

Understanding Men in Midlife



Survey Feedback
Autumn 2023

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Introduction

- As a coach seeking to help men lead more fulfilling lives in their midlife years (loosely 40-55 ish!), I keep my eyes and ears open to men's issues and it is pleasing to see an increased focus on raising awareness, addressing the challenges and developing new ways to support men's physical and mental health e.g. [Andy's Man Club](#), [Men's Health Forum](#), [Tough to Talk](#) and [Movember](#).
- Some of this support is understandably focused on the issue of male suicide. But for a silent majority of men, my view is that there is still not a great deal of relatable support out there at the moment. My intention is to help men at an earlier stage so that they can set and achieve their goals, providing them with fulfilment and satisfaction and meaning that smaller issues do not grow into bigger ones.
- The purpose of this research is to better understand the challenges faced by men of this age group (beyond anecdotal evidence and my own personal experience). Following this, the intention is to find different ways to continue conversations, keep listening to hear and understand the issues, and create solutions and interventions which can help men to be happier as they progress through life.



The Survey

- Between July and October 2023, 41 men responded to a short online survey that was circulated via LinkedIn and in some cases by direct email.
- The purpose of the survey was to find out more about the key challenges faced by men of this age group, who they speak to, how they currently access support and the type of support that would be useful to them in future.
- The age profile of respondents ranged between 39.5 and 61 and the average age of those responding was just under 47.
- It is acknowledged that the survey has some limitations (not least in numbers and diversity) nevertheless it has provided an indication of some key challenges and the type of support that men would find helpful.
- I hope you find this summary of the feedback of interest.

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1st November 2023

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Executive Summary/Headlines

- Just over 40% of men responding think of themselves as in 'middle age'.
- The majority of men responding are generally happy in their lives, with a smaller number rating their level of happiness as fairly low.
- From the list of identified challenges suggested, the top 3 highlighted most frequently were:
 - Parenting young children (49%)
 - Loss of motivation, energy or focus (41.5%)
 - Few friends or not spending enough time with friends (39%).
- It is most common for men to speak about their challenges to a friend (63%) and their spouse/partner (61%).
- The most cited forms of current or previous support accessed by men were counselling and support offered through Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) provided through employers.
- 78% agreed that there should be more support available / provided for men in their middle years.
- In terms of future support for men in midlife, the ideas gaining the most interest were one-to-one support and a podcast aimed at midlife challenges and issues.
- When asked for the biggest single thing that would help men in midlife, survey respondents identified having more time, more money, and achieving a better life balance.

Self-reflection and self-perception



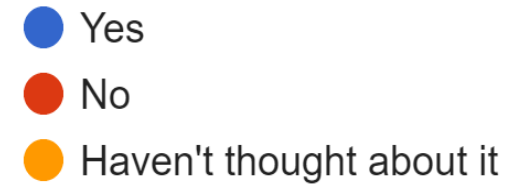
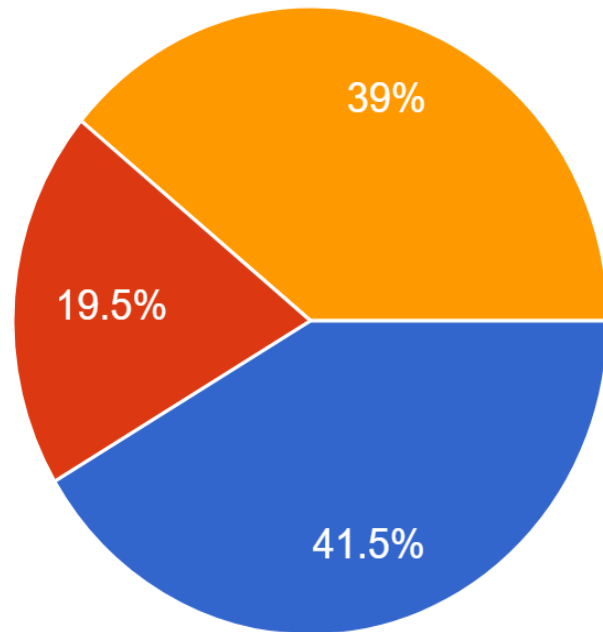
Headline Findings – Self Perception

- 41.5% of men responding think of themselves as 'middle aged'.
- Interestingly, 39% have not thought about it.
- Therefore almost as many men haven't thought about their age compared to those that do.
- Almost a fifth of respondents do not think of themselves as middle aged, suggesting that they may have a different definition of what constitutes being middle aged.



Would you describe yourself as middle aged or in midlife?

41 responses



Are Men in Midlife Happy?



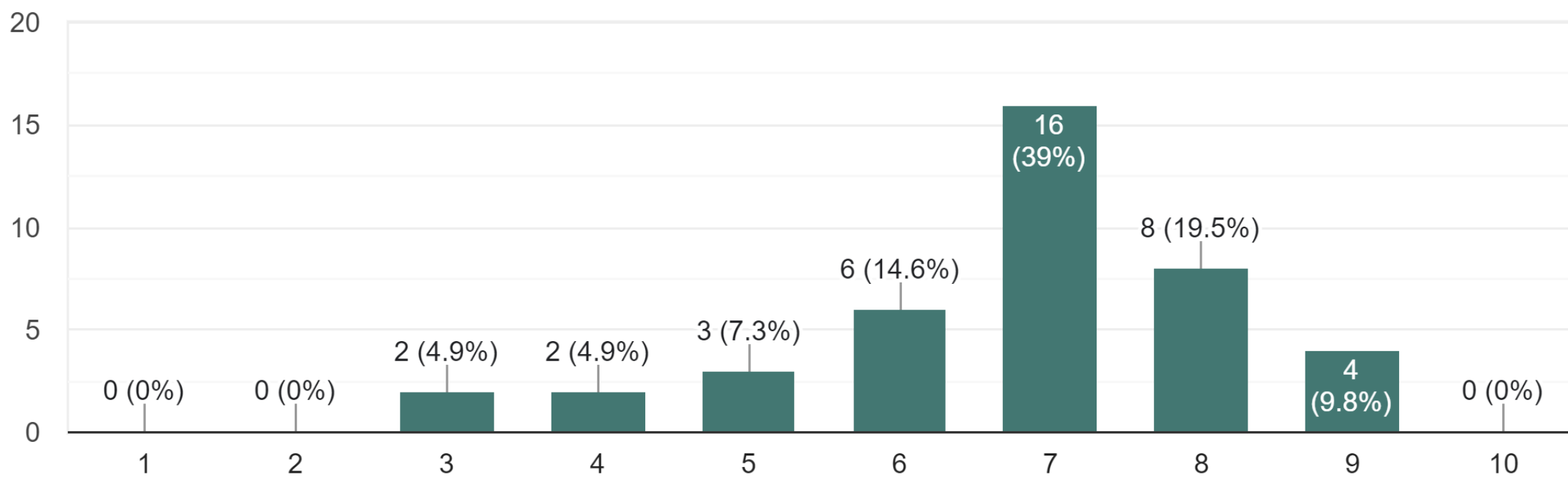
Headline Findings - Happiness

- The majority of men that responded put themselves at the happier end of the 0-10 scale, with 68% rating their general happiness as a '7' or higher.
- 4 people scored their happiness as a '9', but none scored themselves as '10'.
- Almost a third of men rated their happiness as '6' or below, but none scored lower than '3'.
- This could be due to something impacting negatively on their lives at the time of responding, or as one respondent mentioned, a culmination of the various challenges raised.

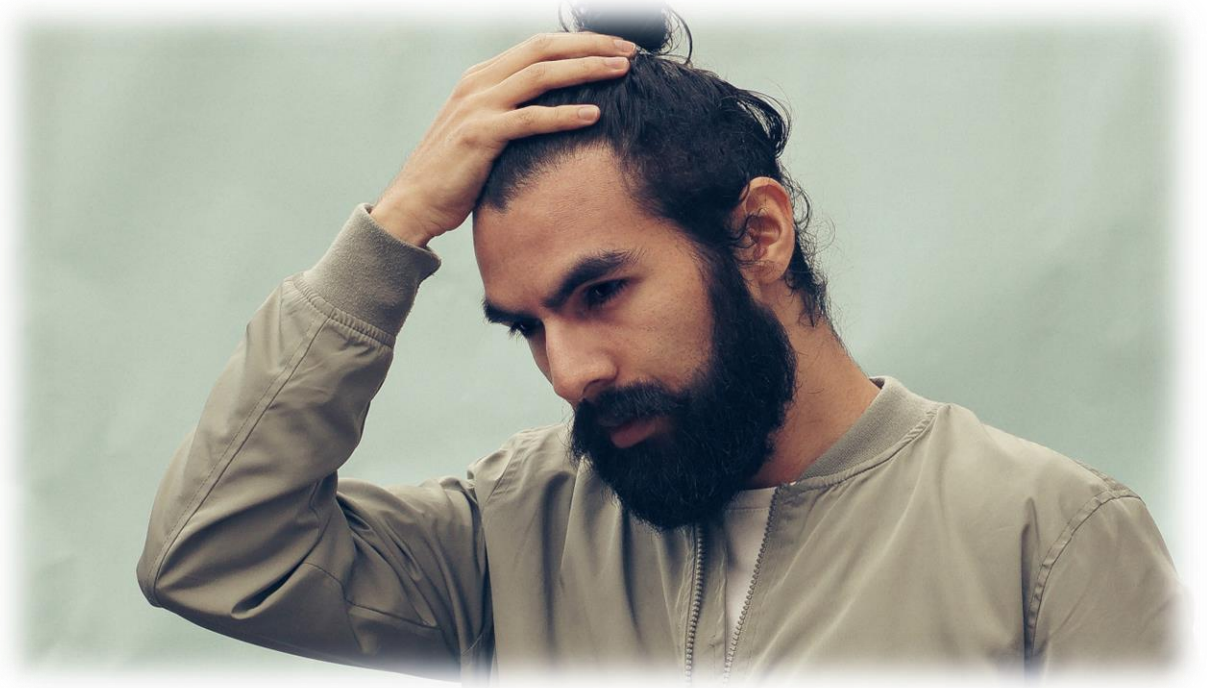


How would you rate your happiness on a scale of 1-10?

41 responses



The Challenges for Midlife Men



Headline Findings - The Challenges

- From the list of identified challenges provided, the top 3 highlighted most frequently were:



1. Parenting young children



2. Loss of motivation, energy or focus

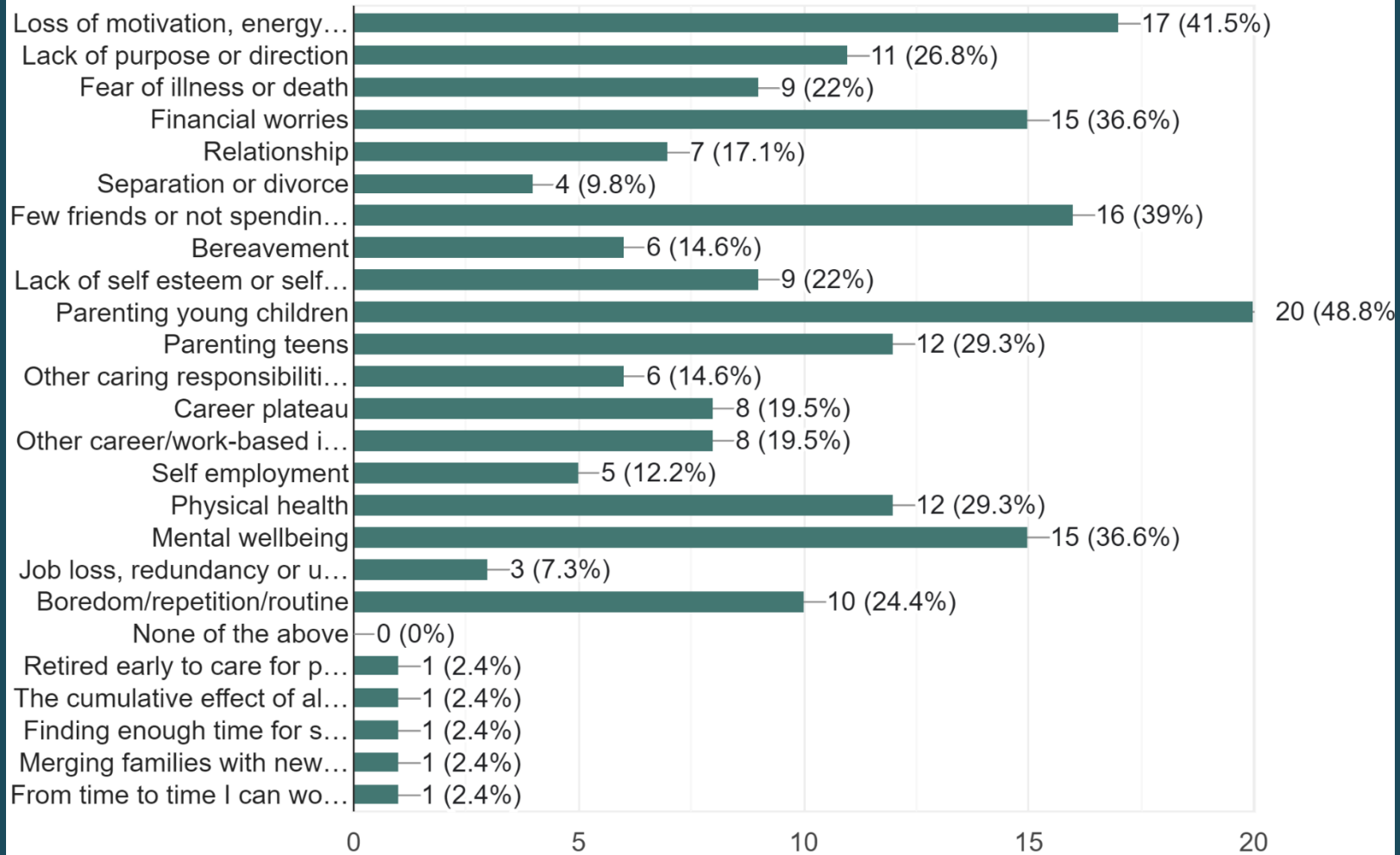


3. Few friends, or not spending enough time with friends

- Also worth a mention as key challenges at this stage of life are financial worries, mental wellbeing, physical health and parenting teens.
- As well as the issues suggested, some respondents added their own specific issues which highlights the complexity of modern life and an individual's personal circumstances. These issues included retiring early to care for a partner, merging families with a new partner, and struggling to find enough time for self-care.

What are the biggest challenges for you? (please select all that apply)

41 responses



Talking About Things



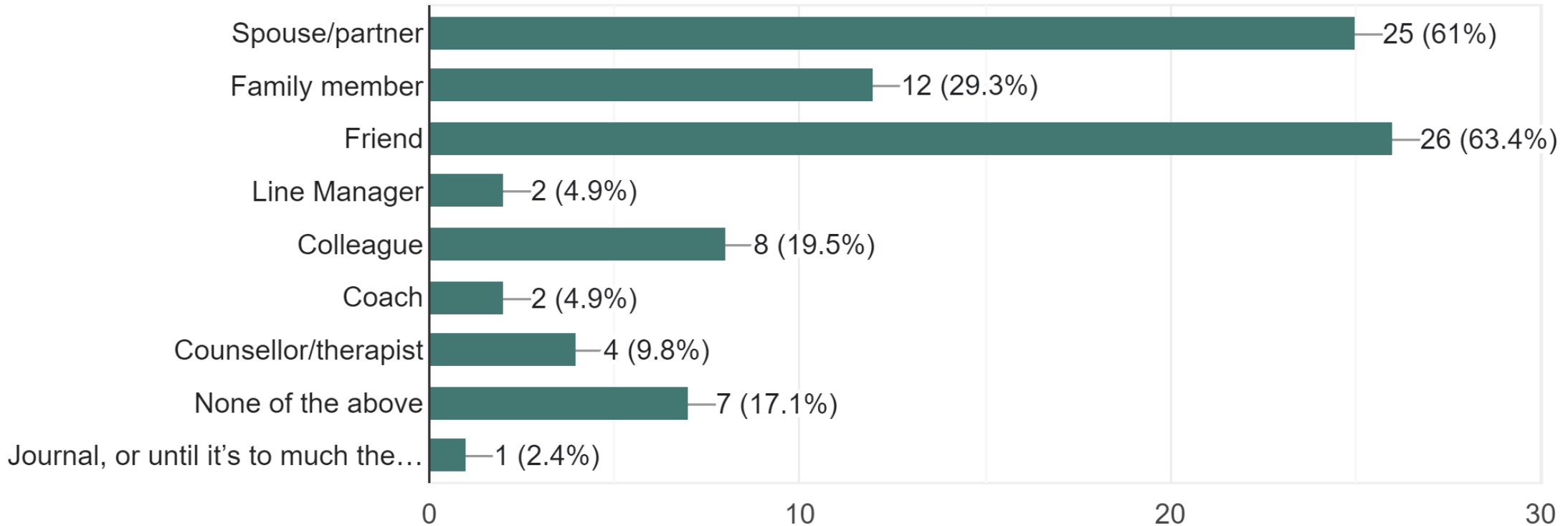
Headline Findings – Talking About Things

- If men open up, it is usually with those they feel closest to and trust.
- The most frequently mentioned people that men speak to about their challenges are a friend (63%) and spouse/partner (61%).
- Much further down the list were a family member (29%), a colleague (19%) and line managers (5%).
- Fewer than 15% had accessed the support of a coach or therapist.
- 39% find talking about their challenges easy, or very easy.
- Exactly the same percentage find talking about their challenges difficult, or very difficult.
- Almost a quarter of respondents find it neither easy or difficult.



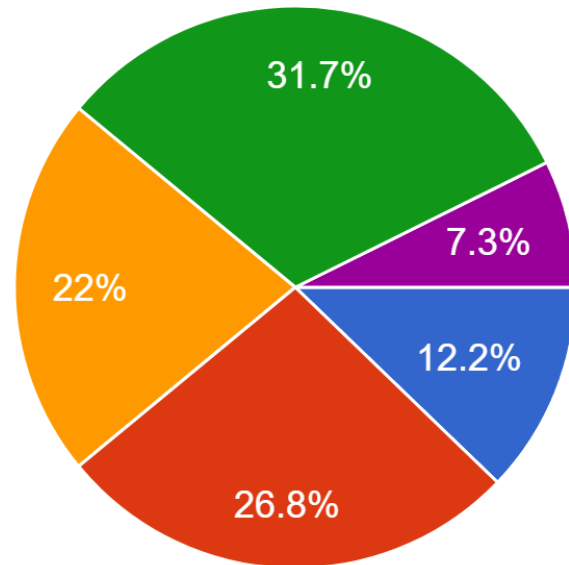
Who do you speak with about your fears, worries, and emotions?

41 responses



How easy do you find it to talk about these things?

41 responses



- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy or difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

Current Support



Headline Findings – Current Support

- The most cited forms of current or previous support accessed were counselling and support offered through Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) made available through the workplace.
- A smaller number mentioned the support of friends, family, doctors, and interventions such as coaching and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).

“Currently have access to private healthcare which includes therapy and counselling. Other than that I look for support online through articles and books mainly around Stoicism.”

“There is help available, but I don't think I'm at the point of needing it.”

“Mental health and wellbeing from the company. Or a friend when I need to talk. My colleagues in my team are brilliant. Small circle at work.”

“Employee assistance programme, general chat with friends whilst exercising.”

“Now self employed so nothing available.”



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daughter field assessment
Employee access relating
assistance **Counseling**
friends providers based nothing company whilst
doctor partner/friend
friend help discussed **None** try chat club
program books reluctant mainly online team
brilliant look healthcare circle manage neither well sure
point existent Lion around CBT recently
being articles concerns sports myself
Heart **Counselling** Other
experts private
digital sessions Stoicism RICS told GP Councillors Small
via needing currently session
health Peer before portal **support** manager
family rd tools party
Current though **mental** self-employed
EAP previous accessed charity available
work again talk **Coaching** best wellbeing
through Free counsellor Never therapy
need service programme

Future Support



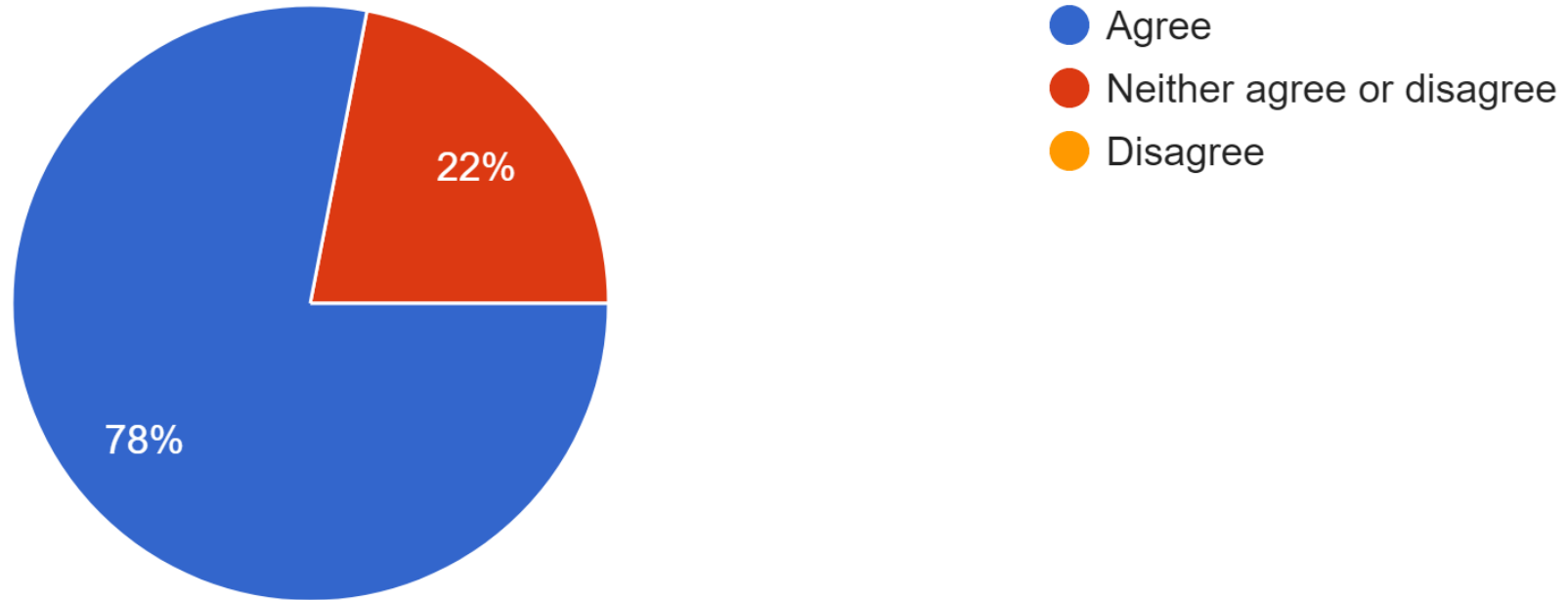
Headline Findings - Future Support

- 78% agreed that there should be more support available / provided for men in their middle years.
- In terms of future support for men in midlife, the ideas most favoured were:



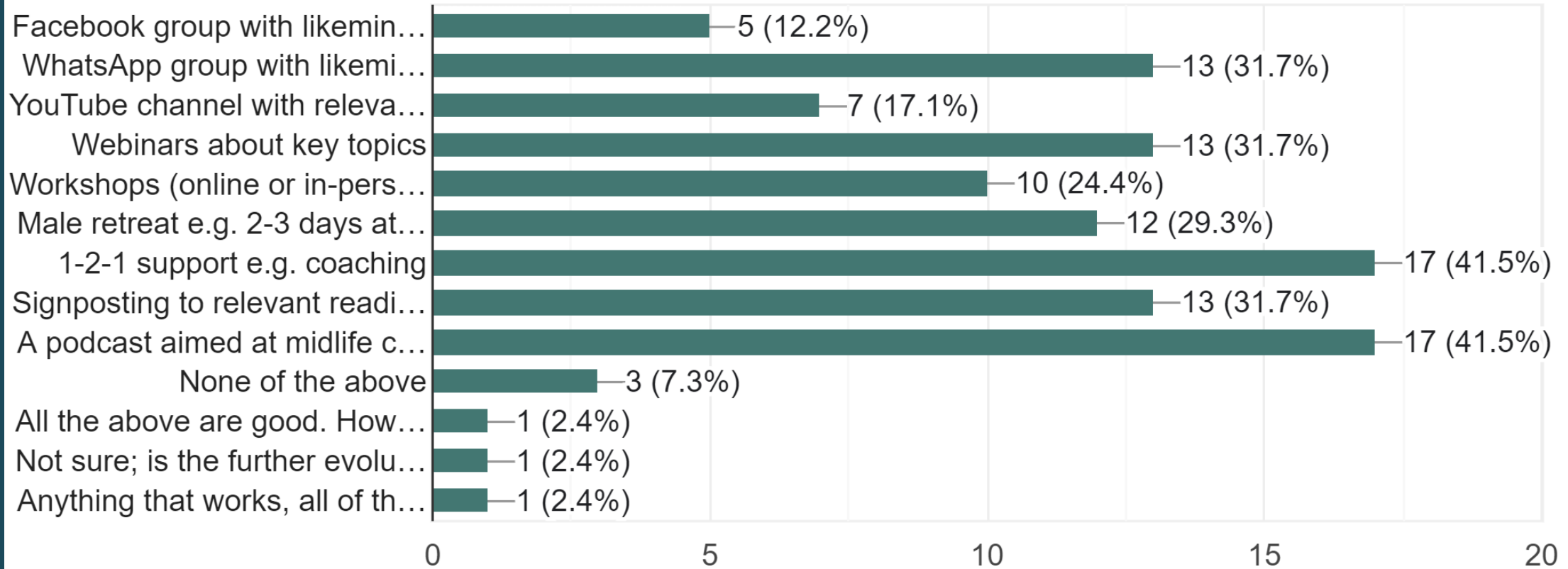
To what extent do you agree that there should be more support for men in their middle years (e.g. 40-55) to help them deal with the numerous potential challenges?

41 responses



Please tick any of the following that you would find useful to attend, support, contribute to or access. If you have your own ideas, please add these under 'other'.

41 responses

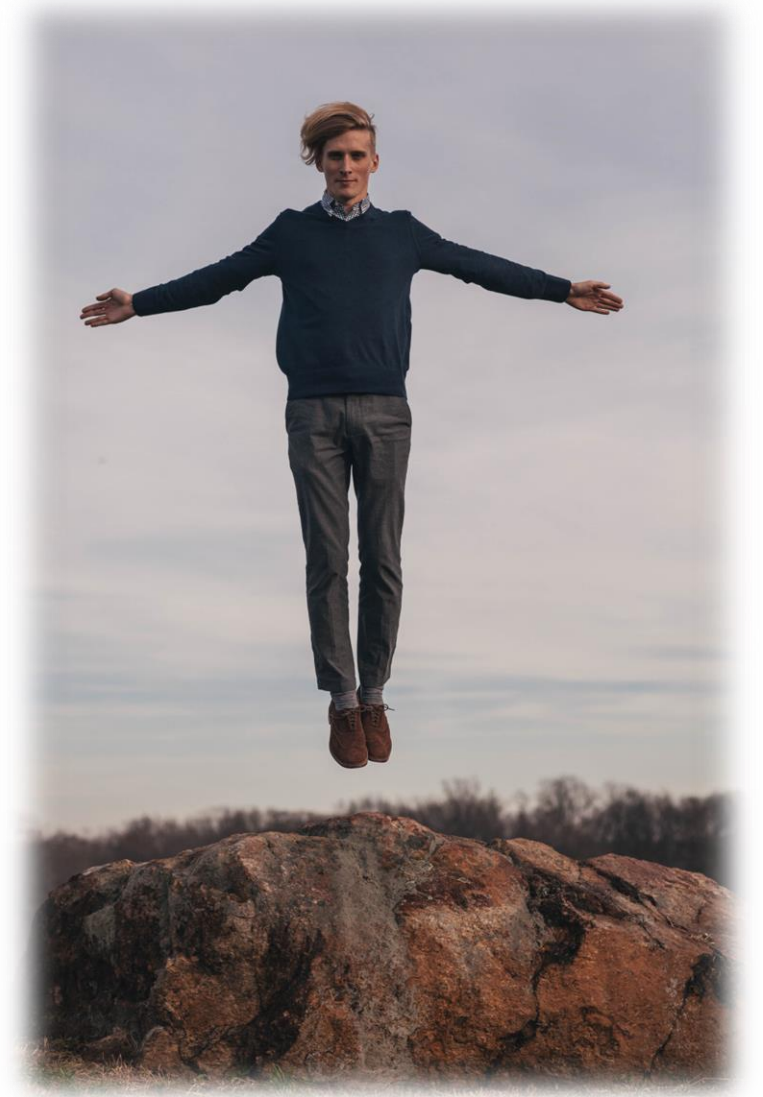


“Anything that works, all of the above and anything that encourages openness.”



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COACHING**

The **ONE** thing that would most help
men in midlife right now



Headline Findings

- The ONE thing that men said would most help them in midlife right now included:



More time



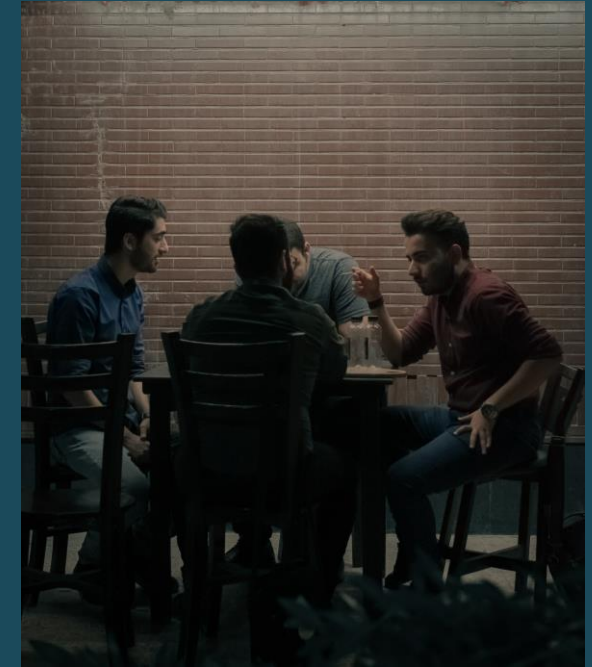
Achieving a better life balance



More money



A friend or somebody to talk to



A support group or a way of hearing similar stories and getting advice

self-awareness about talk
work motivation passive
invest Fewer right virtual
more Someone life/friends/work activity remove
Self-acceptance **one** social
friends day different **really** retire Something
pleasure closer feel financially knowing stories
partner **Win** own upto **income**
unfortunately pass **above** director
life times inc **else** Nhs lottery **time** thing Planking midlife
mins **week** Euro EI similar
balance Spend abundance always considered
set Career men people enough
Money toxic brave live time/family give **challenges**
maintain want **Quality** materials level
highlight getting Fitness topics Access able
Being caring Hearing male career/life
group hours countries **anything**
conversations

“Time. Quality time. It’s more valuable than anything else.”

“An independent person to talk to.”

“Access to materials I can read in my own time.”

“Help with work-life balance.”

“More time for self and honest conversations with male friendship group.”

Recommendations and Next Steps



Recommendations (1)

- Collectively we all have a responsibility to 'normalise' men in their middle years speaking more openly about the unique challenges they face at this life stage.
- Encourage men to stop or pause in their busy lives and self-reflect on their biggest challenges and how they could be addressed.
- It is important that we better signpost men to the different types of support that is already available.
- But we need to help men to find the *right* support and get deeper into their challenges to really understand what will help. For example, is having more time or more money a genuine solution? For loss of motivation and direction a coach would be appropriate, for issues with mental health it is more likely to be a counsellor or therapist.

Recommendations (2)

If you know a man in midlife:

- Encourage them to have more conversations with people they trust, and to prioritise spending time with friends.
- If they are a parent, ask what specifically might help them with this - there are specialists and support is out there, including books, workshops as well as learning from other parents.
- Signpost them to relevant support - coaching and counselling are different interventions and can be helpful depending on the issue identified. Key is finding the right intervention.

If you are a man in midlife:

- Having read this research, consider what is the area of your life that you need the most support with?
- In terms of your happiness, consider what would take your rating up one point? (e.g. from a 7 to an 8).
- Identify how can you get that support and from whom.
- Take or seek opportunities to talk about your challenges more.
- Seek opportunities to support another man with his challenges.
- Commit to do, or change, one thing to improve your day-to-day life. Ask someone to hold you to account on it.

Recommendations (3)

As a leader in your workplace:

- Assess whether the culture in your company or organisation lends itself to men opening up more and having honest discussions about their challenges.
- Consider whether additional support for your male colleagues in this age group is required and is this available internally or from somebody external?
- Ensure that provisions are in place for working parents/dads e.g. flexible working, empathetic line managers, enhanced parental leave.

For those self-employed:

- You may need to work harder to cultivate your own support mechanisms e.g. with other self-employed people, networking groups or local/community organisations.

And Finally...

- Thanks again to all 41 respondents for contributing to this survey.
- If you have any comments or feedback about this research, please get in touch at darren@frontfootcoaching.com or call me on 07703 359673.
- Visit [Resources | Frontfoot Coaching](#) for more resources, articles and links regarding midlife issues - this area is continually updated with new material.
- If you would like to have a conversation about how coaching might help you as an individual or your team, please get in touch.



Front Foot Coaching



Front Foot Coaching was created in 2021, by certified Personal Development Coach Darren Lawrence.

The origins of the term 'on the front foot' are thought to have sporting connotations from cricket or boxing, and refers to being in an advantageous position. Following roles in national organisations such as Sport England and The FA, the description fits with Darren's background in sport and his passion for helping people find their purpose and make progress confidently with direction, clarity and motivation.

In recent years Darren has become fascinated by the concept of midlife and the so-called 'midlife crisis', having come through personal challenges of his own. He now works with individuals and organisations in sport and other sectors to help clients move forward through change positively and with greater confidence.

For an initial conversation about how coaching might help you or your team, please get in touch on 07703 359673 or at darren@frontfootcoaching.com