Surveys and Countering Violent Extremism

A PRACTITIONER GUIDE

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Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Acknowledgments

The production of this guide has been a collective effort. It was written by Matthew Nanes, a political scientist, and Bryony Lau, a program manager in the regional conflict and development unit at The Asia Foundation.

This guide was produced with the generous support of the Governance, Fragility, and Water Branch of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Michael Wilson, Victoria Coakley, and Emily Rainey provided support and input throughout the development of the guide. An experts' meeting was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in September 2017 to solicit the views of a wide range of development actors on the challenges of running surveys for CVE. A draft version was then reviewed internally by Foundation staff, including Patrick Barron and Pauline Tweedie, and externally by Michael Schroll and colleagues at the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. Patthiya Tongfueng organized logistics for the experts' meeting, and John Rieger edited the text for clarity and style. Deddeaw Laosinchai did the graphic design and layout.

The authors would like to thank the workshop participants, peer reviewers, their colleagues, and DFAT for their support.

The guide reflects the views of its authors, not necessarily those of The Asia Foundation or its funders.

Introduction

The intent of this practitioner guide is to better acquaint development practitioners with the use of surveys in preventing or countering violent extremism (CVE). Surveys are an excellent way to gather systematic data about violent extremism, as well as the behaviors and attitudes of the general public or important segments of the population such as victims, potential perpetrators, and even extremists themselves. They can capture information about the drivers of violent extremism and reveal which are the most significant, in what areas, and among whom. When applied to programming, surveys can improve the targeting and design of projects and can measure results.

This guide emphasizes that surveys are a powerful and flexible tool with many potential applications to CVE. It also underscores what surveys cannot do, and acknowledges that surveys will often be most effective when combined with qualitative and other quantitative methods. The advice provided will help practitioners ensure that their surveys yield accurate, useful data about violent extremism while gathering information ethically and safely.

Who is this guide for?

It is aimed at those funding surveys—aid agencies, foreign ministries, foundations—as well as international and local NGOs, consultants, and think tanks that may be running surveys. It is relevant for practitioners running diagnostic surveys, surveys for project design, and surveys that are part of project evaluation, such as for establishing baselines.

What is in this guide?

The guide is divided into two sections. It begins by providing an overview of *why* surveys can be helpful for CVE, and then looks at *how* they should be run. The first section lays out a series of questions that should be answered to clarify the focus and purpose of a survey. The second section addresses implementation: the challenges of designing a survey instrument on violent extremism, fielding the survey, and analyzing results.

How to use this guide

The guide should be used in parallel with other resources and expertise. It is not a field manual for running a survey. The first half does not require any knowledge of surveys and statistics; the second half assumes familiarity with survey methodology, terminology, and basic statistics. Nor is it an introduction to CVE analytical frameworks and programming approaches, as useful guidance on these topics already exists. While the guide discusses the use of surveys as part of project design and evaluation, it does not discuss in detail the monitoring and evaluation challenges of CVE interventions.

Methodology

This guide uses examples from publicly available surveys on violent extremism and closely related topics, such as public-opinion polling on governance, democracy, and violence. This includes surveys conducted to inform policy-making and development projects—including by The Asia Foundation—as well as academic survey research on the causes of civil war, insurgency, and terrorism.

Glossary

Anonymity: Individuals' identities will not become linked with the research in any way (cf. *privacy*).

Descriptive statistics: Quantitative figures that provide an overview of the data. Usually include a measure of centrality/average (mean, median, or mode) and distribution (variance or standard deviation). Descriptive statistics are frequently provided for several subgroups, for example by gender, age, or location.

Difference in differences: A special type of panel study that takes before and after measures for two groups, one that received a treatment (e.g., development program, government policy, exposure to extremism) and one that did not, to estimate the effects of that treatment. Provides a more reliable estimate of the effect, because it measures both cross-sectional and over-time differences.

Enumerator: Individual who carries out a survey.

Enumerator effect: Influence of an enumerator's personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) on the measurement of interest. Enumerator effects obscure the true value of the item being measured and therefore are usually considered undesirable.

Indirect *vs.* **direct questions:** *Direct questions* attempt to measure the item of interest as explicitly as possible. *Indirect questions* take a proxy measure that is closely correlated with the item of interest, usually because the item of interest is too sensitive to mention directly.

Informed consent: The process through which respondents or other research subjects understand the nature of their participation and agree or disagree to participate. Typically, informed consent involves explaining the purpose of the research, the expected costs and benefits to the respondent for participating, any risks they may face for participating, and their ability to terminate participation at any time. In the United States and many other developed countries, legal guidelines require all participants in scientific research to provide informed consent.

Mixed methods: The use of a variety of measurement and analysis strategies to answer a research question (e.g., combining surveys with focus group interviews).

Multivariate analysis: Quantitative analytic tool that accounts for the effects of several predictors/drivers on a single outcome simultaneously. Can answer questions like, "how does poverty affect extremist beliefs, holding constant age, gender, and religion?"

Nonresponse: Refusal to answer a question (*item nonresponse)* or refusal of a sampled individual to participate in the survey. Item nonresponse harms the precision/accuracy of the measure, while refusal to participate harms the generalizability of the survey.

Observer effect: Influence of the presence of an observer on the measurement of interest. Observer effects obscure the true value of the item being measured, and therefore are usually considered undesirable.

Panel survey: A survey that takes repeated measures from the same respondents at multiple points in time.

Piloting *or* pretesting: Running a survey on a small number of participants to evaluate the survey instrument, including the amount of time it takes and whether respondents have trouble understanding any of the questions.

Privacy: The contents of a respondent's participation will not be shared beyond the intended audience, but the respondent's identity may or may not be recorded (cf. *anonymity*).

Randomization: Using chance to assign items based on a pre-defined probability. In this guide, randomization applies mainly to assigning respondents to different versions of a survey based on chance, for example by flipping a coin or rolling dice.

Representativeness: The extent to which the individuals surveyed match the general population of interest.

Response rate: Proportion of sampled respondents who agree to take the survey/answer a question.

Sample size: Number of individuals who successfully complete the survey.

Sampling: The process of selecting individuals, from the population of interest, to take the survey.

Sampling error: Divergence between the measurement taken and the "true" value of that item in the population of interest, caused by unrepresentativeness of the sample.

Sampling frame: List of people or other units from which a sample is selected.

Survey instrument: The questions, answers, instructions, and other information presented to respondents.

Weighting: In analysis of results, giving more emphasis to some respondents than others to correct for unrepresentativeness of the sample.

Text boxes appear throughout this guide. There are four kinds, each with its own icon:

Research examples: Summaries of published and unpublished research that illustrate concepts or survey techniques.

Tips: Best practice for survey design/implementation and research on violent extremism.

Key concepts: Short explanations of important concepts for survey design or CVE.

Survey solutions: Common problems that arise when implementing surveys for CVE and recommended solutions, graded by difficulty from simple (S) to medium (M) to advanced (A).

Pointers for surveys on violent extremism

- **Surveys on violent extremism must be tailored to the local context**. Start by identifying the violent extremist outcomes (events, behaviors, and attitudes) to be measured and their drivers. If those running the survey are new to the country or area, desk research, interviews with experts, and workshops can help fill knowledge gaps.

- **Surveys may be more effective for measuring the views of the general population than those of violent extremists**. Surveys can help predict propensity for support or participation in extremist violence among the general population, which is important for prevention. Individuals who are known violent extremists may be harder to access and unwilling to reveal information.

- **Sampling determines the types of conclusions that can be drawn from survey data.** Surveys that intend to draw conclusions about a general population must use a representative sample of that population. The number of respondents required also depends on whom the survey seeks to describe and what it seeks to answer.

- **Questions about violent extremism need only comprise a part of a survey instrument**. Perceptions of democracy, governance, and identity will be relevant to understanding support for, participation in, or rejection of extremist violence.

- **Sensitive questions about violent extremism should be carefully phrased**. Softening questions or asking indirectly can help elicit answers and reduce the rate of nonresponse. Terminology appropriate to the context and accurate translation into local languages are essential.

- **Surveys can serve multiple purposes: diagnostic, program design, and evaluation**. The purpose will determine the focus, timing, and population of interest for the survey. Surveys linked to programming should help with targeting, testing the theory of change and underlying assumptions, and assessing results.

- **Decide before beginning the survey if the findings will be shared, and if so, how**. Disclosure of research findings on violent extremism can stigmatize at-risk groups and could put both those running the survey and the respondents in danger.

- **Surveys on violent extremism may involve ethical dilemmas and security risks**. While unique to local context, risks can usually be categorized into three types: presence in the survey area is dangerous, topics in the survey might upset armed actors, or responses would reveal illegal activities. Those implementing and funding surveys should have a shared understanding of these issues and assess whether the potential value of the findings warrants taking these risks.

- **Surveys take time to design, field, and implement.** The time required may range from a couple of months to more than a year. Where violent extremism is changing rapidly or information for policy and programming is needed urgently, those running the survey should realistically assess how long implementation will take and advise funders accordingly.

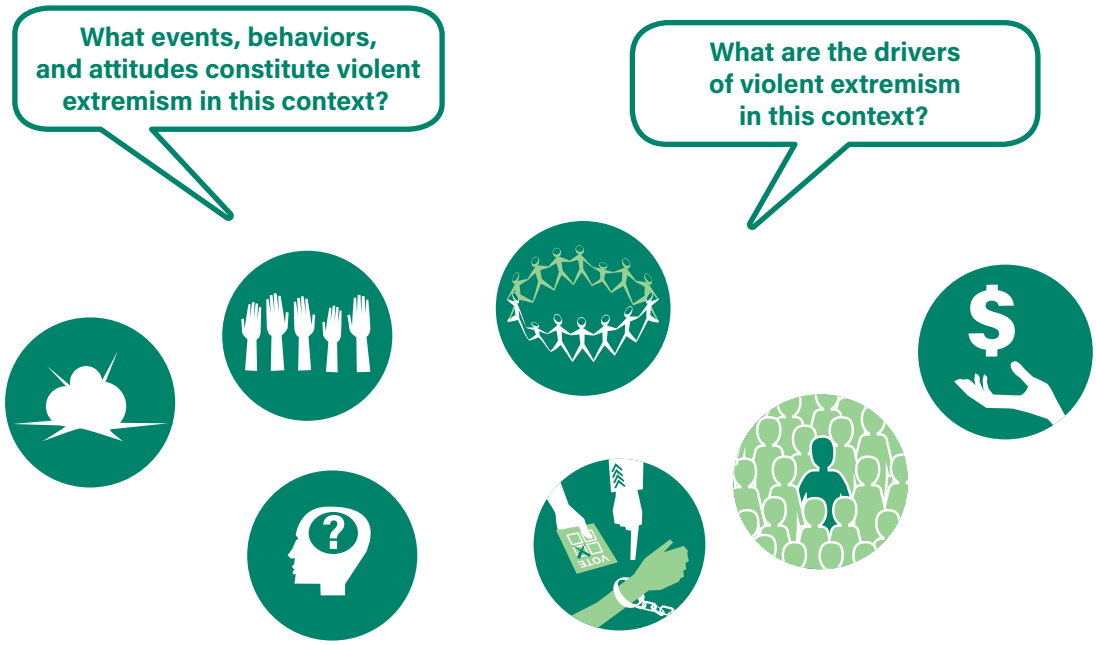
- **Surveys are a powerful tool, but they are not always the best tool**. The choice of research method depends on the answers being sought by those running the survey and the capacity of researchers available. Surveys demand technical know-how, a competent survey firm, and ability to analyze and store data.

- **Surveys can often be made more effective by combining them with qualitative methods**. These methods are complementary and can be combined to produce a fuller picture of the dynamics of violent extremism.

Why run a survey?

What do we want to know about violent extremism?

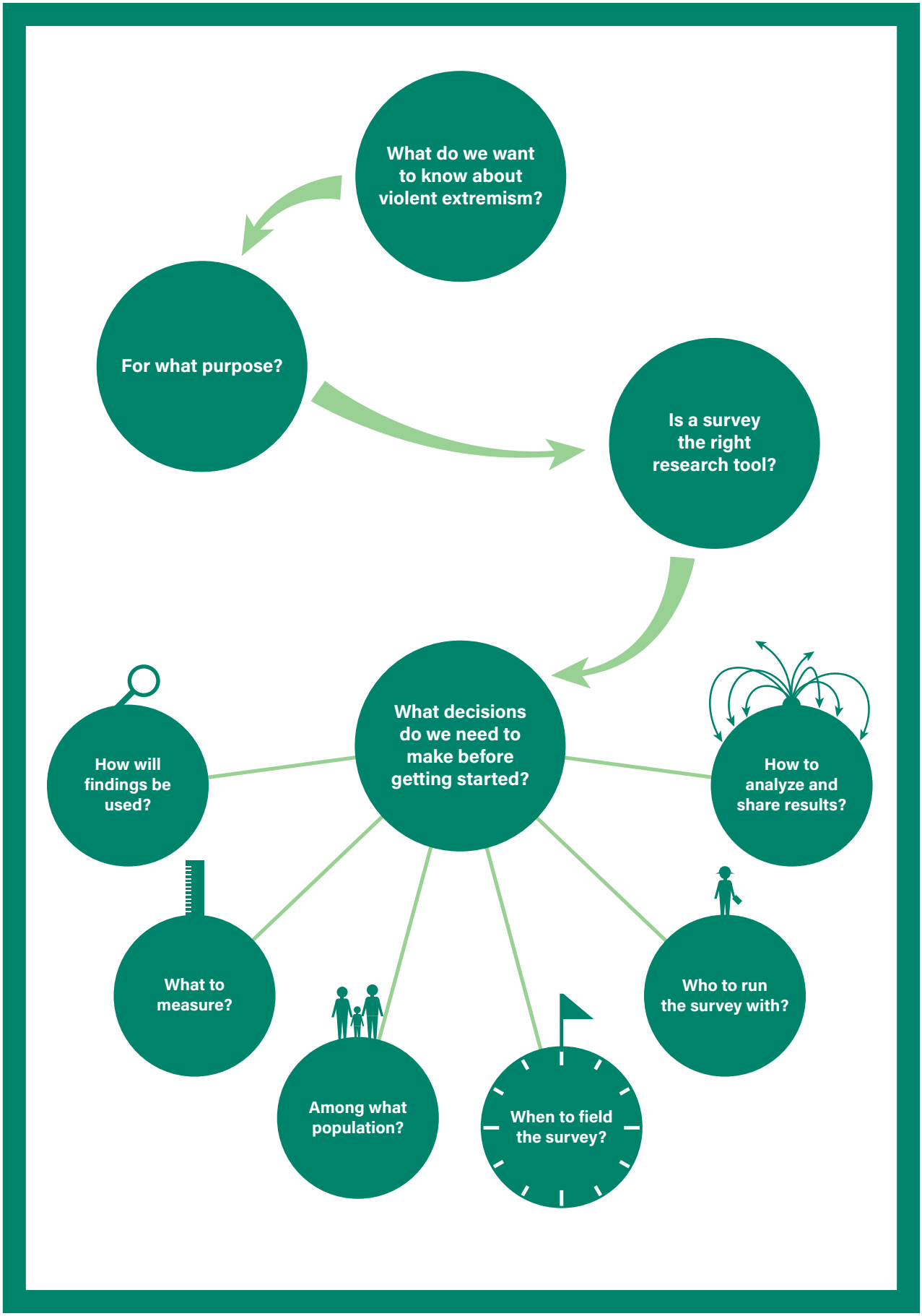
"Violent extremism" describes a wide range of violence, from terror attacks to ethnic riots and sectarian killings, as well as beliefs that are perceived to be conducive to such acts. Before starting a survey on violent extremism, those running the survey need to know: what events, behaviors, and attitudes constitute violent extremism in this context; and what are the drivers of violent extremism in this context.



Countering vs. preventing violent extremism

C/PVE involves governments, civil society, and communities preventing individuals from being radicalized or recruited into violent extremism. C/PVE efforts may address structural "push" factors as well as psychosocial "pull" factors that make someone vulnerable to radicalization or recruitment. The emphasis is prevention, which is why many organizations, including the United Nations, increasingly use the term "PVE" rather than "CVE".[1]

Figure 1: Why run a survey?



Violent extremism should be broken down into specific kinds of events, behaviors, and attitudes that the survey will measure. These *violent extremist outcomes* are simply the different ways violent extremism may manifest itself. The factors that produce these outcomes are the *drivers of violent extremism.*

Surveys are useful in areas where violent extremism is already a problem, as well as for prevention in areas that are susceptible to but not yet affected by violent extremism. The latter is especially important where those commissioning surveys have strong expectations about what makes a population vulnerable to extremism, as surveys can help measure the prevalence of those drivers and track changes in them over time.

Violent extremist outcomes

What violent extremist outcomes will the survey measure? The answer to this question will determine what events, forms of participation, and kinds of attitudes the survey should focus on. Figure 2 provides examples of the different dimensions of violent extremism that a survey could study, and offers sample questions. The table is not exhaustive, but is intended to spur further thinking.

Events

A survey can measure both **violent and nonviolent events**. Where indiscriminate attacks on civilians are occurring, a survey may measure the population's exposure to these incidents. Where communal tensions are increasing but rarely lead to physical violence, a survey may measure incidents of verbal harassment within a community. Men and women may be exposed to different kinds of extremist violence, and surveys should be sensitive to and try to capture these gender differences. It is unlikely that survey respondents will have comprehensive knowledge of all violent extremist events in their community, but their impressions and exposure to extremist violence may be analytically useful nonetheless.

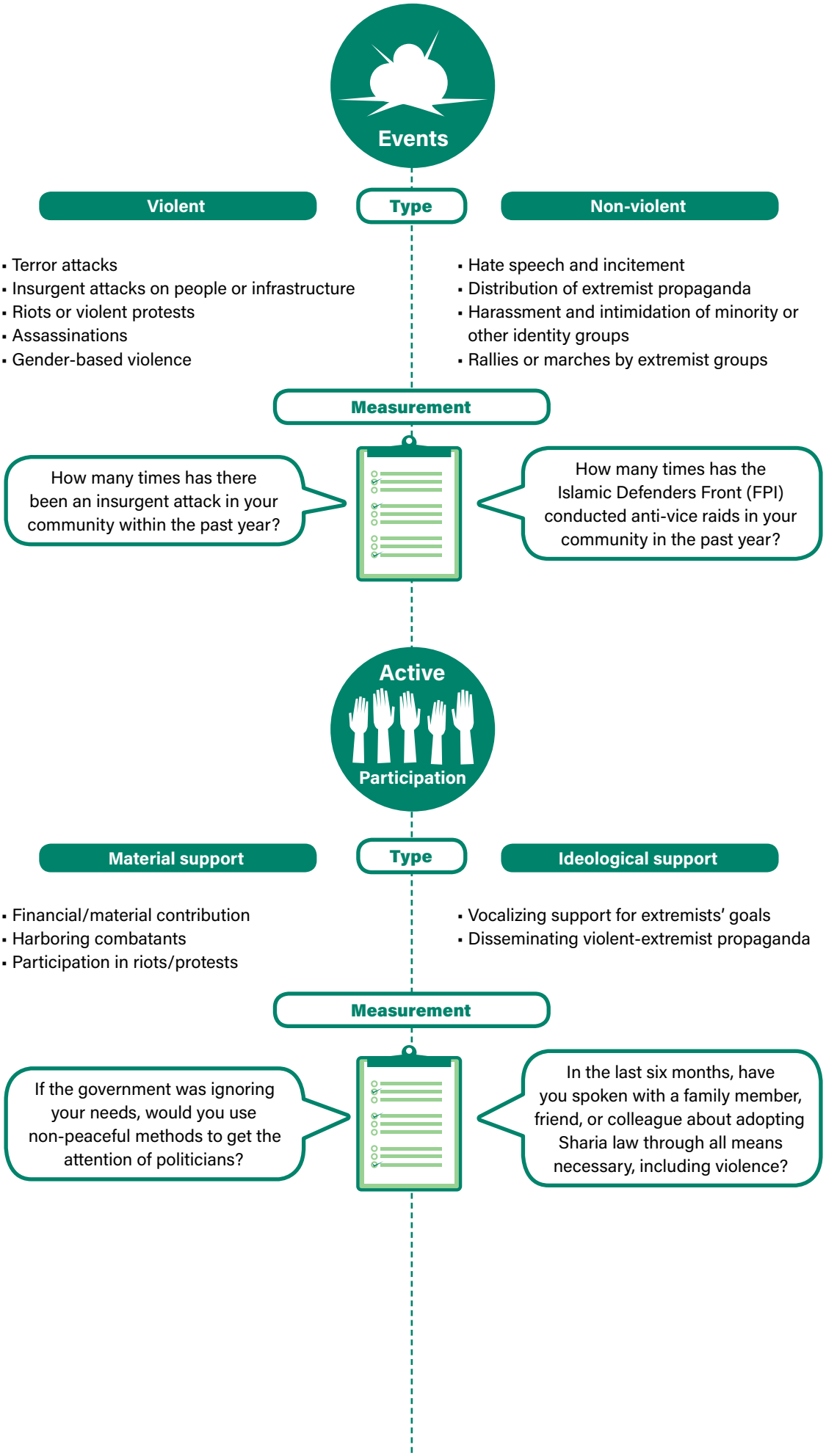
Participation

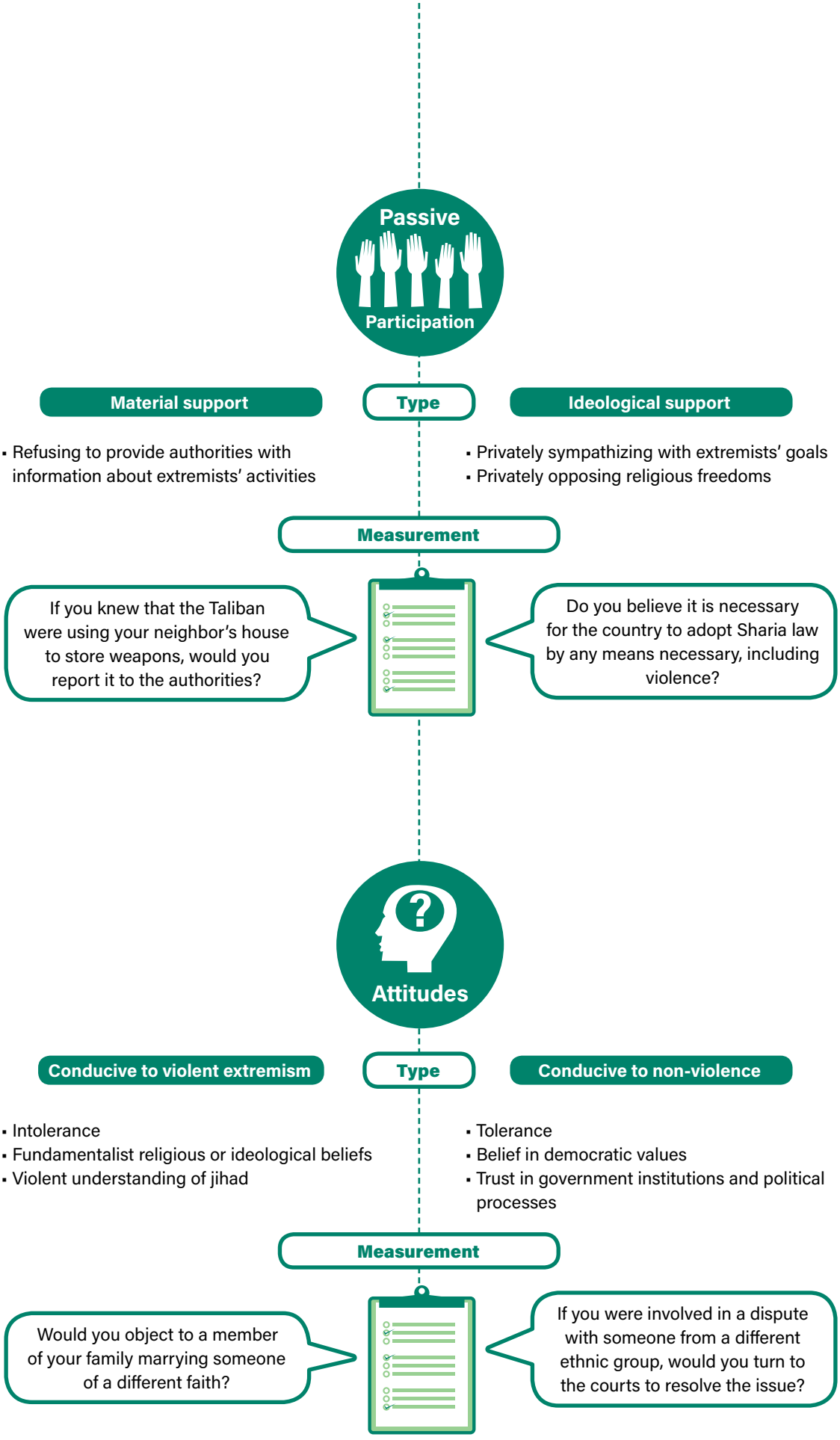
Surveys on violent extremism will likely measure **active participation as well as passive support**. Amid active conflict waged by a violent extremist organization, it may be relevant to measure direct participation in violence. But often, more subtle forms of support may be more important. Residents of an area where violent extremists are operating may provide **material support** in the form of money or supplies to the group, share information about government forces and potential

Counting violent extremist incidents

Surveys are not the only means of gathering data on violent events. Alternative sources of data may be available. Global datasets such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project, the Global Terrorism Database, or other, local violence -monitoring systems—for example, Conflict Alert in the Philippines—gather data on violent events systematically. Provided a database tracking extremist violence exists and uses sound methodology, its data could be used instead of or in addition to data gathered from survey respondents.[2]

Figure 2: Violent extremist outcomes




Passive
Participation
Material support
Type
Ideological support
▪ Refusing to provide authorities with information about extremists' activities
▪ Privately sympathizing with extremists' goals
▪ Privately opposing religious freedoms
Measurement
If you knew that the Taliban were using your neighbor's house to store weapons, would you report it to the authorities?
Do you believe it is necessary for the country to adopt Sharia law by any means necessary, including violence?
Attitudes
Conducive to violent extremism
Type
Conducive to non-violence
▪ Intolerance
▪ Fundamentalist religious or ideological beliefs
▪ Violent understanding of jihad
▪ Tolerance
▪ Belief in democratic values
▪ Trust in government institutions and political processes
Measurement
Would you object to a member of your family marrying someone of a different faith?
If you were involved in a dispute with someone from a different ethnic group, would you turn to the courts to resolve the issue?

targets, or help them hide when they are being pursued. **Ideological support** is also crucial. Sympathizers support the cause of violent extremists—and perhaps their tactics as well—without engaging in violence themselves. Religiously motivated violence, such as attacks on nonbelievers or apostates, is often supported by a large share of the population even when very few individuals are actually perpetrators. Participation may also be gendered; for example, men may be more likely to be directly involved in violence, while women may be providing material support, such as handling financial transfers.

Attitudes

Surveys may measure both **attitudes conducive to violent extremism** and **attitudes that bolster support for nonviolence**. Surveys can track intolerance, views of other identity groups, lack of social cohesion, mistrust in politicians and key institutions like the police, and religious or other ideological beliefs. If the survey seeks to explain who does *not* support violence, it may seek to measure attitudes that can protect a society against violent extremism. This may include measuring views on nonviolent forms of political action and commitment to and understanding of democratic values.

Surveys often measure attitudes as the primary outcome of interest. For example, a survey may seek to find out about citizens' attitudes towards other religious groups, their perceptions of government effectiveness, or their feelings about extremism. At other times, surveys may assess how attitudes correlate with behavior—specifically, with participation in violent extremism. This can help identify who is likely at risk of recruitment. In this case, attitudes are also a driver of violent extremism.

Measuring attitudes towards nonviolence in Yemen

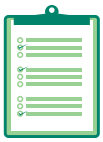
Surveys often seek to measure attitudes perceived to be conducive to violent extremism, but it may be equally useful to study why people *reject* violent extremism. Researchers at the RAND Corporation fielded a survey in Yemen to study why individuals opt not to use violence to pursue their political goals. Using a conceptual framework that distinguished between choosing not to use violence and opposing violence, the survey returned surprising findings. Social ties—to family, friends, and religious leaders—influenced attitudes towards violence, but did not have a clear effect on decisions to participate or not to participate in violence. The survey also tested the appeal of nonviolent ways of expressing grievances, and it found that having access to these other pathways did not affect the propensity to use violence, which is viewed by many Yemenis as another form of political activism.[3]

Drivers of violent extremism

Surveys can produce deeper understanding of the drivers of violent extremism. Drivers are what induce individuals to turn to violence, and they make it easier for violent organizations to attract fighters and followers to their cause. Possible drivers range from individual psychosocial rewards, to social networks involved in recruitment, to institutionalized political and economic marginalization.[4]

Surveys should measure suspected drivers of violent extremism in context. The drivers of violent extremism vary widely, both among and within countries.[5] Existing quantitative research shows that drivers are not the same in developed and developing countries,[6] and individual country studies show internal variation—for example, between rural and urban areas. Qualitative research emphasizes that individual radicalization is a complex, nonlinear, and multicausal process.[7] An indicative list of drivers that surveys may measure is provided in figure 3.

Figure 3: Drivers of violent extremism

Type of driver	Examples	Measurement
 **Psychological and social drivers**	 ▪ Social alienation ▪ Resentment due to loss of loved ones ▪ Access to radical networks (community leaders, friends) ▪ Belief in violent jihad	 As you know, there are many forms of jihad. Do you believe that violence is an important component of jihad?
 **Identity-based drivers**	 ▪ Segregation or weak social cohesion along identity lines ▪ Factionalized elites deepening identity-based divides ▪ Discrimination against minority groups	 Let us suppose you had to choose between being a [country name] and being a [religious identity]. Which would you choose?[11]
 **Political drivers**	 ▪ Weak legitimacy of political system ▪ Exclusion from state services ▪ Corruption ▪ Fear of physical insecurity or mistreatment by the state ▪ Human rights abuses	 Are you satisfied with the steps taken by public authorities to safeguard the rights of minorities in Bangladesh?
 **Economic drivers**	 ▪ Poverty and inequality ▪ Drug addiction ▪ Unemployment or underemployment ▪ Financial incentives	 Do you currently have enough income to house, feed, and clothe your family?

Surveys should collect information on **locally relevant drivers**. When the team running the survey has limited knowledge of the context, it will be necessary to tap local networks—for example, by convening a workshop or consulting experts to determine what drivers are believed to be the most relevant.

Conceptual frameworks for analyzing violent extremism may be helpful in identifying possible drivers.[8] For example, one common distinction made in policy research is between pull and push factors. Pull factors are simply proximate triggers or incentives to participate in violence—often psychosocial considerations specific to the individual—while push factors are structural conditions linked to political institutions, economic opportunities, and social context.[9]

Measuring democratic values and support for militancy in Pakistan

Do violent political organizations garner more support among individuals who reject core democratic values? Academic researchers conducted a 6,000-person, provincially representative survey in Pakistan to assess the validity of this commonly held assumption about the roots of militancy. The survey found that belief in property rights, free speech, independent courts, the ability of citizens to elect representatives, a separation of civilian and military power, and freedom of assembly were positively associated with support for militant organizations that promote *azadi*, an Urdu word that can be translated as "freedom" or "independence".[10]

Analyzing violent extremism and its drivers

Survey data on drivers and violent extremist events, forms of participation, and attitudes can be analyzed in different ways. The kind of analysis that will be performed on the data should inform the design of the survey. What assumptions or hypotheses about the nature of violent extremism and its drivers will the data test? It is possible to group the kinds of analysis that will be performed into four categories:

- **The prevalence of violent extremist outcomes**. What is the frequency and distribution of violent extremist events, behaviors, and attitudes? Are specific forms of extremist violence more common in some parts of the country than others? Who is most likely to privately sympathize with an extremist cause? What about the tactics of violent organizations—where do these receive the most support?

- **Correlations between drivers of violent extremism**. Are individuals with limited access to social services also more likely to report youth alienation as a problem in their community? Do perceptions of corruption correlate with a lower level of trust in elected officials? Are individuals who fear for their personal safety more likely to say that they would rely on nonstate security providers?

- **Correlations between violent extremist outcomes**. Are individuals with more exposure to extremist violence also more likely to admit directly participating in violence? Are individuals who are more tolerant less likely to perceive the killing of civilians as justified? What kinds of religious belief and practice correlate with sympathy for extremist causes?

- **Correlations between drivers and outcomes**. What socioeconomic differences exist between individuals who report directly participating in different forms of extremist violence? Are individuals who believe in gender equality more likely to say they would choose nonviolent forms of political change? Do communities reporting low trust in the police express more support for

extremist causes? What is the profile of an individual who is most likely to be a quiet sympathizer with extremist causes?

How the data will be analyzed subsequently has a bearing on how the survey should be conducted. Those running and funding the survey should discuss early on the expected analytical outputs and their intended audience. This will ensure that the survey answers the questions those funding and implementing the survey are interested in.

Populations of interest

Rather than taking a sample of the general population, surveys may target a sample of sub-populations. Often surveys for CVE focus on specific populations, perceived to be at risk of radicalization and recruitment, in order to understand their participation in and perceptions of violent extremism and the drivers that may be causing these behaviors and beliefs. Members of these populations may share certain demographic characteristics that place them at risk, such as age and gender. Alternatively, the population may be geographically determined—for example, if part of a country is perceived as a hotbed of violent extremism.

Those running the survey should consider broadening their population of interest to include respondents who are not part of the at-risk group. If the goal is to determine who is at risk, or how those who are at risk differ from the rest of the population, then including a broader population allows for the necessary comparisons. However, if the survey intends to measure something about the at-risk population itself, then the survey can gather the highest quality data by focusing specifically on that group.

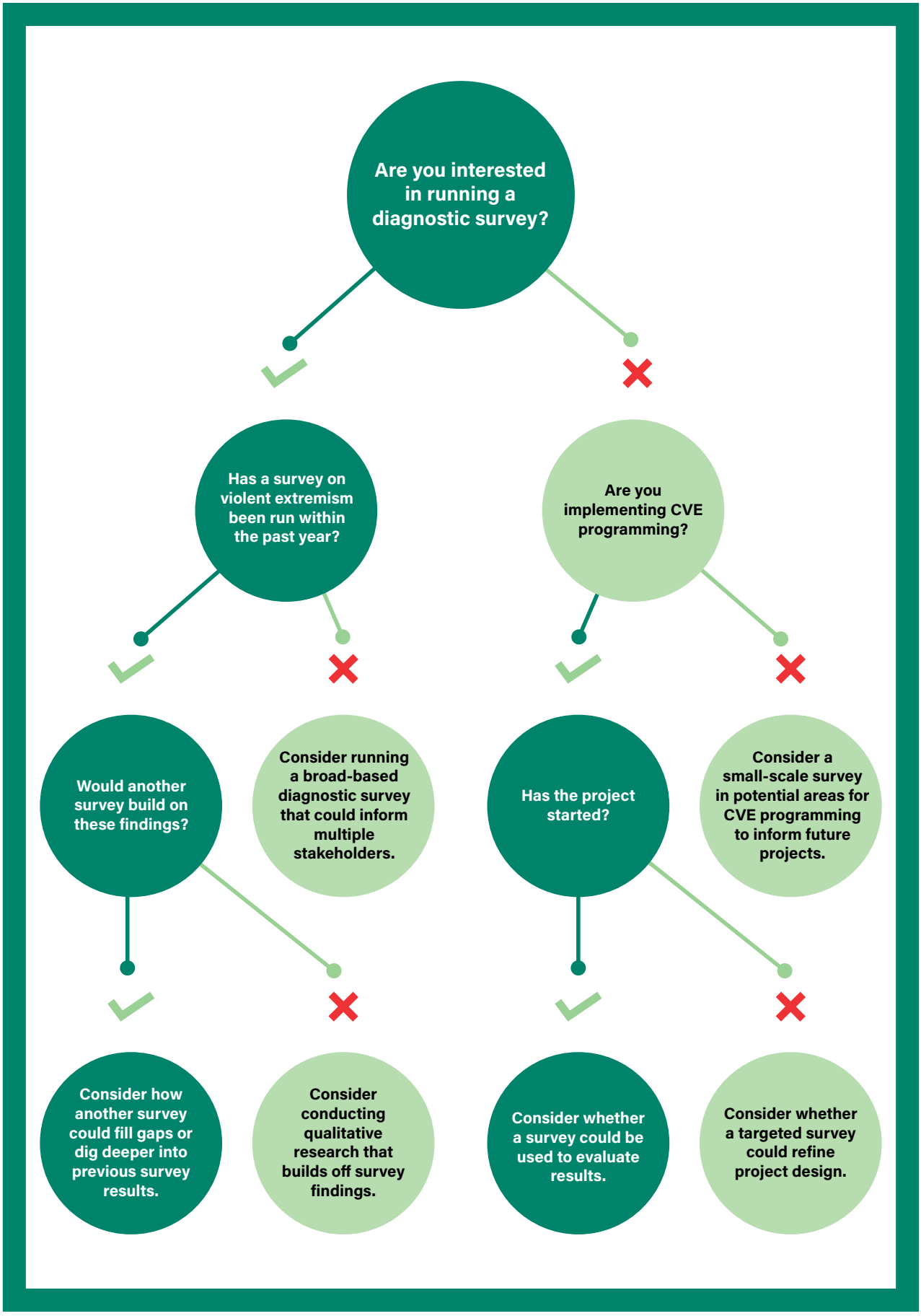
For what purpose?

Most surveys will serve one of three purposes: diagnosis, project design, or project evaluation. Depending on the purpose, different decisions will be made regarding the focus, population of interest, and timing.

A survey may have more than one purpose. For example, a donor planning to spend its CVE programming budget on education projects may wish to run a nationwide survey that will measure levels of education and propensity to support political violence, in order to inform the design of a program to engage in-school and out-of-school youth. The donor may simultaneously measure several other potential drivers of extremism for diagnostic purposes. This section discusses the three separate purposes that a survey may have, while noting that they may be combined.

	Diagnostic surveys	Project design	Project evaluation
Focus	▪ Prevalence of a range of violent extremist events, behaviors, and attitudes ▪ Suspected drivers of violent extremism	▪ Violent extremism and drivers, both identified in project theory of change and not ▪ Baseline data on project sites pre-intervention	▪ Changes in violent extremism and drivers due to intervention ▪ Awareness/feedback on project activities
Population	▪ Country-wide or regional ▪ Nationwide or sub-national ▪ General population ▪ At-risk sub-groups of the population	▪ Project sites and other communities used as control groups ▪ Project beneficiaries and other individuals in a control group	▪ Project sites and other communities used as control groups ▪ Project beneficiaries and other individuals in a control group
Timing	▪ Flexible but rarely more frequent than annually	▪ Project inception	▪ Baseline ▪ Mid-term ▪ Project completion

Figure 4: Determining the purpose of a survey



Diagnostic surveys

A diagnostic survey gathers information to deepen understanding about violent extremism. Examples include global polling, such as cross-country surveys that have tracked views on the Islamic State and the perceived legitimacy of suicide bombing. Alternatively, surveys can assess similarities and differences in violent extremism within areas of a country (urban vs. rural areas; conflict vs. nonconflict) or across population groups (different ethnicities; men vs. women). Surveys for academic or generalizable scientific research are a specific kind of diagnostic survey, which often have valuable insights for policymaking and CVE programs even though this may not have been the primary purpose. Diagnostic surveys by local and international NGOs on violent extremism are becoming much more common and often serve dual purposes—providing knowledge as a public good, but also guiding CVE programming.

Diagnostic surveys generally have a broader scope than surveys for project design or evaluation. They gather data on a range of violent extremist outcomes and drivers, not just those that may be relevant for interventions. They can capture historical patterns and trends, or attempt to forecast future dynamics of violent extremism. They may be fielded nationwide or subnationally, by geographic area (e.g., cities) or by population group (e.g., youth).

Whatever the scope or focus of a diagnostic survey, there must be adequate time to carefully design and test the instrument before fielding the survey. Investing time up front yields better survey results.

While a one-off survey can generate useful data, funders and implementers should also consider running two or more rounds, making it possible to track changes over time. A panel survey takes repeated measurements of the same individuals over time. A typical panel survey might poll a random sample of the population of interest, record (with permission) their contact information, and then resurvey those same individuals several months later to see how their attitudes and experiences have changed. By collecting data from the same individuals over time, researchers can track changes longitudinally. Panel surveys are therefore a powerful way to assess the dynamics of change in the life of a person or a household, and are particularly well suited to the study of violent extremism.

Diagnostic surveys generally have a broader scope than surveys for project design or evaluation.

Cross-country surveys

Cross-population groups

Academic survey research

Nationwide or subnational

It is important for funders and implementers to consider whether and how the findings from a diagnostic survey will be disseminated. Publicly releasing results could stigmatize communities or individuals who express support for violent extremism. At the same time, sharing findings can help donors, think tanks, and NGOs coordinate their CVE research and programming. When the organization running a diagnostic survey does not conduct programming—as is often the case—it is all the more important to ensure that findings are shared with others who do.

Panel surveys in practice

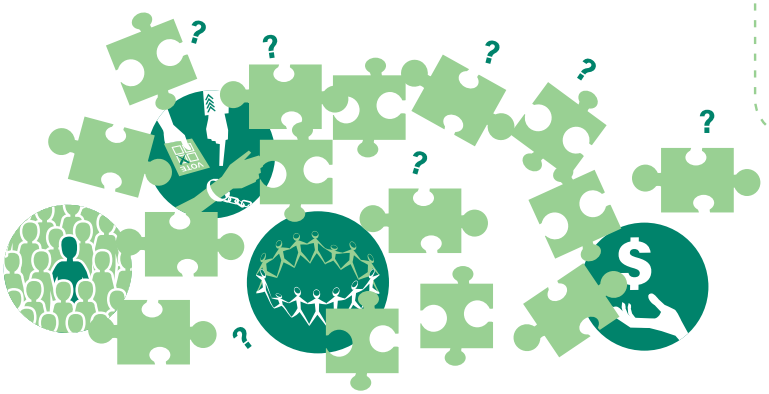
The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium ran two panel surveys—in 2012 and in 2015—in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Uganda. Research teams interviewed almost 10,000 people for the first round and were able to find 86 percent of the original respondents when they returned to the same towns, villages, and communities for the second round. This research yielded findings at both the individual and household levels over this three-year period.[12]

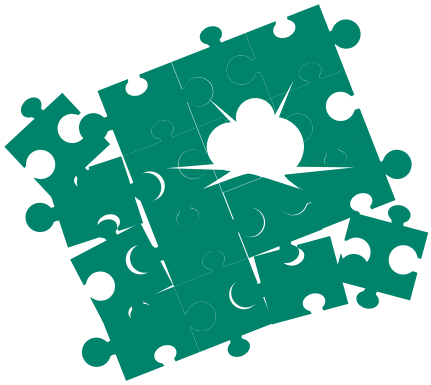
Project design

Surveys can help refine project design by improving targeting and by testing the logic of the intervention and the assumptions that underpin it. Having the budget for a survey—or other research—during the inception phase of a CVE project is essential. Research before implementation begins ensures that the intervention is tailored to local drivers of violent extremism. While this may prolong the inception phase of a project and delay the start of other project activities, preliminary research like a survey is a worthwhile investment of time and money.

A survey to inform project design will have a narrower scope than a diagnostic survey. It should aim to develop, refine, or validate the theory of change, which is an articulation of the underlying logic of the intervention. In other words, the survey should test the assumptions embedded in the theory of

Surveys for project design should aim to develop, refine or validate the theory of change, which is an articulation of the underlying logic of the intervention.





Projects must respond to local drivers of violent extremism and research is necessary to identify what these are.

change. For example, if a project assumes that social alienation of urban youth is a driver of support for violent extremist organizations, a survey may gather data on attitudes towards violent extremist organizations and on the social habits and interactions of youth at the project sites. If the survey shows that boys are affected by social alienation in different ways than girls, it may be necessary to modify planned activities and to revise the theory of change to reflect these gender differences.

Whether a survey is an appropriate tool to guide project design will likely depend on the data already available and the project sites. If the implementer has access to quantitative data—for example, if a recent diagnostic survey on violent extremism has relevant findings—it may be more useful to gather qualitative data. If project sites are not readily accessible to enumerators because they are too insecure or because running a survey might stigmatize intended beneficiaries and skew project results, a survey may not be advisable. Or it may simply be the case that other methods are better suited to gathering the information needed for project design. For example, observation and focus group discussions may be a better way to elicit information.

Project evaluation

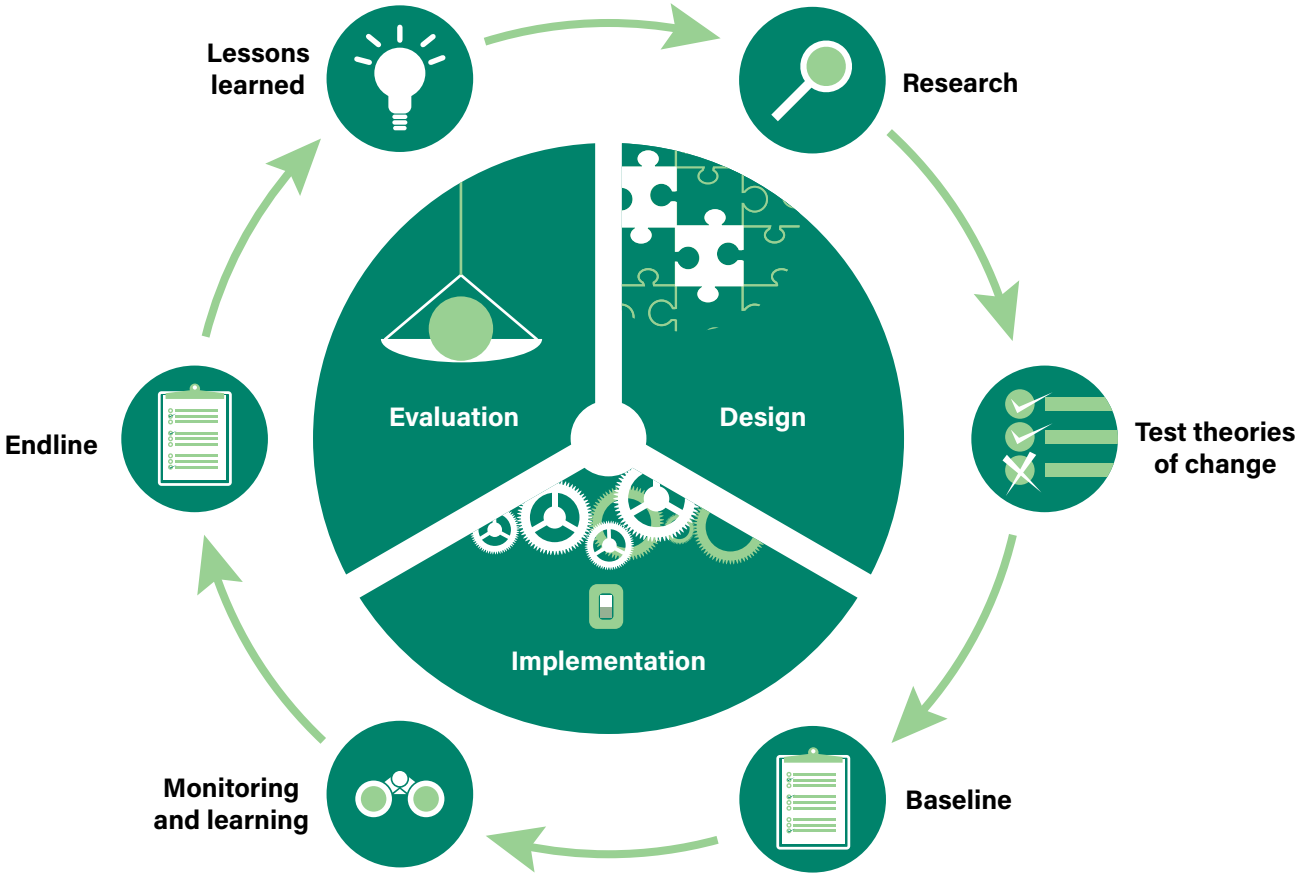
More evidence is needed to show what kinds of CVE programming are effective, under what conditions, and in what contexts. Using surveys for monitoring and evaluation can help build this evidence base.

A rigorous measure of baseline conditions allows stakeholders to later determine whether and in what ways a project affected the outcomes it was designed to target. There are different ways of gathering baseline data. In some cases, it may be possible to use findings from a diagnostic survey, should one exist with relevance to the project sites. Other times, it may be necessary to field a survey specifically to generate the baseline. With CVE programming, there may be pressure to start activities as soon as possible, but time spent collecting baseline data pays off later on.

For ideal project evaluation, projects should also be designed with control and treatment groups. Control groups may be geographic areas or nonbeneficiaries with profiles similar to the treatment areas or beneficiaries. This enables more rigorous comparison, before and after project activities to assess whether the intervention has had any effect on violent extremism and its drivers, however these may be defined. When time and budget allow, it is worthwhile to assign individuals to treatment (beneficiary) or control (nonbeneficiary) conditions randomly, creating an experimental design. This approach may be particularly important for pilot interventions before they are scaled up, or for programming approaches that have a weak evidence base.

Difference in differences

A "difference in differences" design combines a panel survey with program implementation to compare change over time between individuals who receive a program and those who do not. Implementers first survey a sample of individuals who are eligible for the program. They then implement the program only for a subset, ideally randomly-selected, of those individuals. Following program implementation, they re-survey all of the previously-surveyed individuals. By comparing change over time in the outcome the program intends to effect between those who received the program and those who did not, implementers can estimate the program's effect.



Surveys are a highly flexible tool that can be tailored to measure project results in various ways.

CVE often requires creative approaches to measuring outcomes. It may be possible to gauge results through direct measures, such as the number of violent extremism incidents or by asking project beneficiaries about their views of violent militant organizations. Or it may be necessary to use proxy indicators, such as a behavior that can be more readily measured and that correlates with support for or propensity to participate in extremist violence.[13] Surveys can be used to measure direct and proxy indicators.

Practitioners often express concerns about their ability to measure sensitive topics using impersonal techniques like surveys in CVE evaluations. For example, if a project aims to change people's willingness to use violence against members of another ethnic group, will residents in project sites honestly report their views to survey enumerators, or are they more likely to reveal the effects of the intervention through other evaluative means? Many of these concerns, while well founded, can be mitigated through careful survey design. We discuss such techniques in detail in section 2.

Surveys are a highly flexible tool that can be tailored to measure project results in various ways. However, they are less well suited to monitoring and learning while activities are ongoing, because they only gather data at fixed points in time. Other monitoring tools may be more appropriate when learning is a priority.

Employment and political violence in Afghanistan

Mercy Corps' *Introducing New Vocational Education and Skills Training* (INVEST) program in Afghanistan seeks to reduce citizens' susceptibility to recruitment by violent extremists by providing jobs and skills training in Helmand Province. Mercy Corps uses a survey to evaluate both the direct and indirect impacts of the program, measuring the intervention's effects on intermediate outcomes like employment status as well as the overall outcome of propensity for political violence. The study is able to distinguish between program effectiveness on employment issues—the immediate goal—and program effectiveness on the broader goal of promoting political stability. Indeed, the study finds little evidence of a link between program participation and propensity towards violent extremism. It does, however, find a significant increase in employment rates among program participants. The survey reveals that the limitations of the program are caused not by ineffective job training but by a weak link between employment and the propensity for violence.[14]

Is a survey the right research tool?

Surveys have important strengths. This section discusses the relative merits of surveys as compared to qualitative research methods, and suggests how they can most effectively be combined when studying violent extremism. Surveys are not the only research method that can be used to analyze violent extremism and its drivers. They demand technical know-how, a competent survey firm, and the ability to store and analyze data. These capacities and skills may not be available in all contexts where CVE programs are being run.

The main advantage of surveys is that they can illuminate patterns in attitudes and perceptions that are otherwise difficult to observe systematically. Surveys can be run using a small sample (less than a hundred) or a very large sample (several or tens of thousands). By quantifying answers, it is feasible to sift through and analyze the data in many different ways, even when the sample size is very large. By fitting respondents' answers into categories—often predetermined by the survey instrument—surveys make it possible to collect and manage large data sets and run simple and complex mathematical analyses.

In contrast, qualitative research is not limited by the preexisting expectations of the people running the survey. Interview-based research—particularly unstructured or semistructured interviews—allows respondents to provide any information they think may be relevant. Interviewers can spontaneously follow a line of questioning to completion, so the information may be more granular and unexpected than what a survey collects. Focus group discussions can elicit views from specific segments of the population, and key-informant interviews can ensure that the knowledge of elites or key stakeholders is tapped during the research process.

For research on violent extremism, both surveys and qualitative methods have their merits. Generally speaking, qualitative research is useful for uncovering mechanisms—the specific processes connecting drivers of violent extremism with outcomes – while quantitative analysis of survey data is better suited for testing those connections in a systematic, rigorous way. The choice of approach will commonly depend on the questions being researched, the population of interest, and the capabilities of locally available researchers. **Quantitative and qualitative methods are complementary and can be combined to produce a fuller picture of the dynamics of violent extremism.**

Perception versus reality in surveys

Although surveys can measure behavior (*Did you contribute money to any of the following organizations in the past year?*), they are more commonly used to measure perceptions about some group, event, or policy (*To what extent would you say that Jemaah Islamiyah is influential in your village? Which group do you think is most effective at providing services in your neighborhood?*). Responses to these questions reflect respondents' *perceptions* of reality, and thus are not reality, but a *proxy for reality*. Measures of perceptions are valuable because individuals' decisions are shaped, not by reality, but by their perceptions.

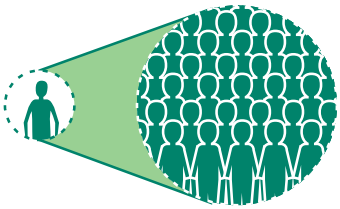
Figure 5: Surveys vs. qualitative methods

VS

Surveys

Systematic data gathered by trained enumerators in a standardized and scripted way from respondents.

Quantify answers to enable mathematical analysis.



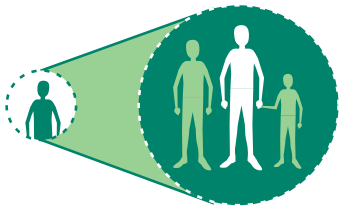
Aim to make claims that can be generalized to a broader population.

Enable us to see patterns in violent extremist events, behaviors, and attitudes.

Qualitative methods

Interviews, focus groups, observation, and written materials.

Rely on researchers to follow up on leads and more open-ended responses are possible.



Focus on smaller number of individuals but in more depth.

Illuminate processes and mechanisms of radicalization.

Research questions. Surveys excel at showing patterns in violent extremist outcomes and correlations with drivers. Qualitative methods excel at capturing processes of radicalization and mechanisms through which drivers influence choices to support or participate in violence. In other words, a survey might show that men who are underemployed are more likely to sympathize with a militant group in their community, but interviews may be necessary to illuminate why this is so. Qualitative research may be better suited for developing and proposing answers to *why*, while surveys are useful for systematically testing whether those proposed answers are correct.

Population of interest. Surveys are an excellent way to access the views of the general population, as opposed to those already participating in violence. Surveying the general population is important for preventing violent extremism, because a survey can help predict the propensity to support or participate in violence, and identify underlying drivers. In other words, surveys may be particularly useful for identifying subsets of the population that may be at risk. Surveys of individuals who are known to already be directly participating in violence are less common. Often, these individuals are harder to access and less willing to reveal useful information if they still support an extremist cause.

Local research capacity. Research on violent extremism requires researchers who can work in local languages, adhere to security and ethics protocols, and gather information accurately. As surveys are scripted, they are less reliant on the skills of individual researchers; qualitative research, in contrast, is highly dependent on the capacity and experience of the person conducting an interview or focus group discussion. This is critical with research on violent extremism, where many respondents may be reluctant to respond. A survey instrument can be designed to minimize the problem of nonresponse (as discussed in section 2), while qualitative methods wholly depend on the skill of individual researchers to build trust with interviewees. Reputable survey firms often have a pool of enumerators who are already trained. For these reasons, in contexts where local researchers are comparatively inexperienced, a survey may, in fact, require less training and yield more reliable data.

Often, surveys will be integrated into a mixed-methods research design. By using qualitative research alongside a survey, researchers can be more confident that nuances in local conditions, identity politics, and personal experiences, which a survey might not reflect, will be captured by other methods. The sequencing of quantitative and qualitative phases of mixed-methods research varies, but it is often most useful to conduct qualitative research both before and after a survey. Before a survey, qualitative research can help determine what issues should be included in the survey instrument and how questions should be asked. Survey findings may illuminate geographic areas or subgroups of the population vulnerable to violent extremism, and qualitative research can be used to validate and deepen the findings.

Mixed methods may also be necessary for robust project evaluation, as suggested above. **Qualitative methods can reveal the processes through which an intervention achieved results or impacts on individual beneficiaries; a survey can show differences and similarities in results across project sites or segments of the population**.

Surveys of former participants in violence

A survey of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone identified factors that led to participation in insurgent and progovernment factions, and found that these were similar on both sides. The researchers concluded that grievances may be less important than a susceptibility to engaging in violence or a vulnerability to manipulation by political elites.[15] However, access to ex-combatants is often not possible. For example, a World Bank report used recruitment data leaked by the Islamic State and other socioeconomic statistics from their countries of origin to analyze their backgrounds and the potential structural drivers of their decision to fight. Access to foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria would not have been possible.[16]

What decisions do we need to make before getting started?

The key decisions that should be made before designing and fielding a survey include deciding how the findings will be used, choosing what to measure, selecting the population to be sampled, establishing the timing of the survey and any subsequent rounds, identifying a survey firm and other research partners or consultants, and determining what kind of analysis will be done with the data and how it will be shared.

As these decisions have cost implications, they need to be made before a budget is finalized. These decisions should be informed by a desk-based review of existing quantitative and qualitative research on violent extremism in the context where the survey will be fielded. When surveys on violent extremism have already been conducted, it may be useful to review survey instruments, if available, and to consult the organizations or individuals who fielded those surveys. The review should assess both findings and methodology to identify what is known, what is contested, and what requires further research.

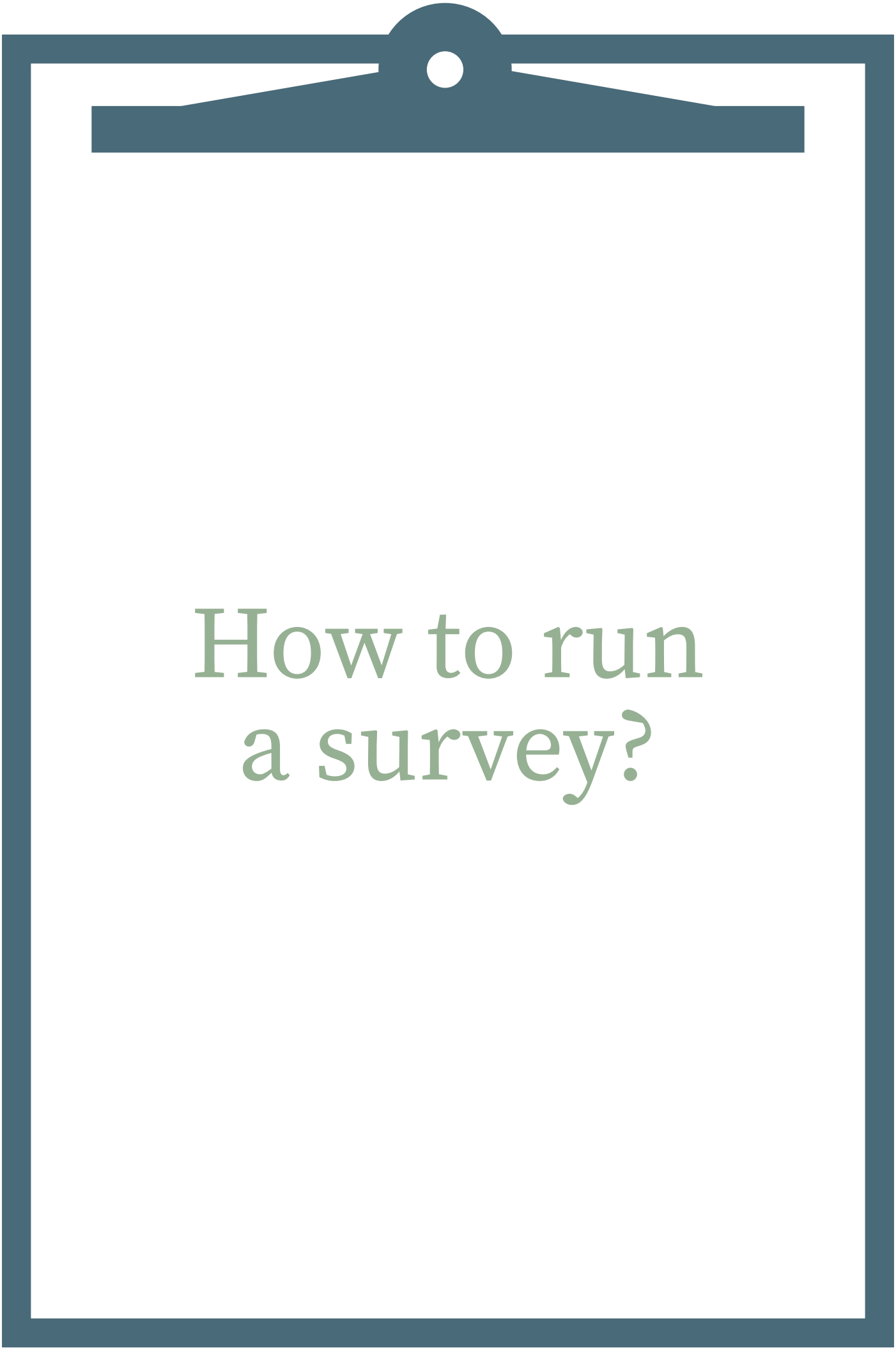
Gender in surveys and CVE

Men and women are affected by violent extremism differently and may be motivated to support or participate in extremist violence for different reasons. When designing a survey, it is important to consider the different perspectives and experiences of men and women—as well as girls and boys—and ensure that instrument is not "gender blind." Gender should be considered throughout survey implementation, from early brainstorming through presentation of the data. In particular, gender matters when:

- Defining what constitutes violent extremism and determining what drivers are relevant locally. Surveys are limited by the questions those running them think to ask. A gender lens should be applied when drawing up a list of concepts the survey will measure.
- Selecting the population of interest and a sampling strategy. Should men and women be sampled equally?
- Drafting questions and response options. The instrument must ask about concepts using language that will be understood by both men and women.
- Choosing a survey firm. Does the survey firm have male and female enumerators? Enumerator effects are linked to gender, among other factors.
- Assessing how to access respondents and encourage response to sensitive questions. Is it possible to access women and for them to complete the survey in private? If not, there may be significant observer effects that distort the data collected from female respondents.
- Drawing up a risk-mitigation strategy. Men and women—as enumerators, respondents, and researchers—may face different threats to their security due to their gender.
- Analyzing the findings. Descriptive statistics can be used to generate sex-disaggregated data. Multivariate statistical analysis allows researchers to isolate the effects of gender by holding all other variables constant.

Figure 6: Key decisions when planning a survey

How will findings be used?	▪ What is the purpose of the survey? What decisions will be made on the basis of the findings? ▪ Will it be possible to disclose the findings? To whom? ▪ Will the results be sufficiently useful to justify the projected costs and potential security risks?
What to measure?	▪ Which violent extremist events, behaviors, and attitudes will be measured? How are these defined in the context in which the survey will be fielded? ▪ What drivers of violent extremism should be measured? How many different dimensions of each driver need to be measured? (E.g., religious belief, practice, schooling, and influences—would each dimension require separate questions?) ▪ What assumptions underpin ongoing or planned CVE programming in the context? Should they be tested through the survey? ▪ What other basic demographic data should be collected from respondents?
Among which population?	▪ Will the survey be nationwide or subnational? ▪ Which populations will be sampled? By geographic area or by segments of the population? Project beneficiaries? ▪ What level of representativeness is required? ▪ Are there any areas or populations that may be more difficult to access?
When to field the survey?	▪ Will one round of the survey or more than one be fielded? ▪ If more than one round is anticipated, is a panel survey possible? ▪ Are there any political or other events that may have an impact on the timing of the survey? ▪ What is a realistic timeframe for designing and pretesting the survey instrument, fielding the survey, and analyzing the results? ▪ Will qualitative or other research be done alongside the survey? How does this impact the timing of the survey?
Whom to run the survey with?	▪ What survey firms are available in country? How much experience do they have with surveys on politics or other sensitive topics? Do they have the capacity to manage security risks? ▪ Will it be necessary to hire and train new enumerators for the survey, or does the survey firm have enumerators with the right profile (language, ethnicity, gender)? ▪ Is an expert consultant needed in addition to a survey firm? What skills should he or she have? ▪ Will government approval or consultation with armed nonstate actors be necessary?
How to analyze and share results?	▪ Who will analyze the survey results? ▪ Will only descriptive statistics be presented, or will more statistically advanced methods be used? ▪ What written outputs will be produced? Will these be disseminated? To whom and how?



How to run a survey?

This section addresses the three steps in conducting a survey for CVE. While the sequence of steps would be the same for a survey on any topic, this practitioner guide focuses on challenges specific to surveys on violent extremism. When a challenge is identified, the guide lays out potential solutions, along with the tradeoffs they pose and their relative ease of implementation.

Step 1: Designing the survey instrument. This involves (1) determining survey length and mode, (2) drafting questions, (3) anticipating nonresponse to sensitive questions, (4) placing sensitive questions, and (5) calibrating response options. If the survey will use advanced survey techniques like randomization, the survey firm should be included in the design process as early as possible so that they can confirm the capabilities of their enumerators to implement complicated techniques. A brief introduction to randomization is provided at the end of step 1, below.

Step 2: Fielding the survey. Normally, this will be done by a survey firm. The survey firm, together with the organization leading the research, should discuss how to manage challenges that may arise with (1) hiring, training, and distributing enumerators, (2) sampling respondents, (3) accessing respondents and encouraging participation, (4) guaranteeing respondents' privacy, and (5) mitigating security risks.

Step 3: Analyzing the results. This involves (1) analyzing raw data, (2) validating the findings, and (3) sharing and presenting the results. Raw survey data provides a seemingly infinite number of potential summary statistics, correlations, and trends. To get maximum value from the data, implementers may want to hire an external consultant with statistical expertise. This is often necessary to get beyond descriptive statistics and make stronger claims about what the data shows.

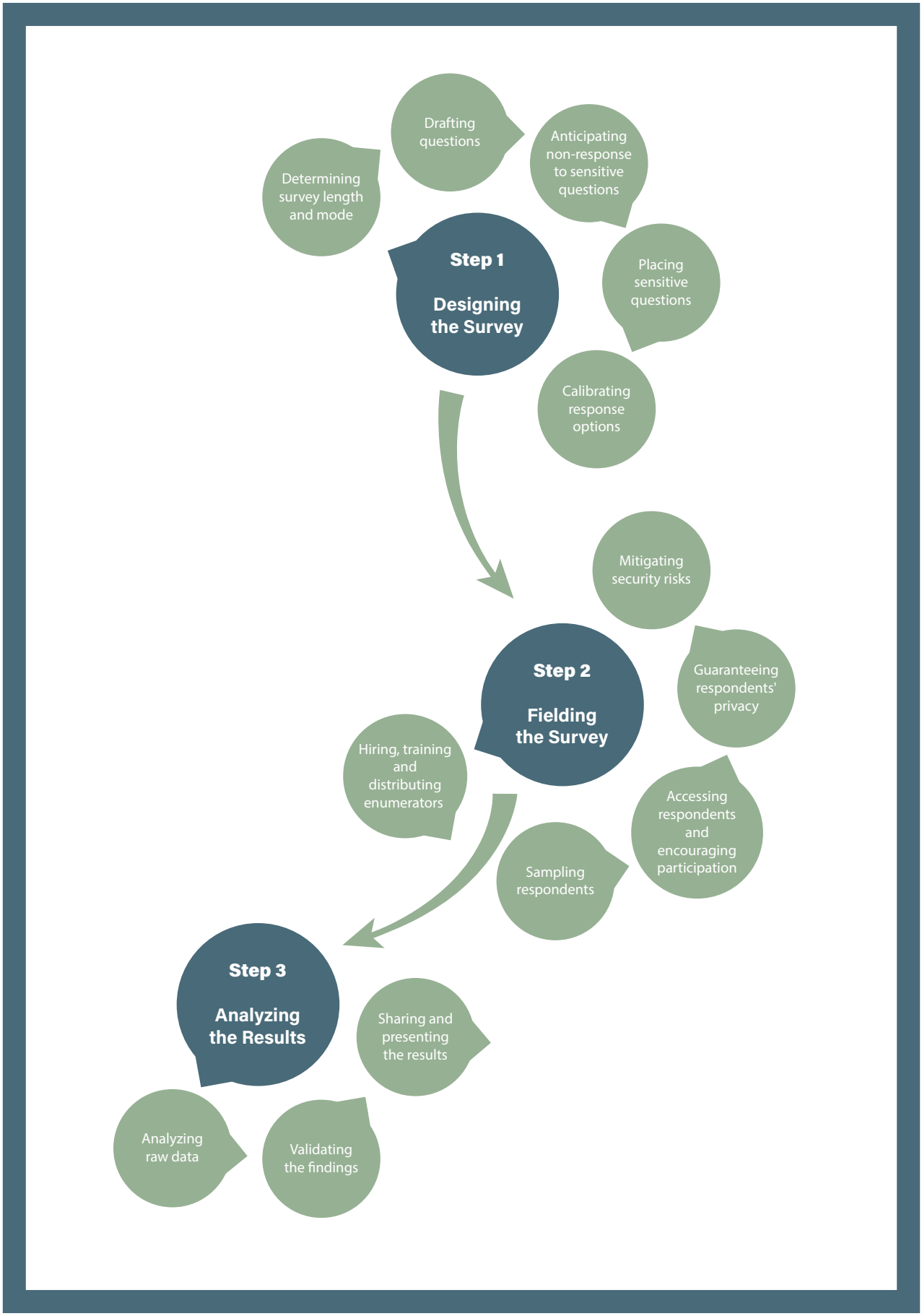
Working with expert consultants

In addition to a survey firm, outside experts can help ensure that the instrument is correctly designed and support the analysis of the data. A well-run survey requires expertise on three topics: violent extremism, the country or region in which the study will take place, and survey design. Most donors or organizations running such a survey will have adequate in-house expertise in the first two areas, but they may lack sufficient resources in the third. Survey firms may suggest technical solutions to challenges posed by sensitive topics or sampling difficulties. If they do not, an outside consultant with experience conducting survey research on sensitive topics can help design the survey instrument—including the integration of randomization techniques—and determine sampling strategies. Consultants may also be useful when implementers would like to do more sophisticated, multivariate analysis of the data.

Cost considerations:

- Expert consultants are an additional labor cost on top of normal survey costs.
- Consultants can often provide advice and analysis remotely to reduce travel costs.
- Academics conducting research in the same country where the survey is being fielded may be willing to exchange their technical knowledge for in-kind support from the implementer—temporary office space, for example, or logistical support for their own research.

Figure 7: Steps to running a survey



Step 1: Designing the survey instrument

The first step is to design the survey. The survey instrument consists of questions and answer choices, as well as any additional text or media that will be provided to respondents during the interview. Those designing the survey must decide what the format of their survey will be, how they will phrase questions, and what answer options to provide. In doing so, they must address a number of challenges specific to surveys on violent extremism.

Determining survey mode and length

The vast majority of surveys conducted to inform development policy and programming use in-person interviews in which an enumerator goes to the respondent's physical location, reads questions out loud, and records the answers. Common alternatives include phone surveys, in which an enumerator reads questions to respondents over the phone and records their answers, and Internet surveys, in which respondents read questions and enter answers themselves. Circumstances and technological limitations often dictate the use of in-person surveys. Incomplete Internet coverage makes online surveys impractical in many developing countries, and the lack of exhaustive telephone directories makes sampling respondents for phone surveys difficult.

Where circumstances allow, remote survey modes like phone and Internet enumeration have both strengths and weaknesses. Oftentimes, the main benefit is in cost; remote surveys are much cheaper to implement than in-person ones. The downside tends to be in the representativeness of the sample. Online surveys only include people with internet access, typically providing a sample that is disproportionately young and well-off. Phone surveys reach more people but still exclude individuals or households without phones. In addition to these limitations, the representativeness of remote surveys often suffers due to the process through which respondents are recruited. Ideally, respondents are selected from a sampling frame and then contacted to take the survey. With online surveys, more

Computer-assisted telephone interviews in Bangladesh

One example of a remote survey is Democracy International's 2016 survey on democratic participation and reform in Bangladesh, which used computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATIs) to survey 1,453 Bangladeshis. CATI works similarly to an in-person survey where the enumerator uses a tablet computer, with the enumerator reading questions off of the computer and recording the respondent's verbal answer directly into a computerized form.[17] The difference, of course, is that the enumerator conducts interviews from a central location, allowing him or her to complete many more interviews per day by eliminating travel time. Where phone lists allow, CATI is an excellent option for surveys in dangerous areas, because it prevents enumerators from traveling to unsafe locations and avoids drawing attention to respondents by sending strangers to their doorstep.

often than not the survey opportunity is presented to a large number of individuals who then decide whether to opt in to take the survey. The problem with this method is that individuals who choose to take the survey likely have different characteristics than individuals who choose not to take it, leading to a sample that does not represent the broader population of interest.

In-person surveys have many advantages over other survey modes, including typically higher response rates and the ability to sample a more representative subset of the population.

However, **certain characteristics of in-person surveys threaten the ability to collect accurate responses on sensitive topics related to violent extremism.** In particular, because these surveys require respondents to tell their answers to a stranger in a very personal setting, respondents may lie or refuse to answer rather than face the discomfort of revealing sensitive information. One possible solution is to let the respondents record their own answers by filling out the survey form themselves, keeping responses private from the enumerator.

In-person surveys are susceptible to breaches of data security and confidentiality. Enumerators who have recorded responses on paper may be stopped by government authorities or armed groups and forced to turn over their records. Such incidents breach the confidentiality promised to respondents, place future research activities at risk if the revealed responses upset the authorities or armed group, and lead to data loss.

A good solution is to use tablets instead of pen and paper. Tablets allow enumerators to lock completed surveys so that the data cannot be viewed once a survey is finalized. The only way to view the data is to upload it to a centrally located, password-protected computer. This can be done at the end of each survey day or, where Internet connectivity is available, in real time following each interview. There are drawbacks to using tablets, such as theft. Furthermore, where computers are not common, respondents may distrust the use of these unfamiliar devices and fear that they are being used to record video or audio without consent.

Finally, implementers must decide how long their survey will be. Attention spans pose the main constraint on length, because respondents lose focus as the survey progresses. Beyond a certain point, the reliability of any answers they provide becomes suspect. How long it takes to get to this point depends on a number of factors, including the respondent's personality and state of mind, the enumerator, the location, the topic of the survey, and the survey mode (in-person, phone, Internet, etc.). For the types of in-person surveys most relevant to research on CVE, implementers should reflect seriously on the value of adding questions past the 30-minute mark, and should probably not run over an hour under most circumstances.

Protecting data in in-person surveys

Challenge: **In-person surveys may make respondents unwilling to give answers to sensitive questions to a stranger.**

Solution: S Let literate respondents record their own answers.

Challenge: **In-person surveys are more likely to result in loss of confidentiality, because enumerators can be forced to hand over their data.**

Solution: A Use tablets that can be locked.

Drafting questions

The most important factor in writing survey questions is **being specific about what the questions are intended to measure**. While there are benefits to using standard questions across multiple surveys—the ability to draw direct comparisons between responses, for instance—the trade-off is that a question may be ill suited to measure the concept of interest in a particular setting. This problem is particularly acute with surveys on violent extremism, because what constitutes extremism is relative and varies widely, even within countries.

Those implementing the survey should have a detailed list of topics and a clear understanding of whose views the survey will measure. Often, the survey instrument will need multiple questions to gather data on different dimensions of each topic. Once a draft survey instrument is complete, it may be helpful to consider

- convening a brainstorming session with trusted partners who can help assess the willingness of respondents to answer the questions and how they will interpret them;
- discussing the survey with other development organizations that have run surveys in the same area to find out what challenges they encountered;
- testing the questions on a focus group of individuals from the target population to see how they react to sensitive questions on violent extremism;
- piloting the survey in the field on out-of-sample respondents. Piloting provides feedback from enumerators, who can assess how the survey flows, how respondents react to being asked certain questions in a real-world setting, and whether any questions create confusion.

Generally, the more specific the questions are about the item being measured, and the more tailored the questions are to the context, the more effective the survey will be. A specific question like *would you call the police if someone in your community were planning to kill an apostate?* is more informative than a broad question such as *do you support the use of violence against those who distort the word of God?* The latter is ambiguous because the word "support" may mean different things to different respondents, while the former is a clearer measure of the actions the respondent would or would not take to prevent extremist violence. **There is no such thing as a good or bad question in isolation; the quality of the question must be evaluated in the context of what the survey is trying to measure.**

Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting the subset of individuals from the population of interest to take the survey. It is almost never feasible to survey every person in whom implementers are interested. Instead, a properly selected sample allows implementers to draw conclusions about the population at large using the responses of a subset of individuals who are representative of that population.

1. Begin by defining the population of interest. These are the people about whom the survey seeks to learn something.
2. Select or create a *sampling frame*, a list of individuals from whom survey participants will be selected. In a perfect world, the sampling frame perfectly matches the population of interest.
3. Select a sampling method, the rules by which individuals will be selected off of the sampling frame (e.g., *simple random sampling*, *block sampling*, *stratified sampling*).
4. Determine the sample size.
5. Select the sample and carry out the survey.

It is best to write the survey instrument from the start in the language in which it will be enumerated. When circumstances require that the instrument be created in one language and later translated into the language of the target area. High-quality translation is critical, and, however, sufficient time and resources must be allocated to ensure that the translation is of the highest quality. The translation should match the original in tone and level of comprehension, and language should be appropriate to the local context. Proper translation is a multi-step process. A professional translator with knowledge of the survey topic should produce a first translation, which should then be back-translated to the original language by a native speaker of the target language who has not seen the original version. Further adjustments may be necessary if the piloting of the survey identifies any uncertainty or confusion caused by language.

Anticipating nonresponse to sensitive questions

Convincing respondents to reveal information about violent extremism, and ensuring that responses to questions on sensitive topics are accurate, is a major challenge. Broadly speaking, sensitive topics introduce two types of measurement challenges in surveys:

- how to obtain information that respondents do not wish to reveal;
- how to obtain information that respondents are willing to reveal but do not want linked to their identity.

Nonresponse by respondents who do not wish to reveal information is very difficult to resolve. In some cases, enumerators may gain trust by explaining how the data will be used. If responses are shared only with academic researchers, for instance, then a Pakistani supporter of the Taliban is less likely to worry that revealing information about local fighting will harm the Taliban's cause. In most cases, however, it is difficult to extract information from reluctant respondents without tricking them or using deception, tactics that are unethical.

Fortunately, much nonresponse in surveys on sensitive issues comes from respondents who are willing to reveal information but are unwilling to associate their identity with it, a problem that is easier to solve. The simplest way to combat nonresponse in these cases is to ensure that respondents' anonymity is safeguarded, and to communicate clearly to respondents how anonymity is ensured. Another method is to soften the way questions are worded. Items may be asked at the village level

Global polling and support for sharia

Most surveys on support for sharia fail to specify what, exactly, they mean by "sharia," and therefore fail to distinguish between Muslims who believe that religious values have a place in secular law and those who have a literal interpretation of specific, violent excerpts from the Quran and other religious sources. The Pew Research Center's survey on Muslim attitudes around the globe asks respondents, *Do you favor or oppose making sharia law, or Islamic law, the official law of the land in our country?* Because the survey fails to specify what is meant by sharia (not to mention what is meant by implementing it as the law of the land), it is difficult to compare answers to the question among individuals who may have interpreted the question to mean different things.[18] The World Values Survey takes a somewhat clearer approach to the same question: *Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy: Religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws*. The WVS version clearly specifies a potential component of sharia—religious leaders interpret laws—and asks respondents to characterize their support for it. For broad concepts like sharia, which are made up of a number of possible components, surveys may need to include a battery of questions to measure each component separately.[19]

Encouraging responses to sensitive questions

Challenge: **Respondents do not wish to reveal information**

Solution:

- (S) Explain how responses will be used. Will data be shared with the government? With other groups? Allay fears that data will be used against the respondent's interests.

Challenge: **Respondents are willing to reveal information but do not want their identity associated with it.**

Solutions:

- (S) Moderate or soften questions.
- (S) Depersonalize: ask about "your neighbor" or "your village."
- (A) Use randomization techniques.

rather than the individual level, (e.g., *to what extent would you say that people in your village believe the Taliban's fight against the government is justified?*). On sensitive items about past experiences, surveys can ask general "thermometer" questions rather than asking respondents to recall a specific incident, avoiding implications of complicity. Rather than asking, *Were you the victim of an ethnic riot in the past 12 months?* the survey may ask, *How prevalent would you say that ethnic riots are in your village? Please answer on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all prevalent" and 5 being "extremely prevalent."*

While indirect questions make respondents more willing to answer a question, and decrease the likelihood that they will answer untruthfully, they are not a panacea. First, by skirting the issue that researchers are actually interested in, indirect questions provide a less precise measure. Second, while indirect questions should make respondents feel more comfortable, they still may not be sufficient to elicit a response, especially when the issue at hand is very sensitive.

A more advanced way to handle responses to sensitive questions, one which almost certainly requires collaboration with an expert consultant or experienced survey firm, is to use *randomization techniques* like forced-choice, endorsement-experiment, or list-experiment questions. Randomization techniques are measurement devices that keep responses completely private for each individual respondent but allow analysts to calculate sample-level estimates of responses. These techniques are discussed below.

Placing sensitive questions

As a general rule, **sensitive items should go at the end of the survey so that they do not influence responses to other questions**. Placing them at the end may also allow enumerators to gently convince respondents who express a desire to terminate the interview due to sensitivity to reconsider: *We can certainly end the survey if you would like, but there are only two more questions after this one*. Where to place basic demographic questions remains an open debate. Some prefer to place them at the beginning of the survey in order to ease respondents in and help the enumerator build a sense of rapport before moving on to heavier topics. Others prefer to place them at the end, at the point where respondents are most fatigued and less likely to answer difficult questions carefully.

Calibrating response options

Response options are just as important as the questions themselves. The text box below lists the pros and cons of the standard set of response options. These trade-offs apply to all surveys, not just those on violent extremism. It is also crucial to measure item nonresponse. Respondents who decline to answer a particular question are providing useful information, even if it is not the information that the survey aimed to measure.

Nonresponses should be recorded in a way that differentiates between *do not know* and *prefer not to answer*. Including these options when reading the answer choices out loud increases the likelihood of respondents selecting them: *Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? You may also say "don't know" or "prefer not to answer."* On the one hand, increases in item nonresponse are problematic for measurement accuracy, as discussed below. On the other hand, weeding out responses from those who are uncomfortable providing an accurate answer or are unable to recall the correct choice increases the accuracy of the responses that are received. As with many issues related to survey design, the correct strategy depends on context and expectations about respondents.

Common response options

Open response
- **Pros:** does not limit responses to those that researchers anticipate.
- **Cons:** time consuming to record; requires postsurvey categorization and coding.

Multiple choice (select one)
- **Pros:** easy to analyze, provides standardized responses.
- **Cons:** time consuming to read all answer choices out loud; restricts information that survey collects.

Multiple choice (select many)
- **Pros:** provides standardized responses; allows collection of more information than "select one."
- **Cons:** the number of responses a respondent selects can introduce bias; still limits answers to those that researchers anticipate.

Categorical scale (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied)
- **Pros:** anchors respondents' evaluations in concrete language.
- **Cons:** time consuming to read answer choices out loud.

Thermometer scale (1 to 10, with 1 being the least satisfied and 10 being the most satisfied)
- **Pros:** allows for fine-grained evaluative measures; no limits on the size of the scale.
- **Cons:** lacks standardization—one respondent's 6 is another's 7.

Using randomization

When concerns about anonymity, sensitivity, or privacy are particularly acute, randomization techniques are helpful. **Randomization techniques address two types of problems: respondents' unwillingness to answer questions on sensitive topics, and concerns that respondents' safety will be jeopardized if confidentiality is breached.** The goal is that nobody—not even the enumerator—will ever know the answer selected by any individual respondent. Randomization techniques ensure that responses remain private by randomly varying some aspect of a question and comparing answers across respondents who answered different versions of the question. Randomly assigning respondents to different versions of the survey allows analysts to estimate answers to the sensitive question for the sample as a whole, but not for individual respondents. In other words, they could determine that 38% of respondents pay extortion money to an extremist group, but not whether any individual respondent pays extortion money.

Randomization techniques like the ones described below have become common in academic research over the last decade.[20] While researchers initially developed these techniques in an effort to measure sensitive attitudes about racial prejudice, they have become increasingly popular for measuring topics related to violent extremism. Policy analysts and nonacademic researchers have yet to widely adopt these techniques, because they are challenging to implement. Yet, given the potential benefits they offer in allowing reliable measurement of highly sensitive topics, they are well suited for use in surveys on CVE.

This section describes three types of randomization techniques in sufficient detail to introduce the tools available, and considers which might be appropriate under what circumstances. It is not a how-to guide, however; those wishing to use these techniques should consult a more technical resource or engage an expert consultant.[21]

Forced choice

The simplest type of randomization technique is the *forced choice*, also called *randomized choice*. In the forced-choice technique, the survey asks respondents a direct question about the sensitive topic of interest. For example, *did you participate in the riots against ethnic Chinese last May?* Before answering, the enumerator instructs the respondent as follows:

1. Flip a coin. Do not let the enumerator see how it lands.
2. If the coin lands on heads, answer the question truthfully.
3. If the coin lands on tails, answer yes to the sensitive question regardless of whether it is true.

Since the enumerators do not know how the coin landed, they do not know whether a yes answer is truthful or the result of the coin landing on tails; therefore, there is no stigma against answering affirmatively. Because 50 percent (the probability of the coin landing on tails) of respondents automatically answered yes, that number can be subtracted from the total number of yes answers. The remaining yes answers, when expressed as a proportion of the remaining half of the sample, give the true percentage of respondents who participated in the riots. For example, 50 out of 100 respondents will, on average, receive a tails coin toss result. If 55 out of the 100 respondents answered yes, then the rate of respondents who participated in the riots is 5 out of 50, or 10%. The forced-choice technique is the simplest of the randomization techniques to implement.

Endorsement experiments

A second randomization technique is the *endorsement experiment*. Endorsement experiments measure levels of support for a group, policy, or ideology. Applied to CVE, we might want to know what proportion of the population supports an extremist group like the Taliban, Jamaat ul-Mujahideen

Bangladesh, or Jemaah Islamiyah. Respondents have no reason not to want researchers to know how much support these groups have overall, but they may be unwilling to reveal their personal support, for fear of reprisals by the government, the group in question, or competing groups.

In an endorsement experiment, respondents are randomly assigned to one of several survey versions. The survey asks respondents whether they support some innocuous policy or item. In the first (control) version of the survey, the endorsement experiment is a direct question of support for the policy. In the second (treatment) version, the policy is said to be endorsed by the group about which we are interested. The study conducted in Pakistan cited on page 18 used an endorsement experiment to measure support for militant groups in Pakistan. The control question reads as follows:

> The World Health Organization recently announced a plan to introduce universal polio vaccination across Pakistan. How much do you support such a plan?

A random subset of respondents are told that the campaign is endorsed by one of several militant groups:

> The World Health Organization recently announced a plan to introduce universal polio vaccination across Pakistan. Pakistani militant groups fighting in Kashmir have voiced support for this program. How much do you support such a plan?

In this example, the survey is not testing attitudes about polio vaccination but rather support for the groups alleged to be endorsing the vaccinations. Because assignment to the different question versions is random, any difference in support between the two groups is caused by the difference between the two questions, in this case Pakistani militant groups' endorsement of the policy. Variations on the endorsement experiment can measure support for multiple groups by randomly dividing respondents into more than two groups, always with a nonendorsed control version to compare against.

Endorsement experiments are sensitive to the policy being endorsed. The policy must be familiar to respondents so that the endorsement is meaningful and to minimize *don't know* responses. At the same time, however, respondents' attitudes about the policy must not be so strong that they cannot be influenced by the endorsement of the group in question. In the above example, if respondents strongly oppose the vaccination campaign, they may not change their answer even if they do support militant groups in Kashmir. **Surveys using endorsement experiments should run a presurvey pilot on a separate sample to test the appropriateness of any policies for use in the questions.**

Endorsement experiments are better suited for measuring relative support between groups than for estimating absolute levels of support. If the same policy is said to be endorsed by the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and the United States government, shifts in support for the policy depending on which endorsement the respondent viewed can reliably tell us which group has higher support, even if we cannot reliably say what proportion of individuals supports each group.

List experiments

A third randomization technique is the *list experiment*, also sometimes called an *item count* or *unordered count*. List experiments protect the privacy of a respondent's answer by including the sensitive item of interest in a list of innocuous items and then asking the respondent to report only *how many* of those items they endorse. The list experiment is best explained through an example. Nanes uses a list experiment to measure support for antigovernment violence in Iraq.[22] Respondents who reveal that they would be willing to use violence against the government risk arrest or violence by progovernment forces; therefore, it is assumed that they would not answer a direct question truthfully.

Respondents are first randomly assigned to one of two survey versions, a four-item *short-list* version and a five-item *long-list* version. Enumerators then read respondents the following question:

> I am going to read you a list of [4/5] strategies that citizens sometimes use when the government does not seem to be listening to them. Please tell me how many of these strategies you would consider using if you felt the government were ignoring your needs. Remember, I don't need to know which ones you would use, only how many of these [4/5] you would consider.

Respondents in the short-list group receive a list of four nonsensitive items, for example voting against the government or writing a letter to an international organization. Respondents in the long-list group receive the same four nonsensitive items, as well as a fifth option of using violence against the government.

Because respondents are randomly assigned to one of the two groups, the only difference between the two groups is whether they had the fifth option of using violence. Thus, the proportion of the overall sample that answered yes to using violence is the average response of the long-list group minus the average response of the short-list group. In this example, respondents in the long-list group on average report that they would consider using 2.45 out of the 5 items listed, while those in the short-list group on average report that they would consider using 2.15 out of 4 items. Thus, the additional item in the long list added 0.30, or 2.45 minus 2.15, to the average number of items respondents would consider, indicating that 30 percent of the overall sample would consider using antigovernment violence.

The success of the list experiment depends heavily on the list of items the survey presents to respondents. List experiments typically require the expertise of a consultant with experience using this technique to help design the questions, as this is the most difficult of the randomization techniques to implement. However, if performed correctly, list experiments allow researchers to accurately measure a wide variety of constructs that would otherwise be difficult to observe.

Pros and cons of randomization techniques

When implemented correctly, randomization techniques allow respondents to communicate information that they would otherwise be unwilling to share because it is sensitive, embarrassing, or risky. To the extent that respondents understand how the randomization technique protects the anonymity of their response, they should be willing to answer questions that would otherwise be too sensitive. Unfortunately, these techniques have several downsides:

1. Resulting data is at the **sample level rather than the individual level**, limiting the types of analyses researchers can conduct and restricting the inferences they can draw. Randomization techniques can answer the question "what proportion of citizens support religiously motivated violence?" but are less useful[23] for answering the question "which citizens support religiously motivated violence?"[24]

2. Randomization techniques are often **confusing to respondents**. Respondents must *believe* that the technique protects the secrecy of their answer in order for it to have the desired effect. However, because these techniques are complicated, respondents may believe that the enumerator is trying to trick them, making them even less inclined to answer truthfully.

3. Randomization techniques require extensive enumerator training and take significantly more time to complete than do direct questions, making them financially **costly** and crowding out other questions on surveys with limited space.

4. These techniques **require a larger overall sample** to maintain the desired sampling error within each group.

5. Randomization techniques only solve the problem of respondents who wish to reveal information but do not want their identity linked with their answer. A respondent who does not want researchers to obtain the information at all will not be persuaded to answer a question of this type accurately.

Overview of randomization techniques

Randomization techniques shield respondents' anonymity by preventing enumerators from associating an answer choice with each respondent while allowing analysts to calculate sample-level estimates of responses.

M 1. Forced Choice

- Easy to implement.
- Respondent flips a coin out of enumerator's view.
- If heads, answer sensitive question truthfully. If tails, answer yes.
- The true rate of yes answers to the sensitive question is the observed rate of yes answers minus 50 percentage points (probability of tails), times two (to account for subtracting the half of the sample who received tails).

A 2. Endorsement Experiment

- Difficult to implement. Highly sensitive to design effects. Better for generating comparisons than absolute measures.
- Respondents randomly assigned to two or more groups, *control* and *treatment(s)*.
- *Control* group presented with a familiar, noncontroversial policy and asked whether they support it.
- *Treatment* group(s) presented with the same policy and then told it is supported by some group of interest, for example the Taliban or the MILF, and asked whether they support the policy.
- Support for the group of interest is estimated as the mean response of the *treatment* group minus the mean response of the *control* group.
- Can include multiple treatment groups to evaluate relative support for multiple groups.

A 3. List Experiment

- Difficult to implement. High risk of enumerator mistakes or respondent misconceptions.
- Respondents randomly assigned to two groups, *short-list* and *long-list*.
- *Short-list* group presented with a list of noncontroversial items and asked *how many* they have done, agree with, etc.
- *Long-list* group presented with the same list of noncontroversial items as well as an additional sensitive item of interest, and asked *how many* they have done, agree with, etc.
- Proportion of the sample that has done or has doneagrees with the sensitive item is the mean response of the *long-list* group minus the mean response of the *short-list* group.

Step 2: Fielding the survey

Once the survey instrument is finalized, it is time to implement it with the support of a survey firm. Key decisions include how to select respondents, how enumerators will access respondents, how to encourage respondents to answer questions on sensitive topics, and how to guarantee privacy and safety during the survey.

Hiring, training, and distributing enumerators

All surveys depend on competent and well-trained enumerators, but the competence of these individuals is especially important for surveys on violent extremism. Many of the techniques this guide describes to mitigate challenges are complicated to implement. The success of these techniques depends on enumerators' abilities to execute them accurately and in a way that puts respondents at ease. **Survey implementers should allocate additional time and funds for enumerator training**, and should **hire experienced enumerators** whenever possible. Extensive piloting of the survey will test not only how respondents react to the survey but also how enumerators perform.

Choosing a survey firm

Challenge: **Surveys on violent extremism require high levels of expertise and experience compared to most surveys.**

Solutions:

- S Hire a survey firm with experience conducting research on sensitive topics.
- S Hire enumerators who are familiar and comfortable with the local context.

Survey firms with experience conducting surveys on politically sensitive topics, and ideally firms with experience using the methods described in this guide, should be chosen wherever possible. Firms with high rates of returning, experienced enumerators will be better able to effectively explain complicated techniques to respondents, and are less likely to stray off script. Securing experienced enumerators may be more expensive, but ensuring that the survey is implemented correctly is generally worth the greater cost.

Survey interviews are social interactions between enumerators and respondents. As such, the identity of the enumerator may affect the data he or she collects from respondents. This distortion is called an *enumerator effect.* Enumerator effects are especially worrisome on surveys about sensitive topics like CVE, where the respondent may feel extra pressure to appease the enumerator. Common practices include:

- **Hiring enumerators who are local** to the area in which the survey takes place.
- **Gender matching between enumerators and respondents,** so that men interview men, and women interview women. In many parts of the world, it is socially unacceptable for a strange man to interview a woman, either preventing the interview from occurring or requiring undesired observation by a male relative (see below).

Where outwardly visible enumerator characteristics like race or tribal affiliation are salient, implementers should take one of two approaches:

- **Match respondents with enumerators from the same group to the greatest extent possible**. This strategy is most feasible where there are few groups or where groups are geographically concentrated.
- **Randomly assign enumerators to respondents** so that any enumerator effects "average out" across the sample.

In either case, it is important to keep a record of which enumerator conducted which interview and to be prepared to test whether answers collected by interviewers from each group differ significantly from one another.

Interviewer-respondent matching affects responses

A survey of individuals in 14 African countries found that respondents interviewed by someone from a different ethnic group are more likely to say they prioritize their national identity over their ethnic identity, express a positive attitude towards democracy, approve of the government, and claim to have voted in the last election. The authors suggest that social pressures to present oneself in a positive light or avoid talking about certain sensitive topics are strongest when interacting with ethnic outsiders, leading to these differences in responses depending on interviewer identity.[25]

Sampling respondents

Ideally, survey implementation begins with consulting a *sampling frame*, or a list that includes every individual in the population of interest. These allow survey implementers to randomly select their sample from that list, and enumerators to track down and interview each selected individual. Unfortunately, such lists are rarely available in contexts where surveys on violent extremism may be fielded. Where they are available, sampling frames may not include sufficient contact information for enumerators to easily find the sampled individuals.

In the absence of an individual-level sampling frame, there are several options. The most common approach, one used by many existing surveys like those conducted by The Asia Foundation in Afghanistan,[26] Myanmar,[27] and Bangladesh,[28] is to randomly sample administrative units (towns, provinces, etc.) and then use a "random walk" [29] to sample respondents within those units. Whether this approach is feasible depends on the security risks for enumerators. Random walks do not make it possible to match respondent and enumerator characteristics ahead of time.

Sampling strategies that begin with administrative units typically sample proportionally to the share of the population in each unit. That is, if town A has twice as many people as town B, and the goal is to achieve a nationally representative sample, twice as many individuals will be interviewed in town A as in town B. What can be done when survey implementers do not even know how many people live

Options for sampling

Challenge: **No individual-level sampling frame exists.**

Solution: (M) Begin by sampling administrative units (villages, provinces, etc.), and then choose individuals using a "random walk."

Challenge: **No area-level sampling frame exists.**

Solution: (A) Use satellite imagery to estimate local-level population densities, then sample within areas proportionally to their estimated population.

in each unit? For example, state failure in Afghanistan means that we know little about population characteristics in many parts of the country. One solution is to use satellite imagery to estimate population densities and then sample within grid cells based on these estimates.[30]

Not all surveys aim for representativeness of the general population. On some occasions, the questions the survey intends to answer refer to specific subpopulations—for example, *What do youth think about the role of religion in politics?* or *How prevalent is harassment against women?* In these cases, of course, the survey should sample only from the subpopulation of interest. Other times, the questions require a full cross section of society to answer, but are best addressed by oversampling—including certain subgroups in numbers greater than their proportion. **Oversampling is most often required when making comparisons between groups of unequal size.** For example, if the survey intends to measure the difference in attitudes towards extremism between Filipino Catholics, who make up the vast majority of Filipinos, and Filipino Muslims, a small minority, that comparison can be estimated most efficiently if the survey includes equal numbers of Catholics and Muslims. Thus, the survey would need to oversample Muslims.

Accessing respondents and encouraging participation

Surveys that measure violent extremism face particularly acute challenges in accessing respondents. First, the nature of the topic makes it highly likely that sampled respondents will be located in areas that are dangerous, geographically remote, or otherwise inaccessible to enumerators. Thus, researchers face a choice between taking unusually high risks to reach sampled respondents, and fielding a sample that excludes important segments of the population.

One solution is to **interview respondents away from the problematic area.** For example, The Asia Foundation's 2015 Survey of the Afghan People[31] uses "intercept interviews," in which respondents traveling to or from insecure sampling points are interviewed at public locations like bus stops. Similarly, a study in insurgent-influenced areas of the Philippines avoided sending enumerators to remote locations by phoning sampled respondents and asking them to meet the enumerator at the village hall, where the interview could be conducted more safely.[32] Lastly, to learn about conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine State, Physicians for Human Rights conducted interviews with migrants in Bangladesh to avoid retaliation by Myanmar's government against respondents who were still in the country.[33]

These methods of using alternative locations involve trade-offs, of course. Intercept interviews only reach respondents traveling to and from the sampled area, likely leading to a disproportionate

Surveying hard-to-reach populations

Challenge: **The population of interest is difficult or impossible to access due to safety concerns.**

Solutions:

- S Use a telephone- or Internet-based survey where conditions permit.
- M Conduct intercept interviews, with enumerators interviewing members of the target population away from their homes.

Challenge: **Selected respondents are hesitant to participate because of the sensitive topic.**

Solutions:

- S Partner with a trusted, well-known institution like a development agency or university.
- S Conduct interviews in a private setting like the respondent's home.
- A Use randomization techniques to ensure the privacy of responses.

number of working-age males, while the method used in the Philippine study cited above requires that enumerators have a way of contacting the respondent without going to their physical location. In both cases, the method of contact harms the representativeness of the sample, excluding those who do not travel and those without telephones, respectively.

Even when respondents can be reached, some may not wish to participate in a survey about topics that are sensitive or elicit unpleasant memories. Some respondents may find recounting experiences with violence to be painful. Others may fear that answering questions about extremism will lead to reprisals. In some cases, potential respondents may believe that simply talking to enumerators is dangerous, regardless of the content of the survey, if the survey might be perceived as affiliated with a particular group or sect or with the government. **Low response rates decrease the representativeness of the sample,** since respondents who are willing to be interviewed undoubtedly differ from those who refuse to participate on characteristics researchers care about. Thus, implementers must take care to ensure that a large enough proportion of sampled respondents are reached to ensure representativeness.

The context of each case plays a large role in determining how to achieve high participation rates. In most cases, respondents will be more willing to participate in the survey if **enumerators are affiliated with an organization that respondents know and trust**. Enumerators should **always emphasize the safeguards in place to keep responses anonymous and ensure respondents' privacy.** Finally, **the location in which the interview takes place affects respondents' comfort and willingness to participate.** Where participants face risks from violent groups for participating in the survey, the interview should be conducted in a private setting—for instance, inside the respondent's home. In contrast, where the local population is distrustful of enumerators, respondents may be more comfortable conducting the interview in a public location like a community hall or religious center.

Guaranteeing respondents' privacy

The enumerator and the respondent may not be the only people present during an interview. Survey interviews may attract the attention of family members, friends, curious bystanders, and police officers. The presence of observers affects how respondents answer questions and their willingness to answer, a distortion referred to as an *observer effect*. Like enumerator effects, surveys on violent extremism are especially susceptible to observer effects, because the sensitive nature of the topic makes respondents especially aware of who may be listening. Respondents will not want to admit supporting an extremist group in front of the authorities, or they may fear that their opposition to an extremist group will make its way to members of that group if they reveal such opposition publicly.

Enumerators should attempt to **minimize the presence of observers** where possible, but it is sometimes unavoidable. If asking observers to leave might jeopardize the ability to complete the survey, or if the enumerator has no authority to ask observers to leave, best practice is for the enumerator to **inconspicuously record the presence of observers**, including how many there are and what their position is (i.e., family member, police officer, neighbor, etc.). The enumerator may also wish to make a note if he or she believes the observer's presence overtly influenced the outcome of the survey. With this information, analysts can account for the presence of observers after the fact.

Mitigating security risks

Surveys on violent extremism are likely to involve risks to the safety of both enumerators and respondents. Those implementing the survey are responsible for assessing the level of risk their survey poses, evaluating whether the potential rewards of collecting the information outweigh the risks, and designing a survey that minimizes those risks. They must be prepared to answer questions about safety risks honestly and accurately before beginning a survey, and should design a survey that explicitly avoids these risks to the greatest possible extent. Those running the survey need to inform their donors of the nature and severity of the risks, and how they will be mitigated and managed. Funders and implementers of the survey need to have a shared understanding of security risks before the survey is fielded.

There will be instances in which safety issues do not permit survey research. The suggestions and solutions discussed in this guide are not a panacea. They cannot address every potential threat, nor can they ever eliminate risk entirely. Survey implementers have a responsibility to recognize these instances and to either conduct research by other means or delay research until conditions improve. Those implementing the survey should discuss with their donors whether the value of the research warrants the risks to safety. Security risks come from several sources:

Securing informed consent

Enumerators should secure informed consent from respondents. They should explain the purpose of the survey and how the information will be used, the extent to which data collected is confidential, and the risks and benefits to subjects of participating. Only respondents who understand these issues can truly consent to participate. While some academic research necessitates deceiving respondents about the goals of the research, deception is rarely needed or justified in surveys for CVE. The consent process should always emphasize to potential subjects that their participation is voluntary.

- **Presence in the survey area is dangerous.** When enumerators conduct surveys in conflict zones, their mere presence is risky, as they could be caught in crossfire or intentionally targeted. In this case, it is not the survey itself that creates risks, but rather that the survey draws enumerators into dangerous areas that they would otherwise likely avoid.

  The best solution to this source of risk is to **avoid sending enumerators to active conflict zones.** Where possible, the survey should be conducted remotely via phone or Internet, or using some of the strategies described above for accessing respondents. If enumerators absolutely must conduct the survey in person, then the survey should be kept as short as possible to minimize the amount of time enumerators spend in exposed locations, and great effort should be made to secure safe transportation (i.e., private vehicles rather than public transportation) to and from survey locations.

- **Topics covered on the survey are upsetting to armed actors.** Parties to a conflict—including governments—may be upset by surveys asking about them or their activities, and they may threaten enumerators or respondents associated with the survey. In this case, the steps suggested above to ensure respondent anonymity and secure the data are pertinent. A survey could also avoid asking direct questions on sensitive topics. Ultimately, if an armed actor signals that survey activities are unacceptable to them and threatens to harm participants, it may be necessary to cease all survey activities and seek alternative means of gathering the desired information.

- **Topics covered on the survey may require respondents to disclose illegal activities.** Surveys sometimes ask respondents to reveal participation in activities that are illegal. Supporting violent extremism or proscribed terrorist groups may be a crime in some countries. At the same time, information about such behavior may be important for CVE programming. Whether it is advisable to ask about these issues in the survey will depend on the context and on the level of risk those running and funding the survey feel is acceptable. If a decision is made to include questions about illegal activities in the survey, respondent privacy can be protected by *ensuring respondent anonymity, securing data, and asking indirect questions.* Enumerators should also remind respondents that, while they will do their best to maintain their privacy, they may be compelled to disclose information about illegal activities under certain circumstances.

Research ethics and surveys on violent extremism

Surveys—like any other research—should abide by relevant ethical standards. Those running the survey should check whether their funder or the country where the survey is being fielded has guidelines on research ethics and securing government clearance for research. Donors are likely to have strict legislation or policies that restrict any engagement with groups or individuals on counterterrorism and sanctions lists. There may also be relevant legal frameworks that restrict access to individuals involved in violent extremism (for example, counterterrorism legislation) and control how personal data can be collected and shared. One of the particular ethical challenges of surveys on CVE is the likely possibility that the research will uncover information about past or planned illegal activities, including activities that might harm noncombatants or government authorities. When this happens, those running the survey must decide whether reporting dangerous or illegal activities to authorities warrants breaching respondents' confidentiality.

Step 3: Analyzing the results

Once data collection is complete, the data must be analyzed and presented. The information that follows on analyzing raw data will be useful primarily for those running the survey. Donors such as aid agencies, however, may benefit from reading the sections on validating findings and sharing and presenting results.

Analyzing raw data

Many development organizations do not take full advantage of the survey data they collect. Most use survey data exclusively to report descriptive figures: 27 percent of Myanmar residents perceive ethnic tensions to be a cause of conflict in their country;[34] 4.8 percent of Nepalese report violence in their community following the April 2015 earthquake;[35] 51 percent of citizens in southern Thailand cite a lack of respect for Malay culture as a major driver of insurgent recruitment.[37] Many reports also include cross-tabulations in which they report figures across different segments of the population. For example, The Asia Foundation's 2016 report on Afghanistan shows that 88 percent of Kabul residents, but only 74 percent of Hazarajat residents, have heard of the Islamic State.[38]

These types of figures are valuable to policymakers seeking to understand what is happening in a particular location and to design policies in line with conditions on the ground. Yet, surveys offer an opportunity to conduct more sophisticated analyses to determine relationships between violent extremist outcomes and various drivers. That is, rather than simply asking what proportion of the population has participated in a riot, researchers might ask what drivers—say, attitudes about interethnic relations—are associated with the occurrence of riots. These correlations between extremist violence and its drivers help policymakers decide how to target CVE interventions and evaluate their effectiveness.

Multivariate analysis of survey data

A 2012 study by Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob Shapiro uses a survey of 6,000 Pakistanis to determine which factors predict support for militant groups. Rather than presenting simple correlations between factors like beliefs about jihad or religiosity and support for militancy, they use multivariate models that account for each of these factors, along with demographic characteristics like education, gender, and religiosity, as well as regional variation, to determine the effects of each factor on support for militant groups, *independent of other characteristics*. They find, among other things, that *all else equa*l, respondents who view jihad as an internal struggle are significantly less likely to support militant groups. They also find that baseline levels of support for militancy are much higher in some regions than in others. By using multivariate analysis, the researchers are able to separate individual-level ideological motives from regional variation, providing agencies wishing to conduct CVE programs with precise information about where to target their efforts, whom to target, and what types of programs are most likely to succeed in reducing support for militant groups.[39]

Survey data can also be used for more complex, multivariate analyses, which allow researchers to estimate relationships between two variables while holding constant the effect of one or more other variables. For example, analysts might suspect that individuals who are gainfully employed are less likely to participate in organized violence, since doing so takes away from their time at work. A simple cross-tab can show whether respondents who are underemployed are, in fact, more likely to participate in violence. However, it might also be the case that men are more likely to participate in violence than women. If men are also more likely to be underemployed, analysts need to separate the effects of underemployment from those of gender. A multivariate analysis can include all three variables and determine the relationship between underemployment and participation in violence, *independent of the effects of gender*.

Opportunities to answer complex questions using a multivariate approach should not be wasted. At the very least, implementers should understand the types of questions that survey data allows them to answer using multivariate analyses, even if they must engage an outside firm or consultant to perform the analysis.

Implementers should also be aware of the effects of nonresponse on their analysis. As noted above, nonresponse affects the representativeness of the sample. It also matters because individuals who choose not to take the survey or who opt not to answer certain questions may be different from other respondents in ways that are relevant for understanding violent extremism.

"Netflixing" nonresponse

The International Republican Institute (IRI), in a recent survey conducted in Asia, used an algorithm to predict how individuals who chose not to reply to sensitive questions *might* have replied. The algorithm, conceptually similar to the one used by Netflix to predict which movies users might like based on their past behavior, matched nonrespondents to their "nearest neighbor" based on the answers they did provide for the rest of the survey, and projected that their likely response to the sensitive questions would be the same as this "nearest neighbor". Using this technique, IRI was able to predict what the 49 percent of respondents who refused to say whether they were sympathetic to the actions of ISIS in their country over the past year might actually think. The algorithm found that of this 49 percent, 37 percent were not sympathetic, and only 12 percent were sympathetic.

Weighting

Most surveys seek to represent a broader population. That is, the results can be used to draw conclusions, not just about the individuals who answered the questions, but about the population of the country or region, or some subset of that population like women or recipients of an aid program. Where those running the survey know the true characteristics of the population they seek to describe—for example, if complete census data is available—they can weight survey responses to enhance the representativeness of their sample. Weighting involves giving more emphasis to some responses from underrepresented categories. For example, if Muslims make up 18 percent of the population that is being described but only 12 percent of survey respondents, then the analysis would use each observation from a Muslim respondent 1.5 times.

Weighting is useful when two conditions are met: the true demographic makeup of the population of interest is known, and the survey sample is not perfectly representative of that population. However, weighting is not a panacea, and it should not be used as a substitute for high-quality sampling. The

more extreme the weighting, the more results are driven by a small number of responses. In an extreme case, a single respondent could be asked to represent his or her entire demographic category. Since it cannot be assumed that any one respondent is representative of an entire category, such a technique would be inappropriate. Rather, weighting is helpful in making minor adjustments when appropriate sampling techniques produce imperfect samples.

Validating the findings

Survey findings should always be validated. First, results can be compared against data from previous surveys that asked similar questions of the same population, should such surveys exist. As surveys on violent extremism proliferate, it may become easier to do such comparisons, provided the data is accessible. There is no expectation that responses will match perfectly, but findings should remain reasonably consistent across surveys unless there has been a major change in context from one survey to the next. For example, if all previous surveys find support for sharia law in Indonesia in the range of 20–30 percent, and a new survey finds support at 5 percent, analysts will need a compelling reason why their survey yielded such different results.

Another option is to compare survey responses against nonsurvey observational data. For example, if a survey measured victimization by communal violence, it would be helpful to compare reported rates of victimization against official statistics compiled by law enforcement. While the rates will certainly not match perfectly, they should correlate with one another in predictable ways. When they do not, the difference should be explained.

Information gleaned from focus groups or other qualitative methods may explain surprising survey results or help to confirm the correlations. As noted in section 1, qualitative research may be especially valuable for shedding light on mechanisms and processes that lead to participation in extremist violence. Survey data alone is unlikely to show how structural push factors have combined with individual pull factors to induce radicalization. Polling may, however, show which push factors merit further qualitative research.

Comparing survey data against nonsurvey sources also contributes to a broader understanding of findings. Surveys are useful for collecting systematic, quantifiable data that is easy to analyze, but without an understanding of the social and political context in which the data was collected, researchers may misinterpret survey responses.

Ways of validating findings

Challenge: **Data collected using surveys may be inaccurate and should always be verified.**

Solutions:

- S Compare responses against other survey data on the same topic.
- M Compare responses against administrative or other data measuring similar concepts.
- A Conduct qualitative interviews to verify specific mechanisms.

Analyzing interrupted or incomplete surveys

Sometimes security concerns or political factors force the suspension of survey enumeration before all data has been collected. Those running the survey, and other stakeholders, may wish to use the responses that were collected but must be careful to understand their limitations. The first concern is with representativeness: what conclusions can be drawn about the broader population of interest using only a subset of sampled respondents?

The answer depends on the order in which respondents were surveyed in relation to the sampling method. If the surveys were carried out in a random order, then the subset that were completed are representative of the intended sample, and valid generalizations can be made. Analysis can proceed, but with caution. The smaller-than-intended sample size increases *sampling error*, or uncertainty about how well the data matches the "true value" in the population of interest. In all likelihood, the original sample size was determined based on estimates of how many respondents were necessary to achieve an acceptable sampling error. By failing to complete the survey, the implementer failed to achieve this figure.

If surveys were not carried out in random order with regard to the sampling frame, then it should not be assumed that the completed subset of surveys represents the population of interest. For example, if surveys were to be completed in 90 villages, and surveys were completed for all individuals in a village before moving on to the next village, then interrupting the survey midway through means that the responses only represent individuals in the completed villages, who may or may not represent people in other villages. In this case, the survey results may still be *internally valid*—meaning that they accurately describe the respondents themselves—but they should not be used to draw conclusions about the broader population.

In deciding how to proceed after an interruption, those running the survey must also consider their realistic alternatives. Why was the survey interrupted? Is it plausible to resume the survey at some point in the future? If so, and if not much time will pass in between, then it may be possible to simply pick up where the enumerators left off when conditions allow. On the other hand, if so much time passes that conditions on the ground have changed, the survey should be restarted from the beginning. In either case, analysts need not discard the earlier data: the survey rounds can be pooled for analysis as long as multivariate analysis includes an indicator variable denoting the round in which a response was collected. That is, if 400 surveys were conducted in January, then conditions required halting the survey until October when the remaining 300 surveys were completed, a multivariate analysis could include all 700 responses, but would need to include a variable coded "0" for all surveys from January and "1" for all surveys from October, and the mitigating effect of this variable should be considered in all interpretations of the results.

Sharing and presenting the results

Survey data on violent extremism has many potential applications and should be made available to others when possible to avoid duplication of effort. However, disclosing the results may pose risks to communities, individual respondents, enumerators, and those funding and implementing the survey. Those funding and running such surveys should carefully consider their options for dissemination. These include

- convening off-the-record briefings with donors and trusted partners;
- releasing headline findings without disclosing disaggregated data that could lead to stigmatization of communities or segments of the population that support violent extremism;
- redacting sensitive questions and answers, but making the rest of the data available online to encourage other researchers to perform their own analysis.

If it is possible to share the findings, the next step is to consider the different audiences who may be interested in the data. Key messages will need to be tailored to each audience, and this will often require presenting the results in different formats and in different levels of technical detail.

One of the major challenges of survey data is rendering it intelligible to a nonspecialist audience. More complex regression analyses may be of interest to a research community, but they can muddy the message for audiences less conversant in statistics. For policymakers, it may be more effective to highlight descriptive statistics and policy recommendations over multivariate analyses. When the objective is to influence project teams—within the same organization or in others—those analyzing the survey results should frame findings in terms with clear implications for CVE programming.

It is hard to predict how survey findings will be interpreted once they are released. Those responsible for the survey should have a strategy for managing risks—operational and political—that stem from the data being negatively received. Surveys on violent extremism may return unexpected or politically unpalatable findings that antagonize important stakeholders. For example, they could show that experiences of petty corruption are a major driver of violent extremism, which might be poorly received by local officials who have given permission for the survey to go ahead in their area. Often, it may be appropriate to engage the funder and other trusted partners in determining what should be disseminated, to whom, and how.

Surveys on violent extremism pose many challenges. But when they yield methodologically sound results, surveys can create opportunities to confront difficult truths about violent extremism and forge better responses in the future.

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