

Living Together, Feeling Apart

Loneliness & Living Arrangements among
Middle Age and Older US Immigrants

Mara Getz Sheftel, PhD
Instructor



NJ Population
Health Cohort
Study



RUTGERS HEALTH

Center for State Health Policy

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research

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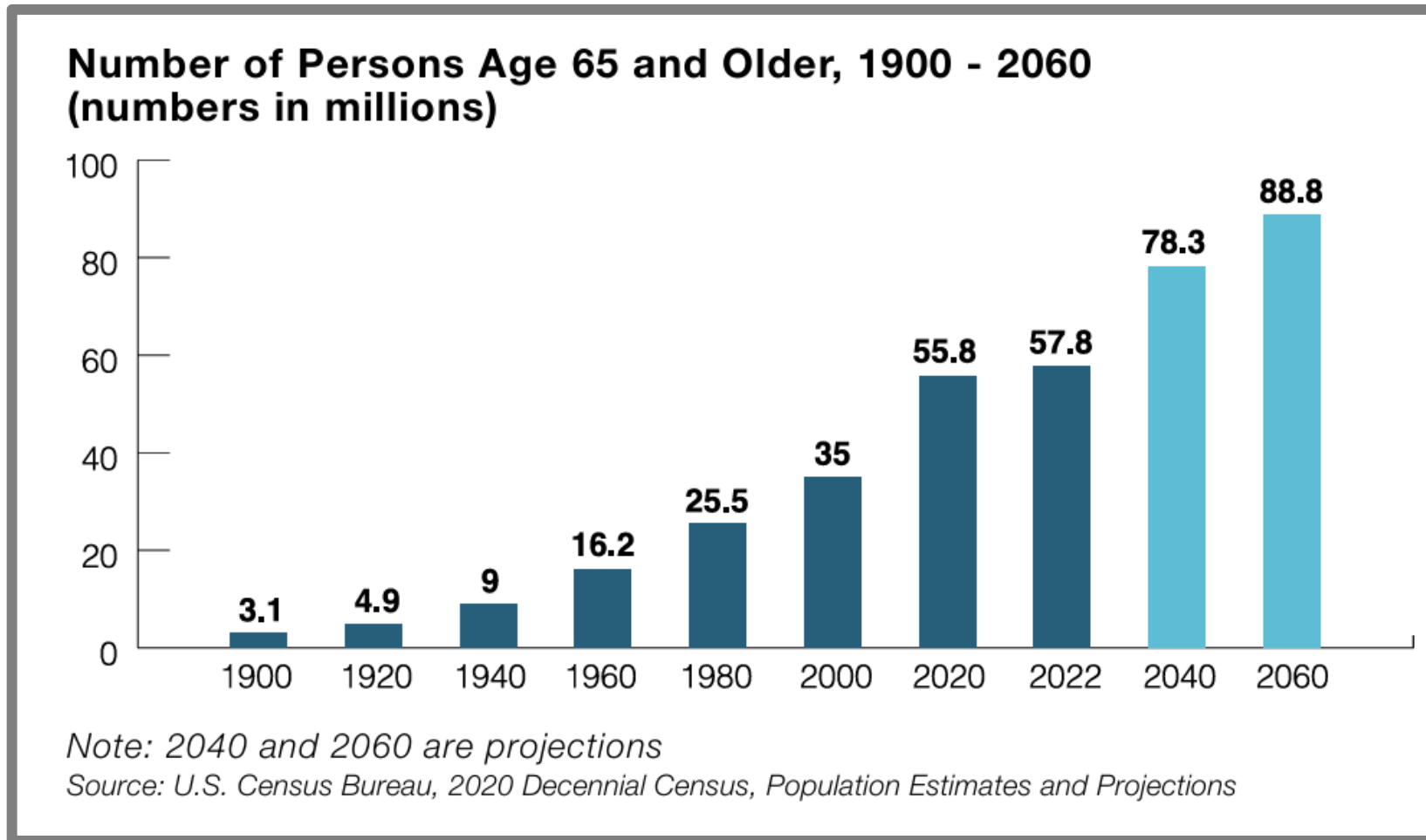


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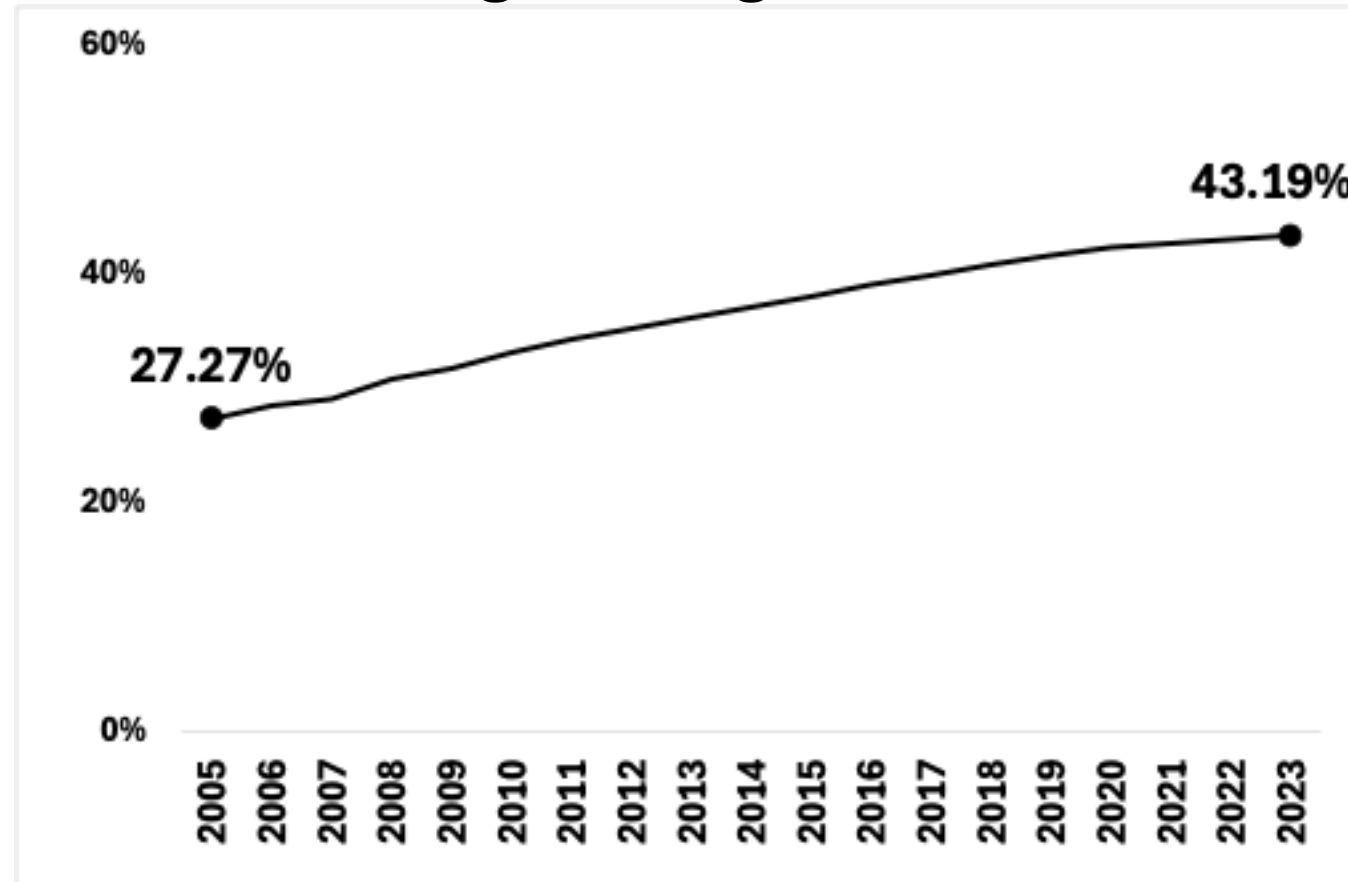
Population Aging



Source: Administration for Community Living (ACL) 2023 Profile of Older Americans

Aging Immigrants in the U.S.

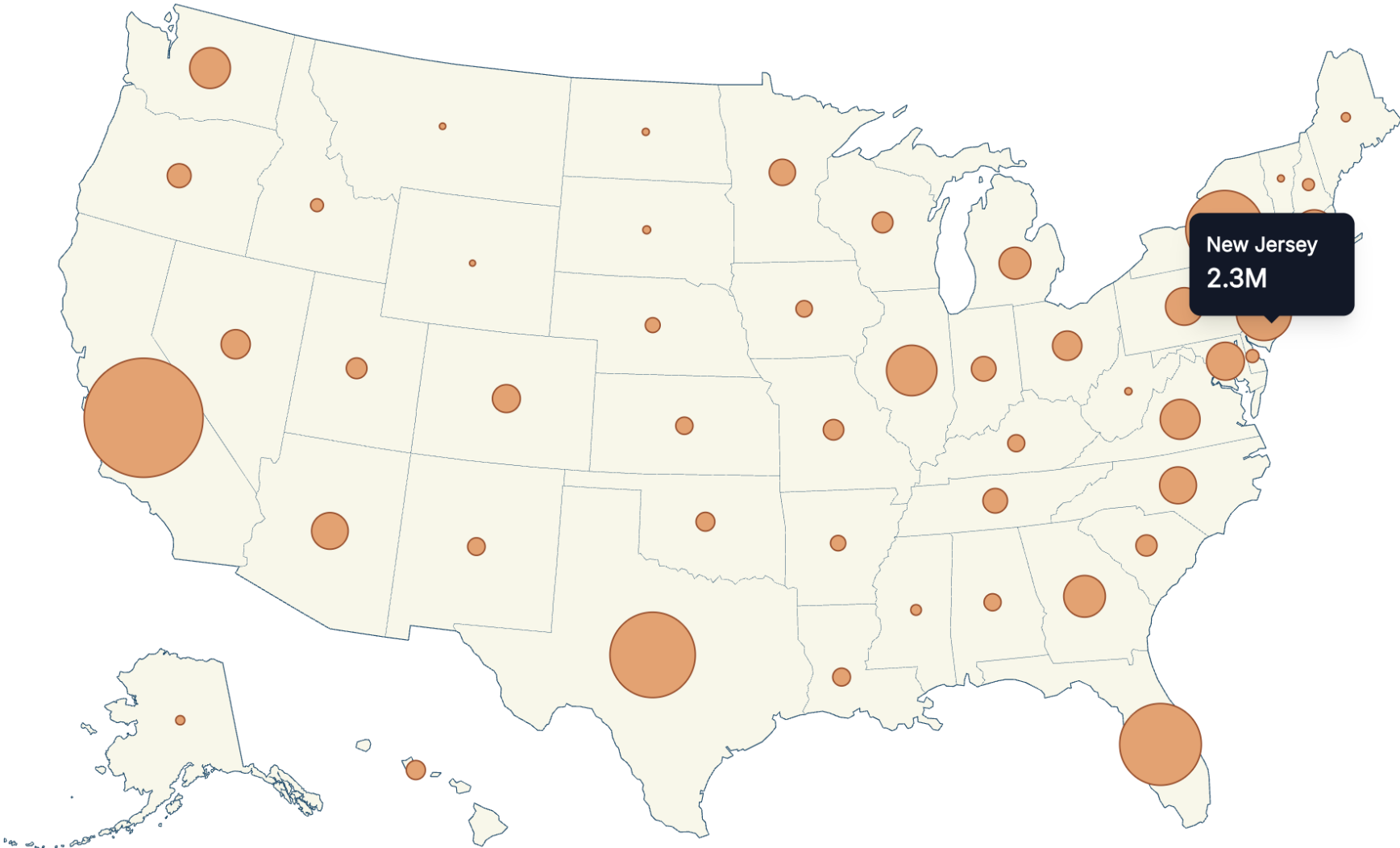
Percent Immigrants Age 50+, 2005-2023



Percent of U.S. immigrants age 50+ has almost doubled in less than 20 years

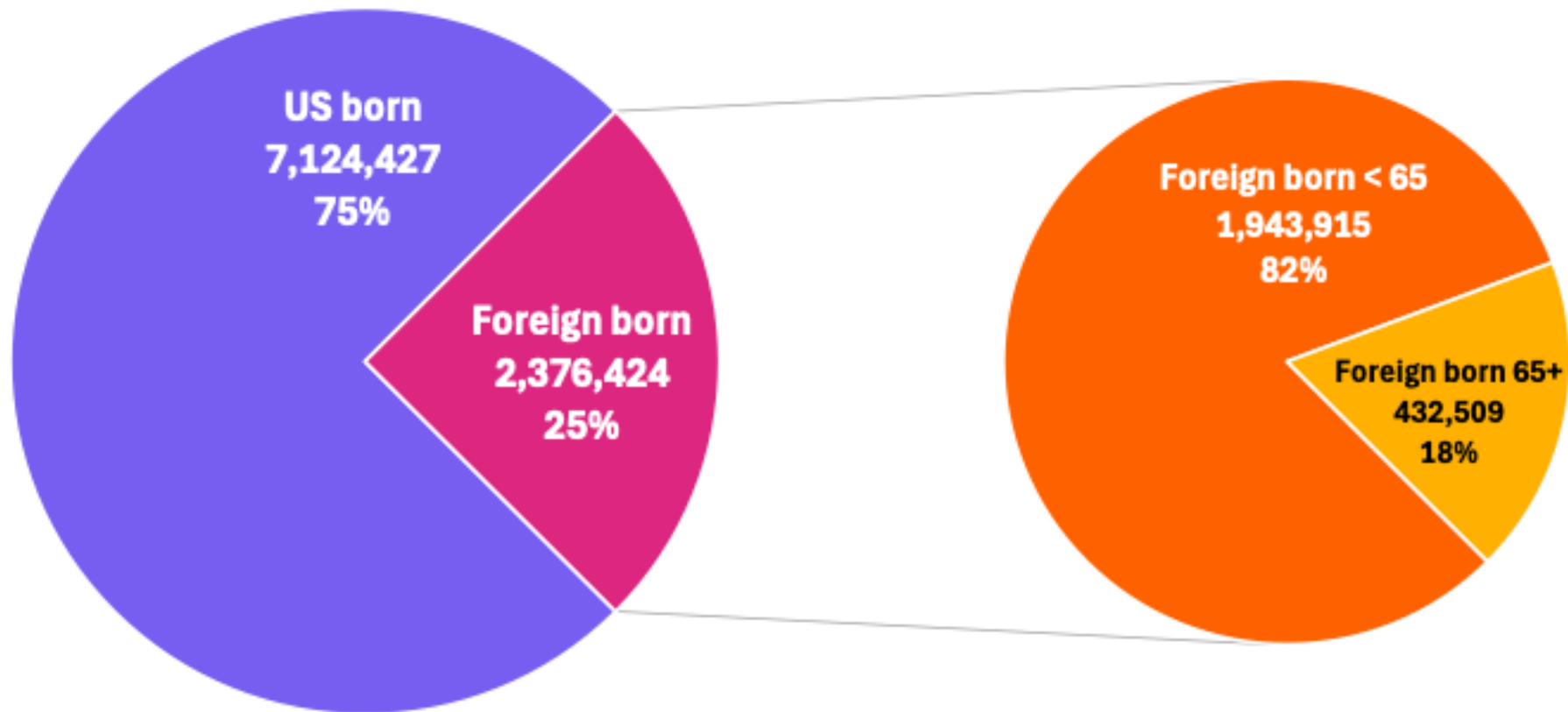
Population estimates from American Community Survey (ACS) data, adjusted for coverage error of the unauthorized population by Dr. Jennifer Van Hook

Immigrants by State 2026



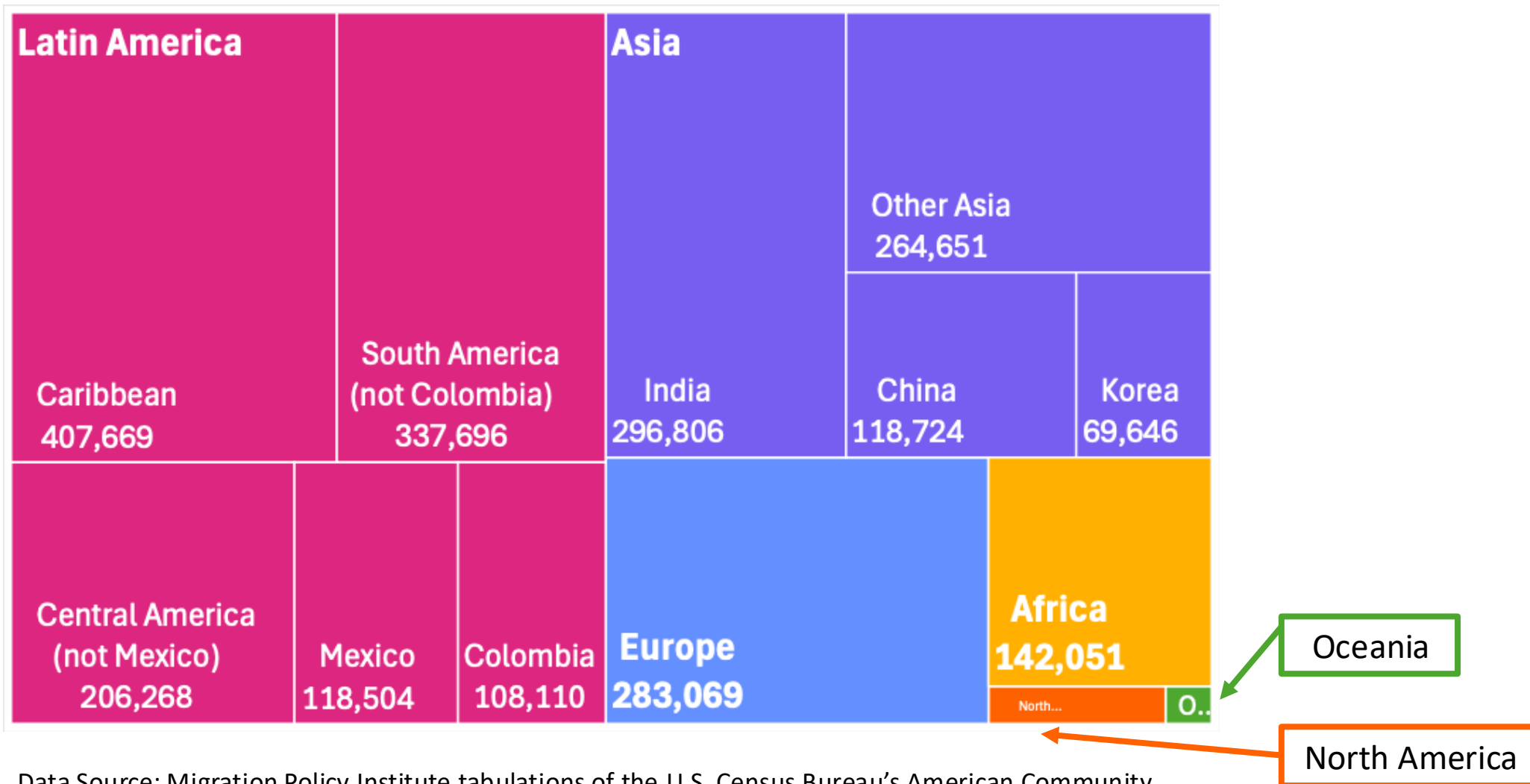
Foreign-Born Population
Source: World Population Review

Immigrants in New Jersey (2024)



Data Source: Migration Policy Institute tabulations of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and Decennial Census.

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Definitions

Social Isolation: the objective condition of having no/few meaningful social contacts (Crosswell et al. 2020)

Loneliness: the subjective experience of distress with the quality and quantity of one's personal relationships (Russel et al. 1984 Perlman & Papiou 1981)

Social Isolation & Loneliness = Moderately Correlated
(e.g., Coyle & Dugan 2012)

Why is social well-being important?

Loneliness impacts health through biopsychosocial mechanisms.

(Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2013, *Brain, Behavior, & Immunity*)

- **Physical health**

More detrimental health behaviors (smoking, drinking), chronic illness, functional limitations, high blood pressure, i

- **Mental health**

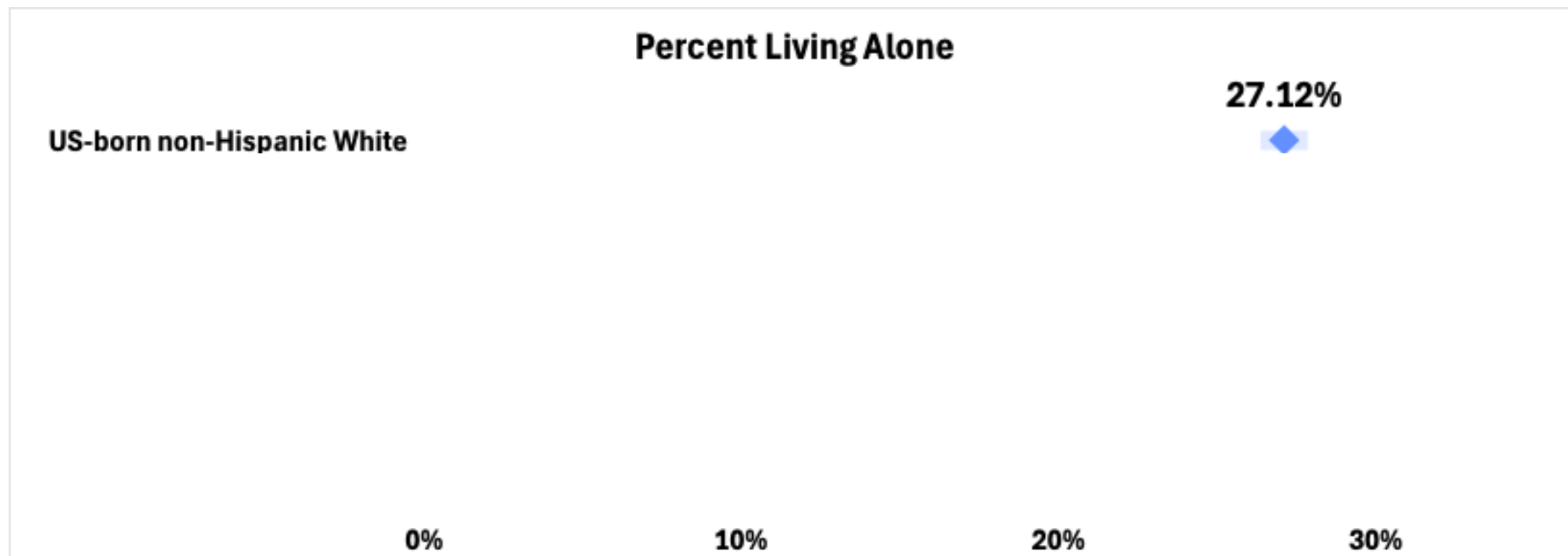
More anxiety, depression, & suicide
poor sleep

- **Cognitive health**

Poorer recall, executive function, semantic fluency, & processing speed

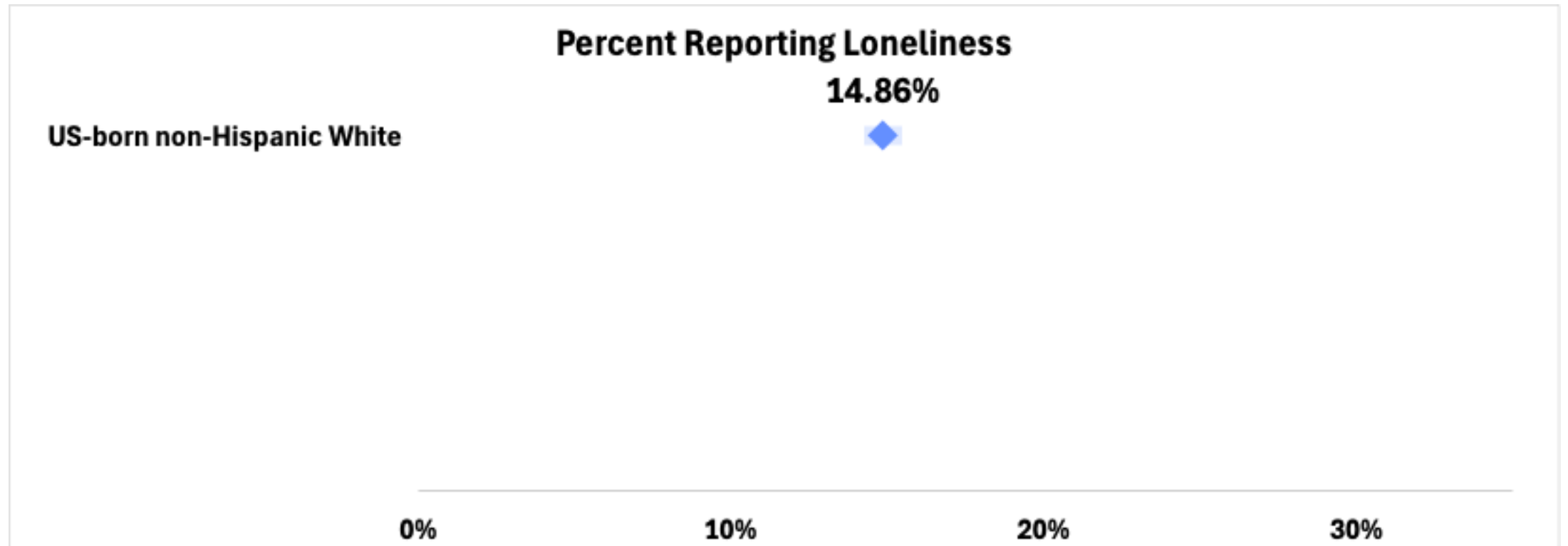
Social well-being is a
population health issue!

Older Adult Social Isolation



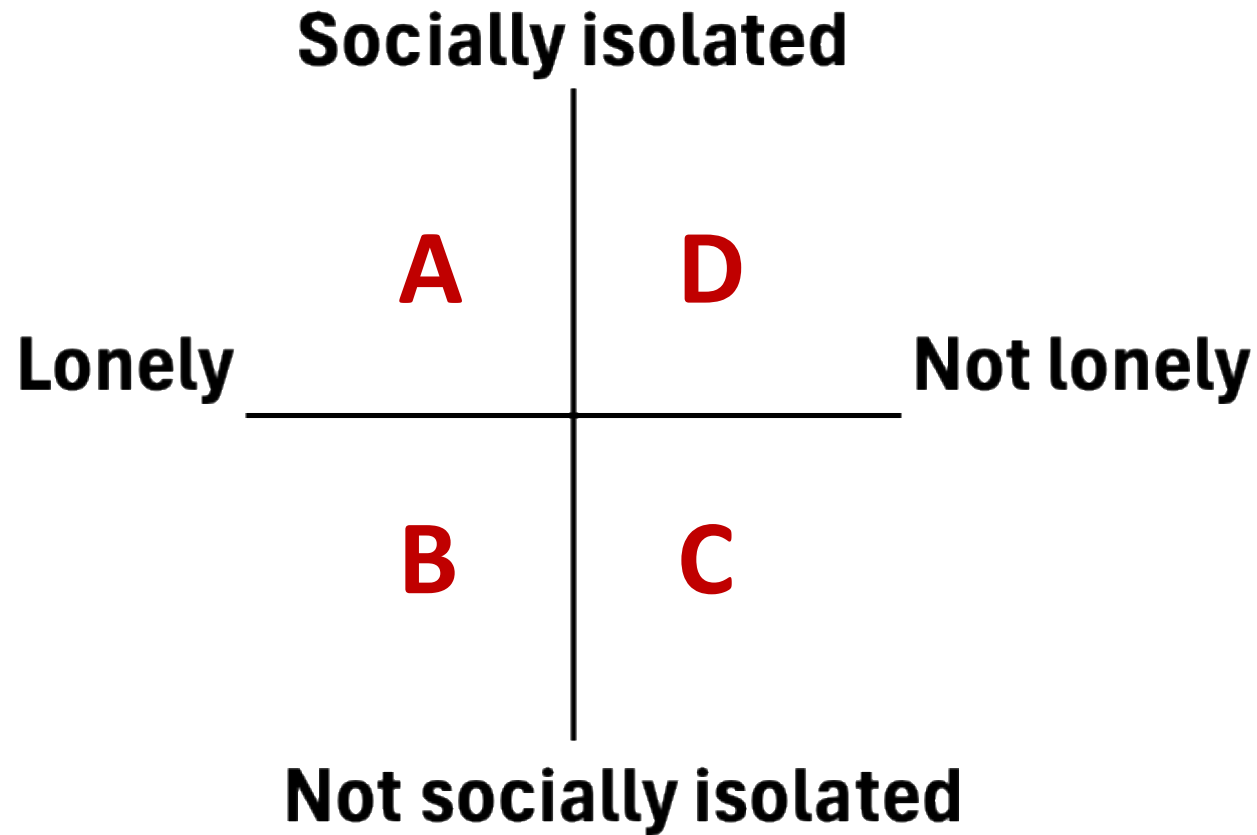
US-born non-Hispanic White & Foreign-born Mexican: Health and Retirement Study (HRS), Wave 16 (2022)
Foreign-born Indian & Korean: NJHealth

Older Adult Loneliness

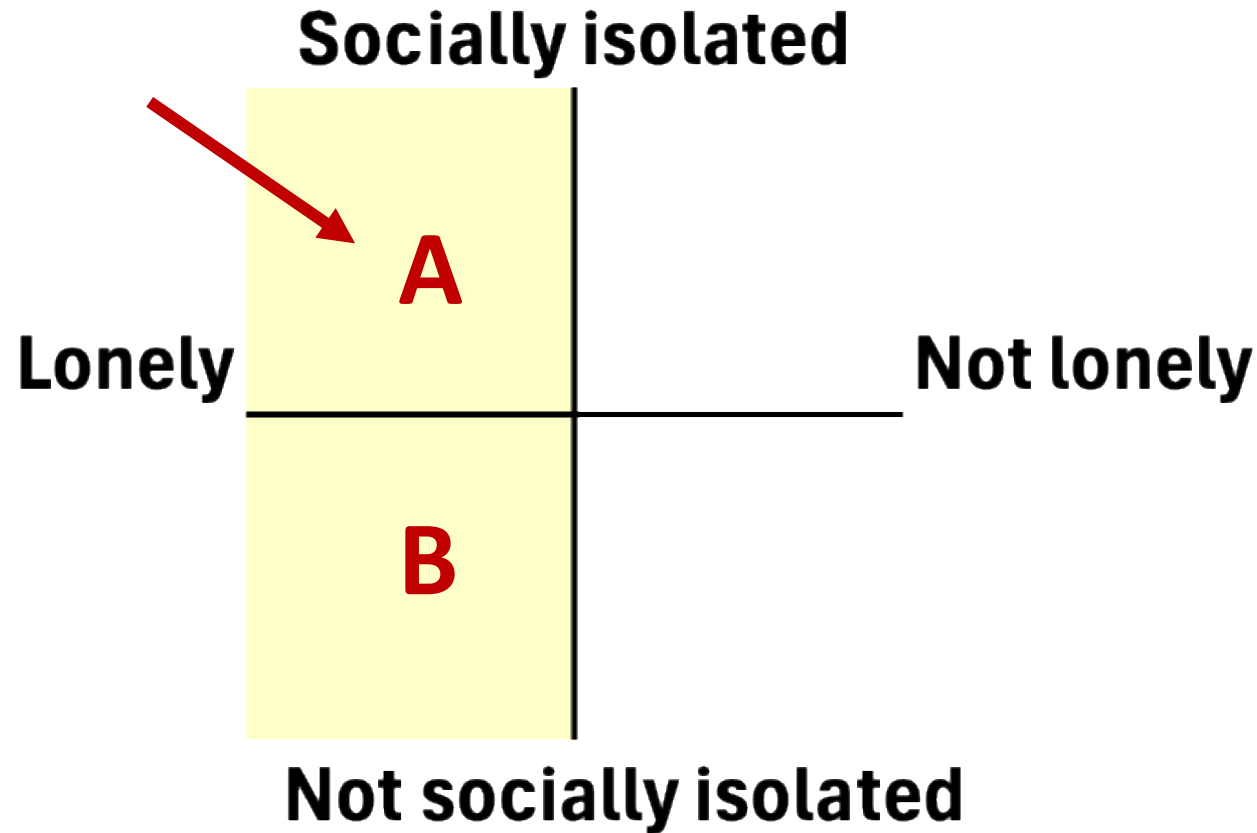


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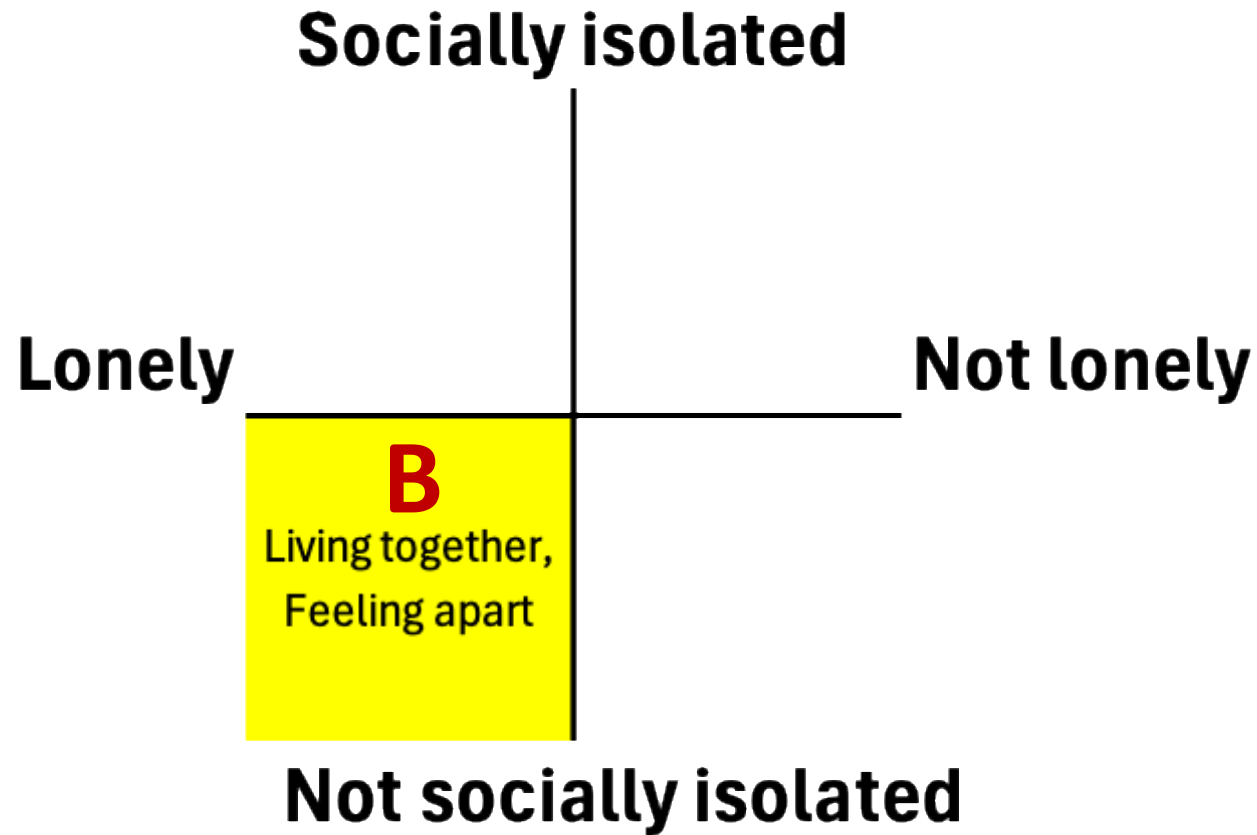
Intersection of Social Isolation & Loneliness



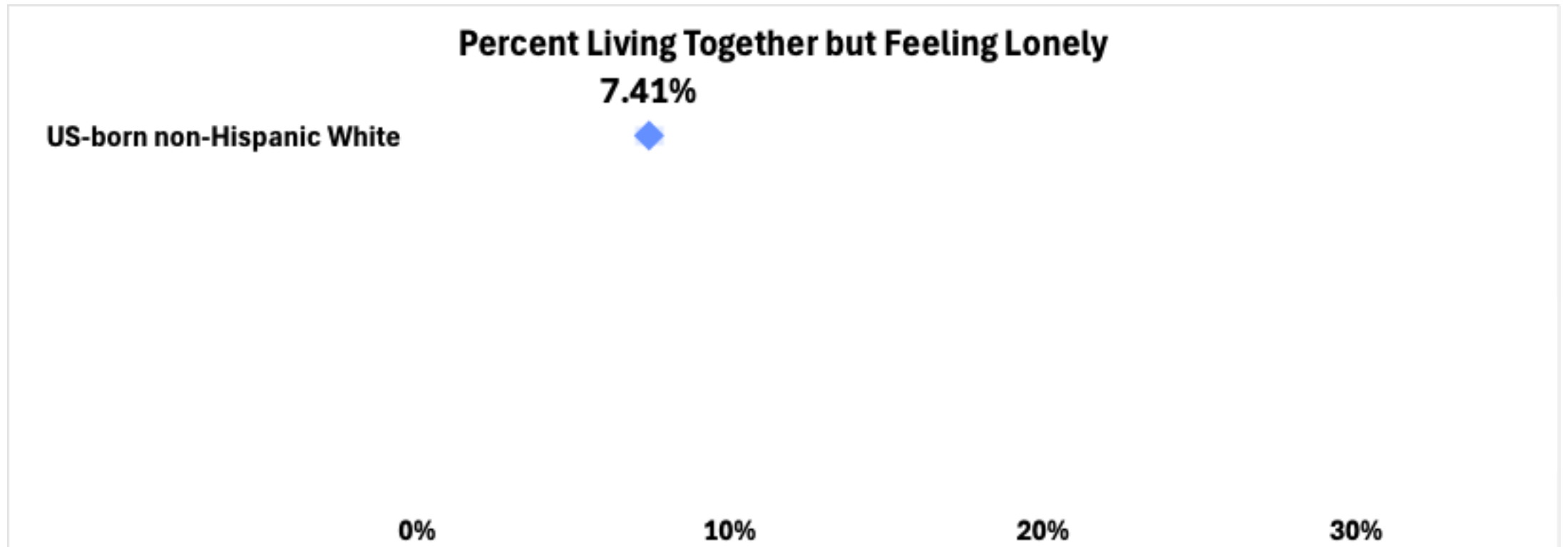
Intersection of Social Isolation & Loneliness



Intersection of Social Isolation & Loneliness



Living together, feeling apart?



US-born non-Hispanic White & Foreign-born Mexican: Health and Retirement Study (HRS), Wave 16 (2022)
Foreign-born Indian & Korean: NJHealth

Conclusions

- New Jersey offers the opportunity to study immigrant populations not often included in population surveys
- Mexican immigrants are more likely to live with others in middle age/older adulthood, but more likely to report loneliness
- Patterns for Mexican immigrants should not be generalized to other populations
- Indian immigrants in NJ may show similar patterns to Mexicans, but Korean immigrants diverge from Mexican immigrants
- Need to design targeted interventions for social well-being



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Questions or Comments?

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NJHealth Study Leadership



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Public Policy



Paul Duberstein, PhD
Sr. Co-Investigator
Health Psychology



William Hu, MD, PhD
Sr. Co-Investigator
Cognitive Neurology



Dawne Mouzon, PhD
Sr. Co-Investigator
Sociology



Mara Getz Sheftel, PhD
Co-Investigator
Sociology & Demography



Stephanie Bergren
Project Director



Margaret Koller, MS
Exec. Administrator



Victor Murray, MSW
Community Engagement
Advisor
Camden Coalition



Steven Cohen, PhD
Sampling Consultant
RTI International (retired)

Study Team



Francine Cartwright
Project Manager



Michelle Migut
Study Nurse & Chief
Safety Officer



Dinesh Mendhe
Database Manager



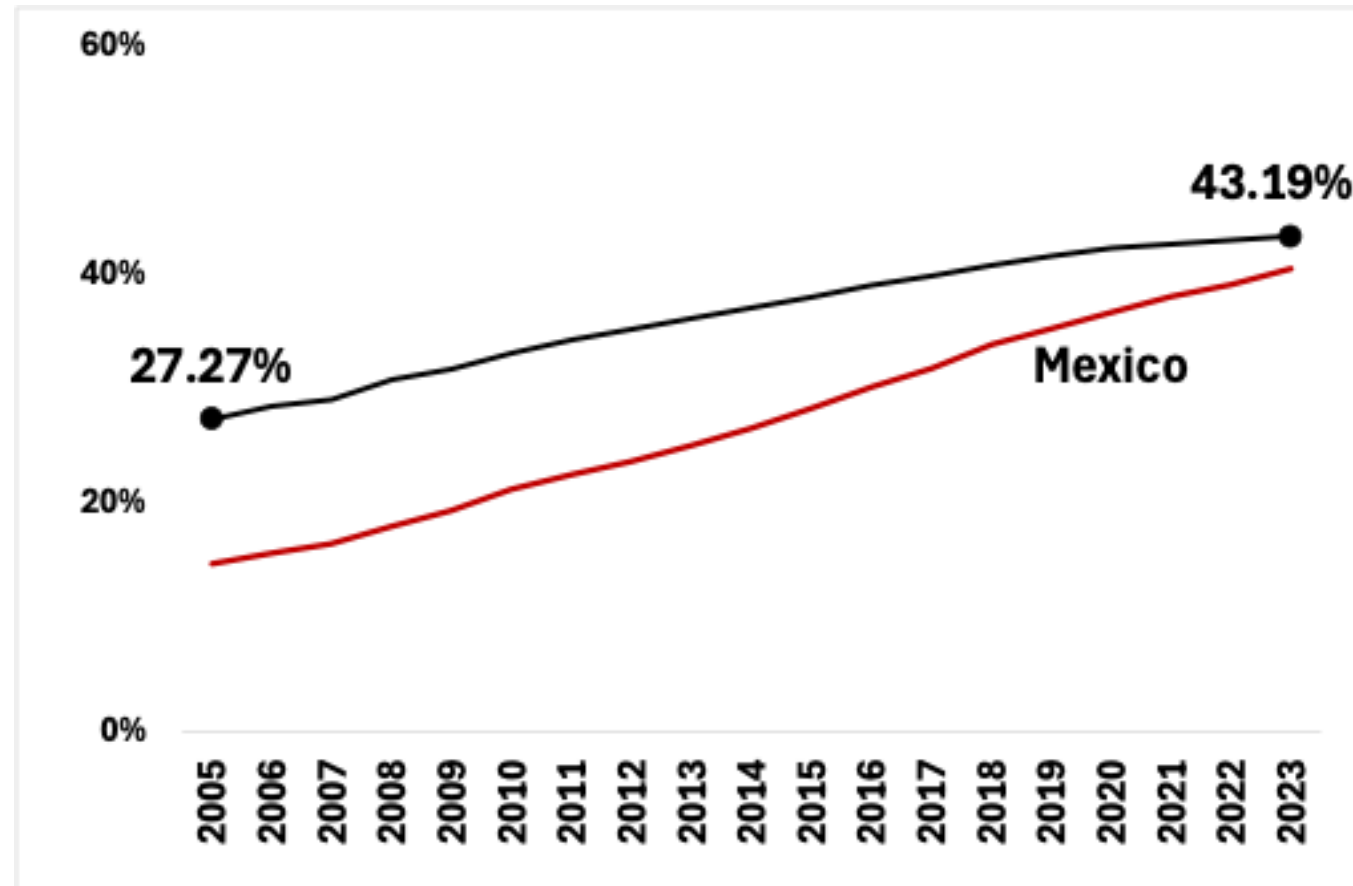
Julia Schimmel
Study Coordinator

Study Site
303 George St. (entrance on New St.)



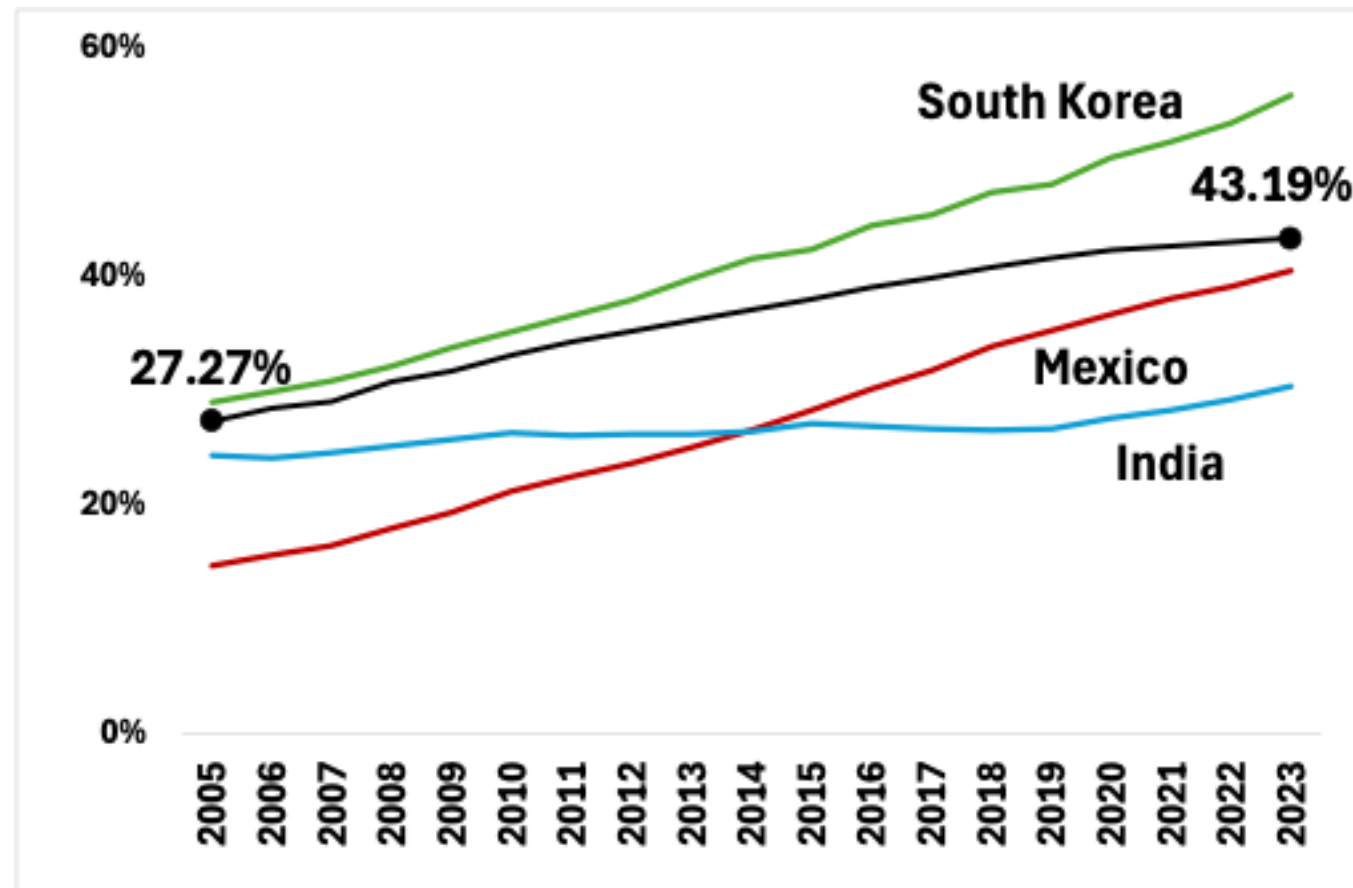
Multilingual community outreach staff
Field coordinators
RA/Interview staff

Percent Immigrants Age 50+ by Country of Origin



Population estimates from American Community Survey (ACS) data, adjusted for coverage error of the unauthorized population by Dr. Jennifer Van Hook

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Top Countries of Origin for Immigrants 50+

Population Estimates for 2023 (in thousands)

1	Mexico	4,716	6	Cuba	781
2	Philippines	1,310	7	Germany	637
3	China	1,062	8	S. Korea	617
4	India	1,071	9	El Salvador	614
5	Vietnam	846	10	Canada	570

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