

Erectile dysfunction (ED) Australian research findings

Boston Scientific commissioned YouGov to perform an online quantitative survey on erectile dysfunction (ED) involving a nationally representative sample of 1,017 Australian men aged 40+ years between July 5 to 10, 2024.¹ The data was weighted by age and region to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates of Australian men aged 40+. The major findings included:

Experience with ED

- Half (50%) of Aussie men aged 40 and over have experienced ED – a persistent inability to achieve, or maintain a penile erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance – in the past 12 months, with as many as one in three (32%) experiencing ED at least once per month.
- Concerningly, for more than one in five (22%) male survey respondents, ED is a challenge they face at least once week.

Prevalence

- Despite the significant number of men afflicted by ED, almost one in two Aussie men (47%) believe ED affects only around one in five men, while mistakenly, 12 per cent of men believe ED is very uncommon, and only affects around one in 10 men.

Affect on quality of life

- Living with this common, yet under diagnosed, and consequently, under-treated condition comes at a high price. Living with ED weighs heavily on the mental health of those affected (43%), with almost half of the survey respondents (48%) reporting a “sense of helplessness”.
- Men living with ED most commonly describe their experience as frustrating (58%), embarrassing (44%) and confidence-robbing (39%).
- 33% of men living with ED describe it to be depressing, anxiety-inducing (29%), compromising of their masculinity (21%), mentally exhausting (16%), and isolating (13%).
- Men aged 40-49 and 50-64 are more likely than those aged 65+ to describe it as embarrassing (51% respectively, compared to 35%), anxiety-inducing (41% and 32% respectively, compared to 20%) and mentally exhausting (29% and 17% respectively, compared to 9%).
- More than a quarter (27%) of men living with ED, say that it has affected their social interactions with others and nearly three in five (58%) men living with ED report it has affected their confidence.
- These figures are alarmingly higher in Australian men living with ED under 50 years of age, with 8 in 10 (79%) of men aged between 40-49 reporting the condition has affected their confidence, 68% stating it has taken a toll on their mental health and 46% claiming ED has affected their social interactions with others.
- Although ED is more likely to affect older men, the impact of living ED is more pronounced among those aged 40-49.
- Not only does the condition have a toll on an individual's quality of life, one in five (21%) employed men living with ED say that it has affected their work productivity.

Impact on partner's quality of life

- Commonly referred to as the 'couples disease', ED impacts both the man and his partner.
- 70+% of men living with ED state it has affected their sex drive, while three in 10 (31%) of married/partnered men living with ED claim it has affected their spouse/partner's mental health.
- Two in three (65%) men living with ED claim the condition has robbed them of intimacy with their spouse/partner, while two in five (39%) say it has strained their relationship, while nearly three in five (58%) allege it has reduced relationship satisfaction for their spouse.
- The impact on the spouse/ partner of those living with ED is also more pronounced among men aged 40-49, with as many as six in 10 (61%) men of this age group reporting ED has put a strain on their relationship with their spouse/partner and 58 per cent claim living with the condition has affected their spouse/partner's mental health.

Support from partner/spouse

- Most men (63%) living with ED maintain having support from their partner would make a difference, enhancing their confidence to both seek, and undergo treatment (36% respectively).
- Three in 10 (30%) male respondents said support from their partner would also help reduce the embarrassment, frustration, and isolation associated with the condition.
- One in four men (25%) say support from their partner/ spouse would help minimise the impact on their confidence and sense of masculinity, while around one in five say that it would help minimise the effect on their quality of life (21%) or on their mental health (19%).
- Overall, those aged 40-49 are far more likely than older counterparts to say that spouse/partner support would make a difference in seeking treatment for ED (85% compared to 50-64: 61%, 65+: 53%).

Treatment seeking

- While two in three (66%) male respondents claim to be "open to seeking treatment", only one in three (34%) men living with ED have actually sought treatment.
- Of the 34% of male respondents who have sought ED treatment, almost one in three (12%) waited more than 6 months before doing so.
- While only one in six (17%) men recall having been asked by their GP/health care professional (HCP) about their sexual health or erectile function, seven in 10 (70%) men reported they would find it easier to seek treatment for ED if it was raised during a routine general health check-up with their GP/HCP.

Reasons for seeking treatment

- Undoubtedly, the greatest motivation for seeking treatment for ED was wanting to have a better sex life (71% of men ranking this as one of their top 3 motivations).
- Other motivators for seeking treatment included men who believed the condition has compromised their quality of life (46%), the impacted their confidence and masculinity (39%) and the impacted their relationships with their partner/spouse (34%), noting men aged 40-49 are more than twice as likely as those aged 65+ to cite ED having compromised their mental health (35% compared to 16%).
- Furthermore, for those who have sought treatment, the impact on their relationships with others (28%) and the compromise ED had caused to their mental health (25%), were cited as treatment seeking motivators.

Reasons for not seeking treatment

- One of the most commonly reported reasons for not seeking treatment is that many men mistakenly believe ED is a normal part of ageing.
- Other reasons men report for not seeking ED treatment include;

- Being unsure whether treatment will be effective (36%)
- Too embarrassed to discuss it with their GP/ HCP (28%)
- Concern with associated treatment costs (26%); and
- Erroneously believing there is nothing they can do about it (14%).
- Almost one in four (24%) younger men (aged 40-49) avoid seeking treatment in the vain hope that their ED will resolve on its own.
- Furthermore, those aged 40-49 and 50-64 are more likely than those aged 65+ to be embarrassed to discuss it with their GP/HCP (34% and 35% respectively, compared to 19%).

ED information sought online

- Less than three in ten (28%) men have sought information about ED online – one in eight (12%) have done so from social media, while one in five (22%) have done so from educational and/or other websites.
- One in five (22%) men sought information about ED online and believe the information was helpful, while one in ten (9%) sought information about ED online but believe the information wasn't helpful.

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References:

1. Australian market research on erectile dysfunction (ED). YouGov: YouGov; 2024.