

Centre for Policy Research on
Men and Boys

Missing Men 2026

Men and Boys' Scorecard

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Foreword by Nick Isles

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Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys

The Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys (CPRMB) is a research organisation and think tank dedicated to understanding and addressing issues that disproportionately affect men and boys in the UK. Its vision is a world where men and boys of all backgrounds thrive in their families and communities; one where the sexes can rise together.

It does this by supporting the development of new research, thinking and insight into policy affecting men and boys. The focus is on critical areas where they face unique challenges, promoting policy change, and fostering wider awareness and understanding. CPRMB concentrates on seven core areas: Economy, Employment and Skills; Education; Health; Fatherhood and Family; Criminal Justice; Male Identity; and Portrayal of Men in Media and Culture.

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Foreword

A major theme of the work of the CPRMB is understanding why men may be failing and why boys may be struggling. There is never a simple solution, one simple answer – the magic bullet that creates the lightbulb moment. However, solutions that might help, that might work, that might ease distress and bring hope (to coin a phrase of the moment) must be rooted in evidence. Missing Men presents that evidence.

The data tell us two things. Firstly, that there is a long way to go to resolve the issues that most affect men – issues such as worklessness, homelessness, sickness and idleness. These were identified by Sir William Beveridge as four of the five giants in his revolutionary report into the major ills affecting Britain in 1942 – a report that underpinned the founding of the welfare state after the Second World War. We need a new Beveridge process to rejuvenate the British state.

Secondly, that there are – here and there – some seeming green shoots; some straws to clutch at perhaps, such as an improved educational performance by boys in some aspects of their learning; in workforce contribution (the CALI rate) going up and in homicides going down.

Too many aspects of Missing Men reveal the deep-rooted issues a great number of men and boys face in many parts of Britain. Why are there significant regional disparities in health outcomes? Why are alcohol-related deaths so much higher in Scotland? Why is Wales seeing an increase in male suicide rates despite a small contraction in England? Why are educational outcomes for Traveller, Caribbean (black and mixed) and White Working-Class boys so miserable?

Answering these questions and more is why CPRMB has set about establishing a Boys' Education Commission; is conducting research into Men's Community Health Groups supported by the Randal Foundation and has been commissioned to investigate what other countries might teach us about developing an education system that can provide better outcomes for boys as well as girls. And, there is so much more to come and to do.

This edition of Missing Men, compiled by CPRMB's newest recruit, Research Officer Martha Lucas, gives everyone who reads and uses it a snapshot into the state of men in Britain today. If we want to have men for all seasons, we must fix the foundations that help them grow from boys into men; that provide education that works for all; that offer a healthcare system that protects and prevents and an economy that offers good work for everyone who wants to work and can work.

Then, and only then, might we hope to have the good society we seek.

Nick Isles

Director, Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys

Executive Summary

The Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys (CPRMB) publishes a unique annual “Missing Men” report that, through taking a business scorecard approach, gives an overall snapshot on the state of men and boys across four essential areas - employment, education health and crime.

Overall, the findings show life for many men and boys is still worse than before the pandemic. Unemployment is increasing, mental health is worsening and the number of men in prison continues to grow. On the flipside, physical health is starting to improve, and educational outcomes are gradually getting better - albeit a significant gender attainment gap remains. There is a no identikit “man or “boy” so race, place and class, as well as many other factors, all play a role.

The report shows that too many men and boys in the UK are still missing. They are missing from the economy. They are missing out on education. They are missing from society and families. We need to get men and boys back to at least an overall state of “pre-pandemic norms”. To flourish, our economy and society need the energy and skills of men and boys and women and girls.

The key recommendation of this report is therefore for the government at all levels, the policymaking and academic community, and employers and the third sector to apply a gender-sensitive lens to how they approach the challenges facing men and boys in the UK. Gender considerations must be central and not sidelined.

- Employment outcomes for men and boys remain subdued. Unemployment rates for men are rising and are higher than pre-pandemic levels. The number of economically inactive men who want a job has increased in the last year; this suggests there is desire, but not opportunity and ability, for work. In addition, the number of disabled men who are unemployed has grown.
- However, those men in work are taking more time off sick. Sickness rates and the number of workdays lost to sickness among men are growing.
- Workforce contribution (Compositionally Adjusted Labour Input, or CALI) is the only measure by which outcomes for men are improving and have exceeded pre-pandemic levels.
- By contrast, female employment has now exceeded (72.3% in 2025) pre-pandemic rates (72.1%) in a positive trend. Female unemployment rates, like male unemployment rates, are rising (to 4.5% in 2025, from 3.6% in 2019).
- Overall, exam results for boys from early years education to A Levels are broadly improving in a positive trend. However, attainment continues to diverge significantly between boys and girls. While 75.3% of girls in early years education had reached a good level of development by age 5 in 2024/5, only 61.6% of boys had met the same standards. This gap emerges concerningly early in a boy’s educational journey and continues into SATs and GCSEs.
- Moreover, results patterns vary distinctly based on ethnicity and disadvantage status. Consistently, boys of Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Caribbean (black and mixed) ethnic groups are underachieving in exam results, across KS2 and KS4. These trends are broadly mirrored across disadvantage status, with the exception of disadvantaged white boys, for whom disadvantage status most significantly contributes to underperforming.

- The already low number of male entrants into teaching is falling; the acceptance rate of men into higher education is stagnating; the number of long-term male NEETs is rising. The upcoming findings from the Boys' Education Commission will diagnose these issues at a deeper level.
- Meanwhile permanent exclusion rates for boys in primary schools in England continue to grow and remain higher than pre-pandemic levels.
- More than two years life expectancy separates men in England and Scotland, and over a year's life expectancy separates men in England and Wales. The data strengthens the case for regionally focused men's health campaigns being vital.
- In contrast, men's mental health outcomes are not following the same positive trend. While male suicide rates in England have decreased by 0.1 per 100,000 from 2023 to 2024, suicide rates across both England and Wales remain higher than pre-pandemic. Male suicide rates have risen sharply in Wales in the last year and are higher than those in England. A wide margin continues to exist between male and female suicide rates, where male suicide rates are at least 3 times higher. Furthermore, male suicide rates vary dramatically across the regions in England.
- There are approximately 39 times more second homes without usual residents in England than there are male rough sleepers. If each rough sleeper was allocated one of these homes, there would still be an estimated 151,032 second homes in England without usual residents.
- Scotland's male homicide rate is more than twice that of England and Wales, at 30 per million.

Introduction

Over the past year, some significant policy steps have been taken towards improving the physical, mental and social health of men and boys. On 19th November 2025 (International Men's Day), the Department of Health and Social Care launched the first ever Men's Health Strategy across England. The government has said that it remains committed to supporting men and boys including with ministers continuing to be given specific responsibilities. Its National Youth Strategy launched in December and its review into NEETs chaired by Alan Milburn are due this autumn. However, though policy gains have been made, the gravity of the issues facing men and boys is severe.

The number of young men Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) remains significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. In Q4 of 2025, there were 452,640 male NEETs aged 16–24 in England. This is more than twice as many men as the daily capacity of Glastonbury Festival. Given the importance of work for purpose, identity and agency, this alarmingly high level of men outside employment, education or training is a cause for societal and economic concern.

Moreover, there is a significant gap in educational attainment by gender (and influenced by disadvantage status and ethnicity). Boys are underperforming at every stage of education – in early years development, SATs, GCSEs, A levels and higher education. Within schools, boys continue to be under-engaged and over-punished; the result is increasing permanent exclusion rates of young boys in primary school. Across the academic year 2024/5, 1,276 boys were excluded from primary school. That is the equivalent of more than 42 full standard-sized classes of boys being excluded permanently from their schools before the age of 12. Better guidance and support are needed to help boys thrive in school.

Health inequalities are stark. Male mortality rates – 1,097 per 100,000 in 2024 – continue to be higher than female mortality rates – 797 in 2024 – and are not spread evenly. Life expectancy for men is more than two years longer in England than in Scotland, and mortality rates for men from cancer in Wales are double those in England. Data suggests physical health inequalities need to be considered with a gender-specific lens, which accounts for regional inequalities.

Mental health inequalities must also be considered. While male suicide rates in England have decreased marginally in England over the last recorded year (from 17.1 per 100,000 in 2023 to 17.0 per 100,000 in 2024) they remain at nearly the highest levels this century. In Wales, not only have they risen, but the male suicide rate is also the highest since records began.

Rough sleeping continues to harm male health, with 3,938 men sleeping rough in England in 2025. According to the most recent data, there are 39 times more second homes in England without usual residents than there are male rough sleepers. If each rough sleeper was allocated a home, more than 151,000 homes would still remain routinely empty.

The adult male prison population in England and Wales continues to grow. In 2025, there were 82,282 men in prison – beyond 3,000 more than pre-pandemic. The number of men in prison across the whole of the UK (more than 91,000) consistently exceeds the capacity of Wembley Stadium. Female prison populations are falling as the male incarcerated population continues to rise.

This report is the second annual Missing Men scorecard which aims to trace the outcomes of men and boys across different key sectors – employment; education; health; and crime. It uses credible data – primarily from the Office of National Statistics and the UK Government – to offer

a comprehensive assessment of whether outcomes are improving for men and boys across the board. Where possible, it contextualises data against similar outcomes for women and girls. This is not to compete, but to compare and contextualise. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to a world where outcomes for boys and girls, for men and women, are more equal, more positive, and more collaborative, for the benefit of all.

The report focuses on men and boys in England and Wales; however, some primary datasets cover all of the UK. There is a lack of consistency in the availability, timing and applicability of datasets across the four UK nations, meaning the report is not always able to provide a 'whole' UK dataset; where possible, the report does provide this data. The figures have focused on the last dataset available for 2025 to ensure a consistent picture over time and are accurate as of 11th August 2026.

Lastly, the title 'Missing Men' stems from the Centre's core vision of a world where men and boys of all backgrounds thrive in their families and communities and where the sexes can rise together by supporting each other. Men and boys who are not thriving are missing out on the great lives and opportunities they could and should have.

Key

For the scorecard, a simple key has been created. This will be used over time and will show a continuing picture.

There are three measures:

- (1) Comparison between the penultimate dataset (2024 or 2023/4) and the dataset closest to the pre-pandemic period (often 2019 or 2018/19). This can be seen by PP-2023/24 in the data example below.
- (2) Comparison between the two latest available datasets (for example, 2024 and 2025) which shows whether the most recent data is improving or not. This can be seen by 2024/25 in the data example below.
- (3) The latest dataset and the dataset closest to the start of the pandemic. This is denoted by the column "PrePan" (PP) which shows whether the lives of men and boys have gone back to a pre-pandemic 'normal'. This can be seen by PP-2024/25 in the data example below.

Key

Red	Worsening or Negative Data from previous period
Amber	No Improvement
Green	Improving or Positive Data from previous period

Data Example

Data	PP-2023/24	2024/25	PP-2024/25
Measure	The 2023/24 data is worse than the pre-pandemic data	The 2024/25 data is better than the 2023/24 data	The 2024/25 data is still worse though than the pre-pandemic data

Scorecard

Scorecard

Employment

Summary

Key employment outcomes for men and boys remain weaker than pre-pandemic.

Unemployment rates for men are rising and are higher than pre-pandemic levels. The number of economically inactive men who want a job has increased in the last year. This suggests there is desire, but not opportunity and ability, for work. This is likely to be frustrating for those men.

Sickness rates and the number of workdays lost to sickness among men are growing, as is the proportion of disabled men who are unemployed. Together, this strengthens the necessity for the targeted Men's Health Strategy, which the UK government launched in November 2025.

While the employment rate for men aged 16 to 64 has increased marginally in the last year it remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. As highlighted in the last annual Missing Men report, for the government to reach its overall employment rate target of 80%, it requires a male employment rate of 83% – given the gap in employment rates between men and women. It is therefore still 5 percentage points lower than its target and needs an estimated 1 million more working-age men to be in employment to hit this target. Workforce contribution (Compositionally Adjusted Labour Input, or CALI) is the only measure by which outcomes for men are improving and have exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

Scorecards

Table 1: Employment Rates

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Employment Rates ¹					
1.1 (UK)	Employment: Annual rate (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 77.9% 2024: 77.7% 2019: 80.2%			
1.2 (UK)	Unemployment: Annual rate (16 and over males, UK)	2025: 5.2% 2024: 4.5% 2019: 4.0%			
While male employment rates have risen slowly between 2024 and 2025, they have not reached pre-pandemic rates and male unemployment is rising faster. Male unemployment, at 5.2% this year, remains higher than female unemployment, which was 4.5%. At the end of 2025, male working-age unemployment had exceeded 1 million for the first time since 2015, however during 2026, it has started to fall slowly. By contrast, female employment has now exceeded (72.3% in 2025) pre-pandemic rates (72.1%) in a positive trend. Female unemployment rates, like male unemployment rates, are rising (to 4.5% in 2025, from 3.6% in 2019). It remains to be seen whether the government's "Youth Jobs Grant", which offers £3,000 to employers hiring eligible young people for a minimum of sixteen weeks, will have a significant impact on employment rates.					

Table 2: Workforce Contribution

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023	2024	PP-2024
Workforce Contribution²					
2.1 (UK)	Workforce contribution (CALI): Annual rate (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2024: 103.5 2023: 101.1 2022: 100 2019: 101.0			
In discussions with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there is not one single method of measuring labour productivity by gender. The closest comparator is the Compositionally Adjusted Labour Input (CALI). This aggregates underlying data for the whole economy by industry, education, age and sex categories, and accounts for both quantity (hours worked) and quality (skill level, experience and education) of labour. The figures show that the overall workforce contribution for men has increased using the ONS baseline of 100 in 2022. Despite falling in 2020 and 2021, this closest approximation to labour productivity is now in effect higher than it was in the year before the pandemic. However, in comparison, the female CALI rate for 2024 was 105.2. This means the workforce contribution of women, when accounting for quantity and quality of labour together, remains measurably higher than that of men.					

Table 3: Economic Inactivity

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Economic Inactivity³					
3.1 (UK)	Inactivity: Rate (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 17.8% 2024: 18.6% 2019: 16.4%			
3.2 (UK)	Inactivity and want a job: Q4 Rate of those who are economically inactive, (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK, October)	2025: 25.1% 2024: 22.5% 2019: 23.4%			
Despite decreasing between 2024 and 2025, rates of male economic inactivity are still higher now than the pre-pandemic period. The data suggests this is not because men do not want to work. Instead, rates of economically inactive men who want to work are rising and are notably higher than pre-pandemic. This will probably be a frustration to those men who wish to work but are unable either to find work, or complete work (for example, due to sickness). Conversely, female economic inactivity has fallen to a level lower than pre-pandemic (24.2% this year compared to 25.1% in 2019). The long-term trend shows that a smaller percentage of economically inactive women (21.6% in 2025) than men (25.1% in 2025) want a job.					

Table 4: Disability Unemployment

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Disability Unemployment⁴					
4.1 (UK)	Disability unemployment: Q4 rate (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 11.6% 2024: 8.7% 2019: 8.0%			
Unemployment rates for both disabled men and women are increasing and have been since the pandemic. In the last year, unemployment rates for disabled men have increased sharply. Moreover, disabled men are unemployed at a notably higher rate than women (11.6% in 2025 compared to 7.5% in 2025, respectively). Further research is needed to understand what drives this stark difference.					

Table 5: Sickness

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Sickness Rates⁵					
5.1 (UK)	Sickness: Rate (16 and over males, UK)	2025: 1.7% 2024: 1.6% 2019: 1.6%			
5.2 (UK)	Sickness: Annual days lost (16 and over males, UK)	2025: 72.2m 2024: 68.3m 2019: 67.2m			
5.3 (UK)	Inactivity: Q4, numbers of long-term sick (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 1.30m 2024: 1.30m 2019: 963k			
5.4 (UK)	Inactivity: Q4, numbers who want a job and are long-term sick (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 362k 2024: 359k 2019: 282k			
5.5 (UK)	Inactivity: Q4 numbers of those who want a job and are temporary sick (16- to 64-year-olds, males, UK)	2025: 53k 2024: 69k 2019: 36k			
Rates of sickness among men and women over 16 are higher than the pre-pandemic period, as are the numbers of days lost to sickness. However, female rates of sickness (2.4% in 2025) and days lost to sickness (76.6 mil) are higher than those of male. The number of men with long-term sickness is increasing, as is the number of men who are long term sick but want a job. The trends coincide and likely correlate with increasing economic inactivity due to sickness among men since the pandemic. By comparison, while there are more women who are long-term sick (1.48 mil in 2025), fewer women (319k) than men (362k) who are long-term sick want a job. This indicates the importance of employment for men, and the sustained desire by men to be working. Looking at short-term sickness, the number of men who are temporarily sick has decreased since last year but remains 17,000 higher than in 2019. There is no apparent trend between men and women who are temporarily sick but want a job, pre and post-pandemic.					

Education

Summary

Overall, exam results for boys from early years education to A level are broadly improving. 43.9% of boys in England achieved a grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSE in 2024/5, compared to 40.0% in 2018/9, and 59% of boys reached expected standards for reading, writing and maths in their SATs in 2024/5, compared to 57% in 2023/24.

However, attainment continues to diverge significantly between boys and girls. While 75.3% of girls in early years education had reached a good level of development by age 5 in 2024/5, only 61.6% of boys had met the same standards. This gap emerges concerningly early in a boy’s educational journey and continues into SATs and GCSEs.

Moreover, results vary measurably based on ethnicity and disadvantage status.

Disadvantage status indicates those who have been registered for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, children looked after by a local authority or who have left local authority care in England and Wales through adoption, a special guardianship order, a residence order or a child arrangements order. Where possible, disadvantage status is used in this report rather than Free School Meal eligibility as it incorporates obstacles beyond just the financial, thus offering the most holistic and comprehensive understanding of the disadvantage a child can face.

Consistently, British boys of Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Caribbean (Black and mixed) ethnic groups are underachieving in exam results, across KS2 and KS4. These trends are broadly mirrored across disadvantage status, though disadvantage status consistently affects white boys most significantly in comparison to other ethnic groups.

Given these variations, it is imperative that an intersectional lens is used to analyse boys’ educational attainment.

Considering education more broadly, outcomes for boys and men are concerning.

The number of male entrants into teaching is falling; the acceptance rate of men into higher education is stagnating; the number of long-term male NEETs is rising. The anticipated findings from the Boys’ Education Commission will diagnose these issues at a deeper level.

Scorecards

Table 6: Standard Assessment Tests (Key Stage 2)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023/24	2024/25	PP-2024/25
Early years and Standard Assessment Tests (Key Stage 1 and 2) ⁶					
6.1 (E)	Percentage of children with a ‘good level of development’ (boys under 5, England) (Due to changes in early years framework in September 2021, it is not possible to compare current assessment results with those from before the pandemic)	2024/25: 61.6% 2023/24: 60.7%	N/A		N/A

6.2 (E)	Percentage of students eligible for free school meals with a 'good level of development' (boys under 5, England)	2024/25: 43.5% 2023/24: 43.2%	N/A		N/A
6.3 (E)	SATS: Percentage reaching the expected standard for reading, writing and maths combined (all boys, England)	2024/25: 59% 2023/24: 57% 2018/19: 60%			
6.4 (E)	SATS: Percentage of 'disadvantaged' children reaching the expected standard for reading, writing and maths combined (boys, England)	2024/25: 44% 2023/24: 42% 2018/19: 46%			

Overall trends seem to be mirrored across boys and girls. The number of those meeting the expected standards of early development, and later for reading, writing and maths, is improving across both sexes – though SATs attainment remains lower than pre-pandemic standards.

However, despite increases in boys with a 'good level of development' in early years education, there remains a wide discrepancy between the number of girls achieving these levels (75.3% in 2024/5) and the comparative number of boys (61.6% in 2024/5). Levels of good development are concerningly low when boys are on free school meals (43.5% in 2024/5) in comparison to girls eligible for free school meals (59.3% in 2024/5) and suggests the value of an intersectional analysis of early years education. According to the government's 'Plan for Change', the government aims to have 75% of early years students reaching good levels of development by 2028. However, girls have already surpassed this goal, and boys remain far from it. Efforts to reach this goal should therefore be targeted at boys in early years education, particularly those on free school meals, to ensure cross-gender and cross-class school readiness.

In SATs, a significant gap remains between male and female attainment, and for disadvantaged boys, fewer than half (44%) are meeting expected standards in reading, writing and maths by the end of Key Stage 2.

Trends highlighting an ethnic disparity in attainment are emerging at this age. Gypsy boys are consistently failing to meet expected standards in reading, writing and maths by the greatest margin, and the next lowest performing group failing to meet expected standards is Irish Traveller boys (19% in 2024/5). It should be noted, however, that these are both statistically small populations.

The major ethnic groups of boys underperforming to the greatest extent are Caribbean boys – both Black British Caribbean boys and Mixed Ethnicity British Caribbean Boys. Given the 10-percentage point difference between Black British Caribbean boys and Black British African boys, it is vital not to consider the attainment of these children under the single banner of 'black'.

When accounting for disadvantaged status and ethnicity, these trends are broadly mirrored.

Note: 'disadvantaged' status indicates those who have been registered for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, children looked after by a local authority or who have left local authority care in England and Wales through adoption, a special guardianship order, a residence order or a child arrangements order.

Table 7: GCSEs (Key Stage 4 / Level 2)

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
GCSES (Key Stage 4/ Level 2)⁷					
7.1 (E)	GCSEs (Grade 5): Achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths (males, England)	2024/25: 43.9% 2023/24: 43.6% 2018/19: 40.0%			
The total percentage of boys achieving a Grade 5 ('good C') at GCSE continues to rise and has surpassed pre-pandemic levels. However, at 43.9%, it continues to be lower than that of girls (47% in 2024/5). Attainment for boys varies dramatically, however, by ethnicity. Gypsy boys are the ethnic group consistently achieving the least number of Grade 5s or above in English or maths GCSE. This is followed by Irish Traveller boys, mirroring the pattern established at SATS level. Moreover, Black British Caribbean boys continue to perform worse than other black boys and other boys more generally, with only 25.8% achieving a Grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE in 2024/5. These patterns differ slightly across disadvantaged status. British Caribbean boys of Mixed Ethnicity perform worse than Black British Caribbean boys and White British boys, when all are disadvantaged. This contrasts with data non-reflective of disadvantage status; in this dataset, Black British Caribbean boys do worse than Mixed Ethnicity British Caribbean boys and White boys.					

Table 8: A levels (Key Stage 5 / Level 3)

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
A levels (Key Stage 5 / Level 3)⁸					
8.1 (E)	A level: Grades A*-A (18-year-old males, England)	2025: 28.7% 2024: 27.6% 2019: 25.6%			
8.2 (E)	A level: Grade C and above (18-year-old males, England)	2025: 76.7% 2024: 74.4% 2019: 74.1%			
In England, the percentage of men achieving A*- A at A level (28.7% in 2025) has surpassed the level of women achieving these grades (28.5% in 2025). However, given that fewer males take A levels than females, in raw numbers this means that males achieved 2,420 fewer A* s than their female peers. They achieved 15,568 fewer grades at A and above, and 58,690 fewer grades than their female peers at C and above. Moreover, while more men achieve A*- A grades, fewer men than women achieve a grade C and above overall, and this margin is greater (where 76.7% of men achieved a grade C at A level in 2025, compared to 80.4% of women). This means men are simultaneously more likely to achieve both the very highest and lowest grades overall. Trends based on ethnicity are somewhat different at A level. Rather than British boys from Gypsy backgrounds having the worst grade attainment (as seen at GCSE level), British boys from Black Caribbean backgrounds are getting the lowest average point scores at A level (according to 2024/5 data). This trend is mirrored for boys across disadvantage status. *APS are not available before the 2020/21 cohort.					

Table 9: Higher Education (Level 6)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Higher Education⁹					
9.1 (E)	Higher Education: Proportion of the 18-year-old population who were accepted (males, England)	2025: 31.4% 2024: 31.4% 2019: 30.3%			
9.1 (W)	Higher Education: Proportion of the 18-year-old population who were accepted (males, Wales)	2025: 22.6% 2024: 23.4% 2019: 24.2%			
9.1 (S)	Higher Education: Proportion of the 18-year-old population who were accepted (males, Scotland)	2025: 23.8% 2024: 24.3% 2019: 20.4%			
9.1 (NI)	Higher Education: Proportion of the 18-year-old population who were accepted (males, Northern Ireland)	2025: 30.2% 2024: 29.7% 2019: 29.5%			
The proportion of 18-year-old men accepted into higher education has not changed in the past year in England and has risen over the same period in Northern Ireland. However, it has fallen in Wales and Scotland and remains significantly lower than that of females across the UK (42% female acceptance in England, 36.3% in Scotland, 35.4% in Wales and 45.7% in Northern Ireland in 2025). Last year, a young woman in Northern Ireland was more than twice as likely as a young man in Wales to go to university. Across the UK, girls were 11 percentage points more likely to be accepted into university than boys. Across the UK, for every 100 women aged 19 and under who were accepted into university, only 78 men were. Simultaneously, the median salary for male graduates in England, aged 16-64, remains higher than that of female graduates and is continuing in an upward trend. The median salary for male graduates aged 16-64 in 2024 was £48,500 in comparison to that of female graduates aged 16-64, at £38,000. Yet, it must be noted that these trends reflect wages rising with inflation and not necessarily rising standards of living for graduates.					

Table 10: Apprenticeships

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
Apprenticeships¹⁰					
10.1 (E)	Apprenticeships: Number of 19-year-old and under starts (males, England)	2024/25: 43,820 2023/24: 46,140 2019/20: 46,270			
10.1 (W)	Apprenticeships: Number of 19-year-old and under starts (males, Wales, Q1)	2024/25: 1,855 2023/24: 2,090 2019/20: 1,905			
The number of men aged 19 and under starting apprenticeships has fallen in the last year in both England and Wales and is lower than pre-pandemic levels. However, the number of men aged 19 and under starting apprenticeships (43,820 in England and 1,855 in Wales 2024/5) remains consistently higher than the number of women beginning them (31,170 in England and 655 in Wales 2024/5).					

Table 11: Exclusions

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
Exclusions¹¹					
11. 1 (E)	Permanent exclusions: Rate per 100 (males, England, primary school)	2024/25: 0.06 2023/24: 0.05 2018/19: 0.04			
11.2 (E)	Permanent exclusions: Rate per 100 (males, England, secondary school)	2024/25: 0.30 2023/24: 0.34 2018/19: 0.30			
11.3 (E)	Permanent exclusions: Rate per 100 (males, England)	2024/25: 0.16 2023/24: 0.15 2018/19: 0.14			
11.3 (W)	Permanent exclusions: Rate per 100 (males, Wales)	2023/24: 0.12 2022/23: 0.10 2019/20: 0.06		N/A	N/A
Permanent exclusion rates for boys in primary schools in England continue to grow and remain higher than pre-pandemic levels. 1,276 boys in England were permanently excluded from their primary schools in 2024/5. Taking an average class size as 30, that is the equivalent of 42 full classes of boys being permanently excluded from their schools before the age of 12. By contrast, permanent exclusion rates of boys in secondary schools have marginally fallen in the last year. They now equal those of 2018/19. Overall rates (across primary and secondary schools) of male exclusions in England and Wales have risen in the past year. The male rate of exclusion in England (0.16) is more than double the female rate (0.07). In 2024/25, in England, there were 6,941 male permanent exclusions (2,965 female). In Wales, the male exclusion rate this year was double the pre-pandemic rate.					

Table 12: Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS, aged 16-24)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
NEETS¹²					
12.1 (E)	NEET: Q4 rate: overall percentage (males, England)	2025: 14.0% 2024: 14.5% 2019: 11.3%			
12.2 (E)	NEET: Q4 rate: unemployed percentage (males, England, unemployed for more than six months)	2025: 3.0% 2024: 2.4% 2019: 2.3%			
12.3 (E)	NEET: Q4 rate unemployed percentage (males, England, unemployed for less than six months)	2025: 4.4% 2024: 4.3% 2019: 4.1%			
12.4 (E)	NEET: Q4 rate long-term or temporarily sick (males, England)	2025: 3.2% 2024: 3.9% 2019: 2.2%			
While the NEET rate among 16–24-year-old men has dropped by 0.5 percentage points, it remains consistently higher than the female NEET rate, which sits at 12.7%. Moreover, the rate of male long-term NEETs is rising. In real terms, the male NEET rate means that nearly one in every seven young men in England is not in education, employment or training. In Q4 of 2025, there were 452,640 male NEETS (aged 16-24) in England. If assembled together, these young men could fill Glastonbury Festival to its daily capacity 2.5 times over. The reasons for males becoming NEET are worrying. The number of men who are NEET due to being unemployed for more than six months has grown in the last year, from 2.4% to 3.0%. This suggests long-term unemployment is a growing characteristic of the male NEET crisis. Short-term unemployment among men as a cause of economic inactivity has also grown. Since the pandemic, the percentage of male NEETS who have been unemployed for less than six months has risen from 4.1% to 4.4%. Recently, emerging 2026 data has shown the number of male NEETs to exceed 500,000.					

Table 13: Teaching Workforce

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
Teaching Workforce¹³					
13.1 (E)	Teachers: Number, secondary school (males, England)	2024/25: 82,880 2023/24: 82,231 2018/19: 78,382			
13.1 (W)	Teachers: Number, secondary school (males, Wales)	2024/25: 3,555 2023/24: 3,670 2019/20: 3,720			
13.2 (E)	Teachers: Number, primary/nursery school (males, England)	2024/25: 33,437 2023/24: 34,001 2018/19: 35,489			
13.2 (W)	Teachers: Number, primary school (males, Wales)	2024/25: 2,010 2023/24: 1,960 2019/20: 2,185			
13.3 (E)	Teachers: Number, new FTE entrants (males, England)	2024/25: 4,227 2023/24: 4,272 2019/20: 5,676			
In 2024/5, 24% of teachers in England were male, and in Wales, 25.7% of the teaching workforce were male. 14% of nursery and primary teachers in England were male compared to 17% of primary teachers in Wales, and 35% of secondary teachers in England and 34.8% of secondary teachers in Wales were male. This highlights the shortage of men in the teaching sector, especially in the formative years of early education, and raises questions about why men are not becoming teachers, and where boys, especially those without consistent father figures at home, will find their male role models. Male entrants into teaching in England are also falling year-on-year. In 2024/5, there were more than 1000 fewer annual male FTE teaching entrants than pre-pandemic. This pattern risks any marginal gains in the number of male teachers in secondary schools since the pandemic, especially given how early on girls begin to outperform boys.					

Health

Summary

While men’s physical health outcomes (for example, cancer and CVD mortality rates) are following a marginal positive trend of improvement, they remain regionally unequal, favouring men in England. More than two years life expectancy separates men in England and Scotland, and more than a year’s life expectancy separates men in England and Wales. The data strengthens the case for regionally focused men’s health strategies and campaigns.

In contrast, men’s mental health outcomes are not following the same positive trend. While male suicide rates in England have decreased by 0.1 per 100,000 from 2023 to 2024, suicide rates across both England and Wales remain higher than pre-pandemic. Male suicide rates have risen sharply in Wales in the last year and are higher than those in England. A wide margin continues to exist between male and female suicide rates, where male suicide rates are at least three times higher.

While CPRMB welcomes the government’s Men’s Health Strategy for England, male regional health inequality may continue unless devolved bodies commit to similar plans.

Scorecards

Table 14: Mortality and Life Expectancy

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023 OR PP- (2021-23)	2024 OR (2022-24)	PP-2024 OR PP- (2022-24)
Mortality and Life Expectancy ¹⁴					
14.1 (E+W)	Mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, England and Wales)	2024: 1,094 2023: 1,142 2019: 1,098			
14.2 (E)	Life expectancy at birth: Age (males, England)	2022-24: 79.39 2021-23: 79.07 2017-19: 79.59			
14.2 (W)	Life expectancy at birth: Age (males, Wales)	2022-24: 78.25 2021-23: 78.06 2017-19: 78.34			
14.2 (S)	Life expectancy at birth: Age (males, Scotland)	2022-24: 77.12 2021-23: 76.78 2017-19: 77.14			
14.2 (NI)	Life expectancy at birth: Age (males, Northern Ireland)	2022-24: 78.78 2021-23: 78.75 2017-19: 78.79			

While mortality rates for men in England and Wales have decreased in comparison to pre-pandemic years, they remain consistently higher than mortality rates for women (at 797 in 2024).

At the same time, while life expectancy is rising for men across the UK, the average life expectancy for men has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Life expectancy across the UK is not even. For men in Scotland, it is more than two years shorter than for men in England, highlighting the regional health inequality Scottish men face. Life expectancy for men in Wales remains more than a year shorter than life expectancy for men in England, and life expectancy for men in Northern Ireland is less than a year shorter than that of men in England.

Table 15: Mortality (Cancer)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Mortality (Cancer)¹⁵					
15.1 (E)	Cancer mortality: Rates per 100,000 (under 75, males, England)	2025: 126.8* 2024: 130.9 2019: 140.7			
15.1 (W)	Cancer mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (excluding skin cancers - Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer- all ages, males, Wales)	2025: 307.7 2024: 313.7 2019: 326.8			
In both England and Wales, cancer mortality rates among men have decreased since the pandemic. This is an encouraging trend. However, they remain notably higher in Wales, where cancer remains the leading cause of death, than in England. In 2025 alone, 4,805 men died of cancer in Wales. Overall efforts to reduce mortality by cancer should include a national focus towards Wales. *Value based on provisional data					

Table 16: Mortality (Prostate Cancer)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023	2024	PP-2024
Mortality (Prostate Cancer)¹⁶					
16.1 (E)	Prostate Cancer mortality: Rate per 100,000 (England)	2024: 40.9 2023: 43.7 2019: 46.3			
The latest data shows prostate cancer mortality rates in England have fallen for the fifth-year running, remaining lower than pre-pandemic rates. This is a genuinely positive trend. However, between 2022-2024, there were 12,300 deaths from prostate cancer in the UK. That is more than 500 deaths a month, or more than 17 deaths a day.					

Table 17: Mortality (Cardiovascular Disease – CVD)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Mortality (Cardiovascular Disease – CVD)¹⁷					
17.1 (E)	CVD mortality: Rate per 100,000 (under 75, males, England)	2025: 101.3* 2024: 105.5 2019: 97.2			
There has been a slight improvement in the cardiovascular disease (conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels - CVD) mortality rate among men in England this year, however it remains notably higher than in the pre-pandemic period. It also remains more than double the rate of CVD mortality among women this year (43.4*), highlighting the need for gender-specific public health campaigns around how lifestyle choices impact CVD. The NHS Health Check is a programme which aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia in adults in England aged 40-74 years. The last available data shows that in 2017-18, only 38.5% of eligible men attended. The female figure was 44%. *Value based on provisional data					

Table 18: Mortality (Suicide)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023	2024	PP-2024
Mortality (Suicide)¹⁸					
18.1 (E)	Suicide mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, England)	2024: 17.0 2023: 17.1 2019: 16.7			
18.1 (W)	Suicide mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, Wales)	2024: 25.0 2023: 22.0 2019: 19.3			
Despite a marginal decrease in male suicide mortality rates in England in 2024, suicide mortality rates in England and Wales remain higher now than pre-pandemic. Across Wales and England in 2024, male suicide rates are three times greater than female suicide rates (5.6 in England and 6.8 in Wales). Suicide rates for both men and women in Wales are higher than those in England and rising faster. In Wales, the male suicide rate this year was the highest since records began. Moreover, male suicide rates vary dramatically across the regions in England. Between 2022 and 2024, male suicide rates in the London region were 11.5 per 100,000. In the Southwest region they were 17.7 per 100,000, and in the Northeast region they were 22.6 per 100,000. This shows the significant impact that geography has on suicide rates and highlights the Northeast as an area vulnerable to higher rates of suicide.					

Table 19 – Mortality (Alcohol-specific)

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023	2024	PP-2024
Mortality (Alcohol-specific)¹⁹					
19.1 (UK)	Alcohol-specific mortality: Age-standardised rate per 100,000 (males, UK)	2024: 20.2 2023: 21.9 2019: 16.1			
19.1 (E)	Alcohol-specific mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, England)	2024: 18.7 2023: 20.6 2019: 15.0			
19.1 (W)	Alcohol-specific mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, Wales)	2024: 22.9 2023: 23.5 2019: 15.2			
19.1 (S)	Alcohol-specific mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, Scotland)	2024: 29.6 2023: 31.8 2019: 25.1			
19.1 (NI)	Alcohol-specific mortality: Age standardised rate per 100,000 (males, Northern Ireland)	2024: 28.1 2023: 24.7 2019: 23.9			
The male alcohol-specific mortality rate in the UK slightly fell between 2023 and 2024. However, it is still far higher than the pre-pandemic rate. It also remains around double the rate for females, a continued trend from recent years. Regionally, while Northern Ireland was the only nation to see a rise in its male alcohol-specific mortality rate in the last year, the male alcohol-specific mortality rate is highest in Scotland, where it exceeds that of England and Wales by a considerable margin.					

Table 20: Workplace Deaths

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
Workplace Deaths²⁰					
20.1 (GB)	Number of work-related fatal injuries (males, Great Britain)	2024/25: 118 2023/24: 131 2018/19: 142			
20.2 (GB)	Rate of work-related fatal injury per 100,000 workers (males, Great Britain):	2024/25: 0.68 2023/24: 0.76 2018/19: 0.83			
Men made up 95% of fatal workplace deaths in 2024/5. In 2024/5, 118 men died due to workplace injury, compared to 6 women. In 2024/5, the rates and numbers of fatal workplace injuries for men across Great Britain were lower than pre-pandemic and are declining in a downwards trend. Due to the increase of workplace deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic, measuring current data against data in the years 2020-2022 can produce skewed results, hence its omission.					

Table 21: Loneliness

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2023/24	2024/25	PP-2024/25
Loneliness²¹					
21.1 (E)	Loneliness: Often/Always percentage (males, England)	2024/25: 6% 2023/24: 6% 2018/19: 6%			
From government community life surveys, the male loneliness rate has stayed at 6%. The female figure was 8% in 2023/24 and decreased to 7% in 2024/5. On both occasions, more women reported feelings of loneliness. However, reporting may not accurately correspond with the proportion of men and women feeling lonely, due to perceived community and cultural barriers faced when reporting these feelings.					

Table 22: Rough Sleeping

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Homelessness (Rough Sleeping)²²					
22.1 (E)	Rough Sleeping: Numbers in annual autumn count (Males, England)	2025: 3,938 2024: 3,858 2019: 3,534			
Men have consistently made up the majority of rough sleepers since data collection began in 2017. Today, they make up 82% of rough sleepers. This year, the number of men sleeping rough in England has increased again to 3,938. Meanwhile, according to the latest available data from the 2021 census, there were an estimated 154,970 second homes in England in 2021 without usual residents. This means that there are approximately 39 times more second homes without usual residents in England than there are male rough sleepers. If each rough sleeper was allocated one of these homes, there would still be an estimated 151,032 second homes in England without usual residents. In July 2026, the Prime Minister pledged £340 million to help end rough sleeping in the UK. It is yet to be seen if figures will substantially decrease. Accurate data for Wales is unavailable as the Welsh Government ceased the annual national rough sleeper count in August 2024.					

Crime

Summary

There are mixed trends when it comes to men, boys and crime in the UK.

While the population of young men in youth custody has declined in the last year, and is less than half its pre-pandemic level, the adult male prison population continues to grow.

This poses significant challenges for both the incarcerated men themselves and their families – especially their sons, daughters, and partners.

Simultaneously, the rates of male victims of homicide are decreasing, and in 2024/5, were the lowest they had been in England and Wales since 2015. Men continue to account for 7 in 10 homicide victims in England and Wales.

Scorecard

Table 23: Homicide Rates

Number	Measure	Data	PP- 2023/24	2024/25	PP- 2024/25
Homicide Rates ²³					
23.1 (E+W)	Homicide victims: Rates per one million population (males, England and Wales)	2024/25: 12.3 2023/24: 13.7 2018/19: 14.3			
23.1 (S)	Homicide victims: Number of victims annually (males, Scotland)	2024/25: 30 2023/24: 44 2018/19: 46			
23.1 (NI)	Homicide victims: Number of male victims annually (males, Northern Ireland)	2024/25: 8 2023/24: 12 2018/19: 23			
Homicide across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is decreasing. There were 522 victims of homicide in England and Wales in 2024/5, the lowest number since March 2015. In Scotland, there were 45 victims of homicide in 2024/5, 30 of whom were male, the lowest number since records began in 1976. In Northern Ireland, there were 8 male victims of homicide this year – nearly a third of the number pre-pandemic. Seven in ten homicide victims are male (England and Wales), and the rate of male homicide victims remains more than double the rate of female homicide victims (5.0 in 2024-5, England and Wales). However, rates of male homicide victims decreased by 10% this year, while rates of female homicide victims underwent no significant statistical change.					

Table 24: Prison Numbers

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2024	2025	PP-2025
Prison Numbers²⁴					
24.1 (EW)	Prison: Numbers in prison on 31 December (males, England and Wales)	2025: 82, 282 2024: 81, 954 2019: 79,165			
The male prison population increased by 328 in the last year. It is 3,000 greater than before the pandemic. The number of women in prison has decreased by 87, from 3,418 (31 December 2024) to 3,331 (31 December 2025). It has fallen below pre-pandemic levels of 3,703 (31 March 2019). These stark patterns show that male prison populations continue to grow, while female populations fall and have fallen significantly below pre-pandemic levels. A gender-sensitive approach to reducing the male prison population is necessary.					

Table 25: Youth Population in Custody

Number	Measure	Data	PP-2025	2026	PP-2026
Youth Population in Custody²⁵					
25.1 (EW)	Youth custody: Numbers youth custody centres in December (males, England and Wales)	2026: 426 2025: 501 2019: 775			
There has been a notable reduction in males in youth custody centres over a decade-long period. In December 2016, there were 892 males in youth custody; more than twice the number in March 2026. We welcome this reduction. The number of females in youth custody fell from 30 in March 2019 to 12 in March 2026. The wider trend of a decreasing youth population in custody seems to be mirrored across men and women.					

Conclusion and Recommendations

This is the second annual edition of the Missing Men scorecard. It identifies trends, connections and recommendations on outcomes for men and boys across four key areas – employment, education, health and crime – directly from official data. It is evidence-led at all stages.

Where possible, data from across devolved nations has been included. However, CPRMB encourages the governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to make gender-based data more accessible. Future publications of Missing Men aim to delve deeper into regional comparisons, connections and inequalities.

The data shows that troubling outcomes for men and boys persist across the board. In employment, men are struggling to find and retain regular employment, despite the desire to work.

In education, grades may be improving for boys and young men, but the gender gap remains, and the number of men going into teaching continues to fall.

Where outcomes do seem to be improving – most notably in men's physical health outcomes – they often remain counterbalanced by worrying outcomes in others – including men's mental health results. This pattern is mirrored across the area of crime, where male youth prison populations are decreasing, but remain outweighed by an increasing annual adult male prison population. At best, outcomes are mixed.

The overwhelming policy recommendation CPRMB makes to key stakeholders is to centre, and not sideline, gender as a policy consideration. A gender-sensitive lens is vital, as outcomes for men and boys are, and will continue to be, sensitive to gender.

Good steps have been made in critical areas. One such example is the interim 2026 Millburn 'discovery phase' report into 'Young People and Work', investigating the key causes of NEETs. However, the report lacks a genuine consideration of gender disparities within the young adult, economically inactive population. This is where a gender-specific lens is vital.

Another welcome action has been the Prime Minister's 2026 announcement into education reforms – namely, to offer vocational routes from age 14 – in efforts to bring more young people into work. Although once again, considerations of gender weren't prioritised.

Overall, the Missing Men report shows outcomes for men and boys across key areas are troubling. They warrant a gender-sensitive lens in all stages of policymaking – and specifically in employment, education, health and crime. Considerations of gender must be central and not sidelined.

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