

Effective Communication of Performance Measures: Performance Journalism in Practice at the Washington State Department of Transportation

Daniela Bremmer

**Director, Strategic Assessment Office
Washington State Department of Transportation**

**TRB Third International Conference on Performance Measurement
Pre-Conference Workshop
“Building a Successful Measurement System”
September 9, 2007**



Effective Communication of Performance Measures: Challenges

- **There is a large gap in completed research and the performance measurement and reporting literature about the effective communication of performance information.**
- **Ineffective communication does little to build credibility, leads to information asymmetry, and can increase public dissatisfaction, reflected as anti-tax sentiments and growing funding shortages.**

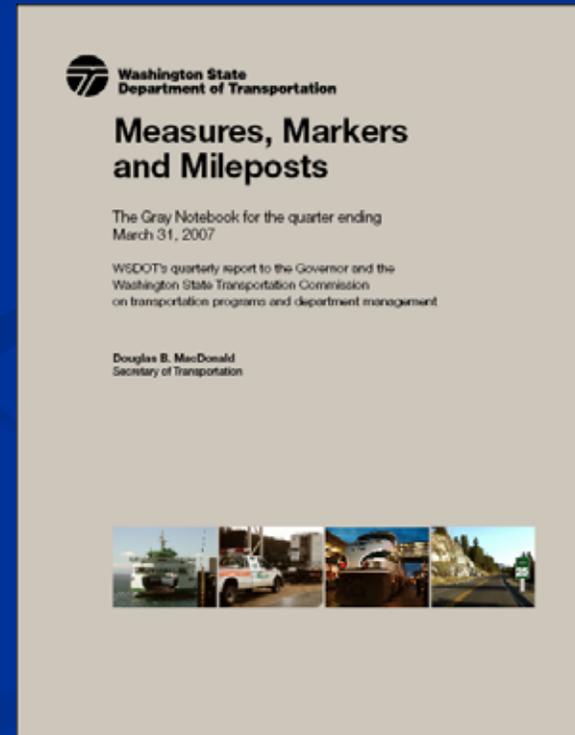


WSDOT's Communication Approach: Performance Journalism

- **WSDOT has been using its *Performance Journalism* approach to communicate performance results to a diverse audience including the public, the media, and policy-makers.**
- **It is a combination of quantitative reporting (using data, graphs, and charts) and narrative story telling.**
- **WSDOT developed performance journalism based on experience gained over six years of reporting comprehensive transportation system performance information in the agency's quarterly performance report, *Measures, Markers and Mileposts*, also referred to as the *Gray Notebook*.**

The Seven Principles of Performance Journalism

1. **Good Stories**
2. **Good Writing**
3. **Good Data**
4. **Good Graphics**
5. **Good Format/Presentation**
6. **Quality Control**
7. **Good Timing**





WSDOT Lessons Learned in Graphics, Formatting, and Presentation

- **Make communicating relevant and easy-to-understand measures, text, and graphs your number one priority- not an afterthought once the data has been collected.**
- **Graphical Displays should:**
 - **Show the data!**
 - **Make the viewer think about substance rather than about methodology, graphic design, or the technology of graphic production**
 - **Avoid distorting what the data says**
 - **Make large data sets coherent**
 - **Encourage the eye to compare different pieces of data.**
 - **Reveal the data at several levels of detail- from a broad overview to the fine structure.**
 - **Be closely integrated with the statistical and verbal descriptions of a data set.**



Good Graphics: Every Graph Tells A Story, Every Graph Asks A Question

- **In general, good performance journalism graphics:**
 - **Are quickly comprehended and understood by the reader**
 - **Are relevant to the data and topic**
 - **Are formatted with a sense of balance, proportion, and clarity of design**
 - **Can stand on their own if lifted from the page**
 - **Have data, analysis and scale integrity**
 - **Answer some *fundamental* questions**



Effort was great! Data was good!
Presentation was lousy.
Impact was poor.

The Key to Effective Communication:

- **A Step-by-Step, Practical, How-to that Anyone Can Do**
- **How to deconstruct and reconstruct Excel**

Provided: With appreciation to **Edward Tufte**, Professor Emeritus of Yale University, and to **Barb Felver** of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

REMOVE
SHADING

Men continued to earn higher incomes than women. . .

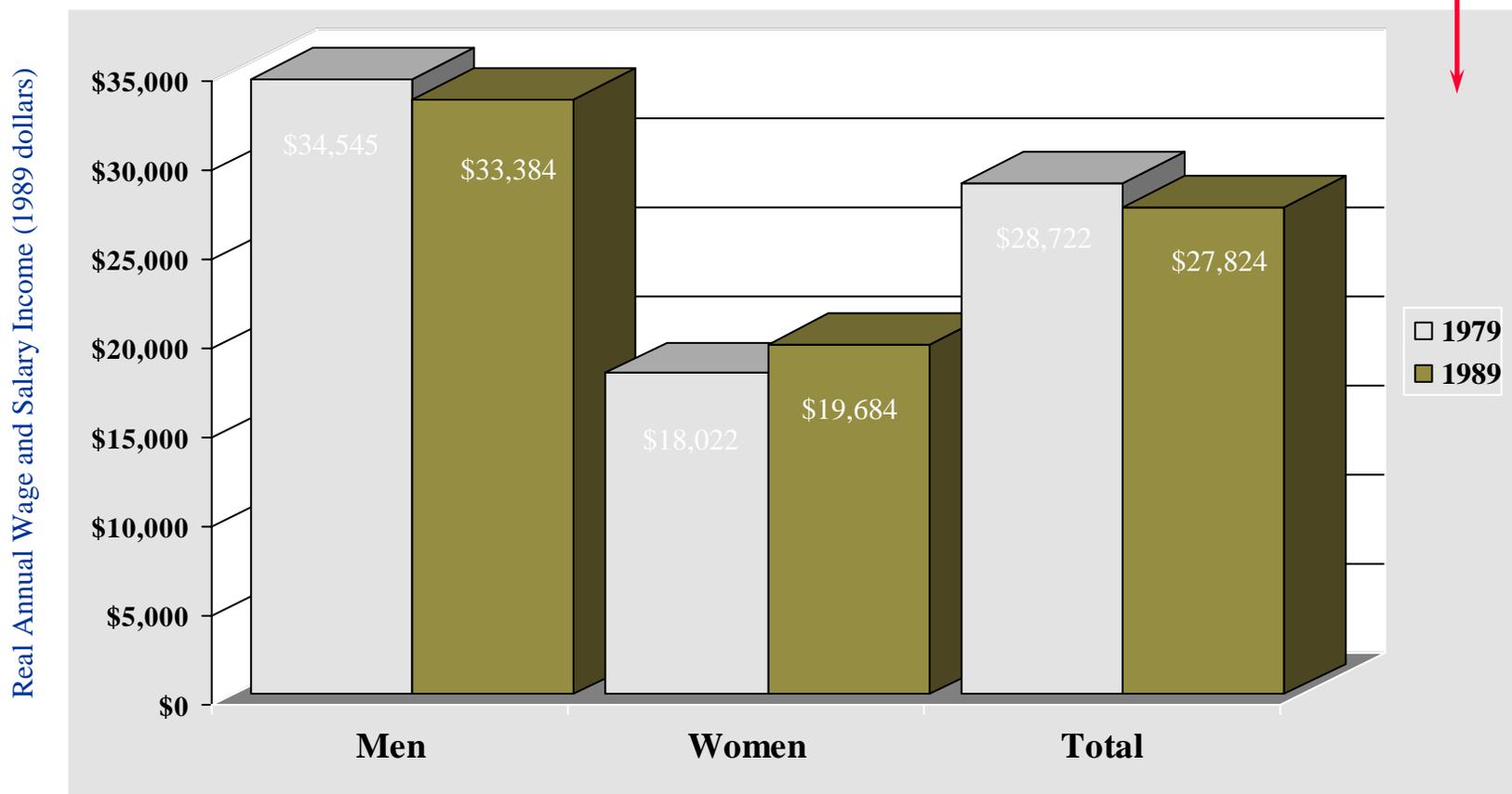


Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

REMOVE
BOX
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Men continued to earn higher incomes than women. . .

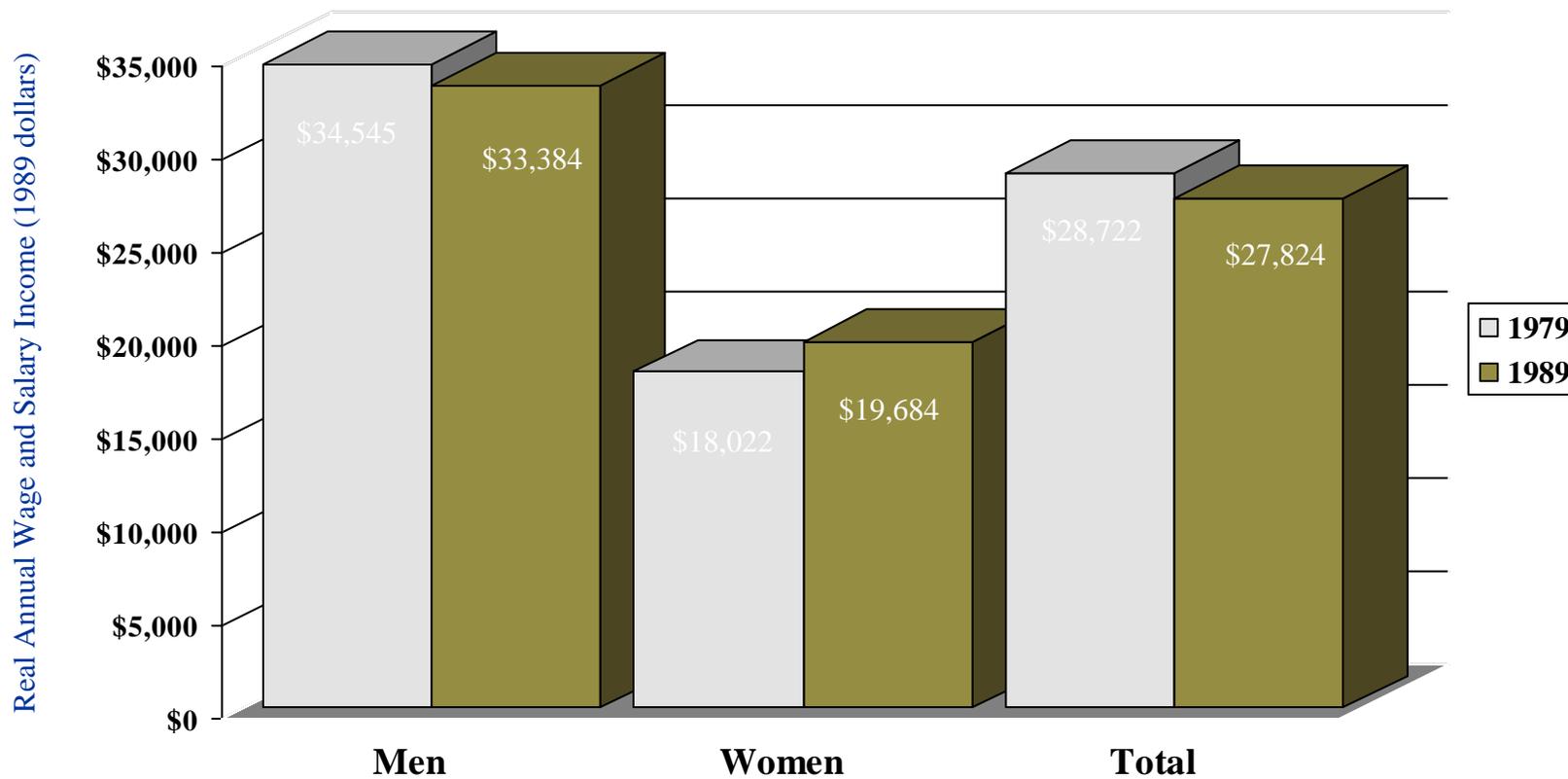


Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

REMOVE
3D

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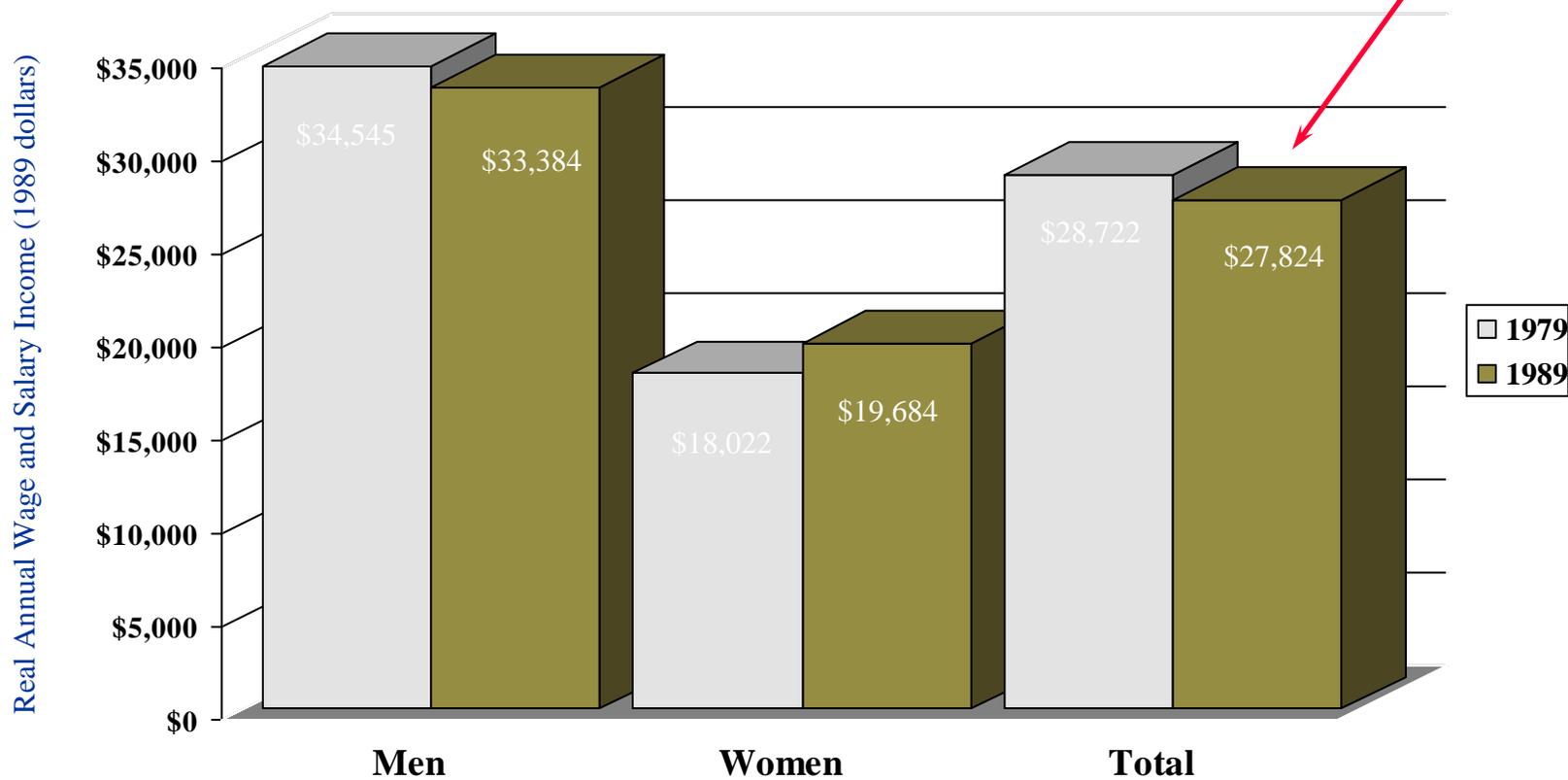


Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

REMOVE
GRIDLINES

Men continued to earn higher incomes than women...

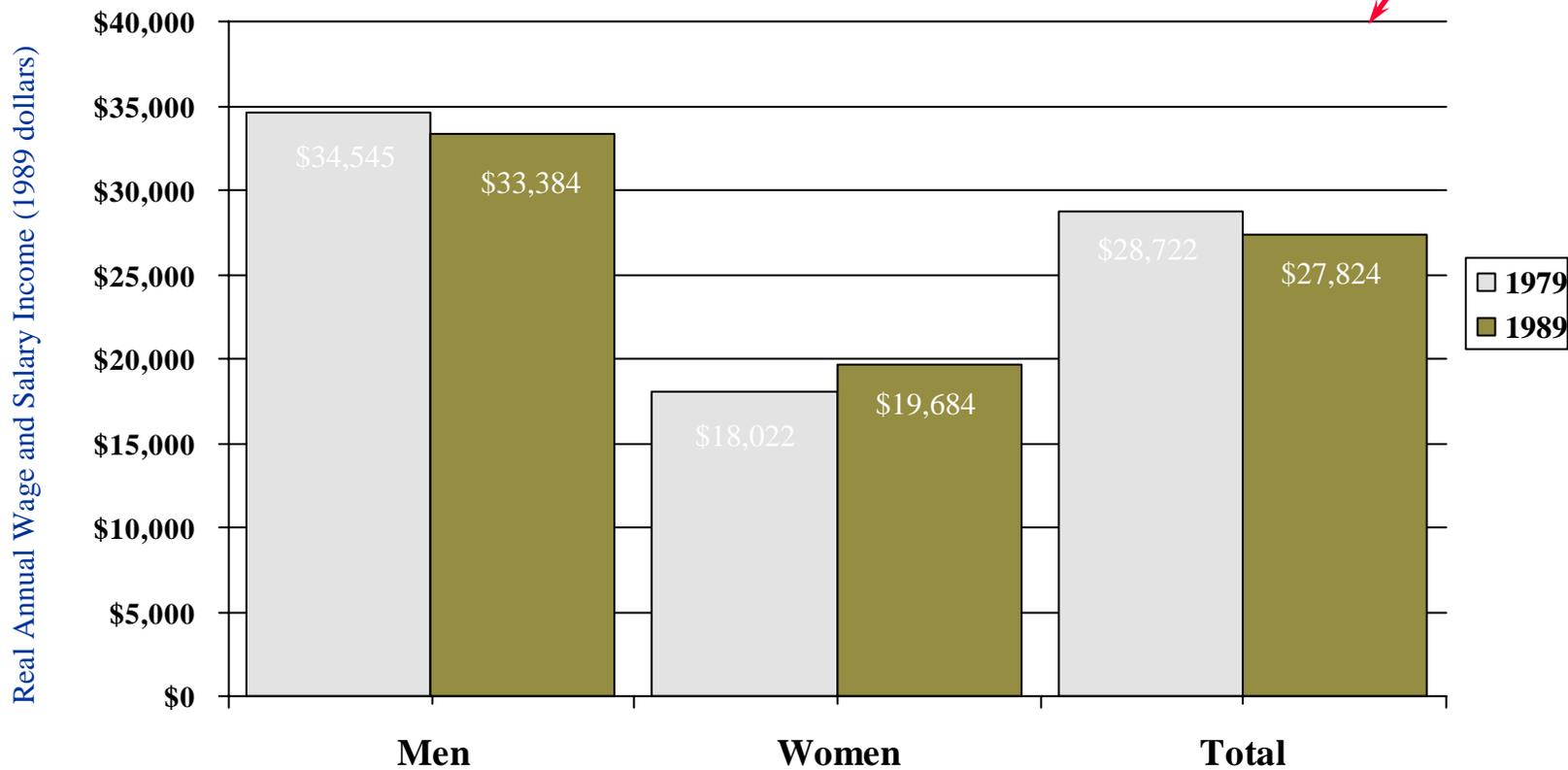


Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

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**REMOVE
TICK MARKS**

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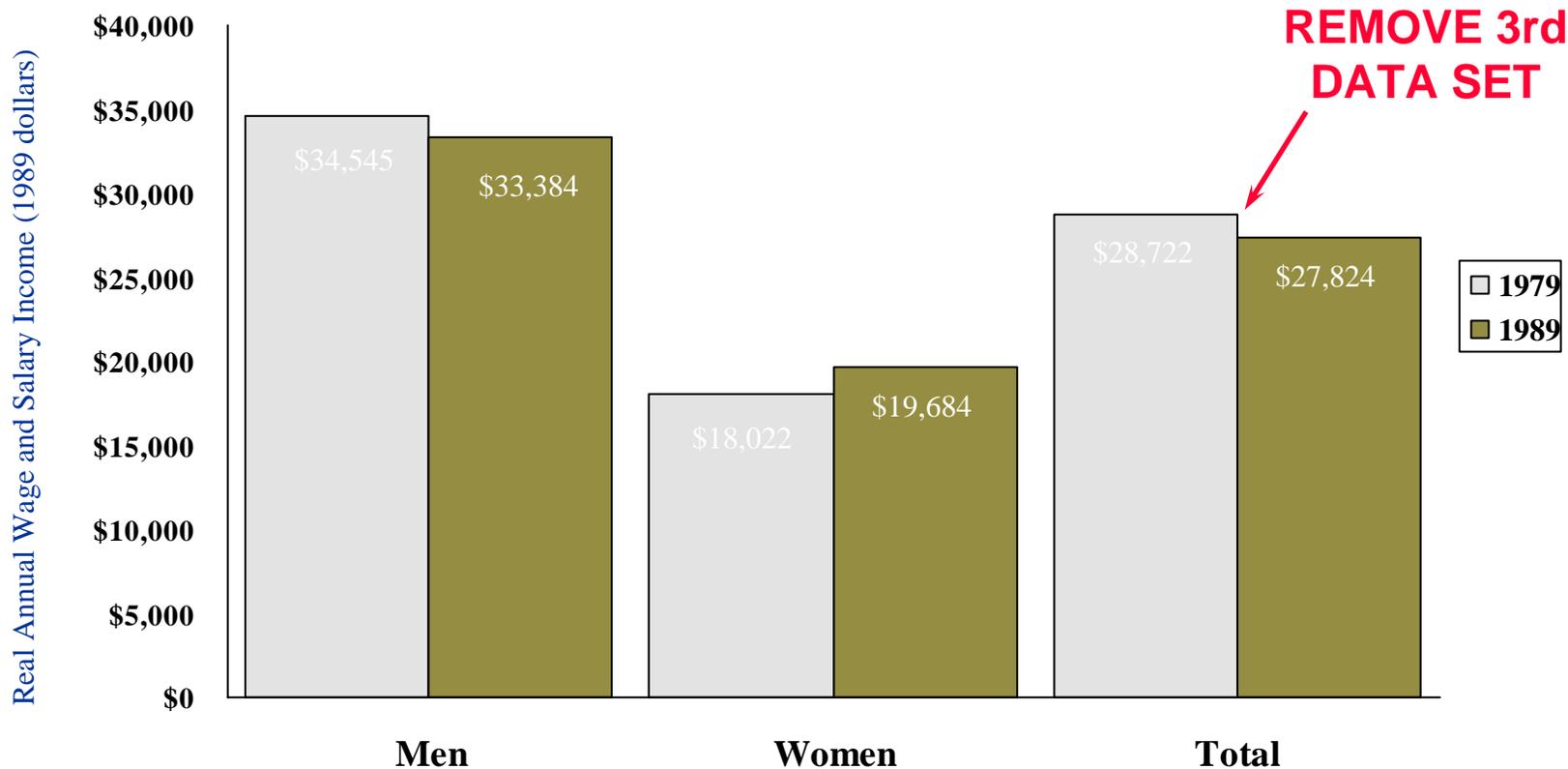


Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

Men continued to earn higher incomes than women. . .

Real Annual Wage and Salary Income (1989 dollars)



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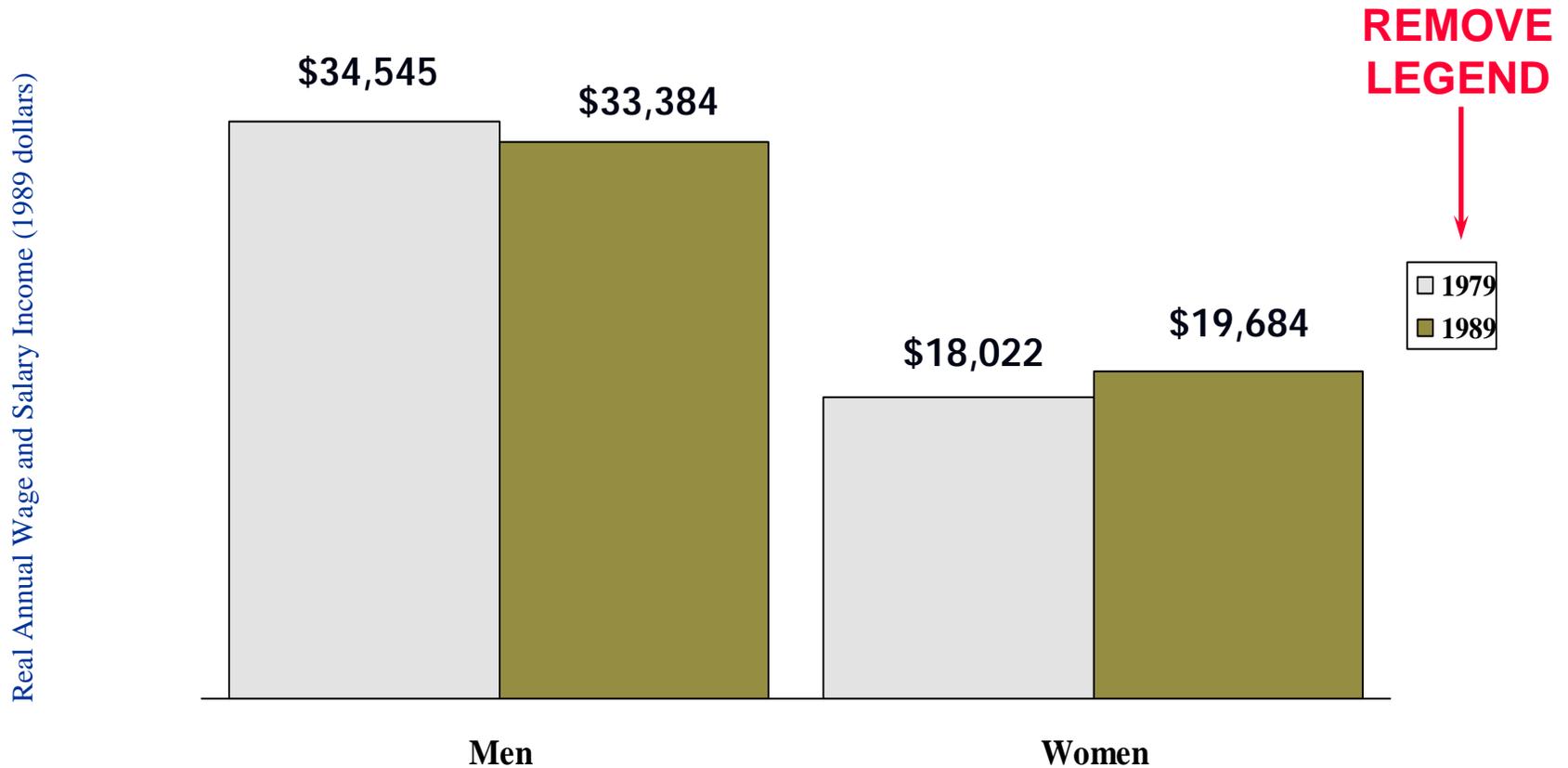


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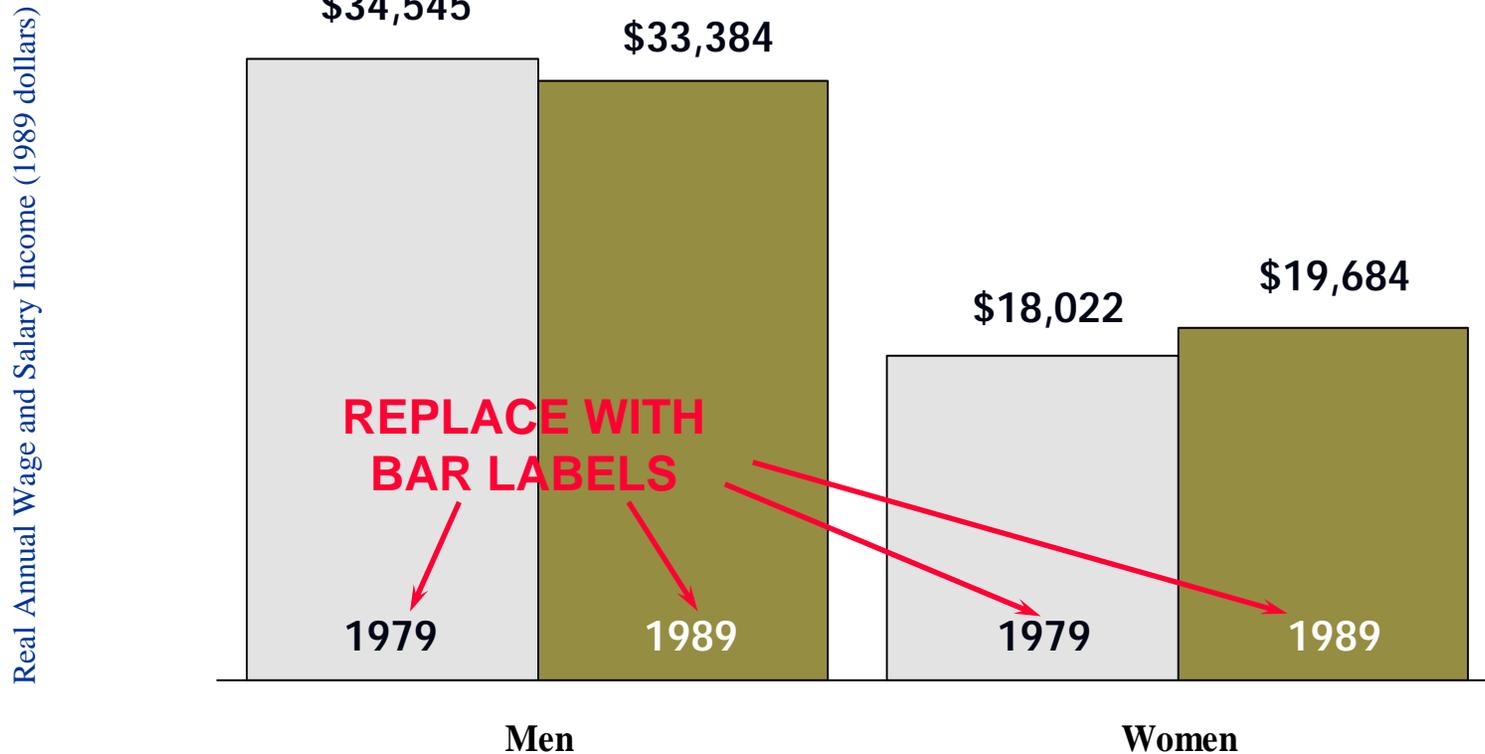


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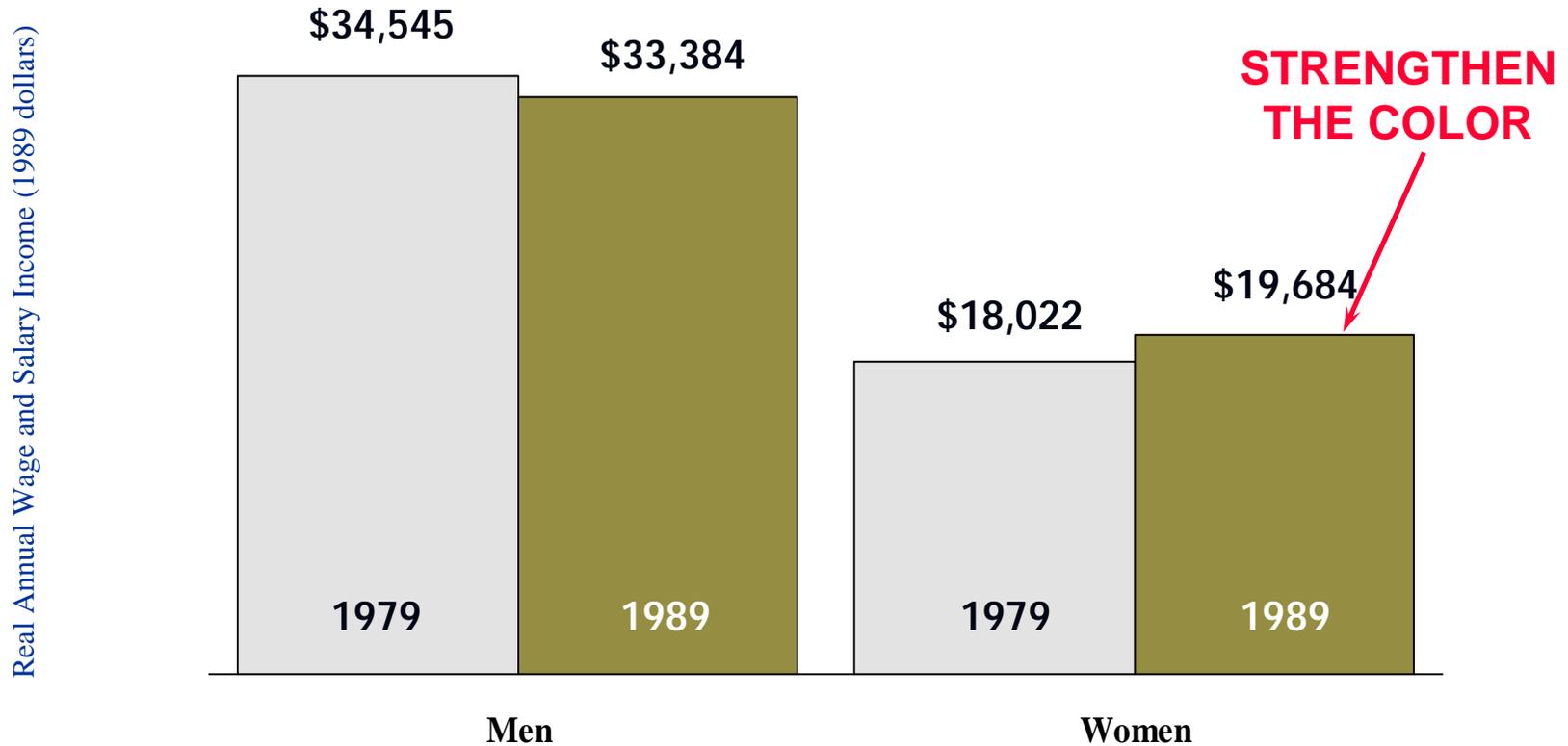
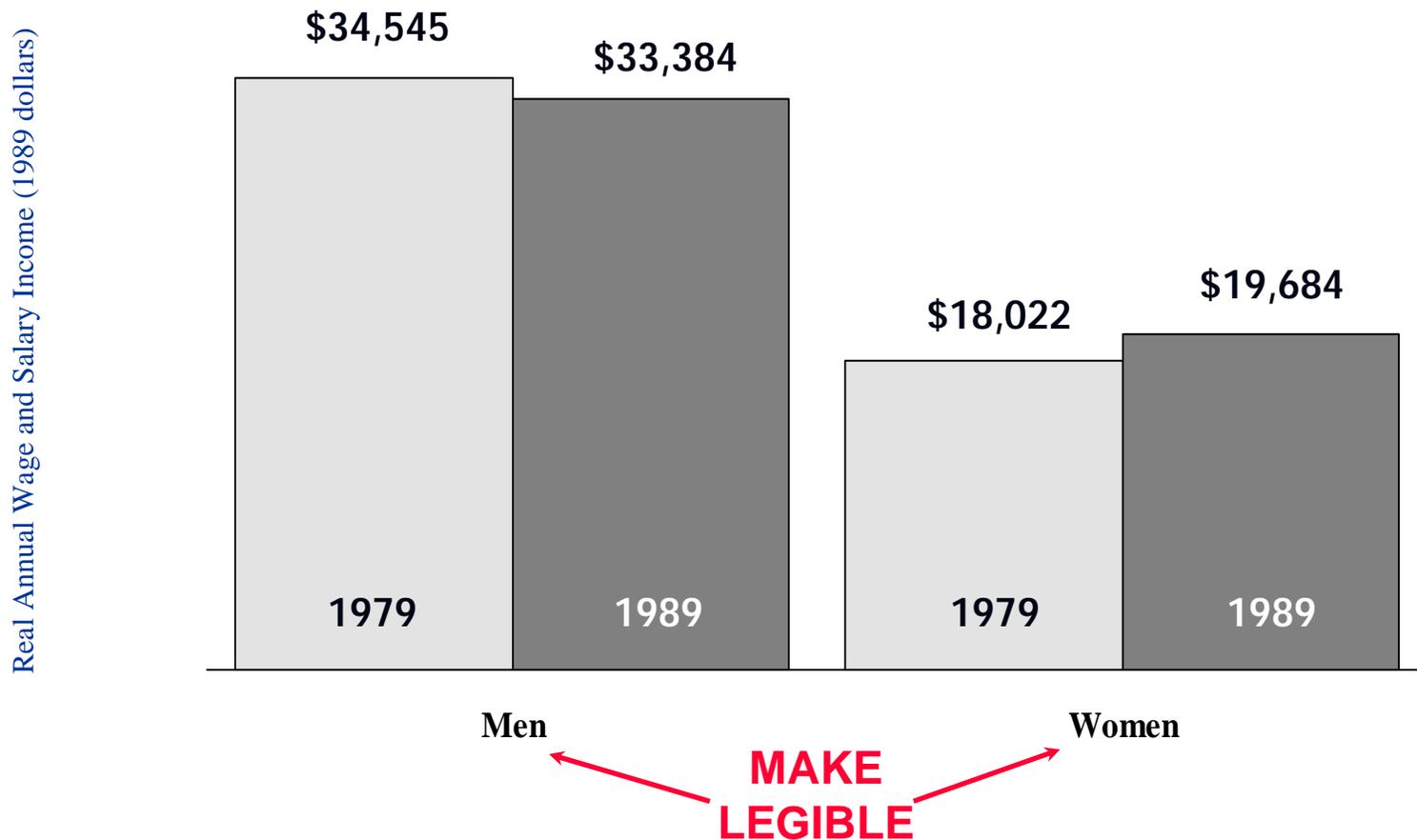


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DECREASE EMPHASIS
ON REFERENCE

Figure VI-1

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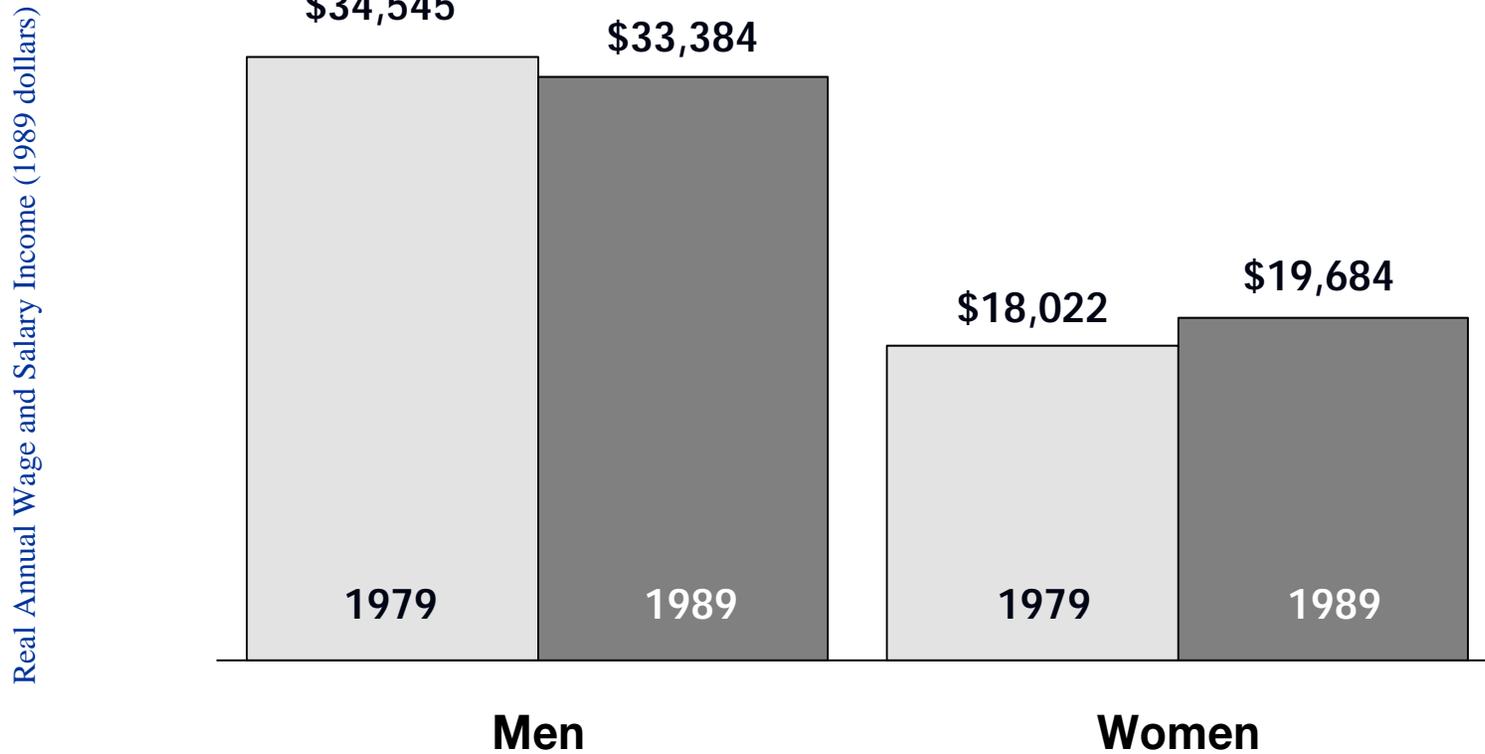


Figure VI-1

Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

REWRITE

Men continued to earn higher incomes than women...

Real Annual Wage and Salary Income (1989 dollars)

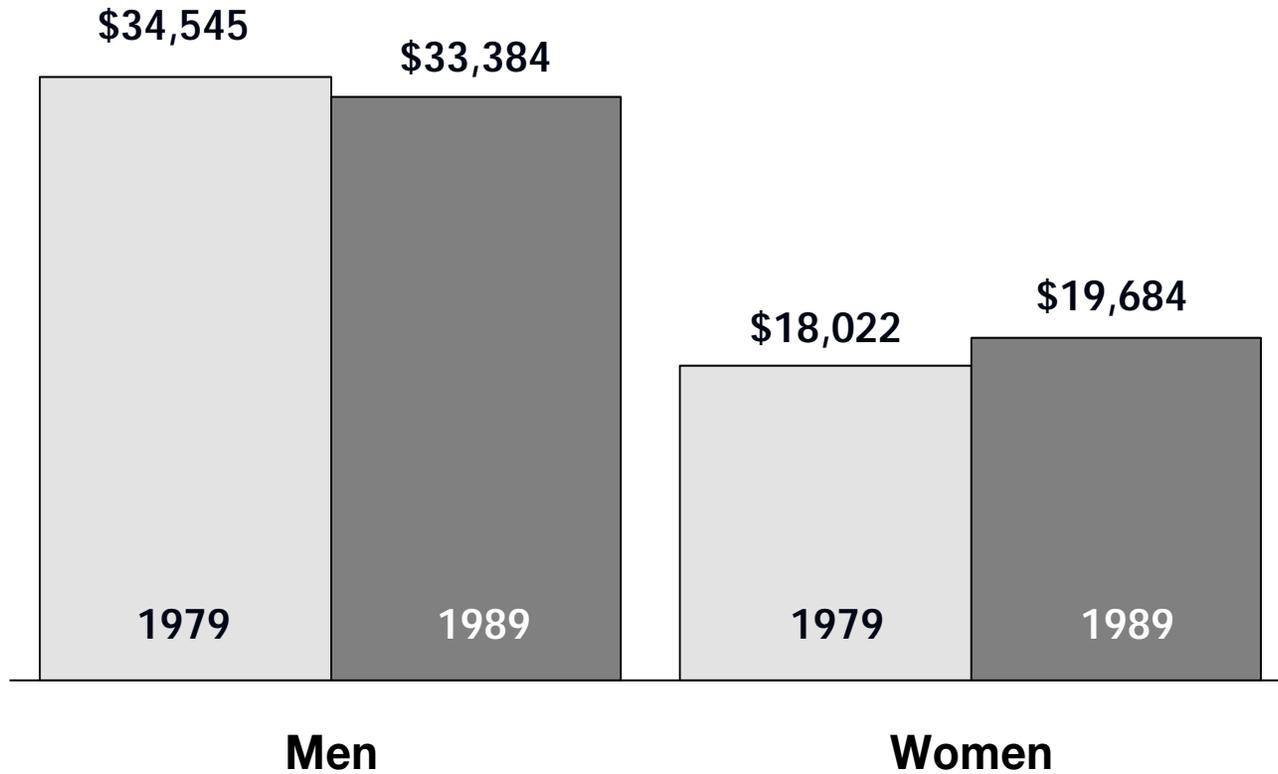


Figure VI-1

The Gap Between Male and Female Earnings is Decreasing But Men Still Earn More Than Women

DELETE → Men continued to earn higher incomes than women...

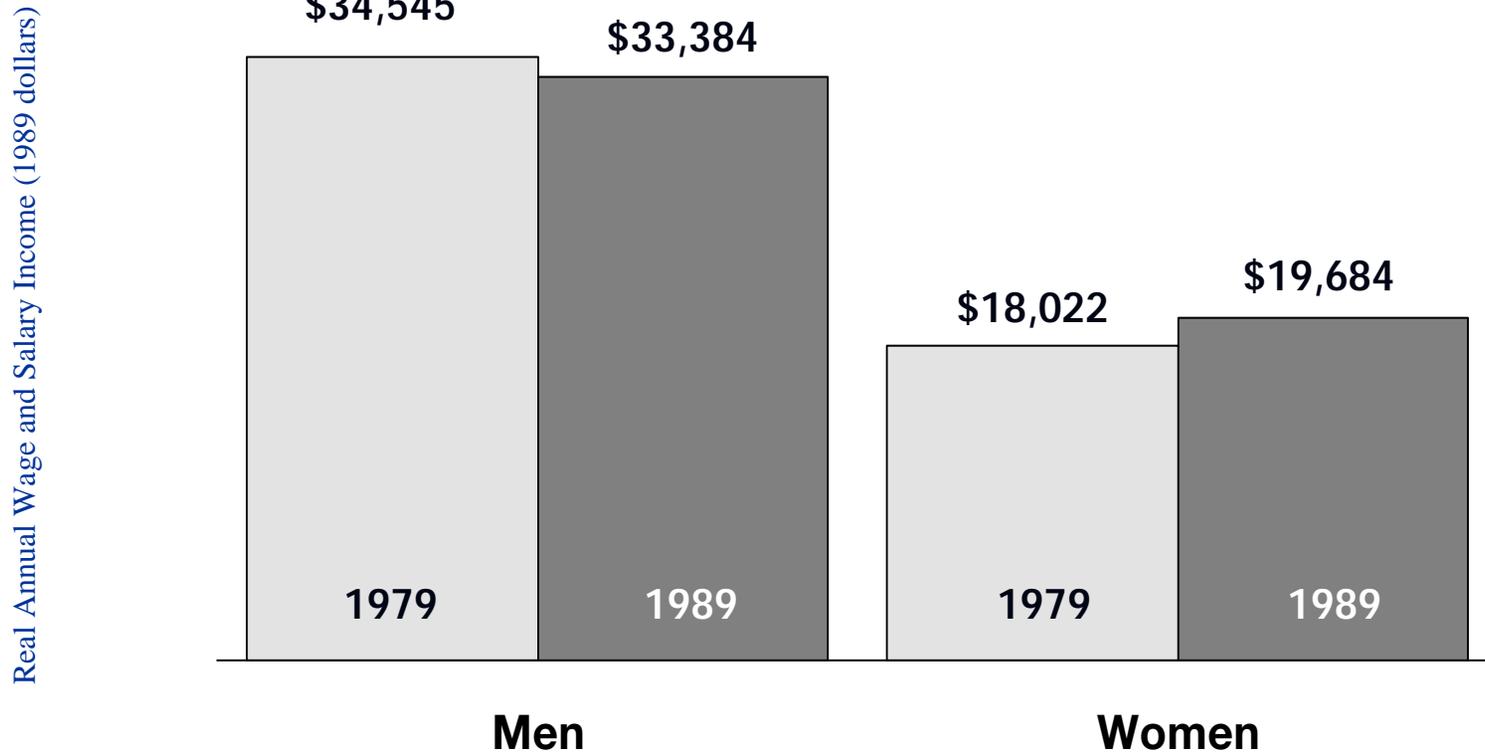


Figure VI-1

The Gap Between Male and Female Earnings is Decreasing But Men Still Earn More Than Women

**SHOW AS
FOOTNOTE**

Real Annual Wage and Salary Income (1989 dollars)

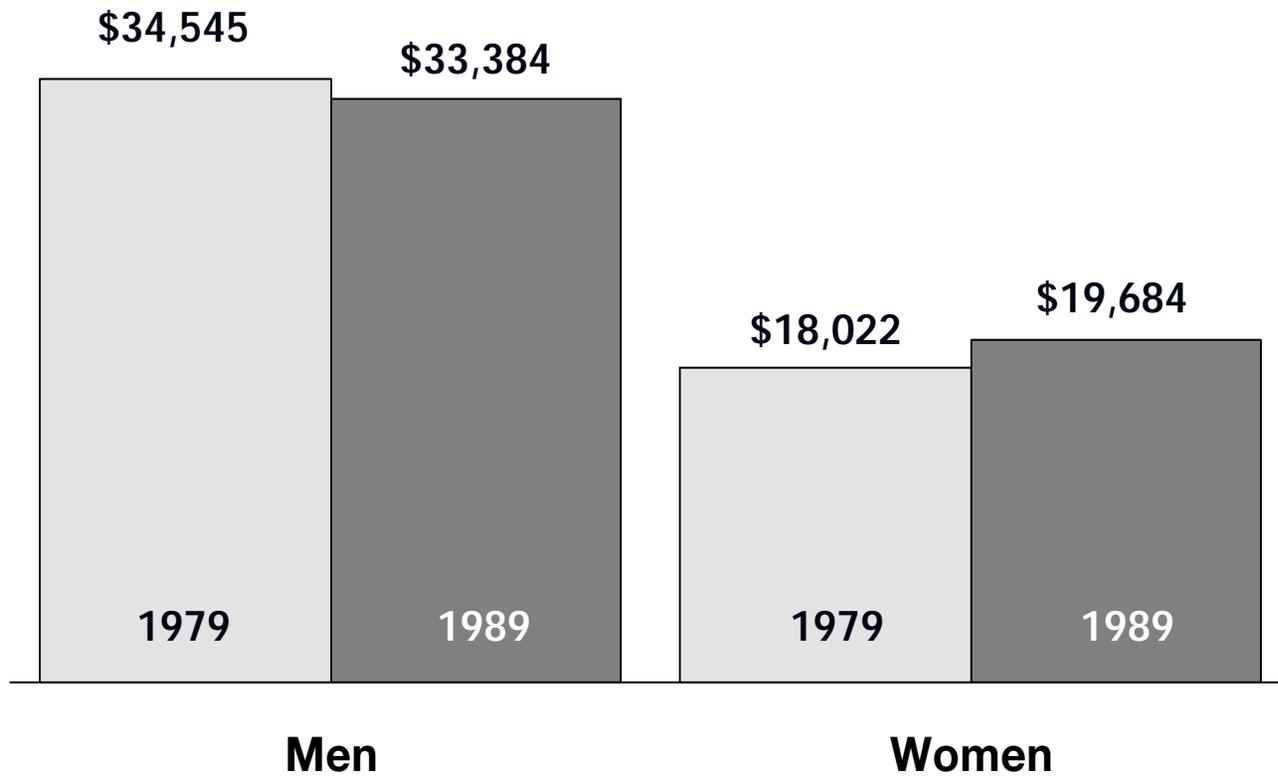
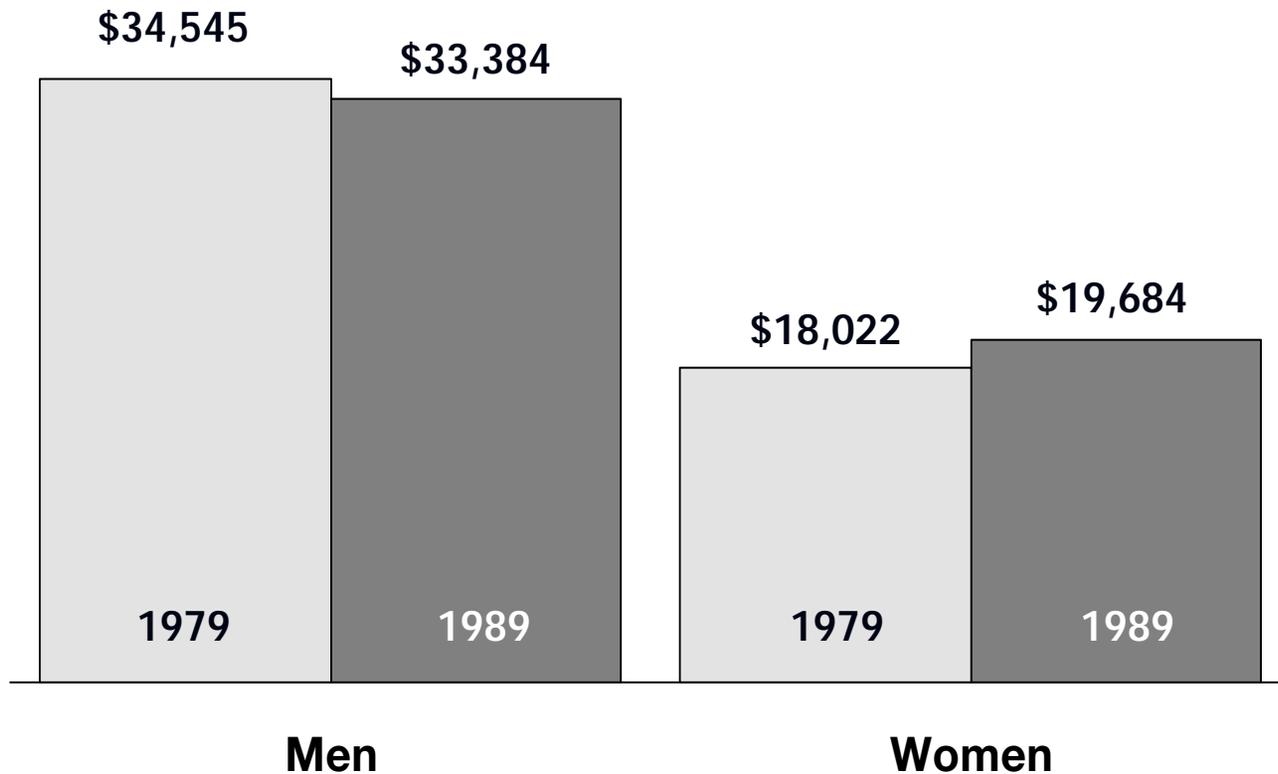


Figure VI-1

The Gap Between Male and Female Earnings is Decreasing But Men Still Earn More Than Women*

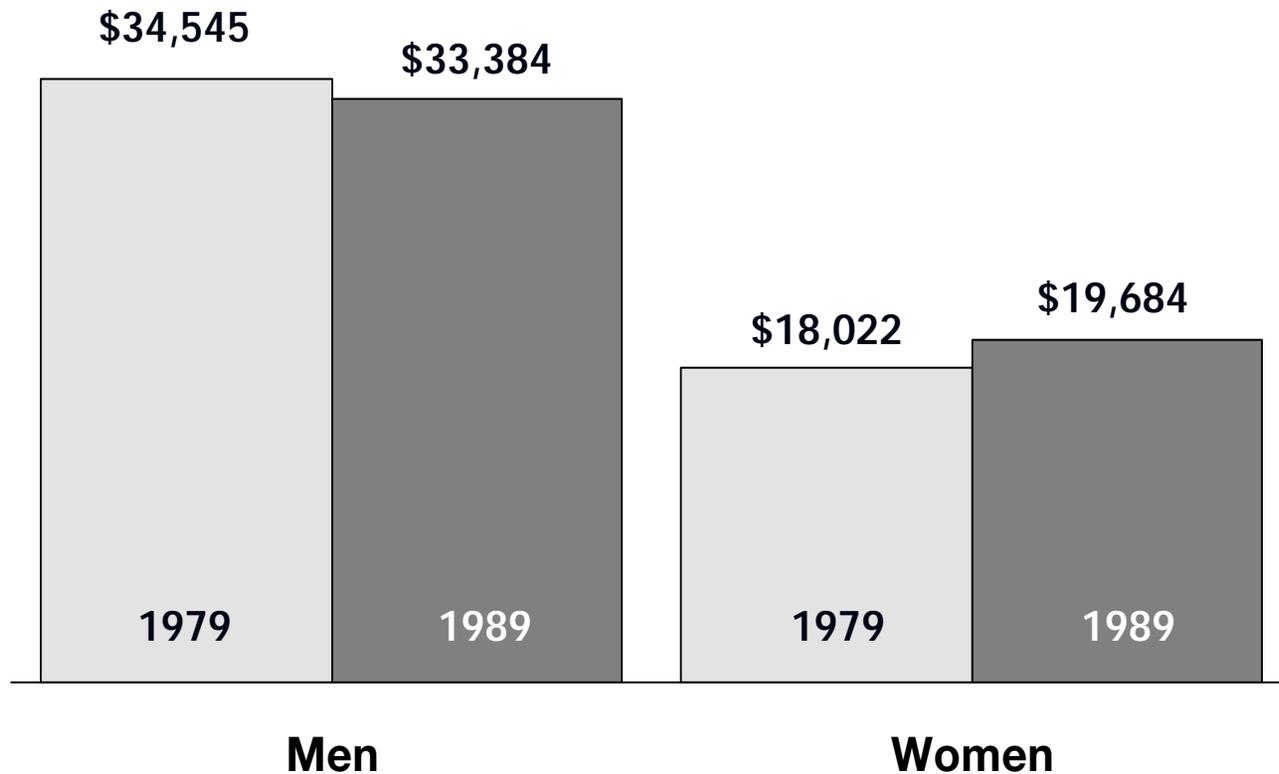


*Average annual income, 1989 dollars (real income)

← **ADD DATE, REFERENCE**

Figure VI-1

The Gap Between Male and Female Earnings is Decreasing But Men Still Earn More Than Women*



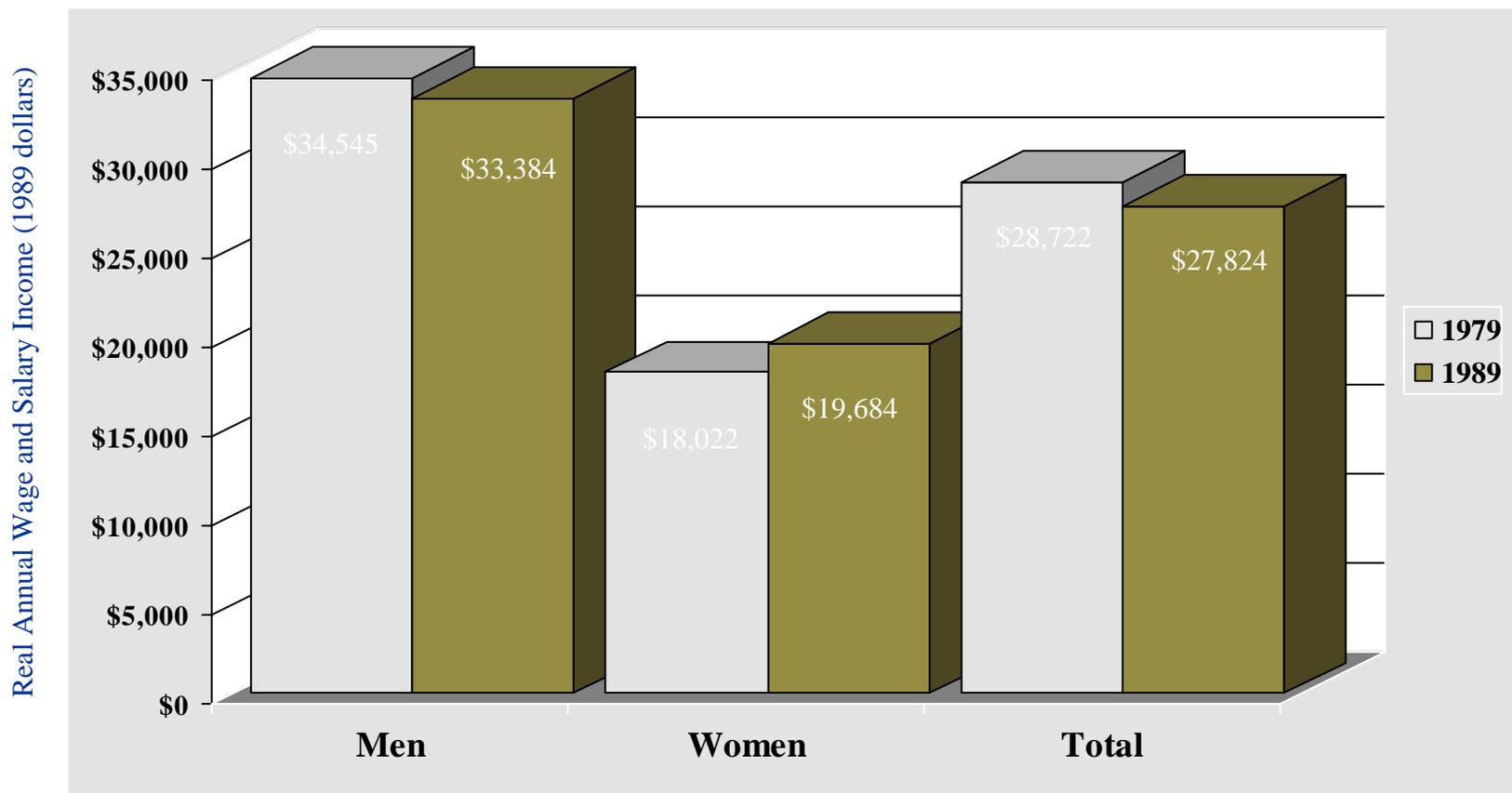
*Average annual income, 1989 dollars (real income)

Data Source: Office of Financial Management, June 1993

BEFORE

Figure VI-1 Average Annual Wages by Sex, 1979 & 1989

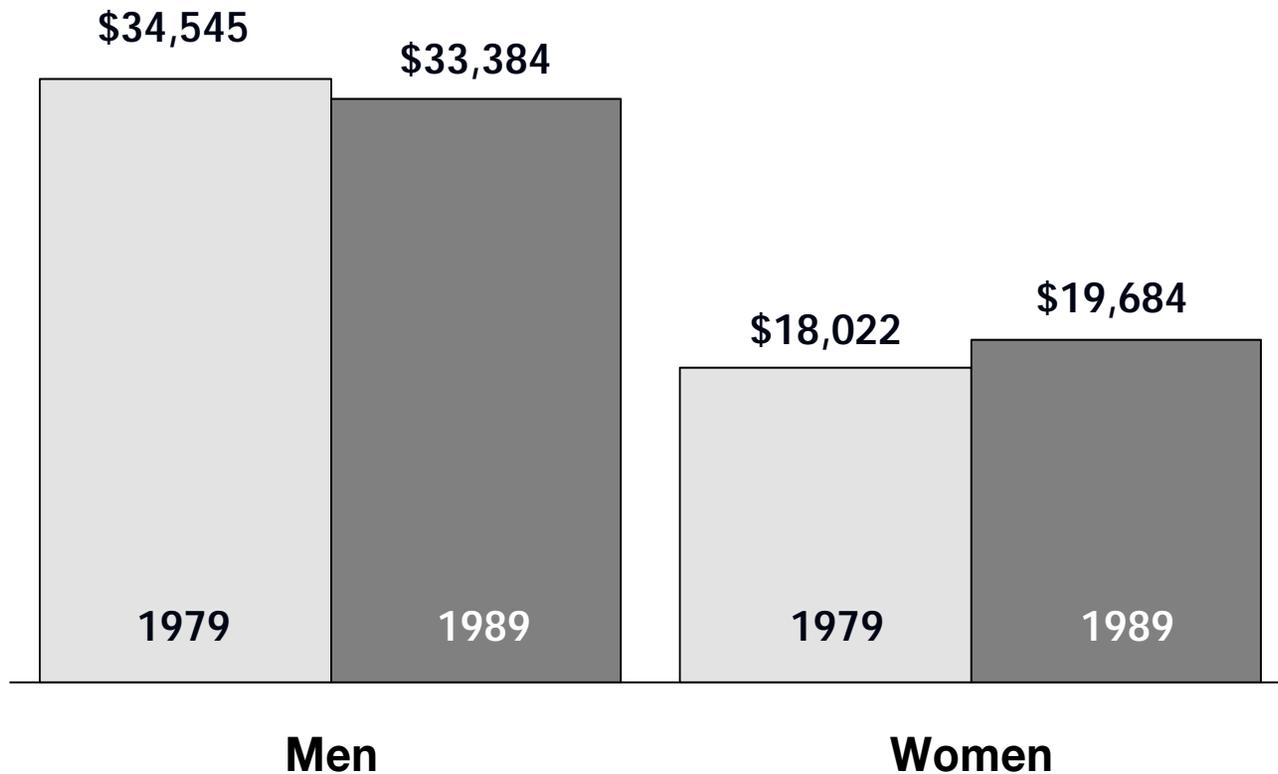
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AFTER

Figure VI-1

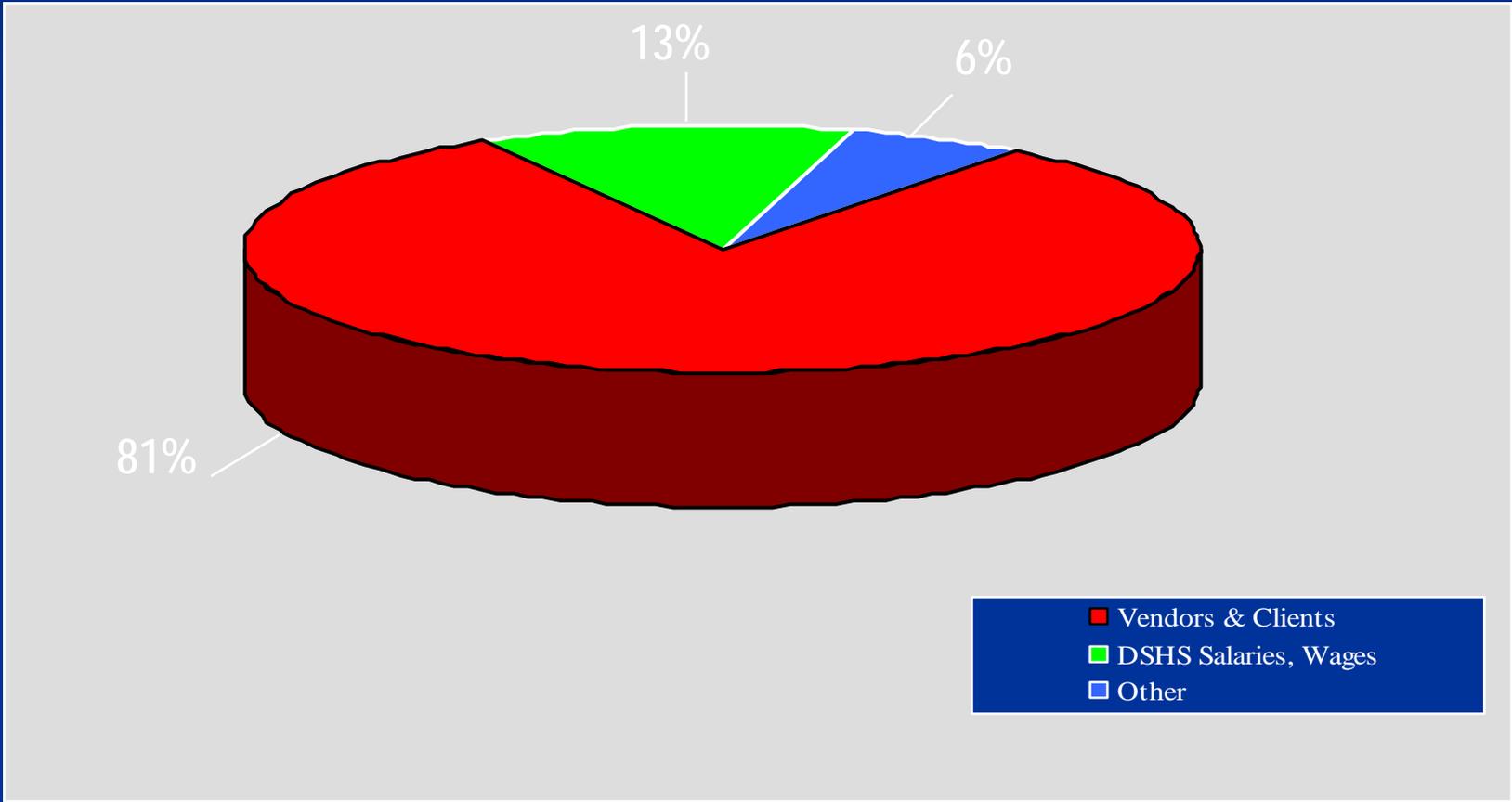
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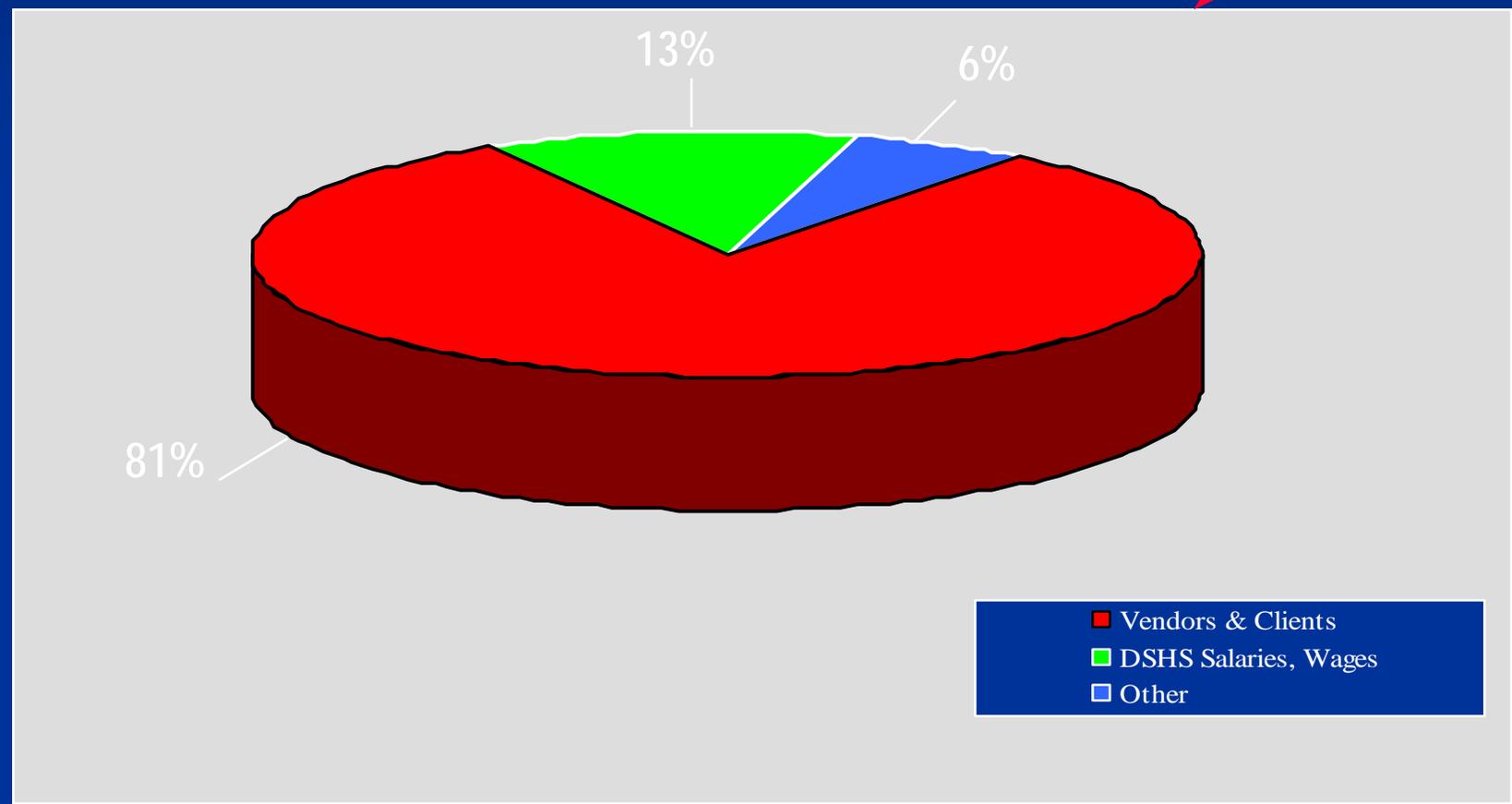
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DSHS Expenditures



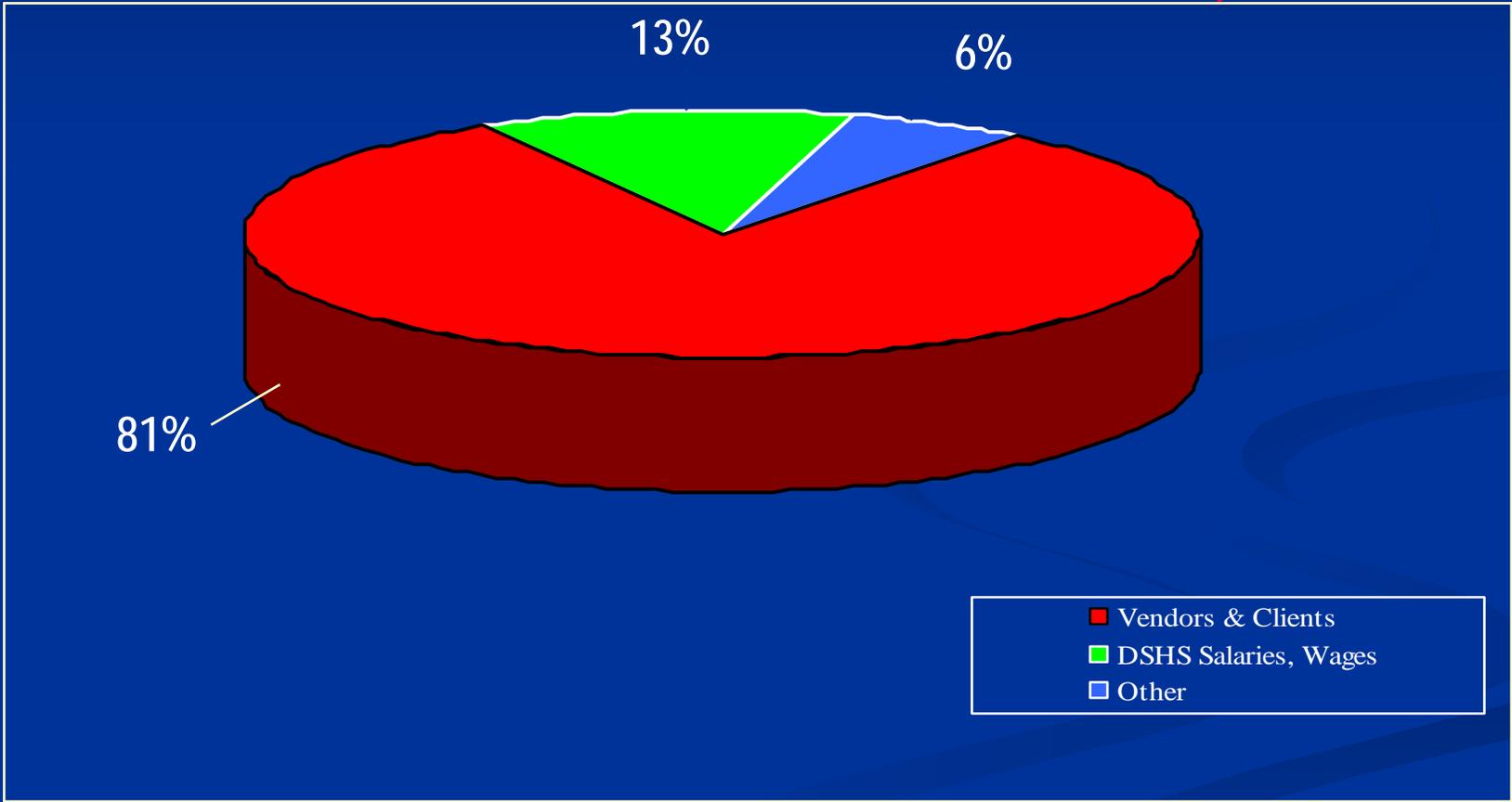
DSHS Expenditures

REMOVE
SHADING

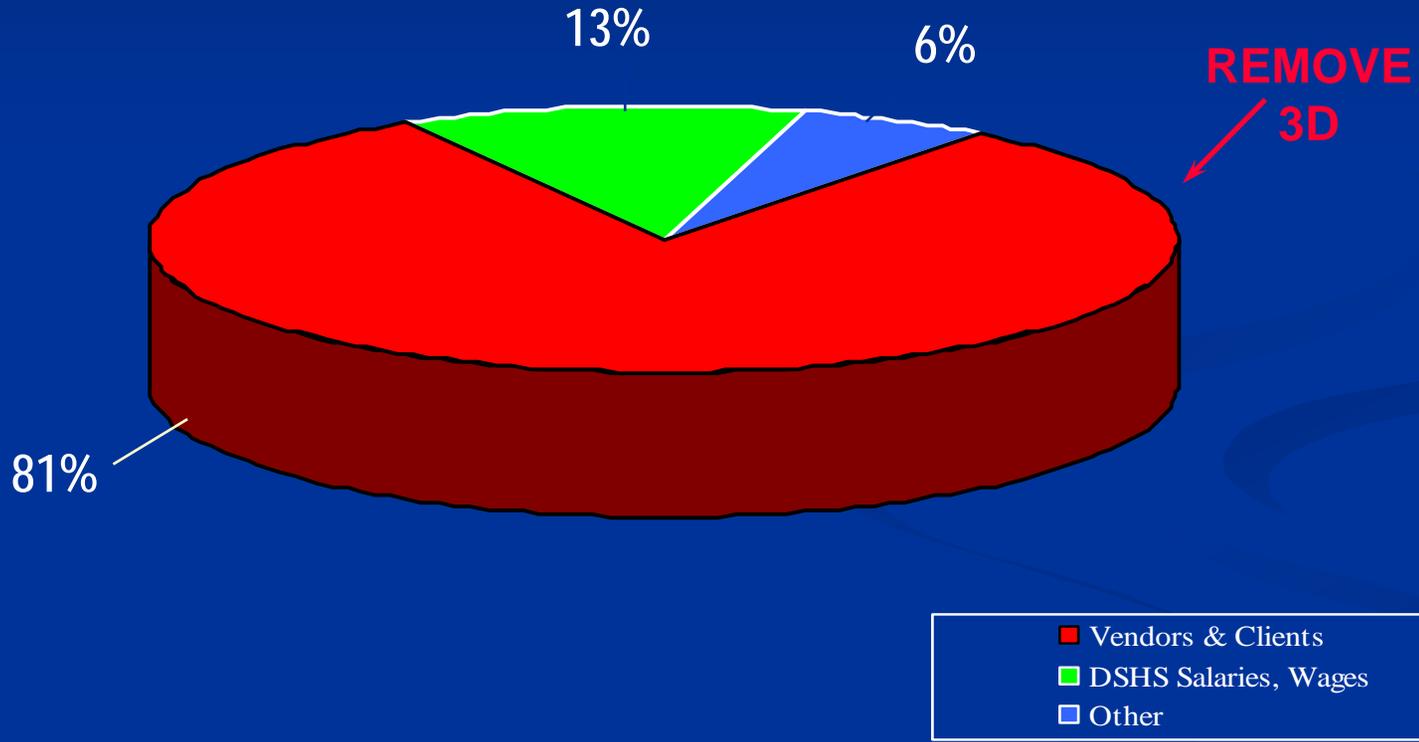


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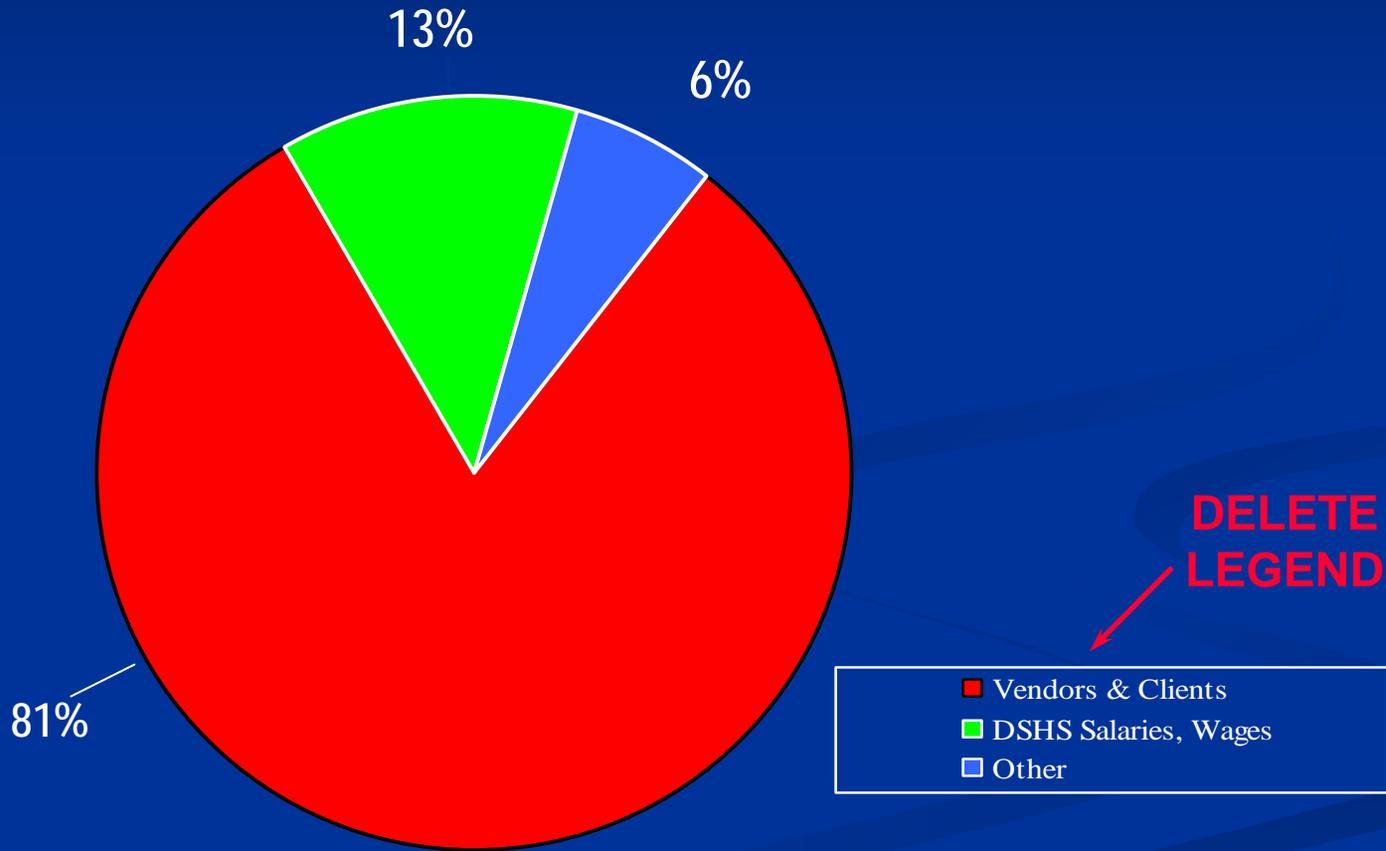
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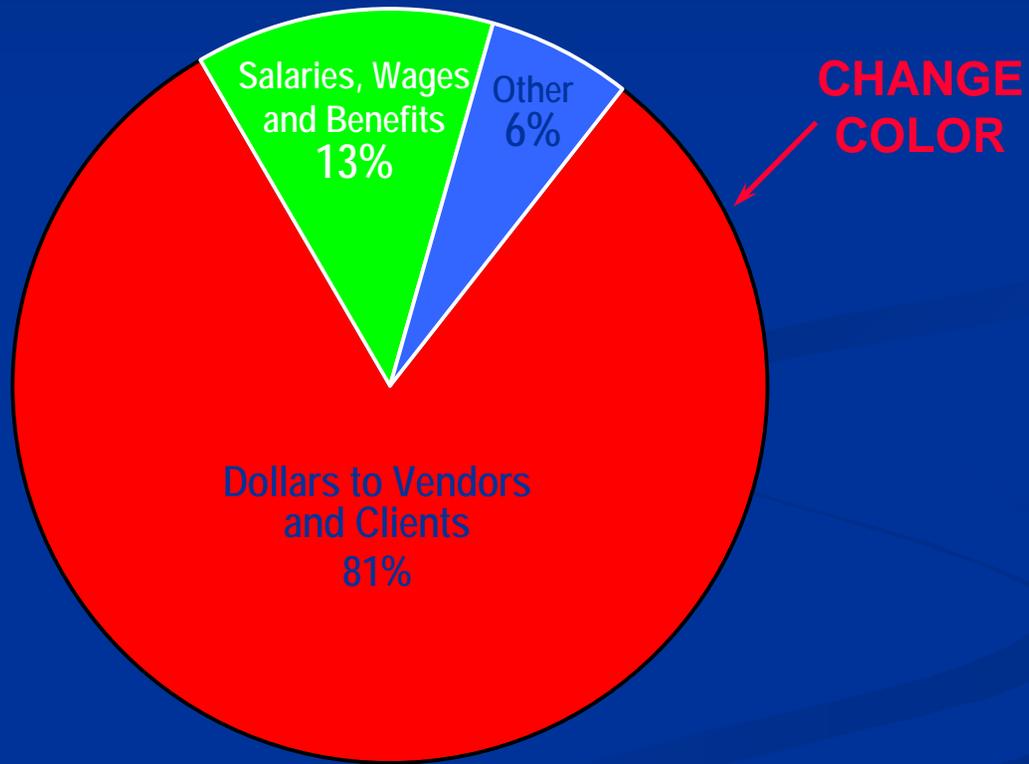
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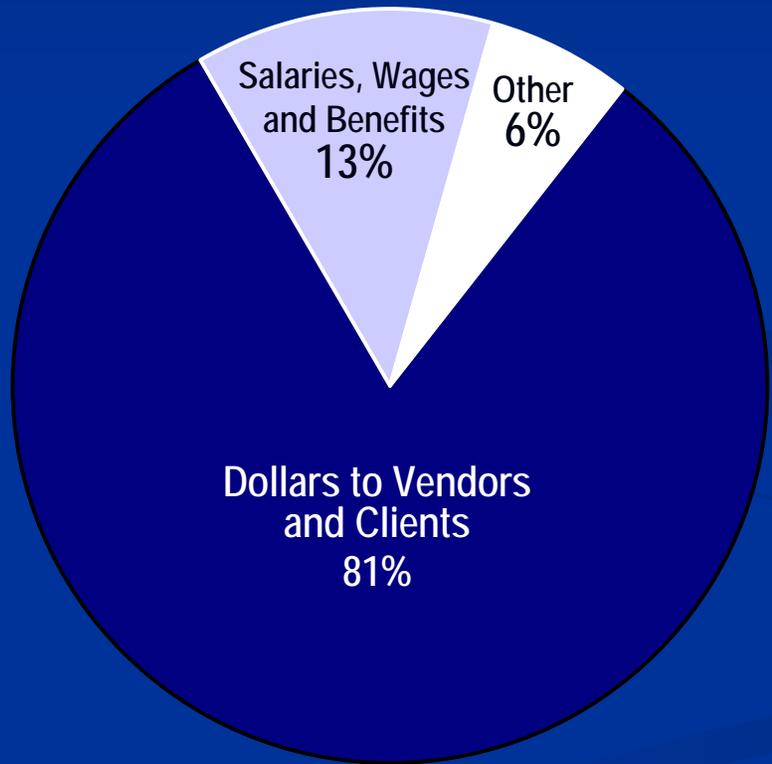


DSHS Expenditures



**REWRITE
TITLE** →

DSHS Expenditures



Our Spending Goes to Client Care



Our Spending Goes to Client Care

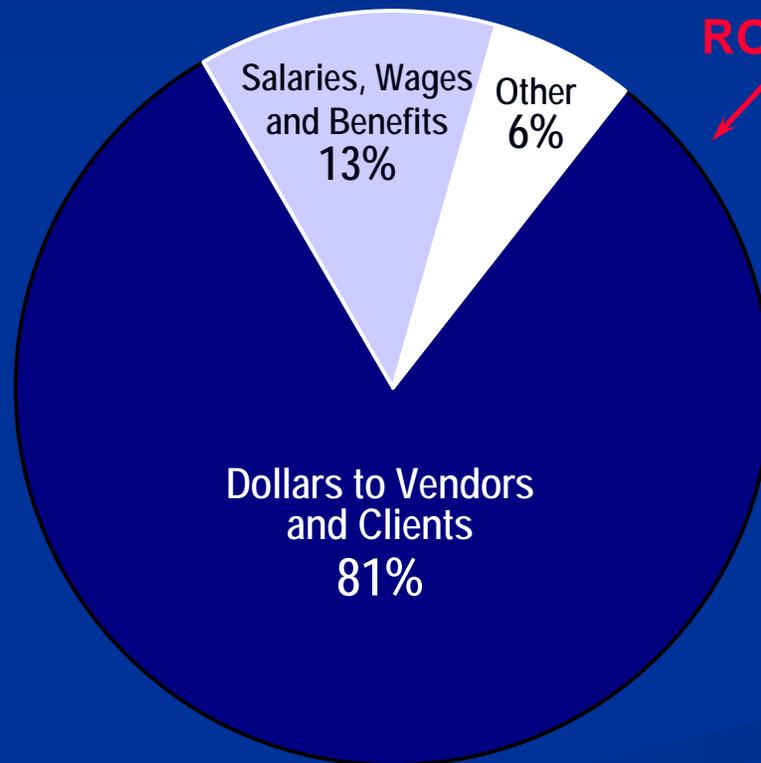
**ADD DOLLAR
AMOUNT** → DSHS 2001-03 Budget = \$14.1 Billion



Our Spending Goes to Client Care

**CHANGE
FONT**

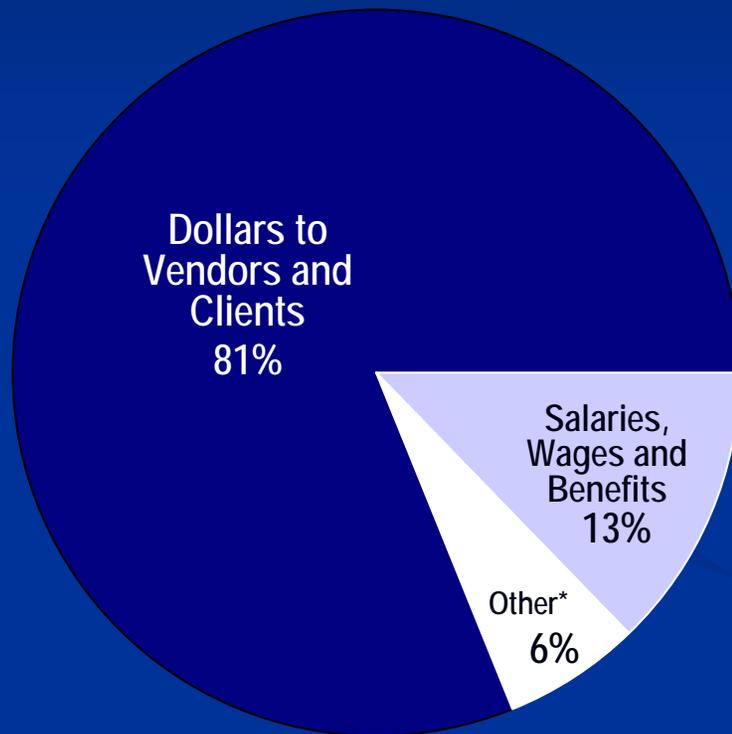
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ROTATE

Our Spending Goes to Client Care

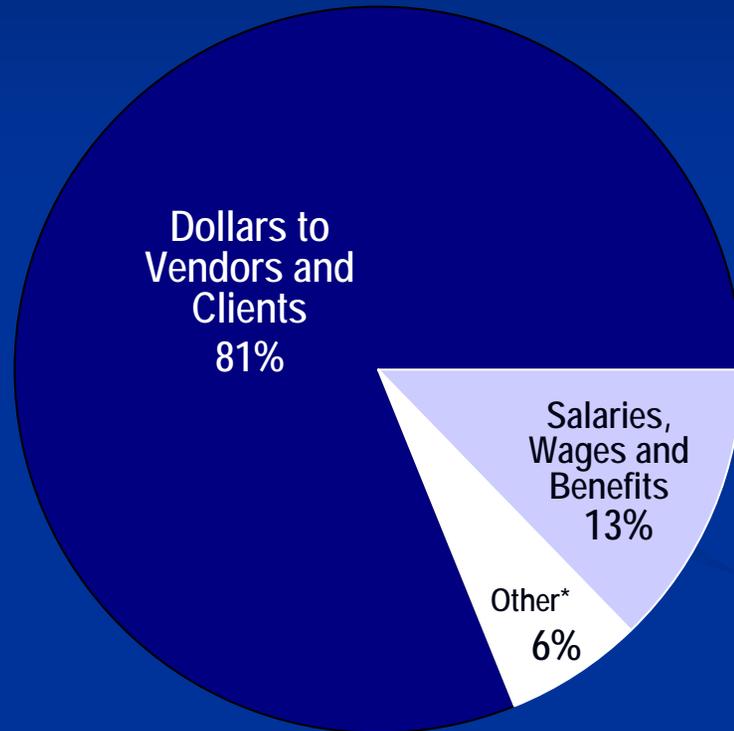
2001-03 DSHS Budget = \$14.1 billion



**COMPLETE
MESSAGE: Where do
we place our FTEs?**

Our Spending Goes to Client Care

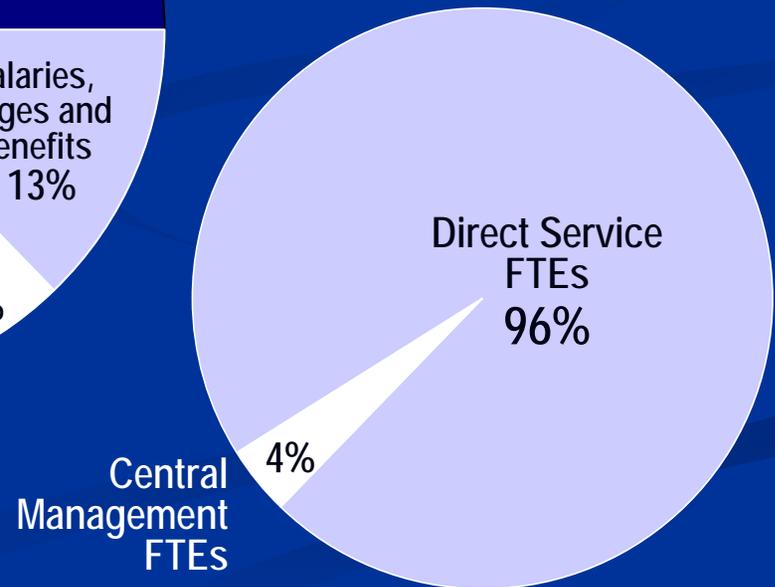
Proposed = \$14.1 billion



** All Other includes items such as leases, Attorney General services, agency contracts (other than direct vendor or client services), capital outlays, administrative hearings, support services, training, fraud prevention, administration of vendor contracts, and administration.*

Our Employees Serve Clients First

Proposed = 18,201 FTEs



BUDGET SUMMARY

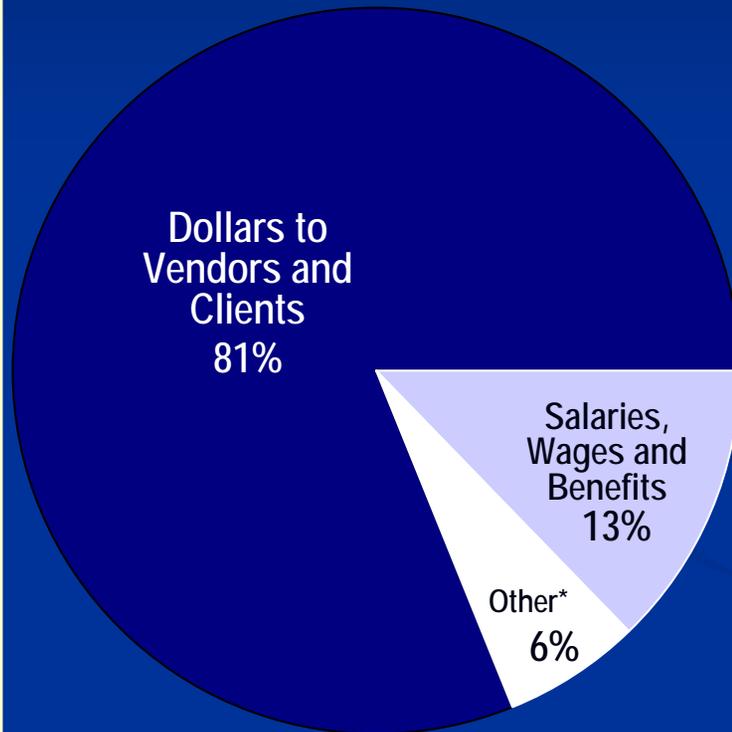
Focused and
Efficient

2001-03 Proposed
Budget
\$14.1 Billion
(All Funds)

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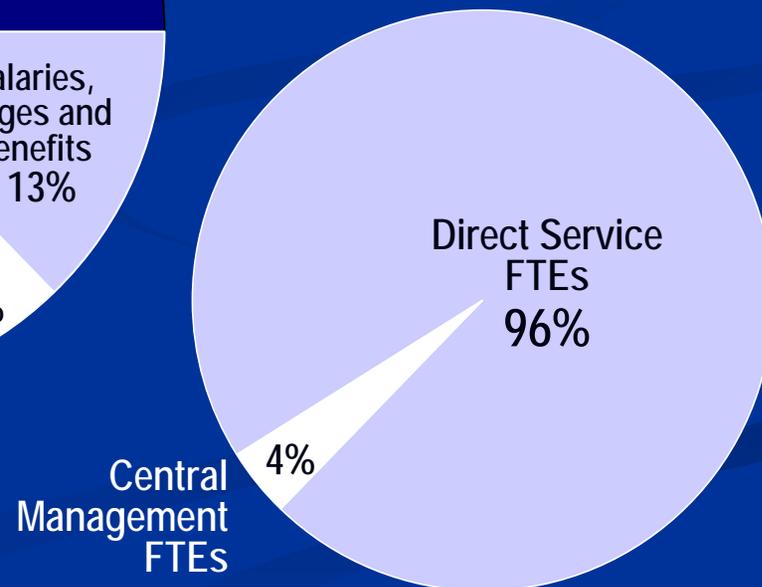
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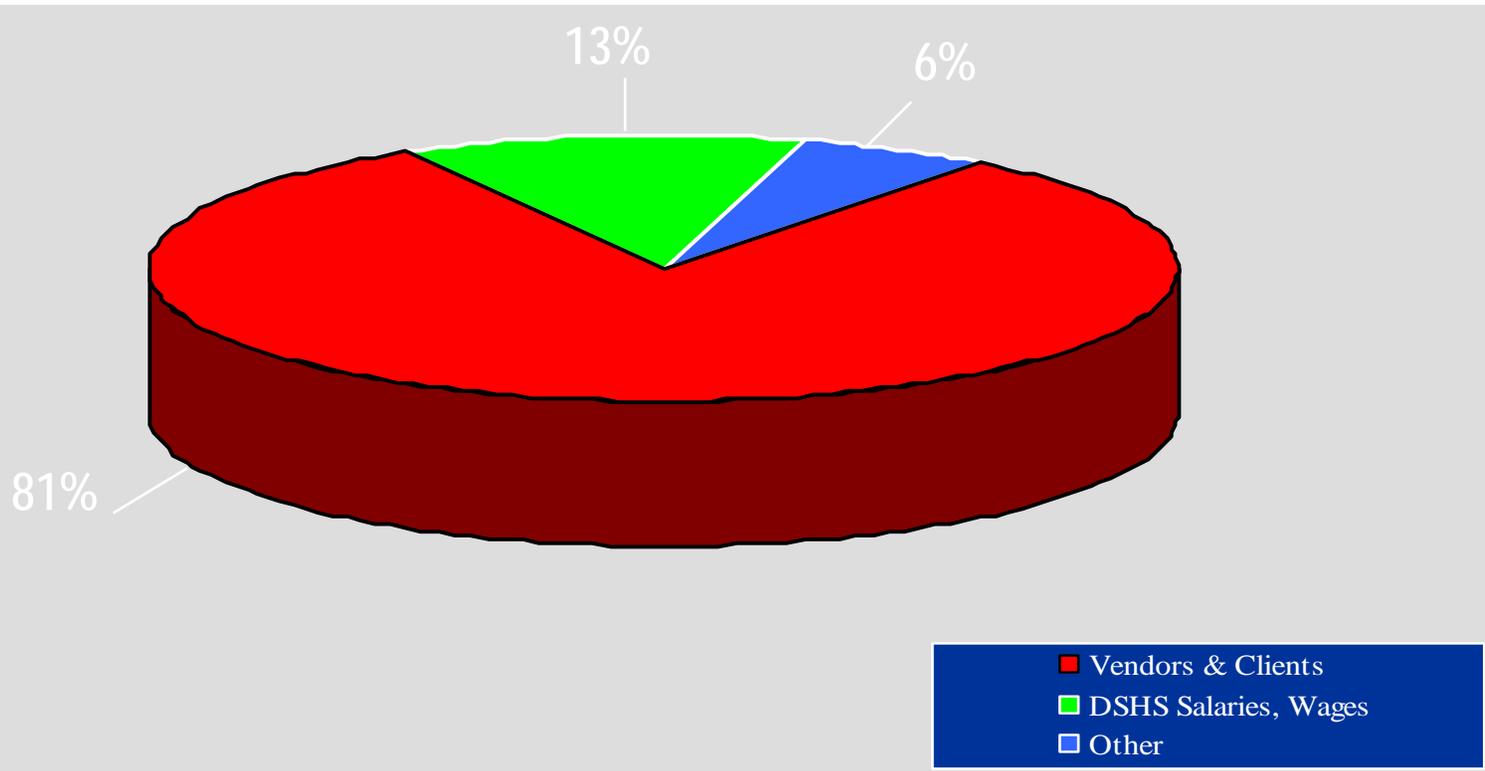
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BEFORE

DSHS Expenditures



AFTER

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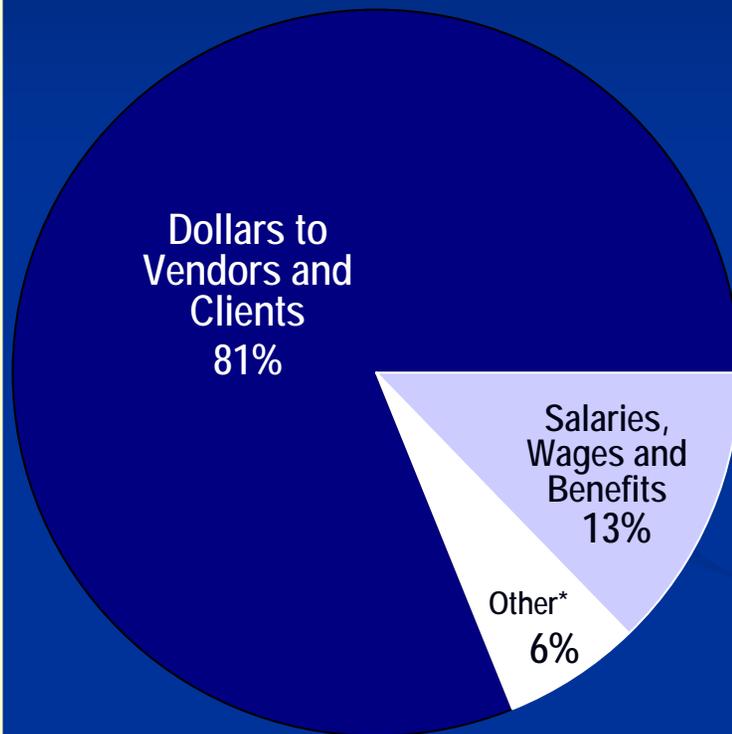
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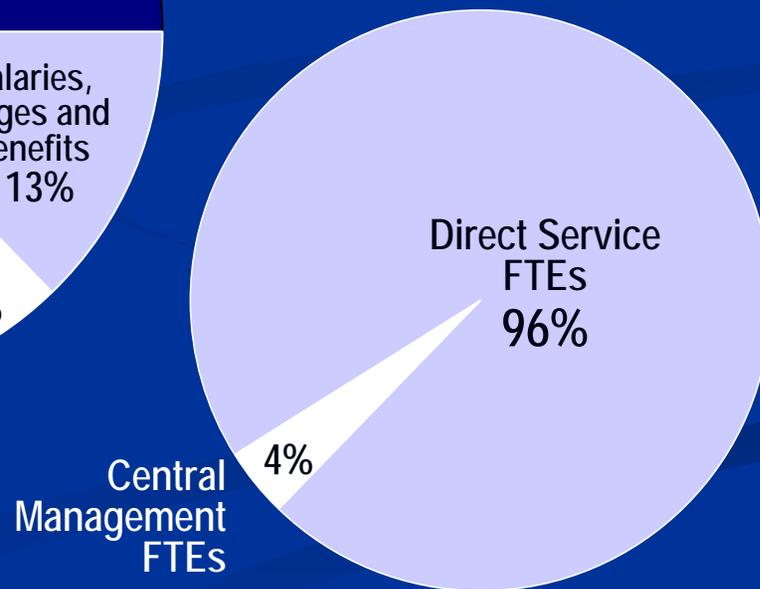
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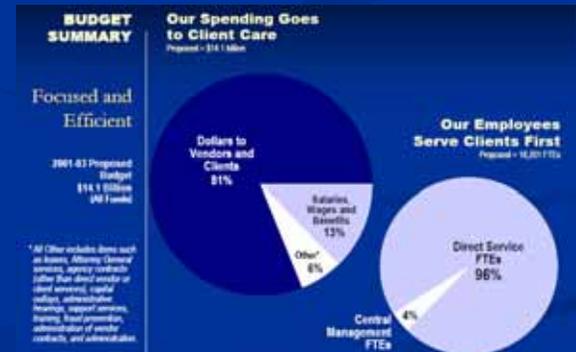
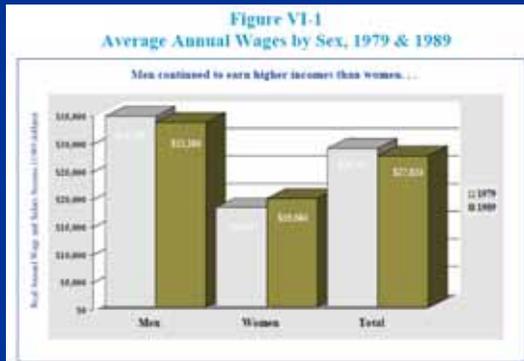


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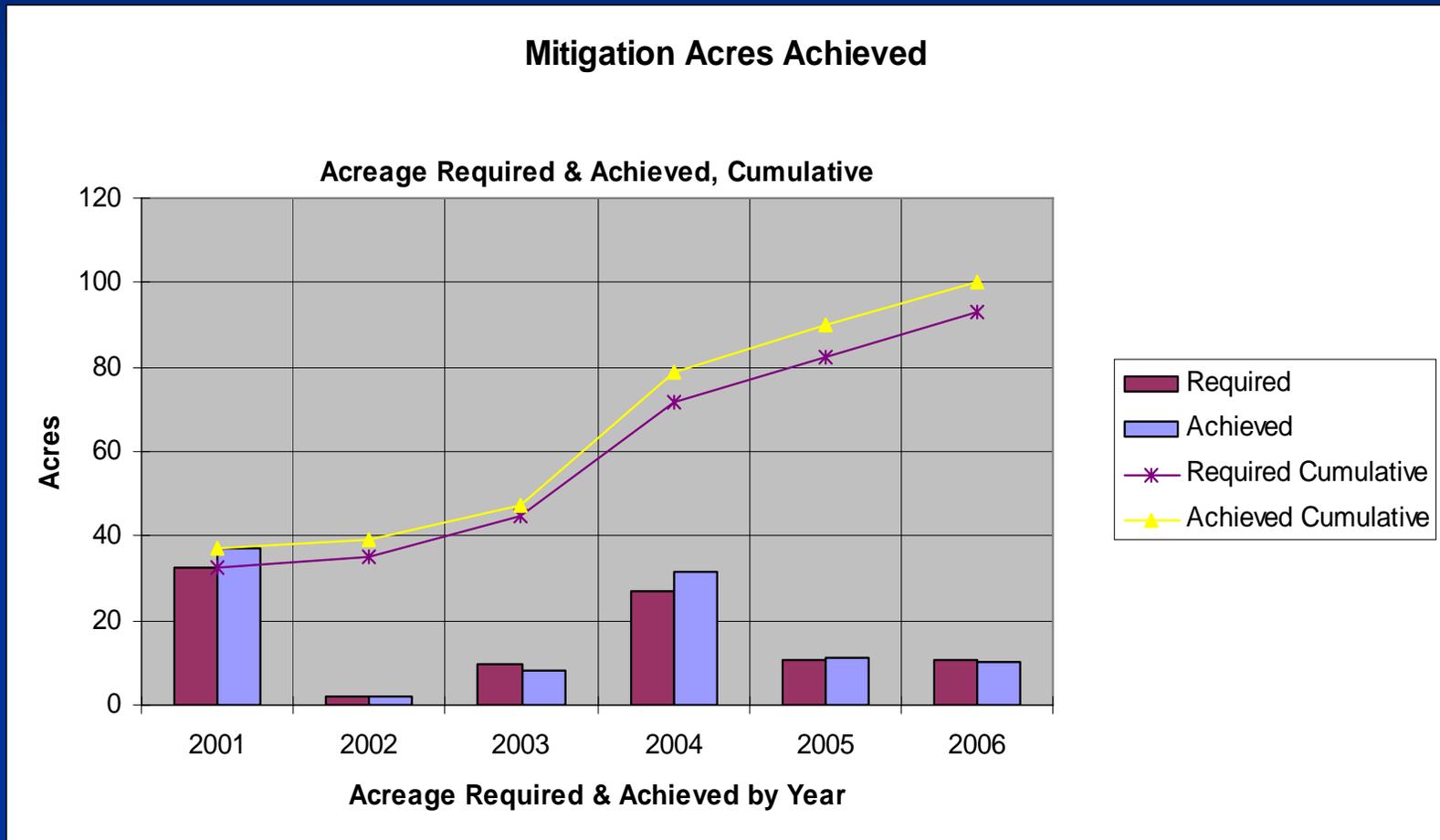
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Applying What You Have Just Learned

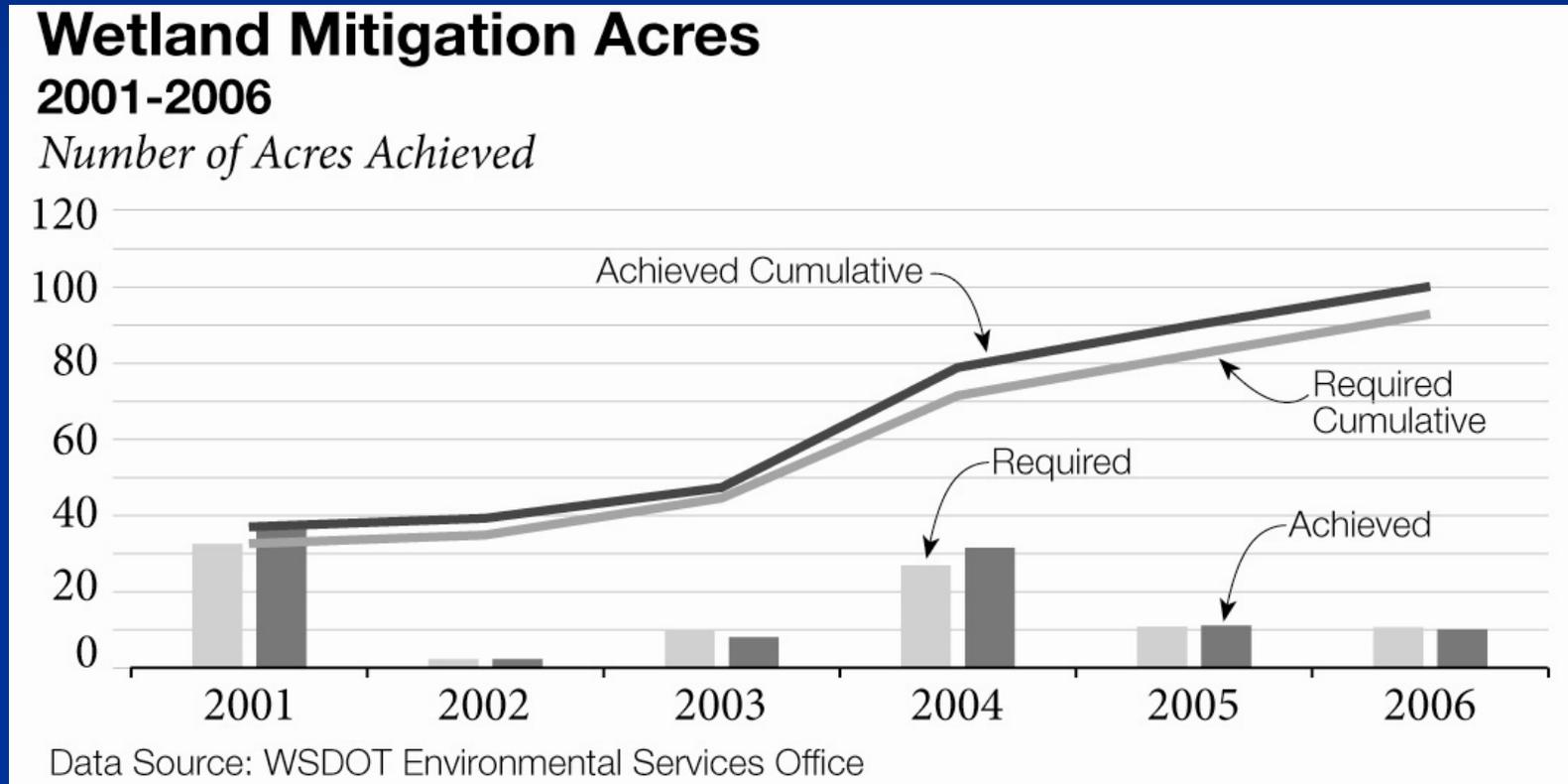


What's Wrong with this Graph?



Real Life Gray Notebook example of a "BEFORE" graph

The Final Version, as it Appeared in the *Gray Notebook*



Real Life Gray Notebook example of an "AFTER" graph, from the December 31, 2006 edition

Performance Measurement at WSDOT: Overview and Lessons Learned

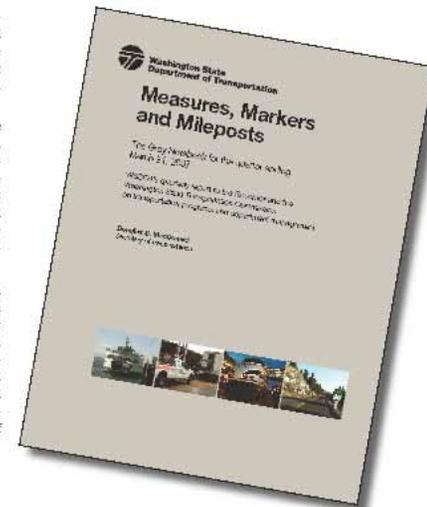
Performance Measurement at WSDOT

Overview and Lessons Learned

Agency wide performance reporting is a high priority at WSDOT. Data tracking, measurement, and reporting methods are continuously refined. The reporting approach is dynamic to adapt to changing public and legislative expectations, agency needs, and to provide timely performance information.

Measures, Markers, and Mileposts, also called *The Gray Notebook* (GNB) because of its gray cover, is the foundation for agency performance assessment and reporting, as well as public and legislative communication. The development of the GNB has influenced many related accountability and performance products. It also supports multiple performance measurement and reporting initiatives and requirements.

The Gray Notebook provides quarterly, in-depth reports on agency and transportation system performance. The purpose of *The Gray Notebook* is to keep WSDOT accountable to the Governor, Washington State citizens, legislators, and transportation organizations. It is also an important internal management and integration tool. The rigor and quality control involved in developing each performance report requires a hands on approach by staff and managers at all levels and across all programs.



Sharing Our Lessons Learned

Most Recent WSDOT Research:

- *Bridging the Gap Between Agencies and Citizens: Performance Journalism Offers A Practical Solution to Communicate Performance Results* (Bremmer and Bryan, Unpublished- TRB Submitted)
- *Making the Case for Funding: The WSDOT Experience* (Bremmer and Bryan, Unpublished- TRB Submitted)
- *Maximizing Highway System Capacity: Measuring and Communicating System Performance in an Evolving Field* (Bremmer and Bryan, Unpublished- TRI Submitted)



Resources and Contacts

- WSDOT's overall Accountability site: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/>
- WSDOT's quarterly performance report: the *Gray Notebook*:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/ronlyres/1668E9EB-8A54-4B08-81B3-B64CBADBB0B2/0/GrayNotebookMar07.pdf>
- Performance Measurement at WSDOT Folio
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/ronlyres/07E1F62D-0BF9-47B9-AE06-1B8F26D51A57/0/Performance_Measurement_Folio_2007.pdf
- *Bridging the Gap Between Agencies and Citizens: Performance Journalism Offers A Practical Solution to Communicate Performance Results* (Bremmer and Bryan, Unpublished- TRB Submitted)
- *Making the Case for Funding: The WSDOT Experience* (Bremmer and Bryan, Unpublished- TRB Submitted)
- *Emerging Performance Measurement Responses to Changing Political Pressures at State DOT's: A Practitioner's Perspective*
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/ronlyres/139F581F-0CED-40E6-B3DB-E89581B016DF/0/Practitioners_Perspective.pdf

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Director, Strategic Assessment Office

Washington State Department of Transportation

(360) 705-7953

bremmed@wsdot.wa.gov