

NATIONAL WELLNESS SURVEY

FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL

DISPATCH
SUMMARY

8,710 165 24

TOTAL RESPONDENTS AGENCIES PARTICIPATED STATES REPRESENTED



Dispatchers
comprise 7%
of total survey
respondents

PROFESSIONAL STRESSORS

Most commonly reported work-related stressors by dispatchers



78%

Concerns about exposure to COVID-19



65%

Low morale in the workforce



53%

Coworkers do not pull their own weight

Stressors associated with depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal ideation, and intent to leave their jobs include:

- > Fear or retaliation in the workforce
- > Being overworked

WELLNESS

Symptom severity reaching clinical significance, determined by self-reporting on validated mental health questionnaires

17% moderately severe to severe depression

30% moderate to severe anxiety

18% may benefit from PTSD treatment

14% reported thoughts of passive or active suicidal ideation within the past month

NIMH estimates public rates of depression to be 8.4%, anxiety 2.7%, PTSD 3.6%, and suicidal thoughts/behaviors 4.9%. Comparatively, dispatchers exhibit elevated rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation.

OVERVIEW

The National Wellness Survey was developed to assess the impact of public safety work on individual wellness and capture effects of the current climate on personnel. Respondents include individuals serving in any type of public safety role between November 2020 and November 2021, with the majority being sworn law enforcement officers, fire & rescue personnel, and dispatchers.

Findings from the survey are being used to guide needed changes in policy and legislation, strengthen the focus on wellness, inform prevention and intervention strategies, and assist in understanding what cultural changes can be made to reduce stigma involved with seeking mental health treatment.

FINDINGS

Exposure to Trauma

Traumatic experiences with the most notable associations to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were endorsed by dispatchers who experienced the following events while they were happening:

- Serious assault, intentional injury, or severe suffering
- Kidnapping or a hostage situation
- Suicide
- Sexual assault
- Accidental death

Job Satisfaction

Indicators of job satisfaction revealed the strongest associations with wellness measures. Items are categorized into two groups based on their association with symptom severity.

⚠ **Risk factors** represent an association with wellness in a negative way (i.e., if the respondent chose the item, they were more likely to disclose symptoms of depression, anxiety, and/or PTSD).

- This job has made me a more negative person
- I assume the worst about people I meet
- As a result of my work, I have a difficult time trusting people

💡 **Protective factors** represent an association with wellness in a positive way (i.e., they were less likely to disclose symptoms).

- I feel good about myself when I am at work
- I feel a sense of personal fulfillment at work
- I enjoy the work I am involved in

Behavioral Health Resources

Respondents were asked about reluctance to seek behavioral health resources in the past. Of those who expressed interest in services, these were the most common reasons for not doing so:

- Fears it would impact their career or future employment
- Wanting to handle it on their own
- Concerns about confidentiality
- Stigma