



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Movember calls for digital or technology-based global solutions aimed at helping men maintain social connectedness amidst isolation**

*Men's health charity launches Social Connections Challenge in five markets - including Canada - with aim to support men experiencing isolation and loneliness in 2020 and beyond*

**Toronto, Canada | August 17, 2020** – Men's health charity Movember is on a global hunt for fresh, innovative technology-based ideas that leverage strategies to address feelings of loneliness, isolation and improve social connectedness in men, strengthening their overall mental health. Today the Social Connections Challenge, the second offering under the broader Social Innovators Challenge portfolio, will launch across five markets and, through crowdsourcing, aims to find and develop ideas that will help maintain or strengthen social connections and address isolations in groups of at-risk men. As many as 75 ideas from Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and the UK will be shortlisted, with a goal of selecting 16 ideas and investing \$3.22 million overall. In Canada, up to five ideas will be selected for co-development with Movember at an investment between \$90-225K toward each idea.

A timely debut, the Social Connections Challenge comes amidst increased feelings of isolation and uncertainty many are facing as a result of the global COVID-19 crisis. In May, Movember launched a global survey whose results indicated that nearly a quarter of men globally (23 per cent) reported their mental health had worsened in the first six weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, while almost a third of men (30 per cent) noted increased feelings of loneliness with the highest percentage (71%) among young men aged 18-29 years. Locally, the research revealed that a third of Canadian men felt their relationships with friends and colleagues (both 32 per cent) had weakened since stay-at-home measures had been imposed, while also showing Canadian men were less likely to seek help in managing changes in their life due to the COVID-19 pandemic than women.<sup>1</sup>

Movember Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Brendan Maher, said strong social connections were a key protective factor for men against anxiety, depression and potentially suicide. "It's concerning that in the midst of this pandemic, Movember research tells us that 33 per cent of men admitted they felt lonely more often.<sup>1</sup> We've been isolated from our usual support networks and coping mechanisms which can have a huge impact on mental health and wellbeing," he said. "There is a critical need to ease the anxiety and strain resulting from being physically apart."

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



The challenge will ensure funding is directed to the following priority groups, with a focus on those who are likely to be at greater risk of social isolation due to geographical location, socio-economic status, gender and/or cultural background, including:

- Older men who live alone
- Men who have experienced recent relationship breakdown/family separation
- Men undergoing treatment for prostate/testicular cancer who are experiencing social isolation
- Bereaved men experiencing loss and managing grief while socially isolated
- Men living with a mental health challenge who are at risk of substance misuse due to social isolation or who are in recovery
- Young men affected by education interruption or unemployment due to the economic downturn
- Men from culturally diverse backgrounds who are unemployed and/or socially isolated

The Social Connections Challenge was born out of a similarly structured Movember initiative, the Social Innovators Challenge, which launched in 2015 and funded active programming that looked to encourage men to build positive relationships and increase levels of social connections. The original Social Innovator's Challenge received an overwhelming response with more than 426 submissions globally. Twelve initiatives progressed through the first round of funding.

“In this COVID-19 year, the way we connect is evolving. We see Movember's Social Connections Challenge as an opportunity to shake things up and leverage the amazing ways that people have been keeping men connected using technology,” he says. “In addition to funding, being part of the Social Connections Challenge includes support and expertise from the Movember team in order to maximize potential and impact. We test, learn and find out exactly what works for men, so that the most promising programs can be scaled to reach more men, more quickly. Finding ideas that have been started in the community and are showing promise is a really exciting opportunity.”

**Submissions for the Social Connections Challenge open on August 17, 2020 and will close on October 15, 2020. Individuals whose ideas have been shortlisted will be notified by the end of Movember. For more information, or to find out how to submit your idea, visit [movember.com](https://movember.com) or [HERE](#).**

**ENDS**

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**About the Social Innovators Challenge**



The Social Innovators Challenge was developed in 2015 following Movember-funded [Beyond Blue research into men's social connectedness](#) and the impact it has on mental wellbeing. The research showed that as men enter middle age, they experience a decline in social connectedness and in turn, lower levels of social support - risk factors for anxiety, depression and suicide. This transitional period, coupled with social influences like a growing trend in competitive workplace cultures and increasing commitments to work and families, suggests men within this demographic experience increased feelings of isolation and loneliness.

### **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](http://movember.com)

*<sup>1</sup>A survey carried out by the Social Research Centre (and commissioned by Movember) 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.*