

Research Project Details	
Title	Hostile workplace: Investigating return-to-work practices after psychological injury caused by mistreatment from the public
Investigator(s)	Dr. Candace Nykiforuk and Evan Worman, University of Alberta
Funding Period	2023-2025
Budget	\$40,980.00
Issue/Rationale	<p>Employees providing public-facing services (e.g., baristas, call center agents, nurses, municipal service staff, etc.) often receive mistreatment from the public, including harassment, incivility, discrimination, or violence. Receiving mistreatment from the public may lead to a psychological injury, a condition with lasting impacts on individuals including depression, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, psychological distress, and job dissatisfaction. Business outcomes are also affected by psychological injuries among workers, including lower safety outcomes, poorer quality service, absenteeism, and extreme employee turnover. However, supports and effective return-to-work practices related to workplace psychological injury is a topic with little representation in research, particularly relating to public mistreatment.</p>
Objective(s)	<p>This study's research objectives are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify best practices used to assist employees in returning to work after experiencing workplace psychological injury caused by public mistreatment. 2. Produce an estimate of mistreatment-caused psychological injury in Alberta within selected roles/sectors which could highlight the need (and specific areas) for intervention and further understanding of the issue. 3. Identify commonly cited causes or antecedents of mistreatment to assist in the identification of workplace psychological injury and, subsequently, application of remedy for an effective return to work. 4. Conduct a comparative study identifying the similarities of frequency of injury or successful return-to-work between roles, sectors, and/or jurisdictions to determine if there are material similarities or differences. 5. Produce research and knowledge mobilization products to fill an existing knowledge/practice gap in academia and industry. 6. Produce a final report including narrative and interpretive information for the research, as well as reflection on gaps and data availability.
Anticipated Results/ Impact	<p>From a theoretical point of view, this study will help us to understand the current state of knowledge on public mistreatment leading to psychological injury and related policies or practice. It will also serve as a foundation from which future research or theoretical work could be conducted. It should also be noted that due to the nature of this project, even challenges finding information would prove illuminating as it demonstrates an area for further research and education. Practically speaking, the knowledge transfer aspect of this study will help spread and mobilize practices and knowledge in the community to prove the scale of this issue and inform what actions employers can take to support their employees.</p>
Keywords	Public mistreatment, psychological injury, return-to-work, public-facing work