

AUDIENCE PROFILE: MEN

12.7%

12.7% of American men age 18 and older have diabetes. (1)

36.6%

36.6% of American men have prediabetes, however only 9.4% know they have this condition.



States where men make up more than 50% of the population:

- Alaska
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Montana
- Nevada
- North Dakota
- Utah
- Wyoming



In order to successfully engage your target audience, you must have a clear understanding of their culture, beliefs and barriers to health. This audience profile includes information about the nuances that need to be considered when reaching men, based on the review of various research studies and also taking into consideration lessons learned through past experiences working with this group. This document is not an in-depth research report or analysis, as it is meant to help you have a general understanding of different factors that may affect your audience's availability, interest and/or commitment to your program. Use the questions listed at the end of this profile to validate and expand on the information provided for your local program's market.

Understanding Male Audiences

Culturally, men are a diverse group and getting them to become involved in a variety of things is challenging. However, there are over-arching commonalities that can be helpful to understand. According to the US census data men currently make up 49.2 percent of the population. Men comprise a significant portion of the population and given the prevalence of diabetes among this population as well as attitudes and behaviors that increase the likelihood of complications it is important to reach and engage men in your type 2 diabetes prevention lifestyle change program.

- Among Americans 18 and older men have a higher incidence of diabetes (12.7 percent) than women (11.7 percent) and the general population (12.2 percent). (1)
- Racial and ethnic minorities have higher rates of diabetes in general, which is true for men as well. (2)
- Among men, lower education is associated with a higher chance of diabetes.
- The percentage of men with diabetes increases with age. Seventeen percent of men between 45-65 years of age and 25.2 percent of men aged 65 and older have diabetes.
- Men make less healthy food choices and while they exercise more, the exercise men undertake is likely to be riskier and have a higher chance for injury. (1)

Characteristics and Cultural Understanding

Research suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to male health promotion will not be successful because men are a heterogeneous group with varying health information needs and preferences.

The role of masculinity in male health

Concepts of masculinity are consistent across cultures. Traditional views of masculinity often have a negative effect on health behaviors. (2) Men often define themselves by strength, intelligence, and self-reliance.

Strength

Several qualitative studies have found that men, even healthy men, do not like to think and talk about their health because of the possibility of being exposed as unhealthy. (5) Men will actively avoid information that would jeopardize internal narratives of strength by exposing weakness, even in health care scenarios. (3) Men are also rewarded in development for ignoring symptoms and persevering despite weakness and pain. (4)

Intelligence

Men often report frustration with health promotions and information stating that it is “common sense” and therefore it is not necessary for them to participate in programs to learn what they already know. Participation in health education and promotion activities is perceived as an indication that men are the opposite of knowledgeable or intelligent.

Self-Reliance

Men desire to be self-reliant and this aspect of masculinity discourages information seeking and participation in health care services. Men also often view themselves as risk takers with the consequences of behaviors and choices not being considered.

These and other aspects of masculinity create difficulties when navigating health promotion or conversations.

Cultural gender roles also affect men’s health behaviors. In many cultures taking care of health matters is up to the women in the family. Women schedule health appointments, seek health information and make health behavior decisions such as foods that are prepared and served.

Economic Implications

Men are less likely to be in poverty than women

across all racial and ethnic groups. (5, 6) Men are also more likely than women to be employed and to work longer hours. Men are also more likely to have health insurance sponsored through their workplace and to be the primary subscriber.

Long hours spent at work are often seen as a barrier by men to seeking health care and participating in health promotion and wellness activities.

Health Information Seeking

When men do seek health information and health care it is with the goal of protecting and providing for their children and wives/partners. Many men also seek health information from their wives and other family members before consulting health care providers.

Men and the Health Care System

In addition to the other reasons that make health care utilization less frequent than it should be in America, men typically and uniquely have a pattern of avoidance. There are many cultural and psychological factors at play here, including those mentioned above. Men don’t want to feel like they’re wasting other people’s time so receiving information they feel like they could have gotten on their own or information that isn’t very actionable can be frustrating. (5) Unfortunately, this can apply to many health-related situations.

It is also important to understand the role of loved ones in providing health services to men. In most families, men are not the primary health care decision maker in their family. (7) It is a good idea to market to and conduct outreach to mothers, wives, and sisters of men who you are interested in enrolling in diabetes prevention. Several studies found that messaging and involving men’s loved ones in the outreach process was effective. (8)

Support both to and from men is also a key concept once men are engaged in your program. Men like to be supported in their decision making process by those they trust and there is benefit from framing their role as supporting others. Positive peer social control for men is a significant factor in health promotion. (9) Getting male stakeholders engaged, conducting outreach, and acting as supportive role models to other men is a great way to both meet their health needs, as they now have these positive pressures on them to adhere to good health behaviors, and improve the health behaviors of others.

Utilizing male stakeholders as role models is likely key in reaching those men without the social connections that typically form a social support system that would encourage them to seek help.

In the United States men have lacked health movement that are equivalent to those experienced by women. While women's specialty health clinics have thrived and their issues receive national attention it is rare for the same to be true for a men's specialty clinic or unique health issue. It may be challenging but we can contribute to re-framing the conversation around men's health in constructive ways and make a difference in the lives of men.

Trusted Sources and Influencers

Men tend to seek information and be influenced by their wives and families. Men will also trust information provided by figures that represent their view of masculinity particularly sports figures, businessmen and those in traditional occupations that highlight male strength and heroism such as police, military and emergency personnel.

Media Habits

Television and Video Games

According to the 2016 American Time Use Survey, American men watch television for 2.94 hours a day, compared to an average of 2.52 per day for women. (10) This will likely increase with the rise of television and other streaming services offered through video game consoles such as PlayStation Vue which have led to men spending more time on their game devices. The average man also spent 0.49 hours per day playing computer games or otherwise using a computer for leisure. (11)

Internet

Men are slightly less likely to use the more common social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and more likely to use other platforms such as Reddit, LinkedIn, and YouTube compared to women. (12) Men spend an hour on YouTube every week compared to 35 minutes for women. (13) Men seek entertainment and information from social networks rather than using social networks to maintain relationships.

When marketing over the internet to men, information should be useful, practical, and highlight the value your brand will add to their lives. (14)

Considerations for Messaging

Organizations conducting focus group research with men have found common reasons that men cite when avoiding health care:

- Lack of comfort in social groups relative to women.
- Lack of time or other convenience.
- It's not manly, men value autonomy and think they can fix things themselves.
- Denial. Men are not motivated to deal with health-related issues, particularly those that are preventive. They are less likely to sacrifice or modify behavior now for a future reward.
- Men prefer to either attend all male programs or programs with their spouses.
- Men prefer action to discussion. Focus on the "actionable strategies" taught in the program.
- Men respond to data and measures making screening activities that give them data, possible consequences of inaction and proven strategies most appealing.

Proven Promotion Strategies

The focus group report also included several recommendations for health promotion programs or marketing efforts hoping to reach and engage men:

- Make benefits concrete and accessible.
- Provide messages where men are and make accessing information as convenient as possible. Scottish researchers had success reaching men through their local premier league club. (15)
- The most effective information will be personal.
- Include family members, particularly wives.
- Focus on increased ability to work and be productive.
- Focus on the benefit of health in terms of providing for the family.
- Use sports figures and other men in positions of success and strength to champion your message.
- Focus on how your program helps "fix" a problem.

Questions for Consideration

Understanding Your Male Population

- What are the demographics of your local male population?

Demographics	Statistic/Data
Population Percentage	
Median Age	
Gender	
Country of Origin	
Language (spoken)	
Population with Prediabetes	
Economic Status	

- What are the cultural and language nuances for the local male community?
- Within your community, are there particularly active or large groups that represent men?

Health Care and Health Information Seeking Behaviors

- Where specifically does your local male population go for health care?
- How accessible is health care within the community, especially for men?
- Are the health information seeking behaviors the same or different for your local male population compared to other populations within the community? If different, how?
- Who are the trusted sources for health information for the local male population? Are they different or the same as other trusted sources?

Trusted Sources

- Who are the trusted thought leaders in your local community?
 - Community Based Organizations?
 - Faith Communities?
 - Health Care Providers?
 - Vocal advocates?
- Who has access to these groups? With whom do you need to collaborate?

- How can you utilize these trusted sources to help you with marketing and promoting your lifestyle change program?

Media Habits

- Which media channels, including social and digital media, are most popular and/or preferred among men in your community?
- What relationships do you have with these media outlets? Who do you need to reach out to?
- What infrastructure does your organization have to utilize popular social and digital channels? What do you need to strengthen?

Messages

- Are your messages culturally sensitive?
- Do you have images that will resonate with your male population?
- Are you working with community organizations or groups that will be able to assist with message development for your marketing materials?

Barriers and Benefits to DPP

- What are the specific barriers in your community?
- How will you work to mitigate these?
- What benefits are meaningful to your audience? How can you work these benefits into your marketing materials?
- What does your lifestyle change program offer the community that other prevention programs or events don't or can't?

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