

Hello All

I am the primary researcher in the Wellbeing and Firefighter Study. I am grateful to those of you who have already completed the survey. In the course of doing this, several of you have contacted me to discuss some concerns, which I would like to address with you all. I will summarise the issues raised as well as my responses:

1. ***The wording in a number of questions is complex and not tailored to volunteers.*** All of the questions related to mental health, and some of the others, are standardised measures. This means that I am not able to alter any of the wording. The results from this study can be compared with studies of other Australian and overseas firefighter, as well as other emergency service populations.
2. ***The time period specified in the questions is relatively short*** ie last 2 week, last month and even last 12 months, ***which means that many firefighters may not have experienced challenging jobs during that time, and the results will not capture these experiences.*** Because of the standardised measures we have used, we are not able to alter the time periods. However, the aim of this study is to identify current mental health at two points in time, this year and next. Although you haven't answered questions about difficult firefighting jobs attended more than 12 months ago, the mental health questions will identify the impact of the cumulative effect of your firefighting work on your current mental health. Also, there is one question that asks you whether you think your mental health has been negatively impacted by your firefighting role.
3. ***Some of the questions are confusing in that it is unclear whether they relate to firefighters' main job or their firefighting role.*** The main intention of this study is to evaluate the impact of your firefighter role on your mental health. Although we recognise that for volunteers this may be a small part of their working week, that is still the focus of the questions. We also recognise that your primary role is likely to have a significant impact on the stress in your lives, and hence on your mental health. We only ask 3 questions about your main job ie whether you have a paid job in addition to your firefighting role, how many hours on average a week you work in it, and how stressful you rate it. All the other questions relate to the impact of your firefighting role on your mental health and whether the various aspects of your firefighting role have a positive or negative effect on the satisfaction you get from your firefighting role. From your answers to all of these questions, we will be able to separate out the stress of your primary role versus the stress of your firefighter role, and the impact of each on your mental health.
4. ***Couldn't we have had a separate questionnaire for volunteer firefighter to make the questions more relevant and tailored.*** Because one of the key questions in the study is whether the mental health of volunteer and career firefighters is different, the questions had to be worded the same for all firefighters regardless of your role.
5. ***You may be confused about which study you are participating in. There are currently two unrelated studies going on in CFS.*** The other one is a sleep study that involves the wearing

of a heart monitor and collection of saliva samples. It is being run by a different researcher and university.

6. ***The Wellbeing Survey will stay up on-line until 27 November*** and I hope if you haven't completed it, that you will consider doing so. It is an important study that will help us understand the positive and negative aspects of your firefighting role and how they impact on your mental health. The survey is available at the following link:<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fireandrescuestudy115>

Wellbeing and Firefighter Study Survey

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or the study in general.

Regards

Heather

Heather Bancroft

PhD Candidate - Clinical & Consulting Psychologist
Phoenix Australia | Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health
Department of Psychiatry | The University of Melbourne

Level 3, Alan Gilbert Building, 161 Barry Street
Carlton VIC 3053
Mob: +61 0409 135 899
Direct: +61 3 8344 2622 (Thurs & Fri)
heather.bancroft@unimelb.edu.au
www.phoenixaustralia.org