



# APMreports.

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## Five Years of Impact

2016 - 2021



## From the Editor

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APM Reports has been making a difference from the start. Our first investigation—published and broadcast in May 2016—exposed violence and negligence at a “troubled teen” facility in northern Minnesota. Seventeen days after the first story, the owner was forced to close the operation because county officials, concerned by the abuse allegations, were removing children from the facility. Five months later, we launched our investigative podcast *In the Dark*, which has generated 83 million episode downloads. The show’s second season was central to freeing a Mississippi man from death row.

In the past five years, the journalism of APM Reports has also changed housing policy in Atlanta, triggered a moratorium on water shutoffs in Chicago, revealed the lack of training for police officers in de-escalation tactics, led to reform of voting rules in Georgia and prompted nationwide debate about reading instruction. Our journalism is having an impact, which was our aim when we started.

American Public Media created APM Reports because newsroom staffs nationwide were being cut, diminishing the ability of media organizations to commit

to investigative journalism, a critical piece of a functional democracy. By partnering with other news outlets, we hoped to help fill that void, and we have. Today we have worked with scores of national and local news organizations—public radio stations, newspapers, and digital-only operations—to help produce immersive, important journalism.

We select our reporting projects based on a consistent set of criteria grounded by a central tenet: The work must have the potential to break new ground and lead to substantive change. Our stories typically focus on holding powerful people or organizations to account in the public interest, most often for neglect, abuse, injustice, corruption or illegal, unethical behavior that brings harm to others. At the center of many of our investigations is a system that is unfair and unjust. All our journalism is verifiable and anchored by first-hand information, data or documents; we work independent of outside influence and without an agenda; and we adhere to the highest ethical standards.

Our team comprises reporters, editors, data journalists and audio and digital producers. Our work features on digital

platforms—web/print, data visualizations, video—in newspapers and audio, both radio programs and podcasts. We have multiple distribution options: national shows, regional public radio stations, our website, national co-productions and podcasts. We excel at public records acquisition, data analysis and presentation, and we share all our work with partners.

Looking ahead to the next five years, APM Reports wants to grow a national network of local public radio, digital and print outlets working in partnership on investigative reporting that shares resources, knowledge and information. Why us? We have driven significant change with our journalism; we work within a nonprofit, mission-driven company with national reach; we are a high-end audio producer at a time when podcast consumption is soaring; and we are a proven, trustworthy partner.

Few media outlets have that combination of attributes. And they position APM Reports for meaningful success in the next five years—and beyond.

**Chris Worthington**  
Editor in Chief, APM Reports

**Our investigative journalism produces high-impact stories that are essential to a healthy democracy.**

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We are defined by...

**AUDIO EXCELLENCE**

We've been producing journalism using voices and sounds for more than 50 years.

**JOURNALISM THAT CAN MAKE CHANGE**

We pursue investigations that hold power to account and serve the public's best interest.

**INDEPENDENT PUBLIC MEDIA**

The American public is our parent company.

**DISTINGUISHED PARTNERS**

We collaborate nationwide to help strengthen local journalism and amplify the reporting.



Photo: Derek Montgomery for APM Reports

**APM Reports exposed a flawed system that kept critical information about abuse inquiries and the conditions at Mesabi out of the hands that needed it most.**

## Stopping Abuse

### Investigating a Juvenile Corrections Facility

#### THE ISSUE

Mesabi Academy, a juvenile corrections facility in northern Minnesota, could be a harsh and violent place. Workers said they sometimes feared for their safety and frequently broke up fights among residents. APM Reports discovered that it had generated far more complaints about conditions and treatment than any of the other juvenile facilities overseen by the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

Our four-part series with exclusive data analysis exposed the flawed, confused system that prevented judges, social services officials and guardians from discovering abusive conditions at Mesabi.

#### OUR REPORTING

*In interviews with scores of current and former employees, county and state officials, and parents and guardians—and through an examination of seldom-viewed state and county records—APM Reports discovered troubling incidents, practices and treatments.*

*One boy who wanted to be discharged from the facility tried to commit suicide. A staffer, frustrated that a disabled boy soiled himself and wasn't willing to take a shower, allegedly dumped cold water over him while other boys laughed.*

#### THE IMPACT

Two months after the first APM Reports story aired, the parent company of Mesabi Academy closed the facility. That action came soon after decisions by Hennepin and Ramsey counties to remove boys they had placed there and by the Minnesota Department of Corrections to freeze admissions. Lawsuits were filed by former residents, alleging physical and mental abuse.

The APM Reports story also led to a change in state law that today requires the Minnesota Department of Human Services to investigate any maltreatment allegations and to make those investigations publicly available.



Photo: Courtney Perry for MPR News

**Most states neglect ordering police to learn de-escalation tactics to avoid shootings.**

## Critical Training

### Nationwide Dearth of Police De-escalation Training

#### THE ISSUE

De-escalation training teaches officers to slow down, create space, and use communication techniques to defuse potentially dangerous situations. It gives officers strategies to more calmly deal with people who are experiencing mental and emotional crises.

In cities such as Dallas and Las Vegas, which instituted the training, use of force and excessive force complaints have dropped. But APM Reports found that most states did not require de-escalation training for all officers.

#### OUR REPORTING

*With increased media attention on police shootings, and the expensive litigation that can follow for departments, more states are requiring that officers receive training on how to resolve confrontations peacefully. Yet an APM Reports investigation published in May 2017 found that only 16 states at the time mandated de-escalation training.*

#### THE IMPACT

A follow-up to the investigation found that six months later, five additional states moved to mandate de-escalation training for officers. Yet by June 2021, only eight more states had required the training, bringing the total to 29.



Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Alan Bean

**The reporting in the second season of In the Dark helped free a man from death row.**

## In the Dark, Season Two

### Exposing Misconduct; Saving a Life

#### THE ISSUE

Curtis Flowers, a Black man from Winona, Mississippi, was tried six times for the same crime: the murder of four furniture store employees. Eventually he was sentenced to die. Flowers spent more than 20 years fighting for his life while a white prosecutor spent that same time trying just as hard to execute him.

#### OUR REPORTING

*During the second season of In the Dark, journalists spent nearly three years digging into the Flowers case. They found a town divided by race and a murder conviction supported by questionable evidence. APM Reports journalists identified significant holes and misconduct in the investigation and prosecution, including a history of racial bias in jury selection by the district attorney. The information uncovered by APM Reports was cited in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn his conviction.*

#### THE IMPACT

The reporting in the second season of In the Dark freed a man from death row. In June 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned his most recent conviction. The Mississippi attorney general's office submitted a motion to dismiss the case, and Flowers was set free. In 2021, the state of Mississippi agreed to pay Curtis Flowers \$500,000 for his decades behind bars.

The APM Reports team received a George Polk Award and a Peabody nomination for season two of In the Dark.



Photo: Nikki Tundel for APM Reports

**Minneapolis puts itself at risk of bestowing badges and guns on officers who are psychologically ill-suited to their jobs at a time when trust in police is already at historic lows.**

## Minimizing Mental Fitness

### Reduced Psych Testing for Minneapolis Cops

#### THE ISSUE

Like most police departments in the United States, Minneapolis requires job applicants to go through a psychological screening before they're hired. But the screening protocol the city has put officers through during the past five years is less extensive than the battery of tests used in comparable cities. It's also less rigorous than national best practices and the screenings Minneapolis administered over the previous decade and more.

#### OUR REPORTING

*Starting in 2012, the city eliminated four of the five psychological tests used to screen applicants for its police academy. For two decades, Minneapolis has taken an inconsistent approach to the psychological screening process, frequently changing evaluators and leaving it up to them to decide which tests to administer. It's even unclear who is ultimately accountable for the decisions.*

*As a result of the dysfunction, Minneapolis put itself at risk of bestowing badges and guns on officers who were psychologically ill-suited to their jobs at a time when trust in police was already at historic lows.*

#### THE IMPACT

The Minneapolis City Council approved the selection of a new psychologist to screen potential police recruits after APM Reports published its story in December 2017.



Photo: Dustin Chambers for APM Reports

**In a single day, 8 percent of Georgia's registered voters were cut from the voter rolls.**

## Restricting the Vote

### They Didn't Vote ... Now They Can't: Purging Georgia Voters

#### THE ISSUE

Even by Georgia standards, the voter purge of late July 2017 was remarkable. In a single day, more than half a million people—8 percent of Georgia's registered voters—were cut from the voter rolls, and an estimated 107,000 of those people were removed not because they moved, died or went to prison, but rather because they had decided not to vote in prior elections.

Analysis by APM Reports in October 2018 and in follow-up reporting revealed significant errors in lists of people who were set to be removed.

#### OUR REPORTING

*Georgia election officials were poised to wrongly remove hundreds of people from the state's voter rolls—until journalists with APM Reports unearthed errors in the removal list from the Georgia secretary of state's office. An APM Reports review found 294 records on the list that matched voters who shouldn't be purged because they'd voted recently enough to be ineligible for removal under the state's election law.*

#### THE IMPACT

After an APM Reports investigation of the removal of thousands of voters, Governor Brian Kemp signed a reform bill that gives people who haven't voted in several elections more time before their registrations are canceled. The League of Women Voters called on Georgia's top election official to halt a controversial voter list purge, citing the APM Reports investigation and subsequent reporting.





Photo: Stearns County Sheriff's Office

**The Wetterling case wasn't the perfect crime. It was a botched investigation.**

## In the Dark, Season One

### Exposing a Botched Criminal Investigation

#### THE ISSUE

The investigation into the abduction of 11-year-old Jacob Wetterling yielded no answers for 27 years. APM Reports' In the Dark podcast investigated how law enforcement mishandled one of the most notorious child abductions in the country.

The failure to solve the case changed the lives of millions of Americans and fueled national anxiety about stranger danger and led to the nation's sex-offender registries.

#### OUR REPORTING

*For nearly 90 minutes, Sheriff Donald Gudmundson explained in painful detail why law enforcement had failed to catch Jacob's killer. His assessment was scathing and candid. "I will accept the responsibility speaking for all of law enforcement in this case," Gudmundson said. "All of us failed." The Wetterling case wasn't the perfect crime. It was a botched investigation. An APM Reports investigation found that officers with the Stearns County Sheriff's Office failed to conduct some of the most basic police work in the critical first few hours after Jacob disappeared.*

#### THE IMPACT

In the Dark exposed a botched investigation that led to years of pain and worry for the Wetterling family, surrounding communities and millions of families across the country. Without our reporting, the truth would never have been told.

Our In the Dark podcasts have generated 83 million episode downloads. Season one earned a George Polk Award, a duPont-Columbia Award, a Peabody Award, National Murrow Award and a Society for Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award.



Photo: Hasain Rasheed for APM Reports

**For decades, schools have taught children the strategies that cognitive scientists have repeatedly debunked.**

## Hard to Read

### How American Schools Are Failing Kids

#### THE ISSUE

Four audio documentaries produced by APM Reports explored reading instruction in the U.S. Our reporters looked at false assumptions about what it takes to be a skilled reader and how those assumptions created deep inequalities among U.S. children. They also looked at methods used with struggling readers, and while scientific research shows how children learn to read and how they should be taught, many educators don't know the science and, in some cases, actively resist it. As a result, millions of kids are being set up to fail.

#### OUR REPORTING

*There are proven ways to help people with dyslexia learn to read, and a federal law that's supposed to ensure schools provide kids with help. But across the country, public schools are denying children proper treatment and often failing to identify their dyslexia in the first place.*

*For decades, schools have taught children the strategies of struggling readers, using a theory about reading that cognitive scientists have repeatedly debunked. And many teachers and parents don't know there's anything wrong with it.*

#### THE IMPACT

Our reporting has instigated change in reading instruction across the U.S. By bringing attention to the science of reading, we prompted a level of engagement and debate about reading instruction not seen since the Reading Wars of the 1980s and '90s. Our work has been cited in numerous policy documents, professional development materials, college coursework and dozens of books, films and articles (including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and Forbes). In Dec 2019, our reporting was named among the 10 pieces of education journalism that "defined the past decade" by The Grade.



Photo: Danny Moloshok for the Associated Press

**When Tasers fail to subdue someone, the results can be life-threatening... the suspect becoming more violent after receiving the electrical shock.**

## When Tasers Fail

### Looking at the Unreliability and Dangerous Consequences of Taser Use

#### THE ISSUE

Tasers have become an essential tool for police, but how effective are they? A yearlong investigation by APM Reports found that officers in some big cities rated Tasers as unreliable up to 40 percent of the time, and in three large departments, newer models were less effective than older ones.

In 258 cases over three years, a Taser failed to subdue someone who was then shot and killed by police.

#### OUR REPORTING

*Axon, the company that makes Tasers, has claimed that Tasers are between 80 and 97 percent effective at subduing a suspect in the field. But a year-long investigation by APM Reports shows that police rate Tasers as considerably less effective.*

*When Tasers fail to subdue someone, the results can be life-threatening—for police, and especially for the public. APM Reports found more than 250 fatal police shootings nationwide between 2015 and 2017 that occurred after a Taser failed to incapacitate a suspect. In 106 of them, the suspect became more violent after receiving the electrical shock.*

#### THE IMPACT

After the APM Reports investigation aired, the Vermont Mental Health Crisis Response Commission examined the shooting of a man featured in “When Tasers Fail.” The commission’s 63-page report makes frequent reference to the APM Reports investigation.



Photo: Provided by Lakeside Academy

**A company founded on noble ideals has pursued profit and expansion by housing traumatized kids while trying to keep expenses low.**

## Youth Were Abused Here

### Investigating a For-Profit Youth Treatment Company

#### THE ISSUE

A year-long investigation led by APM Reports found that the company took in some of the most difficult-to-treat children while keeping costs low in pursuit of profit and expansion. The result was dozens of cases of physical violence, sexual assault and improper restraints.

Despite repeated scandals, many states and counties continue to send kids to Sequel for one central reason: They have little choice.

#### OUR REPORTING

*A company founded on noble ideals has pursued profit and expansion by housing traumatized kids while trying to keep expenses low. The company's model was, as one former employee put it, "a recipe for destruction": inexperienced, low-paid staff charged with caring for some of the most vulnerable and difficult-to-treat children in the country. And it resulted in dozens of cases of abuse and neglect, including physical violence, sexual assault, filthy conditions, and improper restraints that led to numerous injuries and one death.*

#### THE IMPACT

For much of Sequel's 21 years, the company eluded public accountability. As a result of the APM Reports investigation, six of the 14 states where Sequel operates—California, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon and Washington—announced they would no longer send children to Sequel facilities.



Photo: Michelle Kanaar for APM Reports

**Phoenix, which pipes in much of its water from 200 miles away, paid about two-thirds less for their water than some communities near the Great Lakes.**

## So Close, Yet So Costly

### Investigating Disparities in Water Near the Great Lakes

#### THE ISSUE

A nine-month investigation by APM Reports examined the cost of water in the six largest cities that sit directly on the Great Lakes—Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Buffalo and Duluth—over the past 10 years and found that rates have risen alarmingly fast. In Chicago, the cost of water for the average family of four nearly tripled between 2007 and 2018. Cleveland's rates more than doubled to \$1,317 per year for an average family of four, whereas that same family in Phoenix, which pipes in much of its water from 200 miles away, paid about two-thirds less.

#### OUR REPORTING

*The rising cost of water has hit poor families the hardest; the government-run water utilities in these six cities have issued at least 367,740 shutoff notices in the past decade.*

*And an analysis of shutoff data revealed disproportionately high concentrations of water shutoffs in poorer areas and in majority Black and Latino neighborhoods in every city.*

#### THE IMPACT

After the APM Reports investigation aired, Chicago's mayor, Lori Lightfoot, pledged that the city will no longer shut off residents' water as punishment for not paying their bills. The Chicago Water Department sent more than 150,000 shutoff notices in the past decade, according to city records.

# Distinguished Partnerships



Courtesy of Dan Carino for LAist

## OUR PARTNERS, PAST AND PRESENT



## Distinguished Partnerships

### We Support Local Newsrooms Across the Nation

APM Reports collaborates with local public radio newsrooms and other news organizations around the country to pursue investigations exposing neglect, injustice, abuse and improper behavior among powerful people and organizations. Thanks to generous investment from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, APM Reports is able to share resources, knowledge and information to fill a vital gap in regions and lifts the quality of our partners' journalism.

We work with our partners to identify issues they believe are important to their local audiences. APM Reports assigns reporters, editors and data journalists and provides training, legal support and expertise in narrative-driven, investigative reporting. Many of the projects to date have resulted in important changes.

**“APM Reports helped us break investigations we could not have done without them. The work that emerged from WABE collaborating with APM Reports literally changed the law in Atlanta. Our series on the equity theft of low-income homeowners was cited by city lawmakers as the reason they introduced the legislation that ultimately was approved and signed into law.”**

–Alex Helmick,  
Managing Editor, WABE



Photo: Courtesy of Emily Baxter

**Myon Burrell's prosecution and harsh punishment raised questions about the integrity of the criminal justice system that put him away.**

## In Partnership: Associated Press

### New Reporting Propels a Black Man's Case to Commutation

#### THE ISSUE

The Associated Press and APM Reports uncovered new evidence and serious flaws in the police investigation of Myon Burrell, ultimately leading to the creation of an independent national legal panel to review the case.

The panel published its findings, saying there was a "failure to investigate that illustrates tunnel vision" and that evidence that could have helped exonerate Burrell was either ignored or minimized.

#### OUR REPORTING

*A Black man who, as a teenager, was sent to prison for life took his first steps of freedom to the sound of ringing bells and cheering family members and supporters, hours after a pardons board commuted his sentence in a high-profile murder case.*

*Myon Burrell's prosecution and harsh punishment raised questions about the integrity of the criminal justice system that put him away nearly two decades earlier for the shooting death of 11-year-old Tyeshia Edwards, who was struck by a stray bullet.*

#### THE IMPACT

The panel said it saw no purpose served by keeping Burrell locked up, pointing to his age at the time of the crime and his good behavior behind bars. He was released on December 14, 2020. It was the first time in at least 22 years that Minnesota commuted a sentence in a murder case, according to the Department of Corrections.



Photo: Bitá Honarvar for WABE

**Black wealth is being siphoned off to increase real estate profits, making the road to gentrification even more destructive.**

## In Partnership: WABE

### Investigating Predatory Practices Affecting Black Homeowners

#### THE ISSUE

A partnership between WABE and APM Reports led to a four-part series that demonstrated how homeownership, often considered a central part of the American dream, is turning residents in Atlanta's gentrifying Black neighborhoods into targets. As property values rise in Atlanta along the curve of the BeltLine in South and West Atlanta, so, too, does the exploitation of Black homeowners.

#### OUR REPORTING

*In four Atlanta neighborhoods, more than 1 in 4 homes sold by the owner sold for a price that wasn't even half the estimate. These neighborhoods were also among those with the highest rates of homes with occupant sales prices that were well below their value when compared with the Fulton County Tax Assessor's estimate of fair market value.*

*Interviews with homeowners uncovered several factors that led them to sell for those prices, from calls, texts and fliers from investors asking to buy their properties to the stress that came with increased code-enforcement complaints.*

#### THE IMPACT

The WABE and APM Reports analysis of four years of Fulton County real estate records shed light on how many homeowners in fast-appreciating, longtime Black neighborhoods could be missing out on rising values, because they're selling their homes for artificially low amounts. The partnership between WABE and APM Reports forced officials to protect vulnerable homeowners from predatory practices.





Photo: Francisco Kjolseth for the Salt Lake Tribune

**Youth are being harmed in places meant to help them. Utah state regulations needed to catch up to protect vulnerable youth.**

## In Partnership: KUER and the Salt Lake Tribune

### How State Regulators Failed Young People

#### THE ISSUE

Utah has become a national center for youth treatment, with some 100 residential facilities and outdoor programs treating teens with histories of mental health problems, drug abuse or juvenile delinquency. But APM Reports, in partnership with KUER and the Salt Lake Tribune, discovered lax oversight of the industry by the state government. State records show that facilities caught mistreating children often receive little more than a mild scolding.

#### OUR REPORTING

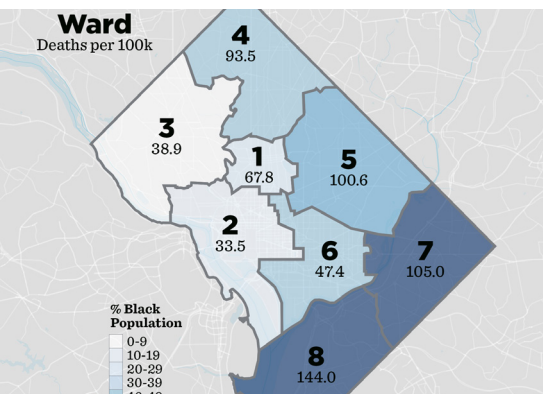
*It started as a routine police call. In June 2018, a 17-year-old girl living at a treatment center for troubled teens had hit a staff member in the face during a therapy session involving horses. But when deputies arrived at the small ranch in southwest Utah, staff said the suspect was waiting “in the trough.”*

*Deputies soon found a girl sitting in a tub of dirty water. When the girl stood, her hands were zip-tied behind her back. The girl told deputies she had tried to run away from Havenwood Academy, a 16-bed treatment center. Staff placed her in zip ties and made her sit in the horse trough until deputies arrived.*

#### THE IMPACT

Reporting by APM Reports, KUER, and the Salt Lake Tribune led to investigations by law enforcement, child welfare workers and Utah’s Office of Licensing, which oversees youth treatment centers. Following reports of abuse in the industry, state lawmakers recently passed legislation to toughen Utah’s regulation of youth treatment facilities. Treatment centers now must document any instance in which employees use physical restraints or place a child in seclusion. Regulations also prohibit programs from sedating residents, using mechanical restraints and inducing pain to gain compliance.

# Grounded in Data



## Grounded in Data

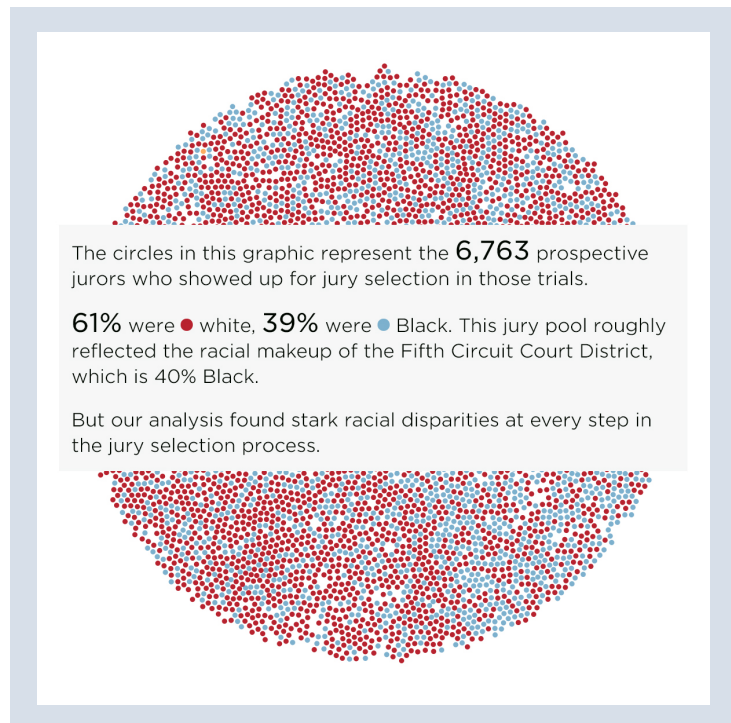
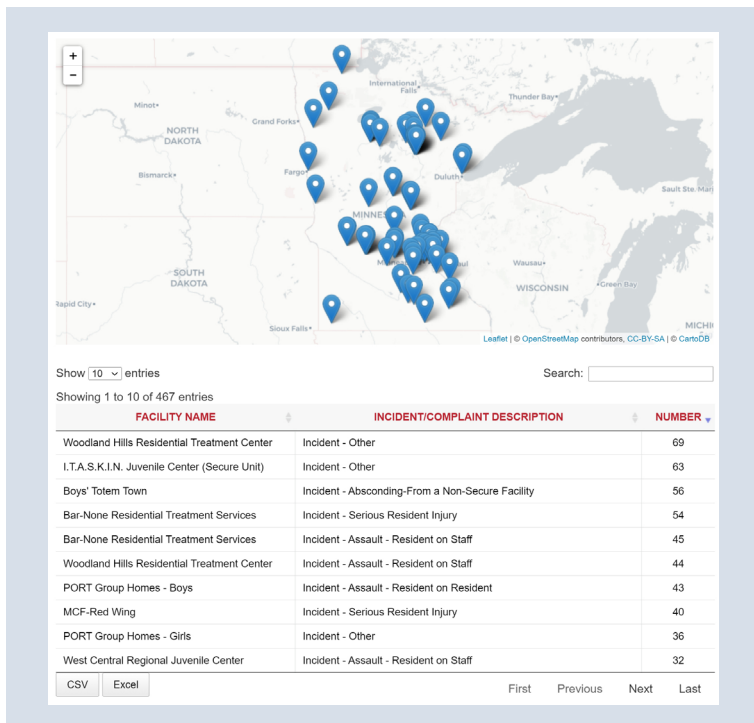
Data is a central focus and driver in many of our investigations.

**Our data journalists pursue and decipher critical information. While government agencies sometimes don't want us to have the information, we persist, using the law to make the information public.**

The data journalists working at APM Reports pursue data, clean it, analyze it and present their findings to colleagues, and ultimately audiences. Though their daily work immerses them in arcane programs—Django, SQL, Python and R—they collaborate with reporters to summarize key points for audiences and with web producers to create compelling graphics that bring our data to life.

Their work often grounds the key findings of our investigations or provides critical context and analysis for our reporting.

The information APM Reports journalists pursue often has never been made public, typically because government agencies don't want the public to see it. And though open records statutes often work in our favor, our data reporters must wrangle with, or cajole, uncooperative bureaucrats to obtain the information we need. The following pages highlighting some of their work.



## Mesabi Academy

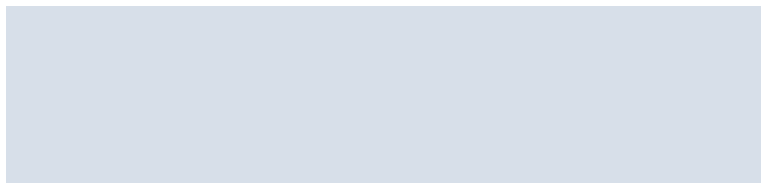
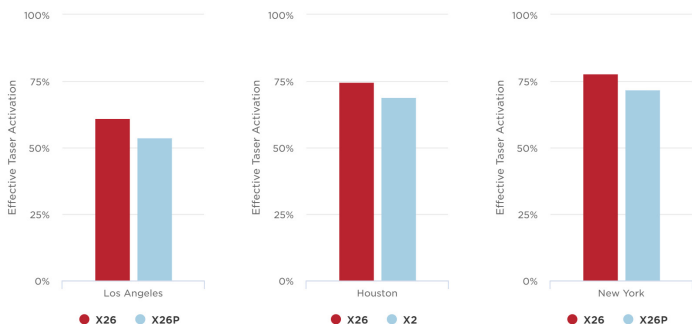
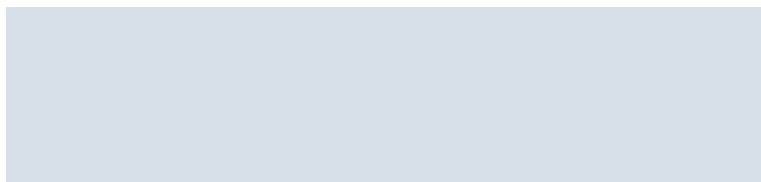
### DATA LEADS TO CLOSING OF TROUBLED FACILITY

APM Reports data journalists discovered that residential facilities—such as Mesabi Academy, a private juvenile detention facility in northern Minnesota—could be licensed through two agencies: the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) or Department of Human Services (DHS). While the DHS releases all incidents and complaints reported to them, the DOC had published nothing. Reporters filed record requests that revealed more than 2,000 reports from 60 facilities to the DOC, none of which had been made public. The database our journalists created found that Mesabi Academy was the subject of more complaints than any other residential youth facility in the state. Shortly after APM Reports published its findings, the facility was shut down. Data was at the center of this impact.

## In the Dark

### JURY SELECTION ANALYSIS IN MISSISSIPPI HELPS FREE A MAN FROM PRISON

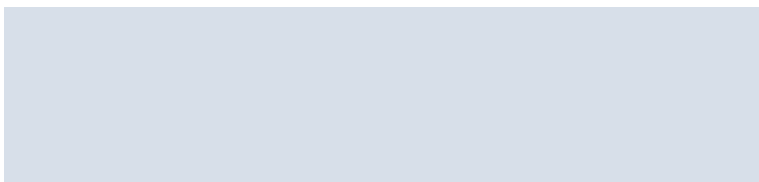
APM journalists working on season two of In the Dark dug into data to understand potential racial bias in jury selection in the case of a man tried six times for the same crime. Reporters manually scanned more than 115,000 pages of court records, reading through the files for records relating to jury selection. They eventually built one of the largest databases on jury selection in U.S. history and used advanced statistical techniques to find that Black jurors were much more likely to be struck compared to white jurors who responded to questions in the same way. APM Reports' work on jury selection was cited in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2019, the Court overturned the man's conviction due to racial bias in jury selection.



## When Tasers Fail

### ANALYSIS LINKS TASER INEFFECTIVENESS TO DEADLY POLICE INTERACTIONS

APM reporters gathered use-of-force data through public records requests from law enforcement agencies across the country. The data had to be cleaned and checked to make sure there weren't problems that could cause misleading results from the analysis. Using logistic regression with data from three cities, APM Reports identified a correlation between newer, lower-powered Taser devices and uses of the devices where officers said they were ineffective. Reporters built a public database of fatal police shootings that involved a Taser between 2015 and 2017. This data highlighted the ways in which police using Tasers often escalated police interactions and resulted in fatal incidents. The data also highlighted the many shootings during which the shooting victim was experiencing a mental health crisis.

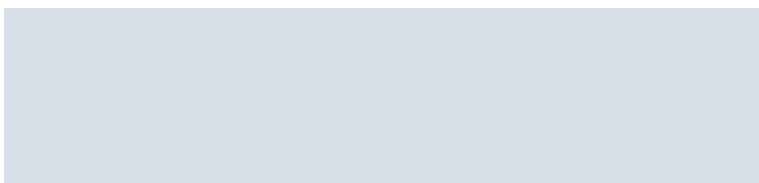


### A surge in registrations

This graph shows the days which Georgia saw the most people register to vote prior to the 2018 election. There were spikes on the registration deadline and on Election Day. The days in red were after the deadline. Anyone who registered on those days couldn't vote in 2018.



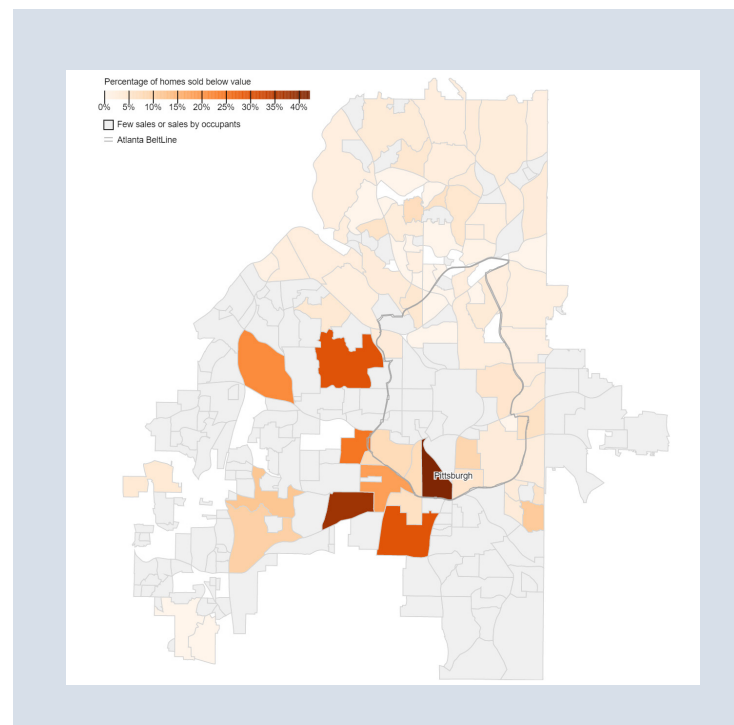
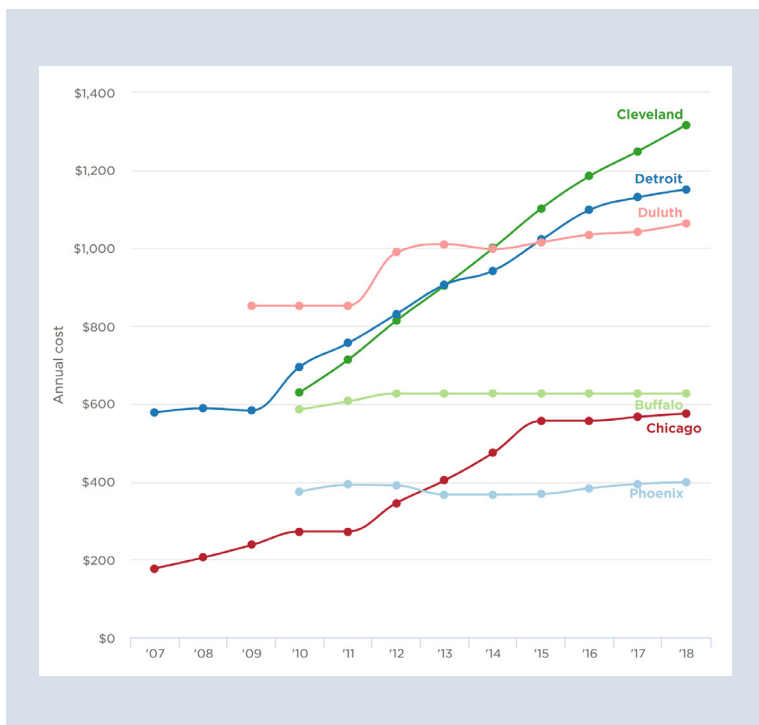
SOURCE: Voter registrations file, Georgia Secretary of State



## Restricting the Vote

### DATA SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON REGISTRATION ISSUES

APM Reports used Georgia's voter file and other election data to understand how policies such as voter registration deadlines and list maintenance make it harder for people to vote. Georgia has one of the earliest registration deadlines. APM Reports found that 87,000 Georgians registered before the 2018 general election but too late to vote. States with early deadlines like Georgia's account for a substantial number of Electoral College votes and tend to have lower voter turnout than states that give voters more time to register. APM Reports was also able to use voter registration data to identify voters whom the state was about to incorrectly purge in 2019.



## Great Lakes Water Costs

### INVESTIGATING WATER SHUTOFFS AROUND THE GREAT LAKES

The cost of water in cities along the Great Lakes has been rising significantly in the last decade. APM Reports requested data on water and sewer rates, billing data and water shutoff notices going back 10 or more years. We spent months fighting for the data and challenging the exorbitant fees some cities wanted to charge for access to the information. Reporters found that the rising cost of water hit poor families and families in communities of color the hardest. As the cost of water rose, water utilities issued more than 365,000 shutoff notices in the past decade, disproportionately concentrated in majority Black and Latino neighborhoods.

After our story, water shutoffs in Chicago became a major issue in the 2019 mayoral race.

## Exploitation in Atlanta

### DATA REVEALS PREDATORY PRACTICES AFFECTING BLACK HOMEOWNERS

APM Reports—in partnership with WABE—gathered property sales and assessment data from 2015 to 2018 in Atlanta from the county assessor, market value estimates from a real estate data company, and demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau to identify residential property sales where the sale price was less than half of the estimated market value of the home. The reporters found that in some Black neighborhoods, nearly one in four properties with sales by the owner had been sold for a sale price that was far below the estimated value. In neighborhoods on the northern side of the city, which tend to be majority white, such undervalued sales were rare. As a result of the reporting, an Atlanta City Council member introduced legislation that penalizes predatory buyers who repeatedly harass homeowners to sell their homes.

# In Closing



## In Closing Facts aren't free.

This type of journalism requires a significant commitment of time and money. This work requires a dedicated staff free from the demands of the daily news cycle. Our investigative reporters need ample time to dig for evidence, sort through complex documents, seek out sources, build trust in the community and acquire and interpret critical data in order to get to the truth.

For example, making *In the Dark* costs more than \$100,000 per episode. From living away from home to report for almost a year, to the time spent writing, producing and editing, the podcast demands significant time, labor and resources to reveal the facts of untold stories.

Join us in exposing the truth.

**“Using the power of investigative journalism, APM Reports has made a podcast about non-sensational aspects of criminal justice—the power of prosecutors, the accountability of police—as popular and beloved as many true-crime podcasts. In doing so, they’ve reminded producers and listeners alike that stories don’t have to be lurid to be compelling—and that even in this era of unreal reality, there are questions that can be answered and important truths that can be exposed.”**

–Sarah Larson,

“Why ‘In the Dark’ May Be the Best Podcast of the Year,” *The New Yorker*, June 1, 2018.