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**INTRODUCTION**

Masculinity and Male Identity is Volume 449 in the ‘Issues in Society’ series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

**KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC**

The status quo of gender-based inequality and discrimination in our society perpetuates the notion that we live in a ‘man’s world’. Traditional masculine stereotypes persist in a culture which identifies men as emotionally reticent, stubbornly self-reliant, more focused on work than family, and oversexed. When these beliefs are taken to extreme levels by boys and men, they can contribute to poor relationships, risky behaviours and mental health problems. Rethinking masculinity can help men and boys to move away from narrow masculine ideals and negative role models towards healthier, more diverse approaches to male identity.

This book explores what it means to be a ‘real man’ in Australia, questioning the masculine stereotypes which sustain gender inequality. In addition, the book examines ‘toxic masculinity’, traditional male gender roles, and attitudes which promote violence and disrespect towards women. It also addresses the impacts of traditional masculine norms on men’s health and wellbeing.

What does it mean to be a man in a changing world – is there really a crisis in masculinity? How can society, and boys and men as individuals, encourage positive, healthier masculinities?

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Titles in the ‘Issues in Society’ series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the ‘Issues in Society’ series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

**CRITICAL EVALUATION**

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

**EXPLORING ISSUES**

The ‘Exploring issues’ section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The ‘Web links’ section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.
TEN POINTS ABOUT MEN TODAY

Peter West briefly sums up what it means to be a modern Australian man

1. Being a man used to be all about work. Men identified as farmers, bank clerks, plumbers, or teachers, as I found in Fathers, Sons and Lovers: Men Talk about Their Lives from the 1930s to Today. This is still true in part.

2. Men used also to be part of a web of authority that kept society together: fathers, other men, teachers, policemen, clergymen. That web is looking a bit tatty today, with obvious consequences in declining authority in schools and trouble on the street.

3. Sport was always part of being a man – and that’s still true. Men are expected to have an opinion about the local football team [whatever code applies]. And to be able to kick a ball and swing a bat. If they don’t fit in, they risk attack or ridicule.

4. People expect a lot of men these days. They want us to have a great body – and so many of the bodies being shown to us in the men’s health mags are unrealistic for most of us: amazing abs, perfect pecs, fantastic teeth, to say nothing of the dick of death. And the models are usually Caucasian or acceptably exotic. Even Vladimir Putin and Tony Abbott want to show us their firm hard bodies these days. Are they hoping to impress someone?

5. Men are expected today to have opinions about a wide range of things related to women. They have learned to keep quiet when they expect to be judged as too this or that. Their real opinions are kept for a partner or special mate. And we know that some men seem threatened by a female Prime Minister too – in Thailand or Australia!

6. Men today identify in terms of ethnicity, and sometimes religion; e.g. “I’m Chinese-Aussie” or “I’m half Italian and half Lebanese”. “I’m Indian and a Hindu”. It’s OK to be different. They still want to come out with flags to celebrate Australia Day (or fly the Stars and Stripes in the USA. Or the Union Jack).

7. There is a fluidity to men’s lives today. They might start out telling themselves they are totally straight. Ten years later there might be changes in this. And changes later on too in occupation (far more than in the 1960s: the idea of a job – for a lifetime – went out the window long ago). And changes in world-view. Men don’t want to be labelled and do want freedom to choose what to be, and what to do.

8. Men’s lives are longer and a long retirement is common. This gives men the freedom to find new things to do. I’m typical – I’m now committed to gym, partly by need. And I went back to singing.

9. Men want to feel special to their partners. When that relationship breaks down, men are at risk of self-harm and substance abuse.

10. Men want to feel special to their kids. Men after divorce are often devastated from the sudden loss of contact with kids. Don’t forget that many gay men are also becoming dads; Ricky Martin is one of many taking part in this interesting new trend. But the media tend not to talk about men unless they put them in boxes: “anti-feminist men”, “muscle boys”, “geeks” etc. Complexity seems too hard for many journalists to deal with.

11. It’s expected in many quarters that being male means you must be always looking for a sexual connection. And drinking alcohol. Alcohol is so much tied up with masculinity and sport that we don’t even notice any more.

12. Men feel their lives are scrutinized. It’s not quite true that they feel under attack, but it’s close. Society often champions women, who are always “breaking down barriers”. Many men feel the only way they will get favourable notice is by doing something extreme – getting a mammoth body, driving an amazing car, etc. Men and boys don’t want their bodies judged and they cover up, even in change-rooms.

13. Australian men seem to travel a lot compared to some others. They find travel stimulating. They look at people in Thailand or Bali or Nepal and see big differences in people’s lives. They seem to me more open than some others to rethinking themselves and their lives after travel.

14. Women talk confidently about men. Sometimes they tell us we are “confused” or “more this” or “less that”. Women often think they understand men. I’ve never met a man who said he understood women.

Am I up to more than ten points? I never could count accurately ...

Dr Peter West is a well-known social commentator, author and expert on men’s and boys’ issues.

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WHY WE NEED TO STOP TALKING ABOUT A ‘MASCULINITY CRISIS’

DEALING WITH DAMAGING HARASSMENT CULTURE MEANS CHANGING THE WAY WE TREAT MEN TOO, OBSERVES ANETA STEPIEN

The recent outpouring of sexual harassment cases makes people wonder: what is wrong with men? After all, the vast majority of those accused of sexual violence are men. The simple and perhaps shocking answer is that we, as a society, tell men to be violent. We speak about “real” manhood and call men to “grow a pair” to prove they are manly enough.

And, crucially, we describe men’s anxieties about their changing social roles as a “masculinity crisis”. In doing this, we suggest that manhood is something universal, even primeval, and thus unchangeable. But masculinity is a social construct. It has a history.

Our ideals of masculinity – the model to which men are supposed to aspire – is very old-fashioned. Even though our culture changed drastically over the course of the 20th century, the qualities we value in “real men” – such as domination, control, physical strength and emotional restraint – are unchanged. These qualities were promoted during the high period of European imperialism in the 19th century – when nations sought above all else to dominate other cultures.

As boys grow up, their peers, parents and even girlfriends tell them “boys don’t cry”, “don’t be a girl”, “be strong”. They learn to feel ashamed of emotionality and vulnerability. They are expected to “prove” their masculinity and, often, that means aggression. Sociologists and psychologists, such as Stephen M. Whitehead, or Victor J. Sadler tell us that only by connecting with their emotions can men look at themselves critically and change their behaviour.

Another old belief is that men can become “real men” through sexual conquest. In 1886, Richard von Krafft-Ebing wrote in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, the most influential book on human sexuality, that for men, sex with women was a biological force, a “natural instinct ... demanding fulfilment”. The idea that healthy men need to satisfy their instinct through sex was commonly accepted as the truth – the norm regulating relations between men and women. So the traditional and still dominant idea of masculinity means accepting and even encouraging male sexual conquest, the man’s power over others and emotional restraint.

However, emotions, including sympathy and empathy, are actually crucial for healthy social interactions. Thanks to them we understand how other people feel and know how to respond properly – including responses to sexual harassment.
CHANGING ROLES

More recently, we’ve begun to talk about a “masculinity crisis” – commonly used to describe how the changing work patterns and new family demands put pressure on men who feel distress and insecurity about their new gender role. Many straight men find it hard to reconcile the traditional view of gender with the new approach based on partnership and equality of men and women at home and in work. The sense of failing to perform the male ideal promoted by advertisements, Hollywood films and porn movies can provoke defensive reactions in men – machismo, resentment towards women and all-too often, aggressive or abusive behaviour.

Clearly, the problem doesn’t lie simply in the pressures of the changing culture but in the old-fashioned ideals of masculinity that can often only be achieved through predatory and sexist attitudes towards women. Sexism is a huge part of bonding among men who define themselves as heterosexual. Let’s be clear, the sort of thing that Donald Trump refers to as “locker room talk” is not just banter, it’s an accepted, encouraged and repeated practice of objectifying and denigrating women. Many men also find it difficult to speak out if they object to it.

A man who is sexist can’t be a woman’s ally – so why do we continue to value masculinity based on sexism? Even though this outdated and restrictive model of masculinity actually makes men unhappy, it prevails because the culture at large continues to enable it.

REDEFINING MASCULINITY

Speaking about the masculinity crisis detracts our attention from a real issue: our failure to reform the way we think about masculinity and how unfit it is for the culture in which we now live. The crisis narrative can become an easy excuse of inaction, or a handy justification of some men’s violent and abusive behaviour.

The word “crisis” even seems to fuel a backlash against movements such as #metoo. When some men feel their status is under threat, blogs such as The Voice for Men emerge producing sexist content blaming women for the challenges faced by men.

While it’s extremely important to discuss the changing roles and position of men, the language we use to do that has crucial consequences. The Irish campaign “Man up” is one example of how to teach, particularly young boys, positive values and change the meaning we understand about strength in men. This project promotes men’s strength as not being in muscles but in active participation of men in preventing domestic violence.

The campaign also encourages men to speak up about their emotions because “silence can kill”. The high number of suicides among men before their 50s is linked to men’s restraint in sharing their emotions.

The negative narrative of the crisis stops men from joining the debate that there can be multiple ways of being a man and there is no shame in breaking with the old patterns.
DEFINING GENDER STEREOTYPES
FACT SHEET REPRODUCED COURTESY OF OUR WATCH

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified ideas, messages and images about differences between males and females. They have become meaningful because society has given them meaning and value.

‘SEX’ OR ‘GENDER’?

While a person’s ‘sex’ is based on their biological features, such as hormones and physical anatomy, ‘gender’ refers to the learnt roles, norms and expectations we have of someone because of their sex.

When we say:
“Girls only like ...”
“Boys always go for ...”
“Girls are better at ...”
“Boys naturally know how to ...”

... we are talking about gender, and we present these stereotypes as ‘fact’ – rather than considering actual evidence, or an individual child’s talents or interests.

Gender stereotypes make generalisations, assumptions and judgements about a child’s personality, behaviour, appearance, skills and interests.

And so kids get treated differently, learn different things, have unequal access to opportunities, and start to develop their own understanding of what their limitations and abilities are. For example, if you never thought to suggest dance classes to your son, or rugby to your daughter, it would limit what opportunities they thought were available to them.

When boys are told to “toughen up” because they express sadness, or girls are called “bossy” for being assertive, they learn how they are expected to ‘be’ in life.

Language matters, and gender stereotypes in childhood ‘grow’ into adult attitudes – 21% of Australians surveyed believe women are “becoming too outspoken”, and one in four believe men make better political leaders.

Gender equality creates a fairer, happier and more prosperous society. There is no ‘equality’ that comes from gender stereotypes, except that they limit opportunities for both boys and girls, men and women.

REFLECTION

• Think about the toys you owned as a child and whether they were considered ‘boys’ or ‘girls’ toys.
• Have you ever bought a present for a child that went against what might have been expected for their gender (like a pram for a little boy or a truck for a little girl)? Are there challenges with doing that? Do you feel differently about giving a girl a ‘boys’ toy to giving a boy a ‘girls’ toy?
• Think about how gender was represented in your childhood home. How would you like your children’s experience to differ from your own?

ENDNOTES


CHILD’S PLAY – 6 WAYS TO CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

While play helps children to try out and develop new skills, gender stereotypes can limit what new types of play they feel encouraged to try, and subsequently what skills and abilities they develop, according to this advice from Our Watch.

You can't always control outside influences, like what happens in the playground or other environments, but you can actively give kids insight and access to play that goes beyond gendered stereotypes:

1. **Notice what you encourage and support**
   
   What kind of topics and ideas do you support your children to be interested in – science and nature, languages, drama, visual art, music, technology, geography or history?
   
   Consider what the toys and games in your house are teaching your kids – what are they learning to be ‘good at’, who are they learning to be – are they learning carefulness, thoughtfulness and calmness alongside agility and problem solving?

2. **Make stereotypes less meaningful**
   
   Where possible, try choosing some toys that don’t ‘look’ stereotypically gendered – this helps make gender less meaningful and allows kids to focus on the activity, rather than what’s ‘for boys’ or ‘for girls’.

3. **Notice your body language**
   
   When your kids play with toys or games that don’t necessarily sit within the stereotypes attached to their gender, check your reaction and be encouraging – it’s easy to forget, so make eye contact, smile, nod and get excited.

4. **Notice which family members play with what ... and mix it up!**
   
   Think about how, and what you played with as a child – is it how you tend to play with kids now? Encourage yourself, your child, and other family members to try new things.

5. **Challenge stereotypes while you play**
   
   While playing with toys, watching TV or reading, try asking questions like, ‘I wonder why we never see Jimmy cooking? He must eat sometimes!’ or ‘Why do the girls always talk about clothes – what else do you think they like doing?’ or ‘I notice he always decides where they go on adventures – what kind of places do you think they’d go if she was the leader sometimes?’

6. **Play-acting**
   
   Arrive at the ‘tea party’ ready to talk about problems that need to be solved or experiments that need to be done. Suggest the action-figures take a break and set up a tea party with them and have the dolls rescue the other toys!

Reducing gender stereotypes is about noticing and focussing on similarities and opportunities rather than differences and limitations.

Reducing gender stereotypes is about noticing and focussing on similarities and opportunities rather than differences and limitations.

Playing alongside children, encouraging a range of activities, and calling out stereotypes helps kids to learn and grow free of limitations.

HOW CHALLENGING MASCULINE STEREOTYPES IS GOOD FOR MEN

Men are much less likely than women to seek help for depression and anxiety, and a host of physical conditions. By Michelle Stratemeyer, Adriana Vargas Saenz and Elise Holland

A man sits in a doctor’s office after months of his wife’s increasingly desperate pleas for him to seek professional help for his constant coughing. In the end, she was the one who booked his appointment and even drove him there.

Another man is meeting with his manager, anticipating derision and mockery when he mentions he needs to reduce his workload to accommodate the birth of his first child.

A third man has a violent encounter outside a pub, fuelled by binge drinking and machismo. He cops a blow to the head and crumples, hitting his head against the pavement.

These aren’t just stereotypes of men. They are the types of experiences and outcomes that reliably differ between men and women. Men are 32% less likely to visit a health professional than women. Men are also less likely to seek therapy for psychological complaints, such as feeling down or anxious.

Men also experience higher rates of suicide and motor accidents, are more likely to drink excessively and smoke, and are more prone to serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, and vascular disease.

Similarly, men are more likely to both perpetrate and experience violence, and to adopt beliefs and behaviours that increase the risk of violence.

It is no surprise that men die four years earlier, on average, than women. A woman can expect to live to just over 84, while a man can expect to live to just over 80.

In a bid to improve men’s health and wellbeing, the American Psychological Association (APA) recently released guidelines for psychologists when working with boys and men. These guidelines complement the APA’s 2007 guidelines for working with girls and women. Both guidelines share commonalities, such as focusing on gender-appropriate therapeutic practices and education.

The APA is acknowledging that gender issues are relevant to everyone, not just women, and that the experiences of men may differ to those of women. But despite the positive intentions of the guidelines, their release was met by backlash and unfounded criticisms in some parts of the media.

WHAT DO THE GUIDELINES ACTUALLY SAY?

The guidelines aim to challenge some aspects of traditional masculinity that might cause problems in men’s lives. Traditional masculinity encompasses a set of norms, ideas and beliefs about what it means to be a man. Such beliefs include identifying men as self-reliant, emotionally reticent, focused on work over family, and oversexed.

Traditional masculinity encompasses a set of norms, ideas and beliefs about what it means to be a man. Such beliefs include identifying men as self-reliant, emotionally reticent, focused on work over family, and oversexed.

To illustrate the impact of these traditional ideas of masculinity on men’s health and wellbeing, let’s look at three of the ten APA recommendations in detail.

First, the guidelines urge psychologists to address the high rates of problems like violence, substance abuse, and suicide, which are more commonly experienced by men. The guidelines highlight the link between beliefs about traditional forms of masculinity and the encouragement of aggressive behaviour in boys by family, peers and the media. As a result, men are more
likely to display violent behaviours and to be victims of violence.

The guidelines also highlight the negative links between male childhood abuse and victimisation, and later aggressive behaviour, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse. Recognising these patterns offers an opportunity for therapists to engage in gender-appropriate conversations and tailor behavioural change to the problems that plague men.

Second, the guidelines highlight the importance of encouraging men’s positive involvement in families. Despite increasing numbers of dual-income households, there is still strong social pressure for men to be the providers and breadwinners rather than taking on nurturing and caring roles. This expectation can come at the expense of men’s relationships with their partners, children and extended family.

Encouraging men’s positive involvement with their families has been shown to improve health and well-being outcomes for men, their children and their partners. It may have spillover benefits in making work practices more progressive, with better balance between paid work and time spent with loved ones.

Third, the guidelines highlight the need for boys and men to more willingly seek help and health care. Men are more likely than women to die from diseases such as colorectal cancer, which can be prevented with the right health care.

In terms of mental health, men’s reluctance to express emotions and seek help through therapy may underlie the high rates of self-harm and suicide. Traditional masculinity also encourages risky and competitive actions in men, resulting in unintentional injuries being the leading cause of death in men under 45.

According to the guidelines, we need to shift beliefs around self-reliance so men feel more comfortable looking after themselves and seeking professional help and services when needed.
In recent decades, women in Australia have made significant strides towards equality with men. At universities, in workplaces, in boardrooms and in government, a growing number of women have taken on leadership roles, forging pathways for other women and girls to follow.

In 1984, the Sex Discrimination Act came into force, making sex discrimination and sexual harassment across various parts of public life against the law. The Act, which gives effect to Australia’s international human rights obligations, has played an important role in changing community attitudes and helping advance gender equality in this country.

Despite this progress, women and girls continue to experience inequality and discrimination in many important parts of their lives, which can limit the choices and opportunities available to them.

### ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

- Women and men make up just over half (50.7 per cent) of the Australian population.  
- While women comprise roughly 47 per cent of all employees in Australia, they take home on average $251.20 less than men each week (full-time adult ordinary earnings). The national gender “pay gap” is 15.3 per cent and it has remained stuck between 15 per cent and 19 per cent for the past two decades.
- Australian women account for 68% of primary carers for older people and people with disability.
- 95% of primary parental leave (outside of the public sector) is taken by women and women spend almost three times as much time taking care of children each day, compared to men.
- In 2017, Australia was ranked 35th on a global index measuring gender equality, slipping from a high point of 15th in 2006. While Australia scores very highly in the area of educational attainment, there is still a lot of progress to be made in the areas of economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment.

### BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY

- The Australian workforce is highly segregated by gender and female-dominated industries – such as aged care, child care and health and community services – have been historically undervalued.
- Australian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work and continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors.
- More than half of women aged 18 or older have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.
- On average, women spend 64 per cent of their working week performing unpaid care work. They spend almost twice as many hours performing such work each week compared to men.
- In 2015-2016 the average Australian woman was reaching retirement with an average of $113,660 less superannuation than the average male. As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension.
- More than one in three Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime and one in two experiences sexual harassment.
- It is estimated that violence against women and their children cost the Australian economy $22 billion in 2015-16.

### POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

- The number of women on the Boards of ASX-listed companies grew from 8.3 per cent in 2009 to 26.2 per cent in 2017, due in part to a diversity policy implemented by the ASX Corporate Governance Council in 2010. Increasing the number of women in corporate leadership positions is likely to significantly increase financial returns.
- Australian men and women overwhelmingly believe (90 per cent) that men should be as involved in parenting as women. However, while a significant number of fathers, and in particular young fathers, would like to be able to access better workplace flexibility arrangements, men are much more likely than women to have such requests denied.
- As of 2016, over one million Australian workers are able to take leave and enjoy other protections because of domestic violence clauses in their workplace agreement or award conditions.

### OUR ROLE

The Commission helps people resolve complaints of unfair treatment under the Sex Discrimination Act, including discrimination on the basis of sex, marital (or relationship) status and pregnancy and potential pregnancy. The Act also protects workers with family responsibilities and makes sexual harassment against the law.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner works in partnership with a broad range of groups to promote gender equality and counter discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women and other barriers to gender equality. She also undertakes major research projects and provides policy advice to government and others to bring about positive change.

Did you know?
On average, Australian women have to work an extra 56 days a year to earn the same pay as men for doing the same work.  

FIND OUT MORE
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Gender Indicators, Australia (Latest update 2017).
- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, Publications.
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender pay gap statistics (February 2018).
• Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender workplace statistics at a glance (February 2018).

FOOTNOTES
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Australia, Table 10.1: Total number of hours and minutes per day spent on work (employment related and unpaid) (September 2017).
9. For example: approximately 45 per cent of women in the workforce are employed part-time compared with around 16 per cent of men. See: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Summary – Economic Security (September 2017); women make up only 5 per cent of CEOs and only 20 per cent of executive management in ASX 200 companies (see: Chief Executive Women, Senior Executive Census 2017) and, despite making up almost 60 per cent of all Commonwealth public servants, they comprise only 43 per cent of the Senior Executive Service (see: Australian Public Service Statistical Bulletin, Tables 8 and 12 (31 December 2016).
17. Australian Institute of Company Directors, Appointments to ASX 200 Boards (updated online resource).
21. L McFerran, Domestic violence is a workplace issue; Australian developments 2009-2016 (June 2016).
22. Equal Pay Day marks the additional number of days that the average woman must work in a year to receive the same amount of pay as the average man. Equal Pay Day is calculated using the following formula: 365 days x gender gap estimate ÷ 100. Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender pay gap statistics (March 2014) p.4; Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender pay gap statistics (February 2018), p.3.

MEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: ENGAGING MEN ON GENDER EQUALITY

Initiatives aimed at ‘engaging men’ to address gender inequality have gained popularity in recent years. But how much do we really know about the most effective ways to engage men in gender equality?

In partnership with Dr Graeme Russell and Dr Michael Flood, two of Australia’s leading researchers in diversity and inclusion, Diversity Council Australia has released a new report, Men Make a Difference: Engaging Men on Gender Equality. The report examines the evidence for what works and what doesn’t, and recommends more effective ways to engage men to achieve gender equality at work.

Lisa Annese, DCA’s CEO, said men can play a crucial role in addressing gender inequality. “Despite gains in recent years, gender inequality at work is still a major issue – you only have to look at the gender pay gap, the high incidence of pregnancy discrimination and the lack of women in positions of leadership to see that. “While engaging men is not a ‘magic bullet’, men are part of the problem of inequality so they need to be part of the solution. We have to find more effective ways to encourage men to work in partnership with women to create the necessary change. Importantly, men need to understand they will benefit from equality as well as women,” said Lisa.

Chris Sutherland, Managing Director of Programmed that sponsored the report, said it is important research that contributes to the conversation about gender equality. “At Programmed, we’re committed to the pursuit of gender equity in pay and jobs across leadership, operations and trades roles. A purposeful approach to diversity and inclusion enables us to gain broader perspectives and insights to better serve our customers. “We seek to drive change not only within our organisation, but the wider community. To achieve gender equality, we need to engage men and women as active and equal partners,” said Chris.

KEY REPORT FINDINGS

Gender inequalities are everywhere

• Gender inequalities are built into the systems and structures of our workplaces:
  – Formally through policies and decision-making practices (e.g. denying promotion to part-time staff, as women are much more likely to work part-time than men), and
  – Informally through norms and customs (e.g. ‘cultural fit’, ‘merit’, who gets included in or excluded in social and professional networks, language use, stereotypes, sexist and harassing behaviour).

• Gender inequalities are also carried out by men and women at work:
  – Many men, often without even realising it, practise other everyday forms of sexism.

Men benefit from gender equality

• Men gain when the women and girls around them have lives which are safe and fair.
• Men’s wellbeing improves when the constraints of narrow notions of masculinity are relaxed.
• Men with feminist partners report greater relationship stability and sexual satisfaction than men with non-feminist partners.
• Men also benefit from active involvement as fathers in their children’s lives.
• With progress towards gender equality in workplaces, men will enjoy workplaces with greater productivity, creativity, and diversity because of the wider pools of talent and fairer processes on which they are based.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ENGAGE MEN ON GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK:

1. Get the foundation right – ensure gender equality initiatives involve women and men as active and equal partners.
2. Get the framing right – treat gender equality as a business issue, not a women’s issue.
3. Go wide – make visible and target all key gender equality areas (i.e. paid work, power and decision making, financial security, personal safety, interpersonal work relationships, caring, and community involvement).
4. Get the messaging right – to appeal to men as well as women.
5. Engage a diversity of men – including men in different organisational roles and levels, and with a variety of demographic backgrounds (e.g. ages, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations).
6. Educate about how to lead change effectively – by resourcing initiatives, being visible and persistent, and ‘walking the talk’.
7. Make the connection between work and home – by implementing initiatives that encourage gender equality in caregiving.
8. Make the connection between work and communities – by framing gender inequality as a societal/community problem.
9. Build individuals’ gender confidence and capability – by providing opportunities for both men and women to change their mindsets, assumptions, and behaviours.
10. Encourage men and women to challenge and change gender-biased organisational policies and practices.
WHY WE STILL STRUGGLE WITH WORK-HOME CONFLICT IN WOMEN AND MEN

Kate O’Brien explores how men and women can find an equitable balance between work and other responsibilities in and out of the home.

Still in 2019 women and men grapple with how best to balance work and other responsibilities in and out of the home.

Women bear the brunt of household labour, take career hits if they become mothers, and are poorly represented in the upper levels of professional careers. But the careers of men also suffer if they take time out from paid work.

Why do these issues still persist? It may be at least partly from a failure to recognise the full picture of equality.

A new paper gives eight different ways to view gender equality. Each is important but incomplete when viewed on its own in the real world, and the list is not exhaustive. These different aspects of equality need to be considered in tackling both gender inequality and work-home conflict.

My colleagues and I looked at this topic in the context of careers in science, but the findings are applicable across many industries, including medicine, law, engineering and education.

EIGHT FACETS OF INEQUALITY

Consider each of the following aspects of equality:

• Gender pay parity
  – Success is equal pay for men and women in comparable roles

• Gender-balanced leadership
  – Success is when the proportion of female leaders matches the proportion of junior women

• Gender balance across disciplines
  – Success is 50% women in all disciplines, including those historically viewed as male

• Gender neutral assessment of individual performance
  – Success is objective assessment of performance

• Equal workforce participation by men and women
  – Success is when women account for 50% of the workforce

• Domestic labour shared equally by men and women
  – Success is when women and men spend equal time on childcare and household labour

• Motherhood does not affect career
  – Success is when careers are unaffected by parenthood, for both genders

• Career does not affect motherhood
  – Success is when parenting choices are unaffected by career, for both genders.

Let’s look at what happens when we view workplace equality with an overemphasis on one or only a few of these aspects.

MOTHER OF ALL CONFLICTS

Work-home conflict is both a symptom and a cause of gender inequality, and highlighting the issue can reinforce stereotypes about women as carers. The assumption of “negative spillover” (that family responsibilities impair work performance and vice versa, rather than being mutually enhancing) could well discourage employers from recruiting and promoting primary carers.

Downplaying the importance of work-home conflict is not the solution, however, because it implicitly devalues caring work. The devaluation of caring underpins many aspects of gender inequality, including the pay gap.

Economic analysis trumpets the productivity gains from increasing female workforce participation, but often fails to account for the economic value of unpaid labour currently done by women, a large part of which is care-giving.

Men are called to play a larger role in childcare to promote gender equality, but they are penalised more heavily than women when they take up flexible work arrangements, especially in societies where gender roles are firmly entrenched.

WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

So is the issue that women do more low-value caring work, both at home and at work? Or is the problem that caring work is perceived as less valuable because it’s done by women?

This conundrum exposes one of the biggest challenges for workplace gender equality: defining and measuring success. Inequalities between men and women are widespread, well-documented and routinely condemned, and yet it’s not clear how equality is best defined or measured. Each of our eight indicators...
is valid, but none is sufficient, and our list does not capture all aspects of equality.

Women bear the brunt of household labour, take career hits if they become mothers, and are poorly represented in the upper levels of professional careers. But the careers of men also suffer if they take time out from paid work.

For example, gender balance in the workplace is the goal of many equality initiatives. It is particularly important to increase the number of women in traditionally male jobs, and to provide role models and opportunities for women to meet their potential. Since male-dominated sectors attract better pay, this approach also addresses some aspects of the gender pay gap.

But efforts to attract women into traditionally masculine jobs (such as the Science in Australia Gender Equity Initiative) are not matched by equivalent efforts to attract men into feminised sectors (such as nursing and childcare). This imbalance reinforces the perception that men’s work is more important than women’s work. It also fails to address a major cause of the gender pay gap: low pay in industries dominated by women.

Further, having more women around does not automatically create gender equality. Paradoxically, research suggests female retention and progression may actually be higher in scientific disciplines where there are fewer women.

Thus increasing the number of women in traditionally male areas is important for equality, but is only one piece of the puzzle. Workplace gender equality also depends on access to leadership roles, pay equality, workforce participation, social norms, flexible work arrangements, dealing with sexual harassment, explicit and unconscious bias, access to affordable high quality childcare and more.

KEEPING TRACK
Measuring progress is essential for holding leaders to account and evaluating whether equality initiatives actually work.

Equality metrics need to be used with care, however, because each only captures one dimension of success. For example, increasing the number of women in leadership roles is paramount for gender equality.

Working part-time or taking time off to care for children will almost inevitably slow career progression. Therefore women employees might be pressured to follow the “ideal worker” model to help an organisation achieve their female leadership targets. This model presumes that workers (particularly professionals) devote themselves completely to their work, and have the resources, support and desire to outsource family demands such as caring for young children or elderly relatives. Thus a narrow focus on leadership for women could inadvertently perpetuate the “ideal worker” assumption, which penalises both men and women for flexible work.

Around the world, governments, workplaces, families and individuals are working hard to tackle workplace gender inequality, but no single initiative can deliver on all dimensions of equality.

As we move forwards, it’s important to specify what aspects of equality are the focus of any given action, so that it’s clear what else needs to be done. Focusing too narrowly on any one indicator can have perverse outcomes, undermining other aspects of equality.

Co-authors of this research with Kate O’Brien are Milena Holmgren, Terrance Fitzsimmons, Margaret Crane, Paul Maxwell and Brian Head.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
Kate O’Brien does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond her academic appointment.

Kate O’Brien is Associate Professor, University of Queensland.
Kids want their dads to spend more time with them, research reported in the UK journal Daddilife.com says. My research, and that of others, emphasises the vital importance of dads for kids’ intellectual growth, maturity and balanced development. And that goes for girls as well as boys. So here’s the million-dollar question: *If kids want dads to give them more time, why can’t dads do so?*

A couple of answers jump out. First, fathers spend more time at paid work than mothers. Nearly half of fathers in the above research done at the Australian National University worked more than 44 hours a week. "Fathers are more likely than mothers to report work-life challenges," Professor Strazdins said.

Balancing all these things is hard for dads: time with kids, driving kids to school and sport, time with a partner, time on their own health and wellbeing, travelling to work and – work! Employers have to be steadily encouraged to allow dads freedom to do all these properly. Perhaps employers give women a little more understanding than men when it comes to things like visits to the doctor or looking after kids. And kids always seem to be catching some bug or other!

Second, old habits die hard. We still expect a man to be the major breadwinner, even though that term is rather antiquated these days. It was certainly talked about a lot when I interviewed older males for *Fathers, Sons and Lovers*. When a boy is growing up, most people don’t talk to him about caring for kids, but focus on what job he will do, what career, and so on. Asked about being a teacher, one young man said "It would be a great job, if I was a woman".

Maybe subconsciously, we expect women to go into ‘caring’ professions (teaching, nursing, social work) in which they are doing some version of mothering. We expect a male to be career-focused. If he fathers some kids we somehow expect that – as an admiral said to a naval rating asking for leave – “Sailor, you need to be there to lay the keel. You don’t need to be there when the ship is launched”.

Fortunately many men do choose to be there at the birth of their kids and follow through with lots of infant care. So we need to work harder to re-educate society to remember that men are carers. And some of them care for people full-time, and part-time, in many capacities.

Third, many men are going through separation and divorce. Nobody does well out of it, except the lawyers. It’s an issue relevant to many of us. Dads: what can we do to make life a bit less stressful and let you have better time with kids? Employers: what’s your experience? Do unions have dad-friendly policies? Teachers can benefit by involving dads with kids’ learning, especially in some ethnic families. And mums are part of the whole deal too. We need to get dads better connected with kids, for everyone’s sake.

**Dr Peter West** is a well-known social commentator and an expert on men’s and boys’ issues. He is the author of *Fathers, Sons and Lovers: Men Talk about their Lives from the 1930s to Today* (Finch, 1996) and *What is the Matter with Boys?* (Choice Books, 2002). He works part-time in the Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Sydney.
Study reveals dangers of ‘toxic masculinity’ to men and those around them

Young men who subscribe to traditional ideals of manhood are more likely to sexually harass women and bully others, according to research by Michael Flood

Young men who conform to traditional definitions of manhood are more likely to suffer harm to themselves, and do harm to others, according to a new survey of Australian men aged 18 to 30.

This is the first major Australian survey to map ideals of masculinity among young men, commissioned as part of the Jesuit Social Services’ Men’s Project, which is dedicated to helping boys and men live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives.

The researchers surveyed 1,000 young men on their attitudes toward seven pillars of traditional manhood: self-sufficiency, toughness, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control over women. These represent what we call the “Man Box”, or the ideals of manhood that can be both influential and restrictive to young men.

The men were asked about their perceptions of societal messages about manhood and their own endorsement of these messages.

Our findings showed that many young men remain greatly influenced by these societal messages of what it means to be a man. For example, young men were particularly likely to agree with statements that society expects men to act strong (69%), fight back when pushed (60%) and never say no to sex (56%).

However, some traditional ideals seem to be dropping away. Few young men agreed that society tells them they should use violence to get respect (35%), straight men should shun gay men as friends (36%), boys shouldn’t learn how to cook and clean (38%), and men shouldn’t do household chores (39%).

There was also a consistent gap between social messages and personal ideals, with lower personal endorsement of every element of traditional manhood.

Still, a sizeable number of young men believed men should act strong (47%), be the primary breadwinners (35%) and fight back when pushed around (34%).

Fewer respondents agreed that men should have as many sexual partners as they can (25%), avoid housework and child care (23%) and use violence to get respect (20%).

In a particularly troubling finding, 27% of young men believed they should always have the final say about decisions in their relationships and 37% believed they should know where their wives or girlfriends are at all times.

WHAT OTHER RESEARCHERS HAVE FOUND

Our findings are consistent with other research on the societal impact of traditional masculine ideals.

First, there is a consistent gap between men and women when it comes to views of gender roles. Young Australian men are less aware than young women of sexism and more supportive of male dominance and violent attitudes toward women. Research in the US has found that young American men are also less aware than young women of the harms of traditional masculinity.

Second, there is diversity among men. Young men have different ways of expressing their masculine identities, depending on their peer groups. There are also large variations among young men in their endorsement of sexism and violence.

Third, men are changing. While the “Man Box” survey is not longitudinal, other research points to shifts over time in men’s attitudes toward gender roles. Other studies have shown more young men supporting gender equality and rejecting violence against women, although there are also signs of regress and backlash.

THE HARMS OF ACTING LIKE A ‘REAL MAN’

Conforming to ideals of traditional masculinity has a real cost, both for young men themselves and for the women and men around them.

Our findings show that being inside the “Man Box”
### The Man Box: Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 1: SELF-SUFFICIENCY</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that Society as a whole tells me that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn’t really get respect.</td>
<td>49% 25% 24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.</td>
<td>54% 27% 27%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 2: ACTING TOUGH</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A guy who doesn’t fight back when others push him around is weak.</td>
<td>60% 34% 26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.</td>
<td>69% 47% 22%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 3: PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn’t look good.</td>
<td>57% 42% 15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn’t very manly.</td>
<td>48% 32% 16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women don’t go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.</td>
<td>44% 39% 5%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 4: RIGID GENDER ROLES</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.</td>
<td>38% 23% 15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man shouldn’t have to do household chores.</td>
<td>39% 19% 20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.</td>
<td>56% 35% 21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 5: HETEROSEXUALITY AND HOMOPHOBIA</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A gay guy is not a ‘real man’.</td>
<td>47% 28% 19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement).</td>
<td>64% 83% 19%</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>PILLAR 6: HYPERSEXUALITY</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ‘real man’ should have as many sexual partners as he can.</td>
<td>47% 25% 22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ‘real man’ would never say no to sex.</td>
<td>56% 24% 32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR 7: AGGRESSION AND CONTROL</th>
<th>SOCIAL MESSAGE: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that...</th>
<th>PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “In my opinion...”</th>
<th>Gap between social message and personal endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.</td>
<td>35% 20% 15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.</td>
<td>43% 27% 16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.</td>
<td>44% 37% 7%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Men’s Project/Author provided.
– having higher-than-average agreement with traditional masculine ideals – is bad for young men’s health.

According to our survey, young men in the “Man Box” were more likely than other men to have poor mental health (including feeling depressed, hopeless or suicidal), to seek help from only a narrow range of sources, and to be involved in binge drinking and traffic accidents.

This accords with a large number of other studies that have found men who endorse dominant ideals of masculinity are more likely than other men to have greater health risks and engage in poor behaviours. They are more likely to consider suicide, drink excessively, take risks at work and drive dangerously.

Recent media discussions of “toxic masculinity” have emphasised that patriarchal notions of manhood are dangerous not only for men themselves but for those around them.

Conforming to ideals of traditional masculinity has a real cost, both for young men themselves and for the women and men around them.

Our survey also bears this out. Young men who agreed more strongly with the ideals of the “Man Box” were six times as likely as other men to have sexually harassed women in the last month – making sexual comments to a women or girl they didn’t know in a public place or online.

They were also more likely to have bullied other people in the last month, physically, verbally and online. And they were far less likely to intervene when other men were acting violently.

Again, these findings should not be surprising. Conformity to traditional masculinity is a well-documented risk factor in domestic violence. Men are also more likely to rape women if they are hostile towards women, desire sexual dominance, accept rape myths and feel entitled to women’s bodies.

Masculinity also is a significant contributing factor in male-to-male violence. Indeed, men’s violence against women and men’s violence against other men are interrelated, and both are shaped by traditional ideals of masculinity.

### RESPONSES OF YOUNG MEN TO QUESTIONS ON THEIR BEHAVIOURS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside the Man Box</th>
<th>Outside the Man Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little interest or pleasure in doing things in the last two weeks.</td>
<td>83%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had thoughts of suicide in the last two weeks.</td>
<td>44%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrated verbal bullying in the past month.</td>
<td>56%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrated online bullying in the past month.</td>
<td>47%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrated physical bullying in the past month.</td>
<td>47%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made sexual comments to women you don’t know in a public place in the past month.</td>
<td>46%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced verbal bullying in the past month.</td>
<td>66%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced physical bullying in the past month.</td>
<td>52%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went along or didn’t take action when witnessing guys making sexist comments or jokes.</td>
<td>57%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went along or didn’t take action when witnessing guys verbally or physically harassing women.</td>
<td>22%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks to the point of getting drunk once per month or more.</td>
<td>31%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been in one or more traffic accidents in the past year.</td>
<td>38%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report being satisfied or very satisfied with overall physical attractiveness.</td>
<td>67%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represents statistically significant relationships at p<.05

The Men’s Project/Author provided.
BEYOND THE ‘MAN BOX’
There is an urgent need to promote change in the way we view masculinity in Australia. Three tasks are vital.

There is an urgent need to promote change in the way we view masculinity in Australia.

First, we need to raise awareness of the harms of the “Man Box”. And in doing so, let’s avoid a focus only on harms to men. We must also address how masculinity contributes to ongoing sexism and male privilege in society.

Second, we need to confront traditional masculine ideals and try to reduce their impact on society. We need to engage men and boys in critical conversations about manhood, encouraging them to embrace identities of their own making rather than conforming to constrained masculine scripts. We should also highlight how young men are changing and adopting diverse viewpoints on what it means to be a man.

Third, let’s promote healthy and ethical alternatives to traditional masculine ideals. Whether we call it “healthy masculinity” or something else, we need to promote ideals for boys’ and men’s lives that are positive, diverse and gender-equitable.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
Michael Flood worked with Jesuit Social Services to provide commentary on the Man Box Survey.
Michael Flood is Associate Professor, Queensland University of Technology.

THE CONVERSATION
Toxic masculinity: helping men understand the impact of their behaviour

Many abusive men don’t realise the extent of their behaviour – leaving the ones closest to them to endure years of emotional and physical torment, according to this ABC Life report by Jason Om

“’I’ve been called a scary person,” says Bob**, sitting cross-legged, hands clasped in his lap.

“I’ve never laid hands on anyone in my family. I love them. I care for them. But then there’s the other side, where I was different,” he says.

“Throwing stuff or breaking stuff at home. You get the shits and you throw and smash [things] and you go, ‘Oh well, that’s just me venting.’”

We’re in the group therapy room in an unremarkable building among the business parks of Sydney’s outer suburbs. Bob is here to take part in a men’s behaviour change program that addresses domestic violence.

Men who attend the program come from a variety of backgrounds. There are tradies and teachers, lawyers and policemen. Many are referred from the prison system or government welfare agencies. Some choose to be here, proactively seeking help.

Such programs have been running for many years to deal with behaviours that have recently become part of global conversations through the #MeToo movement and “toxic masculinity”.

**DEFINING TOXIC MASCULINITY**

The term toxic masculinity has become a catch-all to describe male feelings of entitlement, anger and vulnerability, and the urge to dominate and intimidate, through either overt or covert means.

In the book Angry White Men, US academic Michael Kimmel describes the anger of men whose unrealistic expectations of power and dominance are not met. The book was first published in 2013, but the term toxic masculinity did not become widely used until late 2017, after accusations of sexual harassment and assault were made public against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

The peak body of Australian psychologists, the Australian Psychological Society, says while the term is socio-cultural, not medical, it is useful for examining poisonous behaviours.

“To me, domestic violence was laying your hands on someone,” Bob says.

“That was the extent of my knowledge of DV, 100 per cent. Then I found out what domestic violence was, and I just felt like an absolute piece of shit.”

Reflecting on his behaviour, another participant, Steven, says “a lot of the time we can be so intoxicated with ourselves”.

“We’re not aware that how we’re acting is affecting the people we love.”

For organisers of this program, it’s not simply about big men letting their feelings out, but the serious introspection needed to own up to one’s actions and commit to change.

“A question I sometimes put to men is: Are the things I’m doing now in line with the man I aspire to be?” says Michael Riley, program co-ordinator at Relationships Australia.

Clearly, these men believe they have fallen short. Behind them is a trail of damage, of women and children who’ve endured emotional and violent attacks, some who suffered for years before deciding to flee.

In Bob’s case, his wife left him and took their children after years of emotional abuse. He wishes men were confronting these issues earlier.

“This should be taught in school,” Bob says.

“Not when you’re [in your 40s] and your life is f**ked. Why didn’t someone tell me this before?”

The men are only just emerging into the light, blinking, having been oblivious to the consequences of their actions.

“I’d been with my wife for a very long time and I didn’t even see this coming, mate. This was bang,” Bob says.

**AM I BEING ABUSIVE WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING IT?**

“Slapping, grabbing, punching, pushing, kicking, choking ...” Steven reads from a list of nearly 70 abusive behaviours that men in the room assess themselves against.

Have they done it once? More than once? To whom? Organisers say it’s never just once. Even if the men say otherwise.

Some listed behaviours may not be obvious examples of abuse, such as “giving her an allowance”.

“I looked at the list and I was ticking them and putting question marks against them and wondering, ‘How is this categorised as abuse?’” Steven says.

“There’s behaviours in there that you would look at and just go, holy shit,” Bob adds.

Behaviours such as:

• Criticising her clothes or her body shape
• Checking up on her
• Using jealousy to justify your actions

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Issues in Society | Volume 449

Masculinity and Male Identity
• Putting her down
• Making her feel guilty
• Trying to make her feel guilty about not having sex.

Bob finds a behaviour on the list he engaged in: making her think she’s crazy.

“I realised we didn’t argue because my wife was too afraid to argue with me. Not that I put hands on her, but I just shut her down and I didn’t even know I did it,” Bob says.

“She’d want to talk about something and I’d be, ‘Nuh, I don’t want to talk about it’. And if she did want to talk about it I’d ramp it up until she felt scared.”

Despite acknowledging this now, Bob never thought he had a problem.

“There’s this sneaky shit,” he says, referring to the unconscious things he did.

“Now I can look at it and go, ‘righto’. That takes a lot of deep thought to actually go back and figure out how your brain works and how you’ve actually been twisting shit to make things go a certain way.”

MEN SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES ‘THE HARD QUESTIONS’

Clinical and forensic psychologist Dr Katie Seidler has treated violent offenders over 20 years. She likens this twisting of thought to the boiling frog analogy, in which the frog boils to death without noticing the rising heat.

“The moral compass skews subtly, subtly, subtly so by the time extreme acts occur, the compass is so skewed the person hasn’t realised it.”

Like Dr Seidler, Lizette Twisleton has been working with men to change their behaviour for many years. Men are asked to question how their behaviour makes their partner or children feel.

“How do I notice the subtle shifts in other people when they start to pull back from me? When they start to speak less? When they maybe start to feel less confident?”

Ms Twisleton now works for No to Violence, a family violence peak body that runs the phone hotline, Men’s Referral Service. She says all domestic violence comes from a desire to exert power and control over others.

“A lot of controlling behaviour comes from a calm, calculated place.

“It happens from a place of, ‘I believe that I have a right to have things my way. It’s my right. I’m a man. Society says that I’m at the top of the pile, and therefore things will be as I say’.”

“Privilege and entitlement is, ‘I am more powerful than you and I will remind you that I am more powerful than you.”

Ms Twisleton suggests men can ask themselves hard questions.

“How do I hold power? How can I have power with, not power over?”

“Power is not a bad thing. We need personal power. But for me it’s, ‘How do I share that?’”

The term toxic masculinity has become a catch-all to describe male feelings of entitlement, anger and vulnerability, and the urge to dominate and intimidate, through either overt or covert means.
Looking back, Jerry Retford can see the way he used power in an abusive marriage and relationship that are now over.

He has spent many years “dealing with the toxic junk inside” by attending several men’s behaviour change programs.

“We say we love these people. Don’t we want to protect them and cherish them?” he says.

“We can’t do that with all this junk sitting inside us.”

For him, feelings of jealousy were a key driver of his abusive actions. Obsessive texting to find out where his partner was. Turning up at her house. Calling her work repeatedly because she wouldn’t talk to him.

“It’s abhorrent. I look back now and think, ‘What kind of person does that?’”

Dr Seidler says jealousy comes from a sense of insecurity and, for some men, can be connected to their ideas around manhood.

“They’re constantly worried their partners will see somebody else and think that someone else is a better man than they are,” she says.

Australian research has found jealousy is the most common motive for the murder of intimate partners. Of course, there is a difference between feeling jealous and then carrying out extreme acts.

Jerry attributes his own jealous feelings to a sense of abandonment as a child. In his current relationship, jealousy is less of a problem.

“I know she’ll come back from the shops at some time,” he says.

Jerry says men can test out their level of jealousy by asking themselves how they will react when their partner goes out for a night on the town.

“So I think she’s with someone, or do I think she’s missed the taxi?”

Take time to consider what’s behind the rage

In his previous relationships, it didn’t take a lot for Jerry to fly into a rage. Small things would trigger a torrent of swearing, shouting and throwing objects.

He now uses a “time out” technique to slow down his emotional reactions. He checks himself and takes a breath.

“When I slow down, I become conscious of what’s going on for me,” he says.

“I then don’t blame other people. I take responsibility for what’s happening to me.”

Stop, check and think.

Western Sydney University senior lecturer in criminology Michael Salter suggests men pause and ask themselves: “Why am I doing this? Why do I feel the need to do this? What am I feeling right now? Where do those feelings come from?”

“From an early age we teach boys to be phobic of their emotions.

“I think those are tough questions for men and boys, because men in our society are taught to be ashamed of all our feelings. The only socially endorsed feelings that are legitimate for us are anger, and being horny.”

Change is possible, but takes time

Michael Riley is optimistic the men in his Sydney groups can become the men they want to be, but it’s not an easy process.

“This is really just a starting point,” he says.

It can take a while. A longitudinal study into the effectiveness of such programs led by Monash University found most of the men who attended became violence free or almost violence free after two years.

“I’m by no means fixed,” Bob says, back in the group therapy room.

“I’ve got a long way to go. I’d like to get my family back. I just want them to be happy.”

* Names have been changed for privacy.

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MISOGYNY AS VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Analysis from an article in ‘Australian Outlook’, published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs. Authors: Dr David Duriesmith, Luisa Ryan and Shannon Zimmerman

Misogynist violence continues to be seen as an individual, private problem when in fact it constitutes a major security issue. Australia is uniquely positioned to act due to its ground-breaking work on gender-based violence prevention.

On Friday, 40-year-old Scott Beierle walked into a yoga studio in Tallahassee and opened fire, killing two before turning the gun on himself. Beierle had a history of violence against women. He had also posted videos on his YouTube channel where he ranted against women, calling them “whores”, accusing them of “treachery” and blaming women who had “wronged” him for his “rebirth” as an anti-women crusader.

Beierle is just one example of a disturbing increase of violent misogyny. In April Alek Minassian drove a rented van into a crowd of people in Toronto, killing 10 pedestrians, predominantly women. Other recent examples include Alexandre Bissonnette, who killed six people and injured 19 at a Quebec mosque, and Nikolas Cruz, who killed 17 people in a Florida high school. All resonate with the ideology of Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and injured 14 in California in 2014, and his 137-page manifesto on his sexual frustration.

A public security issue

Misogyny is not a private issue; it is a direct threat to broader public security. There is an undeniable link between misogyny – hatred of women – and violence. This link is clear to see in domestic violence, which experts say is a way for male abusers to impose and enforce “traditional” gender roles based on ideas of men having control over women.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1 in 6 women (1.6 million) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner since age 15. This violence is estimated to cost the Australian economy $22 billion dollars annually.

Not only are misogynistic attitudes and ideologies harmful to an entire society, domestic violence is a key correlate of public violence. Recent research in the United States has shown that more than 50% of mass shootings between 2009 and 2016 were preceded by the murder of a partner, ex-partner or family member. This connection can be seen in Australia with prominent attacks such as the Lindt Café siege and the January 2017 Melbourne car attack both being committed by men with records of gender-based violence.

Additionally, violent political misogyny follows the same pattern of dehumanisation and incitement to violence as other violent extremist groups. Male supremacists, alt-right, fascist and white supremacist circles overlap and reinforce each other’s misogynist ideas. This makes paying serious attention to violent political misogyny even more urgent, as far right discourse is again gaining “legitimate” traction in our society.

Incel terrorism in Australia

Made up of mostly young, white men, Incels (a contraction of “involuntary” and “celibate”) see sex as a fundamental right, which “attractive” women owe to men. For example, if no attractive women consents to dating an Incel, they should be forced to do so, potentially through government-devised programs to distribute sexual access to women.

The Incel movement remains difficult to detect. In contrast to the other anti-feminist groups in Australia, Incels remain invisible because they do not have on-the-ground infrastructure and rarely formally meet. Instead they are commonly self-radicalising and link online through a group of anti-feminist websites commonly referred to as the ‘Manosphere’. The result is an echo chamber which justifies and amplifies feelings of male entitlement and rage.

The Manosphere is massive: the subreddit r/Incels had roughly 40,000 members when it was shut down by reddit in 2017 for inciting violence against women. This community encourages despair, desperation and violence: a toxic and terrifying combination.

In the words of journalist David Futrelle who charts anti-feminist groups: “Of all the toxic misogynistic groups I monitor on my blog, the Incel subculture is easily the most troubling. It’s a strange and toxic little world that transforms lovelorn men by the thousands into potential terrorists.”

While no research has explored the prevalence of Incel ideology in Australia, there is reason to believe
it may be a rising issue. The strength of far-right misogynist groups in Australia, and the tendency of these sorts of groups to facilitate Incel ideology, all indicates that Australia is likely to face increasing threats from Incels in coming years. Other branches of the misogynist far-right have risen rapidly, most recently in the growth of the Lads Society, a series of clubs where white nationalist, anti-feminist men meet to train in weight-lifting and martial arts.

Last month, Andrew Nolch testified in court that his vandalism of a memorial to Eurydice Dixon, a young comedian who was raped and murdered while walking home from a performance, was a “political statement” against feminism.

Incel attacks as terror attacks
While Incel violence has not yet been perpetrated on the same scale as other acts of terror in Australia, its ideology has already motivated terrorist attacks overseas and is a serious security threat comparable to the racist and jihadist ideologies that fuel other violent extremist movements.

However, unlike other forms of violent extremism, Incel attacks may not be immediately defined as terrorism. After Incel attacks the perpetrators have often been branded “lone wolves” suffering from mental illness. These depictions downplay the ideological nature of their violence and distance their actions from other forms of terrorism.

As Toula Drimonis in the Huffington Post noted of one perpetrator, his behaviour “had all the hallmarks of terrorism. If he had been indoctrinated by Islamist extremists instead of by a virulently misogynistic Incel group, his would have been considered an open-and-shut case.”

The sympathy for the Incel agenda within some mainstream circles is disturbing. Earlier this year, the New York Times published an opinion piece entitled “The Redistribution of Sex” that positioned access to sex as a legitimate issue and included the quote “Sometimes the extremists and radicals and weirdos see the world more clearly than the respectable and moderate and sane”.

A policy response is needed
Australia has a strong history in addressing misogynist attitudes that lead to violence and is a world leader in conducting primary prevention work on gender-based violence. It has taken an innovative approach to primary prevention of violent extremism with initiative such as the Fixed Threat Assessment Centre in Victoria. The national initiative Our Watch leads work on preventing violence against women and their children by targeting the core misogynist attitudes that enable violence.

In addition to the work already being done, Australia can strengthen its defences against misogynistic violence by:

- Updating the Criminal Code Act to include targeting groups due to gender.
- Enforcing policies against speech intended to incite violence or harm against an individual or group.
- Supporting education campaigns around gender quality, feminism and misogyny both in schools and the wider community.
- Enforcing laws against domestic violence, both a serious crime in and of itself, as well as a strong indicator of future violence.
- Ensuring that those working with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence receive training on the warning signs of radicalisation and escalation.

Australia is uniquely positioned to take the lead in responding to misogynist violent extremism. Australia has the national expertise and infrastructure to combat misogynistic violence at a national and state level. Australia needs to strengthen its defences by addressing misogynistic ideology with the same seriousness as other forms of violent extremism.

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MEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVIST GROUPS

- There has been a recent emergence of chauvinistic men’s rights activist groups (MRAs) online and at public rallies.
- These groups are often far-right political movements that espouse a militant masculinity which is dedicated to the restoration of a perceived loss of men’s rights and place in society.
- Ideological masculinity seeks to promote a return to a perceived period of male supremacy, which has been displaced by women’s rights, structural shifts in the workforce and economy, and male self-effacement. Men are framed as victims in a world where women’s rights have taken away their traditional status.
- In recent years, Australia has seen a number of far-right provocateurs seeking to bring this movement to Australia, representing groups such as the Proud Boys and the English Defence League (EDL).
- At its most extreme, this men’s movement is motivating new forms of far-right agitation that verge on the politically motivated violence of terrorism.
- The emergence of Incels (involuntary celibates) in the USA is viewed by many as an extreme and dangerous manifestation of toxic masculinity.

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EVERYONE’S BUSINESS: 
SEXUAL HARASSMENT SURVEY

Executive summary from an Australian Human Rights Commission report based on a national survey on the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and the broader community

Between April and June 2018, the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) conducted a national survey to investigate the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and the community more broadly. The Commission has conducted and reported on similar sexual harassment surveys in 2003, 2008 and 2012.

The 2018 National workplace sexual harassment survey (2018 National Survey) was designed to collect data about:

• The prevalence and nature of sexual harassment experienced by Australians aged 15 years and older across their lifetime (at any time or anywhere)
• The prevalence and nature of sexual harassment experienced by Australians aged 15 years and older in the workplace
• The perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment
• Characteristics of workplaces where harassment occurs
• The industries where harassment occurs
• The reporting of workplace sexual harassment and the outcomes of complaints
• The impacts of workplace sexual harassment on those who experience it
• The responses of people who witnessed or heard about sexual harassment in their workplaces, and
• Australians’ levels of awareness of where they can access information about sexual harassment.

The 2018 National Survey was conducted both online and by telephone with a sample of over 10,000 Australians.

The survey measured people’s experiences of sexual harassment over the course of their lifetimes and within the last five years.

Sexual harassment survey findings revealed

Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins has released new figures that show sexual harassment continues to be a major problem in Australian workplaces

Speaking at the National Press Club in Canberra, Commissioner Jenkins outlined the pervasive nature of sexual harassment. “One in three workers in Australia said that they had been sexually harassed at work over the last five years, compared with one in five from our 2012 survey and one in ten in 2003. What is clear is that this conduct begins the moment people enter the workplace, and that harassers prey on those less powerful than them.

“Young people between the ages of 18 and 29 were the most likely to be sexually harassed at work,” Commissioner Jenkins said.

The Commission’s survey of 10,000 people was undertaken by Roy Morgan Research. It showed that sexual harassment continues to affect both men and women.

“We found that 39% of Australian women and 26% of Australian men told us they have been sexually harassed at work in the past five years, both a significant increase on 2012,” Commissioner Jenkins said.

At the same time, four out of every five harassers in the workplace were men. For the first time, the survey results provide industry specific data. For example, four out of five people working in information, media and telecommunications reported being sexually harassed.

Commissioner Jenkins said the results revealed that formal reporting of workplace sexual harassment continues to be low, with only 17% of people making a report or complaint.

“We know from our research that many people are afraid to report their experiences of unwelcome sexual conduct out of fear that they won’t be believed, that it’s not worth it, that they’ll be ostracised and that it could damage their career.

“It’s also worrying that almost half of those who did make a formal report said that nothing changed at their organisation, as a result of the complaint.

“Unwelcome sexual conduct on this scale in the workplace not only causes distress to workers and colleagues, it impacts workplace productivity and impedes career progression, which has an economic impact on businesses and families,” Commissioner Jenkins said.

The survey results will inform the Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces, which will begin public consultations later this month.
KEY FINDINGS

(a) Lifetime sexual harassment
The results of the 2018 National Survey reveal that a large majority of Australians have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lifetime. Women are significantly more likely than men to have experienced sexual harassment over the course of their lifetime. However, rates of sexual harassment are also high among Australian men.

It is also clear that the nature and type of sexual harassment experienced by Australians differs by demographic profile such as age, disability, sexual orientation and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status.

- 77% of Australians have been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes.
- More than four in five (85%) Australian women and over half (56%) of Australian men over the age of 15 have been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes.

The most common forms of sexual harassment experienced were:
- Offensive sexually suggestive comments or jokes: two thirds of (59%) women and one quarter (26%) of men
- Inappropriate physical contact: just over half of women (54%) and one quarter (23%) of men, and
- Unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing: just over half of women (51%) and one in five (21%) men.

Almost one quarter (23%) of women have experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes and nearly one third (31%) of women have experienced unwelcome requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts.

While the sample was small, those who identified as non-binary or as a gender other than male or female were very likely (89%) to have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetimes.

Rates of sexual harassment were highest among people aged 18-29, with three in four people (75%) in this age group having experienced sexual harassment over the course of their lifetimes.

70% of people who identify as straight or heterosexual have experienced sexual harassment over the course of their lifetimes, compared with 83% of people who identify as gay or lesbian and 90% of people who identify as bisexual.

Nine out of ten (89%) women with disability and almost seven out of ten (68%) men with disability have been sexually harassed in their lifetimes.

(b) Prevalence of workplace sexual harassment
The results of the 2018 National Survey indicate that there is a high rate of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, with one in three people (33%) having experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years. As with lifetime sexual harassment, women were more likely to be sexually harassed in the workplace than men.

- In the last 12 months, 23% of women in the Australian workforce have experienced some form of workplace sexual harassment compared with 16% of men in the workforce.

When examining workplace sexual harassment in the last five years:
- Almost two in five women (39%) and just over one in four men (26%) have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years.
- People aged 18 to 29 were more likely than those in other age groups to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the past five years (45%).
- People who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual, aromantic, undecided, not sure, questioning or other were more likely than people who identify as straight or heterosexual to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the past five years (52% and 31% respectively).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment than people who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (53% and 32% respectively).
- People with disability were also more likely than those without disability to have been sexually harassed in the workplace (44% and 32% respectively).

(c) Perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment
The majority of workplace sexual harassment was perpetrated by men. Harassers were most often a co-worker employed at the same level as the victim and in the majority of cases, had sexually harassed others in the same workplace in a similar manner.

The survey results indicate that, based on the most recent incident of sexual harassment experienced at work in the last five years:
- Perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment are overwhelmingly male. In almost four out of five cases (79%) of workplace sexual harassment in the past five years, one or more of the perpetrators were male.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of workplace sexual harassment in the past five years was perpetrated by a single perpetrator.
- Perpetrators were most often a co-worker at the same level as the victim. Where there was a single perpetrator, more than one in four cases (27%) involved a co-worker at the same level as the victim. Where there were multiple perpetrators, more than one in three cases (35%) involved at least one co-worker at the same level as the victim.

(d) Nature of workplace sexual harassment
Data from the 2018 National Survey contributes to a comprehensive picture of the nature of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. In a large number of workplace sexual harassment cases, the harassment was ongoing over an extended period. In addition, a
substantial proportion of people who were sexually harassed experienced negative consequences as a result, such as impacts on mental health or stress.

- For both women and men, the most common type of workplace sexual harassment experienced was offensive, sexually suggestive comments or jokes. One in four women (25%) and just over one in ten men (13%) have experienced this type of workplace harassment in the last five years.
- More than half of workplace sexual harassment (52%) occurred at the victim’s workstation or where they work. One-quarter of incidents (26%) happened in a social area for employees.
- A substantial proportion (40%) of workplace sexual harassment incidents were witnessed by at least one other person, and in the majority of cases (69%) the witness did not try to intervene.
- The most common negative consequence of workplace sexual harassment was an impact on mental health or stress (36%). In general, women were more likely than men to experience negative consequences as a result of workplace sexual harassment.
- Women reported higher levels of offence and intimidation about their most recent incident of workplace sexual harassment than men (21% of women felt ‘extremely offended’, compared to 12% of men; 16% of women felt ‘extremely intimidated’, compared to 10% of men).

(e) Characteristics of workplaces where sexual harassment occurs
The prevalence of sexual harassment across industry sectors was broadly aligned with the proportions of Australian workers employed in those industries.

- Rates of workplace sexual harassment are notably high in some industries, including: information, media and telecommunications (81% of employees in this industry in the last five years), arts and recreation services (49%), electricity, gas, water and waste services (42%) and retail trade (42%).
- A substantial proportion (just over two in five) of workplaces where the sexual harassment occurred had an equal mix of female and male employees.
- One in five people who were sexually harassed at work said the behaviour was common (20%) in their workplace.
- Two in five people (41%) said they were aware of someone else in their workplace who had also been sexually harassed in the same way as them.

(f) Reporting and seeking support in relation to workplace sexual harassment
The majority of people who were sexually harassed at work did not formally report their experience or seek support or advice, with many victims believing a formal complaint would be viewed as an overreaction or that it was easier to stay quiet.

- Fewer than one in five people (17%) made a formal report or complaint in relation to workplace sexual harassment.
- The majority of people (55%) who reported their most recent incident of workplace sexual harassment made the report to their direct manager or supervisor.
- Almost one in five people who made a formal report or complaint were labelled as a troublemaker (19%), were ostracised, victimised or ignored by colleagues (18%) or resigned (17%).
- In one in five cases (20%) the formal report or complaint brought no consequences for the perpetrator. The most common outcome of reports or complaints was a formal warning to the perpetrator (30% of cases).
- Almost half (45%) of people who made a formal report said that no changes occurred at their organisation as a result of the complaint. This was more likely to be the case for complaints lodged by women (55%) than for complaints lodged by men (31%). The most common reasons for not reporting workplace sexual harassment were that people would think it was an over-reaction (49%) and it was easier to keep quiet (45%).
- The most common reasons for not reporting workplace sexual harassment were that people would think it was an over-reaction (49%) and it was easier to keep quiet (45%).
- Fewer than one in five people (18%) who experienced workplace sexual harassment sought support or advice in relation to the incident. Where advice or support was sought, most commonly it was from friends or family (61%).

(g) Witnessing and hearing about workplace sexual harassment

- Although more than one third of people witnessed or heard about the sexual harassment of someone else in their workplace, only one in three bystanders took action to intervene.
- More than one-third of people (37%) have witnessed or heard about the sexual harassment of another person at their workplace in the past five years.
- Only one in three people (35%) who witnessed or heard about the sexual harassment of someone else in the workplace took action to prevent or reduce the harm of this harassment.
- Most commonly (in 71% of cases), the action taken by the bystander was to talk with or listen to the victim about the incident. In less than half of cases (47%) the bystander reported the harassment to the employer.
- The most common reason for bystanders not taking action was knowing that other people were supporting and assisting the victim (41%). In one-quarter (25%) of cases, the bystander did not take action because they did not want to make things worse for the victim.

Understanding violence against women

Physical and sexual violence against women are prevalent problems with significant health, social and economic costs for women and their children, as well as society as a whole. Gender inequality and disrespect of women increase the likelihood of this violence occurring, according to this article from ANROWS.

Australian governments have made significant efforts to reduce violence against women and promote gender equality and respect. However, 1 in 4 Australian women over the age of 18 have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15, and 1 in 5 have experienced sexual violence. One in 6 Australian women have experienced stalking and more than half have experienced sexual harassment.

ATTITUDES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY
Promoting gender equality is pivotal to reducing violence against women. Gender inequality, and attitudes supporting gender inequality, provide the social conditions in which violence against women is more likely to occur. This is a position supported by many expert bodies and which underpins both the National Plan and Change the Story.

WHAT ARE VIOLENCE-SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDES?
These are attitudes that:
• Excuse the perpetrator and hold women responsible by shifting responsibility for violence from the perpetrator to the victim by holding women responsible for the violence occurring, or for not preventing it. Attitudes excusing the perpetrator suggest that there are factors that make some men unable to control their behaviour, and that these make the violence excusable.
• Disregard the need to gain consent by denying the requirement for sexual relations to be based on the presence and ongoing negotiation of consent. These attitudes rationalise men’s failure to actively gain consent as a ‘natural’ aspect of masculinity (e.g. men’s uncontrollable sexual drive), or are based on stereotypes of female sexuality (e.g. that women are passive or submissive in sexual matters).
• Minimise violence against women by denying its seriousness, downplaying the impact on the victim or making the violence and its consequences seem less significant or complex than they really are.
• Mistrust women’s reports of violence by suggesting women lie about or exaggerate reports of violence in order to ‘get back at’ men or gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men. Such attitudes have been referred to as part of a ‘backlash’.

Individuals who hold such attitudes are not necessarily violence prone or would openly condone violence against women. However, when such attitudes are expressed by influential individuals or are held by a large number of people, they can contribute to a culture in which violence is at best not clearly condemned, or at worst, is actively condoned or encouraged.

WHAT ARE ATTITUDES THAT UNDERMINE GENDER EQUALITY?
These are attitudes that:
• Undermine women’s independence and decision-making in public life by suggesting men make better leaders, decision-makers or are more suited to holding positions of power and responsibility.
• Undermine women’s independence and decision-making in private life by agreeing that men should have greater authority to make decisions and control in the private realm of intimate relationships, family life and household affairs.
• Promote rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions by reflecting the idea that men and women are naturally suited to different tasks and responsibilities, and have naturally distinctive – often oppositional – personal characteristics (e.g. ‘women are emotional and are therefore better childcarers’, while ‘men are rational and are therefore better politicians’).
• Condone male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women by accepting it as normal or harmless for men to encourage negative aspects of masculinity among one another (e.g. aggression and not showing one’s feelings) and to talk about women in ways that are sexist and disrespectful (e.g. ‘locker room talk’).
• Deny gender inequality is a problem through denial that gender inequality, sexism or discrimination against women continue to be problems in society. These attitudes often reflect...
hostility towards women and are sometimes referred to as reflecting a ‘backlash’ towards women’s advancement.

FOOTNOTES


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**Community attitudes towards violence against women: overall findings**

**Encouraging results**

- Most Australians have accurate knowledge of violence against women and do not endorse this violence.
- Most Australians support gender equality and are more likely to support gender equality in 2017 than they were in 2013 and 2009.
- Australians are more likely to understand that violence against women involves more than just physical violence in 2017 than they were in 2013 and 2009.
- Australians are less likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women in 2017 than they were in 2013 and 2009.
- There has been improvement in knowledge and attitudes related to 27 of the 36 questions asked in 2013 and again in 2017.
- There has been improvement in knowledge and attitudes related to all but two of the 11 questions asked in the 1995 NCAS and again in 2017.
- If confronted by a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, most respondents say they would be bothered (98%), would act (70%) and would feel they would have the support of all or most of their friends if they did act (69%).

**Concerning results**

- There continues to be a decline in the number of Australians who understand that men are more likely than women to perpetrate domestic violence.
- A concerning proportion of Australians believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or no longer a problem.
- Among attitudes condoning violence against women, the highest level of agreement was with the idea that women use claims of violence to gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men.
- 1 in 5 Australians would not be bothered if a male friend told a sexist joke about women.

**Predictors**

The strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women are people having a low level of support for gender equality and a low level of understanding of the behaviours constituting violence against women (relative to other respondents).a

(a) ‘High’ and ‘low’ classify respondents relative to one another. It would be wrong to say that any group has a high or low level of support in absolute terms.
MYTHS ABOUT VIOLENCE

According to Our Watch our beliefs and attitudes are shaped by many influences and can be held without conscious thought. When we unpack the building blocks of our attitudes we can identify certain myths or false truths upon which our attitudes are based.

Some myths can lead people to minimise or excuse violent behaviour. We can identify these commonly held but prejudicial myths and constructively question their influence on our attitudes, behaviours and our relationships. Prejudicial myths are dangerous because they influence how we think and feel about violence against women and their children. These beliefs and attitudes influence how we act when confronted with violent behaviour or how we respond when we hear about violence.

Here are some common myths and why they are not true:

**MYTH 1: Men should make the decisions and take control in relationships**

**Fact:** Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision making, and less so in those relationships where women have a greater degree of independence. ¹

The belief that men and women have different roles or characteristics (whether in relationships or society in general) is known as gender stereotyping. International studies have shown time and again that belief in such stereotypes is one of the most significant predictors of violence. That is, individuals who hold such beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women, and countries where gender stereotyping is more accepted have higher levels of violence against women.

We know that in societies where men and women are more equal in their relationships, and where they are not expected to play different roles based on their sex, violence is less common. Greater equality and more flexible gender roles give everyone more opportunities to develop to their full capacity.

**MYTH 2: There’s nothing wrong with a sexist joke**

**Fact:** The most consistent predictor for support of violence by men is their agreement with sexist attitudes. Sexist jokes reflect and reinforce sexist attitudes. They excuse and perpetuate the gender stereotyping and discrimination against women that underpins violence.

If no one speaks up when a sexist comment or joke is made, it sends the message that this behaviour is OK. It can be difficult to stand up to someone using sexist language, so we’ve created some strategies that may help.

**MYTH 3: Domestic violence is OK if the perpetrator gets so angry they lose control**

**Fact:** Violence against women is about something more than just losing your temper.² There are no excuses for violent behaviour. Ever. Violence is caused by an individual’s attitudes towards women, and the social and cultural influences that say violence is OK.

**MYTH 4: Women could leave a violent relationship if they wanted to**

**Fact:** The most extreme violence, including murder, often occurs when a woman tries to leave a relationship. When it is assumed that a woman who is a victim of domestic violence stays by choice, blame is taken away from the perpetrator. This puts the responsibility for dealing with the violence on the victim, who might not be able to leave a relationship because she fears for her life or the safety of her children.

**MYTH 5: If a woman is drunk or on drugs, she’s partly to blame for being raped**

**Fact:** You can’t legally give consent when you’re intoxicated. The perpetrator is always the only person responsible for sexual violence.

**MYTH 6: Men rape women because they can’t control their need for sex**

**Fact:** Sexual violence is an abuse of power. Men rape women because they believe women are possessions, not equals, and that they have a right to women’s bodies. Myths like this place responsibility on the woman and encourage more victim-blaming.

**MYTH 7: Women are most likely to be raped by a stranger in a public place**

**Fact:** Both men and women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know than by a stranger. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 15% of all women and 3% of all men aged 18 years and over have been sexually assaulted by a known person. This is in comparison to the 3.8% of all women and 1.6% of all men who had been sexually assaulted by a stranger.³

The stranger danger myth is one of the reasons that women are less likely to report a sexual assault perpetrated by someone they know. They may fear no one will believe them or that they encouraged the perpetrator in some way. Once this myth is busted, women may be more willing to come forward and report a known attacker.

**MYTH 8: Many women make false claims about domestic violence or sexual assault**

**Fact:** False claims of domestic violence or sexual assault are extremely rare.⁴ 80% of women who experience current partner violence don’t contact the police about the violence.⁵ The same is true with sexual assault; 80% of women do not report sexual assault to police.⁶

ENDNOTES

1. VicHealth, 2014, p.34.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ‘BE A MAN’?  
AND WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

According to The Line, these are two key questions that we need to ask, but it can be difficult to know where to start.

We know that while most men are not violent, the majority of violent acts (against women and other men) are committed by men. Men’s understanding of their gender is a key driver of violence. The key to change is to encourage critical analysis of masculinity in our boys and young men and to reinforce the healthy aspects of what it is to ‘be a man’.

From a very young age, boys not only learn what it means to be manly and masculine, but that they need to be these things in order to be accepted and valued.

Some of the key messages that boys hear about how to ‘be a man’ include:
- Be a winner: Manly activities are those that increase your wealth, social prestige, and power over others – including in romantic and sexual relationships.
- Be tough: Men should be physically and emotionally strong. You can show anger, but not weakness, pain, fear or self-doubt.
- Be a man’s man: Seek approval from other men and avoid all things feminine – never be seen conforming to any feminine norms.

We need to reconstruct masculinity so that men and boys can confidently express all parts of themselves, without fear of being shamed or losing status. We need men and boys to feel free to show empathy and vulnerability, be nurturing and considerate, and express their sexuality without fear of judgement.

The point is not to tell young men how they should act, but to create space for them to explore and define for themselves what it means to be a man – essentially suggesting, ‘Being a man is whatever you want it to be – just try to be a good man who’s happy within himself’. So, how do we do that?

1. Talk about what it is to ‘be a man’
Ask them what they think is wrong with rigid and ‘old fashioned’ gender roles and highlight the broader range of possibilities.

For example:
- Men are intelligent
- Men are caring
- Men control themselves, not others
- Men are considerate
- Men are open-minded
- Men do take no for an answer!

2. Compare role models
Stand healthy male role models (e.g. Antonio Banderas and Joseph Gordon-Levitt) beside less admirable ones (e.g. Chris Brown and Redfoo).

Who are the men they respect or admire and how do they sit within or outside traditional masculinity models? Can they pick and choose the better aspects of their role models’ characters?

3. Discuss the media’s portrayal of males
What is the simplified model of a man? The tough guy who won’t take no for an answer and who fights hard to get the money and the girl? What’s wrong with this model?

4. Take a long, hard look at yourself
Ask what traditionally masculine characteristics they have adopted. Explore how, while they might not be violent or feel they disrespect women, certain attitudes and behaviours can lead to men as a group having more power than women or feeling they are entitled to something from women. Self-awareness leads to improvement.

5. How does the ‘traditional man’ treat women?
Talk about the traditionally powerful and aggressive man, and how his attitudes – like ‘men should take charge’ or ‘boys can’t control themselves’ – lead to promoting dominance and excusing violence.

6. Be a champion of change
Suggest that the truly ‘strong man’ challenges violence against women and the attitudes that support it. Demonstrate there are always ways we can all do even better. Whether it’s gaining a better understanding of the issues, actively discussing them with their peers or working/volunteering with gender advocacy groups. Getting them to visit The Line is a good start!

It takes work to start these discussions but, apart from raising a smarter and fairer young man, you’ll be providing an example of a great gender role model who thinks critically and speaks up about what’s right – you.

Our Watch. What does it mean to ‘be a man’? And what does that have to do with violence against women?
The stereotype trap – girls think guys are …

A FACT SHEET FROM THE LINE CAMPAIGN

People rely on stereotypes all the time

On the one hand, they save us from having to constantly reassess every bit of new information from scratch. If you spot a couple of crazy-eyed dogs checking you out, it may be wise to … run like your life depends on it.

But on the other hand, stereotypes can ‘dumb us down’ …

Some of the most dumb and dangerous stereotypes that some girls have about boys:

- Boys are naturally more sexually aggressive and have a higher sex drive than girls
- Boys don’t really care about romance, all they want is sex
- Boys can’t really control their feelings or their sexual urges
- Boys should be in control in relationships
- Boys who are a bit jealous or overprotective just really care a lot
- Boys believe that they should ‘Treat ‘em mean, to keep ‘em keen’.

All of these stereotypes are dangerous because they provide an easy excuse for boys to hurt and use their girlfriends. And not only are they dangerous, they’re just plain wrong.

The truth is …

There’s no evidence to suggest men’s sexual desire is any greater than women’s – in fact research has found levels of desire between the sexes is pretty well matched:

- Guys fall in love, and into romantic relationships, just as hard as girls do
- Anyone – male or female – who tells you they can’t control their feelings or urges is probably making excuses for acting like a douche
- If one person is ‘in control’ of the relationship, it’s probably not a great relationship
- Displays of jealousy and ‘over-protectiveness’ are NOT signs of affection – they’re signs of insecurity and not being able to deal with, well, life
- The only reason people quote the ‘Treat ’em mean … ’ crap is because they haven’t figured out how to ‘Treat ’em right’.

Why are stereotypes dangerous? Because when people quote or use them they start being relied on as ‘the truth’.

Stereotypes like the ones above will affect your expectations of a relationship and your thoughts and feelings about a partner.

For example, if you think ‘treating you mean’ is fair enough, you’re basically suggesting there’s sometimes an excuse for violence in a relationship. Or if you believe the stereotype that boys only care about sex, then you’re less likely to just believe and enjoy a guy being genuinely romantic with you.

Remember, although the majority of violence might be perpetrated by males, most males are not violent.

This is not to say you shouldn’t be careful. It’s just that stereotypes can make you jump to conclusions before you get a chance to really test out whether they’re true or not, or harmful or not. And this can screw up what might be a really good experience or relationship … and unfairly portray decent guys as evil, sex-mad monsters!

Remember, although the majority of violence might be perpetrated by males, most males are not violent.

Remember, if you want to work on a great relationship with someone, stay away from the stereotype trap …

RECOGNISING DISRESPECT

Discover the hidden meanings of common expressions that can excuse disrespectful behaviour towards girls – advice courtesy of the 1800RESPECT campaign

THE EXCUSE INTERPRETER

What adults say when males are disrespectful or aggressive toward females shapes young people’s views about what is and isn’t acceptable – or what might be okay in certain circumstances.

But our language can carry hidden meanings. The things we say in front of young people can be interpreted in ways we don’t intend. Without meaning to, we can say things or use words that excuse disrespectful behaviour towards women.

You can use the Interpreter to become more aware of your reactions in these situations. It will help you avoid seemingly harmless phrases that might send mixed messages to young people about respect.

INTERPRETING OUR EXCUSES

Playing down disrespect towards girls

This is when we brush off or try to lessen the seriousness of disrespectful or aggressive actions.

Blaming girls

Sometimes we shift the blame when a boy is disrespectful or aggressive towards a girl. This may imply

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<tr>
<th>Have you ever thought or said ...</th>
<th>What a young person might think</th>
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<tr>
<td>“It takes two to tango”</td>
<td>Girl: I probably did something to start it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy: She started it, so my actions are okay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“She probably provoked him”</td>
<td>Girl: I caused this.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boy: She asked for it.</td>
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</table>

Our language can carry hidden meanings. The things we say in front of young people can be interpreted in ways we don’t intend. Without meaning to, we can say things or use words that excuse disrespectful behaviour towards women.

Avoiding gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are labels that reinforce outdated ideas that she must have done something to provoke the behaviour, or manipulated the situation.

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<th>Have you ever thought or said ...</th>
<th>What a young person might think</th>
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<tr>
<td>“It’s tough being a boy”</td>
<td>Girl: It’s okay for boys to disrespect me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boy: It’s not my fault if she makes me angry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“He’s just going through a phase”</td>
<td>Girl: If I just accept it, he’ll grow out of it and it’ll stop.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy: I have the right to act this way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Boys will be boys”</td>
<td>Girl: It’s just what boys do – I should get used to it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy: We’re just like that, it’s fine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“He didn’t know he was doing anything wrong”</td>
<td>Girl: It wasn’t his fault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy: I’m not responsible for this.</td>
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</table>
Gender stereotypes are labels that reinforce outdated ideas of how men and women should behave. Popular phrases imply boys should take control and suppress their emotions, and girls should be passive and accommodating.

While it may not be our intention, these comments often have a negative effect on the confidence and self-esteem of young people. If we continue to use words and phrases like these, the outdated ideas about male and female roles will go on.

What you can do next
Reflecting on our own attitudes, which might excuse disrespect, and being aware of the things we say to young people is the first step towards making a change.

By talking to young people about respect, we can have a positive influence on their attitudes and behaviours as they grow into adults.

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Department of Social Services. Recognising disrespect.
MEN AND MANAGING ANGER
TIP SHEET ADVICE FROM MENSLINE AUSTRALIA

Anger is a basic human emotion and feeling angry is OK. It is how we respond to and express that anger that can cause problems.

Expressing anger in an abusive, violent or negative way is unacceptable. Rather than trying to suppress the anger, we need to learn how to manage it in a way that acknowledges the feeling while not harming anyone else.

Questions to ask yourself
- Do you sometimes have trouble controlling your temper?
- Have you ever become angry and regretted it later?
- Have you ever lost control of your anger to the point where you became violent or abusive?
- Has anyone ever commented on your anger?

If you answered ‘yes’ to any of the questions, here are some initial ideas to help take the strength out of anger.

RECOGNISING THE WARNING SIGNS
To control your anger, you first need to be able to recognise the signs that you are getting angry:
- Muscular tightening, especially around the jaw and arms
- A sensation of building pressure in the head
- Sensations of heat and flushing in the face
- Elevated heart rate, breathing or sweating.

These physical signs are all indications that your body is preparing for fight or flight, our primitive response to a threat. Once you recognise that you are getting angry, you have the opportunity to do something to diffuse the situation before it gets out of control.

HERE ARE SOME TECHNIQUES YOU CAN TRY:

Time out
Stepping away from a situation when you are starting to feel angry gives you space to think clearly and calm down. If things are starting to get heated, try saying something to the other person like: “Listen, I think I need to take a break for a bit. I’ll come back, and we can sort this out in half an hour.”

Controlled breathing
Slowing and deepening your breath can help diffuse the anger. Try taking five long, slow breaths. Focus on relaxing the muscles in your arms and face.

Talk yourself down not up
Self-talk can influence whether you get more or less angry in an exchange.

Saying things to yourself like, “This person is an idiot!” or “How dare this person talk to me like that?” is likely to increase your feelings of anger.

Instead, try calming self-statements such as:
- “Cool it. You can handle this.”
- “No point flying off the handle. Let’s just take a few breaths.”
- “I’m not going to let this get to me.”
- “Relax ...”

TIPS TO AVOID GETTING ANGRY IN THE FIRST PLACE
While these anger management techniques can help you calm down in a crisis, they don’t address the causes of excessive anger. Conflict is inevitable in relationships, but this doesn’t mean that every disagreement needs to lead to an angry fight.

Expressing anger in an abusive, violent or negative way is unacceptable. Rather than trying to suppress the anger, we need to learn how to manage it in a way that acknowledges the feeling while not harming anyone else.

Relaxation
Anger can be the result of built up, unresolved distress, or it may be masking underlying emotions such as sadness. Learning relaxation skills can help you release the physical tension in your body which can contribute to anger problems.

Changing beliefs that contribute to anger
Some anger problems are related to underlying belief systems about how the world should be. If you have a belief that the world should conform to your expectations, you may experience a lot of frustration and anger when it doesn’t.

Call MensLine Australia to talk to our counsellors who can provide you with tools and information to help you with your situation. MensLine Australia is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with professional counsellors providing information and support for all relationship issues. Call us on 1300 78 99 78 or register for online counselling.

MASCULINE NORMS AND MEN’S HEALTH: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM A REPORT BY GLOBAL ACTION ON MEN’S HEALTH

What are the links between masculine norms and men’s health outcomes globally? What implications do these links have for efforts to improve men’s health – alongside efforts to improve the health of women and children – and as part of broader efforts to create healthier, thriving societies?

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the current state of men’s health globally and to illustrate the direct connections between health-risk behaviours and hegemonic masculine norms. Addressing men’s health requires an understanding that gender is relational, and an understanding that healthcare systems and efforts to promote health must incorporate an understanding of the relations among men, women, and children at the household and community levels, as well as consider the context of broader systematic and persistent inequalities and discrimination that women face in private and public life.

This document is targeted at practitioners, policymakers, donors, and advocates who have an interest in strengthening national and global responses to address the intersections of masculine norms and men’s ill health. While it focuses on men globally, men and masculinities are not uniform across the world; there is substantial variation in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This analysis does not intend to minimise these differences. Rather, it intends to provide a global snapshot that will serve as a starting point for future, more nuanced analyses.

Presenting a new analysis of men’s health using data from the 2016 Global Burden of Disease (GBD), we outline the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among men globally. The report highlights seven of the most influential risk behaviours that, in large part, drive these poor health outcomes, and it presents evidence on the connections between hegemonic masculine norms and these risk behaviours and poor health outcomes. The key point is that salient norms related to masculinities, and the gendered nature of paid work and men’s lives, are a driving force in men’s ill health: globally, on average, men die 5.5 years earlier than women, and men are over-represented in nearly every major burden-of-disease category.

While biological factors are involved in male-specific ill health, the vast majority of men’s morbidities and excess mortality are related to health practices and the social and cultural influences that shape them. In short, while some gender norms can be protective in terms of health outcomes, men’s poor health is most often driven by their efforts to live up to or adhere to restrictive societal norms related to manhood.

Men’s health matters for everyone: for men themselves; for women, who generally bear the burden of care for sick and disabled men; for children, who can experience adverse outcomes from the poor health of
caregivers; and for societies, which bear the social and economic cost of men's illness and premature death. Poor health affects men's mobility, productivity, and overall quality of life. Furthermore, women are generally responsible for picking up the pieces of men's poor health or premature death, which create greater care and income-generation burdens for women. The loss of a husband, father, son, or brother can have lasting psychological, financial, and social effects on families and communities.²

On the other hand, men in good physical and mental health are better able to participate in caregiving and household responsibilities, reducing the care burdens on partners and families. Additionally, men who exemplify health-seeking and self-care often serve as role models for younger boys and men.

Despite the growing body of evidence, the need to improve men's health struggles to gain traction and attention on the world's stage. Only three countries in the world – Brazil, Ireland, and Australia – have developed national men's health policy frameworks or departments.³ Even when men's health is discussed, the focus is often on the biological drivers of men's ill health, not on the social determinants, including masculine norms.

WHAT DO MASCULINITIES AND MASCULINE NORMS HAVE TO DO WITH HEALTH?
The leading health-risk behaviours that account for a major share of men's ill health are directly related to masculine norms and masculinities interacting with other factors. These six health behaviours – poor diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, occupational hazards, unsafe sex, and drug use – according to 2016 GBD data, account for more than half of all male deaths and about 70 per cent of male morbidity globally.⁴

To this list of six health behaviours, the authors added men's limited health-seeking behaviour. It is worth noting that there are some positive masculine norms that may support health-seeking behaviour. Evidence shows that, in some settings, men who are more involved as fathers and caregivers are more likely to have better health, suggesting that the care of others may also support an ethic of self-care.⁵ More research is needed on other ways that positive masculine norms may support men's health.

“Masculinities” refers to the plural and dynamic ways in which masculine norms, attitudes, identities, power dynamics, and behaviours are lived.⁶ This report focuses on masculine norms, which are a set of rules and expected behaviours that are associated with men and manhood in a given culture.

In a 2017 multi-country study of masculine norms, Promundo referred to these norms collectively as the "Man Box," a set of beliefs that place pressure on boys and men to think and behave in specific ways. The idea of the "Man Box" is based on a construct originally created by Paul Kivel.⁷ In the study, Promundo, in partnership with Axe, operationalised the prevalent social constructions of masculinity seen in many parts of the world into seven “pillars”.

These components, or “pillars of the Man Box” as we called them, are salient and widely reinforced norms about manhood, even as they vary tremendously by individual and cultural context. Clearly not all men have internalised these norms, but in various studies from around the world, most men affirm that they have been pressured or encouraged to act in these ways at least some of the time.

We adapted these pillars of the “Man Box” slightly to the context of men’s health:

1. Self-sufficiency and emotional control
There is a widespread social expectation that men should not rely on other people, talk about their feelings, or seek help for their physical and emotional health. Pillar 1 encompasses how men cope with stresses and disease in their lives.

2. Acting tough and risk-taking
A man’s toughness is seen as closely tied to physical strength and invincibility. The beliefs included in Pillar 2 hold that a man must be willing to defend his reputation by fighting or using physical force, if necessary, as well as take risks and engage in activities that are not perceived as weak.

3. Attractiveness
Pillar 3 includes ideas related to men’s physical appearance, body image, and physical attractiveness. Men who prioritise physical attractiveness will engage in behaviours that they believe make them appear desirable to women and seem “cool” to their peer group. This pillar is associated with the potentially dangerous use of anabolic steroids and other mind- and body-altering substances.
4. Rigid masculine gender roles
Pillar 4 reflects the perception that certain activities and duties are either masculine or feminine. Men who subscribe to these rigid beliefs relate to the still-common expectation that men contribute to family wellbeing primarily as financial providers, while seeking healthcare or taking care of the health of those in the home is a female task.

5. Superiority among males
Pillar 5 reflects the socially constructed hierarchy of male identity and a belief that men must experience feelings of superiority. This includes the marginalisation or idolisation of men based on specific behaviours seen as more or less masculine. Men who do not engage in certain behaviours (e.g. excessive drinking, eating meat) are deemed to be feminine or non-masculine, and are marginalised by other men.

6. Hypersexuality
Pillar 6 emphasises not only that a man should be unambiguously straight or heterosexual, but also that he should always be ready for sex and always eager to acquire another “sexual conquest”. The hypersexuality implied in Pillar 6 serves to undermine men’s sexual agency and sexual health, along with women’s, in that it can contribute to sexual coercion and limited attention to sexual health.

7. Power, aggression and control
Pillar 7 emphasises the need for men to use physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and psychological violence when necessary and to hold control and power over women and male peers around them.

While men’s individual health-related behaviour is important, using a masculinities lens underscores that men’s health is shaped, in large part, by a specific set of masculine norms that encourage certain attitudes and practices, among others, risk-taking, aggression, and limited self-care. Addressing men’s ill health – which includes that, of the 12 leading causes of global mortality, 11 disproportionately burden males; that the global average life expectancy at birth for men is 69.8 years compared to 75.3 years for women; and that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of mortality and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) among males globally, accounting for 31 per cent of all male deaths – requires changes to healthcare systems, to social norms about manhood, and in individual men.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise the plurality, contextual factors, and fluid nature of gender norms. Many men around the world regularly engage in health-promoting and health-seeking behaviours, even as many men also show poor health-seeking and risky health-affected behaviours. Finally, men’s health must be understood via an intersectional approach; norms about manhood interact with other social factors, such as the acute vulnerability of racial/ethnic and sexual minorities as a result of systemic and structural forces.

Indeed, there are vast regional disparities in age-standardised morbidity and mortality rates among the World Health Organization regions, which attest to the extent to which poverty, living conditions, and occupation-related risks drive men’s ill health. Men in Africa have the poorest health globally, followed by men in South-East Asia. Stratifications by country, according to World Bank income classifications, show a clear positive relationship between higher income and better health indicators.

POLICY, RESEARCH, AND PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS
National governments, global health institutions, researchers, civil society organisations, corporations, and activists should act to strengthen the response to men’s health – alongside efforts to improve the health of women and children, and as a part of broader efforts to create healthier, thriving societies. Any efforts that address men’s health should build on men’s strengths rather than pathologise men as problematic or toxic. It is important to recognise and leverage the fact that many men are already striving to take care of their individual health and wellbeing. In addition, in advancing men’s health practices, it is important to address not only attitudes and practices at the individual level, but also men’s lack of inclusion in health policies, structures, and services.

Efforts to include men’s health in the national healthcare sector should be supported by civil society, by additional research, and by the support of donors and international agencies. Resources that have been dedicated to women’s and girls’ health programs should not be reallocated or reduced due to these efforts.

National and local governments should ...

• Ensure that health policies and services actively address potential barriers to men’s use of services – such as available hours and staff composition – and increase the provision of health services that actively seek out men as well as women in the workplace, in the community, and in other settings.

• Develop and implement multisectoral health and well-being policies, and monitor the differential effects by sex.

• Develop and implement multisectoral health and wellbeing policies that take into consideration the effects of social, economic, and cultural factors, including masculine norms, on the health outcomes of men.

• Integrate awareness of harmful masculine norms into occupational safety and employment policies in an attempt to neutralise their effects.

• Promote policies and create gender-transformative programs that, by implicitly or explicitly questioning the underlying masculine norms that often drive harmful behaviour (e.g. tobacco use, drunk driving, and unprotected sex), aim to reduce men’s risk-taking and harmful behaviour.

• Publish and appropriately fund national and local...
men’s health strategies, as part of broader work on gender and health, that ensure specific consideration for men who are members of minority groups.\textsuperscript{15,17}

- Build the capacity of medical and health personnel within countries to understand masculinities and men’s health needs and to incorporate them into their diagnostic, referral, and treatment practices. Again, this should be undertaken with attention to the allocation of funds and resources, to ensure access for all.

**Global and regional health institutions and bodies should …**
Adopt specific global commitments, and accompanying frameworks and strategies, to better address the links between masculinities and men’s ill health.

**Researchers, scholars, and academic institutions should …**
Widen the breadth of research on alternative dimensions of masculinities that are less researched and that could promote healthy behaviour, such as responsibility, self-control, and how men’s positive involvement as fathers and caregivers may also provide a way to promote self-care and help-seeking.

**Civil society organisations, practitioners and advocates within public health systems should …**
Design and implement evidence-based and gender-transformative programs and advocacy efforts\textsuperscript{18,19} that effectively address gender inequities and the consequences associated with men’s exercise of hegemonic power over women and other men.

**Donors should …**
Strengthen the focus on masculinities and men’s health within their work, without diluting resources for women’s health, and look for ways to engage men in their own self-care that also support better outcomes for women (related to sexual health, for example).

**Corporations and other employers should …**
Provide flexible working conditions and hours – as well as comprehensive, adequately paid leave – so that all employees can take the time they need to care for their own health and the health of their families.

i. A set of rules and expected behaviours that is associated with men and manhood in a given culture and that emphasises certain expressions of masculinity and enforces certain men’s dominance, power, and privilege over women, as well as over certain other men. The expression also refers to versions of manhood that enjoy greater power than other, “subaltern” masculinities (e.g. lower income, racial/ethnic minority, non-heterosexual).

**REFERENCES**


6. Ibid.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.


A rethink of masculinity is helping men and boys to move away from narrow stereotypes and negative role models toward healthier, more diverse approaches. The ripple effect will be safer, more equal societies.

In an all-boys school in South Melbourne, a 14-year-old boy starts crying. For some years now he has been teased for his speech impediment and he’s had enough. Between tears, he shares his thoughts with his classmates, some of whom apologise for belittling him in the past. The workshop facilitator, an ex-football player in his early 30s, consoles the boy and congratulates him for having the courage to speak up.

Other boys in the room have their own stories to share – around self-esteem or trouble at home. One boy says his father had a heart attack three weeks ago. He hasn’t told any of his friends and, without knowing what’s been going on for him, they’ve been giving him a hard time. The facilitator raises the importance of communication and peer respect.

Such scenarios are playing out right now across Victoria. They are part of a movement that challenges traditional stereotypes of masculinity and says it’s okay, and healthy, for men to show vulnerabilities.

THE #METOO CONTEXT

The ‘healthier masculinities’ movement is gaining momentum. In Australia, it emerged in the wake of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the staggering statistic that, every week, one Australian woman is murdered by her current or former partner. And it continues to run in parallel with the global #MeToo movement which has seen countless cases of sexual abuse and harassment brought to public attention, in turn giving women the courage to speak up after years of remaining silent.

In recent months, novelist Tim Winton has written about how ‘toxic masculinity is shackling men to misogyny’. Significantly, that ‘toxic’ masculinity not only affects women and children, but also boys and men themselves, driving depression and, at worst, suicide, the number one cause of death in men in Australia between the ages of 15 and 44 years.

POSITIVE PROGRAMS FOR MEN

The discussion can at times feel mired in negativity, but positive action is taking place, too. Indeed, there has been a proliferation of organisations running workshops and seminars that aim to expand representations of masculinity and dismantle rigid gender norms.

It is an invitation to explore their humanity more deeply and to share openly and honestly how they’re dealing with life.

Hunter Johnson, CEO of The Man Cave, a business that runs workshops with students, teachers and parents, believes that the key lies in giving young men the opportunity to ‘take off the mask’ and talk freely without the constraints of social expectations.

“The real art of what we do is not making men wrong, not telling them how to live their lives or telling them to throw away their masculine traits,” he says.

“But it is an invitation to explore their humanity more deeply and to share openly and honestly how they’re dealing with life.”

Johnson, who won a 2018 EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year award, says his philosophy comes from his own experience of growing up and ‘drinking the Kool-Aid of the boys’ culture’.

“I literally didn’t know there was another narrative, or an option to talk about challenges I was facing,” he says. “I saw a lot of mates struggle with addiction, depression, anxiety, violence and suicide and I thought the mental health care system, and the domestic violence system, was very much geared around crisis management, a band-aid solution. This, on the other hand, is a preventative and proactive model.”

He says workshops often reveal profound insight when at the end, students are asked: ‘What does it mean to be a man?’

“They come up with things like “to be strong emotionally, or to support the people around you, to be compassionate and kind”. And then we say, “that’s not actually being a man, that’s being a human”. And they get it. They really do.”

VICHEALTH’S EVIDENCE REVIEW

The effectiveness of these well-intentioned programs is being tracked by VicHealth in an evidence review. Irene
Verins, Manager of Mental Wellbeing at VicHealth, explains that to date, very little research or evaluation has been carried out in this area.

“VicHealth has been very focused on preventing violence against women for 15 years or more and working in the gender equality space,” she says. “We really want to engage men in this discussion, because ultimately, we know that promoting gender equality is obviously good for women’s health and wellbeing, but it’s also good for men’s health and wellbeing.”

VicHealth’s involvement follows on from a roundtable discussion last July, which brought together 30 stakeholders and explored definitions of ‘healthier masculinities for gender equality’.

Participants worked on identifying the characteristics of healthy masculinities, such as vulnerability, a readiness to have open conversations, and a willingness to express emotions. It was agreed that those characteristics can play out across a broad spectrum of attitudes and behaviours, from men who feel comfortable cultivating close friendships with both men and women, or who confidently take on roles as stay-at-home dads, to those who actively advocate for feminism.

The roundtable also discussed the idea of reframing masculinity in a positive light, rather than as a fixed state or as inherently bad. The trait of ‘strength’, for example, can be considered healthy or unhealthy depending on how, when and where it’s expressed.

“Many social norms reflect rigid interpretations of what it is to be a man or a woman and these lead to men believing they have more power and more privilege than they should,” says Verins.

She highlights findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes Survey released by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) which show that some young men continue to have attitudes which are supportive of control and violence. Indeed, the survey reveals that one in three Australians believe that it is ‘natural’ for a man to want to appear ‘in control of his partner’ in front of his male friends.

“These sorts of attitudes are what have become known as ‘toxic’,” explains Verins. “Yet some types of masculinity can be extremely positive. We need to refocus definitions so that ‘healthy’ is the default.”

**AGGRESSION CARRIES A RISK OF SELF-HARM**

The take up of the plural term – ‘masculinities’ – supports the idea that masculinity can take many forms. Some of them are entrenched as clichés and stereotypes; others are more progressive.

Rigid stereotypes were recently explored in a study called *The Man Box*, released in October 2018. An initiative of Jesuit Social Services (JSS), the research looked at the behaviours and attitudes of 1,000 young Australian men aged 18 to 30 from a broad demographic spread that took into account location, work, education level and cultural background.

Michael Livingstone, Executive Director of the Men’s Project at JSS, says *The Man Box* is a research tool that has been used in the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico to evaluate how men are responding to a specific set of societal beliefs that place pressure on them to be tough, to conceal their emotions, to be breadwinners, to always be in control, to use violence to solve problems, and to have multiple sexual partners.

Many young men, probably over half, are feeling pressure to comply with societal beliefs.

The Australian findings were fairly encouraging, reports Livingstone, although a worrying number of men still act on social norms around power and control.

*It is an invitation to explore their humanity more deeply and to share openly and honestly how they’re dealing with life.*

“Most young men seem to be doing well and have healthy, respectful relationships and lives,” he says.

“But what we see in terms of the rules of *The Man Box* is that many young men, probably over half, are feeling pressure to comply with societal beliefs. Over half say they’ve seen or felt pressure to become the provider, or to have many sexual partners, for example.

“Most young men disagreed with the traditional rules of *The Man Box*, but there was a fairly significant minority of about a third, who said they agreed with them. There were some rules that young men did agree with that were particularly worrying and those were around aggression and control.”

A key finding of the study is that men classified as being ‘inside’ *The Man Box* were both more likely to harm others – in the form of bullying, violence and harassment – and themselves. They are more likely to have thoughts of suicide, poor mental health, drink more and be involved in more accidents.

“So what we are saying is that *The Man Box* comes at a cost, for people who are in the lives of young men in *The Man Box*, but also for the men themselves.

“We feel this is something that really needs to be
looked at and addressed. Similarly, we need to look at what’s working for the men who are not inside The Man Box and who appear to have relatively healthy, respectful, happy lives.

“It’s a big vision – changing and working to create a more respectful, equal and healthy culture – and it will take time. There has been some progress, like very strong rejection of homophobia, among the young men who were surveyed. But there is still a lot of work to do around some other harmful norms.”

BREAKING UP RIGID STEREOTYPES
Patty Kinnersly, CEO of Our Watch, a national organisation that works to prevent violence against women, says that everyone has a role to play in breaking down rigid gender stereotypes. Social norms, she explains, can set up an environment of inequality.

Ultimately, this can lead to violence, with one in three Australian women having experienced physical violence since the age of 15.

“We have to encourage our children to be their true selves and make their own choices, and not be limited by society’s construction of masculinity and femininity,” Kinnersly says. “We have to call out disrespect, at all levels when we see it.”

She points out that not all men are on a level playing field and it is important to recognise the ‘structural barriers’ that affect some boys and men, making it difficult for them to take up caring and nurturing roles.

“There are often ramifications for boys and men who don’t fit into society’s definition of manhood, including verbal and physical abuse, bullying and isolation, and even sexual assault, which would disincentivise anyone from going against the grain,” she explains.

“We have to encourage boys and men to identify and tap into the full range of emotions and behaviours they may have been conditioned to suppress, such as asking for help, feeling or showing vulnerability, taking up caregiving and homemaking roles, and calling out disrespect in all areas.”

Kinnersly adds that as well as feeling pressure from family or peers, boys and men are bombarded with messages that tell them to be tough and not weak. They may also experience cultural pressures to be in charge. A lack of representation of women in decision-making roles, and a general undervaluing of caregiving and homemaking roles, all get in the way of men adopting these more caring qualities.

Healthy characteristics include willingness to share emotions, having conversations, cultivating friendships with both men and women, and advocating for women and girls.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELS
Associate Professor of Sociology at Monash University, Steven Roberts, agrees that role models are critical when it comes to teaching young men how to break away from stereotypes around masculinity. This helps to create a positive discourse, rather than reinforcing attitudes that are potentially damaging.

“The risk is that we too readily say masculinity is bad,” Roberts says. “Important points are being made on this, but this discussion has to go alongside showcasing positive attitudes and more progressive and healthy masculinity.

“An important part of the research agenda is not to just point out the men who are problematic, but to try and harness and amplify the voices of men who recognise the problems and the pressures of having to conform to particular stereotypes.”

He adds that there is often a generational divide between young men who are aware of stereotypes, and older men who are still role modelling unhealthy behaviours. This could be a father or grandfather, or it could be a sports coach who uses homophobic language in an effort to teach his players to ‘man up’.

Many young men, probably over half, are feeling pressure to comply with societal beliefs.

“We so often focus on young men because they’re the next generation,’ says Roberts. ’But what is equally important is to consider those older men who are resistant to change or progress, who lack an open mind. They’re the gatekeepers here, because they’re role modelling.”

He points out that the #MeToo movement has shown that even seemingly ‘nice’ men can display problematic behaviours.

“It’s not just terrible, bad men who demonstrate unhealthy masculinity practices,” he says. “Virtually anyone can endorse these negative traits, because the values around what it means to be a man are so entrenched.”

IMPROVING MALE MENTAL HEALTH
One positive role model making an impression is Tomorrow Man facilitator Ryder Jack, who conducts workshops in high schools and sports clubs with young men aged 16 and up. Jack trained to become a facilitator under the guidance of successful AFL player Jim Stynes, who co-founded the Reach Foundation.
“Jim taught us that a man can be a whole lot of different things,” explains Jack. “He was obviously quite dominant and competitive on the field, but then he could access his emotions, let down his guard and be quite vulnerable, or switch out of that and be a boss, a CEO and a trainer.”

It was at the Reach Foundation that Jack also met Tom Harkin who went on to establish Tomorrow Man. The business now consists of around 10 facilitators who are passionate about allowing young men the opportunity to ‘practise stepping out’.

We need to be able to speak emotionally. We need to be able to let people in. Guys know it. They just need the right environment.

“What we do is give guys the tool kit to be able to just be,” he says. “We’re not there to necessarily give the answers, but to just get guys used to being uncomfortable, because the longer you sit in discomfort the more comfortable it becomes.

We need to be able to speak emotionally. We need to be able to let people in. Guys know it. They just need the right environment.

“It’s about letting them know that there are great things about being a guy, but there are also things we need to improve in order to save lives, as extreme as that sounds. We need to be able to speak emotionally. We need to be able to let people in. Guys know it. They just need the right environment.”

The high demand for programs such as Tomorrow Man indicates that people are taking notice and prioritising men’s mental health. However, Jack says the area is still developing and research will help with this.

“Thankfully, feminism has come such a long way and has great momentum,” he says.

“But I feel like men haven’t stepped up or evolved as much as the women’s movement. This leaves a lot of guys confused or defensive and we’re told all these things about what a man is supposed to be.

“We try to create environments where guys can explore the type of manhood they want, and help them have a little bit more fluidity with their ideas, to know that courage isn’t necessarily being able to fight with physical strength. It’s being able to speak from the heart and take your armour off sometimes.”
TEN SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT MEN’S MENTAL HEALTH

Glen Poole from Australian Men’s Health Forum has produced a list of surprising facts about boys’ and men’s mental health

1. Most male suicide is not linked to depression

When we talk about men’s mental health, lots of people think about the fact that men are three times more likely to take their own lives than women. This is true. Suicide kills an average of eight people a day in Australia, six men and two women.

However, the majority of male suicides are not primarily linked to a mental health diagnosis, according to the Queensland Suicide Register. With depression, for example, while nearly half of female suicides (46.5%) are linked to unipolar depression, fewer than a third of male suicides (32.8%) are associated with unipolar depression.

Depression is still a significant factor in the high male suicide rates, but not in the majority of cases. Male suicides are more commonly linked to a range of distressing life events such as relationship separation (28.3%); financial problems (17%); relationship conflict (15.7%); bereavement (12.3%); recent or pending unemployment (10.5%); familial conflict (9.5%) and pending legal matters (9.0%).

2. Boys have more mental health issues than girls

Boys (aged 4-17) are more likely than girls to have experienced mental health disorders in the past 12 months according to the Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. The gap is larger for children aged 4-11 (16.5% of boys and 10.6% of girls) than for children aged 12-17 (15.9% of boys and 12.8% of girls).

It is often said that boys are more likely to “act out” and externalise problems while girls are more likely to “act in” and externalise problems. This pattern is reflected in mental health disorders in children:

- Boys account for 72.1% of children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
- Boys account for 62.7% of children with Conduct Disorders
- Girls account for around 75% of reported self-harm
- Girls account for around 70% of reported suicidal thinking.

Boys also account for 52.5% of anxiety disorders and 45.4% of major depressive orders. This changes in late teens and adulthood with women reporting significantly more depression and anxiety than men.

3. Men aren’t as bad at getting help as we think

The public story about men’s mental health is that men “bottle up” their emotions and need to “open up” more and get help. There may be some truth in this. We know that girls are up to twice as likely to access formal support with emotional and behavioural problems through health services, schools, online support and telephone helplines.

Girls are also more likely to access informal support though the gap is smaller, with over half of boys and nearly three quarters of girls getting help from parents, friends, teachers etc. Overall, girls are around 80% more likely to access formal support than boys and 40% more likely to access informal support.

A similar pattern is seen in adulthood with women with mental health disorders being around 50% more likely to access services than men. However data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics challenge the simplistic binary story about gender and mental health, for example:

- The proportion of men with mental health disorders (13.1%) who visit a psychologist is almost identical to the proportion of women with mental health disorders who visit a psychologist (13.2%)
- The proportion of women in the overall population who have a mental disorder but don’t access any help (13.2%) is slightly higher than the proportion of men in the overall population who have a mental disorder but don’t access any help (12.8%)
- The proportion of women with a mental health disorder who say they aren’t getting the help they need (28.9%) is slightly higher than in men with mental health disorders (25.2%).

These statistics suggest that we need a more open and inclusive public discussion about men’s and women’s mental health that goes beyond lazy gender stereotypes and places more focus on ensuring our responses are gender inclusive and provide a balance of male-friendly and female-friendly responses.

4. Men have lots of coping strategies that don’t involve talking

Men may be less likely to access talking therapies, however research in Australia has found that men with experience of depression and suicide have a range of prevention strategies to “keep myself feeling OK or on an even keel from day to day”.

The top 10 are:

- Eating healthily (54.2% do this regularly)
- Keep myself busy (50.1%)
- Exercise (44.9%)
- Use humour to reframe my thoughts/feelings (41.1%)
- Do something to help another person (35.7%)
- Spend time with a pet (34.8%)
- Accept my sad feelings/this will pass too’ (32.7%)
- Achieve something (big or small) (31%)
- Hang out with people who are positive (30.8 %)
- Distract myself from negative thoughts/feelings (30.5%).
5. Men have less depression and anxiety but more drink and drug disorders
According to the last National Survey of mental health and wellbeing:
- Women are more likely to have experienced mental disorders in the past 12 months (22.3% compared to 17.6% for men)
- Women are more likely to have experienced anxiety disorders in the past 12 months (17.9% compared with 10.8% for men)
- Women are more likely to have experienced affective disorders like depression in the past 12 months (7.1% compared with 5.3% for men)
- Men are more than twice as likely as women to have experienced substance use disorders (7.0% compared with 3.3%)
- Men are more likely to experience mental disorders in all three categories (e.g. anxiety, depression and alcohol abuse) than women (0.8% compared with 0.6%).

6. Mental health is having a big impact on men’s physical health
Mental health issues have a greater impact on men’s physical health overall. The majority of the burden of disease linked to mental health disorders is experienced by men (52.3%).

In terms of life expectancy, research in Western Australia found that the gap in men with mental disorders (compared to the rest of the male population) was around 16 years. The gap between women with mental disorders (compared to the rest of the female population) was 12 years.

7. Gambling is linked to mental health issues
According to Mental Health First Aid Australia, “gambling problems are mental health problems”. In addition to this, people with gambling problems are likely to have other common mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and substance use problems.

In terms of sex/gender differences, the 2017 HILDA report found that:
- Around 1.4 million Australians report at least one harmful consequence as a result of their gambling (10.3% of men and 5.6% of women)
- Around 200,000 Australians are considered to be problem gamblers (1.5% of men and 0.8% of women).

8. Men get eating disorders too
According to a recent Australian report on women’s mental health, eating disorders of all kinds predominantly affect women. However, the report makes the following point:
“Men also suffer from eating disorders. Large population studies suggest that up to a quarter of people suffering with anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa are male, and almost an equal number of males and females suffer with binge eating disorder. We also know that under-diagnosis and cultural stigma mean that the actual proportion of males with eating disorders could be higher.”

This is a useful reminder that we need to look beyond gender stereotypes when talking about men’s and women’s mental health.

9. Dads experience postnatal depression too
Around one in 10 new dads get postnatal depression. Unlike new mums, dads don’t benefit from universal screening. When in comes to the mental health of parents, we don’t provide the same level of proactive care to dads, as we do mums.

This missed opportunity to engage men in conversations about their mental wellbeing, has become a key issue for some mental health advocates in recent years. For example, at least one international expert on paternal mental health, Mark Williams, has called for all new dads to be screened and set up the #HowAreYouDad campaign.

According to Associate Professor Richard Fletcher, at the University of Newcastle, dads’ mental health impacts children and mums too. Lack of partner support is a risk factor for maternal depression and research shows that a child of a depressed father has three times the rate of behaviour problems and twice the chance of a psychiatric diagnosis at seven years of age.

10. Gender-blind mental health services may struggle to help men (and women)
Like women, most men with mental health issues are offered “gender neutral” services. While this may seem fair and equal, gender neutral services can fail to take into account the different needs of men and women.

As Rosemary Calder AM, Director of the Australian Health Policy Collaboration has argued: “Everyone knows that there are differences between women and men. The marketing and retailing industries spend many millions of dollars on market research to understand the needs and preferences of men and women so that they can gender-target their messages to both adults and children. They wouldn’t do it if the evidence told them that gender-blind strategies would work just as well.

“In spite of all of this evidence about the importance of gender, mental health policy in Australia is gender-blind. If gender matters to marketeers, helping them to be more effective and profitable, surely it should also matter to governments who have a responsibility for the policies which support the health and wellbeing of the population?”

While Calder was arguing specifically for gender-sensitive approaches to women and girls’ mental health, the same principle can be applied to men and boys’ mental health. A gender-inclusive mental health system would work to respond to the different needs of men and women and ensure an equitable balance of male-friendly and female-friendly approaches.

‘Traditional masculinity’ and mental health: experts call for gendered approach to treatment

Australia’s peak body for psychologists says it will consider developing new practice guidelines for psychologists working with boys and men after the American Psychological Association announced its own set of guidelines for the group last month. An ABC Health & Wellbeing report by Olivia Willis

The APA guidelines, which say “traditional masculinity ideology has been shown to limit males’ psychological development … and negatively influence mental health”, were designed to provide psychologists with an “evidence-based approach” for responding to the particular needs of boys and men.

“The guidelines support encouraging positive aspects of ‘traditional masculinity’, such as courage and leadership, and discarding traits such as violence and sexism, while noting that the vast majority of men are not violent,” the APA wrote on Twitter.

“Traits of so-called ‘traditional masculinity’, like suppressing emotions and masking distress, often start early in life and have been linked to less willingness by boys and men to seek help, more risk-taking and aggression – possibly harming themselves and those with whom they interact.”

Ros Knight, president of the Australian Psychological Society, said the APS had been highlighting the “quiet crisis around men’s mental health” since 2012.

“What we’ve done is address it through ethical guidelines – so things [psychologists] need to think about when treating men,” Ms Knight said.

“But there is an opportunity for us to consider whether making specific practice guidelines for boys and men would be a sensible thing to do.

“I think as a result of the APA really bringing this much more to the fore, it’s something that we’re going to think about doing in 2019.”

TAKING A ‘GENDERED’ APPROACH

While the APA guidelines were released in August last year, they captured widespread attention in January when the APA published an article (and subsequent tweet) about the guidelines. It sparked controversy on social media, and attracted negative comments from conservative US media.

The health body has released several guidelines in the past for psychologists working with people belonging to certain groups, including members of racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community, and women and girls. But for boys and men, who have historically been considered the norm in psychological practice, no such guidelines existed.

Lead author Fredric Rabinowitz, a psychologist at the University of Redlands, said the purpose of the guidelines was to help boys and men lead happy, healthy lives.

“We see that men have higher suicide rates, men have more cardiovascular disease and men are lonelier as they get older,” he told The New York Times.

“We’re trying to help men by expanding their emotional repertoire, not trying to take away the strengths that men have.”

Michael Flood, a researcher from Queensland University of Technology who specialises in gender, masculinities and violence prevention, said the guidelines were “long overdue.”

“We’ve known for a long time, probably 40 years, that norms of masculinity shape boys’ and men’s behaviour, including in unhealthy and negative ways,” Associate Professor Flood said.

“There’s literally decades of research pointing to the fact that conformity to traditional masculinity is associated with poor health among men, high levels of suicidal thoughts and behaviour, poor relationships and parenting, and involvements in violence against women and other men.”

Associate Professor Flood said there had been growing recognition in the fields of psychology and social work, since the mid-1990s, that a “gender-sensitive approach” to men’s health was needed.

“That began with a recognition that women’s lives are gendered – women’s health and wellbeing are shaped by stereotypes and norms regarding what it means to be a woman,” he said.

“But it took some time before that same insight was applied to men, with the recognition that men’s lives too are gendered.”

MEN LESS WILLING TO SEEK HELP

According to the guidelines, several factors influence the way men construct ideas of masculinity, including race, ethnicity, age and socio-economic status.

“Although there are differences in masculinity ideologies, there is a particular constellation of standards that have held sway over large segments of the population, including: anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk and violence,” the guidelines state.

It is these cultural lessons, according to the APA, that have led to boys and men being overrepresented in a variety of psychological and social problems, in part because they’re less willing to seek help.

“Research shows that boys and men are at a disproportionate risk for school discipline, academic challenges, health disparities, and other quality of life issues,” the APA wrote.
In Australia, men have more accidents, are more prone to lifestyle-related chronic health conditions than women and girls at the same age. Andrea Fogarty, a research fellow at the Black Dog Institute, said the cultural expectations placed on men to be "tough" and emotionally stoic meant that many men avoid seeking help.

"We know that for pretty much any mental health problem, men are not accessing health services at the same rate as women," Dr Fogarty said.

A 2014 Black Dog Institute report found "unhelpful conceptions of masculinity" were among four factors – alongside acute stress, depressed mood and ineffective coping strategies – that increased men’s risk of suicidal behaviour.

“What we found in our research was that for some men, particularly those who adhered to a conception of masculinity that was quite traditional, they were less likely to seek help earlier in the course of illness,” Dr Fogarty said.

Similarly, a 2016 study from the University of Melbourne found men who strongly identified with being self-reliant were significantly more likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts.

“In addition to self-reliance, the men in our study didn’t want to be seen as a burden to their families and support networks … which often drove them further away,” Dr Fogarty said.

“That might be a way of temporarily managing distress … but in the long term, it’s not helpful.

“It comes through in alcohol use, substance use, withdrawal and isolation, and sometimes aggression.”

This is part of the reason there is a lower incidence of mood disorders yet a higher rate of suicide among young men – they are being misdiagnosed, according to a report from Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health.

**IMPACT OF MASCULINITY ON RELATIONSHIPS**

In addition to looking at the impacts of traditional masculinity on men’s mental health, the APA guidelines also encourage psychologists to focus on how ideas about masculinity can influence men’s interpersonal relationships.

“If we socialise boys and men to avoid vulnerability, to be stoic, strong and avoid showing weakness or dependency … that plays itself out in a whole series of ways in men’s friendships, in their intimate and sexual relationships, and in their parenting,” Associate Professor Flood said.

He said while it was important to acknowledge how traditional masculinity can be “limiting for men”, it was also important to talk about how it can be harmful, or indeed lethal, for women.

“There is a very well-established link between agreement with traditional masculinity and men’s use of violence, whether that’s domestic violence, sexual violence, or violence against other men.

“It’s not the only factor that shapes men’s use of violence … and it’s not just any kind of traditional masculine norm. So, we need to look at what bits of traditional masculinity are at stake.”

He added that there were times and places where some traditional masculine qualities were “highly desirable”.

“The problem is, in part, that we tell boys and men to show these traditional masculine qualities all the time – to always be stoic, to always be tough, to always be in control,” he said.

“That can sometimes leave men emotionally stunted, even crippled, in contexts where showing weakness, asking for help, or being nurturers would be much better for them.”

**GUIDELINES NOT AN ‘ATTACK’ ON MEN**

Some of the negative responses to the guidelines, including that they conflate traditional masculinity with “being a pig, or a creep or a Harvey Weinstein kind of person”, misunderstand what they’re about, Associate Professor Flood said.

“This is not an attack of men. It’s an attack on one particular set of ideals about how to be a man – a set of ideals which are actually pretty harmful to men themselves,” he said.

“What’s been criticised is a particular version of masculinity, based on sexism, rigid homophobia, and narrow emotional stoicism.”

Zac Seidler, a psychologist who specialises in the treatment of boys and men, said the idea that traditional masculinity is “fundamentally dangerous” was not the case, and not what the guidelines were suggesting.

“What the literature has shown is that if you are to enact traditional masculine norms – like stoicism, aggression and competitiveness – to an extreme, in a way that is extremely restrictive and rigid, that you are more likely to be depressed, and less likely to seek help,” said Mr Seidler, who is undertaking a PhD at the University of Sydney.

He said that when it came to men’s mental health, pretending that boys and men were not “socialised in certain ways” was “a dangerous way forward”.

“I think people have their eyes shut when they think this stuff isn’t happening anymore,” he said.

“We know these traditional norms are slowly dying off, but everyone has a bit of it – myself included.”

Both experts agreed that the guidelines were driven by a “profound compassion and concern” for men.

“It’s a shame that [the guidelines] have been misinterpreted, but if anything, the fact that this is out in the public domain means that we’re heading in the right direction, in understanding that masculinity, and gender on the whole, is a cultural competency that all psychologists need to understand,” Mr Seidler said.

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Young men and mental health: risk factors

Summary

- Traditional masculine norms, such as being tough and self-reliant mean that many young men learn to avoid expressing emotions or behaviours that show vulnerability.
- Psychoeducation based on positive masculinity should be a part of preventive responses to mental ill-health for young men.
- There is growing recognition that for young men, symptoms of mental ill-health manifest through externalising behaviours and as such, their symptoms can be missed as they do not readily fit with existing diagnostic criteria.

A young man’s experience and environment is going to inform the potential risk of experiencing mental ill-health and point to domains in which policy opportunities may exist to improve service design and delivery. This extract from a paper produced by Orygen considers the potential impacts of traditional masculine norms, the role of culture, and sexuality and learning difficulties.

TRADITIONAL MASCULINE IDEALS

As boys grow into young men the social expectations and pressures of “being a man” can assert positive and negative influences on their self-development. Traditional masculine norms include being tough and self-reliant. As such, young men learn to avoid expressing emotions or behaviours that show vulnerability, such as hopelessness, sadness, and worthlessness (Fields and Cochran 2011) or tearfulness/crying (Fischer et al. 2004).

Men are seen as you know hard, sturdy, you know, nothing can faze me sort of thing you know. Men, I’ve got a big shield on my chest. But it’s not always like that. – focus group

For many young men, reconciling their own experience and identity formation to traditional masculine norms may generate or contribute to emotional distress. Many young men in Australia continue to use ‘longstanding Western masculine ideals’ as their ontological reference point (Oliffe et al. 2010).

For some young men the societal expectations of traditional masculine norms can increase self-stigma around help-seeking. The accumulation of masculine capital can contribute positively and negatively to a young man’s mental health. Accumulation of masculine capital through exercise and participation in sport for example will be more likely to have positive health outcomes than heavy drinking of alcohol (de Visser and McDonnell 2013).

As young men develop their self-identity, the pervasive influence of traditional masculine norms can negatively affect their mental health. There is evidence that the more closely a young man conforms to traditional masculine norms, the greater their mental and physical health risks, and the less likely they are to seek help or access services (Courtenay 2003; Rice et al. 2017).

Young men typically need to be ‘obviously injured, seriously ill or pressured to attend’ health services (O’Brien, Hunt, and Hart 2005). Dominant notions of traditional masculine norms have also been identified as a barrier to health professionals recognising health problems in men (Courtenay 2000).

Conforming to traditional masculine norms have different effects for different men, some beneficial and others detrimental to their mental health. More research is needed to better understand this influence on young men. There is, however, growing recognition that for some young men mental ill-health manifests differently from the symptoms included in existing diagnostic criteria for mental disorders (Thompson and Bennett 2015). The potential for positive, as well as negative influences of traditional masculine norms on experiences of mental ill-health needs to be considered in developing approaches to encourage help-seeking and the design of interventions acceptable to young men.

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<th>OPPORTUNITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health service providers (organisations and individual professionals) need to recognise the pressure traditional masculine norms can exert on young men, the variation in masculine forms young men identify with and how these factors influence help-seeking.</td>
<td>Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, Departments of Health, Primary Health Networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted funding for innovative co-design initiatives, developed in partnership with young men, is urgently needed to develop a new generation of mental health services that are acceptable to young men.</td>
<td>Service providers and professional bodies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development modules and supporting awareness materials need to be designed and disseminated to increase understanding among primary and specialist health professionals of the potential link between mental ill-health and externalising behaviours in young men.</td>
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MORE THAN ONE WAY TO BE A MAN

Despite the emphasis on traditional masculine norms, how individuals understand, experience and embody
these norms varies (Courtenay 2000). Many factors influence the masculinity young men will likely construct, such as ethnicity, economic status, education, sexual diversity and social context. The form this masculinity or masculinities take can in turn influence the health risks young men may face (Courtenay 2000). Men who are able to be flexible in their adoption of traditional masculine norms may be more open to help-seeking and accepting of interventions (Proudfoot et al. 2015).

What you perceive to be as possible or impossible will define your perceptions of masculinity, and where you can be on that spectrum.

– focus group

There is mixed evidence on the benefits of not conforming to traditional masculine norms. A study of college-aged men from the United States found that not conforming was linked to a lower risk of negative health outcomes (Levant et al. 2009). However, broader social consequences of non-compliance can have negative outcomes, such as reduced self-esteem in the face of social pressures to conform to traditional masculine norms (O’Neil 2008). For others, identifying with a masculine ideal may provide a safe path among an emerging plurality of masculinities (Levant et al. 2009).

While there are potentially negative consequences from the social pressures and expectations of traditional masculine norms, for some young men there may be beneficial aspects. Positively framing masculinity by emphasising the strengths available to young men is more likely to foster positive health-related behaviours. Psychological models of positive masculinity have been successful in developing relationships with young men (Kislica and Englar-Carlson 2010). Psychoeducation based on positive masculinity should, therefore, be a part of preventive responses to mental ill-health for young men.

CULTURE

Young men from non-Western cultural backgrounds are less likely to access mental health services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men report higher levels of psychological distress, are hospitalised more often for a mental health-related condition and are more likely to die from suicide compared with other young men. headspace has been relatively successful in engaging young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a consequence of targeted campaigns, with the difference greatest among 12-17 year olds (Hilferty et al. 2015). In the year following the launch of Yarn Safe initiative (and the opening of new centres) the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people accessing headspace centres increased by 32 per cent (headspace).

In contrast, young men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds remain under-represented. Limited awareness around the needs for young people

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<td>Training and best practice guidelines need to be updated to incorporate cultural awareness and safety in mental health services. Professional bodies need to make cultural and diversity awareness training a requisite component of continuing professional development.</td>
<td>Service providers, cultural and professional bodies.</td>
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from culturally diverse backgrounds within headspace has been identified as a barrier, but to what extent is not clear (Brown et al. 2016).

Young people born overseas and speaking a language other than English at home make up 15.4 per cent of the young people living in Australia but only 2.4 per cent of the demographic engaged in headspace services (Hilferty et al. 2015). Data for access and engagement with mental health services by culturally diverse populations is limited. Reference is still made (Rickwood et al. 2015) to a 1997 study from New South Wales (McDonald and Steel 1997) that found people (of all ages) born overseas from a non-English speaking background were less likely to use community mental health services. The lack of research into service use, engagement and efficacy by this group, and specifically young men, restricts the development of targeted programs and services.

**SEXUALITY**

Young men who are sexuality diverse experience higher rates of mental ill-health. Among young men attending headspace, 5.9 per cent identify as sexuality diverse (Hilferty et al. 2015). Comparable population data for this group is sparse with suggestions that around one-in-ten Australians are sexuality diverse (Australian Human Rights Commission 2014).

Young same-sex attracted men are more likely to experience mental ill-health than their heterosexual peers. Just over 40 per cent of sexuality diverse young men (ages 16-24 years) in Australia have a high/very high level of psychological distress compared with a national average of seven per cent (Leonard et al. 2012). The risk of self-harm and suicide is higher for young men who experience abuse related to being sexuality diverse (Hillier et al. 2010). There is suggestive evidence that young same-sex attracted men who more closely identify with traditional masculine norms are more likely to report experiences of discrimination attributed to their sexual orientation (Lyons and Hosking 2014). Consideration of the safety of sexuality diverse young men is needed in the design and provision of mental health services.

**LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

The ability to articulate the presence or experience of mental ill-health can be harder for young men with learning difficulties. Difficulties with emotional expression can delay access to mental health care, as can the mistaken attributing of symptoms to learning difficulties.

In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that 36 per cent of children and young people with learning difficulties experience mental health problems at any point in time (24 per cent if problem behaviours are excluded) (NICE guideline 2016).

Higher rates of mental ill-health and disorders in people with learning difficulties underlines the importance of accurately identifying and diagnosing symptoms.

The presence of a mental disorder can also negatively affect a young man’s ability to function in a learning environment. These difficulties can include; struggling to actively engage with school work, concentrate on tasks, tolerate uncertainty or demands, engage with social networks and cope with the various day-to-day demands of study (MindMatters).

A study of Year 7, 8 and 9 students (aged 11-15 years) in Adelaide found a strong correlation between self-reported learning and wellbeing. The research authors noted that despite this link school wellbeing programs are more likely to focus on social contexts (i.e. bullying) than academic contexts (i.e. learning strategy capacity building). Young men scored lower for learning strategies, coping with schoolwork and how liked they felt they were, however, only the latter had a substantive effect size (Askell-Williams and Lawson 2005). The risk of delayed educational development compounds the negative life outcomes that can result from undiagnosed or untreated mental ill-health.

The potential bidirectional relationship between learning difficulties and mental ill-health indicates the mental health of young men who are struggling at school, including engaging in disruptive behaviour, needs to be considered and support provided. This support needs to be accessible and acceptable to young men who are likely to be finding school to be a pressured environment, and for who being linked with mental health treatment will likely increase perceived pressure and symptoms.

MEN AND EMOTIONS

THIS GUIDE IS COURTESY OF MENSLINE AUSTRALIA

OUR EMOTIONAL STATE OFTEN DICTATES HOW WE BEHAVE

Men and women may handle emotions in quite different ways. When upset, women are more likely to express their feelings directly and to seek the support of friends and family, whereas men might hide their emotions or withdraw.

Men often feel that they need to be self-reliant and provide for their loved ones, so it is not appropriate to express their emotions. This behaviour can be reinforced in the stereotype of the heroic male, so often represented in popular culture. Fearless, resourceful, stoic and usually facing adversity alone, these characters tell us a lot about what is considered to be ideal male behaviour within our society.

More powerful than film characters are the roles we see our parents playing. Many men have experienced fathers who were emotionally distant, who rarely, if ever, cried or expressed affection outwardly. The way we see our parents behave may become the unconscious template for our behaviour.

THE FOUR BASIC EMOTIONS

It is helpful to think in terms of four basic human emotions:
- Sadness
- Anger
- Happiness
- Fear.

Of these four emotions, happiness is considered the most acceptable in society. Yet anger, fear and sadness are universally felt by everyone. These emotions serve valuable purposes and are normal responses to threat and loss.

As emotions such as fear and sadness are generally not as accepted, men might try to hide these from themselves and those around them. They feel that they should be able to cope on their own.

Individuals might try to cope with ‘negative’ emotions in one or more of the following ways:
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Working longer hours
- Spending more time away from home
- Consuming more alcohol
- Behaving recklessly and/or violently.

We might not always be able to identify what we’re feeling or have the words to describe our emotions. Men may feel uncomfortable talking to someone about them, leading to frustration in relationships when they cannot express their needs, fears and grief.

WHY TALK ABOUT IT?

The restriction of emotional expression in many men’s lives can lead to:
- A greater sense of isolation
- Less support being available from loved ones
- Health issues, due to carrying chronic tension in the body and other bad coping strategies
- Relationship difficulties due to an inability to resolve emotional conflicts and/or a perceived lack of ability to be intimate
- Psychological problems such as depression, insomnia and anxiety.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Men are often told they have to ‘get in touch with their feelings’, but what does this mean and how do you do it?

Here are some strategies for getting to know your feelings better:
- Be aware of the sensations in your body. Emotion always manifests somewhere in the body. Anger might be experienced as a flush of heat in the face, sadness as a tightening of the throat, anxiety as a knot in the stomach. Take a moment to acknowledge the feeling(s) and take a few breaths to help identify these sensations and understand what they mean.
- If you are feeling angry, ask yourself what other emotions you might be feeling? Are you really sad underneath, or afraid?
- Learn to put words to what you are feeling. Often it helps to write down or brainstorm ideas before a conversation.
- Identifying and expressing feelings is a learnt behaviour – and like driving a car, it takes practice.
- Take the risk of showing your vulnerability with people who you feel safe with. Give yourself permission to be human; it can bring you closer to others and may even bring a sense of relief.
- Ask for help when you need it. You can start by contacting counselling services such as MensLine Australia, for professional support.

MensLine Australia is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with professional counsellors providing information and support for all relationship issues. Call us on 1300 78 99 78 or register for online counselling.

For many men, talking about their mental health can be overwhelming. Who can you trust? When is a good time to bring it up? How much should you divulge? As part of Men’s Health Week, we asked Glen Benton, from On The Line and MensLine Australia for tips on how men can talk about their mental health with their mates. A guide produced by Mat Larkin for SANE Australia.

Is it appropriate for men to share their mental illness experience with friends?

Not only is it appropriate, it’s really important. Having a range of professional and personal supports is generally the best way to address mental health concerns.

I often speak to men who explain they are hesitant to involve their friends and family in their mental health story, explaining that they don’t want to ‘put it on them’. My suggestion is that they think about what their reaction would be if a friend confided in them about their needs. I’ve never heard anyone respond and say they wouldn’t want a mate to come to them for support.

It’s usually more common that we’re willing to give support to others rather than to receive it. And there is often support available from friends and family if the person in need can accept it. My suggestion would be to reach out where you can and gain a range of professional and personal support. Be aware though that everyone has boundaries and limits. Friends and family are usually willing to be there for general support, but core treatment and support needs are best handled by trained professionals.

If someone is experiencing mental health issues, a positive first step is telling someone you’re close to such as a friend, family member or co-worker and ask them to go with you to a GP. The GP can assist you with referral to professional mental health support while friends and family are supporting you as you go through the process.

When is a good time to have the discussion? At work? At the pub?

Wherever you choose to have the conversation, it needs be somewhere that you feel safe and supported. Rather than thinking about where you ‘should’ do it, think about what you need to feel safe to have the conversation and let those needs influence your choices.

When it comes to mental health, you need to give your full attention. At the pub, you may find this harder to do, and at work you may find yourself and others distracted. The important thing is that you feel empowered, safe and supported when you express what’s going on.

What is a good way of starting the conversation?

It can feel overwhelming for most men to bring up mental health discussions with friends and family. Often this comes from fear of the unknown or looking less ‘tough’ and these worries and fears can cause men to stop communicating. Mental health issues can cause confusion, paranoia, lethargy and trouble interacting with others. When this is how we feel on the inside and we’re also unsure of how...
to tell someone, it can be helpful to do something called ‘calling it out’.

Calling it out can be a statement like, “I’m really nervous to bring this up with you, and I’m not sure where to start. But I need help right now because I think that I’ve been depressed and I don’t want to do this on my own any more. Could you help me to get some support?”

Bringing the worries out in the open to make them part of the conversation, rather than hiding them and tip-toing around them. You can call out your unspoken thoughts with a friend or family member, a doctor, counsellor or other mental health professional or support services like MensLine.

The important thing is to tell someone, don’t keep it to yourself, call it out.

What responses can you expect from your friends?
It’s hard to articulate what specific responses you can expect from friends and family because, as we all know, everyone is different. What can be expected is the response of a person who cares for you. In all my time working in this field I’ve found it very rare that men who confide in friends and family about their mental health issues are met with a negative response. Usually their fears about how others will react are unfounded. Care, concern and willingness to help is generally the most common response I see.

Your friend or family member will probably respond by wanting to help you, but unless they are a trained professional, they won’t be able treat or ‘fix’ the mental health issue. For example, if you were diagnosed with diabetes you may want the support of a friend or family member to come along to the first appointment with the specialist, but you wouldn’t expect that they would have the information and skills needed to assist in treating the diabetes.

We can expect a response of compassion and willingness to help from family or friends, but professional guidance is the next step to getting back to wellness.

What can men do to make it easier for their friends to support them?
Accept their support. As I said earlier, we’re usually more willing to help others with mental health issues than we are to ask for or accept support.

Step one is to ask for help.

The second step is to accept it when it’s offered.

Mental health issues tend to affect the parts of our brains that control problem solving and communication, and this can make asking for help feel more complex. This sense of complexity can stop men from gaining mental health treatment and getting better.

Depression, for example, can cause people to avoid reaching out, or become chronically reclusive and isolated. Which make things worse. You can assist those supporting you by making a decision to accept their support and trust that they won’t be judging you.

What if you get a negative response after sharing your experience?
There are lots of ways to address negative responses to mental health. If this has happened to you or someone you know I would suggest making contact with a telephone or online counselling service to talk through it. In my experience, I’ve found a negative response is rare, and why the negative response occurred often takes us into deeper issues like family/friend dynamics, culture, spirituality, or lack of understanding of mental health.

As rare as it is, there are many different reasons why someone may react negatively. This is why it can be helpful to talk through negative responses, with professional support services or a counsellor.

What resources are available for friends who want to support you?
• MensLine Australia is a 24/7 counselling service for men and their families. We encourage any man, or family member concerned about a man, to contact us and speak to one of our qualified counsellors on 1300 789 978.
• The SANE Help Centre provides the information, guidance, and referrals you need to manage mental health concerns, including:
  – SANE helpline, 1800 18 7263
    – Talk to a mental health professional (weekdays, 9am-5pm AEST). For urgent assistance, see Crisis support below.
• Helpline chat. Chat online with a mental health professional (weekdays 9am-5pm AEST), www.sane.org/get-help
  – Helpline email, helpline@sane.org
• SANE Forums
  – Online forums for information and support.
  – Anonymous and moderated 24/7.
  – For people living with mental illness
  – For family, friends and carers.

Fact sheets and guides
Get the facts on mental illness. All you need to know about treatments, support, and helping yourself and others: www.sane.org/information-stories/facts-and-guides

Crisis support:
• Emergency, police and ambulance 000 (24 hrs)
• Lifeline telephone counselling 13 11 14 (24 hrs)
• Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467 (24 hrs)
• Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (24 hrs).

WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about masculinity and male identity.

1. What is ‘masculinity’ and what forms does it take? (Provide at least 3 examples)

2. What are ‘gender stereotypes’? (Provide at least 3 examples)

3. What is ‘gender inequality’? (Provide at least 3 examples)

4. What does the term ‘toxic masculinity’ refer to?

5. What is ‘traditional masculinity’ and what are some of its potential impacts on the emotional and mental wellbeing of Australian boys and men?
Speaking about the masculinity crisis detracts our attention from a real issue: our failure to reform the way we think about masculinity and how unfit it is for the culture in which we now live. The crisis narrative can become an easy excuse of inaction, or a handy justification of some men’s violent and abusive behaviour.

Aneta Stepien, *Why we need to stop talking about a ‘masculinity crisis’*

In general terms, how could society create a more positive and progressive culture by inviting men to actively participate in redefining and reforming the norms of masculinity?

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified ideas, messages and images about differences between males and females. They have become meaningful because society has given them meaning and value.

Our Watch, *Defining gender stereotypes*

Consider the above statement, and in the space below explain what gender stereotypes are. Provide three (3) specific examples each for both male and female stereotypes and explain their positive and negative impacts on gender equality and society more broadly.

The seven pillars of traditional manhood which represent the “Man Box” are: self-sufficiency; toughness; physical attractiveness; rigid gender roles; heterosexuality and homophobia; hyper-sexuality; and aggression and control over women.

Michael Flood, *Study reveals dangers of ‘toxic masculinity’ to men and those around them*

Explain how each of the seven (7) traits used to represent the traditional ideals of manhood can be both influential and restrictive to young men.
MULTIPLE CHOICE

Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of this page.

1. Jesuit Social Services’ Men’s Project defines the seven pillars of traditional manhood as representing the “Man Box”. (Select all 7 that apply)
   a. Equal sharing of domestic labour/child-rearing
   b. Aggression and control over women
   c. Heterosexuality and homophobia
   d. Emotional responsiveness
   e. Physical attractiveness
   f. Feminine sensitivity
   g. Rigid gender roles
   h. Gender equality
   i. Hyper-sexuality
   j. Self-sufficiency
   k. Toughness

2. Match the following terms to their correct definitions.
   a. Gender equality
   b. Gender identity
   c. Gender stereotype
   d. Homophobia
   e. Male chauvinism
   f. Misogyny
   g. Sex
   h. Toxic masculinity

3. Respond to the following statements by circling either ‘True’ or ‘False’.
   (Source: 2018 National workplace sexual harassment survey, Australian Human Rights Commission)
   a. Perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment are overwhelmingly male. True / False
   b. Almost 2 in 5 women and just over 1 in 4 men have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years. True / False
   c. Almost one quarter of women have experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes. True / False
   d. Nearly one third of women have experienced unwelcome requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts. True / False

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

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Our ideals of masculinity – the model to which men are supposed to aspire – is very old-fashioned. Even though our culture changed drastically over the course of the 20th century, the qualities we value in “real men” – such as domination, control, physical strength and emotional restraint – are unchanged. (Stepien, A, Why we need to stop talking about a ‘masculinity crisis’). (p.2)

More recently, we’ve begun to talk about a “masculinity crisis” – commonly used to describe how the changing work patterns and new family demands put pressure on men who feel distress and insecurity about their new gender role (ibid). (p.2)

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified ideas, messages and images about differences between males and females. They have become meaningful because society has given them meaning and value (Our Watch, Defining gender stereotypes). (p.4)

While play helps children to try out and develop new skills, gender stereotypes can limit what new types of play they feel encouraged to try, and subsequently what skills and abilities they develop (Our Watch, Child’s play – 6 ways to challenge gender stereotypes). (p.5)

Men are 32% less likely to visit a health professional than women. Men are also less likely to seek therapy for psychological complaints, such as feeling down or anxious. Men also experience higher rates of suicide and motor accidents, are more likely to drink excessively and smoke, and are more prone to serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, and vascular disease. Similarly, men are more likely to both perpetrate and experience violence, and to adopt beliefs and behaviours that increase the risk of violence (Stratemeyer, M, Saenz, A, and Holland, E, How challenging masculine stereotypes is good for men). (p.6)

While women comprise roughly 47% of all employees in Australia, they take home on average $251.20 less than men each week (full-time adult ordinary earnings). The national gender pay gap is 15.3% and it has remained stuck between 15-19% for the past two decades (Australian Human Rights Commission, Face the facts: Gender Equality 2018). (p.8)

In 2017, Australia was ranked 35th on a global index measuring gender equality, slipping from a high point of 15th in 2006. While Australia scores very highly in the area of educational attainment, there is still a lot of progress to be made in the areas of economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment (ibid). (p.8)

More than one in three Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime and one in two experiences sexual harassment (ibid). (p.8)

Young men who conform to traditional definitions of manhood are more likely to suffer harm to themselves, and do harm to others, according to a new survey of Australian men aged 18 to 30 (Flood, M, Australian study reveals the dangers of ‘toxic masculinity’ to men and those around them). (p.15)

Masculinity is a significant contributing factor in male-to-male violence. Indeed, men’s violence against women and men’s violence against other men are interrelated, and both are shaped by traditional ideals of masculinity (ibid). (p.17)

The term toxic masculinity has become a catch-all to describe male feelings of entitlement, anger and vulnerability, and the urge to dominate and intimidate, through either overt or covert means (Om, J, Toxic masculinity: helping men understand the impact of their behaviour). (p.19)

We need to reconstruct masculinity so that men and boys can confidently express all parts of themselves, without fear of being shamed or losing status. We need men and boys to feel free to show empathy and vulnerability, be nurturing and considerate, and express their sexuality without fear of judgement (Our Watch, What does it mean to ‘be a man? And what does that have to do with violence against women?). (p.30)

Gender stereotypes are labels that reinforce outdated ideas of how men and women should behave. Popular phrases imply boys should take control and suppress their emotions, and girls should be passive and accommodating (1800RESPECT/Department of Social Services, Recognising disrespect). (pp. 32-33)

The leading health-risk behaviours that account for a major share of men’s ill health are directly related to masculine norms and masculinities interacting with other factors. These six health behaviours – poor diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, occupational hazards, unsafe sex, and drug use – account for more than half of all male deaths and about 70% of male morbidity globally (Ragonese, C, Shand, T, & Barker, G, Masculine Norms and Men’s Health: Making the Connections). (p.36)

“Masculinities” refers to the plural and dynamic ways in which masculine norms, attitudes, identities, power dynamics, and behaviours are lived (ibid). (p.36)

A rethink of masculinity is helping men and boys to move away from narrow stereotypes and negative role models toward healthier, more diverse approaches. The ripple effect will be safer, more equal societies (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Certified male: promoting healthier masculinities). (p.39)

“If we socialise boys and men to avoid vulnerability, to be stoic, strong and avoid showing weakness or dependency … that plays itself out in a whole series of ways in men’s friendships, in their intimate and sexual relationships, and in their parenting.” – Assoc. Prof. Michael Flood (Willis, O, ‘Traditional masculinity’ and mental health: experts call for gendered approach to treatment) (p.46)

Men often feel that they need to be self-reliant and provide for their loved ones, so it is not appropriate to express their emotions. This behaviour can be reinforced in the stereotype of the heroic male, so often represented in popular culture (MensLine Australia, Men and emotions). (p.50)
Gender
The socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

Gendered drivers
The specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. Gendered drivers are considered to be the most significant underlying causes required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Gender equality
Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all people irrespective of their gender.

Gender identity
A person’s perception of having a particular gender, which may or may not correspond with their birth sex.

Gender inequality
Gender inequality acknowledges that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual’s lived experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be socially constructed.

Gender norms and structures
Ideas about how women and men should be and act. These ‘rules’ are learned and internalised early in life, which sets up a life-cycle of gender socialisation and stereotyping.

Gender stereotypes
Preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Sex stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, their educational and professional experiences as well as life opportunities in general. Stereotypes both result from and are the cause of deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices.

Hegemonic masculinity
Notion of how men manage to assume and retain dominant positions in society, usually at the expense of women or other, marginalised, such as non-white or non-heterosexual, men. Being a hegemonic male is generally associated with being powerful, dominant, stoic and successful.

Homophobia
Encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI).

Hyper-masculinity
An exaggerated image of hegemonic masculinity, mainly in media, over emphasising the ideals set out for men and hence reinforcing them. Hyper-masculinity is associated with sexual and physical aggression against women and is common in places where men congregate and dominate, such as sports, prisons, the military, and typically male-dominated working environments.

Ideological masculinity
Radical promotion of a return to a perceived period of male supremacy, now ‘lost’ to women’s rights, self-effacing men, and broad social and economic changes.

Male chauvinism
Male prejudice against women; the belief that men are superior in terms of ability, intelligence, etc.

Masculinity
Like gender, masculinity is neither a natural, biological category nor a fixed, clearly defined norm. It is socially and culturally constructed, learned and performed. What is considered specifically masculine has not only been evolving over time, it is also influenced by parameters such as class, ethnicity, age, sexuality or geographical location. This leads to a complex interplay of experiences, ideals, practices and images that makes a clear singular definition impossible. Consequently, there are multiple expressions of masculinity – masculinities.

Men’s rights movement
Consists of a variety of groups and individuals who focus on general social issues and specific government services which they claim adversely impact, or in some cases structurally discriminate against, men.

Misogyny
The dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.

Sex
The biological and physical characteristics that tend to define humans as female or male. These sets of characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both.

Toxic masculinity
A collective term associated with harmful attitudes and behaviours displayed by some men, such as different forms of violence, misogyny, sexual aggression, machismo, homophobia and male privilege reflected in a sense of entitlement, as well as rape culture and most forms of mainstream pornography.

Violence against women
Any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender-based.
Websites with further information on the topic

Australian Human Rights Commission  www.humanrights.gov.au
Australian Men’s Health Forum  www.amhf.org.au
Boys’ Education (Dr Peter West)  www.boyseducation.com.au
Mensline Australia  https://mensline.org.au
Men’s Health Week  www.menshealthweek.org.au
Our Watch  www.ourwatch.org.au
The Conversation  www.theconversation.com
The Line  www.theline.org.au
Violence Against Women. Let’s Stop it at the Start  www.respect.gov.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THANK YOU

» VicHealth
» Our Watch
» Dr Peter West
» MensLine Australia
» Assoc Prof Michael Flood
» Australian Human Rights Commission.

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Mascularity and Male Identity