The Future of Men

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Contents

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Foreword

When I started telling people we were researching a report about the future of men the responses were usually divided into two (usually gendered) camps. Women would laugh out loud and then say, "Why?", whilst men would look uncomfortable and ask the question, "Do we have a future?" And that, in itself, is the reason for this report.

The fight for equality and women's liberation over the past 60 years has seen a rapid and seismic shift in society. A shift that has moved labour-markets away from brawn and towards brain, leaving men struggling in a space of **ontological insecurity**. As Richard Reeves puts it in his 2022 book, Of Boys and Men, men are now confronted, for the first time in history, with the prospect of "cultural redundancy".

For men and boys living through this shift, it can feel like the rug has suddenly been pulled out from under them. They're searching for guidance, for a north star to help them navigate the shifting sands of an uncertain future - a guidebook on how to be a man. And into this void are stepping the likes of Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson, espousing versions of masculinity that are founded in outdated patriarchal norms, peppered with a large dose of misogyny, bigotry, sexism and racism.

But the modern problems of men don't all sit at the feet of the likes of Tate and his legion of 'alpha males'. We are all culpable in this prosecution.

Every year, on International Women's Day on 8th March, the comedian Richard Herring takes to X (the platform formerly known as Twitter) and responds to every tweet mentioning International Men's Day with a reminder that there is, in fact, an International Men's Day (it's on 19th November). Roll around 19th November and posts on the aforementioned platform celebrating International Men's Day are routinely attacked and trolled for their celebrations of masculinity in a way that, if it were happening on 8th March, would see people up in

arms about the sexist and vile language.

The discourse around masculinity has become so divisive and polarised that it's almost impossible to start an open conversation about positive masculinity in a public social forum. There are real fears held by some that if we start focusing on the problems of men and actively helping them, then we'll forget about women and girls. But lack of discourse about these problems have led to some shocking stats for men.

1 in 5 men in the UK report that they have no close friends. Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50. Men die younger than women, partly because they dismiss their symptoms and hold off going to see a medical professional until it's too late. Boys are less likely to go onto further education, they're more likely to struggle with addiction issues, and they make up the majority of the homeless and prison population. Men are assaulted on a daily basis by toxic and unrealistic ideals of masculinity in the media, in advertising and in porn. A generation of boys are growing up being shamed for their gender. And that's not ok.

The third sector isn't immune from these problems. Men are

less likely to donate, less likely to volunteer, and less likely to get involved in charities. We're a sector powered by women but led by men and, as a result, we (women) have innovated for ourselves. There's a reason that Dorothy was so generous. We've created products, services and offers that have skewed their tone, language and features towards women.

We want and need to build a more inclusive and fair society where people can be themselves without fear of being judged or treated unfairly. We need debate and discourse about positive masculinity and how this fits into a more equal and equitable society for everyone.

Masculinity is not a bad thing. There should be no shame in being a man. And yet, that's where society has positioned a large percentage of young men. Providing support for men and boys does not, and should not, detract from the fight for women and girls. Equally, innovating and investing in help for women and girls is not an attempt to put men down.

In this report we've explored 10 lenses of masculinity. From how to be a man, how to be a dad, educating men and boys, and their physical and mental health, through to men at work, men

and sport, men and charity, and men and friendships. We've tried to map out a snapshot of the current landscape, considered the future implications (some positive, some slightly murkier), offered some inspiration on how others are taking action, and outlined provocations for charities to innovate.

We hope that this report starts a debate in your organisations and with your peers about the responsibility of the third sector to being part of a positive discourse about masculinity.

As Richard Reeves puts it, "We can be passionate about the rights of women and girls, and compassionate toward vulnerable boys and men." By promoting healthy expressions of masculinity and offering support and guidance, we can help men find their place in a world that is continuing to evolve and, ultimately, create a fairer, more equitable society for all.

Daisy O'Reilly-Weinstock
Senior Director of Big Bets

> "We can be passionate about the rights of women and girls, and compassionate toward vulnerable boys and men."
>
> Richard Reeves

Theoretical Framework

Before we dive into the Future of Men, we wanted to take a moment to set out some guidance on how we're defining and approaching 'men'. Our research follows a **sociological gender frame**, which holds that gender is not tied to sex organs, hormones or biological traits. Rather, it's a concept that's **socially constructed** - something which has meaning placed on it by society. Our current idea of gender and how we classify and order its categories aren't inherent, but a dynamic outcome of numerous interactions and social processes in society. These then shape the cultural meanings around gender roles, how we understand gender identities and more.

For example, telling boys to play with monster trucks and girls to play with Barbie dolls, is part of a socialisation process that pushes these constructed gender norms onto individuals. Individuals can then take up and take part in the gender category ascribed to them, or refuse and negotiate with them. We then experience gender as how it is lived (ie. our own gender identity), regulated (legally and through social norms), and represented (in the media).

This is not to say that we unquestioningly absorb and reproduce gender stereotypes, or that we're just passive recipients of gender identities. **Childhood studies have shown** that kids are active agents in performing gender (**performing acts that we label masculine or feminine** through dress, mannerisms and more, the repetition of which gives off a signal of gender identity to society), and often reflect more diverse gender identities than adults. What is absorbed and reproduced are societal expectations of how boys and girls should act, which can drive our behaviours to emphasise masculine and feminine aspects of ourselves, or to repress these, depending on what we've been taught is 'socially acceptable'. Stepping away from biological definitions of gender lets us acknowledge the fact that people can occupy more than one gender position, or feel excluded by the categories of gender that society recognises.

So when we talk about stereotypical masculinity throughout this report, we're mostly referring to the '**Man Box**'. This influential term to understand masculinity refers to a set of rigid norms and beliefs, communicated both directly

and indirectly by families, peers, education, the media, and other members of society, that pressure men to be a certain way (and are largely harmful to both men and women). These norms include the idea that men should be self-sufficient, act tough, look good, stick to rigid gender roles (especially around housework and care), be heterosexual and homophobic, display sexual prowess, be prepared to use violence, and control household decisions and women's independence. While some of these norms are more prevalent than others, research shows that modern men still **feel the pressure of these** on a regular basis.

Our approach has also been **intersectional**. We're not looking at men as a homogenous group, but want to acknowledge that there are multiple, intersecting dimensions related to race, age, social class, sexuality and other identities that shape gender experiences and norms in different ways. Dimensions of identity layer onto each other, forming different experiences at each intersection of identity. For example, the experience of a working class White boy is very different from an upper middle class White boy, both of which are different from

the experience of their BPOC counterparts. We've considered some of these intersections as much as possible within the report, acknowledging that the problems of men are not equal across all identities.

Per this approach, we also recognise that trans men are men, but have chosen not to delve into the complexities present in the lived experiences of this community. Not because we wish to exclude their voices and narratives, but in recognition that the scope of this report could not do them justice.

TL;DR:

We're delving into the experiences of anyone who identifies as male and the problems of masculinity as it is socially constructed. We focus on the problems of stereotypical social norms around men and masculinity in particular.

Our Favourite Resources

Throughout our research, we've more heavily drawn on some resources than others. If you're interested in reading more in-depth accounts of the future and problems of men, these are the ones we recommend:

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys (2022): *Tackling Male Suicide: A Whole New Approach.*

Equimundo (2022): *The State of UK Boys: Understanding and Transforming Gender in the Lives of UK Boys.*

Herring, Richard (2020): *The Problem with Men: When is it International Men's Day? (and why it matters).*

Moran, Caitlin (2023): *What About Men?*

Reeves, Richard V. (2022): *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What To Do About It.*

A Note on the Algorithm

Before we dive in, we want to note that the team who have worked on researching and writing the bulk of this report all identify as women. Our personal and professional online identities, and the subsequent data trails those have created, are gendered.

While researching this report, and specifically the chapter 'Be a Man', we spent a lot of time thinking about 'The Algorithm'. The hyper-personalised internet of today that delivers us the content that matches our exact interests, sometimes even before we know they're interests. It's great at creating echo chambers, prioritising attention and clicks over truth, and making us believe that what we see is what is true. We know that the algorithm exposes young men to visions of masculinity that can **manipulate, but rarely challenge**, their understandings of masculinity. But what does this look like in practice?

The first time we noticed it was when researching 'male role models'. This simple Google search (when initiated by us) served up an even mix of positive and negative role models. (Though the first link did tout Andrew Tate as the best male role model of 2023). But

when we approached some of the men around us to Google the same under their profiles, the results consistently came out more negative. This was problem #1: men are more likely to get served 'toxic' role models or visions of masculinity, even when the search is as innocent as 'male role models'.

Following on from this, we looked into how some of these role models presented themselves on social media. Mildly terrified, we went down the #SigmaMale rabbit hole on TikTok. The most viewed videos, the ones that pop up at the top of every page, are the most controversial clips. TikTok thrives off of views and engagement, so creators with certain views tend to lose nuance and become more extreme over time, in order to drive more clicks. The average comment section on one of these videos is a mix of anonymous profiles spouting violently misogynistic vitriol, and incensed progressives explaining why the content is misogynistic. Which brings us to problem #2: **Gen Z use TikTok as their search engine of choice**. But the TikTok algorithm prioritises and promotes extreme and controversial content that delivers greater engagement.

What was most shocking though, is how quickly our algorithms picked up on these changes. After about 30 minutes scrolling through search results for various 'toxic' role models, our For You Pages were completely changed. Not only was there endless content from these role models, there were huge amounts of disturbing jokes (misogynistic, racist, homophobic, or similar) and, somehow, provocative sexual content. Hence, problem #3: engaging with these role models, even for a little while, very quickly shifts your algorithm. If a young boy, who is merely curious, goes to look into Andrew Tate because all of his classmates are doing the same, the chances are he'll be served more Tate content on his For You Page later. And if he hovers over that, he'll be served more again. Very quickly, adjacent assumptions are made about what kind of content he'd want to consume.

The extreme content that makes it to our For You Pages isn't necessarily what comes up in searches either. It's more niche, and while some of the jokes and comments are very extreme, a lot of it is more subtle rhetoric. Problem #4: by the time you're getting served this content on your For You Page, the algorithm

has likely already assigned you to this echo chamber. The comments on these videos no longer have progressive voices pushing back, it's just more of the same vitriol. Alternative views are completely pushed out by this point (which, as a reminder, was after only about 30 minutes of scrolling).

Of course, it's easy to undo all of this. Simply clicking "Not Interested" on all of the offensive content that comes up will gradually filter it out. But you have to be actively trying to change your algorithm to do so. With young people spending increasing amounts of time on TikTok, and no sign of this trend slowing down, how do we minimise the effects of the online echo chamber?

1930s

1950s

1960s
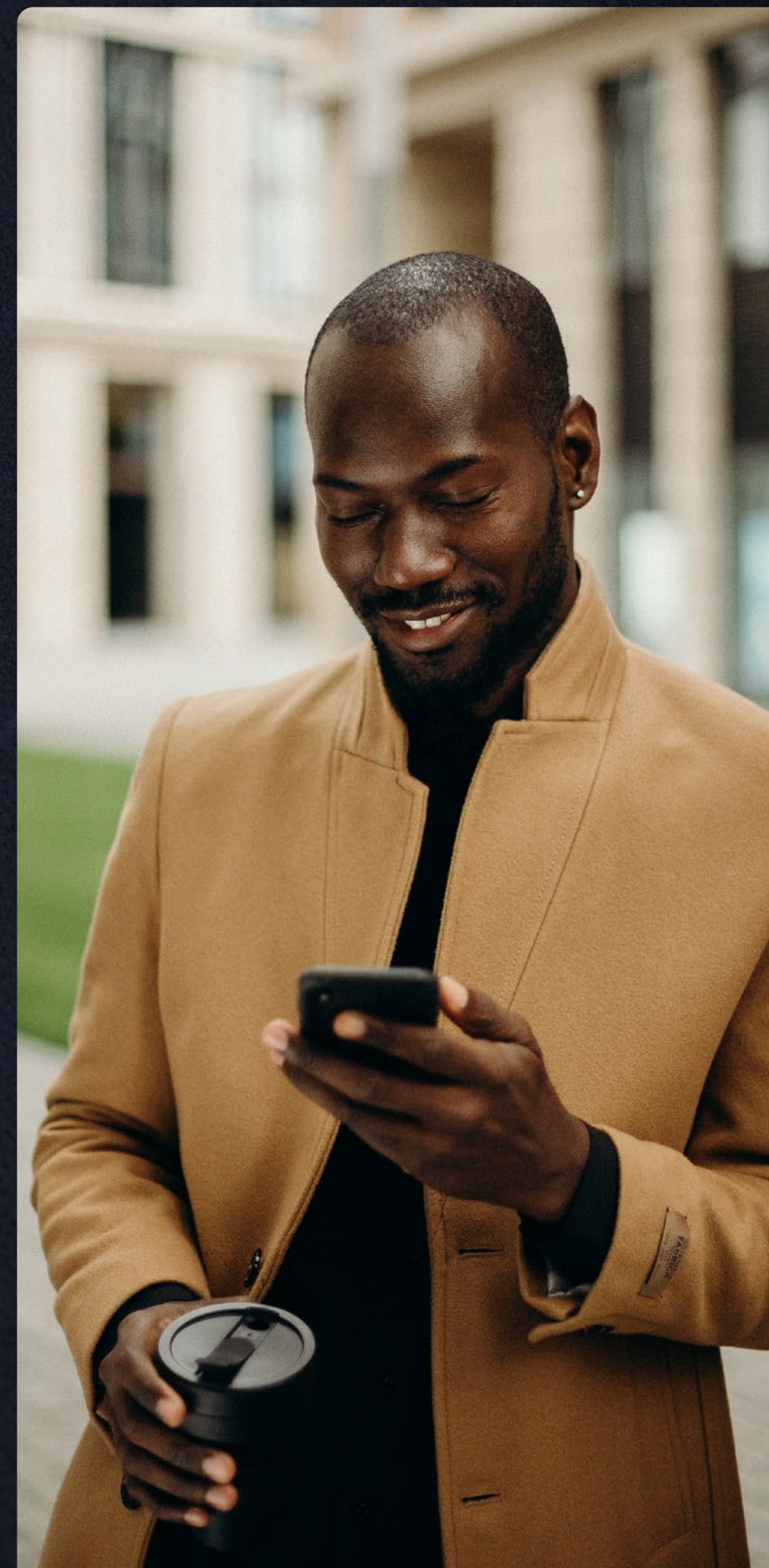
1940s

1970s

Jesse Owens

Fred Astaire

Sherlock Holmes

Clark Gable

Elvis Presley

Marlon Brando

James Dean

James Bond

Muhammad Ali

Paul Newman

Bobby Moore

Mick Jagger

Cary Grant

Laurence Olivier

Winston Churchill

Bruce Lee

John Travolta

Superman

Clint Eastwood

Source

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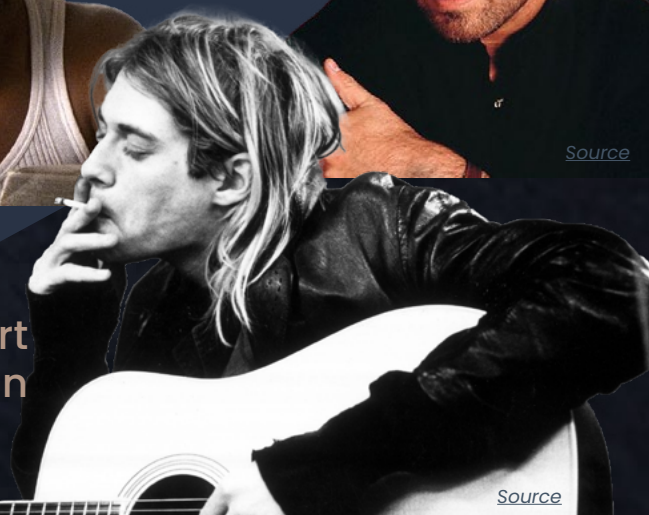
10

11

Be a Man

Current Landscape

Changing Gender Roles

The roles and expectations placed on men in today's society are undergoing a significant transformation. The traditional notions of men as primary 'providers' and 'protectors' no longer hold true universally. So what does it mean to 'be a man' in 2023? While this evolving landscape can feel liberating for some, it leaves many men grappling with uncertainty about their identity and societal roles. As a result, men are still searching for a modern masculine ideal, contributing to a **crisis of confidence among men**.

Where Is My Guide To Life?

The fight for women's liberation has, justifiably so, sparked extensive discussions about 'being a woman' and celebrating women's achievements. From gender equality initiatives to International Women's Day, to the seemingly unspoken understanding among women that sharing advice about their personal and professional experiences will, on some level, allow them to better navigate a patriarchal society: the women's guide to life, whilst not clear cut, simple, or codified into a single manual, does exist. However, men often **find themselves without the same level of advice, guidance, or spaces** for discussion.

Being explicitly told that your identity is valuable, and being given roadmaps and resources for how to fulfil it, whether those guides are 100% effective or not, is always going to beat no guidance at all. For many men, the absence of guidance can foster **a fear of cultural redundancy**. Which leads us to the core question: How do we equip the next generation of men and boys to feel comfortable in a world where masculinity and 'being a man' does not come with the guidebook that many of them seek?

> "70% of young men feel that societal expectations around their gender negatively affect their mental health"

Celebrating Masculinity

As the landscape of gender roles evolves, the celebration of masculinity becomes more complex. Concerns arise when attributing specific positive traits to men or masculinity, as it may be misinterpreted as detracting or diminishing positive femininity. If you call men strong, does that mean that women are weak? We wouldn't be as quick to ask the same question the other way around.

We've seen a generalised resentment against men,

particularly in online spaces (think: "Men are trash." or "The world would be better off without men."), that means that speaking up for men may at times feel like a direct attack on women. Unsurprisingly then, about **70% of young men** feel that societal expectations around their gender negatively affect their mental health. We need to move towards a popular discourse that acknowledges that both masculinity and femininity can be celebrated in the same spaces, without detracting from the positive strides we've made towards gender equality.

Toxic Masculinity

Enter: toxic masculinity. It's a term that's hard to avoid when talking about masculinity these days. It specifically refers to **a version of masculinity that is unhealthy for both men themselves and those around them**, by emphasising the worst aspects of stereotypical maleness (think violence, dominance, entitlement, etc.). We've blamed everything from **rape**, to **Brexit**, to **climate change** on it. Progressives argue that detoxifying masculinity is essential to achieving gender equality, while conservatives claim that the term is an attack on masculinity itself.

When understood properly, the term helps us recognise that the issue is a societal one, rooted in how boys and men are socialised, rather than focussing on the idea that "boys will be boys." However, using 'toxic masculinity' as an umbrella term makes the problems that stem from these behaviours seem like an issue of all men and only serves to obscure the much more complex societal issues that are driving these behaviours. It can feel like the message is that all masculinity is inherently toxic, rather than pinpointing specific behaviours. We need to move towards a language that highlights the social norms associated with manhood, critiques the harmful behaviours that some men adopt as a result, whilst helping men move towards less gendered identities and behaviours.

Toxic Role Models

When looking at the origins of what we understand to be 'toxic masculinity', a recurring theme in the discussion is the absence of positive male role models. Those offering a positive and healthy 'male guide to life' are either hard to find **or associated with radical, misogynistic, and extremist views**. Try to look them up, and you'll likely be served personalities like Jordan Peterson and Andrew Tate over and over again. The environment created by these role models has been dubbed the '**manosphere**': an online ecosystem that offers self-improvement advice for men, often intertwined with misogyny. Male role models who promote clear views of masculinity without scapegoating women are hard to find.

"One in four young men in the UK agree with Andrew Tate's views on women to some degree"

The brand of masculinity that these role models try to sell to their fans is more prescriptive, rooted in a myopic take on historical and stereotypical norms of maleness. If you're wondering what this looks like,

Tate's videos are a highlight reel of **machetes, cigars, diamond watches, luxury cars, and bands of cash that look straight out of** *Scarface*.

Unfortunately, the philosophy that these role models endorse is often underscored by casual or violent misogyny. Coming back to the Tate example, **his views include** the idea that women in relationships "belong" to men; that young women are better to date because they're less likely to have been sexually active; or that men should choke women who accuse them of cheating. And per new research, **one in four young men in the UK** agree with Andrew Tate's views on women to some degree.

So why are men turning to these influencers? Firstly, conforming to these images simply comes with **much clearer advice, norms, and guidance** than just 'being good' does - the prescriptive nature is crucial in a society lacking the male guide to life. Secondly, these figures promote the idea that by following their ideals of masculinity, other men

too can achieve the **socially, economically, and sexually successful lifestyles that they have**. And thirdly, liberal discourse increasingly tries to centre marginalised voices (and rightly so), under the ethos that white, straight, cisgender men have 'had their time'. But for many young men, this isn't the reality at all. They were just born, are in school, etc - has their time really come already?

They are being told by society that their voices aren't relevant to social discourse anymore, leading to them feeling more isolated and marginalised than ever before. These role models, and the manosphere that they've created, provide a space where their voices can be elevated and heard. They offer a **sense of belonging** that young men may not feel they can find elsewhere. The place where young men go to address their loneliness and find purpose now also confines them to anti-social ideologies.

> **"Those offering a positive and healthy 'male guide to life' are either hard to find or associated with radical, misogynistic, and extremist views"**

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

In these sections we wanted to outline at least one possible positive future, based on the trends, actions and initiatives already in train. But for this chapter, we're stumped. The increasingly polarised debate is pushing us further from gender equality, rather than towards a more equitable and fair society for everyone.

Providing support for men and boys does not, and should not, detract from the fight for women and girls. Equally, innovating and investing in help for women and girls is not an attempt to put men down. But the current politics and debate presents these two positions as diametrically opposing actors on the battlefield.

Masculinity is not a bad thing. There should be no shame in being a man. And yet, that's where society has positioned a large percentage of young men. In order to start imagining more positive futures, we first need to start articulating a positive vision of masculinity.

Murkier Outlooks

Marginalising Men

Men increasingly feel like their voices don't have a space in public discourse, and may feel like celebrating their identities feels taboo, or becomes relegated to alt-right 'men's rights' echo chambers.

Extreme Online Spaces Thrive

Those online places pushing harmful ideas about masculinity keep growing, leading to more division, hostility, and radicalisation among certain groups of young men.

Role Model Shortage

A lack of positive male role models mean young men might miss out on good guidance and mentorship.

A Lost Generation

We fail to articulate a healthy vision of masculinity and guide to life that accompanies this. Young men and boys find it harder to articulate their own identities and feel more adrift.

Undermining Gender Equality

The increased perceived division between masculinity and femininity slows down efforts to achieve gender equality. Without actively trying to redefine and balance gender roles, we might keep dealing with unequal treatment and opportunities for both men and women.

Inspiration & New Approaches

Good Lad Initiative

The Good Lad Initiative is a programme designed for young men, designed to teach young men and boys to be active participants in the fight for global gender equity. Their ethos is to let boys and men choose how they want to be men, and co-construct a vision of masculinity that does better by themselves, women and girls, and non-binary people. Through a series of workshops, in workplaces, schools, universities, and communities, they centre male voices and provide a safe space for communication, whilst educating men about processes of socialisation and how to counteract these.

So What: The programme recognises how men and boys are disadvantaged by the patriarchy just like anyone else. By reaching boys from young ages and letting them be active participants in constructing their own visions of positive masculinity, they are engaging men from young ages in order to create communities that are safe and welcoming for everyone.

Progressive Masculinity Workshops

Progressive Masculinity's school workshops similarly let pupils articulate their own visions of masculinity in spaces that feel comfortable and safe to them. The workshops are in small groups of influential pupils, in order to maximise engagement, who then go on to become masculinity ambassadors in schools and spread impact among their peers. Topics purposefully include areas that are typically considered taboo within the male world, like masculine hierarchy, attitudes towards women, and masculinity in digital spaces.

So What: Through recognition that many young men feel unseen and unheard, and that so much social dialogue around masculinity is negative, they argue that we're limiting the potential of young men to be positive influences on the world around them. The workshops aim to engage men at a time during developmental stages in order to minimise the impacts of socialisation processes.

Ventoring by Future Men

Similar to the Good Lad Initiative and Progressive Masculinity workshops, **Future Men** run interventions with boys and men of all ages to reduce the impacts of socialisation processes on our views of masculinity. Where their approach differs, is the specific techniques they've developed to engage men in hard to reach communities. 'Ventoring' is the approach focussed on a venting period, where men have safe spaces to simply talk about their issues, before moving on to mentoring and coaching relationships to gain trust.

So What: Future Men recognises the complexities and importance of engaging men in hard to reach communities. If the underlying factors of non-engagement are not addressed in a one-on-one approach, change has been found to be less sustainable for these groups of young men. By building long-term safe spaces and relationships, Future Men is able to empower more men to reconstruct their masculinity.

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Influencing

We have to acknowledge the importance of the conversation. We can acknowledge the fact that young men are becoming lonelier, less educated, more polarised, and more radicalised. We need to centre positivity, instead of simply rejecting negativity. The conversation shouldn't just focus on what masculinity shouldn't look like, but rather what it could. Do you understand the problems of men right now? What's your role as an organisation in this conversation? Should you even have a role?

Role Models

Focussing on positive, uplifting ideals of masculinity that drive a sense of purpose and pride among young men will be crucial. Who are the role models you're supporting, promoting and platforming? What or who is missing?

Service

Centering the problems of men shouldn't diminish the problems faced by others. But finding the balance can be hard when budgets are limited and you can't stretch your service provision to answer every issue. Where can you find the overlap of need and issue?

Educating Men & Boys

Current Landscape

The Stats

Historically, women and girls faced significant barriers to equal educational opportunities but have made substantial progress in academic achievement over the last 50 years. In contrast, boys and men have experienced much slower growth or even decline in those areas. Boys are now at a **higher risk of repeating grades, failing to complete their education, and struggling to learn while in school**. Globally, colleges and universities now admit **88 men for every 100 women**. In the UK, **50.6% of women in state school education progress to higher education by age 19**, compared to only 38.4% of men.

> "Globally, colleges and universities now admit 88 men for every 100 women"

The gulf between boys and girls is widest when it comes to reading. In almost every country that collects sufficient data, **girls outperform boys at ten years old**. But boys also lag behind in international science tests, and have lost their historical advantage in mathematics.

For boys of colour, **the gap is even wider**. Caribbean British pupils, especially boys, are three times more likely to be permanently excluded from education compared to

their White peers. And while politicians and the media commonly identify White, working-class boys as the most underperforming group, this narrative is based on statistics that equate the working class with those claiming free school meals (FSM), which obscures the fact that **BPOC boys are far more likely to claim these than their white counterparts**. Nonetheless, White boys who claim FSM are **40% less likely** to pursue higher education than disadvantaged BPOC boys. **Lack of aspiration** is commonly cited as one of the largest barriers to achievement for White working class boys - often stemming from parents' negative educational experiences, which acts as a significant barrier to their children's own attainment.

Despite these challenges, concerted efforts to improve outcomes for boys' education are **uncommon**. We have to acknowledge and address the fact that even though men continue to hold more structural power in society, there is a growing number of men and boys who are struggling in education. Ensuring access to quality education for all, as well as engagement throughout, is not a zero-sum game, and ignoring boys' educational issues has broad societal consequences. **Boys are more likely to repeat years of school**,

which is expensive; boys who don't complete secondary education are **more likely to commit crimes**; and doing poorly in school is heavily correlated to **issues with mental and physical health problems in later life**. We must ensure that our pursuit of parity in education does not leave behind young boys.

> "Boys are at higher risk for inattention, hyperactivity, and externalising behaviours"

Biology

So why do we see this divide? The first culprit is, simply put, biology. **Grey matter in female brains develops faster**, and because they then mature faster, they are given more books at earlier ages and learn faster. Girls are ultimately more suited to starting school at the ages we currently set. Additionally, boys are also at **higher risk for inattention, hyperactivity, and externalising behaviours**. When these issues become visible in class, like if they get out of their seats or ignore instructions, they're often punished for it, and more so than girls are. Boys, particularly BPOC boys, are **disciplined at much higher rates than girls**, beginning as early as ages 4 and 5. These differences can be

"Boys report higher rates of bullying, particularly violent kinds"

discouraging for young boys, who fall behind early on and struggle to find engagement later on in school. In fact, research shows that the average boy has lost motivation for school **as early as the age of 8**.

Cultural Barriers

Perhaps the most pervasive and entrenched challenge within education is gender socialisation. We simply don't frame education as a **manly pursuit**. Male role models succeed in athletics, business, and entertainment, rather than academic superstars. It doesn't help that **male teachers are in the minority**, giving boys a lack of studious male role models in their own educational environments as well. The takeaway for many young boys is that school isn't 'cool' and being good at sports is. According to the OECD,

boys are **eight percentage points more likely** to say that school is a "waste of time", and their favourite response when asked for a future profession is "**professional sportsman**".

We also tend to correlate academic success with traditionally 'feminine' traits. Ideals of masculinity project images of **dominance, indifference, and self-sufficiency**, whilst suppressing vulnerability and curiosity. In schools, the boys who actively distance themselves from girls and feminine qualities (including schoolwork and emotional literacy) are **more likely to be considered "real lads" by their peers**. If the basis of learning is admitting that you don't know something and asking for help when it's needed, and boys are taught to associate vulnerability with shame, learning ultimately suffers.

Violence and Fear

The normalisation of aggression in the lives of boys, through the historic construction of violence as an inherently masculine trait, has led to a culture of violence that stretches across the lives of men, but is particularly important to consider during early developmental stages. Boys grow up accustomed to violence and the fear of violence, - making it challenging to perceive **or identify acts of violence** (like peer-to-peer violence in schools or homes) in their own lives. But the constant presence of this violence means that boys report **higher rates of bullying**, particularly violent kinds. And they're more likely to **be targeted because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity or expression than girls are**. This fear and genuine risk of violence increases the risk that boys **will disengage from education**.

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Reimagined Education

The advent of AI is going to force a radical rethink of our current education system. This opportunity to reimagine how we teach, what we teach and where we teach could open the doors to a brighter future that makes learning fun for all, is flexible to varying developmental stages of children, and teaches the next generation computational intelligence over rote learning.

Murkier Outlooks

Boys Left Behind

Equality in education efforts continue to focus solely on achieving gender parity for women, and leave boys behind.

Increased Disillusionment

We continue to see a widening gap between girls and boys in education, leading to more disillusionment, isolation, and long-term mental and physical health problems for men.

Reinforcing the Gender Binary

Our educational system continues to enforce stereotypical notions of gender identity and the gender binary, boxing men into outdated ideals of 'maleness' and further socialising both boys and girls into outdated conceptions of their own identities.

Higher Crime Rates

Boys who do not complete their education are at an increased risk of engaging in criminal activities. High dropout rates and underachievement can contribute to higher crime rates and incarceration rates among men.

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Inspiration & New Approaches

WiseGuyz

WiseGuyz is a US-based initiative focussed on teaching teenage boys the emotional skills needed for healthy relationships, while reflecting on the impacts of harmful gender stereotypes. Intended to both promote healthy attitudes and norms around sexuality, while decreasing behaviours of homophobia and gender-based violence.

So What: Most sexual health services and personal-social education curriculums in schools focus on pregnancy prevention, safe sex and going through puberty. But very few of them address the cultural and media messaging that young boys receive around ideals of manhood and how these relate to cultures of misogyny and homophobia. WiseGuyz recognises the need to shift attitudes around gender norms in order to decrease bullying and violence in these spaces. How can we better address the needs of young boys in order to decrease harmful behaviours that affect everyone across the gender binary?

NYC Men Teach

American movement **NYC Men Teach** aims to improve the presence of male role models in the classroom - specifically men of colour. Not only do they support men of colour entering the education workforce, they also focus on retention and support these teachers in finding better opportunities to change the educational landscape from within.

So What: With fewer men entering the educational workforce, particularly in public schools, there is a need to improve the diversity of role models in the classroom to foster better cultures of tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of all communities.

Kinder

Project **KINDER** works in Portugal, Spain and Croatia with educators of young kids, providing teachers with gender-responsive, more positive tools to help with educating from a gender equality perspective. Their playroom has tons of books and videos to help address topics of gender equality and norms around gender with kids. On top of that, they work with parents to promote diversity in and out of schools.

So What: Patriarchal gender norms affect all kids across the gender binary. Assuming that learning processes are a key part of the socialisation of boys and girls, engaging them from younger ages is crucial to reduce gender stereotypes and promote attitude changes among both kids and their parents. KINDER's philosophy aims to instil an understanding and empathy for better, more inclusive gender norms through fun and playful resources. How do we decrease the prevalence of toxic masculine ideals in schools by focussing on positivity?

Scottish Government

The Scottish government **has now issued guidance** on 'gender-friendly' nursery approaches, from supporting trans kids in schools, addressing gender-based violence, supporting mental health related, gender identity and ensuring LGBTQIA+ equality. The emphasis of the approach is on gender neutral approaches, like 'dress-up boxes' that include options ranging from hyper-feminine, to hyper-masculine, to 'neutral' and encouraging kids to use their own imagination when engaging with these. They also note the importance of incorporating books into the curriculum that have alternative, anti-stereotypical depictions of gender roles.

So What: Teaching gender neutrality from young ages can help to neutralise the stereotypical gender norms that kids often get boxed into, foster better understanding of other gender identities, and ensure the inclusion of those who don't feel represented by a static gender binary. Treating these options as 'normal' rather than special and exceptional helps better embed these.

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Stereotypes

We have to recognise that the stereotypes faced by young boys in classrooms are exacerbated by stereotypes of race. Students of colour are more likely to face unique challenges in education that lead to greater disengagement. Break the stereotypes of race and provide better support for young boys of colour in schools.

Systematic

Whilst biology does contribute to the different experiences of boys and girls in education, it doesn't determine destiny. That being said, current educational systems don't adequately address the different needs of boys and contribute to socialisation processes that exacerbate the issue. It's time to break the cycle.

Engagement

Education has a bad reputation among boys - it just isn't cool. We need to redesign education to be more fun for everyone, including boys. We need role models and mentoring systems that showcase the positive benefits of education, and deconstruct learning as being a 'girl thing'. At a time when AI could radically reshape the future of work, we have an opportunity to radically rethink how we educate the next generation.

Mental Health

Current Landscape

Suicide & Men's Mental Health

In the UK, **approximately 6,000 people die by suicide each year**. It's important to note that while women are more likely to attempt suicide or be diagnosed with mental health conditions like depression, men ultimately account for **74% of these deaths**. The problem is particularly evident in **men aged 45 to 65**, who have the highest statistical likelihood of committing suicide, whilst suicide also remains the **second biggest cause of death in young men** (aged 19 years and under).

But these statistics don't reflect the unique struggles faced by marginalised groups of men in the UK. Black men, in particular, experience **additional mental health struggles** related to racism and discrimination in their day-to-day lives. Gay and bisexual men are **four times more likely** to attempt suicide across their lifetime than the rest of the population. And both of these groups face **even higher** barriers to entry when attempting to access mental health support, because not enough services are tailored to their needs.

While the reasons for these are complex and varied, research has found that there are **universal themes** that stretch across many male suicides. Loneliness, the loss of meaning and purpose, a gap in clearly signposted male-friendly services, and a lack of professional and societal curiosity or empathy when it comes to male wellbeing are the biggest culprits.

Getting Men To Help Themselves

From a young age, men are told to 'man up' and that 'boys don't cry'. Society ingrains the idea that men should keep their issues to themselves, making many men feel that expressing emotions is a sign of weakness. Unsurprisingly, this has led to serious stigma around seeking professional support and treatment, or even just talking about feelings with friends.

"40% of men have never spoken to anyone about their mental health"

This stigma is reflected in the statistics. **40% of men have never spoken to anyone about their mental health**, despite over three quarters of them suffering from symptoms like anxiety, stress, or depression. **A third of men** think they've had diagnosable mental health conditions at some point in their life, but haven't felt comfortable asking for help.

Only 36% of referrals to the NHS for talk therapy are for men. And young Gen Z men are the **least likely of all** to talk openly about their mental health. **The most common reasons** men give for not seeking help are that they think they can handle it themselves, they don't want to be a burden, or they feel embarrassed.

But even when men do speak up, **who's there to listen, act, or ask about their wellbeing?** About **three quarters of young men** believe there aren't enough support systems in place for their mental health. The narrative that men are only in this situation because of the way that they are socialised suggests that masculinity itself is at fault, and that only if men talked more, it would solve all of their issues. The burden shouldn't rest solely on their shoulders.

Successful Interventions

If the public policy/health response isn't effectively helping men access the support they need, what does? We've seen the rise of informal approaches, like active therapy and men's clubs, to fill this space. The successful ones share some common **features**: they harness positive masculinity; focus on belonging; prioritise active therapy rather than face-to-

face talking; recognise the need for effective signposting; and offer male-tailored ways to start communication.

What we see over and over again is the need for spaces for men to be 'men'. There's a craving for activities that bring men together, where they can be heard without judgement, and can communicate in their own way.

AI & Therapy

With the dawn of generative AI upon us, we're already seeing more **AI-based interventions for mental health**. Traditional therapists can be expensive and hard to find, but an AI can be there for you and your problems 24/7. However can a chatbot really replace a trained psychotherapist? The answer is 'not really'. On the one hand, chatbots can boost wellbeing and reduce feelings of loneliness.

A small study on Tess, a type of AI therapist, showed that young people who spoke to the chatbot daily reported **lower levels of anxiety and depression**.

As AI gets more sophisticated, these chatbots may become better at handling complex and nuanced problems and broader range of mental health issues. For example, Microsoft has already patented the ability to **bring back loved ones as chatbots**, while other research is looking into using AI to **personalise mental health interventions** based on computer vision analysis of brain images.

> "Microsoft has already patented the ability to bring back loved ones as chatbots"

On the other hand, AI isn't a human, and therefore can't perceive the **nuance of the therapeutic assessment process**. If someone tells it that they're sad, it can't read social cues and emotions through body language, tone of voice, or tears, and it can't assess the depth of that sadness. Human empathy and connection are the cornerstones of many mental health interventions, and chatbots can't replicate that effectively. On top of that, they're known to hold **sexist, racist, homophobic, and other**

biases that are ingrained into their training data and we've yet to figure out a tool to prevent this (most likely, it would involve de-biasing all training data, and then there's a question around who is leading this process and what their internal biases are).

Moreover, AI chatbots just aren't that great at giving reliable advice yet. For example, one eating disorder support chatbot was recently shut down after **giving out dieting advice** to its users. As AI mental health interventions become more popular and easily accessible, we'll need to find ways to reduce these risks and ensure that those in need still have access to human mental health support.

Gaming

Let's challenge some common gaming myths. First: Men game more than women. True or false? Mostly false. Changing social norms around gaming mean that **more women are getting into this space** than ever before, and the gender breakdown of gamers is largely representative of the global population. But at young ages, boys use video

games **up to five times as much** as girls, mostly because it's more socially acceptable for them. So while it would be a mistake to think that gaming is mostly a men's hobby, we have to recognise that men are more likely to get into gaming from young ages, and thus have a different relationship to gaming throughout their lives.

> "At young ages, boys use video games up to five times as much as girls"

Second: gaming is bad for mental health. True or false? Research actually shows that gaming doesn't seem to be **harmful to mental health**, unless it becomes an addiction (as is the case with most things). However, the daily consumption of **violent video game content** does correlate to higher rates of depression, especially in preadolescent youth.

But beyond that caveat, gaming can actually have a positive impact on mental health. Specifically, the community aspect of gaming could be hugely impactful for the loneliness epidemic. Younger demographics are getting

into gaming because they're **seeking connection and a sense of belonging**, with **44% of Gen Z** engaging with gaming in other ways than just playing the games (think gaming channels, podcasts, communities, or conventions).

And new research shows that online gaming communities could be a lifeline for young men struggling with mental health issues, with men who have depressive symptoms and less real-life support being **40% more likely** to form and maintain social ties with fellow

gamers. The community-focussed nature of modern gaming could give isolated young men a space to open up, find empathy, and build the social connections that they may lack in real life.

And while young male gamers are a demographic **unlikely to seek out mental health support** for themselves, some early stage research shows that **digital mental health services** are promising tools for engagement, with anonymity and confidentiality being the key to making these work.

> "58% of men between 26 and 40 feel negatively about their bodies, and a whopping 48% feel they have mental health issues linked to this"

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

"30% of men say they feel "unmanly" trying to discuss issues they have around their bodies"

The Problem of Porn

Another mental health problem to be aware of is the so-called 'pornography epidemic'. Nowadays, as kids grow up with smartphone in hand, **half of kids aged 9-16 have regular exposure to sexual images**. Young kids in school are showing porn to each other over lunch break, watching celebrity sex tapes, **but schools have a fear around addressing the issue**. This is particularly common to young men, who are **more likely to deliberately seek out porn and to do so more frequently**.

Porn has become a kind of 'guide' for young men, offering clear instructions on how they're expected to perform as 'real men'. Actors in these clips become sexual role models. But the attitudes pervasive in porn are far from healthy. Frequent exposure to these clips may **strengthen attitudes supportive of sexual violence and violence against women** and paint unrealistic and often unhealthy ideals of what sex should look like, which can lead to **sexual dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear**. What's troubling is that men often turn to porn **out of loneliness**, but it can actually make those feelings worse.

Destigmatising Men's Bodies

In the UK, about **58% of men between 26 and 40** feel negatively about their bodies, and a whopping 48% feel they have mental health issues linked to this. And while the conversation around female body positivity has gained momentum and recognition, that same conversation hasn't been extended to men. Male-focused magazines and media still **avoid body positivity**, reinforcing the stereotype that men only want to talk about sports and workouts. An alarming **30% of men** say they feel "unmanly" trying to discuss issues they have around their bodies.

Interestingly, we know that much of female insecurity is driven by air-brushed and photoshopped images in the media and online, but most men feel that their insecurities are organically created. **More than half** think that the top source of insecurity is looking in a mirror. But media representations **are still crucial** in shaping men's ideas of the 'perfect physique', whatever that may be. Hollywood, TV, and the influencer economy, equally drive unattainable ideals of men's bodies. Think of generations of boys growing up watching Arnold Schwarzenegger (a physique which isn't attainable without medical help) or Wolverine (a role for which Hugh Jackman **didn't drink water for 30 hours straight** before rocking up on set). Boys tend to form opinions of what a desirable body looks like at **around 11 or 12 years old**, and they're growing up with a distinct lack of variety when it comes to men that the media frames as attractive. While we've seen a positive shift towards embracing androgyny for men, androgynous fashion is still **always shown on a lean or muscular male body**.

There is some positive movement in this space, like **men's fashion bloggers** who focus on physiques often excluded by the fashion industry, or **better representations of men's bodies** in advertising campaigns, but there's still a long way to go. We need to promote open conversations about men's bodies, destigmatise the men that speak up about this, and break down barriers around men discussing their body image issues.

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Body Positivity

The pushback against unhealthy and unachievable body ideals, led by social media and Hollywood actors, leads to a richer dialogue around body positivity for everyone.

Normalising Help

The increasingly normalised conversation about mental health, therapy and asking for help, starts to shift the dial on the stigma for men. Initiatives created and led by charities lead the way in innovation in this space, offering a diverse range of services and support that offer alternatives to the traditional therapy pathway.

Murkier Outlooks

Mental Health Stigma Persists

There are insufficient mental health resources and services available to and tailored for men. They continue to have difficulties accessing the care that they need.

Continued High Suicide Rates

If men start to feel more isolated, the structural lack of access to the care that they need exacerbates the suicide epidemic among men of every age group.

Healthcare Inequality

Successful interventions for male mental health aren't signposted sufficiently because they fall outside of the traditional system of mental health support.

AI Chatbots as a Limited Solution

While AI-based interventions for mental health may become more common, they may fall short in providing the depth of human empathy and understanding needed for effective mental health support.

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Inspiration & New Approaches

Comedy on Referral

Comedy on Referral is a programme intended to help men who've gone through traumatic experiences through feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide. The course is based on NHS referrals and uses playful therapy methods to encourage participants to write standup comedy routines about their personal experiences. A showcase at the end then has participants perform these for a crowd. All routines are supported by psychologists to ensure no former traumas get brought up.

So What: Comedy on Referral is tapping into the need for alternative ways of discussing mental health issues, whilst adopting men's own tendency to communicate in more humorous (some could say 'banterous') ways. By helping victims reframe their experiences through comedy, they give men the voice to tell their own story.


IT'S OKAY TO TALK.

ANDYSMANCLUB are a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across the United Kingdom and online. We want to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and help men through the power of conversation. #ITSOKAYTOTALK

Andy's Man Club

Andy's Man Club are a men's suicide prevention charity, which focusses on peer-to-peer support groups both in person and online. Their community focussed approach has gained acclaim across the country, and aims to let men speak about anything that's bothering them in judgement-free, confidential spaces.

So What: Andy's Man Club recognises the need for safe spaces for men to be men in, and the importance of giving them access to peer-to-peer conversations in order to reduce the stigma around men's mental health. Their casual framing of these spaces ("We're just a bunch of blokes having a chat over a brew & a biscuit.") is intended to make men feel more comfortable with taking the first step towards getting help.

WELCOME TO MAN THERAPY
...e throws you curveballs, sometimes right your manhood.
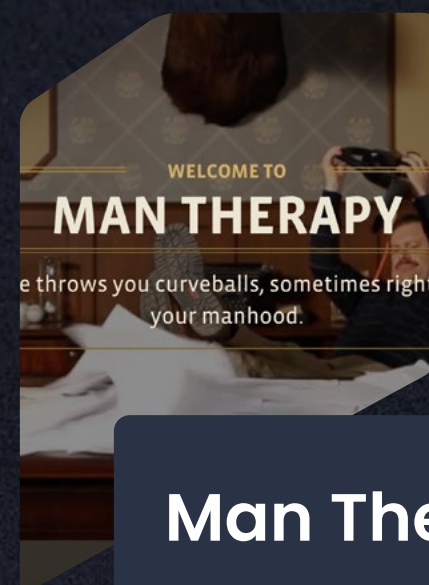
Man Therapy

Man Therapy, at its core, is a fairly standard website designed to educate, reduce stigma, and encourage men to seek help in times of crisis. They have therapist finder tools, screening questionnaires, and self-help tips and resources for men in crisis. While these are fairly standard, it's their tone that is unique. Man Therapy focuses on humour and masculine stereotypes to draw in men: slogans like "It's OK to cry, even when it's not about sports," a logo that simply says 'mahogany,' and moustachioed fictional therapist Rich Mahogany to guide men through the site.

So What: Man Therapy's philosophy is to meet men where they are, rather than trying to get men engaged in services that aren't built for them, or shed years of socialisation processes to get involved with more traditional mental health resources. How can we market therapy to men by speaking their language, signposting in ways that attract them, and using humour?
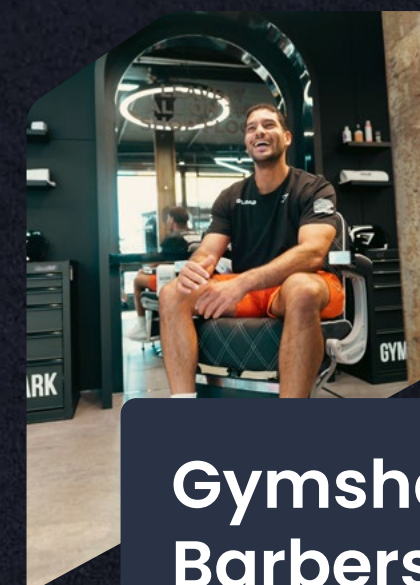
Gymshark Barbershop Deload

As part of their mental health initiative, sportswear brand Gymshark launched a **temporary barber shop** staffed by mental healthcare trained barbers. The non-judgemental safe space, dubbed 'Deload' opened in July 2022, and offered free trims to any men who stepped up to the chair. The pop-up also hosted panel talks featuring representatives from CALM, Curfew Grooming, influencers and gymshark athletes, to discuss campaigns that celebrate the caring side of modern men.

So What: Gymshark is recognising the need for expansive, cross-sector collaborations to create safe spaces for men and reaching out to them in environments that they already feel comfortable talking in. How do we leverage brand partnerships to destigmatise mental health conversations and break down harmful perceptions of masculinity?

Inspiration & New Approaches

Gamers vs Depression

Movember-funded initiative **Gamers vs Depression** aims to train up gamers to be 'psychological first aiders'. These mental health supporters attend three hour online workshops with a team of psychologists, and are expected to complete supervised experience over a number of weeks. The training helps them pick up on signs of common mental health disorders, how to start the conversation, and to look after friends. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to make sure that every gaming guild, esports team and society has a psychological first aider on hand.

So What: For many young men, gaming communities are already a safe space to relax in, as well as open up about their day-to-day anxieties. Gamers vs Depression is working to embed more awareness and mental health support skills into these communities, in order to make the positive mental health benefits structural. How can we give gamers the tools to support themselves and others through difficult times?

The Grieving Pint

Bristol-based charity **The Grieving Pint** was set up in 2023 through recognition that healing processes after the death of a loved one only begin after good conversations. The concept revolves around running monthly sessions in pubs, where any man can come to speak openly about feelings of grief, any other mental health struggles, or simply try to find connection and friendship. They also attempt to drive conversations about the unhealthy relationship between alcohol and grief.

So What: For many men, the pub is a familiar and relaxed setting. The Grieving Pint's philosophy aims to bring better conversation and understandings of grief to this space in which men already feel comfortable. By combining open conversation with a space designed to drive socialising, the charity manages to offer men community and belonging at a grassroots level.

CALM x Instagram: Body Talks

CALM's Body Talks campaign consists of a series of interviews, in partnership with Instagram, featuring male celebrities discussing male body positivity. Topics from height to hair loss to male role models were all on the table. The accompanying research that delved into UK men's feelings about their bodies was published alongside, and videos all linked to resources for support.

So What: Through the use of Instagram (a platform which is frequently accused of perpetuating unhealthy male body standards) and male celebrities (who often showcase these unrealistic standards themselves), CALM was able to start open conversations around destigmatising men's bodies, in a space where men are more vulnerable to these ideals in the first place.

The Grieving Pint — Men's mental health charity

CALM BODY TALKS SUPPORTED BY Instagram — BODIES. WE'VE ALL GOT 'EM. SO WHY DO MEN HARDLY EVER...

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Co-Create

Men don't feel like mental health services are designed with their unique needs and expectations in mind. We need to design services for men, with men. We need to signpost and market these to better engage men. We all need to co-create with our target audiences, and not assume that we know the answers.

Conversation

We need to destigmatise the mental health conversation for young men. How do we normalise men talking to other men and professional services about their feelings and problems? In particular, how do we acknowledge the particular complexities around mental health faced by those in high-stress work environments (ie. first aiders) or by men who are part of marginalised communities (ie. LGBTQIA+ men)?

Positive Imagery

Simply put, are you presenting positive body ideals for all? Be mindful of the representations of men that you're including across all of your communications. Are you a part of driving healthier conversations around male body image? Challenge stereotypes around masculinity and promote a healthier, more positive form of masculinity that encourages emotional expression and reaching out for help when needed.

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Friendships and Relationships

Current Landscape

Loneliness & Men

The number of lonely men globally is on the rise. In the UK, a startling statistic reveals that **1 in 5 men** have no close friends at all. The consequences of this loneliness epidemic is heavily reflected in the male mental health crisis, and is a **significant driver of higher male suicide rates** (as discussed in the previous chapter). And it's not for lack of trying: men are **just as likely as women** to say that they desire emotional support and closeness.

The male struggle with loneliness largely stems back to the way society socialises men. Research indicates that young boys and girls initially approach **friendships in much the same way**. However, by the time boys become teenagers, this drastically changes. By teaching men that expressing emotions is often equated to weakness, and equating masculinity with the ability to **handle stressful life events on their own**, intimate friendships are devalued. Boys learn early on not to talk to their friends about certain things, for fear of showing vulnerability or weakness. Yet the more profound friendships are built on trust and intimacy, stemming from a willingness to be vulnerable with one another. Over time, **men are more likely to lose the skills** needed to maintain healthy relationships with their male peers. By the time they reach their 40s and 50s, we see this loneliness become increasingly reflected in the worryingly high rates of suicide amongst this demographic.

> "The financial cost of severe loneliness was estimated at around £9,537 per person per year"

Loneliness doesn't just lead to isolation and unhappiness; it also **increases the risk of developing anxiety or depression, and is linked to physical health conditions like strokes and cardiovascular disease**. As of 2020, the financial cost of severe loneliness was estimated at around **£9,537 per person per year**.

Men Talking to Men

A recurring theme that emerges when examining male loneliness and mental health is the notion that men simply aren't very good at talking. Whether it's with each other, with women, or with professionals, men seem to have learned to build up internal walls. However, there are two primary ways in which men do engage in communication: through banter, and whilst standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

The former we're all familiar with. Banter (particularly in the **British context** of the term), is a fundamental element of how men communicate with each other. From grabbing a pint at the pub to locker room chat. The playful, humorous ribbing of friends can sometimes be understood as making light of any situation, or slapping "**LOL Artex over crumbling emotional walls**." But the light aggression that often underscores banter isn't intended to be mean to one another, but rather is **deployed as a strategy to achieve intimacy** (think: "I know you know that I'm not being mean or serious, that I have permission to say this, and that my jokes are acceptable within the trust we've built up in this friendship."). The second is the idea that rather than talking face-to-face, **men are socialised to do group activities side by side**. Breaking down the internal barriers around open conversation feels easier when it's accompanied by external activities.

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Tackling Suicide

A lack of close social and family relationships, and the associated loneliness, is one of the biggest risk factors in male suicide. We take hope from Max Dickins' book Billy No-Mates, which explores male friendships and comes to the conclusion that, if you want better friends, you need to be a better man. "Show up, when asked. Go first, when not. Keep going, even when it's hard."

Murkier Outlooks

Loneliness Epidemic

Perceived social barriers to presenting vulnerability in friendships and relationships further isolates men and worsens the loneliness epidemic. Men that were socialised in this way from a young age struggle to make friends in adulthood and have lower emotional resilience throughout their later life.

Stigmatising Emotional Growth

Young men aren't given the tools and freedom they need to build up crucial social skills, and aren't given the same opportunities to be emotionally open with themselves and others. The stigma around discussing their feelings continues to grow.

Poor Service Provision

Mental health services predominantly benefit the way women feel comfortable communicating and risk shutting men off from important resources.

Inspiration & New Approaches

Broquets

Australian charity Gotcha4Life partnered with florists Fig & Bloom in 2020 to launch the **Broquet**: bouquets of flowers for men to give 'to their bros' with the aim of kickstarting conversations and checking in on one another. The bouquets were made up of dried flowers and foliage that could last up to six years, and half of the proceeds from the flowers went to the charity to build mental health services in Australia.

So What: While the concept of 'flowers for bros' may come off as frivolous at first glance, the underlying concept of helping men to express support and friendship to each other is a powerful one. The initiative created the opportunity to touch base with friends, whether they'd recently gone through a tough time or just to check in, whilst keeping things light through its jokey name and nature.
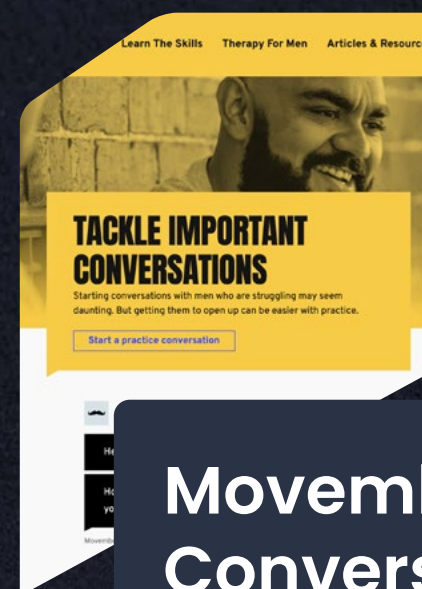
Movember Conversations

To support men during the pandemic, The Movember Foundation launched **Movember Conversations** in 2020. With the mental health impacts of the pandemic even more significant for those who were already reluctant to reach out about their mental health, Movember's aim was to engage harder to reach men. The interactive tool gives practical guidance for anyone on how to approach men about mental health issues. It features four short conversations, in which users can choose from a range of responses, which the tool will offer feedback on.

So What: Movember's tool asks the question: if, as an organisation, you can't reach out and engage these hard to reach audiences directly, how can you give other people the confidence to do so? How do we equip the people around men with the tools and skills to help them more effectively engage men in conversations around their mental health?

Men's Sheds UK

Men's Sheds UK has gained wide appeal for their active approach to mental health interventions. The core philosophy is that men bond over shared interests in familiar environments (ie. do most of their talking 'shoulder to shoulder'), rather than engage with traditional counselling and support groups. Positioned as a space for men to meet other men, talk openly about their feelings, all the while fixing up broken lawnmowers and the like, they're uniquely tailored to how men talk and bond.

So What: While women are welcome to become members of some sheds, the philosophy of the organisation stresses the importance of men having their own spaces to be men in. It might sound stereotypical or reductive, but for men to build friendships in the same way women do, the sheds need to be an environment tailored specifically to how men prefer to communicate. The end goal is to reduce the impact of the loneliness epidemic in men, and destigmatise vulnerability.

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Banter

Men use banter to achieve connection and intimacy. Don't be afraid to use humour to broach more serious conversations when engaging men. It might feel different from your usual tone of voice, but could open your services up to new audiences and communities.

Loneliness

There's a financial cost of loneliness. Tackling loneliness by supporting men to make and retain new friendships (throughout their lives) could be one route to starting to address the mental health crisis amongst men and reducing the financial burden on society.

Safe Spaces

We know that interventions for male mental health are largely community-focussed. Men are craving spaces for men to be men, with other men. Should you be designing and providing services and spaces specifically for men, to foster open conversations, vulnerability and better emotional connections? What could and should inclusion look like in this design?

Current Landscape

Dying Younger

We've known for decades that **men die younger than women**. In the UK, the life expectancy gap sits at around **four years**, and this pattern is mirrored worldwide. To make matters worse, men face a higher prevalence of **33 out of the top 40 leading causes of death**. When combined with the tragic suicide rates among young men, as well as men's reluctance to seek **medical** assistance, **weaker immune systems**, and engagement in **risky behaviours** like smoking and drinking - it becomes evident that the life expectancy gap shows no signs of closing.

> "After the age of 16, boys suddenly become three times more likely than girls to engage in drug use"

Substance Abuse

When it comes to risky behaviours, **men are more likely than women** to use almost all types of illicit drugs (illegal drugs or the abuse of prescription drugs), and are **more likely to see** their drug use end in an A&E visit or accidental overdose than women are. This behaviour isn't consistent across age categories - during school years, boys and girls are equally likely to experiment with

drugs or be in secure treatment. However, after the age of 16, boys suddenly become **three times more likely** than girls to engage in drug use. Additionally, roughly **a quarter of British men** exceed the recommended weekly alcohol consumption, and with nearly 30% classified as regular binge drinkers. Men's biological predisposition and subsequent socialisation to risk-taking behaviour is the biggest driver of this, but it's crucial not to underestimate the potential impact the growing mental health crisis, especially among young men, may have on this issue.

Impact of Cancer

Men are also more susceptible to cancer than women. Through a combination of social (ie. higher likelihood of men to smoke) and biological factors, **one in two men** will develop some form of the disease in their lifetime, compared to one in three women. Gendered cancers like prostate or testicular cancer can have significant repercussions on men's sense of identity. Physical changes in their bodies, feeling weaker, changes to their sex life, or erection, urinary and bowel problems can all have **serious impacts on how men see themselves**, especially given how many of these are often related to societies'

ideas of strong masculinity (ie. high sex drives). Men facing these cancers may grapple with feelings of diminished masculinity, reduced capacity to provide for their families or themselves, and difficulties in acknowledging vulnerability and weakness after being conditioned to hide such emotions for so long.

Prostate cancer, in particular, is more prevalent among Black men, with **one in four of them** likely to develop the disease. Despite this, support groups still mostly cater to White men struggling with the disease, leaving BPOC and other marginalised communities struggling to find resources and space tailored to their specific experience. These underserved groups require **more inclusive platforms to discuss** the impact of cancer on their sense of identity, taking into account both their gender and their racial or ethnic background.

Men's Health
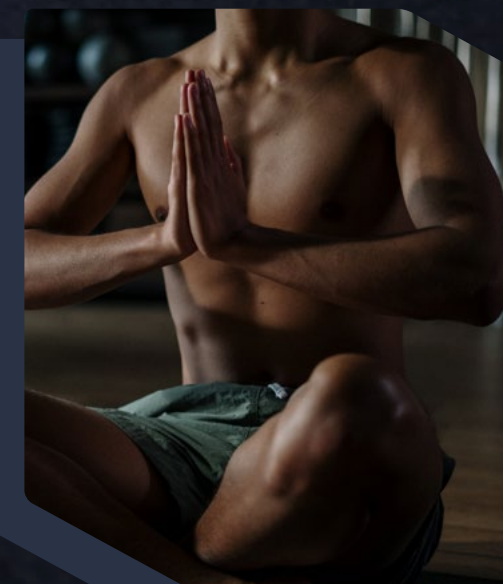
"40% of bisexual men aren't out to any healthcare professional about their sexual orientation"

Erectile Dysfunction

Erectile Dysfunction (ED) can significantly affect the quality of life and men's **perception of their own masculinity**. The ability to achieve an erection is still framed as a cornerstone of masculinity across society - from the way porn portrays sex, to the frequent use of ED as the subject of jokes in the media, to the way we relate masculinity to sexual performance. Stereotypical notions of masculinity are so heavily tied to ideas of sex, virility, the ability to provide, and assertiveness, that erections have become symbolic of this idea of what stereotypical men should be able to do. In this context, ED can feel like failure, or a **threat to one's own manhood**. Unsurprising then that **research finds that men with ED** report high levels of depression, embarrassment, decreased self-worth, and a fear of being stigmatised.

Ageing

In the context of the UK's rapidly ageing population, men's increased health risks could strain an already overwhelmed healthcare system even further. With decreased quality of life in older age and the **associated increased social burden** (ie. pressure on the NHS, more care workers needed, greater financial burden for those paying for care, etc), we need to engage men around their health now, rather than later, in order to prevent and slow the progress of any health problems that could lead to lower quality of life in older age.

Going To The GP

Men's reluctance to seek medical help or visit the GP is a recurring problem that underlies almost all of the above issues. Almost two-thirds of men put off going to the doctor as long as possible (a number which gets worse when you take **social class** into account), and **37% say they withhold information from their doctors**. This reluctance to seek medical assistance not only prevents doctors from detecting life-threatening conditions in time, but also compounds the long-term health impacts, sometimes even leading to preventable deaths. We already know that men are less likely to admit to feeling vulnerable, stemming from the fact that they're socialised to keep their emotions inside, put on a brave face, and be self-sufficient. Going to the doctor goes against all of those innate instincts. Finding ways to reach men in their own environments and present seeking medical assistance as a sign of strength rather than weakness is crucial. Another barrier to seeking medical help is their perception of their co-workers' and bosses' attitudes. Research shows that **retired men visit the GP almost as frequently as women of the same age**. However, for working age men, admitting the vulnerability to a professional authority figure might act as an additional barrier to entry.

Meanwhile LGBTQIA+ men are far more likely to face actual **discrimination** in healthcare settings, and find accessing healthcare to be detrimental to their own mental health at times. In fact, **19% of LGBT people** in general, and 40% of bisexual men specifically, aren't out to any healthcare professional about their sexual orientation, which makes it harder to access the healthcare that they need. We need to build a healthcare system that considers gender sensitivity across the entire gender spectrum and is fully inclusive, encouraging men to seek healthcare when necessary.

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Dr ChatGPT

AI tools unlock diagnostics in the home, reducing the guilt felt by some men for taking up GP time and encouraging more men to check their symptoms earlier, with the help of technology.

Murkier Outlooks

Continued Health Disparities

The healthcare system continues to neglect the specific needs and expectations of men. Men's access to GPs and general medical care decreases, and their long-term health issues become more severe.

Rising Substance Abuse

The impacts of the loneliness epidemic turn more men to substance abuse. Low proliferation of support services designed with men in mind, combined with low uptake of the ones that do exist exacerbate the problem.

Increased Healthcare Burden

After having neglected their health problems at younger ages, the ageing male population in the UK requires increasing amounts of care. The care and healthcare sectors both become overwhelmed. The cost of care puts a huge financial burden on both the estates of the ageing population and of their money-stretched Millennial children.

Inspiration & New Approaches

Viagra Connect

Over-the-counter erection medicine Viagra Connect launched their short film '**Love Story**' in 2020. The short story follows a young couple as they overcome the challenges of isolation, erection problems, and intimacy. The tagline: "Don't let life get in the way of your love story."

So What: With Viagra Connect's research showing that erection problems result in breakups for one in 14 men, the ad spot works to destigmatise erectile dysfunction (ED) and the use of viagra. It aims to disassociate men's sexuality and 'maleness' with their ability to hold an erection by showing that ED is largely related to stress, work, and poor eating habits, rather than any innate relationship to masculinity.

Het Ballenalarm

In the Netherlands, public sirens are tested at noon on the first Monday of every month. But a new initiative funded by the Dutch Foundation for Testicular Cancer has co-opted the sound, by dubbing it **Het Ballenalarm** (The Ball Alarm). When it sounds, it's encouraging people to drop everything and perform a testicular self-exam. The campaign both pushes people to take that moment as a reminder for a check-up, as well as raising awareness for how to check.

So What: As much as men have been told and know to look for potential signs of testicular cancer, it can slip anyone's mind. By attaching a monthly check to an unavoidable part of Dutch life, the test sirens, Het Ballenalarm uses humour to raise awareness and set monthly reminders for men to check in on their physical health.

Philips Norelco x Movember

Technology brand **Philips Norelco** recently partnered with Movember to do some myth-busting around men's health (both mental and physical) for young boys. The campaign, run on Gen Z and Alpha favourite platform Roblox, let men buy moustaches for their online personas to take part in a digital version of Movember. Alongside this, the company provided health advice and information from men's health doctors both on Roblox and across its social media platforms.

So What: By engaging young boys through gamified approaches to men's health, Philips Norelco and Movember try to reduce the barriers around asking for help from a young age, even making it seem fun at times. It clearly worked, as the campaign has attracted **1 million players**, who've spent 43,838 hours in the space, making it one of the fastest growing health-focused activations by a brand on Roblox to date.

Inspiration & New Approaches

Hims

Hims is an online telehealth platform that aims to connect men to healthcare professionals in the UK in safe spaces. In particular, they focus on conditions that may be seen as 'embarrassing' for men, and thus don't get addressed in typical GP spaces as often: hair loss, erectile dysfunction, early climax, and more. Consultations are entirely online and as anonymised as possible, with all medicines shipped to men's home addresses in discreet packaging. Their website also offers a blog ('Savoir Faire') full of content and resources around the same issues.

So What: Men are already reluctant to go to the GP - an issue that's exacerbated when the issue at hand is considered 'shameful' in some way. Hims recognises the need for safe, destigmatised, and most importantly, anonymised and online treatment options for men in these situations.
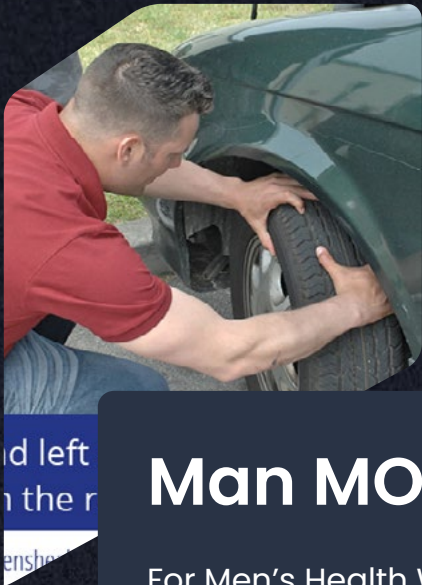
Man MOT

For Men's Health Week 2022, the Men's Health Forum called for a **Man MOT**. At its core, this is basically code for getting an NHS Health Check, or checking in on any existing symptoms. On top of that, the organisation published and shared their Man MOT manuals for both physical and emotional health, featuring fourteen key questions to monitor wellbeing in a bright, fun, and interactive style. The campaign also called for a gender-aware policy response from the government to improve men's access to healthcare.

So What: Whilst simple in its approach, the Man MOT understands that adopting men's language is key to engaging them in their own health. The campaign breaks down the process of getting an annual health check-in to easily manageable, bite-size steps in order to make the process the least overwhelming it can be.

Brother to Brother, Man to Man

The **Brother to Brother, Man to Man** group was set up by Guy's Cancer and the South East London Cancer Alliance to address the disparities in access to quality healthcare for men with prostate cancer, particularly for BPOC men. Feedback from Black patients around the lack of support they faced largely focused on the lack of community spaces to talk to other patients from similar communities, so the programme has created support groups, talks on subjects including sex and intimacy in the context of prostate cancer, and monthly open conversations that welcome partners, family members, and carers.

So What: The lived realities of health issues like prostate cancer look very different for marginalised communities across the UK. There's a clear appetite for intersectional spaces where these communities can safely discuss the added layers of difficulty that these diagnoses can have on them. Brother to Brother, Man to Man attempts to address that need.

hims

Get a personalised treatment plan with

Losing or thinning hair?

hims

Start hair loss

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Normalise Our Bodies

Men's bodies and their relationships to their bodies continue to be largely undiscussed. Help reduce the stigma around men's bodies and the issues that affect them, opening the doors for them to ask for help. Start the conversation about self-checks and attending screenings for cancer early.

GP Access

GP access is particularly poor among working age men. We need to build healthcare systems that better acknowledge and understand the hesitations men have around seeking help, particularly as it pertains to balancing work and health.

Data Collaboration

There continues to be a disparity in access and quality of healthcare across different demographics in the UK. A large part comes down to lack of data and insight on the challenges and needs faced by underrepresented groups. Where can you collaborate with other organisations and community groups to build up a more complete picture of the data landscape and needs?

Inclusivity

Discrimination in healthcare means that coming out to healthcare providers is still difficult for many men (and women). We need to reduce the stigma of coming out to healthcare professionals by creating more inclusive approaches to health, with better training for healthcare professionals.

Current Landscape

Men As Parents

In today's media, the typical portrayal of a dad often shows him as well-meaning but clueless. A 2022 study found that male caregivers on screen are almost **twice as likely to be depicted as incompetent as women**. We still frame dads as being perennial babysitters. Black fathers in particular are often framed as **absent and uninvolved** (despite this being untrue). This can be problematic because it leads to an automatic assumption that mothers should shoulder the **heaviest and most complex burdens** in most heterosexual parental situations. Research shows that kids **benefit the most** when dads are actively engaged and content with those roles as parents. To encourage more engagements from dads, we need to present fatherhood as a more fulfilling pursuit, and shift more of the caregiving responsibilities to men.

There is some positive change happening in this area. The number of **stay-at-home dads has increased by a third** since before the pandemic, and more men are taking on **equal caregiving responsibilities**, partially due to post-pandemic **flexible working policies**. **More children are parented by LGBTQIA+ parents**, who are **more likely to split chores and childcare equally** to begin with.

However, sociologists warn that although the **culture of fatherhood is changing, fathers' actual behaviours** haven't shifted as much as desired. For example, whilst 62% of Millennial dads self-report as saying that they share equal parenting duties with their partner, only **43% of Millennial mums say the same**. Furthermore, there's **no generational difference** between Gen X and Millennials when it comes to men reducing their careers in favour of childcare. This could be due in part to structural barriers, such as unequal parental leave policies (which we go into further in the 'Men At Work' chapter). Whilst there is still a way to go when it comes to achieving gender parity in parenting work, giving fathers the credit where it's due is crucial in order to break down the idea that fathers are less competent parents than mothers - a misconception that's bad for everyone.

> "We're seeing parents feel increasingly anxious about how they should be raising a 'conscious boy in a changing world'"

Parenting Boys

With changing gender norms in society, we're seeing parents feel **increasingly anxious** about how they should be raising a '21st century boy' or a 'conscious boy in a changing world'. While the question of how to raise a modern man is by no means a new one, we're perhaps seeing a new sense of urgency, as it becomes increasingly obvious that current models of parenting are proving insufficient. So, how do we equip boys with the 'guide to life' that they feel is lacking, and the resources they need to navigate shifting conceptions of masculinity, and how do we help parents help navigate their boys into manhood?

Parenting

> "Open and honest communication allows boys to air all of their worries and concerns, and destigmatises vulnerability and emotion among men"

Unfortunately there's not a one-size-fits-all answer to this challenge, but two things come up over and over in the research. First, the benefit of **having an engaged and positive male role model at home**. The presence of fathers who are engaged with parenting and comfortable with their own masculinity gives boys a template of what positive masculinity could look like and allow them to feel more comfortable with their own identities. This is not to say that single-sex households will never be able to provide this for their sons - research shows that kids parented by same-sex, opposite-sex, and single-parents familiar all have **largely equal chances of growing up successful**.

While it's great to celebrate the benefit of fathers, there is no evidence to suggest that they're a magic ingredient that single-sex parents can never access. Secondly: **conversation, conversation, conversation**. Open and honest communication that allows boys to air all of their worries and concerns, and destigmatises vulnerability and emotion among men.

Custody and Divorce

Many men feel they often draw **the short straw** when it comes to custody and access to their kids post-separation. This has led to the emergence of specialist lawyers for fathers going through

divorce. However, it's important to note that over the past decades there has **been a shift** towards more equitable family court and custody decisions. Since 2015, men are **just as likely** to have their petitions approved as women. Increasing awareness of these positive developments in valuing fathers equally is essential for fostering a culture that recognizes the importance of fatherhood.

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Foreword

Theoretical
Framework

A Note on
the Algorithm

Be a Man

Educating
Men & Boys

Mental Health

Friendships &
Relationships

Men's Health

Parenting

Marketing
to Men

Men & Sport

Men At Work

Men &
Charity

10/10

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Proud Parents

Post-pandemic flexible working enables more families to reconsider the gender dynamic around caring responsibilities, seeing more men choosing to take on a greater share of caregiving. Gen Z dads become the generation to break the gendered caring cycle, with more men choosing to pause their careers for their families than any previous generation.

Murkier Outlooks

Disengaged Dads

We continue to undervalue fathers' contributions to parenting and more men become disengaged from fatherhood.

Impact on Children

Young boys struggle to find role models both out of and in their daily lives. They struggle to find positive conceptions of masculinity close to home and have to turn elsewhere for these.

Gender Inequality in Parenting

Inequalities in how we view mums and dads' role in families continue to disadvantage both women and men in the workplace, and continually place the burden of care on women.

Societal Perceptions

Stereotypical portrayals of fathers in the media as inept caregivers continues, contributing to the perception that fathers are less competent parents than mothers. Further perpetuating harmful stereotypes and hindering efforts to promote equal parenting roles.

![GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION]

Inspiration & New Approaches
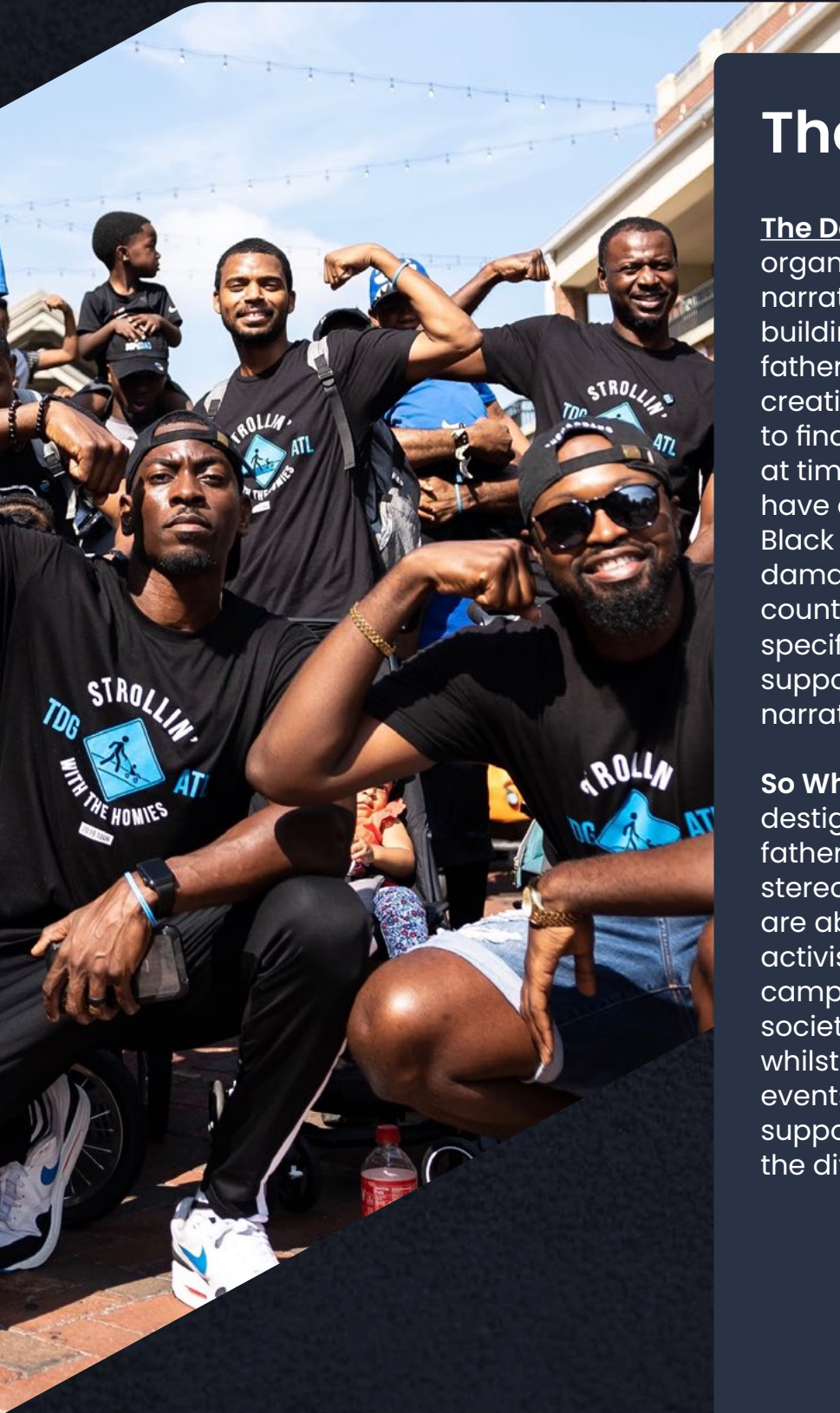
The Dad Gang

The Dad Gang is a global organisation working to redefine narratives of Black fatherhood. By building community amongst Black fathers across the world, they're creating safe spaces for these dads to find camaraderie, support, and, at times, a place to turn up and have a few pints. Stereotypes of Black fatherhood are often more damaging than those of their White counterparts, and The Dad Gang specifically exists to teach and support men through breaking that narrative.

So What: As a society, we need to destigmatise perceptions of BPOC fatherhood in order to tackle the stereotype that most Black dads are absent fathers. The Dad Gang's activist marches and marketing campaigns work to change the societal narrative around this issue, whilst their community-focussed events offer safe spaces and support for Black dads to navigate the difficulties of black fatherhood.

Future Men

The Future Dads Course by Future Men is a course for new and expectant dads, which trains men to get their own mental health in check at the start of their fatherhood journey, in order to take better care of themselves, their partner, and their baby. From practical skills to co-constructing ideals of fatherhood, to self-care strategies and skills, the programme offers a safe space for men to come together and prepare for being a dad.

So What: How do we equip a new generation of dads with the skills to be kinder to themselves and raise emotionally healthy and secure children at the same time? The Future Dads programme recognises the sometimes-sidelined emotional impact of fatherhood and attempts to mitigate this through sustainable mental health training.

Fathers Reading Every Day

Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED) by The Fatherhood Institute is a simple and sustainable intervention aimed at getting dads reading to their children regularly. Knowing that it can dramatically improve children's outcomes in later life, as well as encourage bonding between fathers and their kids, the programme includes explorations of what specifically benefits children from this intervention, as well as the personal and cultural issues which shape our perceptions of men and fathers.

So What: Engaging fathers with their children's learning and in the life of schools is hugely beneficial to both fathers and their kids. FRED attempts to build long-lasting engagement, that questions the underlying stereotypes that drive fathers to read less to their kids in the first place. How do we encourage fathers to take on a more active role in this space?

Inspiration & New Approaches
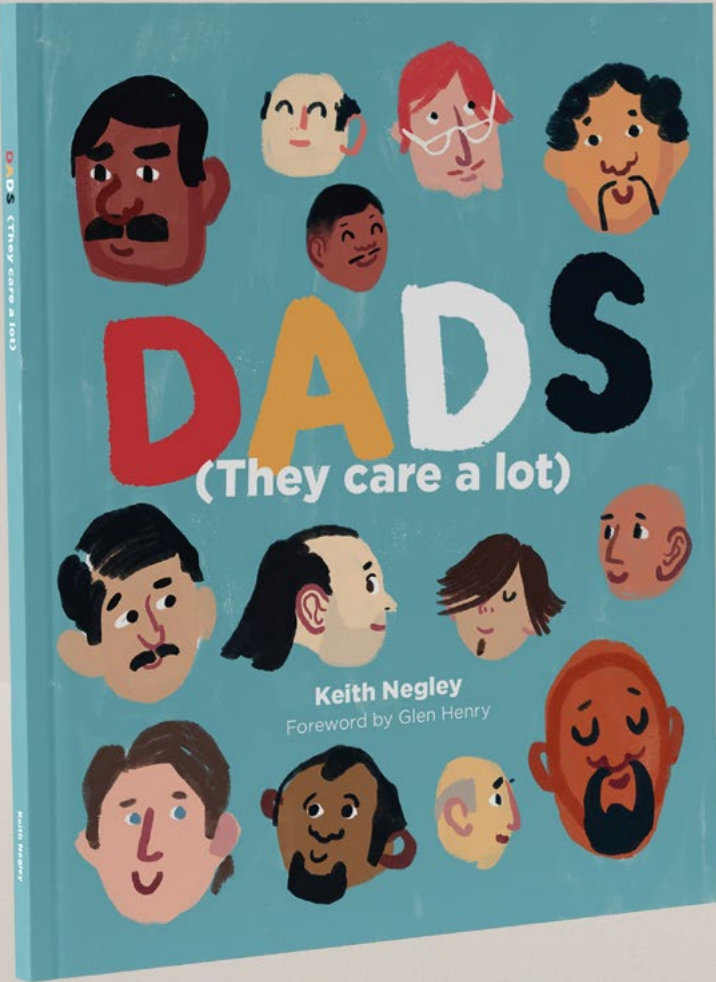
Dads (They Care A Lot)

For Father's Day 2021, Dove Men+Care created a children's e-book called '**Dads (They Care A Lot)**', to encourage dads spending time with their kids, and to recognise the work that fathers put in on the day to day. The brand also partnered with Headspace to ensure that any Dove product bought in the adjacent months would come with a three-month trial for the wellbeing platform, and launched a YouTube hub called #DadsCare to share resources and advice about fatherhood.

So What: Dove Men+Care's campaign aims to recognise fatherhood and celebrate it, rather than diminishing the work that engaged fathers put into their families. Their approach combines this celebration with the provision of tools and resources for dads to practise self care as well.

DadLaSoul

DadLaSoul is a UK based charity focussed on the social isolation faced by many fathers. It recognises that fatherhood doesn't come with a rule book and that men are often portrayed to be glorified babysitters within parenting partnerships, whilst simultaneously facing smaller social circles and greater isolation. In response, the charity aims to encourage the proliferation of things like dad-toddler groups, gents toilets with changing facilities, and, most importantly, creating social opportunities for dads to connect.

So What: We know that fatherhood, like all parenting, can be isolating. But we're much more likely to see interventions for women in this space than men. Not only does DadLaSoul's work encourage the more equal distribution of care duties among parenting relationships, they also try to support dads' mental health by giving them a community space.

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Parental Leave

Inequalities in parental leave continue to be a structural barrier to the equal sharing of caring responsibilities. Are your own parental leave policies up to date and equal? Can you contribute to the wider conversation of normalising these practices across the UK?

Portraying Dads

We need to portray better, more nuanced visions of dads in advertising, the media, and all communications. Men are not clueless, incompetent, or babysitters. We need to create more value around fatherhood by showing positive representations of it.

Reading

Simply put, how do we encourage more fathers to read to their kids? And how do we encourage parents to spend equal time reading to their sons as they do their daughters?

Resources

Raising boys continues to be a source of anxiety for many parents, particularly as we live in a society lacking a consistent, healthy vision of masculinity. Help parents through these stresses by equipping them with support, services, and resources to raise boys.

Current Landscape

Brands and Masculinity

In the world of advertising, it's a common narrative that it's **harder to market to men** nowadays. In the early '90s, there was a well-defined '**lads culture**' (the era of the 'ladvert'). The 2000s and 2010s brought about the era of the '**metrosexual man**'. However, in today's landscape, categorising and targeting men has become less straightforward. Whilst it's clear that the archetype of the 'real man' is past its sell-by date, it's less clear what should replace it. Only **54% of young men** feel modern advertising truly represents them, and they yearn for more nuanced portrayls of masculinity.

> "Only 54% of young men feel modern advertising truly represents them"

We know that more needs to be done to change the way that men are perceived in society, from finding the male guide to life to supporting men's mental health better, and young men believe that brands and advertising **have a responsibility** to shape new, healthy and positive visions of manhood. This involves challenging stereotypes that harm men, focussing on the positive and emotional aspects of maleness, destigmatising men's bodies, to

better representations of good dads and male role models in advertising.

However, the complexity of the topic, combined with a healthy dose of fear of backlash, means that masculinity is often seen as the **elephant in the room for marketers**. It's time for all brands, businesses and advertisers to take a stand and confront the complexities of masculinity and offer authentic, relatable and thoughtful representations that can help boys and men in navigating a new era of masculinity.

Marketing To Men vs. Women

The enduring stereotype that women are more likely to shop means that Adland is simply more clued in on what women want, need, and buy, than what men do. However, research reveals that men are actually **more likely to be successfully targeted** by advertising than women. In particular, they respond well to ads that focus on **problem-solving** - whether it's solving problems; guides for fixing things; or presenting products and services as problem-solving tools. Even better if the product or service actually provides a solution or quick fix: that's a huge factor in **male brand loyalty**.

> "Men are more likely to be successfully targeted by advertising than women"

A recent study showed that male and female responses to emotional advertising are **generally similar**. However, this dynamic changes when there's a third party present, and the ad's content challenges traditional notions of masculinity. In these cases, men's emotional engagement tends to decrease.

Marketing to Men

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Challenging Stereotypes

Brands and advertising increasingly take a stand on challenging stereotypes of masculinity. These campaigns become more common and face less backlash. Media representations of masculinity become more nuanced and men feel more secure in their identities.

Murkier Outlooks

Inadequate Representation

Men and boys continue to not see themselves or their lived experience represented in marketing, leading to further isolation and disconnection.

Missing Marketing Opportunities

Brands fail to adapt to shifting notions of masculinity and struggle to engage men through authentic representation. Even brands that are supporting men through their products and services find it more difficult to reach male audiences.

Inspiration & New Approaches

#ManEnough ToCare

Dove Men+Care is attempting to redefine fatherhood with their **#ManEnoughToCare** campaign. The campaign features sweet portrayals of real fathers' devotion to their children, and recognises a version of masculinity that isn't often seen in advertising: the one that acknowledges fathers and the tenderness of men. It uses conventional phrases like "lifting" and "getting your hands dirty" and subverts them with images of a father supporting his child in a swimming pool, or finger-painting together.

So What: Recognising the more caring, emotional, and soft aspects of masculinity not only helps more men recognise themselves in advertising and media, it also helps break down stigmas around stereotypical masculinity. How can more varied representations of men in communications shift societal conversations?

Glenlivet US

For Father's Day this year, **The Glenlivet** shows what happens if you let AI write your ads about fatherhood. As expected, AI spat out an ad filled with scenarios of fathers and sons on camping trips, fishing together, making bonfires together... you see where this is going. In the short film, the brand invited real families to read the scripts, and then open up the dialogue to what fatherhood really looks like.

So What: The ad isn't just intended to shine a light on fathers and father figures who are challenging the conventions of what fatherhood looks like today, it is also a warning note about what stereotypes could be perpetuated in society if we begin to rely on AI more and more, particularly in marketing.

Stuff

Male grooming brand '**Stuff**' sells men's self-care products without the overly-stereotypically masculinised marketing. The brand was born out of a lack of businesses in the masculinity space being driven by purpose, and too few brands tackling stereotypes around men. So alongside selling simple care products whose marketing focuses on nuanced visions of men, the business works with their partner charity, The Man Cave, to support men's mental health programmes. For every $1000 in sales, Stuff sponsors one boy through one of these interventions.

So What: With men's self-care products often heavily marketed through outdated stereotypes of masculinity (typically, how do you get men to buy skincare? Call it something cool like 'steely ice'), Stuff goes against the grain to peel back these stereotypes and focus on nuanced and diverse representations of masculinity. They then back up this philosophy by investing in men's mental health through charity partnerships.
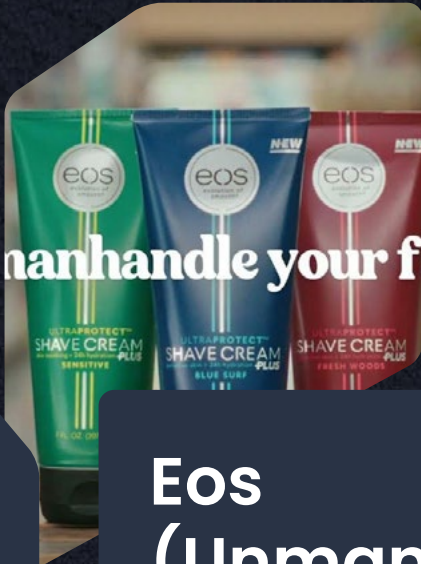
Eos (Unmanhandle Your Face)

Similar to Stuff, US skincare brand **Eos** is tackling stereotypes of masculinity in its marketing of self-care products. Their tongue-in-cheek marketing takes aim at other 'alpha male' marketing campaigns by embracing humour. For example, its recent 'Unmanhandle your face' campaign features a man trying to persuade a peer not to buy Eos in favour of stereotypical shaving cream which "smells of mahogany, and telling chicks to smile more."

So What: There's plenty of men's products that market to the 'alpha male' stereotype, but not that many that show the everyman that most men identify with. By using humour to draw in men, Eos tackles stereotypes and stigmas in traditional male marketing. How can we better highlight how unrealistic and unrelatable certain ideals of masculinity are through our marketing and communications?

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Stereotypes

Young men don't feel represented by the visions of masculinity presented to them in advertising. Marketing and communications need to offer more varied representations of masculinity, and actively work to dismantle stereotypes.

Co-Creation

In order to create nuanced portrayals of men and masculinity, we need to elevate men's voices when trying to engage them through marketing. How do we co-create these healthier visions of masculinity with men?

Innovation

Don't be scared of products designed for and marketed to and for men. Innovating on your services, products and offers to deliver support for men and boys, shouldn't diminish or detract from work to support women and girls.

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Current Landscape

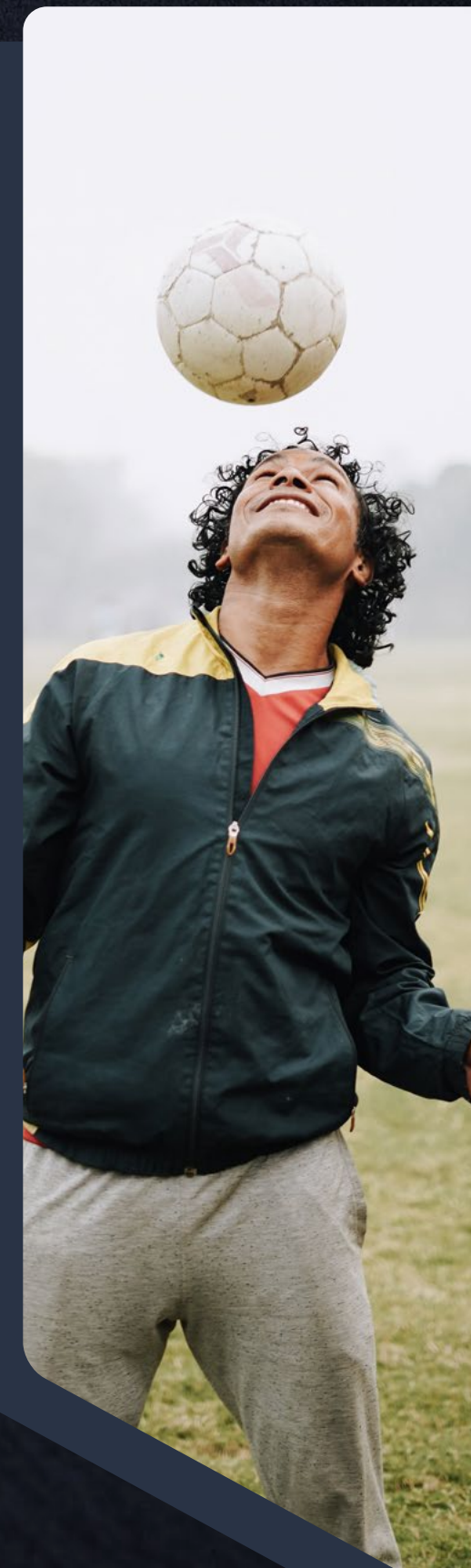# Men & Sport

Why Do Men Love Sports?

While female interest and participation in sport is on the rise (as it does globally **whenever any culture makes an effort to improve access and engagement with sports for women**), it remains a male-dominated space. In the UK, **boys aged 8 to 15** spend an average of 40 minutes per day on organised sports, whereas girls spend about 25 minutes. Only about **29% of UK Premier League viewers identify as female**. This gender disparity can be attributed to historical limitations on women's access to sports, as well as the role of socialisation in shaping male and female attitudes towards the pastime. Boys are **more likely to be encouraged to participate in sports** by teachers, peers, or parents, especially more physically demanding ones, as well as be encouraged to train outside of school hours. For many men, sports, **which are dominated by men and by the values and behaviours that society deems stereotypically 'masculine'** are a unique place to find role models, a guide to life, and conceptualise or develop their own masculinity.

In many ways, having this space to experience, explore and construct masculinity, as well as having the positive role models that come out of sport,

are heavily beneficial for men. Taking part in team sports is associated with **better mental health and friendships**, and we're seeing increasing amounts of mental health programmes for young boys use sports as an engagement tool.

Sport As Community

Beyond anything else, one of the most important benefits of sport is the sense of community they foster. When asked why athletes get involved with sports, the most common answer is that it was **an opportunity to connect with other boys**. Team sports become an opportunity to disconnect from everyday worries, build connection with peers, and engage in the shoulder-to-shoulder communication that men prefer. They're essentially a **socially endorsed safe space for men to be themselves alongside other men**. As such, team sports have a **noted impact on men's mental wellbeing**, through factors like rising self-esteem, social support, and lower levels of anxiety and depression. There is mounting evidence to suggest that team sports can be a valuable tool for engaging young men with their mental health and addressing the loneliness crisis head-on.

"Domestic abuse reports soar by nearly 50% when the England men's team win"

Sport and Violence

However, not all aspects of team sports yield positive results, especially among young boys who may not excel in sport (and therefore fall outside of the ideal of 'manhood'), experiencing **exclusion, bullying, and homophobia**. In fact, sex-segregated sports often **systematically strengthen traditional gender binaries**, and can legitimise and entrench myths around biological differences (and superiority)

between men and women. The same aspects that can make football so beneficial for young boys - essentially, its celebration of stereotypical ideals of masculinity that can make the sport a great place to explore ideals of manhood - also drive behaviours like violence, aggression, and misogyny.

These issues extend beyond schools as well. Research indicates that professional men's football in the UK is **one of the last bastions of male**

domination and misogynistic attitudes. That misogyny can manifest as challenges to women to 'prove' their status as genuine fans, to denigrating women's football, making women feel unwelcome in the sports world, or even escalating to outright violence. Following the 2022 World Cup, many of us will have seen the same headlines: domestic abuse reports **soar by nearly 50%** when the England men's team win.

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Breaking the Taboo

More sports stars are encouraged to speak out about their mental health, breaking down barriers around 'traditionally masculine' men experiencing emotional challenges and asking for help. Boys and men see these athletes as role models.

Safe Spaces

Healthy conversations about positive masculinity are fostered by, for and with men in spaces and communities designed for men. Sport plays a pivotal role in creating these spaces, and a platform for these conversations.

Murkier Outlooks

Violence and Misogyny

Without action, the association between sports and aggression, violence, and misogyny might persist.

### Exclusion in Sports

The binary gender divide in sports exacerbates. The debate around the inclusion and categorisation of trans and non-binary athletes is driven more by opinion and politics, rather than science.

Gender Divide

We fail to address cultures of sexism and misogyny within the game. It continues to exclude women from the sports space and enforces stereotypical gender ideals.

Inspiration & New Approaches
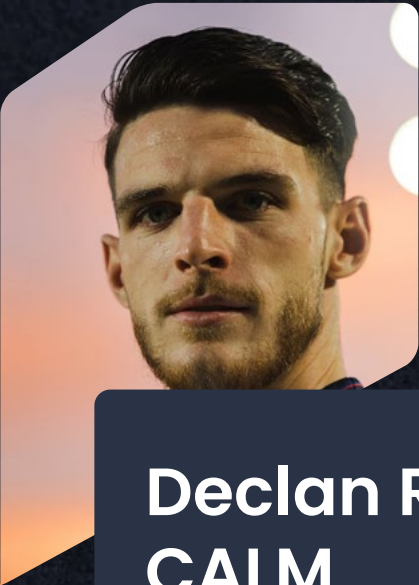
Declan Rice x CALM

A 2022 campaign spot for the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) showed premier league footballer Declan Rice playing a match in front of crowds while silently battling inner thoughts of unhappiness. '**The Invisible Opponent 2**' ends with a hand reaching out to Rice, as the words "You don't have to be alone to feel alone" appear on the screen.

So What: Sports stars are important role models for boys and men. By engaging Rice in the ad, CALM is able to draw on his wide fanbase to kickstart a mental health conversation among men who may not feel like they have the space to speak out. How do we encourage people to tackle these issues together by engaging positive male role models?

Head in the Game

Head In The Game is a UK-based charity that advocates mental-health support through football. The community-focussed approach offers free weekly sessions for local communities, led by football and talking therapy coaches, specifically designed for participants to address their mental health concerns in a secure and trusted environment. On top of that, they also partner with various football clubs, like Brentford FC and West Ham United, to offer this mental wellbeing support in the clubs' local areas, focussing on specific stressors like the cost of living crisis.

So What: Many boys and men already turn to football and other sports as stress relief and community-building. Head In The Game is formalising these mental health benefits by incorporating professional support services into what is already a safe environment for many.

Hatton

Released in August 2023, the new documentary **Hatton**, chronicling the life of Ricky Hatton, spends much of it examining the boxer's mental health. Hatton lived through a decade of estrangement from family and friends, combined with mental health issues, which culminated in a suicide attempt. The documentary embraces his potential role as an ambassador for dealing with issues like depression by speaking openly about his struggles. In his words: "We wanted to make a big point of the mental-health side of things [in the film]. We don't just want boxing fans to watch this, we want everyone to watch it."

So What: Boxing is a stereotypically-masculinised sport. Ricky Hatton himself is an icon of that sport, and as he says himself, someone who most people would not have expected to be struggling with these issues when they were ongoing. By speaking up, he tries to break down the idea that 'strong', 'masculine' men can't face or speak up about these issues, as well as encouraging others to seek help.

Nivea Men x Liverpool FC x Talk Club

Nivea Men, in partnership with Talk Club and Liverpool FC, is launching an initiative to encourage men to open up about their mental health. The campaign, called '**Strength in Numbers**', launched with a short film featuring Liverpool FC U8 academy boys, alongside boys from local primary schools. It shows the young boys alone in various locations, speaking lines from the Liverpool anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone' to the camera. The end of the spot calls attention to the fact that 50% of mental health problems begin before the age of 14.

So What: The ad spot recognises that these issues of mental health and the stigmatisation of young boys speaking up about these cannot be solved by any one organisation alone. We need wide-ranging, cross-sector collaborations. In this case, Liverpool FC has the 'cool-factor' to draw boys' eyeballs, Nivea Men has wide brand recognition among their fathers, and Talk Club has the knowledge and expertise to drive meaningful change in this area.

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Foreword

Theoretical
Framework

A Note on
the Algorithm

Be a Man

Educating
Men & Boys

Mental Health

Friendships &
Relationships

Men's Health

Parenting

Marketing
to Men

Men & Sport

Men At Work

Men &
Charity

10/10

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Innovation

Sport takes many different forms, both online and offline. Explore the entire spectrum of engagement and participation for opportunities to innovate.

Community

The community and activities around sport are a space where men already feel more comfortable connecting and sharing their experiences, challenges and triumphs. Organisations like CALM have seen real success in building platforms for community engagement around their sporting events, giving them a longer lifetime value.

Partnership

Some of the most successful charity sports events in the last decade have been built on the foundations of partnership between charity and sportsperson. As more public figures step into the spotlight around their physical and mental health, where's your next potential partnership opportunity?

Current Landscape

Men At Work

Men and Power

The workplace continues to be a domain where men hold significant structural power. Despite growing gaps across all levels of education (as discussed in the chapter Educating Men & Boys), **24 out of 25 CEOs in the UK are men**; **men are still paid more than women** at four out of five UK employers; and **82% of men participate in the labour force**, compared to 75% of women. The workplace, by and large, remains a space that is built to structurally favour men. It tends to value **characteristics and communication styles that men and boys have been socialised into** from a young age, such as confidence and assertiveness, qualities often seen as positive leadership attributes in men. However, when these same qualities are displayed by women, they are frequently re-badged as bitchy, bossy or aggressive. These persistent power imbalances have created an environment where women feel apprehensive about participating in traditionally male-dominated sectors **for fear of sexual harassment**.

The third sector isn't immune from this imbalance of power. We're a sector powered by women, but led by men. 68% of charity workers are female, whilst only **a third of CEOs** at the largest 100 UK charities are

women, and this number has declined in the last two years. Only **13% of charity boards** have gender parity, and 29% have all White boards.

> *"Only 13% of charity boards have gender parity, and 29% have all White boards"*

Parenthood and Work

One of the most enduring and pervasive drivers of gender inequality in the workplace continues to be the **motherhood penalty**. Childcare responsibilities are still distributed unequally across men and women in heterosexual parenting partnerships, with the majority of dads still playing a supporting role in family life - only about **a third of active parental childcare is** carried out by fathers.

This unequal distribution is partly due to continuing societal expectation that men should be the primary 'breadwinner' in relationships (about **37% of young men** feel this pressure acutely and **almost half of UK adults** believe that not being able to provide financially would feel emasculating for men). And whilst we are seeing shifting gender dynamics drive an appetite for change in this space, with particularly younger

men striving to **participate more fully in family life**, there are a number of structural barriers to change.

Firstly, the gender pay gap, combined with the rising cost of childcare, is **pricing growing amounts of women out of work**. This is exacerbated by the fact that men **tend to get pay bumps** when they first become fathers, whereas women face pay reductions. Affordable childcare is crucial to alleviate the burden on families, and allow a more equal distribution of childcare between women and men. Secondly, parental leave policies continue to be based on **out-of-date models** that don't encourage the sharing of childcare between parents. Redesigning parental leave policies to support 'dual earner-dual carer' models would help shift societal attitudes around gender, work, and care.

"Men make up just 18% of the social care workforce, and 85% of them say they're unlikely to start a career in adult social care"

Valuing Care Roles

Widening workforce gaps in various industries, especially ones that are traditionally female-dominated, are having a hard time finding men to fill the gaps. This issue is particularly evident in the care sector, which is struggling to meet the growing demand due to an ageing population, historically low compensation packages and a labour force that was (prior to Brexit) supported by skilled labour from outside the UK. The number of people requiring round-the-clock care will likely **double over the next 20 years**. With men making up just **18% of the social care workforce**, and **85% of them** saying they're unlikely to start a career in adult social care, we need to find a way to incentivise people to work in industries they haven't historically been encouraged to consider (not just men).

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Equal Pay

Protests by women to address the gender-based pay gap around the world (take the walkout by 100,000 women in Iceland in October 2023) benefit everyone in the workplace, regardless of gender.

Murkier Outlooks

Holding Back Women, Holds Back Everyone

Structural barriers to men balancing work with family life continue to put the onus of care on women. Societal attitudes around gender, work, and care are held back by these.

Who Cares?

Men proportionally consider careers in care less and the employment gap widens. As the UK population ages, we feel the effects of the overwhelmed care sector more and more. Children of older parents will have to commit more time and money towards care.
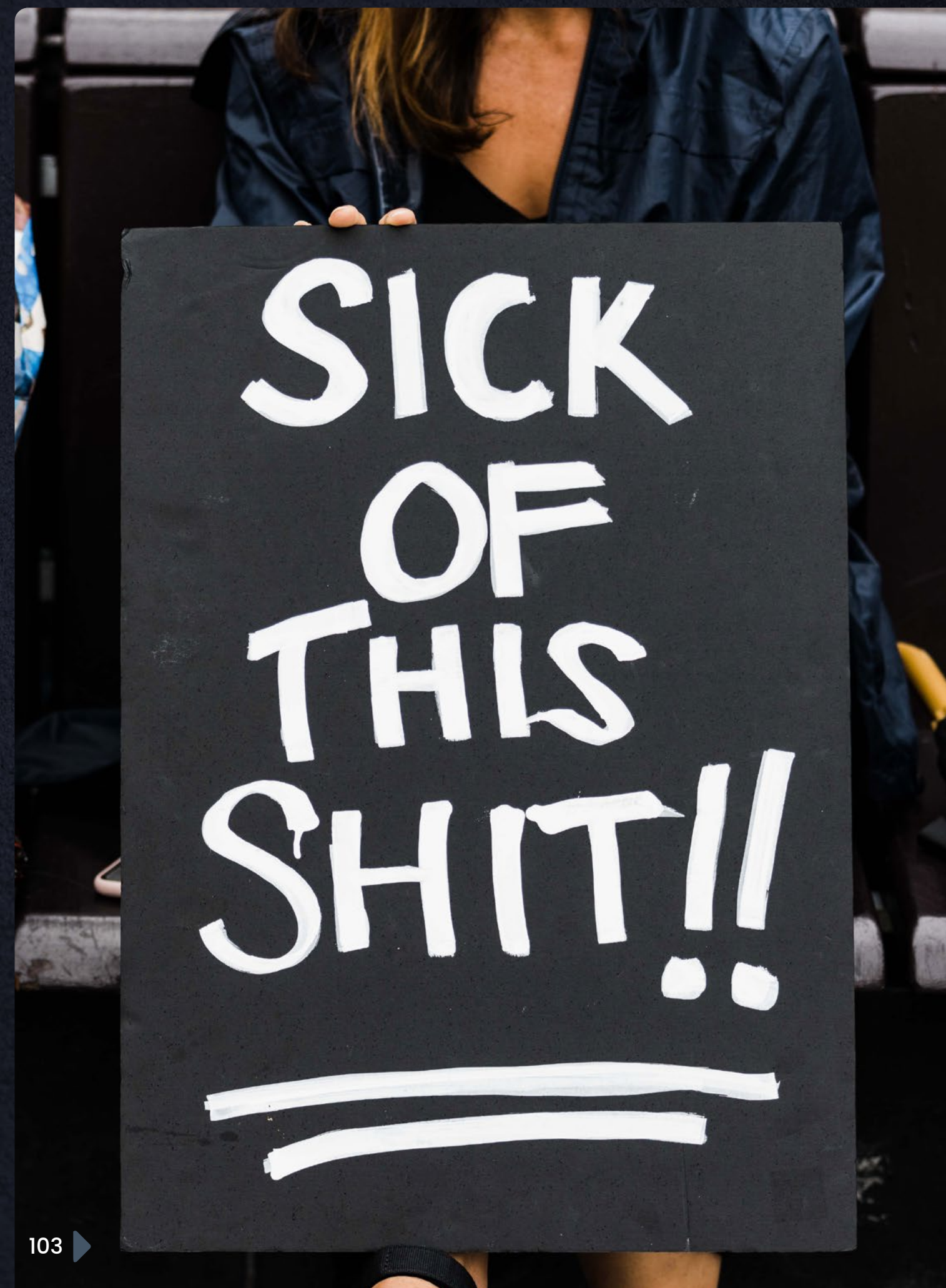
Inspiration & New Approaches

fatherhood INSTITUTE

DE KOFFIE JONGENS

International Men's Day 2022

To celebrate International Men's Day (for those of you wondering - yes, it does exist. Yes, it happens every year) 2022, the **#MenWithWomen** project promotes the idea of men being agents of change to eliminate gender disparities in the workplace. The project presents 15 behavioural principles for men in any workplace, based on women's feedback, including not expecting stereotypical behaviours and ensuring the equal allocation of roles within organisations.

So What: With gender inequality in workplaces remaining a persistent problem, how do we encourage those with structural power (ie. men) to encourage changing gender norms in their own environments? By including women's voices and opinions in the necessary changes, the campaign does well to offer a vision of a co-created, gender-equal workplace.

The Fatherhood Institute

In July 2023, **The Fatherhood Institute** called for a rethinking of paternity and parental leave, through a parliamentary petition. Bringing together a coalition of charities, advocacy organisations and researchers, they published an open letter to the Department for Business and Trade to encourage this reform with a view to achieving greater equality in parenting and work. Alongside this, they've published a series of blog resources highlighting the importance of this fight, from how it could add to the UK economy, to the redistribution of care duties and the importance of recognising fathers' roles.

So What: Inequalities in parental leave mean that fathers' contributions to childcare are often unrecognised and undervalued, and that women are forced to bear the brunt of childcare whilst recovering from birth and establishing care routines without support. The Fatherhood Institute is trying to create long-lasting, legal change around these structural barriers to equality in the workplace.

De Koffiejongens

Dutch coffee brand **De Koffiejongens** (The Coffee Boys) launched a new initiative to tackle the impacts of the gender pay gap in 2021. Essentially, they asked men to pay 14% (the size of the Dutch gender pay gap) extra when ordering the brand's biodegradable coffee capsules. That voluntary surcharge was then donated to Project Fearless, a young girls' rights charity. Within their own company, De Koffiejongens were actively working to close the gender pay gap, specifically by focusing on the so-called 'ask gap' - where women routinely ask for lower salaries than men do.

So What: While The Netherlands, like many countries, has laws in place to mandate equal pay for men and women, the reality is that parity won't be reached any time soon. So De Koffiejongens are taking matters into their own hands by raising awareness of the issues, reexamining their compensation practices, and encouraging men to be active participants in correcting existing disparities.

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Pay Gap

The gender pay gap, and particularly the motherhood penalty, continues to be a primary driver of societal inequality. Challenging it, as well as empowering men to challenge it within their own workplaces, is crucial.

Care Roles

Especially in the face of an ageing population, how do we reframe the value and status of care and caring roles? How do we encourage men to consider careers that may not align with stereotypically male professional ideals?

Flexible

Flexible and remote working practices offer better opportunities to create dual-caring households. Are you offering your employees these chances? And how do we support this culture across wider professional cultures?

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Current Landscape

Researching Men and Charity

In researching this chapter, one of the first things that jumped out was the lack of available resources and information around engaging men as a charity audience. Statistically, we know that **women give more than men**, but why is this the case?

Historically, while men were in charge of bringing home the bacon, women were seen as the domestic presence that took care of the day-to-day spending, including charitable giving. Additionally, society has long held the stereotype that women are more emotional (even though there's **no truth to this**), and therefore easier to engage with emotional causes. Furthermore, **more women work in fundraising** than men. Ultimately, we've **created a sector primarily focussed on women** as the target audience, partly because they have been easier to engage, and potentially because women have been doing the asking - they've innovated for themselves. While it makes sense to focus fundraising efforts on audiences that have given in the past and have historically been more successful, we're missing out on untapped opportunities with audiences who have been historically overlooked - men.

There are examples of charities working to engage men specifically, like Prostate Cancer UK and Movember, who have worked hard to make their brands specifically more appealing to men, with **great success**. But overall, the percentage of men that give tends to lag behind women who give by about **10 percentage points** each year.

Engaging Men

> "Early on, there is no difference between boys' and girls' attitudes towards charities"

But what are the barriers to engaging men? Firstly, we need to start the conversation early. Early on, there is **no difference between boys' and girls' attitudes towards charities**, which suggests that any later divide is at least partially caused by socialisation processes that encourage women to be more empathetic and emotional than men. Secondly, the lack of visibility of men in the third sector can make men feel like it's a **predominantly female environment**, which deters them both from giving and from engaging as a beneficiary. Thirdly, when discussing societal problems, we tend to **ignore the gender lens as it pertains to men**, and focus on

disadvantaged groups. There's an overall resistance to engage with social issues from a male perspective, thus making authentic engagement harder to achieve.

How do they want to support?

> "Men are more willing to reach out for help if there is an element of activity that facilitates discussion"

So how do men want to support? We know that men have a preference for participating in events and activities, starting early on. Young boys are **more likely to ask** their parents to take part in fundraising events than girls (think of the Ice Bucket Challenge and Tough Mudder), and this is reflected in the amount of men who participate in **mass participation events**. The same goes for service design: men are more willing to reach out for help if there is an **element of activity that facilitates discussion**. The other crucial aspect is that men are **less likely to put work aside** for other commitments, which is especially true throughout increasing financial instability and the cost of living crisis. Engaging men needs to happen in spaces that don't interfere with their day to day work lives.

Men & Charity

Future Implications for Men

Positive Futures

Engaged Men

Charities like Movember and CALM have proved that, when you innovate and design for and with men, you can engage them in supporting your cause. The only barrier to engaging men with charity is how we've innovated historically.

Murkier Outlooks

Men Don't Access Services

Men don't see themselves, their needs and expectations, reflected in the third sector and struggle to engage. Philanthropy increasingly becomes a 'women's thing' and men become less likely to use charity services as beneficiaries.

Increased Polarisation

Charities struggle to find engagement tools that work for both men and women, and risk alienating one or the other through their strategy. Polarisation across the gender binary means that organisations and even causes themselves become seen as gendered.

Missed Opportunities

Organisations don't engage men in charitable causes, limiting their ability to communicate their role in society to men.

Inspiration & New Approaches

Movember

In the past, **Movember** used to split its fundraising campaign into binary gender options. People could either fundraise as Mo Bros or Mo Sistas. As of 2020, the charity has begun to include a non-binary option, in order to acknowledge and include those who want to improve men's health but had previously felt excluded or not appropriately recognised.

So What: Whilst Movember's core mission is male-centric and their campaigns and marketing often call on men specifically, they recognise that everyone should be able to engage with the charity if they wish to. Through the simple shift of recognising people across the gender binary, they're able to foster a more inclusive environment for their supporters.

Prostate Cancer UK

Prostate Cancer UK is championing their "unashamedly male brand". They've consciously masculinised their approach in order to draw in more men. From partnering with SkySports, to using "jokey, blokey" language, advertising on beer mats in pubs, and a series of campaigns centering around sports and pubs, the brand has leaned into a more stereotypically male image - and with great success. One of their recent campaigns got over **550,000 men** to check their risk.

So What: Prostate Cancer UK recognises that traditional charity branding and engagement tools aren't necessarily the most effective way to draw in men. As a charity whose primary purpose is to support a specifically male issue, they've chosen to lean into that demographic and adopt marketing, events, and other engagement strategies that are specifically targeted at men. Not with the aim of excluding women, but with the aim of encouraging more men (who are less likely to be engaged with charity to begin with) to access and support their resources.

Campaign Against Living Miserably

When it was founded in 1997, **CALM** was a helpline specifically targeted at young men who were at greater risk of suicide. Gradually, they've shifted their strategy to focus on everyone, and be inclusive of women's mental health issues as well.

So What: Whilst CALM has opened their doors to everyone across the gender binary, their previous experience has allowed them to understand the importance of gender-specific approaches to mental health support and are able to differentiate their services and support based on these. While this may not apply to every organisation, the nuances of shifting to a wider approach worked well for CALM.

Foreword

Theoretical
Framework

A Note on
the Algorithm

Be a Man

Educating
Men & Boys

Mental Health

Friendships &
Relationships

Men's Health

Parenting

Marketing
to Men

Men & Sport

Men At Work

Men &
Charity

10/10

Inspiration &
New Approaches

100 Black Men
of London

The **100 Black Men of London** charity is, as the name suggests, a charity largely run by Black men, to support Black people in a system not necessarily designed for them. Starting out in the US during the post-civil rights era to specifically support Black men, the charity has evolved to support girls and women as well. Whilst leadership is still predominantly made up of Black men, everyone is welcome at its workshops, and more women are ageing out of their menteeship and into leadership roles at the organisation.

So What: Recognising that their potential impact could reach a wider audience, 100BMOL has opened the doors to women and girls, whilst still recognising and honouring their history through their name. How can charities that were historically more male-led or driven balance those goals with the greater inclusion of women (either as supporters or as beneficiaries)?
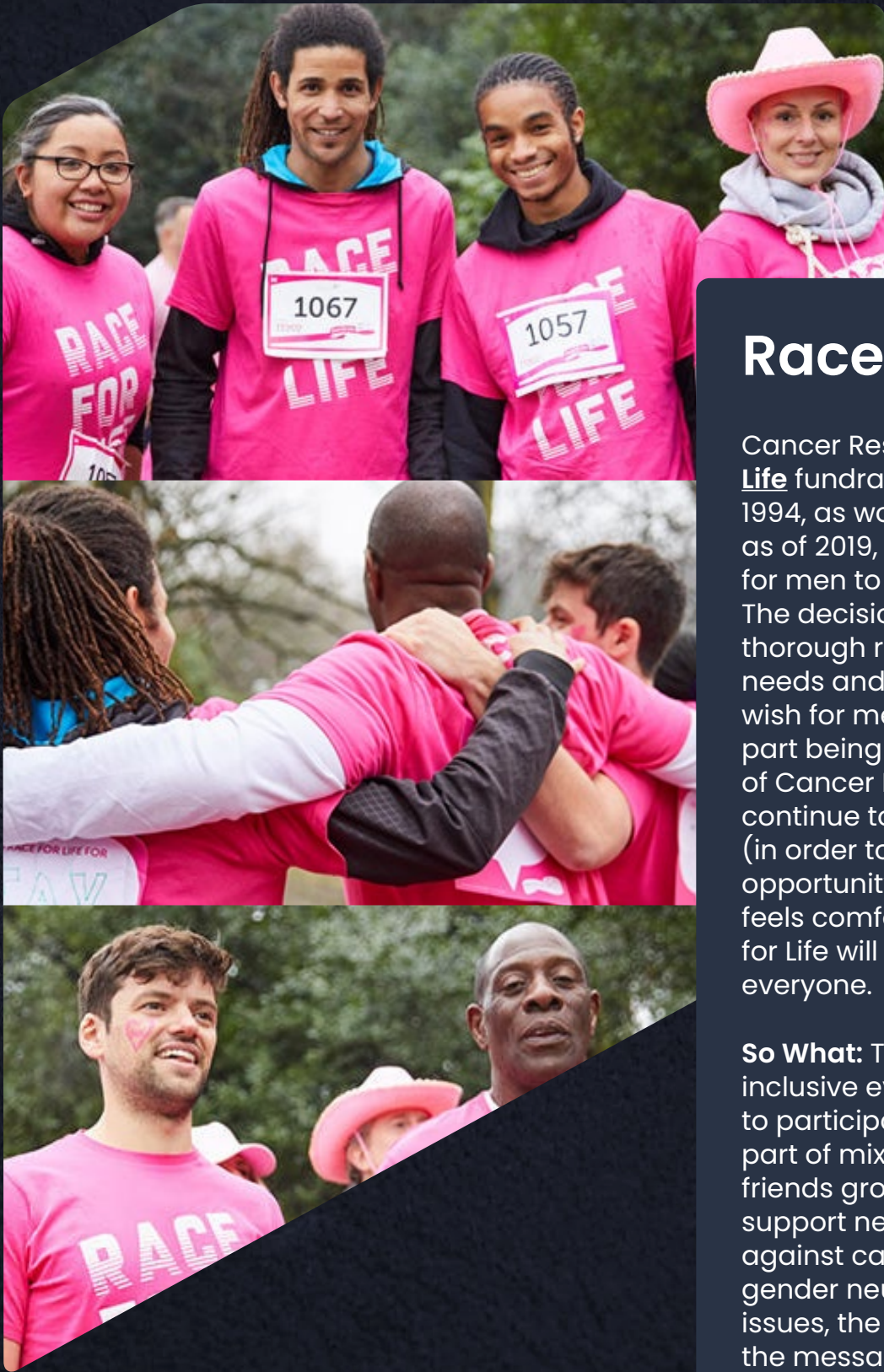
Race for Life

Cancer Research UK's **Race for Life** fundraising events began in 1994, as women-only spaces. But as of 2019, they opened their doors for men to participate as well. The decision was made after a thorough review of their supporters' needs and expectations, with the wish for men to be able to take part being flagged. While some of Cancer Research UK's events continue to be for women only (in order to give everyone the opportunity to support in a way that feels comfortable to them), Race for Life will continue to be open to everyone.

So What: The shift towards a more inclusive event allows supporters to participate in the event as part of mixed-gender family and friends groups, welcoming wider support networks into the fight against cancer. By offering more gender neutral events for gendered issues, the organisation sends the message that it's not just a women's problem, and that there is space for everyone to be engaged.

The Playbook
Provocations for Charities

Stereotypes

Men are born no less altruistic than women - the third sector just isn't built to engage this audience. How do we shift perceptions and stereotypes around gender and charity to better understand opportunities to engage men as well as women?

Youth

Engaging boys at young ages is crucial towards shaping their later attitudes towards charity. Acting early is the key towards socialising them to be more understanding of the role that charity plays in society.

Gaming

How can we use gaming as a new engagement tool or as part of product- and service-design? Particularly, how can we use it as a tool to reach lonely or hard to reach men?

GOOD FUTURES
FROM GOOD INNOVATION

10 Challenges
To the Future of Men

1 It's Not OK To Be A Man

... and that's not ok. No one should be shamed for their gender or identity. We all have a responsibility in shifting the narrative, language and discourse.

2 Imagining Positive Masculinity in a Toxic Environment

The debate has become so polarised that everybody loses. Even starting the conversation around positive masculinity gets shot down.

3 The Problem of Porn

It's not just unrealistic representations and expectations of intimate relationships and attitudes toward sexual partners. It's also adding to unrealistic representations of the male form and body dysmorphia.

4 The Lost Generation

A widening attainment gap, compounded by the disruption to education from Covid lockdowns, and the influence of the manosphere puts a generation of boys at risk.

5 Where Are The Role Models?

Men and boys are searching for a guide on how to be a man, but in the vacuum of positive discourse have stepped the likes of Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson.

6 Fear of Stigmatisation

Men are avoiding reaching out for professional help or even support from friends and family because they're worried about being perceived as weak or unable to cope.

7 Men Die Young

Men die younger than women. They face a higher prevalence of 33 out of the top 40 leading causes of death, but they also put off going to the GP for as long as possible, compounding this problem.

8 Am I a Good Dad?

We're still portraying dads as well-meaning but clueless players in their children's lives. So what does it mean to be a good dad, and where can dads find positive role models of parenting that don't just lean into the stereotype of perennial babysitter?

9 Epidemic of Loneliness

1 in 5 men in the UK have no close friends. Boys are still told not to show fear, vulnerability or weakness. But profound friendships are built on trust, intimacy and a willingness to be vulnerable with one another.

10 The Biggest Killer

Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50. In the UK, someone dies from suicide every 90 minutes, and 3 out of 4 suicides are by men.

10 Ways
You Can Be Part of the Solution

5 Take Action on the Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap and undervaluation of care hurts everyone. Not just women. By taking action on the gender pay gap, recognising, fairly compensating and valuing paid for and unpaid care, we create a fairer society for all. This also includes lobbying for fairer parental leave policies for all parents.

6 Normalise Conversations

Help normalise conversations about our physical and mental health. Remove the fear of stigmatisation for men to be vulnerable with their friends, families and peers. Stop making jokes about erectile dysfunction and hair loss. In the UK, one man dies from prostate cancer every 45 minutes. Help men to be as comfortable talking about the problems of their prostate as women are becoming about their periods.

1 Addressing the Challenges of Men & Boys

... doesn't dismiss the problems faced by women and girls. Be part of the conversation about positive masculinity and help create a future that is more equitable and fair for everyone. We all have a responsibility to be part of the solution. It's not enough to encourage change among individual men and boys if wider society is not changing with them. Shifting gendered social norms requires change at an organisational, institutional and structural level.

2 Take an Intersectional Approach

Men and boys are not a single, homogenous group. They are simultaneously affected by different aspects of their age, social class, 'race' and ethnicity, sexuality and disability, as well as gender.

7 Partner With Gatekeepers

Go to men in the places, spaces and communities they already feel comfortable. But to be a credible ally and partner you need to be invited in. Partner with the gatekeepers who hold the keys to these communities. From sports personalities and gaming influencers, to civic and cultural leaders, build collaborative initiatives that help unlock the new audiences.

8 Co-Create With Men

It's time to ditch the myths, assumptions and stereotypes about what you think men need or want. Get men involved in the process of innovation. Co-create, test, iterate and innovate with them. (It's a core part of Movember's secret sauce).

3 Positive Role Models

Modern masculinity is diverse and varied. There isn't one presentation of a 'real man'. Tap into the expanse of these identities by offering a range of imagery that represents this broad spectrum, supported by a new generation of role models who can champion the and lead the discourse.

4 Hard to Reach Men

We're missing data on men, and particularly the challenges and issues faced by harder to reach communities - the evidence gaps. You won't be the only organisation trying to reach and understand these communities, so why not collaborate with others to build more robust data and insight to better inform policy, service and decision making?

9 Innovate For Men

Develop products and interventions that specifically target the problems of men. A one-size-fits-all approach damages everyone. Consider the value of spaces and services that create a safe environment for discussion and dialogue.

10 It's All About The Bantz

Get on the banter bus and break out the National Bantrum. But seriously. Don't be scared of humour, puns and banter. Become the Bishop of Banterbury.

GOOD FUTURES FROM GOOD INNOVATION

Get in touch for a coffee
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