# Netflix's 'Adolescence' sparks debate on toxic masculinity and youth culture



A new Netflix series titled "Adolescence" has ignited a significant conversation around the themes of toxic masculinity and the influences of online culture on disaffected young men. The four-part drama, co-written and created by Stephen Graham, follows 13-year-old Jamie Miller, portrayed by Owen Cooper, who becomes embroiled in a web of violence and deceit after being accused of murdering a female classmate. The series examines the darker aspects of masculinity, including misogyny and incel culture, which have raised alarms among experts and campaigners alike.

Colin MacFarlane, the National Programme Director at YMCA, noted that the troubling themes illustrated in "Adolescence" have stark parallels with real-life issues faced by young males today. Speaking to the Daily Record, he highlighted the impact of the “manosphere,” a term for online forums and websites fostering toxic masculinity, emphasising that many young boys are grappling with harmful content without access to a healthier narrative. “From our research and of the youths we spoke to, everyone has heard of toxic masculinity but nobody has heard of positive or healthy masculinity," he stated, calling for adult understanding of young people's online experiences to catalyse change.

The series has drawn attention for its portrayal of the difficulties faced by young men, often positioned unfairly as societal villains. MacFarlane stressed that there need to be avenues for addressing these challenges before young people are led down destructive paths: “At the moment, young men are seen as the 'big bad'. They are the perpetrators of crime but nobody talks about the fact that they are also victims of those crimes."

David Paton from the Kingdom Off Road Motorcycle Club echoed this sentiment, describing a need for safe spaces for young people to engage in meaningful conversations about life and citizenship. He described the task of redirecting disaffected youths as "massive," but asserted it is essential to prevent them from getting involved in violence or hatred.

A Scottish Government spokesperson acknowledged the pressing nature of the issues highlighted by "Adolescence," asserting that over £4 million has been invested in activities to prevent violence in the last two years. They also mentioned a new youth violence campaign aimed at encouraging young people to report incidents of violence or weapon possession, while over £683,000 has been allocated this year to enhance community-based youth work.

Simultaneously, "Adolescence" has raised concerns regarding the use of emojis among children and teenagers, as pointed out by Amit Kalley, a former deputy headteacher. The series includes a scene in which the hidden meanings of emojis linked to the "manosphere" are uncovered. This has prompted Kalley to stress the disconnect between parents’ and teachers' understanding of current youth culture and the risks posed by it. Kalley asserted that many adults lack knowledge about the implications of the new digital language, as many emojis are laden with meanings that indicate misogyny and incel ideologies.

The drama’s interactions related to online behaviour, including references to notorious figures like Andrew Tate, have been described by various experts as crucial for fostering conversations around youth and online radicalisation. Dr Caroline Boyd, a clinical psychologist, urged that societal structures must address the rising male rage and misogyny, noting, “It’s the ordinariness of Jamie’s family — and the realisation that a combination of dangerous influences along with bad luck could make this about any one of us – that make it so harrowing.”

Graham himself has said that the motivation behind creating "Adolescence" stemmed from a deep concern for societal trends, highlighting instances where young boys have committed serious crimes against young girls. “I just couldn’t fathom it. So I wanted to really have a look and try to shine a light on this particular thing,” he stated, indicating his desire to explore the roots of such violent incidents within the framework of contemporary society.

"Adolescence" thus not only serves as a dramatic exploration of youth struggles but also sparks a wider dialogue about the intersections of masculinity, youth culture, and online influences, which are increasingly relevant in today's context.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/adolescence-netflix-toxic-masculinity-teenage-boys-13873353.html> - This article supports the claim that 'Adolescence' explores themes of toxic masculinity and its impact on young men, highlighting the show's portrayal of these issues and their resonance with audiences.
* <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2025/03/20/adolescence-how-young-men-are-being-radicalised-by-social-media> - This article corroborates the influence of social media and figures like Andrew Tate on young men, as depicted in 'Adolescence', and discusses the show's potential for sparking change.
* <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Culture/adolescence-netflix-limited-series/story?id=119968581> - This piece supports the exploration of masculinity and incel culture in 'Adolescence', highlighting the show's impact on conversations about youth and online radicalization.
* <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/adolescence-netflix-toxic-masculinity-teenage-boys-13873353.html> - This article further explains the concept of toxic masculinity and its portrayal in 'Adolescence', emphasizing its relevance to contemporary societal issues.
* <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2025/03/20/adolescence-how-young-men-are-being-radicalised-by-social-media> - This article highlights the UK Prime Minister's support for showing 'Adolescence' in schools to address toxic culture, underscoring the show's potential for educational impact.
* <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Culture/adolescence-netflix-limited-series/story?id=119968581> - This article discusses the creators' intentions behind 'Adolescence', including their desire to explore the pressures on young men and the need for societal change.