

TRAUMA EXPOSURE AMONG THE RCMP

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Why study PPTEs in the RCMP?

RCMP Officers report frequent exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTEs). While occupational exposures may be one reason for the symptoms of mental health disorders among officers, exposures prior to service could also play a role. To understand the latter, this study estimates the frequency of PPTe exposure in cadets.

Method

As part of a larger, 10-year RCMP study designed to assess the impact of skills taught to help protect members from Posttraumatic Stress Injuries (PTSI), 772 cadets beginning the Cadet Training Program (CTP) completed a self-assessment survey. Next, the results were compared to PPTe exposure data about the general population, other Canadian public safety personnel, and serving RCMP.

Results

Cadets, on average reported exposure to more types of PPTe exposures than the general population, but significantly fewer than serving RCMP and other public safety personnel.

Group	Exposure rate (out of 17)
General population	2.31
Cadets	5.81
RCMP	11.64
Public safety personnel (PSP)	11.08

These results indicate that a relationship between more frequent PPTe exposures and choosing policing as a career may exist.

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

Prevalence of PPTe exposures by types for cadets

Type of PPTe	Exposure rate in cadets (%)
Physical assault	58.2
Serious transportation accident	52.2
Serious accident at work, home or during recreational activity	45.2
Sudden accidental death	41.6

Exposure to PPTe can potentially lead to mental health disorders such as:

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Major depressive disorder (MDD)
- Social anxiety disorder (SAD)
- Panic disorder (PD)

Conclusion

The findings of this study can:

- Help recruit and retain RCMP by providing insight into why people become officers
- Inform mental health training and resources
- Identify risk factors for mental health challenges.

The 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.

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Find the full study here

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