



MOVEMBER® INSTITUTE  
OF MEN'S HEALTH

# New Zealand Election Platform 2026



# Stop men dying too young

By committing to a coordinated approach to men's mental health, we can save lives and strengthen communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Healthier Men.  
Healthier Relationships.  
Healthier Families.  
Healthier Communities.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

Movember is calling on all political parties running in the 2026 NZ General Election to commit to a **Men's Mental Health Roadmap** – one that drives coordinated action across policy, services, and systems. This Roadmap should focus on improving the mental, social and emotional wellbeing of men and boys in all their diversities, shaping a health system that meets their needs, addresses men-specific health issues, and supports them to live and age well. Because when boys and men live healthier, longer lives, everyone benefits.

### We are calling for:

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1. **A MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH ROADMAP – A COORDINATED NATIONAL PLAN FOR MEN AND BOYS MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION**

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2. **A MEN'S HEALTH TASKFORCE – TO OVERSEE THE ROADMAP AND ENSURE ITS PRIORITIES ARE DELIVERED**

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A **Men's Mental Health Roadmap** would set a clear national direction for mental health prevention and early intervention – providing practical, evidence-based guidance and support to help community organisations deliver care that responds to the local needs of men and boys, in the places where they already work and play, in addition to clinical settings. It would be an operational document that lays out the goals, the key priorities and actions, and the timeline – so people can see what is going to happen, why it matters, and how progress will be measured over the long term.

**Public support for a Roadmap is clear: a Movember Institute of Men's Health poll reported 83% of New Zealanders support the Government adopting a Men's Mental Health Roadmap.<sup>1</sup>**

## OUR PLEDGE

Movember is deeply committed to changing the face of men's health, as reflected in our \$6.8 million investment in men's health over the next four years. This includes around \$2.5 million into mental health and \$3 million in kaupapa Māori initiatives over the same time period.

Investment alone can only go so far. To maximise the impact of Movember's investment, we're calling for a Men's Mental Health Roadmap which brings together Government, community and key stakeholders to coordinate effort, align action and deliver meaningful and lasting health system change.

The problems men are facing today are rooted in a health system that hasn't adapted to how men actually engage with care. A system that created these barriers and norms can also be improved to address them – and a dedicated Roadmap is how we get there. By focusing on systems change, we can implement solutions that drive better outcomes for men, boys and their communities.

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<sup>1</sup>Based on a survey of 1,463 New Zealanders aged 18+, designed and analysed by Movember with data collection via Dynata research panel in March 2026.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

In New Zealand, suicide is the leading cause of death among young men aged 15–34, and the third leading cause of premature death for all men. Three in every four people who die by suicide are male. Our men are dying too young.

**Psychological distress among young men (15–24) has more than tripled over the past decade, rising from 4.3% in 2014 to 15.1% in 2023. For men aged 25–34, it has more than doubled.<sup>2</sup>**

This is the result of a health system that has not kept pace with what men actually need – compounded by societal expectations that have taught men to suffer in silence rather than seek help. Movember data shows that 62% of men say masculine stereotypes, like the expectation to “toughen up”, have negatively influenced their health behaviours and experiences in healthcare. And 61% believe it is normal to avoid regular health checks.<sup>3</sup>

Even when men do reach out, we are losing them through gaps in care. Men are continuously disengaging from the health system and have been making fewer visits to their GP over the past decade. Many men delay help-seeking until a point of crisis, resulting in a critical, but short window of opportunity for practitioners to effectively engage with men during healthcare encounters.<sup>4</sup>

This pattern reflects that men are being undertreated in community settings, and that delayed access is leading to health service presentation at more severe stages of illness requiring more intensive patient care. Men spend more time in inpatient or residential care, accounting for 633,317 bed nights compared to women who spend 377,031 bed nights.<sup>5</sup>

These aren't just statistics. They're sons, fathers, brothers, and mates. And their deaths and real lived experiences ripple through relationships, whānau, workplaces, and communities. Too often men are missing out on the support they need, when and where they need it.



**New Zealand men who died by suicide between 2019 – 2021 lost an average of 37 potential years of life<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>2,3,4</sup> Movember Institute of Men's Health, Real Face of Men's Health Aotearoa New Zealand Report.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health Manatū Hauora. (2024). Annual Data Explorer 2023/24: New Zealand Health Survey. Wellington: Ministry of Health. [Includes Mental Health and Addiction Service Use data].

<sup>6</sup> Estimated by Movember using a 3-year rolling average of confirmed suicide counts (2019–2021) from Health New Zealand, benchmarked against the latest Stats NZ male life expectancy data (80.1 years).

*“It’s hard for men to talk about their health. Particularly here in New Zealand, you know the bravado macho image, the rugby boys – you’ve got to be strong and stand up for yourself.”*

– Denis, age 54, Male

*“I battled with seeking help and my experience of masculinity. It was a direct confrontation with my self-image. I’m a country boy so I should be stoic, you know masculine and strong, and to experience the depth of these crushing emotions was very difficult to confront and very difficult to understand. It’s about how we perceive ourselves in New Zealand as men and also how we feel that others are going to perceive us.”*

- Callum, age 29, Male

## WHY WE NEED TO ACT NOW

Movember is committed to working with the New Zealand Government, and across Parliament to change the face of men’s mental health – bringing our research, community networks, and proven programmes to the table, and asking them to do the same. Too many men are falling through the cracks, and the impact is not felt equally. Tāne Māori, Pacific men, men living in low socioeconomic or rural communities, and men in high-risk industries face the greatest barriers to care and the worst health outcomes as a result.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the mental health crisis falls hardest on Māori and Pacific men. Tāne Māori die by suicide at 1.6 times the national average for men, and among young tāne aged 25–44, the rate is nearly 60 deaths per 100,000. Pacific men report the lowest life satisfaction of any ethnic group in New Zealand, and the highest rates of psychological distress – 17.5% – with a close to fourfold increase since 2016 in unmet mental health support needs.

The burden is also felt acutely by men in rural and low-income communities and those working in high-risk occupations. Rural men die by intentional self-harm at a rate 72% higher than urban men, and men in the most deprived areas are nearly 1.5 times more likely to die prematurely – with suicide rates 1.7 times higher than in the least deprived.

Among emergency service workers, one in three firefighters – a predominantly male workforce – report clinically significant symptoms of depression, anxiety, or PTSD, a rate substantially higher than in the general population. Many also report patterns of emotional numbing and other avoidance-based coping, which can mask distress and delay help-seeking. In construction, 1 in 3 workers has experienced serious psychological distress – more than twice the national average. And 64% of young farmers report that wellbeing issues are having a significant negative impact on their lives.<sup>7</sup>

And the consequences don’t stop with men. An estimated half a million New Zealanders are providing unpaid care for a man in their life, the majority of them women. 46% say it has harmed their own mental health.

Nearly a third have reduced their hours or left work entirely. The indirect costs of this, including lost productivity, informal care, and lost tax revenue to the government, were estimated at \$414 million in 2023, with suicide alone accounting for \$178 million of those costs.

*“I didn’t understand how intense and fragile emotions really are, and the tools you need yourself to safely navigate through it with them.”*

- Wahine Māori, age 35-44

The economic case for action is compelling. A 2021 study found that **health conditions in men cost New Zealand \$3.1 billion in lost income every year – with mental health conditions alone accounting for 29% of income lost.** In 2023, New Zealand could have saved up to **\$917 million** by addressing the five leading contributors to years of life lost in men: coronary heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and suicide – all of which are preventable.

Economic analysis conducted by Movember shows that every \$1 invested in evidence-based grassroots programs for men’s health could produce between \$2-\$5 in health benefits in health benefits, improved quality of life and reduced health system costs.



<sup>7</sup> Movember Institute of Men’s Health, Real Face of Men’s Health Aotearoa New Zealand Report.

## BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS TO CHANGE THE FACE OF MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

We need to meet men and boys where they are – in their workplaces, communities and online – with services tailored to them and barriers to help-seeking removed.

Across Aotearoa New Zealand, there is already evidence of what works. Our Real Face of Men's Health Report identifies a range of low-cost, grassroots community men's health programmes with highly promising or demonstrated effectiveness. These are prevention and early intervention initiatives that meet boys and men where they are in their daily lives, where they live, learn, work and play, to advance their health literacy. This includes responsive healthcare services for the needs of men and culturally appropriate services, with training programmes that are proving effective for upskilling practitioners and increasing their confidence and competence for engaging men and boys in these settings.

### HERE ARE FOUR EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY WORKING WELL ON THE GROUND IN NEW ZEALAND:

- Movember Ahead of the Game.**  
 Delivered in secondary schools nationwide, in partnership with New Zealand Rugby's Mind Set Engage Programme, helping young men build mental fitness and emotional resilience from the locker room. Over 160 workshops are expected to be delivered this year, reaching nearly 2,500 participants.
- MATES in Construction.**  
 A workplace suicide prevention programme that has trained over 80,000 workers and equipped more than 5,000 on-site volunteers to take action when a colleague isn't doing well. An economic evaluation of the programme found that for every \$1 spent, \$4.42 was gained in return.<sup>8</sup>
- Farmstrong.**  
 Launched in 2015, this rural mental health and wellbeing programme adopts a peer-to-peer approach designed to help farmers and growers cope through the ups and downs of farming, and improve their mental health, wellbeing and psychological resilience. The last ten years of Farmstrong has seen over 20,000 farmers and growers attribute an improvement in their wellbeing after engaging with its programme.
- Whanaungatanga Programme.**  
 A mental health and suicide prevention initiative for Fire and Emergency NZ career firefighters, communications centre personnel and commanders, addressing organisational factors that contribute to mental ill health. In its pilot region, positive workplace sentiment has tripled compared to non-pilot areas.

<sup>8</sup> Doran CM. (2024.) The economic cost of suicide and non-fatal suicide behaviour to the New Zealand construction industry and the impact of MATES in Construction in reducing this cost.



## THE MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH ROADMAP

New Zealand is missing a critical piece of the puzzle – a dedicated national men's mental health roadmap, one that puts a shared vision and plan into action. Without it, efforts to improve men's mental health remain fragmented, underfunded, and unable to achieve the coordinated, sustained change that men and boys need and deserve.

A **Men's Mental Health Roadmap** is a critical component towards keeping men and boys healthier for longer – delivering real, measurable change over time, reducing pressure on frontline services and shifting the balance from crisis response to prevention and early intervention.

**What we'd like to see in the Roadmap:**

### BY DESIGN

- **Built with the sector.**  
The Roadmap needs to be informed, designed, and developed with partners across the sector: such as healthcare providers, NGOs, Māori, researchers, government agencies, community providers, and those with lived experience. Together this group will identify a clear set of priorities and tangible actions to be achieved over a period of time. It would leverage the wisdom of existing Government Pae Ora and Suicide Prevention strategies that are already doing important work in this space.

- **Equity at its core.**  
To honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by advancing hauora Māori and achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori, while prioritising populations experiencing the greatest inequities – including tāne Māori, Pacific men, men in high-deprivation or rural communities, disabled men, older men, LGBTQIA+ men, and those working in high-risk occupations such as farming, construction, and emergency services.
- **Agile by design.**  
A living document, reviewed periodically to keep pace with technological developments, emerging policy priorities and evolving health challenges.

### IN PRACTICE

- **Drive health systems solutions.**  
Work with sectors to make practical improvements that deliver meaningful and long-term health system change. This includes things like collecting disaggregated sex and gender data to understand why, how, when, and where men and boys engage with their health, and healthcare services, to advance policy, inform workforce practice, and develop standards of care that are responsive to the needs of boys and men.
- **Built to scale.**  
Consistent, evidence-based guidance that supports community providers to grow their programmes and reach more men and boys in their communities, including in provincial and rural areas where access to care is most limited.
- **A catalyst for wider investment.**  
A Roadmap would give government, NGOs, businesses and philanthropic funders greater confidence to invest in evidence-based community programmes proven to respond to the needs of men and boys – further increasing the overall resources flowing into this space.



## THE PRECEDENT FOR A MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH ROADMAP

The evidence from other countries around the world shows what becomes possible when this North Star is in place. Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Malaysia, South Africa, the UK, and others have each committed to national men's health strategies and the results are promising. Ireland was the first country in the world to publish a National Men's Health Policy in 2008. Following this, men's life expectancy in Ireland increased from 76.8 to 79.6 years, and the life expectancy gap between men and women narrowed from 4.8 to 3.8 years.

Australia's strategy has been praised for raising awareness and guiding interventions across diverse groups of boys and men – backed most recently by a \$32 million government commitment, the single largest investment in the health of men and boys in Australian Government history. This investment is already delivering results. Thanks to this commitment, the Movember Men in Mind programme, an evidence-based online training programme for mental health practitioners, is starting to be rolled out across Australia. Proven to significantly improve practitioners' confidence, it equips them to reach, respond to and retain men in therapy, particularly those experiencing suicidality. Movember's Ahead of the Game is also being scaled across Australia, and has been found to increase depression literacy, help-seeking intentions, resilience and wellbeing among young men in organised sport. Other leading organisations have also received a portion of the \$32 million - the Australian Men's Shed Association, Healthy Male (helping men prepare for fatherhood), and the Black Dog Institute men's suicide research program. When services are designed specifically for men and boys, they work. A dedicated national vision and action plan is what makes that possible at scale.

**New Zealand's own Women's Health Strategy 2023 sets the precedent for how a dedicated, gendered lens can be applied to improve health outcomes for women – a result that could be mirrored through a dedicated mental health roadmap for men.**

## THE MEN'S HEALTH TASKFORCE

A Roadmap is only as good as the people behind it. That is why Movember is calling for a Men's Health Taskforce to oversee the Roadmap and ensure its priorities are delivered effectively.

**The Taskforce would be sector-led and Government-enabled**, guiding coordinated efforts across sectors and government agencies through policy, investment, and research and evaluation. It would bring together men's health experts across the spectrum – like community providers, NGOs, social services, hauora Māori, Pacific leaders, rural health, academics, government, and those with lived experience – giving the people closest to the problem a direct line to the people with the power to act on it.

### What the Taskforce could do in practice:

- **Unlock the handbrakes.**  
Identify and streamline bureaucratic processes, like lengthy funding applications, that pull time and resources away from frontline care.
- **Build the evidence base.**  
Make it more accessible for small community organisations to evaluate their programmes and calculate a social return on investment – giving government, corporate and philanthropic funders the confidence to invest in what works.
- **Keep the sector connected and evolving.**  
Build on the strengths of community providers and share learnings from quality research and evaluation, helping them keep pace with emerging trends.
- **Promote cross-sector collaboration.**  
Bring together key stakeholder groups across health, social services, hauora Māori, community providers, researchers, and those with lived experience – ensuring a joined-up approach to men's health.
- **Foster innovation.**  
Create the conditions for new ideas to be tested, evaluated and scaled – supporting community organisations and healthcare providers to trial emerging approaches and share what works across the sector.
- **Bring the grassroots up to government.**  
Ensure community voices are at the heart of decision-making, creating a direct feedback loop between what is happening on the ground and the officials who can act on it, so together they can address root causes and implement systems-led solutions.

## PARTNER WITH US

Movember has been funding life-saving men's health programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand since 2006 – raising over \$40 million through community fundraising and investing in mental health programmes for young men, culturally grounded care for tāne Māori, and community-based innovation backed by evidence.

We're a catalytic funder, investing early in what works, building the evidence, and supporting others to scale it. We've seen what actually works for boys and men but we can only go so far alone – and that is why we are calling on the New Zealand Government to partner with us.

We are deeply committed to working with the Government, across Parliament, and with sector stakeholders to change the face of mental health in men and boys across New Zealand.

**A note on inclusive healthcare.**  
Movember will continue championing new research, cutting-edge treatments, and community programmes to promote healthy behaviours in boys and men. 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. In doing so, we hope to create a future where barriers to healthy living are overcome, stigmas are removed, and everyone has an opportunity to live a long, healthy life. of men and boys each year.

By improving men's health, we can have a profoundly positive impact on women, relationships, families, workplaces and society. Healthier men means a healthier world.



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Contact [advocacy@movember.com](mailto:advocacy@movember.com) to find out more