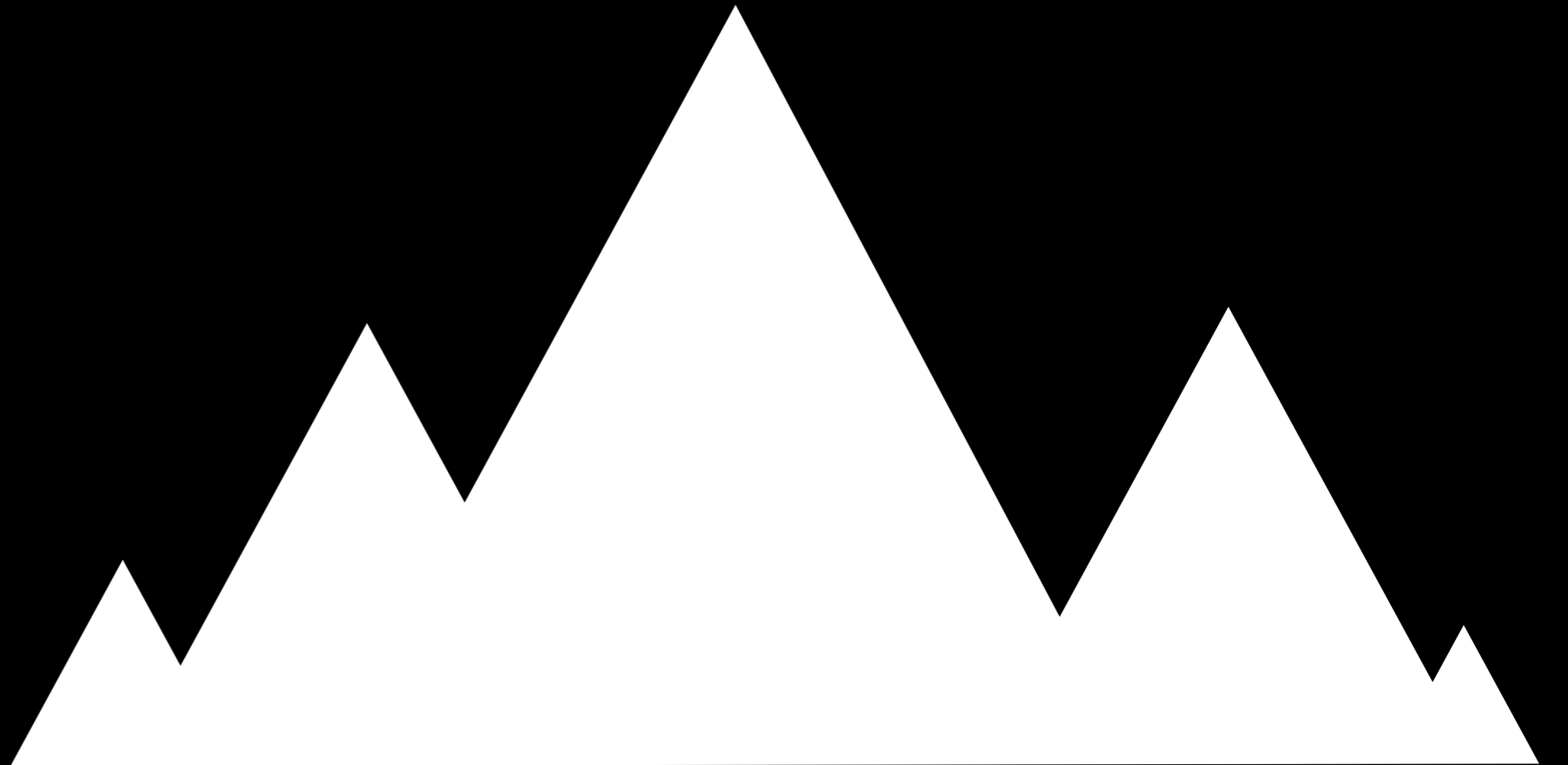


The Manosphere Content Classification Framework



MOVEMBER® INSTITUTE
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Abstract

This study developed and applied the world's first framework to classify masculinity content on TikTok.

Researchers recruited 142 young men aged 16–25 across Australia, the UK and the US, who shared their real TikTok data with the research team. A sample of 2,414 videos were randomly selected from participants past month viewing histories. Researchers manually coded these videos using the developed Masculinity Content Classification Framework.

The framework identifies three tiers of content: Cultural Touchpoints (mainstream lifestyle and entertainment), Masculine Status (dominance, wealth, emotional suppression) and Degrading Health (misogyny, hopelessness, risky behaviour). Of the videos coded, 37.74% were Cultural Touchpoints, 4.89% Masculine Status and 0.87% Degrading Health — with content depicting extreme manosphere ideologies and health harms representing 5.76% of all videos analysed.

What's striking is how these manosphere ideologies show up and spread – embedded within the culturally relevant topics and trends young men care about, such as gaming, fashion, sports and music. Movember researchers describe this as an “inverted iceberg” – highly visible lifestyle content at the surface, with intensifying layers of dominance, exclusionary attitudes and harmful health behaviours underneath, connected within the same ecosystem and amplified through algorithmic recommendation.

The study is the first to use real-world data donated directly by young men, rather than simulated ‘dummy accounts’ created by researchers. This is a significant step forward for the field – giving researchers, platforms and policymakers a rigorous, replicable tool to identify and measure harmful masculinity content at scale.

Development and Application of the Masculinity Content Classification Framework

Fisher, K., Benakovic, R., O’Gorman, K., Rice, S. M., Tierney, K., Miller-Idriss, C., ... & Seidler, Z. (2026). Development and application of the masculinity content classification framework. *Telematics and Informatics*, 102402.

The Inverted Iceberg

CULTURAL TOUCHPOINTS

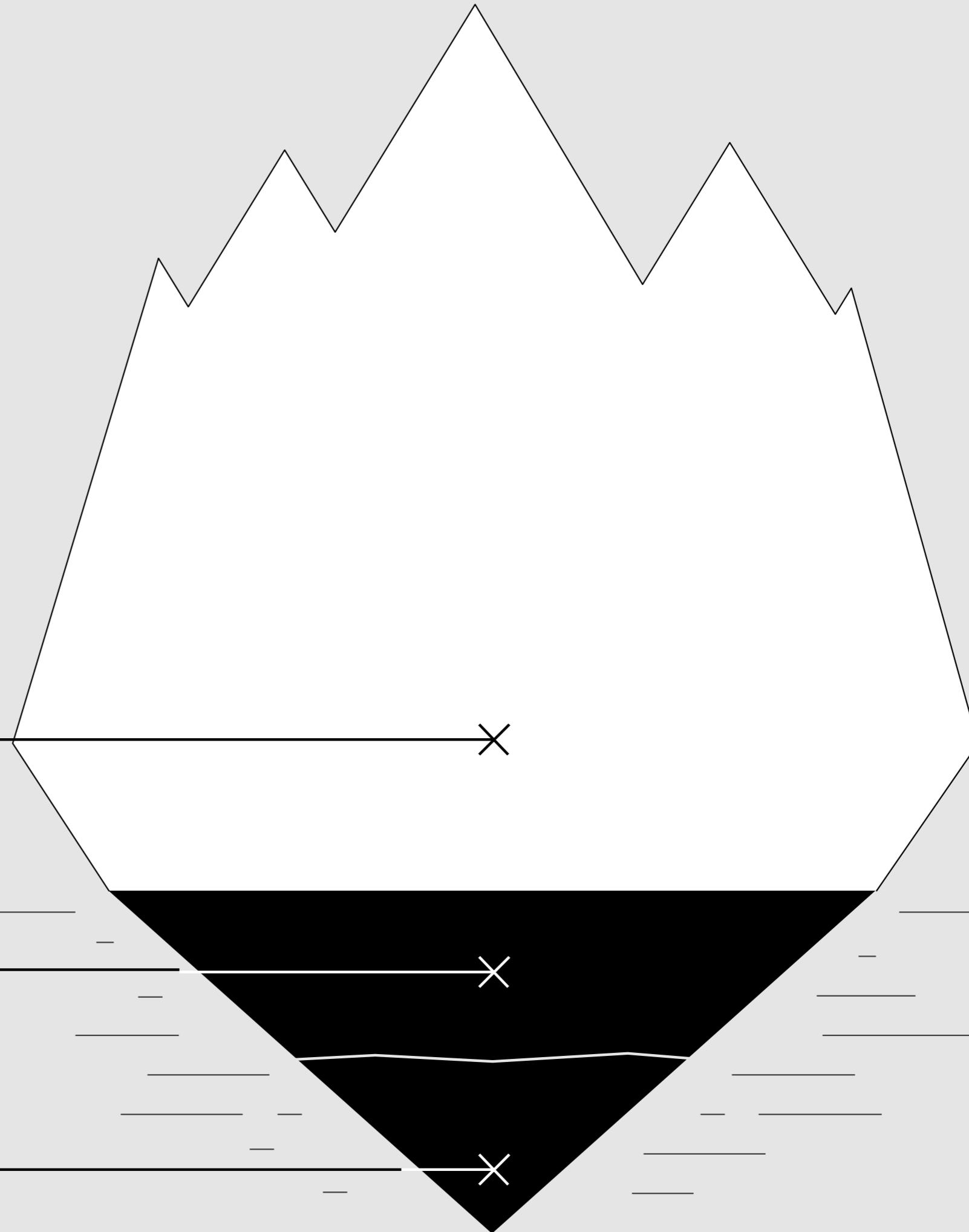
Everyday men's lifestyle and popular culture content — sport, fitness, gaming, fashion — targeting a young male audience. This is the cultural packaging upon which exclusivist messaging and risky-health behaviours are layered.

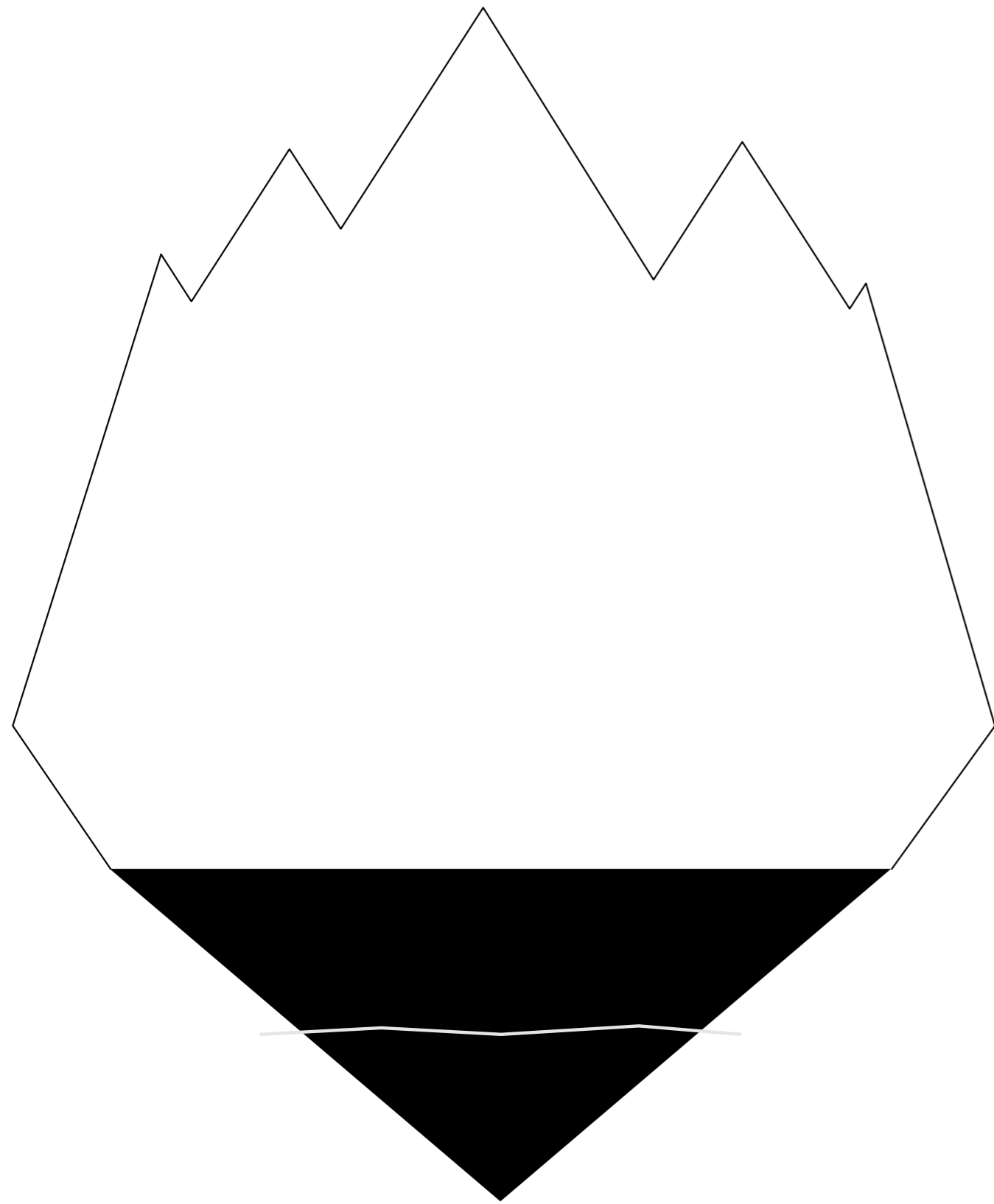
MASCULINE STATUS

Content that frames dominance, wealth, emotional invulnerability and anti-feminism as the hallmarks of being a real or "high-value" man.

DEGRADING HEALTH

Content that depicts harmful health behaviours (towards oneself and others), hate-speech and misogyny.





01. Cultural Touchpoints

Everyday men's lifestyle and popular culture content — sport, fitness, gaming, fashion — targeting a young male audience. This is the cultural packaging upon which exclusivist messaging and risky-health behaviours are layered.

SUBCATEGORY ▼

1.1
Physical exercise and athleticism

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

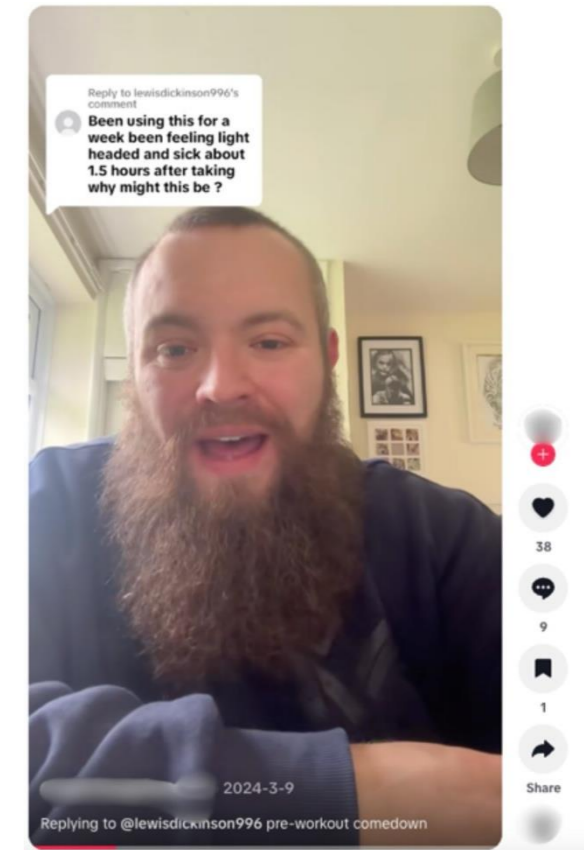
Content focused on fitness, exercise and/or nutrition as a men’s lifestyle interest and/or health-related activity without reference to these behaviours as a source of masculine value, status or dominance.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

- Advocating for muscularity and athletic performance as a means for achieving masculine status (see subcategory 2.3).
- Advocating use of steroids, medications or other performance enhancing substances (see subcategory 3.3).

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

A man records himself responding to a viewer’s comment asking for advice on a pre-workout that has been making them feel lightheaded and sick after working out.

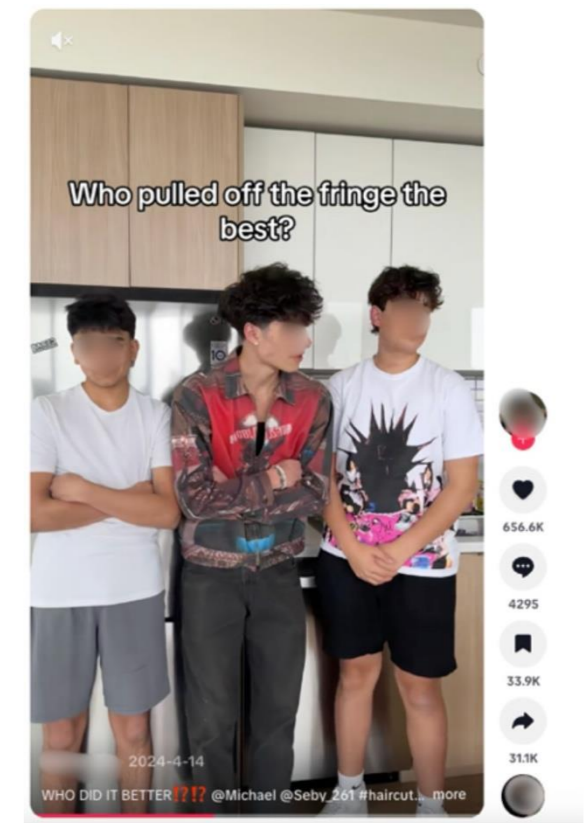


1.2
Men’s grooming

Grooming (skincare, hair/facial hair, fragrance, supplements) content for men reviewing beauty/health products or providing tools/tips to improve their physical appearance or personal hygiene.

- Explicitly linking grooming to masculine or dating/mating value and a way to pick up women (see subcategory 2.6).
- Promotion of prescription medications/illegal or performance enhancement substances (see subcategory 3.3).

Camera pans between three young men [before and after a barber visit] while they turn their heads and ask audiences to rate their hair styles. Text overlay on the video says, “Who pulled off the fringe the best”.



SUBCATEGORY ▼

1.3
Men's fashion and clothing trends

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

Content related to men's fashion, style and clothing including cultural commentary on men's fashion trends and step-by-step 'how to' style guides for men.

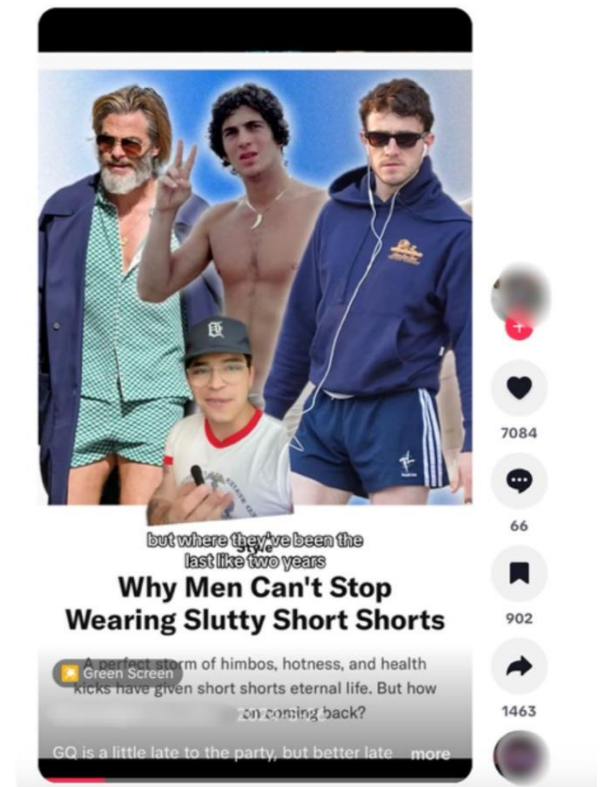
EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

- Clothing and accessories being depicted as markers of financial success (see subcategory 2.2).

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

Male content creator comments on a GQ article about short shorts for men, showing celebrity still photo examples and explains how he would style this trend.

Text overlay says: "I think a 5-inch inseam is the most approachable and best place to start if you're trying to experiment with a shorter short."

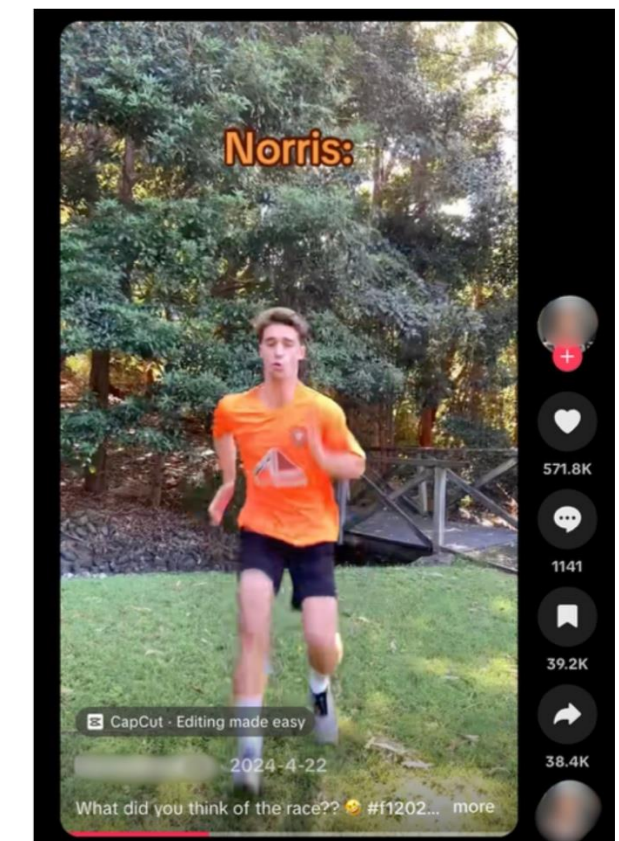


1.4
Men's pop-culture content

Content popular with (or primarily marketed towards) male audiences covering topics including professional sport, music, gaming, podcasts. Often uses male 'banter' or colloquial terms (e.g., fellas, bro)

- Content that framed gender differences as innate or hierarchical (see subcategory 2.5 or 2.1).
- Content that positioned male dominance/ muscularity or female subordination as desirable or normal (see subcategory 2.5).
- Degrading others (girls/women) under the guise of humour (see subcategory 2.1 or 3.4).
- Implicit or explicit normative claims around gender roles or masculinity (see subcategory 2.1 or 3.4).

Man acts out being various F1 drivers, parodying a recent incident where Lance Stroll crashed into Daniel Ricciardo. Text overlay says: "Safety car boys, safety car... Just slow down Stroll we've got a safety car... Stroll!?"



SUBCATEGORY ▼

1.5
Men's dating and relationships discourse

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

Dating and relationships content for men that is primarily light-hearted, comedic, anecdotal or observational in tone (e.g., portrayals of couple dynamics, interpersonal misunderstandings). Gender stereotypes were sometimes described in anecdotal reflections/ storytelling or skits.

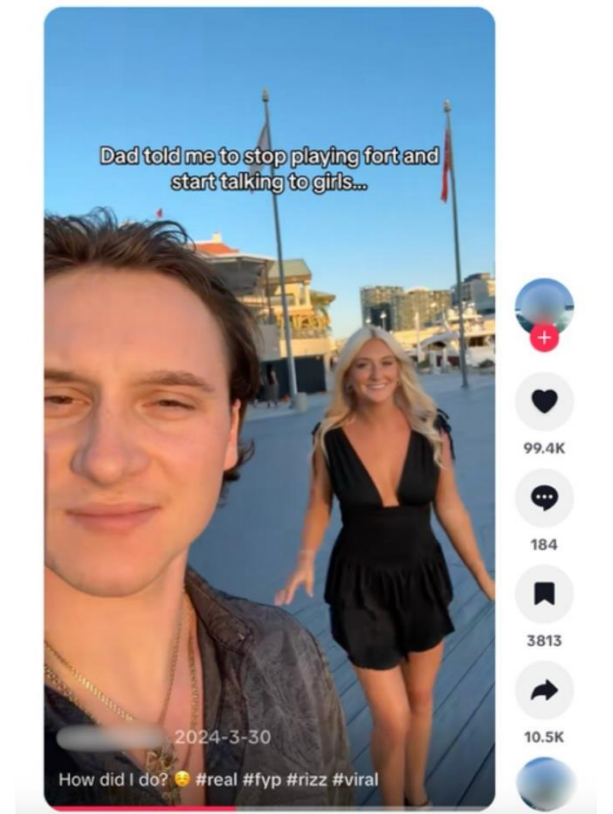
EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

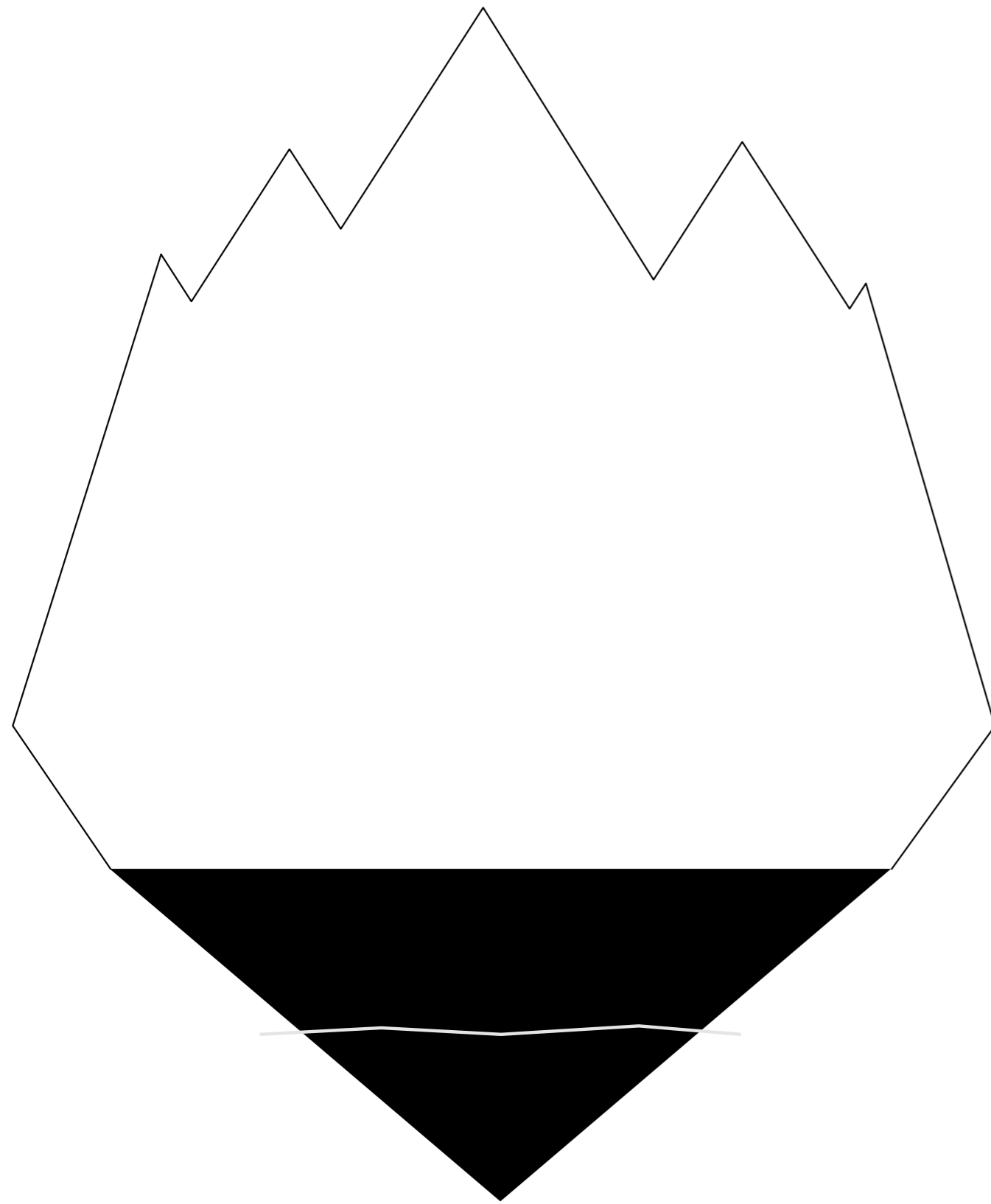
- Advocating for traditional or unequal gender dynamics in dating/ relationships (see subcategory 2.5)
- Framing of girls and women as deceptive or inferior e.g., promotion of dating young women or women's attractiveness/appeal decreasing as they age (see subcategory 3.4).
- Promotion of male entitlement, dominance or control (see subcategory 2.5 or 3.5).
- Pushing gender-essentialist claims as objective truths (see subcategory 2.1 or 2.5).

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

Video filmed as a male-POV. A young man walks towards the end of a pier where two women in mini-dresses and heels are drinking cocktails and taking photos of one another. The video then cuts to one of the women giving him a hug and kiss on the cheek late in the night.

Text overlay says:
"Dad told me to stop playing fort [Fortnite] and start talking to girls... how did I do?"





02.

Masculine Status

Content that frames dominance, wealth, emotional invulnerability and anti-feminism as the hallmarks of being a real or "high-value" man.

SUBCATEGORY ▼	OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼	EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼	EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼
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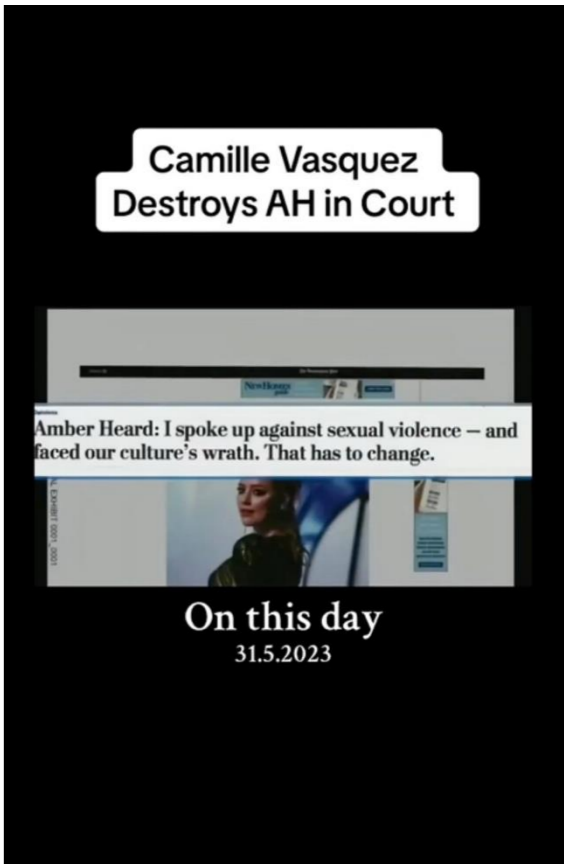
2.1
Undermining Gender Equality

Content that undermines or critiques feminism, gender equality efforts or women’s rights through a lens of male victimisation. Content that frames these issues (gender equality) as hypocritical, illegitimate, and an existential threat to Western Masculinity.

- Explicit misogyny (overt hostility or rage towards women as a group; *see subcategory 2.4*).
- Explicit reference to male supremacy (*see subcategory 2.4*).

Video footage from the Johnny Depp v Amber Heard defamation trial (31st May 2023). Depp’s attorney cross examines Heard, critiquing the legitimacy of her domestic violence testimony and advocacy efforts. Depp’s attorney asks Heard to confirm the date that she publicly accused Depp of physical violence. Heard says “I was intending to keep that private. I had not ever publicly accused him of that.” Depp’s attorney shows a screenshot of Heard’s tweet which linked an article titled “Amber Heard: I spoke up against sexual violence and faced our cultures wrath. That has to change.”

Text overlay on the video says: Camille Vasquez destroys AH in court #IstandwithJohnnyDepp #JohnnyDeppisInnocent.



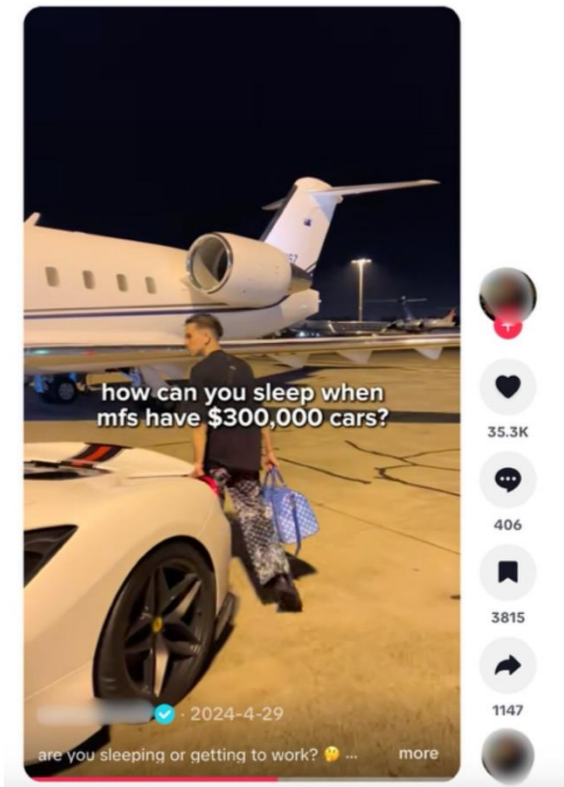
2.2
Wealth attainment

Content that conflates wealth and financial abundance/prosperity with masculine status/value and self-worth. Videos may encourage financial risk taking and oversimplify wealth accumulation through the provision of unsolicited financial advice.

- Normalisation or encouragement of gambling (*see subcategory 3.3*).

A young man (under 30 years of age) carrying a leather bag and wearing designer clothes walks along a tarmac and boards a private jet.

Text overlay on the video says “How can you sleep when mfs [mother fuckers] have \$300,000 cars. Are you sleeping or getting to work?”.



SUBCATEGORY ▼

2.3 Muscularity and athletic dominance

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

Diet or exercise content that idealises and glorifies a “superhero” body type (mesomorphic: extremely muscular and low body fat). Content conflates male physical appearance (particularly muscularity) with athletic and sexual prowess. Strength, fighting and “softmaxing” (e.g., non-invasive practices to improve physical attractiveness) is positioned to assert status (particularly over other men).

EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

- Promotion of steroid use (or other performance enhancement substances e.g., TRT) (see subcategory 3.3).
- Endorsement of non-FDA or TGA-approved peptides and sharing information about how to purchase compounds from online vendors or research laboratories (see subcategory 3.3).
- Invasive looksmaxxing content that includes physical appearance augmentation (surgery, bone smashing, restriction of nutrition) (see subcategory 3.1).

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

Male content creator promotes a product he calls a “forearm gripper” telling audiences: *“We all know girls love guys with veiny forearms...well this summer I got a product that will help to get you guys this...”* [shows video of two men with flexed biceps and prominent veins arm wrestling].

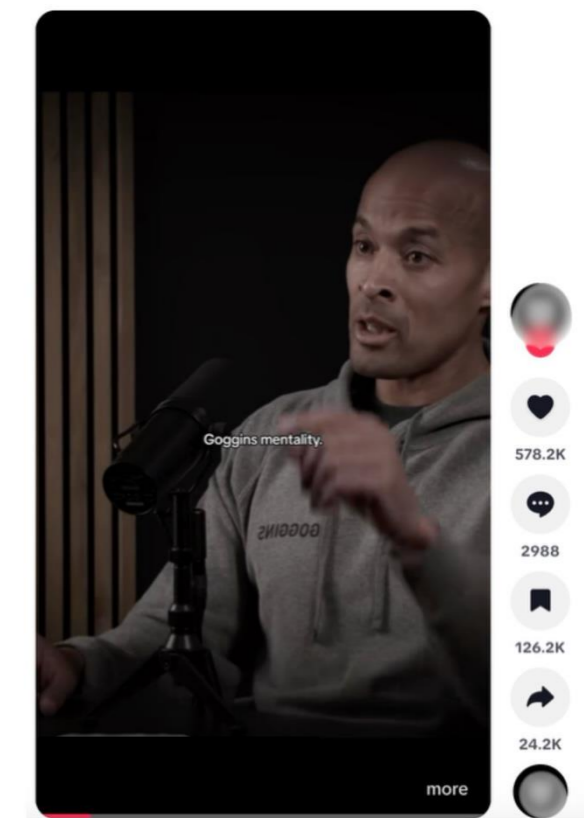


2.4 Relentless mental fortitude avoiding weakness or emotion

Content encourages relentless emotional suppression, self-reliance, /independence and stoicism in men and glorifies/idealises male suffering.

- Nihilist or hopeless narratives (see subcategory 3.2).
- Suicide or self-harm content (see subcategory 3.2).
- Promotion of self-punishment or self-hate (see subcategory 3.2).

Short-form segment from a podcast interview where a well-known male content creator responds to the hosts question “are you happy?” The male content creator responds *“I don’t know. I never really thought about it, I don’t really care about it. All I care about is that when I looked in that fucking mirror, I saw a piece of shit. Happiness wasn’t on the mirror at 16. You have to struggle. The bigger the struggle the bigger the peace. Every fucking day I wake up I don’t want to do some shit; I’m like okay well do you want to be a bitch today? Do you want to walk around feeling like a bitch?”*.



SUBCATEGORY ▼	OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼	EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼	EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼
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2.5
Protector and provider roles

Content that prescriptively frames men’s value as contingent on protecting, financial providing for, or being responsible for women and families. These messages are often justified through gender essentialist ideologies or reverence of traditional gender roles in relationships (e.g., women as homemakers, men as breadwinners). Often references biological determinism, inherent sex differences, and/or evolutionary psychology to support the above (e.g., a woman will leave if you can’t provide for/protect her”).

- Promotion of male supremacy (see subcategory 3.4).
- Denigration of women’s value/worth (see subcategory 3.4).
- Presence of coercive control/abuse tactics (see subcategory 3.5).

A man faces the camera and explains how he believes a household should be run: *“I am not going to have a girl pay half my rent. Half my mortgage. Half my car payment. Half the food bills. If my wife works, that’s all her money. She doesn’t have to contribute anything. There are a lot of men out there going ‘screw that’ well listen you’re just not traditional. You’re just not old fashioned like I am. I think the man of the house should provide for the house and the people in it.”.*

Text sits atop the video:
“Men should provide.”.

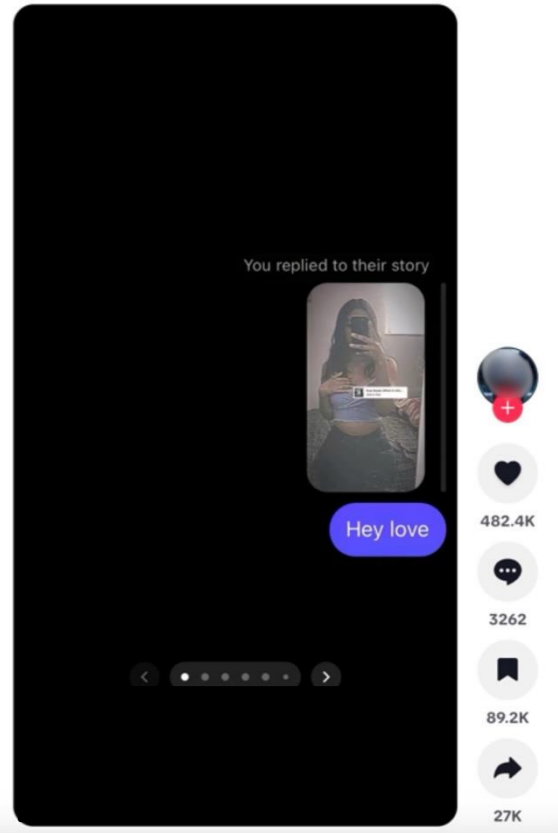


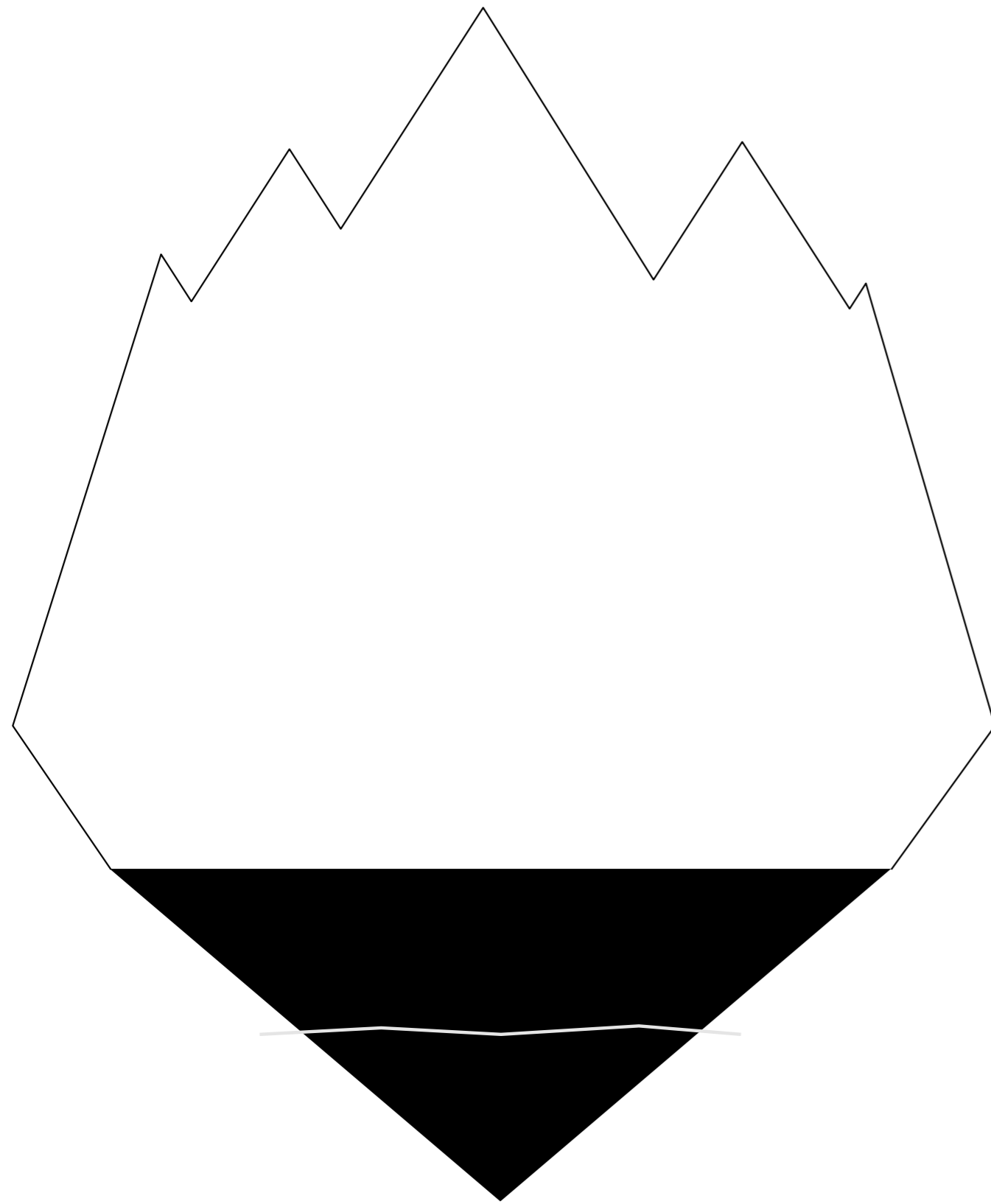
2.6
Playboy

Dating, relationships and sexual promiscuity content (‘pick-up’ tips, tricks and advice) that frames women and girls as a homogenous group wanting the same things. Content sexualises women and girls as status objects or arm candy. Content implicitly or explicitly defends the notion that a man’s masculinity is validated through the ability of men to attract and bed as many women as possible.

- Explicit reference to women and girls’ worth being linked first and foremost to their appearance, age, sexual appeal or reproductive ability (see subcategory 3.4).
- Content that trivialises or endorses sexual coercion and harm (see subcategory 3.5).

A photo slideshow (of 10+ screenshots) showing a flirtatious Instagram direct message exchange where a male user responds to a photo of a young woman taking a mirror selfie and proceeds to ask her on a date and express his romantic interest. The final photo is an advertisement for an application/ tool called PlugAI (formally known as Wingman) designed to *“boost your confidence and effectiveness in the game of love #reverserizzler.”.*





03.

Degrading Health

Content that depicts harmful health behaviours
(towards oneself and others), hate-speech and misogyny.

SUBCATEGORY ▼

**3.1
Physical appearance
augmentation***

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

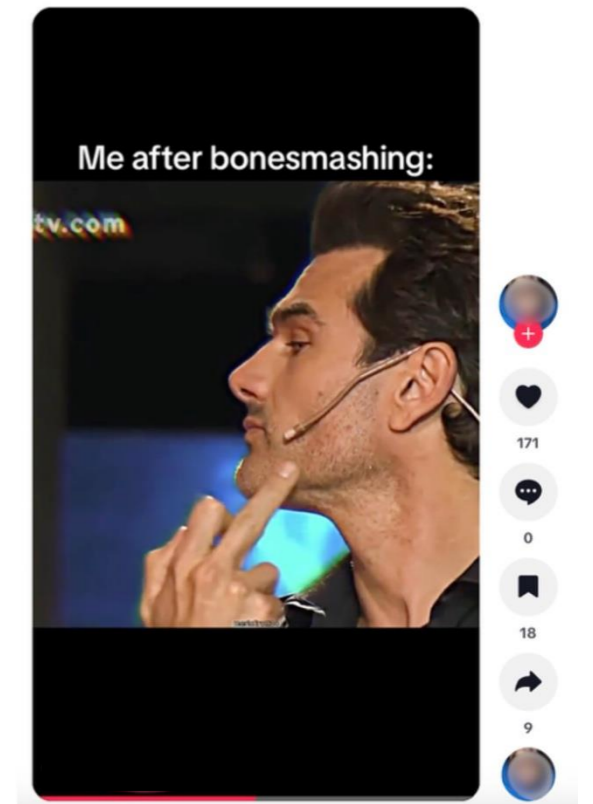
Content that depicts or encourages male physical appearance augmentation (e.g., cosmetic surgery, genioplasty [chin surgery]) as a way for men to improve their physical appearance/attractiveness. Contains the embedded assumption that physical attractiveness is the most important factor in men's worth and potential happiness/successobtaining/sustaining romantic or sexual satisfaction.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

- General men's grooming and self-care practices (see subcategory 1.2).
- Evidence-based information or discussions about cosmetic surgery without endorsement or encouragement.
- Body dissatisfaction content without promoting physical appearance modification as the solution.

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

A before and after video of a man turning his head to show his jaw line at a side on and then front on profile. The text overlay on the video says: "Me before bonesmashing. Me after bonesmashing".

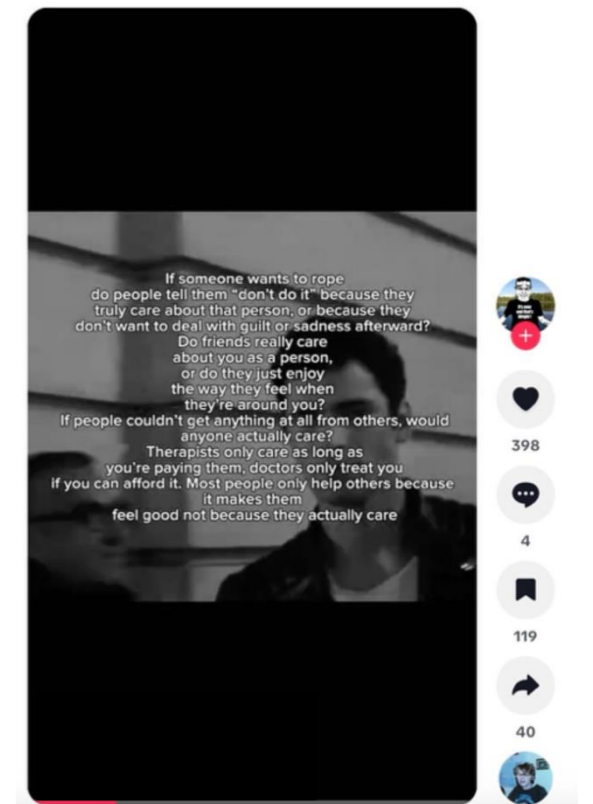


**3.2
Hopelessness
and suicide**

Content that encourages suicide and self-harm (ideation and behaviours), normalises this behavior, and/or includes explicit messages of self-hate, nihilism, hopelessness, and shame (e.g., sentiments of "I hate myself," "I am never going to be good enough")

- Suicide/self-harm prevention content.
- Lived experience story telling framed around education, recovery, hope, and support.

A black and white video of a famous man walking around and taking photos with people. The text overlay on the video says "If someone wants to rope do people tell them don't do it because they truly care about that person, or because they don't want to deal with guilt or sadness afterward? Do friends really care about you as a person, or do they just enjoy they feel when they're around you? If people couldn't get anything at all from others, would anyone actually care? Therapists only care as long as you're paying them, doctors only treat you if you can afford it. Most people only help others because it makes them feel good not because they actually care."



SUBCATEGORY ▼

OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼

EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼

EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼

**3.3
Risk-taking and health behaviours**

Content that glorifies (both implicitly [e.g., actionable instructions] and explicitly [e.g., before and after transformations]) risk taking in the context of men's health and wellbeing. This includes content relating to binge drinking, problematic gambling, substance misuse, non-prescribed medications and peptides use, extreme exercise (to the point of physical harm) and criminal activity (e.g., scamming, tax evasion, drug dealing)

- Health promotion/lived experience stories of substance use recovery (or harm-minimisation).
- Alcohol-related content not framed through a lens of excessive consumption or as a source of masculine validation.
- Men's diet and exercise content that does not promote working out or endurance activities to the point of injury or physical/mental harm (see subcategory 1.1 or 2.3).

A video of a shirtless man talking to camera.
The man says: "Everyone wants to do peptides and steroids and get jacked but they're like 'oh no I'm scared I don't know what's going into it, it's not FDA-approved' brother you just came off a 3 day fucking bender did somebody FDA approve the eight ball you just brought... God forbid you did anything good for you. Pick up the fucking pin and jab it brother."

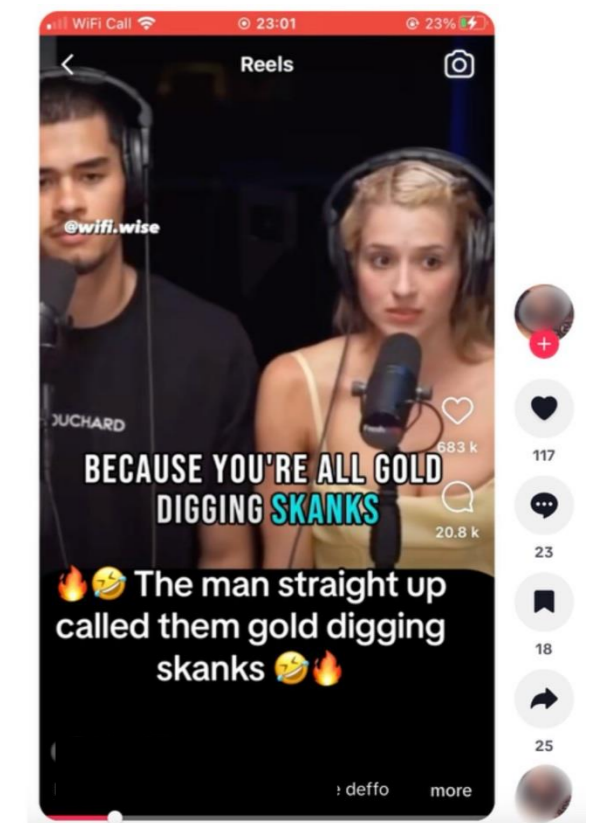


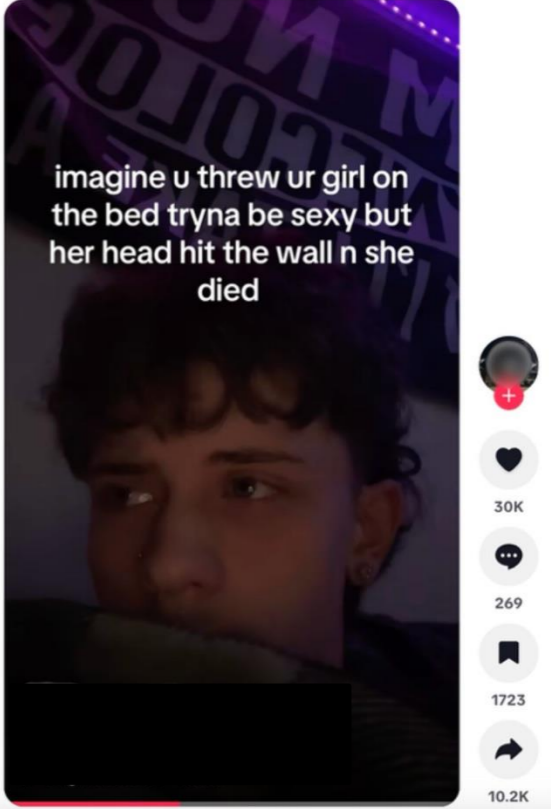
**3.4
Explicit misogyny**

Content that directly expresses hostility, contempt, distrust or dehumanisation toward women as a social group (and women's rights efforts). Includes female-directed slurs, explicit male supremacy, direct opposition of feminism/ women's right's/bodily autonomy efforts or the reduction of women's worth to appearance, sexuality, or reproduction.

- Implicit stereotypes of women (or endorsement of traditional gender roles) without explicit hostility or dehumanisation (see subcategory 1.5 or 2.5).
- Criticism of individual women (e.g., sharing conflict with an ex-girlfriend) without generalised assertions to women as a social group (see subcategory 1.5).
- Satirical content or videos made under the context of 'comedy' where misogynistic language is condemned or made light of rather than endorsed (see subcategory 1.5).

A video recording of a podcast with 10 women and 5 men sitting around a table having a discussion.
One woman says, "why would I want to be with a bum," to which one of the hosts replies, "how come no man in this room has ever said that about a girl he dated...because you're all gold-digging skanks."



SUBCATEGORY ▼	OPERATIONALISED DEFINITION ▼	EXCLUSION CRITERIA ▼	EXAMPLE VIDEO DESCRIPTION ▼
<p>3.5 Violence towards women and sexual and gender minorities</p>	<p>Content that normalises, justifies, endorses, or trivialises physical, sexual, mental, financial, or coercive harm toward women or sexual/gender minorities, including symbolic threats and coercive control framed as protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survivor or lived experience stories of violence perpetration not framed as acceptable, humorous or justified. - Relationship advice that does not involve dominance/control, coercion, threat or trivialise abusive behaviour (see subcategory 1.5). - Content endorsing traditional gender roles in relationships (e.g., men are the financial providers, women are the care takers) without reference to removing autonomy, threat or coercive control (see subcategory 2.5). 	<p>Video footage of a young man looking at the camera.</p> <p><i>The text overlay on this video says:</i> <i>“Imagine u threw ur girl on the bed tryna be sexy but her head hit the wall n she died.”</i></p> 

Note. Each video could only be coded to a single category and to a single corresponding subcategory. If the content of a video spanned multiple codes, the video was coded to align with the most dominant and prevailing theme of the video (e.g., focus of the video in terms of time and emphasis). *Physical appearance augmentation was a sub-category identified in Phase 1 (social media monitoring) but did not appear in Phase 2 (validating the coding framework on participants’ videos). As such this sub-category is retained in the Masculinity Content Classification Framework but not in the below results. ♦ Downloaded videos available upon request.



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