Risks

Downloaded on 23.07.2026

Last updated on 20.11.2025

Table of contents

Sudden attack **3**

Sudden attack

Threat assessment: The likelihood of a sudden attack occurring in Estonia is low. Compared with the previous assessment, the risk evaluation has not changed.

A sudden attack is an event in which one or more individuals, using a suitable means, attempt within a short period of time in a crowded place to injure or kill as many people as possible or cause as much damage as possible. Terrorist attacks account for only about one-third of all sudden attacks.

Violent ideologies rooted in any form of extremism often attract young people with mental health or family-related problems. As mental health deteriorates, the probability of carrying out a sudden attack increases. Some young people who are interested in terrorist ideologies are active online, showing greater ideological flexibility and readiness to use violence. Certain vulnerable young people are also direct targets of active recruitment. Lone actors are usually not completely isolated; more often, they are young individuals integrated into online communities that promote violence.

THREATS

- Events in recent years worldwide – war, inflation, rising prices, worsening living standards, and growing societal tensions – have created fertile ground for the spread of violent extremism. Radicalisation can occur covertly and quickly, making it difficult to assess the probability of an attack.

- The most likely triggers for attacks are family and psychological problems or mental illnesses. Factors that can lead an individual to attack include depression, suicidal thoughts, feelings of persecution, desires for revenge, romantic grievances, or the wish to gain attention.

- Other reasons for sudden attacks are generally social, economic, or personal in nature, with attack targets typically linked directly to these causes.

- Terrorist and violent extremists are capable of strategically integrating digital technology – including the latest developments in artificial intelligence – into their toolkit to spread propaganda, recruit members, plan attacks, and avoid detection by law enforcement agencies.

Guidelines

If you witness a sudden attack in a public place, or notice a situation that may indicate the possibility of such an attack:

- ✓ Leave the dangerous area quickly and seek cover.
- ✓ Once you have reached a safe location, call the emergency number 112.
- ✓ If possible, warn others.
- ✓ Follow the instructions and orders of the police.

Remember:

- ✓ The attacker may injure anyone in their path.
- ✓ The attacker cannot be persuaded to stop.
- ✓ The first 10 minutes are critical for your survival.
- ✓ Attackers may, but do not necessarily, take hostages.

Expand all

Read more

EUROPOL – **European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2024 (EU TE-SAT)**

Last updated on 20.11.2025