**Work & Stress** >An International Journal of Work, Health & Organisations
Volume 20, 2006 - Issue 1[Submit an article](#)[Journal homepage](#)

Enter keywords, authors, DOI, etc

This Journal

Advanced search

1,587

Views

105

CrossRef
citations to date

0

Altmetric

Original Articles

Prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in firefighters

Kevin S. Del Ben , Joseph R. Scotti, Yi-Chuen Chen & Beverly L. Fortson

Pages 37-48 | Published online: 23 Feb 2007

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370600679512>[Full Article](#) [Figures & data](#) [References](#) [Citations](#) [Metrics](#) [Reprints & Permissions](#) [Read this article](#)

Abstract

Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been extensively studied in victim populations (e.g., survivors of sexual assault), but not nearly as thoroughly in the responders who come to the aid of those victims, particularly firefighters. The prevalence rates for PTSD (as defined by previous authors) in firefighters vary widely, from 6.5% to 37%, using various cutoff scores on a variety of measures (primarily self-report) with rather dissimilar samples and events. This study utilized the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL), a measure consistent with current *DSM-IV* criteria, to evaluate the prevalence of PTSD symptoms in 131 firefighters from two US states. Using a standard cutoff score on the PCL, a prevalence rate of 8% was found. When measures of fear, helplessness, or horror (*DSM-IV* Criterion A2) and functional impairment (Criterion F) were included, a lower prevalence rate of 5% was obtained, a rate lower than typically is found in previously published reports. Previous psychological treatment, age at which the firefighters started working, Miscellaneous Calls, and the response of horror following the firefighter's Single Worst Event predicted PTSD symptoms. The present findings highlight the importance of using a symptom measure consistent with the full *DSM-IV* criteria to more fully assess firefighters' responses of fear, helplessness, and horror.

Q Keywords: [Trauma](#) [work-related stress](#) [firefighters](#) [emergency services](#) [PTSD](#) [prevalence](#)

[Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist](#)

This research represents a portion of the doctoral dissertation of the first author (now at the University of Mississippi Medical Center), which was funded in part by a Dissertation Award from the American Psychological Association, the West Virginia University (WVU) Department of Psychology Alumni Fund, the WVU Office of Academic Affairs, and an Awards for Research Team Scholarship (ARTS) grant from the WVU Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. These financial contributions are gratefully acknowledged. We would like to thank Jeff Simpkins of the WVU Fire Extension Service, Rick Rice, and the Chiefs of several fire departments for their support in making this study possible. We also would like to thank Jamey Biesczad, Abby Friedman, Lisa Greene, and Jennifer Gurriel for their assistance through various stages of this study. Most importantly, we would like to thank the firefighters who took the time to participate in this research.

Related research


People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by 105

[A preliminary investigation of post-traumatic stress symptoms among firefighters >](#)Cheryl Haslam et al.
Work & Stress
Published online: 3 Jun 2010[Predicting post-traumatic growth and post-traumatic stress in firefighters >](#)Deanne Armstrong et al.
Australian Journal of Psychology
Published online: 20 Nov 2020[Post-traumatic stress disorder in volunteer firefighters: influence of specific risk and protective factors >](#)Thomas Schnell et al.
European Journal of Psychotraumatology
Published online: 17 Jun 2020[View more](#)

Browse journals by subject

[Back to top](#) [Area Studies](#)[Arts](#)[Behavioral Sciences](#)[Bioscience](#)[Built Environment](#)[Communication Studies](#)[Computer Science](#)[Earth Sciences](#)[Economics, Finance, Business & Industry](#)[Education](#)[Engineering & Technology](#)[Environment & Agriculture](#)[Environment and Sustainability](#)[Food Science & Technology](#)[Geography](#)[Global Development](#)[Health and Social Care](#)[Humanities](#)[Information Science](#)[Language & Literature](#)[Law](#)[Mathematics & Statistics](#)[Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing & Allied Health](#)[Museum and Heritage Studies](#)[Physical Sciences](#)[Politics & International Relations](#)[Social Sciences](#)[Sports and Leisure](#)[Tourism, Hospitality and Events](#)[Urban Studies](#)

Information for

[Authors](#)[R&D professionals](#)[Editors](#)[Librarians](#)[Societies](#)

Open access

[Overview](#)[Open journals](#)[Open Select](#)[Dove Medical Press](#)[F1000Research](#)

Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)[Advertising solutions](#)[Accelerated publication](#)[Corporate access solutions](#)

Help and information

[Help and contact](#)[Newsroom](#)[All journals](#)[Books](#)

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

 Sign me up