Workforce & Workplace Challenges Facing the Public Service

Graham S. Lowe

**Canadian Policy Research Networks
& University of Alberta**

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CPRN's Human Resources in Government Study:
insights to guide change

✓ Moving beyond government restructuring (cost and service focus) requires a *future workplace and workforce agenda*

✓ Managers, employees, and unions must collaborate to meet the demands for service effectiveness *and* better quality work-life

✓ Workplace innovation is crucial for recruitment, retention, and skill development and use

✓ Demographics, rising skills requirements, and the negative effects of downsizing demand new ways of doing government work

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Doing government work differently ...

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An integrated approach to public service reform

•Changing public needs & sense of citizenship
•Public support for internal reforms
•Shifting political agendas (reinvestment, people)

•Workforce renewal
•Workplace reform

Public services that are:
•cost-effective
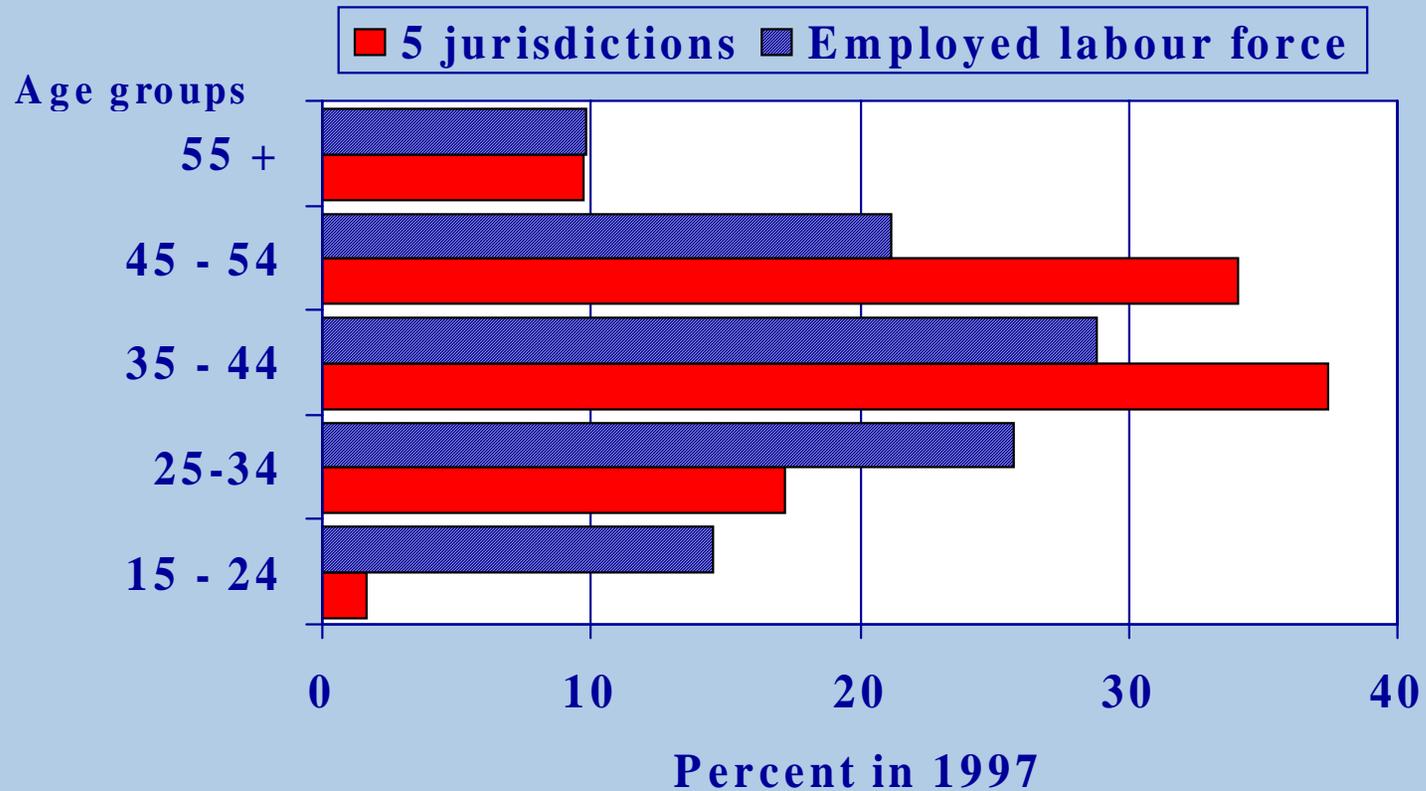•accountable
•responsive
•innovative
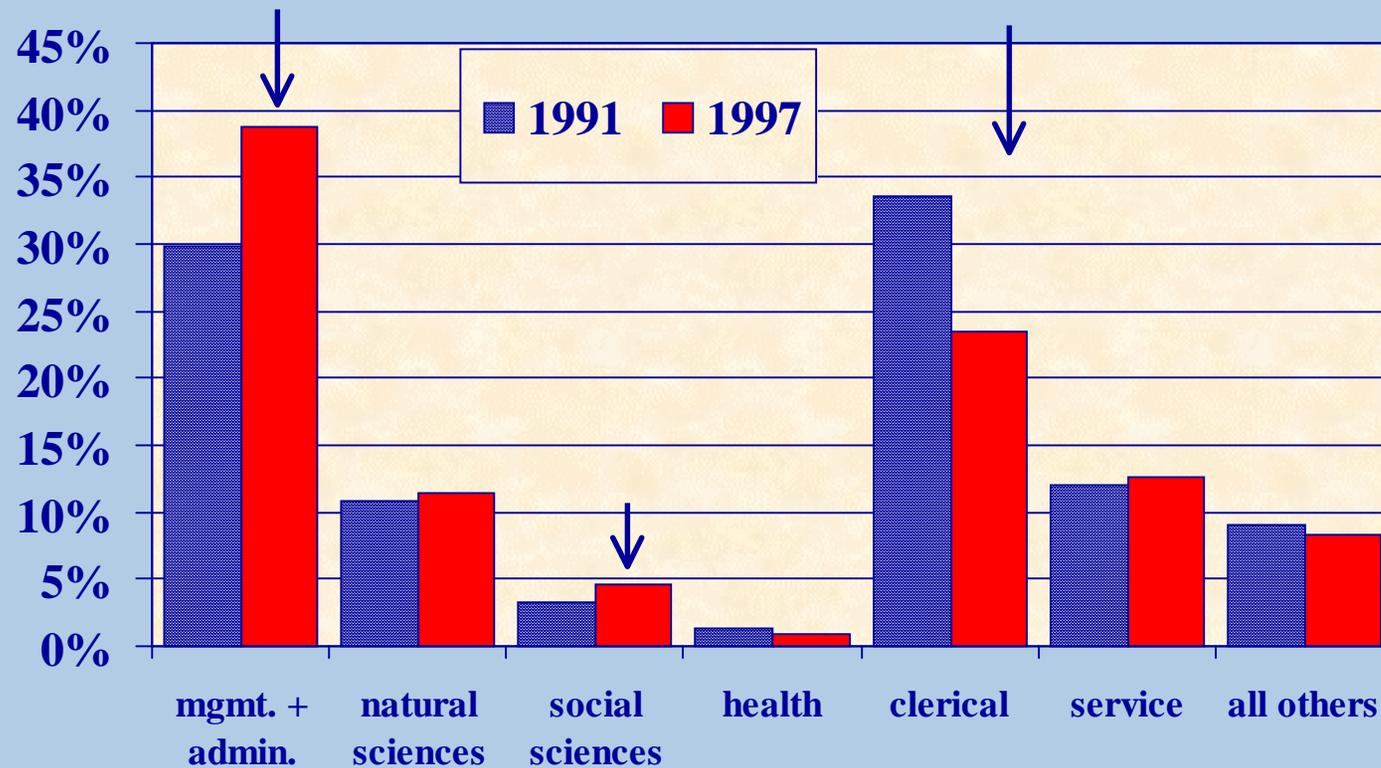•knowledge-based

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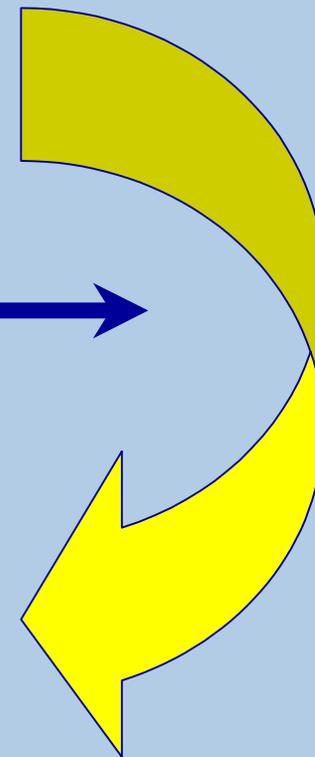
#1   Internal pressures for reform

The renewal crisis: age profiles of government and national workforces

Legend: ■ 5 jurisdictions ■ Employed labour force

Age groups, Percent in 1997

Who are the knowledge workers?

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Changing occupational composition of the federal public service, 1991 and 1997

Legend: ■ 1991 ■ 1997

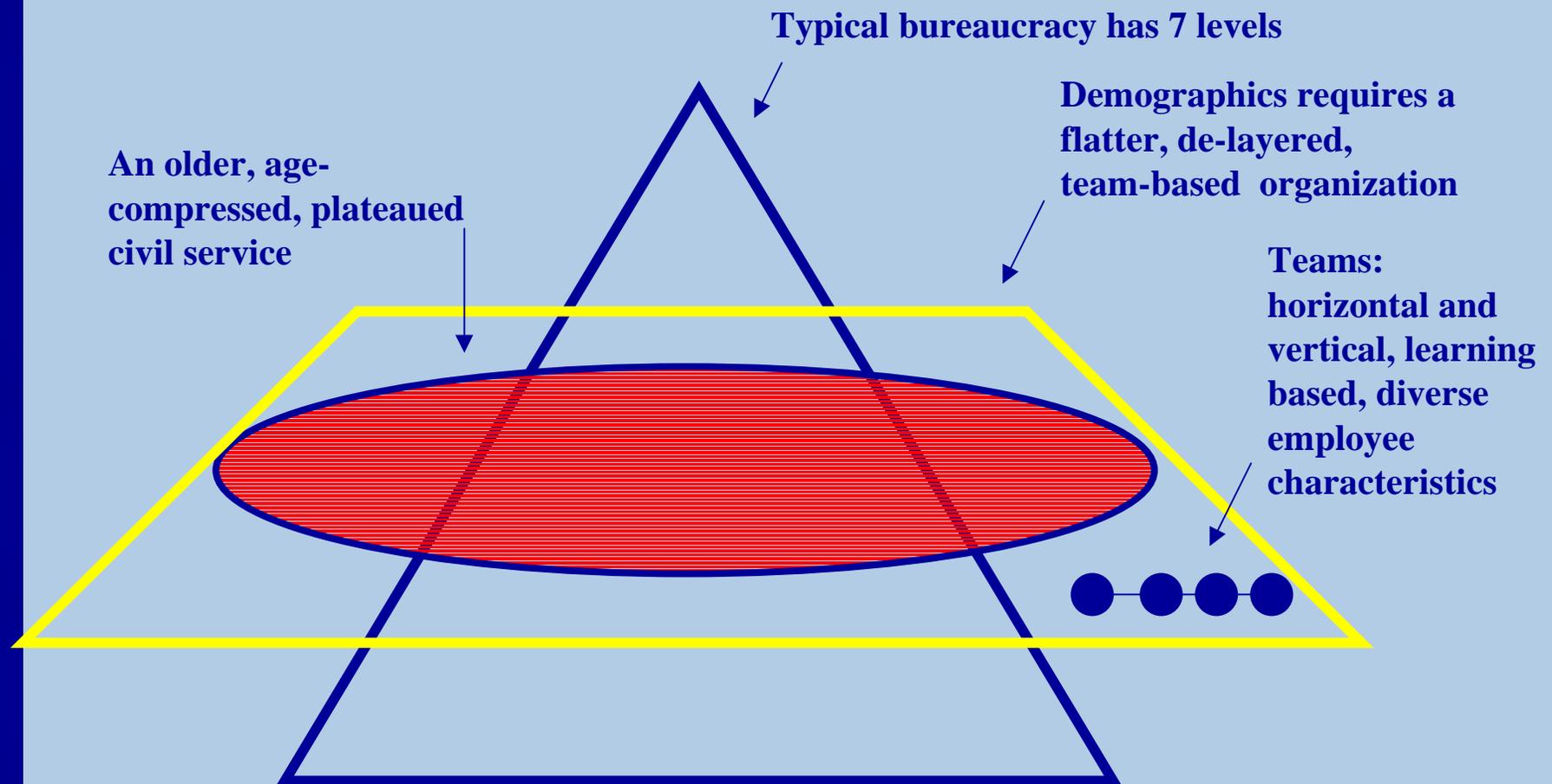Categories: mgmt. + admin., natural sciences, social sciences, health, clerical, service, all others

All public employees must become 'knowledge workers'

Bureaucracy, downsizing and demography collide: pressures for organizational redesign

Typical bureaucracy has 7 levels

Demographics requires a flatter, de-layered, team-based organization

An older, age-compressed, plateaued civil service

Teams: horizontal and vertical, learning based, diverse employee characteristics

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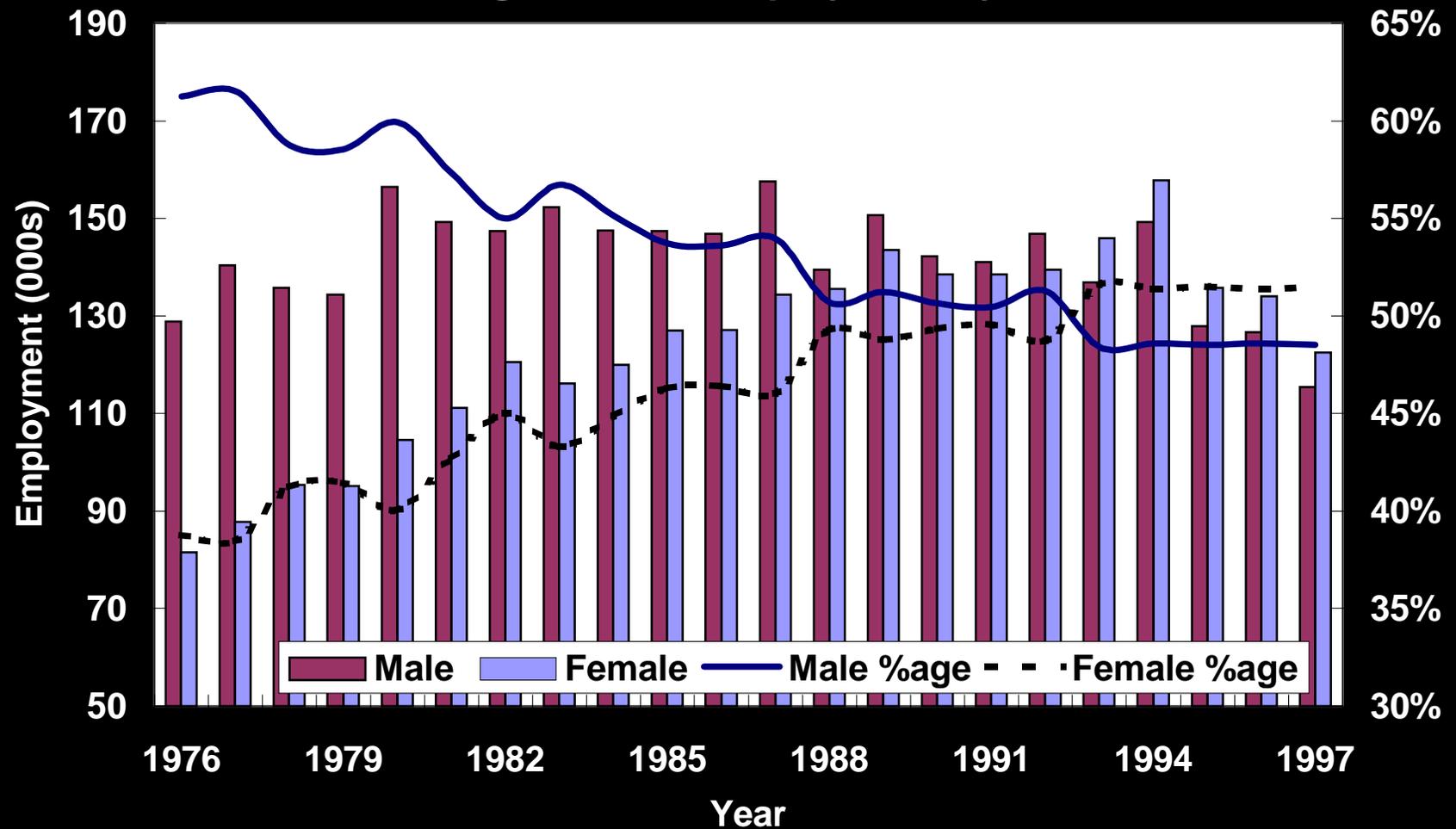**Challenge: how to reshape the organization to fit current and future demographics**

Restructuring and employment equity

- Females outnumbered males in provincial governments by 1993, but still underrepresented in senior positions
- Aboriginals, visible minorities and persons with disabilities were affected less than average by downsizing
- But designated groups still underrepresented
- Aboriginal and visible minority populations are rapidly increasing in the labour force (especially in BC, prairies)
- Diversity policies and workplace culture important in recruitment
- Anticipate possible backlash from non-designated groups
- The ageism of restructuring: too much focus on young recruits to the possible detriment of older workers still in the system

Source: Joe Peters, *An Era of Change: Government Employment Trends in the 1980s and 1990s*. CPRN, 1999. 7

Provincial Government
Total Employment by Gender and
Percentage of Total Employment by Gender

Chart: Employment (000s) on left axis (50 to 190), Percentage on right axis (30% to 65%), Year on horizontal axis (1976 to 1997).

Legend: Male | Female | Male %age | Female %age

Federal Government and Selected Provinces
Percent of Workforce that are Aboriginal Peoples,
Visible Minorities, or Persons with Disabilities
1987, 1991, 1997
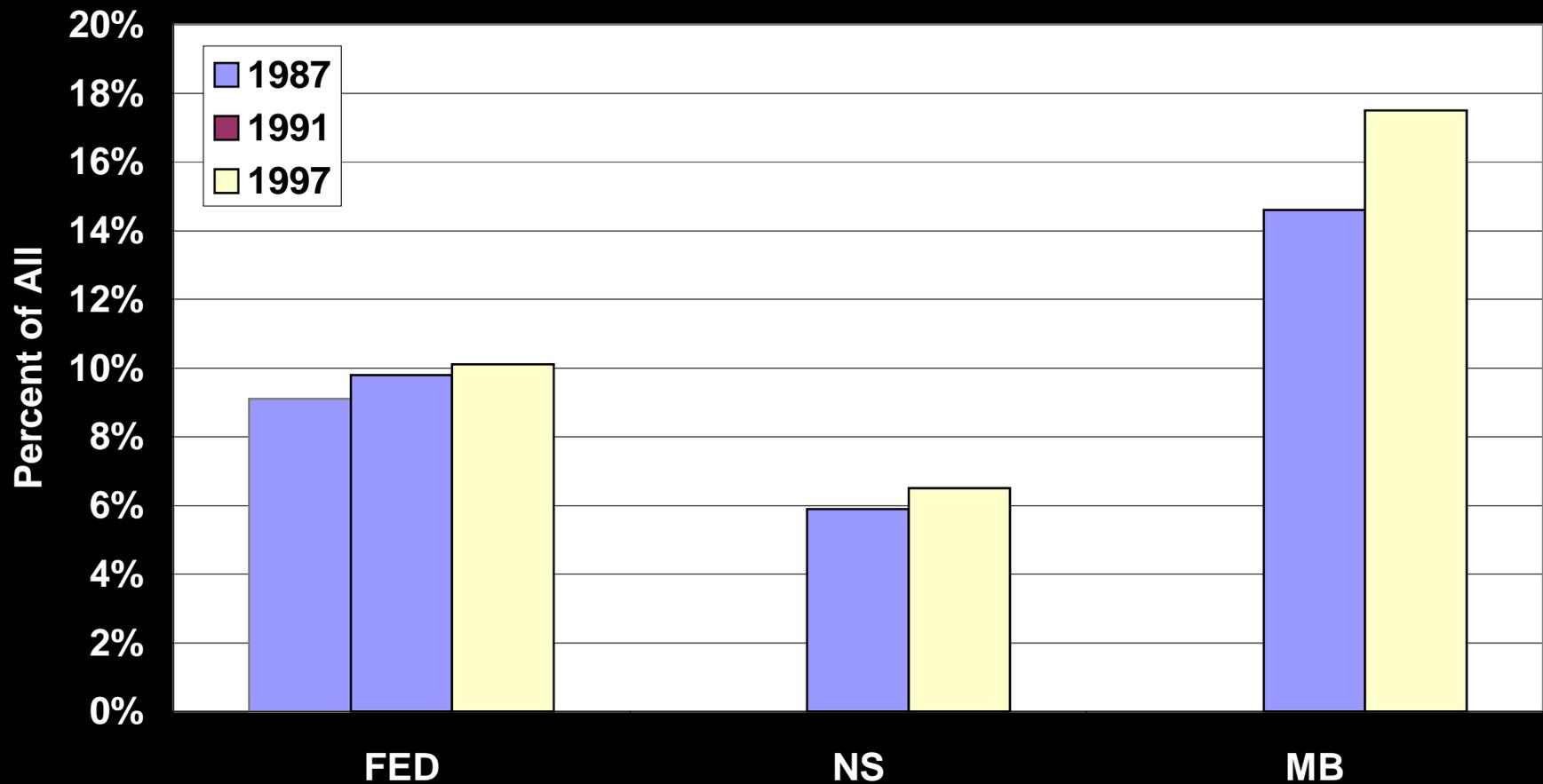
#2 Impact of restructuring on work

Research findings:

- 82% of managers reported that their unit's work volume had increased between 1996-1998

- over half of the units experienced work intensification (staff size and work volume combined)

- only 16% of units were doing the same work in the same way in 1998 as 3 years earlier

Source: Survey of Workplace Issues in Government (n=802 unit managers)

Future challenges for managers

- The managers surveyed identified 4 future challenges:

  1. employee burnout / fatigue
  2. loss of experience / corporate memory
  3. morale
  4. hiring / staffing

Source: Survey of Workplace Issues in Government (n=802 unit managers)

Challenges from the unions' perspective

- Workloads, work pace, and stress have increased among union members
- Quality of work life has deteriorated
- Technical and problem solving skills have increased, but little evidence of employee 'empowerment'
  - ➔ Unions reps and managers focus on quality of worklife
  - ➔ This is common ground for management-union 'future workplace' initiatives
  - ➔ BUT little or no union involvement so far
  - ➔ What is the role of unions in reform and renewal?

#3 Signs of workplace innovation

Despite downsizing and increased workloads, some managers and units have begun to innovate in the areas of job design and human resource management practices.

- Potential to transform how work gets done
- Can improve organizational effectiveness *and* working conditions
- What factors encourage and prevent truly innovative change?

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Overview of workplace innovation

Type of Workplace Changes:	Low diffusion	Moderate diffusion	High diffusion
Information technology			4
Training			4
Flexible work design		4	
Flexible work arrangements		4	
Employee involvement schemes		4	
Flexible staffing	4		
Performance pay	4		
Decentralized authority	4		
Labour-management consultation	4		

Source: Survey of Workplace Issues in Government (n=802 unit managers)

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Use of flexible work practices

- Flexible work design (multi-skilling, job rotation, job enlargement, job enrichment, teams) is the key to workplace innovation
- One-third of units reported using 3 or 4 kinds of flexibility, but only a minority of employees are involved
- Characteristics of the most 'innovative' units: do the same work differently, strong public accountability, higher manager autonomy, training on group decision-making and problem solving
- Flexibility is 'bundled' with other workplace human resource management practices and use of information technology
- Also some positive links with performance

#4 Creating the future public service

Various renewal initiatives identify these goals for the future public service:

- knowledge-based
- continuously learning
- multi-skilled
- flexible & responsive
- creative
- collaborative
- government as the "employer of choice"

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A model of workplace innovation

International research shows that some large firms have introduced what's called **high performance (or high involvement, flexible, high trust - high skills)** *work practices, often with the cooperation of unions.*

When 'bundled', these practices are linked to superior performance:

- multi-skilled jobs
- extensive team work
- training
- employee participation
- reduced hierarchy
- delegated responsibility
- shared information and rewards
- supportive work environment (well-being, work-family balance)

$\rightarrow$ ***To what extent can government bureaucracy be flexible and empower workers, given political constraints (ministerial responsibility)?***

Learning and innovation in a high quality work environment

Learning organization

Supportive organizational context, high quality work environment

Innovation, knowledge-based public service strategies

Challenging job designs in a flexible workplace

Skills

Adapted from: G. Betcherman, K. McMullen & K. Davidman, TRAINING FOR THE NEW ECONOMY. CPRN, 1998, p. 68.

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First steps toward doing government work differently...

✔ Treat quality of worklife (workloads, morale, stress, etc.) as a renewal and effectiveness issue

✔ Balance higher skill requirements and responsibilities with employee consultation and empowerment

✔ Take an integrated approach to technology, training, job design, staffing, compensation, and other HRM issues

✔ Foster cooperative labour-management relations to support innovation

Strategic HRM challenges

- Support: existing innovative practices
- Leadership: create 'change champions' at all levels
- Process: developmental and participative
- Diffusion: identify, encourage and reward the use of effective HRM practices

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