



The friendship cost of COVID - research reveals one in three men fear their relationships with mates may never recover

Over a third of men in the UK (38 per cent) fear they have lost friendships as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns that they will never get back, according to new research from men's health charity Movember.

The results of a six-month research project* by Movember looking at the pandemic's impact on the mental health of men across the UK, Canada and Australia, has revealed that many men are feeling isolated and distant from friends, prompting concerns for their long-term mental health and wellbeing.

While the research found that relationships with family members and partners became stronger during the second and third national lockdowns, 42 per cent of men said they felt more distant from friends compared with before the outbreak of the pandemic.

Movember CEO Michelle Terry said: "Having strong social connections (friendships) has a major influence on our long-term health and wellbeing. Spending time with your mates and having people to rely on in a crisis is good for everyone.

"Despite the fact that we saw a huge increase in the use of digital technologies including private direct messaging, texting and video calls to keep in touch with friends during the pandemic, a high proportion of men we asked said they were not only feeling less connected to their friends but many fear that some of those friendships have been irreparably damaged.

"If those relationships cannot be repaired following the further easing of social distancing restrictions, we would be concerned about the impact this would have on their long-term mental health and wellbeing."

Other key findings from the study include:

- Approximately three out of five (58 per cent) UK males reported experiencing poor wellbeing** and 29 per cent met WHO** criteria for depression
- Over a third (36 per cent) of men said they felt lonely more often than before the outbreak of COVID

Terry says: "Evidence shows there are lots of things you can do to look after your mental health and wellbeing in tough times. Feeling connected and valued by other people is a fundamental human need. Both giving and getting support has been shown to increase happiness levels and wellbeing.

"It's been more difficult for many men to stay connected during COVID because the things they typically rely on to get together such as watching or playing sport or going to the pub either haven't been available or have been severely reduced.



“Technology played a vital role in keeping us connected during lockdown when there was no other option but with the further easing of social distancing restrictions next week, we would urge men to think about how to reconnect with friends they haven’t seen or been in touch with and start rebuilding those friendships.”

The ‘Movember Six’ healthy habits to support your mental wellbeing:

- **Do activities that give you purpose and meaning.** This could be learning a new skill, taking on a challenge or helping someone else.
- **Spend time with people who make you feel positive.** It’s important for your mental health to make the time to catch up regularly and re-establish relationships that have drifted during lockdown.
- **Talk to people you trust when times get tough.** Confiding in someone about an issue that’s bothering you can help you stay mentally healthy. It isn’t a sign of emotional weakness – getting someone else’s perspective can help you see a situation in a new light.
- **Increase physical activity.** Exercise doesn’t just benefit your physical health it also raises self-esteem and positively changes your mood.
- **Support others in bad times.** Research suggests that helping a mate also creates positive feelings in ourselves and gives us feelings of purpose and self-worth.
- **Speak to a health professional when you need to.** We all have times when our mood is low but if the feelings don’t pass and start to interfere with your life, it could be a sign that it’s time to call in an expert.

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*** About the research**

The research was commissioned by Movember and conducted by The Good Side, a UK-based insights and social change agency. The quantitative survey was conducted over two waves in November 2020 and January 2021 with a total of 3,000 men surveyed representative of the national population in the UK (1,000 men), Canada (1,000 men) and Australia (1,000 men). In addition, 800 men identified as representing specific target audiences for Movember’s media intervention work in the UK, Canada and Australia were also included in the sample. The 20 minute survey asked men about their mental health during COVID-19, and explored themes around relationships, social connection, loneliness, dealing with pressures during COVID-19, masculinity in today’s world and their outlook for the future.



** The World Health Organisation

Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) is a self-reported measure of current mental wellbeing and depression screening in the last two weeks.

About Movember

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects around the world.

In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit [movember.com](https://www.movember.com).