

Bupa Wellbeing Index 2025:

Lifting the Lid on
Men's Health



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Foreword

Men's health in the UK is at a critical juncture. For too long, conversations about men's wellbeing have been held back by silence, societal expectations and harmful stereotypes that discourage men from prioritising and speaking about their health or seeking the support they need.

It's well known that men face specific health challenges such as higher rates of suicide, lower life expectancy and increased prevalence of certain health conditions, whilst also being less likely to seek medical help for both physical and mental health concerns.

The lack of communication around men's health has ripple effects, visible and invisible, short and long term. It can strain and break down relationships, reduce workplace productivity, and increase the burden on healthcare systems as they are seeking support once things become more serious.

The Government's upcoming Men's Health Strategy represents a pivotal moment to drive real change—and at Bupa, we're proud to contribute to this vital national conversation. Our latest Bupa Wellbeing Index turns the spotlight onto men's health, addressing the impact of physical and mental ill-health and encourages conversations between generations about health and wellbeing. These topics resonate beyond the individual, affecting families, workplaces, and society at large.

Employers, policymakers and healthcare providers all have a critical role to play in tackling these challenges. Societal expectations must change to foster an environment where men feel empowered to speak openly, seek help and prioritise their health without embarrassment and fear of judgement. It's not a case of 'man up' but feeling comfortable to talk to each other and seek help when they need it, we know how powerful a conversation can be especially when it comes to our mental health.

Through this report, our call to action is for more meaningful conversations and societal change.

Together, we can break down the barriers in society and create a future where historic stigma and fear of weakness is replaced by support and better outcomes for the individual and those around them.



Carlos Jaureguizar
CEO for Bupa Global, India & UK

Executive summary

This report provides an in-depth exploration of three critical areas—mental health, intergenerational conversations about men’s health, and sexual function. Drawing on comprehensive research and detailed analysis, it uncovers the multifaceted challenges men face, including stigma, barriers to seeking help, and the wider impacts on relationships, workplaces, and families.



Key findings



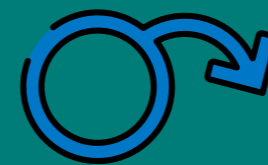
Mental health

While stigma around mental health is improving, nearly a third of men still do not know where to turn for help.



Generational health

Generational divides in discussing health issues persist, with younger men more willing to open up compared to older generations.



Sexual function

Over a quarter of men report experiencing issues with erectile dysfunction, loss of libido, or premature ejaculation, often linked to mental health struggles and workplace stress.

This report highlights the urgency of fostering open dialogue, raising awareness, and providing support for men’s health. It calls on employers, healthcare providers, and society to come together to address these challenges.

Mental health

At one time or another, half of men (50%) in the UK have suffered with poor mental health.

While a growing number of men are willing to seek support, barriers such as stigma, lack of awareness, and limited access to resources persist.

In this section, we examine the stereotype that men are reluctant to talk about their problem, as well as the effects on their mental health. We look at who they're most likely to turn to in their hour of need, as well as the impact on relationships and what can be done to improve matters.

We call for a concerted effort to address these challenges by normalising meaningful conversations around mental health, improving access to professional support, and fostering a societal environment where seeking help is seen as a strength rather than a weakness.



50%

of men in the UK have suffered with poor mental health at one time or another



Dr Luke Powles, Associate Clinical Director at Bupa Health Clinics said:

“There is a stereotype around men that showing emotion can make you less “manly” which really isn’t the case. If you are struggling with your mental health, speaking to your partner about how you’re feeling can make a huge difference.”

Who can men talk to about their mental health?

It’s a well-known stereotype that men struggle to talk about their concerns, particularly in comparison with women. Bupa’s survey shows that this stereotype has more than a grain or two of truth in it, but it’s not as simple as you might imagine.

Only around a quarter of men (24%) who’ve struggled with mental health say they would talk to their friends about their struggles. What’s more, less than half of men would seek medical advice for their mental health struggles, owing to the stigma surrounding it.

Who men seek advice or help from:

A medical professional



A partner



A family member



A friend



A online forum



Relationships are inextricably linked with mental health. When one suffers, the other often suffers too. **28%** of men say their mental health problems have led to their relationship breaking down entirely.

The stereotype about men being afraid to talk about their problems comes into play here as well: over a third (**37%**) say that they have having hidden their mental health issue from their partner.



24%

of men say they would talk to their friends about their mental health struggles



30%

of men say they don't know where to go for advice on their mental health issues

Percentage of people who have hidden a mental health issue from their partner:

16-24 year olds



25-34 year olds



35-44 year olds



45-55 year olds



55+



How can we reduce the stigma around men's mental health?

The public's awareness of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety is far more sophisticated today than a few decades ago. However, there's still a long way to go in removing the stigma that surrounds this type of non-visible illness.

Nearly a third (**30%**) of men say they don't know where to go for advice on their mental health issues, suggesting that better awareness around treatment options for mental health issues is urgently needed.



Dr Luke Powles adds:

“Awareness around mental health has moved on huge amounts in recent years and help is available through lots of different places including your GP, private healthcare providers, workplaces and charities. It's good to find out if your workplace offers any mental health support; the majority of businesses now offer employee assistance programmes (EAPs) or mental health. Another good first step is to speak to your GP surgery or call 111 who have a mental health support line and will be able to help. Charities, such as the Samaritans and CALM, have phone lines available for emergency support.”

Almost **65%** of people say that there's still stigma attached to men's mental health issues, with those aged 35+ agreeing more compared to younger people. Interestingly, more women (**68%**) have this perception than men (**62%**), which may contribute to the reticence of some men to talk about their issues with their female partners.

Things are changing, though. Our survey shows that both men and women who believe there is a stigma surrounding men's mental health issues feel this has improved over the past five years, with **64%** of men and of women agreeing.

One way to continue this improvement may be to ask more male public figures to talk openly about their issues. Half of men with mental health issues say this would encourage them to talk about their own mental health struggles.

Additionally, the Government has recently announced a national Men's Health Strategy - to include mental health. It seems that this will be welcomed, as over half the people in our survey called for the government to develop a dedicated mental health strategy to help improve men's lives.

Percentage of employed men who want their employers to offer more support for men struggling with their mental health:

16-24 year olds



25-34 year olds



35-44 year olds



45-55 year olds



55+



Conversations across generations

The importance of addressing health issues within families cannot be overstated. Open, honest lines of communication are vital when it comes to talking to children about mental health, ensuring that their concerns are listened to and their needs are met.

However, there is a generational divide based on stigma in how comfortable people feel when talking about certain health issues, which can have a serious impact on the way health is discussed within families.

For those with aging parents in need of care for the first time, starting conversations on physical and mental health can be difficult owing to fears around privacy and the stigma barrier. Two thirds (66%) of those aged 55+ say there is stigma attached to men's mental health issues, compared to 57% of 16-24 year olds. However, in our research, factors like getting older, seeing their parents have a health scare, or choosing care often prompted men to start these conversations, which is positive.



66%

of those aged 55+ say there is stigma attached to men's mental health issues



Younger people tend to feel more confident about their understanding of health issues and are generally more open to talking about it than older generations. However, young people are in a mental health crisis in the UK, with two-fifths (39%) of 8-18 year olds surveyed saying they feel worried at least every week. In fact, mental health is Bupa's highest claims area for children and young people aged 4-17.

The knock-on effect of dealing with children's mental health issues can take a toll on the whole family. Four out of five (80%) parents surveyed feel their children don't open up to them about their mental health. While men are supporting their children, it is vital that they're also able to open up and seek help for their own struggles. Resources such as Bupa's Family+ Plan can help, offering extensive mental health cover with ongoing support and no time limits. This has the added benefit of Family Mental HealthLine support from trained advisors and mental health nurses for parents who are worried about a child's emotional wellbeing.

In this section, we call for action to encourage more meaningful conversations across generations in families, breaking down barriers like the stigma around men's health and privacy concerns, and bringing about societal change through increased levels of health knowledge to encourage openness on the topic.



What's stopping us talking about men's health?

Talking about our health concerns, whether physical or mental, is key to doing something about them. For many people, their family is the safe space where they go to discuss what's worrying them with someone who cares.

However, there are many men who don't feel confident in broaching the subject with family members, revealing a significant communication gap across generations. Over a quarter of people admit that they've never had an open, meaningful discussion about health with a male family member, whether that is with a child or parent.



Dr Naveen Puri, Medical Director for Bupa UK Insurance comments:

"Breaking through the bubble of isolation is a crucial first step in having an open and honest conversation across generations.

"Anxiety, depression and other health conditions, whether physical or psychological, are complex. It can be difficult to distinguish between everyday highs and lows, versus the symptoms of poor mental health. This is why it's so important that parents and their children, no matter how old they are, have these open conversations in a safe space. And by making these conversations feel normal every day, we can help make sure that those who need help receive it."

The reluctance to discuss health openly is not completely down to men. While almost a fifth of men* (**17%**) feel embarrassed about talking to male family members about health issues, more women (**21%**) say they feel the same way. This shows that there's a level of stigma and discomfort around discussing men's health issues across all genders.

The ability to have honest and open conversations about mental health issues is the first step in making an improvement. Without this, too many children, parents and grandparents are suffering in silence without the benefit of sharing their concerns.

*who've never engaged in open and meaningful conversations about health with a male family member

Addressing the knowledge gap

The underlying historical reasons for the stigma around men's health are complex. But it may be more helpful to consider what's stopping people today from having those conversations.

Awareness and knowledge of men's health is one element. Almost a quarter of those aged 55+ lack confidence in their knowledge about men's health, compared to **18%** of 25-34-year-olds, reflecting a greater hesitancy among older generations to discuss health topics due to lower confidence or awareness. This is an important factor if you are a parent or carer of older parents, not just in talking to family members about their mental health, but in being able to assess and take care of your own mental health so that you are fit to deal with the stresses of family life.



16%

of men say that privacy is a barrier to conversations about men's health

Privacy also appears to be key concern for many people. Overall, **16%** of people* say that it's a barrier to conversations about men's health. This rises to **18%** for those aged 55+, highlighting generational differences in openness even within the family.

25%

of men would rather deal with health issues on their own

14%

of men find it difficult to open up about what they're going through

17%

of men feel embarrassed talking to male family members about men's health issues

11%

of men feel like there is a stigma around men talking to men about health issues

Dr Naveen Puri adds:

“We know that men tend to suffer in silence but it’s incredibly important to seek support for any physical or mental health condition you may be experiencing. We see male patients all the time who say they wished they’d taken control on their health sooner but embarrassment, particularly around more personal conditions, tends to put them off. As doctors, we’ve seen it all before and it takes a lot to shock us.

“Speaking to a healthcare professional can be the best place to start and then once there is a treatment plan, it can be less overwhelming to talk to family members about what you are experiencing. It’s likely male family members or friends have experienced the same thing and speaking about it can really help to reassure and make you feel less isolated.”

A quarter of men say they prefer to “deal with it on my own”, showing that a substantial number feel the need to keep health issues private owing to stigma around the subject, rather than engage in family discussions. This figure is much the same even when we look at younger adults, with **28%** of men agreeing, despite their higher levels of health awareness compared to older generations.

Over a third (**36%**) say they are more likely to turn to other places before seeking their doctors advice on healthcare matters.

These figures show that younger generations are slowly becoming more comfortable in discussing men’s health issues but there are still big hurdles in the way. As a parent or carer of aging parents, being open about your own mental health can act as a doorway to conversations about their mental health.

On a societal level, part of the solution may be to make it easier to discover and learn about men’s health issues, with different approaches for different generations, to create a larger, public conversation so that it is no longer a taboo topic that should be kept private.

The main factors inspiring men to have a conversation about health with a male family member:

Getting older



Own health score



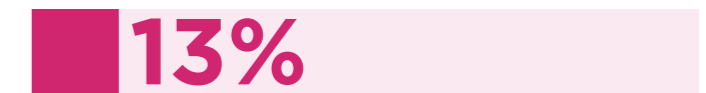
Family members health score



A friend’s health score



Mentions of a men’s health strategy



Sexual function

Sexual function is a critical but often taboo topic in men's health. Almost half of men in the UK have suffered with sexual function-related issues, which includes erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation and loss of libido.

These issues extend beyond the individual, deeply impacting partners, families and relationships. In relationships, the emotional strain can lead to feelings of rejection, frustration, loneliness and relationship breakdown. Families, too, may suffer as the ripple effects of these challenges disrupt harmony and intimacy within the home.

The stigma and silence surrounding sexual dysfunction often exacerbate the issue, leaving men and their loved ones isolated and without the necessary support. Addressing these concerns openly and with compassion is essential to breaking down barriers, fostering understanding, and enabling men to seek the help they need to improve their wellbeing and strengthen their relationships.

We look at the impact that sexual dysfunction has on men's mental health and their relationships, and call for action on eliminating the stigma attached to men's sexual problems and encouraging men to speak out and seek help.



The impact on relationships and mental health

One in three men say they or their male partner have had problems with their sexual function, whether that's loss of libido (**32%**), erectile dysfunction (**31%**) or premature ejaculation (**33%**). And while it won't come as a surprise that the chances of this increases as they get older, problems with sexual function can affect men of all ages.

The reasons for these issues vary from person to person, but can involve illness and physical problems, as well as pressures and stresses from elsewhere in their lives. In our survey, men said that poor mental health (**39%**) and stresses at work (**41%**) were the most prominent factors behind symptoms of erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation and loss of libido.



50%

of men say that sexual function problems have impacted their relationship

Men often face these issues alone, without confiding in friends or family, creating a vicious circle that worsens their mental health and negatively affects their relationships. As a result of their sexual dysfunction issues, around **a third of men** suffer from anxiety, stress or frustration, all of which can negatively impact their relationships.

Mesha Moinirad, public figure and advocator for chronic illness, said:

"Speaking about sexual dysfunction is hugely embarrassing and there is a real stigma attached to erection problems for men.

As someone who lives with Crohn's disease and has a stoma bag, I'm well versed on embarrassing topics, but in my early 20s I experienced issues with my sexual function, and it left me feeling incredibly isolated and depressed. I couldn't think about work or focus on relationships, and I was worried it was going to impact my fertility which left me feeling even more low. Eventually, I spoke to a healthcare professional and it gave me my life back. I can't stress the importance of seeking help and talking about what you're experiencing, don't keep it to yourself as it will only make things worse."

Their partners also suffer: **35%** of men say that sexual function problems have impacted their relationship. Almost half of those impacted report a loss of intimacy, while a quarter of men are dealing with feelings of embarrassment.

This should not be underestimated: just over one in five men say they would rather end their relationship than talk about their sexual function issues with their male partner.

Being open about sexual problems

We don't hear much about men's sexual function problems in day-to-day life. It's a subject that simply isn't discussed or, if it is, it's often treated as something to laugh about. This societal attitude means that a significant proportion of men would rather suffer in silence.



34%

of men fear of being judged or feeling embarrassed

Percentage of men avoiding seeking medical advice for sexual function concerns due to embarrassment or fear of judgement

16-24 year olds



25-34 year olds



35-44 year olds



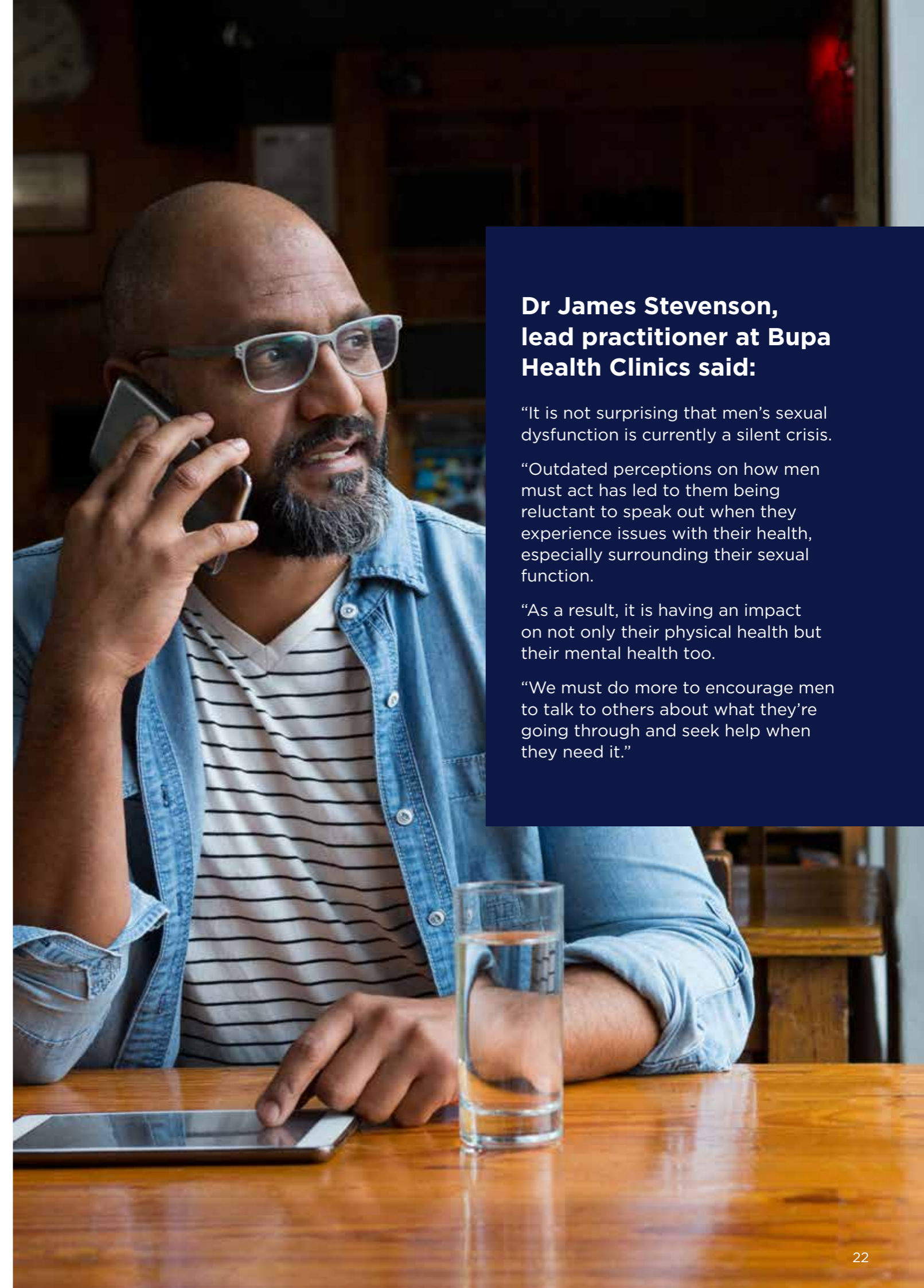
45-55 year olds



55+



Men's decisions about seeking advice and talking to people about their sexual function problems are linked to perceived stigma and harmful stereotypes (**62%**), as well as a fear of being judged or feeling embarrassed (**34%**). This is felt mostly by those aged 25-34, and 35-44.



Dr James Stevenson, lead practitioner at Bupa Health Clinics said:

"It is not surprising that men's sexual dysfunction is currently a silent crisis.

"Outdated perceptions on how men must act has led to them being reluctant to speak out when they experience issues with their health, especially surrounding their sexual function.

"As a result, it is having an impact on not only their physical health but their mental health too.

"We must do more to encourage men to talk to others about what they're going through and seek help when they need it."

Percentage of men who would rather end their relationship than talk to their male partner about their sexual function issues:

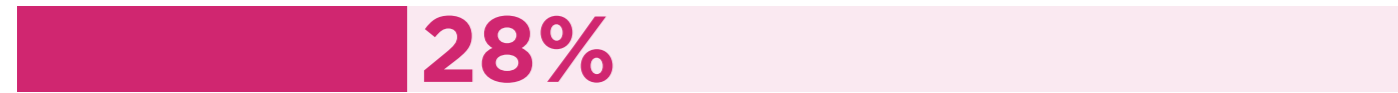
16-24 year olds



25-34 year olds



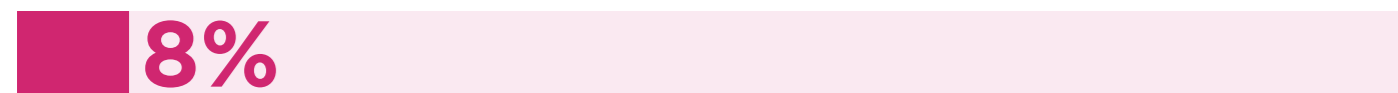
35-44 year olds



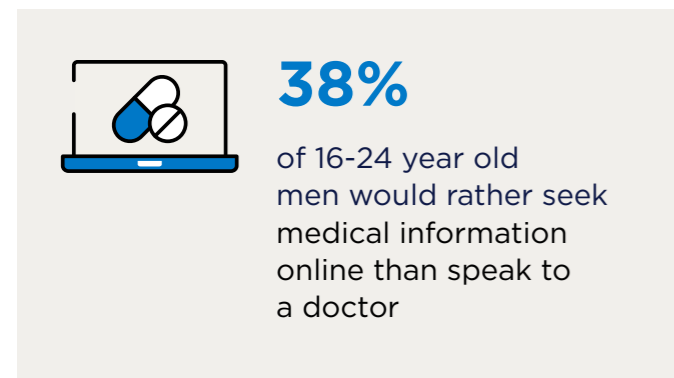
45-55 year olds



55+



For those men who are willing to speak to someone about their problem, over half would consider talking to a doctor if they're experiencing issues, but over **2 in 5** would rather seek medical information online, with 16-24 year olds (**34%**) and 25-34 year olds (**39%**) often turning to TikTok. Nearly a third of men have also bought, or considering buying, sexual function treatments online, either anonymously or through the dark web.



Keeping quiet about sexual dysfunction is not helping men or their partners. **Nearly a third of men** say their mental health is suffering which is having an impact on their sexual function issues and **40%** would like to be able to speak more openly about their problems. Over a third of men and women feel there's a need for greater awareness regarding men's sexual function.

Achieving this will take concerted action from the government in their plans for a new men's health strategy, and through public figures leading the way in speaking out about their personal sexual function issues. In fact, **38%** of men say this would help to make them comfortable in speaking about their own problems.

Dr Stevenson's advice to those experiencing erection problems:

Be open and honest

Whether you're speaking to your partner, a friend or a healthcare professional, talking about your experience with sexual dysfunction can help to ease the isolation you may be feeling.

Reconnect with your partner

Connecting with your partner without the pressure of the goal being penetrative sex can help to reboot your relationship. Explore new ways to connect and spend time together as a couple.

Make lifestyle changes

Problems with erectile dysfunction can be linked to lifestyle factors. Try to exercise for 150 minutes per week and cut out saturated fats from your diet.

Seek Support

If you have made changes to your lifestyle and it hasn't helped, go see a doctor who will be able to investigate the root cause of the problem.

Conclusion: Giving men the lift they need to talk comfortably about their mental and physical health

There's no doubt that men - and women - still find it difficult to have conversations about men's health. Although the stigma around the subject appears to be slowly shrinking in younger generations, discussions about important health issues are still seen as embarrassing.



Many men dealing with their own mental or physical health struggles or supporting family members are suffering in silence. Often, the research shows that they are not seeking help because they are embarrassed or fear showing signs of weakness. And as with most medical issues, waiting for problems to go away by themselves can often do more harm than good.

Around a **third** of men in the UK suffer from sexual function-related issues at some point in their lives, yet the public conversation around this topic is so limited that you'd be forgiven for thinking it's simply not a problem. It takes a toll on mental health in the form of anxiety, stress and depression, and negatively affects or breaks down relationships. When just over one in five men say they would rather end their relationship than talk about their sexual function issues with their partner, we know there's a serious problem around conversations on this issue.

It's a similar story when it comes to mental health. Almost half of men have struggled with their mental health but are reluctant to talk about it because of the perceived stigma. Again, even in a relationship, men are scared to discuss these issues, with over a third saying they have hidden their mental health issue from their partner.

Conversations across generations are also affected. Embarrassment, lack of knowledge and a feeling that topics such as mental health and sexual function should remain private lead to many men feeling that it's simply not right to be having those discussions.

Many men say they prefer to "deal with it myself", too afraid to share their problems regarding sexual function and mental health with friends or family. However, almost half of them would go to see a doctor about their sexual concerns, so there is evidence that men are willing to talk about these subjects if they are in a caring environment where they won't be embarrassed and can be sure that their conversations are private. What's more, over a **third** of men say that having public figures share their own stories will help them feel comfortable to discuss their own.

These factors point the way to give men's health a lift, encouraging meaningful conversations and creating societal change that will give them much needed space to talk about the issues that affect them. The Government's forthcoming men's health strategy to create a wider public conversation that normalises talking about men's health will do much to increase awareness and knowledge across different generations. This will benefit men, their partners and families, as well as having a positive effect on their communities, workplaces and wider society.



40%

of men would like to be able to speak more openly about their problems





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