

HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS DO BETTER FOR MEN AND BOYS?

A 10 POINT ACTION PLAN



10 ACTIONS FOR MEN AND BOYS

Could Governments do better for men and boys? The facts are compelling. Our sons are less educated than our daughters. Our brothers die younger than our sisters. Our fathers are more likely to die at work than our mothers. Our male friends are more likely to die by suicide than our female friends.

According to researchers at the University of Canberra, the majority of Australians support equality between men and women, but are concerned that men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality.

The solution to this problem is not to stop working to improve the lives of women and girls, but to increase our efforts to tackle the issues facing men and boys. This report outlines 10 areas where Governments can do a better job for men and boys, and a better job for everyone.

ACTION 1: CREATING A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Men die six years younger than women. By taking action to improve men and boys' health, we can create a healthier future for everyone.

ACTION 2: IMPROVING BOYS' EDUCATION

Boys are 60% more likely to leave school before the end of Year 12. Helping boys from all backgrounds to get a better education is better for everyone.

ACTION 3: SUPPORTING INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

Only 5% of primary parental leave is taken by fathers. Being an involved dad is better for men's health and better for everyone, especially women and children.

ACTION 4: PREVENTING MALE SUICIDE

Suicide kills an average of six men and two women every day. Taking a gender inclusive approach to reducing male suicide and female suicide is better for everyone.

ACTION 5: MAKING WORK HEALTHIER

Men account for 92% of workplace deaths and 72% of work-related disease. Making work safer and healthier for men is better for everyone.

ACTION 6: KEEPING MEN AND BOYS SAFE

Men and boys experience 72% of the health burden from injuries. Creating a safer world with fewer accidents, injuries and acts of violence is better for everyone.

ACTION 7: STRENGTHENING MEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

Around two million Australian men are experiencing economic insecurity. By taking action to tackle the money issues that men face, we can help improve everyone's financial wellbeing.

ACTION 8: BUILDING MEN'S SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

One in four men in Australia are socially isolated. When we support men and boys to build healthy social connections, we help create a better world for everyone.

ACTION 9: DEVELOPING A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM

The majority of Government initiatives to improve gender equity focus on women and girls. Taking a systemic approach to tackling the issues men and boys face too, is better for everyone.

ACTION 10: PROMOTING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Males and females are different and diverse. Taking action to improve the lives of people of all backgrounds and beliefs, including gender diverse people, is better for everyone.



CREATING A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Australia is one of the world's healthiest societies, yet men die six years younger than women on average. Men and boys in Australia also account for:

- 92% of workplace deaths
- 4 out of 5 heart disease deaths (under 65)
- 3 out of 4 suicides
- 3 out of 4 road deaths
- 2 out of 3 violent deaths

In 2014-2015, we spent more than \$160B on our health. It is vital that our politicians ensure this money is invested in ways that help create a healthier future for men and boys, and a healthier future for everyone.

When it comes to taking care of their health, it is often said that men are their own worst enemies. We know, for example, that men experience:

- 71% of disease linked to alcohol
- 60% of disease linked to smoking
- 60% of disease linked to body mass
- 56% of disease due to lack of exercise
- 72% of disease linked to environmental factors like workplace hazards

While helping men change their individual health behaviours can make a difference, these behaviours only account for around 30% of poor health. If we want to improve men and boys' health, we need to take collective action to address the underlying social and structural factors that shape our physical and mental health throughout life.

Some of the key social factors that shape our health include our education; our experiences of childhood and fatherhood; our social connections; our working lives and living conditions and our access to male-friendly services.

“MEN DIE 6 YEARS YOUNGER THAN WOMEN”

Research suggests that helping men make better use of health services is one way to improve their health. Experience shows that the best way to achieve this outcome is by taking a gender inclusive approach that delivers a balance of male-friendly and female-friendly services and programs. This applies not only to the health sector, but any sector concerned with the lives and health of men and boys.

The Federal Government's Draft 2020-2030 Men's Health Strategy places a strong focus on developing male-friendly health services. What's missing is a focus on the social factors that shape men's health such as relationships; fatherhood; boys' education; men's working lives and the importance of our social connections. These social determinants of men's health are addressed in more detail in this report.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to annual funding of the Men's Health Strategy (2020-2030).



IMPROVING BOYS' EDUCATION

Education is one of the key social factors that shape our lives and our health. Lower levels of education can be linked to shorter life expectancy, poorer physical and mental health, lower wages, higher risk of unemployment and greater exposure to crime.

In simple terms, the better your education the better your health.

As far as boys are concerned, the education system delivers better results for girls at every stage.

Three in 10 boys (28.2%) are developmentally vulnerable when they start school, compared with 15.7% of girls. By Year 7, half of these boys (14.9%) will still fall below the standards expected of their age group, making them three times more likely than girls to miss both development milestones.

This slow start is reflected in school retention rates with boys being nearly 60% more likely to drop out before the end of Year 12 (19% versus 12%). The gender gap continues in tertiary education with women nearly 40% more likely to attend university.

Broadly speaking, the longer people stay in school, the longer they can expect to live. This is a key reason why boys' education is a men's health issue.

The education system is also a setting that deals directly with children experiencing health issues, with a significant number of children seeking informal support from school friends, teachers and other school staff.

Boys are less likely to receive support from peers or adults at school, despite being 40% more likely to experience mental disorders (16.3% to 11.5%), with the difference mainly due to the higher prevalence of ADHD and conduct disorders in boys.

In recent years, some men's organisations have developed programs that can help schools to support boys more effectively. These organisations include the Top Blokes Foundation in New South Wales and Menslink in Canberra.

“60% MORE BOYS FAIL TO COMPLETE YEAR 12”

Finally, between 1977 and 2016 the proportion of male teachers fell from 28.5 per cent to 18 per cent in primary schools and from 54 per cent to 40 per cent in high schools. Without intervention, this trend is likely to continue as fewer than one in four students who study education at university are men.

Academics have noted that the disadvantages faced by boys in education have been overlooked by policy makers and that there are no workforce diversity policies to redress the sharp decline in male teachers.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to develop national policies to improve boys' educational outcomes and increase the proportion of male teachers in Australian schools.

SUPPORTING INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

The evidence that involved dads positively influence their children’s health, social success and academic achievements is compelling and robust.

Parents can also impact their children in negative ways. Children whose dads show signs of depression in their first year are three times more likely to experience behavioural problems, while four-year-olds with obese or overweight dads are up to 15 times more likely to be overweight four years later.

Taking action to help dads stay involved and stay healthy is better for men and better for their children. For mums, involved fatherhood can help advance gender equality by expanding women’s career opportunities and improving their economic security.

Three of the main barriers that prevent men being actively involved in their children’s lives are:

- Sex/gender differences in parenting roles
- Lack of social supports for dads
- Being a separated dad

While biology clearly shapes the roles that mums and dads play, men’s involvement in their children’s lives is also shaped by the parental leave policies of the country they live in. According to parenting campaigners, Australia’s paid parental leave is the least generous among OECD countries. Research shows that:



“3 IN 10 DADS FACE PARENTAL LEAVE DISCRIMINATION”

- 95% of primary parental leave takers are mums
- 85% of fathers take less than 4 weeks leave
- In the private sector, fewer than 30% of parents who take leave are men
- Most mums taking leave get 18 weeks pay, while most dads get two weeks
- 60% of private sector employers do not offer leave for dads
- Private employers who offer dads leave, give mums seven times more leave
- 3 in 10 dads experience discrimination related to parental leave and return to work despite
- Men are nearly twice as likely as women to have requests to work flexibly rejected.

One in two separated dads spend little or no time with their children after separation. Around 75% of separated dads say they want to be more actively involved, and 50% of separated mums also say they want dads involved more. According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the four main barriers to separated fathers being more involved in their children’s lives are as follows:

- 1 in 2 say the demands of work is a key barrier
- 1 in 3 say the child’s mother is a key barrier
- 1 in 3 say distance/cost of travel is a key barrier
- 1 in 6 say a court-ordered arrangement is a key barrier

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to take action to remove the barriers that prevent dads from being more actively involved in their children’s lives.

PREVENTING MALE SUICIDE

Suicide kills six men a day in Australia and is the leading killer of men and boys under 45. While men account for 75.7% of all suicides, the majority of time, money and energy invested in researching and preventing suicide in Australia, fails to target male suicide as a specific issue.

Male suicide has increased by 41% in the past decade from 1624 deaths a year in 2006 to 2292 suicides in 2015. Yet research suggests that most suicide prevention strategies are more effective at preventing female suicide than male suicide.

“3 OUT OF 4 SUICIDES ARE MEN”

Each suicide is estimated to cost the economy \$6million. Based on this figure, male suicide costs the economy an estimated \$13.75billion a year. If male suicide was the same level as female suicide, we would save the lives of more than 1500 Australian men a year and save the economy an estimated annual \$9.3billion.

Suicide is generally presented as a mental health issue, yet the majority of male suicides are not linked with a mental health diagnosis. According to the Queensland Suicide Register (QSR), while nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of women who take their own lives have at least one psychiatric disorder, less than half of men (44.4%) who die by suicide, have a psychiatric disorder.

These figures suggest that while people with mental health issues who take their own lives are twice as likely to be male, people who die by suicide, but don’t have a mental health issue, are nearly five times more likely to be male. According to the QSR, the situational factors that are most commonly associated with male suicide are:

- Relationship Separation (28.3%)
- Financial Problems (17%)
- Relationship Conflict (15.7%)



- Bereavement (12.3%)
 - Recent or pending unemployment (10.5%)
- When compared to female suicide, male suicide is:
- 12 times more likely to be linked to financial problems
 - 8 to 9 times more likely to be linked to pending legal matters
 - 5 times more likely to be linked to recent or pending unemployment
 - 4 to 5 times more likely to be linked to problems at work or school
 - 4 times more likely to be linked to child custody disputes

Suicide kills eight people a day in Australia, six men and two women. It is vital that we address the gendered nature of suicide and ensure there is an equitable balance of male-friendly and female-friendly approaches to suicide prevention that responds to the fact that three-quarters of suicides are male.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to developing a national action plan to prevent male suicide

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE MEN AND BOYS' HEALTH

When tackling a complex social issue, such as improving men's health, a conceptual framework can help us to create a map of the many different factors that are at play. Most people understand that having a detailed and accurate map can help us plan the best route to a chosen destination.

Our Framework for a Healthier Future builds on the work of existing conceptual frameworks and introduces two additional features that are generally overlooked:

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- STRUCTURAL FACTORS**
- SOCIAL FACTORS**
- INDIVIDUAL FACTORS**
- SOCIAL STATUS**
- Socio-Economic Status
 - Locality
 - Aboriginality
 - Sexuality
 - Disability
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Age
- THE SYSTEM**
- Policy
 - Funding
 - Institutions
 - The Economy
 - Beliefs About Gender
- LIFE EXPERIENCES**
- Boys' Education
 - Boyhood + Fatherhood Experiences
 - Men's Working Lives
 - Social Connections and Relationships
 - Daily Living Conditions
 - Access to Male-Friendly Support Services
- HEALTH RISKS**
- Smoking
 - Alcohol
 - Diet
 - Exercise
 - Weight
 - Self-Care
 - Stress/Distress
- GENDER HEALTH GAPS**
- Life Expectancy
 - Male Suicide
 - Avoidable Deaths
 - Poor Health
 - Getting Help
- HEALTH PROMOTION**
- HEALTHCARE**
- ADVOCACY FOR MEN & BOYS**
- COMMUNITY ACTION**
- RESEARCH + EVALUATION**
- UPSTREAM**
- DOWNSTREAM**
- SEX / GENDER DIFFERENCES ARISE AT EVERY STAGE**

- Identify specific outcomes for targeted intervention (e.g. male suicide rates)
- Undertake gender impact assessments to ensure resources reach both men and women
- Evaluate interventions to help identify best practice

MAKING WORK HEALTHIER

“92% OF WORKPLACE DEATHS ARE MEN”

The world of work has a major impact on everyone’s lives and health and can promote and prevent good health.

For men in particular, work is:

- The leading predictor of positive wellbeing
- A cause of death and illness
- A great setting to deliver health programs
- A predictor of poor health (for low status work)
- Better for men’s health than being out of work

Research shows that while work can impact everyone’s health, the health risks and health benefits of work have a more profound impact on men. The reasons for this include the fact that men are more likely to be employed, work full time, be their household’s main earner and work in high risk environments.

Men spend twice as many hours in paid work as work as women, doubling their exposure to the risks and benefits of work. For example, men account for:

- 92% of workplace deaths
- 72% of work-related disease
- 2 in 3 serious claims for workers’ compensation

In terms of the positive benefits of work, research on masculinity and men’s health reveals that “job satisfaction” is the strongest predictor of happiness and wellbeing in men and that the feelings of responsibility, control and self-esteem associated with work are linked to preventative self-care behaviours in men.

Conversely, “job strain” is known to have a significant negative impact on men’s health.



Broadly speaking, good work is good for everyone, not just men. Poor job status is strongly linked to poor health, while a better job and better working conditions, means better health.

In comparison, being out of work is linked to poor health. This is a significant concern, as the proportion of men who are not in the labour force (NILF) has risen from 5% to around 20% since the 1960s.

Improving men’s health through work means taking action on a number of fronts.

It means promoting the benefits of good work for everyone; improving workplace safety; using work as a setting to deliver health programs; identifying ways to reach workers who are missed by employee health initiatives (e.g. self-employed men) and addressing the health needs of NILF men.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to a target for reducing workplace deaths to zero.

KEEPING MEN AND BOYS SAFE

Accidents and injuries kill nearly 11,000 people a year in Australia and around nearly two thirds of them are men and boys.

By working to do a better job of keeping men and boys safe, we can create a safer society for the benefit of everyone. At present, men and boys account for:

- 97% military deaths (2007-2017)
- 92% of workplace deaths
- 92% of people killed by strangers (and 69% of all homicides)
- 86% of deaths by drowning in open water
- 76% of young people dying from accidents and injuries
- 75% of suicides
- 74% of road transport deaths
- 70% of accidental poisoning
- 69% of deaths by violent assault
- 63% of all deaths by accident and injury



“MEN SUFFER 72% OF POOR HEALTH LINKED TO INJURIES”

Accidents and injuries can also have a significant impact on our health. Men and boys experience 72% of the health burden from injuries at a rate that is nearly three times higher than for women and girls. In addition, nearly 10,000 men and boys a week end up in hospital as a result of accidents and injuries.

Alcohol and other drugs increase men’s risk of accident, injury, violence and self-harm. As men are nearly three times more likely than women to drink alcohol at levels that present a lifetime risk to their health, it is essential that our efforts to reduce harmful alcohol consumption target men and boys.

There is also a need to address the gendered nature of violence involving men and boys. Most initiatives that tackle gender and violence focus on men’s violence against women. In addition to this important work, we need to look beyond the narrow stereotypes of violent males and female victims and work to prevent violence against men and boys.

This includes sexual violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, elder abuse, violence in institutional settings and violence by strangers and acquaintances. Men and boys are the main victims of both male violence and female violence. The needs of male victims need to be tackled in parallel to work to end violence against women and girls.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to a national action plan to reduce harmful alcohol consumption by men and boys.

STRENGTHENING MEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

In recent years, Governments across Australia have taken action to address gender inequalities in economic security. This important work has highlighted some of the key areas where women have lower levels of economic security than men, with a particular focus on workforce participation, gender pay gaps and superannuation.

What's missing from this approach, is a recognition of the areas where men experience low levels of economic security. For example:

- Men are less likely to own their own home
- Men are more likely to be homeless
- Men have less social capital (access to financial support from others)
- Men experience a 7% part-time gender pay gap
- 45% of people with no superannuation are men
- Seven out of 10 men not in a couple relationship have no superannuation
- Men are twice as likely to have a problem with gambling
- 12 times more male suicides are linked to financial problems

Around two million men experience some form of economic insecurity:

- 1.9 million men live in households with low economic resources
- 1.5 million have no superannuation coverage
- 1.4 million men living in households with cashflow problems
- 1.2 million men couldn't access \$2,000 in an emergency
- 1.2 million men in employment have no paid leave entitlements
- 450k men live in rental stress



While men's and women's roles have changed significantly in recent decades, there remain clear gender differences in the ways men and women take share responsibility for their household's economic security.

“2 MILLION MEN EXPERIENCE ECONOMIC INSECURITY”

Both men and women do a daily average of around 7.5 hours of paid and unpaid work. Roughly speaking, men spend twice as many hours doing paid work and women spend twice as many hours on unpaid work, such as childcare.

The way men and women share responsibility for paid and unpaid work is one of the key contributors to the gender pay gap. Other factors include lack of workplace flexibility; women taking career breaks; men working in higher paid industries and job positions and sex discrimination.

In at least 85% of couple families, men are the primary breadwinner and 44.8% of women don't have any superannuation, compared with 28.6% of men. In contrast, for those not in a couple relationship, 55.4% of women and 71.4% of men don't have superannuation.

Finally, when we consider gender and workforce participation, it is important to note that the proportion of men not in the labour force has risen from 5% to around 20% since the 1960s.

If we want to create better economic security for everyone, we need to do a better job of supporting both men and women in financial difficulty.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to developing strategies to improve men's economic security.

BUILDING MEN'S SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connection is good for everyone's health. The evidence that having high-quality relationships and feeling socially connected to the people in your life reduces your risk of death and disease is well established.

Being socially connected has been found to be associated with a 50% reduced risk of early death. Conversely, lacking social connections is as damaging to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

While lack of social connection can affect both men and women, research shows that Australian men endure serious loneliness for longer periods than women and are less able to deal with loneliness. In particular, separated men and single fathers experience less social support, are less likely to have friends to confide in, and are less likely to have a say in family matters.

More generally, men have been found to have smaller social networks than women, less access to informal support through friendships and family relationships, and lower levels of social contact and social support.

In Australia, 25.3 per cent of men report poor social networks compared with 21.5 per cent of women.

Men have lower levels of social support than women from early adulthood until their seventies, with the lowest level of social support experienced by men aged 35 to 44.

While around one in four men of working age have poor social connectedness, there are some groups of men at higher risk including:

- Men living on their own (37%)
- Unemployed men looking for work (39%)
- Male students (42%)
- Unemployed men looking for work (45%)
- Men on a disability pension (47%)

Lack of social connection is linked to poor physical health and poor mental health. For example, men with low levels of social support are three times more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress than men with strong social supports (42% versus 13%).

“1 IN 4 MEN LACK SOCIAL CONNECTION ”

As a general rule, social connection is not recognised as being a public health issue that requires government intervention. One of the exceptions to this rule is the Men's Shed movement, which has been particularly effective at engaging with socially isolated older men in rural and remote communities.

Yet lack of social connection is not just a problem for the elderly, it can affect people at any stage of life with men at higher risk of social isolation than women. For this reason, it is essential that we increase awareness of the benefits of social connection and take action to identify and promote ways to tackle social isolation, particularly among men.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to raise awareness of the health risks associated with lack of social connection, particularly among men.

DEVELOPING A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM

How do governments take action to improve the lives of women and men in Australia?

At a national level, the Office For Women's three priorities are women's economic security and workforce participation; women in leadership positions; and preventing violence against women and children. The Office For Women also funds six women's alliances representing almost 120 women's organisations. Three of these alliances are focused on economic security; equal rights; violence against women and the other three represent rural women; indigenous women and migrant and refugee women.

Other Government initiatives include a women's health strategy, a national plan to prevent violence against women, the Workplace Gender Equality Alliance and the Australian Human Rights Commission which address sex discrimination against women.

The NSW Women's Strategy aims to improve the economic, social and physical wellbeing of women and girls by focusing the whole of government (and the whole community) on three priority areas: economic opportunity and advancement; health and wellbeing; and participation and empowerment.

The Queensland Women's Strategy focuses on four key areas: participation and leadership; safety; economic security; and health and wellbeing. It co-ordinates work to achieve gender equality involving government, business and the community.

Women Victoria has developed a Gender Equality Strategy that drives statewide action by strategic alliances and partnership in six settings: education and training; work and economic security; leadership and participation; health, safety and wellbeing; sport and recreation; media, arts and culture.

In Western Australia, the Minister of Women's Interests publishes The Women's Report Card that lists key statistics in areas such as leadership, education, work, housing, family and domestic violence, safety, health and wellbeing, to inform the policies, services and programs of government and the corporate and community sectors.

South Australia's Office for Women provides executives support to the Premier's Council for Women and is responsible for a Women's Policy that focuses on three pillars of action: improving women's economic status; increasing women's leadership and participation; and improving women's safety and wellbeing.

Women in Tasmania supports the Tasmania Women's Council that advises Government on women's issues and has developed a Women's Strategy that identifies actions in four priority areas: financial security; safety; leadership and participation and health and well-being.

In the Northern Territory, the Office of Women's Policy has developed a Policy Framework for Northern Territory Women, which has four key focus areas: women's safety; health and wellbeing; economic security; and leadership and participation.

The Australian Capital Territory has developed an ACT Women's Plan identifies five priority areas for action: health and wellbeing; housing and homelessness; safety; economic security; and leadership.

In contrast, there are no Offices for Men and Boys and just three men's health policies (Federal, NSW and WA).

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties develop Men's Policies to guide the work of federal, state and territory governments at federal.

PROMOTING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

This report focuses on some key issues that impact men and boys as a distinct group, such as gender gaps in life expectancy, male suicide rates and boys' education.

While most of the issues outlined in this report can impact men and boys of all backgrounds, men are not a homogenous group and there are many different communities of men who will be at greater risk of being impacted by some of the issues.

Some men and boys, such as those with lower socioeconomic status and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander males, will experience most of these issues more profoundly.

Some men and boys will have organisations who are working hard to advocate on their behalf. For example, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) advocates on issues impacting the health and wellbeing of Indigenous men and boys; the National LGBTI Health Alliance works for males who identify as gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex and several organisations focus on the wellbeing of veterans.

Some men belong to groups where their gender is rarely considered or taken into account. For people with disabilities, for example, while there are specialist groups addressing the needs of women with disabilities, there are not parallel groups placing a specific focus on the needs of men with disabilities. The same may apply to other groups of men and boys, such as those who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and men in the criminal justice system.

There are other groups of men who don't appear to have any specialist organisations advocating on their behalf. These include the one in four men who lack social connection and the two million men who lack economic security.

All efforts to improve the lives and health of men and boys need to take into account the needs of different communities of men, at different life stages, living in different regions of Australia. The needs of sexuality, gender and bodily diverse people also need to be taken into account.



Promoting diversity also means working to be inclusive of people with different religious, philosophical and political viewpoints. We cannot hope to tackle the challenging social issues outlined in this report if we do not actively work to ensure people who hold a diversity of worldviews are able to bring solutions to the table.

Finally, promoting diversity also means working to be more inclusive of men, women and gender diverse people in settings where they are under-represented. For men this may include removing barriers for those who want to be carers, school teachers, health workers, hands-on dads, social workers, counsellors, psychologists and early childhood workers.

TAKE ACTION

We call on all political parties to commit to taking action to improve the lives and health of men and boys in all their diversity.

A BETTER WORLD FOR EVERYONE

The facts outlined in this report are compelling. There are many areas of life where men and boys are struggling. From the results boys achieve at every stage of education to the high male suicide rates, we can and must do better.

This doesn't mean we should stop working to improve the lives of women and girls. Most Australians believe in equality between men and women, but they also feel we should be doing more to include men and boys in our efforts to improve gender equality.

This means taking action to tackle the inequalities that men and boys experience in areas like education, health, suicide prevention, family life, work, safety, economic security and social connection. The evidence for action is clear:

- Men account for 2 out of 3 deaths from preventable causes (under 75)
- Women are nearly 40% more likely to attend university
- Men experience 71% of disease linked to alcohol
- 9 out of 10 workplace deaths are men
- 3 in 4 suicides are men
- Private employers give dads seven times more leave than mums
- 12x more male suicides are linked to finances than female suicides
- Psychological distress is 3x higher in socially isolated males
- Governments at all levels have women's strategies, but not men's strategies

Taking time to consider the severity of the issues facing men and boys can be overwhelming. It's easy to dismiss these problems as being the responsibility of individual men or to seek out a singular cause to explain away these issues, such as traditional masculinity.

Men's issues are more complex than that. They arise out of the way we structure our society and our communities and they remain largely unchanged and unresolved because we don't know what action to take.

This report is designed to help people, and particularly politicians and policy makers, to take the first steps towards tackling some of the key issues men and boys face. It doesn't matter where you sit on the political spectrum, you cannot create a better future for everyone unless you focus on the needs of men and boys, in addition to the needs of women and girls.

These twin objectives are not incompatible. When we help a boy do better school, or support a man to live a healthier life, or prevent a father from dying at work, we create a positive benefit for the men, women and children in his life.

Doing better for men and boys, means doing better for everyone, which is why we invite everyone who reads the report to take action to improve the lives and health of men and boys in Australia.

10 ACTIONS FOR POLITICIANS

The many different social issues that men and boys face are challenging and complex. There are, however, some simple actions that all political parties can commit to taking to begin the process of doing better for men and better for everyone.

ACTION 1: CREATING A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Men die six years younger than women. We call on all political parties to commit to annual funding of the Men's Health Strategy (2020-2030).

ACTION 2: IMPROVING BOYS' EDUCATION

Boys are 60% more likely to leave school before the end of Year 12. We call on all political parties to develop national policies to improve boys' educational outcomes and increase the proportion of male teachers in Australian schools.

ACTION 3: SUPPORTING INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

Only 5% of primary parental leave is taken by fathers. We call on all political parties to take action to remove the barriers that prevent dads from being more actively involved in their children's lives.

ACTION 4: PREVENTING MALE SUICIDE

Suicide kills an average of six men and two women every day. We call on all political parties to commit to developing a national action plan to prevent male suicide.

ACTION 5: MAKING WORK HEALTHIER

Men account for 92% of workplace deaths and 72% of work-related disease. We call on all political parties to commit to a target for reducing workplace deaths to zero.

ACTION 6: KEEPING MEN AND BOYS SAFE

Men and boys experience 72% of the health burden from injuries. We call on all political parties to commit to a national action plan to reduce harmful alcohol consumption by men and boys.

ACTION 7: STRENGTHENING MEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

Around two million men are experiencing some form of economic insecurity. We call on all political parties to commit to developing strategies to improve men's economic security.

ACTION 8: BUILDING MEN'S SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

One in four men in Australia are socially isolated. We call on all political parties to raise awareness of the health risks associated with lack of social connection, particularly among men.

ACTION 9: DEVELOPING A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM

The majority of Government initiatives to improve gender equity focus on women and girls. We call on all political parties develop Men's Policies to guide the work of federal, state and territory governments at federal.

ACTION 10: PROMOTING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Males and females are different and diverse. We call on all political parties to commit to taking action to improve the lives and health of men and boys in all their diversity.



A full list of references for this report is available from
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