

# THE COST OF THE MAN BOX

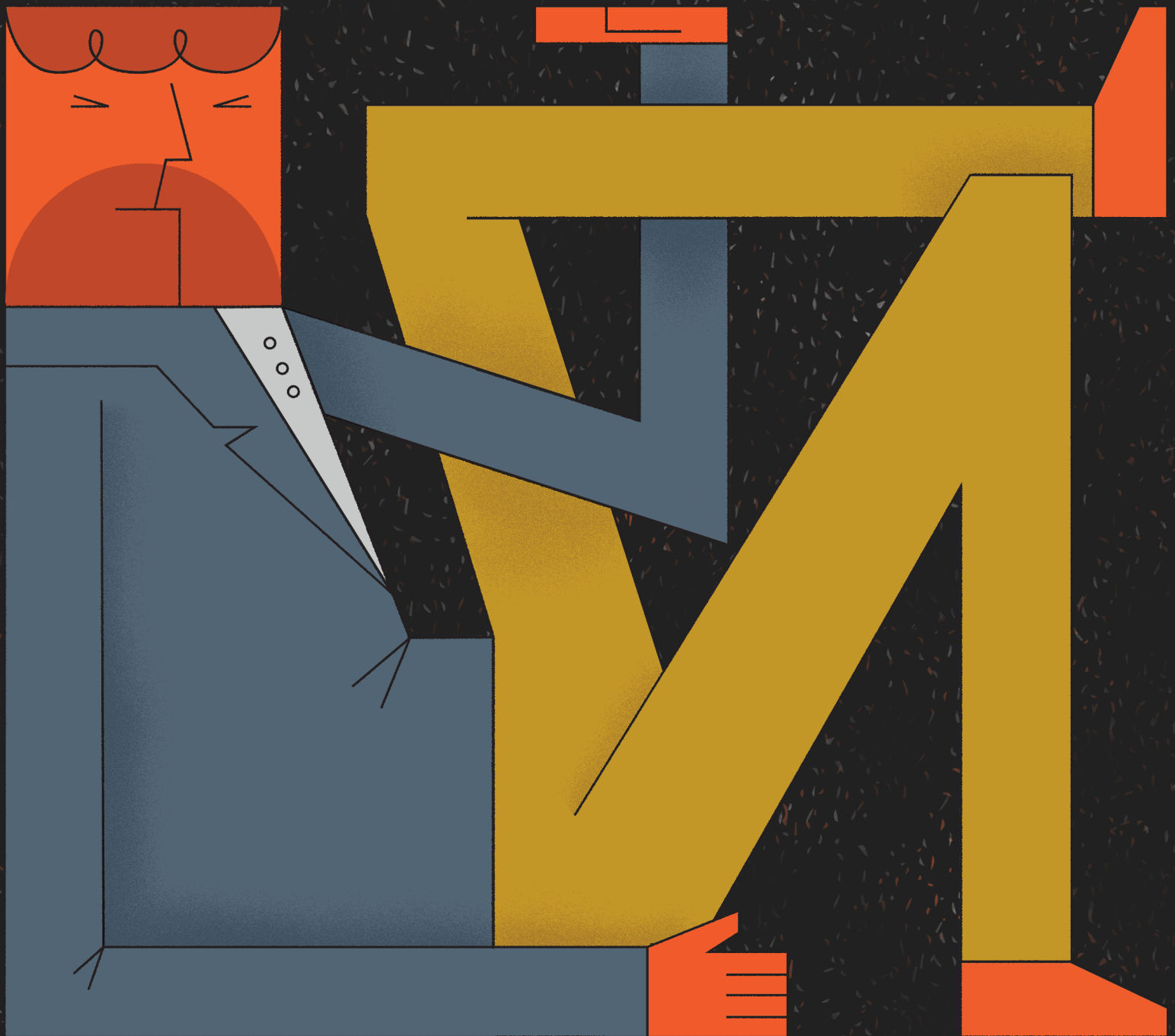
A STUDY ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF HARMFUL  
MASCULINE STEREOTYPES IN THE UNITED STATES



Unilever



PROMUNDO AXE





# THE COST OF THE MAN BOX



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## ALSO IN THIS SERIES:

- *The Cost of the Man Box: A study on the economic impacts of harmful masculine stereotypes in the United Kingdom* (2019)
- *The Cost of the Man Box: A study on the economic impacts of harmful masculine stereotypes in Mexico* (2019)
- *The Cost of the Man Box: A study on the economic impacts of harmful masculine stereotypes in the US, UK, and Mexico: Executive Summary* (2019)
- *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico* (2017)

To download these and other reports, visit **[www.promundoglobal.org](http://www.promundoglobal.org)**

Note: Some information presented in this report has been previously published in the 2017 study mentioned above.

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# FOREWORD

In our 2017 study, “The Man Box: A study on being a young man in the US, UK, and Mexico,” Promundo and Axe, Unilever’s leading male grooming brand, carried out nationally representative surveys in these three countries with young men ages 18 to 30 to understand the prevalence of harmful ideas about manhood and how broad the effects of these ideas are.

That study confirmed how much young men continue to be told “being a man” means using violence to resolve conflicts, refusing to seek help even if they need it, and sticking to rigid gender roles. It also confirmed that young men who believe in the most restrictive ideas about manhood are consistently more likely to bully, binge drink, be in traffic accidents, harass, show signs of depression, and have considered suicide.

The findings were so strong and so alarming that we wanted to dig even deeper into the data to see if we could estimate the size of the effects of harmful ideas about masculinity in a new way. The result is a new research series called “The Cost of the Man Box.” The reports in this series aim to estimate the actual economic impact of rigid masculine ideas in the US, UK, and Mexico. We believe that estimating the enormous toll of these harmful

ideas – in dollars, pounds, and pesos, in quality of life lost, and in unquantifiable costs alike – will boost the urgency of this issue and prompt new conversations, campaigns, and social change.

This report shows that our economies and societies are paying a steep price due to restrictive ideas about masculinity. As a result of these findings, we are more committed than ever to work collectively to change harmful norms and smash the Man Box for good. Our research adds to a growing recognition that rigid ideas about masculinity are a drain on our economies, and on all of our lives, regardless of our gender.

When young men reject the Man Box, embrace their emotions and vulnerability, demonstrate confidence in themselves and respect for others, and let their honesty, empathy, and caregiving define their identity, then we can expect wide, positive effects. This vision stands to benefit everyone in society: men and boys alongside the women and girls who so often bear the brunt of patriarchal ideas and practices. In the pursuit of a better, fuller, safer, and healthier society, join us in smashing the Man Box.

**Gary Barker – President and CEO, Promundo-US**  
**Rik Strubel – Global Vice President, Axe/Lynx**

# OVERVIEW: ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE MAN BOX ON THE UNITED STATES

Looking at six key cost categories, we estimate the harmful masculine norms that make up the Man Box cost the US economy at least:

**\$15.7  
BILLION**

Cost category	Estimated economic toll of the Man Box annually in the US
Bullying and violence	\$772,100,000
Sexual violence	\$631,400,000
Depression	\$2,410,300,000
Suicide	\$4,422,500,000
Binge drinking	\$181,090,000
Traffic accidents	\$7,300,400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,717,790,000</b>

## WHY THIS STUDY?

**Collectively, we're having an urgent and overdue conversation about what is often called "toxic masculinity," and what we as Promundo and Axe call the "Man Box."**

Irrefutable evidence shows many of the ways that we socialize or raise men and boys are destructive, leading directly to harm to women and girls, to families and communities, and to men and boys themselves. There can no longer be any doubt that when we tell men and boys that being a "real man" means they have to "toughen up," not ask for help, dominate others, and use violence to resolve conflicts, we are potentially damaging lives, relationships, and communities. Prominent examples of this evidence include:

- **BULLYING AND VIOLENCE:** Rigid norms regarding gender, gender roles, family, and marriage – together with men's childhood experiences of violence – are among the key drivers of men's use of violence against female partners (Heise, 2011; Moore & Stuart, 2005; Levton et al., 2014). Men also disproportionately perpetrate violent crime, and research shows men and boys often use crime in various ways to demonstrate or prove their achievement of a certain form of masculinity or when they feel they can't achieve social recognition by other, less violent means (Crowther-Dowey & Silvestri, 2017).
- **SEXUAL VIOLENCE:** According to a review of approximately 300 studies, restrictive or inequitable ideas about masculinity are among the top causes of men's perpetration of rape (Jewkes, 2012).
- **SUICIDE:** Globally, men are almost twice as likely to die by suicide as women are, with harmful gender norms being one of the key drivers of men's suicidal ideation or suicidal tendencies (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014b).
- **ALCOHOL USE AND ABUSE:** Alcohol use – and its harmful outcomes – have been a symbol of manhood and manliness in most cultures for centuries, with evidence showing links between alcohol consumption and violent crime, physical and sexual aggression,

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vandalism, and more (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989; Iwamoto, et al., 2014; Willott & Lyons, 2012; Leone & Parrott, 2015; Miller et al., 2014; Thurang, Palmstierna, & Tops, 2014).

- **OTHER RISKY BEHAVIORS:** A new global review by Promundo on the leading causes of men's death and illness found that six health behaviors – poor diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, occupational hazards, unsafe sex, and drug use – account for more than half of all premature male deaths and about 70 percent of men's illnesses. Hundreds of scientific articles from around the world confirm that all six of these behaviors are directly related to restrictive masculine social norms (Ragonese, Shand, & Barker, 2019). To give one example, in the United States, research finds that men who perceive themselves to be particularly masculine are more likely to engage in unprotected sex with multiple partners and to be diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (Reidy et al., 2016).

**In light of this overwhelming evidence, and building upon the findings of the 2017 study “The Man Box: A study on being a young man in the US, UK, and Mexico,” we have set out to measure the broad, tangible costs of harmful ideas about masculinity.**

This study builds upon existing evidence of the widespread effects of these harmful ideas by estimating a minimum cost that could be saved by the economy of each country if there were no Man Box as a root cause of so many health outcomes and economic consequences. We say *minimum* because there are numerous immeasurable costs not included in that total. In addition, any negative health outcome or economic consequence is driven by many factors, with restrictive ideas about manhood as a key contributor.

## WHAT IS THE MAN BOX?

**The Man Box refers to a set of beliefs, communicated by parents, families, the media, peers, and other members of society, that place pressure on men to act a certain way.** These pressures tell men to be self-sufficient, to act tough, to be physically attractive in a certain way, to stick to rigid gender roles, to be heterosexual, to demonstrate sexual prowess, and to use aggression to resolve conflicts. Research



is overwhelming that adherence to these messages and pressures is linked with perpetrating and experiencing many forms of violence, as well as many other destructive behaviors. The use of the Man Box concept is inspired by work dating to the early 1980s in the United States by Paul Kivel, Allan Creighton, and others at the Oakland Men's Project, who used the term to describe how labels and pressures associated with mainstream masculinity have the effect of entrapping and isolating men who, inevitably, fall short of these idealized, rigid notions of manhood (Greene, 2019).

**For the purpose of this study, men “in the Man Box” are those young men who most internalize these messages and pressures.** They agree that “a guy who doesn’t fight back when others push him around is weak,” or that “a gay guy is not a ‘real man,’” among other harmful patriarchal messages. Young men “outside the Man Box” are those who reject these ideas and instead embrace more positive attitudes about manhood. As noted earlier, young men “in the Man Box” were statistically much more likely to engage in harmful behaviors compared to respondents “outside of the Man Box” in the 2017 study. For instance, men in the Man Box were three to seven times more likely to report perpetrating physical bullying and three to six times as likely to report perpetrating sexual harassment.

## THE MATH BEHIND THE NUMBERS... AND WHY WE CALL THEM A “MINIMUM”

**The arithmetic behind the cost estimates in this report followed a clear, step-by-step process.** At each step, we also applied limits to our numbers, which helps explain why we refer to the cost totals as a “minimum.” First, we found the most comprehensive data sources available to tell us the nationwide prevalence or incidence of each outcome of interest: bullying and violence, sexual violence, depression, suicide, binge drinking, and traffic accidents. Whenever possible, we used numbers specifically for calendar year 2016 to match the year of data collection of our Man Box study. Next, we took this number and reduced it to only cases related to or perpetrated

**“WE LIMITED OUR TOTAL BY AGE. WE LIMITED OUR TOTAL TO REFLECT AVAILABLE DATA. WE LIMITED OUR TOTAL TO THESE SIX CATEGORIES ONLY. AND STILL IT COMES TO \$15.7 BILLION AS A MINIMUM COST OF THE MAN BOX IN THE UNITED STATES.”**

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by men aged 18 to 30, to the best of our ability. In only a few cases, data availability meant we had to use a slightly different age range, but nonetheless, the cost estimates only reflect an age-restricted group as close to 18 to 30 as possible. Next, we used various sources, as elaborated in Annex B, to arrive at the cost implications of each case of our outcome of interest. When we took the number of cases related to men aged 18 to 30 and multiplied it by this cost per case, it produced a large dollar figure. We then limited this number yet again, reducing it to only the proportion of the cost that could be reduced if there were no Man Box as a factor in society. These proportions are called “population attributable fractions,” and we derived them from the 2017 Man Box dataset.

**It is important to emphasize that the dollar figures presented in this report, large as they are, represent the bare minimum economic impact of the Man Box.** The true comprehensive cost would be much higher due to important limitations to the study:

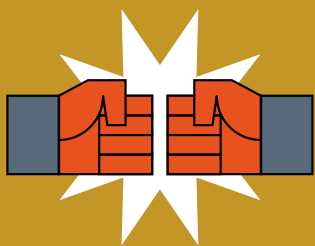
- **AGE RANGE:** The data analysis presented in this study focuses specifically on the actions of men aged 18 to 30, the target population of the original Man Box study. Any costs associated with harmful masculine norms that manifest in the lives of others – other age groups, other gender identities – are not included in this report.
- **SELECT CATEGORIES:** We are also limited to these six cost categories, which were the only such harmful outcomes included in the 2017 Man Box study. We are not able to include cost estimates for other harmful outcomes known to be linked with harmful masculine norms, such as men’s violence against female partners, homicide, theft, vandalism, armed conflict and war, drug use, poor diet, unsafe sex, or poor health-seeking behaviors, among others.
- **CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES:** Many elements of the true toll of harmful ideas about masculinity simply cannot be captured in financial terms. This true toll would have to account for numerous outcomes that are unquantifiable – in particular, the massive range of traumas, pains, and lost opportunities that impact cis women and trans and nonbinary individuals in patriarchal societies, for instance, and many other unquantifiable consequences such as fear, anxiety, abandoned interests, loneliness, and more that are faced by all genders.

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- **DATA AVAILABILITY:** Even within the cost categories included in the study, several known costs are simply not available in any accessible datasets. With variations by cost category, we were able to find data on many costs: lost productivity by absenteeism, lost productivity by premature death, physical costs of traffic accidents, quality-adjusted life years for victims of violent crime, and more. Data were rarely available for other known costs, however, such as: direct costs of medical or psychological treatment, costs in response to crime (i.e. police, criminal legal system), funeral expenses, and others.

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE MAN BOX ACROSS SIX HEALTH CATEGORIES

01. \_\_\_\_\_

**Bullying  
and Violence**



02. \_\_\_\_\_

**Sexual Violence**



03. \_\_\_\_\_

**Depression**



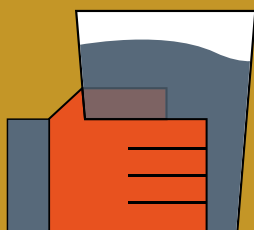
04. \_\_\_\_\_

**Suicide**



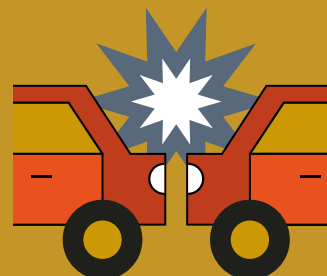
05. \_\_\_\_\_

**Binge  
Drinking**



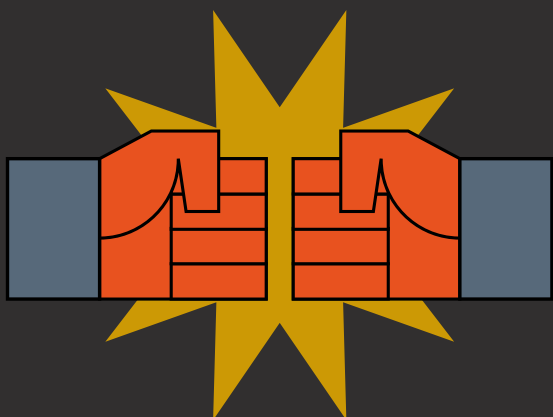
06. \_\_\_\_\_

**Traffic  
Accidents**



# 01.

## BULLYING AND VIOLENCE



**\$772 million is the estimated cost resulting from cases of verbal and physical violence that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (or restrictive masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States, according to our analysis (and applying a restrictive definition of bullying and violence used in the original Man Box study). See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$772 MILLION PER YEAR

### WHAT WE MEAN:

The Man Box study includes verbal, physical and online bullying/violence. Verbal bullying includes an individual or group making jokes about someone, teasing them, or calling them undesired names for any reason. Physical bullying includes an individual or group physically hurting someone on purpose by pushing them down, kicking them, or hitting them with a hand, object, or weapon. Online bullying includes an individual or group insulting someone, posting photos meant to embarrass, or making threats via SMS, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or another app or website.

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES BULLYING:

Social norms about masculinities are often at the root of men's perpetration of bullying. In all three countries in the 2017 Man Box study, the young men who held the most inequitable gender attitudes (about a variety of themes, not only violence) were significantly more likely to report both perpetrating and experiencing all three forms of bullying/violence included: verbal, online, and physical. Further research suggests that bullying behaviors often share common root causes: the perpetrator's desire to demonstrate power and control over the victim and the use of bullying to enforce gender conformity. In short, one's likelihood of "being a bully" or using verbal, online, or physical violence increases dramatically inside the Man Box. The 2016 National Crime

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and Victimization Survey in the United States, the source for our cost calculations, demonstrates that some 242,380 events of verbal or physical violence were perpetrated by men aged 18 to 29 in the year we investigated.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS:**

Interpersonal violence in all its forms – physical violence, verbal harassment, even the proliferating world of online harassment and abuse – represents a particularly tangible and devastating arena where rigid masculine norms manifest. Bullying and other forms of interpersonal violence are rightly regarded as public health and criminal justice priorities in the United States and around the world, with research showing that about one-third of 12- to 18-year-old students report involvement in “traditional bullying” (Modecki et al., 2014). Survey data collected for the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance report found that in the 12 months before the survey, 6 percent of high school students recalled being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once, with boys reporting nearly twice as much violence as girls (Kann, 2018). A total of 15.5 percent of students reported being electronically bullied and 20.2 percent had been bullied on school property in the 12 months before the survey. In the 30 days before the survey, 5.6 percent of

students said that they did not go to school at least one day because they did not feel safe. The 2017 Man Box study found that more than one-third of young men in the United States reported having perpetrated verbal, physical, and/or online bullying/violence in the month prior to the survey.

## **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

Some researchers argue the consequences of bullying and harassment in a workplace go far beyond the individuals directly involved and instead impact everyone in the workplace (Chappell & di Martino, 2006). School violence is generally underreported either because of fear or because of the perceived social acceptability of some violence in school (Pereznieto, Harper, Clench, & Coarasaet, 2010). While there are significant gaps in the research calculating the total costs of bullying to society, some studies have made attempts. The costs of school violence to the US economy is estimated at \$7.9 billion per year (Pereznieto et al., 2010).

**“SOCIAL NORMS ABOUT MASCULINITIES ARE OFTEN AT THE ROOT OF MEN’S PERPETRATION OF BULLYING.”**

# 02.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE



**\$631 million is the estimated cost resulting from cases of coerced or unwanted sex that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (harmful masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States, according to the analysis undertaken for this report. See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$631 MILLION PER YEAR

### WHAT WE MEAN:

The Man Box survey defines sexual harassment as making sexual comments to a woman or girl one doesn't know, in a public place (like the street, a workplace or school/university, or an Internet or social media space). The cost consequences of unwanted sexual comments in a public place are exceedingly difficult to estimate in available data sources and would give only a small glimpse of the true cost toll of the Man Box's influence on sexual violence. (See the following sections for more discussion on the difficulty of ascertaining costs of the broad, prevalent forms of street-based sexual harassment). Due to these data limitations, we used the narrower and more severe action of "coerced or unwanted sex," as included in the US National Crime and Victimization Survey, to produce costing calculations with the specific age cohort and year of the original Man Box study. Certainly, sexual comments in a public place are a different phenomenon from coerced or unwanted sex, but both are manifestations of sexual violence that are known to be linked with harmful ideas about masculinity.

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

The links between rape culture, sexual harassment, and the Man Box are undeniable: in the 2017 Man Box study, men in the Man Box were six times more likely to report perpetrating sexual harassment than men outside the Man Box. Furthermore, the array of culturally salient attitudes and assumptions that drive sexual

violence – including harmful masculine norms – are so globally and locally pervasive that feminist scholars and cultural critics coined the term “rape culture” to describe it. Rape culture creates an environment in which the constant threat of sexual violence controls women and girls’ gender performance (e.g., “be careful what you wear or you could be raped”), reinforces the division of space (e.g., “women should not work in certain professional fields or they will be harassed”), and reinforces male dominance and power (e.g., “a woman should not leave the house without a man or she puts herself at risk of harassment”). Furthermore, rape culture places blame on the woman if she is victimized.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS:**

The prevalence of men’s use of sexual violence in the United States is deeply troubling, with new evidence demonstrating that some 81 percent of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime (Stop Street Harassment, 2018). This widespread prevalence has also been powerfully amplified by the #MeToo movement, originally founded by Tarana Burke, which achieved mainstream visibility in connection with numerous reports of sexual harassment perpetrated by prominent men in government and entertainment in 2017 and 2018. Harassment clearly is a violation of women’s rights and limits their social mobility and movement, in addition to costing companies billions, as the following section describes.

## **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

Sexual harassment costs companies via legal expenses, decreased productivity, increased turnover, and reputational harm (Rizzo et al., 2018; Merkin, 2008; Raver & Gelfand, 2005; Sierra, 2008). In terms of legal costs, in 2015 alone, the US Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission recovered \$164 million for workers who had been harassed (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016). This is a dramatic underestimate of the total cost to employers given that most harassment is unreported (Merchant, 2017). A meta-analysis of 41 studies estimated that sexual harassment costs companies an average of \$22,500 in productivity per harassed person (Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). Importantly, these figures do not include the steep costs to those who suffer harassment, including mental, physical, and economic harm (Chan et al., 2008; Houle et al., 2011; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997; Willness et al., 2007).

Sexual harassment forces many women (and some men, albeit less frequently) out of their jobs, leading to slower career growth. Women who have been targets of sexual harassment are 6.5 times more likely to leave their jobs than women who haven’t been (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2017). When this happens, they may lose connections for future work or be forced to start their career climb again in a different field. These factors disrupt career ladders that normally lead to wage growth (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Indeed, McLaughlin et al. found a strong correlation between sexual harassment and financial stress in their longitudinal study.

Sexual harassment has a considerable impact on the gender wage gap. Despite gains in women’s educational attainment, men continue to dominate high-wage and high-prestige fields (Rizzo et al., 2018). While many factors contribute to this trend, there is substantial documentation of discriminatory cultures and policies in these high-wage, male-dominated fields that disadvantage women and subvert their professional standing (Prokos & Padavic, 2005; Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2006; Laband & Lentz, 1998).



# 03.

## DEPRESSION



**\$2.4 billion is the estimated cost resulting from lost productivity due to depressive symptoms that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (harmful masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States, according to new analysis undertaken for this report. See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$2.4 BILLION

### WHAT WE MEAN:

The Man Box survey defines depression, using standard public health definitions, as having little interest or pleasure in doing things or feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.

### WHY THIS MATTERS:

Mental illnesses, including various forms of depressive disorders, are common in the United States, varying in their degree of severity and in how well they are currently understood by the fields of medicine and psychology. Data from the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States suggest that some 44.7 million adults in the United States – about one in five – lived with a mental illness in 2016 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019).

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES DEPRESSION:

In the United States, men inside the Man Box are statistically significantly more likely than peers outside the Man Box to report having little interest or pleasure in doing things. More broadly, health statistics in the United States show the prevalence of any mental illness is higher among women than men, though these data are restricted to those seeking formal healthcare for these illnesses. To be clear, mental illnesses pose important health consequences for all genders. At the same time, we can see links between

harmful masculine norms and men's likelihood of experiencing depression. Rigid notions of masculinity imparted to men often include the idea that men remain self-sufficient at all costs and bottle up any feelings other than strength, confidence, or aggression. It is no surprise, then, that the 2017 Man Box study found young men's ideas about masculinity were strongly linked with mental health problems. Men inside the Man Box showed higher incidence of at least one indicator of depression. Large proportions of respondents in all settings reported experiencing one or both depressive symptoms ("Little interest or pleasure in doing things" or "Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless") in the previous two weeks, with some significant associations with Man Box adherence.

## **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

Previous studies have estimated the costs of depression by looking at lost labor time in the workforce (Stewart et al., 2003; Evans-Lacko & Knapp, 2016; Conti & Burton, 1994). Other studies have calculated both lost labor costs and healthcare and service costs (Cuijpers et al., 2007; Greenberg et al., 2003). Estimating the countrywide costs of depression is challenging

due to the difficulty in quantifying non-labor-related indirect costs such as increased likelihood of terminating education, teen childbearing, marital timing and stability, and marital and parental functioning (Kessler, 2012). Additionally, actual prevalence rates of depression are likely well above their estimates due to mental health stigma that causes underreporting.

In the United States, the economic burden of major depressive disorder was estimated to have increased from \$173.2 billion in 2005 to \$210.5 billion in 2010 (Greenberg et al., 2015). A 2004 meta-study of 24 depression costing studies estimated average annual costs per case ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500 in direct costs, \$2,000 to \$3,700 in morbidity costs, and \$200 to \$400 in mortality costs (Luppa et al., 2007).

**“RIGID NOTIONS OF MASCULINITY IMPARTED TO MEN OFTEN INCLUDE THE IDEA THAT MEN REMAIN SELF-SUFFICIENT AT ALL COSTS AND BOTTLE UP ANY FEELINGS OTHER THAN STRENGTH, CONFIDENCE, OR AGGRESSION.”**

# 04.

## SUICIDE



**\$4.4 billion is the estimated cost resulting from lost productivity due to premature death caused by suicides that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (harmful masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States, according to new analysis undertaken for this report. See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$4.4 BILLION

### WHAT WE MEAN:

The Man Box survey measured suicidal ideation, or the percentage of respondents who reported having thoughts of suicide in the previous two weeks. Since ideation or thinking about suicide on its own is not as likely to produce quantifiable costs, we have calculated the costs associated with suicide itself. In making this adjustment, we rest on the rationale that the link between the Man Box and suicidal ideation is likely to be the same or similar to the link between the Man Box and suicide itself, though, of course, the prevalence of the act of suicide is much smaller than of thoughts about suicide. By this rationale, we estimate that among young men aged 18 to 30, the Man Box may have been responsible for nearly 3,000 suicides and their associated costs and consequences in the United States in 2016.

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES SUICIDE:

Globally, men are almost twice as likely to die by suicide as women are, with the WHO estimating that 15 men per 100,000 and eight women per 100,000 die by suicide on average, with tremendous variation by country (WHO, 2014b). In the United States, women as a group make more suicide attempts than men, but men as a group have more deaths attributable to suicide (Hawton & van Heeringen, 2000). Many scholars have noted the connection between the recent economic recession and increased

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rates of suicide and suicide attempts (Oyesanya, Lopez-Morinigo, & Dutta, 2015).

Harmful gender norms may often be at the root of suicidal ideation and suicide. Societies that encourage men to repress their emotions and to be hard-shelled workers, protectors, and lone providers contribute to a crisis of connection among men. This lack of social connection, or undermining of men's emotional lives, can be part of the groundwork for suicidal ideation, a form of patriarchal violence (Barker, 2016; Way, 2011). Harmful masculine norms often require that boys and men suppress their emotional experience, so much so that men often lack even the language to express or understand their emotions. Several scholars point to alexithymia, the inability to connect with and communicate one's emotions, as a particularly male-gendered precursor to suicidal ideation; a failure to recognize negative or troubling emotions makes it difficult to address them. Cleary (2012) argues that men's socially reinforced disconnect from their inner emotional lives, alongside the "forced socialization of men's stoicism as a gendered ideal," correlates with suicidal ideation and death by suicide.

Both the overall rates of suicidal ideation and their statistical links to being in the Man Box are extremely troubling. Quite simply, young men are thinking frequently about taking their own lives, and in all three countries, men in the Man Box show dramatically, statistically significantly higher levels of reported suicidal ideas than men outside the Man Box.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS:**

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 800,000 people die due to suicide every year and that suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds globally. Suicide is frequent – with someone dying by suicide every 40 seconds worldwide – but the sensitivity surrounding the topic makes it among the least understood major public health crises facing humans worldwide (WHO, 2014b).

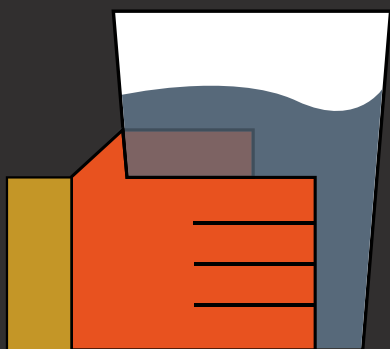
## **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

While the purely financial costs of suicide could never compare to its emotional impact on loved ones, the cost of suicide to society and businesses is stark. Most existing costing studies calculate the direct (hospital costs) and indirect costs (lost productivity) of suicide, with lost productivity representing most of the cost of suicide accounted for in the literature (Shepard et al., 2016; Corso et al., 2007; Palmer et al., 1995).

Most studies calculating the costs of suicide use data from the United States, Canada, and Europe. The most recent available study estimating the costs of suicide, including adjustments for underreporting due to stigma, estimated the national costs of suicides and suicide attempts in the United States at \$93.5 billion in 2013 (Shepard et al., 2016). This study also reflects that deaths by suicide have increased from 29,416 in 2000 to 41,149 in 2013.

# 05.

## BINGE DRINKING



**\$181 million is the estimated cost resulting from lost productivity due to binge drinking, including premature death resulting from binge drinking, that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (harmful masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States, according to new analysis undertaken for this report. See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$181 MILLION

### WHAT WE MEAN:

The Man Box study defines binge drinking as drinking to the point of getting drunk once per month or more, using standard public health definitions.

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES BINGE DRINKING:

Men are almost twice as likely to binge drink as women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). An extensive analysis observed that in 2004, 6.3 percent of all men who died globally and 7.6 percent of global diseases and injuries were attributable to alcohol; for women, alcohol could be attributed to 1.1 percent of deaths and 1.4 percent of diseases and injuries (Rehm et al., 2009). The same study reported that one in every ten deaths among European men is attributed to alcohol. In the United States, 71 percent of deaths from the effects of excessive alcohol use were of men (Stahre et al., 2014). The same study estimated 1,847,072 years of potential life lost among men annually, averaging data from 2006 to 2010.

### WHY THIS MATTERS:

Alcohol abuse presents a double danger to society, in that it creates health harms and risks on its own and simultaneously exacerbates many other health risks both to the user and to those around them. Alcohol use has been shown to be a factor in cardiovascular disease, cancer,

diarrhea, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, HIV, tuberculosis, transportation injuries, liver cirrhosis, unintentional injuries, self-harm and violence, and mental disorders, among others (Ragonese et al., 2019; WHO 2014a).

### **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

Several publications use data from the WHO (2014a) for their costing studies (Shield et al., 2015; Pan American Health Organization, 2015). A meta-analysis of 20 studies across 12 developed countries estimated the economic burden of alcohol to be 0.45 percent to 5.44 percent of the gross domestic product (Thavorncharoensap et al., 2009). A comprehensive analysis estimated the 2006 economic costs of binge drinking at \$170.7 billion (Bouchery et al., 2011); a 2010 update put the estimate at \$191.1 billion, with

more than 40 percent paid for by the government (Sacks et al., 2015). Both studies looked at 26 costs under the categories of lost productivity, health care, and criminal justice that are attributable to binge drinking. Unrecorded alcohol consumption presents challenges to reliable costing statistics; experts estimate more than 25 percent of global consumption is unrecorded (Rehm et al., 2001).

**“ALCOHOL ABUSE PRESENTS A DOUBLE DANGER TO SOCIETY, IN THAT IT CREATES HEALTH HARMS AND RISKS ON ITS OWN AND SIMULTANEOUSLY EXACERBATES MANY OTHER HEALTH RISKS BOTH TO THE USER AND TO THOSE AROUND THEM.”**

# 06.

## TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS



**\$7.3 billion is the estimated cost resulting from the direct physical costs accrued by traffic accidents, plus the lost productivity due to premature death caused by traffic accidents, that could be eliminated if there were no Man Box (harmful masculine norms) as a causal factor in the United States. See Annex B for methodological details.**

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$7.3 BILLION

### WHAT WE MEAN:

Risky driving was determined in the Man Box survey by asking participants if they had been in one or more traffic accidents within the prior 12 months.

### HOW THE MAN BOX INFLUENCES TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS:

On a global and national level, men are much more likely to be involved in road traffic crashes than women. Globally, nearly three-quarters of all road traffic deaths occur among men under 25 (WHO, 2018). In the Man Box study, men inside the Man Box were significantly more likely to report having been in recent traffic accidents – two to three times more likely. While the survey did not ask about the exact nature of these accidents, the results are consistent and unsurprising in a world that too often teaches young men to be reckless with their health and safety, all for the misguided goal of being “manly.”

### WHY THIS MATTERS:

Globally, an estimated 1.2 to 1.4 million people die from road injuries each year, and between 20 and 50 million people have non-fatal injuries (Dalal et al., 2013; WHO, 2018). Worldwide, according to the WHO, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5 to 29 (WHO, 2018). Any and all risk factors for dangerous

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driving could, if removed, doubtlessly save many thousands of lives every year.

### **ADDITIONAL COSTS AND CHALLENGES:**

The global cost of road injuries and deaths is estimated at \$518 billion (Dalal et al., 2013). In the United States, motor vehicle crashes cost \$242 billion in 2010, including 32,999 fatalities, 3.9 million non-fatal injuries, and 24 million damaged vehicles (Blincoe et al., 2015). The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration decennial reports calculate costs from productivity losses, property damage, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, emergency services, insurance administration costs, and costs to employers (Blincoe et al., 2002; Blincoe et al., 2015).

While traffic injury data is accessible in the United

States, few countries have reliable data (WHO, 2009). Many countries use different definitions of a road traffic fatality, and underreporting of traffic deaths is common in low-income countries, largely due to poor links between police, transport, and health service data (WHO, 2009). An additional gap in measuring the costs of traffic accidents relates to the cost of the indefinite time of rehabilitation for serious disability (Peden et al., 2004).

**“GLOBALLY, AN ESTIMATED 1.2 TO 1.4 MILLION PEOPLE DIE FROM ROAD INJURIES EACH YEAR, AND BETWEEN 20 AND 50 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE NON-FATAL INJURIES.”**



## HOW DO WE USE THESE FINDINGS?

**Taking the six categories of costs related to the Man Box in the United States, we have shown enormous economic impacts.** We can demonstrate reliably – with the most limited, conservative estimates in all cases – that if we can help young men break out of the Man Box (i.e., adopt healthy norms about manhood) in US society, we could save an estimated \$15.7 billion annually. How big a sum, exactly, is \$15.7 billion? Not only is it larger than the gross domestic product of some 70 countries around the world, but it also represents the amount needed to cover the final budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for two years: 2016 (\$7.178 billion) and 2017 (\$7.185 billion) combined.\* The CDC is the leading national public health institute of the United States.

**Harmful masculine norms cost the US economy at least \$15.7 billion a year.** As with other risk factors linked to so many harmful health outcomes, we might rightly expect to see national campaigns and urgent legislative measures to respond to the crisis. We hardly see this kind of urgency with regard to the Man Box. Little by little, this may be changing, as demonstrated by the first-ever American Psychological Association guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men, released in 2019, which seek specifically to address the harmful effects of rigid definitions of manhood and masculinity.

These guidelines must be only a first step of many if we are to eradicate this broadly influential – and costly – risk factor from our society, our economy, and our lives.

**So, what can we do to change ideas about manhood?** The #MeToo movement has brought a historic and necessary questioning of some men's behaviors. There is no going back. We can and must engage parents, teachers, the media, and young women and men themselves in conversations about what it means to be a man. There are plenty of ideas to work from, and ample evidence exists that campaigns

**“SO, WHAT CAN WE DO TO CHANGE IDEAS ABOUT MANHOOD? WE CAN AND MUST ENGAGE PARENTS, TEACHERS, THE MEDIA, AND YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN THEMSELVES IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN.”**

\* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “CDC Budget Request Overview,” March 15, 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/budget/documents/fy2019/cdc-overview-factsheet.pdf>

and educational activities can lead to positive changes in ideas and norms about manhood – to the benefit of all. In addition to these program approaches, brands like Axe are already lending their voice to promoting healthy manhood, and many others can and should do the same. It's time to turn up the volume and put respect, care, nonviolence, and integrity at the heart of masculinity.

## **TO ADVANCE MEANINGFUL CHANGE:**

### **1. At home, parents and caregivers should:**

- Challenge their own perceptions about what it means to be a man today.
- Talk to their sons and daughters early about respect and nonviolence, and helping children feel they can seek help when they need it.
- Help guide boys and girls in conversations that encourage more critical thinking about gender equality and masculinity.

### **2. In schools and other institutions serving youth, classes and programs should:**

- Work to transform harmful gender norms in school curricula and activities.
- Include gender equality topics in all teacher, guidance counselor, or other related professional training.

### **3. Brands, entertainment industries, news institutions, and all mass media should:**

- Normalize the inclusion of diverse, respectful, and healthy depictions of men and masculinity.
- Commit to abolish the use of harmful, outdated male stereotypes in the media.

### **4. Celebrities, influencers, and role models of all kinds should:**

- Embrace and model healthy masculinities.
- Inspire others to broaden the definition of masculinity.

**“THE #METOO MOVEMENT  
HAS BROUGHT A  
HISTORIC AND NECESSARY  
QUESTIONING OF SOME  
MEN’S BEHAVIORS.  
THERE IS NO GOING BACK.”**

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## **5. Civic leaders, legislators, foundations, and philanthropic donors should:**

- Prioritize violence prevention and health education, specifically programs that work to dismantle the root causes of harmful gender norms.
- Fund additional programs for young people of all sexual orientations and gender identities that encourage healthy masculinity, respect, and equality.

**For links to some key resources and organizations working in this space, visit Promundo's Future of Manhood web page: [futureofmanhood.org](http://futureofmanhood.org)**

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# ANNEX A.

## THE MAN BOX SCALE

Based on the extensive research about masculinities and masculine norms, we identified seven pillars or key norms about traditional manhood and designed attitude statements for each:

### PILLAR 1 Self-Sufficiency

- A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect
- Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help

### PILLAR 2 Acting Tough

- A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak
- Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside

### PILLAR 3 Physical Attractiveness

- A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly

### PILLAR 4 Rigid Masculine Gender Roles

- It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children
- A husband shouldn't have to do household chores
- Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women

### PILLAR 5 Heterosexuality and Homophobia

- A gay guy is not a "real man"
- Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement)

### PILLAR 6 Hypersexuality

- A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can
- A "real man" would never say no to sex

### PILLAR 7 Aggression and Control

- Men should use violence to get respect, if necessary
- A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage
- If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time

To analyze the Man Box scale, we calculated a composite score for each respondent's answers for the 15 Man Box rules presented above. Each response was awarded from one to four points, with the most gender-inequitable answer (usually "strongly agree") receiving one point and the most gender-equitable answer (usually "strongly disagree") receiving four points. "Agree" and "disagree" responses received two or three points depending on the nature/direction of the item. We then divided this score by 15 to arrive at each individual's composite score on the same 1 to 4 scale (with higher scores reflecting more gender-equitable views). **In the United States, the average composite score was 2.87 on this scale.** For ease of analysis and presentation, we then coded all men with Man Box scores below this country average as "in the Man Box," and those with scores at or above the country average as "outside the Man Box." This creates two easily comparable categories that reflect the particular landscape of masculine norms in the United States.

## ANNEX B.

# METHODOLOGY

Interested readers are encouraged to download the full methodological notes at: [www.promundoglobal.org/cost-of-the-man-box](http://www.promundoglobal.org/cost-of-the-man-box)



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