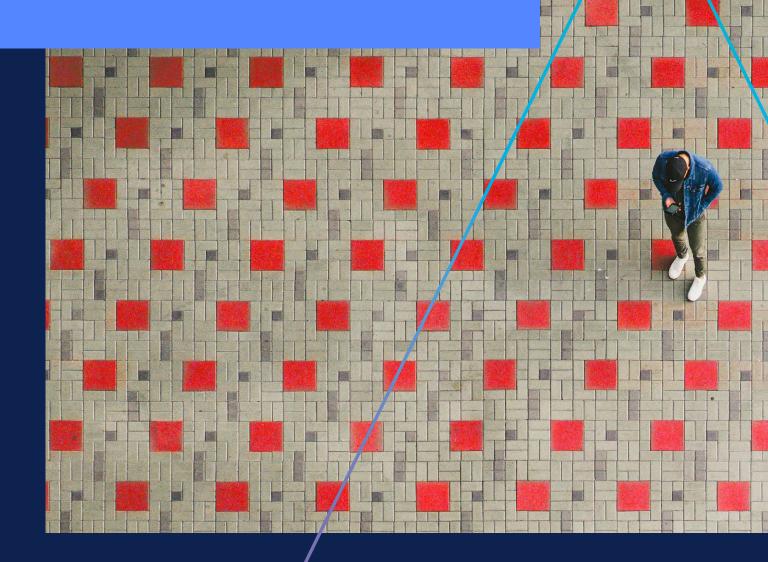
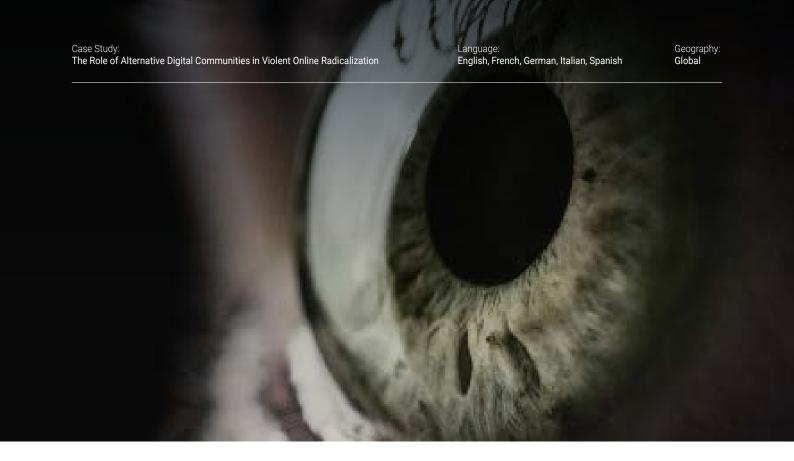


# Blame the Women

Incels, loneliness and new security threats emerging from the digital sphere





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# Introduction, Context, and Key Research Questions

The potentially radicalizing role and characteristics of the digital sphere have continued to gain recognition by researchers, policymakers and the public in recent years amid several instances of high-profile mass violence linked to misogynistic extremism.

Leveraging open-source intelligence (OSINT) methodologies, including analysis of alternative online sources like the deep and dark web, this report maps and analyzes digital public activity related to misogynistic violent extremism. Alto's methodology employs a data-first approach with the objective of supporting experts and practitioners establish an evidence-based understanding of the complex, multivariate nature of extremism and radicalization online and its multi-layered relationship with:

- A. The vulnerabilities linked to certain narratives and ideologies that constitute a part of public discourse and can be weaponized with specific aims
- B. The tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of malign actors online intentionally aiming to influence discourse through inorganic means for financial or strategic motives.

To avoid providing visibility and indirect promotion of violent movements and harmful online spaces, this document is an executive summary of the complete threat analysis and does not publish the names of individuals, profiles, or accounts identified in extremist or radicalization networks. However, this report does highlight specific domains, channels and other digital spaces to aid practitioners in understanding the mechanics of the digital spaces analyzed. It is also important to note that this document also refers to digital activity identified related to conversations around homicide, rape, suicide, and other types of violent or sensitive activity – as such, caution is urged when circulating this document. To offer our readers forewarning of this type of content throughout the document, the appearance of the "red-eye" icon ( ) is displayed to signal sensitive content. Should any researcher or practitioner be interested in accessing the full body of research, feel free to get in contact at info@ altointelligence.com for further evaluation.

#### Introduction to the "manosphere"

The "manosphere" is an umbrella term referring to a number of interconnected misogynistic communities online. It encompasses multiple types and degrees of misogyny – from broader male supremacist discourse to men's rights activism and "involuntary celibates". This document focuses on surfacing and detailing the more extreme, harmful elements of the "manosphere".

Involuntary celibates (incels) is a term that describes "men who believe they are unable to access consensual sexual relationships due to their perceived physical

unattractiveness." Based on shared experiences, networked digital communities composed of (often young) males blaming women and society for an inability to successfully establish romantic or sexual relationships have progressively developed. The "incelosphere," defined as "an online incel ecosystem (that) contains violent misogynistic content, with members celebrating violence against women and societal-level attacks" along with the "manosphere," have received increasing attention in social and psychological research related to online radicalization and extremism<sup>1</sup>.

#### Why is the "manosphere" a concept of interest?

Regarding the incel phenomenon, the principal risks identified and extensively analyzed by experts in recent years emerge from the radical and extremist nature of the ideologies that are reinforced, the way in which these ideologies are driven by unsubstantiated claims and conspiracy theories, hateful rhetoric and toxic digital content, the manner in which these discourses are disseminated in digital communities populated by vulnerable and impressionable young males, and the mechanics of audience amplification and precision segmentation on influential channels to disseminate content in a scaled yet targeted fashion. Alto's research in conjunction with numerous studies conducted in recent years have established several reasons that explain why the type of activity identified in the "manosphere" and "incelosphere" present specific risks and potential social harms. These include:

- The intersections of these ideological and digital spaces being "founded in antiwomen hate, where individuals and communities express conspiratorial and often violent beliefs about women and characterize women's sole value as their ability to procreate or fulfill the sexual needs and desires of men, where women are referred to as subhuman sexual objects..."<sup>2</sup>
- The "significant overlap among narratives espoused within these spaces and those put forth by extremist white supremacist groups." These include the production and diffusion of hostile, antagonistic content linked to racially hateful content (including antisemitism) and anti-LGBTQ+ content.
- The incitement, encouragement and praise of violence, suicide, or self-harm and the frequency of engagement of young, impressionable individuals in these online communities. Examples include the promotion and defense of acts of real-world physical violence, including highly publicized episodes of mass violence with

The language used among online users in these spaces employs quickly-evolving terminology to communicate specific, highly-contextual ideas related to relevant ideologies. As such, in the final section of this document, we have created and included a glossary of terms. These terms and their definitions correspond with those used in research published by numerous institutions such as the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the UK government's Commission for Countering Extremism, which have led efforts to develop greater understanding of the incel phenomenon, the "manosphere", and the implications and risks related to mental health and physical safety stemming from extreme, violent, or radical content online, especially in connection with younger online users.

<sup>2</sup> https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/incel-and-misogynist-violent-extre-mism-read-ahead-materials-august-2.pdf

<sup>3</sup> https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/incel-and-misogynist-violent-extre-mism-read-ahead-materials-august-2.pdf

connections to the ideologies espoused in these digital spaces. These factors offer supporting evidence for the increasing classification of incel-related violence as a form of terrorism.

The opaque nature of many online forums, groups on encrypted peer-to-peer (P2P) messaging apps and other "grey" digital spaces alongside the lack of content moderation on many platforms contributes to less safe digital spaces and endangers individual and public safety – both for the individuals that populate and engage in these spaces as well as other communities that may be targeted by hateful rhetoric or violence promoted by these networks. As our research demonstrates, targeted strategies of audience amplification and monetization enable influential profiles and groups to grow followings, radicalizing individuals in communities often heavily populated by young male users.

The intersection of these sensitive social, political, individual, and technological vulnerabilities presents significant risks, especially regarding the weaponization of narratives by threat actors in a highly polarized and politicized digital landscape. In this way, the systematic propagation of unfounded conspiracy theories and extremist narratives produce a risk vector for the targeted distortion of social and political debates. As such, this body of research surfaces several examples demonstrating why the weaponization of misogynistic and racist discourses on digital channels is only a singular part of a "funnel" of radicalization across interlinked networks of extremist toxic content<sup>5</sup>.

#### In this analysis, Alto's threat intelligence analysts aimed to answer the following questions:

- **A.** What is the volume, distribution, and capacity for diffusion of digital activity and actors engaging in discourse related to incels-related topics in the digital public sphere, including the deep and dark web?
- **B.** To what extent do these [incelosphere, manosphere, alternative digital communities] promote, incite, or encourage hate speech, violence, or self-harm?
- **C.** To what degree does abnormal digital activity (such as inorganic or synthetic production or amplification of content or messages) influence digital activity in these spaces? What tactics and techniques are leveraged in these digital spaces to engage with, grow, and monetize their digital audiences and communities?
- **D.** What is the role of alternative digital spaces, like public groups on P2P messaging apps, forums and deep and dark web sites, in the production of the "incelosphere" and radical, hostile and violent content?

<sup>4</sup> The National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism (US) <u>recognizes</u> Incel violent extremism as a potential single-issue motivator for terrorism. In Canada, the perpetrator of a fatal stabbing was charged with terrorism offences, and in the UK an <u>Incel-related arrest</u> was <u>charged</u> under the UK's Terrorism Act.

<sup>5</sup> Much of the content disseminated in the "incelosphere" ensnares young males navigating difficult emotional experiences—especially those in the most critical years of their social and cognitive development. Influential figures in these communities capitalize on rejection and isolation experienced by vulnerable users and incite their resentment by demonizing women and other groups, depicting them as the source of their problems. Many users interacting with "manosphere" content may initially or primarily seek a specific type of content (e.g. dating advice or tips for physical improvements) but are ultimately coaxed deeper into "manosphere" sub-communities and exposed to more radical, extremist, violent content.

# **Key Findings**



### The publicly available nature of violent, sensitive and illegal content



As a key dimension of their mutual interaction, communities analyzed within the incelosphere frequently disseminate and circulate explicit, violent and misogynistic content. Recurrent, salient narratives and topics of engagement are explicitly antisemitic, racist against specific ethnic groups, and hostile towards the LGBTQ+ community. Content and messages frequently display, describe, and support women being subjected to dehumanizing sexual acts, while non-consensual distribution of intimate videos of women is prevalent. Alto's team conducted a topological analysis of the network of digital interactions of profiles engaged in the digital public debate on relevant topics to better understand the key narratives and content distributed In this analysis, the relevance of digital platforms like 4chan.org, reddit.com, public groups on messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, and video platforms like YouTube and rumble.com, stand out alongside several forums and domains specifically dedicated to discussion and content-sharing on these specific themes. Numerous publicly accessible websites, forums, messaging groups and other channels were identified hosting content with themes including pornography, child abuse, encouragement of sexual abuse, pedophilia, and violence towards women, incitement of suicide, bestiality, and other highly sensitive topics. Our analysis surfaces:

- The explicit, extreme, violent nature of the usernames, messages, and visual content distributed in these digital spaces
- The accessibly, openly available, and public nature of this content on the open web
- The lack of protection for young, vulnerable individuals exposed to this type of content



#### Incitement of self-harm and hate-driven violence



Multiple subgroups in the "manosphere" and "incelosphere" explicitly glorify and encourage harassment, violence and self-harm. In addition to promoting violence against women and minority groups, we identify several instances in which suicide or suicide attempts are also directly encouraged. Profiles and channels in these communities even create content contributing to narratives defending and supporting the actions of mass shooters, trivializing violence and justifying violent actions on the basis of racism, defense of masculinity, homophobia, or xenophobia. The violence promoted by these groups is often rooted in conspiracy theories with clearly expressed links to antisemitic, racist, and misogynistic claims and narratives. In aiming to convince other online users of these conspiracy theories, white supremacist, antisemitic and xenophobic tropes are frequently employed. As also surfaced in other studies, equating feminism with terrorism and consequently supporting militant responses to feminist ideology was identified in several sub-groups. On several forums and channels analyzed, promotion of self-harm and suicide was identified, often in the same communities in which users were seeking advice or guidance for personal problems. The most sensitive content was

identified outside of social platforms or public messaging groups and on domains and forums dedicated to incel-ideology-related discussions.



#### Synthetic identities, abnormal activity, and the funding and monetization of online communities in the incelosphere



A commonality between these "manosphere" sub-communities is the platform monetization of the engagement generated from content shared by these groups. As engagement with posts drives audience size and potential avenues for monetization through sales of commercial items or ad revenues, a clear incentive emerges to grow audiences through the use of increasingly extreme rhetoric. This dynamic legitimizes these figures and increases their reach, in turn enhancing their ability to not only espouse toxic content, but to effectively amplify any type of content that attracts users from any of the sub-communities that comprise the "manosphere." Channels that contribute to the funding and monetization of these channels and the ideologies that their activity produces and distributes including Etsy.com, Amazon.com, and Selar.co were highly propagated by users across the digital conversation - and in many cases, evidence of significant inorganic diffusion of these sites was detected.

#### Key Metrics: Multi-Platform Digital Public Activity Related to Online Incels-Related Conversations.

Clear division between mainstream and fringe/alternative digital channels and media.

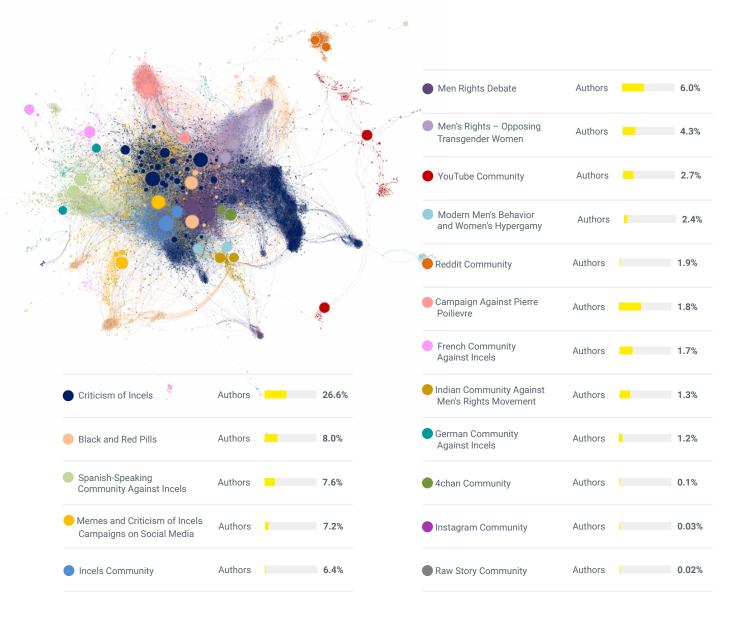


Given the relatively low volume of profiles engaging in incel-related communities online from fringe or alternative media platforms and digital channels where radical, extreme, violent, or sensitive content has been detected, the frequency of activity in this classification is significantly higher than the engagement of profiles active on mainstream digital platforms like Twitter and Instagram.

## **Community Network Analysis**

Alto's non-biased, unassisted algorithms were applied to map and visualize the different clusters of digital identities engaging on this topic, identifying 12 key communities of profiles sharing content and producing conversations relevant to the manosphere or incelosphere. In this visualization of active digital entities (profiles) and their interactions, the nodes represent the active digital identities in the debate, with the size of each node indicating its ability to influence the debate and the interconnections among nodes denoting interactions.

### Message Propagation: Community network analysis visualizes how digital identities online cluster into distinct communities



<sup>\*</sup>Period of Analysis: June 1st to August 31st, 2023

# The Role of Alternative Digital Platforms and Channels in the Incelosphere Ecosystem

Several hundred channels with relevant activity were detected and indexed for this analysis, and a select few channels were analyzed in greater depth to better understand the types of violent and radical content circulated on different platforms, public groups on messaging apps, and forums or domains.



#### **REDDIT**

#### 8 channels of interest analyzed



→ BlackpillScience (20,193 profiles). Content encouraging bullying is shared alongside messages and content about the importance of physical appearance for success in romantic relationships.



#### 4CHAN

#### 1 channel of interest analyzed



→ R9k - R0B0T9001. Forum of the 4Chan image board where discussions about pornography and sexual relations are widely circulated, accompanied by vignettes or complementary images of the content.



#### **TELEGRAM**

#### +200 channels detected. 6 channels of interest analyzed.



→ Incel (669 subscribers). Telegram channel where posts are published with anti-feminism comments, violence towards women, transphobic and antisemitic content.



→ Blackpilled (29,391 subscribers). Telegram channel where posts are published with antisemitic, racist, and transphobic content. Politically, the content leans towards far-right ideas.



→ Nicholas J. Fuentes (54,038 subscribers). Telegram channel of the American far-right white supremacist, political commentator, and streamer; known for his anti-Semitic and Holocaust denial views. He identifies himself as a member of the incel movement and on his channel, you can find a multitude of hateful comments and narratives against women.



→ Thaïs d'Escufon (22,516 subscribers). Telegram channel on the psychology of heterosexual relationships, with advice on how to approach women, how to find "a worthy woman", discussions on "why men should refuse to marry women with troubled pasts?" and other misogynistic content.



→ PaperGoy5000Adventure (249 subscribers). Telegram group with racist content including anti-black and antisemitic content.



→ Ted Talks (Formerly RedPillGangTV) (3,045 subscribers). Telegram channel with anti-trans, antisemitic and anti-black narratives.

<sup>\*</sup> Data points linked to channels of interest (e.g., channel audience size) correspond with the period of analysis





#### OTHER SOURCES ANALYZED INCLUDE:



- → Involuntary Celibate (22,611 users and over 10 million posts) Prominent topics include advocacy of rape, pro-Nazi views, racism, antisemitism, VAWG (Violence against women and girls), blaming women for rape (victim blaming), violence, homicide and suicide encouragement, or incel mass shooters defense, and others.
  - Users share "studies" supporting their theories and incite violence against women, for example defending that torture in video games is free expression. Profiles are against therapy, claiming that therapy is linked with racism, accusing Jews of weaponizing mental health for their benefit. This group is filled with Holocaust deniers, although they defend that it would have been good.



→ Wizardchan (Forum with 11,118 users and over 1 million posts) Antisemitic, xenophobic, and transphobic content is the focus of most of the discussion threads.



→ Black Pill World NO LONGER AVAILABLE. Forum where racist and white supremacist content predominates, justifying a "natural hierarchy". They encourage suicide at a young age and encourage users who feel suicidal to try. Sexual abuse content is prevalent as the promotion of sex without consent.



→ Il Forum dei Brutti (Forum with 21,882 users and over 1.2 million posts) Forum where the main content is the promotion of sex with adolescents.



→ Un Brutto Forum (Forum with 2,796 users and 226,069 posts) Forum where sexual abuse narratives are discussed, promoting pedophilia and bestiality, as well as hate speech against some religions.



→ Neets.net (Forum with 1,166 users and over 384K posts) "A community for NEETs, people that are not currently employed, education, or training". Users promote under-age sexual abuse and share memes about it, usually related to anime/manga characters. They share unconsented videos and pictures of naked girls and pornography. Community members are against therapy and psychiatry medication, accusing it of being a Jewish-led conspiracy. They encourage drug use and giving up on treatments, claiming that being depressed is better. Users share tips to catfish or scam girls online.



→ Looksmax.org - Men's Self-Improvement & Aesthetics (Forum with 24,791 users and over 12.1 million posts) Discussions revolve around sex and pornography; no promotion of abuse or corruption of minors was detected.

<sup>\*</sup> Other sources producing and sharing messages and content related to relevant narratives without the distribution of violent or sensitive content were also detected and analyzed. These are included in the full analysis which can be made available upon request.

# Other Connections Surfaced Linking the Incelosphere and Violent Extremism

#### **GAMERS**

Our research identified a close relationship between the communities of the incelosphere and the world of video games. The communities of gamers identified and analyzed are characterized by being made up mostly of profiles identifying as men. The few women openly participating in conversations in these communities are harassed outright. Within this context, the term incel is used as a complaint against this harassment that causes many women to distance themselves from gaming.

The Japanese genres bishōjo and eroge, an acronym for "erochikku gēmu", are present in some of the incelosphere forums, the first for focusing on interactions with attractive anime-style girls and the second for its frequent explicit sex scenes or plots. An example of a video game of this genre mentioned in some of the incel forums is the video game RapeLay, a rape simulator where the protagonist (male) harasses and sexually assaults a mother and her two daughters; this content and narrative that has caused the video game to be banned in several countries. Other video games bishōjo and eroge, and video games that have generated notable controversy due to their content, are Lolita Yakyūken, Shizuku, Seduction of the Condominium Wife, Battle Raper Serie, Bible Black, Euforia, Ochiru Hitozuma, Gal Gun, Super Seducer, Custer's Revenge, 177, J. B. Harold Murder Club, Night Trap, Rule of Rose and BioShock, among others.

#### PEPE THE FROG

The NEET community (a previously highlighted community containing the promotion of sexual abuse of minors, the distribution of unconsented videos, and antisemitic conspiracy theories) adopted the meme as a symbol of hatred towards those men and women who participated in their communities and were considered "normies", turning Pepe into a symbol related to misogyny, Nazism or other ideologies linked to the extreme right. Pepe the Frog was also used by numerous Trump supporters, also turning it into a racist symbol, as a rejection of political correctness or as a joke to provoke liberals and the Left.

This visual connection illustrates a compelling case of memetic replication<sup>6</sup>, in which actors with limited or no formal connections use imagery to establish and promote a shared cultural and political space. On different websites and forums, the frog has undergone variations, creating a whole gallery of "weird Pepes". In fact, the forum Looksmax.org, detailed below, shares a whole gallery of variations and the codes for the chats.

#### NAZISM, ANTISEMITISM AND OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF RACIST IDEOLOGIES

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) recurrently tracks 15 hate group ideologies. Of these 15, nine explicitly are linked to white supremacist ideologies. Within this context, the SPLC has also begun to track male supremacy arguing that there is an explicit link and overlap between the two ideologies. This overlap is consistently evidenced throughout the data and findings presented in this report in which a broad spectrum of explicit racist content against a wide range of ethnicities, anti-LGBTQ content, antisemitic content, and a prevalent volume of pro-Nazi content are meshed and circulated together in a variety of ways.

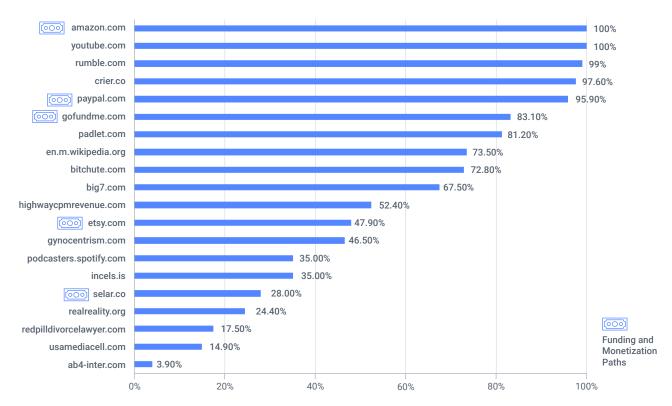
<sup>6</sup> In an analysis of the 2022 Buffalo shooting, the International Centre for Counter Terrorism published an "Analysis of the Manifesto" of the Buffalo attack, stating: "According to Shifman, Internet memes are "units of popular culture that are circulated, imitated, and transformed by Internet users, creating a shared cultural experience." In this case, the replication of the same memes across different manifestos speaks of the shared cultural space that the online extreme right inhabits nowadays. These actors are not agglutinated by specific ideology, terrorist cell or even geographical location. Rather, the online extreme-right political milieu is composed of "a host of heterogeneous strands of diffuse political activities", with divergent justificatory narratives» (p. 3). This ecosystem is inhabited by young, Internet-savvy, politically oriented individuals, but its underlying connection is cultural and extremely visual."

# The Link Between Monetization of the Incelosphere, Conspiracy Theories and Abnormal Digital Activity

To determine the impact of users engaging with abnormal levels of activity, Alto's team analyzed statistical outliers across all previously identified communities to assess their posting frequency. A total of **3,511 digital entities** were detected producing **239,232 comments within the period of analysis**. These profiles represent **0.1% of the total profiles of the network** and **generated 8.5% of the total activity**. Significant proportions of inorganic activity were detected in specific communities, including the Incel Community (#5). This community is where over one-third (34.1%) of all abnormally high-activity profiles in the overall digital conversation were identified. Further, while these profiles only represented 2% of total profiles within the **Incel Community**, they generated 39.8% of all activity in the community over the period analyzed.

**What does this mean?** This exhibits a significant influence of inorganic and potentially synthetic amplification of digital content around incel-related ideology and conversations. Looking at the most frequently shared domains and the percentage of distribution of each domain by abnormal high-activity profiles, we can discern trends related to the influence of these high-activity profiles and the type of content that they are engaged in distributing.

# TOP 20 MOST SHARED DOMAINS BY HIGH ACTIVITY PROFILES: PERCENTAGE OF DISTRIBUTION BY PROFILES DEMONSTRATING ABNORMALLY HIGH ACTIVITY



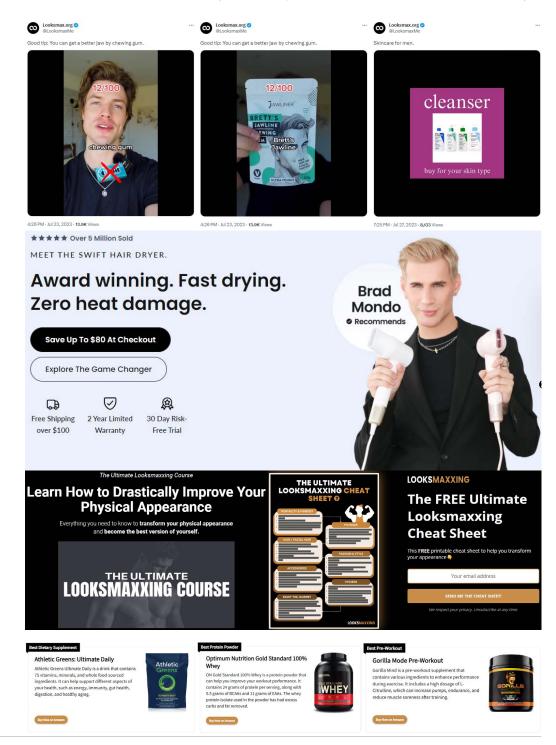
Platforms identified for the monetization of commercial items linked to incelosphere communities and discourse are associated with abnormally high levels of user activity in some communities in addition to inorganic patterns of activity and content distribution. In the domain analysis, various online commercial platforms for the sale of products and services were identified being shared by active profiles in the incelosphere. Via these sales platforms, books on conspiracy theories, manuals and guides to attract women, products to improve one's looks, and merchandising with recognizable phrases and language common to the manosphere, among many other items, are recommended. Some of the most widely circulated platforms on which commercialization of these networks occur include:

- 73% of the profiles sharing Etsy.com, a global e-commerce site, demonstrated abnormally high levels of activity. Within the Black and Red Pills community (#2), 100% of the distribution of the Etsy.com domain came from users exhibiting inorganic, non-human patterns of abnormally high activity. Etsy.com: This sales platform is primarily shared by users in the Black and Red Pill community, However, profiles from the Men rights' debate community also distribute this domain. From the first community the MericaFirstCo store is shared (without items for sale); while the second community promotes the sale of t-shirts with messages such as "escape the matrix" or "just cope".
- 95.9% of the profiles sharing Selar.co, "your all-in-one e-commerce store builder to sell any kind of digital product or service to anyone, anywhere in the world" demonstrated abnormally high levels of activity. This sales platform is mainly shared by users of the Modern men's behaviour and women's hypergamy community. The book The Red Pill Game, by Gabriel Togan, is recommended, under the premise of "learning the fundamental principles to unlock your inner game (...) and learning the art of attracting women and Real G techniques to hook girls", plus free support via WhatsApp chat with Maestro Togan.
- Amazon.com: This sales platform is mainly shared by users of the Black and Red pill community, recommending conspiracy books on the scandals surrounding Hunter Biden or on <a href="The Great Reset">The Great Reset</a> theory as well as books published by Alex Jones, the well known conspiracy theorist, radio host, and founder of InfoWars. In some communities, distribution of books for purchase via Amazon are driven by inorganic activity, for example, 71% of the distribution of Amazon.com in the Incel Community (#5) is driven by abnormal high-activity profiles.

Additional examples of monetization and commercialization of the incelosphere were identified related to the phenomenon of "looksmaxxing", a trend that is based on maximizing physical appearance for social acceptance, often through extreme or dangerous means. Looksmaxxing feeds off of the core tenets of incel-related discourse to reinforce these ideologies via the commercialization of a wide range of products for personal aesthetic improvement. Some of those identified, including courses, hair dryers, cosmetics, jawline-shaping gum, and whey protein are only a few examples of the plethora of commercial items linked to this trend.

 Looksmax.org - Men's Self-Improvement & Aesthetics: In their X profile @ LooksmaxMe, various videos are shared about skin care routines or tricks on how to get a better jaw, using certain products from recognized or own brands and even discrediting other brands. An example of this is the <u>Brett's Jawline Chewing Gum</u> brand, a product created and promoted by <u>Brett Maverick</u>, Looksmax content creator and videos for OnlyFans.

Looksmaxxing: Maximize Your Physical Appearance: On the main page of this forum, you can find an online store in which, via subscription, you can access a Looksmaxxing course (the cost of the course is not specified). Also a series of best Looksmaxxing products are commercialized: pre-workout supplements from the Gorilla Mode brand; protein powder from the Optimum Nutrition brand or a drink with vitamins and minerals from the Athletic Greens brand (all of these products included a direct link to Amazon).



## Thanks for reading!

Interested in learning more or accessing the full analysis? Feel free to reach out to us at info@altointelligence.com.

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#### PROPRIETARY ALGORITHMS FROM EXPERTS IN GENERATIVE AI

Our unique technology empowers advanced analysis across the entire risk surface for superior anticipation, protecting organizations, their employees, and their critical assets. Because, the best way to overcome future digital threats is by facing them today.