Access to Telehealth in Relation to Health Professional Shortage Areas in the United States

The demand for broadband Internet access has increased dramatically in recent years, particularly with the incredible surge in telework and video conferencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fast speeds and high bandwidth allow for low-latency data transfer, enabling a wide range of applications. In particular, Telehealth has emerged as a way to provide healthcare services remotely, with enormous potential to overcome traditional geospatial barriers to access, especially in rural areas. Health Professional Shortage Areas that also have good broadband access are thus prime locations for Telehealth. Unfortunately, while broadband access has improved in recent years, it remains far from ubiquitous in the United States, leading to geographic disparities, most notably in the South.

Data Sources:
❖ DP02 “Selected Social Characteristics in the United States” from the American Community Survey 2018 5-year estimates
❖ Health Professional Shortage Areas from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

75% of U.S. Households in Health Professional Shortage Areas Report Broadband Access (Prime for Telehealth), but Geographic Disparities Remain*

*Mostly in South and Southwest