

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ♂ This research was undertaken by The Male Link (TML) between Spring and Winter 2000.
- ♂ TML is a cross-community, cross-Border, voluntary network of men and women, individuals and organisations, who share a common belief that it is important to increase awareness of the issues facing males in the north of Ireland and who wish to initiate practical action to meet this need.
- ♂ This study sought to: provide baseline feedback on men's views about themselves and the world they live in; highlight key issues and inform the focus, direction and implementation of future practical programmes for men across the north of Ireland; provide a lever to exert pressure for increased resources in this area; raise the public profile of men's work/issues.
- ♂ 632 men took part in this survey. They came from a wide variety of personal backgrounds:
 - 79% lived in Northern Ireland, 21% in the Republic of Ireland
 - 34% lived in a city, 38% in a town, 11% in a village and 17% in the countryside
 - Ages ranged from 15 to over 70
 - 4% of respondents were gay, while 2% were bisexual
 - 59% were in a relationship or married, 34% were single, while the rest were either separated, divorced or widowed
 - More than half of those who responded said that they had children
 - 69% were employed, 10% unemployed and the remainder were students, retired, in training or out of work due to ill health. Two men were full-time carers
 - 48% were Roman Catholic, 32% Protestant, 2% came from another religious background and 15% came from no religious background. A further 3% of respondents did not wish to answer this question
- ♂ Respondents supported the idea of being in touch with, and expressing, their feelings:
 - Nearly 80% of men disagreed with the statement that real men don't cry
 - Almost the same amount agreed that it's good to show your sensitive side
 - 86% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that talking about your feelings is OK
- ♂ Despite being positive about their feelings, nearly two thirds of men agreed, to some extent, that "sometimes you don't do things in case you fail". Subsequently, acting upon these feelings is difficult.
- ♂ Nearly two thirds of men agreed or strongly agreed that nursing is a good career for a man, although one quarter of them were undecided.
- ♂ Only 18% of men agreed that the man should be the chief breadwinner in a household.
- ♂ There was support for the idea that it is more difficult for men to take on traditional female roles than vice-versa and that there is pressure on men to behave in a certain way.
- ♂ 40% of respondents felt that the media portray men in a negative way and almost two thirds believed that men are discriminated against on the basis of their sex.
- ♂ Support for equality was very evident: there was overwhelming support for the statement that men and women should always be treated equally, and a strong feeling that straight, gay and bisexual men should all be treated equally.
- ♂ Respondents felt that men can care for children equally as well as women. This supports the general feeling against the statement that after separation/divorce children should always stay with their mother.
- ♂ However, 58% of men felt that family law upholds the rights of women more than men.

- ♂ Most men felt that they should be more proactive about attending to their health - nearly three quarters felt that men's lives would be better if they looked after themselves more. Despite this, 60% of respondents still saw going to the pub as a good way to relax. There was also general disagreement with the notion of only going to the doctor when there is something seriously wrong. However, there was no obvious consensus as to whether or not Health Services take men's health seriously.
- ♂ Worryingly, although the vast majority of men disagreed that sometimes suicide is the only escape from life's problems, 17% showed some agreement.
- ♂ While men generally supported the idea of being in a relationship, there was acknowledgement of some of the problems that this may bring:
 - 42% of men felt that women don't understand them
 - Over three quarters (77%) of respondents agreed that some men are abused by their partners
- ♂ Attitudes to the statement "being gay or bisexual is as natural as being straight" were very mixed, with 38% showing some agreement, 18% being undecided, and 44% showing some disagreement.
- ♂ Men acknowledged that they need emotional support:
 - Nearly three quarters of men disagreed that men need less emotional support than women
 - 86% disagreed that men shouldn't ask for help even if they've got a problem
- ♂ Respondents agreed that support was needed from other men, other fathers, and men's groups - as well as from religion.
- ♂ There was strong agreement that support services are geared towards women.
- ♂ It was felt that men can, at times, be their own worst enemy - 73% of respondents felt that men use their power to threaten each other.
- ♂ There was overwhelming support (87%) for the statement that men should be involved in improving their local community.
- ♂ This report recommends strategies and highlights potential areas which need to be addressed if men's work and issues are to be positively supported in the future.
- ♂ The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey Team have decided to build upon the findings in this report and have included a "Men's Life and Times" module in their 2000 survey. Results will be available before summer 2001 at www.qub.ac.uk/nilt
- ♂ This report is available in Portable Document Format (PDF) for free downloading from the internet at: www.mensproject.org/tmlatts.html