Middle-Aged Men and Suicide in Ireland

‘Men in the Middle’
Men’s Health Symposium

Dr Steevens’ Hospital

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Introduction
Why Middle-Aged Men? - Suicide Rates

Male Suicide Rate 4.4 Times Greater

0-19 Yrs Old
20-39 Yrs Old
40-59 Yrs Old
60+ Yrs Old

Suicide Rate Per 100,000

Year


*Data for 2016 is provisional.
Why Middle-Aged Men? - Suicide Rates

Suicide Rate of 26.4 per 100,000 in 2014

EU Suicide Rate of 24.8 per 100,000 in 2014
Why Middle-Aged Men? – Self-Harm Rates

Higher Lethality of Self-Harms Acts Used by Males

Higher Risk of Suicide Following Self-Harm Act for Males

Self-Harm Rate Per 100,000

All Ages

Self-Harm Rate Per 100,000

40-59 Yrs Old

Self-Harm Rate Per 100,000


Suicide Risk Factors (WHO, 2014)

**Individual**
- Previous Suicide Attempt
- Job/Financial Loss

**Health Systems & Society**
- Mental Health
- Access to Means of Suicide

**Community**
- Discrimination
- Trauma/Abuse

**Relationship**
- Sense of Isolation
- Relationship Problems

**Risk Factors**
- Alcohol/Substance Misuse
Suicide Protective Factors (WHO, 2014)

- Lifestyle Practice of Positive Coping Strategies and Wellbeing
- Spiritual and Religious Beliefs

Strong Personal Connections
Explore the factors underpinning the high suicide rates among middle-aged men at risk of marginalisation in the Republic of Ireland, with a view to providing more effective and gender specific programmes, services and resources that support their mental health and wellbeing.
What Did We Do?

- Study Design
- Recruitment
- Qualitative Research
- Purposive and Snowball Sampling
- Research Approach
- Data Analysis
- Data Collection
- Focus Groups and Phone Interviews
Participants: Men and Service Providers

- Gay Men
- Transgender Men
- Traveller Men
- Male Victims of Domestic Violence
- Non-Irish National Men
- Farmers
- Divorced Fathers
- Unemployed Men
- Rurally Isolated Men

- Mental Health Organisations
- Men’s Health Expert Group
- Community Based Workers with a Remit for Men’s Health
- Statutory Mental Health Services
- Community and Voluntary Organisations
- GPs
- Defence Forces
What Did We Find?

Marginalised Masculinities

Support Seeking and ‘Coping’ Mechanisms

Negotiating the Dynamics of Engaging Middle-Aged Men
Theme 1: Marginalised Masculinities

Societal Challenges

Mid-Life Transitions

Life and Career Opportunities

Subordinated Identities

Rejection

Withdrawal

Isolation

“We’re the last generation before the huge change out there...sometimes you think am I part of this world or that one?”
Alan, Rural Isolated Man.

“It’s the shame...they want them [new shoes] but you can’t get them... that would depress you. The Travelling man is the provider.” Liam, Traveller Man.

“Walk into a pub... you get refused. You feel that small, you feel like scum”. Joe, Traveller Man.
“Men were usually the breadwinner in our generation. I think men feel they have lost their way or they are not needed as much as they used to be.” Leonard, Rural Isolated Man.

“Plans you would have had for the future, and you are in that future, and it hasn’t happened the way you expected...possibilities, opportunities.” Dermot, Gay Man.

“Complete isolation. Your marriage breaks down, your kids no longer need you, you haven’t a job to go to...you need social interaction, when you don’t have that it makes you...think what is the point of being here? Simon, Divorced Father.
Theme 2: Support Seeking and ‘Coping’ Mechanisms

“It’s not like a stich in time saves nine, you wait till the whole thing is ripped up to shreds before you ask for help. Why? Man up… things you hear all of your life.” Oscar, Transgender Man.

Barriers to Support Seeking and Triggers to/Pathways for Support Seeking

‘Unhelpful’ and ‘Helpful’ Coping Mechanisms

“For a group of men, the love in the room was so strong and so intense”. Jack, Unemployed Man, Personal Biography.
Theme 2: Support Seeking and ‘Coping’ Mechanisms

“They say men don’t talk... men have no problem talking whatsoever... Education is a huge obviously for me – making them aware. Colin, Unemployed Man.

Barriers to Support Seeking and Triggers to/Pathways for Support Seeking

‘Unhelpful’ and ‘Helpful’ Coping Mechanisms

“Drink is a substitute to make you feel good... it takes you out of the dark place. You wake up in the morning and you are back to square one” Joe, Traveller Man.
“Get the tea on...begin with sports, the weather...if you try launch into a conversation about mental health they will shut down” Ciara, Mental Health Organisation.

“it was as 12 week programme ...it was fashioned to us... there was flexibility and ownership to it. Imagine being part of a structured programme and thinking we ran this ourselves? We thought we were great lads.

Paul, Unemployed Man.
Engaging Middle-Aged Men in Suicide Prevention Model
Recommendations and Next Steps

**Advocacy**
Identify and facilitate key advocates to drive the agenda on middle-aged men and suicide prevention in the Republic of Ireland.

**Connection**
Support middle-age men at risk of marginalisation to build and strengthen relationships with friends, family and service providers.

**Communication**
Increase lines of communication between services to better support middle-aged men’s mental health and wellbeing.

**Education and Training**
Develop specific education and training programmes for both middle-aged men and service providers to support middle-aged men’s mental health and wellbeing.

**Stigma Reduction & Awareness**
Reduce stigma relating to mental health and to men seeking support for a mental health issues, and raise awareness across society on the issue of middle-aged male suicide.

**Support**
Extend the availability of statutory mental health services nationwide and increase the accessibility to services for marginalised groups of middle-aged men.
Recommendations and Next Steps