

Incel Culture

What is incel culture?

- o An incel – shorthand for “involuntary celibate” – is a member of an online subculture of people who define themselves as unable to get a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one.
- o Incel discussion forums are often characterised by resentment and hatred, misogyny, self-pity, self-loathing, a sense of entitlement to sex, racism, and the endorsement of violence against women and sexually active people.
- o Like many internet ‘wormholes’ these forums are riven with conspiracy theories and a complete absence of nuanced and informed debate.
- o Incels may share similarities with extreme right- wing groups.
- o Both groups attribute society’s ills to social liberalism, women and ethnic minorities. Racial hatred and far right extremism is also common in some online Incel forums.

Factors that *might* contribute to development and maintenance of incel identities:

- o Physical appearance (e.g., body weight, height)
- o Ability status
- o Mental health
- o Emotional and physical abuse at home were common themes.

Other themes included:

- o Personality issues and social ineptitudes
- o Being closeted about one’s sexual orientation or gender identity
- o A lack of effort, and certain beliefs about masculinity, sex, and relationships.

Stijelja (2021) / Hintz and Baker (2021)

What can we do?

- o **Safeguarding training**
- o **Educate ourselves on the problem**
- o **Alertness:** being alert to incel lexicon.
- o **Embedding values into the curriculum**
- o **An inclusive culture:** being open to discussion
- o **Gentle but robust interventions:** remembering that those who express these views also need safeguarding.
- o **Understanding of what learners are accessing online**
- o **Role modelling:** staff are incredible role models who seize opportunities to model values and calm, collected responses to extreme views.

Interested in finding out more?

A summary introduction to incel culture:

<https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/a-short-introduction-to-the-involuntary-celibate-sub-culture/>

Signs of incel culture: <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/be-vigilant-for-signs-of-incel-culture-prevent-terrorism-radicalisation-safeguarding-child-protection-wellbeing-mental-health/>

Cultural comment from the New Yorker (2018):

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-rage-of-the-incels>

A long read on ‘Our Incel Problem’ (US, 2019):

<https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit>

ITV news report – 3 mins (2022):

<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2022-01-18/what-is-incel-culture-and-why-is-it-growing-around-the-world>

Incel: A member of an online subculture of people who define themselves as unable to get a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one.

The manosphere: a collection of websites, blogs, and online forums promoting (to varying degrees) masculinity, misogyny, and opposition to feminism.

Symph: A derogatory term to deride those who support equal rights – widely used by teenagers who don’t understand the origins. An insult towards men who are seen as too attentive and submissive to women, especially if that is perceived as in hope of / pursuit of a sexual relationship.

Beta: A man who is not "alpha". They lack charisma and shy away from confrontation. Some incels identify as "omega" males, implying they are below even the betas.

Chad: The anti-incel. A chad is a man who is sexually successful, who is charismatic and handsome and clever.

Stacey: Used to denote a woman who has sex with a lot of men (usually chads) and is stereotypically air-headed, unintelligent, beautiful and promiscuous. As with other terms used to describe women, Stacy homogenises and demeans them.

(Fem)joid: Term used to describe women. Usually "female humanoid (organism)", sometimes "female android". Regardless, it's used to indicate that women aren't fully human, and are either sub-human or "other". Often used in conjunction with the pronoun "it" to further dehumanise women.

AWALT (all women are like that): Used to generalise about women in negative ways.

Red pill-er: A red piller is someone who believes that women are actually the privileged group instead of men.

Pick up artist: Typically men – female artists are much rarer – who attempt to coax women into having sex with them through a mixture of flattery, psychological manipulation and coercion.

Rapecel: A further subset of the Incel community whose members who believe all sexual interaction between men and women is (or should be) coercive and women are thereby reassured on a primal level that the perpetrator is capable of taking care of her .