What are the challenges facing equal accessibility to mental healthcare?

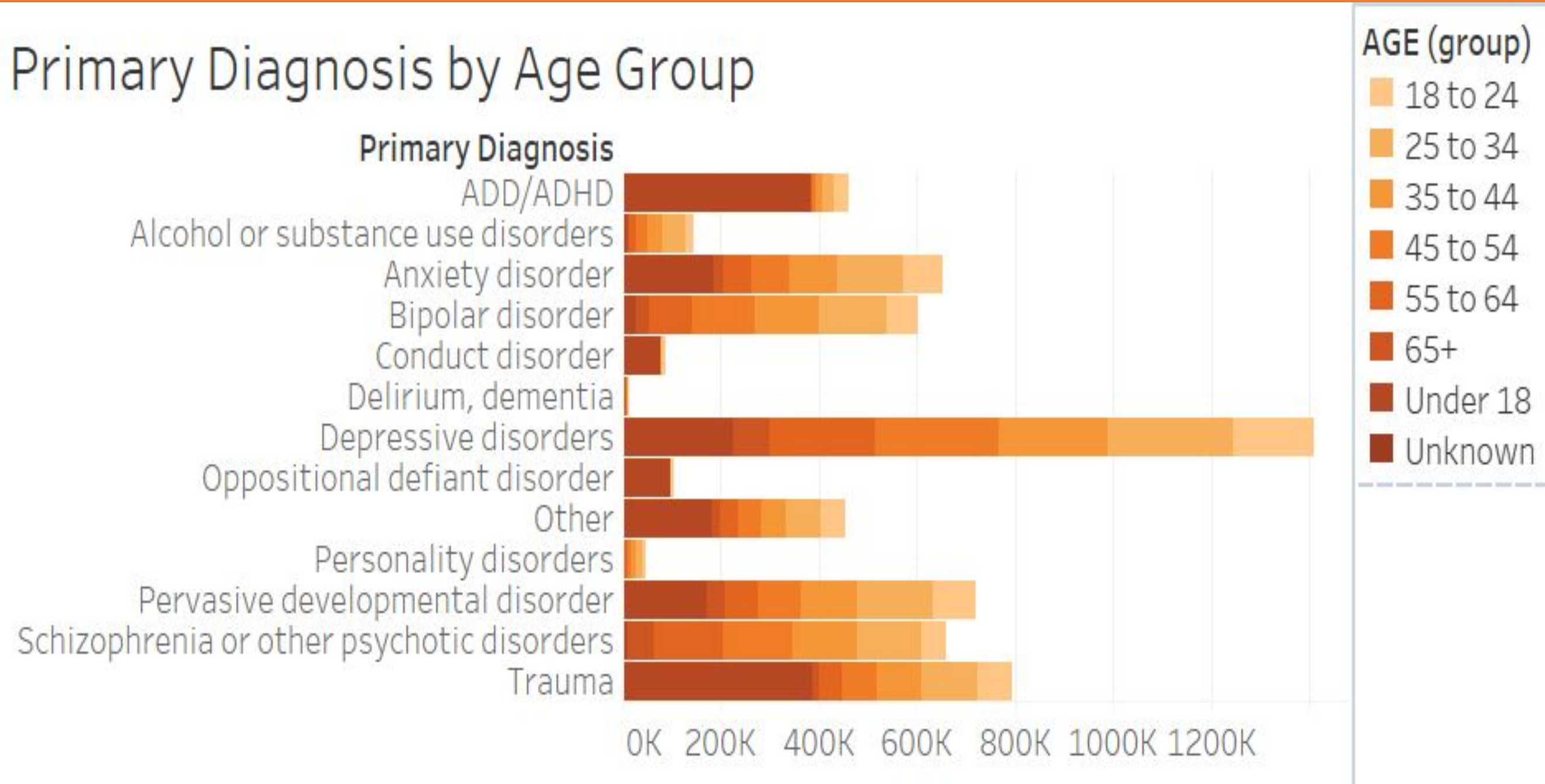**Laverne Eubanks**, Karla Garcia, Mwangi Kariuki, Christie Washington

Highlights

- The need for access to mental healthcare covers a wide range across various demographic groups
- Challenges to access to mental healthcare include affordability, insufficient insurance coverage, and professional shortage.
- The mental healthcare professional shortage challenge is of critical importance.

Background

Mental healthcare is an important foundation of our society. With recent changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, it became more apparent that mental healthcare is not equally accessible to everyone.

This issue affects everyone individually and in relation to a broader community.

6,464 additional psychiatrist needed in the United States to eliminate mental healthcare psychiatrist shortage

Primary Diagnosis by Age Group

Methods

- Tableau was used to visually analyze all data.
- To avoid skewed data resulting from outliers, we utilized median for the CDC data.
- Count was used for the MH/CLD data to assess patient demographics and diagnoses.
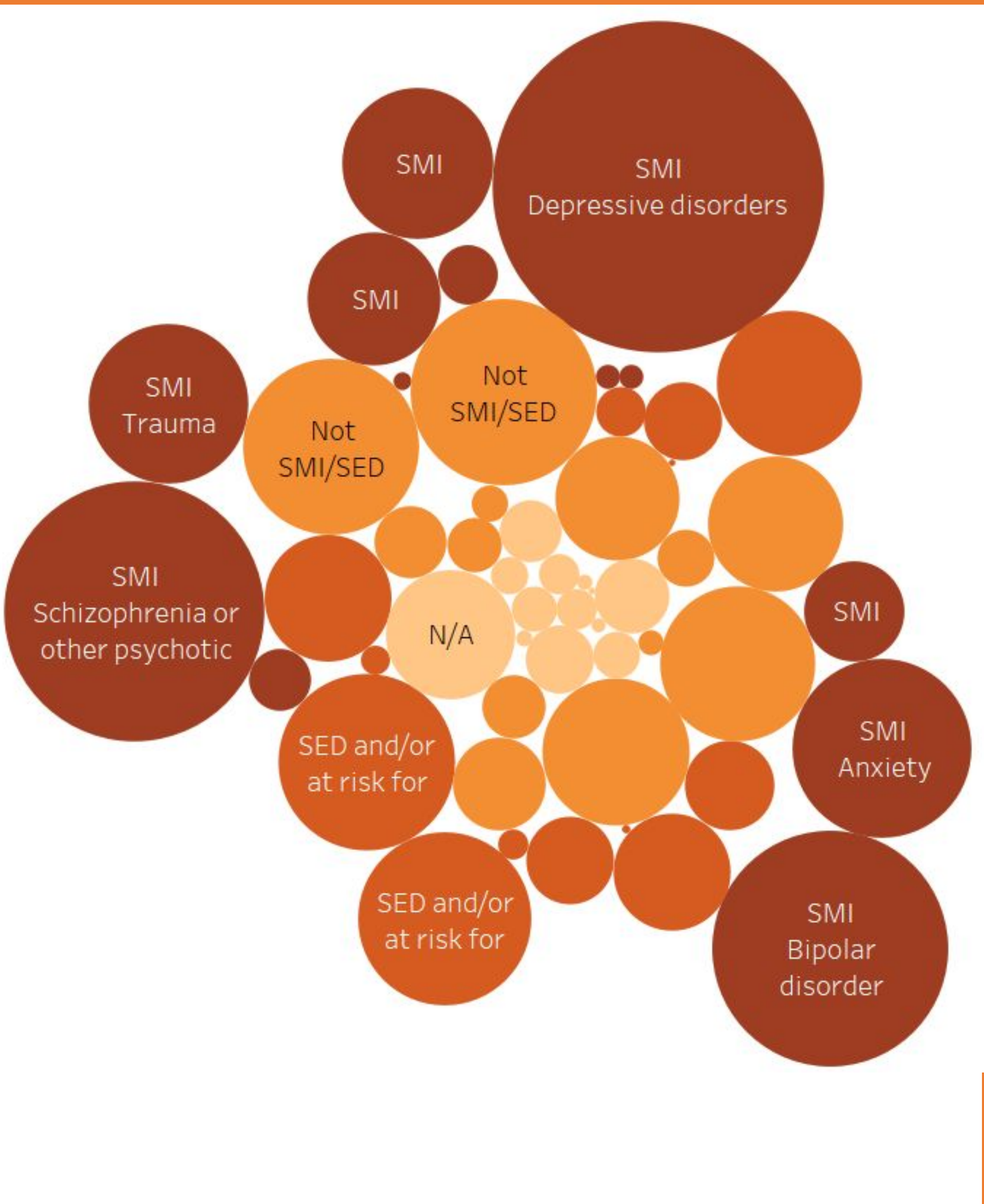
Data

CDC Data: Surveys done during Covid-19, where people were asked about their anxiety and depression symptoms. Data was transformed by removing rows flagged by a suppression flag indicator.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Data: Mental healthcare workers and psychiatrists employment data from May 2020. Data was compiled from the BLS.gov website.

HPSA Data: Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) data for states designated with HPSA status. Data was retrieved using a custom report compiler from kff.org.

Mental Health Client Level Data: state reported data of persons receiving mental health treatment. Data was first tranformed by replacing values based on the data dictionary and unreferenced rows were hidden.

While some states may have a large number of psychiatrist, the healthcare professionals are not equally distributed to meet the needs of all patients.

May 2020 Employment - Vermont vs Georgia - Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health
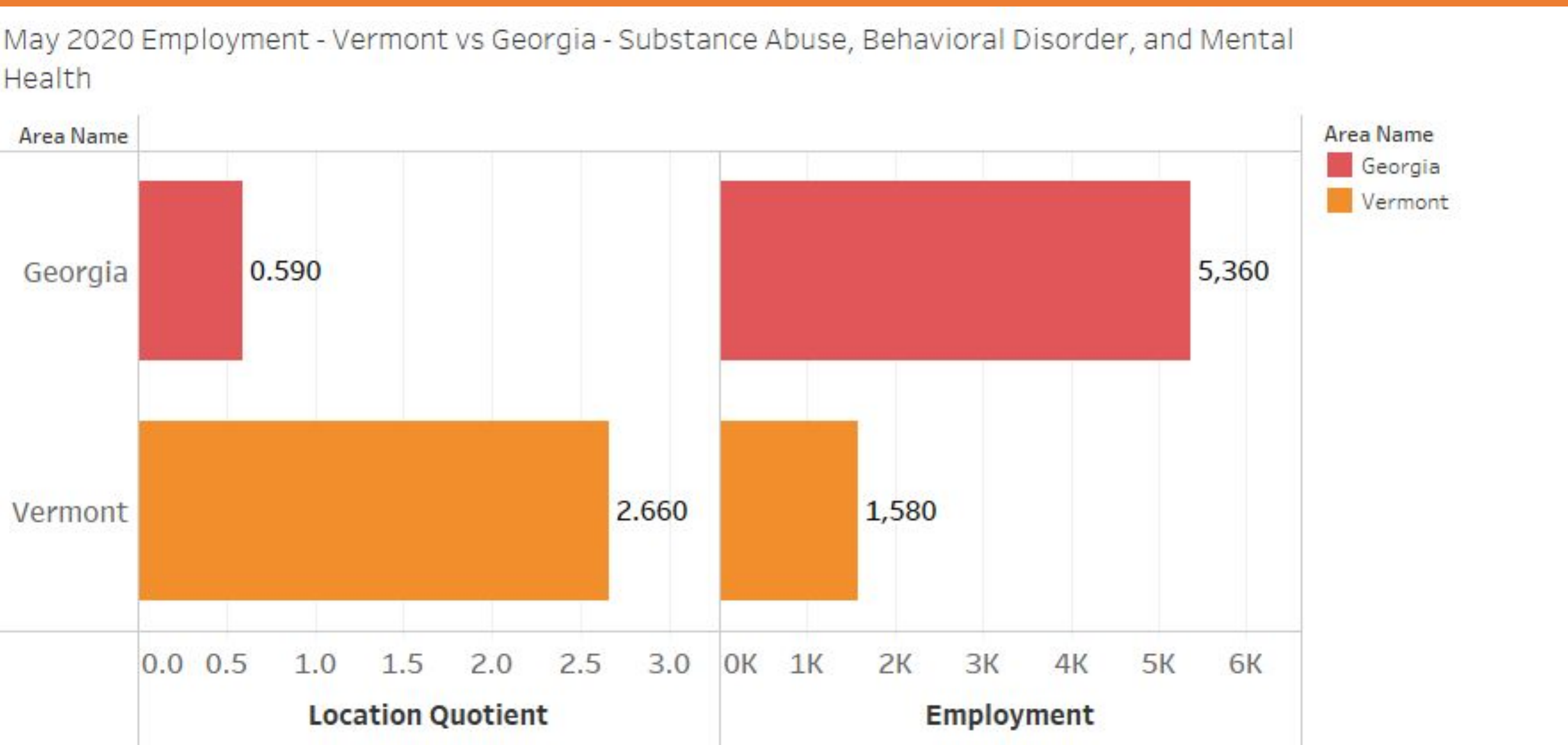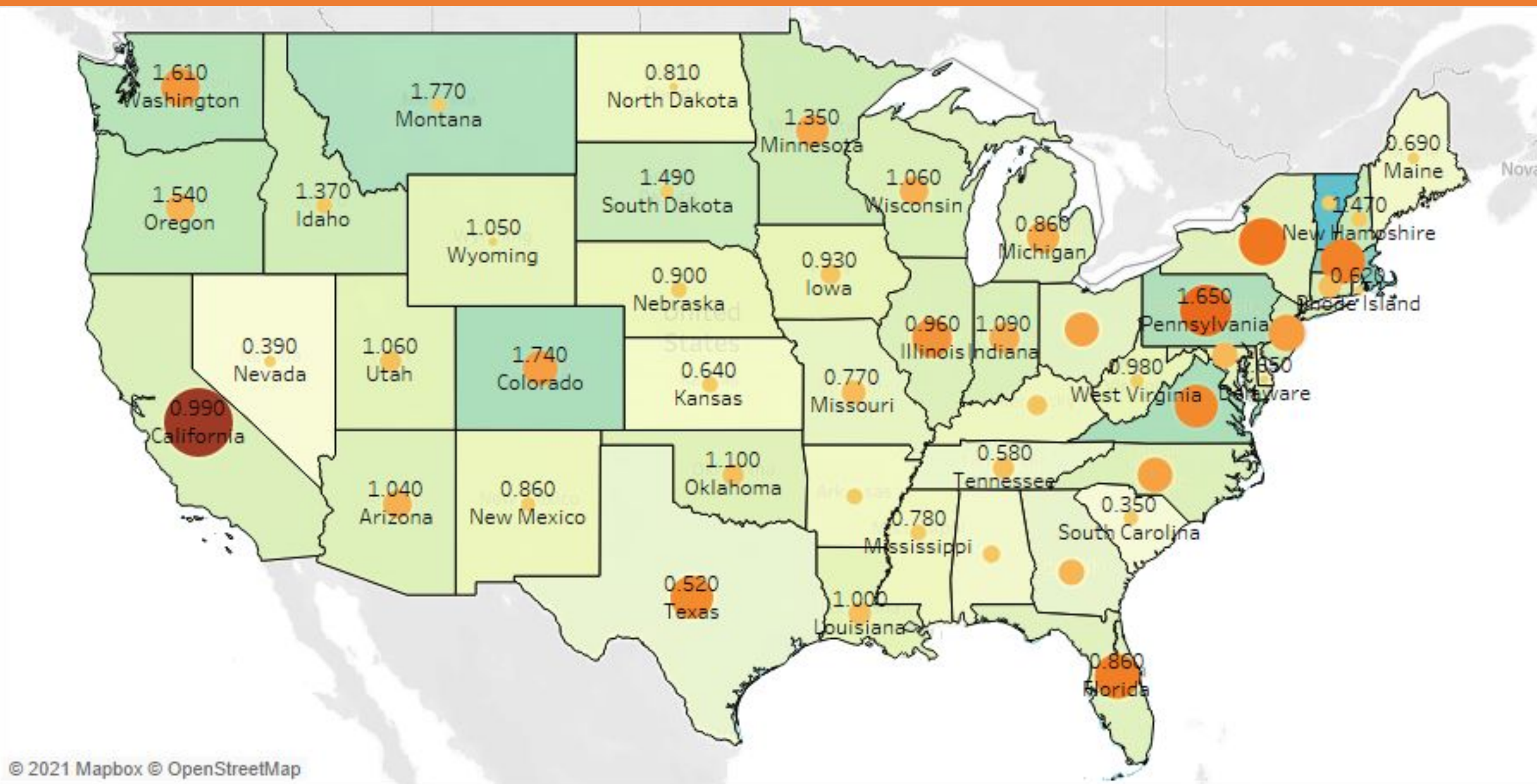
In order to insure everyone has access to the care they need we must not only increase the number of mental healthcare professionals but also make sure rural areas are covered.