



Healthy Men, Healthy Families, Healthy Communities:

Backing Men's Health in Ireland

A BUDGET 2027 SUBMISSION BY MOVEMBER IRELAND



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Contents

About Movember and this Submission	3
Summary of recommendations	5
Budgetary recommendations	5
Policy recommendations	5
 The Real Face of Men’s Health in Ireland	 6
 Men’s health in Ireland in numbers	 7
The scale and impact of poor men’s health	7
The cost of men’s health in Ireland	7
Investing in men’s health has overwhelming public support	7
 1. Backing what Works: Investing in Men’s Health in Ireland	 9
Funding the meaningful delivery of the National Men’s Health Action Plan	9
Investing in community men’s health together	10
Building on the success of Movember Ahead of the Game	11
Working together to back community-based men’s health	12
Working with Movember to upskill Ireland’s mental health practitioners	12
 2. Men’s Health Policy Development: Healthier Men, Healthier Society	 15
The case for a new men’s health policy in Ireland	15
Reforming paternity leave policy	16
Young men online: developing a better understanding of the harms	18
 References	 19



About Movember and this Submission

Founded in Melbourne, Australia in 2003, Movember is a global movement for the advancement of men's health.

Over the past 23 years, Movember has challenged the status quo, supported men's health research and transformed the way that health services reach, respond to, and retain men in healthcare. We have taken on prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention with unwavering determination. In Ireland we have raised over €29.7m for men's health in Ireland, thanks to a passionate community of global Movember supporters.

We advocate for inclusive healthcare systems that are tailored to the unique needs of men, women, and gender-diverse people from wide-ranging cultural backgrounds. We hope to create a future where barriers to healthy living are overcome, stigmas are removed, and everyone has an equal opportunity to live a long, healthy life.

Improving men's health creates benefits that extend far beyond the individual, leading to stronger families, healthier relationships, and more resilient communities. Health-aware men live longer, healthier lives and are better able to participate in family life, support their loved ones, remain active in the workforce, and contribute to society. Investing in men's health therefore delivers a significant social return, positively impacting men, women, children, communities, and the wider economy.

The key challenges outlined in this submission are grounded in our landmark 'Real Face of Men's Health in Ireland' report, published in September 2025. Our ask is budget-focused and outlines how government can best invest in improving men's health, through funding the National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028 over the coming two budget cycles and backing proven men's health initiatives at the community and national level. Alongside this, we call for Government to commit to forward-looking cross-government policy development across life stages, including with a focus on fatherhood and youth.

Movember has a track record of working in collaboration with Governments on delivering highly successful men's health partnerships. We want to bring this proven direct-collaboration model to Ireland. This submission therefore also urges Government to draw on insights and expertise gained elsewhere and commit to a programme of long-term investment in grass roots community men's health programmes in partnership with Movember and other funders.

To learn more, please visit movember.com or contact walter.jayawardene@movember.com



Summary of recommendations

BUDGETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate an initial €10 million, split across the 2027 and 2028 Budget cycles to deliver the National Men’s Health Action Plan 2024-2028 in line with the plan’s original ambition.
- Work with the Action Plan’s coordinators to commission a full cost analysis to ensure appropriate resourcing and implementation of this and future Action Plans, supporting the broad range of men in Ireland.
- Commit to sustained investment in Movember’s Ahead of the Game programme in partnership with the Irish Life GAA Healthy Club Programme to ensure its continued growth and impact, building on the €1M already committed by Movember.
- Launch a new 3-year investment fund in grassroots community programmes, partnering with Movember and other potential funders to increase funds available.
- Commit to piloting the Movember Men in Mind programme among mental health practitioners in Ireland and thereafter to scale it to strengthen the healthcare workforce’s knowledge, skills and confidence in effectively working with men and retaining them in good health.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a new National Men’s Health Policy as a whole-of-government policy mandate complementing, not replacing, the National Men’s Health Action Plan 2024-2028. The Policy should take inspiration from the Women’s Health Action Plan and: provide cross-government leadership, coordination and accountability; address upstream determinants of men’s health; secure sustainable, ring-fenced investment and strengthen links between policy, implementation and evaluation.
- Convene a dedicated multi-stakeholder Paternity Leave Working Group with a mandate to review the duration of statutory paternity leave and develop a phased pathway beyond the EU minimum of 10 working days, develop a roadmap to replace the flat-rate €299/week Paternity Benefit with an earnings-related model that reduces income loss, and examine workplace culture barriers.
- Commit to supporting young men online through consultation with global leaders on recognised harms specific to young men and potential policy solutions.

The Real Face of Men's Health in Ireland

Ireland was the first country in the world to publish a National Men's Health Policy in 2009, leading the way globally. Since the introduction of the policy there has been meaningful improvement in men's health, particularly in reducing premature deaths.



But momentum on men's health has since faltered. While a National Men's Health Action Plan exists under the Healthy Ireland Framework, it does not yet have sufficient visibility, is constrained in scale and resourcing, and sits outside any up-to-date cross-government policy framework for men's health, as there has been no renewal of the first National Men's Health Policy since it expired in 2013.

In September 2025 Movember published its report 'The Real Face of Men's Health'¹

Real Face presented findings that strengthen the case for continued leadership and progress in men's health in Ireland. It highlighted the changing perspective in Ireland on male roles and the growing challenge that is evident amongst men against more restrictive masculine stereotypes. It also examines ongoing concerning health trends, and new insights on the impact poor men's health has on the community, loved ones and the economy.



Men's health in Ireland in numbers

The scale and impact of poor men's health

The barriers to healthier lifestyles and health-seeking behaviours are complex, and include stigma, influence of gender norms, and inadequate support networks.

Movember's 'The Real Face of Men's Health in Ireland' report underscored the compelling need to address poor men's health outcomes in Ireland.

- Two in five (40.2%) Irish men die prematurely – before the age of 75 – and **the vast majority of these deaths are preventable.**
- The national suicide crisis disproportionately affects men. In 2022, 79% of all deaths by suicide were men and 97% of GPs say they encounter suicidal men annually.

- Many more men die from the five leading causes of preventable and manageable disease than women – 148% higher for circulatory diseases; 58% greater in digestive disorders; 32% higher for respiratory illness and 17% higher in cancer.
- Men's poor health has a significant emotional, psychological and physical impact on families, loved ones and caregivers. Nearly two thirds of unpaid caregivers in Ireland are women, and the impact of men's poor health on them is particularly pronounced. Of those caregivers surveyed for our Real Face report, women reported markedly higher levels of emotional, psychological and physical strain and lower life satisfaction than their male caregiving counterparts.²

Potentially preventable disease in men cost the state €716 million in 2025 alone. Significant costs could be saved through modest investment in gender responsive interventions targeted to prevent avoidable ill-health.

The cost of men's health in Ireland³

Men's poor health results in direct costs to the health and care systems, as well as indirect costs to the wider economy, through reduced productivity, lower earnings, and lost tax revenue for the government.

Commissioned research for Movember's Real Face report estimated the costs of the five conditions that cause the largest number of years of life lost to ill-health for men in Ireland: coronary heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and suicide.

The overall costs of these five conditions in men were over €1 billion in 2025 alone:

- Of this, €716 million (69%) was identified as potentially preventable.
- This would cover half of the capital expenditure allocated to the Department of Health for 2025.

While complete prevention of these diseases may be a long-term goal, this data indicates the scale and significance of the costs that could be saved through modest investment in gender responsive interventions targeted to prevent avoidable ill-health. This budget submission points to some of the modest investments that could be made to this end.

Investing in men's health has overwhelming public support

Nationally representative polling by 'More in Common' for the Real Face report reveals that public support for action on men's health cuts across typical divides and presents as a unifying non-partisan issue.

- 75% have concerns on the current state of men's health.
- 75% are worried about male suicide.
- 70% believe loneliness amongst men needs action.

If we combine this public support with appropriate political backing and investment, we have a real opportunity to drive meaningful change for the health and wellbeing of men in Ireland, and with it, the health and wellbeing of families and wider society.



1. Backing what Works: Investing in Men's Health in Ireland

FUNDING THE MEANINGFUL DELIVERY OF THE NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH ACTION PLAN

While there has not been an update to the groundbreaking National Men's Health Policy 2008-2013, there have been successive National Men's Health Action Plans developed under the Healthy Ireland framework and under the aegis of the Department of Health and Health Service Executive.

The current National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028⁴ provides a useful blueprint for addressing many of the issues facing men's health in Ireland today through, for example, scaling up evidence-based men's health programmes in the community and delivery of programmes encompassing gender equality, healthy masculinities and zero tolerance of sexual violence.

Movember's Real Face report also found that the plan enjoys widespread public support, with 83% of those surveyed thinking it is a good idea. There is strong appetite for meaningful, visible action on men's health.

However, awareness of the Plan is low. Scope for its meaningful implementation is currently limited by resource constraints, lower political prioritisation and the absence of a wider cross-government men's health policy framework within which to deliver.

Working with national experts in men's health on the development of the Real Face report, **Movember has identified an initial investment of €10 million across two budget cycles as key to the delivery of the actions under the National Men's Health Action Plan**, alongside an additional full cost analysis to ensure proper resourcing and implementation of this and future action plans.

Movember is re-iterating its call on Government to act on these recommendations, and to recognise that progressing the National Men's Health Action Plan requires active investment and meaningful political support.

Movember is also calling for the development of a new National Men's Health Policy within the next Healthy Ireland Framework (see section 2).

Movember firmly believes that women's and men's health should complement, not compete with one another, reflecting shared values of equity, wellbeing and social cohesion. Supporting men's health is not a zero-sum game: it makes sense for women, children, families, and society at large.

Movember calls on Government to:

- Allocate an initial €10 million, split across the 2027 and 2028 Budget cycles to progress delivery of the National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028.
- Work with the Action Plan's coordinators to commission a full cost analysis to ensure appropriate resourcing and implementation of this and future Action Plans, supporting the broad range of men in Ireland.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY MEN’S HEALTH TOGETHER

There is a significant and welcome emphasis in the National Men’s Health Action Plan on the importance of scaling up evidence-based men’s health programmes in the community.

Such programmes are fundamental to the prevention of avoidable ill health amongst men.

Movember’s *Real Face of Men’s Health*⁵ report showcases many of these programmes – many funded or supported by the HSE and organisations including Movember – as practical examples of ‘what works’: from men’s sheds to the Heads-Up programme; from Men on the Move to the Place 4U Men’s Health Programme; from the Men’s Development Network to the Cairde suicide prevention initiative and the GAA healthy clubs programme.

All these initiatives and more operate on limited resources but make a significant difference to the lives of men and their communities. With meaningful longer-term investment they can achieve so much more and harness the opportunity to learn from each other.



Building on the success of Movember Ahead of the Game

One of the best examples of this is Ahead of the Game⁶, Movember’s mental fitness and resilience programme delivered in partnership with the GAA, GPA, and Movember, and delivered through the Irish Life GAA Healthy Clubs network. Through Movember Ahead of the Game, over 10,000 players, parents, coaches and volunteers across Ireland have gained the knowledge, confidence and practical tools to build mental resilience, promote wellbeing and create supportive sporting environments where conversations about mental health can thrive. Movember has invested €1,037,260 to date into the programme in Ireland. It has also benefited from state funding, including from the National Office of Suicide Prevention (NOSP) (€30,000) and Healthy Ireland (€50,000) as a once-off investment in 2025 to support Phase 3 of delivery reflecting the programme’s proven impact and growing national momentum.

Movember would welcome increased and sustained support from Government of this valuable programme.

Movember calls on Government to:

- Commit to sustained investment in Movember’s Ahead of the Game programme in partnership with the Irish Life GAA Healthy Club Programme to ensure its continued growth and impact, building on the €1M already committed by Movember.

Working together to back community-based men's health

Movember has a track record of working in collaboration with Governments to back what works.

In England Movember has partnered with the Department of Health and Social Care, and the People's Health Trust, on a Men's Health Community Fund. Combining government commitment and resources alongside those of Movember and philanthropy, significant investments are being made in community-led programmes that improve men's health and wellbeing. Alongside improving outcomes for the men reached, it aims to build practical evidence about what works, to inform future policy, commissioning and systems change.⁷

With the necessary political and financial commitment, we can also do this in Ireland.

Movember is calling on the Government to launch a new 3-year public investment fund in grassroots men's health community programs in Ireland, particularly targeting demographics of men most at need. Such a fund would also provide useful framework for impact measurement, including measures of healthy masculinity, in keeping with one of the core priorities of the National Men's Health Action Plan.

Movember pledges to partner with Government to increase this fund, and to work with Government to expand the base of other potential funders that could contribute to it.

Movember calls on Government to:

- Launch a new 3-year investment fund in grassroots community programmes, partnering with Movember and other potential funders to increase funds available.
- Use the fund to build a robust framework for impact measurement including measures of healthy masculinity to show future return on action plan investment

Working with Movember to upskill Ireland's mental health practitioners

The Movember-funded Men in Mind programme is a world-first, research-backed training programme co-designed with practitioners and men to equip mental health professionals with the knowledge and skills to engage men more effectively.⁸

Men in Mind has scaled across Australia and has recently been funded by the Australian government to be adapted for practitioners across primary care and incorporated into tertiary curricula to develop gender competencies for working with men.

Movember is actively seeking to partner with healthcare sector partners and/or government to bring Men in Mind to Europe, and recently conducted two small successful pilot programmes in the UK.

In Ireland, under Minister for Mental Health Mary Butler TD, there has been significant investment in the promotion of men's mental health through the free counselling initiative.⁹ Movember believes that Men in Mind may prove a valuable companion piece to this work, assisting practitioners to engage men more effectively and retain them in good health, thereby ensuring better outcomes for the investment made.

Movember calls on Government to:

- Commit to piloting the Movember Men in Mind programme among mental health practitioners in Ireland and thereafter to scale it here to strengthen the healthcare workforce's knowledge, skills and confidence in effectively working with men and retaining them in good health.





2. Men's Health Policy Development: Healthier Men, Healthier Society

THE CASE FOR A NEW MEN'S HEALTH POLICY IN IRELAND

In April 2026 Movember made a submission to the public consultation on the Healthy Ireland Framework¹⁰, calling for the development of a new National Men's Health Policy as a whole-of-government policy mandate – complementing, not replacing, the National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028.

While HSE-led Action Plans have supported implementation and innovation over the past decade, there are limits to an action-plan approach: no formal mechanisms for cross-government leadership or accountability, constrained scale and resourcing, and a primary focus on health promotion rather than the upstream determinants of health shaped by housing, education, employment, social protection, justice and integration.

Ireland's 2008-2013 National Men's Health Policy – the first of its kind in the world – established intersectoral roles across government and the health service, including responsibility for mainstreaming men's health across departments. This represented a broader governance model than one centred within a single delivery organisation.

Recent investment in women's health - including over €180 million since 2020 and €38 million allocated in Budget 2025 – also demonstrates what can be achieved through a clearly defined, well-resourced national approach which tackles gender as a determinant of health. The Women's Health Action Plan represents a significant and welcome advancement in addressing gender-specific health needs and reflects strong policy leadership. It also illustrates how inter-departmental support can enable sustained investment, cross-sector

collaboration, strategic programme development, and increased visibility and accountability. A comparable, comprehensive policy and investment framework has not been fully realised in relation to men's health since the expiration of the previous Men's Health Policy in 2013, despite persistent disparities in health outcomes among men since then and growing opportunities to learn from our colleagues in women's health.

There is a clear opportunity to apply similar policy ambition and structure, and Movember believes now is time for a renewed National Men's Health Policy to support men's health in Ireland.

Movember calls on Government to develop a new National Men's Health Policy as a whole-of-government policy mandate – complementing, not replacing, the National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028. The Policy should:

- Retain and strengthen the National Men's Health Action Plan 2024-2028 as the implementation, delivery and coordination mechanism, operating within the broader policy framework.
- Provide cross-government leadership, coordination and accountability, with alignment across health, employment, education, agriculture and social inclusion.
- Address upstream determinants of men's health and target priority populations (e.g. men in deprived communities, Traveller men, younger men).
- Secure sustainable, ring-fenced investment and strengthen links between policy, implementation and evaluation.

REFORMING PATERNITY
LEAVE POLICY

During Men’s Health Week 2026
Movember published *Extra Time With
Dad*¹, a new report setting out the
evidence base for reform of paternity
leave policy in Ireland.



Fatherhood is a critical window for men’s health. Fathers who take leave bond more deeply with their children, report better mental health, and remain more involved in caregiving long-term. Where structural barriers prevent fathers from taking leave, research consistently links poor uptake with elevated risk of paternal mental health difficulties and reduced bonding in the critical early months.

Ireland ranks among the worst in the EU for support to new fathers. The two weeks of statutory paternity leave is the minimum permitted under EU law, and the total leave support available to a father in Ireland is just 2.8 weeks of equivalent full-time income, against an EU average of 8.5 weeks and Slovakia’s 21 weeks. That represents a 74.5% reduction in earnings for fathers in Ireland who avail of statutory paternity or parent’s leave.

Survey results published in the same report indicated that:

1 in 5

Fathers took no paternity leave whatsoever, whether statutory or employer.

68%

Nearly 7 in 10 who took paternity leave relied in part or in whole on employer top-ups.

67%

Nearly 7 in 10 who took paternity leave experienced financial strain.

~60%

Approximately 6 in 10 of fathers felt that neither society nor Government takes their mental health seriously.

1 in 4

One in four fathers rated their mental health as fair or poor.

Movember believes that reform of paternity leave policy in Ireland represents an opportunity not only to improve the health and wellbeing of fathers, but that of their partners, children and families.

Movember reiterates its recent calls on the Government to convene a dedicated multi-stakeholder Paternity Leave Working Group with a mandate to:

- Review the duration of statutory paternity leave and develop a phased pathway beyond the EU minimum of 10 working days.
- Develop a roadmap to replace the flat-rate €299/week Paternity Benefit with an earnings-related model that reduces income loss, particularly for middle- and lower-income fathers.
- Examine workplace culture barriers – including employer practices, awareness, and the career risk perceptions that prevent fathers from availing of their entitlements.
- Align Ireland’s Paternity Leave provision with the National Men’s Health Action Plan 2024–2028¹ and the Programme for Government commitment to advancing men’s health.
- Report with clear recommendations within a defined timeframe, with representation from fatherhood experts, employer groups, trade unions, public health, and family policy specialists.
- Develop mandatory monitoring and reporting requirements for employers and industry bodies, to track uptake of paternity and parent’s leave by sector and firm size.



YOUNG MEN ONLINE:
DEVELOPING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE HARMS

Movember’s Real Face report identifies increasing concerns at the intersection between the online world and poor health among men and boys.

However, this intersection is extremely complex, with evidence and conceptual frameworks relating to online health harms affecting men and boys remaining fragmented across public health, digital policy, online safety and online platform governance discussions.

Movember has partnered with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) to develop a comprehensive public health-informed blueprint or ‘taxonomy’ of the online harms impacting on the health of men and boys. It will be grounded in an intersectional and gender transformative lens, that recognises different communities and their vulnerabilities (LGBTQ+, socio-economic background, ethnicity, age group), and how harms can disproportionately impact specific groups.

This resource, once complete, will provide evidence-based practical guidance for regulators and policymakers working towards safer online environments, and will be particularly focussed on implications for Ireland, the wider EU, the UK and Canada.

This work, once complete, will prove a useful tool for public health policy development in Ireland and **Movember would welcome engagement with Government on using it to arrive at policy solutions for improving men and boy’s health.**



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The following references are cited in this report using superscript numerals throughout the text.

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2.

The Real Face of Men’s Health: 2025 Republic of Ireland Report, p13.

3.

The Real Face of Men’s Health: 2025 Republic of Ireland Report, p16.

4.

HSE/Department of Health/Healthy Ireland, National Men’s Health Action Plan 2024-2028: Working with Men in Ireland to Achieve Optimum Health and Wellbeing. Movember Ireland is one of the civil society organisations represented on the plan’s steering group.

5.

Movember launched a video for Men’s Health Week 2026 showcasing some of these initiatives, demonstrating the significant impact investment in them can have on men and their communities. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBXOYMoINH4>

6.

This initiative equips young players, their parents, and coaches with tools to build mental resilience, support emotional wellbeing, and foster open conversations - both on and off the pitch. To date, over 10,000 participants across all 32 counties have engaged in the programme, underscoring the value of meeting participants where they are: in trusted, familiar environments like their local GAA clubs. Importantly, only clubs officially recognised as Healthy Clubs were eligible to deliver the programme, ensuring it is embedded in a wider culture of wellbeing before being offered to all clubs.

7.

For more on the Men’s Health Community Fund in England, see <https://uk.movember.com/story/the-men-s-health-community-fund>

8.

A randomised controlled trial indicated that Men in Mind significantly improved practitioners’ self-reported confidence and competence for engaging and responding to help-seeking men (83). Specifically, 82% reported confidence for working with men experiencing suicidality compared with 47% at baseline, and these gains were maintained at 3-month follow up. The Real Face of Men’s Health: 2025 Republic of Ireland Report, p81. Further research has shown that these gains hold for 12 months. See Wilson, M. J., Benakovic, R., O’Gorman, K., Fletcher, J., Oliffe, J. L., Rice, S. M., & Seidler, Z. E. (2026). Keeping men in mind: practitioner self-efficacy and e-learning implementation one year following training to engage men in therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 39(2), 275–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2025.2536555>

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10.

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