

Exploring the male friendships and masculinities of young men who identify as 'light' drinkers  
Burrows, Annamae; Emslie, Carol; Dimova, Elena; Hunter, Simon

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Men report more **difficulties making friends** and **fewer sources of emotional support** than women<sup>1</sup>.

**Drinking together** provides **intimacy** for men.

However, this can **exclude non-drinking men** and is associated with **significant health risks**<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. METHODS

**1. Focus groups** with men who self-identify as 'light' drinkers and their **male friends**.

**2. Subsequent individual interviews** with 'light' drinkers



Study explores:

Understandings of 'light' drinking

Sense of social connection

Masculine Identity

Developing and maintaining friendships

## 3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### Theme 1: Navigating Difficult Emotions Without a Roadmap

- **Challenged stereotypes of unemotional men.** Confusion around healthy expression of 'negative' emotions. Concerns about **media portrayal of violent men, lack of positive male role models, male friends who lacked emotional skills.**

### Theme 2: Feeling Excluded

- **Perceived lack of support for men.** Impact of term **"toxic" masculinity.** "For women, there's 'Ask for Angela', but for men there's no 'Ask for Dave', you know?"

### Theme 3: Barriers to Emotionally Intimate Friendships

- **Shame, 'dominant' man dynamic, lack of practical hobbies.**
- For **LGBTQ+ men: Personal safety** concerns, **alienation** in straight male spaces. Connection with straight male friends through **online gaming.**

## 4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Young men **perceive greater acceptance around discussing feelings.**

However, they may need **more support and guidance in navigating meaningful emotional expression, more examples of healthy masculinities, and judgement-free spaces to explore masculinities.**

## CONTACT DETAILS



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1. Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018  
2. Scottish Health Survey, 2019

