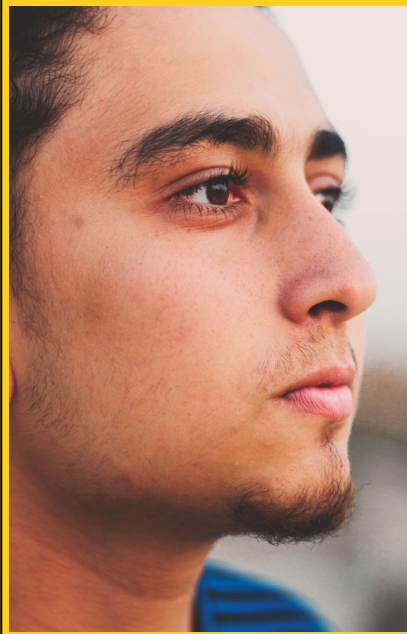


State of American Men 2025

equimundo



About this study

Building on our *State of American Men 2023* report, Equimundo surveyed 2,454 men, women, and nonbinary people to ask about their sense of economic stability, their anxieties, their social lives – online and off – and their mental health.

Equimundo also interviewed 32 fathers across the United States as part the *State of America's Fathers* report series. These fathers were recruited to represent diversity in ethnicities, age groups, voting preferences, caregiving responsibilities, marital status, and sexualities.

The findings confirm that men in the US continue to feel a deep sense of economic anxiety and that this anxiety is related to how much they support authoritarian government, their mental health, and how much they believe in restrictive ideas about manhood.

The headlines at a glance

1. **Economic anxiety is at the forefront of men's worries.**

Anxiety around not being able to financially secure their and their families' future is linked to lack of purpose, higher suicidal ideation, and feelings of being an inadequate caregiver.

2. **Men's views about masculinity are becoming more restrictive.**

With men and women believing that being a provider is the key trait of manhood today, it's unsurprising that rigid masculinity is linked to poor mental health but also, paradoxically, a better sense of purpose in life.

3. **Men are isolated, feel no one cares about them, and are pessimistic about their romantic prospects.**

Men and women lack social connection and feel unworthy of love; for men this is especially acute.

4. **Pressure to be a provider and economic anxiety are exacerbated by where they spend time online.**

Narratives online often perpetuate zero-sum ideas about men and women, but it's important to acknowledge the positive reasons for why men are online as well.

The headlines at a glance

5. Frustrated by economic anxieties, men and women support leaders who would “tear it all down.”

The more men feel economic uncertainty and hear harmful online narratives, the more they support beliefs against elections and democracy, which many women do as well.

6. Many men fear being called out or canceled.

Men face tremendous anxiety that they will be called out, which is likely fueling their backlash against diversity and equality.

7. “Armed and ready” is the current state of being for many men, meaning they own firearms and support the views of militias.

There is a large segment of the population that is ready for violence and extremist thinking – and this leads to lower trust in public institutions.

8. Men and women want care policies.

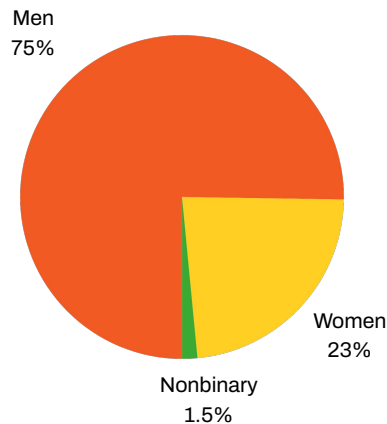
As fathers and caregivers of others, many men find a sense of purpose in those roles and, alongside women, are willing to vote for care policies to improve their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Survey Demographics

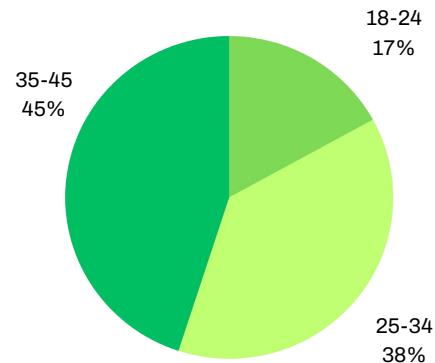
We carried out an online survey with 2,454 people ages 18 to 45, oversampling for men to allow for greater statistical power.

The sample is representative of the US population in terms of geography, employment status, and education.

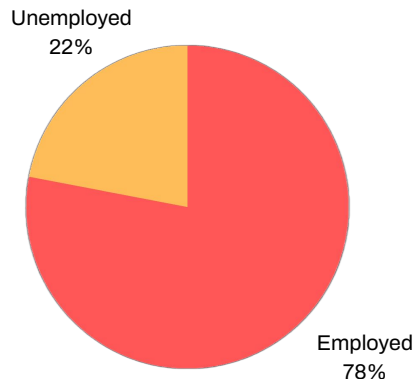
Gender



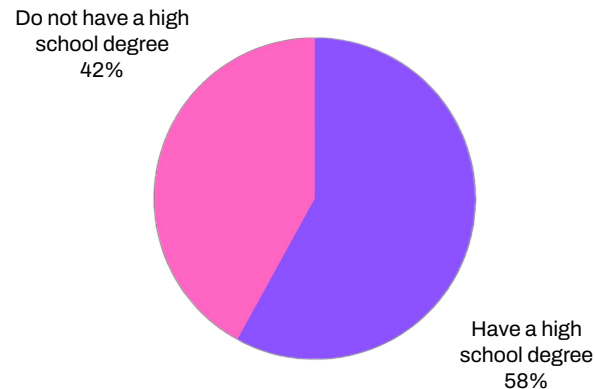
Age



Employment Status

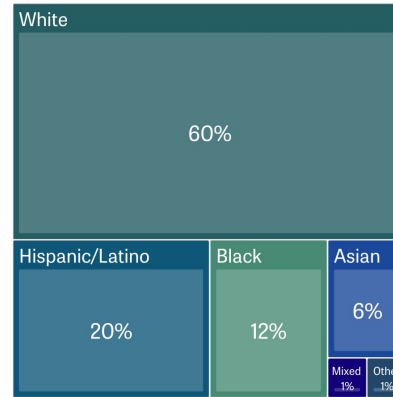


Educational Attainment

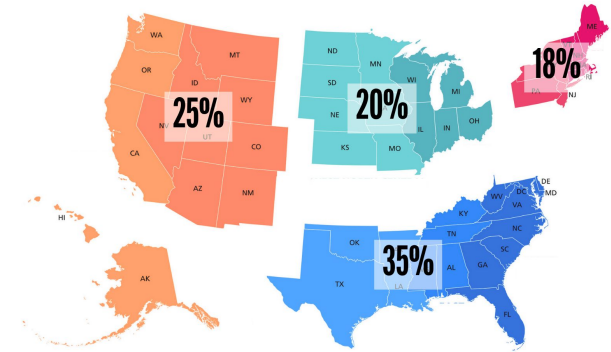


Survey Demographics Continued

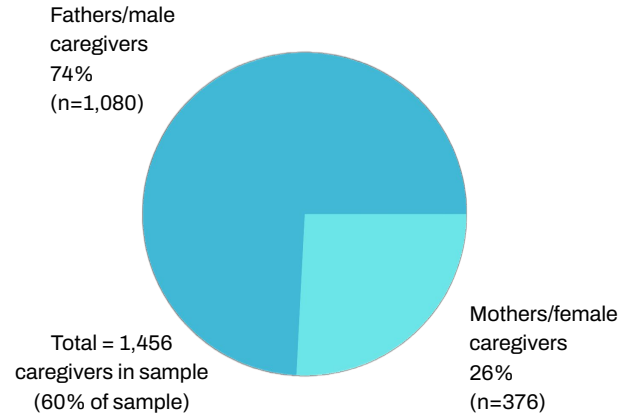
Race/Ethnicity



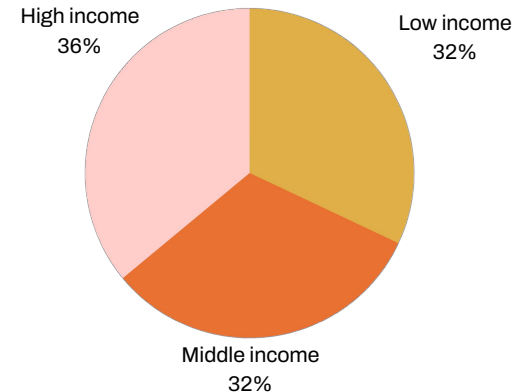
Geography



Caregiving Responsibility



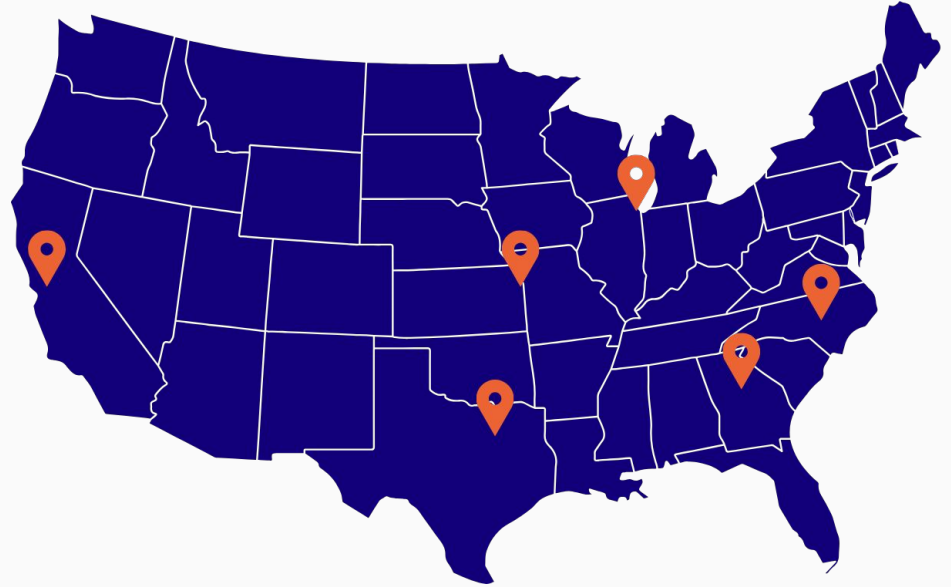
Socioeconomic Status



We also spoke in depth with 32 dads across the US.

We heard from dads of different ages and life stages, different constellations of caregiving responsibilities, and different political leanings and voting groups.

We held focus groups with fathers across the United States in Kansas City, Oakland, Atlanta, Raleigh, Chicago, and Dallas.



HEADLINE 1

Economic anxiety is at the forefront of men's worries.

What do we mean by “economic anxiety”?

The fact that the world is undergoing social, political, and economic shocks is not a recent phenomenon. What is changing at an increasingly fast pace is the shifting realities of financial security that people can expect today from traditionally defined pathways to success, employment, and economic stability.

Economic precarity refers to a state of insecure or unstable economic conditions, characterized by a lack of job security, stable income, and social safety nets. It signifies a situation where individuals face financial instability and struggle with the challenges of meeting basic needs and planning for the future.

As Han (2018)¹ explains, precarity manifests not merely as economic uncertainty but as a condition that fundamentally disrupts social identities and sense of future possibility. This disruption particularly affects men, whose masculinity has historically been anchored in the provider role.

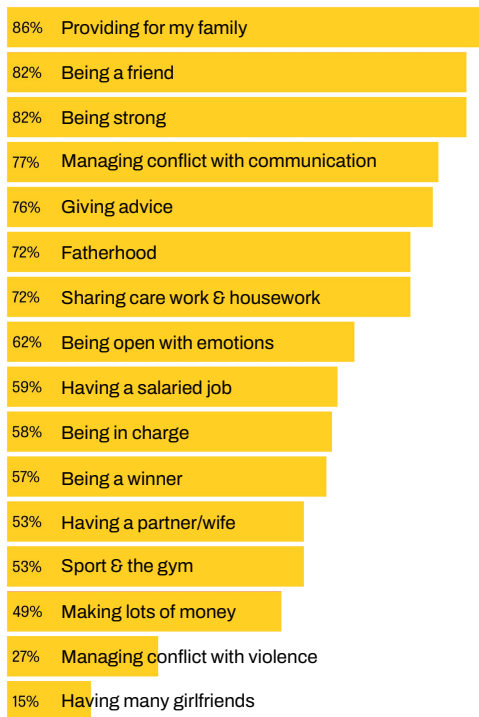
The intersection of economic precarity and masculinity creates a complex terrain where traditional notions of male identity – being a provider – confront increasingly unstable economic realities. Additionally, this is all in the foreground of the global gender gap that women face daily.

Men in the US and around the world feel that their main identity is as provider; thus, a sense of economic instability cuts to the heart of their sense of self and their self-esteem. The results of the 2024 elections are a clear indicator of how much this anxiety is driving men of all ethnicities – and some women, as our data also confirm – toward supporting authoritarian politicians and a “tear it all down” mentality.

Definitions of manhood have expanded, but men are expected first and foremost to be providers.

“In my opinion, being a man is...”²

Responses from men



86%

of men chose
“provider” as the top
trait they should have

77%

of women chose
“provider” as the top trait
a man should have

Many fathers see themselves as “wallet dads.”

“I was the **wallet dad**; the only thing I did for my children growing up was paying for everything.”

–Black Dad, Voting Unknown

“As a father, **your job is to be a provider**, that’s what I’ve always thought of myself.”

–White, Progressive-Voting Dad

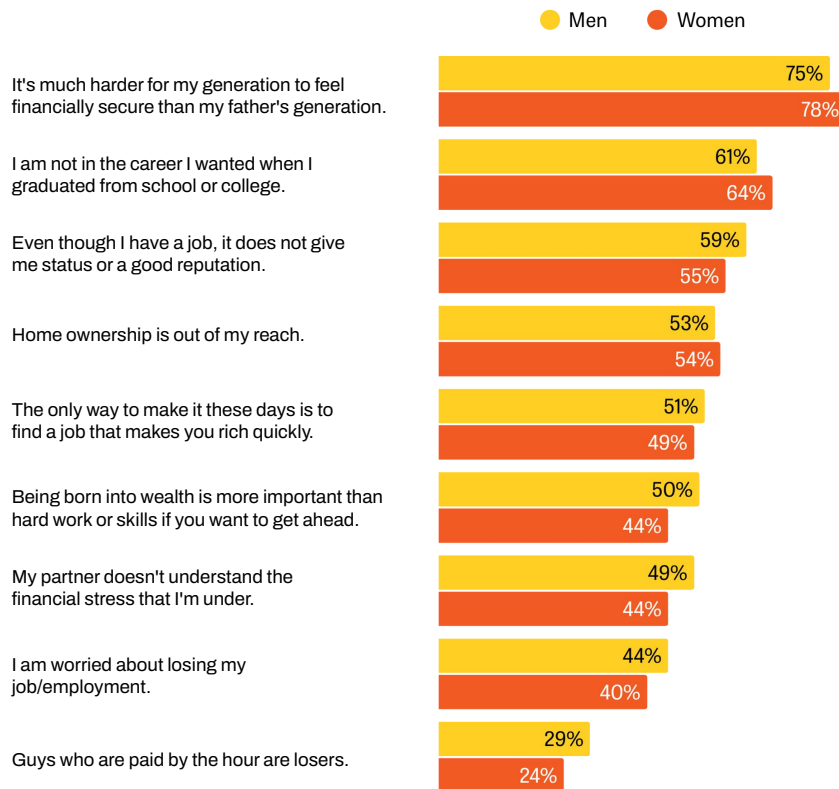
“What people think is a father’s role, it’s to **give safety and shelter and be provider for their children** and for the next generation by being able to offer a down payment for a home.”

–Black, Progressive-Voting Dad

The “American dream” is out of reach.

And a majority of men say their jobs don’t give them status or reputation.

Percentage of men and women who agree with the following statements:



Economic
anxiety for men
translates into
lack of meaning
or purpose.

**LESS CAREER FULFILMENT,
LESS PURPOSE³ IN LIFE.**

For men 25 and older, the more they agree with the statement “I am not in the career I wanted when I graduated from school or college,” the less likely they are to agree with the statement “Life is full of meaning and purpose.”

Economic worries are strongly linked to suicidal ideation.

Men who face financial instability are

16.3x

as likely to have had suicidal thoughts in the past two weeks.

This link is strongest for Asian men, then Black men, then White men, and then Hispanic men.

Women who face financial instability are

7.3x

as likely to have had suicidal thoughts in the past two weeks.

This link is strongest for White women and then Black women.

Financial stress gets in the way of being the dads and partners that men want to be.

2x

Fathers/male caregivers of a lower socioeconomic status are more than twice as likely to report that they do not have enough time for caregiving.

61%

of fathers/male caregivers cite struggling to balance their job and care responsibilities as the key reason for not having enough time for caregiving.

31%

of mothers/female caregivers cite their partner not contributing enough as the key reason for not having enough time for caregiving.

Being a dad is tough – especially in a polarized, changing, and increasingly digital world.

“My child is very mixed. If he filled out the census, he could check every box. And so, **the way the world is right now, it's a little nerve-racking as he gets older.**”

–*Black, Progressive-Voting Dad*

“My oldest **child is nonbinary**. Dealing with their feelings has definitely been a challenge. **It's something I really don't understand; in the world I grew up in, this had never been an issue.**”

–*White, Conservative-Voting Dad*

“One of the biggest issues is the amount of information that's coming at them because of technology. These outside influences now have a front-row seat in our houses, in their beds, in our living room. **As parents, how do we put guardrails around that? How do we guide them and give them wisdom?**”

–*White, Conservative-Voting Dad*

...especially
given the
financial strains
and structural
barriers they are
facing daily.

“I was **laid off** after 13 years, and now, you know, I **can’t always provide**. [Kids] value that time with you, and they can call you out on it, but my **challenge is finding the space for me to detox from my day of financial battles** ... and they don’t know anything about that; they just want you there, and **sometimes it’s hard just to be there, even though you’re physically there.**”

—Black, Conservative-Voting Dad

Women *and* men
are making
difficult financial
decisions to be
caregivers.

80%

of mothers and fathers have made
work- or finance-related changes to
meet their caregiving needs.

25%

of mothers and fathers have
refinanced their homes.

38%

of mothers and fathers have changed
their job to have more flexible hours
or have stopped working.

49%

of mothers and fathers have delayed
major life decisions.

Yet these difficult decisions, and the sacrifices they entail, do not always fall equally.

Mothers are

14%

more likely than fathers to stop working to meet their caregiving responsibilities.

“One of the ways that my wife and I got through that time was I had a decent job, but it wasn't enough, and **she needed a job where we wouldn't need daycare**. So, for almost 10 years, she worked as a server at a decent restaurant because then I would come home [from work], give her a high five, and she would go to work. **You can't typically get an office job starting at 4 p.m. and work till midnight**. And so, this was the best money that we could make without getting into daycare. **Once the kids were in school, she was able to start having a career. But I mean, it was hard for her to go back to that. Like, what have you been doing for 10 years?**”

—White, Progressive-Voting Dad

HEADLINE 2

Men's views about masculinity are becoming more restrictive.

What is the “Man Box”?

The “Man Box” – a term first used by Paul Kivel of the Oakland Men’s Project and Tony Porter of A Call to Men – is used to refer to *a restrictive set of masculine norms that demand emotional stoicism, dominance, and self-reliance*.

Men caught within this framework face a double bind: they must succeed as providers to validate their masculinity, yet the Man Box's emphasis on independence prevents them from seeking help when they struggle.

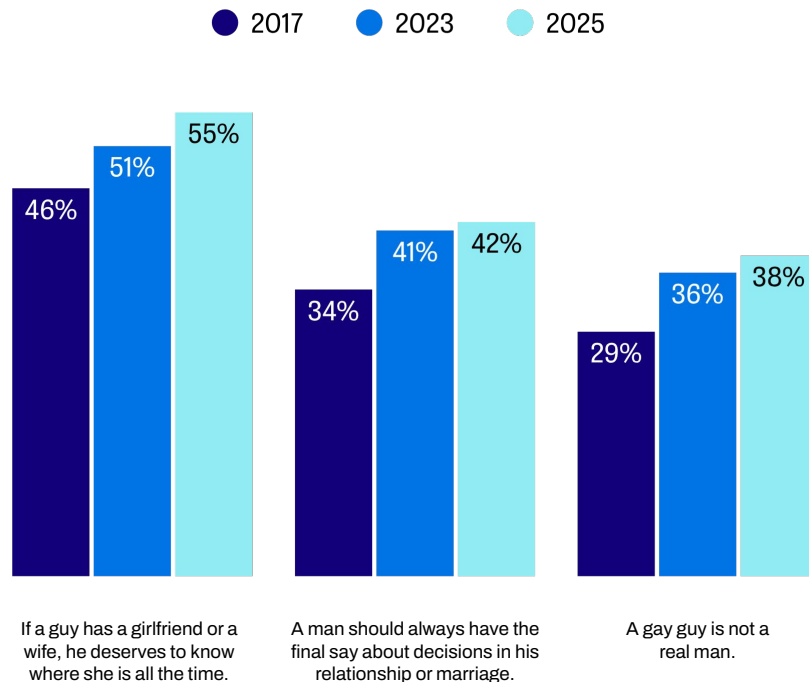
The provider role remains a cornerstone of masculine identity even as economic realities in 2025 make this traditional expectation increasingly unattainable for many men.

The picture becomes more complex when we consider different groups of men. Griffith (2015)⁴ demonstrates how minority men's relationship to manhood intersects with health equity, noting that assertions of masculinity can become survival mechanisms against racism while simultaneously creating barriers to healthcare access and emotional expression.

The confluence of these factors – economic precarity undermining traditional provider expectations, restrictive masculine norms preventing help-seeking behavior, and systemic inequities compounding stress for marginalized men – creates what can only be described as a perfect storm for masculine mental health crisis. Without deliberate intervention to redefine masculine success beyond economic provision and to challenge the Man Box's emotional restrictions, we risk losing an entire generation of men to depression, anxiety, and despair.

Between 2017 and 2025, restrictive beliefs on manhood increased.

Percentage of men who agree with Man Box⁵ statements



5. Heilman, B., Barker, G., & Harrison, A. (2017). *The Man Box: A study on being a young man in the US, UK, and Mexico*. Equimundo & Unilever.

Black and Hispanic men – who face acute economic exclusion – are more likely to support Man Box ideas.

Compared to White men, Black men are

2.3x

as likely to be in the Man Box

Compared to White men, Hispanic men are

1.4x

as likely to be in the Man Box

Men don't feel “man” enough.

Most men (63%) wish they
were more masculine.

2x

Men who are experiencing economic anxiety are twice as likely to say that they wish they were more masculine.

Gen Z

18-24 year olds are most likely say that they wish they were more masculine.

The Man Box
has strong
effects on
mental health.

Men in the Man Box are

6.3x

as likely to report having
thought about suicide in
the past two weeks.

Men who reported feeling high
economic anxiety are

1.8x

as likely to be in
the Man Box.

But being in the Man Box also has social value.

The more men and women report endorsing Man Box ideals, the more likely they are to feel a sense of purpose in life.⁶

Caregiving also
gives men a sense
of purpose...and
there we see hope.

Fathers are

1.3x

as likely to report feeling a sense of purpose compared to men who do not have children.

“There’s **no adrenaline rush like seeing [my kids] succeed**, if it’s sports, if they’re reading a poem, if my son was like, ‘Hey Dad, I’m about to learn how to stand on my hands,’ and three days later, he’s walking around the house on his hands...I’m just making **sure I pour into them**, and when you see the results or see them say something you might have said, or a habit you might have had that is beneficial, that’s the good.”

—*Black Dad, Voting Unknown*

HEADLINE 3

Men are isolated, feel like no one cares about them, and are pessimistic about their romantic prospects.

Increasing social disconnection and isolation

Social disconnection and isolation represent profound challenges in contemporary society, particularly affecting mental health and well-being.

In the United States, the Surgeon General and many other public health officials agree on one core aspect of the American experience – there is an “epidemic of loneliness.” As a 2023 advisory by the Surgeon General noted ⁷, loneliness levels, especially for young men, have gone up every year between 1976 and 2019.

The consequences of social isolation extend far beyond temporary feelings of loneliness, potentially contributing to severe mental health crises, including suicidal ideation (Ernst et al., 2021).⁸

A recent scoping analysis by Nordin, Degerstedt, and Granholm Valmari (2024)⁹ that included 13 studies with 856 total participants from Western countries found that masculine ideals of self-reliance and invulnerability prevent men from seeking help or expressing vulnerability, paradoxically increasing loneliness; social bonding often occurs through rejecting diversity (feminine, non-heterosexual, and non-White traits) and using derogatory banter to maintain masculine identity; and some men successfully reinvent masculinity by challenging traditional norms, allowing for deeper emotional connections while preserving their masculine identity.

7. Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. (2023). *Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community*. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

8. Ernst, M., Klein, E. M., Beutel, M. E., & Brähler, E. (2021). Gender-specific associations of loneliness and suicidal ideation in a representative population sample: Young, lonely men are particularly at risk. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 294, 63–70.

9. Nordin, T., Degerstedt, F., & Granholm Valmari, E. (2024). A scoping review of masculinity norms and their interplay with loneliness and social connectedness among men in Western societies. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 18(6), p.15579883241304585.

Men and women face loneliness, isolation, and disconnection.

“No one really knows me.”

53%

of men agree

52%

of women agree

“My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me.”

47%

of men agree

41%

of women agree

“I think it’s better if I keep some parts of myself hidden.”

48%

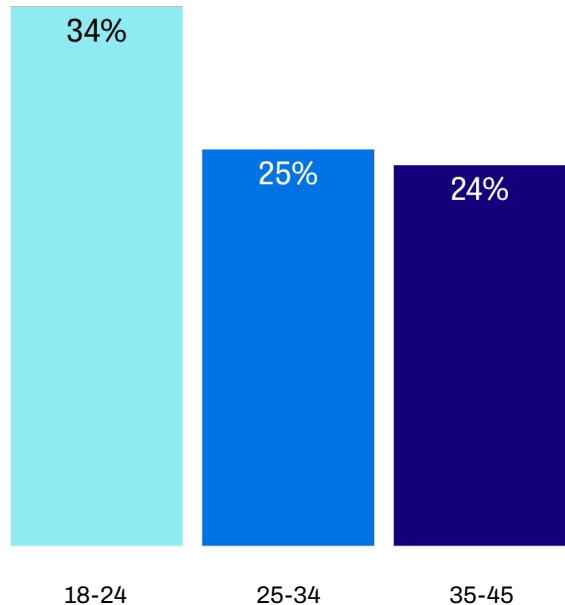
of men agree

45%

of women agree

The youngest men and women feel the most unworthy of love.

Percentage of men and women by age who agree with the statement *“I don’t think anyone can fall in love with me”*

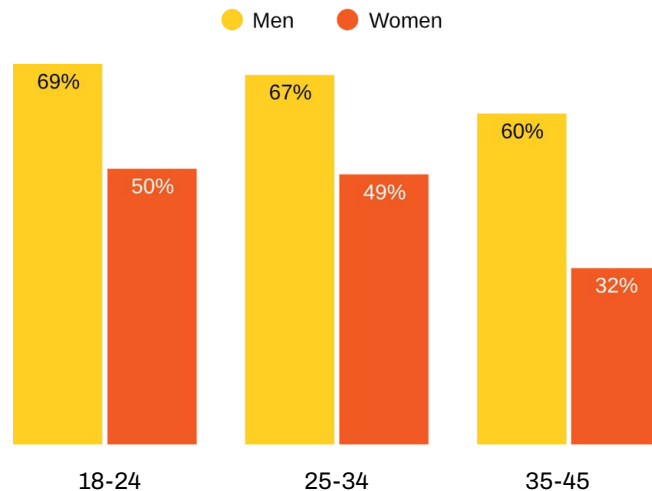


A majority of men feel like no one cares if men are okay – and a substantial portion of women agree.

57% of the full sample reports that “no one cares if men are okay.”

The youngest men agree with this the most.

Percentage of respondents by age who agree with the statement “*No one cares if men are okay*”



Feeling isolated
has strong effects
on mental health.

Men who say that “no one really knows me” are

2.2x

as likely to have thought about
suicide in the past two weeks.

This is the strongest for men with economic anxiety.

Women who say that “no one really knows me” are

3.4x

as likely to have thought about
suicide in the past two weeks.

For too many
dads, the pressure
and isolation are
associated with
higher suicidality.

5.2x

Dads with **more rigid ideas of fatherhood**
are 5.2 times as likely to report
suicidality – with this likelihood being
slightly **higher** among progressive voters.

Fathers also just want to be seen as humans, not superheroes.

“Kids look at you like you’re Superman. We’re like anyone else, we struggle, we have difficulties. None of us are Superman.”
—White, Conservative-Voting Dad

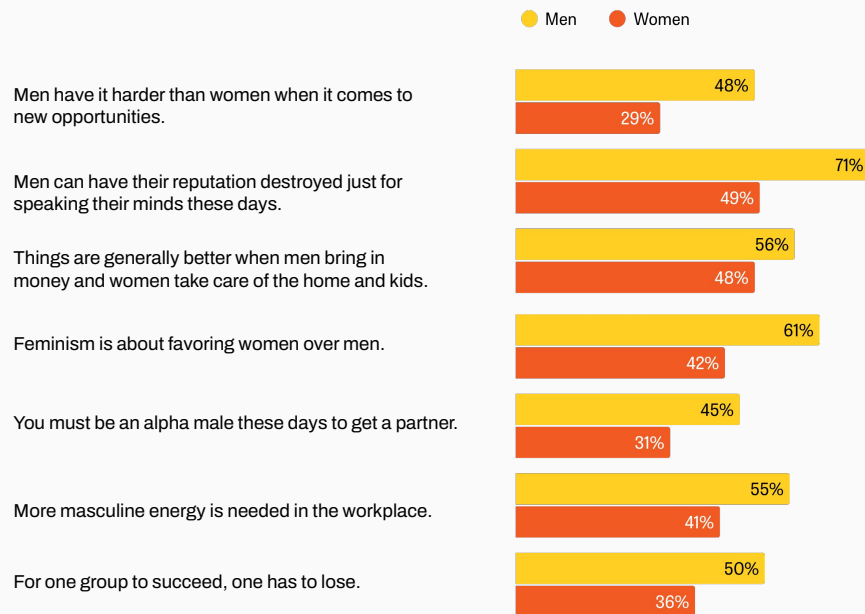
HEADLINE 4

Pressure to be a provider
and economic anxiety are
exacerbated by where men
spend time online.

What are the narratives men are hearing online?

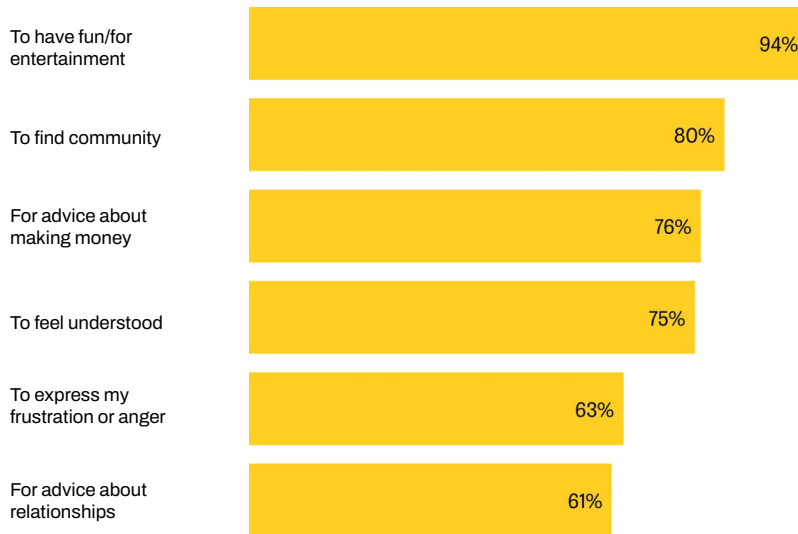
In our 2024 study on the manosphere,⁹ we explored online spaces where men spend their time and the messages they receive there.

In this survey, we asked men and women whether they believed the ideas that proliferate in the manosphere.



Online spaces attract men for a variety of reasons – more often positive.

Reasons men say they go online



Being in the Man Box is overwhelmingly linked to reporting being online to find community, to express anger/frustration, and for any type of advice.

Of men who voted for Trump in 2024, the main reason to be online is advice about making money.

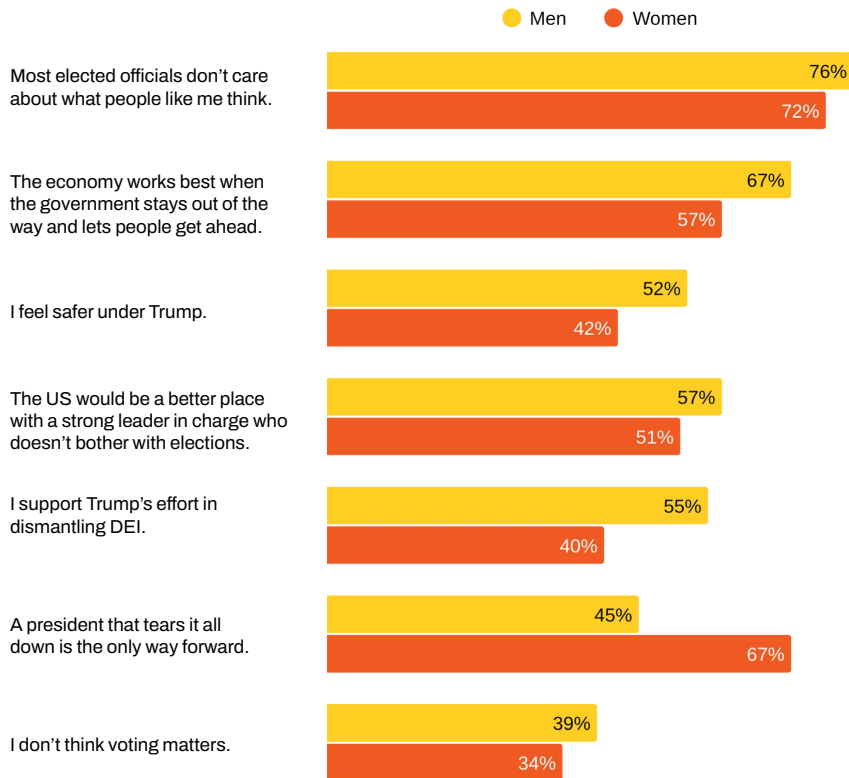
HEADLINE 5

Frustrated by economic
anxieties, men and women
support leaders who would
“tear it all down.”

Economic
anxieties mean
more support for
these beliefs.

Men who face economic
anxiety are more than twice
as likely to support
“strongman” political views.

Percentage of men and women who agree with the following statements



The more that
men *and* women
endorse
manosphere
beliefs, the more
they want to tear
it all down.

3x

Men who endorse manosphere beliefs that they are exposed to online are three times as likely to endorse strongman politics.

3.7x

Women who endorse manosphere beliefs that they are exposed to online are 3.7 times as likely to endorse strongman politics.

Many dads are also deeply worried about their children's financial futures.

“What do we as caregivers and parents do about this situation with our children and young adult children who are coming of age and trying to start their lives when it seems like **the deck is stacked against them?**”

—White, Progressive-Voting Dad

“I’m a Gen X kid and I think my generation was the last group that actually bought into the idea of, ‘You go to college, get a good job, and everything will be okay.’ I’ve been out of graduate school for over 20 years, and I’m still paying back my loans. For my kids, their peers are \$50,000, \$75,000, or \$175,000 in debt and are working at Starbucks. There’s this sense of, ‘I’ll never be able to afford to buy a house, I can’t afford to get married, I can’t afford to have kids.’ It’s hard to be on their side when they feel so ripped off and so angry.”

—White, Progressive-Voting Dad

For parents and caregivers across voting groups, political distrust is pervasive.

"I have a **hard time trusting** anything coming from the left or the right, and then **I know anything coming from the government is going to be deeply flawed.**"

—*White, Conservative-Voting Dad*

"My main job as a parent is to provide or create the environment within which learning and growth and maturing will happen, right? The government's role to its society is to provide the environment within which we are also all learning and growing, right? And so chaos there creates chaos down here...all the anxiety and stress that can be created by all that turmoil isn't healthy for us and if we're not healthy, then our families are going to be experiencing that as well."

—*White, Progressive-Voting Dad*

"You know, sometimes **as a dad, there's only so much you can take before you are wiped out.** It's fearful when the cop pulls you over, **you're wondering if you're going to be able to go home that or night or not.** And you're feeling this from police, other government folks, ICE, and all of the above."

—*Hispanic Dad, Voting Unknown*

HEADLINE 6

Many men fear being called out or canceled.

A majority of men think their reputation can be destroyed by a single comment – and many support tearing down DEI.

Percentage of men who agree with the following statements

Men can have their reputation destroyed just for speaking their minds these days.

72%

More masculine energy is needed in the workplace.

54%

The media is negatively biased against men.

58%

I support getting rid of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

47%

The youngest and oldest men who say they are worried about being called out are also in support of getting rid of DEI.

Fear of being
canceled is
particularly
worrying for men
aged 25 and over
and for White men.

1.6x

For men aged 35 and over, believing that men's reputation can be destroyed for speaking their mind is associated with higher odds of suicidal ideation.

White men

Only White men report **more anxiety** if they also feel that their reputation can be destroyed by speaking their minds.

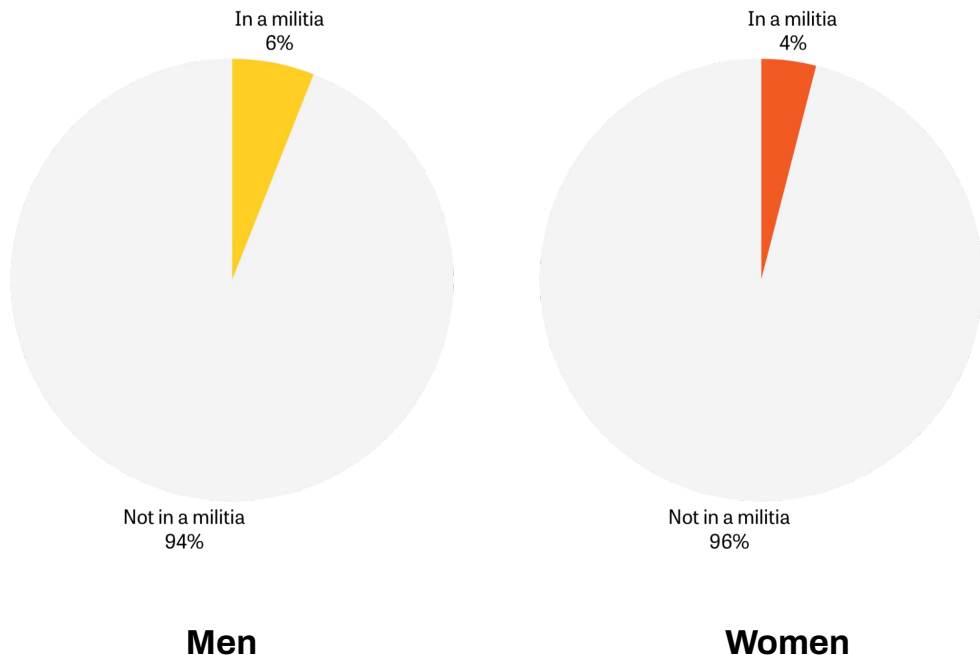
HEADLINE 7

“Armed and ready” is the current state of being for many men, meaning they own firearms and support the views of militias.

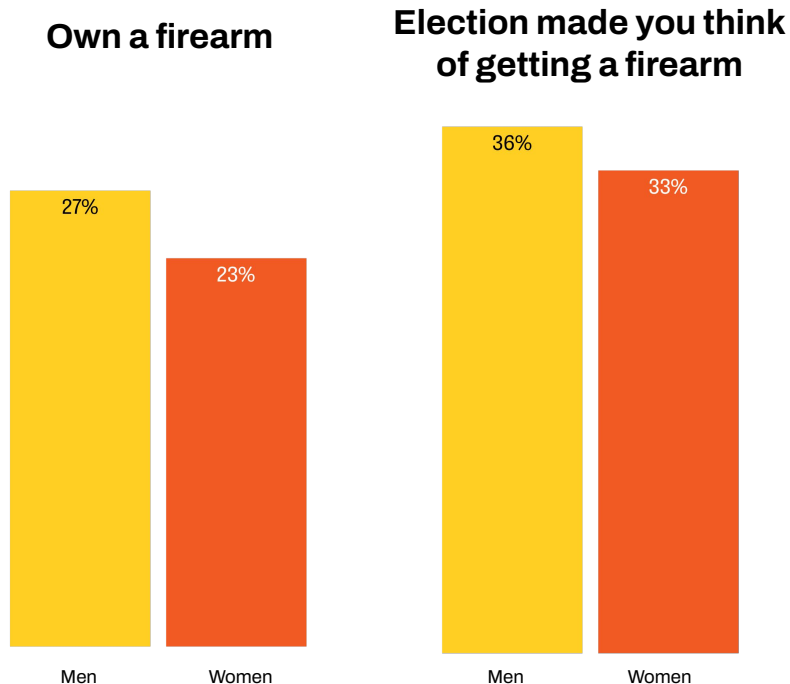
A surprisingly high number of men (37%) and women (33%) agree with the goals of militias.

And 6% of men and 4% of women report being part of a militia.

Militia membership by gender



Firearm ownership is high across men *and* women.



Of those who own firearms, 30% of men and 19% of women own an AR-15.

Who is most likely to own a firearm?

1.6x

Men and women who endorse online harmful narratives are 1.6 times as likely to own a firearm.

↓ 50%

Men and women who voted for Kamala Harris in 2024 were 50% less likely to own a firearm.

15%

of all the men we sampled were both in the Man Box and own a firearm – suggesting they endorse using violence to achieve their goals.

Firearm owners
have lower levels
of trust in public
institutions.

Owning a firearm is linked to
lower rates of trust in:

↓ **26%** lower trust in Congress;
legal systems

↓ **25%** lower trust in local
government

↓ **24%** lower trust in police

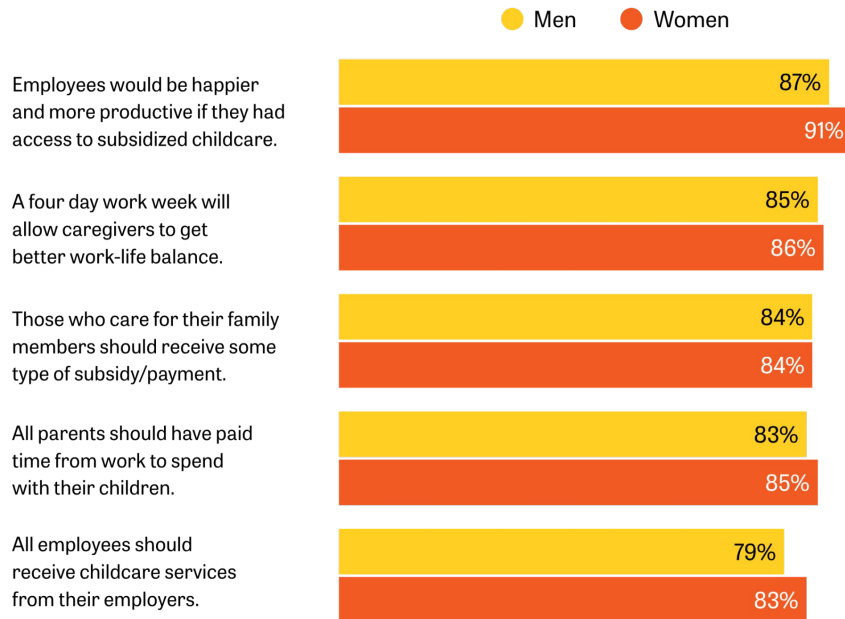
↓ **32%** lower trust in news media

HEADLINE 8

Men and women want better care policies.

Women and men overwhelmingly support care policies.

Percentage of fathers and mothers who agree with the following statements:



A majority of women and men say they would vote for care policies.

Paid parental leave

61% of fathers and mothers support

Child tax credits

64% of fathers and mothers support

Subsidized child/elder care

64% of fathers and mothers support

Dads are calling for investment in resources closer to home.

"I think we're so focused on Trump and Biden and all of those before that we miss that Congress is actually the one making laws and the state legislator and our local, our mayors and our city council. And so bringing that funding back, mandating to have support for trauma for men, whatever that trauma may be...what I need the government to do is pass the funding this way."

—Black, Conservative-Voting Dad

"You know, I don't really care about the Department of Education being abolished; bring it back to this state level. It would be easier to implement policy at a state level with state governance, rather than some politician or big group in DC, man. Our government should be focusing on implementing policy at [the] state level; instead, they're focusing on other s* that's hurting Americans, and hurting our kids. They should be spending money to come up with solutions, to provide kids with the education and the support they need to grow up to be positive contributing citizens."**

—White, Conservative-Voting Dad

Across party lines, dads seem less interested in polarization than in just seeing their kids thrive.

“We all kind of fall in the middle. I’m a fiscal Republican. You know, fiscally speaking, but [in] other ways, we probably all fall in the middle. I want equality for everyone. I want everybody having opportunity. ... **I just, I want to know that [my children’s] future ... that they have an opportunity, they have a chance.”**

–Black, Conservative-Voting Dad

“**When I look at our sons, they’re the message that we’re sending to the future** – we have loved them and raised them into the young men they are. That’s what we’re telling the future, ‘This is what is important to us, we have sons who are not only strong and self-reliant but caring and loving of the people around them.’ **I’m sending my sons into a future that I will never see; I’m hoping that we’ve taught them what it means to be a good man.”**

–White, Progressive-Voting Dad

CONCLUSION AND SOLUTIONS

At Equimundo, we're working on solutions. Here are some of our ideas.

Solution 1

Lean into men's caregiving and their sense of purpose from fatherhood.

Learn more at mencare.org.

Solution 2

Engage boys in conversations on aspirational ideas about manhood.

Learn more at boyhoodinitiative.org.

Solution 3

Support young men's need for mentorship, coaching, and apprenticeship.

Solution 4

Engage online influencers to tell stories of young men finding connection and purpose.

Learn more at equimundo.org/link-up-lab.

Solution 5

Galvanize state-, local-, and national-level officials to prioritize economic security for men facing economic precarity – and all of us.

The Path Ahead

We know that the world as it's currently set up with its power dynamics and structural inequalities is not serving women, not serving men, and not serving people of different genders.

It's easy to read this study and panic. Yet there are many glimmers of hope: more men are doing hands-on care work than ever before, men find purpose in their role as caregivers, and we are seeing a shift where more people are ready to listen to men with compassion and care than ever before. With this study, we offer some optimism and a way forward.

This is the time for us to recognize why we are seeing pushback on equality and rights and collectively acknowledge and address the *structural drivers* of these rollbacks. It is a real moment for us to shift the narrative so that we promote a *caring version of manhood*, one that values healthy connection (offline and online) and that values men's mental health and acknowledges their anxieties while also building a common agenda with and for women and girls.

"When we know better, we do better." –Maya Angelou

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