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Digital Policy Lab: Policy Brief

Fostering Healthy Masculinities: Building Resilience Against Online Misogyny

November 2025

About the Digital Policy Lab

The Digital Policy Lab (DPL) is an inter-governmental working group focused on charting the policy path forward to prevent and counter the spread of online harms. It is convened by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and composed of representatives of relevant ministries and regulatory bodies from selected democracies. The DPL aims to foster inter-governmental exchange, provide policymakers and regulators with access to sector-leading expertise and research, and build an international community of practice around key challenges in the digital policy space.

About this paper

As part of the DPL, ISD organised three working group meetings on the topic titled “From Exposure to Empowerment: Interventions to Counter Online Misogyny” in September 2025. The working group consisted of DPL members including regulators, competent authorities and law enforcement from multiple jurisdictions, as well as representatives from civil society, international organisations, practitioners and academia. While participants’ contributions have informed the analysis in this paper, the views expressed within do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants, nor any governments involved in this project.

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Executive Summary

Online misogyny is a global challenge with far-reaching consequences for equality, safety and public health. It directly fuels gender-based violence (GBV) and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) against women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities. While women and girls remain the primary targets, boys and young men are also affected both as potential participants in misogynistic environments, and victims of the same systems and norms that drive them. Misogynistic content and behaviours online reinforce patriarchal gender expectations or male dominance and control, normalising attitudes that condone such behaviour. At the same time, boys and young men are exposed to digital environments that endorse hypermasculinity, encouraging risky behaviours around fitness, appearance and financial success, and promoting coercion and sexual entitlement while discouraging help-seeking or emotional openness. These dynamics silence boys' own experience of harm and reinforce patterns of guilt, shame or self-blame. This exposure also impacts boys' and men's wellbeing, identities and relationships in ways that reinforce cycles of grievance, polarisation and, in some cases, extremist mobilisation.

Across social media platforms, gaming services, pornographic sites and encrypted channels, algorithmic design and engagement-driven business models amplify both misogynistic content and behaviour, creating feedback loops that normalise misogyny and limit empathy, resilience and equality. This is compounded by the underrepresentation of women at all levels in the design, development, management and use of digital technologies, including at senior roles in major tech firms, AI research and regulatory bodies, which narrows the perspectives informing product design and policy decisions.

In parallel, hostile foreign state and non-state actors, from organised anti-feminist networks and extremist movements to state-linked information operations, strategically weaponise gendered disinformation to silence women, undermine trust in gender equality institutions, roll back hard-won progress on equality, and shape perceptions toward gender and the role of women's rights. Such campaigns frequently target women in public life, journalists and human rights activists, shaping public perception of gender roles and reinforcing patriarchal narratives.

Transforming the masculinities that underpin these harms is therefore critical to achieving gender equality and preventing violence in all its forms. Engagement with men and boys must extend beyond allyship to challenge the systems and power structures that sustain discrimination and to address the harmful activities associated with online misogyny which include harassment, cyberbullying, coercion, abuse and incitement to violence. Online environments are now central arenas where these norms are reproduced, contested and potentially transformed.

This brief outlines the drivers and impacts of online misogyny, from platform design choices and monetised influencer economies to geo-political trends shaping online content and the broader educational, community and social settings in which young people form their identities. It reviews current interventions, which span regulation, Safety by Design, education and civil society initiatives, and highlights both their promise and their limitations. This analysis is informed by a landscape review of current pro-social interventions to engage men and boys and to address online misogyny, including online, offline and hybrid strategies. Additionally, this brief drew on discussions held during the multi-stakeholder working group facilitated by ISD's Digital Policy Lab (DPL) in September 2025.

The cross-cutting policy implications drawn from this analysis underscore the need for sustained, systemic action that bridges online and offline contexts. Interventions must be gender-transformative, rights-based, survivor-informed, and adapted to local realities while anchored in international cooperation. Addressing online misogyny is not only about mitigating immediate harms: it is also about investing in healthier, more equitable societies, and shifting the social norms that sustain inequality and violence. Bridging online and offline contexts through coordinated, multi-stakeholder action offers a path toward safer, more equitable digital and social environments.

Summary of cross-cutting policy recommendations

The evidence presented in this brief demonstrates that addressing online misogyny requires a coordinated, systemic approach that connects digital regulation with education, community and design-level interventions. Effective action depends on alignment across governments, regulators, platforms, funders and civil society, paired with locally grounded delivery, as well as breaking down silos to enable coherent responses that cut across multiple policy agendas. Below is a summary of the recommendations. The detailed recommendations can be found in the final section of this report.

1 Governments and regulators

- a. **Strengthen regulatory frameworks for systemic prevention:** Governments should integrate Safety by Design principles into online safety regulation, ensuring that risk assessments explicitly include gender-based harms, algorithmic amplification, and design-driven and data privacy risks. Regulators should align enforcement practices across jurisdictions, coordinate with tech industry standards setting bodies, and build capacity for independent audits and accountability mechanisms.
- b. **Integrate misogyny prevention into national education and equality strategies as part of a coordinated public health approach to prevention designed to improve health-positive behaviours amongst men and boys:** Governments should embed digital citizenship, consent and gender equality education into curricula including Comprehensive Sexuality Education curricula, train educators and youth workers (both in and out of school contexts). They should connect these initiatives with national gender equality and public health strategies.
- c. **Foster international coordination with local anchoring:** Localised initiatives demonstrate that prevention is most effective when grounded in community norms and cultural practice. At the same time, they should acknowledge that technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is trans-locational and crosses borders, necessitating cross-jurisdictional coordination.

2 Platforms and Industry

- a. **Operationalise Safety by Design and gender-sensitive and survivor-informed product governance:** Platform design profoundly shapes exposure to misogyny and abuse online, such as TFGBV and content that negatively impacts men's and boys' health. Companies should embed Safety by Design principles throughout product lifecycles as well as policy development and implementation. This should be informed indirectly by survivor and affected groups' consultations and gender impact assessments, in line with global gender-based violence (GBV) data ethics standards.¹ This can take form in engaging with those who support survivors or by engaging a large anonymous group on a topic.² Additionally, there should be greater investment in Trust and Safety capacities to monitor and respond to harms on an ongoing basis, including in context specific ways.
- b. **Prioritise high-risk online environments:** Platforms operating in these environments should conduct proactive risk assessments of chat and voice functions and generative technologies such as AI-powered functions. They should also expand transparent moderation metrics and incorporate inclusive design features; these include gender-diverse avatars, norm-challenging empathy-based and accessible reporting systems. They should also actively promote check-in systems and help-seeking behaviours.
- c. **Ensure Safety by Design is a central feature of tech industry standards:** Integrate and embed Safety by Design principles at the core of tech industry standards. This involves centring gender-equality and human rights rather than treating these principles solely as a requirement to meet regulatory compliance standards. Such an approach prioritises prevention, fostering a culture where safety is a fundamental aspect of decision-making and innovation.

3 Donors and funding institutions

- a. **Invest in sustainable and scalable interventions:** Donors should prioritise multi-year investments that enable institutionalisation, replication and evaluation.
- b. **Governments and foundations that fund organisations working on social and behavioural change**

should ensure that funding is sustainable and that coordination across different projects and sectors is improved:

While this work can be difficult to fund due to the challenge of measuring long-term shifts in attitudes and norms, flexible, longer-term funding is essential to achieve sustainable impact. Funding models must incentivise partnerships between education, technology and community actors to ensure continuity rather than isolated pilots. It is also important to break down silos across sectors, for example between digital rights, women's rights, TFGDV, GBV, cybersecurity and TVEC and democracy actors, to enable coherent responses that cut across multiple policy agendas.

- c. **Build evaluation and learning capacity:** Evidence gaps remain on long-term behavioural outcomes and the offline impact of online misogyny. Further investment should go towards both measuring the effect of online misogyny on women and girls, LGBTQ+ communities, and men and boys, as well as the effectiveness of interventions, both online and offline.

4 Civil society and the research community

- a. **Innovate, document and scale effective models:** These should be rigorously evaluated and documented to support replication across cultural contexts. Academic and practitioner partnerships can translate lessons from offline programming into online and hybrid spaces.
- b. **Deepen cross-sector collaboration:** Civil society should be involved in product co-design processes, policy consultations, tech industry standard setting bodies and public education campaigns. Researchers can play a bridging role, translating insights from practice into evidence-informed policy and regulation.

Glossary

This policy brief addresses the complex and multifaceted issues of gender-based harms and misogyny, highlighting opportunities for intervention, the promotion of healthy masculinities and increased awareness.

The collaborative working group shared a wealth of expertise and provided the basis for this policy brief. ISD recognises that we have various stakeholders across different regions, each of whom may employ distinct terminology and perspectives regarding violence and other harmful behaviours directed at individuals due to their gender; in some cases, these terms may overlap. The glossary below clarifies the terminology used throughout this report.

Algorithmic amplification

Algorithmic amplification refers to the degree to which an algorithm increases the visibility of specific content beyond what it would have achieved if the content were shown uninfluenced by ranking or personalisation, often in chronological order.³

Counter-messaging

Counter-messaging on social media refers to using content to challenge, correct or undermine harmful, misleading or extremist content online. Counter-speech is a subset of counter-messaging, referring specifically to verbal or text responses.

Digital citizenship

“Digital citizenship is the capacity to participate actively, continuously and responsibly in communities online and offline, through competent and positive engagement with digital technologies (by creating, working, sharing, socialising, investigating, playing, communicating and learning).”⁴

Digital literacy

Skills enabling individuals to critically evaluate and engage with online information.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

This term refers to “violence directed against a person because of that person’s gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.”⁵ Women and the LGBTQ+ community, including transgender and gender-diverse persons, experience disproportionate rates of GBV.⁶

Gender-transformative approach (GTA)

A framework aimed at addressing the root causes of gender inequality. It involves understanding the power dynamics and systems that perpetuate gender exclusion in specific contexts. The approach includes actions to change these dynamics, promoting shifts in social attitudes.⁷

Inoculation model

Communication strategy that builds resistance to harmful narratives by pre-exposing audiences to weakened versions of those narratives.

Male supremacism

Male supremacism is a cultural, political and economic system which “disproportionately privileges cis men and subordinates women, trans men, and nonbinary people”.⁸

Misogyny

Misogyny is a “system that operates within a patriarchal social order to police and enforce women’s subordination and to uphold male dominance.”⁹ It affects not just cisgender heterosexual women but also transgender, intersex, non-binary, genderqueer people and men. Misogynistic acts are often motivated by underlying sexist ideologies and can neither be defined as purely structural nor as purely individual actions.¹⁰

Pro-social interventions

Pro-social interventions are intentional actions, programmes or strategies to encourage positive social behaviours (pro-social behaviour) that benefit society, while minimising harmful or antisocial behaviours.¹¹

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)

TFGBV is an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully through information and communication technologies or digital media against a person on the basis of gender.¹²

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) do not occur in a vacuum. The design and management of online environments (from social media platforms and messaging apps to gaming, dating platforms and pornographic sites) shape norms, identities and behaviours that spill into schools, workplaces and homes. Equally, behaviours offline shape norms online in a continuum. Misogynistic narratives have become more visible and organised online, particularly within the ‘Manosphere’ – a loosely connected network of groups, actors, influencers, communities and online spaces composed overwhelmingly of men – and often overlapping with other harms.¹³ Their spread is accelerated by product design and platforms’ recommender systems: these expose boys and young men to online harms such as exploitative or harmful male and masculine influencers, health misinformation and extremist ideologies.¹⁴ Such digital ecosystems both amplify misogyny and entrench harmful expectations of masculinity, discouraging boys from recognising or disclosing their own experience of abuse.

This issue is worsened due to the underrepresentation of women at every level in the technology, media and information sectors, where women hold only 35% of jobs across 74 countries according to research by the World Economic Forum.¹⁵ The Alan Turing Institute has found that only 22% of AI and data professionals in the UK are women, and women make up only 18% of users of the largest global data science platforms.¹⁶ This significant underrepresentation – particularly in global majority countries – heightens the risk that technology and AI systems will perpetuate gender stereotypes, discriminatory social norms, and other harmful biases and outcomes. Without safe avenues for support, many internalise the idea that vulnerability signals weakness, deepening feelings of isolation, guilt or shame.

Intersectionality highlights how overlapping forms of discrimination, such as those based on race, gender, sexuality and other identities, combine to create distinct and compounded experiences of inequality. Research highlights that women, adolescent girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex (LGBTQ+) women experience a disproportionate level of TFGBV. Black women and women who belong to racial or ethnic minorities are also disproportionately targeted with online hate speech and harassment: they often

experience an intersecting form of TFGBV rooted in both racist and sexist tropes.¹⁷

While women, girls and the LGBTQ+ community bear the brunt of abuse, these dynamics also harm boys and men, constricting emotional life, fuelling anxiety and isolation, and normalising unhealthy relationships.¹⁸ GBV is rooted in patriarchal power relations and gendered social norms that legitimise male dominance, control and entitlement.¹⁹ Transforming these norms (and the harmful expressions of masculinity they sustain) is essential to advancing gender equality and preventing violence in all its forms, including technology-facilitated.²⁰

This approach acknowledges that engaging men and boys in gender equality efforts must go beyond ‘male-ally’ initiatives toward dismantling the patriarchal systems that underpin discrimination and violence.²¹ These systems are reproduced and amplified online, where digital cultures valorise aggression, sexual entitlement, and hostility toward women and girls.²²

A growing evidence base underscores the scale, consequences and overlap of more extreme misogynistic communities with mainstream misogynistic rhetoric that bleeds into everyday life and politics. Mitigation requires coordinated action across platforms and emerging technologies, education and policy.²³ In his 2024 report to the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General António Guterres highlights the rise of TFGBV and flags the role of ‘masculinist influencers’ and online ecosystems in amplifying misogyny, urging states and platforms to act.²⁴

Approaching GBV from a human rights perspective recognises that violence is a result of structural discrimination, and social and gendered stereotypes which states have a legal obligation to address. States must ensure that perpetrators of gender-based violence are held accountable. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) notes that this applies across all spheres of human interaction. Under the due diligence principle of human rights law, states have positive obligations regarding gender-based violence, even when committed by private actors. This obligation includes ensuring effective protection against violence and investigating reports of violence on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).²⁵ Technology companies also

have an obligation to human rights, as set out by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In this, Article 13 includes the responsibility to respect human rights and requirements for business enterprises.²⁶

Qualitative research maps exposure pathways into the Manosphere and the conditions under which harm is most likely.²⁷ A recent multi-country study found that almost two-thirds (63%) of young men regularly engage with (negative) “men and masculinity” influencers. Those who do report higher levels of psychological distress and more negative attitudes towards women than their non-engaged peers.²⁸ This points to the need for a comprehensive, upstream approach: platform design that is both rights-protecting and safe, gender-informed education (formal and informal), and strengths-based interventions that engage boys and men as part of the solution while centring the rights and safety of women and girls.

Misogyny is increasingly mainstreamed through influencer economies, algorithmic recommendation systems and poorly moderated platforms.²⁹ Evidence further indicates that exposure to misogynistic content correlates with hostile attitudes toward women, support for gender inequality and offline violence including femicide.³⁰

Online misogyny is a global phenomenon: it transcends cultures, languages and borders while manifesting in ways that reflect local gender norms, political environments and platform ecosystems. This dual character, both universal and distinct, underscores the need for international cooperation between governments, regulators and tech industry standards setting bodies alongside tailored, context-driven responses. It is a particularly important time to prioritise international cooperation and a strong multi-stakeholder approach given the current landscape of rising authoritarianism.³¹ This is further needed as structural features of the digital ecosystem, combined with gaps in regulatory and national frameworks, enable harmful norms to spread unchecked.

Anti-democratic forces at a global and societal level, such as foreign state and non-state malign actors, often exploit online spaces to attack women and LGBTQ+ people in public life to dissuade them from exercising their rights.³² A global report on gendered disinformation by the U.S., Canada, the European External Action Service (EEAS), Germany, Slovakia, and the UK notes that identity-based disinformation undermines the “ability to access impartial, fact-based information, and

it negatively impacts the make-up of democratic representation.”³³ A report by #ShePersisted discusses how gendered disinformation can serve as an early-warning system for “both backsliding on women’s rights and the erosion of democratic principles and institutions.”³⁴ A global study conducted by ICFJ also highlights an “alarming trend” of the role played by political actors, including politicians, government officials, political party representatives, party members, political operatives, and extremists on the political fringe, as “instigators and primary perpetrators of online violence against women journalists.”³⁵ This geo-political trend directly shapes misogyny online and emphasises the need for societal shifts to erode paternalistic power structures.

This brief examines how harmful content and digital environments fuel the mainstreaming of misogyny. It considers the pathways through which these harms take root across societies. The brief highlights evidence-based interventions with particular emphasis on offline and hybrid approaches that cut across multiple policy agendas and can strengthen resilience, challenge harmful norms and promote healthier, more equitable models of masculinities.

Drivers and impacts of online misogyny on boys

Confronting online misogyny is vital for a rights-based approach. It is key to preventing the gender-based violence experienced by women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities; it is also vital to addressing the structural norms that undermine boys' and men's health, relationships, and sense of identity. Boys and young men are not only shaped by misogyny as witnesses or participants; they also experience direct harms that impact their well-being, relationships and life trajectories.³⁶ These harms span mental health and physical wellbeing, social development, relationships, and sense of identity. They may lead to exposure to radicalisation pathways, consumer and sexual exploitation all while reinforcing patterns of inequality and fuelling broader social polarisation.

The digital ecosystem in which men and boys participate spans a range of online spaces such as large social media and messaging platforms, gaming services, pornographic websites, smaller or fringe tech platforms, and emerging technologies and AI tools. These services can expose boys to a wide range of harmful content, some of which may be illegal (e.g. non-consensual sharing of intimate images, encouragement of suicide, real sexual assault footage). However, much of the harmful content is legal, including hypermasculine, misogynistic or harmful pornographic material. This includes forms of pornography that normalise coercion, dominance or violence, often termed 'coercive porn', as well as content that blurs ethical boundaries while remaining legal (such as incest-themed narratives and strangulation).

Though women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, misogyny and patriarchal norms affect boys as well. Societal expectations often pressure boys to appear invulnerable, while seeking help or expressing vulnerability is frequently stigmatised as weakness or "not being a real man".³⁷ Rigid gender norms can prevent boys from recognising when they have experienced abuse or from signalling need for support. They also contribute to others overlooking boys' vulnerability to harm including sexual violence. For boys, a culture of silence around sexual victimisation is reinforced by individual, relational, community and institutional factors. Without safe and supportive avenues to disclose abuse or seek help, boys often internalise these norms, leading to feelings of guilt, shame or anger directed at themselves.³⁸ Acknowledging this dynamic is important to addressing the full impact of misogyny, including its role in silencing and harming boys who may be exposed to child sexual abuse material.

Understanding these patterns is essential to ensure effective interventions. By recognising how misogyny simultaneously drives gender-based violence and damages boys' and men's development, policymakers can disrupt its root causes, prevent future harms and build healthier, more equitable societies. Interventions can create different narratives for boys and young men about additional ideas of masculinity, as well as promoting pro social behaviours such as care, empathy, community and help-seeking behaviours.

Mental health, social norms and relationships

Patriarchal norms that equate masculinity with emotional restraint, physical strength and sole financial responsibility can exacerbate men's mental health challenges, contribute to substance misuse, and discourage timely engagement with healthcare services. Evidence shows that young men are reporting rising levels of anxiety, loneliness and depressive symptoms whilst suicide remains the leading cause of death for men under the age of 45.³⁹

Digital environments can intensify these pressures with constant comparison to hypermasculine ideals often embodied by influencers, and promoted through recommendation algorithms and targeted advertising, most prominently in high- and middle-income markets but increasingly replicated across the global majority through the increased usage of global platforms and the impact of influencer economies.⁴⁰ Studies have shown exposure to misogynistic narratives, regressive gender stereotypes, and coercive and violent pornography can lead to the normalisation of harmful relationship expectations, eroding empathy and respect in peer and intimate interactions.⁴¹ Boys who internalise harmful masculinities often report diminished ability to express vulnerability or seek support. Studies from Equimundo and UN Women highlight how rigid gender norms restrict emotional expression, entrench peer-level misogyny and reinforce policing of masculinity among boys themselves.⁴² This reinforces cycles of grievance, peer exclusion and disengagement from education or supportive relationships. Mental health support is essential for wellbeing but on its own cannot counter or transform misogynistic beliefs rooted in social norms, peer dynamics and cultural narratives around gender and power.

Monetisation and exploitation

A growing online ecosystem is monetising harmful masculinities.⁴³ Influencers market 'alpha male' coaching, get-rich-quick schemes, and unregulated health products such as testosterone boosters and steroids. These schemes often target boys' insecurities around body and dating dissatisfaction, exploiting them financially whilst reinforcing hypermasculine ideals. A socioeconomic lens is also critical here, as many boys' grievances reflect concerns around limited economic opportunities and precarious employment prospects. When combined with context-specific gendered norms that cast men as breadwinners and providers, these constraints heighten vulnerability to influencer narratives that promise quick wealth or status through hypermasculine performance and financial dominance. The same dynamic extends into appearance-based economies, promising confidence and desirability through physical transformation. So-called looksmaxxing first emerged among involuntary celibates (incels), referring specifically to the idea of improving men's appearances to enter relationships with women.⁴⁴ Today, it is part of an economic ecosystem which includes individual content creators promoting products including non-scientific pheromone perfumes through expensive, invasive and potentially dangerous surgery.⁴⁵

There is also an overlap between so-called influencers (financial influencers) and male lifestyle gurus.⁴⁶ For example, self-described misogynist Andrew Tate has run several coaching or schemes such as Hustler's University and later The Real World; these promote high-risk money-making schemes including investing in cryptocurrency.⁴⁷ Myron Gaines, a podcaster better known as Fit, has repeatedly promoted toxic gendered beliefs including through a book called *Why Women Deserve Less*. His financial advice includes leveraging a credit card to take on high levels of debt to build a business, an extremely dangerous financial decision.⁴⁸

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and sexual extortion of children

CSAM should be treated as a distinct and standalone harms. It encompasses sexually explicit content involving minors, which is criminal in all jurisdictions and includes a wide-range of exploitative acts beyond image sharing. It is weaponised by abusers to re-victimise survivors and groom additional children for future exploitation, with dissemination linked to established psychological harms including symptoms of post-traumatic stress, shame, anxiety and self-blame.⁴⁹

Emerging research on CSAM offenders indicates that online environments provide access to social validation, justification and reinforcement that diminishes psycho-

logical and social barriers to further offending.⁵⁰ ECPAT Sweden's research on financial sextortion of children highlights the vulnerability of boys and documents impacts on victims who seek help after their images have been spread. The impacts include negative impacts on relationships with friends, family and partners; feelings of shame accompanied by suicidal thoughts and threats; school avoidance; mental illness; and financial loss.⁵¹

Intimate image abuse

This includes the non-consensual sharing, creation or manipulation of intimate imagery. Intimate image abuse both stems from and reinforces harmful social norms around gender and sexuality. This form of abuse disproportionately targets women and girls and is embedded in digital spaces where their bodies are commodified, exploited and dehumanised, and where sexual violence is trivialised or normalised.

Despite the distinct nature of violence against children and adults, violence against children and TFGBV share key risk factors that apply across the life course. This includes harmful social norms that contribute to an ecosystem that condones violence, amplified in digital spaces that promote violent discipline, exacerbate harmful forms of masculinity, prioritise family reputation and privacy over victims' safety and wellbeing, and blame victims and survivors.

Such violations are closely linked to the proliferation of online misogynistic content that promotes entitlement, domination and humiliation as markers of masculinity. This includes normalising sexual violence, shaping boys' and men's attitudes toward consent and intimacy, and blurring the boundaries between desire and coercion. Such dynamics exacerbate the gender biases that drive other forms of gender-based violence, frequently intersecting with racist and other discriminatory narratives that underpin online misogyny.⁵²

Radicalisation and extremist pathways

Heteronormative gender stereotypes are pervasive across extremist movements, making misogyny a critical gateway to radicalisation.⁵³ Misogyny should be understood as both an attitude and a system of power. As an attitude, it reflects hatred or deep-seated prejudice towards women; as a system, it sustains patriarchal dominance and gender inequality. It also operates along a continuum, from casual sexism and everyday microaggressions to the explicit incitement or enactment of violence. In some cases, it operates as an ideology in its own right: self-described incel perpetrators such as Elliot Rodgers and Alek Minassian framed their violence explicitly through gendered grievance.⁵⁴

The relationship between misogyny and violent extremism takes several forms. First, misogynistic beliefs can serve as both a gateway and an early warning sign of radicalisation.⁵⁵ Second, misogynistic and anti-feminist narratives circulating across online subcultures, including incel forums, men's rights communities and parts of gaming culture, which often act as entry points into broader extremist ecosystems. Third, support for violent misogyny reduces resilience to extremist ideas and correlates directly with support for other forms of violence, making it a central component of diverse extremist ideologies. Finally, misogyny itself constitutes a standalone form of violent extremism when it meets established criteria for ideology, intent and violence.

Research indicates that misogynistic belief systems can also operate as a pathway into far-right, religious fundamentalist and conspiratorial movements, providing a common language of grievance and control.⁵⁶ These narratives portray women as the source of men's perceived failures or injustice, offering simplistic explanations that resonate with those struggling with identity, belonging or economic insecurity. Misogyny thus serves as a broader risk factor for violence, ranging from violence against women and girls (VAWG) and interpersonal abuse to extremist worldviews, operating at the intersection of personal grievance and ideological mobilisation.

This dynamic is reflected across extremist ecosystems. Anti-feminist communities overlap heavily with extremist spaces, often serving as a first step towards conspiratorial thinking and broader hate. For example, the 'Great Replacement' conspiracy theory in far-right movements is frequently underpinned by fears of declining white birth rates, with blame directed at feminism and women's rights. Within this narrative, white women are simultaneously portrayed as victims and betrayers: supposedly endangered by migrant men yet condemned for rejecting traditional gender roles. This rhetoric sexualises and instrumentalises women, using them to justify xenophobia and anti-migrant violence whilst reinforcing patriarchal control. The intersection between gendered and racialised narratives highlights that misogyny is not only a driver of gender-based harm but also a structural component of broader extremist mobilisation.

Male misogynistic movements such as incels normalise dehumanisation of women, which can escalate into violence as seen in the Isla Vista and Plymouth shootings.⁵⁷ Extremist recruiters deliberately exploit grievance-based masculinities, presenting misogyny as both an explanation for men's frustrations and a gateway to broader ideological commitments including xenophobia, antisemitism and homophobia.⁵⁸

This pathway dynamic underscores that misogyny is not a fringe concern but a structural driver of extremist mobilisation. Addressing it requires both tackling the harms experienced directly by women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities, and recognising its wider role in sustaining cycles of polarisation, conspiracy and violence.

While these harms illustrate the immediate consequences for boys and men, they are rooted in deeper structural dynamics. Key drivers of online misogyny are shaped both by individual or group acts of harm and structural features of a digital ecosystem that amplifies hostile narratives and mainstreams gender norms. Recognising intersectionality, including how misogyny intersects with racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, is essential to understanding how harmful masculinities gain traction online and why these harms persist despite growing awareness.

Key dynamics include:

- **Convergence with extremism and disinformation:** Misogyny often does not exist in isolation. Online spaces that mobilise around gender grievances often overlap with conspiracy movements, far-right networks and anti-LGBTQ+ mobilisation.⁵⁹ Gendered disinformation is also used within these ecosystems to target women in public and political life, portraying their participation as a threat to established patterns of male power and authority. Whilst the incel ecosystem gives an example of how personal frustrations about dating and relationships can be reframed as collective grievances around female oppression which in turn can lead to pathways into more violent ideologies. Misogyny becomes both a recruitment tool and a potential legitimising frame for violence.
- **Mainstreaming of misogynistic narratives:** Misogynistic content has become increasingly mainstream in online culture. Male supremacist influencers present gender grievance as entertainment, self-improvement or humour, repackaging misogyny as relatable rather than extremist. Social media platforms amplify such content through recommendation systems, pushing boys and young men toward repeated exposure to increasingly extreme material.⁶⁰ Evidence from youth surveys shows that those following masculinity influencers report poorer mental health, higher levels of social isolation and greater involvement in at-risk.⁶¹
- **Algorithmic amplification:** Platform design choices exacerbate these harms. Engagement-optimised algorithms favour sensationalist and polarising material,

boosting the visibility of misogynistic content regardless of its accuracy or impact.⁶² Features such as autoplay, infinite scroll and algorithmic recommendation systems create cycles of reinforcement that normalise harmful beliefs.⁶³ Inflammatory and exploitative content such as AI-generated sexualised images, coded misogynistic slurs and online sexual exploitation are all amplified by platform algorithms that reward outrage for profit. Even when platforms acknowledge the risks, systemic design changes remain voluntary and inconsistent.

- Regulatory and enforcement gaps in digital policy:** Legislative frameworks are beginning to acknowledge the broad spectrum that encompasses online misogyny. The most significant shift in recent years has been a move away from a narrow focus on content removal toward systemic risk assessment and mitigation, including addressing the liability of internet intermediaries. The EU Digital Services Act (DSA, 2022) and the UK Online Safety Act (UK OSA, 2023) reflect this new approach: they require platforms and services to identify risks including gender-based abuse, illegal harms or algorithmic amplification of harmful content (depending on national definitions), and to implement preventative measures including transparency obligations, design changes and Safety by Design settings.⁶⁴

Australia's Online Safety Act (AUST OSA, 2021) takes a similar approach: the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is Australia's national online safety regulator.⁶⁵ eSafety helps to keep Australia safer online by addressing online harms, improving online safety and exercising regulatory powers under a holistic framework that comprises three pillars: Prevention, Protection and Proactive and Systemic Change. This includes implementation of systemic levers, such as online safety industry codes and standards as well as the Basic Online Safety Expectations, and work on eSafety's proactive Safety by Design Initiative.⁶⁶

While these frameworks represent a positive step towards embedding safety into services from the outset, they are still new: effective enforcement and cross-border alignment remain untested. At the global level, the Global Online Safety Regulators Network (GOSRN) provides a forum for collaboration between online-safety regulators, emphasising shared commitments to proactive, evidence-based regulations and cross-jurisdictional learning.⁶⁷

Several countries in the Global Majority are developing rights-based digital safety frameworks that explicitly address gendered harms. Kenya's Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act and National Cybersecurity Strategy

recognise online gender-based violence as a criminal offence, while the Kenya ICT Authority's Gender Mainstreaming Policy embeds gender-sensitive standards in digital governance.⁶⁸ However, civil society actors note a persistent gap between legislation and enforcement. This includes a general lack of public awareness around existing TFGBV laws and limited knowledge of avenues for legal redress, leading to low rates of reporting despite the prevalence of online gender-based violence.⁶⁹

In India, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules require intermediaries to remove non-consensual sexual imagery and deepfakes and to designate grievance officers for redress.⁷⁰ The Philippines' Safe Spaces Act extends anti-harassment protections to online environments and mandates government agencies to enforce compliance.⁷¹ South Africa's Film and Publications Amendment Act obliges online distributors to protect children from exposure to harmful and sexualised material, including gendered content.⁷² Brazil's proposed Internet Freedom, Responsibility and Transparency Bill would require major platforms to conduct gender impact assessments as part of their content moderation processes.⁷³

Across these frameworks, civil society organisations highlight that some legal provisions remain vague or inconsistently applied, making enforcement difficult in practice and limiting accountability for perpetrators. Together, these initiatives signal growing momentum in the Global Majority to align digital governance with international human rights norms. However, enforcement capacity, definitional clarity and cross-border consistency remain uneven.

Platforms and digital services have long relied on voluntary safeguarding through community guidelines that are unenforced, under-resourced moderation systems, or the absence of clear reporting and safety mechanisms.⁷⁴ Without binding standards, harmful but legal content (ranging from coercive image-based abuse to influencer-driven misogyny) continues to circulate unchecked, shaping attitudes and reinforcing regressive gender norms. While existing human rights treaties recognise states' duties to prevent gender-based harms, these principles have not yet translated into real accountability for online environments.

Gaps in national frameworks

Although online misogyny reflects and reinforces broader social dynamics around masculinity, many jurisdictions lack comprehensive national framework that links online risks with offline interventions.⁷⁵ Schools,

youth services, families and community institutions often lack the training, confidence and resources to engage boys and young men in meaningful discussions about gender, relationships and harmful masculinities. Religious spaces, sports clubs and other trusted institutions are underutilised as platforms for prevention.

In parallel, gaps in hate crime legislation and inconsistent recognition of gender-motivated abuse limit accountability and hinder effective responses to misogynistic behaviours online and offline. While some EU member states have introduced gender-motivated hate crime provisions or strengthened online abuse laws, others lack explicit recognition of misogyny as a motivating factor in hate offences. The UK has debated but not enacted statutory recognition of misogyny as a hate crime category. In Australia, the absence of a federal hate crime framework leads to significant variation across states and territories. These inconsistencies limit accountability and hinder coordinated responses to online and offline misogynistic behaviours.

Interventions

Addressing online misogyny and harmful or rigid ideas of masculinities requires a comprehensive, multi-level response. This section maps the current landscape of interventions, drawing on insights from existing literature and multi-stakeholder working group sessions held online in September 2025. The categories presented reflect the patterns that emerged most consistently across evidence and stakeholder discussions. Each targets a different aspect of the problem drivers outlined in the previous section from design-driven harms, fragmented educational provision, debilitated community capacity, and under-regulated and permissive online environments. They consider where existing approaches fall short as well as potential opportunities for progress, such as the importance of information exchange and coherence across different policy areas, from gender-based violence to terrorism or cyber-security. Rather than being organised by stakeholder, the section is structured by type of intervention as most approaches require collaboration.

A recurring challenge is sustainability: too many interventions remain underfunded or fragmented from broader initiatives, underscoring the need for long-term commitments from governments, funders and platforms, as well as innovation in market-driven solutions. Another overarching challenge is that many sectors – such as digital rights and gender-based violence – tend to work in silos, highlighting the need for shared learning and more coordinated responses.

Safety by Design

Safety by Design has gained prominence as a proactive approach to addressing online risks and harms including TFGBV and misogyny. Safety by Design also recognises that many online harms disproportionately affect some groups, and that these harms are often amplified not only through user behaviour but also design choices. Unlike reactive moderation or user-driven reporting, Safety by Design emphasises embedding protections into platforms' design, governance and product lifecycles from the outset. Survivors, civil society and regulators have increasingly highlighted that harmful outcomes often stem not only from malicious misuse but also from design choices, business models and omissions of safety interventions that amplify risk.

Emerging regulatory frameworks

As mentioned above, the Australian eSafety Commissioner has been a global pioneer in Safety by Design, embedding

the principles in the Australian OSA and developing industry toolkits and assessment tools.⁷⁶ These encourage companies to identify risks, integrate safety from early development stages and align product governance with user protection. In the UK, regulator Ofcom has taken a similar approach under the UK OSA: its codes of practice and risk assessments require platforms to consider recommender systems, child-protection defaults, and iterative design changes. However, they could go further to move beyond a focus on content.

In the EU, the DSA does not explicitly use the term Safety by Design, but its systemic risk assessment and mitigation duties (Articles 34–35) reflect the same preventive ethos: requiring Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines (VLOPSEs) to identify and mitigate risks. This includes those related to gender-based violence, disinformation and systemic discrimination. By focusing on upstream risk rather than downstream moderation, the DSA signals a shift toward design-level accountability.

Other jurisdictions are exploring parallel approaches. In the US, regulatory debate has focused less on statutory Safety by Design frameworks and more on agency-driven guidance and litigation strategies (e.g. Federal Trade Commission actions around design practices deemed 'unfair or deceptive'). Policymakers and researchers increasingly frame Safety by Design as a way to reduce reliance on purely reactive moderation models which often fail to address the structural dynamics by which harms are created and spread, and to embed prevention into the core of platform governance and product development. International initiatives such as the Global Online Safety Regulators Network (GOSRN) and the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse (Global Partnership) aim to establish cohesive approaches across jurisdictions: this underscores the growing consensus that systemic prevention must complement, and in some cases replace, post-harm responses.

Beyond regulation

Civil society and multilateral actors have played a critical role in operationalising Safety by Design through survivor-informed, gender-sensitive design. Innovations presented include privacy-preserving health apps, AI tools for intimate partner violence risk assessment and chatbots delivering multi-lingual support.⁷⁷ These interventions demonstrate that Safety by Design can go

beyond compliance to proactively challenge gender bias and centre survivor needs, including minimal data collection and ensuring strong data security.⁷⁸ Any technology or feature developed specifically to address TF/GBV should follow global GBV standards and principles. These safety frameworks must account for the lived realities of women, LGBTQ+ users and marginalised groups.⁷⁹ Emerging evidence shows that when Safety by Design principles are embedded early across product design, moderation systems and user experience, platforms can measurably reduce exposure to abuse, strengthen user agency and foster more respectful online interactions.⁸⁰ The following examples illustrate these impacts in practice.⁸¹

Recent studies demonstrate how platform design choices, from algorithmic amplification to user interface defaults, significantly shape exposure to misogyny and abuse.⁸² Two complementary strategies are particularly relevant for mitigating TFGVBV. The first are behaviour-focused interventions, which aim to influence user interactions by deterring harmful behaviours in real time and empowering individuals to manage their online safety. These include filters to empower users in managing content exposure and nudging users to reconsider harmful behaviour, such as through onboarding processes that raise awareness and encourage adherence to norms of respectful conduct and community guidelines.

Examples include Perspective API and Coral, which offer a toxicity filter for comments sections, aimed at fostering a healthier online community.⁸³ FACEIT, a gaming platform which claims to have a community of more than 34 million gamers, experienced a decline in toxic messages since developing an admin-like AI powered by machine learning, called Minerva, with the support of Google Cloud and Jigsaw (who developed Perspective API).⁸⁴ In the first month and half of activity, Minerva issued 90,000 warnings and 20,000 bans for verbal abuse and spam. Toxic messages decreased by 20% as they reduced from 2,280,769 in August to 1,821,723 in September.⁸⁵ A study of this toxicity filter feature by Matt Katsaros of the Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School found that 9% of users decided not to post and 22% edited their tweet. An important observation made by Katsaros was that recipients were less likely to post offensive content in the following weeks and to receive offensive replies.⁸⁶ This seems to highlight how nudges can lead to change of behaviour in the moment as well as having a longer lasting impact. It is important to note that this would apply at an individual level – for instance, to someone who might have momentarily lost their temper, as exemplified by the experiment conducted by Katsaros. However, this

scenario would not be relevant to a malign actor who is intentionally seeking to cause or spread harm.⁸⁷

The second strategy is upstream design solutions, which address the structural features of the platform, such as algorithmic systems and content moderation processes to tackle the harm at the source. Moving away from engagement-based content ranking, which frequently amplifies sensationalist, divisive and abusive material is one example of this approach.⁸⁸ Crucially, the study argues that Safety by Design cannot succeed as a 'bolt-on': it must be tied to accountability mechanisms, regulatory pressure and survivor-informed product governance. Safety by Design is not a panacea: however, by embedding preventative principles into policies, product lifecycles, governance systems and accountability structures, it represents a powerful lever to reduce online misogyny and TFGVBV at scale.

Upstream design solutions can also include privacy safeguards such as default privacy settings to minimise user vulnerability. For example, some companies offer 'privacy by default', implementing features like limited profile visibility and restricted discoverability to help reduce user vulnerability. These safeguards protect individuals from unwanted contact and targeted harassment. This can be accompanied by a clear explanation for how users can modify these settings and ensure they understand the potential risks of lowering their privacy protections.⁸⁹

An example of a privacy safeguarding option includes Apple's Safety Check for iPhone, which allows users to quickly review, update and stop sharing their information with individual people and apps. This includes managing sharing and access options to review and make individual changes, as well as an 'Emergency Reset' to immediately stop sharing all information.⁹⁰ Another example includes Apple enabling users to be alerted if Bluetooth compatible devices, such as an AirTag, are tracking them.⁹¹

In addition to features that enable user control of their privacy, platforms can also ensure that privacy is embedded on a technological level. This can be achieved through minimising data collection, improved data control practices and implementing strong encryption. Chayn, a nonprofit that creates open, online resources and services for survivors of abuse, emphasises the importance of encryption and the role it plays in safeguarding the rights, safety and dignity of women, queer people, gender minorities and children.⁹² Chayn argues that policy and technology interventions towards online gender based violence need to ensure the human rights and civil liberties of women and gender minorities (including privacy, security and free expression) are

protected through encryption. It also argues that technology-assisted solutions to online gender-based violence, such as innovative content moderation, provide a more effective and rights-respecting path than proposals to introduce encryption ‘backdoors’.⁹³ Chayn notes that changes to systems should refrain from creating more metadata and instead empower users through improved features, as well as investing in prevention through education and Safety by Design.⁹⁴

Education: from digital safety to digital citizenship

Evidence from multiple studies and programme evaluations highlights both the promise and the limits of educational responses to online misogyny. Interventions in schools (including primary and secondary schools) and universities can improve empathy, reduce tolerance for sexist behaviour and build healthier peer norms. They can also take place outside of these formal educational settings, providing for more flexible and tailored approaches especially to interventions around sexuality education and related interventions. However, outcomes are often uneven and short-lived without sustained investment, educator training, and systemic support. Schools and universities can be a cornerstone for prevention but may lack the resources and training to address misogyny effectively. The opportunity of developing strategies to support educators is particularly important given the high levels of exposure to toxic masculinity that boys receive: a study by Vodafone estimated that almost 70% of boys in the UK aged 11-14 have been exposed to “online content that promotes misogyny and other harmful views”.¹⁰⁰ Successful interventions can help ensure that boys and young men develop healthy relationships later in life.¹⁰¹ One ongoing project, run by researchers from Monash University, includes workshops with school stakeholders to create a learning programme to assist secondary school teachers in mitigating the harmful impacts of online misogyny and the Manosphere in Australian schools; at the time of writing, delivery had just been completed.¹⁰²

However, current provisions can be fragmented and overly focused on risk avoidance. Several types of interventions have been implemented, from counter-speech campaigns and one-off school assemblies, bystander training and mentoring. Many are short-term, unevenly implemented and thin on robust outcome metrics.¹⁰³ Systematic reviews highlight limited or mixed evidence of durable norm change underlining the need for a more ambitious strategy that should promote critical resilience, positive role models and inclusive citizenship.¹⁰⁴ Several more sustained and embedded approaches, outlined below, show greater promise, particularly those

Case study

Safety by Design in practice

The Australian eSafety Commissioner’s (eSafety) approach to Safety by Design highlights how policymaking and industry can collaborate on creating evidence-based interventions for TFGBV. This collaborative approach has evolved from consultations with industry that began in 2018. Since then, eSafety has developed assessment tools and continued to engage industry and publish resources on the implementation of the Safety by Design principles.

In guidance on “Technology, gendered violence and Safety by Design”, published in 2024, eSafety presents industry case studies which highlight the importance of pairing Safety by Design principles with audits.⁹⁵ The guidance addresses various specific risks including unsolicited nudes, abusive messages, gendered hate speech amplification and harassment in immersive spaces.

Employing Safety by Design principles, the outlined interventions are intentionally designed to empower users. Such interventions include controlling message acceptance, blurred images, managing comment settings, and muting or blocking interactions, all tailored to the identified risks. Notably, many of the case studies illustrate the deployment of automated detection systems and the integration of user feedback to improve safety measures. For example, TikTok’s example showcases the use of metrics for tracking the removal of hateful content to enhance accountability while Bumble has developed a blurred image detector following user input.⁹⁶

Additionally, risk assessments identified gaps in existing policies prompting the necessary adjustments for clearer platform guidelines and enforcement.⁹⁷ For example, Twitch updated its policies on synthetic non-consensual intimate images after its audits identified shortcomings. While Safety by Design interventions emerge from observed harms, their pairing with assessments aimed at understanding and addressing evolving harms provides promising ground for interventions to address TFGBV. Such interventions may not only limit exposure to women and girls to TFGBV but also deter men from engaging in misogynistic behaviours.

Case study

Safety by Design in practice (continued)

The independent 2024 statutory review of the Australian OSA reaffirmed Safety by Design as a pivotal framework for enhancing online safety in Australia.⁹⁸ While the review did not explicitly evaluate Safety by Design, it recognised that it is a core component of driving systemic online safety.⁹⁹ The tools and guidance offered by the eSafety Commissioner to assist providers in implementing Safety by Design aim to foster positive, civil and rewarding online experiences for all users. The review's recommendations suggest that integrating Safety by Design is essential for strengthening Australia's online safety laws and ensuring service providers uphold their responsibilities in protecting users from online harms.

Regulators and policymakers increasingly back Safety by Design as a framework in other jurisdictions such as the UK and Kenya. However, the working group discussions highlighted the challenges in engaging large technology companies on Safety by Design in countries like Kenya. Meanwhile, risk assessment reporting considering Safety by Design in the UK is in its early stages. Thus, the effectiveness of these measures will require time to evaluate as regulations are further implemented and enforced.

that integrate peer mentorship, arts-based education and sports-led role modelling.

Education should follow a three-tiered digital citizenship framework, an approach recognised as best practice by the Council of Europe and reaffirmed by recent research from the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), which identifies media literacy as a necessary foundation for engaged digital citizenship.¹⁰⁵ This model begins with skills, ensuring access and competence; develops into literacy, enabling analysis of online information and influence tactics; and culminates in citizenship which empowers boys and young men to act as positive leaders and creators of healthier digital spaces.

Updates to Religious and Sex Education (RSE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) should explicitly address harmful masculinities, consent and pornography, healthy relationships and the links between misogyny and extremism.¹⁰⁶ Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), which “gives young people accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health”, has already been adopted in countries including Argentina.¹⁰⁷ Lessons can also be drawn from models in Sweden, where sexuality, consent and relationship education has been incorporated across multiple subjects and supported through national teacher training.¹⁰⁸

In the UK, a proposal from the PSHE Association and the University of York, has produced guidance and resources for teachers on addressing misogyny and toxic masculinity, responding to clear demand from schools.¹⁰⁹ In line with this, training ‘force multipliers’ is equally important. Teachers, youth workers, coaches and mentors often serve as trusted guides and equipping them through programmes such as Equimundo's Global Boyhood Initiative, to confidently discuss gender and digital culture amplifies impact well beyond the classroom.¹¹⁰ Transforming Masculinities, a programme developed by UK-based Christian charity Tearfund and first launched in 2017, similarly highlights the role of both male and female volunteers to drive change at the intersection of gender, masculinities and faith.¹¹¹ Peer mentorship programmes also show promise: Beyond Equality's initiative Boys to Men (Lockerbie Academy, Scotland) demonstrated that peer-to-peer mentoring increased empathy, reduced tolerance for sexist humour and created stronger male role models.¹¹²

Agile support for educators is key. Ongoing resources such as ‘crib sheets’, webinars and communities of practice can help educators adapt quickly to new online trends (e.g. emerging influencers or viral misogynistic

narratives). The Curriculum for Healthier Masculinities, a product of Habonim Dror North America, provides staff at camps with a set of suggested activities such as defining emotional labour and sample scenarios, but emphasises a flexible approach.¹¹³ It also offers a glossary of terms such as 'toxic masculinity' and 'patriarchy' for easy understanding. Youth voice and co-design are crucial for authenticity and impact. And involving young people in intervention design ensures relevance and resonance.¹¹⁴

It is just as important to open up classroom discussions without shutting down debate. Organisations working in the space have noted the need to address misogynistic comments without immediately resorting to chastisement. Analysis of projects by Wales without Violence found one challenge was that while some teachers immediately imposed detentions for misogynist remarks others used such incidents as a learning opportunity.¹¹⁵ The Global Boyhood Initiative (a project of Equimundo) recommended that teachers should open up discussions when boys voice problematic views.¹¹⁶ Guidance by the National Education Union and Beyond Equality similarly emphasises the need for "acknowledging without validating negative comments" (for example, by asking critical follow-up questions to misogynist discourse).¹¹⁷ Research from Monash University found that students recommend dialogue in the classroom to address these views rather than confronting them with anger; however they also feel that teachers are not adequately prepared to do so.¹¹⁸

Despite encouraging practices, challenges remain. In their analysis of anti-misogyny interventions for children and adolescents, Collins et al. found that many existing programmes have limited content on critical media literacy and literacy, and lacked effective measures to evaluate outcomes by (for example) using pre-and post-intervention surveys.¹¹⁹ A report from the International Center for Research on Women and Cartier Philanthropy similarly recommended funding long-term programmes with complementary longitudinal studies to track progress towards meaningful social change.¹²⁰ Furthermore, UNFPA has integrated these topics the CSE curricula in both Argentina and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with aims to expand it into other low- and middle-income countries.¹²¹

Community and hybrid interventions

Our review of evidence across diverse contexts demonstrates that community-based and hybrid interventions are among the most effective ways to engage boys and men in rethinking harmful gender norms. The UK-funded programme, What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls, is a multi-country study to pilot, evalu-

ate and scale a range of approaches to preventing violence across 12 countries in Africa and Asia. It found that community approaches allow individuals who are exposed to the original intervention to informally spread these ideas and norms throughout the wider population.¹²² There are three core components of successful community approaches – encouraging community change leaders to support other members in a journey of self-reflection, providing effective training to community mobilisers and creating engaging communications material that highlights individuals' ability to act.¹²³

Programmes that embed discussions of masculinity within trusted settings – such as sports clubs, workplaces, faith spaces and cultural traditions – show greater uptake, credibility and sustained behavioural change than one-off or externally driven initiatives. These findings underline the importance of context, continuity and accountability in transforming social norms. Additionally, it is critical that these initiatives are accountable to women's organisations, complementing their work and avoiding 'performative' allyship that lacks real change. This includes ensuring that programmes for men and boys do not inadvertently divert resources or attention from work with women and girls.

Much of boys' socialisation happens outside formal education making community-based and hybrid approaches vital for creating trusted spaces to challenge harmful norms and reinforce inclusive masculinities.¹²⁴ Sports and youth engagement have proven particularly effective. Programmes run by Beyond Equality and community football clubs train coaches to weave respect, empathy and healthy masculinity into everyday practice with early findings suggesting high receptivity when delivered by trusted figures.¹²⁵ The Man Cave have engaged 95,000+ young men in Australia with preventative, strengths-based programmes designed to create long-term, positive shifts in attitudes and behaviours by creating psychologically safe space, challenging problematic gender stereotypes and providing participants with the opportunity to practise healthier masculinity attributes.¹²⁶ Broader campaigns have also harnessed influencers to build ideas of positive masculinity such as the Imagine a Man Toolkit from the No Knives, Better Lives education campaign in Scotland.¹²⁷ Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM), a programme of Futures Without Violence, similarly trains high school coaches to teach young male athletes skills including mental health practices and tools for healthy relationships¹²⁸. A 2020 study of 973 participants found that participants were less likely to report sexual harassment perpetration a year after the programme.¹²⁹

Engaging with men as allies in supporting gender equality can also take place in professional settings, as shown by the HeForShe male allyship toolkit. Paralleling some work done in schools to create 'gender champions', this seeks to embed male allies in workplaces.¹³⁰ Early studies of projects such as HeForShe and PwC's Building Gender IQ course found that organisations which adopted the approach reported greater awareness of gender issues among employees demonstrating the potential for workplace cultures to reinforce broader societal change.¹³¹

Arts and theatre-based approaches offer another pathway into sensitive topics. Men4Dem and Tender use performance and drama to explore gender, relationships and power. Evaluations show that participatory arts can shift attitudes and reduce resistance to discussions about equality and respect.¹³² Faith and cultural leaders have also played a key role, contextualising gender equality within religious and traditional frameworks to strengthen credibility and reach.

Activist approaches rooted in local culture illustrate the value of tailoring interventions to context. Furthermore, these approaches must be intersectional, explicitly addressing how different layers of oppression such as race, class, or sexual orientation affect men and boys differently and produce inequalities for all genders. This prevents the work from inadvertently reinforcing harmful norms. The SASA! Approach, first pioneered in East Africa, partners behavioural change with community intervention as part of a programme to counter violence against women.¹³³ Similarly, Unite for a Better Life, Ethiopia focused on reducing intimate partner violence and the spread of HIV and reported success in both metrics. It was patterned on a coffee ceremony, a traditional community-based discussion space.¹³⁴ As noted in a report from ALiGN, these approaches can avoid orientalist and paternalistic ideologies by working within, rather than outside of, cultural traditions.¹³⁵

Parental engagement adds another layer of continuity, bridging school, community and family life. Toolkits and workshops piloted in Canada and the UK support parents to initiate conversations at home.¹³⁶ Not Just a Joke, a guide developed by the SPLC and American University's Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL), supports parents and adult caregivers by providing warnings signs of radicalisation and strategies for prevention and how to encourage peer-to-peer support from an early age.¹³⁷

Hybrid models that combine online and offline engagement have also demonstrated impact. Initiatives such as ECPAT International's Disrupting Harm and ISD's Young

Case study

Digital citizenship in sports

Beyond Equality's workshops with football clubs integrate discussions on masculinity and online conduct into training.¹⁴² Evaluations show stronger team cohesion and greater empathy among participants, particularly in groups previously resistant to classroom-based interventions.¹⁴³

Beyond Equality strives to support wider cultural change: it offers a wide range of interactive workshops for young, adult athletes and the wider ecosystem (including staff, coaches, parents, guardians, carers and youth workers). Since 2014, the team has worked with more than 90,000 participants. In 2023/24 alone, they reached 1,000 participants. Following the workshops, 70% of participants reported aspiring to "role model attitudes and behaviours that will create a more positive team culture".¹⁴⁴ Significantly, 90% reported feeling more equipped to approach challenging conversations and opening ongoing discussions around VAWG prevention and masculinity.

These testimonies appear promising. Addressing the wider ecosystem of male players and opening ongoing dialogue appears to have an impact in positively changing the discourse about masculinity and VAWG prevention.

It is worth noting that this intervention is UK-based, where football is the most popular team sport to participate in and spectate (with around 2.2 million people participating in football in England alone).¹⁴⁵ It would be beneficial to understand how these workshops translate to different geographies and cultural contexts. Additionally, recognising that these players are reached as part of a club, it may be helpful to further understand how to reach boys and men who are not part of a sports club, or those clubs who may not have the financial resources to partake in the workshops.

Digital Leaders demonstrate how online campaigns combined with offline mentoring amplify pro-social narratives and sustain behavioural change.¹³⁸

For long-term impact, these programmes must go beyond individual change and address the structural and institutional factors that perpetuate patriarchal power. This includes advocating for policy change and integrating violence prevention work into broader sectors like democratic resilience, digital inclusion, sports, health and education to create more systematic and sustainable changes. They can also draw lessons in how to engage boys and young men from adjacent work such as ECPAT International's Global Boys Initiative, which focuses on the sexual exploitation of boys.¹³⁹

Finally, gender equity and male engagement programmes must be designed with care. A report from the International Center for Research on Women and Cartier Philanthropy, cautions against framing male participation solely as an instrument of women's empowerment, instead positioning it as part of a broader social good.¹⁴⁰ The report also highlights that many programmes fail to measure outcomes for women and warns against simplistic binaries of 'well-meaning' men and 'sexist' men, which may prevent the chance for self-reflection among participants about sexist attitudes that they have internalised unknowingly. An analysis of 12 studies by Men4Dem reinforces these lessons, concluding that the most effective strategies combined culturally specific approaches with safe spaces for reflection and voluntary engagement.¹⁴¹ By contrast, the least effective interventions were characterised by short-term programming and the absence of mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable. Taken together, these findings highlight the need for interventions that are contextually grounded, sustainable and centred on accountability to make a lasting difference in challenging harmful masculinities.

Civil society–tech partnerships

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are driving much of the practical innovation in addressing online misogyny. This includes developing tools, campaigns and educational approaches that influence user behaviour and platform practices alike as well as tracking ongoing and emerging harms. CSOs often serve as helpful intermediaries between technology companies and governments (whether for reputational reasons or to mitigate other risks). This is particularly common where tech companies may be hesitant to engage directly with government entities, such as before reaching law enforcement referral thresholds or when setting a global precedent. It is important to note that a power asymmetry can exist between large technology companies and CSOs, which requires

clearly embedded principles of equitable partnerships including fair compensation for CSO expertise, and co-ownership of data and intellectual property. Evaluations indicate that these initiatives can meaningfully reduce harmful content and foster safer digital interactions, particularly when paired with platform collaboration, funding continuity and rigorous learning frameworks. Yet the evidence also underscores persistent gaps in scalability and cultural change, highlighting the need for deeper structural integration of these efforts.

CSOs are increasingly at the forefront of innovating creative solutions to misogyny online. When these initiatives are partnered with technology companies, they have the potential to be scaled and sustained, embedding new norms of safety and accountability into digital spaces. AI-driven support tools illustrate how design can foster healthier digital interactions. Bumble's AI chatbot helps male users build respectful profiles and initiate conversations in non-harmful ways.¹⁴⁶ Such tools have the potential to reduce the circulation of misogynistic language while also improving user confidence. Counter-narrative campaigns represent another promising avenue. Youth-led efforts such as Diverting Hate show that authentic, peer-created messaging resonates more strongly than traditional institutional campaigns.¹⁴⁷ By giving young people a central role in design and delivery, these initiatives can achieve greater reach and credibility among their intended audience.

Supporting grassroots organisations is essential for ensuring sustainability. Although many organisations are required to evaluate their work as a condition of funding, smaller initiatives may lack the capacity for robust longitudinal assessments. Prioritising funding for monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks can help fill this gap ensuring that promising interventions are able to grow and replicate. Similarly, cross-sector coalitions and collaboration between technology firms, educators, researchers and CSOs may be useful in establishing shared 'what works' frameworks, avoiding duplication and enabling investment in proven models. Such partnerships can pool resources as well as create the conditions for strategic investment in proven approaches.

Content filtering tools provide a further layer of protection against harmful exposure. These include customisable filters, quarantining mechanisms and machine learning models that detect evolving patterns of abuse. By enabling users and moderators to block certain keywords, topics or triggers, filters reduce exposure to harmful content, promote safer and most positive spaces and encourage continued participation from individuals who might otherwise disengage due to harassment.

'Prevention by Design' approaches highlight the importance of integrating such tools into platform architecture.¹⁴⁸ The Perspective API is an example, offering developers the ability to score comments by their perceived impact, thereby supporting both user reflection and moderator decision-making.¹⁴⁹

Civil society groups have also developed filtering tools of their own. The Uli browser extension was launched in 2021 by the Centre for Internet and Society in partnership with Tattle Civic Tech.¹⁵⁰ It filters offensive words, archives harmful content and provides users with pathways to seek support.¹⁵¹ Such interventions highlight the value of NGO-led innovation in fostering safer online environments.

Though filters reduce exposure to harmful content and can therefore potentially encourage greater participation from users who might otherwise disengage due to harassment, it is important to acknowledge that it is not a solution alone and does not address the culture of a platform.¹⁵² Matt Katsaros of the Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School shared findings from his research on the effects of such filters, which focused on the neighbourhood social network Nextdoor.¹⁵³ According to Katsaros, filtering offensive comments lowered their visibility by 12%. However, this reduction did not significantly influence user behaviour, nor did it encourage more productive engagement.¹⁵⁴ This highlights an important consideration in how filtering may prevent users from seeing toxic content, but it may not change the culture of the platform.

Gaming interventions

We see gaming ecosystems as both a high-risk and high-impact environment for shaping boys' and young men's attitudes toward gender, identity and violence. Studies show widespread exposure to misogynistic and extremist content within gaming spaces, but also demonstrate that when prevention, moderation and design measures are embedded early (through trusted peers, inclusive gameplay and Safety by Design principles) they can reduce toxicity and foster pro-social norms. This section outlines the key risks and intervention opportunities emerging from this evidence.

Gaming is one of the most significant digital environments for boys and young men, with a global reach that rivals social media platforms. While games themselves are not directly linked to violent behaviour, the surrounding ecosystems including live-streaming platforms, in-game chat functions, forums and Discord servers have been repeatedly exploited by extremist and misogynistic actors.¹⁵⁹ Entrenched cultural issues such as 'geek

Case study

Bumble chatbot

Bumble is an example of a company that collaborates both with other industry partners and CSOs to deploy features to tackle TFGBV. Given the proliferation of AI-generated non-consensual intimate images, Bumble has partnered with the nonprofit coalition Partnership on AI (PAI).¹⁵⁵ The coalition includes companies such as Adobe, TikTok and OpenAI as well as public media organisations including the BBC, CBC/Radio Canada and Witness. Together, they launched the "Responsible Practices for Synthetic Media: A Framework for Collective Action", which informs Bumble's approach to non-consensual intimate image abuse.¹⁵⁶

One of Bumble's safety features is a 'Private Detector' which uses AI to blur any potential nude images sent within a chat.¹⁵⁷ It is then up to the user to view, block or report the image. To better understand risks to users online and tackle TFGBV, Bumble has partnered with Indian think-tank Dialogue to research gender safety. In their 2023 report, their research recommends that tech-based harms require a deeper understanding and stronger collaboration between stakeholders. It suggests another framework to "allow stakeholders to adopt a broader view of tech-based harms and play their respective roles at different junctures rather than just focussing on a few aspects, thereby facilitating comprehensive solutions".¹⁵⁸

There is increasing evidence of TFGBV and safety features rolled out across platforms alongside growing transparency demands. It will be useful to assess the impact Bumble's safety features have had on users, and how they continue to implement findings from partnerships with industry, civil society and research organisations.

masculinity', the hyper-sexualisation of female characters and persistent harassment of women and LGBTQ+ players further heighten the relevance of gaming to policy responses on harmful masculinities.

Risks and vulnerabilities

Risks within gaming ecosystems manifest in several ways.¹⁶⁰ Extremist actors have used voice chats, guilds and forums on platforms such as Steam, Twitch and Discord to identify and radicalise young players. The gamification of extremism refers to the repurposing of scoreboards, memes and 'levelling up' mechanics to celebrate terrorist acts, creates subcultural incentives for violence.¹⁶¹ Popular streamers can also play a decisive role: Sneako and Trainwrecks illustrate how creators who start with apolitical gaming content can pivot toward misogynistic or extremist ideologies, mainstreaming harmful talking points to large audiences.¹⁶² At the community level, gendered harassment, slurs and targeted abuse remain widespread. These disproportionately impact women and LGBTQ+ players who often conceal their identities or disengage from communities entirely.¹⁶³ There is also significant cross-over between gaming spaces and online subcultures within the Manosphere, such as incels, PUAs and MGTOWs; this reinforces grievance-based masculinities and provide pathways toward extremist ideologies.¹⁶⁴ Emerging evidence also points to how virtual reality (VR) extended reality (XR) platforms – many of which are used as gaming spaces – are becoming sites for the perpetration of TFGBV, with documented cases of virtual sexual assault and harassment, 'meta-rape', and the non-consensual creation and spread of intimate synthetic material (deepfakes) via VR.¹⁶⁵

Intervention opportunities

Despite these risks, gaming spaces also offer important opportunities for interventions. Applying Safety by Design principles to gaming ecosystems is one step: this includes OSA-style regulatory standards that require proactive risk assessments of chat and voice functions. It also covers strengthened reporting tools for harassment and extremist content with built-in feedback loops so players can see action being taken. Prosocial design approaches should be embedded in early game development, ensuring gender-inclusive experiences and visible moderation cues. Developers could explore open-ended character design that allows diverse expressions of gender identity and incorporate emotional expression as a central gameplay mechanic; this would reward behaviours that foster self-awareness and cooperation.¹⁶⁶ However, it is worth noting that attempts to broaden representation in gaming, for instance, beyond binary male/female avatars, have sometimes triggered backlash, as seen in the Gamergate and later Sweet Baby Inc

Case study

The Kiddo game

The serious game 'Kiddo' is designed to increase awareness of stereotypes among children aged 10-13.¹⁷⁶ Using methods such as storytelling, problem-solving and rewards, the game provides an interactive learning experience. A study evaluated the implementation of Kiddo following validation from educators.¹⁷⁷ Based on 210 students from a public school in Mexico, the study found that the game resulted in improved recognition of gender stereotypes highlighted within the game. The study also assessed users' emotional responses, acceptance and to what extent it is appropriate as an educational tool.

Kiddo serves as a useful case study on how to reach children in Mexico, where "gender stereotypes and sexist behaviours are still accepted by a significant part of the population (88%), resulting in discrimination, especially against women".¹⁷⁸ By engaging the children in a serious game in an educational setting, Kiddo offers an immersive learning experience that may lead to boosted motivation and retention rates, "leading to more effective training outcomes".¹⁷⁹

Researchers assessing Kiddo concluded that it is as an effective gaming resource for promoting awareness of gender equality, offering benefits for all genders and receiving positive feedback from users. It was also found that the game aligned with the Mexican equality curriculum, highlighting that a broader application of the game in educational settings would be realistic and could potentially be adapted to other cultural contexts and educational curricula.

controversy.¹⁶⁷ This highlights the challenges developers face in embedding inclusive design.

Safety features should also adapt help-seeking mechanisms for all genders, reducing stigma through interaction models that move away from punitive or formal labels such as 'report' or 'abuse'. Alternative phrasing such as "Something seemed not right. Want to share what happened?" can normalise asking for support and lower barriers to disclosure.¹⁶⁸ Onboarding processes should further present community norms and explain accessible reporting options, ensuring players encounter a range of ways to seek support as they progress through the game.¹⁶⁹

Alternative approaches to regulation can complement these measures by 'gamifying' civility and safety particularly during onboarding. Research suggests that youth, especially adolescent boys, are more likely to engage with lightweight, in-platform nudges than with external policy documents.¹⁷⁰ At the community level, gamer-led resilience and peer support models show considerable promise. Life After Hate's presence on Discord or Slovak NGO IPčko's 'digital streetwork' on Twitch show the value of embedding credible, empathetic voices directly into gaming spaces.¹⁷¹ Similarly, peer mentoring within guilds, esports teams or fan communities can normalise inclusive behaviours and disrupt misogyny.

Partnerships with developers and streamers can extend these efforts. Gaming studios may integrate pro-social features, such as 'badges' for inclusive play or opt-in safe modes while influencers can lend authenticity to counter-narrative campaigns if given creative freedom to maintain authenticity. Positive gamification strategies, such as rewarding players for reporting abuse or promoting inclusive team play, can invert extremist tactics to highlight cooperation and empathy.¹⁷² Equimundo's LinkUp Lab initiative is trialling a similar approach by collaborating with moderators and gaming designers to prototype behavioural nudges, trust mechanisms and tools to make gaming spaces safer and more pro-social.¹⁷³ The RUSI toolkit on gaming and extremism similarly emphasises the need for both in-game design features and external resources, recommending that educators, parents and youth workers are equipped to demystify gaming cultures, explain risks, and identify early warning signs.¹⁷⁴ Together, these approaches help embed pro-social norms within gaming environments while strengthening the capacity of adults to support young people navigating them. Collaboration with and insight from CSOs and grassroots groups who have 'infiltrated' extremist Roblox groups or challenge hate speech in Minecraft servers can also provide models for build scalable interventions.¹⁷⁵

Considerations

Addressing online misogyny and harmful masculinities is both urgent and complex. A wide range of factors will shape the success of any policy response or intervention. Several considerations stand out as particularly important for ensuring research and interventions are both effective and sustainable. These include the need for multi-actor coordination and effectiveness, the persistent challenges of cost and sustainability, the value of experimental and adaptive approaches and the integration of gender-transformative frameworks. While recognition of online misogyny's societal impact has increased, significant gaps remain in research methodologies, intervention design and institutional capacity. At the same time, several high-impact opportunities exist for targeted investments in research and programming to accelerate progress.

Costs and sustainability

Many promising projects are funded as short-term pilots but struggle to endure once seed funding ends. Policymakers should prioritise approaches that train those on the frontline such as teachers, community workers, coaches and parents. They should also embed interventions into existing institutions such as schools, sports clubs, faith and community groups. This would lower long-term cost whilst simultaneously expanding reach. At the same time, scale is a critical challenge; interventions that succeed in small, intensive settings may lose impact when expanded nationally. Building scalable models that retain quality whilst broadening access could be a central focus of future investment (info from working group session).

Effectiveness

Short-term, isolated initiatives rarely maintain a lasting impact. Sustained multi-actor approaches including schools, families, communities and platforms are mutually reinforcing, crucial, and far more sustainable and effective at shifting harmful entrenched norms and behaviours.¹⁸⁰

The rapidly evolving nature of online spaces calls for more explorative and experimental methods to address evidence gaps. At the same time, there is also a more explorative and experimental method to fill that evidence gap, which is relevant for novel, fast-developing spaces such as online communities. For example, Equimundo found concerning trends around men's mental health issues, economic prospects and feelings of optimism for the future, and noted that there were very few organisa-

tions looking at how to engage men in the digital spaces in which they are spending increasing amounts of time.¹⁸¹ Building on more than two decades of work with young men, Futures Without Violence and Equimundo launched LinkUp Lab, an innovation hub that tested digital strategies to reach young men online. The initiative aims to address cultural influences that condone harm against women and promote anti-democratic content. The organisations are developing strategies that provide young men with alternative models for mental wellbeing and non-violent relationships, while promoting content designed to foster connection rather than division.¹⁸²

Gender transformative-approaches

Effective interventions must apply gender transformative as well as rights-based approaches to masculinities work, moving beyond individual education to systematically dismantle patriarchal power structures and institutional discrimination. This approach requires uprooting harmful masculine norms and stereotypes through intersectional feminist analysis, transforming both individual behaviours and institutional policies that perpetuate gender-based oppression. The framework must shift from 'power-over' to 'power-with' models while addressing how communities become trapped in systems that reinforce gender discrimination.¹⁸³

This work must recognise the diversity among men and boys and how patriarchy shapes power differently across class, race, nationality and generation. It must understand that men's interests often align more closely with women in their communities than with other men. Mobilising men as agents of change requires linking gender justice with broader struggles for economic and racial justice while maintaining accountability for those who benefit most from patriarchal systems.¹⁸⁴

The primary objective of engaging men and boys in gender and development initiatives is to promote gender equality and uphold the human rights and empowerment of women, girls and LGBTQ+ people. MenEngage Alliance note that stakeholders should clearly articulate this objective and ensure that their policies and strategies are aligned with it, across planning, resource allocation, and implementation, in collaboration with women's rights and LGBTQ+ organisations and leaders. In February 2023, the working group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, a Special Procedures expert group of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in

Geneva, developed a Report and Guidance Document on Men's Accountability to Gender Equality. The working group on Discrimination against Women and Girls notes that men, boys and the organisations working with them have a responsibility to ensure that engagement is constructive, respectful, and grounded in the human rights of women and girls.¹⁸⁵

Scaling interventions

Online interventions offer opportunities for scaling. There is a potential avenue for scaling the lessons learned from offline interventions to the online space to inform online interventions. To be effective, they require a local approach as contexts and actors differ. For example, to reach adolescent boys, the topics they want to discuss and the influencers they follow may differ. The narratives and interventions to reach them must be contextualised with local organisations and experts. Offline interventions such as discussion groups can be replicated online to meet adolescent boys' needs and reach them with information about gender equality, human rights, health and well-being.¹⁸⁶

Gaps

Despite greater awareness of online misogyny's societal impact, significant gaps remain across research methodologies, intervention design and institutional responses.

Evidence gaps and research limitations

While some recent studies have begun documenting how recommender systems and algorithmic design amplify misogynistic content, research remains limited on other important areas of online misogyny and its impacts.

Significant gaps include understanding gendered and intersectional dynamics exposure pathways beyond algorithmic amplification and the online-offline continuum of harm.

There is emerging evidence on how boys and young men engage with online content. However, data disaggregated by gender, age and other demographics remain inconsistent. Less is known about how online misogyny compounds with race, sexuality or socio-economic status to intensify harms. Available evidence suggests, for example, that online misogyny has disproportionate effects on women who face intersecting forms of oppression. A poll by Amnesty International UK shows how Gen Z women with disabilities report higher levels of threats and negative health outcomes than their peers.¹⁸⁷ A UNFPA study also suggests that while TFGBV against women with disabilities may mirror those experienced by women without disabilities, the impact is often magnified

by a heightened dependence on others and/or limited access to protective mechanisms.¹⁸⁸

Research on algorithmic amplification has advanced, with numerous studies illustrating how recommender systems promote misogynistic content. However, there is considerably less research on other exposure pathways including pornography, body-image pressures and the promotion of supplements, and how these shape outcomes.

Intervention and policy gaps

Most intervention programmes remain at pilot stage or operate as short-term initiatives. A systematic review reveals that interventions typically focus on narrow online behaviours like trolling or hate speech, with insufficient long-term evaluation of wellbeing impacts.¹⁸⁹ Current approaches often lack research that centres men as solutions with insufficient attention to interventions designed with men for men.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, gender equality work with men and boys has primarily concentrated on changing individual attitudes and behaviours. This has meant inadequate attention to developing the analyses, skills and partnerships required for institutional and ideological-level social change strategies.¹⁹¹ A persistent challenge for gender transformative work involves responding to patriarchal masculinities' violence against people of differing gender identities without inadvertently reinforcing male victimhood messaging utilised by Men's Rights movements – messaging that dangerously minimises violence against women and girls while claiming that violence against men and boys is of equivalent concern.¹⁹²

Institutional and policy gaps

Misogyny remains under-recognised in mainstream institutional responses. Analysis of domestic homicide reviews in the UK shows that gendered and intersectional dynamics are often overlooked in safeguarding and legal processes.¹⁹³ These gaps highlight how, even outside digital policy, misogyny is not consistently treated as a structural driver of harm, limiting the effectiveness of prevention and accountability mechanisms.

Opportunities

Several high-impact opportunities emerge from this analysis where focused research and programming investments could advance impact. First, dedicated research is needed to understand young men's health experiences and develop interventions that resonate with their specific needs, as highlighted by Movember during the working group discussions.¹⁹⁴ Second, there are opportunities to examine intersectional content dynamics, particularly the links between misogynistic

content and anti-LGBTQ+/anti-trans content online.¹⁹⁵ There is a need for further research that examines how these ideologies mutually reinforce each other and how policy responses vary across national contexts. This ranges from countries that actively address such content to those that integrate it into official strategies. Third, further research is required to understand platform economies and harmful content, in particular to understand how engagement algorithms monetise misogynistic content and create financial incentives for its proliferation.¹⁹⁶

Cross-cutting policy recommendations, principles and areas for intervention

The evidence presented in this brief demonstrates that addressing online misogyny requires a coordinated, systemic approach that connects digital regulation with education, community, and design-level interventions. Effective action depends on alignment across governments, regulators, platforms, funders, and civil society, paired with locally grounded delivery.

Policy recommendations:

1 Governments and regulators

- a. **Strengthen regulatory frameworks for systemic prevention:** Governments should integrate Safety by Design principles into online safety regulation. They should also ensure that risk assessments explicitly include gender-based harms, algorithmic amplification, design-driven and data privacy risks. Regulators should align enforcement practices across jurisdictions, coordinate with tech industry standards setting bodies, and build capacity for independent audits and accountability mechanisms. Early evidence from Safety by Design approaches shows that embedding safety and gender sensitivity into platform governance can reduce exposure to abuse and promote healthier online interactions.
- b. **Integrate misogyny prevention into national education and equality strategies as part of a coordinated public health approach to prevention designed to improve health-positive behaviours amongst men and boys:** Governments should embed digital citizenship, consent and gender equality education into curricula (including Comprehensive Sexuality Education curricula). They should also work to train educators and youth workers, both in and out of school contexts, and connect these initiatives with national gender equality and public health strategies. Partnerships with community, sports and faith-based organisations can strengthen awareness of healthy masculinities across social environments. Educational and community interventions consistently demonstrate that long-term, multi-actor engagement is critical to foster long-term normative change.
- c. **Foster international coordination with local anchoring:** Online misogyny is global in scope but locally shaped. International cooperation (through mechanisms such as the Global Online Safety

Regulators Network and the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse) should promote knowledge exchange, including on risk assessment frameworks and joint research. At the same time, policy responses must remain context-sensitive. Locally-driven initiatives demonstrate that prevention is most effective when grounded in community norms and cultural practice, whilst acknowledging that TFGBV is translocational and crosses borders, thereby necessitating cross-jurisdictional coordination.

2 Platforms and industry

- a. **Operationalise Safety by Design, and gender-sensitive and survivor-informed product governance:** Platform design profoundly shapes exposure to misogyny and abuse online including TFGBV, and content that negatively impacts men's and boys' health. Companies should embed Safety by Design principles throughout product lifecycles, as well as policy development and implementation, informed indirectly by survivor and affected groups' consultations and gender impact assessments. This should be done in line with global GBV data ethics standards. This can take form in engaging with those who support survivors or engaging a large anonymous group on a topic. Evidence from interventions such as Bumble's AI-driven tools and the Perspective API filtering system show that real-time nudges and moderation features can measurably reduce toxicity and address gender disparities while improving user trust and agency. Additionally, there should be greater investment in Trust and Safety capacities to monitor and respond to harms on an ongoing basis, including in context specific ways.
- b. **Prioritise high-risk online environments:** Evidence from gaming, influencer and messaging ecosystems highlights where misogyny and extremist mobilisation intersect. Platforms operating in these environments should conduct proactive risk assessments of chat and voice functions as well as generative technologies such as AI-powered functions, expand transparent moderation metrics, and incorporate inclusive design features such as gender-diverse avatars, norm-challenging empathy-based gameplay and accessible reporting systems. They should also promote check-in systems and help-seeking

behaviours. Partnerships with trusted influencers, moderators and grassroots CSOs can extend credibility and ensure authenticity in counter-narrative efforts.

- c. **Ensure Safety by Design is a central feature of tech industry standards:** Integrate and embed Safety by Design principles at the core of tech industry standards, centring gender-equality and human rights, rather than treating these principles solely as a regulatory compliance exercise. This approach prioritises prevention, fostering a culture where safety is a fundamental aspect of decision-making and innovation.

3 Donors and funding institutions

- a. **Invest in sustainable and scalable interventions:** Many promising initiatives, from sports-based mentoring to youth-led digital, remain small-scale due to short-term funding. Donors should prioritise multi-year investments that enable institutionalisation, replication and evaluation. Funding models must incentivise partnerships between education, technology and community actors to ensure continuity rather than isolated pilots.
- b. **Governments and foundations that fund organisations working on social and behavioural change should ensure that funding is sustainable and that coordination across different projects and sectors is improved:** Funding models must incentivise partnerships between education, technology and community actors to ensure continuity rather than isolated pilots. It is also important to break down silos to enable coherent responses that cut across multiple policy agendas, for example between digital rights, women's rights, TFGBV, GBV, cybersecurity and TVEC and democracy actors.
- c. **Build evaluation and learning capacity:** Evidence gaps remain on long-term behavioural outcomes and the offline impact of online misogyny. Donors should support longitudinal and comparative studies, particularly those led by organisations working directly with boys and young men. Building monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) capacity within smaller CSOs will help sustain impact and create a shared evidence base for 'what works'. Further investment should go towards measuring the effect of online misogyny on women and girls, LGTBQ+ communities, as well as men and boys, and to measuring the effectiveness of both online and offline interventions.

4 Civil society and the research community

- a. **Innovate, document and scale effective models:** Civil society organisations have demonstrated agility in developing practical interventions, from participatory arts (Men4Dem, Tender) to digital mentorship and hybrid engagement (Young Digital Leaders). These should be rigorously evaluated and documented to support replication across cultural contexts. Academic and practitioner partnerships can translate lessons from offline programming into online and hybrid spaces.
- b. **Deepen cross-sector collaboration:** Evidence shows that sustained collaboration between CSOs, industry and regulators amplifies reach and legitimacy. Civil society should be involved in product co-design processes, policy consultations, tech industry standard setting bodies and public education campaigns. Researchers can play a bridging role, translating insights from practice into evidence-informed policy and regulation.

Cross-cutting principles

- **Gender-transformative design:** Interventions must actively challenge patriarchal and heteronormative norms rather than merely mitigating symptoms.
- **Intersectional equity:** All actors should account for the compounded effects of misogyny on marginalised communities across race, class, disability and sexuality.
- **Multi-stakeholder coherence:** Coordination between governments, industry, educators, researchers and civil society, with a particular emphasis on enhancing youth engagement, is essential to avoid duplication and 'pilot fatigue'.
- **Evidence-driven adaptation:** Policy and programming should evolve with continuous learning, supported by open data and transparent evaluation.

Priority environments for intervention

In addition to these systemic implications, several online environments consistently emerge as critical spaces where misogyny is normalised, monetised and amplified. These include:

- **Gaming ecosystems:** Hostile norms, misogynistic streamer cultures and extremist recruitment are present in gaming spaces, which are under-regulated compared to social media.

- **Influencer economies:** Grievance-driven masculinities are monetised via pathways including coaching schemes, financial scams/high-risk investments and unregulated health products.
 - **Messaging platforms and semi-private spaces:** Encrypted or closed networks (e.g. Discord, Telegram) act as incubators for misogynistic peer culture and extremist mobilisation.
 - **Body-image and health product markets:** Unregulated supplements, steroids and 'looksmaxxing' procedures exploit young men's insecurities.
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Conclusion

This brief has traced the pathways through which misogyny is normalised and amplified online, showing how these dynamics damage not only women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities but also boys and men, shaping health, relationships and identity. It highlighted how structural features of the digital ecosystem, combined with gaps in regulatory and national frameworks, and the underrepresentation of women across all levels of technology, enable harmful norms to spread unchecked – vulnerabilities that foreign state and non-state actors strategically exploit through gendered disinformation to silence women, roll back hard-won progress on equality, and shape perceptions toward gender and the role of women in society.

From this foundation, the policy brief mapped a landscape of interventions: from Safety by Design approaches and regulatory innovation, to education reforms, community-led programmes and civil society–tech partnerships. Each intervention demonstrates both the opportunities and limitations of current practice, underscoring the importance of sustainability, survivor perspectives and cultural context.

The cross-cutting policy implications set out here point to the need for systemic, multi-actor collaboration that bridges digital and offline environments and breaks down silos to enable coherent responses that cut across multiple policy agendas. Disrupting the normalisation of misogynistic beliefs will require sustained action across platforms, institutions and communities, grounded in intersectional, gender-transformative, and rights-based approaches. Only through such joined-up strategies can we prevent harm, build resilience and foster healthier, more equitable models of masculinity.

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