

equimundo's

STATE OF

UK MEN

**1 IN 4
MEN**

BELIEVE
NO ONE
WILL EVER
FALL IN
LOVE WITH
THEM

**1 IN 2
MEN**

WOULD
SUPPORT A
LEADER WHO
WOULD DO
AWAY WITH
ELECTIONS

63%

of men
believe
that no one
cares if
men are
okay these
days



More Inside!

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

B EQUALITY **YOND**

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Foreword

What is the State of UK Men in 2025?

The conversation about men and about masculinity is gaining visibility. This conversation often leans towards panic: For instance, the recent widely seen Netflix show *Adolescence* was an upsetting wake-up call to many parents and others about the online lives of young men. The decline in boys' educational attainment and stagnation in the workplaces, particularly among lower-income and racialised boys and men, has raised further concern. Men's decreased support for full equality for women and girls is further reason for worry.

Equimundo's 2017 Man Box study looked at young men in the United States and the United Kingdom and found that many were finding solace in a version of manhood that valued violence over dialogue, domination over respect, and isolation over seeking help from others. It is a version of manhood rooted in fear and uncertainty. The study further revealed the harms to young men themselves, to those of us who care about them, and to women and girls.

This study builds on that 2017 research and on Equimundo's State of American Men studies in 2023 and 2025. The two State of American Men reports found that high rates of young men feel confused, lonely, and are unsure about their futures. They often turn to online spaces in search of meaning. They also found that the more economically anxious men felt – particularly younger men – the more likely they are to support leaders who promote us-versus-them politics, and who would tear down public good and social justice work that we believe government can and should provide.

The results from this study – the first State of UK Men survey – carried out in partnership between Equimundo and Beyond Equality, and in dialogue with many UK partners concerned about men and boys and what it means for us all – reveals many reasons to be concerned.

- Sixty-three percent of men say no one cares if men are okay these days.
- More than half of men are constantly worrying about keeping a roof over theirs and their family's heads.
- Forty-four percent have given up on ever finding love.
- Forty-two percent thought about harming themselves or taking their own lives in the last two weeks.
- Sixty-eight percent are afraid that their reputation will be destroyed if they speak their minds.

Where we see hope is in the high percentage of survey participants who believe that the true meaning of manhood, the most important purpose, is friendship – with 91 percent of men surveyed identifying friendship as core to what it means to be a man today. We see in this finding a way towards a manhood based in solidarity, care, connection, and, ultimately, equality and well-being for women, girls, non-binary people, men, boys, and all individuals.

Parents, teachers, and policymakers are deeply concerned about men's online lives. And there is much to be concerned about. The finding that young men will be the target of algorithmically driven misogyny within an average of 23 minutes of being online in spaces such as YouTube and TikTok is cause for concern.¹ Yet young men are also finding connection and friendship online, and are also often able to discern positive content from harm online. Social media and tech platforms must be called to account for the harm distributed on their watch. We need limits on minors' access to social media. But we must also engage young men to raise their active, critical voices to serve and care for their communities.

The results here confirm that we should be deeply concerned about the state of men, cognisant of the constellation of mental health and social needs that are going unmet and the movement away from supporting gender equality and democracy.

Yet we call from moving from panic to positive engagement to address the roots of these complex issues. We see in our research and our work that young men are seeking our help. They are building alternatives. Indeed, some of the most promising solutions and conversations that promote care, better mental health, and connection are being developed by young men themselves, online and off. Many men are finding and expanding what it means to be a man and pushing back on those who try to create hate.



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Ben's Purpose

by Sam Browne (@sambrownex)

I've got this mate Ben and he reckons his life is purposeless

Which is a shame

because it is

I'm not kidding if Ben left today

the world would keep spinning

Not much change

To the world Ben is pointless

I mean it really gains very little from his existence

In fact, when you've taken into account the carbon emissions

Ben is a bit of a nuisance

But, from my perspective

Ben being alive is a big win

I like Ben

In fact, I love him

He brightens up my day

Puts a smile on my face

Makes me feel better about whatever is in my way

I love Ben and his importance is not possibly something I could understate.

So, when Ben told me his life is purposeless

I had to disagree

And then look introspectively

How could Ben be so unaware of how much he means to me

I suppose a decent hypothesis

One I'm working on at the minute

Is that I never told him

That could be it

In fact, it probably is

For someone who couldn't understate Ben's purpose

I don't often state it

So this time I thought I should

And I did

I told Ben I loved him

And he broke down in tears

Cause a drop of water means nothing

But put a million, a billion

All flowing

That's how dams break,

That's how rivers become flooded

A drop of water means nothing

But if it drops from one man's eye

Into the arms of his brother

It becomes the beginning of something

A free-flowing system

A river of connection

I've got this mate Ben and he reckons his life is purposeless

And I don't agree

I stop him and say

Ben how can your life be purposeless when you mean so much to me



WHITBY

PHOTOGRAPHY MARCO ANGELO VIA UNSPLASH

The Headlines at a Glance

Equipundo's State of UK Men 2025 survey, conducted in partnership with Beyond Equality, with more than 2,100 men and women in the United Kingdom reveals some conflicting realities about men and women in the country today:

Being a Man in the UK Today

What it means to be a man in the UK is expanding, but harmful expectations of being a man are common among men and women. When asked to define what being a man in the UK today means, it was unambiguous that **men value – and are valued for – their friendship and for showing up for the people in their lives.** Ninety-one percent of men and women surveyed believe that being a friend is a defining quality of manhood, with a similar proportion believing that helping those who need it, giving advice, and valuing honesty and kindness are core to being a man. Parallely, men surveyed were almost as likely to value being a provider as defining masculinity today, as they did sharing housework and care work with a partner; these attributes scored 88 percent and 83 percent, respectively. Men surveyed were least likely to associate casual sex and hooking-up with multiple partners as defining manhood today. Violence was also among the least identified features associated with manhood. Yet, a third of men and more than a quarter of women did identify managing conflict with violence as a core part of what it means to be a man today.

The Man Box is a code of behaviours and characteristics commonly expected of boys and men, such as being tough, heterosexual, and dominant, correlating with a sense of purpose for men in the UK.² It is also harming men. Men surveyed who endorse the Man Box are almost twice as likely to report purpose in life. Yet, it is also associated with negative mental health outcomes. Men who endorsed Man Box ideals were, on average, three times more likely to report having thought about self-harm and suicide in the past two weeks. Though the Man Box can provide men with purpose and clarity, this additional finding affirms that there is a threshold beyond which that sense of purpose turns into pressure for many men. This is often compounded by expectations of stoicism and a reluctance to seek support. Indeed, the survey revealed the extent to which self-reliance remains the *modus operandi* for most men. **While deeply valuing friendship in their lives, almost three-quarters of men report that they opt to solve problems on their own rather than discuss them with others, while almost two-thirds (60 percent) of men affirmed that they “have to look out for themselves because no one else has their back.”**

Men's Purpose in Times of Insecurity

Young people in the UK are facing a crisis of purpose and aspiration with profound ripple effects across their lives. For many, this is entwined with financial anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Forty percent of men reported experiencing financial difficulties – more than half of men across all income groups say they constantly worry about their financial future. Men and women are split evenly between feeling a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and feeling none at all. Across income brackets, men reported that home ownership is out of reach and that they constantly worry about their financial future, with men in the lowest income bracket being most likely to report these fears (70 percent).

Financial security is closely entwined with men's purpose, sense of manhood, and well-being. For many men navigating this tough economic landscape, a clear and secure sense of manhood feels out of reach – particularly for younger men and men from lower income-earning households. Men earning more than £70,000 a year were nearly 14 times more likely to describe their lives as meaningful than those with the lowest incomes. Similarly, younger men were also less likely to report purpose in their lives, with men ages 18 to 24 being 1.6 times less likely feel a sense of purpose. Demonstrating the connection between financial anxiety and masculinity, the youngest cohort of men surveyed were 10 percent more likely to affirm that they wish they were

they more masculine than men over 35 reported, while the lowest-earning men were 40 percent more likely to wish they were more masculine than the highest-earning men reported. This indicates that financial security remains a prominent marker of a masculine identity among men in the UK – and one which feels increasingly out of reach in today's economic climate. Unsurprisingly, economic security and purpose are closely tied to mental health, especially for men. Men with higher incomes have lower odds of reporting suicidal thoughts, while financial insecurity predicts greater distress. Loneliness compounds these pressures. Around half of all men and women agreed that “no one really knows me,” reflecting widespread disconnection.

Men's Online Lives and the Manosphere

As men in the UK spend more time online, they are exposed to powerful, harmful, and often appealing ideas about gender and society. Some of these ideas are resonating with a sizeable proportion of men. Men are spending more time online than women, and are almost 10 percent more likely to report finding their online lives more rewarding than their offline lives. Men go online to find community, express anger, seek advice, and express themselves without judgement. While online they are exposed to regressive and harmful ideas of men's and women's roles in society, including within online communities described as “the manosphere.” While more men reported recognising, rather than actively engaging with or following masculinity content creators – such as Andrew Tate or Joe Rogan – the survey revealed significant endorsement of harmful online narratives. Some of these ideas reflect a sense of grievance – indicatively, 68 percent of men believe that “men should be more respected in society” and more than half believe that “feminism is about favouring women over men.” For others, the resonance of these ideas may be borne out of a sense of fear and alienation in a changing world. **Illustratively, more than two-thirds of men believe that their “reputation can be destroyed for saying the wrong thing,” while a similar number believe that “no one cares whether men are okay these days.”**

Most men do not reject gender equality completely. Indeed, a large majority of men (75 percent) expressed their support for equal pay for equal work, and similar numbers agreed that the world would be better if everyone had the same rights and opportunities. Yet, roughly half of men endorsed some regressive, or “red pill,” ideas – such as “for one group to succeed, one has to lose” and “men have it harder than women”. This finding suggests that men in the UK are at a crossroads with harmful and regressive ideas of masculinity on one side and more expansive ideas on the other. The survey reveals that endorsement of gender-threat rhetoric was most pronounced among men identifying with right-leaning politics, as well as with men who reported going online to express anger and find community.

Men's Health, Well-Being, and Safety

Men's health needs remain unmet, despite living with a range of physical and mental health challenges. More than a third of men reported living with one or more health – physical or mental – conditions. While one in five men overall disclosed living with a mental health condition, a far greater number – more than two-thirds (67.5 percent) – disclosed experiencing negative mental health symptoms, including anxiety, thoughts of self-harm or suicide, and feelings of failure in the previous two weeks. Men are evidently struggling with their mental health, even if they may not recognise these symptoms as such. Men in the youngest age bracket – 18 to 24 – were most likely to report experiencing negative mental health symptoms, which may reflect a growing awareness

and openness among younger men to talk about mental health challenges. Despite these health needs, a significant portion of men are unlikely to seek medical care when they are unwell or take time off work to recover.³

Taking a broader look at men’s social well-being and sense of safety, more than 40 percent of men reported experiencing violence in their lifetimes and a significant proportion feel unsafe in public, at home, and online, at least some of the time. Men were more likely than women to report feeling safe in their worlds, including in public, online, and in their homes. Yet, on average, just more than a quarter of men report only feeling safe in public at least some of the time, a quarter feel unsafe online, and 15 percent report feeling unsafe at home. Looking across demographic groups, Asian men are the least likely to report feeling safe in public, while Black men were most likely to report feeling unsafe online. Paying attention to men’s sense of safety is important. The report reveals that men’s perceptions of safety are correlated with a number of potentially significant social outcomes, including positive mental health and proactive health seeking, increased likelihood of calling out harm or injustice, and a decreased likelihood of endorsing the Man Box and extremist rhetoric. This finding affirms that safety and openness reinforce each other.

Men, Relationships, and Dating

Men and women haven’t given up on love completely. Most men are looking for connection and intimacy. But many wonder, “is it worth the bother?” While 44 percent of men and women affirmed having given up on relationships completely, the majority have not. Many men and women are feeling disenchanted with relationships. A quarter of men overall believe that no one will ever fall in love with them, a figure that increases to more than a third (36 percent) for men in the youngest cohort. The majority of men surveyed believe that the odds are stacked against them when it comes to relationships, with 56 percent of men believing that it is too difficult to meet a romantic partner these days and 62 percent of men believing that women expect too much of men in relationships these days. Across all age groups, men are feeling pressure to meet increasingly complex expectations of what it means to be a desirable partner.

Men and women are seeking connection, companionship, and intimacy online, with similar numbers of women and men reporting interacting with a virtual partner. Around 15 percent of men and 14 percent of women reported having engaged with virtual girlfriend or boyfriend, with virtual relationships being increasingly appealing among those over 24 years of age. For those who interact with virtual companions, these digital connections offer emotional intimacy without the perceived risks of rejection or conflict. Instructively, more than two-thirds of men – and women – report that their virtual partner understands them better than anyone in their real lives and that they don’t have to worry about their virtual partner being unfaithful. Relatedly, pornography remains a major part of men’s online and intimate lives, with men being more likely to report significantly higher use of porn than women. Both women and men report engaging with porn to learn about sex and explore their sexuality more than they report engaging with porn to seek out violent or non-consensual material. Overall, men, as well as women, have not fallen out of love completely, but many are losing hope that romantic connections are possible and are finding alternative means of connection in their online lives.

Men, Politics, and Distrust

Political distrust is palpable: A majority of men do not believe that the country’s political leaders are invested in their future, and in turn, are supporting anti-democratic views. Across the broad spectrum of political leanings represented in the study, men and women are united in a shared sense of political distrust and disenchantment. Three-quarters of men and women do not believe that politicians are invested in their lives or their future, while more than two-thirds of participants believe that the government does not care about the cost-of-living crisis. For many, this political distrust is manifesting in anti-democratic views and support for authoritarian-style leadership and “tear it all down” politics. More than half of the men surveyed – 54 percent – believe that “the country would be in a better place with a strong leader who doesn’t bother with parliament or elections,” while just under half – 47 percent – believe that “a government that tears it all down is the only way forward.” Lower-income and financially unstable men were most likely to express these views. Indeed, lower-earning men were 14 percent less likely than higher-earning men to believe that elections are important to the well-being of the country.

Men who endorse harmful online narratives are six times more likely to endorse anti-democratic sentiments. This affirms a stark correlation between the rigid and gender-regressive views associated with harmful online narratives and democratic backsliding in the UK. Notably, men’s support for gender-threat ideology is correlated with an almost four times greater likelihood of supporting strongman leaders, an almost three times higher likelihood of believing voting doesn’t matter, and an increase in anti-immigration sentiments. Additionally, the higher endorsement of harmful narratives online is linked to a more than four times higher likelihood of believing that the government cares more about migrants than its own people. **Yet, men and women across the UK have not given up their faith in democratic politics completely – many simply want to see more investment in the well-being of their communities closer to home.** Across the UK and across political lines, 82.5 percent of men and women surveyed affirmed that they want to see greater government investment in their communities and in the well-being of young people.

Fatherhood and Care

Men value being fathers and are calling for more support to be the present and involved dads they want to be. More than 80 percent of the fathers we surveyed agreed that “being a dad is the most important job in the world.” We see this reflected in men’s sense of purpose, too: the fathers we surveyed were twice as likely to report feeling a sense of purpose in their lives than men who do not have children. While valuing care, it is still perceived as conflicting with ideas of manhood to a significant proportion of men – and women. Indeed, 42 percent of men and almost a third of women agreed that “men who are full-time fathers are not seen as real men.” Some men also underestimate the extent to which women value men’s active involvement in care work in their partnerships or parenting arrangements. While a striking 80 percent of women agree that men who are involved caregivers are attractive partners, men were, on average, 7 percent less likely to agree. Some of these ideas are shaping decisions around resourcing childcare and caregiving needs.

Parents are making tough choices to meet their childcare and caregiving responsibilities under challenging economic circumstances. Mothers and fathers are calling – and voting – for policies that can offer an alternative and help centre care in their lives. Fifty percent of men and 55 percent of women reported making at least one difficult choice or sacrifice to re-

source their childcare and caregiving needs. Yet, men were, on average, 12 percent more likely than women to report working overtime, while women were 20 percent more likely to leave a job to have more flexible hours and were 10 percent more likely to report reducing their work hours. This affirms that fathers are more likely to sacrifice time with their children to prioritise professional opportunities to resource their childcare and caregiving needs, while mothers are more likely to sacrifice their professional opportunities to meet their childcare and caregiving responsibilities. Looking across demographic groups, Black men were most likely to report risking their future financial security to resource their caregiving needs, with 63 percent reporting that they had tapped into their retirement savings to meet their caregiving needs. Men want to do more to contribute to childcare and caregiving at home: **Eighty percent of fathers affirmed that they want more support to juggle work and family life and the same number agreed that all parents should have paid time off work to spend with their children.** What is more, most women and men are casting their political votes for policies that would make this possible.

PHOTOGRAPHY BENJAMIN ELLIOTT VIA UNSPLASH



MARAZION

Introducing Equimundo's State of UK Men 2025

In partnership with Beyond Equality

This study presents a look at men in the United Kingdom, their concerns, their hopes, and their ideas about what it means to be a man today. It is rooted in finding solutions. First and foremost, the study finds both hope and concern about the state of UK men.

Almost two-thirds of the men surveyed across the UK feel unseen or uncared for in public life. Forty percent of men are grappling with financial difficulties and more than half of men across income groups say they constantly worry about their financial future. Further, forty-four percent of men report having given up on finding love completely.

Yet, the majority of men say that care, family, and connection with friends and others are what give their lives meaning. Indeed, **91 percent of men and women affirm that friendship is the quality they most associate with being a man today. Eighty-one percent of men affirm that being a parent in the best job in the world, and more than half say that care and family policies shape how they vote. Here, we see tremendous hope.**

This report is one of the few UK-wide

investigations of the effects of ideas of masculinity on men's health, relationships, and politics, and the implications for men themselves – as well as women and others. Building on Equimundo's State of American Men 2025, we surveyed more than 2,100 men and women across the UK about their sense of economic stability, outlook on the future, social and romantic life (online and off), health and well-being, political outlook, and family life. The findings of the study are clear: Men in the UK are at a crossroads. While ideas of what it means to be a man today are expanding, some more restrictive ideas remain prevalent and alluring to many men. But there is optimism. Men across the UK want and are ready to centre care, connection, and community in their lives. By asking the right questions and investing in the right solutions, we can tip the balance towards men's care.

We will use the insights and recommendations from the report to contribute and refine the ongoing work with men and boys and the people in their lives. As always, we do this work with a broad range of stakeholders, collaborating on responses, and bringing the recommendations to the communities they serve.

PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID RICO VIA PEXELS



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Methodology

Study Overview

The data presented in this report come from an online questionnaire administered in July 2025 to 2,130 respondents across all four nations of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). The sample was strategically constructed to achieve specific representation goals, while maintaining geographic and demographic diversity. Given men's and women's shared stake in gender equality, the sample intentionally included men and women to allow comparison between the findings for men and women, although men were over sampled in the study.

We also conducted key informant interviews from June 2024 to February 2025 with 21 experts and stakeholders working with young men and boys to better understand the state of the field, as well as their advocacy priorities for men and boys in the UK today (see Annex A for list of institutions from which stakeholders were interviewed). We also consulted experts and stakeholders leading work across the thematic areas covered in this report.

For this study, we also report on findings from the Movenber Institute of Health's Men's Digital Health Study data that surveyed 1,023 men ages between 16 to 25 years of age in the UK in 2025.

Sampling Strategy

We employed a purposive sampling approach with proportionate stratification to ensure robust representation of men in the sample. The online data partner, RepData, recruited respondents from established online research panels, utilizing quota sampling to achieve predetermined demographic targets.



LONDON

Table 1. Additional sample characteristics percentage by gender

	Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women
Race											
White	87.35	67.32	Bachelor's	31.34	35.09	Agnostic	7.84	6.58	£55,001 – £70,000	13.29	15.79
Asian	5.91	21.27	Master's or higher	22.86	19.74	Atheist	30.19	24.78	More than £70,000	26.20	14.25
Black	4.75	6.14	Country			Caregiving			Employment Status		
Mixed	1.28	4.39	England	73.99	56.58	Have children	49.71	49.12	Full-time	73.09	52.19
Other	0.71	0.88	Scotland	7.84	17.98	Average number of children	1.84	1.79	Part-time	9.18	18.86
Age			Wales	9.12	13.82	Live with children	94.96	95.98	Working multiple jobs	0.64	0.66
18-24	21.07	26.54	Northern Ireland	9.06	11.62	Work Status			In education and employed	1.41	2.19
25-34	40.59	41.45	Religion			Partner has a job	74.69	76.85	In education and not employed	2.57	4.39
35-45	38.34	32.02	Muslim	7.64	14.25	Respondent has job	79.06	67.32	Internship/apprenticeship	0.32	0.44
Highest Level of Education			Catholic	28.58	27.19	Income			Self-employed part-time	1.35	2.41
None	1.28	0.44	Protestant	13.23	9.21	Less than £10,000	6.62	11.62	Self-employed full-time	2.44	3.73
Primary	0.26	0.88	Hindu	1.03	2.85	£10,001 – £25,000	12.59	18.86	Informal work	0.26	0.22
Secondary	16.12	11.84	Sikh	0.51	1.54	£25,001 – £40,000	25.18	26.10	Unemployed/looking for work	6.04	7.89
Sixth form	16.63	19.96	Buddhist	0.51	1.54	£40,001 – £55,000	16.12	13.38	Unable to work	2.25	5.26
Vocational	11.50	12.06	Spiritual	2.57	3.07						

Gender Breakdown

The sample deliberately oversampled men to allow for in-depth analysis of male perspectives and experiences:

Men: 70% (n = 1,470)
Women: 30% (n = 630)

This gender distribution enabled comprehensive subgroup analysis among men while maintaining a substantial comparison group of women to examine gender differences in key outcomes.

Race and Ethnicity

The sample closely matched UK population demographics for racial and ethnic composition:

White: 82.81%
Asian: 9.39%
Black: 5.00%
Mixed/Other: 2.80%

These proportions align with recent UK Census data, ensuring the findings are broadly representative of the UK’s ethnic diversity.

Age Distribution

The study focused on adults ages 18 to 45, with the following distribution:

18-24 years: 22.31% (n = 469)
25-34 years: 40.78% (n = 856)
35-45 years: 36.91% (n = 775)

This age range allowed for focused analysis of individuals navigating key life transitions including education completion, career establishment, and family formation.

The survey was administered online, and respondents accessed the survey via personalised links distributed through recruitment partner panels. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Quality Control Measures

Several quality control procedures were implemented:

- Attention check questions throughout the survey
- Minimum completion time requirements
- IP address verification to prevent duplicate responses
- Post-collection data cleaning to remove incomplete or inconsistent responses



Key Topic Areas

1. Gender Attitudes and Masculinity

Beliefs about gender roles, adherence to rigid masculine norms (for example, items from the Man Box survey that ask “Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help”), and support for gender equality

2. Social Connection and Support

Measures of social isolation, relationship quality, and community engagement

3. Mental Health and Well-Being

Depression symptoms, life satisfaction, and purpose

4. Political and Social Views

Trust in institutions, political engagement, and social attitudes

5. Online Behaviour

Internet use patterns, social media engagement, and digital relationships

6. Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Partnership status, dating experiences, and relationship satisfaction

7. Work and Economic Security

Employment status, financial stress, and career aspirations

Limitations

The exclusive use of online data collection may underrepresent individuals with limited internet access or digital literacy, potentially excluding some of the most marginalised populations. Despite quota controls, online panel participants may differ systematically from the general population in terms of engagement, attitudes, or behaviours. As a cross-sectional study capturing a single point in time, the survey design limits our ability to make causal inferences about the relationships observed. While the deliberate oversampling of men (70/30 male/female split) strengthens our analysis of male subgroups, it requires careful interpretation when making overall population estimates. We did not have sufficient data for meaningful analysis of some subgroups, such as for LGBTQ+ or region by region analysis. Finally, all measures rely on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly for sensitive topics such as mental health, relationship quality, and adherence to gender norms.



PHOTOGRAPHY JASON JEANDRON VIA UNSPLASH



Findings:

Being a Man and the 'Man Box' in the UK

"...we do need to help men to broaden their idea of what masculinity is, I believe, in this modern world. As men we can be providers and be provided for, be leaders and be led, be breadwinners and be caregivers.."

— Elliott Rae
Parenting Out Loud

What it means to be a man in the UK is expanding. But rigid ideas of masculinity remain prevalent among men.

There is growing attention on what it means to be a man in the UK.⁴ Often framed around the crisis and confusion of masculinity facing young men. For example, there is general agreement that gender norms are changing and young men's place in the world feels less clear and certain. At the same time, in the wake of the #MeToo movement and ever-increasing levels of men's violence against women and girls, conversations about masculinity in the UK frequently centre on men's harmful behaviours. When used, the word "masculinity" is often presumed to be pejorative, a source of harm and concern – particularly for women and girls – and a problem to be solved. These trends have only been intensified by the rise of social media and the "manosphere," pulling men into online algorithmic currents of misogynistic content and fuelling a gender divide and "crisis of connection."⁵ This report shows that what it means to be a young man

in the UK today presents a more complicated, and ultimately, hopeful picture. **The findings of this study make clear that what it means to be a man is expanding, but some restrictive ideas of masculinity are alive and well.** This gives cause for concern, as well as cause for optimism.

Before diving into the data here, what do we mean by the Man Box? In this report, being in the Man Box refers to those who most agree with and endorse rigid ideas about how men should be or behave. Conversely, men who are out of the Man Box are those who are the least likely to endorse or be boxed in by rigid ideas of what it means to be a man. This concept applies to women and men. See the Glossary for more on the Man Box.

As Equimundo has previously noted, this analysis of the Man Box is not intended to offer a blanket chastisement of men who are more likely to find themselves endorsing Man Box ideas.⁶ Importantly, being in or out of the Man Box is not static; men and women may endorse some ideas more than others and move in and out at different times in their lives.

Traits Valued in Masculinity

What it means to be a man in the UK is shifting and is associated with a range of roles and attributes. In the survey, participants were presented with a list of potential attributes linked to ideas of manhood and were asked to identify those that most represent what it means to be a man today. **Ten of the 18 attributes were identified by three-quarters (75 percent) of participants, while 14 of the possible 18 were selected by almost two-thirds (60 percent) of participants.** To be sure, there is no one singular and clear-cut way to be a man in the UK today.

Strikingly, being a man is unambiguously associated with friendship and showing up for people who need it (see figure 1): 91 percent of men and women surveyed believe that being a friend is a defining quality of manhood. A similar proportion of respondents believe that helping those who need it and giving advice are core to being a man. Further, a significant majority – more than 80 percent – affirmed that protecting their community is a core attribute of masculinity. With the exception of protecting their community, the figures from women and men surveyed relative to these attributes were largely equal across these attributes.

In addition to being a friend, several more traits scored highly as defining what it means to be a man in the UK today; some of those traits are more traditionally associated with masculinity and some are more recent additions. Notably, **men surveyed were almost as likely to agree that being a provider for their family defines a core feature of masculinity today as sharing the housework and care work with a partner, with these attributes scoring 88 percent and 83 percent, respectively.** As detailed in the Findings: Fatherhood and Care section, norms around fatherhood and parenthood in particular are shifting, as parents adopt more equitable parenting and call for more support for men to be more involved fathers at home.

“Being a man means...”

- Being a friend
- Helping those who need it
- Providing for their family
- Managing conflict with communication
- Giving advice
- Sharing carework and housework
- Being strong
- Protecting their community
- Fatherhood
- Being open with emotions
- Having a salaried job
- Being a winner
- Sports and the gym
- Having a wife/partner
- Being in charge
- Making lots of money
- Managing conflict with violence
- Having many sexual partners

Figure 1. Percentage of men and women who strongly agree or agree with traits that define manhood

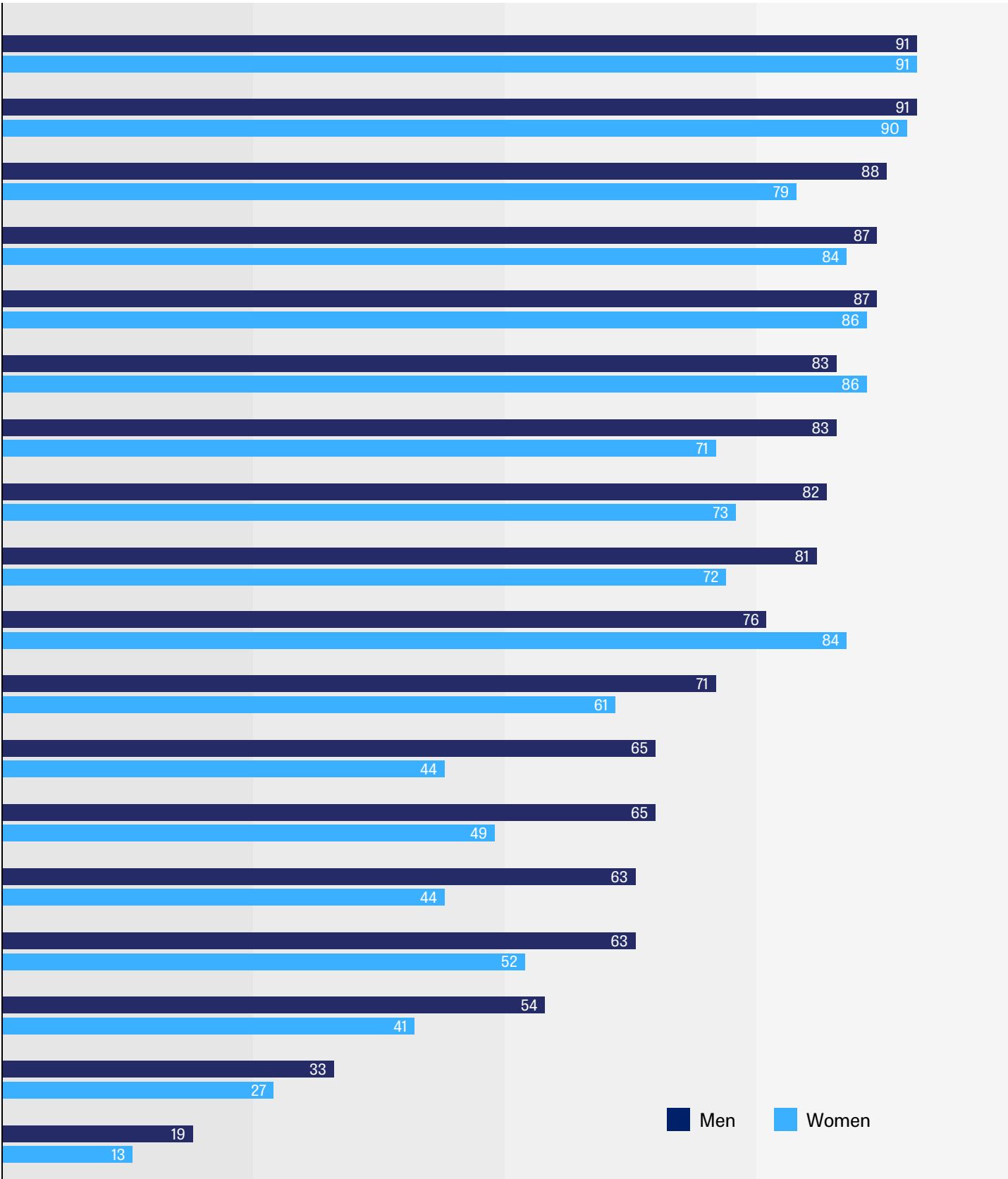


Figure 2. *In men's words, "My ideal man is...."*



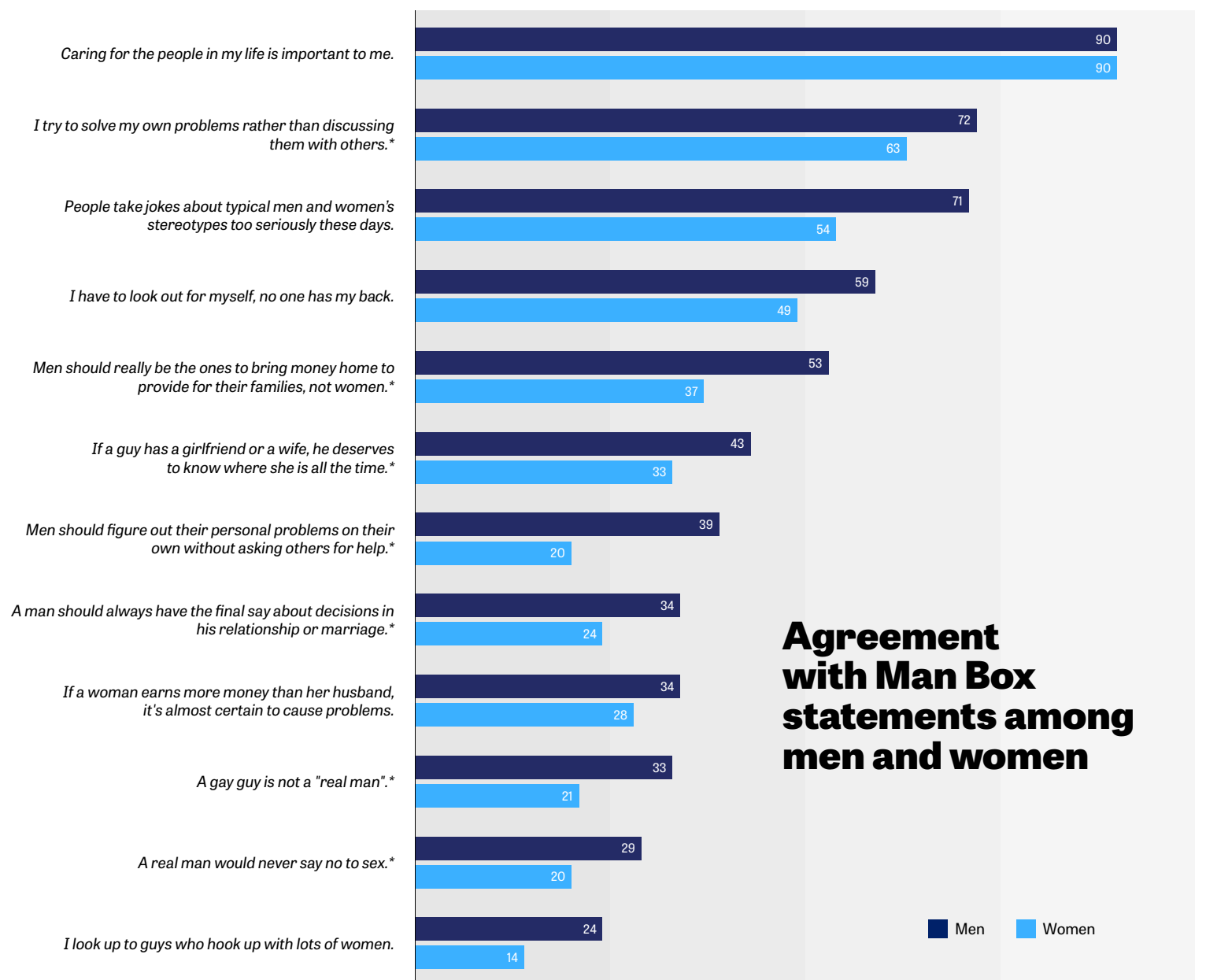
As Figure 2 shows, we also asked participants to describe what an ideal man means to them, in their own words. Participants were told that they could describe characteristics or write the name of a public figure. The image shows the amalgamation of the words most commonly used by participants across the sample to describe what an ideal man means to them – with the size of the words representing their frequency.

Among the attributes most valued in mas-

culinity today are family, honesty, kindness, strength, and care. These well-represented qualities of ideal masculinity that young men live by – or are aspiring to live by – are a far cry from those associated with more harmful ideas of masculinity in society.

In this regard, equally striking were the characteristics participants identified as being least associated with what it means to be a man today. On average, only 19 percent of men surveyed identified having multiple

Figure 3. Percentage of men and women who strongly agree/agree with statements about the Man Box



sexual partners as being a core feature of masculinity, a figure which dropped to 13 percent for women. Relatedly, three-quarters of men surveyed affirmed they did not look up to men who “hook-up with lots of women,” with men in the youngest age bracket being the least likely to report looking up to men who have casual sex with multiple female partners. While violence featured among the least identified features associated with what it means to be a man today, a sizable minority – **a third of**

men and more than a quarter of women – do associate managing conflict with violence as a part of what it means to be a man today.

The Role of the Man Box

While change is evident, the survey revealed that the Man Box still has a firm grip on men in the UK and may be hard to shake (see figure 3). The survey included some original Man Box items – noted with an asterisk (*) in figure 3 – and added others.



Views About Masculinity in the UK: A Snapshot

The survey results present the following views about masculinity in the UK:

- **71 percent of men believe** that people take jokes about gender stereotypes too seriously
- **Just over half of men surveyed believe** that men are becoming weaker these days
- **Just over half of men believe** that men should really be the ones to bring home the money to provide for their families, not women (original Man Box survey item)
- **44 percent of men believe** that men make better executives and leaders
- **A third of men believe** that a man should always have the final say in his relationship or marriage (original Man Box survey item)
- **A third of men believe** that gay men are not real men (original Man Box survey item)
- Men and women in the Man Box are **48**

percent less likely to intervene as a bystander to challenge harmful behaviour against women

Some men are more likely to endorse the Man Box than others: higher-earning men and Asian men are more likely to endorse restrictive masculinity than other groups.

The survey indicated that relative to white men, Asian men were just over three times more likely to endorse the Man Box. Men earning £70,000 a year or more were 1.4 times more likely to be in the Man Box than men in the lowest income bracket. Regarding political outlook, the analysis showed a strong negative gradient in Man Box endorsement from the right-leaning identifying participants relative to the left of the political spectrum. While age differences did not show significant variation relative to the Man Box scale as a whole, there were some differences along specific items. For example, the youngest cohort of men surveyed were less likely to agree that “a real man

would never say no to sex,” while men who are aged 35 and up were found to be the most likely to agree that “people take jokes about gender stereotypes too seriously these days.”

Men are more than twice (2.6 times) as likely to endorse the Man Box than women. For a significant portion of men and women in the UK, the Man Box shapes their ideas and expectations of dynamics between men and women in their relationships, workplaces, politics, and in society. While women and men were aligned around valuing men’s friendship, care, communication, and advice, some divergence was perceptible around roles and characteristics conventionally associated with masculinity. Relative to men, women were, on average:

- **20 percent less likely** to say having a partner or wife is what it means to be a man
- **9 percent less likely** to say providing for their family is what it means to be a man
- **9 percent less likely** to say fatherhood is what it means to be a man
- **9 percent less likely** to say protecting their community is what it means to be a man

The Man Box provides men with a sense of purpose; it is also harming men. Equipundo’s research shows that the Man Box provides men with clarity and a sense of certainty in an uncertain and changing world.⁷ Adherence to the Man Box can also provide men with currency and standing – and is correlated with a stronger sense of purpose.⁸ We see this reflected in the UK, too: **Across the surveyed men, the ones who endorsed the Man Box had 1.7 higher odds of reporting a higher sense of purpose in their lives.**

Interestingly, this finding often sits at odds with men’s mental health outcomes. **Across men surveyed, men who endorsed Man Box ideals were, on average, also three times more likely to report having thought about suicide or self-harm in the past two weeks.** This aligns with research carried out by Equipundo, including in the UK,⁹ revealing a

threshold beyond which the purpose men gain associated with their Man Box endorsement morphs into pressure. This pressure is often compounded by expectations of stoicism and a reluctance to seek support. This underscores the extent to which self-reliance remains the modus operandi for most men, even in the face of challenges and hardship.

Despite valuing friendship and caring for the people in their lives, almost **three-quarters of men report that they opt to solve problems on their own rather than discuss them with others, while almost two-thirds (60 percent) of men affirmed that they “have to look out for themselves because no one else has their back.”** This affirms the double-edged sword nature of the Man Box. While conforming to the Man Box rewards men with purpose and standing, the pressures to conform can also leave men feeling boxed in without the tools to navigate their way out. This double-bind can have punishing and perilous consequences for men and the people in their lives.

“Over recent decades, as some men have been falling out of love with equality, fathers have fallen in love with care. Dads still want to protect and provide – we just believe that one of the best ways to protect our kids is through the example we set, we believe in providing for their families means their presence as well as food on the table.”

— George Gabriel
The Dad Shift



PHOTOGRAPHY ADRIEN OLICHON VIA UNSPLASH

"... It's upstream thinking, really, if we get a boy and a man supported, feeling more confident, secure in who he is, actually a lot of those downstream factors are mitigated."

— Mike Nicholson
Progressive Masculinity



Findings:

Men's Purpose in Precarious and Uncertain Times

Young people in the UK are facing a crisis of purpose and aspiration. Uncertain about their futures, men – and those facing financial hardships in particular – are experiencing this crisis of purpose acutely, with profound ripple effects across their lives.

In recent years, life in the UK has been marked by political and economic upheaval. After a decade of government austerity decimating public services and an ever-intensifying cost-of-living crisis, for many, the economic landscape looks bleak. While employment rates in the UK are relatively high – with 75 percent of 16- to 64-year-olds in some

form of employment¹⁰ – job security and job satisfaction are low. According to The Work Foundation at Lancaster University, in 2023, one in five workers were estimated to be in severely insecure work.¹¹ As short-term and precarious contracts increasingly become the norm and as the cost of living continues to soar, recent research found that young people in the UK are putting their aspirations on hold and are “no longer chasing their dream jobs.”¹² In these turbulent times, many young people, including men, are struggling to achieve financial security and plan for the future. **In this context, as many men and women surveyed reported feeling that their personal**

Figure 5. Percentage of men across difference income groups who share their economic worries.

existence is without meaning or purpose as those who reported feeling that their personal existence is full of meaning or purpose (figure 4).

Economic Anxiety as a Root Driver of the Crisis of Purpose

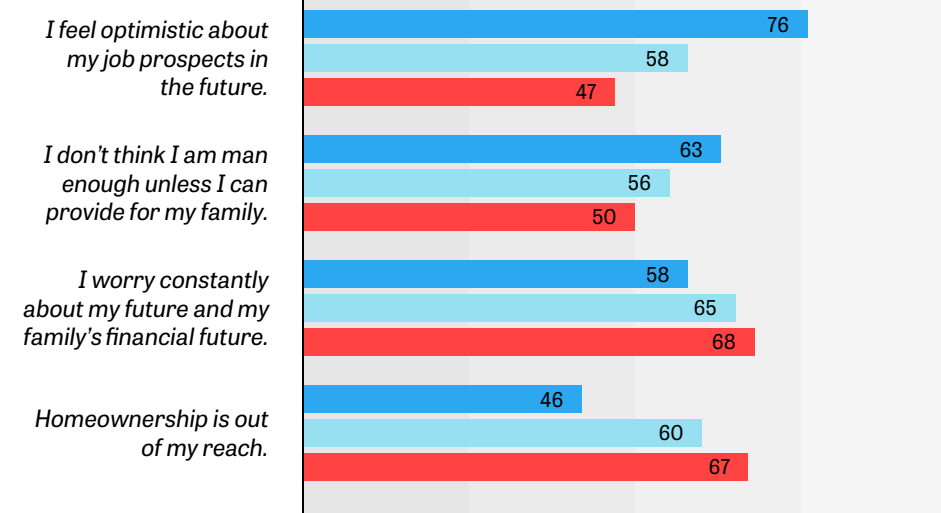
A significant proportion of men are experiencing financial insecurity and anxiety. Forty percent of men surveyed reported that their income is not sufficient to meet their daily needs and only 46 percent of men revealed that their financial conditions are excellent. As figure 5 shows, overall, men were less likely than women to report that their income meets their needs and less likely to state that their financial conditions are excellent. Unsurprisingly, the highest-earning men sampled were least likely to report that their income was insufficient to meet their daily needs and were most likely to report that their financial conditions are excellent. Yet even men in the highest-earning bracket expressed concerns about their future financial prospects. No-

tably, 42 percent of men earning £55,000 a year or more believe that home ownership is out of their reach and close to 60 percent of men in the same income bracket report constantly worrying about their financial future. Unsurprisingly, these figures increase for men in lower-income brackets, with **almost 70 percent of men earning £25,000 a year or less reporting that home ownership is out of their reach and a similar proportion reporting they constantly worry about their financial future.**

Financial security is closely entwined with men's purpose, as well as men's sense of masculinity. **Men earning more than £70,000 a year were nearly 14 times more likely to describe their lives as meaningful than those with the lowest incomes.** Yet, while purpose in life rose sharply with income, the data also surfaced additional factors that influence men's sense of purpose. **Black men were more than twice as likely to report higher levels of purpose in their lives compared with white men, while transgender respondents also reported higher levels of**

Men's financial anxieties by earnings bracket

More than 55K+
Between 25K – 55K
Less than 25K



purpose than cis respondents. This suggests that for higher earners, a sense of purpose may be reinforced by financial stability and the ability to plan ahead. For marginalised groups, purpose may also come from collective identity, solidarity, and community resilience. **Age also matters. Men ages 25 to 34 had 1.6 times higher odds of reporting purpose than men ages 18 to 24.** Younger men may struggle to find purpose as they navigate early adulthood, compounded by broader instability in a world marked by political volatility, economic uncertainty, and climate crisis.

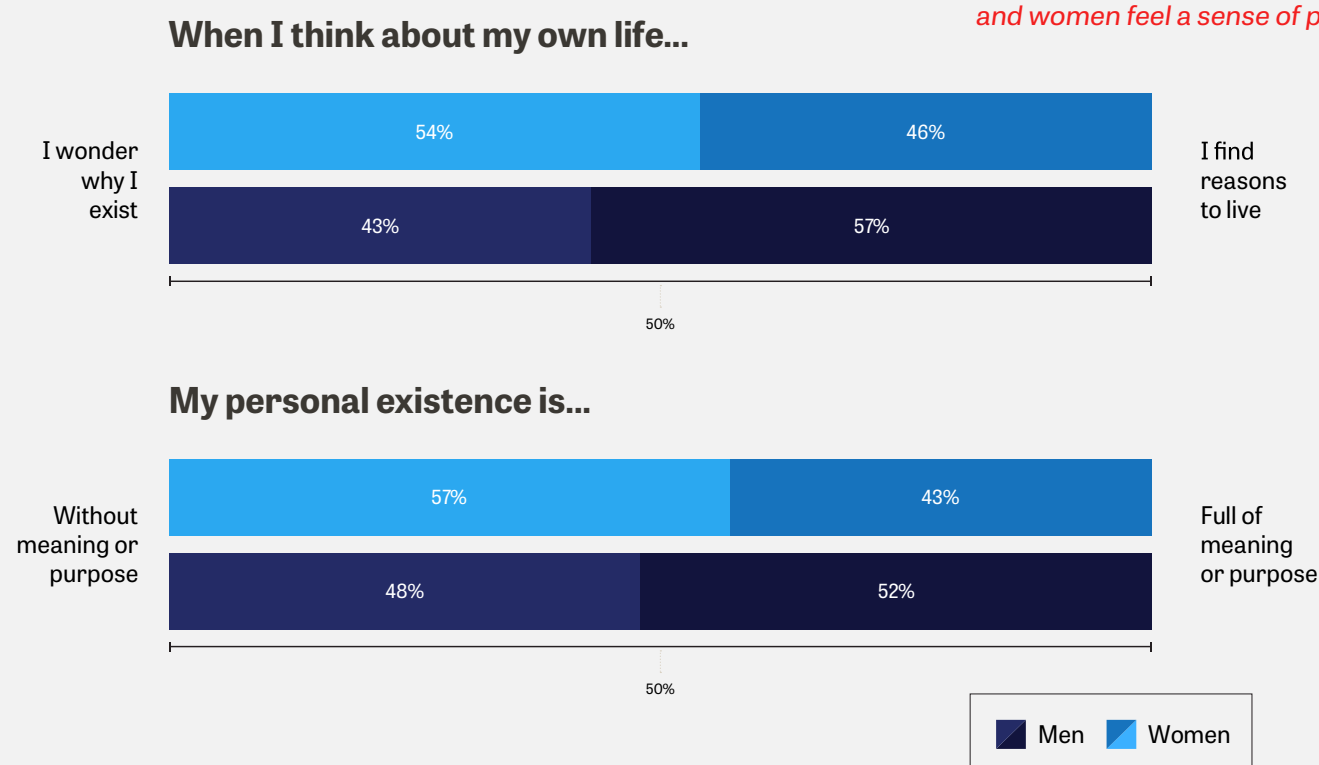
For many men navigating this tough economic landscape, a clear and secure sense of manhood feels out of reach – particularly for younger and lower-income men. On average, 40 percent of men surveyed reported wishing they were more masculine. The survey did not allow for participants to expand on their response. Nevertheless, further analysis of which men were most likely to agree with this statement was telling: the youngest cohort of men were 10 percent more likely to agree with this statement than men over 35. Further, the lowest-earning men were 40 percent more likely to affirm wishing they were more masculine than the highest-earning men surveyed. While financial wealth did not feature among the most highly selected

features of what it means to be a man today, these findings suggest that **financial security remains a prominent marker of a masculine identity among men in the UK – and one which feels increasingly out of reach today.**

Linkages to Mental Health

Unsurprisingly, economic security and purpose are closely tied to mental health, including for men. Men with higher incomes have far lower odds of reporting suicidal thoughts, while financial insecurity predicts greater distress. This link is not simply about wealth, but what it represents: safety, control, and opportunity. When these are absent, the psychological toll can be severe. **Loneliness compounds these pressures. Around half of all men and women agreed that “no one really knows me,” reflecting widespread disconnection.** Men ages 18 to 24 reported the lowest levels of support: just over half said they had someone to talk to, compared with two-thirds of older men. Women in the lowest-income bracket were least likely to have emotional support, showing how financial strain and the competing demands of paid work and domestic labour can leave lower-income women isolated. Together, these findings show that purpose and well-being are shaped by structural, economic, and social factors.

Figure 4. Personal existence: how many men and women feel a sense of purpose





Findings:

Men's Online Lives and the "Manosphere"

As men in the UK spend more time online, they are finding themselves more frequently exposed to the "manosphere," where they are more likely to encounter powerful, harmful, and often appealing ideas about gender and society. These ideas are resonating with a majority of men.

In the UK, men and boys are increasingly turning to the internet not only for connection and self-expression but also for advice, community, and even grievance. While digital spaces can provide vital avenues of belonging and emotional release, they are also where powerful messages about masculinity converge – messages that riff on self-improvement, hierarchy, and entitlement. A recent UK study by the Movember Institute of Men's Health found that around 61 percent of young men ages 16 to 25 regularly engage with masculinity influencers, and those who do are significantly more likely to believe that men must fix their own lives and not ask for help.¹³ At the same time, online spaces are exposing many boys and young men to what external commentators have labelled the "manosphere" – a disparate network of online groups

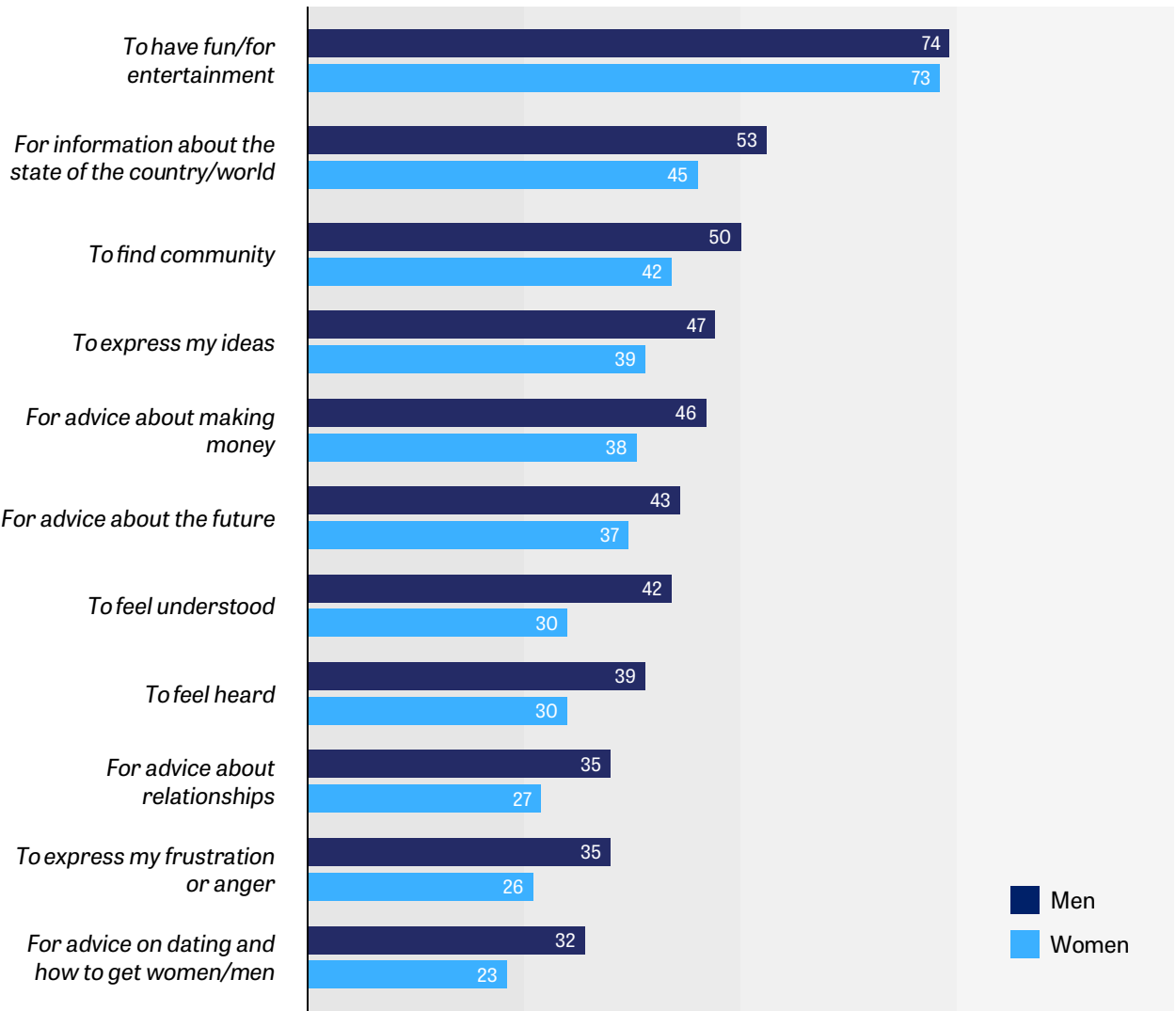
and spaces described by the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD) as "a breeding ground for the most extreme and violent expressions of misogyny" (also see the Glossary).¹⁴ According to ISD's analysis, while not all corners of the manosphere are extremist, and many of these groups do not see themselves as related, those included share an ideological core that recasts gender equality as a zero-sum threat to men's status, and they sometimes overlap with right-wing or conspiratorial movements.¹⁵

Men spend more time online than women and find their online lives more rewarding than their offline lives. The internet plays an increasingly significant role in men's social and emotional worlds. Men spend more time online than women: one-third (33 percent) are online for 3 to 5 hours per day, one-fifth (20 percent) for 6 to 8 hours, and 11 percent for more than 8 hours daily. By contrast, most women spend 1 to 3 hours per day online. **Men also report greater online satisfaction: one in three (32 percent) say their online social life is more interesting and rewarding than their offline life, compared with 24 percent of women.** For many men, the internet has become a central site of social participa-

PHOTOGRAPHY ARTHUR EDELMANS VIA UNSPLASH

Figure 6. Percentage of men and women who go online (a lot or completely) for these reasons

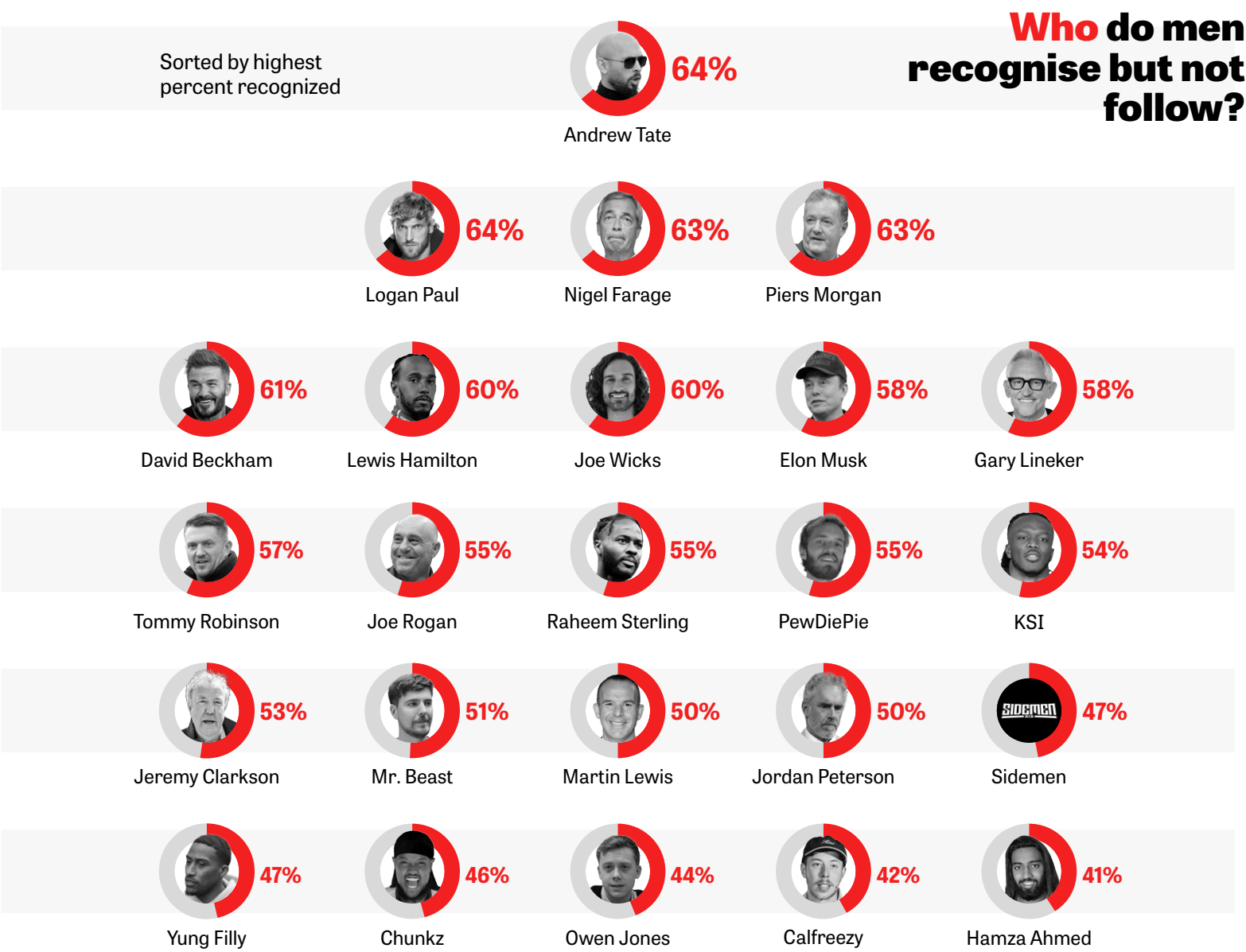
Why men and women go online



tion and self-expression, with social life shifting from shared physical spaces to more individualised, digital environments. **Men are going online for a range of reasons, including to find community, express anger, and look for advice (see figure 6).** Forty-three percent of men feel able to be themselves without judgment online, compared with 36 percent of women. Men are also more likely to use the internet to feel heard, understood, and connected. The relative anonymity of

online spaces may provide a safer arena for vulnerability, compensating for what may be missing in men's offline relationships. **Asian respondents were more likely than white respondents to go online to find community and feel understood.** For many, online spaces provide vital links to diasporic or transnational networks and may feel safer amid rising racism and xenophobia in the UK. A notable gender difference emerges in the emotional uses of online space: **35 percent of men, com-**

Figure 7. List of influencers who men recognise (percent who agreed)



Who do men recognise but not follow?

pared with 26 percent of women, report going online frequently to express frustration or anger. The prevalence of online anger among men may signal deeper unmet needs for belonging and emotional expression. However, men's online anger may also hint at something additionally troubling: a persistent sense of grievance.

Who are Men Following?

The survey asked men who they recognise and follow online (see figure 7). Significantly,

more men recognise men and masculinity influencers than follow them. For instance, almost two-thirds recognise names like Joe Rogan, Mr. Beast, and Andrew Tate, but a much smaller percentage report that they follow these influencers' accounts. This is a critical distinction as discussions about the manosphere evolve – we cannot assume that all men are passively absorbing, or even actively engaging with, the content put forth by these accounts.

Table 2. Percentage of men and women who strongly agree/agree with harmful narratives online

Agreement with harmful online narratives among men and women

	Men	Women
Men have it harder than women when it comes to new opportunities.	51%	30%
Men can have their reputation destroyed just for speaking their minds these days.	68%	45%
Things are generally better when men bring in money and women take care of the home and/or kids.	54%	45%
Things would be better if women held more powerful positions in society and men did more around the house.	50%	60%
It should be a national law that women and men with the same qualifications in the same jobs get paid equally.	75%	82%
No one cares whether men are ok these days.	63%	39%
Feminism is about favouring women over men.	59%	37%
The media tend to paint men in a negative light.	67%	47%
All in all, men are well respected in today's society.	51%	66%
You must be an alpha male these days to get a partner.	43%	27%
It makes me so angry that unqualified people get promoted just because of diversity.	63%	57%
Women only seek out men who either have a lot of money or a really good job.	57%	41%
More masculine energy is needed in the workplace.	49%	39%
For one group to succeed, one has to lose.	52%	38%
I support getting rid of equality, diversity, and inclusion policies.	46%	32%
I feel a lot of pressure to look a certain way to be successful in the dating world.	57%	57%
Most men don't stand a chance to meet someone on dating apps.	54%	34%
I find it difficult not to keep swiping on dating apps to see who else I can match with.	45%	37%
I respect men who flash their wealth.	36%	25%
The world would be a better place if everybody had the same rights and opportunities.	75%	78%
Men should be more valued in society	68%	50%
Racism isn't an issue in the UK	32%	21%

Box 1. Digital Subcultures and the Manosphere

Digital Subcultures and the Manosphere

MEN WHO AGREE WITH GENDER-THREAT STATEMENTS are more likely to go online to seek advice, find community, and express frustration. Social media algorithms that amplify emotionally charged content can transform that frustration into grievance.ⁱ Studies show that isolated young men are disproportionately exposed to misogynistic content: platforms like TikTok can steer users from self-improvement content towards anti-feminist, sometimes extremist ideologies. Men and boys searching for advice, understanding, and belonging online can quickly be exposed to the “red pill” world-view of what is frequently termed “the manosphere.”

The red pill metaphor – borrowed from but unrelated to the 1999 film The Matrix – refers to a supposed awakening to the “truth” that society has been corrupted by feminism, which allegedly disadvantages men. This framing is central to online subcultures mostly populated by men, such as the involuntary celibate (incel) community, whose members often describe themselves as victims of women’s “hypergamous tendencies” (the belief that women prefer only high-status “alpha men” and therefore “mate upward,” condemning “beta men” to lives of perpetual loneliness).

However, incel groups represent only one strand of a broader, disparate constellation of online communities and groups, including some men’s rights activists (MRAs), pickup artists (PUAs), and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) groups. These groups have important differences and do not see themselves as part of a shared network, but they share a common ideological core: the conviction that feminism has destabilised traditional gender relations, undermined men’s authority, and fostered “feminine privilege.” Within these spaces, gender-threat ideology becomes both explanation and justification, reframing social progress as moral and civilisational decline and an attack on men, and positioning anger towards women as a means of restoring masculine control.ⁱⁱ

PHOTOGRAPHY JAROSLAV MALÉŘ VIA UNSPLASH

What are the Harmful Narratives Online?

Many men in the UK feel uncertain about their place in a changing world. This unease is finding expression through gender-threat ideology: the belief that progress towards gender equality threatens men's status or the natural order of society.

Rooted in anti-feminist backlash, gender-threat ideology reframes feminist and LGBTQ+ movements as threats to a supposedly natural gender balance rather than as struggles for justice or equality. This framing interprets gender equality as a zero-sum game, in which women's advancement necessarily demands men's decline. Men's grievances are reframed as evidence of systemic victimisation. Across all statements measured, men expressed greater endorsement of gender-threat beliefs than women (see table 2):

- **57 percent of men agreed** that "women only seek out men who either have a lot of money or a really good job"
- **68 percent of men agreed** that "men can

have their reputations destroyed just for speaking their mind these days"

- **67 percent of men agreed** that "the media tends to portray men in a negative light"
- **59 percent of men agreed** that "feminism is about favouring women over men"

Taken together, these findings reveal a pervasive sense among men of persecution and displacement. Many perceive themselves as targets of unfair scrutiny or cultural hostility and understand feminism not as a movement towards equality but as an attempt to gain advantage over men.

The idea that women are romantically motivated by economic self-interest reflects the enduring "provider ideal," in which masculinity is tied to earning power. Such beliefs – strongest among higher-income men, who may be more invested in traditional success metrics – can carry a misogynistic logic portraying women as transactional or manipulative.

Harmful Narratives Online and the Far Right

Endorsement of harmful online narratives is highest among those identifying with the far right, who are also more likely to use the internet to express anger or seek validation.

Both gender-threat and far-right ideologies frame social change as an existential crisis and idealise a return to patriarchal hierarchies. Within these narratives, men's economic and cultural anxieties are racialised and weaponised: feminism, migration, and multiculturalism are cast as parallel threats to moral and national order. Here, gender grievance merges with nationalist politics, offering alienated men – particularly white men – both an explanation for their struggles and a sanctioned target for their rage.

While men are more likely to endorse gender-threat beliefs, these attitudes are not exclusive to them. Among women, substantial minorities also express ambivalence about changing gender roles:

"The manosphere isn't the problem; it's the symptom. The real issue is a cultural void around how we support boys and men. The solution isn't to solely cancel influencers or censor content; it's to understand what drives boys there. Until we rebuild the offline spaces where boys feel seen, valued, and guided, the same needs will keep finding new outlets. You could get rid of the manosphere tomorrow, but the unmet needs would remain."

— Will Adolphy
M-Path

"... in 2025, society continues to confront them with limited and limiting patriarchal pressures to be a 'real man'. These rigid expectations are being turbocharged online, and boys and men's insecurities are being exploited and weaponised for profit and political gain. But the research also highlights the potential for men and boys to be positive agents of change, with many already supportive of gender equality, yearning for connection, and keen to care for others, for example as fathers."

Many feel that our leaders are failing to offer positive examples currently. Yet there are numerous inspiring examples of men and boys and organisations who are working together with people of all genders to create healthier, happier, more equitable communities. Hopefully this report will help to bring into question the divisive narratives saturating media and politics at the moment, and drive forwards efforts to build a more caring and just society for all."

— Stephen Burrell, University of Melbourne
Sandy Ruxton, University of Durham
Now and Men Podcast

- **45 percent agree** that men risk reputational damage for speaking their minds
- **47 percent agree** that the media portrays men negatively
- **45 percent agree** that "things are generally better when men provide and women care for the home"
- **37 percent agree** that "feminism favours women over men"

In times of social, economic, and environmental instability – marked by austerity, global conflict, climate change, and technological upheaval – traditional gender norms may provide a sense of order and predictability, offering a sense of security amid multiple uncertainties.

Hope for the Future

Despite these challenges, there are strong reasons for optimism. Almost equal proportions of men (54 percent) and women (50 percent) endorse the idea that society would benefit if women held

more power and men shared more domestic duties. Moreover, a large majority of men (75 percent) and women (82 percent) support equal pay for equal work, and similar numbers agree that the world would be better if everyone had the same rights and opportunities. These findings suggest that most people support the principle of gender equality, even if traditional gender norms and roles retain emotional appeal. For those seeking to advance gender justice, their task may be not only ideological but also emotional: Progress requires addressing men's needs for purpose, belonging, and healthy emotional expression. Our regression analysis shows that offline relationships correlate with lower endorsement of gender-threat beliefs – and that is after controlling for all demographic differences by race, income, region, and age. This finding suggests that the most effective solutions are relational rather than rhetorical: By repairing disconnection and rebuilding community, we reduce the appeal of grievance and the ideologies that exploit it.



Findings:

Men's Health, Well-Being, and Safety

PHOTOGRAPHY OLLIE CRAIG VIA PEXELS

BIRMINGHAM



Men face particular challenges relating to their health, well-being, and sense of safety in the world. Addressing men's well-being has important positive social outcomes and affirms that care leads to care.

Globally, the topic of men's health – both physical and mental – remains stigmatised in conversation. In the UK, this is starting to change. Recognising that men experience particular and disproportionate challenges relating to health and accessing health care, the government recently commissioned a call for evidence on men's health to inform the development of a Men's Health Strategy for England. The development of this strategy was borne out of the knowledge that life expectancy for men in the UK consistently remains lower than for women. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), on average, men live four years fewer than women (79 years for men and 83 years for women).¹⁶

"This data shows why a gender-sensitive approach to men's health is essential. Men's wellbeing is rooted in connection, purpose and belonging, yet services too often overlook these social determinants. Meeting men where they are means understanding the realities of their lives and creating settings - at work, in communities and online - where care and support feel relevant, accessible and valued."

— Paul Galdas
University of York

Figure 8. Percentage of men who reported seeking medical help when they need it (rarely/never to frequently or most of the time)

Some specific men's physical and mental health statistics indicate cause for concern and action. It is well documented that men are more likely to die by suicide than women; the UK is no exception. It is estimated that three-quarters of deaths by suicide in the UK are by men, a trend that has remained consistent since the mid-1990s.¹⁷ Moreover, suicide is the biggest cause of death among men under 50.¹⁸ Across a range of health outcomes, men fall behind women.¹⁹

Advocacy about some of the issues specific to men's health is emerging. Regarding men's social and reproductive well-being, there is increased attention to men's experiences of violence in the UK and to men's reproductive health. A number of initiatives are encouraging men to be more proactive around their health and well-being, the most well-known of which is likely 'Grow a Moustache for Movember,' an annual campaign to raise awareness around men's health. More recently, the health start-up Jack Fertility is breaking barriers around men's reproductive health by offering men and people with sperm mail-in sperm testing.²⁰

Despite increasing public conversations around men's health, men remain less likely than women to seek health care, with some significant differences in barriers to health care experienced by different groups of men. Research by the Movember Institute of Men's Health shows a majority of men say gender stereotypes have an impact on their health behaviours and their experiences in health care settings, with 42 percent saying they have encountered gender bias from their practitioner.²¹ Health care providers can reinforce Man Box norms around stoicism and self-reliance, responding more positively to men who demonstrate these traits. For some young men in the UK, this contributes to a perception that accessing health care is embarrassing.²² For racialised men, a lack of cultural competency and racist bias in health care providers can

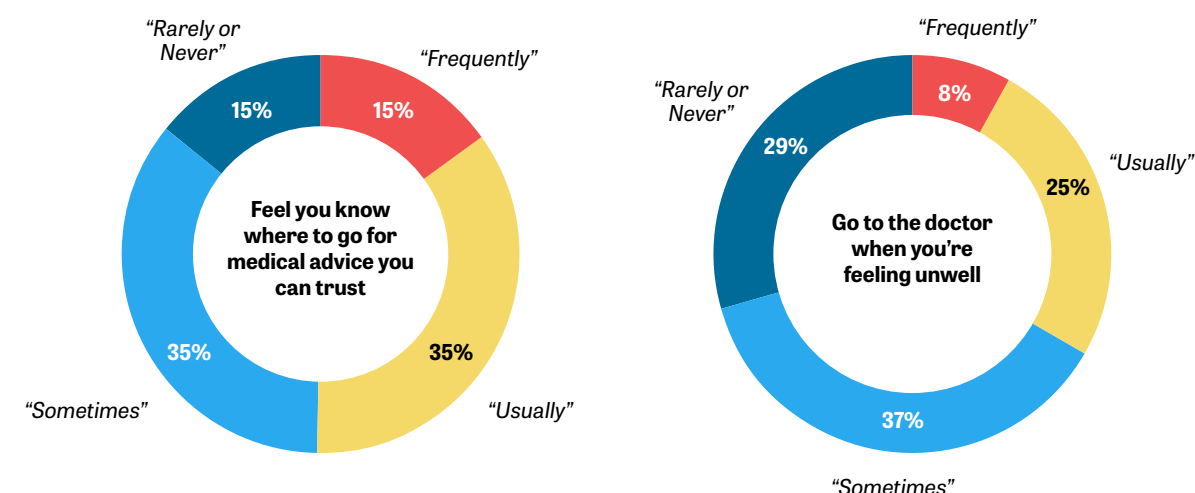
erode their trust in health care services and discourage them from seeking help: In a 2022 NHS survey of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority patients, 38 percent of Asian respondents and 49 percent of Black respondents reported being treated differently by primary care providers because of their ethnicity, and only half of respondents said they trust primary care providers to meet their health needs all or most of the time.²³

Men's Health Needs Remain Unmet

Men disclosed living with a range of health conditions, physical- and mental-health related. A greater proportion of men reported experiencing a range of symptoms associated with mental health challenges than reported a mental health condition as such (see figure 8). On average, more than a third (36 percent) of men surveyed reported having one or more health condition(s) of some kind, including physical health related, mental health related, a disability, or chronic pain. Of these, 13 percent reported having a physical health condition with an additional 5 percent reporting chronic pain. Seven percent of men who reported a health condition disclosed living with a disability. **Looking at mental health, 1 in 5 men disclosed having a mental health condition and an additional 4 percent of men disclosed living with post-traumatic stress disorder.** A higher number still reported experiencing symptoms of mental illness, including anxiety, thoughts of self-harm, and suicide.

Young men were most likely to disclose living with a health condition, particularly mental health, while Asian and Black men were least likely to disclose living with a health condition. Looking across age groups, men in the youngest cohort were slightly more likely than average – +5 percent – to disclose living with a health condition, in particular a mental health condition, a disability, and

How often men report seeking medical help when they need it



chronic pain. By contrast, men surveyed who are 35 and older were the group least likely to report living with a mental health condition but were slightly more likely than average (+2 percent) to report living with a physical health condition. Men in the 25 to 34 age category were slightly less likely than average to report living with a health condition. Looking at racial variation, white men were slightly more (+3 percent) likely than men overall to report living with a health condition. Remarkably, the survey revealed that Black and Asian men were the groups the least likely to disclose living with a health condition, being 12 percent and 15 percent less likely to report a health condition than the average. We are cautious not to interpret this to mean that men in these groups do not have health conditions, particularly as existing research shows that racialised men may be more susceptible to certain diseases and conditions than white men for a number of social, economic, and structural reasons.²⁴

While 1 in 5 men disclosed living with a mental health condition, a far greater number – 67.5 percent – disclosed experiencing negative mental health symptoms. Men are

evidently struggling with their mental health, even if they may not recognise these symptoms as such. While 45 percent of men overall reported thoughts of self-harm or suicide within the previous two weeks, three-quarters of men disclosed that they constantly worried about bad things happening, such as a family tragedy, falling ill, experiencing an accident, or losing their job. **The youngest cohort of men were the most likely to report negative mental health symptoms.** Sixty-seven percent of men in the 18 to 24 age bracket disclosed at least one negative symptoms in the previous two weeks, while men in the oldest cohort (35+) were the least likely to disclose experiencing negative mental health symptoms in the previous two weeks. This may reflect a growing tendency among younger men towards greater awareness about and openness around mental health. Demographic variation and negative mental health outcomes:

- **Men ages 18 to 24 were overall 11 percent more likely** to report thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideation, and 18 percent more likely to report experiencing catastrophic thinking in the previous two

GLASGOW



weeks than men who are ages 35 to 45

- **Black men were overall 10 percent less likely** to report negative mental health symptoms than the average for men, yet more than 60 percent of Black men reported experiencing catastrophic thinking over the last two weeks and 40 percent reported thoughts of self-harm or suicide in this same period
- **More than half of Asian men** – 53 percent – reported experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicidal ideation in the last two weeks, almost 10 percent higher than men surveyed overall

A significant portion of men are unlikely to seek medical care when they are unwell or take time off work to recover, meaning that men's health needs are unmet. Overall, just under a third of men surveyed indicated that they rarely or never go to the doctor when

they are feeling unwell, while only 8 percent of men overall report that they seek medical care most or all of the time. Women were, overall, as likely to report that they seek medical care most or all of the time when they are feeling unwell, but were 6 percent less likely to report that they rarely or never seek medical care. Women were also as likely as men to report that they rarely or never know where to go for medical advice they can trust. Just under a third of men and women also reported that they rarely or never feel that “they can take time off to recover and feel better” when they are unwell. This is significant. As Equimundo's research shows, men who take care of themselves are more likely to care for the people in their lives. In other words, care leads to care.²⁵

Men's Experiences of Violence and Feelings of Safety

Taking a broader look at men's social

well-being and sense of safety, more than 40 percent of men surveyed reported experiencing violence in their lifetime. Overall, 44 percent of men surveyed reported experiencing, witnessing, or being threatened by violence at some point in their lifetime, with men in the youngest age bracket being slightly more likely than average to report exposure to violence (+5 percent). This was, on average, slightly higher than the aggregated levels of violence reported by women surveyed over their lifetime. The intention of noting this variation here is not to create or contribute to a hierarchy of harms between women and men - there are a number of reasons why the figure may be lower for women surveyed. **This finding does serve to show that men in the UK are exposed to and experience significant levels of violence in their lives.** The survey also asked participants about the types of violence they had been exposed to and where. Men who

reported exposure to violence were most likely to report being beaten in a serious physical fight that left someone injured, reported by just over a third (34 percent) of men. Similarly, approximately a third of men also reported witnessing domestic violence between adults in their homes growing up (32 percent), 28 percent reported benign exposed to violence against children growing up, while 31 percent of men overall reported being exposed to knife or weapon-based violence, while 15 percent and 13 percent reported exposure to gang and police violence, respectively.

Where men's experiences of violence took place:

- **For over a quarter of men**, this violence took place at home
- **For over half of men**, this violence took place in a public place
- **For 20 percent**, this violence took place at school, college, or university

- **For 10 percent**, this violence took place online

Where women's experiences of violence took place:

- **For almost half of women**, this violence took place at home
- **For over a third of women**, this violence took place in a public place
- **For 19 percent**, this violence took place at school, college, or university
- **For 16 percent**, this violence took place online

Men and women are likely to experience different types and levels of violence in different settings, but men on the whole feel safer than women in public, online, and at home. Yet, a sizable proportion of men report feeling unsafe, too. Women were almost twice as likely to report exposure to violence at home relative to men, whereas men were more likely to report exposure to violence in public. As shown below, men and women reported relatively similar levels of exposure to violence in educational settings, while women were more likely to report violence online.

While men reported experiencing higher levels of violence, men were also more likely to report feeling a higher sense of safety than women, including in public spaces, at home, and online. As a whole, men were 16 percent more likely than women to report feeling safe in public. This suggests that, for men, exposure to violence does not necessarily correlate with men's perceptions of safety. This may reflect men's normalisation of the potential for violence, a propensity to value being tough and strong, and may reflect a greater sense of readiness to respond to potential violence.

Yet, the survey revealed that men in the UK also experience feeling unsafe across different parts of their lives. On average, just over a quarter of men surveyed - 26 percent - reported feeling safe in public only



some of the time, a quarter reported feeling unsafe online at least some of the time, and 15 percent reported feeling unsafe at home at least some of the time. There was no significant differences in perceptions of safety by age, but did reveal some differences by race: Asian men were the least likely to report feeling safe in public - with 18.5 percent of them reporting that they feel safe in public all of the time, compared to just under a quarter of white and Black men - and were significantly more likely to report feeling safe at home only some of the time. Looking at perceptions of safety online, Black men were most likely to report rarely or never feeling safe online. Perceptions of safety were found to be correlated with men's likelihood to own a weapon, with the analysis showing that every unit increase in men's reported safety is correlated with a 30 percent lower likelihood of owning a weapon.

Men need to feel safe to care, to break out of the Man Box, and to counter red pill ideology. Paying attention to men's physical, mental, and social health is important not only for men's own well-being and capacity to live full and healthy lives, it is also valuable for the people in their lives. The analysis shows a range of potentially significant correlations between men's perceptions of safety - defined as feeling safe at home, in public, and online - and positive health and social outcomes:

- **Safety creates fertile ground for health seeking:** every unit increase in safety is correlated with an associated 13 percent increase in the desire to seek health for both men and women.
- **Safety is correlated with an increased likelihood to speak out in the face of harm or injustice:** for every unit increase

in a sense of safety, men are 1.3 times more likely to intervene as a bystander. Women are 1.4 times more likely to intervene.

- **A sense of safety is correlated with improved mental health outcomes for men:** every unit increase in perceived safety is correlated with 66 percent lower odds of suicidal ideation and 1.4 times higher odds of reporting purpose in life.
- **Safety reduces men's likelihood of being 'boxed into' the Man Box:** every unit increase in safety is associated with 33 percent lower odds for men in the Man Box.
- **Safety reduces men's likelihood of endorsing red pill ideology:** every unit increase in safety, is associated -0.7 unit decrease in men's likelihood of endorsing harmful online narratives.

The Premier League: Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being

The Premier League's Inside Matters programme raises awareness of and encourages action to support mental health. It brings together work across clubs and partners to help people talk more openly about how they feel and where to find help.

As part of this work, in September 2025 the Premier League launched Together Against Suicide in partnership with Samaritans — a new initiative to support fans affected by suicide or suicidal thoughts. Backed by all 20 Premier League clubs, it aims to reduce stigma, increase understanding and make it easier for anyone who is struggling to talk, listen or seek help in an environment they know and trust.

Suicide remains the leading cause of death among men under 50 in the UK, and every 90 minutes – the length of a football match – someone in the UK takes their own life. Launched on World Suicide Prevention Day, *Together Against Suicide* was visible at all Premier League matches, raising awareness of available help for millions of fans across the country and around the world.

The League has also created an online hub at premierleague.com/together-eragainsutsuicide, offering guidance on recognising the signs of suicidal thoughts and providing signposting information to domestic and international support services.

To extend this impact, the Premier League is supporting 11 clubs to pilot tailored matchday support for fans — creating safe, non-judgemental spaces to talk and access trusted organisations for specialist help. The clubs involved are: Arsenal, Aston Villa, Brentford, Brighton & Hove Albion, Chelsea, Everton, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur, West Ham United, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Southampton.

Support for those facing mental health challenges has been ongoing for many years, with the League and its partners funding professional football club charities to deliver local programmes that provide practical help and connection. The Premier League Charitable Fund (PLCF) supports more than 100 club charities across the Premier League, EFL and National League, distributing £36 million in 2024/25 to deliver programmes that create positive pathways for children and young people. Club staff, trained in safeguarding, youth work and mentoring, use the power of football to engage participants, build confidence and promote wellbeing in schools and communities.

Through initiatives such as Premier League Primary Stars and Premier League Inspires, the League helps young people develop resilience, self-esteem and life skills. In 2024/25, 1.3 million children took part in PLCF-funded activity, with 87 per cent of schools in England and Wales engaged in Primary Stars since 2017. During Children's Mental Health Week 2025, a new Building Self-Esteem resource was launched for 20,000 schools, featuring advice from current and former players and practical classroom activities.

This preventative work with young people is increasingly being complemented by club charities working with individuals in need of greater support. At Newcastle United Foundation, staff member Josh Banyard credits the *Be A Game Changer* initiative with helping him through a period of severe depression and suicidal thoughts. Through the Foundation's programmes, he found structure, purpose and support. He now works to help others do the same

— leading sessions and encouraging open conversations within his community.

At Everton in the Community, the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub* supports fans at every home game, offering a welcoming space for conversations and signposting to professional services. Through initiatives such as *Imagine Your Goals*, more than 15,000 people have been supported since 2008 — including life-long Evertonian Sam, who describes the programme as “life-changing.” The charity's *People's Place* facility — the first purpose-built mental health centre linked to a football club — extends that support year-round. Everton is one of the 11 clubs piloting the Premier League's *Together Against Suicide* campaign, ensuring help is accessible to those who need it most.

These programmes show the long-standing commitment of the Premier League and clubs to support mental health and wellbeing in our communities.

Together Against Suicide

Inside Matters

Premier League

You support us.
Let us support you.
Speak to someone in confidence today - call Samaritans for free on 116-123 or visit premierleague.com/togetheragainstsucide

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Findings: Relationships and Dating

Men and women haven't given up on love completely. Most men are looking for connection and intimacy, but many wonder if it's worth the bother.

Despite widespread cynicism about modern dating, men and women alike have not given up on love. However, many now believe that while desirable in theory, romantic relationships carry too high a cost in practice.

Men in particular perceive that the odds are stacked against them when it comes to sustaining serious relationships. Men ages 24 to 35 were especially likely to view relationships as too much of a financial burden, while younger men viewed relationships as too big a

commitment.

Across all age groups, men reported feeling pressured to meet increasingly complex expectations of what it means to be a desirable partner (see table 3). While both men and women express frustration at rigid gender norms, men are more likely to report feeling that they must change themselves to meet women's expectations. This perception was particularly strong among Asian respondents, who were also more likely to agree that there are "too many rules" in relationships, perhaps reflecting the double burden of balancing partners' expectations alongside pressure from family, cultural, ancestral, and sometimes religious norms around relationships.

PHOTOGRAPHY SAM KIMBER VIA UNSPLASH



BATH

Table 3. Percentage of men and women and percentage of men across different age groups who strongly agree/agree with statements below on relationships

How do men and women feel about relationships?

	Women	Men	Men 18-24	Men 25-34	Men 35-45
A serious relationship is too big a commitment.	35%	40%	43%	43%	39%
A serious relationship is too big a financial commitment.	29%	41%	44%	44%	36%
When it comes to relationships, there are too many rules for what is expected of women and men.	55%	56%	59%	59%	53%
I would have to change too much about myself, such as my values or behaviours, to make a serious relationship work long-term.	33%	44%	48%	48%	41%
It is too difficult to meet potential romantic partners these days.	59%	55%	57%	57%	52%
Women have too many expectations for how men should be in relationships these days.	46%	62%	65%	65%	60%

These findings highlight a paradox: Both men and women recognise that traditional gender scripts are limiting, yet many still bring those same gendered expectations to relationships. For men, this tension leads to a sense of inadequacy – of being expected to meet an idealised version of masculinity, rather than being valued as individuals on their own terms.

Online Dating Lives

The landscape of dating has changed dramatically in the last decade, with apps and online platforms now central to how people connect. While technology offers new opportunities for meeting potential partners, it also tends to exacerbate feelings of competition, frustration, and exclusion – especially for men:

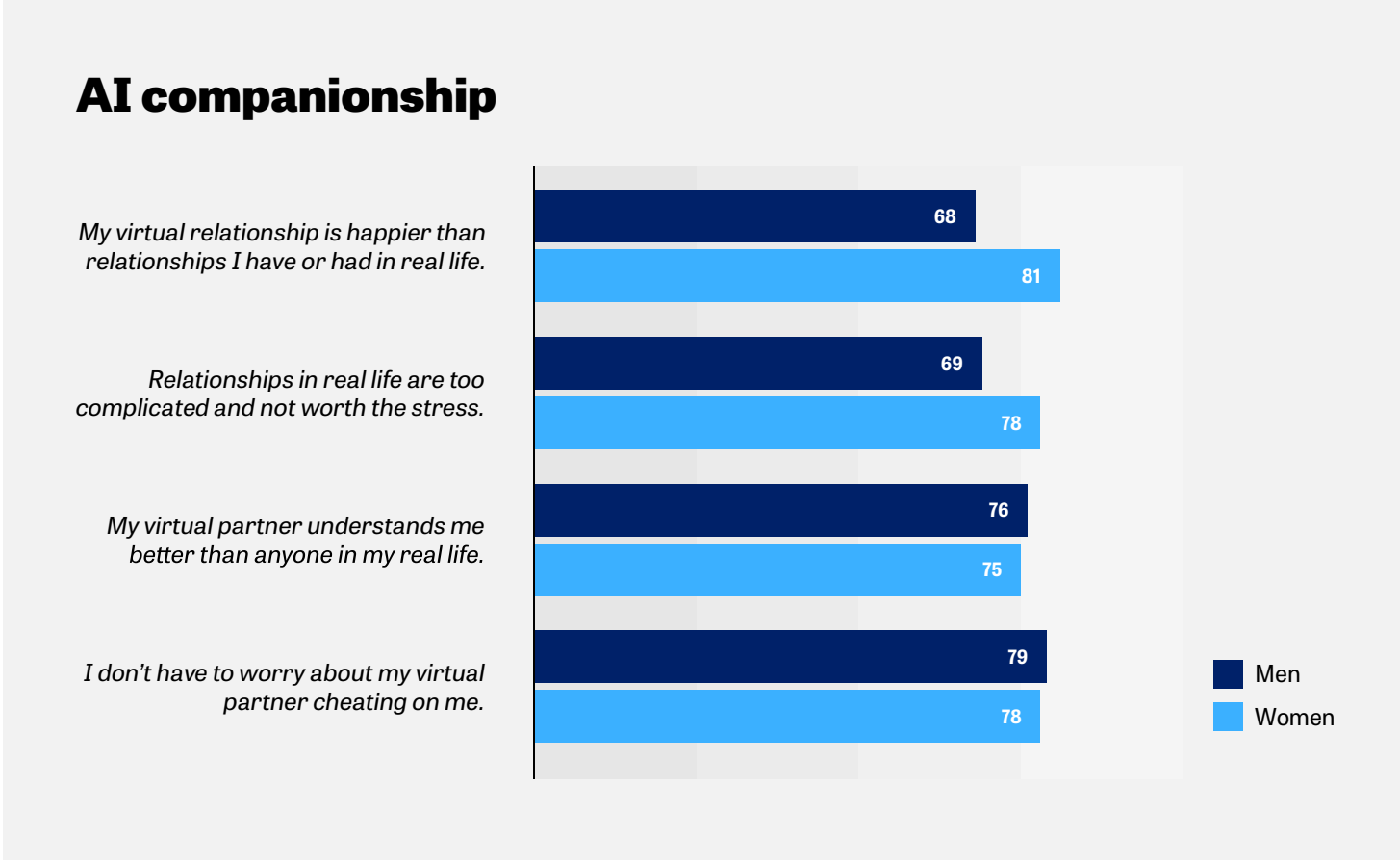
- **More than half of men (54 percent) agreed** that “most men don’t stand a

- chance to meet someone on dating apps,” compared to 34 percent of women
- **Nevertheless, 52 percent of men and 60 percent of women** said they use dating apps in the hope of finding a long-term relationship

A substantial gender gap exists in motivations for app use: 49 percent of men compared to 23 percent of women reported seeking casual sex online. This mismatch in expectations may contribute to widespread dissatisfaction between men and women in digital dating spaces and may partially explain why women are more likely than men to report negative experiences on apps.

Perhaps the most striking finding concerns the growing number of people forming relationships with artificial intelligence (AI) or virtual partners (see figure 9). **Around 15**

Figure 9. Percentage of men and women who strongly agree or agree about their views on virtual relationships



percent of men and 14 percent of women reported having used a virtual girlfriend or boyfriend. Even more telling is how participants described these relationships:

For some men, especially those over 24 years of age, virtual relationships are increasingly appealing. These digital connections offer emotional intimacy without the perceived risks of rejection, conflict, or financial strain. Yet, the rise of AI companionship also highlights growing social isolation – particularly among men, who already spend more time online than women.

Movember's UK data shows that men who regularly consume “masculinity influencer” content are more likely to report frustration with dating, believing that men and women have mismatched dating values, and in many cases perceiving “women being rude to me” and “women and men having different

dating values.” As young men spend more time in online spaces, they are increasingly exposed to masculinity influencers. Among these men:

- **63 percent believe** women should fulfil traditional roles as wives and mothers (compared to 37 percent among those who do not follow such content)
- **Many describe feeling** that “high-value men” receive all the dating opportunities, while ordinary men are ignored or disrespected.

The Role of Pornography in Men's and Women's Lives

Pornography remains a major part of men's online experiences. Men report significantly higher use than women, but both men and women engage with porn to learn about sex or

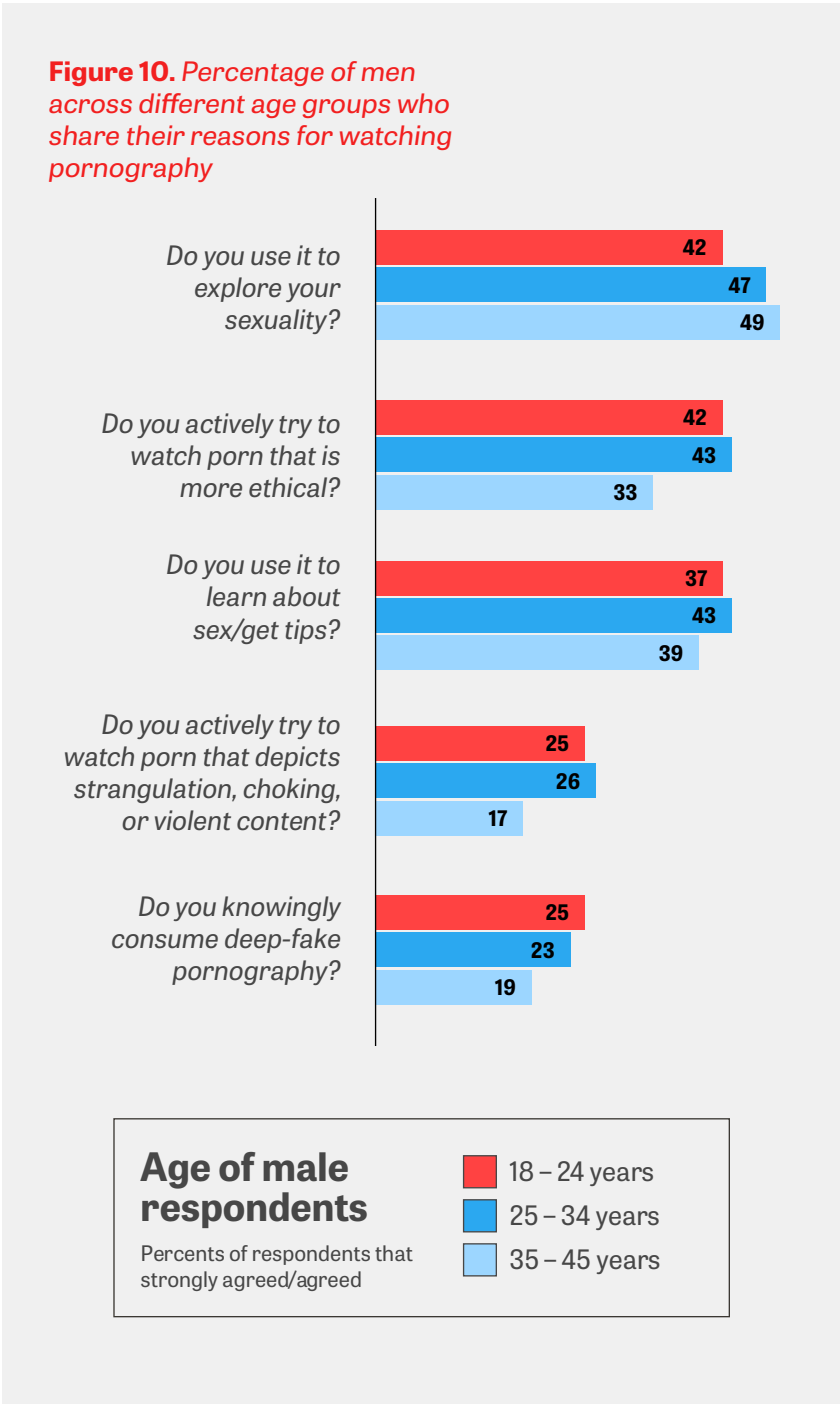
Porn, social media, and influencers' effect on young men's intimacy

explore sexuality more often than to seek violent or non-consensual material. It's possible that pornography could provide some benefit in helping people learn about and navigate their sexual desires at a safe distance from the pressures of real-life sexual relationships. **However, 15 percent of both men and women surveyed said that pornography use had negatively affected important areas of their life — work, family, or relationships.**

While 57 percent of men and 64 percent of women have tried to stop watching pornography, far fewer have succeeded (12 percent of men and 23 percent of women). This suggests that some men may need more support to manage their consumption, especially when it becomes compulsive or a substitute for real-world intimacy. There are several reasons as to why men watch pornography (see figure 10) but most interestingly, younger men (under 35 years) report they actively try to watch more ethical porn than older men even though, as a group, they report watching more violent porn than the oldest men.

Perhaps the most concerning finding is the sheer number of young men who describe themselves as "unloveable" (see figure 11). While similar sentiments were reported by women, the concentration among younger men is striking. These figures may partly reflect the uncertainties of early adulthood, but they may also signal a broader erosion of hope and belonging. Many young men are internalising the idea that connection is out of reach forever.

Across this data, one theme stands out: Men are not rejecting relationships, but many are retreating from them or



losing hope that they are possible. Financial pressures, social expectations, online disconnection, and the influence of gendered digital subcultures are combining to produce a landscape where intimacy feels risky, confusing, and often unattainable. These findings underscore the importance of creating spaces – online and offline – where men can

Love feels out of reach

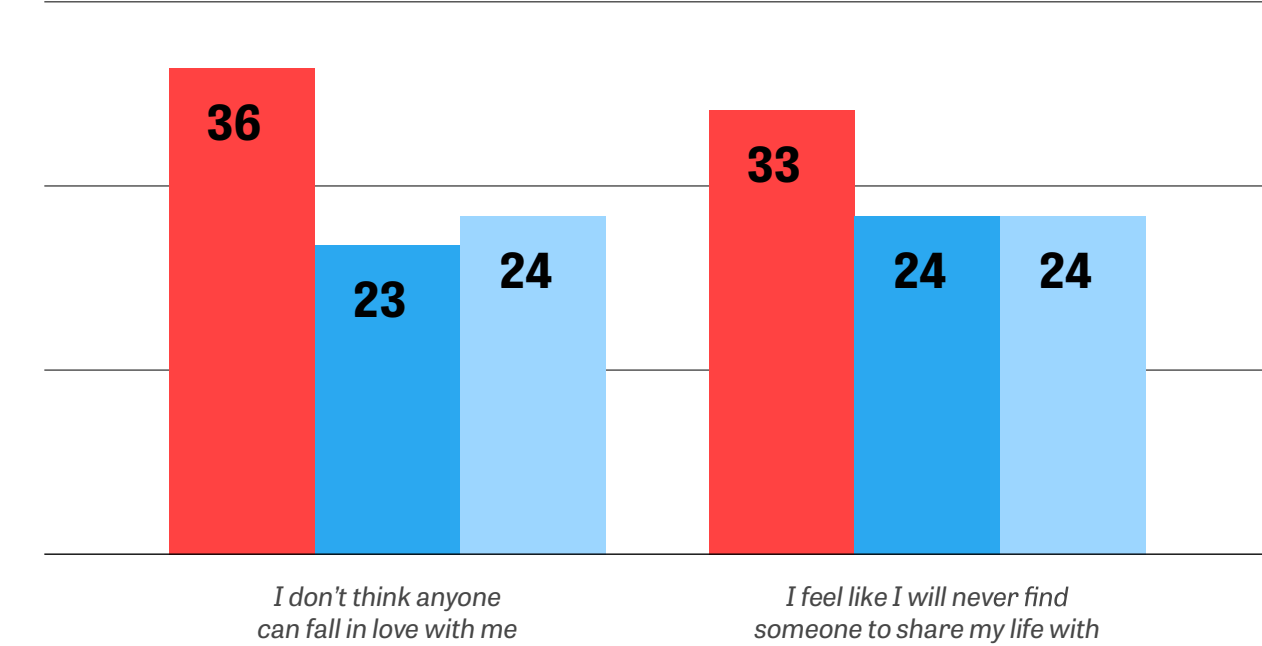
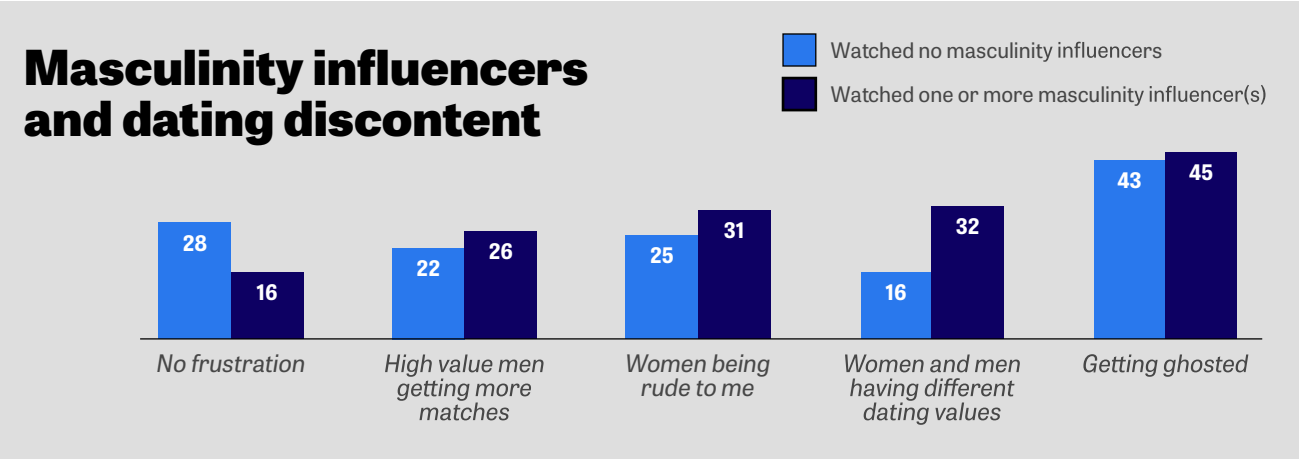


Figure 12. Impact of masculinity influencers on dating frustrations



explore relationships, consent, and emotional connection without shame or defensiveness. Programmes that foster empathy, digital literacy, and healthy masculinity can help counter the influence of harmful ideologies and online subcultures. At its core, this work is not about convincing men to date differently, it is about helping them build the skills and the resilience

for healthy connection. According to data from the Movember Institute of Men's Health, men who are regularly consuming social media content from masculinity influencers are more likely to be frustrated with dating and more likely to see differences between women's and men's values (figure 12).



PHOTOGRAPHY EHIMETALOR AKHERE UNUABONA VIA UNSPLASH

LONDON



Findings: Men, Politics, and Distrust

"The evidence in this chapter demonstrates the urgent need to strengthen our democracy. I was particularly struck by the findings of men's high level of confidence in their local communities contrasting with low trust in politics. This shows the importance of building transparency, engagement and trust in our democratic processes and to work in partnership to promote respectful politics, strengthen communities and work towards a society that embraces Jo's message that 'we have more in common than that which divides us.'"

— Baroness Jan Royall
Chair of the Jo Cox Foundation

Political distrust is palpable: The majority of men do not believe that the country's political leaders are invested in their future and they are increasingly supporting anti-democratic views.

People are more politically divided, disaffected, and distrustful than ever. As a result, faith in democratic politics is waning. This is a global trend, and the UK is no exception. Across the world, studies show that widening political divides are mapping onto gender lines: Young women are leaning left, while young men are leaning right.²⁷ In the UK, recent polling shows that similar trends are emerging among voters. According to the 2025 UK Youth Poll, conducted by the John Smith Centre, 20 percent of women surveyed identified as politically "left," compared to 13

percent of men. Conversely, 26 percent of men identified as politically "right," compared to 15 percent of women.²⁸ As shown in this section, this emerging divide is reflected in this study's sample. Amidst these divisions, men and women in the UK are converging around a palpable distrust and disaffection towards the country's political leaders. The 2024 British Social Attitudes survey found that trust in British politics had fallen to record lows.²⁹ More recent polls show no improvement. According to a YouGov UK poll conducted earlier this year, two-thirds (67 percent) of British voters believe that politicians are out for themselves, while only 4 percent believe that politicians are doing what is the best for the country.³⁰ In this climate of distrust, we see young men increasingly drawn to authoritarian-style leaders and "tear it all down" politics.

This survey revealed a broad range of political outlooks across the UK. The survey asked participants who they voted for in the last general election and how they identify politically. The sample included a broad spectrum of political leanings, ranging from participants identifying with the far right (5 percent) through to the extreme left (2 percent). The highest proportion of participants overall identified as moderate or centrist (20 percent), identified as liberal (18 percent), or indicated that they did not know (20 percent). In line with global trends, men were slightly more likely to identify with conservative or right-leaning politics than women; women were marginally more likely to identify with left-leaning and progressive pol-

itics than men. Women were also more likely than men to indicate that they did not know how they identified politically (31 percent). Looking at the edges of the political spectrum, 6 percent of men surveyed reported identifying with the far right. This was almost double the proportion of women who identified with far-right politics, while just under 2 percent of men and women identified with the extreme left.

Political Distrust

Across political divides, men and women in the UK are united in a shared sense of political distrust and disenchantment. We asked participants about political trust in a range of

ways and towards a range of public and political institutions. In the first instance, participants were asked if they believe they have a friend or family member who who is invested in their lives and their future (figure 13). Encouragingly, 70 percent of participants overall and 71 percent of men agreed that they had someone in their life who is invested in their future. Participants were then asked if they believe that their political leaders care about their lives and their future. Far less encouragingly, responses to this question dropped to 25 percent of participants overall and 27 percent of men indicating that they believe the political leadership is invested in their lives. Participants, including men, were twice

as likely to state that political leaders are rarely or never invested in their future. In other words, half of participants overall and half of men in the sample reported believing that their political leaders are rarely or never in their lives and future. Women were the least likely to indicate a sense of belief in the country's political leadership being invested in their future, with just more than 20 percent indicating some level of belief that political leaders are mostly or always invested in their life and future. Across the board, participants believe that the current government does not care about the cost-of-living crisis – this was a view held by 68 percent of men and 71 percent of women.

Men in the lowest-income bracket were 14 percent less likely than men

“What we have seen make a difference to this is meeting men where they are currently at, listening with curiosity, not judging them, and giving them space to share their challenges. To explore how those challenges are linked to the challenges of others. To define allyship as a skill to build, not an ideology to believe. To be honest about the barriers while sharing how it's beneficial, through story and evidence. Supporting men to understand their values, drivers and motivations. And fundamentally, to bring to life the mutual win of allyship, and the freedom it provides to delve into the whole man that they can be. Allyship is a route back to connection, not a threat to it.”

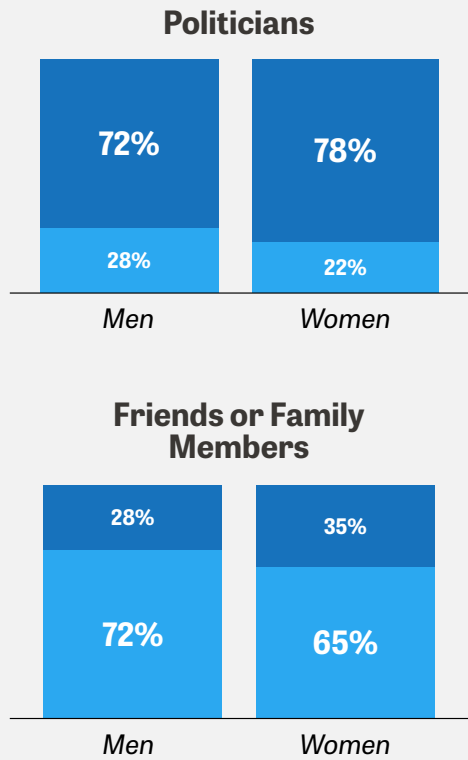
— Lee Chambers
Male Allies UK

in the highest-income bracket to agree that elections are important to the well-being of the country, while greater economic insecurity was associated with 2.9 higher likelihood of believing that the government does not care about the cost-of-living crisis. Even more telling, trust in public and political institutions was strongly correlated with income, particularly among men. Compared to men in the lowest-income bracket, men surveyed earning more than £70,000 a year were more likely to trust public institutions (see figure 14).

For many, political distrust is manifesting in anti-democratic views and support for authoritarian-style leadership, and “tear it all down” politics. On average,

Figure 13. Perceptions of political leadership investment in people's lives and futures

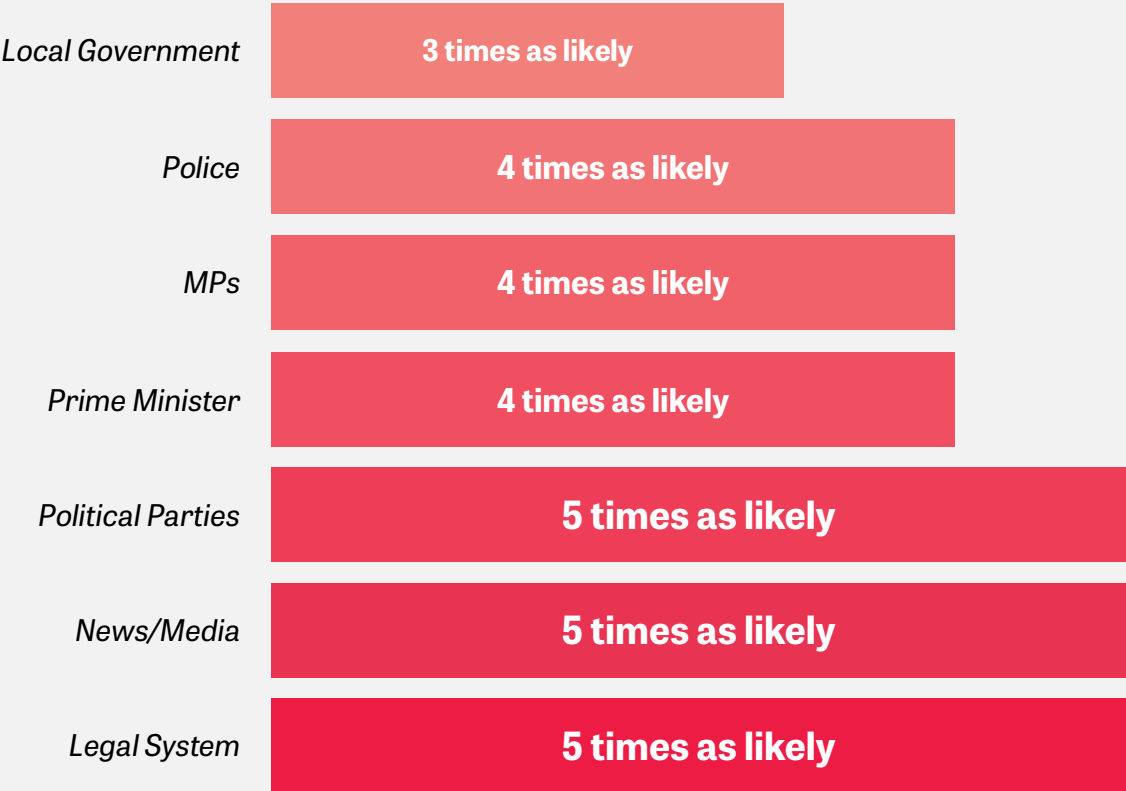
“I feel _____ care about my life and future...”



Often to always Sometimes to never

Figure 14. Odds that men in higher income are more likely to trust public institutions

How likely men earning over £70K are to trust public institutions



men expressed small but measurably higher endorsement of anti-democratic sentiments than women surveyed, although women were more likely than men to believe that “elected representatives don’t care about what people like me think.” Strikingly, more than half of the men surveyed – 54 percent – believe that “the country would be in a better place with a strong leader who doesn’t bother with parliament or elections,” while just under half – 47 percent – believe that “a government that tears it all down is the only way forward.” The survey revealed stark correlation between men’s endorsement of red pill ideology and support

for anti-democratic sentiments: **Men who endorsed gender-regressive ideas associated with red pill rhetoric in this survey were found to be six times more likely to express anti-democratic views than men who did not.** Indeed, greater levels of endorsement to red pill ideology are correlated with 3.8 times higher likelihood of supporting strongman leaders, 2.8 times higher likelihood of believing that voting does not matter, and 3.1 times more likely to believe that the only way forward is to tear everything down politically and start again. Interestingly and somewhat unsurprisingly, the analysis also revealed a link between

Men and women’s views on democracy

	Men	Women
<i>The economy works best when the government stays out of the way and lets people get ahead on their own.</i>	58%	53%
<i>Too many people abuse the benefit system in this country.</i>	68%	64%
<i>Most elected representatives don’t care about what people like me think.</i>	75%	77%
<i>Laws should be based on religious values.</i>	35%	29%
<i>This government doesn’t care about the cost-of-living crisis.</i>	68%	71%
<i>Elections are important to the well-being of the country.</i>	74%	73%
<i>This country would be a better place with a strong leader in charge who doesn’t bother with parliament or elections.</i>	54%	51%
<i>I don’t think voting matters.</i>	41%	36%
<i>A government that tears it all down is the only way forward.</i>	47%	39%
<i>The government cares more about immigrants than about its own people.</i>	55%	47%
<i>The country is a better place thanks to the contributions of migrants to our communities.</i>	60%	58%
<i>I do not think people are having fewer or no children these days.</i>	50%	45%

Table 4. Percentage of men and women who agree with statements about democracy



extreme ideology and anti-immigration sentiments, with greater endorsement of gender threat being linked to 4.1 times higher likelihood of believing that the government cares more about migrants than its own citizens and 43 percent lower odds of believing that migrants make the country better and stronger.

Beliefs About Democracy

Men and women across the UK have not given up on democracy completely. They want to feel heard by their political leaders and want more investment in the well-being of their communities (see table 4). The vast majority of participants – just under three-quarters – reported agreeing that elections are important to the well-being of the country, indicating that there is still widespread trust in the value of elections in the political life of the UK. This also suggests that the widespread

political distrust expressed may be symptomatic of a pervasive sense of disaffection and being disregarded by political representatives, particularly in a punishing economic climate, rather than signalling a complete rejection of democratic politics. Sixty percent of participants overall affirmed their belief in the value of the UK as an inclusive society that benefits from and is stronger for the contributions of migrants in the country. This data point is important in the context of anti-immigration sentiments and protests emerging across the UK. Certain policy investments had broad support, among men and women. Across the UK and political lines, 83 percent of men and women affirmed that they want to see greater government investment in their communities and in the well-being of young people (see table 5).

Where should the government invest its resources?

	Men	Women
<i>The government should invest more money in local communities.</i>	83%	84%
<i>The government should invest in more activities for young people, including youth clubs.</i>	82%	82%
<i>We need more subsidised after school activities across the country.</i>	77%	78%
<i>There should be more support for fathers in this country.</i>	81%	80%

Table 5. Percentage of men and women who agree with policy investments in the UK

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PHOTOGRAPHY KATIE GERRARD VIA UNSPLASH



Findings:

Fatherhood and Care

Fatherhood is important to men's lives in the UK. Men value being fathers and are calling for more support to be the present and involved dads they want to be.

Parenting has changed significantly in recent years. Rigid ideas of parenting roles are loosening as women's participation in the labour force continues to grow — now almost on a par with men's employment rate in the UK³¹ — and men are stepping into more equitable models of parenting. The recently published Working Families "Barriers to Equal Parenting" research found that three quarters of the 5,000 working fathers they surveyed across the UK reported wanting to embrace equal parenting.³² As detailed below, the findings of this study reveal a similar sentiment. Men and women recognise the generational shifts at play, with four out of five (80 percent) of the fathers and three-quarters (76 percent) of the mothers we surveyed agreeing that fathers want to be more present in their children's lives today than their parents' generation. As gender norms shift around caregiving, the

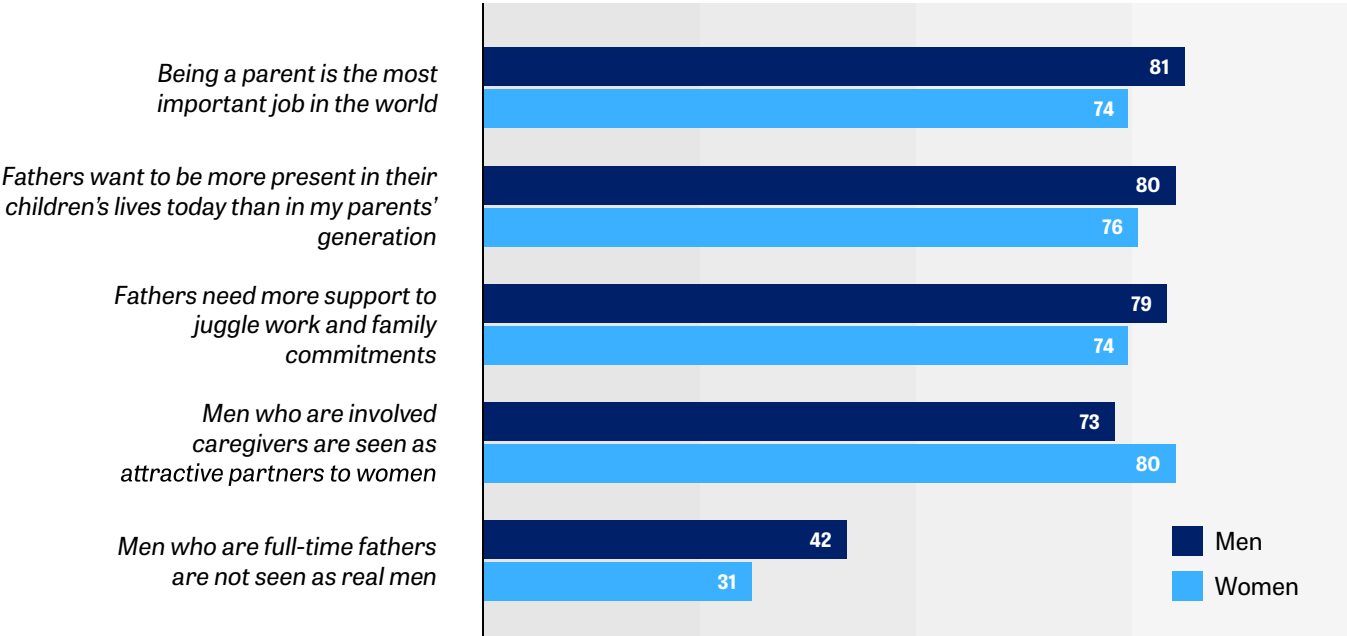
survey indicates that fathers across the UK are, overall, as likely to value care as mothers and are calling for support to be more present and involved in their children's lives. Indicatively, close to 80 percent of fathers affirmed that fathers need more support to balance their work and family life; three-quarters (74 percent) of mothers agreed. Across age, racial, income groups, and political divides, parents are juggling the pressures of everyday life, and are calling for more support to centre care in their lives.

"But it's about embracing and nurturing men's caring qualities, and their ability to have really positive influence on their children's lives."

— Chris Stein
Future Men - Developing
an Advocacy Strategy

Figure 15. Percentage of men and women who agree with these statements about men as carers

Opinions on men as caretakers



Men across the UK find enormous value and meaning in fatherhood. **More than 80 percent of the fathers we surveyed agreed that “being a dad is the most important job in the world.”** We see this reflected in men’s sense of purpose, too: the fathers we surveyed were twice as likely to report feeling a sense of purpose in their lives than men who do not have children. Studies in the UK increasingly show that fathers want to be more present and hands-on caregivers in their children’s lives, even in their children’s early years. Respondents also made clear that being a parent and caregiver in today’s economic climate feels tougher than ever, with mothers and fathers making hard choices to meet their childcare and caregiving needs. In the UK, campaigns like The Dad Shift are increasing visibility of men’s roles in and the benefits of their roles in caregiving. As stated by George Gabriel of The Dad Shift: “Lots of people see care involvement as important to male mental health... there’s a really heavy majority in favour of a kind of much more actively involved vision of a male caregiver, which is quite exciting.”

While valuing caregiving in their lives, care is still seen as conflicting with ideas of manhood to a significant proportion of men – and women. Ideas of what it means to be a man in the UK are expanding and include men’s caregiving and more equitable parenting (see figure 15): **83 percent of men and 86 percent of women affirmed that sharing care work and housework is a core part of what it means to be a man in the UK today.** Yet, when presented with the idea that “men who are full-time fathers are not seen as real men,” 42 percent of men and almost a third of women agreed (see the Findings: Being a Man and the “Man Box” in the UK section). For many, the idea of men’s full-time caregiving is not seen as wholly compatible with their sense of what it means to be a man.

Similarly, the survey revealed that a proportion of fathers may underestimate the extent to which women value men’s active involvement in care work in their partnerships or parenting arrangements. A striking 80 percent of women surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that “men who are involved caregivers

are seen as attractive partners to women.” While the majority of men surveyed agreed (73 percent), they were, on average, 7 percent less likely to perceive men’s involved caregiving as being attractive to women. As shown in Figure 12, some of these ideas may be shaping parents’ decisions around resourcing childcare and their caregiving needs.

Financial Challenges and Parenting

Parents are making tough choices to meet their childcare and caregiving responsibilities under challenging economic and structural circumstances. In this climate, fathers are more likely to make financial choices that lead to more time at work and away from home, while mothers are more likely to give up or delay professional opportunities to spend more time at home.

“Being a father and trying to juggle work is especially challenging. Childcare is vastly too expensive and the ‘free’ hours are not what they appear. Having to pay for essentials and extras makes it very expensive and I feel that this needs to be funded to make it possible to use more childcare days. It is not acceptable that people work to pay for childcare. We should live in a society where having children is celebrated.”

—Survey respondent on an open-ended item asking what do you need from policymakers

Parenting and caregiving are tough in today’s economic climate. The cost of childcare in the UK is among the most expensive in the world,

estimated to cost parents almost a quarter of the average wage in the UK in 2021.³³ Despite recent government funding to support childcare expenses, childcare costs remain out of reach for many families, particularly for lower-income households.³⁴ In recent years, the financial pressures on parents have been compounded by the cost of living crisis, caused by the cumulation of rising costs of basic necessities, including food as well as gas and electricity.³⁵ According to recent data from BBC Children In Need, almost 4 million children and young people across the UK are living in poverty and an estimated 23.4 million people will be unable to afford the cost of living.³⁶ With economic and structural barriers stacked against them, mothers and fathers are making difficult decisions to meet their childcare and caregiving needs.

We asked participants about the difficult choices they make to meet their childcare and caregiving responsibilities, including, for example, reducing or increasing work hours, delaying or giving up professional education or training, and taking on additional income streams. **Overall, 50 percent of men and 55 percent of women surveyed reported adopting at least one of these measures to resource their childcare or caregiving responsibilities.** While women and men are almost equally likely to report tapping into emergency savings and delaying major life purchases, men surveyed were more likely to report taking measures that increase the household income, while women were reportedly more likely to delay or give up paid work or professional opportunities.

Overall, men were 12 percent more likely than women to report working overtime and 7 percent more likely to report taking on a second or third job to supplement their income. In turn, women were, on average, almost 20 percent more likely to report having left their job to have more flexible hours and were 10 percent more

LOCH AWE



likely to report reducing their work hours, and/or delaying or stopping professional education or training. The survey indicated that women were also, on average, 10 percent more likely to report taking less time for themselves and reducing spending on non-essential items and activities than men surveyed. In line with existing evidence in the UK, this suggests that fathers are more likely to sacrifice time with their children to prioritise professional opportunities to resource their childcare and caregiving needs, while mothers are more

likely to sacrifice their time and professional opportunities to meet their childcare and caregiving responsibilities.

Beyond gender differences, these tough choices are falling disproportionately on different demographic groups of parents. Looking at differences across groups, mothers in the youngest age brackets were most likely to report giving up career and educational opportunities when they had children. Young mothers were most likely to report having temporarily or indefinitely delayed

“I’d tell them parenting isn’t about just about raising children – it’s about doing it in a system that often feels stacked against us. We need real support: affordable childcare, mental health resources, and policies that respect the balance between work and family life.”

—Survey respondent on an open-ended question asking what they need from policymakers

professional education or training with just under half – 45 percent – reporting doing so. This group was also the most likely to report turning down a professional opportunity or promotion (55 percent) and most likely to report taking on a second or third job or income stream (42 percent). Across these three measures, young mothers were 17 percent more likely to shoulder the care burden for their children than young fathers in the same age bracket. Across racialised groups, Asian women (63 percent) and Black women (71 percent) were most likely to report reducing their work hours to meet their care responsibilities and delaying major life purchases – 61 percent and 65 percent, respectively – while Black men were most likely to report tapping into a retirement saving fund (63 percent). In this context of widespread economic hardship and financial pressure, combined with insufficient support, parenthood and caregiving are becoming sources of stress and sacrifice for many, as mothers and fathers risk greater present and future financial insecurity to meet their caregiving needs.

Fatherhood Matters to All – Especially as Voters

Mothers and fathers are calling – and voting – for policies that can offer an alternative and help centre care in their lives. This study shows that many fathers not only want to be more involved caregivers and present for their children, but also support policies that would make that possible. As shown in figure 12, just under **80 percent of fathers agreed that they want more support to juggle work and family life, while more than 80 percent agreed**

that all parents should have paid time off work to spend with their children and supported the idea that caregivers and carers should receive payments or compensation for care work. When asked about whether support for care policies features in their voting decisions during political elections, close to two thirds of women and more than half of men surveyed reported that support for paid parental leave, child tax credits, and subsidised care (child and elderly) determine who receives their vote. As more equal parenting increasingly becomes the norm – or aspired norm – for many, the prospect of designing policies and economies that support prioritising care in men’s lives is one that is appealing for parents across the UK.

“This data highlights something we can’t ignore — 79 percent of men say fathers need more support to juggle work and family commitments. This is a positive evolution that we should celebrate. Men want to show up fully at home as well as at work, but too often the systems and cultures around them make that difficult. Supporting dads to balance both isn’t just good for families — it’s a powerful statement about what it means to be a man in today’s world.”

— Elliott Rae
Parenting Out Loud

Recommendations for Action

This report reveals that men in the UK are at a crossroads. Many men face insecurity, loneliness, and disconnection, but also show clear desires for care, community, and purpose.

The following recommendations translate the evidence from Equimundo's State of UK Men 2025 survey and analysis into an actionable agenda for government, civil society, and community partners. The recommendations combine calls for policy-level change with local investment and programme delivery, and they highlight opportunities for collaboration through trusted community infrastructures already engaging men and boys across the UK.

Significant progress is being made across the UK to engage men and boys in developing fuller, more connected understandings of themselves and their roles in society. For this progress to be effective, it must be underpinned by shared principles that acknowledge the complexity of masculinities, the impact of precarity, and the central importance of purpose, care, and connection. The following recommendations outline how policymakers, practitioners, and civil society organisations can act collaboratively to support inclusive, gender-equitable change.



PHOTOGRAPHY MUSIC HQ VIA PEXELS

1. Expand Narratives of Masculinity to Embrace Connection, Care, and Compassion

- Develop national public education and media campaigns that challenge restrictive masculinity norms (the Man Box) and promote care, empathy, and equity as markers of strength.
- Enable schools and youth services to provide safe spaces for boys to explore gender, relationships, and consent, counteracting negative online influences. Evidence-based programmes, professional teacher training, and inclusive curricula ensure boys engage constructively without alienation or defensiveness. Addressing gendered barriers to boys' achievement benefits all students and contributes to a more equitable society for both men and women.
- Partner with football and other sports bodies to leverage their reach and credibility in normalising help-seeking, compassion, and emotional openness. Initiatives in these trusted spaces can be utilised for open dialogue about well-being and equality.
- Create safe spaces – online and IRL – where men can explore emotions and identities without judgement. Emotional safety is a precondition for change: every unit increase in men's perceived safety reduces their adherence to restrictive norms by 33 percent. Safety, empathy, and belonging are prerequisites for transformation – not byproducts of it.
- Recognise that masculinity and inequality intersect across class, race, sexuality, disability, and geography.

2. Prioritise Social Connection and Purpose

- Provide lower-income communities with recognition, investment, and a part in building purposeful futures.
- Invest in peer-led, community-based programmes that provide belonging and shared purpose, such as men's clubs, mentorship networks, and arts, culture, and sports-based initiatives. Integrate appropriate organisations, including community-based, as strategic delivery partners.
- Encourage employers to promote purpose through volunteering, community engagement, and flexible work that values caregiving alongside paid work.

3. Strengthen Men's Health by Linking to Community Spaces

- Recognise social connection as a public health priority. Isolation and loneliness are major risk factors for depression and suicidality, especially among young and lower-income men.
- Expand social prescribing pathways that connect men and boys to local physical activity and community support programmes.
- Invest in community-specific programmes, particularly those catering to marginalised populations through culturally specific practices and accessible interventions.
- Pilot direct-to-patient healthcare interventions – from NHS checks to mental well-being in places where men already congregate, such as community centres, sites of work, stadiums, and clubs, which are familiar, stigma-free spaces. Bring care to where men already are.

4. Engage Men as Allies in Gender Equality and Safer Communities

- Frame men's involvement in gender equality as a partnership, not a diversion from women's rights.
- Incorporate men-focused interventions within the Home Office's Safer Streets Mission and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships to engage young men in expansive masculinity, empathy, and respect.
- Train community practitioners, coaches, and teachers to act as role models and facilitators of care-centred, gender-equitable practices.
- Embed expansive masculinity and civic engagement modules into citizenship and the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curricula to strengthen young men's sense of belonging and democratic engagement. This would help counter the sixfold higher risk of anti-democratic sentiment among those who endorse gender-threat ideology.
- Ensure that men's allyship and civic participation are intertwined as both depend on connection, fairness, and belonging.

5. Address Backlash, and Online Influence and Culture

- Develop digital literacy and digital citizenship initiatives for boys and men to counter harmful online narratives. Half of UK men report exposure to red pill rhetoric, often linked to anger, alienation, and distrust.
- Partner with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into the Youth Strategy and Online Safety Act, addressing how online influencers shape young men's beliefs about masculinity.
- Collaborate with sports organisations, influencers, and digital creators to model inclusive masculinities and positive male identities.
- Build alternative online communities of belonging where men can find purpose, advice, and support, reducing vulnerability to extremist recruitment and red pill pipelines.
- Build digital belonging with intentionality; do not allow it to be exploited by those who profit from men's pain.
- Meet men where they click, scroll, and connect by investing in online test and learn initiatives, such as Equimundo's LinkUp Lab and the Young Men and Media Collective, launched by Movember and Equimundo.

6. Prioritise Educational and Economic Equity for Boys and Men

- Address gendered educational outcomes through targeted interventions that improve boys' attainment, attendance, and engagement.
- Invest in vocational pathways and skills training for young and low-income men who experience identity insecurity and economic precarity – key drivers of crisis and backlash. Include financial support for them during their training.
- In partnership with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department for Education (DfE), expand mentorship and employment initiatives for young men at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) using football and creative industries as

engagement entry points.

- Education policy must reconnect learning, purpose, and belonging – not just credentials and compliance.
- Invest in further research examining how income, precarity, and purpose shape interest in different engagement with gender equality.

7. Prioritise Healthy Relationships

- Embed healthy relationship education beginning in schools and extending through universities, workplaces, and community settings.
- Partner with specialist providers such as Equimundo and Beyond Equality to deliver training that enhances relational skills, empathy, and consent awareness, as well as the emerging risks associated with AI companionships.
- Support academic and applied research on how healthy relationships among men and boys can catalyse positive social change and challenge harmful gender norms.

8. Reform Institutions to Promote Expansive Masculinities

- Develop and enforce workplace guidance for employers to actively support fathers' involvement in care, especially through flexible work policies.
- Fund local and community initiatives for fathers, including new and expecting fathers, that build confidence, promote sharing of domestic labour, and normalise men as caregivers.
- Extend paid paternity leave, including coverage for freelancers and the self-employed, to support men's involvement in caregiving.
- Equip professionals, such as educators, youth workers, coaches, and health practitioners, to engage men through a gender-aware lens that recognises both vulnerability and strength.
- Embed wellness staff in community and sports infrastructures. Football club collaborations with NHS trusts and the Samaritans show how institutional partnerships can deliver early intervention and mental health support.
- Establish a cross-sector framework between Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS, and Integrated Care Systems for joint delivery, data sharing, and evaluation of men's health outcomes.
- Develop guidance for integrating football and other trusted spaces into social prescribing and preventative care strategies.
- Meet men where they are; only then can institutions support men to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

9. Engage Young Men and Boys Early On, Building Healthy, Inclusive Masculinities for the Future

- Reinforce public and media narratives that move beyond polarising, problem-focused portrayals such as “boys will be boys.” Instead, emphasise that “boys can be anything.” Positive role models and diverse representations of masculinity in media and digital spaces can position boys as part of the solution to gender equality.
- Provide safe, constructive spaces in schools and through youth services for boys to explore

masculinity, integrate gender-sensitive violence prevention, and deliver evidence-based programmes that challenge restrictive gender norms. This should include policies on anti-bullying and online safety with a gender-sensitive approach. These efforts should align with and strengthen the forthcoming Relationships, Sex, Health Education (RSHE) guidance mandating anti-misogyny education in primary schools starting in 2026. Extend these principles into higher education through workshops, student leadership initiatives, and partnerships with community organisations.

- Prioritise mental and physical well-being for boys through preventative care, health education, and mental health services. This should align with the forthcoming UK Men's Health Strategy by providing earlier support at younger ages to limit long-term negative health consequences.
- Provide early exposure to caregiving and diverse career pathways, which can encourage boys to see care as a shared responsibility, find value in family involvement, and explore non-traditional work roles.

10. Commit to Sound Implementation Principles

- Employ a whole-of-society approach. No single sector can shift masculinities alone; this requires coordination across health, education, justice, culture, and civil society.
- Engage boys, young men, fathers, and older men – throughout their lives – to take preventative health actions to ensure well-being into their later years.
- Engage men as both beneficiaries and partners. Men must be seen as essential allies and co-creators in achieving gender equality.
- Utilise a gender-sensitive and gender-transformative lens: A gender-sensitive approach to provide services and programmes that are relevant to a variety of men will increase participation. Seek transformation by addressing the power structures and cultural scripts that restrict all genders.
- Combine national policy with local delivery through devolved regional governments, networks, and grassroots organisations.
- Embrace intersectionality, ensuring strategies reflect diversity, notably race, class, sexuality, disability, and geography.



Annex A: List of Institutions for Key Informant Interviews and Consultations

Organisation

ALIGN
Beyond Equality
Boys Impact
Cummins UK
Fawcett Society
Future Men
Global Action on Men's Health (GAMH)
Jo Cox Foundation
Lifting Limits
M-Path
Male Allies UK
Men and Boys Coalition
Movember
Movember Institute of Men's Health

MusicFootballFatherhood
Netmums
Now and Men podcast
Plan International UK
Potentia
Powered by Diversity
Progressive Masculinities Ltd
Rosa Fund
The Dad Shift
University of Melbourne
University of Surrey
University of York
Where are you Going? Podcast



Annex B: Glossary of Terms

Below is a list of some of the key terms that are used in this report and what we mean by them:

DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING The process by which a state becomes gradually less democratic over time and when societal support for democracy is reducing or coming under increasing threat.

GENDER NORMS/TRADITIONAL GENDER NORMS The often-unspoken rules or expectations that identify the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours that are valued and considered acceptable for boys, girls, women, and men.

HARMFUL NORMS OF MASCULINITY Beliefs often associated with masculinity that have negative impacts on men, women, and society as a whole. This can include values that promote violence, toughness, not showing emotions, and not participating in unpaid care work (such as cooking, washing clothes, and taking care of children).

MAN BOX First used by Paul Kivel of the Oakland Men's Project and Tony Porter of A Call to Men, the Man Box refers to a rigid and often restrictive set of ideas about what it means to be a man, including emotional stoicism, dominance, and self-reliance. For more information about the Man Box, see Equimundo's introductory video.

MANOSPHERE An umbrella term for a constellation of fragmented online communities that promote narrow and aggressive definitions of what it means to be a man. Those communities can contain views that are both misogynistic and hostile towards women and/or women's rights.

MASCULINITY The qualities and characteristics describing what it means to be manly, which can include being strong, brave, and tough. These definitions vary across and within cultures and communities and change over time, but they are determined and policed by individual societies and communities. The plural form (masculinities) is used to indicate that there is no single, fixed definition of what it means to be manly or what it means to be masculine.

RED PILL (OR REDPILL) AND GENDER-THREAT IDEOLOGY Misogynistic beliefs shared online. The term is borrowed from but unrelated to the 1999 film *The Matrix*. It refers to a supposed awakening to the "truth" that society has been corrupted by feminism, which allegedly disadvantages men. This framing is central to online subcultures mostly populated by men, such as the involuntary celibate (incel) community, whose members often describe themselves as victims of women's "hypergamous tendencies" (the belief that women prefer only high-status "alpha men" and therefore "mate upward," condemning "beta men" to lives of perpetual loneliness).

A belief system promoted by the "anti-gender" movement that views equitable advancements in gender equality, feminism, and LGBTQ+ rights as a threat to traditional family structures, religious values, and established social norms.

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The PLCF distributes funding from the Premier League and partners to 106 club charities – totaling £36 million in Season 2024/25 – throughout the football pyramid, delivering programmes that inspire and provide positive pathways and opportunities for children and young people. Football club staff are positive role models, well-positioned to reach and open-up conversations with young

people in a school, sport, or community setting. The programmes that staff – who access training in safeguarding, youth work, and mentoring through PLCF – deliver can enable children and young people to build pro-social behaviours, friendship and belonging, and well-being.

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