

# Far Right Extremist Violence in the United States

## Risk Assessment of Far Right Extremist Violence by County

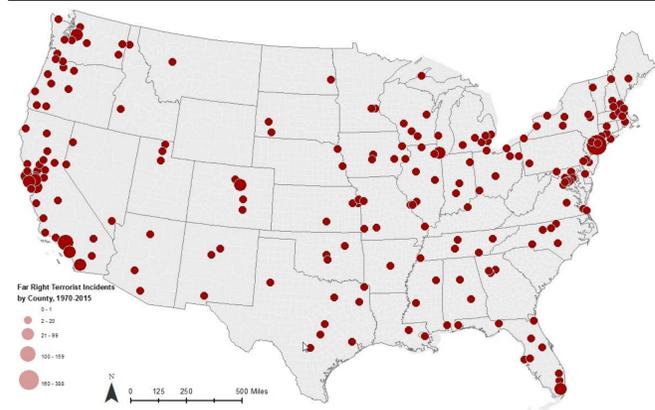
### Introduction and Research Question

In September 2015, President Barack Obama established the Office for Community Partnerships within the Department of Homeland Security. The mission of this office was to provide resources to communities to prevent violence extremism. With the new Trump Administration, officials have sought to narrow the focus of this office to focus solely on countering “radical Islam,” and not providing resources for communities to counter far right extremism. Data shows that Islamist extremism and far-right extremism pose the greatest threats to the United States. In addition, literature suggests that there is typically a spike in far right extremist activity and violence near the time of a contentious presidential election. Therefore, it is important to understand the threat landscape posed by far-right extremism within the United States.

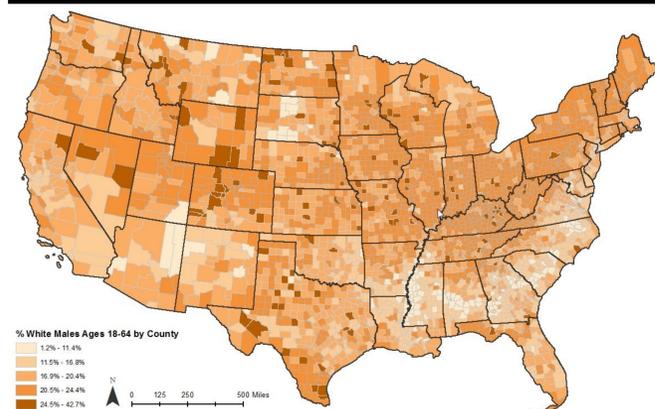
This project sought to answer: what counties within the United States are most at risk for far right extremist violence? Based upon academic literature, I have identified factors that are correlated with far right extremist violence. The first group of factors relate to socio-economic and demographic variables: white male unemployment rate, white male education level, age and racial identity, and racial diversity of county. The second group of factors relate to a history or presence of far right violent extremist activity: the presence of a far right hate group and history of far right terrorist attacks. Taking into account these conditions and factors have enabled me to explore where vulnerable counties for far right extremism are within the United States. Understanding these areas holds implications for federal funding and resource allocation to best enable communities and law enforcement to protect the public.

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**Data Sources:** Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Map, UMD START’s Global Terrorism Database, US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2011-2015  
**Projection:** USA Contiguous Albers Equal Area Conic USGS; NAD 1983 Alaska Albers

### Far Right Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2015



### White Males Ages 18-64, 2011-2015



### Methodology

The project performs a risk assessment to identify counties most vulnerable to far right extremist violence. Socio-economic, demographic, and history of far right extremist violence variables were chosen. The socio-economic and demographic indicators are from the 2011-2015 US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS): percentage of white males between 18-64 years of age; percentage of unemployed white males in the labor force over 18 years of age; percentage of white males 25 years of age or older with some college education or less; and percentage of population that is non-white. The variables for history of far right extremist violence are presence of a far right hate group per capita from the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “Hate Map” and far right terrorist attacks per capita from START’s Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

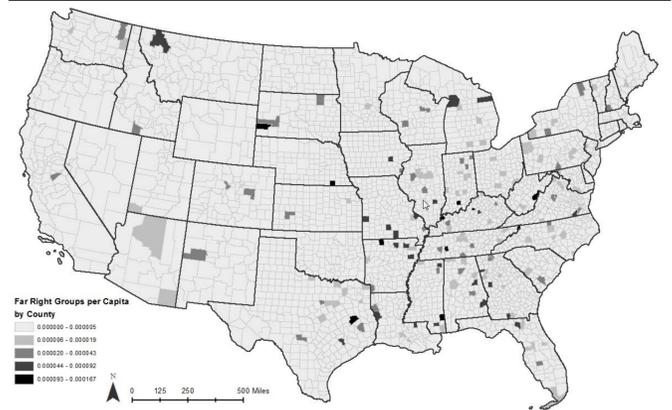
Employment status, education level, race, and age are socio-economic and demographic variables that fit a profile of a perpetrator of far right extremist violence. Percentage of non-white population was selected as academic literature shows that far right extremist attacks typically occur in racially diverse areas.

Socio-economic and demographic indicators were joined together. Next, these variables were scored using a natural breaks in the data on a scale of 0 (lowest risk of far right violence) and 4 (highest risk of far right violence). This was done by county and then added together to create a socio-economic and demographic risk score.

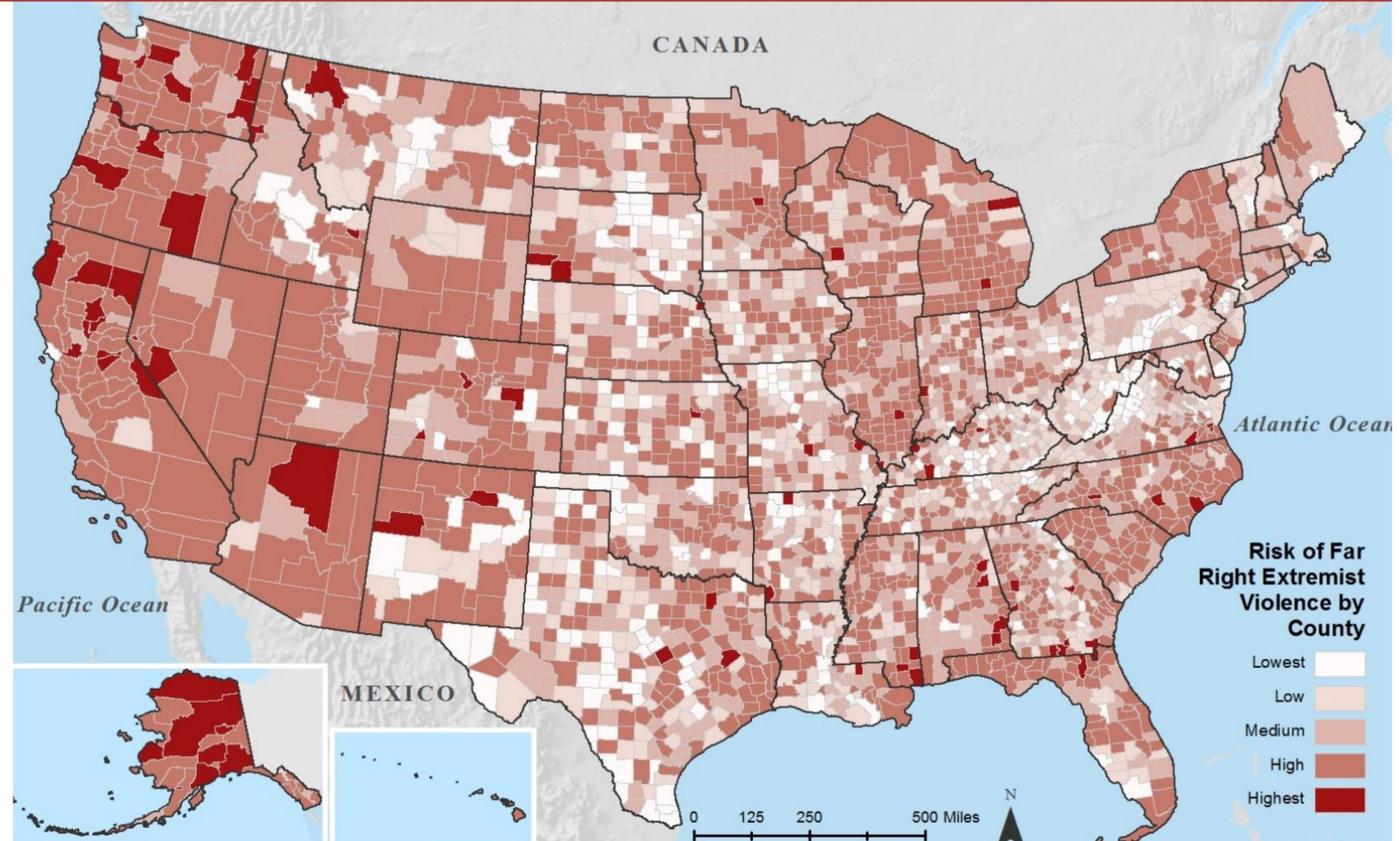
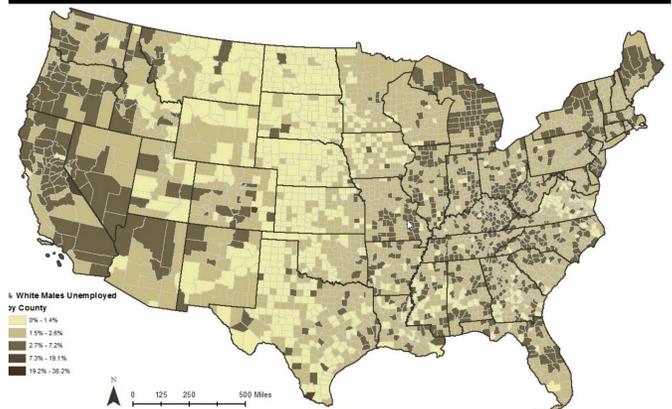
For history of “hate,” data was gathered from the GTD. Only incidents attributed to far right terrorists within the United States from 1970-2015 were selected. As the GTD data only has longitude and latitude coordinates, I performed a spatial join with the ACS county dataset to convert the points to the county polygons. Next, I only had the SPLC 2016 “Hate Map” by town and state; therefore, I coded only the far right extremist groups to their associated county and its ACS GEOID. I then joined this dataset to the joined ACS and GTD file. Next, these variables were scored using a natural breaks in the data on a scale of 0 (lowest risk of far right violence) and 4 (highest risk of far right violence). This was done by county and then added together to create a “history of hate” risk score.

Lastly, the socio-economic, demographic and history of far right extremist violence rank were added together to produce an overall far right extremist violence risk score. This score was then classified into a final scale of lowest to highest risk using natural breaks.

### Far Right Hate Groups, 2016



### White Male Unemployment, 2011-2015



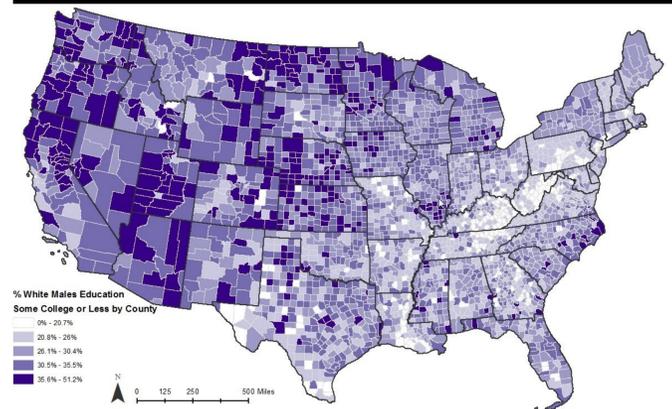
### Results, Conclusions, and Limitations

The resulting risk analysis shows that counties that are most at risk for far right extremist violence are spread throughout the country. The top six counties in this risk assessment are: Lassen County, CA; Chatahoochee County, GA; Oglala Lakota County, SD; Greene County, MS; Coconino County, AZ; and Alpena County, MI.

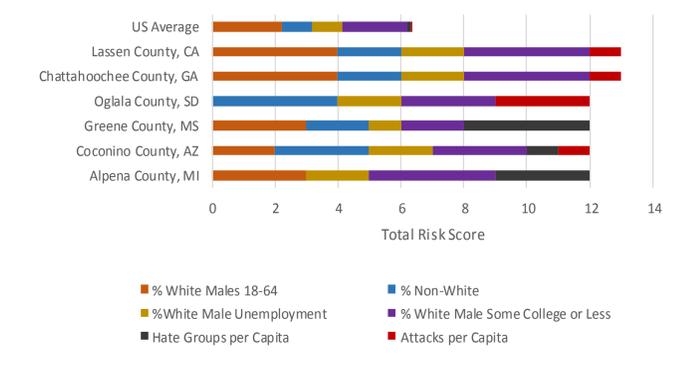
These highest risk areas have similar education levels and percentage of white male ranks. A majority also have a significant non-white population.

There are several limitations with this project. First, far right extremist violence is frequently considered a hate crime and not a terrorist incident. Therefore, incorporation of US Department of Justice hate crime statistics would have developed a fuller picture of where far right extremist violence occurs. However, this data was not fully listed by county with an associated GEOID and not all counties reported statistics. There would have been substantial data clean up and significant gaps in the data. Another challenge was determining which classification to use for the data. Natural breaks (Jenks) was chosen and applied across all for consistency. However, further research on far right extremist violence could better inform which classification to use and how to best weigh socio-economic, demographic, and historical variables. Finally, the ACS county shapefile covers over water and some coastlines which gives some areas a distorted look. I chose not to manipulate this as I wanted to preserve the county boundaries.

### White Male Education Level, 2011-2015



### Risk Comparison of Top Six Ranked Counties and US Average



### Non-White Population, 2011-2015

