Evidence-Based Recruitment: Enhancing Diversity in Policing

October 10th, 2025

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Recruiting in policing is a challenge

Salish Current

Local law enforcement faces staffing, recruiting issues

Law enforcement agencies have seen many changes in recent years, including a new

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WTOP

College credits for cops: Montgomery Co. police tackle recruitment challenges with education benefits

Montgomery County has a need for more police officers, and it hopes to lure in recruits and keep its veterans with discounted college...

5 days ago

Police1

'Tremendous disinerest': Conn. PDs struggle to recruit amid staffing deficits

By Justin Muszynski Hartford Courant. HARTFORD, Conn. — More than 50 police departments across the state are in need of entry level police...

1 month ago

Diverse recruiting is an even bigger challenge

- While we are trying to get more people in the door, we are also trying to make sure that the people in the door represent unique identities and backgrounds

- This is an additional challenge on top of the recruiting challenge

However, police services remain committed to enhancing diversity

But…why?

When we’re struggling to recruit at all, why bother with diversity-based recruitment?

The CSPA

- The CSPA mandates that police services and their boards are representative of the communities they serve

Diversity is essential to policing

- Racialized neighbourhoods benefit from racially diverse patrol platoons (Weitzer, 2000)
- Increased female officer presence is associated with greater intimate partner violence reporting and reduced intimate partner homicide (Miller & Segal, 2018)
- Diversity is associated with better service quality, creative problem solving, and productivity (Gomez & Bernet, 2019)

But, how do police services do this?

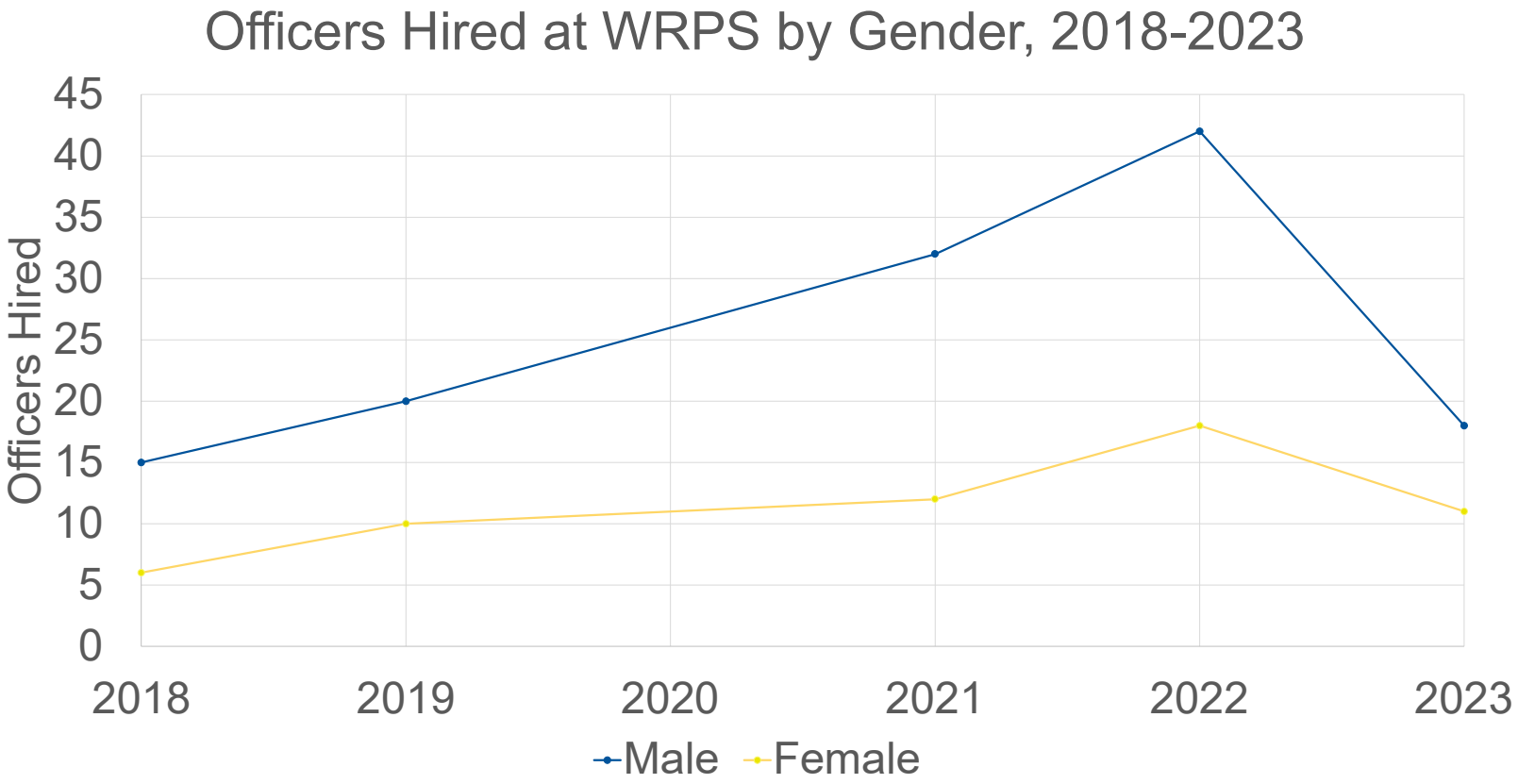
Integrating an evidence-based approach

- Must collect our own data to have any chance at figuring out:
  - Where we are at
  - How we can improve

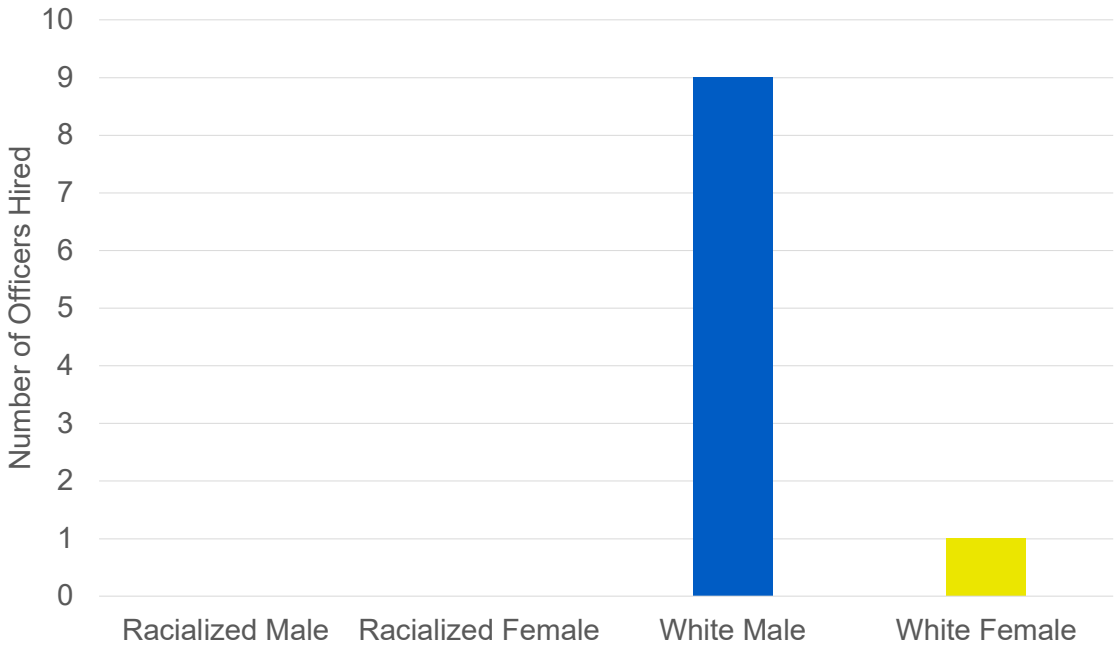
- Specifically, we need data at key decision-making points within recruitment

The context at WRPS

- We have been tracking our male vs. female hiring disparity through the years



And then in 2024, we hired a class that was entirely White, and 90% male



The context at WRPS

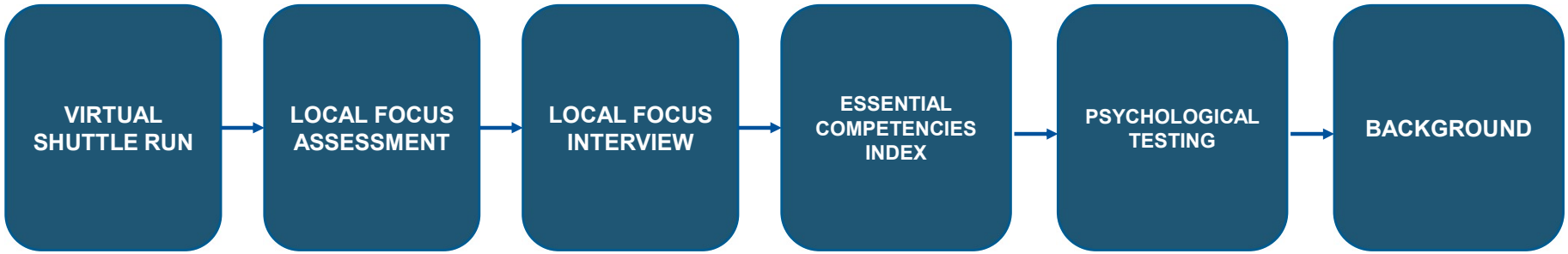
- After the hiring of this most recent class, we needed to dig deeper into the data

- We worked with our HR team to collect perceived race and gender data for the most recent, and then subsequent, classes

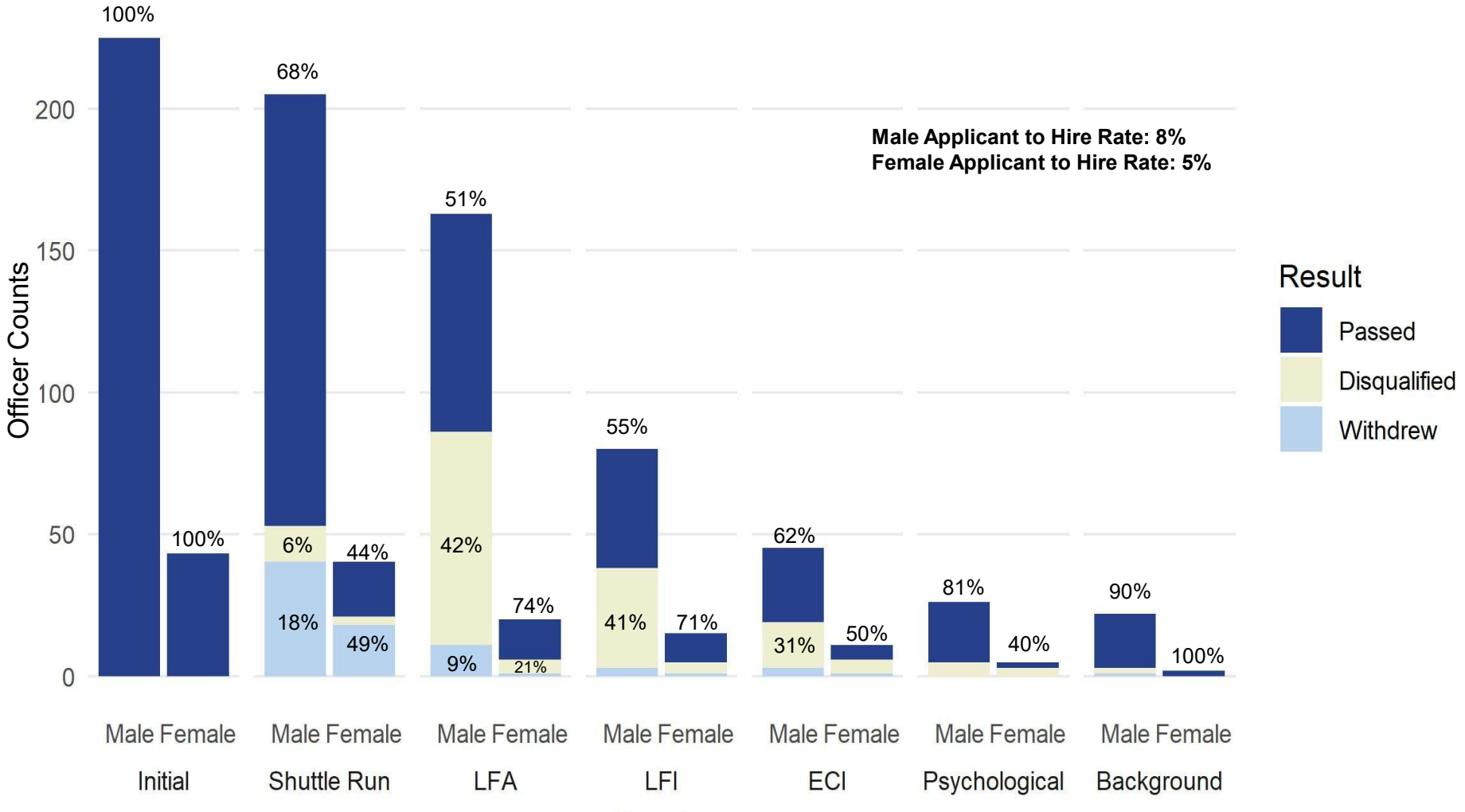
Police Recruitment: Decision-Making Points

- However, just looking at the final class tells us very little
- Just like all of policing, recruitment involves multiple decision-making points

The Recruitment Process



Males vs. Females through the recruitment pipeline



Findings

- We had more than 5 times the number of male applicants as female applicants (225 vs. 43)

- Females were less likely to advance past the Shuttle Run as compared to males
  - However, this is largely due to withdrawals, not disqualifications

Issue 1: Not enough female applicants

Male-dominated culture

No proactive recruitment

No family-friendly programs

Cordner & Cordner (2025)

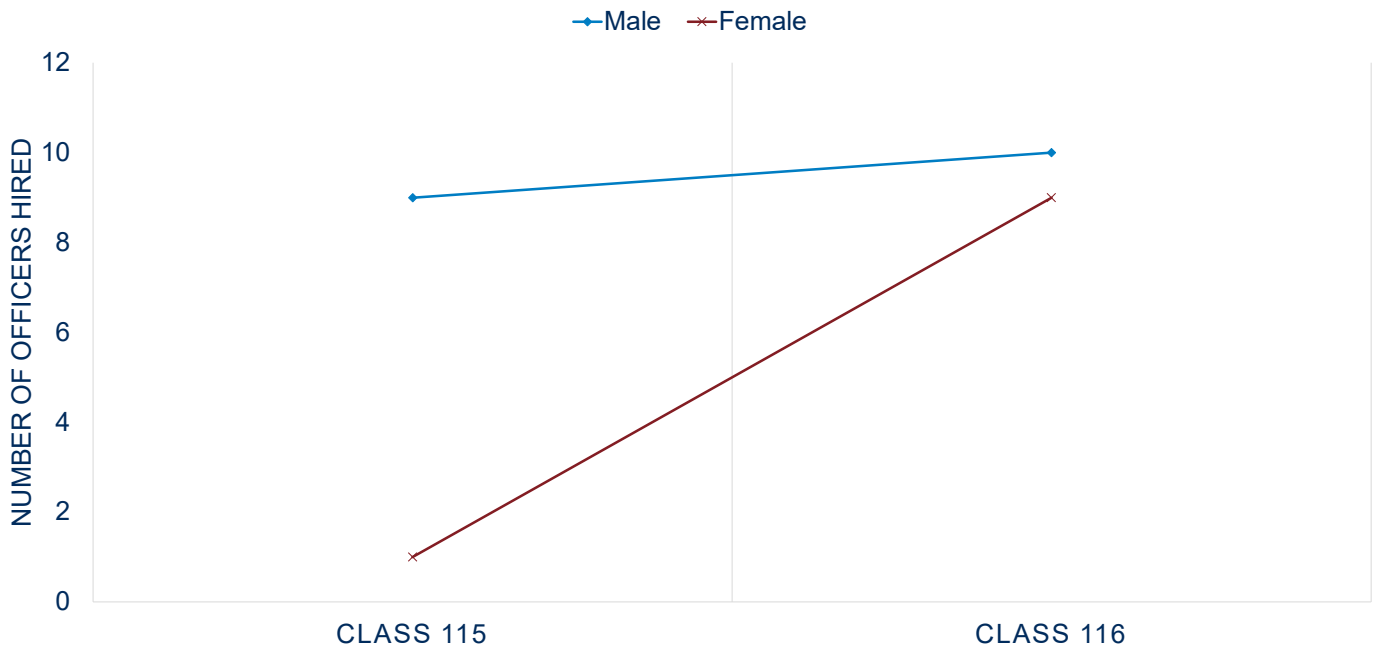
Issue 2: The Shuttle Run

- We observe the greatest disparate gender drop-off rate at the Shuttle Run

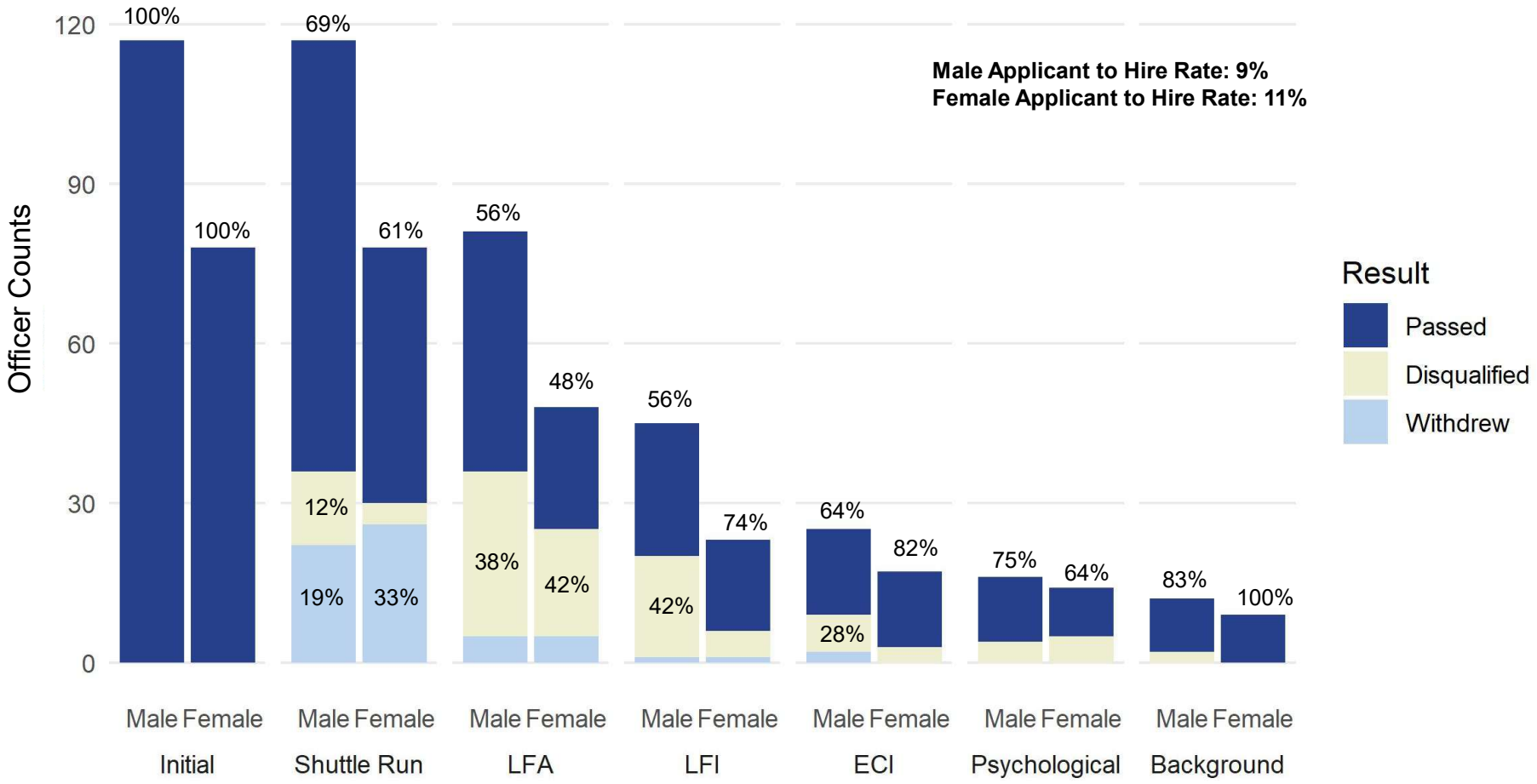
Women in Policing
SHUTTLE RUN &
MENTORSHIP
Program
Weekly sessions
start mid-April
Apply
Now

POLICE
APPLY
NOW
Begins April 2025
Police Headquarters
WOMEN IN POLICING:
SHUTTLE RUN & MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Afterwards, we see parity in our male and female hiring numbers!

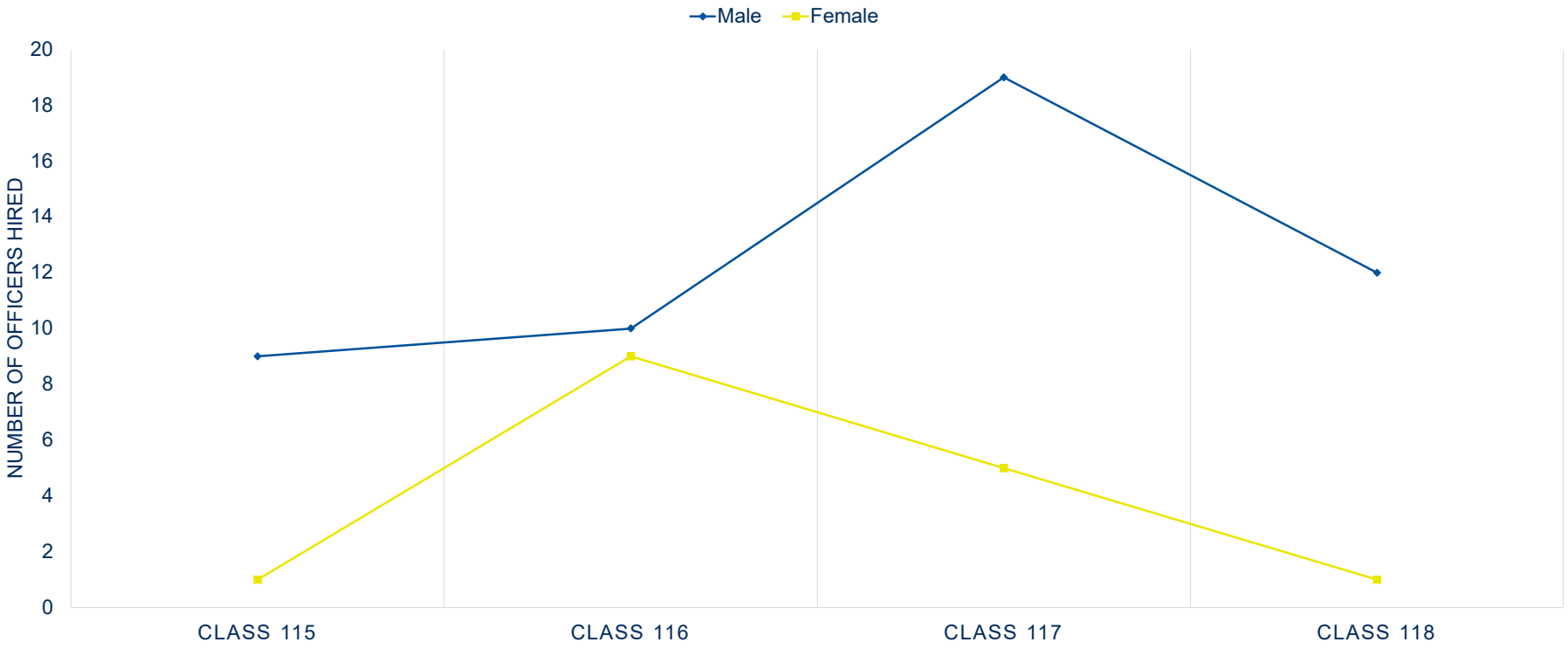


Male vs. Female Recruitment after Shuttle Run Training Program Launch

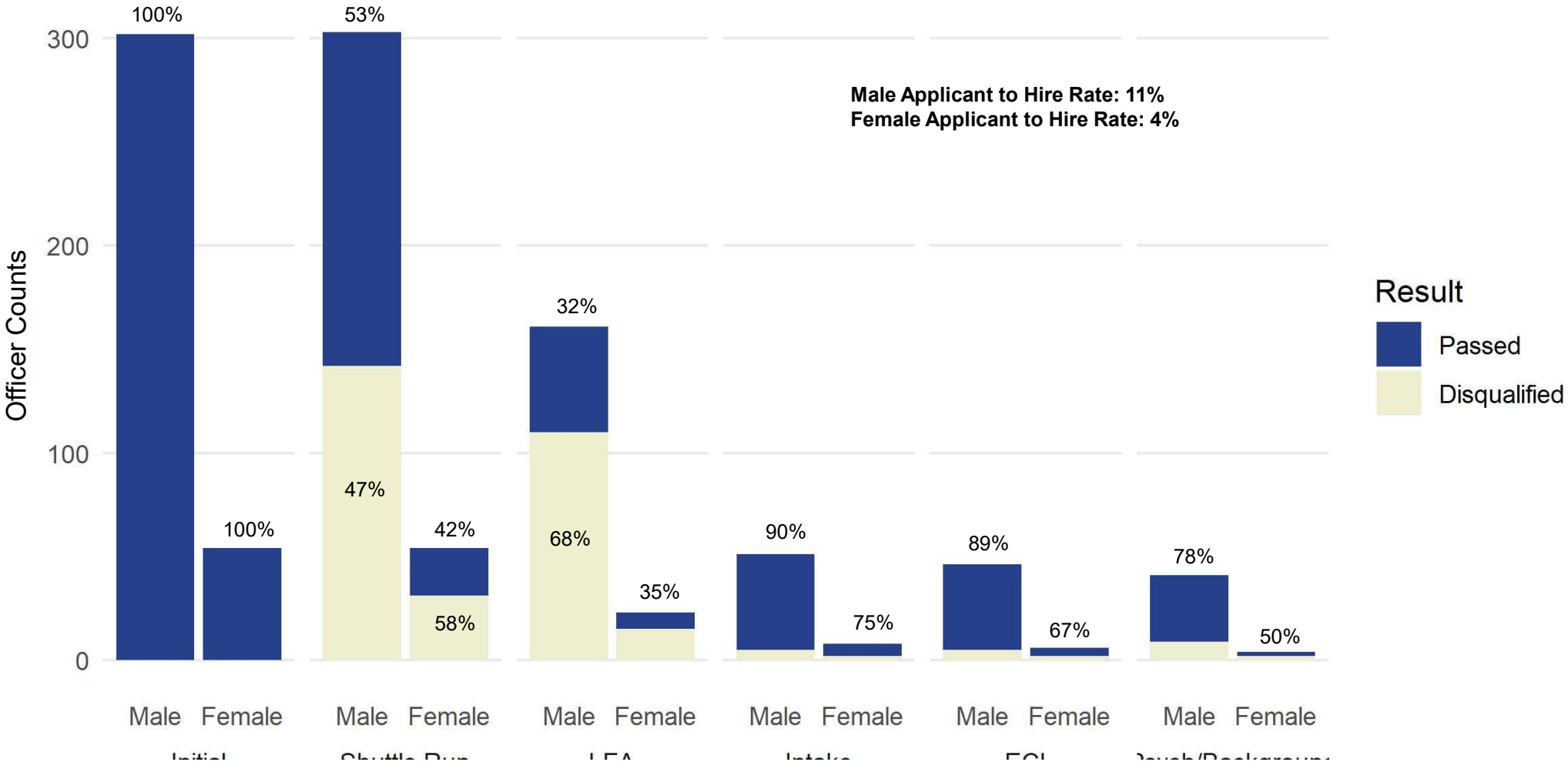


A victory for evidence-based policing!

Except…


Male
Female
NUMBER OF OFFICERS HIRED
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
CLASS 115
CLASS 116
CLASS 117
CLASS 118

Males vs. Females through the recruitment pipeline



Findings

- We had almost 6 times as many male applicants as female applicants (302 vs. 54)

- No significant difference in drop-off rate between males and females at the Shuttle Run, largely due to males being less successful at this stage
  - No withdrawal data for 2025

Proactive recruitment not enough

- In WRPS' example, we addressed one of the key findings highlighted by Cordner & Cordner (2025): proactive recruitment
- This led to immediate improvement, but not long-term change
- This may be impacted by the effect of novelty on advertising (Hadija et al., 2012)
- We must address cultural and psychological barriers to women in policing

Lessons from Social Psychology

Addressing Stereotype Threat

- Advertise only the most required aspects of the job (Glastonbury et al., 2020)
- Diversify who is recruiting and interviewing candidates (Glastonbury et al., 2020)
- Avoid gendered language in job advertisements (Gaucher et al., 2011; Wille & Derous, 2018)

Embracing Diversity

- Have diversity advocates at all levels of management (Ginsberg & Abrahamson, 1991)
- Have them *speak* to the importance of diversity (Lindsay & Dharmani, 2022)
- Highlight social responsibility as an organizational value (Zeone et al., 2021)

Organizational Change

- Address what aspects of your culture are “male-centric” (Bikos, 2016)
- Respond to feedback when it is brought forward
- Use advertisements that illustrate how the career is steeped in community (Salwender & Stahlberg, 2023)

Final Takeaways

- Female-focused recruitment tactics had short-term, but not long-term, success on female officer recruitment and hiring
- Next steps will include addressing cultural and psychological barriers that women may feel related to policing
- Eventually, we want to look at the next phases of recruitment
- Evidence-based policing:
  - Use the best evidence available
  - Research is evidence! Use it to drive programs
  - Null results matter!

Thank You

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Questions?

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