

# Are rural Americans exposed to more innovative Medicaid dental health policies?

## Identifying the approaches to expand the supply, demand, and innovativeness of Medicaid dental programs

Semprini, Jason MPP'

University of Iowa College of Public Health; Department of Health Management and Policy; University of Iowa, College of Dentistry

### Background

Low-income adults in rural regions have disproportionately poor oral health outcomes and face systematic barriers to dental treatment given the shortage of providers in rural regions. To accommodate these realities, many states have adopted innovative policies to increase dental utilization.

Yet, little evidence has identified if these innovative policies are in fact meeting the contextual needs of rural adults.

This study aims to determine if rural Americans live in states with more innovative Medicaid dental policies, adopted through Medicaid waivers, state action plans, or teledentistry coverage.

### Aims

- 1) Conduct a state-by-state policy scan of adult Medicaid dental health policies.
- 2) Review and codify Medicaid dental health policy approaches related to innovative service delivery.
- 3) Identify the differences in policy approaches exposed to rural and non-rural Americans.
- 4) Test the hypothesis that a higher proportion of rural adults live in states with innovative Medicaid policies than the proportion of non-rural adults.

### Data and Methodology

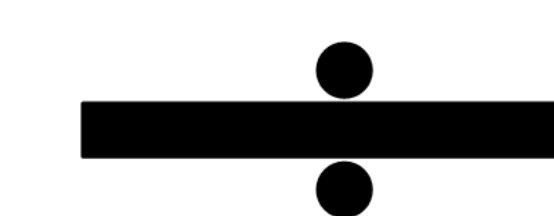
#### Data:

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP)
- U.S. Census Bureau

#### Methodology:

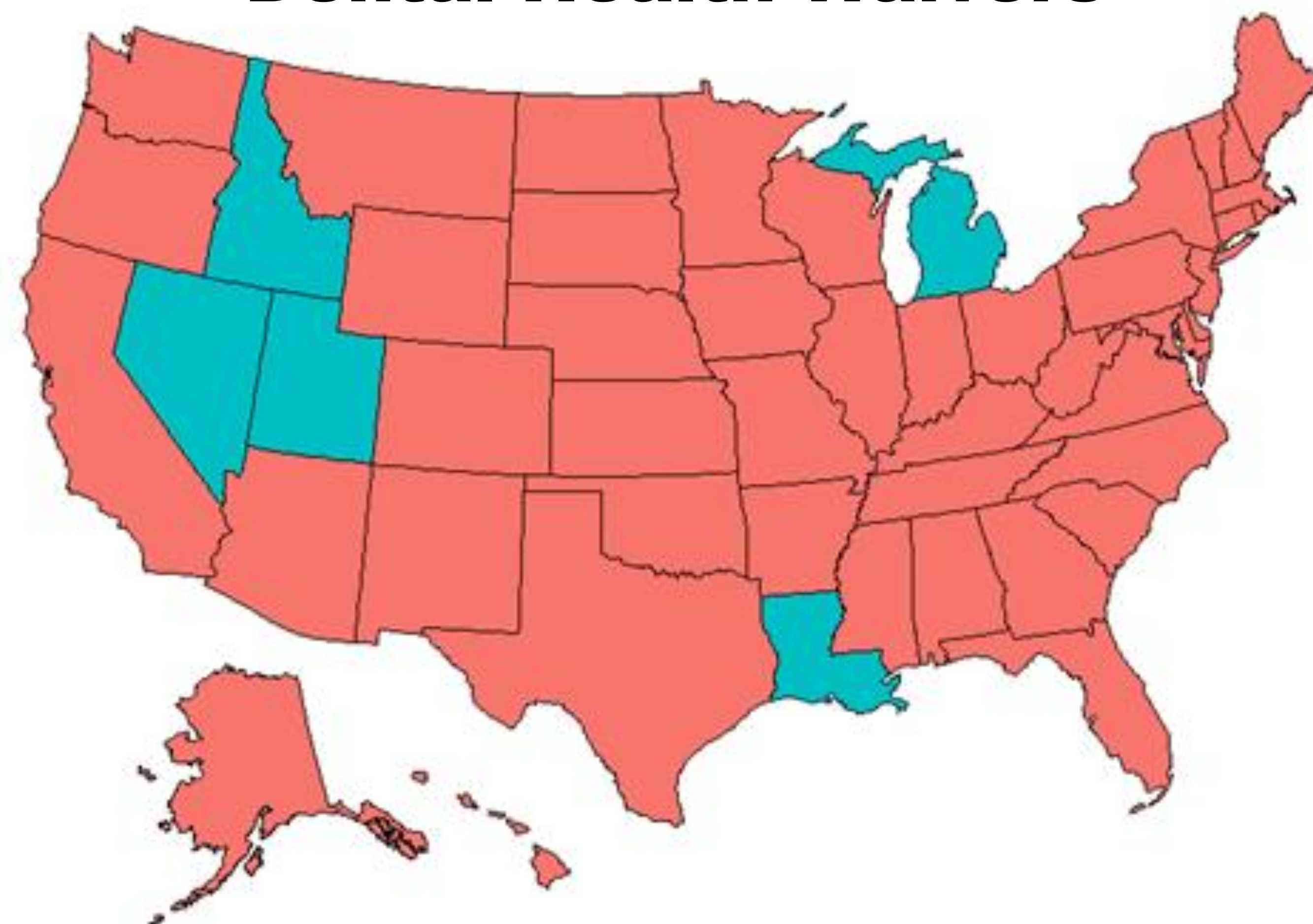
Construct a cross-sectional dataset with publicly available reports from CMS and CCHP, to calculate the proportion of rural and non-rural low-income adults living in states 1) adapting adult Medicaid program by waiver or state oral health action plan and 2) covering Medicaid teledentistry

Number of Low-Income, Rural Adults Living in State Covering Teledentistry

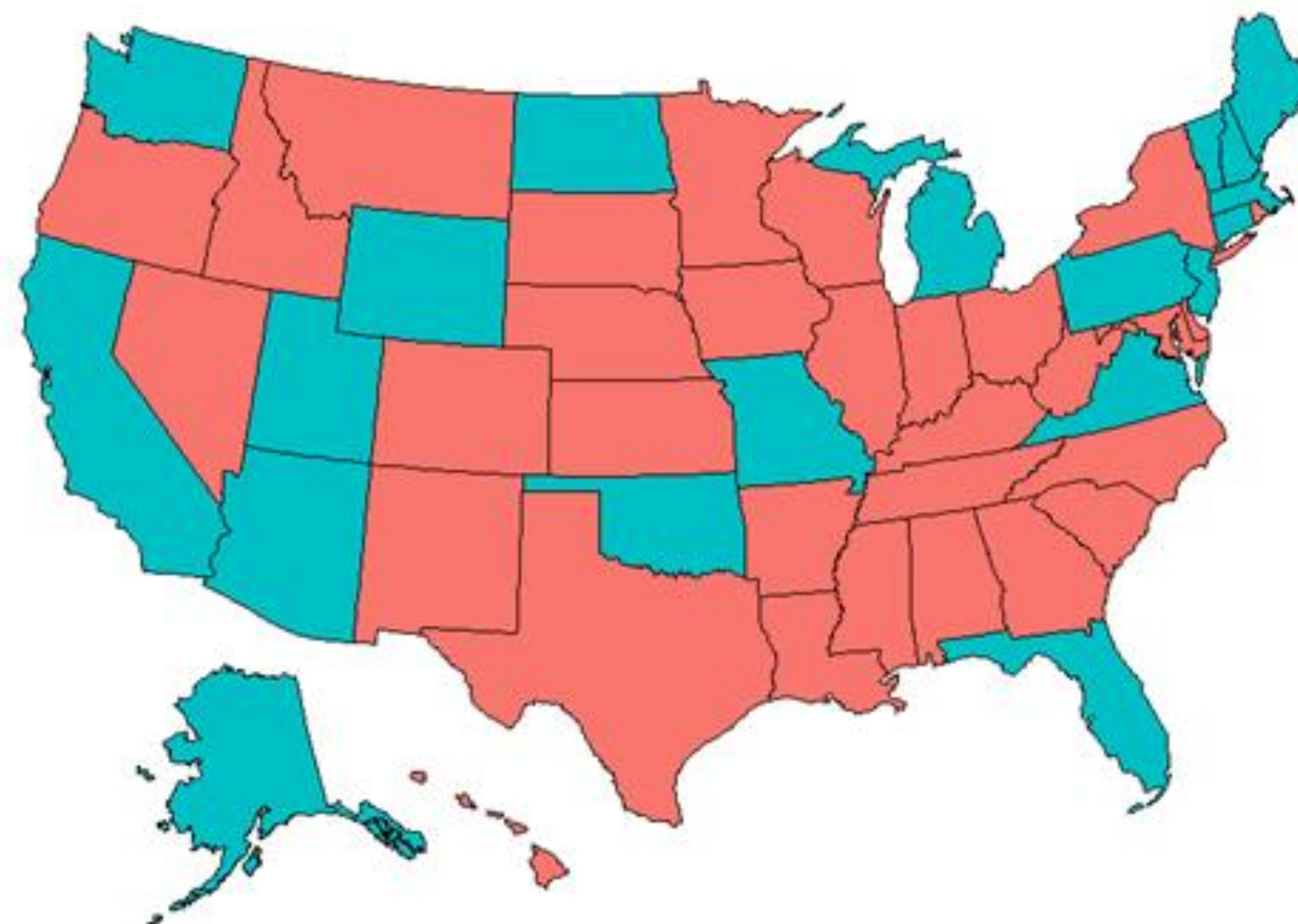


Number of Low-Income, Rural Adults

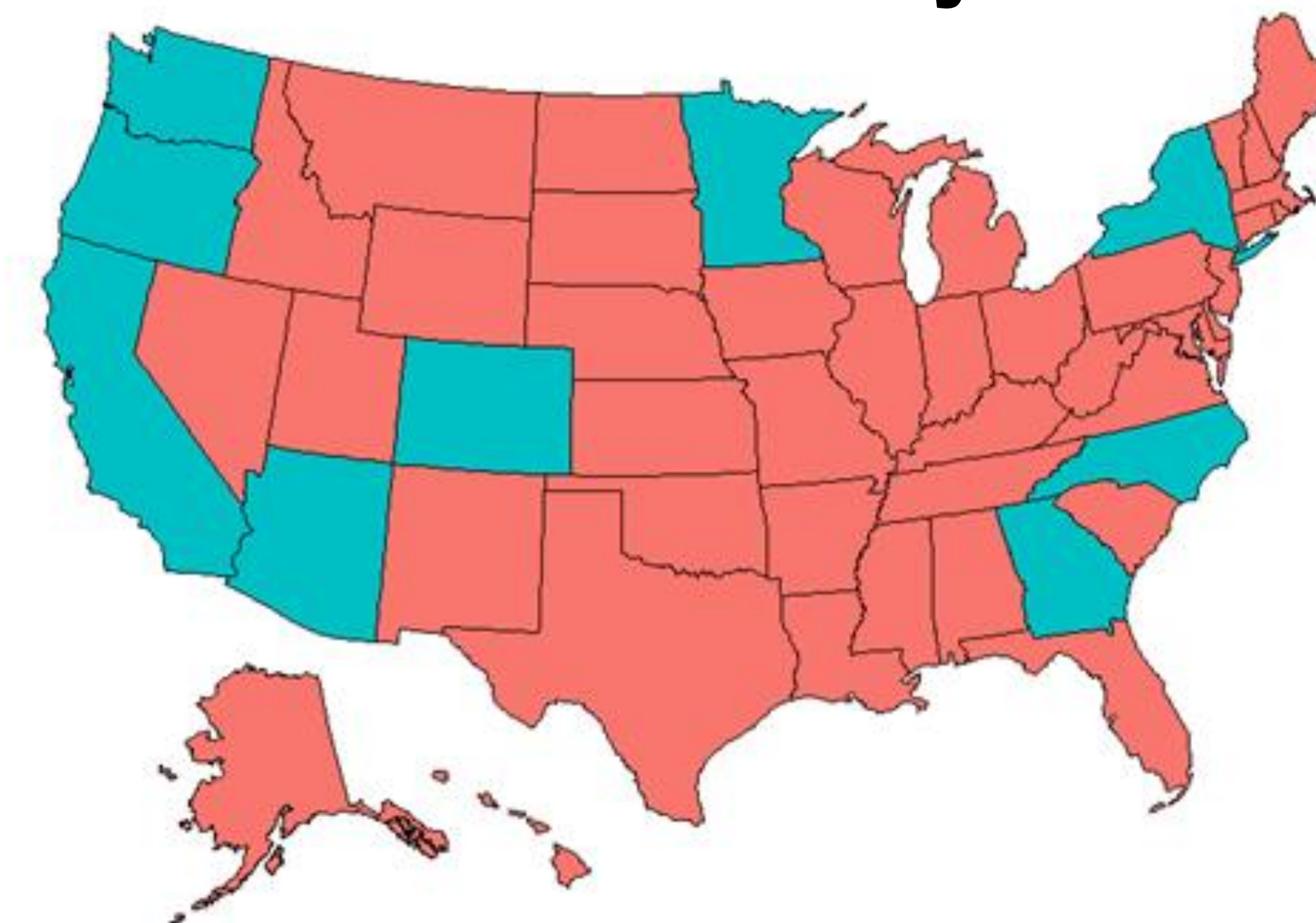
### Dental Health Waivers



### Oral Health Action Plan



### Teledentistry



**Adopted**

**No Policy**

	States (n)	Population (%)	
		Non-Rural	Rural
<i>Dental Health Waivers</i>	5	7.83%	6.60%
<i>State Oral Health Action Plan</i>	20	45.50%	29.17%
<i>Teledentistry Services</i>	9	35.60%	18.31%

### Conclusions

Comparing policies across states, low-income rural adults were less likely to live in states with teledentistry Medicaid benefits, while also less likely to live in states innovatively adapting their Medicaid dental program through plan or waiver. This study highlights the disconnect between the need for teledentistry and innovative policies accommodating the reality of rural dental shortage areas.