THE REAL FACE OF MEN'S HEALTH: AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Too many men are dying too young.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, more than two in five men die prematurely — before the age of 75 – and the vast majority of these deaths are preventable.

Conditions that we know how to spot, manage and treat — such as coronary heart disease, suicide, and cancers of the bowel, liver, lungs, and stomach – are some of the biggest killers.

In New Zealand, suicide remains the leading cause of death among young men aged 15–34, and the third leading cause of premature death for all men. Three in every four people who die by suicide are male.

These aren't just statistics. They're sons, fathers, brothers, and mates. And their deaths ripple through our whānau, workplaces, and communities. Too often, men are falling through the cracks, missing out on the support they need, when and where they need it, and it has gone on for too long.

The groundbreaking Real Face of Men's Health report, produced by the Movember Institute of Men's Health, delivers the most comprehensive look at men's health in New Zealand to date. Backed by nationally representative surveys and fresh analysis of government data, the report exposes the barriers that prevent men from receiving the care they need, and the personal and economic cost of leaving those gaps unaddressed. The report outlines the state of men's health across New Zealand and makes clear the benefits that would ripple through relationships, families and communities if we improved men's health – including delivering hundreds of millions in cost savings to the country and economy each year.

That is why the Movember Institute of Men's Health is looking to work with the New Zealand Government and Parliament to improve men's health. In doing so, it won't just benefit men; it will have a profoundly positive impact across society. Healthier men mean a healthier world.

You can check out the full report and executive summary [here]. Key insights are outlined below.

Men are dying too young.

- More than two in five men (41.8%) living in New Zealand die prematurely from causes we know how to prevent, manage and treat..
- Tāne Māori die prematurely at more than twice the rate of New Zealand European men, and four times the rate of Asian men. Pacific men aren't far behind, facing nearly double the risk of European men.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of premature death in men. Each year, three in four people who die by suicide in New Zealand are male.
- Tāne Māori die by suicide at 1.6 times the national average for men. Among young tāne aged 25–44, the rate soars to nearly 60 deaths per 100,000.

- Psychological distress among men aged 15–24 has more than tripled over the past decade – rising from 4.3% in 2014 to 15.1% in 2023. For men aged 25–34, the rate has more than doubled, from 5.4% to 13.9%.

Where men live can also determine how long they live.

- Men living in rural areas face a 37% higher risk of dying early than men living in urban areas.
- New analysis in this report shows that the eight districts with the highest rates of male premature mortality are all located in the North Island: Tairāwhiti, Northland, Lakes, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Taranaki, Whanganui, and MidCentral.
- Tairāwhiti tops the list. Men living here are nearly twice as likely to die prematurely as those living in Auckland or Waitematā – the country's lowest-rate districts.
- Men living in the most deprived areas of Aotearoa are nearly 1.5 times more likely to die prematurely than those in the least deprived.
- Want to know how your electorate stacks up? Check out this interactive map to explore premature death rates and leading causes of early death in men across Aotearoa.

Certain jobs come with a hidden health cost.

- In high-risk jobs like farming, construction and emergency services, men face elevated physical and mental health risks.
- More than half of emergency responders (52%) report anxiety, major depression or PTSD, as well as a higher prevalence of hazardous drinking.

Seeking help versus suffering in silence

- Too often, men's help-seeking is shaped — and sometimes stopped — by gender and societal norms.
- 62% of men said masculine stereotypes, like the expectation to "tough it out," negatively influenced their health behaviours and experiences in healthcare.
- Over half (54%) have wanted to leave – or have left – a healthcare provider due to a lack of personal connection.
- 40% say their symptoms aren't taken seriously, and 39% say their doctor rarely asks about their mental health.
- Men are less likely to follow medical advice than women (58%), and 61% believe it's normal to avoid regular health checks

When men are in poor health, we all feel it.

Men's poor health doesn't just affect men. It affects everyone around them. Across New Zealand an estimated half a million people are unpaid caregivers[1], and many are caring for a man in their life. While caregiving can be rewarding, it often comes at a cost.

[1] Based on 2018 New Zealand Census data and CarersNZ estimates. Approximately 431,673 people aged 15 and over identified as unpaid carers, though the real number may be higher (estimated between 523,000–655,000) due to a high non-response rate in caregiving questions.

A new Movember survey of 579 informal caregivers found:

- 46% said caring for a man had harmed their own mental health
- 64% reported strain on their intimate relationships
- 31% had to reduce work hours, change jobs, or leave employment
- 62% took time off work in the past year to care for a man

And the financial cost? In 2023 alone, New Zealand lost $917 million to the top five preventable. causes of death in men[2]. That's nearly half the government's annual spend on mental health services. Zooming out, poor health among working-age men (25–64) is estimated to cost $3.1 billion in lost income every year — with nearly a third of that loss linked to mental health.

We know what works. But we need to go further.

Movember has been funding life-saving men's health programs in New Zealand since 2006, raising over $80 million through community fundraising and grassroots momentum. That investment has supported:

- Mental health programs for young men
- Culturally grounded care for tāne Māori
- Prostate cancer treatment and research
- Community-based innovation backed by evidence

Across the country, there are pockets of progress, but not all men have access to care that works for them. And in some places, those services don't exist at all.

Our Call to Action

We're calling on the New Zealand Government to invest in a **national Men's Health Strategy** — one that drives coordinated action across policy, services, and systems.

This strategy must:

- **Establish a Men's Health Taskforce** to guide policy, programs, research, and investment
- **Back proven, community-based programs** that reach all men — especially those most at risk[3] — and support their physical, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing
- **Build a health system and workforce** that understands and responds to the unique needs of men
- **Advance research** to help men seek support earlier and stay connected to care

Because when men live longer, healthier lives — everyone benefits.

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[2] Based on modelling of the top five preventable causes of death in men: coronary heart disease, gastrointestinal cancers, lung cancer, other heart disease, and suicide.

[3] Priority groups include tāne Māori; Pacific men; men in more deprived areas; disabled men; older men; LGBTQIA+ men; and those working in high-risk occupations such as farming, construction, and emergency services.