# Annex of Statistical Information

## Country Reports on Terrorism 2021

**September 30, 2022**

**Prepared for**
**U.S. Department of State**
**Bureau of Counterterrorism**

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Prepared by Development Services Group, Inc., under
Department of State Contract No. 19AQMM18F2561.

DSG Science in the Service of People

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# Methodology

## GTTAC DATA ELEMENTS

- The number of incidents
- Casualties, including fatalities, wounded, and hostages
- Geolocation (country and state/province) of the incident
- Perpetrators and categories by incident
- The tactics (e.g., assassination, suicide, armed assault, bombing/ explosion, hijacking)
- Intended and actual victim type (e.g., business, government, police, military)

## About the 2021 Annex of Statistical Information

Title 22, Section 2656f, of the United States Code, requires the U.S. Department of State to present in its annual report on terrorism "to the extent practicable, complete statistical information on the number of individuals, including United States citizens and dual nationals, killed, wounded, or kidnapped by each terrorist group during the preceding calendar year."

Title 22 of the U.S. Code defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." From 2004 through 2011, the data for the Annex of Statistical Information were collected by the National Counterterrorism Center, part of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, through the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System.

In June 2012 the Department of State contracted with the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) to collect an Annex of Statistical Information dataset and provide a report to supplement the Department of State's annual Country Reports on Terrorism. Using its Global Terrorism Database, START produced the Annex from 2012 through 2017.

In August 2018 the Department of State awarded the contract to Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), an international research firm with headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland. DSG and its subcontractor, the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center at George Mason University (GMU). We are responsible for data collection, analysis, and the creation of a global database of terrorist incidents, the production of the Annex of Statistical Information, and the editing of the Country Reports on Terrorism.

## Defining Terrorism

For this Annex, an incident is deemed a terrorist act if it conforms with Title 22, Section 2656f, of the U.S. Code. It is therefore defined as a violent act carried out by nonstate actors that meets the following inclusion criteria:

1. The violent act aims to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal.
2. The violent act includes evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to an audience (or audiences) larger than the immediate victims.
3. The violent act occurred outside the precepts of international humanitarian law as far as it targeted non-combatants.

The Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC) includes only those incidents for which all three criteria were met. In some cases, where terrorists **initiate** an action that targets military forces rather than non-combatants, this would be considered an incident. An example would be an improvised explosive device (IED) attack on a military patrol. A coordinated counterterrorism operation in which the military initiates the attack would not be considered an incident. Additionally, all identified terrorist incidents must be reported by an independent and reliable source. For example, GTTAC does not use any reports from terrorist media sources, and it excludes any incidents for which there was considerable uncertainty or conflicting reporting.

## About GTTAC

DSG created the GTTAC database that the Annex uses to summarize global terrorism incidents. GTTAC uses comprehensive, open-source intelligence through multimedia data aggregators to identify reports of potential terrorist incidents. Data acquisition begins with using open-source technology tools developed in Python atop a Linux platform for text analysis, predictive modeling, and feature extraction. GTTAC applies ontologies for terrorist incidents, perpetrators, tactics for attack, weapon use, and the targeting of victims and facilities. Once the automated processes have established a body of data for human review and validation, the database of global terrorism incidents aggregates information based on regional and other geographic locales.

## Considerations

A rigorous approach using open-source material has its challenges; not all media outlets have the same reporting standards. There are increasing issues with disinformation and misinformation finding their way into open-source media through news outlets, and with outlets repurposing older content with modified and unconfirmed details. The sophistication of these outlets can be quite advanced, and techniques for propagating their messages are constantly evolving and adapting. These sources often thrive in information-poor regions, making the confirmation of incidents increasingly difficult. In addition to the biases that some outlets may have in reporting certain conflicts, there often are localized media blackouts. The COVID-19 pandemic seriously disrupted 2021 in many ways. While it is too early to understand its full impact on terrorism and reporting, many media outlets had limited the mobility of their journalists at a time when conflict and terrorism have remained active. We strive to ensure that the data collection process is not biased by unreliable media coverage, especially in conflict zones. Quantifying harm to victims or

identifying the perpetrator of terrorist incidents can be challenging when open-source information (particularly the number of persons killed or wounded) is imprecise.

This report mitigates these challenges by employing a well-trained, multilingual, and multicultural team of subject-matter experts, technologists, and researchers to continually monitor and enhance the methodology and thereby maintain a comprehensive, accurate, and systematic data collection process in more than 90 languages.

We have made use of technological advancements in data collection that employed different processes for identifying, coding, and counting terrorism incidents.

GTTAC has also created a Global Terrorism Experts Group, an international advisory board that reviews content and ensures objectivity by capturing local context and nuance.

As part of our effort to maintain data integrity, we have created the following scale (Table M.1) to ensure consistency in the recording of fatalities:

**Table M.1. Quantifying Imprecise Amounts**

| When Media Articulate | GTTAC Records |
|---|---|
| A couple | 2 |
| A number of, a few, several, or some | 3 |
| Many | 5 |
| Tens | 11 |
| A dozen | 12 |
| More than a dozen, dozens | 13 |

It is GTTAC's understanding that, before 2018, data on fatalities and wounded were omitted when open-source reports did not cite specific numbers; fatalities described in terms such as "a few," "huge losses," or "scores" were classified as "missing data" and were not counted. Because of this methodological difference, GTTAC's numbers may be higher than those reported in previous data.

We continue to introduce improvements to several typologies to enhance the clarity of the incidents included in this report. These improvements include

A. Dashboards for significant and emerging perpetrators.
B. Global characteristics of incidents.
C. Categories of perpetrators based on ideology, background, or other characteristics.
D. More information on racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism.

These changes provide more detailed information about each incident and do not affect data integrity. As an example, not all incidents are the same and vary from a failed IED attack to a highly lethal vehicle-borne suicide bomb. We also are tracking 465 known perpetrators and their

aliases of global terrorism, and we collect up to 126 different attributes for each incident. The newly added categories of perpetrators are in recognition that many perpetrators are not specifically named by the media sources and thus remain unknown, yet the same media may identify them as jihadist or ethnonationalist. This detail should give readers and analysts a fuller understanding of each incident.

This report conducts comparisons and looks at trends with data from 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 that were processed under the same conditions and for which direct comparisons are appropriate. As with any written report based on large and complex datasets, we have had to compress and edit the findings to make this report manageable.

## Trend Analysis and Presentation

Each year the Annex reports on the top 10 perpetrators of terrorist activity and fatalities as well as the top 10 countries with the most terrorist incidents and fatalities. For each year, we recalculate the reporting year's top 10 perpetrators and countries and look back at the trends of what has changed in these categories.

When reporting on perpetrators and countries that show large increases in activity or fatalities, we delve into a second level of geographic location, victims, facilities, and weapon types to examine these increases in greater depth. We present these data in Perpetrator and Country dashboards. Similarly, we have added a section, called the Global Characteristics of Incidents, which delves deeper into the various attributes of incidents and their impact.

## Disclaimers

**Nothing in this report should be construed as a determination that individuals associated with incidents are guilty of terrorism or any other criminal offense.**

**The data on terrorist incidents collected and stored in GTTAC are not static. Rather, the database is dynamic and will evolve as new incidents are identified and as further details about existing incidents become available. For this reason, the data provided in this report may not exactly match data provided in subsequent or previous reports.**

# 1. Significant Trends

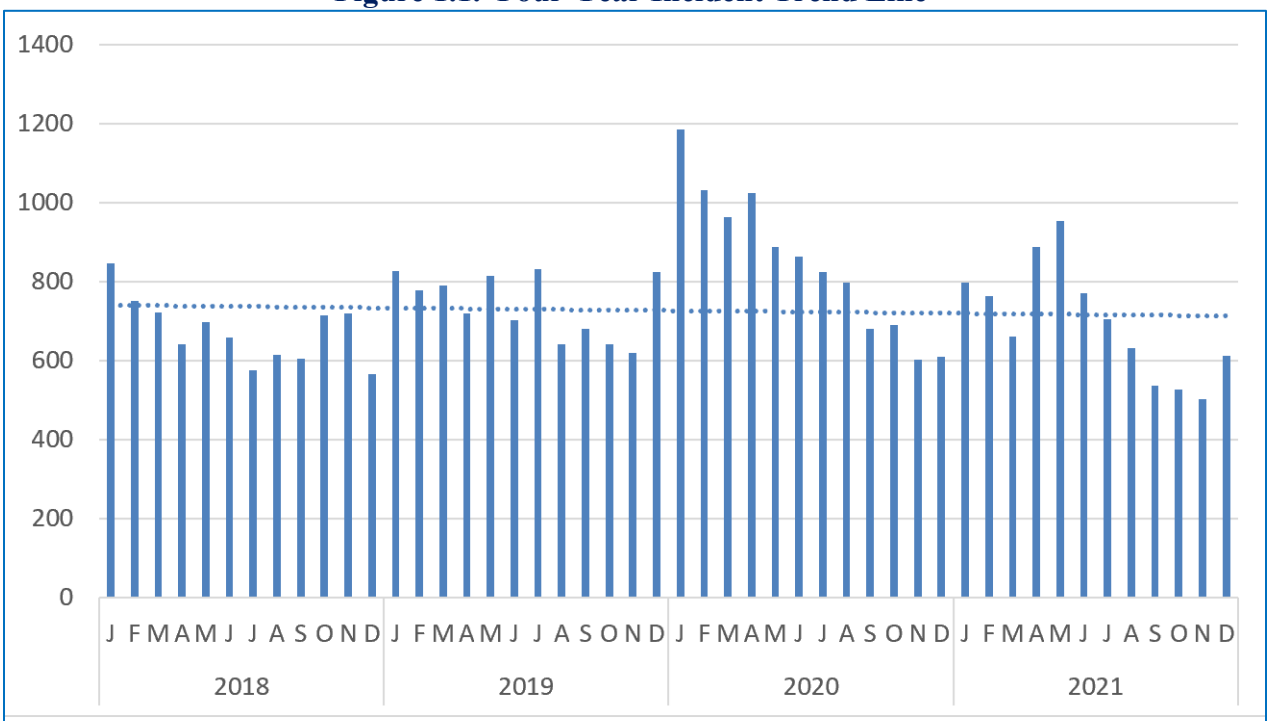
This report relies on data from open-source intelligence to provide a statistical review of global terrorism. Several important global issues in 2021 affected the availability of quality open-source material; COVID-19 and political changes in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burma, and Mali are examples. In 2021 there were 8,354 terrorist incidents, resulting in 23,692 fatalities (detailed in Table 1.1), 16,342 wounded, and 5,612 kidnapped. 2021 experienced 18 percent fewer terrorism incidents, 19 percent fewer fatalities, and 16 percent fewer wounded, but 25 percent more kidnappings than in 2020. A large part of the reductions can be explained by the situation in Afghanistan, where the main perpetrator — the Taliban — effectively took over the country by mid-August, severely curtailing open-source reporting of Afghan incidents. In 2021, terrorist incidents occurred in 65 countries and territories. Of these, 88.6 percent were concentrated in three geographic regions: Western Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southern Asia. As Table 3.1 shows, in order, Syria, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, India, Burma, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen were the countries that experienced the greatest number of terrorist incidents in 2021. Incidents in these 10 countries accounted for 78 percent of all global terrorist incidents in 2021.

**Table 1.1. Global Terrorist Incidents, 2021**

| | Incidents | | | | *2020-21* | | Fatalities | | | | *2020-21* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | *change* | | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | *change* | | |
| **January** | 846 | 827 | 1,185 | 798 | -33% | ▼ | 2,677 | 2,478 | 2,963 | 2,012 | -32% | ▼ | **January** |
| **February** | 751 | 778 | 1,032 | 764 | -26% | ▼ | 1,712 | 2,215 | 2,743 | 1,650 | -40% | ▼ | **February** |
| **March** | 723 | 791 | 964 | 662 | -31% | ▼ | 2,711 | 2,557 | 3,057 | 2,018 | -34% | ▼ | **March** |
| **April** | 641 | 719 | 1,024 | 888 | -13% | ▼ | 2,473 | 2,457 | 2,577 | 2,121 | -18% | ▼ | **April** |
| **May** | 699 | 814 | 888 | 954 | 7% | ▲ | 3,547 | 2,342 | 2,531 | 2,780 | 10% | ▲ | **May** |
| **June** | 658 | 703 | 865 | 770 | -11% | ▼ | 3,123 | 2,387 | 2,548 | 2,559 | 0% | | **June** |
| **July** | 576 | 831 | 824 | 705 | -14% | ▼ | 2,640 | 2,590 | 2,567 | 2,299 | -10% | ▼ | **July** |
| **August** | 614 | 643 | 799 | 631 | -21% | ▼ | 2,654 | 1,835 | 2,135 | 2,436 | 14% | ▲ | **August** |
| **September** | 605 | 680 | 682 | 537 | -21% | ▼ | 2,616 | 1,893 | 2,192 | 1,314 | -40% | ▼ | **September** |
| **October** | 715 | 642 | 691 | 528 | -24% | ▼ | 2,668 | 1,702 | 2,357 | 1,761 | -25% | ▼ | **October** |
| **November** | 719 | 620 | 604 | 504 | -17% | ▼ | 3,981 | 1,691 | 1,874 | 1,505 | -20% | ▼ | **November** |
| **December** | 566 | 824 | 609 | 613 | 1% | ▲ | 2,142 | 2,126 | 1,822 | 1,237 | -32% | ▼ | **December** |
| **TOTAL** | **8,113** | **8,872** | **10,167** | **8,354** | **-18%** | ▼ | **32,944** | **26,273** | **29,366** | **23,692** | **-19%** | ▼ | **TOTAL** |

Figure 1.1 shows the trend line of incidents on a month-to-month basis over the previous three-year period.

**Figure 1.1. Four-Year Incident Trend Line**




| Totals | 8,113 | 8,872 | 10,167 | 8,354 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## 1.1. Trends Summary

Among global perpetrators of terrorism, the Taliban (including the Haqqani Network), despite the changing context in Afghanistan, was responsible for the most incidents and fatalities, followed by ISIS-Core (ISIS elements in Iraq and Syria, including connections in other surrounding countries), CODECO, ISIS-DRC, and al-Shabaab — to round out the top five. In 2021 the Taliban was responsible for 799 incidents and 4,458 fatalities — a reduction of 42 percent in the number of incidents and 40 percent in the number of fatalities from 2020, yet still 16 percent of the total fatalities attributed to terrorism globally. ISIS-Core with 647 terrorist incidents — an increase of 28 percent from 2020 — was the next-most-active terrorist organization, and responsible for 1,342 fatalities; followed by CODECO, responsible for 367 incidents and 866 fatalities. ISIS-DRC was the fourth-most-active perpetrator group, responsible for 323 incidents and 1,606 fatalities. Finally, al-Shabaab with 289 incidents and 1,040 fatalities, rounds out the top five. The evolution of these groups over a four-year period is available in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. We also have created a perpetrator dashboard in section 2.3 for a more thorough review of the most prominent groups.

As reported in previous years, ISIS-Core lost most of the remaining territory of its so-called caliphate in Iraq, and in 2019 lost the remainder of its territory in Syria. The group and its affiliates, however, remained active in 26 countries, including Iraq and Syria.

## AFFILIATES

GTTAC defines an "affiliated group" as pledging allegiance, declaring loyalty, breaking away from the group but still linked by finance, communications, technical, HR, or being a splinter/ offshoot organization."

ISIS-Core and the most active ISIS affiliates of 2021 were responsible for the following incidents:

- ISIS-Core (645 incidents, 1,240 fatalities) in Iraq, Syria.
- ISIS-Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC), often reported as the Allied Democratic Forces (323 incidents, 1,606 fatalities), in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.
- ISIS-West Africa (102 incidents, 963 fatalities) in Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria.
- ISIS-Mozambique (42 incidents, 188 fatalities) in Mozambique.
- ISIS-Greater Sahara (11 incidents, 118 fatalities) in Burkina Faso and Mali.
- ISIS-Khorasan (42 incidents, 549 fatalities) in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- ISIS-Philippines (3 incidents, 3 fatalities) in the Philippines.
- ISIS-Central Africa (1 incident, 4 fatalities) in Tanzania.
- ISIS-Sinai Province (29 incidents, 52 fatalities) in Egypt.
- Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (17 incidents, 52 fatalities) in the Philippines.
- ISIS-Jammu Kashmir (3 incidents, 3 fatalities) in India.
- Maute Group (12 incidents, 31 fatalities) in the Philippines.
- ISIS-Libya (4 incidents, 7 fatalities) in Libya.
- ISIS-Tunisia (1 incident, 4 fatalities) in Tunisia.
- ISIS-Somalia (2 incidents, 5 fatalities) in Somalia.
- Caucasus Province of the Islamic State (4 incidents, 4 fatalities) in Russia.
- Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (3 incidents, 4 fatalities) in Indonesia.
- ISIS-Maldives (1 incident) in the Maldives.

More information on the activities of ISIS-affiliated terrorist organizations can be found on page 13.

Al-Qa'ida networks continue to operate primarily in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. Some of the major al-Qa'ida affiliate groups in 2021 were

- Al-Qa'ida (4 incidents, 106 fatalities) in Afghanistan.
- Al-Shabaab (289 incidents, 1,040 fatalities) in Somalia and Kenya.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (51 incidents, 49 fatalities) in Syria.
- Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (50 incidents, 560 fatalities) in Mali and Burkina Faso.
- Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (50 incidents, 103 fatalities) in India.
- Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (6 incidents, 29 fatalities) in Yemen.

- Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (3 incidents, 5 fatalities) in India.
- Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad (1 incident, 11 fatalities) in Syria.
- Ahrar al-Sham (2 incidents, 4 fatalities) in Syria
- Ahrar al-Sharqiya (10 incidents, 2 fatalities) in Syria
- Al Badr Mujahideen (Jammu and Kashmir) [6 incidents, 10 fatalities] in India
- Ansar al-Tawhid (7 incidents, 19 fatalities) in Syria
- Ansar al-Islam (5 incidents, 0 fatalities) in Syria
- Ansaru (2 incidents, 35 fatalities) in Nigeria
- Ansar Abu Bakr al-Siddiq* (4 incidents, 3 fatalities) in Syria
- Hurras al-Din (2 incidents, 5 fatalities) in Syria
- Jund al-Sham for Tawhid and Jihad (2 incidents, 13 fatalities) in Syria
- Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (34 incidents, 103 fatalities) in Pakistan

More information on the activities of al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist organizations can be found on page 15.

## 1.2. Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism

In the methodology section of this report, we define terrorism as the deliberate use or threat of violence by nonstate actors to achieve political goals, making a broader impact beyond the actual victims or event. In the case of racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE), an analysis of our data from 2018 through 2021 shows the common denominator of the perpetrators is driven by race or ethnicity. Tightly defining terrorist ideologies can be a challenge even when groups or individuals proclaim to adhere to, for example, an ISIS ideology. In the case of REMVE the landscape is dynamic, involving actors that are neither homogeneous nor geocentric. For 2021, we have noted a growing number of incidents of REMVE attacks, in North America and Europe. Many of these incidents are perpetrated by self-radicalized individuals with various ideologies reflecting white-identity, anti-government, anti-immigrant, anti-abortion, Incel, or neo-Nazi views. Among the victims were law enforcement officials and individuals identified by gender, religion, race, or ethnicity.

Some 2021 examples of REMVE incidents:

### GERMANY

On September 18, in Idar-Oberstein, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, an individual shot dead a cashier at a gas station because the cashier had reminded the perpetrator the requirement of wearing a mask. The assailant was allegedly close to the "Querdenken" movement and has been linked to COVID-19 conspiracy theorists and to the far right. The assailant expressed support for the far-right AfD party on his social media.

### NETHERLANDS

GTTAC recorded several incidents in Europe targeting COVID-19 centers. On March 3, in Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, unknown perpetrators planted an IED at a COVID

*Also known as Ansar Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Squadron.

testing center in the town of Bovenkarspel. The explosion caused windows to shatter. No injuries have been reported.

**ITALY**

On April 3, in Brescia, Italy, two unknown perpetrators who identified as "antivaxxers" threw a Molotov cocktail at a COVID-19 vaccination hub. A fire broke out and damaged one of the center's two pavilions. Damages were limited to property, and no injuries were reported.

**CANADA**

On June 6, in London, Ontario, Canada, an individual rammed his vehicle into a Muslim family, killing four persons and injuring another. Canada has prosecuted this as a terrorist attack.

**TÜRKIYE**

On June 17, in Izmir, Türkiye, a perpetrator linked to SADAT entered a Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) building armed with a rifle. The man took a female HDP member hostage, then shot and killed her.

# 2. Perpetrators and Fatalities

## 2.1. Perpetrator Activity

As in previous years, a significant percentage of terrorism incidents were either not claimed or not credibly attributable to one perpetrator or another. Following our methodology, if the perpetrator is not named or identified by a credible source, we simply record it as unknown. This is partially due to the vagaries of open-source intelligence and the difficulty of identifying perpetrators in conflict zones. To mitigate these missing data, we have developed categories of perpetrators, allowing us to complete an incident record where that information is available (see below).

In 2021, for 3,189 incidents (38 percent of the total number of incidents), the perpetrators were either not identified or unknown.

The geographic clustering of terrorism hotspots (see Figure 3.1) shows that terror groups — including ISIS-Core and affiliates, al-Qa'ida, and their affiliates — continued to expand across Africa. ISIS-DRC and CODECO accounted for some of the sharpest increases in incidents in 2021. Terrorist incidents in the tri-border area of the Sahel have remained steady. See the Sahel dashboard in section 3.

**Table 2.1. Top 10 Known Perpetrator Groups With the Most Incidents, 2021**

| Top Perpetrators | Incidents | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | *2020-21 change* | |
| 1 TALIBAN | 1,083 | 1,466 | 1,330 | 799 | -40% | ▼ |
| 2 ISIS CORE | 655 | 590 | 507 | 645 | 27% | ▲ |
| 3 CODECO | - | 7 | 119 | 367 | 208% | ▲ |
| 4 ISIS-DRC | 60 | 97 | 275 | 323 | 17% | ▲ |
| 5 AL-SHABAAB | 536 | 484 | 477 | 289 | -39% | ▼ |
| 6 ZAMFARA MILITANTS | - | 13 | 3 | 265 | 8733% | ▲ |
| 7 CPI-MAOIST | 178 | 292 | 298 | 225 | -24% | ▼ |
| 8 CPP/NPA | 195 | 220 | 232 | 148 | -36% | ▼ |
| 9 BOKO HARAM | 220 | 294 | 249 | 134 | -36% | ▼ |
| 10 FULANI MILITANTS | 300 | 84 | 137 | 115 | -16% | ▼ |
| **Sub-total** | **3,227** | **3,547** | **3,627** | **3,310** | **-9%** | ▼ |
| **Year-end Total** | **8,113** | **8,872** | **10,167** | **8,354** | **-18%** | ▼ |
| UNKNOWN | 2,674 | 2,946 | 3,782 | 3,189 | -16% | ▼ |

Table 2.1 shows the top 10 perpetrators in 2021 ranked by the number of incidents. These were the Taliban, ISIS-Core (Iraq and Syria), CODECO and affiliates, ISIS of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC), al-Shabaab, Zamfara Militants, the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist), the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA), Boko Haram, and Fulani Militants. These top 10 perpetrators accounted for 42 percent of global terrorism activity for 2021. Between 2020 and 2021, there was an 18 percent decline in terrorism incidents among the top 10 perpetrators.

A more detailed review of perpetrators appears in section 2.3, Perpetrator Dashboards.

## Perpetrator Categories

Many of the traditional reports on terrorism have unnamed or unknown perpetrators, as high as 50 percent of the total. While perpetrators may not be named specifically by the reporting media, they may identify them by category — such as jihadist, ethnonationalist, or right wing. We have added this factor to the data to give readers and analysts a fuller understanding of each incident. Table 2.2 below reflects the top four perpetrator categories for 2021.

**Table 2.2**

| 2021 Perpetrator Categories by Incident | |
|---|---|
| **Jihadist** | 58% |
| **Ethnonationalist** | 45% |
| **Left Wing** | 7% |
| **Iranian-backed** | 6% |

Some perpetrator groups and some terrorist incidents are coded to more than one category.

**PERPETRATOR CATEGORIES**

Religious (Jihadist)
Religious (Other, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian)
Iranian Backed
Ethnonationalist/Separatist
Left Wing/Revolutionary (Marxism Leninism Maoism)
Anarchist
Right Wing (Racist/Anti Government Militia/Anti Statist/Populist)
Vigilante (Pro Government)
Single Issue (Abortion, Environment, Animal Rights, Misogynist)
Unknown

## 2.2. Perpetrators and Fatalities

**Table 2.3. Top 10 Known Perpetrators With the Most Fatalities, 2021**

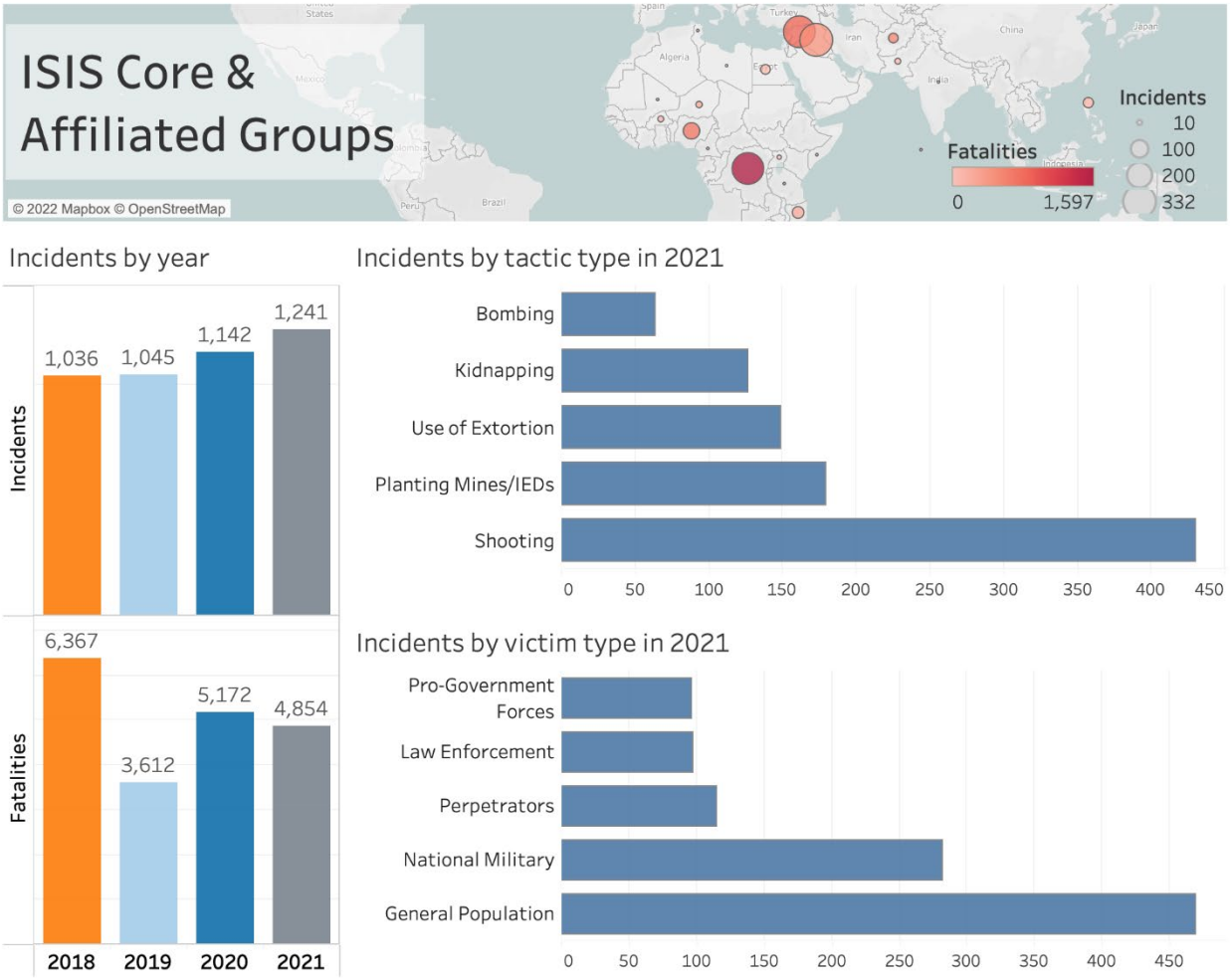
| | Top Perpetrators | Fatalities 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | *2020-21 change* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TALIBAN | 8,554 | 7,918 | 7,445 | 4,458 | -40% | ▼ |
| 2 | ISIS-DRC | 298 | 341 | 1,422 | 1,606 | 13% | ▲ |
| 3 | ZAMFARA MILITANTS | - | 178 | 47 | 1,347 | 2766% | ▲ |
| 4 | ISIS-CORE | 3,649 | 1,487 | 1,434 | 1,240 | -14% | ▼ |
| 5 | AL-SHABAAB | 2,087 | 1,409 | 1,393 | 1,040 | -25% | ▼ |
| 6 | ISIS-WEST AFRICA | 114 | 929 | 982 | 1,004 | 2% | ▼ |
| 7 | CODECO | - | 23 | 644 | 866 | 34% | ▲ |
| 8 | BOKO HARAM | 1,311 | 1,379 | 1,286 | 747 | -42% | ▼ |
| 9 | FULANI MILITANTS | 1,924 | 430 | 487 | 632 | 30% | ▲ |
| 10 | PDF - BURMA | - | - | - | 563 | | |
| | **Subtotal** | **17,937** | **14,094** | **15,140** | **13,503** | **-11%** | ▼ |
| | **Year-End Total** | **32,994** | **26,273** | **29,366** | **23,692** | **-19%** | ▼ |
| | **UNKNOWN** | 7,464 | 5,817 | 7,694 | 5,792 | -25% | ▼ |

Table 2.2 shows the top 10 perpetrators in 2021 ranked in the order of fatalities. These were the Taliban, ISIS-DRC, Zamfara Militants, ISIS-Core, al-Shabaab, ISIS-West Africa, CODECO, Boko Haram, Fulani Militants, and the People's Defense Force-Burma. There was an 11 percent reduction in the number of fatalities from 2020 for the top 10 perpetrators. Globally there was a 19 percent reduction in the number of fatalities in 2021, compared with 2020. There were several exceptions to this trend: ISIS-DRC, Zamfara Militants, CODECO, and ISIS-West Africa.

More 2021 details appear in section 2.3, Perpetrator Dashboards.

## 2.3. Perpetrator Dashboards

This section disaggregates the data on global terrorism incidents to provide an analysis of specific perpetrators and their categories. The nature of modern global terrorism is that a select few perpetrators commit many incidents annually. This section provides greater context for the terrorist activities to reflect consistent and emerging threats to global security in 2021 and beyond.




## ISIS-Core and Known Affiliated Groups

In 2021, there were 645 incidents involving ISIS-Core, with 1,240 fatalities and 1,237 persons wounded. This constitutes a 27.2 percent increase in incidents from 2020, but a 13.5 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020. In 2021, ISIS-Core was the second-most-active terrorist organization globally, and ISIS-DRC was the fourth-most active.

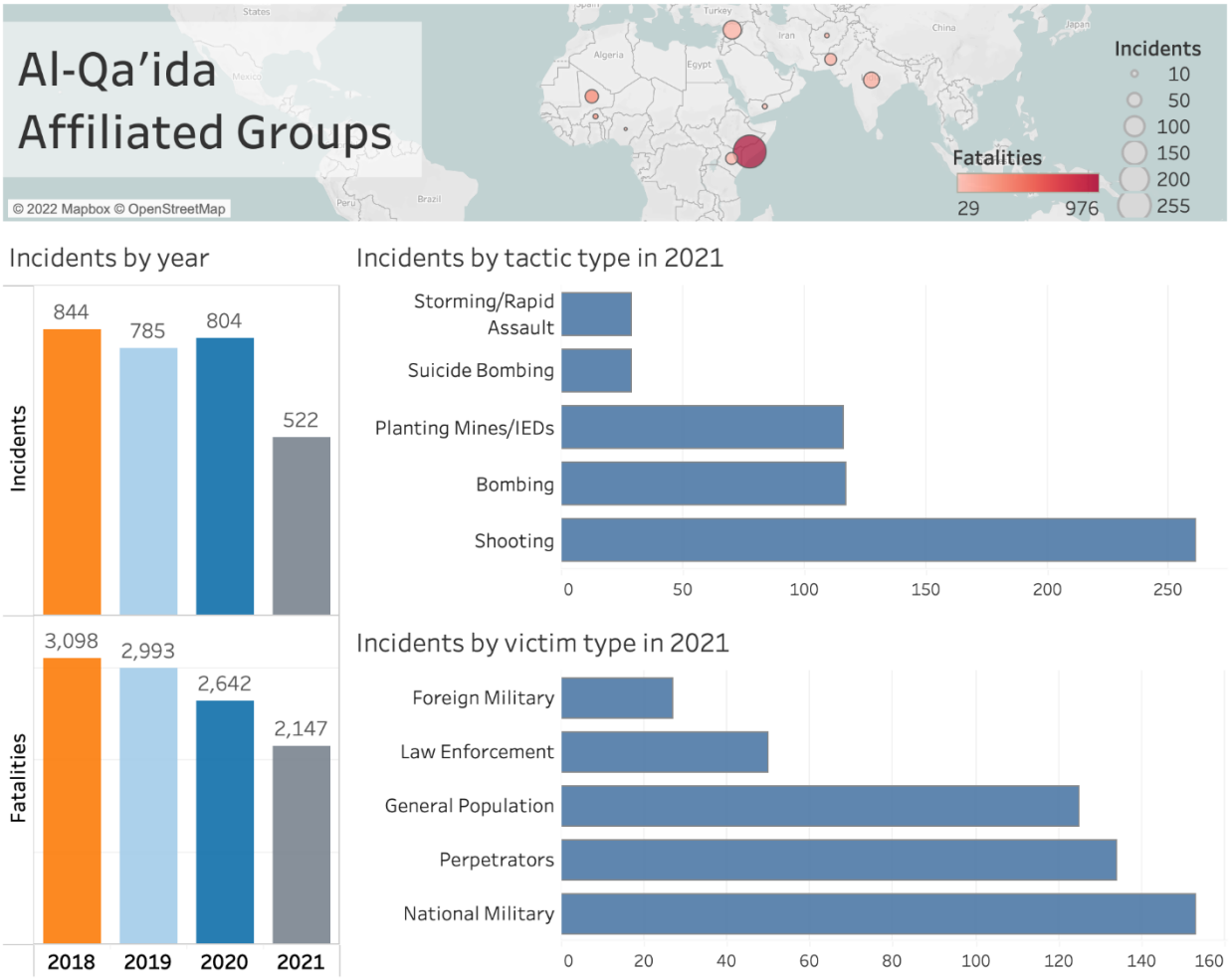
ISIS-Core and its affiliates were involved in 1,241 incidents with 4,854 fatalities and 2,441 persons wounded. This constitutes a 9 percent increase in incidents from 2020, as well as a 6 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020. The three most-active ISIS-affiliated groups were ISIS-Core with 645 incidents, ISIS-DRC with 323 incidents, and ISIS-West Africa with 102 incidents.

ISIS-Core's incidents were focused primarily in Iraq (332 incidents) and Syria (310 incidents). ISIS affiliates were active in 20 countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the Philippines.

Common tactics employed by ISIS-Core included shootings (44 percent), planting mines/IEDs (22 percent), and bombings (6 percent). Across all ISIS-affiliated groups, the most frequently employed tactics were shootings (34 percent), IED attacks (14 percent), and extortion (12 percent).

Twenty-five percent of ISIS-Core incidents in 2021 involved national militaries. Other prominent victims of ISIS-Core violence included the general population (18 percent of incidents) and pro-government forces (14 percent of incidents). ISIS-Core terrorists were reported to have been killed in 5 percent of the incidents attributed to them in 2021. Across all ISIS-affiliated groups, the most-frequently targeted victims were the general population (37 percent), the military (23 percent), and law enforcement (8 percent). ISIS-affiliated terrorists were reported to have been killed in 9 percent of the incidents attributed to them in 2021.

ISIS-Core incidents in 2021 were spread across several provinces and countries, including 125 incidents (19.3 percent) in Diyala in Iraq, 116 incidents (17.9 percent) in Dayr az Zawr in Syria, and 82 incidents (12.7 percent) in Kirkuk in Iraq.



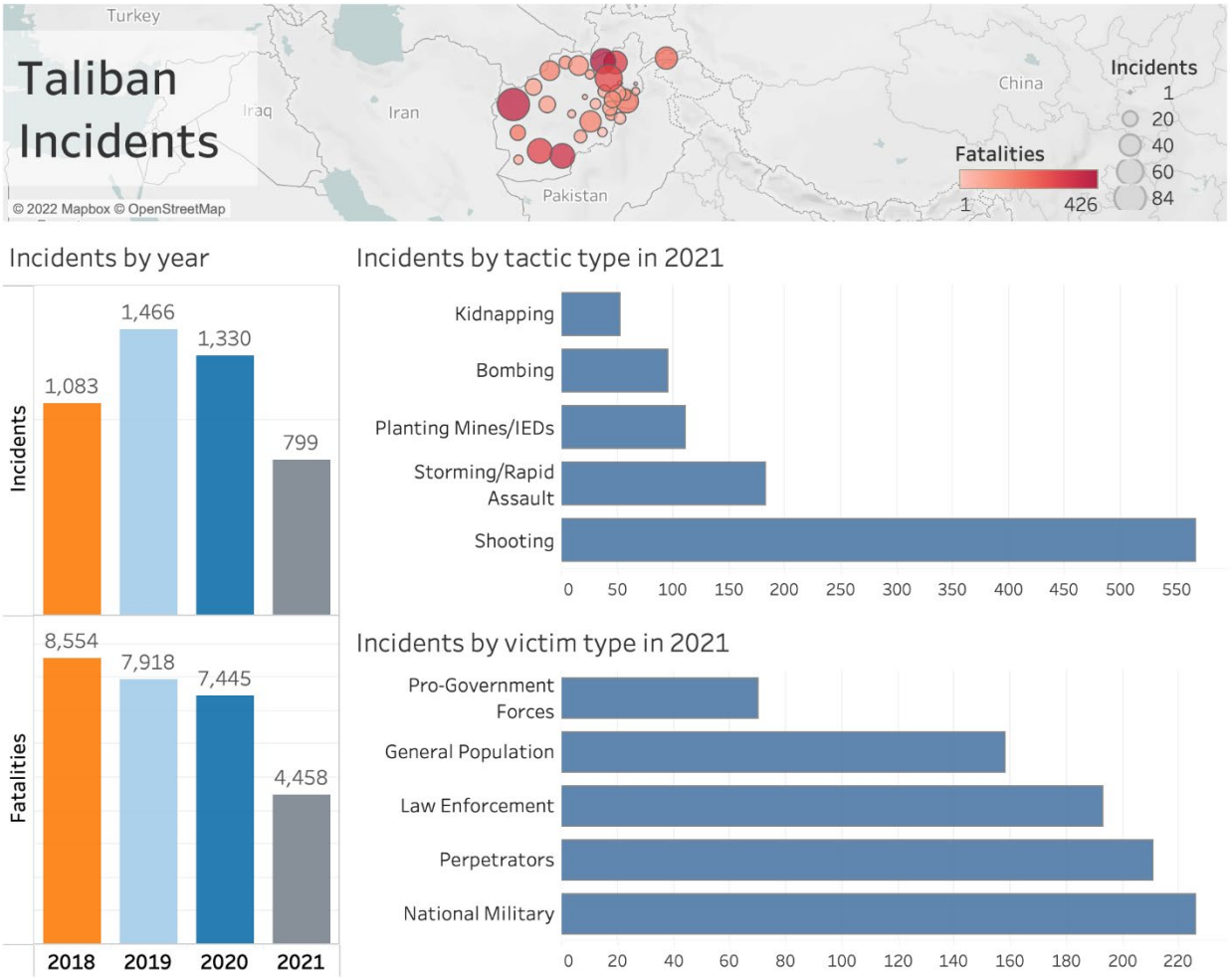

## Al-Qa'ida-Core and Known Affiliated Groups

In 2021, there were 522 incidents involving al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups, with 2,147 fatalities and 1,133 persons wounded. This constitutes a 36 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, as well as an 18.7 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020. The most-active al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups were al-Shabaab with 289 incidents in Somalia and Kenya, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham with 51 incidents in Syria, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba with 50 incidents in India. Al-Qa'ida-Core itself was responsible for four incidents.

Al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups were active in 10 countries, the five most-active being Somalia, Syria, India, Mali, and Kenya.

Across all al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups, the most frequently employed tactics were shootings (50 percent), bombings (22 percent), and IED attacks (22 percent).

Twenty-nine percent of al-Qa'ida-affiliated incidents in 2021 targeted the military. Other prominent victims of al-Qa'ida-affiliated violence included the general population (24 percent of incidents) and law enforcement (10 percent of incidents). Al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorists were reported to have been killed in 26 percent of the incidents attributed to them in 2021.



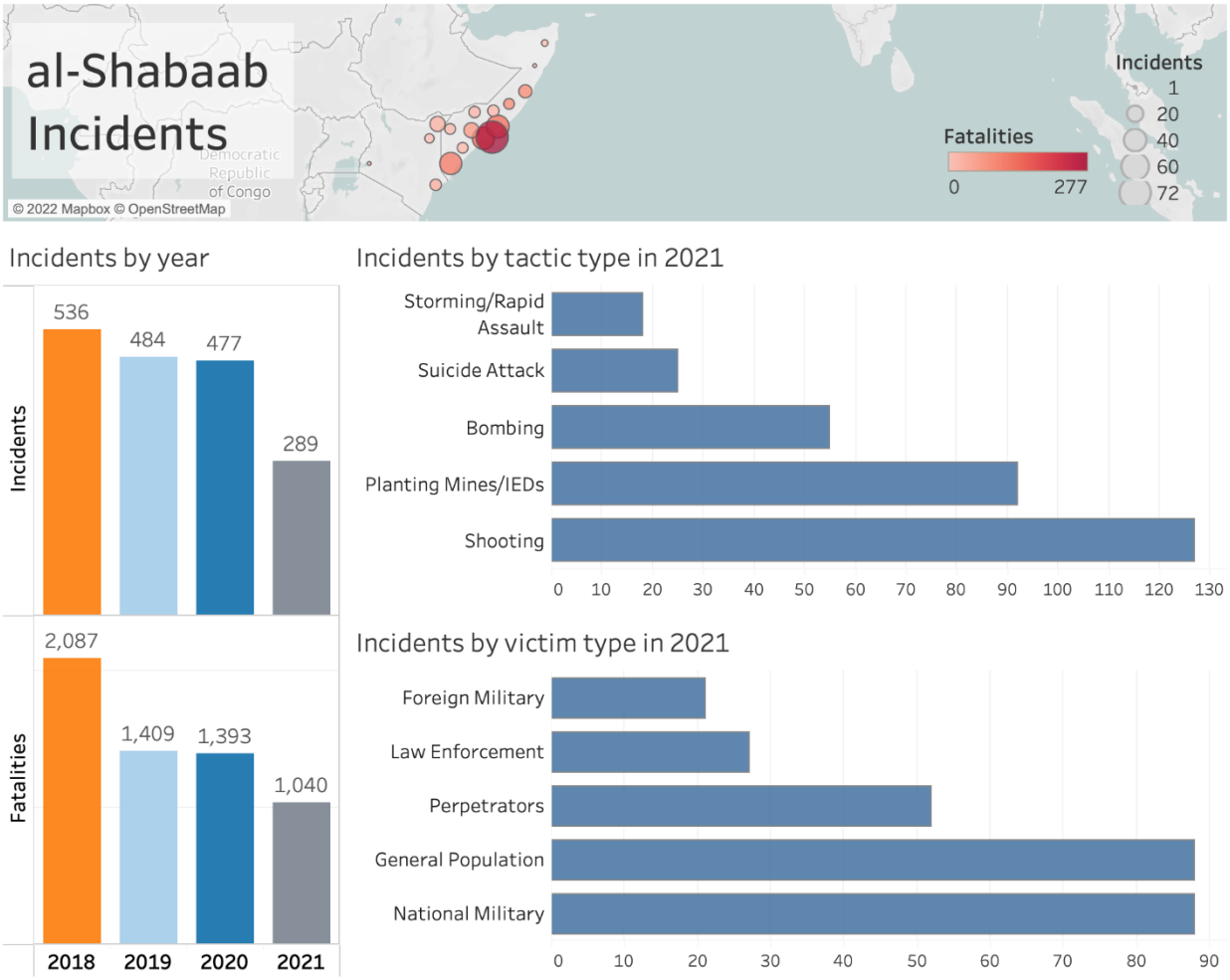

## Taliban

At the end of August, the Taliban overran the government of Afghanistan. This complicates the collection of terrorist incidents in the country, with far less open-source reporting available and far less documentation of incidents. With the arrival of the Taliban to power, many media outlets and sources have been attacked and have had their equipment confiscated and dismantled. In 2021 (January 1 to August 15), there were 799 incidents involving the Taliban, with 4,458 fatalities and 3,555 persons wounded, all of which occurred within Afghanistan. This constitutes a 42 percent reduction in incidents from 2020, as well as a 46 percent drop in fatalities from 2020.

Common tactics the Taliban employed in incidents included shootings (71 percent), storming/rapid assaults (23 percent), and the use of landmines or IEDs (14 percent).

Twenty-eight percent of Taliban incidents involved national military victims in 2021. Other prominent victims of Taliban violence included law enforcement (24 percent of incidents) and the general population (20 percent of incidents). The Taliban was reported to have been killed in 27 percent of the incidents attributed to them in 2021.

The districts in Afghanistan that experienced the most Taliban incidents were Herat with 86 incidents (10.8 percent), Baghlan with 59 incidents (7.4 percent), Kunduz with 51 incidents (6.4 percent), and Kandahar with 51 incidents (6.4 percent).




## Al-Shabaab

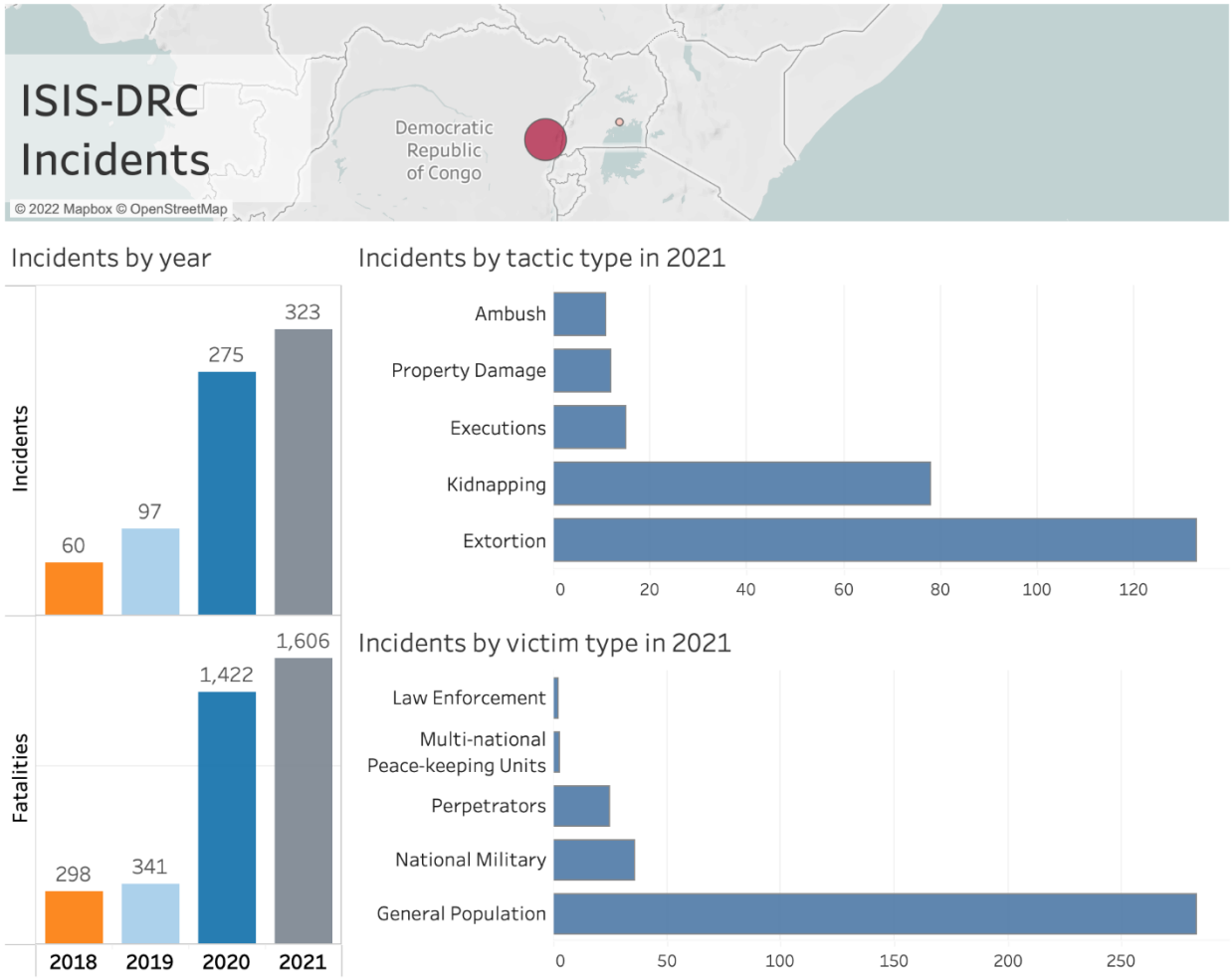
In 2021, there were 289 incidents involving al-Shabaab, with 1,040 fatalities and 847 persons wounded. This constitutes a 39 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, as well as a 25 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020.

All the al-Shabaab incidents in 2021 were concentrated in Somalia (255 incidents) or Kenya (34 incidents).

Common tactics al-Shabaab employed in incidents included shootings (44 percent), planting mines/IEDs (32 percent), bombings (19 percent), and suicide attacks (9 percent).

Thirty percent of al-Shabaab-involved incidents in 2021 targeted the military. Other prominent victims of al-Shabaab violence included the general population (30 percent of incidents) and law enforcement (9 percent of incidents). Al-Shabaab terrorists were reported to have been killed in 18 percent of incidents attributed to them in 2021.

The regions in Somalia that experienced the most al-Shabaab incidents were Banaadir with 72 incidents (24.9 percent), Shabeellaha Dhexe with 36 incidents (12.5 percent), Jubbada Hoose with 35 incidents (or 12.1 percent of al-Shabaab incidents), and Shabeellaha Hoose with 34 incidents (11.8 percent).




## ISIS-DRC

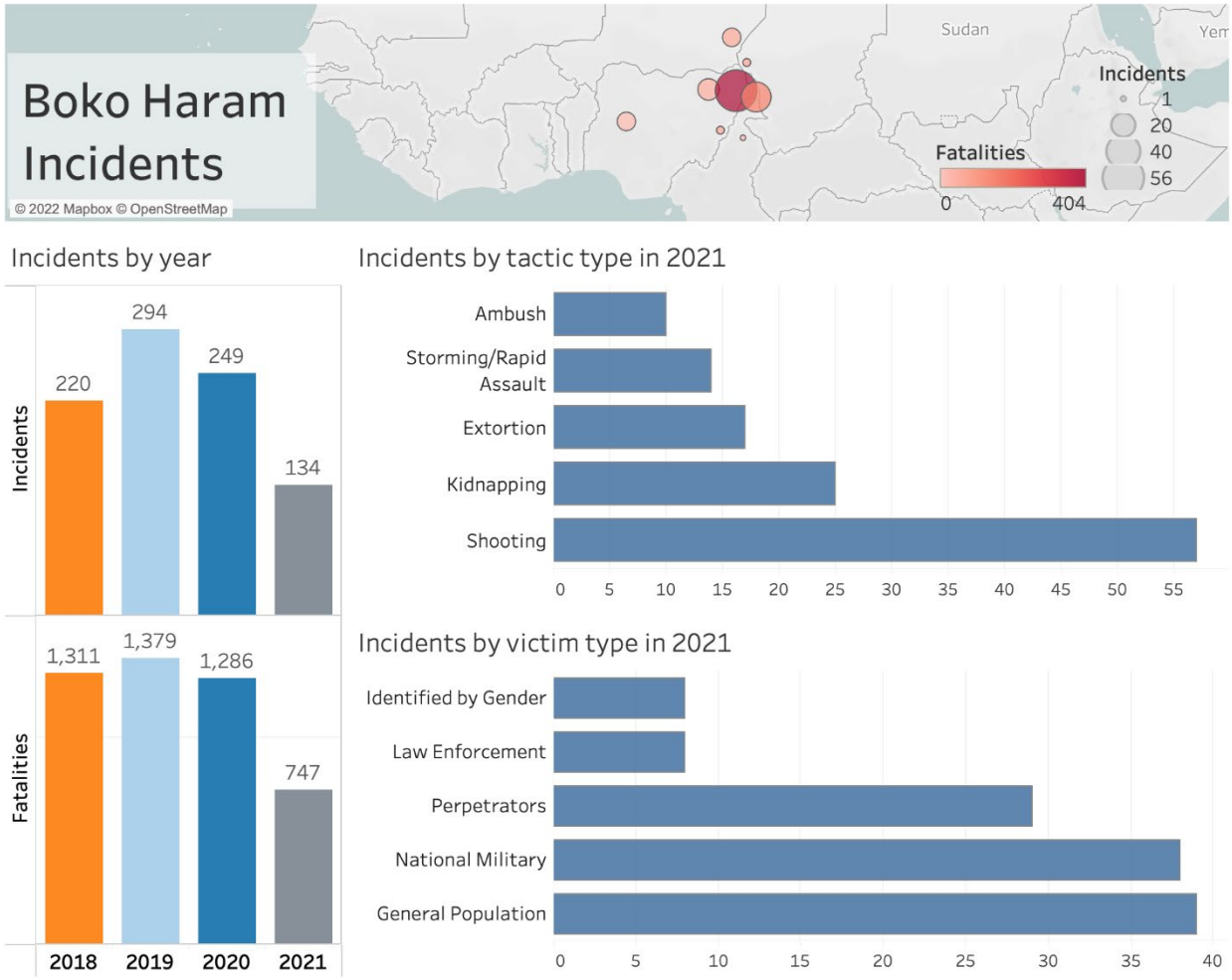
ISIS-DRC was designated a foreign terrorist organization by the Department of State in March 2021. Included in their incidents are those attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (one of the group's aliases). In 2021 there were 323 incidents involving ISIS-DRC, with 1,606 fatalities and 156 persons wounded. This constitutes a 17 percent increase in the number of incidents from 2020, as well as a 13 percent increase in fatalities from 2020.

All ISIS-DRC's incidents in 2021 were concentrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (317 incidents) or Uganda (6 incidents).

Common tactics ISIS-DRC employed in incidents included extortion (41 percent), kidnappings (24 percent), and executions (5 percent).

Eighty-eight percent of ISIS-DRC-involved incidents in 2021 included general population victims. Other prominent victims of ISIS-DRC violence included military (11 percent of incidents). ISIS-DRC terrorists were reported as victims in 8 percent of the incidents attributed to them in 2021.

Most ISIS-DRC incidents were concentrated in the Nord/North-Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 161 incidents (50 percent) and Ituri with 156 incidents (48 percent).



## Boko Haram

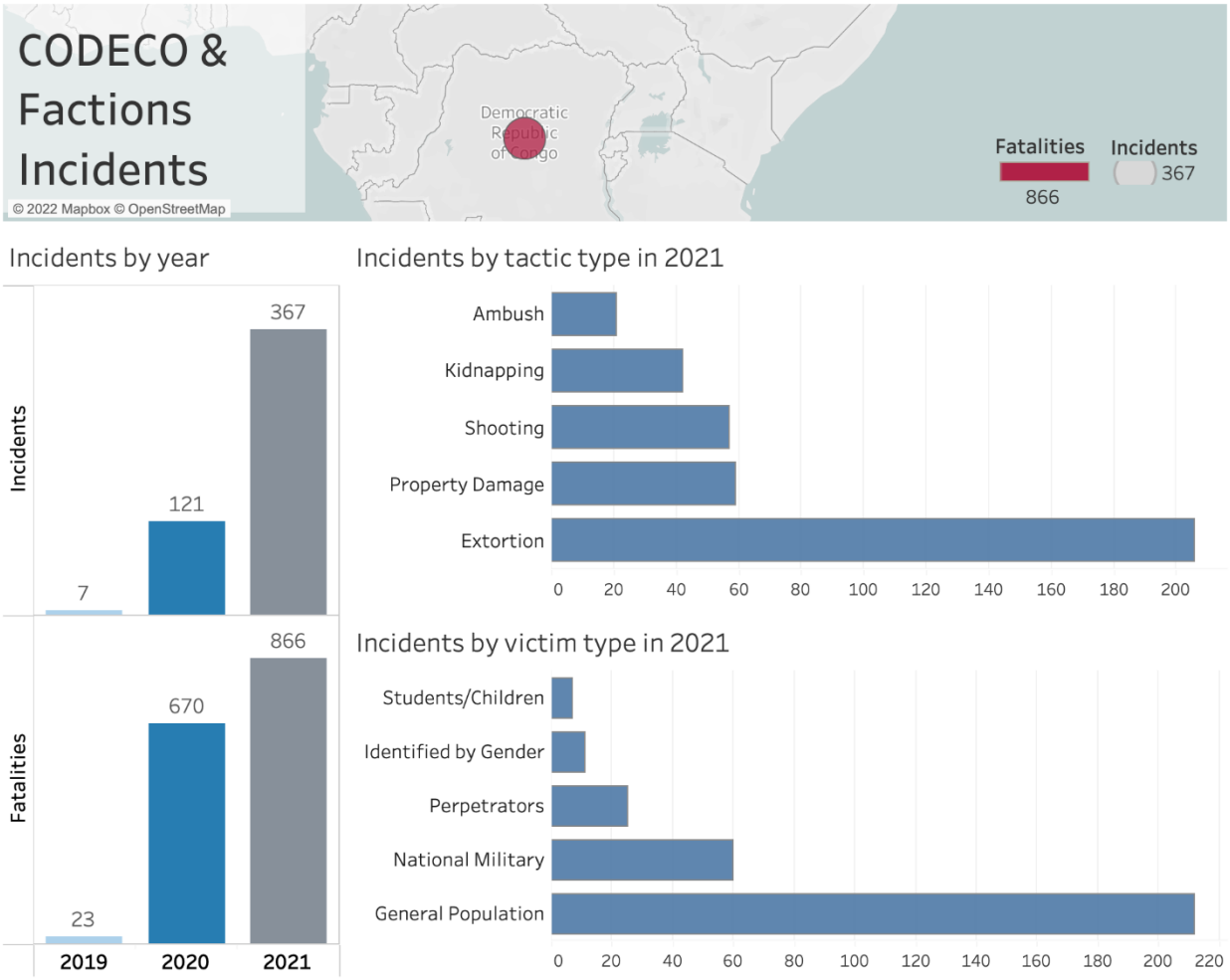
In 2021 there were 134 incidents involving Boko Haram, with 747 fatalities and 250 persons wounded. This constitutes a 44 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, as well as a 36 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020.

All the Boko Haram incidents in 2021 were concentrated in Nigeria (89 incidents), Cameroon (30 incidents), Niger (12 incidents), or Chad (3 incidents).

Common tactics Boko Haram employed in incidents included shootings (43 percent), kidnappings (19 percent), and extortion practices (13 percent).

Twenty-nine percent of Boko Haram-involved incidents in 2021 victimized the general population. Other prominent victims of Boko Haram violence included the military (28 percent of incidents) and law enforcement (6 percent of incidents). Boko Haram terrorists were reported as killed in 22 percent of incidents attributed to them in 2021.

The Nigerian states that experienced the most Boko Haram incidents were Borno with 57 incidents (42.5 percent), Extreme-Nord with 29 incidents (21.6 percent), and Yobe with 15 incidents (11.2 percent).




## CODECO and Factions

CODECO, also known as the Cooperative for Development of the Congo, is an umbrella organization of Lendu militia groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The 2020 death of its leader led the already-decentralized group to splinter further, with some elements becoming more violent. The incidents attributed to CODECO, and its factions are aggregated here, but during 2021 most incidents were committed by CODECO-URPDC (Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People), with 271 incidents in 2021.

**Table 2.4. CODECO and Its Factions**

| Cooperative for the Development of the Congo and Factions | Incident Year | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Total |
| CODECO-ALC | 0 | 0 | 21 | 21 |
| CODECO-FDBC | 0 | 0 | 31 | 31 |
| CODECO-URPDC | 0 | 0 | 271 | 271 |
| CODECO-BTD | 0 | 0 | 13 | 13 |
| CODECO | 7 | 119 | 31 | 157 |
| Total | **7** | **119** | **367** | **493** |

ALC: Alliance for the Liberation of the Congo. FDBC: Defense Force against the Balkanization of the Congo. URPDC: Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People. BTD: Bon Temple de Dieu.

In 2021 there were 367 incidents involving CODECO and its factions, with 866 fatalities and 255 persons wounded. This constitutes a 309 percent increase in incidents from 2020, as well as a 30 percent increase in fatalities from 2020.

All CODECO incidents took place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Common tactics employed in CODECO incidents included extortion (56 percent), property damage (16 percent), and shootings (16 percent).

Fifty-eight percent of CODECO incidents in 2021 involved general population victims. The other prominent victims of CODECO violence were the military (16 percent of incidents). CODECO terrorists were reported to have been killed in 7 percent of the incidents attributed to the organization during 2021.

The vast majority of CODECO incidents in 2021 — 362 incidents (98.6 percent) — took place in Ituri. Four incidents (1.1 percent) occurred in Bas-Uele, and one incident occurred in Nord-Kivu.

# 3. Geographic Trends of Terrorism

**Figure 3.1. Global Terrorist Incidents and Fatalities, 2021**

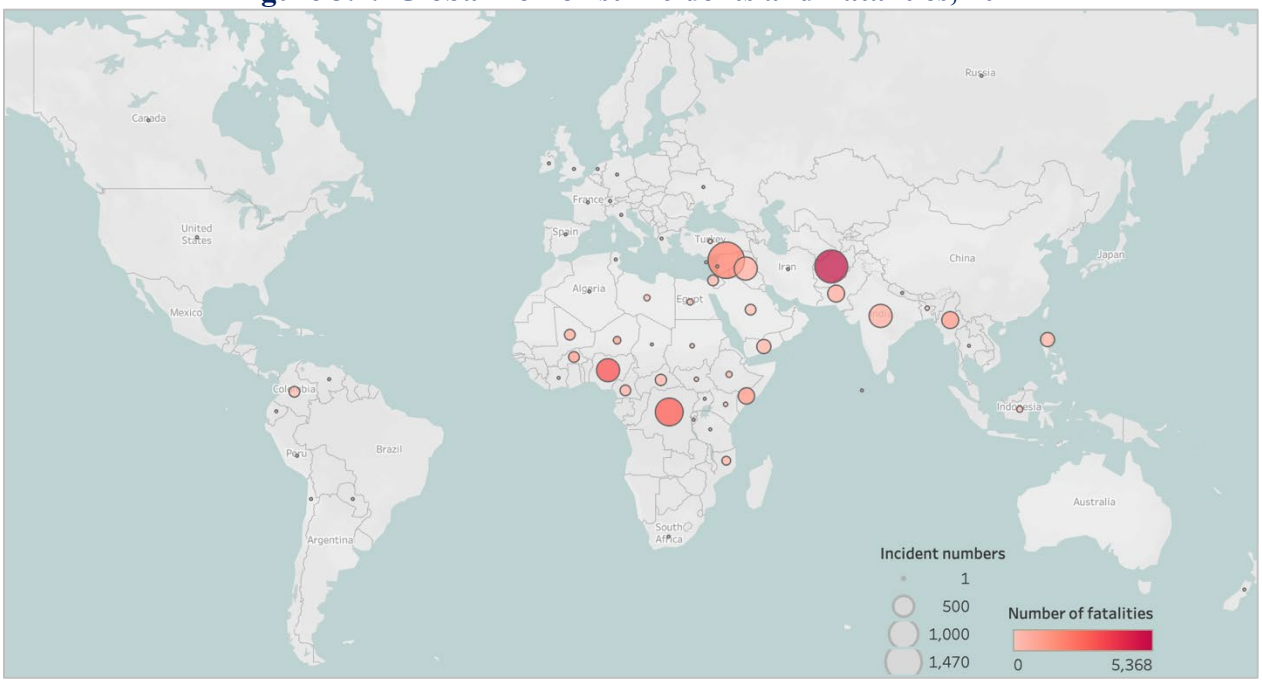



Figure 3.1 shows the country hotspots of global terrorist incidents for 2021, as defined by the highest number of incidents and fatalities. As mentioned previously, at the end of August the Taliban became the de facto government of Afghanistan. Consequently, for 2021, first Syria, then Afghanistan, and then the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the most terrorism incidents. The continued expansion of terrorism in Africa — especially in the Sahel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of incidents and fatalities in these countries and regions. The Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are not among the top 10 in the number of incidents; however, they are among the top 10 for the number of fatalities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, CODECO (including its affiliates) has joined ISIS-DRC as one of the most violent terror organizations.

## 3.1. Location of Terrorist Activity

Table 3.1 shows that during 2021 the three countries with the highest number of terrorist incidents were Syria (1,470 incidents), Afghanistan (1,244 incidents), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (898 incidents). Overall, there was a 12 percent decline in terrorism incidents in 2021 among the top 10 countries, compared with 2020, and an 18 percent decline in incidents globally from 2020 to 2021.

**Table 3.1. Top 10 Countries With the Most Terrorist Incidents, 2021**

| | Top Countries | Incidents | | | | *2020-21 change* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | | |
| 1 | SYRIA | 875 | 1,051 | 1,332 | 1,470 | 10% | ▲ |
| 2 | AFGHANISTAN | 1,295 | 1,748 | 1,717 | 1,244 | -28% | ▼ |
| 3 | DR CONGO | 187 | 384 | 999 | 898 | -10% | ▼ |
| 4 | IRAQ | 765 | 542 | 629 | 605 | -4% | ▼ |
| 5 | NIGERIA | 546 | 460 | 389 | 594 | 53% | ▲ |
| 6 | INDIA | 673 | 655 | 679 | 572 | -16% | ▼ |
| 7 | BURMA | 52 | 85 | 175 | 325 | 86% | ▲ |
| 8 | PAKISTAN | 330 | 226 | 215 | 319 | 48% | ▲ |
| 9 | SOMALIA | 527 | 486 | 504 | 297 | -41% | ▼ |
| 10 | YEMEN | 224 | 396 | 835 | 223 | -73% | ▼ |
| | **Sub-total** | **5,474** | **6,033** | **7,474** | **6,547** | **-12%** | ▼ |
| | **Year-end Total** | **8,060** | **8,828** | **10,145** | **8,354** | **-18%** | ▼ |

## 3.2. Fatalities by Location

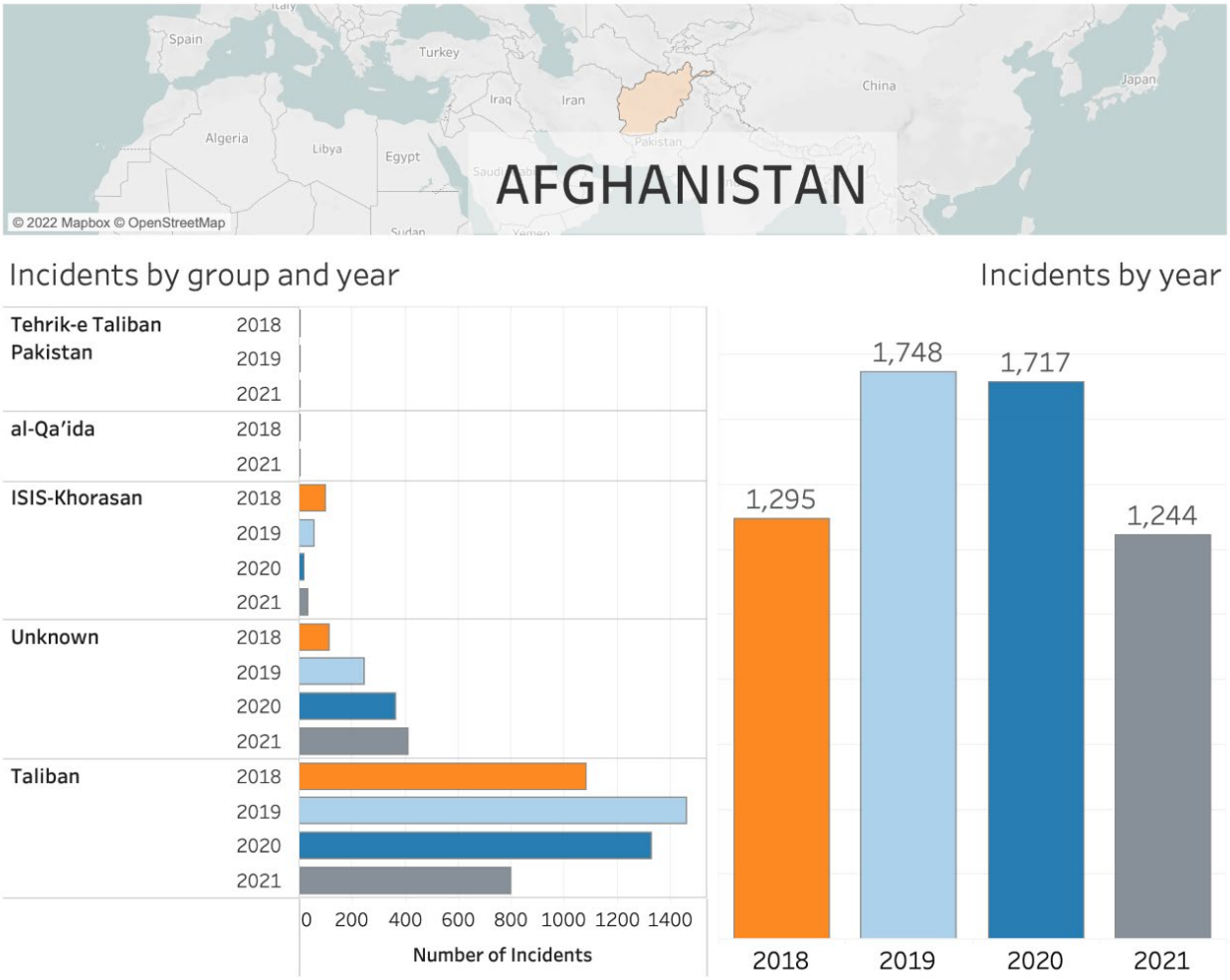
Table 3.2 shows that the top 10 countries with the most fatalities during 2021 were Afghanistan, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Somalia, Burma, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ethiopia, and Mali. This shows a 10 percent decline in the number of fatalities in 2021 among the top 10 countries, compared with those countries' terrorism-related fatalities in 2020, and a 23 percent decline in global fatalities, compared with 2020. These 10 countries accounted for 78.3 percent of all fatalities in 2021. In 2020 the top 10 countries with the most fatalities were Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan, and Mozambique; together these 10 represented close to 96 percent of all fatalities.

**Table 3.2. Top 10 Countries With the Most Fatalities, 2021**

| Top Countries | Fatalities | | | | *2020-21* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | *change* | |
| 1 AFGHANISTAN | 9,974 | 8,727 | 8,495 | 5,837 | -31% | ▼ |
| 2 NIGERIA | 3,331 | 2,750 | 2,317 | 3,266 | 41% | ▲ |
| 3 DR CONGO | 680 | 1,125 | 3,522 | 3,065 | -13% | ▼ |
| 4 SYRIA | 3,906 | 2,920 | 3,172 | 1,930 | -39% | ▼ |
| 5 SOMALIA | 2,088 | 1,358 | 1,458 | 1,147 | -21% | ▼ |
| 6 BURMA | 62 | 120 | 134 | 1,052 | 685% | ▲ |
| 7 BURKINA FASO | 183 | 977 | 891 | 1,016 | 14% | ▲ |
| 8 NIGER | 117 | 326 | 493 | 916 | 86% | ▲ |
| 9 ETHIOPIA | 95 | 93 | 278 | 646 | 132% | ▲ |
| 10 MALI | 1,090 | 1,060 | 874 | 630 | -28% | ▼ |
| **Subtotal** | **21,526** | **19,456** | **21,634** | **19,505** | **-10%** | ▼ |
| **Year-end Total** | **32,841** | **25,925** | **29,335** | **22,692** | **-23%** | ▼ |

## 3.3. Profiles of Countries/Regions With a Significant Number of Terrorist Incidents

This section disaggregates the data on global terrorism incidents down to an analysis of specific geographic areas. The highly concentrated and localized nature of terrorism guides the selection of these countries and regions for further analysis and allows for crucial context to be provided to the overwhelming majority of incidents reported in 2021.




## Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

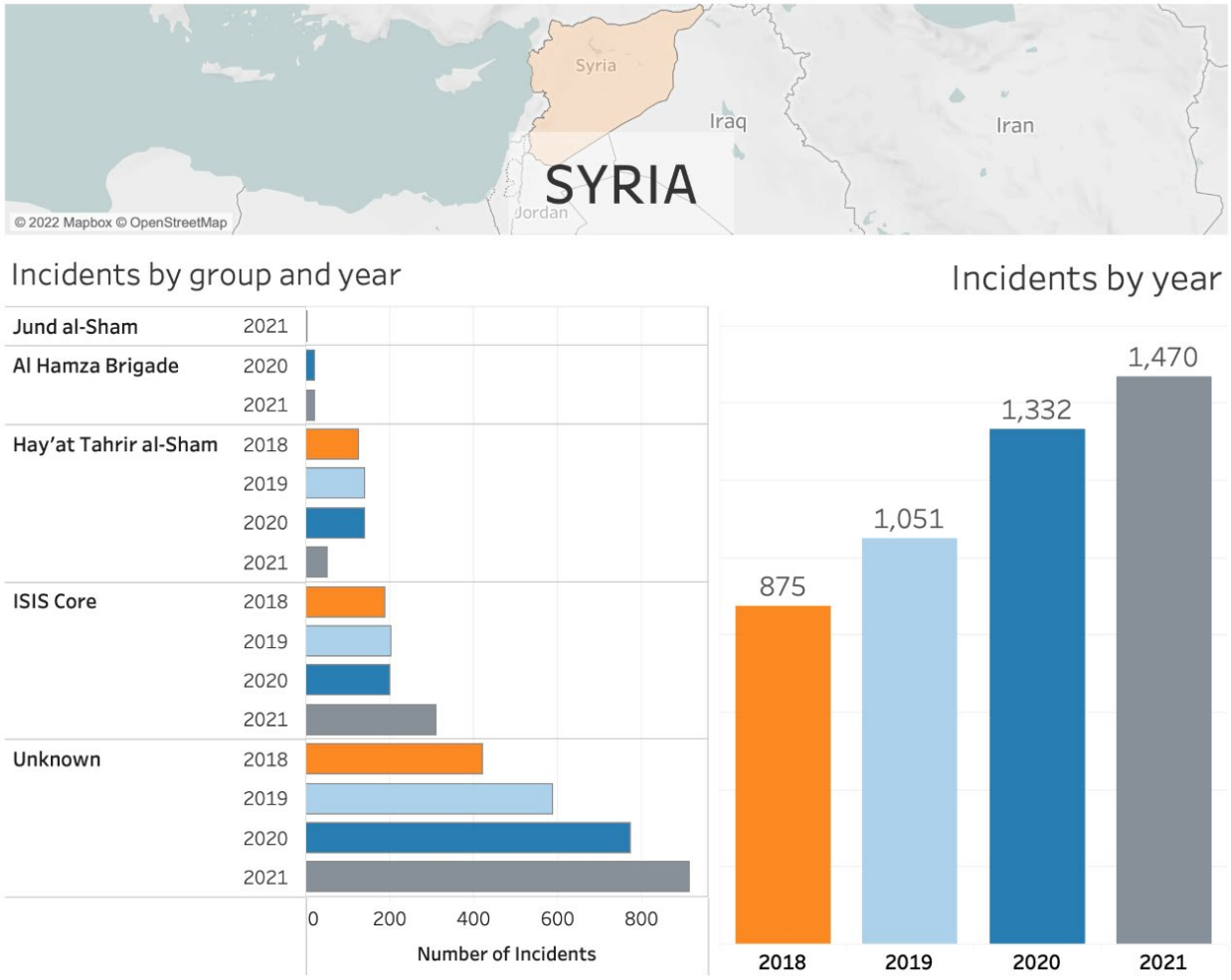
As we pointed out in the Perpetrator section of this report, toward the end of August the Taliban overthrew the government of Afghanistan. In this context many media outlets and sources have been attacked and had their equipment confiscated and dismantled. A reduction in the number of incidents by the Taliban does not necessarily mean there has been a reduction in violence. In 2021 there were 1,244 incidents in Afghanistan, with 5,837 fatalities (25 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 27.5 percent reduction in incidents from 2020 and a 31 percent decrease in fatalities.

The Taliban was the main perpetrator of incidents in Afghanistan in 2021, responsible for 67 percent of all incidents. ISIS-Khorasan was responsible for 3 percent of incidents, and 34 percent were not attributed to a specific perpetrator group (total percentages are greater than 100 percent, as multiple perpetrators can be involved in incidents).

Common tactic types in Afghanistan included shootings (57 percent), landmines or IEDs (28 percent), and assaults-bombings (16 percent). Significantly, of all terrorist incidents in Afghanistan in 2021, 47 percent targeted law enforcement and the military. Another prominent targeted group was the general population (29 percent). Also targeted but to lesser degrees were government

officials, students/children, journalists, other members of terrorist or militant groups, and pro-government forces.

In Afghanistan, the districts that experienced the most incidents were Kabul with 148 incidents (11.9 percent), Herat with 117 incidents (9.4 percent), and Kandahar with 110 incidents (8.9 percent).




## Syrian Arab Republic

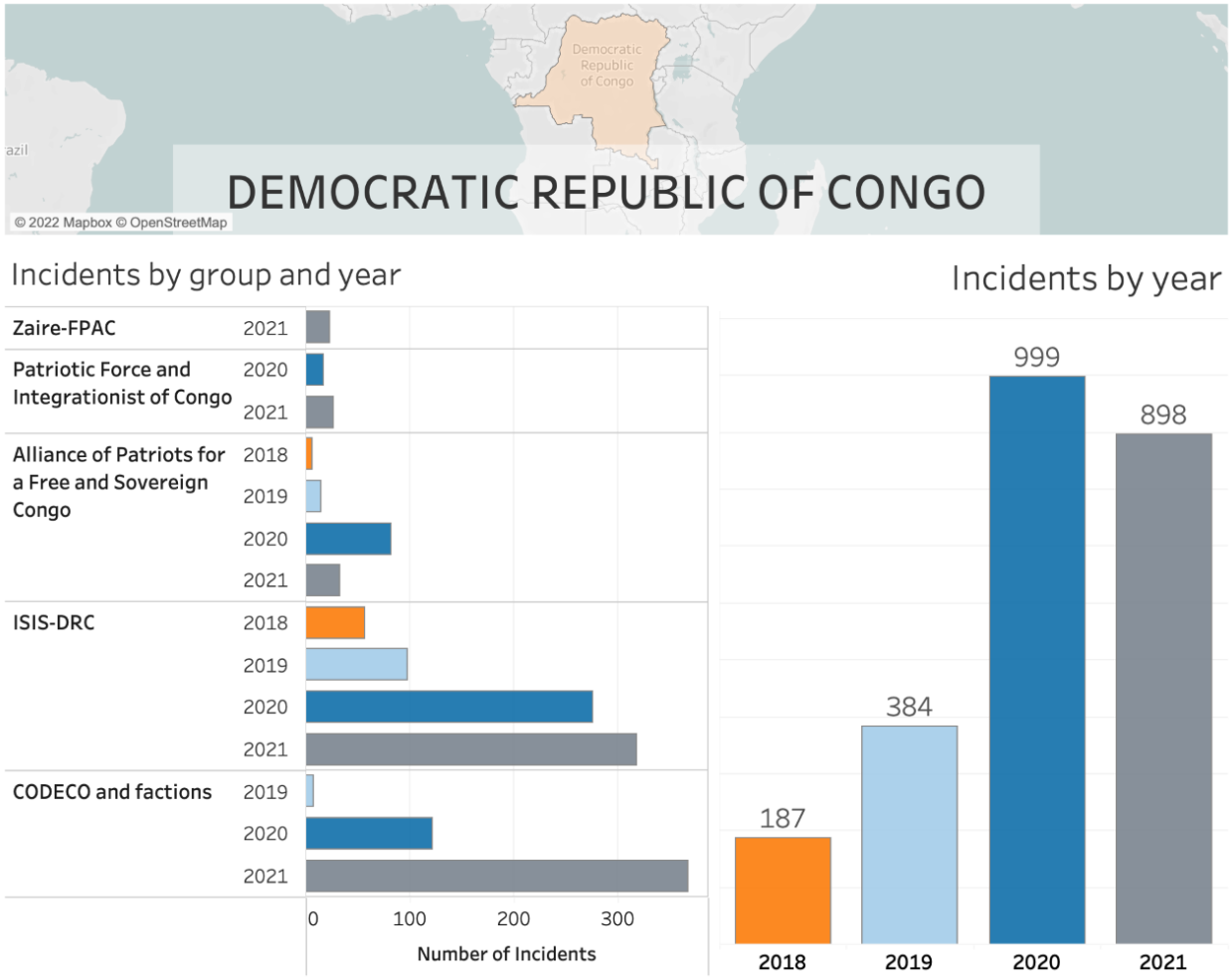
In 2021 there were 1,470 terrorist incidents in Syria, with 1,930 fatalities (8 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 10 percent increase in incidents from 2020 and a 39 percent decline in fatalities, as seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 previously.

ISIS-Core was the main known perpetrator of incidents in Syria in 2021, responsible for 21 percent of all incidents. The next-most-active group was Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, responsible for 3 percent of incidents. As is typical in conflict zones, a sizable percentage of incidents — for example, 65 percent in Syria — are not attributable to a known perpetrator. In total, there were 44 different perpetrator groups active in Syria in 2021.

Common tactic types in Syria included shootings (43 percent) and landmines or IEDs (33 percent).

Twenty-five percent of terrorist incidents in Syria in 2021 primarily targeted the general population. Other prominent targeted groups included other victims (19 percent) — consisting of other violent nonstate actors and other perpetrators — and the military (18 percent).

The Syrian provinces that experienced the most incidents were Halab with 289 incidents (19.7) percent), Dayr az Zawr with 254 incidents (17.6 percent), and Daraa with 245 incidents (16.7) percent).




## Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 2021 there were 898 incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with 3,065 fatalities (13 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constituted a 10 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, and a 13 percent decrease in fatalities.

ISIS-DRC (labeled in past Annexes as the Allied Democratic Forces [ADF]) was the main perpetrator of incidents in the DRC in 2021, responsible for 317 incidents or 37 percent of all DRC

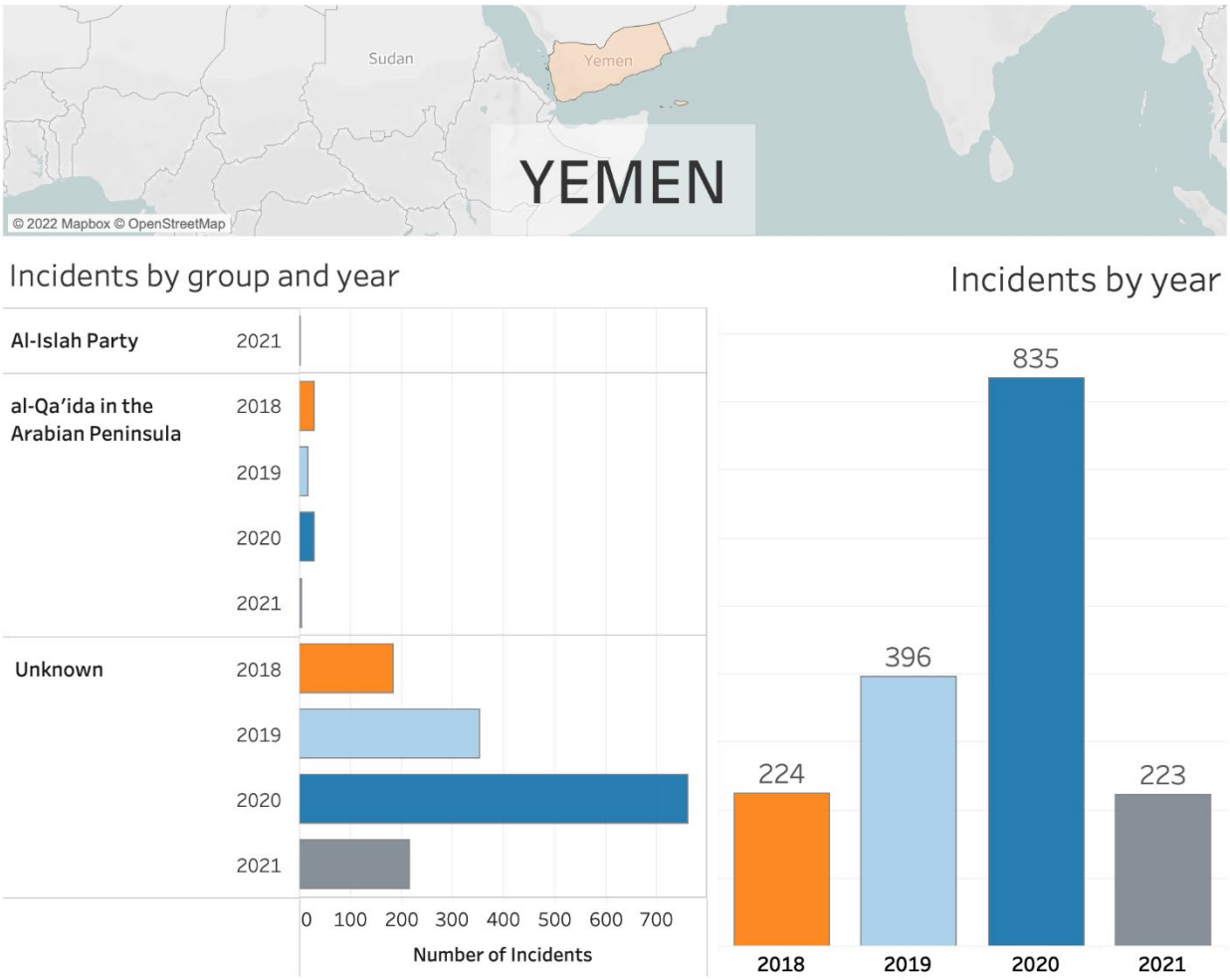
incidents. The Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (or CODECO-URPDC) was responsible for 271 incidents (31 percent of all incidents). The five factions of CODECO were responsible for 367 incidents. (See the CODECO dashboard on page 19.)

There are 49 active perpetrator groups — such as the Reformed Nduma Defense of the Congo, RED-Tabara, and the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo. Two percent of incidents in the DRC could not be attributed to a perpetrator group.

Common tactic types in the DRC included extortion (45 percent), kidnappings (17 percent), and shootings (9 percent).

Sixty-four percent of terrorist incidents primarily targeted the general population in 2021. Other prominent targeted groups included the military (15 percent) and other victims (11 percent) — consisting of other perpetrators or members of terrorist or militant groups.

The states in the DRC that experienced the most incidents were Ituri with 534 incidents (59.5 percent), Nord-Kivu with 286 incidents (31.8 percent), and Sud-Kivu with 62 incidents (6.9 percent).




## Republic of Yemen

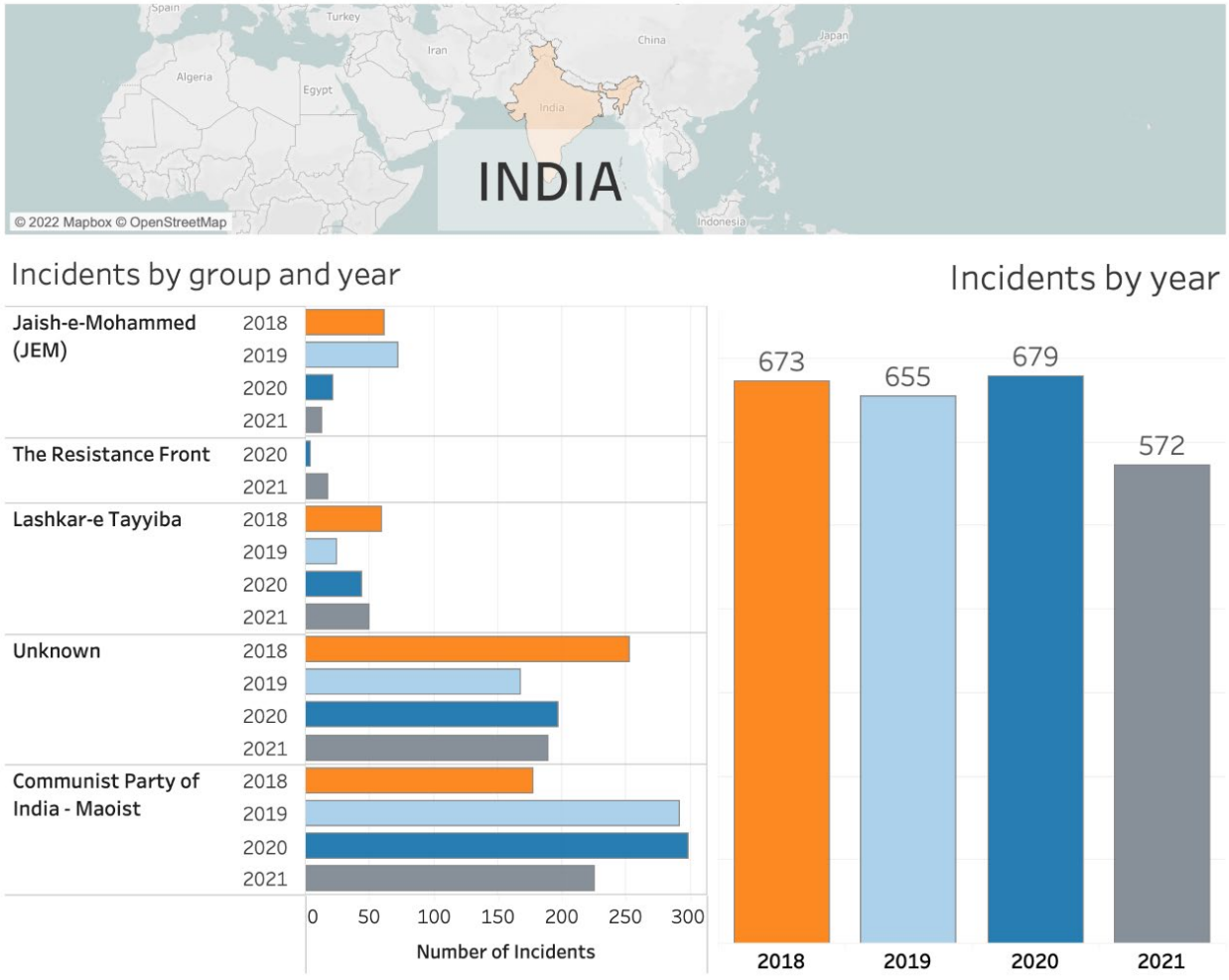
In 2021 there were 223 incidents in Yemen, with 383 fatalities (2 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 73 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, as well as a significant 82 percent decrease from the 2,132 fatalities in 2020.

Yemen is illustrative of the challenges of gathering open-source reporting in a conflict zone, with weak and/or biased media coverage. COVID-19 exacerbated this lack of detailed reporting in 2021. According to our methodology, if a credible media source does not identify a particular perpetrator we mark it as unknown. Subsequently more than 97 percent of all incidents in 2021 were not attributable to a particular perpetrator. Three percent of incidents were attributed to al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and another small percentage of incidents were attributed to al-Islah.

Common tactic types in Yemen included bombings (35 percent), landmines or IEDs (33 percent), and shootings (23 percent).

Terrorist incidents in Yemen in 2021 primarily targeted the general population (39 percent), other victims consisting of students and children (15 percent), and the military (10 percent).

In Yemen the provinces that experienced the most incidents were al-Hudaydah with 50 incidents (22.4 percent), Marib with 44 incidents (19.7 percent), and Ta'izz with 43 incidents (19.3 percent).




## Republic of India

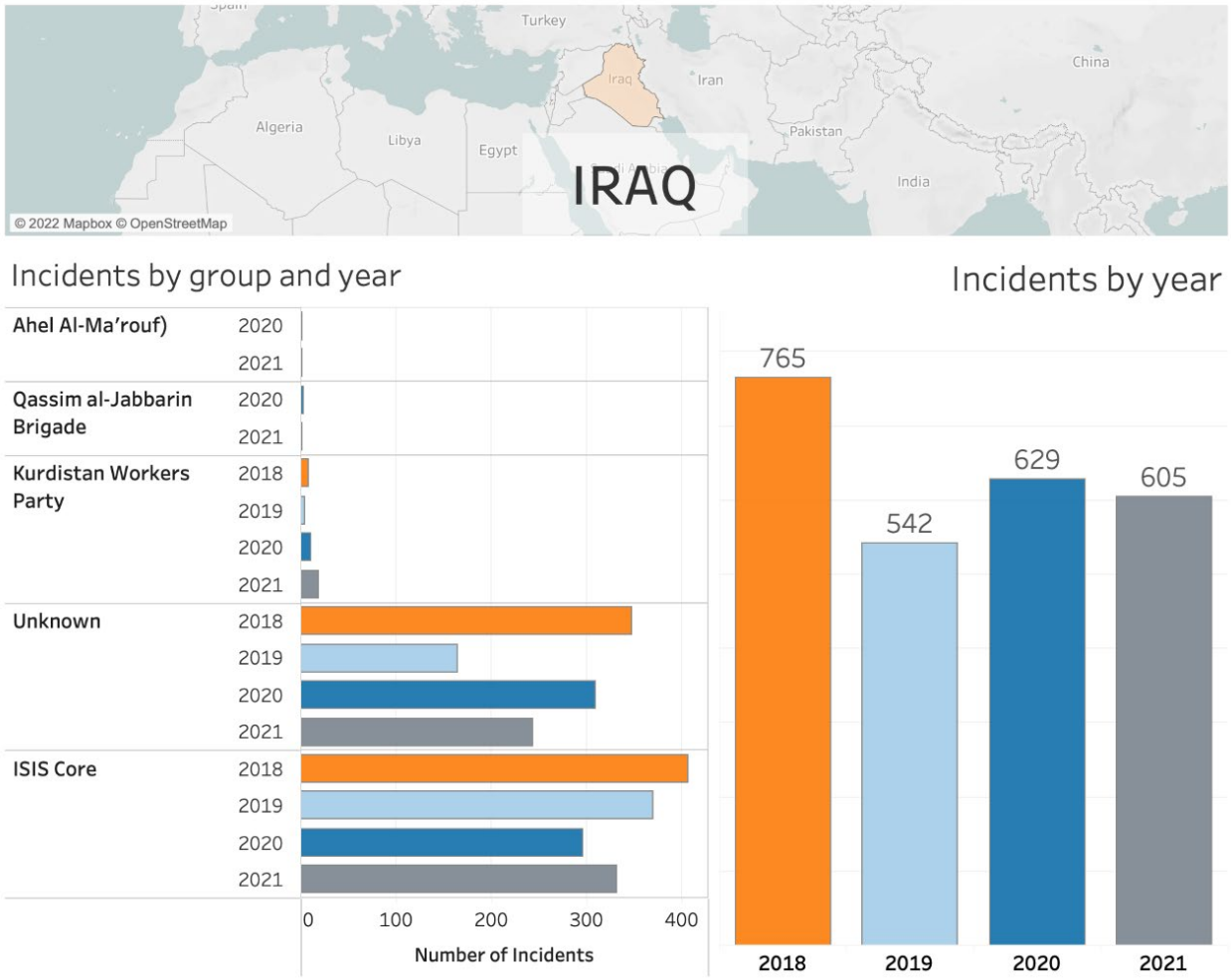
In 2021 there were 572 incidents in India. There were 536 fatalities (2 percent of the global total of fatalities). While India was in the top 10 countries for most terrorism incidents, it is not in the top 10 for fatalities. There was a 16 percent decrease in terrorism incidents from 2020, and a 5 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020.

CPI-Maoist was the main perpetrator of incidents in India in 2021, responsible for 225 incidents or 39 percent of all incidents. Lashkar-e-Tayyiba was responsible for 50 incidents, or 9 percent of all incidents. Hizbul Mujahideen was responsible for 12 incidents, or 2 percent of all incidents. The Resistance Front was responsible for 18 incidents, or 3 percent of all incidents. And 33 percent of incidents were not attributable to any perpetrator group.

Common tactic types in India included shootings (49 percent), landmines or IEDs (21 percent), and bombings (13 percent).

Twenty-two percent of terrorist incidents in India in 2021 primarily targeted law enforcement and the military. Other prominent targeted groups included the general population (16 percent) and other informants, terrorist group members, or militant group members (31 percent).

The states in India that experienced the most incidents were the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with 252 incidents (44 percent), Chattisgarh with 119 incidents (21 percent), and Jharkand with 59 incidents (10 percent).




## Republic of Iraq

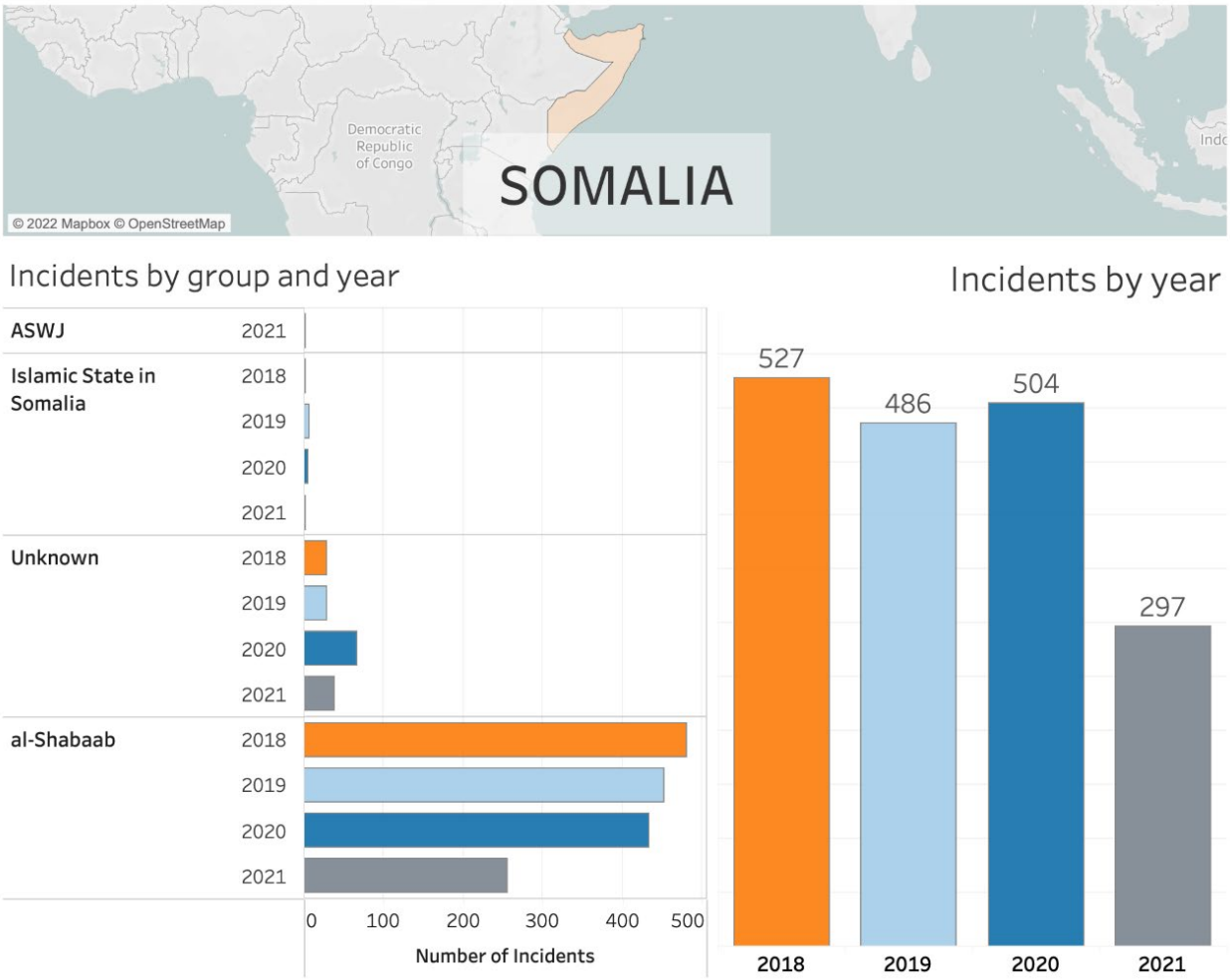
In 2021 there were 605 incidents in Iraq, with 511 fatalities (2 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 4 percent decline in incidents from 2020, and a 1 percent reduction in fatalities from 2020. While Iraq was in the top 10 list for terrorism incidents in 2021, it was not among the top 10 countries with the most fatalities.

ISIS-Core was the main perpetrator of incidents in Iraq in 2021, responsible for 333 or 55 percent of all incidents. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was responsible for 19 (or 3 percent of) incidents. Other active perpetrator groups — such as the Revolutionary League (Usbat al-Thairen), the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Qassim al-Jabbarin Brigade, and Hizballah-Iraq — were collectively responsible for 2 percent of the incidents. Forty percent of incidents in Iraq were not attributed to a particular perpetrator group. However, by perpetrator category, 68 percent of incidents in Iraq were perpetrated by radical Islamic jihadists, and 24 percent of incidents in Iraq were perpetrated by Iranian-backed groups or individuals.

Common tactic types in Iraq included landmines or IEDs (33 percent), shootings (20 percent), and bombings (15 percent).

Thirteen percent of terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2021 primarily targeted the general population. Other prominent targeted groups included military (18 percent), law enforcement (14 percent), and other victims (14 percent) — consisting of other perpetrators, members of terrorist or militant groups, or pro-government forces.

The provinces in Iraq that experienced the most incidents were Diyala with 156 incidents (25.8 percent), Kirkuk with 99 incidents (16.4 percent), and Baghdad with 83 incidents (13.7 percent).




## Federal Republic of Somalia

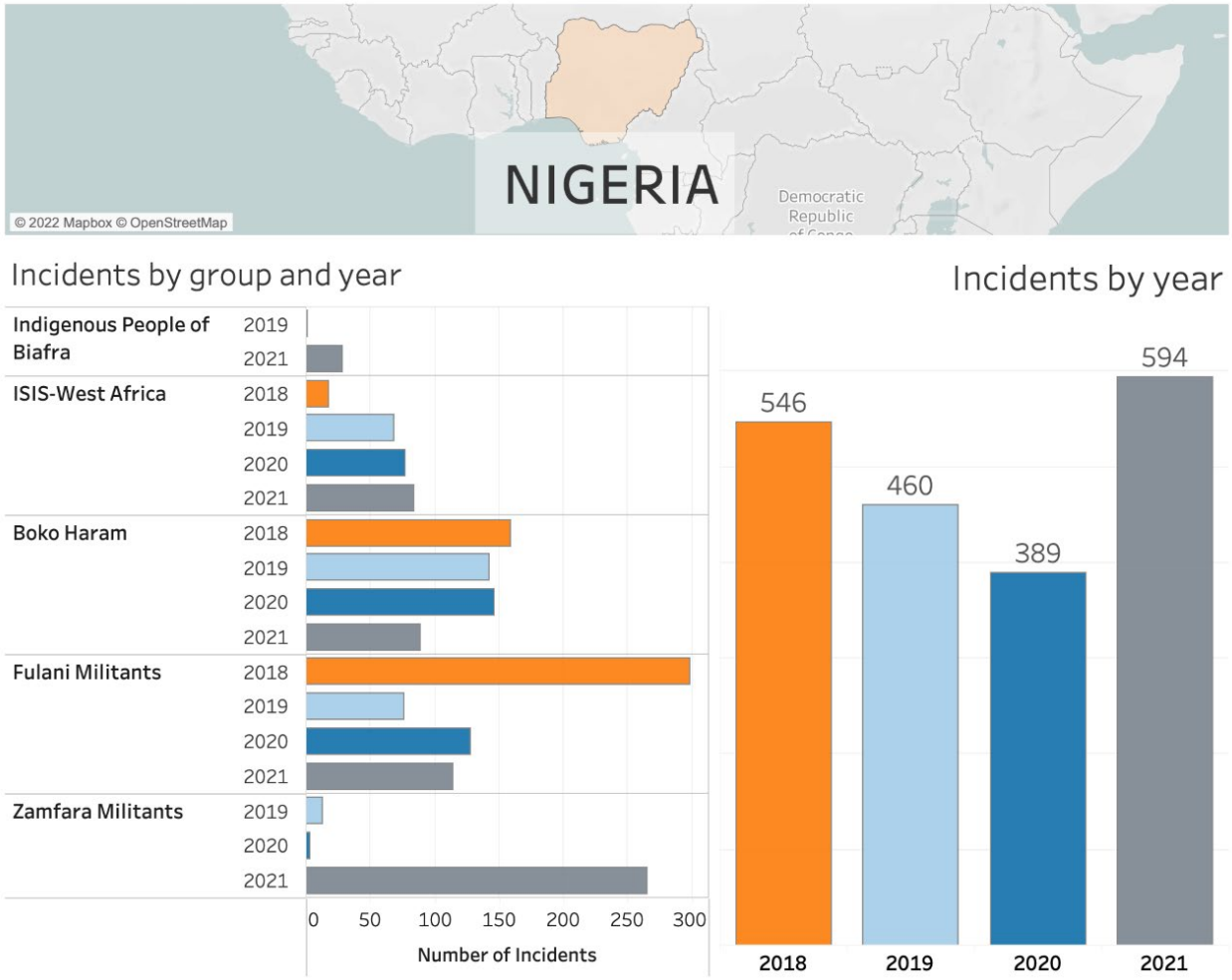
In 2021 there were 297 incidents in Somalia, with 1,147 fatalities (5 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 41 percent decrease in incidents from 2020, as well as a 21 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020.

Al-Shabaab was the main perpetrator of incidents in Somalia in 2021, responsible for 255 incidents (86 percent of all incidents). ISIS-Somalia was responsible for 1 percent. Thirteen percent of incidents in Somalia were not attributed to a perpetrator group.

Common tactic types in Somalia included shootings (41 percent), landmines or IEDs (33 percent), and bombings (20 percent).

Thirty-two percent of terrorist incidents in Somalia in 2021 primarily targeted the military, with a further 7 percent targeting international military. Another prominent targeted group was the general population (32 percent).

In Somalia, the provinces that experienced the most incidents were Banaadir with 84 incidents (28 percent), Jubbada Hoose with 40 incidents (13 percent), and Shabeellaha Dhexe with 39 incidents (13 percent).




## Federal Republic of Nigeria

In 2021 there were 594 incidents in Nigeria, with 3,266 fatalities (14 percent of the global total of fatalities). This constitutes a 53 percent increase in incidents from 2020, as well as a 41 percent increase in fatalities from 2020.

Zamfara Militants were the main known perpetrator of incidents in Nigeria in 2021, responsible for 265 incidents (45 percent of all incidents). Fulani Militants were next, with 114 incidents (19 percent). Boko Haram was responsible for 89 incidents (15 percent of the total), and ISIS-West Africa was responsible for 85 incidents (14 percent). As noted earlier, local sources do not always differentiate between Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

Common tactic types in Nigeria included shootings (62 percent), hostage-taking/kidnappings (26 percent), and ambushes (7 percent).

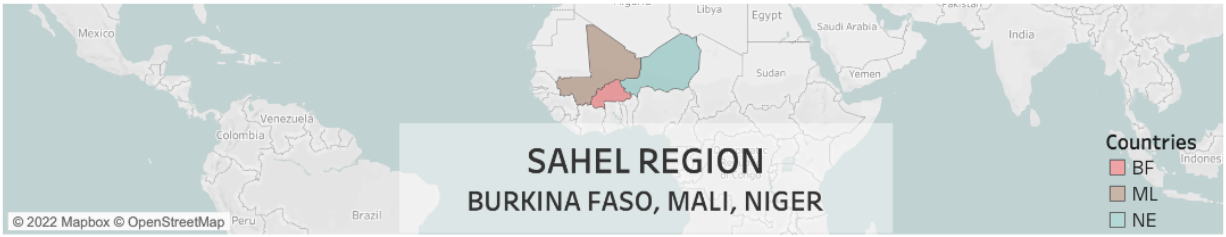
Thirty-six percent of terrorist incidents in Nigeria in 2021 targeted the general population. Other prominent targeted groups included the military (15 percent) and specifically targeted groups of civilians (11 percent) — consisting of those identified by gender, identified by race or ethnicity, identified by religion (Muslim, Christian, or other religion), refugees/internally displaced persons, and students/children.

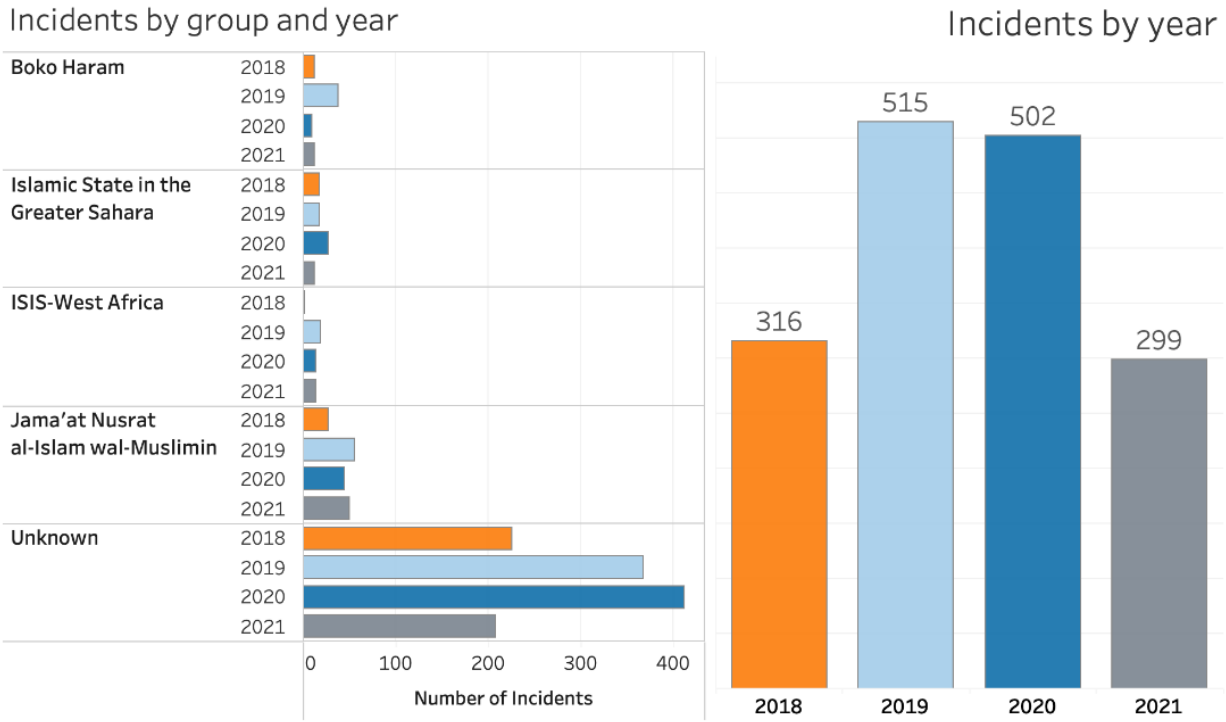
The Nigerian states that experienced the most incidents were Borno with 125 incidents (21 percent), Kaduna with 83 incidents (14 percent), and Zamfara with 65 incidents (11 percent).

### Zamfara Militias

Zamfara militias are groups of insurgents that traditionally operated in the northwest region of Nigeria. Their activities predate Nigeria's colonial period, and they are now well entrenched in northern Nigeria. The contemporary Zamfara militias began around 2011 in Zamfara state. They have spread across northwestern and parts of northcentral Nigeria, including Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Niger state, Sokoto, and the Federal Capital Territory. Authorities and analysts suggest that Zamfara militias may number as many as 100 loosely connected groups ranging in size from 10 fighters to more than 1,000, cumulating to more than 30,000 fighters, most of whom are based in Zamfara state.

Fragmentation and intensified counteroffensives by the Nigerian security agents forced Zamfara militias to disperse across northwest and northcentral Nigeria, with some of the militias constantly moving across state lines through the forests to evade capture. Rather than defeat the militias, the counteroffensives led them to adapt, and they expanded their numbers and capabilities. Mutala Ahmed Rufa'i a historian at Nigeria's Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto having conducted months of interviews with various Zamfara militia members, contends that the militias have recruited, and continue to recruit, members from Chad, Mali, and Niger mostly Tuaregs with links to Sahelian rebels, where they also source weapons. Dr Rufa'i notes that the militias have trained in modern guerilla strategies and tactics and have developed relationships with Jihadi groups in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel region, particularly Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. With greater numbers and capabilities, Zamfara militias have intensified their attacks on government interests and local populations. Some of these attacks have been violent with high numbers of casualties.




## The Sahel Region

In the Sahel, terrorist groups — including affiliates and adherents of al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and nonaligned groups — continued their operations in north and central Mali and the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

In 2021 there were 299 incidents in the Sahel, with 2,562 fatalities (11 percent of the global total). This constituted a 13.5 percent decrease in incidents from 2020. None of these three countries is in the top 10 for incidents, but all of them are among the top 10 for the number of fatalities, which rose 13 percent from the total terrorism fatalities of 2020.

This is also one of the most difficult regions to gather open-source media reporting, regardless of language. In Burkina Faso, for 86 percent of the incidents the media did not identify the perpetrator. In Mali it was 59 percent and Niger 60 percent. These are the highest percentages anywhere.

### Burkina Faso

In 2021 there were 126 incidents in Burkina Faso, with 1,036 fatalities. This represents a 36 percent decrease in terrorist activity from 2020 but a 14 percent increase in fatalities from 2020.

ISIS-Greater Sahara was the main perpetrator of incidents in Burkina Faso in 2021, responsible for 11 incidents (9 percent). Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin was responsible for eight incidents (6 percent).

Common tactics in Burkina Faso included shootings (52 percent), planting mines or IEDs (19 percent), and kidnappings (11 percent).

Forty percent of terrorist incidents in Burkina Faso in 2021 primarily targeted the general population. Other prominent targeted groups included the military (19 percent) and government (13 percent).

In Burkina Faso the provinces that experienced the most incidents were Seno (10.3 percent), Oudalan (8.7 percent), and Loroum (7.9 percent).

### Republic of Mali

In 2021 there were 110 incidents in Mali, resulting in 630 fatalities. Mali experienced a 56 percent decrease in terrorist activity from 2020 and a 27.9 percent decrease in fatalities from 2020.

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin was the main perpetrator of incidents in Mali in 2021, responsible for 42 incidents (38 percent). ISIS-Greater Sahara was responsible for three incidents (3 percent).

Common tactic types in Mali included shootings (32 percent), landmines or IEDs (26 percent), and ambushes (19 percent).

Thirty-five percent of terrorist incidents in Mali targeted the military in 2021. Other prominent targeted groups included the general population (23 percent), groups identified by race or ethnicity (12 percent), and refugees or internally displaced persons (4 percent).

In Mali the provinces that experienced the most incidents were Mopti (37.3 percent), Gao (20.9 percent), and Segou (11.8 percent).

### Republic of Niger

In 2021 there were 63 incidents in Niger, with 916 fatalities. This constituted a 22 percent increase in terrorist activity from 2020 and an 85.8 percent increase in fatalities from 2020.

ISIS-West Africa was the main perpetrator of incidents in Niger in 2021, responsible for 13 incidents (21 percent). Boko Haram was responsible for 12 incidents (19 percent).

Common tactic types in Niger included shootings (33 percent), exploitation (10 percent), and landmines or IEDs (8 percent).

Forty-six percent of terrorist incidents in Niger targeted the general population. Other prominent targeted groups included the military (27 percent) and law enforcement (16 percent).

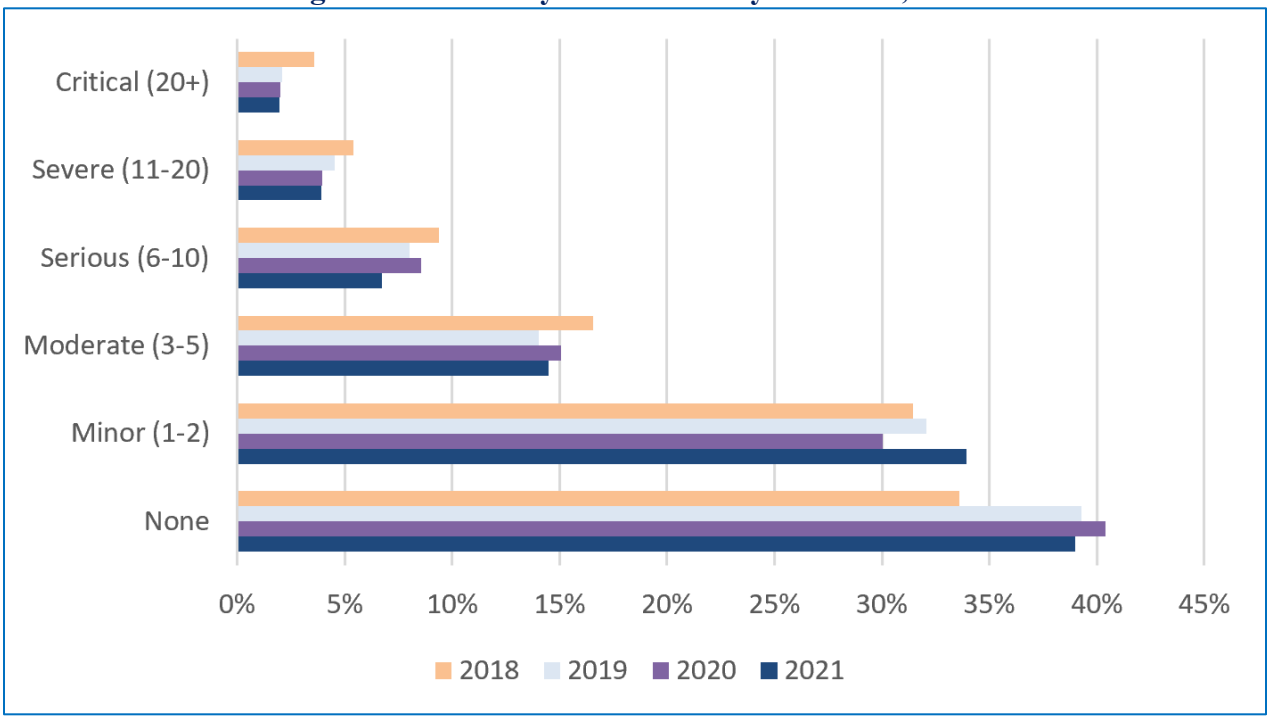
In Niger the provinces that experienced the most terrorism was Tillaberi (50.8 percent), Diffa (28.6 percent), and Tahoua (11.1 percent).

# 4. Global Characteristics of Incidents

As with Perpetrator Dashboards, this is a newer section of the Annex. This section disaggregates the corpus of records on global terrorism events into their component characteristics to present the different aspects of incidents in 2021. Terrorism can be a highly localized phenomenon, and analysis at a global scale does not always provide for an adequate understanding. By examining the distinctive characteristics of global incidents, our goal is to shed light on the nature of global terrorism in 2021.

## 4.1. Severity of Incidents

**Figure 4.1. Severity of Incidents by Fatalities, 2021**




The principal unit of measurement for this report is the number of terrorism incidents in a particular year. However, not all terrorism incidents make the same impact or cause the same damage. Similarly, not all incidents require the same level of coordination and complexity by the perpetrators to succeed in their attacks. It also is difficult, for example, to measure property damage — whether it occurs on government or commercial property or results in people losing their homes. It is even more difficult to measure the trauma and fear of those areas victimized by terrorism on a continual basis. One simple measure of the severity of an attack is the number of fatalities the incident causes, as seen in Figure 4.1. In 2021 there were 196 incidents with 20 or more fatalities (2 percent of 2021 incidents). In 2020 there were 202 incidents with 20 or more fatalities (2 percent of 2020 incidents).

Figure 4.1 also shows that there has been a relatively static share of incidents recorded in which there were no fatalities — such as incidents damaging land, property, or infrastructure. These represented 34 percent of incidents in 2018, more than 40 percent of incidents in 2020, and 39 percent for 2021.

## 4.2. Related Incidents

Some terrorist attacks recorded by GTTAC involve related incidents that took place in separate locations or times. When an attack involved multiple incidents discontinuous from one another across space and time, but which were clearly part of the same attack, the events were given their own incident record but also linked in the data. The related incidents reported cover several different scenarios. For example, the kidnapping and execution of a hostage that happens in different times and locations by a terrorist group would be classified as two related incidents. an example:

- On February 10, 2021, in Dashisha, Tel Tamr, Hasakah, Syria, Al-Hamza Brigade targeted the SDF-controlled areas with rocket artillery, injuring a child. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident.

  This was one of two related incidents. On February 10, 2021, Al-Hamza Brigade shelled the SDF-controlled villages of Tawilah and Dashisha in Tel Tamr in Hasakah Governorate. The rocket attacks left two children injured.

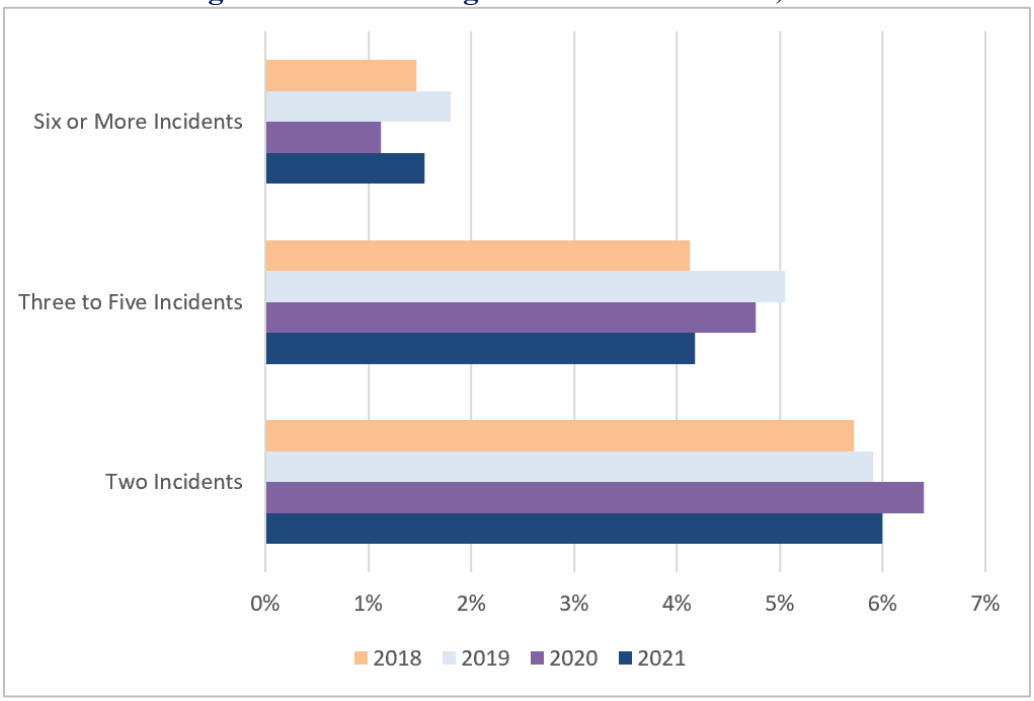
Most other related incidents were coordinated attacks on the same day or on multiple days in one or multiple locations, most often within the same region.

Another example:

- On April 3, 2021, al-Shabaab militants conducted a coordinated attack consisting of three incidents. First, in Shabeellaha Hoose, Somalia, al-Shabaab militants conducted a suicide car bombing at the Awdhigle military base and clashed with the military forces. Five persons were killed, and five others were wounded. Second, another suicide car bombing was conducted at the Barire military base. Militants also clashed with the military forces and burned property. Third, the militants also bombed a convoy of national army troops en route to defend military bases being attacked simultaneously. Four soldiers were killed, and another four others were wounded. In total, 13 were killed and 13 wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The overwhelming majority of incidents recorded in 2021 were single incidents — 7,375. Remarkably, the percentage of single events has hovered around 88 percent of all incidents for the past four years. In 2020, 1,250 incidents were part of a multiple-incident attack. In 2021 there were 979 multi-incident attacks. Figure 4.2 represents the small decrease in the share of related incidents from 2020 to 2021, split out by the number of related incidents.

**Figure 4.2. Percentage of Related Incidents, 2021**



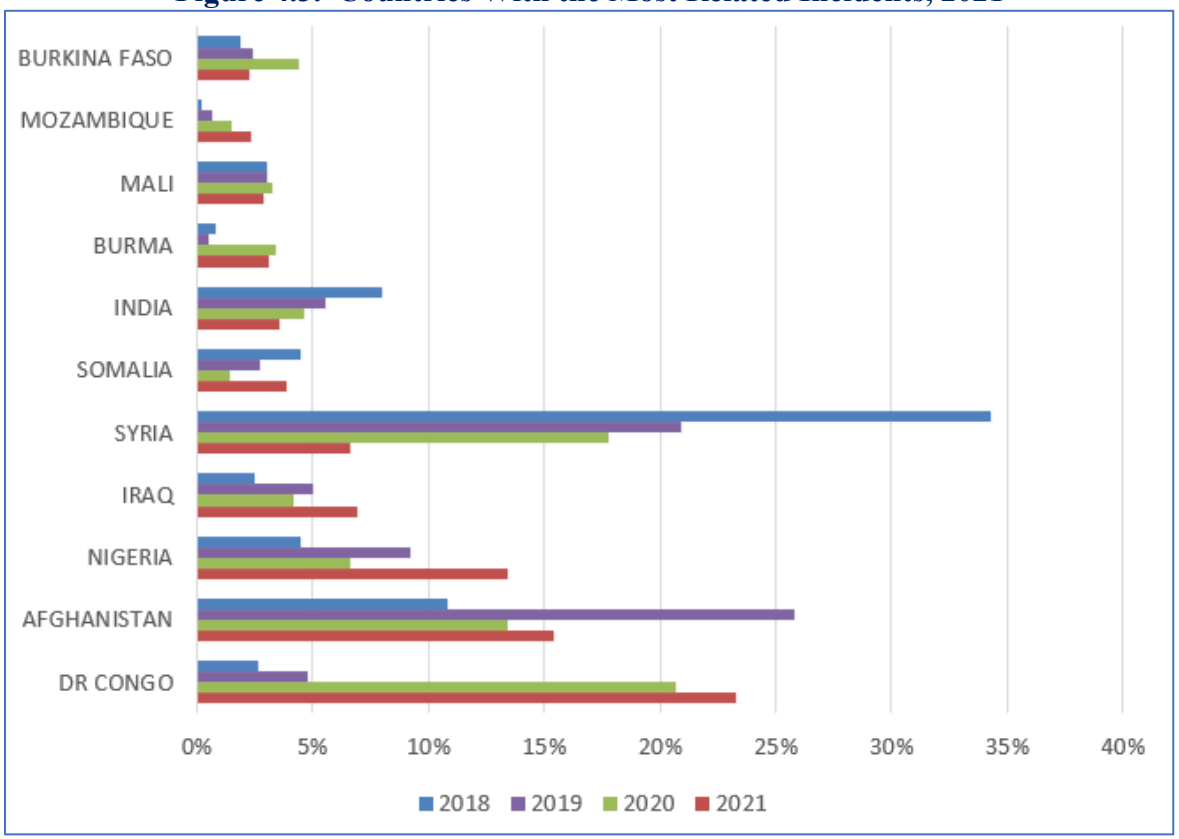

While the share of complex attacks with six or more related incidents rose slightly (from 1.1 percent of incidents in 2020 to 1.5 percent of incidents in 2021), the share of events with two related incidents represented 6 percent of all incidents recorded in 2021.

On average in 2021, a related incident caused 3.12 fatalities, compared with single incidents, which caused 2.73 fatalities on average. This is a small but statistically significant difference ($p<.01$), indicating that related incidents tended to be more lethal than single incidents in 2021.

In 2021, 86.6 percent of related incidents occurred on the same calendar day. While 5.5 percent of related incidents took place over two calendar days, only 1.7 percent of incidents took place over three days. Of all related incidents in 2021, 6.2 percent took place over four or more calendar days.

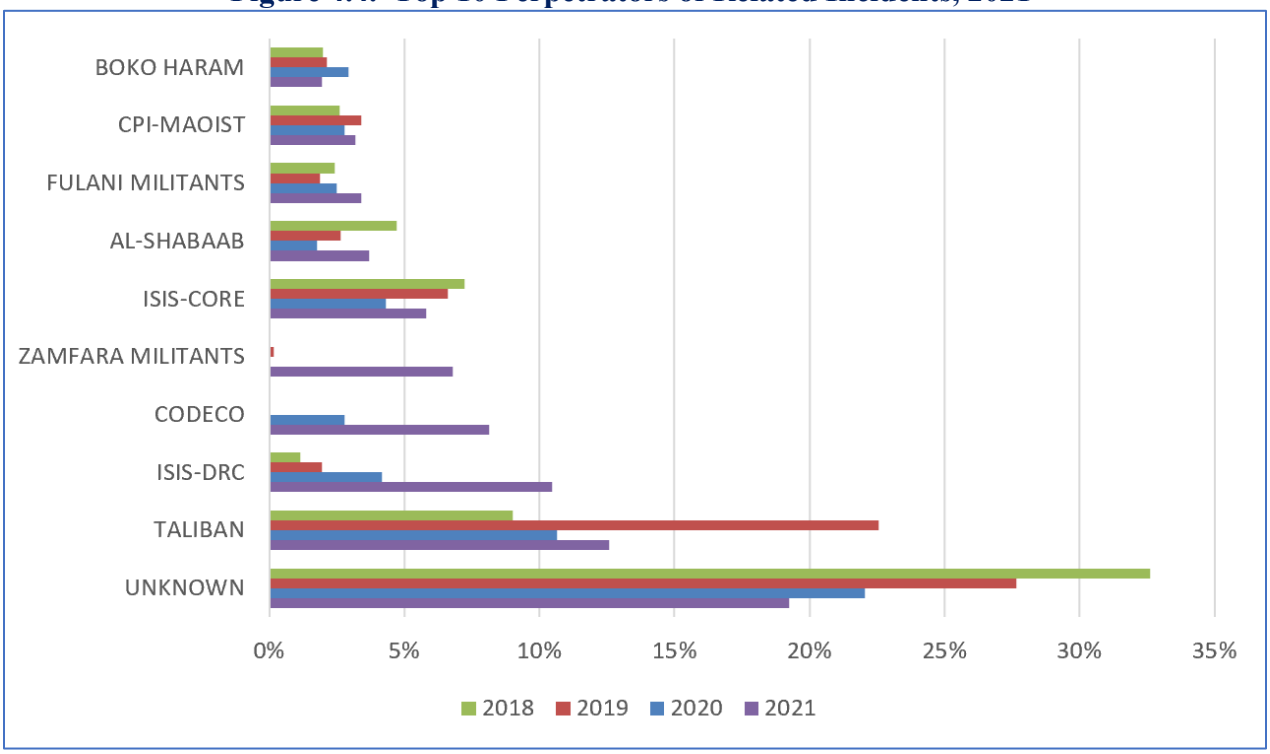
As with terrorist incidents in general, the related incidents were heavily concentrated in a small number of countries. Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of related incidents among the countries where they were most common. These countries account for 85 percent of all related incidents reported in 2021. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (the DRC) accounted for 23 percent of the related incidents in 2021, the highest share of any country. This represented a dramatic increase from 2.6 percent in 2018 and 4.8 percent in 2019 and 20.0 percent in 2020. Afghanistan had the second-highest share of related incidents, with 15 percent of all related incidents in 2021. However, unlike the DRC, Syria had a notable decline in related incidents over the past three years, down from 34.2 percent in 2018, 20.9 percent in 2019, and 17.0 percent in 2020, to 6.6 percent in 2021.

**Figure 4.3. Countries With the Most Related Incidents, 2021**




The dramatic increase of related incidents over the last four years for the Democratic Republic of the Congo — from 2.5 percent in 2018 to 23.0 percent in 2021 — is reflected in Figure 4.4. The main perpetrators CODECO and ISIS–DRC have also increased their share of the related incidents there. The increase in Afghanistan matches the numbers for the Taliban (seen in Figure 4.4), which perpetrated 15 percent of related incidents in 2021, up from 11 percent in 2020. Figure 4.4 represents the share of the related incidents that can be attributed to the top known perpetrators of related incidents, representing 57 percent of related incidents. Nineteen percent of related incidents in 2021 involved an unknown perpetrator; however, this share has been decreasing consistently since 2018.

**Figure 4.4. Top 10 Perpetrators of Related Incidents, 2021**



## 4.3. Weapons Used in Terrorist Incidents

**Figure 4.5. Weapon Types by Terrorist Incidents Worldwide, 2021**

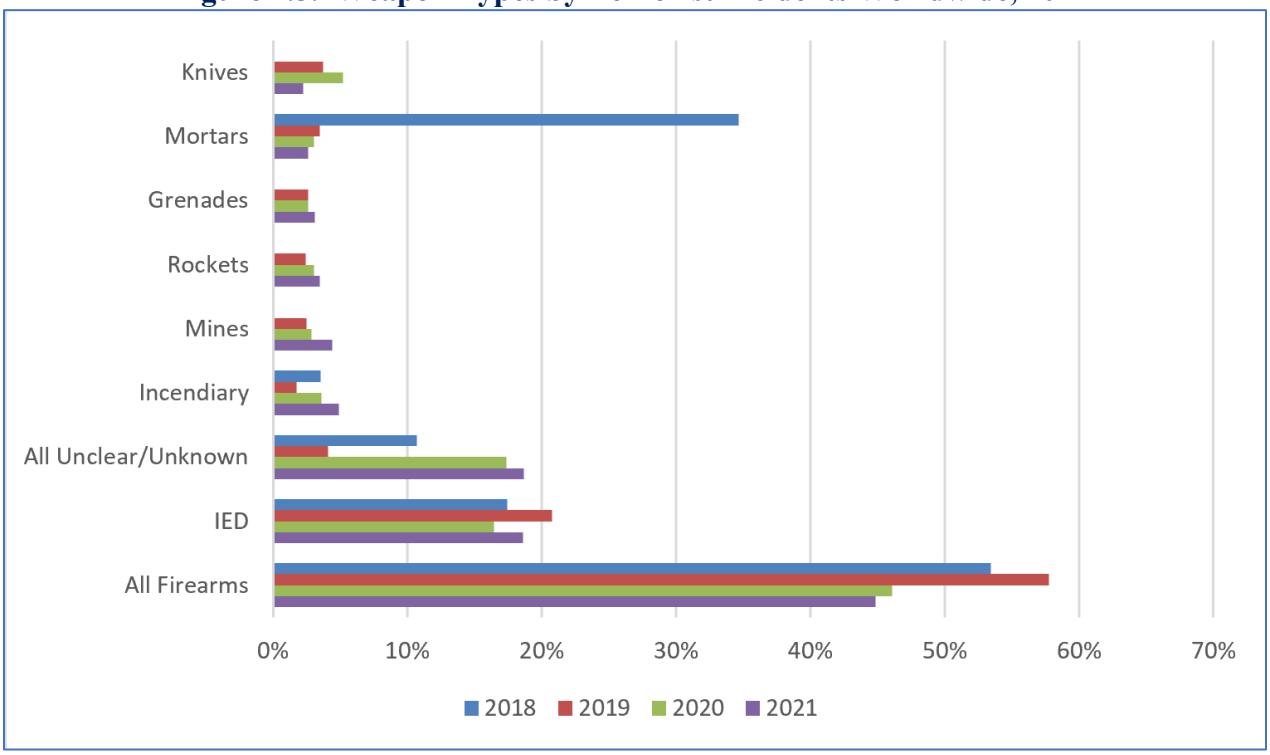



Figure 4.5 shows that, during 2021, all types of firearms combined were used in 45 percent of the terrorist incidents, followed by IEDs in 19 percent of terrorist incidents. Compared with the previous year, we see a small decline in the usage of firearms by 1 percent but a 5 percent increase in the use of IEDs. We also note in general a slight increase in unclear or unknown weapons reported, which may reflect diminished open-source media reporting attributable to the global pandemic.

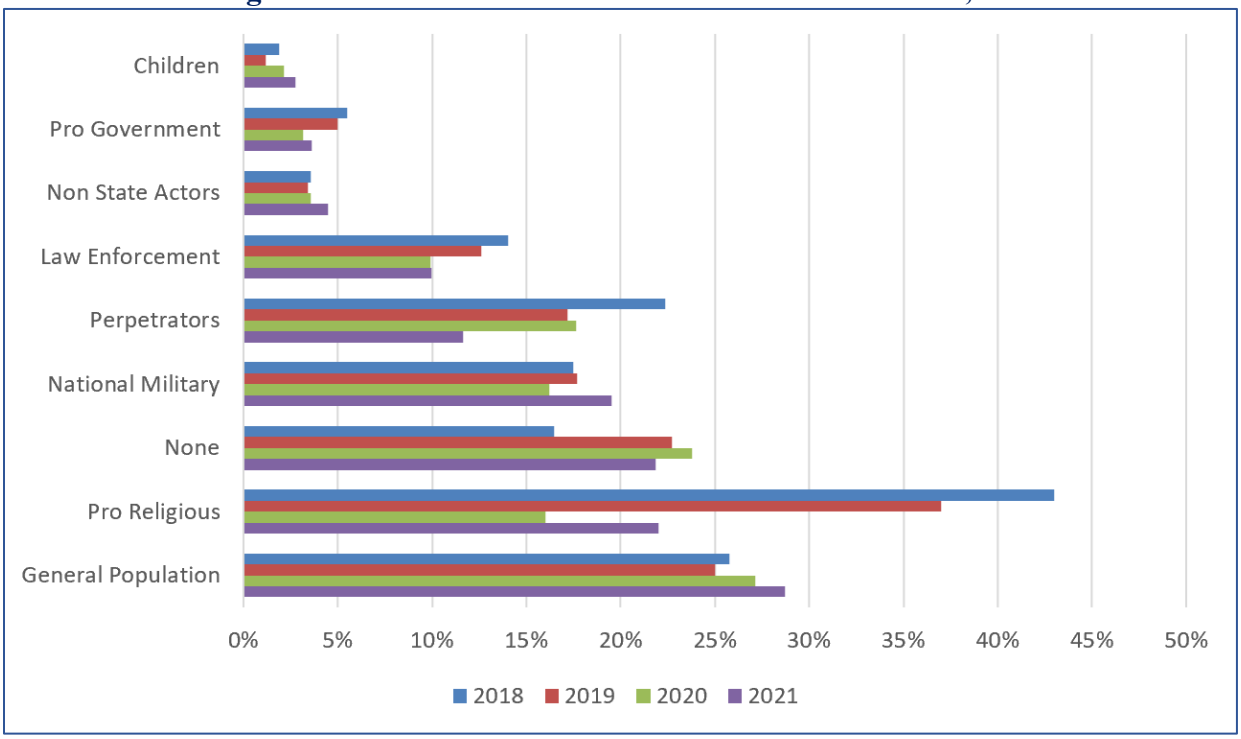
## 4.4. Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping

There were 5,612 persons kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist incidents in 2021. This was a 25.5 percent increase from 2020. The perpetrators responsible for the most terrorism-related kidnappings were Zamfara Militants (1,802 hostages), the Taliban (977 hostages), ISIS-DRC (556 hostages), and ISIS-West Africa (345 hostages).

## 4.5. Victims of Terrorism

Incidents are often complex, and a single incident may affect diverse types of victims directly and indirectly. While most reporting will give a rough estimate on the loss of life, it is extremely hard to quantify the loss of individual property and human trauma from these incidents. Consistent with our methodology, we included the military as a victim when it was a target and when the attack was initiated by the terrorist. Some terrorist groups — for example ISIS-West Africa, Boko Haram, Taliban, and al-Shabaab — attacked military targets as a sign of strength.

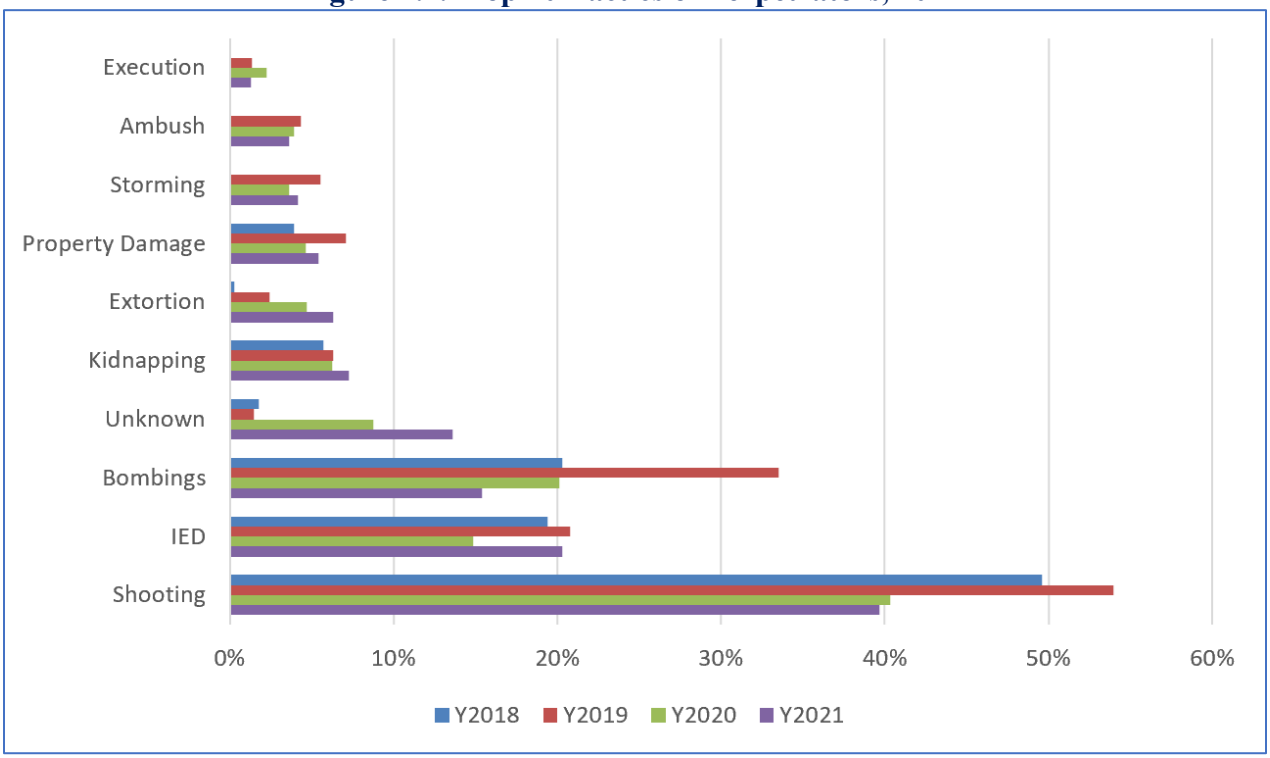
**Figure 4.6. Victims of Terrorism Incidents Worldwide, 2021**




As shown in Figure 4.6, the general population were victims in more than 29 percent of incidents. As noted in the Methodology section, open-source media reports can often be imprecise when trying to identify the victim of an incident, especially in certain regions. Individuals associated with governments (such as civil servants, local government, high-level officials, judiciary, or law enforcement and legislators) were collectively found to be victims in 13 percent of incidents globally in 2021.

## 4.6. Tactics of Perpetrators

**Figure 4.7. Top 10 Tactics of Perpetrators, 2021**




The GTTAC database recorded 30 different tactics. Figure 4.7 shows the top 10 tactics used in 2021.

Forty-seven percent of incidents were armed attacks, with 39 percent being shootings. Thirty-six percent of incidents were carried out with bombs and explosives; among these, 22 percent (of all attacks) were IEDs or landmines planted in a static location, 15 percent were bombings used in an assault, and 1 percent were suicide bombings. Seven percent of all incidents were kidnappings, 4 percent were storming/rapid assaults, 3 percent were ambushes, and 1 percent were executions.

# 5. Glossary of Terms

## 5.1. Tactic Types

| | |
|---|---|
| Suicide Attack | A suicide attack is when a perpetrator deliberately intends to die during their attack. These cases usually — but not always — involve use of a bomb or other explosive device. |
| Hostage-taking | In a hostage-taking, unlike a kidnapping, the victims are held at the site where they are captured until the hostage-takers' conditions are met. The victims of a hostage-taking often are random individuals who are captured at the site of the attack. |
| Kidnapping | The main distinctions between a kidnapping and a hostage-taking are the location and the targeting of the victims. Kidnapping is usually more targeted, with the perpetrators selecting specific victims in advance, taking control of them, and moving them to a different site. In a hostage-taking the victims may be random individuals who find themselves at the attack site. |
| Bombing | A bombing or munition is used to cause destruction to an intended location or target. This category includes attacks with commercial explosives such as TNT but also reflects car bombs, mail bombs, and pipe bombs, as well as other types of IEDS and suicide bombs. |
| Mines/IEDs | Mines and IEDs refer to antipersonnel mines and antivehicle mines or IEDs strategically placed to deny access to an area, route, or structure. |

## 5.2. Victim Types

| | |
|---|---|
| General Population or Unknown | This category is used in cases where there is insufficient information about the victims or when they appear to have been victimized for no apparent reason other than they were at the site of the incident. |
| Identified by Gender | This category is used in cases such as attacks on women's schools, or other cases when either men or women formed a large majority of the targeted victims. |
| Identified by Race or Ethnicity | This category is used in cases where a specific racial or ethnic group formed a large majority of the victims and may have been targeted for their group identity. |
| Perpetrators | This category records any deaths and injuries among the perpetrators of the attack. |
| Pro-Government Forces | This category is used for pro-government forces that are present in a country, whether they are funded or otherwise supported by the government, if they are not the official forces of a national government. |
| Other Violent Nonstate Actors | This category accounts for members of other groups, members of factions, individuals in the perpetrator's group who are considered disloyal, or members of the perpetrator's group that were accidental victims. |