



Movember releases new study, encourages Canadians to check-in with men in their life during COVID-19 pandemic

Charity unveils findings with Movember Conversations launch, a new online tool aimed at helping Canadians understand how best to check-in with a friend

- Canadian men are **less likely** than women to report having sought help to manage COVID-19 life changes, with 49% of men seeking help compared to 58% if women
- **A quarter of Canadian men (25%)** have not checked-in with friends or family to find how their coping, compared to 13% of women
- **6 out of 10** Canadian men aged 45+ report feeling less connected to their friends following lockdown restrictions

Toronto, Canada | Wednesday, May 20, 2019 - Eight out of 10 Canadian men find it helpful when people ask if they're having a difficult time, yet four out of ten Canadian men (40 per cent) say no one has asked how they're coping during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report released by global men's health charity, Movember.

The research released today aims to explore the impact of COVID-19 on social connections particularly when it comes to men, revealing a quarter (25 per cent) of Canadian men surveyed had not checked in with friends or family to find out how they were doing during the crisis, compared with only 13 per cent of women.

The survey of 1,430 Canadians, including 794 men aged 18 or older, was commissioned by Movember and carried out by the Social Research Centre, forming part of a global study of over 5,700 respondents internationally, investigating the impact COVID-19 was having on men globally. It found that approximately a third of Canadian men felt their relationships with friends (32 per cent) and work colleagues (also 32 per cent) had weakened since stay-at-home and physical distancing restrictions had been imposed.

The research also showed Canadian men were less likely to seek help (from family, friends or other sources) as a means to helping them manage changes to their life due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with only 49 per cent reporting they had sought help, compared to 58 per cent of women.

In Canada, older men as a group are most likely to have experienced poorer social connection, with 57 per cent of Canadian men aged 45+ years reporting they feel less connected to their friends since the COVID-19 outbreak, compared with 48 per cent of men aged 18 to 24 years.

It's no surprise mental health continues to be a central theme in the COVID-19 rhetoric globally, and for good reason. The study showed over a quarter of Canadian men (27 per cent) reported their mental health had worsened compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19 and a third (34 per cent) stated they felt lonely more often. Prior to COVID-19, in Canada three out of four deaths by suicide are men, and it is the second leading cause of death in men aged 15 – 44. However, the role of social connectivity on mental health is well documented, showing positive impacts on alleviating feelings of anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges. With social isolation as the 'new normal', it is clear there are heightened mental health risks, and sadly these results also show that Canadians are more likely to check-in on how female friends and family are coping since the COVID-19 pandemic began, than they are for their male friends and family.

"These findings indicate that guys are hungry for connection and in need of support in these trying times," says Zac Seidler, Director of Mental Health Training for Movember globally. "As the country slowly gets back to business, the residual stress of this pandemic may bubble to the surface and some may struggle more so than others. While we know these conversations can often feel uncomfortable or awkward, checking in on your friends and loved ones can make the world of difference. Don't assume they don't want to be bothered or don't want to talk. Just making the call can go a long way."



Movember is committed to tackling the crisis in men's mental health through its investment in early intervention and prevention programs. According to Brendan Maher, Movember Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, this is why the charity has launched *Movember Conversations*, a new easy-to-use interactive online tool, that offers practical guidance on how to start a difficult conversation and support someone who is struggling.

"People know it's important to have conversations to support others; however, confidence and knowledge around how to do this with men is low," says Brendan. "What's making things even harder are the challenges thrown up by COVID-19, and its consequences of physical distancing, job loss, financial stress and strain on relationships."

Based on R U OK?'s ALEC conversation framework (Ask, Listen, Encourage action, Check in) and guided by an international team of mental health experts, *Movember Conversations* is a free interactive digital tool (available in English and French) that presents a number of scenarios relevant to today's world including job loss, social isolation and family pressures. It uses simulated conversations to explore and practise how anyone might navigate a difficult conversation with someone they care about.

"We hope that this tool will encourage people to have conversations with men they care about who might be going through a tough time," Brendan adds. "*Movember Conversations* gives them the practical skills to do that."

CANADIAN CASE STUDY: Toronto-based Arman was coming up to his year mark with a start-up events company when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada. He had taken a risk the previous July, leaving a company he had worked at for nearly 12 years in favour of a new passion. But in March 2020, he was let go – a result of the economic uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. During the next few months, Arman went through a series of emotions, struggling with a lack of feeling 'productive', the 'Groundhog Day' notion of doing the same thing each day, and the overall loss of 'routine' often found through work. "It was a rough time for me personally, a bit of a slap in the face. It was the first time I'd really made a decision to take a risk by taking that job, and for weeks I would think "what if I had stayed with my long-time company. But the mind tries to play tricks on you, and I was able to change my general mindset to focus instead on the time I would be able to spend with my wife. It's important for men to recognize that it's okay to be upset and feel down but recognize when you need to get help or chat with someone."

Movember Conversations can found at conversations.movember.com

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About Movember:

Movember is the leading charity dedicated to changing the face of men's health around the world. With a singular goal to stop men dying too young, the charity supports the following causes: prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention. Since 2003, the support of more than 5 million participants has funded over 1,250 innovative projects across more than 20 countries. To donate or learn more, please visit Movember.com.

Note to Editors:

Movember strongly encourages the inclusion of appropriate help-seeking information for stories about suicide and mental illness. For crisis support at any time, day or night, we encourage Canadians to reach out to one of the following services: Suicide Prevention Service (Toll Free: 1-833-456-4566 - ENG, 1-866-277-3553 – FR) or the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868). For more help-seeking information, visit Movember.com/findhelp.

ⁱ SRC conducted a survey through an online panel with 5,737 people aged 18 or older across the UK, US, Canada and Australia (approximately 1,430 respondents in each country). This included 809 men



in the UK, 804 men in the US, 794 men in Canada and 806 men in Australia. Response quotas were set based on age, region and gender and the final data were weighted to reflect the profiles of each country. Fieldwork ran from 22nd April – 4th May 2020.