



International  
**Wellbeing Insights**  
People, Culture & Wellbeing



**Stress Management Society**  
from distress to de-stress

# Men's Mental Health: Brave Enough to Talk

A Purple Paper from The Stress Management Society



# Introduction: Why Men's Mental Health Matters

Mental health is a universal human concern, but men face unique pressures that affect how they experience, manage, and seek support for mental health challenges. Societal norms often dictate that men should be stoic, self-reliant, and resilient — yet these expectations can prevent men from acknowledging struggles or accessing help.

Globally, men account for the majority of suicide deaths. In the UK, approximately 75% of suicides are men, with middle-aged men particularly at risk. Untreated mental health issues can also contribute to substance use, aggression, social withdrawal, and reduced quality of life.

This paper explores the complex factors affecting men's mental health, barriers to seeking help, and practical strategies to support men across workplaces, communities, and families.

## The Current State of Men's Mental Health (2025)

In 2025, men's mental health is marked by rising distress and high suicide rates, alongside a cultural shift toward greater openness and self-care. While stigma remains a barrier, many men are now discussing their feelings more openly, using new support networks, and focusing on emotional well-being. However, men are still less likely than women to seek professional help and often face workplace stress and harmful coping mechanisms.

### Key Challenges:

- **Rising mental distress:** Younger men in particular are experiencing higher levels of stress and anxiety. Work-related pressures continue to impact wellbeing.
- **Stigma and barriers:** Societal expectations still discourage men from speaking up or seeking help.
- **Less likely to seek help:** Men are under-represented in accessing psychological services and often underreport symptoms of depression.
- **Harmful coping mechanisms:** Increased risk-taking behaviours, alcohol, and substance use are common ways men cope.
- **Suicide risk:** Suicide remains the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. Men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women.



# Men's Mental Health Numbers

## Stress and anxiety

Around **40%** of adults worldwide report high levels of stress and anxiety.

## Suicide

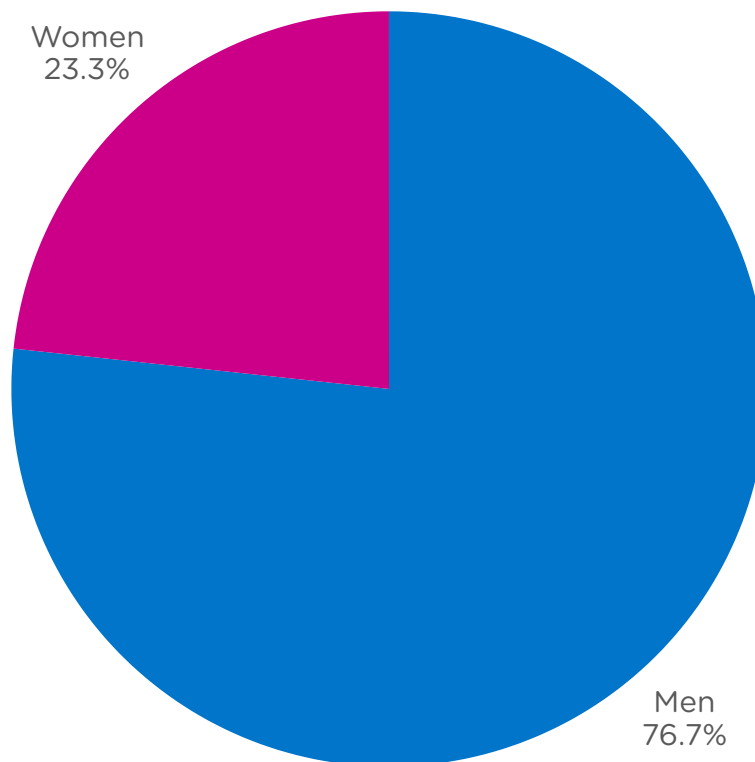
In January 2025, of **352 suspected suicides**, **75% were men**.

## Help-Seeking

Men are less likely than women to reach out for mental health support. Only about **40%** of **men** experiencing mental health challenges **access help**.

## Depression and Anxiety

Men may show symptoms differently, often through irritability, anger, risk-taking, or substance use. This can contribute to underdiagnosis.



# Key Factors Affecting Men's Mental Health



## Social and Cultural Pressures

Traditional masculine norms can discourage emotional expression. Traits such as independence, control, and stoicism are valued, while vulnerability is often seen as weakness. Men may internalise these expectations, believing they must handle problems alone.

## Biological Influences

Hormonal differences, including testosterone, influence stress response, emotional regulation, and impulsivity. Brain differences and neurochemical pathways can also affect how men experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.

## Economic and Workplace Stress

Men frequently face expectations to be primary financial providers. Job insecurity, long working hours, and high-pressure roles increase stress, contributing to burnout, depression, and anxiety. Workplace cultures can also discourage men from seeking support, especially in male-dominated sectors.

## Isolation and Support Networks

Compared to women, men often have smaller or less emotionally-focused social networks. Limited access to trusted peers or confidants can exacerbate feelings of isolation, making it harder to discuss emotional or mental health challenges.

## Barriers to Seeking Support



- **Stigma:** Cultural and internalised stigma can prevent men from acknowledging distress.
- **Recognition:** Men may exhibit mental health symptoms in ways that are less widely recognised, such as irritability, aggression, or withdrawal.
- **Communication:** Traditional mental health language may feel clinical or inaccessible. Framing support as “mental fitness” or “mental training” can make it more approachable.
- **Cultural Expectations:** Societal ideas about masculinity may prevent men from discussing emotions or asking for help.

## Redefining Strength

Strength is often associated with independence and self-reliance, but true resilience includes:

- **Vulnerability and openness** acknowledging emotions and seeking help.
- **Empathy and connection** building relationships and supporting others.
- **Self-awareness** understanding personal limits and taking steps to maintain wellbeing.
- **Action-orientated coping** uses problem-solving, planning, and skill-building to manage challenges.

Redefining strength in this way can help reduce stigma and encourage men to engage with mental health support.



# Supporting Men's Mental Health



## **Provide confidential, accessible mental health resources**

Make support easy to access and private. Examples include Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), mental health apps, counselling services, or anonymous hotlines. Highlighting that support is confidential can reduce fear of stigma.

## **Offer flexible working options to reduce stress**

Flexibility can include adjustable hours, remote work, or time off for wellbeing. Reducing rigid schedules can help men manage work-life balance and relieve pressure, supporting overall mental health.

## **Train managers to recognise and respond empathetically**

Equip supervisors with skills to notice signs of stress or distress and respond without judgment. Training can include how to have supportive conversations, recognising non-verbal cues, and connecting employees with resources.

## **Encourage peer support networks**

Build systems where colleagues can support one another, such as mentorship schemes, buddy systems, or team check-ins. Men often open up more when talking with peers who understand their experiences, reducing feelings of isolation.

## **Promote mental health literacy**

Offer workshops, seminars, or newsletters that explain mental health in clear, actionable terms. Understanding common challenges, symptoms, and coping strategies helps create a more informed, compassionate workplace culture.



# Supporting Men's Mental Health in Communities and Families



## **Normalise conversations about mental health**

Share your own experiences or discuss mental wellbeing openly. This helps reduce stigma and shows that it is acceptable to seek support.

## **Encourage small, regular check-ins**

Asking "How are you really doing?" or sending a quick message can make men feel noticed and supported. Simple, consistent gestures matter more than occasional grand interventions.

## **Create emotionally safe environments**

Ensure spaces at home, with friends, or in community groups allow men to speak without fear of judgement, ridicule, or dismissal. Validating emotions fosters openness and connection.

## **Leverage shared activities to build connection**

Men often feel more comfortable discussing emotions in informal settings, like while walking, exercising, or engaging in hobbies together. These shared activities can facilitate conversation naturally.

## **Educate families and peers**

Provide guidance on signs of mental distress and practical ways to respond. Knowing what to look for and how to act empowers support networks to intervene early and effectively.



## Key Takeaways and Actions

Men's mental health remains a critical, yet often overlooked, public health concern. Social expectations, cultural pressures, and stigma create unique challenges for men, often discouraging them from seeking support. This can lead to isolation, untreated mental health conditions, and in severe cases, suicide.

Addressing these challenges starts with understanding, awareness, and small intentional actions. Each of us can play a role in creating environments where men feel safe to speak openly and seek support.



### Actions You Can Take

- Start meaningful conversations; check in with friends, colleagues, or family with a genuine “How are you really doing?”
- Listen without immediately offering solutions; allow men to express themselves without judgment.
- Encourage shared activities; walks, sports, or hobbies can create space for conversation naturally.
- Normalise seeking support; talk positively about therapy, counselling, or other mental health resources.
- Lead by example; practise healthy mental health habits yourself, showing that openness is a strength.
- Share accessible resources; mental health apps, online communities, or confidential helplines provide private support.
- Check in regularly, especially during stressful periods or life changes, consistent support makes a real difference.

These small but deliberate actions collectively help create a culture where men feel empowered to address their mental wellbeing.



The Stress Management Society (SMS) is committed to creating a happier, healthier more resilient world by collaborating with champions and changemakers to raise awareness, promote best practices, and advocate for evidence-based approaches that support mental health and wellbeing for all. Together, we can create a culture that fosters healthier, happier men who are better equipped to contribute to stronger families, schools, workplaces, and communities.

## Conclusion

Men face distinctive challenges when it comes to recognising, discussing, and addressing mental health needs. While awareness has improved, there is still much work to be done to reduce stigma, foster connection, and build supportive communities.

By understanding these challenges and taking practical steps to create safe spaces, we can break cycles of isolation, encourage early support, and promote healthier, more resilient men.

## Existing Efforts

Ongoing initiatives from workplace mental health programmes to peer-support networks have made meaningful impacts, but more action is needed. Collaboration, education, and advocacy remain vital to create environments where men can speak openly and access the help they need.

## About The Stress Management Society

The Stress Management Society (SMS) is a UK-based non-profit dedicated to improving mental wellbeing through education, advocacy, and support. We work across workplaces, communities, and educational settings to raise awareness, reduce stress, and promote resilience. Our mission is to empower people with knowledge, practical strategies, and support systems to improve mental health outcomes for all.



We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

**Find Us Here:**

The Lighthouse  
Suite S, Quay West  
Salamander Quay  
Harefield, Middlesex  
UB6 9NZ

**Call Us On:**

Switchboard: +44  
(0) 203 142 8659

**Email Us On:**

info@stress.org.uk

**Visit Us On:**

[www.stress.org.uk](http://www.stress.org.uk)  
[www.wellbeing.work](http://www.wellbeing.work)

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