

Mississippi's Mental Health Outlook: Telehealth as a Solution to Mississippi Hospitals' Dire Need

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INTRODUCTION

Mental illness is a leading cause of disability based on research by Al Achkar et al. (2020), Tönnies et al. (2019), and Calderone et al. (2020). Most often these illnesses are first evaluated in primary care clinics (Birch, Ling, & Phoenix, 2021). While depression and anxiety are the most common mental health concerns addressed, research spotlights the usefulness and benefits of telehealth in primary care in treating mental health disorders with more complex concerns for those living with autism, schizophrenia, addiction, and other behavioral disorders (Caldrone et al., 2020; Holland, Hatcher, & Meares, 2018; Rodgers et al., 2018; and Salisbury et al., 2016). Caldron et al. (2020) further highlights the importance of telepsychiatry's importance in establishing a differential diagnosis for proper diagnosis and treatment identification.

Using telehealth to provide prompt and appropriate mental health services in primary care settings bridges the gap in equitable geographic distribution of services for those living in more remote or rural settings.

IRB

This study was approved by the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board
UMMC-IRB-2024-206

METHODS

Surveys were distributed to all Mississippi Hospitals

- E-mail with survey link (4 solicitations)
- Print survey direct mailed (2 solicitations)
- Follow-up calls (minimum 2 each)
- In-person visits (as needed).

DISTRIBUTION

Hospitals surveyed: 102
Total hospital responses: 61
Response percentage: 60%

Print: 2 solicitations
Electronic: 5 solicitations
Telephone: Approximately 50 follow-up calls

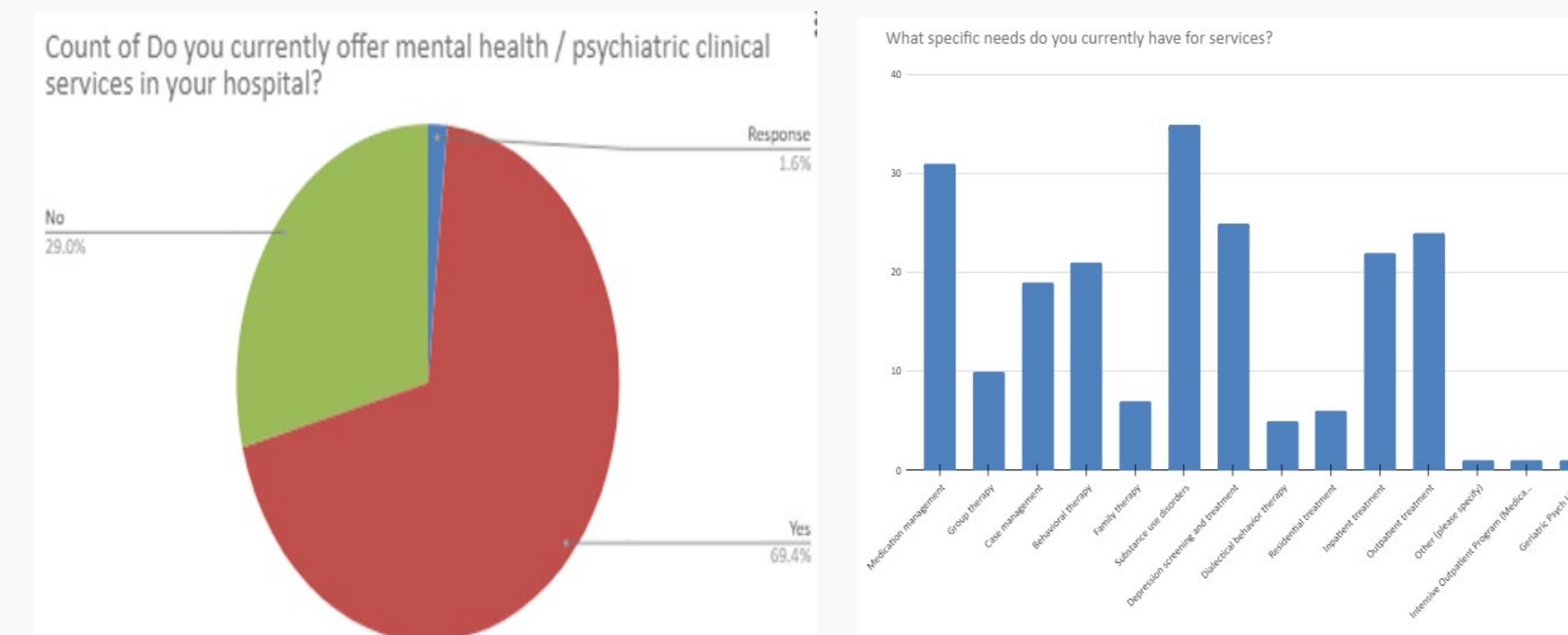
AIM

This survey was intended to gather information regarding mental health and psychiatric services currently being provided in rural hospitals in the State of Mississippi and the role that telepsychiatry may play in supporting these needed services in our communities.

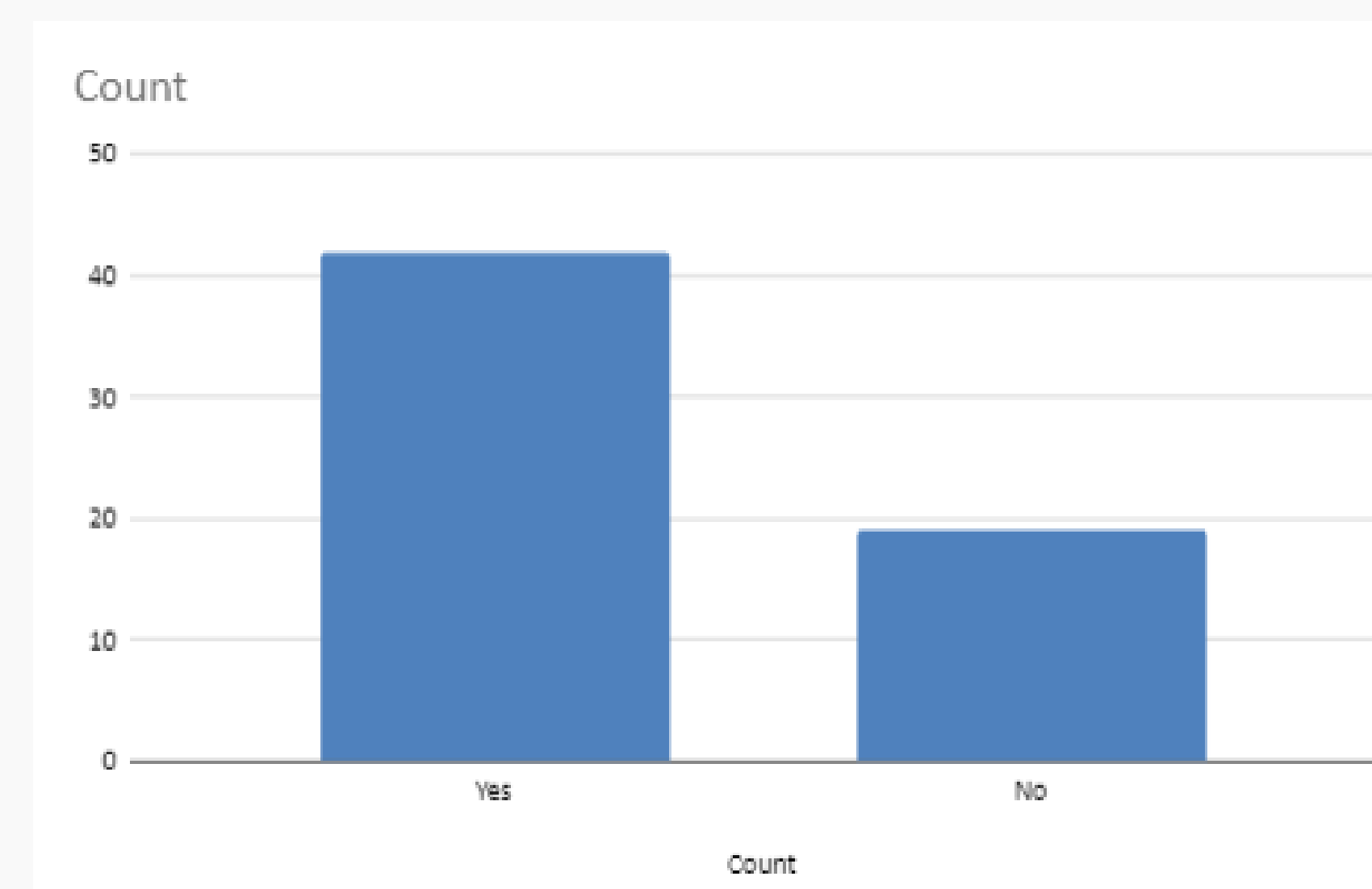
This survey is provided in partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Center for Telehealth, as part of its National Center of Excellence.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

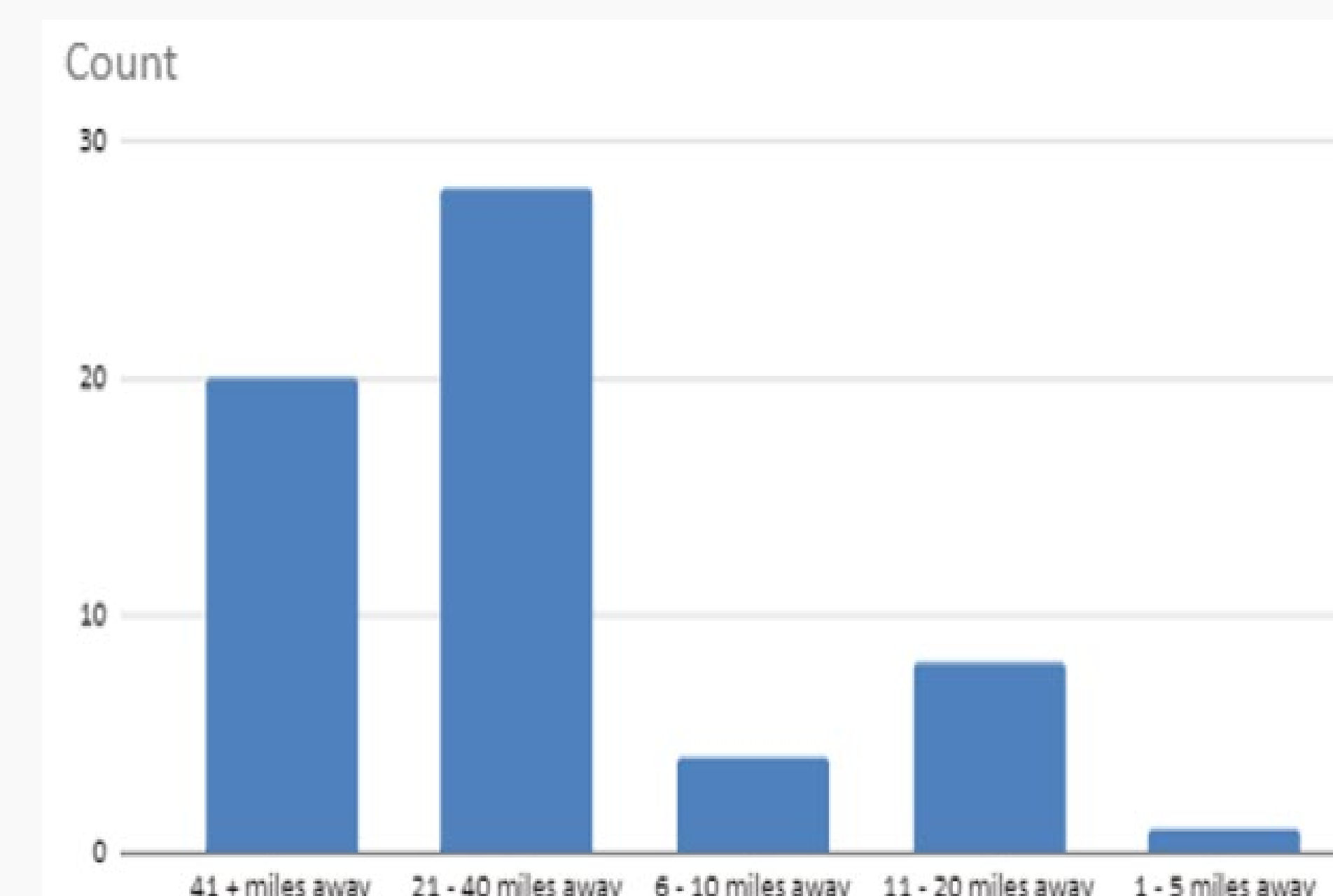
69% of the facilities reported having mental health services, but there is still a need for specific services in each organization.



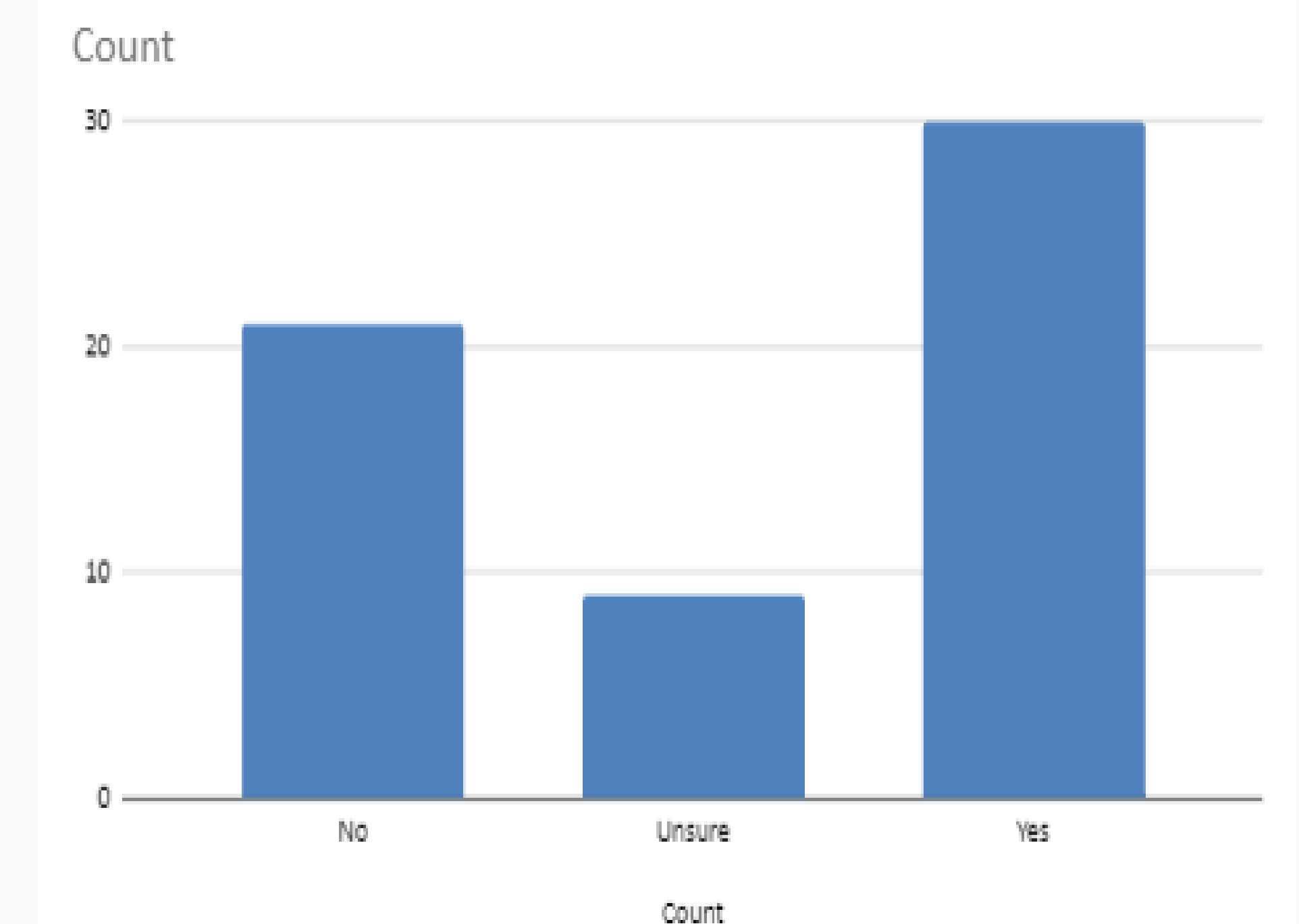
Thirty-one percent of the hospitals do not admit patients for mental health needs. Medicare is the highest payor of mental health services.



DISTANCE TO TRAVEL FOR SERVICES



THIRD PARTY AGREEMENTS



About 50% of the facilities have agreements with external mental health programs

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a high need for mental health services in Mississippi hospitals.
- Many enlist 3rd parties.
- Patients are traveling 20-40 miles for mental health services
- Locally provided services could result in better patient care and increased local revenue.
- Telehealth could be a viable solution to meeting the mental health needs of hospitals statewide.

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