

Communicating with Heart in Public Health

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
4:30 – 6:00 pm EST / 1:30 – 3:00pm PST

This event will be recorded. The recording and slides will be available on publichealthcollaborative.org later this week.

All attendees are automatically muted upon entry.

Join the PHCC Newsletter

All the latest public health...

- Messaging
- Resources
- Communication tools
- Trending topics
- Trainings

Delivered directly to your inbox!



Closed Captioning and ASL Interpretation

If you'd like to use closed captions or ASL interpretation: Hover over the “More” button or the “Interpretation” button on the bottom of your Zoom screen.

- Live closed captioning is being provided by AI Media.
- ASL interpretation is being provided by Keystone Interpreting Solutions.

Meet Today's Experts



Nir Menachemi, PhD, MPH
Dean
Indiana University Fairbanks School of
Public Health, Indianapolis



Matthew Montesano, MPH
Senior Director of Data Communication
NYC Department of Health and Mental
Hygiene



Leslie Lopato, MD
Co-Leader of the Truth and Trust Project
Braver Angels



Amanda Kwong, MPH
Director
Public Health Communications Collaborative

Don't Forget to Use the Chat!

Add your questions to the chat throughout the webinar.

We'll do our best to get to all of them, but if we don't get to yours, we will repurpose your questions for future webinars, resources, and PHCC Academy courses.





FAIRBANKS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
INDIANA UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS

The Role of Trust in Communicating with H.E.A.R.T. in Public Health

Nir Menachemi, PhD, MPH
Dean & Professor
Fairbanks Endowed Chair

DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2023.01650
HEALTH AFFAIRS 43,
NO. 6 (2024): 856–863

This open access article is distributed in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

By Nir Menachemi, Lindsay Weaver, Virginia Caine, D. Shane Hatchett, Kristina Box, and Paul K. Halverson

COMMENTARY

Indiana's Public Health Investment Holds Insights For Other States

Nir Menachemi (nirmena@iu.edu), Indiana University and Regenstrief Institute, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Lindsay Weaver, Indiana Department of Health, Indianapolis, Indiana.

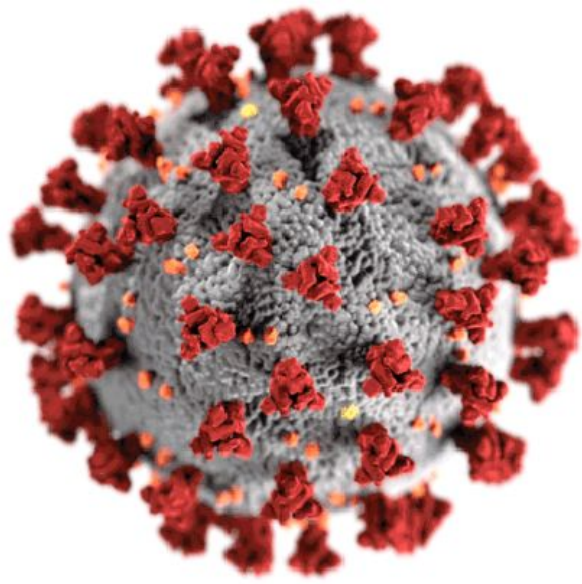
Virginia Caine, Marion County Public Health Department, Indianapolis, Indiana.

D. Shane Hatchett, Indiana Department of Health.

Kristina Box, Indiana Department of Health.

Paul K. Halverson, Oregon Health & Science University and Portland State University, Portland, Oregon.

ABSTRACT Indiana has a business-friendly environment, but historical underinvestment in public health has yielded poor health outcomes. In 2023, when trust in governmental public health was strained nationwide, Indiana increased public health spending by 1,500 percent. In this article, we explain how Indiana achieved this unprecedented legislative victory for public health, describing the context, approach, and lessons learned. Specifically, an Indiana University report linking economic vitality and overall health sparked the creation of a governor's commission charged with exploring ways to address Indiana's shortcomings. Working with the Indiana Department of Health, the commission developed multisectoral coalitions and business and government partnerships, and it maintained consistent and coordinated communication with policy makers. Lessons learned included the value of uncoupling public health from partisan narratives, appointing diverse commission membership with strategically selected coauthors, involving local leaders, and ensuring local decision-making control. We believe that Indiana's approach holds insights for other states interested in strengthening public health funding in the current era.



Google Gemini. (2025). AI-generated image of broken egg with word trust etched. Generated August 31, 2025.



An AI-generated illustration of a group of early humans, possibly Neanderthals, gathered around a campfire at dusk. The scene is set in a savanna-like environment with acacia trees and distant mountains. The group consists of about ten individuals, including men, women, and children, all wearing simple clothing made of animal skins. They are sitting on the ground, some holding spears and other tools. The campfire is a central point of light, casting a warm glow on the scene. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, indicating the time is either dawn or dusk. The overall atmosphere is one of community and shared life.

Importance of Trust

Microsoft Copilot. (2025). AI-generated image of early humans around a campfire. Generated June 11, 2025.

Tribalism and the Human Need to “Belong”



Tribalism and the Human Need to “Belong”

- Competitive and professional sports “exploits” this innate human need

Tribalism and the Human Need to “Belong”

- Competitive and professional sports “exploits” this innate human need
- The same mechanism affects:
 - Politics with “P” or “p”



Tribalism and the Human Need to “Belong”

- Competitive and professional sports “exploits” this innate human need
- The same mechanism affects:
 - Politics with “P” or “p”
 - Culture

Article

Preferred Interpersonal Distances: A Global Comparison

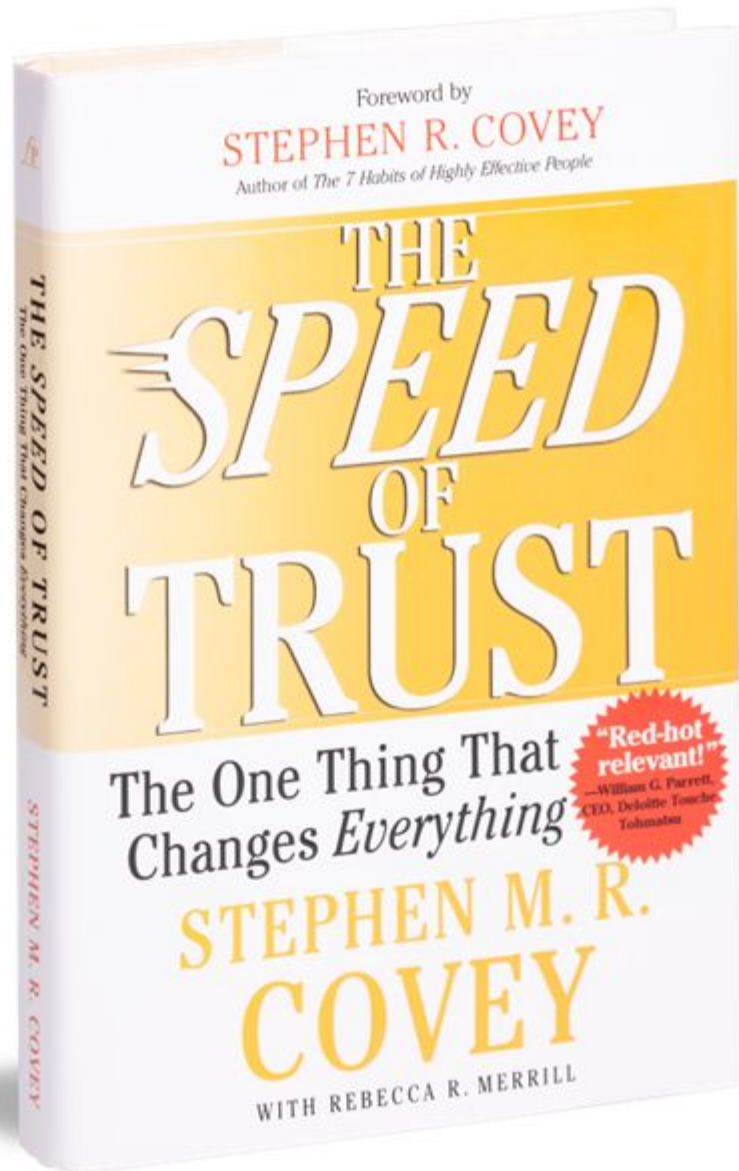
Agnieszka Sorokowska¹, Piotr Sorokowski¹, Peter Hilpert²,
Katarzyna Cantarero³, Tomasz Frackowiak¹, Khodabakhsh
Ahmadi⁴, Ahmad M. Alghraibeh⁵, Richmond Aryeetey⁶, Anna

Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
2017, Vol. 48(4) 577–592
© The Author(s) 2017
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0022022117698039
journals.sagepub.com/home/jcc



Tribalism and the Human Need to “Belong”

- Competitive and professional sports “exploits” this innate human need
- The same mechanism affects:
 - Politics with “P” or “p”
 - Culture
 - Market competition between firms
 - Much more!
- “I need to find my people”



- We judge ourselves based on our **intentions**
- We judge others based on their **behaviors** (*which includes their words*)

Communicating with H.E.A.R.T. in Public Health



Practical Considerations to Center Empathy and Compassion in Public Health Communications

H Humility
Honesty

E Engagement
Equity

A Accessibility
Authenticity

R Resonance
Reach

T Transcreation
Transparency

Listening to Find Your Way to the H.E.A.R.T.

Empathy and compassion are important elements of public health communications. Empathetic communications show an awareness and consideration of your audiences' emotions, beliefs, and experiences. Compassionate communications act on awareness and consideration to support and inform audiences in a responsive way. To create empathetic and compassionate communications, be sure to listen to your audiences, and when you do, **listen to understand**. This can help the H.E.A.R.T. you bring to your communications be better informed and fully aware of the circumstances faced by your audiences. As you develop communications that center both empathy and compassion, consider some of these listening techniques:

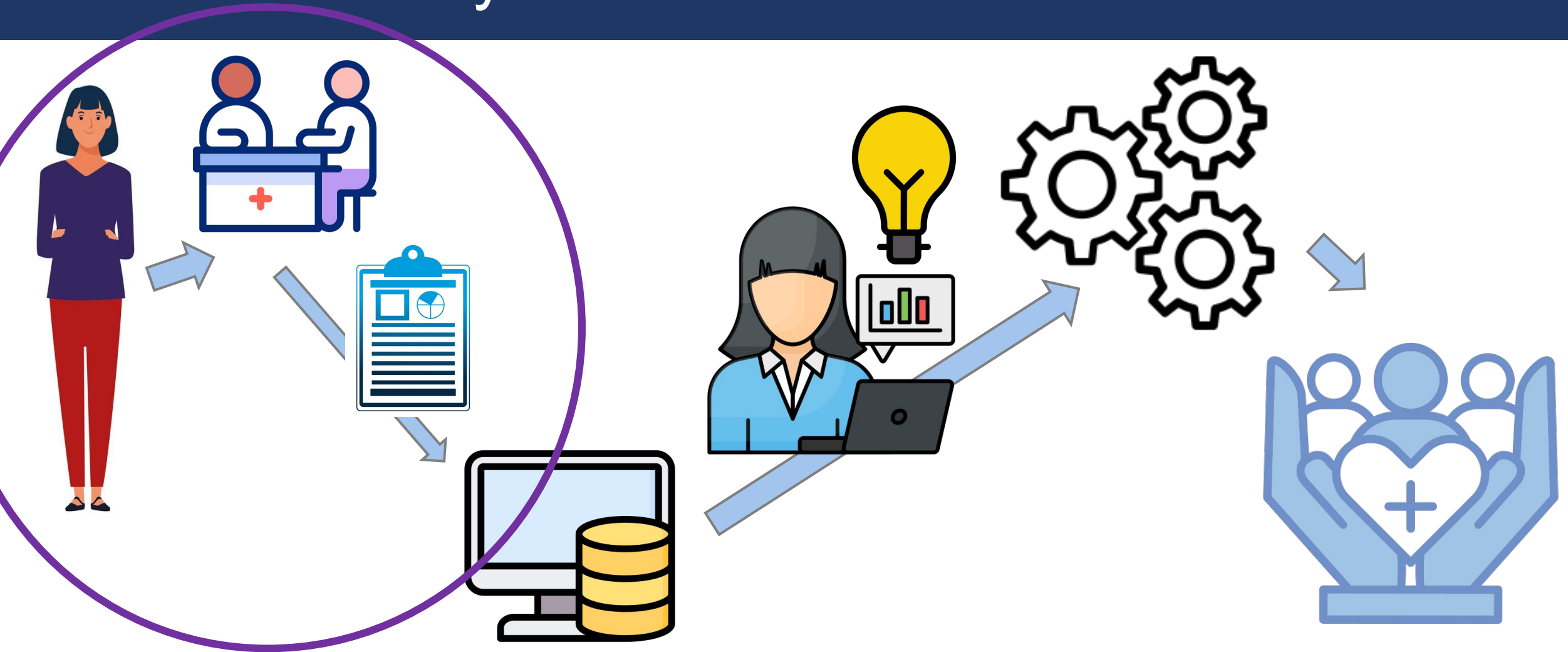
- **Avoid formulating answers** in your mind while you are listening to a response.
- **Bring an open and curious mind** to your listening.
- **Consider biases** you may bring to your listening before a conversation starts or before you review responses.
- **Gain deeper insight** into the perspective of your audience instead of focusing on yours.
- **Use active listening** when you are in conversation with your audience. Summarize and repeat what you heard and ask clarifying, open-ended questions to ensure you understand.

These behaviors
help build trust

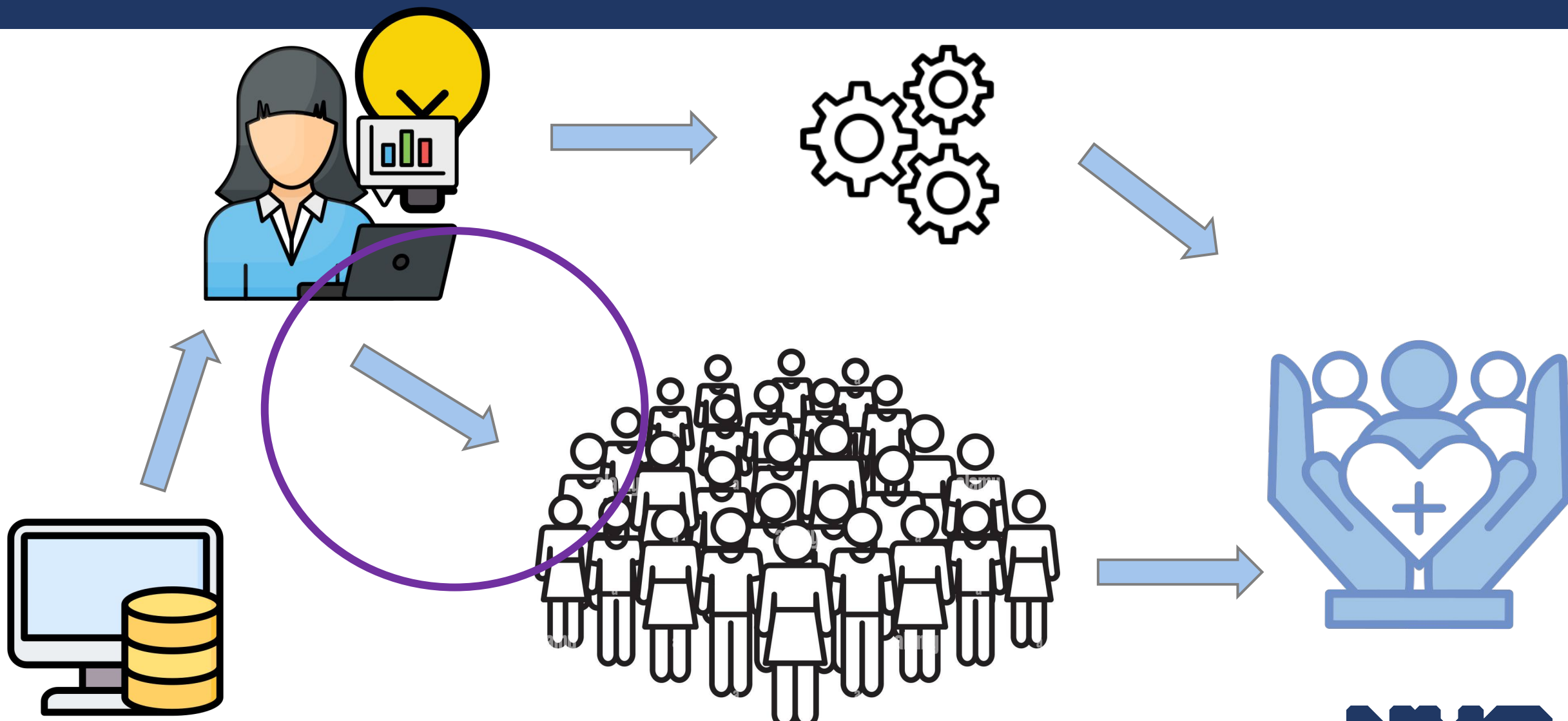
Solving the “last mile problem” with public health data

Communicating data so it's easier to access, understand, use

The data lifecycle



The data lifecycle



The “last mile problem”

NYC Environment and Health Data Portal

<https://a816-dohbesp.nyc.gov/IndicatorPublic/>



nyc.gov > Health > EH Data Portal 311 Search all NYC.gov NYC

Environment & Health Data Portal Topics Explore About Q Subscribe

Explore your city - through data.

The environment is everything around us - our air and water, the climate, our city's buildings and streets, and the society that we live in:

Air quality	Housing
Child health	Inequality
Climate	Injury and violence
Food and drink	Pests
Health outcomes	Public space

See all topics

Inspection data are the key to controlling NYC's rats

Learn why inspection results are the most reliable way to understand rat activity in any NYC neighborhood.

New data stories

- Inspection data are the key to controlling NYC's rats** Rats are one of New York City's hottest topics. You see them on the news, while scrolling on social ...
- Initial data from Congestion Relief Tolling** In January 2025, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bridge and Tunnels (MTABT) started ...
- Energy is critical for health and climate resilience — but not all New Yorkers may be able to afford it**

Recently updated data

- Homes with mold
- Homes using supplemental heat
- Homes with cockroaches
- Homes with cracks or holes
- Homes with leaks
- Homes with mice or rats in the unit or building
- Household air conditioning
- Renter-occupied homes with any health-related housing problems
- Penetration (airtight)

Get updates and announcements

Sign up here! We won't share your email address.

Find what you need

Q Search the site

Talk to people

When we ask **how to make data easier for people to understand**, this is what we hear:

“It has to be easy to use.”

“Don’t make me analyze the data – *tell me what’s going on.*”

Making data easier to access, understand, and use

Making data easier to access:

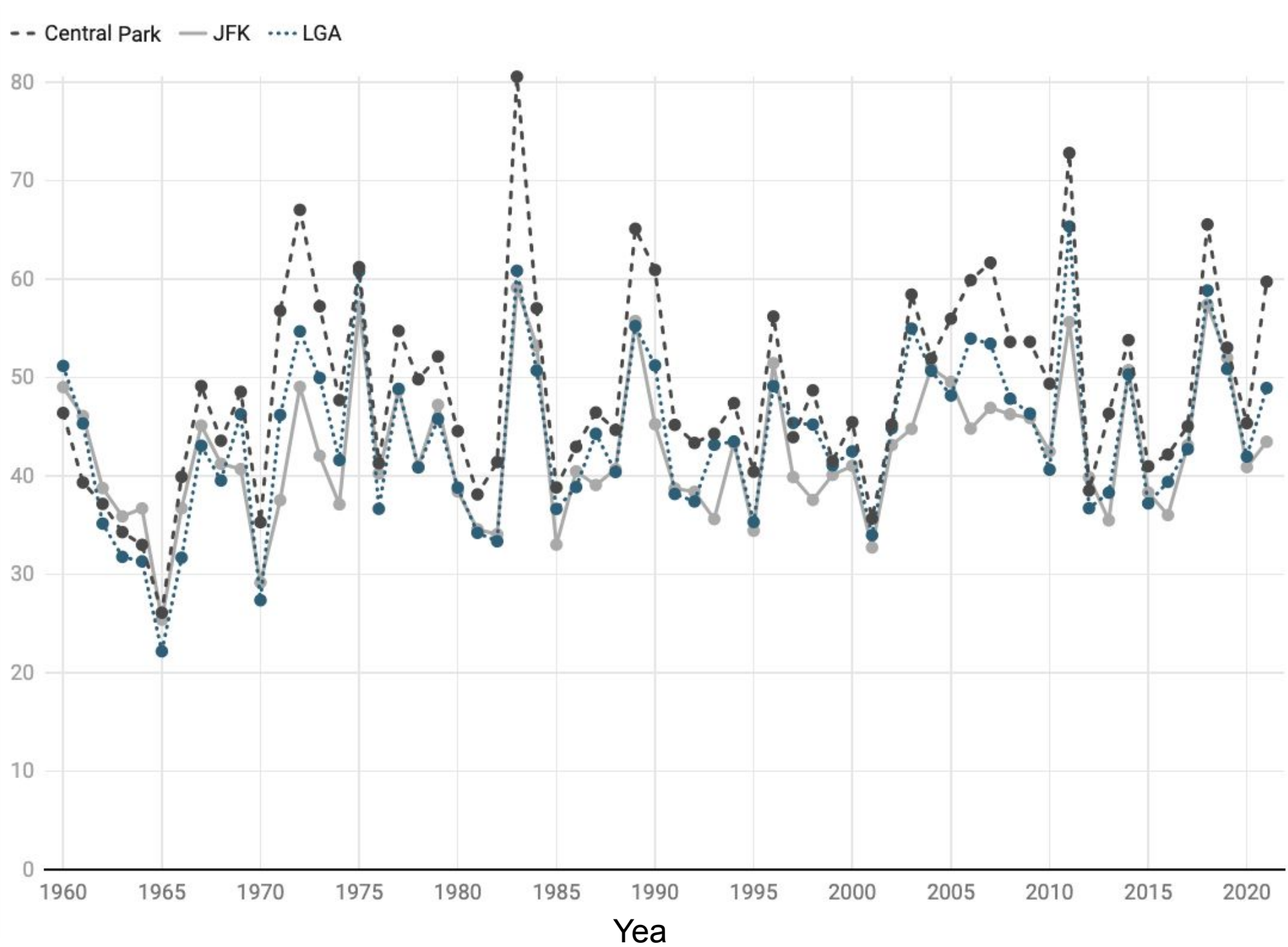
- Focus on **usability**
- Use **familiar-feeling web techniques**
- **Connect information** through search, tags, keywords

Making data easier to access, understand, and use

Making data easier to understand:

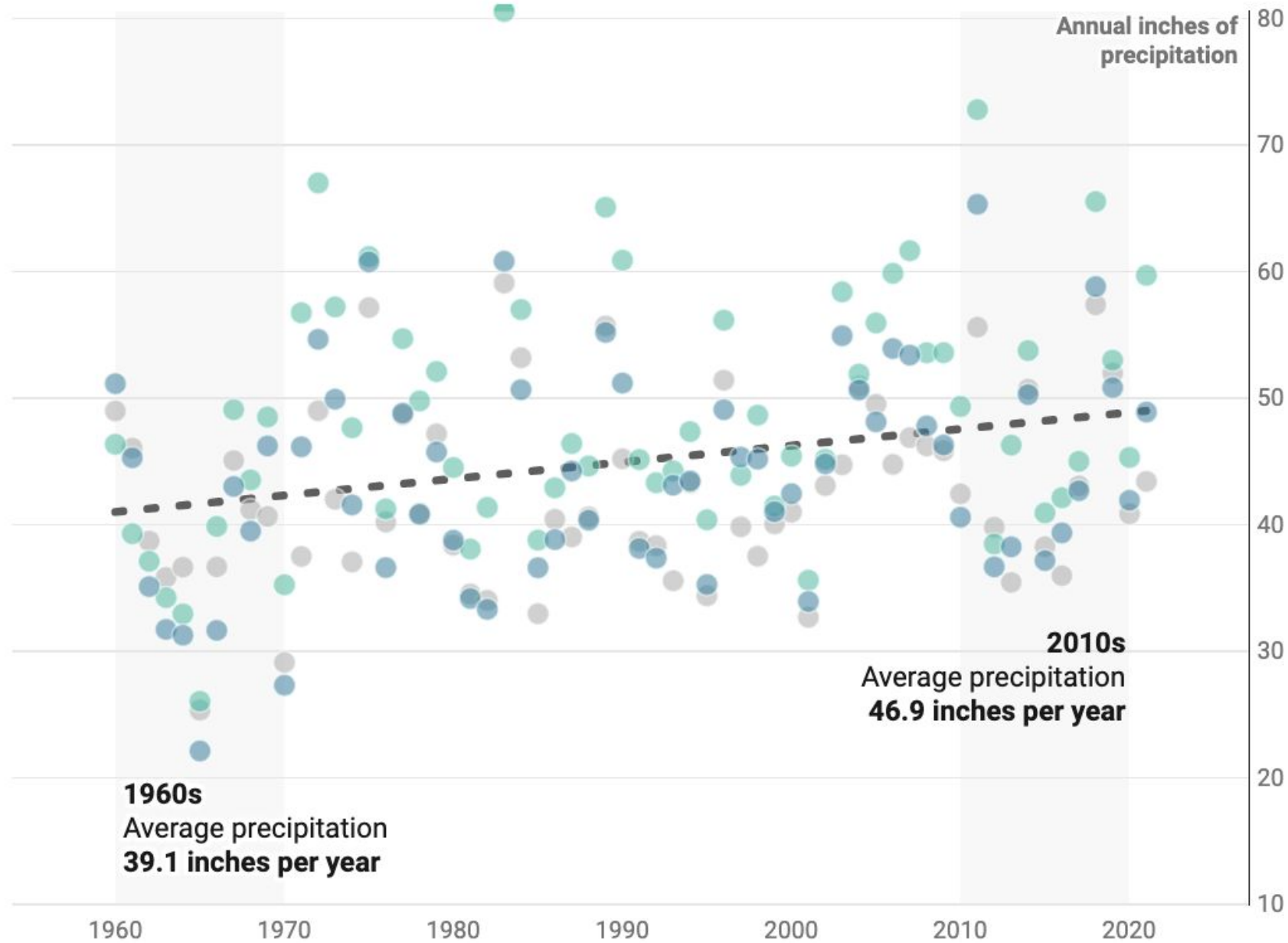
- **Explanatory** products complement **exploratory** products
- Evidence-based data visualization techniques

Annual inches of precipitation per year, by weather station



NYC's annual precipitation has increased about 20% since 1960

● JFK ● La Guardia ● Central Park



Making data easier to access, understand, and use

Making data easier to understand:

- **Explanatory** products complement **exploratory** products
- Evidence-based data visualization techniques
- Plain(er) language

Making data easier to access, understand, and use

Access + Understanding = Use

See for yourself

NYC Environment and Health Data Portal

<https://a816-dohbesp.nyc.gov/IndicatorPublic/>



nyc.gov > Health > EH Data Portal311 Search all NYC.gov

Environment & Health

Data Portal

Topics ▾Explore ▾About 🔍Subscribe

Explore your city - through data.

The environment is everything around us - our air and water, the climate, our city's buildings and streets, and the society that we live in:

Air quality

Child health

Climate

Food and drink

Health outcomes

Housing


Inequality

Injury and violence

Pests

Public space


See all topics



Inspection data are the key to controlling NYC's rats


Learn why inspection results are the most reliable way to understand rat activity in any NYC neighborhood.

New data stories




Inspection data are the key to controlling NYC's rats

Rats are one of New York City's hottest topics. You see them on the news, while scrolling on social ...



Initial data from Congestion Relief Tolling

In January 2025, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bridge and Tunnels (MTABT) started ...



Energy is critical for health and climate resilience

— but not all New Yorkers may be able to afford it

Recently updated data

Homes with mold

Homes using supplemental heat

Homes with cockroaches

Homes with cracks or holes

Homes with leaks

Homes with mice or rats in the unit or building

Household air conditioning

Renter-occupied homes with any health-related housing problems

Penetration (airtight)

Get updates and announcements

Sign up here! We won't share your email address.

Find what you need

Search the site

The logo for NYC Health, featuring the letters "NYC" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font, with the word "Health" in a smaller, blue sans-serif font directly below it.

See for yourself

Data Explorer

Datasets

About asthma

PREVALENCE: ADULTS

Adults with asthma

Adults with a recent asthma attack

PREVALENCE: CHILDREN

Children ever diagnosed with asthma

Youth with a recent asthma attack

Children with a recent asthma attack

Children still with asthma

ASTHMA EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS

Asthma emergency department visits (adults)

Asthma emergency department visits (adults), by NTA

Asthma emergency department visits (age 4 and under)

Asthma emergency department visits (age 4 and under), by NTA

Asthma emergency department visits (age 5 to 17)

Asthma emergency department visits (age 5 to 17), by NTA

ASTHMA HOSPITALIZATIONS

Asthma hospitalizations (adults)

Related data on:

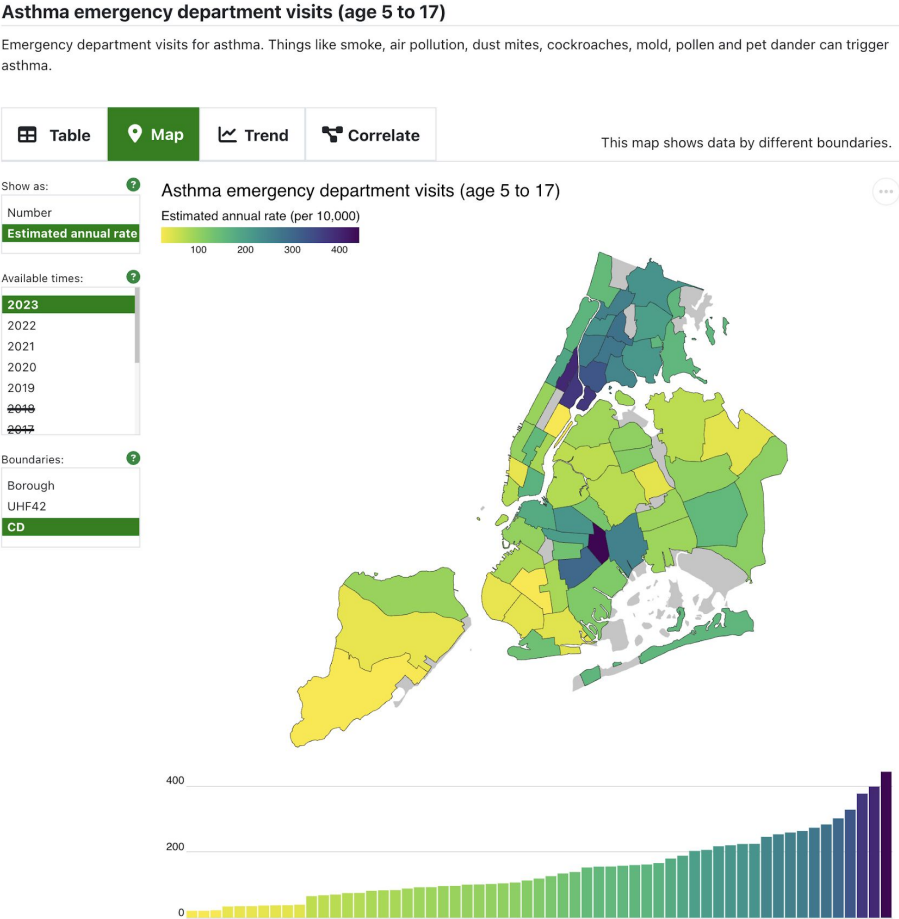
Health impacts of air pollution

Housing maintenance

Asthma triggers

Keywords:

asthma | children | hospitalizations | emergency department visits | breathing | housing | physical activity |

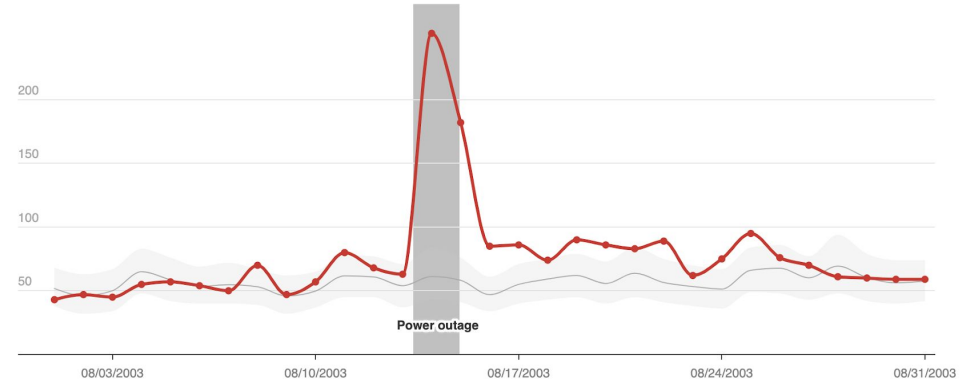


See for yourself

Explanatory material

The 2003 Blackout caused a spike in respiratory hospitalizations...

Respiratory hospitalizations: Predicted and **Observed**.



Created with [Datawrapper](#)

The health impacts were not limited to just hospitalizations. In fact, the power outage was deadly.

In the chart below, you can clearly see that **observed deaths** generally bounce around the level of **predicted deaths**, staying within the **prediction range**. But on and after the power outage, observed deaths spiked: more people died during and immediately after the power outage.

...and a spike in deaths in NYC.

Predicted deaths and **Observed deaths**.



Keywords:

asthma | weather | mortality | death |
cooling | air conditioning | built
environment |

Banner image:

Benjamin Kanter/Mayoral
Photography Office, City of
New York

Published on:

January 10, 2022

Designing tools so more people can use them

PDF reports buried on websites
Clunky, archaic dashboards
Inaccessible data formats



Good websites
Searchable, findable data
Easy-to-understand visuals
Exploratory and explanatory



An aerial photograph of a city featuring a large, flat, rectangular structure, possibly a bridge or a platform, situated in a body of water. The structure has a reddish-brown top surface and is supported by concrete pillars. A person is walking on the right side of the structure. In the background, there are several modern, multi-story buildings. The water reflects the surrounding environment.

Us & our data

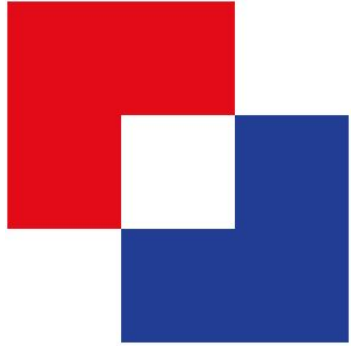
**Ineffective data
comms practices**

**Potential public health
change-makers**

Thank you!

mmontesano@health.nyc.gov

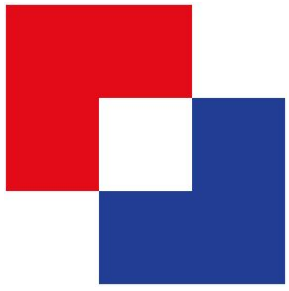
<https://github.com/mmontesanonyc/resources>



Managing Difficult Conversations in Public Health



Leslie Lopato, MD



BRAVER ANGELS

“Courageous connections across political division”

- with unity of purpose, not uniformity of opinion.

National nonprofit with the mission to bring Americans together to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic.

Leadership is half red and half blue at all levels.

We hold workshops, debates, and engage with community members and elected officials

Merriam-Webster's 2024 Word of the Year was:

“Polarization”

“Division into two sharply distinct opposites; especially, a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes.” This is a polarization of issues and ideas.

BUT we need to be aware of

Affective Polarization

The gap between the positive way an “in group” views itself and the negative way it views “others.” Characterized by viewing outsiders with anger, distrust, contempt, hostility and even hatred, sometimes seeing them as evil and ill-intentioned.

SHARED FACTS AND SOCIAL TRUST

Most individuals do not have direct, personal access to easily understandable scientific or medical facts.

Even medical and scientific professionals can have trouble evaluating the volumes of information.

We rely on authorities and leaders we trust.

Result: In a polarized world without shared sources of trustworthiness, we lack shared facts, which paralyzes us for making collective decisions.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

We can work to build stronger relationships of respect and trust.

We can develop our skills for communicating across trust and fact divides.

DEVELOP 1:1 RELATIONSHIPS

Reach out to initiate conversation, formally and informally.

Have coffee with your critics.

Connect personally.

Get their story and share yours.

Listen and ask questions when you can do it *with sincere curiosity*.

Things to Consider:

- 1) Anticipate that ***you*** may be the one who has to reach out and connect first. You will be doing the “heavy lifting” in the conversation, especially at first.
- 2) Recognize that you may not persuade the other person that they are wrong and you are right.
- 3) Ask nonjudgmentally **how** they came to believe as they do.
- 4) Recognize that listening is **NOT** the same as validating or giving weight to their entire viewpoint.

You need to speak your truth, but for YOU to be *heard*, the person you're talking to also has to feel *heard*.

FOUR SKILLS FOR COMMUNICATING

L- LISTEN AND ACKNOWLEDGE

-the other person's view and the strength of their feelings. Give a brief paraphrase of their view and ask question of clarification if necessary.

A- APPRECIATE

-their willingness to bring their concerns to your attention.

A- AGREE

-with whatever piece of common ground you can find, even if it's a small part

P- PERSPECTIVE

-after asking if it's OK, share your own perspective on the issue.

If you'd like to know more about Braver Angels
or the Truth and Trust Project:

braverangels.org

<https://braverangels.org/truth-and-trust/>

If you'd like to know more about or schedule a workshop:
email: llopato@braverangels.org

Q&A

Explore More from PHCC

publichealthcollaborative.org

- Sign up for the PHCC newsletter
- Download resources, like brand new vaccine content, to share with your community
- Review new messaging on the 2025-26 COVID-19 and flu vaccines
- Get the latest trending health alerts
- Take a PHCC Academy training



Thank You

More Resources

www.publichealthcollaborative.org

Contact

info@publichealthcollaborative.org

Follow PHCC

LinkedIn: Public Health
Communications Collaborative

