



P S T

What characterises right-wing extremist minors in Norway?



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Summary

Key characteristics of right-wing extremist minors of concern to PST:

- boys aged 12-17 years (the majority between 15-16 years old)
- many are vulnerable due to mental health issues and social exclusion, previous criminal record and have been in contact with the child welfare services
- a nationwide distribution
- weak ideological conviction
- most right-wing extremist activity is conducted online
- no to little physical links to right-wing extremist groups or individual actors

Personal vulnerabilities seem to have played a more important role in the radicalisation of minors than ideology. The primary motivations appear to be a search for belonging and the desire for status or recognition.

Several of the minors exhibit a fascination with violence. Exposure to narratives that glorify violence alongside right-wing extremist rhetoric can accelerate radicalisation and lower the threshold for violent action.

To prevent minors from becoming radicalised into right-wing extremism, it is essential that relevant actors in society have a good understanding of the phenomenon, as they play a crucial role in the preventive work. PST is dependent on information from the public, law enforcement, and other stakeholders concerning individuals who may pose a threat.

Early prevention is essential to mitigate the threat posed by radicalised minors. Tailored measures aimed at each individual's vulnerabilities will also be required.

Introduction

In recent years, PST has observed a growing number of minors¹ in Norway being radicalised into right-wing extremism. At present, we experience a significantly increased involvement of persons in this age group in both averted and executed right-wing extremist attacks in Western societies.

To mitigate this negative development, a deeper understanding of the characteristics of this group is required. Accordingly, PST has made an analysis of close to 100 minors based in Norway in the period from 01.01.2023 until 01.05.2025. Through a systematic gathering of information from PST and police databases, we have examined the characteristics of these individuals. This aim of this analysis is to make PST and other societal actors better equipped to prevent radicalisation among minors.

The number of unrecorded cases and misinterpretations of the findings will always pose a challenge. To the extent possible, we have considered these issues throughout the assessment process.

In the first part of this report, we describe how the minors became known to PST. Furthermore, we describe the minors' characteristics and finally, we present our assessments of the findings.

How did PST identify the minors?

Our analysis of the original source of PST's intelligence, which gave rise to concern about the minors in this selection, reveals three principal information streams: 40% came from PST and other intelligence and security services, 40% from other societal actors such as schools, health services and police, and 20% of the data was tip-offs from the public.

This shows the importance of cooperating with other relevant actors, and that the public has a low threshold for reporting concerns.

Furthermore, the data highlight the necessity of disseminating comprehensive knowledge of terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation. Improved understanding of the phenomenon enables relevant stakeholders to recognise early indicators of radicalisation and to identify individuals who may be vulnerable.

The initial concern

We also examined the initial concern regarding the registration of minors in PST's databases.

The majority of individuals in this selection were registered due to right-wing extremist statements, made on digital platforms or in the physical sphere. Additionally, many were registered for being members of right-wing extremist groups online. Several were registered because of threats of violence or terrorism, or because they expressed an intention to commit violent or terrorist acts.

¹ Minors are here defined as persons under the age of 18.

What characterises minors becoming radicalised into right-wing extremism?

Considerable majority of boys, most of them between 15 and 16 years old

The selection shows an overwhelming majority of boys (97%).

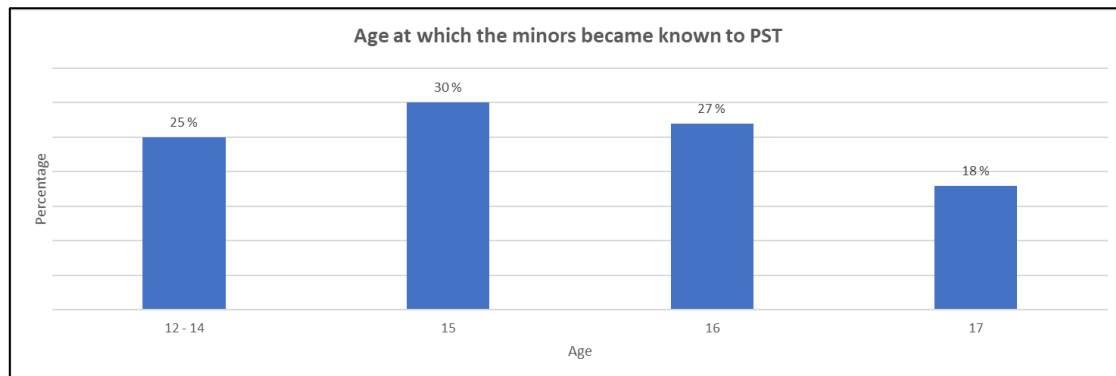


Figure 1: Age distribution in the selection

Figure 1 shows the distribution of age in the selection. On the short side of 60% of the minors were between 15 and 16 years old when they became known to PST. In the selection, 25% were under the age of 15, whereas the youngest were 12 years old when they became known to PST.

A nationwide distribution

The data reveal a nationwide distribution of minors across more than 65 counties, indicating that they reside in all regions of the country.

This widespread presence demonstrates that the radicalisation of minors into right-wing extremism constitutes a national challenge, occurring irrespective of geographic location.

Ideological conviction among minors

To evaluate the level of ideological conviction of the persons included in the selection, we divided them into three categories: «weak», «moderate» and «strong».²

The majority (83%) was assessed to have a «weak» ideological conviction. They displayed a superficial understanding of right-wing extremist ideology. Their primary interests concentrated on World War II, Nazism, and right-wing extremist terrorists. Many expressed a fascination with violence – particularly school shootings - rather than genuine ideological commitment. Their engagement with extremist concepts was fragmented, selectively adopting elements that matched their personal interests.

Moreover, 16% were assessed to have a «moderate» ideological conviction, whereas 1% was assessed to have a «strong» ideological belief. Both groups primarily referred to right-wing extremist conspiracy theories. They also had a deeper knowledge of key right-wing extremist ideologists and terrorists. Their perception of the enemy aligned more closely with right-wing

² The distribution is based on three criteria: (1) level of ideological conviction, (2) level of participation in digital and/or physical right-wing extremist groups, and (3) how long the minor has been involved in right-wing extremist activity.

extremist narratives, and their fascination with violence was more pronounced than for those with a weaker ideological conviction.

Digital platforms are a key domain for minors’ right-wing extremist activity

We identified the platforms used by the minors included in the selection to carry out their right-wing extremist activity.

Most of them, around 75%, carried out their extremist activities on digital platforms. A significant proportion had been members of online right-wing extremist groups. Many were members of multiple digital right-wing extremist groups simultaneously – ranging from a handful to several hundred distinct groups.

Open platforms	• Facebook • Instagram • Snapchat • TikTok • <u>Vkontakte</u>
Encrypted platforms	• Discord • Signal • Telegram • WhatsApp
Gaming platforms	• Roblox
Other	• <u>ChatGPT</u> • Dark Web • Web pages

Figure 2: Overview of digital platforms used by the minors for RWE-activity. Telegram and TikTok are the most prominent platforms.

These right-wing extremist digital groups exhibited considerable diversity and included both Norwegian and transnational groups with a varying approach to violence. Some groups explicitly endorsed violent actions, while others glorified severe violence by circulating photographs, videos and facilitating discussions of such content.

The platforms most frequently used by the minors were Telegram and TikTok. Our investigations also identified the relevance of other platforms, notably the gaming platform Roblox (see Figure 2).

A minority of the minors confined their right-wing extremist activity to the physical domain, expressed through Nazi salutations, the drawing of right-wing extremist symbols or racist and Nazi statements - often made at school. These youths, however, participated only marginally in established physical right-wing extremist groups.

Approximately one quarter of the selected minors had, to a varying degree, physical contact in Norway with other individuals involved in right-wing extremism. These contacts were primarily with peers of the same age from their local environment.

Multiple vulnerabilities

Vulnerability³ influences the radicalisation process.⁴ To assess the prevalence and types of vulnerability among the sample, we identified 17 categories that are likely to affect minors' childhood experiences. These categories encompass both socio-economic and psychological factors.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of these vulnerability types and the number of cases in each category. The seriousness of each vulnerability varies across categories.

Divorced parents	62 %
Previous criminal record	46 %
Mental illness or suspected mental illness	45 %
One or both parents have a criminal record	40 %
Fully or partially absent parents	40 %
Social isolation	39 %
Child welfare services involved	35 %
Impaired school functioning	34 %
No leisure activities	24 %
Victim in a criminal case	22 %
Exposed to violence or neglect	21 %
Parents negative to cooperate with police/PST	20 %
Exposed to bullying or was bullying others	19 %
Parents with mental health issues	19 %
Drug use among parents	16 %
Living in an institution or with a foster family	15 %
Parents with RWE sympathies	9 %

Figure 3: Overview of the 17 categories of «vulnerability» in percentage

While vulnerability is not a direct cause of radicalisation, it can facilitate the process. Consequently, we examined the extent of vulnerabilities present in the individuals included in the sample.

To deepen our understanding of the minors' backgrounds and childhood experiences, we quantified each individual's number of vulnerabilities. The results are displayed in figure 4 underneath.

³ By "vulnerability" we refer to personal, social, or situational circumstances that increase an individual's susceptibility to extremist influence and may accelerate the radicalisation process.

⁴ According to the Norwegian Directorate of Health, a high number of stressors at a young age is clearly linked to adverse health outcomes and a reduced quality of life later in adulthood. Available at <https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/rapporter/folkehelse-i-et-livsloppsperspektiv-helsedirektoratets-innspill-til-ny-folkehelsemelding>

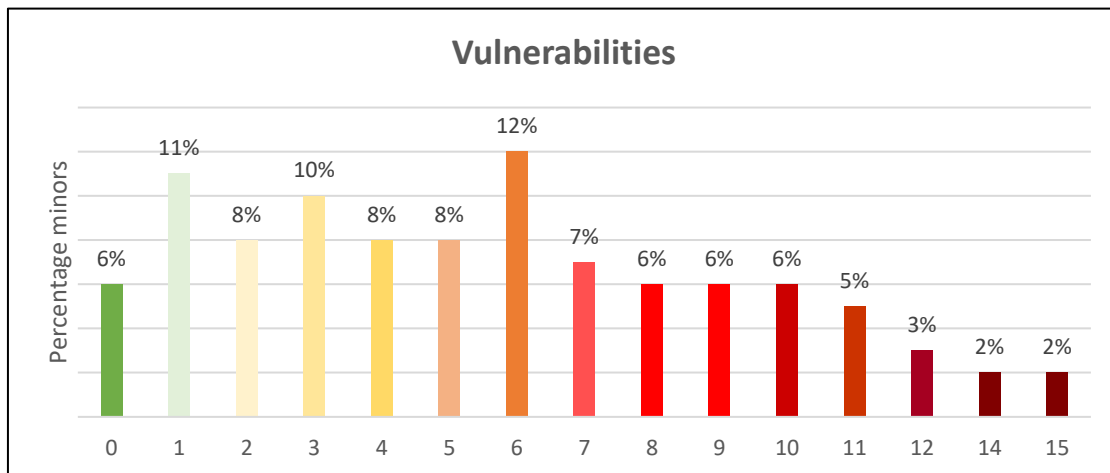


Figure 4: Number of vulnerabilities per minor

The sample exhibits considerable heterogeneity, yet half of the minors possess six or more vulnerabilities. Our analysis indicates that 77% of those with six or more vulnerabilities also display a «weak» ideological conviction. The co-occurrence of multiple vulnerabilities can increase susceptibility to extremist messaging.

Overall, the majority of the minors included in the selection presented multiple vulnerabilities that adversely affected their life circumstances, thereby heightening their exposure to radicalisation. Right-wing extremist activity is frequently driven more by a quest for belonging, fellowship and meaning, than by firm ideological commitment.

General socio-economic vulnerabilities

The following summarizes the most prevalent vulnerabilities identified in our sample:

Social isolation:⁵ 37% of the minors were either fully or partly socially isolated. Among those under the age of 15, this proportion rises to 75%.

Impaired school functioning:⁶ Approximately one-third of the minors reported difficulties in school performance.

Data are missing for roughly 25% of the group.

More than half of those classified with a «moderate» or «strong» ideological conviction exhibited impaired school functioning, compared with only 28% of individuals holding a «weak» ideological conviction. These findings highlight a strong association between ideological intensity and reduced school performance, as well as a marked prevalence of social isolation among younger minors.

Crime:⁷ We examined three key factors related to criminal behavior:

⁵ By «social isolation» we understand that the minor has few (one or two) or no friends.

⁶ By «decreased ability to function at school» we understand that the individual attends a special school, receives special education or has been reported by the school for behavioral problems.

⁷ Relevant offences include: violence, drug-related crimes, threats, sexual offences, adverse family circumstances, and driving under the influence.

- *Crime committed by the subject:* 46% of the minors are registered with a criminal record in the police register. While the specific offences vary, the majority are categorized as violence, threats and destruction of property (criminal damage).
- *Aggrieved in a criminal case:* About 25% of the minors have been victims of offences reported to the police. The majority of these cases involve sexual abuse or violent conduct.
- *Parents with a criminal record:*⁸ Approximately 40% of the parents were registered with a criminal record, which is presumed to adversely affect the minors' wellbeing. Relevant offences included violence, drug-related crimes, threats, sexual offences, adverse family circumstances, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Both mothers and fathers were represented in these statistics, but the majority of them were the fathers.

Involvement of the child welfare service: The child welfare service was involved in more than one-third of the minors' families in this sample. In several of these families, the child welfare service had been engaged from the child's early years, typically because the parents' capacity to provide care was limited or the child exhibits behavioral challenges. In other cases, child welfare involvement had occurred solely in connection with concerns about right-wing extremism.

According to national statistics, approximately 0,1% of all minors in Norway were residing in child welfare institutions at the end of 2024. Fewer than 1% of children under the age of 18 lived in foster homes.⁹ By contrast, 15% of the minors examined in this study were under the care of the child welfare service, either placed in an institution or in a foster family.

Mental disorder

Occurrence

Mental disorder constitutes a vulnerability factor for both general crime and radicalisation, making it a relevant factor to examine in this context.¹⁰

To assess the mental health status of the minors in the sample, we examined records from PST's databases and police files. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of documented mental disorders within our sample.¹¹

⁸ For this category, we selected cases based on the type of crime most likely to affect the child's welfare and childhood experience. The assessment also considered the number of cases and the elapsed time since the crime occurred.

⁹ Available at www.bufdir.no/statistikk-og-analyse/barnevern/barn-i-fosterhjem

¹⁰ PST is not authorised to process personal information solely on the basis of a mental disorder. PST may process personal data only when there is a substantiated concern regarding radicalisation, the planning of terrorism, support for terrorist acts, or any other matter that falls within PST's statutory mandate. In such cases, a psychological disorder can be considered merely as additional information.

¹¹ Only information that is reliably sourced from public health reports or guardians and explicitly confirms a mental disorder is classified as «mental disorder». Reports or statements from public authorities or guardians that merely raise suspicion of a disorder are recorded under «suspected mental disorder». The «unknown» category is used when PST has no data on an individual's mental health, or where any mental health statements are absent from a professional context.

The majority of individuals with various mental or developmental disorders do not pose a danger to others. While mental disorder is not a direct risk factor for radicalisation, it may, over time, exert an indirect impact, amplifying effect on an individual's overall vulnerability.

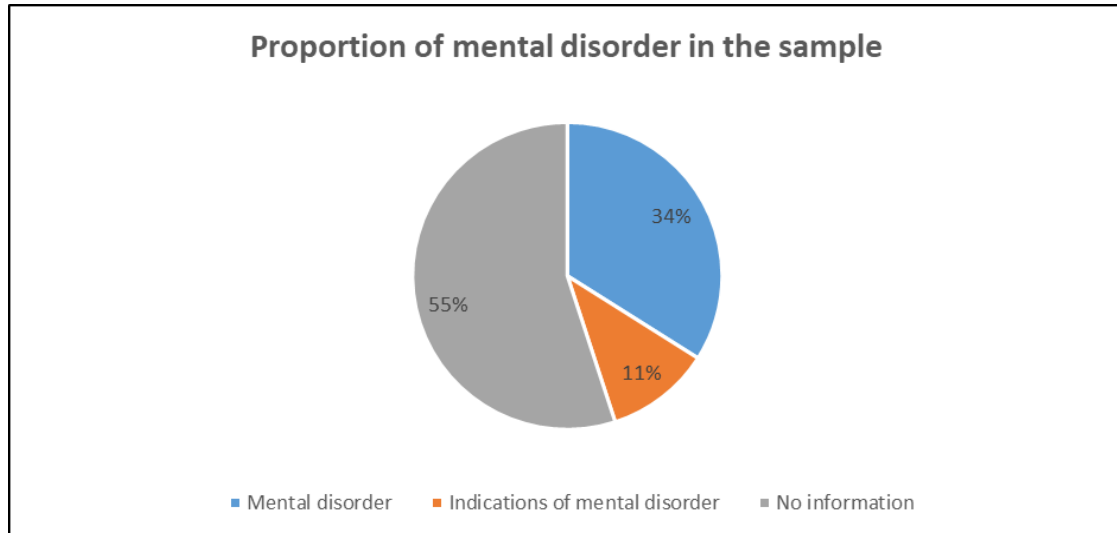


Figure 5: Distribution of information about psychological disorder in the sample.

We made the following findings:

- 34% - diagnosed with a mental disorder.
- 11% - indications of mental disorder.
- 55% - PST has no reported information concerning their mental health.¹²

International studies estimate that approximately 16% of minors aged 5-18 suffer from a mental disorder.¹³ Consequently, the prevalence observed in our sample is markedly higher than that of the general population.¹⁴

Research on the prevalence of mental disorders within extremist contexts is limited. Nevertheless, the literature indicates that “lone actors” are more likely to exhibit a psychological disorder than individuals operating within groups.¹⁵

Categories of mental disorders

Mental disorders represent a potential vulnerability factor for radicalisation into extremism. Because these disorders manifest in diverse ways, it is important to identify which specific conditions are present in the sample. Such identification can inform the development of tailored intervention that address the unique needs of each individual.

¹² This could indicate either that the individual does not suffer from any psychological disorder, or that such a condition exists, but has not been recorded in the databases of the police or PST.

¹³ Bang, L., Surén P, Støle HS, Odsbu I, Handla M, Furu K, Hartz I et al. Psykiske plager og lidelser hos barn og unge. Available at: www.fhi.no/he/fr/folkhelserapporten/psykisk-helse/psykisk-helse-hos-barn-og-unge

¹⁴ There are no new studies of the prevalence of mental disorders in Norwegian minors aged 12-18 years.

¹⁵ Gill, P., Clemmow, C., Hetzel, F., Rottweiler, B., Salman, N., Van Der Vegt, I., Marchment, Z, Schumann, S., Zolghadriha, S., Schulten, N., Taylor, H., og Corner, E. (2021). Systematic Review of Mental Health Problems and Violent Extremism, *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 32(1), 51-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2020.1820067>

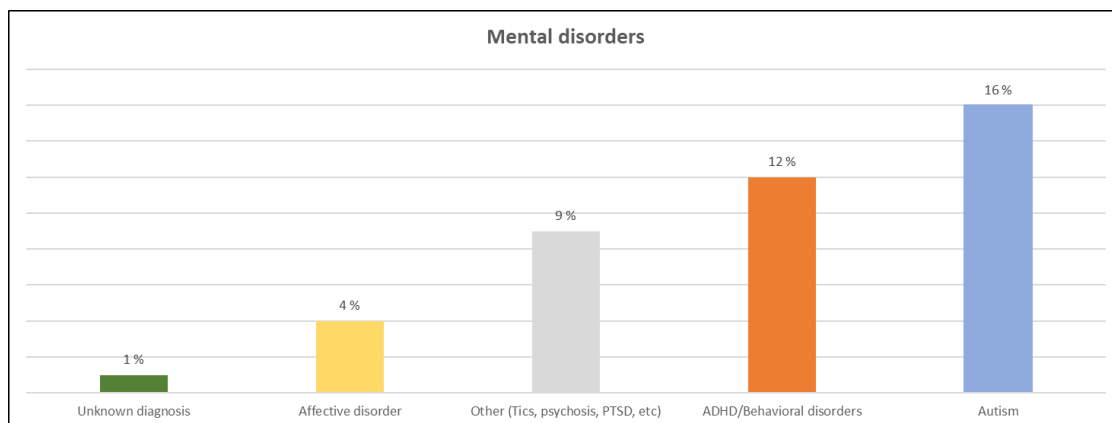


Figure 6: Categories of mental disorders

Autism Spectrum Disorder: 16% of the minors included in the selection had some sort of autism spectrum disorder. About 1% of the general population¹⁶ has this kind of disorder.

ADHD/Behavioral Disorder: 12% of the minors in the selection had some kind of ADHD/behavioral disorder. The occurrence of this type of disorder in the general population is around 5%.¹⁷

These results indicate that the minors in the selection exhibit a markedly higher rate of psychological disorders than is observed in the general population.

Affective Disorder: 4% of the minors in the selection were diagnosed with an affective disorder. This category is a composite construct, which limits direct comparison with prevalence rates reported in other studies.

Other disorders: 9% of the sample were classified under «other disorders». This category encompasses a heterogeneous group of conditions that occurred infrequently in the sample, such as specific learning disabilities, trauma-related disorders and tic disorders. Because of the small numbers, these diagnoses were aggregated into a single collective category, which precludes direct comparison with prevalence figures from the general population.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

A neurodevelopmental condition encompassing a range of disorders that affect communication, social interaction, and the processing of sensory information.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent difficulties with attention regulation, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

Behavioral disorders

A disorder marked by a chronic pattern of oppositional, norm-deviating, or aggressive behavior.

Affective Disorders

A category of mental-health conditions primarily affecting mood. The most prevalent affective disorders are anxiety disorders and major depression disorder.

¹⁶ Available at www.helsenorge.no/sykdom/utviklingsforstyrrelser/autisme

¹⁷ Available at <https://www.helsenorge.no/sykdom/utviklingsforstyrrelser/adhd/>

Implemented measures and development of the concern

To determine which follow-up actions have been provided to the minors, we reviewed the preventive measures implemented after PST became aware of the concern.¹⁸ We also assessed how the initial concern evolved from the first report to PST and until summer 2025.¹⁹

Implemented measures

Figure 7 illustrates the measures implemented after PST received the initial concern.

In the majority of cases, a coordinated follow-up involving the school, health services, police and/or PST was instituted for the minor.

Approximately one-third of the cases were addressed solely through preventive talks. These talks were conducted either by PST alone or by the police with PST's assistance. When only one agency conducted the follow-up, it was typically the police (radicalisation contact²⁰) or the school.

In roughly one-quarter of the cases, no further preventive measures were undertaken. Instead, investigations were carried out to assess the seriousness and credibility of the initial concern, and these inquiries did not reveal sufficient grounds for additional intervention.

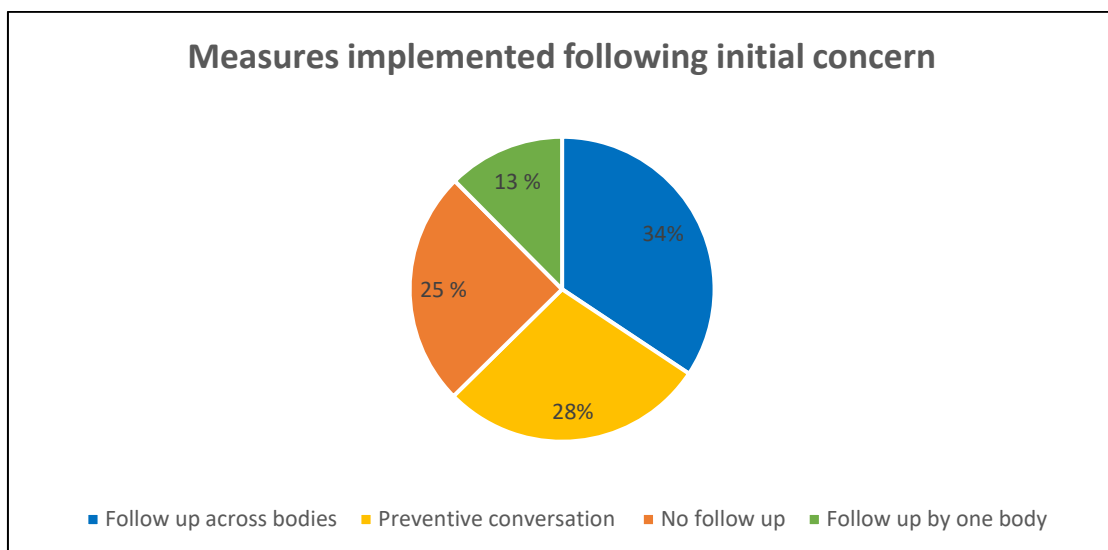


Figure 7: Overview of measures implemented after the initial concern has been reported

¹⁸ Implemented measures were divided in four sub-categories: «no follow-up», «conversation of concern», «follow-up from one body», and «interdisciplinary follow-up».

¹⁹ The progress of the initial concern was classified into three categories: «concern resolved», «concern maintained» and «aggravated concern».

²⁰ A radicalisation contact works for the Norwegian police. All the police districts in Norway have a system with a radicalisation contact. The radicalisation contact is a designated employee within the field of radicalisation and violent extremism. They receive notifications of concern relating to this topic and initiate measures with external and internal actors. For PST, the cooperation with the radicalisation contacts is of great importance in the work on preventive measures.

Development of the concern

To evaluate how the initial concern has evolved following the implementation of preventive measures, three categories were defined: «concern resolved»²¹, «concern maintained» and «aggravated concern». We examined which preventive measures have been instituted for the minors and tracked the progression of the original concern from the first report to PST and until summer 2025.

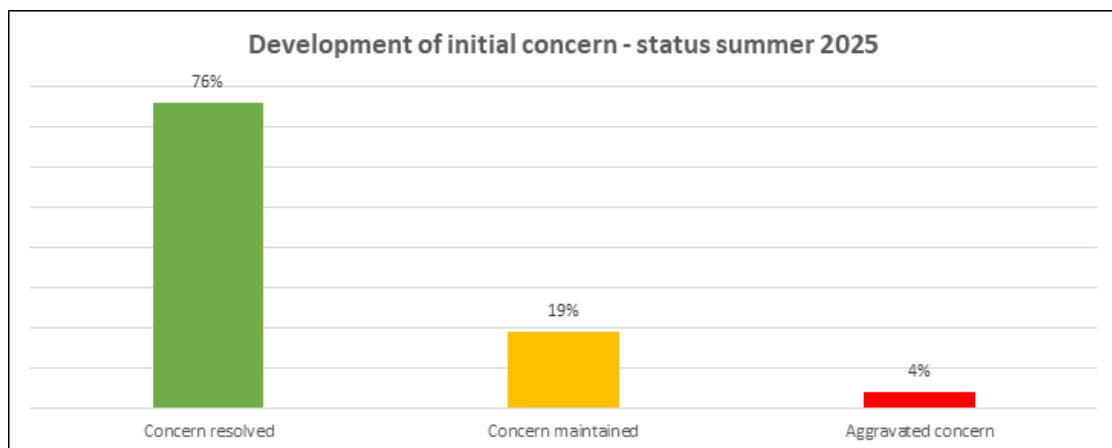


Figure 8: Development of initial concern divided on the categories «resolved», «maintained» and «aggravated».

Figure 8 illustrates PST's assessment of the level of concern for the minors included in the analysis:

- «Concern resolved»: the concern was either reduced or disproved for 76% of the minors.
- «Concern maintained»: The concern remained for 19% of the minors.
- «Aggravated concern»: For 4% of the minors, the concern was assessed to have increased after the implementation of the measures.

An aggravated concern correlates with a stronger ideological conviction and a higher number of vulnerabilities. Every individual classified under «aggravated concern» has a diagnosed condition; the majority also exhibit a «moderate» ideological conviction and have a criminal record.

²¹ By «concern resolved» we understand that the issue has been either been reduced in magnitude or entirely eliminated.

Summary of key findings

The following characteristics have been identified for the right-wing extremist minors of concern to PST:

- Male youths aged 12-17, with the majority between 15 and 16 years old.
- High prevalence of psychological disorders, criminal records, and contact with the child welfare services.
- A nationwide distribution; no regional concentration is evident.
- Weak right-wing extremist ideology.
- Activities are predominantly conducted online.
- No to little direct affiliation with established right-wing extremist groups or individual actors.

Assessments

The survey indicates that the radicalisation of minors into right-wing extremism is mainly driven by the interaction between personal vulnerabilities and ideological narratives. Vulnerabilities appear to exert a more decisive influence than ideological conviction. The majority of minors in the sample exhibit a greater number of socio-economic and psychological vulnerabilities than their peers in the general population. Because many display only a superficial commitment to the ideology, the pathway to extremism is primarily motivated by a search for belonging, affirmation and self-worth.

A notable proportion of the minors display a fascination with violence, which typically precedes any ideological adherence. We are concerned that the combination of violent glorification and right-wing extremist ideology may accelerate the radicalisation of vulnerable youths and lower the threshold for violent action. This is especially true for young people, who are exposed to highly graphic violent content on digital forums.

PST depends on information given by the public, police, and other societal stakeholders concerning individuals who may constitute a security threat. These actors also play a crucial role in the preventive work. Consequently, it is essential that they possess a phenomenological understanding of extremism, radicalisation and vulnerability, as well as how these elements interact.

We expect minors will continue to be radicalised into right-wing extremism. Nevertheless, for the majority of the minors included in the selection, the threat has been mitigated or eliminated, demonstrating the effectiveness of the preventive measures undertaken by PST, the police, and other societal actors. Early intervention remains essential to minimise the threat posed by these minors, and the measures must be tailored to address each individual's specific vulnerabilities.



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