

Chili Chat

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Cornell University
Employee Assembly

Report and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

The intent of this series of forums was to discover the reasons why some staff had difficulty using their vacation time. Each forum was an hour long held at one of the following locations: Geneva, East Hill Plaza, Statler, Veterinary Medical Center, Robert Purcell Community Center, and Willard Straight Hall. Lunch was provided.

The following questions were asked:

1. Other than wages and benefits, what keeps you motivated at work?
2. What is the biggest obstacle to taking your vacation (or using your vacation time)?
3. How do you leave work 'at work' while on vacation?

Responses from 400 Participants yielded 1145 replies to all three questions asked. The results indicated that other than wages and benefits, communication and positive interaction between coworkers create the most effective motivating environment for employees to work in. Similarly increased communication and support of coworkers is needed to decrease work overload and guild expressed by employees when vacation or sick time is used.

Three objectives will result from this data. First, the results will be presented to Cornell staff via this document. Second, recommendations will be made based on these results to present to administrators. The final objective will be to present the findings and recommendations to Cornell Trustees and executives.

Analysis of the results

Question 1: It was found that what motivates staff the most is coworkers, other people, and the workplace. This indicates that it is important to be able to interact with others during work in an agreeable work environment. Following closely, staff is motivated by a sense of pride, accomplishment, and the feeling they are doing something worthwhile. It is interesting to note that there are very few responses by people citing students and customers as motivation. The results from each individual location matched closely with the average results.

Question 2: It was found, by far, that the biggest reason that staff has trouble taking vacation is due to workload and lack of coverage. This suggests that it would be beneficial for staff to communicate with coworkers/supervisors to schedule vacation and to have staff available to cover workloads while on vacation. Based on the responses received, it was found that less than 1% of staff said they had no trouble taking vacation time; clearly this is an issue that must be considered.

Question 3: It was found the best way to stop thinking about work while on vacation is to leave behind all communication devices (such as phones, laptops, email, etc.) and to plan ahead. It is interesting to note that in Geneva, the largest response is having

something fun to do while on vacation. Note also that Robert Purcell Community Center may seem to have very divergent totals, but this was a result of a low number of responses.

Recommendations

- **Vacation calendars for departments and better planning for vacation time in general.** This will improve communication between staff about their vacation plans and make it easier to prepare for vacations. Workload, lack of coverage, guilt, timing, and coworkers accounted for a vast majority of the obstacles to taking vacations or using vacation time. Planning ahead for this by improving communication between coworkers, for example by using a vacation calendar, would help alleviate some of the obstacles.
- **A small group meeting (informal) to discuss concerns or items that need attention.** As mentioned above, this would improve communication between coworkers and make planning for vacations easier.
- **Temp Pool – especially in manual labor areas.** This was suggested by quite a few staff, and would help with the lack of coverage and would reduce the pile of work that employees would come back to after vacation. This option would be the most realistic for jobs that don't require specialized training.
- **Improve cross training and back up plans by supervisors.** Cross training will improve the feeling of comfort while on vacation, knowing someone is taking on one's responsibilities.
- **Midwinter day off – Martin Luther King Day.** There's a five-month period between the holiday break and Memorial Day. Having a day off in that period may give staff a nice breather.
- **Reinforce spending co-worker time together through forums, workplace informals, special events – plan and support these events.** Having these things planned for staff will make it easier for them to connect.
- **Better non-tangible supervisor employee recognition effort and other ways to value, respect and recognize each other.** Staff said that a sense of accomplishment, pride, recognition, contributing to the greater good, and a sense of doing good were all very important motivators for them to come to work (about 30%). Staff are more motivated when they receive recognition for doing their jobs well.

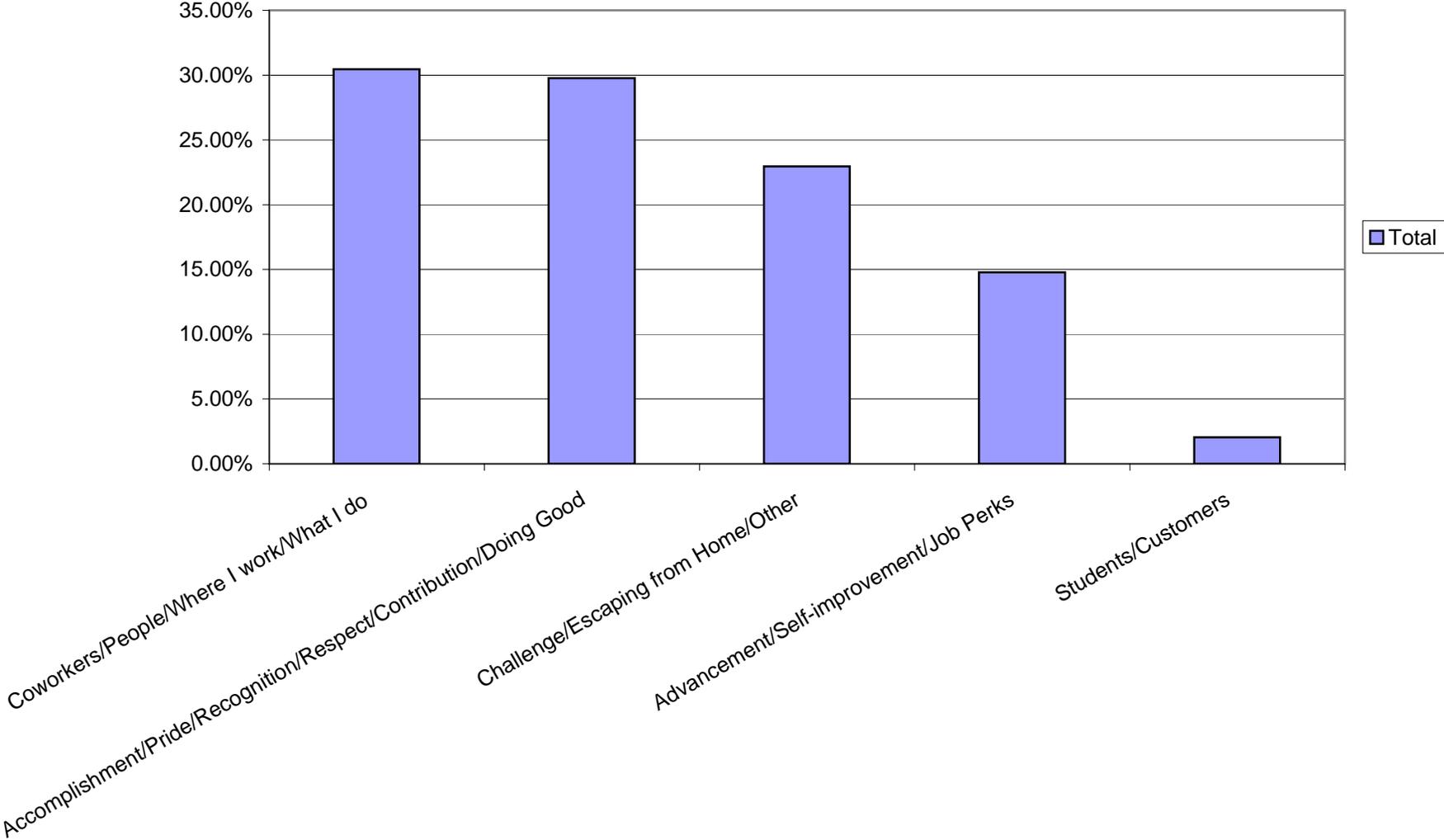
Timeline

Report and Recommendations	October, 2006
Tip of the Month pamphlet for supervisors and staff (to be distributed through email, pawprint, and other mediums). Implementation of other recommendations.	October through January, 2006
Forums for Supervisors	February through April, 2007

Reading the charts

The charts are divided into three sections, one for each question. The first page has a chart with the results for that question with a combined average for all six locations. Each bar on the chart indicates the percent of responses corresponding with a particular response (i.e. 9% of people said that Lack of Money was their main obstacle to taking vacations). The second page shows the average results in a table with the percentage of responses per location. Additionally, it averages all six locations combined, matching the chart on the first page. Pages three through eight show the charts for each of the six locations. The blue bar shows the percentage of responses for each location. The red bar shows the overall responses from all six locations for comparison purposes.

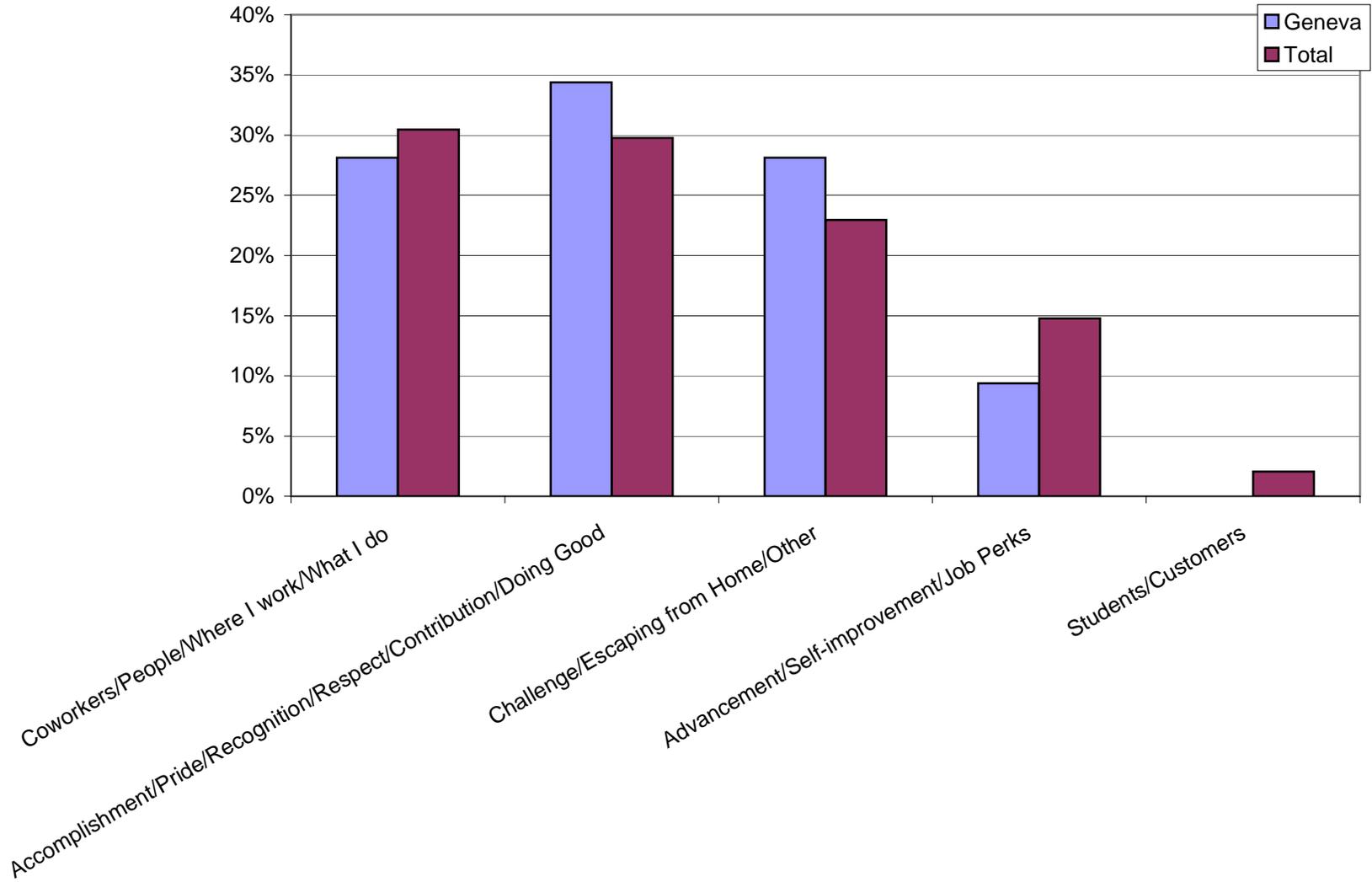
Question 1 Average Results
Other than Wages and Benefits, what keeps you motivated at work?



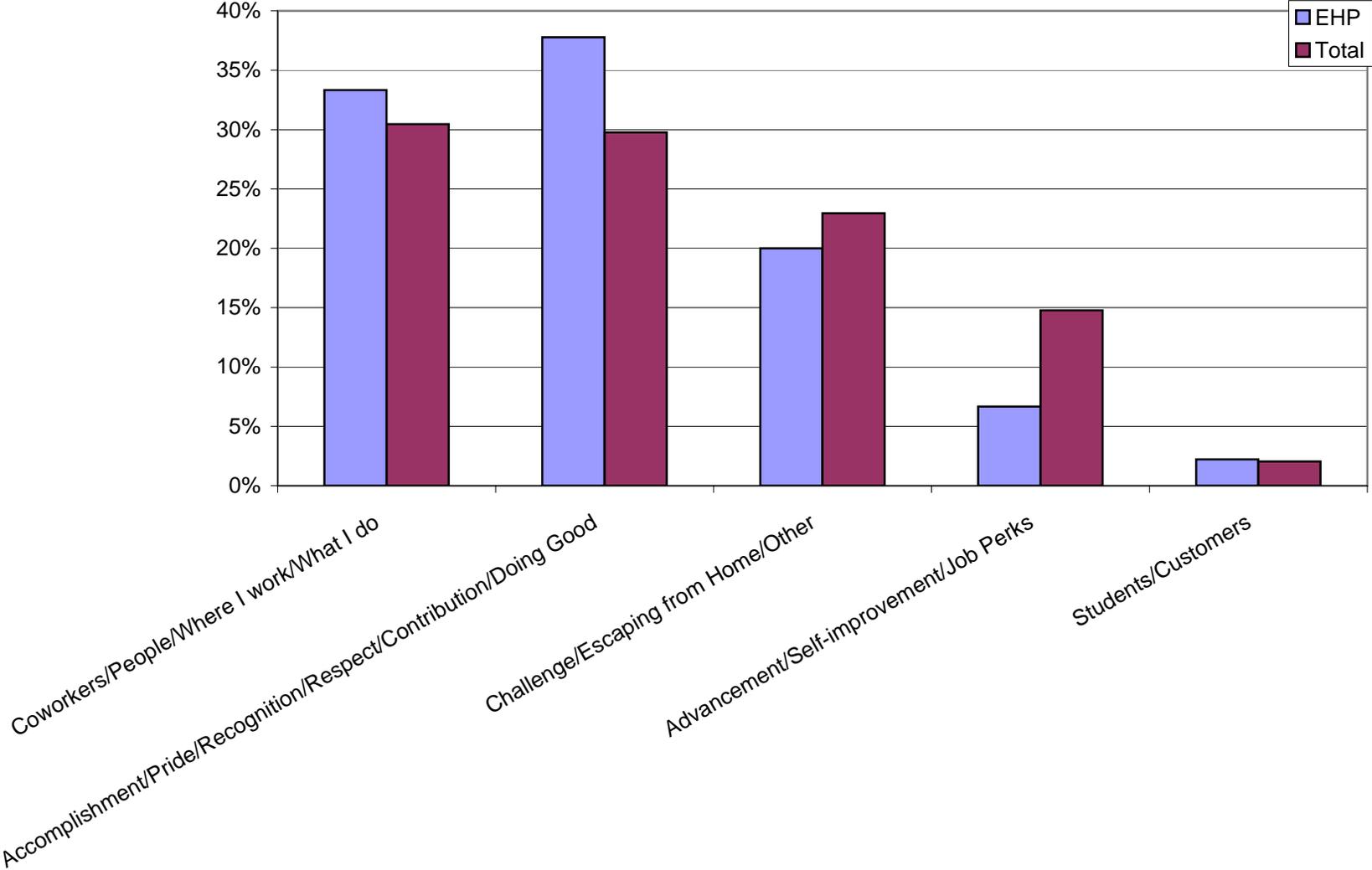
Question 1 - Other than wages and benefits, what keeps you motivated at work?

	Geneva	EHP	Statler	VMC	RPCC	WSH	Total
Coworkers/People/Where I work/What I do Accomplishment/Pride/Recognition/ Respect/Contribution/Doing Good	28.13%	33.33%	34.95%	30.60%	25.00%	26.36%	30.45%
Challenge/Escaping from Home/Other	34.38%	37.78%	33.01%	26.12%	31.25%	26.36%	29.77%
Advancement/Self-improvement/Job Perks	28.13%	20.00%	18.45%	20.90%	25.00%	29.09%	22.95%
Students/Customers	9.38%	6.67%	11.65%	21.64%	12.50%	14.55%	14.77%
	0.00%	2.22%	1.94%	0.75%	6.25%	3.64%	2.05%

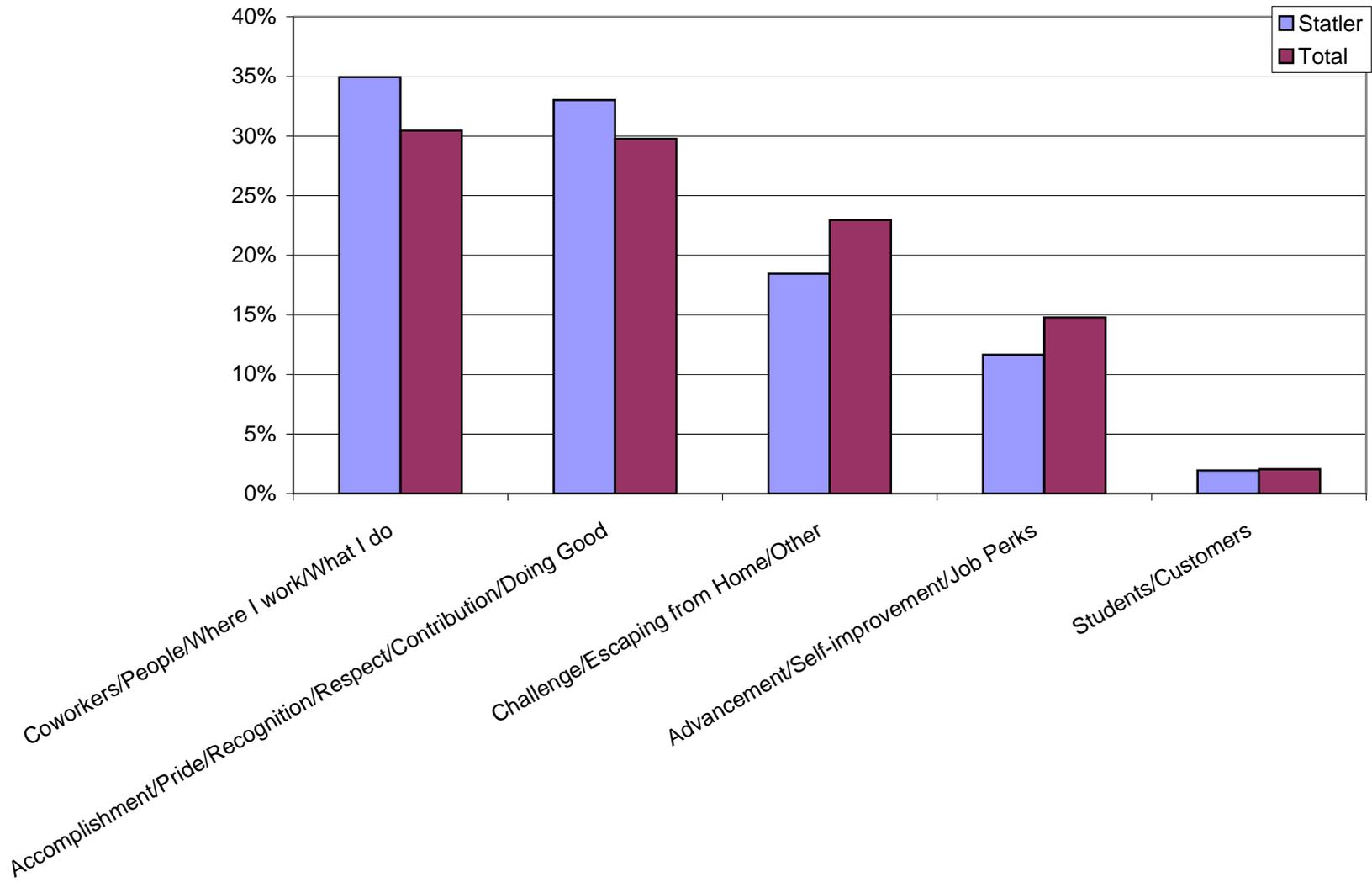
Geneva



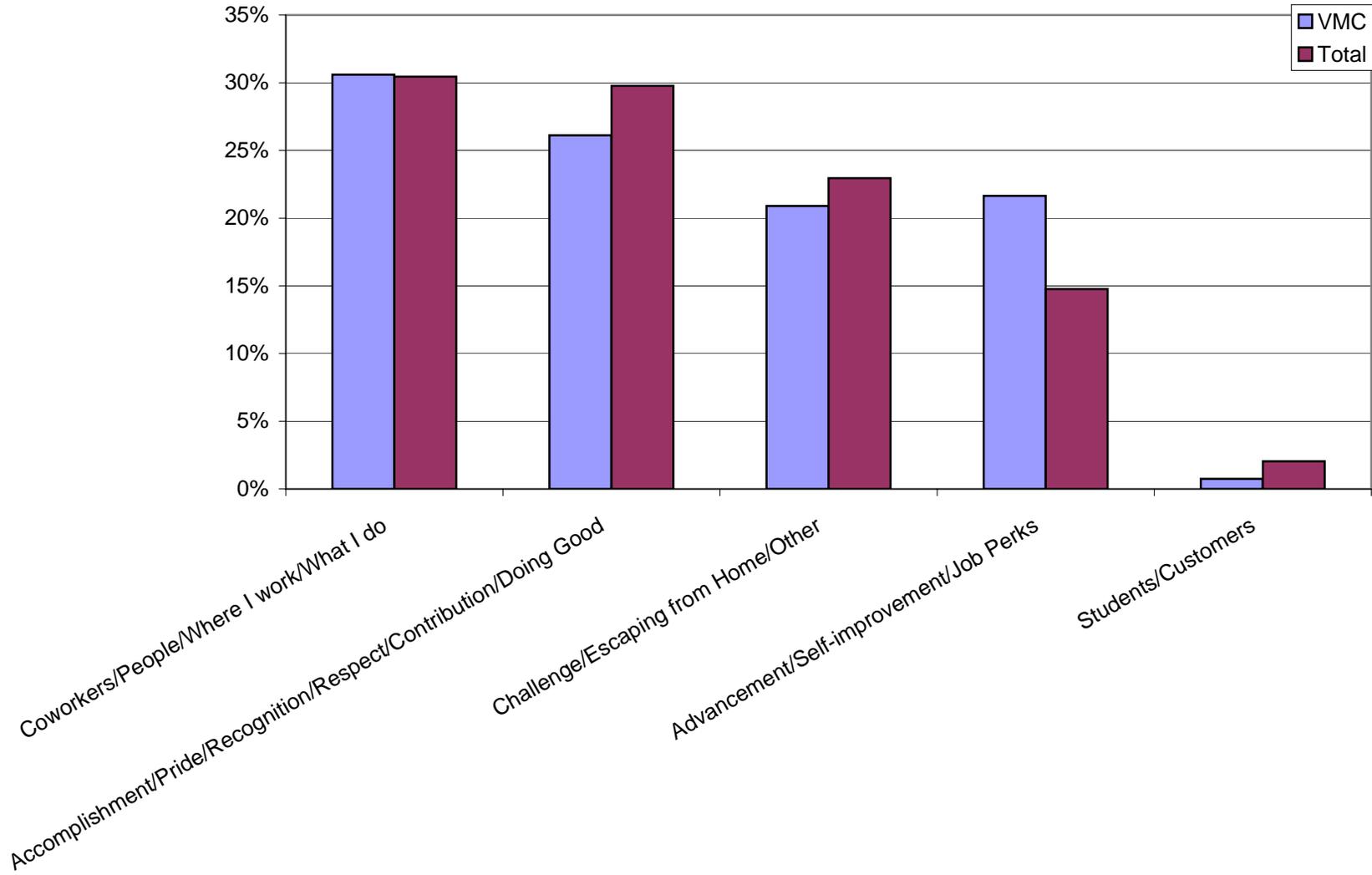
EHP



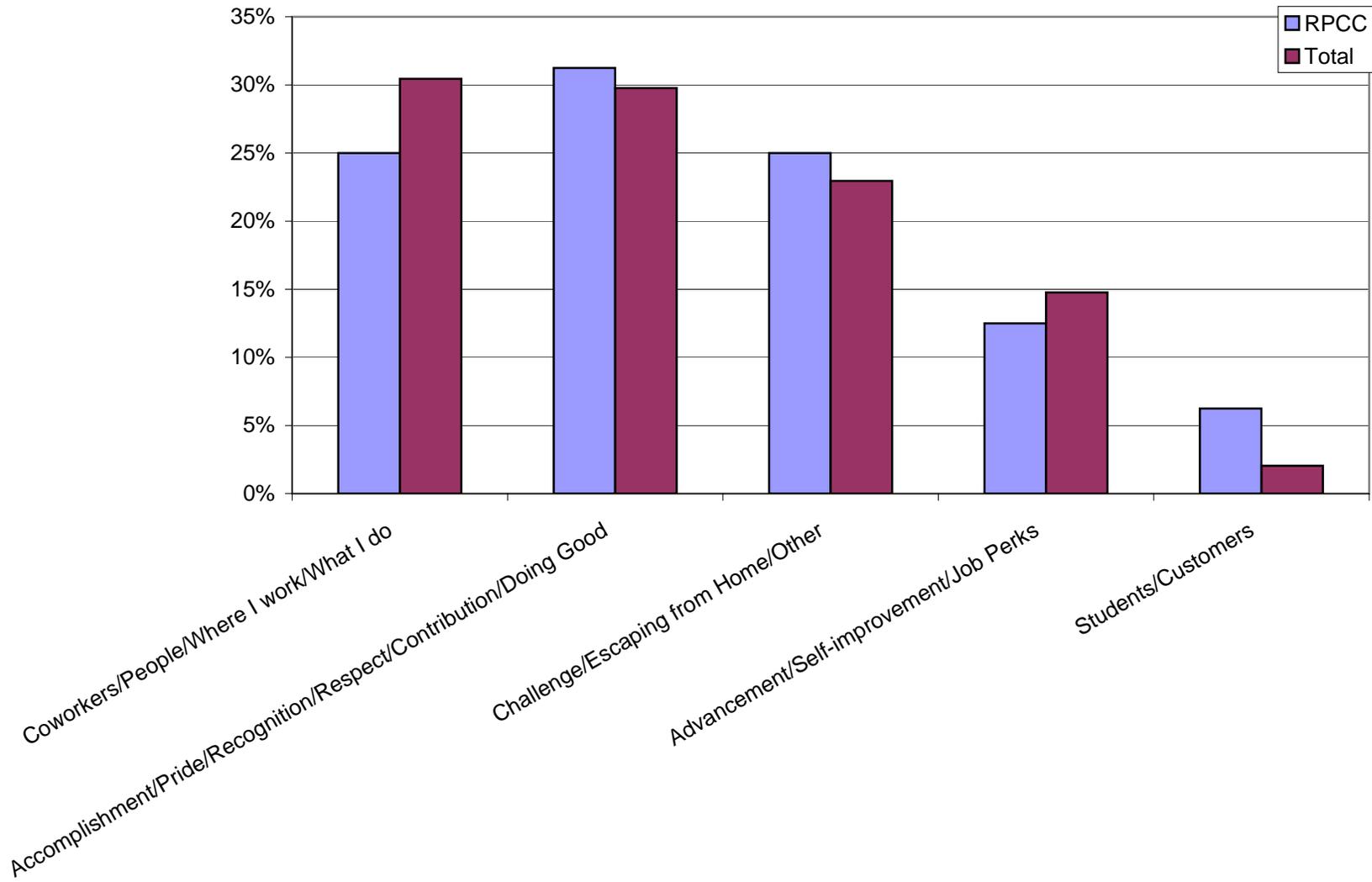
Statler



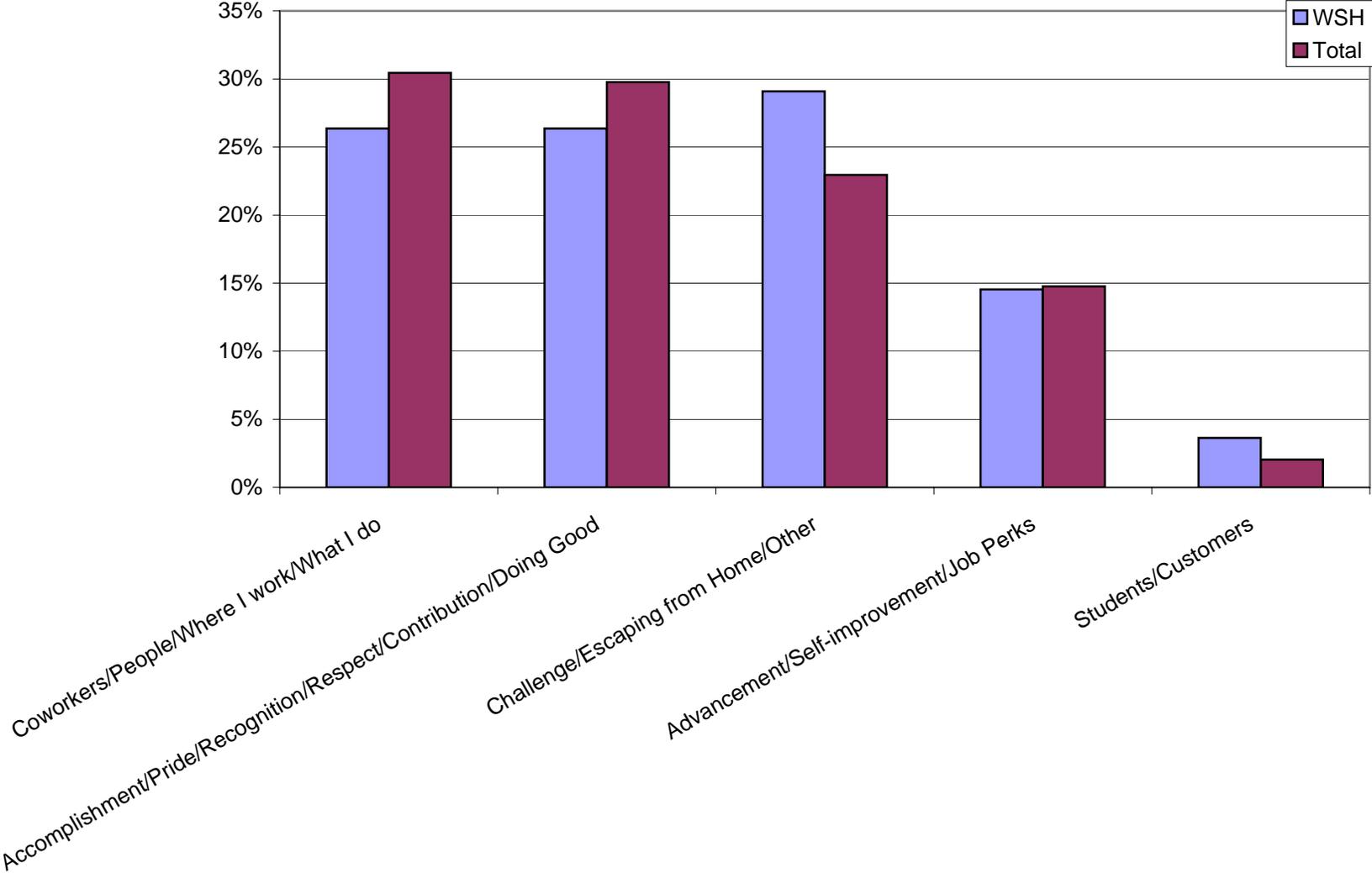
VMC



RPCC

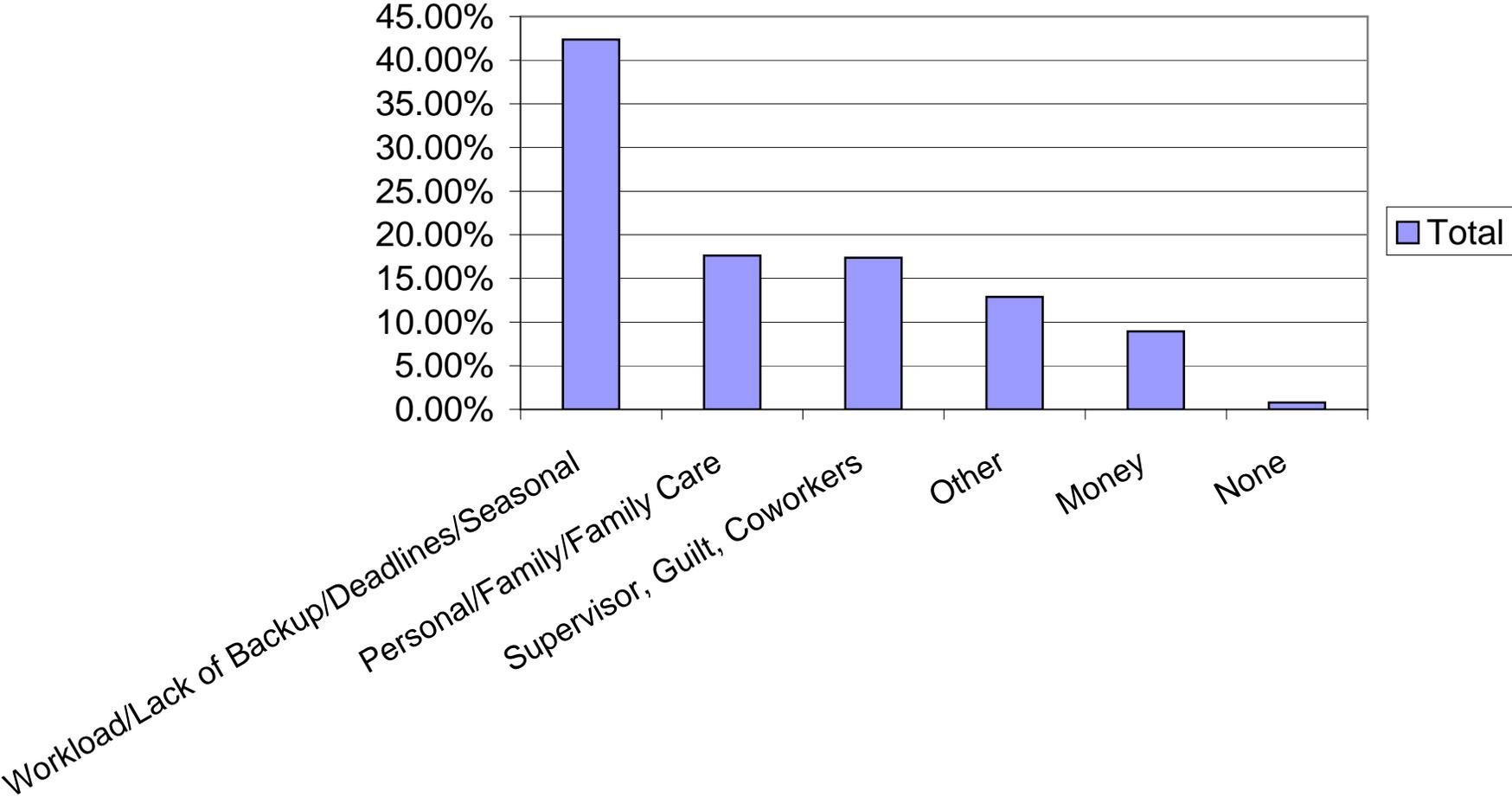


WSH



Question 2 Average Results

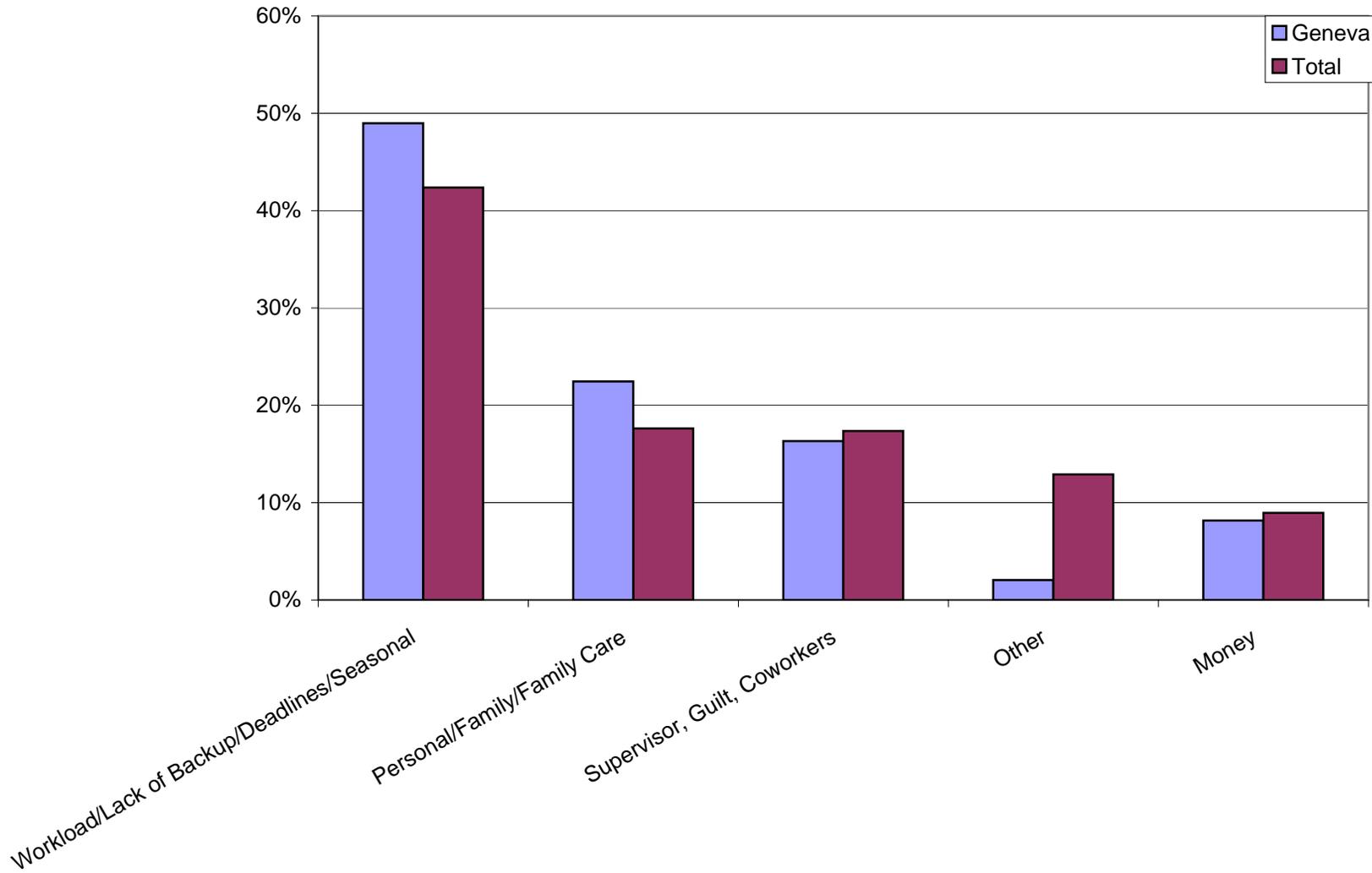
What is the biggest obstacle to taking your vacation (or using your vacation time)?



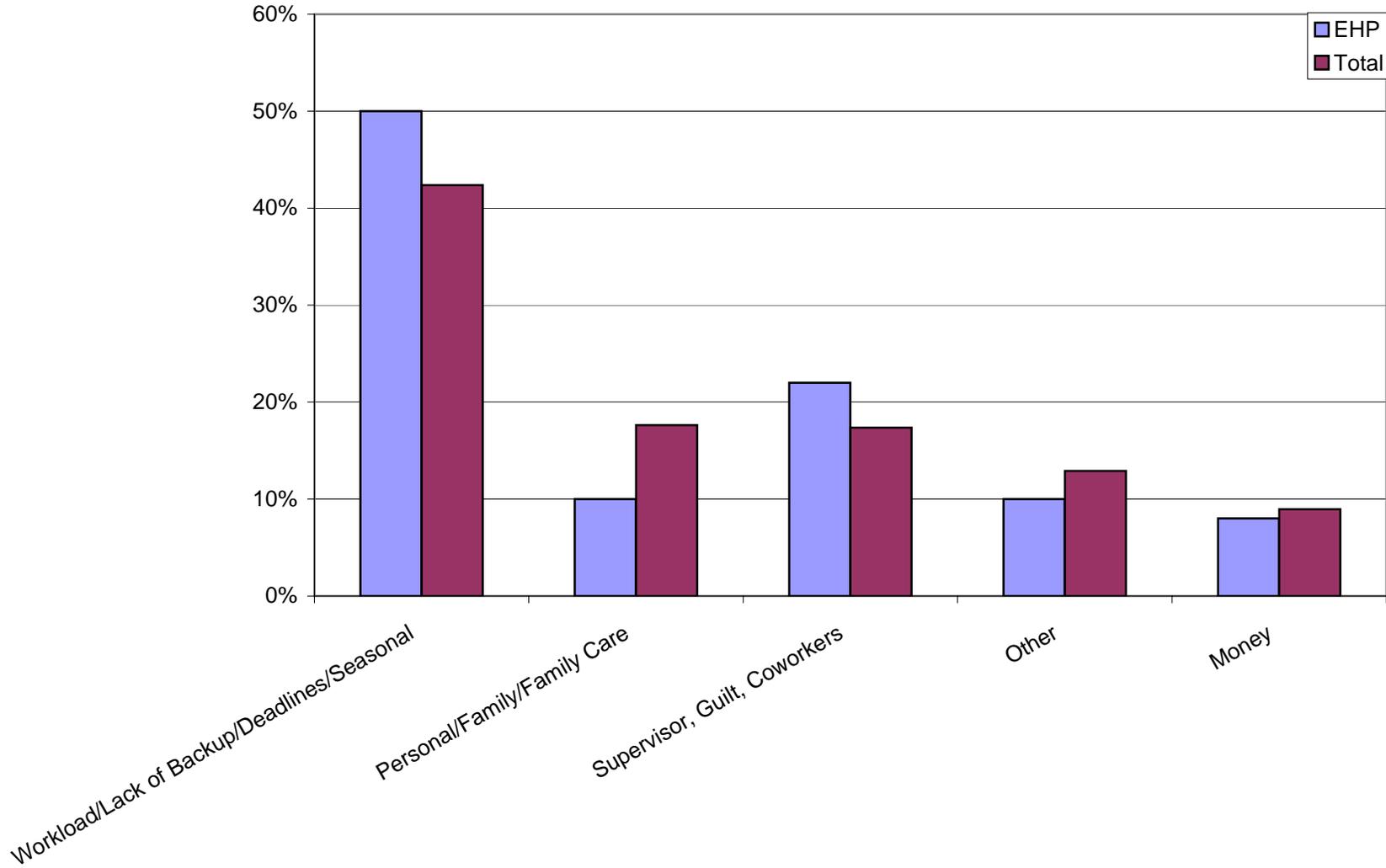
Question 2 - What is the biggest obstacle to taking your vacation (or using your vacation time)?

	Geneva	EHP	Statler	VMC	RPCC	WSH	Total
Workload/ Lack of Backup/ Deadlines/ Seasonal	48.98%	50.00%	42.17%	39.58%	42.86%	37.23%	42.37%
Personal/Family/Family Care	22.45%	10.00%	16.87%	17.71%	14.29%	20.21%	17.63%
Supervisor, Guilt, Coworkers	16.33%	22.00%	15.66%	16.67%	28.57%	17.02%	17.37%
Other	2.04%	10.00%	16.87%	17.71%	0.00%	12.77%	12.89%
Lack of Money	8.16%	8.00%	7.23%	7.29%	14.29%	12.77%	8.95%
None	2.04%	0.00%	1.20%	1.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.79%

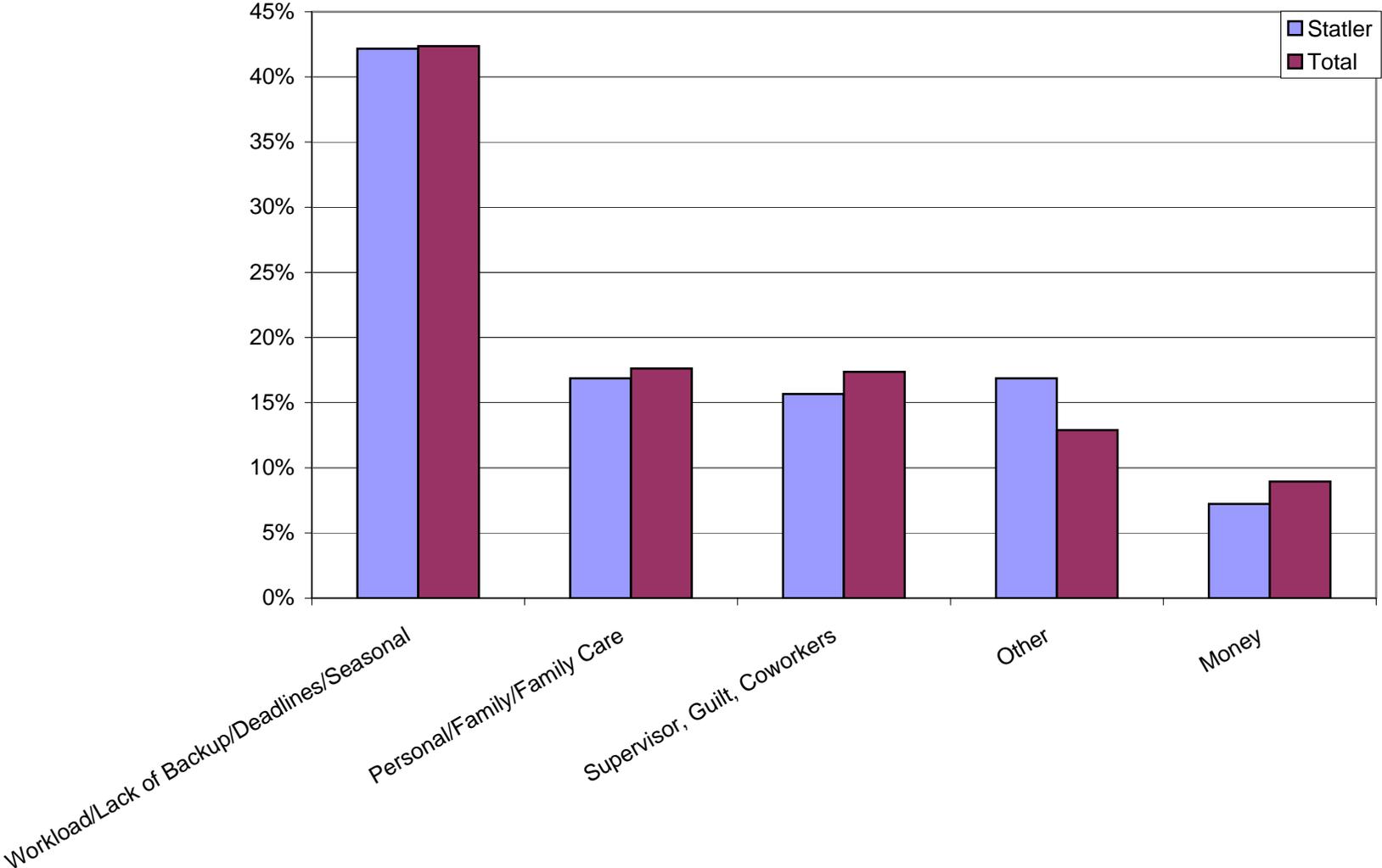
Geneva



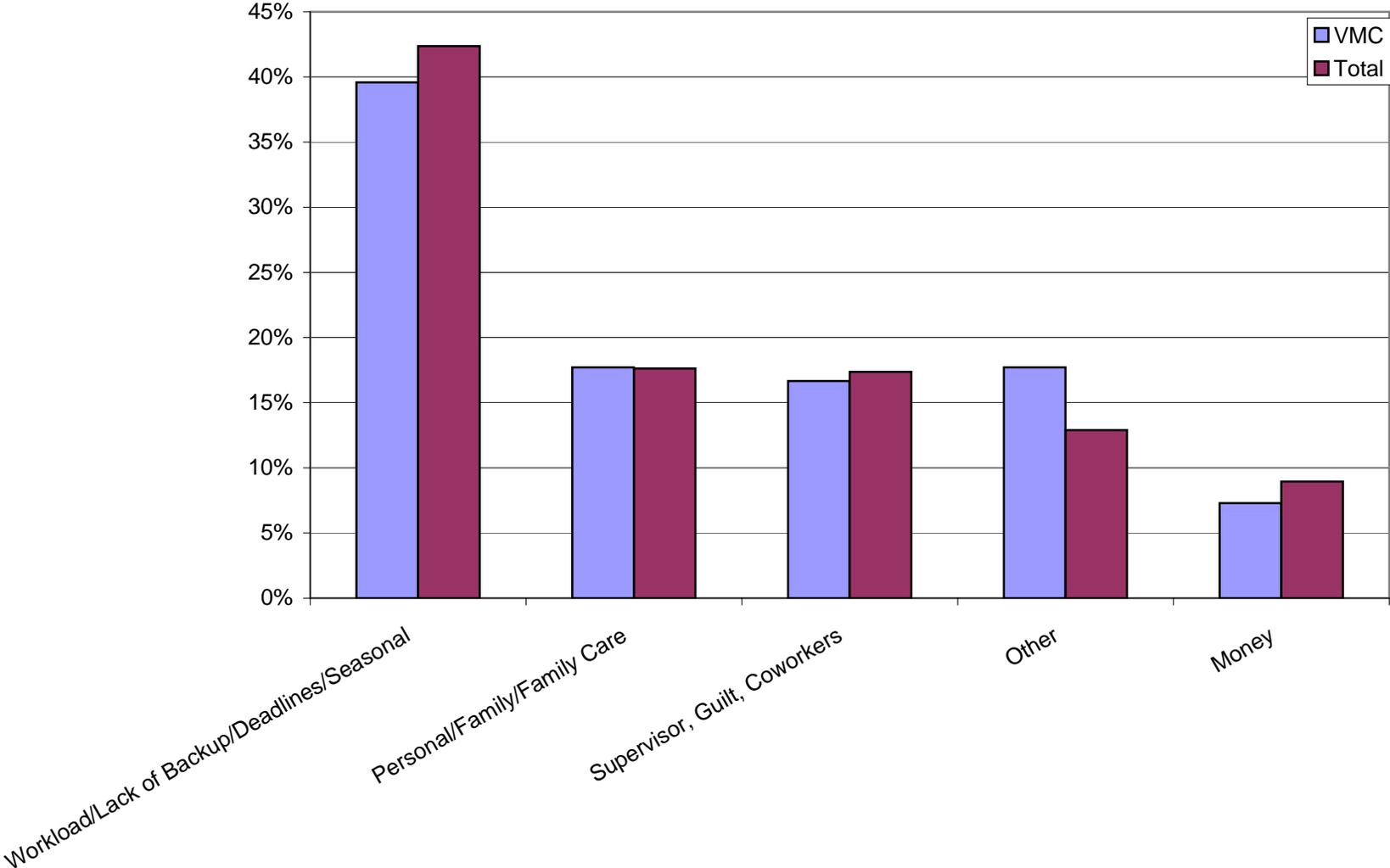
EHP



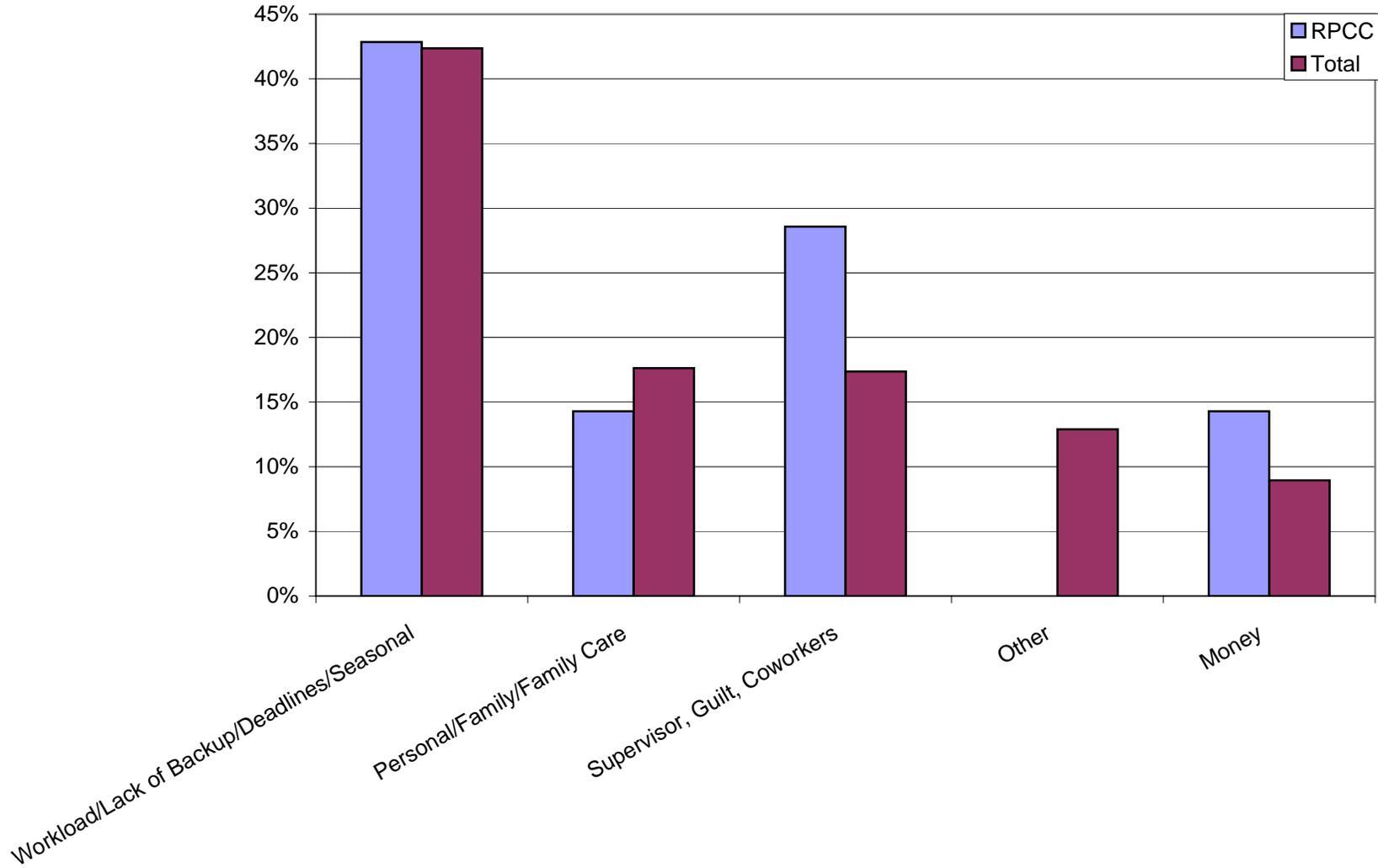
Statler



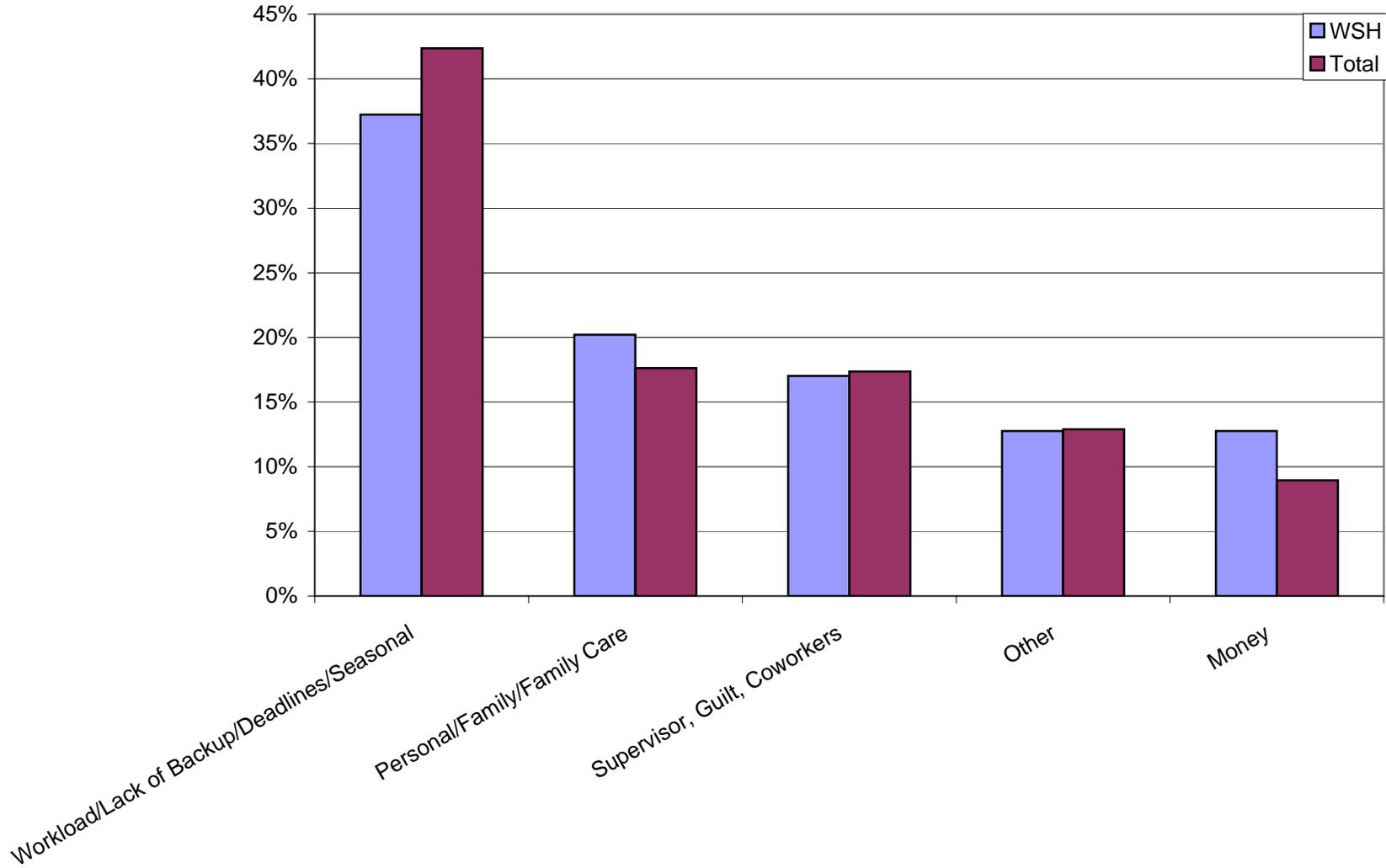
VMC



RPCC

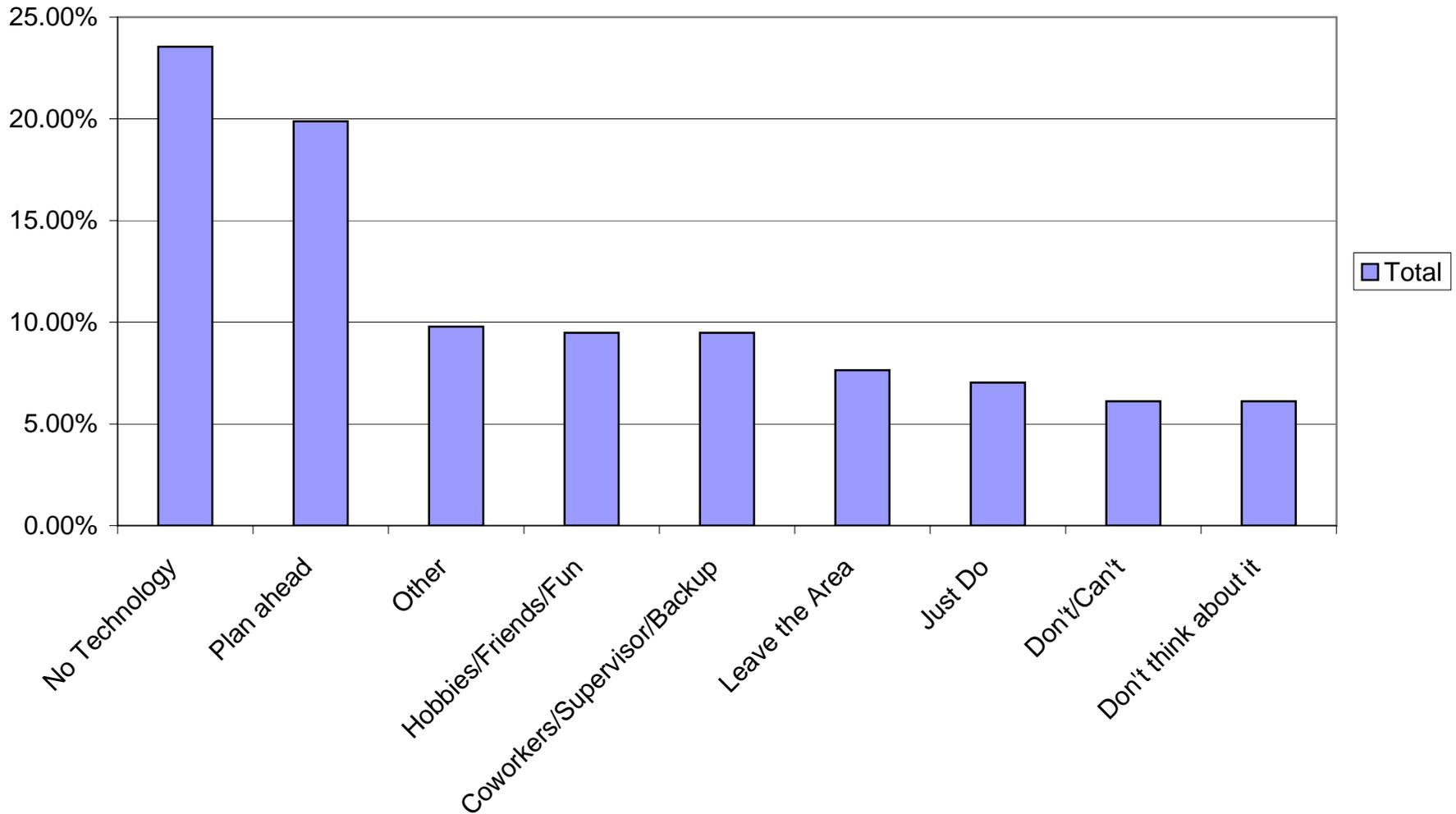


WSH



Question 3 Average Results

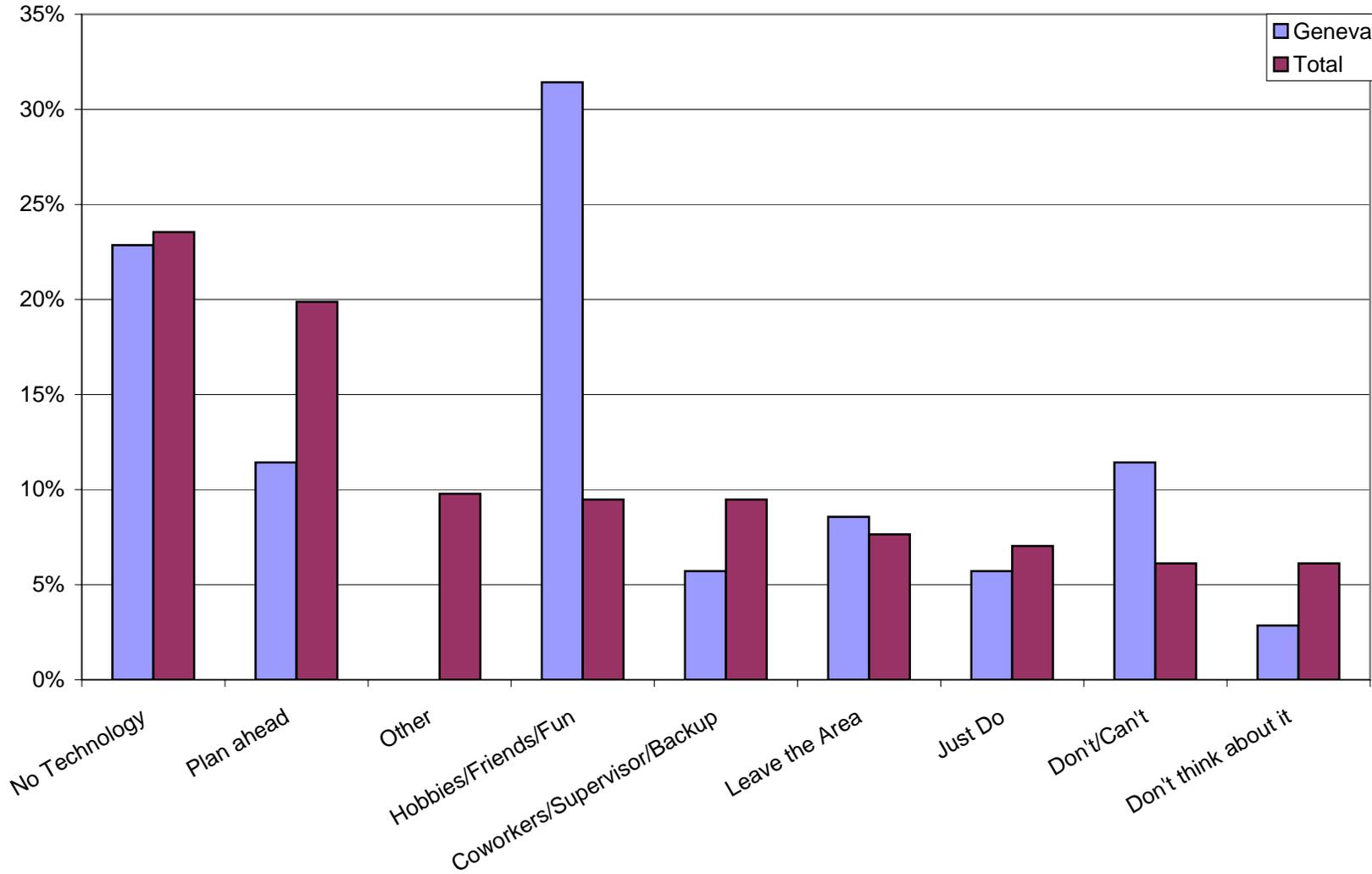
How do you leave work 'at work' while on vacation?



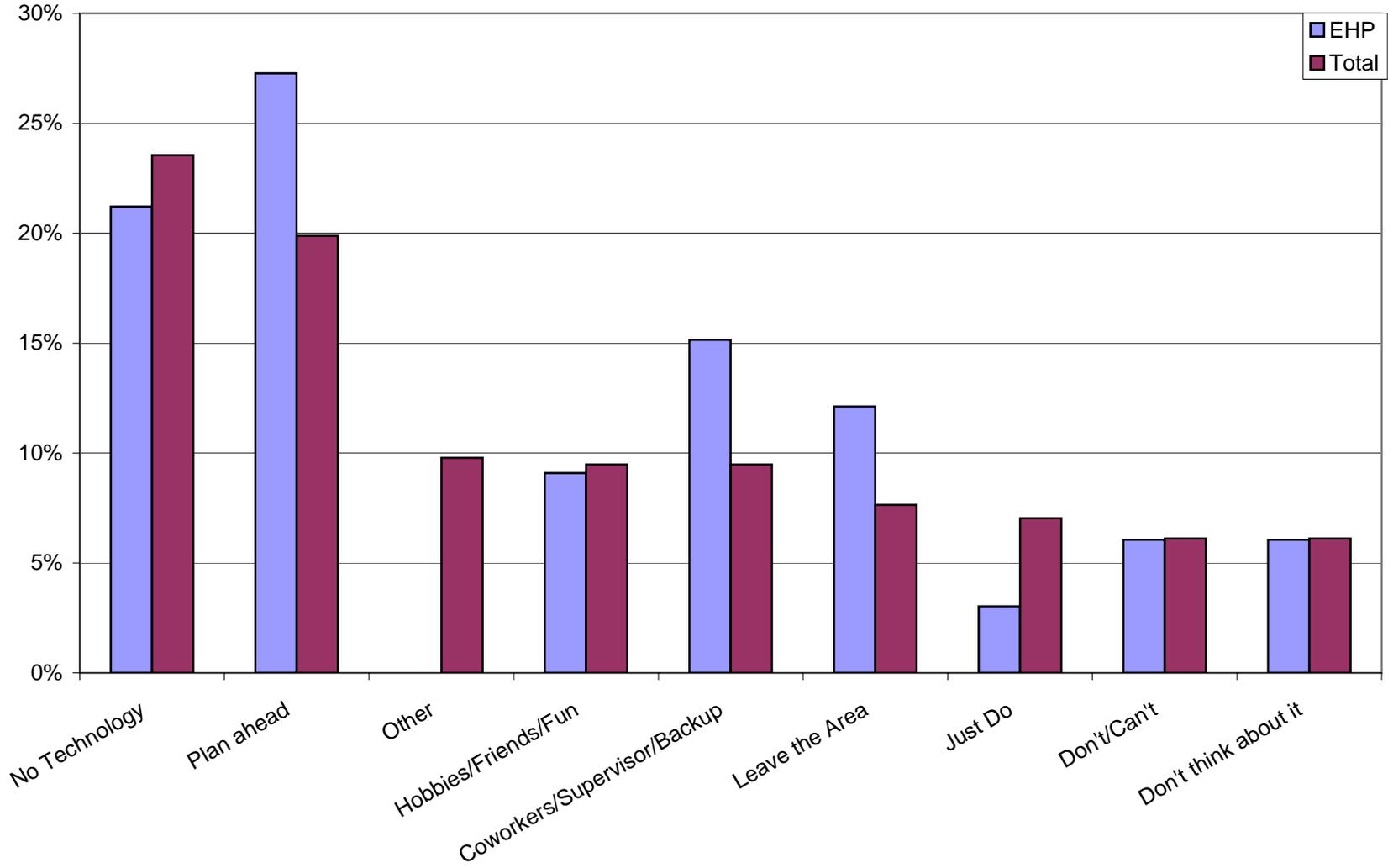
Question 3 - How do you leave work 'at work' while on vacation?

	Geneva	EHP	Statler	VMC	RPCC	WSH	Total
No Technology	22.86%	21.21%	24.42%	20.78%	0.00%	28.74%	23.55%
Plan ahead	11.43%	27.27%	25.58%	14.29%	16.67%	20.69%	19.88%
Other	0.00%	0.00%	13.95%	14.29%	0.00%	10.34%	9.79%
Hobbies/Friends/Fun	31.43%	9.09%	3.49%	9.09%	16.67%	6.90%	9.48%
Coworkers/Supervisor/Backup	5.71%	15.15%	16.28%	7.79%	0.00%	4.60%	9.48%
Leave the Area	8.57%	12.12%	3.49%	5.19%	16.67%	11.49%	7.65%
Just Do	5.71%	3.03%	2.33%	11.69%	16.67%	9.20%	7.03%
Don't/Can't	11.43%	6.06%	5.81%	9.09%	16.67%	1.15%	6.12%
Don't think about it	2.86%	6.06%	4.65%	7.79%	16.67%	6.90%	6.12%

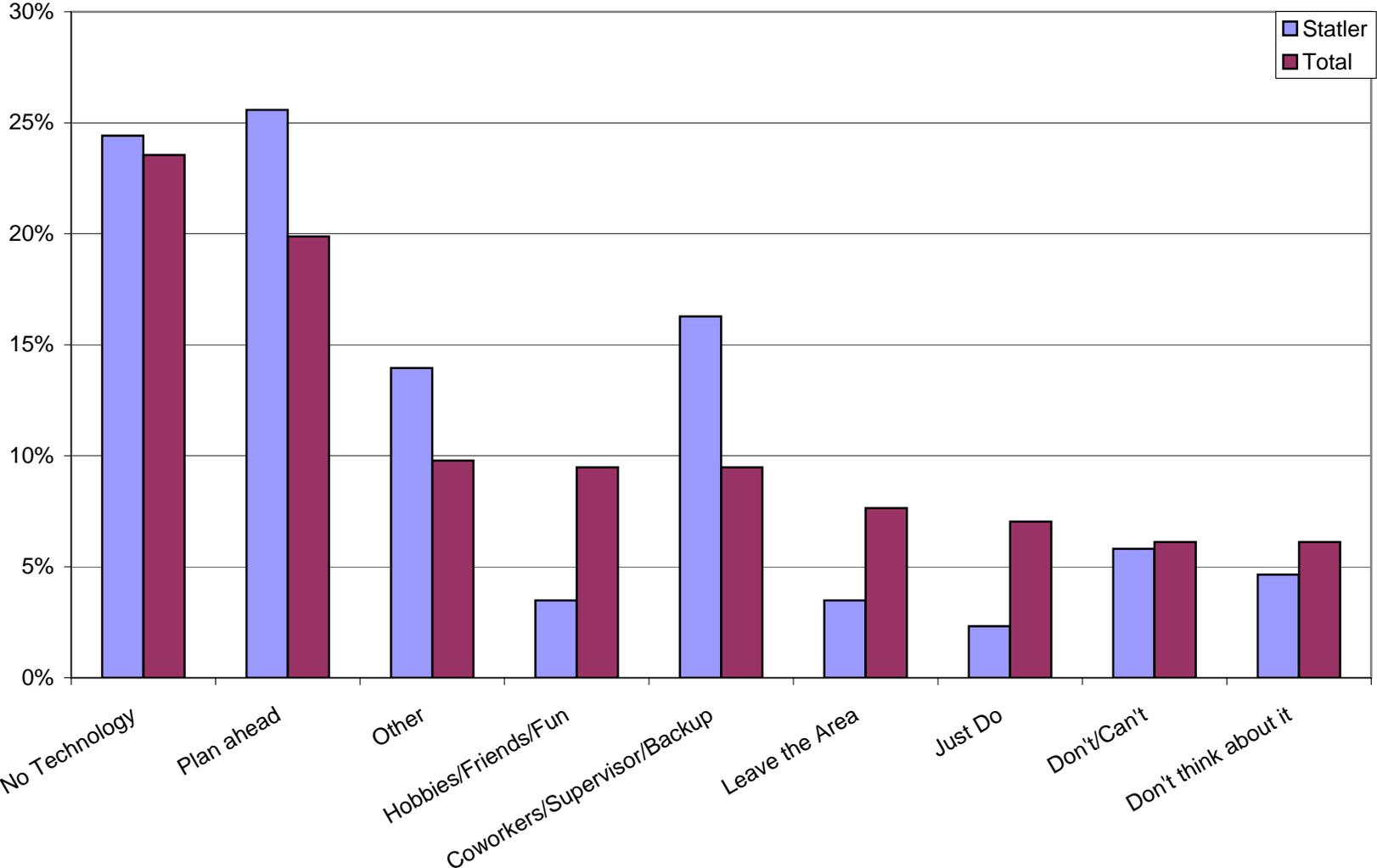
Geneva



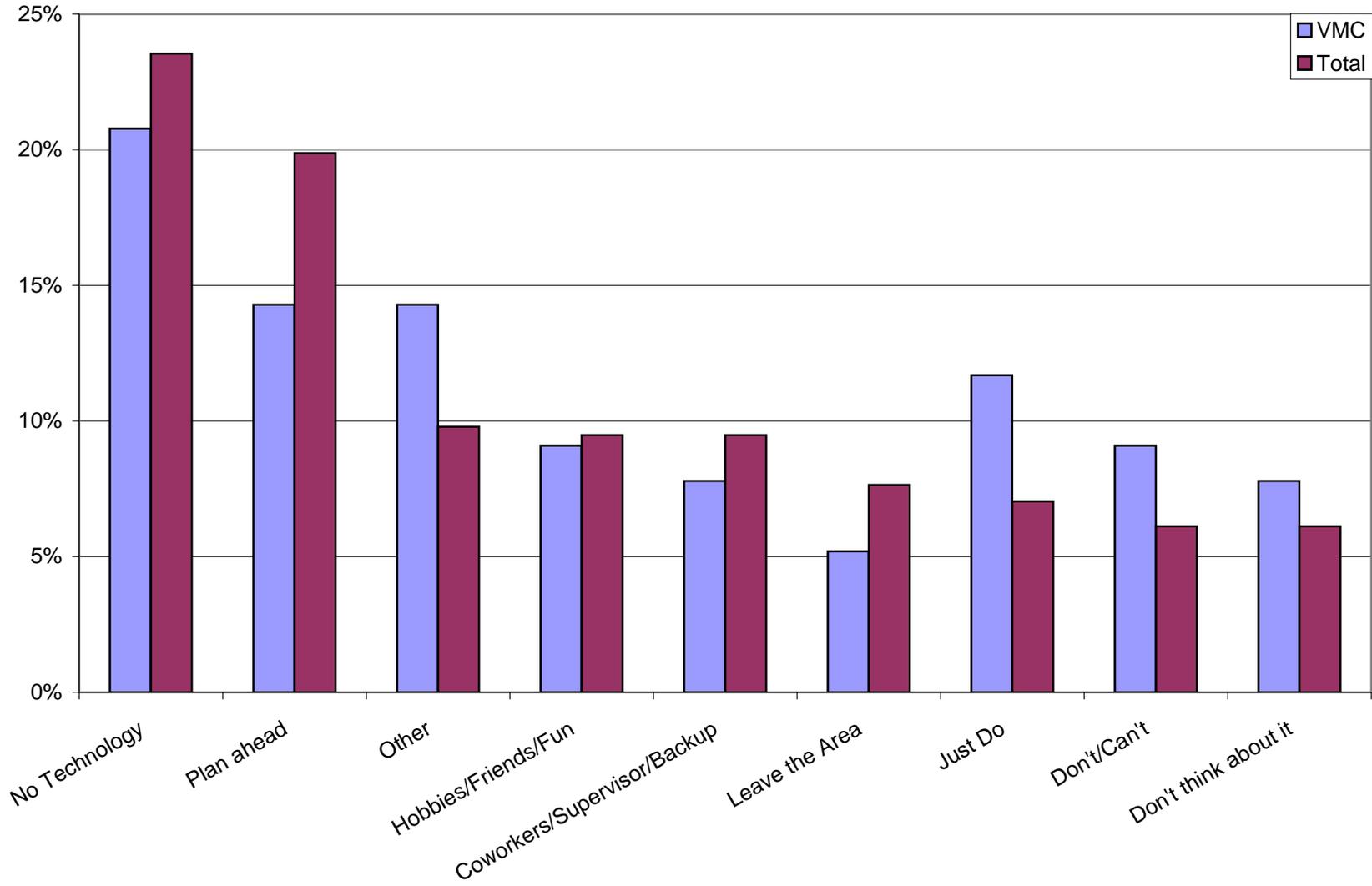
EHP



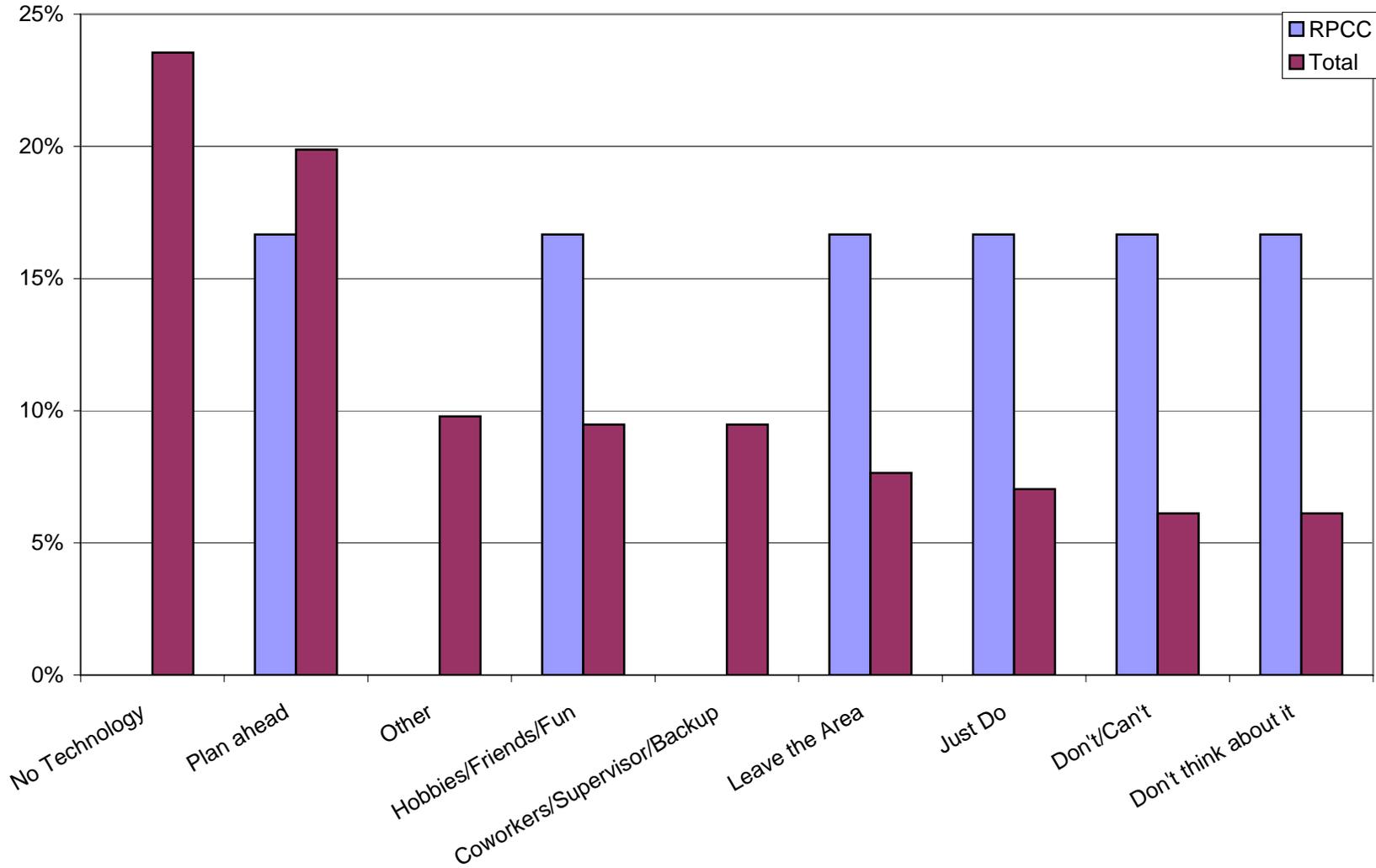
Statler



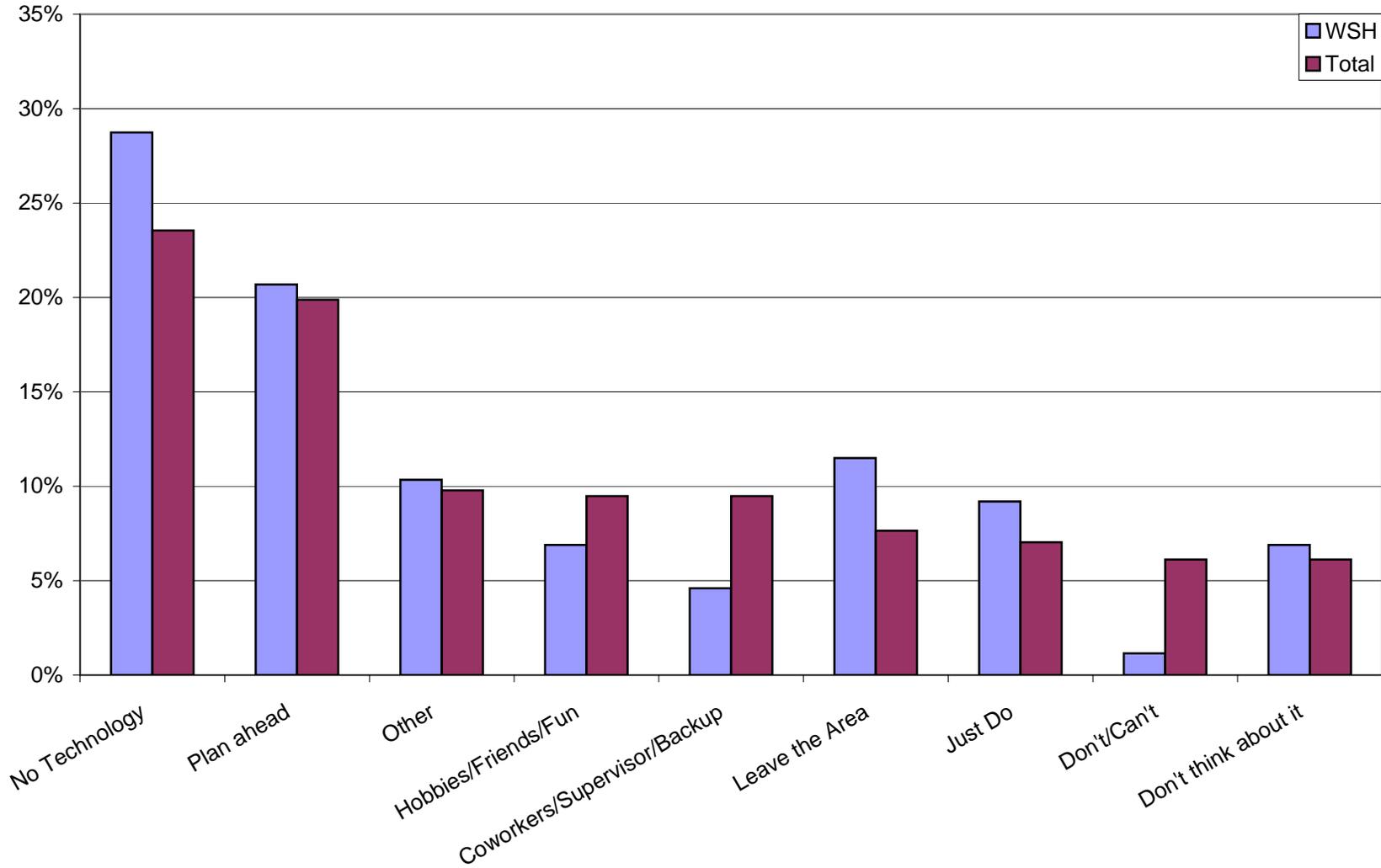
VMC



RPCC



WSH



Report prepared by,

Peter Korolov

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- Hazel Hall
- Donna Goss
- Andre Goncarovs
- Beth Burlew

And the Employee Assembly.