

Stigma and Cultural Challenges in Veterans and Public Safety Personnel

2022 Annual CAHS Forum

Supporting the Mental and Physical Health of Public Safety Personnel

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

Faculty: J Don Richardson

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Learning Objectives :

At the end of this presentation, attendees will be able to:

1. List the rates of PTSD, MDD and suicidal ideation in Veterans and Public Safety Personnel.
2. Identify the impact of stigma in treatment seeking behaviour.
3. Describe the importance of cultural competency in providing support to Veterans and Public Safety personnel i.e., “***supporting those who support us***”.

Introduction: Why is it important?

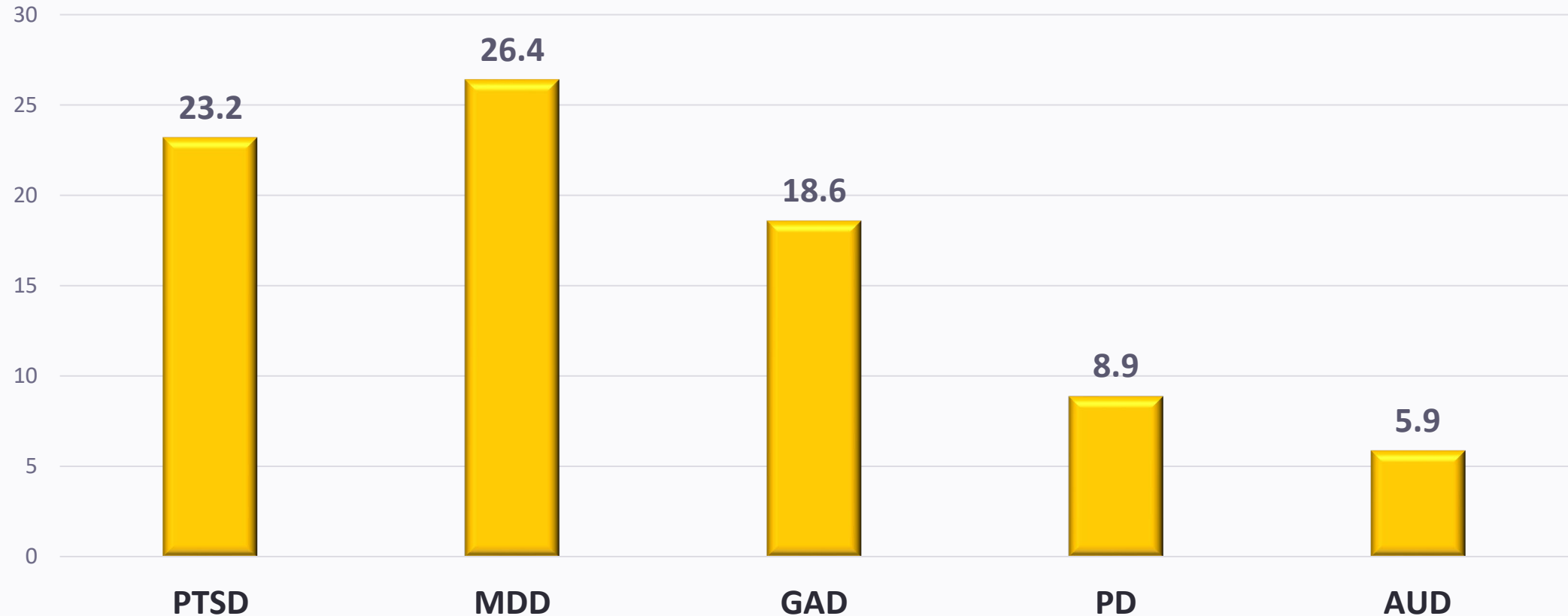
- Veterans and PSP represent at -risk populations
 - Veterans more likely to have MH conditions compared with the Canadian general population: Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans (*Van Til, Sweet, & Poirier et al., 2017*)
- Current Pandemic:
 - Increased Isolation
 - Veterans experience a heightened risk of loneliness; further reductions in social interaction may be detrimental to well -being. (*Loneliness and social isolation of military veterans. Wilson, G.; Hill, M, Kiernan, M D; 2018*)
 - Changes to delivery of health care
 - Many outpatient (psychological and physical health) services across Canada transitioned from in -person to online formats (i.e., telehealth)

Mental Health

Mental Health in PSP

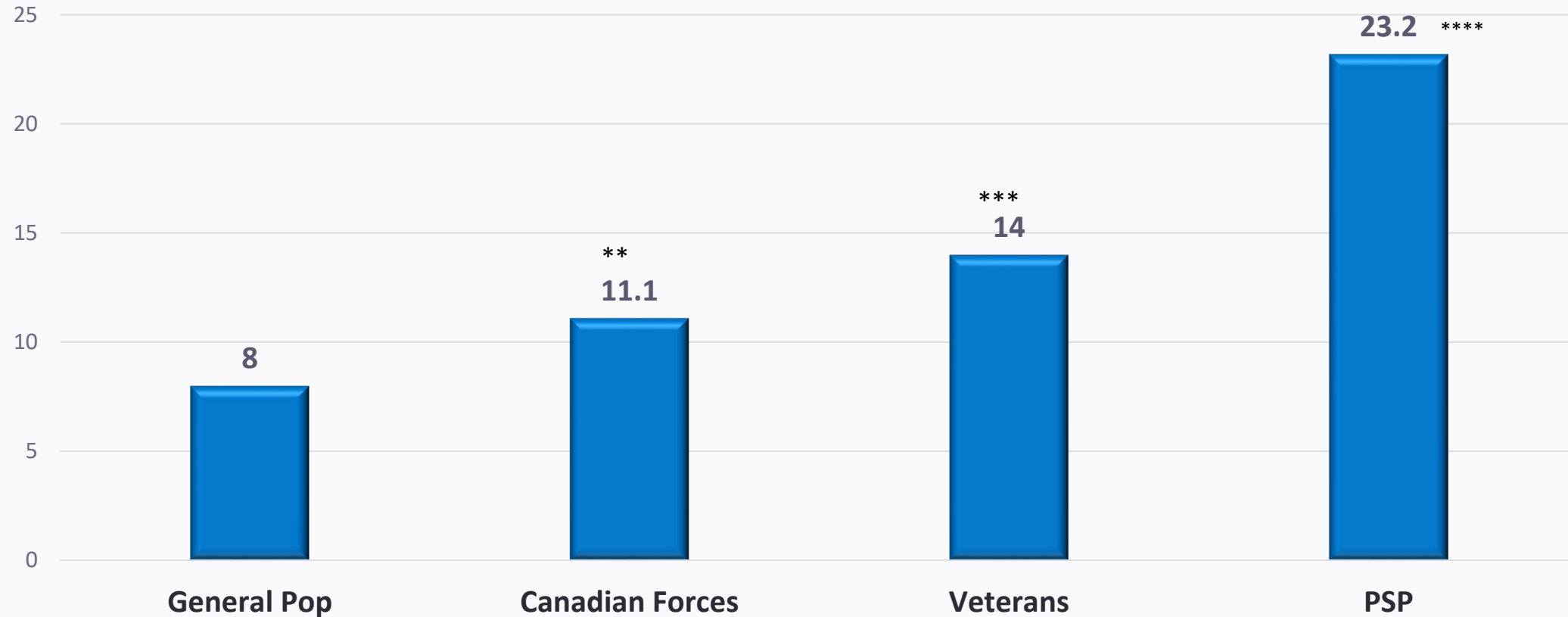
- Large heterogeneity of MH conditions across PSP professions . *(Carleton et al., 2018)*
 - Exposure to different workplace experiences.
 - Varied access to structural and social supports.
 - Different populations being served across PSP professions.
 - Women generally more likely to report symptoms.
 - Frequency of exposures.

General Mental Health of PSP



Carleton et al., Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada, 2018

PTSD in Canada



**Statistics Canada. Survey on Mental Health and Stressful Events, August to December 2021.*

***2013 Canadian Forces Mental Health Survey*

****Van Til et al. 2016 Life After Service Survey 2016*

***** Carleton et al., Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada, 2018*

Moral Injury in Veterans and PSP

- Moral injury
 - Psychological distress experienced in response to perpetrating, observing, and/or failing to prevent acts that transgress deeply-held moral standards (*Litz et al., 2009*)
- Veterans who have experienced potentially moral injurious events are more likely to seek help from traditional gatekeeper professionals (i.e., general practitioner) and non-professionals (i.e., religious/spiritual advisor) (*Nazarov et al., 2020*)
 - Not well known the impact of health seeking behaviour in PSP.

Stigma and Culture

Sources of Stigma in Veterans and PSP

- Men account for ~80% of all active CAF members *(Stats Can, 2022)*
 - Longer MH treatment - seeking behaviour among men than women *(Boulos & Zamorski, 2016b)*
 - System -level processes as well as stigma directed towards MH disorders may shape MH care - seeking decisions in PSP *(Ricciardelli et al., 2020)*
- Barriers to care among CAF members, Veterans and PSP: *(Sudom et al., 2012; Houle et al., 2022; Newell et al., 2022)*
 - Stigma surrounding MH conditions (i.e.: Weakness)
 - Structural barriers
 - Lack of knowledge of available supports
 - Confidentiality concerns
 - Mistrust of military clinicians
 - Seeking care perceived as detrimental to career

Cultural Challenges in Veterans and PSP

- Degree to which providers are sensitive to the unique needs and relevant issues of concern within a given population (*i.e., Veterans and PSP*).
- Key Components of cultural competency
 - Cultural Awareness
 - Cultural Sensitivity
 - Cultural Knowledge
 - Cultural Skills
- Understanding of facilitators to care such as a sense of shared experience, enhanced medical screening, and alternative to formal MH care (*Houle et al., 2022*)

Cultural Challenges in Veterans and PSP

- CAF engaged in extensive MH clinical systems changes to enhance uptake
 - Has also led to improved perceived sufficiency of MH care *(Fikretoglu et al., 2016)*
 - Consistent pattern of ↑ mental health service use among CAF members over time *(Fikretoglu et al., 2018)*
- PSP and Veterans:
 - Receive their mental health care within multiple and different provincial healthcare system
 - Contemporary approaches to improve MH in PSP may be lacking. *(Lentz et al., 2022)*
 - Challenge of increased engagement and on-going initiatives.
 - lack of preparedness for dealing with personal MH problems and discussing mental health with co-workers

Discussion/Conclusion

- Both Veterans and PSP demonstrate a greater prevalence of MH conditions than the general population.
- Uptake of MH treatment remains dependent upon reducing stigma and accessibility issues in Veteran and PSP populations.
- Clinicians and researchers need to be agile and acknowledge the unique challenges of serving these populations.
- Importance of cultural competency



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Thank you

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