



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Saturday May 8, 2021**

# **STUDY: 1 IN 5 HASN'T SEEN MATES IN SIX MONTHS OR MORE**

*Close to 4.5 million lonely Aussies could be missing out on mental health benefits of close friendships*

**One in five Aussies (22%) has not arranged to catch up with a close mate in six months or more, potentially putting them at risk of social isolation, loneliness and even mental health issues, according to men's health charity Movember.**

A YouGov survey of 1,029 Australians aged 18 and older, released today, coincides with Movember's official day of mateship, MAYEIGHT. Held each year on May 8, the annual 'date to catch up with a mate' urges blokes to reach out and reconnect with a mate they haven't seen in a while, in an effort to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

In addition, the survey found that 28% of people say they haven't organised a proper catch up because they are too busy in their everyday lives, while men are twice as likely as women to admit they are not good at organising catch-ups.

Two out of three (63%) Aussies had between 1-4 people in their life they would count as close mates, 23% identified just 1-2 people. Less than one in ten (8%) say they do not consider anyone in their life a close mate.

Brendan Maher, Movember's Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, says the figures are concerning.

"When we apply these results to the wider population, we estimate there could be up to one million men in Australia missing out on having that vital support network around them, which is particularly important when you are going through a rough time," he said.

"Anyone who is socially isolated or lonely is at greater risk of mental health issues including anxiety, depression and even suicide, yet we know that men in particular aren't great at asking for, or seeking support, at the best of times. Males account for three out of every four suicides in Australia, so we should never underestimate the power of reconnecting with our mates. It can be life-saving."

Maher added: "This is Movember's sixth annual MAYEIGHT campaign and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our message is more important than ever. The past year has been tough for many, but we do hope that more people can recognise the crucial role that social

# **CHANGING THE FACE OF MEN'S HEALTH**



connections play in bringing meaning and joy to our lives, as well as the positive effect that friendships have on our mental health and wellbeing.”

The study also highlighted a drop off in mateship as we age, with Gen Xers aged between 41-56 the least socially connected of the younger generations. Gen Z (73%) and Millennials (70%) are more likely than Gen X (63%) to have caught up with a close mate in the past month. Gen X (29%) was also less likely than Gen Z (40%) or Millennials (31%) to have 5-10 people they’d consider ‘close mates.’ Among Baby Boomers, 10% had not caught up with a mate for 12 months or longer.

Figures released last year by Movember as part of a global study carried out by the Social Research Centre, found that a third of men noted increased feelings of loneliness during the first six weeks of the COVID-19 outbreak, with older men the group most likely to experience poorer social connection.

Clinical psychologist Dr Zac Seidler, Movember’s Director of Mental Health Training, says previous studies show men have fewer close friends than women and these numbers continue to drop as men hit their 30s.

“While we can all be guilty of getting bogged down with life and being too busy to make time for mates, when you’re connected socially, there is a fantastic flow-on effect that benefits other areas of your life,” he said.

“This MAYEIGHT, it would be great to see people commit to organising that long-overdue catch up – in-person if possible. If you’re struggling to fit it in, try ‘repurposing’ some of the time you might be spending staring at a screen.

“On average, Australians spend almost 75 hours per month watching TV, if we can reclaim just a few of those hours to catch up with a mate, it can do wonders for your mental health.”

For more information visit [movember.com/mayeight](https://movember.com/mayeight). *Need a hand having a conversation with a mate who’s struggling?* Try [Movember Conversations](https://conversations.movember.com), a free interactive digital tool that guides you through tricky scenarios from job loss and social isolation to family pressures. Visit [conversations.movember.com](https://conversations.movember.com)

**ENDS**

**Crisis support can be found at Lifeline: (13 11 14 and [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au))**

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#### **About Movember**

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men’s health on a global scale. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programs 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 focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.



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)