



As the world is fighting the spread of the COVID-19 virus, data-driven approaches have taken center stage and now, more than ever, appear to hold the solution to finding a cure to the disease and preventing it from happening again. Exceptional times call for exceptional measures. Across the globe, public and private organizations are being asked by governments to share, pool or open access to patient or epidemiologic data they collect or hold, to complement publicly available data and benefit the greater good. An important question is how much of this new momentum will be maintained once the crisis is over. What will be the new normal in health data sharing?

The current situation provides numerous opportunities for organizations across the globe to engage and shape a meaningful conversation about the future of health data collection and sharing. Here are a few ideas on how that could pan out and issues to keep an eye on once we are in the new normal.

1. Breaking Barriers to Health Data Sharing: a Unique Momentum to Be Maintained

When discussing the sharing of health data, issues around access, privacy, patient confidentiality, IP or standards are often barriers that prevent data from flowing freely between and within public and private organizations. However, the COVID-19 crisis has so far shown that when push comes to shove, pooling data between stakeholders to generate insights that will benefit society, both now and in the future, can be done easily and quickly. Moreover, it can be done in compliance with privacy laws. This begs the question: *If it can be done now, why not in the future?*

According to the OECD, Singapore, Canada, the United States and New Zealand appear ready, both from governance and technological perspectives, to deploy health data sharing, while much of Europe seems to be lagging behind. As Europe develops a set of European Data Spaces, including a European Health Data Space, the COVID-19 crisis could give policymakers an opportunity to encourage public and private organizations to ramp up their data sharing efforts. This would effectively make routine public-private data sharing in health (data collaboratives) the new normal.

APCO Worldwide can help reshape the narrative around data sharing to overcome key barriers by:

- Leveraging the unique research capabilities of APCO Insight to collate data-driven insights to map out specific challenges to the sharing of health data.
- Design and implement communications strategies to make the case for reform and position private and non-for-profit actors as key solution providers to enable data sharing while responding to regulatory and citizen concerns.

2. Accompanying the Digital Transformation of the Health Sector to Achieve the Full Potential of Data-Based Health Systems

The current crisis will accelerate the digitization of healthcare systems across the world, with reports showing that countries making the most of data-driven technologies and insights are often the ones that are the most successful in managing pandemics. Such accelerated digitization will require significant human, financial and technical investments.

Technology and health companies as well as non-governmental organizations will play a key role in securing buy-in from all involved stakeholders if a successful transformation is to be realized.

This crisis has shown that health data is essential to inform public decisions and that it can be collected and shared in a way that respects data protection rules. However, organizations holding health data, from companies to national health systems, will need to safeguard this positive sentiment by proactively suggesting solutions guaranteeing that secondary use of health data will respect patients' and consumers' trust and privacy, allowing them to remain in control of the way their health data is shared and used.

APCO can leverage opportunities offered by the current crisis to make the case for the digitalisation of health systems by:

- ✓ Leveraging the unique research and trend-sensing capabilities of APCO Insight to map out the impact of the coronavirus crisis on health systems digitalisation and identify key challenges and enablers.
- ✓ Supporting the development and refinement of a new narrative around data sharing for a post-coronavirus era.
- ✓ Identifying stakeholders and building coalitions to proactively develop consensus-based solutions to the challenges of the digital transformation of health systems.

3. Supporting Market Innovation and Data Sharing for Public Health

Finding the right balance between opening up proprietary data and encouraging innovation will remain high on the policy agenda as the current crisis has revived the calls on and from governments to introduce mandatory data sharing to accelerate research. Regulators could see the current cooperation as a precedent and support the establishment of (health) data collaboratives that would pool public and private high-value data. Yet, incentives can be put in place to encourage voluntary data sharing, and it will be up to private companies to identify the most effective approaches and promote them to public authorities.

APCO can help organizations with the identification of innovative solutions to support data sharing and bring them to the attention of regulators by:

- ✓ Conducting opinion research and stakeholder mapping to better understand patients' concerns and hopes for data sharing.
- ✓ Supporting the development and refinement of a new narrative around data sharing for a post-coronavirus era.
- ✓ Designing and implementing public affairs and communications strategies to support engagement with decision-makers and to define win-win policy propositions.