



Behavioral Health Workforce Challenges

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New Behavioral Health Workforce Database Paints A Stark Picture

[Clese Erikson](#), [Ellen Schenk](#), [Sara Westergaard](#), [Edward S. Salsberg](#)

AUGUST 30, 2022

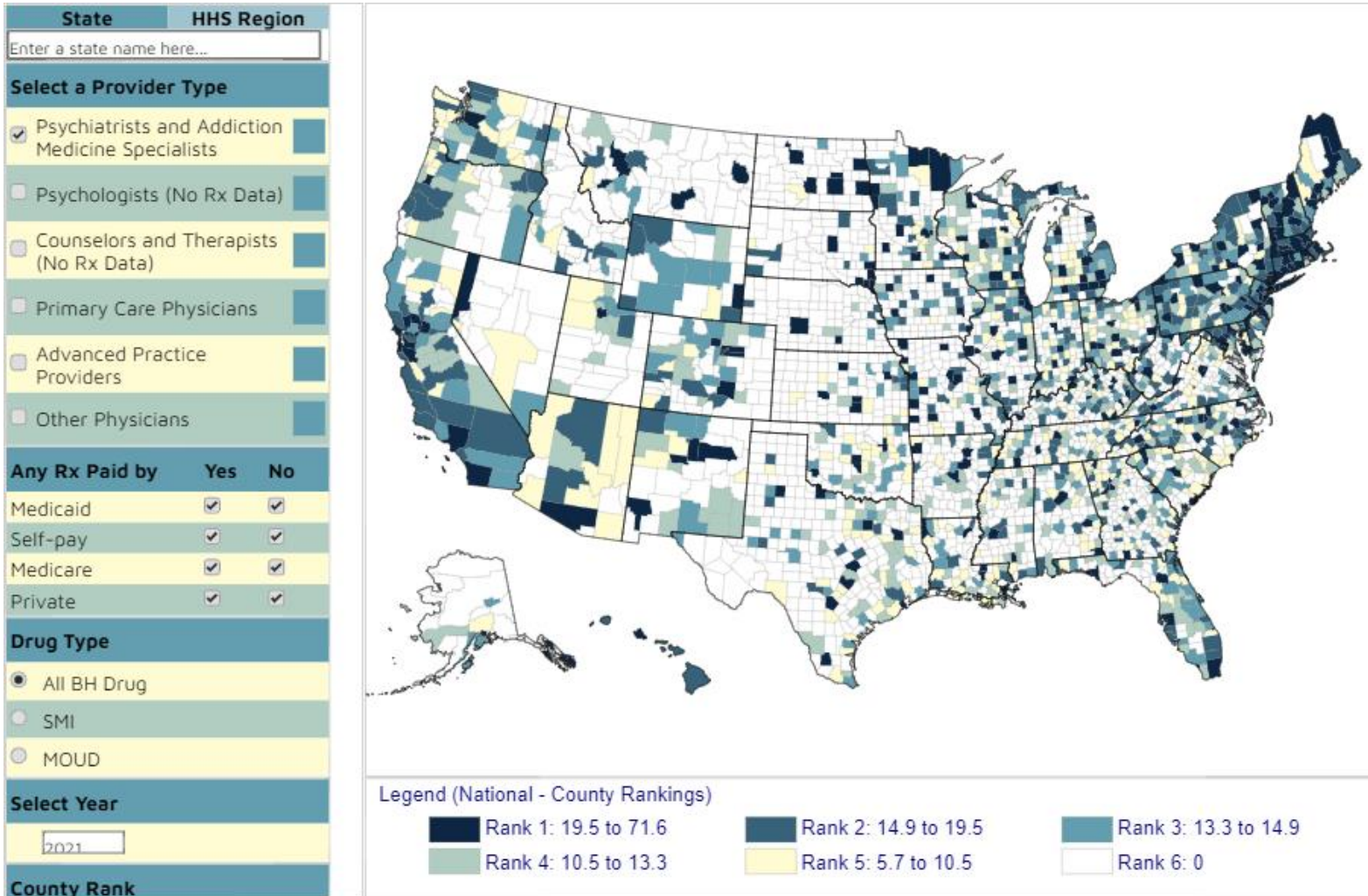
10.1377/forefront.20220829.640971



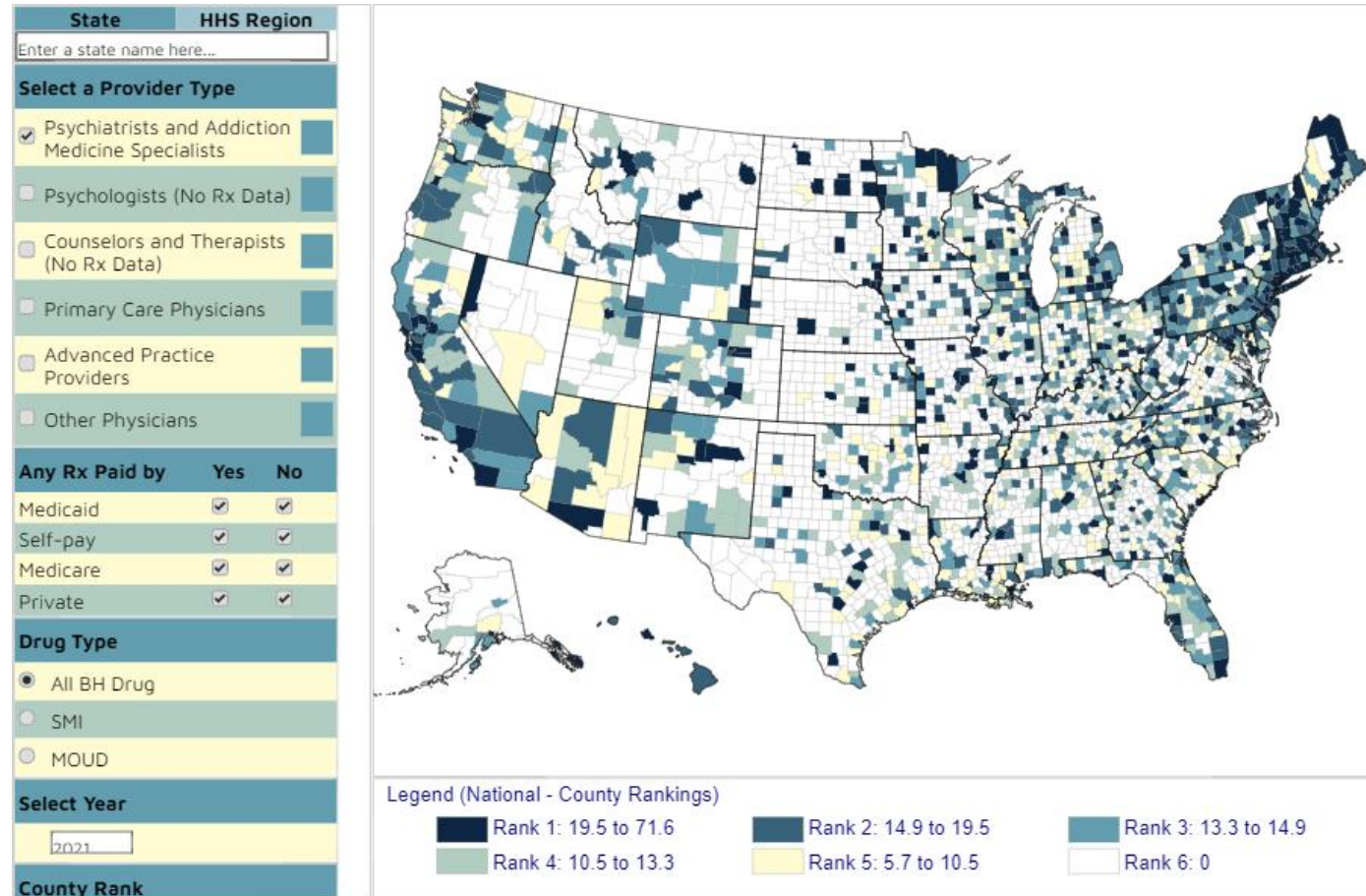
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/new-behavioral-health-workforce-database-paints-stark-picture>

<https://www.gwhwi.org/behavioralhealth.html>

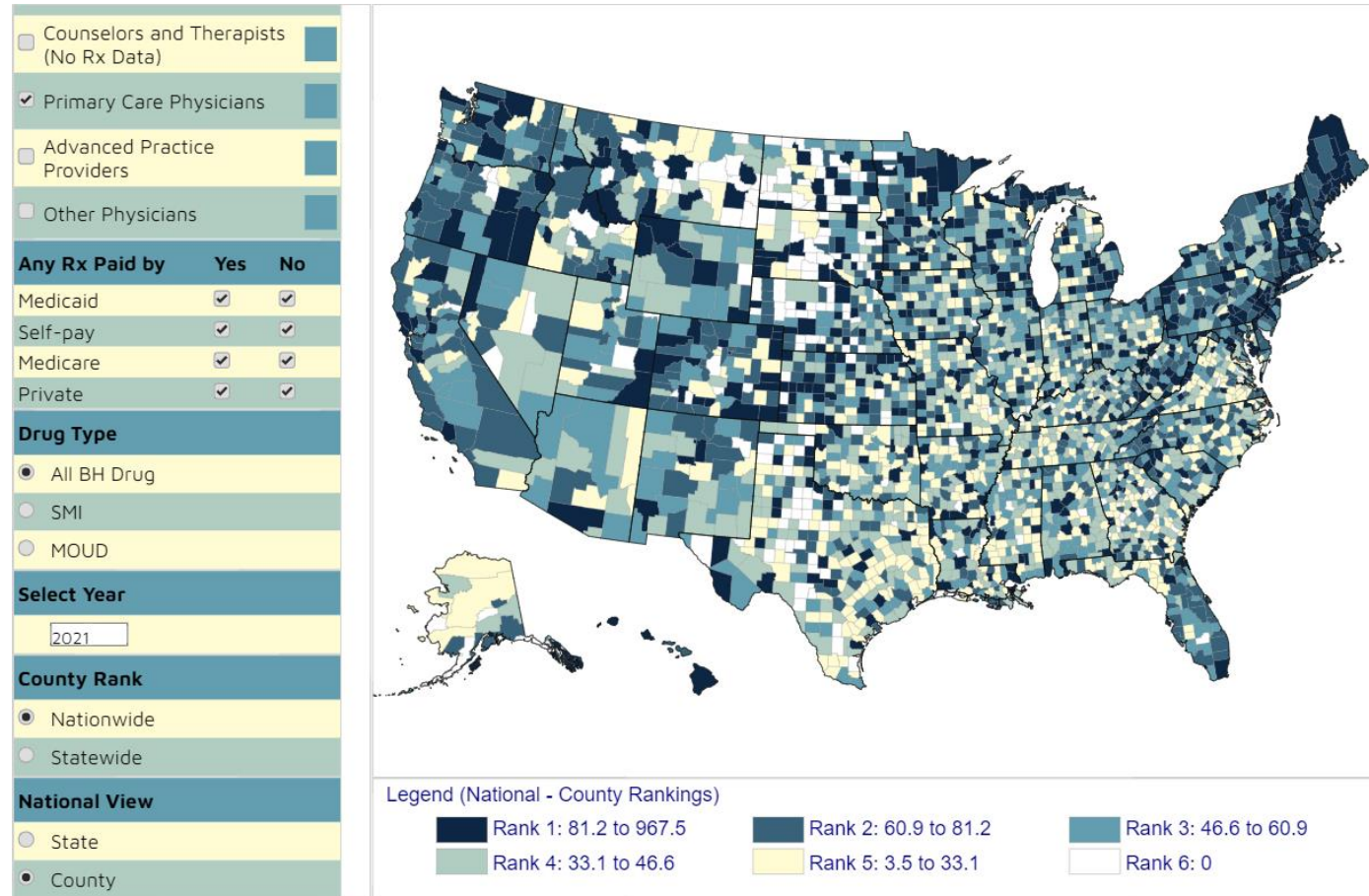
GW Behavioral Health Workforce Tracker



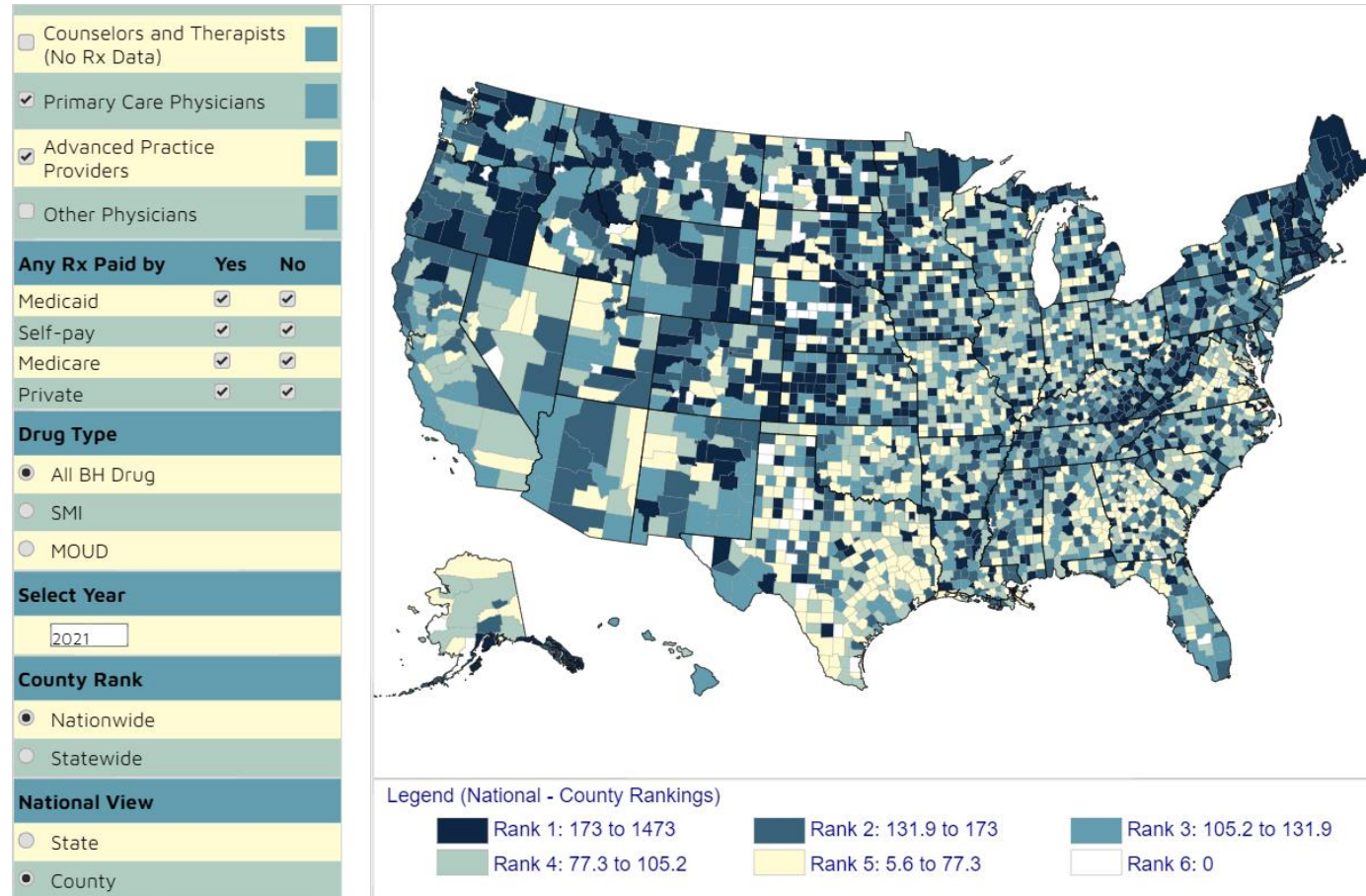
50% of counties do not have a psychiatric or addiction medicine specialist



Primary Care Physicians Help Fill Gaps in Access to Specialists

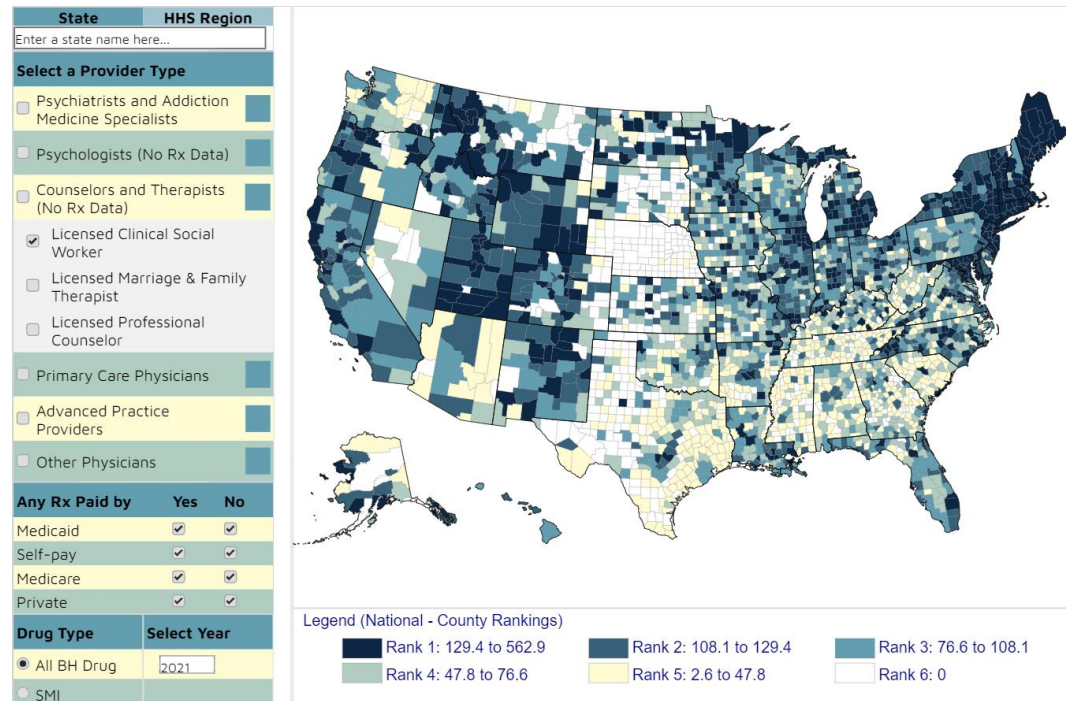


NPs/PAs fill even more gaps – particularly in underserved, rural communities

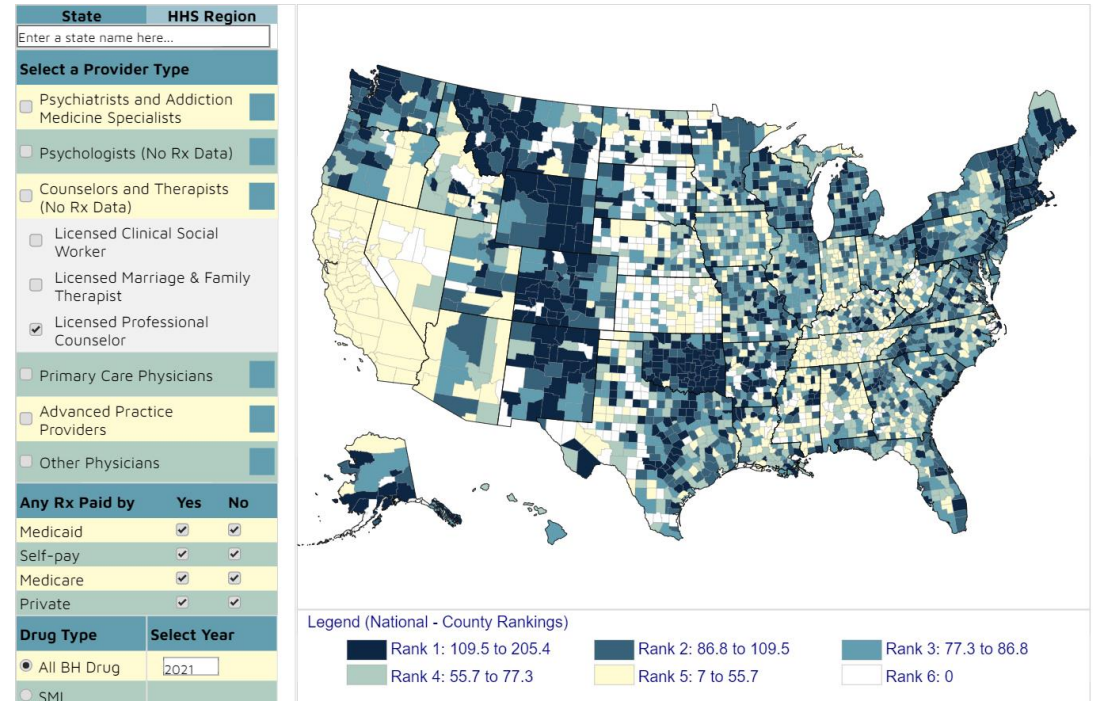


Variation across states in use of LCSWs and LPCs

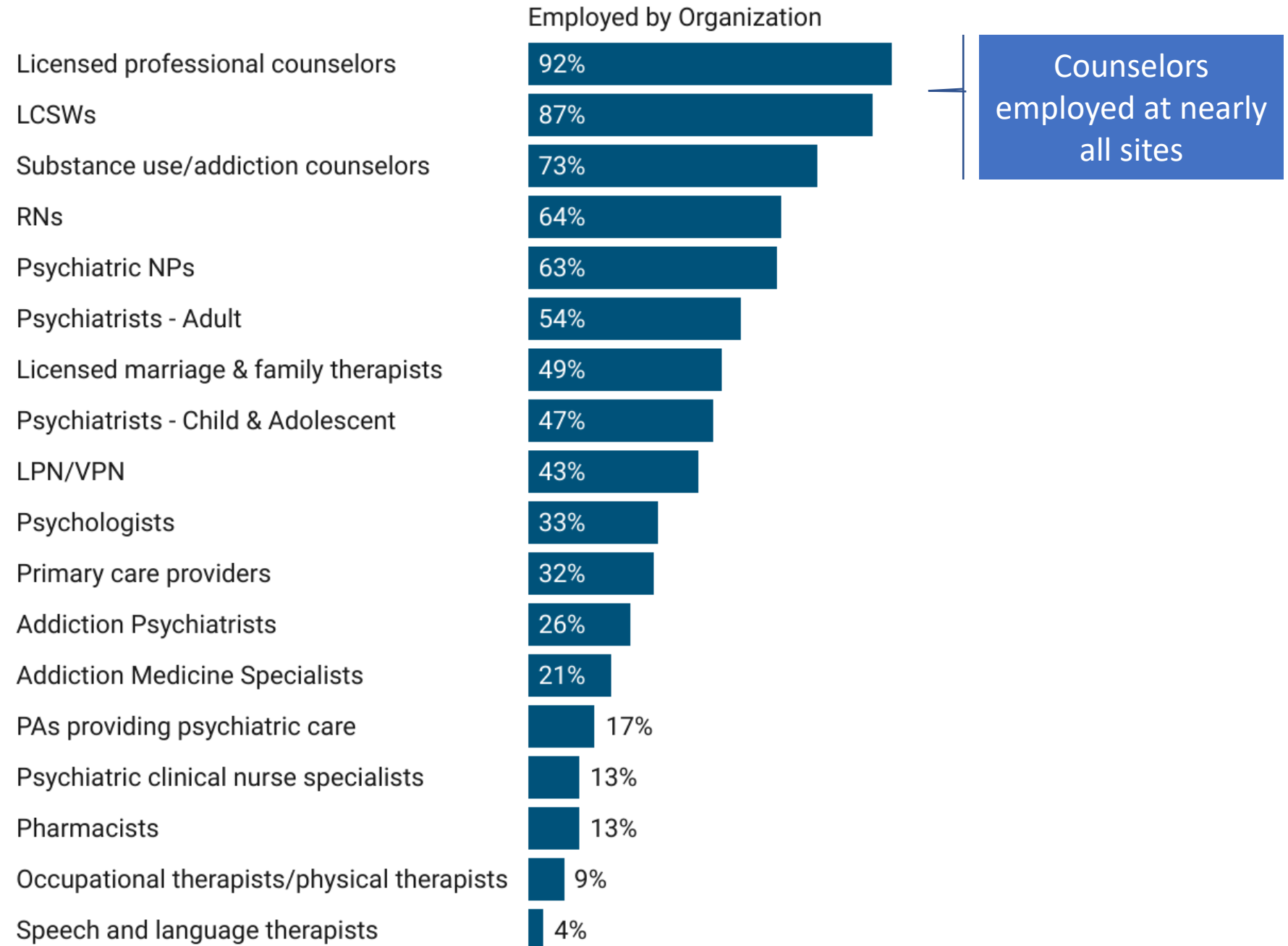
Licensed Clinical Social Workers



Licensed Professional Counselors

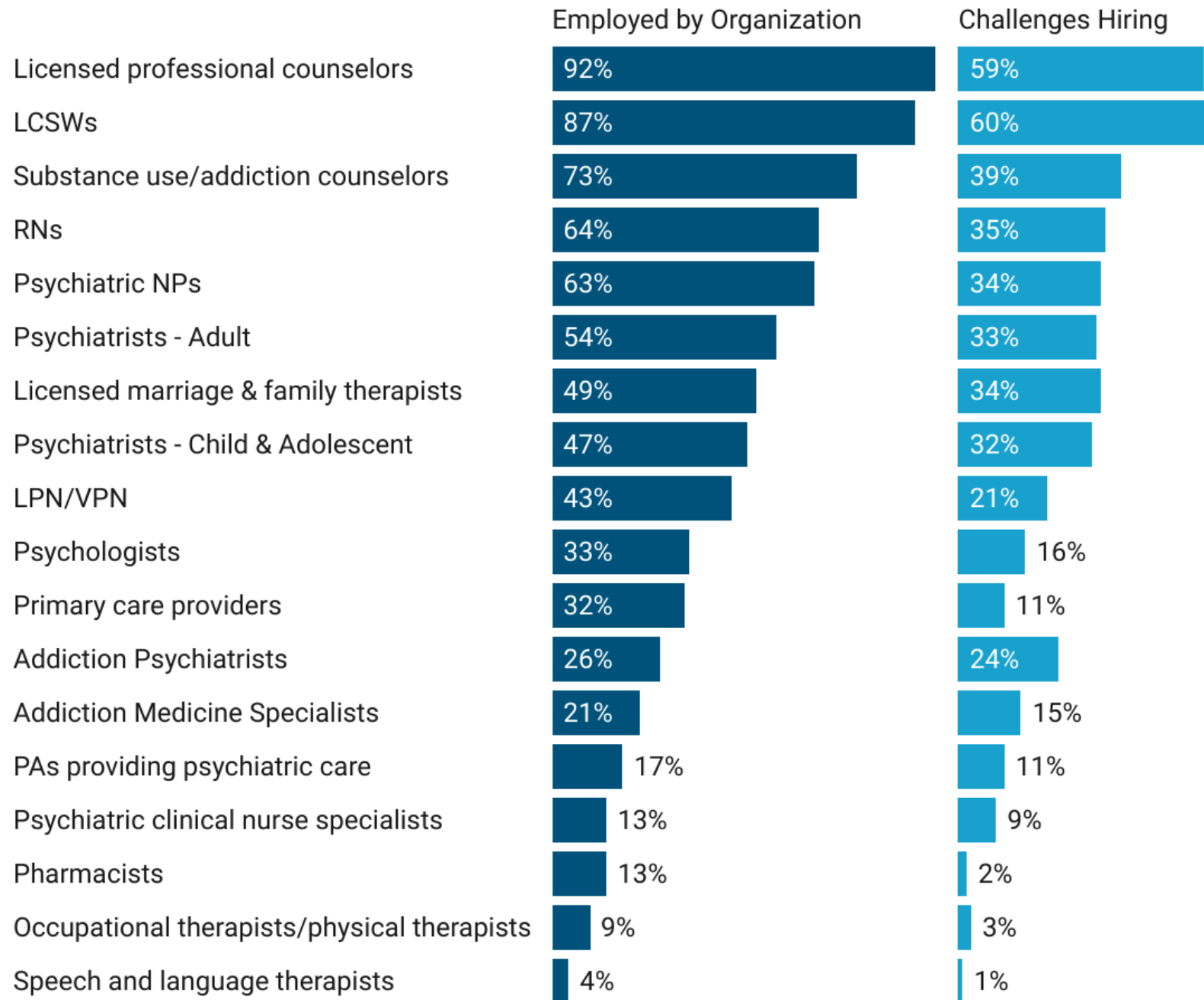


Some of the most frequently employed clinical staff members most difficult to recruit and retain



“I never thought I would say this...but right now I can hire a psych ARNP, off the street tomorrow. I can't find a licensed social worker to save my life.”

– Executive Director,
Mental Health Center



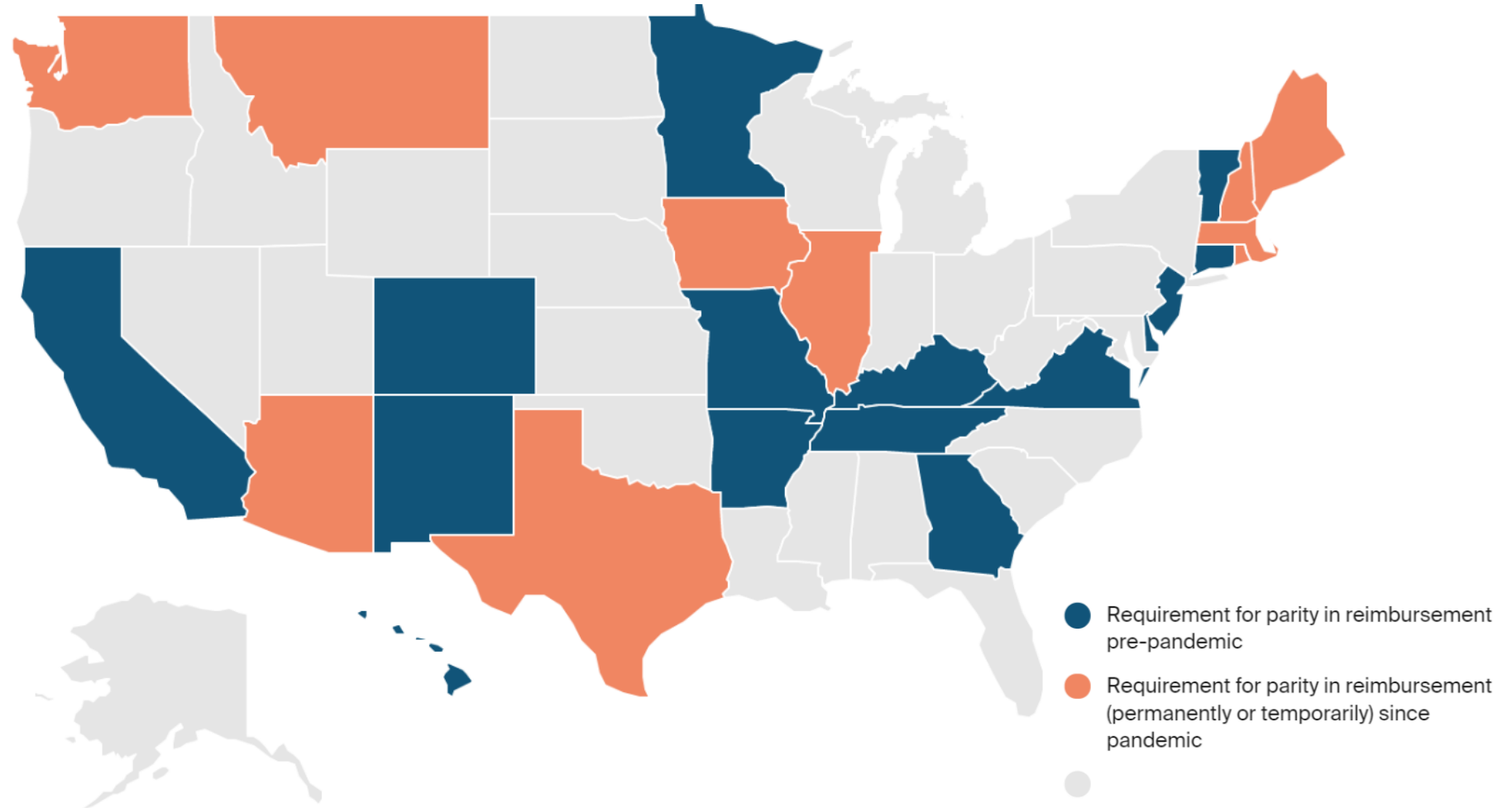


Policies for Addressing Workforce Challenges

- **Higher Medicaid reimbursement**
- **Allow accredited/licensed clinics to bill for master's level trained but not independently licensed (yet) staff under supervision**
- **Independent practice for psych NPs**
- **Loan repayment**
- **Reduced documentation and paperwork**

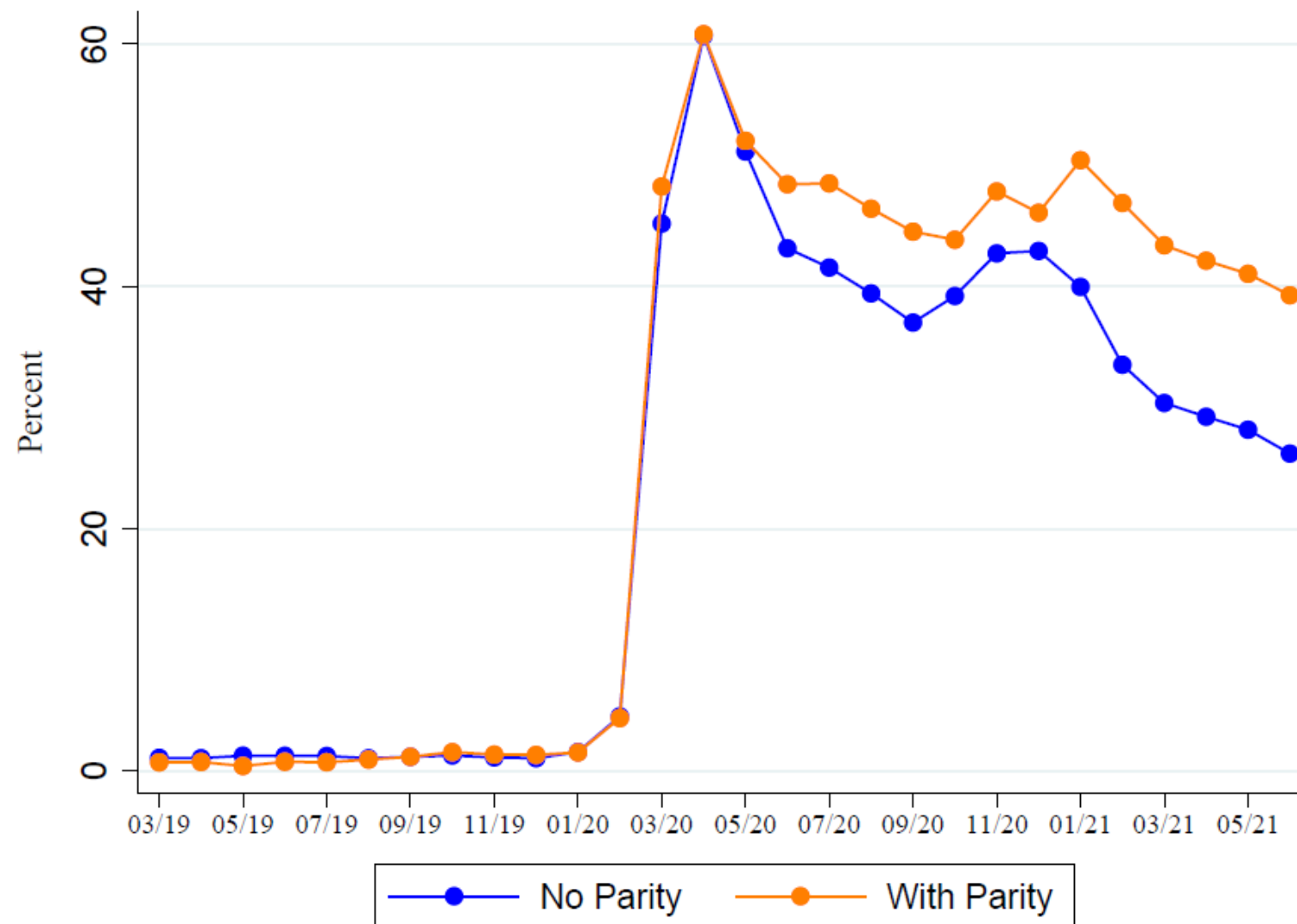
Payment parity for privately insured

State policies
for privately
insured



Percent of CHC sites that used telehealth by state reimbursement parity requirement for private insurers

Payment
parity
and CHC
telehealth
use



Notes: FAIR Health. Based on privately insured visits at CHC sites. Parity requirements assigned based on time implemented (i.e. CHC sites located in states that adopted parity requirements in response to the pandemic would be included in the “No Parity” group prior to 03/20, but in the “With Parity” group starting in 03/20).

Erikson C, Herring J. et al, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jamia/ocac104>

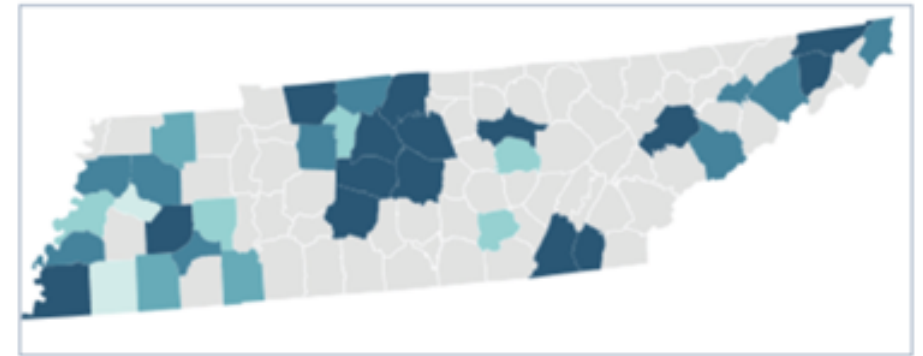
Collect and Liberate your Data!

Figure 1. Counties with Counselors or Therapists in Tennessee, 2021

a. Counties with Any Counselors/Therapists



b. Counties with 1+ Black Counselors/Therapists



Source: Author's analysis of Tennessee Licensure Data, <https://apps.health.tn.gov/licensureReports>

Note: Shading in panel b represents the density of the overall counselor therapist supply (same as presented in panel a) but gray counties now indicate lack of any Black counselors/therapists.

“Health workforce policy is increasingly a health equity battlefield.” – Fitzhugh Mullan

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