

## Written evidence from Dr Alexandra Krendel etl. [MIS0030]

1. We are [a well-established group of four researchers](#) who have worked together since 2018 to investigate language use in the manosphere, identify its harmful potential, and advise educators on preventing the radicalisation of boys and young men. Our work has highlighted the extent and spread of violently misogynist language online and its potential effects outside the communities in which that language is used.
2. Our submission builds on our previously evidence accepted as part of the Women's and Equalities Committee inquiry into the escalation of violence against women and girls: [Misogynist language online can escalate to offline violence against women and girls \(EOV00019\)](#). That evidence - based on [our published research investigating language in the manosphere](#) - presented a range of findings and problems.
3. Our **findings** were that manosphere communities use language to:
  - 3.1 **Dehumanise women** through, for example, likening them to non-human beings and parasites (e.g. female humanoids ['femoids', 'foids'], 'vermin', 'leeches', 'bitches') and commodities on the sexual market place.
  - 3.2 **Deny violence against women and girls (VAWG)** by suggesting that women frequently lie about experiencing rape and other sexual assault as a tactic to take advantage of men (e.g. to gain advantages in custody and divorce disputes, and to manipulate sympathetic others). In doing so, manosphere communities can downplay - and deny the existence of - VAWG by men.
  - 3.3 **Portray women as desiring hostile behaviour from men.** Women are described as 'hybristophiliacs' (i.e. having sexual interest in criminals) and as being biologically driven towards 'hypergamy' (i.e. desiring relationships with 'high status' or 'alpha' men who would be physically able to overpower them and compete with other men). Pick-up artists also claim that [women's resistance to sexual activity is only token or symbolic](#) and is therefore something that men need to 'push through' and 'overcome'.
4. These findings highlighted two important **problems**:
  - 4.1 **Desensitisation** of boys and young men to gender-based violence and, given the mainstreaming of language from the manosphere, the potential for such desensitisation to lead to radicalisation. Indeed, since our evidence was accepted, the themes of the Netflix drama series [Adolescence](#) have brought to prominence the radicalising potential of the manosphere.
  - 4.2 **Consequences for schools:** as evident in teachers' reports in both the UK and US of increasingly frequent and problematic behaviour by boys in schools who [accuse their teachers of hating men](#), repeat talking points and language typical of the manosphere, and engage in sexist and harassing behaviours towards female peers and teachers, including [threats of sexual violence](#). Again, since highlighting these problems in our previously accepted evidence, [research has continued to highlight](#)

[links between “manfluencers” and increasingly misogynistic behaviours of male students.](#)

5. Taken together, these findings and problems led us to a **policy recommendation** that the then draft Online Safety Bill (now [Online Safety Act 2023](#)) be modified to oblige social media platforms to identify content which promotes and perpetuates VAWG by using proactive technology (e.g. automatic keyword/phrase matching) alongside sufficiently supported human moderators. This would help to label such content as harmful and to swiftly (i.e. within no more than three days) remove this content from their platforms. We reiterate the urgency and necessity of acting on this policy recommendation to prevent VAWG and the radicalisation of boys and young men.
6. Concerning the present call for evidence, we give detailed responses to four questions put forward by the committee in **sections 7-10** below and further elaborate on our earlier recommendations. We summarise our recommendations in response to the present call for evidence as follows:
  - 6.1 Within **PSHE curricula**, schools should be encouraged to facilitate discussions of both toxic and positive masculinities (and gender identities more broadly), with a view to challenging stereotypes. (9.7)
  - 6.2 Schools should nurture the formation of **supportive peer groups** in which boys and young men can discuss and express their understandings of the masculinities they encounter in their on- and offline lives, as well as their own masculinities. (9.7)
  - 6.3 Government, regulatory bodies (e.g. Ofcom), and online platforms should **consult with subject-matter experts** both in the formation of media literacy initiatives (9.8) and in the development of systems to identify, filter, report and block harmful manosphere content (10.5.2). These systems should take account of both explicit and implicit forms of misogyny (7.5) as they occur across the different groups that make up the manosphere. (7.1)
  - 6.4. Where possible, harmful manosphere content should be **prevented from being posted** on social media platforms. Where it is found to have been posted, it should be **proactively removed**. (10.5.1-10.5.3)
  - 6.5 Online platforms should **give users tools** to proactively block and filter manosphere content. (10.5.2)
  - 6.6. Ensure that the manosphere is treated as a **priority area in implementing the Online Safety Act**. (10.5.3)

7. How prevalent are misogynistic views, attitudes and behaviour among young people today, particularly in educational settings? **What examples are there of these views, attitudes and behaviours? In what other settings are such behaviours prevalent?**

7.1 Our research focuses on how misogynistic views and attitudes are expressed, and behaviour towards women is reported, in the language used in different manosphere communities. These include men's rights activists, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), pick-up artists, involuntary celibates (incels) and The Red Pill. We describe these communities in our open access research available [here](#). Misogyny and misogynistic language in these communities take both **explicit and implicit forms**.

7.2 **Explicit language use** expressing misogynistic views and attitudes takes the form of vocabulary that is specific to particular manosphere communities. For example, incels routinely refer to women as 'foids' (short for 'femoid', i.e. a female android), while pick-up artists see them as 'plates' that can be 'spun' (i.e. dating a number of women simultaneously). For male separatists, financial arguments are important, and women are accordingly called 'leeches'. Beyond individual words, manosphere communities also show highly frequent use of words for topics that concern them. For instance, pick-up artists talk about techniques and practices of seduction, male separatists discuss financial independence, men's rights activists focus on crime, punishment and advocacy, and incels share their mental state and also use racist terms.

7.3. There are also **implicit features** that at first glance look no different from general language use but which are used significantly more often across the manosphere. Members of all communities frequently use both neutral and evaluative terms for gendered social actors (e.g. 'women', 'men', 'bro', 'whore'); discuss sexuality and relationships (e.g. 'attraction', 'porn'); describe people in physical (e.g. 'tall') and non-physical terms (e.g. 'creepy'); refer to their own and women's (assumed) thoughts and feelings (e.g. 'think', 'opinions', 'emotional'); and finally show frequent use of intensifiers (e.g. 'really', 'all', 'never'). Online posts across the manosphere also feature ideological acronyms such as 'awalt' (all women are like that), betraying a belief in essential and immutable gender differences. Where frequent words appear to be neutral (e.g. 'women', 'men'), the way they are employed conveys ideological beliefs. For example, men are talked about as acting on women in dating contexts, while women are portrayed as lying to men and themselves.

7.4. In sum, the interactive online settings known as the manosphere are rife with misogynistic views, attitudes and (reported) behaviours. Language is used there to represent gendered identities and relationships from a misogynistic perspective and to build communities around relevant beliefs.

7.5. We therefore recommend that any description of views, attitudes and behaviours characteristic of the manosphere must **take account of both explicit and implicit forms** through which misogyny can be realised and mainstreamed.

## 8. How are social media influencers shaping attitudes towards women and girls?

8.1 While there is no doubt that misogynistic influencers (or “manfluencers”) like Andrew Tate influence especially boys’ and young men’s attitudes towards women and girls (as [evidenced](#) for Australia), it is important to **go beyond individual personalities**. Most manosphere content is generated by groups on online forums and dedicated websites, and figureheads are only symptoms of a wider culture.

8.2. The manosphere takes misogynistic **beliefs from mainstream cultures** (e.g. ageist attitudes to women, beliefs about women as purely emotional or essentially deceitful) and intensifies them into an extremist ideology, which then filters back into the mainstream.

## 9. How is content on social media and online, such as violent pornography, contributing to sexist and misogynistic attitudes and behaviour and violence against women and girls both online and offline?

9.1 Young people in the UK spend on average [6 hours per day online](#), where there is an abundance of manosphere or “red pill” content promoting sexist and misogynistic attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls. As shown in our previous evidence, this includes content in which women are dehumanised and violence against women is denied or even justified as something women innately desire. Therefore, this may lead to men becoming **desensitised** to gender-based violence **and potentially radicalised** into misogynistic and antifeminist ideologies.

9.2. While not all who view this content will be radicalised, **consistent exposure** to such content by “manfluencers” has been shown to [negatively impact men’s attitudes towards women](#), as well as towards [feminists and the LGBTQ community](#).

9.3 Furthermore, there is evidence of **increasing antifeminist and sexist attitudes among young men** in the UK. [A 2020 poll](#) found that 50% of male respondents aged 18-25 agreed that “feminism has gone too far and makes it harder for young men to succeed”, while [a 2024 survey](#) found that 47% of Britons agreed that women’s rights had gone “far enough” and that society now discriminates against men.

9.4. Meanwhile, [in the USA](#), 46% of younger Democrat men and 62% of younger Republican men agreed that “feminism has done more harm than good”. For comparison, only 4% of older Democrat men and 31% of older Republican men agreed with this statement, suggesting that [antifeminist beliefs are becoming more prominent in the younger generations](#).

9.5. Finally, there is evidence from teachers that young boys are consuming antifeminist or “red pill” content online and that such exposure has a **detrimental impact on pupils’ attitudes and behaviours**. Recently, [39% of secondary school](#) teachers in the UK reported misogynistic behaviour from pupils, with more experienced teachers claiming that such behaviours had increased over time. For example, male pupils may [repeat antifeminist talking points](#) and disrupt classroom discussions

about gender equality, [refuse to talk to female teachers](#), make misogynistic jokes or even [engage in abusive or harassing behaviours](#) towards female teachers and students. This problem is not exclusive to the UK, as similar trends have been reported in [Australia](#) and [Ireland](#).

9.6. Overall, this shows how consumption of, and exposure to, online manosphere content can negatively shape men's attitudes towards women and girls, which can then lead to misogynistic behaviours towards them in both online and offline settings.

9.7 In response to this, we recommend that alongside discussions of the manosphere being facilitated as part of the **PSHE curriculum** and its renewed focus on digital literacy, there should be **discussions on positive masculinity and [a move beyond a focus on male role models to whether boys have supportive peer groups](#)**.

9.8 We also recommend that, as part of their three-year media literacy strategy and their Safer Life Online for Women and Girls work, Ofcom **work with subject-matter experts** on harms against women and girls, in order to inform how media literacy initiatives are delivered.

## 10. **What role are social media companies and online platforms playing in the promotion of misogynistic content?**

10.1 As noted in our previous evidence, boys and young men may become **desensitised** to gender-based violence through exposure to this content via social media platforms. The increase in anti-feminist attitudes among young men and in schools noted above (sections 8 and 9.5) is facilitated by how readily available manosphere content is online. Desensitisation has the potential to lead to offline attacks, as was the case for Jake Davison in Plymouth, 2021, who accessed incel content online before carrying out a mass shooting.

10.2 There is a considerable amount of **manosphere content on mainstream social media platforms** such as Reddit and TikTok. Although some of these platforms have taken actions to limit the reach of certain manosphere communities (e.g. limiting the access of r/TheRedPill on Reddit to those who are logged in and read a content warning before full access is granted; the banning of Andrew Tate from TikTok), these actions are not taken in a timely fashion and so their efficacy is limited.

10.3 Multiple academic reports (e.g. on [algorithms popularising misogyny](#)) find that manosphere content is actively recommended to male-identified accounts on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, regardless of whether the account seeks out this content. These recommendations happen rapidly, with [one study](#) finding that accounts mimicking generic 16-year-old boys are recommended this content less than 20 minutes after viewing TikTok videos and YouTube shorts. For 18-year-olds, this number was even lower, which showcases how quickly this content is promoted to young men and boys.

10.4 Based on these observations, we make the following recommendations:

10.4.1 **Recommender algorithms should not actively promote manosphere content to its users.** This is especially important given the potential for social media platforms to mainstream manosphere content for wider audiences.

10.4.2 **Harmful content should be prevented from publication or taken down** in a timely manner and in accordance with social media platforms' Terms of Service. Specifically, we recommend that platforms swiftly identify and remove manosphere content using a combination of proactive technology (e.g. automatic keyword/phrase matching) and sufficiently supported human moderators. It is also important to utilise the knowledge of subject-matter experts (e.g. academics, charities) when developing these systems for identifying and removing manosphere content.

10.4.3 Harms related to the manosphere are directly addressed in the **implementation of the Online Safety Act**. We urge for the issue of the manosphere to be treated as a foundational step in improving online life for women and girls, as opposed to being relegated to 'good practice'.

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