

EVALUATING PROGRAMMES TO PREVENT AND COUNTER EXTREMISM

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INTRODUCTION

In contrast to comparable areas, such as gang-related interventions, programmes for preventing or countering violent extremism (P/CVE) have neither a strong knowledge base nor established standards for evaluating their impact. Research has instead sought to draw international comparisons across interventions and identify transferable lessons from other fields.

However, very little research has systematically tested or applied these approaches to P/CVE programmes.

KEY POINTS

- The overwhelming majority of P/CVE programmes have not been subject to formal evaluation. Where evaluations have taken place, they can fall short of the standards of transparency, independence and rigour typical of related fields.
- Greater sharing of internal evaluations would strengthen the field and enhance the speed at which progress is made, as well as avoiding parallel research cultures developing in the open and closed source literature. Pooling expertise on evaluation methods across the different bodies involved in delivering P/CVE interventions, and more publicly accessible evaluations would also strengthen work in this area.
- Key challenges facing P/CVE interventions include the absence of an appropriate counterfactual, or an understanding of what would have happened in the absence of an intervention, and the small numbers of people who are supported through these programmes. Quasi-experimental designs have been used in comparable fields such as gang-related interventions and have the potential to overcome these challenges.



- There are ethical and security challenges when selecting an appropriate control group against which to evaluate the impact of P/CVE programmes. It is relatively straightforward to identify a control group for primary prevention methods that are aimed at larger populations. It is far harder to generate control groups for those at risk, or involved in extremism, as this would typically involve denying individuals access to support to determine if an intervention was effective. Switching-replications designs can potentially overcome this issue.
- There is an absence of robust data against which to triangulate the findings of P/CVE evaluations. However, lessons can be learned from evaluations of gang-related interventions, which commonly use more than one evaluation method to triangulate their findings.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This Executive Summary comes from the Full Report from the project *Knowledge Management Across the Four Counter-Terrorism 'Ps'*. You can find the Full Report [here](#).