

Introduction

Although the current global geopolitical landscape has pushed terrorism into the background, this phenomenon remains vigorous and persistent¹. Generally speaking, terrorism focuses more on psychological impact than on physical damage, pursuing political or social objectives rather than destruction and death—though the latter are part of the strategy to convey its message.

Terrorism has evolved throughout history, as the American scholar Rapoport² explains in his analysis of four “waves”: the anarchist, the anti-colonial, the New Left, and the current, religious wave. The social media revolution³ has compounded this latest wave, making it far more explosive due to greater capacity for recruitment, diversification, and access to methods, strategies, funding, and dissemination. We can affirm that current religious terrorism, which will be part of the subject of study in this paper, differs from the Al-Qaeda terrorism perpetrated at the beginning of the century. However, this technological revolution has also fueled other types of terrorism that are also present in our society, such as far-right or far-left terrorism, ethno-nationalist or separatist terrorism⁴.

Jihadist Terrorism

This form of religious terrorism stems from an extreme interpretation of Islam, rooted in radical Salafist doctrine. Its proponents seek to establish the Islamic Ummah—a community founded on religious principles as its ultimate foundation—on a global scale, challenging the Western-led international order⁵. In this context, it is important to note that the term Jihad, as an essential part of Islamic belief, is described in the Quran as the “struggle in the way of God” or “holy war,” ranging from the personal struggle to be a better Muslim to war against the infidel⁶.

¹ Echevarría, C. (2022). Terrorismo internacional: mutación y adaptación de un fenómeno global. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. Cuaderno de Estrategia 214. Ministry of Defense.

² Rapoport, D. C. (2002). The four waves of Modern Terrorism. ICCT – International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.

³ Velasco, S. (2019). TIC, Redes y Posverdad. Innovación comunicativa: una nueva ola terrorista. Revista Española de Ciencia Política (RECP).

⁴ Europol (2024). TE-SAT. European Union. Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2024. Europol.

⁵ Bockstette, C. (2008). Uso de técnicas de gestión de la comunicación estratégica por parte de terroristas yihadistas. George C. Marshall. European Center for Security Studies.

⁶ Absaoui, I. (2017). El terrorismo yihadista. Aproximación ideológica, filosófica, sociológica, criminológica y jurídica. Universidad Complutense De Madrid. Facultad De Derecho.

Currently, jihadist terrorism is led by the so-called Islamic State, Daesh, or ISIS, which is the deadliest group, though not the only one: it coexists with others such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab. In the short term, these groups seek to expand their ranks, both in their countries of origin and in the West; in the medium term, they aim to oust the political leaders of secular Muslim states, eliminate Israel, and attack the West, in their ambition to expand their recruitment and funding; and in the long term, the main objective is to restore the global Islamic caliphate⁷.

There is no record of the first attack that triggered this radical religious phenomenon. According to Rapoport's analysis, the wave of religious terrorism emerged in the 1980s. It is worth noting that the first attack, allegedly jihadist, to occur in Spain took place in 1985 at the El Descanso restaurant, where 18 people were killed near the Torrejón de Ardoz airbase, allegedly by the same individual suspected of the subsequent March 11 attack: Mustafa Setmariam⁸, founder of the Al-Qaeda cell in Spain. This same type of jihadism was also seen in the US in 1993, with the World Trade Center bombing, considered a precursor to what would happen eight years later in the 9/11 attacks⁹.

Regarding the growing spread of this phenomenon in recent decades, it is essential to discuss radicalization and the strategies employed to achieve it. Radicalization is defined as "increased readiness for intergroup conflict and a heightened commitment to it," as well as a "change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that justify intergroup violence and the demand for sacrifice in defense of one's own group"¹⁰. Radicalization is driven by sociological factors: on the one hand, individual factors arising from identity conflicts, which are very common among second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants; on the other hand, external or social factors related to growing political polarization and public opinion clashes¹¹. Furthermore, radicalization relies on key channels for its success, which have evolved from more traditional methods—such

⁷ Bockstette, C. (2008). Uso de técnicas de gestión de la comunicación estratégica por parte de terroristas yihadistas. George C. Marshall. European Center for Security Studies.

⁸ Blasco, E. J. (2025). El Descanso: Indagación sobre un atentado olvidado. Global Affairs. Universidad de Navarra.

⁹ Kenk, J. (2022). 26 de febrero de 1993: Atentado del World Trade Center de 1993, el primer atentado yihadista en Estados Unidos. El Orden Mundial.

¹⁰ McCauley, C. & Moskalenko, S. (2008). Mecanismos de radicalización política: caminos hacia el terrorismo. *Terror. Violencia Política* 20, 415-433. doi: 10.1080/09546550802073367

¹¹ Bałkowski, P. (2022). Preventing radicalisation in the European Union. How EU policy has evolved. European Parliamentary Research Service. European Parliament. PE 739.213 – November 2022.

as family influence, messages conveyed in places of worship or educational and correctional institutions, and printed propaganda—to a massive strategy utilizing social media and online forums, creating hidden communities—especially on the dark web—and providing military equipment online¹².

The current reality is that in 2024, at least 1,979 jihadist attacks were recorded worldwide, claiming nearly 11,000 lives. The main focus of these attacks is in West Africa, perpetrated by local groups¹³.

Jihadist Terrorism in the West and Europe

In the West, jihadist terrorism resurged over the past decade, reaching a peak in the number of attacks in 2016. The significant increase beginning in 2014 and its subsequent decline can be attributed to various factors, including conflicts, migration, and international interventions: the war in Syria that began in 2011, the fight against ISIS in Iraq from 2014 to 2017 with support from the United States and its allies, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts of 2012, 2014, and 2021, among others.

The number of fatalities from jihadist attacks in the West in recent years has not been too high, peaking in 2015 when the average number of fatalities per attack was 10¹⁴.

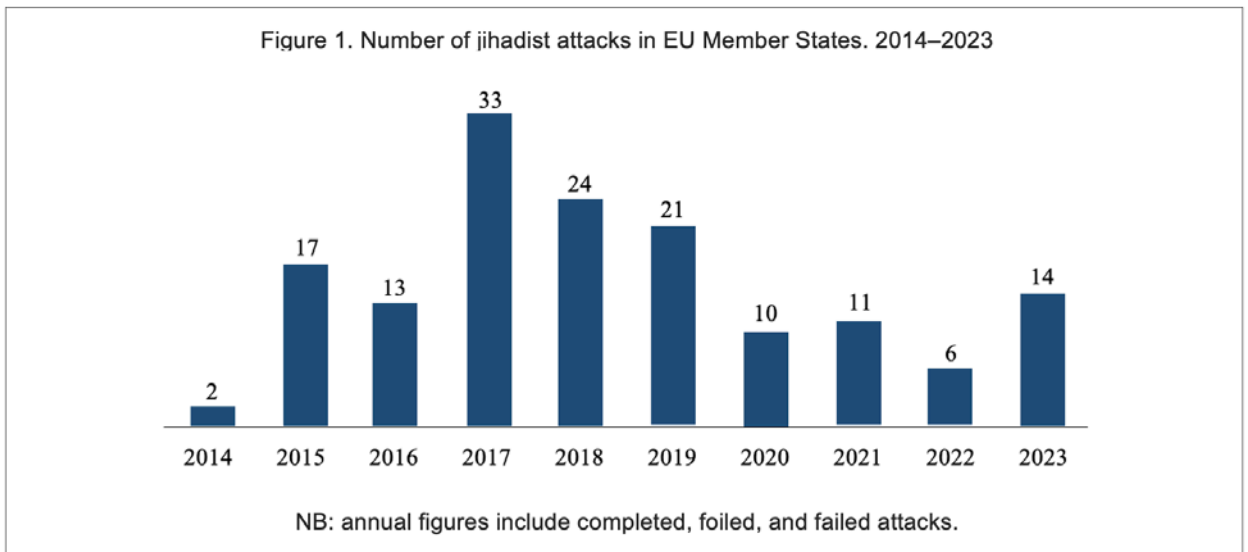
Europe accurately reflects the reality of the West. European Union (EU) member states recorded 151 attacks—including completed, foiled, and failed ones—during the 2014–23 period. In line with the above, and as can be seen in the graph below, approximately a decade ago we experienced a spike in this type of attack, which has since been declining, among other reasons, due to the effectiveness of police operations¹⁵.

¹² Expósito, J. (2021). Reclutamiento yihadista en redes sociales: Yihad 3.0. Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil. Revista de Seguridad Pública. Núm. 62-2021. Ministerio del Interior.

¹³ OIET (2025). Anuario del terrorismo yihadista 2024. COVITE. Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo. Observatorio Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo.

¹⁴ GTI (2025). Global Terrorism Index 2025. Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. IEP. Institute for Economics & Peace.

¹⁵ EU TE-SAT (2024). European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report. 2024. Europol.



Currently, jihadist terrorism is one of the top security priorities in Europe, both because of its impact and the growing complexity of this phenomenon, which is increasingly dominated by lone wolves: “self-radicalized” individuals who act without supervision and with little specialized training, making them very difficult for law enforcement to detect.

In 2024 alone, 334 jihadist terrorists were arrested in the European Union, a number significantly higher than in previous years: 266 in 2022 and 260 in 2021. Of those 334, 161 were EU nationals (48%), while the remaining 173 (52%) came from third countries. This combination highlights a growing trend among jihadists carrying out attacks in Europe: the radicalization of Islam is giving way to an Islamization of radicalism, where religion plays a secondary role, providing a sense of purpose to a disillusioned youth in generational conflict with their elders¹⁶. There is a significant number of second- and third-generation Muslims who, having been born within our borders, become radicalized primarily through the Internet, family ties, and social circles.

It should also be noted that jihadist terrorists are predominantly male; women account for barely 15% of terrorists arrested in the EU.

Due to the significance and impact of these attacks and the radicalization that precedes them, the Union and its member states have adopted measures to combat against this phenomenon. In 2004, the EU established the position of EU Counter-

¹⁶ Parlamento Europeo (2025). Terrorismo en la UE: tendencias, ataques terroristas y detenciones en 2023. Parlamento Europeo. Terrorismo y seguridad. Lucha contra el terrorismo.

Terrorism Coordinator; since 2011, it has maintained a list of individuals, groups, and entities linked to this type of terrorism, which is regularly updated and shared with various international police forces, with this information exchange further enhanced by the update to the Schengen Information System; in 2021, it adopted a Regulation to limit the dissemination of jihadist content online, automatically blocking access to it, among many other measures¹⁷. Furthermore, European countries, such as Spain, have criminalized in their Penal Codes acts preparatory to the commission of terrorist acts, which also punish recruitment and radicalization aimed at terrorism.

Jihadist Attacks and Attackers in France, Germany, and Spain, 2015–2025

It is important to analyze the attacks and attackers within the context of jihadist terrorism in Europe over the past decade, with a particular focus on France, Germany, and Spain, given these countries' significance within the EU in terms of population and economy, as well as the high impact of terrorism on them. This would allow us to identify a possible pattern regarding the profile of the terrorist and the attack, both within each country individually and collectively. To this end, we will consider the attacks carried out in these three countries from 2015 to 2025, excluding the last six months, using the following variables: date, location of the attack, method, target, and number of fatalities. We will also analyze the profile of each attacker, drawing on data regarding their age, nationality, modus operandi, and form of radicalization. Not all details of the attacks and attackers will be available for analysis, as only public sources are used to obtain this information, such as newspapers or reports from official agencies and police.

Existing studies and academic articles suggest that the typical terrorist is a young man who acts alone or in small groups and owes allegiance to a larger group. Most have been radicalized online within Europe itself, although the data also suggests that a significant proportion of the jihadist terrorists currently in Europe are migrants who take advantage of migration flows to enter the continent unnoticed.

¹⁷ Consejo de la UE (s.f.). La respuesta de la UE al terrorismo. Consejo Europeo. Consejo de la Unión Europea.

The Case of France

France is home to the largest Muslim community in Western Europe, with nearly 7 million Muslims out of the nearly 68 million inhabitants registered in the 2023 census. Of these, 19 million are immigrants, their children, or their grandchildren¹⁸.

It is significant to note that France topped the ranking of deportations of undocumented individuals carried out by EU member states in 2024¹⁹. Added to this reality are growing social, political, and religious tensions, as well as the recurring debate about secularism in relation to the Muslim community, with initiatives such as the ban on the veil in competitions or public events²⁰, or the rise in hate crimes against Muslims, which increased by 30% from 2023 to 2024, which has led the French government to seek a balance between combating Islamism and preventing Islamophobia²¹.

With regard to the jihadist attacks carried out in France between 2015 and 2025, as shown in Figure 2, a total of 47 attacks have been recorded. The average age of the attackers was 28; the youngest was a 15-year-old boy who stabbed his Jewish teacher in the neck “in defense of Allah,” and the oldest was a 52-year-old prisoner of German origin who had been radicalized outside Europe. Among all the attackers, only two women were recorded; they attempted to detonate a car bomb in front of Notre-Dame to avenge their husbands. Of the 47 attacks, 32 were carried out by lone wolves, and regarding the attackers, it has been established that at least 16 were radicalized online and that at least three were radicalized outside the EU.

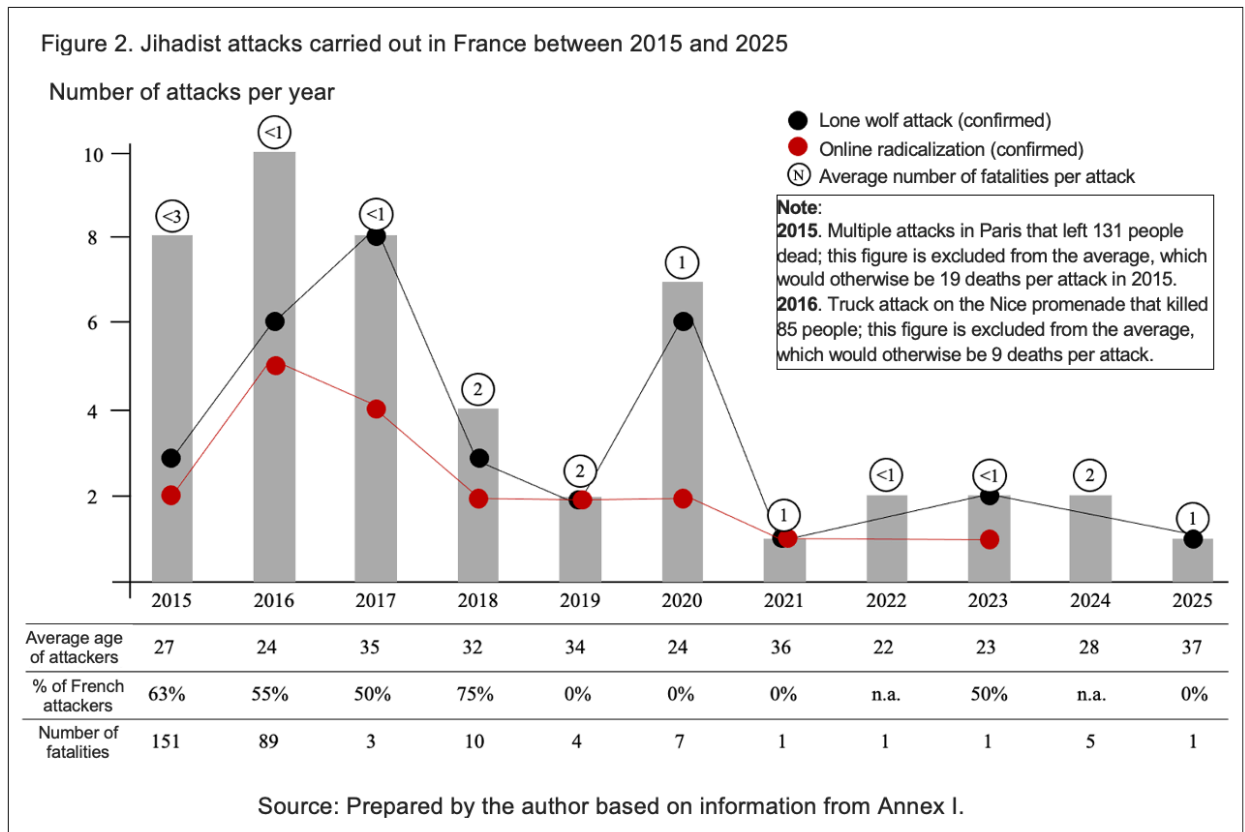
On another note, the data confirms that a large percentage of these terrorists were French nationals, and in most cases had Arabic names, suggesting they were second- or third-generation immigrants.

¹⁸ Quiñonero, J. P. (2023). El islam se consolida como la segunda religión de Francia. ABC Internacional.

¹⁹ EuropaPress (2025). España realizó más de 2.500 deportaciones en el primer trimestre, el quinto país de la UE con más expulsiones.

²⁰ Verdú, D. (2025). Francia: crisis de fe en la laicidad diez años después del atentado de ‘Charlie Hebdo’. El País.

²¹ EuropaPress (2024). Francia pone el foco en el islamismo radical con el reto de contener también la islamofobia.



It is also important to note that the average number of deaths per attack is similar to that in Europe, with an average of nearly two deaths per attack, if we exclude the simultaneous attacks carried out in Paris in 2015 (Charlie Hebdo, Bataclan, and the soccer stadium) and the 2016 mass vehicle attack in Nice, which left 130²² and 85²³ dead, respectively—a figure that would raise this average to six deaths per attack during this period.

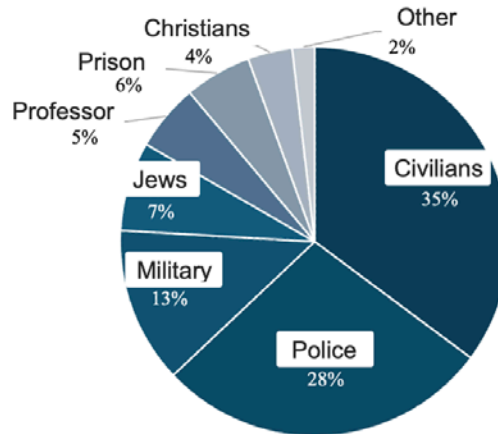
Likewise, we can observe from the red and black dots in the previous graph that in virtually every year there is a notable number of attackers radicalized online, which, in many cases, aligns with their “lone wolf” nature, as can be further corroborated in the information in Annex 1.

Regarding the targets of these attacks, they are varied, primarily focused on civilians, police, and military personnel, in that order, as shown in the following graph. These three groups together account for more than 75% of the targets of the attacks analyzed.

²² Parlamento Europeo (2025). Décimo aniversario de los atentados del 13 de noviembre en París.

²³ MAEC (2016). Atentado en Niza, 14 de julio de 2016.

Figure 3. Target of jihadist attacks carried out in France between 2015 and 2025.

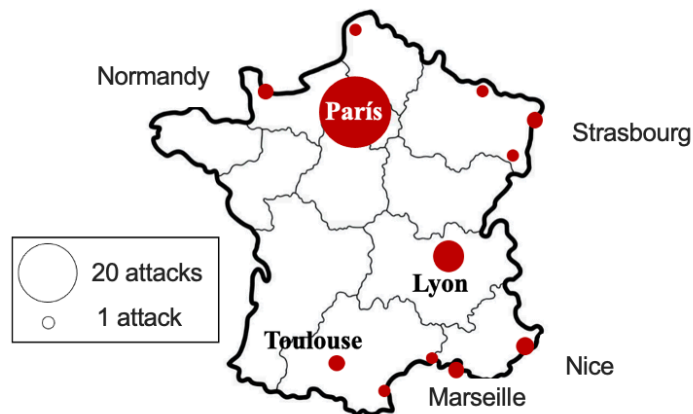


Source: Prepared by the author based on information from Annex I.

It is important to note that most of the attacks on French soil were carried out with knives, as well as with vehicles and firearms to a lesser extent.

Finally, if we analyze the French regions where these attacks have been carried out, we can see that the vast majority—almost half—occurred in the capital, with 20 in the city of Paris and 3 in its suburbs, followed by attacks in other major cities such as Lyon, Nice, Marseille, and Strasbourg, where an average of 3 attacks per city are concentrated. There are also isolated incidents in smaller, more remote towns. Attacks in large cities would cause greater damage, noise, and public alarm, reflecting these groups' attempt to make a stronger statement and seek wider dissemination of their message, mission, and intent to sow fear.

Figure 4. Geographic location of jihadist attacks carried out in France between 2015 and 2025.



Source: Prepared by the author based on information from Annex I.

The Case of Germany

Germany has the second-largest Muslim community in the European Union, with approximately 5.5 million people, representing about 6.5% of its total population in 2024²⁴. Around 47% of these Muslims are German²⁵. Compared to other EU countries, Germany is characterized by a high number of asylum applications, as well as significant intra-EU migration due to its wide range of opportunities and job openings²⁶.

In 2024, the foreign population in Germany exceeded 13 million people, compared to nearly 71 million Germans, representing about 15% of the total. This massive immigration has posed a significant challenge for many cities, due to integration issues and the resulting rise in violence, making this issue the top priority on the political agenda for 25% of Germans²⁷.

Regarding irregular immigration, Germany recorded more than 266,000 illegal entries in 2023 alone, a 33% increase from the previous year. The main countries of origin for these irregular immigrants are Syria, Turkey, and Afghanistan, and they chose Germany because of its liberal immigration policy, fleeing war and abuse in their home countries²⁸. Similarly, deportations of irregular immigrants have also increased, with more than 21,000 in 2023 alone²⁹.

It is also worth noting that in 2020, Germany maintained a list of 627 individuals classified as “dangerous” Islamists—five times as many as in 2013. Consequently, in recent years and in response to attacks carried out in the country by Muslim foreigners, hate crimes against them have increased, with more than 1,550 incidents in 2024, including attacks on 54 mosques³⁰.

Regarding jihadist attacks carried out in Germany during the 2015–25 period, and as shown in Figure 5, 19 terrorists carried out 18 attacks. Only one, in 2016, was committed by two people. Among all of them, only one was a woman.

²⁴ Villalba (2025). La profecía de Merkel sobre la inmigración y los musulmanes que vuelve a ser viral. La Razón.

²⁵ Duvander, P (2021). El 47% de los musulmanes en Alemania son alemanes. Salam Plan.

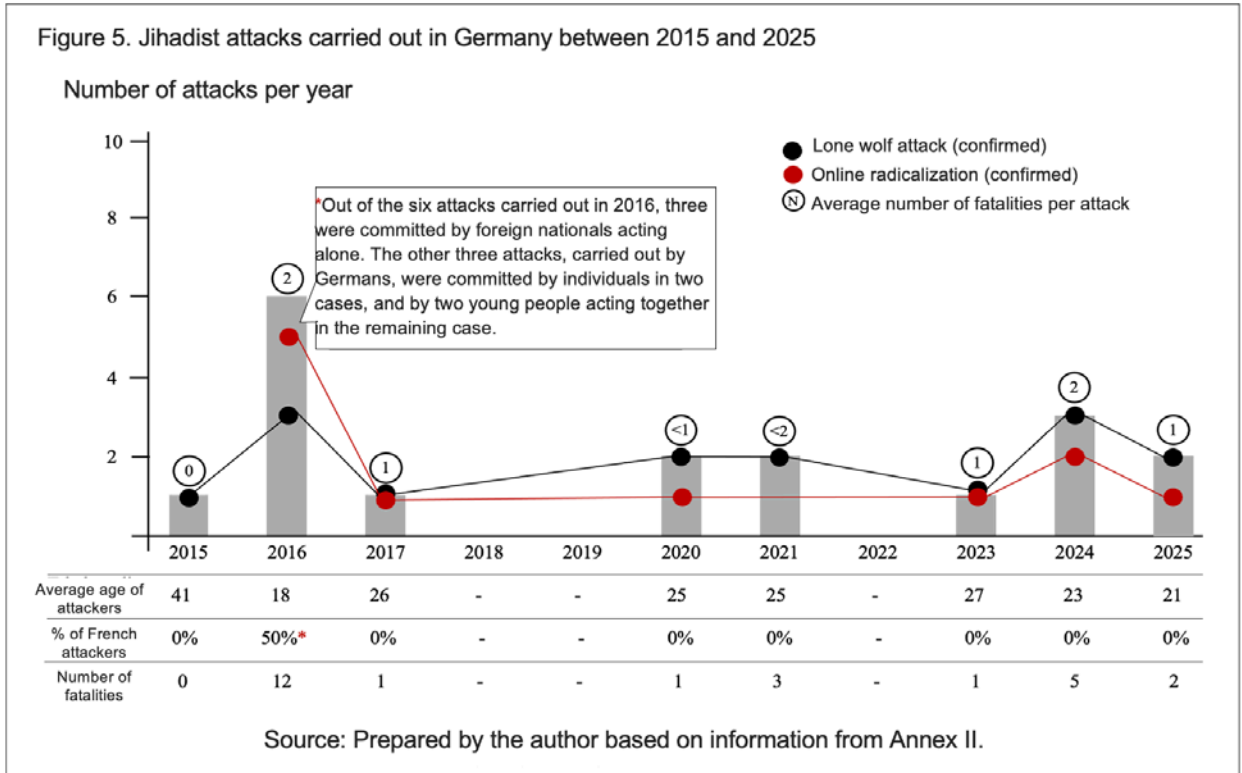
²⁶ Thurau, J. (2024). OCDE da buena nota a Alemania por integración de inmigrantes. DW.

²⁷ Martel, I. (2025). La inmigración en Alemania en datos, el tema clave de las elecciones federales. El Debate.

²⁸ Swissinfo (2024). Alemania registra un aumento del 33 % de las entradas ilegales en el país.

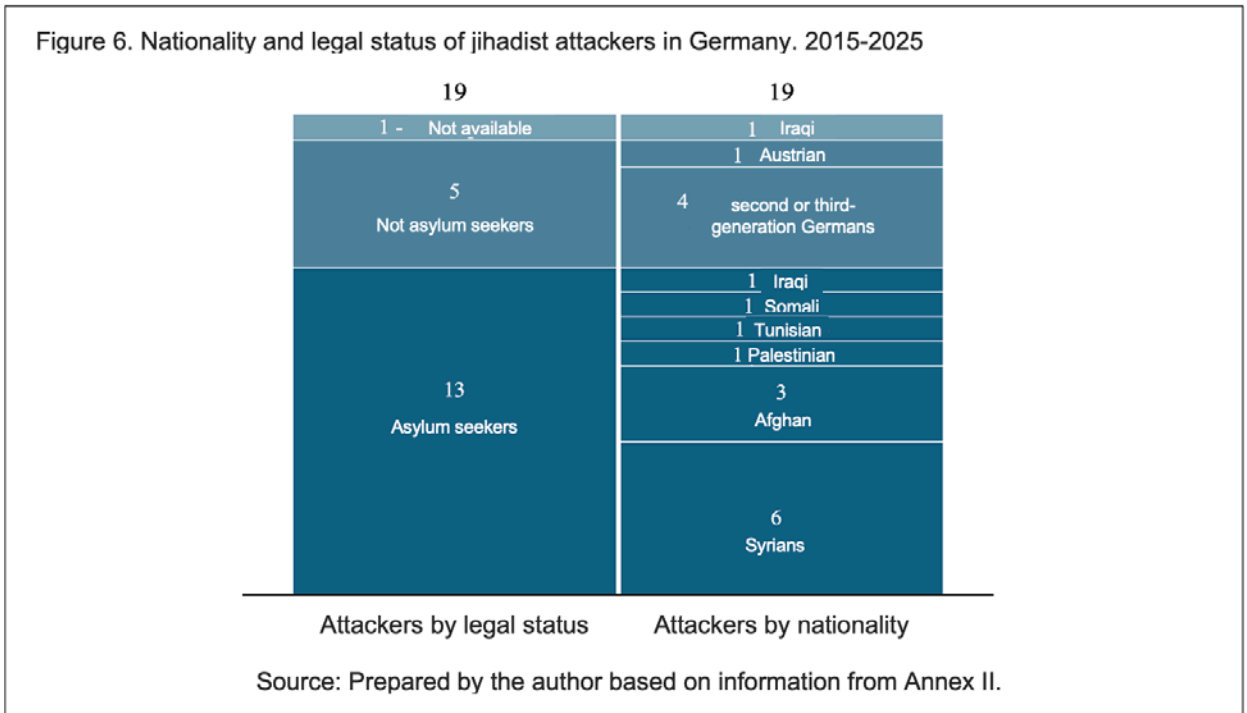
²⁹ DW (2024). Alemania ha expulsado a 10.800 migrantes irregulares en 2024.

³⁰ Agencia Islámica de Noticias (2025). Alemania reporta más de 1550 ataques de odio contra musulmanes en 2024

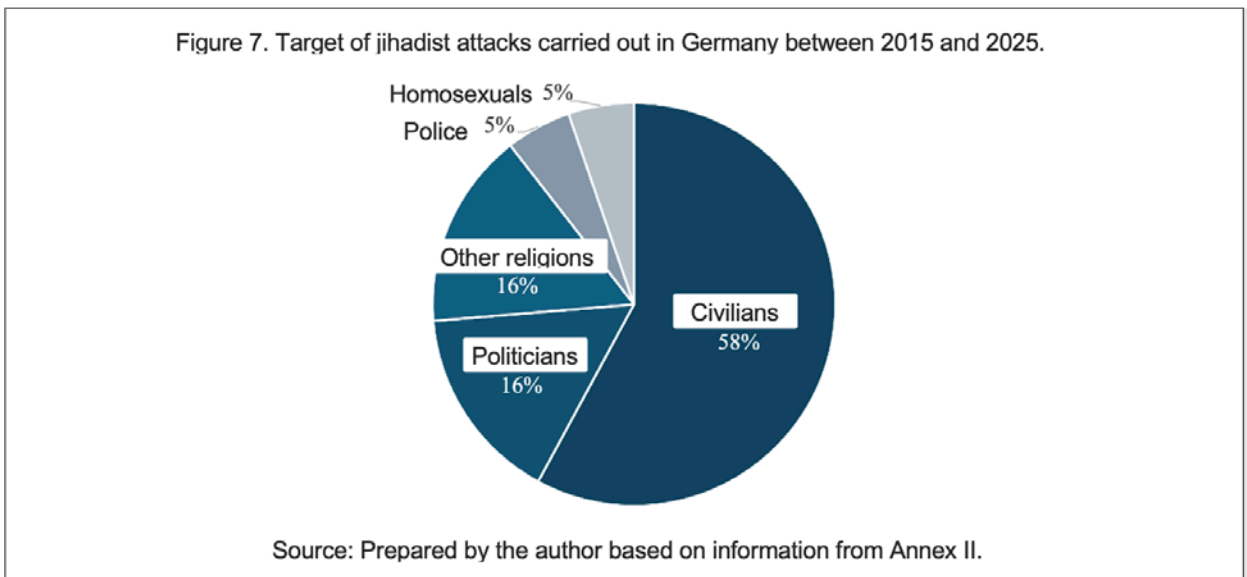


The average age of the attackers is 23. The total number of fatalities, excluding the attackers themselves, is 25, which amounts to an average of about one and a half deaths per attack—a figure in line with EU statistics and most likely a result of the nature of the attacks: carried out individually, as “lone wolf” attacks, and using relatively unsophisticated means, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

As for the radicalization of the attackers, the German case differs from the French one, as most of the terrorists are foreigners and migrants. Figure 6 shows that of the 19 attackers analyzed, 14 are non-EU citizens, and of those, 13 were asylum seekers, with nearly half of them coming from Syria and more than a quarter from Afghanistan. Of the remaining five, four are Germans of foreign descent, with Arabic first and last names, belonging to the second and third generations and ranging in age from 16 to 18.



Regarding the targets of these attacks, civilians stand out. Fifty-eight percent of the attacks targeted the general population, followed, to a lesser extent, by political targets and members of other religions. The police account for no more than 5% of the total, and there are no attacks against the military, which, in Germany, is not deployed on the streets as it is in France.



In the German case, 11 of the 18 attacks were carried out with knives—an easily accessible weapon—followed by vehicles in three other attacks. Bombs were used in only

two attacks, and Molotov cocktails and firearms in just one. This is most likely due to the low level of professionalism and limited resources of the attackers, the majority of whom were foreign asylum seekers.

Finally, regarding the geographic location of the attacks, four of the 18 were committed in Berlin, the capital; two in Munich and two in Würzburg. The rest were carried out in isolated incidents. Therefore, we can conclude that the pattern here is more a reflection of the attackers' characteristics: geographically dispersed lone wolves with limited resources, little training, and no command structure to direct them.

Figure 8. Geographic location of jihadist attacks carried out in Germany between 2015 and 2025.



Source: Prepared by the author based on information from Annex II.

The Case of Spain

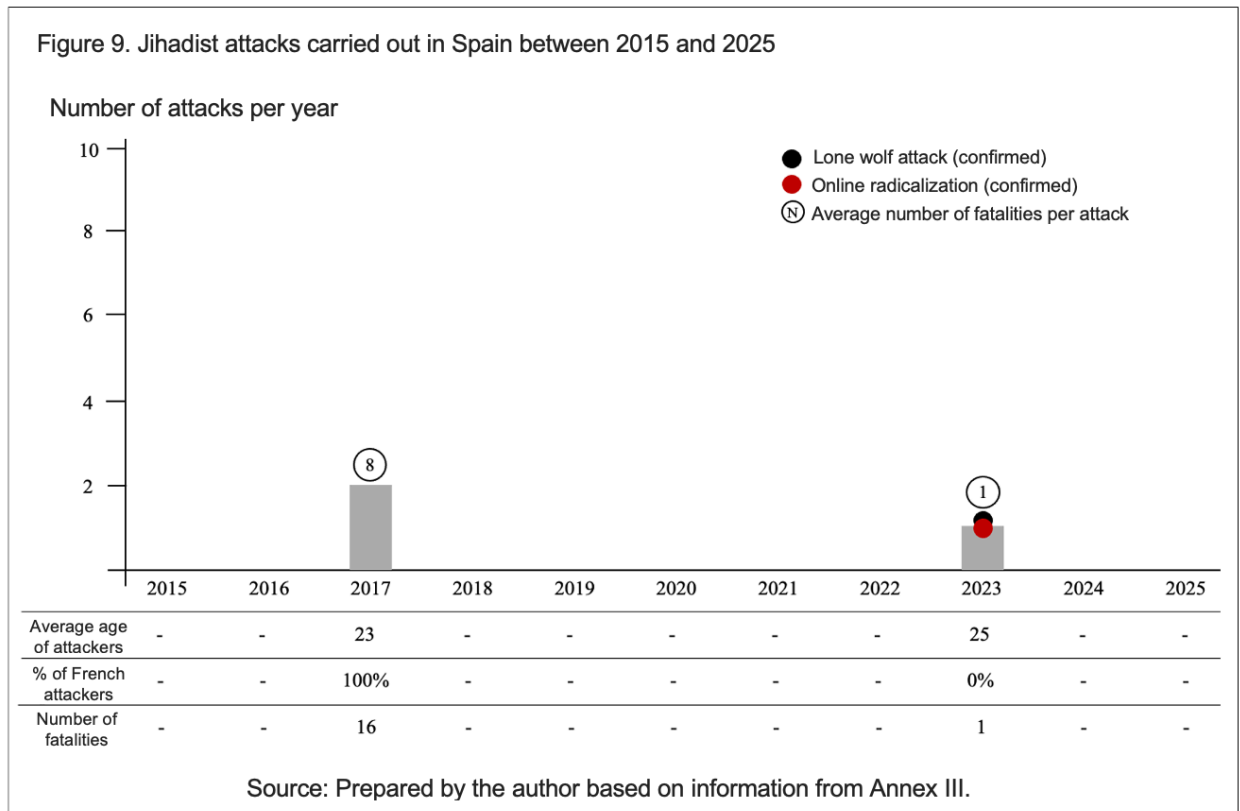
By the end of 2023, approximately 5% of the Spanish population was Muslim. Of this total number of Muslim citizens in Spain, 55% are foreign nationals and 45% are Spanish nationals. Among Muslim foreign nationals, nearly 70% come from Morocco. By autonomous community, the majority of these Muslims are concentrated in Catalonia, followed by Andalusia, Madrid, the Valencian Community, and Murcia, as well as a high percentage in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla³¹.

Immigration in Spain is predominantly regular or legal, with up to 1.25 million people in 2023, and a net migration balance of 642,000 people.

³¹ EuropaPress (2024 a). Los musulmanes en España superan los 2,4 millones.

Irregular immigration, although it has increased in recent years, accounts for approximately 5% of the total. In 2023, nearly 60,000 people entered our country illegally, most by sea, representing an 82% increase over 2022³². According to government³³ statements, this increase in irregular immigration is largely due to growing instability in the Sahel, as well as a lack of opportunities and extreme poverty in West African countries, which generates migratory flows. In the specific case of the Canary Islands, this has led to the massive arrival of small boats due to the diversion of migration routes from Morocco to Mauritania.

With regard to the jihadist attacks carried out in Spain between 2015 and 2025, and as can be seen in Figure 9, Spain has experienced a very low number of such attacks, with only three successful ones, which occurred in 2017 and 2023.



In 2017, there were two attacks linked to and carried out by the same jihadist cell, which consisted of 12 members—most of Moroccan origin but holding Spanish nationality—who had been radicalized and were under the command of the imam of Ripoll, A. Es Satty,

³² INE (2025). Estadística del Padrón de Españoles Residentes en el Extranjero (PERE).

³³ Moncloa (2024). España aumentó un 95% la inmigración irregular en 2023.

who died in an explosion following the attacks at the safe house where the surviving attackers were hiding. All of them were young people, ranging in age from 17 to 28. These attacks were carried out using ordinary vehicles on Barcelona's Las Ramblas, with the addition of a knife in the case of the second attack, in Cambrils. In total, the two attacks claimed 16 lives: 15 in the first, in Barcelona, and one in the second. They were carried out on consecutive days in August.

The attack on January 25, 2023, took place in Algeciras and was carried out by Yassin Kanza, a 25-year-old Moroccan illegal immigrant who had been radicalized and was a regular consumer of online jihadist propaganda. Since 2022, he had been subject to a deportation order that had not yet been enforced. To carry out the attack, he used a knife and killed a sacristan. The motive for the attack is linked to jihadism and possible psychiatric disorders. Yassin acted as a lone wolf.

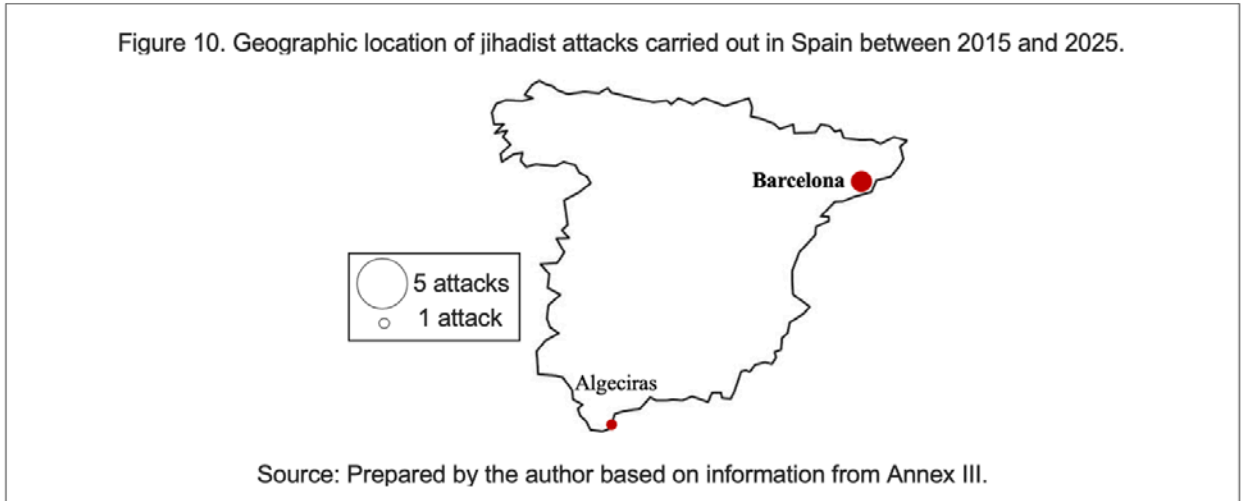
Despite the low number of jihadist attacks in Spain during the period analyzed, compared to France or Germany, this low number is accompanied by numerous arrests of individuals linked to jihadist activities. From March 11, 2004, through May 2025, 1,172 people have been arrested in Spain in nearly 500 anti-jihadist police operations³⁴.

In this regard, the former Chief of Information for the National Police, Germán Rodríguez, recently stated that "the terrorists of the future are already living among us, and the only thing preventing them from advancing is police work," since "very few arrive by boat, as they are already here in Spain." He also stated that most of these dangerous individuals are in Catalonia, are increasingly younger, are Spanish nationals, and include a greater number of women. Similarly, he suggested that the greatest danger facing Spain in this regard is the emergence of attacks carried out by lone wolves, which are very difficult to detect³⁵.

As for geographic location, we can only conclude that the attacks have been carried out in areas with the highest concentration of Muslim populations, as the sample size of attacks is too small to draw other conclusions. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to focus on areas with larger Muslim populations as a means of preventing potential attacks.

³⁴ Ministerio del Interior (2025). Lucha contra el terrorismo yihadista. Histórico.

³⁵ Moya, A. (2025). El mayor experto policial en yihadismo: «Los terroristas del futuro ya viven entre nosotros».



Comparison and Discussion of the Three Case Studies

After analyzing the jihadist attacks carried out in France, Germany, and Spain between 2015 and 2025, we can conclude that these attacks and attackers follow a common pattern, though with specific characteristics unique to each country. Given that the information used in this analysis comes from open sources, and that the number of cases—particularly in Spain—is low, the conclusions drawn must be treated with due caution.

If we look at the table, we can see that there are similarities among the countries analyzed: all fit the established European pattern, led by the lone wolf—a young man who indiscriminately attacks civilians, with little training and using unsophisticated means (such as knives and vehicles)—who has been radicalized online and causes a low number of deaths.

	France	Germany	Spain (<i>low N</i>)
Location	Large cities	Geographical dispersion	Places with a high Muslim population index
Method	Knife, firearm, and vehicle	Mainly skife, vehicle	Vehicle and machete
Target	Civilians, police and military	Mainly civilians, politicians and other religions	Civilians
Número of fatalities	273 in 47 attacks	25 fatalities in 19 attacks	17 fatalities in 3 attacks
Average age of attacker	28	23	21
Nationality and status	Mostly French, second- and third-generation	Mostly foreigners seeking asylum	Mostly Spanish, second- and third-generation of Moroccan origin
Radicalization	Influence of leaders or family, internet, abroad, and prison	Predominantly online	Mainly in mosques
Execution	Both lone and group actions	Predominantly lone wolves	Both lone and group actions

However, we can also point out some differences. In terms of the geographical location of the attacks, large cities are the primary targets in France, attacks are more spread out in Germany, and attacks tend to occur in areas with large Muslim populations in Spain. As for the number of deaths per attack, and despite all figures aligning with the low European average, we see that France has suffered several particularly deadly attacks, namely those in Paris in 2015 and Nice in 2016, as well as the first attack of 2017 in Spain, which left 15 people dead. Furthermore, attacks in France and Spain are predominantly carried out by second- or third-generation nationals, whereas in Germany, nearly three-quarters of the attacks were committed by foreign asylum seekers, many of whom had been issued deportation orders.

With regard to this last characteristic analyzed—the nationality and status of the terrorist—we can observe that in all cases these are systemic issues, although in Germany they could be categorized as circumstantial. This is because in France and Spain, virtually all the attackers analyzed are naturalized citizens or were born in the country itself, belonging to second- and third-generation immigrant families, making them very difficult to detect. In Germany, although this profile also exists, most of the attackers are foreign asylum seekers. This would indicate that in Germany they are not as “camouflaged,” but are, for the most part, foreigners who are part of a verifiable database. Therefore, Germany could use this characteristic to its advantage to prevent potential attacks through increased monitoring.

It is also important to note that, although online radicalization is widespread among these attackers carrying out attacks in Europe, there are still connections and influences—in prisons, mosques, among family members, and prior to migration to European countries, etc.—that must be taken into account, as prevention efforts should not focus solely on monitoring social media or online forums.

Conclusions: A Common Pattern, with Country-Specific Variations

After analyzing various case studies, we can conclude that jihadism in Europe is a major problem that is now virtually impossible to resolve. This is due to its enormous scale and the diverse ways in which it emerges, both from within and outside our borders, through uncontrolled migration flows and the individual and isolated radicalization of naturalized

citizens who act as lone wolves—unpredictable, silent, and fueled by easily accessible social media, where skilled orators seek to recruit on European soil from their own countries or through their social, religious, and family networks. Police efforts in prevention and detection are key, as is the tightening of laws that allow for the deportation of those denied asylum or who commit crimes, or of entry requirements in the case of migration.

The problem is common to Europe as a whole, but it manifests itself in different ways depending on the specific circumstances of each European country: its Muslim community, its policies on receiving illegal immigrants, how it integrates them, the level of police effort, and a long list of other factors.

It is not enough to coordinate efforts, cooperate internationally, and tighten laws; this phenomenon requires tailored efforts in each country, with strict monitoring of its hotspots—if any exist—constant surveillance of both the surface and deep web, updating of suspect lists, deportation and monitoring of immigrants whose applications have been denied, monitoring of mosques, places of worship, and their sermons through informants, and more comprehensive and stringent immigration laws.

We can state that there is a certain common pattern among jihadists and jihadist attacks carried out on European soil over the past decade, as the main characteristics of the attackers—young, male, of Muslim background—and of the attacks—carried out using simple, inexpensive means, and primarily targeting the civilian population—are consistent. However, there are notable differences among the countries analyzed, which can likely be extrapolated to other European countries not included in the study. Furthermore, we must not forget that the data analyzed comes from open sources and is therefore incomplete; moreover, it considers only attacks that were successfully carried out, which represent a minority compared to all attempted attacks.

All of this highlights the importance of increasing efforts in detection, prevention, surveillance, and control—not only within networks but also in schools, mosques, immigrant registries, prisons, and shelters or detention centers for minors or adults—always tailored to the specific reality of each individual country.

Cristina Romero Alonso

Master's Degree in Strategic Thinking and Global Security

Annex I.

Jihadist attacks carried out in France between 2015 and 2025.

2015										
Date	Location	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone W.	Target	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
7/1	Paris	Brothers: Kouachi	32, 34	Born in France, of Algerian parents	No	Charlie Hebdo + Police	Al Qaeda in Yemen	Attack on the Charlie Hebdo newsroom and a French police officer	12	Paiva 2024
8/1	Paris	A. Coulibaly,	23	French, born in Mali	No	Police + Civilians	Disciple of the Algerian terrorist Djamel Beghal	Murder of a police officer and serious injury to a civilian	1	Paiva 2024
9/1	Paris	A. Coulibaly	23	French, born in Mali	No	Civilians	Disciple of the Algerian terrorist Djamel Beghal	Attack on a Jewish store, hostages, and ultimately killed	5	Paiva 2024
3/2	Nice	M. Coulibaly	30	Malian	Yes	Jewish community + Military	-	Knife attack on 3 soldiers in front of a Jewish center	0	ABC 2015
19/4	Paris	Sid Ahmed Ghiam	24	Algerian	Yes	Civilians	Propaganda on the internet	Murder of a woman for being a student who planned to attack a church	1	Euronews 2015
26/6	Isère	Yassin Sahli	35	French	Yes	Civilians	Salafist sympathizer. He carried an ISIS flag.	Man beheaded, and 2 injured in an American factory	1	RTVE 2015
21/8	Train	Ayoub El Khazzani	26	Moroccan	No	Civilians	Propaganda on an Islamic terrorist	Attack with a rifle on a Thalys high-speed train Amsterdam-Paris	0	Euronews 2020
13/11	Paris	10 terrorists 20 accomplices	20–31	5 French, one Syrian, 3 Belgians and one unknown.	No	Civilians	Multiple. Some had traveled to Syria.	7 attacks: streets, Bataclan theater, stadium. 131 killed. Islamic State claimed responsibility.	131	Yurany 2022

2016										
Date	Location	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone W.	Target	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
1/1	Valence	Man	-	French of Tunisian origin	Yes	Military	Jihadist propaganda on the Internet	Run over a group of soldiers who were protecting a mosque.	0	Costa 2017
7/1	Paris	Tarek Belkacem	24	Tunisian. Asylum seeker	Yes	Police	-	Attack on a police station: knife and fake suicide belt. ISIS flag carried.	0	Swissinfo 2016
11/1	Marseille	Yusuf K	15	Turkish, of Kurdish origin	Yes	Teacher / Jewish community	-	Stabbed a teacher in the neck at a Jewish school in "defense of Syria".	0	Costa 2017
27/5	St. Julien du Puy	Two Syrian sympathizers	-	-	-	Military	-	Stabbed a French soldier for attacks by the French in Syria.	1	Costa 2017
14/6	Magnanville	Larossi Abballa	25	French	No	Police	Radicalized on the Internet.	Murder of a police officer's partner with a knife.	2	Costa 2017 RTVE 2015
14/7	Nice	Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	31	French of Tunisian origin	Yes	Civilians	Radicalized on the Internet.	Drove a truck into a crowd of people.	85	Costa 2017
26/7	Normandy	Adel Kermiche and another	19	French	No	Christian community	Radicalized on the Internet after the Charlie Hebdo attack.	Attacked a priest during mass. Took 5 hostages.	1	Costa 2017
19/8	Strasbourg	-	+30	-	Yes	Jewish community	-	Stabbing of a rabbi at the "Allahu Akbar" shout.	0	Costa 2017
4/9	Osny	Bilal Taghi	24	French	Yes	Prison guards	Radicalized on the Internet and in prison	Attempted murder of 2 prison guards	0	Costa 2017
4/9	Paris	2 women jihadists	-	-	-	Civilians	For love	Attempted frustrated terrorist attack with a car and a bomb in front of Notre-Dame	0	Costa 2017

2017										
Date	Location	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone W.	Target	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
3/2	Paris	Abdullah Reda al-Hamamy	28	Egyptian	Yes	Military	-	Man attacked soldiers at the Louvre with a machete	0	Costa 2017
18/3	Paris	Ziyed Ben Belgacem	39	French	Yes	Military	In prison	Seized a soldier's weapon at Orly	0	Bassets 2017
20/4	Paris	Karim Cheurfi	39	French	Yes	Civilians + Police	Radicalized online	Shooting on the Champs-Élysées	1	BBC 2017
6/6	Paris	Farid L.	40	Algerian	Yes	Police	Radicalized online	Attack with a hammer on a police officer at Notre Dame	0	GTD n.d.
19/6	Paris	-	31	French	Yes	Police / Military	Radicalized online	Vehicle rammed into a police van on Champs-Élysées	0	Swissinfo 2017
9/8	Paris	Hamou B	38	Algerian	Yes	Military	-	Car bomb that injured six soldiers	0	Costa 2017
15/9	Paris	-	39	French	Yes	Military	-	Knife attack in a metro station	0	Swissinfo 2017
1/10	Marseille	-	20–30	Illegal Tunisian immigrant	Yes	Civilians	Radicalized online	Two women stabbed at Marseille station	2	BBC 2017

2018										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
11/1	Vendin-le-Vieil	Christian Ganczarski	52	German	Yes	Prison guard	Radicalized in 1986 outside France	Attack on two prison guards. Car theft with murder, shootout against agents and wounding in a supermarket.	0	La-Razón 2025
23/3	Aude	Redouane Lakdim	26	French of Moroccan origin	Yes	Police officers and civilians	Radicalized in prison and on the Internet	Car theft with murder, shootout against agents and wounding in a supermarket.	4	Quinónero 2018
12/5	Paris	Khamzat Azimov	20	French, born in Chechnya	Yes	Police officers and civilians	Radicalized on the Internet	Attack with a knife on pedestrians and a subsequent attack on police officers	1	Allen 2018
11/12	Strasbourg	Chérif Chekatt	29	French of Algerian origin	No	Civilians	Radicalized in prison	Stabbed people in the street, killing 5 in a Christmas market	5	Ayuso 2018
2019										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
24/5	Lyon	Mohamed Hichem M.	24	Algerian	Yes	Civilians	Radicalized on the Internet	Bomb attack near a bakery.	0	Demontfaucou 2025
3/10	Paris	Mickaël Harpon	45	Martiniquais	Yes	Police	Converted to Islam in 2008. Radicalized on the Internet (El Iraki and Levant)	Attack at police station with a kitchen knife for personal reasons related to work.	4	Ayuso 2019
2020										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
3/1	Villejuif	Nathan C	22	-	Yes	Civilians	Converted in 2017. Radicalized on the Internet	Stabbing of passersby with a white weapon.	1	Juez 2020
5/1	Metz	-	30	-	Yes	Police	-	Attempted attack on police at the cry of "Allahu Akbar".	0	Juez 2020 a
4/4	Isère	-	33	Sudanese, asylum applicant	Yes	Civilians	-	Knife attack in a shirt factory.	2	France24 2020
27/4	Colombes	Youssef Tilhah	29	-	Yes	Police	-	Car ramming against 2 motorcyclists.	0	Le Monde 2024
25/9	Paris	1 attacker and 5 accomplices	18	Pakistani	No	Charlie Hebdo	-	Attack with a machete.	0	RTVE 2025
16/10	Paris	Abdullakh Anzorov	18	Chechen, Russian refugee	Yes	Teacher (Samuel Paty)	Radicalized through contact in Syria	Beheading for showing caricatures of Mahoma in class	1	Flores 2020
29/10	Nice	Brahim Aouissaoui	21	Tunisian	Yes	Christian community	Consumption of jihadist propaganda	Knife attack on several people in Notre-Dame Basilica	3	NTN24 2020
2021										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
23/4	Rambouillet	Jamel Gorchene	36	Tunisian	Yes	Police	Online propaganda	Murder of a police officer with a knife.	1	Juez 2021
2022										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
2/3	Arles	-	-	-	-	Prisoner	-	Strangulation of a prisoner for making fun of Allah	1	Tadeo 2023
22/11	Annecy	-	22	-	-	Police	-	Attack on police at the cry of "Allahu Akbar"	0	Tadeo 2023
2023										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
13/10	Pas de Calais	Mohammed Mogouchkov	20	Chechen	Yes	Teacher	In a family environment	Killed a teacher and wounded others.	1	Tadeo 2023
2/12	Paris	Armand R	25	French of Iranian parents	Yes	Civilians	Radicalized on the Internet	Attack near the Eiffel Tower	0	Villacèija 2023
2024										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
24/8	La Grande Motte	-	33	Algerian	No	Jewish community	-	Attack on a synagogue with fire.	0	France24 2024
14/12	Wormhout	-	22	-	-	Migrants	-	Attack with a handgun on other migrants.	5	Martincz 2024
2025										
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
21/2	Mulhouse	-	37	Algerian	Yes.	Police	Yes. Listed in the FSPRT. Had a deportation order.	Attack with a knife. Subsequent religious rite in Arabic.	1	France24 2025

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Annex II.

Jihadist attacks carried out in Germany between 2015 and 2025.

2015											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective (Political)	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
17/10	Berlin	Rafik Mohamad	41	Iraqi	-	Yes	Political (Government)	-	Knife attack	0	Mezzofiore 2015; Reuters 2017
2016											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
5/2	Hanover	Sale S.	18	German, 2nd–3rd generation	No	Yes	Civilians	-	2 Molotov cocktails in shopping center	0	AP News 2017
26/2	Hanover	Safia S. (sister)	16	German, 2nd–3rd generation	No	Yes	Police	Mosque	Knife attack	0	US Gov 2016
16/4	Essen	Yussuf T. & Mohammed	16 both	German, 2nd–3rd generation	No	No	Hindu	Internet (2015)	Bomb at Hindu temple	0	US Gov 2016; DW 2017
18/7	Würzburg	Riaz Khan Ahmadzai	17	Afghan	Yes, since 2015 (refugee)	Yes	Civilians	Internet, ISIS	Axe attack on train	0	US Gov 2016; Roberts 2016
24/7	Ansbach	Mohammed Daleel	27	Syrian	Yes, denied	Yes	Civilians	Internet, ISIS	Bomb	0	US Gov 2016; Pleitgen 2016
19/12	Berlin	Anis Amri	24	Tunisian	Yes, denied	Yes	Civilians	Internet, ISIS	Vehicle attack at Christmas market	12	US Gov 2016; Eurojust 2016
2017											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
28/7	Hamburg	Ahmad Alhaw	26	Palestinian	Yes	Yes	Christian civilians	Internet, ISIS	Knife attack	1	BBC 2018; US Gov 2017
2020											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
18/8	Berlin	-	30	Iraqi	Yes	Yes	Civilians	Internet, ISIS	Vehicle attack	0	Guy 2020
4/10	Dresden	Abdullah Al-H	20	Syrian	Yes, since 2015	Yes	Civilians, homosexuals	Internet, ISIS + prior	Knife attack before emigrating	1	DW 2020
2021											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
25/6	Würzburg	-	24	Somali	Yes, since 2015	Yes	Civilians	-	Knife attack. Shouted twice: Allah is great.	3	Loza 2021; DW 2021
4/10	Neumarkt	-	27	Syrian	Yes, since 2014	Yes	Civilians, homosexuals	-	Knife attack on a train.	0	Sueddeutsche 2021; US Gov 2022
2023											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
April	Duisburg	Maan D.	27	Syrian	Yes.	Yes	Christian civilians	Internet, ISIS.	Knife attack in a gym.	1	Surgit 2023; US Gov 2024
2024											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
31/5	Mannheim	Sulaiman Ataee	25	Afghan	Yes.	Yes	Political	-	Knife attack in political event.	1	Escritt 2024; Spiegel 2024
23/8	Solingen	Issa al H.	26	Syrian	Yes	Yes	Civilians	Internet, ISIS.	Knife attack	3	NPR 2024; Niemann 2024
5/9	München	Emrah I.	18	Austrian	No	Yes	Political	Internet.	Attack with firearm.	1	Flade 2024; Guder 2024
2025											
Date	Place	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Asylum Status	Lone Wolf	Objective	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
13/2	München	Farhad Noori	24	Afghan	Yes, since 2016	Yes	Civilians	Internet	Vehicle in a demonstration.	2	France24 2025
21/2	Berlin	Wassim al M	19	Syrian	Yes	Yes	Jews	-	Knife attack	0	Ansa 2025

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Annex III.

Jihadist attacks carried out in Spain between 2015 and 2025.

2017										
Date	Location	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Target	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
17/8	Barcelona	Younes Abouyaaqoub	22	Spanish of Moroccan origin	No, part of a cell	Civilians	Imam of Ripoll	Vehicle, rollover, pedestrians	15	Reinares 2018 Rodríguez 2017
18/8	Cambrils	M. Oukabir	18	Spanish of Moroccan origin	No, part of the same cell	Civilians	Imam of Ripoll	Vehicle, rollover, pedestrians + knife attack	1	Reinares 2018
		Said Aallaa	19							
		Mohamed H.	24							
		Houssaine A. Omar Hycham	21							
2023										
Date	Location	Attacker	Age	Nationality	Lone Wolf	Target	Radicalization	Facts	Deaths	Source
25/1	Algeciras	Yassin Kanza	25	Moroccan	Yes	Civilians, Christians	Self-doctrinated on social media.	Machete, entered churches and stabbed a priest	1	Peñalosa 2023 Peñalosa 2023 a

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