

# REPORTING MHPSS EVIDENCE: EXAMPLE FROM PORTUGUESE RED CROSS

TITLE: Promoting the wellbeing of Portuguese Red Cross first responders

## WHO WILL THIS EVIDENCE BE OF INTEREST TO?

Heads of local and national structures of the Portuguese Red Cross; Local, regional, and national emergency managers; first responder teams.

## WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THIS EVIDENCE?

Portuguese Red Cross first responders working in pre-hospital emergency settings experience high levels of stress. This research investigates the effects of this, their coping strategies and factors that have an impact on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

The findings can be used to ensure that first responders receive the support they need in order to continue to provide services whilst maintain their own wellbeing.

## WHAT ARE THE KEY FINDINGS/ RECOMMENDATIONS?

- Generally, first responders were found to have satisfactory levels of general health and psychological wellbeing and reported good levels of job satisfaction.
- Female first responders reported more signs of distress.
- First responders use more emotion-focused strategies.
- First responders with basic training show worse mental health than those with advanced training.
- Volunteers show greater satisfaction, well-being, organizational and peer support, compared to staff.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED?

- The health and well-being of these first responders has an impact not only at the individual level, but also at the family, organizational and community levels, so should be a priority for the structures in which these professionals operate.
- Optimizing the working conditions of first responders and guiding them towards health-promoting practices will make an important contribution to their psychological well-being and the quality of the support they provide to the population.
- Given the impossibility of controlling exposure to potentially traumatic events, it is important to train these workers to use adaptive coping strategies to deal with the challenges of everyday life.
- Training is fundamental to their health and well-being.
- Staff and volunteer support should be a basic component of emergency structures. This should include promoting a culture of support, providing a structured support system (such as a peer support system), and encouraging the use of the informal support network.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Oliveira, A., Ferreira, R., Neto, F., Maia, A. (2021). Contributo para um retrato dos Socorristas da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa: Saúde, Trabalho, Coping e Suporte Social. Revista Portuguesa de Saúde Ocupacional, 12, 1-12. 10.31252/RPSO.25.09.2021<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rpso.pt/contributo-para-um-retrato-dos-socorristas-da-cruz-vermelha-portuguesa-saude-trabalho-coping-e-suporte-social/>