

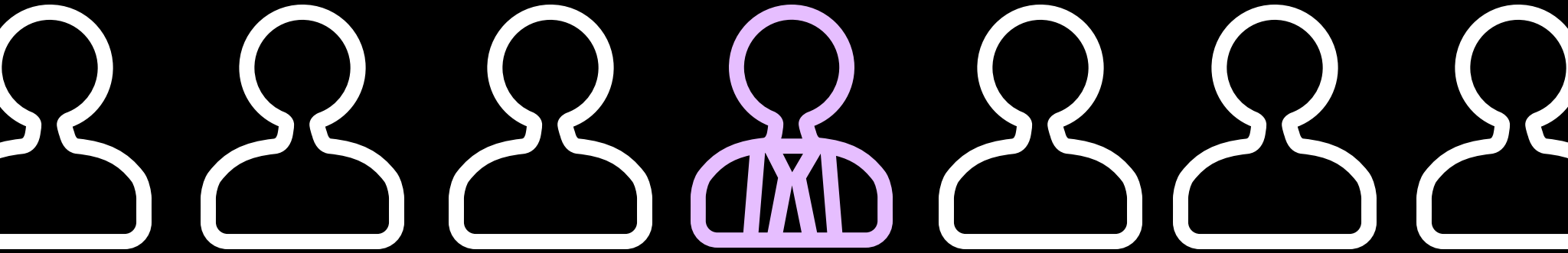
The background features a low-angle, black and white photograph of two skyscrapers with a grid-like window pattern, converging towards the top. At the bottom, a dark, herringbone-patterned wooden floor is visible. A white rectangular box with a thick black border is centered on the page, containing the text.

WFF SEED GRANT  
PROJECT | MAY 2018

# **HEALTH, POLICY, AND GENDER**



Using the Media to Improve Health  
Equity



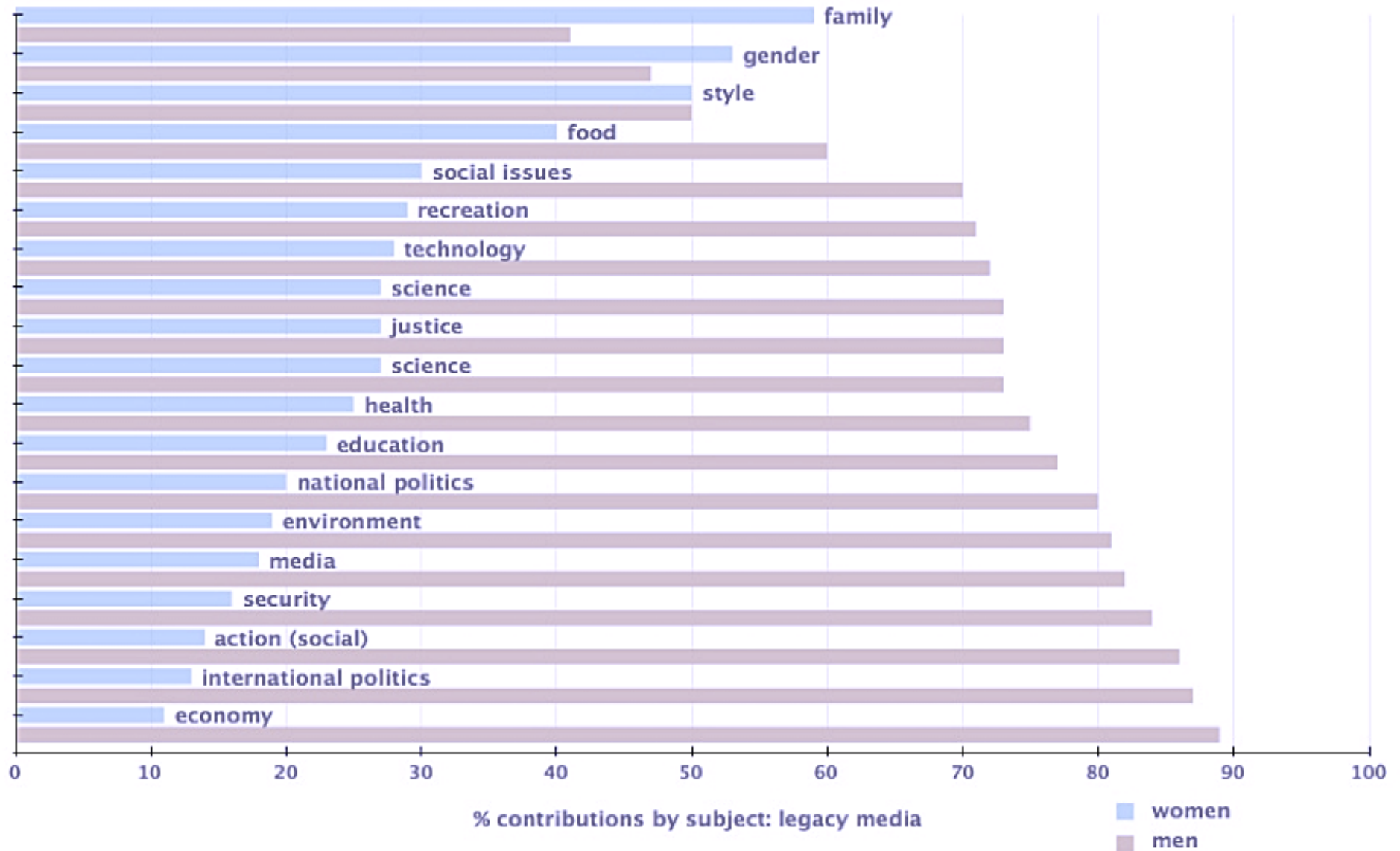
## **MEDIA IS A MALE-DOMINATED SPACE**



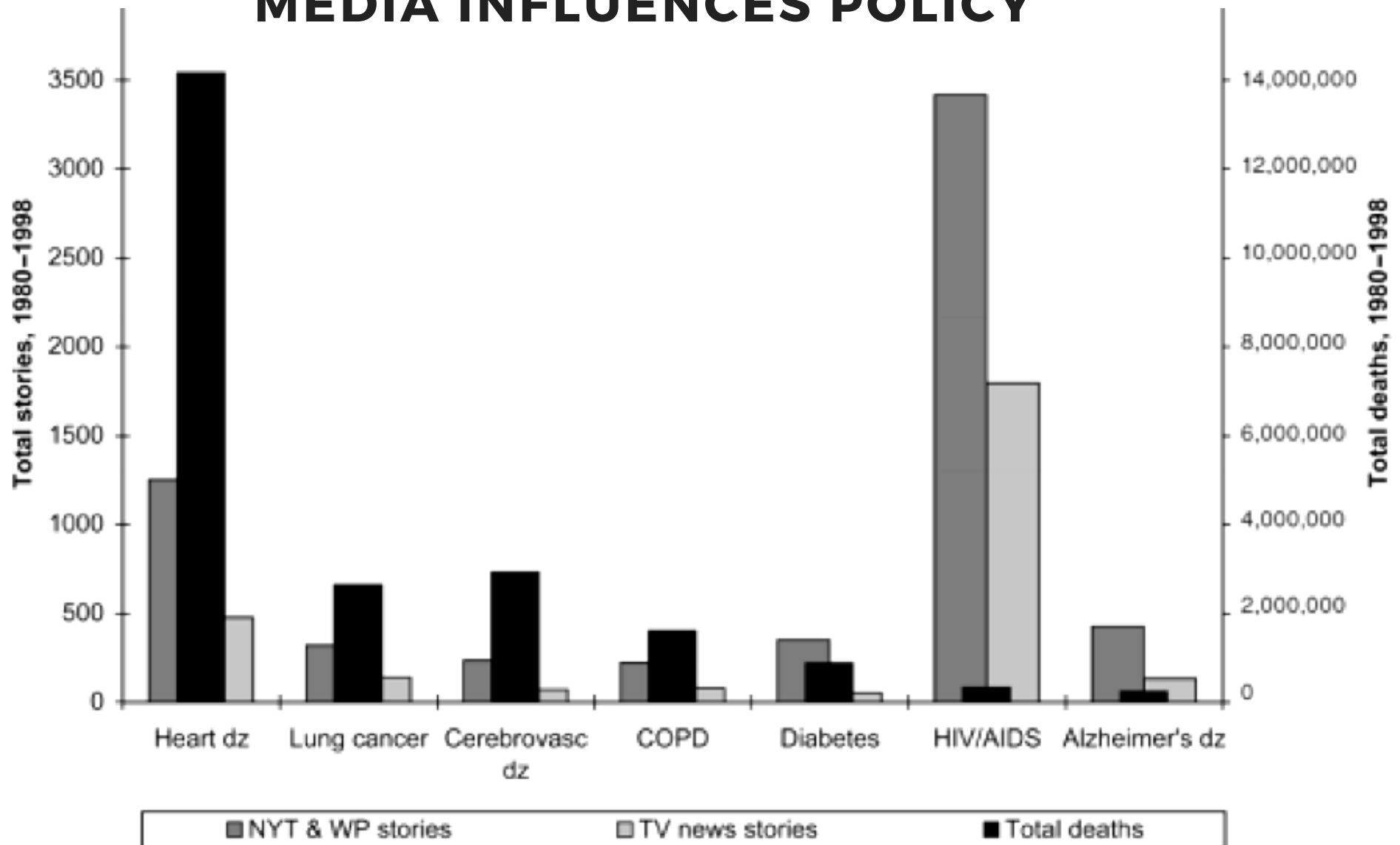
- Our world conversation is currently an echo chamber that reproduces the same narrow range of (85% male) voices
- Even worse among academics: a May 2008 Rutgers University study found that 97% of op-eds by scholars in the Wall Street Journal are written by men

# THE GENDER GAP PERSISTS IN BY-LINES ABOUT SCIENCE, HEALTH, AND POLITICS

Contributions by Women and Men by Subject: Legacy Media



# MEDIA INFLUENCES POLICY



**Figure 1** Total Deaths and Media Attention, 1980–1998

**Media often dictates government health agendas and funding**

# MEDIA INFLUENCES POLICY

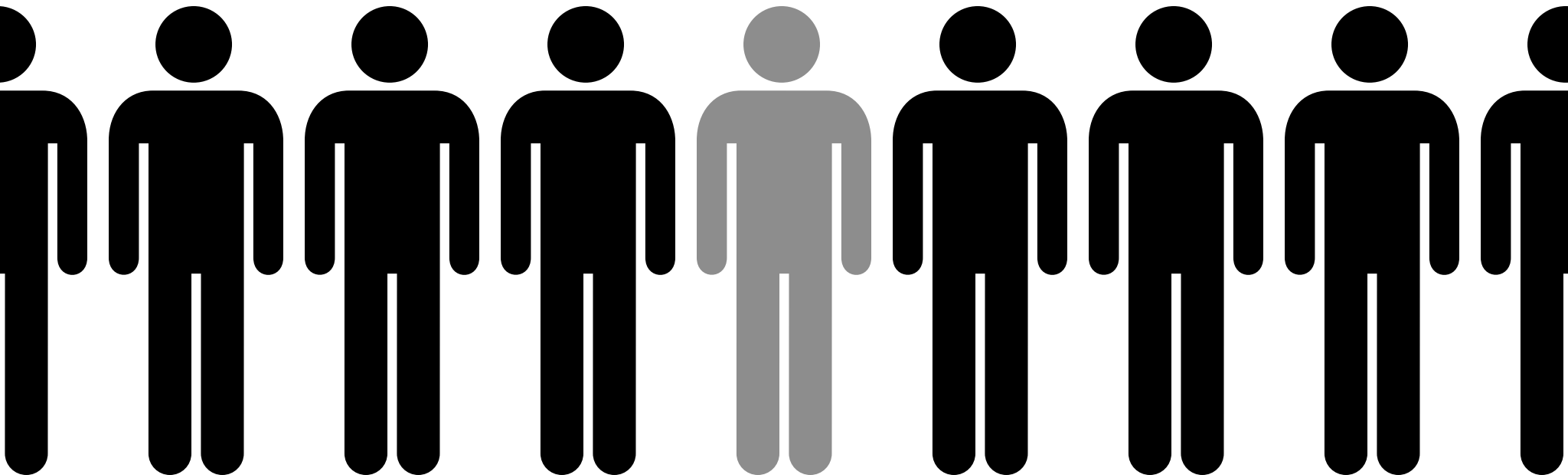
**NIH Research Funds and Measures of Disease Burden for 29 Conditions.**

Condition or Disease	NIH Research Funds <i>millions of dollars (% of total)</i>	Measure of Disease Burden in North America* <i>thousands (rank)</i>				
		Incidence	Prevalence	Mortality	Years of Life Lost	Disability-Adjusted Life-Years
AIDS	2902 (24.3)	142 (19)	1275 (15)	14 (16)	279 (13)	583 (14)
Diabetes mellitus	1038 (8.7)	1200 (9)	21663 (2)	84 (7)	563 (7)	1473 (6)
Perinatal conditions	789 (6.6)	45 (21)	3516 (7)	17 (14)	578 (6)	793 (10)
Breast cancer	718 (6.0)	222 (13)	1875 (11)	53 (10)	488 (8)	684 (12)
Dementia	643 (5.4)	714 (10)	3108 (8)	132 (5)	306 (11)	1359 (8)
Alcohol abuse	511 (4.3)	2641 (6)	9553 (4)	8 (17)	121 (16)	1837 (4)
Dental and oral disorders	413 (3.5)	109774 (1)	41152 (1)	0	2 (27)	267 (18)
Cirrhosis	408 (3.4)	43 (22)	303 (21)	30 (12)	360 (10)	455 (16)
Ischemic heart disease	398 (3.3)	1336 (7)	2347 (10)	531 (1)	2695 (2)	3048 (3)
Schizophrenia	364 (3.1)	42 (23)	1561 (13)	1 (24)	5 (25)	522 (15)
Injuries	355 (3.0)	3747 (5)	241 (23)	182 (2)	3448 (1)	4484 (2)

**Media often dictates government health agendas and funding**

**MALES** → **MEDIA**  
**MEDIA** → **POLICY**

So, who can women rely on to bring light to the intersectional health disparities experienced women?



# MY WFF SEED GRANT PROJECT



- 1) Attend the Op-Ed Project's writing workshop, which is aimed at amplifying the voice of women and other underrepresented groups in the media
- 2) Use acquired knowledge to write a series of op-eds that discuss gender, health, and policy

# GENDER & HEALTH POLICY WRITING SERIES

The Op-Ed  
Project Core Seminar  
("Write To Change The  
World")

Op-Ed 2: Promoting the  
Health of Incarcerated  
Women and Their  
Children in Connecticut

Op-Ed 1: Only Women  
Can Get HPV, Right?

Op-Ed 3: Why Aren't  
Women Worried about  
Heart Attacks?

Danville  
NEXT 3 EXITS





# Only Women Can Get HPV, Right?




- HPV infects 80% of women and 66% of men at least once over the course of their lives
- The promotion of Gardasil as a women's-only health issue jeopardized herd immunity: it ignored 50% of viral carriers (males)
- Females who were unable to be vaccinated were left unprotected from male HPV transmission
- The development of the HPV vaccine ignored the sexual health of men who have sex with men (MSM) who had a known risk of HPV-related anal cancer




# Only Women Can Get HPV, Right?




- The Gardasil marketing campaign used gender stereotyping in a way that disempowered women, leveraging gender stereotypes to increase uptake
- 'I Chose' Campaign: 1) victim narrative (i.e. females as without power and in need of protection) 2) sex is not the element they have control over 3) by avoiding talking about sex it reinforces the idea that female sexuality is taboo
- The FDA needs to address sexual and gender stereotypes in the development and marketing of pharmaceuticals




# Promoting the Health of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Connecticut



- SB 13 prohibits restraints and shackling on incarcerated women during labor and delivery, reducing the danger of falls and other bodily injuries
- Only 54% of pregnant women in state prisons have received instruction on childcare, special testing (i.e. ultrasounds and maternal blood tests), diet, and other relevant reproductive health information
- SB 13's services include a **lactation policy** (mothers can pump and store breast milk) to help their babies fight off viruses and bacteria and lower their risk of allergies and asthma



# Promoting the Health of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Connecticut



- 1 in 27 children in the US have an incarcerated parents; SB 13 takes steps toward improving the parent-child relationship (visitation policies for mothers with children 18 and under that include physical contact, increased frequency of visits, and access to child-friendly visiting areas)
- SB 13 would require that menstrual products to be provided free of charge
- Needs an amendment to re-establish special maternal units, allowing inmate mothers to bond with their child for their first 18 months of life
- Women need to be provided with a copy of the “Pregnant Women’s Bill of Rights” upon incarceration



# Why Aren't Women Worried About Heart Attacks?

NCDs have been the leading causes of death among women globally for at least the past three decades and are now responsible for two in every three deaths among women each year

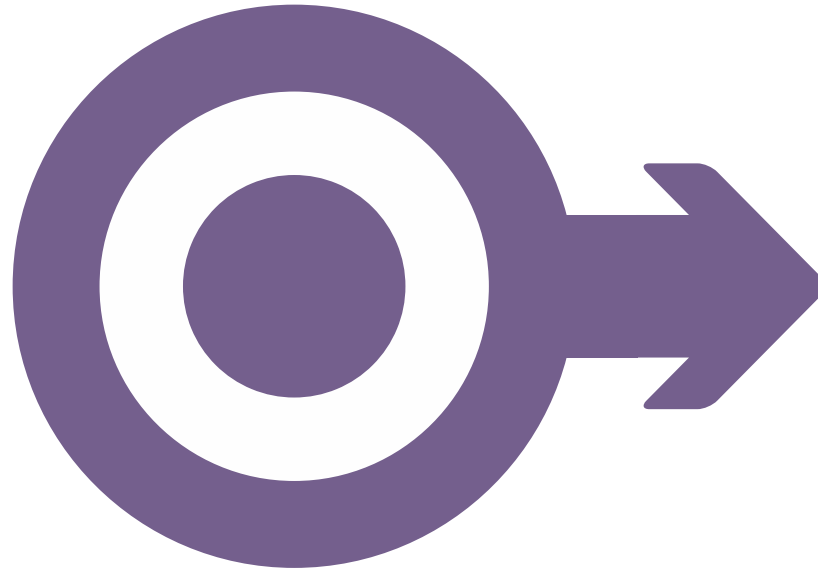
Three enduring myths contribute to the neglect of cardiovascular disease in women:

- First, the persistent view that health-related issues of importance to women are defined through their reproductive capacity
- Second, the misperception that NCDs, especially CVDs, primarily are diseases of men
- Thirdly, the myth that NCDs in women are an issue only in high-income countries and a result of lifestyle choices



# Why Aren't Women Worried About Heart Attacks?

- In a survey conducted by the American Heart Association, 48% of the women interviewed knew that heart disease is the leading cause of death in women, yet only 13% said it was their greatest personal health risk
- Data suggests that women still worry more about getting breast cancer – even though heart disease kills six times as many women every year. *Why the disconnect?*
- Many women say their physicians never talk to them about coronary risk and sometimes don't even recognize the symptoms, mistaking them instead for signs of panic disorder, stress, and even hypochondria



## **N E X T   S T E P S**

Op-ed 1: In the process of being published with the Huffington Post

Op-ed 2: Published in the CT Mirror and contributing to the current conversation at the CT General Assembly

Op-ed 3: Still editing and preparing to pitch



*Whoever tells the story*

**WRITES HISTORY**





**QUESTIONS?**