

Web of Hate

A Retrospective Study of Online Gendered Abuse in 2022 in the United States

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Executive Summary

In 2022, the United States witnessed both dramatic breakthroughs and calamitous setbacks on women's rights, from Ketanji Brown Jackson becoming the first Black woman to sit on Supreme Court of the United States to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, a legal precedent that protected a woman's right to bodily autonomy for over 50 years. These events, among many others, had an undeniable impact on the US information environment last year. Women's rights soon became one of the critical wedge issues ahead of the November midterm elections. Meanwhile, on the local level, communities witnessed violent incidents targeting reproductive health providers.

Much of this public debate took place online, with 2022 seeing the rapid growth in popularity of misogynistic and male supremacist influencers who openly advocate for violence against women and campaigns of hate and disinformation targeted against women celebrities speaking out against the abuse they have faced. This prompted action from national governments and international organizations to address gendered disinformation and harassment. The White House, for example, joined five other governments in the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, committing to support the development of "resources and training for civil-society organizations, journalists, and politically active women."

These dynamics prompted ISD to look back at 2022 to examine online conversations around nine different real-world events impacting women in the US. With this retrospective study, ISD explores the potential correlation between these offline events and the targeting of women with misogynistic and abusive content on social media. The study also attempts to identify potential ways in which online misogyny, abusive content, and gendered disinformation may be amplified and deployed for the rest of 2023 and in 2024, a critical election year for the US. We also set out to analyze how well these platforms are currently enforcing their own policies on harmful gender-based content, to ascertain what more could be done.

The events chosen were all deemed significant in 2022, either politically or culturally, and center on a woman or a group of women. They involve celebrities, athletes, political figures, and influencers, and include women with intersectional identities such as women of color and women who identify as LGBTQ+. Analysts collected

data on each of these nine events from five large, mainstream social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Telegram, and TikTok. This data was then used to determine whether misogynistic speech or gendered disinformation was present in the online conversation around these events and, if so, to what extent.

Analysts used a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to understand the following:

- The dominant online narratives provoked by the nine events;
- The roles that specific individuals or communities with substantial reach played in the spread of those narratives;
- How conversations around the same events differed between online spaces.

In short, ISD's research found that several of these offline events acted as key catalysts for online misogynistic content and abuse directed at the women involved or women generally. Notably, analysts identified misogynistic content related to women politicians involved in the US midterm elections across all five platforms analyzed: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and TikTok. Misogynistic narratives and abuse targeting women took many forms, including videos and images, and reflected the diverse range of tactics known to be used by malign actors. Researchers identified content which clearly violates platforms' terms of service and found that existing policies put in place by platforms are neither comprehensive nor consistently enforced.

This report provides ISD's key findings, an overview of conversations across platforms related to the nine events, and a deep dive into key narratives and tactics used to spread misogyny, abuse and/or gendered disinformation. It then highlights shortcomings in platform policies and enforcement and recommends ways forward for platforms, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.

Key Findings

- While some of these events did not elicit significant abusive activity, others appeared to act as catalysts for misogynistic online content. The Depp v. Heard trial, the US midterm elections, and events related to women candidates or political figures (including Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan and Liz Cheney's involvement in the Jan. 6 investigation) generated the highest volumes of misogynistic speech overall.
 - Women in politics were the target of online gendered disinformation. ISD analysts identified hateful and misleading narratives targeting prominent women in politics, especially women of color and Democrats, though Republican women were also targeted. This was the case across all platforms analyzed, though Telegram was found to be particularly toxic.
 - Most of the misogynistic content within these event-related conversations focused on the appearance or intellect of women and deployed sexist tropes, slurs, and sexualized narratives. Women politicians such as Liz Cheney and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, along with celebrities or athletes like Amber Heard and Brittney Griner, were frequently discussed as unintelligent, incompetent or referred to using misogynistic terms (e.g. descriptions of them as "witches").
 - Women with intersecting identities were targeted with misogynistic online speech based on multiple protected characteristics. Women politicians of color, basketball player Brittney Griner, and trans athlete Lia Thomas were notable targets of abuse. Abuse directed at Griner and Thomas, while not always directly misogynistic in nature, was nonetheless gendered, and included examples of misgendering and transphobia. For example, users claimed Griner, a Black lesbian, is not a "real" woman and therefore did not deserve to be swapped in the prisoner exchange that allowed her to return to the US. Meanwhile, over 80% of the Facebook posts about Lia Thomas in the data sample were classified as transphobic by analysts.
 - There is a small group of social media actors that have considerable influence over the propagation of misogynistic rhetoric. Video content from influencers like Andrew Tate, conservative influencer Jack Posobiec, and white nationalist Nick Fuentes about these events attracted thousands of interactions. Notably, these videos continue to spread across platforms regardless of efforts made by social media platforms to restrict them. For example, analysts found 19 YouTube channels (with a combined subscriber count of 390k) dedicated to posting Andrew Tate content, with hundreds of misogynistic comments posted under various videos.
 - Misogynistic content frequently appeared in image and video form, reinforcing the limits of a text-based approach in content moderation. This trend was most notable on Telegram and Facebook. The focus of the images and videos ranged from demeaning women's intelligence and looks to depicting violence against women, depending on the event. Posts featuring violence against women appeared frequently but usually did not include key misogynistic phrases in captions or other text, highlighting the limits of text-based approaches to detecting hateful content.
 - ISD's research found that misogynistic and abusive content frequently redirects users to alternative platforms. Misogynistic content on Telegram included links to similar content on other video platforms, including TikTok and BitChute, potentially allowing content to spread more widely and remain accessible longer if it is removed on one platform but not another. This trend highlights the cross-platform circulation of misogynistic content and the need for platforms to adopt collaborative models for responding to harmful and hateful content.
 - Most platforms have policies in place to protect women online, but these are far from comprehensive, and they are not consistently enforced. The four major social media platforms studied (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok) have guidelines designed to protect against gendered abuse and misogyny, however analysts frequently found this content appears not only in posts but also in the comment sections and in replies to posts.
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Introduction

Research in recent years has highlighted the growing impact of online misogyny and gendered disinformation on offline, real-world events.

To this day, Gamergate, an online, misogynistic harassment campaign against women in the video game industry, serves as a template for alt-right and far-right organizing online. Many have partially attributed the rise of the alt-right, the Pizzagate conspiracy theory, other targeted harassment campaigns, and even the 2021 attack on the United States Capitol to tactics deployed and promoted by the Gamergate campaign. Despite the campaign's vast and ongoing impact on women online and influence on the US alt-right and far-right, at the time, social media platforms made little to no effort to deter or moderate harassers and trolls who were attacking women online every day.

Gamergate and subsequent events such as the 2014 Isla Vista killings¹¹ sparked an interest amongst researchers in tracking misogynistic, anti-feminist networks and what has come to be known as the "manosphere". Since then, researchers have identified, mapped and analyzed communities of what some have called "male supremacists," allowing for more focus and delineation between different types of hate groups that target women and other vulnerable populations online. With an influx of misogynistic rhetoric entering US political discourse and recent backsliding of women's rights, updated, systematic, data-driven explorations of the nature and dynamics of the mainstreaming of online misogyny are lacking.

Additionally, and as this study will highlight, content posted online containing misogyny and gendered disinformation is not necessarily immediately obvious. Veiled misogyny and gendered disinformation can serve to mainstream misogyny and further normalize hate against women and therefore must be considered when researching the dynamics of online misogyny.

A 2022 global survey by Ipsos revealed that one in three men believe feminism does more harm than good, and that 36% of men think women "overreact" to things that people send or say to women online. Gendered abuse and disinformation, which can deter women from participating in the public sphere by spreading misleading gender and sex-based narratives, is widespread and had until recently been largely ignored by policymakers and platforms.

ISD defines misogyny as the hatred or dislike of, contempt for, or prejudice against women, that is manifested in diverse forms such as mental, verbal or physical intimidation, harassment or abuse of women that targets them based on their gender or sex. This consists of any act, including online speech and content, that seeks to exclude, coerce, shame, stigmatize or portray as inferior, women based on these protected attributes.

Following ISD's own definition of disinformation and the definition established in a report by the Wilson Center, ISD defines gendered and sexualized disinformation as a subset of online gendered abuse that uses false, misleading, or manipulated gender and sex-based narratives and media against women aimed at deterring women from participating in the public sphere, delegitimizing women in power, or invalidate women's experiences.

This concerning trend threatens to set back the work of activists, community organizers, politicians, and others, and prompted ISD to conduct research to understand the current state of online conversation around high-profile events involving women on key platforms used across the US. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, ISD aimed to understand dominant narratives surrounding these events, to examine the prevalence of misogynistic and abusive rhetoric, the roles of specific individuals or communities in spreading such rhetoric, and how discussions about these differed across online spaces. Our findings indicate that certain events in 2022 acted as catalysts for the spread of misogynistic online content, while some did not. However, while the volume of misogynistic content varied across the nine events studied, the weaknesses shown by social media platforms in enforcing their own policies to limit harmful behavior were consistent.

Methodology

These nine events were chosen on the basis that they all featured a high-profile woman (or a group of women) and/or were relevant to the conversation about women's rights in the United States. Analysts also considered intersectional identities and how, for example, women of color and LGBTQ+ women might experience hate online in different ways.

The high-profile events chosen were:

1. The Depp v. Heard defamation trial held in Fairfax County, Virginia, from April 11 to June 1.
2. The reversal of Roe v. Wade by the Supreme Court of the United States on June 24 and the preceding leak of the decision in early May.
3. The November midterm elections in the US and the women who either ran for office or played a key political role in them.
4. The rise in popularity of misogynistic influencer Andrew Tate and the subsequent removal of Tate and his content from social media platforms.
5. WNBA's Brittney Griner's return to the US in December 2022 after being detained in Russia for 10 months.
6. The news and controversy around Lia Thomas, a trans woman and swimmer who competed for and won an NCAA Division I gold medal for the 500-yard freestyle.
7. US Representative Liz Cheney's role in the January 6 Committee hearings, first streamed to the public in June 2022.
8. Former US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August.
9. The divorce and subsequent settlement of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, first announced in January 2021 and finalized in March 2022.

Analysts used quantitative and qualitative research methods to study online content posted on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and TikTok. These platforms

were selected due to their wide user bases in the United States and their wide range of functionalities: users can share short- and long-form videos, there are comment sections and messaging systems in place, and it is easy to reshare content. Analysts built [keyword lists](#) relating to the nine events above and a separate list of abusive and misogynistic keywords collected during [previous ISD](#) and third-party [research](#).

This keyword list was built with the consideration that misogynistic and abusive content online can be veiled and not always clear-cut. For example, the words "stupid" or "crazy" on their own may not be inherently misogynistic but when paired with insults such as "bitch" or "whore", are being weaponized to draw attention to gender. Given the often context-dependent nature of gendered abuse and misogynistic speech online, ISD chose to employ an approach for this project that relied on assessments made by analysts rather than natural-language classifiers.

Content collected from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram was filtered through these lists in different ways to yield usable results (e.g., a count of times a sexist slur was used in all posts or comments discussing Nancy Pelosi). The results were also sorted through manually to ensure results were as accurate as possible. TikTok analysis was conducted using solely qualitative methods due to the lack of an accessible TikTok API for researchers. A full description of ISD's methodology, broken down by platform, can be found in the [Appendix](#) of this report.

As this research attempted to provide an overview of online conversations surrounding events on different social media platforms, it is important to note the limitations of the methodology used. A keyword-based approach was used to identify potentially misogynistic content; however, not all content including misogynistic and/or abusive keywords is necessarily misogynistic. Content mentioning the events analyzed in the report in combination with misogynistic keywords can be denouncing and criticizing misogyny, or simply talking about it. Moreover, the keywords included in this analysis cannot be considered exhaustive or complete.

Misogynistic abuse online can take many forms, and not all of them include specific abusive keywords. To overcome these limitations, the analysis of misogynistic content included both a quantitative and a qualitative approach.

Overview of events

The Depp v. Heard Trial

The Depp v. Heard trial stood out among the nine events analyzed for the particularly vitriolic nature of misogynistic comments in conversations about the trial and for the prominence of discussion of the trial across all platforms observed. ISD researchers identified abusive and misogynistic content, both veiled and explicit, targeting Heard across all platforms. The keyword list produced by researchers contained several abusive keywords specifically related to Amber Heard to identify potential instances of misogynistic content targeting the actress. The keyword list did not include specific keywords related to Depp. Analysts identified content demeaning and belittling Heard which appeared in a variety of formats, including memes and images.

On Twitter, a total of 12 tweets out of the top 100 were found to contain misogynistic abuse towards Amber Heard. These tweets received a total of over 24k retweets and attacked Amber's looks, character, testimony, and actions in the court.

Among the top 100 Facebook posts related to the Johnny Depp and Amber Heard trial, 43% targeted Heard with misogynistic or abusive rhetoric. Top posts attacked Amber Heard as "crazy" and "delusional and psychotic", frequently using visual or meme-based content. In addition, posts used misogynistic or broadly abusive slurs, as well as sex-based commentary, to attack her. The use of memes, caricatures, and words that may not be considered outright misogynistic is an example of some of the more veiled content that can fly under the radar of moderation practices and go unnoticed by other users. However, this content can serve to normalize hate and often even goes as far to make light of it.

While Heard settled the defamation trial with Depp and was ordered to pay damages, content analyzed by researchers in the run-up to this focused heavily on which party was the victim of abuse. During the Depp v. Heard trial, posts on Facebook villainized women, pushed the idea that men are regular victims of abuse by women, and made generalized claims about domestic abuse. Some posts specifically originated from pages affiliated with men's rights and fathers' rights movements that often argue that a man's status as a victim is ignored because of their gender while women are systematically believed because they are women.



Figure 1: Tweet calling Heard a "gold digger" and "psychopath narcissistic abuser."

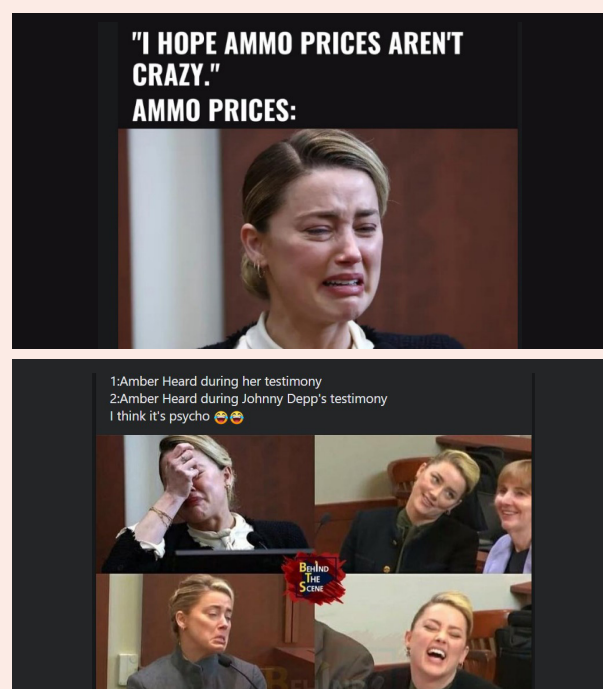
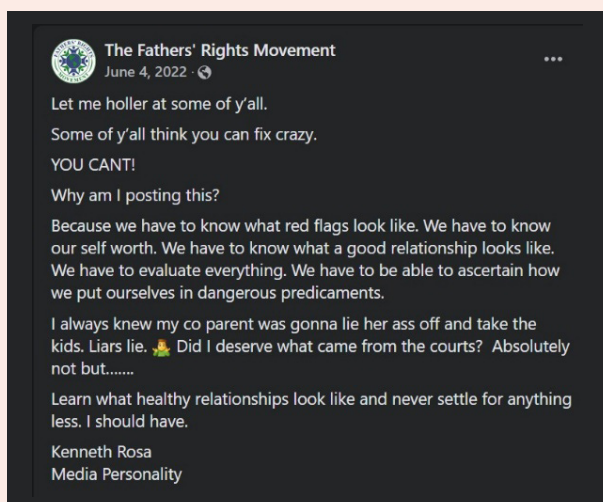
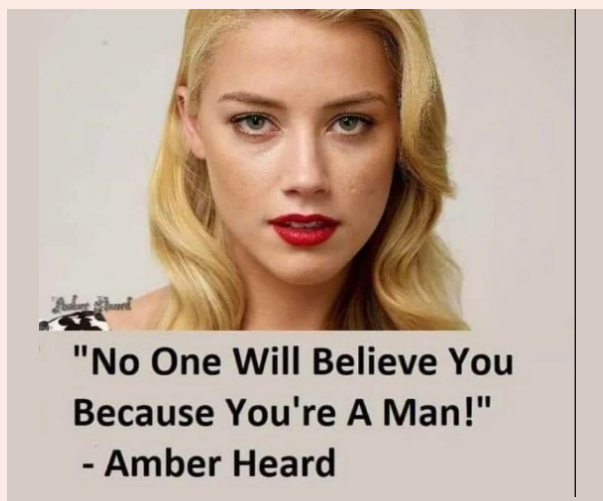


Figure 2: Posts 'memeifying' Heard's testimony and presence in the trial.



Figures 3-5: Posts from Facebook attacking Heard calling her a “sadistic bitch” and “crazy.”

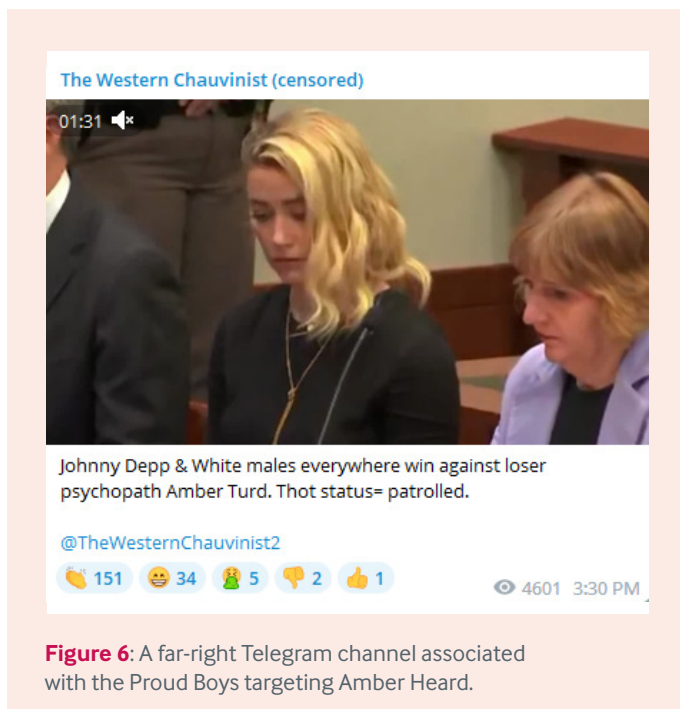
On YouTube, analysts found 361 videos about the Depp v. Heard trial containing misogynistic and abusive comments, making it the event with the highest volume of misogynistic and abusive comments. This is likely due to the content of the videos themselves inciting inflammatory and hateful comments – analysts noted that most of the videos in the dataset attacked Heard and praised Depp and his lawyer, Camille Vasquez. Titles of such videos ranged from “Johnny Depp calls Amber Turd a ‘FLAPPY FISH MARKET’ LMAOOO” to “Why is Amber Heard an abusive, narcissistic b****?” Twenty-five videos from the dataset refer to Amber Heard as “Amber Turd,” a belittling nickname for Heard used online throughout the trial.

In an analysis of all 191k comments in the YouTube dataset, ISD found 20,050 users that made misogynistic and abusive comments more than once across different videos, totaling almost 53K comments. One user commented 74 times across 73 videos about the Depp v. Heard trial and called Heard “bat shit crazy” in every comment. Most of the repeat offenders only commented on videos regarding one event (some of them commented on the same video twice, suggesting they may be bot or spam accounts).

While YouTube’s [policy](#) may seem to protect against misogynistic hate speech, ISD has [previously identified weaknesses](#) in its comment moderation. Analysts found over 57k comments with misogynistic and abusive language directed at Amber Heard. The most common terms – crazy, psycho, and stupid – may not necessarily pass YouTube’s threshold for harmful speech but reflect the veiled abuse that often occurs in such spaces online. Nonetheless, comments calling Heard a “psycho bitch” or calling for her to “drop dead” are particularly targeted and are more likely to meet these thresholds.

A lot of YouTube comments also reflected the success of the disinformation narratives targeting Heard during the trial; for example, users in comment sections perpetuated the claim that Heard was consuming cocaine in the courtroom – which has been [proven false](#) multiple times.

Disparaging rhetoric around Amber Heard was so normalized on the Telegram channels analyzed that her name (or variations such as “Amber Turd”) became an adjective, applied to other women deemed to be



behaving poorly or stepping out of line. This includes Cassidy Hutchinson, the former Trump White House aide who drew right-wing ire after she testified in front of the January 6 Committee. Prominent right-wing influencers including Jack Posobiec posted phrases like “Amber Heard 2.0” in reference to Hutchinson, deeming her a liar. Posobiec also referred to Taylor Lorenz, a Washington Post reporter who has faced right-wing backlash over her coverage of the prominent anti-LGBTQ account Libs of TikTok, as “the Amber Heard of journalism.”

Analysts also identified misogynistic abuse on TikTok where Heard’s testimony and looks were consistently mocked throughout the trial. Videos of courtroom appearances edited with overlaying soundtracks and text, depicting Heard to be intentionally lying in a sitcom-like manner, gained tens of millions of views. One user negatively animated Heard, using audio clips from throughout the trial. Each video garnered millions of views with thousands of encouraging comments backing the user and chastising Heard. Disparaging language surrounding Heard became so normalized that influencers would make instructional videos using testimony from the trial (i.e. “how to cover a bruise” or “what to do if Amber Heard cuts off your finger”) portraying Heard as a villain.

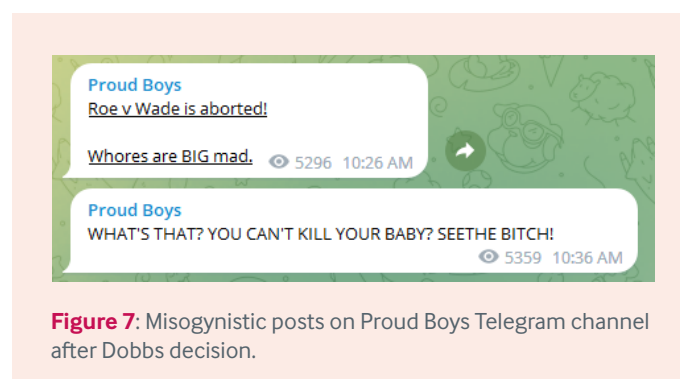
The Reversal of Roe v. Wade

The overturning of Roe v. Wade resulted in notable activity across all platforms, but analysts observed the most misogynistic and abusive activity on Telegram and on Facebook. This may be due to the types of users that use these two platforms and the variety of stances on abortion rights (analysts observed that on TikTok, which has a younger audience, users generally expressed outrage at news of the reversal). Analysts identified abusive and even violent content directed at abortion rights activists protesting the reversal and some content on Telegram appearing to endorse attacks on abortion centers.

A post from Jack Posobiec calls “pro-life supporters [...] easily 10x more attractive than the abortion supporters here at court, who lack basic hygiene and clothes that fit.” The post received 1.7K reactions and 64.8k views and ranked 25th in the dataset.

One of the posts from Telegram with the highest number of reactions (but fewer views) is a post from Nick Fuentes celebrating the reversal of Roe by saying, “Hey women we are gonna put y’all back in chains” (2.6K reactions). Seeing users enthusiastically employ verbs such as “hang”, “jail”, “kill”, and even “rape” against women is common on Telegram – especially in more toxic channels with comments enabled.

Following the leaked Supreme Court opinion on Dobbs v. Jackson in May, a misogynistic and anti-abortion Telegram channel was created, which appeared to be affiliated with the Proud Boys (an initial post in the group claimed the “Proud Boys are here to help”). The channel openly advocated for sexual violence against women, posted memes depicting sexual violence, and described those who would seek abortions as “sluts”, “whores”, and “subhuman”. The channel also forwarded posts



from other misogynistic channels, and its own content was shared in other Proud Boys affiliated channels, such as the Philadelphia Proud Boys. In general, Proud Boys groups on Telegram regularly share anti-women and anti-LGBTQ+ content that advocates for violence against both groups.

Among the top posts analyzed in relation to the reversal of Roe v. Wade on Facebook, 34% of those used the reversal of Roe to attack or mock women abortion rights activists. Mocking the appearances of people protesting the Roe reversal was a trend noted by analysts on Facebook, Telegram, and Twitter. One Facebook post shared a video of Republican Representative Matt Gaetz at a Turning Point USA Student Action Summit in July 2022, where he mocked abortion rights activists and stated that women “who look like a thumb” should not worry about abortions. Although misogynistic language is not used in the speech, the blatant mocking and belittling of these women’s appearances is an example of the veiled abuse women can face online.

Nicholas Fuentes is the leader of the Groyper movement, a loose network of white nationalist and deeply misogynistic influencers and activists who are followed and supported by a large army of online trolls. The Groyper movement continued to grow steadily in 2022, becoming a “countercultural presence” holding “significant sway among Gen Z conservative leaders.” Groypers have embraced not only misogyny and white nationalism but antisemitism, homophobia, and transphobia as well. The movement’s strategy of embracing different kinds of bigotry and hate aims to facilitate recruitment and the normalization of extreme views. While this report did not look at misogyny on Gab – the platform that sponsored Fuentes’ third America First Political Action Conference and where Fuentes has 138.9K followers – ISD analysts found that Fuentes’ channel on Telegram was one of the most popular channels sharing misogynistic content.

Not Proud Of Your Abortion



Not Proud Of Your Abortion

What should be done to women who have had an abortion

Anonymous Poll

- ☐ A) Jail them until they are sterilized, and adopt any living children away to loving couples.
- ☐ B) Try them and execute them by firing squad, adopt any living children away to loving couples.
- ☐ Flog them on pay per view, with proceeds going to fund the adoptions and then "A"
- ☐ Flog them on pay per view, with proceeds going to fund the adoptions and then "B"

125 votes

587 11:41 AM

Figure 8: Telegram channel post promoting violence and hatred against people who seek abortions.

US Midterm Elections

The US midterm elections generated misogynistic activity on all platforms analyzed. Researchers identified belittling and demeaning comments directed at both Democrats and Republicans. Abusive and misogynistic content appeared notably in image-based content and in the form of memes, reflecting a broader trend of how groups and actors seem to be using image-based content to evade content moderation and push hateful narratives. Analysts also noted that women politicians of color faced not only misogynistic abuse but also racist abuse online, a trend that was often noted by analysts throughout the report – no matter the event.

On Facebook, 25% of the 100 posts analyzed included misogynistic content targeting prominent American women in politics. All but two of these posts targeted Democratic figures Nancy Pelosi, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or Kamala Harris. High-engagement posts included depictions of Pelosi as a witch, descriptions of these women as stupid, and misogynistic tropes such as insinuating that blonde women are unintelligent.

On YouTube, analysts found 700 videos related to prominent women politicians representing both political parties in the US midterms that drew misogynistic and abusive comments. Some of the titles of these videos focus on their eligibility for office (e.g. “Kamala Harris ‘struggling’ with the ‘simplest of concepts’”). Other videos did not necessarily incite hateful comments directed at women politicians but attracted these comments nonetheless. This suggests that English-language videos about US politics draw partisan and polarized comments, and that at times those comments are directed at women (in the form of misogynistic speech), an easy target for users online reacting negatively or harshly to the news.

The US midterm elections also sparked substantial misogynistic content on Telegram, where women in politics were targeted with memes and videos mocking and attacking them. Current and former officials, including Michelle Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Kamala Harris, were openly mocked for their intelligence, deemed “traitors,” and accused of actively working against US interests.

A prominent narrative directed at Michelle Obama references her as a man. These hateful campaigns were often accompanied by racist and fatphobic rhetoric



Figure 9: Facebook posts calling Pelosi a “witch” and calling Ocasio-Cortez dumb.

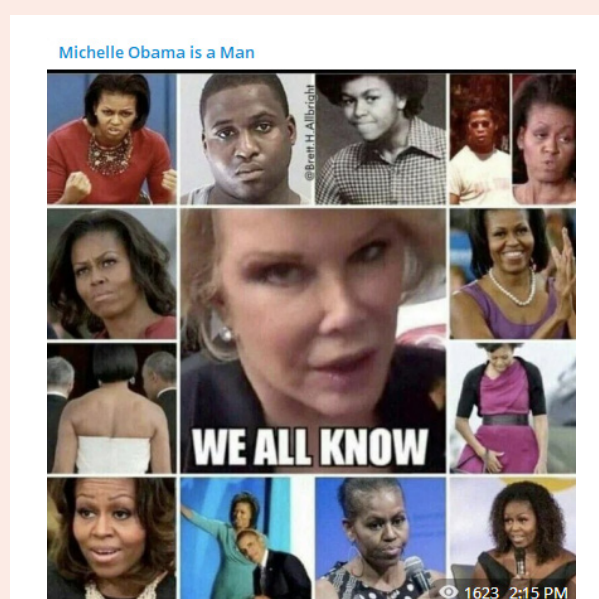
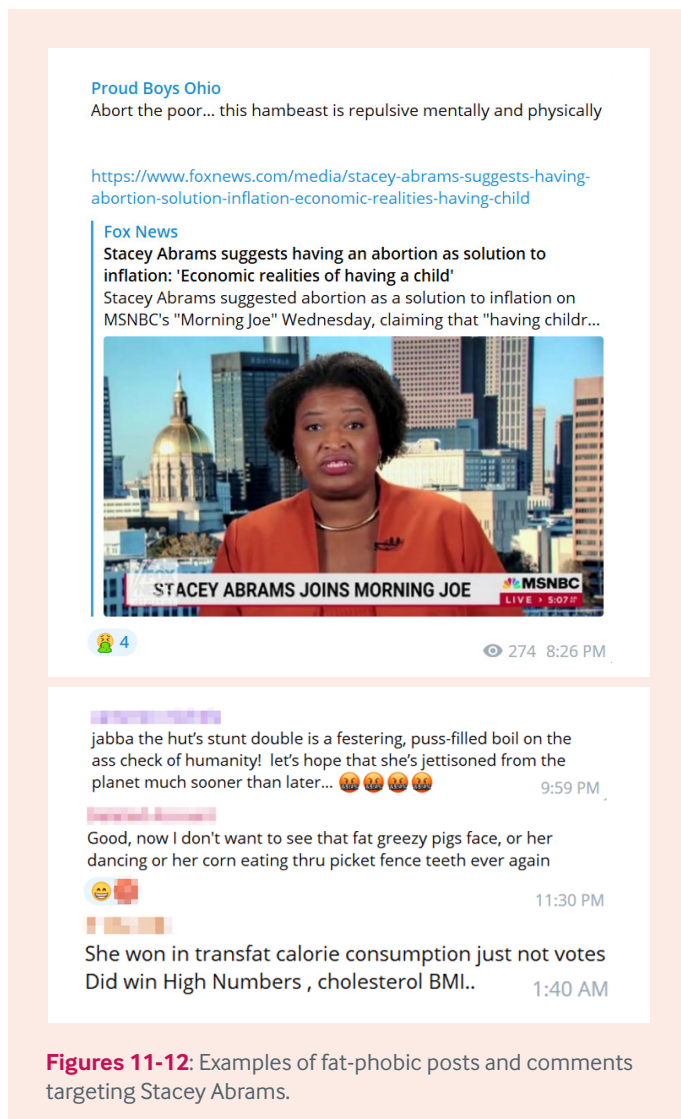
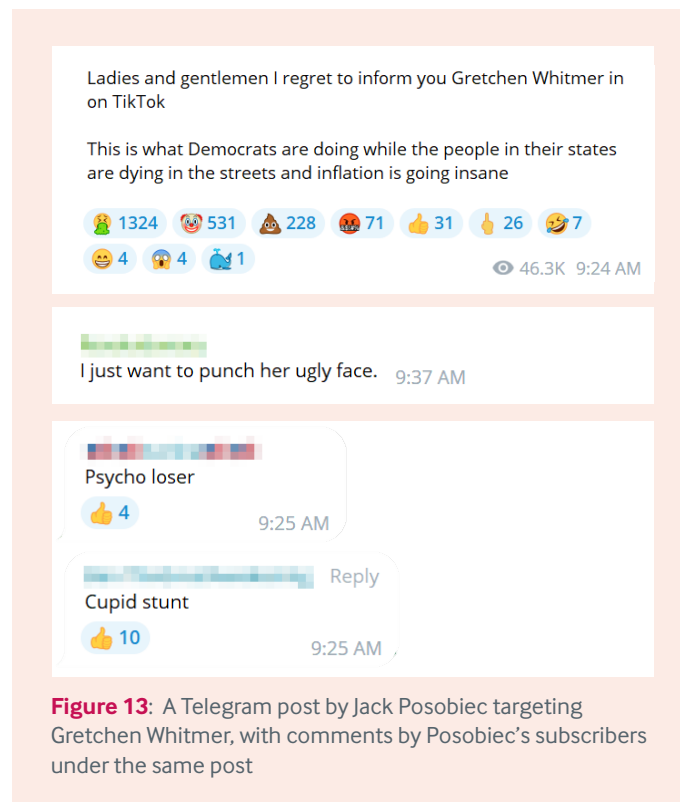


Figure 10: A meme claiming that Michelle Obama is a man.



when directed at women of color and larger body types, prominently including former Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams.

When looking at the 100 most viewed posts in the Telegram dataset (which included 899 total posts), analysts found that posts mentioning women political figures received the most views and attention – 58 out of 100 posts fell into this category. Not all these 58 posts were outwardly misogynistic or abusive towards the women (i.e. used language featured in the keyword list), but analysts found that most of the posts and associated comments specifically targeted Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Gretchen Whitmer, Liz Cheney, Kamala Harris, and Nancy Pelosi.



The ninth most viewed Telegram post from Jack Posobiec (97K views, 3K reactions), posted during the FBI raid of former President Trump's residence at Mar-a-Lago on August 8, 2022, makes fun of Ocasio-Cortez's sexual assault trauma after the January 6 Capitol riots. Other posts in the top 100 call Cheney a "witch" and Harris a "blithering fool"; the second of which is not necessarily outwardly misogynistic, but can be when paired with a meme or digs at Harris' appearance. In general, analysts observed many more attacks against Democrat women, but Republican women were not spared. Users attacked Lauren Boebert as a "prostitute" and "based whore."

Misogynistic content regarding each of these events was not contained to fringe channels on Telegram. Numerous right-wing and other conspiracy theory-based accounts shared content that was demeaning to women. This includes right-wing figures like Jack Posobiec (178.6K Telegram subscribers) who forwarded content from channels further right than him. Groyper channels, including Vincent James, Nicholas J. Fuentes, and Lauren Witzke, have forwarded content from channels like Femoids Unleashed. In essence, deeply misogynistic

Posts and comments targeting women politicians were the highest in the dataset, which is likely in part due to the high subscriber count of channels that post about US politics in general, and the admins posting reactionary content related to women in politics. Analysts found that explicitly anti-women channels (i.e, the main purpose of the channel is to disparage women and spread misogyny) had a much smaller subscriber count and posted more images and videos, which made them much harder to analyze. Yet, those were the channels with the most hateful and abusive content.

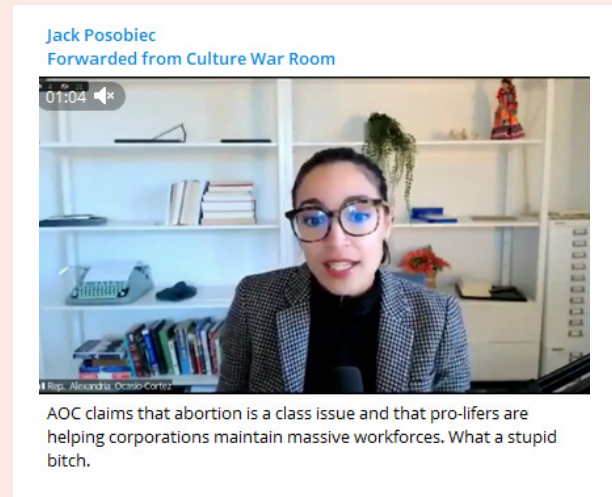


Figure 14: Jack Posobiec forwards a misogynistic Telegram post targeting AOC.



Figure 15: A word cloud depicting the most common abusive words used in Telegram comments directed at prominent women politicians.

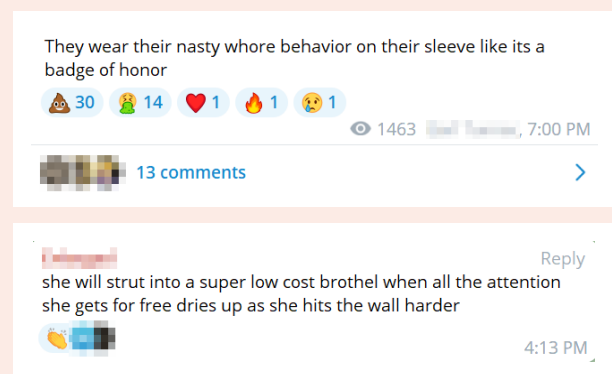


Figure 16: An explicitly anti-women Telegram channel posting more unveiled misogynistic content.

Andrew Tate's Ban from Social Media

Research has found that Andrew Tate was one of the most prolific spreaders of misogyny online in 2022. In the summer, members of his “Hustler’s Army”² posted clips on various platforms from his YouTube channel and from his interviews on popular podcasts that went viral. Pro-Tate fan accounts garnered millions of likes and thousands of followers just for posting Tate’s old content. ISD’s research found that pro-Tate accounts spread misogynistic views and continued to spread his misogynistic narratives, notably on TikTok, the platform that contributed to turning Tate into a viral influencer.

TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram banned Tate for violating their terms of service in August 2022. Tate had been previously suspended from Twitter three times from 2017 to early 2022 over his comments against survivors of sexual assault. Shortly after Elon Musk purchased Twitter, Tate’s account was restored. In December, Romanian authorities arrested Tate for human trafficking, along with other alleged crimes. Tate’s name became one of the most Googled names worldwide last year, with searches spiking in August and December.

Analysts found significant commentary about Tate’s various suspensions and reinstatement that amplified Tate’s misogynistic messages. On TikTok, the event was widely discussed by users on individual accounts or by major news networks with large TikTok followings, such as NBC News (4M followers) and CBS (1.1M followers). Though misogynistic narratives spread largely amongst the videos of the identified event case studies – including both correlated hashtags and “related search terms”—ISD found that they were also heavily expressed within the comment sections of viral videos.

When Tate was initially banned from mainstream social media platforms and then arrested, there was an outpouring of support for him from his following. When searching his name on TikTok, many of the top suggested videos were pro-Tate fan edits that amplified some of his misogynistic comments, such as that women should “take some degree of personal responsibility and not put [themselves] in dangerous situations,” in relation to teaching men about sexual consent.

Additionally, some of these pro-Tate accounts conducted street interviews with women where they discussed Tate’s views. These interviews were then edited to negatively

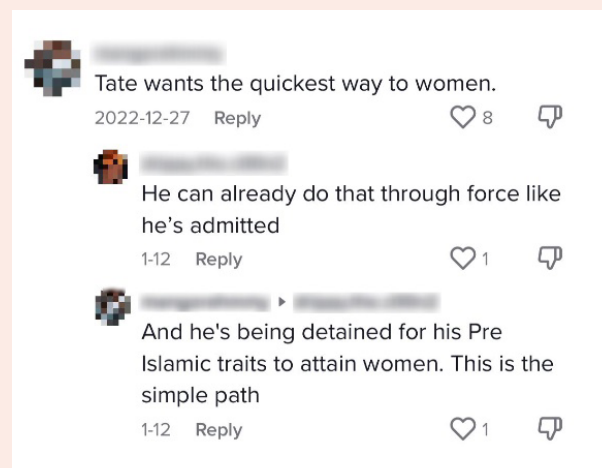


Figure 17: Comments under Tate’s TikTok videos, despite his ban from the platform.



Figure 18: A post on Facebook claiming there is a “war” on “true masculinity” and telling men to “stay away from delusional women.”

portray the women as uninformed. Commenters posted statements like, “at least you should have a reason for your opinion.” These fan accounts justified their support of Tate by claiming he “reignited masculinity” and strength, further amplifying abusive and misogynistic sentiments to a wide audience.

On Facebook, ISD identified misogynistic content and content supportive of Tate. An analysis of the top 100 high-engagement posts related to Andrew Tate found that 7% of posts were supportive of Tate without expressing misogynistic views and 3% expressed misogynistic views, or views representative of the men’s rights activism movement. One such post equated rapper Lizzo’s gender equality activism with Andrew Tate’s toxic masculinity and suggested Lizzo represents a form of “toxic feminism.” Other posts described men as victims, suggesting that society is favoring women and waging a war on men, while calling women “delusional.”

On YouTube, analysts found that comments under videos featuring or discussing Tate’s wealth, influence, arrest, or ban from social media included hateful comments (not gendered) directed at Tate himself.³ However, as soon as women were featured or talked about in content related to Tate, analysts noted that the hateful (gendered) comments became directed at them. While the platform banned Andrew Tate back in August 2022, content produced by Tate continues to circulate in short clips on YouTube Shorts and via uploads from Tate fan accounts.

Of the 191k misogynistic and abusive comments analyzed on YouTube, 14.6% of them were posted under Tate’s videos. The word “bitch,” whether used by itself or paired with another keyword, was used 2,329 times. Many of the comments receiving the most likes attacked the women featured in the YouTube videos, usually targeting their appearance.

On Telegram, analysts noted that there were mixed reactions to Andrew Tate’s ban from social media and arrest. Groups with more overt white supremacist ideologies called Tate a “Muslim mutt” but also praised him for exposing the “Jew world order.” After his ban from mainstream platforms, individuals such as Nick Fuentes invited Tate to join more alternative platforms (such as Fuentes’ own platform, Cozy TV) while one misogynistic and male supremacist Telegram group called Tate one

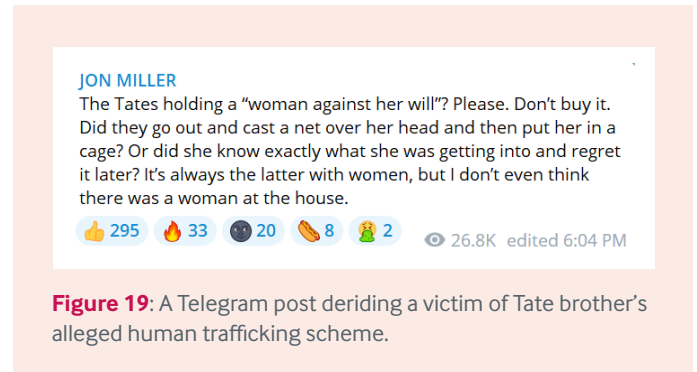


Figure 19: A Telegram post deriding a victim of Tate brother’s alleged human trafficking scheme.

of the “biggest and most important” misogynists “of our times.” While different Telegram channels seem to have varying opinions about Tate himself, they seem to agree with certain aspects of his misogynistic rhetoric. After his arrest over human trafficking claims, one Telegram channel seemed to claim that Andrew Tate and his brother were not at fault and that the women who came forward falsely accused the Tate brothers of imprisoning them.

Representative Liz Cheney's Role in the Jan. 6 Committee Hearings

Analysts identified misogynistic content targeting Representative Liz Cheney in relation to the January 6 Committee on Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram, but not on TikTok and YouTube. Misogynistic content took the form of misogynistic slurs and image-based posts aimed at belittling the politician.

On Twitter, 10% of the top 100 tweets (by retweets) related to Liz Cheney and the Jan. 6 hearings were classified as misogynistic or abusive. These tweets included conspiratorial claims about her alleged participation in “child trafficking rings,” as well as negative comments about her physical appearance and her mental stability, showing the hybrid nature of the content targeting her at the intersection of gender-based abuse and disinformation as well as conspiratorial narratives.

Among the Facebook posts related to Liz Cheney, 18% were abusive towards her, calling her a traitor and using insults and slurs. However, only a small subset of content (4%) was overtly misogynistic. These posts used misogynistic tropes, describing Cheney as a “witch” and using patronizing terms like “buttercup.” All misogynistic posts were produced by pages that typically share pro-Trump and MAGA content, while all abusive posts similarly originated with pro-Trump or pro-Republican pages.

Analysts also observed misogynistic and abusive content directed at Cheney on Telegram, mostly targeting her appearance and calling her a “witch.” One of the posts found on Telegram used the exact same language as the Twitter example above, telling Cheney to “bring it, witch.” When Cheney lost the Wyoming GOP primary against a Trump-endorsed candidate, comments in posts announcing the news once again exhibited misogynistic language. In the comment section under Charlie Kirk’s post announcing the news, users called her a “bitch,” “RINO witch,” and “cunt.” Again, most of the content targeting Liz Cheney came from channels expressing pro-Trump views, whereas smaller and more extreme channels did not focus on Cheney to the same extent.



Isabella Riley Moody
@isabellarileyus

Liz Cheney is almost as ugly as Hillary Clinton

5:45 am · 6 Jan 2022



It's Tiff
@TiffMoodNukes

FACTS: Liz Cheney total net worth \$44M
Congressional salary \$174K

She's in bed w/the Obamas/Clinton/Biden/& Bush crime families. She accepted millions from Hollywood A list pedophiles now restructuring child trafficking rings—the very ones that Trump took down

Audit the bitch

8:37 pm · 14 Oct 2022



Dan Hird
@Hirdman

She's as dirty a liar as Adam Schiff! What a hateful and dishonest b*tch.

VIDEO: Dirty Liz Cheney Gets Caught OPENLY LYING About Trump's Request for 20,000 National Guard on January 6th
thegatewaypundit.com/2022/07/video-... via @gatewaypundit



thegatewaypundit.com

VIDEO: Dirty Liz Cheney Gets Caught OPENLY LYING About Trump's Request for 20,000 National Guard on...



FreedomFighter
@FreedomUSA4

Liz Cheney running in 2024??

Bring it Witch...



Figures 20-23: Abusive posts against Liz Cheney.



Figure 24: A post on Facebook belittling Liz Cheney, calling her “buttercup.”

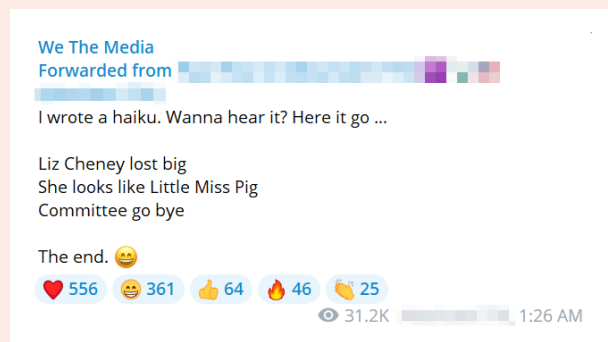


Figure 25: A Telegram post with 31.2K views and over 1K reactions calling Cheney “Little Miss Pig.”

Representative Nancy Pelosi’s Diplomatic Visit to Taiwan

Former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan generated misogynistic and abusive backlash. This was notable on Facebook and in the comment sections of YouTube. Of the top 100 Facebook posts, 14% contained misogynistic rhetoric, with half of the posts comparing Pelosi to a witch. Tangentially, an offline campaign hacked public billboards in Taiwan describing her as an “old witch” and telling her to “get out” of Taiwan. There was no notable controversy when other US male lawmakers visited Taiwan later in 2022.

The post that generated the highest traction in the dataset came from Donald Trump Jr.’s Facebook page when he reshared a post by conservative pundit Benny Johnson that called Pelosi “the Witch of Wall Street.” Other posts called Nancy Pelosi “crazy” and shared Donald Trump Jr.’s comments on Truth Social, in which he called her “Crazy Nancy.”

Out of the 191k misogynistic and abusive comments collected from YouTube, only about 3% were commented under videos about Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan. Yet, the comments within the small sample were highly toxic, with some even expressing hope that her plane would get “shot down” and calling her the “wicked witch of the West,” an “American witch,” and “old witch” (mimicking the language



Figure 26: Trump Jr. and Johnson calling Nancy Pelosi “the witch of Wall Street.”

on the billboards). Much like Cheney, Pelosi was not just targeted for her gender but for her age, which is likely why the word “witch” was used against them more than any other women politician in the dataset. Additionally, a lot of the titles of YouTube videos about Pelosi’s trip to Taiwan seemed to place any fallout from her trip entirely on her instead of the fact that it was a wider US diplomatic decision (i.e., “How Pelosi created another crisis”).

As mentioned in sections above, Pelosi is a regular target on Telegram. Her trip to Taiwan was heavily covered by larger channels, but analysts did not note a higher amount of misogynistic and abusive language (aside from the comment sections, which consistently attracted this language).

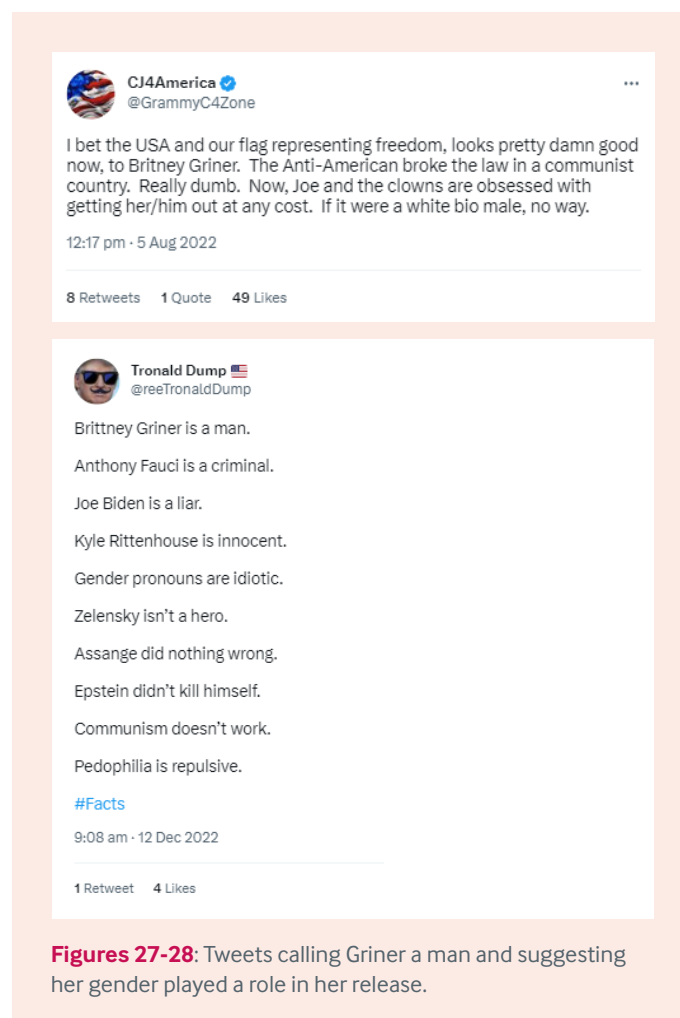
Brittney Griner’s Return to the US

Analysis of online discourse around WNBA star Brittney Griner’s release from Russian detention in December showed that Griner was the subject of substantial abuse across all platforms. While the primary forms of abuse targeting Griner were racism and homophobia, analysts nonetheless identified misogynistic content in the form of misgendering.

On Twitter, analysts identified both broadly abusive tweets and tweets which deliberately misgendered and dehumanized Griner by using both misogynistic and racist rhetoric. Abusive posts against Griner intentionally identified her as a man and used incorrect pronouns. Posts also argued that Griner received preferential treatment because she is a woman.

These findings illustrate the role that intersectionality plays in abuse against women and the additional level of abuse that people of color and LGBTQ+ people receive online. Black women face specific forms of online abuse in the form of misogynoir, a subset of misogyny targeting black women for both their gender and race. Previous research has found that athletes such as Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka, and Sha’Carri Richardson have all received racist and misogynistic hate online and offline.

By contrast, analysis of the top 100 posts on Facebook found no explicitly misogynistic content surrounding the event of Brittney Griner’s release. Over half of the dataset (55% of posts), however, contained other abusive content towards Griner. Posts contained slurs, insults and implicitly



Figures 27-28: Tweets calling Griner a man and suggesting her gender played a role in her release.

racist content describing Griner as “un-American” and a “traitor,” stating that she did not deserve to be released. Users contrasted her case with that of US Marine Paul Whelan who was detained in Russia, claiming that Whelan should have been released instead.

These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by ISD during the US midterm elections, which found that women from minority backgrounds are frequently targeted with abuse alleging treason and explicitly described as “un-American,” with accusations connected to their racial or ethnic background.

As seen on other platforms, analysts also identified transphobic and racist narratives and language directed at Griner on YouTube – ten videos that alleged that Griner is a man (or questioned her gender) in the titles attracted 314 comments total, most of which agreed with the

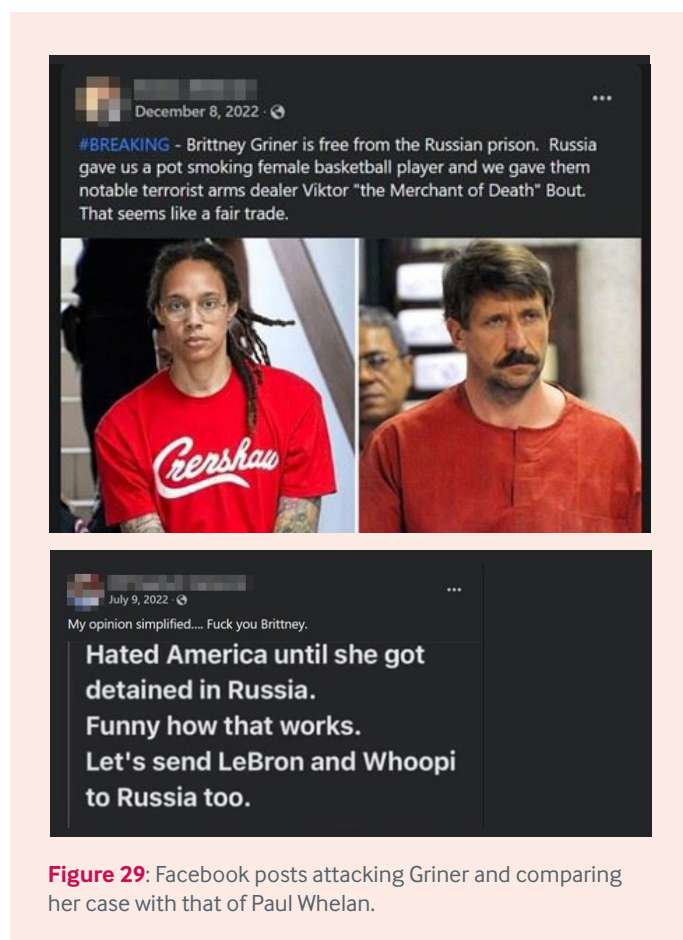


Figure 29: Facebook posts attacking Griner and comparing her case with that of Paul Whelan.

content of the videos. When not misgendering Griner, comments under videos of her release called her a “prison bitch,” “stupid bitch,” “doper bitch” and other variations (the term “bitch” was used in over 700 comments).

Lia Thomas and NCAA Swimming Controversy

Across the platforms analyzed, analysts found that Lia Thomas was targeted with transphobic and misogynistic abuse (known as “transmisogyny”) based on her identity as a trans woman, attacking her appearance, her voice, and her gender identity. This highlights the “interlocking structure of oppression” that many women with intersecting identities face online.

On Twitter, analysis of the top 100 most retweeted content mentioning Thomas alongside abusive or misogynistic keywords showed that 39 tweets were transphobic, and all but one misgendered Thomas. Similarly, top posts related to Lia Thomas on Facebook were overwhelmingly transphobic and abusive, with 80% of posts containing transphobic content. Posts included



Figure 30: Transphobic posts attacking Lia Thomas, misgendering her, and calling her a “gender dysphoric moron.”

highly abusive language, slurs and insults targeting Thomas, and frequently called her a man or deadnamed her (the act of calling a transgender person by their birth name when they have changed their name as part of their gender transition). Only five posts expressed support for Thomas. Notably, transphobic posts described Thomas as a “failed man” and called Thomas a “washed out loser” who “couldn’t hack it in the real world as a man.”

On YouTube, 4.9% of the 191k misogynistic and abusive comments targeted Lia Thomas. When reviewing the over 9.4k comments, analysts noted that comments largely misgendered Thomas. While misgendering her, some comments also used overly misogynistic speech, saying that Thomas “makes an ugly woman” and that “these morons pretending to [be women] sure do make ugly women.” Some comments also blamed feminism for the existence of transgender people.

On Telegram, figures such as Charlie Kirk discussed the concept of being “female” in relation to Thomas and deployed misogynistic rhetoric, suggesting for instance that women are defined by their ability to “bear young or produce eggs.” On his show, Kirk also stated that Thomas sounds “like a dude” and should “at least try to make your



Figure 32: The man in the video says, “her body count is high enough to have her own graveyard.”

voice sound different” or “squeaky.” Kirk reshared these statements to his Telegram page and garnered thousands of views. This attack was primarily misogynistic in nature, suggesting that having a deeper voice is not feminine and not a reflection of “real” womanhood.

Kim Kardashian’s Divorce

Most of the content identified by ISD across platforms in relation to Kim Kardashian’s divorce was critical of both her and Kanye West and typically did not take sides. Nevertheless, researchers identified a small amount of misogynistic content targeting Kardashian on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. This content used misogynistic slurs and tropes against Kardashian.

On Twitter, misogynistic tweets in the context of Kanye West and Kim Kardashian’s divorce targeted not only Kim Kardashian but also West’s supposed new girlfriend, who was referred to as “Kanye’s new bitch.” Analysts identified two misogynistic posts attacking Kardashian for her looks and alleged promiscuity among the 100 most shared posts. In both posts, the misogynistic content appeared in video or audio format, highlighting the limits of a text-based approach to identifying misogynistic content online.



Figure 33: A user on Facebook listening to a fake artist on Facebook called “Ugly..kim.”

Similarly, ISD identified some misogynistic comments in the sample analyzed on YouTube, which stated that “Kanye is the world’s best example of why you don’t marry and have children with a whore” with the other calling Kardashian an “attention seeking Whore...” These comments appeared under videos that did not explicitly target Kim Kardashian or promote outwardly misogynistic rhetoric in their content, suggesting that neutral content can still attract misogynistic content and comments.

Assessment of Current Policies and Enforcement

ISD analysts reviewed current policies of four mainstream social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok) and the widely used messaging platform, Telegram. A key factor in reducing and minimizing gendered hate online lies in improving the policies that platforms develop to protect their users who identify as women. The table below breaks down how women across the five platforms are theoretically protected from abuse and hate (if at all), and whether ISD analysts identified content that would violate policies or content that exposes weak spots in these policies.

Twitter's rules and policies prohibit "behavior that targets individuals or groups with abuse based on their perceived membership in a protected category." This includes women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and marginalized and historically underrepresented communities. According to its policies, the use of slurs or sexist tropes and hateful imagery is forbidden on the platform. However, this report found multiple examples where this sort of content was not moderated: analysts found tweets containing sexist tropes against Amber Heard, gendered disinformation narratives (especially against Liz Cheney and Nancy Pelosi), and general attacks on women's appearances.

Similarly, Meta's community standards prohibit hate speech, defined as "a direct attack against people – rather than concepts or institutions – on the basis of what we call protected characteristics."⁴ The same policy bans "dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes,

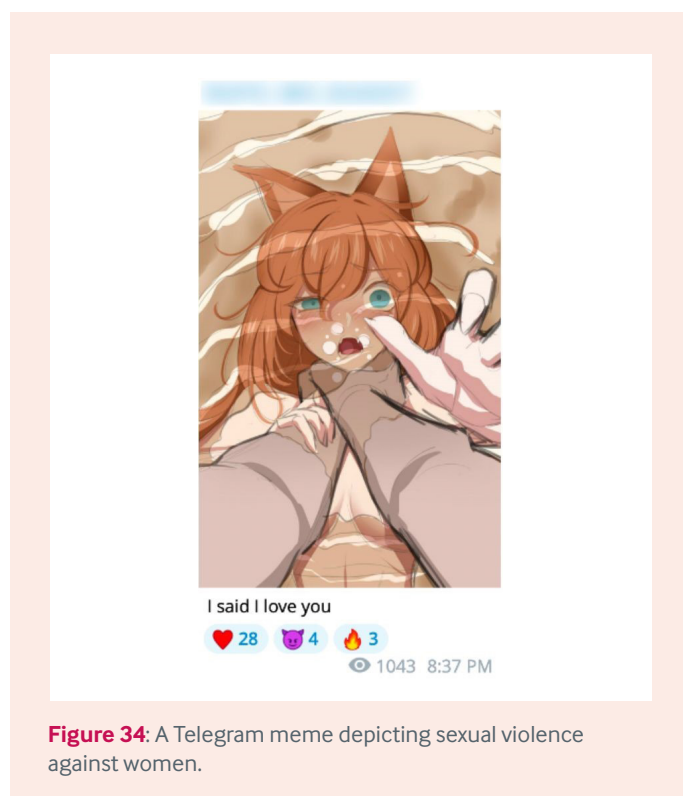
statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt, disgust or dismissal" based on one or several protected characteristics; theoretically, this could include gendered disinformation, but it is not named specifically in policies. Meta also has specific rules for public figures, acknowledging a "distinction" in the implementation of its policies between "public figures" and "private individuals." This report identified multiple instances of violations of Meta's terms of service, including the use of dehumanising and transphobic language targeting Lia Thomas and the use of slurs and misogynistic terminology against candidates and elected public figures.

YouTube's hate speech policy claims to "remove content promoting violence or hatred" against individuals based on a list of attributes including gender identity or expression, sex, and gender. Content includes videos and comments, and the policy is stricter to repeat offenders. Based on this report's findings, YouTube still lacks efficient enforcement mechanisms when it comes to comment sections: analysts were able to find comments using derogatory terms such as "whore," "cunt," "bitch," and more. These comments would often occur under videos that seemed to invite hateful comments but also under innocuous videos (i.e., "Andrew Tate Destroys Modern Women" vs "House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holds her final weekly press conference").

TikTok's community guidelines defines hate speech and hateful behavior as something that "attacks, threatens, dehumanizes or degrades an individual or group based

	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	Telegram	TikTok
Sex, gender, and gender identity are protected attributes under hate speech policy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Hate speech policy explicitly addresses all features of a platform, including but not limited to profiles, comments, and replies.	Yes	Not in the platform policies, but briefly addressed in a 2017 blog post	Yes	No, specifically says policies don't apply in 'private' spaces on the platform	Yes
Platform has a policy specifically for gendered and/or sexualized mis- and disinformation	No	No	No	No	
ISD analysts identified misogynistic rhetoric, gendered disinformation, or abusive language directed at women on the platform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1. Hate speech policies by platform



pornographic content on publicly viewable Telegram channels.” Because of Telegram’s lax policies, content that might be banned on other platforms due to stricter policies or better enforcement often makes its way there, and the platform may redirect users to more alternative and fringe platforms with more hateful content.

on their characteristics.” They claim that these include “race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, serious disease, disability and immigration status.” Though the platform itself claims to bar aspects of gendered disinformation, it still plays a prominent part in the content found in this study. The accessibility, aggressive algorithms, and lack of barriers normally found on other sites (i.e., TikTok is marketed as “less about social connection and more about broadcasting creativity and expression” – comparable to other algorithm-based apps, such as Netflix or Spotify) allow certain narratives to gain mass attention rapidly amongst audiences world-wide. This abrupt virality serves as an outlet for major global and cultural events, which can in turn serve as a catalyst for misogynistic rhetoric.

Finally, the platform with by far the most misogynistic and abusive content found in this report but the most “hands-off” content moderation and platform policies was Telegram. The platform lacks policies specific to misogynistic speech and images. Actions and content that violate Telegram’s Terms of Service in public channels (private channels are not moderated) include calls to violence, spam and scam content, and “illegal

Conclusion and Recommendations

This retrospective report provided a multi-platform overview of misogynistic and abusive content and gendered disinformation related to nine major US or English-language events that centered around women (or the topic of women). Analysts found that all nine events studied both qualitatively and quantitatively sparked some misogynistic and/or abusive rhetoric, but that two out of the nine events sparked much more misogynistic and/or abusive rhetoric above the rest. News about the Depp v. Heard trial and women politicians (primarily in the US November midterm election, but also Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan and Liz Cheney's role in the January 6 Committee hearings) seemed to consistently draw a higher number of toxic posts, images, videos, and comments across all platforms compared to the other events selected for analysis.

Part of this is likely due to the amount of gendered mis- and disinformation that surrounded these events in the first place. The Depp v. Heard trial was shrouded by claims that were proven to be false or memes and videos sensationalizing misleading information about the trial. Women politicians, particularly women of color, already face more hate and disinformation campaigns against them online. News coverage about events can also play a role in what people online pay attention to and can even contribute to polarizing and hateful online chatter. This study shed a light on the hybrid nature of the harmful content targeting women in politics: public figures including Liz Cheney were the target of both abusive rhetoric and disinformation content. This shows the diverse range of tactics at work in the misogynistic playbook.

This study also found that misogynistic influencers played a key role in spreading hate against women online across all platforms studied. Andrew Tate was one of the key figures cited in relation to misogyny in 2022. His content discussing or featuring women, despite his ban from various social media platforms, continuously drew misogynistic and abusive comments on YouTube and TikTok later in the year. Tate was not the only online influencer who promoted and amplified misogynistic content. Nick Fuentes, leader of the Groyper movement, remained popular on Telegram partially for his reactionary and hateful posts about women.

Even influencers who do not primarily post anti-feminism or misogynistic content (i.e. are instead more focused

on general far-right content or politics) played a role in spreading supremacist ideologies about gender on several platforms. The comment sections of several platforms (Telegram, TikTok, and YouTube) under the main posts proved to contain harmful content, showing how these influencers can (inadvertently or not) encourage their followers to spread misogyny and abusive rhetoric. Ultimately, the problem is not a specific individual, but rather the unrestrained spread of these ideas themselves.

This report provided only a snapshot of the misogyny and hate against women occurring every single day online. It did not cover non-English language content, nor did it try to quantify the total amount of misogyny online in 2022. Some events that analysts hypothesized might result in higher levels of misogynistic or abusive content did not. This report, however, showed that platforms and policymakers are not doing enough to protect women online. Platform policies, when existent, are inconsistently enforced and social media companies continue to provide a space for misogynistic content to spread.

This can have serious offline consequences. A 2017 survey by Amnesty International revealed that 55% of women who experienced online abuse or harassment experienced stress, anxiety, or panic attacks after the fact. Women's Aid, a UK-based charity aimed at providing aid to domestic abuse survivors, found through another survey that 85% of survivors said "the abuse they received online from a partner or ex-partner was part of a pattern of abuse they also experienced offline."

Online abuse also has a silencing effect. 32% of women who responded to the 2022 Ipsos global survey reported they have "stopped" themselves from sharing what they think online after facing online abuse. Gendered disinformation, hateful speech, misogynistic abuse and vicious attacks against women in positions of political authority and women running for office is an impediment to democratic societies, threatening progress on diversity and representation in politics. This is evidenced by reports of women stepping back from election campaigns because of online abuse and harassment.

With gubernatorial and state legislative elections scheduled to take place at the end of 2023 in several states and the prospect of the next presidential election in 2024, the way social media provides a platform for misogynistic

abuse and gendered disinformation, particularly targeting women who run for office or hold political responsibility, is a concerning trend. Tactics used by misogynistic actors are constantly evolving and exploit a range of narratives and platform features and functionalities, as this report showed. The rapid development of new technologies, including those based on Artificial Intelligence (AI), are raising concerns about how they can be exploited to promote gendered disinformation and online gender-based violence. Women with a public profile have become a prime target of “” exploiting gender-based and abusive tropes targeting multiple aspects of these women’s identities, including race and sexuality.

Given these concerns and based on the results and analysis conducted by ISD in this report, analysts propose a set of recommendations to platforms, policymakers, and researchers and practitioners to combat online misogyny and prevent its potential offline effects.

Recommendations for platforms

- Platforms need to ensure better implementation and enforcement of their policies in relation to misogynistic content, gendered abuse, and harassment. This report found that widely publicized offline events fueled misogynistic, transphobic, and abusive content across different social media platforms, much of which violated platforms’ policies. This is especially true for comment sections, which can often be more toxic than the original content itself. Social media companies not only need to explicitly address comment sections in their hate speech policies, but also have a deeper understanding of which spaces are the most toxic and least likely to be reported by users on their platform. This allows platforms to understand which spaces have the potential to spread the most hate and apply more comprehensive moderation systems. Platforms need to provide their staff working on content moderation with up-to-date training (and not roll back content moderation) about the evolving language of misogyny and gendered abuse, and how misogynistic hate and abuse can be contextual.
 - Platforms need to ensure that banned content does not continue circulating on their platforms. This research showed Andrew Tate’s misogynistic content continued to circulate widely on platforms, despite his ban from various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Platforms should implement clearer policies on how to handle content from banned users, proactively monitoring the spread of content related to banned users, especially if that content violates hate speech policies. Platforms should conduct robust risk assessment and implement proactive mitigation strategies related to viral events and content, including by redirecting users to resources or credible news about viral topics.
 - Platforms need to enhance their content moderation measures and mitigation strategies to address misogynistic content targeting high-profile women and public figures. This report has shown that various events including the Depp v. Heard trial, the US midterm elections, and the Supreme Court’s overturning of Roe v. Wade acted as particular trigger points for misogynistic mobilization online. To prevent toxic and misogynistic abuse from going viral, platforms can temporarily suspend the use of abusive hashtags that refer to or amplify misogynistic narratives or keywords and diminish the visibility of abusive content both in direct posts and in comments.
 - Platforms need to be more transparent about their content moderation policies, processes, and enforcement outcomes relating to misogynistic content and gendered abuse - including the financial, human, and technical resources allocated to content moderation. They also need to provide regular reporting on the type of content removed on grounds of misogyny, including: (1) the proportion of image or video content removed under these policies; (2) where different types of abuse (homophobia, racism, transphobia, etc.) overlap to see whether moderation is effective for certain groups; and (3) greater transparency about decisions underpinning algorithmic recommendations of misogynistic content. Platforms also need to update their moderation strategies to reflect how different platform features are used to target women (of all identities) and promote gendered abuse.
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- Platforms need to cooperate more closely with each other and the research sector and civil society organizations focusing on gender equality and fighting online harms. In conducting the research for this report, ISD researchers faced several limitations in data access. Access to Meta’s content, for instance, was limited to public pages and posts. In addition to communicating transparently about their mitigation strategies, social media companies need to ensure that research organizations and civil society organizations can carry out research. In June 2022, [Bloomberg](#) reported that Facebook plans to shut down CrowdTangle and in February 2023 [Twitter](#) restricted access to its API for researchers. These developments suggest that platforms are currently moving away from transparent practices and further obstructing external assessments of their work. Platforms need to work closely with civil society organizations on the frontline of tackling gendered abuse and harassment by offering opportunities for these organizations to provide trainings to their staff on the evolving tactics and language of misogynistic and gendered abuse.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Policymakers need to include misogyny, intersectional abuse, and transphobia in legislation related to the regulation of social media platforms and give regulatory bodies the power to audit social media companies on their enforcement of their terms of service. The Digital Services Act (DSA) in the EU, for instance, [would require](#) larger platforms to carry out an annual risk assessment on the risks of misogyny (or “online gender-based violence,” amongst other hateful content). US policymakers, who are [only beginning](#) to consider online safety bills, [can learn](#) from the DSA’s model. Policymakers need to encourage [cross-country partnerships](#) to address these issues (especially in various languages).
- Regulation efforts from policymakers and governments need to consider the cross-platform circulation of harmful misogynistic content. This research found that the same misogynistic content circulated across different social media

platforms, allowing content to spread more widely and potentially remain online longer. Regulation efforts need to go beyond content removal and include provisions to address recommendation and amplification mechanisms and holding platforms responsible for how information disseminates on their platform (even if this information comes from a different online space). This is especially true with gendered disinformation, a newer concerning phenomenon that can have [real offline impacts](#) – including discouraging women from participating in civic life in the first place.

Recommendations for researchers and practitioners

- Researchers and practitioners should do more research into misogyny and gendered disinformation in non-English-speaking countries. Due to language and data access limitations, this report focused on English-speaking content. International events in non-English speaking countries such as attacks on women’s rights in [Iran](#) or [Poland](#) require further research.
- Researchers and practitioners need to keep abreast of malign actors’ evolving tactics in producing, spreading, and amplifying misogynistic content, and their use of different platform features. As this research showed, misogynistic content took various forms – from hateful speech and calls to violence to demeaning narratives and gendered disinformation. ISD’s research has shown that new platform features can easily be exploited to nefarious ends.⁷ Researchers need to pursue opportunities to collaborate and share knowledge with policymakers and relevant stakeholders about the evolving language and tactics of online misogyny.

Appendix

Appendix A: Keyword Lists

Analysts made two keyword lists to conduct the analysts featured in this report: one, a list of keywords and hashtags related to each of the nine events selected for research; two, a list of general misogynistic and abusive keywords to use once content was filtered through the event keyword list (this latter list was expanded for Facebook and Twitter due to the high volume of content that exists on both platforms). The list of keywords and hashtags related to the nine events were found through manually exploring different popular phrases and hashtags observed about the nine events.⁵ Due to API and platform transparency limitations, analysts had to shorten the list of event keywords for YouTube and TikTok (ten and five keywords per event, respectively). The list of misogynistic and abusive keywords can be found below.

whore	skank	tradwife
femoid	slut	dumb
landwhale	drop dead	stupid
shallow	cum dump	liar
bitch	fat	cumbucket
gallows	feminazi	narcissict
cock carousel	mulattas	witch
golddigger	shameful	sheboon
ugly	attention seeker	pussy pass
gigastacy	dirty	fuck you
disgrace	shallow	hypocrite
fuck off	not worth	she lied
moron	shut up	waste
she got what she deserve		psycho
dumb	incompetent	ham planet
fishwife	thot	lock her up
seethe bitch	terrorist	delusional
jail her	she did it to herself	
traitor	crazy	cumdump
cunt	AWALT	hang her

Table 2: List of misogynistic and abusive keywords used for analysis. Analysts also used qualitative methods to ensure accurate results.

Table 3: Shortened list of keywords, color coded by event, used for YouTube analysis. The one event that analysts selected 12 and not ten keywords for was the US midterms and prominent women politicians. This was to ensure there were an equal number of Democrat and Republican women in the dataset.

amber heard amber turd darvo heard cancel amber heard justice for johnny depp johnny depp won depp heard trial amber heard is an abuser camille vasquez flappy fish market	pro life generation roe v wade abortion united states pro life pro choice activists abortion is murder roe v wade overturned end abortion abortion is genocide abortion holocaust
unban andrew tate andrew tate cobratate free andrew tate i stand with andrew tate tate for president g mindset cobratate domination tate grindset andrew tate women	trans swimmer lia thomas the little spermaid ncaa lia thomas race against lia thomas lia thomas trans swimmer "lia" thomas lia thomas unfair lia thomas is male lia thomas is a man
marsha blackburn lauren boebert liz cheney kamala harris rachel levine alexandria ocasio-cortez ilhan omar nancy pelosi elise stefanik marjorie taylor greene	kayne west and kim kardashian kayne west harassment kayne west divorce kayne west ex wife kayne west skete kim kardashian golddigger kim kardashian cloutchas- erbritney griner man kayne west settlement kanye moving on kanye west kids

brittney griner released brittney griner free brittney griner russia brittney griner prison brittney griner hates america brittney griner paul whelan britney griner brittney griner viktor bout brittney griner kneel	liz cheney hearings liz cheney treason liz cheney traitor liz cheney Jan 6th hearing liz cheney pig liz cheney fraud liz cheney RINO hang liz cheney jail liz cheney liz cheney jail	Table 4: List of keywords used for the analysis on TikTok amber heard johnny depp amber turd #justiceforjohnnydepp #justiceforamberheard	roe v wade overturned roe v wade pro-life generation end abortion abortion is genocide abortion holocaust
taiwan pelosi nancy pelosi visit pelosi visiting taiwan pelosi visited taiwan pelosi visits taiwan warmonger pelosi taiwan war criminal pelosi taiwan nancy pelosi taiwan pelosi taiwan stupid nancy pelosi in taiwan	rashida tlaib gretchen whitmer	andrew tate cobratate free andrew tate g mindset andrew tate women	kayne west and kim kardashian kayne west harassment kim kardashian golddigger kayne west ex wife kanye west divorce
		brittney griner brittney griner released brittney griner hates america brittney griner man brittney griner prison	liz cheney hearings liz cheney traitor liz cheney treason liz cheney pig liz cheney Jan 6th
		taiwan pelosi nancy pelosi visit pelosi visiting taiwan warmonger pelosi taiwan pelosi visitedtaiwan	lia thomas trans swimmer lia thomas naaa lia thomas the little spermaid lia thomas unfair
		marsha blackburn lauren boebert liz cheney alexandria ocasio-cortez ilhan omar	

Appendix B: Data Collection & Analysis

ISD analysts collected all posts related to the nine events selected on Facebook and Twitter from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, using the joint ISD and CASM Technology social media analytics tool Beam and social listening tool Brandwatch. For Facebook, the posts were then filtered through a list of misogynistic and abusive terms. Analysts then qualitatively analyzed the top 100 posts which generated the most engagement (shares and retweets) for each event to gain insight into the nature of online conversations surrounding the events. For Twitter, analysts first parsed through the 100 most retweeted tweets for each of the nine events to manually code the ones with misogynistic content. Then, all the events were filtered through the list of misogynistic and abusive terms and the top 100 most retweeted tweets containing both lists of keywords (event-based and misogynistic and abusive) were analyzed.

For YouTube, ISD analysts shortened the list of event keywords to 10 keywords per event due to API limitations (as seen in Appendix A). Analysts then collected 4,266 relevant videos, collected all comments on these videos, and searched those from 2022 for the misogynist and abusive terms list (yielding 191K comments under 2,269 videos which were both used in the final analysis). Qualitative and quantitative analysis was conducted on misogynist and abusive comments to determine which event was discussed the most.

For Telegram, ISD analysts joined 71 Telegram channels with a total of 880,947 subscribers⁶. The channels had a minimum of 100 subscribers and were collected from ISD's existing seed lists. The categories of these groups range from hate groups (Proud Boys, White Lives Matter, etc.) to known Groyper to MGTOW and anti-women movements. This range allowed ISD analysts to capture a comprehensive view of narratives and discussion that happen across far-right, extremist, and alt-right groups. Using Beam, analysts then collected a total of 899 posts related to the ten selected events and qualitatively analyzed the top 100 posts generating the highest number of views. Analysts also collected all the comments under the 899 posts to conduct further qualitative and quantitative analysis. To adequately capture all the ways in which information is shared on Telegram, analysts also conducted qualitative analysis of 142 Telegram channels (which included the 71 analyzed quantitatively) to look at ways in which misogynistic narratives and rhetoric spread through images and videos.

For TikTok, ISD analysts shortened the list of event keywords to 5 keywords per event (as seen in Appendix A) due to the platform's search limitations.⁷ Using a new TikTok account, ISD manually searched each term and watched the top 10 videos under the "Top Suggested Videos" tab from the date the event occurred through December 31, 2022. Analysts qualitatively analyzed the content of these videos and the comments, noting interactions and conversations.

Endnotes

- 1 The 2014 Isla Vista killings were a series of misogynistic attacks carried out by Elliot Rodger, who is revered by the local incel movement.
- 2 In 2021, Tate founded 'Hustler's University,' an affiliate program considered a "social media pyramid scheme" targeting vulnerable young men. The website offered members lessons on how to accumulate wealth online for a monthly \$49.99 fee. However, it was found that Tate used this platform to encourage his fans to widely share his most controversial posts, which allowed him to manipulate social media algorithms and "artificially boost his content."
- 3 These comments, and the videos they were posted under, were subsequently removed from the dataset as they were not misogynistic or directed at women.
- 4 Protected characteristics include race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity and serious disease.
- 5 Note: The list of women politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, was previously compiled for an ISD report published on December 1 2022. The report highlighted the abuse targeting women ahead of the midterm elections on TikTok and Instagram.
- 6 There is likely overlap in these subscribers.
- 7 As opposed to other mainstream platforms, TikTok does not do engagement or quality-based ranking. According to a release from the company, "The system recommends content by ranking videos based on a combination of factors — starting from interests you express as a new user, and adjusting for things you indicate you're not interested in."



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