

Online toxic masculinity

Learn more about the spread of misogyny online and about the rise of 'the manosphere' and 'incel' culture. Get advice on how to tackle these issues at home.

What do we mean by misogyny and 'the manosphere'?

Misogyny is when someone hates or has an aversion to women, and shows prejudice towards women. Someone might mistreat women, or believe that women are not as important or capable as men.

The **manosphere** is a group of online communities where misogynistic views are shared. These groups discuss masculinity and promote anti-feminist and sexist beliefs. The communities also discuss everyday topics such as gaming, finance and politics.

A lot of these groups use jokes and memes (pictures) to share their views, so it might not be obvious at a glance that they're spreading hateful content.

According to a recent survey, **69% of boys aged 11 to 14** have seen misogynistic content online without searching for it, and **52%** of the boys surveyed had seen content from influencers linked to the manosphere.

Other vocabulary you might hear

Incel – short for involuntary celibate. This refers to a man who believes he is unable to form a romantic or sexual relationship with a woman, despite wanting to.

Red pill/Redpilled – those who have 'taken the red pill' have 'seen the truth' (i.e they now believe that society treats women too well, and other ideas that undermine equality and fairness between genders).

Pickup Artists (PUA) – people who persuade, force or trick women into having sex with them.

The 80/20 rule – a (fake scientific) theory that 80% of women are only attracted to the top 20% of men. This is used to blame women for men's feelings of inadequacy and rejection.

Chad – A boy/man who is very popular, good-looking and successful with women/girls.

Stacey – A girl/woman who is very popular and good-looking, and will usually only be attracted to 'Chads'.

Not everyone uses this type of language however, so it's important to also be alert to generalisations being made about women and men. For example, statements about how *all* women act, or comments highlighting that women and men are different species.

Some emojis linked to incel culture are:



You can view The Key's [digital dictionary](#) for a longer list of terms.

Where might your child see this content?

Manosphere content is shared by various influencers across many different online services including:

- Social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram
- Podcasting platforms
- Online messaging boards such as 4Chan and Reddit
- Live streaming gaming platforms such as Twitch

Well-known influencers include Andrew Tate, Hamza Ahmed, Adin Ross and Jordan Petersen, but there are many more.

Content from misogynistic influencers will often:

- Be combined with other, less controversial material including fitness and lifestyle advice, which can help attract a wider audience
- Include step-by-step instructions on how to improve social standing
- Showcase wealth, luxurious lifestyles and expensive possessions. This makes followers think they can have the same success if they adopt the same beliefs

How does this content affect children?

Children, and especially boys, might get involved in these online communities as it gives them a sense of self-worth, belonging and security.

They can be strongly influenced, and even radicalised, by what they see.

Manosphere content promotes ideas such as:

- Men are more important and more powerful than women
- Violence against women is acceptable

Following these beliefs can lead to violence against women and girls, such as female classmates.

This content also promotes unrealistic expectations that can lead to poor self-esteem and mental health issues. It preys on vulnerabilities of boys and young men, especially those related to feeling alone and being rejected by women and girls.

What can you do as parents/carers?

We're talking about online toxic masculinity in school, for example:

through our behaviour policy, through our PSHE curriculum and through providing an early, inclusive education on healthy relationships, consent, and gender equality. We foster critical thinking to challenge harmful narratives. We promote positive male role models. We train staff to identify warning signs and intervene supportively, and we encourage empathy, respect, and diverse friendships.

However, children are less likely to be vulnerable to this type of content if they are having similar conversations reinforced at home.

We recommend you:

1. **Read recent news articles** about toxic masculinity and the most famous influencers, if you're not already familiar with them (you can find some in the 'Sources' box below).
2. **Ask your child what they're getting up to online** – show genuine interest, don't judge them or tell them what they should and shouldn't be doing. Children are more likely to share if they feel you're interested, rather than trying to check up on them.
3. **Encourage your child to question what they see online** – a child who is naturally sceptical about what they see online is less likely to be influenced by things that aren't true. Have conversations about why they trust certain influencers and how they can double-check the information they're seeing.
4. **Have open discussions about toxic masculinity** – don't tell your child how to think, but question their thinking and understanding. Ask if they believe some of the views being shared, such as that women "belong" to men, and how that might make the women in their lives feel, or they themselves feel.
5. **Be role models** – encourage your child to be open with their emotions. Show respect for women and girls, and encourage your child to model this behaviour.

Sources

This factsheet was produced by [The Key Safeguarding](https://www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding): www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding

- [Parents should be aware of extremism, Met says](#), BBC News
- [Andrew Tate toolkit](#), Bold Voices
- [How to talk to your children about Adolescence, incels and the manosphere](#), The Independent
- [How to talk to children about Andrew Tate and other toxic views online](#), The British Psychological Society
- [Boys are being targeted with harmful content](#), Global Action Plan