

MENTAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, STIGMA, AND SERVICE USE INTENTIONS AMONG RCMP CADETS

www.rcmpstudy.ca

Why study mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions?

Nearly half of all serving Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers screen positively for one or more mental health disorders. The mental health challenges faced by RCMP are often coupled with high levels of stigma toward those with mental health disorders and low levels of intention to seek mental health services. Higher levels of mental health knowledge and lower levels of stigma have been associated with an increase in intentions to use mental health services; therefore, evidence-based training to reduce stigma and increase service use among RCMP members is imperative to support their mental health.



Increased intent to access mental health services occurs when levels of mental health knowledge is high and stigma is low

The study

The current research draws on data from the larger, 10-year RCMP Study designed to assess the impact of skills taught to help protect members from posttraumatic stress injuries (PTSI), a part of a Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The current study involved 772 RCMP cadets beginning the Cadet Training Program (CPT) who completed questionnaires on mental health knowledge, stigma, and intentions to use mental health services. Results were compared across sociodemographic characteristics such as sex, age, education, and with previously collected data from serving RCMP members.

Results

Cadets reported lower mental health knowledge and stigma, and higher levels of service use intentions than serving RCMP members. Female cadets reported higher levels of mental health knowledge and service use intentions, and lower levels of stigma than male cadets. Overall, stigma was inversely associated with mental health knowledge and service use intentions, meaning higher stigma was associated with lower mental health knowledge and the intent to use mental health services.

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

Mental health knowledge and service use intentions were positively associated, suggesting that cadets with higher levels of mental health knowledge also had more intention to seek services. Cadets who reported higher levels of stigma also reported lower levels of mental health knowledge and service use intentions.

Comparison between cadets and serving RCMP

	Mental Health Knowledge	Stigma	Service Use Intentions
Cadets	lower	lower	higher
Serving RCMP	higher	higher	lower

Included were self-reported measures for: Mental Health Knowledge Scale (MAKS), Open Minds Survey for Workplace Attitudes (OMS-WA-SF), and Mental Health Service Use Questionnaire (MHSUQ)

Serving RCMP frequently encounter persons experiencing mental health challenges as part of their occupational duties, potentially increasing perceived mental health knowledge and increasing mental health stigma.

Conclusions

Differences between cadets and serving RCMP members highlight the need for ongoing evidence-informed mental health training, starting during the CTP and continuing throughout RCMP careers. Increasing evidence-based mental health knowledge may help to decrease stigma and increase the intent to use mental health services, thereby increasing early access and helping to mitigate mental health challenges for serving members.

The current results assist in advancing Canada's first-ever National Action Plan on Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries, and support ongoing investments in research and evidence-based efforts to support the health and well-being of first responders and other public safety personnel.

The RCMP Study is funded by support from the RCMP, the Government of Canada, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. R. N. Carleton is supported by the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts at The University of Regina, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and a Medavie Foundation Project Grant. T. O. Afifi is supported by a Tier I Canada Research Chair in Childhood Adversity and Resilience. The development, analyses, and distribution of the current article was made possible by a generous and much-appreciated grant from the Medavie Foundation.



[Read the full study here](#)

Andrews, K.L., Jamshidi, L., Shields, R.E., Teckchandani, T.A., Afifi, T.O., Fletcher, A.J., Sauer-Zavala, S., Brunet, A., Krätzig, G.P., and Carleton, R.N. (2023) Examining mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions among Royal Canadian Mounted Police cadets. *Front. Psychol.* 14:1123361. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1123361

Special thanks to Kara Vincent for excellent support in creating this infographic.

