CNA

Domestic Terrorism Offender-Level Database (DTOLD): Data Sheet

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Dataset name	Domestic Terrorism Offender Level Database (DTOLD)
Focus	Domestic terrorism and domestic violent extremism
Key definitions	**Domestic violent extremist:** an individual based and operating primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States who seeks to further their ideological goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence (Congress, 2019). **Domestic terrorism:** violent criminal acts committed by individuals or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature (FBI, n.d.).
Level of analysis	DTOLD is an offender-level database that includes psychosocial, trauma-related, and life history variables.
Benefits	DTOLD is an offender-level database that prioritizes psychosocial, trauma-related, and life history variables. It is also designed to facilitate analysis alongside the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS), and the Violence Prevention Project Research Center's (VPPRC's) Mass Shooter Database (MSD). GTD and MSD ID numbers are included in DTOLD when appropriate, and we worked with the principal investigators for PIRUS and VPPRC's MSD to facilitate analysis using both datasets.
Number of cases	319
Geography	United States of America
Date range	January 1, 2001, to December 31, 2020

Inclusion criteria	1. Attack is in the GTD.
	2. Attack occurred in the United States.
	3. Attack occurred between January 1, 2001, and December 31, 2020.
	4. Perpetrator was 18 or older at the time of the attack.
	5. If charges were filed, the case did not result in acquittal or mistrial, nor were the charges dismissed.
	6. Attack meets the FBI definitions of *domestic violent extremism* and *terrorism*.
Codebook	Yes
Host	CNA, Institute for Public Research
Data sources	The dataset was populated using only publicly available information from newspaper reporting, court records, and primary source content (including archived social media posts, manifestos, journals, and videos).
Limitations	We relied on readily available secondary sources, especially media reporting and court cases, to populate the dataset. Research shows that when covering terrorism, the quantity and depth of some media coverage varies depending on a range of variables, including the number of casualties (Chermak et al., 2018; Drakos & Gofas, 2006; Ghazi-Tehrani & Kearns, 2020; Mahoney, 2018), the identity of the perpetrator (Betus et al., 2019; Betus et al., 2021; Card et al., 2022; Dolliver & Kearns, 2022), and the type of weapon (Mitnik et al., 2020).
	Similarly, although court documents may seem like an impartial data source, they are better characterized as a doubly partial data source: defense attorneys are motivated to cast the alleged perpetrator as a sympathetic figure (e.g., highlighting mental health issues), and prosecuting attorneys are motivated to cast the alleged perpetrator as a malevolent actor (e.g., minimizing mental health issues). Furthermore, key documents (e.g., indictments, criminal complaints, sentencing memoranda) are not always available, and state-level court records are not always accessible (e.g., some state court records can only be accessed in person at self-service kiosks in the state).
	Given these limitations, we note that DTOLD data cannot be used for predictive modeling.

Relevant publications	McBride, M., Strayer, M., Hagy, L., Haney, K., Jenkins, M., Plapinger, S., Xu, A., & Stern, J. *Introducing the domestic terrorism offender-level database (DTOLD): Psychosocial and life history data on US domestic terrorists, 2001–2020*. Under review.
	McBride, M., & Jenkins, M. (2024). *Domestic terrorists' contact with system stakeholders before attacks*. CNA. https://www.cna.org/reports/2024/08/domestic-terrorists-contact-with-system-stakeholders-before-attacks
	McBride, M., Haney, K., Strayer, M., & Stern, J. (2024). *Suicidality among domestic terrorists*. CNA. https://www.cna.org/reports/2024/05/suicidality-among-domestic-terrorists
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File type	Stata database, .xlsx (Excel file)
Suggested Citation	CNA. (2025). Domestic terrorism offender-level database, 2001-2020 [data file].

References

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Mahoney, C. W. (2018). More data, new problems: audiences, ahistoricity, and selection bias in terrorism and insurgency research. *International Studies Review*, *20*(4), 589–614. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48557411

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The research team can be contacted at dtold@cna.org with questions about accessing or using DTOLD data.