

CIDB Descriptive Analysis 05/08/2015

The Canadian Incident Database (CIDB) consists of 1,815 violent extremist and terrorist incidents. With the goal of capturing all incidents occurring within Canada ($n=1,405$) and all Canadian-affiliated incidents abroad¹ ($n=410$) from 1960 to 2014, the database was compiled through the systematic search and extraction of incidents from various databases, media sources, and government reports.

Terrorism or Violent Extremism?

All incidents in the database comprise violent extremism; however only 87% are considered terrorist acts ($n=1,579$), as prescribed by section 83.01 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*.²

Overview

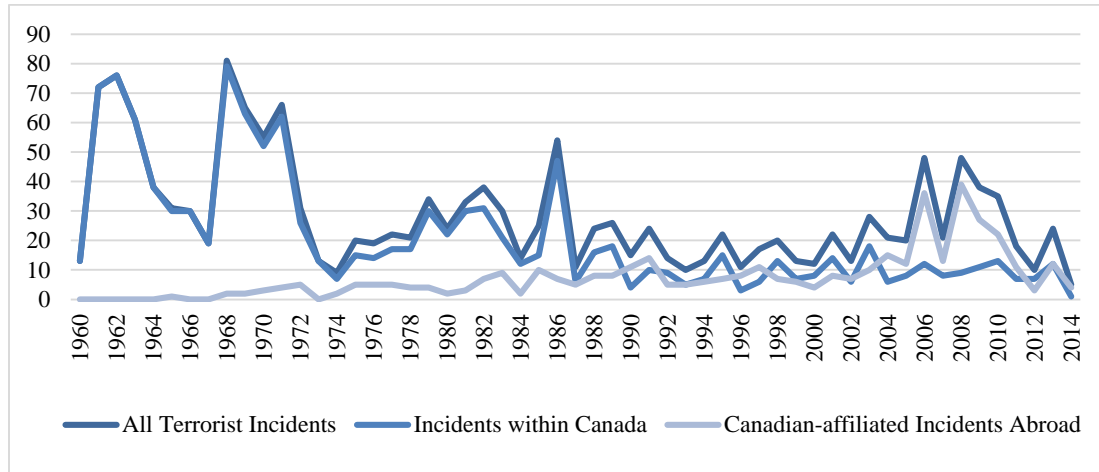


Figure 1. Canadian-related Terrorist Incidents within Canada and Abroad, 1960-2014 ($n=1,579$)

Focusing first on terrorist acts from 1960 to 2014 (Figure 1), two peaks in incidents during the early and late 1960s can be observed, followed by a drop during the 1970s, and relatively smaller, but notable, increases during the 1980s and mid-2000s. While the fluctuations in terrorist attacks pre-2000 are largely attributed to attacks within Canada, this trend is reversed during the late 2000s with most Canadian-related attacks occurring

¹ Canadian affiliated incidents abroad include acts that occurred internationally and either involved a Canadian target, victim, and/or perpetrator.

² However, of these identified terrorist acts, 28% ($n=436$) were coded as ambiguous incidents, as they had a high probability, but not certainty of being a terrorism incident. Given the oftentimes ambiguous nature of terrorist acts these incidents were further coded to identify the alternative possibilities, which included lack of intentionality (67%; $n=290$) capturing events where the motive of the attack was difficult to discern or not provided; insurgency/guerilla action (19%; $n=84$) including incidents that may be attributable to militants; other crime types (14%; $n=60$) involving incidents such as weapons procurement or robberies to finance terrorist activities; inter/intra-group conflict (0.2%; $n=1$), and lastly, state actors (0.2%; $n=1$) capturing events where the perpetrators were likely state bodies. The below analyses include these events; however it should be noted that trends stayed similar even when these events were excluded.

internationally. While this may be reflective of domestic versus international trends, at present it is likely attributable to the source databases that were consulted in order to create this database, with the majority of Canadian-focused chronologies consulted ending by 2001.³

Accounting for the peak during the early 1960s is a series of attacks conducted by religiously motivated groups, in particular the Sons of Freedom. These religious ideological attacks account for 44% ($n=98$) of all events across Canada, and 61% ($n=97$) of attacks in British Columbia for the period 1960 to 1963. Of the 222 events across Canada during this period, most involved bombings or explosions (54%; $n=120$), facility/infrastructure attacks (33%; $n=74$), and primarily targeted utilities (22%; $n=49$), private citizens and property (17% $n=37$), or transportation (15%; $n=34$). Despite the peak in events for this period, there was a low number of fatalities ($n=2$), none of which were attributed to religious acts.

Although a sustained series of separatist motivated attacks occurred during the early 1960s, attacks by these groups did not peak until 1968 with a high of 46 attacks, accounting for 58% of all attacks across Canada for this year. Between 1968 and 1971 separatist organizations conducted 142 attacks in Quebec, four in Ontario, and one in Alberta. Primarily involving bombings (77%; $n=114$) these groups attacked a range of targets, including businesses (29%; $n=43$), government facilities (27%; $n=40$), and private citizens and property (18%; $n=27$). Despite a high volume of incidents during this period, only two fatalities were directly attributed to separatist groups.

Providing a less defined picture is the surge in incidents during the 1980s, which involved a range of attacks across ideological groups and provinces. Of the 218 terrorist incidents within Canada that occurred during this period, most were perpetrated by religiously motivated groups (19%; $n=41$) and separatist organizations (17%; $n=36$). Attacks by the former group primarily involved a resurgence of Sons of Freedom attacks in British Columbia (8%; $n=17$). In addition, during this period terrorist attacks were also perpetrated by leftist (7%; $n=16$) and rightist (1%; $n=3$) organizations. While all leftist attacks occurred in British Columbia, Ontario or Quebec, attacks by rightist groups occurred either in the province of Alberta or Quebec.

³ Of the Canadian specific databases (Kellett et al., 1991, *Terrorism in Canada: Attributes of Domestic Political Terrorism in Canada (ATIC)*; RCMP Chronology; *Right-wing Violence in Canada (RWVIC)*) only one source went until the year 2001 with the rest cutting off by 1989.

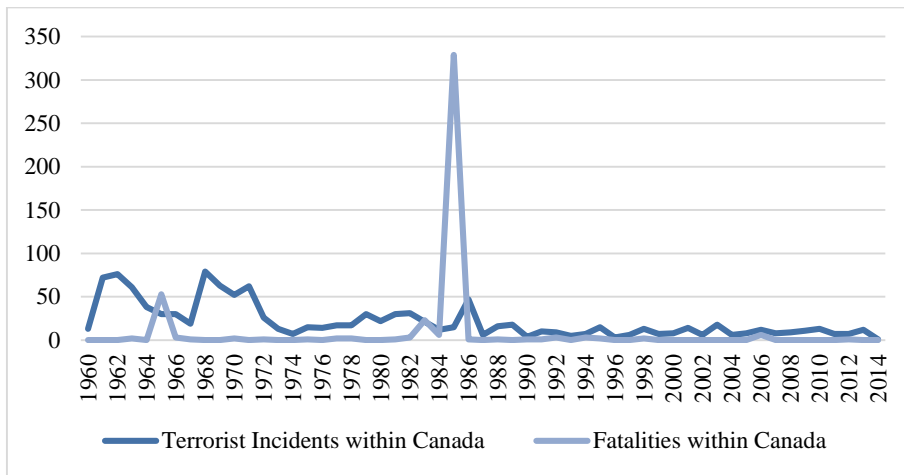


Figure 2. Terrorist Incidents and Fatalities within Canada, 1960-2014

Figure 2 demonstrates that there has generally been a lower rate of fatalities relative to terrorist attacks, with the exception of the years 1965 and 1985. Within Canada there have been 1,170 terrorist incidents and a total of 450 fatalities. The majority of these fatalities can be primarily accounted for by two incidents, one in 1965 and the other 1985. In 1965 a Canadian Pacific Aircraft flying from Vancouver to Whitehorse crashed after an explosive device detonated within the fuselage, killing all 52 persons aboard. Involving a similar attack type, in 1985 a bomb exploded onboard Air India Flight 182 killing all 329 people on the aircraft, and a twin bomb killed two baggage handlers at Tokyo’s Narita airport.

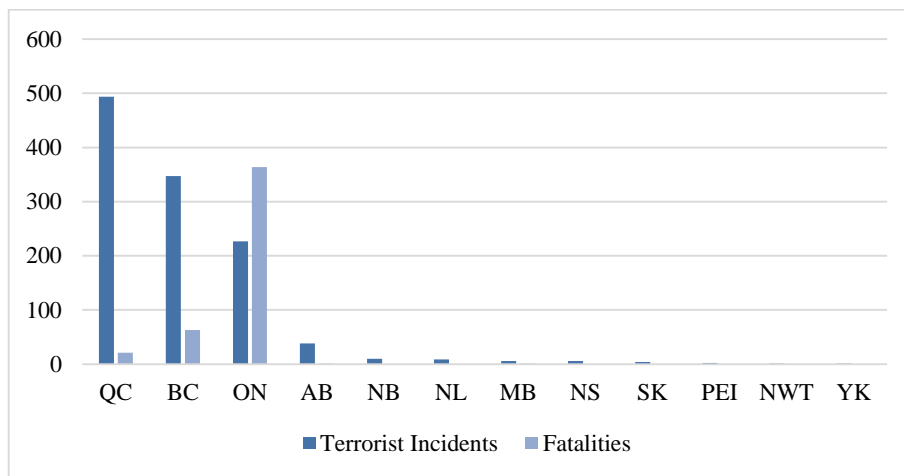


Figure 3. Terrorist Incidents and Fatalities by Province, 1960-2014

In Figure 3, breaking terrorist events down by province, Quebec is shown to have the highest number of attacks (42%; $n=493$) across all terrorist incidents within Canada from 1960 to 2014 ($n=1,170$). British Columbia is responsible for the second highest number of incidents (30%; $n=347$), followed by Ontario (19%; $n=227$). As mentioned, most of the incidents in British Columbia can be attributed to religiously motivated terrorism and those in Quebec to separatist attacks. Further, attacks tended to occur in urban rather than rural areas, a trend that can be seen across Ontario and Quebec. Almost all events in Ontario, either took place in Toronto (42%; $n=95$) or Ottawa (36%; $n=82$).

Similarly, most events in Quebec occurred in the municipality of Montreal (77%; $n=380$). However, British Columbia did not follow this tendency. While a high number of terrorist acts occurred in Vancouver (18%; $n=64$), most occurred within smaller cities throughout the Kootenay region (50%; $n=172$).

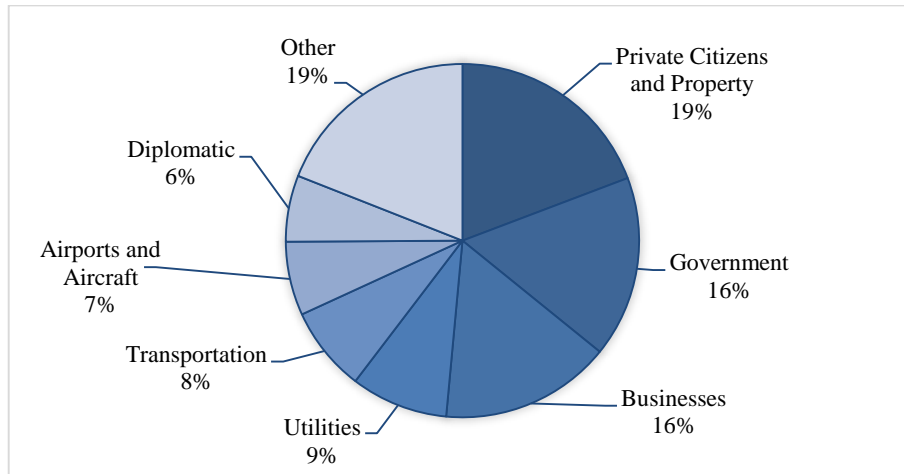


Figure 4. Distribution of Terrorist Targets within Canada, 1960-2014 ($n=1,170$)

Figure 4 illustrates that terrorist attacks across Canada from 1960 to 2014 primarily targeted private citizens and property, accounting for 19% of all attacks ($n=224$) during this period. These attacks generally targeted private residences (49%; $n=111$) and public areas (9%; $n=20$). Other frequently targeted venues included government (17%; $n=194$), businesses (16%; $n=183$), and utilities (9%; $n=104$). In the same order, the most targeted sub-category for each was: government buildings/facilities (51%; $n=98$), retail businesses (21%; $n=38$), and electrical substations/power lines (68%; $n=71$).

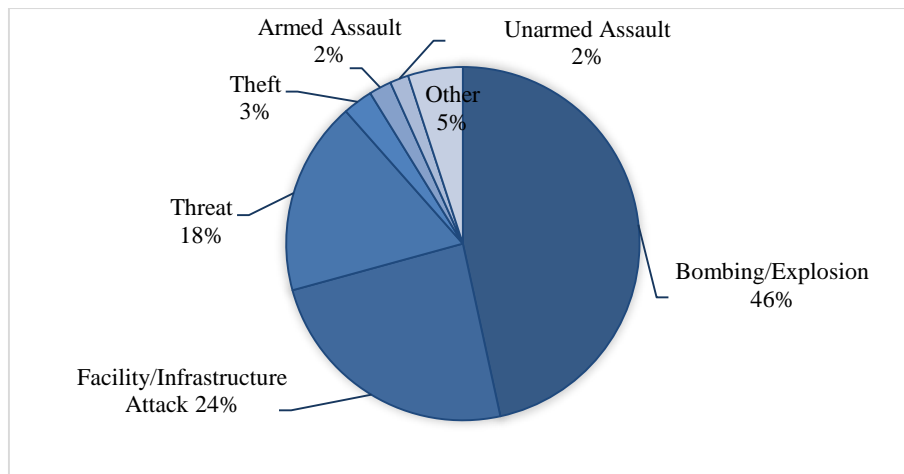


Figure 5. Distribution of Terrorist Events across Canada, 1960-2014 ($n=1,170$)

Figure 5 demonstrates that most terrorist incidents within Canada involved bombings or explosives (46%; $n=543$). Bombings occurred across a range of targets, including private citizens and property (18%; $n=96$), utilities (17%; $n=90$), businesses (15%; $n=84$), government (15%; $n=84$), and transportation (11%; $n=58$). Facility/infrastructure attacks comprised 24% of all incidents within Canada ($n=282$).

These incidents consisted almost exclusively of incendiary attacks (93%; $n=263$) and primarily targeted private citizens and property (32%; $n=91$) and business facilities (20%; $n=56$).

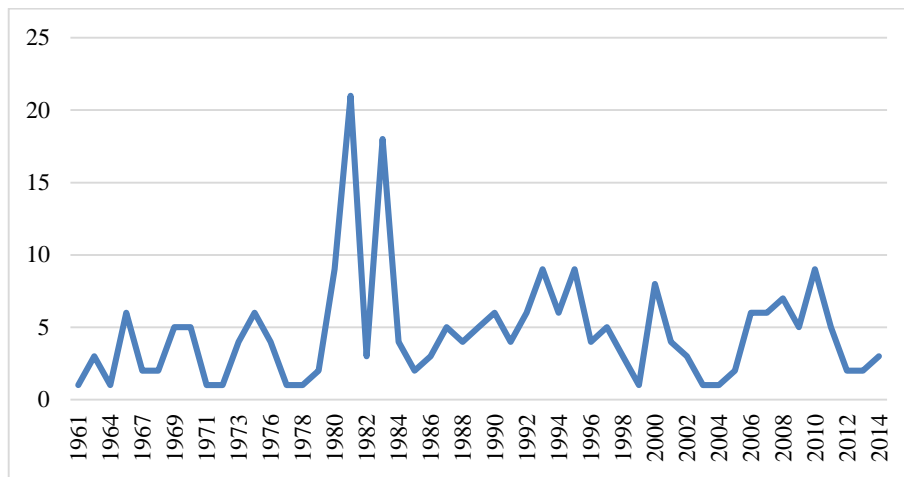


Figure 6. Extremist Incidents within Canada, 1960-2014 ($n=235$)

Focusing on extremist incidents ($n=235$), Figure 6 illustrates trends in extremist acts from 1960 to 2014. Almost all extremist acts occurred in Canada, with the exception of one animal-rights event potentially affiliated with Canadian perpetrators that occurred at a United States university. Nearly a quarter of all extremist incidents were clustered across a five year period from 1980 to 1984 (23%; $n=55$). These incidents occurred across multiple provinces and involved a range ideological motivations; however were primarily perpetrated by supremacist groups (40%; $n=22$). In Canada, most extremist incidents from 1960 to 2014 occurred in Ontario (46%; $n=108$), followed by British Columbia (18%; $n=43$), Alberta (15%; $n=36$), and Quebec (12%; $n=28$). Of the incidents in Ontario many were supremacist (39%; $n=42$) and environmentalist related (24%; $n=26$), and primarily involved unarmed assaults (39%; $n=42$). Similarly, many extremist incidents in British Columbia were motivated by supremacist ideologies (51%; $n=22$), and involved facility/infrastructure attacks (33%; $n=14$).

Across all extremist incidents, the most common event types were unarmed assaults (30%; $n=70$), followed by facility/infrastructure attacks (28%; $n=65$), armed assaults (16%; $n=37$), and threats (13%; $n=31$). Where an ideological motivation was identified (87%; $n=205$), most acts were perpetrated by supremacist groups (57%; $n=116$), followed by environmentalist (23%; $n=48$) and rightist organizations (8%; $n=16$). Less common were extremist acts by ethnic groups (5%; $n=11$); leftist groups (2%; $n=5$), religious groups (2%; $n=4$), separatist organizations (2%; $n=4$), and anarchist groups (0.4%; $n=1$).