# Study reveals incel culture’s embrace of unemployment as identity marker



The critically acclaimed Netflix drama *Adolescence* has brought significant attention to the incel phenomenon, or “involuntary celibacy,” a predominantly male online subculture that struggles to find romantic or sexual partners. This community often defines its identity through the lens of perceived unattractiveness, leading to a cycle of frustration and isolation.

A recent study from McGill University dives deep into this subculture, analysing over 1,200 online comments from incel forums to shed light on their attitudes towards employment. The findings suggest that while many incels face significant mental health challenges that hinder their ability to work, a notable segment actively embraces unemployment as part of their identity. The researchers found that some participants believe lack of a female partner renders work meaningless. This notion is further propagated within these forums, where members often assess each other's commitment to the incel identity based on their employment status.

Eran Shor, a sociologist involved in the study, noted that forum discussions often glorify NEET status—“Not in Employment, Education, or Training”—as a mark of authenticity among incels. Those aiming to improve their situations through work or study are frequently dismissed as "fakecels," reinforcing a culture that not only normalises unemployment but also stifles the desire to change. Shor emphasises the importance of understanding how these beliefs are formed, positing that to assist these individuals effectively, society must address the deeper alienation and distress characteristic of many incels.

This rejection of employment is tied not just to a culture of contempt for traditional success metrics, but also to pervasive issues of mental health. Other studies, including those highlighting the life satisfaction levels of incels, illustrate a stark reality: many experience elevated loneliness and mental health issues compared to their non-incel counterparts. Reluctance to seek mental health support—often due to mistrust of professionals and perceived stigma—compounds their struggles. The need for tailored mental health interventions has never been clearer, as advocates call for resources specifically designed to meet the needs of this vulnerable population.

Initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of incel ideology are emerging, such as Arizona State University’s Kindness Empowers Youth (K.E.Y.) programme. This initiative targets younger individuals, fostering emotional intelligence and self-worth, thereby reducing the likelihood of developing harmful beliefs associated with the incel community. By shifting the focus to early intervention, there is optimism that such programs can mitigate the factors that lead to incel identification.

The complexities surrounding incel identity extend into broader discussions of masculinity and societal expectations. Long-term change, experts argue, necessitates a shift in cultural narratives. Rather than ostracising incels or resorting to punitive measures, a more constructive approach would involve creating pathways for reintegration into society. This may include employment training, educational initiatives, and community-building efforts that encourage personal growth rather than isolation.

In conclusion, the intersection of mental health and incel culture presents significant challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted strategy that engages with the psychological and social dimensions of the incel experience. By fostering environments of support and understanding, society may begin to alleviate the sense of alienation felt by these individuals and help them forge more fulfilling lives.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1
2. Paragraph 2: 1
3. Paragraph 3: 1, 2
4. Paragraph 4: 2, 4
5. Paragraph 5: 3
6. Paragraph 6: 5, 7
7. Conclusion: 6

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.miragenews.com/research-explores-incels-aversion-to-work-and-1459512/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363484489_Levels_of_Well-Being_Among_Men_Who_Are_Incel_Involuntarily_Celibate> - This study examines the well-being of men who identify as involuntary celibates (incels). It highlights that incels often experience low levels of life satisfaction, increased loneliness, and higher rates of mental health issues compared to non-incels. The research suggests that these individuals are reluctant to seek mental health support, possibly due to mistrust of the system and financial barriers. The findings emphasize the need for targeted mental health interventions to address the unique challenges faced by the incel community.
3. <https://news.asu.edu/20200716-confronting-incel-isolation-it-starts> - Arizona State University's Kindness Empowers Youth (K.E.Y.) program aims to prevent incel-related violence by teaching emotional intelligence and healthy coping skills to elementary school students. The program focuses on fostering empathy and self-worth to address the root causes of incel ideology, such as social isolation and feelings of inadequacy. By intervening early, K.E.Y. seeks to reduce the development of harmful beliefs associated with the incel subculture.
4. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365475530_Involuntary_Celibacy_A_Review_of_Incel_Ideology_and_Experiences_with_Dating_Rejection_and_Associated_Mental_Health_and_Emotional_Sequelae> - This review explores the ideology and experiences of individuals identifying as incels, focusing on their encounters with dating rejection and associated mental health challenges. It reveals that incels often report higher levels of loneliness, depression, and anxiety compared to non-incels. The study also notes a reluctance among incels to seek mental health support, citing mistrust of the system and financial constraints. The authors advocate for tailored mental health interventions to address the specific needs of the incel community.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/predicting-harm-among-incels-involuntary-celibates/press-release-incels-need-mental-health-support-rather-than-a-counter-terrorism-intervention-the-worlds-largest-study-of-incels-finds-accessible> - A comprehensive study commissioned by the UK's Commission for Countering Extremism examines the mental health and ideological beliefs of the incel community. The findings indicate that incels typically exhibit poor mental health, with high incidences of depression and suicidal thoughts. The study suggests that mental health support is more effective than counter-terrorism measures in addressing the challenges faced by incels, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to reduce harm.
6. <https://icsve.org/self-reported-psychiatric-disorder-and-perceived-psychological-symptom-rates-among-involuntary-celibates-incels-and-their-perceptions-of-mental-health-treatment/> - This research investigates the prevalence of psychiatric disorders and psychological symptoms among self-identified incels, as well as their perceptions of mental health treatment. The study finds that incels report higher rates of depression, anxiety, and autism spectrum disorders compared to the general population. Despite these challenges, many incels are resistant to seeking mental health support, often due to a belief that practitioners will blame them for their situation. The authors suggest that online forums could serve as platforms for providing non-judgmental mental health support.
7. <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/press-office/news-events/news/2024/02/mental-health-support-may-be-a-key-route-to-reducing-incel-harm-worlds-largest-study-of-incels-finds.php> - A groundbreaking study by Swansea University explores the complex relationship between mental health, ideological beliefs, and social networking within incel communities. The research reveals that incels often experience poor mental health, including high rates of depression and suicidal thoughts. The study advocates for mental health support as a more effective intervention than counter-terrorism measures, highlighting the need for targeted programs to address the unique challenges faced by incels.