

# Online misogyny vs digital feminism: navigating the manosphere

## Workshop Factsheet | GIWL Youth Summit

### Workshop overview

The 21st century has witnessed significant advancements in gender equality, but progress has been impeded by various forces, including the manosphere – an online movement that holds itself in firm opposition to feminism, characterised by views of extreme misogyny that are harmful to everyone.

This workshop will explore how these forces impact our day-to-day lives on a personal level – for example our interactions with friends and family, and our experiences online and in the real-world – and what needs to change on a systemic level to address these issues.

*Please be advised that this workshop will explore sensitive and emotionally challenging topics and discussions may encompass themes such as sexual entitlement, harassment, and assault. These discussions are intended for educational and awareness purposes, and our aim is to foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for dialogue. We encourage open-mindedness, empathy, and constructive engagement throughout the workshop.*

### Background

Online **misogyny** is a depressingly familiar experience for many of us. But research shows us that there is a concerning new trend unfolding – the growing “**manosphere**” of online anti-women groups, often led by charismatic male social media influencers, including Andrew Tate.

Promoting a specific type of masculinity and blaming common male problems and insecurities on the rise of **feminism**, these hugely popular videos, podcasts and social media posts are influencing the values, attitudes and behaviour of millions of young male followers.

Often referred to as “**toxic masculinity**,” many believe this is a form of **radicalisation** that uses the same grooming tactics as other organised online extremist groups to specifically target boys and young men.

There are four main groups within the “manosphere” community...

1. **Men’s rights activists (MRAs)** advocate political changes that will benefit men. However, much of their activism consists of harassment and abuse towards feminists and other female public figures.
2. **Men going their own way (MGTOW)** argue that women are so toxic that men should avoid them altogether. Some MGTOW will date women but avoid anything serious like getting married, while others won’t even be friends with women.
3. **Pick-up artists (PUAs)** teach men seduction strategies so that they can be more successful in attracting women. Many of these techniques involve mistreating women, such as insulting them (“negging”) or disregarding consent.
4. **Involuntary celibates (incels)** believe they are entitled to a relationship with a woman, but are incapable of finding a partner. Multiple acts of extreme violence and even murder have been attributed to this group.

The manosphere promotes the idea of a “natural hierarchy” where white men remain at the top. As such, feminists are seen as the enemy and a threat to men’s power for working to disrupt this “natural order”.

Cloaked as protecting “free speech”, these groups promote the idea that feminism is an authoritative, controlling **ideology**, and feminists are part of an out of touch “liberal elite” that has “gone too far” and become so caught up in **identity politics** and political correctness that it’s become repressive towards men.

### Changing attitudes to gender equality

A 2020 HOPE not hate report found that...

- Boys are repeating manosphere talking points in school and even harassing female teachers
- 50% of young men aged 16-24 believe feminism makes it more difficult for men to succeed.

Research by Ipsos UK and GIWL finds that...

- More than half of Millennials and Gen Zs globally say that the promotion of women’s

rights has gone “too far” and is now discriminatory against men.

- Globally, 37% of people say that they are scared to speak out and advocate for the equal rights of women because of what might happen to them.

### How do people find the manosphere?

Many manosphere groups host their own websites and have seen increasing traffic with some seeing growth from thousands to millions of users. However, these groups can also be found on popular social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Reddit in particular is home to many manosphere communities, although the most popular **MGTOW** and **incel** subreddits have been banned.

Young people may also find the manosphere via YouTube, as the “watch next” algorithm has been known to recommend increasingly sexist and anti-feminist content in order to keep users engaged. TikTok may be another avenue, as the **MGTOW**

and pick-up artist communities in particular are becoming more prevalent there.

### What language should I look out for?

There are certain phrases you can listen out for that suggest that someone might be interacting with the manosphere. These include...

- **Red pill** – Learning the ‘truth’ about female nature and that feminism is about oppressing men.
- **Blue pill** – Not having taken the red pill and so living in blissful ignorance.
- **Alpha male/Chad** – An attractive, successful man desired by all women.
- **Beta male/Cuck** – An “average” man who has not yet taken the red pill and is inferior to the alpha male.

BUT not everyone uses this sort of language. It is also important to look out for generalising statements made about women and men, such as making claims about how all women act or talking about men and women as if they are two different species.

### Workshop aims

Although the manosphere is an online movement, it has very concerning and extreme real-world consequences, including targeted harassment campaigns, attacks against prominent feminists and even mass shootings. To address this growing issue, we need a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives at play and to work collectively to advocate for a safer online environment for everyone. This workshop aims to...

- Create a platform to share our experiences of navigating online spaces as feminists.
- Explore how to enact change in our lives, in our communities and at a systemic level.
- Shape GIWL’s newly emerging research agenda aimed at addressing these issues.

### Other key terms

#### Manosphere

A network of online men’s communities against the empowerment of women and who promote anti-feminist and sexist beliefs.

#### Feminism

The idea that all genders are equal and should have equal rights and opportunities.

#### Toxic masculinity

Cultural pressures for men to behave in a way that promotes rigid and traditional ideas of manliness, like having a strong physique, hiding their emotions, or acting in an aggressively dominant way.

#### Radicalisation

The process of a person’s belief system moving to one that accepts, uses or condones violence,

including acts of terrorism, to reach a specific political or ideological purpose.

#### Ideology

A set of opinions, beliefs and ideals of a group or an individual.

#### Identity politics

Political or social activity related to a particular identity, such as race, sexual orientation, or social class. This is usually with the goal of rectifying injustices suffered by group members because of differences or conflicts between their particular identity (or misconceptions of their particular identity) and the dominant identities of a larger society.

#### Patriarchy

A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

#### Misogyny

Hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or non-binary folks.

#### Meninism

The idea that men are victimised by feminism and that attention needs to be called to what they believe are the struggles of being a man in the 21st century.

#### Gender essentialism

The belief that a person, thing, or particular trait is inherently and permanently male and masculine or female and feminine.

#### Hegemonic masculinity

The idealisation of stereotypically male as the masculine cultural ideal in order to promote and maintain male dominance over women and other groups considered to be feminine.

### Sources & further reading

[What is the manosphere and why is it a concern?](#)

[The draw of the manosphere: understanding Andrew Tate’s appeal](#)

[A dictionary of the manosphere: five terms to understand](#)

[Online misogyny: the “manosphere”](#)

[Algorithms as a weapon against women:](#)

[How YouTube lures boys and young men into the ‘Manosphere’](#)

[Social media: A double-edged sword for the feminist movement](#)

[A feminist internet would be better for everyone](#)

[The future of \(online\)feminism](#)

[HOPE Not Hate – Young People in the Time of Covid-19](#)

[Ipsos-GIWL IWD survey 2023](#)

