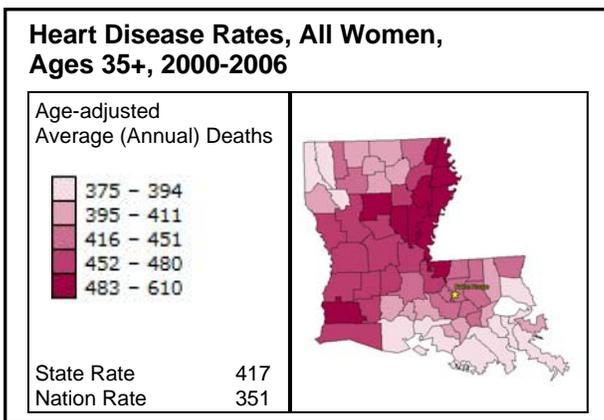


# FACTS

## Women and Cardiovascular Disease: **LOUISIANA**

- Heart disease and stroke account for **30.9%** of all female deaths in Louisiana.
- On average, nearly **17** women die from heart disease and stroke in Louisiana each day.



- Heart disease alone is the **leading** cause of death in Louisiana, accounting for **4,891** female deaths in 2009.
- Stroke is the **No. 3** cause of death for females in Louisiana, accounting for **1,185** female deaths in 2009.
- Nearly **60.9%** of women in Louisiana are obese and overweight.
- In Louisiana, **19.1%** of women smoke cigarettes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mortality data based on WISQARS Leading Cause of Death Reports, 2009; state maps from the Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention; risk factor data from the BRFSS, 2010.

\* Overweight is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 25.0-29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and obese is defined as having a BMI of 30.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or greater.

### Lu Bonvillain, Louisiana Survivor

Lu Bonvillain of Houma, Louisiana, understands why it's important for women to recognize the warning signs of heart attack, and take action. When she experienced symptoms one morning in 1979 – at the age of 29 – the idea of a heart attack never crossed her mind.

In those days, it was common to consider a heart attack as a man's issue. So when she woke up with severe chest pain, nausea and vomiting that lasted four hours, she tried to wait it out. But for the next three and- a-half days, she experienced weakness, nausea and shortness of breath with fullness and a squeezing sensation in her chest. It wasn't until she felt faint that she had her husband take her to the hospital. She was diagnosed with the flu and prescribed medication to settle her stomach. Three hours later, she felt even worse and returned to the hospital. An EKG showed a heart attack in progress with 100% blockage of left anterior descending artery, an event ironically referred to as a "widow maker."

Since then she has undergone triple bypass surgery and received a stent to open an artery. She knows heart disease isn't just a man's issue – it equally affects women – and that's why she energetically shares her story with area lawmakers as an American Heart Association/ *You're the Cure* advocate. She has urged the Louisiana House and Senate to support Go Red for Women, and has attended the association's Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day in Washington, D.C., where she discussed the association's legislative priorities with former Congressman Bobby Jindal, now Louisiana's governor.

According to Lu, it wasn't until she began advocating for the American Heart Association that she understood the importance of sharing her story. She advises other *You're the Cure* advocates to do the same. "Without our continuing efforts to be a part of the cure, to be the voice of those affected by heart disease and stroke, the fight will never end," says Lu.