



# Wellness Survey for Public Safety Personnel

The U.S. Marshals Service,  
Fairfax County Police  
Department, and Nova  
Southeastern University  
invite you to participate in a  
national survey to assess the  
impact of public safety work  
on individual wellbeing.



Corrections  
Dispatch  
EMS  
Wildland Firefighters  
Fire & Rescue  
Police  
Military

## Why are we doing this survey?

Given their repeated exposure to potentially traumatic events, there is an overwhelming need to address the wellness of public safety professionals. Specific goals include learning how exposure to these events affects front-line personnel and identifying techniques for effectively handling work-related stressors.

## How to Participate

1. Designate a point of contact for your organization
2. Submit a list of work email addresses for all adult (age 18+) public safety employees in your organization to [USMS.BAU@usdoj.gov](mailto:USMS.BAU@usdoj.gov)
3. A study representative will confirm your participation and provide further instructions

Data summaries specific to your organization will be available upon request at the conclusion of this initiative.



## **Will this study make a difference?**

Yes. It's worth your time.

It is imperative that we learn how to prevent stressors from "taking hold" in the lives of public safety professionals, as well as determine which coping strategies are the most effective in helping them stay psychologically safe. These issues are important; they deserve real answers that can be derived only from rigorous study.

The knowledge we acquire will allow mental health practitioners to develop better prevention programs and more effective intervention strategies. The results also will be used to guide needed changes in policy and legislation, strengthen the focus on wellness and prevention, and assist in understanding how cultural changes may reduce the stigma involved with seeking treatment.

## **For whom is this survey intended?**

This survey should be completed by active federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement, corrections, fire and rescue, emergency medical services, and public safety communications personnel, including military service members and veterans who now serve in a public safety role. Participants must be 18 year of age or older.

## **What data will be collected?**

Participants will receive a unique link asking them to take a voluntary 30- to 40-minute survey about traumatic experiences, life stressors, coping mechanisms, and measures of current mental health. Everyone's responses will be recorded anonymously - researchers will not know who took the survey, and who declined.

## **For more information:**

United States Marshals Service, Behavioral Analysis Unit: [USMS.BAU@usdoj.gov](mailto:USMS.BAU@usdoj.gov)

Fairfax County Police Department: [FCPDNationalSurvey@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:FCPDNationalSurvey@fairfaxcounty.gov)



# National Wellness Survey for Public Safety Personnel

## *Survey Instrument Overview*

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

Invitees are asked to provide informed consent prior to starting the survey. The initial page outlines survey goals, the fact it's voluntary and anonymous, the minimal risks involved, and contact information for the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Invitees must agree to participate if they want to proceed and take the survey. Those who do not agree to participate are directed to the end of the survey and referred to *Safe Call Now* – a confidential, comprehensive, 24-hour crisis referral service for all public safety employees, emergency services personnel, and their family members nationwide (<https://www.safecallnow.org>).

### **PART 1 OF 4: TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES**

The first part of the survey gathers information related to the participants' professional background and traumatic experiences they've had in their life. Knowing each person's public safety work history and what they've been through is critical to this study.

Participants are walked through a series of 11 question blocks asking about the frequency and recency of traumatic experiences they've had during their public safety career. Examples of each type of traumatic experience are provided to help them recall applicable incidents. The questioning structure of each block is designed to determine the context of the exposure, including if the participant was directly or indirectly affected and whether it was within or outside the scope of their public safety role(s).

The example below shows how the line of questioning starts when asking about situations involving mass civil disorder.

Have you ever been exposed to **situations involving mass civil disorder**?

Exposure includes circumstances where:

- *You were or someone close to you was directly involved with riot control, or otherwise involuntarily involved in a violent protest or riot situation*
- *You saw or heard it happen*
- *You saw or heard the aftermath*
  
- Yes, and it was **within the scope of my public safety role(s)** (i.e., you were trained/authorized to respond to the situation, or a colleague close to you was affected)
- Yes, but the circumstances were purely personal or completely **outside the scope of my public safety role(s)**
- Yes, I have been exposed to this **both** within and outside the scope of my public safety role(s)
- No, I have **never** been exposed to this

## **PART 2 OF 4: DEMOGRAPHICS**

The second part of the survey asks participants to provide details about themselves to learn how events and experiences affect different groups of people. The topics include age range, gender, race, ethnicity, education, military/veteran status, relationship status, parental status, and mental health diagnoses.

## **PART 3 OF 4: STRESS & STRESS MANAGEMENT**

The third part of the survey helps gain an understanding of the types of stressors that can result from public safety work and how these stressors are being managed. It is outlined as follows:

- Professional life stressors dealt with in the past year
- Personal life stressors dealt with in the past year
- Stressors unique to females in a public safety role
- Positive and negative coping strategies used to counteract the effects of work stress
- An assessment of the use of humor at work
- Access to and use of behavioral health resources within or through their organization
- Access to and use of behavioral health resources outside of their organization

## **PART 4 OF 4: HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

The final part of the survey helps gain an understanding of how public safety work may be impacting the current well-being of individuals. It is largely composed of well-recognized and validated mental health instruments, used either in their original or somewhat modified form. Each instrument is listed below.

- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004)
- General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7; Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, 1999)
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002)
- Questions related to social support, coworker relationships, positive contributions, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and distrust of general public (Perez et al., 2010)
- Substance Abuse Screening Tool (CAGE, Ewing, 1984)
- Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS; Posner et al., 2011)
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5; Weathers et al., 2013)

## **SURVEY CONCLUSION**

The survey concludes with a free text response question asking if there is anything else they'd like to share regarding the stressors related to their job. The final page of the survey refers the participant to *Safe Call Now* (<https://www.safecallnow.org>).

## REFERENCES

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