

# Deciphering incels and the manosphere: a glossary

If you watch Netflix's *Adolescence* (2025) – a crime drama about a murder driven by incel sub-culture – and are left scratching your head on what the symbols and terms mean, here is a guide to the manosphere.

## WHAT IS THE MANOSPHERE?

**Manosphere:** A loose collection of online anti-feminist and misogynistic communities. The manosphere includes incels, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), men's rights activists and pick-up artists (PUAs).

• **Incels:** Short for "involuntarily celibate". A group of mostly men who blame society, feminism and genetics for their inability to form romantic or sexual relationships.

• **MGTOW:** Men Going Their Own Way, who advocate for male separatism from women and no romantic relationships with them.

• **Men's rights activists:** Activists who seek legal and political changes they believe will address perceived discrimination against men.

• **PUAs:** Pick-up artists who seek to manipulate women into sex by learning "game" techniques.

## VOCABULARY OF THE MANOSPHERE



**Red pill:** Borrowed from the science-fiction film *The Matrix* (1999). Being "red pill" means "awakening" to the "truth" that feminism has corrupted society and disadvantaged men. Someone who is red pill claims to see through what he believes are societal deceptions about gender relations. All manosphere groups subscribe to some degree of red-pill thinking.



**Black pill:** A nihilistic extension of red-pill thinking that claims some men are biologically destined to fail in relationships due to unchangeable traits, such as their height and facial features.



**80/20 rule:** The belief that 80 per cent of women pursue only the "top" 20 per cent of men, forcing the remaining men to compete for the "bottom" 20 per cent of women. Originally an economic principle, it is co-opted by the manosphere to justify the necessity of manipulative and deceptive behaviour towards women.



**Finger-pinching conspiracy theory:** An anti-feminist conspiracy theory originating in South Korea that there is a deliberate plot to spread and promote hatred of men through symbolic hand gestures, and that radical feminist groups have propagated these hidden messages to humiliate men with small sexual organs.

**Negging:** A manipulation technique using subtle insults or backhanded compliments to undermine someone's confidence and increase one's need for validation.



### Alphas, Betas, Omegas, Sigmas:

A pseudo-scientific hierarchy system applied to men. Alphas are seen as dominant and successful. Betas are seen as weak and submissive. Omegas are men at the bottom of the hierarchy. Sigmas are lone wolves that operate outside social hierarchies.

### Looks-, gym-, money-, status-maxxing:

Increasing your dating success through improving your looks, fitness, wealth or social status.



**Mogging:** To "mog" someone is to dominate, outclass or overshadow that person, typically in terms of physical appearance or social status. Being "mogged" means being outshone or upstaged by someone else.

**Awalt:** All Women Are Like That, a generalisation suggesting that all women share negative behavioural traits.



**Hypergamy:** The belief that women naturally seek partners of higher social, economic or physical status.



**Chads, Stacys, Beckys:** Archetypes primarily used in incel communities. Chads are stereotypically attractive and successful men who have access to multiple female partners. Stacys are attractive women who date only Chads. Beckys are women who are average in appearance, aspiring to date Chads but settling for Betas.

## OTHER TERMS USED BY THE MANOSPHERE



**The "OK" symbol:** While mostly harmless, the sign has been appropriated by the far right to signify white supremacy. It was used by the perpetrator of the Christchurch mosque attack in New Zealand in 2019, which left 51 dead.

**Cuck:** Though originally referring to a man whose partner is unfaithful, the term is now broadly used as an insult implying weakness or submissiveness.



**Catfishing:** Creating a fake social media profile for the purposes of abusing or defrauding an individual online.

**Simp:** A derogatory term for men perceived as excessively attentive or submissive to women, especially when seeking romantic or sexual attention.



**Friendzone:** The concept that someone has been relegated to "just friends" status when he desires a romantic or sexual relationship.



**JB/Jailbait:** Referring to someone under the age of consent who is seen as sexually attractive.

**Dark Triad:** Used in psychology to refer to three personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. In manosphere communities, these traits are sometimes glorified as characteristics that supposedly make men attractive to women.



**White knight:** A pejorative term for men who defend women online or speak out against misogyny, implying they do so only to gain female approval.