

REDC



Masculinity in today's world: Key Findings from our Monitor #2

February 2025



Against the backdrop of a shifting political and social landscape, we wanted to revisit our 2023 investigation of what Masculinity means in today's world



Results are broadly in line with 2023, however this phase reveals some interesting differences, particularly between age groups

METHODOLOGY

- Online survey in the UK
- Questionnaire included 10 statements and 3 open-ended questions for richer depth of results
- Fieldwork: 4th to 5th December 2024
- N=2,084 respondents: N=1,020 Men and N=1,056 Women
- Nationally representative sample (quotas on age, gender, region, SEG and ethnicity)
- ▲ and ▼ represent significant differences between subgroups with a confidence level of 95%

Key takeouts from this wave:

1

Younger men find it a **confusing time to be a man** as they struggle with social media, societal pressures and a strong friction between modern and 'traditional' representations of masculinity

2

We have continued to find a **gap in feeling represented on-screen** amongst men, particularly older ages. There is appetite for more authentic representation e.g. diversity of body shapes, regional accents, age etc

3

Most men believe that **social media is damaging society's perceptions of men**, whether linked to its impact on mental health or the harmful stereotypes shared online

4

Younger men in particular **struggle to talk about their feelings**, and are more likely to struggle with **mental health**

5

Finding a partner is perceived as difficult for single young men, who struggle to navigate an increasingly complex dating scene

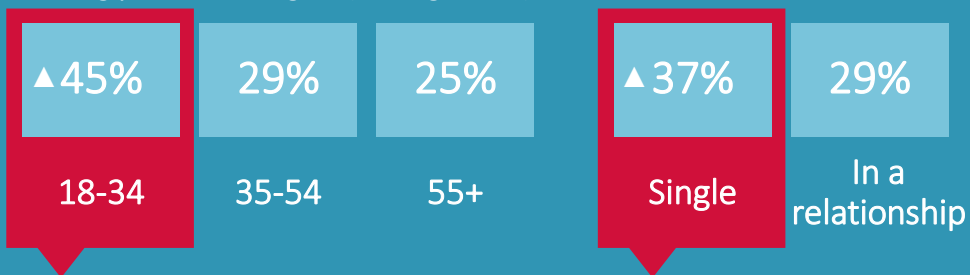
6

For older men, a **lack of close connections with friends and a lack of positive role models** is a standout finding

In line with our monitor #1, around a third of men find it a confusing time to be a man (31%)



Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)



Particularly driven by 18-34s and single men



Some of the beliefs I have of what a man is are not acceptable anymore. There is a juxtaposition between being strong and "manly" but also soft and emotional (28yrs)

Friction between old and new models of masculinity drives confusion

Redefining the rules



*What it means to be a man is **rapidly changing**. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but it's **definitely different**, and big change can be confusing (20yrs)*

Media & societal pressure



***There are many negative role models in art and on social media and it is difficult to seek out the positive role models.** Men with a personality or appearance which doesn't conform with other people's ideals, often get criticised and excluded (27yrs)*

Balancing roles



***Men are now expected to be fully part of the family and contribute equally to raising a family, yet are also still expected to be the breadwinner.** Whereas decades ago, men were only expected to be the breadwinner (37yrs)*

Gender & relational dynamics



*There is a feeling that **men are responsible for patriarchy and (you feel) a sense of guilt**, although things were this way before I was born and in spite of personal effort for equality/ equanimity (53yrs)*

Tradition vs change



*Patterns of behaviour and what is expected of you are constantly changing. **What was considered polite in my era is now considered condescending or non-PC** (78yrs)*



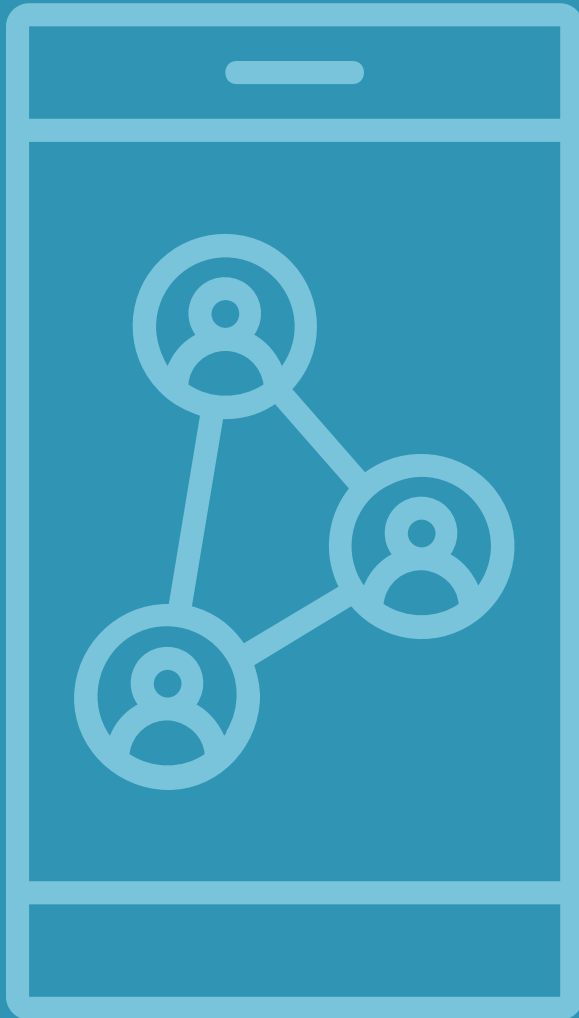
And only half of men

think being a man is
something to be
proud of (51%),
in line with 2023

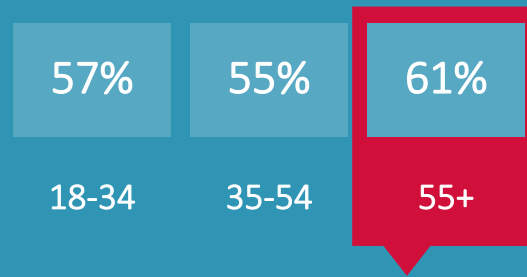
Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)

The finger strongly points at social media

Almost 6 in 10 men believe that social media is damaging society's perceptions of men (58%)



Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)



Particularly driven by 65+ (66%)

Social media amplifies negative and unrealistic expectations

Vilifying men

There are a lot of **negative stories** of how men have treated women which makes people **assume all men are the same** which isn't the case (20yrs)

Portrayal of unrealistic ideals

Social media is damaging to men's mental health as society have an expectation of what a man should be. This puts **pressure on men to live up to this expectation** (25yrs)

Harmful stereotyping

It creates **false perceptions of what 'males' should be**. It can encourage negative reactions to society (48yrs)

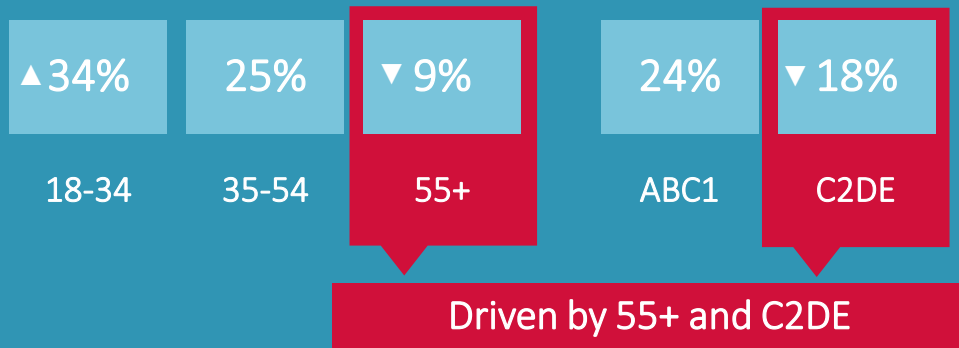
Negative role of social media overall

Social media is ruining perceptions of everything, pushing people to act in ways that they probably wouldn't do if social media was not around (56yrs)

Older men feel particularly under-represented on screen

(21% for all men)

Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men) with
“I feel represented by men I see on screen”



Again, **different stereotypes that don't represent the norm are disproportionately presented as being normal** (41yrs)

Very few men are portrayed as struggling with issues – they're always shown as strong and capable (48yrs)

I am a single, mixed race man. I never see myself represented on TV (53yrs)

Disabled people/wheelchair users are rarely employed on tv shows and films (32yrs)

Being from an Asian background, there is a tendency to stereotype a token Asian man as having an accent with other undesirable traits. And other roles are typically filled by white men (27yrs)

There is increasingly not many true working-class actors (61yrs)

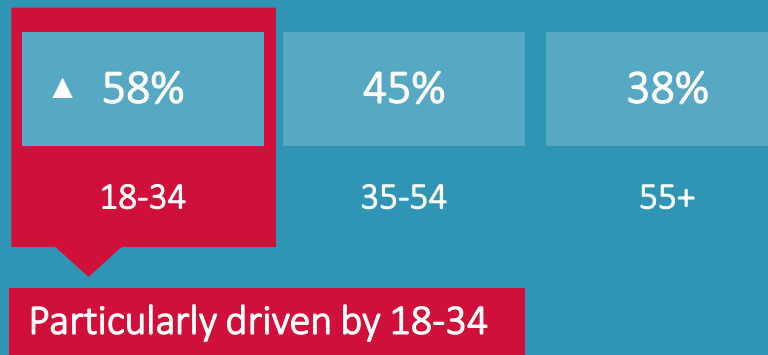
Screen representations of men tend to concentrate either on highly masculine traits or perceived weaknesses, rather than any realistic picture of normal men (71yrs)

The hard-working man trying to make ends meet and still being a good human being is very unrepresented (60yrs)

Strong role models

have been present in the life of just under half of men (45%), up vs 2023 (38%)

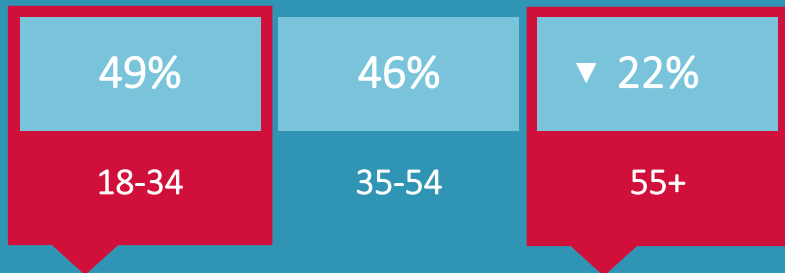
Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)



Over 1 in 3 men have struggled with mental health (37%)



Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)

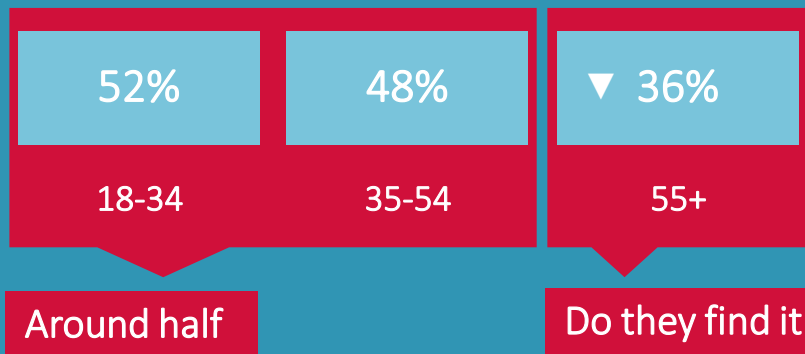


Around half

Do they struggle less, or lack the language to communicate it?

44% of men find it hard to talk about their inner most feelings

Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst Men)



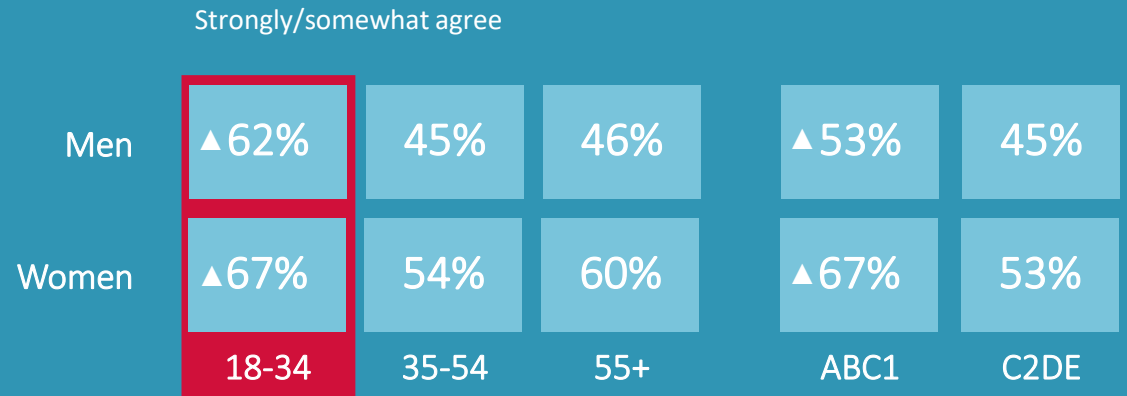
RED C Research – 4th to 5th December 2024

Q1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... "For me, I find it difficult to talk about my innermost feelings"

Base: 2024 Men (n=1,020), 18-34 (n=226), 35-54 (n=370), 55+ (n=424), White (n=908), Other ethnicity (n=100)

▲ / ▼ = significantly higher / lower than other group(s) @95%

Men's close friendships decline with age while women sustain these connections



Younger people are most likely to have close friendships



RED C Research – 4th to 5th December 2024

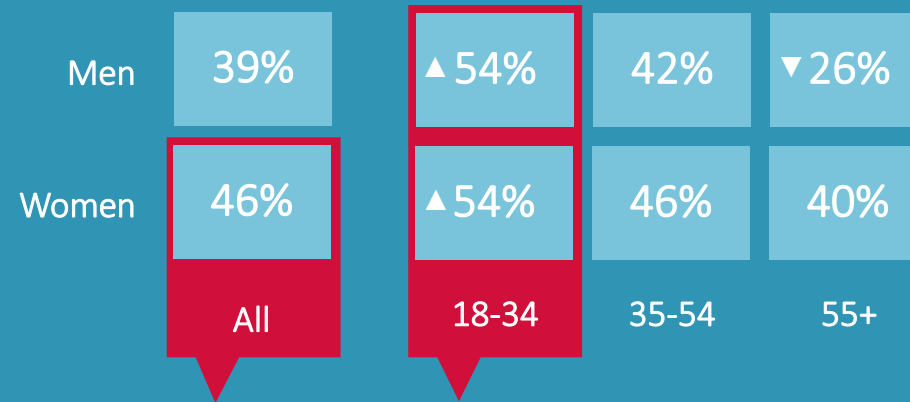
Q1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... “I have deep, close friendships”
 Base: 2024 Men (n=1,020), 18-34 (n=226), 35-54 (n=370), 55+ (n=424), ABC1 (n=603), C2DE (n=417), 2024 Women (n=1,056), 18-34 (n=303), 35-54 (n=322), 55+ (n=431), ABC1 (n=561), C2DE (n=495)

▲ / ▼ = significantly higher / lower than other group(s) @95%

43% of all UK respondents think it's hard to find a partner, in particular Women and 18-34



Strongly/somewhat agree (Amongst All respondents)



Particularly driven by Women and those 18-34

RED C Research – 4th to 5th December 2024
 Q1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... “It’s hard to find a partner in today’s world”
 Base: 2024 All respondents (n=2,084), 2024 Men (n=1,020), 18-34 (n=226), 35-54 (n=370), 55+ (n=424), White (n=908), Other ethnicity (n=100), 2024 Women (n=1,056), 18-34 (n=303), 35-54 (n=322), 55+ (n=431), White (n=959), Other ethnicity (n=94)

▲ / ▼ = significantly higher / lower than other group(s) @95%

What can it mean for brands?

- ▶ Acknowledgment of the confusion posed by the clash of 'old' vs 'modern' masculinity – how can brands **reflect men in a positive, inclusive, emotionally sensitive way?**
- ▶ Better representation of men across different physical shape, size, region, ethnicity and age, so that **men can 'see people like them'**
- ▶ Promote positive role-modelling and friendships (both for older and younger men), and **reinforce authentic behaviours** – men doing the best they can
- ▶ Younger men crave authentic connections and value close friendships - to better connect with them, be sensitive to their **emotional and mental vulnerability**



I believe men are finally starting to understand that what they have been taught about their own gender could be possibly wrong. That it is okay to go against this general image (22yrs)

THANK YOU

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