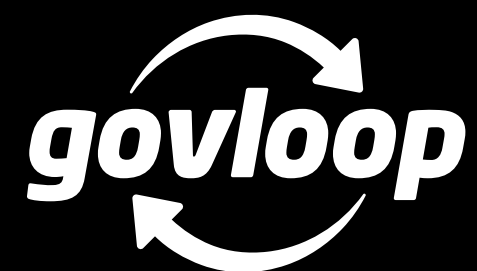
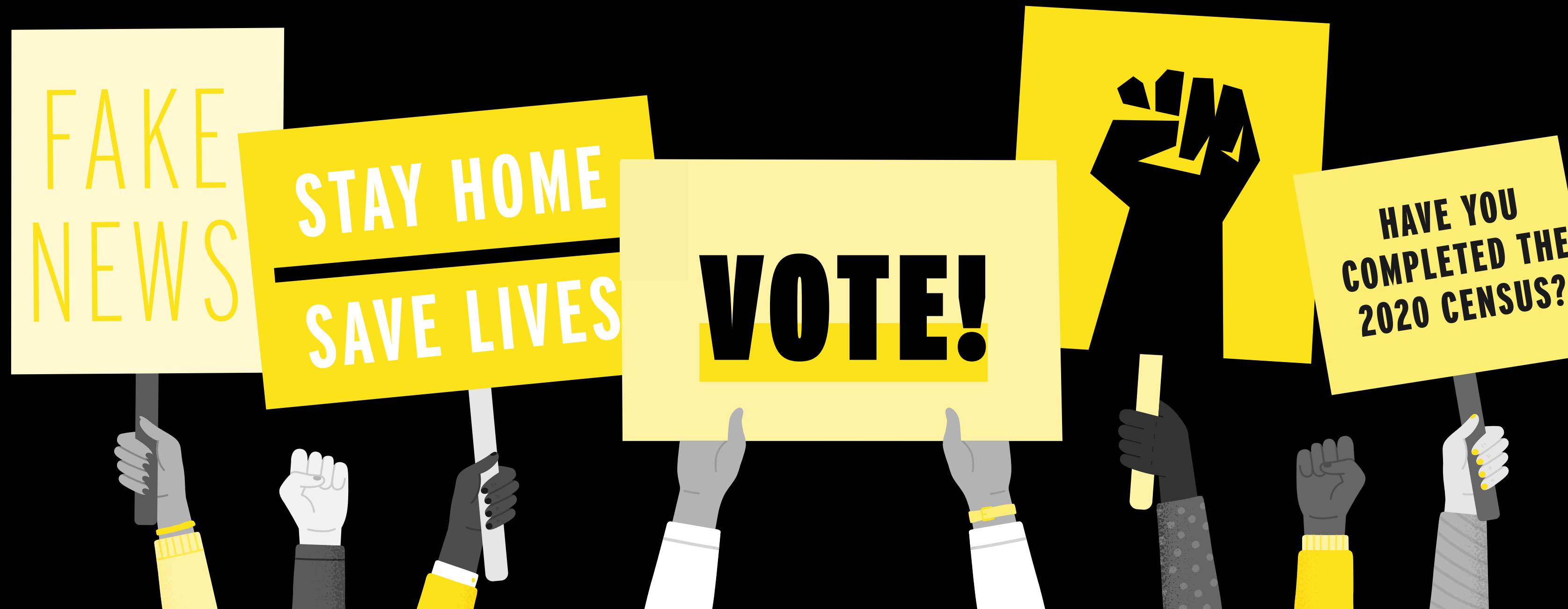


WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: YOUR DATA IN THE YEAR OF EVERYTHING ELSE



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“GOVERNORS RARELY EVEN HAD USED THE WORD ‘DATA’ – MAYBE ONCE OR TWICE IF THEY EVEN SAID ‘DATA’ AT ALL IN THEIR STATE OF THE STATE SPEECHES. AND NOW HERE WE ARE. EVERY DAY, EVERY GOVERNOR IS USING DATA, RIGHT IN THEIR PRESS CONFERENCES, TALKING ABOUT DATA.”

– Tyler Kleykamp, Director, State Chief Data Officers Network

DATA IN THE NEWS

TESTS HIT SNAGS IN OLD TECHNOLOGY

A lack of funding and technological resources — exacerbated by pandemic revenue shortfalls — has been a major problem for local governments in their COVID-19 responses. As [The New York Times reported](#), test results have faced bottlenecks because of fax machines.

Fax machines present copious problems. One is that incomplete reporting over fax often doesn't include demographic data, despite national efforts to study the impacts of the coronavirus on specific populations.

QUESTIONS OF DATA TRANSPARENCY IN COVID-19 RESPONSES

Florida's summer reopening jamboree was called into question when a prominent geographic information systems (GIS) manager accused the health department of undercounting and manipulating data to look more favorable.

As [The Washington Post reported](#), Rebekah Jones, who maintained a localized dashboard of COVID-19 test results and cases in her time as a state GIS administrator, alleged that Florida officials asked her to manipulate positive test numbers and engage in dishonest data practices. The Florida Health Department fired Jones for "insubordination."

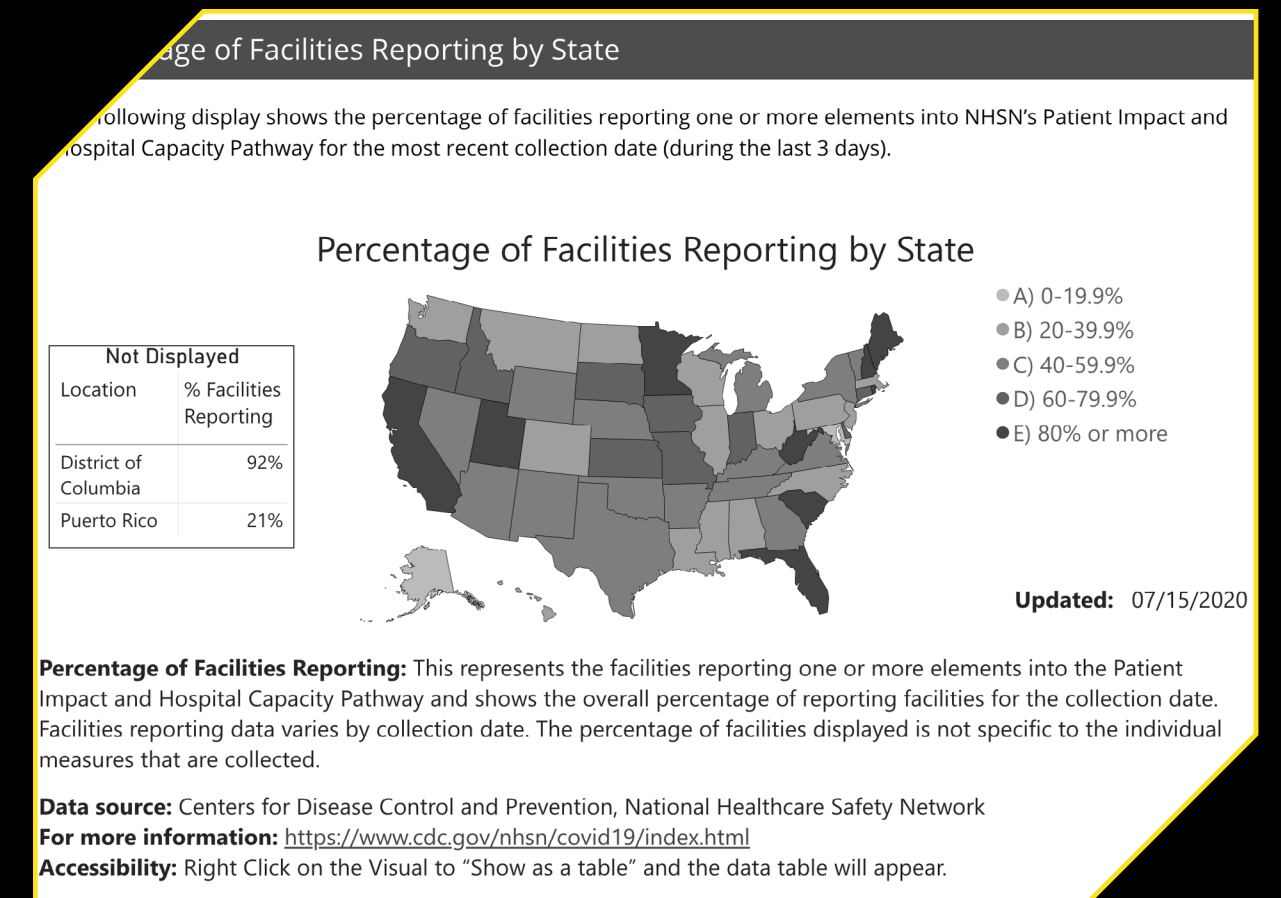
STATES ADOPT FEDERAL DATA STRATEGY AS BLUEPRINT

More state and local governments are publishing their own data strategies, not too long after the federal government released its version in 2019. Several states, like Connecticut and Oregon, have alluded to the Federal Data Strategy as their blueprint.

With the goal of organizing a governmentwide baseline for data governance and design, the Federal Data Strategy has had several items delayed because of COVID-19. Still, data culture and collaboration are trending, as other government entities rush to coordinate their data approaches.

THE RISE OF DATA DASHBOARDS

Dashboards: An online interface that shows stats, graphics and visuals that are usually easy to understand and interpret for a broad audience. State, local and federal agencies have deployed dashboards in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. New to some and not to others, dashboards present important data to guide decisions. Dashboards can be both internal and external.

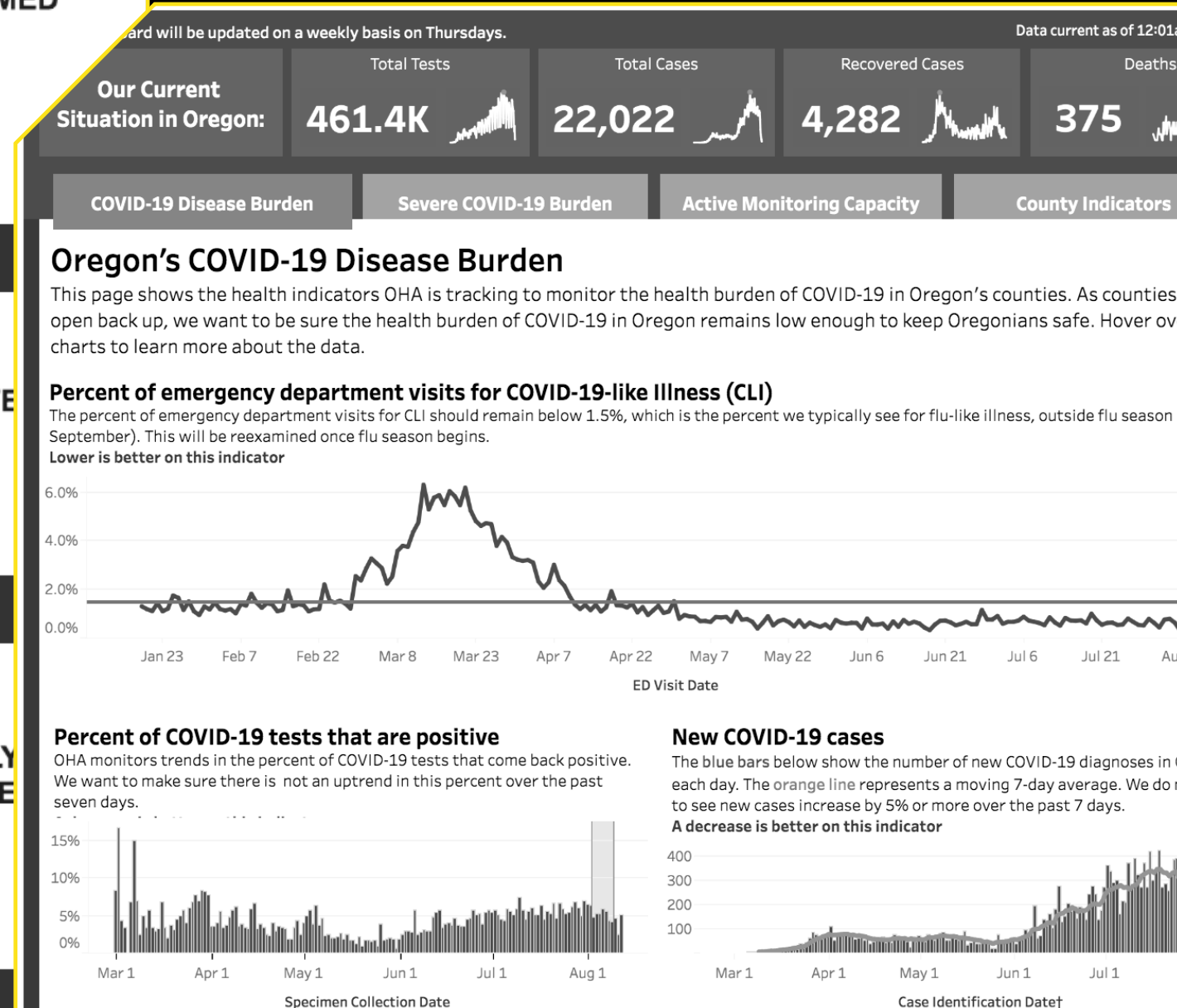
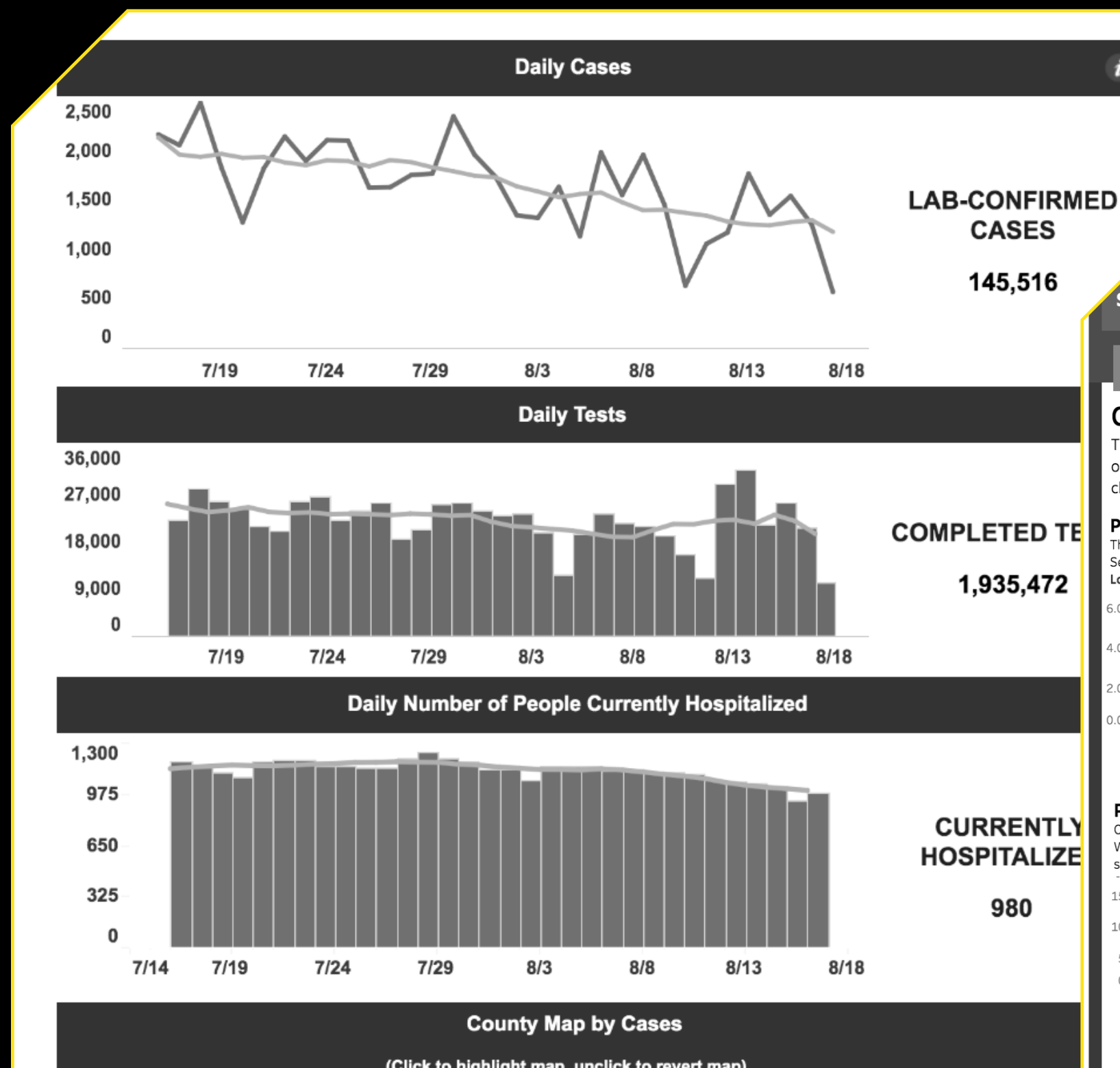


WHAT MAKES A GOOD DASHBOARD?

Simplicity.

"For a lot of the dashboards my team creates, we want to know just how something's changing. We want that quick snapshot of data that when you look at that dashboard, you can tell what's going on. So all dashboards, for them to be really valuable, they need to be consumable and very, very simple."

- John Correllus, Chief Data Officer (CDO), North Carolina



HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGES EXPAND IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

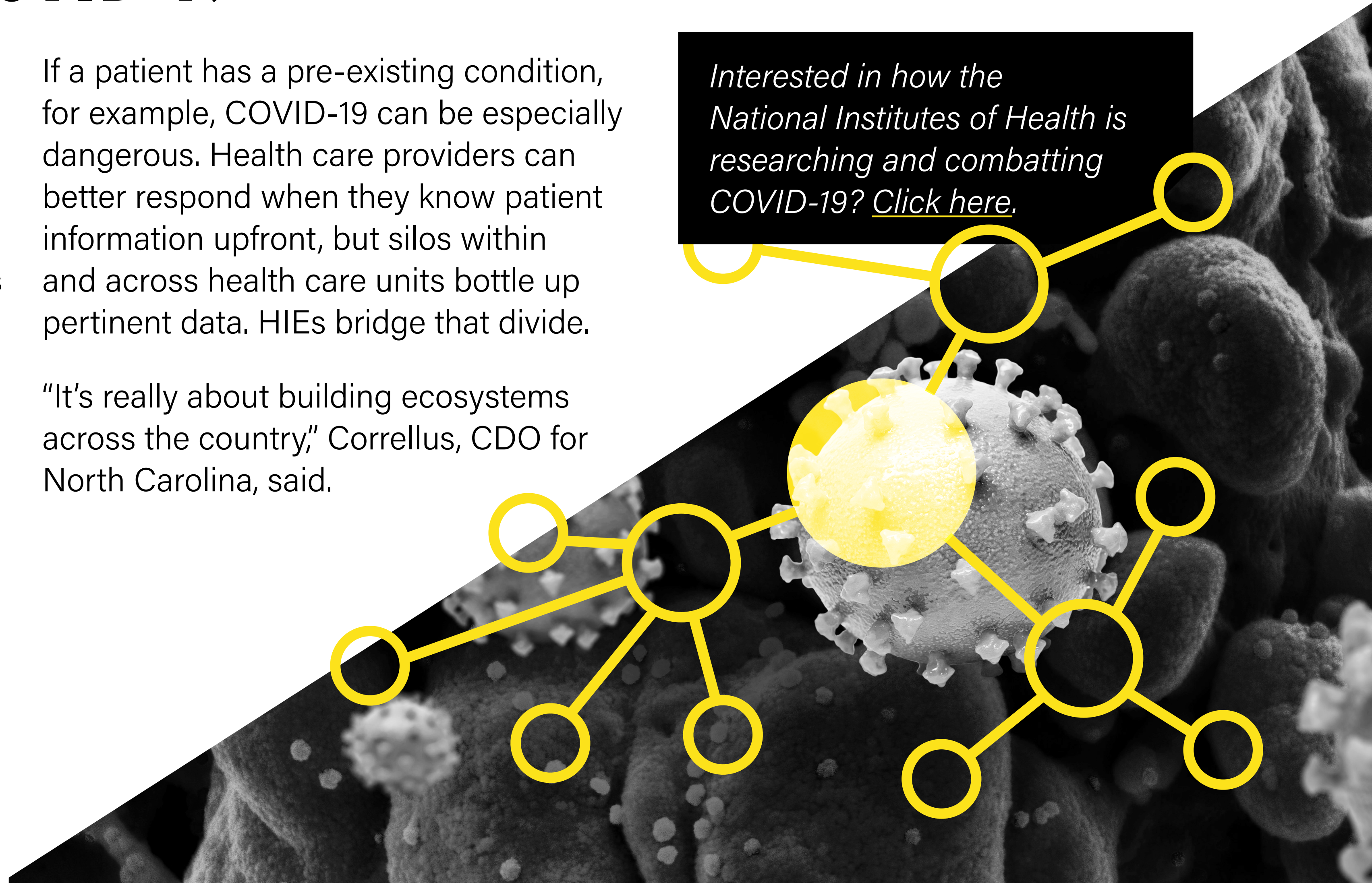
Seconds, minutes and hours matter on the front lines. For that reason, health information exchanges (HIEs) save lives by expediting the time it takes to diagnose and treat patients, and North Carolina's NC HealthConnex program has been perfectly suited to the COVID-19 medical response.

How HIEs Work: HIEs are neutral data stewards, providing a centralized store of medical data that hospitals and health care facilities securely tap into for patient records. The technology saves valuable treatment time by providing health professionals with patient information that they otherwise would have to test for or diagnose on site.

If a patient has a pre-existing condition, for example, COVID-19 can be especially dangerous. Health care providers can better respond when they know patient information upfront, but silos within and across health care units bottle up pertinent data. HIEs bridge that divide.

"It's really about building ecosystems across the country," Correllus, CDO for North Carolina, said.

Interested in how the National Institutes of Health is researching and combatting COVID-19? [Click here.](#)



GOVERNMENTS JOIN FORCES IN THEIR RESPONSE

States that first noticed COVID-19 spikes — such as those on the West Coast, where the virus was initially discovered on U.S. soil — informed governments in other parts of the country of the steps they took, such as constructing dashboards and establishing data-sharing agreements. Because of the warning, other states had a few extra days to prepare for the surge of cases.

The State Chief Data Officers Network is one such partnership through which states exchanged best practices, resources and information.

“A couple of days means saving lives,” Tyler Kleykamp, Director of the State CDO Network, said.

The National Guard also used data from state and local governments to prepare its response. The Joint Artificial Intelligence Center (JAIC), the military artificial intelligence branch, started Project Salus to prevent shortages in regional supply chains.

With data-fueled artificial intelligence algorithms, the JAIC predicted which places would soon be overwhelmed. Then, the Defense Department (DoD) supplied necessary equipment and assistance.

“In the height of the pandemic, we were able to deploy a lot of our medical personnel, as well as other job functions that the military could provide, to help New York City respond to the pandemic,” said Sunmin Kim, Chief of Policy at the JAIC.



PRIVACY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS STILL AT THE FOREFRONT

The JAIC has acquired personal information from businesses and civilian agencies to analyze and predict areas that are struggling. That information allows the JAIC to bolster front lines, but having civilian data inside DoD can make some people uneasy.

The Privacy Act of 1974 permits federal agencies to incorporate data critical for the mission.

Kim said that DoD takes precautions so that citizen trust and privacy are not violated. **Personal information is anonymized and geospatial data is given within a range, instead of at a granular detail. The JAIC even sacrifices modeling accuracy to protect privacy, Kim said.**

“Maybe we only want to have it at a certain ZIP code or a Census tract level, versus something that could be distilled all the way down to a singular block, because that means that there’s a greater risk of identification,” Kim said.



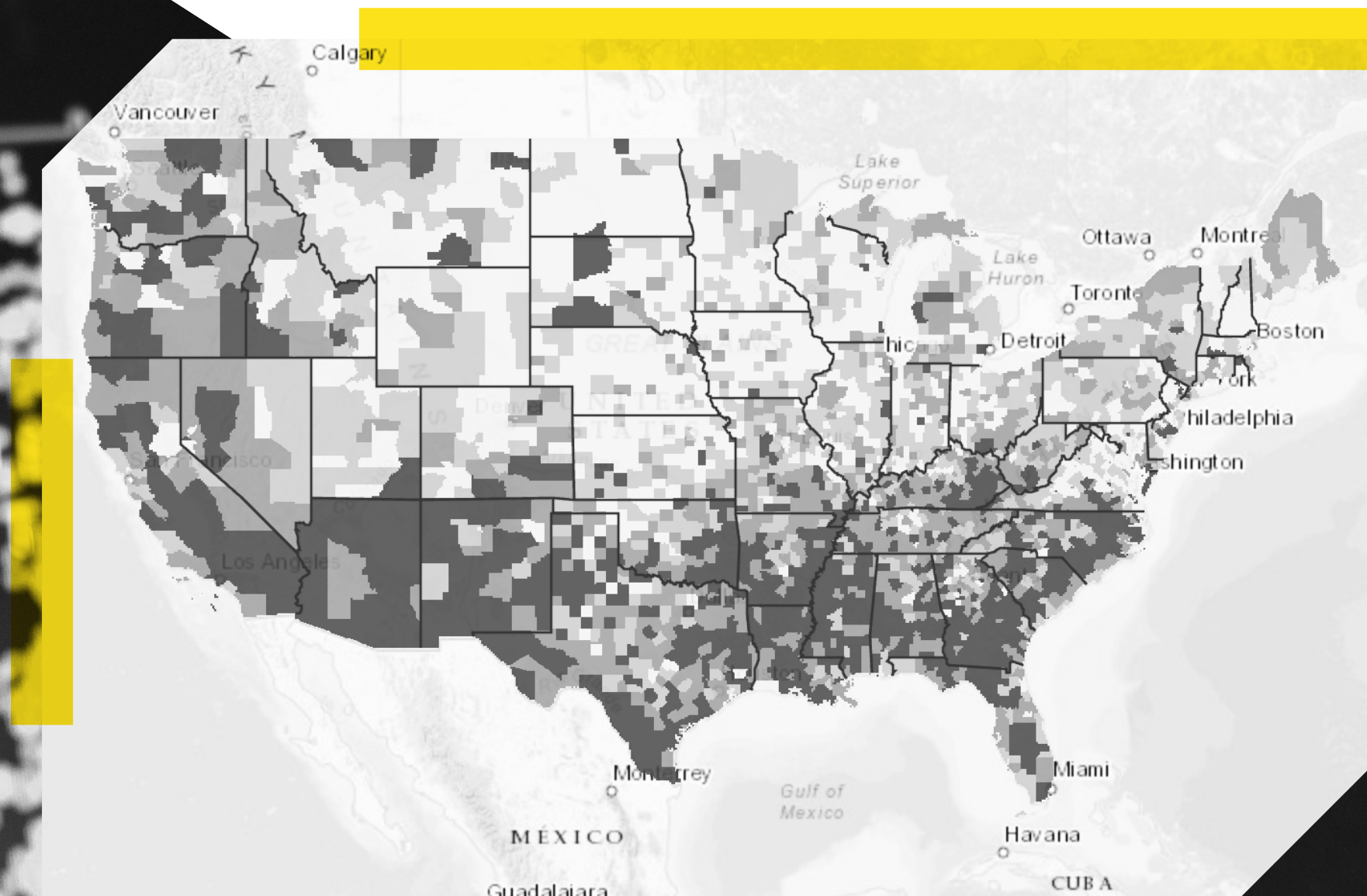
Privacy concerns are not only present at DoD. In Minnesota, a Blue Ribbon Council appointed by Gov. Tim Walz published a report in June 2020 recommending that “the state should appoint a chief privacy officer position to support state practices on data privacy and sharing.”

Ultimately, data privacy is in the best interest of agencies, as it reinforces trust in government, Kim said.

LOCATION DATA IS GUIDELIGHT IN RESPONSE

To combat the spread of an infectious disease, which requires contact tracing, geospatial information has shown what feet on the ground or eyes in the sky can't. Contained in GIS, location data is powering responses and targeting resources to the most impacted areas.

"We've seen how critical location is to this and understanding deeper issues," Kleykamp, Director of the State CDO Network, said.



With GIS, agencies can analyze deeper issues. Whereas raw data shows that Black and Latino people have had significantly higher rates of COVID-19 than other populations, it doesn't reflect the reason. GIS can give the case-specific why, offering information down to the block to pinpoint hotspots.

How? Geospatial data could, for example, uncover an overcrowded nursing home that spread the outbreak in one of those neighborhoods.

"People are starting to make assumptions about comorbidity based on race. But really when you unpack that a little bit more, and look at more granular geographic areas, it might be there's a lot of public housing in that area," Kleykamp said. "Or there might be more essential workers in a particular area that are disproportionately around communities of color."

RESPONSES WERE ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTALS

Successful data responses to the pandemic weren't because of fancy technology like artificial intelligence. Instead, the main differentiator separating successful governments and unsuccessful ones comes from longstanding data fundamentals, experts agreed.

Data inventories, sharing agreements, standards and governance models underpinned governments that were proactive and adaptable in their responses.

"A lot of this is about investing in the foundation," Correllus, North Carolina's CDO, said.

As agencies grapple with the volume and value of data, they need to get their houses in order, experts said. That sort of coordination can come internally but usually requires some sort of formalization.

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RACE AND DATA

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY LENS

Cook County, Illinois, uses GIS mapping technology to plot out its social vulnerability index (SVI), which tracks factors that make a community susceptible to being disproportionately impacted by crises. By putting this information on a map, Cook County can critically evaluate what neighborhoods need more help, said Dessa Gypalo, the county’s CDO. Another usage tracks investment data from different agencies to examine if funds are equitably distributed.

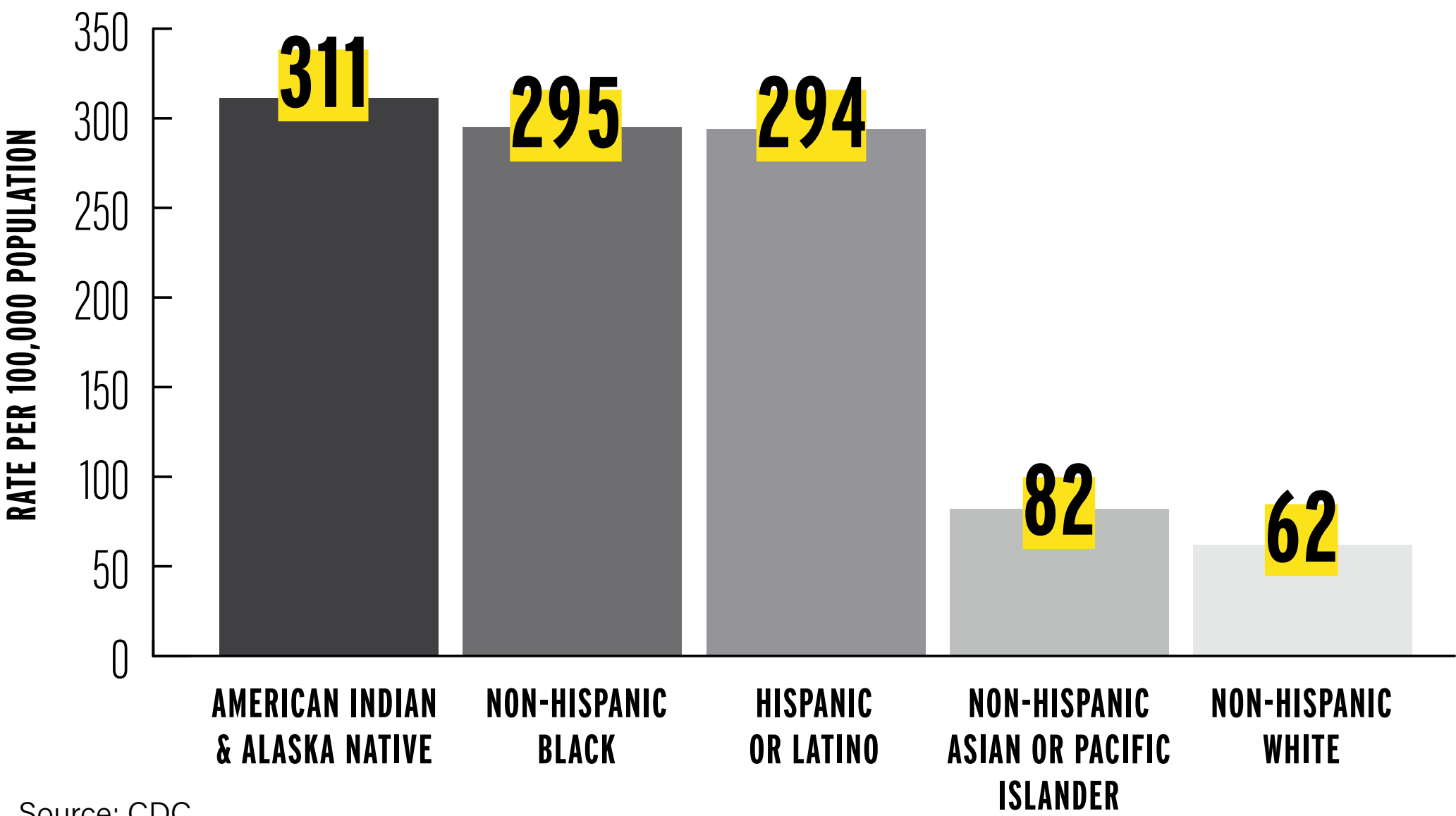
DATA AND POLICE USE OF FORCE

Why is there no comprehensive database for police use of force?

There’s no one answer. Until recently, studies hadn’t been commissioned. And even now that one has been, with the FBI’s Use-of-Force Data Collection, reporting is voluntary and the decision to report data falls on local departments. The cost falls on them too, a noteworthy barrier to entry.



AGE-ADJUSTED COVID-19-ASSOCIATED HOSPITALIZATION RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



Source: CDC

WHERE ANALYTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION FITS IN

With analytic process automation (APA), every data worker regardless of their technical acumen can be a data champion, and every organization can unlock the insights contained in their data.

From small counties to large federal agencies, APA self-service analytics gives agencies the ability to democratize data, automate all elements of the analytics lifecycle and upskill existing resources. From prep and blend to basic analysis to the application of advanced analytics including predictive, geospatial and text-mining capabilities, APA provides the self-service platform public sector organizations need to improve efficiency, optimize resources and accelerate outcomes for the people, communities and stakeholders they serve.

Alteryx provides organizations with the ability to catalog, consume, prep and blend data, and leverage predictive and machine learning models that can be templated, created, shared, automated and governed. The Alteryx APA platform is built to support the collaboration and consumption of insight within a code-free or code-friendly environment, and its flexibility welcomes a variety of data sources.

“As you start thinking about self-service analytics, what it did was put more data or more capabilities in the hands of the average everyday user.”

– Sean Brophy, VP of Public Sector, Alteryx

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ADVICE FROM CDOs

Here are highlights from some of the many chief data officers whom GovLoop spoke to as part of “[Your Data in the Year of Everything Else](#).” For more information and other interviews, visit GovLoop’s [CDO Conversations](#) and download the [full guide](#).

“The primary thing is to be a data evangelist – to collaborate within and outside of the state on data issues; to integrate some of the systems within the state; to train the workforce on data technologies; and to execute on the strategic and tactical projects that we have that are involving data.

– *Tammy Roust, CDO, Illinois*

We’re saying, ‘OK, we as a state are particularly committed to these core principles.’ ... Otherwise what happens is you get this flavor-of-the-week reaction to data.

– *Kathryn Helms, CDO, Oregon*

We serve as translators between the data itself and maybe a more technical audience with policy, operations, decision-makers, as well as the public. There’s a lot to be said for how you champion not just analysis but data availability and data literacy.

– *Kelly Jin, Chief Analytics Officer, New York City*

”The importance of data has been elevated and the importance of data-sharing, the importance of cataloging your data to understand what data you have to help solve ‘x’ problem is very important.

– *John Correllus, CDO, North Carolina*

**THANK YOU TO ALTERYX FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THIS VALUABLE
RESOURCE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR PROFESSIONALS.**



**CHECK OUT OUR FULL GUIDE, WHERE WE TAKE A DEEPER DIVE INTO
THESE AND OTHER DATA TOPICS.**