

# Advancing Officer Wellness: A Study of On-Duty Experiences and their Impacts among Law Enforcement Professionals

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**Purpose Statement:** In light of the stresses of police work, recent years have brought heightened attention to the tolls of the job on individual officers. These can include illness, mental and behavioral health challenges, and even suicide. There is thus a strong push for proactive efforts to advance health, wellness, and resilience among officers. This study seeks to support and advance those efforts.

**Background:** Policing professionals face traumatic and morally injurious events in the line of duty. The effects of trauma and moral injury can include posttraumatic stress, depression, anxiety, suicidality, substance misuse, spiritual and religious struggle, and more. This study is an important step in bolstering resilience among those working in the policing profession. Findings can be used to raise awareness of officer's experiences and to develop programming that supports officer wellness.

## NOTES:

- This study seeks to look at moral injury and related constructs of well-being among police across the country. *Findings will be reported in aggregate only and will not linked back to any officer, department, or agency.*
- Please contact the researchers if interested in the results of this study. We enjoy opportunities to host presentations and workshops and to share the findings of our research in order to advance community well-being.

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**Study Description:** Respondents will be asked to fill out an online survey designed to provide insight into the impact of policing experiences on officer wellness. Constructs of interest include mental health (depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress), moral injury (injury to one's conscience stemming from involvement in an event that challenges one's values), meaning making, religious/spiritual coping, empathy, and orientations towards policing.

In an optional second part to the study, six survey respondents will complete an individual interview focused on their impressions of the *Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES)*, one of the measures included in the survey. The purpose of this part of the

study is to assess the fit of the “moral injury” construct to police and the appropriateness of the MIES for police populations.

**The findings of this study will be used to:**

- Increase awareness of the experiences and needs of individual officers
- Inform the development of programs to support officer wellness
- Inform future research related to the effects of moral injury among police

**Confidentiality**

- We are looking at moral injury among police across the country, as opposed to in a particular setting. Findings will be reported in aggregate only and will not linked back to any individual officer, department, or agency.
- The data we collect is for research purposes only and will not be made available to any police department, Sheriff's office, or law enforcement agency.
- Respondents may participate anonymously in the survey and only have to identify themselves if they want to volunteer for an interview.

**Time Required**

- It is expected that the survey will take up to 30 minutes to complete.
- Interviews are expected to last up to 45 minutes.

**Incentives**

- Ten \$25 gift cards will be raffled off to survey respondents, and all interview participants will receive a \$50 gift card.

**Dissemination of Findings**

- This research may be published in academic journals and presented at professional conferences that target relevant professionals.
- The researchers will prepare a free brief of the research findings to share with all departments, agencies, and officers that desire a copy.
- The researchers will provide community presentations of study findings if as desired by various police departments and agencies.

Thank you for interest in this work. Please feel free to contact Shannon Johnson, at [sjohns36@uccs.edu](mailto:sjohns36@uccs.edu) or Stephanie Gangemi at [sgangemi@uccs.edu](mailto:sgangemi@uccs.edu) with any questions or to discuss the study.

You may also access the study directly at [tinyurl.com/moral-injury-police](https://tinyurl.com/moral-injury-police)