



YOUR VOICE MATTERS: UPCOMING MENTAL HEALTH STUDY FOR RCMP VETERANS

A first-of-its-kind study will capture RCMP Veterans' experiences to strengthen mental health supports for generations to come.

Q&A with Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton, Ph.D., R.D. Psych., FCAHS, FRSC

What inspired you and your team to pursue this study on the mental health of RCMP Veterans?

Serving RCMP often report a high prevalence of mental health disorders relative to the general public. Reports have indicated that serving RCMP screening positive for one or more mental health disorders increased from approximately 50% in 2017¹ to approximately 65% in 2023². The cumulative nature of potentially psychologically traumatic events and other occupational stressors experienced by RCMP during service can contribute to long-term mental health challenges that carry into post-service life. Our understanding of posttraumatic stress injuries (PTSI) is increasing among the RCMP population currently serving; however, we know almost nothing about the mental health and experiences of former/retired RCMP³.

Is there a date established for the survey launch?

The survey is expected to launch in *February 2026*.

What are the main goals or research questions you hope to answer through this project?

The main outcomes/goals of the study are to:

- Estimate the prevalence of posttraumatic stress injuries (PTSI) among former/retired RCMP and any differences based on sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, sex, years of experience);
- Examine the potentially psychologically traumatic event (PTE) exposures and other operational and organizational stressors experienced by former/retired RCMP;
- Assess the types of mental health supports available to former/retired RCMP, and their willingness to access different kinds of professional and non-professional care;
- Compare prevalence estimates of PTIs among the former/retired RCMP population, newly recruited RCMP cadets, currently serving RCMP, and other public safety personnel sectors (e.g., municipal police) to understand differences across service sectors and from pre, to during, to post-service; and,
- Provide evidence that can help make sure the best possible resources are available to support former/retired RCMP.

¹ Carleton et al., "Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada."

² Carleton et al., "Mental Health Disorder Symptoms among Serving Royal Canadian Mounted Police."

³ Carleton et al., "Exposures to Potentially Traumatic Events among Public Safety Personnel in Canada."



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What kinds of mental health challenges or themes are you hoping to explore among Veterans (e.g., PTSD, anxiety, depression, transition to civilian life, stigma, and resilience)?

We hope to assess various posttraumatic stress injuries (PTSI), including, but not limited to:

- posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- major depressive disorder (MDD);
- generalized anxiety disorder (GAD);
- social anxiety disorder (SAD);
- panic disorder (PD); and,
- suicidal ideations and behaviours.

We will also assess:

- Lifetime exposures to potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTe) and other operational (e.g., public scrutiny, shift work) and organizational (e.g., lack of resources, staff shortages) stressors throughout their employment context, trying to assess for anything that impacts mental health⁴;
- Moral injury sustained through service;
- Well-being and health concerns (e.g., physical activity, insomnia, chronic pain);
- Perceived social supports (e.g., organizational, institutional, interpersonal, family supports);
- Factors that may impact willingness to access support (e.g., previous mental health training, resilience, stigma, and attitudes towards support); and,
- Perceptions of transition from service to post-service (e.g., financial preparation, social connections, time use, identities, and family situations).

How do you plan to engage the broader RCMP Veteran community, including non-members of the Association, when the survey launches?

We will be provided with support from the [Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families](#), the [RCMP Veterans' Association \(RCMPVA\)](#), and the [National Police Federation](#), and we will collaborate with these groups to facilitate distributing study information via email, internal channels, and social media (e.g., Facebook, Linked-In).

Veterans can also find study information on our website: [PTSS Lab](#) and our social media channels: [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#).

We are eager to discuss any other possible supports for engaging the broader RCMP Veteran community. We want to be as inclusive as possible and make sure every former/retired RCMP who wants to participate is able to participate.

⁴ Edgelow et al., "Organizational Factors and Their Impact on Mental Health in Public Safety Organizations."



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What message would you like to share with RCMP Veterans now, ahead of the survey? (E.g., why their voices matter and what difference their participation can make.)

The RCMP provide a vital and under-appreciated set of services for all Canadians. Most people really do not understand the challenges RCMP face in serving and protecting our communities, or the tolls such challenges can take. Relatively speaking, there has been almost no attention paid to the experiences of former/retired RCMP. The survey results will increase our understanding of the challenges former/retired RCMP encounter, identify gaps in mental health supports and resources, and provide a foundation for innovative interventions, treatments, and accessible resources for retired RCMP. The data we will collect can also identify, for the first time, the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of former/retired RCMP members, compared to the public, to RCMP cadets, to serving RCMP, to other first responders, and to other public safety personnel.

The study results will be used directly to inform how we can better support the mental health and well-being of current and former/retired RCMP members and their families. The results can also help with advocacy efforts for current and future generations of RCMP, during and after their service, something we have seen with results from similar studies with serving personnel and military Veterans.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

The planned study is a first-time research effort specifically in support of former/retired RCMP. The impact of the results directly depends on how many people choose to participate – the more voices we can include the more impact we can have to support current and former/retired RCMP members and their families. The experiences of every former/retired RCMP who participates are important to us; as such, we invite and encourage all of their participation. Their collective voices will contribute to a better understanding and fostering of mental health among all RCMP, past, present, and future. We hope the current study is the first of many so that we can more effectively honour the service of so many RCMP.