



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **NEW RESEARCH: STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIAN MEN**

Among Australian men, there is a two way association between depression and social support, according to a new report from The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

The report, which forms part of AIFS' longitudinal study, *Ten to Men*, found that over time, lower levels of social support were associated with greater depressive symptoms while greater depressive symptoms were associated with lower self-perceived social support.

Lead researcher, Dr Brendan Quinn, said that social support, under any circumstances, is important.

“Social support can improve resilience to stress, enhance your quality of life and help you work through challenging life events. When someone is experiencing depression, this can be of particular importance,” Dr Quinn said.

“Some people with depression might withdraw from their family, friends and other support networks, which could possibly worsen the severity of their depressive symptoms. Conversely, when levels of social support were higher, depression tended to be lower in severity,” Dr Quinn said.

According to the report, 72% of men had ‘someone to count on to listen when needing to talk’ most or all of the time. Less available was ‘having someone to share private worries and fears with’, with only 61% of men saying this was available to them most or all of the time.

“For a variety of reasons, many men have smaller social networks than women. Having someone who you can trust to share your thoughts and feelings with can be incredibly important to improve and maintain quality of life and mental wellbeing,” Dr Quinn said.

The report found that certain sub-groups of males were more likely to experience depression, or low social support, or both.. For example, older males, men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those living in more socioeconomically disadvantaged areas were more likely to experience lower self-perceived social support. Being unemployed or out of the labour force and lower levels of education were also associated with experiencing more severe depressive symptoms.

“There are certain socio-demographics that are susceptible to more severe depressive symptoms, lower levels of social support or both. While many men would benefit from interventions to create greater social connectedness, it’s important that we pay particular attention to these groups to work to improve mental wellbeing,” Dr Quinn said.

Read the full report at: [http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/docs/3nhAkObfz4j97/2021\\_TTM\\_Social-connectedness-among-Australian-males.pdf](http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/docs/3nhAkObfz4j97/2021_TTM_Social-connectedness-among-Australian-males.pdf)

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AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them. See [aifs.gov.au](http://aifs.gov.au) for more information.

*Ten to Men is a national research initiative aimed at filling the gaps in knowledge about why males on average have poorer health outcomes than females, and why certain groups of males have poorer health than males in general. The knowledge gained in the study will be used to improve programs and policies for male health in Australia.*

*The study is longitudinal – meaning that we will return to participants every few years for an update so that we can understand how changing life stages and circumstances might affect health and wellbeing over time.*