



TARGETED VIOLENCE ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

The landscape of extremism, hate,
and violent conspiracies throughout
Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba
from 2019 to 2025



Michael King and John McCoy

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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

The landscape of targeted violence, extremism, and hate has changed significantly since 2019, when the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) published its first report surveying the landscape of hate-motivated violence across the province of Alberta. Further examining this evolving landscape, the OPV published its second, updated report on hate-motivated violence and extremism across Alberta in 2022.

For this newest report, the OPV has expanded its focus to include all three Prairie provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. In this report, we provide a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of targeted violence, extremism, and hate across the Prairies between January 2019 and February 2025. It is the first report of its kind to focus on the Prairie provinces.

During our period of study, major domestic and international events – such as the COVID-19 pandemic, contentious presidential elections in the United States, and geopolitical conflicts like the Israel-Hamas war – have continued to shape targeted violence, extremism and hate in Canada. Although many trends in the Prairies mirror broader national patterns, they often take on a distinct regional form and differ in magnitude. Specifically, our research yields seven key findings:

1. The persistence of ideologically motivated violent extremism

Ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) remains a significant threat across the Prairies. IMVE actors now show a preference for localized, informal networks, or act alone. Recent developments during this period include the proliferation of so-called active clubs, which prioritize in-person and offline activities like combat training and physical fitness to prepare for a looming race war. Active clubs are present, at varying levels, in all three Prairie provinces.

2. Growing youth involvement in extremism and hate

Youth engagement in targeted violence, extremism and hate has increased, particularly among religiously motivated violent extremists, and within the online nihilistic accelerationist milieu, such as “The Com” and 764 networks. This development contrasts with the rise of active clubs, which attract slightly older demographics due to the nature of their offline activities.

3. Mixed and unclear extremism on the rise

A growing number of extremist actors adhere to highly individualized worldviews, blending elements from a variety of ideologies, personal experiences, grievances, and conspiracies. Extremist activities rooted in such idiosyncratic worldviews have unfolded across the Prairies, evident in incidents like the Edmonton City Hall attack and the ongoing encampment of the Kingdom of Canada in Richmond, Saskatchewan.

4. The emergence of nihilistic, accelerationist extremism

A strategy originally favored by xenophobic groups, accelerationism is now embraced by new online communities of nihilistic actors. Groups like 764 and No Lives Matter engage in a range of criminal activities, such as child sexual abuse, hoping to destabilize societal norms and trigger the collapse of society. While some individuals associated with these groups espouse their ideologies, others engage with these communities for non-ideological reasons. Activities related to nihilistic, accelerationist extremism has been reported across the Prairies.

5. The role of current events and crises

Geopolitical events and domestic crises have long been exploited by extremist actors to justify violence. The Israel-Hamas war, for example, has seemingly motivated several individuals arrested for terrorist activities, as well as a flurry of hate crimes targeting Jewish, Muslim, and Arab communities across Canada and the Prairies. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic fuelled a range of anti-government narratives, conspiracy theories, as well as anti-Asian hate that has persisted long after health mandates were lifted.

6. A surge in anti-authority sentiments

Extreme anti-authority beliefs have grown significantly across the Prairies. Most anti-authority actors engage in non-violent resistance, such as protests or pseudo-legal actions: tactics that contribute to a strain on public resources and further erode trust in public institutions. Some individuals, however, have escalated their anti-authority extremism, issuing threats and in some instances even attacking government figures, law enforcement, and health workers.

7. The re-emergence of RMVE in Canada

Religiously motivated violent extremist (RMVE) activity linked to the Islamic State has re-emerged in Canada after a lull following the fall of the Caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Recent arrests suggest a growing interest in carrying out attacks within Canada, with an increasing number of young people involved. Some of these RMVE actors in Alberta appear to be inspired by geopolitical events, particularly the Israel-Hamas war, or other grievances, such as anti-2SLGBTQI+ sentiments.

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We are deeply grateful to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for their generous contribution to this research. Their willingness to allow us to interview their members, and the candid conversations about extremism, hate, and targeted violence were invaluable to the creation of this report.

We also thank the many subject-matter experts and academics who shared their time and knowledge with us during this project.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Introduction

Since 2019, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have witnessed a changing tide of trends in violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence. Despite the known impacts of these phenomena in Alberta, the most populous of the Prairie provinces, there is little up-to-date information about the landscape of these issues in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, impeding our collective understanding and response.¹

Indeed, most analyses of violent extremism and hate in Canada tend to focus on trends at the national level. For example, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) provides an annual overview outlining country-wide trends.² Alternatively, academic studies frequently compare Canada to other countries, such as the United States.³ While these national and international perspectives are valuable, they overlook the significant regional variations within Canada. Differences in demographics, culture, and language across the country influence how crime, polarization, hate, and extremism manifest at the regional and local levels.

This report seeks to fill this gap by shifting the analytical lens to the “Prairies,” which encompasses the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This region, with its distinct social, economic, and cultural landscapes, presents unique challenges and opportunities for addressing violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence.

With a focus on the Prairies, this report aims to offer a granular understanding of how these issues manifest regionally and locally, examining how they align with and diverge from broader national and international patterns. By doing so, this report highlights the importance of considering regional variations and underscores the need for interventions that account for the unique contexts of different Canadian regions. Above all, this report aims to build knowledge and awareness of these issues among the public, civil society, researchers, and criminal justice stakeholders.

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- ¹ St-Amant, Michele, John McCoy & Maryam Adham, *Hate in Alberta: Problems to Solutions*. (Edmonton, AB: Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2023), <https://preventviolence.ca/publication/hate-in-alberta-problems-to-solutions/>; St-Amant, Michele, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism in Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022*, (Edmonton, AB: Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.
 - ² Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023* (March 2024), https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf.
 - ³ Ciarán O'Connor, Laurie Wood, Katherine Keneally & Kevin D. Reyes, *Active Clubs: The Growing Threat of 'White Nationalism 3.0' Across the United States*, (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, October 2023), <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Active-Clubs.pdf>.

Scope of Our Research

Consistent with the terminology used by many experts, policymakers, and public safety institutions, we use the term “targeted violence” to describe acts of violence that are premeditated, goal-directed, and aimed at specific persons or groups.⁴

Targeted violence is generally motivated by grievances, extremism, hate, ideologies, and/or conspiracy theories, but notably excludes financial gain, impulsiveness, and poor self-regulation as primary motives. Therefore, unlike random or opportunistic violence, targeted violence is driven by an underlying belief system or grievance, which fuels the desire to harm a predetermined target.⁵

While targeted violence encompasses acts of terrorism —where a clear political motive is identifiable— it also includes violence driven by ideological beliefs that do not fit neatly into traditional categories of violent extremism.

These include motivations rooted in conspiracy theories, fixated grievances, or diffuse ideological frameworks that are often ill-defined. The term has emerged to describe a trend among perpetrators’ motives for violence, which have become more individualized and varied and consequently increasingly difficult to categorize using historical frameworks of extremism, hate, or terrorism. This trend has also become evident across the Prairies.

Methodology

Data collection for this report was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, drawing from four distinct sources to ensure a multifaceted understanding of violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence in the Prairies.

The first data source consisted of traditional media reports from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba from January 2019 until February 2025. The second source involved conducting 24 semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of local stakeholders and experts. Our third data source was the collection of digital and social media content produced by individuals and groups that promote violent extremism and hate in the Prairie provinces. Fourth, we collected and reviewed grey and academic literature related to violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence.

Traditional Media Reports

We systematically collected traditional media and news reports that described incidents of violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence in the Prairie region between January 2019 and February 2025. These reports provided a foundational overview of the key events, incidents, and trends in this region. By focusing on local and regional news coverage, we identified patterns, frequencies, the nature of these events, and the public discourse surrounding them.

To ensure both a comprehensive and targeted search, we employed the Google search engine with a set of specific keywords to identify and filter relevant articles. These included keywords such as “extremism,” “violent extremism,” “terrorism,” “radicalization,” “extremist activities,” “conspiracy,” and “hate,” which were cross-referenced with location-specific keywords like “Alberta,” “Saskatchewan,” and “Manitoba.” This method allowed us to capture a wide range of incidents across the Prairie provinces.

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- ⁴ Heidi B. Ellis, Edna Erez, John Horgan, Gary LaFree and Ramón Spaaj, “Comparing Violent Extremism and Terrorism to Other Forms of Targeted Violence,” *National Institute of Justice Journal* 285 (2024), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/306124.pdf>
- ⁵ Madison F. E. Almond, Tonia L. Nicholls, Karen L. Petersen, Michael C. Seto and Anne G. Crocker, “Exploring the Nature and Prevalence of Targeted Violence Perpetrated by Persons Found Not Criminally Responsible on Account of Mental Disorder.” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 41:2–3 (2023), 124–40. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2626>;
- Reid J. Meloy, Jens Hoffmann, Karoline Roshdi and Angela Guldemann, “Some Warning Behaviors Discriminate between School Shooters and Other Students of Concern,” *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 1:3 (2014), 203–11. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tam0000020>.

Stakeholder Interviews

The second source of data collection involved conducting 24 semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of local stakeholders. These included experts in extremism and hate studies, law enforcement and national security officials, legal experts, and representatives from civil society organizations. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of the participants' insights and experiences, adding contextual depth to our understanding of the local dynamics of extremism and hate.

To standardize these interviews, we developed a semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to explore stakeholders' views on the drivers, manifestations, and trends of violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence. We also asked interview participants about their perspectives on solutions to these issues, including resource constraints that might hinder effective responses.

To identify and recruit participants, we employed purposive and snowball sampling methods. Each participant was directly or indirectly involved in monitoring, studying, or countering violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence in the Prairie region. These stakeholders included law enforcement officials, national security experts, academics and researchers, and community members.

Interviews were conducted between September 2023 and January 2025 via online video conferencing platforms. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants. Audio recordings were then transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and stored in a double-encrypted drive to protect participants' identities. Transcripts were then coded using thematic analysis, allowing us to identify recurrent themes and patterns.

The qualitative data from interviews were triangulated with the catalogued data from traditional media reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of current trends in the Prairie provinces.

Moreover, over two trips throughout the Prairies, in April 2024 and February 2025, we engaged in informal evidence-gathering discussions with various stakeholders. These in-person conversations were instrumental in verifying the accuracy of our initial findings and providing additional context to refine and nuance our conclusions.

Digital Media

To achieve a holistic understanding of violent extremism, hate, and targeted violence across the Prairies, we extended our data collection to include digital media sources. This approach involved identifying, monitoring, and collecting content from a variety of online platforms commonly used by individuals and groups involved in hate and extremism. Specifically, we targeted social media platforms such as Telegram as well as online forums and podcasts produced by local individuals and groups that actively promote hate, violent extremism, and conspiracy theories. Telegram was selected because, in recent years, it has emerged as the preferred encrypted messaging platform used by extremist actors to organize, communicate, and disseminate content with minimal moderation.⁶

The process began with stakeholder interviews and media reports, which helped to identify key groups and influencers operating in the region. From there, we employed a snowball sampling method on social media platforms, utilizing algorithmic recommendations to uncover additional pages, groups, and channels associated with similar ideologies. This method allowed us to trace the interconnected networks of extremist actors and groups and gain a deeper understanding of their online presence and communication strategies.

⁶ Bronagh Munro, "Telegram pushes extremist groups to users study," BBC News, December 16, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgrvw29x4jo>.

By incorporating evidence from digital media sources into our research, we aim to provide a more nuanced and accurate portrayal of the dynamics of hate, extremism, and targeted violence in the Prairie region, complementing the traditional data collection methods discussed above.

Structure of this Report

Our findings are divided into five chapters, each addressing distinct aspects of targeted violence. The first three chapters explore the landscape of violent extremism through the classification system outlined by the Government of Canada, which distinguishes between three primary categories: ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE), religiously motivated violent extremism (RMVE), and politically motivated violent extremism (PMVE). These chapters provide an in-depth examination of each type of extremism, focusing on their local manifestations across the Prairies.

Chapter 5 focuses on trends related to violence driven by mixed and unclear ideologies, which often involve idiosyncratic grievances and conspiracy theories. This chapter delves into the complexities of understanding violent acts with ambiguous or multifaceted ideological underpinnings. *Chapter 6* examines hate, providing an overview of how hate-motivated violence has evolved and manifested across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba between 2019 and February 2025.

Each chapter begins with a contextual discussion of the relevant sub-category of targeted violence, situating it within historical as well as broader national and global trends. Each chapter then reviews local developments in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. It is important to note that there is no specific chapter dedicated to conspiracy-driven violence, as violent conspiracy theories are intrinsic features of each subtype of targeted violence and are discussed throughout the report.



CHAPTER 2

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism

The Government of Canada uses the umbrella term “ideologically motivated violent extremism” (IMVE) to identify a variety of grievances, ideologies, and beliefs that span from far-left extremism to the far-right extremism.¹ The term refers to a range of justifications for the use of violence to achieve ideological goals based on the following beliefs:

- **Xenophobia:** which refers to grievances, ideologies, and beliefs that justify racially motivated or ethno-nationalist violence, such as white supremacy or neo-Nazism.
- **Anti-authority extremism:** which includes extreme anti-government, anti-law enforcement, or anarchist beliefs or grievances that reject the legitimacy and authority of the state.
- **Extreme misogyny:** which includes gender or identity-related grievances and beliefs. Adherents include individuals who identify as violent incels or extremists in the online manosphere ecosystem.

Groups and individuals promoting IMVE frequently incorporate other grievances and conspiracy theories into their justifications for violence. While these elements are present across many different ideologies and belief systems, their role and significance can vary. *Chapter 5* will examine cases where mixed and unclear ideologies dominate, whereas this chapter will focus on ideologies primarily driven by xenophobia, anti-authority beliefs, and extreme misogyny, with separate grievances and conspiracy theories playing a peripheral or supporting role rather than being the dominant motivation.

Our interviews with law enforcement, national security officials, and Subject-Matter Experts reveal a notable rise in xenophobia, anti-authority, and extreme-right accelerationist beliefs across all three Prairie provinces between January 2019 and February 2025. In contrast, gender-driven violence appeared to be either stable or in decline during this period, with spurts of activity resulting from current events and debates.

This chapter examines these trends by discussing each IMVE sub-category. For each sub-category, such as xenophobia, we begin with an overview of its historical background, followed by our key research findings and an analysis of local trends across the Prairie provinces.

While our analysis is organized according to these sub-categories, readers must recognize that these belief systems are not mutually exclusive. Many individuals, groups, and movements engage with violent ideologies that blend elements from multiple IMVE sub-categories. This ideological overlap complicates the categorization but reflects the existing and complex landscape of extremism and hate in the Prairies.

Xenophobia

Consistent with broader trends across Canada in recent years, many of our interviewees reported that extreme xenophobic beliefs have continued to pose a threat across the Prairies between January 2019 and February 2025. Xenophobic extremism in the Prairies, as in other parts of the country, encompasses a wide range of grievances, beliefs, and ideologies. These are often deeply intertwined with neo-Nazi and ethno-nationalist ideologies, all of which have been gaining traction in recent years.

¹ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2019* (April 2020), p. 13, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/PubRep-2019-E.pdf>

Xenophobic extremism manifests in various forms, from organized hate groups and movements to individuals who act alone. These groups, movements, and individuals target racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, promoting a narrative that justifies the use of violence to achieve or maintain racial purity and protect perceived national identity. Encrypted messaging apps and social media platforms like Telegram and Gab have been exploited to facilitate these ideologies, where hate speech and extremist content is poorly moderated and can be disseminated quickly, fostering a sense of community among disparate actors worldwide.

Our previous report on violent extremism and hate in Alberta and Canada, published in 2022, highlighted an expansion in extreme xenophobic beliefs between 2019 and 2022.² This period marked the emergence of strategies and ideologies that reshaped the landscape of the extreme right.

Notably, moderately successful attempts were made to establish small, loosely connected extremist cells. These networks operated under the banner of “accelerationism,” a doctrine that advocates for the use of political violence and terrorism to ignite a race war, and accelerate the destruction of liberalism, modernity, and capitalism.³

Accelerationism is rooted in the teachings of influential white supremacists and neo-Nazis such as James Mason and Louis Beam Jr. Their writings, particularly Mason’s *Siege* – a series of newsletters that was later compiled into a book – have become central to the ideology of many contemporary xenophobic groups, movements, and actors.

Siege claims an impending race war is inevitable and portrays it as the only viable solution to what is perceived as the decline of white society.⁴ *Siege* and other influential xenophobic texts, like *The Turner Diaries*, are often considered as “essential reading” in many online xenophobic spaces, which promote the idea that societal collapse is not only inevitable but required to ultimately build a White ethno-state, and encourage followers to accelerate this by committing violence.⁵

In the early-to-mid 2010s, a network of neo-fascist groups emerged from the now-defunct online forum known as Iron March. This network played a pivotal role in adopting, disseminating, and promoting “Siege Culture” and militant accelerationism to a new generation of neo-Nazis and white ethno-nationalists.⁶

This network included groups scattered around the world like the Azov Battalion in Ukraine, CasaPound in Italy, the Nordic Resistance Movement across the Nordic countries, and the transnational group Blood & Honour, which also had members in the Prairies. These groups fostered strong transnational ties, facilitating real-world meetups, training, and activism.

² Michele St-Amant, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022* (Edmonton, AB: The Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.

³ Matthew Kriner, “An Introduction to Militant Accelerationism,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/an-introduction-to-militant-accelerationism>.

⁴ Michele St-Amant, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022* (Edmonton, AB: The Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), pp. II 2-3, <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.

⁵ Bethan Johnson & Matthew Feldman, *Siege Culture After Siege: Anatomy of a Neo-Nazi Terrorist Doctrine*, (The Hague, Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, July 2021), <https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/2022-12/siege-culture-neo-nazi-terrorist-doctrine.pdf>.

⁶ Alex Newhouse, “The Threat Is the Network: The Multi-Node Structure of Neo-Fascist Accelerationism,” *CTC Sentinel* 38:5 (June 2021), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-threat-is-the-network-the-multi-node-structure-of-neo-fascist-accelerationism/>.

Among the most prominent groups to emerge in North America were Atomwaffen Division and The Base, the former of which has been linked to at least five murders in the U.S. alone.⁷ Through connections with other groups like the Azov Battalion and the Nordic Resistance Movement, this emerging network of militant accelerationist neo-fascists embraced terrorism and violence as a tool to achieve their aims and, in turn, helped shape modern-day neo-fascist aesthetics and tactics.

The adoption of accelerationism has been far-reaching, leading to a series of violent attacks in Canada and internationally. For example, in 2019, two members of Atomwaffen's offshoot in the United Kingdom, the Sonnenkrieg Division, were arrested and charged with terrorism offences for encouraging terrorist attacks and spreading terrorist propaganda.⁸

A trend among accelerationists is their reference to, or inspiration from, previous attackers and their manifestos. For example, the 2019 Christchurch New Zealand Mosque shooter wrote the names of other xenophobic mass killers on his firearm and magazines, including the 2017 Quebec City Mosque shooter.⁹ Meanwhile, the 2017 Quebec City Mosque shooter, who was motivated by anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiments, held a fascination for another accelerationist attacker who killed 9 Black churchgoers in South Carolina in 2015.¹⁰

Although groups like Atomwaffen Division, The Base, and their network of transnational affiliate groups were most prominent in the United States and Europe, their influence extended to Canada as well. One of Canada's most prominent adherents was Patrik Mathews, a Canadian Armed Forces reservist from Manitoba who was exposed in 2019 as a recruiter for The Base.¹¹

An RCMP raid of his home in Manitoba uncovered a cache of firearms and extremist materials. Mathews fled to the United States, where he was later arrested and sentenced to nine years in an American prison for his role in a plot to instigate a race war.¹² Image 1 shows a post from a now-defunct X account (formerly Twitter), believed to belong to Mathews, in which he advocates for a "Racial Holy War" (RaHoWa), a term commonly used by militant accelerationists. Image 2 shows a post from The Base's now-defunct X account displaying recruitment stickers in Winnipeg, which are thought to have been placed by Mathews himself.

7 Jason Wilson, "Sweep of arrests hits US neo-Nazi group connected to five murders," *The Guardian*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/06/neo-nazi-arrests-deals-blow-us-group-atomwaffen-division>.

8 No Author, "Teenage neo-Nazis jailed over terror offences," *The Guardian*, June 18, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-48672929>.

9 Julia Kupper, "The Venomous Rhetorical Web of Far-Right Terrorists," *Global Network on Extremism & Terrorism*, October 17 2022, <https://gnet-research.org/2022/10/17/the-venomous-rhetorical-web-of-far-right-terrorists/>.

10 Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Colin P. Clarke & Samuel Hodgson, "Bordering on Hate: The Strategic Implications of White Supremacist Extremist Travel Between the United States and Canada," (The Hague, Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, April 13, 2021), <https://www.icct.nl/publication/bordering-hate-strategic-implications-white-supremacist-extremist-travel-between-united>.

11 Ben Makuch & Mack Lamoureux, "Police Warn that Accused Neo-Nazi Canadian Soldier Could Have Fled to U.S.," *Vice News*, September 6, 2019, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/ne8ejx/police-warn-that-accused-neo-nazi-patrik-mathews-canadian-soldier-could-be-have-fled-to-us>.

12 Sarah Petz, "Neo-Nazi group member Patrik Mathews won't get weapons seized in 2019 raid back: Manitoba judge," *CBC News*, October 26, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/patrik-mathews-weapons-forfeiture-1.7009588>.



Image 1: Post from a now-defunct X (formerly Twitter) account, which is believed to have been operated by The Base recruiter Patrik Mathews. The term “RaHoWa” refers to a Racial Holy War (Source: X, August 2019).



Image 2: Post from a now-defunct X account (formerly Twitter) for The Base, featuring recruitment stickers placed in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Source: X, August 2019).

Terrorist designations of xenophobic groups

In 2019 the Government of Canada took a historic step in combating xenophobic extremism by designating Blood & Honour and Combat 18 – two transnational neo-Nazi groups – as terrorist organizations.¹³ This marked the first time xenophobic groups were designated as terrorist organizations in Canada. In 2021, the Government added several more to the list, including Atomwaffen Division, The Base, and the Proud Boys.¹⁴ Designating groups as terrorist organizations has several important implications. Once on the terror list, the financial assets of individuals linked to these groups can be frozen, and police can charge those who support them through financial or material means, such as by creating group propaganda.¹⁵

Although this move was symbolically profound, it was met with mixed reactions. As we noted in our last report about Alberta published in 2022, some law enforcement officials admitted that the designation had little impact because many of the targeted groups, such as the Proud Boys, had already largely disbanded before the government implemented the designations.¹⁶ This sentiment was echoed during the interviews we conducted across the Prairies for this report, as well.

The designation of the Atomwaffen Division as a terrorist entity had a similarly unremarkable effect, as the group had already split with portions thereof rebranded. Some of its Canadian members, however, remained involved in the extremist activities. During the summer of 2023, an Ottawa man known online as “Dark Foreigner” was arrested for his activities in relation to the Atomwaffen Division, which had already been defunct for several years in Canada.¹⁷ Dark Foreigner was a very influential propagandist across online militant accelerationist circles and was responsible for creating some of the most widely shared aesthetics and propaganda art used by the Atomwaffen Division, The Base, Sonnenkrieg Division, the Order of Nine Angles (discussed more in *Chapter 5: Mixed, Unclear & Hybrid Threats*), and others in online militant accelerationist communities.¹⁸

Dark Foreigner was also the first Canadian linked to extreme-right ideologies charged with both terrorism and hate propaganda offences.¹⁹ His arrest was followed by charges against two other Ontario men linked to Atomwaffen Division in December 2023.²⁰ Likewise, in the United States and across Europe, many individuals linked to these groups have since been arrested, charged, and convicted.²¹

- 13 Omar Mosleh, “Canada adds extremist neo-Nazi groups with Alberta history to list of terrorist entities for first time,” *Toronto Star*, June 26, 2019, https://www.thestar.com/edmonton/canada-adds-extremist-neo-nazi-groups-with-alberta-history-to-list-of-terrorist-entities-for/article_b5948d7a-15b7-5f8b-baa4-2dd278048b0e.html.
- 14 Public Safety Canada, press release, “Government of Canada lists 13 new groups as terrorist entities and completes review of seven others,” February 3, 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2021/02/government-of-canada-lists-13-new-groups-as-terrorist-entities-and-completes-review-of-seven-others.html>.
- 15 Ashley Burke & Michael Woods, “Canada listing Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard as terrorist group after years of pressure,” *CBC News*, June 19, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ottawa-list-iran-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps-terrorist-group-1.7238522>.
- 16 Michele St-Amant, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022* (Edmonton, AB: The Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.
- 17 Richard Raycraft, “RCMP charge Ottawa man tied to ‘violent far-right ideology’ with terrorism offences,” *CBC News*, July 5, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/rcmp-changes-terrorism-atomwaffen-1.6897459>.
- 18 Isabela Bernardo & Matthew Kriner, “‘A New Image of Terror and Dread’: The Significance of Dark Foreigner’s Arrest,” *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, September 25, 2023, <https://gnet-research.org/2023/09/25/the-significance-of-dark-foreigners-arrest/>.
- 19 Richard Raycraft, “RCMP charge Ottawa man tied to ‘violent far-right ideology’ with terrorism offences,” *CBC News*, July 5, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/rcmp-changes-terrorism-atomwaffen-1.6897459>.
- 20 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, press release, “Two Ontario men arrested on terrorism charges,” December 8, 2023, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2023/two-ontario-men-arrested-terrorism-charges>.
- 21 Jason Wilson, “Sweep of arrests hits US neo-Nazi group connected to five murders,” *The Guardian*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/06/neo-nazi-arrests-deals-blow-us-group-atomwaffen-division>.

Despite these arrests, the legacy of these groups and the appeal of militant accelerationism continue to resonate among extreme xenophobic actors today, inspiring the formation of new groups and movements and motivating lone actors to commit violence.²² Consequently, militant accelerationism has emerged as an enduring violent extremist strategy, one that draws on inspirational individuals, manifestos, aesthetics, tactics, and learning from previous attacks.

A particularly influential incident often cited as an inspiration by subsequent attackers, including the 2019 Christchurch attacker, is the 2011 Norway attacks that resulted in 77 fatalities.²³ This enduring influence is evident in more recent xenophobic attacks, such as the 2021 London Ontario truck ramming, which targeted a Muslim family and resulted in the death of four people; and the 2022 Buffalo New York supermarket shooting, which targeted and killed 10 Black Americans.

In Canada and across the Prairies, the ecosystem of xenophobic actors has been reshaped by the government's designation of some xenophobic groups as terrorist organizations, along with heightened public attention and awareness of these groups.

Today, some xenophobic actors continue to organize themselves into small groups or movements, while others prefer loosely networked cells or to operate independently. Law enforcement officials we interviewed reported a notable rise in xenophobic beliefs across various forms throughout the Prairies in recent years:

"It's been a progression. [Before 2019], there was a focus on Syria, people travelling there in support of a terrorist organization [and] returning to Canada. Now, that hasn't been our focus. Now, it's been linked to [what we call] IMVE... It's almost done a full 180 of our threat landscape. You always had the neo-Nazis, there was always very small pockets... but now they're gaining ground."

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

"I think the [xenophobic] ideology is increasing and it's becoming more militant, more violent. Some of the ideological material out there is definitely increasing as well as the consumption [of this material]. There's definitely potential there and I think it's the greatest growing potential sphere."

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

"[Xenophobic extremism] is something that is trending upwards."

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

"There is definitely a common theme in a lot of the threat actors and groups that we do come [across]. There's almost always elements of xenophobia in one form or another."

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

²² Alex Newhouse, "The Threat Is the Network: The Multi-Node Structure of Neo-Fascist Accelerationism," *CTC Sentinel* 38:5 (June 2021), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-threat-is-the-network-the-multi-node-structure-of-neo-fascist-accelerationism/>.

²³ Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "The Dark Web Enabled the Christchurch Killer," *Foreign Policy*, March 16, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/16/the-dark-web-enabled-the-christchurch-killer-extreme-right-terrorism-white-nationalism-anders-breivik/>.

Xenophobic “Activism”

In our interviews, law enforcement officials identified persistent activities in the Prairies stemming from individuals, movements, and groups linked to xenophobic beliefs. However, they emphasized that not all groups associated with these ideologies pose the same level of risk to public safety. Xenophobic groups, movements, and actors engage in a wide variety of activities, ranging from non-violent activism – such as putting up stickers and banners or distributing propaganda – to violent acts, including mass shootings and other forms of extremist violence. Activism may fuel both hate crimes and extremism, creating a nexus between the two. In Alberta, law enforcement authorities corroborated this:

“I think the sphere of extreme right-wing, neo-Nazi, xenophobic space is rapidly increasing. Again, what we’re seeing [right now] is not reaching the threshold of violent extremism [yet,] but we’re seeing real world organization [and] activism. So, [we’ve seen] banners [and stickers] to get the message out and to promote the idea that xenophobia has a stronghold and [others] can join too.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

While distinctions are often made between groups that promote xenophobic ideologies through “activism” (e.g., spreading propaganda, placing stickers, or hanging banners) and those that actively incite or engage in violence, our findings show that these boundaries are frequently blurred.

For example, White Lives Matter (WLM), a racist activism network with chapters across the United States, Canada, and Europe, regularly posts xenophobic propaganda and advertises its social media channels in Canadian cities. Although WLM primarily engages in non-violent activism, its activities are designed to foster an environment of hatred and intimidation, and to establish an ideological climate that can encourage more extreme actions by others, including violence. A recent example of WLM propaganda from Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, illustrates this:



Image 3: Example of a post from the Canadian White Lives Matter group featuring stickers placed around Assiniboia, SK (Source: Telegram, June 2023).

The stickers often contain QR codes, which, when scanned, lead to local WLM social media channels. These channels offer a mix of racist memes, propaganda, and content, such as image 4 below, which serves to normalize xenophobic ideologies. These channels often share content that glorifies violence and serves as a link to openly violent xenophobic groups that actively promote and engage in violence to achieve their political goals.

Similarly, WLM also promotes active clubs - an international white nationalist movement that emphasizes physical training, mixed martial arts, and preparation for armed combat - which serves to glorify the notion of "White warriors" trained for battle. This linkage suggests that activism groups like WLM, while rarely directly linked to violence in Canada, do not stop at merely spreading hate. Instead, these groups also serve as gateways to more extreme forms of xenophobic violence, including accelerationism.



Image 4: Image shared by a Canadian White Lives Matter group (Source: Telegram, July 2024).

In addition to the largely non-violent activism groups discussed above, law enforcement officials also highlighted that some high-profile arrests in Canada, such as those linked to Atomwaffen Division in Ontario, were due to financial or ideological support of terrorist entities rather than acts of violence. However, they suggest these cases were nonetheless critical in contributing to a violent ecosystem through "activism" and propaganda activities. Likewise, WLM and similar activism movements play an important role in perpetuating and normalizing xenophobic narratives that can be used to justify violence:

"[In other cases], the arrests that we're seeing publicly are [usually] not due to violence, but due to financial support [of terrorist entities]. They're due to ideological support [or] material support, such as the Atomwaffen arrests [in] Ontario. They're not meeting that violent aspect, but [they are] producing a very violent message."

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

By normalizing and amplifying xenophobic narratives in the public sphere, activist groups create a bridge for more extreme elements to connect and collaborate with one another. This process not only makes xenophobic beliefs more visible and accessible but also serves as a recruitment tool, drawing in individuals who might otherwise remain isolated or disengaged.

Between January 2019 and February 2025, there were numerous instances across the Prairies where xenophobic messages were displayed, including stickers and banners that contained QR codes or links to social media sites.

For instance, in March 2024, a man in Calgary was charged after allegedly placing white supremacist stickers in a locker room at a local recreation centre.²⁴ Similarly, in Saskatchewan in March 2021, "White Lives Matter" posters were found around North Battleford, directing viewers to the WLM website.²⁵ In January 2025, these xenophobic messages were delivered in person when three men staged a makeshift protest in St. Albert, Alberta, displaying an anti-immigrant sign and a Celtic cross flag, a symbol used by neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups.²⁶ They also reportedly gave Nazi salutes to passersby.

Despite the often loosely organized and fragmented nature of extreme xenophobic actors in the Prairies, our research reveals that many groups have developed mechanisms to foster connections among disparate actors in the activism space. These networks operate as a show of solidarity and support and, in turn, reinforce their underlying xenophobic ideologies.

For example, in response to the 2024 Calgary recreation centre incident described above, a Canadian xenophobic group on the encrypted messaging app known as Telegram publicly expressed support for the individual involved, even though there was no evidence that this individual was connected to the group.

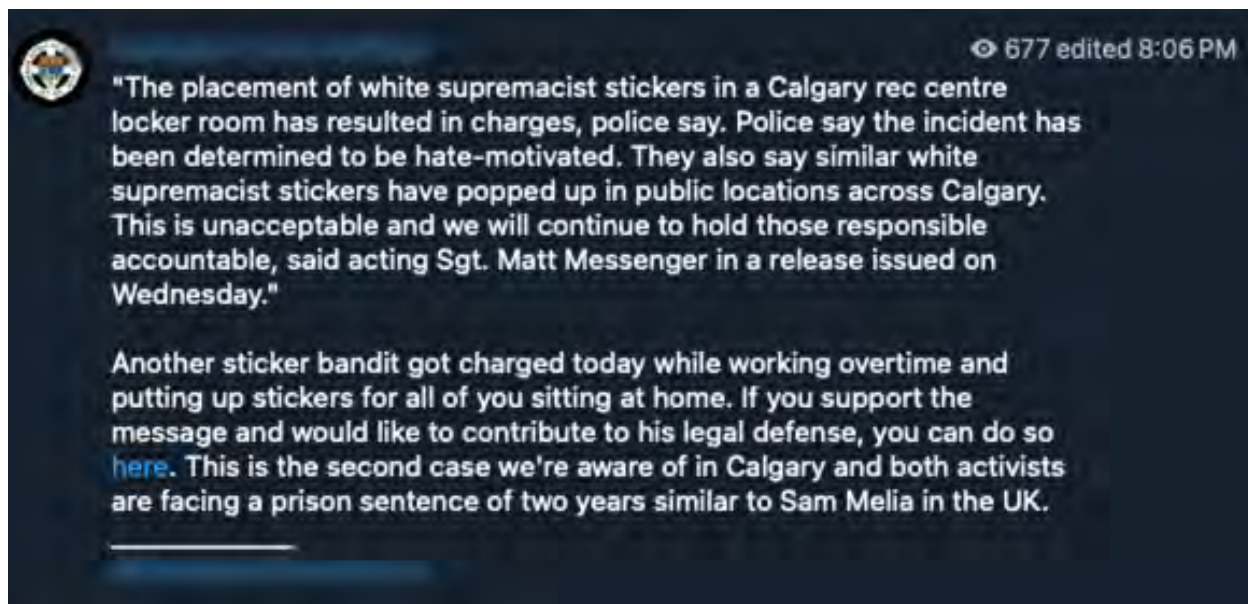


Image 5: Example of a post from a Canadian extreme xenophobic group supporting the individual involved in the Calgary recreation centre incident (Source: Telegram, March 2024).

²⁴ Lauryn Heintz, "Man charged after allegedly putting white supremacist stickers in locker room of Calgary rec centre: police," *CityNews*, March 20, 2024, <https://calgary.citynews.ca/2024/03/20/calgary-white-supremacist-stickers-locker-room/>.

²⁵ Nicole Di Donato, "Sask. Mayor says 'white lives matter' signs posted in community 'something we can't tolerate'," *CTV News*, March 24, 2021, <https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/sask-mayor-says-white-lives-matter-signs-posted-in-community-something-we-can-t-tolerate-1.5361216>.

²⁶ Phil Heidenreich, "'I was speechless': St. Albert protest condemned by community leaders, RCMP now investigating," *Global News*, January 27, 2025, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10979999/st-albert-alberta-nazi-salute/>.

Law enforcement officials we interviewed in Alberta confirmed that networking among disparate and often disconnected actors through fundraising and social media sharing is a growing trend in the xenophobic extremism space:

“Raising money follow[s] a global trend of people in these spheres getting arrested and then a group banding [together] and paying legal fees.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

These findings underscore a broader trend within the community of xenophobic actors. Despite its disjointed nature, this lack of formal structure does not prevent the community from achieving common goals and objectives, such as fundraising for arrested individuals or promoting the propaganda, messages, and actions of other adjacent groups. Rather, this exchange of ideas amplifies and glorifies the impact of individual efforts by echoing them across online xenophobic spaces.

Additionally, by publicly supporting those who engage in xenophobic activities, whether directly linked to the group or not, these organizations signal to their followers that there is a broader, supportive community behind them, which is crucial for sustaining activities.

Xenophobic extremism

Xenophobic extremism in the Prairies has evolved over recent years, reflecting broader changes in the domestic and global extremist landscape. While some groups, movements, or individuals associated with xenophobic beliefs limit their activities to non-violent activism or propaganda, as described above, others are actively involved in committing – or attempting to commit – acts of violence. Unfortunately, there have been several recent examples of this in the Prairies since 2019.

One of the most high-profile cases occurred in 2022 when four Albertans were charged with conspiracy to commit murder following a seizure of rifles, handguns, and body armour from trailers at the Coutts border blockade during pandemic protests. The seized body armour was reportedly decorated with patches, one of which featured the word “infidel” in Arabic script. According to experts, this symbol is associated with militant accelerationist beliefs about an impending race war.²⁷ Two years later in August 2024, a jury found two of the men not guilty of conspiring to kill Mounties, though they were convicted on other charges, including mischief, possession of a weapon, and possession of a pipe bomb.²⁸ The other two men pleaded guilty to lesser charges.

In both Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Proud Boys had active chapters until 2021, when the group disbanded following its designation as a terrorist entity by the Government of Canada.²⁹ While Proud Boys groups have been associated with violence in the United States, their activities in Canada appear to have been more subdued.

²⁷ Bill Kaufmann, “Activists say some suspects arrested at Coutts have white supremacist links,” *Calgary Herald*, February 16, 2022, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/some-arrested-at-coutts-border-protest-have-white-supremacist-links-activists-feds>.

²⁸ Fakiha Baig & Bill Graveland, “Protesters not guilty of conspiring to kill Mounties at Coutts blockade,” *CBC News*, August 2, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/anthony-olienick-chris-carbert-protesters-not-guilty-murder-conspiracy-rcmp-1.7284629>.

²⁹ Mack Lamoureux, “At Least One Canadian Proud Boys Chapter Has Shut Down Following Terror Designation,” *Vice News*, February 17, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkd89b/at-least-one-canadian-proud-boys-chapter-has-shut-down-following-terror-designation>.

In Winnipeg, Manitoba, Jeremy Skibicki murdered four indigenous-Canadian women between March and May 2022 in what has been described as a targeted serial killing spree motivated, at least in part, by xenophobic beliefs. Skibicki posted antisemitic, misogynist, and white supremacist material to his social media profiles, including claims of membership in Holy Europe, a white supremacist movement calling for the preservation of the white bloodline, and an end to immigration.³⁰

Despite these claims, Skibicki's role in Holy Europe remains unclear, and there is no evidence linking him to any other organized xenophobic groups in Manitoba. In July 2024, Skibicki was found guilty of four counts of first-degree murder.³¹

The post-organizational trend

Xenophobic groups in the Prairies, and more broadly across Canada and North America, have long been plagued by instability and fragmentation.³² A combination of police scrutiny, public attention, and infighting has led many of these groups to be short-lived, frequently disbanding and rebranding under new names. This "post-organizational" trend has led to the proliferation of loosely connected cells and individuals who share similar extremist ideologies but operate independently of one another. This trend has been particularly pronounced among militant accelerationists.

According to law enforcement officials we interviewed in Alberta and Saskatchewan, many organized groups do not last long. Individuals associated with now-defunct xenophobic groups that have been linked with violence in the past, like the Soldiers of Odin and Blood & Honour, consistently rebrand and join new groups under different names:

"They just change the name... we've very much seen [it] happen here where Proud Boys and [others] got [designated], then you see Western Folk Assembly, Folkish Resistance Movement, [now] you see active clubs. It's all under the same ideology. They're just branching out into different names and, from what we can tell, loosely aligned or not as structured as the previous groups used to be, which is them evolving. I think they're figuring out how to walk the line by not having such a structured organization and reporting process, but yeah, we've definitely seen a shift to rebranding or just name changes, but it's the same ideology."

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

[In Alberta], we're not seeing a lot of activity [organized by] groups and if they are they [go] defunct fast. We do not see any longevity with these [xenophobic] groups. So, if we had a Sons of Odin chapter here, they've all dissolved within months. There's just not longevity... So, the grievances we're seeing and bucketing as IMVE are under the surface of a bunch of whack-a-mole groups. Even in Alberta, we [used to] have the Soldiers of Odin, [but] then we have the Wolves of Odin, and [now] we have the Super Soldiers of Odin. [When these groups] get a little bit of heat, it shuts down, [they] reorder a new t-shirt, and get a new Facebook page."

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

³⁰ Rachel Bergen, "Accused killer's allegedly hate-filled online presence should be factored into investigation trial: experts," CBC News, June 7, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/rebecca-contois-homicide-jeremy-skibicki-neo-nazi-holy-europe-1.6462730>.

³¹ Caitlyn Gowriluk, "Winnipeg serial killer knew what he was doing was wrong, judge says," CBC News, July 22, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/jeremy-skibicki-judge-written-decision-1.7267617>.

³² Barbara Perry & Ryan Scrivens, "Uneasy Alliances: A Look at the Right-Wing Extremist Movement in Canada," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39:9 (2016), 819–41. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1139375.

“When it comes specifically to [organized] right-wing groups, we’ve seen a little less in regards to information about actual groups. We still have people that are doing neo-Nazi hate crime or hate speech, stuff like that. Years ago, we used to get information of there being an Aryan Nations group [or others], but we just don’t really see that anymore. I would say since 2019 we haven’t had a single [organized] group come up [on our radar].”

-Law Enforcement Official (SK)

In Manitoba, law enforcement officials told us that online communities have been crucial for spreading the message of xenophobic groups where in-person meetups have been made impossible. By making xenophobic messages and material accessible to a wider audience via encrypted messaging apps like Telegram, xenophobic groups can encourage individuals to act on their own:

“The people that [are on my radar] are self-taught online. Their communities aren’t in real life, or to whatever degree you might call them a group, it’s just online. There’s no patches, there’s no meetings, there’s nothing like that. A few years ago, I feel there was more of the sense these people are gathering [in person] to do a certain activity, I’m [referring] to more organized groups like the Proud Boys, which have now dissolved [or] Soldiers of Odin which, from what I understand, [have] also dissolved.”

-Law Enforcement Official (MB)

According to our interviews, the primary concern for law enforcement extends beyond the mere group affiliations of the individuals involved. Rather, it centers on the deeper ideological beliefs that drive violent actions, irrespective of the specific organizations or movements they might belong to. A particular concern is the philosophy that underpins accelerationism, which is prominently featured within online spaces such as the “Terrorgram” collective on Telegram.

According to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), Terrorgram is a decentralized “online network of neo-fascist accelerationists who produce and share propaganda encouraging followers to carry out terrorist attacks”.³³ Similarly, the Accelerationist Research Consortium (ARC) describes the goal of the Terrorgram network as “focusing on mobilizing concept-narratives (e.g., The Great Replacement Theory) with a proven record of instigating violence”.³⁴

The network is composed of dozens of Telegram channels and groups containing millions of posts. Previously, it served as a crucial online platform for groups like Atomwaffen Division, The Base, and its various offshoots to spread ideas and materials to a broad audience of like-minded individuals.³⁵ Importantly, participation in Terrorgram channels does not require formal membership in any organized extremist groups. Rather, the Terrorgram network actively encourages individuals - regardless of their group affiliations - to commit acts of violence.

³³ No Author, “UK Terrorgram Proscription: Useful, but limited tool to combat online network,” (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, May 2, 2024), https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/uk-terrorgram-proscription-useful-but-limited-tool-to-combat-online-network/.

³⁴ Erica Barbarossa, “The Three Phases of Terrorgram,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, May 6, 2024, <https://www.accelresearch.org/accelreports/the-three-phases-of-terrorgram>.

³⁵ Jakob Guhl & Jacob Davey, “A Safe Space to Hate: White Supremacist Mobilisation on Telegram,” (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, June 26, 2020), <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/a-safe-space-to-hate-white-supremacist-mobilisation-on-telegram/>.

The material distributed on Terrorgram ranges from ideological propaganda and manifestos that promote and endorse terrorism to more tactical materials aimed at facilitating violent actions. This includes bomb-making guides, strategies for executing mass casualty attacks, operational security tips and tools, and instructions for improvising firearms or explosives.³⁶ For example, publications on Terrorgram offer detailed instructions on how to sabotage critical infrastructure, which has led to several instances of attempted and successful attacks on power grids.³⁷

The Terrorgram collective also spreads material that reveres and gamifies xenophobic attackers as “Saints,” such as the 2019 Christchurch or the 2022 Bratislava attackers.³⁸ By glorifying these individuals, “Saints Culture” seeks to influence and inspire a new wave of “disciples” to carry out similar lone-actor attacks so they, too, can achieve “Sainthood”.³⁹

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- 36** Jakob Guhl & Jacob Davey, “A Safe Space to Hate: White Supremacist Mobilisation on Telegram,” (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, June 26, 2020), <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/a-safe-space-to-hate-white-supremacist-mobilisation-on-telegram/>;
Erica Barbarossa, “The Three Phases of Terrorgram,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, May 6, 2024, <https://www.accelresearch.org/accreports/the-three-phases-of-terrorgram>.
- 37** Mike Wendling, “How the US Power Grid is a Target for Far-Right Groups,” *BBC News*, March 10, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64832129>;
Jeff Stone, “Far-Right ‘Terrorgram’ Chatrooms Are Fueling a Wave of Power Grid Attacks,” *Bloomberg*, August 26, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-08-26/far-right-terrorgram-chatrooms-fuel-wave-of-power-grid-attacks>.
- 38** Graham Macklin, “Terrorgram: Saints Culture,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, September 12, 2024, <https://www.accelresearch.org/accreports/terrorgram-saints-culture>.
- 39** Erica Barbarossa, “The Three Phases of Terrorgram,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, May 6, 2024, <https://www.accelresearch.org/accreports/the-three-phases-of-terrorgram>.



Image 6: The 2019 Christchurch shooter depicted as a Christian “Saint”.

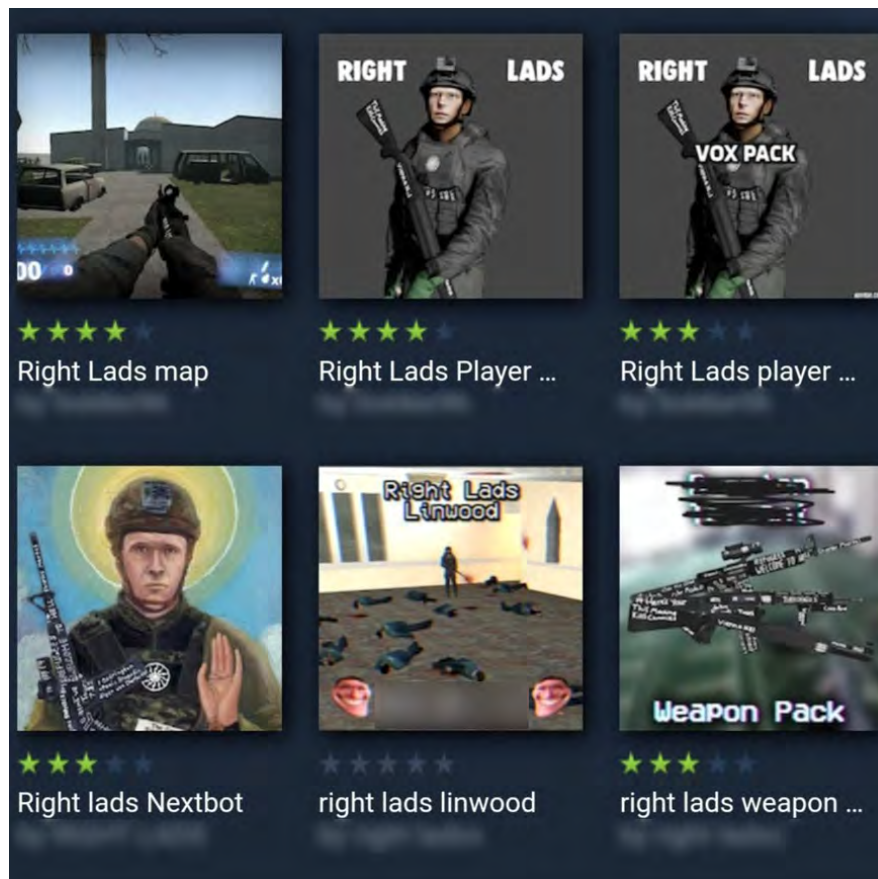


Image 7: The 2019 Christchurch shooter depicted as a video game character allowing users to reenact the shooting.

An example in the Prairies occurred in February 2021, when a 26-year-old Edmonton man, known online as “Moleman,” was arrested on charges related to possessing prohibited weapons, explosive substances, and police equipment, as well as impersonating a peace officer.⁴⁰ The RCMP’s Integrated National Security Enforcement Team first identified the man in 2018 following posts he made on 4chan, where he expressed interest in firearms and explosives, expressed anti-government and anti-police sentiments, and demonstrated fascination with neo-Nazi groups.

Between 2020 and 2021, his online activities escalated, and he began posting about blowing up power lines and infiltrating an Edmonton-area power plant. After his arrest, the prosecutor claimed there was evidence he had researched how to use explosives to “create chaos” on electrical grids and how to modify firearms.⁴¹

In 2023, he was sentenced to six years in prison. Although there is currently no evidence to indicate the man was active specifically within the Terrorgram network, the instructional materials found in his possession are similar to those which can be found on Terrorgram, showcasing the risk these networks can pose to public safety.

Other countries have recognized the danger posed by the Terrorgram network. For example, in April 2024, the British government added Terrorgram to its list of proscribed terrorist organizations.⁴² More recently, the United States designated the Terrorgram network as a terrorist group in January 2025.⁴³

Law enforcement officials across the Prairies also expressed concern over the persistence of extremist beliefs that glorify, encourage, and instruct individuals to commit violence and terrorism, like those found in the possession of “Moleman.” One law enforcement official from Alberta articulated concerns related to this form of violence:

“The deep, dark accelerationism Terrorgram stuff... that’s what I’m more concerned about. That’s the kind of [stuff] we’re seeing a bit of an uptick in. There’s been a whole bunch of cases in the United States, [and] a few out in Alberta. But increasingly, the [accessibility for] people [to obtain] these materials is the concern. [That’s] the real concerning uptick in the IMVE realm, it’s people who have [access to] the “how-to” materials. The Terrorgram publications that are making punchy and snappy propaganda, sanctioning mass shooting of minorities, [or] providing instructions to take down [power] grids, providing instructions to tie off railway tracks [or to sabotage] water treatment facilities, how to mask your gunshots with fireworks. The deep, philosophical accelerationists. The subgroups that support [this] ideological material is drastically increasing.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁴⁰ Jonny Wakefield, “‘Moleman’: 4chan user linked to Alberta man charged in extremism investigation,” *Edmonton Journal*, October 7, 2021, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/moleman-inside-the-dark-web-alter-ego-of-the-alberta-man-charged-in-rcmp-extremism-investigation>.

⁴¹ Jonny Wakefield, “‘Moleman’: 4chan user linked to Alberta man charged in extremism investigation,” *Edmonton Journal*, October 7, 2021, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/moleman-inside-the-dark-web-alter-ego-of-the-alberta-man-charged-in-rcmp-extremism-investigation>.

⁴² Home Office of the Government of the United Kingdom, press release “Terrorgram collective now proscribed as terrorist organisation,” April 26, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/terrorgram-collective-now-proscribed-as-terrorist-organisation>.

⁴³ Reuters, “US designates extreme right-wing ‘Terrorgram’ network as terrorist group,” *Reuters*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-designates-extreme-right-wing-terrorgram-network-terrorist-group-2025-01-13/>.

Law enforcement officials in Manitoba reported a similar trend:

“I think the Internet has given people [with these beliefs] a place to connect where you wouldn’t find someone with shared interests before. People can search out and find manifestos... [It was reported in the press that] Patrik Mathews [here in Manitoba] referred to [the Christchurch shooter] as Saint Tarrant. The[se are] individual people who go through the Internet and are able to connect to the communities they want to. Accelerationism is here and we have had incidences on file. We’re not seeing them [organized as groups] but they share the same beliefs from manifestos, [its] the accelerationism.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

The rise of active clubs

A new trend following the post-organizational movement described above is an increasing preference for some IMVE actors to meet offline. This preference has given rise to “active clubs,” a loose and decentralized transnational network of white nationalist and neo-fascist cells. These cells emerged in recent years across the United States, Canada, and Europe, promoting a strategy known as “White Nationalism 3.0”.⁴⁴ This approach aims to present a slick and modernized version of white nationalism to aid recruitment and avoid law enforcement scrutiny.⁴⁵ Active clubs combine broadly appealing elements such as physical fitness, popular combat sports, lifestyle aesthetics, and messaging that resonates with a more health-conscious generation of adherents. In general, active clubs tend to reject overtly violent tactics to avoid law enforcement attention.⁴⁶ By comparison, earlier white nationalist or white supremacist groups had more limited appeal through their overtly extremist and niche belief systems and aesthetics.

A popular belief among active clubs, and in the broader xenophobic extremism space more generally, is a mobilization around the “Great Replacement” theory. This white nationalist conspiracy purports that global elites are conspiring to replace the white population with non-European people through mass migration.⁴⁷ As with its promotion of physical fitness and combat sports, the underlying xenophobic message of this conspiracy aligns with more widely held and palatable belief systems accessible on mainstream social media.

⁴⁴ Alexander Ritzmann, “Hiding in Plain Sight – The Transnational Right-Wing Extremist Active Club Network,” (Berlin, Germany: Counter Extremism Project, September 22, 2023), p. 7, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Hiding%20in%20Plain%20Sight_The%20Transnational%20Right-Wing%20Extremist%20Active%20Club%20Network_Sept%202023.pdf.

⁴⁵ Mack Lamoureux, “Neo-Nazi Fight Clubs Are Growing Rapidly, New Research Shows,” *Vice News*, September 22, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgw4bz/neo-nazi-active-clubs-rising-globally>.

⁴⁶ Accelerationism Research Consortium, “Accelerationism: The Active Club Network,” (London, UK: Global Network on Extremism and Technology, July 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-188>.

⁴⁷ Matthew Kriner, Meghan Conroy, Alex Newhouse & Jon Lewis, “Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, May 30, 2022, <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-the-great-replacement-theory>.

The spread of these groups in North America is largely attributed to Robert Rundo, the American co-founder of the Rise Above Movement (RAM), a white nationalist mixed martial arts (MMA) group established in southern California in 2017. Although RAM was short-lived, it was active at political rallies across the United States between 2017 and 2018, including the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, where three RAM members were arrested.⁴⁸ Rundo himself was later arrested in 2018 for inciting violence, which eventually led to the group’s disbandment.

After federal charges against Rundo were dismissed in 2019, he fled to Eastern Europe, where he connected with prominent figures of Europe’s white nationalist mixed martial arts (MMA) scene, such as Russian-German neo-Nazi Denis Kapustin.⁴⁹ At the time, Europe’s white nationalist MMA ecosystem was more developed than in North America, with Kapustin playing a key role in its expansion.

Since the early 2010s, Kapustin organized and launched a series of popular MMA tournaments across Europe in collaboration with far-right political parties like the German neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NDP), and white racist skinhead gangs like the Hammerskins, which also have a presence in Canada and the Prairies.⁵⁰ In 2021, Kapustin and Rundo co-hosted a podcast endorsing the active club model, which aligns with the strategy of “White Nationalism 3.0”.⁵¹ The model emphasizes self-improvement, fitness, and physical combat training to create “warriors” prepared for the impending race war.

48 A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston, & Darwin BondGraham, “Racist, Violent, Unpunished: A White Hate Group’s Campaign of Menace,” *ProPublica*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/white-hate-group-campaign-of-menace-rise-above-movement>

49 René Nissen, Kiril Avramov, & Jason Roberts, “White Rex, White Nationalism, and Combat Sport: The Production of a Far-Right Cultural Scene,” *Journal of Illiberalism Studies* 1:2 (2021), 19–37, <https://doi.org/10.53483/VCIT3530>; Brittny Mejia, “Judge Clears Charges Against Alleged White Supremacists, Says There’s a Bias Against the Far Right,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-02-21/judge-again-dismisses-charges-against-members-of-california-white-nationalist-group>.

50 Tim Hume, “A Russian Neo-Nazi Football Hooligan is Trying to Build an MMA Empire Across Europe,” *Vice News*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/a-russian-neo-nazi-football-hooligan-is-trying-to-build-an-mma-empire-across-europe/>.

51 Ben Makuch, “Russian Militia has Links to American Neo-Nazi and Anti-Trans Figures,” *The Intercept*, July 8, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/07/08/american-neo-nazis-ukraine-war/>; Ciarán O’Connor, Laurie Wood, Katherine Keneally & Kevin D. Reyes, “Active Clubs: The Growing Threat of ‘White Nationalism 3.0’ Across the United States,” (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, October 24, 2023), <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Active-Clubs.pdf>

The arrests of key members within Atomwaffen Division, The Base, and other similar groups between 2019 and 2021 created ideal conditions for the active club model, which positioned itself as the “next” iteration of modern neo-fascism. As Atomwaffen’s influence waned with each wave of arrests, and especially after the group’s designation as a terrorist entity, many former Canadian Atomwaffen members shifted their allegiance to active clubs across Canada.⁵² Despite RAM’s dissolution and Rundo’s recent extradition to the U.S. to face renewed charges, the active club model has continued to flourish across North America and Europe. An ISD report from 2023 identified 53 telegram channels in the U.S. active club network alone.⁵³ Also in 2023, the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism reported evidence of 149 active club chapters across 21 different countries.⁵⁴

A key factor in the success of the active club model has been the encouragement of individuals to establish local chapters, which function like franchises. The decentralized nature of these clubs allows small groups of like-minded individuals to form local collectives offline, contributing to perceived white nationalist objectives without needing any formal affiliation with a central organization. As a result, local, regional, and even national chapters of active clubs have emerged across North America and Europe, but details about these clubs are difficult to uncover:

“It’s important to remember that anybody can start an active club, [but] you don’t know if it’s one individual or 20.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

⁵² Alexander Ritzmann, “Don’t Get Fooled – The Extreme-Right Active Club Network Is Not About Combat Sports,” *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, December 15, 2023, <https://www.accelresearch.org/shortanalysis/dont-get-fooledthe-extreme-right-active-club-network-is-not-about-combat-sports>.

⁵³ Ciarán O’Connor, Laurie Wood, Katherine Keneally, & Kevin D. Reyes, “Active Clubs: The Growing Threat of ‘White Nationalism 3.0’ Across the United States,” (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, October 24, 2023), <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/active-clubs-the-growing-threat-of-white-nationalism-3-0-across-the-united-states/>.

⁵⁴ No Author, “Neo-Nazi Active Clubs Spreading Globally, Allying with Similar Extremists, and Taking to the Streets,” (Montgomery, AL: Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, October 26, 2023), <https://globalextremism.org/post/active-clubs-spreading-globally/>.

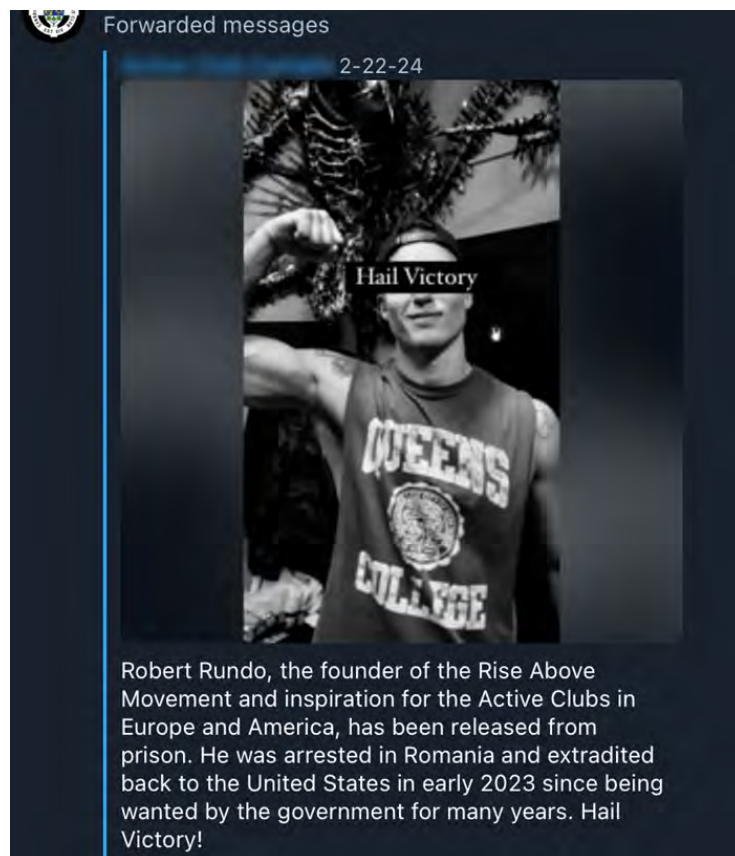


Image 8: Post from a Canadian active club group celebrating the news of Robert Rundo's release from prison (Source: Telegram, February 2024).

While active clubs are highly decentralized offline, research has shown that their online activities are much more interconnected.⁵⁵ Active clubs use a variety of social media platforms, which range from encrypted messaging apps like Telegram to video-sharing platforms like Rumble. On Telegram, active club channels frequently share posts from other affiliated groups around the world, including other active clubs and activist groups like White Lives Matter.

For instance, a prominent Canadian active club channel regularly shares content from American and European groups as "inspiration," including content that glorifies and promotes violence. Image 9 shows a series of posts from a Canadian active club channel on Telegram, sharing content from active clubs around the world (in this case, from Germany and Finland).

Likewise, in image 10, a Canadian active club shared a quote promoting the use of violence allegedly from José Antonio Primo de Rivera, a Spanish fascist politician from the early 20th century.

⁵⁵ Accelerationism Research Consortium, "Accelerationism: The Active Club Network," (London, UK: Global Network on Extremism and Technology, July 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-188>.

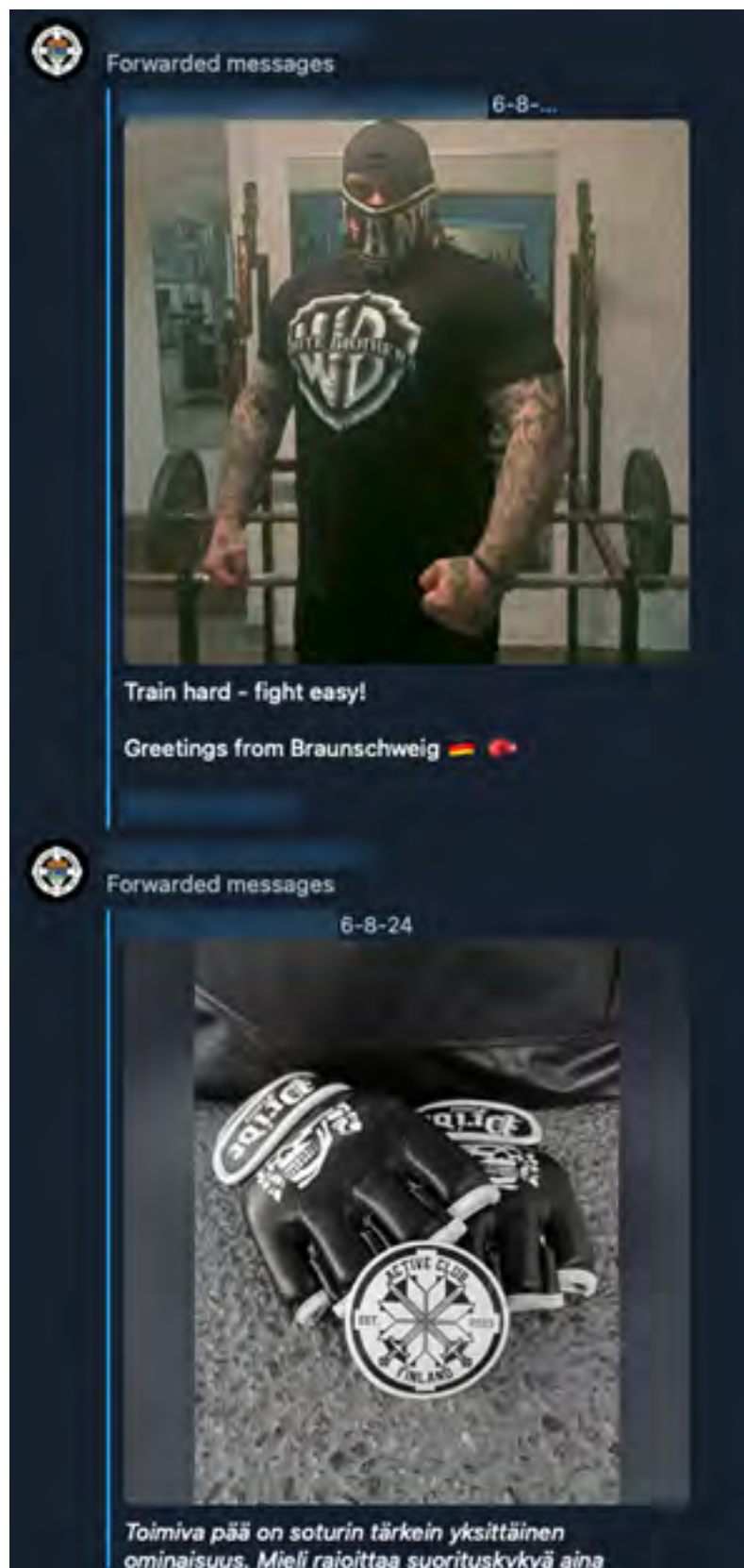


Image 9: Posts from international groups on a Canadian active club group (Source: Telegram, June 2024).



Image 10: Image posted to a Canadian active club group (Source: Telegram, May 2024).

The online interconnectedness of the active club movement likely has several benefits. First, because most offline activities of active clubs are highly secretive, it can be difficult for potential recruits to find local chapters. By sharing content on a wide variety of social media platforms, including those considered to be mainstream, like YouTube, active clubs can reach a wider audience and help direct recruits to their local chapters.⁵⁶ Second, reposting content from clubs around the world gives the illusion of a much larger and more unified movement than is likely the case. And third, this facilitates networking between clubs across different regions and countries.

For example, Canadian active club channels on Telegram often share content not only from European clubs, but also from various local clubs across Canada, reinforcing the idea of a “unified” national and international presence. Image 11 below was shared by a Canadian active club Telegram channel and depicts a “meetup” of representatives from local clubs across Canada, including a representative from the Wild Rose Active Club, an Alberta-based group which claimed responsibility for hanging a racist banner in Calgary in 2022.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Accelerationism Research Consortium, “Accelerationism: The Active Club Network,” (London, UK: Global Network on Extremism and Technology, July 2024), p. 7, <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-188>.

⁵⁷ Adam Toy, “Calgary Neo-Nazi Group Claims Responsibility for Hanging Racist Banner Over Macleod Trail,” *Global News*, August 19, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9067332/calgary-neo-nazi-group-claims-responsibility-for-hanging-racist-banner-over-macleod-trail/>.

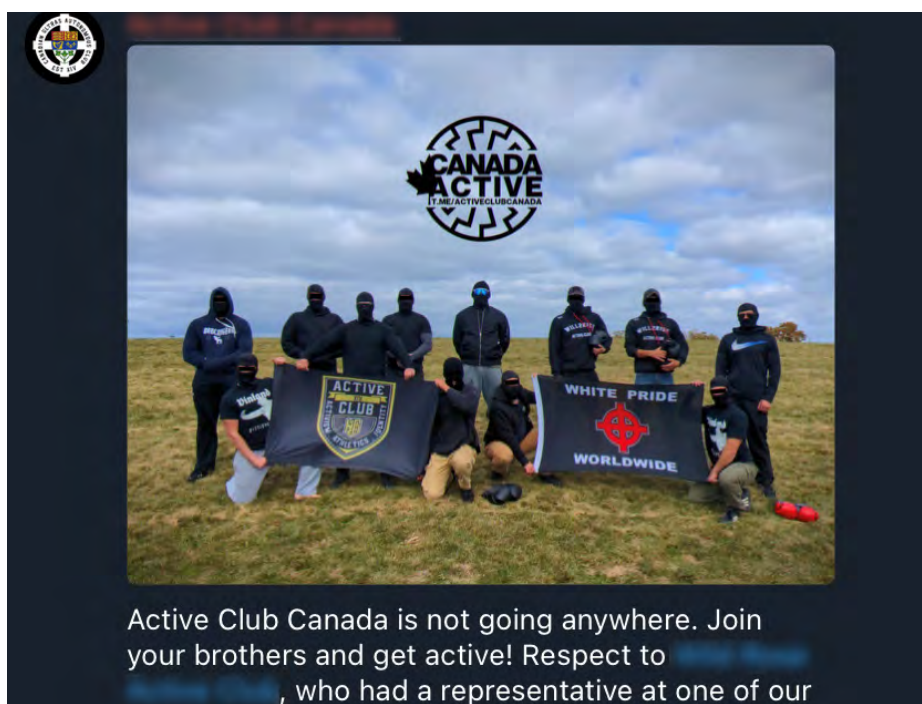


Image 11: Post from a Canadian active club group about a “meetup” with representatives from across Canada (Source: Telegram, January 2024).

The number of active clubs in Canada is fluid and difficult to ascertain, largely due to the secrecy of these groups and the tendency for them to share members, fracture, rename, and rebrand. Previous cross-national research from September 2023 found at least 12 active clubs across Canada at the time, including in Alberta and Saskatchewan.⁵⁸ Conversely, the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism documented 22 active clubs across Canada in October 2023.⁵⁹ This was corroborated during our interviews with experts and law enforcement officials in both those provinces, who noted at the time of interview that active clubs present a new feature of the IMVE landscape. In Saskatchewan:

“I think [active clubs] are the new threat landscape. They’re doing it for the ideology. They’re doing it to find like-minded people that share the same values. But, it’s extreme [values]. They’re not [exercising] to get on dates. They’re doing it for protection, for militaristic self-defense, to be able to defend themselves and make themselves stronger. They share manifestos from Robert Rundo and [others]. And they slowly get deeper down the rabbit hole. You might have one person that leads it, and everybody tags along to varying degrees. But they are very well organized. They’re not typically into drugs, they’re more into their ideas, they’re into Bible studies, eating well. They have very strong views against police. It’s unique, it’s different. And they have a real hatred of any non-white person.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

⁵⁸ Alexander Ritzmann, “Hiding in Plain Sight – The Transnational Right-Wing Extremist Active Club Network,” (Berlin, Germany: Counter Extremism Project, September 22, 2023), p. 52, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Hiding%20in%20Plain%20Sight_The%20Transnational%20Right-Wing%20Extremist%20Active%20Club%20Network_Sept%202023.pdf.

⁵⁹ No Author, “Neo-Nazi Active Clubs Spreading Globally, Allying with Similar Extremists, and Taking to the Streets,” (Montgomery, AL: Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, October 26, 2023), <https://globalextrmism.org/post/active-clubs-spreading-globally/>.

“Active clubs were never heard of two years ago, whereas most people have [heard of them] now. That is something we’re assessing, and it is certainly something we’re dedicating resources to try and understand further and to disrupt any sort of threat that may come from that. I know [shooting practice and survivalism] is something that occurs in other locations and the information I have on people that may support active clubs in Saskatchewan is fairly consistent with other places in the country.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

In Alberta, law enforcement officials further described that active clubs occupy the middle ground between less violent activism groups like White Lives Matter, and more violent racist gangs like the Hammerskins. According to some research, active clubs act as a recruiting network by vetting and funneling more extreme members to join the latter group.⁶⁰

“I’d say active clubs [sit] somewhat in the middle. For every active club there’s about four or five other similar groups, some that are a bit harder, [and] some that are a bit softer. There’s all these ‘Great Replacement’-esque ideology groups that [say] ‘save the white race,’ they’ll put the message out there, they’ll have a small Telegram group, things like that. These are sprouting up quite a bit. Then on the extreme other side of these are things like the Hammerskins or the Aryan Brotherhood, which are street gangs that commit serious violence and have since the 90s. The active club is somewhat in the middle of both of these. They [participate in] some real-world activism, [they have] some real-world [offline] comradery where you have to do pushups [or] box to join. There’s a militant benchmark [required] to get in, so it sits in between some of the extreme street gangs and the political activism groups.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

During interviews conducted in the first half of 2024, law enforcement officials and subject matter experts in Manitoba reported no evidence of active clubs in the province, consistent with previous research in Canada.⁶¹ However, recent findings from encrypted messaging apps indicate that at least one active club has emerged in Manitoba during the latter half of 2024.⁶² This club has initiated vetting for new members, and has engaged in in-person activities, including combat training and stickering, shown in images 12-14.

⁶⁰ Mack Lamoureux, “Meet the ‘Entrepreneur of Hate’ Behind the Rise of Canadian Neo-Nazi Fight Clubs,” *Vice News*, December 1, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/meet-the-entrepreneur-of-hate-behind-the-rise-of-canadian-neo-nazi-fight-clubs/>.

⁶¹ Alexander Ritzmann, “Hiding in Plain Sight – The Transnational Right-Wing Extremist Active Club Network,” (Berlin, Germany: Counter Extremism Project, September 22, 2023), p. 52, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Hiding%20in%20Plain%20Sight_The%20Transnational%20Right-Wing%20Extremist%20Active%20Club%20Network_Sept%202023.pdf.

⁶² No Author, “New Canadian neo-Nazi Active Club emerges in Manitoba; Distributes ideological content online and in public spaces,” *MEMRI*, October 2, 2024, <https://www.memri.org/dttm/new-canadian-neo-nazi-active-club-emerges-manitoba-organizes-physical-training-sessions-members>.

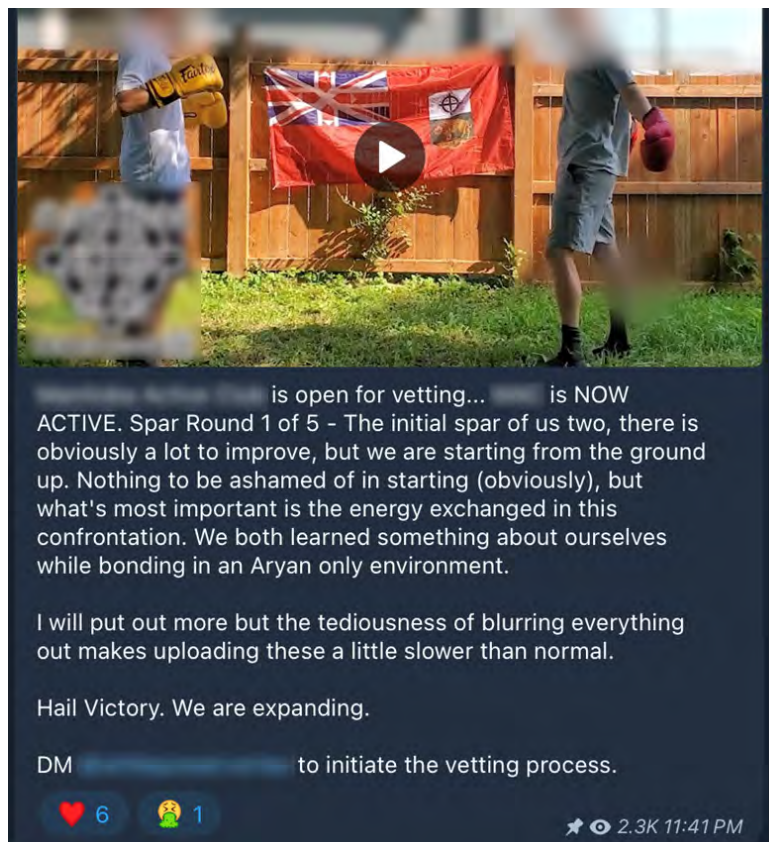


Image 12: Post about in-person activities and vetting for an active club in Manitoba (Source: Telegram, September 2024).

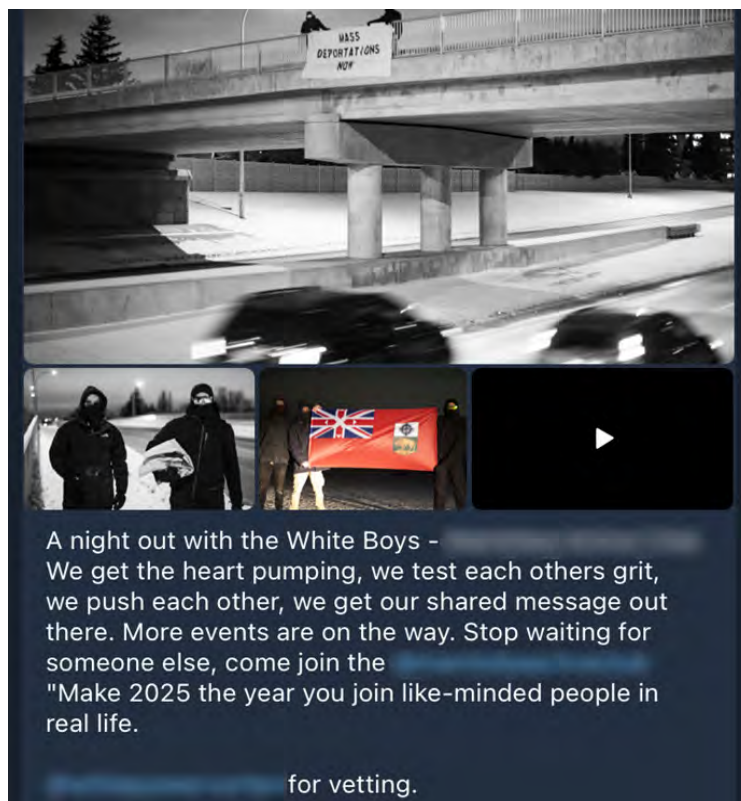


Image 13: Post about in-person activities of an active club in Manitoba (Source: Telegram, January 2025).

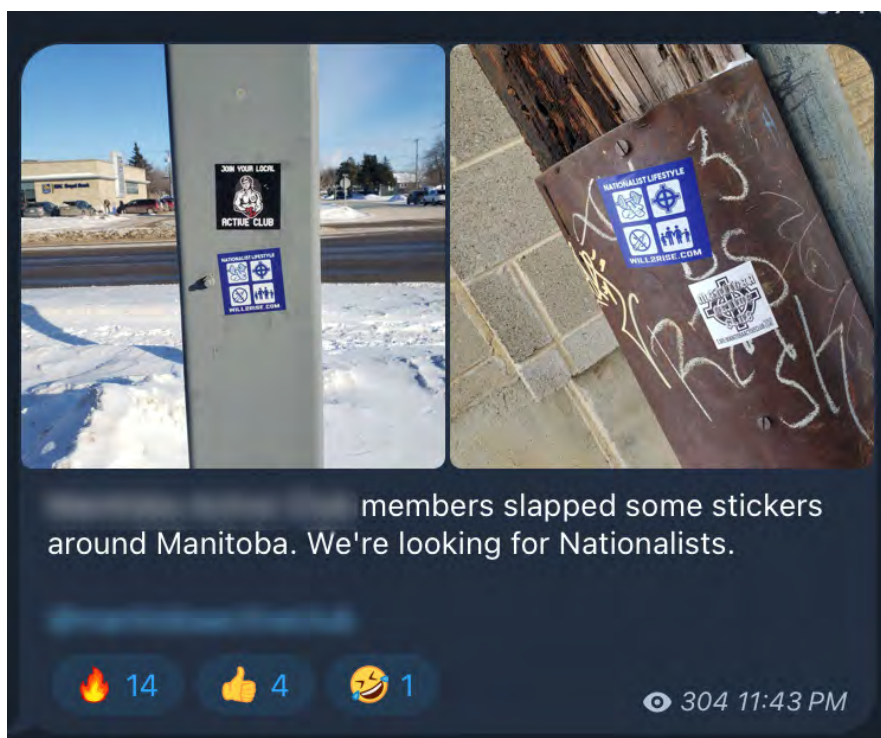


Image 14: Stickers placed in an undisclosed location in Manitoba advertising a local active club (Source: Telegram, February 2025).

When asked about the threat of violence, law enforcement officials and subject-matter experts told us they had limited evidence that active club members are involved in significant offline violence in the Prairies. This is consistent with existing research suggesting these groups often shun violent activities to avoid scrutiny and appeal to a broader audience, in line with the strategy of “White Nationalism 3.0”.⁶³ For example, one subject-matter expert told us:

“Whether they’re an actual threat for violence remains to be seen. The individuals arrested in Ontario, who were also involved in Atomwaffen and Terrorgram, they were heavy hitters. But it remains to be seen how much of an actual threat for violence active clubs pose, because they’re insular and [right now] they’re building their brand – White Nationalism 3.0. They’re in a weird place right now... are they going to continue to brand-build or are they going to expand into the real-world with activities beyond just occasionally showing up to a protest or making videos? We don’t really know yet.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

⁶³ Accelerationism Research Consortium, “Accelerationism: The Active Club Network,” (London, UK: Global Network on Extremism and Technology, July 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-188>.

However, this assessment is complicated by the increased secrecy of these clubs, a trend that was reinforced after the recent arrests of Atomwaffen members in Ontario and Quebec:

“[If] you look at the Telegrams and when [they became more secretive,] it lines up with the arrests [in Ontario]. I think the arrests in Ontario scared a lot of people, so they kind of went underground. A lot of the active club telegram channels now, they’re ‘invite only.’ They have tests that you need to pass. Some of them are stupid, [for example] you have to send a picture of your skin color, which can be taken [from Google]. But when they ask for [your] public profile to make sure you’re a real person, it [becomes] harder to get in. Lots of them [also require doing] a real-world meetup. They’re looking to burn off police, intelligence, journalism, or researchers. It’s very much like an iceberg where you have these public [social media] groups at the top, then there is a never-ending [list] of subgroups that become more and more encrypted. It’s very difficult to penetrate. They’re quite dynamic and they learn.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“We know loosely who was involved, but for the longest time we were calling it the ‘inactive’ club because we knew they existed, but it was really [difficult to know] what they were doing. We’re not seeing a lot of overt activity, but from what we understand, the group is still functioning behind the scenes, just maybe not out in public as much. It seems like they’ve learned from previous groups and entities that were exclusively online. A lot of them thought they could hide online. Now, [active clubs] very much recruit and make contact online, but from what we can understand [they’ve] gone back to in-person meetings and vetting. All that stuff is very much in-person. It’s like, “meet me now,” and if you can’t meet now, that’s a red flag. If you have excuses, that’s a red flag.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Given the secrecy of these groups, many likely refrain from posting any identifying information or calls to violence on publicly accessible webpages or Telegram channels. Instead, as noted by law enforcement, invitations to join group activities are only posted to “private” groups that have vetted their users. For example, the image below shows a post in a private invite-only group advertising the activities of an active club in northern Alberta:

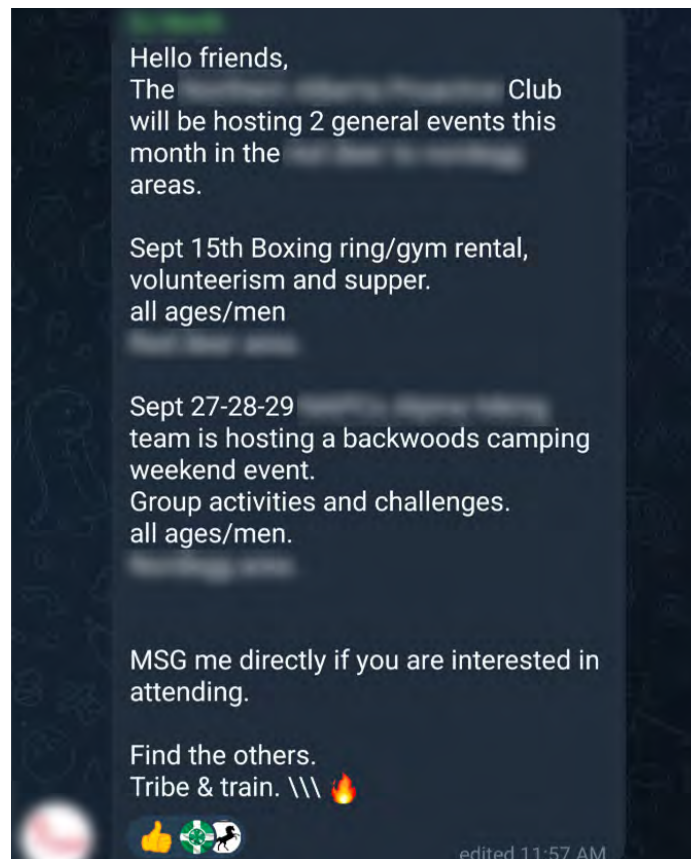


Image 15: Post from a group advertising a local active club (Source: Telegram, September 2024).

Similarly, law enforcement officials in Saskatchewan told us that active clubs are highly secretive and covert:

“[People in active clubs] have Monday to Friday jobs. They’re not typically involved in criminal activity, they go to work, they come home. You don’t see anything out of the ordinary. They’re very disciplined. They organize through secure chat rooms, through portals, through servers in other countries that are protected. They’re very guarded because they know that their views are extreme. But they are very militaristic, they have access to firearms. [There are videos where] there is a sort of assault-style rifle. They’re doing training, boxing, self-defence. They want to stay underground... they’re not using outward facing intimidation.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

“You get a lot of people, younger people, that are impressionable. They see [these groups] and it makes sense to them, and then they join. It’s like any other gang that forms, there’s camaraderie. There’s internal teachings, ‘do you agree with this way of life or this way of life?’ And, for the most part, they’re not outwardly violent, they’re not committing crime, they’re not selling drugs. They’re holding down 9-5 jobs, they’re working overtime, they’re accumulating money, they’re travelling, they’re going to groups all over the place to find other like-minded people and growing. Their community is very guarded and very aware when they travel. They’re not doing it openly, they know that the police are watching and they know that [their beliefs are] generally not accepted by everybody.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

However, given the diversity of active clubs and their potential use as a recruitment tool for more overtly violent groups like the Hammerskins, there are likely important differences between active club chapters across the country. For example, law enforcement officials in Saskatchewan also told us that active clubs recruit members for specific purposes based on their perceived “value” to the group:

“[Active clubs] seek out people that have something to provide to the group, whether it be a trade or a skill, it’s almost like creating a community of men. Are you a welder? Are you into communications? Computers? Are you a mechanic? They’re looking for people that can bring some value to the group. Past military experience, obviously they like to shoot guns. They have access to real properties. They have access to guns. They do shooting as a form of self-defence, or just to show they’re prepared to defend themselves. ”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

In Alberta, law enforcement officials noted that the activities and threat levels of local active club chapters can vary widely from one another. While active clubs in the province overall have not been linked to violence, by promoting an ideology that calls for and justifies violence, the group itself may attract individuals or small cells interested in committing violence:

“Active clubs are different and personality-based. So, if you get someone who’s starting an active club chapter, it may be very different from an active club elsewhere. I think with active clubs they’re pretty hardline and extremist, but the point is not for them to [cross the line]. But, that’s where you’re probably going to find some of those small networks or individuals that actually are crossing the line to violent extremism... There’s definitely that funnel. The active club is an atmosphere and environment to push the ideology, and then if people go ahead and [commit] real world [violence], they do it.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Law enforcement officials also told us that active clubs not only network amongst themselves but are also connected within a broader network of other xenophobic groups and unaffiliated actors who act as “facilitators”. These facilitators are often individuals who have been involved in the xenophobic extremism landscape for several years but, for several reasons, remain unaffiliated with any specific groups:

“The people with the pedigree and the background, the history, the [ones] who’ve been involved in the scene in one form or another for years and years. They [are not] injecting themselves into some of these groups, perhaps for various reasons. Maybe they don’t want to taint those groups with somebody who [has a criminal history] as a former Skinhead. If you start to map out the landscape, you’ll find some nodes that fall between and aren’t members of groups. But they’re facilitators – they’re nodes in that overall network. You can be in a stickering group, but you’re probably also aware of [the person] who’s involved in an active club or in a Hammerskin group. You’re all bumping up against each other at some point or another, and you’re just deciding how you operate within that space. You’re never going to be once or twice removed from somebody else in a different group. There’s a lot of linkages.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

The future trajectory of active clubs in the Prairies remains to be seen. While new clubs continue to pop up, such as the recent addition of a local club in southern Manitoba, the activities of others appear to be slowing down. For example, during our informal evidence-gathering discussions with law enforcement and local stakeholders in Saskatchewan in February 2025, we learned that active clubs in the province had significantly slowed their activities.

Anti-Authority Extremism

Our research suggests extreme anti-authority beliefs have been on the rise across the Prairies, manifesting in various forms as reported through interviews with law enforcement and local stakeholders. These beliefs often intersect with xenophobic ideologies, including accelerationism.

Extreme anti-authority beliefs can also manifest independently of other ideologies, driving individuals or groups to oppose established forms of authority, such as law enforcement and government, based on the perception they are illegitimate or corrupt. This opposition can range from peaceful protests, which exercise the right to free speech, to violent actions and threats against symbols of authority, including police or political figures.

Pseudolaw

Pseudolaw is a specific manifestation of anti-authority extremism, and refers to “a collection of legal-sounding but false rules that purport to be law”.⁶⁴ Adherents of the pseudo-legal movement (PLM), including groups like sovereign citizens, the Canadian Freeman-on-the-Land (FOTL), or the earlier “Detaxer” movement in Canada, believe they possess privileged knowledge about the “true” law, which they believe makes them exempt from Canadian legal obligations.⁶⁵

However, pseudolaw is often rooted in conspiracy theories and fringe misinterpretations of legal systems. For instance, PLM adherents may claim impunity by invoking historical documents like the Magna Carta or false interpretations of “common law”, derived from traditional English law. By doing so, PLM adherents claim they are resisting a government-led conspiracy to strip individuals of their freedom.

A key characteristic of the PLM is its attempt to shift authority to the individual, away from established institutions such as the “state, police, and court actors”.⁶⁶ As a function of this shift, pseudolaw adherents believe this invalidates the legal and political authority these institutions have over them. These beliefs can lead PLM adherents to engage in a wide variety of activities that challenge or disregard their legal obligations, such as refusing to pay taxes and utilities bills, adhering to court rulings, complying with law enforcement, and rejecting government-required identification like driver’s licenses, license plates, and vehicle insurance.

More broadly among the PLM, including the Freeman-on-the-Land, pseudolaw tactics are promoted through a decentralized network online. In this network, self-proclaimed leaders, or “gurus,” position themselves as educators and key figures disseminating “special knowledge” about pseudo-legal strategies. These gurus are not formal leaders, but rather, are individuals who claim to understand the “true” legal system and how to navigate it. Many gurus monetize their “wisdom” by hosting in-person and online seminars, workshops, courses, and offering personalized “legal” advice often for a fee. Many also host websites or forums with pay-to-download materials, documents, and resources for individuals seeking to carry out pseudo-legal tactics for their own purposes.

While direct confrontation with law enforcement, such as during a traffic stop, has occasionally led to violence, most PLM adherents employ non-violent tactics designed to overrule or evade the current legal system with their interpretation of “true” law.

64 Donald J. Netolitzky “A Rebellion of Furious Paper: Pseudolaw As a Revolutionary Legal System,” Paper delivered at the Centre d’expertise et de formation sur les intégrismes religieux et la radicalisation (CEFIR) symposium: “Sovereign Citizens in Canada”, (Montreal, QC: May 3, 2018), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3177484> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3177484>

65 Donald J. Netolitzky, “The History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada,” *Alberta Law Review* 53:3 (2016), 609-642 <https://albertalawreview.com/index.php/ALR/article/view/422>;
Donald J. Netolitzky, “New Hosts For an Old Disease: History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada – Part III,” *Alberta Law Review* 60:4 (2023), 971-1016, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4213830

66 Donald J. Netolitzky, “New Hosts For an Old Disease: History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada – Part III,” *Alberta Law Review* 60:4 (2023), 971-1016, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4213830

These tactics, sometimes known as vexatious litigation or “paper terrorism”, include sending pseudo-legal documents to businesses, courts, or individuals that threaten (amongst other things) to sue, place liens on personal or private property, or even make threats of arrest and execution.⁶⁷ To be clear, these documents have no validity and are not recognized in the Canadian legal system, but PLM adherents believe they are.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, cease and desist orders became a popular tactic to challenge public health measures, with businesses, courts, and public health authorities receiving numerous documents from PLM adherents demanding that health measures and mandates be dropped.

According to subject-matter experts and law enforcement officials we interviewed across the Prairies, the landscape of anti-authority extremism has changed between January 2019 and February 2025. PLM adherents are unlikely to claim membership with specific groups or movements. Instead, the current ecosystem of anti-authority extremism in Canada and the Prairies is composed primarily of a loose collection of individuals who adopt a variety of beliefs and connect mostly online over their shared worldviews. For instance, law enforcement officials in Alberta told us the following:

“There’s very few [who claim to be Freeman-on-the-Land], but I think more of them are now being swept up in the whole anti-government [space]... I think that has expanded and they’ve just kind of got sucked into that.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“Alberta specifically has had historically one of the biggest landscapes for anti-authority violence – we’ve been a big hotbed for Freeman-on-the-Land, Three Percenters, things like that. [Now] we’re seeing increasingly anti-police [sentiments]. There’s an increase against authority and against police insofar as [being] against federal politics. [Things like] federal mandates, the direction of federal politics, the direction of globalization. With Freeman and the sovereign citizen movements, none of that’s popping up any more like it was in the 90s and 2000s... Anti-authority in the traditional sense, sovereign citizens [and] Freeman, that’s not increasing. But there is [growth] in the anti-authority, anti-lockdown, and growing right-wing sphere, the militia mindset.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁶⁷ Followers of Romana Didulo, a QAnon leader who uses many pseudo-legal arguments in her ideology, has encouraged her followers to send threats of execution to members of the public. See: Laura Sciarpetti, “Cult of Self-Proclaimed ‘Queen of Canada’ Threatens Sask. Village with Public Executions,” *CBC News*, October 6 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/cult-of-self-proclaimed-queen-of-canada-threaten-sask-village-with-public-executions-1.6988680>; Donald J. Netolitzky, “The History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada,” *Alberta Law Review* 53:3 (2016), 609-642, <https://albertalawreview.com/index.php/ALR/article/view/422>

Law enforcement in Manitoba reported a similar shift:

“[Freemen and sovereign citizens] pop up every now and then, [but] that has slowly dwindled. There’s a lot less people saying they’re Freeman-on-the-Land [or sovereigns], it’s not really come up as a threat landscape for Manitoba right now. In my personal opinion, the new anti-authority extremism threat is grievance [based]. A lot of people have a grievance with [Prime Minister] Trudeau and his government in the current state, even if their [grievances aren’t based in fact]. [We’ve had] threats directly related to police. So, one [threat] was to shoot [law enforcement which was] 100% [driven by] anti-government sentiments.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

The decline of Freeman-on-the-Land and other similar movements can be attributed to the failure of many of their arguments in Canadian courts during the 2010s. One such landmark failure was *Meads v. Meads* in 2012, where Alberta Associate Chief Justice John Rooke condemned and dismissed the defendant’s pseudolaw tactics used during divorce proceedings, referring to these as Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Arguments (OPCA).⁶⁸ This case is often cited as precedent in other rulings involving pseudo-legal arguments.

Although individuals who refer to themselves as “Freemen” are relatively rare, law enforcement officials across the Prairies told us they still occasionally come across them, though with less frequency than in previous years:

“[Freemen] are still there, they’ve always been out there. The reason [you don’t hear about them often is that], typically, you [only hear] about them [during a] traffic stop. For the most part [they’re] non-violent, but it can be extremely frustrating, and a simple traffic stop turns into something more complicated. I don’t know if anybody could say the numbers are rising or declining... [but] there’s certainly information that I’m aware of that they’re still out there.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

“In the past, like pre-2019, [Freemen-on-the-Land] was more prevalent, but I haven’t seen a lot of it recently.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

Instead, law enforcement and subject-matter experts described the anti-authority movement as increasingly broad, co-opting various conspiracy theories and xenophobic beliefs, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health mandates. However, our interviewees cautioned that anti-authority actors, for the most part, do not resort to violence:

“I haven’t seen many notices about Freeman-on-the-Land. It’s more just [broad] anti-government now and I think they’re all getting lumped into the same scene. I think it’s all now just been sucked up into one big group. If you’ve got any grievance against the government, any issue at all. They’ve got their conspiracy theories and all that, but I don’t think there’s a huge push to violence about a master plan or anything like that.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁶⁸ Jonnette Watson Hamilton & Alice Woolley, “What has *Meads v Meads* wrought?” *ABlawg.ca*, April 8, 2013, https://ablawg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Blog_JWH_AW_Duncan_April2013.pdf.

Pseudo-legal concepts, arguments, and tactics continue to influence the Canadian anti-authority phenomenon today. Many individuals and groups have adapted pseudo-legal theories to fit their own worldviews and use them to challenge state authority, evade legal obligations like taxes, or to undermine governmental institutions.

An example is Romana Didulo, a Canadian conspiracy theorist and leader of an anti-authority group known as “The Kingdom of Canada” who has incorporated pseudo-legal rhetoric into her belief system. For example, she has told her thousands of online followers that taxes are no longer legitimate, an idea which is rooted in Freemen and sovereigntist belief systems which claim individuals are not bound by any “legal” contracts with the government they had not expressly consented to. Didulo and her followers have also used other pseudo-legal tactics, like issuing false “cease and desist” orders to individuals, businesses, and government institutions. This group is discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5: Mixed, Unclear & Hybrid Threats*.

This co-optation of various pseudo-legal beliefs and tactics is consistent with current trends in anti-authority and anti-government extremism across the country.⁶⁹ Individuals motivated by beliefs or grievances about the illegitimacy of the government and authority pick and choose from different conspiracies and pseudo-legal concepts, creating a highly individualized mélange of beliefs. Many share tactics, strategies, tips, and documents with one another online in popular encrypted chat platforms, such as Telegram, some of which have upwards of 15,000 members.

“They’re acting independent, but they are connected by those grievances and the need to find scripts and [advice] from one another that they can use.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

On one popular Canadian pseudolaw Telegram channel, users routinely share their experiences using specific tactics and request legal advice from the group’s participants. In the example below, an individual shares how they have not paid taxes to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) because they had not signed a legal “contract” with the Canadian government:

⁶⁹ Donald J. Netolitzky, “The History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada,” *Alberta Law Review* 53:3 (2016), 609-642, <https://albertalawreview.com/index.php/ALR/article/view/422>; Donald J. Netolitzky, “New Hosts For an Old Disease: History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada – Part III,” *Alberta Law Review* 60:4 (2023), 971-1016, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4213830

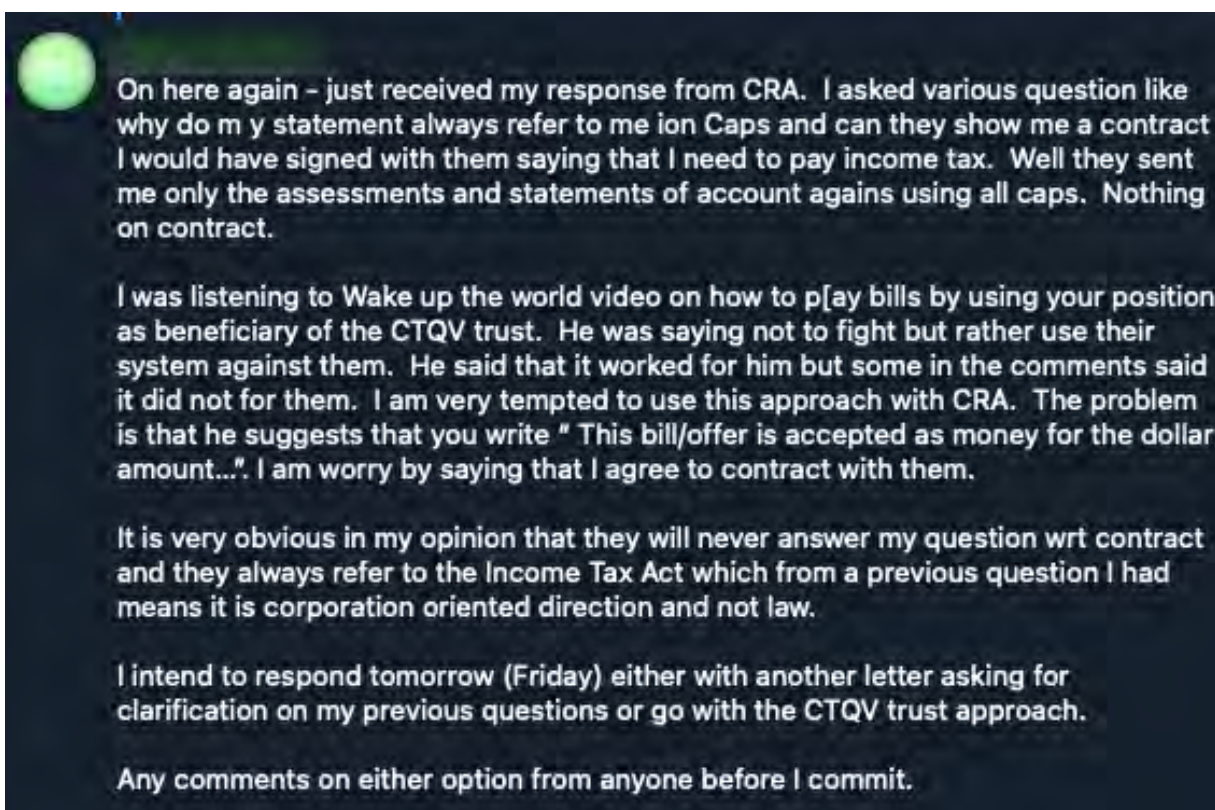


Image 16: Example of a post about pseudolaw and the legitimacy of Canadian taxes (Source: Telegram, August 2024).

Other popular topics in many online groups include the “Strawman theory,” a false pseudo-legal concept that purports the government creates separate legal entities, or “strawmen,” for each person at birth. These legal entities are believed to be tied to Social Insurance Numbers and birth certificates, leading many adherents to reject the legality of these documents. Proponents argue that separating themselves from the “strawman” means they can then free themselves from their legal obligations, including taxes, while others believe it gives them access to a hidden sum of money deposited by the government under their “legal” names as a corporation.

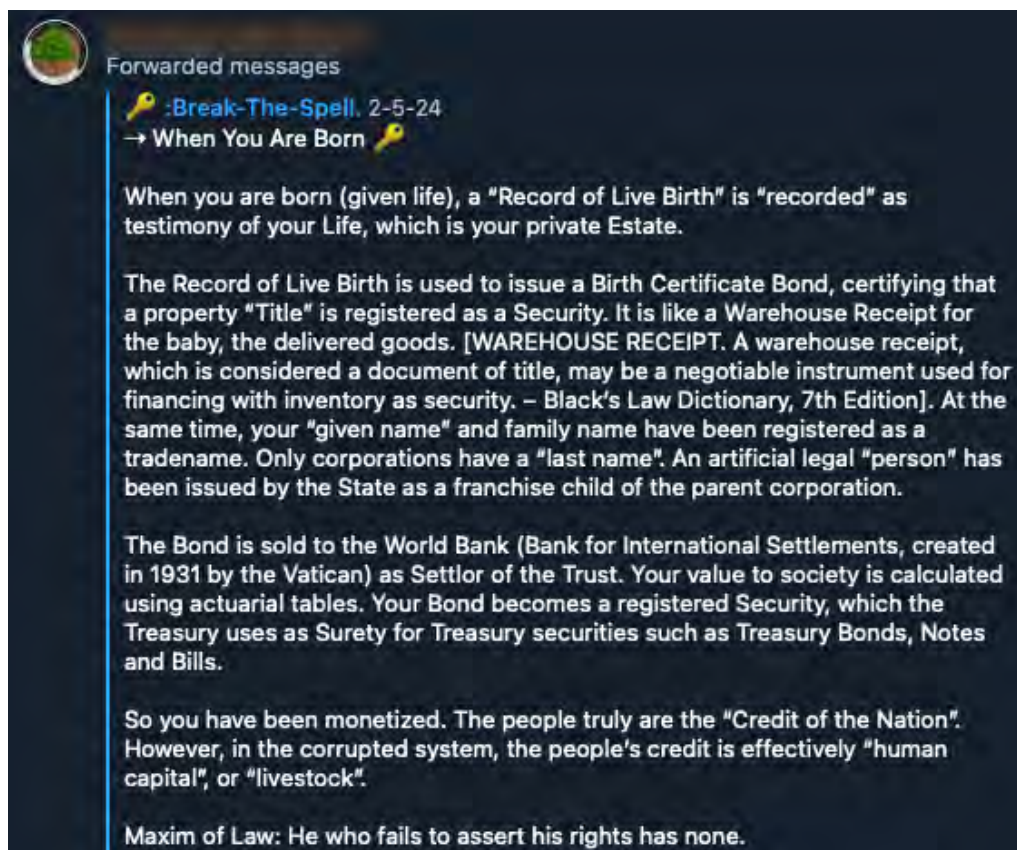


Image 17: Example of a post about the “Strawman Theory” from a Canadian anti-authority group (Source: Telegram, February 2024).

Adopting pseudo-legal tactics can lead to serious consequences. By refusing to pay taxes, debts, and bills, or to use a license plate and carry government-issued identification, PLM adherents can face legal, criminal, and financial repercussions. These can include eviction, foreclosure, financial penalties, arrest, and even time spent in prison.

In some rare cases, pseudo-legal adherents may act violently toward law enforcement or authority officials when confronted. For example, in Edmonton in 2015, a man shot and killed a police officer and injured another after the officers had arrived at his home to arrest him.⁷⁰ The man believed, among other things, that government taxation was part of a corporate conspiracy, a belief still commonly held among many pseudo-law adherents.⁷¹

Subject-matter experts and law enforcement officials we spoke to across the Prairie provinces agreed that anti-authority beliefs and conspiracies have surged between January 2019 and February 2025, but this rise was not linked to any specific, identifiable group. Instead, the anti-authority landscape is better described as being amorphous, fluid, and reactionary.

Many adherents have repurposed old pseudo-legal tactics, which have previously been shown in court to be false, into new arguments and concepts. As one subject-matter expert explained, the influx of new individuals who adopt these beliefs has contributed to a shift in the landscape:

⁷⁰ Emily Mertz, “Who is Norman Raddatz, the gunman in Edmonton police shooting?” *Global News*, June 9, 2015, <https://globalnews.ca/news/2045769/who-is-norman-raddatz-the-gunman-in-edmonton-police-shooting/>.

⁷¹ Jana Pruden, “Police shooter espoused extremist Freemen-on-the-Land ideology on Facebook page,” *Edmonton Journal*, June 11, 2015, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/police-shooter-espoused-extremist-freemen-on-the-land-ideology-on-facebook-page>.

“It’s important to keep the duality of the pseudo law phenomenon in mind. On one side [we have] this set of strange concepts about law. On the other side we have host communities who adopt these concepts. If you go back to the old Freeman population, they’re still the same people. They have not changed their ideology; they still hate government. They still have the conspiratorial beliefs that were typical of those groups. They’re just not using pseudo law anymore because they’ve learned [through court cases] it doesn’t work. So, fast forward to the early pandemic where many who would have never been exposed to pseudo law became activated. They did their marches, they held their rallies. And now that population has contracted. There aren’t as many active, but there still are some, and they have networked through the experience of the pandemic and being part of mass resistance. This is the latest wave of pseudolaw adherence. I think [this new wave] is different from anything we’ve seen before because they are so diverse in their beliefs. But they’re all still trying to use the same pseudolaw tools. They repackage [old] concepts like strawman theory. This new population is even more accepting of the diversity of weird ideas than any previous wave of pseudolaw populations I’ve seen before.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

Our own research confirms this and highlights two main dynamics within the modern pseudolaw movement. First, several long-standing pseudolaw adherents continue to hold anti-government and conspiratorial beliefs but have shifted away from more traditional anti-authority movements like the Freeman-on-the-Land. This includes prominent individuals like Dean Clifford, a former Freeman “guru” from Manitoba who was arrested for assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest.⁷²

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, gurus like Clifford have distanced themselves from older anti-authority groups and have begun networking with new movements, like Diagolon, a xenophobic and broadly anti-government group discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In addition to this, Clifford has pursued new ventures, including operating a restaurant in B.C. that was flagged by a local council in early 2025 for allegedly refusing to obtain proper government health and liquor licenses.⁷³ In response, Clifford reportedly threatened the council with legal action, a common tactic among PLM adherents. Despite these shifts, the “wisdom” from prominent Freeman-era gurus like Clifford continue to inspire a new generation of pseudo-legal adherents, as evidenced by the proliferation of online groups which continue to adopt their “teachings”.

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated health mandates triggered a renewed wave of pseudo-legal engagement, expanding the number and diversity of its adherents drawn from anti-mandate movements and mass protests.

⁷² Adam Carter, “Dean Clifford, Freeman guru, arrested on Canada-wide warrant,” *CBC News*, November 25, 2013, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/headlines/dean-clifford-freemen-guru-arrested-on-canada-wide-warrant-1.2439237>.

⁷³ Dyleena Kneeshaw, “Clearwater council calls for provincial intervention in ongoing restaurant licensing dispute,” *CFJC Today*, February 20, 2025, <https://cfjctoday.com/2025/02/20/clearwater-council-calls-for-provincial-intervention-in-ongoing-restaurant-licensing-dispute/>.

According to our interviews with subject-matter experts, these new adherents display more ideological diversity, while at the same time repurposing old pseudolaw theories to suit contemporary contexts and grievances. This suggests that pseudolaw has evolved from its use among a niche group of individuals to become a more versatile toolkit adaptable to a wider array of grievances today.



Image 18: Post by a popular Diagonalon "influencer" linking a YouTube video of an interview with Dean Clifford (Source: Telegram, April 2022).

Anti-police sentiments & threats to public figures

According to our research and reports from the Government of Canada, threats to public figures, law enforcement, and politicians driven by extreme anti-authority sentiments have also been on the rise between January 2019 and February 2025.⁷⁴ These stem from a wide variety of actors who adopt varying tactics including (but not limited to) threats related to pseudo-legal arguments such as cease and desist orders, threats of detainment and arrest, as well as threats of violence or bodily harm. In rare circumstances, anti-authority actors may act on these threats. For instance, in June 2022, twin brothers entered a bank in Saanich, B.C., wearing full body armour and carrying semi-automatic rifles, ostensibly to commit a bank robbery. The incident, which ended in a shootout with police, left both suspects dead and injured six officers. The ensuing investigation revealed the brothers used the bank robbery as a ruse to "shoot and kill police officers" due to their extreme opposition to law enforcement and government regulations of firearm ownership.⁷⁵

A notable example from the Prairies occurred in July 2020 when Corey Hurren, a former Canadian Forces reservist and resident of Manitoba, drove to Ottawa and rammed his truck through the gates of Rideau Hall. Hurren, carrying firearms, then entered the grounds of the Prime Minister's residence on foot and engaged in a 90-minute standoff with police. According to court documents revealed during his trial, Hurren was enraged by the federal government's COVID-19 health mandates and its ban on assault-style firearms. He sought to directly confront and "arrest" Trudeau about these policies.⁷⁶ Hurren was sentenced to six years in prison in 2021 but was granted statutory release in 2024.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Jim Bronskill, "Anti-authority narratives could tear 'fabric of society,' intelligence report warns," *CTV News*, March 24, 2024, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/anti-authority-narratives-could-tear-fabric-of-society-intelligence-report-warns-1.6820025>.

⁷⁵ Darrian Matassa-Fung, "Twin brothers killed in Saanich, B.C. bank shooting 'wanted to shoot and kill police': report," *Global News*, January 20, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9424658/saanich-bank-shooting/>.

⁷⁶ Derren Major, "Former reservist who stormed Rideau Hall to confront PM granted conditional release," *CBC News*, July 15, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/corey-hurren-stormed-rideau-hall-granted-conditional-release-1.7264186>.

⁷⁷ Charles Lefebvre, "Manitoba man who rammed gates of Rideau Hall granted statutory release," *CTV News*, July 15, 2024, <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/manitoba-man-who-rammed-gates-of-rideau-hall-granted-statutory-release-1.6964876>.

Our interviews with law enforcement and subject-matter experts reveal that threats to public figures have been a persistent occurrence in the Prairies, though these events rarely lead to actualized violence. In Alberta, law enforcement officials told us:

“We’re constantly getting threats to different ministers and to the Prime Minister. A lot of the time we end up talking to them, it’s the frustration just boil[ing] over so much that they threw a comment out there. As soon as we show up, they immediately regret it.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Similarly, in Manitoba, law enforcement officials told us there is growing anti-authority sentiment, with some credible threats of violence to both law enforcement and politicians:

“[There have been events] directly related to police. So, a threat to shoot us [which] was 100% anti-government [ideology].”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

“There has been some targeting of politicians and political offices that have happened related to anti-authority movements.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

In Saskatchewan, threats to politicians have also occurred. For instance, in October 2023, an individual from Saskatoon was arrested and charged for uttering threats to kill Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during an online video chat on TikTok.⁷⁸ Law enforcement officials we interviewed in Saskatchewan explained that such threats were becoming more frequent, with most originating online:

“The people that [come to our attention] are people that don’t like the way the government is run. It’s very much attached to the government. Videos online, chat groups, death threats to Trudeau, it’s a daily event. It’s a daily finger on the pulse of what the Prime Minister is doing, where he’s going. Along with that, the police get wrapped in because they think the police are part of the government’s arm protecting him, enforcing his laws.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

“I think there is an increase in the threats to politicians whether it’s at the provincial or federal level.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

“A lot of the [threats], especially if it’s directed toward government, it’s online threats.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

⁷⁸ Dan Zakreski, “Conditional discharge for Sask. Woman who threatened prime minister in TikTok group chat,” CBC News, January 11, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/conditional-discharge-woman-threatened-prime-minister-1.7080556>.

Overlap between anti-authority & xenophobia

According to our research findings, anti-authority extremism has increasingly co-opted various conspiracy theories commonly seen among extreme xenophobic ideologies, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health mandates. While there has long been an overlap between anti-authority extremism, xenophobia, and various conspiracy theories, our research has found that the distinction between them is becoming less clear. Our interviews with subject-matter experts and law enforcement officials reveal these trends have also been increasing in the Prairies:

“It’s very intermeshed within conspiratorial movements. Anti-authority in its traditional sense like sovereign citizen, Freeman-on-the-Land, that’s not increasing. But again, the anti-authority, the anti-lockdowns [sentiments are] growing [in the] right-wing sphere. There is that increase of the militia mindset, like, you know, maybe we[‘ve] got to arm up and go against the government.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“Conspiracy theories have always been a part of [this form of extremism]. The belief there’s some secret hand behind government that are responsible for our problems. The conspiracy element has [now] exploded beyond the anti-authority movement to fully embrace antisemitism, or to embrace anti-globalization. We’re seeing far more people being attracted to the conspiracy theory elements of the movement. Anti-authority is much more of an umbrella term because it [can] include resistance to knowledge, science, medicine, health experts, to any form of authority. The [anti-authority] movement seems loosely organized.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

In the following sections, we discuss two movements that have an overlap between the two.

Anti-mandate protests

As discussed above, most anti-authority movements engage in non-violent activism that seeks to oppose different policies and orders of government. The most high-profile of these in Canada between January 2019 and February 2025, was a series of blockades and protests organized primarily against COVID-19 vaccine mandates, generally referred to as the “Freedom Convoy”.

This movement emerged as a response to the Government of Canada’s requirement in January 2022 that “all truck drivers crossing the border” have proof of COVID-19 vaccination “regardless of whether they are Canadian citizens or foreign nationals”.⁷⁹ This caused backlash throughout Canada and the U.S., resulting in a series of protests across the country and blockades at three border crossings between the U.S. and Canada: two blockades at Coutts and Milk River crossings in Alberta, and the third at the Ambassador Bridge border crossing in Ontario.

In addition to the blockades, a convoy drove from B.C. to Ottawa, gaining participants on its way. By the time the convoy arrived in Ottawa, the requirement for Canadian truckers to be vaccinated to travel into the United States had been lifted; however, the vaccination requirement for U.S. truckers entering Canada remained in effect.⁸⁰ The convoy and its supporters established a month-long protest from January to February 2022, paralyzing the downtown area of Ottawa around Parliament Hill.

While these anti-mandate protests were mostly non-violent, their large-scale mobilization created opportunities for extreme elements to exploit the movement for their own agendas. The convoy, which attracted a wide and varied range of participants united by their opposition to public health mandates, also drew some fringe actors who promoted or displayed xenophobic symbols like swastikas. For example, anti-authority extremist groups like that of Romana Didulo’s “Kingdom of Canada” joined the protest, though they did not receive widespread support among protesters. As one subject-matter expert told us,

“At [protests], there was clear [anti-authority] ideology. But... there were [a diverse range of] people, [for example] Proud Boys, there are indigenous people, there are queer people... there are a variety of people who are [broadly] anti-government. But [some] might take that anti-government [ideology] and [also] put down Jews or also put down queer people. So, you’re seeing a lot of people from different identities merging in a ‘salad bar’ kind of way who have decided that this movement speaks to those specific grievances and goals.”

- Subject-Matter Expert (MB)

⁷⁹ Peter Zimonjic, “Federal Government Now Says All Truckers Crossing Border Must Be Fully Vaccinated,” *CBC News*, January 12, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-truckers-vaccine-reversal-1.6313200>.

⁸⁰ Steve Scherer, “Canada drops vaccine mandate for its truckers after pressure from industry,” *Reuters*, January 13, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadian-truckers-stay-exempt-COVID-19-vaccine-requirements-2022-01-13/>.

The Freedom Convoy and other anti-mandate protests ended on February 14, 2022, when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the Federal Emergencies Act (FEA), which grants extraordinary powers to the federal government to respond to emergencies.⁸¹ The FEA gave the RCMP, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and other police agencies the power to take any necessary measures to ensure compliance with the FEA, allowing them to clear the blockades.⁸² This led to the forcible removal of protesters from all locations, including the demonstrations in Ottawa and the blockades at the three border crossings.

Of the three blockades, the one at Coutts, Alberta, attracted the most national attention. Once the FEA was invoked, nearly all protesters left the area.⁸³ However, among those who remained were a small group of individuals who continued to oppose law enforcement, including four individuals who collectively became known as the “Coutts Four”.

Following an investigation and the seizure of a large cache of guns, body armor, ammunition, and high-capacity magazines from three trailers which remained in the area, the Coutts Four were charged with conspiracy to murder RCMP officers. Ten other people were also arrested on other charges. The seized body armor included a patch featuring the word “infidel” in Arabic script, a symbol that some experts have associated with xenophobic beliefs about an impending race war.⁸⁴

The Federal government’s response to the pandemic, the invocation of the FEA, and the arrests at Coutts are widely seen as having intensified pre-existing anti-government grievances and sentiments among many Canadians. Two outcomes of this series of events have significantly impacted Canadian anti-government movements: the public inquiry into the FEA and the prosecution of the Coutts Four.

As required following the invocation of the FEA, the Government held a public inquiry to investigate if its use was justified, reasonable, and upheld the constitution.⁸⁵ This inquiry, which produced a final report in February 2023, concluded that the invocation of the FEA was justified and reasonable. However, nearly a year later, after various individuals and organizations sought a judicial review of this decision, the Federal Court of Canada ruled the Cabinet’s invocation was neither reasonable nor justified, as the convoy’s actions did not constitute a credible threat to the national security of Canada.⁸⁶ In February 2024, the Government announced its plans to appeal the ruling.⁸⁷

81 Touria Izri, David Baxter & Alex Boutilier, “Federal Court finds Emergencies Act for ‘Freedom Convoy’ violated Charter,” *Global News*, February 16, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10244673/emergencies-act-convoy-federal-court/>.

82 Catharine Tunney, “Ottawa’s use of Emergencies Act against convoy protests was unreasonable, violated Charter, court rules,” *CBC News*, January 23, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/lite/story/1.7091891>

83 Adrian Humphreys, “What the mixed verdict in the Coutts Freedom Convoy blockade trial really means,” *National Post*, August 19 2024, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/what-the-mixed-verdict-in-the-coutts-freedom-convoy-blockade-trial-really-means>

84 Bill Kaufmann, “Activists say some suspects arrested at Coutts have white supremacist links,” *Calgary Herald*, February 16, 2022, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/some-arrested-at-coutts-border-protest-have-white-supremacist-links-activists-feds>.

85 Paul S. Rouleau, “Report of the Public Inquiry into the 2022 Public Order Emergency, Volume 1: Overview,” (Public Order Emergency Commission, February 2023), <https://publicorderemergencycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Report/Vol-1-Report-of-the-Public-Inquiry-into-the-2022-Public-Order-Emergency.pdf>.

86 Public Safety Canada, “Parliamentary Committee Notes: Federal Court Ruling on the Invocation of the Emergencies Act and Appeal,” (Government of Canada, February 27, 2024), <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20240626/09-en.aspx>

87 Anja Karadeglija, “Ottawa appeals court ruling that found use of Emergencies Act ‘unreasonable’” *CTV News*, February 23, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10314900/emergencies-act-federal-court-ottawa-appeal/>.

Several groups and movements opposing the government’s use of the FEA were also opposed to the prosecution of the Coutts Four. One of the most prominent groups, a Facebook group called “Alberta Political Prisoners,” became a hub of support for the Coutts Four. Group members provided financial support by donating to the families and legal defense teams of the Coutts Four, writing letters of encouragement, and selling merchandise featuring their names and likenesses.



Image 19: Photo from an online group supporting the Coutts Four.

The group also became a venue for continued expressions of anti-government sentiments, influenced by members’ perception that the Coutts Four were being “unfairly” pursued by the government. Alberta Political Prisoners framed the Coutts Four as political prisoners, alleging that they were being persecuted by the federal government as a way to intimidate those who did not comply with government mandates.

The group claimed these individuals were on trial for standing up for what was right and that their detention was a direct result of the government’s alleged atrocities against its own citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁸ Many characterized the government’s actions as “totalitarian” and denounced Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s leadership as a “reign of terror,” with some calling for the execution of Trudeau and other federal members of parliament.



Image 20: Photo from an online group supporting the Coutts Four.

⁸⁸ Kyle Cardinal, “717 Days Locked Up Without Trial: Canada’s Dirty Little Secret,” *Druthers*, February 2024, <https://druthers.ca/wp-content/uploads/druthers-february-2024-resized.pdf>



Image 21: Photo from an online group supporting the Coutts Four.



Image 22: Photo from an online group supporting the Coutts Four.

In a Lethbridge court, a jury found Anthony Olienick and Chris Corbett, two of the Coutts Four accused of plotting to kill RCMP officers at the Coutts border blockade, not guilty.⁸⁹ While evidence of their anti-government sentiments and incendiary rhetoric was presented in court, including threats of violence and statements equating the blockade to a stand against a “tyrannical” federal government, the jury found these did not amount to a criminal conspiracy to murder. Both men were convicted on lesser charges: Olienick was found guilty of mischief, possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, and possessing a pipe bomb, while Corbett was convicted of mischief and weapon possession. The other two of the Coutts Four pleaded guilty to lesser charges and were released from custody in early 2024.

Diagolon

Diagolon is a xenophobic, anti-government movement that has gained notoriety in Canada since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Diagolon emerged from, and is associated with, the so-called “Plaid Army,” a collective of online far-right Canadian live streamers, including Jeremy MacKenzie, Derek “Rants” Harrison, and Alex Vriend.⁹⁰

Jeremy MacKenzie gained prominence through his online persona and his podcast series, “The Raging Dissident” and is considered the de-facto ideological “founder” of Diagolon. MacKenzie was previously arrested for assault and firearms charges, however, these and other charges levied against him in Quebec and Nova Scotia have since been stayed or withdrawn.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Fakiha Baig & Bill Graveland, “Jury finds protesters not guilty of conspiring to kill Mounties at Coutts blockade,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 3, 2024, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/crime/coutts-trial-acquittal>.

⁹⁰ Alex Boutilier, “Ontario police considered ‘covert’ surveillance of anti-government group ahead of Freedom Convoy,” *Global News*, October 21, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9217463/opp-covert-surveillance-anti-government-group/>.

⁹¹ Lisa Joy, “Charges in all provinces tossed against ‘Diagolon’s’ Jeremy MacKenzie,” *SaskToday*, June 13, 2024, <https://www.sasktoday.ca/crime-cops-court/charges-in-all-provinces-tossed-against-diagolons-jeremy-mackenzie-9074950>.

Supporters of Diagonlon share a bitter opposition to the federal government and frequently display anti-immigrant and xenophobic sentiments. While its activities are primarily online through social media platforms like Telegram and Odysee, members organized a series of in-person events across Canada during the summer of 2024, known as the “Road Rage Terror Tour”.⁹²

Some experts have categorized Diagonlon as a militant accelerationist network.⁹³ However, adherents within the movement have disputed this characterization. For example, when asked to describe Diagonlon during a podcast, Derek Rants described the movement as:

“... the product of somebody’s podcast. [Just] like Hulkamania was part of Hulk Hogan’s schtick... It’s branding. That’s all Jeremy [MacKenzie] was doing [with his podcast] and a lot of people latched on to what he was talking about. It’s part of the lore, it’s fun. Other people will be watching and trying to figure out what Diagonlon is, what’s behind it and it’s a joke... and now people identify with it.”

- Derek Rants (The Rob Primo livestream, November 10, 2022)

Alex Vriend, who goes by the online alias “The Ferryman’s Toll”, further elaborates:

“It’s literally the definition of a meme... What happens with a successful meme? It starts growing on its own into something beyond what that meme was originally... The more people talk about Diagonlon as a serious [extremist] entity, we lean into it. It’s funny to us. So, what is Diagonlon? It’s a lot of things. It’s a collection of [live] streamers, but ultimately, it’s a meme... A meme that ran way out of control in the mind of the establishment.”

- Alex Vriend (The Rob Primo livestream, November 10, 2022)

Our interviews reveal that many in law enforcement offer a more nuanced understanding of the movement than has been previously presented by some academics and researchers:

“[Diagonlon] to me doesn’t look like it’s anything resembling a coherent group. It’s more of an online meme. Do you have threat actors that will potentially adopt it as part of their rhetoric? Yeah, for sure. But in and of itself, I’m not sure if it goes too much deeper than the meme thing. Is it a group or is it just a brand? Would there be individuals within the Diagonlon milieu that adopt militant accelerationism? Yeah, for sure. I wouldn’t be surprised if somebody, you know, an individual or a very small group of individuals, adopts both – the militant accelerationist worldview along with the Diagonlon element. But are they necessarily part and parcel of the same thing? I wouldn’t say so.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁹² Bobby Hristova & Nathan Fung, “Community centre in Jarvis, Ont., says far-right group Diagonlon misled venue when it booked event,” CBC News, August 2, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/diagonlon-jarvis-norfolk-1.7282716>

⁹³ Christy Somos, “What is the Diagonlon extremist group and what does it want?” CTV News, February 17, 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/what-is-the-diagonlon-extremist-group-and-what-does-it-want-1.5785646>.

“I haven’t seen any indication that they are purporting to use guns instead of paperwork. I have to admit, I’m a little skeptical of the various portraits of Diagonol as a terrorist militia revolutionary group that’s ready to spring onto the scene. I find that to be a little bit on the implausible side.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

Instead, law enforcement officials suggested that the loosely affiliated nature of Diagonol makes it challenging to categorize. Our research suggests that while its figureheads and many within the Diagonol community express strong xenophobic sentiments which at times insinuate calls for violence, they do not explicitly call for their followers to engage in violence. And while at times Diagonol’s figurehead has discussed accelerationism, it is not a defining feature of the network.⁹⁴ However, as a result of their inflammatory rhetoric and insinuations, the movement may attract individuals with a pre-existing inclination toward violence.⁹⁵ There is also the potential for some followers to take matters in their own hands, frustrated that the movement is not taking enough action.

Regardless of their intended meaning, the inflammatory rhetoric used by many Diagonol influencers may be interpreted by some as a call for violence. Additionally, emerging evidence from our research suggests that some members of the Diagonol community, including its core influencers, are networking with established active clubs in Canada. For example, image 23 below shows that the Frontenac Active Club – a prominent active club chapter in Quebec – has networked with the Diagonol community. In other cases, members of a now-defunct private Diagonol chat appear eager to establish new active clubs in their local areas, including in the Prairie provinces, as shown in image 24.

⁹⁴ Matthew Kriner & Peter Smith, “The Diagonol Movement and Militant Accelerationism,” Accelerationism Research Consortium, n.d., <https://www.accresearch.org/accreports/the-diagonol-movement-and-militant-accelerationism>.

⁹⁵ No Author, “White Supremacist in Diagonol Inner Circle Trying to Recruit Ex-Military Members to Build a Militia: Court,” Canadian Anti-Hate Network, June 20, 2024, https://www.antihate.ca/white_supremacist_diagonol_inner_circle_recruit_military_members



Image 23: Example of the crossover between active clubs and members of Diagon (Source: Telegram, August 2024).

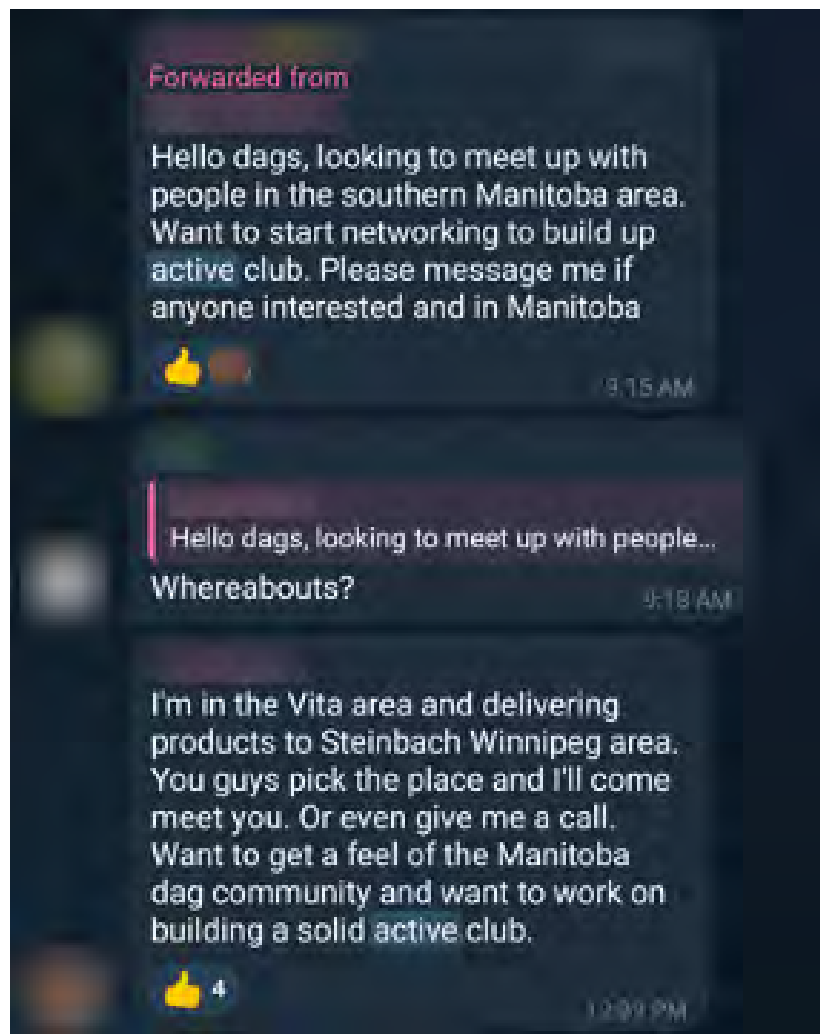


Image 24: Post from a group linked to Diagonon about starting an active club in Manitoba (Source: Telegram).

There is strong evidence to indicate several Diagonon “influencers” have shown interest in, or affiliation with, established active clubs around the country. Posts from prominent Diagonon channels also appear to indicate explicit endorsement for the active club model and, in some cases, the creation of their own local club, as shown in images 25 and 26. Meanwhile, Alex Vriend, who ran the popular “The Ferryman’s Toll” channel on Telegram, frequently shared content from active clubs around Canada and the world. In January 2025, however, Alex Vriend abandoned his once-popular Telegram channel, which had over 15,000 followers. In his farewell message, Vriend encouraged his followers to “Tribe and Train,” likely a reference to offline far-right active clubs. More recently, Vriend has appeared to revive his Telegram channel to post an invitation to the so-called “Second Sons Canada,” an all-male nationalist club which lists its main activities as “political activism and fitness training,” like that of active clubs or WLM.

“Diagolon itself, and the conversations around Diagolon, may have started in a satirical space. It may still be in that space where they’re not serious, they’re just spouting off and speaking their minds. But there’s a great danger to that too when it’s picked up by individuals who don’t quite understand that it is [a] meme.... The issue is that while [the so-called leaders of Diagolon] may not step over the line, they are putting those ideas out there that others latch onto. They may take it past the frustration level and move into the violent extremism level. It [can be] a dangerous space.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)



Image 25: Map of alleged Second Sons Canada club divisions across Canada.

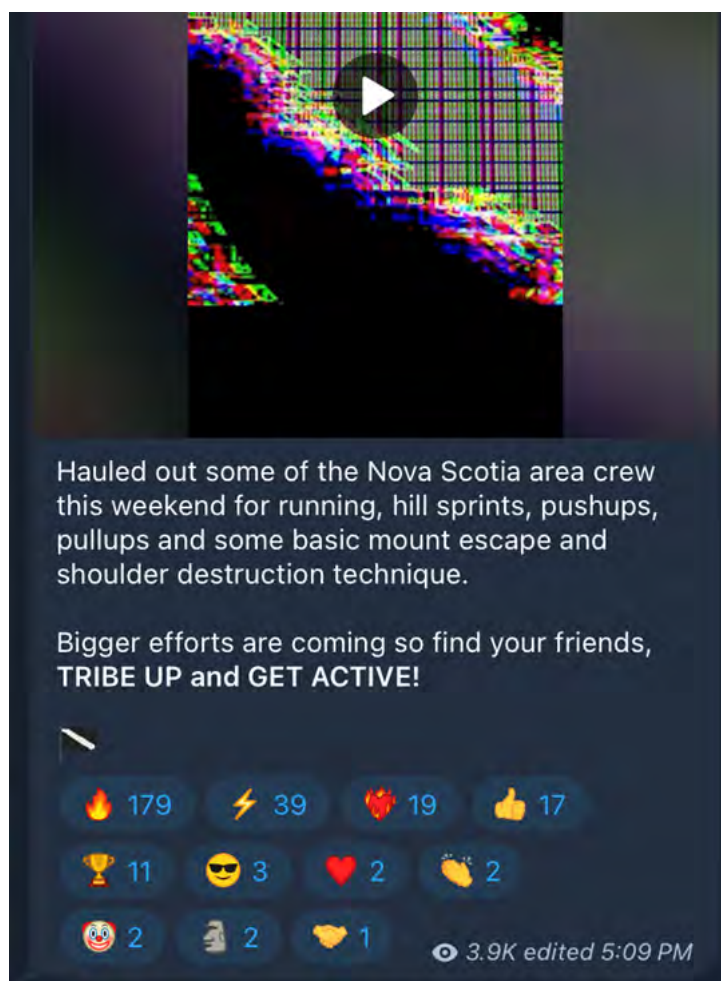


Image 26: Post from a group linked to Diagon using language like that of active clubs (Source: Telegram, June 2024).

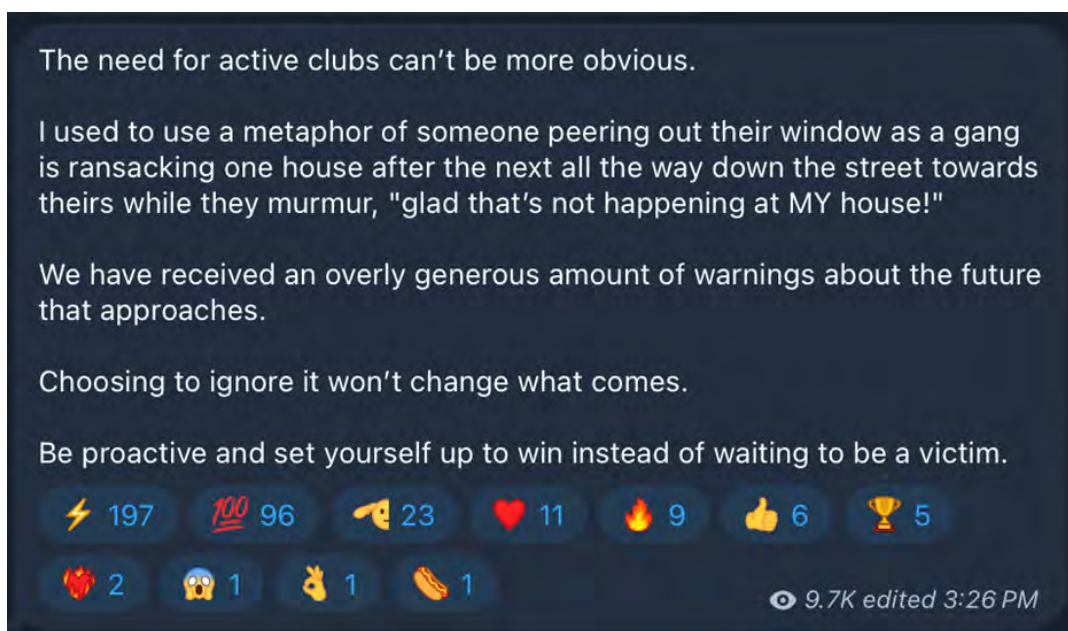


Image 27: Post from a group linked to Diagon endorsing the need for active clubs (Source: Telegram, August 2024).

Gender & Identity-Based Violent Extremism

Gender and identity-based violence, as well as extreme misogyny, continue to be concerning issues in Canada and in the Prairie regions. This form of extremism can manifest in various ways, from online harassment to violent rhetoric and, in some cases, physical acts of violence. These acts of violence can be driven by beliefs rooted in sexism, misogyny, or gender and identity-based discrimination and hate.

Incels

One of the most prominent groups associated with extreme misogyny is the online subculture of involuntary celibates, typically referred to as “incels”. Incels are a diverse online group of predominantly men who are unable to find romantic or sexual partners despite desiring them. Their frustrations often lead to a worldview rooted in resentment towards women and men deemed “sexually desirable”, who they blame for their perceived sexual and romantic failures.

While many incels are more of a danger to themselves than others, as evidenced by the high rates of self-reported mental health issues and suicidality within the online community, there have been several high-profile instances where individuals who self-identify as incels have committed violence in Canada.⁹⁶

The most notorious case of incel-related violence in Canada occurred in 2018, when Alek Minassian – a self-proclaimed incel – killed 10 people in Toronto after ramming a van into a crowded sidewalk. More recently, in 2020, a minor who self-identified as an incel targeted a spa in Toronto, killing one woman and injuring another. While the minor was initially charged with murder, the RCMP subsequently upgraded the charges to include terrorist activity.⁹⁷ The attack was later deemed to be an act of terror by the court, marking the first time extreme misogyny was labeled terrorism in Canada.⁹⁸

Despite there being no evidence of violence committed by individuals linked to incels in the Prairies between 2019 and 2025, law enforcement officials noted a potential increase in interest regarding online extreme misogynist subcultures:

“I wouldn’t say that incel violence is increasing in any kind of events. I would say that the subculture’s probably increasing deep on the Internet.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“I’ve seen it come up on a number of different times. Again, nothing acute, but [more] as an element of potential radicalization or potential threat. We get files that [this individual] is posting this or that. You take a look, and I’ve definitely come across a few files [where] it looks like [extreme misogyny] is an element of it.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁹⁶ Anne Speckhard & Molly Ellenberg, “Self-Reported Psychiatric Disorder and Perceived Psychological Symptom Rates Among Involuntary Celibates (Incels) and Their Perceptions of Mental Health Treatment,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2022), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2022.2029933>

⁹⁷ Stewart Bell, Andrew Russell & Catherine McDonald, “Deadly attack at Toronto erotic spa was incel terrorism, police allege,” *Global News*, May 19, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6910670/toronto-spa-terrorism-incel/>

⁹⁸ CBC News, “Incel-inspired Toronto massage parlour murder was act of terror, judge rules,” *CBC News*, June 6, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/incel-toronto-massage-killing-terrorism-1.6867177>

Although law enforcement officials we interviewed in the Prairies acknowledged the potential threat that extreme misogyny can pose, most reported that the threat specifically, from incels, remained stable:

“I wouldn’t say incels are on our threat landscape right now.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

Additionally, law enforcement officials in the Prairies confirmed that when incel violence occurs, it is almost always a lone actor activity:

“It really seems to be more of an individual radicalization pathway. There’s obviously a lot of Internet groups, a lot of exchanging ideas, a lot of that stuff. But when it comes to actual violent extremist activities, it seems to be almost exclusively a lone actor thing.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Anti-sexual orientation & gender identity grievances

The recognition of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) diversity, and corresponding resources and curriculum that integrates diverse gender identities and sexual orientations into classrooms and schools, has led some groups to actively resist these educational practices.⁹⁹ This anti-SOGI movement is briefly discussed here and explored further in *Chapter 6: Hate*. Additionally, some religiously motivated violent extremist actors in Canada, including those linked to the Islamic State, have sought to target the 2SLGBTQI+ community. More on this is discussed in *Chapter 3: Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism*.

Anti-SOGI actors frame their grievances as a defense of traditional values, leveraging misconceptions about trans and gender-diverse youth to rally support. This backlash is rooted in a desire to uphold a traditional definition of family and gender, which often centers on the nuclear family. By invoking parental rights, these groups seek to challenge the integration of SOGI education, framing it as a threat to traditional societal norms.

“When things like the pronoun policy come up in the schools. you get a cluster of anti-2SLGBTI+ [graffiti] being sprayed all over the place. But then when that issue dies down a new one comes up and then there’s something else that people are complaining about. I would say it’s about average from where it was in 2019 up till now. Sometimes there are threats of violence [online], but we find that any threat of violence, if we can identify where it came from, usually is [not a legitimate threat]. I can’t think of a legitimate threat to a particular group or building or anything like that aside from the 2SLGBTQI+ issue because that’s a hot button issue right now.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

⁹⁹ Kendrick James, “Mapping Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Inclusion through Curriculum and Practice in a Canadian Teacher Education Program,” *Canadian Journal of Education*, 42, (2019), 957-991.

Because anti-SOGI hate is embedded within broader anti-2SLGBTQI+ discourse, it is important to differentiate between anti-SOGI activism and anti-2SLGTBQI+ activism. Anti-SOGI specifically targets trans and gender non-conforming peoples and the integration of alternative modes of kinship into education and curriculum. Notably, groups like “Gays Against Groomers” showcase a clear distinction in the alienation of trans and gender non-conforming people. This group is composed of gay and lesbian activists who join anti-SOGI protests, shifting discourse toward levels of “acceptable queerness”.



Image 28: Example of a “Gays Against Groomers” anti-SOGI meme.



Image 29: Example of meme which purports a conspiracy about “woke teachers”.

A recent example of this form of violence in Canada occurred at the University of Waterloo in June 2023, when a former student walked into a gender-studies class and stabbed the instructor and two students.¹⁰⁰ The perpetrator left a ripped-up Pride flag on a desk in the classroom later found by police.¹⁰¹ The perpetrator, who pleaded guilty to four charges of assault in June 2024, left a manifesto before the attack in which he praised the 2019 Christchurch Mosque and 2011 Norway shooters - both revered as “Saints” by militant neo-fascist accelerationists today - and claimed his actions were driven by a desire to protect education from “woke” culture.¹⁰²

- 100** Aastha Shetty, “Accused in University of Waterloo stabbings charged with attempted murder, added to other counts,” *CBC News*, August 25, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/stabbing-incident-university-waterloo-attempt-murder-1.6947981>.
- 101** Jennifer K. Baker & Krista Simpson, “‘It was me’: Video shows moment University of Waterloo attacker admits to triple stabbing,” *CTV News*, June 12, 2024, <https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/it-was-me-video-shows-moment-university-of-waterloo-attacker-admits-to-triple-stabbing-1.6924642>.
- 102** Aastha Shetty, “Ex-University of Waterloo student pleads guilty to 2023 stabbings in gender-studies class,” *CBC News*, June 3, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/university-waterloo-stabbing-suspect-pleads-guilty-assault-1.7205532>.

Though our research did not uncover any IMVE-related incidents of anti-SOGI or anti-2SLGBTBQI+ violence in the Prairies during the period covered by this report, our interviews reveal an understanding of the broader societal implications of events like the Waterloo attack. While the Waterloo incident is often framed as an act of anti-queer violence, it also intersects with complex dynamics around anti-feminist narratives about preserving traditional conceptualizations of “womanhood”. Likewise, anti-SOGI groups utilize narratives that position themselves as “protectors of women” by exploiting feminist language to justify transphobia. For example, law enforcement officials noted a rise in extreme misogynistic beliefs intertwined with anti-SOGI narratives in the Prairies:

“It’s hard to prove misogyny. But because the feminist movement had made such a huge impact and now where you’ve got the 2SLGBTQI+ community, that relates a lot within feminist movement, especially when you’re coming in with transgender [rights]. So now it’s kind of this anti-feminist movement slash misogynist viewpoint that I think is what I’m seeing a little bit more. We’re seeing this also on the extremist side, they have always co opted anti-feminist narratives, but it’s becoming a more important part of their ideology overall.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)



CHAPTER 3

Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism

Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism

Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE) is the term used by the Canadian government to refer to a set of grievances encouraging the “use of violence as part of a spiritual struggle against a perceived immoral system”.¹ Many groups and actors incorporate religious symbols, principles, and concepts into their ideologies. While religion may play an important role in the ideology of many groups and movements, religious tenets are often a component of their belief-systems and political goals, rather than the primary objective. Conversely, the primary objective of RMVE actors is religious supremacy.

This chapter focuses on Canadian RMVE actors who espouse the ideologies of the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, two long-standing international terrorist organizations that embrace distorted interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence to justify the use of violence. These groups have had a long-standing presence in the Prairie region, particularly Alberta. As is common among many ideologies that incorporate religious tenets, RMVE actors often distinguish between so-called “true believers” and “non-believers” to reinforce the need for violence against those who do not share their worldview.

Introduction to RMVE in the Prairies

Religiously motivated violent extremism in the Prairies has fluctuated over time, mirroring national and international trends. Although RMVE threats in Canada have not reached the levels seen in Europe or the U.S. over the past two decades, and RMVE groups in the Middle East have faced significant battlefield losses, a persistent risk of violence from individuals inspired by these ideologies remains.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service’s (CSIS) 2019 Public Report identified that the primary domestic RMVE threat in Canada stemmed from individuals drawing inspiration from the Islamic State or al-Qaeda who commit “low-resource, high-impact” attacks, such as vehicle rammings or knife attacks.² This threat subsided somewhat thereafter, with CSIS’ 2021 Public Report noting “no RMVE inspired attacks occurred in Canada” that year.³

Instead, the report highlighted challenges pertaining to the return of several Canadian extremist travellers from Syrian detention camps - individuals who had left Canada to join the Islamic State during its peak in the mid-2010s. During this time, a disproportionately high number of extremist travellers originated from Alberta relative to the province’s population.⁴ Law enforcement officials we interviewed highlighted these fluctuating trends:

¹ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023*, (April 2024), p. 47 https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf.

² Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2019*, (April 2020), p. 12, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/PubRep-2019-E.pdf>.

³ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2021*, (March 2022), p. 25, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/2021/public-report/2021_PublicReport_Digital-ENG.pdf

⁴ Meghan Grant, “Calgary man accused of ISIS kidnapping asks to be released,” *CBC News*, July 24, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/rcmp-borhot-isis-calgary-terrorism-charges-court-1.5661558>.

“If you [look at recent history], all the way back to 9/11, what we saw was a gradual trend. We had ideologues that would provide would-be jihadists with the religious context of radicalization, [but] it would percolate under the surface. Primarily we’d have individuals that would show signs of radicalization and would go [elsewhere in the world]. Between 2014 and right up until now, with ISIS and [similar groups], certainly we had several Canadians, a large amount from Alberta, leave to go fight for ISIS. [Many] took their families with them. A lot of those cases what we found was that the recruiting or influence of radicalization was not [coming] so much from overseas. We saw a lot of what we call the “ideologues” based here in Canada. What we saw was individuals in the range of 16-years-old to 30-years-old range that would gravitate to those ideolog[ies].”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

After this dip in activity, CSIS’ 2023 Public Report indicated a resurgence of RMVE threats linked to international developments such as the Israel-Hamas war which began in 2023, marked by increased arrests involving individuals who “use low-sophisticated means against soft targets...”⁵ These included a man from Calgary who planned to attack Pride celebrations, and a youth arrested after planning a bomb attack targeting Jewish people in Ottawa. This trend continued into 2024 as Canada experienced additional arrests, including a man from Toronto who planned a mass shooting in New York on the one-year anniversary of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack against Israel.⁶

This resurgence in RMVE-linked activity has also been observed elsewhere in the world, including a 2025 New Years Day truck ramming attack in New Orleans, Louisiana carried out by an individual who was allegedly inspired by the Islamic State. Although investigations are currently ongoing as of the writing of this report, recent discoveries by the FBI indicate the individual who carried out the attack had travelled to Egypt and Ontario, Canada in July 2023, though it is still unclear if these trips were connected to the attack.⁷

In the following sections, we discuss these and other emerging RMVE trends in more detail.

⁵ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023*, (April 2024), p. 48, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf

⁶ Stewart Bell & Jeff Semple, “The Return of ISIS: ISIS arrests are spiking in Canada and youths are driving the resurgence,” *Global News*, November 18, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10857151/youths-social-media-isis-resurgence-national-security-threat/>.

⁷ CBC News, “New Orleans attacker’s movements included trip to Ontario in July 2023, FBI says,” *CBC News*, January 5, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/new-orleans-truck-attack-investigation-1.7423429>.

The “foreign fighter” legacy in Canada

In 2019, the Islamic State – an international terrorist organization based in Syria and Iraq – suffered two major setbacks. In March, it lost its last territorial stronghold in northeastern Syria, and later in October, its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was killed.⁸ This destabilized much of the group’s operations in Syria and Iraq, and many of the group’s foreign fighters – individuals who travelled from other countries to join the Islamic State – were forced into detention camps. This included both adults who had travelled from their home countries, and their children, some of whom were born in Syria.

As of 2023, it is estimated that 11,500 men, 14,500 women, and 30,000 children are being held in at least 27 detention facilities in northeastern Syria, some of whom are Canadian citizens.⁹

Between January 2019 and February 2025, many of the arrests in Canada related to RMVE were of Canadian extremist travellers: individuals with Canadian citizenship or permanent residency status, who travelled abroad to engage in terrorism-related activities.¹⁰ In the mid-2010s, an unprecedentedly large number of Canadian extremist travellers went to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and other RMVE groups participating in the regional conflict. A disproportionate amount of these Canadian extremist travellers were Albertans.¹¹

As of May 2024, 29 Canadians have been repatriated, which includes 22 children and 7 women.¹² The largest repatriation operation conducted by the Canadian government occurred in April 2023 when four women and 10 Canadian children were brought back; one of these women returned to Edmonton.¹³ Another two women from Edmonton returned in July 2023.¹⁴ In some cases, the father of these children is either not Canadian, died during the fighting, or fled elsewhere. As of May 2024, 17 Canadians are still being held in Kurdish detention camps, which includes 8 Canadian children of 3 foreign mothers.¹⁵

Separately, two Albertans have recently been charged and convicted for their involvement in the Islamic State, which extends prior to the period investigated in this report.

⁸ Michele St-Amant, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022* (Edmonton, AB: The Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.

⁹ Jim Bronskill, “Feds don’t ‘care if they die,’ says lawyer helping Canadian children held in Syria,” CTV News, April 22, 2024, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/feds-don-t-care-if-they-die-says-lawyer-helping-canadian-children-held-in-syria-1.6856376>.

¹⁰ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023*, (April 2024), p. 47 https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf.

¹¹ Michele St-Amant, David Jones, Michael King & John McCoy, *Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond: The Shift from 2019 to 2022* (Edmonton, AB: The Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2022), <https://preventviolence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Hate-Extremism-and-Terrorism-in-Alberta-Canada-and-Beyond.pdf>.

¹² Judy Trinh, “More than half the Canadians once detained in Syrian camps for suspected ISIS family members have returned home,” CTV News, May 10, 2024, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/more-than-half-the-canadians-once-detained-in-syrian-camps-for-suspected-isis-family-members-have-returned-home-1.6882067>.

¹³ Stewart Bell, “RCMP arrests 3 women after they return to Canada from ISIS camps in Syria,” *Global News*, April 6, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9607059/rcmp-arrests-women-isis-camps-syria/>.

¹⁴ Stewart Bell, “Edmonton family returning to Canada from ISIS camp in Syria,” *Global News*, July 6, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9788984/edmonton-women-return-canada-isis-camp-syria/>.

¹⁵ Judy Trinh, “More than half the Canadians once detained in Syrian camps for suspected ISIS family members have returned home,” CTV News, May 10, 2024, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/article/more-than-half-the-canadians-once-detained-in-syrian-camps-for-suspected-isis-family-members-have-returned-home/>.

These two were cousins from Calgary who travelled to Syria to join the Islamic State in 2013 before voluntarily returning to Canada in 2014.¹⁶ After an extensive RCMP investigation which spanned 7 years, both cousins were arrested and charged separately in 2020. Hussein Borhot was arrested in July 2020¹⁷ while Jamal Borhot was arrested two months later.¹⁸

One of the cousins, who told officers he had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Islamic State and that “he loved shooting and jihad,” plead guilty and received a 12-year prison sentence.¹⁹ The second cousin is awaiting trial on terrorism charges after the judge rejected a defense application.²⁰

In addition to those who travelled, some directly supported the travel of others to the Islamic State from Canada. Such is the case of an individual from Edmonton who, according to the United States Department of Justice, “encouraged, aided and financially assisted six North American nationals in traveling to Syria” between 2013 and 2014.²¹

Three of these individuals were his own cousins from Edmonton, along with American nationals from California and Minnesota. After their departure to Syria, Abdullahi wired money to Turkey to support their fighting abroad.²² Abdullahi was arrested in Fort McMurray in 2017 and extradited to California in 2019; he pled guilty to all terrorism charges brought against him in 2021.²³

The number and frequency at which Albertans travelled to Syria to join groups such as the Islamic State during this period, and the more recent public cases in the province indicate the presence of both local and foreign recruitment efforts. For example, law enforcement officials we interviewed in Alberta indicated that online material associated with the Islamic State has become more accessible in recent years:

“There is an increase in availability of al-Qaeda, Islamic State, radical Salafi jihadism. The accessibility [to the material] is out there. But, with the Caliphate on the downtrend, I think these things remained isolated incidents.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

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- 16** Meghan Grant, “Calgarian accused of fighting for ISIS to stand trial after judge rejects defence application,” *CBC News*, April 22, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/jamal-borhot-terrorism-charges-jordan-decision-trial-1.7181063>; Meghan Grant, “Calgary terrorist who fought as ISIS sniper in Syria sentenced to 12 years in prison,” *CBC News*, May 26, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/hussein-borhot-calgary-syria-terrorism-1.6466509>.
- 17** Royal Canadian Mounted Police, press release, “Alberta RCMP Integrated National Enforcement Team lays terrorism charges,” July 22, 2020, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2020/alberta-rcmp-integrated-national-enforcement-team-lays-terrorism-charges>.
- 18** Bill Kaufmann, “Second Calgary man in two months charged with aiding Islamic State terrorists,” *Calgary Herald*, September 25, 2020, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/crime/second-calgary-man-in-two-months-charged-with-aiding-islamic-state-terrorists>.
- 19** Bill Graveland, *CTV News*, “I didn’t know better”: Calgary man admits to terrorism activity with Islamic State (April 28, 2022), <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/i-didn-t-know-better-calgary-man-admits-to-terrorism-activity-with-islamic-state-1.5880642>; Meghan Grant, “Calgarian accused of fighting for ISIS to stand trial after judge rejects defence application,” *CBC News*, April 22, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/jamal-borhot-terrorism-charges-jordan-decision-trial-1.7181063>.
- 20** Meghan Grant, “Calgary terrorist who fought as ISIS sniper in Syria sentenced to 12 years in prison,” *CBC News*, May 26, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/hussein-borhot-calgary-syria-terrorism-1.6466509>.
- 21** U.S. Department of Justice, press release, “Former San Diego Resident Sentenced to 20 Years for Funding ISIS Terrorist Activities in Syria,” October 17, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-san-diego-resident-sentenced-20-years-funding-isis-terrorist-activities-syria>.
- 22** Andrea Huncar, “Man accused of Edmonton jewelry store heist to fund ISIS fighters,” *CBC News*, May 23, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-terrorist-u-s-extradition-fort-mcmurray-san-diego-court-1.4674994>.
- 23** U.S. Department of Justice, press release, “Former San Diego Resident Sentenced to 20 Years for Funding ISIS Terrorist Activities in Syria,” October 17, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-san-diego-resident-sentenced-20-years-funding-isis-terrorist-activities-syria>.

However, our interviews with law enforcement officials also indicate that the sustained focus on the threat from these and similar actors in the province has proved to be successful in preventing violence:

“One noticeable trend in the national security apparatus is since the Caliphate trend in the [mid]-2010s, there’s been a better understanding of [RMVE]. Maybe there [has not] been the [same] progression towards violence because we’re better at intercepting or understanding it. Or prevention organizations such as the OPV, [they’re able to act] sooner in the process when people start to identify signs of radicalization.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Other law enforcement officials we interviewed in Saskatchewan indicated that the prevalence of Islamic State-related activity in the province follows international trends:

“There’s ebbs and flows, depending on if there’s a conflict overseas. We might hear about one or two people wanting to go over, [such as in Syria]. [But] it’s not something I would say is a trend [right now]. We [did] have a few [travellers] regarding the Syrian conflict, but [those] would have been pre-2019.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

The enduring appeal of the Islamic State among youth

While it retains very little territory in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State has nonetheless secured a global presence through its “provinces” established in other countries. By affiliating with local militant groups that pledge allegiance to its leadership, these provinces adopt the Islamic State ideology, tactics, and branding, allowing the organization to maintain relevance and continue its operations across the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.²⁴ As a result, the Islamic State continues to inspire people in many countries, including Canada. As one law enforcement official told us, there has been an uptick in online radicalization stemming from RMVE in the past few years, particularly among youth:

“This is not just [in Canada], it’s a global phenomenon that partners across the globe are noticing. In the past 2-3 years in particular, there’s been a definite uptick in online radicalization and the planning of potentially kinetic activities domestically. We’ll have individuals in Alberta participating online and then having dialogue and discussion online about acting in their communities to further those ideological objectives. We’ve noticed a particular increase among youth... In Canada, by virtue of [public reporting] in the last 2-3 years, we’ve seen that the majority of national security-related arrests have been of RMVE actors and have involved youth. That’s been a [consistent] global trend.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

²⁴ Clayton Thomas, “The Islamic State: Background, Current Status, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, May 6, 2024, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10328>.

For instance, between 2023 and 2024, three teenagers and one 20-year-old man from Calgary were arrested by the RCMP as part of a national security investigation stemming from posts made on TikTok and other social media sites.²⁵ These four Calgarian youth were connected to a Snapchat group titled “Islamic State Soldiers of Allah” (English translation), which shared content about Islamic State recruiting and suicide bombers. In September 2024, the 20-year-old man was sentenced to six years in prison for sharing terrorist content that depicted Islamic State recruitment, a bomb-making video, and encouraged “the killing of gay men”.²⁶ The remaining three teens, whose identities remain protected by the Youth Criminal Justice Act, now face peace bonds with restrictions to social media access and limits to several freedoms.²⁷

As noted in *Chapter 2: Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism*, there is also an overlap between RMVE ideologies, such as those associated with the Islamic State, and anti-2SLGBTQI+ sentiments. For instance, the 20-year-old individual arrested in Calgary in 2023 posted messages which suggested he intended to target Pride events.

In one post from June 1, 2023, he wrote: *“Tomorrow my mission begins. It’s Pride month. I’ve been waiting.”*²⁸ Law enforcement officials we interviewed indicated that anti-2SLGBTQI+ and misogynist sentiments often overlap with other extremist ideologies, which can make identifying the primary ideology more difficult:

“There’s a bunch of different elements, and it’s hard to pick out what’s what. You look at the incel stuff, like Alek Minassian, [and anti-2SLGBTQI+ and misogynist beliefs] are the center of it. But then when you’re talking about RMVE, like Salafi jihadism, or other brands of IMVE, like ethno-nationalism, neo-Nazism, there’s always that chauvinist and sometimes misogynist elements as well. So, it’s picking out the source, it can sometimes [be] a challenge.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

While misogyny has long been a shared characteristic of violent ideologies, a distinct, more recent trend is clearly emerging: an increasing number of young individuals are involved in violent extremism. This recent trend in youth participating in RMVE activities contrasts with the previous cohort of individuals who radicalized and departed Canada to join the Islamic State.

For this newer cohort, the appeal of travel has largely dissipated, given the Islamic State’s loss of territory in both Syria and Iraq. Instead, recent RMVE actors - many of them youth - have carried out, or attempted to carry out, attacks at home on behalf of the Islamic State. As law enforcement officials noted during interviews:

²⁵ The Canadian Press, “Terrorism peace bond hearing set for Calgary teen in TikTok video case,” *CBC News*, March 15, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-teen-tiktok-alleged-terrorism-1.7145196#:~:>

²⁶ Meghan Grant, “Calgary man who searched ‘killing of gay persons’ posted ISIS propaganda to TikTok pleads to terror charge,” *CBC News*, December 1, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/zakarya-hussein-terrorism-plea-calgary-rcmp-court-tiktok-social-media-1.7046447>; Kevin Martin, “Terrorism sympathizer who planned to target Calgary Pride handed six-year prison term,” *Calgary Herald*, September 13, 2024, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/crime/terrorism-sympathizer-who-planned-to-target-calgary-pride-handed-six-year-prison-term>.

²⁷ The Canadian Press, “Terrorism peace bond hearing set for Calgary teen in TikTok video case,” *CBC News*, March 15, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-teen-tiktok-alleged-terrorism-1.7145196>,

²⁸ Kevin Martin, “Terrorism sympathizer who planned to target Calgary Pride handed six-year prison term,” *Calgary Herald*, September 13, 2024, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/crime/terrorism-sympathizer-who-planned-to-target-calgary-pride-handed-six-year-prison-term>.

“That’s always been a pretty obvious concern for security and intelligence services. When things are going on in the world where travel to Syria right now may not be in a ‘wanna-be’ jihadists’ interests. So, what’s the next best thing? It’s to carry out a [terrorist] act in their own country. You start to see, especially on those fringe [social media platforms] like Telegram or Discord, a lot of commentary that draws some concern from law enforcement that somebody may be dabbling in being radicalized and may be escalating to more of an active [role]. That’s definitely a concern. Once the whole Islamic State caliphate collapsed, the percolating issue is the younger people start to get more vocal, online especially.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“We thought after the fall of the Caliphate that maybe this trend of violent jihadism would start to fizzle out. But I don’t think it’s gone away, it’s still there. I think the ability for people to travel and join a cause is looking less and less attractive, so I think we are still going to see individuals [here in Canada] who take action [domestically]. I think that’s a trend we are going to continue to see and it’s not going away at all.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

For instance, in 2023, a man slashed the neck of another person on board a bus in B.C. Police allege the man carried out the attack on behalf of the Islamic State, and he has been charged with attempted murder and terrorism-related offences.²⁹ A trial has been scheduled for February 2025.

Similarly, in March 2023, an 18-year-old individual was arrested in Montreal following an investigation by the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) based on suspicions he was planning to commit an RMVE-based terrorism offence.³⁰ While these attacks are still infrequent and of a low level, ongoing developments in RMVE in the Middle East and Africa continue to pose challenges to national security elsewhere in the world.

RMVE beyond the Islamic State

Another transnational RMVE case rooted in Alberta centres on Khaled Hussein, who was charged by British authorities in 2023 for actively participating with a listed terrorist organization. Hussein, originally from Edmonton, was accused of joining and supporting the activities of al-Muhajiroun, an organization listed in the United Kingdom - but not in Canada - as a terrorist entity for their aims “to establish an Islamic Caliphate ruled by Shariah law”.³¹ Hussein was charged alongside Anjem Choudary, a British preacher who was previously imprisoned in 2016 in the U.K. for supporting the Islamic State.³² In July 2024, Choudary was found guilty of directing a terrorist group, while Hussein was convicted of membership in a terrorist organization.³³

²⁹ Anna Burns, “Trial scheduled for man charged with terrorism in Surrey bus stabbing,” *Peace Arch News*, November 28, 2024, <https://www.peacearchnews.com/local-news/trial-scheduled-for-man-charged-with-terrorism-in-surrey-bus-stabbing-7676329>.

³⁰ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, press release, “Individual arrested on allegations of terrorism,” March 23, 2023. <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2023/individual-arrested-allegations-terrorism>

³¹ Peter Zimonjic, “Canadian, 28, charged under U.K. terrorism act after arrest at Heathrow,” *CBC News*, July 24, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/anjem-choudary-khaled-hussein-charged-1.6915737>;

Jonny Wakefield, “Edmonton man accused of extremist ties in U.K. makes court appearance; trial set for next year,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 4, 2023, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/crime/edmonton-man-accused-of-extremist-ties-in-u-k-makes-court-appearance-trial-set-for-next-year>.

³² Vikram Dodd, “Jailed preacher Anjem Choudary faces strict controls after release,” *The Guardian*, October 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/16/jailed-preacher-anjem-choudary-faces-strict-controls-after-release>.

³³ The Associated Press, “Canadian convicted under U.K. terrorism act,” *CBC News*, July 23 2024, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-canadian-gas-station-attendant-and-british-preacher-convicted-in-uk/>.

Although al-Muhajiroun is not a listed terrorist entity in Canada, this case is reflective of previous incidents of Canadian individuals travelling abroad to join or support the Islamic State. According to law enforcement officials we spoke with,

“We [are] focused on catching the people that were escalating toward a more active, participant-level. That’s where a case like Khaled Hussein is a good indicator. This is a guy who’s 29 years old, who is in that age range that we see a lot of individuals moving to a more active [role]. That was reflective of some of the [other] individuals, males especially, that left Canada to join ISIS – they were in that 20-30-year-old range, predominantly. Maybe even early 30s. They became adults and were able to make their own decisions, maybe they’re more independent from family, and [that] may have diverted them on that path.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Beyond Alberta, there has been limited RMVE within the Prairie region. The last notable RMVE activity in Saskatchewan dates to 2017, when the Prince Albert Police Service website was hacked. The hacker group that claimed responsibility posted pro-Islamic State propaganda and messages on the website.³⁴ This same pro-Islamic State hacker group is thought to be responsible for hacking other websites in Canada, including the University of New Brunswick Student Union Website in 2014.³⁵

The last notable RMVE activity tied to Manitoba occurred in 2016 in Strathroy, Ontario, when Aaron Driver, a Canadian Islamic State sympathizer, was killed during an armed confrontation with RCMP outside of his residence.³⁶

The confrontation was prompted by a tip from the FBI that Driver was potentially planning a terrorist attack in Canada. Although Driver was killed in Ontario, he had extensive ties to Winnipeg, where he allegedly became radicalized.³⁷ While still in Winnipeg in 2014, Driver came to the attention of CSIS after posting support for the Islamic State on Twitter under the alias Harun Abdurahman.

As in other jurisdictions, there is growing evidence of increased RMVE activity in the Prairie region. The recruitment of extremist travellers in the 2010s and more recent cases involving criminal charges against residents of both Calgary and Edmonton demonstrates the enduring appeal of certain groups in the region, particularly among youth in recent years. While the mechanisms for recruitment and engagement remain unclear in some cases, both online and in-person activities associated with these groups continue to persist. As law enforcement officials told us:

“I don’t think the Islamic State issue is over by any stretch. I think they’re just regrouping or recruiting differently or staying under the radar right now.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“[RMVE] continues to be a big concern for security and intelligence services. That percolation of jihadist rhetoric and extremism continues to flow in an upward trend. Certainly, with the recent geopolitical scene out of Gaza, it still is very much a flashpoint for homegrown extremism. From a trend perspective, it’s not going away. It’s continuing to spread.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

³⁴ CBC News, “Prince Albert Police Service website hacked, pro-ISIS message left,” CBC News, November 8, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/prince-albert-police-website-hacked-isis-1.4392568>

³⁵ CBC News, “ISIS supporters hack UNB Student Union’s website,” CBC News, October 14, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/isis-supporters-hack-unb-student-union-s-website-1.2797758>.

³⁶ The Canadian Press, “FBI tip led RCMP to thwart possible terrorist act by Aaron Driver in Strathroy, Ont.,” CBC News, August 10, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/terror-threat-arrest-rcmp-1.3715969>.

³⁷ No Author, “Aaron Driver: Troubled childhood, ISIS supporter, terror threat suspect,” CBC News, August 11, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/aaron-driver-troubled-childhood-isis-supporter-1.3716222>.



CHAPTER 4

Politically Motivated Violent Extremism

Politically Motivated Violent Extremism

Politically Motivated Violent Extremism (PMVE) refers to ideologies that justify the use of violence to instigate political change, whether to establish a new political system or alter existing political structures.¹ Historically and contemporarily, a majority of PMVE activity has been underpinned by nationalism, ethno-nationalism, and the promotion of independence and self-determination through the use of violence.

To be clear, these objectives and ideas also feature in other forms of extremism. In the RMVE category, jihadists seek to override human-made laws with their interpretation of divine laws. In the IMVE category, white supremacists want to replace governments with White ethno-states.

Recognizing the overlap between all the categories suggested by the Government of Canada, this section reviews instances of violent extremism that are (a) primarily motivated by political objectives and (b) not traditionally labelled RMVE or IMVE, such as violent separatist movements.

History of PMVE in Canada

The most prolific PMVE movement in Canadian history is that of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), active during the early 1960s to 1970s. The FLQ sought to establish a socialist government in Quebec that would separate from the rest of Canada, using tactics like bombings, robberies, and kidnappings to advance their objectives.²

Their most notorious act occurred in 1970 when members of the FLQ kidnapped a British diplomat and the Quebec Labour Minister, who later died, which led the Government of Canada to invoke the War Measures Act to allow for the mass arrest of suspected FLQ members, sympathizers, and the deployment of Canadian military forces.³ In total, 497 people were arrested or detained.

Outside of the FLQ, there have been numerous other examples of clandestine activities via diaspora communities that use violence to advocate for political change and independence abroad. The most notable incident in Canadian history was the Air India bombing in 1985, which claimed the lives of more Canadian citizens than any other terrorist attack to date.

On June 23, 1985, individuals linked to Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) – a militant organization that sought to create an independent Sikh nation-state in the Punjab region of India – planted a bomb on Air India Flight 182, which exploded over the Atlantic Ocean on the route from Montreal to London. All 331 people on board, including 268 Canadian citizens, were killed. The attack prompted a criminal investigation, which lasted nearly 20 years. While several people were arrested and tried for their alleged involvement, only 1 person was convicted and plead guilty to manslaughter in 2003.⁴

1 Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023* (March 2024), p. 47, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf.

2 Gustave Morf, *Terror in Quebec—Case Studies of the FLQ* (Front de Liberation Quebecois) (Toronto, ON: Clarke, Irwin and Co Ltd, 1970).

3 Ronald D. Crelinsten, "The Internal Dynamics of the FLQ During the October Crisis of 1970," in David C. Rapoport, *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, (Routledge, 2001).

4 Jon Azpiri, "Inderjit Singh Reyat, only person convicted in Air India bombing, released from halfway house," *Global News*, February 14, 2017, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3250033/inderjit-singh-reyat-only-person-convicted-in-air-india-bombing-released-from-halfway-house/>.

Recent trends in PMVE in Canada

PMVE and the Khalistan Movement

While the Khalistan movement peaked in Canada during the 1980s, it resurfaced in the late 2010s when the U.S.-based Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) organization launched an international, unofficial “referendum” about separating Punjab from India.⁵ Much of the activity associated with the contemporary manifestation of the movement in Canada remains political and non-violent.

Approximately 100,000 supporters in Brampton, Ontario, reportedly voted in favour of creating an independent Punjab.⁶ A year later, in Surrey, B.C., tens of thousands of Sikhs engaged in a similar mock referendum.⁷ The Government of India criticized Canada for allowing these activities to occur.

In June 2023, a “Sikh separatist leader who publicly campaigned for Khalistan” was killed in Surrey, B.C., by masked gunmen.⁸ The Indian government had previously alleged the victim was a leading member of the Khalistan Tiger Force, a banned militant group, and placed a \$1.2 million reward for information about him.⁹

Despite these accusations, the murdered activist and those around him consistently deny his involvement in any militancy or violence, even writing to the Canadian Prime Minister in 2016 to refute India’s claims. Canadian authorities arrested three Indian nationals living in Edmonton and charged them in connection with the murder.¹⁰

The killing has escalated diplomatic tensions between Canada and India. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated Canada was investigating “credible allegations” linking the Indian state to the murder; while India claims Canada harbors “Khalistani terrorists and extremists”.¹¹

In October 2024, Canadian police accused Indian diplomats of working with a criminal network to systematically target Sikh dissidents in the country.¹² Canadian officials allege that the murder was connected to other crimes that were part of a broader, India-sanctioned campaign of intimidation against the Sikh diaspora in Canada. This includes the murder of a Sikh fugitive in a Winnipeg home in September 2023.¹³ The Indian government has rejected these allegations.

During our discussions with law enforcement and intelligence officials about the Khalistan movement and the alleged involvement of the Indian government, several interviewees identified key policy areas for improvement to effectively address these emerging challenges:

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- 5 Harpreet Jhinjar, W. Andy Knight, & David Jones, “The Khalistan Movement and Its Impact in Canada,” (TSAS Research Brief, 2023), https://tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Jhinjar_KnightREsearchBriefV2.pdf.
 - 6 Shweta Sharma, “What is the Khalistan referendum, and why is India is so concerned about what’s happening in Canada?” *The Independent*, September 23, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/canada-khalistan-referendum-india-sikhs-b2173723.html>.
 - 7 No Author, “Tens of thousands of Sikhs cast ballots in 2nd Khalistan vote in Surrey, B.C., organizers, observers say,” *CBC News*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/khalistan-vote-second-round-surrey-1.7012234>.
 - 8 Jessica Murphy, “Three arrested and charged over Sikh activist’s killing in Canada,” *BBC News*, May 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67836968>.
 - 9 Nadine Yousif & Neal Razzal, “Who was Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar?” *BBC News*, October 2, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66860510>.
 - 10 Jessica Murphy, “Three arrested and charged over Sikh activist’s killing in Canada,” *BBC News*, May 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67836968>.
 - 11 Jessica Murphy, “Three arrested and charged over Sikh activist’s killing in Canada,” *BBC News*, May 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67836968>.
 - 12 Leyland Cecco, “Drive-by shootings, arson and murder: is the Indian government trying to silence Canada’s Sikh activists?” *The Guardian*, October 19, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/19/india-sikh-activists-violence>.
 - 13 Leyland Cecco, “Drive-by shootings, arson and murder: is the Indian government trying to silence Canada’s Sikh activists?” *The Guardian*, October 19, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/19/india-sikh-activists-violence>.
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“The foreign interference [issue] is a very difficult one to deal with. The tools that we have currently still need to be modernized. If you look at the Anti-Terrorism Act, it was kind of geared toward those major conspiracy plots [like] flying planes into towers. The world has changed, and I think those laws need to be changed [with it]. The ability to charge people with espionage for foreign interference, I think those need to be addressed. We [still have a long road ahead] to develop tools to effectively deal with that.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

The Impact of the Israel-Hamas War

While various domestic and international political independence movements have long been part of Canada’s experience with PMVE, global conflicts have also impacted domestic security.

One example is the ongoing Israeli-Hamas conflict. The most recent chapter of this longstanding conflict was triggered by Hamas’ attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Hamas – the militant group governing Gaza – launched rockets and carried out coordinated attacks in southern Israel, killing over 1,000 people,¹⁴ including 7 Canadians,¹⁵ while also capturing hostages.

In response, Israel launched a military campaign into Gaza against Hamas and, more recently, in Lebanon against Hezbollah. This campaign has resulted in mounting casualties, with the Palestinian Ministry of Health estimating 37,877 casualties as of June 2024, though it is unclear what proportion of these are civilian and military.¹⁶ Additionally, the accuracy of data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health is difficult to ascertain, as it is an institution run by Hamas. However, independent analyses published in *The Lancet* indicate this data is likely accurate and may even underestimate the true number of deaths.¹⁷

As with other highly contentious international conflicts there are impacts on Canadian citizens, including growing incidences of hate crimes that impact diaspora communities. Since the conflict began, there has been a documented increase in antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab hate crimes across Canada. For instance, in Toronto, antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes increased by 110% during October and November 2023.¹⁸ In Winnipeg, police reported an escalation in hate-motivated crimes since the start of the conflict, including several that targeted religious symbols and institutions.¹⁹

In addition to hate crimes and incidences, Canada’s Integrated Terrorist Assessment Centre warned that the conflict could inspire domestic attacks targeting Jewish and Palestinian communities, embassies, and cultural centers in Canada.²⁰

¹⁴ Agence France-Press, “Israel social security data reveals true picture of Oct 7 deaths,” *France 24*, December 15, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231215-israel-social-security-data-reveals-true-picture-of-oct-7-deaths>.

¹⁵ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2023* (March 2024), p. 47, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/scsis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf

¹⁶ Zeina Jamaluddine, Hanan Abukmail, Sarah Aly, Oona M.R. Campbell, & Francesco Checchi, “Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024: A Capture-recapture Analysis,” *The Lancet*, 1-9. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)02678-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)02678-3)

¹⁷ Les Roberts, “The Science is Clear. Over 30,000 People Have Died in Gaza,” *Time*, March 15, 2024, <https://time.com/6909636/gaza-death-toll/>.

¹⁸ No Author, “Toronto police say hate crimes spiked since start of Gaza conflict,” *Reuters*, November 23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/toronto-police-say-hate-crimes-spiked-since-start-gaza-conflict-2023-11-23/>.

¹⁹ No Author, “River Heights home shot at in suspected hate-motivated crime, Winnipeg police say,” *CBC News*, October 26, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-hate-motivated-crimes-october-1.7009240>.

²⁰ Stewart Bell & Mercedes Stephenson, “Government threat report warns about attacks in Canada inspired by Hamas-Israel conflict,” *Global News*, February 23, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10308061/threat-report-hamas-israel-attack-canada/>.

As predicted, in December 2023, a youth in Ottawa was charged with terrorism offences for allegedly plotting an attack against Jewish people. According to the charges, the plot is alleged to have begun sometime in late October when the youth instructed someone to carry out a terrorist attack against Jewish people.²¹

Two months later, a second youth was charged as an alleged co-conspirator in the plot.²² According to details released in November 2024, the two youths were allegedly planning to bomb a pro-Israel rally on Parliament Hill and possessed explosive materials.²³ Because the plot was allegedly linked to the Islamic State (discussed in *Chapter 3*), it can be categorized as RMVE, yet because it was accelerated by the Israel-Hamas war, it can also be considered PMVE.

In a separate PMVE incident, the Israeli-Hamas conflict is also believed to have inspired Qawarshi Zakaria Adam, from Airdrie, Alberta, to travel to Israel, where he attempted to stab an Israeli security unit while shouting “free Palestine”.²⁴ In the Prairie provinces, law enforcement officials told us they are closely monitoring any threats that may stem from or be inspired by the conflict:

“We definitely did see a trend in some of the political or religiously motivated extremism when it came to the things related to the Israel-Hamas conflict. There was some concern there, [but] we [haven’t] actually seen or identified any kind of significant like violent extremist threats locally related to that. [It’s] been something that we’ve been tuned into because there’s been a lot more activity in that area.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

“I think right now the Israel-Hamas issue is in the forefront – it’s what everyone’s watching right now.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

More about the impacts of the Israel-Hamas conflict on hate-motivated events in Canada will be discussed in *Chapter 6* of this report.

21 Kanishka Singh, “Ottawa youth charged with ‘terrorism’ offences for alleged targeting of Jews,” *Reuters*, December 16, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ottawa-youth-charged-with-terrorism-offences-alleged-targeting-jews-2023-12-16/>;

Kristy Nease, “Teen boy accused of anti-Jewish terror plot appears in court,” *CBC News*, December 20, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/anti-jewish-terror-plot-ottawa-teen-court-1.7065116>.

22 No Author, “2nd youth charged in connection with anti-Jewish terror plot,” *CBC News*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/2nd-youth-charged-in-connection-with-anti-jewish-terror-plot-1.7118072>.

23 Kristy Nease, “Teen accused of plotting to bomb pro-Israel rally on Parliament Hill denied bail,” *CBC News*, November 30, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/youth-anti-jewish-terror-plot-ottawa-parliament-hill-1.7396152>.

24 Natasha Anderson, “Canadian is ‘shot and killed by IDF after trying to stab Israelis’ as he screamed ‘you’re murdering people in Gaza’ in town that was attacked during Oct 7 terrorist attack by Hamas,” *The Daily Mail*, July 22, 2024, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13659571/Canadian-shot-killed-IDF-stab-Israelis-Gaza-town-Oct-7-terrorist-attack-Hamas.html>;
Tyson Fedor, “Canadian man killed in southern Israel has ties to Airdrie,” *CTV News*, July 24, 2024, <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/canadian-man-killed-in-southern-israel-has-ties-to-airdrie-1.6976870>.

The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Another international conflict that has created tensions within Canada is Russia's war in Ukraine. In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, marking a dramatic escalation of tensions between the two countries which have been ongoing since the start of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014. The conflict has caused mass civilian and military casualties, and a large number of refugees. According to estimates from the International Rescue Committee, as of April 2023, 8 million Ukrainians have fled the country, and another 5.4 million have been internally displaced.²⁵

Canada has deep historical ties with Ukraine and is home to the world's second largest Ukrainian diaspora after Russia.²⁶

As of November 2023, a little over 200,000 people fleeing the war in Ukraine have settled in Canada.²⁷ In addition to people coming to Canada from Ukraine, some Canadians have travelled to Ukraine to join the war. Although exact numbers are difficult to pinpoint, some estimates indicate around 550 Canadians have joined.²⁸ Additionally, as of October 2024, Global Affairs Canada has said it is "aware of the deaths of 20 Canadians in Ukraine" since the start of the war in 2022.²⁹

It is possible that Canadians fighting in Ukraine will eventually seek to return to Canada, which presents several challenges. Experiences during conflict such as exposure to combat and extreme violence, as well as physical injuries or psychological trauma could all play a role in their reintegration process. However, the extent to which these individuals will need support, such as psychological or reintegration support, remains to be seen, which makes this an important issue to monitor as it develops.

²⁵ International Rescue Committee, "Ukraine: Europe's largest displacement crisis in decades," *International Rescue Committee*, April 10, 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/article/ukraine-europes-largest-displacement-crisis-decades>.

²⁶ Leyland Cecco, "In Canada, world's second largest Ukrainian diaspora grieves invasion," *The Guardian*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/03/canada-ukraine-diaspora-relief-efforts-russia-attack>.

²⁷ Laura Osman, "Tens of thousands of Ukrainians expected to come to Canada in the next few months," *CBC News*, January 18, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ukrainians-canada-visas-1.7088030>.

²⁸ David Common, "'They saved my life that day': The inside story of a Canadian wounded in Ukraine," *CBC News*, October 16, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canadian-soldier-ukraine-russia-war-wounded-1.7352259>.

²⁹ David Common, "'They saved my life that day': The inside story of a Canadian wounded in Ukraine," *CBC News*, October 16, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canadian-soldier-ukraine-russia-war-wounded-1.7352259>.



CHAPTER 5

Mixed, Unclear & Hybrid Threats

Mixed, Unclear & Hybrid Threats

Violence is sometimes driven by a complex set of grievances, psychological factors, conspiracy theories, and mixed or unclear ideological convictions. In some instances, the motives are clearly ideological in nature, but the ideology itself is unclear. In other instances, it is difficult to discern any clear ideology that underpins a series of grievances and conspiracies. Instead, perpetrators are driven by a mixture of disparate grievances, beliefs, and ideologies that overlap and sometimes even contradict each other. Such cases pose classification challenges when using traditional categories of extremism, such as xenophobia or anti-authority extremism. The increasing prevalence of these mixed, unclear, and grievance-driven forms of violence poses challenges not only to existing systems of classification but also to approaches seeking to counter, prevent, and investigate threats to public safety.

To be clear, many groups, movements, and actors categorized as IMVE espouse an amalgamation of beliefs, grievances, and ideologies. However, these groups and movements – while eclectic and individualized in some ways – are primarily motivated by an underlying ideological system that is clear and coherent.

In contrast, for the cases discussed in this chapter, it is difficult to identify a single coherent belief system or ideology that takes precedence over others despite the tactics and justifications for violence resembling that of terrorism.¹ In some cases, ideology and belief systems may be deeply personal or fuelled by idiosyncratic grievances. In other cases, actors may hold a collection of contradictory beliefs, such as jihadism and white supremacy. This complicates efforts to establish a motive for violence and makes it more difficult to determine whether they meet the legal threshold of terrorism.

In response, governments have increasingly sought to incorporate mixed and unclear violent ideologies into national counterterrorism and prevention frameworks. In 2019, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security released a strategic framework to include ideologically ambiguous cases within their scope of counterterrorism and prevention efforts.² A year later, in 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray introduced the term “salad bar extremism”.³ Elsewhere, the United Kingdom’s Prevent Program established a new category called mixed, unstable, and unclear (MUU) for cases where individuals presented an ambiguous system of beliefs.⁴

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- ¹ For a fulsome explanation of mixed, unclear, and grievance-driven terrorism, see: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Andrew Zammit, Emelie Chace-Donahue & Madison Urban, “Composite Violent Extremism: Conceptualizing Attackers Who Increasingly Challenge Traditional Categories of Terrorism”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2023, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2194133>
 - ² U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence*, September 2019. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0920_plcy_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf.
 - ³ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens & Moustafa Ayad, *The Age of Incoherence: Understanding the New Extremist Landscape* (Washington, DC: Program on Extremism at the George Washington University, 2023), <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/the-age-of-incoherence-final.pdf>.
 - ⁴ U.K. Home Office, “User guide to individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales (2023)”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/user-guide-to-individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-england-and-wales>

Concurrently, researchers have sought to better understand this emerging phenomenon. Some experts believe this type of extremism is facilitated by how extremist actors connect and share ideas online, which facilitates the cross-pollination of disparate ideas and beliefs.⁵ Others have developed conceptual frameworks to classify and help understand this emerging trend, such as “idiosyncratic terrorism” and Composite Violent Extremism (CoVE).⁶

Unclear or grievance-driven violence

The most prominent case of unclear, grievance-driven violence in the Prairies occurred in Alberta on January 23, 2024, when Bezhani Sarvar entered Edmonton’s City Hall building armed with a rifle and explosives. Sarvar fired gunshots and threw homemade explosives before surrendering to an unarmed security guard without anyone being injured.

Determining a clear ideological motivation for this attack has been challenging. In a video posted to YouTube before the attack, Sarvar recorded himself discussing a variety of grievances, ranging from “anti-wokeism” to the war in Gaza, inflation, corruption, the housing crises, and healthy eating.⁷

Initially, Sarvar was charged with a litany of criminal offences, but a month later, the RCMP added 11 terrorism-related charges.⁸ Law enforcement officials told the media that Sarvar’s actions “were believed to be politically motivated and therefore reached the legal threshold required to support the terrorism charges”, although they acknowledged the complexity of the case.⁹ Sarvar, who has entered a plea of not guilty, remains in custody with his future trial dates yet to be determined.

5 Lewys Brace, Stephanie J. Baele & Debbie Ging, “Where do ‘mixed, unclear, and unstable’ ideologies come from? A data-driven answer centred on the incelosphere”, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 19:2, 2024, 103–124, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2023.2226667>.

6 Jesse J. Norris, “Idiosyncratic Terrorism: Disaggregating an Undertheorized Concept,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14:3 (2020), 2–18; Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Andrew Zammit, Emelie Chace-Donahue & Madison Urban, “Composite Violent Extremism: Conceptualizing Attackers Who Increasingly Challenge Traditional Categories of Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2023, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2194133>

7 Tyler Dawson, “From Gaza to ‘wokeism’: What the Edmonton city hall attack suspect allegedly said in video manifesto,” *The National Post*, January 26, 2024, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/edmonton-city-hall-bezhani-sarvar-video-manifesto>.

8 Paige Parsons, “RCMP lay terrorism charges against Edmonton city hall shooting suspect,” *CBC News*, March 4, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-city-hall-shooting-suspect-charged-with-terrorism-offences-1.7133063>; Jonny Wakefield, “Bail denied to man accused of committing terror attack on Edmonton city hall,” *Edmonton Journal*, April 12, 2024, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/crime/bail-denied-to-man-accused-of-committing-terror-attack-on-edmonton-city-hall>.

9 Tyler Dawson, “From Gaza to ‘wokeism’: What the Edmonton city hall attack suspect allegedly said in video manifesto,” *The National Post*, January 26, 2024, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/edmonton-city-hall-bezhani-sarvar-video-manifesto>.

Mixed ideologically motivated violent extremism

The most prominent instance of mixed ideologically motivated violent extremism in the Prairies is the self-proclaimed “Kingdom of Canada”, a conspiratorial movement that borrows heavily from anti-authority and xenophobic beliefs as well as pseudo-legal tactics. This movement was created and is currently led by Romana Didulo, a Canadian conspiracy theorist. Didulo gained notoriety in 2021 for her opposition to public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, garnering over 20,000 followers on her Telegram channel.¹⁰

Didulo’s ideology is characterized by a wide range of pseudo-legal, xenophobic, anti-authority, and conspiratorial beliefs that are packaged as “Royal Decrees” on her website and Telegram channels.

For example, in addition to adopting common QAnon conspiracy tropes, such as the claim that a cabal of elites is sex-trafficking children, she has declared herself the “Queen of Canada”. She also claims to be part of a superior extraterrestrial species with supernatural powers and access to New Age healing technologies like “medbeds”.¹¹

Until 2022, Didulo was primarily located in British Columbia. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, Didulo and a small group of her followers made their way to Ottawa when vehicles from around the country joined in the “Freedom Convoy” to protest the public health restrictions and vaccination mandates.

While in Ottawa, Didulo encouraged supporters to resist government authority, ignore public health measures, and avoid the COVID-19 vaccine, which she claimed was an “unlawful, unscientific, and unjust” bioweapon.¹² After the protests in Ottawa ended, Didulo and a small group of her supporters undertook a tour of Canada in their RVs, hosting public gatherings and “meet and greets” for supporters.

During their tour, in August 2022, about 30 of Didulo supporters attempted to arrest police officers at the Peterborough Ontario police headquarters. Didulo, who had made several calls for the arrest and execution of anyone involved in administering COVID-19 vaccines, did not participate and instead watched the attempted arrest from inside a vehicle.¹³ The event resulted in the arrest of several participants by police, including a woman charged with assault of a police officer.¹⁴

After the event in Peterborough, Didulo and her caravan continued their tour of the country, funded by online donations from supporters.¹⁵ Since September 2023, Didulo has settled in an abandoned schoolhouse in the rural village of Richmond, Saskatchewan, where she and a small group of her most ardent supporters remain at the time of publication of this report.

10 Mack Lamoureux, “QAnons Are Harassing People at the Whim of a Woman They Say Is Canada’s Queen,” *Vice News*, June 17, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3aqvkw/qanons-are-harassing-people-at-the-whim-of-a-woman-they-say-is-canadas-queen-romana-didulo>.

11 Christine Sarteschi, “The Social Phenomenon of Romana Didulo: ‘Queen of Canada,’” *International Journal of Coercion, Abuse, and Manipulation* (2023), DOI: 10.54208/1000/0006/002

12 Andrew Lupton, “Completely false anti-vaccine ‘cease and desist’ order prompts complaints to police,” *CBC News*, July 4, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/completely-false-anti-vaccine-cease-and-desist-order-prompts-complaints-to-police-1.6088212>.

13 Greg Davis, “3 Romana Didulo followers charged after attempting to ‘arrest’ Peterborough police,” *Global News*, August 15, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9060426/romana-didulo-peterborough/>.

14 Greg Davis, “6th arrest of Romana Didulo followers who attempted to arrest police in Peterborough,” *Global News*, August 26, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9087002/6th-arrest-romana-didulo-followers-arrest-police-officers-peterborough/>.

15 Mack Lamoureux, “A Mom Is Losing Her Family Home Thanks to the QAnon Queen of Canada,” *Vice News*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/romana-didulo-qanon-follower-losing-home/>.

The schoolhouse was privately owned by one of Didulo's supporters, who offered it as refuge after Didulo and her convoy were forced out of Kamsack, on the eastern edge of Saskatchewan, by protests.¹⁶ Didulo's arrival in the small village has caused significant tension, as many residents and local officials claim they received cease and desist letters from the group, including threats of death and execution for their opposition to the group's presence in the village.¹⁷

As tensions between the townspeople and Didulo's group escalated, the Saskatchewan RCMP set up a mobile detachment in the village.¹⁸ In November, Didulo and her followers briefly left the schoolhouse and relocated to a farm an hour outside of the town, only to return a few weeks later.¹⁹ In image 1 from a popular "Kingdom of Canada" Telegram channel, Didulo uses antisemitic tropes, a common element of many xenophobic and pseudo-legal beliefs, to justify the negative reaction of the Richmond residents to her group's return:

16 Nicholas Frew, "Canada's QAnon 'Queen' forced out of Kamsack, Sask." *CBC News*, September 15, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/kamsack-saskatchewan-qanon-didulo-1.6967631>.

17 Mack Lamoureux, "Death Threats, Closed Playgrounds: QAnon Queen Wreaks Havoc in Small Town Canada," *Vice News*, October 6, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/death-threats-closed-playgrounds-qanon-queen-wreaks-havoc-in-small-town-canada/>.

18 Rory McLean, "RCM speak in Sask. Community where 'QAnon queen' supporters are located," *CTV News*, October 10, 2023, <https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/rcmp-expected-to-speak-in-sask-community-where-qanon-queen-supporters-are-located-1.6595321>.

19 Mack Lamoureux, "QAnon Queen Cult Leader Returns to Small Town That Thought It Drove Her Away", *Vice News*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qanon-queen-returns-saskatchewan-town-canada/>.

December 18, 2023

In the Kingdom of Canada,

Remember, zionists playbook teaches adults to be emotionally charged even if they don't care or don't know what it is they are doing. Apparently, it's a tactic they use to convince the easily fooled that they really care about their cause.

Would this phrase count with hyped up emotions...This is from the select few individuals in RichmondSaskatchewan.

1] We Don't know HRM Queen Romana Didulo and her Team, so we just want them out of Richmond, Saskatchewan.

2] We just want her gone from Richmond Saskatchewan

3] We don't know her.

4] We don't want them here.

WoW! They were all filmed by a television crew saying all these zionist Schitz [making themselves look ignorant].

These are the examples of zionism activism.

And so it is. 🤔👉👎🏛️👑👁️

🐸🐸🐸🐸🐸 Q 🐸🐸🐸🐸🐸 Q 🐸🐸🐸🐸🐸 Q 🐸🐸

Peace and Prosperity and Love.

🌟🌟 Politics Zero, Religion Zero 🌟🌟

HRH Majesty Queen Romana Didulo,
Commander-in-Chief,
Head of Government, Head of State,
President, National Indigenous Chief, and Queen of the Kingdom of
Canada

👍 39 🔥 18 ❤️ 11 😊 5 😄 1

👁️ 4.7K 2:33 PM

Image 1: Announcement on a “Kingdom of Canada” channel with antisemitic sentiments (Source: Telegram, December 2023).

The presence of the “Kingdom of Canada” has divided the town of Richmond. The group’s threats of public execution have instilled fear in many residents. Other residents, however, support the group and have actively opposed measures to remove her.²⁰ While the group in Saskatchewan has not committed any acts of violence, instructions to use violence, as depicted in image 2, are regularly communicated to followers. In the past, Didulo was detained by the RCMP for encouraging her followers to shoot healthcare workers and migrants, leading to the arrest of at least one individual in Quebec who threatened a school.²¹



Image 2: Example of a post to a “Kingdom of Canada” channel calling for followers to shoot migrants (Source: Telegram, February 2023).

²⁰ Laura Sciarpetletti, “Village residents divided as ‘Queen of Canada’ cult remains in Richmond, Sask.,” *CBC News*, June 19, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/village-residents-divided-as-queen-of-canada-cult-remains-in-richmond-sask-1.7238282>.

²¹ Andrew Russell & Stewart Bell, “Self-declared ‘Queen of Canada’ detained by RCMP after alleged threats to health-care workers”, *Global News*, December 1, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/8417379/queen-of-canada-COVID-online-threats/>; Mack Lamoureux, “The QAnon Queen Is Telling Her Followers to Shoot Migrants”, *Vice News*, February 9, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qanon-romana-didulo-shoot-migrants/>.

In the online discussion linked to the post calling to shoot migrants, nearly a hundred users commented in support. One user wrote, "WOW!!!! Now that's BORDER CONTROL! AWESOME!!!!" another wrote, "Shoot Trudeau on site!" and another posted image 3.

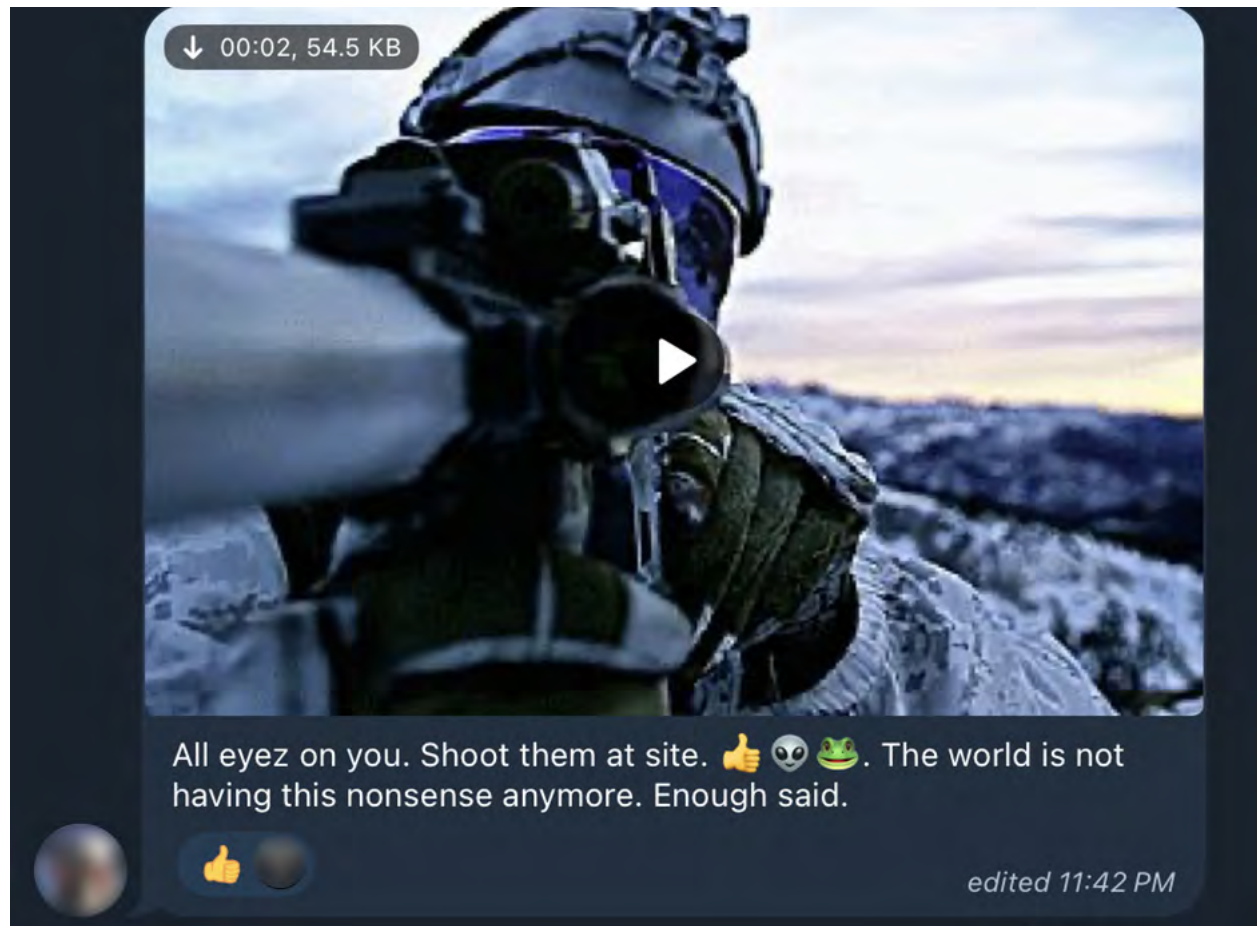


Image 3: Example of a post in support of the call to shoot migrants on a popular "Kingdom of Canada" channel (Source: Telegram, February 2023).

One subject-matter expert we interviewed likened the “Kingdom of Canada” to a high-control cult with the potential for violence if threatened:

“You’ve got a group of people who break off into their own community around a charismatic leader. They are ideologically oriented to be hostile to the government [and] law enforcement. If they perceive themselves under siege and under attack, they may do very dangerous things. The part about Didulo is, again, we’ve got this group of individual isolated in a hostile community who have been conditioned to follow their leader. I think the chances of her choosing an armed confrontation are low, [but] you never know what they’re capable of.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

While they may pose a potential risk to others, the belief system underlying the “Kingdom of Canada” mostly jeopardizes its followers. Based on the belief that they have no legal obligation to corporate institutions or governments, many followers have stopped paying their mortgages, rent, utility bills, and taxes. This has led to evictions, foreclosures, homelessness, and the loss of power or water to their homes.²² Others have postponed necessary medical treatments based on the belief that “med beds” with New Age healing technologies would soon become available as Didulo had promised, as shown in image 4.

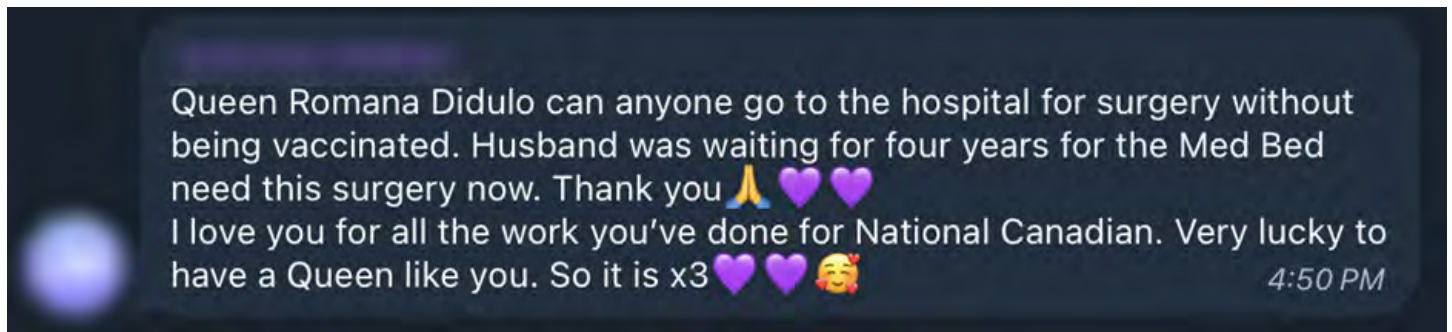


Image 4: Post about “Med Beds” on popular “Kingdom of Canada” channel (Source: Telegram, 2024).

²² Mack Lamoureux, “A Mom Stopped Paying Her Bills Because of the QAnon Queen. She Lost Her Home,” *Vice News*, March 28, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qanon-queen-romana-didulo-follower-evicted/>.

Hybridized Xenophobic Threats

Order of Nine Angles (O9A)

A concerning development in the ecosystem of xenophobic extremism is the outgrowth of hybridized threats which blend “different types of threats, tactics, and actors”.²³ For instance, some esoteric, militant accelerationist, neo-fascist networks blend non-ideological criminality, such as sextortion and child sexual abuse material (CSAM), with violent xenophobic narratives. By blending these elements, these groups seek to undermine social norms and moral standards to create chaos and trigger the collapse of society.

Perhaps the most well-known of these is the Order of Nine Angles (O9A), a transnational esoteric occultist network that incorporates militant accelerationist neo-Nazism with Satanism, paganism, and cosmology.²⁴ The O9A is composed of decentralized cells known as “nexions”, all of whom share the goal to subvert and ultimately destroy society by carrying out criminal acts deemed amoral, such as sexual assault or abuse, animal abuse, torture, ritualistic killings, human sacrifice, mass shootings, and acts of terrorism.

To initiate oneself into O9A and affiliated offshoots, individuals can seek advice from an existing affiliate or embark on a self-guided process. O9A texts encourage initiates to carry out acts of sedition demonstrating “devotion” to the group’s objectives, known as the “ABC Rites,” which stand for committing acts of “assault, business [fraud], and criminal organization”.²⁵

Other paths include The Sevenfold Way, which claims to promote a personal and esoteric transformation.²⁶ A key component of this is the “insight role,” whereby adherents infiltrate institutions like the military or police to recruit, gather information, and carry out insider attacks.²⁷ One example of this occurred in 2020 when a U.S. Army soldier shared sensitive deployment details with O9A-affiliated individuals and others he believed were linked to al-Qaeda.²⁸ His goal, according to the U.S. Justice Department, was to orchestrate an ambush on his unit to incite a global race war.

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- 23** Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay, & Matt Bastin, “Nihilism and Terror: How M.K.Y. Is Redefining Terrorism, Recruitment, and Mass Violence,” *CTC Sentinel*, 17:8 (2024): 22-29, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/nihilism-and-terror-how-m-k-y-is-redefining-terrorism-recruitment-and-mass-violence/>.
- 24** Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Emelie Chace-Donahue, “The Order of Nine Angles: Cosmology, Practice & Movement,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, (2023): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2186737>
- 25** Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, “Dangerous Organizations and Bad Actors: Order of Nine Angles,” *Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*, September 29, 2023, <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/publications/dangerous-organizations-and-bad-actors-order-nine>;
- Marc-André Argentino, Barrett G., & M.B. Tyler, “764: The Intersection of Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Child Sexual Exploitation”, *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, January 19, 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/01/19/764-the-intersection-of-terrorism-violent-extremism-and-child-sexual-exploitation/>;
- Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay & Matt Bastin, “Nihilism and Terror: How M.K.Y. Is Redefining Terrorism, Recruitment, and Mass Violence”, *CTC Sentinel* 17:8 (2024): 22-29, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/nihilism-and-terror-how-m-k-y-is-redefining-terrorism-recruitment-and-mass-violence/>.
- 26** Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, “Dangerous Organizations and Bad Actors: Order of Nine Angles”, *Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*, September 29, 2023, <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/publications/dangerous-organizations-and-bad-actors-order-nine>.
- 27** Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Emelie Chace-Donahue, “The Order of Nine Angles: Cosmology, Practice & Movement”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, (2023): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2186737>
- 28** Holmes Lybrand, “Former Army soldier sentenced to 45 years for role in plot to kill fellow service members,” *CNN News*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/03/politics/ethan-melzer-army-nazi-jihadist-plot/index.html>.

O9A has important linkages to other xenophobic militant accelerationist groups that emerged during the mid-to-late 2010s and has played an important role in shaping their ideology, aesthetic, and tactics. For example, members of some Atomwaffen Division cells in the United States frequently cross-pollinated with the Tempel ov Blood (ToB), an American O9A nexion.²⁹ Some members of The Base also had links to O9A, including three individuals arrested in Georgia in 2020 for conspiring to murder a couple they believed to be antifascist.³⁰ One of the three men allegedly spent his free time reading O9A texts.

Many modern neo-fascist accelerationist movements across North America and Europe have since adopted beliefs, tactics, and aesthetics from O9A. For example, image 5 depicts a ToB Liber333 patch, a symbol frequently used by American Atomwaffen members on their clothes and in their propaganda.

Since the decline of Atomwaffen Division and its designation as a terrorist organization by several countries, it has rebranded as the National Socialist Order (NSO).³¹ Similarly, Tempel ov Blood has rebranded as Satanic Font.³² As with other IMVE groups and movements, the names and affiliations regularly change, but the core ideology remains largely the same.

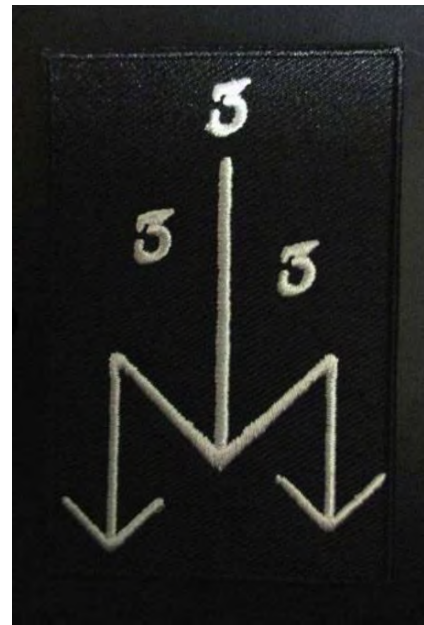


Image 5: Example of a Liber333 patch sold by the Tempel ov Blood and worn by some Atomwaffen members.

- ²⁹ Isabela Bernardo & Matthew Kriner, "A New Image of Terror and Dread: The Significance of Dark Foreigner's Arrest", *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, September 25, 2023, <https://gnet-research.org/2023/09/25/the-significance-of-dark-foreigners-arrest/>; Ali Winston & Jake Hanrahan, "He Was an FBI Informant – and Inspired a Generation of Violent Extremists", *Wired*, August 1, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/the-dangerous-exploits-of-an-extremist-fbi-informant/>.
- ³⁰ Mack Lamoureux, Ben Makuch & Zachary Kamel, "How One Man Built a Neo-Nazi Insurgency in Trump's America", *Vice News*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/how-one-man-built-a-neo-nazi-insurgency-in-trumps-america/>.
- ³¹ Ben Makuch, "Neo-Nazi Terror Group Atomwaffen Division Re-Emerges Under New Name", *Vice News*, August 5, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/neo-nazi-terror-group-atomwaffen-division-re-emerges-under-new-name/>.
- ³² Marc-André Argentino, "Part 3 When No Lives Matter: M.K.Y. and its Affiliation to Domestic Nihilistic Satanism", *From the Depths*, July 1, 2024, <https://www.maargentino.com/part-3-when-no-lives-matter-m-k-u-and-its-affiliation-to-domestic-nihilistic-satanism/>.

One hybrid offshoot is the National Socialist Order of Nine Angles (NSO9A), which blends the militant accelerationist neo-fascism of Atomwaffen with esoteric, occult, and satanic elements from the Order of Nine Angles.³³ Image 6 depicts a symbol used by the NSO9A, which blends traditional neo-Nazi imagery with esoteric O9A symbols, such as the trident and the ouroboros (a symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail).



Image 6: NSO9A symbol

In September 2020, a man with online links to O9A slit the throat of a mosque volunteer in Toronto, which is believed to be the first case of violence linked to the group in Canada.³⁴ Though our research has not indicated any acts of violence committed by O9A or its affiliates in the Prairies, law enforcement officials we spoke to noted they were aware of the potential threats from O9A and its adherents:

“It seems like right now O9A is what everyone’s really looking at. This one could be pretty dangerous, especially with some of the material they’re putting out.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

764 Network

Although our research has found no evidence of O9A-specific violence in the Prairies, an adjacent online movement known as the 764 network has received increased attention from law enforcement in the region.

Part of a larger cybercriminal network known as “The Com” (short for “The Community”), the 764 network is a decentralized online child sextortion network formed in 2021 on Discord by a teenage boy from Texas.³⁵ 764 – a reference to the partial postcode of the Texan youth – took inspiration from another similar group on Discord called “CVLT,” which forced minors to perform sexual and violent acts, which were often live-streamed to other group members.³⁶

³³ Marc-André Argentino, “Part 3 When No Lives Matter: M.K.Y. and its Affiliation to Domestic Nihilistic Satanism”, *From the Depths*, July 1, 2024, <https://www.maargentino.com/part-3-when-no-lives-matter-m-k-u-and-its-affiliation-to-domestic-nihilistic-satanism/>.

³⁴ Mack Lamoureux, “‘Random’ Murder of Muslim Man Linked to ‘Neo-Nazi Death Cult’: Report”, *Vice News*, September 19, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/random-murder-of-muslim-man-linked-to-neo-nazi-death-cult-report/>.

³⁵ Ali Winston, “There Are Dark Corners of the Internet. Then There’s 764”, *Wired*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/764-com-child-predator-network/>.

³⁶ Marc-André Argentino, Barrett G. & M.B. Tyler, “764: The Intersection of Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Child Sexual Exploitation”, *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, January 19, 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/01/19/764-the-intersection-of-terrorism-violent-extremism-and-child-sexual-exploitation/>;

Shawn Boburg & Chris Dehghanpoor, “On social media, a bullied teen found fame among child predators worldwide”, *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2024/09/09/social-media-bullied-teen-found-fame-among-child-predators-worldwide/>.

According to recent documents from the U.S. Department of Justice, CVLT has been operating since at least 2019, and in January 2025, four of its members were charged for their involvement in activities related to child sexual exploitation, which victimized at least 16 minors around the world.³⁷ The 764 Discord server, inspired by CVLT, expanded to include other criminal and exploitation activities, such as forcing victims to engage in animal torture and bestiality, incest, rape, drug use, violence against others, and suicide.³⁸

Like CVLT, victims of 764 are lured from online spaces in several ways. Some are brought in from websites frequented by vulnerable minors, such as websites about mental health, eating disorders, or self-harm forums. Others were brought in from popular gaming sites like Roblox and Minecraft. Some are lured from websites that host extreme gore.

In most cases, the 764 groomer initiates contact with the minor - usually female - and engages in tactics such as "love bombing" to gain trust before inviting them to join private Discord and Telegram groups where they are further coerced into sharing sexually explicit or violent images and videos of themselves.³⁹

In other cases, minors are tricked into clicking compromised links, which provide groomers with sensitive digital information like IP addresses that can be leveraged for extortion.⁴⁰ These digital files, along with any sexually explicit images or videos, are then compiled into a "LoreBook" and used to extort them into grooming others.⁴¹

Victims are also exploited into performing other acts, such as harming, mutilating, or killing family pets and animals, incest, or carving the online aliases of their 764 groomers onto their bodies, known as "cutsigns".⁴²

The original 764 Discord server dissolved in July 2021 following the founder's arrest on child pornography charges.⁴³ Since then, similar groups under different names have rebranded and multiplied across private servers on platforms like Discord and Telegram, though researchers and experts often refer to these groups simply as 764.

Assessing the stability and size of the 764 network is challenging because researchers cannot observe the inner workings of private groups due to the prevalence of CSAM.⁴⁴ However, as with other xenophobic groups discussed in this report, "The Com" groups frequently disband, splinter, and rebrand under new names to circumvent social media bans and de-platforming efforts.

37 United States Department of Justice, press release, "Four Members of Online Neo-Nazi Group that Exploited Minors Charged with Producing Child Sexual Abuse Material", January 30, 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/four-members-online-neo-nazi-group-exploited-minors-charged-producing-child-sexual-abuse>.

38 Shawn Boburg, Pranshu Verma & Chris Dehghanpoor, "On popular online platforms, predatory groups coerce children into self-harm", *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/764-predator-discord-telegram/>.

39 Shawn Boburg, Pranshu Verma & Chris Dehghanpoor, "On popular online platforms, predatory groups coerce children into self-harm", *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/764-predator-discord-telegram/>.

40 Marc-André Argentino, "When 'Community' Means Cruelty: An Introduction to the Criminal Networks and Behaviors of The Community, Comm, Com, and 764," *From the Depths*, May 9, 2024, <https://www.maargentino.com/coming-soon/>.

41 Marc-André Argentino, Barrett G. & M.B. Tyler, "764: The Intersection of Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Child Sexual Exploitation", *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, January 19, 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/01/19/764-the-intersection-of-terrorism-violent-extremism-and-child-sexual-exploitation/>.

42 Ali Winston, "There Are Dark Corners of the Internet. Then There's 764," *Wired*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/764-com-child-predator-network/>.

43 Shawn Boburg, Pranshu Verma & Chris Dehghanpoor, "On popular online platforms, predatory groups coerce children into self-harm", *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/764-predator-discord-telegram/>.

44 Marc-André Argentino, Barrett G. & M.B. Tyler, "764: The Intersection of Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Child Sexual Exploitation", *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, January 19, 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/01/19/764-the-intersection-of-terrorism-violent-extremism-and-child-sexual-exploitation/>.

When Discord servers are shut down, they reorganize by creating new accounts and sharing links to alternate servers, allowing illegal activities to continue.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, on private Discord servers and Telegram groups, members share advice on how and where to groom vulnerable youth. In many cases, 764 perpetrators were originally victims who were exploited and groomed to prey on other vulnerable youth. As one Canadian expert told us:

“A lot of the perpetrators are also victims themselves, because a lot of them have been brought into the network and then exploited and manipulated into doing really horrible things. And then throughout the process, they themselves become perpetrators. We’re dealing with really young perpetrators.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

In addition to the severity of this network’s activities, researchers have also identified several connections with violent extremist groups like O9A. Many of O9A’s stereotypical aesthetics, visuals, and tactics have been adopted by 764 members and vice-versa. There are several possible reasons for this overlap. In some cases, adherents seeking to further the ideological goals of O9A may be attracted to groups like 764, which engage in activities considered taboo, illicit, and amoral by society. Conversely, members of the 764 network may be attracted to ideologies like O9A, which promotes violence, gore, child pornography, rape, and more. Law enforcement officials in the Prairies echoed these findings:

“The big one for us is accelerationism, and a lot of groups tap into the philosophy of accelerationism, especially militant accelerationism. One of those domains is 764 [and] Tempel ov Blood, Order of Nine Angles. The people that are meshing child exploitation with esoteric accelerationism, Nazism, that’s their philosophy – to bring down the world by ensuring there’s no future by targeting children. [They engage in] the most heinous, awful acts imaginable. We’re seeing an uptick in these absolutely awful ideologies that’s proliferating.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Although there is some overlap between individuals linked to both movements, others have cautioned the “relationship [between 764 and O9A] is thinner than it’s been made out to be”.⁴⁶ Much of the similarity between the two appears to be superficial and primarily aesthetic.

Rather than actively pursuing broader ideological objectives tied to xenophobic militant accelerationism, experts and former victims explain that 764 groomers are often more concerned with gaining status and power within the group. Many members seem “unfamiliar with O9A dogma” and instead seek to co-opt the sect’s “symbols, texts, and aesthetic” primarily for shock value.⁴⁷ Engaging in the most extreme and shocking behaviours earns members “clout,” or social recognition, which perpetuates the cycle of abuse that sustains the group.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ali Winston, “There Are Dark Corners of the Internet. Then There’s 764”, *Wired*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/764-com-child-predator-network/>.

⁴⁶ Mack Lamoureux, “The Vile Sextortion and Torture Ring Where Kids Target Kids”, *Vice News*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kxjnz/the-vile-sextortion-and-torture-ring-where-kids-target-kids>.

⁴⁷ Ali Winston, “There Are Dark Corners of the Internet. Then There’s 764”, *Wired*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/764-com-child-predator-network/>.

⁴⁸ Mack Lamoureux, “The Vile Sextortion and Torture Ring Where Kids Target Kids”, *Vice News*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kxjnz/the-vile-sextortion-and-torture-ring-where-kids-target-kids>;

In 2024, federal authorities in the United States and Canada released a series of public warnings about the dangers of online predatorial networks like 764 and other child sexual exploitation groups within “The Com”.⁴⁹ Although the size of the broader 764 network is likely small due to the extreme nature of its contents, experts estimate there have been at least a few hundred victims globally, evidenced by several high-profile arrests of groomers in Europe, South America, and the United States.⁵⁰

In Canada, there has been at least one arrest in the Prairies linked to this group: a teenager in Alberta.⁵¹ Although law enforcement officials in Saskatchewan and Manitoba said they were aware of the groups, our research has not uncovered any arrests related to these groups in those provinces. Nonetheless, law enforcement officials we spoke to expressed concern about the extreme nature of the content:

“764 seems to be the one that everyone is really worried about. The material that they’re using and what they get people to do is just off the charts. Stuff we haven’t seen before.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

When asked how successful groups like 764 are at recruiting individuals, law enforcement officials told us:

“It’s shocking how successful they are. I don’t think it’s a numbers thing, [because] it’s not the quantity of people. These are very small groups, [but] it’s the fact that they’re getting any at all that are buying into this kind of material. Even a small number of people is shocking [because of] how they are getting into [this material]. Right now, especially with the youth [and] how much time they’re spending on social media, [they] don’t understand how social media feeds are playing at them. Once you get connected via a backdoor on an app from [764 groomers] and you start to look at the material, that’s all you’re seeing. It’s not a huge number [of people], but any – even a low number of people getting recruited by these groups – is very concerning.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁴⁹ Ioanna Roumeliotis, Laurence Mathieu-Leger & Andrew Culbert, “Violent online groups are pressuring youth into harming themselves, authorities warn,” *CBC News*, February 9, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/online-groups-pressuring-youth-self-harm-1.7107885>;

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, press release, “RCMP Reminds Canadians About Violent Online Groups Targeting Youth”, August 27, 2024, <https://rcmp.ca/en/news/2024/08/rcmp-reminds-canadians-about-violent-online-groups-targeting-youth>; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, “Young people and violent extremism: A call for collective action”, December 16, 2024, <https://rcmp.ca/en/corporate-information/publications-and-manuals/five-eyes-insights-young-people-and-violent-extremism-call-collective-action>.

⁵⁰ Mack Lamoureux, “The Vile Sextortion and Torture Ring Where Kids Target Kids”, *Vice News*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kxjnz/the-vile-sextortion-and-torture-ring-where-kids-target-kids>; Ali Winston, “There Are Dark Corners of the Internet. Then There’s 764”, *Wired*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.wired.com/story/764-com-child-predator-network/>.

⁵¹ Megan Yamoah, “Arrest of Lethbridge teen prompts police to warn parents of online activity”, *Global News*, February 27, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10320207/arrest-of-lethbridge-teen-prompts-police-to-warn-parents-of-online-activity/>.

However, law enforcement officials also told us that, unlike other accelerationist groups discussed in this report, 764 appears to be an entirely online phenomenon in Canada thus far:

“For active clubs, we’re still seeing [mostly] young men, but adult young men. The difference with [groups like] active clubs and Atomwaffen Division is that although they do have online activities and online footprints, their main purpose is real-world active engagement at a cellular level. They’re meeting, they’re [engaged] in different activities. In the case of active clubs, it’s physical fitness. On the other side, the Coms and 764 networks are entirely internet-based. There is no [evidence in Canada] to suggest any offline organization. It’s based on the Internet, so it’s got a global reach and these people are based all around the world. ”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Despite the low number of publicly known arrests related to these groups, this new form of extremism seems to have become a significant concern across the Prairies, including in Alberta, where at least one case has occurred.⁵² However, our interviewees encouraged a careful interpretation of this:

“What defines significant? I think oftentimes [people interpret] significant to mean significant numbers, or significant instances. To be fearmongering, saying we have an epidemic and suggesting that every other youth on a computer is actively being radicalized – that’s not the case. [Instead], I would suggest in the national security space, significant means [something] totally different. The numbers of [764] might not be massive, but the potential damage that can be done [to themselves and others] if these individuals aren’t identified and stopped, that’s significant. The level of trauma that is inflicted on these victims is significant... I think it’s safe to say that it’s not something that we didn’t notice, it’s always been there. I think there has been an uptick. But it’s like anything else in policing, if you start looking for it more, you’re going to find more of it. That doesn’t mean it didn’t exist before, but it does seem like it’s increasing.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁵² Megan Yamoah, “Arrest of Lethbridge teen prompts police to warn parents of online activity”, *Global News*, February 27, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10320207/arrest-of-lethbridge-teen-prompts-police-to-warn-parents-of-online-activity/>.

Moreover, our interviewees suggest this network may not be a transient form of extremism:

“It seems like that’s where [experts] expect our next big focus to be. Not necessarily as big as [Religiously Motivated Terrorism], I don’t think it’s going to get that big. [But] it seems everyone believes that this O9A and 764 stuff is the next wave of where things are going. Now we’re seeing this whole new world of gross stuff that they’re getting people to do, the child porn, the self-mutilation, all that stuff. It’s taken to a whole other level, and there’s a lot of people who say that this is the next wave.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

However, law enforcement officials also discussed a range of unique challenges that arise when combating online child sextortion networks, such as these:

“The whole goal of Coms groups is to turn the victim into the victimizer, and that presents its own set of challenges in dealing with those offenders or the victims. The transnational nature of these offenses, the fluidity, the anonymization of both suspects and victims is an incredible challenge for law enforcement.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Nihilism & misanthropy

Alongside the mix of militant accelerationist neo-fascism with esoteric, occult, and satanic beliefs, there has also been an adoption of nihilism and misanthropy.⁵³ A small but growing strain of militant accelerationist neo-fascist movements, such as the Maniac Murder Cult (abbreviated M.K.Y. based on the group’s Russian name) or No Lives Matter (NLM), promote nihilistic and misanthropic calls for violence.

M.K.Y. is a group that originated in Ukraine and Russia but has since expanded and engaged in extremist activities elsewhere. A high-profile incident in North America linked to the group occurred in July 2024, when an M.K.Y. leader from the country of Georgia was indicted in New York for plotting to have someone dressed up as Santa Claus hand out poisoned candy to racial minorities and children at Jewish schools in Brooklyn.⁵⁴

⁵³ Simon Purdue, “Ideological Nihilism and Aesthetic Violence: Mass Shooters and Online Antisocial Subcultures”, *Global Network on Extremism and Technology*, July 13, 2022, <https://gnet-research.org/2022/07/13/ideological-nihilism-and-aesthetic-violence-mass-shooters-and-online-antisocial-subcultures/>.

⁵⁴ Marlene Lenthag, “‘Maniac Murder Cult’ plotted to have person in Santa costume poison kids in New York City, officials say”, *NBC News*, July 17, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/maniac-murder-cult-plotted-person-santa-costume-poison-kids-new-york-c-rcna162323>.



Image 7: Example of propaganda that blends neo-fascism, esotericism, nihilism, and misanthropy. The individual depicted on the left wears a Liber333 patch on the arm, a symbol associated with the American O9A nexion Tempel ov Blood (now Satanic Front). The text at the top is a play on a common white nationalist slogan known as the “14 Words,” but depicts a nihilistic and misanthropic call to violence. The original “14 Words” slogan is as follows: *“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”*

Experts argue that M.K.Y. adheres to neo-fascist militant accelerationist ideologies like other similar movements but calls for “nihilistic” and “misanthropic” violence to precipitate the collapse of society.⁵⁵ For example, the vetting procedures for individuals seeking to join M.K.Y. include proving they have committed acts of violence such as murders, beatings, arsons, acts of terrorism; a cyberattack such as hacking, swatting, or doxxing; or the creation of biological weapons.

⁵⁵ Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay & Matt Bastin, “Nihilism and Terror: How M.K.Y. is Redefining Terrorism, Recruitment, and Mass Violence”, *CTC Sentinel* 17:8 (2024): 22-29, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/nihilism-and-terror-how-m-k-y-is-redefining-terrorism-recruitment-and-mass-violence/>.

However, according to a complaint and affidavit filed against the M.K.Y. leader from Georgia, the violence promoted by these groups appears to be directed at specific people deemed “low race targets” rather than being truly nihilistic or misanthropic.⁵⁶ A manifesto titled “Hater’s Handbook,” authored by the Georgian individual, includes chapters titled “White Race One Race”, and claims in the introduction: *“I can proudly say I’ve murder[ed] for [the] white race and [I’m] willing to bring more of chaos in this rotten world... Our main goal is to spread flames of Lucifer and continue his mission of ethnic cleansing, great drive of purification”*.⁵⁷

No documented incidents of violence committed by individuals linked to M.K.Y. have been reported in Canada. However, some emerging evidence suggests that support for the group exists in the Prairies. Specifically, in Winnipeg, the M.K.Y. initials and other hateful symbols, including swastikas, were spray-painted onto a Jewish community center during Hanukkah in December 2024.⁵⁸

A 19-year-old Winnipeg-area man was arrested in January 2025 during a raid linked to this graffiti and charged with 26 counts of mischief, where police and investigators seized some as yet undisclosed evidence.⁵⁹ In March 2025, the Manitoba RCMP announced that this individual was now facing terrorist-related charges for “facilitating a terrorist activity, participating in an activity related to a terrorist group,” and for the “commission of an offence for a terrorist group”.⁶⁰ Much like the foiled plot in New York City, the graffiti in Winnipeg targeted a specific group: the Jewish community.

In contrast, another group called No Lives Matter (NLM) appears to follow a stricter interpretation of nihilistic and misanthropic violence. Although its origins are unclear, some prominent NLM members claim the group was originally formed as a subgroup of 764.⁶¹ However, some reports indicate that NLM has since disassociated from 764 due to the latter’s connection with pedophilia and CSAM.⁶² Instead, NLM claims it has abandoned these elements and returned to a pure “misanthropic... mundane killing ideology”⁶³ and “seeks the purification of all mankind through endless attacks”.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ United States Department of Justice, Eastern District of New York. “United States of America v. Michail Chkhikvishvili: Complaint and Affidavit in Support of an Application for an Arrest Warrant”, April 22, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/media/1360516/dl>.

⁵⁷ United States Department of Justice, Eastern District of New York. “United States of America v. Michail Chkhikvishvili: Complaint and Affidavit in Support of an Application for an Arrest Warrant,” April 22, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/media/1360516/dl>.

⁵⁸ Chris Kitching, “Man, 19, charged in antisemitic graffiti incidents”, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/14/arrest-made-in-antisemitic-graffiti-incidents>.

⁵⁹ Chris Kitching, “Man, 19, charged in antisemitic graffiti incidents,” *The Winnipeg Free Press*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/14/arrest-made-in-antisemitic-graffiti-incidents>.

⁶⁰ No Author, “Winnipeg man faces terrorism-related charges: Manitoba RCMP,” *CBC News*, March 18, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-rcmp-terrorism-charges-investigation-1.7486815>.

⁶¹ Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay, & Matt Bastin, “Nihilism and Terror: How M.K.Y. is Redefining Terrorism, Recruitment, and Mass Violence”, *CTC Sentinel* 17:8 (2024): 22-29, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/nihilism-and-terror-how-m-k-y-is-redefining-terrorism-recruitment-and-mass-violence/>.

⁶² Marc-André Argentino, “The Rise of Nihilistic Accelerationism: From Sextortion to Stabbings in Sweden”, *From the Depths*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.maargentino.com/the-rise-of-nihilistic-accelerationism-from-sex-tortion-to-stabbings-in-sweden/>.

⁶³ New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, “No Lives Matter Updates Extremist Messaging and Publishes Tactical Guides”, *State of New Jersey*, August 21, 2024, <https://www.njohsp.gov/Home/Components/News/News/1430/2/>.

⁶⁴ Ali Winston, “The Violent Rise of ‘No Lives Matter’”, *Wired*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.wired.com/story/no-lives-matter-764-violence/>.

Though the extent of this dissociation from 764 is still unclear, researchers are trying to determine the linkages between NLM and other related Com groups. NLM has also claimed partnerships or affiliation with other neo-Nazi groups, such as the European Mordwaffen Division and the Satanic Front.⁶⁵

No incidents of violence or attempted violence linked to NLM have been reported in Canada. However, NLM-related activities have occurred in Europe. In Hässelby, Sweden, a 14-year-old boy was arrested in September 2024 after allegedly stabbing an 80-year-old man.⁶⁶ This minor has since been linked to the stabbings of at least 6 other people over several months, many of which were filmed by the minor and shared in Telegram groups linked to NLM and 764.

So far, the targeting of individuals in Hässelby does not appear to be driven by race or religion. This contrasts with similar stabbings elsewhere in Europe linked to 764, whereby victims were targeted based on perceived Jewish or Romanian identity. If the Hässelby attacks were indeed random, it also contrasts with the M.K.Y. plot in New York City, which explicitly targeted the Jewish community.

⁶⁵ New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, "No Lives Matter Updates Extremist Messaging and Publishes Tactical Guides", *State of New Jersey*, August 21, 2024, <https://www.njohsp.gov/Home/Components/News/News/1430/2/> ; Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay & Matt Bastin, "Nihilism and Terror: How M.K.Y. is Redefining Terrorism, Recruitment, and Mass Violence", *CTC Sentinel* 17:8 (2024): 22-29, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/nihilism-and-terror-how-m-k-y-is-redefining-terrorism-recruitment-and-mass-violence/>.

⁶⁶ Marc-André Argentino, "The Rise of Nihilistic Accelerationism: From Sextortion to Stabbings in Sweden," *From the Depths*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.maargentino.com/the-rise-of-nihilistic-accelerationism-from-sex-tortion-to-stabbings-in-sweden/>



CHAPTER 6

Hate

Hate

Hateful conduct, from harassment and mischief to acts of violence against specific groups, has long affected communities across Canada. The Prairies have been no exception. Hate encompasses a range of harmful behaviours that are motivated by the perpetrator's bias or prejudice toward the perceived identity of their victim, whether that identity is race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.¹ Manifestations of hate include racism, homophobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination and exclusion.²

Hate is often differentiated from violent extremism and terrorism, as we have chosen to do in this report. These differences, however, can sometimes be more of degree and less of kind.³ For instance, ideology can be a driving force behind hateful behaviour, but the ideologies underpinning hate are often more simplistic and less structured than violent extremist ideologies. Some hate crimes and hate incidents are perpetrated impulsively, and in some cases, these spontaneous acts may be partially enabled by drugs and alcohol. While terrorism may also be spontaneous, it generally – but not always – involves more complex acts of violence that require planning and resources.

From a legal perspective, terrorism requires three distinct characteristics to qualify as such: motive, purpose, and consequence. Terrorism and hate crimes may share the *motive* characteristic. However, *purpose* and *consequence* can be absent from hate crimes.⁴

The *purpose* characteristic of terrorism refers to the underlying intent to intimidate the public, a portion thereof, or the government. The *consequence* characteristic of terrorism refers to the intent to cause death or serious bodily harm, endanger life, or substantial property damage for a political, religious, or ideological purpose, all of which may be absent in hate crimes such as hate-motivated threats, physical assaults, and hateful graffiti.

There is no international consensus on definitions of hate and its manifestations, such as hate incidents, propaganda, and hate crimes.⁵ Even in the Canadian Criminal Code, hate is recognized but not defined. However, hate has been described in Canadian case law as an emotion “associated with vilification and detestation,” which “implies that those individuals are to be despised, scorned, denied respect and made subject of ill-treatment on the basis of group affiliation”.⁶

- 1 Matteo Vergani, Angelique Stefanopoulos, Alexandra Lee, Haily Tran, Imogen Richards, Dan Goodhardt & Greg Barton, *Defining and identifying hate motives: Bias indicators for the Australian context* (Melbourne: Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.56311/POZS1016>.
- 2 Michele St-Amant, John McCoy & Maryam Adham. *Hate in Alberta: Problems to Solutions*. (Edmonton, AB: Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2023), <https://preventviolence.ca/publication/hate-in-alberta-problems-to-solutions/>.
- 3 Matteo Vergani & Jade Hutchinson, “Ecosystems of Hate: understanding the relationship between terrorism, hate crime, and hate speech,” in James Hawdon & Matthew Costello (Eds.) *Research Handbook on Hate and Hate Crimes in Society* (Elgar Publishing, 2024), pp. 301-319.
- 4 Michael Nesbitt, “Violent Crime, Hate Speech or Terrorism? How Canada Views and Prosecutes Far-Right Extremism (2001–2019),” *Common Law World Review* 50:1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473779521991557>; R. v. Veltman, 2024 Ontario Superior Court of Justice (CanLII), <https://www.canlii.org/en/on/onsc/doc/2024/2024onsc1054/2024onsc1054.pdf>.
- 5 Matteo Vergani, Barbara Perry, Joshua Freilich, Steven Chermak, Ryan Scrivens, Rouven Link, Daniel Kleinsman, John Betts & Muhammad Iqbal, “Mapping the scientific knowledge and approaches to defining and measuring hate crime, hate speech, and hate incidents: A systematic review,” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 20:2 (2024): e1397, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1397>.
- 6 R. v. Keegstra, 3 S.C.R. 697, *Supreme Court judgements*, (Supreme Court of Canada, 1990), https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/695/index.do#_ftn1.

Acts of hate are typically classified as either meeting the threshold of a Criminal Code offence, in which case they are considered hate crimes, or falling below this threshold, in which case they are considered hate incidents. Despite not being prosecuted as crimes, hate incidents can deeply harm the individuals, groups, and communities targeted, underscoring the need for researching, understanding, and addressing them.⁷

Statistics Canada defines a hate crime as a crime against a person or property “motivated in whole or in part by race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, sex, age, mental or physical disability, or any other similar factor”.⁸ The Canadian Criminal Code includes two types of criminal offences and one sentencing section for hate crimes.

First are hate propaganda offences, which include advocating genocide, public incitement of hatred, and the willful promotion of hatred.⁹ The second involves hate-motivated mischief to property, such as places of worship, educational institutions, or cultural centers.¹⁰ Finally, the sentencing section for crimes deemed to be motivated by hate, bias, or prejudice allows courts to “enhance” sentencing.¹¹ Enhanced sentencing is the most common way hate crimes are processed in the Canadian legal system.¹²

Hate crime trends across the Prairies

According to Statistics Canada, police-reported hate crimes in Canada have more than doubled from 5.2 per 100,000 population in 2019 to 12 hate crimes per 100,000 population in 2023.¹³ This rising trend has also occurred across the Prairies, as shown in figure 1 below.

Both Manitoba and Alberta have experienced a rise in police-reported hate crimes over time, with a small decrease in 2022. Manitoba experienced a sharp rise in police-reported hate crimes from 2022 and 2023. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan has experienced a steady increase in police-reported hate crimes every year during this time.

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- ⁷ Michele St-Amant, John McCoy & Maryam Adham, *Hate in Alberta: Problems to Solutions*, (Edmonton, AB: Organization for the Prevention of Violence, 2023), <https://preventviolence.ca/publication/hate-in-alberta-problems-to-solutions/>
- ⁸ Statistics Canada, *Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2025), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>
- ⁹ Department of Justice Canada, “Part VIII: Offences Against the Person and Reputation (continued); Defamatory Libel (continued),” *Government of Canada* (1985), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/page-45.html#docCont>.
- ¹⁰ Department of Justice Canada, “Criminal Code (r.S.C., 1985, c. C-46),” *Government of Canada* (1985), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-430.html>.
- ¹¹ Department of Justice Canada, “Part XXII: Sentencing: Interpretation,” *Government of Canada* (1985), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/page-120.html#docCont>.
- ¹² Anna Ndegwa & Susan McDonald, *Victims of Crime Research Digest No. 16*, (Department of Justice Canada, 2016), <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd16-rr16/index.html>.
- ¹³ Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

Police-reported hate crimes per 100,000 population

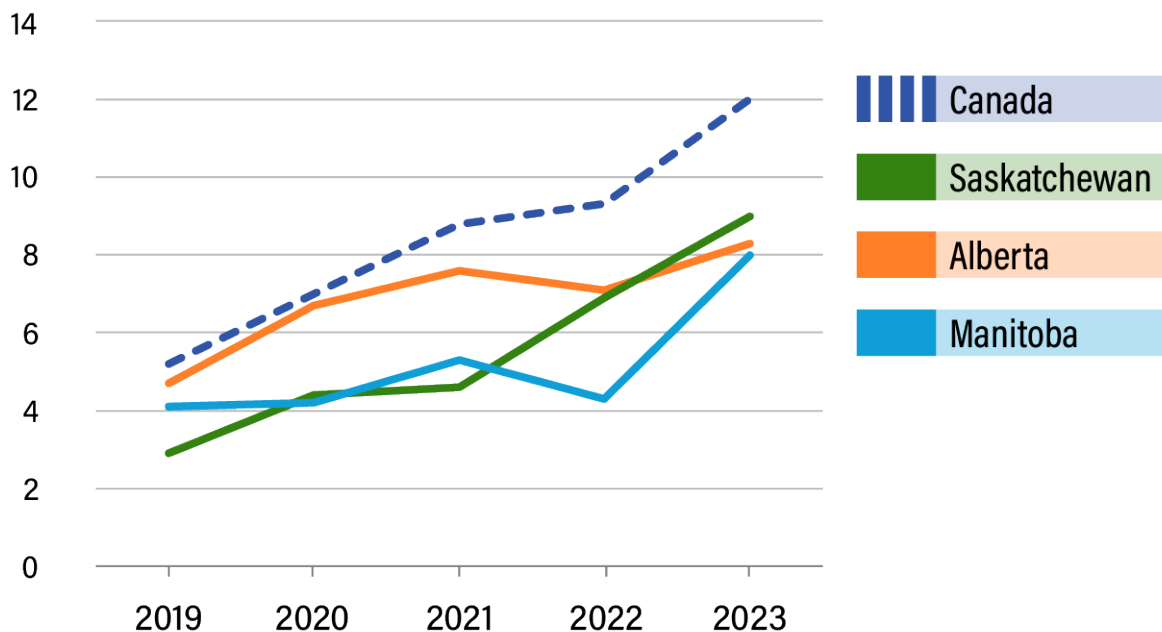


Figure 1: Police-reported hate crimes per 100,000 population. Source: Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

Experts and law enforcement officials we interviewed across the three provinces reported witnessing this trend locally:

“I think [hate crime numbers are] up and I think it’s due [in part] to the [Israel-Hamas] war.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

“[Hate crimes in Manitoba and Saskatchewan] are very much in line with the national trends. We’ve seen increases there in 2020 and 2021, much in line with what we’ve seen in other provinces as well.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

“The uptick in general hate crimes is huge right now.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“In Canada there’s a lot of copycatting because of the close proximity to the United States. [Canada is] very much influenced by the backlash, anti-left, anti-liberal, anti-2SLGBTQI+, anti-refugee, immigrant movement [in the United States right now]. You’re seeing copycatting and then a hybridization and evolution to Canadian-specific grievances.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

Many interviewees attributed this rise to national and international events, such as political influence from the United States and the Israel-Hamas war:

For instance, data on police-reported hate crimes across Canada in 2023 reveals that those targeting Arab or West Asians increased by 52% from 2022, while hate crimes targeting Jewish and Muslim people increased by 71% and 94% from 2022, respectively.¹⁴

Geopolitical events aside, law enforcement officials we interviewed across the Prairies also noted that police are becoming better equipped to identify, document, and address these types of crimes. The documented rise in police-reported hate crimes is, therefore, at least partly attributable to the increase in size, capacity, and resources allocated to hate crime units and improved data collection:

“If you look at the numbers, you see an increase. However, having said that, over the last couple years hate crimes units have gotten a lot better at actually identifying and measuring th[ese crimes]. For a long time, it was an off-the-side-of-the-desk [task]. Unless somebody actually looks at it in detail, [it] might [be] misclassified if you don’t [have enough resources to] capture the hate-related element to it. I think we’re getting a lot better at recording and documenting those things and identifying them for what they are.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“It wasn’t until [recently that] we designated a unit and a person looking for those files. [Consequently], the number [of hate crimes] increased. That’s [in large part] because there’s now a designated person looking at those files.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

However, work is still needed to further expand and improve the capacity to address and combat hate crimes. For example, some unofficial estimates suggest that less than 20% of Canadian police agencies have a dedicated hate crime unit.¹⁵ Recent research also appears to corroborate this estimate. In a 2024 survey by the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, 72% of 110 police service respondents in Canada reported their police service did not have a dedicated hate crime unit.¹⁶ Of note, there is a total of 177 police agencies in Canada.

Law enforcement officials and experts across the Prairies also noted a growing overlap between hate and violent extremism. For instance, in Alberta in 2022, a local active club chapter – the Wild Rose Active Club – claimed responsibility for hanging a racist banner over Macleod Trail.¹⁷ Previously, researchers identified Canadian active clubs as recruitment grounds for the Hammerskins, a Canadian branch of an international network of violent racist skinhead gangs.¹⁸

¹⁴ Statistics Canada, *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2023*, (Government of Canada, July 25, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240725/dq240725b-eng.htm>

¹⁵ Based on informal communication between OPV researcher and police during a meeting of Canadian Chief’s of Police Hate Crime Task Force, 2022.

¹⁶ Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, *Strengthening Access to Justice for Victims of Hate Crime in Canada* (October 2024), p. 4, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ofovc-ofvac/documents/reports/en/Final_Report_OFOVC_Access%20to%20Justice%20for%20Victims%20of%20Hate%20Crime_2024.pdf

¹⁷ Adam Toy, “Calgary neo-Nazi group claims responsibility for hanging racist banner over Macleod Trail,” *Global News*, August 19, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9067332/calgary-neo-nazi-group-claims-responsibility-for-hanging-racist-banner-over-macleod-trail/>.

¹⁸ Mack Lamoureux, “Meet the ‘Entrepreneur of Hate’ Behind the Rise of Canadian Neo-Nazi Fight Clubs,” *Vice News*, December 1, 2023, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/meet-the-entrepreneur-of-hate-behind-the-rise-of-canadian-neo-nazi-fight-clubs/>.

In 2023, the link between hate and violent extremism was further exemplified when the RCMP arrested three individuals across Ontario linked to Atomwaffen Division. These individuals were charged with terrorism as well as hate crimes, specifically the advocating of genocide and the willful promotion of hatred.¹⁹

Experts and law enforcement officials suggest these and other examples show fluidity between hate and violent extremism, indicating that the two should be understood as existing on a spectrum. Combating this requires further integration between the national security apparatus responsible for investigating terrorism and the policing units responsible for investigating hate crimes:

“[Hate crimes] may be a national security threat because white supremacy and neo-Nazism advocates violence against Jews, Indigenous, the [2SLGBTQI+ and other minority communities]. They just do and that’s just the way it works. So how could you not have collaboration of partnerships between hate [crime police] and national security?”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“I think that hate motivated events, which are numerous, are right next to IMVE/ PMVE and RMVE. [Currently] there’s a delineation between national security and hate-motivated events. But they’re on that same continuum of violent extremism. [They’re] under the violent extremism umbrella because if someone’s committing a hate crime, it [could be] xenophobic or gender driven. So, if someone runs over a rainbow crosswalk because they believe that members of the queer community shouldn’t be a part of [society], that’s extremism. When they attack a person from the queer community, it’s violence. And so, to me that’s all extremism... it’s on the same continuum.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Individuals involved in hate crimes can be thought of as part of extremist networks, making hate crimes a possible indicator of more violent actions to come, including mass casualty attacks:

“There’s a bit of fluid[ity]. If, say, someone was [committing] hate crimes, then how do you know they’re not going to carry out [extremist violence]? [Hate crimes offer] indicators that there might be something [more] they want to carry out to cause bodily harm or violence in the community – and that becomes terrorist activity. There’s overlap. Sometimes I do investigate things that eventually get ruled as a hate crime. [But] because [hate crimes and extremist violence are under the same] umbrella to start, you [end up] looking at people trying to hurt others in either a mass [casualty] event or [a hate crime].”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

¹⁹ RCMP, press release, “Individual Associated with Atomwaffen Charged with Terrorism and Hate Propaganda,” July 5, 2023, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2023/individual-associated-atomwaffen-division-charged-terrorism-and-hate-propaganda>;

RCMP, press release, “Two Ontario Men Arrested on Terrorism Charges,” December 8, 2023, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2023/two-ontario-men-arrested-terrorism-charges>.

“You look at some of [the xenophobic] or white supremacist extremists, their groups may be shared with people that [are] hate crime oriented or committing hate crimes on the Internet. So, you might have someone who’s not [committing] terroris[m] but [they] are also [in] a terrorist [group]. They are in shared communities.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

Trends in anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate

According to data from Statistics Canada, depicted in figure 2, there has been a rise in police-reported hate crimes motivated by gender identity or sexual orientation across the Prairies between 2019 and 2023.²⁰ In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, police-reported hate crimes rose by 87%, 100%, and 138%, respectively, between these years. The largest year-to-year increase in anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes for all three provinces occurred in 2023.

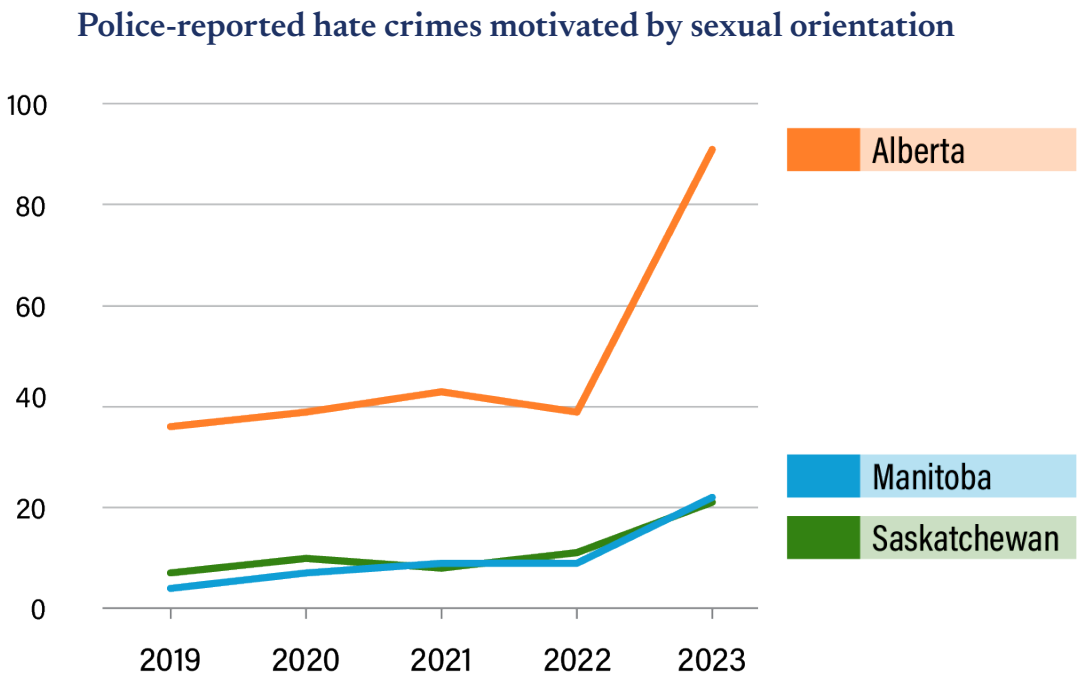


Figure 2: Number of police-reported hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation. Source: Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

²⁰ Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

In Alberta, anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes and incidents spiked from 39 in 2022 to 91 in 2023. Several of these incidents involved disruptions and protests targeting drag events. In February 2023, police were called after protesters disrupted an all-ages drag story time event at a public library in Calgary.²¹ The protesters entered the classroom and began shouting “homophobic and transphobic slurs” at attendants, many of whom were children.²² Similar protests disrupted two other drag story-time events at other public libraries in March and April 2023. One individual who attended all three protests was arrested and later found guilty of criminal harassment.²³

Several of these and other anti-2SLGBTQI+ protests in Calgary in 2023 have also been attended by individuals linked to xenophobic groups, such as members of Alberta’s White Lives Matter (WLM) branch.²⁴ Other incidents of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate included vandalism of rainbow sidewalks.

According to the RCMP and Calgary police, between January and July 2023, a disproportionate number of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender were perpetrated compared to those motivated by race, representing a noteworthy shift in provincial trends.²⁵ Calgary police attributed this increase partly to influence from the United States, which experienced the highest recorded number of anti-2SLGBTQI+ legislation in 2023, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.²⁶ In Alberta, law enforcement officials we interviewed highlighted this trend:

“The [2SLGBTQI+] community seems to have constantly had hate incidents and hate crimes directed [at them]. I know that they still have violence directed at them.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“We have seen a spike in [anti-2SLGBTQI+] rhetoric and negative connotations. We’ve seen a lot of the pride flags [vandalized] and mischief happening towards [the community].”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

Likewise, Saskatchewan experienced a steady increase in police-reported anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes between 2019 and 2023. The largest single-year increase occurred between 2022 and 2023 when anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes increased by nearly 100% from 11 to 21.²⁷ Several of these hate crimes and incidents targeted members of the transgender community, motivated by public debates about transgender rights, including access to healthcare.²⁸

²¹ The Canadian Press, “Police say charges laid in hate-motivated crime after drag storytime disturbance,” *CBC News*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/charges-library-drag-storytime-disturbance-mischief-1.6767207>.

²² The Canadian Press, “Police say charges laid in hate-motivated crime after drag storytime disturbance,” *CBC News*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/charges-library-drag-storytime-disturbance-mischief-1.6767207>.

²³ Meghan Grant, “Calgary pastor on trial for library drag storytime protests guilty of harassment,” *CBC News*, August 21, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/derek-reimer-calgary-drag-storytime-protest-harassment-verdict-1.7301390/>.

²⁴ No Author, “Canadian neo-Nazis join anti-drag protests,” *Canadian Anti-Hate Network*, February 14, 2023, https://www.antihate.ca/canadian_neo_nazis_join_anti_drag_protests.

²⁵ Jade Markus, “Vandalized crosswalks, library protests – Alberta police track more hate crimes against LGBTQ communities,” *CBC News*, July 29, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-hate-crimes-lgbt-1.6919250>.

²⁶ Kiara Alfonseca, “Record number of anti-LGBTQ legislation filed in 2023,” *ABC News*, December 28, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/record-number-anti-lgbtq-legislation-filed-2023/story?id=105556010>.

²⁷ Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

²⁸ Brody Langager, “‘Misinformation, fear, lack of education’: A look at trans hate in Saskatchewan,” *Global News*, February 10, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9474386/misinformation-fear-lack-of-critical-education-trans-hate-saskatchewan/>.

Some anti-transgender sentiments are mixed with conspiracies observed in extremist ideologies, such as the Great Replacement conspiracy, due to the belief that the transgender community grooms children to become transgender to prevent them from having children.²⁹

Other incidents in Saskatchewan include homophobic graffiti sprayed on three Saskatoon churches welcoming 2SLGBTQI+ members in 2020,³⁰ the defacing of rainbow crosswalks decorated for Pride in 2022, and mischief-related offences to Pride stickers on private property in 2024.³¹ Law enforcement officials in Saskatchewan noted there had been an increase in hate crimes and incidents involving the 2SLGBTQI+ community in recent years:

“Now [we]’ve got the 2SLGBTQI+ community [experiencing a lot of hate], especially the transgender [community].”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

Finally, Manitoba also experienced an increase in anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes, according to data from Statistics Canada. In 2021, a transgender federal election candidate in southeastern Manitoba was targeted when over 100 of their election signs were stolen or vandalized with transphobic slurs.³²

However, the largest increase in Manitoba occurred from 2022 to 2023, as police-reported anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes more than doubled from 9 to 22. In May 2023, a month before Pride, a Pride flag and books covering 2SLGBTQI+ and Indigenous themes were stolen from a Winnipeg classroom.

The individual responsible left an anonymous letter stating that 2SLGBTQI+ themes should not be taught in school.³³ A month later, during Pride festivities, southern Manitoba experienced a wave of anti-2SLGBTQI+ vandalism, including Pride flags being torn down from private properties.³⁴ Like in Alberta, experts we interviewed in Manitoba said the increase was likely influenced by the sociopolitical climate in the United States:

“In Canada there’s a lot of copycatting because of the proximity to the United States. [People are] very much influenced by the backlash, anti-left, anti-liberal, anti-2SLGBTQI+, anti-refugee, immigrant and refugee movement [in the United States right now]. Part of what you’re seeing for the anti-trans backlash down in the USA has been there for years. So, you’re seeing a copycatting and then a hybridization and evolution to Canadian-specific grievances.”

- Subject-Matter Expert

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- ²⁹ Laura Sciarpetti, “Activists respond to transphobic backlash ahead of Saskatchewan Rush Pride game”, *CBC News*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/activists-respond-transphobic-backlash-saskatchewan-rush-pride-game-1.6755636>.
- ³⁰ Nick Pearce, “Police hate crime unit investigating defaced Pride crosswalk”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 16, 2022, <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/police-hate-crime-unit-investigating-defaced-pride-crosswalk>.
- ³¹ Michael Oleksyn, “PA Pride finds vandalism of Pride Flag on local business as emblematic of larger issues”, *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, July 30, 2024, <https://paherald.sk.ca/pa-pride-denounces-vandalism-of-pride-flag-on-local-business/>.
- ³² Alex Karpa, “Transgender candidate in Manitoba targeted by hate speech, signs vandalized”, *CityNews*, September 12, 2021, <https://winnipeg.citynews.ca/2021/09/12/transgender-candidate-manitoba-hate-speech/>.
- ³³ Sarah Petz, “Winnipeg school’s Pride flag stolen days after LGBT, indigenous books taken from teacher’s classroom”, *CBC News*, May 16, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-school-pride-flag-stolen-1.6845711>.
- ³⁴ Sarah Petz, “Spate of homophobic vandalism puts southern Manitoba LGBTQ community on edge”, *CBC News*, June 10, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/homophobic-vandalism-morden-winkler-1.6871749>.

1 Million March for Children

As discussed in *Chapter 2: Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism*, the introduction of resources and curriculum used to teach about diverse gender identities and sexual orientations in classrooms and schools has led some groups to actively oppose Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) diversity practices.³⁵ This issue has become a flashpoint within contentious debates on 2SLGBTQI+ rights that are increasingly played out online. Anti-SOGI discourse has been predominantly focused on transgender individuals and non-traditional conceptions about gender, and particularly, how those concepts are being incorporated into materials in school curriculum.

In 2023, anti-SOGI activities culminated in an organized national school walkout called the “1 Million March 4 Children” (1MM4C) on two occasions in the fall of 2023. According to organizers, the walkout was intended to protest the inclusion of SOGI-related themes in educational curricula in schools.³⁶ On the days of the walkout, protestors pulled their children from schools and gathered in public areas across Canada, accusing schools and teachers of using SOGI-related educational resources to violate parental rights and teach children about “adult concepts,” such as sexual orientation and gender identity.³⁷

While most of these protests were peaceful, several hate incidents transpired. For example, the Edmonton 1MM4C brought protestors to the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) building, where a Pride flag displayed on the building’s parkade was torn down and destroyed, which Edmonton Police Service investigated as a potential hate crime.³⁸ In other provinces such as B.C., Ontario, and Nova Scotia, several arrests were made in connection with the 1MM4C protests.³⁹ Though protests did take place at several locations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba there were no reported arrests in either province.

35 Kendrick James, “Mapping Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Inclusion through Curriculum and Practice in a Canadian Teacher Education Program”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 42 (2019), 957-991.

36 Ted Raymond, “Five arrests made at ‘Million March for Children’ protest on Parliament Hill,” *CTV News*, September 23, 2023, <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/five-arrests-made-at-million-march-for-children-protest-on-parliament-hill-1.6568706>.

37 Amy Judd, “Thousands rally in support of protest of SOGI curriculum in B.C.’S schools”, *Global News*, September 30, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9973963/sogi-support-protest-bc-schools-rally/>.

38 Karen Bartko, “Suspects sought after ATA Pride flag destroyed during 1 Million March for Children Edmonton protest”, *Global News*, September 27, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9989803/ata-pride-flag-1-million-march-for-children-protest-edmonton/>.

39 No Author, “Arrests, Heated Exchanges Mark Rallies Over LGBTQ School Policies”, *CBC News*, September 20 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/rallies-gender-schools-1.6972606>.

Trends in hate crimes motivated by religion

According to Statistics Canada, police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion have increased across the Prairies between 2019 and 2023. As shown in figure 3, these hate crimes in Alberta have increased by 84%, while in Saskatchewan, they have more than doubled, rising by 133%. Manitoba experienced a more modest increase of 27% over the same period.

Notably, these trends include two periods of decline between 2019 and 2020 and again from 2021 to 2022 in Alberta and Manitoba. However, each dip was followed by a rise that resulted in higher highs. This trend is most pronounced in Alberta, suggesting an overall rise despite some year-to-year volatility. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan has experienced a modest but steady and consistent increase in police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion throughout the period examined.

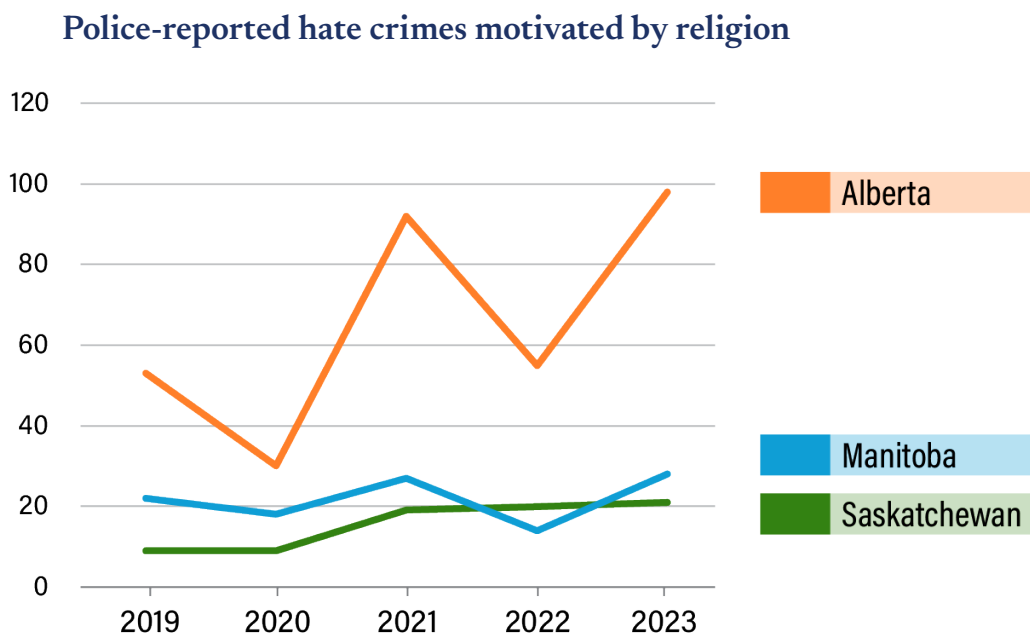


Figure 3: Number of police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion. Source: Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

In Alberta, police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion spiked from 58 in 2019 to 98 in 2023. Investigators have suggested that many of the incidents are related to the Israel-Hamas conflict, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. However, prior to this conflict, there have been several high-profile hate crimes and incidents motivated by religion.

For example, between 2020 and 2021, six Muslim women wearing hijabs were attacked in the Edmonton area by individuals who used racial slurs, physically assaulted, or brandished knives at them.⁴⁰ One of the individuals responsible was sentenced to 16 months in jail for his attack on a mother and daughter in 2020.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Heather Yourex-West, "Why are Alberta's Black, Muslim women being attacked?" *Global News*, March 26, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7721850/hate-crime-alberta-attacks-black-muslim-women/>.

⁴¹ No Author, "Edmonton man gets 16-month jail sentence for hate-motivated attack on Muslim women," *CBC News*, October 21, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/southgate-mall-black-muslim-sentence-1.6625604>.

In Saskatchewan, police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion have steadily increased over the years. For instance, in February 2021, Travis Patron – the former leader of the now-defunct white nationalist Canadian Nationalist Party and resident of Redvers – was charged with willfully promoting hatred against Jewish people in a video posted online in 2019.⁴² Patron was later convicted and sentenced to one year in jail in 2022. In June 2021, a Muslim man in Saskatoon was physically assaulted by an attacker who tried to stab him in the back and cut his beard while yelling, “go back to your country”.⁴³

In Manitoba, police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion have followed a similar pattern to that of Alberta, albeit on a smaller scale. In 2019, Manitoba had 28 police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion. By 2023, there were 54. Like the other two provinces, many of these crimes center on antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate.

For example, in February 2020, a Jewish high school student was assaulted by several other students and told to “go back to the ovens”.⁴⁴ A month later, a Winnipeg synagogue was vandalized with graffiti of a swastika.⁴⁵ In June 2022, 70 gravestones in a Jewish cemetery were pushed over.⁴⁶

In 2022, amid reports from Statistics Canada about rising antisemitic hate crimes across the country, all three of the Prairie provinces adopted a new definition of antisemitism to help document and address antisemitic hate.⁴⁷ This definition, used by the Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, defines antisemitism more broadly to include Holocaust denial and stereotyping through conspiracies and has also been adopted by the federal government and several other provinces, including Quebec and Ontario.⁴⁸ While this definition does not replace or modify provisions set out in Canadian law, it can help police agencies identify and categorize antisemitic incidents, crimes or propaganda.⁴⁹

While many of these trends predate the recent conflicts in the Middle East, these events significantly exacerbated prejudice and hate across Canada.

⁴² Dan Zakreski, “Former Canadian Nationalist Party Leader Travis Patron Sentenced to 1 Year for Promoting Hatred Against Jews,” *CBC News*, October 20, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/former-canadian-nationalist-party-leader-travis-patron-sentenced-to-1-year-for-promoting-hatred-against-jews-1.6623901>.

⁴³ Josh Lynn, “Saskatoon Muslim man says he was stabbed, had beard cut off in alleged hate crime,” *CTV News*, June 25, 2021, <https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/saskatoon-muslim-man-says-he-was-stabbed-had-beard-cut-off-in-alleged-hate-crime-1.5485986>.

⁴⁴ Daniel Halmarson and Charles Lefebvre, “Attack on Winnipeg high school student among reported anti-Semitic incidents in new audit,” *CTV News*, April 26, 2021, <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/attack-on-winnipeg-high-school-student-among-reported-anti-semitic-incidents-in-new-audit-1.5402847?cache=yesclipId104062%3FcontactForm%3Dtrue>.

⁴⁵ Dana Hatherly, “Winnipeg synagogue ‘hit hard’ by swastika spray-painted outside, congregant says,” *CBC News*, March 7, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/swastika-spray-painted-winnipeg-synagogue-1.5490028>.

⁴⁶ Rachel Bergen, “70 gravestones pushed over in Jewish cemetery feel like a ‘slap in the face’ for community,” *CBC News*, June 30, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/gravestones-vandalized-jewish-cemetery-winnipeg-1.6507181>.

⁴⁷ Bill Kaufmann, “Province adopts new definition of antisemitism to help in battle against hatred: Kenney,” *Calgary Herald*, September 23, 2022, <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/province-adopts-new-definition-of-antisemitism-to-help-in-battle-against-hatred-kenney>;

No Author, “Manitoba adopts working definition of antisemitism amid ‘alarming rates’ of incidents,” *CBC News*, October 27 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-definition-antisemitism-1.6632329>;

No Author, “Saskatchewan Becomes Seventh Canadian Province to Adopt IHRA Antisemitism Definition,” *Combat Antisemitism Movement*, December 21, 2022, <https://combatantisemitism.org/government-and-policy/saskatchewan-becomes-seventh-canadian-province-to-adopt-ihra-antisemitism-definition/>.

⁴⁸ No Author, “Alberta adopts working definition of antisemitism amid ‘hate and violence,’” *CBC News*, September 23, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-antisemitism-definition-justice-1.6594261>.

⁴⁹ Government of Manitoba, press release, “Manitoba Government Adopts International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s Definition of Antisemitism,” October 27, 2022, <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=56745>.

Israel-Hamas Conflict

Like hate crimes motivated by gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation, hate crimes motivated by religion also appear to be influenced by geopolitical events. One of the largest international political events that occurred in 2023 that likely contributed to the rise in police-reported hate crimes is the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In October 2023, Hamas – the militant group governing Gaza – launched rockets and carried out coordinated attacks in southern Israel, killing 1,139 people and capturing hostages.⁵⁰ In response, Israel launched a military campaign in Gaza against Hamas and, more recently, in Lebanon against Hezbollah, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties. The conflict has sparked international concern from leaders and international organizations calling for a ceasefire to prevent an escalation into a wider regional war.

In response to the civilian casualties that have occurred in Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon, there have been several mass demonstrations, most of which have been conducted peacefully. However, a protest at McGill University in Montreal ended in June 2024 after police used tear gas to disperse protesters occupying a campus building.⁵¹

In addition to ongoing mass demonstrations, there has been a flurry of antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes linked to the conflict in Canada.⁵² For instance, in Toronto, antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes increased by 110% during the months of October and November 2023.⁵³ More recently, in August 2024, an email was sent to about 125 Jewish institutions across Canada threatening the use of explosives.⁵⁴

This increase has also been observed across the Prairies.⁵⁵ For example, Winnipeg police reported an escalation in hate-motivated crimes since the start of the conflict, including several that targeted religious symbols and institutions.⁵⁶ In one instance, the window of a Winnipeg home was shot in a hate-motivated crime targeting a religious symbol. Police have refrained from publicly stating what the religious symbol was to avoid further incitement of violence, though it was allegedly linked to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

To help combat the rise in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes in recent years, the province of Manitoba, in November 2023, mandated Holocaust education in kindergarten to grade 12 school curricula.⁵⁷ Additionally, anti-Islamophobia toolkits would also be made available to Manitoba's Islamic community and teachers. Likewise, law enforcement officials in the province told us:

50 Agence France-Press, "Israel social security data reveals true picture of Oct 7 deaths," *France 24*, December 15, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231215-israel-social-security-data-reveals-true-picture-of-oct-7-deaths>.

51 Michelle Lalonde, & Jacob Serebrin, "Police spray tear gas, break up pro-Palestinian occupation of McGill building," *The Montreal Gazette*, June 4, 2024, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/updated-police-spray-tear-gas-break-up-pro-palestinian-occupation-of-mcgill-building>.

52 Davut Akca, "Israel-Hamas war: Canada must act to prevent hate crimes against Muslim and Jewish communities," *The Conversation*, October 30, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/israel-hamas-war-canada-must-act-to-prevent-hate-crimes-against-muslim-and-jewish-communities-216416>.

53 Reuters, "Toronto police say hate crimes spiked since start of Gaza conflict," *Reuters*, November 23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/toronto-police-say-hate-crimes-spiked-since-start-gaza-conflict-2023-11-23/>.

54 Verity Stevenson, "RCMP investigating after bomb threat sent to Jewish institutions across Canada," *CBC News*, August 21, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mass-bomb-threat-jewish-institutions-1.7300582>.

55 No Author, "River Heights home shot at in suspected hate-motivated crime, Winnipeg police say," *CBC News*, October 26, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-hate-motivated-crimes-october-1.7009240>; Ania Bessonov, "Reported hate crimes in several Canadian cities higher amid Israel-Hamas war, police say," *CBC News*, November 3, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hate-crimes-up-oct-7-1.7016717>.

56 No Author, "River Heights home shot at in suspected hate-motivated crime, Winnipeg police say," *CBC News*, October 26, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-hate-motivated-crimes-october-1.7009240>.

57 Darren Bernhardt, "Jewish group applauds mandatory Holocaust education in Manitoba," *CBC News*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mandatory-holocaust-education-manitoba-1.7036001>.

“I would say I think [hate crime numbers are] up, and I think it’s due [in part] to the [Israel-Hamas] war.”

- Law Enforcement Official (MB)

Like Manitoba, the Government of Saskatchewan also announced in November 2023 that Holocaust education would be mandatory beginning in 2025 and 2026.⁵⁸ Compared to the two other Prairie provinces, Saskatchewan experienced a slower but consistent increase in hate crimes motivated by religion since 2019. Law enforcement officials in Saskatchewan told us:

“[Hate crimes are] steadily on the increase above where we were last year. A lot of that has to do with the Middle Eastern conflict.”

- Law Enforcement Official (SK)

Alberta has also experienced several hate-motivated events allegedly linked to the Israel-Hamas conflict, including an incident in mid-October 2023 in Edmonton where a man uttered threats and racial slurs toward the Muslim community.⁵⁹

Between mid-October and December 2023, the provincial government and police proactively increased funding, patrols, and security around places frequented by Muslim and Jewish communities, including schools and places of worship.⁶⁰ Law enforcement officials we interviewed in Alberta told us they had observed an increase in hate crimes motivated by religion since the conflict began:

“We’re seeing an increase of lots of [anti-Muslim]-related hate crimes in Alberta. Lots of Mosque vandalism, violence, or threats towards people that are visibly Muslim. [That’s] on [the] uptick for sure.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

“Those [international] trigger events really [influence] what we’ll see locally.”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

⁵⁸ Nicole Amiel, “CIJA Applauds Saskatchewan’s Introduction of Mandatory Holocaust Education Beginning in 2025-26,” CIJA, November 20, 2023, https://www.cija.ca/cija_applauds_saskatchewan_s_introduction_of_mandatory_holocaust_education_beginning_in_2025_26.

⁵⁹ Karen Bartko, “Charges pending after man allegedly threatened Muslim community in north Edmonton: police,” *Global News*, October 17, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10031397/edmonton-eaumaris-lake-uttering-threats-muslim-community/>.

⁶⁰ Sean Amato, “No direct threats’ to Edmonton Jewish community but patrols stepped up: police,” *CTV News*, October 13, 2023, <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/no-direct-threats-to-edmonton-jewish-community-but-patrols-stepped-up-police-1.6600626>;

Jasmine King, “Alberta boosting security funding at Islamic and Jewish faith-based schools,” *Global News*, December 7, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10156471/alberta-schools-hate-crimes-security-funding/>.

Trends in hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity

Finally, according to Statistics Canada, police-reported hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity have increased across the Prairies between 2019 and 2023.⁶¹ As shown in figure 4 below, between 2019 and 2023, police-reported hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity have increased in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba by 72%, 320%, and 93%, respectively.

In Alberta, these trends include two periods of decline between 2020 and 2021, and again from 2022 to 2023. Similarly, Saskatchewan experienced a small decline between 2020 and 2021. Meanwhile, Manitoba has experienced a steady increase throughout the time period.

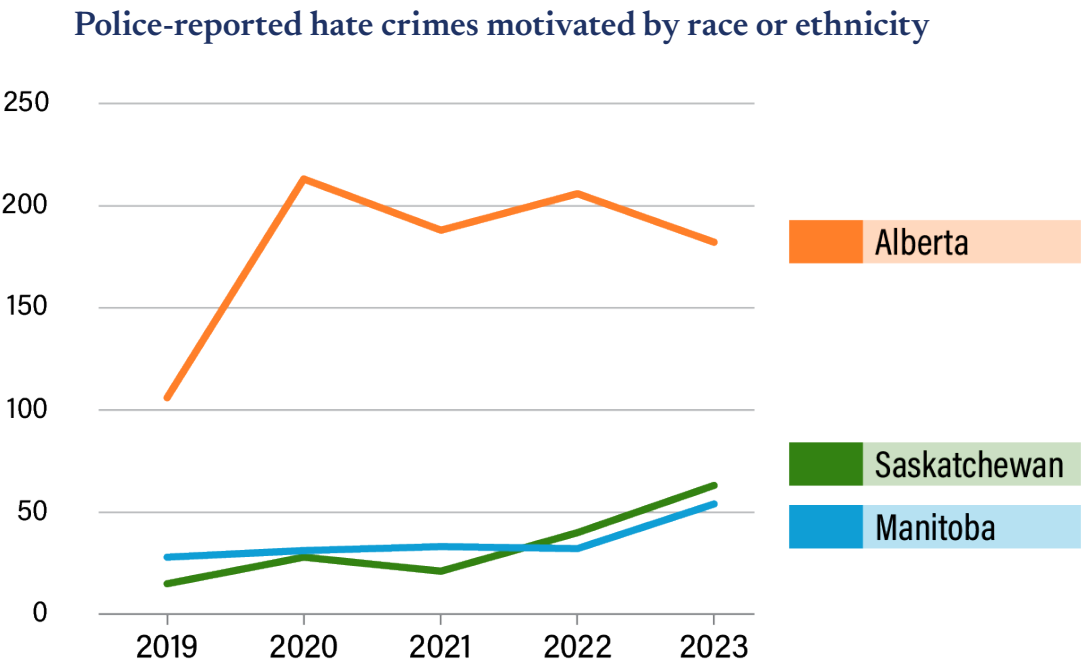


Figure 4: Number of police-reported hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity. Source: Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

⁶¹ Statistics Canada, *Police-reported Information Hub: Hate crime in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2024) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>.

Like hate crimes motivated by sexuality, gender-identity, or religion, hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity have been influenced by international and national events. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing public health measures corresponded with an increase in hate crimes against Asian communities across Canada.⁶² According to Statistics Canada, anti-Asian hate crimes increased by over 300% in 2020 alone.⁶³

Anti-Asian incidents were also observed across the Prairies in places like Calgary,⁶⁴ Saskatoon,⁶⁵ and Winnipeg.⁶⁶ Hate crimes targeting Asian communities have persisted even after public health measures were lifted.⁶⁷ For instance, in Edmonton in 2023, a man threatened to kill two women after asking if they were “Japanese or Asian”.⁶⁸ In 2024, police responded to an alleged hate-motivated carjacking where two individuals targeted a man of Southeast Asian descent, used racial slurs, stole his car, and set it on fire.⁶⁹

Hate crimes motivated by anti-immigrant sentiments have also been on the rise, fuelled by a growing perception that immigration is to blame for the rising cost of living in Canada.⁷⁰ For example, in Alberta, officials told us:

“Immigration’s been probably the biggest hate crime driver. So, [these are crimes] against people that are [perceived to be] from other countries, [people who are perceived to have] immigrated to Canada, [or] that are visible minorities”

- Law Enforcement Official (AB)

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- ⁶² Jeremiah Rodriguez, “New report details ‘disturbing rise’ in anti-Asian hate crimes in Canada,” *CTV News*, March 23, 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/new-report-details-disturbing-rise-in-anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-canada-1.5358955>.
- ⁶³ Tom Yun, “Police-reported anti-Asian hate crimes in Canada jumped 300 per cent in 2020: StatCan,” *CTV News*, March 17, 2022, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/police-reported-anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-canada-jumped-300-per-cent-in-2020-statcan-1.5823965>.
- ⁶⁴ Christa Dao, “Calgary seeing rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, incidents: police, community members,” *Global News*, March 20, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7709086/calgary-anti-asian-hate-crimes/>.
- ⁶⁵ Bre McAdam, “Man gets suspended sentence for random, racially-motivated assault against 15-year-old boy,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, November 3, 2021, <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/crime/man-gets-suspended-sentence-for-random-racially-motivated-assault-against-15-year-old-boy>.
- ⁶⁶ Peggy Lam, “Winnipeg’s Asian community speaks about racism during COVID-19,” *CBC News*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-anti-asian-racism-covid-19-wfpcbc-cbc-1.5762954>.
- ⁶⁷ Natasha O’Neill, “Political tensions ‘sustain’ hate, racism towards Asian Canadians after surge of discrimination from COVID-19,” *CTV News*, July 13, 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/political-tensions-sustain-hate-racism-towards-asian-canadians-after-surge-of-discrimination-from-covid-19-1.6478278>.
- ⁶⁸ Jonny Wakefield, “Edmonton police lay charges after ‘racist incident’ targeting Asian women at Government Centre LRT station,” *Edmonton Journal*, April 7, 2023, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/crime/edmonton-police-lay-charges-after-racist-incident-targeting-asian-women-at-government-centre-lrt-station>.
- ⁶⁹ Lakeland Today Staff, “Two charged in alleged hate incident and carjacking in Bonnyville,” *The Albertan*, April 26, 2024, <https://www.thealbertan.com/beyond-local/two-charged-in-alleged-hate-incident-and-carjacking-in-bonnyville-8661946>.
- ⁷⁰ Anna Mehler Paperny, “Backlash against immigrants challenges Canada’s welcoming image,” *Reuters*, September 6, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/backlash-against-immigrants-challenges-canadas-welcoming-image-2024-09-06/>.

Saskatchewan has also witnessed a similar rising trend in hate-motivated by race or ethnicity.⁷¹ For example, in 2019, a man was charged with mischief and assault after allegedly punching a gas station employee and telling him to “go back to your country”.⁷² In May 2022, a woman in Saskatoon was charged for allegedly using ethnic slurs after chasing another woman at a library.⁷³

Likewise, Manitoba has experienced a steady rise in hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity during this time, including anti-Indigenous hate. For example, in 2022 the gravesite of Louis Riel, a historic Métis leader and the founder of Manitoba, was defaced after deep scratches were left on the headstone.⁷⁴ Also in 2022, Jeremy Skibicki murdered four indigenous-Canadian women between March and May in what has been described as a serial killing spree motivated, at least in part, by xenophobic and racist beliefs.⁷⁵ In July 2024 Skibicki was found guilty of four counts of first-degree murder.⁷⁶ In an annual report released by Winnipeg police in 2024, it was reported that hate crimes reached an historic high in 2023.⁷⁷ The most frequently reported type of hate crime offence in Winnipeg was hate propaganda, followed by assault, mischief, and uttering threats.

71 Thia James, “Saskatoon police hate crime unit makes inroads with communities in first full year,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 16, 2023, <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/saskatoon-police-hate-crime-unit-makes-inroads-with-communities-in-first-full-year>.

72 Zak Vescera, “‘Go back to your country’: Man charged in alleged racist assault at gas station,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, September 26, 2019, <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/go-back-to-your-country-man-charged-in-alleged-racist-assault-at-gas-station>.

73 Sasktoday.ca Staff, “Saskatoon woman charged for chasing another, using ethnic slurs,” *Sasktoday*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.sasktoday.ca/central/local-news/saskatoon-woman-charged-for-chasing-another-using-ethnic-slurs-5348531/>.

74 Kayla Rosen, “‘We will seek justice’: Defacement of Louis Riel’s gravesite sparks outrage,” *CTV News*, October 21, 2022, <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/we-will-seek-justice-defacement-of-louis-riel-s-gravesite-sparks-outrage-1.6119609>.

75 Rachel Bergen, “Accused killer’s allegedly hate-filled online presence should be factored into investigation trial: experts,” *CBC News*, June 7, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/rebecca-contois-homicide-jeremy-skibicki-neo-nazi-holy-europe-1.6462730>.

76 Caitlyn Gowriluk, “Winnipeg serial killer knew what he was doing was wrong, judge says,” *CBC News*, July 22, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/jeremy-skibicki-judge-written-decision-1.7267617>.

77 Darren Bernhardt, “Hate crimes, violent crimes in Winnipeg surged in 2023, annual police report says,” *CBC News*, June 18, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-police-service-annual-statistical-report-1.7238318>.



CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Conclusion

This report has outlined the landscape of targeted violence, extremism, and hate in the Canadian Prairie provinces between January 2019 and February 2025, highlighting both longstanding regional threats to public safety, as well as more recent trends and developments affecting this geographical area. While our research shows that the Prairie provinces share many of the same challenges observed across Canada, there are also unique political, social, and economic dynamics that shape these issues in distinct ways.

Our findings underscored the importance of drawing from local perspectives and expertise to fully understand the factors driving targeted violence, extremism, and hate in the region. While many of these patterns align with broader national trends, key findings emerge that can only be captured through engagement with these local stakeholders. These can be distilled into seven key findings that describe the current trends and challenges facing the Canadian Prairies.

Finding 1: Ideologically motivated violent extremism is a persistent concern

First, ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) remains a significant concern across the Prairies. Individuals, groups, and movements associated with IMVE continue to evolve and learn from the actions of their predecessors. This evolution has led to shifts in how extremist actors network, operate, communicate, and organize.

Among those who hold extreme xenophobic beliefs, there has been a continued transition away from organizations like the Atomwaffen Division and The Base toward localized and informal networks and cells, especially active clubs. This transition can also be noticed in the online activities of these groups. Active clubs have adopted a “White Nationalism 3.0” approach, designed to make their online presence more palatable and appealing to a broader audience, in contrast to the more extreme and overtly violent content of earlier groups like The Base.

Once individuals are drawn in, those who demonstrate commitment are primarily recruited and vetted through offline processes, which effectively conceal most of the groups’ activities. In Canada, rather than engaging directly in violent extremist activities, many active clubs have served as a pipeline by funnelling the most committed and violent individuals toward openly violent groups like the Hammerskins.

The atomization of xenophobic extremism also continues to be a growing trend. While organized groups certainly still exist, a growing number of extremist actors prefer to operate independently. Online extremist material, resources, information, and manuals are readily available in online ecosystems like the Terrorgram network, making it easier for lone actors to plan, organize, and commit extremist violence.

Finding 2: Youth involvement in targeted violence, extremism, and hate

More youth are attracted to and participating in targeted violence, extremism, and hate. This trend spans multiple ideologies, including xenophobia and extreme misogyny, but seems notably high for religiously motivated violent extremism (RMVE).

Despite the challenges in tracking juvenile criminal activities, our research suggests that, since 2019, many — and potentially as much as half — of young individuals arrested under the age of 24 across Canada for terrorist activities were inspired by the Islamic State. Moreover, some online accelerationist networks, such as “The Com” groups like 764, not only exhibit a high participation of youth, but also actively target minors for recruitment, radicalization, and victimization.

While younger individuals are more prevalent in RMVE and some online-based accelerationist communities, other xenophobic and ethnonationalist movements, such as active clubs, tend to attract a slightly older demographic, primarily young men. This difference is likely due to the offline and physical nature of many of their activities, where recruitment and training occur in-person rather than online.

Finding 3: Sustained increase in mixed and unclear extremism

Violent actors continue to increasingly espouse mixed and unclear ideologies to justify their activities, including the use of violence. This trend spans the ideological spectrum, whereby extremist actors pick and choose from a variety of ideologies, beliefs, sentiments, and conspiracies to create a unique and highly individualized worldview, often by incorporating their own grievances, personal experiences, fears, or prejudices.

This highly individualized form of extremism and targeted violence poses several challenges. First, it poses challenges for researchers and extremism experts, given that many traditional extremism frameworks focus on distinct ideological categories.

While several experts have proposed new frameworks and categories to encompass these mixed and unclear beliefs, more research is needed to better understand the phenomenon. On the other hand, the fluidity of these ideologies can make it difficult to anticipate the motivation for and target of violence.

Finding 4: Rise of nihilistic, accelerationist extremism

Some xenophobic ideologies have long embraced accelerationism, a strategy to hasten the establishment of their envisioned social order by triggering the collapse of society. During our period of focus, however, we have witnessed the emergence of new online communities that have also adopted accelerationism but do so for a different purpose than other IMVE actors.

Specifically, the 764 network and the broader “Com” groups espouse a nihilistic ideology while promoting accelerationist tactics to bring about societal collapse. For these nihilistic groups, however, societal collapse is the end goal rather than a milestone toward a new world order. Another characteristic of these newer nihilistic, accelerationist groups is their incorporation of criminal activities to further their ideological goals. For instance, the 764 network and “Com” groups encourage activities that society deems illicit and immoral, such as the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

Members of these groups will often seek to turn their victims into victimizers, which perpetuates the cycle of abuse and creates significant challenges for prevention and rehabilitation efforts. Our research has also revealed that members of these online groups vary in their motives to engage in these criminal behaviours: some appear ideologically motivated to destabilize or challenge perceived societal norms, while others engage for reasons completely unrelated to ideology.

This trend of blending nihilism, criminality, and vague ideological motivations has made it more difficult to identify reasons for involvement in these groups. It further indicates a shift from more traditional and identifiable forms of extremism toward a fragmented landscape that is increasingly attracting younger individuals.

Finding 5: Current events & crises as a driver

Geopolitical events and crises continue to serve as catalysts for targeted violence, extremism, and hate. While the impact of global events on hate-motivated violence is not new, the specific crises and grievances that extremists exploit change over time.

A recent example is the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, which has become a rallying point for various extremist actors across the ideological spectrum. This conflict has fuelled violent online rhetoric, increased polarization, and, in some cases, led to acts of violence in the form of both hate and extremism against communities perceived to be connected to the conflict, such as Canada’s Jewish and Muslim communities.

Similarly, domestic crises such as economic downturns, public health emergencies, or political instability can also fuel targeted violence, extremism, and hate. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a surge in anti-authority and conspiracy-driven narratives, some of which have, in turn, been exploited by xenophobic groups to blame specific communities for the crisis. Health mandates have also resulted in increased threats to authority figures, such as law enforcement, politicians, health authorities, and healthcare workers.

Finding 6: Rise in anti-authority sentiments

The period studied for this report, from 2019 to February 2025, has been marked by a notable increase in anti-authority sentiments across Canada and the Prairies. This trend has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent public health measures, fostering increased distrust in public institutions and a heightened risk of targeted violence against government and law enforcement officials, as well as healthcare workers.

The communities that espouse anti-authority beliefs are increasingly amorphous. Anti-authority networks today are highly diffuse and decentralized, resulting in a highly fragmented movement that connects largely online around shared grievances and conspiracies. Additionally, pseudo-legal beliefs, concepts, and tactics have continued to be adopted by many of these individuals, despite their repeated failure in Canadian courts.

While these sentiments and conspiracies have led to instances of violence, it is important to note that many individuals within anti-authority movements are non-violent. A significant proportion of these actors channel their grievances into peaceful protests and activism, or attempt to subvert legal and governmental systems through pseudo-legal tactics. Some of these non-violent tactics, however, contribute to an erosion of trust in our public institutions and waste public resources.

Finding 7: Re-Emergence of RMVE

RMVE-related extremism has re-emerged in the Prairie region and across Canada. While the prominence of the Islamic State initially waned after the fall of the Caliphate in Syria and Iraq in 2019, a recent wave of arrests linked to the Islamic State suggests renewed activity and influence, mainly through diffuse online networks.

This revived appeal of the Islamic State seems particularly prominent among youth. Although the group's initial surge in popularity attracted recruits of all ages seeking to travel to Syria during the mid-2010s, recent events and arrests in Canada suggest a growing appeal among younger individuals who seek to carry out violence domestically. Additionally, several of these were motivated or inspired by domestic and international events, such as the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas or during 2SLGBTQI+ Pride events.

Concluding thoughts

The findings of this report highlight the evolving landscape of targeted violence, extremism, and hate in the Canadian Prairie provinces between January 2019 and February 2025. The persistent activity of IMVE, the increasing involvement of youth, the rise of mixed and nihilistic extremism, the exploitation of crises for extremist mobilization, growing anti-authority sentiments, and the resurgence of RMVE emphasize the complexities of these phenomena in the region. While the manifestations of these issues across the Prairies align with broader national trends, regional idiosyncrasies have emerged. By reporting on these emerging trends and engaging with local experts and stakeholders, we hope our research can assist policymakers to develop more effective strategies to counter these threats and help the public better understand the changing nature of extremism, hate, and violent conspiracies.