Understanding and Preventing Incel Violence in Canada

Disclaimer

Please note that this document presents the analysis of Moonshot, and does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Government of Canada. It is intended to help practitioners understand the online incel community, and present evidence-based recommendations to identify risk and respond to incel-related violence.

Content Warning

This report contains racist and violent misogynist material, explicit language and other content that readers may find distressing.

Contents

Introduction

Involuntary celibates (hereafter "incels") are an online community of men who define themselves by their inability to access sex with women. Incels blame their inability to form sexual relationships on their perceived genetic inferiority, evolutionary traits in female mate selection, and oppressive societal structures. Their online ecosystem contains violent misogynistic content, much of which is presented and discussed through this ideological lens. In addition to encouraging violence against women, vocal members of many incel communities endorse white supremacy, suicidal ideation, and attacks against members of the public. Mass casualty events are regularly celebrated by incels online, and the perpetrators are adopted into a canon of incel "heroes" if they are deemed to be motivated by incel ideology.

While there is a growing body of research on online incel communities, to date there has not been a systematic, multi-platform study of how they communicate. There is also a lack of knowledge about how to identify and assess incel risk factors, and on conducting enhanced interventions to disengage vulnerable individuals from violent incel beliefs.

This report is intended to improve understanding of the incel community and the scale of the community's online activity in Canada. We describe the known demographics and size of the at-risk community on several major platforms, map best practices from fields related to the vulnerabilities identified within the incel ecosystem, and present evidence-based recommendations to identify risk and respond to incel-related violence.

The report is divided into three sections. The first summarizes the existing literature on incels and their underlying risk factors. The second section presents Moonshot's own mapping of the online incel ecosystem, including insights into the incel community, key topics of incel discourse, and findings on non-anglophone incel communities. The third section covers findings from Moonshot's consultations with 35 global experts and workshops with Canadian practitioners. It includes recommendations by these practitioners for intervention programming and reducing the overall risk of incel violence in Canada.

Incel Terminology

Incel communities have developed a complex online lexicon. It acts as a form of gatekeeping, where familiarity with incel terms is a prerequisite for inclusion and acceptance. Key incel terminology is bolded throughout this report, and Appendix A provides a glossary of key terms referenced in this report. For further reading on incel symbols and terminology, see Moonshot's comprehensive guide.

Key Findings

- **Online incel communities provide an opportunity for at-risk individuals to be accepted by like-minded peers who articulate shared grievances through an ideological lens**. Incels are often highly abusive towards one another online, but their communities offer a sense of belonging and exclusivity that many members feel they lack in other areas of their lives.

- **The online incel ecosystem is spread across both mainstream and niche platforms**, and is concentrated on incel-created websites, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and Reddit. YouTube is a major hub for incel activity and is the most hyperlinked platform in public posts made by incels on these platforms. Platforms that are exclusively devoted to incel audiences are home to the most violent, misogynist, and dangerous content.

- **Incel-related violence in Canada is quoted, discussed, and celebrated online by incels of various nationalities**. Canada is described as a "**cuck**" or "**beta**" country due to its perceived "feminist" political orientation and the perceived "sexual selectivity" of Canadian women. Canadian incels seem to believe that their physical attributes, including skin colour, affect their ability to find a sexual partner. In comparison to the global user base on the primary English-language incel website, Canadian users were 65% more likely to post news stories about incels, and were especially celebratory of incel violence that occurred in Canada.

- **Key topics of incel discourse include suicide, violent extremism, race, child sexual exploitation, and mental health and neurodiversity**. Incels also use symbolism through their user avatars and posts to express support for violent misogyny and other extremist groups, as well as to acknowledge their mental health issues.

- **Interest in incel-related discourse is international**. We conducted analysis of incel-related content in five languages: English, French, Russian, Portuguese and Italian. While the volume of foreign language users engaging with incel content is lower than in English speaking countries, Moonshot identified unique themes in each linguistic community. **French** incels are particularly concerned with the perceived "sexual liberation" of French women, as well as immigration introducing more male competition to the dating pool. **Russian** incels share violent misogynistic content and celebrate incel "influencers" who advocate a fusion of communist and incel ideology. Interestingly, the Russian incel community contains both male and female members. **Brazilian** and **Italian** incel forums have several thematic overlaps, including an alignment with the Japanese **Hikikomori** subculture, celebration of misogynistic violence, and discussion of domestic gender-based murders.

- **Moonshot conducted 35 interviews with subject matter experts and identified seven key vulnerabilities to incel ideology**. These vulnerabilities largely pertain to feelings of rejection, social isolation, traumatic experiences, and the perceived failure to meet societal standards of masculinity. Individuals that feel victimized by their social disenfranchisement or inability to find a romantic partner may find inceldom attractive. Further research is needed to understand incel ideology's perceived appeal to some individuals who are struggling with mental illness, as well as members of the neurodiverse community.

Key Recommendations

Based on our research and consultations with subject matter experts, Moonshot developed recommendations for:

- Incel-specific interventions
- Broader interventions
- Social media platforms

Incel-Specific Interventions

- **Create an online-offline referral mechanism to offer support services and resources directly to at-risk individuals**. Individuals who search for or engage with incel content online can be offered opportunities to disengage, such as access to local mental health support or to digitised resources that address incel-specific risk factors. Support can consist of highlighting intervention providers' websites, where vulnerable individuals can get in touch with case workers for one-to-one conversations or counselling.

- **Promote support services, positive messages and events through influential personalities online.** Increasing the presence of positive voices and events, and raising awareness of available support services through social media-based influencers should be regarded as a viable option to reach incels online. Identifying common non-incel interests of the incel community, including influencers that they admire, can help organizations spread prosocial messages (e.g. positive masculinity; the importance of reaching out for help when in crisis) or information about support services.

- **Initiate one-to-one interventions through direct messaging and relationship building**. Given that it is important to reach incels where they gather, network and audience analysis can play an important role in understanding the different ways in which platforms are used by the community. For instance, the use of gaming platforms such as Twitch or Discord by incels provides an opportunity to use a familiar space to offer support services and to build relationships.

- **Create alternative spaces for at-risk men and boys to share grievances in a healthy environment**. Practitioners could consider creating alternative online spaces (e.g. Discord servers) where men and boys can gather online. Considering resource restrictions for many organizations, this technique would be most effective if undertaken in prevention programs.

- **Invest significant time and resources in outreach**. Outreach primarily consists of ensuring that relevant populations are aware of these programs and know how to access them. Because incels are socially isolated and often hostile or resistant to mental health support, it is crucial that intervention programs are credible and accessible.

- **Consider aftercare early on**. Aftercare consists of support following an intervention program, occurring when a client has disengaged from incel beliefs, groups, or from violent aspects of the ideology. Especially for socially isolated individuals, aftercare is essential to helping them rebuild relationships; it can also dispel incels' notion that therapy is a 'scam' through sustained and holistic support following an intervention.

- **Increase prevention-focused funding**. Practitioners consistently cited that effective interventions for at-risk populations, like incels, depend on adequate funding. Investment in early stage interventions is considered an upstream solution to incel extremism.

Broader Interventions

- **Incorporate incel awareness into existing programming**. Incel ideology covers a wide spectrum of grievances and topics. Organizations that specialize in youth education, social services, school social work, and public health should be trained to recognize incel language and the warning signs of violent misogynistic beliefs.

- **Create a practitioner network for knowledge sharing and intervention support**. Incels exhibit a range of vulnerabilities, each of which influences their engagement with the ideology and why they see themselves as involuntarily celibate. Flexible intervention strategies are needed to support and engage this community successfully. A single practitioner or organization may not be equipped to handle the vulnerabilities exhibited by an at-risk individual, or may not have capacity to provide specialized support to an incel. A practitioner network, connecting organizations across Canada from different disciplines, would help build the capacity of any one organization to provide intervention support to an individual at-risk of inceldom.

Social Media Platforms

• **Incorporate safeguarding into algorithm design**. Social media and tech companies should ensure that platforms are not inadvertently promoting incel content, in addition to other violent misogynist content from the wider online "manosphere". This will ensure that internet users, particularly younger boys, are protected from incel and other violent extremist content.

• **Demonetise and deplatform violent misogyny**. Several incel creators on YouTube have taken advantage of opportunities to monetize violent misogynist content through ad revenue or by promoting their account on Patreon, a subscription service. YouTube and other video hosting platforms should ensure the removal of violent misogynist content, and ensure that creators promoting violent incel content cannot benefit financially from ad revenue or by promoting a paid subscription service on their channel. Partnerships between video hosting platforms and subject matter experts / organisations working to address incel ideology can support in identifying violent incel content suitable for demonetization.

• **Ensure proactive and targeted deplatforming**. Partnerships between social media platforms and subject matter experts working to address incel ideology can support social media platforms in identifying and removing violent incel content. However, it is important that such efforts are specific and targeted, and do not push users towards communities on other websites that are more extreme or difficult to moderate.

Part 1: Literature Review

What Does the Existing Literature About Incels Tell Us?

Incel ideology is centered on the belief that men are owed sex and romantic fulfillment by women.[1] Incels see themselves as victims, asserting that the rise of feminism has robbed them of their ability to find a mate. Incels congregate almost exclusively online, leveraging social media platforms and incel-specific websites as hosts for their communities. In an analysis of the leading English-language incel website, researchers identified that many posters lament the "masculine milestones," such as losing their virginity, that they have allegedly missed due to women's increased independence.[2] Incels claim that women's failure to meet men's "basic needs" reduces their quality of life, causing them to be "kissless, hugless, handholdless virgins."[3]

In Canada, the danger of misogynistic violence is exemplified by the proliferation of fatal anti-women attacks. For example, the 1989 Montreal Massacre (which killed 14 women and injured several others) is one of the deadliest attacks in the country's history. The perpetrator, while not associated with inceldom, was motivated by a desire to murder female engineers and "fight feminism." More recent incidents of male supremacist violence in Toronto, including the 2018 vehicle ramming attack, which killed 10 and injured 16, and the 2020 machete attack, further demonstrate the gravity of the threat posed by individuals engaging with incel ideology. Following the 2020 attack, the Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) updated charges against the unnamed teenage attacker, referring to the homicide as a terrorist act, and defining incel violence as Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism.[4]

The current literature provides insight into potential reasons that individuals—in most cases young men—may become incels. Researchers highlight that one primary motivation is a desire for acceptance by like-minded individuals. For example, the Center for Digital Youth Care notes that men who feel rejected in their personal or romantic lives can migrate to online communities as a "psychological coping mechanism."[5]

Almost all literature related to the incel movement highlights the role that the internet plays in cementing incel ideology.[6] While the reasons that an individual seeks out incel culture online may be based primarily on unique personal experiences, participation in online incel communities can facilitate collective violent misogynist extremism. Social media channels or forums that are built around anti-feminism or misogyny are commonly referred to as "the manosphere."[7] In the manosphere, virulent sexism is normalized and violence against women is often glorified. Researchers argue that incel forums perpetuate a culture of "one-upmanship," encouraging individuals to use provocative language to obtain approval and attention from the group.[8] These toxic environments often enable users to operate under a veil of anonymity or pseudonymity (depending on the platform in question), providing the security to express reactionary, offensive, often violent ideas.

1. Lewis, J., & Ware, J. Spring Provides Timely Reminder of Incel Violence-And Clarifies How to Respond. ICCT. 2020, September 29. https://icct.nl/publication/spring-provides-timely-reminder-of-incel-violence/.
    https://www.vox.com/2018/6/20/17314846/incel-support-group-therapy-black-pill-mental-health.
2. Misogynist Incels and Male Supremacism. New America. 2021. https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/misogynist-incels-and-male-supremacism/.
    CFDP. The angry Internet - Center for Digital Pædagogik. 2020, November. https://cfdp.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CFDP_the_angry_internet_ISSUE.pdf.
3. Romano, A.. What a woman-led incel support group can teach us about men and mental health. Vox. 2018, June 20. https://www.vox.com/2018/6/20/17314846/incel-support-group-therapy-black-pill-mental-health.
4. Lewis, J., & Ware, J, 2020.
5. CFDP, 2020.
6. New America, 2021.
    Ouferroukkh. RAN event P/CVE and mental health support online, online meeting 18-19 November 2020. Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission. 2021, January 8. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/ran-event-pcve-and-mental-health-support-online-online-meeting-18-19-november-2020_en.
7. Ouferroukkh, 2021.
8. Lewis, J., & Ware, J, 2020.

The current literature demonstrates that community members on incel forums often articulate their desire to commit violent attacks against women or to replicate previous instances of gender-based violence. Incels lionize misogynist killers like Elliot Rodger, using arguments from his manifesto as inspiration for radical acts of violence. For example, when users share suicidal thoughts, others in the incel community may encourage them to "**go ER**" in reference to Rodger's murder-suicide in 2014.

Praise of past incel violence and celebration of ideological martyrs are viewed by the community as "lifefuel," insinuating that the pain of others is all they have to live for.[9] Writing about this desire for suicide or revenge is a common behaviour on several incel platforms, and may instill a sense of solidarity between users.[10]

Research from the Global Network on Extremism and Terrorism notes that individuals suffering from mental illness may be more susceptible to committing acts of violence on behalf of incel ideology.[11] Many incels self-identify as having mental illness and even appear to wear mental illness as a badge of honour that symbolizes their struggle to survive in a world that fails to acknowledge their existence.[12] Suicidal ideation and nihilistic attitudes are extremely common in online incel communities. Incels frequently use mantras like "stop coping," "it's over," and "LDAR" ("lay down and rot") to convey their hopelessness and to support their perception that incels are victims of societal injustice.[13]

While researchers agree that mental illness is a problematic and widespread theme in the incel community, it may also be a potential gateway for deradicalization. Europe's Radicalization Awareness Network suggests that interventions geared toward incels should focus on improving men's access to mental health treatment and improving education about healthy romantic relationships. Practitioners should address interventions' target audience from a place of empathy and understanding, which does not condone their misogyny but rather seeks to understand its source.[14] For example, if a practitioner makes an effort to understand the painful experiences that have led an individual to the incel community, they will be better equipped to help them disengage from their extremist worldviews.[15]

According to the current literature, one best practice for reducing the risk of incel violence is engaging with younger men, such as high school students, who are less set in their beliefs. A recent New America report asserts that intervening early in a young man's life can "prevent movement along a spectrum of dehumanization and misogyny towards violent extremes."[16] It is therefore most effective to conduct outreach efforts in partnership with a school or community organization. In Sweden, for example, courses related to human rights and peaceful civic participation are built directly into the education curriculum.[17] Similarly, in the Netherlands, young men and women are required to complete courses related to intergroup conflict, healthy relationships, and gender dynamics. By providing a safe space to discuss these complicated, nuanced topics, practitioners can improve young men's ability to critically analyze issues adopted by incel communities and in turn, build their resilience to extremism.[18]

9. New America, 2021.
10. Jones, A. Incels and the Manosphere: Tracking Men's Movements Online. STARS (2021). https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd2020/65/.
11. Dr. Colin Clarke and Lilianna Turner, Clarke, D. C., & Turner, L. The 'Incel' Ideology Continues to Build a Strong Following in the Online 'Manosphere'. GNET. April 2020. https://gnet-research.org/2020/04/22/the-incel-ideology-continues-to-build-a-strong-following-in-the-online-manosphere/.
12. Vox, 2018.
13. Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. Taylor & Francis, 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459.
14. TSAS, 2021.
15. Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Through Education Initiatives: Assessing the Evidence Base. RUSI. 2020, June 30. https://rusi.org/publication/occasional-papers/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-education.
16. New America, 2021.
17. RUSI, 2020.
18. RUSI, 2020.

Several researchers have proposed online interventions as an alternative to in-person sessions. Online interventions are especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated feelings of isolation and disenfranchisement. The challenge for practitioners is to determine how best to intervene with a community that holds extreme misogynistic beliefs and has demonstrated vehement resistance to therapy and self-help. However, the Radicalization Awareness Network suggests that the accessibility and anonymity of online engagement may encourage participation from individuals who would otherwise not feel comfortable seeking help offline.[19]

In a research study on Nordic incels, the Centre for Digital Youth Care recommended that researchers analyze incels domestically, rather than creating a broad global best practice, to better understand the unique cultural, historical, and socioeconomic conditions that have contributed to their inceldom.[20] New training is required for Canadian law enforcement on what is presently known about incels, as well as the factors that "may create an extremist vortex" that has the capacity to manifest in the form of offline violence.[21] The competency models for Canadian police, such as the Canadian Police Sector Council Model and the OACP-Ontario Model, should be updated to include strategies and success criteria for preventing violent misogynist extremism.[22]

Existing research also suggests that further study of incels' online activity across mainstream and alternative platforms can help to cultivate an understanding of and consequent ability to predict radical misogynists' propensity for violence. Through analysis of the themes, vernacular, and threats circulated in the Canadian incel community, practitioners can better understand what pushes an individual toward inceldom and potential violence, and in turn, how to pull them back.

Incel Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

While there is no singular mould for an incel, the current literature points to several risk factors that may make an individual more susceptible to engagement in violent misogyny: social isolation, insecurity and the fear of rejection, and the state of "aggrieved entitlement".

Social Isolation:

According to a study of polls on the primary English-language incel forum, the main demographic for incels is young men between the ages of 18 and 30.[23] Young men are drawn to inceldom due to feelings of isolation and disenfranchisement from social structures.[24] The psychological motivation to participate in 'something bigger' derives from the fundamental human need to belong.[25] Men that lack meaningful relationships or community ties are therefore considered more susceptible to the allure of inceldom.[26]

19.   Ouferroukkh, 2021.
20.   CFDP, 2020.
21.   TSAS, 2021.
22.   TSAS, 2021.
23.   A March 2020 poll from the forum confirms that 82 percent of respondents said they were between the ages of 18 and 30. The largest percentage (36 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 21. The second largest segment (27.9 percent) said they were between 22 and 25, followed by 18.1 percent aged 26-30. Poll responses were anonymous, and demographic and geographic information cannot be corroborated. ADL, 2020.
24.   Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. Taylor & Francis. 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459.
25.   Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M.R. The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation Psychological Bulletin, 117(3), 497-529. 1995.
26.   Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. Taylor & Francis. 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459.
27.   Barzilay, R., Moore, T. M., Greenberg, D. M., DiDomenico, G. E., Brown, L. A., White, L. K., Gur, R. C., & Gur, R. E.. Resilience, COVID-19-related stress, anxiety and depression during the pandemic in a large population enriched for healthcare providers. Nature News. 2020, August 20. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41398-020-00982-4.

In this past year, the pandemic has acted as a force multiplier for social isolation. Widespread stay-at-home orders have substantially increased the time that individuals spend alone and muted the distractions of everyday life. Heightened incidence of unemployment as a result of the pandemic increased feelings of disenfranchisement, especially for those already struggling with their sense of self worth.[27] For example, users on incel forums often self-identify as **NEET** (not in employment, education or training) to showcase that they have been left behind by society. It is possible that feelings of isolation from the professional and social world may increase the appeal of incel ideology.

Research from Baele, Brace, and Coan in 2019 demonstrates that an excess of time spent online, whether due to the pandemic or otherwise, can be an accelerator for extremism.[28] In the context of incels, engagement with the incel community or the manosphere provides individuals with the opportunity to connect with others that share similar views. Often under a cloak of anonymity, users are free to express misogynistic views without fear of public scrutiny or retribution. Active reinforcement of incel ideology in online spaces creates a pernicious echo chamber, where extreme ideas are validated. Posts that use inflammatory rhetoric (such as those related to suicidal ideation or murder-suicides) are rewarded and praised by other members of the online community. Echo chambers distort information and skew social messaging, making them prime venues for recruitment, dissemination of ideas, and justifying offline action, including violence.[29]

Insecurity and Fear of Rejection:

The isolation risk factor may be exacerbated for men who are struggling to live up to what they believe to be societal expectations of masculinity. Individuals fearing rejection in their offline lives may be more likely to seek out like-minded individuals in the online space as a coping mechanism for their loneliness.[30] The participation in sexist online forums helps to fill the individual's desire for acceptance by a group with shared values and life experiences, as well as to validate their perceived status as a victim. Similarly to other extremist groups, the bond of incel communities is strengthened by juxtaposition to the "other." On incel forums, collective hostility towards women and "normies" (normal people) helps to bring previously isolated individuals together in opposition of a common enemy.

In their 2020 publication on incel extremism, Australian researchers Tomkinson et al. demonstrate that rejection plays a key role in radicalization.[31] For incels, rejection predominately centers around the individual's perception of masculinity. When a male feels that his gender identity is under threat, he becomes more likely to engage in performance of hyper- masculinity through displays of "toughness, lack of empathy, devaluation of women, need for respect, competitiveness, and homophobia."[32] This phenomenon is clearly exemplified in the incel population, whose fear of rejection and social insecurity translates into anger at women.

Incels' fear of rejection is not only present at the romantic and social level, but also when it comes to engagement with authoritative figures. In particular, incels express trepidation or even hostility towards medical professionals or counsellors that lack empathy for their plight.[33] Incels fear that they will be dismissed or laughed at by the medical community, and are therefore vocally resistant to mental health support or interventions. The notion that incels are "beyond help" fuels suicidal ideation within the community and nihilistic groupthink. For example, users who discuss depression on incel forums are often met with comments that encourage retaliatory violence. Collective incitement and support for violence in the online incel ecosystem is highly dangerous, as it can lower the threshold for violence in the offline world.[34]

28.   Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. Taylor & Francis. 2020. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459.
29.   What is an Echo Chamber? GFC Global. Digital Media Literacy. 2021. https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/digital-media-literacy/what-is-an-echo-chamber/1/.
30.   Jones, A.. Incels and the Manosphere: Tracking Men's Movements Online. STARS. 2020. https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd2020/65/.
31.   Confronting Incel: exploring possible policy responses to misogynistic violent extremism. Taylor & Francis. 2020, May. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459.
32.   Taylor & Francis, 2020.
33.   New America, 2021.
34.   Kimmel, M. S. Angry White Men. Nation Books, 2013.

Aggrieved Entitlement:

In addition to social isolation, insecurity, and fear of rejection, a commonly identified risk factor for inceldom is the state of "aggrieved entitlement", which the sociologist Michael Kimmel refers to as an "existential state of fear about having [one's] 'rightful place' as a man questioned."[35] Research from the Center for Digital Youth Care indicates that men living in countries where women's rights are valued may be more susceptible to aggrieved entitlement and incel ideology. In countries like Canada, Sweden or Denmark, where gender equality is a political priority, the notion that men's hegemonic position in society is being unjustly challenged is a fixture of incel ideology and the wider online manosphere. In extreme cases, those who experience "aggrieved entitlement" may feel that physical or sexual violence against women is justified.

The existing research on extremist mobilization and disengagement points to several 'push' and 'pull' factors for at-risk individuals:

Push Factors
(things that can lead to extremism)

❌ **Exposure to childhood trauma** (especially sexual violence)

❌ **Bullying or rejection from peers**

❌ **Self esteem issues** (especially related to gender identity and sexuality)

❌ **Lack of engagement in activities or community programming**

❌ **Lack of mentor or role model**

❌ **Exorbitant amount of time spent online exposed to hateful, misogynistic and/or extremist content**

Protective Factors
(things that can prevent extremism)

Education on health relationships and sexuality ✅

Education on how to resist the "rabbit hole" and build critical thinking ✅

Normalization of mental health / feelings of rejection and how to get help ✅

Engagement in sports, music, art or other extracurricular activities ✅

Presenting opportunities for the individual to lead ✅

Coordinating activities with mixed demographics to apply the "contact hypothesis" ✅

35.   Kimmel, M. S. Angry White Men. Nation Books. 2013.

Part 2: The Online Incel Ecosystem

Mapping The Online Incel Ecosystem

In a previous report Moonshot studied the behaviour of incel communities on five major online platforms.[36] Moonshot's full methodology can be found in our companion report "Mapping the Online Incel Ecosystem". We explored characteristics unique to each platform, their role within the broader online incel ecosystem, how the platforms connect to one another, and the common risk factors and vulnerabilities exhibited by their users.

Our analysis of both mainstream and niche platforms frequented by incels found that at-risk individuals may first become exposed to incel ideology on mainstream platforms like Twitter and YouTube. While these platforms have an enormous reach and user base, they are comparatively lower-risk because incels are a small minority of users, and platform moderation and community guidelines appear to prevent the proliferation of extreme aspects of incel ideology, such as suicidal ideation and incitement to violence. Incel content is easily available, however, and can point users to other, exclusively incel spaces. We consequently identified platforms like Telegram and the primary English-language incel website as higher risk, as they are incel-only spaces, or host channels focused explicitly on incel ideology and violence, and therefore feature much less content moderation. This allows for widespread discussion of self-harm, misogyny and sympathy for incel and other violent extremist worldviews. Prior to a mass deplatforming of incel-related forums, Reddit hosted dedicated incel spaces with high levels of violent extremist discourse. These forums contained tens of thousands of users, some of whom migrated to the English-language website in the wake of the platform's forum bans. In spite of these closures, incels remain on the platform and Reddit continues to host niche incel subreddits.

Discussion Topics

A primary topic of discussion across all platforms is the supposed connection between sexual preferences, gender, and race. Misogynist commentary is rampant and general discussion about women is consistently hateful, demeaning and celebrates violence. Incels enjoy developing their **blackpill** beliefs by sharing research and personal experiences with one another; they openly discuss their worries and problems while discouraging each other from self-improvement or seeking help. Levels of violent language and intent vary by platform and are further detailed below; apart from YouTube and Twitter, all platforms have a high volume of suicidal ideation and incitement to violence.

Platform Summaries

The primary English-language incel website, which is intentionally not named in this public report, is a dedicated incel forum. According to a 2020 survey conducted by the site's administrators that received hundreds of responses, users are male, primarily white and in their early twenties, and are based globally, with a high concentration in North America and Europe (80.8% of 669 responses). Incels discuss a wide range of topics, each with their own "tag," for example "**Venting**" or "**Ragefuel**."

Prominent incel voices produce the majority of content on **Twitter**, with a wider group of both incel and non- incel users responding to their posts. Incel users on Twitter are male and, where geographical information is available,[37] were found to be based primarily in Brazil and the United States. It is common for incel users to engage with non-incel accounts that post about incels or manosphere topics, including researchers and news outlets.

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36.   Moonshot's full methodology can be found in our companion report "Mapping the Online Incel Ecosystem".

37.   Incels are tech-savvy and may use Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to mask their location or enter false gender and age information when they sign into Google to watch incel content. Therefore demographic information may be unreliable.

On **YouTube**, we analyzed over 100,000 user comments on videos from three prominent incel YouTubers, as well as a global sample of viewers of incel channels for whom location and demographic data was available. The demographic makeup of incel viewers indicates that they are generally male, under 35, and located primarily in Anglophone countries, with the highest per-capita viewership in Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the United States. Our analysis of YouTube comments indicated that there is minimal violent language coming from platform users, likely due to the enforcement of YouTube's community guidelines. Moonshot's consultation with a subject matter expert (SME) revealed that incel influencers on this platform have expressed their intent to remain there in spite of the platform's increasingly aggressive content moderation, and calls from the community to move to less regulated video-hosting platform BitChute. These influencers may be financially motivated, rationalizing that this strategy will allow them to develop or preserve a revenue stream from advertisements on YouTube, as they have tens of thousands of subscribers.

On **Telegram**, we found users congregating in nine incel-specific channels. Demographic data was not available. Telegram is used for intimate, real-time conversation in much smaller groups than those on other platforms. Due to fewer content moderation rules, there is a much higher proportion of violent content and language, directed both at fellow users and women.

On **Reddit**, discussions take place in subreddits, which are forums created for specific interests. Demographic data was not available for this platform. The volume of incel-generated content has massively decreased due to the deletion of the primary incel subreddits r/incels and r/Braincels and the platform migration that followed (away from Reddit and toward less actively moderated incel websites). However, users remain on the platform in smaller incel-specific subreddits, and in other non-incel subreddits where they continue to share their misogynistic views.

Cross-Platform Activity

Our analysis report identified YouTube as a major hub for incel content and discourse. It is by far the most hyperlinked platform in posts made by incels; our previous report found that over 50% of links to external platforms on the incel website, Twitter, and YouTube directed other users to videos or channels, including the incel YouTube channels described above. On Reddit, however, users signposted to other subreddits five times more often than to YouTube, the vast majority of times between r/Braincels and r/Incels. Other popular subreddits shared by incels included r/ForeverAlone, r/TheRedPill, /r/MGTOW and r/relationships. Users appear less likely to post direct links to higher risk platforms such as Telegram or the incel website, preferring to link to mainstream sites.

The Canadian Incel Community

Introduction

The incel ecosystem is a transnational community whose members communicate across geographical borders. Incels are digital natives who are highly sensitive to online monitoring and are encouraged by the community to take precautions to protect their identities. This makes the geographical identification of incels difficult because of their presumed use of VPNs or strategic decisions not to share personally identifiable information. In spite of this, Moonshot was able to identify Canadian incels on several major platforms. The following section highlights our key findings.

While the incel movement originated in Canada, our analysis of incels' social media activity found large online communities across North America, South America, Europe, and Asia[38]. Despite the breadth of the online incel ecosystem, Moonshot observed that Canada is a center of discussion in the incel community. Incels' fixation with Canada takes two forms. First, incels believe that Canada's "progressive and feminist agenda" is antithetical to the incel plight. They believe it is a zero sum game, where any advancement of women's rights diminishes the rights of Canadian men, especially other incels. Second, the prevalence of incel-related violence in Canada is watched closely by incel communities online. Incels frequently glorify acts of misogynistic violence within Canada, and idolize their perpetrators as "saints" who have sacrificed themselves for the **blackpill** community.

In order to better understand the incel population within Canada, as well as the way that Canada is perceived by the broader incel community, Moonshot examined both their social media and search engine activity.

Canadians' Activity on the Primary English-Language Incel Website

The incel community typically operates anonymously, using websites and closed forums to communicate through online avatars. The taboo nature of inceldom makes it unlikely that a user would create an account that can be easily traced back to their true identity. While this makes it challenging to identify where incels are based geographically, reporting from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) indicates that incel website users are more comfortable sharing their location details through anonymous polling. Users also choose to reference their location in posts or comments in an attempt to contextualize their grievances or discuss local issues.

Moonshot found a subset of 48 Canadian users on the website, out of 8,116 active profiles, based on their self-identification as Canadian in their forum posts or poll responses.[39] The majority of Canadian users identified themselves as Torontonians (52%), with a smaller number reporting that they live in Vancouver, Edmonton, and Quebec City. These Canadian users were responsible for approximately 4% of content on the website, producing over 228,774 posts between November 2017 and November 2020. Each day, these Canadian users produced between 80-600 posts, which makes up about 11.3% of total daily posts on the platform.[40] The high volume of daily posts indicates that this incel community plays an active role in the lives of Canadian users. Moonshot observed that the top three users in this subset created between 14,000-20,000 posts over a three-year period (User A: 20,001 posts; User B: 19,287 posts, User C: 14,145 posts).

Out of the 48 Canadian incels in this subset, 28 also chose to identify their age. The majority of users reported being in their twenties, with the median age being 25. The youngest user in this subset was 15 years old and the oldest user was 46. The age demographics for Canadian incels is similar to the general distribution of the website, according to the platform's annual census. Reporting from ADL also indicates that 8% of users self-identify as younger than 17 years old, which points to early adoption of the incel ideology in young men.[41] The fact that boys are identifying as incels in their teenage years may indicate a misconception about how often their peers are having sex, especially in North America where the average age of virginity loss is 18 years old. Many Canadian users post about traumatic experiences in middle school (especially those related to rejection or sexual humiliation), and attribute this to their "awakening" as incels.

38.   New America, 2021.
39.   In order to determine the geographic location of Canadian incels, Moonshot mined the incel website for references to 'Canada', the Canadian provinces/territories and Canadian cities. We first put together a list of location indicators ("i live in", "i'm from"). Next, we made a list of Canadian provinces / cities (capital cities and major metropolitan centers). Lastly, we pulled out comments from the dataset which mentioned both a location indicator phrase and province / city name.
40.   Methodology: The average number of daily posts on the website during this period was 3,000. The mean of daily posts for Canadian users is 340 ((80+600)/2)). Canadian posts account for roughly 11.3% of daily posts on the website (340/3000 = 11.3).
41.   Incels (Involuntary celibates). Anti Defamation League. 2021. https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/incels-involuntary-celibates.

In this subset, 23 users also self-reported their race and/or ethnicity. Our analysis indicates that the racial distribution of Canadian incels may be different from the general population. For example, while ADL found that the majority of incel forum users identify as white or Caucasian, Moonshot found that only 17% of Canadian incels self-identified in this category, and 47% of Canadian incels in our subset identified as Indian.[42] However, considering its small sample size, further research is needed to understand the demographics of Canadian incel forum users.
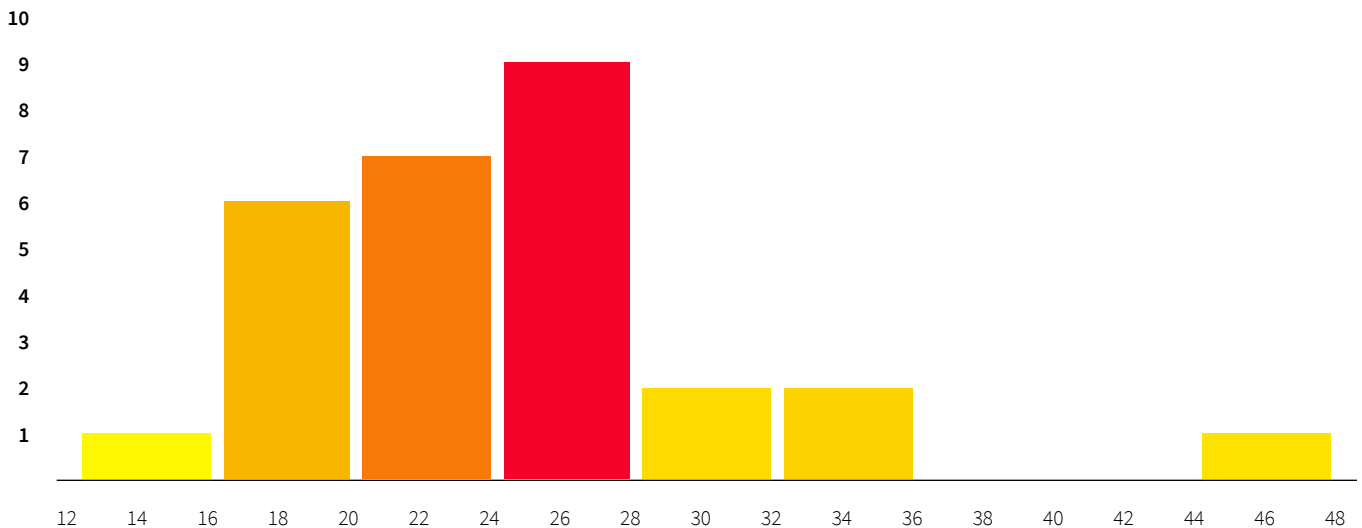
Moonshot analyzed a series of polls of incel website users between 2017 and 2020. This data reflects the responses of 26 unique self-identified Canadian users that chose to indicate their age, shown on the x-axis.

Canadians' Activity on YouTube

To gather more information on Canadian incels, Moonshot collected anonymized data on 508 Canadian YouTube users who engaged with a predetermined set of 37 incel channels between 1 December 2019 and 31 March 2021.[43] Our analysis focused on comparing the content and themes that Canadian viewers of incel content interacted with most frequently against YouTube users more generally, and is divided into three sections: popular video topics, channels, and videos.[44]
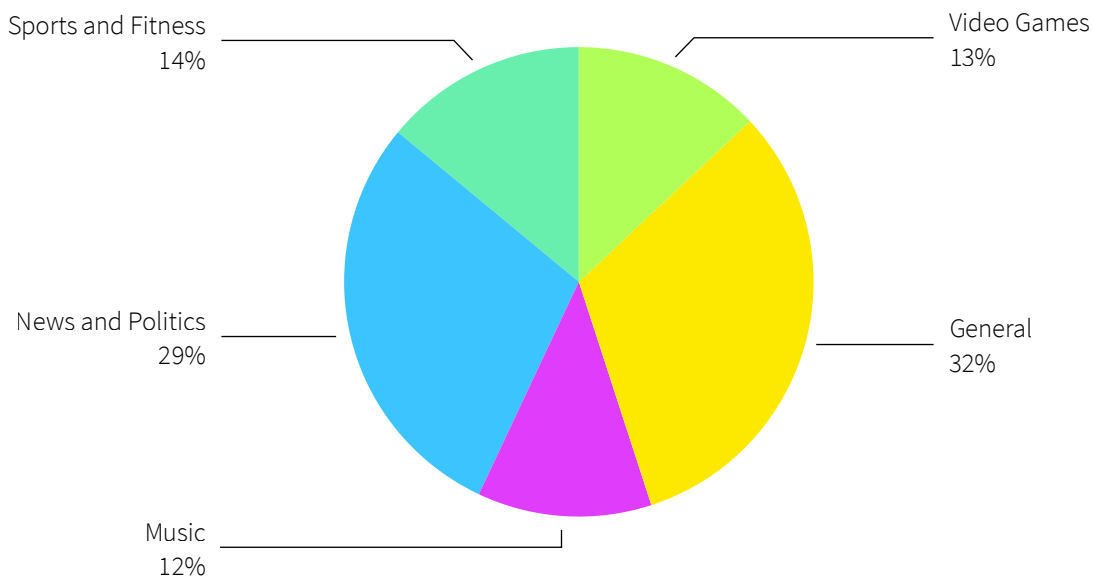
Non Incel Video Topics

Canadian users who engaged with incel content also interacted frequently with videos that can be categorized under several non-incel themes. These themes include General Content (e.g. the topics Lifestyle, Entertainment, and Humour), Music (e.g. Hip Hop Music, Pop Music), Video Games (e.g. Action Adventure games, Sport games), Sports and Fitness (e.g. Motorsport, American Football), and News and Politics content (e.g. Fox News Channel, Vice News).

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42. Users on the incel website self-identified their ethnicity based on a list of seven pre-set options: "Asian," "Indian," "Black," "White," "Native," "Middle Eastern,'' and "Half White, Half Hispanic." While it is difficult to know for certain, it is likely that "Indian" in this context refers to East-Asian individuals, rather than the term for Indigenous Canadians (represented in this poll as "Native").

43. These channels included prominent influencers in the YouTube Incel community, including a channel associated with a blackpill-focused podcast, an incel video game streamer, and an incel advice channel. While not exhaustive, the 37 channels selected reflect a broad range and depth of involvement in YouTube incel content and thus the modal incel content consumer in Canada would very likely have either visited and engaged with this content, or would be similar in YouTube traffic to those that did.

44. Methodology: Moonshot determined the high levels of interaction based upon the degree of overlap between the users that engaged with incel content and other content. Overlap refers to the proportion of users who had previously engaged with incel content and also engaged with the identified themes, topics, channels, or videos below. For example, an overlap of 70% on a video would indicate that among users who engaged with incel content, 70% of them also interacted with that video. For each of the analyses presented (the topics, channels, and videos) were rank-ordered by their percent of overlap and the first set were coded thematically. These themes were generated using previously known topics in the incel community as well as inductively and cross-validated by Moonshot's team of analysts.

The video topic interests of Canadians engaging with incel content.

Few of the highest overlap topics related directly to incel content. Indeed, the topics with the highest overlap were those that fell into the General content theme, suggesting that users consuming incel content are not necessarily isolated to their own corner of YouTube and engage with other channels and videos, and with other users of the platform who are not incels. The News and Politics content of interest to incels contained several politically conservative sources and topics (e.g. Fox News Channel, Republican Party, and Donald Trump).[45] Sports and Fitness content included topics related to improving one's physical appearance, such as boxing and mixed martial arts (possibly connected with some incels' desire to **looksmax**).

When we compared the interests of Canadians who engaged with incel content to all Canadian YouTube users for whom data was available, incel viewers were 15.7x as likely to have engaged with content related to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in addition to politics, news, and incel-specific YouTube content. While this could be associated with "**jihad maxing**", it is unclear based solely on these data. Viewers of incel content are also far more likely to engage with video content associated with partisan political views (e.g. Ben Shapiro, The Young Turks) and, notably, content focused on reporting in the US (e.g. ABC, NBC News, CNBC, and Good Morning America). Due to the overlap of the data collection period with the 2020 US general election and US Capitol riots in Washington, D.C. in January 2021, this is not surprising, though it suggests that the community may have been more sensitive to political events during this period.
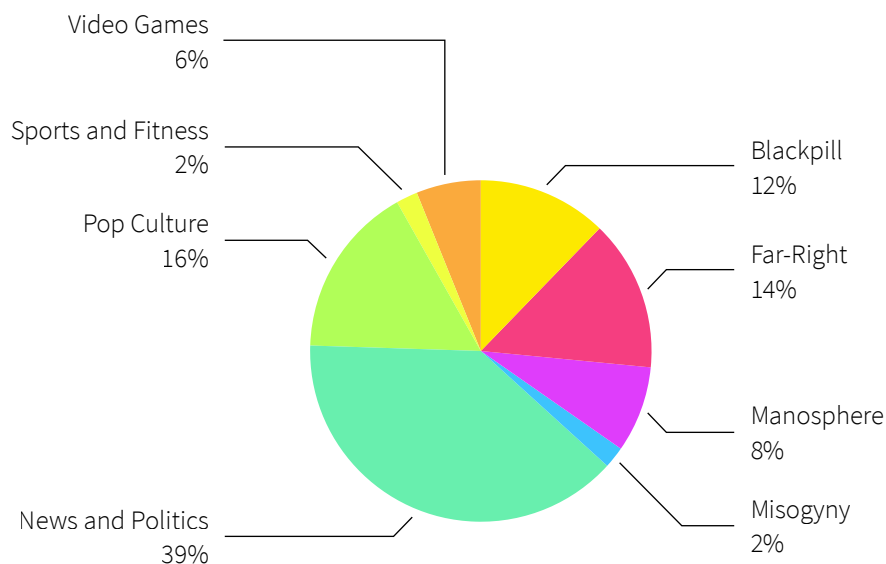
YouTube Channels

Canadian viewers of incel content had the highest viewer overlap with YouTube channels from the News and Politics category, namely with channels not directly related to inceldom and intended for wider audiences. This category represented 38% of channels with a high viewer overlap. However, the individual channel with the highest amount of overlap was "JRE Clips," the official YouTube highlights channel for the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. While Joe Rogan's content is watched by a broad audience, he frequently hosts figures espousing anti-feminist and far-right views, such as Alex Jones.

Far-right channels focusing on news and politics as well as gaming and entertainment (e.g. Rebel News, Paul Joseph Watson, and Ben Shapiro) had the third highest overlap with incel channel viewers. These channels may include content including critiques of COVID-19 restrictions, criticisms of "liberal" culture—including feminism—and alleged attacks on conservative free speech.

45.   This analysis does not suggest that there is a direct link between conservative political ideology and incel status but rather highlights the observation that socially conservative norms, particularly as they relate to "traditional gender roles", may appeal to individuals already engaging with incel content online.

Channels related to video games and gaming culture made up a smaller percentage of the high overlap channels. However, this category is meaningful due to its potential as an entry point for both engagement and disengagement. Video game streamers, who provide commentary while streaming and reviewing games, are popular both with wider audiences and the Canadian incel community. These include figures such as PewDiePie, who has been criticized for anti-Semitic rhetoric and content in his streams. His channel is ranked 23rd in high overlap channels for Canadian incel viewers. Channels we categorized as **blackpill** or Manosphere also sometimes include gaming content, often focused on misogynist discussions of gaming community controversies that involve female gamers. For example, one of the top 25 high overlap videos from a **blackpill** channel showed clips of a well-known female Twitch streamer interacting with a male fan, with overlaid text criticizing her for not engaging in physical affection with him and alleging this was due to his physical appearance. Attacking or criticizing female gamers serves to support the incel community's view that women do not belong in gaming communities and encourage demeaning behaviour toward them.
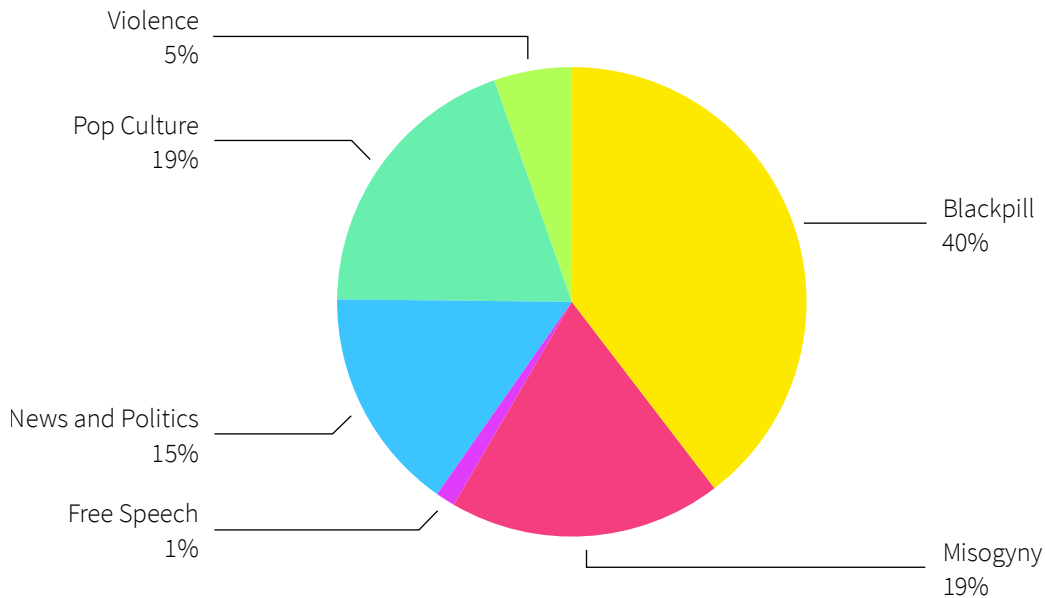

The YouTube channel interests of Canadians engaging with incel content.

YouTube Videos

Canadian YouTube users who viewed incel content were most interested in videos related to the **blackpill theory**. Of the top 50 videos we analyzed, 39% were explicitly linked to inceldom, ranging from tutorials on **blackpill** ideology to an incel's analysis of Elliot Rodger's "legacy." Viewers also showed interest in misogynistic content related to the broader manosphere and **looksmaxing**. Together, **blackpill**- and misogyny-themed content accounted for 57% of the most popular videos with Canadians who engaged with incel channels.

Canadian incel viewers also expressed interest in videos not directly related to inceldom, such as news commentary and pop culture. For example, users engaged with Joe Rogan's interview with Kanye West and videos about China's alleged propaganda strategy on TikTok. Notably, a Joe Rogan interview with Alex Jones was one of the top pieces of video content watched by Canadian incel viewers.

Approximately 5% of videos related directly to themes of violence, and specifically violence against women. For example, content related to women being mugged on the street or of a mother being shot in the face were among the top 50 most popular videos with Canadian incel content viewers. Viewers also expressed interest in videos related to animal torture and public displays of violence, such as a beheading on a bus. Canadian viewers of incel content also appear to engage with videos about perceived censorship and free speech.

The YouTube video interests of Canadians engaging with incel content.

Canadians' Google Search Activity

From 12 July 2020 to 19 March 2021, Moonshot recorded over 2,500 search queries across the US and Canada that indicated users' interest in or engagement with incel ideology. We included American search traffic data to inform our understanding of the transnational nature of the community, and to provide a comparison group.

Content accessed through search engines can promote harmful incel beliefs condoning violence against women, terrorist attacks, and suicide, posing risk to the public and to incels themselves. We grouped search traffic according to six key themes: incel forums and content, solutions to inceldom, influential personalities, desire to harm, celebration of violence, and suicidal ideation. We found that most users searched for specific incel forums and solutions to inceldom, though a small number of searches related to self-harm and violence against society (e.g., "**Ropefuel**"; "**I want to go ER**").

Key Findings

Online search volume in absolute terms was significantly higher in the US (2,444 searches) than in Canada (160 searches). **Weighted by population**, **searches for incel-related content were 70% higher in the US than in Canada**. In absolute terms, the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Alberta, and Quebec saw the highest number of searches. In the US, the top three states for searches related to incel ideology were California, Florida, and Texas.

The most prominent search term in both countries was the web address of the main English-language incel forum. It was searched over 70 times in Canada and almost 1,000 times in the US.

Search users are predominantly male and under 34 years old. Available demographic data for search users revealed that 18-24 year olds produce a significant share of search traffic in both Canada (35.7%) and the US (39.1%). In Canada, however, over 50% of all search traffic came from users aged 25-34, compared with 26% in the US. This finding is in line with demographic trends observed on the primary English-language incel forum, where we observed that a group of self-identified Canadian users had a median age of 25.It is important to note however that in Canada, 70% of the age data, and 68% of gender data, were categorized as unknown. In the US, 72% of the age data, and 70% of the gender data, were categorized as unknown. The demographic data is provided by Google, which collects it from signed-in users based on self-reporting, the user's ad settings, and user behavior on its advertising network. Where a user's age and gender cannot be attributed, Google records their demographic as "unknown". Its absence may reflect strategic avoidance of online behavior tracking by incels (e.g., by using VPNs, or signing out of Google) and is unlikely to be random across demographic segments.

These data provide several insights about the online incel community. First, although search volumes were limited, traffic was widely dispersed geographically. In Canada, Google searches came from nine provinces, with no searches recorded in Prince Edward Island or the three territories. In the US, searches came from 48 US states and Washington, D.C., with no searches coming from Montana and Wyoming. It is important to note that the incel communities encourage digital security practices, such as the use of virtual private networks (VPNs), and this geographic data may not represent the full geographic distribution or absolute search volume of incels in either country. Second, while searches in Canada were comparatively low, they provide evidence that incels use Google's search engine to some extent, largely to find incel-specific communities. Once they access one of these websites and/or become a registered forum user, it is unlikely that they will use Google to find them again.

Canadian Activity on Other Platforms

In addition to the incel website, YouTube, and Google Search, Moonshot analyzed alternative platforms for evidence of Canadian users, including Reddit and Telegram. We first filtered user post data using indicators of users' self-disclosed location (i.e. "I live in" and "I am from"), and conducted a secondary search for the names of Canadian provinces, territories, and major Canadian cities (every capital city, as well as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary).

Compared to the incel website, our analyses of these alternative platforms yielded minimal geographic information. After analysing 1,232,462 publicly available posts on four major incel subreddits (r/incel, r/incels, r/Braincel, and r/Braincels), we found only 29 users who referenced a location within Canada. On nine incel-specific Telegram channels with over 393,241 public messages, we did not find any reference to users' location within Canada, or to a Canadian city, province and territory, or the country itself.

We faced two barriers when analyzing alternative platforms for Canadian incel users. First, these platforms are not directly associated with inceldom, and incel content is more rare. Second, while they do host incel-related content and incel communities, individual users are much less likely to disclose personal information or identifying characteristics (such as their location) in more public forums. While the English language incel website is a "safe space" for thousands of incels, discussion of incel ideology and grievances on other platforms may trigger ridicule or criticism from the other online communities. As a result, incels on alternative platforms likely experience trepidation about disclosing any identifying information on these sites.

Second, incel users discussing Canada or Canadian cities on alternative platforms are not always Canadian themselves. For example, users often discuss the fact that Canada is a "**cuck**" or "**beta**" country, due to its "feminist agenda." It is common for international incels to lament that Canada as a country is "the worst country to be an incel"; incels believe that Canada has an intolerance for misogyny, which they interpret to indicate apathy for the "male plight". Because incels believe that Canada is unsympathetic to inceldom, they find acts of violence that occur within the country to be particularly noteworthy. Incel-related violence in Canada is often quoted, discussed, and celebrated online from users of various nationalities, which makes it challenging to isolate users that are actually living in Canada. To limit the incidence of false positives when searching for the names of Canadian provinces, territories, and cities, Moonshot used the aforementioned location indicators ("I live in," "I am from," etc.). These key phrases helped ensure that users identified were highly likely to be Canadian, therefore narrowing the results across platforms studied.

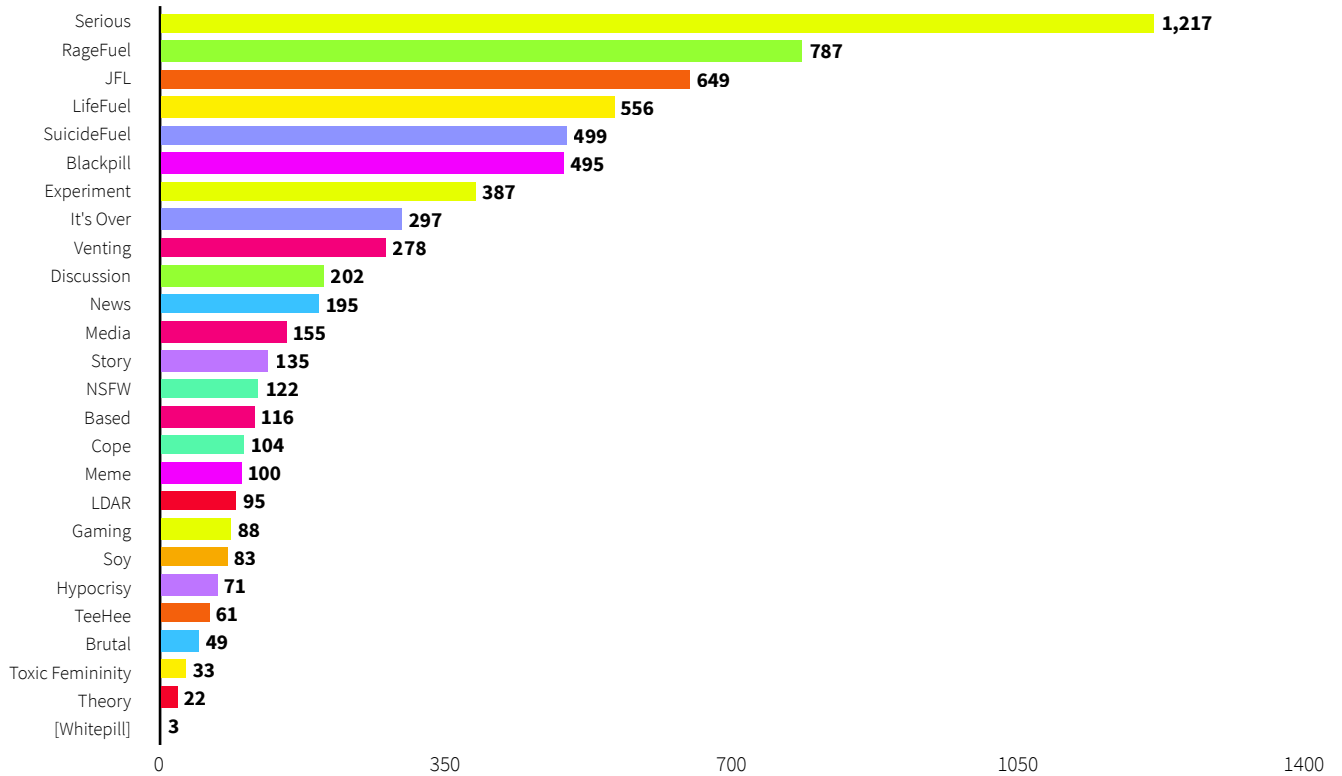## What We Can Learn from the Canadian Incel Conversation:

Moonshot's analysis of multiple platforms revealed that Canadian incels are highly concerned with their physical appearance, especially height and skin colour. Incels across Canada cite height as a major determinant in finding a partner. For example, users complain about women's unwillingness to date a man under six feet tall or complain that they are "too small" to find a girlfriend. Users also discuss their race (self-identifying as a **currycel**, a **ricecel**, etc.) and the challenges of being a minority in Canada. Incels seem to believe that Canadian women prefer white men, asserting that being non-white is a barrier to finding a romantic or sexual partner.

Another major theme in Canadian incel discourse is the concept of **hypergamy**.[46] In particular, incels are resentful of Canada's aforementioned "feminist tendencies". The advancement of women's rights and independence in Canada is seen by the community as a hindrance to their ability to find a mate. Incels are particularly agitated by initiatives related to gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, labeling these groups as "degenerates'' who "should kill themselves." Equal rights is perceived as diametrically opposed to incels' plight. As a result, users on the incel website celebrate violence against women in Canada as a victory for incels everywhere. Posts related to "female genocide" and "killing or nuking all of Canada" are common on the platform. Glorification of past Canadian incel violence, including the 2018 van attack and 2020 machete attack, risks have cascading effects for violence committed by incels looking for notoriety or vengeance.
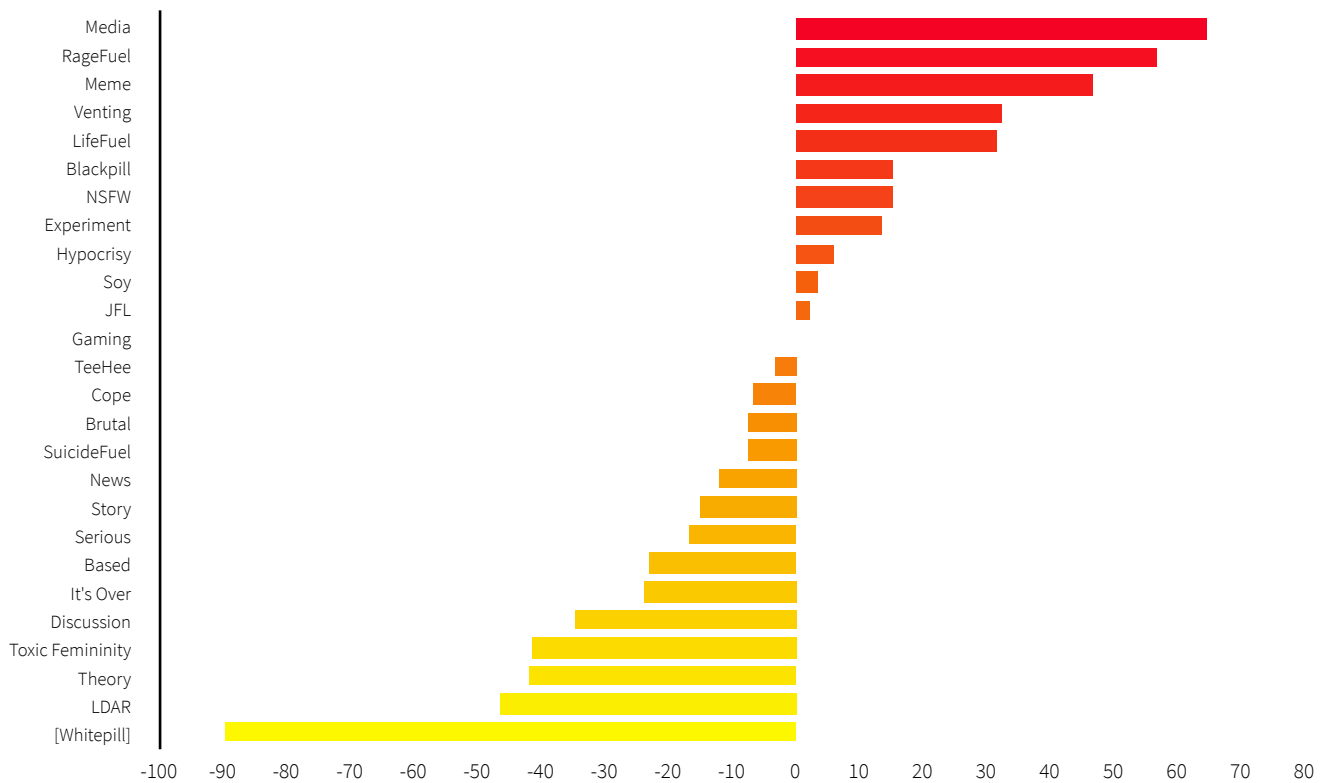
In comparison to the general population, Canadian users on the incel website were 65% more likely to discuss news stories and the media. There has been a high incidence of incel violence that has occurred in Canada in comparison to other countries, with three violent attacks in Ontario since 2018. The Canadian incel population followed coverage of these attacks closely, paying attention to the way that incels are depicted and characterized in the media. While incel violence is glorified internationally on the website, Canadian users appear to be especially celebratory of violence that has occurred because it occurred domestically.

On the incel website, users can tag their posts in order to align them with a particular type of conversation, similar to the hashtag function on Twitter. Moonshot's analysis of users indicates that Canadians most frequently create threads with the tags "**Serious**," "**Ragefuel**," and "**JFL**" ("just fucking lol"). Canadians were 57% more likely to discuss "Ragefuel" than the general population of users. This tag is used to describe situations that anger users, most often related to their interactions with or perceptions of women. For example, a post associated with the **Ragefuel** tag may lament a particular woman speaking openly about her sexuality or female empowerment. In Canada, the prevalence of **Ragefuel** conversations underscores these users' rejection of the country's Feminist International Assistance Policy and stance on gender equality. Canadian incels cite that women's increased equality in the workforce has given them "too much freedom," therefore enabling them to be unjustifiably selective when it comes to finding a partner. This narrative is closely aligned to the incel theory of the 80/20 rule.

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46.   Hypergamy is the act of marrying or forming a sexual relationship with a person of a superior sociological or educational background (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). It is defined in the incel context in Appendix A.

Tag	Value
Serious	1,217
RageFuel	787
JFL	649
LifeFuel	556
SuicideFuel	499
Blackpill	495
Experiment	387
It's Over	297
Venting	278
Discussion	202
News	195
Media	155
Story	135
NSFW	122
Based	116
Cope	104
Meme	100
LDAR	95
Gaming	88
Soy	83
Hypocrisy	71
TeeHee	61
Brutal	49
Toxic Femininity	33
Theory	22
[Whitepill]	3

Most frequently used tags by Canadian users on the primary English-language incel website.

The frequency of tag use by Canadians compared to other website users.

Key Topics in Incel Discourse

Celebration of Suicide and Violent Extremism

The incel community is built on a foundation of nihilism and self-hatred. While not all incels are violent, incels' online ecosystem breeds and encourages extreme attitudes related to suicide, interpersonal violence, and violent misogyny. Incels' fixation on violence throughout their online ecosystem is dangerous, as this could lower members' threshold for committing acts of violence offline.[47]

Our analysis revealed that suicidal ideation is ubiquitous across the incel community. Suicide is often used as an instrument to reinforce the narrative that incels are victims, or to prove how deeply they are suffering. For example, incels will frequently discuss their desire to "**rope**" (a reference to hanging oneself) rather than live in a society that is apathetic to their pain. Users that express the desire to kill themselves are often met with replies encouraging them to do so. Expression of personal suffering is viewed as a badge of honour on incel platforms; suicide vindicates the broader community's position that women (and society as a whole) are cruel at heart, and do not care whether incels live or die.

While this propensity towards self-harm is a public health concern in itself, it also represents a threat to the safety of the Canadian public. Moonshot observed that individuals who have committed mass violence against women are lionized by the incel community. The most common form of glorification by incels is through the reference or visual depiction of these murderers as "saints." Praise for misogynist killers like Elliot Rodger are rife in the incel community. Incels view Rodger as a martyr, and have adopted vernacular like "**hERo**" (in reference to Rodger's initials) and "**going ER**" to describe other violent incel extremists.

The celebration of violent extremism on incel forums has had and will continue to have direct implications for Canadian security. Within Canada, praise for Rodger and other incel killers has had cascading effects for incel violence, as exemplified by the deadly 2018 van attack and 2020 massage parlour attack. In the case of the van attack, the perpetrator was motivated by his inceldom. His attempted murder-suicide, which killed ten people in Toronto's North York area, appeared to be carried out specifically for an incel audience. Prior to the attack, he posted on his Facebook page that "the incel rebellion has already begun" and paid respect to "Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger." The frequency of incel attacks has escalated over the years, with five out of 13 attacks occurring in Canada, three of which occurred in the past two years. With a small number of incel attacks globally, this high concentration of Canadian attacks suggests there is a risk that other Canadian incels will follow a similar trajectory towards societal or interpersonal violence, in the hopes of becoming memorialized by their peers online.

In addition to their admiration of explicit incel killers, Moonshot observed that members of the community also idolize figures that they believe subscribed to the **blackpill** ideology. A famous example is that of Marc Lépine, who murdered fourteen women at Montreal's École Polytechnique in 1989. Despite the fact that Lépine's shooting spree occurred before the term incel had been created, he is worshiped by incel communities. Incels' motivation to project their ideology onto notorious murderers can be attributed in part to their desire to put inceldom "on the map." As a community that feels ostracized and ignored by society, incels want to be noticed and have their grievances heard. By associating themselves with high-profile criminals like Lépine, incels position themselves as a serious threat to society.

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47.   Hoffman, B, Ware, J. and Shapiro, E. Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 43:7, 565-587. 2020.

More recently, Moonshot observed incels' promoting **blackpill** ideology following the 2021 massage parlour shootings in Atlanta, Georgia. Before the perpetrator's motivation was established, incels were quick to claim their act of violence as a symptom of incel rage. Beyond attributing the attack to incel motives, incel website users attempted to leverage the massacre to incite further violence against Asian American women. For example, incels used the Atlanta victims as an opportunity to condemn Asian women more broadly as "race-traitors" and "**noodlewhores**". The glorification of misogynistic violence online has cascading effects for incel extremism, as it lowers the threshold for offline action.[48]

While the incel population is racially diverse, the community hosts a plethora of racist content, specifically toward women of colour. The fetishization of Asian women (particularly in relation to sex work and "rub & tug" massage parlours) can be seen as a trigger for the incel community, as demonstrated by both the Atlanta shooting and the preceding massage parlour murder in Toronto. Incels' categorization of the victims as "**noodlewhores**" is an attempt to dehumanize Asian women and justify violence inflicted against them. Incels' adoption of the Atlanta shooter as one of their own exemplifies the power of social media platforms to galvanize like-minded users against a perceived common enemy in a way that increases risk. The hateful rhetoric used to describe women and minority groups in online incel spaces poses a threat to the safety and security of Canadian communities, as it can push individuals further down the path towards violent extremism.
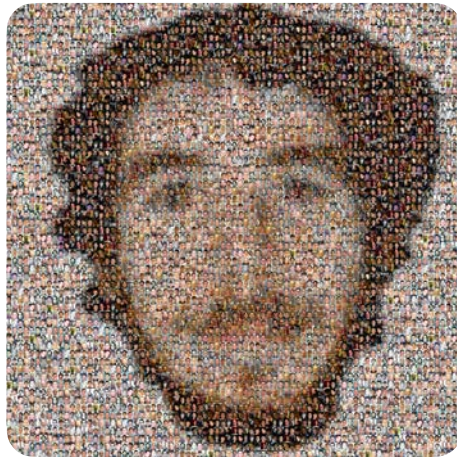
Mosaic image of Marc Lépine created with images of other misogynistic killers perceived to be motivated by inceldom. This image was shared on an incel forum.

Race and Ethnicity

The incel community is racially and ethnically diverse, and incels are actively involved in discussions of race, racism, and the perceived sexual benefits and disadvantages afforded to men because of their race. Racial analysis is intrinsic to incel ideology, and ingroup terminology reflects incels' perception of the way that race impacts their sexual encounters. What is unique about the incel ecosystem is that this analysis occurs in a diverse environment, with individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and across political and religious divides.

The incel ideology subscribes to **lookism**, which posits there are evolutionary, objective standards of attractiveness and unattractiveness (such as height or bone structure). These measurements transcend racial boundaries and are believed to have a similar effect on all women. "**Chad(s)**" is the term used for the most commonly referenced ideal male archetype. However, there are racialized versions of **Chads** that are also referenced including **Tyrone**, **Chadpreet**, and **Chang**. These racialized **Chads** are constructed through the lens of racist stereotypes.

48.   Hoffman, 2020.

Incels may choose to describe themselves and others by their racial or ethnic identity. This includes descriptors such as **blackcel**, **currycel**, and **ricecel**. Incels come from various religious backgrounds, with a number of incels identifying as Muslim. Muslim incels are referred to as **muslimcels**. Muslim incels that they are often not interested in accessing sex before marriage because of their Islamic faith, but still subscribe to key tenets of incel ideology.

Incels' use of race-oriented nicknames demonstrate their belief that racist stereotypes influence dating and sexual preferences. Incels of colour understand inceldom as intrinsically linked to their racial or ethnic identity and experiences of racism and xenophobia. Incels' belief in sexual racism also extends to the sex work industry, where they feel that sex workers will reject clients that are non-white.

Incels believe white incels have advantages in the dating market, including the ability to travel to foreign countries to access sexual relationships. Incels believe this racial advantage also extends to accessing sex with women of colour in their home country. In turn, many incels of colour feel contempt for women's perceived preference for white men. Incels propose a solution to access sex through **SEA-maxxing**, or traveling to South East Asia in order to access sex with foreign woman. Incels believe that non-Western women, particularly women from South East Asia are interested in sex with Western men, particularly white men, and are therefore more likely to have sex with incels.

SEA-maxxing is a commonly proposed solution to inceldom, for those who can afford it. Incels focus on targeting poor and vulnerable women in foreign countries because of the belief that they will be more amenable to advances from incels. **SEA-maxxing** is also seen as an opportunity for older incels to access sex with young women. When discussing foreign travel, incels compare and rank countries based on political or social upheaval - believing that these countries offer a better opportunity to exploit local women.

There are white incels who subscribe to violent far-right (VFR) ideologies. These incels may be referred to as **stormcels**, **altrightcels**, and **whitecels**. These incels take part in the online incel ecosystem, and have been observed having understanding and respectful conversations with incels of colour and Jewish incels. This civil discourse occurs in spite of VFR incels sharing racist, Islamophobic, or anti-Semitic content, and appears to be based on participants' shared experience as incels and their collective misogyny.

A reply to a thread about the murder of a Muslim family in London, Ontario on 6 June 2021 in a hate motivated vehicle attack. The image is from the anti-Muslim propaganda video "Remove Kebab," which celebrates the genocide of Muslims (referred to as "kebabs") in the Yugoslav Wars. The song was played during the livestream of the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings and is a popular far-right meme. The thread, titled "Muslims are the ni**ers of Canada," includes a debate between white supremacists and Muslim incels; posters dismiss Islamophobia and calls for racial justice, advance the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, and criticize "feminist changes" in "cucked" Middle Eastern countries due to perceived interference by Western governments.

What are the Risks of Incels' Views on Race?

Increased risk to women based on their racial, ethnic or religious identity:
For incels of colour, who claim to experience racial prejudice in their own attempts at dating and sexual relationships, the perceived rejection by women from their own racial or ethnic background is a source of emasculation and anger.

East Asian women are particularly targeted by this belief. East Asian women are regularly referred to by the slur **noodlewhore**, and are believed to be the most likely to seek out sexual relationships with white men. White women are also not exempt from this racialized misogyny. White supremacist and neo-Nazi websites, such as CoalFax, that **doxx** white women in interracial relationships are shared by some incels online. This is particularly dangerous for women, as these violent far-right websites include personal information including victims' photographs, home and email addresses. Incels are encouraged to harass these women or upload information about new targets.

Incels are religiously diverse, and incorporate a subset of Muslim incels, or **muslimcels**. Due to incel beliefs about the sexual promiscuity and **hypergamy** of women, Muslim incels believe the majority of women, including Muslim women, are engaging in sex with **Chads**. They regularly talk of their inability to find a "virginal" or "non-promiscuous" Muslim woman for marriage. This applies particularly to Muslim incels living in the West, who believe that liberal approaches to sex encourage sexually promsicuous behaviour in Muslim women. The anger and contempt Muslim incels feel towards Muslim women's perceived behaviour is compounded by the fact that premarital sex is seen as against the Islamic faith. Muslim incels therefore believe Muslim women are both emasculating incels and engaging in blasphemous behaviour.

Increased risk to sex workers for their perceived racial preference:
Incels who frequent sex workers, referred to as **escortcels**, describe experiences of racism when visiting sex workers. **Escortcels** of colour share personal anecdotes of sex workers refusing to engage with men from specific racial or ethnic backgrounds. Incels of colour who have not visited sex workers often indicate to the incel community that their decision is based on this perceived racial profiling. This has built a narrative within the incel ecosystem that incels of colour who are rejected by society will also be rejected by sex workers. These experiences are used to support hateful views of female sex workers, who are targeted as women, as individuals who are believed to profit from male loneliness, and as individuals who are believed to further marginalize incels of colour.

SEA is my only hope,
failing that I kill myself.

A tagline on an incel forum which claims traveling to South East Asia (SEA) or committing suicide are the only options to leave inceldom.

⚠

Content Warning

The following section analyzes how incels discuss child sexual exploitation.

⚠ **Content warning**

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Incels believe that when women turn 25 years old they hit "**the wall**" and begin to lose their **sexual market value (SMV)**. Therefore, women under the age of 25 are considered the most sexually desirable demographic. Accessing sex with women under the age of 25 is perceived to be the sexual goal of all men, and failing to do so as shameful and emasculating. Incels, unable to access sex during their teenage years when females are in their "**prime**," feel emasculated by **Chads**. Incels believe that during their high school years, teenage girls engage in underage sex with **Chads**, thereby reducing the chance of incels finding a virgin woman to have sex with during adulthood.

For a subset of incels, these beliefs lead to the discussion and acceptance of child sexual exploitation (CSE). In this report they are referred to as "CSE incels".

Insights Into Incels and CSE:

- Incels believe the physical characteristics associated with youth make young women sexually desirable. CSE incels believe this extends to underage girls.

- Incels believe underage girls are engaging in sex with underage **Chads**. Due to **hypergamy** and the **80/20 rule**, incels believe this limits the number of girls reaching adulthood as virgins.

- CSE incels believe that due to their own physical characteristics, they were denied access to sex with their female peers when they were underage. As adults, they now believe they are further denied access to sex with underage girls due to age of consent laws.

- Incels believe that underage girls are sexually promiscuous. CSE incels believe this means underage girls will welcome attention from adult men. They also believe underage girls are less judgemental about incels' physical attractiveness because of their lack of experience with men.

- CSE incels believe that laws and societal norms about the age of consent were created by women to reduce female competition in the sexual marketplace. They believe women's intention behind age of consent laws is to limit men's access to young girls, who are more sexually desirable than adult women.

What are the Risk Associated with Incels Beliefs About CSE?

Normalization of interest in sex with underage girls:
CSE incels engage in pseudoscientific discussions supported by **blackpill science** suggesting that it is a biological reality that men are sexually attracted to the youthful features of underage girls. Claiming sexual interest in underage girls as a natural evolutionary response allows CSE incels to claim that it is normal to have these sexual interests. CSE incels therefore argue that pursuing underage women does not necessitate societal censure or legal action.

Hypersexualisation of women and young girls:
Incels believe underage girls are engaging in sex with their underage **Chad** peers. **Hypergamy** is believed to be a trait in all females regardless of age, and incels therefore believe underage girls exhibit the same hypergamous behaviour they perceive in adult women when choosing a sexual partner. To CSE incels, this demonstrates that underage girls are already engaging in the same "depraved" sexual behaviour as they perceive in adult women, and should be treated with the same degree of contempt.

⚠️ **Content warning**

For CSE incels, the fact that underage girls are having sex with their peers is evidence that they are mature enough to engage in sex with adults – specifically incels. The belief that underage girls are engaging in sex with underage **Chads** also supports incels' violent misogynistic beliefs about adult women. Rejecting incels is perceived as an innate, unchangeable behaviour found in all women and girls.

CSE incels also use their beliefs about underage girls' sexual behaviour to support pro-rape views. Many incels believe women enjoy being raped by **Chads**, and only report rape when sexual violence is committed by a man they find sexually undesirable, such as an incel. For CSE incels, this belief extends to the rape of underage girls. For CSE incels, this means underage girls would welcome sex with adult men but society inhibits this behavior by describing it as rape, solely because the men are incels.

Increased belief in gynocentric society:
Incels believe that they live in a **gynocentric** society, in which women hold power over men. Incels view feminist and progressive policies as ploys by women to maintain the illusion that they are not in control. For CSE incels, age of consent (AOC) laws are evidence of **gynocentric** society, and enable women to fabricate the need for legal protection of children. These incels believe AOC laws are a means to control and oppress undesirable men. Incel forums include discussions and polling that debate the need for AOC laws. CSE incels suggest that if adult incels were allowed to engage in sexual relationships with underage girls they could also combat girls' hypergamous behaviour before it fully developed.

It is important to note that **most incels do not support paedophilia or a dramatic reduction in the age of consent**. Many vocally protest these discussions on moral grounds but also because they fear it will damage their ability to generate popular support for incels' beliefs. However, feelings of sexual entitlement, beliefs about evolutionary traits in sexual selection, and myths about the sexual practices of young girls make the incel ecosystem an environment where conversations about CSE are visible and routinely expressed.

Mental Health and Neurodiversity

A large number of incels self-identify as facing challenges to their mental health or neurodevelopment, including diagnoses such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), social anxiety, and other generalized anxiety disorders. Incels who view their mental health or neurodiversity as the main factor in causing their inceldom describe themselves as **mentalcels**.

Incels consider mental health support to be an ineffective coping mechanism promoted by society as an alternative to addressing the root causes of inceldom, which incels believe to be evolutionary, biological, and societal in nature. Mental health professionals (MHPs) are viewed negatively across the incel ecosystem, and suggestions that members access mental health support are almost universally rejected or dismissed by the incel community. Incels believe that women do not experience neurodiversity, mental health issues, or suicidal thoughts, and women are believed to make these claims only for attention.

What are the Risks Associated with Incels' Beliefs About Mental Health?

Increased risk for suicidal individuals:

The **blackpill** ideology states that inceldom is a result of biological and evolutionary factors and is therefore unchangeable. Within this framework, suicide is popularly seen as an appropriate solution to inceldom.

This narrative is perpetuated throughout the online incel ecosystem. Posts related to suicide are common, and individuals' posts about their desire to die are validated by the community. When an individual expresses interest in committing suicide, posts often empathize with the user's choice or express their own interest in committing suicide. On the rare occasion that an individual tries to discourage a user from committing suicide, they are met with hostility from the wider community. Anti-suicide posters are accused of perpetuating mainstream societal beliefs and discounting the unrelenting pain that incels feel. Suicide is therefore presented to the community as an intrinsic part of incel ideology.

Increased risk of suicidal individuals committing attacks:

In closed incel communities, users who express interest in committing suicide are often encouraged to commit a large scale murder-suicide by one or more incels. These individuals typically reference Elliot Rodger's attack, encouraging the user to "**go ER**." The logic driving this is rooted in the belief that "**normies**" (normal people) are accessing sex and deserve to be punished for doing so; some community members argue that suicidal incels should therefore take the opportunity to kill non-incel members of the population before they commit suicide. Posts related to suicidal ideation are extremely common on incel-specific websites, where threads about suicide are posted daily, and can also be found on mainstream platforms that incels use.

Increased risk of incels not engaging in mental health support services:

MHPs, as non-incels and members of mainstream society, are believed to perpetuate the deceptive narrative that incels will benefit from mental health support. Incels share personal anecdotes of their poor experiences with MHPs with online incel communities. These include examples of MHPs suggesting incels are unsuccessful in dating and relationships for reasons unrelated to their physical unattractiveness. These incels actively discourage others from seeking mental health support and claim MHPs are not interested in supporting incels. According to many in the incel community, the only acceptable response from MHPs is to validate an incel's worldview. Any other suggestion is viewed as proof of the MHPs collaboration with mainstream society in the oppression of incels.

Increased risk of incels feeling rejected by society:
Incels are aware of the high suicide rate among members of their community and have been known to document the deaths of community members. Prior to the Reddit community ban of incels, there was a subreddit dedicated to documenting the suicide notes and death dates (where available) of incel suicide victims. This subreddit was closed by Reddit moderators. In other areas of the incel ecosystem when prominent members of the community stop engaging with content or cannot be reached, their silence is often attributed to suicide.

The incel community views these suicides as evidence of the extreme toll that inceldom has on an individual, and also as evidence that they are a persecuted and oppressed class. The perceived lack of media attention for incel suicides, including the perceived suppression of this information by Reddit moderators, is seen to confirm that mainstream society holds incels in contempt, and tacitly approves of their suicides.

Symbolism

A variety of symbols, avatars and images are used within the incel ecosystem, particularly on incel-created websites and forums. The choice of symbols can provide insight into users' relationship to violent misogyny, violent extremist groups, and their mental health. The following examples are illustrative of commonly used images across the incel ecosystem:

Killers adopted into the incel canon
Incels post or use the avatars of killers who the community believe were motivated by incel beliefs. These individuals either specifically targeted women, or expressed that they decided to kill due to their sexual rejection by women. These images include killers who committed an attack for different ideological purposes, but expressed difficulty in accessing sexual relationships. The incel community also adopts killers who have not publicly identified with the ideology but who incels believe are physically unattractive.

> 🔘 I'm crying right now… I miss him so much it hurts. I hope one day we will meet in hell/heaven and sit down to talk. Dream would come true. Love you intil the day I die Elliot.
>
> 🔘 He's so damn handsome, how could girls not want him. I want to cure his beautiful soul who became dirty because of people. When i see him soon.
>
> 🔘 He did it too, now girls fawn over him…
>
> 🔘 10/10 m8
>
> 🔘 I will never forget you, Saint Elliot. Your courage, strength and bravery has never been seen before on this planet, and will never be seen again. There will never ne another incel like Saint Elliot. May God bless his immortal soul.

YouTube comment section from a video dedicated to Elliot Rodger.
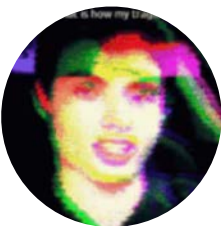
Avatar of Elliot Rodger. This image is taken from the video he recorded before his attack.

Avatar of Dylan Roof, a white supremacist responsible for the Charleston shooting that killed 9 people.

Avatar of Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter who killed 32 people.

Ed Kemper, known as the co-ed killer for his targeting of young women, is a serial killer avatar used within the incel ecosystem.

Violent fictional characters

Incels also use images of fictional characters whose storyline or motivations are based on their hatred and killing of women, such as Patrick Bateman, the protagonist of American Psycho. Their lionization is important because these characters are specifically chosen and celebrated for their violent misogyny.

Violent extremist groups

These are images associated with violent extremist groups, specifically the violent far-right and jihadism. There are incels who identify with the violent far-right and often choose Nazi or Fascist avatars and usernames, and share images associated with these groups. Jihadist content is also shared, although this is less common than violent far-right imagery.

in shaa allah i will stick the black flag on top of them to mark the new era for jesus to return

امر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر

Avatar of the Waffen SS insignia, and a reference to the 6 million Jewish people killed in the Holocaust.

Avatar of Joseph Goebbels, a high ranking member of Hitler's Nazi Party.

A still from an ISIS beheading propaganda video showing 'Jihadi John,' a British ISIS fighter holding a knife. The user's name references Elliot Rodger, and their Arabic bio reads "enjoying the good and forbidding evil." This hadith is often used by violent jihadist groups to demonstrate their legitimacy.

Suicidal ideation

Many incels use avatars about suicidal ideation. These often include rope imagery and illustrated images of suicide. It is important to pay attention to these images because they suggest the user may be at-risk of committing self-harm or suicide.

This is an image of Pink Wojack holding a gun to his head while crying blood: the collar around his neck is a rope attached to a noose. Variants of Wojack images are used throughout the incel ecosystem.

The image is representative of the noose and hanging imagery used by many users in the incel ecosystem.

Non-Anglophone Incel Communities

To understand the full scope of the online incel ecosystem, Moonshot conducted analyses of incel-related content across five languages: English, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Italian. While this report focuses predominantly on English-speaking users, our analyses of incel communities across other languages helps to contextualize the ideology as a global movement. It revealed that while the incel ideology transcends borders, incels' beliefs are heavily influenced by cultural norms.

Users across the identified French, Russian, Brazilian and Italian forums demonstrated an active interest in misogynistic rhetoric. While the volume of foreign language users engaging with incel content is lower than in English speaking countries, interest in incel-related discourse is international. Moonshot observed consistent trends in the demographics of incel users worldwide, with the majority of global users self-identifying as young adult males between the ages of 18 and 35.[49] The basic tenets of inceldom outlined in the **blackpill** ideology appear to resonate with users across each of these languages. While the discussion of interpersonal violence varies across French, Russian, Brazilian, and Italian incels, suicidal ideation remains a common theme. Users glorify the same violent misogynist actors as English users (Elliot Rodger, Alex Minnassian, etc.) as well as gender-based violence within their home countries.

Moonshot identified unique themes across forums in each language based on the social, political and cultural context of the incel community. The majority of the French users found were from France or Belgium, with a few instances of individuals from Québec, Canada. While there is certainly misogynistic rhetoric on French forums, there does not appear to be a solidified French-speaking incel community, and we were unable to differentiate between Canadian and other Francophone users. For example, in response to a post asking about "**frenchcel**" culture, one user responded that the incel "**blackpill** [ideology] hasn't spread properly to French people and the French language". Overall, the incel ideology is understood by French users but not widespread.

On French speaking forums, it is common for users to lament the "sexual liberation" of women and the "**hypergamous**" tendencies of French culture. French users also discuss the issue of immigration, specifically in reference to African men in Europe. For example, white-incels in France and Belgium express envy of "well endowed" Black men, claiming that immigration hinders their ability to find a mate. Lastly, French incels expressed interest in using fundamental Islamic gender constructs as a means to control women in society. Users hypothesize that Islam, specifically the burqa, could be a solution to the issue of Inceldom, as well as a potential punishment for liberated women.

> ⦿ Perso je pense que c'est quand la France sera complétement islamisée et que les meufs n'auront plus aucun droit qu'elles se rendront compte de leurs erreurs / L'islan a toujours traté les femmes comme de simples objets sexuels interchangeables et sans libre-arbitre, et nos putes occidentales ne le comprennent pas en préférant se taper des nègres et des princes du Golfe bien aux as que des incels comme nous

A French user suggests that Islam's approach to gender norms could be used to control Western women.

Translation:
*Personally I think that only when France has become completely Islamicized and women have no more rights that they'll realize their mistakes. Islam has always treated women like interchangeable objects without free will, and our western sluts don't understand this and would rather fuck n*****s and Gulf princes than incels like us.*

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49. Moonshot's analysis of the incel community indicates that the age range for individuals identifying as incel ranges between 13-35. Considering that age data is all self-reported, it is likely that some underage users would claim to be 18 for fear of being kicked off a particular website or forum.

Like English-speaking incels, Russian users engage with violent misogynistic content and idolize 'influencers' that adhere to incel ideology. For example, Russian users fixate on the incel activist Alexey Podnebesny, who promotes a Russian-centric approach to inceldom that aligns with communism. They advocate for legislated sexual communism as a means to guarantee sex for men, condemning the current system as "vaginacapitalism." Russian incels are vehemently opposed to women's alleged monopoly over sex, claiming that it is harmful at the individual level by reducing men's mental and physical health, and at the structural level by diminishing labor productivity and creating economic deprivation.

Interestingly, many Russian incel groups contain a female membership. Moonshot's analysis revealed that male and female incels sometimes connect with each other through discussion threads about dating as a proposed solution to their celibacy. While female incels attempting to join Russian forums face some pushback, the majority are admitted. Russian incel groups' acceptance of female incels may contribute to reducing individuals' propensity for gender based violence. For example, on one Russian incel forum, a female user expressed that her identity as an incel is not intended to insult men, but rather to express her loneliness and disappointment at not having a romantic partner. The dialogue on mixed-gender incel forums has a significantly more pacific connotation than on male-dominated forums, as users from opposite genders are able to develop empathy for the other's position.

Moonshot observed several thematic overlaps on Brazilian and Italian forums, including an alignment with the Japanese Hikikomori subculture. Hikikomori, meaning "pulling inward, being confined" is a phenomenon in Japan that refers to adolescents that become reclusive and refuse to leave their parents' homes. While the reasons that a person adopts Hikkimori may vary, Japanese youth often cite bullying as a driving factor for isolationism. The concept is used by Brazilian and Italian incels to describe young men with a phobia of social interaction. Incels that subscribe to Hikikomori are often highly self- conscious, believing that their personal appearance and limited social skills inhibit them from ever finding a sexual partner.

> Amigos impriessionante como de 2014 para cá o tempo passou rápido , não conquistei nada na minha vida , sequer tive amigos , pois tenho fobia social e tenho ódio de mulheres , não consigo trocar ideia com elas e nem ter amizades, evito lugares que elas frequentam faculdades, baladas e até praças públicas , pode ser um trastorno de dismorfia corporal e um complexo de inferioridade que tenho pois eu odeio minha estética e ainda sou dicklet.Sou hikikomori brasileiro.Bateu puta depressão agora eu tava pesquisando o face das pessoas que estudaram comigo , os alfas estão todos bens financeiramente , e estão em várias viagens acompanhados de várias mulheres e ainda tem traquejos sociais e vários amigo , eu sou em beta pobre fudido , a natureza é muito injusta !!

A Brazilian user describes his life as an incel, citing that he is hikikomori.

Translation:
Friends, it's impressive how time has passed so quickly since 2014. I have not achieved anything in my life, I have not even made any friends because I have a social phobia and I hate women. I cannot strike a convo with them or have friendships, I avoid places where women go, like colleges, clubs and even public plazas, it can be body dysmorphia disorder and an inferiority complex I have because I hate my aesthetics and I'm still a dicklet. I'm a Brazilian hikikomori. I got a fucking surge of depression right now I was looking up the Facebook profiles of people I went to school with. The alphas are all financially well, and they are on several trips accompanied by several women and they also have social skills and several friends. I am a fucked up poor beta, nature is very unfair !!

Similar to Russian incels, Brazilian and Italian incels glorify acts of misogynistic violence. It is common for users to discuss gender-based murders like the De Marco homicide in Italy or the Realengo School Shooting in Brazil. While these incidents are not associated with inceldom, they have been adopted by the incel community and are glorified as "**lifefuel**" for like-minded users. Members of these two communities often identify as the "No-No" generation (No Job, No Education) or "**NEET**" (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It is likely that COVID-19 pandemic will have exacerbated the number of No-No or **NEET** incels, due to the high rate of global unemployment throughout 2020.

Sono Schif, faccio, ho 20 anni e sono vergine. Sono un ragazzo molto brutto, è un po' che sequo il forum. Sono arrivato qui passando da altri forum. La mia è una vita di m. Mi sono reso conto di essere così fin da quando avevo 14 anni. In un certo senso sono stato sempre consapevole della red pill...Ma è da un po' che proprio non reggo piú.
————————

Sono Schif e faccio schif.

Ciao benvuto, cosa fai nella vita?

Disoccupato, non so che fare...to? cosa fai?
————————

Sono Schif e faccio schif.

Italian users discuss their physical insecurities and lack of employment.

Translation:
"I am Schiff [in Italian, "schifo" means disgusting], I am disgusting, I am 20 years old and I am a virgin. I am a very ugly guy, and I have been following the forum for a while. I have arrived here through other forums. Mine is a shitty life. I realized I am like this since I was 14 years old. In a way I have always been aware of red pill...But it has been a while since I no longer can bear it"
"Hello and welcome. What do you do for a living?" "Unemployed, I don't know what to do.. what about you? What do you do?"

When it comes to race, a considerable number of Brazilian incels identify as mixed-race or Black. Within the community, many Brazilian incels acknowledge themselves as non-whites born out of miscegenation, which is perceived by the community as to their social and sexual detriment. Many Brazilian incels discuss racism (whether internalized, experienced or afflicted on others), and associate non-whiteness with failure in romantic relationships.

Brazilian incels feel that the legalization of prostitution and perceived celebration of sex in the country places exorbitant pressure on men to be sexually active. Long before the term incel was coined in 1993, there was a word in Brazilian to define men who are still virgins: cabaço. This term derives from the Brazilian Portuguese word for "hymen" and is typically used by men in a self-deprecating manner to describe their lack of sexual experience and knowledge of female sexuality. Analysis of Brazilian incel forums also identified instances of fetishization of transgender women. It is widely accepted by the community that trans women are a "better version" of cis women. Trans women are believed to have both the benefits of a female body and an understanding of the male mind.

Moonshot also researched the extent of the incel community in Pakistan and South Korea by interviewing local subject matter experts. Experts reported that while there are large online misogynistic communities in these countries, individuals do not appear to coalesce around incel ideology. This may be an area for further research.

Part 3: Expert Consultations and Workshop Findings

Expert Consultations

At the time of our initial research in 2020, Moonshot did not identify incel-specific intervention programs anywhere in the world. During our expert consultations in February 2021, we found that a small number of organizations are beginning to expand their programming to cater to the incel community. However, there is a clear absence of research into creating and designing programming specifically for incels.

After identifying key vulnerabilities and risks exhibited by incels in the academic literature and in their online behaviour, Moonshot conducted semi-structured interviews with 35 global experts[50] to identify best practices for future interventions programming. We aimed to draw on their expertise to develop a holistic approach to interventions that considers incels' unique behaviours, beliefs and vulnerabilities.

Our interviewees came from sectors including:

- Countering violent extremism
- Perpetrator-focused domestic violence programming
- Conspiracy theory research
- Male supremacy and violent misogyny
- Social work
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) research
- Mental health
- Forensic psychiatry
- Youth sexual offending
- Positive masculinity programming
- Social isolation
- Internet addiction
- Sex education

We conducted two rounds of interviews. First, we held an initial conversation with each participant to understand their sector, organization, research or programming, and their previous experience with the incel community. Our second interview involved structured questions about the practical considerations of developing an intervention program for incels, such as how to engage clients effectively; how to identify incel-specific risk factors; and the ethics, health, and safety considerations for intervention providers. The following are key vulnerabilities that these interviews identified among the incel community offline.

Vulnerabilities to Inceldom

Incels, like most extremists, have varied and individual vulnerabilities that can make them susceptible to incel ideology. Experts pointed to a range of factors that may increase a person's interest in or engagement with incel ideology. They can be divided into the following broad categories: early life rejection or trauma, a perceived failure to meet social standards, a sense of victimization or unfulfilled entitlement, and condition-based risk factors.

50. Moonshot interviewed experts from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Brazil, Italy, South Korea, and Sweden.

Early Life Rejection or Trauma

Respondents working in the fields of psychology and psychiatry noted the role of negative childhood experiences in forming vulnerabilities to extremist ideologies, including inceldom. These include violence, sexual abuse, bullying, neglect, and/ or social isolation.

The perpetrators of this abuse may vary from the individuals' peers to adult figures in their lives. Respondents noted, however, that abuse or neglect from male figures is particularly likely to contribute to a vulnerability to incel ideology. Whether real or perceived, in some cases these types of experiences are often retroactively identified in incel communities as "signs" that these individuals would eventually be forced into a celibate lifestyle (for example, the sentiment that "not even teachers wanted to talk to me"). One respondent noted the tendency for individuals to turn to the virtual space for affirmation after experiencing real-life rejection or trauma, a pattern also observed among individuals at risk of far-right extremism.

Respondents in the fields of psychology or psychiatry emphasized that children who experienced or were victims of violence are more likely to perpetrate violence against others.[51] Several respondents also expressed the need to understand clients' childhood experiences during the assessment phase of an intervention, as these experiences may help narrow the possible vulnerabilities that predisposed these individuals to supporting incel ideology.

For some incels, a negative experience with even a single female figure in their lives can manifest in a general hatred of women. One respondent suggested that the root of misogynist anger is in many cases derived from trauma experienced with a mother, past partner, or another female figure in the individual's life.

Failure to Meet Standards of Masculinity

Multiple experts identified the failure to achieve a particular social standard as a common vulnerability to extremist ideology. This failure, whether real or perceived, may leave an individual looking for alternative sources of validation and make them receptive to new ideological frameworks.

The primary social standard with which incels concern themselves is masculinity. Incels' perception of the idealized male - embodied by the exaggerated "**Chad**" stereotype - represents male domination, power, entitlement, and access to sex, all of which incels feel they are unable to achieve. Certain external factors may exacerbate this perceived failure. A reduction in social or economic capital, for instance, is a major stressor that can make an individual feel less "manly" and unable to perform the role of a provider.

Incels' perceived failure to meet perceived standards of beauty manifests in their hyper attentiveness on physical characteristics. Incels often point to a single characteristic (for instance, their wrist circumference or height) as the primary, and sometimes only reason for their celibacy. Respondents suggested that in many cases incels' perception of their physical traits may be indicative of body dysmorphia. Since incel communities encourage an obsessiveness over physical traits, experts suggested that dysmorphic mentalities may frequently develop in incels after joining an incel community. However, men and boys who struggle with eating disorders and/or dysmorphia are likely to be vulnerable to incel communities, particularly if these behaviours are accompanied by trauma or perceived isolation. Respondents identified that another common topic of discussion on incel forums is the shared failure to meet the same rites of passage (often sexual or romantic as their peers in regard to relationships. These unmet adolescent milestones are frequently cited as objective proof that individuals' are confined to a life of involuntary celibacy.

51.   The cycles of violence - World Health Organization. (2007). https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/98783/E90619.pdf

Victimization or Unfulfilled Entitlement

Experts frequently pointed to the concept of the "man box," a term first coined by Paul Kivel and the Oakland Men's Project, to express the way societal expectations about masculinity and male behaviour confine young men and boys. The idealized "man in the box" reflects rigid expectations of masculinity, including how men are expected to look (attractive, tall, muscular), act (aggressive, in control, dominant), and succeed (constant achievement, money, sex).

When these standards are not met, respondents commented that some men and boys may experience feelings of aggrieved entitlement, leading them to believe that retaliatory violence or aggression against others is justified. A desire to retaliate for unmet expectations may also come from a feeling of victimhood. Individuals may interpret rejection through the lens of victimization, leading to a desire to regain power and control.

Respondents working in areas of youth engagement also noted that misconceptions about healthy relationships may play a role in increasing vulnerability to inceldom. One misconception cited is that romantic relationships should occur effortlessly and not require work.

Another misconception cited is that men should never take "no" for an answer. According to respondents, these myths create cognitive dissonance when young people are faced with the social realities of dating and rejection. In lieu of healthy coping skills, incel ideology may provide some men with a clear and attractive explanation for these difficulties.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Condition Based Risk Factors

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) do *not* demonstrate a higher risk of violence than neurotypical people, **nor does ASD in and of itself make an individual more susceptible to extremist or violent ideologies**. However, the presence of neurodiversity within the incel community, and ASD in particular, is a topic that requires further study. A significant percentage of incel users online self-report as having ASD to some degree.[52] Additionally, the incel community fixates on the ASD characteristics of incel attackers, including Alek Minassian and Elliot Rodger.

Experts we consulted noted that while **ASD is not a vulnerability to extremism** in and of itself,[53] a general lack of support for the needs of people with ASD may increase some individuals' susceptibility to aspects of incel ideology. **One expert recommended that we focus on the condition-based or traits-based risk factors that might lead an individual to join an incel group - such as social anxiety or poor social skills** - rather than generalizing incels' temporal identification with ASD.

One expert respondent noted that individuals with ASD or other neurodiversities are at a much higher risk of bullying and trauma, both in childhood and beyond. Among the misconceptions about ASD is the concept that children will "grow out of it," resulting in neurodiverse adults struggling to access services or support that would help them navigate various social environments. Respondents noted that, as it stands, there is a dearth of accessible services that provide mental health counselling or skills development for young adults affected by ASD. This lack of support can lead to poor mental health in individuals with ASD, including depression or social anxiety. One expert noted that many of their patients with ASD demonstrate concern with "making their mark" on society, and feel as though they are not given the opportunity or resources to do so.

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52.   For the complete diagnostic criteria of autism as defined by the DSM-5, please see https://autismcanada.org/autism-explained/diagnosis/diagnostic-criteria-dsm-5/
53.   The recent guilty verdict for Alek Minassian also set the precedent that an ASD diagnosis alone does not qualify for the alleviation of responsibility for a crime.

Experts noted that incel ideology often appeals directly to the intersection of high intelligence and underappreciation. It is presented as a "truth" that most of society is not privy to, creating a sense of superiority and in-group status.[54] It also provides a clear, black-and-white framework to explain the grievances that some individuals might be experiencing, particularly difficulty with understanding social cues in romantic relationships.[55] Rather than struggling with the reality that dating involves a series of subtle social cues that are difficult to read for most people, incel ideology explains that a lack of success is due to a clear-cut social hierarchy and the duplicity of women.

Since a high number of incels self-report as having ASD, it is likely that some of these are not formal diagnoses. Individuals may self-diagnose as a way to feel part of the incel community or understand their lack of romantic success.

Age

Multiple interviewees noted that experiences during individuals' teenage years and young adulthood may increase their susceptibility to inceldom. It is generally accepted that incels tend to occupy a younger age range (between 18-30), while those engaged in other areas of the "manosphere" (MGTOW, MRA, or PUA, for example) are typically older.[56] There are several reasons that the incel ideology may be attractive to a younger audience. Experts noted that many events and psychological changes that occur in teenage years and young adulthood mirror the grievances of incels, including romantic rejection, difficulty "fitting in," confusion around gender and sexuality, low self-esteem, and the development of political ideologies. In the absence of appropriate support to help navigate these changes, incel ideology may appear to be a helpful explanatory framework.

Experts noted that an overreliance on digital communities during childhood development or throughout one's teenage years can also increase vulnerability to incel ideology. The internet provides easy access to forums and media that dehumanize women and encourage violence against them. Combined with other risk factors, continuous and uncritical exposure to harmful online content may increase susceptibility to the incel ideology.

Racial and Cultural Factors

Interviewees said that the draw to inceldom for some individuals of colour is rooted in real issues of racism in dating and cultural pressures around masculinity, dating, and sex. It is possible that for many of these individuals, perceived cultural expectations (for instance, to marry and have children) conflict with real-life experiences of discrimination or feeling unable to live up to normative expectations. Speaking on the Brazilian cultural context, one respondent noted that standards of "European beauty" are highly valued in Brazil, acting as a destabilizing force for people of colour. Rather than grappling with the complex challenges presented by racism, incel ideology can offer a simple explanation and a clear enemy for young men of colour who are struggling to find a sexual partner. The complexities of culture and race, particularly in Canada's multicultural society, must be a key consideration in the development of intervention programs for incels.

Miscellaneous Factors

Interviewees also pointed to a number of other factors that may increase vulnerability to inceldom. These included the social or economic disenfranchisement coming from the loss of a job or relationship; the experience of a personal crisis fomenting a desire for control, knowledge, or certainty; or the exposure to violence online.

54.   New America, 2021.
55.   New America, 2021.
56.   ADL, 2020.

Put simply, many incels feel that they are not able to access meaningful relationships, and experience a profound sense of loneliness and lack of connection. Without a space in their lives where they feel they can be emotionally vulnerable, many individuals find incel communities a comforting space to explore their feelings and grievances. One respondent noted that intervention providers should be aware of the "perfect storm" of risk to extremism, which they described as a combination of mental health vulnerabilities, feelings of victimization, and a sense of entitlement. These three co-occurring factors are believed to make an individual much more vulnerable to an extremist ideology.

While vulnerability factors can be exceedingly diverse, a commonality across nearly all of the vulnerabilities listed is the desire for community or acceptance. Although highly abusive, incel communities offer a sense of membership and exclusivity that many individuals feel they are lacking in other areas of their lives. The need for connection or community has likely worsened for many due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which enhances risk but may also provide some areas for intervention.

Canadian Practitioner Workshops

In March 2021, Moonshot hosted a series of regional workshops for Canadian practitioners working in the areas of public safety, social services, and mental health. While the majority of practitioners did not have direct experience working with incels, each spoke to the gap in incel-specific programming, and provided valuable insights on best practices for engaging individuals at-risk for violent misogyny.

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the incel landscape in Canada, Moonshot selected participants from across the country. Where possible, we aimed to incorporate perspectives from groups that are underrepresented in the countering violent extremism (CVE) space, such as organizations working with Indigenous people or the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) community. With increased funding for and research into addressing incel violence, we are hopeful that this network will continue to grow, offering increased support for intervention providers and the populations that they serve. Moonshot's Canadian practitioner workshops pointed to three key stages of a successful intervention: engagement, outreach, and aftercare. Participants highlighted several best practices that should be incorporated into each stage to ensure that the intervention is effective and safe.

One of the key takeaways from participating practitioners was a lack of knowledge of the incel ideology and its influence on misogynistic violence in Canada. As a baseline recommendation, practitioners agreed that it is necessary to incorporate awareness of incels into existing social programs. The volatility of some incels (specifically in their propensity for violence or suicidal ideation) necessitates that service providers are trained and knowledgeable on incel culture prior to initiating an intervention.

Workshop participants unanimously cited the need for proper funding to implement successful incel interventions. A lack of funding is likely to underpin most barriers faced by organizations to properly address the recommendations outlined.

Intervention Programming for Incels

This section outlines recommendations for future programming to more effectively recognize and address the risk of incel-related violence. These recommendations are derived from our consultations and workshops with Canadian practitioners in March 2021. The recommendations fall into the following categories:

- Recommendations for incel-specific interventions
- Recommendations for broader Interventions
- Recommendations for social media platforms

Recommendations for Incel-Specific Interventions

Many incels are socially isolated digital natives who are vocally resistant to mental health support. In order to successfully engage with incels, service providers should consider hosting online resources or services to reduce the barriers for at-risk individuals to engage in their programming.

Below we provide seven approaches that should be further explored as part of future incel interventions. Security and ethics need to be, by design, at the forefront of all practical explorations of any of these approaches. Our recommendation is to provide holistic, multi-pronged interventions that stagger several different forms of outreach and relationship building to increase their reach, visibility, and effectiveness with the incel community.

① Create an online-offline referral mechanism to offer support services and resources to at-risk individuals

Individuals who search for or engage with incel content online can be offered opportunities to disengage, such as access to a local mental health support service or to digitised resources that address incel-specific risk factors. Support can consist of highlighting intervention providers' websites, where vulnerable individuals can get in touch with case workers for one-to-one conversations or counselling services. These services can be either incel-specific or topic-agnostic, but an essential aim should be to normalize conversations about mental health or rejection. During a recent four-month violence prevention project in the US, Moonshot connected individuals seeking violent content to the Crisis Text Line support service, which operates in Canada in a partnership with Kids Help Phone. This initiative resulted in 33 individuals holding 39 conversations with trained crisis counsellors, and provided evidence that connecting vulnerable individuals with support services can be effective over a sustained period. The project also directed at-risk individuals to the websites of partners in the peacebuilding community. On these websites, they were able to download and engage with resources on positive norm building and how to hold healthy (or difficult) conversations. A total of 130 resources were downloaded from partners' websites, demonstrating a clear intent to engage from individuals who had previously searched for violent armed groups or the QAnon conspiracy. Similar approaches can be taken as part of incel interventions, especially if they are geared towards incels' known vulnerabilities and grievances.

Many incels are concerned about online monitoring. It should be made clear that interventions provided to support incels are consent-based and protective of individuals' privacy. Interventions that provide psychosocial support and other local support services may be more amenable to individuals at-risk of inceldom than ideology-focused interventions, which may be interpreted as targeting or securitizing incels for their beliefs.

② Promote support services, positive messages and events through interest-based influential personalities

Increasing the presence of positive voices and events, and raising awareness of available support services through social media-based influencers[57] should be regarded as a viable option to reach incels online. At-risk individuals who engage with incel content also spend significant time listening to music, playing video games, and watching movies on the internet. Audience analysis techniques are already widely used to analyze and understand online audiences and their unique interests. Identifying common trends amongst the incel community, including potential non-incel related influencers that they admire, can be used to spread prosocial messages (e.g. positive masculinity; the importance of reaching out for help when in crisis) or information about support services. Examples of constructive messaging are the YouTuber channels Contrapoints and

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57.   Influencer in this context does not refer to a famous incel, but rather a celebrity that aligns to topic areas that may be of interest to incels beyond the Blackpill ideology or incel subculture. For example, a famous musician that is spreading messages about positive masculinity.

Examples of constructive messaging are the YouTuber channels Contrapoints and Philosophy Tube. These YouTubers tackle issues important to the incel community in an accessible way, using the tone, humour, and style of someone who spends significant time online. Their accounts are not focused on violent extremism or affiliated with P/CVE, but do address divisive ideological and social views with empathy and critical thinking. Protective factors that can help disengage at-risk individuals from extremist communities include engaging in sports, music, art, or other extracurricular activities, and influencers can also support activities and events that promote social cohesion and self-esteem building.

Over the years, CVE interventions have used influencer-based marketing techniques to reach target audiences on the basis of their unique interests. More recently, several countries across the world have also used this technique to spread information about COVID-19 restrictions and why people should abide by them. Influential personalities can be supported in the creation of positive content through a variety of methods, including workshops focused on key themes and interests related to at-risk groups, such as how to deal with sexual rejection.

Initiate one-to-one interventions through direct messaging and relationship building

This approach requires intervention providers to directly get in touch with members of the incel community. Given that it is important to reach incels where they gather, network and audience analysis can play an important role in understanding the different ways in which platforms are used by the community. For instance, the use of gaming platforms such as Twitch or Discord by incels provides an opportunity to use a familiar space to offer support services. Likewise, this can also be operationalized on incel forums, or by joining incel group chats on messaging apps, such as Telegram, Signal, or WhatsApp, to raise awareness of a support service. Any intervention on high-risk or extremist platforms needs to consider the risks to the intervention provider. In many cases it is not possible to engage incels on high-risk platforms as the platform rules require users to self-identify as an incel in order to be able to use the message function, which would breach a Do No Harm approach.

Care should be taken for the safety and security of intervention providers, especially to protect against potential **doxxing** attempts or online harassment by at-risk individuals. With the sheer volume of spam internet users receive, direct messaging outreach may also be seen as untrustworthy. More research is needed in the field of direct one-to-one interventions to establish an evidence-base for this work. In addition, this approach requires the highest degrees of ethical and security considerations.

At the center of one-to-one interventions should be empathy and trust building. In the absence of such intentions, it will become particularly difficult to hold effective conversations as the incel community is often skeptical of monitoring activities, especially by government and law enforcement agencies.

Incels are acutely aware of being monitored. Even within dedicated incel spaces, users demonstrate a distrust of other incels and do not tend to share personal information. Moonshot therefore recommends that practitioners develop options for anonymous digital outreach. This may include a chat, text, email, or phone service, wherein clients are not required to disclose personal information in the early stages of their intervention. As a relationship is developed, the client will likely feel more comfortable disclosing information about their identity.

4 Create alternative spaces for men and boys to share grievances in a healthy environment

Practitioners should also consider creating alternative online spaces where men and boys can gather to discuss healthy masculinities and challenges they face. Considering resource restrictions for many organizations, this technique would be most effective if undertaken in prevention programs. The creation of alternative spaces has already been undertaken by one organization in Canada, which created a Discord channel for teenage boys to join and engage in discussions about healthy masculinities and challenges they are currently facing. The channel is moderated by a digitally-literate[58] intervention provider and allows its members to discuss difficult topics in a safe and supportive environment. Alternative online spaces can be an effective prevention technique; they allow curious users to explore and engage with communities of interest, and can build resilience to harmful content that exists on digital platforms. However, as previously mentioned, incels are often hyper-aware of being monitored, so efforts to offramp users to alternative spaces must take this into account.

5 Invest significant time and resources in outreach

In addition to the creation of programs or capacities geared towards incels, it is important to invest significant time in the process of outreach. Outreach primarily consists of ensuring that relevant populations are aware of these programs and know how to access them. Because incels are socially isolated and hostile to support services, it is therefore crucial that intervention programs are well-known and accessible. Moreover, the procedures for contacting the programs should be straightforward and quick. Outreach efforts should focus on reaching incels in the online spaces where they spend significant amounts of time. Outreach on social media platforms using direct messaging or targeted advertising can put resources directly in front of this at-risk population. Outreach on high-risk incel, fringe or extremist platforms may not be possible, however, as many of these sites require users to post as incels to gain access, thus breaching a Do No Harm approach.

As with intervention program design, all types of outreach must be done with inclusivity in mind. Incels are not a homogeneous group, and many face various types of discrimination. Any programming geared toward incels, as well as their associated outreach efforts, must include messaging that acknowledges the diversity of incels.

Throughout our interviews, multiple experts pointed to the lack of support available for individuals with ASD in Canada. The prevalence of incels who self-report as having ASD suggests that this is an area that may benefit from further outreach, research, and funding. Critical to increasing ASD support is implementing a strengths-based approach, which encourages a focus on the individual's personal strengths and skills to build a strong sense of personal identity. **It is important that any approach does not present those with ASD as being more likely to commit violence**, **as these narratives are weaponized by the incel community and can further stigmatize individuals with autism**.

The racial, ethnic, and religious diversity within the incel ecosystem also requires practitioners to be knowledgeable about racism and xenophobia and to provide a safe space to discuss these experiences. Incels of colour describe real, measurable experiences of racism in dating. For example, Asian men are chosen the least on online dating apps, and many Black men experience fetishization within the dating market. Experiences of racism by incels of colour should be validated, without excusing or enabling violent misogynistic incel ideology. This requires intervention providers to take an intersectional approach to any intervention design.

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58.   In this context, 'digitally literate' refers to someone that is familiar with the internet subculture and who understands Discord users' unique vernacular.

Men and boys of colour within Canada often face complex grievances related to systemic racism, colonialism, competing cultural expectations, and various and competing expectations of masculinity, among other intersecting pressures. Despite these challenges, men and boys of colour have limited spaces in which they can work through trauma, abuse, grievances and vulnerabilities that can increase their susceptibility to extremist ideologies. In particular, there is a significant need for spaces for men and boys that have been victims of childhood trauma, sexual assault, or abuse.

Incels are also highly averse to mental health interventions and other forms of social support. This aversion is twofold. In part, incels fear ridicule from doctors or authority figures, who they perceive as not taking their concerns seriously.

Additionally, incels' resistance to mental health support can be attributed to the groups' belief that inceldom is an unchangeable condition that cannot be affected by any type of mental health support. If outreach to incels is going to be effective, it must be facilitated by a person or organization deemed 'credible' by the incel community. For example, the messenger should have knowledge of the **blackpill** ideology, internet subculture, and the major challenges that incels face. Interventions that appear judgemental or condescending towards inceldom will not be effective.

6 Consider aftercare early on

According to one expert we spoke with, "aftercare is often an afterthought". However, like prevention and outreach, aftercare must be considered a central part of effective interventions for incels. Aftercare consists of support following an intervention program, occuring after the client has disengaged from the incel ideology and groups or de-escalated from violent aspects of the ideology. It is a necessary part of the intervention process for incels for two primary reasons.

Firstly, incels, in the most severe cases, will have isolated themselves from all relationships and connections to a positive, prosocial lifestyle. This may include relationships with family and friends or any connections to employment or education. The client may need support in developing the skills required to rebuild these relationships or re-enter into social institutions. A lack of support on this front increases the risk of recidivism for the client.

Secondly, incels are a demographic that, as noted, is highly suspicious of and resistant to mental health support. The overarching narrative within incel communities is that such support is a "scam" and that MHPs do not have their clients' best interests at heart. Aftercare is needed to dispel this myth and demonstrate to the client that they are supported throughout their intervention and beyond. Not only is a supported client more likely to demonstrate long-term success following intervention, but they may also feel inclined to persuade other incels to undergo intervention.

7 Increase prevention-focused funding

Practitioners consistently cited that effective interventions for at-risk populations, like incels, depend on adequate funding. Participants expressed that a lack of funding underpins most barriers faced by organizations who want to cater their services to this at-risk group. Practitioners recommended that increased funding should be provided to support incel-specific initiatives, from prevention to aftercare.

Recommendations for Broader Interventions

1

Incorporate incel awareness into existing programming

Incel ideology covers a wide spectrum of grievances and topics. It is possible that during the regular course of their work, organizations addressing the following areas will encounter an individual who has engaged with incels or incel ideology online. Organizations in the following areas should therefore be trained to recognize incel language and the warning signs of violent misogynistic beliefs.

- Mental health
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Far-right ideologies
- Teen dating/intimate relationship education
- Gender performance/expectations
- Gender-based violence

- Digital literacy
- Supports for racialized, disabled, or otherwise disenfranchised youth
- Frontline health workers
- Gaming and internet addiction
- Social isolation

Prevention and intervention experts working in these fields should have a basic understanding of incel ideology, risk factors, and warning signs of inceldom. If these organizations are unable to confidently undertake an intervention with an incel client, it is also recommended that they identify nearby programs or organizations that are equipped to do so.[59] Once the baseline understanding of incels has been established, practitioners may want to begin taking on incel clients. It is recommended that practitioners familiarize themselves with the following topics in order to successfully engage with an incel client:

- Incel culture and vernacular
- Internet culture, including the websites, forums, and activities most frequented by incels
- Sectors of the online manosphere
- Grievances related to racism, ableism, and neurodiversity discrimination

Mental health services are a particularly strong entry point for engagement with individuals at-risk of the incel ideology. With such a high number of incels self-identifying or self-diagnosing with mental health conditions, mental health professionals (MHPs) will likely come across at-risk individuals during the course of their work.

The hostility toward mental health support is high within the incel community and this may make incels resistant to engaging with mental health support even if that support is focused exclusively on their mental health disorder and not their incel ideology.

However, MHPs with an understanding of the incel ideology have an opportunity to address both the underlying mental health disorders and to support incels in disengaging from the ideology. It is vital that MHPs are cognizant of the hostility with which incels hold the mental health sector and establish precautions when challenging the incel ideology.

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59.   The need for a network of practitioners with expertise in this space is discussed in greater detail in the following recommendation.

Create a practitioner network for knowledge sharing and intervention support

Incels exhibit a range of vulnerabilities, each of which impacts their engagement with the incel ideology and their understanding of their inceldom. Flexible intervention strategies are needed to support and engage this community successfully. A single practitioner or organization may not be equipped to handle the vulnerabilities exhibited by an at-risk individual, or may not have capacity to provide specialized support to an incel.

A practitioner network, connecting organizations across Canada from different disciplines, would help build the capacity of any one organization to provide intervention support to an individual at-risk of inceldom. This network should include organizations with dedicated incel-specific programming, but also organizations that work with vulnerabilities identified within the incel community such as social isolation, intimate relationship education, or clinical mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions. In a network, organizations can share learnings from the delivery of their own incel interventions, as well as pose questions or request support from practitioners with a differing area of expertise. If a local organization does not have capacity to provide incel support services, they can refer an identified at-risk individual to another network member. Similarly, if an at-risk individual is exhibiting multiple vulnerabilities, they can be referred to other network members in order to tackle a wider range of issues. This upskills all network members' ability to provide incel interventions holistically.

This recommendation was championed by participants in our Incel Intervention Workshops. During the workshop, participants shared knowledge from their areas of expertise and began conversations about future collaborations and networking on the topic of incels. Participants expressed a strong desire for this type of network and were actively engaged in sharing knowledge and making connections.

Recommendations for Social Media Platforms

In tandem with prevention and intervention efforts, it will be necessary for social media platforms to safeguard users so they are not exposed to violent misogyny and other extremist ideologies.

Incorporate safeguarding into algorithm design

Social media and tech companies should incorporate safeguarding into algorithm design on their platforms so that internet users, particularly younger boys, are protected from incel and other violent extremist content being recommended automatically. These safeguards should ensure that platforms are not inadvertently promoting incel content, in addition to other violent misogynist content from the wider online "manosphere". Algorithms can also offer or point users searching for violent content towards more positive content that can contribute as a protective factor.

Demonetise and deplatform violent misogyny

At the time of this report, several incel creators on YouTube have taken advantage of opportunities to monetize violent misogynist content through ad revenue or by promoting their account on Patreon, a subscription service. While there is debate among incels over whether they should support mainstream social media websites, several incel content creators have explicitly resisted moving to less moderated platforms so as not to lose their channel's ad revenue. Monetization by incel content creators on YouTube leads to longer and more frequent videos, thereby increasing the chances of incel content being recommended to users. Moreover, it incentivizes these individuals to continue creating content aimed at attracting and building an incel audience. We recommend that YouTube and other video hosting platforms ensure the removal of violent misogynist and incel content, and that creators promoting violent misogynist content cannot benefit financially from ad revenue or by promoting a paid

subscription service on their channel. Partnerships between video hosting platforms and subject matter experts /organisations working to address incel ideology can support in identifying violent incel content suitable for demonetization.

Doxxing of women, chadfishing, and the sharing of womens' social media accounts on incel forums are behaviours that are present across the online incel ecosystem. Greater regulatory measures can also be employed to tackle online violent misogyny. In South Korea, for example, legislation has been passed to make doxxing illegal.[60]

Ensure proactive and targeted deplatforming

In addition to taking steps to safeguard recommendation algorithms and channel monetization, we also recommend that social media organizations implement more proactive deplatforming of content that promotes violence. Partnerships between social media platforms and subject matter experts / organisations working to address incel ideology can support social media platforms in identifying the most recent and relevant content.

It is particularly important that such efforts are specific and targeted. Recently, Reddit deplatformed the subreddit r/incelswithouthate, a forum that primarily existed for self-identified incels who did not subscribe to the violent misogynistic aspects of the ideology. Following the removal of this subreddit, a former user posted the following message on another platform:

> "Thank you for being understanding. While there are some pretty vocal and spiteful incels, must [sic] of us are just lonely and sad people who fell through the cracks of society and of the social caste system and have no way to get out or to find people in real life who understand or [sic] plight. While it may have been a vile site for most, to us, IWH was almost like an oasis of mutual understanding...Now, it seems like there is no place for us on this site. Our only option left is to head to [website redacted], which sadly, will further radicalize many younger incels."

60. Library of Congress (2019). Singapore: Amendment to Harassment Law Passed to Criminalize "Doxxing". Retrieved from: https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2019-10-25/singapore-amendment- to-harassment-law-passed-to-criminalize-doxxing/

This post illustrates the potential dangers of widespread deplatforming, particularly of sites or forums that reject the violent aspects of incel ideology. As noted in the previous recommendation, **the creation of alternative spaces is a critical strategy in preventing individuals from seeking out more extreme communities online**. r/incelswithouthate, despite its adherence to the incel ideology, was an example of one such space that should not have been targeted for removal. We recommend that social media websites engage in strategic and targeted deplatforming of spaces that advocate violence. In the event of an all-out ideological ban from a website, users will often seek out communities that are more difficult to moderate. Platforms should therefore ensure that non-violent spaces are encouraged while more extreme groups are removed.

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i think it's time for me to get out

`Asking for help/advice`

i was laughed at and ridiculed by a lot of people in my discord server calling me a trucel and saying i was ugly/they mag me, and now i want to get out my questions are

- how to stop letting people live rent free in ur head

- how to stop thinking in a blackpilled way if ur a teenager

Im in sort of a bad place now after being treated badly by those i considered "brocels" but all they have done to me is be nasty and post gore/edgy memes and be negative parts of my lives. even so, how do i get them out of my head, and more importantly, my life?

An individual asks for support leaving an incel Discord community on the Reddit forum r/IncelExit.

Annex A: Incel Terminology (Glossary)

80/20 Rule	Also known as the Pareto principle, the 80/20 rule is used to illustrate the distribution of effects or a power law, and predicts that, in many situations, 80% of an outcome is produced by 20% of its causes. This is interpreted by the incel community in the context of dating, assuming that 80% of women have access to the top 20% of men in a society, which means that the 'bottom' 80% of men are left with the remaining 20% of females between them.
Altrightcels	Incels that identify with alt-right politics.
Ascend	To ascend is to leave inceldom and access sex with a woman. This sex must not be paid for (e.g., escortcels have not ascended).
Beta	A term used by incels to describe a man who dedicates a large amount of time to pursuing a woman in the hope that she will eventually date him.
Biological essentialism	A term that refers to the notion that rejecting incels is an innate, unchangeable behaviour found in all women and girls.
Blackcel	A Black incel
Blackpill	The blackpill philosophy states that an individual's dating success is determined wholly by their physical attractiveness, and thus determined at birth. The blackpill is built on pseudoscience, and is considered the central ideology of the incel movement.
Blackpill science	Legitimate academic and scientific research, pseudo-scientific research and incel-created experiments that incels believe support the blackpill.
Chads	The archetypal alpha male believed to be favoured by society due to Aryan-esque good looks, genes, bone structure, hair, and height.
Chadpreet	An Indian Chad.
Chang	An East Asian Chad.
Currycel	An Indian incel.
Doxx	A term used to describe searching for and publishing private or identifying information about a particular individual on the internet, typically with malicious intent.
Escortcel	An incel who visits an escort as a method of coping.
Frenchcel	A French incel.
go ER	Named after Elliot Rodger, this term is used by incels to describe the act of committing mass violence.

Gynocentric	A term used by incels when criticizing society's fixation with women, or individuals that support feminist ideals.
hERO	Named after Elliot Rodger, this term is used by incels to praise someone that has committed mass violence.
Hypergamy	The belief that women are evolutionarily pre-determined to seek out mates. Hypergamy is premised on the belief that women are more sexually selective, and thus have the upperhand when it comes to dating, choosing the most attractive mates.
It's over	A term used to describe suicidal ideation and the desire to give up on life.
JFL	Just Fucking Lol (JFL) is a thread topic on incel forums.
Jihad maxing	A term used by incels to associate jihadist extremism with inceldom.
Just be White	Just Be White (JBW) is the suggestion that certain behaviours that allow you to access sex are only available if you are white.
LDAR	Lay Down and Rot (LDAR) is a term incels use to describe suicidal ideation or a desire to give up on life.
Lifefuel	A term used to describe something that gives incels joy, happiness or purpose. Lifefuel encourages incels to live and is the opposite of **suicidefuel**, which are examples of things which encourage incels to commit suicide.
Lookism	Incels' theory that there are evolutionary, objective standards of attractiveness and unattractiveness (such as height or bone structure).
Looksmax	A term used to describe incels' attempt to improve their physical appearance or sexual attractiveness by conforming to societal beauty standards. Examples include going to the gym, getting plastic surgery or concealing acne.
Mentalcels	An incel who has mental health issues.
Muslimcels	An incel who attributes their inceldom to their Islamic upbringing.
NEET	"Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) is a term used by incels to describe their disenfranchisement from modern society, fueling incels' victim narrative.
Noodlewhores	A pejorative term used by incels to describe Asian women.
Normies	A term used by incels to describe individuals who do not subscribe to the blackpill ideology, or do not identify with incels' plight.
Pee-Pee	A term used to reference the alt-right symbol, Pepe the Frog.

Ragefuel Any research, stories or posts that contribute to the build up of anger within incels.

Ricecel An East Asian incel.

Rope A term that incels use to describe suicidal ideation, in reference to the rope that one would use to hang themselves.

SEA-maxxing SEA-maxxing (South-East-Asia-Maxx) is the attempt to improve one's dating ability by dating or having sex with women in Southeast Asia. This is based on the perception that native Southeast Asian men are not typically desired by women, and that white men with 'Nordic' looks are preferred, therefore making it easier for a Western incel to successfully date in Southeast Asia.

Serious A thread tag on incel forums. Discussions tagged as 'Serious' include debate around incel ideology, the merits of large- scale violent attacks, the canonization of killers with perceived incel motives, such as Nikolas Cruz or Elliot Rodger, and incels' hatred towards women.

SMV An acronym for "Sexual Market Value". This is a metric scale measuring an individual's sexual desirability. According to the incel community, it is the primary measure of an individual's worth.

Stop coping A term used to describe suicidal ideation and the desire to give up on life.

Stormcel A term used to refer to white supremacist incels, who frequent the white supremacist website Stormfront.

The Wall The Wall, or the agepill, is the maximum age that a woman reaches before her SMV value starts to decrease; according to incels this is 25.

Thugmaxxing A racist term for Black incels who attempt to attract female partners by dressing and behaving in a way that is outwardly perceived as 'thuglike,' including by committing crimes, moving to high crime areas, or becoming involved in gang culture in order to access sexual relationships.

Tyrone A Black Chad.

Venting A common tag on incel forums, typically associated with complaints about life as an incel.

Whitecel A White incel.

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