



SPOTLIGHT ON MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

STATE OF MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG

- **The male suicide rate in Hong Kong has been continually rising since 2020**, currently at 19.6% per 100,000 males, [more than double the female suicide rate](#). (HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, 2024)
- **65% of suicide cases in Hong Kong in 2023 were men**, yet only 34% of crisis intervention service users were male. (Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong, 2023)
- **31% of male respondents to a survey conducted by the Mental Health Association Hong Kong in 2023 were classified as having moderate to severe mental health risks**, however 63% of all survey participants said they would not seek help from social welfare organisations or mental health professionals because of concerns of being judged, perceived as weak or feeling embarrassed.

HOW MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES MAY MANIFEST IN MEN

Common stressors and coping behaviours

The most common sources of stress identified by men are work, finance, health, and family issues. Rather than talking about distressing thoughts and feelings, some men may turn to [behaviours that mask, numb or distract them from uncomfortable feelings](#), including smoking, drinking, substance use, gaming, eating, and exercise. Some men [may continue to show up to work](#) despite experiencing a mental health struggle, and some may engage in [risky or impulsive behaviours](#) or show irritability or aggression over other emotions.

Obstacles to seeking help

A [2023 scoping review](#) of the reasons deterring men from seeking professional mental health treatment include feeling that they need to be self-reliant and resolve issues on their own. They may not want to burden others around them, admit they need support, or may not know who they can turn to for appropriate help. Some men are unsure about how mental health support services can cater specifically to their needs and may find the language and messaging around mental health alienating.

Gender norms and mental health literacy

Traditional perceptions of femininity and masculinity can be [internalised from a young age](#), and displaying emotions and openly seeking help are often viewed as typically 'female' behaviors. Mental ill-health and seeking professional support can lead to feelings of weakness and inadequacy in men, and a fear of being judged or ridiculed. A [lack of mental health literacy](#) and understanding of the symptoms and treatment options of different conditions can also contribute to this.

TIPS FOR DISCUSSING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND ENCOURAGING HELP-SEEKING

NOTICE BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

Look out for changes in men's behaviour in work or social settings and check in with them sensitively, especially if they have recently experienced a big life change. Consider adopting the **'ALEC' framework** (**ask** how they've been, **listen** with full attention, **encourage** helpful action, **check in** regularly) to frame these conversations.

TALK ABOUT IT

Normalise and practise having conversations about mental health. Highlight potential risk factors and warning signs of mental health decline, and emphasise the importance of prevention, early detection and intervention for recovery. Encouraging men's awareness of positive and negative events and actions which trigger different emotions in them can be a good place to start.

TAKE INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Foster a safe space for diverse and individual expression, whatever that may look like for that person. Everyone is unique and will respond differently to a particular approach. While some men may desire or feel comfortable to openly resist and challenge **traditional gender norms**, others may benefit from support that helps to gradually shift their perspective using ideas from a more familiar framework.

PRACTISE MINDSET SHIFT

Discuss opportunities for a mindset reframe in a way that aligns with his personal values system. For example, the experience and awareness gained from seeking help for a mental health challenge can be seen as an opportunity to learn, grow and develop psychological strength and resilience for the future.

BE A ROLE MODEL

Lead by example and role model behaviours that encourage men to express vulnerability and discuss difficulties. Peer support groups could be especially helpful, combining the opportunity for social connection with a platform to hear and share lived experiences within a safe space. Senior leaders, particularly if male, can be important role models for emotional awareness and mental self-care.

ACTIVITIES AS A PLATFORM

Consider alternative settings or activities as an avenue for starting a conversation with a male colleague about mental health. Engaging in tasks which invoke a sense of pleasure and mastery and require using one's skills and strengths may help some men feel more comfortable to open up.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND TOOLKITS FOR MEN



- [International Men's Day \(Australia\)](#)
- [Movember Men's Mental Health \(Canada\)](#)
- [Mental Health UK - Men's Mental Health \(UK\)](#)
- [Men's Minds Matter: Guides for men about emotions, anxiety, anger, stress, depression, suicide \(UK\)](#)
- [MensLine: Resources for men on relationships, parenting, family violence and mental health \(Australia\)](#)
- [The New Normal: Boys Talk Men's Mental Health Peer Support Groups \(currently in Cantonese with English groups coming soon\) \(Hong Kong\)](#)

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City Mental Health Alliance HK

The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK) is a not-for-profit membership organisation. We are an alliance of businesses, working together with mental health experts and partner organisations, to achieve our vision that every workplace will protect, support and create positive mental health for their people.

We provide training, events, resources, research and practical support for companies wishing to create mentally healthy workplaces.

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