

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 7AM TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2018

44 percent of young men with rigid views about masculinity have thought about suicide in the past two weeks

An Australian first study by Jesuit Social Services' [The Men's Project](#) involving 1,000 men aged 18 to 30 has shown that young men who comply with society's pressures to be a 'real man' report poorer mental health, are twice as likely to consider suicide, more likely to commit acts of sexual harassment and experience and perform acts of violence and bullying.

In response to this, The Men's Project is calling for action to raise awareness of these issues and to promote positive attitudes and behaviours among young men. Supporting this call is Josh Kennedy, captain of AFL team Sydney Swans and Men's Project Ambassador.

[The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia](#) was undertaken with the support of Associate Professor Michael Flood from the Queensland University of Technology. It involved an online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 young men from across all demographics, as well as focus group discussions. It is modelled on research from the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico that was released by [Promundo](#) in 2017.

The central analytical tool used for the study is called the Man Box, defined as the set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to act in a certain way.

In order to understand how young men encounter the Man Box rules in society, The Men's Project asked them their views on different topics about how a man should behave. These were categorised under the seven Man Box pillars: self-sufficiency, acting tough, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control.

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

It found that social pressures around what it means to be 'a real man' are still very real in Australia. Two thirds of young men said that since they were a boy they had been told a 'real man' behaves in a certain way.

Young men inside The Man Box were those who more strongly believe in the Man Box rules, and reported poorer mental health and a variety of behavioural issues that impact on others.

Actions and Thoughts	Inside the Man Box	Outside the Man Box
Had thoughts about suicide in the past two weeks	44 percent	22 percent
Consumed alcohol to the point of getting drunk once a month or more	31 percent	22 percent
Perpetrated physical bullying and violence in the past month	47 percent	7 percent
Made sexual comments to a woman or girl they didn't know, in a public place or online in the previous month	46 percent	7 percent
Experienced physical bullying and violence in the past month	52 percent	15 percent
Been involved in a car accident in the past twelve months	38 percent	11 percent

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

The Men's Project is calling for a new focus on building awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful impacts. This will include new programs across Australia to support young men to understand, critique and negotiate the Man Box.

These programs should be reinforced through a focus on transforming the social pressures around being a man – this needs to happen in a wide range of settings across our society from the schoolyard to sporting clubs and even in the media.

The Man Box report and video is available at: www.themanbox.org.au

Comments attributable to Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards:

"These findings show the immense costs of pressuring young men into living up to rigid ideas of what it means to be a real man."

"We need action across the community and in the form of new programs which will deliver benefits to society, as well as to the young men themselves in terms of health, wellbeing and safety."

Comments attributable to Sydney Swans AFL Captain and The Men's Project Ambassador Josh Kennedy:

"We want young men to be free from harmful social pressures, and we need to support them by focusing on building resilience and promoting respect."

"This report demonstrates the need to start conversations and establish mentoring programs at a grass roots level in environments, like sporting clubs, where young men can feel relaxed and comfortable to talk."

Comments attributable to project partner Associate Professor Michael Flood:

"This is invaluable research that provides the first nationally representative study of the gender-related attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men."

"There is an urgent and powerful need to highlight the harms of the Man Box, weaken its cultural grip, and promote healthy and ethical alternatives for young men."

What: Launch of the Man Box Report

Where: National Australia Bank, Room 15.08A, 255 George Street, Sydney

When: Tuesday 16th October, 10:30am-11:30am, interviewees available at 11:30am.

Available for interview:

- Jesuit Social Services CEO, Julie Edwards
- Dr Michael Flood, Associate Professor, Queensland University of Technology
- Case studies available on request

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