Dear Reader,

Four years ago we launched our first inclusion and diversity event with the specific goal of engaging men simply because we believe that gender equality in the workplace is only going to happen if we work together to deliver meaningful culture change.

The workplace has been created over the past millenia by men – and, let's face it: white, cisgender, heteronormative men – so is 'masculine' by design. Traditional and therefore stereotypical leadership traits like ambition, confidence and dominance are celebrated and rewarded. This leaves important emotional intelligence skills like listening, empathy and vulnerability by the sidelines, and it's an environment that is exclusionary for anyone who doesn't fit the masculine stereotype. Their abilities and skills are bumped down to second place, and the glass ceiling gets an extra coating of corrugated iron.

But it also damages men. We know that stress in the workplace is at an all time high for men and most fathers would love to have more time to spend with their children. And while our annual Masculinity in the Workplace event is designed to help men to recognise the damage that traditional masculine traits are doing to themselves, the workplace and everyone else, this year we wanted to go deeper and find out more about what they are thinking and to understand what changes need to be made to create more inclusive and diverse workplaces for everyone. So we commissioned an extensive piece of research to find out how people were feeling. This white paper pulls together that research, specifically in relation to masculinity and its impact on men.

All we ask is that if you enjoy it, then make sure you give it to all your senior leaders to read. Whilst everyone that was at MIW 2019 felt that change could happen, it was clear that this change needed to be led from the top.
We hope this report will help leaders to understand the need to change their work cultures and convince them of the benefit of a more inclusive, more vulnerable and more empathetic form of leadership. And if we inspire them to join us for Masculinity in the Workplace 2020 on 19th November, even better.

Daniele Fiandaca
Co-founder,
Utopia & Token Man

Roxanne Hobbs
Founder,
The Hobbs Consultancy & #HeANDShe

Masculinity in the Workplace Research

"I think adaptability is the key to our masculine future.. emotions and feelings can be changed. I think that men need to look inside themselves, become more aware of their feelings and start adapting.

Grayson Perry

From Superpower to Kryptonite:
how old stereotypes about masculinity are harming modern employees and how employers can help accelerate change

Executive summary

Original research we carried out to coincide with our Masculinity in the Workplace event ("MIW 2019") on International Men's Day reveals that, while masculine work cultures are in retreat, outdated stereotypes surrounding masculinity are still hindering men and women in the workplace and suggests employers need to accelerate change to keep pace with modern needs.

Many men say they are still feeling the pressure to be the breadwinner, to win all the time and to hide their vulnerability, and the research confirms these stereotypes are continuing to drive a long-hours culture with its consequent negative impacts on mental health.

Significantly, these stereotypes are impacting all genders, creating inauthentic and exclusive workplaces. This is a problem because we know inclusive workplaces are a key driver for success.

In this report we look at how rigid stereotypes surrounding masculinity still prevail in some workplaces. We explore research findings which indicate that men are feeling squeezed from both sides - the pressure to be the breadwinner is still there but significant numbers are also feeling the responsibility to be the primary carer for their children. And with employees feeling a lack of support for flexible working and shared parental leave for all, we discover the challenges businesses face to catch up with the changing needs of their workforce.

Finally, we offer some solutions, including the five hacks you can bring into your business today to address these issues.

Intro and methodology

The survey carried out for us by insight agency Opinium asked a representative sample of 2,001 workers, across a range of industries and across the UK, about their views on masculinity in the workplace.
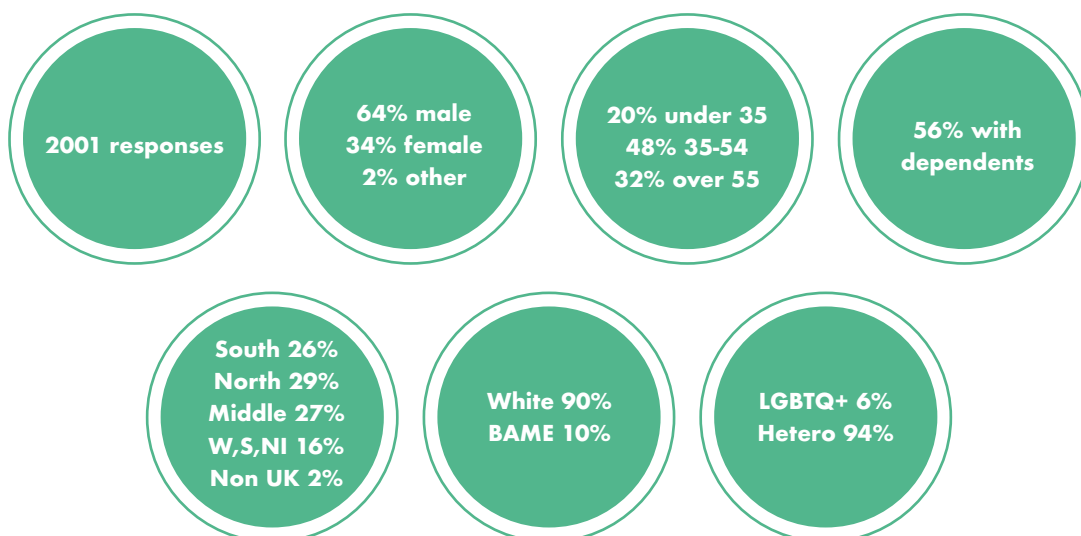
This included questions about how men are feeling today in the workplace, stereotypes around masculinity and the impacts those traditional stereotypes may have on workers and workplaces.

For the purposes of the survey a "masculine workplace culture" was defined as one where the following behaviours are rewarded: assertiveness, competitiveness, prioritising the bottom line over staff engagement and well-being, joining in with banter.

This report digs deeper into the statistics to reveal:

- **while masculine work cultures seem to be in retreat, detrimental norms are still part of some workplaces**

- **many employees still feel they have to "mask" part of themselves to fit in**

- **some surprising findings about emotions and vulnerability at work**

- **continuing barriers to parenting and flexible working**

About the survey

2001 responses

**64% male
34% female
2% other**

**20% under 35
48% 35-54
32% over 55**

**56% with
dependents**

**South 26%
North 29%
Middle 27%
W,S,NI 16%
Non UK 2%**

**White 90%
BAME 10%**

**LGBTQ+ 6%
Hetero 94%**

The headlines

Masculine work cultures seem to be on the retreat, albeit slowly. Overall, 55% of respondents reported that their workplaces do not have such cultures, and this is even higher for our female respondents (60%). Only 9% of respondents indicated they had felt pressure to take part in denigrating banter, which was slightly higher when focusing in on respondents under 35 (17%) and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) respondents (14%). In the aggregate, a mere 8% of people said they had been encouraged to talk over others and about 50% indicated they felt heard when they spoke their mind.

But digging deeper into the research, the statistics revealed that issues around traditional masculinity and its impacts on the workplace are still very much alive.

The stereotypes for men prevail

71%
of men indicated they feel pressure to be the breadwinner (vs.56% of women).

51%
of people think that men are taught to suppress their feelings, and only **15%** actively disagree

53%
of people think that men are taught not to be vulnerable, with 41% that think this has positive impacts for men's probability to be successful

56%
of people agree that men are pressured to put work first, and of these people **51%** stated that this has positive impacts on men's ability to be successful

24%
of people think that men are taught that empathy is a critical work skill

The majority of men and women think that these stereotypes negatively impact men's well-being, their relationships with colleagues and especially their relationships with family and friends. Most women tend to rate the negative impacts of these pressures more highly than most men – this might be due to more frequently being on the receiving end of these relationships.

Additionally, respondents indicated that the pressure on men to be the breadwinner was fuelling men's tendency to work long hours (64%) and also negatively impacting their ability to ask for flexible working (58%) – again, women rated this much higher (67%) compared to men. This corresponds with men's low paternity and shared parental leave uptake[1&2]. One explanation for women rating the impact on men's perception to ask for flexible work more negatively could be that they are the ones that are forced to ask for flexible working schedules – ergo the higher rates of women who work flexibly[3].

Detrimental norms still persist in some workplace cultures

" The whole idea of manning up and strength and being able to cope with whatever is thrown at you lets men down in the modern age. Men need to listen more, to stand back and really stretch to include people very, very different from them and their world experience. When you are in the majority that does take quite a lot of effort but that's what's required.

David Lammy, MP

A significant number of people still think that men being taught not to be vulnerable has positive implications for them to succeed in the workplace and that men who put work first are more likely to be successful. A mere 24% of respondents believed that men being taught empathy is important in the workplace.

Additionally, people report substantial pressure to over-achieve and ensure that family and social life don't interfere with work, while also noting the importance of focusing on winning all the time, and working long hours for career success. Our research also shows that only 31% of men actually feel comfortable asking for support at work (vs 35% of women), which is even lower when it comes to BAME men (24%). Although all groups seem to acknowledge the negative impacts of all these behaviours, pressure to exhibit them in the workplace remains nonetheless.
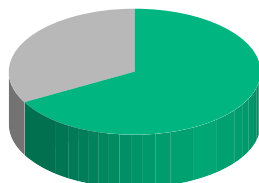
" What I thought was my superpower (hiding/absorbing stress) turned out not to be my superpower, it was my Kryptonite. I started talking to people, had some counselling and started talking to people at work about it. Because, if I can't (as a senior manager) then who can?
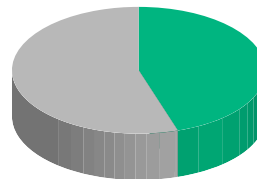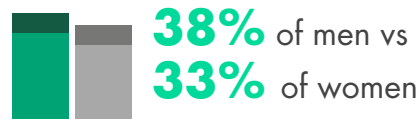
Phil Bartlett, MD at CDM

Pressure to over-achieve

49% of men vs
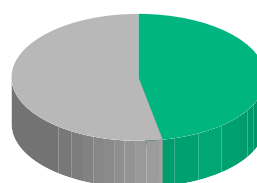**47%** of women
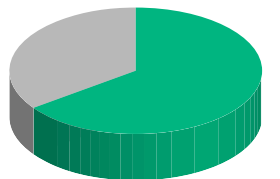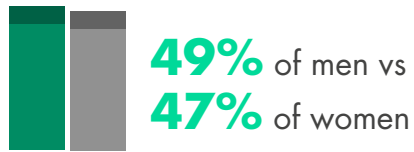
65%
of people under 35

67%
of BAME

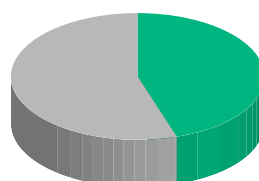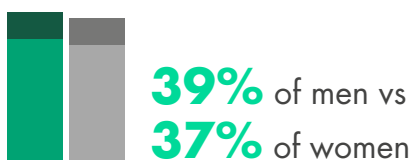## A focus on winning all the time is important for career success

38% of men vs
33% of women

44%
of people under 35

47%
of BAME

Working long hours has a positive impact on career prospects

39% of men vs
37% of women

45%
of people under 35s

Ensuring family and social life doesn't interfere with work has a positive impact on career prospects

33% overall
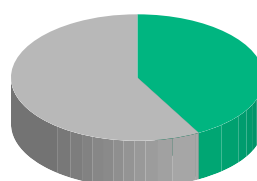
42%
of people under 35s

Masking to fit in

The concept of bringing our whole selves to work, a phrase originating in the LGBTQ+ community, has been popularised in recent years as studies have consistently shown the importance of belonging in the workplace[4]. Unfortunately, our study found that 43% of respondents felt they had to actively mask parts of themselves at work, with numbers spiking for people under 35 (58%) whereas men overall felt this slightly less (42%). Consistently higher reports of negative impacts on almost all aspects of masculinity in the workplace for under 35s is a subject we'll explore in greater depth in a forthcoming report.

Emotions and vulnerability

" My analytical, intellectual traits were rewarded … However, I'm ultimately a people person, that's in my DNA but I suppressed that aspect. In essence I suppressed some of my empathy.

Andrew Keating, Director of Group Finance, CRH

Both men and women indicated that they are afraid to be judged at work for being vulnerable with 42% women agreeing compared to 39% for men. This drops to 22% and 25% respectively when they are at home, which indicates two things.

Firstly, men are practically just as capable as women of having emotions and feeling vulnerable, which corresponds with a large body of academic research [5&6]. Secondly, the workplace is inhibiting men's and women's willingness to be vulnerable which could be costing businesses dearly since vulnerability is one of the key drivers of innovation and creativity [7].

There was more of a difference between how comfortable men and women felt expressing emotion in the workplace which is one element of vulnerability. Our analysis showed that only around 1/3 of employees feel comfortable expressing their emotions in the workplace. That these numbers are still so low perhaps exposes the scale of the task facing businesses to push for change which could be beneficial to all genders.

Additionally, although we don't believe the capacity for vulnerability or the capacity for feelings is gendered, academic research does indicate that men might have more difficulty expressing those feelings. Our research shows there could be some truth to this, as more women than men indicate being comfortable expressing their emotions at work (35% vs 30%). Although we are finding out that men and women are more similar than they are different [8], the way men and women are being socialised is most definitely different, which could explain part

of the discrepancy between them [9]. With the numbers still being very low, there is considerable room for improvement given the positive impact of vulnerability in the workplace [7]. We feel there is work to do convincing organisations of these benefits and 'unlearning' some of the messages we have all assimilated since childhood.

Parenting and flexible working

"No wonder the take-up of shared parental leave is so low – why are they throwing these things out there and not backing it up with change in the workplace culture?

Mary Portas, founder Portas agency
and Work Like A Woman podcast/book

Men and women feel similar responsibilities to be the primary caregiver, 46% and 47% respectively, which indicates a growing acceptance of stay-at-home dads and men fulfilling less traditional family roles. However, the stereotype of men as the primary financial provider, the breadwinner, still holds for many and is linked to men working long hours and feeling unable to ask for flexible working.

Only 13% of parents report that taking on parenting duties that might negatively impact their time at work is encouraged while 29% think that taking unexpected days off to, for example, care for a child is frowned upon or even actively discouraged. The picture seems to be particularly acute for men – while 21% of men say their employers actively discourage them from taking on parenting duties that may affect their work, a tiny 11% report their boss is comfortable with them taking days off due to child sickness.

Meanwhile, a mere 24% of all respondents find that working flexibly is actively encouraged, with 29% of parents reporting that they have been actively discouraged from working flexibly. We know the ability to work flexibly increases employee engagement which makes these figures even more problematic.

MIW 2019 panellist Han-Son Lee of dads' community website DaddiLife highlights his own research on millennial dads which found that while two thirds of those asked had requested flexible working, fewer than 1 in 5 had been approved.

"If we are talking about real equity and equality that number is miniscule, not to mention the many people across industry who have primary caring responsibilities (not just parents)." Han-Son Lee adds, "So many men I spoke to would also have liked to take shared parental leave but didn't even feel like they could have that conversation."

Meanwhile further anecdotal evidence from MIW 2019 confirmed that poor take up of shared parental leave (a mere 2% of new parents are thought to split their entitlement) is unsurprising given the corporate, cultural and financial barriers employees still face.

This disconnect between policy and practice is hurting all genders in the workplace. Meanwhile, in countries where a 'use it or lose it' SPL approach is enforced at work, there is evidence to show that outcomes for equity on the domestic front are significantly more positive.

When some workplace cultures are still so hostile to those with caregiving responsibilities, is it any wonder this is reflected in our survey respondents' tendency to believe that not having family or social life interfere with work is important for career success?

What next?

Our research finds that the majority of people do not think that their workplaces have a masculine culture and 51% of respondents think that their companies are doing something to increase inclusion. However, there are still significant issues in the workplace. Some of these issues might stem from the rigid stereotypes around men, such as suppressing emotion, being the breadwinner, putting work first and focusing on winning all the time. An encouraging prospect is that men and women do not differ that much in their opinions of the workplace and their abilities to be vulnerable, share emotions, ask to work flexibly and experience pressures.

Men and women are feeling similar levels of responsibility in terms of childcare, but they are struggling to navigate through society's stereotypes and corporate systems. The elephant in the room may be that the tensions of flexible working and parental leave which women have long grappled with are now an issue for everyone:

" There is still a stigma for men asking for time out of their job. All the issues that women face, about stunting their career growth, are the issues that men would face. It's just that men haven't faced into those issues for generations. But the same issues apply whether it was a man or a woman wanting to take time out.

Simon Harrison, Head of Marketing and Operations at M&S

And it seems workplaces are lagging behind the demands of younger generations and BAME employees, As these groups reportedly feel more pressure to put work first, are a lot less comfortable showing their emotions, and feeling significant pressure to mask parts of themselves to fit in. [We'll explore these responses in more depth in forthcoming reports.]

However, change is happening, as a director of a financial company, who identifies as they/them, commented they felt they were able to 'come out' in the workplace as non-binary and gender fluid due to the changing corporate culture:

> "When I was hiding part of myself, that had an impact on relationships around me in the workplace … but I was able to come out 6 or 7 years ago because the workplace is changing. Before, society would not have understood or been accepting.
>
> Anon

Ever since the MeToo movement erupted, much has been said about men and toxicity and the political and societal landscape has polarised. But our research might indicate that the differences between men and women are not as stark as we thought them to be. Men have shown willingness to change, which shows through the high reports of women who believe their workplace cultures aren't masculine:

> "From what I've seen from the thousands of men I trained. They really care. They want to do good, be better business people. Men really want to give back.
>
> Dan Doty, co-founder of EVRYMAN

It seems that men are ready for change, women and BAME employees have been ready for some time, and people under 35 are crying out for it, so now it's up to businesses to commit to an inclusive and healthy future.

The key insight from MIW 2019 was clear – in order for change to happen, senior leaders need to step up and embrace a new form of vulnerable and empathetic leadership. This will not only deliver more inclusive teams, but also inspire how they behave in the workplace, and in turn change the culture to one in which everyone can thrive.

> "It takes leaders and role models to model that [open and vulnerable] behaviour, accepting accountability themselves.

Richard Schmidt, Senior Manager of Ops, Coca-Cola European Partners

Five things businesses can do today:

1) Show vulnerability is strength – leaders must lead by example and, rather than armouring up in the workplace, up their capacity and tolerance for vulnerability. Leaders need to educate and demonstrate to people that vulnerability is not a weakness and that it is at the heart of rehumanizing the workplace. Leaders can role model by speaking openly with colleagues about their own uncertainties, the risks they take and the fear they may feel when called upon to be courageous. They can encourage active listening, turn-taking in meetings and a learner's mindset. As MIW 2019 panellist Tanya Joseph says: "Being a strong leader doesn't mean you can't show vulnerability. Because vulnerability is not the same as weakness."

2) Encourage employees to routinely request flexible working and be transparent about it when they get it. If you are a leader in your organisation, an out of office reply stating you are not at work because you are spending time caregiving/with your family, sends a powerful message.

3) Drop the binary load – the damaging dynamic of the financial load vs the emotional load harms all genders at work and at home and is an outdated stereotype. The perception of men as primarily breadwinners while women shoulder the lion's share of unpaid domestic work and caregiving, often alongside paid work, means everyone loses. Employers can help to break down the battlelines by de-stigmatising part-time roles for all and promoting part-timers.

4) Encourage boards and the C-suite to address the uptake of shared parental leave at the highest level and as a matter of urgency. Parenting and caregiving are not subjects for a fringe parents' or women's group; they are a priority for the whole workforce.

5) Measure your workers by the metric of their output and not presenteeism. While this may be more easily implemented in some industries than others, as MIW 2019 panellist and Dope Black Dads founder Marvyn Harrison observes: "The starting point for work should be: what do we want to achieve? It shouldn't be about guarding a seat for certain hours each day."

> "Maybe being a 6ft white, straight, male is a closed door to some people, whereas there is an opportunity for connections in this position of vulnerability which is counterintuitive to most models of masculinity. Maybe I'm not the man I used to be but maybe I'm a better human.

Will Pike, Disability rights campaigner and survivor of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks

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Thanks

This report would not have been possible without the following amazing organisations who helped fund the research and ensure that we delivered an incredible Masculinity in the Workplace event.

All our MIW 2019 partners:

Thanks for your incredible support and we look forward to working together again in 2020.

UTOPIA

Utopia is a culture change business. In a business landscape where creative thinking is the primary driver of growth, our changemakers help organisations build more purposeful, more inclusive and more entrepreneurial cultures, fit for this age of creativity.

We do this by disrupting, inspiring and rewiring - from the intern to the CEO, through workshops and hacks - to create happier, inclusive, more productive workforces that deliver competitive advantage. And we've done it for businesses across the board, including Coca-Cola European Partners, D&AD, Google, Schneider Electric, Spotify and Universal Music.

The Hobbs Consultancy are passionate about putting the humanity into the workplace. We are a team of coaches, facilitators and content creators who are all passionate about transforming business through inclusion.

We support businesses in creating a culture in which people feel able to show up as themselves, where diversity of thought is valued and where people are cherished. We recognise that creating diverse and inclusive organisations is not necessarily an easy path and we help businesses to navigate this complexity, learning the skills required for everyone to be able to step into their inclusive leadership.