

# Why men might be more vulnerable to suicide

Statistics tell us that some groups are more vulnerable to suicide than others. It is important to remember that not everyone in these groups is more vulnerable, and there are people who don't belong to these groups who are vulnerable.

It's good to understand more about these groups and the factors at play. Remember, when we're looking out for signs of suicide in those around us, it's the individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours that will give us the clearest sign that something is not right, and that it's time to talk.

This fact sheet looks at the factors which may make men more vulnerable to suicide. The causes of suicide are complex and multifaceted. It is important to remember that many men may never experience suicidal thoughts or behaviours. Below we describe both the vulnerability and protective factors associated with men.

## Factors that may protect against suicide

- A tendency to look for support when needed.
- A level of comfort with showing and expressing emotion.
- Positive, supportive, close relationships with family, friends, colleagues, community and social institutions.
- Maintaining family and social responsibilities.
- A sense of purpose or meaning in life, and agency over one's life.
- Activities and support for ongoing wellbeing and health.
- Opportunities to make a meaningful contribution, or show leadership at home, work, or in the community.
- Stable finances, employment and safe housing.
- Effective mental health care, skills in effective problem solving, emotion regulation and conflict resolution.
- An ability to adapt to change.
- Personal, cultural, or religious beliefs that discourage suicide.

## Where to get help

MensLine Australia wide, free, confidential 24/7 support. Referrals and counselling services for men via telephone, online, and video.

## Factors that make men more vulnerable to suicide

- Mental health issues, especially a period of depressed mood as part of depression or other mood disorders, and prior suicide attempts(s).
- Social isolation and lack of support. Feeling a burden to others due to long-term unemployment, chronic illness and disability, homelessness or other challenges.
- Reluctance to seek help or show emotion when experiencing distress or mental health issues due to societal expectations of stoicism and perseverance through adversity. These can be compounded by living in a rural or remote area with limited access to mental health services.
- Risky, impulsive, or aggressive behaviour.
- Harmful, frequent use of alcohol or other substances, which disrupts daily functioning. This can compound personal and social problems, negatively affecting mental health and wellbeing.
- Fearlessness towards death: loss of fear of pain or death due to trauma, abuse, high risk behaviours, injuries from contact sport or dangerous work, or familiarity with, and access to, lethal means (e.g. firearms, substances).
- Knowing someone who died by suicide, particularly a family member (contagion effects).
- At least one personal stressor, (such as unemployment, a relationship breakdown, or divorce) which can challenge traditional male roles, combined with poor ability to manage distress, and seeing suicide as a way to escape unbearable emotional pain.
- Recent dealings with the justice system, or transitioning from institutions (e.g. from Defence Forces, prison, or hospital) to independent life.