Online Misogyny and Violent Extremism: Understanding the Landscape

Key Insights

Our decision to explore the links between online misogyny and violent extremism stems from the unique perspective we have from classifying terrorist and violent extremist content (TVEC).

We've found that misogyny is a common thread across various hateful and extremist ideologies.

- Algorithms amplify misogynistic and extremist content, making it easier for vulnerable people to encounter and possibly adopt more extreme ideologies.

- The threats posed by incel (involuntary celibate) ideology, along with other misogynistic and male supremacist ideologies, is becoming more widely recognised.

- New trends in extremist beliefs are emerging, particularly among boys and young men. These include individual adopting mixed and unstable beliefs as well as some who are not tied to any specific ideology but are drawn solely to violence itself.

We found many overlapping and closely related issues across online misogyny and violent extremism.

- Online platforms play a key role in amplifying and perpetuating harmful content including misogynistic content.

- Emerging categories of content and technology, such as deepfakes and other AI-generated materials, are creating new challenges.

- We also found women and girls are more likely to encounter gender-based and severe forms of abuse online, which sometimes spill over (extend into or carry over) to the real (or offline) world.

- Online abuse in the form of gendered disinformation targets women, particularly those in public roles.

- Misogyny, when combined with other forms of discrimination like racism, intensifies the harm experienced by women with intersecting identities.

We've identified a few gaps in New Zealand:

- There is a gap in how current systems collect and record data on online misogyny: In New Zealand, there are no standardised methods for collecting and analysing data on online misogyny across government agencies and NGOs.

- There are gaps in the evidence based in New Zealand. In New Zealand, there are evidence gaps in several key areas related to misogyny, both online and offline, as well as gender-based violence.

What is this summary report?

- Our focus in this project was on understanding the intersections between online misogyny and violent extremism. In the Summary Report, 'online misogyny' means any manifestation of misogyny that occurs online including on social media platforms, messaging apps, or other digital platforms.

- The summary report presents a high-level summary of insights supported with examples from different studies and reports included in our literature review. To read the literature review and to access the full list of references, please visit our online resource.

Visit https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/resources/research/online-misogyny-and-violent-extremism/

What is this online resource?

- Our online resource is a publicly accessible website that is the primary source of access to the research summary report, literature review, and provides links and glossary tips for all the supporting research and information.

- Our online research resource takes an innovative approach to sharing the wide range of information compiled through our research mahi for this project. We have published the references to a wide range of academic literature, as well as detailed insights and analysis of different government, Crown and NGOs responses to online misogyny.

This resource is aimed primarily at academics, researchers, government, and non-governmental organisations and will be a snapshot of the available research at time of publication.

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