Some thoughts on *populations* and mental health

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[take a population approach to mental health]

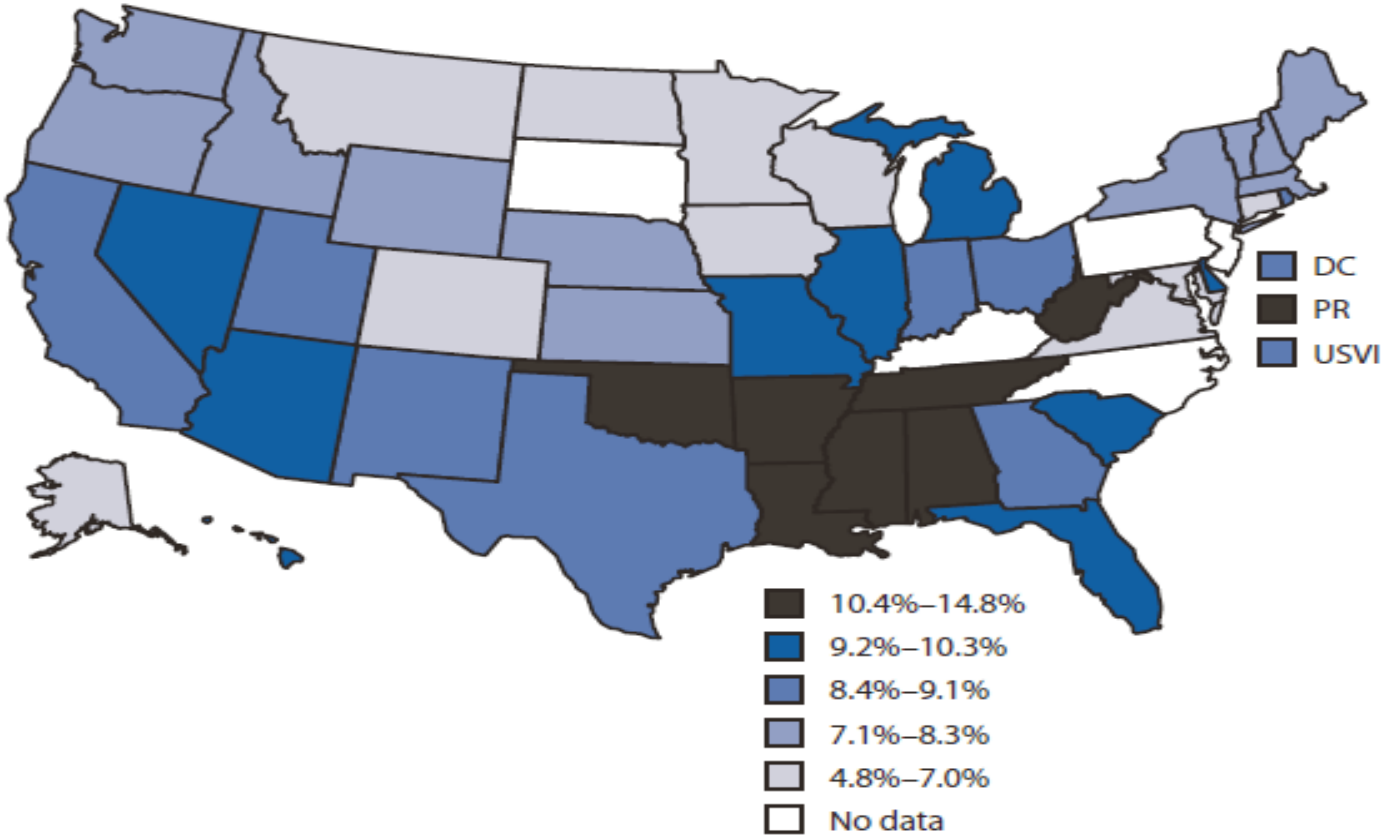
1. **Should we [ ] ?**
2. **Can we afford not to [ ] ?**
3. **So, can we, [ ] ?**

[take a population approach to mental health]

1. **Should we [ ] ?**
2. **Can we afford not to [ ] ?**
3. **So, can we, [ ] ?**

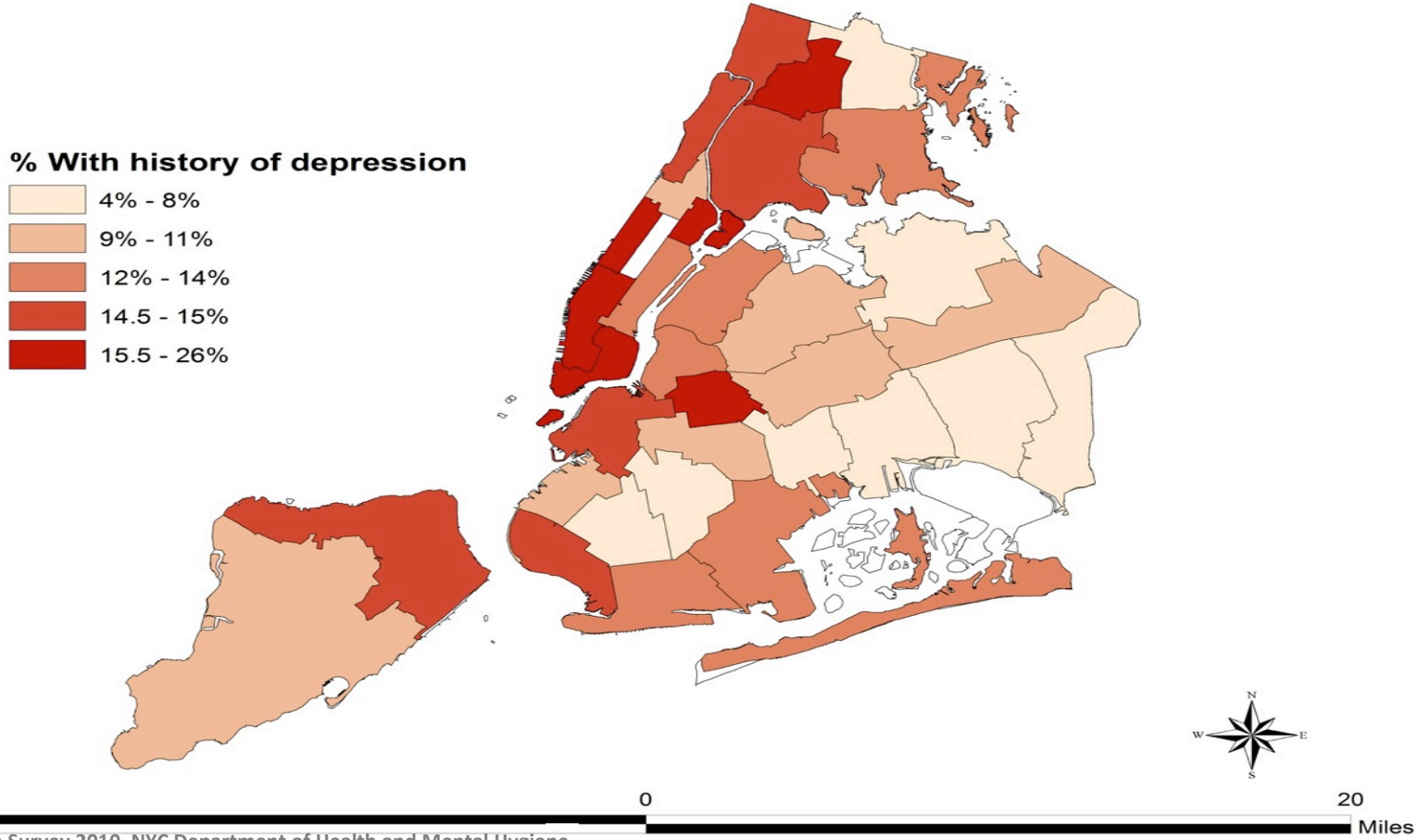
a. Intuition

Depression in the U.S, 2008



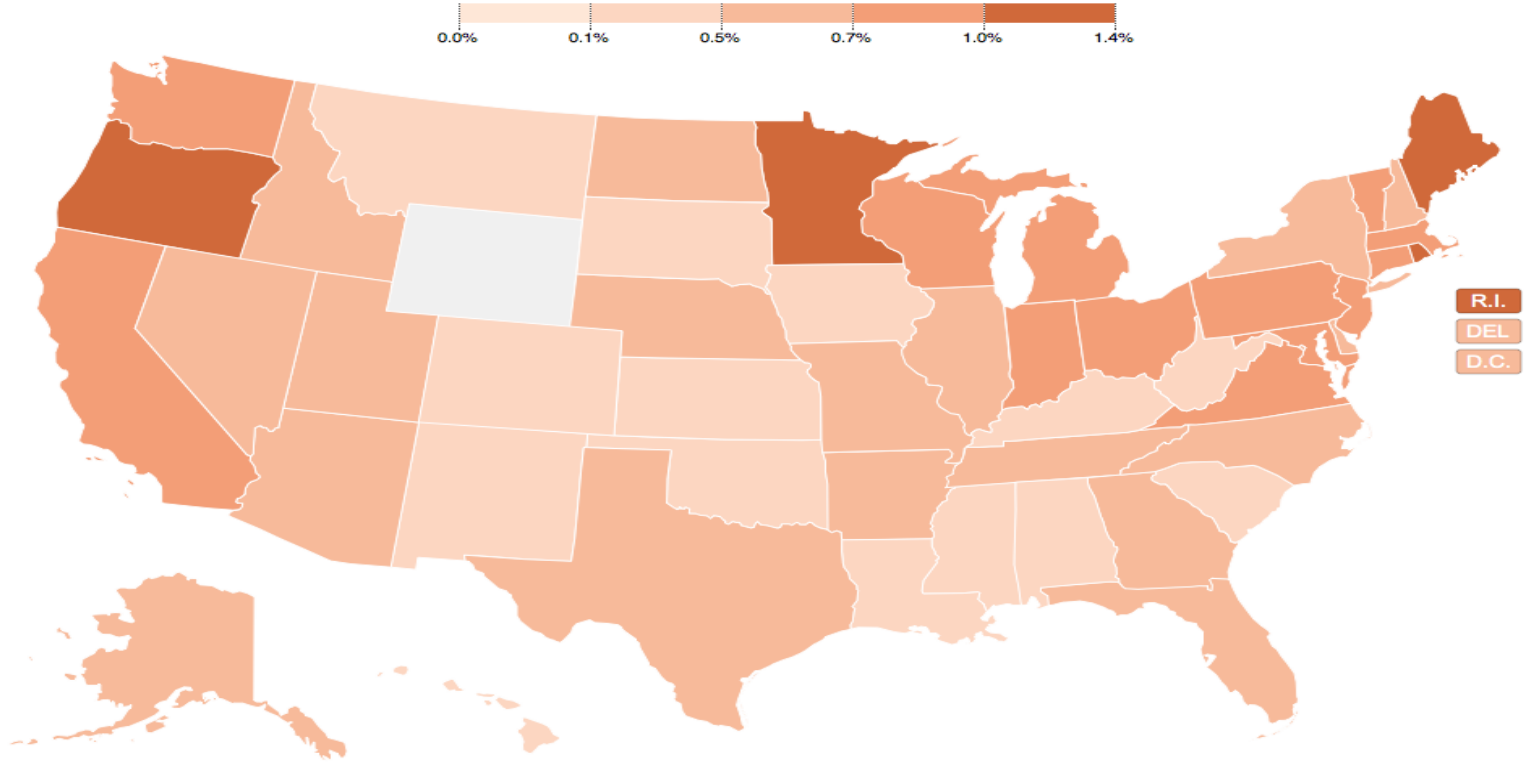
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Oct 2010; 59(38)

Depression, NYC, 2010



Community Health Survey 2010, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Autism in the United States, 2010



Published: Dec. 9, 2011
Credits: Interactivity: Anthony Pesce | Research: Sandra Poindexter, Doug Smith and Alan Zarembo

http://graphics.latimes.com/usmap-autism-rates-state/

b. Values

Ask yourself…would you prefer

To have access to effective treatment for your schizophrenia

Ask yourself…would you prefer

To have access to effective treatment for your schizophrenia

or

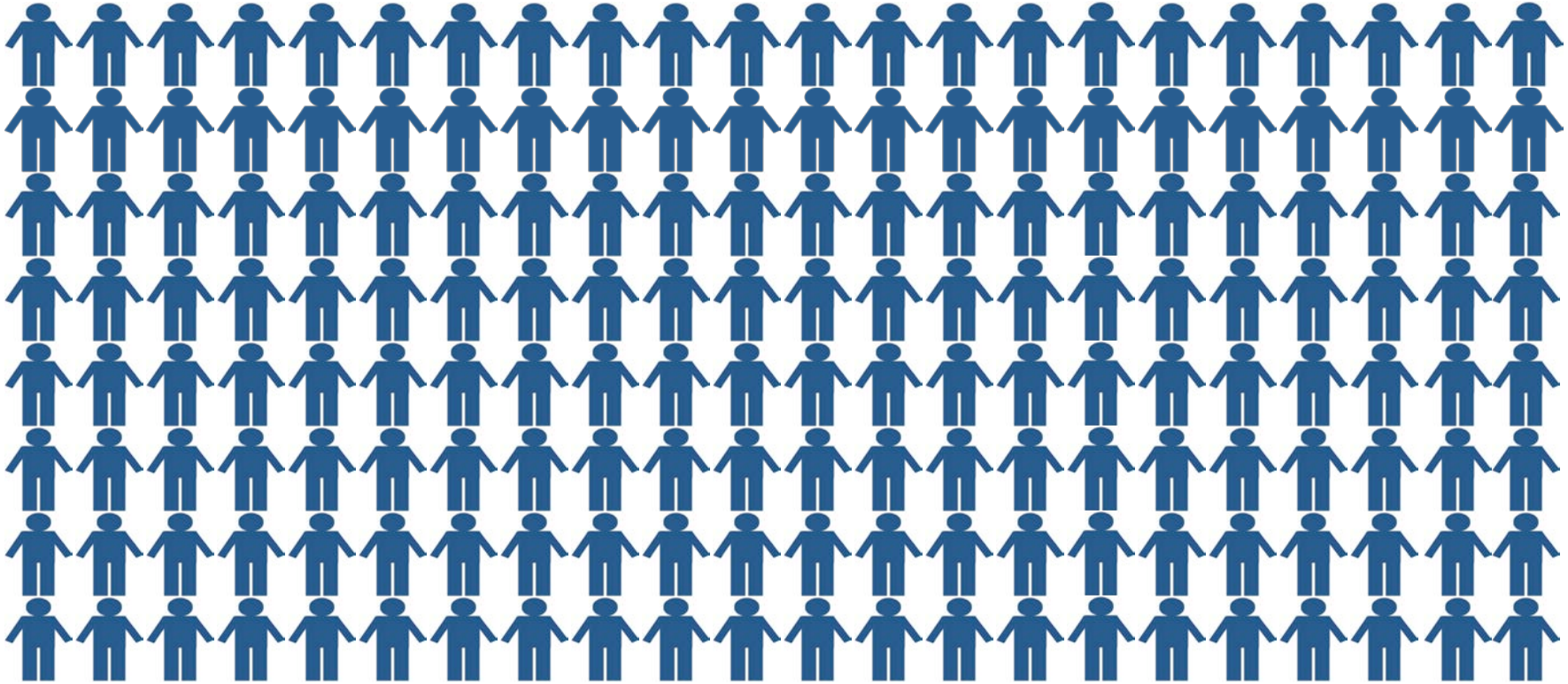
Never to have schizophrenia at all

“One of [our] most difficult challenges is to ensure that the urgent does not crowd out the important. In health the challenge is especially difficult because urgent matters can be so riveting.”

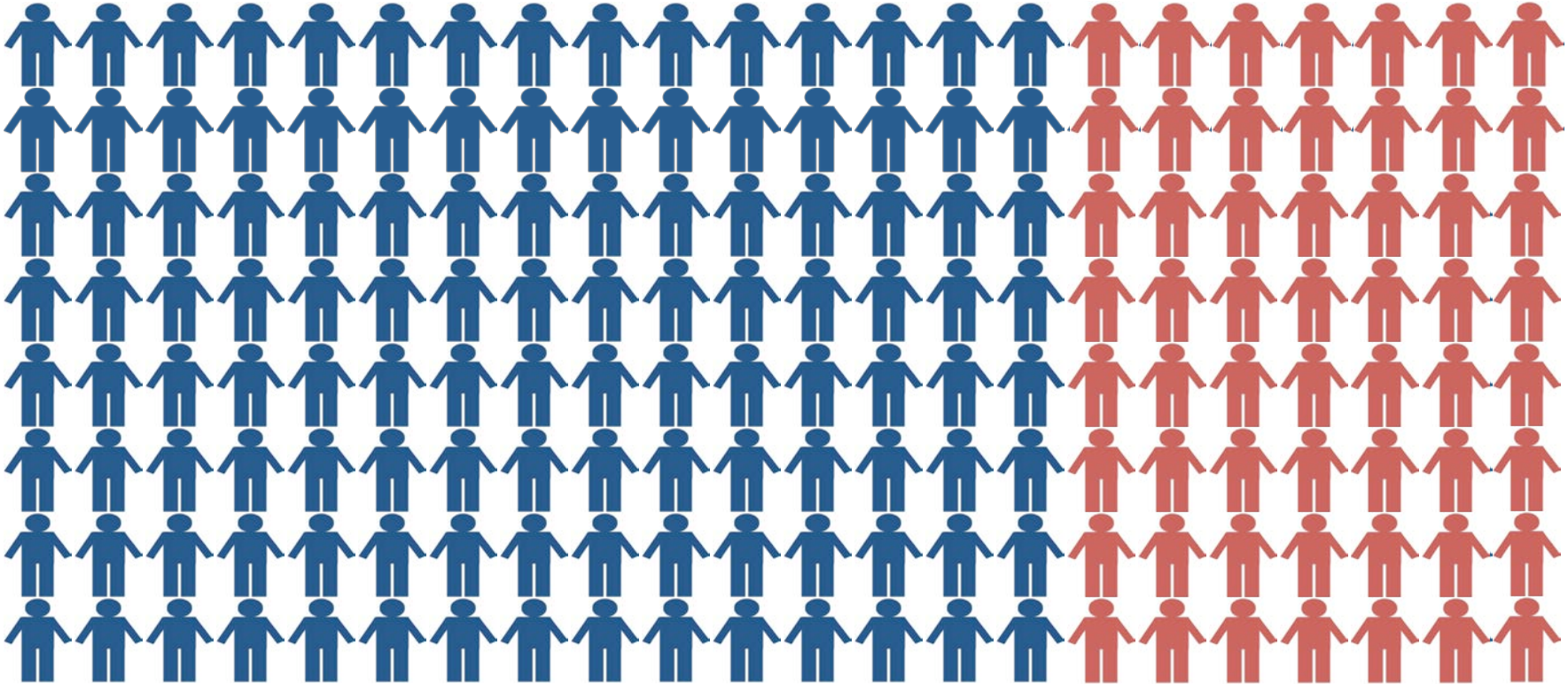
McGinnis JM, Foege W. The immediate vs. the important. JAMA 2004;291(10):1263-1264.

c. A formalism

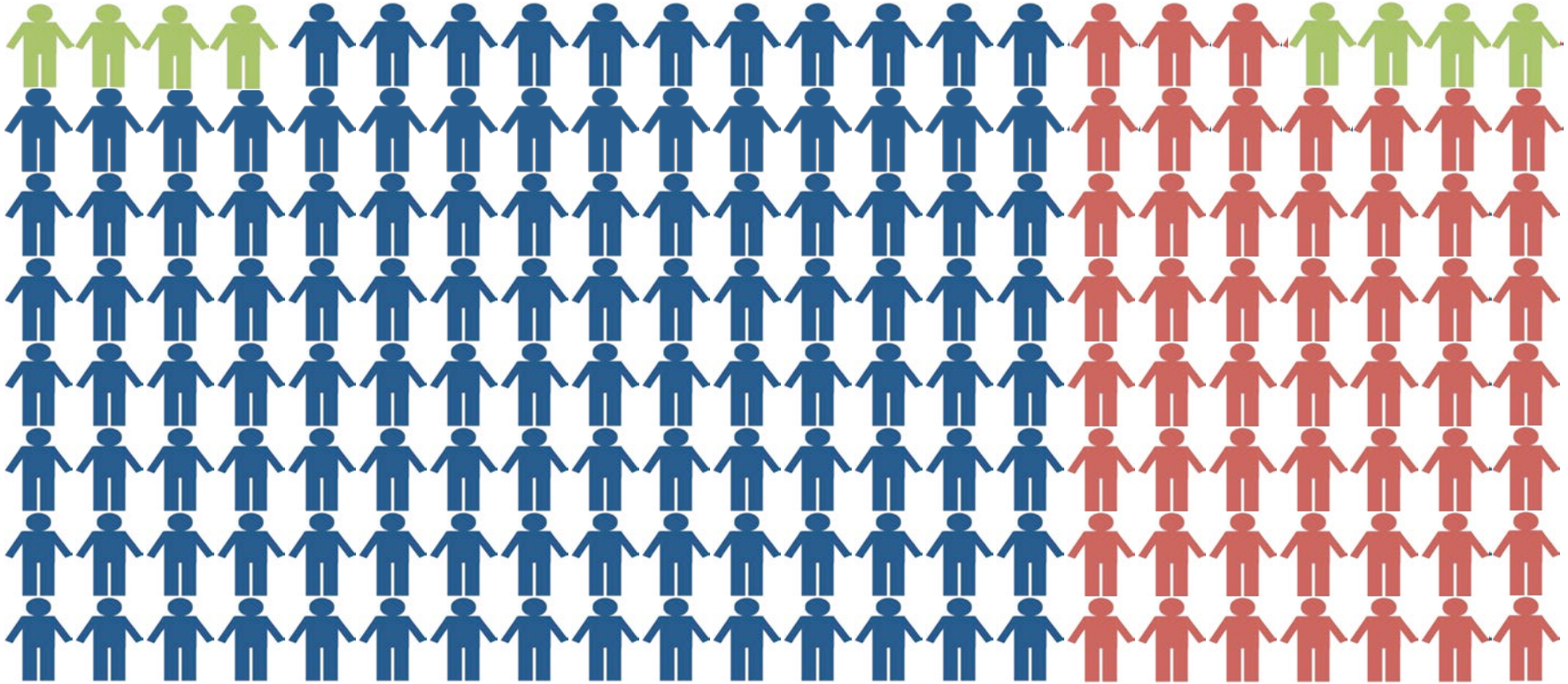
Population



Exposure



Disorder



Should we take a population approach to mental health?

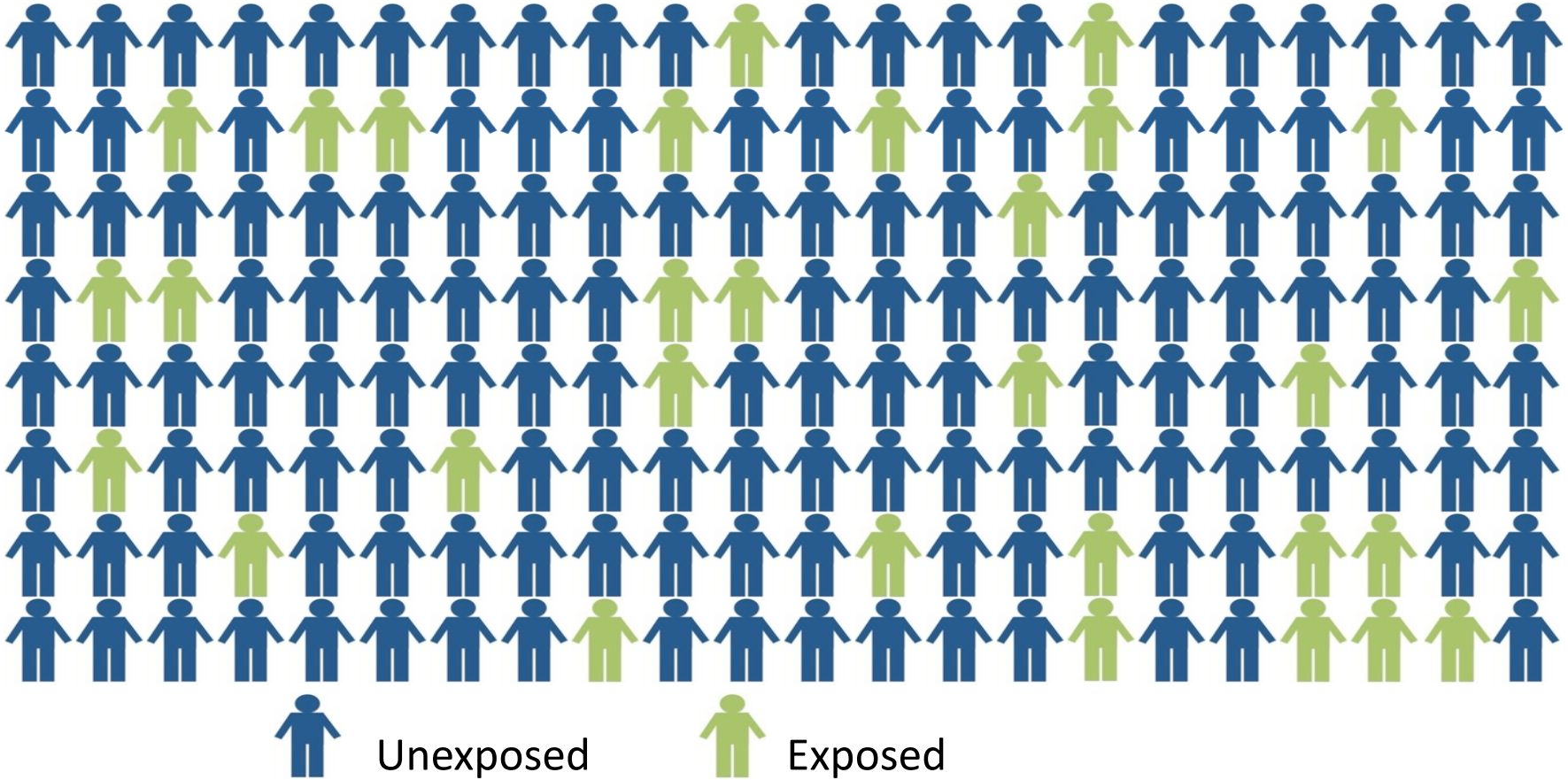
Yes

[take a population approach to mental health]

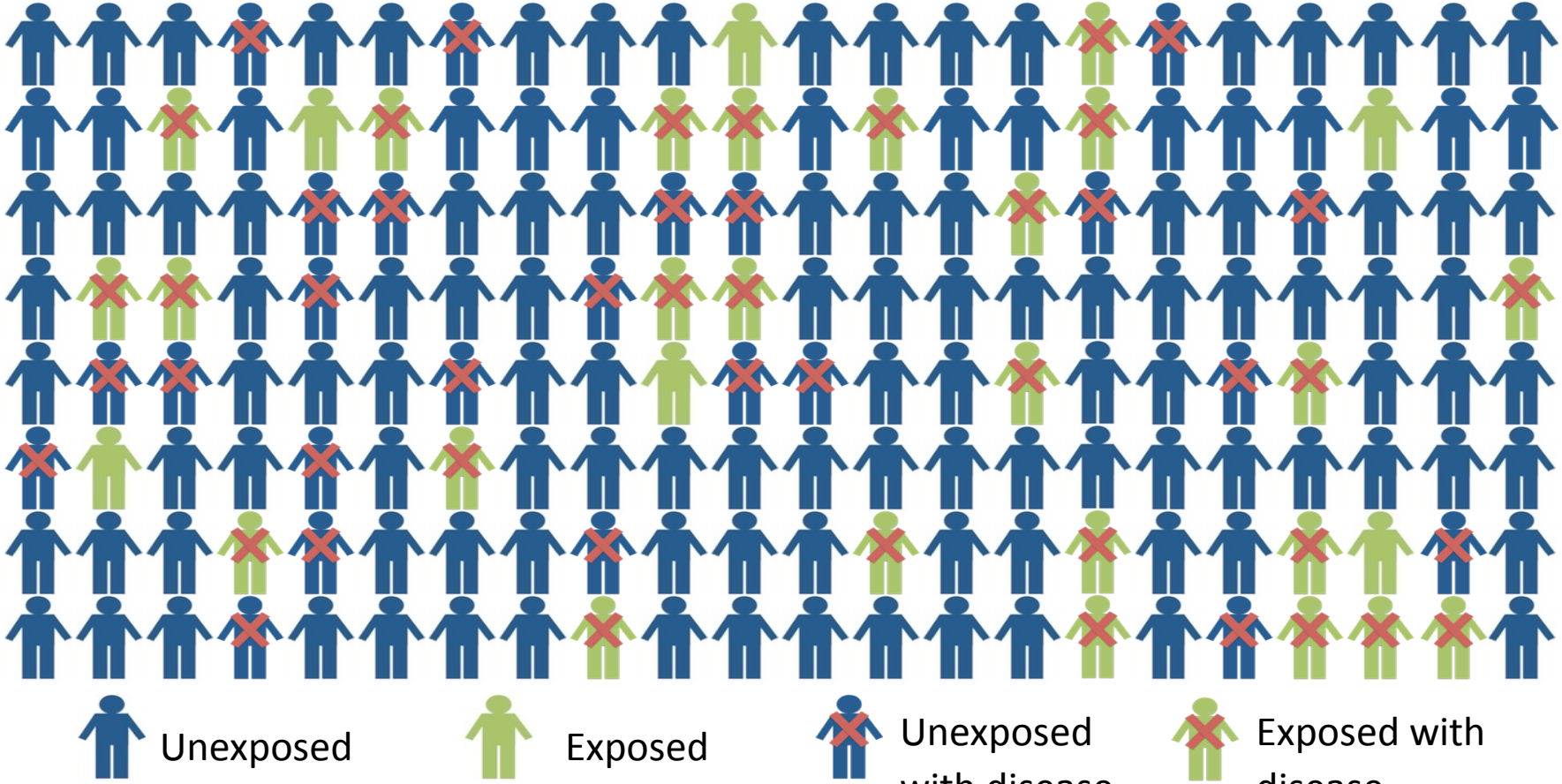
1. Should we [ ] ?
2. **Can we afford not to [ ] ?**
3. So, can we, [ ] ?

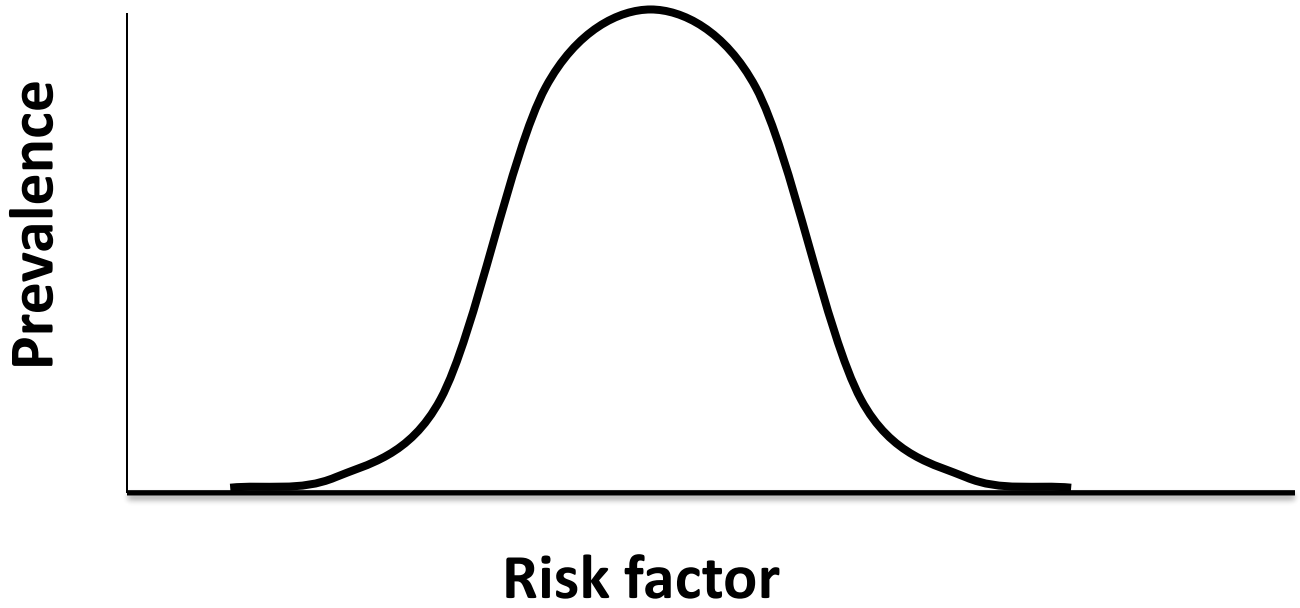
Our curative efforts are, always, fixing only one very small bit of a much larger challenge

Some people are ‘exposed’



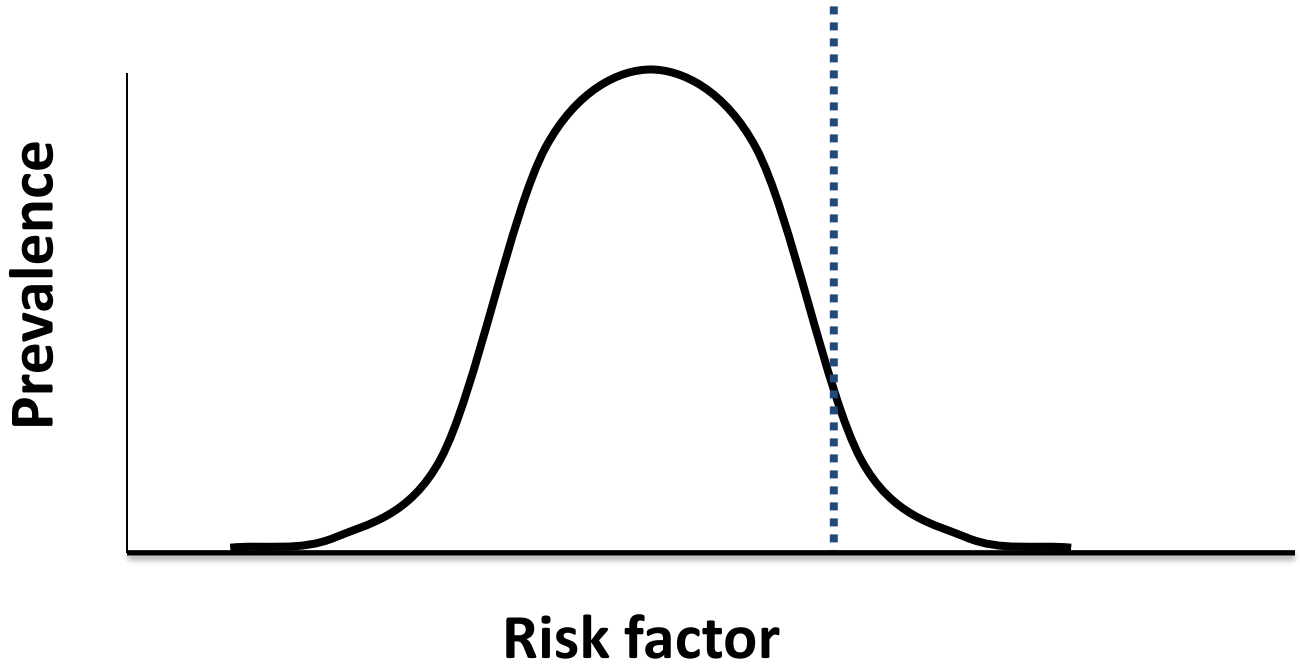
Both exposed and unexposed have disease





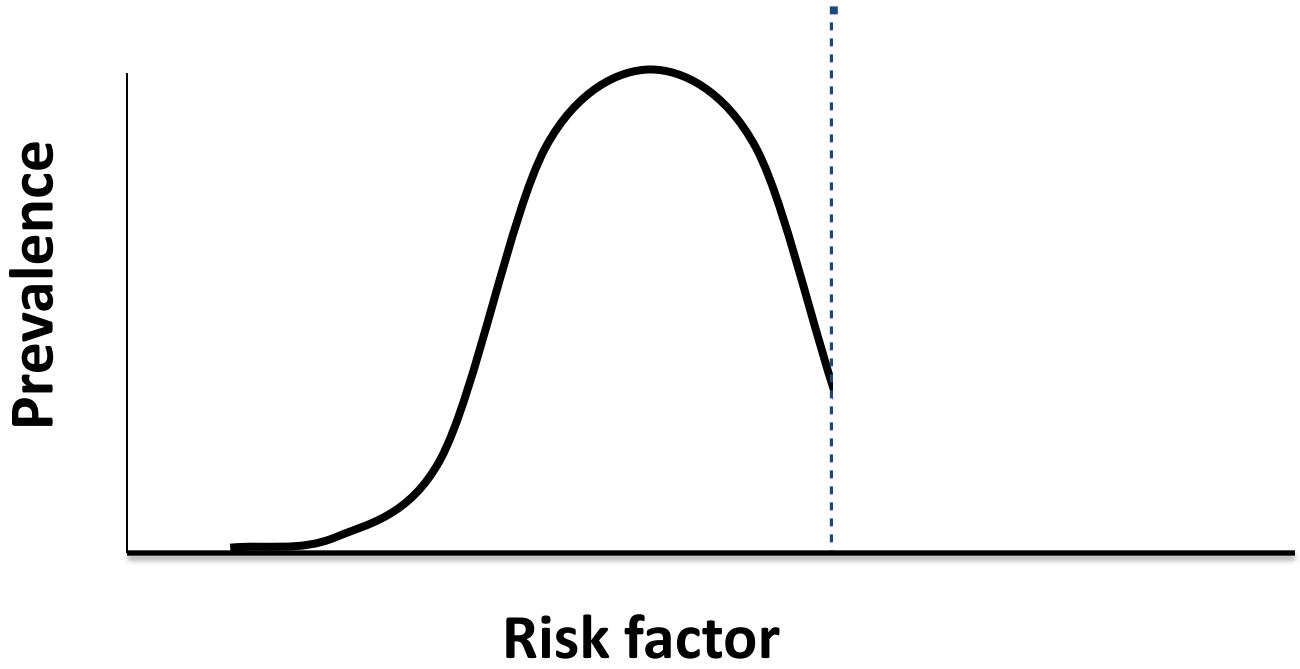
Rose G. The strategy of preventive medicine. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1992.

Identify those who are high risk



Rose G. The strategy of preventive medicine. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1992.

Then decrease their risk



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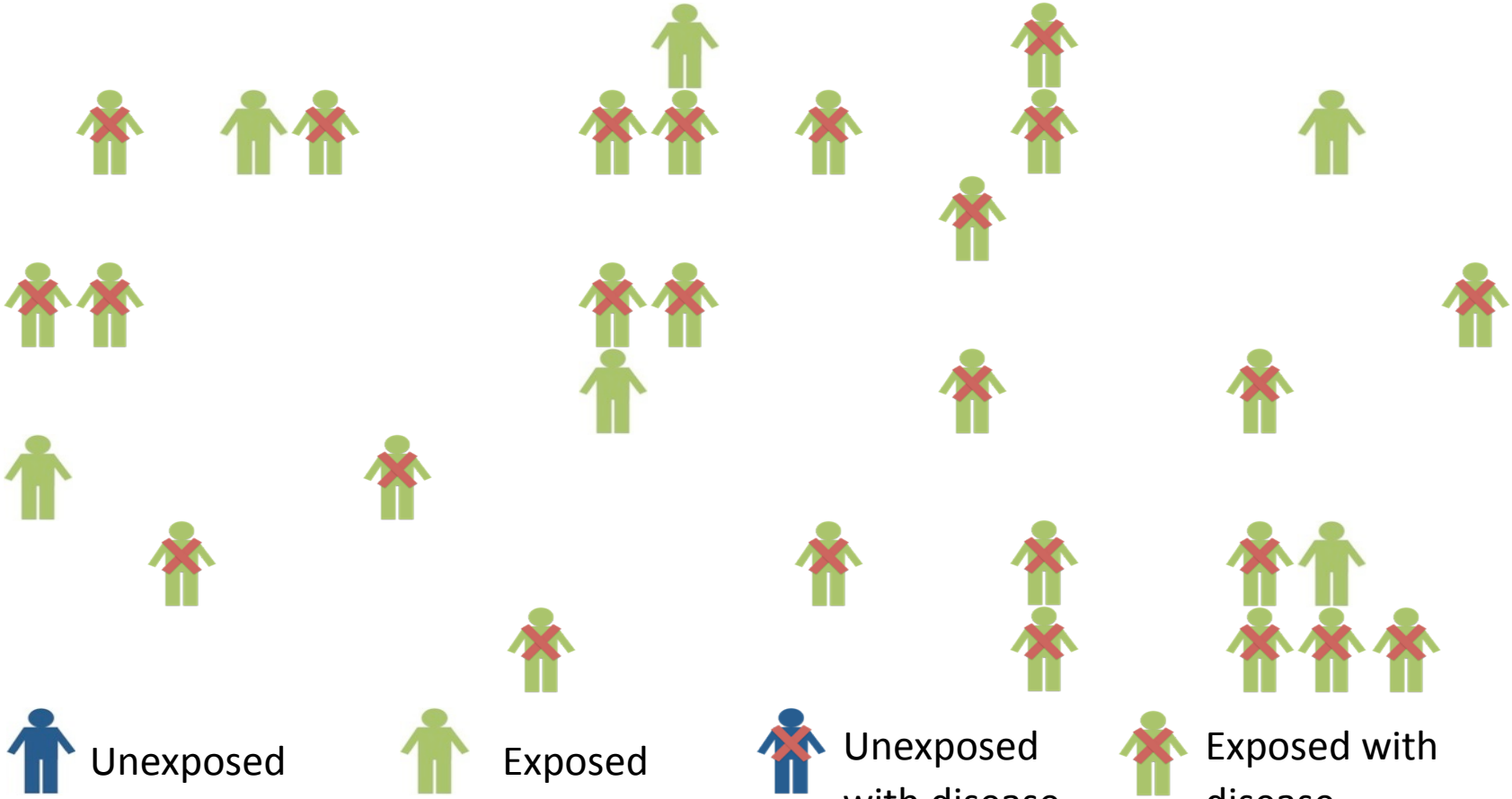
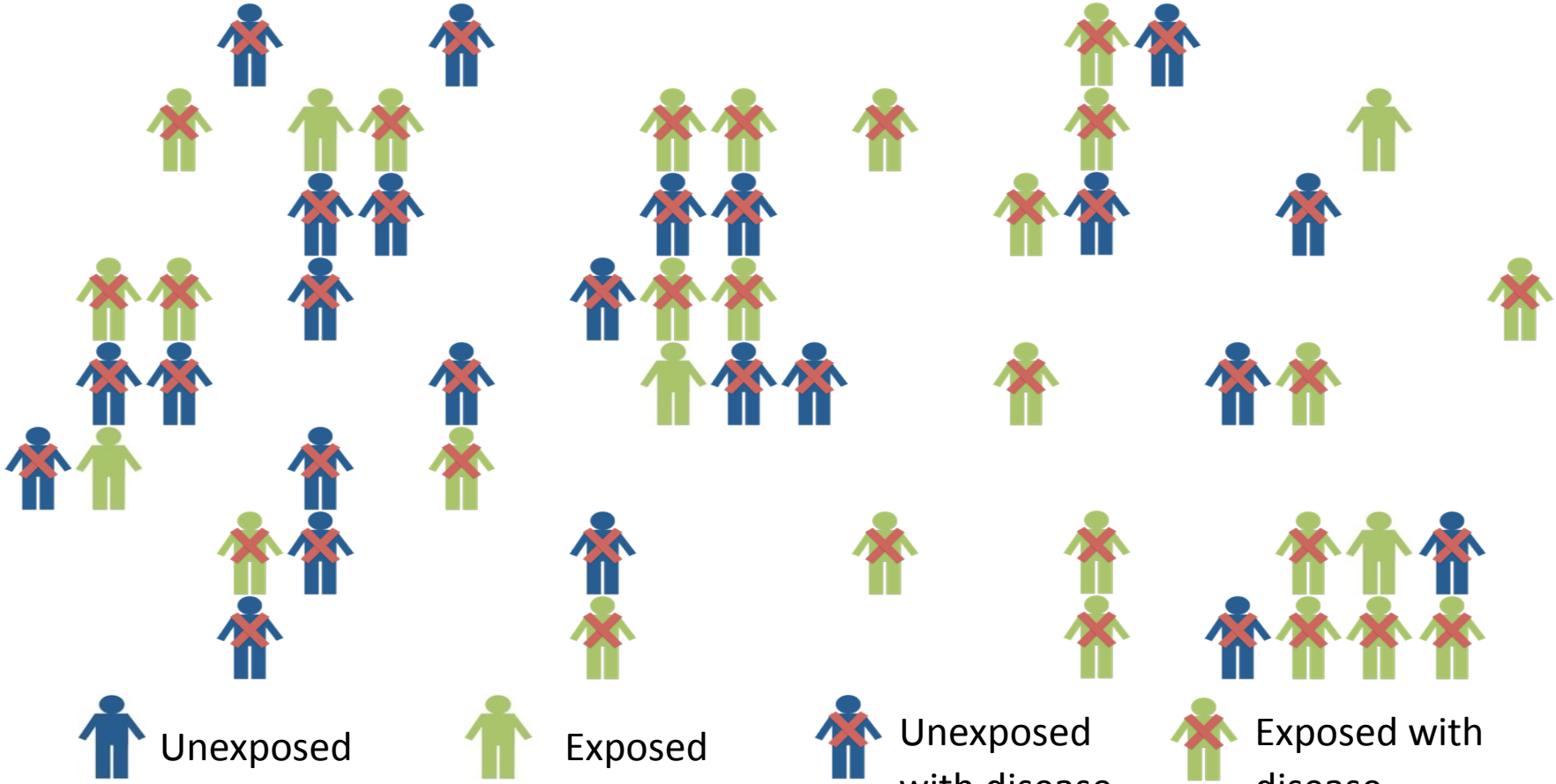
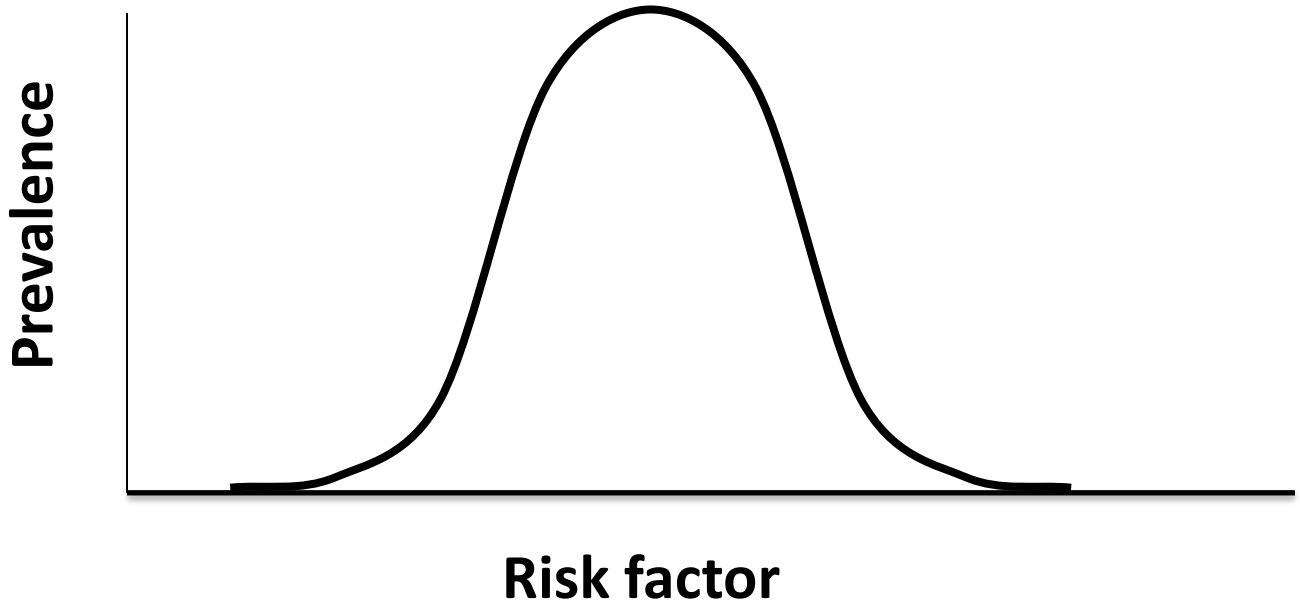
The medical strategy sees this



But misses all of this



The population health strategy



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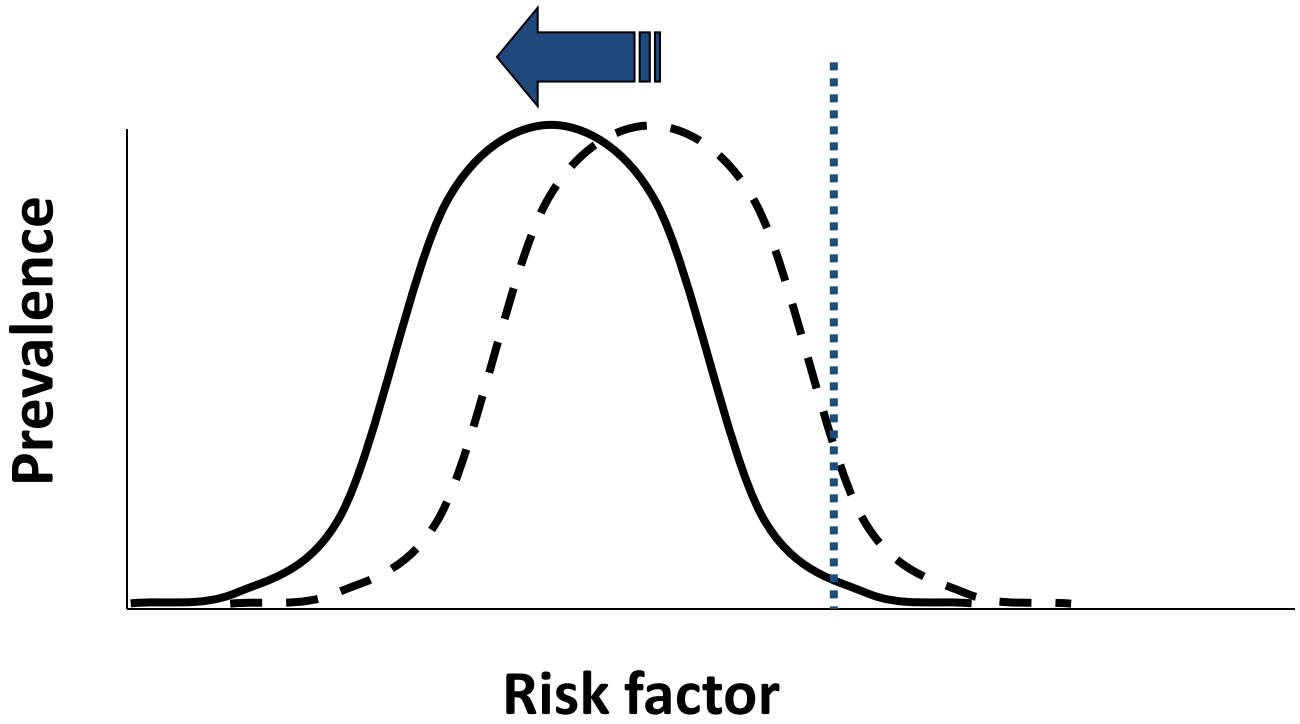
Shifts the entire risk distribution



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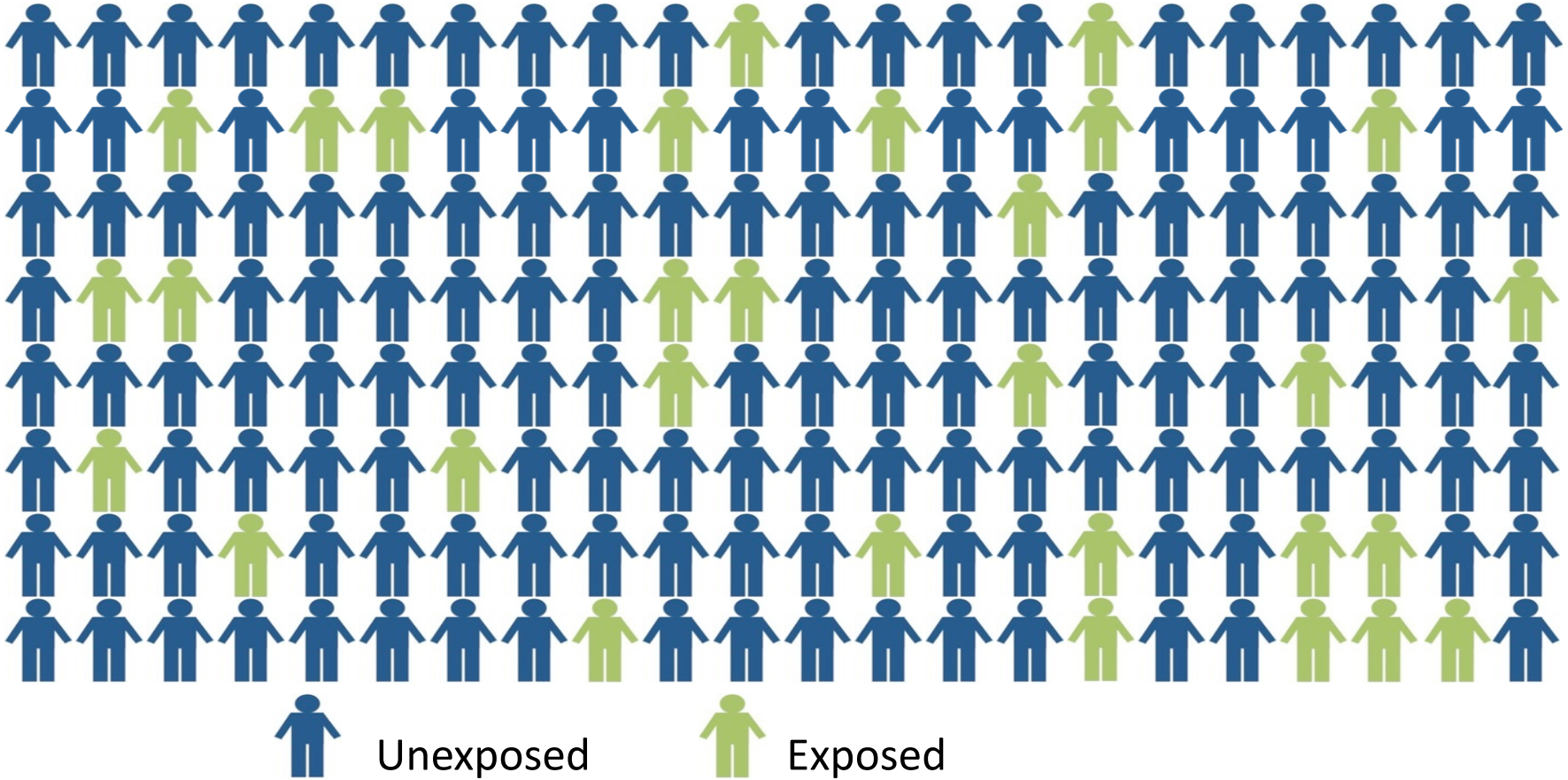
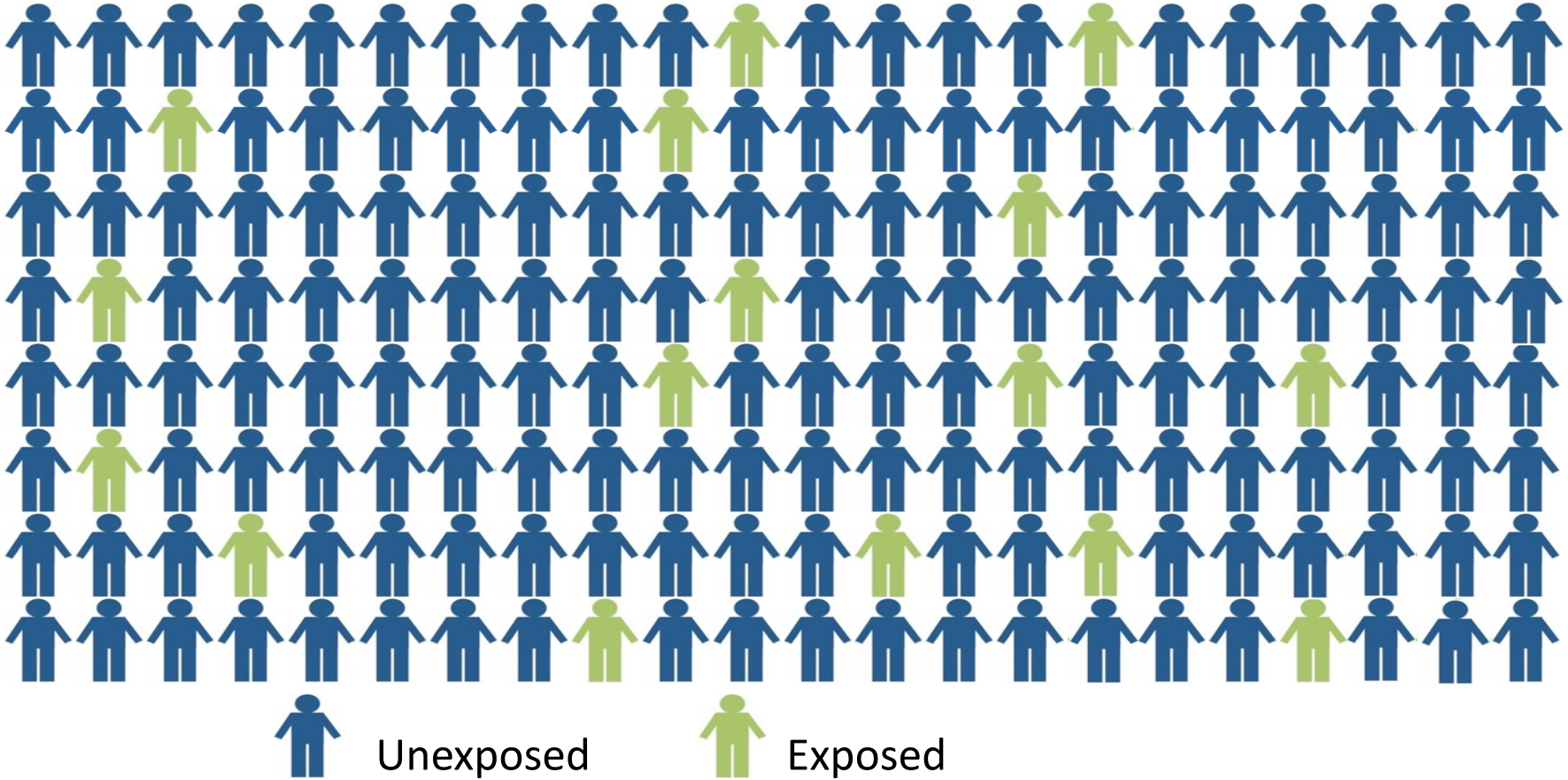
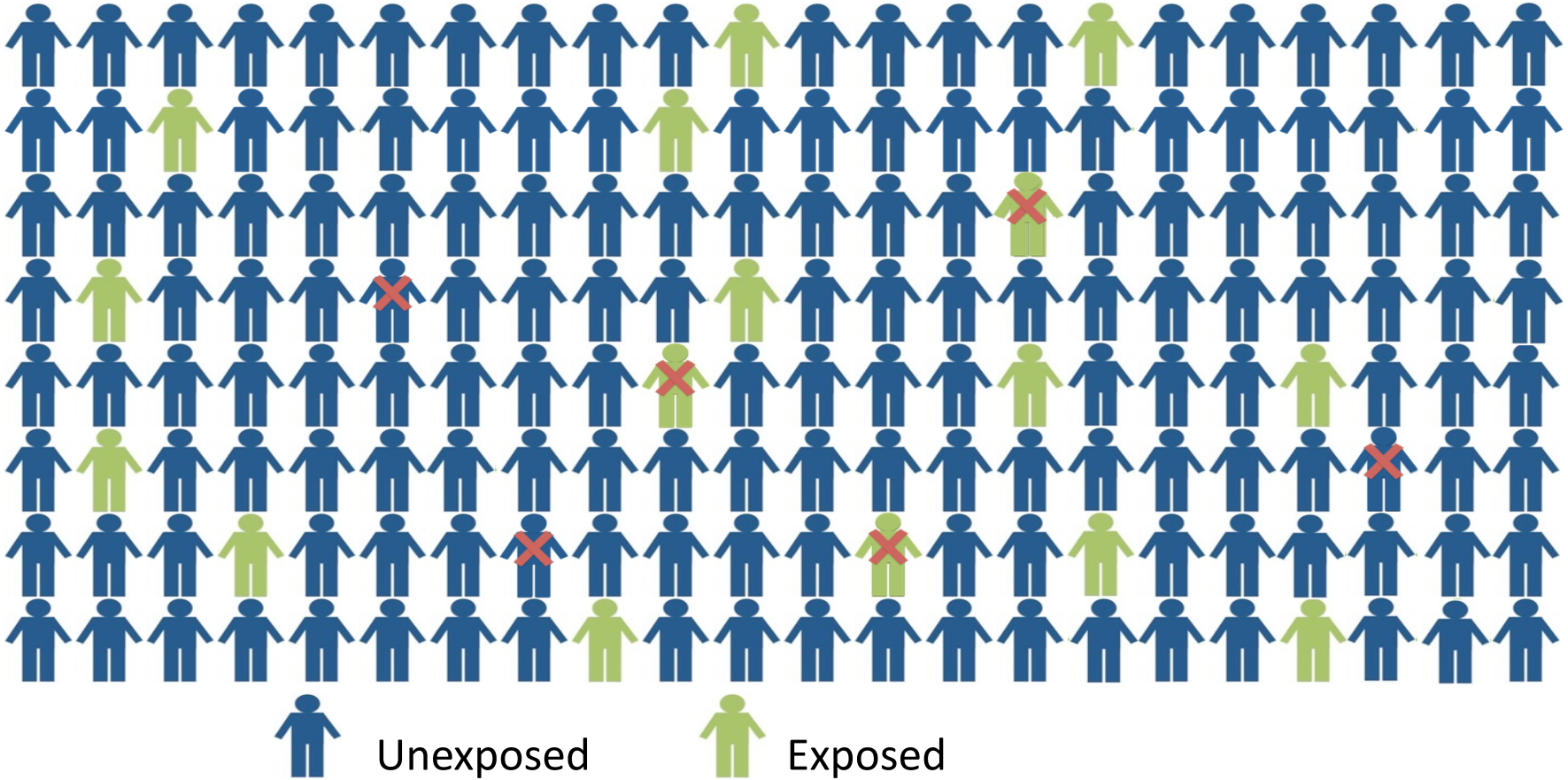
The population health strategy



The population health strategy



The population health strategy



Therefore, factors in the population are *inevitably* driving the prevalence of mental health

Can we afford *not to try* to take a population approach to mental health?

No

[take a population approach to mental health]

1. Should we [ ] ?
2. Can we afford not to [ ] ?
3. **So, can we, [ ] ?**

A story

- A 47-year old man is felled by an inexplicable illness
- He cannot seem to get moving any more
- His doctors suspect a cause, but doubt it, more than 60% of people in the country share the same cause
- The doctors recommend rest, and hope for the best

Preventing cardiovascular disease

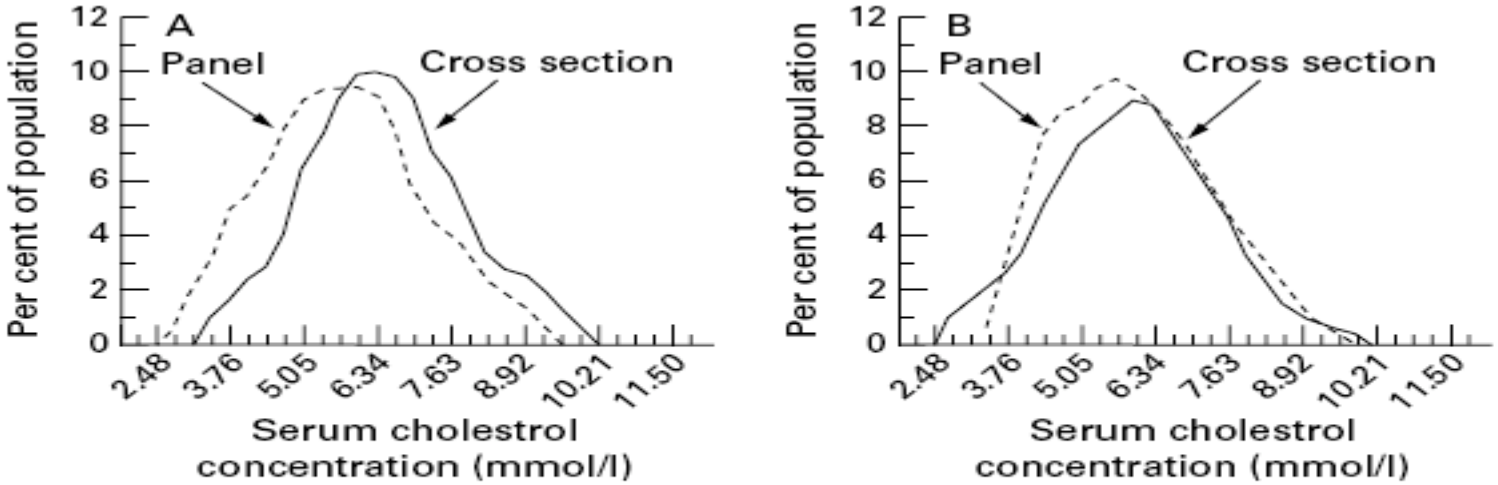


Figure 4 Distributions in plasma cholesterol, comparing panel with contemporaneous cross sections. Mean z=0 for 1986 MONICA= 6.34 mmol/l. SD=1.29. (A) Comparison between panel (dotted line) and cross section (continuous line) after two years. (B) Comparison between panel (dotted line) and cross section (continuous line) after five years.

Weinehall L, Westman G, Hellsten G, Boman K, Hallmans G, Pearson TA, Wall S. Shifting the distribution of risk: results of a community intervention in a Swedish programme for the prevention of cardiovascular disease. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. 1999;53:243-250

“It is no longer sufficient to expect that reforms in the medical care delivery system alone will improve the public’s health. Large proportions of the US disease burden are preventable.”

For the public’s health. IOM 2012.

So, *can we*, take a population approach to mental health?

Yes

“Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy”

Institute of Medicine. *The Future of Public Health*. National Academy Press; Washington, D.C.: 1988

prevention |priˈvenCHən|

noun

the action of stopping something from happening or arising

PHRASES

an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure proverb it's easier to stop something from happening in the first place than to repair the damage after it has happened.

Oxford American Dictionaries

Acknowledgements

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