

# 10 RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHTS TO EVOLVE ON-SCREEN MALE REPRESENTATION

In a survey of over 1,000 boys, ages 10-19:

**2%** said that society values honesty and morality in boys

**33%** said they are expected to hide or suppress their feelings

**44%** said society expects them to be aggressive or violent when they get angry

## 1 Show boys and girls playing together.

**Why?** Because boys who have female friendships are building relationships based on respect from an early age.



In a 2015 study of over 400 single men (average age 24), **26%** reported they had committed some form of sexual aggression (verbal and/or physical).

## 2 Show “tough” male characters being kind and vulnerable to other men.

**Why?** By playing against stereotypes, boys learn that being “masculine” includes having healthy relationships.



Men who feel they must always be tough are **6-7 times** more likely to bully other men.

## 3 Show boys doing more chores.

**Why?** Because American girls ages 10-17 spend 2 more hours a week on chores than boys.



Sons (under 14 years of age) who see their moms work (for any amount of time) spend more time on housework and childcare as adults.

## 4 Show boys playing with typical female toys (e.g., dolls) and girls playing with typical male toys (e.g., trucks), preferably in the same narrative.

**Why?** Because changing stereotypical representation in both directions seems to hold the most power to change unconscious biases.



Infants and toddlers do not show strong gendered toy preferences, but by age 5 their toy choices are strongly gendered.

## 5 Show boys as being caring and having close friendships.

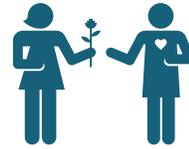
**Why?** Because too often, boys are told not to have close friendships. Furthermore often its only gay boys, who are portrayed as vulnerable and caring."



More boys than girls report being isolated. Boys with close male friendships are less prone to depression and more likely to live longer lives.

## 6 Show boys talking about love, girls making the first move both romantically and sexually, and girls buying flowers for boys.

**Why?** Because the traditional heterosexual script is still the norm, even today.



63% of men believe they are encouraged to seize sex whenever they can, yet 84% of young people describe an ideal Friday night as hook-up free.

## 7 Show male characters who are proud and accepting of having a primary caregiving role and the responsibilities that come with it.

**Why?** Men in these roles who embrace their “job” provide important nurturing for their children (all genders).



Of the 40 million family caregivers in America, nearly half of them are men.

## 8 Show more nuanced boy characters and not just stock types.

**Why?** The majority of male characters in kids’ TV are 1) smart and active boys, 2) funny losers (dumb jock or hapless dad), and 3) geeks.



One in five boys consume fashion content

## 9 Show a wide variety of body types being appealing, not just “beach bodies”.

**Why?** Because 33–35% of boys age 6–8 indicate their ideal body is thinner than their current body.



The number of men undergoing cosmetic procedures between 1997 and 2015 increased by more than 325 percent.

## 10 Show the full spectrum of gender identities.

**Why?** Because Gen Z cares about embracing gender diversity.



Among all teens in California, 27 percent identified with some level of gender non-conformity.

*“For 15 years my Institute on Gender in Media has been raising industry awareness on the imbalance of onscreen gender representation in children’s entertainment media, and we’ve made a lot of progress. To get to the finish line, we must broaden and improve the representation of both male and female characters.”*

**GEENA DAVIS, FOUNDER, GEENA DAVIS INSTITUTE ON GENDER IN MEDIA**

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### Research Sources:

Chumsky (2015, 2019); Freeman, N. K., (2007); Götz, M. & Lemish, D. (2012); Henrich, C. C., et al., (2000); Jacques-Tiura, A. J. et al., (2015); Lai, C.K. et al., (2014); Lemish, D. (2010); Lowes, (2003); Making Caring Common, (2017); Martin, (2019); Miller et al., (2017); Morman, M. T. et al., (2013); Phillips, (2019); Plan International’s State of Gender Equality, (2018); Promundo (2016, 2017); Way, N. et al., (2006); Wilson, (2017).



Use this QR Code to go directly to the checklist aligned with these tips to help guide your efforts. [#realmasculinity](#)

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The Center for Scholars & Storytellers, based at UCLA, bridges the gap between researchers and content creators to support positive youth development.

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