

Public Safety Personnel Mental Wellness: The Impact of Organizational Factors



Importance

160,000 Canadians work in public safety organizations, providing public services in potentially traumatic emergency situations. Over the past 10 years, the number and cost of WSIB mental health claims in this sector have been rising, and the unprecedented stress of the COVID-19 pandemic has made these issues worse. Public safety organizations have attempted to mitigate these issues by providing mental health interventions; however, by focusing efforts on the individual within high stress work environments, these interventions neglect the role of organizational factors, like supervisor and co-worker support and mental health stigma, and their impact on employees and employment outcomes. Building the evidence base on the impact of organizational factors on mental wellness will help public safety employers better support the well-being of their employees.

Impact

The findings of this study will have municipal, provincial, and federal impacts. This study, and the organizational factor assessment tool it creates, will support public safety organizations to positively impact employee mental wellness, and in turn benefit their families and communities. The long-term plan for this work is to build on the findings of this study and expand this research beyond Ontario, to the mental wellness of Canadian workers.

SSHRC  CRSH

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
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Project Objectives

The main goal of this study is to build an understanding of how organizational factors impact public safety personnel mental wellness and work outcomes.

Four study objectives:

1. Determine the ways that public safety organizations in Ontario currently address organizational factors.
2. Explore public safety personnel experiences of their organizations' efforts to address organizational factors.
3. Quantify the impact of organizational factors on public safety personnel mental wellness and work outcomes.
4. Develop a tool for public safety organizations to assess how effectively they address organizational factors and the potential impact of their efforts on employee mental wellness and work outcomes.

Participation in this Research

Participants will include first responders, public safety personnel, and organizations from across Ontario.

To address Study Objectives 1-3, data will be collected from 3 different sources and will contribute to the creation of an employer assessment tool (Objective 4).

1. Leaders and occupational health staff will take part in virtual interviews about the way their organization has addressed organizational factors over the past 10 years.
2. Public safety personnel will participate in surveys and optional virtual interviews and focus groups about the experience of the workers with organizational factors over the past 10 years.
3. Relevant workers compensation usage data from WSIB Ontario will be collected for the past 10 years.

Current Opportunity for all Ontario Public Safety Personnel

Please consider taking 10-20 minutes to respond to our survey about organizational factors in public safety organizations (linked below). Participation is voluntary, anonymous, confidential, and open to all first responders and public safety personnel in Ontario.

Take the survey

or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

<https://fhs.cac.queensu.ca/WMH/surveys/?s=9KJJ4HEJDKEC9EWP>

Thank you for considering this invitation. We hope you will join us in contributing to the well-being of first responders and public safety personnel. Should you have any questions, please contact us using the information below.

Survey Compensation

Participants who take part in this research by completing our current survey will be entered to win 1 of 20 \$50 gift cards.

Contact Information

For more information, contact Dr. Megan Edgelow
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This study has been reviewed for ethical compliance by the Queen's University Health Sciences Research Ethics Board.