



# AMES IN ACTION FEBRUARY 2024



## ASSESSING PARTICIPATION IN WORKPLACE HEALTH PROGRAMS



### WHAT DID AMES DO?

Dr. Kristin Horan recently presented research at the semi-annual Work, Stress, and Health conference. In this project, she examined if samples of employees who participated in occupational health psychology interventions, or programs to improve employee health and safety, matched the characteristics of their overall industry. Similarity between the sample of participants and the broader employee population is one indicator of the quality of the intervention. She found that the majority of studies only reported enough information to see if samples and populations matched in terms of demographic characteristics. Even though it would be beneficial to see if samples matched their industry in terms of socioeconomic, job, or health-related characteristics, most interventions did not report enough information to allow this comparison.

### HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO THE MILITARY, VETERANS, EMERGENCY SERVICES, AND/OR THE COMMUNITY?

Workplace health and safety programs are frequently delivered in emergency services workplaces. In fact, several of the interventions examined in this study were offered to police, fire, or EMS personnel. Ideally, the people who participate in an intervention should be similar to the overall group of eligible employees, because this indicates that the program is attractive and accessible to everyone. Emergency services employees face additional obstacles to participation in health and safety programming, which could result in a lack of similarity between the sample and population and hurt the quality of the intervention. However, because most studies do not report sufficient information about their sample, we cannot explore this.

### HOW CAN YOU APPLY THIS INFORMATION?



REPORT SAMPLE  
CHARACTERISTICS



ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT  
SIMILARITY

**CHARACTERISTICS**

When researchers and practitioners write up the results of a workplace health and safety program evaluation, they should report aggregated details about the demographics, socioeconomic status, job characteristics, and health characteristics of participants in the program. This will permit a comparison to publicly available industry characteristics.

**DISSIMILARITY**

If your workplace offers health/safety programs, ask yourself if the participants are representative of all eligible employees. If not, question what could be contributing to this trend. Aspects of program communication or logistics could be hindering awareness or access among some employees.