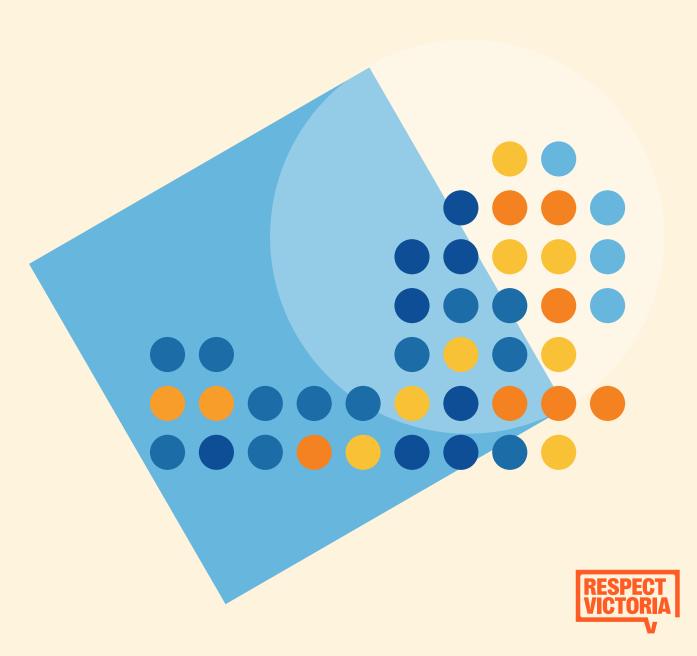
# The Man Box 2024

**Re-examining** what it means to be a man in Australia



A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Supported by Respect Victoria

### **Acknowledgements**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We also acknowledge the women, allies and feminist organisations who have worked tirelessly for decades to prevent violence and achieve gender equality, and who continue to lead our sector today. This report, and the work of The Men's Project, would not be possible without the progress made by these committed trailblazers.

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### **Executive summary**

It's been over five years since we published The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia (The Men's Project and Flood, 2018). This was the first Australian study to explore the association between attitudes to masculine stereotypes and the behaviours of men aged 18 to 30. The Man Box study was followed by the Unpacking the Man Box report, released in 2020, which drew on the same data to complete more detailed analyses of the impact of "Man Box" rules, controlling for demographic variables such as level of education, occupation, where men live, and sexuality.

The Man Box 2024 study sets out to update and expand on the findings of the 2018 and 2020 studies, and see how the results have changed over time. In line with these previous studies, it considers whether Australian men perceive social messages that a "real man" thinks and acts a certain way, whether men personally agree with these messages, and also explores whether men's attitudes predict a range of behaviours and life outcomes.

The Man Box 2024 study expands the age group under consideration, adding men aged 31- to 45-years-old to the younger cohort (18 to 30) in both the survey and focus group samples. This study also broadens the scope of the attitudes and behaviours measured, including additional survey questions on men's attitudes towards, and use of, violence – in particular violence against women. In addition, the questions on risk-taking behaviours have been expanded to include illicit drug use, problem gambling, and dangerous behaviour when under the influence of alcohol and illicit drugs.

This study was conducted by surveying more than 3,500 Australian men¹ between the ages of 18 and 45, using an online survey of a representative and random sample of men from across the country. Seven focus groups were also held in order to hear more about the experiences of Australian men, and to provide additional insight into the survey results.

### **Key findings**

The "Man Box" describes a set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to act in a certain way. The Man Box consists of 19 rules that represent a socially dominant form of masculinity. These "rules" include statements such as "Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside" and "In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women". These rules are organised into seven thematic pillars. This section outlines the four key findings from this work.

### Finding I.

### Almost four in ten men feel pressure to conform to Man Box rules<sup>1</sup>

A significant minority (37%) of 18- to 30-year-old men perceive pressure to conform to Man Box rules. This pressure was felt most strongly for the rules in the "Acting tough" pillar. These two rules require men to always act strong, and to fight back. Almost half (50% and 44% respectively) of 18- to 30-year-old men reported that they were told this is how a "real man" behaves.

The other social pressures felt by more than four in ten men were those requiring men to be the primary income earner; reject trans men's masculinity; never say no to sex; look good; and keep their worries, fears and problems to themselves. Alarmingly, many of the Man Box rules where men perceived pressure to conform were those that may be harmful to those around them. Four in ten men (39%) perceive social messages that men should have the final say about decisions in their relationship. More than a third of men (35%) believe that society says men are entitled to know where their partner is at all times and a similar proportion perceive that society expects men to "Use violence to get respect if necessary" (34%) and avoid responsibility for household chores (33%).

The older age group (31- to 45-year-olds) reported experiencing slightly lower levels of social pressure to conform to Man Box rules than the younger men. Across all Man Box rules, on average, 22% of older men reported they agreed with Man Box rules compared to 26% of younger men. The most notable difference was for the Man Box rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary". Of the older age group, 24% said they felt social pressure to conform to this rule, compared to 34% of younger men.

<sup>1</sup> Average agreement for each Man Box rule, averaged across all Man Box rules.



### 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 each Man Box rule

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

### Finding II.

### A quarter of Australian men aged 18 to 30 personally agree with Man Box rules

On average, a quarter (26%) of 18- to 30-year-old men surveyed for this study personally agreed with Man Box rules. While this is a significant minority, in good news, the majority of men surveyed didn't agree with these rules, highlighting the diversity that exists in relation to attitudes towards masculinity. However, there was substantial variation in these results, with more men agreeing with some rules than others. There was also some variation by demographic factors. For example, men aged 18-30 who most strongly endorse the Man Box are more likely to identify as being heterosexual and religious.

The Man Box rules with the strongest endorsement are those requiring emotional stoicism and self-sufficiency — that guys should always act strong (42% of men agreed), fight back when pushed around (30%), and figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help (28%). Other rules with substantial endorsement were that trans men are not "real men" (39% of men agreed), that guys need to look good to be successful (35%) but shouldn't fuss about their appearance (32%), and that men should be the ones to provide for their family financially (31%).

The rules with the lowest personal agreement were those about boys and men not needing to do household chores (18% agreed boys shouldn't be taught to cook, sew, clean and care for younger children and 19% agreed men shouldn't have to do household chores), having as many sexual partners as possible (21% agreed), and not being friends with trans and gender diverse people (22%).

Men in the 31- to 45-year-old age group reported marginally lower personal agreement with Man Box rules than the younger men. Across all Man Box rules, on average 22% of older men reported they agreed with Man Box rules compared to 26% of younger men. Again, the most notable difference was for the Man Box rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary", which only 11% of the older age group personally agreed with compared to 22% of younger men.



### 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%	
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	A gay guy is not a "real man".	25% 19%	6
transphobia	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

### Finding III.

Men who most strongly agreed with Man Box rules were more likely to have perpetrated violence, hold violence-supportive attitudes, and have consumed violent pornography

Men were asked about their perpetration of, or attitudes towards, various forms of violence, in particular violence against women. The results were both stark and concerning.

Men who most strongly agreed with Man Box rules were more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes, more likely to have used violence in their intimate relationships, and more likely to have perpetrated bullying and sexual harassment. They were also less likely to be bothered if they witnessed violence, and less likely to say they would intervene to prevent violence.

In fact, compared to men who least endorsed Man Box norms, men who most strongly endorsed Man Box norms were more than:

 35 times more likely to have frequently perpetrated verbal sexual harassment against a woman or girl in a public place

- 17 times more likely to express violencesupportive attitudes
- **11 times more likely** to have frequently perpetrated verbal, online, or physical bullying
- Eight times more likely to have perpetrated sexual violence against an intimate partner (including 28 times more likely to have used fear to coerce a partner into having sex)
- Six times more likely to be unconcerned witnessing a male friend verbally abusing their female partner
- Five times more likely to have perpetrated physical violence against an intimate partner (including 17 times more likely to have hit a partner with a fist or something else that could hurt them)
- Five times more likely to disbelieve experiences of gender inequality
- Four times more likely to be unconcerned witnessing male-to-male violence, and
- Three times more likely to have viewed violent pornography at least once a week.

Proportion of men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintile, 18- to 30-year-old men

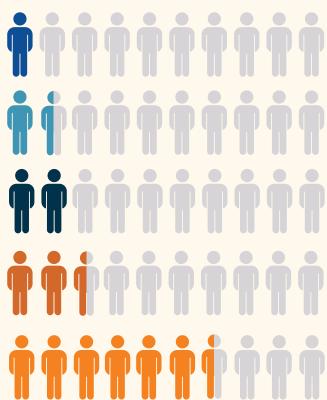
**12%** of men with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules (quintile 1) have perpetrated intimate partner violence

**15%** of men in quintile 2 have perpetrated intimate partner violence

**22%** of men in quintile 3 have perpetrated intimate partner violence

**25%** of men in quintile 4 have perpetrated intimate partner violence

66% of men with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules (quintile 5) have perpetrated intimate partner violence



### Finding IV.

### The men who most strongly agree with Man Box rules have a range of poor health outcomes

Men were asked a range of questions that provide insight into their mental health and risk-taking behaviours. The link between agreement with Man Box rules and poor health was not as stark and consistent as the link between Man Box endorsement and violence. However, Man Box beliefs do appear to be associated with some worrying health outcomes for men themselves.

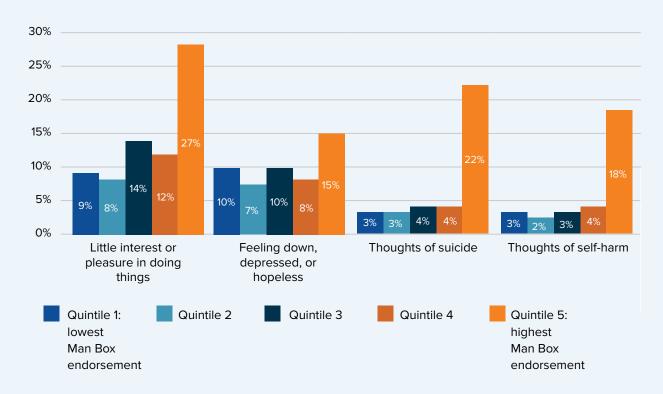
In particular, when men who most strongly endorse Man Box rules (quintile 5) were compared with men with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules, they were:

 Eight times more likely to have had thoughts of suicide nearly every day

- Six times more likely to have had thoughts of selfharm nearly every day
- Six times more likely to have been displaying signs
  of problem gambling in the previous six months
  (in fact, more than half of the men with the
  strongest agreement with Man Box rules exhibited
  signs of problem gambling)
- Three times more likely to have experienced little interest or pleasure in doing things nearly every day in the previous two weeks
- Two and a half times more likely to have engaged in a potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated in the previous six months, and
- Almost twice as likely to have consumed alcohol at least five days a week over the previous 12 months.

### Proportion of men experiencing frequent symptoms of poor mental health, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who experienced the symptom nearly every day in the two weeks prior to the survey



### Recommendations

It is clear that the Man Box is having profound impacts on life in Australia today. The following recommendations are informed by this study, as well as by the violence-prevention, early intervention, and advocacy work of The Men's Project. They relate to four main areas:

- I. Policy change
- II. Workforce capacity building
- III. Community awareness raising
- IV. Future research.

In outlining these recommendations, we use the term "healthier masculinities" to refer to work that increases awareness of the harms of the Man Box, highlights the diversity that exists in relation to attitudes towards masculinity, and promotes positive alternatives to the Man Box (Tyler, 2022). Taken together, implementing these recommendations would go some way towards weakening the cultural grip of the Man Box and thus improve the well-being of all genders.

### Recommendation area 1: Policy change

There has been significant policy progress in recent years. The Federal Government's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 explicitly acknowledges the importance of supporting men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive relationships with their male peers. At a state and territory government level, the approaches taken to violence prevention and early intervention vary, although we have seen an increasing emphasis placed on engaging men and boys in violence prevention efforts. A good example of the type of leadership that can be provided by government agencies is the Healthier Masculinities Framework for Gender Equality, a framework published in 2020 by VicHealth (Victoria's health promotion agency) to guide health promotion with men and boys.

Leadership in violence prevention and/or the well-being of men and boys does not need to be limited to agencies with explicit responsibility for these areas. For instance, Victoria Police's Equal, Safe and Strong: Victoria Police's 10-year Gender Equality Strategy acknowledges the harmful impacts of stereotypical masculine norms, stating, "Strict adherence to gender stereotypes has negatively impacted police culture and amplified inequality ... The less stereotypical masculine traits and gendered stereotyping, the less gendered workplace harm" (Victoria Police, 2020).

While there has been some progress in recognising the importance of engaging men and boys in violence prevention, and the need to include a healthier masculinities approach when addressing a number of social and economic problems including men's health, there are still significant opportunities to strengthen both policy foundations and associated implementation.

#### We recommend that government:

- I. Develop strategy: Every state and territory government should develop a violence prevention and early intervention strategy which foregrounds working with men and boys, including reducing attachment to harmful rigid ideas about what it means to be a man and related attitudes that are linked to the use of violence.
- II. **Develop an action plan:** Informed by the lessons learnt during the forthcoming Healthy Masculinities project trial, the Federal Government should develop a National Healthier Masculinities Action Plan that is aligned with The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032. The Action Plan should set out how healthier masculinities will be embedded into violence prevention and early intervention work with men and boys, including how healthier masculinities relates to other violence prevention approaches. This should include establishing a set of standards based on available evidence of what is expected from programs seeking to deliver healthier masculinities work.
- III. Review policy frameworks: The Federal Government, working closely with state and territory governments, should commission an independent national review of relevant policy frameworks to determine where and how a greater focus on promoting healthier masculinities could be incorporated (e.g., violence prevention, mental health, gambling, alcohol and other drugs, healthy eating, criminal justice, social procurement, child and family services, occupational health and safety, road safety). This review should include thorough community consultation to build an understanding of what "healthier masculinities" means, taking an intersectional and trauma-informed approach.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Workforces" refers to anyone in a position to positively influence gender norms in the course of their work, which could include any workforce. However, we recommend focusing on workforces in the following sectors: education and training, health, child and family services, justice, sport, local government, and communications (Family Safety Victoria, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> An example of this type of campaign is https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/campaigns/respect-starts-with-a-conversation.

### Recommendation area 2: Workforce capacity building

There is increasing recognition that workforces need support in order to understand and confidently challenge stereotypical gender norms. These workforces can positively influence men and boys every day in settings where they learn, work and play. This has been demonstrated through The Men's Project's work in Victoria where, with support from the Victorian Government, we have worked on a project with staff across 60 schools to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to promote healthier masculinities in their school communities as part of implementing the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships initiative.

Building on emerging work such as this, we recommend that:

- I. Government invests in workforce capacity building: State and territory governments should focus on workforce capacity building to promote healthier masculinities in sectors where there are significant opportunities to reduce the harms of the Man Box. The sectors include (but are not limited to) education and training, health, child and family services, justice, sport, local government, and communications.
- II. Tertiary education curricula include healthier masculinities content: Healthier masculinities content and capability building should be included in higher education curricula for workforces such as teachers, social workers, and psychologists, to support them to effectively model healthier alternatives to stereotypical masculine norms and support the populations they work with to adopt healthier and more flexible masculinities.

### Recommendation area 3: Community awareness raising

In the face of increasing awareness of online content reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes, there is a risk that the proliferation of this online content far surpasses the impact of an approach which relies on separate programs delivered to specific audiences (e.g. workshops with teachers, social workers, or sports coaches; curriculum delivered directly to adolescents). To address this, whole-of-population approaches such as public campaigns should be funded alongside primary prevention and early intervention programs. Additionally, greater attention should be given to ensuring diverse masculinities are represented in public media and campaigns not directly related to healthier masculinities (road safety or healthy eating campaigns, for instance).

The funding required to achieve the required reach through programs alone is not likely to be obtainable and, depending on program design and setting, there is also a risk that program participants are predominately those who are already aware of the Man Box and its associated harms. To mitigate against these risks, we recommend that:

- III. Governments fund population-level campaigns:

  Federal, state and territory governments should provide funding to agencies which specialise in the primary prevention of violence and/or in health promotion to run population-level, evidence-based campaigns to promote healthier masculinities. These campaigns should be run in collaboration with other primary prevention initiatives that work with schools, community groups, and workplaces.
- IV. Place-based approaches are funded: Funders adopt a place-based approach in which community consortiums lead healthy masculinities work with multiple and reinforcing approaches across schools, sports clubs, community service organisations and local councils.



### Recommendation area 4: Future research

As the Australian National Research Agenda to End Violence against Women and Children (ANRA) 2023–2028 outlines, there are a number of areas where further research is necessary to understand more about how to ensure that healthier masculinities are widespread. It is also important that research into the impact of masculine gender norms on behaviour is ongoing, so that prevention and early intervention programs are informed by up-to-date evidence on what promising practice looks like.

While there is a significant evidence base to draw on already, we wish to highlight one area that we believe requires urgent action: facilitating a better understanding of what works to shift the impact of attitudes towards masculinity amongst men who most strongly endorse the Man Box. As this report shows, these men are significantly more likely to use and experience violence, as well as experience a range of poor health outcomes.

#### We recommend future research on:

I. Reducing the impact of harmful gender norms amongst the men who most strongly endorse them: Research should aim to understand the most effective ways to decrease the impact of stereotypical masculine norms among those men who most strongly endorse the Man Box. This research should be done in collaboration with partners that have expertise in masculinities research and/or practice. This is a substantial research agenda

that should be completed across various settings (e.g. schools, workplaces, residential settings) and cohorts (including diverse cultures, religions, sexualities, ages and abilities). Research questions should look at:

- The most promising opportunities for effective intervention, informed by ongoing work to understand the mechanisms through which attitudes related to masculinities are developed and what factors moderate the impact of attitudes on behaviour.
- The effectiveness of various practice approaches, including not only approaches focussed on raising awareness of attitudes and encouraging change, but also those that improve emotional literacy and problem-solving skills, which may moderate the impact of endorsing stereotypical masculine norms on behaviour.
- The impact of practice approaches on life outcomes such as use of violence and mental health across different contexts, with a particular focus on behaviour in response to life events that pose significant risks (e.g. post the breakdown of an intimate relationship).
- How, and in what contexts, specific aspects of masculinities can have a protective, positive and healthy impact on behaviours and life outcomes.

The Man Box: 2024

# 1. Why this study?

The 2018 Australian Man Box study opened with this sentence: "More than ever before, the behaviour and attitudes of Australian boys and men are in the spotlight" (The Men's Project and Flood, 2018). In the years since the 2018 study, this focus has only intensified. Discussions of "toxic masculinity" accompany reports of the poor – often times criminal – behaviour of men and boys. A social movement rejecting men's violence has swept onto the steps of Australian Parliaments, prompting conversations about safety and respectful relationships in Australian families, peer groups, classrooms, and workplaces.

At the same time as this public reckoning with men's violence, three-quarters of suicides (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2024) and transport-related fatalities are men (AIHW, 2023b), as are the majority of accidental drug and alcohol induced deaths (Chrzanowska et al., 2021). Compared to Australian women, Australian men are more likely to be overweight or obese, and more likely to smoke (Fetherston and Craike, 2020). They consume fewer fruits and vegetables, more sugary beverages than women and are more likely to have high blood pressure (Fetherston and Craike, 2020).

This study seeks to explore one possible contributor to these disparate issues and, in doing so, examines The "Man Box": a set of beliefs within society related to masculinity that place pressure on young men to act in a certain way. These messages include that men should be tough, not show emotion, use violence to get respect and always be in control. Often times Man Box ideas are deeply embedded in our cultural icons - consider Crocodile Dundee's response to being robbed at knife point, "That's not a knife, THAT'S a knife". They also emerge in throw away lines - "he's a ladies man", "that's gay" or "you've got to look after your family". While the stereotypes represented by the Man Box aren't universal, they share a common feature – they place more value on stereotypically masculine characteristics than stereotypically feminine characteristics.

The 2018 Australian Man Box study and the 2020 Unpacking the Man Box report found strong associations between Man Box attitudes and a range of harmful behaviours. Compared to men with the lowest personal agreement with stereotypical masculine norms, those with the strongest personal agreement were 20 times more likely to self-report sexually harassing a woman, 14 times more likely to report using physical violence and over twice as likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts.

While the reasons for these harmful life outcomes are multi-faceted, men's beliefs about masculinity were more likely to predict their behaviours and life outcomes than demographic factors like where men live, their cultural background, religion and levels of education. It is hardly surprising that in a society that continues to value the masculine over the feminine, and where some men believe that dominance is a demonstration of their manliness, an alarming number of men choose to perpetrate violence against women. It is equally unsurprising that when men feel pressure to be stoic, self-sufficient and in control, too many men experience serious mental health challenges, and may turn to drugs, alcohol and gambling – or suicide – to try to alleviate their distress.

The 2024 Man Box study updates and expands on the findings of the 2018 and 2020 studies. In line with previous studies, it considers whether Australian men perceive social pressure about how a "real man" thinks and acts, and the degree to which men internalise these messages. It also explores young men's attitudes and behaviours towards a range of topics, including gender norms, health and wellbeing, relationships, risk-taking, use of violence, and bystander behaviour. These "life outcome" measures are used to explore the impact of endorsing Man Box ideas.

The 2024 Man Box study expands the age group under consideration, adding men aged 31 to 45 to both the survey and focus group samples. This study also expands the scope of the attitudes and behaviours measured, adding additional questions on men's attitudes towards, and use of, violence (in particular violence against women). In addition, we have expanded the questions on risk-taking behaviours to include problem gambling, illicit drug use, and dangerous behaviour when under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs.1

The addition of questions related to violence addresses a distinct absence in the Australian evidence base. as the Perpetration Project, an Australian national research project on violence in intimate, domestic and family settings, notes, while national data on the proportion of Australians who have experienced violence is collected every four years via the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, there is no national data on who uses violence (Flood et al., 2022). This is a critical gap in developing evidence-based violence prevention and early intervention programs. This study makes a start on filling that gap.



This study was conducted by surveying more than 3,500 Australian men<sup>2</sup> between the ages of 18 and 45, using an online survey of a representative and random sample of men from across the country. Seven focus groups were also held in order to hear more about the experiences of Australian men, and provide additional insight into the survey results.

This report provides an overview of the findings from the research, and allows a comparison between the pressures and beliefs of men aged 18 to 30 today compared with those surveyed in 2018. The study presents the results from the 18- to 30-year-old cohort, with the results for men aged 31 to 45 provided in breakout boxes and an appendix.

Chapter 2 (and Appendices 1 and 2) describe how the study was conducted, including the demographic characteristics of the men who responded. Chapter 3 explores the social pressures men feel to conform to the Man Box, and the degree to which they personally agree with these beliefs. Chapter 4 considers the influence of the Man Box on men's behaviour, including on their use of violence and on their own health and wellbeing. Chapter 5 is a commentary on the findings, written by Dr Michael Flood, Professor at the Queensland University of Technology. The report then concludes with reflections on the findings from the study's authors, and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For a full list of additions to the 2024 research, see the research aims listed in chapter 2.

 $<sup>^{2}</sup>$  There were 3,519 participants in the final sample, made up of 2,523 participants aged between 18- and 30-years-old and 996 participants aged between 31- and 45-years-old.

#### Box 1.1: The research partnership between The Men's Project and Respect Victoria

Previous Australian Man Box studies have been conducted by The Men's Project, an initiative of Jesuit Social Services. The vision of Jesuit Social Services is to contribute to building a more just society, particularly through working with people on the margins of society and advocating for social change (Jesuit Social Services, 2023b). Jesuit Social Services has been working for over 45 years with boys and men who have encountered the criminal justice system, with a particular emphasis on helping them re-integrate into society after they leave prison (Jesuit Social Services, 2023a). Jesuit Social Services also established the first dedicated counselling service to work with young people struggling with concurrent mental health and substance use problems, and set up "Support After Suicide" to provide free individual and family counselling to people bereaved by suicide (Support After Suicide, 2023).

Through implementing these programs, Jesuit Social Services became increasingly interested in intervening earlier and finding more effective ways to support men and boys to live respectful and fulfilling lives free from violence and other harmful behaviours. The Men's Project was formed in 2017 to serve that objective. Their focus is on engaging with young people and community leaders to prevent violence, piloting interventions for boys and men at risk of using violence and building the evidence base about how to do this effectively across Australia. Conducting the first Australian Man Box Study in 2018 was an important step in building this evidence base.

For this 2024 Man Box study, The Men's Project has partnered with Respect Victoria; the dedicated organisation for the prevention of family violence and violence against women in Victoria. Respect Victoria's vision is a community where all people are safe, equal and respected, and live free from family violence and violence against women. They do this by leading and supporting evidence-informed primary prevention and act as a catalyst for transformational social change. Primary prevention aims to stop violence from occurring in the first place, by changing the culture that drives it. Respect Victoria guides prevention wherever Victorians live, work, learn and play, raises awareness that violence against women is preventable, and influences community conversations to fuel social change.

The Men's Project expanded the research aims of the 2024 Man Box study to reflect a shared interest in building understanding of how the drivers of men's violence against women operate in practice and how men's beliefs about masculinity influence their use of violence against women. The aims of the 2024 study include specific exploration of the relationship between adherence to masculine norms, and hostility to women and denial of gender inequality.

The Men's Project partnered with Respect Victoria to complete this study. The Men's Project led the research, collaborating closely with Respect Victoria at key stages of the design of the survey and focus groups. Respect Victoria contributed prevention expertise to support data analysis and interpretation of results, and also provided input on the content of the report.

The partnership between The Men's Project and Respect Victoria is intended to produce at least two reports. The first is this report, authored by The Men's Project, which presents the findings of the quantitative research, with the qualitative research used to expand on these findings. The second report will be authored by Respect Victoria to consider implications of the 2024 National Man Box study for the primary prevention of family violence and violence against women. It will focus on findings of the qualitative research and place these in dialogue with the quantitative findings.

This study has benefited from the guidance provided by the Man Box Advisory Group (full membership listed in the Acknowledgements), comprising leading academics and organisations working in violence prevention, respectful relationships, and masculinities research in Australia.

The Man Box: 2024



### 2. About this study

This study uses the same approach as the 2018 Man Box Study, which was based on a research methodology developed by Equimundo. The research aims are outlined in Box 2.1 below. The methodology includes both quantitative research (a survey, described in Appendix B and C) and qualitative research (focus groups, described in Appendix E).<sup>3</sup> Data collection for this study was carried out in 2023.

As Box 2.1 shows, the 2024 Australian Man Box study expanded on the aims of the 2018 study. Based on a range of factors, there were also some adjustments made to survey items included in the 2018 Man Box study. In turn, the following topics were added to the survey:

 Whether respondents agreed with statements that showed attitudinal support for violence against women and denied gender inequality

- Whether (and how often) respondents viewed pornography, including violent pornography
- Whether men had ever used physical or sexual violence against an intimate partner
- How men would react if they witnessed violence among their male peers, or a male peer verbally abusing their female partner
- How often survey respondents had thoughts of self-harm in the previous two weeks
- Whether respondents had used illicit drugs
- Whether survey respondents had engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, and
- Whether respondents displayed signs of problem gambling.

### Box 2.1: Research aims

The aims of the 2024 Man Box research were to understand:

- 1. The level of social pressure on men to adhere to stereotypical masculine norms;
- 2. The level of men's personal endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms;
- 3. How men's personal endorsement of these stereotypical masculine norms predicts outcomes such as their wellbeing, risk-taking behaviours, pornography use, help-seeking, bystander behaviour, bullying, sexual harassment, and perpetration of intimate partner violence;
- 4. The relationship between personal endorsement of these stereotypical masculine norms and men's level of hostility towards women, and denial of gender inequality;
- 5. The impact of men's level of attachment to stereotypical masculine norms.4

Note: New aims added for the 2024 study are shown above in italics. Each of these additional items, along with the topics carried over from the 2018 survey, are described in Appendix B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Focus group quotations have been included in this report to provide insight into the quantitative findings. Insights from the focus groups will be explored in more depth in a forthcoming report by Respect Victoria, produced as part of the Man Box research partnership with Jesuit Social Services.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Findings for this research aim will be published in a subsequent report.

### Box 2.2: The use of binary language and the term "real man" in this study

Readers may note that this study uses binary language when describing sex and gender, e.g. man/woman, male/ female, masculinity/femininity. While neither sex nor gender are binary categories, for the purposes of this research they have frequently been treated as such.<sup>5</sup> This has been done in order to explore the impact of socially constructed masculinity on men's attitudes and behaviours. We note, however, that this framing does not capture the experiences of those whose gender identity does not fit within this binary. We also note that beliefs and attitudes towards masculinity are diverse, and are influenced by a range of intersecting attributes including class, race, religion, culture, sexuality and age.

In line with prior Man Box studies both in Australia and overseas, in order to understand attitudes related to stereotypical masculine norms, this report often uses the term "real man". We acknowledge that the term "real man" risks reinforcing essentialist ideas related to gender and, as a result, throughout this document we have included these words in inverted commas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Except when asking survey respondents about their gender identity, where multiple gender options were offered, and participants were also able to write in their preferred gender descriptor.





### 2.1. The survey

The survey was completed by men<sup>6</sup> aged between 18 and 30 who currently reside in Australia (the primary focus of this study), as well as a second cohort of men aged between 31 and 45. This older cohort was not included in the 2018 Man Box study or the initial Equimundo 2017 Man Box study. Non-probability sampling (convenience sampling) was used to recruit potential respondents. Participants were recruited through survey panel providers<sup>7</sup> by CloudResearch, who then asked respondents a series of vetting questions and applied behavioural and device analysis security tests to exclude potential "bots".8 Respondents who completed the survey were provided with points by their survey panel provider, which can be redeemed for cash or gift cards. There were 3,519 participants in the final sample, made up of 2,523 participants aged between 18- and 30-years-old and 996 participants aged between 31- and 45-years-old, with demographic characteristics broadly representative of the Australian male population. The survey questionnaire included questions on:

- Demographic characteristics of the survey respondents
- Men's perceptions of social pressure to conform to Man Box rules
- Men's personal agreement with Man Box rules
- Men's attitudes towards, and perpetration of, violence (see Box 2.3 for more detail on how the questions for this section were chosen)
- · Men's health, wellbeing, and risk-taking behaviour.

For a full description of the survey questionnaire, as well as demographic characteristics of the survey sample, see Appendix A and B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Survey respondents were included in the sample if they selected "man" or "transgender man" in response to the question "How do you describe your gender?" Responses were received from 24 transgender men.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Survey panel providers recruit and manage groups of people to participate in online surveys.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> This vetting processes utilised Sentry software and excluded approximately half of potential survey respondents.

#### Box 2.3: Measuring the use of violence – considerations and challenges

The 2018 Australian Man Box study demonstrated that men who personally agreed with stereotypical masculine norms were significantly more likely to perpetrate bullying and sexual harassment than men who did not personally endorse these norms. This finding generated considerable interest in Australia and is the basis for a number of programs which seek to prevent violence by challenging rigid gender norms (including the various prevention and early intervention programs developed and run by The Men's Project, the lead researchers in this study).

Given the contribution that the 2018 report has made to the design of violence prevention efforts, one of the aspirations for the 2024 study was to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between endorsement of "Man Box" rules and the use of violence. As the Perpetration Project has highlighted, while national data on the proportion of Australians who have experienced violence is collected every four years via the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Personal Safety Survey*, there is no national data on who uses violence. Indeed, very little is known about who uses violence, and how (Flood and Dembele, 2021). This study makes a start on filling that gap.

In early iterations of the research design, the intention was to only ask respondents about their use of violence. This approach was rejected for several reasons. Firstly, respondents were likely to find it confronting to be asked about their use of violence, with the risk that each question asked about perpetration could increase the drop-out rate (i.e. the proportion of respondents who do not complete the survey) (Knapp and Heidingsfelder, 2001). This would have created challenges in achieving the target sample size. Secondly, the inclusion of these questions would be likely to increase social desirability bias<sup>9</sup> and reduce the quality of data as a result (Sugarman and Hotaling, 1997).

After consulting with research partners, academics, research agencies and survey panel providers, the research team chose to ask questions in the formats listed below. Each of these provides a different type of insight into the relationship between violence and stereotypical forms of masculinity. The questions measure violence by asking questions about:

- 1. **Perpetration:** where respondents were asked directly whether they have used violence
- 2. **Violence-supportive attitudes:** where respondents were asked whether they agreed with statements that condoned violence
- 3. **Bystander behaviour:** where respondents were presented with scenarios where a friend was using violence, and asked how and why they would react (or not react)
- 4. Victimisation: where respondents were asked directly whether they had been a victim of violence.

Consideration was also given to the forms of violence to include in the survey questionnaire. The 2018 survey asked questions about the perpetration and experience as a victim of bullying, and these remained in the 2023 questionnaire. The 2018 survey question about perpetration of sexual harassment was also retained. Questions measuring violence-supportive attitudes, including the use of violence to get respect, and coercive control, were carried over from the 2018 Man Box scale, and others were added to measure attitudinal support for domestic violence and sexual assault. Additional questions were added to cover the perpetration of physical and sexual intimate partner violence, as well as bystander behaviour when witnessing verbal abuse of an intimate partner, or male-on-male violence within a friendship group.

The table below shows the forms of violence measured, the format of question used for each form, and the section of this report in which the results are discussed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Social desirability bias is when survey respondents provide answers they believe are socially acceptable/desirable, rather than truthfully reflecting their own beliefs or experiences.

Figure 2.1: Forms of violence measured in the 2024 Man Box Study, and the relevant section of this report

#### **TYPE OF QUESTION**

Form of violence	Perpetration	Violence-supportive attitudes	Bystander behaviour	Victimisation
Coercive control		3.2.210		
Sexual assault		4.1.1, 4.1.5		
Domestic violence		4.1.1, 4.1.5		
Verbal bulling	4.1.3*			4.1.3*
Online bullying	4.1.3*			4.1.3*
Physical bullying/ violence	4.1.3*	3.2.211		4.1.3*
Sexual harassment	4.1.4*			
Intimate partner violence – sexual	4.1.5	4.1.1		
Intimate partner violence – physical	4.1.5	4.1.1		
Intimate partner violence – verbal			4.1.6	
Physical violence – male on male			4.1.6	

<sup>\*</sup> These questions were also included in the 2018 Man Box survey questionnaire.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> In this report, coercive control can be measured by several Man Box rules, particularly "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time" and "In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage". It should be noted that "coercive control is not a standalone form of family violence. The term reflects the pattern and underlying feature or dynamic created by a perpetrator's tactics and use of family violence and its felt impact or outcome on victim survivors. As a tactic, coercive control can include any combination of family violence behaviours (risk factors) used by a perpetrator to create a pattern or 'system of behaviours' intended to harm, punish, frighten, dominate, isolate, degrade, monitor or stalk, regulate and subordinate the victim survivor." (Victorian Government 2021, Page 25).

## 2.2. Man Box scores and Man Box quintiles

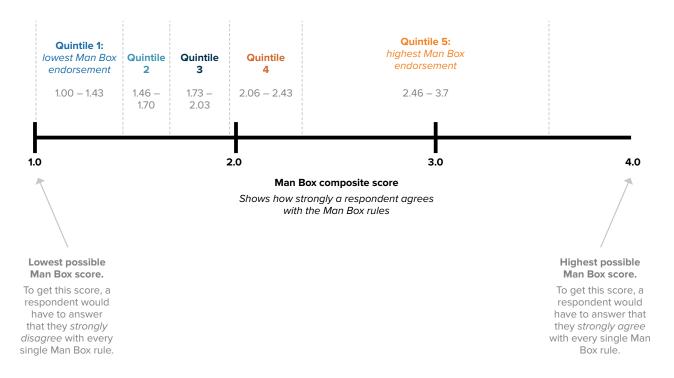
The key construct in this study is the "Man Box score". This score was calculated for each survey respondent, and measured the degree to which they personally agreed the Man Box rules.<sup>12</sup>

These scores are composite scores reflecting the level of agreement with Man Box Rules<sup>13</sup> (*Strongly disagree* received one point, *Disagree* received two points, *Agree* received three points, and *Strongly agree* received four points). As in the 2018 study, two items from the "Physical Attractiveness" pillar were not included in the calculation of the Man Box score. <sup>14</sup> Two items had been added to the Homophobia and Transphobia pillar (see Appendix B for details), and so the four items in this pillar were given a 50% weighting to allow for cross-year comparisons (to ensure the pillar retained the same overall weight in the composite score). The composite score for each respondent was calculated by adding the scores for each question and dividing by 15 (15 being the number of questions used to calculate the composite

score). The Man Box composite scores (hereafter referred to as "Man Box scores") have a minimum value of 1.0 and a maximum value of 4.0. The higher the Man Box score, the higher the personal endorsement of Man Box rules.

An analysis of adherence to the Man Box based on quintiles of Man Box scores was conducted across the other variables. This quintile analysis splits the sample into five groups based upon their scores from those who least strongly endorse Man Box rules to those who most endorse Man Box rules. <sup>15</sup> Quintile 1 (the men who obtained the lowest 20% of Man Box scores) are those who are least adherent to the Man Box. This quintile is shown as "lowest Man Box endorsement" in this report. Quintile 5 (the men with the highest 20% of Man Box scores) are those who most strongly endorse the Man Box rules and are referred to in this report as "highest Man Box endorsement". For each life outcome variable the average score for each quintile was calculated.

Figure 2.2: Man Box quintiles, with range of scores and sample size



 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 11}$  Specifically, the Man Box rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See Appendix C for descriptions of other data analyses.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The two items which were excluded were "It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good," and "Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair, and skin." While these items are "valuable for understanding men's opinions about physical attractiveness, they are not strict reflections of mainstream masculine expectations and roles" (Heilman & Barker, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Each quintile represents a fifth of the range of Man Box scores, not a fifth of respondents. In other words, the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the range of Man Box scores, the second quintile represents the second fifth of the range, and so on. This is why the quintiles do not have an equal number of survey respondents.

### 2.3. Limitations

The generalisability of the findings from this study to a broader population of men in the same age cohorts (18 to 30, and 31 to 45) are limited by various aspects of the research design. Key limitations are:

### 1. Representativeness of survey sample

Survey respondents were recruited via panel providers, <sup>16</sup> using convenience sampling (a nonprobability strategy) which may influence the generalisability of the findings. This means that members of some sub-populations would have been less likely to have been invited than others, as people do not sign up to market research for a range of reasons (for example, they may prefer to keep their opinions private, are not aware of these opportunities, they do not view the incentives as good enough).

In order to mitigate these limitations, our partner responsible for recruiting participants (CloudResearch) engaged multiple panel providers, and conducted exhaustive sampling of these, to maximise the pool of potential respondents. This ensured a larger and more diverse sample compared to using just one panel provider.

With a sample size of 3,519 men aged 18-45 drawn from the panels, it would be expected to be sufficiently representative of the Australian population. Looking at the demographic profile of the sample across age, sexuality, employment, education status, geographic location (state/territory and metro/regional) and religion shows that the sample was representative across many of these variables. We were not able to divide the population into strata and set quotas for each variable due to difficulties achieving the sample size (the target cohort, 18- to 30-year-old men is one of the most difficult cohorts to recruit for this type of study). The approach relied on natural fallout for all demographics beyond age and gender.

### 2. Accuracy of survey respondents' answers

Recruiting participants for the survey through online panels means that there is a risk that some participants lied in order to be eligible for the study, or answered the questions quickly and without fully engaging with or understanding each question. Several steps were taken to mitigate these risks.

- CloudResearch conducted an initial screening of respondents using a vetting system called "Sentry". The type of screenings conducted by Sentry include bot detection, open-ended quality, attention and honesty verification, Advanced FingerPrinting, ChatGPT Blocking, IP duplication, geo-location tracking and autotranslation detection. Across both age cohorts (18-30, and 31-45) there were 11,911 respondents recruited to enter the survey and only 6,223 were allowed to enter the survey.
- Wallis Social Research, the research agency engaged to complete data collection and initial data analysis, reviewed survey responses to check for respondents who completed the survey quickly, provided the same answer to scale questions, and/or provided all the same responses to other questions. 672 respondents were removed as a result of these checks.<sup>17</sup>
- Wallis Social Research tested questions prior to administering the survey to ensure questions were sensitively worded, that terminology was understood, and that available responses aligned with responses (this process is known as "cognitive testing").<sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Panel providers are also known as market research panels. Each panel is a large group of consumers who have signed up and are willing to regularly take part in survey research for either quantitative surveys or focus groups. These panels maintain the details on who their panel members are (from a demographic and behavioural perspective) so are able to target survey invites. This can make pulling together survey samples much more efficient.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> 6,223 entered the survey, 2,032 dropped out whilst undertaking the survey and 672 were removed by Wallis. The final sample included 2,523 (18-30-year-olds) and 996 (31-45-year-olds); a total of 3,519 respondents.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Wallis Research conducted six interviews as part of the cognitive testing process, including 4 participants aged 18-30 years old and 2 participants aged 31-45 years old, with one participant identifying as LGBTQIA+.

The data collected during this study may also be impacted by social desirability bias, where research participants provide answers they believe are socially acceptable/desirable rather than truthfully reflecting their own beliefs or experiences. Some questions in this study may have been perceived by respondents as having "right" or "wrong" answers. For instance most people consider violent behaviour to be negative and therefore many men may think it is unacceptable to admit to having used violence. To mitigate this, the research team sought advice from the research agency, research advisers, and organisations who have conducted similar research, and the following mitigants were used:

- Using an online format. Respondents were anonymous and not receiving any live feedback (e.g. body language) on whether their response was acceptable or not.
- Reassuring respondents that their answers would be private and confidential via the introductory text, and reminders during the survey.
- Framing questions without explicitly naming the topic, but instead describing a specific behaviour.
   For instance, rather than asking respondents how often they viewed violent pornography, they were asked how often they viewed pornography which included one or more of the following being done to a woman: "pushing or shoving; pulling hair; spanking; gagging; choking; slapping; kicking; punching; bondage or restraint; forcing sex."

Social desirability bias was mitigated during the focus groups by using trained and experienced researchers to facilitate the discussions and ask questions in a way to elicit truthful responses.

# 3. This study considers only one representation of stereotypical masculine norms

This study does not consider the full diversity of ways in which men engage with masculinity and with what it means to be a man in Australia.

An individual's experience of social pressures related to masculinity (and whether or not they internalise these messages) are influenced by intersectional factors like race, ethnicity, class, age, gender identity, sexuality and ability. Social messages related to masculinity are also experienced differently in different contexts, and men "perform" masculinity differently depending on the context they are in (for instance, their perception of social expectations around masculinity may be different within their friendship group compared to their workplace). As a result, there is no homogenous expression or experience of masculinity – masculinity is "multiple and situational" (Our Watch, 2019).

In this study, the version of masculinity expressed by the "Man Box" is a shorthand for a version of stereotypical masculinity. It should not be assumed that all men relate to, or experience the pressures of, the Man Box as it is formulated in this study.

# 4. This study does not comprehensively consider the role of intersectional factors in explaining the findings

The attitudes, behaviours and life outcomes measured in this study are influenced by a range of factors which interact to shape the specific experiences of men, including their experience of intersecting forms of privilege and oppression.

This study seeks to measure the impact of men's personal beliefs about masculinity at the population level, and does not comprehensively explore the role of individual characteristics such as race, sexuality, religion, or ability in explaining the findings. In other words, it generally does not consider men's experience of oppression and/or discrimination when discussing the study's findings.

# 3. Understanding the Man Box

This chapter responds to research aims one and two by exploring the level of social pressure on men to adhere to stereotypical masculine norms, and the level of men's personal agreement with these norms. To do that, this chapter considers the social pressures Australian men perceive related to the Man Box, and investigates how men adopt or reject these pressures. It also considers the gap between men's perception of social pressure to conform to the Man Box and men's personal agreement with Man Box rules, as well as how perceived social pressure and personal attitudes have changed since 2018.

The main text of this chapter discusses the survey results from the 2,500 men aged between 18 and 30 years old and includes relevant insights and quotations from five focus groups held with this age group. These focus groups included men with low and moderate Man Box endorsement (see Appendix E for an overview of the characteristics of the focus group participants). Three breakout boxes (on pages 37-38 and 45-46) contrast results from the 18- to 30-year-old age group with results from the 31- to 45-year-old age group.

## 3.1. The origins of the Man Box research

Individuals receive messages from those around them about the expectations of men and women, and children learn from birth to adopt attitudes and behaviours that align with their culture's dominant social norms related to gender (Henslin, 2013). For boys and men in Western countries, the dominant male gender norms prescribe that men should demonstrate emotional control,

dominance, aggression, heterosexual prowess, and self-reliance (Mahalik et al., 2003). For women, dominant feminine gender norms include demonstrating nurturing, emotional sensitivity, domesticity, thinness, modesty, and sexual fidelity. Conformity to these gender norms can be defined as "meeting societal expectations for what constitutes masculinity [or femininity] in one's public or private life" (Mahalik et al., 2003. Page 3).

As gender is socially constructed, gender norms are not static; they are a product of the culture and values of a society, and they change over time as society changes (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Gender norms are also not one-size-fits all; an individual's experience of gender norms will be influenced by a range of intersecting factors, such as their race, class, sexuality and ability (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Several tools exist to measure the perception and internalisation of masculine gender norms. One of these tools is the Man Box scale and research methodology, which was developed in 2017 by Equimundo, a global leader in promoting gender equality and creating "a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls, and individuals of all gender identities". <sup>20</sup> Equimundo's Man Box research methodology 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Focus group quotations have been added to provide insight into the quantitative findings. Insights from the focus groups will be explored in more depth in a forthcoming report by Respect Victoria, produced as part of the Man Box research partnership with Jesuit Social Services.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Equimundo and their research partners have been conducting research into men's opinions on gender norms, attitudes and behaviours since 2008, including the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) and the Gender-Equitable Men SCALE (GEMS). IMAGES has been undertaken with more than 67,000 men and women in more than 30 countries, while GEMS has been adapted and used in at least eight countries.

#### Box 3.1: The origins of the term "the Man Box"

The term "Man Box" is drawn from the work of Paul Kivel, Allan Creighton, and others at the Oakland Men's Project, who developed the "Act Like a Man Box" approach in the 1980s while working with adolescents in San Francisco public schools (Greene, 2019). Tony Porter, the founder of A Call To Men, heard Kivel speak about the Act Like a Man Box approach, and started using it in his work with men. He later shortened the term to "the Man Box" to make it more accessible to the men he worked with in prisons and other challenging spaces. Porter spoke about his experience applying the Man Box in his work during his 2010 TED Talk, which brought the phrase and concept into the mainstream.

In the research methodology developed by Equimundo, the phrase "the Man Box" describes a set of beliefs within and across society that places pressure on men to act in a certain way. The Man Box consists of 19 rules such as "Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside" and "In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women". These rules are organised into seven thematic pillars, as shown in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2.

The rules of the Man Box are reinforced by a system of rewards and punishments; for instance, successfully "performing" masculinity can result in increased

social value as demonstrated by tangible rewards or privileges (including praise, respect, popularity, or job advancement), as well as intangible benefits (such as a sense of belonging or achievement). In contrast, not adhering to Man Box rules may result in the withdrawal of these rewards, as well as marginalisation and stigmatisation (Meyer, 2018). These rewards and punishments may be delivered by various influences in a boy's or man's life – parents, partners, peers, teachers, coaches, workmates – and people of all gender's "police" whether a boy or man is acting according to the Man Box rules.

#### Box 3.2: A note on intersectionality

This study explores the impact of a prescribed set of masculine gender norms (the "Man Box") on men's attitudes and behaviours. It is important to note, however, that social pressures and personal beliefs related to masculinity (and an individual's beliefs and behaviour more generally) are influenced by individual characteristics (e.g. race, ethnicity, class, age, gender identity, sexuality, religion, ability), and by extension experiences of intersecting forms of privilege and oppression. As a result, there is no homogenous expression or experience of masculinity. The version of masculinity expressed by the "Man Box" is merely a shorthand for a version of masculinity that is dominant in Western culture and in Australia. It should not be assumed that all men relate to, or experience the pressures of, the Man Box as it is formulated in this study. It should also be noted that the attitudes, behaviours and life outcomes measured in this study are influenced by a range of factors which interact to shape the specific experiences of men.

It is also important to note that this study seeks to explore social pressures and men's personal beliefs about masculinity across Australian society. It does not break the findings down by attributes such as race, sexuality, religion or ability, other than to break down the top and bottom Man Box quintiles by specific demographic groups (see chapter 4, Box 4.1 for this breakdown).

The Man Box research methodology enables an exploration of how men perceive gender norms, and the extent to which they personally adhere to these traditional, rigid ideas about masculinity. There are limitations to this analysis, as each individual understands and interacts with social pressures in unique and complex ways, and their personal beliefs about how men should behave can vary by context and change over time. Additionally, personal endorsement of a Man Box rule does not mean that a man will necessarily act in accordance with that belief (for

instance, a man might agree with the rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary" but not be using violence in their relationships or communities). Despite these limitations, the Man Box enables the construction of a high-level picture and provides some sense of the patterns and trends in men's attitudes and behaviours. The concept of the Man Box has been widely used in work of The Men's Project and others as a teaching tool to increase the understanding of masculine norms and their impact.



### Figure 3.1: The pillars of the Man Box

The pillars below summarise the themes of the Man Box messages. The descriptions are adapted from the 2017 Equimundo study (Equimundo, 2017).

1 Self-Sufficiency:

Messages related to independence are associated with the widespread expectation that men be **self-reliant**, particularly with regard to their physical and emotional health. Chapter 4 of this report links respondents' adherence to these messages with their actual health-seeking and help-seeking behaviours.

2 Acting Tough:

The requirements of men's **toughness** are two-fold. The first is a willingness to defend one's reputation, by fighting or using physical force, if necessary. The second is emotional invulnerability, whereby men must maintain the outward appearance of toughness and strength even when experiencing more vulnerable emotions. Chapter 4 of this report looks at acceptance of these messages via young men's use of physical force, as well as their emotional help-seeking behaviours.

3 Physical Attractiveness:

Pillar 3 includes three items related to men's **physical appearance**, **physical attractiveness**, **and grooming behaviours**, drawing from common expectations that "real men" meet the paradoxical standard that they both (a) dress well and look good, and (b) achieve this without seeming to try too hard.

4 Rigid Gender Roles:

Pillar 4 includes three items related to common gender-based **divisions of household and caregiving work.** These messages relate to the still-common expectation that men contribute to family well-being primarily as financial providers, while women contribute disproportionately to the daily care of children and the home. Chapter 4 of the report presents results that illuminate the complexity of how these ideas present among young men today.

**5** Homophobia and Transphobia:

Homophobia and Transphobia: The Man Box messages convey that a "real man" is supposed to be both **heterosexual and cisgender, and that they should reject men who are not**. This pillar has been updated in 2023 to include rules around gender identity as well as rules around sexuality.

6 Hypersexuality:

Pillar 6 emphasises that not only is a "real man" unambiguously heterosexual, but he is supposedly also **always ready for sex**, and always eager to acquire another "sexual conquest." The hypersexuality implied in Pillar 6 also serves to undermine men's sexual agency and sexual health, in that it instructs young men that saying no to sex is something that only women do. Chapter 4 presents links between adherence to the Man Box rules and men's likelihood of perpetrating sexual harassment and sexual violence towards an intimate partner.

7 Aggression and Control:

Finally, the three messages of Pillar 7 emphasise the need for a "real man" to use physical violence when necessary, and to hold **control over household decisions and women's movements.** Chapter 4 of the report will link adherence to the Man Box rules with men's likelihood of perpetrating various forms of bullying, sexual harassment, and violence, among other forms of aggression and control.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Note that the rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary" refers to the use of violence against any gender.

Figure 3.2: Man Box messages, by pillar



#### **Self-sufficiency:**

A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.

Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.



#### Acting tough:

A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.

Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.



### **Physical attractiveness:**

It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.

A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.

Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.



### 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.

A man shouldn't have to do household chores.

In heterosexual relationships, men should really by the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.



### Homophobia and transphobia:

A gay guy is not a "real man".

A transgender man is not a "real man"

It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.

It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.



### **Hypersexuality:**

A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can.

A "real man" would never say no to sex.



### Aggression and control:

Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.

In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.

If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.

### 3.2. The Man Box today

# 3.2.1. Social pressure: what does society communicate about "real men"?

### Findings from the Man Box survey

This study's starting point is to understand the degree to which men feel social pressure to adhere to stereotypical masculine norms. To measure this, survey respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed that society communicates and reinforces each of the 19 Man Box rules. The percentage of respondents who select "agree" or "strongly agree" to each Man Box rule is shown in Figure 3.3.

The survey results are clear – a significant minority of men (37%<sup>22</sup>) perceive pressure to conform to Man Box rules. This pressure was felt most strongly for the rules in the "Acting tough" pillar. These two rules require men to always act strong, and to fight back when pushed

around. Almost half (50% and 44% respectively) of 18- to 30-year-old men reported that they were told this is how a "real man" behaves.

The other social pressures felt by more than four in 10 men were those requiring men to be the primary income earner; reject trans men's masculinity; never say no to sex; look good; and keep his worries, fears and problems to himself.

Alarmingly, many of the Man Box rules where men perceived pressure to conform were those that reflect attitudes that support violence and reject gender equality. Four in 10 men (39%) perceive social messages that men should have the final say about decisions in their relationship. More than a third of men (35%) believe that society says men are entitled to know where their partner is at all times and a similar proportion perceive that society expects men to use violence to get respect if necessary (34%) and avoid responsibility for household chores (33%).

Box 3.3: Man Box rules with the highest and lowest perception of social pressure among 18-30 y.o. men, 2023

Highest perceived social pressure	Lowest perceived social pressure
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside (50% agreed/strongly agreed)	It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children (28% agreed/strongly agreed)
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak (44%)	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys (31%)
In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women (42%)	A man shouldn't have to do household chores (33%)
A transgender man is not a "real man" (42%)	A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly (33%)
A "real man" would never say no to sex (42%)	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people (33%)

Figure 3.3: Perceived social messages about masculinity, 18-30 y.o. men, 2023

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "Society as a whole tells me that..."

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

### Insights from the focus groups

The pressure on men to act tough was discussed in the focus groups. While some participants said that men in their social circles commonly engaged in expressions of vulnerability and provided emotional support, others reported that vulnerability could be risky, because being open about themselves or showing emotion could expose them to ridicule or a loss of respect. Some men spoke of the need to "suss out" whether they would be judged for talking about their problems or inner life.

"There are certain topics you can only talk [about] to some groups of people. As you approach certain people, [you] get the vibe that they're understanding... then you can share more."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"...with the blokey friends it's more surface-level... you wouldn't talk about emotions with them."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

"I think it'd be more acceptable for you to cry if your sports team won or lost the grand final than to cry over breaking up with your partner or something."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

Another theme of focus group discussions was that while some men didn't feel pressure from their peers to conform with stereotypical masculine norms, others said they felt this pressure from people older than them, including family members.

"My mum had health issues... it was me and my dad's job to... look after the family and be strong, and I have a twin sister and she was... allowed to have a different role... my sister was allowed to be upset, but my dad [said to] me, 'you've got to be...' ... he never said I had to be the man but that was kind of what he meant."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"I couldn't do that around my family. I couldn't go to them with relationship troubles, or if I was going through a hard time in life."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Insights from the focus groups will be explored in more depth in a forthcoming report by Respect Victoria, produced as part of the Man Box research partnership with Jesuit Social Services.

Some men in the focus groups spoke about the influence of their families in passing on expectations about who would provide for the family in heterosexual relationships.

"There's definitely no roles that either of us play in terms of a breadwinner or anything like that. And I think that's the culture that we've both grown up in. Both of our parents aren't married, so I think maybe it could stem from a little bit of that as well."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"... my mate and his girlfriend, his girlfriend grew up in a family [where] the dad was the breadwinner, and the mum was [a] stay-t-home mum, so she expects that kind of thing. Whereas for him, that's not the way he was brought up with his family structure, so I think that would probably be the biggest influence for a lot of people."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"...my dad... He's always been humble, always been the one equally helping out in the house. He's never set these norms like 'I do this you do that'... He's always around doing DIY stuff at home."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

For others, the shift in the breadwinner norm was more strongly related to financial pressures than it was to changing gender roles.

"I think if the traditional relationship... is where the woman stays home with their kids, if you can afford that and if the wife is happy doing that then I think it's good."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

"I don't want to send my kid to a childcare just so we can afford our home."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

## Social pressure among 31- to 45-year-old men

Overall, 31- to 45-year-old men ("older men") reported experiencing marginally lower levels of social pressure to conform to Man Box rules than 18- to 30-year-old men ("younger men"). Across all Man Box rules, on average, 35% of older men reported social pressure to conform to the Man Box rules compared to 37% of younger men.

As Figure 3.4 illustrates, the area in which social pressures showed the greatest difference related to the rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary". 24% of older men felt social pressure to conform to this Man Box rule compared to 34% of younger men.

Other differences between the two groups include:

- "A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn't really get respect" (35% of the older cohort compared to 40% of younger men)
- Two rules from the "Physical attractiveness" pillar also received lower levels of agreement from older men: "A guy who spends a lot of his time on his looks isn't very manly" (28% compared to 33%) and "Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin" (31% compared to 37%).

Men in the older cohort felt less social pressure regarding rigid gender roles at home. This was more pronounced for the rule "A man shouldn't have to do household chores", which was felt by 28% of the older cohort compared to 33% of younger men.

Older men felt higher levels of social pressure than younger men for only two of the 19 Man Box rules. 48% of the older cohort agreed they perceived social messages that "A transgender man is not a real man" compared to 42% of the younger cohort. Additionally, 55% of older men indicated society told them "A guy should act tough even if they feel scared or nervous inside" compared to 50% of younger men.

Overall, these findings suggest that older men experience marginally lower social pressures to conform to the Man Box rules compared to 18- to 30-year-old men. However, more than one-third of this older age group still indicated that there were strong social pressures to conform to the Man Box rules.

Figure 3.4: Perceived social messages about masculinity, 31-45 y.o. men, 2023

Percentage of 31-45 y.o. survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "Society as a whole tells me that...", compared to 18-30 y.o. respondents

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



# 3.2.2. Personal beliefs: do men internalise Man Box social pressures?

It is clear that Man Box rules are still communicated and reinforced by society, but do these rules influence what men themselves believe about how to be a "real man"? Do men take on the Man Box rules as their own personal benchmark for masculinity, and expect themselves and others to "perform" this version of manhood? Or are men able to detach from the ideas that don't serve them, and develop a more flexible identity? To understand this, survey respondents were asked whether they personally agree with each of the Man Box rules. Their answers are shown in Figure 3.5.

#### Findings from the Man Box survey

Overall, a quarter (26%) of 18- to 30-year-old men personally agreed with Man Box rules (averaged across the rules). However, there was substantial variation in these results, with some rules receiving higher endorsement than others.

A substantial minority of men agreed with Man Box rules which require emotional stoicism and self-sufficiency — that guys should always act strong (42% of men agreed), fight back when pushed around (30% agreed), and figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help (28%). Other rules with substantial endorsement were that trans men are not "real men" (39% of men agreed), guys need to look good to be

successful (35% agreed) but shouldn't fuss about their appearance (32% agreed), and men should be the ones to provide for their family financially (31%).

The rules with the lowest personal agreement were those about boys and men not needing to do household chores (18% and 19% of men agreed respectively), having as many sexual partners as possible (21% agreed), and not being friends with trans and gender diverse people (22%).

A substantial minority of men agreed with Man Box rules requiring emotional stoicism and self-sufficiency – that guys should always act strong (42% of men agreed), fight back when pushed around (30% agreed), and figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help (28% of men agreed). Other rules with substantial endorsement were that trans men are not "real men" (39% of men agreed), that guys need to look good to be successful (35% of men agreed) but shouldn't fuss about their appearance (32% of men agreed), and that men should be the ones to provide for their family financially (31% of men agreed).

The rules with the lowest personal agreement were those about boys and men not needing to do household chores (18% of men agreed boys shouldn't be taught to cook, sew etc and 19% agreed men shouldn't have to do household chores), having as many sexual partners as possible (21% of men agreed), and not being friends with trans and gender diverse people (22% of men agreed).



Box 3.4: Man Box rules with the highest and lowest personal endorsement by 18-30 y.o. men, 2023

Highest personal endorsement	Lowest personal endorsement	
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside (42% agreed/strongly agreed)	It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children (18% agreed/strongly agreed)	
A transgender man is not a "real man" (39%)	A man shouldn't have to do household chores (19%)	
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good (35%)	A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can (21%)	
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin (32%)	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary (22%)	
In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women (31%)	If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time (22%)	



Figure 3.5: Personal beliefs about masculinity, 18-30 y.o. men, 2023

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "In my opinion ..."

Man Box pillar	Man Box rule	Agreed / strongly agreed
1. Self- sufficiency	A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	23%
	Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	28%
2. Acting tough	A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	30%
	Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	42%
3. Physical	It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	35%
attractiveness	A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	23%
	Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	32%
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%
	A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	19%
	In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	31%
5. Homophobia and transphobia	A gay guy is not a "real man".	25%
	A transgender man is not a "real man".	39%
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.	23%
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.	22%
6.	A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can.	21%
Hypersexuality	A "real man" would never say no to sex.	23%
7. Aggression	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	22%
and control	In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	24%
	If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	22%
	Average	26%

#### Insights from the focus groups

The focus groups provided some insight into men's agreement with rules around self-sufficiency and emotional stoicism. Many men endorsed the idea that "real men" don't display emotion or vulnerability. They described these "real men" as being rational, making decisions based on logic rather than emotion, remaining calm in difficult situations, and providing "tough love" in response to people's personal problems.

"[I respect men who are] not emotional and... [who are] always emotionally and mentally strong."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

"[I look up to] a 'man's man'... a gentleman... someone hard-working. Who's tough."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

Several men expressed pride in being an "emotional rock" for their partner. Their descriptions of this role were generally solution-focused and practical (e.g. being available to listen, making suggestions for how to solve problems), rather than based on mutual sharing and support. Some men did acknowledge the role that they could play in supporting women by showing their vulnerable side, but conceded that they would be careful not to let other men know that they behaved in such a way. Others admitted they would "make fun" of other men for sharing their emotions.

".. the bloke is meant to be the rock of the family and yeah, has got to pretend like nothing's affecting him."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

While characteristics like authenticity and trustworthiness were raised as admirable qualities in a man, toughness also featured in some men's description of the men they admire. Several men described that hearing other men share their struggles had reduced the stigma around men sharing their emotions, which may indicate that vulnerability is a pathway to shifting norms that require men to act tough.

"...podcasts... hearing other men's stories about struggling and mental health, stuff like that [has] enabled me to open up a lot more. You're able to think, it's not just me, there are other people out there with similar thoughts."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"It's more accepted, for men to be softer... it's come from equality, right. What social media's allowed us to do, a lot of people are sharing their personal thoughts and views. You see a lot of people coming out and saying how they feel, being open about it. It's a chain reaction, it's encouraged a lot of males in general to be like, I'm allowed to be myself and share my feelings."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

In the focus group recruited from the LGBTQIA+ community, some men reported they believed they were more able to be open and vulnerable than straight and/or cisgender men. Some attributed this to their experience of "coming out"; by experiencing the vulnerability of sharing their sexuality and/or gender identity with those around them, they had come to realise the benefit of sharing their authentic selves, and had integrated this type of sharing into their lives.

"I also found that when I came out of the closet that I didn't really care anymore. You spend so long worrying and then you come out of the closet and in my experience – and this isn't everyone else's experience – it was like, "that was completely fine and I'm alive and that was easy" ... It kind of just changes your brain into thinking it doesn't really matter what people think and you don't have to worry about it so you can be a lot more honest and a lot more open about your emotions."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

Men expressed different facets of what it meant to them to be "a provider". Some men expressed pride in their ability to provide for their family; several also highlighted their role as the emotional "rock" (noting that, as discussed above, their definition of emotional support was based on being available to listen and provide solutions). Men also spoke about the provider role including the provision of safety and security, which included protecting loved ones from (actual or potential) harm from other men.

"You have female friends around, whether it's on a night out or even going to sport or anything, safety is one of the first two or three things that we think about, just making sure they're safe, and making the whole group safe."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

When it comes to the division of domestic labour, it was clear from the focus groups that many men understood they were expected to share these tasks.

"I get a lot of praise if I help out. If you go to someone's house and offer to help out. A lot of females or women would just pick up and say that's good. Or even when they come over, if I'm in the kitchen or doing something like that, they'll say that's a good thing."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"When I'm over at my girlfriend's house we'll usually take turns cooking, but if she's always cooking I'll always clean up. Especially with her family that's quite favoured. It's good that I'm doing something, I suppose."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

"It's a lot more about both sides sharing the load and in terms of doing stuff around the house, work, income and bills, it's split evenly."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, low Man Box endorsement)

## Personal endorsement among 31- to 45-year-old men

Overall, 31- to 45-year-old men ("older men") reported a slightly lower level of personal agreement with the Man Box rules than the 18- to 30-year-olds ("younger men"). On average, 22% of the older age group agreed with the Man Box rules, compared to 26% of younger men. The Man Box rule "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary" had the greatest difference between age groups, with 11% personal agreement among older men and 22% among the younger men. Agreement that men should be the breadwinner ("In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women") was also noticeably lower among the older cohort: 22% of 31- to 45-year-old men personally agreed with this rule, compared to 31% of younger men.

Two of the items in the "Physical attractiveness" pillar had a lower level of agreement for 31- to 45-year-old men compared to the younger cohort:

- "Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin" (24% compared to 32%)
- "A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly" (17% compared to 23%).

Men in the 31- to 45-year-old group also held more gender-equal attitudes than the 18- to 30-year-old group when it came to household tasks. Only 11% of the older age group agreed that "A man shouldn't have to do household chores", compared to 19% of the younger age group. 13% of the older men endorsed the view that "It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children" compared to 18% of the younger cohort.

A smaller proportion of older men demonstrated homophobic attitudes compared with the younger men, with the older cohort less likely to endorse the two homophobic Man Box rules. Men in the older age group were also less likely to endorse the rule "A real man should never say no to sex" (17% of older men compared to 23% of younger men).

There were only two Man Box rules where the proportion of 31- to 45-year-olds who agreed was higher than the proportion of 18- to 30-year-olds. These rules were "A transgender man is not a "real man"" (43% of the older cohort personally agreed with this, compared to 39% of younger men) and "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time" (24% of older men agreed compared to 22% of the younger cohort).

Overall, these findings suggest that the rules of the Man Box have less impact among 31- to 45-year-old men than they do among 18- to 30-year-old men. Men in the older age group demonstrated substantially lower personal agreement with Man Box rules from the "Rigid gender roles" pillar; however, there was little difference between the age groups when it came to rules from the "Acting tough" pillar.

Figure 3.6: Personal beliefs about masculinity, 31-45 y.o. men, 2023

Percentage of 31-45 y.o. survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "In my opinion ...", compared to 18-30 y.o. respondents

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

# 3.2.3.Social pressure to personal beliefs: which Man Box rules stick?

It is clear from the data that there is variation between the ideas of manhood often communicated by society, and men's personal beliefs about how a how a "real man" thinks, feels, and behaves. Figure 3.7 depicts the proportion of men who perceive social pressure to conform with each Man Box rule, the proportion of men who personally agree with each Man Box rule, and the difference between the two. The difference between them provides some insight into which stereotypical masculine norms are more likely to be internalised.

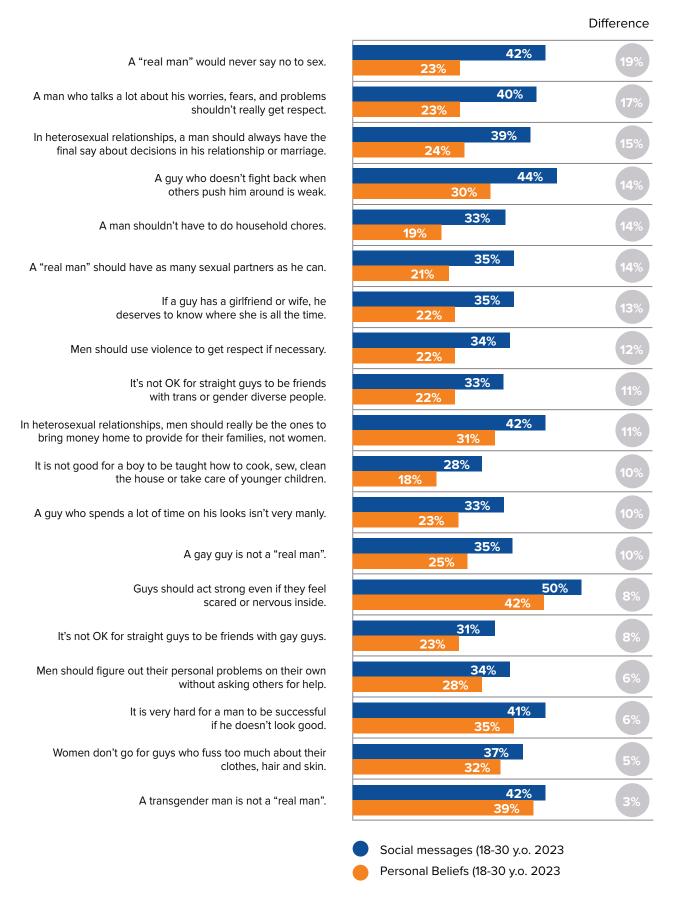
Figure 3.7 shows that men's personal endorsement of the Man Box is 11 percentage points lower (on average) than their perception of social pressure; however, there is significant variation by Man Box rule. For Man Box rules related to hypersexuality, sharing worries and fears, having the final say in relationships, household roles, and fighting back, men's personal views are substantially more progressive than the messages they perceive from society. This suggests that for these Man Box rules, men are able to differentiate between culturally endorsed ideas about masculinity and their own values and beliefs. On the other hand, there is little difference between perceived social pressure and personal agreement of Man Box rules which exclude gay and trans men, require men to look good without effort, and disallow help seeking. This may indicate there are some Man Box rules which men internalise without conscious reflection, and that potentially this could be disrupted.

While there is a clear gap between the proportion of men who perceive social pressure to conform to stereotypical masculine norms and the proportion of men who personally agree with these norms, helping men break free of the Man Box remains a challenge. Men "perform" masculinity differently in different contexts, and an individual's perception of masculine norms and their adoption of these is influenced by multiple intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality and ability (Our Watch, 2019). To address this, it is critical to engage men and boys in a range of contexts, including where they live, work, study and play. Men need to be equipped to challenge harmful gender norms in each of these contexts, particularly within male peer cultures that emphasise aggression and dominance. Even when men don't personally agree with Man Box rules, traditional masculine attitudes and behaviours are modelled to them and reinforced throughout society, creating pressure to conform and potentially negatively impacting a man's sense of worthiness and belonging. It is thus likely that, among the majority of the men 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.

At the same time, the gap between perceived social pressure and personal endorsement is a good news story – the majority of men are rejecting Man Box rules and adopting their own ideas about masculinity, despite the messages they receive from society. Work with men and boys should highlight this diversity among men and boys. That said, as chapter 4 will show, even men with low Man Box endorsement engage in behaviours that stem from the harmful elements of the Man Box.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Insights from the focus groups related to these contexts will be explored in more depth in a forthcoming report by Respect Victoria, produced as part of the Man Box research partnership with Jesuit Social Services.

Figure 3.7: Difference between perceived social message and personal endorsement, 18-30 y.o, 2023, ordered by size of difference



# The difference between social pressure and personal beliefs among 31- to 45-year-old men

Are older or younger men more able to differentiate between culturally imposed gender norms and their own beliefs? This breakout box considers the gap between perceived social messages and personal beliefs for 31- to 45-year-old men ("older men"), compared to men aged 18-30 ("younger men").

The pressure/beliefs gap for older men: Like their younger counterparts, 31- to 45-year-old men's personal endorsement of Man Box rules was lower than the social pressure they perceived to conform to these rules.

As Figure 3.8 demonstrates, the Man Box rules that showed the greatest gaps for the older cohort are:

- A real man should never say no to sex (22 percentage point gap)
- A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn't really get respect (16 percentage point gap)
- A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak (17 percentage point gap)
- A man shouldn't have to do household chores (17 percentage point gap)
- In heterosexual relationships, man should always be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women (19 percentage point gap)
- In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage (20 percentage point gap).

Comparison of the pressure/beliefs gap between age cohorts: On average, the gap between perceived social messages and personal beliefs was slightly larger within the older cohort (13%, compared to 11% among younger men). Both age groups experienced the greatest gaps in essentially similar areas. One exception was the rule "In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women", where the gap was larger in the older cohort. For this rule, a similar proportion of men perceived social messages to conform, but fewer men in the older cohort personally agreed with these messages. This may indicate that older men have developed more flexible attitudes to norms around breadwinning.

Figure 3.8: Difference between perceived social message and personal endorsement, 18-30 y.o and 31-45 y.o. men, 2023

Difference between social message and personal beliefs

Man Box pillar	Man Box rule	18 to 30 year olds	31 to 45 year olds
1. Self- sufficiency	A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect.	17%pt.	16%pt.
	Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	6%pt.	8%pt.
2. Acting tough	A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak.	14%pt.	17%pt.
	Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	8%pt.	14%pt.
3. Physical attractiveness	It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good.	6%pt.	9%pt.
	A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	10%pt.	11%pt.
	Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin.	5%pt.	7%pt.
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.	10%pt.	13%pt.
	A man shouldn't have to do household chores.	14%pt.	17%pt.
	In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	11%pt.	17%pt.

Man Box pillar	Man Box rule	18 to 30 year olds	31 to 45 year olds
5. Homophobia	A gay guy is not a "real man".	10%pt.	14%pt.
and transphobia	A transgender man is not a "real man".	3%pt.	5%pt.
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.	8%pt.	10%pt.
	It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.	11%pt.	13%pt.
6. Hypersexuality	A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can.	14%pt.	19%pt.
	A "real man" would never say no to sex.	19%pt.	22%pt.
7. Aggression and control	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary.	12%pt.	13%pt.
	In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.	15%pt.	20%pt.
	If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.	13%pt.	9%pt.
	Average	11%pt.	13%pt.

# 3.3. What has changed since 2018?

## 3.3.1. Changes in social messages about how to be a "real man"

Social messages about what it means to be a "real man" are not static; they are shaped by the events and trends impacting society as a whole. To understand how social pressures around masculinity have changed, we compared the percentage of survey respondents who agreed that they felt these pressures in 2018 and in 2023<sup>27</sup> (see Figure 3.9).

Box 3.5: Largest and smallest changes in perceived social pressure for 18- to 30-year-old men, 2018 to 2023

Smallest change in perceived social pressure	
Men should use violence to get respect if necessary (1%pt. decrease between 2018 and 2023)	
In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage (4%pt. decrease)	
A man shouldn't have to do household chores (6%pt. decrease)	
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin (7%pt. decrease)	
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect. (9%pt. decrease)	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> The data for this study was collected in 2023.

There have been some significant shifts in perceived social messages in the last five years. The perception of social pressure to conform to Man Box norms decreased for all Man Box rules between 2018 and 2023, with an average fall of 12 percentage points (from 49% of survey respondents agreeing they felt social pressure in 2018 to 37% in 2023). The largest shifts were related to Man Box rules around self-sufficiency, stoicism, and acting tough; the proportion of men who said they felt social pressure around these fell by between 16 percentage points and 20 percentage points (noting that despite this decrease, they remain some of the Man Box rules with the highest perceived social pressure). Several rules in the physical attractiveness pillar also saw substantial decreases in perceived social pressure.

The change in social messages around vulnerability and help seeking were key topics in the focus group discussions. While many focus group participants reported that they still felt pressure to avoid talking about their feelings, some also noted that it has become more socially acceptable for men to reveal their vulnerable sides. Most focus group participants saw this as a positive shift.

"I think we do talk a bit more now. I think we are more open to talking, I think we are more open to being vulnerable. You don't have to be that tough, you know, tough person, I think."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

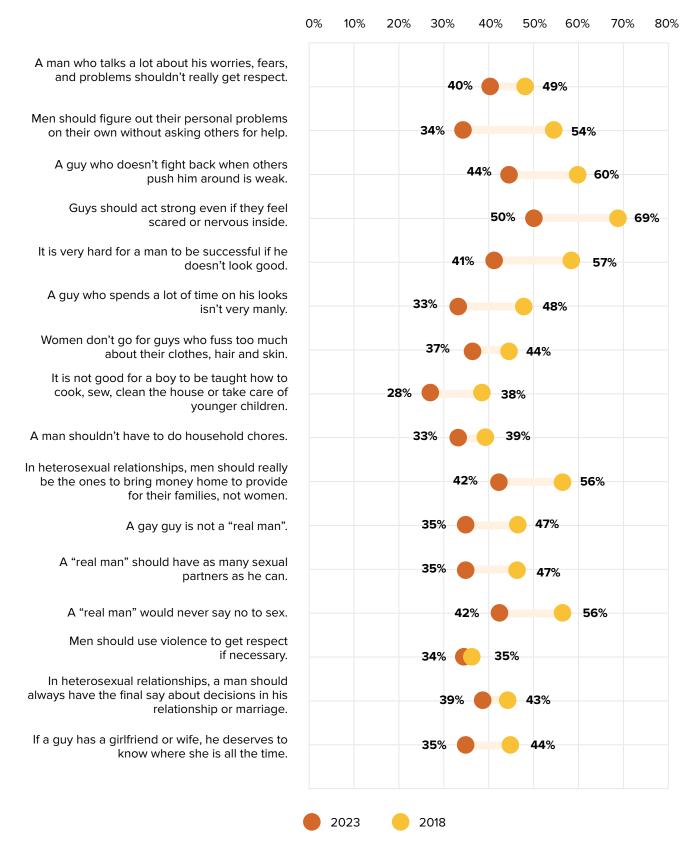
"It's not weak to speak. You know, a lot about men's mental health, being able to speak about things. And I do think that it has helped a lot. Like I know my mates and I, any issues, there's nothing too big an issue to speak about."

Focus group participant (18- to 30-year-old, moderate Man Box endorsement)

While there have been substantial shifts in the perception of social pressure around some Man Box rules, others have barely changed. As discussed in section 3.2, many of the most enduring norms reflect gender-inequitable and violence-supportive attitudes. Four in 10 men still perceive social messages that men should have the final say about decisions in their relationship (43% in 2018 to 39% in 2023). More than a third of men believe society communicates that men are entitled to know where their partner is at all times (44% in 2018 to 35% in 2023) and similar numbers perceive that society expects men to "Use violence to get respect if necessary" (35% in 2018 to 34% in 2023) and avoid responsibility for household chores (39% in 2018, 33% in 2023).

Figure 3.9 Perceived social messages about masculinity, change between 2018 and 2023<sup>28</sup>, 18- to 30-year-old men

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "Society as a whole tells me that..."



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Data for this study was collected in 2023.

### 3.3.2.Changes in personal agreement with the Man Box rules

What men believe about how they should think, feel, and behave is influenced by the messages they receive from society – including from their peers, workmates, and partners. Given this, it could be expected that changes in perceived social pressure to conform to masculine norms would be accompanied by similar changes in personal endorsement of those rules.

Indeed, some Man Box rules have a significantly looser hold over men's attitudes in 2023 compared to 2018 (see Figure 3.10). For instance, men's personal endorsement of the Man Box rule "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time" decreased by more than a third, from 36% in 2018 to 21% in 2023 (despite perceived social pressure to conform to this rule only decreasing from 44% to 37%). Personal endorsement of all rules in the "Physical attractiveness" pillar fell between seven and nine percentage points; less than the decrease in perceived social messages (7% to 16%). Personal endorsement of the rule against boys being taught to cook, sew, clean and care for children fell five percentage points – less than the fall in the perceived social pressure to conform to this rule.

Largest change in personal agreement

However, in general, the fall in personal endorsement of Man Box norms was substantially lower than the fall in the perception of social messages. In fact, the average personal agreement with two Man Box norms actually increased. Agreement that men should use violence to get respect if necessary increased from 20% to 22% between 2018 and 2023. The proportion of survey respondents who agreed that men should figure out their personal problems without asking for help also increased slightly from 27% in 2018 to 28% in 2023 – a shift that contrasts with the substantial fall in perceived social pressure (from 54% in 2018 to 34%).

Stereotypical masculine norms can influence boys' ideas about masculinity from a young age. As a result, some elements of masculinity become tightly woven into a man's identity (and thus resistant to change) (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This may provide a partial explanation for why some Man Box rules showed very little change in personal endorsement despite substantial decreases in perceived social pressure.

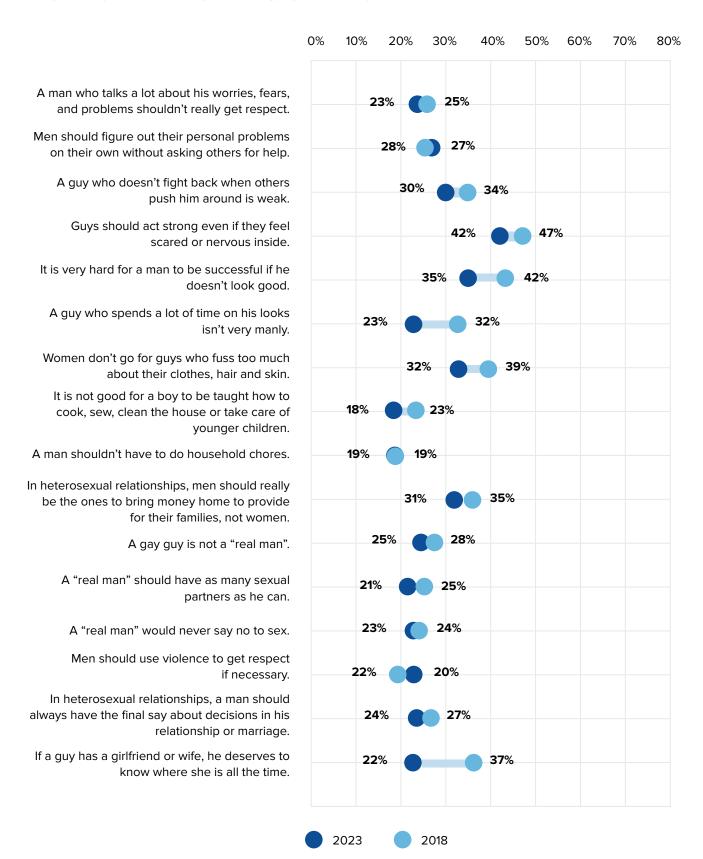
Smallest change in personal agreement

Box 3.6: Largest and smallest changes in personal agreement for 18- to 30-year-old men, 2018 to 2023

If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time (15%pt. decrease between 2018 and 2023)	Men should use violence to get respect if necessary (2%pt. <u>increase</u> between 2018 and 2023)
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly (9%pt. decrease)	Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help (1%pt. increase)
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin (7%pt. decrease)	A man shouldn't have to do household chores (no change)
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good (7%pt. decrease)	A "real man" would never say no to sex (1%pt. absolute <u>decrease</u> )
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children (5%pt. decrease)	A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect (2%pt. decrease)
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside (5%pt. decrease)	

Figure 3.10 Personal beliefs about masculinity, change between 2018 and 2023, 18- to 30-year-old men

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that "In my opinion ..."



#### What does this tell us?

Man Box rules do not represent the views of the majority of men in this study. More than two thirds<sup>30</sup> of men surveyed reported that they don't feel social pressure to live up to Man Box rules, and three-quarters<sup>31</sup> personally disagreed with the version of masculinity represented by the Man Box. Both of these proportions have increased slightly since 2018. This is good news.

On the other hand, while a majority of men do not endorse or feel pressure to conform to Man Box rules, there is still a substantial minority of men who agree with these rigid, restrictive and harmful norms. As the next chapter will demonstrate, men who most strongly endorse Man Box norms are more likely to condone or perpetrate violence, are more likely to demonstrate a range of concerning health behaviours and engage in dangerous activities at a higher rate than men with lower Man Box endorsement. While the findings of this chapter are broadly encouraging, more work needs to be done with the remaining minority of men who are susceptible to experiencing and perpetrating harm due to their rigid beliefs about masculinity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> 74% of 18- to 30-year-old men and 78% of 31- to 45-year-old men did not personally agree with Man Box rules.



<sup>30 63%</sup> of 18- to 30-year-old men and 65% of 31- to 45-year-old men did not agree that they felt social pressure to conform to Man Box rules.

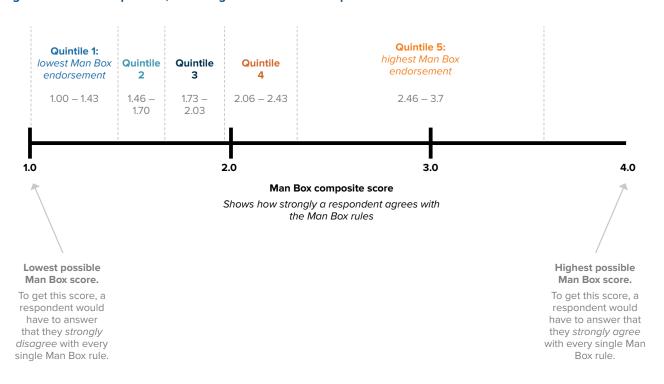


## 4. The impact of the Man Box

This chapter responds to the third and fourth research aims: exploring how men's personal endorsement of Man Box rules predicts other attitudes, behaviours, and life outcomes. The behaviours and life outcomes considered can be broadly understood as "the impact of Man Box endorsement on others" and "the impact of Man Box endorsement on men themselves". The impact of Man Box endorsement on others considers aspects such as violence-supportive attitudes, violent pornography use, bullying, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and bystander behaviour. The impact of Man Box endorsement on men themselves includes variables such as life satisfaction and mental health, help seeking behaviours, alcohol and drug use, gambling behaviours, and traffic accidents. This chapter discusses the results of the survey for each of these areas, for 18- to 30-yearold men. The results for 31- to 45-year-old men are presented in Appendix G.

For all of the behaviours and outcomes in this chapter, respondents were divided into five groups (quintiles) based upon their Man Box composite score (which represents the degree to which they personally agree with Man Box rules – see chapter 2, section 2.2 for more detail). Quintile 1 is the men with the lowest 20% of Man Box scores, i.e. those who most strongly reject the rules of the Man Box.¹ Quintile 5 is the men with the highest 20% of Man Box score, i.e. those who most strongly endorse the Man Box rules.² The quintiles, and the range of Man Box scores in each quintile, are shown in Figure 4.1. (See footnote 31 for more detail on why each quintile has a different number of survey responses).

Figure 4.1: Man Box quintiles, with range of scores and sample size<sup>3</sup>



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Each quintile represents a fifth of the <u>range</u> of Man Box scores, not a fifth of <u>respondents</u>. In other words, the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the range of Man Box scores, the second quintile represents the second fifth of the range, and so on. This is why the quintiles do not have an equal number of survey respondents.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This report does not to use the other categories featured in the 2018 Man Box report: "In the Man Box" and "Out of the Man Box". These categories grouped the 50% of men with the highest Man Box scores ("In the Man Box") and the 50% of men with the lowest Man Box scores ("Out of the Man Box"). This grouping was used in 2018 to ensure sample sizes of sub-groupings that were large enough for analysis (the 2018 report surveyed 1,000 men). The larger sample size (2,500) in the 2024 report allows for analysis to be done at the quintile level, which provides for deeper insight into how Man Box endorsement impacts behaviour, and negates the need for these categories.

<sup>3</sup> Note that the number of respondents in each quintile does not add to the total sample size. This is due to the way quintiles are calculated.

As Figure 4.1 shows, 80% of 18- to 30-year-old respondents' scores fall within the lower half of the possible range of Man Box scores (1.00 to 2.43). To be allocated a Man Box score of 1.00, a respondent would need to strongly disagree with all the Man Box rules. To be allocated a score of 2.43, a survey respondent would need to agree with approximately half of the Man Box rules and disagree with the other half.

The range of Man Box scores for quintile 5 is 2.46 to 3.70. Similar to the example described above, a score of 2.46 would be allocated to a survey respondent who agreed with approximately half the Man Box rules and disagreed with the other half. A Man Box score of 3.70 would be allocated to someone who strongly agreed to approximately 13 out of 19 Man Box rules and agreed to the remaining rules.

#### Box 4.1: Demographic characteristics of Man Box quintiles 1 and 5 (18- to 30-year-old men)

The graphic below presents the demographic variables for quintiles with the highest and lowest Man Box endorsement (for 18- to 30-year-olds). It shows that men with the highest Man Box endorsement (quintile 5) are:

- · More likely to be religious
- · More likely to be heterosexual
- · More likely to have children
- More likely to have left school before finishing year 12, and
- More likely to have been born in Australia.

Survey respondents with lowest agreement with the Man Box (quintile 1)	Survey respondents with highest agreement with the Man Box (quintile 5)		
<b>Have no religion</b> (72% of quintile vs 55% of total survey sample)	<b>Are Christian</b> (41% of quintile vs 31% of total survey sample) or Muslim (9% of quintile vs 5% of total survey sample)		
Are from the LGBTQIA+ community (27% of quintile vs 10% of total survey sample)	<b>Are straight</b> (97% of quintile vs 90% of total survey sample)		
<b>Have no children</b> (84% of quintile vs 74% of total survey sample)	<b>Have children</b> (32% of quintile vs 26% of total survey sample)		
<b>Have a paid job</b> (80% of quintile vs 73% of total survey sample)	Have not completed year 12 (17% of quintile vs 12% of total survey sample)		
Have a disability, health condition, or injury (32% of quintile vs 19% of total survey sample)	<b>Are born in Australia</b> (92% of quintile vs 87% of total survey sample)		

# 4.1. Violence: the impact of the Man Box on others

Men commit the vast majority of violence. In Australia, 95% of victims of violence report experiencing violence at the hands of a male perpetrator (Diemer, 2015).

The set of stereotypical masculine norms represented by the Man Box emphasise aggression, emotional suppression, hierarchy, control, homophobia, transphobia, and hypersexuality as fundamental aspects of masculinity. This model of masculinity directly contributes to gender inequality, which is the social context in which violence against women occurs.<sup>4</sup> These masculine norms also condone and encourage the use of violence against other men, and people of all genders.<sup>5</sup>

This section looks at the impact of Man Box rules on attitudes and behaviour related to the use of violence. A summary of the results discussed in this section is included in Box 4.2.

#### Box 4.2: The impact of stereotypical masculine norms on men's attitudes towards, and perpetration of violence

Compared to men who least strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 1), men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 5) were more than:

- 35 times more likely to report frequently perpetrating verbal sexual harassment against a woman or girl in a public place
- 17 times more likely to agree with violence-supportive attitudes
- 11 times more likely to report frequently perpetrating verbal, online, or physical bullying
- Eight times more likely to report perpetrating sexual violence against an intimate partner (including 28 times more likely to report using fear to coerce a partner into having sex)
- Six times more likely to report they would be unconcerned witnessing a male friend verbally abusing their female partner
- Five times more likely to report having perpetrated physical violence against an intimate partner (including 17 times more likely to report having hit a partner with a fist or something else that could hurt them)
- Five times more likely to deny experiences of gender inequality
- · Four times more likely to report they would be unconcerned witnessing male-to-male violence, and
- · Three times more likely to report viewing violent pornography at least once a week in the previous six months.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Gender inequality also intersects with other forms of structural oppression (e.g. racism, homophobia, ableism) to influence the use of violence against women (Respect Victoria, 2023).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For more information on how social norms underpin violence against women, see <u>Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia.</u>

#### Box 4.3: Change the Story and the four drivers of gendered violence

A framework to understand some of the attitudes and behaviours which drive violence against women is <u>Change</u> <u>the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia</u> (Our Watch, 2021). Change the Story was the world's first national framework focused on preventing violence against women. It takes an approach often used in public health, i.e. investigating the underlying causes and contexts for violence against women, rather than just the immediate precursors or after-effects, in an effort to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Change the Story outlines the national and international evidence on what drives violence against women at a population level, and outlines the essential actions needed across all levels of society to prevent this violence. It highlights how violence against women is underpinned by gender inequality, which also intersects with other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression (such as racism, ableism, classism, homophobia, transphobia etc), to form the social context in which violence against women occurs (Our Watch, 2021).

Change the Story identifies four gendered drivers of violence against women:

- **Driver 1:** Condoning of violence against women.
- Driver 2: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.
- Driver 3: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- Driver 4: Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

The four gendered drivers of men's violence against women consistently predict the use of violence at a population level, and explain the gendered nature of this violence. Each of the drivers is represented by either items in the Man Box scale (or by the scale as a whole, in the case of Driver 3), or by variables in this chapter. See Figure 4.2 for the sections of this report most relevant to the four drivers of gendered violence.

Figure 4.2: Where the four drivers of gendered violence are covered in this report

Driver of gendered violence	Relevant data in this report		
Driver 1: Condoning of violence against women.	Chapter 4, particularly these sections:		
	Attitudes towards violence against women		
	Sexual harassment		
	Violent pornography		
	Bystander behaviour		
<b>Driver 2:</b> Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.	Chapter 3, section 3.2.2., and particularly these Man Box rules:		
	<ul> <li>In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage.</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time.</li> </ul>		
<b>Driver 3:</b> Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.	Chapter 3, section 3.2.2. (all Man Box rules).		
Driver 4: Male peer relations and cultures of	Chapter 4, particularly these sections:		
masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.	Attitudes towards violence against women		
and control.	Sexual harassment		
	Violent pornography		
	Bullying and physical violence		
	Bystander behaviour		

#### 4.1.1. Intimate partner violence

Rigid adherence to traditional masculine norms (as represented by the Man Box rules) is a driver of violence against women (Reidy et al., 2009). This study sought to explore the association between Man Box endorsement and intimate partner violence by asking men whether they had ever used violence against a current or former intimate partner, and considered how the results differed for the Man Box quintiles.

Survey respondents were asked whether they had ever committed any of eight forms of sexual or physical violence against a current or former intimate partner. Physical violence included the use of physical force with the intent to cause injury or harm, and sexual abuse involved sexual acts that were committed or attempted without the explicit informed consent of the other person and/or despite their refusal (Breiding et al., 2015).6 Response options were yes, no and prefer not to say.7 It should be noted that some of the forms of intimate partner violence listed required men to report on their perception of their partner's affective reaction (e.g. whether their partner wanted to do something, was scared etc). As a result, data reported for these questions is likely to underreport perpetration, as men may not have been aware of, considering, or accurately interpreting, their partner's reaction.

The results for survey respondents of all sexualities are presented in this report. Data showing violence against women only (i.e. data collected from survey respondents who identified as heterosexual) is available in a fact sheet on the Man Box 2024 website.

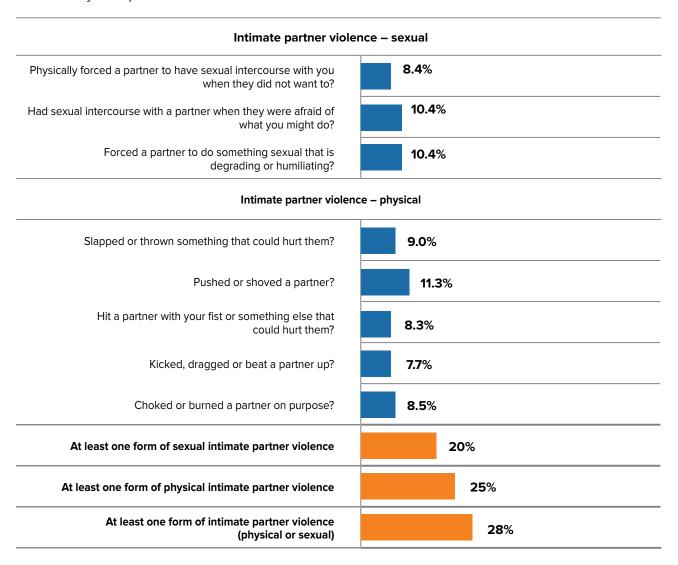
Almost a third of men surveyed (28%) reported that they had perpetrated at least one of the eight forms of intimate partner violence (see Figure 4.3). A fifth (20%) reported that they had perpetrated one of the forms of sexual violence against a partner, and a quarter (25%) reporting that they had perpetrated one of the forms of physical violence listed. These results are consistent with victimisation rates reported in the 2021–22 Australian Personal Safety Survey, which found that 27% of women in Australia had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or family member since the age of 15. The most common form of intimate violence respondents reported perpetrating was "pushed or shoved a partner" (11% of respondents), followed by "had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do" (10%) and "forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating" (10%).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Note: this does not provide a complete picture of perpetration rates of intimate partner violence across this sample, as only selected types of sexual and physical abuse were investigated. Forms of abuse that were not captured in this section included emotional abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, spiritual abuse and coercive control.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Between 2.8% and 5.3% of respondents selected *prefer not to say* for questions about sexual intimate partner violence, and between 3.8% and 4.9% for questions about physical intimate partner violence).

Figure 4.3: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating intimate partner violence, by type of violence, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of survey respondents who selected yes when asked "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner?"



When the sample is divided into quintiles based on the degree to which respondents personally endorse Man Box rules (Figure 4.4), there is a clear association between higher rates of Man Box endorsement and higher rates of reported perpetration of intimate partner violence. Depending on the nature of the intimate partner violence, men who most strongly agree with the Man Box rules (quintile 5) are between four and 28 times more likely to report perpetrating intimate partner violence than men with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules (quintile 1). In fact, the proportion of quintile 5

who report having perpetrated intimate partner violence is three to five times higher than even quintile 4, which is the quintile with the second highest endorsement of Man Box rules. The differences between quintiles 1 and 5 were most substantial for "sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do", where quintile 5 was 28 times more likely to report perpetrating this form of violence than quintile 1; and "Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them", where the proportion of men in quintile 5 who answered yes was 17 times the proportion in quintile 1.

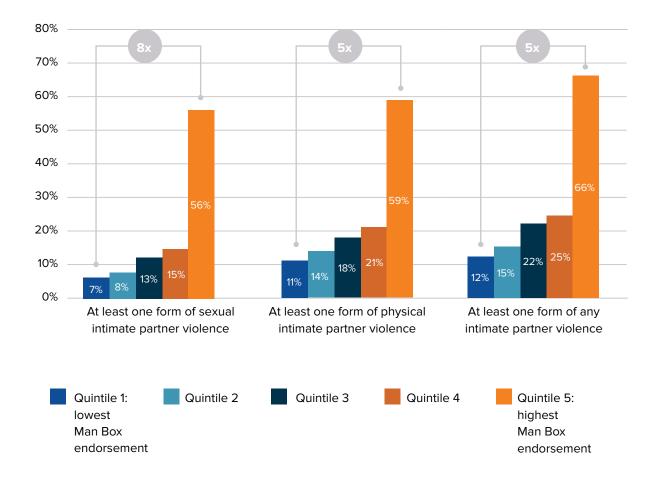
Figure 4.4: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating intimate partner violence, by type of violence and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage that responded yes when asked "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner"

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Intimate partner violence – sexual					
Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to?	5.5%	3.6%	3.9%	4.4%	24%
Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do?	12%	3.8%	5.6%	7.6%	33.0%
Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating?	4.6%	3.8%	6.6%	7.4%	28.9%
Intimate partner violence – physical					
Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?	2.4%	5.5%	6.8%	8.2%	21.7%
Pushed or shoved a partner?	6.5%	4.6%	5.8%	8.4%	29.9%
Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them?	1.4%	4.0%	5.4%	6.0%	24.1%
Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?	4.4%	2.7%	3.5	6.2%	21.1%
Choked or burned a partner on purpose	5.2%	7.4%	7.5%	3.6%	18.4%
At least one form of sexual intimate partner violence	7.0%	8.0%	13%	15%	56%
At least one form of physical intimate partner violence	11%	14%	18%	21%	59%
At least one form of intimate partner violence	12%	15%	22%	25%	66%

Figure 4.5: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating intimate partner violence (aggregated), by type of violence and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Aggregated by type of intimate partner violence



The finding that men in quintile 5 are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence compared to the other quintiles is consistent with a broad body of research. Many studies demonstrate the link between rigid gender norms and the use of intimate partner violence: men who agree with masculine norms that require men to be dominant, aggressive, hypersexual,

use violence, and have the final say about decisions in their relationship are more likely to use aggression, violence and control in their intimate relationships. Despite this, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results of this section, as the confronting nature of the questions may have increased the rate of social desirability bias in the answers.8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> It is possible that men in quintiles 1-4 have greater awareness than men in quintile 5 that the forms of violence listed are unacceptable, and this may have influenced how honestly men in those quintiles responded.

# 4.1.2. Attitudes towards violence against women and gender inequality

Violence against women is underpinned by attitudes that deny/disbelieve experiences of gender inequality, minimise the impact of violence, and demonstrate mistrust for women's reports of violence (see X for more detail on the gendered drivers of violence). This section presents the prevalence of those attitudes among respondents and considers the relationship between these attitudes and Man Box rules.

#### Attitudes towards violence against women

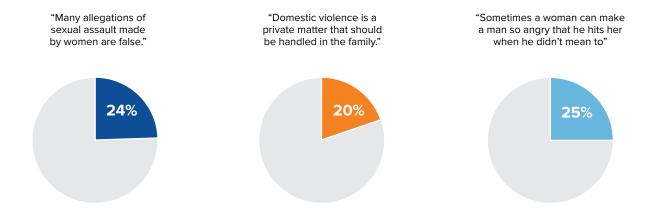
Survey respondents were asked about their attitudinal support for violence against women by asking whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements drawn from the "Attitudes towards Violence Against Women scale" in the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (Coumarelos et al., 2023a). The statements presented were:

- "Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false"
- "Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family"
- "Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he doesn't mean to".

While a majority of the men surveyed hold attitudes which reject violence against women, 20% to 25% of respondents endorsed attitudes which condoned or excused this violence (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Proportion of men who agreed with statements which support violence against women, 18-30 y.o. men

Highlighted segment shows percentage of men who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement



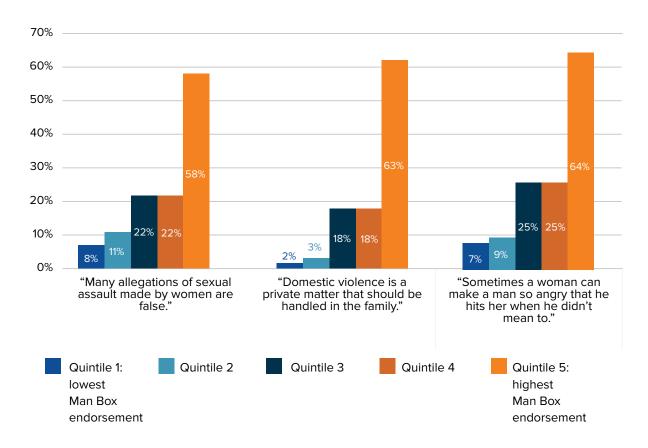
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See Appendix B for more detail.

When the sample is divided into quintiles based on the degree to which respondents personally endorse Man Box rules (see Figure 4.7), there is a positive relationship between violence-supportive attitudes and agreement with the rules of the Man Box. Between 2% and 8% of men with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) of the Man Box agreed with the violence-supportive statements,

but between 58% and 64% of men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 5) agreed with these violence-supportive attitudes (see Figure 4.7). On average, men in the top Man Box quintile (quintile 5) were 17 times more likely to agree with violence supportive statements.

Figure 4.7: Proportion of men who agreed with statements which support violence against women, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men





#### Attitudes towards gender inequality

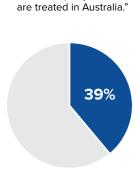
Change the Story (Our Watch, 2021) illustrates how violence against women is enabled by gender inequality. To explore the social context which enables this violence, and understand the connection with endorsement of Man Box rules, survey respondents were asked questions to ascertain whether they deny that gender inequality exists. These questions were taken from Attitudes towards Gender Inequality scale in the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (Coumarelos et al., 2023a). Survey respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements<sup>10</sup>:

- "Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia."
- "Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist."
- "Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them."

As Figure 4.8 shows, while a majority of respondents disagreed with statements that denied gender inequality, more than a third of men agreed with these statements. The proportion who agreed with these statements was higher than for the violence-supportive statements covered in the previous section, suggesting that some respondents reject more overt forms of violence-supportive attitudes, but hold attitudes which underpin violence against women at a societal level.

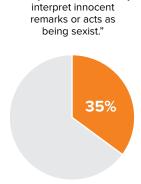
Figure 4.8: Proportion of men who agreed with statements that deny gender inequality, 18-30 y.o. men

Highlighted segment shows percentage of men who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement

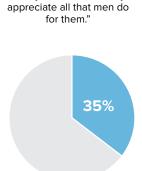


"Many women exaggerate

how unequally women



"Many women mistakenly



"Many women don't fully

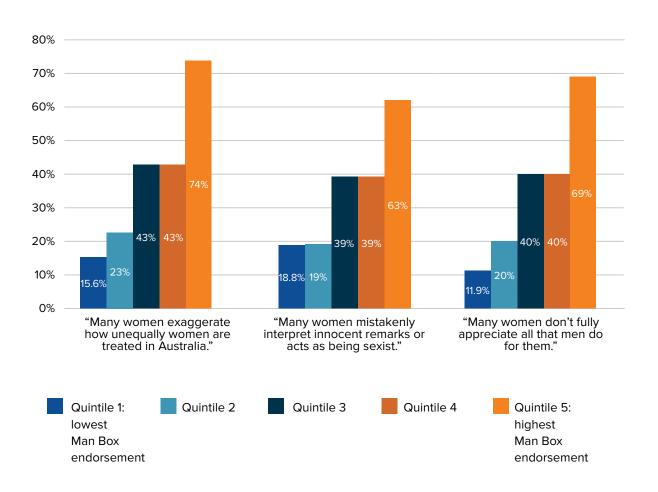
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Appendix B for more detail.

When support for statements that deny gender inequality is broken down by Man Box quintiles, there is a clear positive relationship with the endorsement of Man Box rules. Between 63% and 74% of men in quintile 5 (those with the highest endorsement of the Man Box) agreed with the statements denying gender inequality – a similar proportion to the violence-supportive attitudes expressed by the same quintile (see Figure 4.9). However, almost three times more men in quintile 1 agreed with the statements denying gender inequality

compared to statements condoning violence against women. This indicates that (i.) while some individuals do not expressly endorse violence against women, they do hold attitudes which underpin violence against women at a societal level; and (ii.) attitudes which create the social context for violence against women to occur are pervasive, even among men who reject stereotypical attitudes towards masculinity.

Figure 4.9: Proportion of men who agreed with statements which support violence against women, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who responded agree or strongly agree



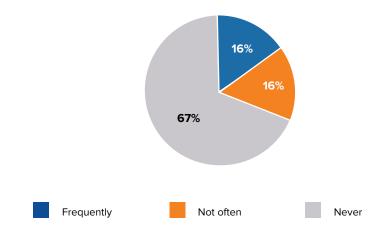
#### 4.1.3. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is "any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour", and can take many forms (AHRC, 2023), including "touch, staring, inappropriate comments, intrusive questions, inappropriate banter, requests or demands for sex, emails, text messages, phone calls, and sexual assault" (Respect Victoria, 2023). It is perpetrated most often by men against women.

In this study we took a look at experiences and perpetration of sexual harassment and how they relate to Man Box norms. We measured men's perpetration of verbal sexual harassment of women in a public place.

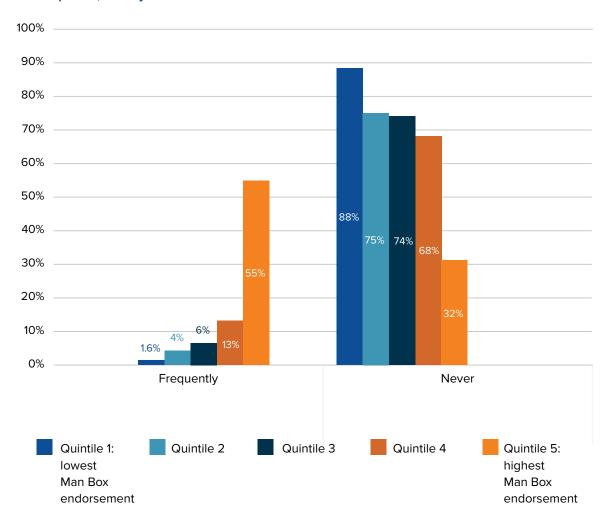
Survey respondents were asked how often they had made "sexual comments to a woman or girl [they] didn't know, in a public place or online", with response options of not at all, not often, often, and very often. A third of men reported they had sexually harassed a woman in the previous month, with about half of these men saying they had done this frequently (see Figure 4.10). It should be noted that the survey question required men to be aware of, and interpret, whether their behaviour was unwanted or unwelcome. As a result, the data reported for these questions are likely to be an underestimate, as men may not have been aware of, or accurately interpreting, a woman's reaction.

Figure 4.10: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating sexual harassment in the previous month, 18-30 y.o. men



Men who most strongly agree with Man Box rules were 35 times more likely to have reported frequently perpetrating sexual harassment (55% of men) compared to men who have the lowest agreement with the Man Box (1.6% of men). They were also over five times more likely to perpetrate sexual harassment at any level of frequency (see Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating sexual harassment in the previous month, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



## 4.1.4. Violent pornography consumption

The 2018 Australian Man Box study sought to understand whether there was a relationship between personal endorsement of masculine norms and viewing of pornography, by asking respondents whether they had accessed pornographic material in the previous month. This study seeks to expand on this, by considering whether there is a relationship between personal endorsement of masculine norms and the consumption of pornography that depicts sexual violence. This link has been explored in a number of studies, but more data is needed on whether this relationship exists in the Australian context.<sup>11</sup>

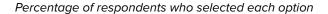
Survey respondents were asked how frequently they had viewed pornography in the last 6 months, with response options never, monthly, 2-3 times a month, weekly, 2-3 times a week or daily. Respondents who reported any frequency of pornography consumption were then asked how often in the last 6 months they had viewed

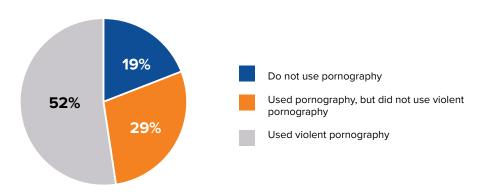
pornography that included one or more of the following being done to a woman: pushing or shoving, pulling hair, spanking, gagging, choking, slapping, kicking, punching, bondage or restraint, or forcing sex. Men who did not identify as heterosexual were presented with an alternative violent pornography question with the phrase "done to a woman" removed.

The results for survey respondents of all sexualities are presented in this report. Data showing violence against women only (i.e. data collected from survey respondents who identified as heterosexual) is available in a fact sheet on the Man Box 2024 website.

As Figure 4.12 shows, more than half of the young men surveyed had viewed violent pornography in the previous six months (52%). An additional 29% had viewed pornography, but not violent pornography, and around one in every five men reported that they had not viewed any pornography or sexually explicit material. In other words, 81% of men had viewed pornography – and two-thirds of that group had viewed violent pornography.

Figure 4.12: Proportion of men who reported viewing pornography in the previous six months, by pornography type, 18-30 y.o. men





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> The relationship between gender norms and sexual violence has been explored in a number of studies. For instance Wright, Tokunaga and Kraus (<sup>2015</sup>) who found that use of violent pornography produced a stronger correlation to acts of sexual aggression, on average, than use of non-violent pornography. This complemented findings from Foubert and Bridges (<sup>2016</sup>), Hald et al (<sup>2010</sup>) and Malamuth et al. whereby violent pornography was a particular risk factor for harmful sexual attitudes and/or behaviours.

As Figure 4.13 shows, the frequency of violent pornography consumption is lower than for other pornography. For instance, less than a third of daily pornography viewers also accessed violent pornography daily (12.2% of respondents were daily pornography viewers; 3.5% were daily viewers of violent pornography). 20.2% of respondents viewed pornography 2-3 times a week, compared to 11.0% of men who accessed violent pornography with the same frequency.

Figure 4.13: Frequency of reported pornography consumption in the previous six months, by pornography type, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who selected each option

Frequency of use	Any pornography	Violent pornography
Daily	12.2%	3.5%
2-3 times a week	20.2%	11.0%
Once a week	17.7%	14.0%
2-3 times a month	10.9%	8.6%
Once a month	19.8%	15.2%
Used porn, but did not use violent porn, in previous 6 months	n/a	28.5%
Did not use any porn in previous 6 months	19.2%	19.2%

Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15 show pornography consumption (including violent pornography) by Man Box quintile. They suggest that, when considering the proportion of men who reported consuming pornography or violent pornography at all in the previous six month/at least once a week in the previous six months:

- There is not a clear linear relationship in quintiles 1 to 4 between Man Box endorsement and likelihood of pornography/violent pornography consumption
- Men in quintile 5 were 1.5 times more likely to report consuming pornography at least once a week than men in the other quintiles. Men in quintile 5 were three times more likely to report consuming <u>violent</u> pornography at least once a week than men in the other quintiles, and 1.6 times more likely to report consuming it in the previous six months.

Figure 4.14: Proportion of respondents who reported viewing pornography /violent pornography in the previous six months, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who selected any option other than Never

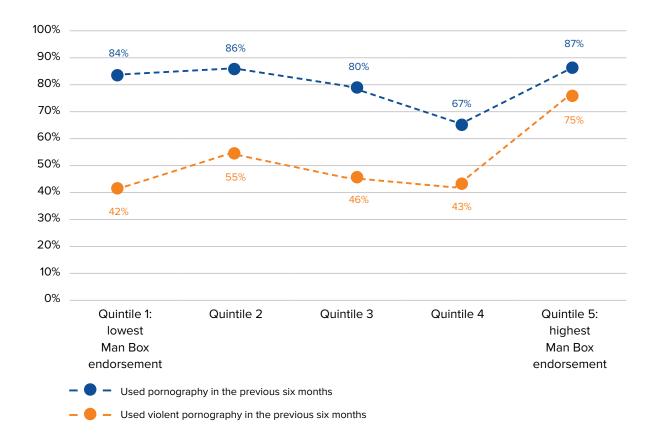
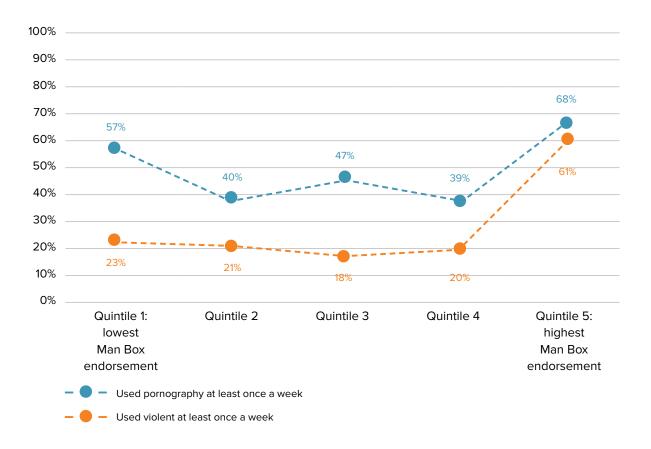


Figure 4.15: Proportion of respondents who reported viewing pornography/violent pornography at least once a week, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who selected Daily, 2-3 times a week, and Once a week



#### 4.1.5. Bullying and physical violence

Bullying is a form of violence used to repeatedly and intentionally cause distress and risk to a person's wellbeing (AHRC, 2024).<sup>12</sup> It can be used in online or in person settings, to both gain and maintain power over others by making them feel helpless. These themes of dominance and control are also reflected in Man Box rules like "men should use violence to get respect if necessary" and "a guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak".

#### Perpetration of bullying and physical violence

Respondents were asked how often they had done any of the following in the previous month:

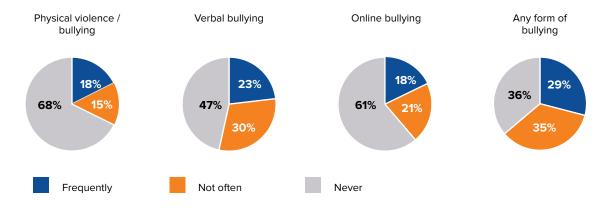
- made jokes about someone, teased someone, or called someone names that they did not like, for any reason (verbal bullying)
- insulted someone, posted something meant to embarrass someone, or made threats to someone via text or online (online bullying)

 physically hurt someone on purpose by pushing them down, kicking them or hitting them with a hand, clenched fist, object or weapon (physical violence/bullying).

Overall, 64% of men in this study reported perpetrating at least one type of bullying over the past month, with 29% of men doing this frequently (see Figure 4.16).<sup>13</sup> Verbal bullying was most common, with more than half of men agreeing they had done this over the previous month, and more than one in five agreeing they had done this frequently. About a third of men reported that over the past month at some point they had perpetrated physical violence/bullying, with more than half (18% of all respondents) agreeing they had done this frequently.

Figure 4.16: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating bullying in the previous month, by bullying type and frequency, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who selected not often, often or very often



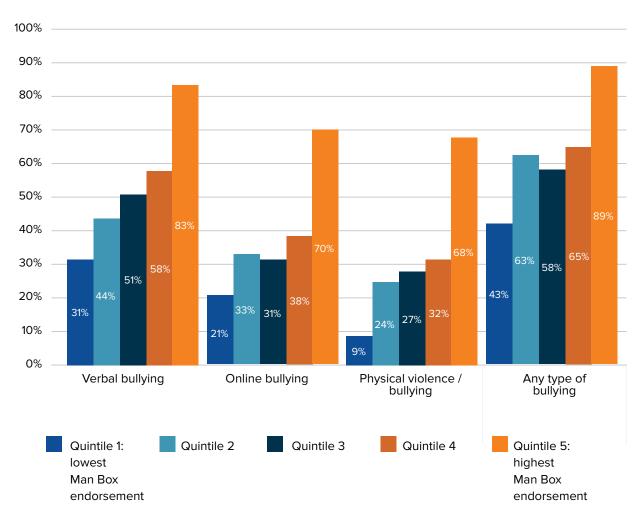
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> In this section, "bullying" is used as a catch-all term for abuse (any intentional action that harms or injures another person) which would meet the definition of bullying when conducted repeatedly. It should be noted that this is not the usual way bullying is defined, however it is the way data was collected and reported in previous studies, and has been retained for consistency.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 13}$  "Frequent" includes men who selected often or very often.

An analysis of these results by Man Box quintiles shows an association between higher Man Box endorsement and higher rates of bullying. Men in quintile 5 (highest endorsement of Man Box rules) were at least twice as likely to have reported perpetrating one of the forms of bullying in the previous month as men in quintile 1 (lowest endorsement of Man Box rules). For physical violence/bullying, men in quintile 5 were almost eight times as likely to have used this form of violence as men in quintile 1.

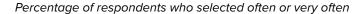
Figure 4.17: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating bullying in the previous month, by bullying type and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

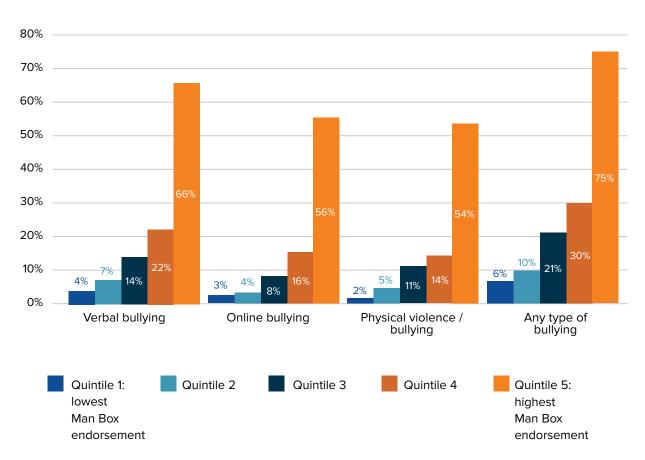




The relationship between Man Box endorsement and bullying is even clearer for those who reported perpetrating bullying frequently. On average, men with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules (quintile 5) were 12 times as likely to have reported frequently perpetrating bulling in the previous month compared to quintile 1 (75% vs 6%) and 28 times more likely to have frequently used physical violence/bullying (54% vs 2%). Men in quintile 5 were also more likely to have reported perpetrating multiple forms of bullying.

Figure 4.18: Proportion of men who reported perpetrating bullying frequently in the previous month, by bullying type and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men





#### Bullying and physical violence victimisation

Respondents were asked how often "someone or a group of people" had done any of the following in the previous month:

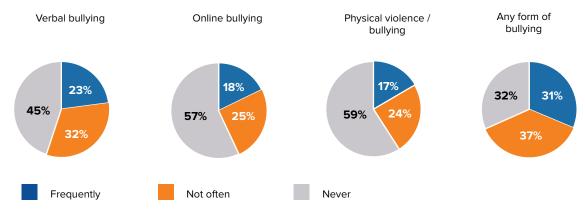
- "verbally put you down, called you names you did not like, made jokes about you or teased you for any reason" (verbal bullying)
- "posted something meant to embarrass you, insulted you or made threats to you via text or online" (online bullying)
- "physically hurt you on purpose". (physical violence/bullying).

As shown in Figure 4.19, the rates of experiencing bullying were similar to the perpetration rates of bullying, with about two-thirds of men reporting being the victim of at least one form of bullying in the past month and almost a third of survey respondents reporting that this happened frequently. The most common type of bullying experienced was verbal bullying (which was also the most common type of bullying perpetrated), with more than half of the men reporting at least one experience of verbal bullying over the past month and almost a quarter of men reporting that they had experienced *frequent* verbal bullying over the past month.

Online bullying and physical violence/bullying were both frequently experienced by more than one in six men. The rate of bullying victimisation was consistent with the rate reported in the 2018 Man Box study, for all forms of bullying.

Figure 4.19: Proportion of men who experienced bullying victimisation in the previous month, by bullying type and frequency, 18-30 y.o. men

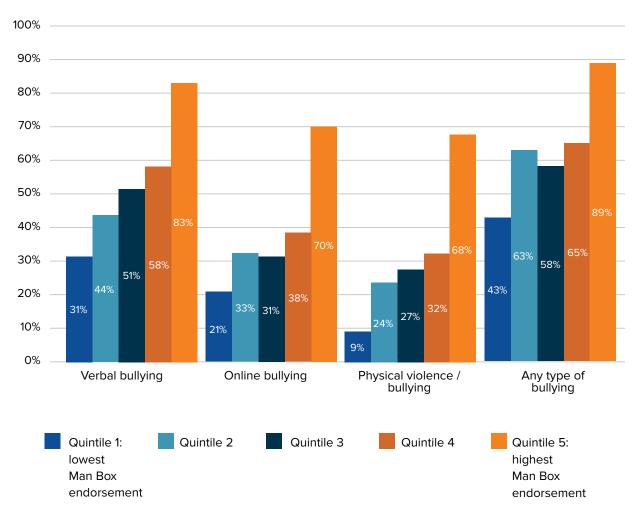
Percentage of respondents who selected not often, often or very often



A quintile analysis (see Figure 4.20) again shows the relationship between being bullied and endorsement of the Man Box. Nine out of every ten men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules had experienced some form of bullying in the last month, compared to just over half of the men with lowest endorsement of the Man Box.

Figure 4.20: Proportion of men who experienced bullying victimisation in the previous month, by bullying type and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who selected not often, often or very often

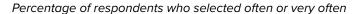


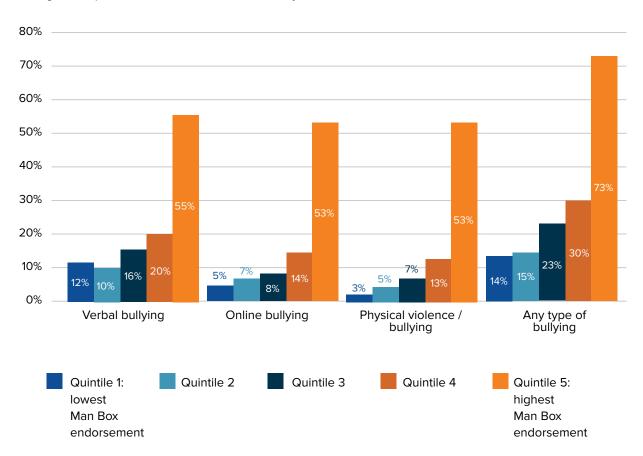
About three-quarters of men in quintile 5 (those with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules) frequently experienced some form of bullying in the last month, compared to only 14% of men in quintile 1 (those with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules). In other words, a man with high Man Box endorsement was five times as likely to experience frequent bullying compared to a man with low Man Box endorsement.

Men in quintile 5 are markedly more likely to have experienced bullying compared to all the other quintiles, not just quintile 1.

There is a clear association between bullying perpetration/victimisation and endorsement of the Man Box: those men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box are much more likely to be involved in bullying as both a perpetrator and a victim.

Figure 4.21: Proportion of men who experienced bullying victimisation frequently in the previous month, by bullying type and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men





#### 4.1.6. Bystander behaviour

A "bystander" is someone who observes but is not directly involved in a harmful or potentially harmful event, and who could assist or intervene (Webster et al., 2018). Bystanders can play an important role in the prevention of violence when they "call out unacceptable behaviour, place social sanctions on perpetrators that discourage future perpetration, help victims and survivors to feel supported and heard, and, in some situations, prevent violence from escalating or even occurring" (Coumarelos et al., 2023b, p. 187). Behaviours like this, which are intended to benefit someone other than the bystander themselves, are called "prosocial" bystander behaviours.

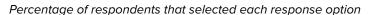
In this section, we examine the influence of men's endorsement of Man Box rules on bystander behaviours when witnessing violence.<sup>17</sup> Two scenarios were presented to survey respondents: one where they witnessed friends getting into a physical fight, and one where they witnessed a friend verbally abusing a woman he was in a relationship with. Survey respondents were asked whether they would be "bothered" by witnessing this violence, and what, if any, action they would take in response.

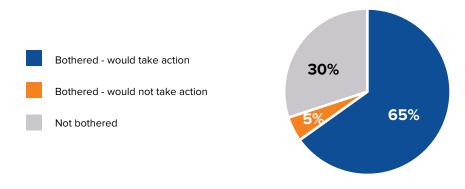
## Bystander behaviour: male-to-male physical violence

Men in the study were presented with the following hypothetical scenario: "Imagine you are out with some friends and two of them get involved in a physical fight with each other". Respondents were then asked if they would be bothered by this, and if yes, how they would respond.<sup>18</sup>

As shown in Figure 4.22, seven out of 10 men reported that they would be bothered if they witnessed their friends engaging in a physical fight, and nearly all of the men who said they would be bothered said they would also intervene in some way (65% out of the 70% who were bothered).<sup>19</sup>

Figure 4.22: Anticipated response to witnessing male friends in a physical fight, 18-30 y.o. men





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Note: attitudes are only one of the factors that influence a person's likelihood of performing a prosocial action as a bystander. For example, a recent study found that bystander intent to intervene in a sexual assault was positively related to the bystander's anticipated "efficacy" in the intervention, indicating that skills development and increasing confidence are also relevant (Papineau, 2020).

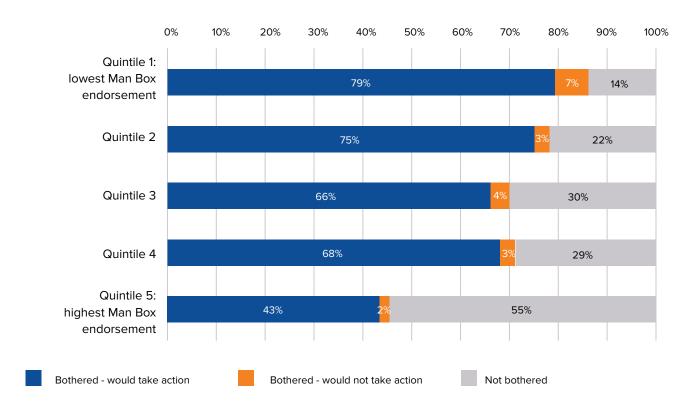
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Response options were You wouldn't say anything (a follow up question was then asked about why the respondent wouldn't say anything), You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve, You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve, You would call for security / call the police, You would physically intervene to break up the fight, You would pick the side you think is right and get involved in the fighting, I do not know how I would react.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> In the figure, "Bothered – would not take action" represents those respondents that reported they wouldn't say anything.

When these responses are broken down by Man Box quintile, it shows that men with lower personal endorsement of Man Box rules were more likely to be bothered, and more likely to say they would intervene, than those with higher agreement with Man Box rules (see Figure 4.23). In fact, men in the quintile with the lowest Man Box endorsement were almost twice as likely to be bothered/intervene than men in the quintile with the highest Man Box endorsement.

Figure 4.23: Anticipated response to witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

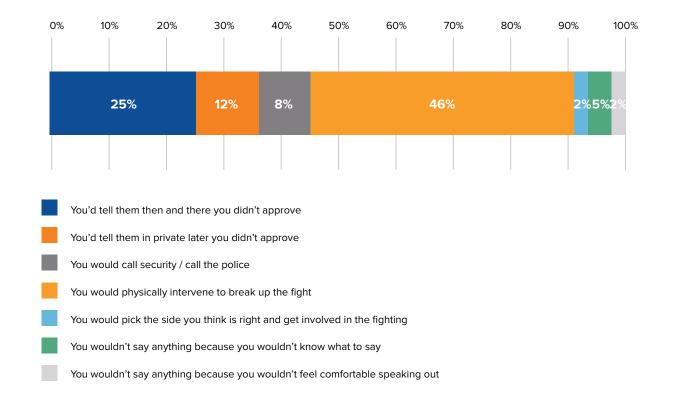
Percentage of respondents that selected each response option



Respondents who reported they would be "bothered" witnessing violence between male friends were then asked to select how they would respond. As Figure 4.24 shows, more than 90% of respondents nominated a prosocial response: around a third of respondents reported they would say something (25% at the time and 12% later in private), 8% would call security or the police, and almost half (46%) would physically intervene to break up the fight. Only 2% of men reported that they would pick a side and join the fight, and 7% said they wouldn't say anything. There was no clear relationship between the type of intervention chosen and the level of endorsement of Man Box rules.

Figure 4.24: Type of anticipated bystander intervention when witnessing male friends in a physical fight, 18-30 y.o. men

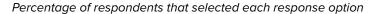
Percentage of respondents that selected each response option, "bothered" respondents only

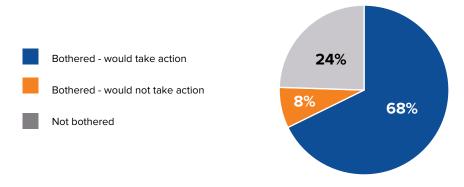


## Bystander behaviour: verbal intimate partner violence

The second bystander scenario presented to survey respondents was: "Imagine you are out with some friends and a male friend is insulting or verbally abusing a woman he is in a relationship with". Respondents were asked if they would be bothered by this, and if yes, how they thought they would respond.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 4.25: Anticipated response to witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, 18-30 y.o. men



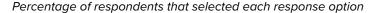


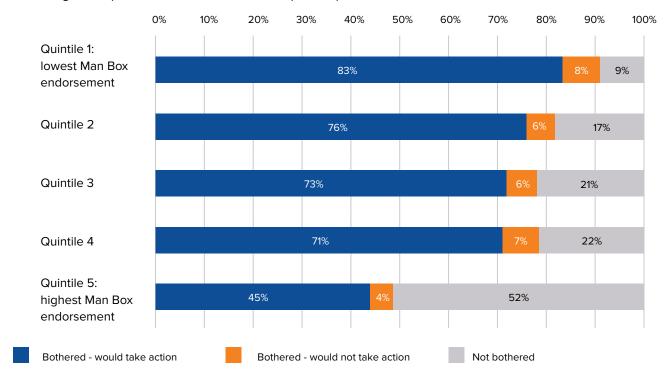
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Response options were: You wouldn't say anything (a follow up question was then asked about why the respondent wouldn't say anything), You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve, You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve, I do not know how I would react.

As Figure 4.25 shows, three in four of the men surveyed reported that they would be bothered if they witnessed a friend verbally abusing their female partner, slightly higher than the proportion who said they would be bothered witnessing friends in a physical fight (70%). Again, nearly all of the men who said they would be bothered also said that they would intervene in some way (68% out of the 76% who were bothered).<sup>21</sup>

Bystander responses were then broken down by Man Box quintiles. Once again, there was a clear relationship between anticipating being bothered/intervening, and the degree of endorsement of Man Box rules. Men with lower personal agreement with Man Box rules were more likely to believe they would be bothered, and more likely to intervene, than those with higher endorsement of Man Box rules (see Figure 4.23). Men in the first quintile (lowest Man Box endorsement) were almost twice as likely to anticipate being bothered/intervene than men in quintile 5 (highest Man Box endorsement). Men were more likely to say they would be bothered, and intervene, in the verbal abuse of a female partner than they were in a physical fight between male friends.

Figure 4.26: Anticipated response to witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



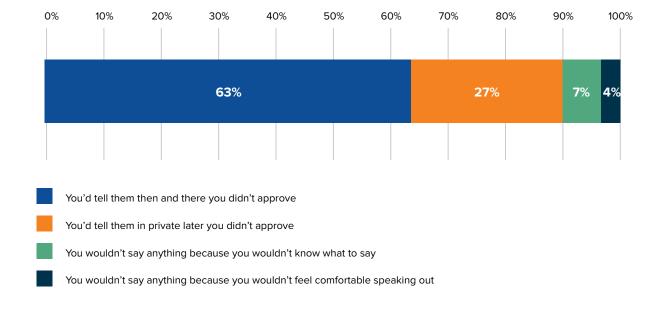


 $<sup>^{21}</sup>$  "Bothered – would not take action" is those respondents that reported they wouldn't say anything.

Respondents who reported they would be "bothered" witnessing a friend verbally abusing their female partner were asked to select how they would respond (The list of possible responses is a subset of the responses to the previous scenario). As Figure 4.27 shows, 90% of respondents nominated a prosocial response: 63% said they would say something at the time, and 27% would say something later in private. 7% said they wouldn't say anything because they would be unsure of what to say and 4% wouldn't feel comfortable speaking out.

Figure 4.27: Type of anticipated bystander intervention when witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, 18-30 y.o. men

% of respondents that selected each response option – "bothered" respondents only<sup>22</sup>



 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 22}$  Does not add to 100% due to rounding.

# 4.2. Health and wellbeing: the impact of the Man Box on men themselves

As well as investigating how adherence to Man Box rules can impact the way men relate to those around them, this study considered the association between Man Box endorsement and a range of health and wellbeing variables. In doing this, this study sought to understand the impact of the Man Box on men themselves – their life satisfaction, mental health, their alcohol and illicit drug consumption, and their risk-taking behaviours. A summary of the results of this section is included in Box 4.4.

#### Box 4.4: The impact of stereotypical masculine norms on men's health and wellbeing

Compared to men who least strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 1), men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 5) were more than:

- · Eight times more likely to have had thoughts of suicide nearly every day
- Six times more likely to have had thoughts of self-harm nearly every day
- Six times more likely to be a problem gambler (more than half of the men with the strongest agreement with Man Box rules exhibited signs of problem gambling)
- Three times more likely to have experienced little interest or pleasure in doing things nearly every day in the previous two weeks
- · Two and a half times more likely to have engaged in a potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated
- Almost twice as likely to have consumed alcohol at least five days a week over the previous 12 months, and
- One and a half times more likely to report high life satisfaction (in apparent contradiction with the rates of suicidal ideation among this cohort).

#### 4.2.1. Mental health

The 2018 Man Box research found that men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box were more likely to report symptoms of poor mental health than men who least strongly endorsed the Man Box. The section below reviews whether these findings persist five years later.

#### Symptoms of poor mental health

In this section, we look at how many men experienced any symptoms of poor mental health and suicidal ideation over the two weeks prior to their completion of the survey. The first two questions 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 et al., 2003). They ask about the frequency with which an individual has experienced disinterest, lack of pleasure, depressed mood, and hopelessness in the two weeks prior. Response options were *Not at all, Some days, More than half the days, Nearly every day or Prefer not to say.* The second two

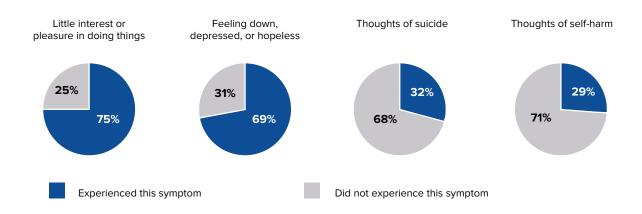
questions ask about the frequency of thoughts of suicide and self-harm, and were written in the same format as the first two questions so that results could be directly compared.

These questions are not intended to establish the prevalence of depression or determine the risk of suicide or self-harm among the men surveyed. Instead, they were included to better understand, in a general sense, the impact of endorsement of masculine norms on men's mental health.

As Figure 4.28 shows, a very high proportion (75%) of men reported that they had experienced "little pleasure or interest in doing things" during the previous two weeks, and similar percentage (69%) felt down, depressed, or hopeless at some point during that period. About a third of men (32%) reported they had experienced thoughts of suicide over the past two weeks, and 29% reported thoughts of self-harm.

Figure 4.28: Proportion of men experiencing symptoms of poor mental health, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who had experienced each symptom in the two weeks prior to the survey



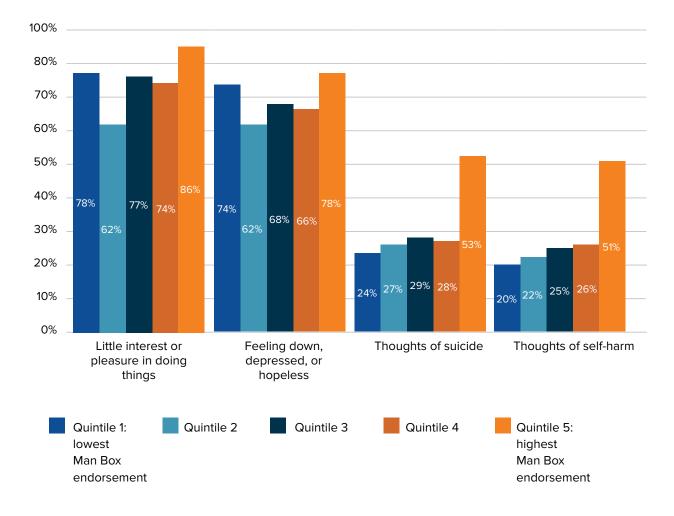
These results are marginally lower than those reported in the 2018 Australian Man Box study. In that study, 80% of men had felt "little pleasure or interest in doing things" (compared to 75% in 2023<sup>23</sup>), 71% had felt down, depressed or hopeless (compared to 69% in 2023), and 33% had experienced thoughts of suicide (compared to 32% in 2023.)<sup>24</sup> While any downward trend in these results is encouraging, the changes are minor compared to the scale of the problem of poor mental health among men (Terhaag et al., 2020).

Looking at the mental health indicators across quintiles (see Figure 4.29), it is clear that men from quintile 5 (the quintile with the highest endorsement of Man Box

rules) are more likely to experience these symptoms of poor mental health than men in any other quintile. The starkest difference is in the questions on suicide and self-harm: men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules were more than twice as likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts and two and a half times more likely to have experienced thoughts of self-harm than men with the lowest endorsement of the Man Box rules. There was much less variation between the top and bottom quintiles for the other mental health indicators, and little variation among quintiles 1-4 for any of the mental health variables. Overall, these findings are similar to those obtained in 2018.

Figure 4.29: Proportion of men experiencing symptoms of poor mental health, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who experienced the symptom in the two weeks prior to the survey



 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 23}$  Data for this study was collected in 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> The question on self-harm was not asked in the 2018 Man Box study.

#### Frequent symptoms of poor mental health

This section seeks to understand the relationship between Man Box endorsement and frequent symptoms of poor mental health.<sup>25</sup>

As Figure 4.30 shows, there appears to be a clear relationship between personal agreement with the rules of the Man Box and indicators of poor mental health. In comparison to quintile 1 (the quintile with lowest personal agreement with Man Box rules), men in quintile 5 (the quintile with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules), are:

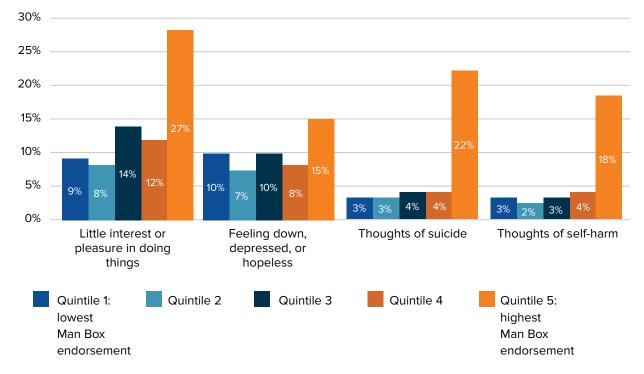
- Seven times more likely to experience near daily thoughts of suicide
- Six times more likely to experience thoughts of self-harm nearly every day
- Three times more likely to frequently experience little interest or pleasure in doing things, and
- Twice as likely to frequently experience feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.

The proportion of men with the highest endorsement of the Man Box (quintile 5), and who experience these symptoms nearly every day, is concerningly high. More than one in five men in quintile 5 think about suicide nearly every day (or more frequently), and more than one in four men in this quintile frequently experience little interest or pleasure in doing things.

These results highlight the complex and contradictory nature of life inside the Man Box. In a later section of this chapter, on life satisfaction, men in quintile 5 (highest Man Box endorsement) had higher life satisfaction than men in the other quintiles. In contrast, the results in Figure 4.30 show that these same men are more likely to experience symptoms of poor mental health and suicidal ideation. This apparent paradox has been explored in research; however the findings are inconclusive. What the research does demonstrate is that conformity with traditional masculine norms — particularly those that require men to be stoic, invulnerable, and self-sufficient results in poorer mental health outcomes and increased suicidal ideation (Rice et al., 2018).

Figure 4.30: Proportion of men experiencing frequent symptoms of poor mental health, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who experienced the symptom nearly every day in the two weeks prior to the survey



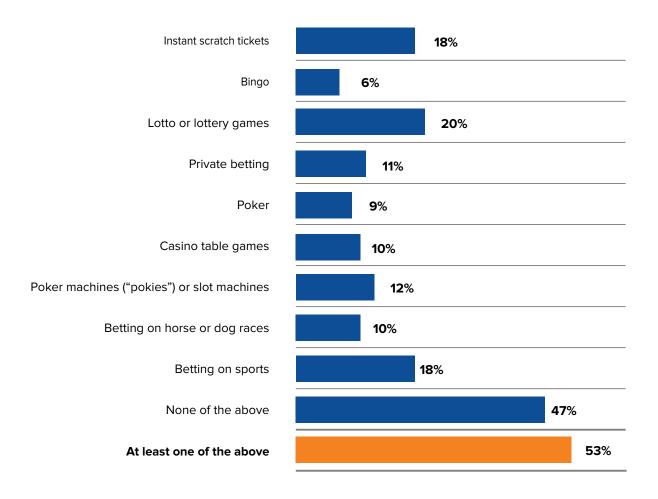
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> In this section, "frequent" is defined as "nearly every day" or more.

#### 4.2.2. Gambling

The Man Box study measured men's gambling behaviours with two questions, one assessing the types of gambling activities participated in during the past month and one assessing whether respondents could be classified as a problem gambler based on the behaviours over the past 12 months.

As seen in Figure 4.31, over half (53%) of the men surveyed in this study participated in some form of gambling in a typical month. The activities they most commonly engaged in were lotto or lottery games (20%), sports betting (18%) and instant scratch tickets (18%).

Figure 4.31: Proportion of men who engaged in each type of gambling activity, 18-30 y.o. men



When comparing gambling activity across the quintiles (see Figure 4.32), men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules (quintile 5) were more likely than men with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to engage in every type of gambling activity except sports betting. Men with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules were almost twice as likely than men with the lowest endorsement to

have engaged in at least one type of gambling activity in the past month. Further, men in quintile 1 (lowest endorsement of Man Box rules) were more than twice as likely as men in quintile 5 to report no engagement in gambling activities in the previous month.

Figure 4.32: Proportion of men who engaged in each type of gambling activity, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Instant scratch tickets	12%	12%	16%	25%	24%
Bingo	2%	3%	5%	5%	17%
Lotto or lottery games	13%	15%	16%	26%	28%
Private betting	5%	8%	8%	11%	21%
Poker	3%	6%	8%	<b>7</b> %	19%
Casino table games	5%	4%	8%	9%	22%
Poker machines ("pokies")	10%	<b>7</b> %	10%	12%	20%
Betting on horse or dog races	12%	<b>7</b> %	9%	8%	16%
Betting on sports	22%	15%	22%	17%	16%
None of the above	58%	61%	49%	43%	25%
At least one of the above	42%	40%	51%	<b>57</b> %	75%

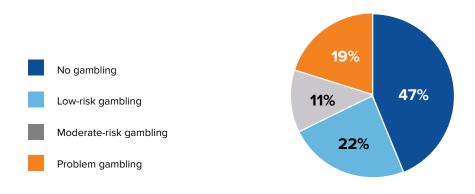
#### **Problem Gambling**

The second question on gambling was adopted from the short-form Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), a tool used to measure the prevalence of problem gambling at a population level (Volberg and Williams, 2012). The three part question asked respondents how often in the previous 12 months they had: bet more than they could really afford to lose; been criticised for their betting or told they had a gambling problem (regardless of whether or not they thought it was true); and felt guilty about the way they gamble or what happens when they gamble.26 Answers were allocated points according to the level of gambling risk they represented, with higher scores indicating more problematic gambling behaviour (Volberg and Williams, 2012). Respondents' gambling was grouped into three categories based on these scores: low-risk gambling, moderate-risk gambling, and problem gambling. Low-risk gamblers experience no or low

negative consequences from their gambling, although they may very occasionally spend more than they intended, or feel guilty about their gambling (Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2019). Moderaterisk gamblers experience some negative consequences from their gambling: they may sometimes spend more than they can afford, lose track of time or feel guilty about their gambling (Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2019). Problem gamblers "gamble with negative consequences and a possible loss of control; ... they may often spend over their limit, gamble to win back money and feel stressed about their gambling"(Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2019).

As can be seen in Figure 4.33, 30% of men surveyed reported moderate or serious negative consequences from their gambling. Of this 30%, 19% were classified as problem gamblers and 11% moderate-risk gamblers.

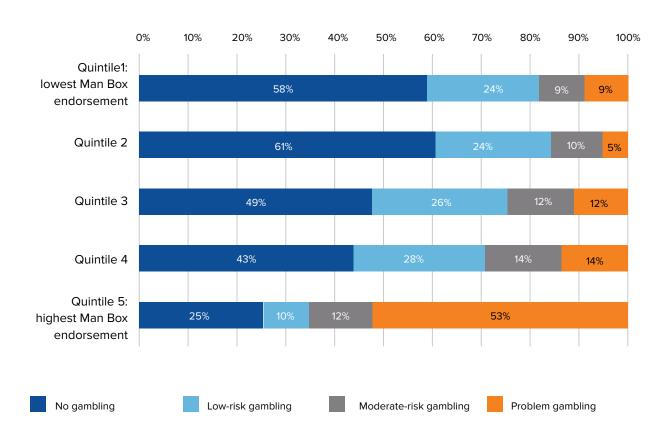
Figure 4.33: Proportion of men who meet the criteria for problem gambling, 18-30 y.o. men



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> The response options for these three questions were Never, Sometimes, Most of the time, and Almost always.

When these results are broken down by the level of Man Box endorsement, the results are stark. More than half of all men in quintile 5 (those who most strongly endorse the Man Box) were classified as problem gamblers using the short-form PGSI. These men were almost six times more likely than the men who least strongly endorsed Man Box rules to be problem gamblers. In contrast, men in quintile 1 were more than twice as likely to be low risk or non-gamblers compared to men in quintile 5. Men across the other three quintiles were similar to the men in quintile 1.

Figure 4.34: Proportion of survey respondents who meet the criteria for problem gambling, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



# 4.2.3. Risky drinking and illicit drug use

#### Risky drinking

The Man Box study considered the frequency of drinking alcohol for Australian men aged 18 to 30. The questions asked were drawn from the 2019 *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* (AIHW, 2019). The first question categorised a respondent as a "frequent drinker" if they reported drinking *five days a week or more*. The second question categorised a respondent as a "binge drinker" if they reported consuming *more than five standard drinks* 

on one occasion. A respondent is assigned to the third category "risky drinking" if they meet the criteria of either or both of the "binge drinking" or "frequent drinking" categories.

As shown in Figure 4.35 of the 18- to 30-year-old men in this study, one in three meet the criteria for risky drinking. More than one quarter of the men are classified as binge drinkers and one in ten are classified as frequent drinkers.

Figure 4.35: Proportion of men engaged in risky drinking, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of survey respondents who met the criteria for each form of problem drinking

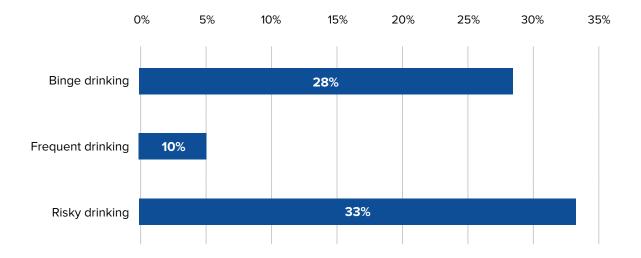


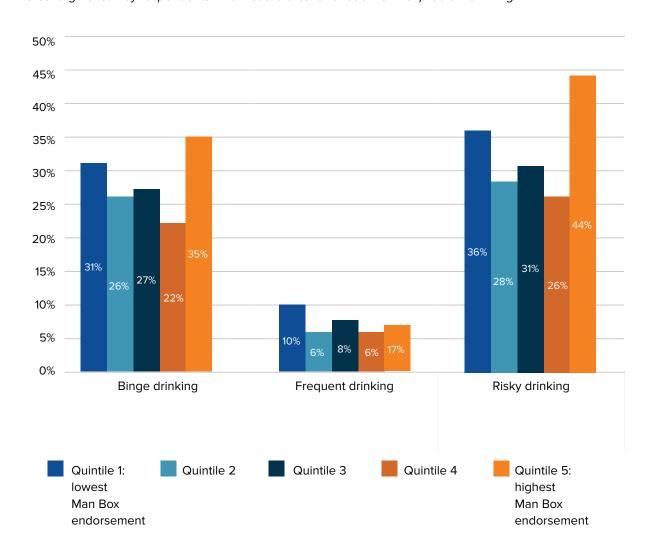
Figure 4.36 demonstrates that men with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules were more likely to be risky drinkers compared to men with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules. The former were nearly twice as likely to report drinking 5 or more times a week compared to men with the lowest Man Box endorsement. We obtained similar findings in 2018. Other research also indicates that particular Man Box rules may be more predictive of hazardous alcohol use than others. For instance, the Hypersexuality Pillar was found to be positively associated with hazardous alcohol use and hard drug use across a similar cohort of Australian

young men (Teese et al., 2023). On the other hand, some masculine norms can protect against problematic drinking behaviour, such as self-reliance or emotional control (Courtenay, 2000, Levant and Richmond, 2007).

Men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box were slightly more likely to binge drink than other quintiles, and are almost twice as likely to drink at least five days a week.

Figure 4.36: Proportion of men engaged in risky drinking, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of survey respondents who met the criteria for each form of problem drinking



#### Illicit drug use

Australian men have higher rates of illicit drug use compared to the population as a whole (Quinn et al., 2022). They also experience a greater degree of harm from illicit drug use; in fact, Australian men experience more than twice the health impact from illicit drug use than Australian women (ibid).<sup>27</sup> When looking at past year illicit drug use among Australian men, the age groups with the highest percentage of users were 18-24 years and 25-34 (35% and 30% respectively) (AIHW, 2019).

The Man Box study measured illicit drug use over the previous six months, and sought to understand whether there was an association between this use and endorsement of the Man Box. As shown in Figure 4.37, one in eight men reported using illicit drugs at some point in the previous 6 months.

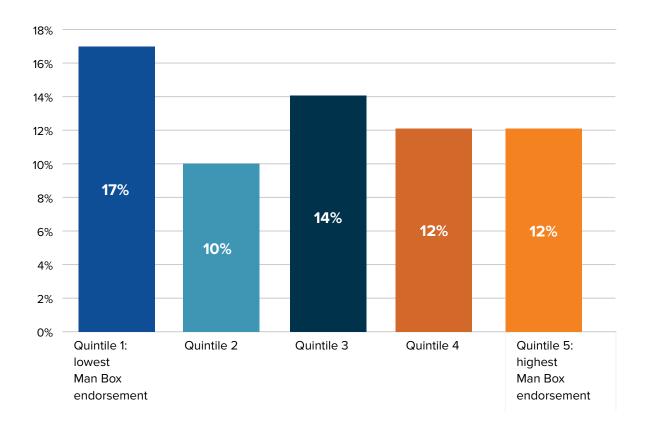
Figure 4.37: Proportion of men who used illicit drugs, 18-30 y.o. men



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "Health impact": illicit drug-use related burden of disease. Burden of disease is a measure of "the impact of living with illness and injury and dying prematurely. The summary measure "disability-adjusted life years" (or DALY) measures the years of healthy life lost from death and illness." AlHW. 2021. Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Interactive data on risk factor burden [Online]. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Available: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/abds-2018-interactive-data-risk-factors/contents/illicit-drug-use [Accessed 8 January 2024].

Figure 4.38 shows there is not a linear relationship between Man Box endorsement and illicit drug use. Reported rates of illicit drug use are higher amongst men with the lowest Man Box endorsement when compared to other quintiles.

Figure 4.38: Proportion of men who used illicit drugs, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



# 4.2.4. Behaviour under the influence of drugs or alcohol

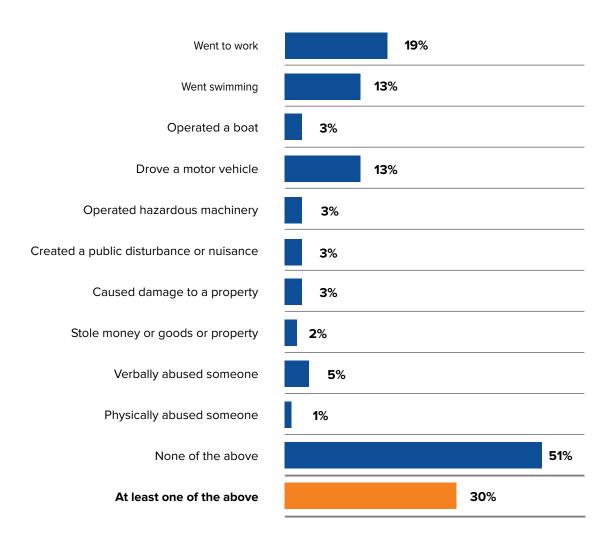
This study sought to understand whether there is an association between Man Box endorsement and risk-taking. Men who had reported consuming alcohol or illicit drugs in the previous 6 months were asked whether they had engaged in a set of potentially dangerous behaviours while intoxicated. These "potentially dangerous behaviours" were those that posed risk to men themselves or those around them. The behaviours

were drawn from the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* conducted every two to three years by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

As shown in Figure 4.39, 30% of men indicated that in the last six months they engaged in a potentially dangerous activity whilst intoxicated. The most common activity men reported engaging in whilst intoxicated was going to work (19%), followed by driving a car (13%) and going swimming (13%). 5% of men reported verbally or physically abusing someone whilst intoxicated.

Figure 4.39: Proportion of men who engaged in dangerous behaviour while intoxicated, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents who reported engaging in each type of behaviour while under the influence<sup>28</sup>



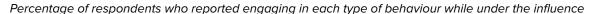
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "At least one of the above" and "none of the above" do not add to 100% because the table does not include men who responded that they do not drink or did not take illicit drugs in the last 6 months (17%), and also does not include those who ticked prefer not to say about illicit drug taking (0.3%) and prefer not to say to the dangerous behaviour question (2%). Therefore groups not included add to 19%. Combined with 30% and 51% equals 100%.

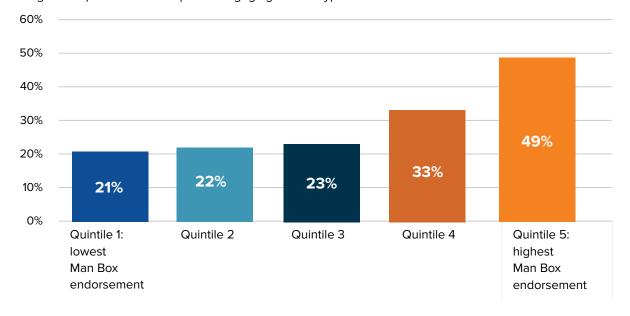
Figure 4.40 indicates a positive association between Man Box endorsement and potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated. 49% of all men with the strongest Man Box endorsement (quintile 5) who had reported alcohol or illicit drug consumption in the previous six months had also engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour whilst intoxicated. Men with the lowest endorsement of the Man Box (quintile 1) were half as likely to report this behaviour (21%).

An analysis of responses for each type of behaviour found that of men who had reported consuming alcohol or illicit drugs in the previous six months:

- About one in every three men with the highest Man Box endorsement (quintile 5) reported they had attended work intoxicated, compared to about one in every eight men with the lowest Man Box endorsement (33% compared to 12%)
- Men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules were almost 2.5 times more likely to go swimming or drive a car while intoxicated compared to men who least strongly endorsed Man Box rules (20% compared to 8%, and 21% compared to 9%).

Figure 4.40: Proportion of men who engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men





#### 4.2.5. Help seeking

Stereotypical masculine norms such as those represented by the Man Box require men to be self-sufficient – to "figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help" (The Men's Project, 2018). In order to provide insight into how this norm operates in men's lives, we measured men's help seeking behaviours and considered whether they were associated with Man Box endorsement.

#### Frequency of help seeking

Survey respondents were asked how often they had sought help from another person for a personal or emotional problem over the last six months. The frequency options presented to respondents were daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, 2-3 times a month, once a month and never. As Figure 4.41 shows, the most common frequency for seeking help regarding a personal or emotional problem is on a monthly basis, with about one third of respondents reporting this in the past six months. No respondents reported help seeking on a daily basis, however, 10% sought help several times a week, 17% sought help once a week and 15% sought help several times a month. Concerningly, almost one quarter of respondents never sought help.

Figure 4.41: Frequency of help seeking, 18-30 y.o. men

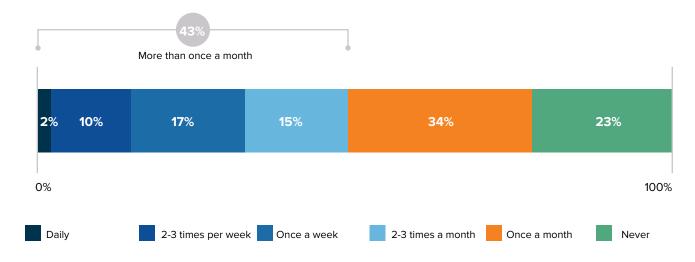
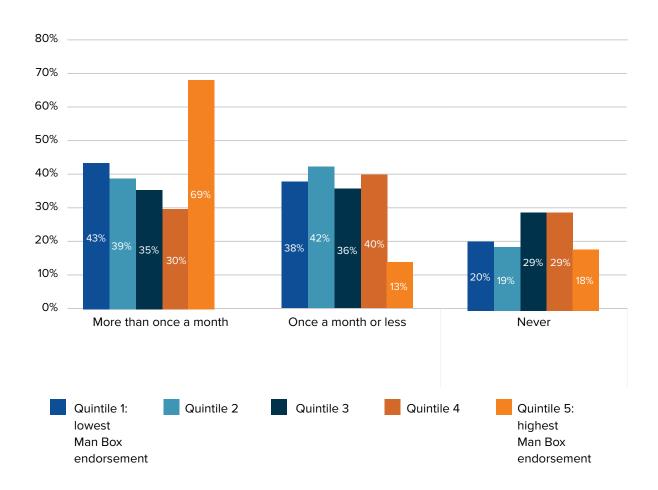


Figure 4.42 shows the frequency of help seeking by Man Box quintiles, with frequency of help seeking combined into three categories: *more than once a month, once a month or less,* and *never.* More than two thirds of men with highest endorsement of the Man Box (quintile 5) reported seeking help more than once a month, compared to only 43% of men with lowest endorsement the Man Box (quintile 1). Less than 1 in 5 men (18%) with

highest endorsement of the Man Box reported having never sought help, while slightly more men (20%) who least endorse the Man Box reported never having done so. This makes men in quintile 5 the most likely to frequently seek help, and least likely to never seek help at all, despite their strong endorsement of Man Box rules such as "men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help".

Figure 4.42: Frequency of help seeking, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



In the next section, we will unpack this finding further, by exploring where or who these men seek help from.

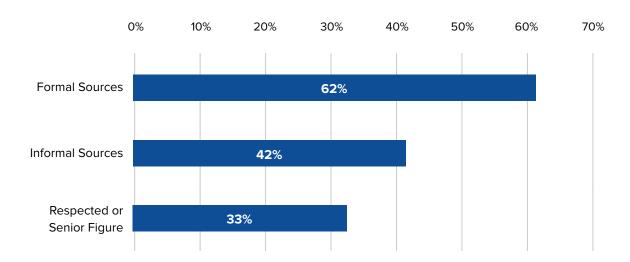
#### Sources of help

Survey respondents were asked how likely they would be to get help for a personal or emotional problem from a given list of people or services. For ease of analysis, these lists of sources of help has been grouped into the categories of formal sources of help (e.g. a doctor or GP, a mental health professional or a helpline), informal sources of help (friend, parent, relative and/or intimate partner), and a respected or senior figure (e.g. minister or religious leader, an employer or manager, a sporting coach).

The results show men were most likely to seek help from formal sources (see Figure 4.43), with almost two thirds indicating they would likely seek help from a doctor or GP, a mental health professional or a helpline. Two in five men were likely to seek help from informal sources such as a friend, parent, relative and/or intimate partner. Almost one third of men were likely to seek help from a respected or senior figure such as a religious leader, an employer or manager at work and/or a sporting coach.

Figure 4.43: Sources of help (categorised), 18-30 y.o. men

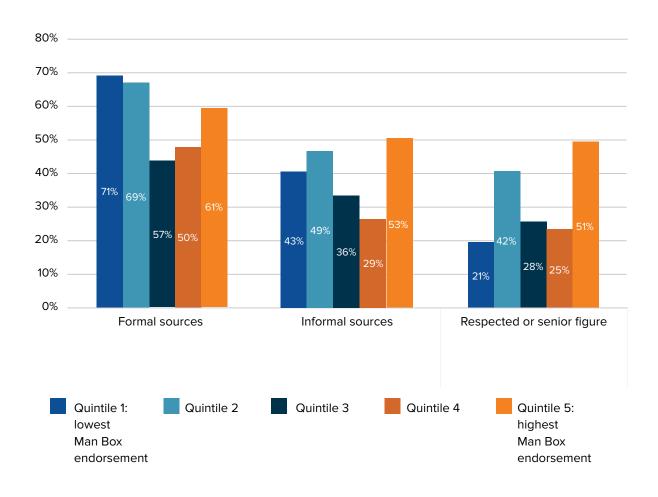
Percentage of respondents who said they'd seek help. Categories are not exclusive



When examining help seeking behaviour by Man Box quintile (see Figure 4.44), the men who most strongly endorsed Man Box rules were 2.5 times more likely to seek help from a respected or senior figure compared to those men with the lowest Man Box endorsement (51.2% and 20.6% respectively). Men with the lowest agreement with Man Box rules were slightly more likely to want to

seek help from formal sources than men with the highest agreement. One in three men in the quintile with highest Man Box endorsement said they would not seek help from anyone if they were having a personal or emotional problem. Men with the lowest Man Box endorsement were about half as likely to agree to this.

Figure 4.44: Sources of help (categorised), by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men



#### 4.2.6. Traffic Accidents

The Man Box study sought to understand whether there is a correlation between endorsement of Man Box rules and involvement in a traffic accident. We asked respondents whether they had been in a traffic accident in the past 12 months, 30 to which they could answer, "no", "yes, once", or "yes, more than once".

In total, more than three-quarters of men in this study had not been in any traffic accident, about one in five reported being in one single accident and only 0.9% had been in multiple accidents in the previous 12 months (see Figure 4.45).

When considering this data by quintiles, there is no clear pattern between the frequency of traffic accidents and endorsement to the Man Box (see Figure 4.46). Consideration should be given in future research to revising the survey question to ensure it captures the respondent's role in the accident (e.g. did their behaviour contribute to the accident).

Figure 4.45: Traffic accident frequency in last 12 months, 18-30 y.o. men

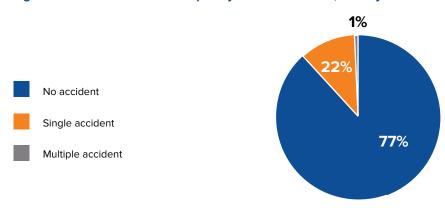
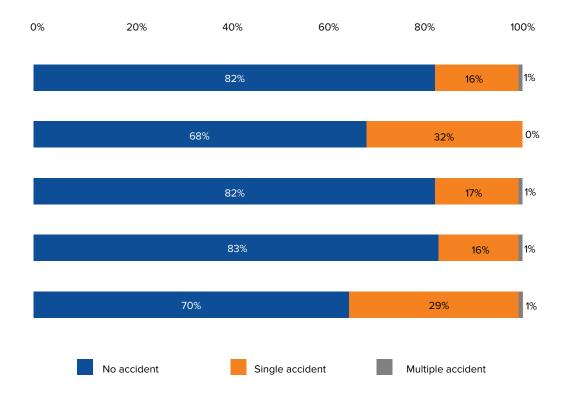


Figure 4.46: Traffic accident frequency in last 12 months, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

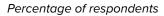


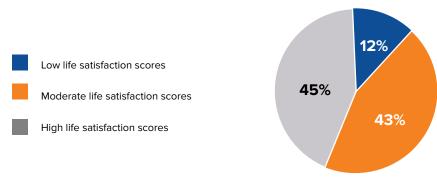
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Respondents were instructed to consider "accidents you might have been involved in with cars, trucks, buses, minibuses, bicycles, motorbikes, or motorcycles. The accidents might have happened while you were driving a vehicle, riding, or while you were walking."

#### 4.2.7. Life satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of life satisfaction on a 1-10 scale in order to explore whether there is a relationship between Man Box endorsement and life satisfaction. Survey responses were grouped into one of three categories: low life satisfaction (scores of 1-4), moderate life satisfaction (scores of 5-7), or high life satisfaction (scores of 8-10).

Figure 4.47: Life satisfaction scores, 18-30 y.o. men



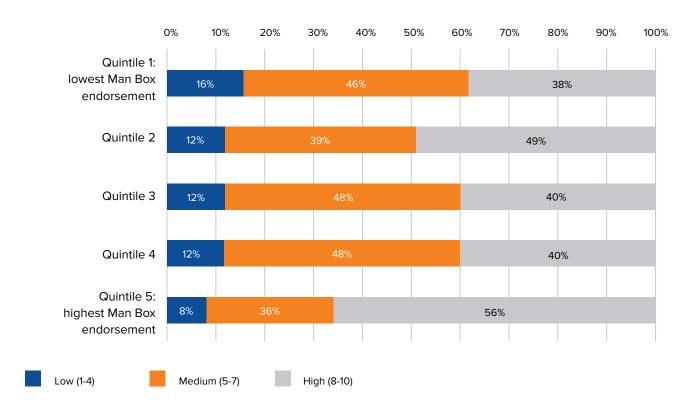


Across the sample of 18- to 30-year-olds, approximately equal percentages of men nominated life satisfaction scores in the "moderate" and "high" life satisfaction groups (43% and 45%), and 12% fell in the "low" category (see Figure 4.47). However, when the sample was divided by the level of endorsement of Man Box rules, there was interesting variation in life satisfaction (see Figure 4.48). Men who most strongly agree with the Man Box rules

were more likely than all other quintiles to report high life satisfaction scores, with more than 90% of these men reporting moderate to high life satisfaction. In contrast, men with the lowest endorsement of Man Box rules reported "low" life satisfaction scores at double the rate of men with the highest endorsement: 16% compared to 8%. These findings are very similar to those obtained in the 2018 Australian Man Box study.

Figure 4.48: Life satisfaction scores, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men

Percentage of respondents whose life satisfaction score fell in each category, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o. men





# 5. Norms of manhood among young men in Australia (a commentary by Professor Michael Flood)

Traditional models of how to be a man face growing criticism in the twenty-first century, with increasing attention to the harms they cause among men, women, and communities. Social norms regarding manhood are diverse across cultures, history, and within any one society. But one version of manhood increasingly is seen as a problem; the version in which men are expected always to be tough, aggressive, risk-taking, stoic, heterosexual, homophobic and transphobic, emotionally inexpressive, hostile to femininity, and dominant. This form of masculinity is identified as oppressive for women, restrictive and limiting for men, and implicated in systemic gender inequities and other social problems (Flood, 2022; The Men's Project & Flood, 2018).

To what extent, then, do men themselves endorse this model of how to be a man? To what extent do men think that it is this version of manhood that they are expected or pressured to live up to? And how does this model of masculinity play out in men's own behaviour? The Man Box surveys answer these questions. Based primarily on a survey of young men in Australia aged 18-30, the Man Box research provides an invaluable mapping of patterns of masculine attitudes, norms, and behaviours. In the following, I comment on the Man Box 2024 findings and their significance, focusing on the sample of young men aged 18-30.

A model of traditional masculinity, based in being tough, stoic, homophobic, and so on, does not receive majority support among young adult men in Australia. Among young men aged 18-30, most do not endorse this version of manhood. Also, most men (although fewer) do not think that society is encouraging this version of manhood among them, and comparing the data from 2018 and 2023,<sup>32</sup> the messages young men receive about manhood have improved in some ways. This is encouraging news. It suggests that healthier, more gender-equitable, and more inclusive norms of manhood are relatively common among young adult men in Australia, and that there has been some decline over the past five years in unhealthy and gender-inequitable norms of manhood.

There are, however, real reasons for concern. First, anywhere from one quarter to one third of young men endorse rigid, dangerous, or sexist models of manhood. Second, this endorsement is not declining fast. Men's levels of endorsement of traditional masculine ideology generally are steady, and we should put aside any assumption that unhealthy and sexist social norms inevitably will drop away over time. Traditional models of how to be a man continue to have a powerful influence on many men's and boys' lives and relations (Flood, 2019). There has been little change in the past five years in men's attitudes towards male aggression, male stoicism and self-sufficiency, domestic labour as women's work, homophobia, or hypersexuality, and substantial changes only in men's endorsement of male surveillance of their female intimate partners and men's comfort with grooming and fashion. Third, young men are still receiving societal messaging that reinforces these rigid and sexist models of manhood. Although there are significant and positive shifts in the societal messaging young men report receiving, their own attitudes are not necessarily following course.

Finally, young men's endorsement of traditional masculine norms is playing out in a range of problematic behaviours. One quarter of young men have used physical violence against an intimate partner, one fifth have used sexual violence against an intimate partner, and both sets of behaviours are more likely among the young men who more strongly endorse the Man Box norms. Traditional masculine norms also constrain young men's own health and wellbeing. Some have considered suicide and self-harm, some are drinking at dangerous levels, some are taking risks while intoxicated or drug-affected, and some are problem-gambling. Again, all of these are more common among the men with the highest conformity to Man Box rules.

What can be done about this? The final section of this commentary canvasses ways forward.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Data for this study was collected in 2023.

### The Man Box surveys

We are fortunate now to have in Australia an increasingly rich body of quantitative data on masculine norms and behaviours: on men's perceptions of the expectations about manhood they receive, men's own endorsement of these expectations, and men's actual behaviour. The Man Box survey, first conducted in Australia in 2018 with 1,000 men and in 2023<sup>33</sup> with just under 2,500 men, provides valuable insight on masculine norms and on their links to men's lives and relations. It relies on data among young adult men, aged 18 to 30 and representative of that portion of the Australian population. The survey also now has been extended to a sample of men aged 31 to 45, although that is not included in this commentary.

Before exploring the Man Box findings, let us define some terms. "Masculinity" refers to the social organisation of men's lives and relations and the meanings given to being male. Given that the meanings and patterns of men's lives differ in different contexts and periods, often we speak of "masculinities", plural. One key dimension of masculinity is attitudinal – to do with people's attitudes, their personal beliefs about manhood and gender. Another dimension is normative or ideological, to do with beliefs about what (other) men do and what is expected of men, and comprises masculine norms or masculinity ideologies (Levant & Richmond, 2016, p. 24). Three other important dimensions of masculinity include the behaviours associated with being a man; the interpersonal relations among men and between men, women, children and others; and the institutional and structural organisation of men's lives.

The term "masculinity" often is used only for one dimension of masculinity, the normative, focusing on societal expectations of men and boys or masculine norms. In most societies, one version of manhood is culturally dominant, with the most widespread influence or highest social status, and this often includes the expectations that boys and men be strong, active, aggressive, tough, daring, leaders, heterosexual, emotionally inexpressive, and dominant. In some accounts this version of manhood, this set of societal expectations, is termed "traditional masculinity" or the "Man Box". The term "Man Box" derives from the pioneering work of Paul Kivel, an anti-violence and social justice activist whose "Act Like a Man Box" depicts the societal expectations placed on men and boys (Kivel, 1998, 2007).

The Man Box survey in Australia gathers data on attitudinal, normative, behavioural, and interpersonal dimensions of masculinity. It focuses particularly on masculine attitudes and norms, but also gathers data on aspects of behaviour and interpersonal relations. The Man Box survey relies on a model of traditional masculinity, represented by 19 statements expressing traditionally masculine qualities: self-sufficiency, toughness, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia (and in the 2023 survey, transphobia), hypersexuality, and aggression and control.

The Man Box Scale was first used in a multi-country study of masculine norms in 2017 (Heilman et al., 2017, p. 21). Its items were identified from social scientific research on masculine norms, and field-tested. The scale has since been tested psychometrically and shown to be methodologically robust: to measure effectively a single underlying construct and to work across diverse contexts (Hill et al., 2020). The scale is similar to a range of other measures of masculine norms, and close to 20 such measures have been used in research on men and masculinities since the mid-1990s (Thompson Jr & Bennett, 2015).

The term "traditional masculinity" is used here as a shorthand for the qualities identified in the Man Box survey, but there are two important caveats to make. First, there are in fact diverse traditions of how to define manhood, both in Australia and globally, and the qualities in the Man Box are not at all "traditional" in some periods and contexts. Second, we should avoid the assumption that older constructions of manhood necessarily are more regressive and newer constructions of manhood necessarily are more progressive (Yusupova, 2023). There are older and ancient societies, including outside Western or Global North countries, in which dominant definitions of manhood included gender-equitable and inclusive norms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Note: data collection was conducted in 2023, and results published in 2024.

The Man Box survey explores three domains: personal attitudes to masculinity, perceived social norms regarding masculinity, and attitudes and behaviours. The first two domains are based on the Man Box Scale, while the survey also asks about a series of other areas. The three domains comprise:

- Men's personal endorsement of a series of statements linked to stereotypical masculine qualities ("In my opinion...");
- Men's perception of societal messages regarding these stereotypically masculine qualities ("Society tells me that...");
- 3. Men's
  - a. Health and wellbeing, including life satisfaction, suicidal thoughts, help-seeking, and so on
  - b. Attitudes, including attitudes towards violence and gender inequality, and
  - c. Behaviours, including four forms of risk-taking, use of pornography, bystander intervention, and forms of violence and abuse including bullying, sexual harassment, and physical and sexual violence against an intimate partner.

One of the strengths of the Man Box 2024 study in Australia is its examination of a wider range of attitudinal and behavioural variables than other surveys using the Man Box or other measures of stereotypical masculine norms. The survey includes data on a wider range of behaviours, and complements its data on attitudes and norms from the Man Box Scale with measures of other attitudes regarding violence and gender inequality. Now for the first time with two rounds of survey data in 2018 and 2023,<sup>34</sup> it also allows assessment of changes over time.

The two Man Box surveys in Australia establish four key findings about formations of manhood in Australia:

- A substantial minority of young men agree with traditional masculine norms.
- Young men's own endorsement of traditional masculine norms largely has remained steady over the past five years.
- The pressure young men feel to conform to traditional masculine norms has lessened over the past five years.
- Young men who conform to traditional masculine norms are more likely than other men to suffer harm themselves and to do harm to others.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Note: data collection was conducted in 2023, and results published in 2024.

### Men and traditional masculine norms

A substantial minority of young men agree with traditional masculine norms, and this informs harms to their own health and harms done to others. On average, one quarter (26%) of young men agree with the Man Box rules, and one third (37%) agree that these rules are communicated to them by society. As this commentary explores later, men's personal endorsement of these stereotypical masculine norms has strong associations with a range of problematic behaviours, that compromise their own health and wellbeing or that do harm to others.

At the same time, the Man Box rules clearly are not the dominant norms of masculinity in Australia. They do not represent the most common personal attitudes or perceived social norms among most young adult men. Most young men, about three quarters (74%) on average, disagree with these ideas about manhood, and most young men (62%) disagree that they receive societal messages that embody the specified Man Box norms. Other Australian data, using more open-ended methods to explore Australian men's perceptions of norms of manhood and their beliefs about what makes a "real man", documents more diverse notions of manhood (Adegbosin et al., 2019; Sharp et al., 2023), although still with some continuities with the elements of the Man Box. At the same time, as I explore further below, levels of both personal endorsement and perceived societal pressure among young men vary markedly for the different elements of the Man Box.

There is a persistent gap between young men's own attitudes towards masculinity and the societal norms they encounter. Young men are less likely to endorse the Man Box norms themselves than they are to report receiving societal messages endorsing them. Young men were 11% less likely on average to agree with a Man Box rule than to agree that they are told it by society. Young men's personal endorsement was lower than perceived societal endorsement for every one of the 19 Man Box rules, although the size of this gap varies markedly, from 3% to 19%.

### Stabilities and shifts in masculine attitudes and norms

Young men's endorsement of traditional masculine norms largely has remained steady over the past five years. Over 2018-2023 there has been no substantial change in men's attitudes towards male aggression, male stoicism and self-sufficiency, domestic labour as women's work, homophobia, or hypersexuality. There has been a decline in young men's personal support for one aspect of male dominance and control in relationships, but not others. Young men also show an increased comfort with men's involvement in grooming and fashion.

The societal messages about manhood that young men perceive show greater change than young men's own attitudes. Perceived societal messaging endorsing male dominance in relationships and families has declined, although more than one-third of young men still report receiving such messages. There has been no change in perceived societal support for male aggression as a way to gain respect if necessary, but some decline in perceived societal support for male aggression as a response to confrontation. Substantially fewer young men now report receiving societal messages that endorse male stoicism and self-sufficiency, represent domestic labour as women's work and men as the primary breadwinners in families, or assume male hypersexuality.

The Man Box findings thus highlight both shifts and stabilities in young men's attitudes towards manhood. Focusing first on the shifts, the largest changes are to do with two areas: relationships, and grooming and appearance.

**Relationships:** Young men's personal support for Man Box rules has declined most for the idea that "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time," with endorsement of this notion dropping from 37% in 2018 to 22% in 2023. This 15% drop is the biggest decline in personal endorsement among the 16 Man Box rules, with the next biggest decline at 9% and 12 of the rules declining by 5% or less or not declining at all.

This represents an encouraging lessening of support for men's control of intimate female partners, but it is not part of a consistent pattern of significant decline in young men's support for male dominance and control in relationships and families. The drop in support for men knowing where their partners are at all times only brings it down to a similar level of endorsement for another statement about male dominance in relationships, that "In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage". About one-quarter of young men (24%) agree with this, with only a 3% drop in endorsement since 2018.

One-fifth to one-quarter of young men aged 18-30 thus endorse aspects of male dominance and control in relationships and families. Looking at the further data in this study outside the Man Box rules, similar proportions of young men (19% to 25%) also distrust women's reports of violence victimisation, minimise the impact of violence against women, and are prepared to blame female victim-survivors for the domestic violence they experience. (As these and other attitudinal items outside the Man Box survey were only used in the 2024 study, we cannot assess changes over time in them.) Other recent Australian data from young people aged 16-24 shows that young men's attitudes towards and understandings of violence against women consistently lag behind young women's (ANROWS, 2023, p. 5).

Moreover, over one-third of young adult men feel that aspects of male dominance and control in relationships and families are approved by society as well: 35% agree that society tells them that "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time", and 39% agree that society tells them that "In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage". Young men's perceptions of societal approval for these two statements both have declined since 2018, from 44% and 43% respectively.

Young men in 2023 are more supportive of male dominance and control in relationships and families than people in general in Australia, with a recent national survey finding that 11% of the population agree that men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household and 19% agree that women prefer men to be in charge in relationships (Coumarelos, Weeks, et al., 2023).

Over one-third of young adult men have attitudes that deny the extent of gender inequalities and express resentment towards women. They agree that "Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia" (39%), "Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist" (35%), and "Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them" (35%). Similarly, other Australian research found that young men were more likely than young women to agree with various anti-feminist statements about gender equality (Evans et al., 2018) and to condone gender inequalities (Coumarelos, Roberts, et al., 2023, pp. 68-69). This suggests that there is a consistent pool of young men in Australia with sexist and violence-supportive views.

Grooming and appearance: The second area of the Man Box rules with the largest decline in men's personal endorsement is to do with grooming, fashion, and appearance. Young men now seem more comfortable with the notion that men can work on their appearance, and doing so does not compromise their manliness or their appeal to women. Only one quarter (23%) agree that "A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly," down by 9% from 2018. This growing comfort with male grooming probably reflects a trend that has been underway since the 1990s, a decade that saw the invention of the 'metrosexual', a man who practises personal grooming in terms of hair, clothing, and even makeup (Flood, 2008). Clothing and lifestyle companies have been working to generate a market of men interested in such traditionally feminine practices and products. Rather than a more radical male embracing of femininity, metrosexuality quickly came to represent a minor shift in the norms of masculinity, particularly among urban and middle-class men (Casanova et al., 2016; Shugart, 2008).

Alongside these shifts in young adult men's attitudes towards manhood, there are also areas of stability. Young men's endorsement of five aspects of stereotypical masculinity has remained largely the same over the past five years:

- Male aggression
- Male stoicism and self-sufficiency
- Domestic labour as women's work
- Homophobia
- Hypersexuality

Male aggression: There has been no consistent change in either young men's own endorsement of the use of violence to gain respect or the perceived social norms supporting this. About one-fifth of men (22%) agree that "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary," and in fact this is 2% more than in 2018. Young men's view that this is the message they receive from society also has held steady, with 34% agreeing, down only 1% from 2018. A related Man Box rule is that "A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak," and here the patterns differ. Young men's sense that society tells them this shows a large drop over 2018 to 2023, of 16%, and is down to 44% (still significantly higher than their support for men using violence to get respect if necessary). Young men's own endorsement of the rule also has declined, although by far less: 30% now agree with this rule, down from 34% in 2018.

Both Man Box rules frame men's use of violence as necessary if not normal, and both may be seen to refer as much to men's violence against other men as to other forms of violence. Young men show slightly less support for the idea that violence is legitimate as a response to others' coercive or aggressive behaviour than the idea that violence is legitimate as a way to get respect if necessary. Young men continue to see both ideas as socially endorsed, again with the first idea as more so, although the extent of perceived societal support for the first idea has declined.

Male stoicism and self-sufficiency: There has been no change among young men in attitudinal prohibitions against help-seeking, although their perceptions of social norms here have shifted substantially. Around one-quarter of young men agree that "Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help" (28% agree) and "A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect" (23% agree). For these two Man Box rules, respectively, young men's personal endorsement since 2018 either increased (by 1%) or barely declined (by 2%).

Although young men's own endorsement of male stoicism has not changed in five years, their perception of societal messaging certainly has. This represents a narrowing of the gap between young men's own support for male stoicism and the perceived social norms for these, with the movement occurring only on the social norms side. There have been large shifts in levels of perceived social pressure to avoid help-seeking and to act strong. Of all the Man Box rules, the largest decline

in perceived societal messaging was for the rule that "Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help", from 54% in 2018 down to 34% in 2023. Close behind this 20% drop, the perception that society tells men that "Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside" declined by 19%. There was a smaller decline, of 9%, in the perception that society tells men that "A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect."

Although norms of male stoicism have declined, substantial proportions of young men still feel that society endorses them. For example;

- 50% agree that they are told by society that 'guys should act strong'
- 40% agree that they are told that 'men who talk a lot about their worries, fears, and problems should receive less respect'
- 34% agree that they are told that 'men should figure out their personal problems on their own'.

For these first two domains, male aggression and male stoicism and self-sufficiency, the patterns over the last five years seem to be in tension, particularly in relation to perceived social norms. The contrast between these may reflect differing levels of social challenge to these elements of stereotypical masculinity.

On the one hand, at least some aspects of a perceived norm of male aggression seem to have remained steady. Young men are as likely now as they were five years ago to feel that they are told by society that violence is a way to get respect if necessary. In Australian society there has been relatively little social challenge to the notions that males are innately predisposed to aggression, malemale violence is normal if not entertaining, and 'boys will be boys'. While there have been over four decades of campaigning and advocacy addressing men's violence against women, there has been far less attention to men's violence against other men. This absence may inform young men's sense that men should 'use violence if necessary'.

Norms of male aggression also include the idea that a man should 'fight back when others push him around'. Young men are less likely than they were in 2018 to feel that this is the message they receive from society, although 44% still agree. So perhaps a norm of male aggression has declined overall. Although there was no change in perceived societal endorsement of the idea that "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary," perhaps the words "if necessary" have a strong influence on young men's perceptions. They may work to qualify a blanket endorsement of violence as an appropriate way to earn respect.

On the other hand, perceived norms of avoiding asking for help, acting strong, and fighting back when pushed show a consistent decline. This may reflect the influence of widespread cultural messages about men's health, including both organised campaigns and informal shifts in masculine social norms. These shifts may mean that the norms of male invincibility and male stoicism evident in other research among older men in Australia (Sharp et al., 2023, p. 122) are lessening.

Domestic labour as women's work: There has been no change in young men's views of household tasks as 'women's work'. One-fifth (20%) of young adult men still agree in 2023 that "A man shouldn't have to do household chores." Perceived societal support for this idea has declined slightly, from 39% in 2018 to 33% in 2023. There was a slight decline of 5% in young men's agreement that "It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house or take care of younger children," now down to 18%. However, the decline in support for this statement may be less about males' involvement in domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning and more about men's care for children. Perceived societal support for this idea has declined, from 38% in 2018 to 28% in 2023.

There has also been a slight decline in young men's personal endorsement of the male breadwinner role. Thirty-one percent of young men agree that "In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women," down by 4% from 2018. Perceived societal support for this idea has declined substantially, by 14%, from 56% in 2018 to 42% in 2023. (The Man Box rules do not ask much about men's roles as fathers, limiting our ability to assess attitudes here.)

Four-fifths of young adult men thus agree, in effect, that men should do household chores (81%) and boys should be taught to cook, clean, and take care of younger children (82%). A smaller proportion, 69%, believe that in heterosexual relationships both men and women should be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families. Presumably this leaves another ten or so percent of young men who believe both that men should contribute to domestic work and caregiving in heterosexual relationships and that men should also be the primary breadwinners. In addition, young men's

own attitudes towards domestic and care work and household divisions of labour have shifted less over 2018-2023 than the societal messages about these that they perceive.

Homophobia: Young men's personal endorsement of homophobia, measured here by agreement with the statement that "A gay guy is not a "real man"", has not changed, with only a small decline in agreement from 28% to 25% over 2018 to 2023. Young men think though that societal messages have shifted more, with a drop from 47% to 35% in the proportion agreeing that this is the message they receive from society. This may reflect the diversification of gendered and sexual identities visible particularly among young people (Cover, 2018), although young men's own levels of homophobia have largely persisted at least over the past five years. About one quarter of young men agree that that it is not okay for heterosexual men to be friends with gay men and with trans or gender diverse people (23% and 22% respectively). Higher proportions of young men, 39%, endorse the view that "A transgender man is not a "real man"". Data on changes over time is not available for these last statements.

Hypersexuality: There has been little change in young men's personal endorsement of male hypersexuality since 2018, with about one-fifth of young men continuing to agree with norms of male sexual promiscuity (21%) and perpetual sexual readiness or interest (23%). Substantially greater proportions of young men agree that these norms are communicated to them by society. Forty-two percent of young men agree that they are told by society that "A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can," and 35% agree that they are told by society that "A "real man" would never say no to sex." Here however, there have been significant declines since 2018, of 12% for the first statement and 14% for the second statement. Also, young men give the notion of male sexual achievement ("A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can") some of the lowest levels of men's endorsement among the Man Box rules: 21% agree, giving this notion the third lowest level of agreement.

The area of the Man Box rules to do with sexual practice seems to be one where young men's own attitudes and perceived social norms are particularly far apart. Among all 19 rules, the largest gap between personal endorsement and perceived social pressure is for the rule based on male sexual promiscuity, a gap of 19%. There is also a large gap for the rule based on perpetual sexual readiness, of 14%, the equal fourth largest of the gaps. The gap between personal endorsement and perceived societal messaging is smaller for other dimensions of sexuality to do with sexual identity, homosexuality, and gender diversity, including perceptions of transgender men as not 'real men' and the acceptability of heterosexual men's friendships with gay men.

### Societal messages about manhood

Today's young men feel under less societal pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms than their peers of five years ago. In 2018, overall, 49% of men aged 18-30 agreed that there is societal pressure to conform to the Man Box rules, but by 2023, this had dropped by 11%, with 38% agreeing. This indicates that perceived pressure to conform to this model of masculinity has declined somewhat, but it does not indicate necessarily that pressure to conform to norms of masculinity per se has declined. That is, there may have been declines in the specific expectations that make up the Man Box, rather than in the overall degree of pressure men feel to conform to some sort of masculine norm.

The decline in perceived societal pressure differs markedly for different elements of the Man Box rules. The largest declines are for norms such as self-sufficiency (although this was for only one of the two elements here, to do with men figuring out their personal problems on their own) and toughness. However, despite the decline in perceived societal pressure on men to act tough, based on the two "Acting Tough" statements, 44% and 50% of young men still felt that they received these messages about toughness from society, and the "Acting Tough" area of the Man Box shows the highest levels of societal pressure of the seven areas. Indeed, the statement that "Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside" is the only one of the 19 statements seen by a majority (50%) of the young men as a societal message, down from 69% in 2018.

Other elements of the Man Box rules that also showed sizeable declines in levels of perceived societal pressure from 2018 to 2023 include physical attractiveness, the male breadwinner role, and hypersexuality. Again though, for some of these such as the male breadwinner role, there is still significant social pressure. For example, 42% of young men agree that "Society as a whole tells me that in heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women," down from 56% in 2018.

Despite an overall decline in perceived societal pressure to conform to the Man Box rules, some elements of the Man Box are seen by young men as enforced as strongly as ever. Norms of male aggression and control seem largely to have held steady. Two of the three statements related to this element of the Man Box show the smallest degree of change: "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary" (1% decline) and "In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage" (4% decline). There was a larger decline (9%) in perceived societal pressure for the third statement, "If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time."

Although young men now feel under less societal pressure to conform to the Man Box rules than the same age cohort five years ago, there has been less change in young men's personal endorsement of Man Box rules. While overall perceptions of societal pressure declined by 11% (from 49% to 38%), overall personal endorsement declined only by 4% (from 30% to 26%). Young men do show less personal support for the Man Box rules than the levels of societal support they perceive, but over time the former has declined less than the latter.

The pattern of change in levels of personal endorsement again is uneven. There is data for both 2018 and 2023 for 16 of the 19 Man Box rules. While young men's levels of agreement with some Man Box rules lessened, with reductions of at least five percent in personal support for six of the rules, for other rules there was little or no change, and for two statements there were even slight increases in support.

# Men's behaviour and the impacts of conformity to masculine norms

Norms of masculinity are of interest above all because they shape behaviour – because they shape the lives and relations of men and boys and those around them. The two Man Box surveys also have established two key findings about the impacts of masculine norms. Both Man Box surveys examine the associations between young men's behaviours and their endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms, and the most recent survey extends this by exploring a wider range of behaviours. There are two consistent findings in this research:

- Young men who endorse traditional definitions of manhood are more likely to suffer harm to themselves.
- Young men who endorse traditional definitions of manhood are more likely to do harm to others.

#### Suffering harm

Young men's health is uneven: while some young men are thriving, others are struggling with poor mental health, isolation, suicidal thoughts, and risk-taking. The Man Box surveys show that one important influence on young men's health and wellbeing is their attitudes towards manhood. Men's endorsement of traditional masculine norms has been widely demonstrated to be associated with a range of problematic individual and relational outcomes, although this also depends on the specific masculine norms and health outcomes in question (Levant & Richmond, 2016, pp. 33-35).

Large numbers of young men have experienced symptoms of poor mental health, the Man Box survey finds, and these are most frequent among men with the highest levels of endorsement of the Man Box rules. This is particularly the case for young men having thoughts of suicide and self-harm. About one-quarter of the men surveyed (25.4%) reported they were very unlikely to seek help from anyone for a personal or emotional problem, and over one fifth (22.9%) had not sought help from anyone in the past six months.

Young men show higher rates of risk-taking behaviour – risky alcohol consumption, illicit drug use, problem gambling, and dangerous driving – than other cohorts in Australia, and traditional masculine norms inform young men's participation in these. The Man Box survey findings illustrate this clearly for three forms of risk-taking: risky drinking, dangerous behaviour under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and problem gambling.

- One in three young men (33.1%) meet 'risky drinker' criteria in terms of the quantity or frequency of their alcohol consumption, and this was more common among men with the highest endorsement of Man Box rules.
- Close to one in three young men (30%) have engaged in an activity while intoxicated by either alcohol or drugs that carried an increased risk to them or others (such as going to work, driving a car, or going swimming). Again, this was more frequent among men who agree more strongly with Man Box rules.
- Over half of young men (53%) participated in some form of gambling in the past month, and one in five (19%) are involved in problem gambling.
   Men with the highest levels of support for the Man Box norms also showed higher levels of gambling, and problem gambling.

The survey data on men's involvement in two other risk-taking behaviours, dangerous drinking and illicit drug use, did not show any relationships with their levels of agreement with the Man Box rules. This may, however, reflect the limits of the data themselves. Dangerous driving was measured only with a question asking if respondents had been in a traffic accident (rather than causing one, or other elements of risky driving such as speeding). Illicit drug use was measured only by a single question on use of any illicit drugs.

The Man Box survey explored young men's involvement in various forms of violence and abuse, and for two of these, it included data on young men's own victimisation.

- Harassment: Close of half of young men (44%) had experienced "someone or a group of people [making] unwanted sexual comments to you in a public place or online", and this was significantly higher among young men with stronger endorsement of Man Box rules.
- Bullying: Asked about three forms of bullying (verbal, online, and physical), two-thirds of young men (68%) had experienced at least some bullying in the last month. Those with the highest endorsement of the Man Box rules were more likely to have experienced any bullying and to have experienced frequent bullying.

A further dimension of young men's health and wellbeing is their life satisfaction. This is one domain where higher endorsement of the Man Box rules is not associated with a negative outcome. Instead, young men with higher endorsement of Man Box rules also showed higher levels of self-reported life satisfaction, while young men with the lowest levels of endorsement showed lower life satisfaction. There are at least three possible explanations for this: the rewards and costs associated with conforming to or departing from traditional masculine norms, the positive impact of endorsement of specific masculine norms, or the demographic makeup of those men who have lower levels of endorsement of Man Box rules.

The association between endorsement of the Man Box rules and higher life satisfaction may reflect an insight fundamental to the notion of the 'Man Box' itself: men are rewarded for staying 'in' the Box, and punished if they step 'outside' it. Men who can successfully demonstrate stereotypical masculine qualities may receive social status from peers and others, be viewed as more capable employees or leaders, and feel satisfaction or pride in their achievement of social expectations of manhood. (At the same time, men with higher endorsement of traditional masculine norms also pay other costs themselves, as the Man Box data indicates, including the poorer mental health and higher levels of risk-taking behaviour described earlier.)

On the other hand, men who violate normative expectations of masculinity may pay a cost. Stepping outside of the Man Box may involve social penalties, such as discrimination and stigma, constraints on friendships and relationships, and informal occupational and institutional disadvantages. It also may involve costs with a more personal dynamic. Where men fail to live up to the manhood ideals they themselves have internalised, they experience 'gender discrepancy strain' (Levant & Richmond, 2016, p. 35). We cannot, however, test whether this is the case among the men in the Man Box survey. This would require comparing men's perceptions of the ideal man (their idealised gender role standards) and their perception of their own gender role characteristics, and data on the latter is not available. (Note that men may violate masculine norms for various reasons, reflecting differing degrees of agency and differing drivers: they are poor at stereotypical masculine behaviours or for whatever reason have personalities at odds with stereotypical masculine traits, they have sexual identities or orientations that fall outside masculinity's strictly heteronormative principles, they actively contest and resist stereotypical masculinity, and so on (Flood, 2008; Heasley, 2005).

A second possibility is that higher levels of life satisfaction among men with higher endorsement of Man Box rules in the Man Box study represent the positive influence of their support for and enactment of specific masculine norms. Other research has documented that stereotypical masculine norms have differential impacts on men's health and wellbeing. Particular masculine norms can have positive or negative associations with men's health, as various reviews attest (Gerdes et al., 2018; Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Wong et al., 2017) and as research e.g. among young adult men continues to show (Kaya et al., 2019).

Lower levels of life satisfaction among men with the lowest levels of endorsement of Man Box rules also may be shaped by the demographic characteristics of this group. For example, gay, bisexual, and transgender men are overrepresented in this group, and homophobic and transphobic discrimination and internalised homophobia may lessen their levels of life satisfaction.

#### Doing harm

Substantial proportions of young men have caused harm to others, and the bluntest expression of this is in violence and abuse. The Man Box survey explores young men's involvement in three forms of violence: physical and sexual violence against an intimate partner, sexual harassment, and bullying. It finds that sizable minorities of young men have perpetrated such behaviours, and doing so is more common among young men who endorse traditional definitions of manhood.

More than one-quarter of young men (28%) have perpetrated at least one of the forms of intimate partner violence about which they were asked. This included, for example, pushing or shoving a partner (11% of respondents), having sexual intercourse with a partner when the partner was afraid of what they might do (10%), and forcing a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating (10%). About one-quarter of the men (24.8%) have perpetrated at least one form of physical violence against an intimate partner One-fifth (20%) have perpetrated at least one of three forms of sexual violence against an intimate partner.

These levels of self-reported perpetration among young men are similar to those in other studies in North America, Europe, and elsewhere (Flood et al., 2023, pp. 23-28). For example, 29.3% of men on average at universities in the USA and Canada have perpetrated sexual violence in their lifetimes, according to a systematic review of studies over 2000 to 2017 based on 78 samples of 25,524 college men (Anderson et al., 2021). The Man Box figures focused on eight forms of physical and sexual violence against a current or former intimate partner. Its findings on the proportions of young men who have perpetrated partner violence would be higher if they included other forms of violence and abuse including emotional abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, and coercive control.

Violence-supportive and patriarchal attitudes are a consistent predictor of men's perpetration of domestic, family, and sexual violence, as four recent meta-analyses and systematic analyses and a wealth of other studies have found (Flood et al., 2023, p. 36). The Man Box survey finds this too. Among young men aged 18 to 30, there were far higher rates of perpetration of sexual and physical violence against intimate partners among those men who agreed most strongly with the Man Box norms.

Pornography use is a risk factor for sexual violence perpetration, as longitudinal, experimental, and correlational studies show (Crabbe & Flood, 2021). In other words, men and boys who consume pornography are more likely than other boys to perpetrate sexual violence. The Man Box survey finds that pornography use is common among young men: 81% had used pornography over the past six months, 50.1% did so at least once a week, and 12.2% did so daily. Half of young men (52%) had looked at violent pornography, that is, at sexually explicit material which included one or more of the following being done to a woman: pushing or shoving, pulling hair, spanking, gagging, choking, slapping, kicking, punching, bondage or restraint, or forcing sex. Men with the highest levels of endorsement of the Man Box rules were more likely to use pornography - to look at it and to do so frequently and this was especially true for violent pornography.

The Man Box survey also collected data about young men's perpetration of two other forms of violence and abuse:

- Sexual harassment: Young men were asked about one form of sexually harassing behaviour, whether they had made "sexual comments to a woman or girl [they] didn't know, in a public place or online". One third of young men (33%) had done so in the last month, with 16% reporting they had done so often or very often. Perpetration was far higher among men with the highest levels of endorsement of the Man Box rules.
- Bullying: Over half of young men (58%) reported perpetrating at least one type of bullying (whether verbal, online, and physical) over the past month.
   Men with the highest levels of endorsement of the Man Box norms were much more likely to have perpetrated bullying and to have done so frequently.

### Preventing and reducing harm

Although most of the Man Box survey items on behaviour look at young men's involvement in behaviours that harm themselves or others, the survey also includes data on one form of pro-social behaviour, bystander intervention in violence.

- Male-male physical violence: If they witnessed their male friends engaged in a physical fight, over two-thirds of young men (70%) would be bothered by this, and nine-tenths of them – 65% of all men – would intervene.
- Verbal intimate partner violence: If they witnessed a male friend insulting or verbally abusing his female partner, three-quarters of young men (76%) would be bothered by this, and nine-tenths of them – 68% of all men – would intervene.

Young men in general seem slightly less bothered by the first form of violence than the second, even though the first is physical, and this may reflect the societal normalisation of male-male violence. At the same time, among those 'bothered' by these forms of violence, the anticipated likelihood of intervening is the same for both. For both male-male physical violence and intimate partner verbal abuse, young men with lesser personal endorsement of traditional masculine norms were more bothered by the violence and more likely to intervene.



### **Building momentum for change**

To return to the opening points in this commentary, there is both good news and bad news in the Man Box findings. First, the good news: a model of manhood based in toughness, aggression, emotional stoicism, homophobia, transphobia, and male dominance is not the cultural standard in Australia, at least among men aged 18-30. Most men aged 18-30 do not endorse this form of masculinity, suggesting that most are more accepting instead of healthier, gender-equitable, and inclusive models of manhood or personhood. Moreover, most men report that traditional masculine beliefs are not the ones they receive from society, and more men report this than the men five years ago.

Then there is the bad news. A sizable minority of young men endorse rigid, dangerous, or sexist models of manhood, and levels of endorsement generally have remained steady over the past five years. A higher proportion of young men, although still in the minority, report that the messages they see from society also uphold these regressive models of manhood. These young men are more likely to perpetrate violence and other forms of harm against women, other men, and others. They may be particularly vulnerable to antifeminist radicalisation in online spaces (Botto & Gottzén, 2023; Habib et al., 2022), or indeed, their sexist views may already reflect this.

It is disheartening to note that there has been little change in the past five years in young men's levels of endorsement of male aggression, stoicism, traditional divisions of household work, homophobia, and hypersexuality. Young men these days are less accepting of men always knowing their intimate partners' whereabouts but still just as accepting of men always having the final say in their relationships or marriages, with about one quarter of men supporting both these dimensions of male dominance and control in relationships. Finally, men's attitudinal support for traditional masculine ideology is reflected in their involvement in a range of behaviours that harm themselves, their intimate partners, or others.

What can be done about this? The three broad recommendations I offered at the end of my commentary on the first Man Box report (2018), summarised in the Text Box, "Beyond the Man Box", are a good place to start. In the second Man Box report (2020), I extended these recommendations, locating them within a gender-transformative approach. I called for doing more to address the specific norms associated with negative outcomes and to target particular groups of men and boys. I emphasised the value of supporting men's and boys' resistance to regressive masculine norms and practices and challenging the pervasive policing of masculinity. And I called for going beyond attitudes and norms, to tackle the institutional forces and structures that sustain unhealthy and oppressive forms of manhood.

#### Box 5.1: How to move beyond the Man Box

#### 1. Highlight the harms of the Man Box

- Highlight the price of blind conformity to masculinity.
- · Sensitise public health, welfare, & service provision to the harms of traditional masculinity.
- But also acknowledge male privilege.

#### 2. Weaken the cultural grip of the Man Box

- Highlight the gap between masculine social norms and men's own ideals
- Turn up the volume on diversity and change among men
- Engage men and boys in critical conversations about manhood
- Challenge the sources of the Man Box

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

- · Promote healthy masculinity. And/or equitable and ethical ways of being
- Including such qualities as: gender equality, non-violence, respect, empathy, nurturance, emotional intelligence, and so on
- Whatever vision we have for men and boys, it must be: feminist based on equality, diverse and multiple, and non-essentialist

Source: Summarised from The Men's Project & Flood (2018, pp. 50-53).



There is a growing field of programming and policy focused on work with men and boys. A field of 'engaging men' has developed, involving genderconscious initiatives and interventions aimed at men and boys in relation to violence prevention, health, parenting, education, and other fields (Flood, 2015). It is encouraging to report that the last decade has seen significant growth in this field. Programs and initiatives focused on men and boys have proliferated at local, national, and international levels, and the fields or domains in which work with men and boys takes place have expanded. There is a growing scholarly evidence base assessing the effectiveness of this work (Greig & Flood, 2020, 2021). In the community in Australia there is widespread support for example for men's positive roles in violence prevention (Flood, 2020, p. 26) and majority support for the notion that men will benefit from breaking free from traditional masculine stereotypes (Flood, 2020, pp. 13-14). There is growing policy support for engaging men and boys, visible for example in Australia's national violence prevention frameworks and policies.

The remainder of my commentary focuses on the most important ways forward for work with men and boys.

Work with men and boys aimed at promoting healthy or positive masculinities in Australia must be intensified and scaled up. There are promising initiatives under way, but the work is small and scattered. Many efforts are focused on face-to-face education, and while this is a valuable strategy, it must be complemented by greater attention to strategies operating at more macro levels and aimed at organisational and structural change.

Community-level strategies are vital to address the social norms, social relations, and social inequalities known to underpin violence, crime, poor health, and other social problems. They target modifiable characteristics of the community: structural, economic, political, cultural or environmental. Community-level strategies move work with men and boys closer to the general ideal that initiatives be comprehensive, relevant, and empowering (Flood, 2023a).

We also need intensive intervention into the settings and processes most implicated in sustaining unhealthy and gender-inequitable masculinities. These may include contexts such as workplaces, sporting clubs, and informal peer circles. One set of spaces in need of urgent intervention is the online platforms, communities and networks through which some boys and men are radicalised into sexism and misogyny (Flood, 2023b).

Work with men and boys must do more to identify and encourage protective factors, the factors that shape healthier and more gender-equitable attitudes, behaviours, and relations among men and boys. This work should be informed by scholarship on men's pathways to gender-equitable and non-violent lives (Flood, 2014) and should address protective factors at individual, relationship, community and societal levels (Casey et al., 2022).

There are two more vital ways forward. We need to build capacity to engage men and boys. Efforts are necessary to increase the capacity of educators, advocates, and other practitioners to work effectively with and boys, whether through dedicated university curricula, professional development, or other strategies (Wells et al., 2023).

Finally, we need explicit standards for effective or best practice in work with men and boys. There is significant community appetite for 'healthy' or 'positive masculinities' programs among boys and men, and a proliferation of such initiatives. But there is little shared sense of standards or principles of effective practice, existing work in Australia is of uneven quality, and this may worsen as the field expands. However, good guidance on standards for effective practice is available, including assessment tools for work with men and boys (Keddie et al., 2023) and guidance for specific fields such as violence prevention (Our Watch, 2022; Regional Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women and UN Women, 2020; Wells et al., 2020), men's health (Galdas et al., 2023), and other areas.

In building healthier and more gender-equitable lives for men and boys, there is much to do. To make progress, we must know where men and boys are at. The Man Box data provides invaluable data on the attitudes men have, the ways they treat themselves and others, and the wider social and cultural forces that shape their lives.

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It is clear from this study that there is variation between the ideas of manhood often communicated by society, and men's personal beliefs about how a "real man" thinks, feels, and behaves. This is good news: it indicates that it is possible for men to develop their own ideas about masculinity, rather than simply internalising the stereotypes served up by society.

While it is encouraging that the majority of men in this study did not personally endorse the rules of the Man Box, a significant proportion still agree with the rigid definition of manhood it represents. A concerning proportion of men display gender-inequitable, homophobic, and transphobic attitudes. Coupled with the proportion of men who believe that men should use violence to get respect, always have the final say in their relationship, and know where their partner is at all times, there is still much work to do to shift harmful attitudes if we are to reduce violence against women. This is even clearer when considering that men who most strongly endorse Man Box rules are much more likely to use various forms of violence, including physical and sexual violence against an intimate partner. The results of this study show that a significant minority of men believe that they need to be stoic, tough and selfsufficient. Those men who most strongly agree with Man Box rules are more likely to experience higher rates of suicidal ideation. They are also more likely to experience symptoms of poor mental health, engage in risky use of alcohol or problem gambling, and put themselves in danger under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The data in this report lays out a compelling case for change, and should spur on efforts to support Australian men to understand, critique and negotiate the norms of the Man Box. The potential benefits are immense: for men and those around them, and for society as a whole.

With this in mind, the following recommendations have been formulated to outline what can be done to continue to address the damaging effects of stereotypical masculine norms. In putting forward these recommendations, we use the term "healthier masculinities" to refer to work that increases awareness of the harms of the Man Box, highlights the diversity that exists in relation to attitudes towards masculinity, and promotes positive alternatives to the Man Box (Tyler, 2022). Taken together, implementing these recommendations would go some way towards weakening the cultural grip of the Man Box and thus improve the well-being of all genders.

### Recommendations

### Recommendation area 1: Policy change

There has been significant policy progress in recent years. The Federal Government's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 explicitly acknowledges the importance of supporting men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive relationships with their male peers. At a state and territory government level, the approaches taken to violence prevention and early intervention vary, although we have seen an increasing emphasis placed on engaging men and boys in violence prevention efforts. A good example of the type of leadership that can be provided by government agencies is the Healthier Masculinities Framework for Gender Equality, a framework published in 2020 by VicHealth (Victoria's health promotion agency) to guide health promotion with men and boys.

Leadership in violence prevention and/or the well-being of men and boys does not need to be limited to agencies with explicit responsibility for these areas. For instance, Victoria Police's Equal, Safe and Strong: Victoria Police's 10-year Gender Equality Strategy acknowledges the harmful impacts of stereotypical masculine norms, stating, "Strict adherence to gender stereotypes has negatively impacted police culture and amplified inequality ...The less stereotypical masculine traits and gendered stereotyping, the less gendered workplace harm" (Victoria Police, 2020).

While there has been some progress in recognising the importance of engaging men and boys in violence prevention, and the need to include a healthier masculinities approach when addressing a number of social and economic problems including men's health, there are still significant opportunities to strengthen both policy foundations and associated implementation.

#### We recommend that government:

- I. Develop strategy: Every state and territory government should develop a violence prevention and early intervention strategy which foregrounds working with men and boys, including reducing attachment to harmful rigid ideas about what it means to be a man and related attitudes that are linked to the use of violence.
- II. Develop an action plan: Informed by the lessons learnt during the forthcoming Healthy Masculinities project trial, the Federal Government should develop a National Healthier Masculinities Action Plan that is aligned with the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. The Action Plan should set out how healthier masculinities will be embedded into violence prevention and early intervention work with men and boys including how healthier masculinities relates to other violence prevention approaches. This should include establishing a set of standards based on available evidence of what is expected from programs seeking to deliver healthier masculinities work.
- III. Review policy frameworks: The Federal Government, working closely with state and territory governments, should commission an independent national review of relevant policy frameworks to determine where and how a greater focus on promoting healthier masculinities could be incorporated (e.g., violence prevention, mental health, gambling, alcohol and other drugs, healthy eating, criminal justice, social procurement, child and family services, occupational health and safety, road safety). This review should include thorough community consultation to build an understanding of what "healthy masculinities" means, taking an intersectional and trauma-informed approach.

### Recommendation area 2: Workforce capacity building

There is increasing recognition that workforces<sup>36</sup> need support in order to understand and confidently challenge stereotypical gender norms. These workforces can positively influence men and boys every day in settings where they learn, work and play. This has been demonstrated through The Men's Project's work in Victoria where, with support from the Victorian Government, we have worked on a project with staff across 60 schools to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to promote healthier masculinities in their school communities as part of implementing the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships initiative.

Building on emerging work such as this, we recommend that:

- IV. Government invests in workforce capacity building:

  State and territory governments should focus on
  workforce capacity building to promote healthier
  masculinities in sectors where there are significant
  opportunities to reduce the harms of the Man Box.
  The sectors include (but are not limited to) education
  and training, health, child and family services, justice,
  sport, local government, and communications.
- V. Tertiary education curricula include healthier masculinities content: Healthier masculinities content and capability building should be included in higher education curricula for workforces such as teachers, social workers, and psychologists, to support them to effectively model healthier alternatives to stereotypical masculine norms and support the populations they work with to adopt healthier and more flexible masculinities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> "Workforces" refers to anyone in a position to positively influence gender norms in the course of their work, which could include any workforce. However, we recommend focusing on workforces in the following sectors: education and training, health, child and family services, justice, sport, local government, and communications. (Family Safety Victoria, 2017).

### Recommendation area 3: Community awareness raising

In the face of increasing awareness of online content reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes, there is a risk that the proliferation of this online content far surpasses the impact of an approach which relies on separate programs delivered to specific audiences (e.g. workshops with teachers, social workers, or sports coaches; curriculum delivered directly to adolescents). To address this, whole-of-population approaches such as public campaigns should be funded alongside primary prevention and early intervention programs. Additionally, greater attention should be given to ensuring diverse masculinities are represented in public media and campaigns not directly related to healthier masculinities (road safety or healthy eating campaigns, for instance).

The funding required to achieve the required reach through programs alone is not likely to be obtainable and, depending on program design and setting, there is also a risk that program participants are predominately those who are already aware of the Man Box and its associated harms.

To mitigate against these risks, we recommend that:

- VI. Governments fund population-level campaigns:
  Federal, state and territory governments should provide funding to agencies which specialise in the primary prevention of violence and/or in health promotion to run population-level, evidence-based campaigns to promote healthier masculinities.<sup>37</sup>
  These campaigns should be run in collaboration with other primary prevention initiatives that work with schools, community groups, and workplaces.
- VII. Place-based approaches are funded: Funders adopt a place-based approach in which community consortiums lead healthy masculinities work with multiple and reinforcing approaches across schools, sports clubs, community service organisations and local councils.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> An example of this type of campaign is <a href="https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/campaigns/respect-starts-with-a-conversation">https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/campaigns/respect-starts-with-a-conversation</a>.

#### Recommendation area 4: Future research

As the Australian National Research Agenda to End Violence against Women and Children (ANRA) 2023–2028 outlines, there are a number of areas where further research is necessary to understand more about how to ensure that equitable masculinities are widespread. It is also important that research into the impact of masculine gender norms on behaviour is ongoing, so that prevention and early intervention programs are informed by up-to-date evidence on what promising practice looks like.

While there is a significant evidence base to draw on already, we wish to highlight one area which we believe requires urgent action: facilitating a better understanding of what works to shift attitudes towards masculinity amongst men who most strongly endorse the Man Box. As this report shows, these men are significantly more likely to use and experience violence, as well as experience a range or poor health outcomes.

#### We recommend future research on:

- VIII. Reducing the impact of harmful gender norms amongst the men who most strongly endorse them: Research should aim to understand the most effective ways to decrease the impact of stereotypical masculine norms among those men who most strongly endorse the Man Box. This research should be done in collaboration with partners that have expertise in masculinities research and/or practice. This is a substantial research agenda which should be completed across various settings (e.g. schools, workplaces, residential settings) and cohorts (including all cultures, religions, sexualities, ages and abilities). Research questions should look at:
  - The most promising opportunities for effective intervention, informed by ongoing work to understand the mechanisms through which attitudes related to masculinities are developed and what factors moderate the impact of attitudes on behaviour.

- The effectiveness of various practice approaches, including not only approaches focussed on raising awareness of/changing attitudes, but also those that improve emotional literacy and problem-solving skills, which may moderate the impact of endorsing stereotypical masculine norms on behaviour.
- The impact of practice approaches on life outcomes such as use of violence and mental health across different contexts with a particular focus on behaviour in response to life events which pose significant risks (e.g. post the breakdown of an intimate relationship).
- How and in what contexts specific aspects of masculinities can have a protective, positive and healthy impact on behaviours and life outcomes.





### Appendix A. Survey sample demographic characteristics

Demographic variable	% of sample, 18- to 30-year-olds	% of Australian male population (18 to 30 years old)*	% of sample, 31- to 45-year-olds
Age			
18-24	44%	51%	-
25-30	56%	49%	-
31-39	-	-	64%
40-45	-	-	36%
Metro v Regional			
Metro	85%	90%	78%
Regional	15%	10%	22%
State / Territory			
NSW	38%	32%	33%
Victoria	25%	26%	24%
Queensland	15%	20%	18%
South Australia	8%	7%	14%
Western Australia	10%	10%	8%
Tasmania	2%	2%	2%
ACT	2%	2%	1%
Northern Territory	0%	1%	0%
Country of Birth			
Australia	88%	65%	82%
Other	12%	35%	18%
Language spoken at home			
English	92%	74%	86%
Another language	8%	26%	14%
Sexuality			
Heterosexual	92%	96%	90%
Gay, bisexual and other <sup>1</sup>	8%	4% +,2	10%

Response options included here are: Pansexual, Queer, Asexual, Don't know, Prefer not to have a label, I use a different term (please specify). These options were adapted from Hill et al. (2020) Private lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia, and Writing themselves in 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+young people in Australia (Hill et al. 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Figures range around 3% not including transgender men, with multiple references to higher rates for younger cohorts like 18-24 years. Therefore 4% is a conservative number.

Demographic variable	% of sample, 18- to 30-year-olds	% of Australian male population (18 to 30 years old)*	% of sample, 31- to 45-year-olds
Religion	io to so year olds	(10 to 50 years old)	
No formal religion	52%	49%	58%
Christianity	34%	30%	31%
Islam	5%	4%	3%
Hinduism	4%	4%	2%
Buddhism	3%	2%	3%
Other	2%	11%	4%
Education (highest level)			
Below year 12	9%	2%	11%
Completed year 12	18%	43%	10%
Trade/tech cert/diploma	23%	25%	28%
Bachelor's degree	38%	17%	35%
Postgraduate	10%	5%	11%
Prefer not to say	2%	8%	1%
Employment status			
Paid work in last week	75%	71%	85%
No paid work in last week	25%	22%	15%
Not stated	N/A	7%	N/A
Current study status			
Full time study	32%	22%	23%
Part time study	11%	10%	5%
Not currently enrolled	57%	68%	72%

<sup>\*</sup> ABS (2020)

#### Note that:

- The survey was conducted in English, which may explain why the survey sample (18- to 30-year-old men) has a larger proportion of English speakers than the Australian population (92% of the sample vs 74% of the equivalent Australian population), as well as a larger proportion of respondents born in Australia (88% of the sample vs 65% of the Australian male population aged 18 to 30).
- The survey sample (18- to 30-year-old men) had higher education levels than the equivalent Australian population. 27% of the sample had a year 12 education or less, compared to 45% of the Australian male population aged 18 to 30, and 48% had a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree, compared to 22% of the Australian male population in this age group.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>+</sup> Carman et al (2020)



The 2024 Australian Man Box study used a revised version of the 2018 Australian Man Box study questionnaire. In turn, the 2018 questionnaire was adapted from that developed by Equimundo in their 2017 US, UK and Mexico Man Box study (Heilman et al., 2017). Equimundo's 2017 Man Box study drew on decades of social science research on masculine norms, as well as the organisation's existing research into gender norms, attitudes, and behaviour including the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), which was undertaken with more than 45,000 men and women in more than 30 countries (Fleming et al., 2015). Equimundo created a list of statements called the "Man Box", which describe the "clear and constant messages and pressures" that men encounter about how to be a "real man". These statements make up the Man Box scale, which is discussed in further detail in the section below.

In 2018, The Men's Project adapted the 2017 Equimundo survey questionnaire for an Australian context, adding questions to explore well-being (life satisfaction, mental health), men's relationships, men's perceptions of their physical appearance, bullying, risk-taking behaviours (including alcohol use and traffic accidents), help seeking behaviours, bystander behaviours, leisure activities, pornography consumption, homophobia and community participation (The Men's Project and Flood, 2018). The survey questionnaire used in the 2024 Man Box study has been revised further, with questions added to measure self-harm, illicit drug use and problem gambling; viewing of violent pornography; and the perpetration of intimate partner violence. Another section was added to gauge the degree to which respondents deny gender inequality and display hostility towards women. Some questions from the 2018 study were revised or expanded to improve the quality of the data collected or align the questions with those asked in other major Australian studies; others were removed because they did not have a strong link to the research questions.

Each of the areas covered by the questionnaire are discussed below.

### B.1. Stereotypical masculine norms (the Man Box)

Research Aims 1 and 2 were explored using the Man Box Scale developed by Equimundo and used in the 2018 Australian Man Box study. This scale measures how survey respondents perceive social pressure to conform to stereotypical masculine norms, as well as whether they personally agree with these norms.

Survey respondents were asked two sets of questions about each Man Box rule. The first set of questions asked respondents to select whether they *Strongly agreed*, *Agreed, Disagreed*, *or Strongly disagreed* with the statement "Society tells me that [insert Man Box rule]". The second set of questions used the same approach, but asked respondents about their personal view of the Man Box rule i.e. "In my opinion, [insert Man Box rule]". An example of this is given in Box B.1.

<sup>3</sup> Mainly aligning demographic questions with relevant Australian standards e.g. those used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This included revising heteronormative language (e.g. assuming parents means a mother and a father) and using more diverse sexuality and gender identifiers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Dominant forms and patterns of masculinity which emphasise aggression, dominance, toughness, emotional stoicism, and heterosexuality.

#### Box B.1: Using Man Box rules to measure both perceived social messages and individual beliefs

Example Man Box rule: "A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect."
Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the following statements:

- Perceived social pressure/social messages about Man Box rule: "Society tells me that a man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect."
- Personal beliefs/personal endorsement of Man Box rule: "In my opinion, a man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect."

Respondents could choose one of the following response options: *strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed.* 

### B.1.1. Changes to the Man Box scale between 2018 and 2024

A number of changes were made to the Man Box rules and pillars in the 2024 study in order to ensure consistency, include transphobia as well as homophobia, and address heteronormative language.

The 2018 Man Box pillar "Heterosexuality and Homophobia" included the Man Box rule "In my opinion, straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal". This was the only positively worded statement among the Man Box rules, and so for consistency, this statement was updated in the Man Box 2024 questionnaire (data collected in 2023) to a negatively worded one: "In my opinion, it's not okay for straight guys to be friends with gay guys".

Another change was made to the 2018 pillar "Heterosexuality and Homophobia". In 2018, this pillar was intended to reflect the social norm that a "real

man" should be heterosexual and spend time with other heterosexual men. The 2024 study expanded this pillar by adding two Man Box rules that prescribed that "real men" are straight, cisgender, and spend time with other cisgender men. The new Man Box rules used language similar to the existing two rules in the pillar (see Figure B.1). This pillar was renamed "Homophobia and Transphobia" to reflect the addition of these two Man Box rules.

Updates were also made to the wording of two Man Box rules which relate to roles in relationships. These statements reflected the stereotypical masculine norm that a "real man" is heterosexual. The statements referred to men's roles in relationships, and specified or implied that the opposite partner in the relationship was a woman. To ensure that the statements reflect social pressures and beliefs around heterosexual relationships, the wording of these rules was updated by inserting "In heterosexual relationships" at the start of each rule.

Figure B.1: Updated Man Box pillar: "Homophobia and transphobia"

Changes in italics

	2018 Man Box study	2024 Man Box study
Name of pillar	Heterosexuality and Homophobia	Homophobia and Transphobia
Man Box rules for this pillar	<ul> <li>A gay guy is not a "real man".</li> <li>Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>A gay guy is not a "real man".</li> <li>A transgender man is not a "real man".</li> <li>It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with gay guys.</li> <li>It's not OK for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people.</li> </ul>

Updates were also made to the wording of two Man Box rules which relate to roles in relationships. These statements reflected the stereotypical masculine norm that a "real man" is heterosexual. The statements referred to men's roles in relationships, and specified or implied that the opposite partner in the relationship was a woman. To ensure that the statements reflect social pressures and beliefs around heterosexual relationships, the wording of these rules was updated by inserting "In heterosexual relationships" at the start of each rule.

#### 2018 wording

- Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women
- A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage

#### 2024 wording

- In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women
- In heterosexual relationships, a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage



### B.1.2. The Man Box scale in 2024

Each Man Box rule is shown under their respective Pillar in Figure B.2.

Figure B.2: Man Box scale 2024

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

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 6}$  The survey used in this latest Man Box study added "in heterosexual relationships."

### **B.2.** Demographic variables

The following variables were included in the survey to allow demographic analyses: age, postcode, gender, sexuality, parenthood status, educational attainment, student status, employment status, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, country of birth, language spoken at home, disability status and religious affiliation. Questions on marital status, occupation type and parent's country of birth were not included in the 2024 study. Parenthood status and disability status were not collected in 2018.

### B.3. Questions measuring harm to others

Research Aims 3 and 4 of this study include seeking to understand the relationship between men's personal endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms and attitudes towards violence, personal use of violence, and bystander behaviour around violence. The study considered, in particular:

- Attitudes towards violence against women and gender inequality
- · Violent pornography consumption
- Bullying and physical violence perpetration and victimisation
- · Sexual harassment perpetration
- The perpetration of physical or sexual violence against an intimate partner
- Bystander behaviour.

## B.3.1. Attitudes towards violence against women and gender inequality

The 2024 study included questions to explore whether respondents were broadly supportive of the social conditions known to enable violence against women – especially attitudes which condone violence against women and disbelieve/deny experiences of gender inequality (Our Watch et al., 2015). Respondents were presented with six statements designed to measure these variables and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each one. Response options were a 5-point Likert scale from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*.

To measure attitudes which condone violence against women, three items from the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) were used (Coumarelos et al., 2023a). The first item listed below was drawn from the Mistrust women subscale and the other two items from the Minimise violence subscale. Both of these subscales were from the Attitudes towards Violence Against Women scale. The statements were chosen because they best aligned with the Research Aims, specifically Aim 4 which sought to explore the relationship between personal endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms and young men's level of hostility towards women (and their experiences). The statements included were:

- Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false
- Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family
- Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he doesn't mean to.

The *Deny Inequality* subscale is from the *Attitudes* towards Gender Inequality scale in the 2021 NCAS (Coumarelos et al., 2023a). The statements included were:

- Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia
- Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist
- Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them.

### B.3.2. Violent pornography consumption

The 2018 Australian Man Box study asked respondents whether they had accessed pornographic material in the past month, in order to understand whether there was a relationship between personal endorsement of masculine norms and use of pornography. The 2024 study expands on this by asking about the consumption of pornography that includes physical aggression and violence, in order to understand whether there is a relationship between this and other variables (including personal endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms and use of intimate partner violence).

The questionnaire asked two questions about how often respondents viewed pornography in the last six months: specifically how often they "... looked at pornography or sexually explicit material" and how often they "... looked at pornography and sexually explicit material which included one or more of the following being done to a woman: pushing or shoving; pulling hair; spanking; gagging; choking; slapping; kicking; punching; bondage or restraint; forcing sex." The latter question was developed using Bridges et al. (2010), who defined the types of physically aggressive acts seen in pornography videos. Bridges et al. (2010) included more severe descriptions of violence in pornography<sup>7</sup>, however these were removed to ensure respondents did not feel

the need to distance themselves from this category of pornography. Men who did not identify as heterosexual were presented with an alternative violent pornography question with the phrase "done to a woman" removed. Men could select *never*, *monthly*, 2-3 times a month, weekly, 2-3 times a week, daily, or prefer not to say. The research team consulted with an expert in young people and pornography, Maree Crabbe, in the development of these questions,

### B.3.3. Bullying and physical violence

In this section, "bullying" is used as a catch-all term for abuse (any intentional action that harms or injures another person) which would meet the definition of bullying when conducted repeatedly. It should be noted that this is not the usual way bullying is defined, however it is the way data was collected and reported in previous studies, and has been retained for consistency.

Survey respondents were asked to select how often they had perpetrated or experienced verbal, online, or physical bullying in the previous month. The text of these questions is shown in italics in Figure B.3. The response options for each of the six questions were *Not at all, Not often, Often, and Very often.* 

Figure 2.4: Survey questions related to bullying

	Perpetration questions	Experience questions
	In the past month, how often have you done any of the following?	In the past month, how often have any of the following things happened to you?
Verbal bullying	You made jokes about someone, teased someone, or called someone names that they did not like, for any reason	Someone or a group of people verbally put you down, called you names you did not like, made jokes about you or teased you for any reason
Online bullying	You insulted someone, posted something meant to embarrass someone, or made threats to someone via text or online	Someone or a group of people posted something meant to embarrass you, insulted you or made threats to you via text or online
Physical violence / bullying	You physically hurt someone on purpose by pushing them down, kicking them or hitting them with a hand, clenched fist, object or weapon	Someone or a group of people physically hurt you on purpose

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Threatening or use of weapons, mutilation or attempting murder were the three severe forms of physical aggression which were removed from the survey question. These were included in Bridges et al (2010) but that study was analyzing porn rather than seeking input from consumers about the type of porn they saw.

### B.3.4. Sexual harassment

Survey respondents were asked how often they had "made sexual comments to a woman or girl you didn't know, in a public place or online" in the previous month. The response options for each of the questions were Not at all, Not often, Often, and Very often.

It should be noted that the survey question required men to be aware of, and interpret, whether their behaviour was unwanted or unwelcome. As a result, the data reported for these questions are likely to be inexact, as men may not have been aware of, or accurately interpreting, a woman's reaction.

### **B.3.5.** Intimate partner violence

The current study would ideally explore the associations between men's personal endorsement of masculine norms and multiple facets of violence against women, but due to constraints related to the length of the survey, the study focused on two forms of intimate partner violence: physical and sexual violence. To measure the life-time perpetration of these forms of intimate partner violence, the research team used questions based on the World Health Organisation's Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (WHO, 2005). The questions used in the WHO study were directed at women with the objective of measuring their experience of violence as a victim. To measure perpetration of violence by men, the research team used a version of the WHO study's questions which have been adapted by other researchers for use with

men to measure perpetration of these forms of violence (Fleming et al., 2015).

Questions about men's perpetration of eight forms of intimate partner violence were asked: three forms of sexual violence and five forms of physical violence.<sup>8</sup> For each form of intimate partner violence, respondents were asked to respond either yes, no or prefer not to say.

The questions about **sexual violence** perpetration were: Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner...

- Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to?
- Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do?
- Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating?

The questions about **physical violence** perpetration were: *Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner...* 

- Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?
- Pushed or shoved a partner?
- Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them?
- Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?
- Choked or burnt a partner on purpose?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Note that some of the forms of intimate partner violence required men to report on their perception of their partner's affective reaction (e.g. whether their partner wanted to do something, was scared etc). The data reported for these questions are likely to be inexact, as men may not have been aware of, or accurately interpreting, their partner's reaction.

### **B.3.6.** Bystander behaviour

Two questions were included in the 2018 questionnaire to understand how men would react when witnessing sexism and sexual harassment. The 2024 study revised these questions in order to enable a comparison of responses to male-to-male violence versus intimate partner violence. See Chapter 2, Box 2.3., for further detail on the types of violence measured in this study).

Two scenarios were presented to survey respondents: one where they witnessed friends getting into a physical fight (male-to-male violence), and one where they witnessed a friend verbally abusing a woman he was in a relationship with (verbal intimate partner violence). The second scenario was drawn from the 2021 National Community Attitudes Survey (Coumarelos et al., 2023a). Respondents were asked if they would be bothered by the scenario and, if so, what action (if any) they would take, and why.9

### B.4. Questions measuring harm to self

Part of Research Aim 3 of this study was to understand how men's personal endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms predicts outcomes such as:

- · Wellbeing (life satisfaction, mental health)
- Risk-taking behaviours (risky consumption of alcohol, illicit drug use, traffic accidents and problem gambling)
- Help seeking and emotional vulnerability

Survey questions from 2018 related to alcohol consumption and help seeking behaviours have been updated so they are consistent with validated measures (AIHW, 2019, Wilson et al., 2005, Coumarelos et al., 2023a).

### **B.4.1. Life satisfaction**

Men were asked "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?". The response options were presented as a one to ten scale, where one was *Extremely dissatisfied* and ten was *Extremely satisfied*. Men's responses are presented in this report in three categories: low (scores of 1-4), medium (5-7), and high (8-10). This question is from the World Values Survey (Haerpfer et al., 2022).

#### B.4.2. Mental health

Survey respondents were also asked questions on symptoms of depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. The two questions on depression were taken from the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2), a validated instrument that is widely used as an initial screening tool for depression (Kroenke et al., 2003). The first question asked men how often they had experienced little interest or pleasure in doing things in the past two weeks, with the response options Not at all, Some days, More than half the days, Nearly every day or Prefer not to say. This question was included as it can be an indicator of both shorter-duration low-level depression as well as chronic low-level depression. The second question asked men how often they felt down, depressed or hopeless in the past two weeks, with the response options the same as above.

Questions on self-harm and suicidal thoughts were drafted to align with the depression questions drawn from PHQ-2. Respondents were asked how often they had thoughts of suicide and, separately, how often they had thoughts of self-harm. Response options were *Not at all, Some days, More than half the days, Nearly every day* or *Prefer not to say.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Response options for the first scenario (male-to-male violence) were You wouldn't say anything (a follow up question was then asked about why the respondent wouldn't say anything), You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve, You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve, You would call for security / call the police, You would physically intervene to break up the fight, You would pick the side you think is right and get involved in the fighting, I do not know how I would react. Response options for the second scenario (verbal intimate partner violence) were: You wouldn't say anything (a follow up question was then asked about why the respondent wouldn't say anything), You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve, You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve, I do not know how I would react.

### B.4.3. Help seeking

These questions were included to explore whether young men sought help when they had a personal or emotional issue and, if so, where they went for help and how comfortable they were to express their emotions.

Respondents were given a list of 12 types of people or places from whom they might seek help (see Box B.2: Sources of help – options listed in questionnaire) and asked to rate how likely they would be to seek help from each type. Respondents also had an option to indicate that they would not seek help from anyone. The response options given were on a 7-point Likert scale from *Extremely unlikely* to *Extremely likely*, with an additional response option of *Not applicable to my relationships*<sup>10</sup>.

The next question explored how frequently men in fact sought help from others. Men were asked: "In the last 6 months, how often have you sought help from any person related to a personal or emotional problem?" Response options were *Daily, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, 2-3 times a month, Once a month,* and *Never.* 

The last question in this section explored whether men felt comfortable being vulnerable with male friends when seeking help. The question asked how often they cried in front of a male friend in the last 6 months. Response options were *Daily, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, 2-3 times a month, Once a month,* and *Never.* 

#### Box B.2: Sources of help - options listed in questionnaire

- · Friend (not related to you)
- Parent
- · Other relative or family member (not your parent)
- Intimate partner (e.g. girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, spouse, de facto partner)
- · Mental health professional (e.g. psychologist, counsellor, social worker)
- · Doctor / GP
- Helpline (e.g. Lifeline, Mensline Australia; Mens Referral Service, QLife)
- Minister or religious leader (e.g. Priest, Rabbi, Chaplain)
- · An employer or manager at your work
- Sporting coach
- Internet search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)
- Social media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, Instagram)
- · I would not seek help from anyone

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Based off the General Help Seeking Questionnaire, as detailed in Wilson et al, (2005).

### B.4.4. Risky drinking and illicit drug use

Alcohol: Survey respondents were asked about how often they drank alcohol in the previous 12 months. Response options were Every day, 5 to 6 days a week, 3 to 4 days a week, 1 to 2 days a week, 2 to 3 days a month, About 1 day a month, Less often, No longer drink / Do not drink. Respondents who selected any option other than No longer drink / Do not drink were asked "On a day that you have an alcoholic drink, how many standard drinks do you usually have?", and a text box was provided where respondents could enter any number between one and 40. This question was accompanied by a National Health and Medical Research Council graphic describing what a standard drink is.

Illicit drugs: Survey respondents were also asked whether they had used illicit drugs in the last six months. If survey respondents hovered over the text "illicit drugs" (which was highlighted), they were presented with a pop-up box which contained the text: "Illicit drugs can include but are not limited to: cannabis, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, hallucinogens (e.g. LSD), and methamphetamines (e.g. ice), or prescription drugs used for non-medical purposes." Response options to this question were Yes, No, and Prefer not to say.

### B.4.5. Behaviour under the influence of drugs or alcohol

The survey asked respondents who had consumed alcohol or illicit drugs whether they had undertaken various activities over the past 6 months while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs. The activities included going to work; going swimming; operating a boat; driving a motor vehicle; operating hazardous machinery; creating a public disturbance or nuisance; causing damage to property; stealing money, goods or property; verbally abusing someone; and physically abusing someone. Participants were able to select any options that applied or select *none of the above* or *prefer not to say*.

Questions asking about the consumption of alcohol and the use of illicit drugs were drawn from the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey*, a survey conducted every two to three years by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW 2024). The question about activities undertaken while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs were based upon the same survey; however instead of having two questions, one which addresses activities done while under the influence of alcohol and another question which addresses those done while under the influence of illicit drugs, these questions were combined to cover both in the same question.

#### **B.4.6.** Gambling

Survey respondents were asked whether they spent any money in a typical month on gambling-related activities. A list of nine gambling activities was given<sup>11</sup>, and respondents were able to select all that applied to their circumstances. The activities listed were:

- Instant scratch tickets ("scratchies")
- Bingo
- Lotto or lottery games (e.g. Powerball or Oz Lotto)
- Private betting (e.g. playing cards or mah-jong with friends or family
- Poker
- Casino table games (e.g. blackjack, roulette)
- Poker machines ("pokies") or slot machines
- · Betting on horse or dog races
- · Betting on sports
- · None of the above

Respondents were then asked the three questions contained in the *short-form Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)*, a tool used to measure the prevalence of problem gambling at a population level (Volberg and Williams, 2012). Respondents were asked how often in the previous 12 months they had: bet more than they could really afford to lose; been criticised for their betting or told they had a gambling problem (regardless of whether or not they thought it was true); and felt guilty about the way they gamble or what happens when they gamble. The response options for these three questions were *Never, Sometimes, Most of the time*, and *Almost always*.

#### **B.4.7.** Traffic accidents

Respondents were asked if they had been in any traffic accidents in the last 12 months. They were prompted to consider all accidents, including those involving cars, trucks, buses, minibuses, bicycles, motorbikes, or motorcycles, and which happened while the respondent was driving a vehicle, riding, or walking. The response options given were *No, Yes: Once* and *Yes: more than once*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Based upon the gambling activities listed in ARMSTRONG, A. & CARROLL, M. 2017. Gambling activity in Australia [Online]. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available: https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/gambling-activity-australia [Accessed 8 January 2024].



# Appendix C. Survey data analysis

The data collected were cleaned: respondents who did not provide quality data were removed, with the most common reasons for removal being that respondents completed the survey in half the average time or less (7.8 minutes or under) or respondents straight-lined in their responses (providing the same option for all items in a scale).

# C.1.1. Categorising where men go for help

The 12 types of people or places listed as a potential source of help were categorised into "Informal sources" of help, "Formal sources" of help, and "Respected or senior figures". These are shown in Box B.2 below.

Figure C.1: Categories of sources of help

Category	Sources of help
Formal sources	Mental health professional (e.g. psychologist, counsellor, social worker)
	Doctor / GP
	Helpline (e.g. Lifeline, Mensline Australia; Men's Referral Service, QLife
Informal sources	Friend (not related to you)
	• Parent
	<ul> <li>Other relative or family member (not your parent)</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Intimate partner (e.g. girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, spouse, de facto partner)</li> </ul>
Respected or senior	Minister or religious leader (e.g. Priest, Rabbi, Chaplain)
figures	An employer or manager at your work
	Sporting coach
Digital sources	Internet search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)
	Social media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, Instagram)
No spurce	I would not seek help from anyone

# C.1.2. Constructing a measure of risky drinking

The data on alcohol consumption was used to develop two categories. Those who stated they had five or more drinks on one day were included in a category named "binge drinking" and those who said they had an alcoholic drink "every day" or "5 to 6 days a week" were included in a category called "high frequency drinking". These categories were based on the Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking, which state that healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than four standard drinks on any one day (AIHW, 2023a).

# C.1.3. Constructing a measure of problem gambling

Answers to the short-form Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) were allocated points for each of the three questions according to the level of gambling risk they represented (Never=0, Sometimes=1, Most of the time=2, and Almost always=3). The score ranged between 0-9, with the higher score indicating more problematic gambling behaviour.

Respondents were grouped into three categories based on their scores, as follows:

Short-form PGSI score	Problem-gambling category
0-1	Low-risk gambling
2-3	Moderate-risk gambling
4+	Problem gambling



#### D.1. Survey

The survey research obtained ethics approval from the Jesuit Social Services Human Research Ethics Committee. To ensure informed consent from participants, we provided survey respondents with a brief overview of the research at the start of the survey, including: its purpose, the nature of the topics covered, how their data was to be stored and how their privacy would be protected. Respondents clicked "next" to indicate their consent and begin the online survey. Respondents were given the opportunity to exit the survey at any time (withdraw their consent), and the choice to exit resulted in their data being excluded from the analysis. Respondents who left their survey browser open with an incomplete survey were considered to have not consented, with their data also being excluded from analysis. Reimbursements for completing the survey were provided as per standard panel remuneration arrangements, i.e. respondents were reimbursed when they completed the survey.

To protect the safety and wellbeing of survey respondents, we compiled a list of free helpline services for respondents should they require support throughout the research. These services were shown at the commencement and conclusion of the survey as well as in the form of a link available at the bottom of every page of the survey, so that support could be accessed throughout. A pop-up page listing these support services was also activated during the wellbeing section of the survey if a respondent selected an answer that indicated depressive symptoms, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or problem gambling behaviours. We also provided opportunities to opt out of answering certain questions to further ensure the comfort of the respondents.

Questions that respondents may have interpreted as potentially incriminating, such as drug use and perpetration of intimate partner violence were accompanied by a *prefer not to say* response option.<sup>12</sup>

#### D.2. Focus groups

The qualitative research (focus groups) obtained ethics approval from Jesuit Social Services' Human Research Ethics Committee. To ensure informed consent, participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form. Written in plain language, the sheet detailed the purpose of the research, what participation would involve, the anonymising of survey responses to ensure privacy, the benefits and risks of participation, the reimbursement given to participants, the contact details of the project team and a statement that advised potential participants that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without needing to provide a reason. The consent form was screenshared and read aloud by the moderator of the online focus groups and consent was recorded when participants verbalised "I agree" after each statement in the consent form.

Several steps were taken to protect the safety and comfort of participants. As mentioned, four items from the Man Box scale formed part of the recruitment screening questionnaire. These four items were selected to reduce potential for emotional burden for participants taking part in the screening process. Further, in allocating the sample across focus groups, gay, bisexual, trans and queer-identifying men were included in a focus group separate from men who identified as heterosexual and cis-gender. This was to provide a safer space to talk about topics that relate to gender and social norms.

To protect participants from harm, the discussion guides were designed with phrases and questions that aimed to keep responses one step removed from the individual. For example, rather than interrogating participants' lived experience, all leading questions asked participants about people in their circle (friends, family, colleagues etc), prominent figures and cases in the media, general society and hypothetical scenarios.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, respondents did not risk being reported for incriminating answers; however we provided a "prefer not to say" option in case this was a concern for them.



## **Appendix E. The focus groups**

The Men's Project and Respect Victoria developed specific aims for the qualitative research. These aims identified areas for further exploration beyond the matters covered in the survey, and reflected the data required for a follow-up report that will be authored by Respect Victoria in collaboration with The Men's Project on the implications of this study for the prevention of violence. The aims for the qualitative component of the research are:

- What facilitates or hinders transgression and compliance with rigid gender norms for men?
- What are expressions of vulnerability that are acceptable/unacceptable in male peer groups?
   How do these differ by context and scenario?
- What influences men's attitudes about peer violence between men and drives or inhibits related bystander intentions and behaviours?

 What influences men's attitudes about intimate partner violence and drives or inhibits related bystander intentions and behaviours?

The research team chose focus groups as the qualitative data collection method, and agreed to conduct seven focus groups in total: five groups of 18- to 30-year-old men, and two groups of 31- to 45-year-old men.<sup>13</sup> Each group included four or five men, with a total of 23 participants taking part in the focus groups.

The research team designed the focus groups to ensure diversity in participants' life experiences, social groups, and attitudes. Each group had unique recruitment criteria (see Figure E.1).

Figure E.1: Focus group recruitment criteria

Group #	Man Box endorsement <sup>14</sup>	Age cohort	Gender and sexuality	Employment / study status	Fatherhood status
1	Low endorsement	18-30	Cisgender & heterosexual	Working in male dominated trade	
2	Low endorsement	18-30	Cisgender & heterosexual	Studying at university or employed (degree)	
3	Moderate endorsement	18-30	Cisgender & heterosexual	Working in male dominated trade	
4	Moderate endorsement	18-30	Cisgender & heterosexual	Studying at university or employed (degree)	
5	Low endorsement	18-30	LGTBQIA+		
6	Low endorsement	31-45	Cisgender & heterosexual		Fathers
7	Moderate endorsement	31-45	Cisgender & heterosexual		Fathers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> This was a substantial increase from the <sup>2018</sup> study, which ran two focus groups of <sup>18</sup>- to <sup>30</sup>-year-old men.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The recruitment screening questionnaire completed by potential focus group participants included a short form of the Man Box scale, which was used to assess Man Box endorsement..

To ensure the sample of men involved in the focus groups was not homogenous, the research team also identified a set of desired demographic characteristics which should be represented among the focus group participants (see Figure E.2). The research team asked the recruitment agency to ensure that these characteristics were represented in the sample, noting that it would not be acceptable for all of the "rare" demographic characteristics to be represented in one participant alone.

The focus group discussion guides were designed to ensure a well-paced discussion, as well as providing participants enough space to share their thoughts. The discussion guides were semi-structured in nature, with leading questions accompanied by a menu of prompts that moderators could choose from, depending on the general direction of the discussion with each group of men.

Figure E.2: Targeted demographic characteristics of focus group participants

Demographic characteristic	Cohorts recruited for
Fatherhood status	Has child/children
	Does not have children
Education level	Year 12 or below
	TAFE, certificate level
	Bachelor degree or above
Employment status	Unemployed
	• Student
	<ul> <li>Employed</li> </ul>
	Home and caring duties
First Nations status	Aboriginal or Torres Strat Islander
	<ul> <li>Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander</li> </ul>
Language spoken at home	A language other than English
	• English
Disability	<ul> <li>Has a disability, health condition or injury that has lasted, or is likely to last, 6 months or more (Includes stress-related, mental health, intellectual as well as physical conditions)</li> </ul>
	No disability
Geographic location	Capital city
	Regional town
	Rural/remote



Figure F.1: Man Box statistics by demographic variables, 18- to 45-year-old men, 2024

Mean Man Box score, standard deviation, and sample size by demographic group

#### Mean Man Box score, standard deviation, and sample size)

Demographic Variable	18- to 30-year-olds	31- to 45-year-olds	
Age			
18-24	1.94 (sd=0.57, n = 1120)		
25-30	1.99 (sd=0.61, n = 1403)		
31-40		1.9 (sd=0.56, n = 638)	
40-45		1.85 (sd=0.51, n = 358)	
Metro v Regional			
Metro	1.99 (sd=0.60, n = 2136)	1.9 (sd=0.55, n = 783)	
Regional	1.88 (sd=0.54, n = 387)	1.83 (sd=0.52, n = 213)	
Country of Birth			
Australia	1.99 (sd=0.60, n = 2211)	1.9 (sd=0.56, n = 815)	
Outside Australia	1.84 (sd=0.51, n = 312)	1.8 (sd=0.49, n = 181)	
Language spoken at home			
English	1.98 (sd=0.60, n = 2232)	1.89 (sd=0.55, n = 854)	
Language other than English	1.91 (sd=0.51, n = 291)	1.82 (sd=0.49, n = 142)	
Sexuality			
Heterosexual	2.01 (sd=0.58, n = 2285)	1.92 (sd=0.54, n = 893)	
Other sexuality*	1.56 (sd=0.51, n = 228)	1.58 (sd=0.48, n = 102)	
Religion			
No religion	1.87 (sd=0.54, n = 1309)	1.84 (sd=0.51, n = 576)	
Christianity/Islam/Hinduism/Other	2.08 (sd=0.62, n = 1214)	1.94 (sd=0.59, n = 420)	
Education (highest level)			
Below year 12	2.08 (sd=0.59, n = 238)	1.99 (sd=0.54, n = 110)	
Completed year 12	1.88 (sd=0.54, n = 454)	1.79 (sd=0.49, n = 104)	
Trade or technical certificate / diploma	1.96 (sd=0.54, n = 591)	1.819 (sd=0.5, n = 279)	
Bachelors or postgraduate degree	1.99 (sd=0.63, n = 1191)	1.92 (sd=0.58, n = 494)	



# Appendix G. Violence, health, and wellbeing results

18- to 30-year-old compared to 31- to 45-year-old men

# G.1. Violence: the impact of the Man Box on others

# G.1.1. Attitudes towards violence against women and gender inequality

#### Attitudes towards violence against women

There were some differences in the way in which hostility towards women was viewed by the 31- to 45-year-old men compared to the 18- to 30-year-old men. About one fifth of both groups were of the view that many allegations of sexual assault made by women

were false. However, the older age group were less likely than the younger age group to believe that domestic violence was a private matter to be handled by the family (12% compared to 20%) and also to agree that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her (19% compared to 25%. The spread of levels of agreement across the quintiles was similar for both groups, with men in both groups with high endorsement of the Man Box rules being substantially more likely to endorse these views. The frequency of responses with lower for the older age group, although the trend was the same as for the younger age group.

#### Proportion of men who agree with statements which support violence against women

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false.	24%	22%
Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family.	20%	12%
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to.	25%	19%

Proportion of men who agree with statements which support violence against women, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false.	8%	11%	22%	22%	58%
Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family.	2%	3%	9%	18%	63%
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to.	7%	9%	16%	25%	64%

Proportion of men who agree with statements which support violence against women, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false.	9%	12%	20%	22%	44%
Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family.	<b>3</b> %	1%	<b>7</b> %	<b>7</b> %	38%
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to.	8%	9%	20%	<b>17</b> %	40%

#### Denial of gender inequality

There were no major differences between the 31- to 45-year-old men compared to the 18- to 30-year-old men in either the overall level of agreement with the

statements on gender inequality or the pattern of the levels of agreement across the quintiles. However, these differences between the quintiles was less marked for the older age group.

#### Proportion of men who agree with statements that deny gender inequality

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false.	39%	40%
Domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family.	35%	39%
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to.	35%	38%

#### Proportion of men who agree with statements that deny gender inequality, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia.	16%	23%	37%	43%	74%
Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.	19%	19%	34%	39%	63%
Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them.	12%	20%	35%	40%	69%

#### Proportion of men who agree with statements that deny gender inequality, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia.	20%	36%	42%	40%	61%
Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.	26%	29%	46%	43%	50%
Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them.	21%	27%	40%	45%	55%

## G.1.2. Violent pornography consumption

#### Pornography consumption

Consistent with the findings for the 18- to 30-year-old men, almost four in five men in the 31- to 45-year-old group had viewed pornography in the previous month. The pattern of responses across quintiles for the two age groups were also very similar. For the 31- to 45-year-old men, there were no substantial differences between the quintiles in the use of pornography in the last six months.

#### Proportion of men who viewed pornography in the previous six months

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Proportion of men who viewed pornography in the previous six months	81%	83%

#### Frequency of pornography consumption in the previous six months, by Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Daily	17%	11%	13%	11%	8%
2-3 times a week	24%	18%	19%	15%	26%
Once a week	16%	11%	15%	13%	34%
2-3 times a month	10%	14%	10%	12%	9%
Once a month	17%	32%	24%	16%	10%
Never (in past 6 months)	16%	14%	20%	33%	13%

#### Frequency of pornography consumption in the previous six months, by Man Box quintiles, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Daily	10%	13%	14%	11%	12%
2-3 times a week	30%	24%	24%	26%	27%
Once a week	17%	18%	18%	13%	25%
2-3 times a month	12%	6%	11%	13%	14%
Once a month	14%	21%	18%	16%	10%
Never (in past 6 months)	<b>17</b> %	19%	15%	21%	13%

#### Violent pornography consumption

Men in the 31- to 45-year-old group were less likely than the 18- to 30-year-old group to have looked at violent pornography in the last six months, although one third of them had done so. The pattern of responses across the quintiles was very similar for both groups of men, with men who are more strongly endorsed the man box rules being more likely than all of the other quintiles to look at violent pornography frequently in the past six months.

#### Proportion of men who viewed violent pornography in the previous six months

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Yes (this includes those who selected any response except "never")	52%	37%
Never (looked at violent pornography)	29%	46%
Never looked at any pornography or sexually explicit material	19%	17%

#### Frequency of pornography consumption, by type

Looked at any p	Looked at any pornography		nt pornography
18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
12%	12%	3%	2%
20%	26%	11%	10%
18%	18%	14%	8%
11%	11%	9%	6%
20%	15%	15%	11%
19%	17%	29%	46%
	18-30 y.o.  12% 20% 18% 11% 20%	18-30 y.o.     31-45 y.o.       12%     12%       20%     26%       18%     18%       11%     11%       20%     15%	18-30 y.o.       31-45 y.o.       18-30 y.o.         12%       3%         20%       26%       11%         18%       18%       14%         11%       11%       9%         20%       15%       15%

#### Frequency of violent pornography consumption in the previous six months, by Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Daily	2%	3%	3%	4%	5%
2-3 times a week	10%	8%	<b>7</b> %	<b>7</b> %	23%
Once a week	10%	10%	8%	9%	33%
2-3 times a month	<b>7</b> %	12%	<b>7</b> %	9%	<b>7</b> %
Once a month	13%	22%	21%	14%	<b>7</b> %
Consumed pornography, but not violent pornography	<b>42</b> %	31%	34%	24%	12%
Did not consume any pornography	16%	14%	20%	33%	13%

#### Frequency of violent pornography consumption in the previous six months, by Man Box quintiles, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Daily	1%	3%	0%	2%	5%
2-3 times a week	6%	4%	8%	<b>7</b> %	24%
Once a week	3%	5%	6%	8%	15%
2-3 times a month	4%	5%	5%	<b>6</b> %	9%
Once a month	<b>7</b> %	14%	16%	10%	10%
Consumed pornography, but not violent pornography	<b>62</b> %	<b>51</b> %	50%	46%	24%
Did not consume any pornography	17%	19%	15%	21%	13%

## G.1.3. Bullying and physical violence

### Perpetration of bullying and physical violence

The level of the perpetration of bullying both in terms of the frequency as well as whether or not it occurred at all in the past six months was about half as frequent in the 31- to 45-year-old men compared to the 18- to 30-year-old men.

The pattern of responses across the quintiles in the perpetration of bullying was very similar for both the 31- to 45-year-old men and the 18- to 30-year-old men. Although the level of perpetration was lower in the older age group, the men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were nine times more likely than the lowest quintile to frequently engage in bullying and almost four times more likely to engage in bullying at all in the last month.

#### Proportion of men who perpetrated bullying in the previous month, by type and frequency

	% OFTEN or VERY OFTEN		% AT ALL	
	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Verbal bullying	23%	12%	53%	37%
Online bullying	18%	9%	39%	23%
Physical bullying	18%	8%	32%	19%
% of men who perpetrated at least one of the above forms of bullying	29%	15%	64%	43%

Proportion of men who perpetrated any form of bullying in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	6%	10%	21%	30%	<b>75</b> %
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	43%	63%	58%	65%	89%

Proportion of men who perpetrated any form of bullying in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	5%	3%	9%	9%	47%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	20%	38%	44%	39%	<b>72</b> %

### Bullying and physical violence victimisation

As for the perpetration of bullying, the experience of bullying among 31- to 45-year-old men was less than for the 18- to 30-year-old men. The experience of bullying among men in the older age group was about two thirds of what it was in the younger age group.

The pattern of the experience of bullying across the quintiles was the same for both the 31- to 45-year-old men and the 18- to 30-year-old men, with greater experience for men who endorsed the Man Box rules.

However, the experience overall was at a lower level among the older age group.

Both the perpetration and experience of sexual harassment among the 31- to 45-year-old men was about half of the rate of the 18- to 30-year-old men with less than ten percent of the older age group experiencing or perpetrating sexual harassment frequently in the preceding month.

#### Proportion of men who experienced bullying in the previous month, by type and frequency

	% OFTEN or VERY OFTEN		% AT ALL	
	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Verbal bullying	23%	13%	55%	40%
Online bullying	18%	9%	43%	30%
Physical bullying	17%	8%	41%	26%
% of men who reported being the victim at least one of the above forms of bullying	31%	19%	68%	50%

Proportion of men who experienced any form of bullying in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	14%	15%	23%	30%	73%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	55%	67%	67%	63%	89%

Proportion of men who experienced any form of bullying in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	<b>7</b> %	8%	18%	14%	46%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	34%	44%	55%	40%	<b>75</b> %

#### G.1.4. Sexual harassment

Consistent with the findings for the 18- to 30-year-old men, the 31-45 year old men who strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were substantially more likely to experience sexual harassment frequently, but the rate was about half of that experienced by the

18- to 30-year-old men. Similar findings across the quintiles were obtained for the perpetration of sexual harassment, although the perpetration among the older age group was about two thirds of that of the 18- to 30-year-old men so it was higher than for the experience of sexual harassment.

#### Proportion of men who perpetrated sexual harassment in the previous month, by frequency

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	16%	9%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	33%	18%

### Proportion of men who perpetrated sexual harassment in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	2%	4%	6%	13%	55%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	12%	25%	26%	32%	68%

### Proportion of men who perpetrated sexual harassment in the previous month, by frequency and Man Box quintiles, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequently ('often' or 'very often')	1%	1%	3%	5%	33%
At all (includes not very often, often and very often)	3%	8%	14%	15%	49%

#### **G.1.5.** Intimate partner violence

Overall, the perpetration of the different forms of intimate partner violence among the 31- to 45-year-old men was about two thirds of that perpetrated by the 18- to 30-year-old man. The same pattern of responses

across the different quintiles was found for the older age group as for the younger age group, although the frequency of men who perpetrated the violence was about two thirds of that found among the younger age group in each of the quintiles.

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence

Percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner...."

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to?	8%	5%
Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do?	10%	5%
Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating?	10%	6%
Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?	9%	7%
Pushed or shoved a partner?	11%	8%
Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them?	8%	4%
Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?	8%	3%
Choked or burned a partner on purpose	9%	5%
Any form of physical or sexual intimate partner violence (yes to one or more items)	28%	18%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Any form of physical or sexual intimate partner violence (respondent said yes to one or more item)	12%	15%	22%	25%	66%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintiles, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Any form of physical or sexual intimate partner violence (respondent said yes to one or more item)	11%	8%	14%	11%	44%

#### Sexual violence against an intimate partner

The perpetration of the different forms of sexual violence against a partner among 31- to 45-year-old men was about half of that found for the 18- to 30-year-old men. The pattern of findings across the quintiles, that

demonstrated men with a high level of endorsement for the Man Box rules were substantially more likely to perpetrate sexual violence, was also similar for both groups of men. However, the prevalence of these acts of sexual violence among the 31–45-year-old men was about half of that found among the 18–30-year-old men.

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence

Percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner..."

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to?	8%	5%
Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do?	10%	5%
Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating?	10%	6%
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the three forms of sexual violence	20%	11%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated sexual intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to? (rape)	6%	4%	4%	4%	24%
Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do? (sexual coercion)	<b>7</b> %	4%	<b>6</b> %	8%	33%
Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating? (degradation)	<b>5</b> %	4%	<b>7</b> %	<b>7</b> %	29%
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the three forms of sexual violence	<b>7</b> %	8%	13%	15%	56%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated sexual intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Physically forced a partner to have sexual intercourse with you when they did not want to? (rape)	2%	2%	1%	4%	18%
Had sexual intercourse with a partner when they were afraid of what you might do? (sexual coercion)	1%	2%	2%	3%	16%
Forced a partner to do something sexual that is degrading or humiliating? (degradation)	2%	5%	1%	4%	17%
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the three forms of sexual violence	<b>4</b> %	6%	<b>4</b> %	<b>7</b> %	<b>32</b> %

#### Physical violence against an intimate partner

The perpetration of physical violence against an intimate partner among 31- to 45-year-old men was about two thirds of that found among 18- to 30-year-old men. The pattern of responses for the older age group across

the quintiles was very similar to that found for the 18-to 30-year-old men. However, the frequency of the occurrence of the different forms of behaviour across the quintiles was about two thirds of that perpetrated by the 18- to 30-year-old men.

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated physical intimate partner violence

% of respondents who answered "yes" to "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner...."

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?	9%	7%
Pushed or shoved a partner?	11%	8%
Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them?	8%	4%
Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?	8%	3%
Choked or burned a partner on purpose	9%	5%
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the five forms of physical violence	25%	15%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated physical intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

% of respondents who answered "yes" to "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner..."

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?	2%	5%	<b>7</b> %	8%	22%
Pushed or shoved a partner?	7%	<b>5</b> %	6%	8%	33%30
Hit a partner with your fist or something else that could hurt them?	1%	4%	5%	<b>6</b> %	24%
Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?	4%	3%	3%	<b>6</b> %	21%
Choked or burnt them on purpose?	5%	<b>7</b> %	8%	4%	18%
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the five forms of physical violence	11%	14%	18%	21%	59%

#### Proportion of men who have perpetrated physical intimate partner violence, by Man Box quintiles, 31-45 y.o.

% of respondents who answered "yes" to "Have you ever done the following things to your current or any other partner...."

	Quintile 1: lowest				Quintile 5: highest
	Man Box	Quintile	Quintile	Quintile	Man Box
	endorsement	2	3	4	endorsement
Slapped or thrown something that could hurt them?	5%	2%	5%	5%	17%
Pushed or shoved a partner?	6%	4%	9%	5%	15%
Hit a partner with your fist or					
something else that could hurt them?	4%	0%	2%	4%	<b>12</b> %
Kicked, dragged or beat a partner up?	1%	2%	<b>2</b> %	2%	10%
Choked or burnt them on purpose?	1%	2%	5%	4%	<b>12</b> %
% of respondents who said YES to at least one of the five forms of physical violence	11%	<b>7</b> %	13%	9%	35%

#### G.1.6. Bystander behaviour

#### Bystander behaviour: Male to male violence

The patterns of response for both the level of bother as well as the type of intervention engaged in by the 31- to 45-year-old men and the 18- to 30-year-old men were very similar. The pattern across the quintiles was also very similar for both groups.

#### Response to witnessing male friends in a physical fight

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	70%	79%
Respondents who agreed they would intervene in some way	95%	93%

#### Type of bystander intervention when witnessing male friends in a physical fight

18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
25%	27%
12%	8%
8%	5%
46%	51%
2%	1%
5%	6%
2%	2%
93%	92%
	25% 12% 8% 46% 2% 5%

#### Response to witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	86%	78%	70%	71%	45%
Respondents who agreed they would be intervene in some way	92%	96%	94%	96%	96%

#### Response to witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	88%	89%	84%	78%	58%
Respondents who agreed they would be intervene in some way	93%	95%	92%	91%	95%

#### Type of bystander intervention when witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintiles, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve	25%	20%	20%	35%	25%
You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve	8%	11%	9%	13%	24%
You would call security / call the Police	<b>7</b> %	12%	6%	4%	15%
You would physically intervene to break up the fight	<b>51</b> %	48%	54%	42%	26%
You would pick the side you think is right and get involved in the fighting	0%	5%	3%	2%	2%
You wouldn't know what to say	7%	3%	5%	3%	5%
You wouldn't feel comfortable speaking out	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%

 $Type of by stander intervention when witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintiles, 31-45 \ y.o. \\$ 

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve	34%	28%	25%	24%	20%
You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve	2%	11%	10%	<b>7</b> %	15%
You would call security / call the Police	1%	5%	8%	4%	9%
You would physically intervene to break up the fight	55%	48%	48%	54%	47%
You would pick the side you think is right and get involved in the fighting	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
You wouldn't know what to say	5%	4%	<b>7</b> %	8%	5%
You wouldn't feel comfortable speaking out	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%

## Bystander behaviour: verbal intimate partner violence

The percentage of men who would be bothered and intervene with the different types of verbal intimate partner violence was very similar for the 31- to 45-year-old men and the 18- to 30-year-old men. Further, the type of intervention was also very similar for both groups

of men. The same patterns of a lack of major difference in the level of bother or type of intervention that was obtained for the 18- to 30-year-old men was also found for the 31- to 45-year-old men, with slightly higher levels of bother across all quintiles been found for the older age group.

#### Response to witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	76%	87%
Respondents who agreed they would intervene in some way	92%	89%

#### Type of bystander intervention when witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner

Incidence across those who were "bothered"

Type of Intervention	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve	63%	67%
You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve	27%	20%
You wouldn't know what to say	4%	3%
You wouldn't feel comfortable speaking out	7%	10%
Rate of intervention (exclude those who said nothing or did not know)	90%	88%

#### Response to witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	91%	83%	79%	78%	48%
Respondents who agreed they would be intervene in some way	91%	92%	92%	92%	92%

#### Response to witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Respondents who agreed they would be "bothered"	96%	94%	92%	88%	66%
Respondents who agreed they would be intervene in some way	89%	89%	89%	87%	91%

#### Type of bystander intervention when witnessing male friends in a physical fight, by Man Box quintiles, 31 – 45 y.o.

Incidence across those who were "bothered"

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve	71%	<b>52</b> %	59%	68%	64%
You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve	19%	39%	31%	22%	21%
You wouldn't say anything	2%	3%	3%	3%	8%
I do not know how I would react	8%	6%	6%	<b>7</b> %	6%

### Type of bystander intervention when witnessing a male friend verbally abusing his female partner, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
You'd tell them then and there you didn't approve	78%	65%	62%	68%	62%
You'd tell them in private later you didn't approve	10%	23%	26%	18%	25%
You wouldn't say anything	2%	2%	2%	3%	5%
I do not know how I would react	10%	9%	10%	11%	8%

#### G.2. Health and wellbeing: the impact of the Man Box on men themselves

#### G.2.1. Life satisfaction

In terms of life satisfaction, 31- to 45-year-old men were somewhat more likely to experience low levels of life satisfaction compared to 18- to 30-year-old men. The levels of life satisfaction across quintiles were very similar between the two groups of men, with men

who were less likely to endorse the Man Box rules experiencing lower levels of life satisfaction and those most likely to endorse the rules experiencing higher levels of life satisfaction. As for the 18- to 30-year-old men, the older men who were more likely to personally endorse the Man Box rules and experience high levels of life satisfaction were are also most likely to perceive strong social pressures to conform to the Man Box rules. Thus their values and behaviours were aligned with social messaging, and so they were likely to have experienced higher life satisfaction due to this alignment.

#### Life satisfaction scores

Rating	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Low (1-4)	12%	20%
Medium (5-7)	43%	43%
High (8-10)	45%	37%

#### Life satisfaction scores, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Low (1-4)	16%	12%	12%	12%	8%
Medium (5-7)	46%	39%	48%	48%	36%
High (8-10)	38%	49%	40%	40%	56%
Mean (SD)	6.7 (2.1)	7.0 (2)	6.8 (2)	6.9 (2.0)	7.4 (1.8)

#### Life satisfaction scores, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Low (1-4)	21%	19%	25%	19%	15%
Medium (5-7)	50%	37%	43%	55%	32%
High (8-10)	29%	44%	31%	26%	53%
Mean (SD)	6.2 (2.2)	6.7 (2.1)	6.3 (2.2)	6.2 (2.1)	7.0 (2.1)

#### G.2.2. Mental health

#### Proportion of men experiencing symptoms of poor mental health

Respondents who agreed they experience this symptom some days, more than half the days and nearly every day

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Flat mood, low pleasure	75%	82%
Feeling depressed	43%	73%
Thoughts of suicide	32%	24%
Thoughts of self-harm	29%	20%

#### Proportion of men experiencing symptoms of poor mental health<sup>15</sup>, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Flat mood, low pleasure	78%	62%	77%	74%	86%
Feeling depressed	74%	62%	68%	66%	78%
Thoughts of suicide	24%	26%	29%	28%	53%
Thoughts of self-harm	20%	22%	25%	26%	51%

#### Proportion of men experiencing symptoms of poor mental health<sup>16</sup>, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Flat mood, low pleasure	78%	78%	84%	84%	85%
Feeling depressed	72%	69%	73%	<b>77</b> %	74%
Thoughts of suicide	18%	21%	23%	19%	37%
Thoughts of self-harm	13%	16%	16%	19%	37%

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Percentage of respondents who answered Some days, More than half the days, or Nearly every day when asked how often they'd experienced the symptom over the last two weeks.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Percentage of respondents who answered Some days, More than half the days, or Nearly every day when asked how often they'd experienced the symptom over the last two weeks.

#### Focus on suicide

Overall, a much smaller percentage of 31- to 45-yearold men had frequent thoughts of suicide compared to the 18- to 30-year-old group. When these thoughts did occur, they were more likely to be experienced by the men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box rules, and so cause the same level of concern as for the 18- to 30-year-old group.

Proportion of men who have thoughts of suicide nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men having thoughts about suicide nearly every day	3%	3%	4%	4%	22%

Proportion of men who have thoughts of suicide nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men having thoughts about suicide nearly every day	3%	1%	3%	3%	10%

#### Focus on self-harm

Similar patterns for self harm as for suicide with found among the 31–45-year-old group, with the same concerns and suggested approaches to intervention as for the 18-30 year old men.

#### Proportion of men who have thoughts of self harm nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men having thoughts about self-harm nearly every day	3%	2%	3%	4%	18%

#### Proportion of men who have thoughts of self harm nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men having thoughts about self-harm nearly every day	1%	1%	2%	3%	10%

#### Focus on depression

Similar findings in terms of both the level of depression and the spread across quintiles with found for the 31-45 year old men as for the 18- to 30-year-old men.

Proportion of men who feel flat or depressed nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men experiencing little interest or pleasure in doing things ("flat mood")	14%	12%	9%	13%	15%

Proportion of men who feel flat or depressed nearly every day, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men experiencing little interest or pleasure in doing things ("flat mood")	9%	14%	13%	12%	14%

#### G.2.3. Help seeking

#### Frequency of help seeking

Men in the 31- to 45-year-old group were less likely to engage in frequent help seeking behaviours compared to men in the 18-30 year old group and also more likely to not seek help at all. This finding is of concern, since although they were less likely than the younger age

group to be suicidal or engage in self harm, they were just as likely to feel down or depressed. Although there were no major differences across the quintiles in the men who never sought help in the past six months, men who most strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were more likely to be unwilling to seek help. This result is of concern, particularly for those men who experience major mental health problems.

#### Frequency of help seeking

		Daily	2-3 times a week	Once a week	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Never
% of men	18-30 y.o.	2%	10%	17%	15%	34%	23%
	31-45 y.o.	2%	8%	11%	13%	32%	35%

#### Frequency of help seeking, by category

Rating	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Frequent Help-Seeking (Daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, 2-3 times a month)	43%	33%
Less Frequent Help-Seeking (Once a month)	34%	32%
No Help-Seeking	23%	35%

#### Frequency of help seeking, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequent Help-Seeking (Daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, 2-3 times a month)	43%	39%	35%	30%	69%
Less Frequent Help-Seeking (Once a month)	38%	42%	36%	40%	13%
No Help-Seeking	20%	19%	29%	9%	18%

#### Frequency of help seeking, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Frequent Help-Seeking (Daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, 2-3 times a month)	30%	31%	32%	22%	50%
Less Frequent Help-Seeking (Once a month)	30%	39%	36%	36%	9%
No Help-Seeking	39%	30%	32%	43%	31%

#### Proportion of men who have not/would not seek help

Rating	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
% of men who had never sought help in the past 6 months	23%	35%
% of men unwilling to seek help from anyone	25%	21%

#### Proportion of men who have not/would not seek help, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men who had never sought help in the past 6 months	20%	19%	29%	29%	18%
% of men unwilling to seek help from anyone	19%	34%	24%	18%	33%

#### Proportion of men who have not/would not seek help, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of men who had never sought help in the past 6 months	39%	30%	32%	43%	31%
% of men unwilling to seek help from anyone	15%	19%	24%	15%	32%

#### Sources of help

There were no major differences between the 31–45-year-old man and the 18–30-year-old men in terms of the people and groups from which they sought help for their problems. This finding applied for both the sources of help seeking behaviour as well as the spread across the quintiles.

#### Sources of help (categorised)

Sources of Help	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Formal Sources	62%	60%
Informal Sources	42%	41%
Respected or Senior Figure	33%	21%

#### Sources of help (categorised), by Man Box quintiles, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Formal Sources	<b>71</b> %	69%	57%	50%	61%
Informal Sources	43%	49%	36%	29%	<b>52</b> %
Respected or Senior Figure	21%	42%	27%	25%	51%

#### Sources of help (categorised), by Man Box quintiles, by Man Box quintile, 31 to 45 y.o.

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Formal Sources	74%	64%	56%	<b>52</b> %	52%
Informal Sources	49%	47%	40%	27%	42%
Respected or Senior Figure	12%	24%	20%	14%	37%

#### Sources of help (categorised), by Man Box quintiles, by Man Box quintile, 18 to 30 y.o.

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Friend (not related to you)	34%	32%	25%	21%	31%
Parent	34%	37%	29%	24%	34%
Other relative or family member (not your parent)	22%	25%	20%	16%	28%
Intimate partner (e.g. girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, spouse, de facto partner)	<b>54</b> %	<b>54</b> %	39%	32%	41%
Internet search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)	26%	33%	21%	20%	33%
Social media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, Instagram)	19%	26%	16%	14%	31%
Mental health professional (e.g. psychologist, counsellor, social worker)	32%	31%	21%	18%	30%
Doctor / GP	29%	35%	21%	13%	33%
Helpline (e.g. Lifeline, Mensline Australia; Mens Referral Service, QLife)	23%	29%	21%	13%	28%
Minister or religious leader (e.g. Priest, Rabbi, Chaplain)	13%	26%	14%	15%	31%
An employer or manager at your work	13%	25%	14%	11%	29%
Sporting coach	13%	25%	15%	13%	29%
I would not seek help from anyone	19%	34%	24%	18%	33%

#### Sources of help (all sources), by Man Box quintiles, 31 to 45 y.o.

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Friend (not related to you)	28%	27%	22%	17%	23%
Parent	30%	31%	24%	9%	27%
Other relative or family member (not your parent)	21%	24%	15%	13%	20%
Intimate partner (e.g. girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, spouse, de facto partner)	63%	56%	44%	43%	36%
Internet search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)	22%	28%	22%	20%	28%
Social media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, Instagram)	9%	16%	15%	13%	23%
Mental health professional (e.g. psychologist, counsellor, social worker)	31%	30%	29%	18%	24%
Doctor / GP	33%	34%	29%	18%	30%
Helpline (e.g. Lifeline, Mensline Australia; Mens Referral Service, QLife)	21%	21%	18%	15%	20%
Minister or religious leader (e.g. Priest, Rabbi, Chaplain)	8%	12%	11%	10%	23%
An employer or manager at your work	8%	14%	11%	<b>7</b> %	20%
Sporting coach	<b>7</b> %	11%	10%	4%	22%
I would not seek help from anyone	15%	19%	24%	15%	<b>32</b> %

# G.2.4. Risky drinking and illicit drug use

#### Risky drinking

There were no major differences between the 31- to 45-year-old men and the 18- to 30-year-old men in terms of either the levels of risky drinking or the patterns of this risky drinking across the different Man Box quintiles.

#### Proportion of men engaged in risky drinking

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Binge Drinker: Men who selected 5 standard drinks or more in one day	28%	29%
<b>High-Frequency Drinker:</b> Men who selected "every day" or "5 to 6 days a week"	10%	15%
TOTAL % OF MEN WHO QUALIFY AS A RISKY DRINKER (BINGE DRINKER AND/OR HIGH-FREQUENCY DRINKER)	33%	35%

#### Proportion of men engaged in risky drinking, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
<b>Binge Drinker:</b> Men who selected 5 standard drinks or more in one day	31%	26%	27%	22%	35%
<b>High-Frequency Drinker:</b> Men who selected "every day" or "5 to 6 days a week"	10%	<b>6</b> %	<b>8</b> %	6%	17%
TOTAL % OF MEN WHO QUALIFY AS A RISKY DRINKER (BINGE DRINKER AND/OR HIGH- FREQUENCY DRINKER)	36%	28%	31%	26%	44%

#### Proportion of men engaged in risky drinking, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o

Sources of Help	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
<b>Binge Drinker:</b> Men who selected 5 standard drinks or more in one day	28%	26%	34%	26%	30%
<b>High-Frequency Drinker: M</b> en who selected "every day" or "5 to 6 days a week"	12%	11%	17%	13%	20%
TOTAL % OF MEN WHO QUALIFY AS A RISKY DRINKER (BINGE DRINKER AND/OR HIGH- FREQUENCY DRINKER)	33%	31%	38%	31%	40%

#### Illicit drug use

The level of illicit drug use was slightly higher among the 31- to 45-year-old man compared to the 18- to 30-year-old men. The older group of men compared to the younger age group who more strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were also more likely to engage in illicit drug use, but these differences between the groups were not substantial.

#### Illicit drug use in last 6 months

			18-30	y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Used illicit drugs in last 6 months			13%		19%
Illicit drug use, by Man Box quintile, 18	8-30 y.o.				
	Quintile				Quintile
	1: lowest				5: highest
	Man Box	Quintile	Quintile	Quintile	Man Box
	endorsement	2	3	4	endorsement
Used illicit drugs in last 6 months	17%	10%	14%	12%	12%

#### Illicit drug use, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest				Quintile 5: highest
	Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Man Box endorsement
Used illicit drugs in last 6 months	17%	20%	21%	21%	19%

## G.2.5. Behaviour under the influence of drugs or alcohol

There are no major differences in the levels of dangerous behaviours engaged in while intoxicated between the two groups of me. Further, the distribution of men who exhibited these behaviours across the Quentin's were also very similar for both groups of men.

#### Proportion of men who engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated

Activities undertaken whilst intoxicated	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Went to work	19%	20%
Went swimming	13%	12%
Operated a boat	3%	2%
Drove a motor vehicle	13%	15%
Operated hazardous machinery	3%	3%
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	3%	2%
Caused damage to a property	3%	1%
Stole money or goods or property	2%	1%
Verbally abused someone	5%	8%
Physically abused someone	1%	1%
None of the above	51%	59%
AT LEAST ONE OF THE ABOVE (not double counting)*	30%	30%
Sub-category: Men who verbally or physically abused someone whilst intoxicated	5%	8%

Proportion of men who engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of respondents who did any of the above activities whilst intoxicated	21%	22%	23%	33%	49%

Proportion of men who engaged in potentially dangerous behaviour while intoxicated, by Man Box quintile,

31-45 y.o.	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
% of respondents who did any of the above activities whilst intoxicated	25%	22%	31%	24%	47%

### G.2.6. Gambling

Men in the 31- to 45-year-old group were more likely than the 18- to 30-year-old men to gamble on lotto, poker machines, horses or dog races and sports betting. Other forms of gambling were similar across the two

groups. For each of these forms of gambling, the pattern of behaviours were similar for both groups of men across the Man Box quintiles, but the percentages were higher across all quintiles for the above forms of gambling for men in the 31–45-year-old group.

#### Proportion of men who engaged in each type of gambling activity

Types of Gambling	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Instant scratch tickets	18%	22%
Bingo	6%	6%
Lotto or lottery games	20%	34%
Private betting	11%	10%
Poker	9%	11%
Casino table games	10%	10%
Poker machines ("pokies") or slot machines	12%	21%
Betting on horse or dog races	10%	21%
Betting on sports	18%	29%
None of the above	47%	35%
AT LEAST ONE OF THE ABOVE (All survey respondents)	53%	65%



#### Proportion of men who engaged in each type of gambling activity, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

Types of gambling	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Guintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Instant scratch tickets	12%	12%	16%	25%	24%
Bingo	2%	3%	4%	5%	<b>17</b> %
Lotto or lottery games	13%	15%	16%	26%	28%
Private betting	5%	8%	8%	11%	21%
Poker	3%	6%	8%	<b>7</b> %	19%
Casino table games	5%	4%	8%	9%	22%
Poker machines ("pokies") or slot machines	10%	<b>7</b> %	10%	12%	20%
Betting on horse or dog races	12%	<b>7</b> %	9%	8%	16%
Betting on sports	22%	15%	22%	17%	16%
None of the above	58%	61%	49%	43%	25%
AT LEAST ONE OF THE ABOVE (All survey respondents)	42%	40%	<b>51</b> %	<b>57</b> %	<b>75</b> %

#### Proportion of men who engaged in each type of gambling activity, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

Types of gambling	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Instant scratch tickets	15%	22%	20%	18%	32%
Bingo	2%	7%	8%	4%	11%
Lotto or lottery games	30%	31%	35%	36%	37%
Private betting	5%	6%	9%	8%	20%
Poker	5%	12%	13%	<b>7</b> %	20%
Casino table games	5%	9%	11%	9%	16%
Poker machines ("pokies") or slot machines	15%	17%	26%	20%	29%
Betting on horse or dog races	16%	18%	23%	21%	27%
Betting on sports	24%	27%	33%	29%	31%
None of the above	44%	48%	32%	33%	20%
AT LEAST ONE OF THE ABOVE (All survey respondents)	56%	52%	68%	<b>67</b> %	80%

#### Problem gambling

Men in the 18- to 30-year-old group were more likely to be classified as a problem gambler compared to the 31to 45-year-old group. Man from the 31-45 year old group who strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were more likely to be moderate risk and problem gamblers; those in the 18–30-year-old group who strongly endorsed the Man Box rules were more likely to be problem gamblers.

#### Proportion of men who meet the criteria for problem gambling

Respondents who had gambled in the previous 12 months

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
Non-Problem and Low-Risk Gambler	42%	50%
Moderate-Risk Gambler	22%	27%
Problem Gambler	36%	23%

#### Proportion of men who meet the criteria for problem gambling, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

Respondents who had gambled in the previous 12 months

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Non-Problem and Low-Risk Gambler	58%	61%	<b>52</b> %	50%	13%
Moderate-Risk Gambler	21%	26%	24%	25%	16%
Problem Gambler	20%	14%	24%	25%	<b>71</b> %

#### Proportion of men who meet the criteria for problem gambling, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

Respondents who had gambled in the previous 12 months

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
Non-Problem and Low-Risk Gambler	72%	60%	53%	56%	24%
Moderate-Risk Gambler	18%	30%	25%	27%	33%
Problem Gambler	10%	11%	22%	17%	44%

#### **G.2.7. Traffic accidents**

There are no major differences between the two groups of men in either the frequency of accidents or the pattern of these accidents across the five quintiles.

#### Traffic accident frequency in last 12 months

	18-30 y.o.	31-45 y.o.
No accident	77%	78%
Single accident	22%	19%
Multiple accidents	1%	3%
Combined single and multiple	23%	22%

Traffic accident frequency in last 12 months, by Man Box quintile, 18-30 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
No accident	82%	68%	82%	82%	70%
Single accident	16%	32%	17%	16%	29%
Multiple accidents	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Combined single and multiple	18%	32%	18%	18%	30%

Traffic accident frequency in last 12 months, by Man Box quintile, 31-45 y.o.

	Quintile 1: lowest Man Box endorsement	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5: highest Man Box endorsement
No accident	85%	<b>71</b> %	78%	83%	74%
Single accident	14%	26%	20%	14%	22%
Multiple accidents	1%	4%	2%	4%	4%
Combined single and multiple	15%	29%	22%	17%	26%

