

Incel Movement

Name: Incel Movement

Type of Organization:

- Online community
- right-wing
- sexist
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Anti-Semitic
- misogynist
- pro-rape
- pro-violence
- racist

Place of Origin:

Internet

Year of Origin:

1997

Places of Operation:

Internet, North America, Europe

Overview

Executive Summary:

In 1997, Alana, an undergraduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, began a website called “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project” to provide a friendly place for people who struggle with dating to talk with one another. It was on this forum that the term ‘incel’—initially ‘invcel’—was first coined.¹ In a 2018 interview, Alana—who did not use her full name—described the website in its early years as “a friendly place,” and “there was probably a bit of anger and some men were a bit clueless about how women are unique, individual humans, but in general it was a supportive place.”² Because her romantic life improved, Alana stepped away from the site in 2000, leaving others to moderate it.³

Incels now comprise an often-violent anti-women movement rooted in online communities.⁴ The largely male incel community blame their incelhood (state of involuntary celibacy) on society—and women specifically. Incels view themselves as part of a repressed group subjugated by genetic determinism.⁵ A March 2020 user survey by a major incel forum, Incels.co, found that most respondents still lived with their parents and had never been sexually intimate or in a romantic relationship. Eighty percent lived in North America and Europe, with “most” identifying as Caucasian. Only half of respondents had attended college, even though most came from middle- and upper-class families. Seventy percent said they suffered from depression and more than a quarter claimed to be autistic.⁶

A subset of incels has taken the community’s misogyny further, advocating for and justifying rape and other violence against women as a means for shaping their ideal society.⁷ Researchers have also noted that the incel community has “seamlessly integrated” with the far right, with several recent right-wing terrorists mixing aspects of both incel ideology and white supremacy in justifying their attacks.⁸ The spread of incel ideology has been underpinned by the rise of social media, with users establishing dedicated incel groups on platforms such as 4chan, Reddit, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Discord, while also using online message board forums such as Incels.co and Incels.net.⁹

A 2020 study explored the role online forums play in promoting extremist incel beliefs. The study concluded:

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[Sites such as] 4chan and Reddit encouraged extremist declamations in order to gain more visibility. Though incel forums were at this point spread across cyberspace rather than confined to those main platforms, they nonetheless began to espouse similarly edgy and at times extremist sentiment. This in turn created a feedback loop where outrageous statements were intended to generate an escalatory spiral of reactions and responses that disguised their true aggressiveness—a behavior known as trolling or shitposting.¹⁰

Many of these websites and forums embrace and lionize incel violent extremists, with users referring to the attackers as “saints” and heroes.”¹¹ A brief visit to either Incel.co or Incel.net shows many users with profile pictures of Elliot Rodger, regarded by researchers and the incel community as the first incel terrorist, who killed nine people in Isla Vista, California, in 2014. The shift toward this more extremist, violent rhetoric began in 2003 with the founding of a new incel website called LoveShy.¹² It was in LoveShy that the incel community became almost exclusively male. At least one of the website’s moderators openly praised mass murderers and reportedly encouraged other members to commit murder.¹³

From LoveShy, incels would gradually move to sites like 4chan and Reddit, where the community adopted even more extremist beliefs, in part due to the system of ‘downvoting,’ allowing users to adjust which posts are shown most prominently and drown out moderate users.¹⁴ Users on these new sites now claimed that incels must take control of their lives by exacting revenge for their perceived mistreatment.¹⁵ By the time Reddit banned its incel community, r/incel, for inciting violence, the subreddit had garnered 40,000 members.¹⁶

Members of these incel forums celebrate successful attacks and ridicule incels whose attacks fail to inflict casualties or lead to only a few deaths.

¹⁷ For example, one year after self-identified incel Scott Beierle, a military veteran, killed two women in Tallahassee, one Incel.co user said “the guy was in the military and only got 2 kills [...] i thought his trainin would make him plan to be as deadly as possible.”¹⁸ Similar posts played a role in Elliot Rodger’s 2014 attack, where, according to future incel attacker Alek Minassian, “other members of 4chan were giving [Elliot] encouraging support so that he would have the courage to start his rebellion.”¹⁹ Since their attacks, Rodger and Minassian are regularly idolized and hailed as heroes on incel forums.²⁰

Doctrine:

Incel ideology revolves around the belief that society exists as a hierarchy created by genetic determinism, with physical attributes defining everyone’s status.²¹ According to this belief, the most desirable men and women are called “Chads” and “Stacys,” respectively, and sit atop this hierarchy.²² Incels exist in the lowest rung, supposedly shunned for their looks despite their “superior personalities,” while “normies” make up the middle of society and are oblivious to the true nature of the world.²³ There are only a small number of Chads in society, who in turn attract most women, leaving the remaining women to date normies and no women for the incels.²⁴

Incels believe this hierarchy is the sole creation of women, who, they argue, are programmed to seek partners based solely on physical attractiveness, height, weight, and race.²⁵ Incels insists that women do not care about personality, and thus the term “supreme gentlemen,” first used by Elliot Rodger to describe himself in his manifesto, is used as a self-identifier for many incels who see themselves as physically inferior but with superior personalities.²⁶ To incels, their lack of sexual and romantic partners is the exclusive fault of women. Therefore, women are, according to scholars Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “the primary target of incels’ hate and violence.”²⁷

Incels have expressed their misogynistic vitriol in several ways. On incel forums, users exclusively refer to women using derogatory terms such as “femoids” (a mix of ‘female’ and ‘humanoid’) or “FHO” (Female Humanoid Organism).²⁸ Male users detest and harass even women who identify as incels. In one case, when a woman posted about her struggles on Incels.me other users responded by calling her a liar, a troll, a “vapid whore,” “lonely and unloved,” and “pig woman” before she was banned from the site.²⁹ Examples of extremely popular sexist threads on these forums include ones titled “Why women are the embodiment of evil” and “All women are sluts.”³⁰

Incels refer to understanding and accepting their worldview as “taking the black pill,” a reference to the 1999 science-fiction film *The Matrix*. Characters in the film choose between “taking the red pill,” and are subsequently exposed to the real world, or “taking the blue pill,” which keeps them in ignorance.³¹ Far-right, anti-feminist groups use “taking the red pill” as a euphemism for when their people “fully recognize the inherently shallow nature of women, but also to understand better how men can manipulate and exploit these supposed female characteristic.”³² Incels view themselves as part of the red-pill community, but believe that individuals cannot change their status in society through manipulation, as red-pillers claim. Instead, taking the black pill requires adopting a nihilistic worldview in which the individual accepts “a reality where women and society are intrinsically biased against men who lack specific physical attributes, who therefore have no hope of ever being attractive to women or even accepted by society.”³³

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Nonetheless, many incels believe action can be taken to change their celibacy. In one passage of his 141-page manifesto, Rodger writes about his ideal society in which women have no choice in their partner and rape is the norm:

They [women] are like animals, completely controlled by their primal, depraved emotions and impulses. That is why they are attracted to barbaric, wild, beast-like men. They are beasts themselves. Beasts should not be able to have any rights in a civilized society. If their wickedness is not contained, the whole of humanity will be held back from advancement to a more civilized state. Women should not have the right to choose who to mate with. That choice should be made for them by civilized men of intelligence.³⁴

These beliefs are widespread within the incel community. A 2019 study by Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan found that:

The Incel worldview rests on the evocation of a past golden age ... of a patriarchal society where monogamy is the rule, traditional gender roles are accepted and followed, women and men marry early, and adultery is prohibited. All men have thus “access” to women and their “entitlement” to sex is never “denied” by women.” While incels diverge slightly on what led to the end of this supposed golden era, all agree that feminism is the sole culprit, destroying the institution of marriage and ushering in an era of sexual promiscuity. This supposed end of monogamy has allowed women to follow their ‘true’ instincts to only sleep with and date Chads, and, to a lesser extent, Normies.³⁵

Motivated by this ideology, incel forums are rife with violent, sexist comments towards women. Some commenters argue women should be second-class citizens, saying “femoids are nothing but sexual objects and thus should be second-class citizens.” or “women are for fucking and raising families, not for having ‘rights.’”³⁶ Others attempt to explain how, in the absence of forced monogamy, “a woman’s tendency [is] to marry the best possible man that she can find. This stems from the biological imperative for her to get pregnant with the best genes possible.”³⁷ Some incels believe that “hypergamous whores deep down [want] to be dominated and treated like shit to keep them attracted to you,” and that “the ideal male for a woman would be a Chad who will rape her and beat her on a daily basis.”³⁸

Also Known As:

- Invcel³⁹

¹ Jim Taylor, “The Woman Who Founded the ‘Incel’ Movement,” BBC, August 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45284455>.

² Jim Taylor, “The Woman Who Founded the ‘Incel’ Movement,” BBC, August 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45284455>.

³ Jim Taylor, “The Woman Who Founded the ‘Incel’ Movement,” BBC, August 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45284455>.

⁴ Zack Beauchamp, “Incel, the Misogynist Ideology That Inspired the Deadly Toronto Attack, Explained,” Vox, April 25, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/4/25/17277496/incele-toronto-attack-alek-minassian>; Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2020, 6, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200612_Jones_DomesticTerrorism_v6.pdf; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566–567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

⁵ Zack Beauchamp, “Incel, the Misogynist Ideology That Inspired the Deadly Toronto Attack, Explained,” Vox, April 25, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/4/25/17277496/incele-toronto-attack-alek-minassian>.

⁶ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 568, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

⁷ Zack Beauchamp, “Incel, the Misogynist Ideology That Inspired the Deadly Toronto Attack, Explained,” Vox, April 25, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/4/25/17277496/incele-toronto-attack-alek-minassian>.

⁸ Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2020, 6, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200612_Jones_DomesticTerrorism_v6.pdf; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 572–573, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

⁹ Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2020, 2, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200612_Jones_DomesticTerrorism_v6.pdf.

¹⁰ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

¹¹ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

¹² Zack Beauchamp, “Our Incel Problem,” Vox, April 23, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incele-definition-reddit>.

¹³ Zack Beauchamp, “Our Incel Problem,” Vox, April 23, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incele-definition-reddit>.

¹⁴ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

¹⁵ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

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- ¹⁷ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 574, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.
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- ²¹ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 577, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.
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- ²³ Rebecca Jennings, "Incels Categorize Women by Personal Style and Attractiveness," Vox, April 28, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/4/28/17290256/incel-chad-stacy-becky>; Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan, "From 'Incel' to 'Saint': Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (August 2019, volume and issue numbers not listed): 8, https://www.academia.edu/40502231/article_with_L_Brace_and_T_Coan_From_Incel_to_Saint_Analyzing_the_violent_worldview_behind_the_2018_Toronto_attack.
- ²⁴ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.
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- ²⁶ "Elliot Rodger: How Misogynist Killer Became 'Incel Hero,'" BBC, April 26, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43892189>; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.
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- ³³ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 568, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.
- ³⁴ Elliot Rodger, *My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger* (self-pub., 2014), 117, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1173808-elliott-rodger-manifesto.html>.
- ³⁵ Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan, "From 'Incel' to 'Saint': Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (August 2019, volume and issue numbers not listed): 13–14, https://www.academia.edu/40502231/article_with_L_Brace_and_T_Coan_From_Incel_to_Saint_Analyzing_the_violent_worldview_behind_the_2018_Toronto_attack.
- ³⁶ Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan, "From 'Incel' to 'Saint': Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (August 2019, volume and issue numbers not listed): 13, https://www.academia.edu/40502231/article_with_L_Brace_and_T_Coan_From_Incel_to_Saint_Analyzing_the_violent_worldview_behind_the_2018_Toronto_attack.
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Key Leaders

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History:

- March 3, 2021:** Alek Minassian, who drove a rented van along a busy street in Toronto in 2018, killing 10 people—eight of them women, is found guilty on 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder.
 Minassian reportedly told police that his attack was a mission for the incel movement. Minassian is sentenced to life in prison on June 13, 2022. Source: Adam Carter, “Judge finds Toronto van attack killer guilty of murder,” CBC, March 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/van-attack-trial-decision-1.5933687>; “Toronto van attacker sentenced to life in prison,” BBC News, June 13, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61792730>.
- September 30, 2019:** Reddit bans r/braincels, a new incel-focused forum created after r/incels was banned in 2017.
 Source: Adam Carter, “Judge finds Toronto van attack killer guilty of murder,” CBC, March 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/van-attack-trial-decision-1.5933687>.
- November 7, 2017:** Reddit bans r/incel for violating its new policies against content calling for violence or advocating physical harm.
 Users subsequently create a new incel-focused subreddit, r/braincels. Sources: Christine Hauser, “Reddit Bans ‘Incel’ Group for Inciting Violence against Women,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/technology/incels-reddit-banned.html>; Kelly Gothard, Peter S. Dodds, Christopher M. Danforth, “Exploring Incel Language and Subreddit Activity on Reddit,” UVM CEMS Honors Thesis, 14, <https://cdanfort.w3.uvm.edu/research/kelly-gothard-undergraduate-thesis.pdf>.
- Reddit users create the subreddit r/incels, an incel-focused forum on the site.
 The new forum was established after Reddit banned their previous subreddit, r/truencels. Sources: Kelly Gothard, Peter S. Dodds, Christopher M. Danforth, “Exploring Incel Language and Subreddit Activity on Reddit,” UVM CEMS Honors Thesis, 14, <https://cdanfort.w3.uvm.edu/research/kelly-gothard-undergraduate-thesis.pdf>; u/pepemon, “r/truencels has finally been quarantined!” r/BluePill, July 5, 2016, https://www.reddit.com/r/TheBluePill/comments/4rt7g1/rtruencels_has_finally_been_quarantined/.
- A female undergraduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, starts a website called “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project,” hoping to provide a friendly place for people who struggle with dating to talk with one another.
 Source: Jim Taylor, “The Woman Who Founded the ‘Incel’ Movement,” BBC, August 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45284455>; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 566, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

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Violent history:

According to an April 2020 study by Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, incel violence has manifested itself through both personal grievances and politically motivated acts of terrorism.⁴⁰ The authors argue that, while incel ideology is not explicitly political, its core beliefs seek to oppress specific groups, most notably women, and the violent acts carried out by its supporters are intended to have wide-ranging societal consequences.⁴¹ An August 2019 study argued that incel ideology embraces the same ingroup/outgroup dichotomy observed in other terrorist groups' beliefs, viewing themselves as an oppressed ingroup that must be "restored to the initially better position thanks to a radical overthrow."⁴²

Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro identify four types of such violence connected to the incel ideology: "Clear incel-motivated terrorist attacks; attacks with mixed motives that evidence incel ideological influences; acts of targeted violence perpetrated by self-professed involuntary celibates; and ex post-facto inceldom."⁴³ Not including ex post-facto attacks—that is, attacks carried out prior to the advent of online incel communities, but whose attackers have since been adopted by incels as one of their own—at least 11 incel-related violent attacks that have occurred in North America since 2014, killing nearly 50 people.

- **February 13, 2021:** Malik Sanchez sits down in a New York City restaurant and says loudly, "Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar. Bomb detonation in two, in two minutes. I take you with me and I kill all you. I kill all you right now. And I kill all you for Allah. . . . I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna fucking do it for Allah. I'm gonna do it, for, Allah, Allah, Allahu Akbar. Come on. I do it, bomb now, bomb now." After two women leave, Sanchez says, "Yo, all of them scattered" and "Holy shit boys. That was fucking five stars. That was five stars." Sanchez leaves the restaurant before police arrive. He uploads a video of the incident to the Internet. He had previously uploaded a February 7 video of himself yelling at women in the street about his "incel rage" and support for Elliot Rodger. He captioned that video INCEL ARMY RISE UP." On March 20, Sanchez posts another video of himself harassing women at a New York restaurant, mimicking a gun and again shouting support for the Incel Movement and Rodger. Sanchez sprays pepper spray in the face of an individual who intervenes. Police arrest Sanchez on April 14 in relation to the February 13 incident. He is charged with conveying false and misleading information and hoaxes. Sanchez self-identifies as an Incel.⁴⁴
- **June 3, 2020:** 26-year-old Alex Stavropoulos stabs a mother in the neck while trying to kill her infant child in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. Stavropoulos self-identifies as an incel and told police, "I like white women, but they won't fuck me. So, I wanted to see what it felt like (to kill a female child) . . . I had my mindset. I was going to kill a child and was waiting for the right opportunity." Stavropoulos had previously been arrested in April 2018 after threatening transit workers with a knife while yelling "white power."⁴⁵
- **May 20, 2020:** 20-year-old Armando Hernandez livestreams his shooting spree at a mall in Glendale, Arizona, where he specifically targeted couples in what he said was retaliation for being rejected by women. Three people are wounded.⁴⁶
- **February 24, 2020:** A 17-year-old male kills a woman and wounds another woman and a man in an attack at a massage parlor in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Police identify him as an incel and say the attack is an act of terrorism.⁴⁷
- **April 21, 2019:** 24-year-old Emmanuel Aranda throws a 5-year-old boy off a third-floor balcony at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota. Aranda tells police that he had come to the mall intending to kill someone because "for several years [he] had made efforts to talk to women in the Mall, but had been rejected, and the rejection caused him to lash out and be aggressive." Aranda had previously been thrown out of the mall for throwing water at a woman.⁴⁸
- **November 2, 2018:** 40-year-old Army veteran Scott Beierle kills two women at a yoga study in Tallahassee, Florida, before killing himself. Beierle had a long history of posting misogynistic videos on YouTube and self-identified as an incel.⁴⁹
- **April 23, 2018:** 25-year-old Alek Minassian kills 10 people—eight of them women—by ramming into them with his car in Toronto. Another victim dies more than three years later from injuries sustained during the attack. Just prior to the attack, Minassian posted on social media "Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacy's! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!" On March 3, 2021, Minassian is found guilty on 26 charges related to the attack. On June 13, 2022, Minassian is sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole for 25 years.⁵⁰
- **February 14, 2018:** Former student Nikolas Cruz kills 17 people—eight girls, six boys, and three male staff members—at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Like Atchison, Cruz did not explicitly identify as an incel but had expressed praise online for Elliot Rodger and his 2014 attack.⁵¹
- **December 7, 2017:** 21-year-old former student William Atchison kills two students, a girl and a boy, at Aztec High School in Aztec, New Mexico. Atchison did not explicitly self-identify as an incel, but his online persona was "Elliot Rodger" and he had repeatedly praised the terrorist.⁵²

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- **July 31, 2016:** Security guard Sheldon Bentley kills a homeless man by stomping on him while at work in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Prosecutors state that Bentley “seems to put himself into the category of an involuntary celibate person” as he spoke often about his anger over being single and celibate and that his frustration is what led him to act violently.⁵³
- **October 1, 2015:** 26-year-old Christopher Harper-Mercer kills nine people at Oregon’s Umpqua Community College, which he attended. He leaves behind a manifesto in which he said, “[My] whole life has been one lonely enterprise. One loss after another. And here I am 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things.” He also described Elliot Rodger as “[standing] with the gods.”⁵⁴
- **May 23, 2014:** 22-year-old Elliot Rodger kills six people near the University of California Santa Barbara, California, after planning an attack for more than two years. After stabbing to death his two roommates and their friend, Rodger attempts to enter a sorority house and kill the women inside. Failing to get into the house, he begins driving through the city and shooting 16 more people, killing three, including two women. Rodger leaves behind a 141-page manifesto in which he bemoaned his virginity, called women “vicious, stupid, cruel animals who take delight in my suffering and starvation,” and advocated systemically raping them.⁵⁵
- **August 2009:** George Sodini kills three women at an LA Fitness gym in Collier Township, Pennsylvania, after writing extensive blogposts about his hatred for the “30 million women who rejected” him. He is considered a hero on incel forums by the time Elliot Rodger conducts his attack in 2014.⁵⁶
- **December 1989:** Canadian anti-feminist Marc Lepine kills 14 women at his university, the École Polytechnique de Montréal. He is later considered a hero by incels.⁵⁷

⁴⁰ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 568, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

⁴¹ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

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⁴³ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 569, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

⁴⁴ U.S. Attorney’s Office Southern District of New York, “New York City Man Arrested For Carrying Out Hoax Bomb Threat At Manhattan Restaurant,” U.S. Department of Justice, April 14, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr-new-york-city-man-arrested-carrying-out-hoax-bomb-threat-manhattan-restaurant>.

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Toronto Sun, January 14, 2020, <https://torontosun.com/news/provincial/sudbury-incel-attacker-told-cops-i-was-going-to-kill-a-child>.

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⁵⁰ Zack Beauchamp, “Incel, the Misogynist Ideology That Inspired the Deadly Toronto Attack, Explained,” *Vox*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/4/25/17277496/incel-toronto-attack-alek-minassian>; Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2020, 6, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200612_Jones_DomesticTerrorism_v6.pdf; Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 570, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>; “Toronto van attacker sentenced to life in prison,” *BBC News*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61792730>; “Toronto van attack: Minassian guilty of killing 10 people,” *BBC News*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56269095>.

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Associations:

Far-Right Groups

A January 2020 study on anti-women ideologies found four general categories of right-wing, anti-feminist beliefs propagated in online communities dubbed the Manosphere: “Pick Up Artists (PUAs), Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and Involuntary Celibates (incels).”⁵⁸ The study found that all of these groups had overlapping membership, and that the first two have diminished in popularity in recent years while the latter two categories have grown more militant and sexist in their rhetoric.⁵⁹ According to a 2019 report by the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, all the groups have been integrated into the alt-right movement, with incels becoming “part of a growing trend of radical-right movements that are anguished by the success of neoliberalism,” and particularly regarding feminism and immigration.⁶⁰

Incels and the far-right also find common ground in their racism and anti-Semitism. Rodger engages in many racist tirades in his manifesto, at one point writing, “How could an inferior, ugly black boy be able to get a white girl and not me? I am beautiful, and I am half white myself. I am descended from British aristocracy. He is descended from slaves.”⁶¹ Incel forums are likewise full of anti-Semitic comments, with many users accusing Jews of controlling society and aiding in the social decay that has helped lead to women-empowerment movements.⁶²

The incel and far-right communities have increasingly intermingled online, and attackers have regularly referenced both groups. Nikolas Cruz, who killed 17 people at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, carved swastikas into the gun magazines he used in his attack, while William Atchison, who killed two people at Aztec High School in Aztec, New Mexico, regularly posted anti-Semitic rants on the gaming platform Steam. Both Cruz and Atchison praised Rodger for his 2014 attack.⁶³ Several far-right terrorists have also echoed incel beliefs in justifying their attacks. The July 2018 Munich shooter was a close friend of incel attacker Alek Minassian. The August 2019 Norway attacker referenced incel memes in his manifesto. While livestreaming his attack, the October 2019 Halle, Germany, gunman claimed he was driven to violence by immigrants who prevented him from getting a girlfriend and accused feminism of destroying the West; and the February 2020 Hanau, Germany, gunman specified in his manifesto that he had never had a relationship.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Manoel Horta Ribeiro, Jeremy Blackburn, Barry Bradlyn, Emiliano De Cristofaro, Gianluca Stringhini, Summer Long, Stephanie Greenberg, and Savvas Zannettou, “From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere,” preprint, submitted January 21, 2020 and last revised August 30, 2020, 1, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2001.07600.pdf>.

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⁶² Zack Beauchamp, “Our Incel Problem,” Vox, April 23, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit>.

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Rhetoric:

User 'Aizen1418' post on Incels.net, October 4, 2020

"Does this piss anyone else off? Every time I pass by NYU in nyc I see hot white chicks with black guys or asian guys in public. There is a kink site I frequent and I see them there too, but white women seem to be more down with black guys judging by the sex videos. Meanwhile, I as a clean, average, healthy spanish guy that's a bit nerdy. I've had to settle with sex workers to get rid of my urges, masturbation doesn't cut it anymore. But if I see these wh*res, then I feel like crap. Money I could've spent on something better instead on some low-life wh*re that fucks randos constantly for money. It irritates me so much. Sometimes I fantasize about killing these c*nts. Without getting caught, but it's not easy."⁶⁵

User 'KoolHitler' post on Incels.net, October 3, 2020

"As far as humans are concerned, western Europeans are top tier. Mixing lower ra?es with the higher ra?es always causes problems. The lower ra?es love it, because they want to benefit from societies built by top tier whites. But once the lower ra?es become dominant in numbers, the societies will crumble and turn to ?hit.

"High tier ra?es: Anglo, Germanic, Scandinavian, Italian, Celtic, Japanese & Korean.

"Mid-tier: Arabs, Semites, Chinese, South Asian, Siberian, North African, Hispanic.

"Low-tier: Sub-Saharan African (negro), Caribbean, Aborigines."⁶⁶

User 'Sweedee' post on Incel.co, November 21, 2019

"going ER [Elliot Rodger] as a lone wolf seems cooler tbh [to be honest]"⁶⁷

User 'Purveyoroftruth' post on Incel.co, November 21, 2019

"I would rather become a secret thot [derogatory term for women] killer than to admit defeat and off myself."⁶⁸

User 'Princel' post on Incel.co, November 3, 2019

"the guy [Scott Beierle] was in the military and only got 2 kills. i thought his trainin would make him plan to be as deadly as possible. wtf he just zerg rushed the yoga studio and some cuck fought him with a broom. a real soldier would plan better. he lit a fire inside and pull the fire alarm and wait outside at the entrance. the muslims would panick thinkin theres a fire and rush out then he would unleash while theyre fightin to get thru the front door. the enemy would run back inside and try to escpae through the back but the soldier barricaded it. now that the enemys trapped inside the building he can stalk and finish the muslims who threaten americas safety."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Aizen1418, "Seeing beautiful young white women with ghetto/unattractive guys," Incels.net, October 4, 2020, 7:58 a.m. Quote reproduced as written.

⁶⁶ KoolHitler, "Mass immigration = more incels," Incels.net, October 3, 2020, 4:52pm.

⁶⁷ Sweedee, "I'd Rather Join a Suicult than Go ER," Incels.co, November 21, 2019, 10:42 a.m.

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⁶⁹ Princel, "Happy St. Yogacel day bro's," Incels.co, November 3, 2019, 12:44 pm. Quote reproduced as written.