

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Personal Profile

This section reports on responses from the Personal Profile/Information section of the questionnaire. Frequency tables can be found in Appendix 2.

Responses were obtained from 632 men. Respondents lived throughout Ireland, with 492 living in Northern Ireland (79%) and 136 coming from the Republic (21%). 72% of respondents were urban dwellers (living in a city or town) while 28% were rural dwellers (from either a village or the countryside).

The vast majority (76%) of men were in the 19-49 year old age bracket. However, 9% were 15-18 years, 13% were 50-59 years, 2% were 60-69 and 1% were aged over 70.

In terms of sexual orientation, 94% identified themselves as being straight/heterosexual, 4% as being gay/homosexual, and 2% as being bisexual. Regardless of orientation, 34% of men said they were single. 59% of men were in a relationship or married, 6% were separated or divorced and less than 1% were widowed.

Although most questions had at least a few missing responses, this was only a major issue in the one which asked how many children/stepchildren the respondent had. Only 499 men answered this question, with nearly half of these (48%) reporting that they had no children. It could probably be assumed that many men who did not answer this question also did not have any children and overlooked it as irrelevant without seeing that the zero option was offered. 39% of all the males had 1-3 children, while 13% said they had four or more.

Household structure among the respondents was quite diverse. 16% of men lived alone, while others lived in various settings: with parents, with partner, with partner and children, with children only, or in shared accommodation with others.

The employment status of respondents varied greatly. The majority of men (69%) were employed or self employed (no distinction was made for the purposes of this survey) and 10% of men were unemployed. 9% of respondents were students, with a further 3% currently undertaking a training course. 3% of men were retired and 5% were out of work because of long-term health problems. Two men were full time carers.

The number of responses to the perceived background section was high - only 3% of men did not wish to answer this question. 48% of men said they came from the Roman Catholic community, 32% came from the Protestant community and a further 2% of respondents were from another religious community. 15% of men said that they belonged to no religious community.

The final question in this section asked if the respondents completed the questionnaire on their own or with the help of someone else. Only 2% of men required the help of someone else.

These results show that the 632 men questioned came from a wide range of backgrounds in terms of age, relationships, location, identity (religious and sexual), economic status, children and household structure. Although no form of structured sampling technique was used, the relatively large sample size and variety of circumstances identified means that the survey can be seen as being fairly representative of most groups of men in the north of Ireland.

## 3.2 Statements

This section of the questionnaire presented forty questions on a wide range of topics. Respondents were asked to state how they felt about these using a five point scale which ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Because of the small number of respondents, this section does not generally quote figures for men aged 70+, widowers, men from an 'other' background, men who did not wish to answer the background question and bisexual men. Where base numbers are less than 100, actual percentages are not quoted.

### Q1 *Real men don't cry*

- There was very strong disagreement with this statement: half the respondents strongly disagreed while more than another quarter disagreed.
- Younger men (15-19) were more likely to be undecided (12%) and, while there was broad disagreement, only 42% of them strongly disagreed.
- Over two thirds of gay men strongly disagreed and only one gay man showed any agreement with this statement.
- Single men were also more likely to be undecided (15%) and less likely to strongly disagree, than men in relationships or men who were married, separated or divorced.
- Two fifths of men with no children strongly disagreed with this, compared to three fifths of men with children. However, this may be related to age and/or marital status.
- Men in employment and unemployed men were more likely to strongly disagree than men not in the labour force.
- Nearly two thirds of men from no religious community strongly disagreed with the statement. Catholic men were more likely to strongly disagree than Protestant men.

### Q2 *Men can care for children equally as well as women*

- There was strong support for this statement - 71% of men strongly agreed or agreed.
- Older men (aged 50-69) were less likely than other age groups to agree and 21% of them were undecided.
- Gay men were more definite in their attitudes to this statement - only 4 disagreed in any way and none were undecided - while 14% of straight men were undecided.
- As might be expected (since these are the group most likely to be affected by custody and access issues) three fifths of separated or divorced men strongly agreed. Only 2 disagreed.
- Attitudes among men in employment and men not in the labour force were more diverse than among unemployed men. Unemployed men were the least likely of these three groups to agree: 40% compared to 60% of men in employment and 50% of men not in the labour force.
- However, Catholic and Protestant men showed a similar pattern of response.
- Surprisingly, having children made no difference to men's views.

### Q3 *The media portray men in a negative way*

- This statement was obviously difficult to answer and over one third of respondents were undecided. 40% showed some support and 25% disagreed in some form.
- This pattern was reflected among most groups - although young men (15-29 year olds), straight men, single men, men with no children and men not in the labour force were more likely than men in other categories to be undecided.

#### **Q4 Men and women should always be treated equally**

- There was unequivocal support for this statement. More than two thirds (68%) of men strongly agreed, with another 14% agreeing.
- Gay and bisexual men showed more support than straight men - only one bisexual man and two gay men disagreed.
- More than four fifths of men who were separated or divorced strongly agreed with this statement compared to around two thirds of single men or men in a relationship/married.
- Catholic men agreed more strongly with this statement than Protestant men, although levels of disagreement and non-decision were fairly equal.

#### **Q5 *The man should be the chief breadwinner in a household***

- Support for this was very low - less than two fifths (18%) showed any agreement. Nearly two thirds (66%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Levels of agreement rose by age: a quarter of men in the 50-69 year old age group agreed or strongly agreed with this statement compared with 15% of young men. However, over one fifth of respondents in the 15-29 year old age group were undecided.
- While the general trends among rural and urban men were similar, rural men were more likely to simply disagree rather than strongly disagree.
- This pattern was similar between straight and gay men, with gay men much more likely to strongly disagree than disagree. Almost all bisexual men strongly disagreed.
- Single men were much more undecided than other men. Nearly three quarters of men who were separated or divorced (66%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Attitudes among unemployed men were mixed: whilst 15% of them strongly agreed, 24% of them were undecided and 33% strongly disagreed. The corresponding figures for men in employment were 7%, 13% and 42%.
- Attitudes among Protestant men were also mixed - nearly a quarter agreed in some way, 22% were undecided and 29% strongly disagreed. The views of Catholic men and men from no religious community were more definite in their lack of support for the statement.

#### **Q6 *Hard men are given a lot of respect in our community***

- Attitudes to this statement varied a lot: 40% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, and 47% strongly disagreed or disagreed.
- While the general trends were similar among all age groups, those aged 50-69 were more likely to agree rather than strongly agree and to disagree rather than strongly disagree.
- Single men agreed more with this statement, as did men with no children.
- Men in employment disagreed much more than unemployed men and men not in the labour force.
- 31% of Catholic men strongly disagreed, compared to 19% of Protestant men and 23% of men from no religious community.

#### **Q7 *Religion can be a source of comfort and support for men***

- Half of the respondents agreed to some degree with this statement, although 29% were undecided.
- Younger men were more undecided (around one third) and less likely to agree.
- More rural than urban men agreed with this, while urban men were more undecided.
- Gay men showed less support than straight men.
- Men in relationships/married men agreed more than others and were less undecided.
- More definite support came from men not in the labour force.
- Results among Catholic and Protestant men were almost identical. Interestingly, over one third of men from no religious community agreed.

**Q8 Male friends should feel free to show physical affection to each other**

- Approximately half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this. 20% were undecided.
- Agreement was especially strong among gay and bisexual men, and among men from no religious community.

**Q9 You should only go to the doctor when there is something seriously wrong**

- Three fifths of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with this and 9% were undecided. Only one third agreed in some way.
- Results among all the different groups showed similar trends.

**Q10 Going to the pub is a good way to relax**

- Six out of ten respondents viewed this statement positively and 23% had a negative view.
- Support was strongest among the 15-29 year old age group - 38% strongly agreed.
- Views among gay men were more mixed.
- Single men agreed very strongly, as did men with no children.

**Q11 After separation/divorce, children should stay with their mother**

- Just over half the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this and another third were undecided.
- Unsurprisingly, separated or divorced men disapproved of this statement - 40% strongly disagreed. 39% of single men were undecided.
- Having children did not seem to make a difference to views on the statement.

**Q12 It's good to show your sensitive side**

- Over three quarters (77%) of men supported this statement and, while only 8% supported it, 15% were undecided.
- This pattern was consistent across all groups of men, although younger men, men without children, Protestant men and men not in the labour force were more likely to be undecided.
- Men from no religious community were very convinced that it's good to show your sensitive side - 51% strongly agreed and 35% agreed. Only 4% expressed any negative views.
- Bisexual men were less likely to agree than straight or gay men.

**Q13 Women don't understand men**

- Feelings were mixed about this statement, with 42% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 31% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 27% undecided.
- Younger men tended to agree more than older men.
- Gay men were more likely not to believe this statement than straight men.
- Not surprisingly, 29% of separated/divorced men strongly agreed with this statement and another 32% agreed. However, 24% were still undecided. Only 16% showed any disagreement.
- Unemployed men were more undecided on this matter (34%).
- A quarter of Protestant men disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement, as did 37% of men from no religious community.

**Q14 *Work experience is more important than education when getting a job***

- Attitudes were mixed. Almost equal numbers agreed/strongly agreed as disagreed/strongly disagreed (36% compared to 38%). 26% were undecided.
- 42% of men in the 50-69 year old age group had negative views on this.
- Unemployed men showed more support (43%) and less indecision (21%), while men not in the labour force showed more disagreement (40%).

**Q15 *It's good to talk to other men about personal problems***

- Whilst support was strong (65% of men agreed or strongly agreed), 23% of men were still undecided.
- 31% of men in the 30-49 year old age group strongly agreed and only 12% showed any kind of disagreement.
- Eight out of ten gay men supported this idea compared to just over six out of ten straight men.
- Separated/divorced men were much more supportive of this idea (82%), while single men were much more undecided.
- 43% of unemployed men strongly agreed, compared to 26% of men in employment and 23% of men not in the labour force.
- Although a slight majority of Protestant men were in favour of this statement (57%), this is less than for Catholic men (66%) and men from no religious community (76%).

**Q16 *Men can be discriminated against because they are men***

- There was a lot of support for this statement - 61% strongly agreed or agreed.
- A further 21% were undecided.

**Q17 *Support services are geared towards women***

- Two thirds of men agreed/strongly agreed with this and only 16% disagreed in some way.
- Young men (15-29 years) were more undecided about this statement (24%) than other groups, as were urban men in relation to rural men (21% and 15% respectively).
- One third of gay men were unsure about their attitudes to the statement.
- Men who were separated or divorced felt strongly about this issue - 42% strongly agreed and a further 40% agreed. Only 5% disagreed.

**Q18 *Men's lives would be better if they looked after themselves more***

- Nearly three quarters of all men replying to the questionnaire supported this idea (73%). Approximately equal numbers were undecided or disagreed in some way.
- Younger men were less sure - only 60% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 84% of men in the 50-69 year old age group.
- Support was particularly strong among men who were separated or divorced - 42% strongly agreed compared to 30% of single men.
- Men not in the labour force were more mixed in their attitudes - 63% agreed/strongly agreed, 21% were undecided and 16% disagreed/strongly disagreed.

### **Q19 Talking about your feelings is OK**

- There was unequivocal support for this statement - half the respondents strongly agreed and another 36% agreed. Only 7% disagreed in any way.
- This was a general trend across all groups. However, gay men, men who were separated or divorced, men with children, unemployed men and men from no religious community showed slightly stronger agreement than other groups.

### **Q20 Being gay or bisexual is as natural as being straight**

- Attitudes to this statement were very mixed: equal amounts (19%) agreed and strongly agreed, 18% were undecided, 18% disagreed and 26% strongly disagreed.
- Attitudes among the different age groups were quite similar, although 32% of men aged 50-69 agreed/strongly agreed, compared to 44% of men in the 30-49 year old age group. However, all the men aged 70 and over disagreed in some way.
- Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of gay and bisexual men strongly agreed with this statement, although three men disagreed or strongly disagreed. None were undecided.
- Over one third of men who were separated or divorced were unsure, compared to 15% of men who were in relationships or married.
- Men with children were less likely to support this view than men without children (36% compared to 45%), as were men not in the labour force compared to men who were unemployed (35% compared to 46%).
- The largest disapproval for this statement came from Protestant men - 40% of whom strongly disagreed and 24% disagreed. Only 23% agreed in any way. In contrast, 45% of men with no religious community strongly agreed, 20% agreed and only 14% disagreed in any way. Attitudes of Catholic men fell between these two positions.

### **Q21 Football is a man's sport**

- Men had mixed views about this statement, with nearly a half (48%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 34% agreed in some way.
- Among the different age groups, the highest level of support came from men aged 50-69: 43% of whom were in support of the statement. In comparison, only 20% of men aged 30-49 supported it.
- More than half the gay men had negative views on this statement and only a quarter showed some support.
- In contrast, 41% of men not in the labour force agreed or strongly agreed.
- A majority of men from no religious community (58%) disagreed in some way. Protestant men were more likely to agree than men from Catholic, other, or no religious background.

### **Q22 It's more acceptable for a man to sleep around than a woman**

- Exactly half the respondents disagreed to some degree with this statement and 15% were undecided.
- 44% of men in the 50-69 year old age group strongly disagreed with this statement, with a further 17% disagreeing.
- Rural men showed more disagreement than urban men, while gay men showed more disagreement than straight men.
- Exactly half the bisexual men strongly agreed and half strongly disagreed.
- Views among single men were very mixed and 20% were undecided. However, more than half the men who were separated/divorced (55%) disagreed in some way and only 8% were undecided.
- Attitudes among Catholic and Protestant men were quite similar, while men with no religious community showed more disagreement. 46% strongly disagreed and 18% disagreed. Only 5% were undecided.

*[Note: Several respondents were not sure if the question was asking if they, personally, thought it was more acceptable for a man to sleep around or whether society, in generally, viewed it as more acceptable]*

### **Q23 *Sometimes suicide is the only escape from life's problems***

- Attitudes to this question were quite definite - only 9% were undecided. There were strong negative feelings towards this statement: 59% strongly disagreed and a further 15% disagreed. Worryingly, 8% strongly agreed and 9% agreed.
- Views among men of different age groups were quite similar, although younger men (15-29 year olds) tended to be more undecided than men aged 50-69. However, men in the oldest age group (70 and over) were almost unanimous: five out of these six men strongly disagreed.
- Groups more likely to show agreement included men who were separated or divorced (24%), unemployed men (32%) and men from no religious community (23%).
- In particular, two fifths of gay men and half the bisexual men expressed some agreement.

### **Q24 *It's useful for fathers to talk to other fathers***

- Approximately four out of five men agreed to some degree with this statement, with only 8% disagreeing in some way.
- There was little difference by age group, location or sexual orientation.
- Single men were more ambiguous in their views - 23% were undecided. In contrast, men who were separated or divorced showed almost unanimous support (84%) and only 3% were undecided.
- Men with children were particularly positive - 51% strongly agreed and a further 36% agreed. Men with no children were less supportive of the idea and 17% were undecided.
- Men who were unemployed or not in the labour force were slightly less supportive and more undecided than men in employment.

### **Q25 *It's harder to be seen as a "real man" if you are disabled***

- Feelings were mixed on this issue - 48% agreed or strongly agreed and 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 17% were undecided.
- Younger men supported this statement less than men in the older age groups, but were more likely to be undecided.
- The attitudes of gay men were more definite, with only one man being undecided. Approximately the same number of gay men agreed as disagreed.
- Nearly two thirds of men who were separated or divorced agreed in some part with this statement and only 24% disagreed.
- A majority (57%) of men from no religious community also agreed and only 6% were undecided.

### **Q26 *Men should be involved in improving their local community***

- There was very strong support for this statement - over half the men (54%) interviewed strongly agreed and another 33% agreed. Only 4% disagreed in any way.
- There were no major differences when analysed by the background variables.

### **Q27 *Men need less emotional support than women***

- Almost two thirds of men expressed some disagreement with this statement. Only 21% showed any kind of agreement and 14% were undecided.
- Younger men were slightly more undecided than other age groups, but the general trend was the same.
- Nearly nine out of ten gay and bisexual men disagreed.
- Men who are in a relationship or married were more likely to express some level of disagreement than men in other marital status groups.

- Men in employment were also more likely to express disagreement than men not in the labour force (68% compared to 54%). However, over one fifth (22%) of the latter group were undecided.
- The greatest level of disagreement was expressed by men from no religious community - 83% disagreed in some way and only 12% supported the statement. In contrast, 57% of Protestant men disagreed in some way and 23% expressed some level of agreement.

**Q28 *Men use their power to threaten each other***

- Nearly three quarters (73%) of men agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Younger men, urban men and gay men were more likely to agree with this statement than older, rural or straight men. However, rural men were more likely to be older.
- It is interesting that nearly half of the unemployed men strongly agreed with this statement compared to one third of all men.
- Background or having children seemed to make little difference to the response given.

**Q29 *There's a lot of pressure on men to behave in a certain way***

- 73% of men agreed to some degree with this statement, with little variation by age group.
- Urban men were more likely to agree than rural men (76% compared to 66%).
- Nearly all gay men (21 out of 24) agreed or strongly agreed - and most of these strongly agreed.
- Over two thirds of separated or divorced men strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q30 *It's better to be on your own than in a relationship***

- There was strong disagreement with this statement by 40% of respondents. Over two thirds either disagreed or strongly disagreed - less than one in ten showed any agreement.
- Older men (50-69) were less likely to be undecided than other age groups and 48% strongly disagreed.
- Straight men disagreed more than gay men.
- As may be expected, separated or divorced men were more likely to agree than single men or men in a relationship or married. However, over a quarter (29%) of single men were undecided, as were men with no children (28%) - although these are likely to be the same people.

**Q31 *Straight, gay and bisexual men should all be treated equally***

- There was large-scale support for this statement: over two thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (with 46% strongly agreeing).
- The age group most likely to strongly agree with this was the 30-49 year old group (51%).
- Unremarkably, eight out of ten gay and bisexual men strongly agreed with this compared to four out of ten straight men.
- Separated and divorced men were less likely to disagree/strongly disagree with this statement than single men or men who are married or in a relationship.
- Religious background seemed to influence the responses to this statement: 47% of men from a Roman Catholic background strongly agreed with this compared to 29% of men from a Protestant background. 12% of men from a Roman Catholic background disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 34% of men from a Protestant background.

### **Q32 *Sometimes you don't do things in case you fail***

- Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents strongly agreed with this statement and two fifths (40%) agreed. Only 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- The three age groups had fairly similar patterns of agreement, although the 50-69 year olds were less likely to strongly agree.
- Unemployed men were more likely to be in agreement and less likely to be undecided than those in employment or not in the labour force.

### **Q33 *Family law upholds the rights of women more than men***

- Nearly three fifths (58%) of men agreed or strongly agreed with this - with over half of these strongly agreeing (30%). However, 28% were undecided.
- The youngest age group were less likely to strongly agree, followed by the 50-69 year olds. However, nearly one third of the youngest age group (32%) were undecided. This, perhaps, reflects that the 30-49 year old age group were those with most knowledge (direct or hearsay) of family law.
- Nearly half of the gay men were undecided compared to just over a quarter of straight men.
- Unsurprisingly, over half of the separated/divorced men (55%) strongly agreed and another 24% agreed. None were undecided.
- 38% of men with children strongly agreed. 36% of men without children were undecided compared to 22% of men with children.

### **Q34 *Nursing is a good career for a man***

- Nearly two thirds (65%) of men agreed with this, although 23% were undecided.
- The youngest age group was less likely to agree (22%) than the other two large age groups (both around 29%).
- No gay men disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, although 24% were undecided.
- Separated/divorced men were nearly twice as likely to strongly agree with this statement than single men.
- Whilst 30% of men from a Roman Catholic background strongly agreed that nursing is a good career for a man, only 18% of men from a Protestant background thought so. However, the latter group were more likely to be undecided.

### **Q35 *Some men are abused by their partners***

- Over three quarters (77%) of men agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only 6% of men disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- There was little difference by age group, although the youngest age group was less likely to strongly agree and more likely to be undecided than the other groups.
- Straight men were more likely to be undecided than gay men, as were men from a Protestant background compared with those from a Roman Catholic background.

### **Q36 *A man gets stick if he doesn't drink alcohol in the pub***

- Responses to this question were quite mixed - 43% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 39% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Age group had a definite effect upon response: 49% of 15-29 year olds agreed or strongly agreed compared to 32% of 50-69 year olds. 11% of the former age group were undecided compared to 23% of the latter.
- Gay men were more likely to support this statement and less likely to be undecided than straight men.
- Around one quarter of men (24%) not in the labour force agreed/strongly agreed, while only 12% of men in employment did.

**Q37 "Men's Groups" are only for weak and sappy men**

- There was little support for this statement: only 15% of men agreed or strongly agreed, while 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Out of the three large age groups, the strongest disagreement came from the oldest group: 46% for 50-69 year olds compared to 40% of 15-29 year olds.
- More than half of gay men strongly disagreed.
- However, more than half the unemployed men strongly disagreed compared with just over a third of men not in the labour force.
- Men from a Roman Catholic background were more likely to disagree/strongly disagree (73%) than men from a Protestant background (65%).

**Q38 It's more difficult for men to take on traditional female roles than vice-versa**

- Over half the respondents (53%) agreed/strongly agreed (20% strongly agreed) while a quarter disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- More than one quarter of younger men (15-29 years), single men and men with no children were undecided (28%, 28% and 27% respectively). However, the younger men were also more likely to be single and/or have no children.
- Men from a Protestant background were more likely to agree/strongly agree (59%) than men from a Catholic background (49%).

**Q39 Men's health is not taken seriously by the Health Services**

- There was a mixed response to this statement: 36% of men agreed/strongly agreed and 40% disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- Older men (50-69) were much less likely to be undecided than men in the younger categories. Only 23% of men in the 15-29 year old age group agreed/strongly agreed compared to 44% of men aged 50-69.
- Over a third of gay men were undecided about this statement.
- Over one fifth of men who were separated or divorced strongly agreed with this compared to 13% of men overall.

**Q40 Men shouldn't ask for help even if they've got a problem**

Only 10% of men showed any sort of support for this statement and 86% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This trend was reflected across all categories.

### 3.3 Discussion by themes

At the outset of this study, The Male Link Research Sub-Group identified eleven themes and categorised the questions under these, as shown in the table below. However, this classification is not definitive - some statements could easily fit under a number of headings. This section gives a brief overview of the results within the framework of these themes.

Themes	Relevant Statements
1. Emotions and Feelings	1, 12, 19, 32
2. Employment and Education	14, 34
3. Equality	4, 16, 31
4. Family	2, 5, 11, 33
5. Health: Mental and Physical	9, 18, 23, 39
6. Leisure	10, 21, 36
7. Masculine Identity	25, 28, 38
8. Relationships	8, 13, 30, 35
9. Sexuality	20, 22
10. Society	3, 6, 26, 29
11. Support	7, 15, 17, 24, 27, 37, 40

#### Theme 1: Emotions and feelings

This theme explored four statements relating to emotions and feelings - traditionally viewed as a 'no go' area for men.

Results from three of the statements (Q1, Q12 and Q19) would suggest that there is strong support among men for being in touch with and expressing their feelings. Interestingly, younger men tended to be more unsure about this issue. In contrast, gay men, men with children and men from no religious community were extremely supportive.

However, despite endorsing being in touch with their feelings, responses to the final statement in this group (Q32) showed that most men still have a deep fear of failure.

#### Theme 2: Employment and education

This theme included two statements: Q14 and Q34. Attitudes to both these statements were mixed and approximately one quarter of respondents to each question were undecided. It is interesting that unemployed men showed more support for the value of work experience than employed men and men not in the labour force.

However, although many respondents felt that nursing is a good career for a man, results from statement 38 (discussed in Theme 7: Masculine identity) show that more than half the respondents felt that it is more difficult for men to take on traditional female roles than vice-versa.

#### Theme 3: Equality

This theme consisted of three statements (Q4, Q16 and Q31) which explored the idea of equality - both in terms of between the sexes and on the grounds of sexual orientation. Generally, there was a definite feeling that all people should be treated equally whether male or female, straight, gay or bisexual.

In terms of sex equality, more separated or divorced men supported the concept of sexual equality than single or married men. It would be interesting to know if they thought that it was men or women who were the group being treated unequally. However, given the responses to the statement that men can be discriminated against because they are men, and also to Q33 (family law upholds the rights of women more than men), many men probably see themselves as the party being unfairly treated.

There was strong support for the view that straight, gay and bisexual men should all be treated equally. However, this was one area where religious background had a strong influence on responses - Catholic men were much more likely to agree than Protestant men.

#### **Theme 4: Family**

This theme centred on the family - especially in relation to children - and included Q2, Q5, Q11 and Q33. Attitudes to these statements would suggest that the traditional image of the man as the breadwinner and the woman as the childminder was not supported.

There was strong support for the view that men can care for children equally as well as women. This attitude was especially strongly held by men who were separated or divorced. However, there was less clear consensus about whether children should stay with their mother after separation or divorce. Having said this, over half the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that this should always be the case and a further third were undecided.

However, despite men's feeling that they can look after children as well as women can, and with limited support for the idea that children should stay with their mother in the event of separation/divorce, there was still a definite belief that family law upholds the rights of women more than men. This perception was held by almost three fifths of men with a further 28% being undecided. This has far-reaching policy implications.

#### **Theme 5: Health: mental and physical**

This theme is currently very topical and, again, has pertinent policy implications. Three out of the four constituent statements (Q9, Q18 and Q39) explored men's use and experience of health services.

Overall, there was a very strong view across all groups that men should look after themselves more and, as part of this, that they should also visit their doctor for "non-serious" complaints. However, younger men were less sure than men in the 50-69 year old age group. This may reflect their lack of life experience.

Despite this positive endorsement for looking after themselves, there was some feeling that men's health is not taken seriously by the Health Services. However, quite a few men were undecided.

Although there was a strong negative reaction to the statement that "Sometimes suicide is the only escape from life's problems" (Q23), it is worrying that 17% replied positively to some degree with a further 9% being undecided. It would be useful to know if this is due, in some part, to the perceived lack of interest in men by health and support services.

## **Theme 6: Leisure**

Three statements (Q10, Q21 and Q36) fell into the theme of Leisure; two of which focused on the “traditional” male pastime of going to the pub. Most men viewed going to the pub as a good way to relax, with strongest support coming from the 15-29 year old age group. However, responses to the statement that “a man gets stuck if he doesn't drink alcohol in the pub” were more varied - with nearly equal numbers showing agreement and disagreement. Younger men and gay men were more likely to support this statement. These figures, therefore, highlight a source of societal pressure upon men i.e. that going to the pub is a “good thing” and that a man should prove himself by drinking alcohol while he is there. In the future, it would be interesting to explore who applies this pressure.

The third statement within this theme relates to “football is a man's sport”. This, again, relates to the idea of men's “traditional” pastimes. The views expressed were mixed. However, there are two ways that participants may have interpreted this question: the first implies that only men should play football and the second implies that all men should be interested in football. Either way, respondents seemed to have no fixed attitudes to this statement.

## **Theme 7: Masculine identity**

This theme included questions on what it means to be male or masculine in today's society (Q25, Q28 and Q38). Respondents were divided about how hard it is for a disabled man to be regarded as a “real man” - although nearly half agreed that it was difficult and 17% were undecided. Furthermore, over half the respondents were in support of the idea that it is more difficult for men to take on traditional female roles than vice-versa.

These responses suggest that there are at least some pre-conceived ideas within society of what a man is/should be and that changing from these may be difficult. This is compounded by the fact that nearly three quarters of the men completing the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that men use their power to threaten each other.

## **Theme 8: Relationships**

This theme explored the issue of relationships - both sexual and platonic. The responses broadly show that men do not want to be alone, but recognise some of the inherent problems of relationships.

There was strong disagreement with the statement that “it's better to be on your own than in a relationship” (Q30). Less than 10% showed any form of agreement. Furthermore, the responses to Question 8 suggest that there is considerable support for the idea that male friends should feel free to show physical affection to each other.

However, against this support for relationships, is the acknowledgement that some men are abused by their partners (Q35). Over three quarters of men agreed in some way with this statement.

Approximately four of out of ten men agreed or strongly agreed that women don't understand men (Q13). Younger men were most likely to agree, while gay men and men of no religious community disagreed.

## Theme 9: Sexuality

This theme looked at two important - although unrelated - issues around men's sexuality i.e. "being gay or bisexual is as natural as being straight" (Q20), and "it's more acceptable for a man to sleep around than a woman" (Q22). Responses to the first of these were very mixed, with slightly more men disagreeing. There was some increase in disagreement with age. While Protestant men were very disapproving of this statement, men from no religious community had more positive reactions. Exactly half the respondents disagreed in some way with the second statement in this theme. Only bisexual men showed any strong agreement.

## Theme 10: Society

The four constituent statements of this theme (Q3, Q6, Q26 and Q29) explored men in society. The first of these examined if men think that the media portray them in a negative way. Over one third of respondents found this question difficult to answer and were undecided. However, 40% still showed some support. Attitudes to the second statement - "hard men are given a lot of respect in our community" - showed that almost the same number of respondents agreed as disagreed.

Responses indicated that men felt that there is a lot of pressure on them to behave in a certain way - nearly three quarters of them agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, there was extremely strong support for the idea that men should be involved in improving their local community.

These results suggest that men are feeling uncertain about their role and portrayal in society, and that there is a lot of pressure upon them to behave in a certain way. It is extremely interesting to note the almost unanimous agreement that men should be contributing more to improving the life of their locality.

## Theme 11: Support

This final theme - Support - was the largest and consisted of seven statements. The main focus was on the need for/sources of emotional support for men.

In terms of the need for support, nearly three quarters of men disagreed with the statement that "men need less emotional support than women" (Q27). This was a feature across all the different groups of men. There was even more unequivocal disagreement with the statement that "men shouldn't ask for help even if they've got a problem" (Q40). Having highlighted that men do need emotional support, and should be asking for this help, the next set of questions in this theme sought to identify sources of emotional support.

**Other men** were seen as possible support networks - nearly two thirds of men agreed that "it's good to talk to other men about personal problems" (Q15). Leading on from this, approximately four out of five men agreed, to some degree, that "it's useful for fathers to talk to **other fathers**" (Q24). Although half of the men interviewed agreed that "**religion** can be a source of comfort and support for men" (Q7), nearly 30% were undecided. Results varied by age, relationship status, location and sexual orientation - but not between Catholic and Protestant men. There was very little support for the idea that "**men's groups** are only for weak and sappy men" (Q37) - thus identifying another possible vehicle for emotional support. However, on the negative side, there was very strong agreement that "support services are geared towards women" (Q17). This perception needs to be addressed.

These responses suggest that men want and need to find support. Possible avenues are other men, other fathers, men's groups, and possibly religion. These would seem to endorse a "self-help" approach, perhaps due to the perceived lack of provision by external support services.

### 3.4 Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is a statistical technique which is used to identify relatively similar groups of respondents whose attributes are close enough that they tend to 'cluster' together. In this study, cluster analysis was used to try to identify 'clusters' of men whose attitudes were very similar. This usefully identified two groups of men: Cluster A and Cluster B. Since only one man was identified as being in Cluster C, this was omitted, as were the men who did not give responses to all statements (Q1 to Q40).

Category	Number of men
Cluster A	246
Cluster B	310
Cluster C	1
Missing	75

An exploration of the background variables for these two groups identified the following features:

Cluster A	Cluster B
More like to be Protestant	More likely to be Catholic or from no religious community
More likely to be single	More likely to be in a relationship/married or separated/divorced
More likely to live in a town or the country	More likely to live in a city
More likely to be straight No gay men	Less likely to be straight - all gay men were in this group
Most likely to be in young (15-18) age group or over 50	More likely to be aged 30-49
More likely to be retired or a student	More likely to be employed/self employed

This confirms some of the points arising from the previous analysis of results. For example, attitudes for single men, younger men and men with no children were very similar - presumably because younger men are more likely to be single. Similarly, as reflects the general population, Protestant men tended to be older than Catholic men.

Examination of the attitudes of these two clusters shows that members of Cluster A tended to be more undecided about their attitudes. For example, 28% of Cluster A were undecided about their opinion to statement 35 (i.e. "some men are abused by their partners"), compared to 9% of Cluster B. Although attitudes between the two clusters were often similar, they especially diverged in relation to attitudes to sexuality. While 59% of men in Cluster B agreed or strongly agreed to statement 20 (i.e. "being gay or bisexual is as natural as being straight"), 70% of men in Cluster A disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, this is probably because all gay men were within Cluster B. 42% of Cluster A also disagreed in some way that "men need less emotional support than women" (statement 27), compared to 83% of men in Cluster B.

### 3.5 Open Question Responses

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to submit any other comments about men's work/issues. In total, 139 respondents offered some additional information. This represents approximately 22% of the total number of participants. Most of these comments are listed in Appendix 3.

The submissions made can be categorised under three broad headings:

- 1) Congratulations to the organisers on breaking new ground by conducting this study (not included in Appendix 3).
- 2) Miscellaneous comments about the structure and focus of the questionnaire itself.
- 3) Personal experience/feelings about men's work, needs and issues.

The most dominant themes which arose under the last heading were the need for support for men and a desire for increased equality of treatment/opportunity between men and women. These comments accounted for over half of all responses tendered. Classifying the information submitted under the themes utilised in Section 3.3 of this report - and quoting some of the Open Question responses - reveals that:

#### Emotions and feelings

There was general agreement that men need to move towards being more open and accepting about displaying their emotions and feelings if they are to *"find inner peace and happiness"*. It was felt that to do this men need *"to have more self-expression"* and, as one respondent said, *"I learn to be closer to myself when I engage in a respectful way with other men. I reduce my alienation brought on through competition. I risk my vulnerability and challenge my myths about being a man"*. For the future, there was a hope that there would be *"more groups for emotional support and more understanding that men have feelings too that they bottle-up"*. There was also a recognition that *"90% of men do not grow up"*. However, although there was a *"hope that men move away from all that macho, violent shite"* there was also an acknowledgement that *"it's drummed into boys that it is sissy to talk about their feelings"*.

#### Employment and education

One person argued that *"Leaving Certs etc. appear more important to authorities than experience"* and that *"being male, and not having any particular career plans, has left me feeling helpless, especially regarding savings, pension plans, etc. I think it is assumed that once someone has been ushered through school that afterwards they suddenly become driven"*. It was also obvious for some respondents that *"many men need education on life issues"*.

The traditional view that *"people value men's wallets more than the man"* was challenged by one participant, while others suggested that *"men need more breaks in their working life"* and that *"men in work situations have no confidential service to discuss problems"*.

However, a number of respondents focused upon how men felt uncomfortable and/or discriminated against in the workplace e.g. *"men ... feel wary about their actions around female staff as this is often mistakenly labelled as harassment. Harassment laws are so vague and one-sided that once harassment is 'called' it is difficult to prove otherwise"* or *"in my last job I was in confrontation with female, single, feminist colleague and treated unfairly. Management didn't see my side. She was treated differently as she was female. I was portrayed as a trouble-maker and treated accordingly"*. Another man commented that *"nursing could be a good career for a man if the female ethos was challenged"*.

## Equality

There was general consensus that *“men and women should be treated as equally as possible”* and that *“it is very stupid separating men from women, because they are equal”*. This was argued by one person on the grounds that *“gender is a construction; men and women have much in common as humans”* and by another who said *“there should be less emphasis on either sex and more on people”*. This was seen to be the case since *“many real issues are of importance to men and women”* and there was a recognition that *“there is a role for both men’s and women’s groups, but they should coordinate and cooperate where appropriate”*. Equality should be real and, one person added, *“tokenism is fraud and counter-productive”*.

However, promoting equality issues was often seen as benefiting women only. Indeed, there was a strong sense among many respondents that *“society, as a whole, is being shaped more along feminine lines - often to the benefit of society, but undermining any sense that the male tradition is important too”*. It was stated that this may bring problems as *“there is a risk that positive discrimination in favour of women ... will lead to negative discrimination against men - particularly against those without the skills to represent themselves adequately”*.

There was a body of respondents who felt that men are unfairly treated:

- *“Very seldom has the law had compassion towards men and almost 90% of women get away with anything with a drop of crocodile tears”*.
- *“When it comes to being homeless, women will be helped more as it is okay for men as they are tough. That is the abuse of most government departments”*.
- *“I wish the legal profession would recognise men as human beings with rights and feelings, and would give them their human rights”*.
- *“There should be the same provisions made for the problems of males as those of females”*.

This sense of inequality was also exacerbated by the feeling that *“despite campaigning for equality, I feel many women who are involved in ‘women’s groups’ resent ‘men’s groups’ of any description”*.

## Family

Many men recognised the significance of their role as fathers although there was also an acknowledgement that some men might not fully appreciate their responsibilities: *“I feel that men do not realise how important it is being a father to their children”*.

There was, however, a strong sense that men need support and equal treatment within the family arena if they are to play a fully involved part in the development of their children. This was reflected in comments such as: *“there is a disparity between maternity and paternity leave. I would hope there is an increase in the minimum wage, paternity leave and a reduction in the number of working hours. I also would like to see the needs of single male parents acknowledged”* ... *“Unmarried men need more advice about their paternity rights”* ... *“I feel strongly about Paternity Leave which isn’t long enough”* ... *“Men should have more family law rights”* ...

## Health and leisure

The themes of Health and Leisure have been merged to reflect the nature of the comments which tended to associate these two strands. Overall, there was a sense that men need to/should look after their health more. However, there was also a recognition that men, themselves, must take some responsibility for this change and that information/structures need to be put in place to support this development. Typical comments included:

- “Men can be encouraged to 'shut up and get on with it' and not deal with any problems. This needs to be addressed for men to develop a sense of well being”.
- *“Need more men's groups, particularly promoting healthy life. Use leisure activities to improve general fitness/health. Need support services aimed at men. Men should take more interest in health, working together/sharing problems”.*
- *“Men do not go for regular cancer tests like women. There are many men under stress at work and home with very little help/guidance. Most magazines relate to women's issues not men's. Stress and suicide should be talked about openly to men and male teenagers”.*
- *“Doctors don't have hours on the weekend, so if we want to see one, we need to take time off work and we lose money. I think that this may keep many people from going to the doctor”.*
- *“There are plenty of Well Women's Clinics. What about a Well Man's Clinic?”*
- *“Men do not know there is so much help out there available to them unless they have a drink or drug problem. They keep it in to themselves. If it was better known it would help” ...*

## **Masculine identity**

Overall, there was consensus that things should change/are changing for men in terms of how they see masculinity. This was articulated by one person as: *“the attitudes of men are constantly changing for the better: they are wheeling prams, taking children for a walk or to/from school. This would have happened very little in the past. I feel that men have come a long way, but have a long way to go”.* Another person recognised this development, but also sought to attribute some rationale to how some men get a sense of role/place: *“a lot of Irish rural males are what their mother made them - mother stayed at home and did all the cooking and cleaning. Current males are being taught differently”.*

Others recognised the problems that ‘traditional masculinity’ may present: *“men are slow to trust. They are taught from an early age what not to be. Feminine things are labelled as such”.* Simultaneously, others pointed out that even within this structure, not all males are seen as equal: *“disabled men are seen as being less than other men and come out bottom of the pile”.* However, there were also some positive messages for the future: *“hopefully one day all men will show tolerance and understanding instead of discrimination and aggression as a means to solve a problem”.*

## **Relationships**

Although one person commented that *“I hope that men and women will look at each other with respect in the future”*, the vast majority of feedback requested more empathy and support for men in the area of relationships:

- *“Disabled men need more support with regard to relationships and other issues”.*
- *“Men can always look secure on the outside, but inside the hurt is always the same as a woman's. I am especially worried about my current relationship breaking up. It's not just women that worry about those things.*
- *“Men should have more support in marriage break-ups. They are not always at fault, but in most cases come out worse and lose homes and children. It seems that the law takes the side of women. Social services are biased when dealing with marriage problems”.*
- *“If a man hits a woman it's assault. If a woman hits a man it's funny. This is the common view of violence in a relationship. Cases are biased in favour of females as they are seen as the ‘weaker sex’. Yet males can be physically and mentally battered by their partner too”.*

## Sexuality

Only two respondents commented upon this area. One saw being gay as *“a regrettable reality in the genes and these persons should be treated with respect”* while the other, even more offensively, suggested that *“all gays and bisexuals should be killed”*.

## Society

One person pointed out that: *“our beliefs/attitudes are influenced by this sexist/racist society”*, while another suggested a way in which this might be remedied: *“leadership among key/visible/media men would help many others to break the mould”*. This desire for change in the way society perceives/treats men was echoed by a number of respondents through comments such as: *“hard men shouldn't be given a lot of respect in the community. Sadly, they are”* and *“in the future I would like to see men not seen as the bane of all problems - social, family, cultural and family break-up”*.

A number of hopes for the future were also articulated:

- *“I hope men will become better able to deal with domestic and social problems and will be supported by the community in which they live”*.
- *“I hope that society becomes more fair and that community groups become more male-friendly”*.
- *“I hope men show more social responsibility and self awareness”*.
- *“As young man, I feel society needs to address men's issues - men in marriage, as a father figure, in the workplace ... When the general public are mature enough to know the answers the human balance can be restored”*.

## Support

This area attracted the vast majority of comments. As one person put it: *“everybody, male or female, needs support at some time - should it be a group or a single person”*. Yet, there was also a recognition of how difficult it is for men to admit this: *“asking for help can be frightening as well as humiliating. It takes a brave person to admit that something is wrong and an even braver one to change things. We should be less ready to ridicule and more willing to support those men who want fuller lives”*. However, there was also a definite sense that this support is, at best, unpublicised and, at worst, missing for men. This was reflected in statements such as:

- *“The only support groups that I know of are for men with problems”*.
- *“There is not enough support available to men and, if there is, it should be better advertised. There should be easier access to information on men's groups”*.
- *“Need more support geared specifically at men”*.
- *“The support available for men needs be promoted more and made public. The more we see and hear about these issues the easier it will be to talk about them”*.
- *“Men's groups - I have never heard of any. Where are they? What are they?” ...*

This frustration was accentuated by a sense that more support is available to/geared towards women: *“support groups e.g. bereavement counselling post-miscarriage are very much geared towards the woman - to the detriment of the male partner” ... “the female ethos, from personal experience, has deeply permeated ante-natal classes. Men should be included in a more supportive way”*.

A huge amount of respondents referred to men's groups as the main vehicle to deliver the support that they needed. One person asserted that *"men's groups do exist, but they're often dressed in different ways e.g. rugby/soccer clubs and teams; Masons; Orange/Hibernian Orders etc. These reflect a need for men to bond"*. However, many others felt that specifically designed men's groups could offer positive change such as: *"challenge traditional male behaviour" ... "bring men's issues to the forefront and bring equality to society and to the matrimonial law framework" ... "release anger and resentment which otherwise wouldn't be dealt with which can create havoc later" ... "act as an alternative to going to pubs or becoming a couch potato" ... "be a useful forum to share and listen to the views of others" ... "provide an outlet for personal/family problems" ... "give men a chance to express themselves and talk openly to each other" ... "provide a means of support and political lobbying" ... "give an opportunity for like-minded men to discuss issues in a safe environment" ...* There was a strong sense that these groups must be backed by government and policy-makers.

However, other respondents saw some of the limitations of/stigma attached to men's groups:

- *"There should be a need for men's groups, rather than just setting them up for the sake of it"*.
- *"Men's groups are needed - but some get carried away with unimportant things"*.
- *"Men's groups are not productive unless targetting specific issues. Men's groups are perceived as wishy washy"*.
- *"Men's groups are useful in promoting male awareness, but can be seen as sissy"*.
- *"It's unrealistic to expect men to participate in groups with strangers - need to get to know/trust each other through activities in informal settings"*.
- *"A misconception of men's groups by some might be that they represent homosexuals"*.
- *"The term 'men's group' imparts a stigma. Why would a man join one? They're just what women do"*.
- *"Men's groups are needed, but their image is too effeminate"*.
- *"It is probably very important to have more male support workers within men's help groups to help overcome the strong negative stigma"*.
- *"As men do not talk to each other about their true feelings in the same way as women, it is doubtful they would use support groups" ...*

A few respondents were against the concept of men's groups on the basis that they may be *"Trojan Horses for the feminisation/marginalisation of men"* and that their *"group members are personally inadequate"*. Some of these people felt that men should be self-reliant and not seek external remedies or the help of a *"Nanny State which perpetuates passengers for society"*.