Mental Health of Australian Defence Force Veterans

Evaluating the Swiss 8 app for Australian Defence Force Veterans

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Overview

1. Background to the ADF
2. Mental Health in the ADF
3. The Swiss 8 App
4. The Swiss 8 Research Project
5. Preliminary Findings
6. Questions

The Australian Defence Force (ADF)

- Army, Navy and Air Force
- 80% male; Largest age group 20-29 years
- One of Australia's major employers
  - ~ 80,000 personnel across full and part-time
  - ~ 6,000 personnel separate each year
- Various service types - Full-time, Part-time, CFTS

What is a veteran?

> A person who is serving or has served in the ADF

Mental Health in the ADF

Current Serving

Similar rates of Mental Health disorders compared to the Australian Population

Different prevalence across Rank, Branch of Service and Age

Suicide rate
48-51% LOWER than Australian Population

Ex-Serving

Significantly higher levels of Psychological Distress

Different prevalence across transition status, time since and reason for discharge

Suicide rate
24% HIGHER (males)
102% HIGHER (females)
than Australian Population

The Swiss 8 App

- Designed by veterans for veterans
- Mobile, accessible, holistic
- Proactive approach
- Daily routine

- Fitness, Nutrition, Mindfulness, Sleep

- Library of content
- Connection to community

Recruitment

- Recruited via Swiss 8 Social media pages
- Organic sharing of advertisements

Enrolment

- 375 completed the eligibility questionnaire
- 156 were eligible and provided consent
- Randomised to one of two groups

Participation

- 156 Completed Pre-Survey
- Download and use the app as much as they like
- Contact group received fortnightly contact
- After 3 months invited to take part in Post-Survey

Completion

- Currently 51 people have completed the Post Questionnaire
- 13 consented to take part in a Post Swiss 8 Interview

Outcomes

1. Psychological Distress

- Changes in Pre and Post K10 score

2. Quality of Life

- Changes in Pre and Post QoL-8

3.Fortnightly contact

- Influence on app usage and K10/QoL scores

4. App Usage

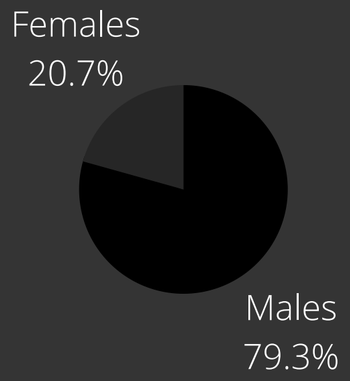
- Duration and frequency of App usage

5. Perceptions and attitudes

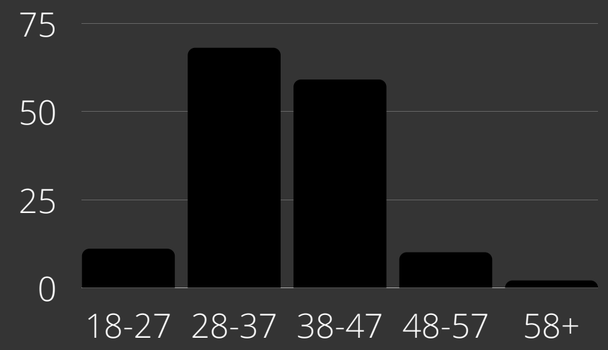
- Experience with Swiss 8 and their transition from ADF

Descriptive Data

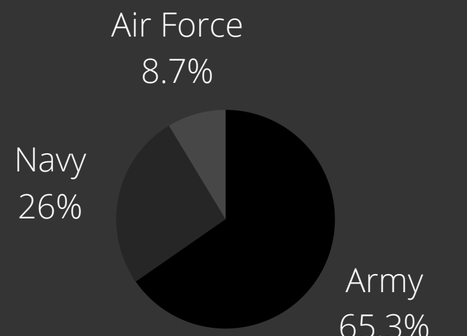
Gender



Age



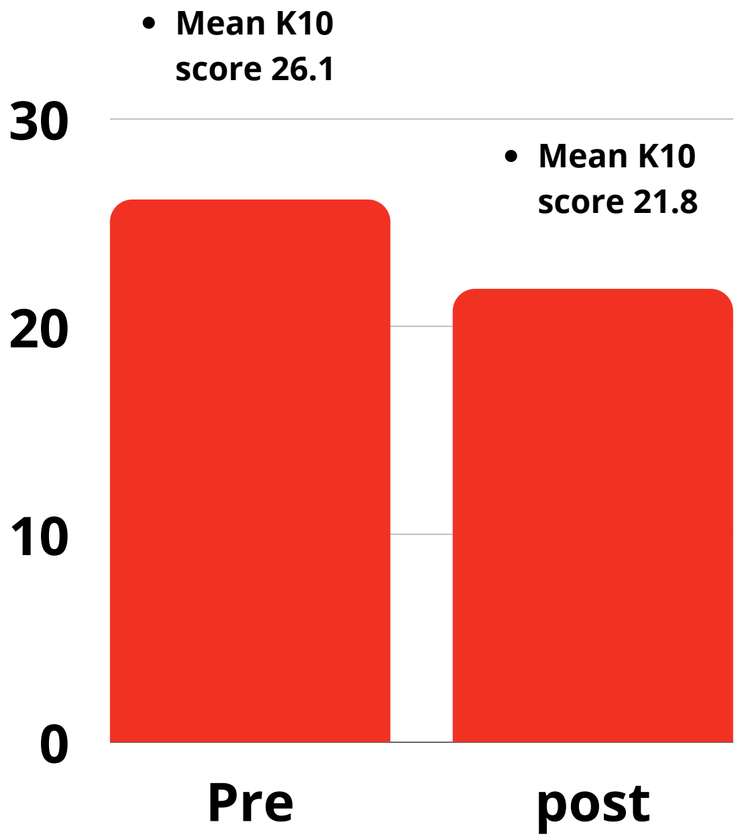
Service



How difficult was your transition?

64% found their transition difficult or very difficult

Preliminary findings



- Final data capture and analysis due for completion in April 2022

Questions

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- Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and Their Families First) Bill 2019
- Van Hooff, M., Lawrence-Wood, E., Hodson, S., Sadler, N., Benassi, H., Hansen, C., . . . McFarlane, A. (2018). Mental Health Prevalence, Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Study. Canberra: Department of Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- McFarlane, A., Hodson, S. E., Hoof, M. V., & Davies, C. (2011). Mental health in the Australian Defence Force: 2010 ADF mental health and wellbeing Study Full Report. Canberra: Department of Defence