

Does media exposure influence an individual's risk of radicalization?

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A recent analysis in *Campbell Systematic Reviews* examined the effects of media on two aspects of radicalization: the support of the use of radical violence in the name of a cause or ideology (called cognitive radicalization) and the actual involvement in such violence (called behavioral radicalization).

The analysis, which included 53 studies, identified and examined 23 media-related factors. Based on experimental evidence, the study found that simple, one-time exposure to mediated content that is theorized to increase [radicalization](#) has a very small effect, even in [individuals](#) with aggressive predispositions. Similarly, evidence indicates that most types of media usage have exceptionally small relationships with radicalization. However, exposure to radical content over the [internet](#), whether passive or active, was associated with more meaningful relationships with radicalization, especially when compared with other non-media related [risk factors](#).

Importantly, the authors noted that the results should be interpreted with caution because the amount of evidence is limited and of relatively low quality.

"It has long been theorized that the media plays an important role in individuals' radicalization, and in recent years, an increased focus has been placed on so-called 'online radicalization' or 'cyber radicalization.' Yet, until now, there has been no real attempt to quantitatively synthesize the evidence," said Michael Wolfowicz, Ph.D., from the Institute of

Criminology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "According to our results, compared with other known risk factors, the internet and other types of [media](#) have only small relationships with the cognitive aspects of radicalization. However, for those who are already radicalized, active exposure to radical content, as well as other radicals on the internet is associated with a salient increase in the risk that they will turn to radical violence."

More information: Experimental evidence concerning media effects on radicalization is limited, inconclusive, and of low quality, *Campbell Systematic Reviews* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/cl2.1244](https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1244)

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