

## What messages do Australian men perceive about masculinity, and which messages do they agree with?

The “Man Box” describes a set of beliefs within and across Australian society that place pressure on men to act in a certain way. The Man Box consists of 19 “rules” that represent a rigid, outdated and often harmful template for how a “real man” should think, feel, and behave. As part of our 2018 and 2024 Man Box studies, we asked men in Australia whether they feel societal pressure to follow these rules, and if they personally agree with these rules.

In both studies, a significant number of Australian men aged 18 to 45 told us they feel social pressure to conform with the rules of the Man Box. On average, in 2024 almost

four in every ten men surveyed felt pressure to conform to the Man Box rules. More than half felt pressure to “act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside”.

While, on average, in 2024 almost 40% of men aged 18 to 45 told us they perceived pressure to follow the Man Box rules, only one in four said they personally agreed with Man Box rules.

It is heartening that many men are rejecting Man Box rules to embrace more flexible definitions of masculinity. However, it is also a concern that on average a quarter of Australian men still agree with a rigid and often harmful template.



For more information about The Man Box 2024, and to download the full report, visit [www.themanbox.com.au](http://www.themanbox.com.au).



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## Comparison of 18- to 30-year-old and 31- to 45-year-old men's perception of social pressure to conform with Man Box rules

Percentage of survey respondents who reported that they agreed or strongly agreed they felt social pressure, by Man Box rule

Man Box pillar	Man Box rule	18- to 30-year-old men	31- to 45-year-old men	Percentage point difference
1. Self-sufficiency	A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	40%	35%	5
	Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	34%	32%	2
2. Acting tough	A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	44%	44%	0
	Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	50%	55%	-5
3. Physical attractiveness	It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	41%	43%	-2
	A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	33%	28%	5
	Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	37%	31%	6
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.	28%	26%	2
	A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	33%	28%	5
	In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	42%	39%	3
5. Homophobia and Transphobia	A gay guy is not a "real man".	35%	33%	2
	A transgender man is not a "real man".	42%	48%	-6
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.	31%	27%	4
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.	33%	30%	3
6. Hypersexuality	A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can.	35%	35%	0
	A "real man" would never say no to sex.	42%	39%	3
7. Aggression and control	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	34%	24%	10
	In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	39%	40%	-1
	If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	35%	33%	2

\*Data for this study was collected in 2023, and the report published in 2024.

## Comparison of 18- to 30-year-old and 31- to 45-year-old men's agreement with Man Box rules

Percentage of survey respondents who reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with each Man Box rule

Man Box pillar	Man Box rule	18- to 30-year-old men	31- to 45-year-old men	Percentage point difference
1. Self-sufficiency	A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	23%	19%	4
	Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	28%	24%	4
2. Acting tough	A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	30%	27%	3
	Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	42%	41%	1
3. Physical attractiveness	It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	35%	34%	1
	A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	23%	17%	6
	Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	32%	24%	8
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.	18%	13%	5
	A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	19%	11%	8
	In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	31%	22%	9
5. Homophobia and Transphobia	A gay guy is not a "real man".	25%	19%	6
	A transgender man is not a "real man".	39%	43%	-4
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.	23%	17%	6
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.	22%	17%	5
6. Hypersexuality	A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can.	21%	16%	5
	A "real man" would never say no to sex.	23%	17%	6
7. Aggression and control	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	22%	11%	11
	In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	24%	20%	4
	If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	22%	24%	-2

\*Data for this study was collected in 2023, and the report published in 2024.





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