WHAT NIJ RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT DOMESTIC TERRORISM

BY **STEVEN CHERMAK, MATTHEW DEMICHELE, JEFF GRUENEWALD, MICHAEL JENSEN, RAVEN LEWIS,** AND **BASIA E. LOPEZ**

NIJ-funded research projects have led to a better understanding of the processes that result in violent action, factors that increase the risk of radicalizing to violence, and how best to prevent and respond to violent extremism.

Militant, nationalistic, white supremacist violent extremism has increased in the United States. In fact, the number of far-right attacks continues to outpace all other types of terrorism and domestic violent extremism. Since 1990, far-right extremists have committed far more ideologically motivated homicides than far-left or radical Islamist extremists, including 227 events that took more than 520 lives.[1] In this same period, far-left extremists committed 42 ideologically motivated attacks that took 78 lives.[2] A recent threat assessment by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security concluded that domestic violent extremists are an acute threat and highlighted a probability that COVID-19 pandemic-related stressors, long-standing ideological grievances related to immigration, and narratives surrounding electoral fraud will continue to serve as a justification for violent actions.[3]

Over the past 20 years, the body of research that examines terrorism and domestic violent extremism has grown exponentially. Studies have looked at the similarities and differences between radicalization to violent domestic ideologies and radicalization to foreign extremist ideologies. Research has found that radicalization processes and outcomes — and perhaps potential prevention and intervention points — vary by group structure and crime type. In addition, research has explored promising and effective approaches for how communities can respond to radicalization and prevent future attacks.[4]