



# **COVID-19 AND MEN: CALL FOR ACTION**

## **A statement by Global Action on Men's Health**

**May 2020**

Men are significantly more likely than women to die as a result of COVID-19 infection. The data is still far from complete but clearly shows much higher numbers of male deaths. In some countries, twice as many men are dying from COVID-19.

The reasons for men's higher mortality rates are not yet clear but are likely to include both biological and behavioural factors, including a weaker immune response and higher smoking rates. Men are also more likely than women to be affected by a range of underlying conditions – cardiovascular disease and diabetes, for example – that increase their risk of death. Certain groups of men, such as those who are older, have low incomes or are from certain ethnic groups, are particularly vulnerable.

There are concerns that the employment impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the psychological stresses caused by lockdowns are leading to higher levels of isolation, alcohol misuse, problem gambling, depression, anxiety and suicide in men. More men are likely to experience relationship problems and many separated fathers will have reduced contact with their children.

At the same time, many of the social and community services that normally support men have been suspended or restricted. It is likely that more men will delay seeking, or have to wait longer for, medical help for a wide range of serious conditions. In the longer-term, the economic downturn will almost certainly have a major impact on men's mental health.

Women also face major problems caused by COVID-19. As the majority of healthcare workers and carers, they are exposed to a high risk of infection. Gender-based violence has increased during lockdowns. A recession will have a significant impact on women's employment and incomes. Women are also far less likely than men to be in senior decision-making roles concerning the pandemic and its social and economic impacts.

Global Action on Men's Health is calling for:

- Gender-responsive actions at the global, national and local levels that take full account of the specific needs of men and boys as well as women and girls during the pandemic and its aftermath.
- The collection and fast-track publication of sex-disaggregated data on COVID-19 infection and mortality at all levels.
- Data must also be further disaggregated to show how outcomes by sex intersect with age, income, race and other key variables.
- Research to understand better the causes of men's higher mortality and how it can most effectively be addressed. This must take full account of the intersectional impacts.
- Research into the wider impact of COVID-19 on the mental and physical health of men and boys as well as on issues concerning their employment, education, personal relationships and family life. Account should be taken of new opportunities to increase men's involvement in parenting and caring and to improve work/life balance through greater home-working.
- The development and deployment of gender-responsive health promotion interventions to reduce men's risk of infection. Evidence of good practice in this field should be rapidly and widely disseminated.
- Sustained support for organisations supporting men and boys, including for employment, education, mental health, alcohol and gambling issues. Organisations that work with male perpetrators and male victims of domestic violence also have an important role to play.
- A focus on addressing the underlying conditions that are linked to men's higher mortality from COVID-19 and which in their own right have a significant impact on men's health outcomes.

Global Action on Men's Health believes that COVID-19 has exposed deep, long-established and widely-overlooked problems in men's health. These must be tackled strategically and systematically by gender-responsive research, policies and practices.

We stand ready to work with health organisations and others at all levels who are ready to rise to the challenge of creating better health for men and for all.

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