



ATLAS
INSTITUTE
FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

LIFE AFTER ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE SERVICE:

Mental health experiences of Veterans and Families

Executive summary

To better understand the post-service mental health experiences of Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans and their Families, the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families convened a series of dialogue sessions with members of this community.

These conversations explored experiences with mental health, access to services and supports, transition from service, and broader cultural and systemic factors shaping well-being after RCMP service. This engagement included 50 participants across six dialogue sessions and two follow-up discussions, held between June 2025 and February 2026 in Moncton, NB, Edmonton, AB and virtually. While participants reflected a range of roles and experiences within the RCMP Veteran and Family community, this was a qualitative, non-representative sample, intended to generate in-depth insights, rather than findings that can be generally applied across this population.



WHAT WE HEARD

Eight broad themes emerged across the dialogue sessions. Although drawn from a relatively small and self-selected group of participants, these themes were raised consistently across sessions and participant groups, underscoring their relevance and resonance within this sample. In the context of limited existing research on RCMP Veterans and their Families, these findings offer important early insight into shared challenges and priorities:

Occupational culture discourages help-seeking and amplifies psychological risk.

Administrative complexity shifts the burden of navigation onto injured members.

Access to care requires both provider availability and cultural competence.

Peer connection and belonging are critical protective factors.

Transition to post-service life is abrupt, under-supported and identity-disrupting.

Mental health challenges of the serving member affect the whole Family.

The term *moral injury* is under-recognized, but deeply resonant.

Identity reconstruction and renewed purpose are central to post-service well-being.

Twelve additional themes emerged from sessions held with three specific communities: Francophone RCMP Veterans, women RCMP Veterans and Families of RCMP Veterans. These themes reflect distinct experiences and perspectives shaped by language, culture, gender and Family roles. They also highlight important differences in how challenges are experienced and supports are accessed. Together, they underscore the need for approaches that are responsive to the diverse realities within the RCMP Veteran and Family community. These are the 12 additional themes that emerged within the three specific communities:

FRANCOPHONE RCMP VETERANS

- Access to information and services in French remains fragmented.
- Language and cultural context shape how administrative decisions are experienced by Francophone RCMP Veterans.
- Peer-led outreach within Francophone networks helps improve awareness of supports.

WOMEN RCMP VETERANS

- Gendered workplace experiences shape long-term well-being.
- Connection with other women RCMP Veterans can be uniquely healing.
- Women RCMP Veterans face identity strain during both entry into and exit from service.
- Women RCMP Veterans often reconnect with support systems on their own terms after service.

FAMILIES OF RCMP VETERANS

- Families often act as informal advocates and navigators of support systems.
- Families carry significant emotional burdens related to their loved one's service and often serve as informal caregivers.
- Transition from service reshapes Family roles and identity.
- Families benefit from connecting with others who share similar experiences.
- Those whose RCMP member loved ones have died experience a distinct and unsupported transition.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Insights shared by participants pointed to clear opportunities to strengthen supports for RCMP Veterans and their Families. The following knowledge needs, research priorities and policy considerations are drawn directly from these discussions and reflect areas where action by researchers, service providers, policy makers and community organizations could contribute to future change to improve mental health and well-being outcomes.

KNOWLEDGE NEEDS

SERVICE ACCESS: Clear and consistent guidance beginning during training on available benefits, programs and services, including how to access and maintain them

TREATMENTS: Clear, accessible information on available mental health treatments and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) services, including what is covered, how to access different types of care (including emerging or less common treatments) and eligibility requirements

SYSTEM NAVIGATION: Greater understanding of system navigation, including claims processes, documentation requirements and digital tools such as My VAC Account

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS: Increased awareness of peer networks that facilitate connection with RCMP Veteran and Family communities

LANGUAGE-RELATED: Accessible, centralized and language-appropriate information, including high-quality resources and clinical services in French

POTENTIAL RESEARCH AREAS

POST-SERVICE LIFE: Post-service mental health and well-being outcomes for RCMP Veterans, including delayed trauma processing and long-term effects

BARRIERS: How system and service barriers shape access to care for RCMP Veterans and Families, including navigation complexity, continuity of care and availability of culturally competent providers across regions and subpopulations

PEER SUPPORT: Effectiveness of peer support, including peer navigation, mentorship and community-based models

SUBPOPULATIONS: Experiences and needs of specific subpopulations

MORAL INJURY: Awareness, recognition and effects of moral injury among RCMP Veterans and their Families

FAMILY EXPERIENCES: Including caregiving, secondary or vicarious trauma, burnout, compassion fatigue and intergenerational effects

THE IMPACT OF GENDER: Long-term mental health effects of gendered workplace experiences during RCMP service

SOCIAL ISOLATION: Role of social isolation in the onset of mental health challenges among RCMP Veterans

RCMP AND MILITARY EXPERIENCES WITH MORAL INJURY: Differences and similarities in how moral injury presents among RCMP and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC POLICY INFLUENCE

SIMPLIFY AND STREAMLINE VAC CLAIMS PROCESSES, particularly for mental health-related claims, to reduce administrative burden

PROVIDE PROACTIVE, HANDS-ON NAVIGATION SUPPORT for Veterans and Families, including structured guidance during and after transition to post-service life

IMPROVE COORDINATION BETWEEN VETERAN-SERVING SYSTEMS to ensure administrative continuity and reduce disruptions to care

EXPAND ACCESS TO TRAUMA-INFORMED AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE, including virtual, hybrid and travelling service models (i.e. bringing services to the RCMP Veteran, rather than the reverse)

Develop and maintain a centralized **NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF PROVIDERS WITH RCMP CULTURAL COMPETENCE**, including defining and operationalizing this concept

STRENGTHEN AND INVEST IN PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS, including formal peer navigator roles

EXPAND TRANSITION SUPPORTS to include structured follow-up and sustained connection to services and community

INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES, including independent (i.e. not reliant on their loved one's registration with VAC) and confidential pathways to care

IMPROVE ACCESS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES and ensure availability of high-quality, culturally appropriate resources

Continue to advance **IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PRIOR REPORTS AND REVIEWS**, with clear accountability, timelines and public reporting on progress

This report presents the lived experiences and perspectives of Royal Canadian Mounted Police Veterans and Families who participated in a dialogue series hosted by the Atlas Institute between June 2025 and February 2026. Atlas extends our sincere thanks to these individuals for informing the findings and recommendations in this report.

FIND MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION RELATED TO RCMP VETERANS AND FAMILIES:

atlasveterans.ca/rcmp

