

19 November 2022

# International Men's Day

For this year's International Men's Day, Liat blogs about the issues that it is intended to highlight and how they particularly impact the LGBT+ community.

International Women's Day was launched over 100 years ago as a result of women workers taking strike action in Russia, but International Men's Day is a more recent invention. It was first marked in 1999 as an initiative of Trinidadian trade union academic Dr Jerome Teelucksingh to highlight positive male role models, and to reject negative stereotypes of masculinity.

For trade unionists we can use this opportunity to highlight the issues that disproportionately impact men under the current economic system. Figures from the [Campaign Against Living Miserably](#) show levels of suicide amongst men are three times that of women in the UK; and that levels of male homelessness are six times that of women.

These issues disproportionately impact gay and bi men. A quarter of homeless youth are LGBT+. Levels of suicide and self-harm amongst gay and bi men are six times higher than straight men. Rates of depression and substance abuse are substantially higher than for straight counterparts. These rates are higher still amongst black gay and bisexual men, and amongst trans people.

The figures show that the current system fails everyone. These are fundamentally trade union issues, impacting our members. Whilst men as a group still dominate society, individual men are often failed by society.

Society sets expectations that men are strong, are breadwinners, that "men don't cry"; and when men break out of these narrow confines, society treats it as shameful, confining men to a box for how we can and can't behave. This ultimately sets men up to fail and denies us the opportunities to live our lives to their full potential - it can also lead us to use coping mechanisms such as alcohol and contributes to mental ill-health and suicide.

International Men's Day should be an opportunity for trade unionists to highlight the need for active campaigns to free men and people of all genders from these constraints. For PCS members this means supporting the upcoming strikes. Better

pay, a reduction in the working week, an increase in annual leave will all do substantially more for our members' mental health than any amount of buzz words from our employers. It will allow us opportunities to connect with friends, family and partners; to explore new hobbies; to spend time within our communities.

We can also campaign within our groups to ensure proper sick pay from day one of employment for all staff, and for employers to treat time off due to mental ill-health as on par with physical ill-health. Our employers need to take stress seriously as a workplace issue; our health and safety reps have a key role to play in demanding this.

If you need help with any of these issues, please speak to your local PCS rep. You can find their details by logging in to [PCS Digital](#).