

Is work life balance in policing an oxymoron?

Key Findings From the 2012 National Study on
Work, Life and Caregiving



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Work-Life Conflict and Employee Wellbeing within Canada's Police Forces

- This talk based on data collected from almost employees from 25 police forces across Canada
 - 4500 sworn officers
 - 2000 civilians
- Also collected data from 25,000 Canadian employees working for public and private sector firms across Canada



Context of this talk

- Went into this research with the idea that the operational aspects of their job were the key sources of stress for today's police officers
- Surprise!!! – this is not the case
- Major sources of stress for police today include the following:
 - How they are managed
 - The work environment
 - Work life issues



Main predictors of stress identified by our research

- Multiple, competing, ever changing number one job priorities
- Understaffing
- The court system
- Expectations to do work outside ones mandate



This talk based on data from

- Approximately 4500 “sworn” officers from across Canada who filled in the survey
 - 63% held the rank of Constable
 - 23% held the rank of Sergeant/Detective
 - 15% held the rank of Staff Sergeant/Detective Staff Sergeant/Senior Officer
 - 9% were Staff Sergeants, 6% senior officers
- Virtually all of the measures collected in this survey depend on job type
 - As such I will present findings by job type (and gender if relevant) and discuss key differences as we move through the presentation

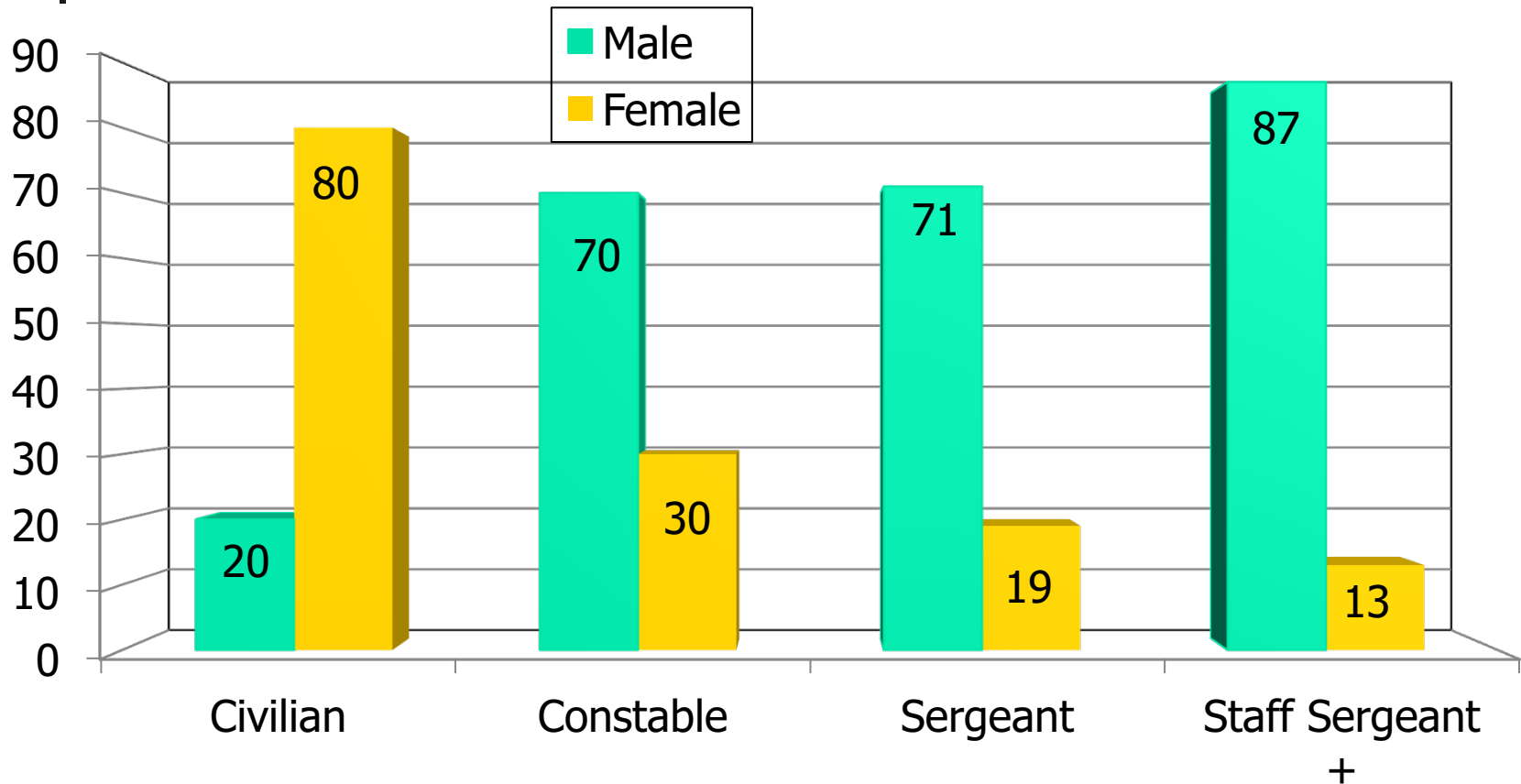


Description of the Sample

- We collected information on our sample to help us better understand the work-life challenges they faced
- The “typical” employee in this sample was:
 - Male (64%)
 - Gen X/30 to 45 years of age (52%)
 - Married (80%) with children still at home (75%)
 - Lived in a community with more than 100,000 citizens (52%) in Ontario (60%)
 - Had a college diploma (34%) or university degree (34%)
 - Part of a dual-career (42%) or dual income – male primary earner (24%) family

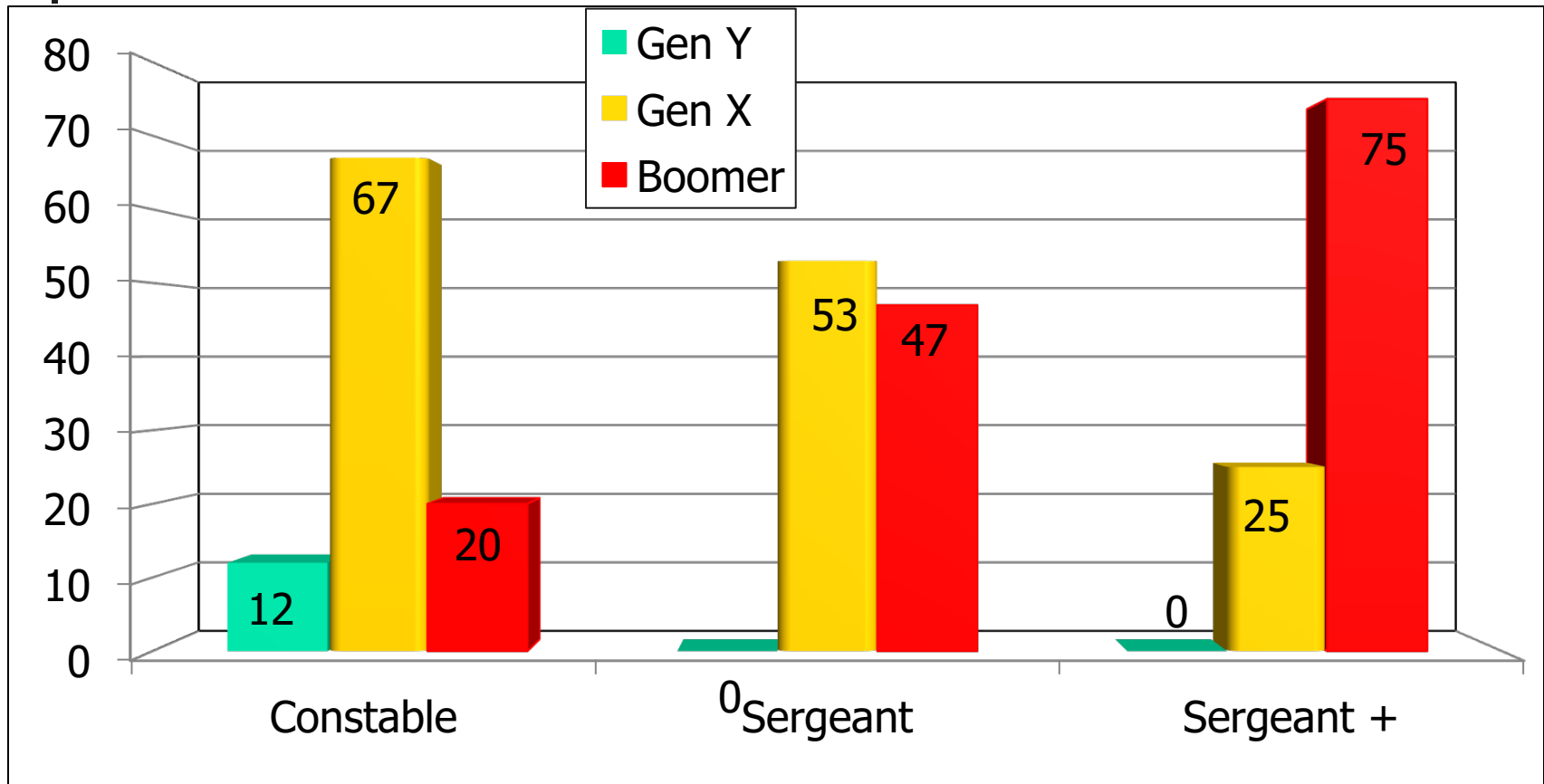
Most of the women in the sample are in civilian positions

Percent of women in the category declines with rank



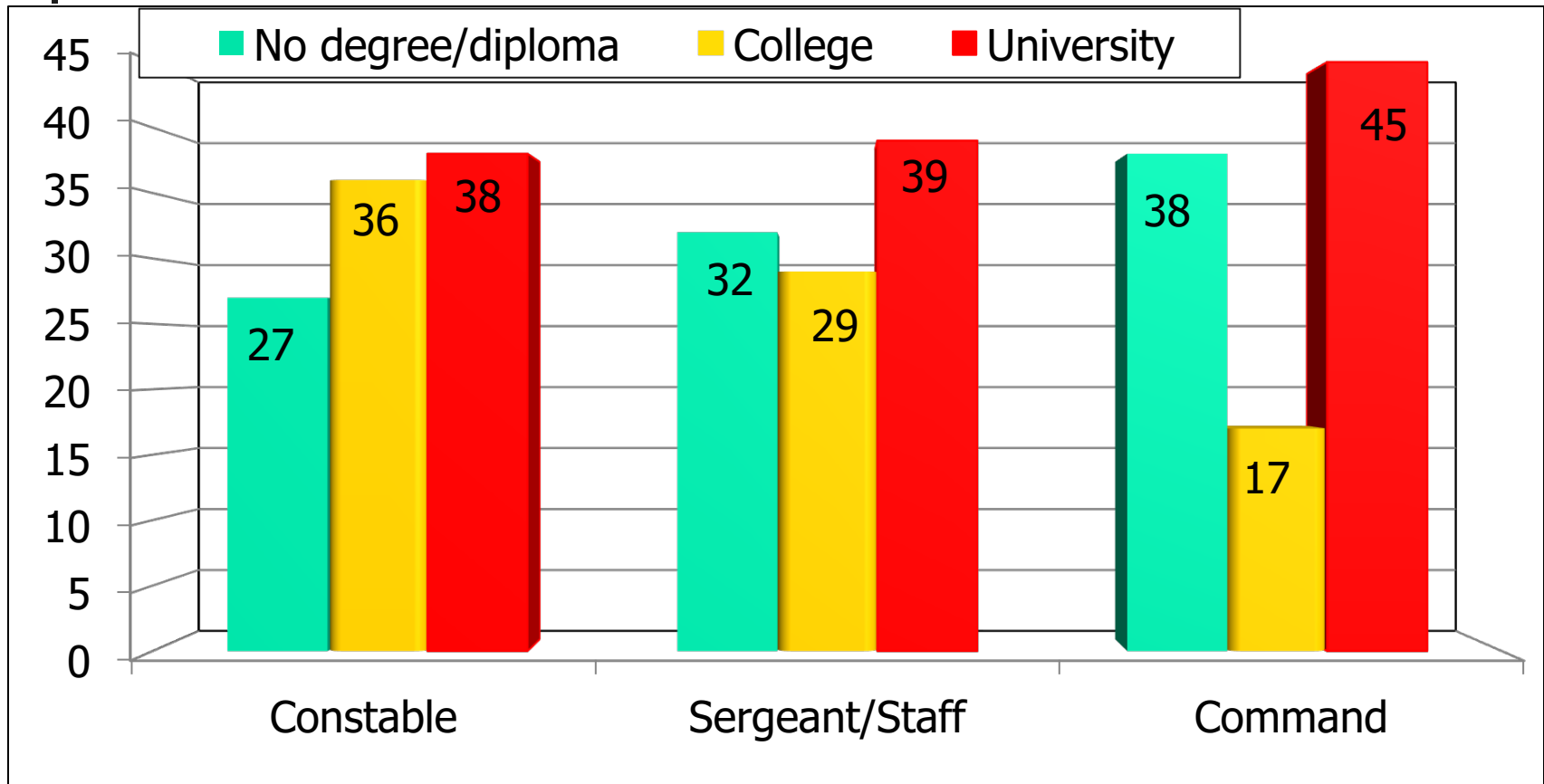
Generational Cohort Strongly Associated with Job Type

Potential for conflict based on values very high



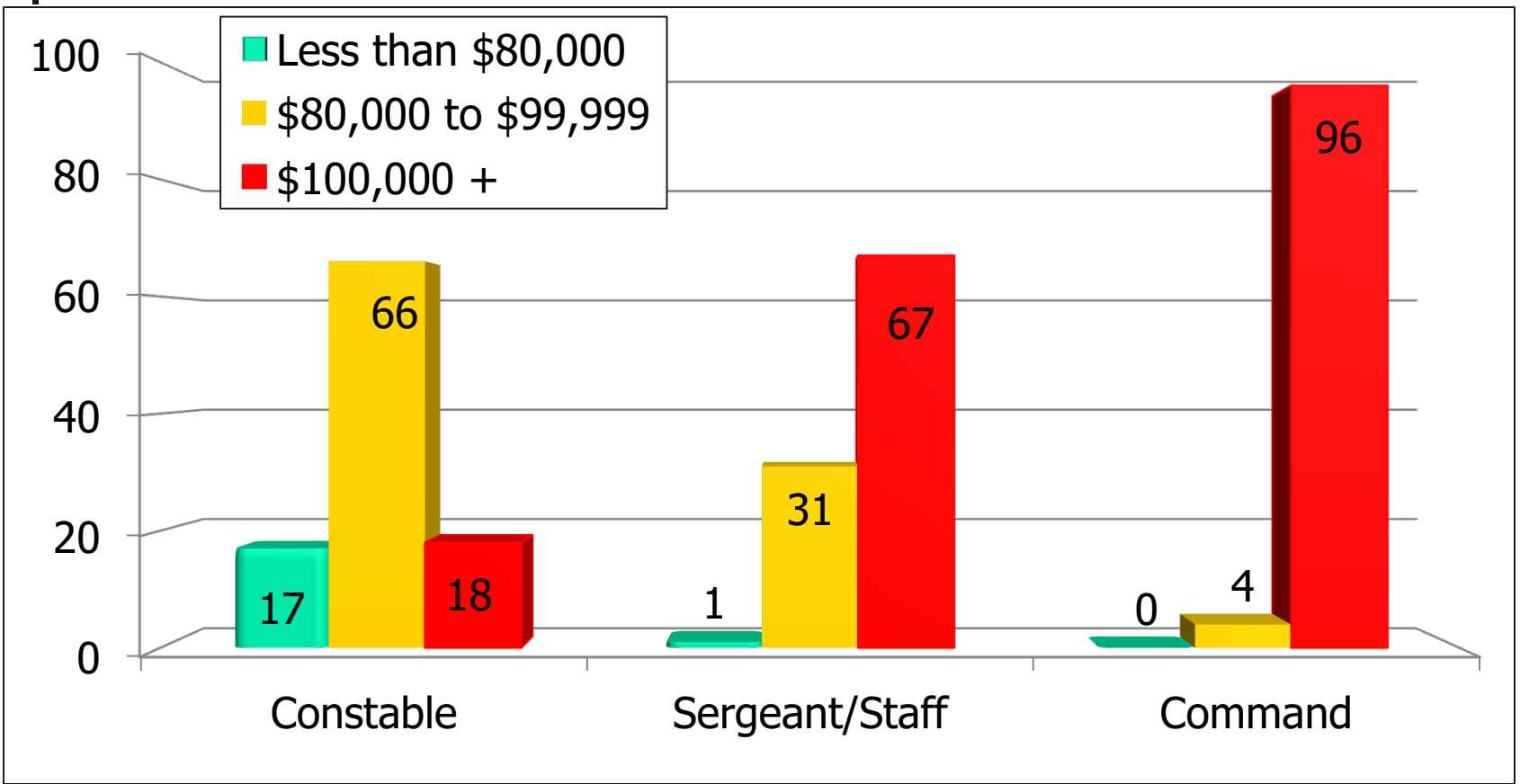
Job Type Strongly Associated with Education

Credentialism has hit the police



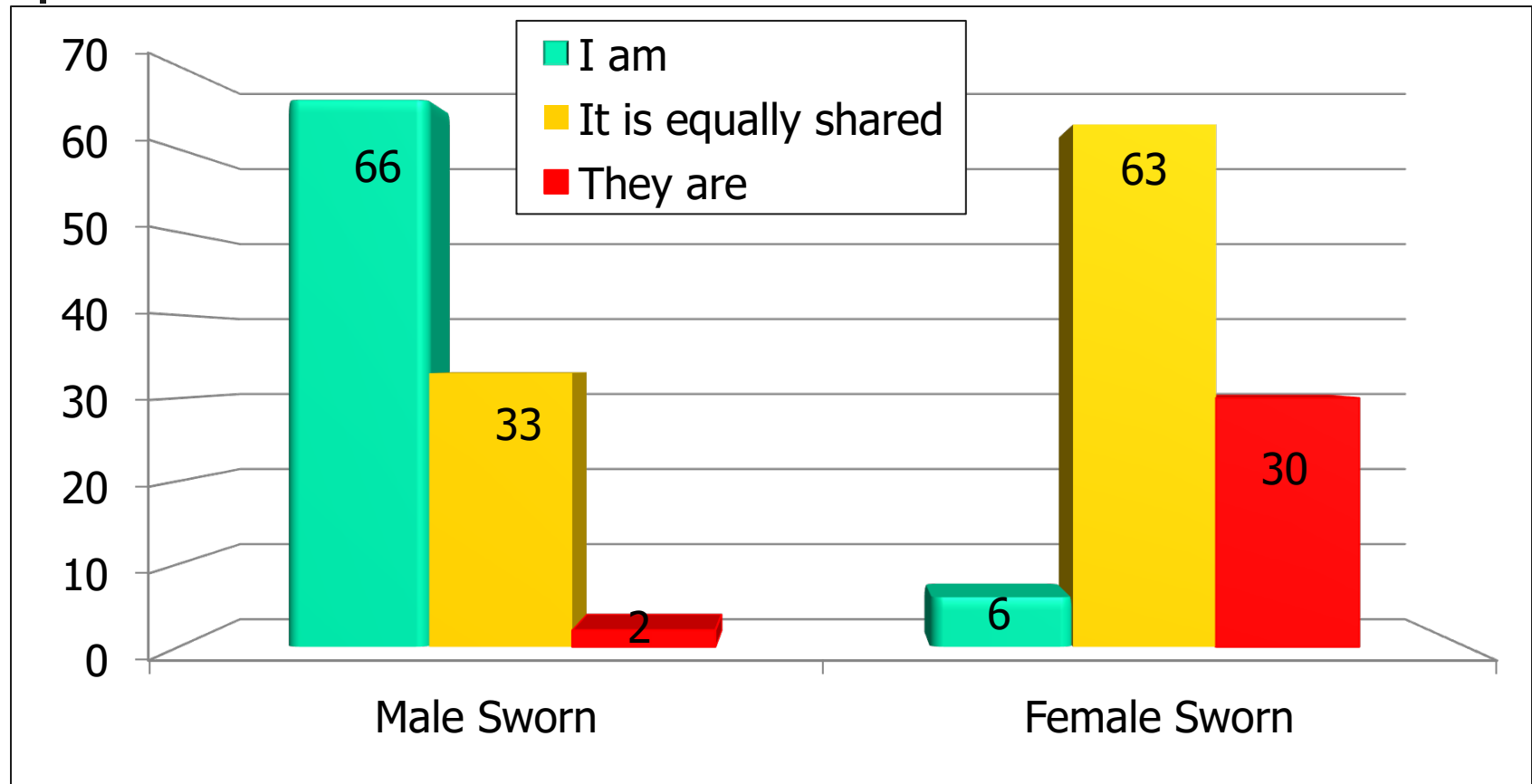
Police officers in Canada well paid

Income increases with rank and within rank, men receive higher pay than women



Breadwinner status associated with job type and gender

Male constables and female police officers both live in families where breadwinning and childcare responsibilities shared





Police officers work hard!

Hours per week in various work related activities

- The typical police employee devotes approximately **54 hours per week** to work-related activities
- This breaks down as follows:
 - An average of 46.4 hours per week in work
 - An average of 8 hours per week spent in job related work outside of work hours
 - 65% of the sample said they regularly engaged in work outside of their regular work hours
 - An average of 6 additional hours per week commuting to and from work and to various work locations during work hours

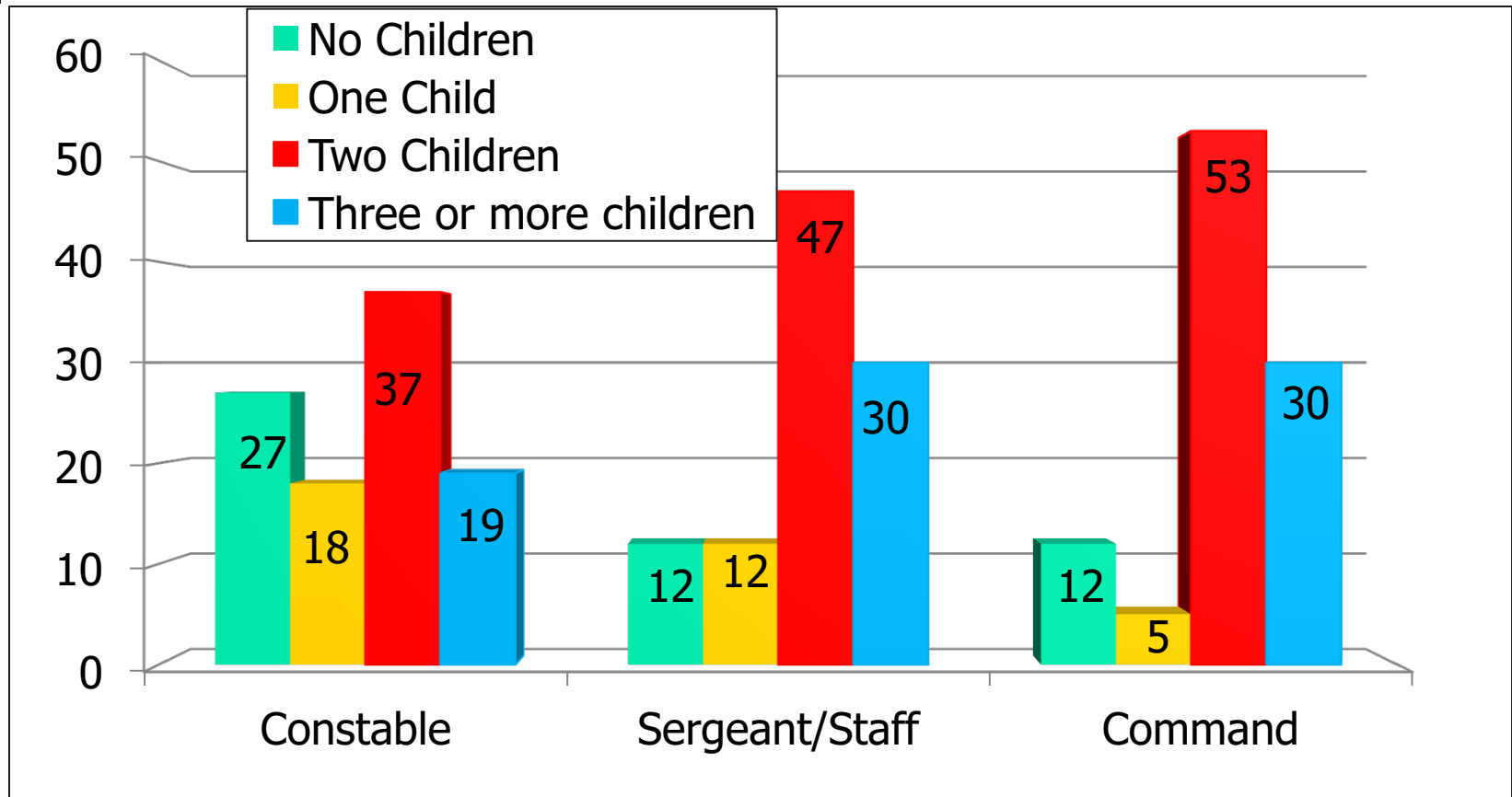
They also have significant responsibilities outside work:

Hours per week in non-work related activities

- Just under two thirds (62%) of the police officers spend time each week in childcare
- One in five (20%) spend time each week in eldercare.
- Police officers with children spend an average of 24 hours a week in care or activities with their children.
- Officers with eldercare spend an average of 7 hours a week in care or activities with their elderly dependents.
- On average a police officer spends 16 hours per week in dependent care.

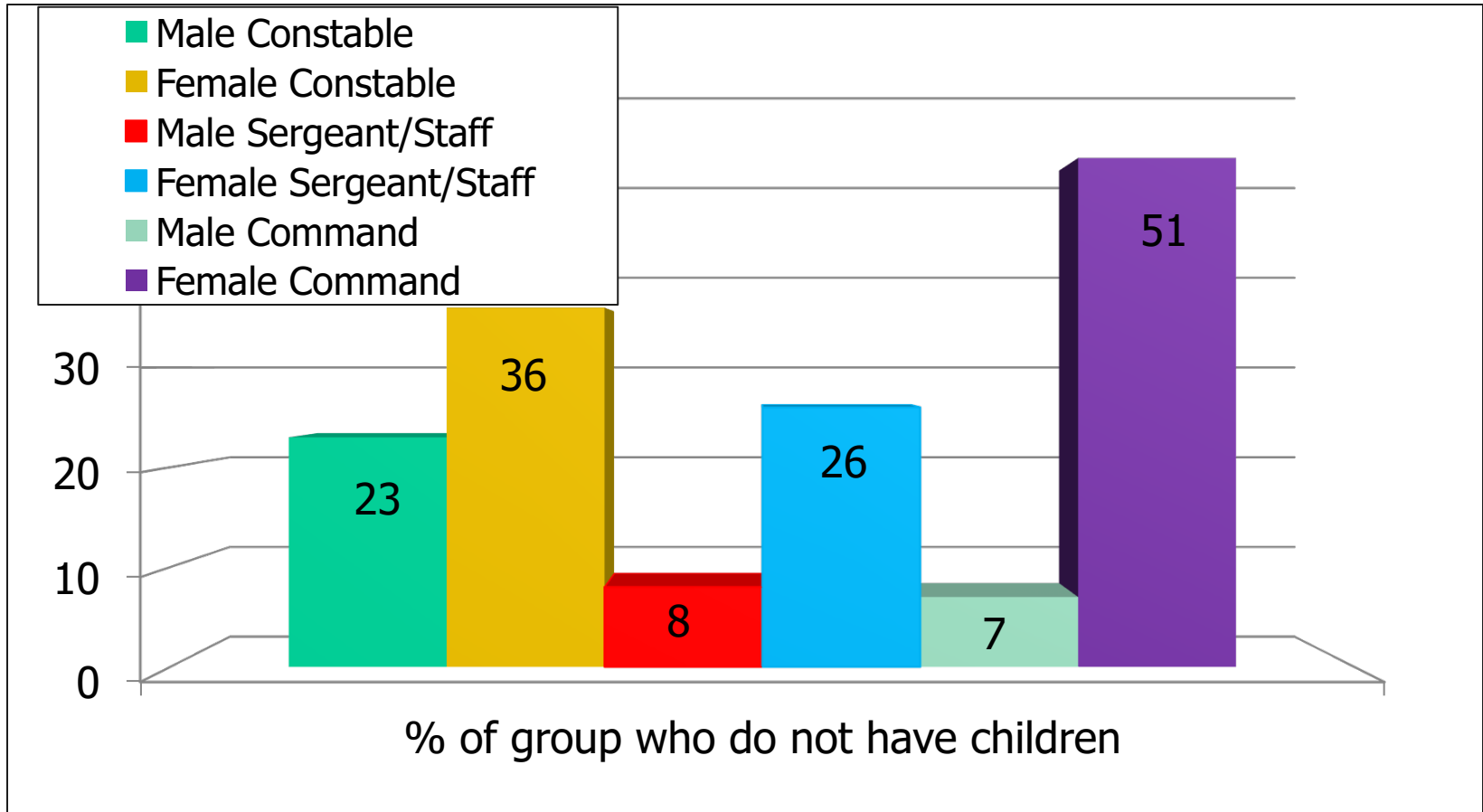
Most police officers are also parents

The likelihood of having children increases with rank



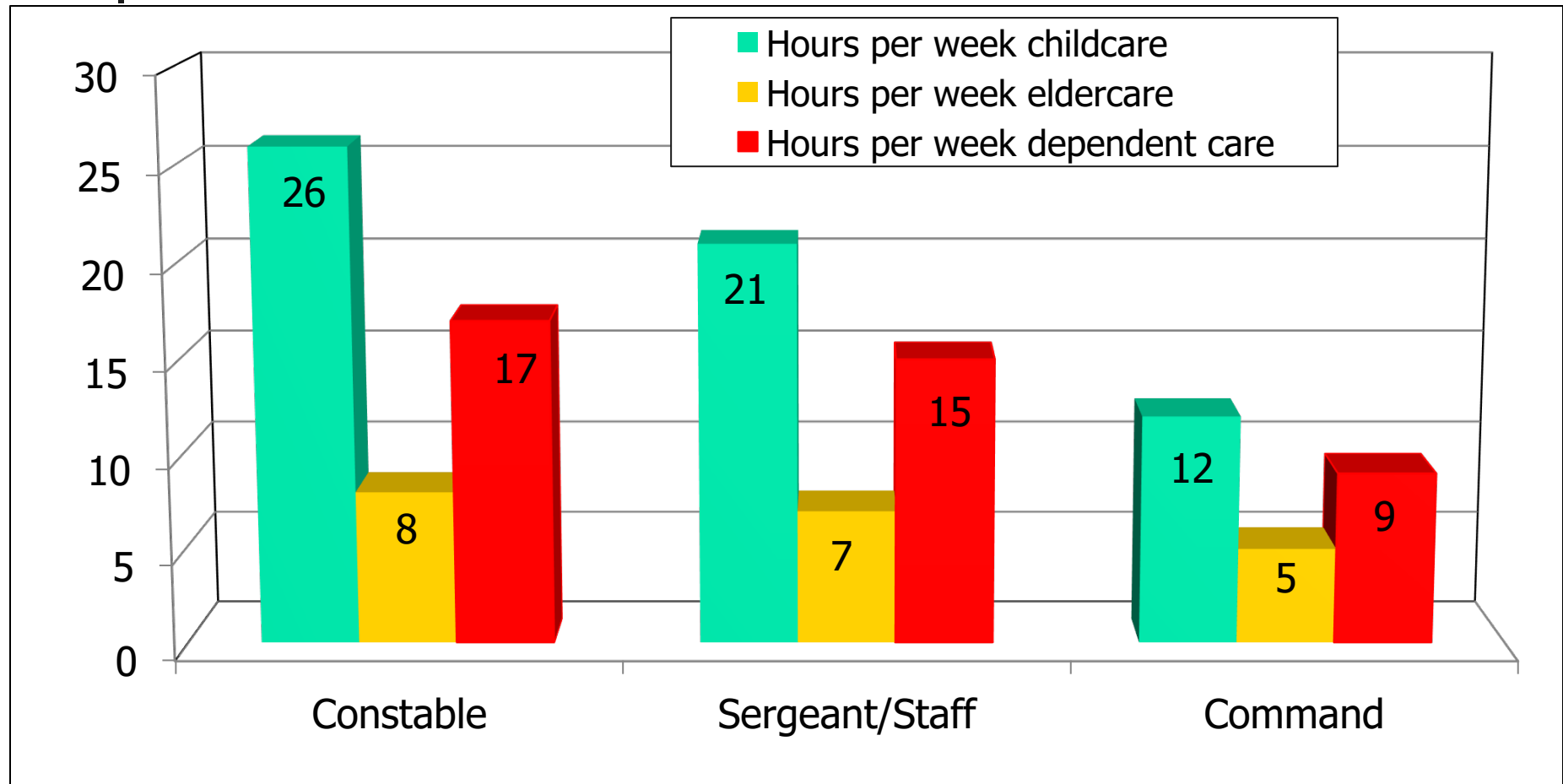
The Costs of Rank for Women

% with no children



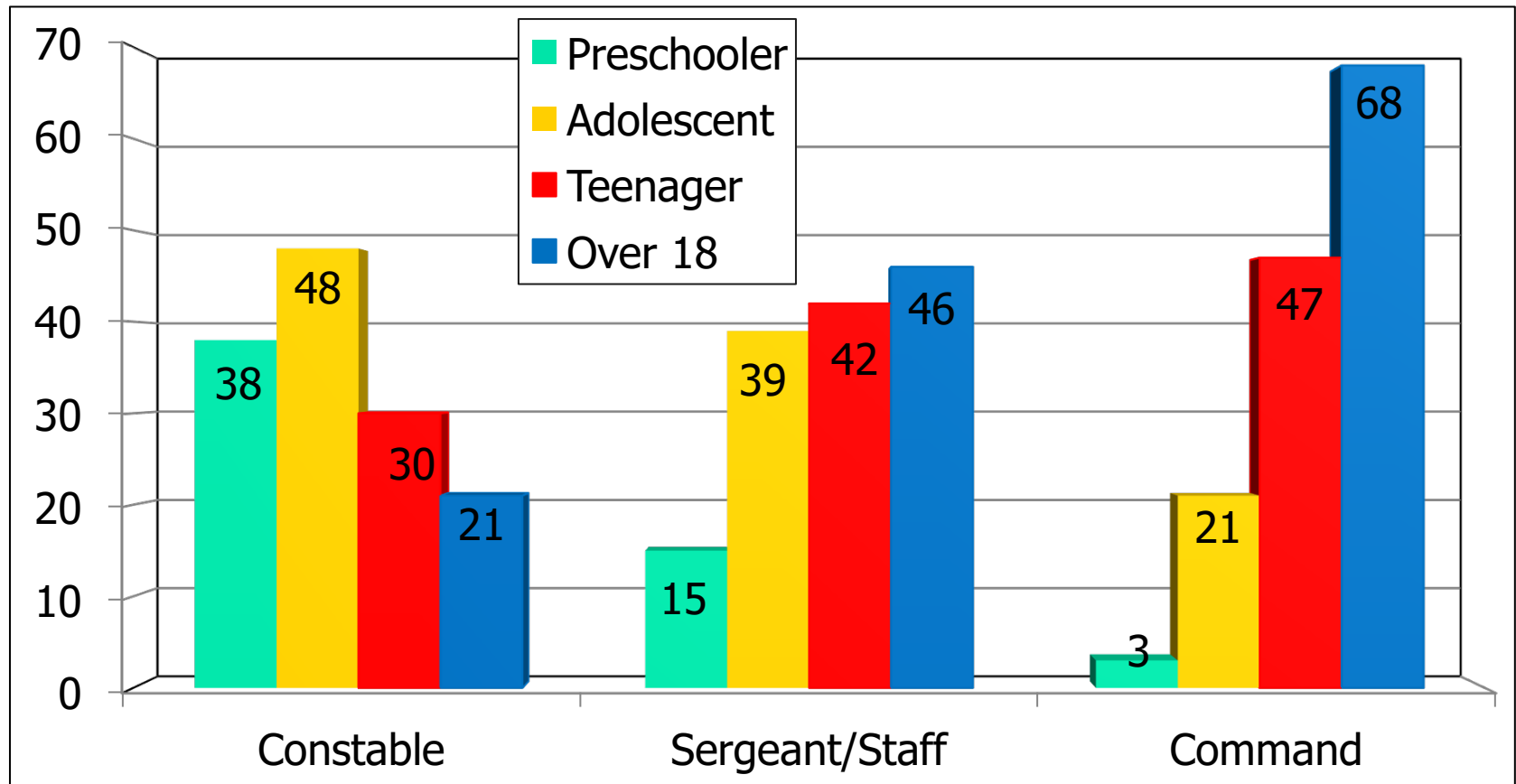
Time in dependent care associated with job type:

Dependent care demands decrease with rank; male and female constables with children at home spend 20+ hours a week in childcare



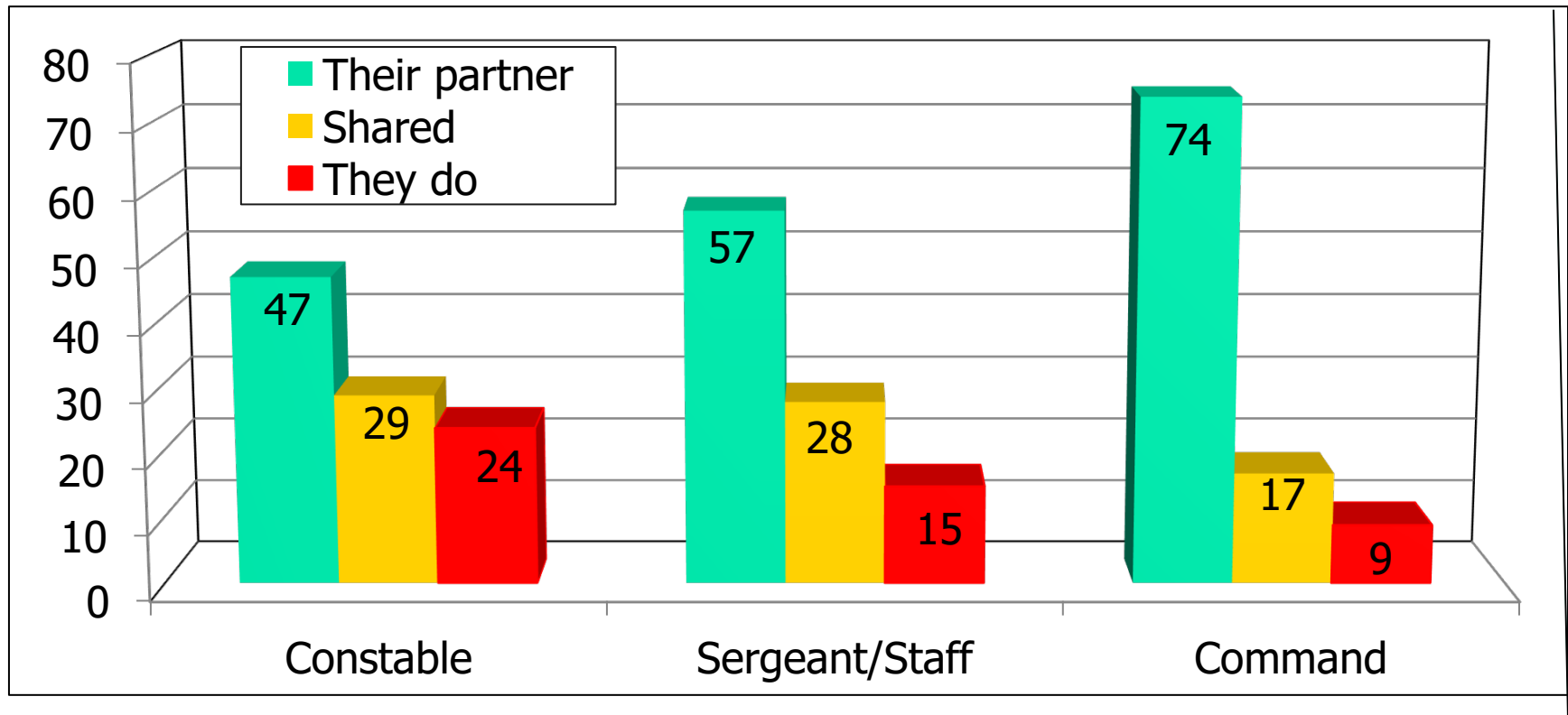
Life Cycle Stage Strongly Associated with Job Type

Those in the constable group most likely to be in "full nest stage" of the life cycle



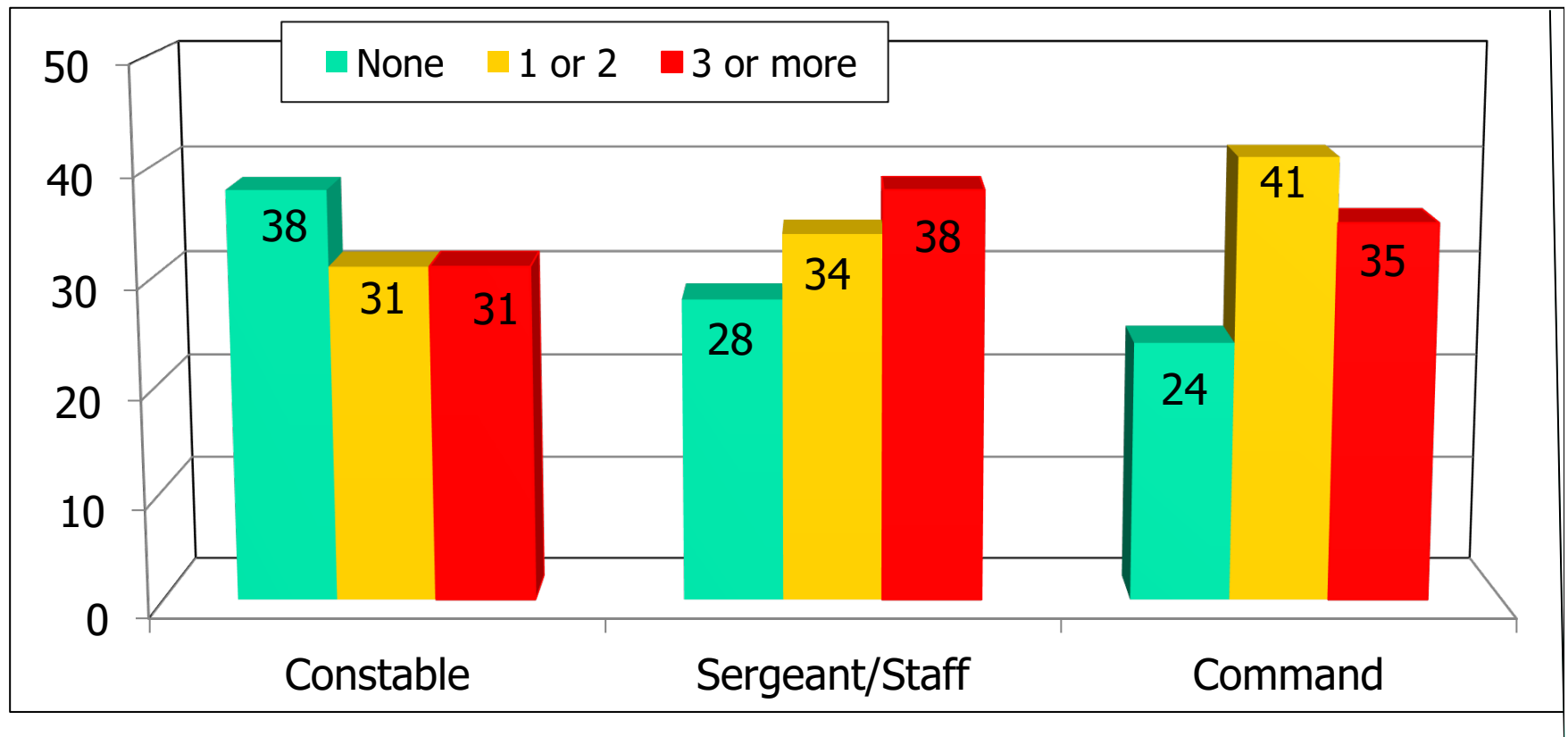
% of Responsibility for Childcare Respondent has in their Family

Those in the constable and sergeant groups more likely to share responsibility with partner



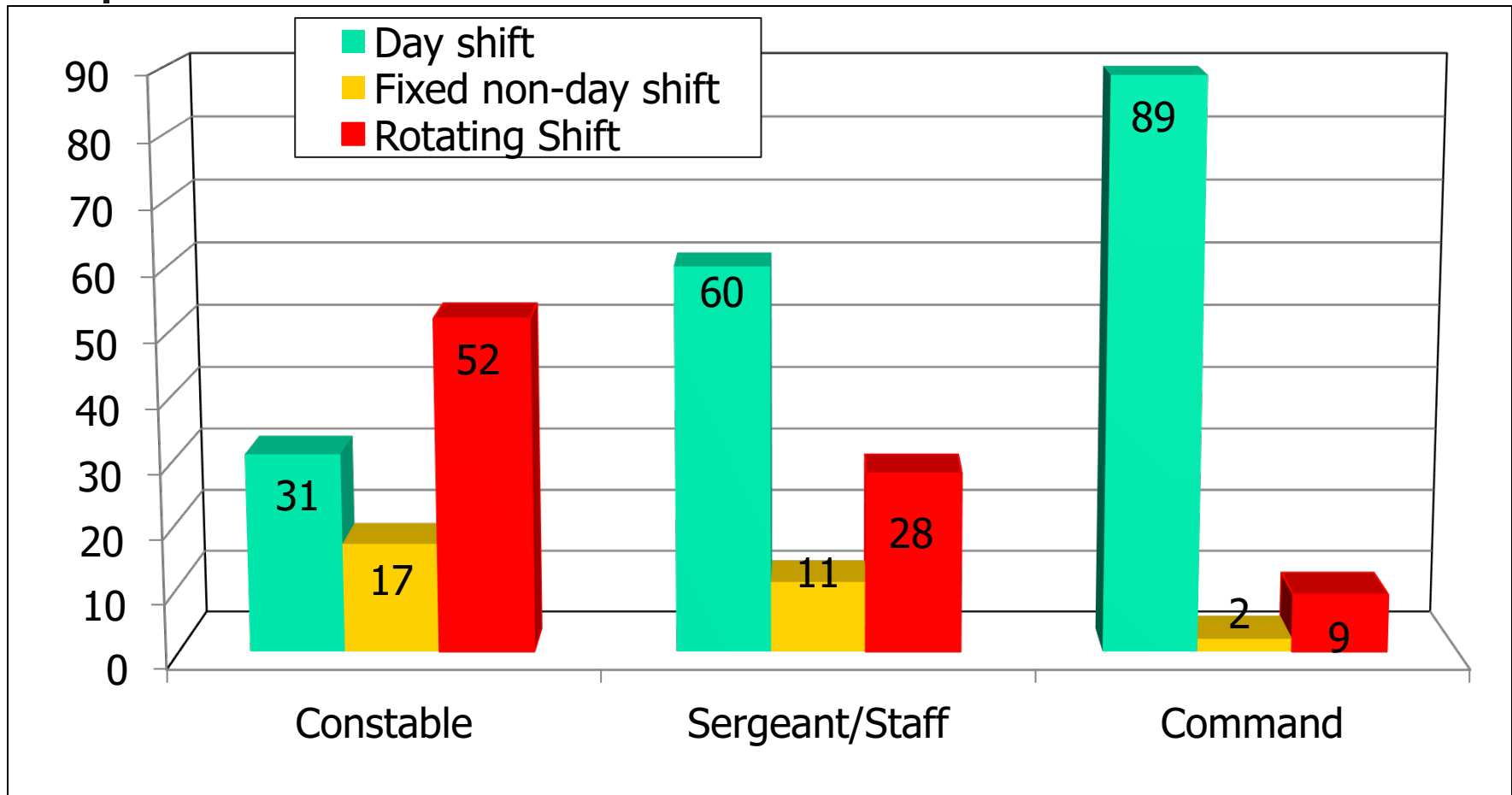
Most Police Officers also Have Responsibility for Care of Elderly Dependent

Likelihood of having this form of dependent care increases with rank

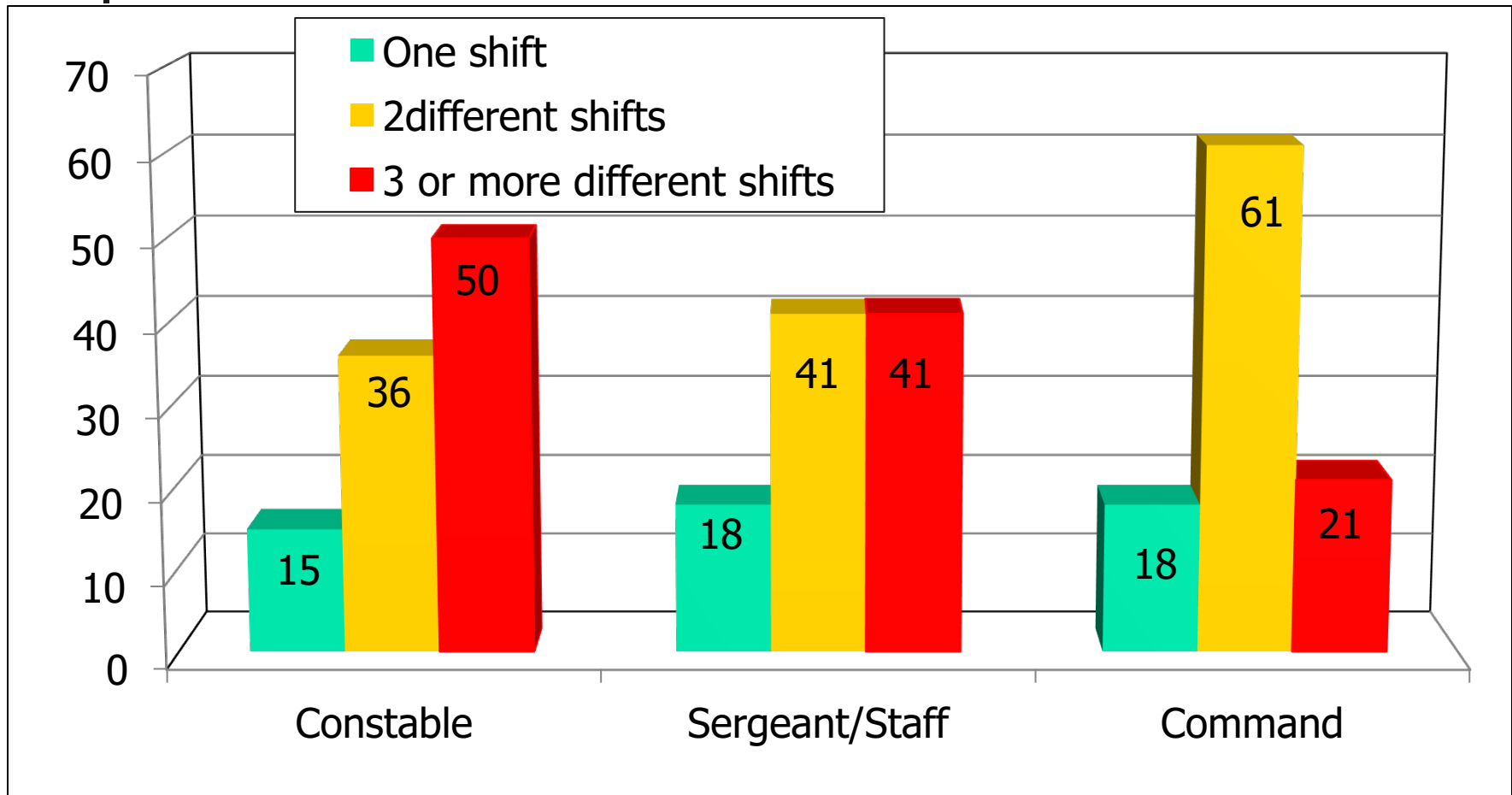


Shiftwork

Half of those at the constable level work shift schedules – which are associated with increased levels of stress and work-life conflict



Stress of shiftwork schedules compounded by high number of different shifts worked per month





Work-Life Challenges

- The irregularity of the hours and the nature of the work often requires police officers to give priority to their work role.
- This is easier in families where the police officer has a partner who assumes primary responsibility for family role responsibilities.
- Unfortunately our data indicates that this is not the case for the majority of the police officers in our sample
 - Particularly an issue for female police officers and males working in front line positions

Work-Life Challenges: Police officers today are expected to contribute at home regardless of their gender

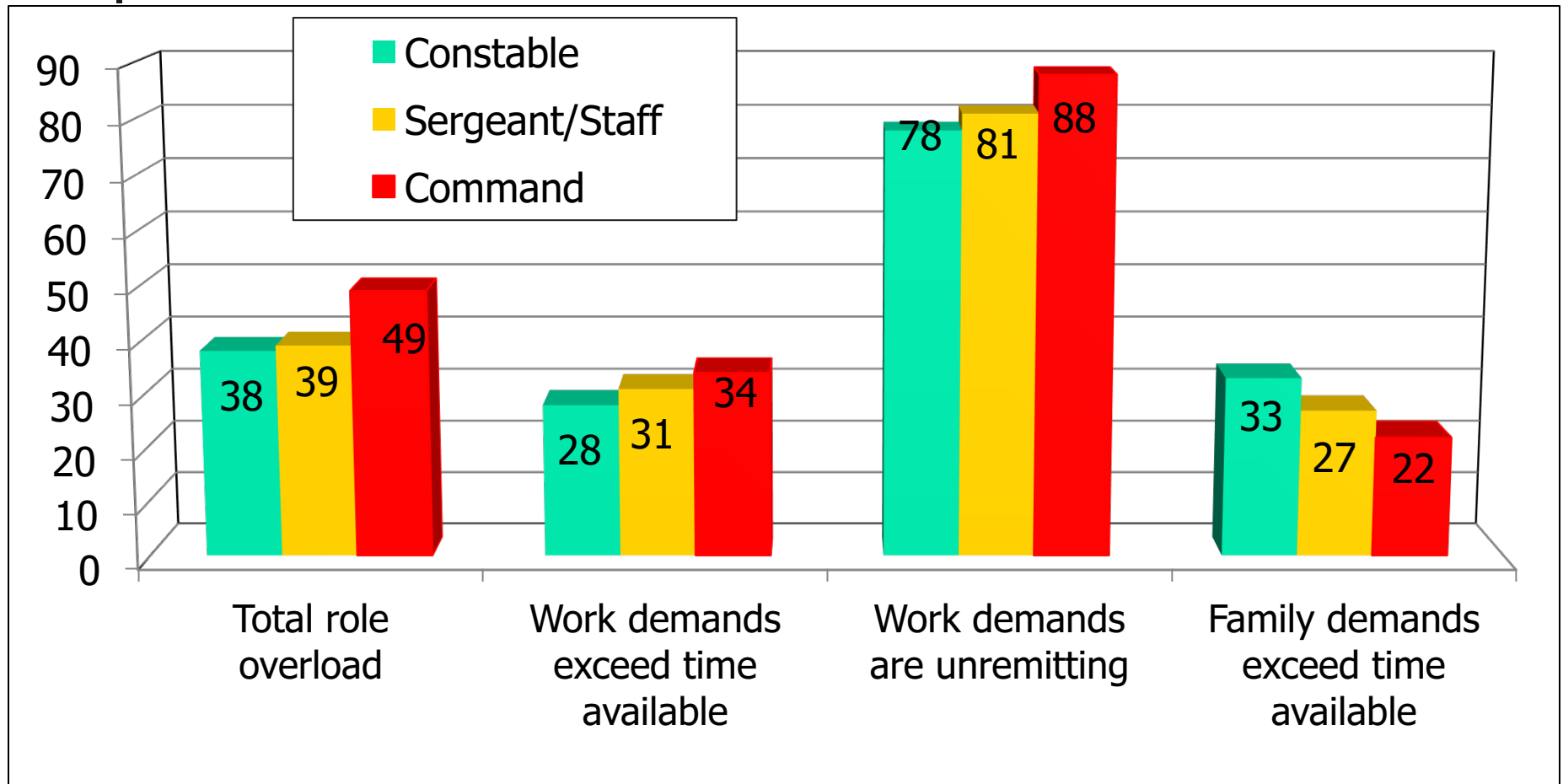
- Most police officers in our sample (66%) are married to highly educated professionals who work as many hours a week as they do!
- Half of the police officers in this sample said that breadwinning responsibilities were shared in their family
 - Majority of younger officers in this situation
- Responsibility for childcare is shared in just over one in four (27%) families
- One in five of the police officers in the sample (most of the women) had primary responsibility for childcare in their family



Changes in family structures

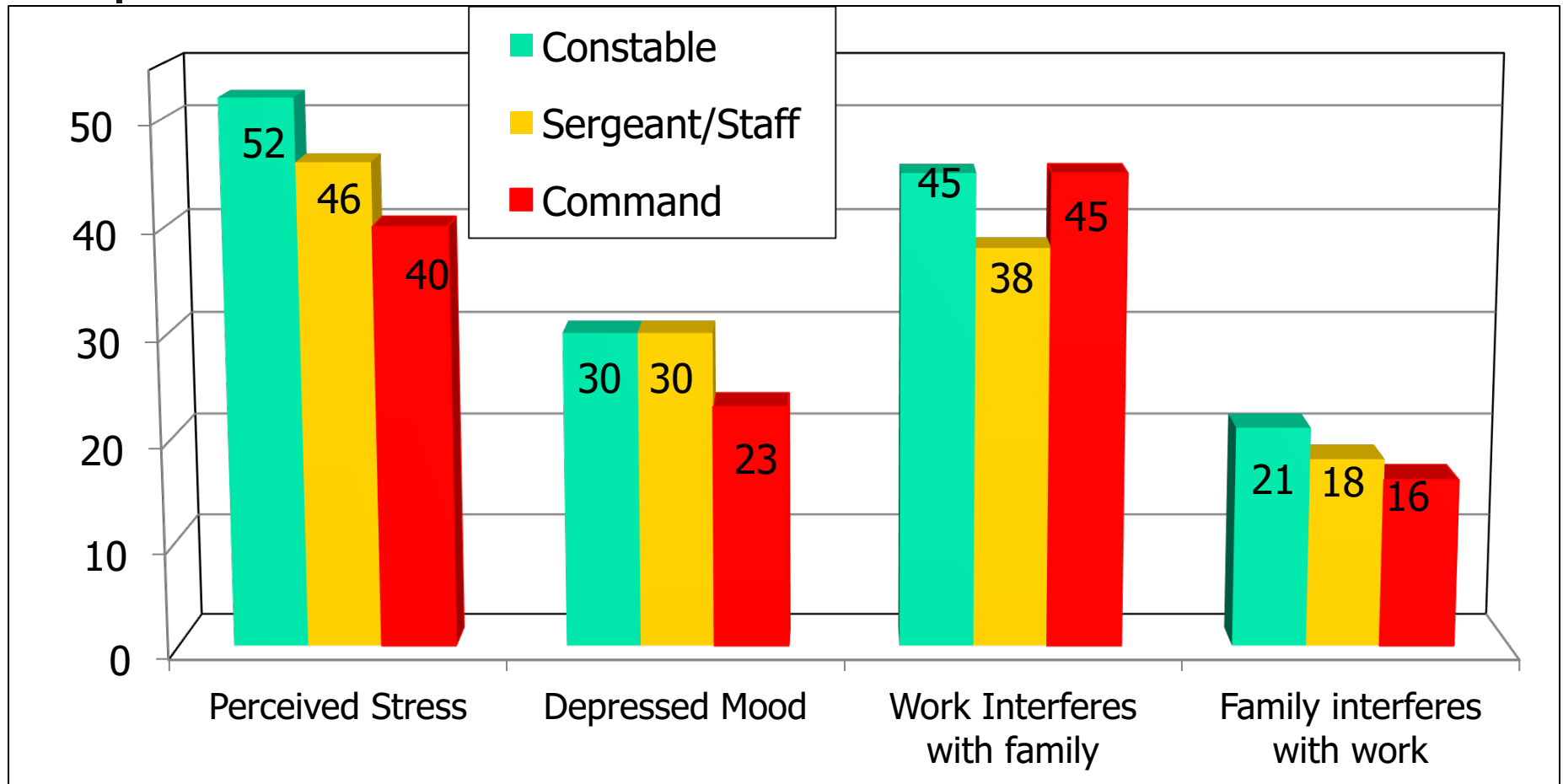
- Have meant that work-life conflict has become key issue for police officers of both genders
- Makes doing job harder and increases need for flexibility and supportive culture and boss
 - Unfortunately, our data suggests that most police officers do not have much flexibility, and do not see either the culture or command officers as supportive

Role overload is high for police officers – cannot do it all



These stressors are having a negative impact on mental health and work-life balance

% with high levels of



The Theory:

Doing Policing Versus Doing Gender

- Policing male dominated organization
 - Values and rewards “masculine” behaviours and traits which defined as set of behaviours and roles traditionally associated with boys and men
 - Masculinity is a social construct and is not the same as male biological sex
- In western societies behaviours/traits traditionally viewed as masculine include
 - Risk seeking, being tough, courage, assertiveness and violence

The Theory:

Doing Policing Versus Doing Gender

- In western societies behaviours/traits traditionally viewed as feminine include
 - Gentleness, empathy, caring, sensitive, nurturance, compassion
- People of both genders can demonstrate masculine and feminine behaviours

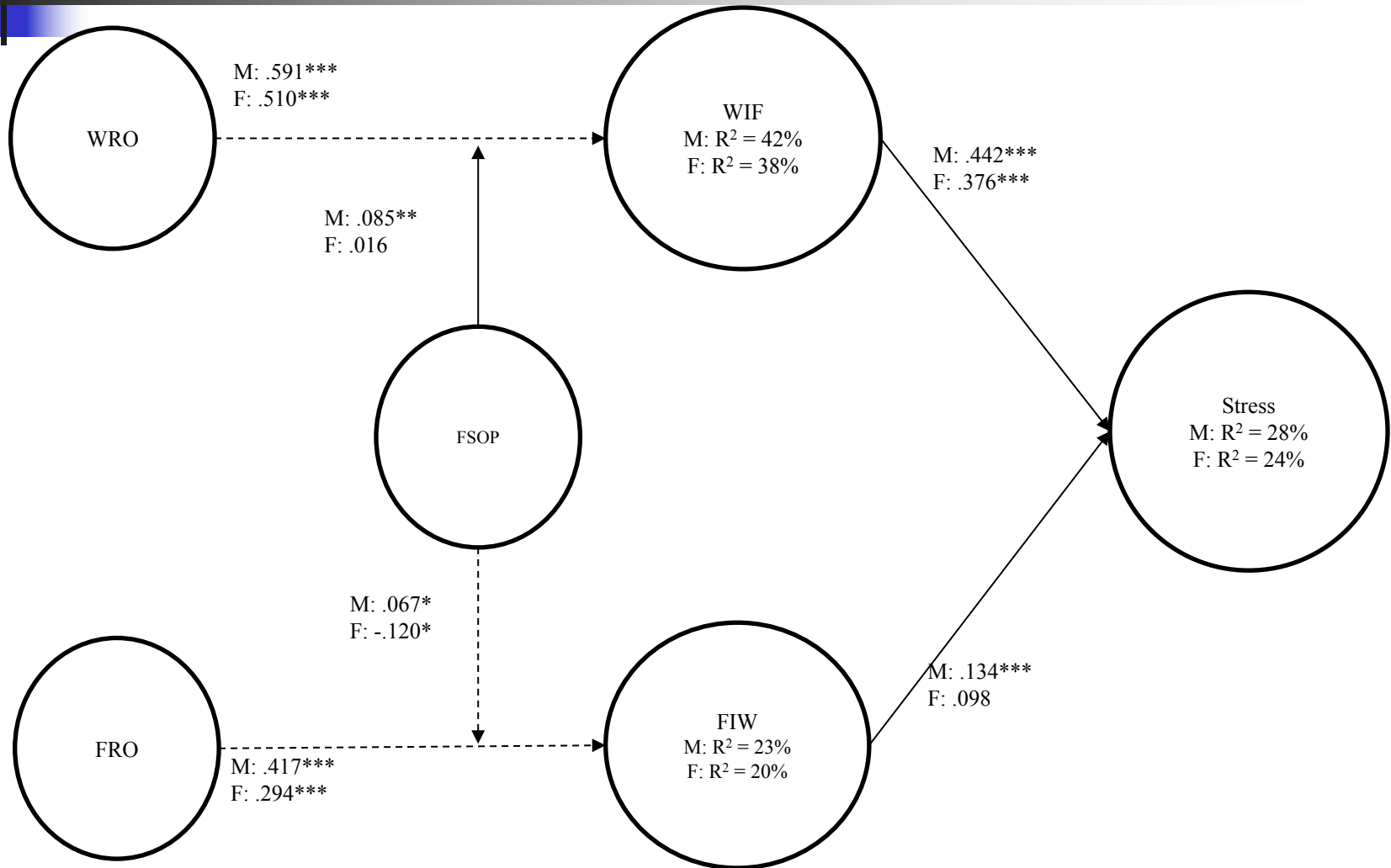
The Theory:

Doing Policing Versus Doing Gender

- In policing men do not have to do anything different to behave in a manner congruent with the culture present within policing
- To be accepted however, women need to “do police” and avoid “doing gender”
- This means that women need to take care to keep family away from work
 - Role of mother equates to feminine attributes

Work-Life Conflict in Policing:

Men now having more problems women!





Summary: Stressors

- The key to balance for police officers appears to be “marrying” well
 - Female officers in our sample were more likely to live in egalitarian families where the male partner did their share
- Male officers, on the other hand, appeared to be struggling with conflicting cultural norms
 - Culture of policing that dictates that men put work first
 - Changing social norms that support the idea that men will take an active fathering role
- Our data also show that male officers who take advantage of work-life supports experienced more push back from fellow officers than their female counterparts

Conclusions and Next steps:

Wake up Call



- Many police officers have very high levels of work-life conflict
 - This conflict negatively impacting how they feel about the organization as well as their mental health and the organization's bottom line
- Many of the things that we know make a positive difference (flexibility, positive culture, good manager, higher levels of perceived control, clear priorities) are not present in many police departments
 - Even when present, male officers who take advantage of these benefits will be "punished"

Conclusions and Next steps:

Wake up Call

- The view from the top is very different from the view at the bottom (constable) and the middle (sergeant)
 - Is there the will to change?



Conclusions

- Questions that need to be asked include the following:
 - How will police services compete in a seller's market for labour when you they not giving younger people of both genders what they want in terms of work-life balance?
 - How will police services encourage officers to seek and take promotions when the job at the top has little control and huge demands?