

Unheeded Voices, Misdirected Reform:

Barriers to Senior Ranks for Women in Canadian Policing

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Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in senior ranks within policing is a longstanding and persistent issue. Despite decades of examination and incremental policy changes, women continue to face significant structural and cultural barriers to advancement. Prior literature has extensively documented where change has been attempted, yet meaningful progress remains elusive. Using the tools, such as the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) and the Viable Systems Model (VSM), provided an opportunity to examine the recurring systemic and cultural themes that inhibit women's advancement in policing. It is proposed that applying CLA, VSM and Meadows Leverage Points framework to the barriers facing women in policing will expose deeper systemic assumptions and cultural impediments that conventional approaches have failed to address, thereby informing more effective and sustained strategies for change. A comprehensive literature review was conducted along with statistical analysis of women in rank, including age and time-in-rank data. CLA was applied to surface underlying assumptions and cultural narratives, while the VSM was used to map systemic functions and identify where there lies opportunity to glean meaningful and timely information to disrupt biases to women's career progression. Meadows leverage points theory was drawn upon to identify where interventions within the policing system would yield the greatest potential for transformative, rather than superficial change. The CLA revealed recurring themes not previously synthesized in this manner, exposing deeply embedded cultural barriers. Meadows' framework further illuminated that lasting change requires intervening at the level of the system goals and paradigms, rather than through isolated policy

amendments. The VSM identified the need to use Audit and Optimizations on an on-going basis to better understand the system. Overall, these key areas - specifically Traits, Selection, and Performance paradigms - identify where the biases affect women in policing and hinder their advancements. These findings underscore the need for ongoing and structured auditing of policing institutions using tools such as the VSM, and for continued critical inquiry directed at organizational leadership. Informed by Meadows' insight that the most powerful leverage points lie in shifting the mindset and goals that drive a system, a shift away from reactive policy toward proactive systemic diagnosis is essential to meaningfully advancing gender equity in senior policing ranks.

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Content Warning

This research paper contains descriptions of harassment, bullying, sexual harassment and gender based discrimination. Some descriptions may be distressing to readers. Reader discretion is advised

Introduction

Women in policing is a topic I feel especially connected with given I served Canadians as a peace officer in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for nearly 34 years. When I joined in 1986, women were few and far between in Canada, with 4% of the police officers being women. One doesn't have to look far for almost daily headlines that show the challenges facing women in policing. The challenges are not from those they help in the course of their daily duties, but from men they work with whose actions are abetted by the very organizations that recruit us into policing.

This research paper focuses on identifying the barriers women continue to face in attaining senior ranks. Having been promoted several times in my career and retired at the rank of Superintendent, I had expected the processes and culture would improve the longer women were in and our numbers increased. While there has been some progress and some elements have improved there are systemic and cultural elements that remain barriers. Throughout my career but especially my last fifteen plus years, I had tried through every means within my power to influence, address, call out bad behaviour, identify solutions, hire consultants, as I knew the culture was not reflective of the posted core values, not conducive for the people within the system to thrive and not what our communities believe is an effectively performing police service. Later in my service I was exposed to different performance concepts and a few design thinking elements that led me to critique in a different way, identify and present where the space existed to improve the systemic issues. In the end, I realized the change needed was beyond what I could influence nor support any more as it was. I very consciously withdrew from

the promotion process to the next level, Chief Superintendent, as I recognized I had outgrown the culture of the RCMP and ultimately retired.

I enrolled in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation (SFI) masters degree programme to learn more about the different ways systems impact the world, how to analyze them differently to better problem solve and find human centered solutions. I believe in and am committed to the profession of policing and I want our communities served by the very best. I was strategic in my choice of research topics because a better environment for women must be the norm, not the exception. Not just in policing but especially in policing. Quite frankly there is too much at stake for it not to be. I want to contribute to the momentum gained and expose where more ground needs to be taken. After reading Pat Mitchell's book, *Becoming A Dangerous Woman, Embracing Risk to Change the World*, I prefer to think of this time in “retirement” as my time in “rewirement.” I know I want to continue to serve and contribute in the best way I can in this next phase of my life. The SFI tools, not typically used in policing, give me greater knowledge and a wider breadth of the sight lines to examine the issues that continue to plague women’s growth and promotion in policing, and across business lines. These last few years have provided me time to rewire as I get ready for the next phase. Trailblazer is not a word I use lightly to describe myself, yet I recognize that my varied experience and education have prepared me, perhaps uniquely, to explore the barriers women face in Canadian policing, share what I discover

and contribute to the solutions. The communities are waiting for their style, their grace, their leadership, their tenacity, their leadership and most of all their authentic contribution.

The goal is to remove barriers that can be addressed by improving the culture within policing.

Lise

Research Question

How might we better understand the key factors contributing to the continued under-representation of women in senior leadership roles in Canadian policing, and how do these factors manifest across the national and municipal police services?

Secondary Questions

1. How might toxic workplace dynamics—such as harassment, exclusion, and incivility—shape women’s leadership trajectories in policing, and how does this compare with other male-dominated professions?
2. How might the hierarchical rank structure limit the opportunity to identify and mentor future women leaders?
3. How might high performing team training models be applied to address known harmful behaviours and support more inclusive and effective team environments in policing?

Research Methodology

This a mixed-methods research methodology, focussing on a literature review, providing qualitative and quantitative data supported by the use of the Social, Technological, Economic,

Environmental, Political and Values (STEPPV), Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) and the Viable Systems Model (VSM) to examine the challenges at the surface level and within the structure.

The research inquiry begins with a systematic literature review, which provides the empirical and theoretical information for all subsequent analysis; by mapping and collecting the data, gaps in knowledge are identified and the conceptual boundaries for this study were established. Building on this a STEEP-V was applied to scan the greater environmental factors influencing the challenges for women in policing. This environmental scan is furthered through the values lens - that shapes the condition under which any solution is based. Then the understanding deepened again using the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Sohail Inoyatollah) which allows for the inquiry to move beyond what is observable, surface level actions and systemic causes to investigate the underlying worldviews metaphors and myths that sustain the problems. The CLA was chosen specifically to see beyond the surface level analysis which may have resulted in a previous misdiagnosis of the complexity by neglecting the deeper narrative structure that reproduces them. Finally the Viable Systems Model (VSM) is used to assess the structural and organizational capacity of its relevant systems to adapt and sustain change; the VSM was selected as it provides a diagnostic lens not usually utilized in the police management environment in the same way. The VSM can better inform whether an organization possesses the internal regulatory mechanisms - identify, policy, coordination, operations and environmental monitoring - necessary to respond effectively to the condition identified in the previous analyses. Together these 4 models form the architectural framework for this research paper. The connective tissue across the framework is Donella Meadows leverage points by providing a shared

hierarchy of systemic depth into a unified diagnostic. The result is an integrated framework where STEEPV finds the forces, CLA uncovers their roots, VSM maps them organizationally and Meadows determines where meaningful change is possible.

Background

History of Policing

This section provides contextual background by outlining the structure of policing services in Canada, addressing foundational aspects that may be unfamiliar or insufficiently understood but that are necessary to understand for the analysis that follows.

In Canada there are three levels of policing services established across Canada, national, provincial and municipal. There are three (3) provincial police services; Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), with 183 detachments, founded in 1909. Quebec provincial police known as the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) with 87 detachments founded in 1800 and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) in 1807 providing police services to 29 communities, including Labrador. There are 137 stand alone municipal police services. The provincial and municipal police services each are responsible for the training of their cadets and personnel. It is important to note that the First Nations negotiate police services with the federal, provincial and territorial governments to provide policing services. In 2018 there were 36 self administered First Nation police services.

At the national level is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), also referred to as Mounties. They started with 150 men in 1873 to help settle the west, then known as the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP). They were dispatched in response to a vicious attack on a First Nations community in the Cypress Hills in southeast Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan by American wolf hunters and whiskey traders. The RCMP are contracted by those provinces and territories without

their own police service. They provide front line policing services with 672 detachments from coast to coast to coast. In addition they also enforce all federal statutes, such as organized crime, national security investigations, financial and serious crimes. They employ more than 28,000 civilian and sworn employees. Sworn employees are those who take an oath to “faithfully, diligently and impartially execute and perform the duties required as a “regular member” of the RCMP and will well and truly obey and perform all lawful orders and instructions received as such, without fear, favour and affection of or toward any person. All RCMP peace officers are trained at Depot in Regina, Saskatchewan for 6 months. The successful cadets are then transferred to a community to receive more in-service cadet field training with an experienced training officer. Worldwide, the RCMP is highly recognizable by the Red Serge, high brown boots and the wide brimmed felt stetson (RCMP, 2025).

Policing is a profession steeped in colonial concepts. Canadian police services are generally modelled after the United Kingdom’s Metropolitan police, established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829. He was one of the prominent founding architects of the nine (9) Peel Principles of policing and 3 core ideals. Although established nearly two centuries ago they remain relevant today.

This examination of the Peel Principles is not intended as a critique of Canadians contemporary policing practices or a debate on current law enforcement model. They are: the mission that the police exist to prevent crime and disorder; the ability of police to perform their duties depends on public approval; police must secure the willing cooperation of the public; the degree of cooperation diminishes with the need for force; police seek and preserve public favour through impartial service to law; the police use physical force only when persuasion and advice are insufficient; the police are the

public and the public are the police: police should not usurp judicial powers; police efficacy is the absence of crime, not the visible police actions.

The *3 core ideals* are the goal of an effective police service. The first of the ideals is *preventing crime*, as to stop it before it happens results in not having to punish citizens nor suppress their rights; police earn public support by respecting community principles as winning public approval requires hard work to build reputation; enforcing the laws impartially, *hiring officers who represent and understand the community*, and *using force as a last resort*; earning public support is the key to preventing crime.

Identifying further the colonial influence in police services in Western societies is the structured paramilitary system, based on hierarchy and rank. A paramilitary structure means there is a downward flow of responsibility through the ranks. This common structure helps people to recognize who is ultimately responsible for the conduct of its police service. The Chief of Police/Commissioner are the highest rank, usually appointed by the Prime Minister's or Premier's office for the national and provincial police service, and police services board personnel for municipal police services. Deputy Chief's /Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Chief Superintendent, Superintendent, Inspector are known as Commissioned ranks. Those who hold these ranks are promoted and receive an order in council appointment from their government in support of recommendations from the Commissioner's office or the Chiefs to the police services board. The non commissioned ranks include Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal and Constable. The Constable rank does have incremental

promotions depending on time served and graduation from a cadet or recruit status. Cadets or recruits are the new hires.

The following image is a typical organizational chart for an RCMP detachment with a Superintendent in Charge. The organizational structure is similar throughout the policing. The detachment is a recursive unit, and within it the Watch Commanders, who are at the Staff Sergeant rank are a recursive unit as understood for the Viable System Model(VSM).

Pitt Meadows Detachment Organization Chart

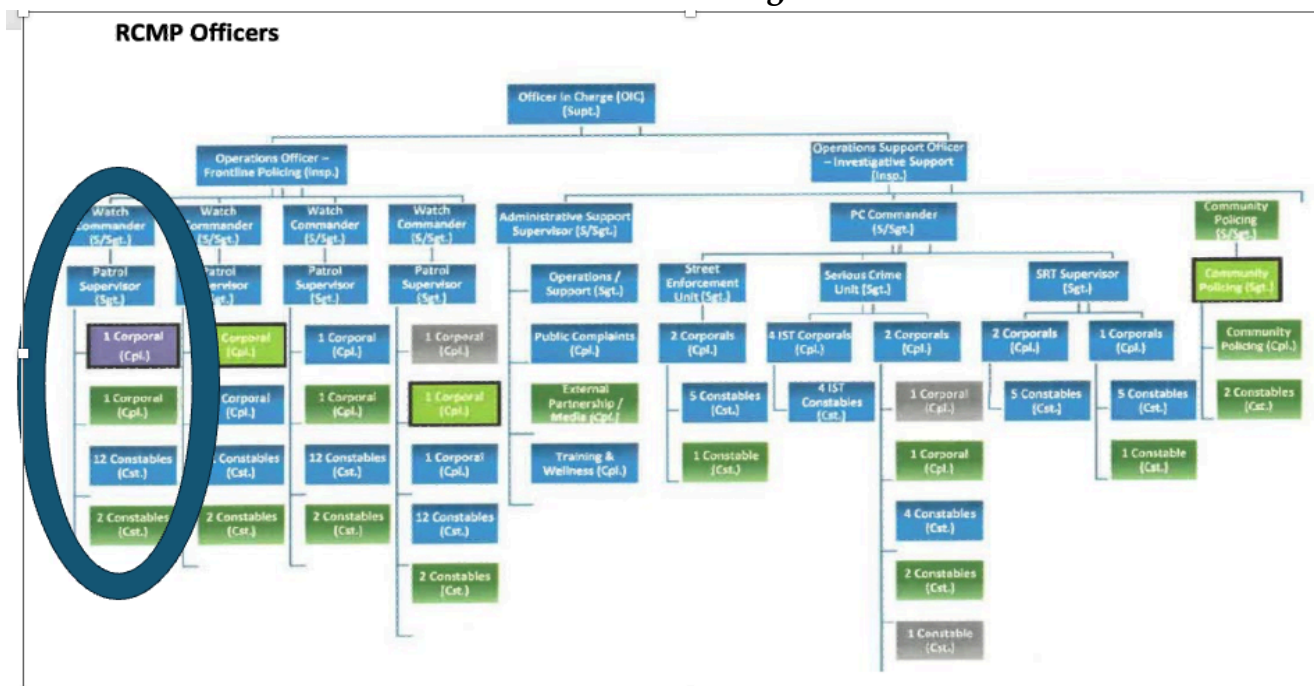


Figure 1, Pitt Meadows Detachment organizational chart, (Mehat, 2024)

When examining the Viable System Model (VSM), especially the recursive element, an important nuance stood out and aligned with the Staff Sergeant and the Sergeant ranks. The standard model of the organizational chart does not demonstrate a functional similarity the way the VSM allows. These ranks appear and reappear because of their recursive position in management right

across Canada in the RCMP and municipal, provincial police services. It is believed to have the most influence up the chain of command and with the lower ranks because of the proximity to both and the community. These ranks are unit commanders, they are detachment commanders, they set the tone, they mentor and train the front line police officers. They supervise more junior ranks, such as Sergeants and Corporals (RCMP), constables and civilian staff. They are the bridge between management and are afforded time with the higher ranks to provide updates and meet face to face with senior NCO's. Those managers in the lower Commissioned ranks also have the opportunity to meet with the Senior Commissioned ranks from time to time.

The Political Gender platform

The rights enjoyed by women in Canada today are because of the historical achievements of women. As this research will show there is still much work to be done to ensure the rights and equity keep expanding and growing with each generation. As with time and distance comes a natural apathy of the easier life for women. Nellie McClung, a leading figure in Canada's suffrage movement, articulated in an editorial a position widely shared by women who were confronted with the startling reality that they were not legally recognized as "persons." This exclusion endured until October 1929, when the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council issued its landmark ruling affirming that women were "persons" under Canadian law. In doing so, the Council rejected the prevailing English interpretation, which had maintained that women were only "persons in matters of pains and penalties, but not persons in matters of rights and privileges" (McClung, 1930).

In 1967 the Federal Government established the Royal Commission into the Status of Women in Canada. Its mandate was to “inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure equal opportunities for women in all aspects of Canadian society” (Status of Women, 1967). The Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was tabled in Parliament on December 7, 1970. It included 167 recommendations. Of those were two directed toward the RCMP recommending “That the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act be amended so that its provisions will be the same for both female and male contributors”(Bird, 1970), and “that enlistment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police be open to women” (Status of Women, 1970). The report also shared that uniformed women in the municipal police forces were more common and many municipalities had found it advantageous to have women on their police forces. It noted that while the RCMP did in fact then employ women in civilian positions only 10% of those civilian positions were held by women. Municipal police services had employed women since about 1912.

On May 5th, 1974 the RCMP announced they were hiring female Canadian citizens to be peace officers. One of the first female Mounties shares that she was driving her car to work as a teacher in Nova Scotia, heard the advertisement and veered off her morning drive and went directly to the local detachment to get her application. The male constable at the detachment service counter didn’t believe her and almost did not give her an application. On September 16th, 1974, 32 women were sworn in simultaneously and Troop 17 was formed. Many provincial and municipal police services followed suit

to increase their representation of female police officers. The statistics for women in policing began to be captured in Canada in 1986, in which sworn female police officers were 4%.

As noted in the Image #1 below the ceremonial uniforms were quite different for the women and men in the RCMP.

The RCMP Ceremonial Uniform for men and women



Figure 2, Credit : Supt Ric Hall Ceremonial RCMP uniforms circa 1974 to 1990.

The first troop of Sworn women peace officers in the RCMP



Figure 3, Photo courtesy of Pillars of the Force, Troop 17, 1974

The first female working uniform, referred to as Kit, was a work in progress. Right from the beginning the women complained about its lack of functionality for operations and that it was very uncomfortable. The shirts had no breast pockets, the pants were skin tight, the clip on ties were short and useless, and a forge cap fashioned after a pillbox hat with a black brim.

In 1990, sixteen years after the first females joined the RCMP, the Government of Canada (GoC) finally announced female members would wear the same ceremonial Red Serge as the men, with high brown boots with spurs, jodhpur pants, Red Serge, a Sam Brown belt, and a most notable wide brimmed felt stetson with Brown leather gloves. Finally being publicly recognized as real Mounties.

The ceremonial uniform was contested and after a 9 year grievance complaint about the discrimination of the ceremonial pants and boots policy only being for men, the policy was changed allowing women the option to wear them in 2012.

Most communities within Canada can see women in every aspect of policing as there are more women in the profession today than ever. The truth is now apparent given the available studies of women in policing there is still a lot of work to be done. The next section explores the current state using the STEEPV model and identifying where there are opportunities to optimize those lessons learned from the brave women's experiences to inform, communicate and further women to senior leadership roles.

Current State

In the Canadian population, the female-to-male ratio has remained very stable since 1986, with women representing almost equal numbers to men. The most recent census data from 2024 shows a Canadian population of 41, 288, 599 persons, with 20,655,544 (50.9%) women and 20, 638,550 (49.1%) men, (Statistics Canada, 2026). Women in policing demonstrate that all persons are valued and it is a relatively easy way to mirror society because of the police presence in all communities. Communities are inclined to view police services more favourably when this is perceived (Vasko, 2024).

Canadians are amongst the best educated, ranked 5th in the world (World Population Review 2025). Using the most recently available information from Statistics Canada. As of 2023, 70% of

women aged 25 to 34 hold a post secondary certificate diploma or degree, compared to 66.1% of men in this age group.

The proportion of women aged 25 to 34 in 1998, employed and working full time has increased from 77.6% to 84.6%, however women are still more likely than men to work part-time and make up 70.2% of part-time employees (Statistics Canada, 2025).

In January 2026, job losses mostly concentrated on core aged women (25-54 years). There was little change to other major demographics (Statistics Canada, 2026). Catalyst, a global not for profit organization, with a small footprint in Canada, has been recognized as an expert at the forefront of women's advancement and inclusion since the 1960's. Their USA survey results show that almost 500,000 women left the workplace from January to August 2025. It revealed 58% of those who left shared their decisions were as a direct result of a lack of support for the employee, lack of flexibility and insufficient wages to acquire childcare being the major driver (Travis, 2026).

These statistics are concerning given the ripple effects on women and families. With so much work still required to support women into more equitable positions in society it drew some criticism of the current Liberal government that the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, a critical role, was also given the Secretary of State portfolio indicating they are not solely focussed on the women's agenda. Globally this aligns with the change in the women agenda internationally and may indicate a lack of seriousness to keeping the advancement of women a political and societal priority in Canada (Action Canada, 2026). Canada's previous feminism agenda was criticized for a perceived lack of

transformational action needed to establish concrete forward momentum and not just merely symbolic in messaging (CIPS, 2025).

Another important note shared by the latest Women in Business research tracking women's representation in senior management roles among North American companies had been moving in a favourable trajectory reaching 35% in 2024 there is some backsliding of women in those positions dropping to 31.9% in 2026 (Grant Thornton Report, 2026).

Relative to policing there is a focussed initiative, known as 30 by 30, spawned by the United Nations and taken up by the Department of Justice in the USA with the objective to increase women's recruitment of sworn police officers to 30% women by 2030. It has influenced 9 Canadian police services to take the pledge. The 30 by 30 initiative provides police services with the information, research and tools to reach their goals. Extensive research supports the critical mass population theory, demonstrating that when underrepresented groups reach approximately 30 percent representation, substantive change becomes possible through enhanced cultural influence and participation in decision-making processes (Department of Justice, USA, 2025).

Canadian Policing

In 2023, women in Canadian police services made up 23% of the personnel, equating to 16,342. Women in the constable rank represent 24%. As the ranks ascend, the non-commissioned

(NCO) officers rose from 3928 to 4000 and women in the commissioned ranks rose from 605 in 2022 to 620 in 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Women in policing and their ranks from 2019-2023

Geography	Canada ² (map)				
Gender	Women ³				
Statistics	Number of police personnel ⁴				
Personnel ⁵	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Number				
Total police personnel (Full-time equivalent - FTE)	35,935	..	36,851	37,208	38,306
Total number of police officers (Full-time equivalent - FTE) ⁶	15,319	..	15,735	16,018	16,342
Commissioned Police Officers ^{7, 8}	656	..	594	605	622
Non-commissioned officers ^{8, 9}	3,680	..	3,760	3,928	4,000
Constables	10,983	..	11,381	11,484	11,720
Total number of civilian personnel (Full-time equivalent - FTE) ¹⁰	19,120	..	19,686	19,887	20,724
Total special constables (Full-time equivalent - FTE) ¹⁰	918	..	852	782	822
Total recruits	578	..	579	521	417

Figure 4, Statistics Canada 2024.

In 2010 five (5) Canadian Senators wrote an opinion paper about the RCMP and shared that having more women would improve internal decision making and the relationships with the communities. They further suggested the RCMP increase their sworn female police officers by 2% each year to ensure an effective and meaningful representation was reached. The report highlights recruiting targets for women were lower than the actual percentage of women in the RCMP. When questioned the RCMP representative explained that the “labour market availability” of women was the cause (Banks, 2010, pg 27). In 2008 women represented 20.8 % of police officers, as of 2023, a meager increase shows women represented 21.6%. The effects of poor recruitment and hiring is evident in the lack of female representation in higher ranks. This is not confined to a single police service but is evident across all levels of policing.

The table denotes a more detailed account of the number of ranked positions, the percentage of women and men in the RCMP ranks as of 2023.

RCMP - Gender percentage by rank

Rank	# of positions	Female %	Male %
Special Constable	106	5.1	94.9
Constable	11,970	22.9	77.1
Corporal	3,641	20.8	79.1
Sergeant	1,993	18.8	81.2
Staff Sergeant	849	12.9	87.1
Inspector	339	24.7	75.3
Superintendent	179	22.3	77.7
Chief Superintendent	54	20.6	79.4
Assistant Commissioner	26	33.3	66.7
Deputy Commissioner	6	20.0	80.0
Commissioner	1	0	100

Figure 5, RCMP Website, 2025

Policing remains a male dominated profession and although the female representation gap has decreased it is still very wide as the representation varies from 18% to 32%. Considering women make up 50.9 % of the Canadian population there is more work to be done to understand better why the gap is difficult to close. There can be some assumptions given the number of settled lawsuits and new complaints of sexual harassment in police. Women can have a transformative effect in the areas of integrity and service with incremental cultural change (Dick, 2014).

An investigative news report denotes a definite slowing and then flattening out of women entering into policing over the last few decades. This too will likely affect promotions, keeping in mind the attrition rates of women leaving will also have an impact. In examining the top 15 police services in the province of Ontario with the high percentage of women demonstrates the “flattening out” of women in their police services. Notably, female officer representation growth within the Toronto Police Service (TPS) suggests a lack of focus on recruiting more women to their ranks given a dismal increase of 2% from 2008 to 2023 (Press, 2026).

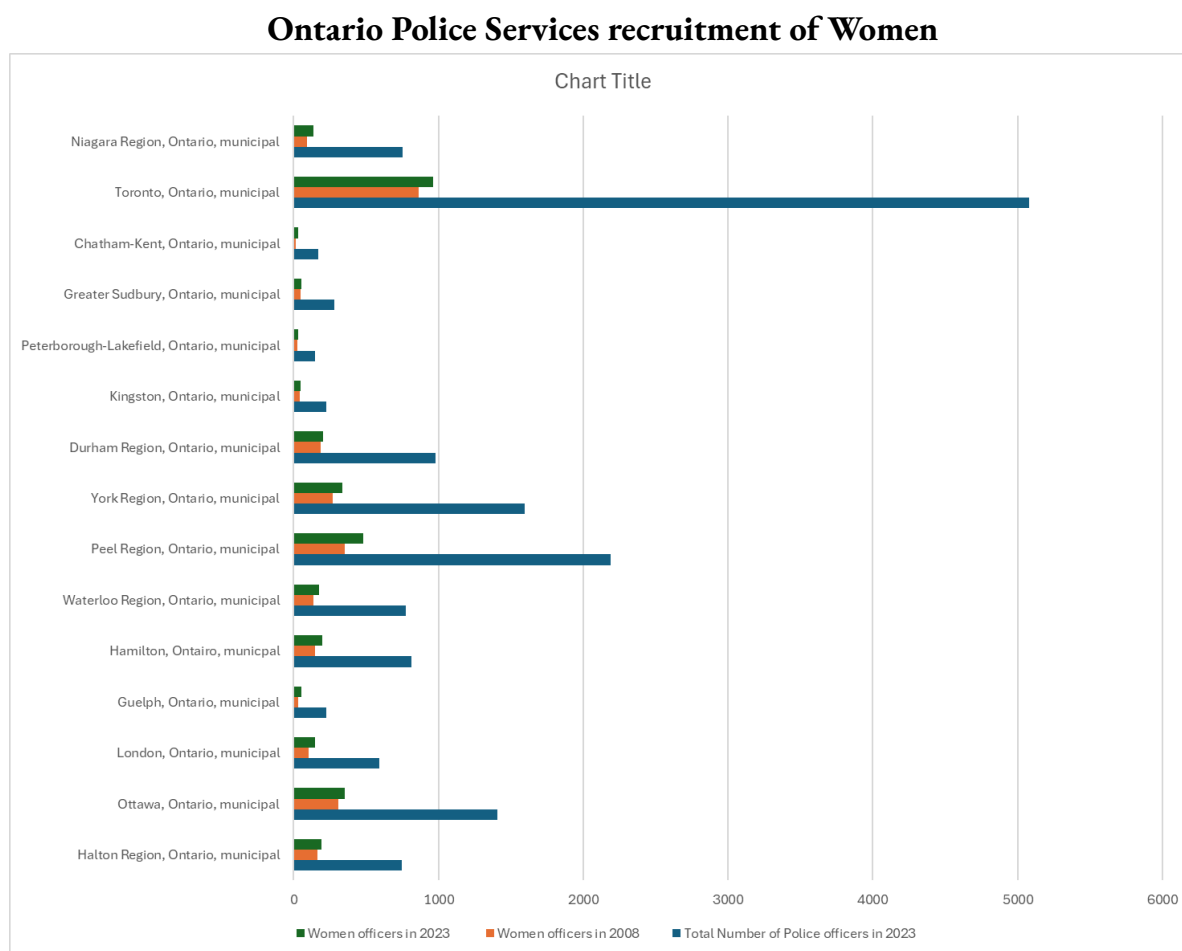


Figure 6, Statistics Canada, Table 35-10-0077-1 Police personnel, Created in Excel.

These increases were accomplished in large part because of political gender targets established by the government and then adopted in principle by police services. The political gender actions have played a significant role in reaching the current numbers, but the backlash existed because they were felt to be contradictory to merit criteria established to get into a police service. The criteria setting was unpopular from its inception and lost support. Progressive police departments work to ensure non-sexist appointment criteria, flexible employment options and anti-harassment policies. Although those policies are ineffective. The table above does reflect the leveling out of women in policing with very modest gains over those 15 years. The RCMP gained a mere one-percent over this same period. There is a causation that when the entry level numbers of women begin to dwindle in policing the ripple effect is that women's progress within police services begins to hinder promotion opportunities compounding the issue of the lack of representation.

The 30 x 30 initiative may be a means in which to hold some to account on whether they meet the initiative challenge but there are no consequences for not meeting them. Internationally there has been success in reaching the 30% and some even have moved beyond it. By way of example, in 2022, 34% of Swedish police officers were women, and 34% of their managers were women (Rostami, 2022). Sweden provides childcare facilities and utilizes equal opportunity policies. Their female police officers were more highly regarded by their peers and held more senior positions within the police service. Women in policing leadership roles advocate for reforms that promote diversity, fairness and inclusion. More diverse police services are able to take on societal challenges because they bring a different

perspective and experience to the job (Vasko, 2024). In Canada the only municipal police service to reach beyond 30% is Montreal Urban Police.

Despite the incremental increase over the last 3 decades, the number of women in leadership roles is persistently low and remains an issue. A term “police progression paradox” suggests that increased numbers of women in policing shows progress however the lack of growth in the higher ranks should sound an alarm that there are barriers (Bailey, 2025). A study noted the high number of resignations (Charman, 2023) which suggests the progress made of the higher number of women in policing might not be as it suggests. There are a number of factors that persist to impede women in policing to mirror their numbers in society. The barriers persist globally, these are not inherent to north american police services. It is important to understand what continues to drive those disparities.

The perception of an effective police service is fundamental to their success to garner trust with the communities they serve and the by-product of attracting people to the profession of policing. One such initiative was the introduction of the Mission Visions and Values statements.

Mission, Vision and Values (MMV)

The development of Mission, Vision and Values (MVV) in organizations gained prominence as part of their business strategies in the mid 1980's. Values, defined as the cognitive representations of the basic motives that specify what is important and guide the motives of those in the organizations (Trapnell, 2012). Police values and norms play an important role to the police officers in their daily roles(Couto, 2025). The RCMP developed their MVV statements in 1997, and listed their motives as

Honesty, Integrity, Professionalism, Compassion, Accountability and Respect (HIPCAR). There were members who dissented in the formation and support of the HIPCAR values and reinvented it themselves as HICRAP. Those HIPCAR values were updated in 2022. The change was ordered by the then Commissioner following recommendations from the Management Advisory Board (Tunney, 2022).

Most police services in Canada have developed very similar mission, vision and value statements. The values from three police services, RCMP, the OPP and Durham region, approached them a bit differently, from a brief list to a fulsome descriptor, they range from taking responsibility, show respect, serve with excellence, demonstrate compassion and act with integrity (RCMP), service with pride, professionalism and honour, interacting with respect, compassion and fairness, leading with integrity, honesty and courage (OPP). Durham region police services (DRPS) states, “every member of the DRPS is committed to providing quality service in partnership with our community. While learning from each other, we will achieve excellence through pride, respect, understanding and ethical behaviour.”

Many RCMP members believe the core values of the RCMP are often disregarded by management. RCMP employees commented that “management does not “walk the talk” when it comes to the ethical values of the organization” (Black, 2007). The honourable Justice Bastarache, recognized the organizational values of the RCMP were undermined by its own toxic culture which tolerates misogyny by its leaders and the membership (Bastarache, 2020).

Considering the challenges facing police services these must have significant meaning to the employees. The values statements can become nothing more than displayed posters hanging on the wall of each office or detachment without being taken seriously or actioned with vigor. They should be lived by fully and not merely applied to some of their activities or tasks. And their relevance extends beyond how they affect their clients - they must equally shape how they also affect their peers and colleagues.

An observation shared during a Daring to Lead podcast in 2026, Brene Brown suggests that necessary conversations aren't happening from senior leaders with their personnel about how to deliver on the MMV's across many different industries (Brown, 2026). In policing the MMVs are mission critical to delivering the service communities pay for. They need to be discussed, challenged and lived everyday, not just lip service to the community. When there is no synergy with the values and the employees this is foundationally where troubles can start to percolate. The Viable Systems model (VSM) suggests the operational units are given as much operational autonomy, "maximized to cope with its niche but constrained to ensure system cohesion" (Espinoza, 2023). The organizational values are set by the most senior management of a police service and it is their responsibility to do all within the role mandates to ensure their employees, those in the operational units have the tools and skills to live up to those values as this sets the identity, to the internal and external environment (Lassl, 2019).

Simon Sinek who focuses on building organizations that create safer environments, shares understanding the "how" the organization does things, and more importantly having the discipline to hold the organization and the employees accountable is vital to a positive culture. He further explains

that values should be verbs. Verbs are actionable. Nouns, such as honest, integrity, compassion, respect are not actionable. It makes building systems or developing incentives around them almost impossible. For values to be effective they have to be actionable. Not simply, integrity, but “always do the right thing”(Sinek, 2011). This reiterates two of the approaches discussed about the leaders needing to be more communicative and the VSM audit and optimization. There lies an opportunity to engage in communication, directly and indirectly using a tool such as the Change Response Circumplex Scale. It is a listen model, a re-engagement model, an advocate model and buy-in model.

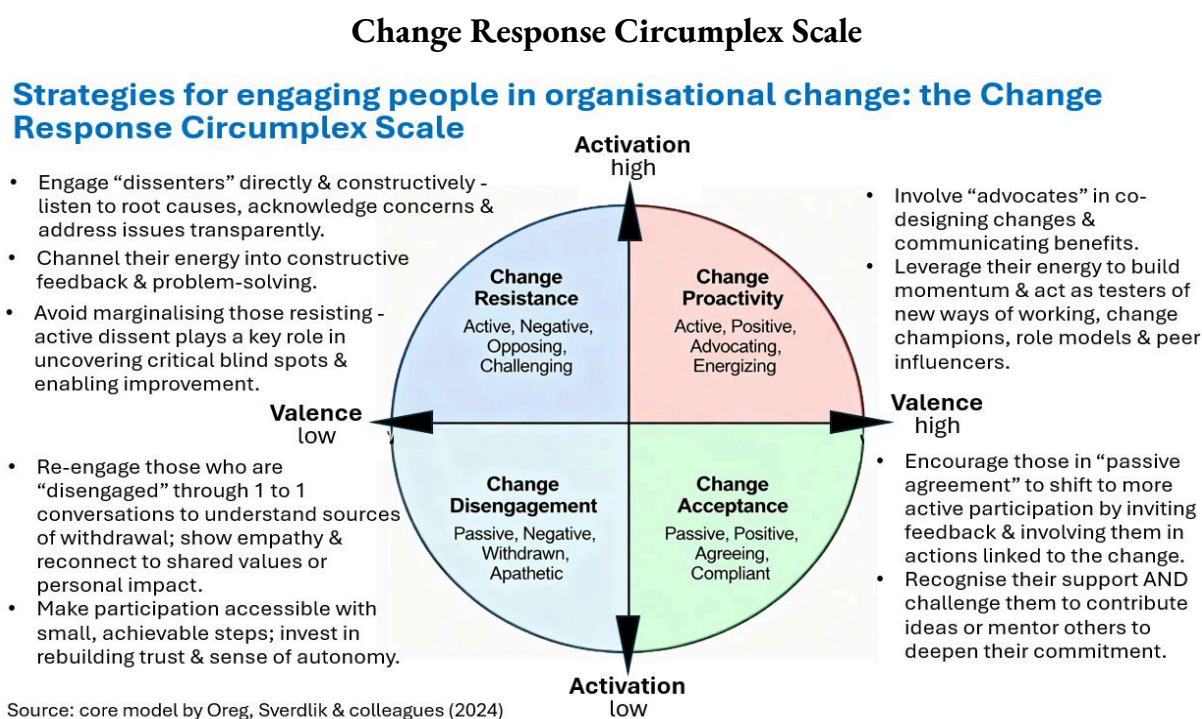


Figure 7, CRCS model

Given the challenges of resistance when the values were first introduced, since 1993 the people within the organizations are able to recite them and they are now common and many people do not give them a second thought. The active resistance is helpful and keeps lines of dialogue open and

surfaces importation information. It is worthy to consider such a dialogue coaching tool as change is explored further (Bevan, 2025). Additionally it enhances the opportunity for feedback loops which provide relevant and timely data in viable systems.

Why people want to be police officers

Women choose to be police officers for many of the same reasons as men. Being a police officer is to do good in society, to help people, to support communities, and to make a difference where they could. The work is congruent with their personal values and aligns with the police service values. They know they bring a different perspective to policing and keep their communities safe, to influence change where possible and be representative of the communities they serve (Vasko, 2024).

Additionally there is wage stability, benefits and a pension. It is a consistent observation in numerous studies that increased representation of women in policing makes a difference as they tend to be better at diffusing situations, are less likely to resort to force and less likely to use excessive force, perceived by those in the communities they serve to be more honest and compassionate and see better outcomes for victims of crimes (Bailey, 2025). Women's skills range, and are not limited to, de-escalation techniques, community engagement, highly rated communication and conflict resolution, problem solving and decision making processes. A dated study from the Australian Federal Police in 1996 identified some police services placing greater importance on the physical selection required to do the job, again feeding into the stereotype that men make better police officers. There continues to be emphasis on the physicality of the job today. From Langan (2016), one of the female police officers shared “ as a female,

you have to show that you've been in a fight with the boys, that you're not gonna shy away, lights and sirens calls, that you're not afraid to be first on scene. It's all about bravado, you have to show you have the same bravado and you're not scared to go in, that you can do the same job they can. Once *you've proven that in a number of situations*, you're golden for a long time, no matter what you do."

As this research paper continues to explore the barriers to women in policing obtaining promotions, there is one massive systemic theme of sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination based on gender that is prevalent across most if not all police services across Canada and beyond. It would be a misjustice to speak of the women in policing and not bring about the long storied history they have been subjected to by their colleagues and supervisors. There has been report after report, lawsuit after lawsuit and yet the toxic, maligning, and at times criminal behaviour continues to fester within the profession of policing. It is a key factor in the barriers women face in promotion and acceptance and therefore is a STEEPV realm on its own.

Sexual Harassment / Harassment

This research paper contains descriptions of harassment, bullying, sexual harassment and gender based discrimination. Some descriptions may be distressing to readers. Reader discretion is advised.

There is no one definition for harassment across the different police services and associations. One was established for the RCMP class action settlement, that in summary stated, harassment meant improper conduct in the workplace direct at and offensive to another working in the organization such

as objectionable act(s) comments, or displays that demean, belittle or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment and any act of intimidation. All claims were linked to gender or sexual orientation, however for no other grounds, such as race or disability (Bastarache, 2020).

Women join to contribute to the nobleness of the “to serve and protect” their communities, they want to make a difference and contribute to society in a positive way. They rightfully expect and deserve to fulfill their duties without fear, favour or affection. It is an expectation everyone should enjoy in their workplace. “They rightfully and quite reasonably expect to be developed, supported, encouraged, enabled and protected as they are deployed to the dangerous and challenging work that is policing. They expect to be treated and judged on their dedication, courage, competence and performance” said then RCMP Commissioner Paulson (Bastarache, 2020).

The stressors of the job are numerous especially given the calls for service all police officers attend. The diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or an occupational stress injury (OSI) affects each and every police officer today (Wagner, 2020). It is an understandable assumption that PTSD or OSI is because of interacting with suspects, attending horrific scenes such as traffic accidents, murder scenes, serious assaults, etc. There is also an assumption that police officers are team players, they look out for and care for each other. The stark contrast in this reality is that the policing culture does not allow women to contribute the best they can because of the harassment and bullying from within. It is their colleagues, supervisors and superior officers in rank and abetted by the organization.

Although now resolved, in 1986, the then Honorable Sheila Copps shared in the House of Commons, about the sexual harassment and assault of a female member on the Musical Ride by her

male colleagues. The Canadian Government refused to investigate. The first known monetary settlement for harassment in the RCMP was in 1987, for \$850,000. The noise about the rampant culture of sexual harassment and bullying flared up again in 2007, although was prevalent for many decades before. Shocking patterns of abuses by male RCMP members against their female member colleagues and civilian staff revealed much was swept under the rug and not addressed. After years and years of senior RCMP officers turning their backs on the female employees and not addressing those responsible for the harassment and bullying it took the courage of two women to launch a class action lawsuit in 2016, known as Merlo-Davidson (Bastarache, 2020). In 2019 as a result of the settlement negotiated in the Merlo-Davidson lawsuit, the RCMP paid 2,304 sworn female police officers more than \$125,400,000 in a historic settlement (Bastarache, 2020). That same year, a second class action lawsuit was settled for non-sworn female civilian employees, volunteers and students (Schmunk, 2019). Of the \$100 million set aside; there was a relatively low submission response of potential claimants, of the 562, 417 received compensation totalling almost \$20 million. It is believed a fear of retribution and Covid -19 reduced the number of submissions (Grant, 2022).

Women are changing their minds about being in policing and leaving or not applying to be police officers. Helen Levine, former police officer

The Merlo Davidson lawsuit reported the incidents ranged in conduct which was generally minor in nature such as non-specific derogatory remarks and low-level bullying, to being pursued for a sexual or romantic relations, to unwanted kissing to minor touching with a sexual purpose of

intention, to more egregious acts of female officers being intentionally put into harms way and not receiving back up on serious calls, to male officers exposing their genitals to female officers, to displaying graphic pornographic material in the workplace, sexual assaults using force or intimidation, male colleagues and superiors rubbing their erect penis against the female officer. The most severe resulting in the female officer resigning, being severely injured in permanent disability as a result of not receiving back up. The female officers reported suicidal ideation, diagnosed with several post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), numbing psychological pain with alcohol or pain killers, and others having completely withdrawn from their life (Bastarache, 2020). Dr. Cyntihia Mathieu, Quebec, shares, toxic workplaces intimidate whistleblowers until they “break” then use “performance issues” to get rid of them (Mathieu, 2026).

The Honorable Justice Michel Bastarache warns, “No amount of financial compensation can undo the harm the Assessors witnessed. If real action is not taken, the RCMP will find itself in the same place again in a few years” (Bastarache, 2020).

The prolific sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and discrimination gender based class action lawsuits and media headlines over the last 10 years in policing alone demonstrates there are massive culturally systemic behaviours affecting women in the workplace that must be addressed. In 2016, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, estimates the range from 25% to 85% of **all women** are subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace. In 2018 the Canadian government introduced the Gender Results Framework (GRF) including a new data set collection through 2020 to Survey on Sexual Misconduct at Work (SSMW). Published in 2021, it showed nearly 1 in 2 women

report ever experiencing harassment or sexual assault in the workplace. Men are not spared 3 in 10 men reported ever experiencing harassment or sexual assault in the workplace (Statistics Canada, 2024).

"Sexual harassment turn real work into an arm of the sex trade. The imperative to exchange sex for survival, or the dangled possibility of survival whether real or not, governs women's inequality, hence women's lives, worldwide." Catharine MacKinnon

In a review conducted in 2013, the OCCRV found 71% of the respondents in a harassment allegation were male, and 23% were female. Of those, 54% were repeated incidents, approximately 90% were listed as varying types of abuse of authority, such as bullying, psychological abuse, belittling and demeaning behaviour, 6% were found to be discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and disability (MacPhail, 2013).

Following the publicity of the RCMP's Merlo Davidson class action lawsuit, there was a sharp increase in harassment complaints filed within other Federal Government departments (CTV, 2021).

Federal Government agency harassment complaints comparison

Agency	# of Harassment Complaints by Year				
	2011-15	2016	2017	2018	2019
Canada Revenue Agency		91	91	166	166
Canada Post	641				870
Fisheries and Oceans Canada		4	4	66	66

Figure 8, CTV, 2021.

Another such story published by the CBC, on March 2nd, 2026, identified there had been seven (7) reports from 2023 to 2025 focussed only on complaints of sexual harassment. The CBSA

reports shared that this type of behaviour persisted because of an unhealthy work culture similar to those by the RCMP employees where CBSA female employees were degraded and subjected to behaviours that were sexual in nature over long periods of time often by senior personnel in rank and experience (Leblanc, 2026).

The harassment of female police officers is not proprietary to the RCMP, many municipal police services have provided monetary compensation to their female police officers for sexual harassment and poisoned work environments, including but not limited to the Toronto Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, Peel Regional Police, Vancouver Police Department, West Vancouver Police Department, Edmonton Police Service. In 2024 the now defunct Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC) released a Section 25 Investigation¹ report into the Durham Regional Police Services (DRPS) and its oversight Board, alleging officials failed to address harassment, denied mental health support to its membership, and manipulated promotion opportunities.

On March 26, 2026 CBC's television journalist Ian Hanamansing interviewed Helen Irvine, a former police officer with BC Delta Police service, and plaintiff in a class action lawsuit, who shared she wasn't naive in understanding that as women the job was going different for women and more difficult however she wasn't prepared for just how bad it could be, "how the culture protects those targeting women. There is no safe place to go and report things or get help, that was the biggest surprise". She was clear that the behaviour spans years, going on for decades, and continues to that day of the

¹ * *A Section 25 investigation is a legal review conducted by a third party to determine if senior officials of the police service or its Board had engaged in improper conduct or governance failures. Noting, where systems issues exist further investigations will occur.*

interview as she gets phone calls from those she used to work with. She further explains the women are not safe in complaining (Irvine, 2026).

Reporting the abuse

The W5 news exposé, “the Tarnished Badge” heard from women in policing who stated reporting the harassment affected not only them but their families as well. They felt a level of fear and intimidation, concern about the “ole boys network” and feelings of being devalued and abandoned by their human resources departments. Similarly shared by the female police officers in the RCMP (Bastarache, 2020). Being warned by supervisors that they didn’t necessarily want to be known as that complainer. It highlights the experiences of a female Toronto Police officer who shared when she reported the harassment she was facing, her supervisor suggested those she was complaining about may not know their behaviour is offensive. Her supervisor provided her with an excuse that it was because they (the male officers) were young, further giving an analogy that they were “kids”. This suggests that men, “boys” are socialized differently and these minor aggressions need to be tolerated by women to adapt to the maleness of the profession. The supervisor said he would be a witness for her complaint however suggested she should consider what the ramifications would be to her career, in the short term, medium and long term. Further suggesting she didn’t want to be labelled as a rat. This sentiment about being a “rat” was also a term used by the accused Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) employee when others complained about his behaviour.

Two other Toronto police officers settled their complaints with the police service. The aforementioned continues her fight because she believes settling isn't going to change the culture and behaviour. At the time of the investigation police leadership would not admit there is a systemic issue (CBC, 2020).

Screenshot from W5's, The Tarnished Badge

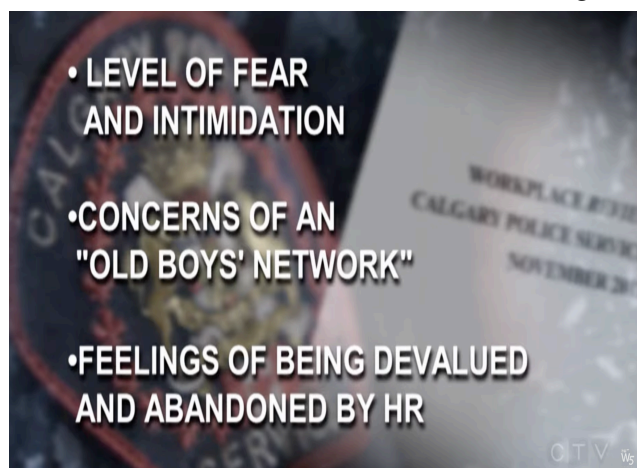


Figure 9, CBC, 2020

As Dr. Jen Magnus, a former Calgary police officer who in 2017 stood at the meeting of the Calgary service board members and read her resignation statement. She eloquently and emotionally identified the hostile bullying and harassment she endured. She was labeled a bitch, slut or lesbian. There were 14 other

women who said nothing most likely because they didn't want to lose their careers (CBC, 2020).

In 2017, two female officers of the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) filed a \$167,000,000 class action lawsuit alleging gender based discrimination and harassment on the job. Details shared by the female officers, one no longer with the WRPS, included being asked for oral sex after being driven to a secluded area by her senior officer, being told women were not wanted by their male peers, not receiving back up on serious calls (CBC, 2017). Canada's highest court denied the claim and returned it to the union as it states this was the appropriate place to deal with the complaint (CBC, 2021).

Many female police officers across Canada are determined to defend themselves and lodge complaints within the system soon learn the convoluted, lengthy and costly process ends in them settling because there are too many barriers (Gillis, 2020).

In British Columbia (BC), a class action lawsuit was filed in 2024, by serving and former female police officers naming 13 municipal police services. Listing discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual touching and offensive jokes, based on gender. The complainants stated they had advised their supervisors of the toxic behaviours and faced retaliatory treatments, with complaints not addressed or inappropriately handled (CBC, 2025). This lawsuit is set to be heard in October 2026. A plaintiff shared during a CBC interview in March 2026, that the intention is to modify behaviour of those who are abusive to women in policing (Irvine, 2026).

As a follow up to the frequency of the sexualized complaints the BC government's Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) announced in March 2026 that it launched its own investigation in municipal police service within the province. It will focus on systemic issues with the hope it sheds light on how police services can better handle sexual misconduct complaints to protect those who report and strengthen public trust. The report is expected to be released by April 2027 (CBC, 2026).

“Moreover, RCMP managers and supervisors have not been given—and are not required to undertake—the kind required of a professional police force.” (Workplace Harassment in the RCMP, 2013)

There is overwhelming evidence to show the long lasting affects of sexual harassment, harassment and bullying has on the job performance. It impairs performance, increases stress, lowers feeling of motivation and self worth, reduces motivation and increases the probability of quitting their jobs. The women who told their stories during the Merlo Davidson class action claim submissions shared they experienced eating disorders, alcohol abuse, panic attacks, vomiting on the way to work, the inability to maintain a positive relationship with their spouse or children. Some intentionally injured themselves repeatedly, some sat with their service weapons in their mouths and only stopped themselves when they thought of their children or pets. One did kill herself during the claims process (Bastarache, 2020).

Interestingly enough women do not necessarily have to recognize they were harassed to experience those costs. Women from different organizational occupations have reported the same emotional, physical and career-related implications for sexual harassment (Eagly, 2007).

Imagine in what mental state a female police officer must function in when just opening the door and walking into an office is the stress she feels. Then while trying to serve communities, let alone to consider what a promotion might be like or how to get there. The goal is survival, the basic function in their current role.

These complaints have culminated into numerous reviews and inquiries. They all lead to a plethora of actions to remedy the issues. As shown in the research, 14 of these reviews and inquiries have occurred for the RCMP alone, with over 200 recommendations over decades. The behaviours

continue. The Merlo Davidson settlement saw no one person held accountable for their behaviour (Bastarache, 2020).

In Stafford Beer's session on the Viable System Model, a grounded theory of organizational cybernetics, the science of effective organizations, his explanation about the benefits of the hierarchy he confirms and reaffirms that hierarchy is good if you want to hold someone accountable. Not so in these cases. It may help to understand a not so well known term outside of mental health professionals, the *diffusion of responsibility* may shed some light on the lack of accountability. The concept of the diffusion of responsibility has been found to be more prolific in organizations with a dominant hierarchy structure. Hierarchical organizations such as policing with its paramilitary structure could be the very impediment to addressing toxic behaviours at the lowest possible level and more timely. It is referred to as the "diffusion of responsibility" as there is an expectation from those who sit at the bottom of the organizational chart that those who hold the rank or position above them are responsible to address situations that arise within the team. The successful attainment of rank indicates they are a "leader" within the organization (Bensons, 2024). The expectation that the "responsibility for establishing and maintaining value and ethics in the RCMP, including their explicit integration into the regular operation of the Force, is the responsibility of senior management" (Brown, 2007). This approach introduces delays and ambiguity to addressing negative behaviours and allows for the finger pointing and the abdication of responsibility. It may explain why the by-stander effect is prevalent in the silence from others who have witnessed the harassment and sexual harassment of women.

Recruitment

Without addressing the behaviours of the men in the police services it is no surprise there is a decline and reluctance for women to join a career where the benefit of service to the community might not outweigh the potential risk to their own safety and well being from their colleagues. Helen Irvine, former Delta BC police officer, shares that women are changing their minds about being in policing and leaving or not applying to be police officers (Irvine, 2026).

Given everything the significance of the toxic culture this research paper has summarized, it begs the question why would anyone, but especially women, trust they would be safe in the policing profession. Safe from colleagues and peers, within the institution who hires them.

The recruitment environment has changed over the years. The RCMP began advertising for recruitment purposes in the early 2000s as they recognized a reduction in applicants. They depended on referrals and walk-ins. The human population interested in policing is limited. There are many police services vying for this exact same finite human resource who would consider a career in policing. The vetting process disqualifies many applicants thus lowering the potential of who gets hired. In 2021 and 2022, Ontario saw a 31% drop in applications. This same time the application for women dropped by 49 %. Adding to the resourcing crisis, for those retiring this same time period, 60% of those police officers were within their first 10 years of service (OACP, 2025).

The Minister of Public Safety Canada posted the Departmental Results Report for 2024-25 touting the RCMP had received over 20,000 applications and that 895 cadets had graduated from Depot (RCMP, 2025).

In 2026 the Auditor General of Canada (AGC), identified that as of September 2025 RCMP vacancy rates across Canada were 7% in 9 of the 11 provinces and territories. The RCMP did not accurately identify its recruiting requirements nor did they meet the targets they set (AGC, 2026, Tunney, 2026). It may be noteworthy for future decision making, to examine if the relocation of recruiting responsibilities into a central area, instead of these activities being left for each province (Division) to manage themselves, was the reason for the missed targets. The RCMP website for Employment Equity statistics shows the female applicants have decreased since 2017 and in 2023/24 account for 11.9% of applicants with male applicants accounting for 63.4% in the same time period. As of 2021, Statistics Canada lists the following data relevant for consideration in recruiting for current recruitment is:

Canadian Gender Statistics by Age Group			
Age	Total Population	Female	Male
15 - 19	1,847,930	892,310	955,415
20-24	1,752,197	796,782	943,425
25-34	4,024,520	1,998,715	2,025,805

Figure 10,(Stats Can 2021)

There exists a significant female population that is choosing not to apply for a career in policing. It begs the question if the toxic culture of policing influences people to not consider policing as a career. While not within the scope of this research project it could be a subject to explore as this creates a significant impediment to meeting the 30 x 30 initiative and to support the critical mass population theory for women in policing to influence the changes needed in policing.

In December 2021 there were 460 recruits in Ontario, the average age, 29 years, 88% had completed post secondary education, 40 % speak a second language. To generate more applicant interest Ontario has now eliminated the post-secondary education requirement (Sol Gen Ont, 2026).

The demographics show there is a significant number of women who would be eligible to apply to be police officers. As stated the age eligibility to be a police officer is 19 years of age, there is no maximum age. For the Canadian police services who have signed on to the 30 X 30 pledge, and those recruiting women into their police service, may benefit by asking themselves, what is it that they are doing to address the behaviour of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Honorable Michel Bastarache warns : “No amount of financial compensation can undo the harm the Assessors witnessed. If real action is not taken, the RCMP will find itself in the same place again in a few years” (Bastarache, 2020). Additionally he makes reference to the attention needed within the RCMP recruitment process to subject applicants to in-depth screening to determine if the applicant has demonstrated misogynistic, homophobic or racist tendencies (Bastarache, 2020). It goes without saying that the persistence of toxic masculine cultures within policing organizations poses

significant harm to new female recruits. Research indicates that younger women—especially those in their mid-twenties and early stages of their careers—are more vulnerable to workplace harassment than older women with greater professional experience and institutional knowledge (Eagly, 2007). For new female recruits entering such environments without sufficient protections is akin to being “led like lambs to slaughter,” exposing them to psychological distress, career disengagement, and diminished retention, while reinforcing cultures of silence and fear of retaliation may result in future similar class action lawsuits. It will take years and years for the critical mass population theory to be evaluated with the increase of women to 30% in policing. Imagine the police services that take action to address behaviour and how they might situate themselves ahead of those who don't. There is an opportunity to set the bar needed to shift change.

There have been complaints by cadets of abuse of power at the hands of their trainer who has authority over the cadet. It would seem the oversight needed to ensure the safety of the cadets is severely under - resourced by each of the provinces (divisions) to ensure the proper trainers are matched with each cadet. There were numerous stories of men refusing to train a female cadet. This creates systemic barriers that will ultimately affect the women's opportunity for advancement and development (Bastarache, 2020). Due to the mix of rural and urban detachments it would be interesting data to collect as this would inform how to better select those who can work under less supervision or who need more due to a poor attitude towards women. It is essential to the well-being and development of female cadets that they are effectively trained until such time as they are competent and capable in advancing out of the cadet rank.

Past Recommended Remedies

In the Broken Dreams Broken Lives report (Bastarache, 2020) it reminds the reader of at least 15 reports both internal and external to the RCMP highlighting the toxic workplace culture, dating back to 2007. Many of the recommendations in the reports are similar across all reports in how to address sexual harassment and discrimination in the RCMP. In its simplest explanation and as astounding as it may seem the fact is these behaviours were known for years and tolerated by those with the power and authority to do something to stop it.

The remedies in the reports, Brown, 2007 and Bastarache, 2020, suggested only hiring people with a post secondary degree would reduce the potential for harassment based on gender. Given that Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) senior leadership ranks faced very similar complaints from the women within their organization against some of their leadership officers, who all enter with degrees or earn them to be in leadership roles, the women in CAF have not been spared. Following an investigation by the External Review Authority (ERA) detailing sexual misconduct, sexual assault and sexual harassment the CAF initiated a program Operation HONOUR to address their behaviours. It was renamed to Operation HOP ON HER by some within, demonstrating the resistance to cultural change (ERA, 2019). The suggestion that higher education will root out misogynistic and aggressive behaviours towards women is an area without much data. What is known this that there are a number of factors such as structural and social contexts that influence the psychological dispositions and gender bias expectations (Najstrom, 2026), and simply introducing the requirements for higher

education appears to be the “easy” leverage point without a full assessment of the immediate and developmental factors of the person.

Systems atrophy when the boundaries are impermeable.

Strong Ground, Brene Brown

Justice Bastarache, recommends the implementation of audits on units and/or detachments to ensure any harassment and or discrimination are identified keeping anonymity of anyone who might be faced with it from having to come forward (Bastarache, 2020). Human beings have a systemic tendency to avoid accountability for their own actions, hence why feedback loops are missing in most organizations (Meadows, 2008). As a way to support this recommendation in collaboration with the VSM’s audit and optimization function within System 3 could work very well and effectively be completed and analyzed. It would serve two purposes, one to determine if there is harassment and two, give the temperature on the effectiveness of leadership of that unit (Lencioni, 2004). Additionally it would ensure the optimization occurs with the information being made available to address those actions specific to the toxic work environment. The optimization of the filtered information allows for the immediacy of communication to what are the senior levels of policing, including the NCO’s who manage units, most likely at the Sergeant rank.

The Costs

In September 2023, labour participation for women aged 25 to 54 was at 85.7% compared to that in 1976 at 52.3%. The gap in employment rates was just 5.8% with 87.5% for men and 81.7% for women. Women are responsible for 75% to 80% of consumerism with direct spending and also the influence of spending. Given they are just over 50% of the population they command more power economically, about 1.2 trillion dollars the same year. The comparison has long been made about women and the unpaid work at home, with or without children. An estimated value put that at close to \$490 billion. The expectation that women continue to be responsible for the majority of the at-home care and childcare continues for working moms and the at-home responsibilities for career professionals outside the home (BDC, 2024).

Police service budgets in Canada for fiscal year 2022/2023 were approximately \$19 billion (Statistics Canada 2024). The financial impact to employ policing services is significant to taxpayers, as all police budget funding is realized from the jurisdiction who employ them. The year-over-year budget increase to police services has been the largest increase to municipal revenue generation which is offloaded to the citizens to fund through their local taxes, such as property taxes.

“There is a high cost to prioritizing policing in our city. There is the \$1.2 billion Toronto Police budget, which dominates our property tax revenue and then there is the cost of over-policing, of system discrimination and a failing enforcement-first approach” (Bravo, 2023).

The RCMP have been the subject of extensive media coverage over the last many years and the most visible in the settled and acknowledged harassment of women and toxic workplace. As previously stated, it paid \$125,400,000.00 to settle the Merlo Davidson class action lawsuit. Relevant to that payout is also the secondary class awards, to women's families who suffered from the injuries inflicted on their mothers, partners and wives, totalling \$3,616,500.00 (Bastarache, 2020).

As previously described in this research paper there have been numerous settlements, and payments made to female police officers since the 1980s.

In Ontario, suspensions of sworn police personnel across 44 departments for misconduct and criminal allegations has cost the taxpayer \$134,000,000 since 2013. Those suspensions include, but are not limited to, drunk driving, sexual assault, intimate partner violence and drug trafficking. While these cases represent less than 2% of the working police officers, more than one-third of the allegations involved gender-based violence in sexual assault, sexual harassment and intimate partners violence. Those allegations were not rank specific and included Chiefs and Deputies with the majority at the Constable rank. At the publishing of this article, those under suspension were not being tracked (Tunney, 2024). Consider what the potential correlation is for the treatment of police women in the workplace is when one-third of the allegations against sworn officers involve gender-based violence in those accused officers personal lives.

The Federal Court of Canada (FCC) has certified a \$1.1 billion dollar lawsuit initiated by two male RCMP members on September 20, 2020 for failing to provide a workplace free from bullying and harassment. The Attorney General of Canada (AGC) appealed the decision on behalf of the

RCMP stating the internal issues such as filing a grievance or harassment complaint or the code of conduct in the RCMP Act processes adequately address such incidents. In 2022 the Supreme Court of Canada disagreed with the AGC and upheld the decision to move forward. The plaintiffs describe “systemic negligence” as how the RCMP management handles harassment and bullying. It is currently before the courts.

The 5 year DRPS investigation into harassment, intimidation of subordinates, and cronyism cost their taxpayers \$2,000,000 to complete. Unfortunately, the investigative report remains secret and not available for public review (Ireton, 2024).

Kelly Donovan, a police whistleblower, lodged a complaint about corruption while serving as a police officer at the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS). She shared via a LinkedIn post that WRPS has spent \$847,425.83 as of April 2026, to litigate her claim against them. The complaint is outside of the scope of this research paper but relevant because it shows how much of the taxpayer dollar and the extent to which the police service will go to silence the internal complainant (Donovan, 2026).

There is no centralized data bank publicly available to show which police services have settled such complaints, nor how much money has been diverted to pay for any settlements related to sexual harassment complaint and lawsuits from the operational budgets allocated to police for service to the communities. In reviewing past operational budgets for several policing services there were no line items /payments listed for any such payments or settlements made to complainants found on a budget line.

The settlement money is carved out of the police service operational budgets. The monies being paid to those impacted individuals and their families ARE taxpayer dollars. These are not submissions to insurance companies with deep pockets. Although not being examined in this research project, but worthy of a more focussed evaluation is the effect the loss of this money has on service delivery in communities and in determining what is not being done in the communities because of the redirected funds to pay settlements for a toxic work environment.

A potential by-product of the toxic workplace, in August 2025 the RCMP's Management Advisory Board alarmingly reported the long term off duty sick (ODS) leave has increased by 184% over the last 15 years. As of December 2024, 7% of the members are ODS leaving significant operational liability to the communities and costing approximately \$58 million dollars. In a 2012 study examining work life balance and employee wellbeing in Canadian police departments, RCMP employees revealed over 50% of those who participated reported high levels of job stress, double the level than the general Canadian workforce (Duxbury, 2012). As a requirement for promotion, being mentally fit and managing stress are vital to lead others. While the reasons for being ODS is not stated in the report further examination may shed light on the root cause. The Broken Lives, Broken Dreams report suggests that 90% of the stress in the RCMP is caused by RCMP members and not external events/actors (Bastarache, 2020). The RCMP union suggests there is a lack of proper handling of those ODS by RCMP management (Tunney, 2025). Similarly in other Canadian police services, Calgary, Kingston and Sault Ste Marie also report high percentages of their officers are ODS (D'Orazio, 2026).

“Individual complaints, which can serve as indicators of broader issues, can provide the information necessary to identify widespread problems. Complaints, like behaviours, are often indicators; they can provide insight and information which can be valuable in preventing problems and improving performance.”
(Bastarache, 2020)

Understanding the work of Donella Meadows, a systems thinker and environmental scientist, especially the Leverage Points framework theory introduced in 1999 may provide some realization as to why these past reviews, inquiries, and their recommendations have not provided the kind of change necessary for the policing culture. Her work in leverage points has been part of systems thinking for decades but may not necessarily be well known or considered in strategy development in policing.

Leverage points

Ms. Meadows’ framework is simple, in that not all interventions in a complex system are equal. There are opportunities to “push” on a system that cause tiny results and others cause fundamental transformation. Ordered from least to most powerful, she lists 12 leverage points. The low leverage, is tweaking the system, at #12, Constraints, parameters and numbers; #11, Buffers; #10 Materials, Stocks and Flow, #9 Delays; #8 Balancing Feedback loops; #7 Reinforcing Feedback loops; #6 Information Flows; #5 Rules; #4 Self Organization; #3 Goals; #2 Paradigms; #1 Transcending paradigms (Meadows, 2008, pp.147-165).

Donella Meadows Leverage Points Scale

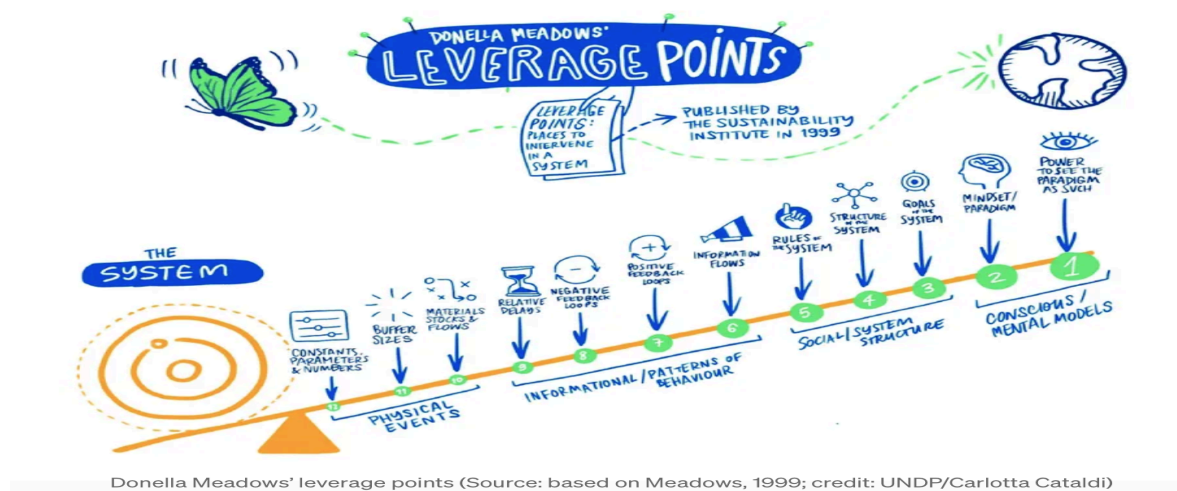


Figure 11, UNDP, 1999

The irony she explains is that people tend to spend most of their energy on the low - leverage points while ignoring the high-leverage ones.

In the review and examination of the numerous reports and reviews their authors make recommendations to impose policies, or install oversight boards and management advisory boards, these fall within the Information and Patterns of Behaviours ranging from 9 to 6 on the scale. They can add value with negative and positive feedback loops however it leaves the actual behaviours unaddressed. Where there is a dire need to focus is at the highest and most difficult level, the power to set the paradigm as such, the Conscious Mental Models, Level 1. In this research especially in relation to support women in policing, the Conscious Mental Models, #1 and 2, is where the greatest impact will have on the culture. Justice Bastarache rightly stated that without real action being taken the potential for the organization to find itself in the same place exists. The transcending paradigm is where

real action awaits. An example could be the introduction and regular communication from senior leaders about what the diffusion of responsibility is and how to address it by making people aware this might be occurring, then providing training to empower employees to address poor behaviour at the very lowest level.

In Brene Brown's latest book, *Strong Ground* and her *Daring to Lead* podcast, she pays homage to Ms. Meadows, recognizing that building the critical mass of people who adopt, trust, respect and participate in honest communication is what changes culture (Brown, 2025).

The Three

The Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) identified numerous possibilities to further expand this research however the MRP will remain focussed on three of those developed into concepts for real action. They are Traits, Selection, and the introduction of High Performing Team (HPT) concepts or a lack of a HPT as barriers to women advancing in policing senior roles.

There is opportunity to delineate what the barrier is within the scope of change led by the organization and then those that would be suggested for the female police officers to undertake for their advancement to the higher ranks.

Barriers

In 2021 the Institute for Women's Policy Research published a report highlighting the obstacles women experience in advancing to executive/senior management roles in corporate USA. It drew from research literature to highlight the barrier, both structural and institutional, to reach gender equity and including racial equity. Women's representation in leadership positions varies per industry however worthy of mentioning as it is important to understand the broad picture affecting women's advancement. Women in management positions in healthcare and other social sectors, which are more female dominated are better represented. Although not specific to policing it is an important statistic to draw potential parallels for women police officers. Women in senior leadership roles, such as Chief, Commissioner even down to the Inspector level of the commissioned rank are less rare today. It had been known as "glass ceiling" as it conveyed an impenetrable barrier. This does not hold true today because women have advanced in those ranks and broken the glass ceiling. As women continue to seek this rightful place at the top of police organizations, it is important to understand better what barrier(s) continue to exist to getting there (Eagly, 2007).

As identified throughout this research project there are many benefits to having women in police services. Analysis of research (Todak, 2023) of 226 surveyed women police officers identified the gap in women in leadership position can be divided into two categories, with 3 supporting themes:

Barrier Themes and Categories

Theme	Category		
Gendered Structure in the Promotion System	Gender bias in decision makers	Promotions based on who you know. Cronyism, "ole boys network"	Working mothers struggles with work-life balance and preparing for exam in their "off-time"
Gender Biases in Police Culture	Women face higher promotion standards than male counterparts.	Men receive more assistance in preparing for exams with mentorship	Women are told then only get promoted because they are women

Figure 12, Todak, 2023

There exists personal and profession factors, women may be choosing not to participate in the promotion process, because they prefer the current duties, they have concerns about the challenging with childcare and the impact on family to changes, nepotism policing, tokenism and/or bias by the organization, a perceived lack of experience, a general lack of interest in being promoted, a potential reduction in salary (i.e.,lack of overtime). Many of the same reasons given by men (Archbold, 2012). Referring to the VSM, in System 3a, the Audit and Optimization, a simple survey that seeks clarity from the women will provide invaluable information for police services in supporting women to attain rank if that is their chosen path. This research paper can not explore them all deeper however the key ones are highlighted below.

In Justice Bastarache's report, he summarized the RCMP promotion processes as being fundamentally unfair and flawed. The female members interviewed described the promotion process as being one that favours "the old boys club and the friends and family plan". They describe the process

being managed by a network of like minded men and women who assert control over the RCMP in who it promotes and who is held back. Explaining further that they have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo because of their own preferential treatment. These same people control the participants for training and promotional opportunities (Bastarache, 2020).

Peter Principle

Promotions in policing can be susceptible to the Peter principle. In policing, as in other professions, the Peter Principle, developed by Canadian Dr, Laurence Peter, plays a role in who is identified as “being promotable”. In a nutshell good or great investigators are promoted because they are competent in this current job and did it well with excellent interviews, report writing, court testimony, thorough investigations and so on. This is competency in the job skills task at hand. Not included in the assessment of being a leader of people. Not everyone is hard wired to be a leader nor willing to put in the work to be an effective leader. Then they do a good job at the next level because of the over-reliance on technical expertise, and are promoted again (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019). This continues until the person is not performing well in their role. Their incompetence starts to reveal itself with diminished work, apathy and the lack of ability. Many police officers believe it necessary to achieve their first and successive promotions to prove their worth to themselves and also because the perception of being a “constable for life” (CFL) carries negative connotations (Fox, 2013)(Morris, 2022).

An added drape to mask a leadership incompetency exists in the RCMP as many members are transferred on promotion thus delaying the possibility to recognize any incompetences and deficiencies to be discovered to identify its poor leaders. Sometimes at the peril of the members of the receiving detachment and community being served. Studies show that narcissistic personalities are common in top management positions as these traits are similar (deVries, 2003). Although this paper is not diving into the examination of why the workplace is so toxic, it is maybe another avenue for research into the relationship between narcissistic leadership and their impact on a policing workplace. Narcissistic behavioural expressions lend to a positive first impression and people perceive them to be very charming and self confident and over time this changes and erodes work relationships (Germain, 2018).

Promotions

The hierarchical structure of police services is the reason the number of opportunities for promotion narrows quite dramatically from Constable to Chief or Commissioner. What is known is that, “the best leadership is found by choosing leaders from the largest pool of talent, and that includes women” (Eagly, 2007). In the RCMP, promotion from Constable to Corporal is the first and most difficult rank to attain as the competitor pool is highest in numbers. With each higher rank the numbers of positions are lower. In the Provincial and municipal it is the first promotion from Constable to Sergeant. Police services tend to follow a similar multi-step promotion process. In the RCMP a person eligible to write the exam must have a minimum of 7 years service, and for municipal

and provincial services it ranges from one year in service to 7 years. The exam is subjective as the grading system is such that the score can eliminate candidates who missed passing by one or two marks. Not everyone is successful in taking written exams, it results in these police officers being eliminated from a promotion for two years (Black, 2007). If successful in the exam process candidates then write situational examples of their experiences to meet the competency descriptors for jobs they are applying to be considered for. Competency profiles have been developed for each position in the RCMP describing both functional and operational elements. Those elements are relevant to the rank of the position. Of note, it was identified the potential for this portion of the promotion process to contribute to a reluctance or an inability to report harassment from colleagues and supervisors as they are the very people who must be the reference to confirm the experience being validated (Bastarache, 2020). If supported, those situational examples are then submitted to be validated by a committee of persons who review the examples for each competency to ensure they meet the competency level. This process is similar for each non-commissioned rank from Corporal to Staff Sergeant Major. From the Corporal rank a member must have been in the rank for two years to be eligible to write the promotional exam to the next level and then follow the same process to validate for the competency profile.

Parenthood status exerts a stronger negative impact than marriage on income for police women, and motherhood at least partially explains the marriage effects (Luo, 2020).

Marriage and/or Motherhood effect

Several studies suggest the notion of having a family and working can be balanced to be questionable and women struggle to show their commitment enough to be promoted (Langan, 2016). Societally there is a reported decline in birth rates in Canada as women choose to delay having children or opt to not have any. That said, women in policing especially when first starting out sometimes feel the scrutiny of their male peers or bosses because it is assumed inevitably they might become pregnant and be off the job for a time to care for a child. Their fear and reluctance to announce their pregnancy should be a happy time however most feel stress and guilt for they know the reaction will most likely be negative. More often than not the women are removed from their substantive position and placed into less fulfilling roles, such as the front desk or general reception. This can be detrimental to any development opportunities. The new mom feels a huge sense of guilt for leaving her colleagues short on the shifts. Occasionally the women are called back to duty to testify in court while on their leave. Often this time is not monetarily compensated. Given the Auditor General of Canada report from 2026 which identified the serious vacancy rates across Canada this pressure is compounded as there is little to no proactive planning to ensure the platoons or units remain adequately staffed with personnel so as to not negatively affect those who are left to carry the load during a maternity or parental leave advance. The unpredictability of police work, especially when working uniform as a first responder, the long hours and the high pressure of the day to day tasks creates issues for all police officers. That is a given, but for women who oftentimes carry the extra responsibilities of childcare and family

responsibilities. There are career consequences for women who have children and are away from the workplace for the allowed amount afforded by law for maternity and parental leave.

A gap realized in this research project is the lack of statistical data relevant to marriage and motherhood. As identified in a 2020 study examining the effects of marriage and parenthood on police income, they were unable to understand and identify if rank progression and being underpaid (potential overtime (OT) is because women take maternity and parental leave or if this occurs because of structural gender inequality within policing (Luo, 2020). It is relevant to elaborate on how some key life milestones may place barriers in the promotion process for women that men do not face. Consider the youngest a person can join a police service is 19 years of age. Many of the recruits have completed some type of post secondary education thus delaying them joining policing. The median age for most people to join policing is approximately 23 - 25 years of age. For the RCMP, the 7 year minimum to write a promotion exam would put most women who are eligible for promotion from 30 - 32 years of age. Canadian women are getting married for the first time at the average age of 30.8 years of age (Made In CA, 2023). Statistics Canada data for 2024 shows women are having their first baby at 31.8 years of age. From age 30 to 34 women were birthing the most babies in Canada with 141,859 babies born. Followed by women aged 25 to 29 with 91,134 babies birthed and then women aged 35-39 birthed 80,557 babies. There were women in the age range of 45 to 49 who birthed 1,190 babies (Statistics Canada, 2024). The relevance is that at the time when women enter into the “being promotable” era of their service they are potentially also in the “maternity or parental leave” era away from their jobs. Men's freedom from bearing children ensures that their professional trajectories are

not affected (Eagly, 2007) to being promoted as they are for female police officers. In the RCMP women who have applied for and been selected for the promotion before going on a maternity/parental leave are not necessarily affected if they assume the role they were promoted to. This is not the same for those who prior to being selected enter into maternity / parental leave as they are not promoted until they return to work. Male officers are not eligible for maternity leave however may face a similar situation if they avail themselves of a parental leave. This results in a loss of potential pension credit at the new rank.

In examining the labour market participation, as described by the Bank of Canada, includes farming to office workers, research is lacking to better understand the impact on women in policing and their career trajectory when marriage and having children intersects with their career advancement compared to men. An examination of the gendered effects of marriage and parenthood is crucial to better understand if there is a barrier to attaining rank. The information in this area is limited and appears to be non-existent in Canadian policing services. One reason may be that there are equity rules and regulations regarding uniform pay structure for the ranks within policing thus making the career more appealing for this perceived egalitarian pay system and promotion process. The USA based research paper, *Is there a Marriage or Parenthood Effect on Police Income?*, considered 42 years of data, from 1976 to 2018, focusing on police specifically found gender pay disadvantages do persist. With the increase of women in policing it is important to understand what if any structural gender discrimination exists. The research looked at single female and male police officers, married female and male with and without children, single female and male officers with children. It found that single

women with no children had a slight income advantage although there was no distinguishable difference from the married female officer with children. For single mom police officers there was a difference in that they earned the least of any group. It suggests that motherhood has negative effects on the income penalty and less so for those simply married, and male police officers with traditional family structures earned the most income. The identified limitations to this study are the lack of details surrounding rank and specifics around the positions or job titles are not available. This study clearly shows gender inequality for compensation processes on family composition based on gender (Luo, 2020). This would be a worthy study consideration for Canadian police services. Thus there is an opportunity to study with more finite detailed data to better identify how marriage, motherhood and promotion may help if these are systemic barriers to promotion compared to men.

Striking a balance between being a mom and policing professional is challenging as most positions within policing are not the 9 to 5 Monday to Friday. Shift work has an impact on family and childcare as flexibility has not changed much due to the working environment of policing. Most shift work also hasn't changed for front line policing as they can work short days but more days in a month or the 4on - 4off working 12 hour shifts (AFP, 1996). For those working front line uniform there is a recognized need for voluntary over-time (VOT) is an expectation by the manager for those members to finish the administrative requirements of investigations. More prevalent in the RCMP this was part of the culture most experienced in the western and eastern provinces. Since the introduction of the Mounted Police Federation, this has either been eliminated or adapted. The expectation that all papers must be done, depending on what type of detachment, big urban first responder or smaller rural

detachment where uniform members do all investigative work. If the police officers with small child care requirements are unable to finish or do VOT it is their reputation that is potentially affected as not being timely in their work (Black, 2007).

As of the writing of this research paper there are no Canadian police services who offer dedicated on site childcare services for their police officers.

Another avenue female police officers have adjusted to best accommodate an effective work life balance to meet the demands of being mothers and police professionals is to work part-time or job share. Discrimination remains a serious barrier as the large part of the challenges are a direct factor of being moms. Some are fortunate who have partners who share a more balanced approach to these responsibilities; nonetheless it is a fact that men continue to devote less time than women to childcare (Eagly, 2007, SCC 2020).

The appellant lawyer Paul Champ suggested to the Supreme Court of Country that with no answers as to why, and no explanation, then it is because it is "arbitrary".

In 1993 the Solicitor General of Canada released a report titled the Status of Women in Canadian Policing. The report shared that with more women entering policing of childbearing age, it was critical to have well-designed pregnancy and childcare policies. These would ensure a stable work force and the lack of such led to turnover. It shared that shift work proved to be a major obstacle especially in preschool years for parents, resulting in a high turnover rate for female officers due to the

pressure for a working mother (Walker, 1993). The RCMP introduced the option for members to “job share” in December 1997 instead of leaving the workplace, for a predetermined and negotiated amount of time. Prior to this, RCMP members with child care obligations had one of two choices, take a leave without pay or work the challenging shifts of a patrol officer. There was no provision for a modified work arrangement. Those who took a leave without pay, could opt to treat the time not worked as pensionable time and purchase back their pensionable credit. This new option for members with child care obligations allowed them to stay in the workforce. It was extended as an alternative to leave without pay. This allowed members to split the roles and responsibilities of one full time position, known as “job sharing.” The members who wanted to share the job were responsible for finding someone else to share it with. The unit manager had the discretion of allowing it on their units.

The “job sharing” option was mostly availed by female members with young children. It allowed them to remain current in their job skills, connected to their colleagues and workplace, and meet the obligations of being a parent. However there was a catch, they had to forgo the ability to buy back their pensionable time, this was not made clear to the members who pursued the new option. They were advised it was the same as the LWOP buy back. If not challenged, it would mean that employees, sworn and civilian, who opted for the leave without pay would not face a pension penalty if they opted to purchase back their time away from work for childcare. For those who stayed engaged in the job sharing positions they would be penalized with no pension credit. For 10 years one of two appellants, Joanne Fraser pursued the RCMP leadership to seek clarity in the discriminant decision as it was

acutely unfair and devalued those members' contributions. There was no answer and the RCMP sidestepped the responsibility to provide one.

In 2019, the appellants lawyer, Paul Champ, submitted to the Supreme Court that the core equity issue in this case was that the “social and economic costs of child care continue to be borne primarily and disproportionately by women and child care presents a significant obstacle for women in the economic domain.” He further submitted to the courts that although women participate fully in the labour market traditional gender roles have not changed and child care continues to fall primarily to the female parent. “Female employment patterns continue to be characterized by breaks in service, working part-time and limiting promotion opportunities because they aren’t in the workplace (CPAC, 2019). Many give the reason that it is a choice, however it is one that men don’t have to make.

Those who participated in “job sharing” were able to buy back any pension contribution for this time. Sometime later the term part-time was introduced into policy. In that policy, amended in September 2014, it states, “”part-time employment for members applies when normal hours of work average 12 or more, but less than 40 hours a week. Job sharing is considered part-time employment.”

The RCMP Superannuation Act allowed for gaps in service such as leave without pay for child rearing or education, and this time could be bought back as fully pensionable and not incur a penalty to their pensions. Those who embarked on this “job-sharing” were able to buy back their pensions and those who worked “part-time” fully expected this to count as fully pensionable time. They were denied. Joanne Fraser, the appellant in this case, had about 10 years service at the time and had two choices, leave without pay or struggle with the responsibilities of balancing the priority of childcare.

This ensued a long legal battle starting in 2017 with Federal Court where their case was denied. It was upheld in the Federal Court of Appeal in 2018, won in the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in 2020.: “Full-time RCMP members who job-share must sacrifice pension benefits because of a temporary reduction in working hours. This arrangement has a disproportionate impact on women and perpetuates their historical disadvantage. It is a clear violation of their right to equality under s. 15(1) of the Charter”(SCC, 2020). The judgement highlights the compelling evidence brought forward of the disadvantages women face in trying to balance work and family obligations. In his oral submission appellant lawyer Paul Champ suggested to the SCC that with no answers as to why, and no explanation, then it is because it is “arbitrary”. Arbitrary, as defined in the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, refers to “decisions, actions or rules based on random choice, personal whim, or impulse rather than reason, logic or system.

The SCC left it to the federal government to decide the remedy as there was vagueness of what element was unconstitutional. The rough estimates were that this affected nearly 1000 women and less than 10 men.

Following the ruling the federal government and the RCMP’s Compensation section refused to address the ruling. On Jan 8th, 2025, the National Police Federation (NPF) released a statement that it filed a class action lawsuit against the federal government for its decision. This remains unresolved.

It seems the barrier that plagues the RCMP in other areas as well with the lack of willingness to address the issue for the employee is also prevalent here. In the SCC oral submission, the appellants lawyer informed the court that the RCMP does have a Pension Advisory Committee under the

Superannuation Act that allows the RCMP members or management to make such recommendations. More shocking though, the RCMP's External Review Committee agreed the pension credit should be allowed.

The diffusion of responsibility would appear to be in play as this is being redirected to the Treasury Board Directorate within the Canadian Government as they set the terms and conditions of employment for the federal government. No special dispensation is being asked, the federal court has ruled in favour of making it right. The result is the police services lose out on experienced police officers who can take up to a 5 year leave of absence without pay (LWOP), get another job for the amount of time, return to work and buy back their pension time. As Reshma Saujani explains, the pipeline for women's advancement becomes "leaky" when women become mothers (Saujani, 2026). It would confirm there is a motherhood penalty for women in policing, especially in the RCMP.

The dichotomy bewilders logic, there are global campaigns for the increase of women in policing, yet there is no will to do the right thing and allow part-time work to be pensionable. What is not being seen by organizations, not just police services, is that women who are supported to be whole, not simply one or the other, become better long term for society here in Canada. The birth rate decline has been highlighted yet it seems there is little will to ensure the appropriate support in the system for mothers to pursue their professional interests and be moms. Understanding the environment as part of the VSM, would have informed what the staffing challenges in the detachments are. The feedback from detachment commanders would inform about the value a trained part-time person would add to the already under-resourced workplace as opposed to having no one because the only option was to take

LWOP and buy back their time without penalty after being away from the office. As Ms. Meadows explains “locate the responsibility in the system”, is a guideline for analysis and design. The analysis is looking for ways the system creates its own behaviour. Sometimes to blame an outside influence is easier than increasing the responsibility within the system. “Intrinsic responsibility” means the design of the system gathers and sends feedback about the consequences of decision making directly, quickly and compellingly to the decision makers”(Meadows, 2008). The current RCMP Commissioner might now be feeling the impact of the decision made by his predecessors because the result of such a decision reduces the number of employees who want to work in the RCMP who now face critical human resources shortages and women leaving the profession.

The precedence of such related to the Fraser decision has an impact as many other federal agencies await to see how this will be resolved. A surprising fact learned during the Fraser SCC submission was that a simple policy introduced in the Public Service Agreement, not legislation nor amendment, allowed for a defined period of time a person to work reduced hours, be paid for those hours and still retain their benefits and pensionable full time credits, for those in the executive category near retirement for a two year period. The SCC ruling was well received by many other police services who thanked Ms. Fraser for her grit to take it on and have themselves moved to amend their part-time policies. Given the competition for resources, “it is rarely the competitors who lose market share,.they may be there to scoop up the advantage, but the losing company creates its losses in part through its own business policy” (Meadows, 2008). It is unknown if any internal communication from the

Commissioners office was shared within the RCMP about the way forward following the SCC decision.

With the current staffing shortages across Canadian police services this is unlikely to change to better manage and support parents. An approach to provide inflow data to inform police human resources staffing in transfer planning, insight on the numbers of police officers who are in the age range for parenthood does not exist. This would allow there to be some predictive means to determine what the future workforce is going to require to ensure officer safety and effective policing services to communities is not disrupted and furthermore give peace of mind to the employees that their employer has their vested interest top of mind for all to be successful, thus expanding the boundary of care in a complex system (Meadows, 2008). This would better inform the Chief / Commissioner who then armed with real data would parlay that into actionable data to then speak with the government partners and police services boards, so they too understand the resourcing pressures and where the liabilities and growth opportunities are.

Another aspect of the maternity and parental leave challenges is the lack of return to work support for those returning from maternity and/or parental leave. Those returning to their workplace are again forced to prove themselves as they have been on leave anywhere from 12 months to 18 months. The time away does not count when applying for promotions. Some women reported being demoted on their return and told they'd have to prove themselves (Langan, 2016). It speaks to the consistent and unrelenting challenges women face in policing.

Consideration should be given to further study this area and determine if the “time in service” is necessary or if there is a means by which a baseline of can be assessed for in an unbiased way. The lack of planning is a factor that negatively affects mental health and increases stress. The horizons of caring, as Ms. Meadows points out is what allows for living successfully in a world of complex systems. She explains that the hierarchies exist to serve the bottom layers, and the aim should be to enhance total systems, paying attention to the whole will enhance resilience, sustainability and stability (Meadows, 2008). The VSM in the audits and optimization would be a great benefit to the organizations as it would allow for better planning, enhance communication and demonstrate the care to the employee for their wellbeing and development.

Absence of mentorship

For women the absence of mentorship and sponsorship can halt their promotion to higher ranks. The authors of *Through the Labyrinth* referred to it as “social capital”. Anyone can amass social capital by establishing positive relationships and interacting with colleagues in and outside their police service. It is as much about getting mentorship as it is giving and sharing experiences (Eagly, 2007). It is especially important in policing as socializing with other women was often frowned upon, referred to as the “estrogen mafia” (Langan, et al, 2016). The motherhood challenge also may contribute to the lack of time and attention women place on developing social capital and informal networking during a busy first responder shift might be difficult.

Some police services were too small to give mentorship to women in a focussed meaningful approach for developmental and coaching. The women themselves identified this gap and the development of women's association groups were born. They have helped to improve mentorship gaps specifically to find needed connections with other women police officers. There are three such associations in Canada, Ontario Women in Law Enforcement (OWLE), British Columbia Women in Law Enforcement (BDWLE), Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement (AWLE), the Women in Defense and Security (WiDS) and the International Association of Women in PO. The mantra for all is to support women in the public safety field to provide education, support and lift up women for future leadership roles in the sector. Given the top heavy male dominated rank environment it is wise for female police officers to be strategic in engaging their male counterparts or senior officers who are supportive and champions for women's growth in policing. An example of supportive mentorship shared by now retired Deputy Chief Scott Burns of Durham Regional Police Service, he looked for opportunities to provide female officers roles and tasks to participate in higher profile duties where they could excel and interact with those whom they might not have had the opportunity.

This is an area where female police officers would be well served to seek out for themselves, someone they respect and want to work with as they can benefit from the personal support and learn from others. Keeping in mind that mentors come and go throughout a person's career and not necessarily limited to how many someone might engage. If fortunate it may develop into a life long relationship.

A large responsibility with being and having a mentor is to receive feedback. Feedback is dreaded by most but necessary and women should be demanding it from supervisors who are my default mentors. Positive feedback can be easier to deliver than criticism; the obstacle is that feedback is rarely delivered well. It has been identified that men are reticent to provide feedback because it could make their female colleagues cry. There is power in seeking feedback, it helps a person feel greater autonomy and certainty. Research shows that 87% of employees want to be developed and only one third are actually receiving it. There is power in developing the skill to receive feedback well as the ability to process the information in a way that makes the receiver more effective (Corbett, 2022).

The Crone Era

There is very little research found regarding women in policing during the perimenopausal and menopausal stage in their careers. It is a natural occurring event for women and no one experience is predictable. When considering that women join policing at approximately 23 - 25 years of age, many reach senior NCO ranks or the lower Commissioned ranks right around the time when they are in or heading into menopause. A 2021 study of 5,000 women in 5 countries found that 66% shared that menopausal symptoms affected their professional work and 44% were too embarrassed to ask for the support they needed. There is some significant research now being completed on the effect of perimenopausal and menopausal stages for women in leadership roles. The effects on women during this time range from heart palpitations, higher frequency of urine leakage, increased fatigue, sleep

disruption or insomnia, increased irritability and mood swings, memory concerns, brain fog and difficulty concentrating and then top it off with hot flashes being the most common (National Defence, 2025). This is a critical topic to women's health that needs to be examined further given the time when women are eligible and reaching higher ranks with the most responsibility and are underrepresented. How might the effects during this stage of life be affecting women in leadership roles and could it be a contributing factor as to why they are leaving their careers.

Culture / Traits

It has been suggested that what is seen today is a confluence of a more militarized approach (equipment, uniform and accessories) to enforcement and a softer side to policing. The militarized influence has developed over many years and in waves. It was especially prominent in the USA. The influence of the 1970's upheaval in demonstrations, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) was pioneered by the LA police department. The 1980's denoted the War on Drugs. Add the 9 11 terrorist attacks, all these aspects eventually influence the rest of policing globally.

In the 1990's law enforcement/police force/police departments transitioned in police naming to more gentle titles of police services. The name "police force" suggests enforcement of laws, arresting of persons, authority, deterrence of crime, and visible power. A definite transition occurred in the name changes to "police service" and can be identified in the agentic and communal language differences it has held over many years. The shift from being proactive to reactive transitions over

decades. Prevention in approaches to policing can not be measured in the same way because those influences are not usually an instantaneous result. A more militarized society forgoes the police services problem solving, resolving problems through collaboration and engagement.

The media could be an influencer, specifically in police related prime-time dramas, on peoples' understanding of what impact women have on policing. The potential for a contributing factor in misconception is that people believe policing is portrayed by what is seen in the movies and television shows, guns, drugs, driving fast, chasing people down. From the 1970's and 2000's police related drama accounted for 30% of what was on television, this included both news and entertainment. In 2019 police related dramas account for over 60% on most major broadcast networks. These shows are the primary access the public have to a police officer's duties and the Hollywood version of culture. Effective policing is more about communication and helping people (Vasko 2024)(Croley 2022). Those elements might not make for such engaging television and movie time. While there has been a shift in appreciation for the skills women bring to policing oftentimes these are seen as weaknesses by those within the police services and in the community (Boehme, 2022).

A quote from the Rebuilding Trust report says, page 12, "Individual complaints, which can serve as indicators of broader issues, can provide the information necessary to identify widespread problems. Complaints, like behaviours, are often indicators; they can provide insight and information which can be valuable in preventing problems and improving performance" (Brown, 2007). This statement hits on some key factors necessary to shift the toxic systemic culture of harassment within the RCMP and other police services as well. What is necessary to change culture is to understand what

the issues are and have a focussed lens to be effective and must be proactive. Using the VSM Audit and Optimization in System 3, there can be real information gleaned from conducting micro surveys such as the effective teams survey by Patrick Lencioni to serve as an indicator if there is a broader issue. Micro surveys, targeting one working team, can be completed in anonymity, to reduce the real whistleblower fear and could provide invaluable data to determine if there is a leadership issue.

The policing mandate is to serve the communities that hire them, a police service conjures an image of being communicative, with interrelational cooperation with the communities, with intention to build trust and solve problems collectively (Quora, 2025). These reflect what can be equated to as community policing principles. There is a tension there when considering the perception of what is an effective leader. Those are the agentic and communal traits that have initiated the bias perception.

Agentic and Communal

The groundbreaking research in the mid 1960's popularized the notion that there are stereotypes of how men and women are to behave. These gender-role traits have been identified and measured leading to the development of many assessments identifying characteristics that men and women possess. Tools such as the Bern Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) are both similar in their purpose to identify characteristics for men (masculinity) and women (femininity), deemed to be more socially acceptable for the gender in American society. These gender role traits in social psychology are known as agentic traits, masculine and or instrumentality, and communal traits, being femininity or expressiveness were believed to be able to

differentiate between men and women. To further pinpoint if there are significant differences in these traits the researchers examined data accumulated over 50 years using over 250,000 participants (Hsu, 2021).

Women are typically associated with communal traits and men with agentic traits. The communal traits are defined as being helpful, warm, nurturing, collaborative and emotionally expressive. The agentic traits are defined as assertiveness, confidence, competitive and dominant. Societal perception norms instill these engendered traits (Trapnell, 2012)(Biddle, 2018)(Kreindler 2023). A leader with communal traits focuses on the team's success, places an emphasis on building relationships with trust and instills a sense of belonging. A leader with agentic traits is known for making quick decisions, taking charge of situations, driving results, and exhibit a hierarchical mindset in extreme situations. The downside is they can breed fear and stifle an exchange of ideas and mute innovation potential (Kreindler, 2023).

A study undertaken by Carleton University shows that the public consistently overestimates use of force rate. When examining the use of force data in Canada, female officers tend to favour intervention requiring less physical power to be effective. They use intermediate weapons more often compared to their male counterparts. In 99.9% of calls for service are resolved using officer presence, communication and the use of intervention tools and/or physical control, soft techniques or restraints and 70% lower odds of discharging their firearms.. Included in their research, "Social role theory, learned norms defining the gender role may be internalized, and the role becomes a part of the individuals personality, in others cases the individual may learn to exhibit the behaviours appropriate

to his or her gender role in response to social pressure, without having fully internalized the defining norms” (Lightdale, 1994)(Sheppard, 2024). Female officers perceive themselves to be as capable as their male counterparts in handling combative suspects (Dodge et al, 2011). An Ontario college study on the relationship of gender and use of lethal force in simulation exercises noted that there was little difference when the use of lethal force was applied. However, in reviewing de-escalation data of those scenarios revealed there were significant results. The statistics highlighted that even if females did make the decision to use lethal force they were more likely than their male peers to at least attempt to de-escalate the scenario. An important relevant fact is women do engage as they have been trained to do in violent calls for services, and put themselves in harms way because when the call for service warrants it there is no other choice but to (Gonneau, 2025). Women’s contribution to policing has been repeatedly confirmed by their ability to de-escalate situations, by possessing a higher degree of interpersonal skills, able to establish trust more effectively with communities. As already identified the Peel principles demonstrate these exact necessary traits to be competent police services.

This may be an area for strategic development to enhance the public’s understanding of the use of force continuum and press upon society that expectations of gender roles in policing whereby men are expected to resolve disputes using force and women are expected to diffuse are unrealistic and unwarranted to be an effective peace officer. These do little to enhance trust and nor improve the policing culture. As a reminder to the Peel principles introduced earlier in this research paper, themselves, on closer examination reveal a distinctly communal foundation. There is but one principle that is more agentic. The founding principles were designed for collaboration and prevention.

It's like women have learned the language of men, have lived in the house of men all their lives, we can speak it, you know how you learn a language, you learn French, you learn Spanish, it isn't your language until you dream in it. And the only way to dream it is to speak it. And women speak...men. But men don't speak..women. They don't dream in it.

Meryl Streep. The Washington Post panel interview, 2017.

In the book, *Through the Labyrinth*, the authors assert women need to overcome the resistance to step into being perceived as more agentic and less communal. The perception remains that naturally men are inherently more agentic traits hence better suited for leadership roles and women would then play into what the perception is (Eagly, 2007).

In examining the trends in agentic and communal traits gender gaps differences, a 2021 study of USA college students found the women's agentic traits had increased steadily over time and mens agentic traits remained consistent. Leading to the understanding that women were becoming more like the men in their career goals, preferring higher-status and more powerful work roles thus lessening the gap in agentic traits. In examination of the communal traits data neither men nor women had increased or decreased for this population over decades. This suggests that females are doing better to achieve agentic traits but losing some of their inherent communal traits. Males are not working on improving their communal traits as much continue to be agentic (Hsu, 2021). Police services where only agentic traits are observed and appreciated seem to be contradictory given that trust is diminishing in communities, excessive force is on the rise, corruption is being investigated across all police services

in Ontario and the harassment complaints and lawsuits are at an all time high. The perception does not necessarily instill confidence in the trust capability.

Women's contribution to policing has been repeatedly confirmed by their ability to de-escalate situations, by possessing a higher degree of interpersonal skills, able to establish trust more effectively with communities. As already identified the Peel principles demonstrate these exact necessary traits to be competent police services.

Another theory that may lend more insight as to why women are not applying for or promoted to senior roles is the “stereotype threat”, was first developed and suggested by Sheryl Sandberg, former Facebook COO, that “women in leadership suffer from stereotyping, and when people expect a stereotype and are reminded of a stereotype, that actually makes the stereotype stronger” (Schnall, 2013). The stereotype threat is absolutely being reinforced with the agentic and communal comparisons in policing. It is a long standing bias that has a significant impact on women in policing. From Gloria Steinem, a best selling author and human activist, “I think we ought to forget about talking about masculine and feminine altogether, we should talk about humans” (Schnall, 2013).

Considering the tendency there may be to favour agentic traits and its lexicon for promotion and a perceived recognition that men are better suited for police work and leadership positions, it is vital to debunk the belief.

In the Donella Meadows book, *Thinking in Systems*, in Chapter 7, Living in a world of systems and creating change, her philosophy is that there exists a need to ensure the expansion of the boundary of caring and to not erode the goals of goodness. In that all systems are interconnected and the human

race in no part is separate from human beings. Giving the example, the heart can't succeed if the lungs fail or an organization to succeed its employees must succeed (Meadows, 2008).

Fitting-in vs Belonging, Likeability vs Respect

When women have to contemplate how to be in a role, agentic or communal, it suggests they can't be themselves. How women were introduced to the police officer role is an important factor to consider as there is a perception they need to approach in a style more masculinely. Their acceptance onto the team can be described as conditional to "fitting-in". In reviewing the data from the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) it was apparent that the perceived masculinity of the profession the women shared in their stories extracted from the reports listed, they felt a need to act to "fit-in" to the role of police officer. What most women have had to do is to "fit-in" to the man's world of policing, so that they weren't seen as different, and could handle the job the way men did. Angelina Rivers, a police officer with Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) shares that women are "groomed to fit in" (Rivers, 2025). As related in Langan et al, 2016, the female police officers interviewed shared the women did not share the same general camaraderie as the men, and that the strong women stuck together to support each other and competed with others to "claw to the top of the bucket" to fit in with the guys.

Women have had to adapt and be adept to this male centric profession of policing. It may create a hostile environment for the women who were determined to break through the traditional gender norms of what women could or could not do. This very environment ensured the women felt

they were outsiders and had to prove themselves and work to assimilate into the male dominated culture (Vasko, 2024). Even the women who had been promoted in the RCMP told of numerous incidents where a subordinate ranked male member refused to follow orders and questioned her authority. Challenging her ability to do her job (Bastarache, 2020). To assimilate to the male way of doing policing interrupts the value women bring to the job. The notion that women should or have to approach policing in anything that isn't authentic to who they are and in the same manner as men demeans and lessens the positive nuances that women bring to the difficult job. There is room for belonging and not simply working to fit in.

In Brene Brown's books, *Braving the Wilderness*, , and *The Gifts of Imperfection* she defines belonging as “the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because **true belonging** only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self acceptance.” Her research revealed that the opposite to belonging is fitting in. “Fitting in means assessing the group and saying what do I have to say? What do I need to wear? How do I need to act? And changing who you are and truly belonging never ask us to change who we are, it demands we be who we are!!! Because if we fit in because of how we've changed ourselves that is not belonging because a person has betrayed themselves for other people and that isn't sustainable. People start to lose themselves. It is hard work to stay out of fear and be good” (Brown, 2010 and 2019).

There are parallels to true belonging and why people join policing. They want to feel part of something real. Mostly people want to feel real connections with people without losing their

authenticity, freedom and power (Brown, 2019). The study participants shared they felt more afraid to disagree and debate with friends, family and colleagues due to the lack of civility and tolerance.

Similarly to women in policing, the study participants were very aware of the pressure to “fit in and conform”. It isn’t just joining, it isn’t pretending or selling out who you are because it is safer. It takes being vulnerable and vulnerability is a challenging proposition to police officers as a whole.



Here is an opportunity for the reader to be better acquainted with the kind of vulnerability being suggested. The QR code will link to Brene Brown’s Ted Talk *The Power of Vulnerability* from 2010. Use this QR Code that will link to the TedTalk Brene Brown gave, *The Power of Vulnerability*, 2010.

Performance Evaluations

Research has been clear that when performance evaluations demonstrate gender bias with reinforced harmful stereotypes, it may stymie the possibility of women being promoted hence impeding their career aspirations. To ensure fairness to performance evaluations they need to be less subjective. Case in point is the mixed messaging about the agentic and communal traits as either gender can be recognized for being more or less effective in these elements of what makes an effective police officer. This further establishes the need for the balance of effective traits necessary in the police officers

servicing communities but even more so in having the “right” person being promoted and leading the police services into the future.

How someone is hardwired is where a person's potential lies. Gerald McGroarty, 2013

Consider the wording that may be introduced on the written performance evaluations of police officers, the agentic and communal verbiage. It is an important aspect to consider how evaluations are written for women as they influence recognition for promotion opportunities and must be limited in decision makers' conscious or unconscious bias. There is very little effective training provided for writing personnel performance evaluations with no gender bias comments. This would be an area to increase awareness by identifying any such reality and care should be taken to review them (Eagly, 2007). Performance evaluations are best completed with specific metrics that capture the employees productivity and behaviours in language that is gender neutral.

Succession Planning

Selection

Effective succession planning is necessary to reduce the barrier women face in attaining senior leadership roles. They must be defensible and a promotion selection must be effective. Succession planning is identified as a proactive strategic process that develops internal personnel to fill key leadership and operational roles. The policing hierarchical rank structure lends itself to be a prime

environment to meet this objective. In actuality the reality is that each promotion is reactive to vacancies. There is significant room for improvement to align the process to include a sound practice in policing organizations to proactively identify who inherently have the traits to be leaders. There is excruciating risk as the authority given to rank has huge consequences if done poorly. It is more than just time in rank and exam scores that make a good leader. It is the inherent traits identified of effective leaders that continue to elude the process. Of course those bring value to determine the worthiness of promotion but an element is missing (Griffith, 2010). The statistics shared clearly show that women are still excluded more frequently and for this reason processes must be in place to ensure the old assumptions of which sex is better in business, and for this research policing makes better leaders is eliminated and only based on abilities and accomplishments (Eagly, 2007). The Broken Dreams Broken Lives reports shared the stories of the women interviewed that even when they were promoted they were steered into more communal roles and functions (Bastarache, 2020). The opportunity to adapt to new perceptions is why a shift in applying performance ideals and understanding a less biased way is possible.

Paradigm in understanding Performance

When assessing police officers who are ready for promotion to the next rank it would be prudent to establish what the traits are for successful leaders as leaders not relying on the social role theory of which sex is a more effective leader. There is a perception within the ranks of policing that there exists nepotism, cronyism and the "ol' boys network" to be promoted or recognized for

developmental opportunities (Gordon, 2024). This perception is tied to the subjectivity introduced by some who select those they know or who they connect with. Or even carry the bias that men make better leaders in policing because of the societal gender norms that have been pervasive for decades. There is an opportunity to eliminate and at the very least reduce this from occurring because inherent traits in effective leaders are not gender based.

Let's consider the elements of promotions are a pie, divided into three portions, each representing a necessary element, it has the potential to remove some of the subjectivity out of the process. They are; performance for on the job work done, performance evaluations i.e. yearly assessments, peer evaluations such as a 360, and normative personality assessment(s). The normative personality assessments identify inherent traits found in effective leaders. These normative personality assessments are the missing piece in the current promotion pie for many police services in Canada. One such assessment is the Predictor of Potential(POP) (Self Management Group, 2026). It is the Science piece and introduces Objectivity.

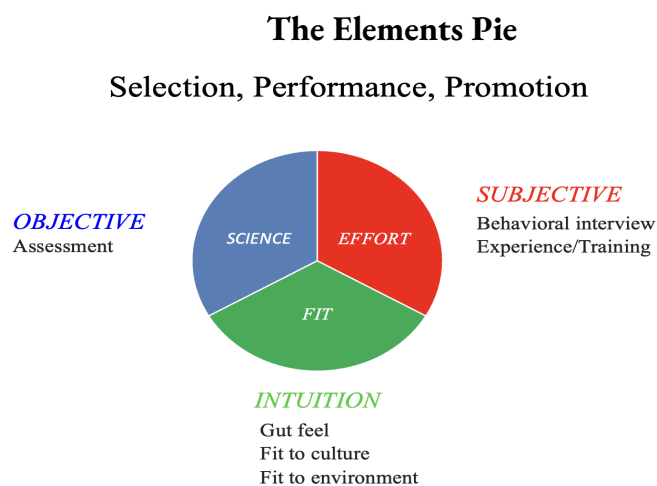


Figure13, Self Management Group, 2026

Predictor of potential (POP)

Understanding the differences in personality assessments helps to guide which one may better inform the selection process as this is key to getting it right for effective leadership. This tool provides an opportunity to level a playing field by providing equal opportunities and remove, if any exist, the subjectivity, by ensuring the leadership inherent traits are recognized not simply how agentic a leader is perceived to be. Lets take out the gender stereotypes related to leadership (Eagly, 2007).

Because of the potential for gender based bias there is a need to ensure the subjectivity is removed when assessing someone's ability and talent to be a leader. A shift in mindset is needed because the traits that make a leader are universal. The talent that makes someone exceptional at guiding people - the ability to read a room to hold trust under pressure, to make decisions when the path is unclear, do not change depending on the gender. It is a failure of the system that does not recognize what leadership actually is. The science of psychometric personality assessments is the tool to ensure objectivity is represented in the pie of selection, performance and promotion.

There are a number of personality assessments being used by police services. They are either ipsative or normative. Ipsative, which refers to items that are forced choice, ie. Are you either this or that? I like to work alone or I like to work on a team. The Ipsative assessments are those such as the Myers Briggs, Disc or True Colours. Normative, which refers to items that are on a continuum, ie. to what degree (using a likert scale) do you agree with this statement, I like to work alone. Normative assessments are those such as Predictive Index, SMG, SHL, Hogan. In the RCMP, the Myers Briggs assessment had been a tool used with their newly promoted Inspectors for many years. The Myers

Briggs is a great team building tool however does not allow researchers to conduct studies to evaluate the validity of the tool in predicting job performance and develop norms based on the top performing groups that a normative assessment such as the POP would (Self Management Group, 2025).

Research is clear that nepotism, favouritism, the old boys network and cronyism is a long standing practice to be promoted in law enforcement (Todak, 2023) and continues to play a significant role in promotion processes. It is human nature for people to bond with like-minded people. Without an effective promotion process this perpetuates the practice. These practices pose a risk to establish trust and maintain the integrity of policing services, let alone affect morale poorly. The recent DRPS reports highlight this exact situation of “cronyism” is the underlying theme across the police service and its issues (CBC, 2025). Assigning the best person using the tools and unbiased processes works to ensure this is done in a manner that is effective and ensures the right person for the job. These tools are more readily available today. However there are differences that are worthy to note given the opportunity they provide police service personnel in addressing cronyism.

“To suggest that the RCMP is strong at developing future leaders borders on the bizarre.” says Gerald McGroarty, a specialist in team effectiveness, talent identification and development. “The fact they don’t use normative personality assessments alone, tells you they most likely won’t have a sustainable or solid succession plan nor sound leadership development. It ensures they remain at a complete disadvantage of developing strong effective leaders.” Mr. McGroarty shared this during one of his dialogues on leadership.

From the very beginning of the hiring application process for any business there is an opportunity to understand what a candidate's potential is for success with the use of science backed personality assessments. One such normative assessment that Mr. McGroarty refers to is the Predictor of Potential (POP), developed by Canadian John Marshall, President of Self Management Group. A normative assessment would allow for research to be conducted to evaluate the validity of the tool in predicting job performance and develop norms based on the top performing groups.

A necessary consideration in shifting the perception and reliance on the agentic and communal traits debate would be to introduce a psychometric assessment tool such as the Predictor of Potential (POP) tool developed by John Marshall at Self Management Group. Such a tool is essential in integrating science with selection and development employees from entry level to the senior executive ranks in policing. This tool assesses an employee's management potential to develop needed succession plans and proactively identify who has the inherent traits, such as self-management potential, motivational structure, organizational fit, leadership style, communication style, emotional intelligence and other key factors found in effective leaders. Furthermore the POP would hold valuable data for insight into individual needs assessment, matching individual profiles to organizational culture, improving retention and growth. Most importantly the data available would provide the Human Resources personnel a list of candidates to proactively approach to determine what if any aspirations they have for promotion, an assessment of management potential candidates to develop proactive succession plans based on the benchmark of the qualified management candidates. It fills the gap in

understanding better how performance can be considered in a new way. Knowing and understanding the Inherent Traits are the current blind spot in many police services.

If one of the main goals of leadership and management is to develop self-managing employees, the command and control model fails (John Marshall, 2003)

It is prudent at this point to introduce the Performance Equation to lay a foundation to a concept that expands the understanding of performance. Developed by John Marshall, PhD, CEO and President of Self Management Group (SMG), states that good performance relies on three performance factors:: Talent, Habits and Opportunity. These factors are compounded, when one is lacking, performance is lacking. Understanding this equation is essential in talent identification. In policing it can be argued that there needs to be a cultural shift in acquiring and understanding talent as this blind spot creates issues in the quality of candidates being selected to be future leaders.

The Performance Equation

The Performance Equation



Figure 14, Marshall, 2026

The Performance Equation (PE) breaks down into its main elements and groups them. These elements interact to produce results. Good performance is based on devoting effort to what can be controlled and refusing to waste energy in attempts to direct unpredictable circumstances. There is an important difference between results and success. Success is associated with good results but it is determined by good performance. The three factors (in Yellow) are multiplied, not added together. Each makes its own distinct contribution. If there is a zero in any category, the calculated value is also zero, no matter how high the other values may be (McHardy, 2003). How someone is hardwired is where a person's potential lies. The element that addresses Talent include Inherent Traits and Skill. Inherent traits reflect a person's potential, and is most often determined by their characteristics, preferences and how they are hard wired. Skill is a learned trait and can be acquired by learning, training, coaching, experience, and self learning. It is what they can train in to get better at. In policing the Skill element is well managed for what is needed to do the job of a police officer. The blind spot for proactively identifying Talent is not knowing from the very outset how people are hardwired. A psychometric assessment tool fills the essential role of integrating science with recruiting, selection and development of managers from entry level to senior executive positions. Proactively knowing who your future leaders are is key to effective succession planning.

Skills Training

Once accepted into the RCMP, Regina Saskatchewan is where they complete the 26 week basic training. The cadets, male and female, are assigned to a co-ed Troop. They are paid a Cadet Training allowance of \$525 a week. Room and board, travel, uniform and insurance costs are paid by the RCMP. The training is delivered in an “adult learning style and in a manner that supports community policing”. The cadet has regular assessment periods and milestones to meet operational requirements. This feeds the Viable system model, #3 Audits and Optimization function to determine how this cadet is progressing to be a police officer. Upon successful completion of the training, cadets are offered employment as members and given peace officer status. They can be transferred across Canada, and not necessarily return to their home province they were recruited from (RCMP, 2025). For municipal and provincial police service cadets they attend a provincial police college for basic training and then attend their own training facilities for more advanced skills training.

Police services all have mandatory training for their police officers, such as firearm requalifications, first aid, physical attributes requirement (PAR) etc. The courses that develop the more advanced skills in policing such as, breathalyzer technician, drug and national security investigation, etc,s have often been criticized because of what is felt the selection process is done with little to no transparency about who is selected (Bastarache, 2020). It should be emphasized that achievement, capability and potential must be combined with knowledge, skills and capabilities commensurate with identified leadership competencies such as ethical, other behavioural and leadership skills all of which

should be the litmus test for senior officer appointments (Black, 2013). The current subjective approach without having the data for inherent traits and understanding the elements identified by performance, competencies and inherent traits of a great leader will continue to plague those police services who do not employ these types of tools.

There are two separate reviews recommending that the responsibility for establishing and maintaining values and ethics in the RCMP and their integration into the regular operations was the responsibility of senior management (Black, 2013). The review, initiated by the Chair of the Commission of Public Complaints (Feb 2013), examined the training provided by the RCMP for all its employees and recommended Supervisors and managers be required to complete relevant training on line addressing workplace conflict, including harassment. These recommendations again do little to effect the change needed within the culture of policing. The publicly available training syllabuses for Canadian police training academies revealed that the skills training needed for police services to train their officers to be participants in high performing teams currently does not exist. The following section will explore how high performing teams are developed through active participation and focussed effort.

To build more sustainability and viability as suggested by the viable system model to consider in policing is the high performing team.

High Performing Teams (HPT)

There may be an opportunity to shift the culture in this aspect as high performing teams ensure all truly belong is not a passive means to be in a group. High performing teams (HPTs) allow for the autonomy of each team to deliver the services needed from a police service to the communities. These teams are provided the autonomy to adapt to change and the emerging challenges, both in the immediacy of the event and longer term (Espinosa, 2023).

The reports and reviews previously identified and highlighted in this paper with over 200 recommendations and the myriad of lawsuits have identified the need for training. It is believed to be the most effective place to intervene to effect the change so needed in policing. Transformation happens when breaking old ways of communicating and risk in trying something new occurs. This is where the leverage point in transcending paradigms would have meaningful impact. When the critical mass of people build a new muscle together at the same time, they make invaluable connections and find meaning in what they do. Systems atrophy when the boundaries are impermeable (Brown, 2025), organization with information and energy that are permeable have healthy systems. This too supports the viable systems model (VSM) with effective and timely feedback loops. Understanding the culture of policing is an important element when examining the systemic challenges it faces. Between police officers there is a working co-dependence their job naturally brings them together. They rely on each

other to ensure their own safety and that of the communities they serve. But do they operate as a high performing team?

In considering what has already been shared about the Performance equation, Talent is comprised of two elements, Inherent Traits and Skills (McHardy, 2003). The police training academies effectively develop the Skills needed by providing their officers with the necessary skills training in areas relevant to their job and for them to develop proficiency if they mature in their roles and duties. This type of skills include training in powers of arrest and detention elements, a myriad of investigational needs (impaired driving, domestic assaults, theft, traffic violations, and more serious crimes) how to drive a police vehicle, how to administer first aid, how to use a police radio, etc.

An open source review of the Canadian police training academies course selection shows a definite lack of focussed training for high performing teams, in that no dedicated training for high performing teams was found. Understanding what teams are and what they can be, lays a foundation to this area of the research.

Various Team Definitions

Webster dictionary Team	number of persons associated together in work or activity. Oxford defines a team as two or more people working together to achieve a common goal.
Patrick Lencioni A team	a group of people working together to achieve a shared purpose or goal. Team members bring a certain skill and rely on the talents of other team members to collaborate and collectively reach team goals. They are committed to results, accountability and overall success of the team.
Lencioni's High performing team	A team is a group of people working together to achieve a shared purpose or goal. Team members bring a certain skill and rely on the talents of other team members to collaborate and collectively reach team goals. Their commitment to results, accountability and the success of the team

	supersedes individual egos and personal agenda. They consistently deliver superior results and exceed expectations by their unrelenting drive for team success.
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Figure 15, (Lencioni, 2002)

Police services work in nothing but teams, on platoons, watches, shifts and investigative units. This skills based training for HPT's warrants more attention to change culture. There is agreement that police service personnel work in teams. Keeping in mind, "The fact remains, that teams, because they are made up of imperfect human beings, are inherently dysfunctional" (Lencioni, 2002). There is an expectation that police are held to a higher standard, but the fact remains they are imperfect humans just as the rest of society.

In considering where the places exist to intervene in the "system" in small ways that could lead to large shifts in behaviour (Meadows, 2008) introducing high performing team training, this is one of them. Gerald McGroarty states, "one of the key pillars of highly effective teams is they don't tolerate personality-based behaviours, bullying, favouritism or politics. Clearly if teams apply these pillars of top performing teams and I've seen this, the behaviours will dramatically be reduced. The problem is we aren't teaching our team how to be highly effective." This is where the transcending paradigm occurs. It is at the top of the leverage points scale, holding positions #1 and 2.

There have been adjustments and changes over many decades within the policing profession however what remains persistent is the toxic disrespectful behaviour. Notwithstanding, the suggestion is not to throw out the baby with the bathwater but to add a bit more warm water to make the experience of working in a high performing environment the norm, not the exception.

The gap identified is the lack of focussed Skills training to understand and apply the what and how high performing teams function and work together. Again to reiterate this is where the transcending shift occurs.

Honorable Michel Bastarache warns : No amount of financial compensation can undo the harm the Assessors witnessed. If real Action is not taken, the RCMP will find itself in the same place again in a few years.

Patrick Lencioni, a foremost celebrated specialist in organizational health, teamwork and leadership development defines a team as, “a group of people working together to achieve a shared purpose or goal. Team members bring a certain skill and rely on the talents of other team members to collaborate and collectively reach team goals. They are committed to results, accountability and overall success of the team.” (Lencioni, 2002).

Given the decades of dysfunction examined within the RCMP and similarly in other police services, it is time to consider they are not functioning teams, let alone HPT’s, in their day to day responsibilities at work. It is for this reason the need to move forward with changing culture is by changing behaviour, and if there are those that aren’t up for the change, they may need a career change.

There are two well known team models, Patrick Lencioni’s, The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team and Bruce Tuckmans, Stages of Group Development.

Brian Tuckman’s model examines the stages groups go through when working together, the Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. The model is helpful to identify the stage

a team is working in (Bonebright, 2020), however it is limited in that it doesn't provide specifics for interventions of a dysfunctional team. This model may be more relevant for teams working in short term projects and tasks.

In Patrick Lencioni's *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*, he shares that it isn't complicated to build a team but can be difficult and keeping it simple is necessary. His model identifies the 5 pitfalls which he identifies as 5 dysfunctions. They are often addressed in isolation but his model is intentionally interrelated. Like a chain if one link is broken it is not functioning. This model works to address behaviours and is interchangeable as people might move around within their organizations. They bring with them the culture of a high functioning team member.

The summary report of the Merlo Davidon lawsuit, *Broken Lives Broken Dreams* describes quite adequately the atrocious way women have been treated and the results of how it has affected them and their family and friends. When considering the Value statements each police service has there is a huge disconnect in their states values. There is no defending, ignoring nor condoning the toxic behaviours. Values are discussed and respected in HPT as in Lencioni's model, trust is the foundation. Necessary in any successful relationship. The word, trust, holds a variety of meanings depending on the context or situation. Trust, or lack thereof, is bantered about when criticizing police services. But how is trust understood? The women in policing would have little trust in their colleagues given the culture of the profession. In the 2007, *Rebuilding of the Trust* report, trust was broken because of the senior leaders mismanagement and lack of action to address the mismanagement. Thirteen (13) years later, *Broken Lives Broken Dreams* authored by the Honourable Justice Bastarache, summarizes for the

3,088 claimants shared “the brutal treatment they experienced which ground them down, broke their confidence, and shattered their trust in their fellow officers.” Once TRUST is gone within the organization and its men, it is challenging to be regained. Add to it that the trust of the communities towards police services has long been questioned. There are a number of different trust elements depending on the situation, understanding the elements of trust is even more important to ensure there is understanding and in fact trust.

The question to understand is whether the department / police service is composed of a group of individuals who come in to do their own thing, and provide some support to each other when needed or as the definition of HPT states, a team is a group of people working together to achieve a shared purpose or goal. Team members bring a certain skill and rely on the talents of other team members to collaborate and collectively reach team goals. Their commitment to results, accountability and the success of the team supersedes individual egos and personal agenda. They consistently deliver superior results and exceed expectations by their unrelenting drive for team success.

The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team model is examined further and the skills training needed bring attention to counter those and produces high performing teams who put in the effort and are supported by managers.

The 5 Dysfunction Model



Figure 16, Lencioni, 2002

This **Absence of Trust** among team members stems from an unwillingness to be vulnerable. Team members are not willing to be open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses making it impossible to build a foundation of trust. It sets the stage for the next dysfunction. Next is the **Fear of Conflict** where teams who lack trust are incapable of engaging unfiltered passionate debate of ideas. Instead they use cloaked discussion and guarded comments. This ensures a **Lack of Commitment** because without airing their opinions in the course of a passionate and open debate, they rarely buy in and commit to decisions though they feign agreement during meetings. Because of the lack of commitment and buy-in team members develop an **Avoidance of Accountability**. Without committing to a clear plan of action, there is hesitation to call out their peers on actions and behaviours that are seen as counterproductive to the good of the team. Failure to hold each other accountable creates an **Inattention to Results** whereby team members put their own needs (career advancements, recognition or ego) above the collective goals of the team (Lencioni, 2003).

In the W5 expose, *The Tarnished Badge*, the then TPS Chief Mark Saunders during his interview asked the question, “what do we do to remove the bystanders within our organization?” The answer eludes many however, the theory of the High Performing Team (HPT) is that the people in those teams are not subject to nor anyone to that type of behaviours, they would not allow for anyone to be subjected, and would not be subjected to the toxic workplace behaviours that have been documented throughout this paper. These teams promote buy-in not consensus, peer-to-peer accountability and trust as the foundation to it all. The theory is that sexual harassment and harassment would not be tolerated, nor would it allowed be a part of any high performing team. Quite simply there are no bystanders in HPT’s.

There is no question, workplace conflict exists in some form, in every place of employment in Canada, worldwide really. HPT’s see conflict as a healthy function of a workplace and when conflict is part of the everyday culture of a workplace then it is an asset. HPT’s are constructed of gender diverse persons who bring with them their own set of skills, backgrounds and perspectives (Vasko, 2024). They are people who are trading off their skills for the benefit of the team even if it isn't their job, they do it for the benefit of the whole team (Lencioni, 2025). The high performing team would hold individuals accountable at the very earliest opportunity. For example, a foundational exercise, the Norms of behaviour, utilizes the teams baseline survey data related to the dysfunction model. The team discusses how they will address the behaviours identified in the survey. There is buy in and commit to it. It can enhance communications, set peer to peer expectations and enhance accountability again peer to peer countering that hierarchical norm of diffused responsibility that has for so long been

the mindset culture that supervisors are responsible for addressing the individual behaviour. It counters the “doing nothing” and engages the aspects represented in how high performing teams operate together. The diffusion of responsibility would be addressed and the culture of high performing teams would be well on its way. In answer to former TPS Chief Mark Saunders question, this is how you remove bystanders from your organizations.

Teamwork trifecta: the right people on the team
 1 ideal team player (understanding inherent traits)
 2. Working genius (hungry humble and smart)
 3. 5 dysfunctions (hpt)

The VSM seeks to regularly assess, through the audit and optimization within System Three. The recursiveness of System One within the policing models would represent the working units, i.e. platoons, teams, units and sections. The recommendation would be prior to implementing or introducing the HPT model there is an opportunity immediately available to audit (evaluate) the team's susceptibility of the five dysfunctions. Each team would be evaluated and the results would provide necessary data to determine the efficacy of the leader and also what aspects of the 5 Dysfunctions are present within the team. This audit is vital to determining the nuances present within each team as each is led by a different person. It would assist to enhance communications between units (potential for cross horizontal training) and inform System 3 to determine what resources or shifts in responsibilities are necessary.

The HPT model speaks directly to the mindset or paradigm shift required to ensure the inclusion and respect of all who interact and work within policing. Ultimately to embrace the “power to transcend paradigms” of the current culture because there is never a better time.

Conclusion

The 1970's report on the status of women then highlighted, "even when laws regarding discrimination against women are scrupulously observed, there are still social customs and beliefs which relegate women to an unfair position." (Bird, 1970) The fact that so much has been brought to light about the deplorable treatment of women in policing, the time is now to reset behaviours within the police services and correct it. A continued call for women to be accepted on equal status is the only right course of action. Although there are certain things only women can do. The reality exists that women's rights will cease to be an issue once equality is given, only equal rights will do (Bird, 1970). They will then truly be human rights. There is a disconnect in the police service values when they are only applied outside the police car. Women belong in those cars just as much as men do. The Peel principles are testament to what the mandate was intended for police services and women are born to be police officers. Somewhere along the way the principles don't seem to mean the same as intended.

The systemic issues in policing persist. As was heard from the appellant lawyer Paul Champ in his submission to the Supreme Court of Canada that no one in the RCMP could explain why moms, working part-time police officers were denied pension credits. He put forward that when there is no "why", then it is because it is "arbitrary". Arbitrary, as defined in the Merriam-Webster's dictionary, refers to "decisions, actions or rules based on random choice, personal whim, or impulse rather than reason, logic or system. Considering the SSC decision about part-time employment, why is this such a barrier to change? The RCMP and if correct the federal government who supports women equality

now choose not to make this pensionable. It makes little sense when considering they are fighting against themselves. It is a lot to consider but when policies are biased in promotions and don't earnestly support women transparently, it is no wonder there is a lack of women at the top levels and all the way in between. After all this time, why? Why is there such an egregious pattern of behaviour and then doubled down with someone not being held to account for their behaviour. It is not all men who act so outrageous but there is a cultural aspect at play. That is the diffusion of responsibility. This too can be eliminated with the right culture shift. The training of police service employees in the norms of what and how high performing teams work will over time address the behaviours as the culture will shift to one that allows and encourages the peer to peer pressure to perform as expected and agreed to. Adding the POP selection tool to the already multi-layered promotion process reduces the subjectivity of the societal traits, female /masculine, and introduces validated inherent leadership traits. Additionally it provides scientific data to be proactive in succession planning. The recommendations listed in this research project confidently can be the small tweaks needed to make the greatest impact as Donella Meadows work has inspired.

Desired / Future & Outcome

Recommendations

Traits	Establish feedback loops to receive meaningful and timely data on trends relevant to employee satisfaction with current supervisors	Review performance measures to remove the communal and agentic nuances	Understand the stereotypical traits and the difference of effective inherent traits in leaders.
Selection Effectively done reduces bias and subjectivity	Assess how current selection processes measure against those suggested in this report with the PIE and performance equation	Develop the ability to measure top performers in policing by conducting validation studies	Beginning with all women utilize the normative personality assessments to proactively identify who is within the ranks with the inherent traits for leadership roles Ensure all senior officers have completed 360's and / or POPs Focus on Sergeants with 360s and POPs
High Performing Teams - To develop strategies to build trust	Ultimately, train all personnel in HPT concepts.	From current data of high complaint areas, on conduct matters, commence baseline surveys to determine the issues not being met for HPTs.	Simultaneously engage Senior leaders and Sergeants in the concepts of HPT - Engage facilitators within the organizations to lead Norms of Behaviours sessions -Develop performance coaching strategies
Working moms	Seeks their input using feedback loops to determine job satisfaction and support they are receiving from the organization.	Have resources available to assist in finding child care services if none are available.	Have contingency plans ready for those detachment/shifts when maternity and parental leave is scheduled. Nationalize policy driven return to work support with detailed expectations for and by the PO returning to duty.
Engagement /Communication	Develop a culture of strong language when addressing harassment	Develop Surveys to determine employee understanding and efficacy of the current organizational values Compare how applied internally and externally.	

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