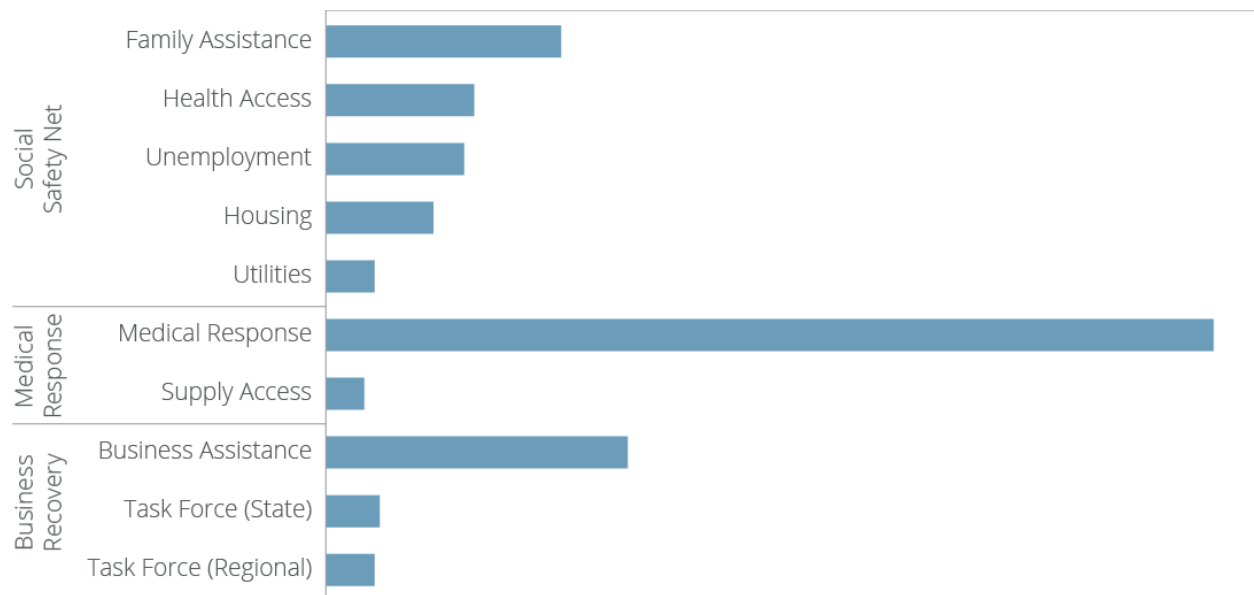


State Governors' Executive Actions

Total Number of Executive Actions by States by Category (n=785)



Medical responses have been by far largest category of executive actions, making up roughly 44 percent of total actions, regardless of gubernatorial political affiliation. Business assistance, the second highest executive action category, constitutes roughly 15 percent of all executive actions.

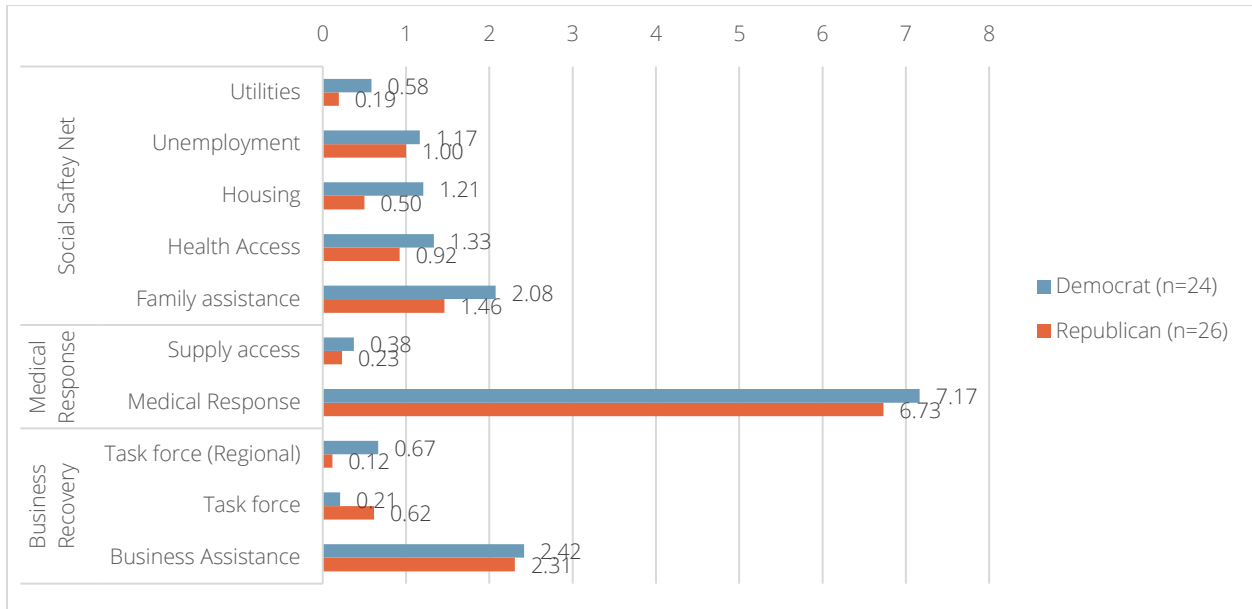
Health access constitutes 7.4 percent of total executive actions. Access to medical supplies is a topic of state action, but has not been significantly covered by executive action.

There have been 265 executive actions (33 percent of the total) aimed at the social safety net. In addition to health access, these include family assistance (11.7 percent), unemployment (7.3 percent) and utilities (2.4 percent).

Forty executive actions (5 percent) are classified as pertaining to economic recovery task forces, with 21 regional task force actions and 19 individual state task force actions.

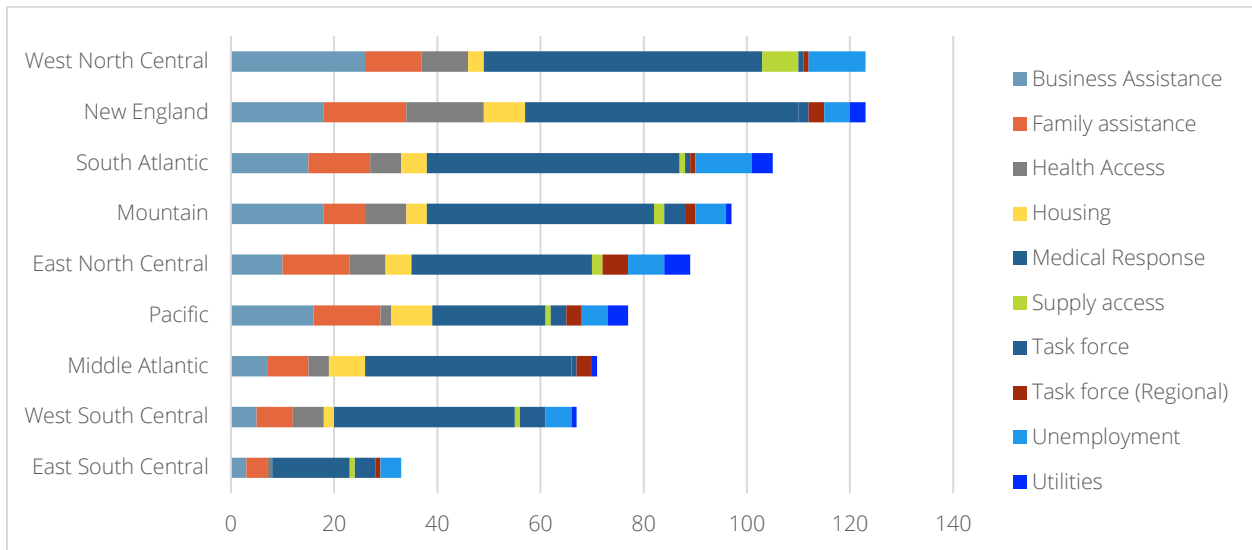
States with Democratic governors were more likely to take executive action in most categories. Republican-led states were more likely to have state-level economic recovery task forces, while Democrat-led states were more likely to join a regional task force.

Executives Action Types per State, by Governor Partisanship



State governors' responses vary regionally.¹ While the West North Central region has implemented the most executive actions in total (123), the Middle Atlantic states have implemented the most actions per state (23.6), and East South Central states have implemented the fewest per state (8.25).

Total Executive Actions by Region



The first executive action was issued on March 6, 2020. By March 15, seven executive actions were issued and by March 16, when the national "15 Days to Slow the Spread" guidelines went into effect, 29 actions had been issued. Two weeks later, a total of 494 executive actions had been issued.

¹ Census regions: New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT); Middle Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA); East North Central (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI); West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD); South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV); East South Central (AL, KY, MI, TN); West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX); Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY); Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

State Governors' Actions by Election Cycle:²

Governors' responses have differed by election-cycle status. In states with an open seat, governors who are not up for re-election have implemented more executive actions, on average. However, at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, governors up for re-election, on average, implemented slightly more executive actions.

Average Executive Actions per State by Election Cycle:

- Up for re-election: average of 16 executive actions
- Not up for re-election: average of 15.3 executive actions
- Open seat: average of 21 executive actions

Effects on State Budgets:

As of May 6, 2020, 24 states have enacted budget legislation in response to COVID-19.³

State Budget Background:

In 2017 (most recent available data) states spent approximately:

- \$1 trillion on education
- \$1 trillion on public welfare and health care
- \$1.1 trillion on services ranging from public safety to retirement benefits for public employees

Some states are already facing shrinking tax revenues. Preliminary data from the Urban Institute shows a year-on-year (April 2019-2020) decline in state tax revenues as follows:

- Massachusetts -54.2 percent
- Missouri -53.4 percent
- Pennsylvania -50.8 percent
- Illinois -43.3 percent
- West Virginia -35.7 percent
- Ohio -31.7 percent
- North Carolina -12.5 percent

Currently, there is \$3.9 trillion of municipal debt outstanding.

- Two-thirds is held directly by individuals or through mutual funds.
- This debt is used to fund approximately two thirds of infrastructure projects in U.S.
- Defaults in the municipal debt market are **very** rare, but high profile defaults do still occur. Filings include:
 - **Detroit, MI:** July 18, 2013; debt of approximately \$19 billion
 - **Jefferson County, AL:** November 9, 2011; debt of \$4.2 billion
 - **Stockton, CA:** June 28, 2012; debt of \$700 million
 - **Puerto Rico:** August 3, 2015, debt of \$72 billion

² Not up for re-election includes the 39 states that are not holding gubernatorial elections in 2020. Open seat includes the 2 states (MT, UT) with 2020 gubernatorial elections whose current governors are not running again. Up for re-election includes the 9 states (DE, IN, MO, NH, NC, ND, VT, WA, WV) whose current governors are running for re-election in 2020.

³ Fiscal Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19). (2020). National Conference of State Legislatures. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-fiscal-responses-to-covid-19.aspx>

Balancing the Budget: Balanced Budget Requirements (BBRs) vary by state. Some states are allowed to propose a balanced budget, but are not forced to pass it. Some states are allowed to carry over deficits, whereas others are not.

State Budget Response to the Great Recession:

- During the Great Recession, budget cuts were predominately in education, health and social services
 - 34 states reduced spending on K-12 education
 - 43 states cut college and university expenditures
 - 31 states cut healthcare expenditures
 - 29 states reduced services to the elderly and disabled
 - 44 states reduced employee compensation
- Forty states enacted tax increases or fee hikes in fiscal years 2008-09 and 2010-11

State Decision-making Process - A North Carolina Example:

While each state has adopted different metrics and trends to track in response to the pandemic, such measures are vital to making determinations about lifting or increasing protective measures. In North Carolina, the metrics and trends used include:⁴

- COVID-like illness surveillance: monitoring the number of individuals presenting with COVID-like illnesses in hospital emergency rooms
- Laboratory-confirmed cases: tracking the number of cases confirmed by laboratory test results
- Positive tests: comparing the percentage positive test results with the total number of tests
- Hospitalizations: monitoring the number of people hospitalized with COVID-19
- Testing capacity: gauging the state's ability to test an average of 5,000 to 7,000 people daily
- Tracing capacity: monitoring North Carolina's capacity to conduct contact tracing
- Personal protective equipment: ensuring that North Carolina has enough personal protective equipment (PPE) to fill at least 30 days' worth of PPE requests

Methodology Notes:

We recorded governors' executive actions related to the economic impact of COVID-19. These actions fell into nine categories. Stay-at-home orders and other social distancing guidelines were not counted as part of these actions:

- **Business assistance:** typically loans or grants to businesses, which may include the relaxation of regulations to keep revenues up (e.g., allowing alcohol sales as part of restaurant takeout orders)
- **Family assistance:** assistance not related to unemployment benefits, such as expanding welfare payments, delaying tax deadlines or creating relief funds for individuals
- **Health access:** increased access to healthcare not specifically related to COVID-19, typically through relaxation of telemedicine regulations or prescription fill limits
- **Housing:** increased housing security by stopping evictions and/or foreclosures
- **Medical response:** increased access to healthcare related to COVID-19, such as mandating insurance coverage of testing or relaxing regulations to increase hospital bed availability
- **Supply access:** suspension of regulations to allow faster transportation of essential supplies
- **Task force:** creation of a task force with a focus on the economic impacts of COVID-19; also includes regional coalitions of states
- **Unemployment:** expansion of unemployment benefit availability
- **Utilities:** moratorium on utility disconnections due to nonpayment

⁴ NCDHHS (2020). *COVID-19 North Carolina Dashboard*. <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard#key-metrics>