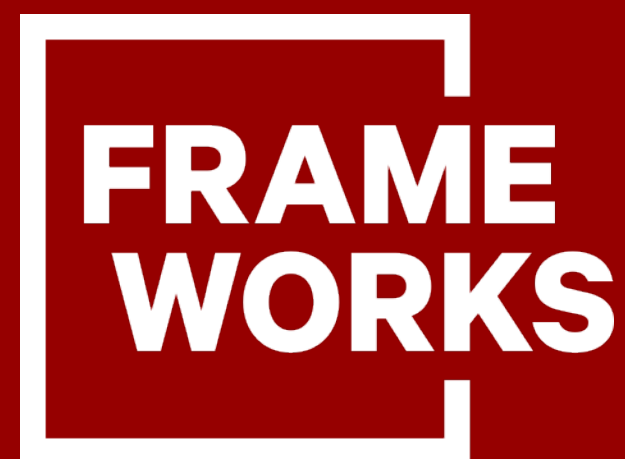


# Framing health disparities

How to help people see the bigger picture

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# About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues.

Learn more at [www.frameworksinstitute.org](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org)

# Research can help a field find a frame that works

- By moving **from a vulnerability frame to a brain development frame**, the early childhood movement has reoriented funding, expanded programs, and improved outcomes
- By **shifting emphasis from “public health issue” to “social justice issue”** the tobacco control movement is moving next-generation protections that tackle health disparities
- Advocates for oral health are **telling a new story about overall health** and how access to oral health care is a matter of health justice
- By moving **from a contaminant frame to a fairness frame**, advocates for environmental health are pointing to the need for systems, rather than the failure of systems



framing =

choices in how  
we present ideas

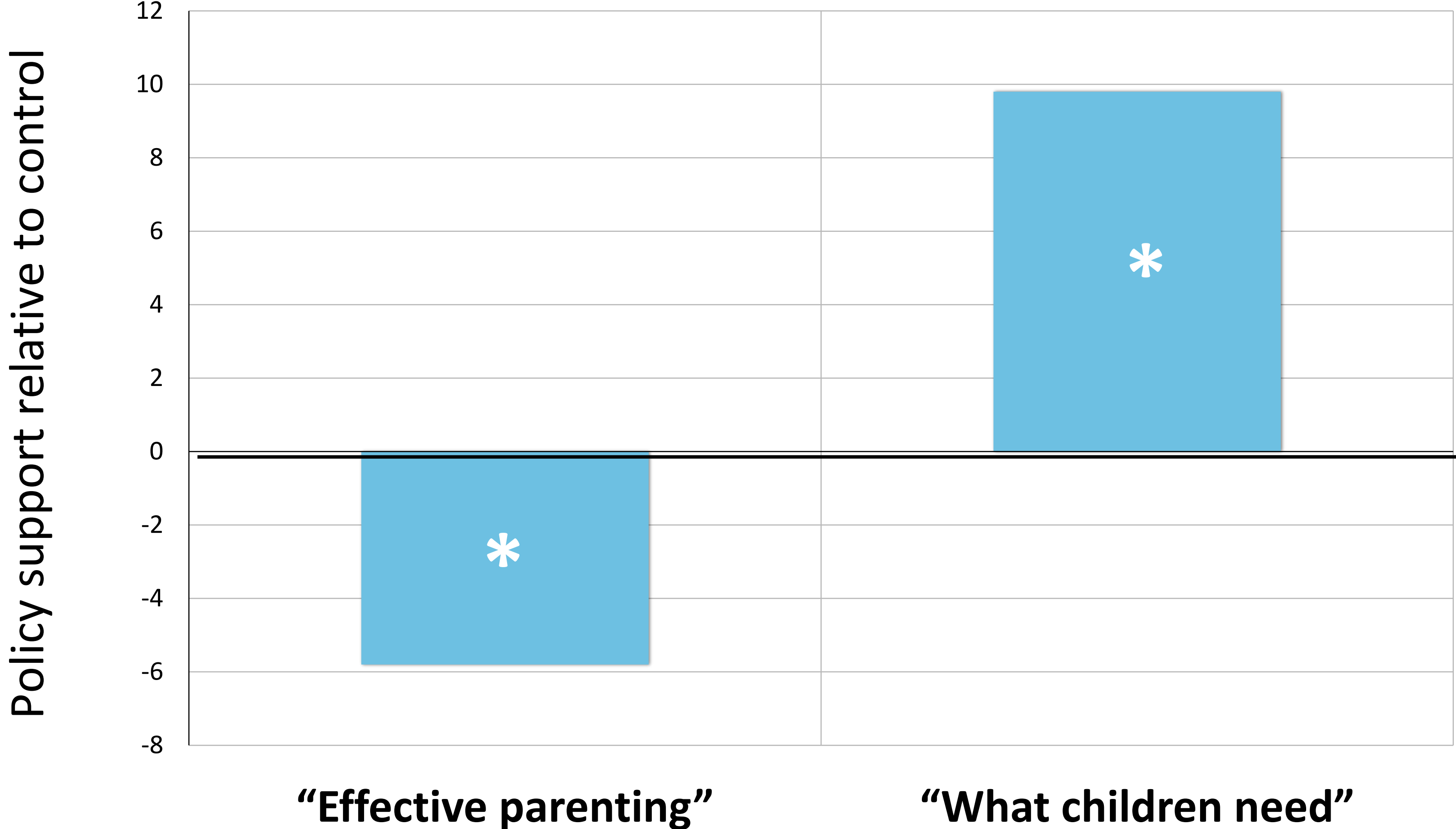


differences in how  
people respond

# Framing can open minds to science - or close them

*Selected results from experimental survey FrameWorks conducted in Australia, 2018*

*\* =  $p < .01$*



## Word choice matters

“Family physicians should **screen adolescents for** alcohol and drug use.”



People rejected the idea because they assumed screening involved testing of biological samples

“Family physicians should **ask adolescents about** alcohol and drug use.”



People rejected the idea because they assumed that the purpose was “catch & punish”

“Family physicians should **have a conversation with adolescents about** alcohol and drug use.”

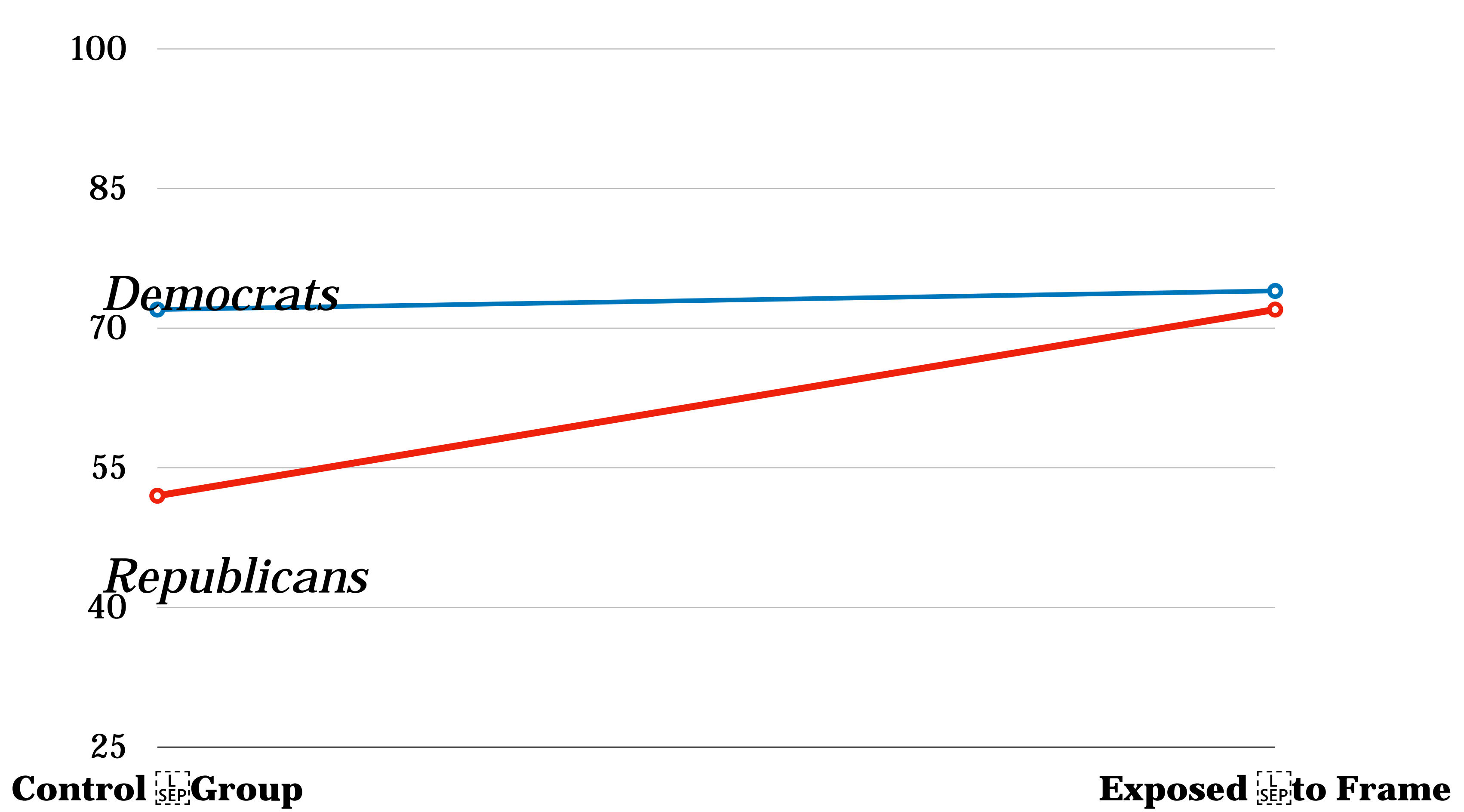


People visualized brief verbal interventions and supported the idea

# Positive or negative emphasis can matter

*Selected results from a 2017 FrameWorks experiment on framing oral health equity*

*Support for oral health equity policies*



*Inaction  
Leads to  
Losses.*

This message emphasized that if society *fails* to act on oral health, economic *losses* and public health *problems* would follow.



# Tone/stance matters

Political Inaction on Gun Violence Is Unacceptable!



**Viewed as ‘accusatory’ and politically charged**

**Rejected by participants as inappropriate for ‘civil conversation’**

New Research Reveals the Impact of Gun Violence in Missouri



**Viewed with suspicion: whose research?**

**Conversation focused on science and bias, not guns or solutions**

We Can All Agree that Reducing Gun Violence Will Do Missouri Good



**Viewed as ‘inclusive’ and getting ‘past political beliefs’**

**Participants envisioned a productive conversation following**

# Examples of Framing Choices

Tone

Values

Numbers

Metaphors

Narrative

Messengers

Examples

Context

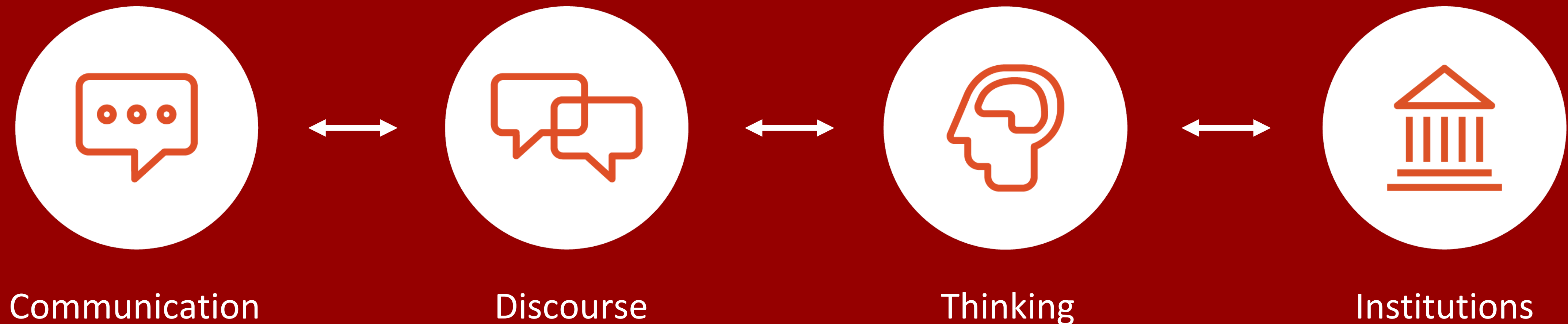
Visuals

Order

Explanatory Chains

Solutions

# Framing catalyzes sustainable social change

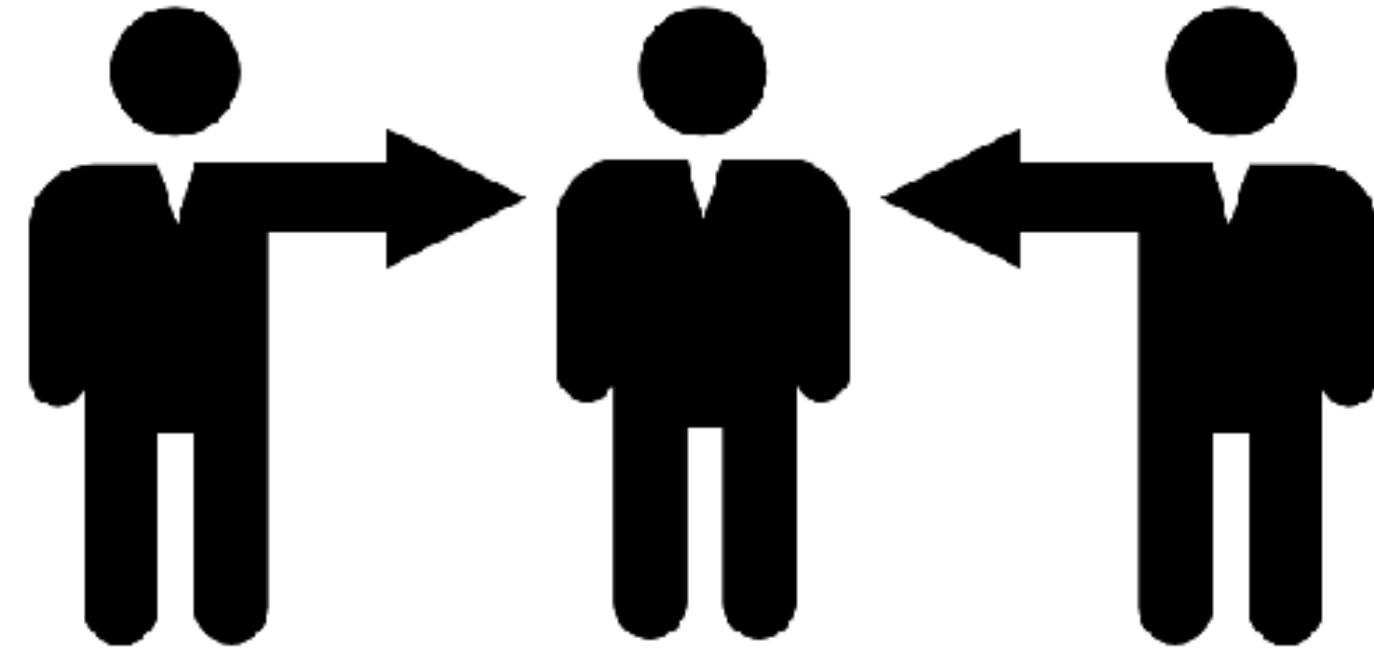


# Common mindsets can limit support for change

*Icons from the Noun Project*



*Individualism*



*Otherism*



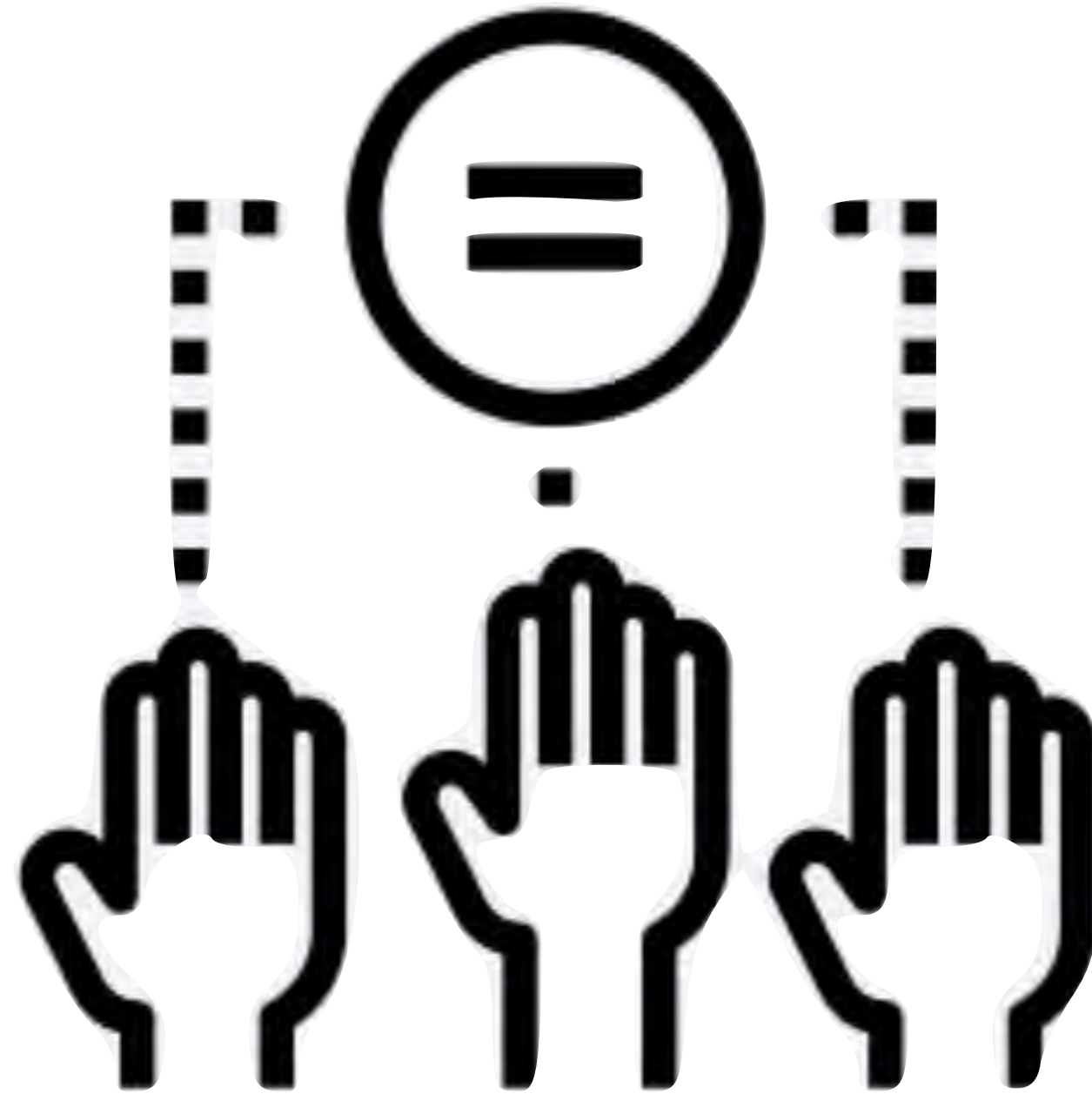
*Fatalism*

# Reframing reinforces alternative mindsets

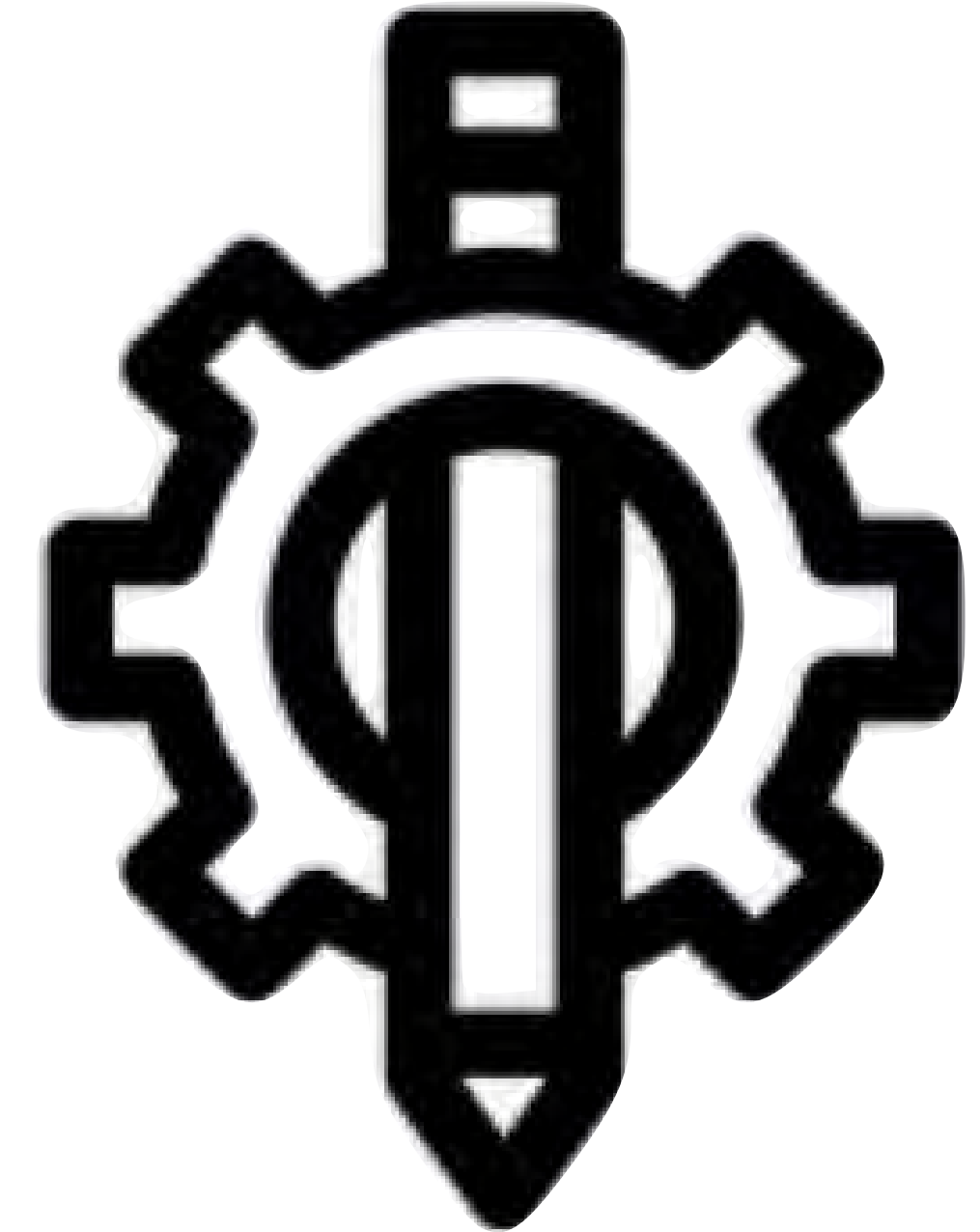
*Icons from the Noun Project*



*Context Matters*



*We're In This Together*



*We Can Redesign This*

# Three ways to build more productive mindsets on your issue

**1 Attribute responsibility carefully.**

**2 Emphasize explanation.**

**3 Frame toward solutions.**

# Attribution:

- Attribution means the way we explain the causes of behavior, events, or conditions
- Attribution of causes has a major effect on how people think about solutions



## Missing attribution

In the U.S., too many women are suffering from pregnancy complications that lead to serious injury and death.

## Systems-level attribution

The U.S. is failing to manage pregnancy complications that lead to serious injury and death.



## Individual attribution

Every year, roughly 3,600 babies in the US die suddenly for unknown reasons. Researchers estimate that if expectant moms would just quit smoking, we could prevent 800 of those deaths.

## Systems-level attribution

Researchers estimate that if we connect expecting families to treatment for nicotine dependency, we could prevent 800 infant deaths a year.

# Craft explanations step-by-step

- Strong explanatory chains:
  - Clearly lay out cause-and-effect sequences
  - Have a tight logical flow - one idea leads to the next
  - Include many causal transition words, guiding understanding of what affects what
  - Can double the level of support for good policy, when compared with mere description



## ***Misplaced or Missing Responsibility***



## ***Include a Causal Pathway***

“Disparities exist among populations.”

“Black women are less likely to receive prenatal treatment during pregnancy.”

“Higher rates of pre-existing health conditions are one factor in pregnancy complications.”

- Some Americans are protected from health harms - others aren't
- Discrimination & poverty increase stress, and trigger longer-term health problems, for some groups
- Unjust and unfair practices have caused harm and continue today
- Implicit bias & biased practices built into systems shape experiences of some groups
- Some Americans have access to quality, affordable health care - others don't

## Framed with “the numbers prove it’s race”

In the U.S., too many women are suffering from pregnancy complications that lead to serious injury and death. The U.S. currently ranks lower than all other developed countries when it comes to maternal death ratios. Some women are more at risk than others. Black women are 3 - 4 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women, and women in Southern states have a higher risk of pregnancy-related death than women in most other parts of the country.

## Reframed with “how disparities happen”

The U.S. is failing to manage pregnancy complications that lead to serious injury and death. One reason is “implicit bias.” Like all of us, health professionals absorb stereotypes that affect their decisions. The stereotype of the “strong Black woman” can lead doctors to minimize Black patients’ concerns and miss opportunities to address problems before they pose a danger. Implicit bias is one reason why Black women are 3-4 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than women from other groups.

# Translate health equity solutions for non-experts

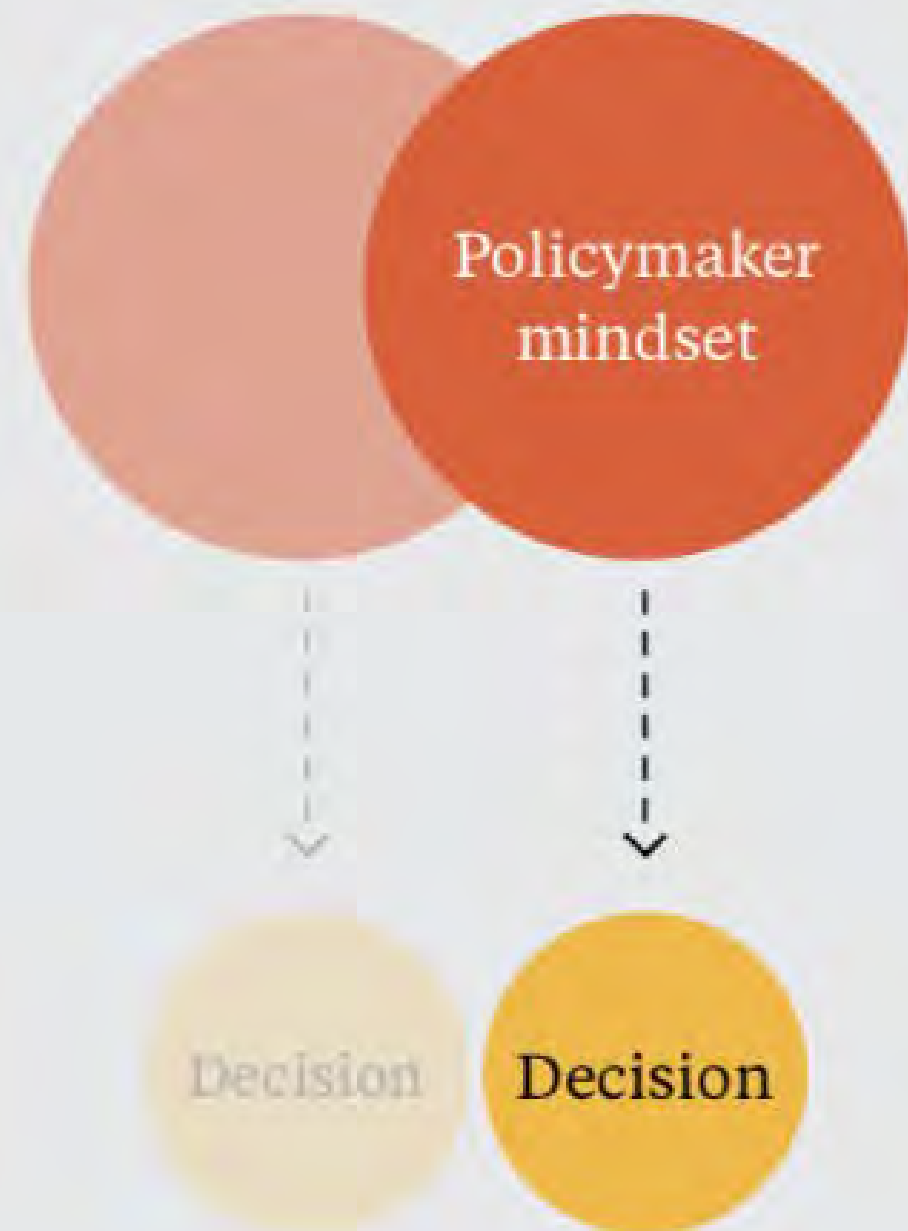
*Examples of well-framed collective solutions that target maternal health disparities*

“When communities offer programs that appeal to different types of expecting mothers, moms get the care they need in the way they need it - and we all get the benefit of healthier pregnancies, births, babies, and moms.”

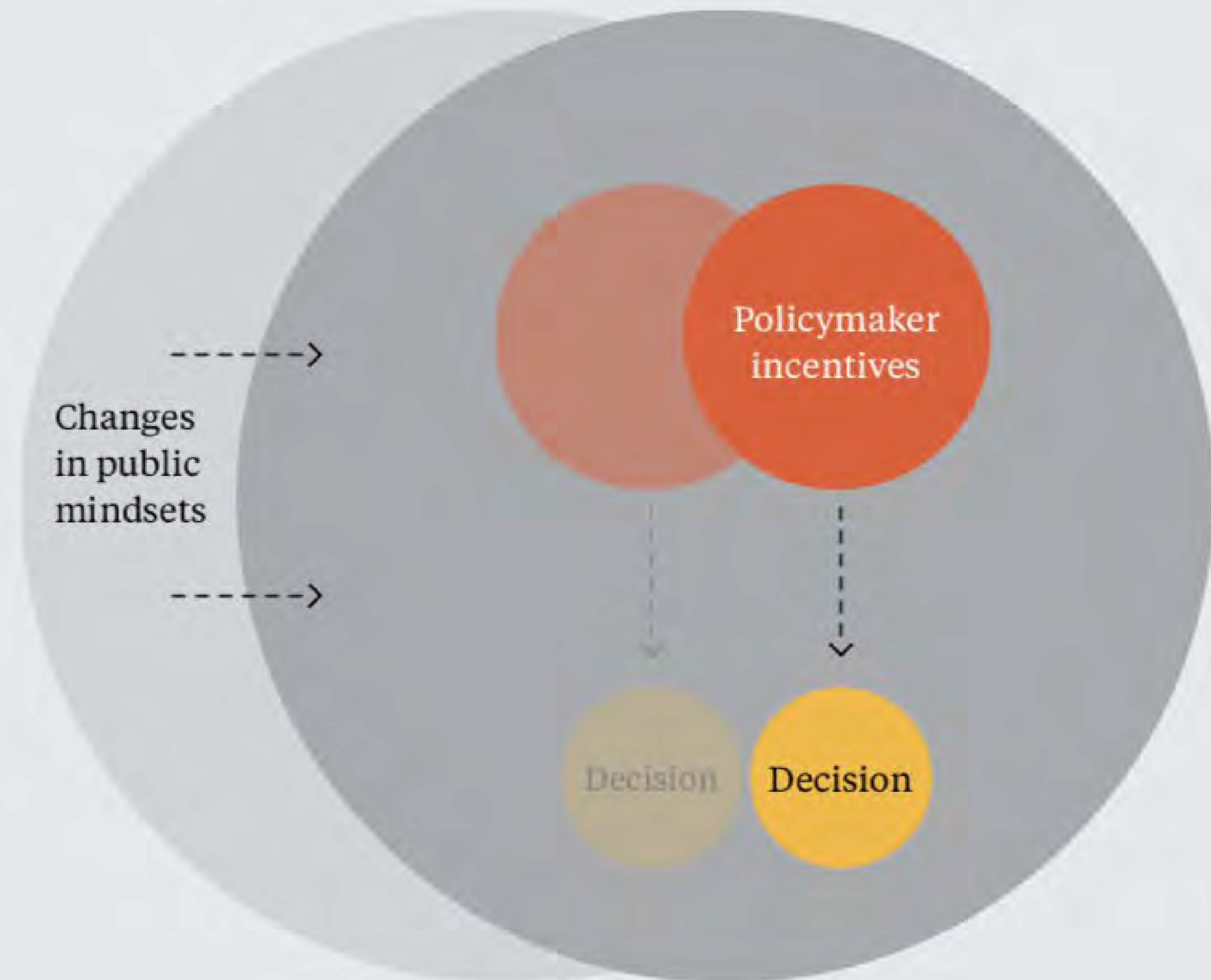
“We can require that all types of health insurance treat oral health as part of overall health - and build in incentives for providers to accept the plans that lower-income people use.”

“To prevent stereotypes from affecting the health care that Black women receive, we can set up routines that remind doctors and nurses to ask every patient, every visit, about health issues that are important to catch early.”

**Policy is changed  
either via a change in  
a policymaker's mindset,**



**or when public mindsets create  
pressure on a policymaker  
to make a different decision.**



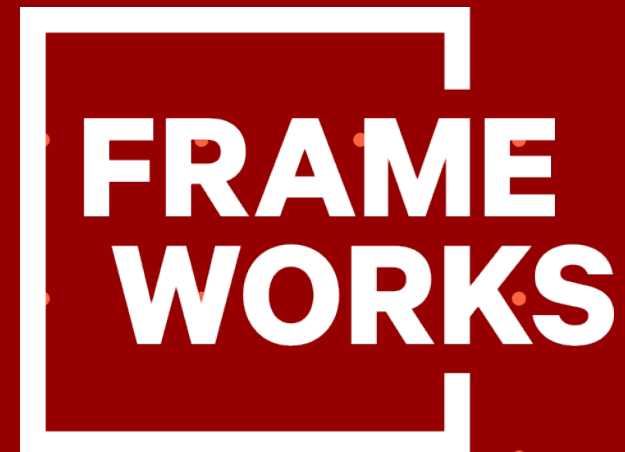
Reactions? Questions?

# Thank you!

Let's continue the conversation.

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# About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis<sup>®</sup>, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks<sup>®</sup>, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

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