

Bringing Together Net Neutrality, Rural Mental Healthcare, and Libraries

Introduction

Net neutrality is important to rural mental healthcare and to libraries that help build healthy communities by providing access to online information. The literature clearly indicates the challenges already faced by the shortage of mental health specialists and online mental healthcare in rural areas. The possibility of restricted access to online information can be seen as an additional obstacle. Whether using a computer or a mobile phone, barrier-free Internet access is vital to providing various online treatments. Rural online mental healthcare providers need unrestricted access to images and videos that support telehealth and remote patient monitoring. Equity of access plays a role in maintaining and in improving the quality of telehealthcare. Libraries need to be able to provide the best possible access to resources for patient care, research, studies, consumer health, and many other educational purposes.

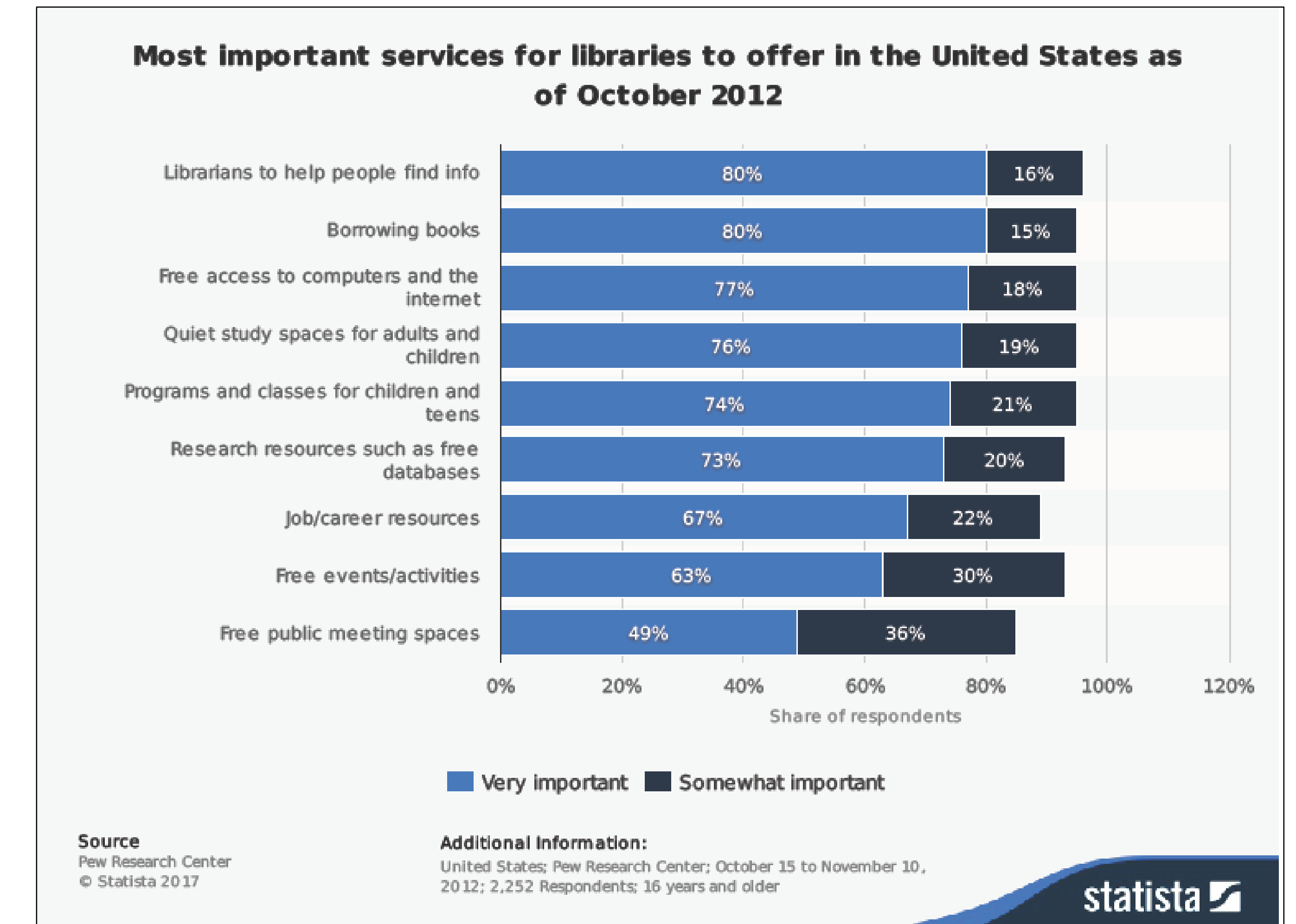
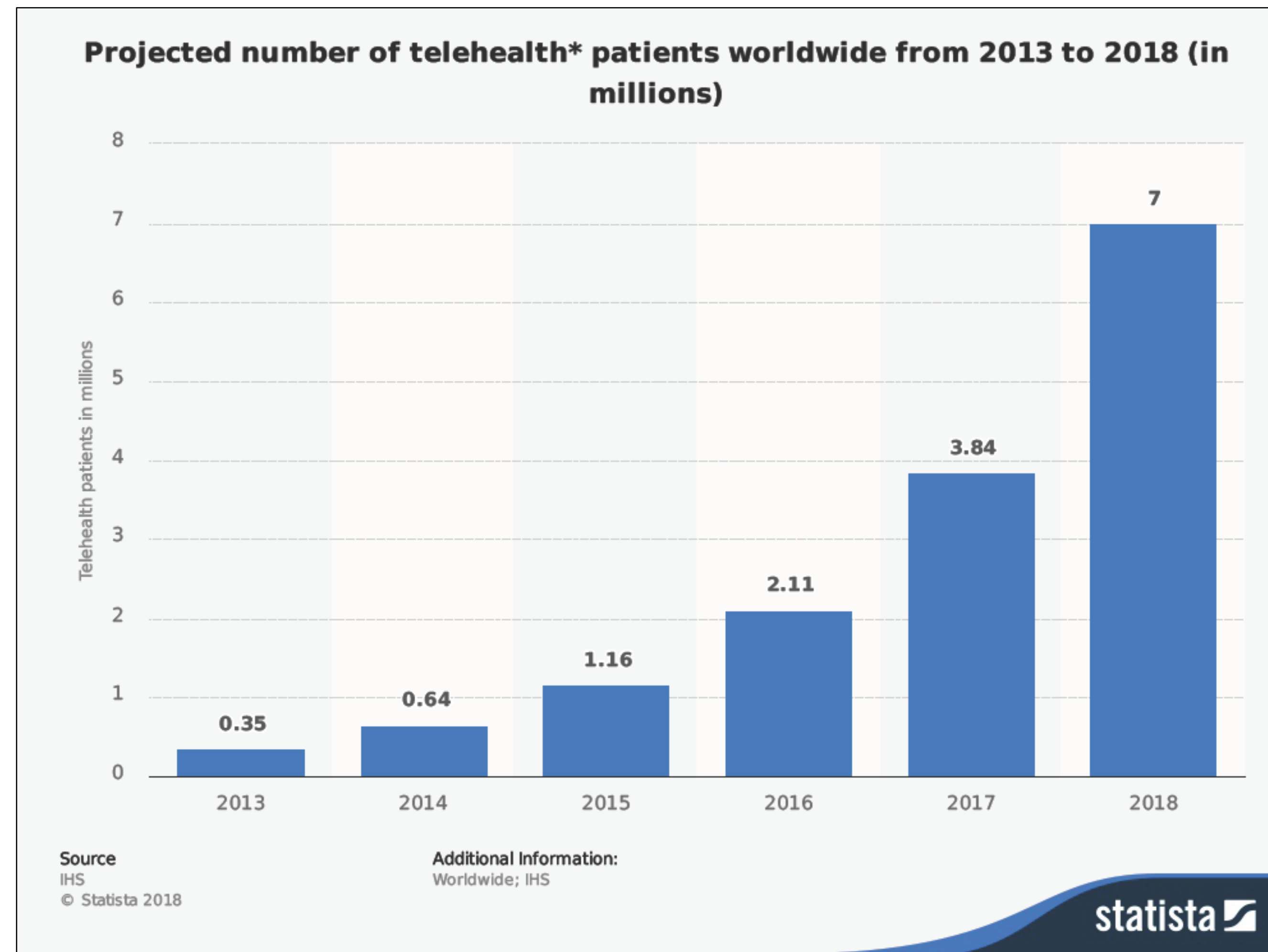
Opportunities

Increase

- Trained therapists
- Distribution of therapists
- Computerized cognitive behavior therapy (CCBT) use
- Adherence to therapy
- Privacy of users
- Computer availability
- Internet speeds
- Acceptability of treatment
- Mental health literacy
- Autonomy of patients
- Efficacy of therapy

Decrease

- Wait times
- Financial burdens
- Stigma associated with mental health illnesses
- Prevalence of mental health disorders
- Consequences of untreated mental health issues



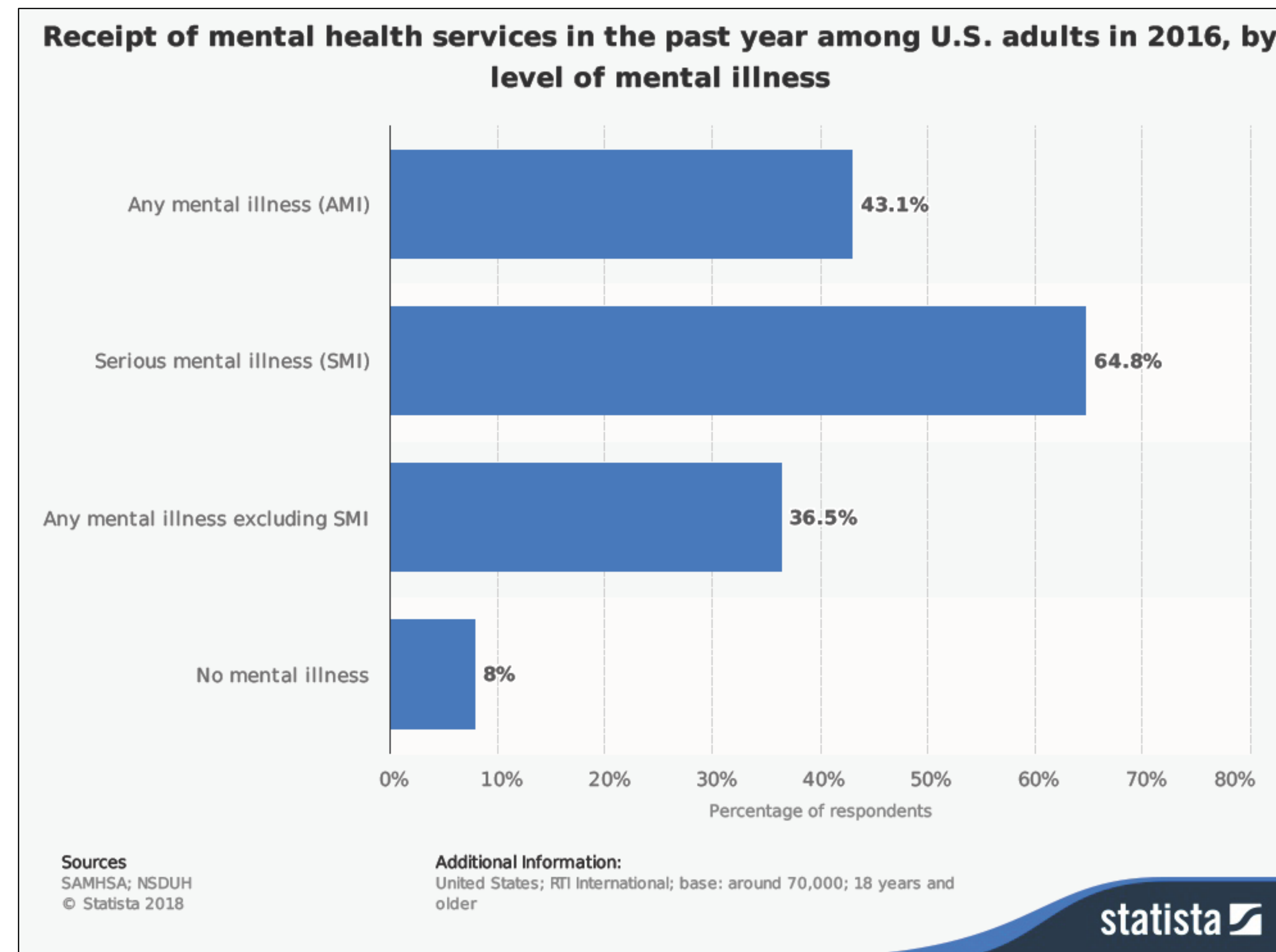
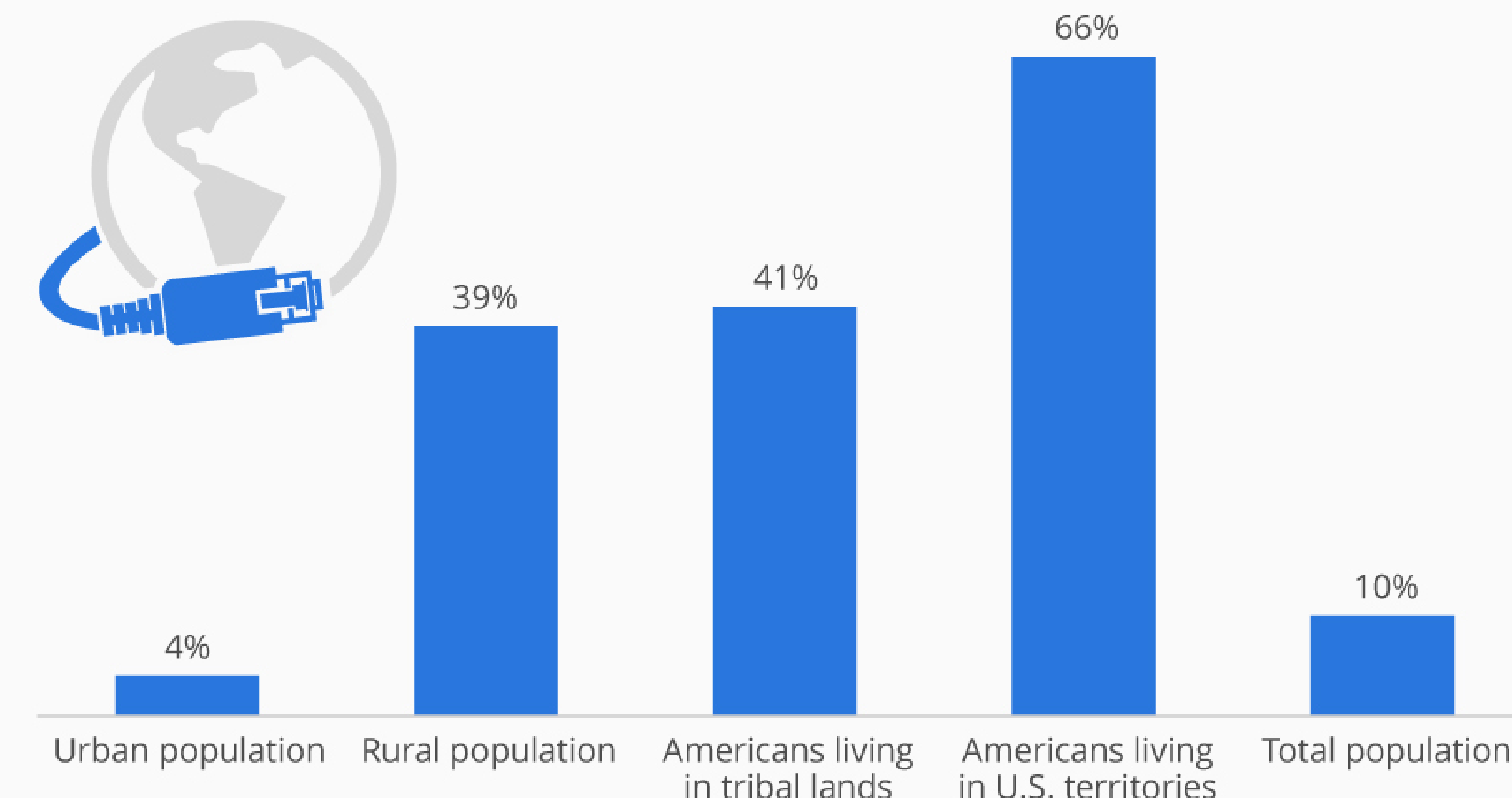
“Seconds matter when you’re dealing with the difference between life and death.”
–Benjamin Sledge

Conclusion

These graphs clearly show the need for net neutrality, rural mental healthcare, and libraries. Thirty-nine percent of Americans without access to high-speed Internet service are considered to live in rural areas. In 2018, the projected number of telehealth patients world-wide is 7 million. Around 43% of U.S. adults received mental health services for any mental illness (AMI) in 2016. Of the services offered by libraries as of October 2012, more than 70% of respondents said it was very important that libraries offer free access to computers and the internet and also research resources such as free databases. There is a need for net neutrality because of the number of rural residents without access to high-speed Internet service, the number of telehealth patients needing mental health services, and the resources people rely on libraries to provide.

The Digital Divide

% of Americans without access to high-speed internet service*



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