

Suicide prevention in public safety personnel in Canada: What would that look like and who should be involved?

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Talking about suicide

- Can be difficult
- It provokes strong feelings (especially in this format)
- If you want to talk to someone Canada Suicide Prevention Service(CSC) call **1.833.456.4566** (or **1 866 APPELLE** in Quebec) or Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention CASP
<https://suicideprevention.ca/Need-Help>
- 1-833-677-2668 Boots on the Ground (Ontario)

The current situation in Canada

- About 10 people a day die of suicide in Canada
- 3769 suicides in 2021
- 10/100,000 population
- Rate hasn't changed much in last ten years (may have dropped around pandemic)
- Of those 3769 suicides 2822 (75%) were in men (about half of all suicides in men aged 30-65)



Suicide amongst public safety personnel compared to the general public in Ontario

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Method

- Searched for suicides of public safety personnel in Ontario
- Jan 1st 2014 to Dec 31st 2018
- Used newspapers, social media, obituary sites, social networks and community of practice
- Each PSP suicide matched with two general public suicide controls matched by age, sex, coronial region and year of death
- Used these names to search coroner records of the suicides

Suicide rates

	PSP suicides 2014-2018	Estimated number of first responders in Ontario	Estimated annual suicide rate
General population			10.4/100,000
Police	22	25,000	17.6/100,000
Fire	10	31,000 (includes 18,000 volunteers)	6.5/100,000
Paramedic	4	11,000	7.3/100,000
Corrections	1	7,000	2.9/100,000

Summary

Police have a higher suicide rate than other PSP groups

Compared to the general population PSP who died by suicide were more likely

- to be divorced and separated
- to use a firearm which was usually a service weapon
- to have PTSD (but depression and alcohol abuse more common than PTSD)
- to have problems at work – threats to identity are important

PSP were less likely to have a diagnosis of drug abuse compared to the general population.

In the same period only one Ontario police officer lost their life in the line of duty

Only one of the PSP deaths was in a woman which is significantly fewer than in the general population

US data from 2015-2017*

- 1% of all suicides in first responders
- Most of these were police (58%) followed by fire (21%) and emergency medical services (18%)
- Firearm use (69% v 44%) and military service (23% v 11%) more common in first responder suicides compared to other occupations
- Intimate partner problems, job problems and physical health problems most frequent
- Some risk factors significantly lower in first responders – history of suicidal thoughts, previous suicide attempts, substance use problems

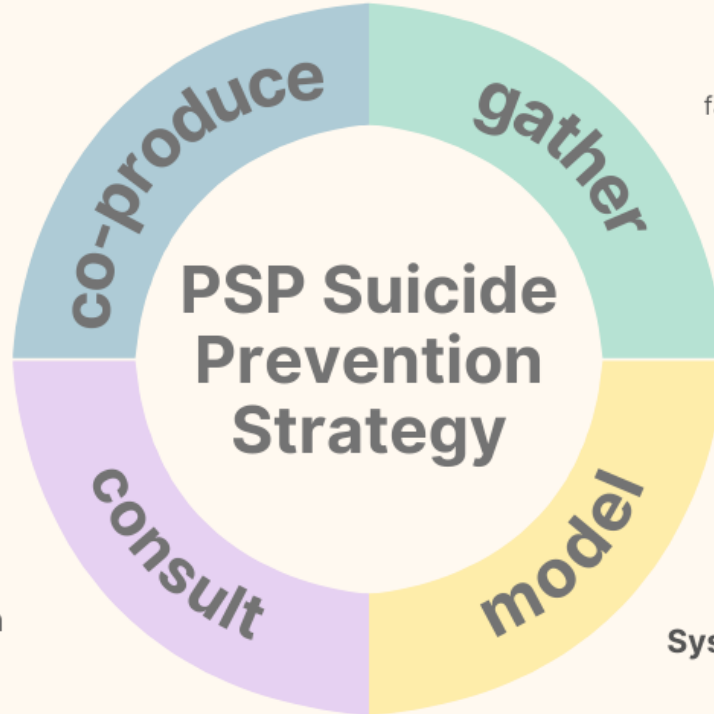
Carson, L. M., Marsh, S. M., Brown, M. M., Elkins, K. L., & Tiesman, H. M. (2023). An analysis of suicides among first responders – Findings from the National Violent Death Reporting System, 2015–2017. *Journal of Safety Research*, 85, 361-370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsr.2023.04.003>

PSP Suicide Prevention Strategy and Plans

Co-production of PSP Suicide Prevention Strategy and Plans with PSP and other decision-makers at the municipal and federal levels

Participatory Approach with Key Stakeholders

Face-to-face and virtual meetings with PSP and other decision-makers at municipal and federal levels to ensure the accuracy of the model developed



Gather Evidence

- ① **Systematic Review:** Extract risk factors for suicide and identify high-risk PSP groups
- ② **Realist Review:** Identify contextual and mechanistic factors that influence changes in suicidal behaviour associated with the suicide prevention programs
- ③ Reviews of national suicide prevention strategies
- ④ PSP demographics from organizations across Canada

System Dynamic Modelling

Assess the effectiveness of different intervention components and their combination for Canada's PSP

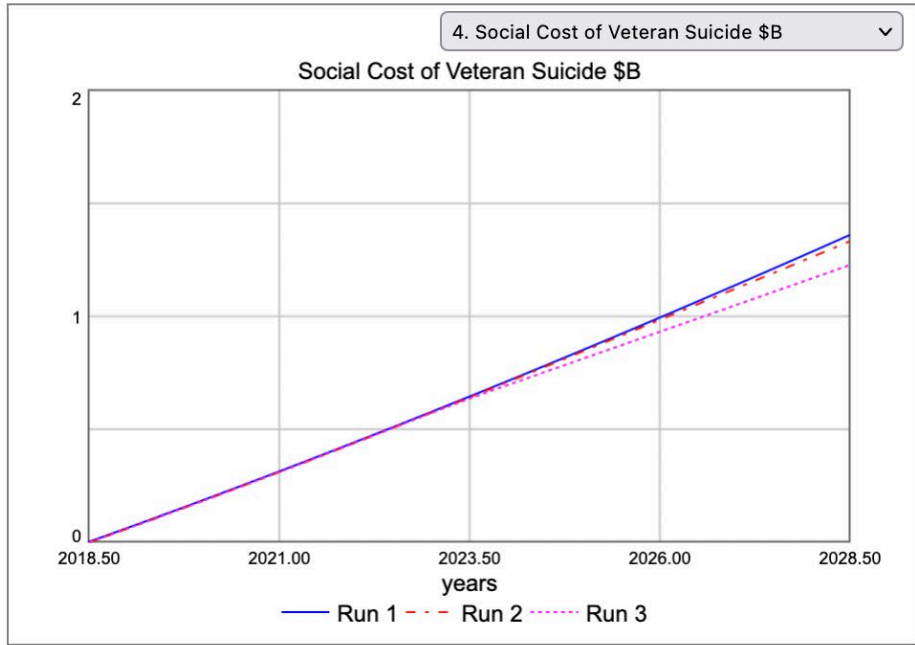
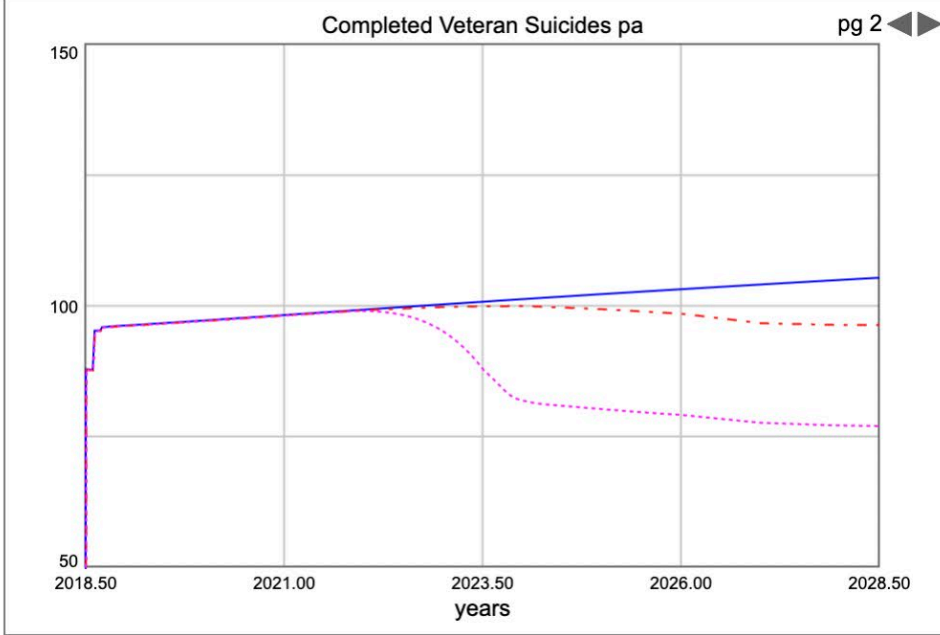
Decision support tool to inform strategic planning to reduce Veteran Suicides & Improve Wellbeing in a Covid-19 Environment



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



- Project aim and approach
- Structure of the model
- What if questions
- Export data from graphs



ADF Size

Female Vets

Societal Costs

Operational Tempo

Covid Response Hammer & Dance

Increased Screening Off/On

Early Attempt Reduction Off/On

PTSD Prevention

Assertive AfterCare Off/On

Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Off/On

HQ Psych Patients

Suicide Attempters

Run

Reset

Expanded Research Off/On

Network of Excellence Off/On

Increase number of Health Professionals

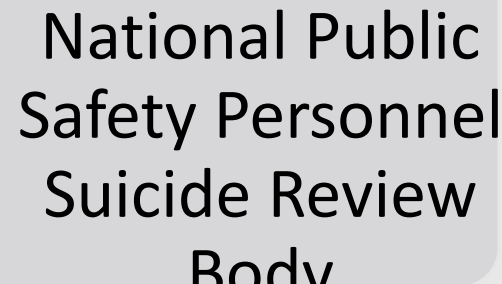
WellBeing Interventions Off/On

Covid 19 Impacts Off/On


Veteran Wellbeing




Some things are difficult to model



National Public
Safety Personnel
Suicide Review
Body



Occupational
codes on coroner
records



Organizational
changes

What are the psychological effects of working as a first responder peer supporter?

ARE YOU
A PEER
OF PEER

ed virtually and
you will be compensated for each visit.

Thinking from right to left

- What would a successful public safety personnel suicide prevention strategy look like?
 - What sort of things already make a difference in the workplace?
- Who should be involved?
 - Public safety personnel (individuals and organizations) but who else?