

The ‘Manosphere’ Isn’t a Movement. It’s a Multibillion-Dollar Grievance Industry

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For many years now, a dark question has haunted parents, teachers, the [internet](#), and [media](#) institutions: [What’s wrong with young men?](#)

Why, people ask, are boys so [politically extreme](#), [spouting misogynist rhetoric](#), and increasingly drawn into [risky crypto schemes](#) and [online gambling](#)? How did they become so [lonely](#), with their depression symptoms often [overlooked](#)? The male youth vote [broke for Trump](#) in the 2024 election following a GOP campaign built on naked appeals to meathead machismo. Yet there are signs that his second term in office has done little to stem the anger of Gen Z men, whose support for the president is now [plummeting](#).

The most common explanation of these interrelated phenomena is that younger men have banded together online under the umbrella of something known as the “manosphere,” usually conceived as an organic right-wing rebellion driving the culture wars. A new study, however, suggests that this is entirely backward: The digital ecosystem that produces red-pilled men is less of a movement than it is a pyramid scheme.

In “[The Grift Economy: How Young Men Are Being Sold Fake Belonging and Fake Wealth Online](#),” researchers from the digital safety organization Reset Tech and the nonprofit Equimundo map how men are “algorithmically routed into paid communities, unregulated supplements, crypto schemes, and high-ticket ‘coaching’ programs,” which together make up a “multibillion-dollar industry.”

“‘Masculinity’ has become a commercial category that is constructed, curated, and financially incentivized online,” write the authors of the 153-page report.

First, men encounter aspirational self-help content when looking up advice on dating, fitness, or finance. Bad actors then exploit their areas of vulnerability by offering a misleading, grievance-based narrative to explain their frustrations. The paper cites, for example, a verified “business” account on X that used real economic data to falsely claim that the high rate of youth unemployment is only affecting men.

“By framing credential competition and labor market dynamics as a coordinated attack on men,” the researchers write, “this operation converts genuine economic anxiety—which is real and documented—into resentment with named targets: women, immigrants, foreign workers.”

Once men feel they are in community with one another based on a shared sense of victimhood and betrayal, and hostility toward a mutual enemy, the same predatory characters can then sell them the dubious solution, whether that’s a class, access to an exclusive club, or gray-market pills. In breaking down the sources of the misogynist influencer Andrew Tate’s income, the researchers estimate that he makes \$184 million in annual gross revenue just from his subscription-based “Real World” education platform, which costs \$99 per month. Reset Tech and Equimundo call these kinds of membership and course systems “fraud at scale,” noting their manipulative character: “Recycled content, affiliate pyramids, deliberate cancellation barriers, and deceptive testimonials characterize the industry’s flagship products.” (Tate’s attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Tate and his brother, Tristan Tate, are fighting extradition to the UK on charges of rape and sex trafficking after being arrested in Florida last month; their attorney has said they are innocent.)

Meanwhile, the report pegs the range of hourly streaming revenue for top-tier streamers such as Adin Ross (who also has an equity stake in Kick, the site that hosts his live content) at around \$30,000 to

\$50,000. Figures like Joe Rogan command speaking fees [upwards of \\$200,000](#). And top creators in the space, the study estimates, can earn anywhere from \$1 million to \$10 million in annual revenue across income streams including “platform payouts, sponsorships, courses, memberships, and speaking fees.” (Neither Rogan’s manager nor Ross’ entertainment company immediately returned a request for comment.)