



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 21, 2023

## Shocking? Believing Masculinity Is Bad Harms Men's Mental Health, Study Finds

We probably wouldn't be surprised if we learned that making women believe femininity was bad harmed their mental health. Ditto for convincing children that having a childlike nature is bad. So perhaps it's also no shock that, according to a recent study, convincing men masculinity is a negative force damages their psyches.

*PsyPost* [reports](#) on the story:

Holding the view that masculinity negatively impacts one's behavior is associated with lower mental well-being, according to a new study of more than 4,000 men [from Britain and Germany]. The findings shed light on the relationship between societal perceptions of masculinity and individual mental health, challenging previous notions that masculine attitudes are inherently harmful or detrimental. The study was published in the [International Journal of Health Sciences](#).

For decades, masculinity has been a topic of both public and academic debate. Historically, traits like being active, dominant, and self-contained were synonymous with masculinity. However, from the 1980s, there was a notable shift. Masculinity began to be viewed through a more critical lens, often associated with negative traits like misogyny and homophobia, and linked to issues such as poor mental health and aggressive behavior.

This transition was partly fueled by sociological theories, leading to what some call a "deficit model" of masculinity - focusing primarily on its



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negative aspects.

*PsyPost* then related that study author John Barry, co-founder of the Centre for Male Psychology, stated that men are three times more likely than women to commit suicide. This is true, too — but only half the story. In reality, women experience more suicidal ideation and are [three times as likely](#) to *attempt* to kill themselves. Yet men are two to four times as likely to succeed, at least partially because they use more violent means (e.g., firearms as opposed to sleeping pills).

Barry, who's also author of *Perspectives in Male Psychology: An Introduction*, went on to confess that he'd initially subscribed to the anti-masculinity narrative. "When I started researching male psychology over a decade ago, I based my hypothesis on the dominant explanation of the time — that poor mental health and suicide are linked to masculinity," *PsyPost* quotes him as saying. "My findings didn't convincingly support this hypothesis, so I delved deeper into existing research and realized a lot of it was based on a surprisingly negative view of masculinity that did not seem grounded in the reality of male mental health and suicide."

This realization is reflected in the study's conclusion section, too. As Barry [writes](#), one "implication [of the research] is that if we want men to have good mental health, a useful strategy might be to help them to appreciate the ways in which their masculinity can have a positive impact on their behavior and the people around them."

"Taking a positive view of masculinity goes against the trend these days, where even global corporations have adopted the fashion of taking the view that masculinity is something to be frightened of," Barry continues. "For example, Unilever — through Promundo and Axe — has been promoting the 'Man Box' concept which casts masculinity in a poor light."

It should be noted, however, that this anti-masculinity movement is enabled by the assertion that men are "broken" relative to women, some "evidence" for which is the notion that men have worse mental-health outcomes. Barry himself *may* accept this supposition, as reflected in his claims about male suicide. Yet is this accurate?

Not only are women far more likely to attempt suicide, but they also more frequently experience melancholia ("depression"). In fact, [studies have shown](#) that women are [more likely](#) than men to suffer from mental disorders, generally speaking. (What's more, among *liberal* white women under 30, the percentage diagnosed with a mental-health problem exceeds 50 percent, according to a 2020 study [related](#) in left-wing publication *Evie*.)

As stated at this article's outset, it's not surprising that men conditioned to take a dim view of what's meant to be integral to their personality, masculinity, would experience diminished well-being. Yet the anti-masculine attitude may not be *entirely* causal here. That is, it is liberal men are who more likely to embrace an anti-masculinity position.

And liberal men also are more likely to be [diagnosed with mental issues](#) and [report being unhappy](#).

In other words, is it the anti-masculinity assumption or the "liberalism" in general (or both) that leads to the diminished sense of well-being?

Yet there's an even deeper factor here, too. Note that liberals are more likely than conservatives to reject religion.

And studies have shown that [non-believers have worse mental health](#) than religious people do. (Read



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2014's "[Religion: Crutch for the Crazy or Panacea for Peon and Prince?](#)")

All this said, for sure is that certain ideologues may welcome masculinity's decline. Why? Consider political power. Famed psychologist Jordan Peterson once related the results of [a study he and a collaborator did](#) on what characteristics were most predictive of a person embracing left-wing authoritarianism. The top two predictors were having low [verbal intelligence](#) and, to quote Peterson, "being female."

The fourth and last predictor was "having ever taken even one explicitly politically correct higher education course." But then there was the third.

To wit: having a "feminine temperament" — *regardless of whether you're female or male.*

In other words, demasculinizing men benefits your agenda greatly — if you're a left-wing authoritarian.

This isn't to say the attack on masculinity is entirely calculated; much of what people do is, after all, emotion-driven. For sure, however, is that society is easier to subdue when you've reduced its members to capons and clucking hens.



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