

# RISK AND RESILIENCY AMONG RCMP CADETS

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## Why study risk and resiliency among RCMP cadets?

Studying the risk and resiliency factors believed to contribute to an increased risk of mental health disorders may help determine whether mental health challenges among Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) stem from inherent psychological difficulties of recruits or from the nature of policing work itself.

## Background

Many (50.2%) RCMP officers screen positively for one or more mental health disorders, which is much higher than the diagnostic prevalence for the Canadian general population (10.1%).



Long-held notions about the mental health of public safety personnel have suggested that mental health challenges can be explained by inherent psychological vulnerabilities, and that these should be screened for prior to service. Despite these prevailing beliefs, little is known about RCMP cadet mental health. This study marks the first attempt to assess whether individual risk and resiliency factors put RCMP cadets at an inherently greater risk for developing mental health challenges.

## The study

The current research draws on data from a larger, 10-year RCMP Study designed to assess the impact of skills taught to help protect members from Posttraumatic Stress Injuries (PTSI).

There were 772 cadets beginning the RCMP Cadet Training Program (CTP) who self-reported on six risk variables believed to negatively influence mental health (anxiety sensitivity, fear of negative evaluation, pain anxiety, illness and injury sensitivity, intolerance of uncertainty, and state anger), and on resiliency. Their data were compared to data from general young adult populations (Canadian, where available), considered to be fair comparison groups. Differences among the cadets themselves, across categories of sex, gender, marital status, age, province of residence, prior public safety experience, and education, were also examined.

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The original wording of the study was changed and condensed for the current research infographic.

## Results

The current study results indicate cadets had lower scores on all of the assessed risk variables, and higher scores on resiliency, relative to general young adult populations.

Cadet scores - lower risk and higher resiliency

### Risk variables

Associated with mental health challenges

Anxiety sensitivity  
Fear of negative evaluation  
Pain anxiety  
Illness and injury sensitivity  
Intolerance of uncertainty  
State anger



### Resiliency

Associated with mental health strength



## Conclusions

The current results contradict the notion that the higher prevalence of mental health challenges among serving RCMP officers is related to inherent psychological vulnerabilities. Instead, RCMP cadets appear to be especially psychologically resilient, and less vulnerable to developing mental health challenges than the general population. The substantially elevated prevalence of mental health disorders among serving RCMP may therefore be associated with frequent exposures to potentially psychologically traumatic events and other occupational stressors. As such, the current results do not support the need for enhanced recruitment screening related to psychological risk and resiliency variables. Instead, the current results suggest that ongoing evidence-based training, assessment, and treatment, as well as organizational supports may be required to protect RCMP officer mental health throughout their careers.

The current results help to continue advancing Canada's first-ever National Action Plan on Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries, including additional investment to support the health and well-being of first responders and other public safety personnel.



[Read the full study here](#)

Khoury, J. M. B., Jamshidi, L., Shields, R. E., Nisbet, J., Afifi, T. O., Fletcher, A. J., Stewart, S. H., Asmundson, G. J. G., Sauer-Zavala, S., Krätzig, G. P., and Carleton, R. N. (2023) Putative risk and resiliency factors among Royal Canadian Mounted Police cadets. *Front. Psychol.* 14:1048573. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1048573.