

“Incels” need mental health support rather than a counter terrorism intervention, the world’s largest study of Incels finds.

A ground-breaking study has discovered the complex relationship between mental health, a shared worldview and the social networking of involuntary celibate (incel) communities.

The Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) commissioned the Swansea University Research on the Incel Community (SURIC) to produce this report. This is the largest global study of incels to date.

Key findings:

- The answer to the incel phenomenon is more closely aligned to **mental health support** than **counter terrorism interventions**.
- **Mental Health:** Incels typically display extremely poor mental health, with high incidences of **depression** and **suicidal thoughts** (one in five incels contemplated suicide every day for the past two weeks). They are also more likely to be neurodivergent, with a higher likelihood of diagnosis for **autism spectrum disorder**.
- **Attitudes and Beliefs:** Participants perceived high levels of **victimhood**, **anger**, and **misogyny**. They acknowledged a shared worldview among incels which includes identifying **feminists** as a primary enemy. They also identified the political (far) left, wider society and women as enemies.
- **Approval of violence:** There exists a small cohort (5%) who ‘endorse the use of violence to defend their community. When asked if they justify violence against people that incels perceive as causing harm to them, **5%** of respondents said ‘**Often**’. Around 20% said “Sometimes”.
- **Political beliefs:** Many commentators have suggested a link between incels and the far right. However, this survey found that incels were politically **centre-left** on average. The exception was the 5% who agreed that violence against individuals that that cause incels harm is often justified; these individuals were politically **centre-right**.
- **Predicting harm: Mental Health** and adoption of incel **Ideology** were significantly more likely to predict the development of harmful views than **Social Networking** (time spent on social network sites, amount of interaction with others, content generation, and exposure to radical people and content).

Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Robin Simcox said:

“What incels truly think and believe has been the source of consistent speculation and conjecture. However, all of us – including those who work in counter extremism – should be led by the evidence.

This study is the most exhaustive research into incels yet and provides a major challenge to conventional wisdoms on the topic. It is no surprise to see the authors uncovered alarming and unacceptable attitudes of misogyny and hatred towards women from incels.

However, the report's findings suggest that adopting a security or counter-terrorism lens towards incels is not often going to be the most appropriate response. Neither is scaremongering about them forming part of a global Extreme Right Wing threat.

Where there is a risk of violence, the appropriate authorities must always be informed. However, finding ways to ensure this desperate, depressed cohort of men, often with poor mental health, are integrated into society and given appropriate support should also be a key part of any response."

ENDS

Notes to editors

- *Predicting Harm Among Incels (Involuntary Celibates): The Roles of Mental Health, Ideological Belief and Social Networking* will be published on the CCE website at 9am on Thursday 15 February.
- This research was published as part of the CCE's 'Rethinking Extremism' series, to present innovative and thought-provoking research to government, counter-extremism professionals, and the wider public. It forms part of a wider CCE approach to providing advice and scrutiny to government on the approaches needed to counter extremism.
- The research was undertaken by Dr Joe Whittaker, Dr Andrew G. Thomas and William Costello from the Swansea University Research on the Incel Community (SURIC).
- We were notified of an error in the report and the accompanying press release and have amended them accordingly. The report originally stated that "one in three incels contemplated suicide every day for the past two weeks". This figure has now been amended to "one in five".
- For further information, please contact info@counteringextremism.gov.uk