

Mental Health of RCMP Cadets after Completing the Cadet Training Program

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Why study the mental health of RCMP cadets after completing the Cadet Training Program?

The high number of serving Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members with mental health disorders have often been incorrectly attributed to inadequate mental health screening of cadets, or the potentially harmful nature of police training programs. In contrast, current research suggests that serving RCMP members screen positive for mental health disorders as a result of service-related mental health injuries from exposures to potentially psychologically traumatic events.

Background

RCMP cadet mental health when starting the Cadet Training Program (CTP) appears comparable to, or better than, the general public. The CTP was expected to improve mental health, but the mental health of cadets who complete the CTP immediately prior to active-duty deployment (i.e., pre-deployment) remained unknown.

The Current Study

The current research draws on data from the larger, 10-year RCMP Study, a part of a Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Participants were RCMP Cadets ($n=449$) finishing the 26-week CTP and assessments included web-delivered surveys and clinical interviews assessing current and past mental health disorder symptoms. The current study provides estimates of RCMP cadet mental health at pre-deployment.

Results

At pre-deployment, the proportion of cadets who screened positive for one or more current mental disorders based on self-reported symptoms (7.3%) or the clinical interview (4.1%) was lower than the diagnostic prevalence for the general population (10.1%), with no statistically significant sex or gender differences. Cadets evidenced improved mental health relative to their pre-training assessments, and better mental health than other RCMP members.

Conclusions

The results suggest that:

1. Cadet mental health improved during the CTP, due at least in part to active participation in the RCMP Study;
2. The mental health challenges reported by serving RCMP likely result from their service-related experiences and exposures to potentially psychologically traumatic events in the field; and,
3. The mental health disorder symptom improvements also directly contrast long-standing notions that mental disorders among serving PSP or military are caused by inherent weaknesses or pre-existing mental health injuries among people who should have been pre-emptively excluded from service. The results further contrast recent suppositions that police training is harmful to cadets.

Highlights

Based on newly published data about RCMP members, RCMP cadets were less likely to screen positive for current mental health disorders:

	Pre-Training	Pre-Deployment	RCMP Members
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	0%	0%	47.7%
Major Depressive Disorder	5.1%	2.4%	44.6%
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	7.6%	4.9%	33.5%
Social Anxiety Disorder	2.2%	0%	24.1%
Panic Disorder	1.3%	0%	21.3%
Alcohol Use Disorder	0%	0%	4.5%

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

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Read the full study here:

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The RCMP Longitudinal PTSD Study



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