



Answering the call – measuring the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel

Frequently asked questions for police and emergency services organisations

1. What is the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services?

beyondblue is undertaking a national research study to build a comprehensive picture of the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel in Australia.

The study is the main focus of the *beyondblue* Police and Emergency Services (PES) Program until December 2018. It has three key phases:

- Phase 1 was a qualitative project gathering the personal experiences of current and former police and emergency services personnel and family members.
- Phase 2 involves the first nationally representative survey of police and emergency services personnel in Australia – *Answering the call*. *beyondblue* has engaged The University of Western Australia and Roy Morgan Research to undertake this phase.
- Phase 3 will be a collaborative 'evidence to action' project. The findings from Phases 1 and 2 will be used to identify and implement practical improvements in the mental health of police and emergency services personnel across Australia.

2. What is the aim of the study?

The study aims to investigate the prevalence of mental health conditions, suicide risk, stigma and help-seeking behaviour among police and emergency services personnel.

The research will establish important baseline measures and provide clear evidence about the issues affecting the mental health of police and emergency services personnel and the best ways to provide support.

beyondblue plans to work with ambulance, fire and rescue, police and SES agencies across Australia for the study. Agencies that participate in the study will gain access to high-quality data (national and local), and support from *beyondblue* to use the new information effectively in their own specific setting.

3. What input has the police and emergency services sector had into the survey?

The overall study methodology was developed with input from an Advisory Group comprising senior leaders from police and emergency services agencies, an executive-level union representative, clinicians and other expert practitioners, researchers with specialist expertise, and community and family representatives.

The group is chaired by Ken Lay AO APM, Chair of Ambulance Victoria and former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

The survey was developed by the research team at The University of Western Australia, led by Associate Professor David Lawrence, with guidance from the Technical Advisory Group. The Technical Advisory Group includes agency representatives, researchers with expertise in epidemiology, post-traumatic stress and workplace mental health, former police and emergency services employees, and members of the study Advisory Group.

4. Who can take part in the survey?

From September 2017, a representative random sample of more than 20,000 employees, volunteers and former employees in police, ambulance, fire and rescue, and state emergency services across Australia will be invited to participate in the survey.

Participants will be selected at random and not on the basis of their wellbeing. This is to provide a representation of the needs of the whole police and emergency services sector.

5. How is *beyondblue* conducting the survey?

Participants will be invited to complete a confidential online survey which is expected to take about 20–25 minutes to complete. Hard copy surveys will be available on request.

6. Will the survey be confidential?

Yes, the survey results will be completely confidential. Participants will not be asked to provide their name, contact details or postcode in which they work. No other information that could identify participants, such as IP address, will be recorded. No identifying information from the survey will be released to anyone. Individual survey data will be held securely by the researchers and only combined results will be released.

7. Is the survey compulsory?

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Participants can withdraw from the survey at any time during completion.

8. What if a participant becomes distressed?

The survey includes questions about issues that individuals may have experienced and some people may find this confronting or distressing. The questions have been sensitively worded to take this into account.

Comprehensive information on support options is provided throughout the survey. In addition, those participants who indicate a high level of current symptoms or distress during the survey will be specifically directed to information about support services.

9. Who has provided approval for the survey?

The national survey has received full ethics approval by The University of Western Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee, reference number RA/4/1/9036, and each participating organisation has provided willing cooperation and high level support for the survey and the overall study.

10. How will the information be used?

In undertaking this overall study, *beyondblue* aims to generate new information that will be useful for everyone in the police and emergency services sector.

The findings of the completed survey will be used in Phase 3 of the study to identify practical actions to improve mental health and wellbeing for individuals, organisations and systems within the police and emergency services sector. *beyondblue* is committed to working

collaboratively with police and emergency service agencies and other key stakeholders in the development of these practical actions.

The findings will also inform the work of the broader *beyondblue* PES Program and may be used by other key stakeholders in the sector to influence policy and practice within frontline services.

11. Where can I get further information about the survey?

If you would like further information about the survey, please phone the research team on 1800 677 248 or email answeringthecall@roymorgan.com

For more information about *beyondblue*'s Police and Emergency Services Program, visit beyondblue.org.au/pes Or, learn more about promoting mental health and wellbeing in police and emergency services workplaces at headsup.org.au/pes

Further information and resources

beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information and advice, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

☎ 1300 22 4636

✉ Email or 💬 chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Heads Up

www.headsup.org.au

Heads Up is an initiative by the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance and *beyondblue* that aims to give individuals and businesses the tools to create mentally healthy workplaces.

mindhealthconnect

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Access to trusted, relevant mental health care services, online programs and resources.



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