

MALE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Far-right extremists typically believe in hierarchies of superiority and inferiority among groups. Such beliefs position the “other” group as inferior in dehumanizing ways, a crucial factor for radicalization. White supremacy is, perhaps, the most recognized of these dehumanizing hierarchies, but other forms include male supremacy, Western supremacy, and Christian supremacy. Male supremacist beliefs often intersect with other forms of supremacy beliefs in powerful, mutually reinforcing ways.

Male supremacy positions all women as inferior to men, often arguing that biological differences between men and women create “naturally-ordered” societies in which men are dominant, superior, and entitled to women’s domestic and/or sexual labor. Women are depicted as subservient, easy to manipulate, and in need of a “strong man.” Feminism itself is often described as a threat, with feminists sometimes being described as “feminazis” who insist on equal rights at the expense of men. Anti-feminist ideology incorrectly argues that feminism is anti-male.

Male supremacists weave a narrative of victimization at the hands of feminism. To these extremists, masculinity and dominance are inseparable. Therefore, they can only see equal rights for women as a threat, an anti-male attack that must be met with a full-scale counterattack. This attitude—that any existential threat demands full retaliation—is at the core of extremist ideology.

Recognizing exposure to male supremacy online is imperative. While inherently extreme on its own, male supremacy can also compound other forms of supremacist thinking, like white supremacy. Adolescent boys or young men may encounter grooming messages online like “Has a woman ever hurt you” or “Have you ever gotten replaced” as an entry point to more violently misogynist discussions. In online youth culture, memes policing women’s sexual behavior or praising women’s sexual purity are ubiquitous.



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Toxic masculinity refers to rigid constructions of gender that place masculinity and femininity in direct contrast. “Manly” behavior—including a discernible lack of empathy, mental and physical toughness, and ridicule for sensitivity and vulnerability—is enforced through shaming, bullying, and promises of rewards. These kinds of beliefs suggest that being a boy (or a man) is better than being a girl (or a woman) and is one way that supremacist thinking is introduced.

The explicit and implicit violence of this supremacist thinking has impacts beyond restrictive gender binaries. Members of the LGBTQ community are also impacted by the violence inherent to toxic masculinity. Since toxic masculinity deems all things “feminine” as inferior, those who embody such traits in contradiction to the sex they were assigned at birth are particularly vulnerable to violence.

Gender-based violence and misogyny have intersections with a wide variety of forms of terrorism and extremism. Anecdotally, several cases of extremist actors and school shooters revealed histories of intimate partner violence or other gender-based violence. Parents, caregivers, therapists, and others should be alert to youth who express violent fantasies about women, including rape fantasies, ideas about keeping women “in line” with force, or suggestions that they are entitled to a life free from the sexual temptation they allege women create. Trusted adults should also be aware of the impact that witnessing or being subjected to gender-based violence can have on other cycles of violence, such as extremist radicalization.

Misogynist incels (involuntary celibate) form a community of self-described celibate men who blame women for not wanting to have sex with them. Misogynist incels have been responsible for deadly extremist attacks against women in locations as varied as a yoga studio, a college sorority, and through a vehicular attack on a public street.