

# Hate sites are using the wider abortion argument to spread racism and extremism

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White supremacists are using the debate around women's reproductive rights to promote racist and extremist agendas, finds a new study released today, following news on Friday that millions of women in the

US will lose the constitutional right to abortion.

US white nationalists are heading on to a neo-Nazi website, "Stormfront," in order to recruit more people to their way of thinking. Online they describe abortions by white women as "murder" and look to "weaponize" the procedure. However, the extremists reason [abortion](#) by non-white women is "acceptable" or even "desirable," because, they argue, the procedure could solve threats to white dominance—including the "urgent need to limit third world populations."

The findings, published in the journal *Information, Communication & Society*, come following a detailed computer-aided analysis of more than 30,000 posts, spanning over two decades on the site.

The study authors warn that their evidence highlights how white extremists "weaponize" abortion arguments to attract recruits, using the political debate as a gateway argument that invites them to dive deeper into white male supremacy ideology.

"Our study shows that science, medicine, and [conspiracy theories](#) meet on the dark corners of the internet," says lead researcher Dr. Yotam Ophir at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, U.S..

"The result is the creation and spread of dangerous racist and misogynistic ideas. These are often born in extremists' platforms, but have spilled over into mainstream politics and discourse."

Abortion rights are a fiercely contested issue in the US. On Friday, the Supreme Court overturned its 50-year-old *Roe v. Wade* decision, in a judgment that therefore entitles individual states to ban the procedure.

Specifically, in this research, Dr. Ophir and his team wanted to better understand how white nationalists not only use abortion debates online to

further their cause, but also apply different moral standards to whites and non-whites.

By analyzing posts made between 2001 and 2017 on Stormfront—a discussion board founded by former Ku Klux Klansman Don Black—the authors found a marked difference in the way far-right extremists conceptualized abortions for whites versus non-whites.

Abortions among white women were described as "murder." Using an entire topic labeled "avoid abortions," Stormfront users accused white women considering terminations as being "deeply unethical" and even "treasonous" to the white race and their gender role. For example, talking about abortions among white women, a user stated that "abortion is the worst thing of all, it is killing a child. Killing a child is worse than bringing him/her up without a father. Adoption is always an option."

Whereas with non-white women, posts often excused abortion in order to limit non-white populations.

The authors say that such discourse could be used to recruit members and to "normalize extreme, racist ideologies."

To protect the public, Dr. Ophir says people, including children, need better tools to navigate the "misleading information environment that is the 21st century."

Additional themes identified on Stormfront included "The Great Replacement conspiracy theory"—a supposed plot to replace white people with non-white immigrants that is said to have inspired the Buffalo grocery store killings suspect.

This is something Dr. Ophir and colleagues argue needs more attention from the mainstream press, as they are concerned there is a spread of the

"great replacement conspiracy."

"Potential solutions should not end with social media and the internet. We also need to pay more attention to the rise of such conspiratorial thinking among television channels like Fox News and prominent political figures," he says.

Stormfront posts analyzed by the team were supplied to the researchers by the Southern Poverty Law Center and by other academics.

The site is focused on propagating white nationalism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, as well as anti-Hinduism, anti-feminism, homophobia, transphobia, Holocaust denial, anti-Catholicism, and white supremacy. As of 2015, the website was estimated to have than 300,000 registered members.

**More information:** Weaponizing Reproductive Rights: A Mixed-Method Analysis of White Nationalists' Discussion of Abortions Online, *Information Communication & Society* (2022). DOI: [10.1080/1369118X.2022.2077654](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2077654)

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