

# Misogyny, Hostile Beliefs and the Transmission of Extremism: A Comparison of the Far-Right in the UK and Australia

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## INTRODUCTION

Far-right extremism is not only on the rise in both the UK and Australia; it is rapidly becoming a primary security threat for both countries. Studies suggest that gender identity and gender ideology are connected to extremism and terrorism – including far-right extremism – and that prevention strategies should consider the gendered dimensions of radicalisation, recruitment, and participation in extremist groups. Yet, less research has been devoted to critically examining the transnational spread of extremism across online channels and offline sites and the degree to which this transmission spreads gender ideology, misogyny, and violent beliefs.

Comparing the current threat of far-right extremism in the UK and Australia, this project examines the role of online channels in promoting gender ideology and misogyny across transnational networks on *three layers*:

- **Layer one:** the general far-right concepts that frame both supporter beliefs and roles, offering them a ‘sense of meaning’ that shapes how they participate in the movement
- **Layer two:** in-group dynamics, with particular focus on how women and men are positioned within the group itself and their roles
- **Layer three:** misogynistic views and hostile/sexist beliefs held and espoused at the individual level



## METHODOLOGY

Using a mixed-methods approach, we conducted a quantitative corpus linguistics analysis of language in far-right online forums, used by both UK and Australia far-right actors, in relation to concepts of gender ideology and identity. This analysis was then followed by a qualitative thematic analysis/ case study of comments in relation to the identified concepts of the gendered language used on such platforms.

- Quantitative corpus linguistics analysis: using SketchEngine and AntConc software, each dataset was compared to neutral text to determine statistical differences in the frequency of keywords used between the two bodies of text.
- Qualitative thematic analysis/ case study of comments in relation to the identified concepts of gendered language used on such platforms based on a manual selection of discussion threads.

## OVERVIEW

### MISOGYNY, HOSTILE BELIEFS AND THE TRANSMISSION OF EXTREMISM

We examined word frequencies in the two datasets and identified relevant terms regarding gender ideology and other thematic areas that stood out in both the UK and Australia corpora. This included analysing the absolute frequency of words as well as comparing the two corpora to a corpus of neutral English language used on the internet to identify which words were used more often in the examined far-right channels and discussion boards than in general English-language discourse on the internet.

In addition, we identified keywords relating to concepts of gender ideology from existing research on the topic, including language used in men's rights movements. These keywords were organised on three levels, as outlined above, and their prevalence in the reference corpora was examined to determine how common these expressions of misogyny and gender power relations were.

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## KEY FINDINGS

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Serving as potential motivators for extremism amongst the far-right, a typology of gendered narratives, which includes appeals to *female control*, *female compliance*, *anti-feminism*, *the 'ideal Man'*, *hyper-masculine 'brothers-in-arms'*, *men's rights*, and *'the patriot 'hero'*, was established. Using this typology as a framework, the project assessed the types of gendered narratives and ideological constructs that are specifically espoused across both UK and Australian online channels to ascertain how prevalent common expressions of misogyny and gender power relations were across the three layers being examined.

Layer one found that the politicised, gendered ideologies amongst the far-right do in fact exist, with certain communities directly espousing misogyny as part of their ideological outlook. These gendered ideologies play a role in the crafting of narratives and recruitment strategies, and frame beliefs and roles that provide a sense of meaning, in turn shaping adherents participation.

To assess whether gender power relations were also promoted, in layer two we examined in-group dynamics to see whether women were positioned in the outgroup or a sub-in group. This analysis provided the means to examine how both women and men are positioned within the examined organisations and how their roles are ideologically justified by some across the far-right spectrum. Some identified words in this layer of research, particularly in terms of 'traditional' family structures were much less frequent in the discourse than the words that were identified for layer one (such as 'tradwife' and 'housewife'), suggesting that while far-right communities may engage in hostile misogynistic discourse it may not always be as explicitly stated as one would assume. But importantly, the underwriting logic included in many far-right online posts still do indicate a gendered, specifically, misogynistic belief structure. For instance, even though it may not be explicitly stated, traditional family structures and the role of women as carers and mothers are consistent thematic occurrences in the online posting of far-right actors. In part, this is seen in imagery, rather than words, that promote these values as well as the promotion of a specific solution to identified concerns, that being the reproduction of the pure white race.

Finally, we revealed that misogynistic views and hostile/sexist beliefs espoused at the individual level are not only present, but that these misogynistic views and gendered narratives impact on the gender expectations for men at the individual level- including how they need to behave and look in the movement as men, the constant promotion of masculine traits, and in some cases how they need to behave towards women.

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## IMPLICATIONS

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Our project found limited evidence of *direct exchanges* between members of the groups and channels in the two respective countries. However, it nonetheless revealed overt similarities in the *gendered narratives* – including *gendered threat narratives* – that were promoted in the discourse in both countries. Even though some outgroups differ in the UK and Australia contexts, many of the gendered threat narratives were the same. *What this*

*suggests is that gendered narratives present an effective mode of transmission even absent of direct engagement between individuals from these two environments, and that misogyny presents a unifying element across different local contexts.* For example, while the demonised out-groups may vary depending on the ethnic groups that are strongly represented in the migration profiles of local contexts, race mixing was seen as a common threat. Moreover, the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community as a sexualised threat as well as the opposition to feminism and race-mixing were a clear threat across contexts. Furthermore, another shared element across both the UK and Australian contexts was that offline sites and activities can further reinforce gendered narratives and hostile purported online amongst the far-right, and that concepts of masculinity were overtly reinforced in these spaces. For example, this was particularly evident in the promotion of specific physical images and the prominence of this in relation to gyms across contexts.

Our findings have implications for existing P/CVE policy and strategy, given that gendered narratives espoused online by far-right communities in both the UK and Australia have offline spill overs. The impact of the online/offline intersection of communication throughout narratives can be used to promote and legitimise violence and misogynistic messages towards women. Our findings suggest some important considerations for thinking about how to make existing threat assessment models more gender responsive. It is also essential to ensure more evidence be gathered. This further necessitates a focus on increasing knowledge of the impact of gender identities and ideologies, such as those identified in this report, and how they play a role in the formation and transmission of violent ideological motivation – and, thus, why it is important to assess them.

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This summary comes from part of a CREST project, which examines the role of online channels in amplifying gender ideology and misogyny across transnational networks.. To read the Full Report this Executive Summary was produced from, as well as other outputs from this project, visit our website: [www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/misogyny-hostile-beliefs-and-transmission-of-extremism/](http://www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/misogyny-hostile-beliefs-and-transmission-of-extremism/)

CREST is funded by the UK's Home Office and security and intelligence agencies to identify and produce social science that enhances their understanding of security threats and capacity to counter them. Its funding is administered by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC Award ES/V002775/1).