How One Library's Location Change Impacted Health Information Requests: Comparing Zip Codes and Health Disparities to Shape Library Services

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Our Background

- Hybrid library—Health Information Center (HIC)/Preston Medical Library (PML)

- Until 2014, we were located in an academic office building on the hospital campus

- That year, we moved into our new space on the main floor of the hospital

- Interact daily with faculty, clinicians, residents, patients, and family members

UTMC Service Area

Serviced Counties
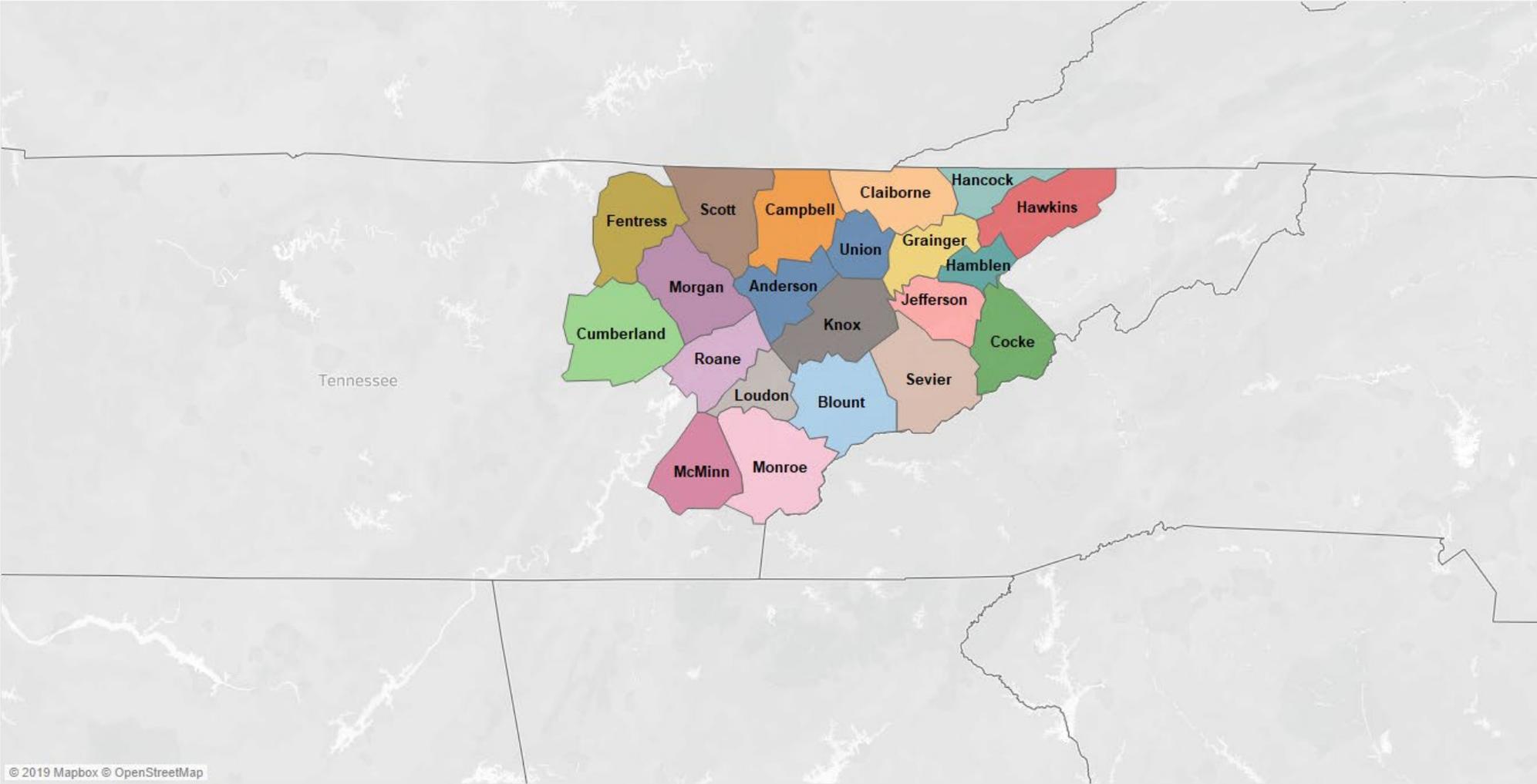
Study Purpose

- Researchers reviewed the Consumer & Patient Health Information Service (CAPHIS) database to see if patrons were requesting information from counties or zip codes with high rates of poverty

- Researchers also reviewed what zip codes and counties that were now being reached that were not previously served in a 2012 study
  - 2012 study was useful, but data reflected old location

- Discovering what areas have not yet been reached
 - Opportunities for future outreach

Methods

- CAPHIS database is stored on the hospital's server
  - Data exists from 1997-current
  - Each record gives topic(s) requested and patron county/zip code
  - This project discusses requests from counties/zip codes, but each request might have more than one search topic
- Split data into two sets
  - Pre-move (1997-Sept 2014)
  - Post-move (Sept 2014-current)
- This project was primarily concerned with the post-move data

Methods

- Removed 383 results due to being anonymous walk-ins or requests from patient rooms
  - Originally used hospital zip code as place holder
- All requests were sorted by county and zip code, comparing results before and after the move
- Used Tableau to visually map what counties and zip codes we had reached since the move
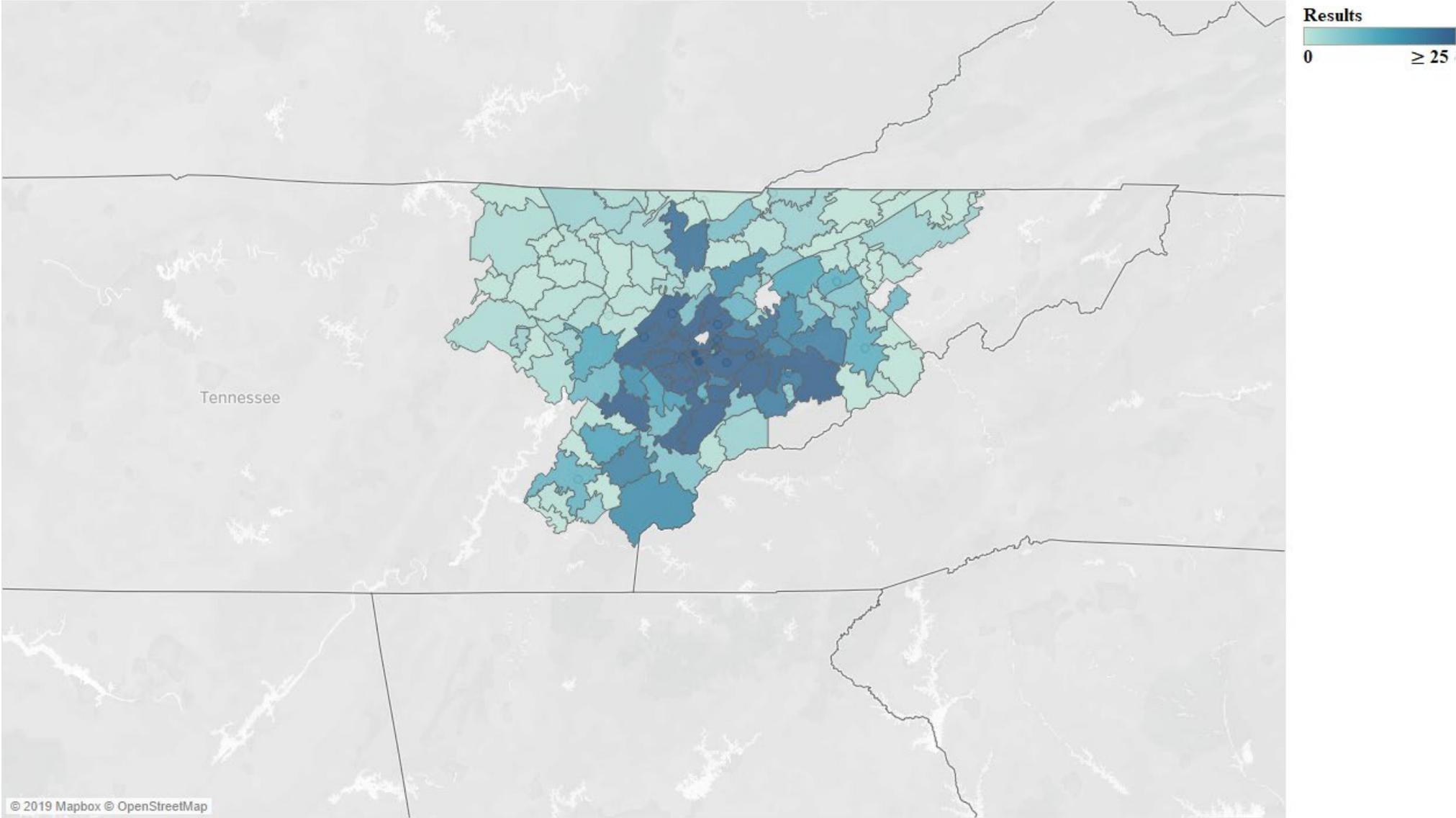
Number of Requests by County
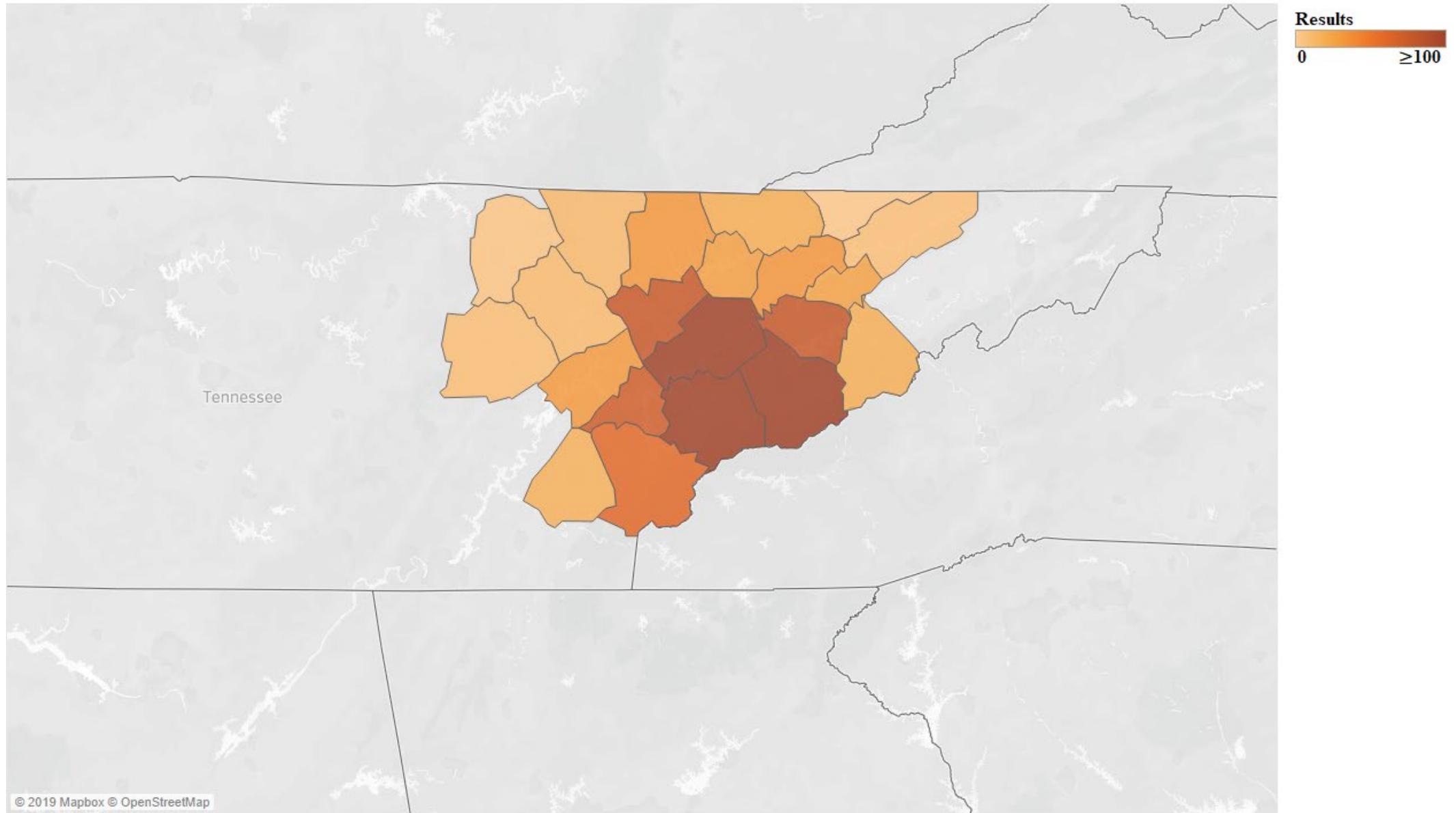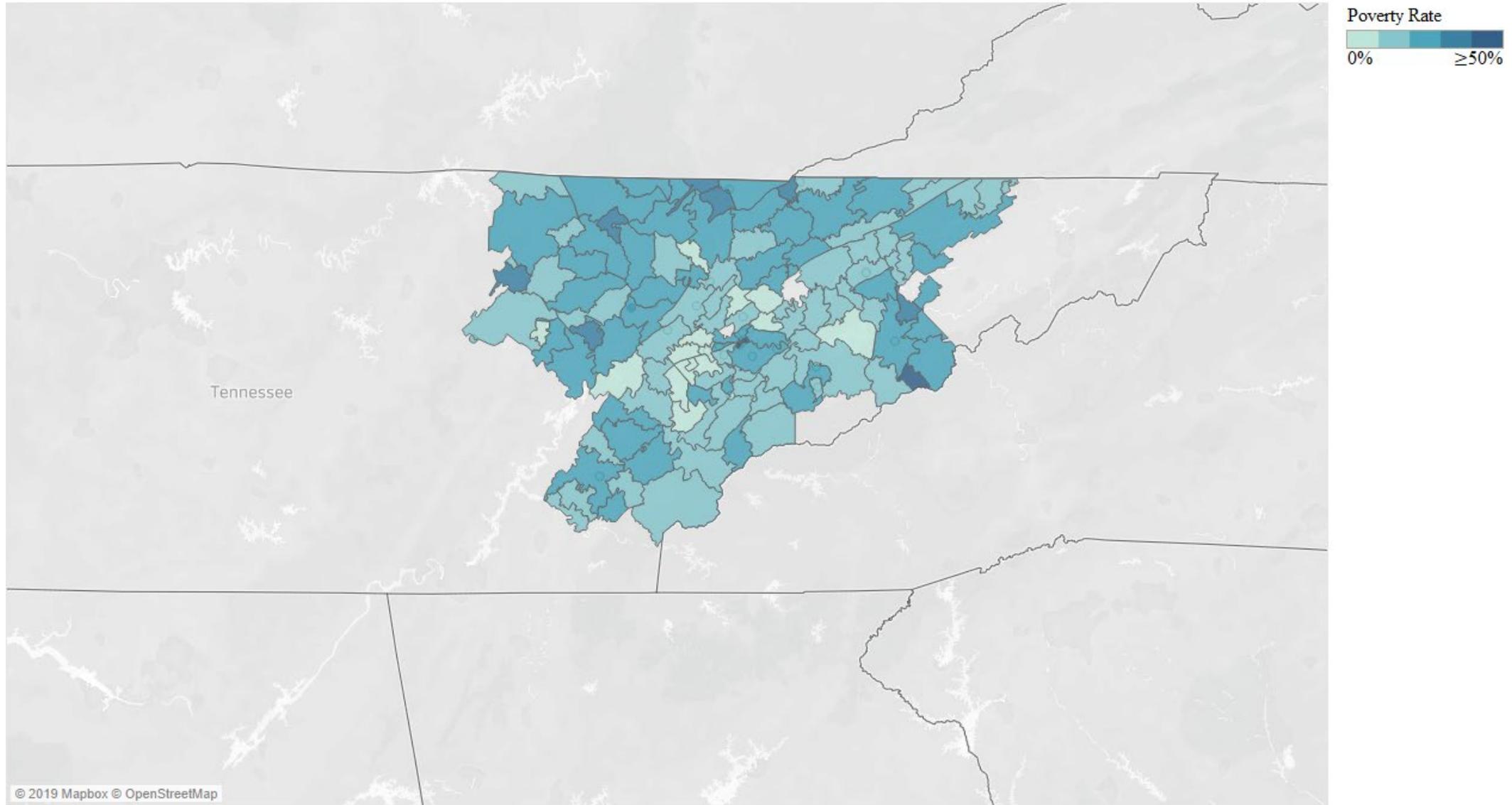
Results by ZIP Code, 2014-2019

Assessing Our Impact

- Raw numbers have greatly increased since moving locations
  - 3,801 requests from 1997-Sept 2014 (date of move)
  - 3,141 requests from Sept 2014-May 2019
- We reached six more counties in our region compared to the 2012 study
  - Five of these counties have poverty levels >20%
- Knox, Blount, and Sevier counties are the most frequent users
- We reached 20 counties in the hospital's 21 county service area

Assessing Our Impact on Knox County

- Three Knox County zip codes were not reached in the 2012 study
  - Since moving locations, all three have been reached
    - 37932: 40 requests
    - 37754: 8 requests
    - 37806: 4 requests
- Other local zip codes had very few requests in the 2012 study, but now are higher:
    - 37931: 30 requests
    - 37909: 28 requests
- Zip code: 37915 – 53.8% below poverty line
    - 34 requests

Challenges

- Data can be incomplete
- Issue with local hospital zip code being used as a placeholder
- Translating a mountain of data into usable information
  - Dealing with the problem of too much information
  - Setting a focus

Conclusions

- Aligning with hospital's mission of serving the 21 county area

- Proving we are an east TN regional resource for health information

- Providing people with health information that reside in zip codes with high rates of poverty

- Knowledge about what zip codes to target for outreach
  - RAM project grant

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