

Who joined the Islamic State from France between 2014 and 2016?

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Radicalized French citizens who adhere to Islamic State propaganda are less likely to disengage from their beliefs if they are married men with children, and from families with married parents. This is according to Nicolas Campelo of the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in France, who led a study in the journal *Palgrave Communications* which is published by Springer Nature. The research identified important factors that were accountable for someone being radicalised, such as having an interest in violence, or experiencing feelings of depression, uncertainty or loneliness. The findings also show that these radicalized individuals most likely tried to influence other family members or friends, and often had a close friend or relative in prison.

Islamic radicalization in European countries is a very real and complex phenomenon. For example, under the influence of Islamic State (IS) propaganda, the number of people who joined IS in Syria from France increased by 300 per cent between 2014 and 2015.

In order to better understand this trend, a team of the CPDSI (Centre de Prévention contre les Dérives Sectaires liées à l'islam) gathered information and conducted interviews with 150 young people and their families who had been pinpointed by authorities as being radicalized between 2014 and 2015. They either willingly or after a court order or police intervention took part in a support programme provided by the French government. The CPDSI also had access to information and videos that these youths shared on social networks. Most participants were around 20 years old.

The researchers conducted follow-up interviews in 2016 and found that nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of the participants were no longer radicalized, while 14 per cent were disengaged. Nineteen individuals (around 12 per cent) were still radicalized. Nine out of ten participants (93 per cent) still identified as Muslim by the time the follow-up sessions ended. Subsequent to the initial interview phase fifteen participants (10 per cent) had managed to reach an IS base.

Of these, nine came from the Paris area, and went together with a friend or a family member. This finding highlights the role that proximity and living in specific neighbourhoods has in the radicalization process.

Women and those with parents who were divorced or with one parent deceased tended to become less radicalized over time with adequate support. This was also true for those who had suicidal thoughts or sought psychiatric help before they became radicalized or received education and psychiatric monitoring after radicalization.

"It is likely that the subsequent support received by these vulnerable individuals had a positive impact on them," says Campelo.

He explains that the link between radicalization and being male, Muslim by birth or having a history of imprisoned relatives or friends, corresponds with other research that shows a relationship between violence, radical Islamism, and having an interest in weapons. He also highlights that being married plays a role in terms of the support that radicalized couples likely provide for each other.

"The dyadic relationship within the couple acts as a cement that amplifies adhesion to the radical ideology. It may also increase the splitting with previous friends and non-radicalized relatives, and the feeling of being involved in something meaningful," he adds.

"Radicalization could also happen more easily in stable Islamic families

through education and also through belonging to Islamic communities in which some individuals already experienced [radicalization](#)."

More information: Nicolas Campelo et al, Joining the Islamic State from France between 2014 and 2016: an observational follow-up study, *Palgrave Communications* (2018). [DOI: 10.1057/s41599-018-0191-8](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0191-8)

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