



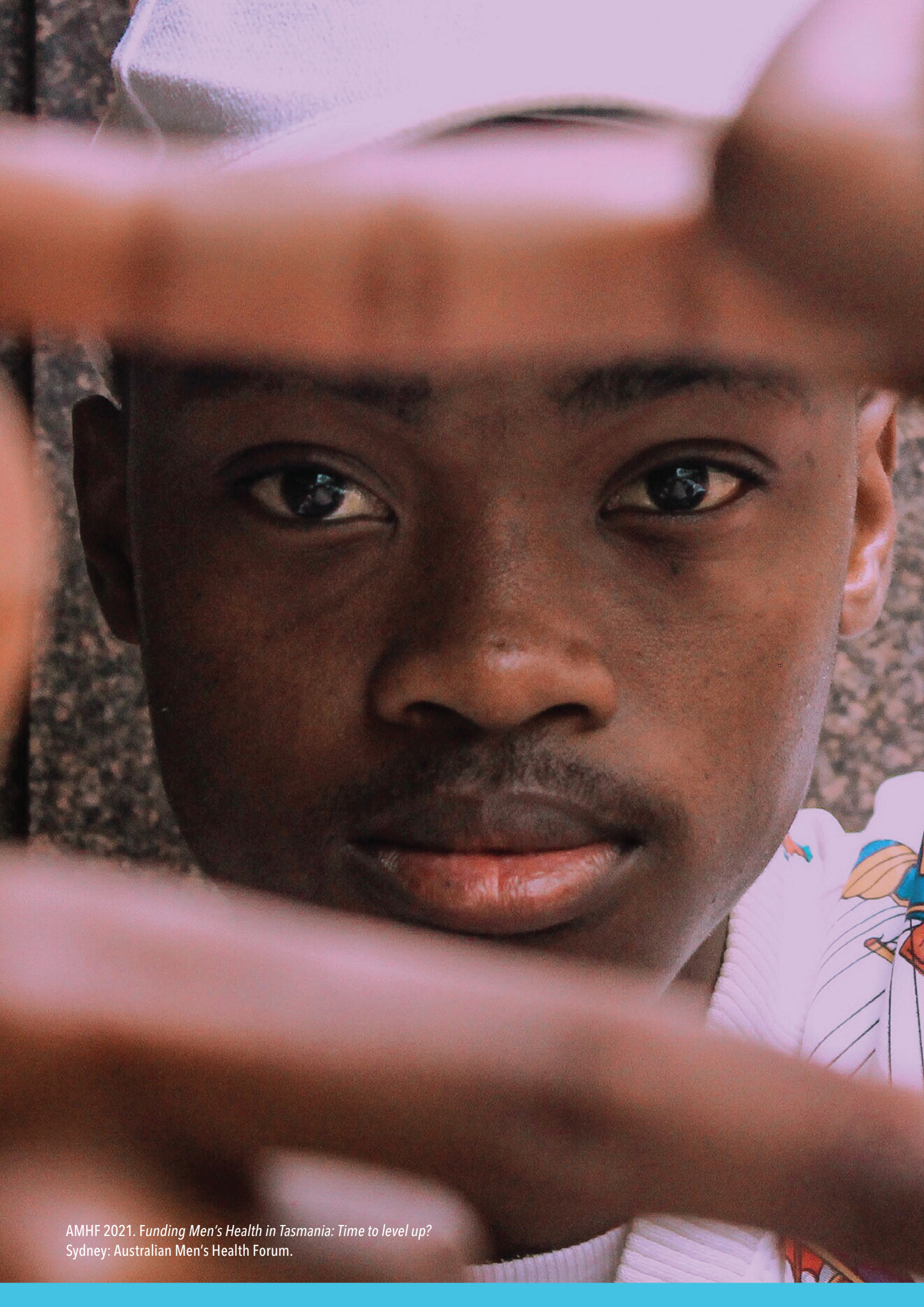
# FUNDING MEN'S HEALTH IN TASMANIA

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Time to level up?









# TIME TO LEVEL UP

In May 2021, the Federal Government unveiled a \$3.4 billion Women's Budget which included an allocation of \$535.8m to focus on the 5 priority areas identified in the National Women's Health Strategy.

There was no parallel Men's Budget and no funding allocated to focus on the 5 priority areas outlined in the National Men's Health Strategy, which include men's mental health and male suicide.

The announcement came just weeks after the Prime Minister's National Suicide Prevention Adviser, Christine Morgan, named male suicide as a priority issue that requires targeted Government action.

The recommendations require all jurisdictions, including the Tasmanian Government, to review and report on the accessibility of their funded services and programs for men.

At present, while 3 in 4 suicides are men, up to 4 in 5 beneficiaries of taxpayer-funded suicide prevention services are women.

Against this backdrop, the Australian Men's Health Forum (AMHF) commissioned Resolve Strategic to survey n=1,250+ Australians to get a better understanding of public attitudes on governments taking action to tackle men's issues like male suicide.

# 88%

TASMANIANS SUPPORT ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO TACKLE MEN'S ISSUES

# 94%

TASMANIANS AGREE MEN AND WOMEN CAN SUFFER FROM DIFFERENT ISSUES

This publication specifically highlights our findings in Tasmania and is published in partnership with Men's Resources Tasmania (MRT). Our research found that Tasmanians are equally supportive of Government funding being targeted at women's issues and men's issues.

Yet according to MRT's analysis, the Tasmanian Government allocates \$6 million a year to programs supporting women's health and wellbeing, and approximately \$665,000 to men's health and wellbeing.



# GENDER HEALTH GAPS

Australia is one of the world's healthiest countries. Boys born in Tasmania, for example, can expect to live longer than boys and girls in most other countries around the world. Yet men in Tasmania still die 5.4 years younger than Tasmanian women on average.

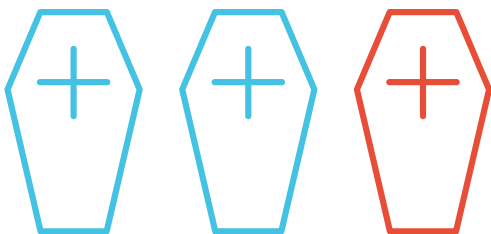
There is a wide range of health and social issues that contribute to this gender health gap:

- Two in three Tasmanians who die prematurely are male. In 2019, there were 1,357 premature deaths (994 male and 363 female). Addressing this health gap between men and women could save more than 600 lives a year.

# 75%

**MOST PEOPLE WHO DIE BY SUICIDE ARE MEN**

- Cancer, the leading cause of poor health, kills nearly 150 more men than women in Tasmania every year. In 2019, there were 1,352 cancer deaths in Tasmania, 750 were male and 602 were female.
- Coronary heart disease is the biggest killer of Tasmanian men, claiming the lives of around 300 men every year. Tasmanian men experience five times more heart deaths before 65 than women.
- Three in four Tasmanians killed in transport accidents are men and boys.
- In 2017, 100% of workplace deaths in Tasmania were men.
- Male suicide is the leading killer of men under the age of 55 in Tasmania with men accounting for 3 in 4 suicides.



**TWO IN THREE PREMATURE DEATHS**

994 male and 363 female



**FIVE IN SIX HEART DEATHS IN PEOPLE UNDER 65 ARE MALE**

Approximately 75 male and 15 female



**1,352  
CANCER  
DEATHS**

750 male and  
602 female



**TRANSPORT ACCIDENTS KILL 40 PEOPLE A YEAR**

3 in 4 are men and boys



**MEN ACCOUNT FOR THREE IN FOUR SUICIDES**

326 male and 117 female (2015-2019)



**FIVE PEOPLE A YEAR ARE KILLED AT WORK**

100% men (2017)

# GENDER FUNDING GAPS

Both men and women can experience health and social issues that require targeted Government action. By many different measures, men experience worse health outcomes than women, yet we consistently invest more time, money and resources into improving women's health when compared to men's health.

For example, in the past 8 years, the National Health and Medical Research Council has invested 5 times more funding in women's health than men's health (\$707.9m and \$148.2m respectively).

When combined with funding for maternal health research, women's health research has received 7.5 times more investment than men's health (\$1.1bn compared with less than \$150m).

More specifically, in April 2019, the Government launched its new national strategies to improve male health and female health in Australia.

The funding committed to the National Women's Health Strategy, was three times more than the National Men's Health Strategy (\$52.2m and \$17.9m respectively).

In May 2021, the Government allocated \$3.4B to its women's budget, which included \$535.8m to support work on the National Women's Health Strategy.

There was no Men's Budget and no funding allocated to support the National Men's Health Strategy.

Other areas where significant gaps in funding show up include cancer prevention and suicide prevention.

In 2018-2019, for example, \$434.9m of Government funding was invested in national screening programs to help detect and prevent cancer. Close to 90% of the people screened are women. While opportunities to screen more men for cancer are limited, there are many different actions that could be taken to reduce men's risk of death and disease if funding to prevent cancer in men was made available.



# 80%

UP TO 4 IN 5 CLIENTS OF TAXPAYER-FUNDED SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES ARE FEMALE

In terms of suicide prevention, the Australian Men's Health Forum's audits consistently find that the majority of Government funding invested in suicide prevention is directed at services that are more effective at reaching women at risk of suicide.

According to Men's Resources Tasmania's analysis of the 2020-2021 Tasmanian budget, the State Government allocated \$6 million a year to programs supporting women's health and wellbeing. In contrast, approximately \$665,000 was allocated to specific programs targeted at men's health and wellbeing, through Men's Sheds and accommodation for homeless men.

While AMHF and MRT do not advocate for funding to be taken away from women at risk of suicide, it is reasonable to ask that suicide prevention funding in Tasmania be allocated in an equitable way that reflects the fact that 3 in 4 suicides are male.





# WHAT TASMANIA THINKS

Our research confirmed that Tasmania prides itself on the importance of equality, with 9 in 10 people (92%) agreeing it is important to aim for equality in our society.

In terms of inequality between men and women in particular, a significant majority (70%) agree that inequality between men and women is an important social issue that the Government should tackle.

When comparing men and women, most Tasmanians (70%) also believe that helping and supporting women should be the priority until equality is reached.

However, this does not mean the Tasmanian public want men's issues to be ignored.

In general, Tasmanians take a pragmatic view that tackling specific health and social issues that impact women and men differently, is more important than addressing gender equality in isolation.

This doesn't mean that gender equality is unimportant, just that Tasmanians place greater priority on tackling issues that can disproportionately impact men and women. Issues that Tasmanians say

# 92%

TASMANIANS SAY IT'S IMPORTANT TO AIM FOR EQUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY

are a priority include violence by strangers (86%), domestic violence (81%), sexual assaults and rape (79%), supporting parents to be involved in their children's lives (79%) and tackling heart disease (77%).

In total, 94% of Tasmanians recognise that men and women can suffer from different health and social issues.

While 80% of Tasmanians surveyed told us that it's desirable for men and women to be treated the same, 79% agree that we shouldn't ignore differences between men and women.

We also found a large majority of Tasmanians are equally likely to say that it is okay for Governments to talk about women's health and social issues (88%) and men's health and social issues (90%).

In terms of Government action, around 2 in 3 Tasmanians (65%) say "it is OK for men and women to receive targeted services and support".

# SUPPORT FOR FUNDING MEN'S ISSUES

In terms of funding, the current practice of funding work on women's issues at significantly higher rates than programs to tackle men's issues, is out of step with public opinion.

Our research found that the majority of Tasmanians (82%) support additional Government funding to tackle women's health and social issues, with an even larger majority also supporting additional Government funding to tackle the health and social issues that impact men and boys (88%).

When asked to consider what proportion of funding should be allocated to men's issues and women's issues, only a small minority (11%) of Tasmanians thought that women should receive the majority of Government funding and support.

In comparison, a significant minority of Tasmanians (27%), told us that men and women should receive roughly half of all funding and support.

In general, however, most Tasmanians seem to take a very pragmatic view with 1 in 2 (51%) telling us that funding and support should be allocated on the basis of need, regardless of gender.

# 51%

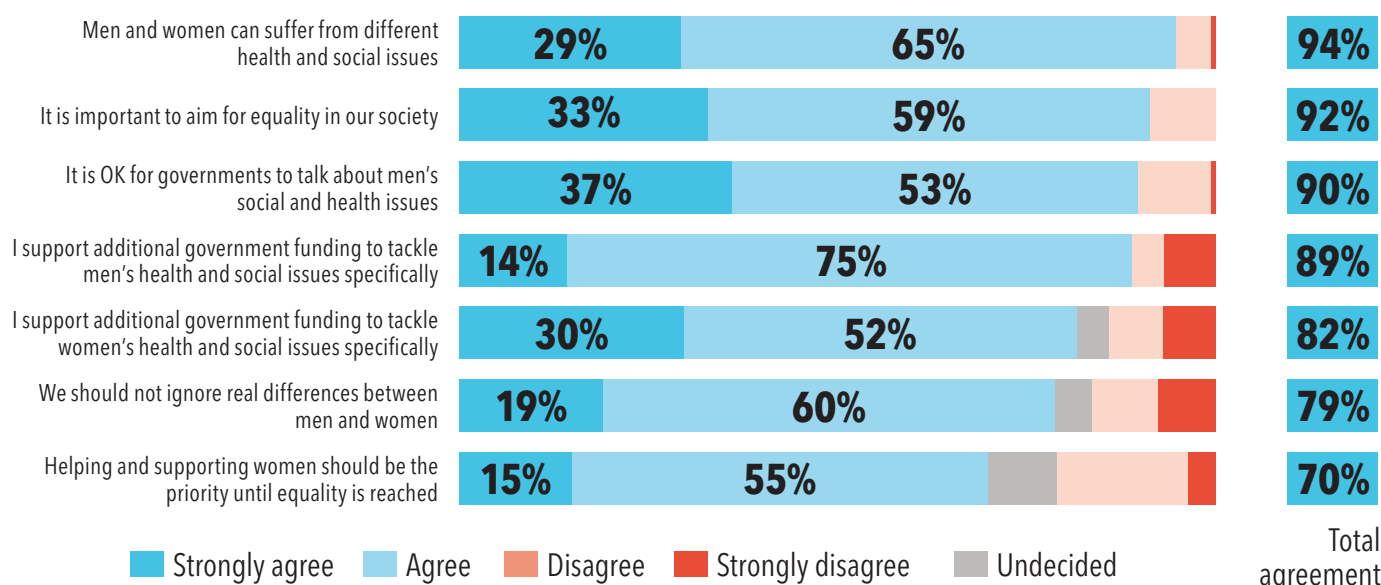
TASMANIANS SAY FUNDING SHOULD BE ALLOCATED ON BASIS OF NEED REGARDLESS OF GENDER

In terms of the men's health and social issues, our research identified 7 areas of concern that the Tasmanian public identify as having a greater impact on men than women.

These were workplace accidents, parental access to children after separation, suicide, premature death, heart disease, mental health and parents playing an active role in young children's lives.

When asked to rank these in order of importance, by selecting 3 issues that are a priority to tackle for men, there were four issues that stood out. The men's issue that is of greatest concern to Tasmanians is men's mental health, with 53% naming this as a priority and 28% also naming male suicide as a priority. Preventing workplace accidents and deaths was the public's second greatest concern (41%), with parents being prevented from accessing their children coming a close third (39%).

**TABLE 1. PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER IN TASMANIA**



Q12) Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about equality and attitudes towards gender. It is important that you consider each carefully and answer honestly! Ordered by net agreement.

# MALE SUICIDE AN URGENT CASE

According to the Australia Bureau of Statistics, mental health is the third biggest cause of death, disease, illness and injury in men behind cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Men experience a greater disease burden than women from mental health issues but are significantly less likely to access mental health services funded by the Government and major NGOs.

In 2021, the Prime Minister's National Suicide Prevention Adviser, Christine Morgan, published her final recommendations in support of the Government's 'towards zero' suicides goals.

Ms Morgan's report delivered a strong message on male suicide and highlighted the disproportionate impact that suicide has on men, as an issue that "must be called out as a priority for whole of government" action.

The recommendations also require all jurisdictions, including the Tasmanian Government, to review and report on the accessibility of their funded services and programs for men.

Suicide killed 443 people in Tasmania between 2015 and 2019 and three in four of these suicides were men (326 male and 117 female).

While men account for 3 in 4 suicides, our auditing consistently finds that suicide prevention services funded by Government are more effective at reaching women at risk of suicide. The May 2021 budget, for example, allocated \$298m to suicide prevention, the majority of which is allocated to interventions that are known to be less effective at reaching men.

The Australian Men's Health Forum and Men's Resources Tasmania do not argue for money to be taken away from these important services, but the act of auditing the reach of services in this way reveals a significant gap in the Government's suicide prevention funding strategy.

When considering what actions are needed to tackle male suicide in Tasmania, it's important to recognise that mental health issues (e.g. depression) are just one pathway to suicide.

According to the Tasmanian Department of Health, the majority of Tasmanian men who take their own lives have already accessed some form of mental health support, with 61% seeking treatment in

## 53%

TASMANIANS SAY MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IS A PRIORITY ISSUE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TACKLE

## 73%

TASMANIANS SAY DEATH BY SUICIDE IS ENTIRELY PREVENTABLE AND CAN BE TACKLED IN MEN

## 80%

TASMANIANS SAY MEN ARE A KEY PART OF ANY FAMILY AND TO LOSE THEM IS DEVASTATING

the past 12 months and 55% having treatment within six weeks of their death.

Furthermore, 95% of suicides in Tasmania are associated with a range of situational factors such as substance abuse (58%), relationship separation (55%), death of a family member (51%) and conflict with partner (41%).

The majority of Tasmanians who die by suicide (64%) are not employed at the time of their suicide and not in a relationship (68%). Most Tasmanian men who die by suicide (71%) are working age (25-64) with 11% being under 25 and 17% being 65 and over.

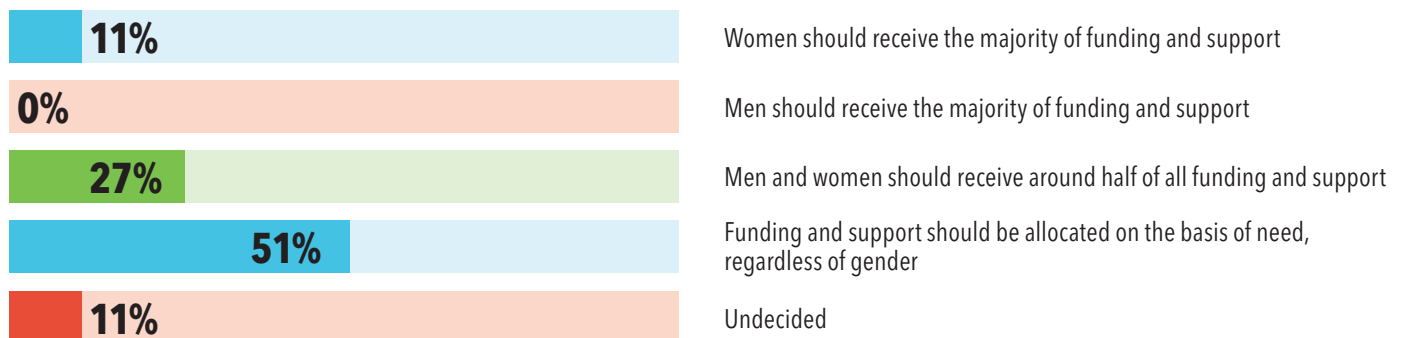
Based on 2019 figures, reducing male suicide to zero would save the lives of 70 Tasmanian men and boys a year.

AMHF and MRT are calling for National, State and Territory Governments to develop Male Suicide Prevention Strategies to tackle this issue.



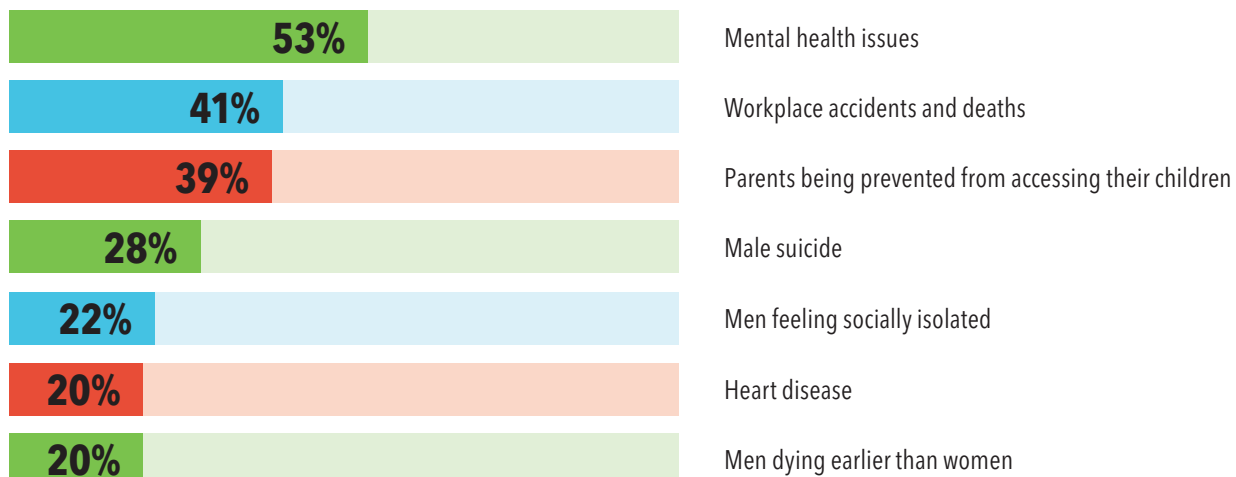


**TABLE 2. TASMANIANS' VIEWS OF FUNDING FOR MEN'S ISSUES**



Q15) And thinking about funding and attention from governments on social and health issues, which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?

**TABLE 3. TASMANIANS' VIEWS ON PRIORITY MEN'S ISSUES**



Q16) First, below is the same list of health and social issues you looked at earlier. This time, please pick up to three that you think are the priorities to tackle for men.

# WHAT CAUSES MEN'S ISSUES?

Having identified mental health, male suicide, workplace deaths and parents prevented access to their children as the top four men's issues that Tasmanians want Government to tackle, our survey asked respondents to consider the root causes of these problems.

The Government's National Men's Health Strategy highlights two key areas for action:

- Men's capacity to access help and support
- The capacity of services to help and support men

The Government acknowledges that opportunities to engage proactively with men and boys, to assess risk, provide health education and undertake health promotion across a range of issues are not being fully

explored and represent an area of significant potential for taking action.

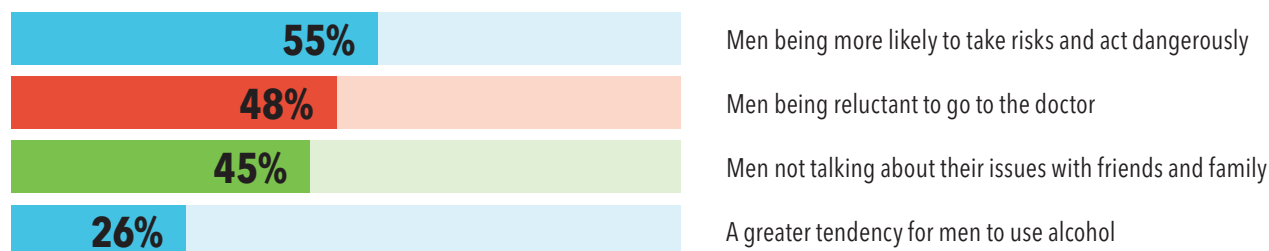
In response to this challenge, the Government has committed to strengthening the capacity of the health system to provide quality care for all men & boys by allocating funding to male-centred information, programs and services.

When we canvassed the public on their views, the responses fell fairly evenly between men's individual behaviour and the collective social and cultural pressures that men face.

In terms of individual behaviours, the public consider the most common cause of the issues men face to be men's risk-taking behaviour (55%). In addition, 48% of Tasmanians said men's apparent reluctance to go to the doctor was a problem, while 45% pointed to "men not talking about their issues with friends and family".

For those who considered broader social and cultural pressures to be at fault, 48% of Tasmanians said unhelpful behaviours were learnt from an early age, 47% said that the work and financial pressures men face were to blame and 56% said it was the "cultural pressure for men to be strong and solve their own problems" that was at the root of men's health and social issues.

**TABLE 4.1. TASMANIANS' VIEWS OF CAUSES OF MEN'S ISSUES (BEHAVIOURAL)**



**TABLE 4.2. TASMANIANS' VIEWS OF CAUSES OF MEN'S ISSUES (SOCIAL AND CULTURAL)**



Q17) And thinking about the sort of men's issues you think are priorities from that list, which do you think contribute to them? You can tick all that apply.





# FUNDING SOLUTIONS TO MEN'S ISSUES

How can Government do more to tackle issues like men's mental health and prevent male suicide?

International best practice tells us that one of the key ways to improve men's access to healthcare is by developing male-friendly services. This fact was acknowledged in Australia's first National Male Health Policy, which called on all health professionals to "make their practices more male-friendly".

The PM's Suicide Prevention Adviser, Christine Morgan, has also stated that where necessary, services should be "redesigned to be more accessible and better meet the needs of men".

Research consistently shows that around 2 in 3 men who die by suicide have been in contact with services prior to their death, but many don't get the support they need.

In a Movember survey of 2,000 men who accessed therapy, 43% dropped out of treatment prematurely without informing their clinician. The main reason given was a lack of connection with the counsellor.

In general, men are willing to access help and support and more likely to do so if the services they reach out to are male-friendly and designed with men in mind.

## 2 in 3

**MEN WHO DIE BY SUICIDE HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SUPPORT SERVICES**

In recent years there has been an upswell of men at a community level who are stepping up to get involved in male suicide prevention by setting up, volunteering for and taking part in local peer support groups, but this is clearly still not enough.

The PM's Suicide Prevention Adviser has noted that services need to be delivered in "places and formats that suit the needs of men" and Suicide Prevention Australia states that "grassroots and peer-led services are often most effective at providing support where men are because they are embedded in the communities of the men at risk of suicide".

Rather than simply funding services that are known to be better at reaching women at risk of suicide and hoping men will show up, the Government could radically improve the efficacy of its work to prevent suicide by specifically targeting funding at male-friendly programs with a long-term commitment to working to improve the lives and health of men and boys.

# SUPPORTING TASMANIAN MEN

Most Tasmanians (98%) agree that “Government funding and attention should be used where it is most needed, and men need help”.

Mental health, in particular, is viewed as being the root cause of many of the issues that men face by most Tasmanians (85%).

Four in five Tasmanians (80%) agree that “men are a key part of any family, and to lose them is devastating to families”. Seven in ten (69%) acknowledge that “men die earlier on average than women, but this

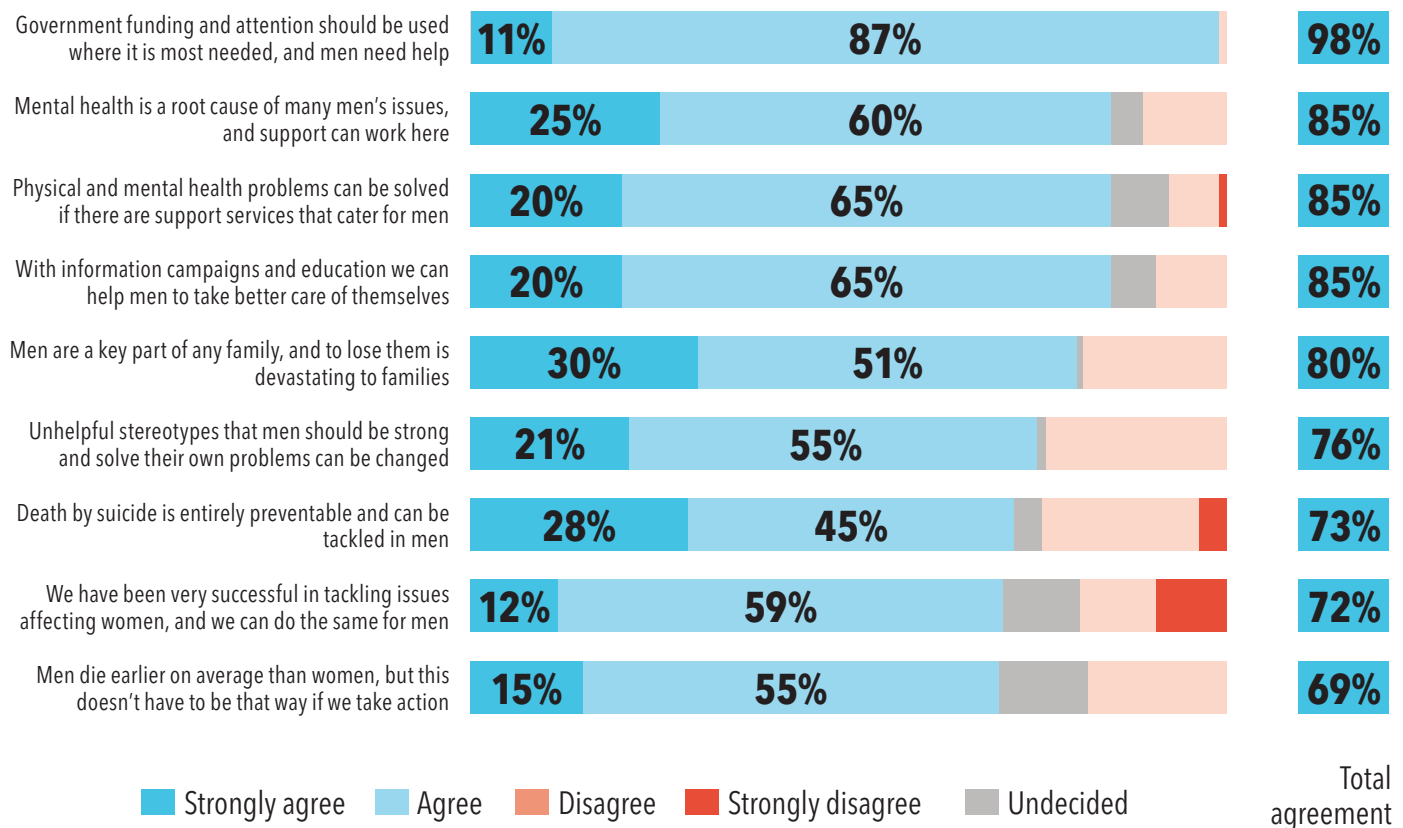
doesn't have to be that way” and three in four (73%) believe that “death by suicide is entirely preventable and can be tackled in men”.

The vast majority (85%) of Tasmanians say that both the physical and mental health problems that men face can be solved if there are support services that cater for men.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) agree that “we have been very successful in tackling issues affecting women, and we can do the same for men”.

Three in four Tasmanians (76%) believe that “unhelpful stereotypes that men should be strong and solve their own problems can be changed” and most Tasmanians (85%) tell us that information and education can help men take better care of themselves.

**TABLE 5. TASMANIANS' VIEWS ON TARGETED FUNDING FOR MEN'S ISSUES**



Q18) Tell us how much you agree that the following statements are a good reason to support funding and attention being paid to men's issues.





## KEY POINTS

- 3 in 4 suicides are men. Based on 2019 figures, reducing male suicide to zero would save the lives of 70 Tasmanian men and boys a year.
- In May 2021, the Government allocated \$3.4B to its Women's Budget including \$535.8m for the National Women's Health Strategy. There was no Men's Budget and no funding for the National Men's Health Strategy.
- The 2020-2021 Tasmanian budget allocated \$6m to women's health and \$665,000 to men's health.
- 94% of Tasmanians agree that men and women can suffer from different health and social issues.
- 90% of Tasmanians say that it is okay for governments to talk about men's health and social issues
- 88% of Tasmanians support additional Government funding being targeted at tackling men's health and social issues.
- The men's issues that are of greatest concern to Tasmanians are men's mental health (53%); workplace deaths and accidents (41%); dads prevented access to their children (39%) and preventing male suicide (28%)
- Some of the common root causes of these issues are thought by Tasmanians to be: cultural pressure for men to be strong and

# 53%

**AGREE PRESSURE TO BE STRONG AND SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS CAUSES HEALTH ISSUES FOR MEN**

- solve their own problems (56%); men's risk-taking behaviour (55%); men being reluctant to go to the doctor (48%); work or financial pressures (47%), men not talking with friends and family (45%) and not enough support services for men (24%).
- Around 2 in 3 men who die by suicide have been in contact with services prior to their death, but many drop out because they don't get the support they need.
  - AMHF and MRT is calling for funding to support male-friendly approaches to suicide prevention, in line with the recommendations of the PM's adviser, who has called for services to be delivered in "places and formats that suit the needs of men".

# ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

The public opinion research quoted in this report was commissioned by the Australian Men's Health Forum and conducted independently by Resolve, a full-service market research agency that specialises in helping clients solve strategic problems.

Resolve helps to clarify problems and design solutions through a combination of high-quality research, creative thinking and hard-won practical experience. The agency is the creation of Jim Reed, one of Australia's most trusted and respected researchers and strategists, including being pollster to *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* via the Resolve Political Monitor.

Jim has polled for 20 general election campaigns, was pollster for the successful Marriage Equality vote in Australia, and for

numerous other non-partisan public opinion and advocacy campaigns.

The research undertaken for this report comprised two phases:

1. An initial qualitative investigation of the topic area via n=12 depth interviews, conducted online between 18-25 March with a good mix of geo-demographics. The 45-60 minute interviews employed spontaneous discussion and prompted stimulus materials.
2. A quantitative survey of n=1,259 (+/-2.8%) adults representative of the national population was then conducted between 26-30 April 2021. This was used to confirm qualitative hypotheses and accurately measure support for solutions. The survey included a representative sample of 35 Tasmanians.

This report places a specific focus on our research findings in Tasmania and is published in partnership with Men's Resources Tasmania.

MRT is a community-based, volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation that supports and promotes the wellbeing of men and boys in Tasmania. Current activities include supporting and auspicing organisations like TasDads and Man Up Tasmania.

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