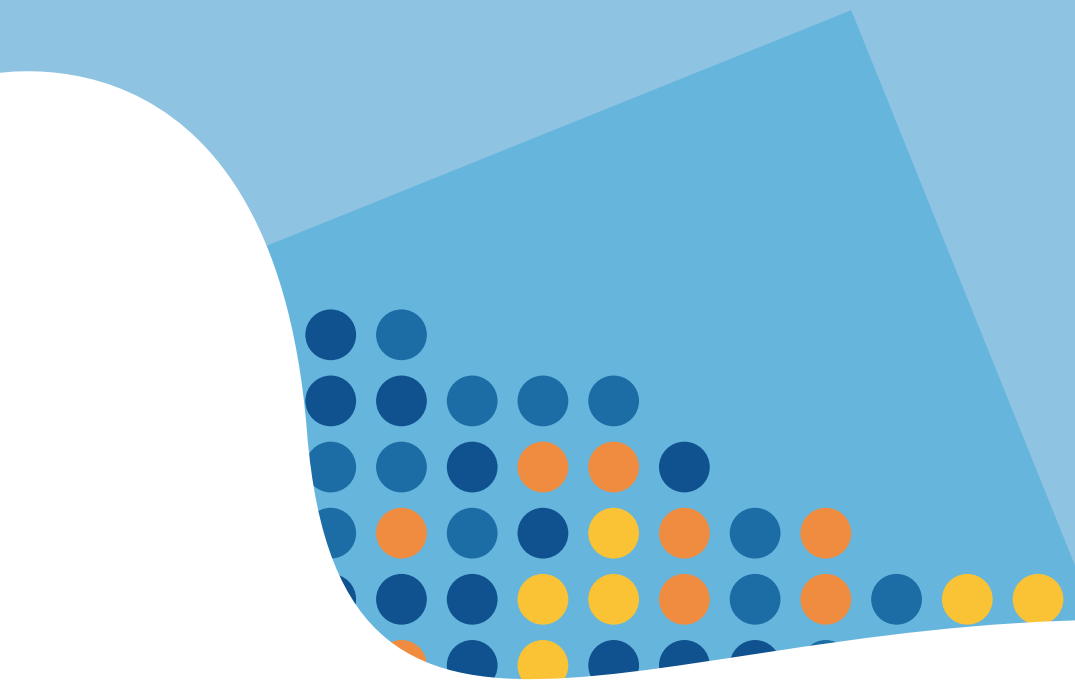

The Man Box:

A study on being a young man in Australia

the men's project

A Jesuit Social Services initiative

The Man Box:
A study on being a young man in Australia

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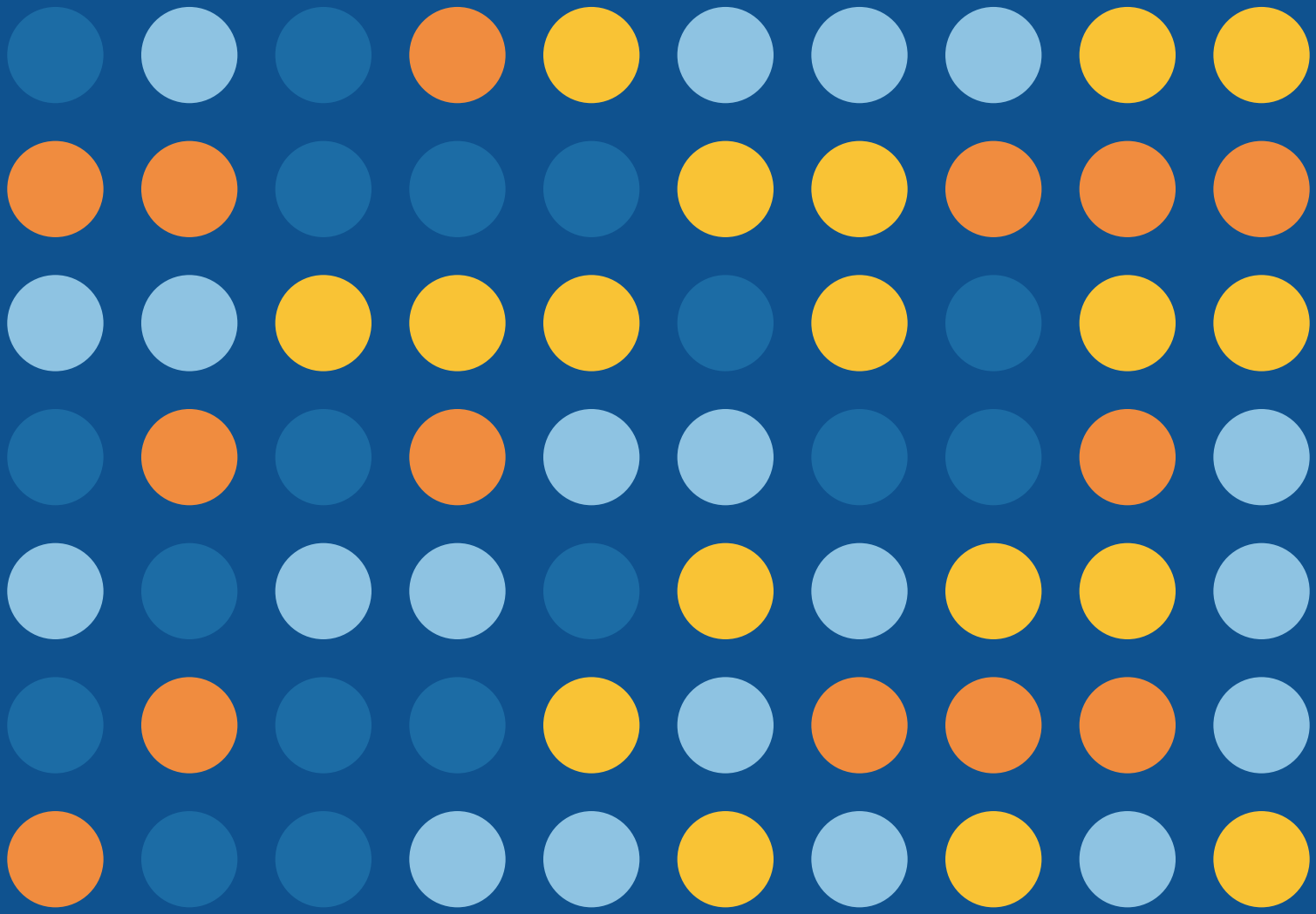

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Executive Summary

The Man Box is the first study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young Australian men aged 18 to 30. It involved an online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 young men from across the country, as well as focus group discussions with two groups of young men. This study is modelled on research in the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico that was released by Promundo in 2017 (Heilman, Barker, Harrison, 2017).

The Man Box is the set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to act in a certain way. Our study explored how young men encounter the Man Box rules in society and internalise them personally by asking their views on 17 messages about how a man should behave. These 17 messages were organised under seven pillars of the Man Box which are: self-sufficiency, acting tough, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control.

We also looked at the influence of agreement with the Man Box rules on different areas of young men's lives, including health and wellbeing, physical appearance, relationships, risk-taking, violence, and bystander behaviour.

The Man Box is alive and well in Australia

We found that social pressures around what it means to be a 'real man' are strong in Australia, and impact on the lives of most young men from a very young age. Two thirds of young men said that since they were a boy they had been told a 'real man' behaves in a certain way.

The findings here are quite clear – young men see the rules of the Man Box being communicated and reinforced throughout society; particularly those related to acting strong, being the primary income earner, and not saying no to sex.

Our findings correspond with those from the US, UK and Mexico. The pressures relating to being a man are everywhere in society and are reinforced and influenced by young men's closest relationships – families, partners and friends.

It is clear that there is a difference between how young men perceive these pressures and their personal agreement with them. Our study showed that young men held more progressive views on what it is to be a 'real man' than what they believe society is telling them.

Looking at the personal views of young men, there was not one Man Box rule that a majority of young men agreed with, and over three quarters of the young men disagreed with the rules on hypersexuality, rigid household roles, and the idea that men should use violence to get respect.

However, there is a substantial minority (averaging around 30 per cent) of young men who endorse most of the Man Box rules. Of particular concern are high levels of personal endorsement of rules that indicate gender inequitable views, and control of women. On several pillars of the Man Box, we found young men more strongly reject overt manifestations (like violence and sexism) while more subtle norms have higher levels of endorsement.

It is important to note the possibility that greater numbers of young men may comply with these norms in their everyday lives than they let on in the survey when asked of their personal views.

The Man Box: Messages	Social message: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "Society as a whole tells me that..."	Personal Endorsement: percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "In my opinion..."	Gap between social message and personal endorsement
Pillar 1: Self-sufficiency			
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	49%	25%	24%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	54%	27%	27%
Pillar 2: Acting tough			
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	60%	34%	26%
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	69%	47%	22%
Pillar 3: Physical attractiveness			
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	57%	42%	15%
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	48%	32%	16%
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	44%	39%	5%
Pillar 4: Rigid gender roles			
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.	38%	23%	15%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	39%	19%	20%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	56%	35%	21%
Pillar 5: Heterosexuality and homophobia			
A gay guy is not a 'real man'.	47%	28%	19%
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement).	64%	83%	19%
Pillar 6: Hypersexuality			
A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can.	47%	25%	22%
A 'real man' would never say no to sex.	56%	24%	32%
Pillar 7: Aggression and control			
Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	35%	20%	15%
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	43%	27%	16%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	44%	37%	7%

Endorsement of the Man Box rules has impacts on young men and society

In order to understand the influence that the Man Box has on the behaviours of young men, we created a scale measure of young men's support for, or rejection of, the Man Box by summing up their responses to each of the Man Box statements.

After calculating an average Man Box score for the whole survey sample, we divided the sample into those below the average score ('inside the Man Box') and those with scores at or above the sample average ('outside the Man Box'). This created two comparable categories to explore the influence of endorsement of the rules of the Man Box.

Consistent with the Man Box Study in the US, UK and Mexico, we found that those inside the Man Box fare more poorly on a range of indicators of mental health and wellbeing, negative feelings, risk-taking, including drinking and traffic accidents, being the victim or perpetrator of violence, and being the perpetrator of sexual harassment of women.

There is a diversity of experiences and views among young men when it comes to norms on being a 'real man', with some evidence that those most outside the Man Box may also experience poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes. While this study includes a representative sample of young men, we have not been able to explore in detail the diverse experiences of young men from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and how these influence their attitudes and behaviours when it comes to social pressures around being a man.

What is clear is that those who most strongly endorse the Man Box rules report the poorest outcomes on mental health, experiencing/perpetrating bullying, violence, perpetrating sexual harassment, drinking, and car accidents.

Responses of young men to questions on their behaviours	Inside the Man Box	Outside the Man Box
Little interest or pleasure in doing things in the last two weeks.	83%*	77%*
Had **thoughts of suicide** in the last two weeks.	44%*	22%*
Perpetrated verbal bullying in the past month.	56%*	24%*
Perpetrated online bullying in the past month.	47%*	10%*
Perpetrated physical bullying in the past month.	47%*	7%*
Made sexual comments to women you don't know in a public place in the past month.	46%*	7%*
Experienced verbal bullying in the past month.	66%*	44%*
Experienced physical bullying in the past month.	52%*	15%*
Went along or didn't take action when **witnessing guys making sexist comments or jokes.**	57%*	48%*
Went along or didn't take action when **witnessing guys verbally or physically harassing women.**	22%*	4%*
Drinks to the point of **getting drunk** once per month or more.	31%*	22%*
Been in one or more **traffic accidents** in the past year.	38%*	11%*
Report being satisfied or very satisfied with overall **physical attractiveness.**	67%*	57%*

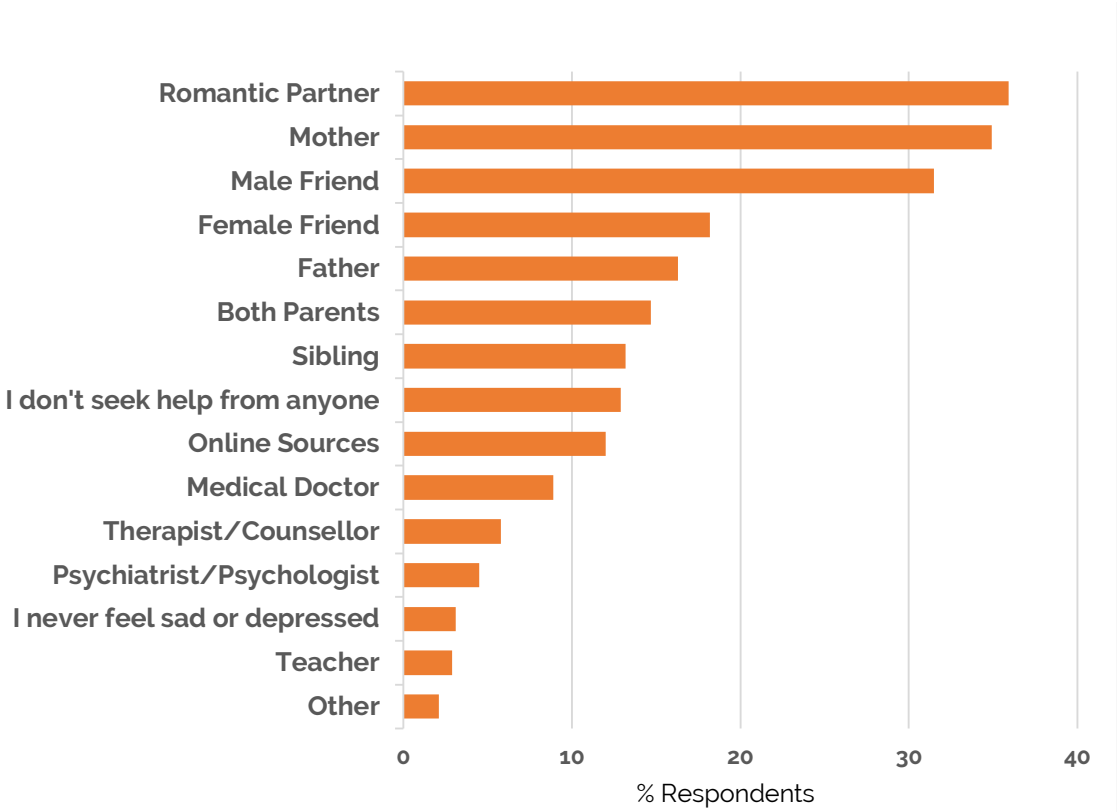
* represents statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Many young men seek help, but not from professionals

This study sought to understand how young men interact with their friends, whether they provided or sought emotional support from friends, and where they went to for help more broadly. Looking at young men's help seeking when they are sad or depressed, the sources of support were overwhelmingly close relationships (romantic partners and mothers) and peers, as opposed to online or professional support.

Those outside the Man Box were statistically more likely to seek help from a wider variety of sources including romantic partners, male friends, female friends, and psychologists. Those inside the Man Box were statistically more likely to report seeking help from their father or a teacher on these issues.

When you feel sad or depressed, who are the first few people you seek help from?



Action is needed to break open the Man Box

Associate Professor Dr Michael Flood points out in his analysis of the implications of this research (Chapter VI) that conformity to the Man Box exacts a real cost, both among young men themselves and for the women and men around them. This study and a number of its findings are consistent with a wider body of research focusing on men, experiences and perceptions of gender, and the norms of manhood.

These findings should prompt efforts to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the norms of the Man Box. If successful, these efforts have the potential to deliver benefits to society, as well as to young men themselves in terms of health, wellbeing and safety.

Across all levels of society there must be a focus on building awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful impacts, weakening their cultural grip, and promoting positive alternatives.

At the individual level, everyone (both men and women) can take action by talking about the pressures of the Man Box with the boys and men in their lives, and by modelling positive alternatives to the Man Box norms in front of boys and young men.

The following recommendations contain actions that, if implemented, will begin to unpack the Man Box norms at the societal, community and individual level.

Recommendation 1:

That the Commonwealth, state and local governments ensure that relevant policies explicitly recognise the harmful impacts that the Man Box norms can have.

Programs and initiatives under these policies should focus on ways boys and men can live positive alternatives to the Man Box norms. This should be guided by a public health approach and be part of policies and initiatives that focus on: mental health and wellbeing; alcohol harm reduction; road safety; crime and violence prevention; and the prevention of family violence.

Recommendation 2:

That governments, philanthropy, business and community groups partner in developing, testing and evaluating new interventions focused on:

- building awareness, understanding and skills of family and peers (role models) to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the rules of the Man Box.
- engaging young men in settings where they are (education, work, sport, community) and provide activities/interventions that support them to live positive alternatives to the Man Box norms.

Recommendation 3:

That government, academia and organisations working with boys and men partner on further detailed research into the attitudes and behaviours of Australian men.

Recommendation 4:

That organisations working with boys and men come together to share knowledge and build capability in undertaking work that promotes positive alternatives to the Man Box. This could include practitioner networks and forums, as well as new tools for working with boys and men.

Recommendation 5:

Efforts under the recommendations outlined above must: be pro-feminist and align with existing women's rights processes; non-discriminatory and accommodating of diversity; and engage men from a positive perspective.

I. Why this study?

More than ever before, the behaviour and attitudes of Australian boys and men are in the spotlight. This has been driven by public attention to the abuses perpetrated by some men and exposed through the #MeToo movement, and inquiries into family violence, child sexual abuse in institutions, and sexual assault and harassment on university campuses and in workplaces. Other drivers include the ongoing attention to issues of men's health and wellbeing, fathering, boys' socialisation and more.

At the same time, there are positive stories. Australian men in 2018 live longer, are better educated, and come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. There has also been substantial progress towards gender equality over successive generations and greater recognition and equality for gay men.

This context, and a prevailing sense that we are at a watershed moment when it comes to men and masculinities, make it timely for us to ask what it means to be a young man today, in order to better understand what young men are thinking and feeling, and how they behave.

Reflecting on the present state of young men will provide a basis for The Men's Project to identify positives and problems, as well as areas where action is required to better support the next generation.

To do this, The Men's Project has undertaken the first national study that focuses on attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young Australian men aged 18 to 30. Our aim was to explore young men's attitudes and behaviours towards a range of topics, including gender norms, health and wellbeing, physical appearance, relationships, risk-taking, violence, and bystander behaviour.

The central analytical tool used for this study is called the Man Box. It was developed and provided by the US-based organisation Promundo who, with the support of Unilever brand AXE, undertook a study of young men's attitudes and behaviours in the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico that was released in 2017.

Put simply, the Man Box is the set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to be a certain way. The Man Box survey allows for an understanding of how men encounter, and then internalise, these beliefs in society. It also looks at the influence of these beliefs on different areas of young men's lives.

We surveyed young men in Australia about their attitudes and behaviours relating to manhood using an online survey of a representative and random sample of 1000 18 to 30-year-old men from across the country. We also undertook focus group discussions with young men in two locations in Victoria so that we could hear more about their experiences and so further unpack these issues.

This research is focused on understanding:

1. **the extent to which young men experience external pressures about how to be a 'real man' and where these pressures come from;**
2. **the extent to which young men internalise these pressures and manifest them in their attitudes and behaviours; and**
3. **the effect of young men's ideas about manhood on their lives, and the lives of those around them.**

This report provides an overview of the findings from this research. It provides a starting point to building our understanding of current attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men. In the next section we will briefly outline how we conducted the study and provide some demographic details of the young men who responded. We then move on to sections that explore young men's views on the rules of the Man Box and its influence on their behaviours. This is followed by a contribution by Dr Michael Flood, Associate Professor at the Queensland University of Technology, which looks at this study in the context of existing research, existing trends, and ideas for action. The report concludes with recommendations for future action.

Why us?

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. For over 40 years we have worked with people on the margins of society, including those involved in the criminal justice system.

Reflecting on our current context, and 40 years of work, Jesuit Social Services established The Men's Project in 2017.

The Men's Project will support boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives, where they are able to develop loving relationships free from violence and contribute to safe communities.

We believe that, to achieve genuine long-term change, a big picture, holistic approach is needed that looks at the root causes of violence and harmful behaviour in boys and men and supports them to be their best selves.

II. About the study

Existing research into men's attitudes and behaviours

This study utilises the Man Box research methodology that was developed by Promundo. Promundo is a global leader in promoting gender justice and preventing violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. Since its establishment in Brazil in 1997, Promundo has worked collaboratively with partners in over 40 countries to advance gender equality and prevent violence.

Promundo and research partners have been conducting studies into men's opinions on gender norms, attitudes and behaviours since 2008. This includes the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) which has been undertaken with more than 45,000 men and women in more than 30 countries.

Promundo's research is informed by, and builds on, a broader field of research and thinking on masculinities and men's attitudes and behaviours. This work has demonstrated that social norms and attitudes about what it means to be a man are linked with a number of different behaviours across a wide range of settings. In Australia, there are a number of academics who have made significant contributions to this field, including Professor Raewyn Connell, Associate Professor Michael Flood and Professor Bob Pease.

There are also several studies and surveys that have some focus on men's attitudes and behaviours on issues, including:

- gender equality – the Australian Bureau of Statistics has published *Gender Indicators Australia* since 2011, and the 5050 by 2030 Foundation has recently released From *Girls to Men: Social Attitudes to Gender Equality in Australia*;
- violence against women - the *National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (NCAS) was first conducted in 1987 and is conducted every four years;
- experiences of violence and feelings of safety – the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Personal Safety Survey* was undertaken in 2005, 2012 and 2016; and
- attitudes to marriage, parenting and work – the *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey* (HILDA) collects information that enables us to track community attitudes to marriage, parenting and work.

This study is the first national survey of men's attitudes and behaviours as they relate to manhood and masculinity.

How we have conducted this research

In late 2017, Promundo provided The Men's Project with access to the Man Box survey, and work to undertake this research in Australia began. The Men's Project has overseen the delivery of this project with the assistance of research partners who have undertaken discrete components of the work, including conducting the online survey and focus groups.

At the outset, ethics approval for the study was obtained through Jesuit Social Services' Ethics Committee and a governance structure was established. This included an Advisory Group to provide expert advice and oversight to the project. The Advisory Group included experts on working with men to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women and children. It met three times over the course of the study, providing feedback and guidance on the approach, findings and conclusions.

Before undertaking the survey, we adapted the survey questions to the Australian context. This included adapting demographic questions to align with relevant Australian standards, most prominently the ABS Census. Following feedback from the Advisory Group and Promundo, some minor changes to existing questions were made and additional questions added to the online survey. The additional questions focus on peer group composition, help-seeking behaviour on issues of masculinity, pornography use, and bystander behaviour.

Intersectionality and the Man Box

There is emerging international research and thinking on cultural diversity and masculine norms. In particular, an intersectional approach recognises that the consequences of conforming to masculine norms might be influenced by cultural values within particular communities (Wong, Ho, Wang, Miller. 2017).

Looking at the Australian context, Our Watch's Changing the Picture (2018) identified drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by men of all cultural backgrounds. Looking at the gendered drivers, the background paper to Changing the Picture noted the impacts of imposed 'colonial patriarchy' on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, gender roles and men and women. The destruction and undermining of Aboriginal men's traditional roles, and the deprivation of power, status and opportunities in contemporary society, make it difficult for them to meet either traditional or colonially imposed standards of manhood.

In another piece of research, Wa Mungai and Pease (2009) explored masculinities among African diaspora males in Melbourne and concluded that, in addition to issues around racism and unemployment, the men felt

many problems stemmed from differences in cultural understanding about masculinity and manhood.

The Man Box survey contains a representative sample of Australian young men including those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as young men from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds. Similarly, the focus groups included young men from a diverse range of backgrounds, reflective of modern Australia.

We recognise that the understanding and perception of rules around being a 'real man' and the internalisation of these rules will be influenced by a wide range of factors. Indeed, during the focus groups some young men commented on how influential different cultural norms on gender roles could be.

Given the small sample size of these diverse groups and the higher margin of error that comes with such small sample sizes, this report does not contain a specific analysis of findings broken down by cultural or religious cohort. This is potentially an area for future research.

The Online Survey

The online survey involved 1,000 respondents who identified as males and were aged between 18 and 30.

Essential Research was engaged to coordinate this part of the project.

The survey was sampled from the Your Source online panel. Your Source is a major provider of online research services in Australia and has an established panel of people experienced in conducting social and market research surveys. The majority of the panel members have been recruited using offline methodologies, effectively ruling out concerns associated with online self-selection. Additionally, Your Source has validation methods in place that prevent panellist overuse and ensure member authenticity.

For this survey, quotas were set for each state to ensure the sample and results were weighted to match the population according to age and geographical location. An outline of the survey sample demographic characteristics is provided in Appendix A at the end of this report.

We undertook analysis of the data from the online survey using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Throughout this report, we have marked statistically significant relationships with an asterisk (*). A statistically significant difference is, in principle, one that is not attributed to chance. We used a p-value of less than 0.05. This means that where there were statistically significant differences between behaviours and attitudes across Man Box adherence categories, there is less than five per cent risk that the difference was caused by chance, rather than Man Box adherence. In other words, we can be more than 95 per cent certain that Man Box adherence caused the difference in the response to the question.

For the two-category analysis in Chapter IV, we ran an independent samples test using SPSS. This test compares the means of the In the Box and Out of the Box groups and determines if they are statistically significantly different from each other. For the quintile analysis in Chapter V, we ran a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test on SPSS. This compares the means between the quintiles and determines if any of them is statistically significantly different from the others. It is important to note that the one-way ANOVA test doesn't indicate which specific quintiles were statistically significantly different from each other. Where data from the quintile analysis is marked with an asterisk, this indicates that within those quintiles there were statistically significant differences between at least two of the quintiles.

The Focus Groups

In order to complement and allow for a more detailed understanding of the issues covered in the online survey, two focus groups of eight young men aged 18-30 were conducted. QDOS Research was engaged to conduct the focus groups. Focus groups were held in two locations in suburban Melbourne (Narre Warren and Heidelberg), and young men were randomly recruited from a market research panel.

The focus groups were semi-structured, with a series of conversation topics modelled on the focus group methodology used for focus groups as part of the US and UK Man Box research.

QDOS research prepared a summary report identifying the key themes and findings from the focus groups on topics including society's expectations of men, masculinity, family and future, emotions, health and body image, and sex and relationships. These conclusions, and quotes from young men who participated in the research, have been incorporated throughout this report.

III. Understanding the Man Box: social pressures and attitudes related to what it means to be a man

"Different people have different roles, I don't think it's so much gendered as it used to be. It's more expected that the man be the breadwinner and the women be the mother."

- Quote from focus group participant

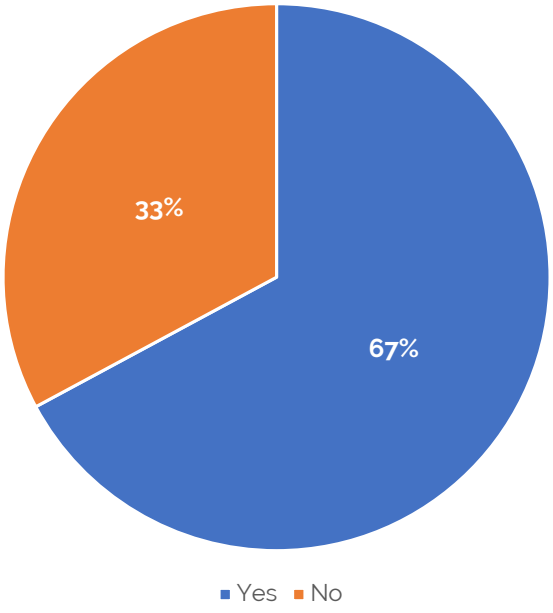
The starting point for this study is our understanding that there are social pressures and messages embedded throughout society that tell men how to behave – in essence, how to be a 'real man'.

These social pressures are there from a young age and can shape the lives of men, with Figure 1 showing more than two thirds of young men report being told, since they were boys, that a 'real man' behaves a certain way.

A key question that arises is: where exactly do young men get these messages from? At the outset we asked young men about certain masculine norms and whether they had experienced pressure to comply with these norms from parents, romantic partners and friends.

The responses to these questions are relatively consistent with those from the US and UK in the Promundo study. Over half the young men agreed or strongly agreed that their parents taught them about acting strong. One third said their friends would give them a hard time if they saw them hanging out with someone who is gay or they think looks gay. And 28 per cent said that their partners would expect them to use violence to defend their reputation. This shows that a significant portion of young men are receiving messages on how a 'real man' should act from a range of sources.

FIGURE 1: Pressures to be a 'real man'



Would you say that since you were a young boy you were told that a 'real man' behaves a certain way?

Focus groups:

"If it's someone close to you… you want to impress them… so their expectations of you are met."

"I feel like I should make [my parents] proud of their sacrifices."

"It depends on your friend group, they're the people you benchmark yourself against, if you're performing lower than them you feel like you're emasculated and not where you should be."

The influences on young men were explored in further detail in the focus groups, where participants spoke about expectations around being a man and of their fears of letting down those they had closest relationships with – parents, siblings and peers.

One area that was beyond the scope of the present study is how these social pressures operate beyond immediate relationships – in particular, how these norms are reinforced through wider social structures and institutions.

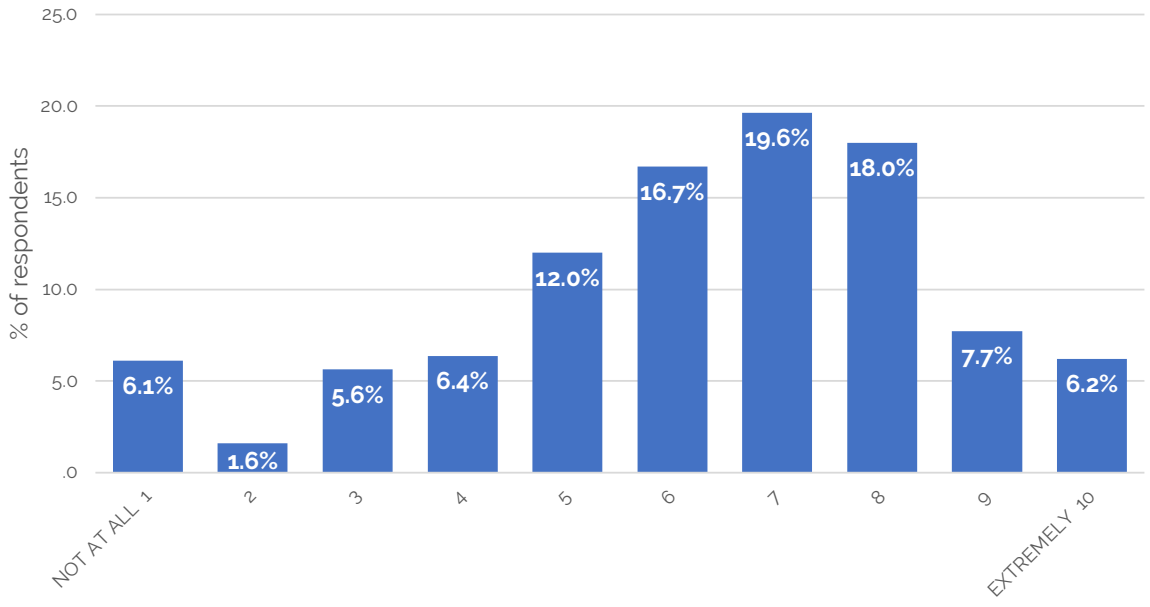
It is clear that young men feel their lives are shaped by these different pressures. When young men were asked to rate how strongly the pressure from society to be a certain kind of man has shaped them on a scale from one (not at all) to 10 (extremely), the average score was 6.2 and 51.5 per cent rated the pressure at a score of seven or higher. It is clear that these pressures are understood to have an impact.

FIGURE 2: Pressures from partners, friends and family (per table 3.1 in Promundo report)

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that…	
My parents taught me that a 'real man' should act strong even If he feels nervous or scared.	52%
My partner would definitely expect me to use violence to defend my reputation if I have to.	28%
My guy friends would give me a hard time if they saw me hanging out with someone who is gay or who they think looks gay.	33%

FIGURE 3: Pressures to be a certain kind of man (percentage of respondents per item on a 1-10 scale)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much would you say that pressure from society to be a certain kind of man has shaped who you are today?



The content of the Man Box: understanding what 'real men' are supposed to be like

In order to better understand the influence of social pressures to be a 'real man', the Man Box tool asks young men about 17 messages about how 'real men' should behave, organised under seven pillars.

The concept of the Man Box draws on both scholarly research on men and masculinities and community-based work and advocacy among men. This includes Promundo's other research tool, the Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM Scale) which has been widely used (see Singh, A., Verma, R., Barker, G., 2013). The concept of the Man Box has also been widely used in work with men and boys as a teaching tool to increase their understanding of masculine norms and their workings (Kivel, P., 2007).

The Man Box tool allows us to better understand how young men see these pressures operating throughout society, and the extent to which they adhere to traditional, rigid ideas about masculinity.

Through this we can distinguish between men who are inside or outside the Man Box. Those inside the Man Box have higher levels of personal agreement with wider societal messages about how a 'real man' should behave, while those outside the Man Box are more likely to reject these messages and stereotypes. There are limitations to such binary distinctions as each individual understands and interacts with social pressures in unique and complex ways. However, the Man Box allows us to paint a high-level picture and provides some sense of patterns and trends in young men's attitudes and behaviours.

The following table shows the seven pillars of the Man Box and the 17 messages associated with each.

Note that all but one of the statements are phrased as endorsements of stereotypical or traditional masculinity. Man Box message 5.2 is the odd one out. It was reverse-coded in our calculation of overall levels of agreement with the Man Box.

Overview of the Man Box

Pillar	Man Box Messages
1. Self-sufficiency	1.1 A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.
	1.2 Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.
2. Acting tough	2.1 A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.
	2.2 Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.
3. Physical attractiveness	3.1 It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.
	3.2 Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair, and skin.
	3.3 A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.
4. Rigid masculine gender roles	4.1 It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.
	4.2 A man shouldn't have to do household chores.
	4.3 Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.
5. Heterosexuality and homophobia	5. 1 A gay guy is not a 'real man'.
	5.2 Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal.
6. Hypersexuality	6.1 A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can.
	6.2 A 'real man' would never say no to sex.
7. Aggression and control	7.1 Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.
	7.2 A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.
	7.3 If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.


Y H H

Social pressures and the Man Box

In order to understand how young men perceived social pressures associated with the Man Box, they were asked whether they agreed, strongly agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed that each of the rules of the Man Box were communicated throughout society. There was no don't know or not sure option for these questions.

The findings here are quite clear – young men see the rules of the Man Box being communicated and reinforced throughout society. The strongest of these Man Box rules were those related to acting strong, being the primary income earner, and not saying no to sex.

The pervasiveness of the Man Box rules on acting strong was evident in the focus group discussions. Focus group respondents reported that men are denigrated for displaying vulnerability. This could be changing, with some younger males in the focus groups feeling that it was more acceptable to display emotions than in the past.

"Society expects men to be not as emotional, you're forced to act on that and not show all your emotions compared to women."

"It's definitely changed, men are able to express their emotional dilemmas a lot more than they used to be… my Dad's like 'guys shouldn't be crying'… nowadays if you cry I can tell my friends I wouldn't be judged for that."

Perceptions of rigid gender roles in work and caring also featured prominently during focus group discussions. It was clear that the young men who participated felt strong expectations were placed on them to be the primary income earner, and some felt that taking pride in working is part of male identity. However, as with expressing vulnerability, some perceived a shift in expectations of men's role in being the income earner in families.

"Men are expected to be more ambitious at work."

"It's interesting, 10 to 20 years ago it would have been entirely different… the man was expected to earn a wage, support the family, I'm not sure that's 100 per cent true anymore"

FIGURE 4: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "Society as a whole tells me that…"

Man Box rule	
Pillar 1: Self-sufficiency	
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	49%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	54%
Pillar 2: Acting tough	
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	60%
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	69%
Pillar 3: Physical attractiveness	
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	57%
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	48%
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	44%
Pillar 4: Rigid gender roles	
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.	38%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	39%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	56%
Pillar 5: Heterosexuality and homophobia	
A gay guy is not a 'real man'.	47%
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal. *	64%
Pillar 6: Hypersexuality	
A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can.	47%
A 'real man' would never say no to sex.	56%
Pillar 7: Aggression and control	
Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	35%
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	43%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	44%

*Is a positive statement and has been reverse coded for the purposes of data analysis.

Internalising the Man Box

A key question for this study is the extent to which young men internalise the rules of the Man Box. To what extent do young men themselves agree with the Man Box rules, whether or not they believe that these rules are enforced by society? To determine this, we asked young men their personal opinion of each of the 17 Man Box rules.

Overall, it appears that the majority of young men reject the rigid rules of the Man Box. There was not one Man Box rule that a majority of young men agreed with, and over three quarters of the young men disagreed with the rules on hypersexuality, rigid household roles and the idea that men should use violence to get respect.

However, for most of the Man Box rules there was a substantial minority of young men who agreed, averaging around one third. The rule that was most internalised was that men should act strong – nearly half of young men personally agree with this.

Alarmingly, over one third of young men agreed that a man deserves to know where his wife or girlfriend is at all times. This mirrors findings from the NCAS survey which found that while Australians understand family violence as a problem, a significant minority endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor in partner violence (VicHealth, 2014).

Young men's opinions on women and gender equality

The majority of young men who responded to the survey disagreed with Man Box rules that reinforce gender inequality, including those around traditional gender roles and men's dominance of decision making.

In focus groups there was a general agreement among participants that women and men should have gender equal roles; that this was a good thing; and that men had a part to play in supporting gender equality.

> *"Society expects both men and women to be supporting the household now as partners."*
>
> *"They (women) should be able to pursue whatever career they want to, not necessarily 'should have' a role in society."*
>
> *"It's a strong obligation, it is an expectation to be not just supportive but actually helpful, you have to make some impact."*

However, young men show more awareness of overt sexism but less of structural and systematic sexism.

The focus group discussions revealed a range of views around the extent to which gender equality has been achieved and on what further action is required to achieve equality. In particular, a number of the young men expressed views that a level of gender equality has been achieved and opposed proactive policies to tackle inequality:

> "*I'm saying it is that way (unbalanced) because it is based on merit and it's not necessarily a problem."*
>
> *"There's enough opportunity in the world today to suggest that people can help themselves, but you see someone struggling you want to give them a hand."*

There was also an understanding that cultural background can impact upon this. Reflecting on this, one participant noted: *"In my household there's pressure for my sister to do all the housework."*

FIGURE 5: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "In my opinion…"

Man Box rule	
Pillar 1: Self-sufficiency	
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	25%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	27%
Pillar 2: Acting tough	
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	34%
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	47%
Pillar 3: Physical attractiveness	
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	42%
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	32%
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	39%
Pillar 4: Rigid gender roles	
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.	23%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	19%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	35%
Pillar 5: Heterosexuality and homophobia	
A gay guy is not a 'real man'.	28%
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal*.	83%
Pillar 6: Hypersexuality	
A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can.	25%
A 'real man' would never say no to sex.	24%
Pillar 7: Aggression and control	
Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	20%
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	27%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	37%

*Is a positive statement and has been reverse coded for the purposes of data analysis.

Which Man Box rules stick?

The views of young men on the social pressures of the Man Box rules and their personal agreement with these rules allow for some sense of the differences between individual views and social pressures – that is, which cultural ideals of manhood are personally endorsed, and which are not.

Generally, it appears that young men's own views of manhood are more progressive than the broader social messages they receive. As outlined in Figure 6, the Man Box rules where young men showed the strongest divergence from social pressures were 'saying no to sex'; 'figuring out their own personal problems'; and 'fighting back when pushed around'. The rejection of pressure towards hypersexuality was evident in the focus groups where most participants said they were looking for a committed relationship and that the image of young males only looking for sex was an inaccurate stereotype:

"Getting into a relationship with someone comes with a degree of importance… they're most important to me."

As we found with sexism, young men more strongly reject overt manifestations while more subtle norms have higher levels of endorsement. The response to Man Box rules on aggression and control perhaps best illustrates this. There is a much stronger rejection of the notion that men should use violence to get respect (only 20 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this) compared to the more subtle forms of aggression and control through men having the final say in relationships (27 per cent agreed) and men deserving to know where their wife/girlfriends are all the time (37 per cent agreed).

A challenge for young men is how to break free from the norms of the Man Box in the face of significant social pressures. Even though young men accept alternatives to the Man Box in theory, traditional masculine attitudes and behaviours are still modelled to them and reinforced throughout society. It is also possible that, among the majority of the young men we surveyed who disagreed with these Man Box rules, there would be some who would nonetheless comply with the powerful social pressures and expectations around manhood in their daily lives.

The figure below shows levels of agreement about each statement as a social message and as personally endorsed, and the gap between these.

FIGURE 6: Man Box rule divergence (extension of table 3.4 in Promundo report)

Man Box rule	Social message: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "Society as a whole tells me that..."	Personal Endorsement: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "In my opinion..."	Gap between social message and personal endorsement
Pillar 1: Self-sufficiency			
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	49%	25%	24%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	54%	27%	27%
Pillar 2: Acting tough			
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	60%	34%	26%
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	69%	47%	22%
Pillar 3: Physical attractiveness			
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	57%	42%	15%
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	48%	32%	16%
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin	44%	39%	5%
Pillar 4: Rigid gender roles			
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children.	38%	23%	15%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	39%	19%	20%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	56%	35%	21%
Pillar 5: Heterosexuality and homophobia			
A gay guy is not a 'real man'.	47%	28%	19%
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement).	64%	83%	19%
Pillar 6: Hypersexuality			
A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can.	47%	25%	22%
A 'real man' would never say no to sex.	56%	24%	32%
Pillar 7: Aggression and control			
Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	35%	20%	15%
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	43%	27%	16%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	44%	37%	7%

IV. What this means: life inside the Man Box

Exploring young men's views on the Man Box rules provides some insights into the nature of socially constructed masculinity among young Australian men. To better understand the effect that ideas about being a man can have on the lives of Australian young men, we looked at the influence of the Man Box on young men's behaviours across a number of areas including:

- life satisfaction and self-confidence;
- mental health;
- friendship and support seeking;
- risky behaviours;
- appearance;
- bullying, violence, and harassment;
- bystander behaviour;
- pornography.

How do we understand the influence of the Man Box?

In order to understand the influence that the Man Box has on the behaviours of young men, Promundo created a scale measure of young men's support for, or rejection of, the Man Box, by summing up their responses to each of the Man Box statements. We followed this method, which also allows us to analyse Australian data in the context of global trends.

To construct the Man Box scale, each respondent was given a composite score for their answers on the degree to which they personally subscribe to 15[1] Man Box rules. Each response was awarded from one to four points, where the most Man Box rule-adherent answers (usually "strongly agree") received one point, the least Man Box Rule rule-adherent answer (usually "strongly disagree") received four points, and the middle answers ("agree" and "disagree") received two or three points. This coding was done in reverse for statement 5.2 which was a positive statement. We then divided each respondent's total score by 15 to arrive at their individual composite score on a one to four scale. Thus, the higher the individual's composite score, the more significant their rejection of the Man Box rules.

Following Promundo's method, we calculated the average composite score of the entire sample. We coded all men with composite Man Box scores below the sample average as 'in the Man Box', and those with scores at or above the sample average as 'outside the Man Box'. This created two comparable categories that we subsequently used for broad analysis of the landscape of masculine norms in the sample.

	Average Man Box score – 1 to 4 scale
Australia	3.01
US	2.87
UK	2.87
Mexico	3.03

While this method provided a useful tool, there are several noteworthy implications for the purpose of our analysis.

Most notably, within each category, inside the Man Box and outside the Man Box, there is a huge degree of variation in adherence to the Man Box rules. This is particularly significant for those classed as inside the Man Box whose composite score could range from 1 up to 3.01, while for those outside the Man Box, scores ranged from 3.01 to 4. Not only does this lead to significant variance in adherence to Man Box rules within each category, it also means that when comparing the two categories some respondents will have very similar adherence scores even though they have been classed in different groups.

We addressed this by conducting an analysis of adherence to the Man Box based on quintiles of Man Box scores (that is the 20 per cent with the lowest Man Box score through to the 20 per cent with the highest score), which is covered in Part V of this report. However, dividing respondents into quintiles leads to far smaller sample sizes. By contrast, the two-category approach gives a more reliable sample size, even while sacrificing some nuance in analysis. By reporting both the two-category and quintile analyses, it is possible to achieve a greater degree of accuracy and depth in our understanding of masculine norms.

Additionally, using the personal adherence scores, as opposed to the perception of society's messaging, creates a very particular analysis. By using the personal adherence scores as the basis for the Man Box categories we arrive at a score that reflects where individual respondents sit relative to other young men who responded to the survey. However, this does not reflect the fact that some respondents who are classed as 'in the Man Box', have higher personal Man Box scores than the average score when we sum up responses to questions on the wider social pressures around the Man Box.

1 In their 2017 study of young men's attitudes and behaviours in the US, UK and Mexico, Promundo removed two items from the 17 scale Man Box survey when doing Man Box calculations. These items were removed on the basis they are not strict reflections of mainstream masculine expectations and roles. We followed this approach in order to allow for comparison between Australian findings and international data.

	Average perception of society's Man Box messages – 1 to 4 scale
Australia	2.47

By comparing the perception of society's Man Box messages score to the personal adherence score, we see that, on average, young men in this sample felt that they had more progressive personal attitudes to masculine norms than the messages they perceive coming from society as a whole.

While we could have created the Man Box composite score based on the respondents' perception of society's messages regarding the Man Box rules, the benefits of using personal adherence scores include greater accuracy within the 18 to 30 age group and remains consistent with Promundo's approach, thus allowing for international comparisons.

a. Life satisfaction and self-confidence

Young men were asked to rate their level of life satisfaction on a 1 to 10 scale, where one was extremely dissatisfied and 10 was extremely satisfied. Those in the Man Box had an average life satisfaction score of 6.8 and those outside the Man Box 6.7. This difference was not statistically significant, which differs from the US and UK where young men inside the man box were found to have statistically significant higher levels of life satisfaction.

We also asked young men to answer a series of questions on their emotions over the past week which we were then able to use to calculate their positive and negative affect scale scores.

Looking at the average positive affect scale scores, we saw no statistically significant difference between those inside and outside the Man Box. As was the case with life satisfaction, this differs from findings in the US and UK where those inside the Man Box had a higher average positive affect scale score that was statistically significant. Most significantly, and consistent with findings from Promundo's previous study, young men who are inside the Man Box reported a higher negative affect scale score, meaning they are statistically more likely to have experienced negative emotions such as feeling hostile, guilty and nervous.

The finding that there is no statistically significant difference between average levels of life satisfaction and positive affect between those inside and outside the Man Box suggests that any sense of belonging that comes with complying with society's expectations on being a man does not produce a significant positive impact. This differs from the US and the UK, where higher levels of life satisfaction and positive effect suggested some positives for young men who were inside the Man Box. Furthermore, statistically significant higher average levels of negative emotions among those in the Man Box show the clear downside of being inside the Man Box to emotional wellbeing. This becomes even more evident in our analysis of the influence of the Man Box on mental health and risk-taking behaviours in the next section.

FIGURE 7: Life Satisfaction: Positive and Negative Affect scale scores (per table 4.1 Promundo study report)

	Man Box	Life satisfaction (average, scale of 1 to 10)	Positive affect scale score	Negative affect scale score
Australia	**In**	6.8	31.3	25.3*
	Out	6.7	31.1	22.0*
US	**In**	7.8*	35.5*	24.8*
	Out	6.9*	32.8*	21*
UK	**In**	7.0*	33.1*	26.3*
	Out	6.5*	30.5*	21*
Mexico	**In**	7.9	34.4	22.7
	Out	7.9	34.7	22.2

* represents statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

b. Mental health

We asked young men a series of questions on symptoms of mental health and suicidal ideation. The two questions on indicators of mental health were taken from the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ 2), a validated instrument that is widely used as a first step to screen for depression (Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R.; Williams J.B., 2003). It asks about the degree to which an individual has experienced depressed mood and disinterest/lack of pleasure/social withdrawal over the past two weeks.

The purpose of these questions is not to establish final diagnosis or to monitor depression severity. When these questions are used in practice, patients are given a weighted score based on their responses to the two questions, and those with higher scores are further tested for depressive symptoms. Our results do not act as an indicator of respondents who would screen positive for a depressive disorder. Instead, they give an indication of the presence and frequency with which young men experience these symptoms.

Across the entire sample of all young men who took the survey, we saw a very high percentage reporting 'little interest or pleasure in doing things' and 'feeling down depressed or hopeless'. A statistically significantly higher percentage of young men inside the Man Box reported experiencing little interest or pleasure in doing things at some point in the past two weeks.

Given the high rates of young men who report some experience of these symptoms, the findings on the frequency they experience are relevant. In terms of frequency, respondents had a choice of 'some days', 'more than half days' and 'nearly every day'. A higher percentage of participants reported experiencing these symptoms less frequently – with 47 per cent of total respondents reporting 'feeling down, depressed or hopeless' some days. This is significantly more than the 14 per cent who reported these feelings more than half of days, and 9.1 per cent who reported experiencing them nearly every day in the past two weeks.

A separate question on thoughts of suicide was included in the survey. This question is not part of the PHQ2 scale. Young men inside the Man Box were twice as likely to report having thoughts of suicide at some point in the last two weeks, a statistically significant difference This is consistent with findings in the US, UK and Mexico where statistically higher percentages of young men inside the Man Box reported having thoughts of suicide, although the exact percentages differed between countries. As with the PHQ-2 scale questions, a higher percentage of participants reported experiencing these thoughts less frequently – with 21.5 per cent of total respondents reporting having thoughts of suicide some days, compared to 7.3 per cent more than half the days, and 4.6 per cent nearly every day.

The high proportion of young men, both inside and outside the Man Box, reporting some experience of mental health symptoms and suicidal ideation is cause for significant concern – 33 per cent of all survey respondents reported having thoughts of suicide in the past two weeks. There are several factors that provide some context for these findings. The first is that the results indicate the experience of certain symptoms; they do not act as an indicator of the portion of respondents who would screen positive for a mental illness. There is the possibility that some of the responses to the questions on interest in doing

FIGURE 8: Mental Health: Depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation

Percentage of respondents who report experience at some point in the last two weeks

	Man Box	Little interest or pleasure in doing things	Feeling down depressed or hopeless	Having thoughts of suicide
Australia	In	83%*	72%	44%*
	Out	77%*	69%	22%*
US	In	74%*	64%	40%*
	Out	63%*	61%	17%*
UK	In	82%*	74%*	55%*
	Out	70%*	63%*	20%*
Mexico	In	68%	50%	19%*
	Out	67%	50%	13%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

things and feeling down, depressed or hopeless reflect the natural ups and downs of life and the influence of environmental factors.

It is also important to note evidence on the prevalence of mental illness within the population and its concentration among young people. Population level research has found that 20 per cent of Australian adults will experience a mental illness in any year (AIHW 2018), and that a higher portion of Australians in younger age groups experience mental illness in a given year. Suicide is the top disease burden among Australian males aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 44 (the ages covering our study cohort), with data suggesting male suicides account for 24.4 per cent of all deaths of young people aged 18 to 24 (Rice, Purcell & McGorry, 2018). This prior research would suggest that findings around high levels of mental health symptoms and suicidal ideation, while concerning, is consistent with wider research on mental health among young men in the Man Box study cohort.

What the findings confirm, which is consistent with research into young men's mental health, is that conformity with traditional masculine norms results in poorer mental health (Rice, Purcell & McGorry, 2018). These traditional norms include that males should be tough, invulnerable, and self-sufficient. They were included as Man Box rules, and we found that a significant portion of young men agreed that these rules were reinforced throughout society (nearly seven in 10 agreed that society tells them to be strong when they feel scared or nervous inside). It is clear that there is significant social pressure that inhibits young men's ability to display vulnerability, and that this is producing negative consequences for all young men, and particularly those inside the Man Box.

Interestingly, there were a range of views on the types of emotions that are acceptable for men to display, with some focus group participants making the point that anger and rage are more acceptable (or expected) from men than crying. Some felt that social expectations about the way men and women express emotions are a problem, as they characterise men as aggressive and women as weak.

Displaying vulnerability

The Man Box norms of self-sufficiency and acting tough are understood to discourage or stigmatise help-seeking behaviours and displays of vulnerability. This has consequences for both mental health and wellbeing. The influence of social pressures on young men's wellbeing and ability to openly express emotions was something that featured in the focus groups.

Most participants felt that men were just as emotional as women but were not permitted to display this, particularly vulnerability:

> *"Men are just as emotional but don't show it as much."*
>
> *"Push them down."*
>
> *"It's not okay to show weakness (as a man) - if you present yourself as a weaker more emotional person you suddenly become less desirable or less stable [but] if you're a woman it's okay."*

However, a number of participants felt that this was changing and expressing emotions is becoming more accepted:

> "*It's definitely changed, men are able to express their emotional dilemmas a lot more than they used to be… my Dad's like 'guys shouldn't be crying'… Nowadays, if you cry, I can tell my friends, I wouldn't be judged for that."*
>
> *"Boys are allowed to cry now… us older ones are still trying our best not to but I like that we are allowed now, it's only fair."*

c. Friendship and support-seeking

This study sought to understand how young men interact with their friends; whether they provided or sought emotional support from friends; and where they went to for help more broadly.

An additional question that was added to the Man Box survey for our study related to the gender composition of friendship groups. Interestingly, we found no statistically significant differences in the gender composition of friendship groups of young men inside and outside the Man Box. Nearly half of respondents in both groups reported that their closest friends were mainly men, compared to only eight per cent who said their friendship groups were mainly women.

It is important to note, that this question does not assess the quality of friendships, and in focus groups there were differing views on the importance of friends. Some focus group participants felt friends were as important as family, while for others they were seen as more transient types of relationships:

"It depends on your relationship with your friends, I'd say just as important as my family... they've done a lot for me so I do a lot for them."

"I don't think they're as important as family, friends do come and go."

FIGURE 9: Percentage of respondents who describe their closest friends as

	Man Box	Mainly men	An even mix of men and women	Mainly women	I don't have close friends
Australia	**In**	47%	35%	8%	10%
	Out	47%	38%	8%	8%

* represent statistically significant relationships at p < .05

Given the Man Box norms on being strong and self-sufficient, in addition to the Man Box rules we also asked a number of questions on whether young men displayed vulnerability and provided emotional support to friends. These questions produced some interesting findings that illustrate the complexities of life inside and outside the Man Box.

Over two thirds of all young men reported having a friend that they feel comfortable talking to about a personal or emotional issue. This is slightly lower than the US, UK and Mexico where this was upwards of three quarters of all respondents. Those outside the Man Box were more likely to report having a friend to whom they felt comfortable displaying personal or emotional vulnerability.

Interestingly, those inside the Man Box were more likely to have talked with a friend about something deeply emotional that they were going through, and also felt comfortable crying in front of friends – with one third of those inside the Man Box saying they felt comfortable with this. These findings about greater displays of vulnerability among those inside the Man Box correspond with patterns from the US and UK study. They suggest that personal agreement with the Man Box rules of being strong and self-sufficient may not always translate into a greater accordance with them in one's own behaviours, particularly when it comes to displaying emotions around friends.

In focus groups, some participants reflected on the acceptability of displaying vulnerability to friends:

"There's an expectation of less judgement with your friends, you tell them things that you're a lot more shameful about [than] you would with your parents."

"It depends on the problem. If it was something for relationship advice I'd probably go to my friends, but financial or career I'd possibly speak to my brothers."

It is clear from the survey results and focus groups that the role of friends, particularly when it comes to providing emotional support, differs significantly and in complex ways between young men. This warrants further and more detailed research beyond this survey. Finally, less than half of all the young men who responded to this survey reported displaying vulnerability to friends (by talking or crying) in the past month, suggesting there is a long way to go to break down Man Box norms of being strong and not showing any weakness.

FIGURE 10: Percentage of respondents who report having a friend with whom they feel comfortable talking about a personal, emotional issue

	Man Box	Percentage of respondents who report having a friend with whom they feel comfortable talking about a personal, emotional issue
Australia	In	62%*
	Out	76%*
US	In	73%*
	Out	82%*
UK	In	72%
	Out	74%
Mexico	In	84%*
	Out	91%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at p < .05

FIGURE 11: Percentage of respondents who report often or very often in the last month

	Man Box	You willingly provided emotional support to someone going through a difficult time	You felt comfortable crying in front of a male friend	You talked with a friend about something deeply emotional you were going through
Australia	In	59%	36%*	47%*
	Out	61%	21%*	41%*
US	In	67%	44%*	52%*
	Out	63%	25%*	40%*
UK	In	56%	46%*	52%*
	Out	55%	18%*	33%*
Mexico	In	62%*	25%	40%*
	Out	69%*	24%	50%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at p < .05

The positive and negative affect scale

The positive and negative affect scale scores show respondents' experience of emotionally positive and negative moods over the past week.

The positive and negative affect scale (PANAS) is widely used in clinical and non-clinical research and is considered a reliable measure for positive and negative mood (Watson, Clark, Tellegen, 1988). It involves a self-report questionnaire comprising two ten-item scales listing positive emotions (attentive, active, alert, excited, enthusiastic, determined, inspired, proud, interested, strong) and negative emotions (hostile, irritable, ashamed, guilty, distressed, upset, scared, afraid, jittery, nervous).

Respondents are asked to rate their experience of a list of those emotions over the past week on a scale of one (not at all) to five (very much). Respondents then receive a total score somewhere between 10 and 50, with higher scores indicating their levels of emotionally positive or negative affect.

Looking beyond friends, we also asked young men a series of questions about help seeking when they were sad or depressed, and who they talk to about the pressures of being a man.

Looking at young men's help seeking when they are sad or depressed, an interesting finding is where young men go to when they need help. The sources of support were overwhelmingly close relationships and peers, as opposed to online or professional support. The most common source of support young men sought when feeling very sad or depressed was romantic partners, then mothers, then male friends. The importance of close relationships was also evident in focus groups when participants were asked who they talk to if they have a problem:

"Dad for the money and job advice but mum for all the emotional stuff."

"I think life advice you go to mum and dad."

Looking at the influence the Man Box has on whom young men seek help from, it is clear that those outside the Man Box are statistically more likely to seek help from a wider variety of sources including romantic partners, male friends, female friends, and psychologists. Of interest is the fact that those inside the Man Box are statistically more likely to report seeking help from their father or a teacher on these issues.

FIGURE 12: When you feel sad or depressed, who are the first few people you seek help from?

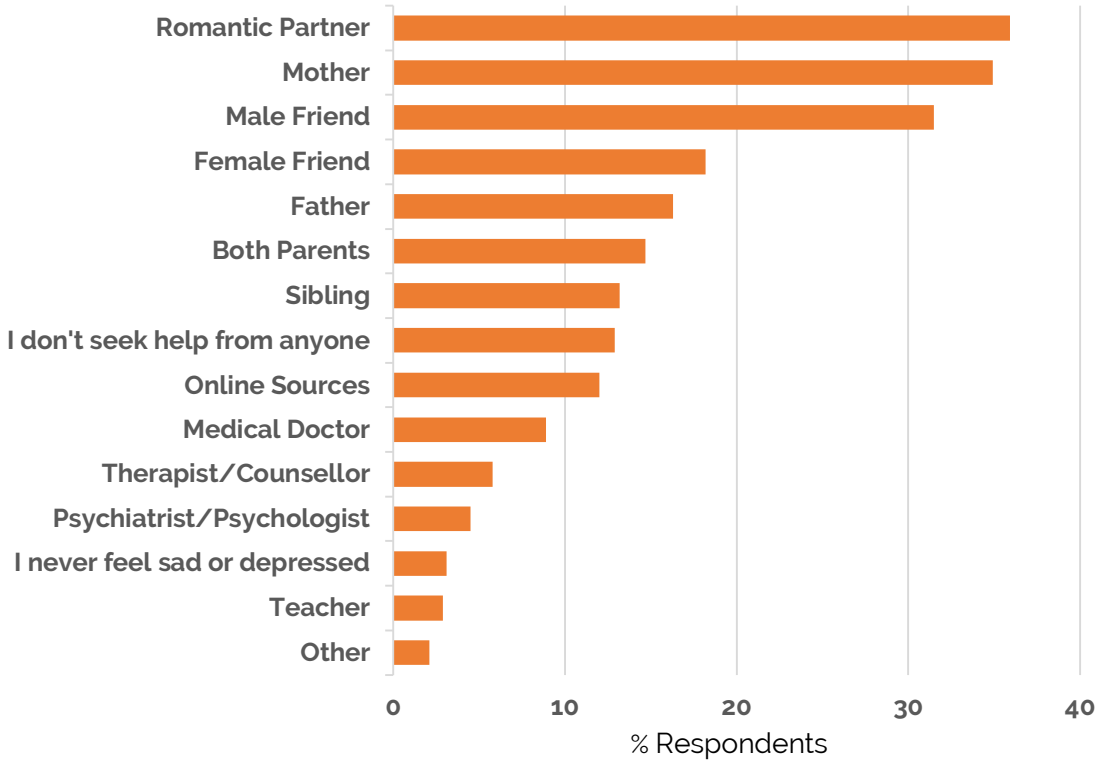


FIGURE 13: When you feel very sad or depressed who are the first few people you seek help from?

	Man Box	
	In	Out
Mother	33.0%	36.8%
Romantic partner	27.2%*	44.7%*
Male friend	25.6%*	37.4%*
Father	19.4%*	13.1%*
Both parents	16.5%	12.9%
I don't seek help from anyone	14.3%	11.5%
Female friend	13.1%*	23.3%*
Sibling	12.3%	14.1%
Online sources	12.1%	11.9%
Medical doctor	9.5%	8.2%
I never feel sad or depressed	4.8%*	1.4%*
Therapist/counsellor	4.6%	7.0%
Teacher	4.4%*	1.4%*
Psychiatrist/psychologist	3.0%*	6.0%*
Other	1.4%	2.8%

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

In addition to the question on help seeking around mental health, we also asked young men a question to gauge whether they spoke about the social pressures of being a 'real man' and whom they spoke to about this. While over a quarter responded that they didn't talk to anyone about these issues, others reported talking about these issues with a wide variety of sources. As with help seeking around mental health, the sources of support that larger numbers of young men turned to on these issues were family and close relationships, particularly romantic partners, male friends, and parents.

Looking at the influence of the Man Box on whether young men talk about the social pressures of being a 'real man', we found that young men outside the Man Box are statistically more likely not to talk to anyone about these issues or, when they do talk, they talk to their romantic partners, or male or female friends. Those inside the Man Box were more likely to talk to their fathers, or both parents, or their siblings. While these findings suggest that conversations around being a 'real man' occur, we don't know their content. It is possible that some of the conversations may have the purpose or consequence of reinforcing the norms of the Man Box, as opposed to reflecting on how to break free from them.

FIGURE 14: Who do you talk to about your experiences of social pressures around being a 'real man'?

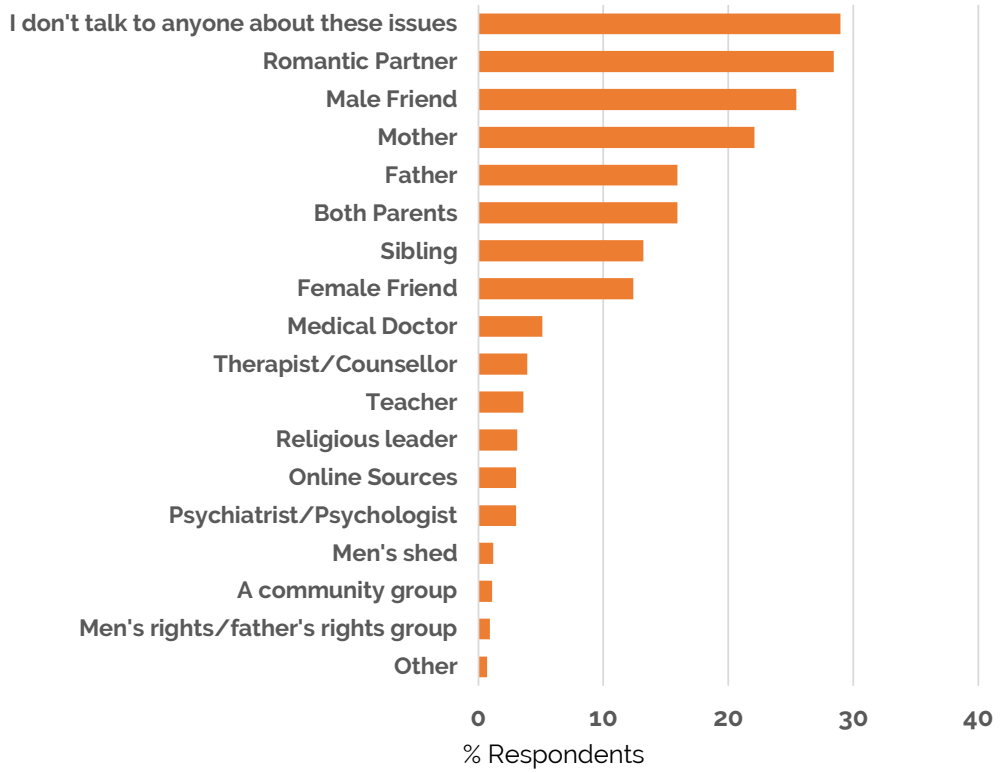


FIGURE 15: Who do you talk to about your experiences of social pressures around being a 'real man'?

	Man Box	
	In	Out
I don't talk to anyone about these issues	24.6%*	33.4%*
Romantic partner	22.9%*	34.1%*
Mother	22.7%	21.5%
Male friend	21.7%*	29.2%*
Father	19.9%*	11.9%*
Both parents	19.3%*	12.5%*
Sibling	16.3%*	10.1%*
Female friend	8.9%*	15.9%*
Medical doctor	6.8%*	3.4%*
Teacher	5.8%*	1.4%*
Religious leader	4.8%*	1.4%*
Online sources	4.0%	2.0%
Therapist/counsellor	3.2%	4.6%
Men's Shed	2.0%*	0.4%*
Men's Rights/Father Right's group	1.8%*	0%*
Psychiatrist/psychologist	1.6%*	4.4%*
Community group	1.6%	0.6%
Other	0%*	1.4%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

d. Risky behaviours

To explore the relationship between the Man Box and risk-taking behaviours, we focused on two forms of risk-taking behaviour: binge drinking and involvement in traffic accidents, collecting data on the nature and frequency of each.

The health and social impacts of alcohol misuse and traffic accidents are well documented. Alcohol use was responsible for 3.4 per cent of deaths in Australia in 2011 (5,039 deaths) and these portions and numbers were higher for males (AIHW, 2018). The Australian Institute of Criminology (2017) has estimated the cost of alcohol-related problems in 2010 was $14.32 billion. During the 12 months ending July 2018 there were 1,214 road deaths in Australia, of which three quarters were male (BITRE, 2018). The estimates costs of road crashes each year is $27 billion.

Of all young men in the survey, 26 per cent reported getting drunk once per month or more, and 24 per cent reported being involved in a traffic accident in the past year. Young men inside the Man Box were statistically more likely to engage in regular binge drinking and to have been involved in traffic accidents. Nearly one in four young men inside the Man Box report being involved in a traffic accident in the past year compared to just over one in 10 young men who were outside the Man Box.

Interestingly, in Australia more respondents classified as being inside the Man Box reported engaging in regular binge drinking (31 per cent) than in the US (25 per cent), UK (27 per cent) and Mexico (24 per cent).This pattern was also evident for traffic accidents, with more young men inside the Man Box in Australia (38 per cent) involved in traffic accidents in the past 12 months than in the other three countries (23 per cent in the US, 28 per cent in UK and 21 per cent in Mexico).

The links between the Man Box and higher rates of binge drinking correspond with existing research that has linked particular forms of masculinity with excessive alcohol consumption (de Visser and Smith, 2007) and research showing how the alcohol industry articulates 'a manual of masculinity' through advertisements (Towns, Parker, Chase, 2012). Similarly, the numbers of traffic accidents among those inside the Man Box correspond with research showing the acceptability of risky driving among young males and the link between masculinity, driving and cars (Redshaw, 2006). Beyond efforts to address these risky behaviours, further consideration needs to be given to how alcohol and driving might be factors through which social norms around the Man Box are reinforced.

FIGURE 16: Risky drinking and driving

	Man Box	Drinks to the point of getting drunk once per month or more	Has been in one or more traffic accidents in the past year
Australia	In	31%*	38%*
	Out	22%*	11%*
US	In	25%	23%*
	Out	20%	9%*
UK	In	27%	28%*
	Out	23%	7%*
Mexico	In	24%*	21%*
	Out	17%*	14%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

e. Appearance

To better understand how young men's ideas about masculinity relate to their body image, we asked them about their satisfaction with their physical attractiveness and their desire to change particular aspects of their appearance.

Overall, Australian young men reported a positive body image: 62 per cent of respondents said that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their physical attractiveness. However, the Australian overall satisfaction rate is lower than its international counterparts.

Notably, those inside the Man Box tend to be more satisfied with their physical attractiveness than those outside the Man Box. This finding is consistent with Promundo's findings in the US, Mexico and the UK.

In the focus groups, participants expressed the feeling that there is more social pressure than in the past for them to be well groomed, to look more sophisticated and 'gentlemanly'. At the same time, most agreed that social attitudes regarding body image are different for women and that there is more pressure for women to conform to a certain appearance and body weight.

A possible explanation for this can be that those inside the Man Box feel more aligned with what they perceive to be expected of them as men. The social context of the Man Box thus would foster a sense of endorsement due to alignment with dominant ideals and norms, leading to higher satisfaction rates.

FIGURE 17: Physical attractiveness

	Man Box	Percentage of respondents who report being satisfied or very satisfied with overall physical attractiveness
Australia	In	67%*
	Out	57%*
US	In	80%*
	Out	61%*
UK	In	73%*
	Out	56%*
Mexico	In	75%*
	Out	72%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Looking at particular aspects of appearance, muscle size, body weight and body shape were the issues of most concern to respondents. Over half of the respondents outside the Man Box reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the size of their muscles or the look of their body, and almost half of them are unhappy with their weight. Among those inside the box, more than a third of respondents are unhappy with these three aspects of their appearance. The differences in levels of satisfaction on these aspects of appearance between those inside and outside the Man Box were statistically significant.

FIGURE 18: Percentage of respondents who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with aspect of physical appearance

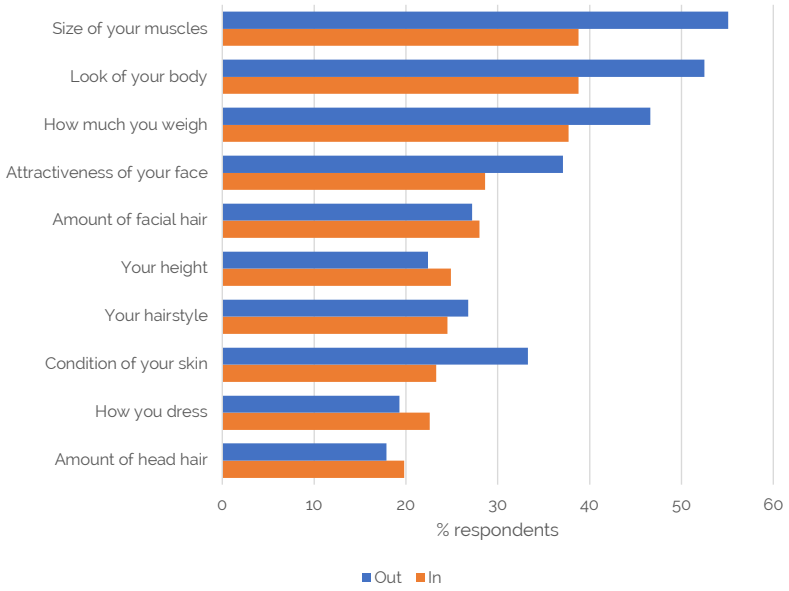


FIGURE 19: Respondents dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with aspect of physical appearance

	Man Box	
	In	Out
Look of your body	38.8*	52.5*
Size of your muscles	38.8*	55.1*
How much you weigh	37.7*	46.6*
Attractiveness of your face	28.6*	37.1*
Amount of facial hair	28	27.2
Your height	24.9	22.4
Your hairstyle	24.5	26.8
Condition of your skin	23.3*	33.3*
How you dress	22.6	19.3
Amount of head hair	19.8*	17.9*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Our findings concur with existing research on the pressures, expectations, and ideals surrounding the male body; in particular that masculinity is in part embodied through the social organisation of bodies and bodily practices such as males being encouraged to develop muscles (Tager, D., Good, G. E., & Morrison, J. B., 2006).

The findings also suggest that Man Box related social pressures can have an impact for young men who are outside the Man Box. Many of those outside the box desire to change their physical appearance towards the ideal of the toned, muscular body. This illustrates the contradictions of the Man Box where pervasive social norms can lead to negative outcomes for those who adhere to them, as well as provide a sense of belonging and satisfaction.

f. Bullying and violence

The influence of gender on violence in Australia has been clearly demonstrated in numerous studies and surveys. Men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of all forms of violence. About 95 per cent of victims of violence report experiencing it at the hands of a male perpetrator (Diemer, 2015). Men's adherence to traditional masculine norms is associated with a greater likelihood of perpetrating violence against women (Our Watch, 2015).

The Man Box survey includes several questions relating to the experience and perpetration of bullying and violence among young men, including a question on whether they have perpetrated sexual harassment.

Bullying and Violence

Experienced

Verbal	Physical	Online
Someone, or a group of people, made jokes about you, teased you, or called you names that you did not like, for any reason.	Someone, or a group of people, physically hurt you on purpose by pushing you down, kicking you, or hitting you with a hand, clenched fist, object, or weapon.	Someone, or a group of people, insulted you, posted photos meant to embarrass you, or made threats to you on SMS, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or another app or website.

Perpetrated

Verbal	Physical	Online	Sexual harassment
You made jokes about someone, teased someone, or called someone names that they did not like, for any reason.	You physically hurt someone on purpose by pushing them down, kicking them, or hitting them with a hand, clenched fist, object, or weapon.	You insulted someone, posted photos meant to embarrass someone, or made threats to someone on SMS, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or another app or website.	You made sexual comments to a woman or girl you didn't know, in a public place, like the street, your workplace, your school/university, or in an internet or social media space.

Over half of all young men reported being the victims of verbal bullying in the past month, 40 per cent reported being the victims of online bulling in the past month, and one third reported being the victims of physical bullying or violence in the past month.

Looking at differences in the experiences of bulling and violence experienced by young men inside and outside the Man Box, we found that those inside the Man Box were more likely to have experienced all forms of bullying and violence. Over half of those inside the Man Box reported experiencing some form of bullying or violence over the previous month. These statistically significant higher rates of experiencing bullying and violence were consistent with findings from the US, UK and Mexico.

FIGURE 20: Experience of bullying (per table 4.11 Promundo)

Percentage of respondents who report experiencing bullying in the last month

	Man Box	Experienced Bullying: Verbal	Experienced Bullying: Online	Experienced Bullying: Physical
Australia	In	66%*	57%*	52%*
	Out	44%*	24%*	15%*
US	In	70%*	60%*	59%*
	Out	43%*	21%*	15%*
UK	In	76%*	69%*	65%*
	Out	43%*	23%*	19%*
Mexico	In	61%*	38%*	35%*
	Out	52%*	22%*	15%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Overall, a significant minority of young men who responded to this survey reported perpetrating different forms of bullying and violence. Forty per cent of young men reported perpetrating verbal bullying in the past month, 28 per cent reported perpetrating online bullying in the past month, and 27 per cent reported perpetrating physical bulling in the past month.

Consistent with findings in the US, UK and Mexico, young Australian men inside the Man Box are significantly more likely to be both perpetrators of all forms of bullying and violence than those outside the Man Box.

The greatest difference between those inside and outside the Man Box was in response to questions about perpetrating physical bullying and violence. Young men inside the Man Box were over six times more likely to have perpetrated physical violence than those outside. These findings are consistent with the US, UK and Mexico and show that life for those inside the Man Box is often characterised by perpetration of a variety of different forms of violence.

FIGURE 21: Perpetrating bullying (per table 4.12 Promundo)

Percentage of respondents who report perpetrating bullying in the last month

	Man Box	Perpetrating Bullying: Verbal	Perpetrating Bullying: Online	Perpetrating Bullying: Physical
Australia	In	56%*	47%*	47%*
	Out	24%*	10%*	7%*
US	In	63%*	54%*	52%*
	Out	26%*	9%*	7%*
UK	In	63%*	59%*	59%*
	Out	23%*	10%*	10%*
Mexico	In	55%*	26%*	28%*
	Out	40%*	10%*	9%*

*represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

The question of violence and its acceptability elicited mixed responses among focus group participants. Some expressed the view that attitudes towards family violence have changed:

"I feel like also with domestic violence… there's a lot more awareness, a lot more campaigns. In the 70s, 80s and 90s domestic violence was a lot more common, but it was 'don't say anything, it's part of the relationship' but these days [there's more scrutiny]."

However, focus group participants' attitudes towards violence differed, depending on whether it was between males, or between a man and a woman:

"If they (two men) want to fight that's up to them."

"I see it as different (to hitting a women)."

"That also comes into being a man, you're expected to protect other people."

Also concerning was the view among some participants in the focus groups that violence against women could be justified in circumstances of self-defence:

"If she's attacking him."

"Self-defence, for sure."

These findings suggest there is quite some distance to go in breaking down norms that justify and excuse different forms of violence, and that this is most acute for young men who are inside the Man Box.

Looking at interventions in fights, a higher percentage of males both inside and outside the Man Box reported intervening in physical fights in the Australian study than in the US, UK and Mexico. There are two possible interpretations for this, positive and negative. A positive interpretation could be that Australian men's higher rates of intervention reflect a culture of bystander action,where men in Australia feel more responsible for and capable of intervening in fights. A negative interpretation could simply be that there are more fights in Australia and thus more opportunities for these young men to intervene in them.

Young men inside the Man Box were more likely than those outside the Man Box to intervene in physical fights among other men that they know, with over three quarters of those inside the Man Box reporting having done so in the past month.

FIGURE 22: Intervention in physical fights

Percentage of respondents who report in the last month

	Man Box	You intervened to stop a physical fight among friends or other guys you knew
Australia	In	76%*
	Out	43%*
US	In	48%*
	Out	16%*
UK	In	48%*
	Out	16%*
Mexico	In	25%*
	Out	19%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Looking more specifically at how the Man Box influences the behaviours of young men towards women, the survey asked young men how often (if at all) they had made sexual comments towards a women they didn't know in a public place or online during the past month.

Alarmingly, 33 per cent of total survey respondents indicated that they had done this at some point in the previous month. Those inside the Man Box were over six times more likely to display this type of behaviour (45 per cent vs 7 per cent), a pattern consistent with findings from the US and UK.

In focus groups, participants expressed the view that men demonstrated greater levels of respect for women than in the past:

"A lot to do with sexual harassment, you have to be a lot more conscious of the words you can say, your actions… a general awareness of how your actions can make women feel."

However, some young men expressed views that this had gone too far:

"It's gone a little PC (politically correct) in what you can and can't say, especially in a business environment."

These findings are particularly concerning, as they show high levels of perpetration of sexual harassment, particularly by young men inside the Man Box. It is also important to note that the questions refer to a very narrow set of circumstances in which sexual harassment occurred – relating to comments directed towards a stranger in a public place or online environment. This would exclude other forms of harassment such as unwanted touching or indecent exposure, and situations in which they knew the victim.

FIGURE 23: Sexual comments towards women

Percentage of respondents who report in the last month

	Man Box	You made sexual comments to a woman or girl you didn't know, in a public place, like the street, your workplace, your school/university, or in an internet or social media
Australia	In	46%*
	Out	7%*
US	In	54%*
	Out	9%*
UK	In	60%*
	Out	9%*
Mexico	In	32%*
	Out	10%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

g. Bystander behaviour

The importance of bystander behaviour has been recognised in theory and through research and interventions over recent decades. Bystander action involves someone who sees or is aware of a harmful event that is happening to someone else and takes action (Taket, Crisp, 2017). It is seen as one form of action to respond to gender discrimination and violence against women and their children.

A new series of questions included in the Australian Man Box survey asked respondents about whether they had taken any action the last time they witnessed sexist behaviour.

Consistent with studies that show overt harassment is more strongly condemned than subtle forms of harassment (VicHealth, 2012), young men were much more likely to respond to more clear instances of harassment and violence against women with only 13 per cent of all young men saying they went along/didn't do anything when witnessing verbal or physical harassment against women. Importantly, those inside the Man Box were over five times more likely than those outside the Man Box (22 per cent versus four per cent) to do nothing or join in when they witnessed verbal or physical harassment of women.

Young men were much less likely to respond to less overt forms of sexist behaviour with 52 per cent of all young men saying they didn't take any action or joined in when they last witnessed other guys making sexist comments or jokes. Again, those inside the Man Box were statistically more likely to join in or do nothing when they witnessed this behaviour.

FIGURE 24: Bystander behaviour

Percentage of respondents who, the last time they witnessed sexist behaviour, didn't take any action to distract, divert, or challenge the behaviour

	Man Box	Witnessed other guys make sexist comments/jokes	Witnessed other guys verbally or physically harass women
Australia	**In**	57%*	22%*
	Out	48%*	4%*

* represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

h. Pornography

Most everyday users of pornography are heterosexual males (ibid.). Numerous studies have been conducted on the pervasiveness of mainstream pornography and the effects of accessing pornography regularly from a young age[1]. Looking at, and masturbating to, pornography is the routine practice of large numbers of men, and most of the commercial mainstream pornographic industry caters to heterosexual men (Flood, M., 2010). One detailed study of bestselling porn movies found that 88 per cent of scenes included physical aggression and 48 per cent of scenes included verbal aggression. In 94 per cent of incidents, the targets of the aggression were female performers (Bridges, et al, 2010). It is not surprising that young men have been found to be more likely to view pornography positively than young women (Horvath, et al, 2013).

We wanted to find out whether norms of manhood have any association with young men's attitudes towards viewing pornography. The survey results confirm that a large majority of young men access pornography and sexually-explicit material. Overall, almost nine out of 10 young men who responded to the survey had accessed this kind of material in the past month. There was no statistically significant difference in the percentage of young men inside and outside the Man Box who reported looking at pornography.

Our survey question did not account for the content, context and frequency of access to pornography and sexually explicit material. It did not take into account variation in the kind of material viewed, whether the viewing was deliberate or accidental, and how often respondents accessed this kind of material. This was clear from the outset, as this level of detail would have surpassed the scope of our study.

Research suggests that pornography can have a complex and far-reaching impact on a person's understanding and performance of their masculinity. A range of studies have found that pornography use is associated with sexist and sexually objectifying attitudes, violence-supportive attitudes, and the actual perpetration of sexual aggression (Flood, M., 2016).This suggests that there could be a long-term correlation between viewing pornography and adherence to the Man Box rules.

1 For a comprehensive collection of articles and links on pornography and discussion of its effects, go to https://xyonline.net/content/pornography-men-and-boys

FIGURE 25: Pornography/sexually explicit material

Percentage of respondents who report accessing pornography in the last month

	Man Box	You looked at pornography or sexually explicit material
Australia	In	89%
	Out	86%

* represent statistically significant relationships at p < .05

Given the enormous speed at which technology, and hence the ubiquitous availability of pornography, is progressing, more detailed and ongoing research is required to further understand pornography's influence on young men's attitudes and behaviours.

V. Looking across the Man Box spectrum in more detail

Dividing young men into more detailed groups

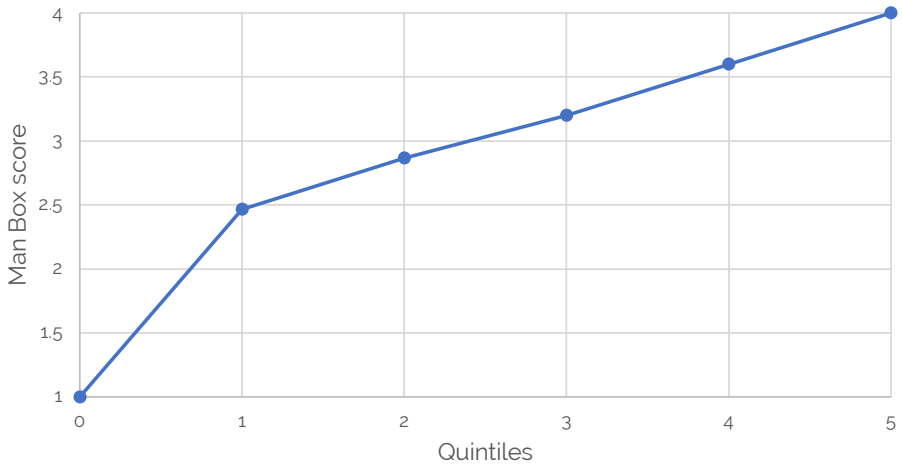
As mentioned above, the approach of breaking young men into two groups, based on whether they sit above or below the average composite score on the Man Boxes scale, may limit our ability to understand the feelings, attitudes and behaviours of those on the extreme ends of the Man Box scale or to gain a differentiated understanding of different positions along the spectrum.

To better understand this, we conducted a further piece of analysis based on Promundo's original methodology. This involved breaking survey respondents into five groups (quintiles) depending on their composite scores on the Man Box scale. At one end of the scale we have the 20 per cent of respondents whose responses to the Man Box questions showed that they most tightly adhered to the rules – we call this group the 'Stuck in the Man Box' group. At the other end are those who most strongly rejecting the rules of the Man Box – the 'Free of the Man Box' quintile. The young men in the three quintiles in between do not have a label but they represent the spectrum of views of young men, with those in group three representing the middle in terms of responses to the Man Box questions.

Looking at the distribution of Man Box composite scores broken down by quintiles, one thing that become evident is that even within the Stuck in the Box group there is a large spread of views on the rules with average scores on the Man Box scale ranging from 1 to 2.5.

In contrast, the middle quintiles indicate a much closer range in adherence to the Man Box rules. This suggests a level of stability in views in the middle of the range, with a long tail of those who most strongly adhere to the Man Box.

FIGURE 26: Distribution of Man Box scores by quintiles



This trend is also visible with regards to views of the social messages that make up the Man Box. Interestingly, when looking at the pattern of social messages versus personal adherence to the Man Box rules, it appears that in each quintile young men believe they have more progressive views of the Man Box rules than what society tells them. This suggests that there is no significant cohort of young men who see themselves taking a more traditional approach to the Man Box rules than society tells them.

FIGURE 27: Distribution of Man Box social message score

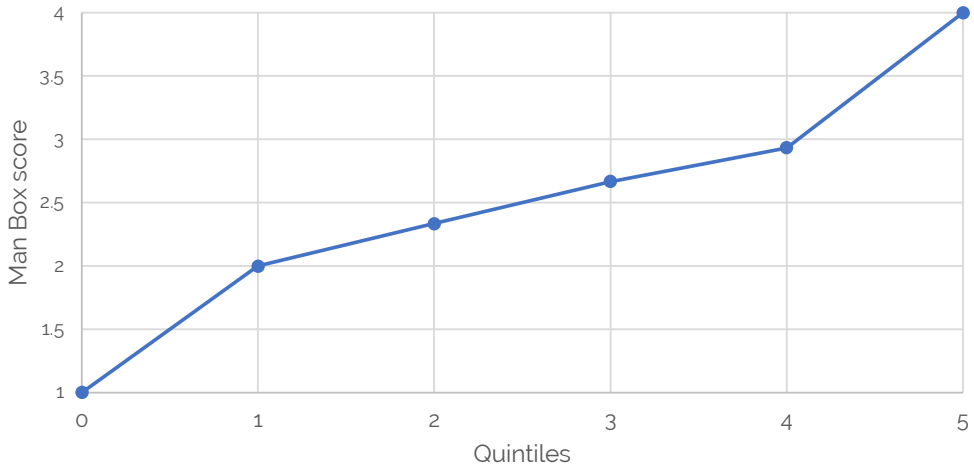
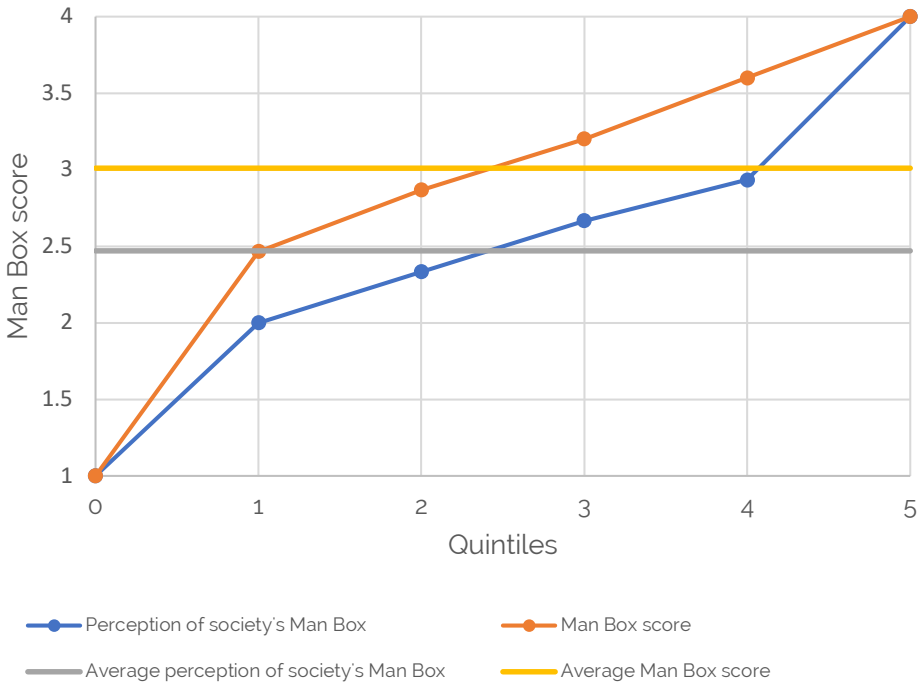


FIGURE 27: Distribution of Man Box score by quintiles vs social message by quintiles



What we found among these smaller groups

Breaking young men down into quintiles based on their adherence to the Man Box rules allows us to see in even more detail the influence that these norms can have on their feelings, behaviours and wellbeing.

Looking firstly at life satisfaction, we see that those who more strongly endorse the Man Box rules have higher levels of life satisfaction and positive affect scores than young men in other quintiles, but also have the highest negative affect scale scores and suicidal ideation rate. This again demonstrates the somewhat complex and contradictory nature of life inside the Man Box. The fact that those Stuck in the Box had thoughts of suicide at double the rate of those who were most free of the box is particularly alarming, suggesting more concentrated experiences of poor mental health among this group. Those most Free of the Man Box have the lowest level of life satisfaction, suggesting challenges around meaning and happiness with life also exist at the other end of the spectrum of masculinity.

FIGURE 29: Life Satisfaction: Positive and Negative Affect scale scores (per table 4.1 Promundo study report)

	Man Box	Life Satisfaction (average, scale of 1 to 10)	Positive Affect scale score	Negative Affect scale score
Australia	Stuck in the Man Box	7.2*	33.5*	29.5*
	2	6.5*	29.5*	22.9*
	3	6.7*	30.9*	22.1*
	4	7.1*	32.0*	22.1*
	Free of the Man Box	6.4*	29.9*	21.6*

* represents statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

FIGURE 30: Mental Health: depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation

Percentage of respondents who report experience at some point in the last two weeks

	Man Box	Little interest or pleasure in doing things	Feeling down depressed or hopeless	Having thoughts of suicide
Australia	Stuck in the Man Box	87%*	81%*	64%*
	2	83%*	71%*	36%*
	3	79%*	65%*	21%*
	4	75%*	67%*	19%*
	Free of the Man Box	76%*	70%*	27%*

* represents statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

The impact of stricter adherence to the Man Box rules becomes even clearer when looking at responses on a wider range of behavioural questions. Those Stuck in the Box perpetrate physical violence and sexual harassment at double the rate of young men in Quintile 2; they are less likely to respond when they witness sexual harassment; and they binge drink and are involved in car accidents at much higher rates. It is clear that young men who are Stuck in the Box have lives characterised by complex combinations of these problematic behaviours. This concentration of problematic behaviours warrants particular attention.

Looking more broadly at other groups, it is clear that those with more progressive attitudes live safer and

more respectful lives, with those Free of the Box having the lowest rates of perpetrating and experiencing bullying and harassment, as well as the lowest rates of risk-taking behaviours. Rates of perpetration of verbal and physical bullying, sexual harassment and risk-taking behaviours remain problematic for quintiles 2 and 3.

However, in the Free from the Box cohort there are lower levels of satisfaction with physical attractiveness and higher levels of mental health symptoms and thoughts of suicide than from those in the middle quintiles. This suggests that there can also be challenges and negative outcomes for those who break free from the Man Box. Possible interpretations for this phenomenon could be lacking a sense of belonging due to being at odds with societal norms and expectations.

FIGURE 31: Quintile breakdown of responses to behavioural questions

	Stuck in the Man Box	2	3	4	Free of the Man Box
Overall physical attractiveness (satisfied or very satisfied)	78%*	56%*	60%*	60%*	55%*
Perpetration of verbal bullying (at some point, past month)	71%*	47%*	36%*	29%*	13%*
Perpetration of physical bullying (at some point, past month)	71%*	33%*	17%*	8%*	5%*
Experiences of verbal bullying (at some point, past month)	79%*	57%*	53%*	47%*	37%*
Experiences of physical bullying (at some point, past month)	76%*	38%*	25%*	14%*	12%*
Sexual harassment (at some point, past month)	70%*	33%*	16%*	9%*	3%*
Bystander jokes (joined in/no intervention)	53%*	62%*	53%*	60%*	33%*
Bystander sexual harassment of women (joined in/ no intervention)	38%*	11%*	8%*	4%*	3%*
Binge drinking (at some point, past month)	38%*	29%*	21%*	25%*	18%*
Traffic accidents (at some point, past year)	55%*	32%*	13%*	11%*	9%*

*represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

VI. Men and the Man Box – A commentary

Dr Michael Flood

The Man Box provides invaluable data on men and masculinities in Australia. As the first nationally representative study of the gender-related attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men, it offers an informative snapshot of young men's experiences and perceptions of gender and the norms of manhood that structure these.

Men and gender

We have known for a long time that men and boys are as implicated in gender as women and girls – that men's lives are shaped, as much as women's, by gender. 'Gender', defined simply, refers to the meanings given to being male and female and the social organisation of men's and women's lives. Five decades of scholarship have documented extensively that gender is socially constructed – it is the outcome of social forces and relations. Boys and men learn to be 'proper' men for example through parental socialisation, peer groups, schools and universities and other institutions, sports, communities, and media and popular culture.

One of the key insights of contemporary scholarship on gender is that in any particular context particular definitions and images of womanhood and manhood are dominant. Whether in a country, a community, or a more local setting, particular versions of femininity and masculinity will be the most celebrated, most desirable and most influential representations of how to be female and male. There are dominant forms of gender in media representations, but also in most settings, institutions and contexts. This is true for example of schools, sporting clubs, workplaces, faith institutions, governments, and so on. In other words, particular ways of being a boy and man are dominant, while others are stigmatised, punished, or silenced. These dominant constructions of gender shape boys' and men's lives. Boys and young men may conform to the dominant form of masculinity, or they may resist it or fail its expectations, but all live in its shadow.

Various terms have been coined for dominant constructions of masculinity. Influential Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell wrote of 'hegemonic masculinity' (R.W. Connell, 1987), and this term has been taken up very widely in scholarship on men and masculinities around the globe (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The term superceded older terms such as 'sex role' and 'gender role', and indeed involved a rejection of the simplistic assumptions which had accompanied these older terms. New terms for dominant constructions of masculinity have emerged outside academia too, such as 'toxic masculinity' (Flood, 2018b).

The Man Box survey follows a well-established tradition of quantitative measurement of men's attitudes towards masculinity. Like other, influential measures of masculinity ideology such as the Masculinity Role Norms Inventory (Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, & Cozza, 1992) and Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986), it assesses men's agreement with a series of 'men should' statements. Another, widely used measure, the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (James R Mahalik et al., 2003), instead focuses on men's individual masculine beliefs, couched in 'I' statements, in addition to asking young men about the social pressures they percieve about masculinity, although *The Man Box* survey also asks about men's own endorsement of beliefs about manhood.

The notion of the 'Man Box' names influential and restrictive norms of manhood. The 'Act Like a Man' box or 'Man Box' has been a common teaching tool in efforts over the past three decades to engage men and boys in critical reflections on men and gender (Kivel, 2007). The 'box' names the qualities men are expected to show, the rewards they earn for doing so, and the punishments they are dealt if they step 'outside' the box. It emphasises that these dominant standards are restrictive and limiting for men, as well as harmful for women. Individual qualities in the Man Box are not necessarily bad, and indeed some may be useful or desirable in some contexts. On the other hand, some of the qualities are negative in themselves, the range of qualities available to men is narrow, and men are expected not to deviate from them. The Man Box norms also sustain forms of privilege and unfair advantage for men, and men's attitudes and behaviours that underpin inequality between man and women. The reference to 'acting like a man' makes the point that masculinity is a 'performance', a set of qualities and behaviours practised in particular contexts.

Before exploring the findings in this report, three further points are relevant. First, dominant constructions of masculinity are not all powerful, and there may be other influential ideals of masculinity in circulation. Second, dominant ideals are not static – they may change over time. Third, men's actual lives do not necessarily conform to dominant ideals of manhood, and typically there is a gap between men's lives and these. The findings of this report bear out of each of these points, as I return to later.

This survey, *The Man Box*, provides crucial information on contemporary Australian norms of manhood – on both perceived *social* norms of manhood, and on young men's *own* norms of manhood. What does it tell us?

Ideals of manhood in Australia

Do young men in Australia agree that the Man Box is an accurate account of social expectations of manhood? The Man Box, as represented in the survey used here, defines being a man in terms of seven qualities: self-sufficiency, toughness, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control over women.

Young men in Australia agree that societal norms for manhood include the expectation that men will act strong and tough, be the primary income earner, and not say no to sex. Here, they echo the "Guy Code", the ideas about 'real men' documented in interviews with young American men aged 17-26 (Kimmel & Davis, 2011). Lower proportions agree that societal norms for manhood include non-involvement in household work and care of children, using violence to get respect, and shunning gay men. So if it was once true that dominant definitions of manhood in Australia included such expectations, then these are weakening. They have not disappeared altogether, but around two thirds of young men reject these. While one-third or close to half show a troubling endorsement of male aggression, decision-making, and control of women, most do not endorse these patriarchal norms.

Young men's perceptions of masculine social expectations seem contradictory or ambivalent, for example for homophobia, paid work and parenting, and violence. On homophobia, although just under half (47 per cent) agree that society tells them "A gay guy is not a 'real man'", two-thirds (64 per cent) agree that society tell them friendships between heterosexual and gay men are 'normal'. This may represent what others have described as contradictory trends regarding homophobia among young men: on the one hand, increased support for same-sex marriage and comfort with gay men as friends, and on the other, the continued policing of masculinity through homophobia (Bridges & Pascoe, 2016). Homophobia continues to be a key means through which young men socialize each other into normatively masculine behaviours, practices, attitudes, and dispositions, including through homophobic joking and demonstrations of heterosexual prowess and power.

Young men's perceptions of breadwinning and care work also seem contradictory, with simultaneous support for men as primary breadwinners *and* as skilled in domestic work and caring for children. While more than half (56 per cent) agree that under societal norms "Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women", only a little over one-third (38 per cent) agree that "It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children". So while men and not women should be the primary breadwinners in families, men also should have some home-making skills. While one-third (35 per cent) agree that they receive the message that "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary", far higher proportions perceive societal messages that men must 'act strong' and 'fight back when pushed'.

Traditional definitions of masculinity have hardly disappeared among young men in Australia. Strength, toughness, aggressive responses to challenge, perpetual sexual readiness, and emotional stoicism continue to define manhood, at least as far as these young men's perceptions of societal norms are concerned. Yet many young men also believe that contemporary men also are expected to contribute to household work and parenting and to be comfortable around gay men (but not actually be gay themselves).

Personal support for the Man Box

If the above findings tell us about young men's perceptions of *societal norms* of manhood, then what about young men's own, *personal understandings* of manhood? To what extent do young men themselves accept or endorse the masculine expectations they perceive?

Research on men and gender finds a consistent gap between perceived social norms of manhood and men's own attitudes about being a man. In any society or culture, the lived or performed genders of the majority of men do not need necessarily to correspond to the culturally dominant ideal. Most men live in a state of tension with, or distance from, the dominant masculinity of their culture or community (R.W. Connell, 2000).

The Man Box survey finds two important patterns here. First, in line with other scholarship, there is a significant gap between young men's perception of societal support for the Man Box rules and their own endorsement of these rules. While young men agree that many of the traditional messages of the Man Box are part of contemporary societal expectations of manhood, they are less likely to support such messages themselves. This accords with other research suggesting that the dominant code of manhood "is perpetuated by men's need for approval from other men, secret shame about not living up to the masculine ideal, and the false perception that most men believe in it" (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 162).

This data shows that young men's own views of masculinity are more progressive than the social norms they perceive. The biggest gaps between societal norms (as perceived) and personal attitudes were for the ideas that a 'real man' would never say no to sex, men should figure out their personal problems on their own, and a guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak. Despite this apparent progressiveness, young men show troubling levels of support for men's domination of relationships and families, with one-quarter to one-third endorsing male privilege over and control of women.

Second, most young men largely reject the Man Box. There were *no* Man Box rules with which a majority of young men agreed. Young men's own beliefs about

masculinity show a particularly strong rejection of the Man Box messages that men should be hypersexual, avoid household work and care, and use violence to get respect. Only about one-quarter of young men agreed personally with the Man Box statements associated with these ideals. They were more likely to personally endorse the Man Box message that men "should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside", with close to half (47 per cent) agreeing. A significant minority, around one-third, also agreed personally with Man Box messages that men should be the primary breadwinners, respond to challenges with violence ('fight back when others push him'), and need to look good to be successful. This gap persists even when the young men are divided into quintiles, and there is no cohort of young men who feel that their own views of masculinity are more traditional than the societal ones they perceive.

A gender gap

The Man Box survey asks only men about their attitudes to gender. But if it had asked women too, it would have found a profound gender gap, as numerous other studies have done. Men's attitudes to gender are consistently less progressive than women's (Flood, 2015). As documented in another recent Australian survey, *From Girls to Men*, men are less likely than women to agree that sexism against women is extensive and systematic in Australia, less supportive of principles of gender equality, and more likely to perceive that men are being neglected or even disadvantaged by gender equality measures (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka, & Rowe, 2018). Focusing on young people, young men are less likely than young women to recognise gender inequalities and sexism, more likely to endorse male dominance of relationships and families, more likely to have violence-supportive attitudes, and less aware even of the constraints of masculinity on men themselves. (Some studies described here are not strictly comparable, as some focus on younger cohorts aged 16 to 24 rather than the 18-to-30 year-olds on whom the *Man Box* survey focuses.)

Among young people in Australia, we find among 16-to-24 year-olds that young men are significantly more likely than young women to agree that "On the whole men make better political leaders than women" (29 per cent of young men, 19 per cent of young women) and "Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia" (17 per cent of young men, 10 per cent of young women) (Harris, Honey, Webster, Diemer, & Politoff, 2015). In the Australian *From Girls to Men* survey, among 16-23 year-olds, young men were more likely than young women to agree with various defensive statements about gender equality: political correctness gives women an advantage in the workplace, men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality, and so on (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka, & Rowe, 2018). Similarly, young men in the US are less likely than young women to believe that women face significant discrimination in society or that women are depicted negatively in news and entertainment media (Jones, Cox, Fisch-Friedman, & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2018).

Young men in Australia are more supportive than women of men's domination of relationships and families, with one-quarter to one-third agreeing with statements endorsing this. Among 16-to-24 year-olds, young men are more likely than young women to agree that "Men should take control in relationships and be head of the household" (27 per cent of young men, 17 per cent of young women), and "Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship" (38per cent of young men, 31 per cent of young women) (Harris et al., 2015). Virtually identical levels of endorsement of men's patriarchal control of relationships are evident in the *Man Box* survey, e.g. with 27 per cent of young men agreeing personally that "A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage".

Australian data also documents that young men have more violence-supportive attitudes than young women. Again among 16-24 year-olds, 43 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females agree that "Rape results from men not able to control their need for sex", and 22 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females agree that "Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'" (Harris et al., 2015).

Young men are less aware than young women of the harms of the Man Box among men themselves. US data finds that young men show lesser recognition than young women of the pressures on men of, and impacts of conformity to, masculinity. Among 15-24 year-olds in the US, young men are less likely than young women to believe that men experience pressure to conform to traditional ideas of masculine behavior. In turn, they are less likely to agree that societal pressure to act masculine prevents young men from expressing their emotion in healthy ways, limits the type of friendships men can have with other men, leads men to treat women as weaker and less capable, encourages sexually aggressive behavior, encourages violent behavior in general, or encourages homophobic attitudes (Jones et al., 2018).

Diversity among young men

One of *The Man Box* survey's key findings is that there is significant diversity in young men's own views of gender. Presented with 17 statements which represent a traditional or stereotypical view of manhood, some young men endorse many or most of these, while other young men reject them. This is likely to reflect differing and distinct clusters of ways of doing gender among young men.

Other research finds that there are distinct peer cultures among young men. Qualitative studies document that some young men have peer groups or social circles which are highly sexist and male-dominated, while other men have peer groups which are much more gender-egalitarian (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Some

young men move in groups with norms of a predatory male sexuality and sexual double standard, while in others these are largely absent and the men express ideals of companionate relationships (Mac An Ghaill, 2000; Wight, 1996). Recent quantitative research in the US makes similar points, that among young heterosexual men aged 18-25 there are diverse and distinct patterns of masculine identity and practice, with large variations in young men's endorsement of sexist masculinity and hostility towards women (Casey et al., 2016).

Diversity in young men's ideals and practices of manhood also is associated with other forms of social difference including ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Contemporary scholarship on masculinities documents that men's lives are shaped not only by gender but by intersections between gender and ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, region, and so on. *All* men are located in multiple relations of privilege and disadvantage (Flood, 1994-1995). Dominant cultural images of masculinity often involve a white masculinity. Popular culture places the lives of white, Anglo-Celtic men at centre stage, while those of men from non-English-speaking and indigenous backgrounds are marginalised or made invisible. Men from marginalised ethnic groups often are portrayed in derogatory ways in media (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). In turn, men from ethnic minority or indigenous groups may resist or protest such representations (Messner, 1997; Poynting, Noble, & Tabar, 2003).

Although the *Man Box* survey's sample is too small to examine this, other research among young men finds that men's attitudes towards gender and manhood do vary with ethnicity. US data documents that among young men, recognition of discrimination against women is lowest among white young men and higher among Hispanic and black young men (Jones et al., 2018).

Shifts in gender?

Norms and practices of gender are shifting among young people, as they are in Australian society in general. The Man Box data is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal so it cannot help us here, but other data does point to shifts over time in gender norms and relations. There are in Australia both signs of progress towards gender equality and of persistent gender injustices. For example, among young men aged 16-24, levels of attitudinal support for violence against women declined over 2009 to 2013 (Harris et al., 2015). Among young people there are some signs of a growing acceptance of gender equality, the blurring of gender boundaries, and the weakening of the homophobic policing of manhood (Flood, 2008).

However, not all the Australian news is good. Overall attitudes towards gender equality among young men aged 16-24 showed no improvement over 2009 to 2013 (Harris et al., 2015). Men's monopoly of political and economic decision-making has worsened over the past decade, with either no progress in, or even worsening in, women's representation in parliamentary politics and corporate boards. While ideals of fatherhood have shifted radically, the gap between men's and women's actual involvement in parenting and domestic work has barely changed. Progress towards gender equality in Australia is constrained by lack of political will, weak policy mechanisms, and the shrinking and silencing of feminist voices (Voola, Beavis, & Mundkur, 2017). And in Australia and internationally, there has been a resurgence of aggressively anti-feminist online cultures and patriarchal religious movements and a pushing back of the gains of the women's movements.

Impacts: Living with the Man Box

Conforming to the Man Box exacts a real cost, both among young men themselves and for the women and men around them.

The Man Box is bad for young men's health. Young men who endorse the traditional ideals of masculinity represented by the Man Box are more likely than other men to have poor mental health (including feeling depressed, hopeless, or suicidal), seek help from a narrow range of sources, and take part in risky behaviours (here, as assessed by involvement in binge drinking and traffic accidents).

This finding accords with a very large volume of other scholarship. In contexts where men are expected to be stoic, self-reliant, tough, brave, vigorous, daring, and aggressive, conformity to these norms is associated with poorer health, greater risk-taking, and lower help-seeking (Courtenay, 2000; James R. Mahalik, Burns, & Syzdek, 2007; O'Neil, 2008; Wong, Ho, Wang, & Miller, 2017). Men who endorse dominant norms of masculinity are more likely than other men to have greater health risks and engage in poorer health behaviours (Courtenay, 2000). A recent meta-analysis of 78 studies among close to 20,000 men documents that conformity to masculine norms is associated with negative mental health and particularly negative social functioning (Wong et al., 2017). Traditional masculinity also is implicated in particular areas of men's health, such as suicide (Coleman, 2015) and occupational deaths and injuries (Nielsen et al., 2015; Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015). Traditional masculinity informs men's participation in particular forms of risk-taking behaviour such as excessive alcohol use (De Visser & McDonnell, 2012; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Mullen, Watson, Swift, & Black, 2007; Peralta, 2007) and dangerous or aggressive driving (Krahé & Fenske, 2002; Roberts & Indermaur, 2005; Vick, 2003).

Men's conformity to traditional manhood also is bad for women and other men. One of the starkest findings in *The Man Box* study is that men with higher levels of conformity to traditional masculinity are far more likely to perpetrate violence, both against women and against other men. Those 'further in' the Man Box are much more likely to perpetrate violence, and much less likely to intervene in others' violence.

On violence against women, the study's behavioural measure addresses only sexual harassment, and only one form of this (sexual comments to an unknown woman in a public place or online in the last month), omitting sexual violence and relationship violence. Even only addressing this, the study finds that young men with above-average endorsement of the Man Box were six times more likely to have perpetrated this harassment than other men. Among young men with the highest levels of endorsement by quintile, 70 per cent had perpetrated harassment in the last month, compared to 3 per cent and 9 per cent of those in the first and second quintiles. There are corresponding patterns for bystander intervention: young men with higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity were far less likely to intervene in violence, and far more likely than other men to do nothing or even to join in.

Conformity to traditional masculinity is a well-documented risk factor for men's perpetration of violence against women. Focusing here on sexual violence, a meta-analysis found that patriarchal masculine ideologies (based for example on a desire to control or dominate women and a defensive and distrustful orientation towards women) were strong predictors of men's sexual aggression against women (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). Similarly, a review on rape perpetration found that key risk factors include gender-inequitable attitudes such as hostility towards women, desire for sexual dominance, belief in traditional gender roles, and greater acceptance of rape myths, and a sense of entitlement to women's bodies (Jewkes, 2012). A multi-country study in Asia and the Pacific found that men's partner violence and non-partner rape were "fundamentally related to unequal gender norms, power inequalities and dominant ideals of manhood that support violence and control over women" (Fulu et al., 2013, p. 14).

Contemporary research continues to bear out this finding. In a study methodologically similar to *The Man Box* study, among 18-25 year-old heterosexual men in the US, 8 per cent of the men showed high endorsement of rigidly traditional notions of masculinity and high hostility toward women, and these men also reported committing far more physical intimate partner violence (IPV), control IPV, and sexual assault than any other group (Casey et al., 2016).

Similarly, violence by men against *other men* is shaped in powerful ways by the Man Box. Some men use violence as a means to achieve or prove masculinity, particularly in front of male peers (Flood, 2007). Violent incidents in and outside pubs and clubs, for example, often represent contests over male honour and status (Polk, 1994). Masculinity is a significant risk factor in male-to-male violence, including in forms of violence also shaped by homophobia or racism (Whitehead, 2005). Indeed, men's violence against women and men's violence against other men are interrelated, with both fundamentally shaped by the norms and relations of masculinity (Fleming, Gruskin, Rojo, & Dworkin, 2015).

While the preceding discussion has discussed the 'Man Box' as if it were an undifferentiated whole, there are signs that some dimensions of traditional masculinity are more dangerous than others.

Which norm? Which outcome?

There is evidence that the impact of masculine conformity on men depends on *which* aspects of masculinity or the 'Man Box' are being conformed to. A recent meta-analysis of the impact of conformity to masculine norms on men's health drew on a scale comprising 11 distinct dimensions of masculine norms: winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, primacy of work, power over women, disdain for homosexuals, and pursuit of status. It found that masculinity's influence on mental health and help-seeking was particularly evident for three dimensions of these norms: self-reliance, playboy, and power over women. In contrast, primacy of work was not associated with any mental health outcomes measured, while risk-taking had associations with both negative and positive mental health (Wong et al., 2017). Similarly, a content analysis of studies assessing men's conformity to masculine norms found that particular masculine norms can have positive *or* negative associations with men's health (Gerdes & Levant, 2018).

Therefore, we must ask *which* masculine norms are influential, on positive and negative outcomes. Rather than assessing men's overall conformity to masculine norms in a generic sense, at times it may be more useful to focus on men's conformity to specific dimensions of masculine norms (Wong et al., 2017).

It also matters which *outcome* is the object of our concern. Particular masculine norms have more influence on some outcomes than others. For example, men's sexual violence against women is shaped more by the acceptance of aggression against women and negative, hostile beliefs about women than by other stereotypically masculine norms (Murnen et al., 2002).

What to do

There is an urgent and powerful need to promote change in dominant norms of masculinity in Australia. The Man Box – the social expectations that boys and men must be tough, aggressive, stoic, in charge, and so on – takes a high toll on both men and women. There are three key tasks here: (1) highlight the harms of the Man Box; (2) weaken its cultural grip; and (3) promote healthy and ethical alternatives.

1. Highlight the harms of the Man Box

The first task is to raise public awareness of the harms associated with traditional norms of masculinity. We need "a public discourse about masculinity that

illuminates the price of blindly consuming masculine hegemony and raises consciousness so that boys and men can become the authors of their lives" (Kimmel & Davis, 2011, p. 12). The good news is that conversations about these are already underway, for example in media and popular discussions of 'toxic masculinity' (Flood, 2018b). There is also resistance and backlash among men to critical scrutiny of men and masculinities, and this is both predictable and preventable (Flood, Dragiewicz, & Pease, 2018).

As well as raising awareness in the community at large, we must also sensitise particular areas of public health, welfare, and service provision to the harms of the Man Box. Given the compelling evidence that traditional masculinity is implicated in key health and social issues such as mental health, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, male-male public violence, and a host of other problems, efforts in these areas should include attention to masculinity. Many of the troubling behaviours with which organisations and governments wrestle, from campus sexual harassment to risky driving to suicide, are shaped by masculine social norms and relations.

Efforts to raise awareness of the costs of traditional masculinity must be careful also to acknowledge the fact of male privilege. While the Man Box constrains men's physical and emotional health, it also brings forms of privilege or unfair advantage for men, and it imposes deep costs among women (Flood, 2018b). If we focus only on harms to men, we miss the systemic gender inequalities which continue to characterise Australian society. These inequalities are sustained in large part by men's attitudes and behaviours, and the *Man Box* survey finds disturbingly high levels of endorsement of male privilege among young men.

In appealing to men to move away from the Man Box in their own lives, therefore, we must address both privilege and disadvantage. Our appeals must be based on both ethical obligation – that men have an ethical obligation to let go of unfair privileges and to support gender justice – and personal self-interest – that men themselves will benefit by stepping away from the Man Box. Internationally, there is a well-established field of work engaging men in progress towards gender equality (Flood, 2015). This field is practised at balancing these different appeals, although there is ongoing debate about how best to do this (Flood, 2018a; ICRW, 2018; MenEngage Alliance, 2016), and Australian efforts would benefit from its experience.

2. Weaken the cultural grip of the Man Box

How can we weaken the normative force of the Man Box, the grip of that narrow set of ideals on the Australian social imagination? Ideals of manhood already are changing in Australia, in large part in positive ways, but how can we accelerate progressive change? Four strategies are particularly valuable.

Highlight the gap between masculine social norms and men's own ideals

Perhaps the most important way to undermine the Man Box's hold on gender norms is to highlight that the Man Box has far less personal support among men than many men think.

Young men in Australia do largely agree that the Man Box is an accurate representation of societal expectations for men, with close to half or more than half agreeing that this is the case for 11 of the 17 statements defining traditional masculinity. At the same time, young men's own endorsement of these statements is considerably lower. None of the 17 statements receives majority support, and only two receive support above 40%.

Other research finds that men routinely misperceive other men's gender-related attitudes and behaviours. Men *over*estimate other men's sexist and violence-supportive attitudes, comfort with sexist, coercive and derogatory comments about and behaviour towards girls and women, and willingness to use force to have sex. Men *under*estimate other men's discomfort with sexism and violence, willingness to intervene to prevent a sexual assault, and desires for social justice (Berkowitz, 2011).

Such misperceptions feed into both 'pluralistic ignorance' or 'false consensus'. In the first, the majority of men who in fact reject patriarchal norms of manhood may falsely believe themselves to be in the minority. They therefore go along with sexist and violent attitudes and behaviours, believing mistakenly that they are in the minority in opposing them. In the second, men who use violent and violence-supportive behaviours continue to do so because they believe falsely that they are in the majority. They incorrectly interpret other men's silence as approval, thus feeling emboldened to express and act violently towards women (Berkowitz, 2002). In fact, this false consensus is strongest among those who engage in the behaviour themselves (Berkowitz, 2011).

A key strategy therefore for undermining the Man Box is a 'social norms' approach, closing the gap between men's perceptions of other men's agreement with sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement (Flood, 2018a). The evidence is that such efforts can correct men's misperceptions, producing positive changes in men's attitudes and behaviours (Berkowitz, 2011).

'Telling men the truth about each other' is an important step (Berkowitz, 2011). At the same time, telling men how other men think and feel is not enough by itself, particularly as this survey shows that troublingly large proportions of young men endorse some of the most problematic elements of the Man Box, including men's control or domination of women. We must also work to shift many men's own ideals and practices of gender.

Turn up the volume on diversity and change among men

The second way to weaken the grip of the Man Box is to turn up the volume on the facts of diversity and change in manhood. We must highlight the reality that there is real diversity among boys and men in their practices and ideals of gender, as the *Man Box* survey has documented. And more than this, we must affirm and celebrate diverse forms of manhood, identity, and gender.

The quantitative data in the *Man Box* survey tells us that young men vary greatly in their attitudes to manhood. Qualitative data confirms and extends this, telling richer stories of men's diverse relations to traditional masculinity. Among heterosexual men for example, some live in ways which disrupt traditional, heteronormative constructions of manhood (Flood, 2008; Heasley, 2005). Some boys and men simply cannot 'do' traditional masculinity: they are poor at the behaviours which are widely regarded as markers of manhood, such as sport or heterosexual sexual conquest. Some boys and men live in the shadows of traditional masculinity: they do enough straight masculinity to pass or get by, they dwell in spaces free of the bluntest forms of masculinity, and they have a sense of being 'different', although they do not publicly question manhood. Some men 'break the rules' of manhood by publicly questioning its sexist and homophobic norms and advocating for feminism and gay and lesbian rights. Some heterosexual men 'flirt' with dress, friendships, scenes, or other behaviours associated with being gay. Some, indeed, blur the boundaries between straight and gay, male and female (Heasley, 2005).

In short, there is a diversity, a spectrum, of performances of gender among boys and men. We should turn up the volume on this (Bem, 1995), working towards what one could call 'gender multiculturalism', a healthy diversity of ways of being male. We should note those aspects of men's experiences which do not fit dominant narratives of masculinity and highlight 'counter stories' of men's lives and experiences which have been disregarded or marginalised (McGann, 2014).

We must also turn up the volume on change, on the fact of progressive shifts in boys' and men's attitudes and behaviours. This is not a rose-coloured story of uniform and inevitable progress towards gender equality. But highlighting the fact of men's growing support for gender equity and egalitarian manhood will give men hope. It tells men that they are on the right side of history.

Engage men and boys in critical conversations about manhood

Change in norms of manhood will not take place unless boys and men themselves start to question them. We must involve boys and men in discussion of and critical reflection on the Man Box – through structured, facilitated sessions as part of gender diversity and violence prevention education in schools, campuses, and workplaces; via social marketing campaigns on men and gender; in everyday conversations between fathers and sons; and in a host of other ways. Let us invite men and boys to embrace identities of their own making, rather than comforming to singular and constraining masculine scripts. And we can draw here on a wealth of insight on how effectively to engage boys and men (Flood, 2018a).

There is a growing consensus in the 'engaging men' field that work with men must be gender-transformative – it must seek to end gender inequalities and create more gender-equitable relations. A series of reviews document that gender-transformative approaches are more likely to make change, including in outcomes such as HIV and STI transmission, violence perpetration, sexual risk behaviour, and gendered norms and attitudes (Barker, Ricardo, & Nascimento, 2007; Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013; Fleming, Lee, & Dworkin, 2014). A gender-transformative approach is defined by an explicit focus at least in part on a critical examination of gender-related norms and expectations – particularly those related to masculinity – and on increasing gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours, although the term's use is uneven (Dworkin et al., 2013).

Challenge the sources of the Man Box

The fourth strategy for weakening the cultural grip of the Man Box is bolder: challenge it at its source. Dominant ideals of masculinity do not materialise out of thin air, but are produced and reproduced, by people, institutions, policies, and other social forces. There are places in Australia where efforts to promote or defend traditional, patriarchal ideals of masculinity seem particularly energetic: some sporting codes and clubs, some parts of the military, some university residences, some faith institutions, some forms of media, some parts of political parties, and so on. I couch this cautiously, saying 'seem' and 'some', as there is little by way of hard data. Nevertheless, to undermine traditional norms of masculinity, we must work with, and sometimes against the view of, those groups and institutions which propagate them.

It may be particularly important to have men speak out against the Man Box. Men's conformity to traditional masculinity is policed and enforced more by other men than by women. For example, a recent study among US young men aged 11-24 found that it was men more than women who relayed the message "Man up" or "Be a man" to young men. More widely, many of these young men saw it as acceptable to mirror their fathers' and male relatives' treatment of women (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2018). In addition, men's endorsement of masculine norms is influenced far more by their perceptions of other men's beliefs than of women's beliefs, as studies among male university students find (Berkowitz, 2011). Finally, there are signs that when being given education about violence and sexism, men listen more readily to men than women and judge men as less

biased and more competent than women (Flood, 2018a). While these patterns are rooted in sexism, they raise questions about how best to reach and engage men.

At the same time, women's voices and experiences can be powerful and inspiring influences on men. Various studies find that many men's initial sensitisation to the issue of violence against women, for example, was fostered in particular by listening *to women* and women's experience (Casey & Smith, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012). There is great value in men listening to women, and centering women's voices and leadership holds this work accountable.

3. Promote alternatives to the Man Box among boys and men

The final task is to offer boys and men alternatives to the Man Box. If the Man Box is sexist, toxic, ugly, and dangerous, then what should take its place?

Whatever terms we use for desirable alternatives to the Man Box, we must offer some kind of alternative. Boys and men cannot be what they cannot see. Young men who work to end sexism and violence typically can easily identify themselves in terms of what they do *not* want to be (misogynists, rapists, and so on), but they may be less practised at imagining what they *do* what to be (Martin, 2009). We need visible, public models of the forms of masculinities or selfhoods we desire.

It is not hard to identify the values and traits which represent a progressive alternative to the Man Box: gender equality, non-violence, respect, empathy, nurturance, and so on. But how should we describe these? One term visible in work with men is 'healthy masculinity' (Abebe et al., 2018; Petronzio, 2015). Framing the goal as 'healthy masculinity' is accessible, palatable, and allows recognition of harm to the bearers of unhealthy masculinity *and* the people around them. It connects to, and may gain traction from, established public health and health promotion approaches. Yet the term has risks. It may focus only on the impacts of masculinity on men's own health and neglect its embeddedness in wider gender inequalities. Other terms I have seen, therefore, include feminist masculinity, democratic manhood, and 'just men'.

More fundamentally, why talk about healthy *masculinity* at all? Part of the problem of the Man Box is the binary system of gender categories itself. Part of the problem is men's investments in male identity *per se* and the pressure men feel to prove themselves *as men*. If we frame desirable ways of being only in terms of 'masculinity', we leave these untouched or even intensify them. We also risk the essentialist assumption that certain qualities are available only to men and not also to women. An alternative is the promotion of (feminist) androgyny, combining virtues and desirable traits traditionally associated with women with virtues and desirable traits traditionally associated with men. An 'androgyny' strategy involves dissolving the Man Box, such that men are free to choose from among a variety of desirable traits and behaviours, including ones which were stereotypically feminine *or* masculine (Almassi, 2015). Part of our work should be breaking down gender boundaries and hierarchies, lessening the significance of biological sex differences in social life, and encouraging men and boys to disinvest in masculinity – to care less about whether they are perceived as male or masculine.

There is still a case, however, for using notions of masculinity (whether gender-equitable, positive, healthy, feminist, or other) in our work with men and boys, at least as a stage or mid-point. This may give men and boys more space to move away from stereotypical masculinity and closer to qualities socially coded as feminine. Using such notions, rather than generic, ethical selfhood, may help men adopting gender-equitable lives to feel connected to other men, to feel a sense of community or solidarity in their efforts at change.

Whatever vision we have for what men and boys should do and be, first, it must be *feminist*. It must be clearly critical of patriarchal and unjust practices, and based on alternate norms and practices compatible with feminist values and commitments (Almassi, 2015). Second, it must be *diverse and multiple*: able to accommodate and celebrate diverse, positive ways of being and acting. We do not need a new 'man box', a new but narrowly prescriptive vision of manhood. Third, if we frame the desirable goal for men and boys in terms of 'masculinity', it must be *non-essentialist*: avoiding the assumption that particular qualities are available only to men and boys.

We must start with men and boys wherever they are (Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe, & Baker, 2007). We must start with men's existing understandings of gender and manhood and their existing commitments to healthy and ethical ways of being, as weak or ambivalent or non-existent as these may be. We must speak to men's experiences and address their concerns (Casey, 2010).

While meeting men where they are, we cannot leave them there. We must invite men into processes of personal and collective change. The *Man Box* survey shows that large numbers of young men support gender equality, at least in some domains, and this provides invaluable leverage for building gender justice. Let us build on these strengths, on the positives already visible in many men's lives. And, let us combine this with a robust critique of the Man Box, of the limitations it places on men and boys and the systemic gender inequalities it sustains.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

The social pressures around what it means to be a 'real man' are strong in Australia, and they impact on the lives of most young men from a very young age. The findings in this research correspond with those from the US, UK and Mexico. The pressures relating to what it means to be a man are everywhere in society and are reinforced and influenced by the closest relationships of young men – families, partners and friends.

Responses to the Man Box survey and focus groups show that perceptions of these social pressures differ across the community and that they may be changing over time. That said, social pressures around being strong, being the income earner, and hypersexuality appear to remain.

It is clear that there is a difference between how young men perceive these pressures and their personal agreement with them. Young men held more progressive views on what it is to be a 'real man' than what they believe society is telling them. Looking at the personal views of young men there is a strong rejection, among the majority, of hypersexuality and the use of violence.

However, there is a substantial minority average of around 30 per cent of young men who endorse most of the Man Box rules. Of particular concern are the high levels of personal endorsement of rules that indicate gender inequitable views, and control of women. It is important to note the possibility that greater numbers of young men may comply with these norms in their everyday lives than they let on in the survey when asked of their personal views.

Consistent with the Man Box Study in the US, UK and Mexico, we find that those inside the Man Box fare more poorly on a range of indicators of mental health and wellbeing, negative feelings, risk-taking, including drinking and traffic accidents, and are more likely to be the victim or perpetrator of violence, and the perpetrator of sexual harassment of women.

The more closely young men adhere to the norms of the Man Box, the more likely they are to experience these negative feelings and behaviours. In a finding that differs from the US and UK, there is no statistically significant difference in levels of life satisfaction and positive affect among those inside and outside the Man Box.

There is a diversity of experiences and views among young men when it comes to norms on being a 'real man', with some evidence that those most outside the Man Box may experience poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes. But it is clear that those who most strongly endorse the Man Box rules report the poorest outcomes on mental health, experiencing/perpetrating bullying violence, perpetrating sexual harassment, drinking, and car accidents.

A call to action

These findings should prompt efforts to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the norms of the Man Box. If successful, these efforts have the potential to deliver benefits to society, as well as young men themselves in terms of health, wellbeing and safety.

Across all levels of society there must be a focus on building awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful impacts, weakening their cultural grip, and promoting positive alternatives. In Chapter VI, Associate Professor Michael Flood outlines in detail a framework for social change to achieve this.

At the individual level, everyone (both men and women) can take action by talking about the pressures of the Man Box with the boys and men in their lives, and by modelling positive alternatives to the Man Box norms in front of boys and young men.

The following recommendations are informed by this research and the analysis of Associate Professor Dr Michael Flood, including the framework for action that he identified in order to break down the man box norms. The recommendations contain actions that, if implemented, will begin to unpack the Man Box norms at the societal, community and individual level.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: that the Commonwealth, state and local governments ensure that relevant policies explicitly recognise the harmful impacts that the Man Box norms can have.

Programs and initiatives under these policies should focus on ways boys and men can live positive alternatives to the Man Box norms. This should be guided by a public health approach and be part of policies and initiatives in the following areas:

- mental health and wellbeing;
- alcohol harm reduction;
- road safety;
- crime and violence prevention;
- and the prevention of family violence.

Recommendation 2: that governments, philanthropy, business and community groups partner in developing, testing and evaluating new interventions focused on:

- building awareness, understanding and skills of family and peers (role models) to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the rules of the Man Box;
- engaging young men in settings where they are (education, work, sport, community) and providing activities/interventions that support them to live positive alternatives to the Man Box norms.

Recommendation 3: that government, academia and organisations working with boys and men should partner in further detailed research into the attitudes and behaviours of Australian men, particularly:

- where social pressures around masculinity are generated and reinforced;
- the experiences of those outside the Man Box, to understand the influence of social pressures around masculinity on their lives;
- the interactions between Man Box rules and social harms including body image, online bullying, alcohol and drug use, and violence against women;
- intersectional experiences and interactions with Man Box rules, and how these might operate differently within diverse communities.

Recommendation 4: that organisations working with boys and men come together to share knowledge and build capability in undertaking work that promotes positive alternatives to the Man Box. This could include practitioner networks and forums, as well as new tools for working with boys and men.

Recommendation 5: that efforts under the recommendations outlined above be pro-feminist and align with existing women's rights processes; are non-discriminatory and accommodating of diversity; and engage men from a positive perspective.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

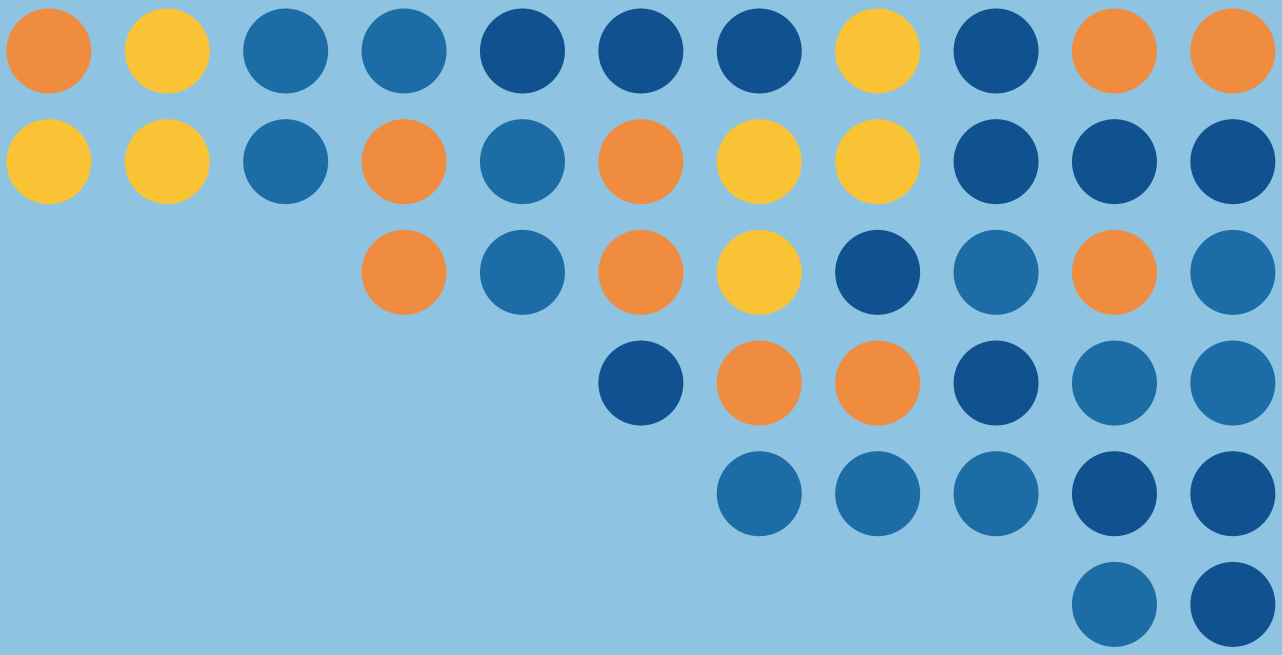
Overall sample size	1000
Age	
18-24	50.8%
25-30	49.2%
Relationship status	
Single	44.3%
Dating casually	9.2%
Dating one person exclusively	13.8%
Living with a partner	18.8%
Polyamorous relationship	0.8%
Separated but not divorced	0.3%
Married	12.4%
Other	0.3%
Highest level of education	
Any/some secondary school	31.9%
Any/some vocational training (apprenticeships, certificates, diplomas)	29.2%
Any/some non-vocational tertiary degree	38.2%
Employment	
Employed full-time	41.4%
Employed part-time	18.6%
Unemployed	23.9%
Student	52.2%
Freelance/consultant/contractor	3.1%
Other	1.1%
Indigenous Australians	
Aboriginal	6.1%
Torres Strait Islander	0.6%
Sexuality	
Heterosexual	87.3%
Homosexual	5.8%
Bisexual	5.7%
Other	1.3%
Gender	
Man	98.6%
Transgender man	1.2%
Other	0.3%
Religion	
No religion	56%
Catholic	18.5%
Anglican	2.7%
Uniting Church	1%

Presbyterian	0.8%
Buddhism	3.6%
Islam	3.5%
Greek Orthodox	0.9%
Baptist	1.4%
Hinduism	4.3%
Other	7.3%
Country of birth	
Australia	76.6%
Overseas	23.4%

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES	
Location	**Respondents**
Brisbane	9.9%
Queensland other than Brisbane	5.3%
Sydney	19.6%
NSW other than Sydney	6.9%
Melbourne	31.5%
Victoria other than Melbourne	8.2%
Adelaide	5.4%
South Australia other than Adelaide	1.1%
Perth	7%
Western Australia other than Perth	1%
Hobart	1%
Tasmania other than Hobart	0.6%
Darwin	0.6%
Northern Territory other than Darwin	.2%
Australian Capital Territory	1.6%
Total metropolitan	**76.8%**
Total rural	**23.2%**

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES (PAST 12 MONTHS)

	Yes	No
Played in Sports Team	30.5%	69.5%
Volunteered for Sports Club	8.5%	91.5%
Volunteered with a community group/ organisations	12.2%	87.8%



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society