

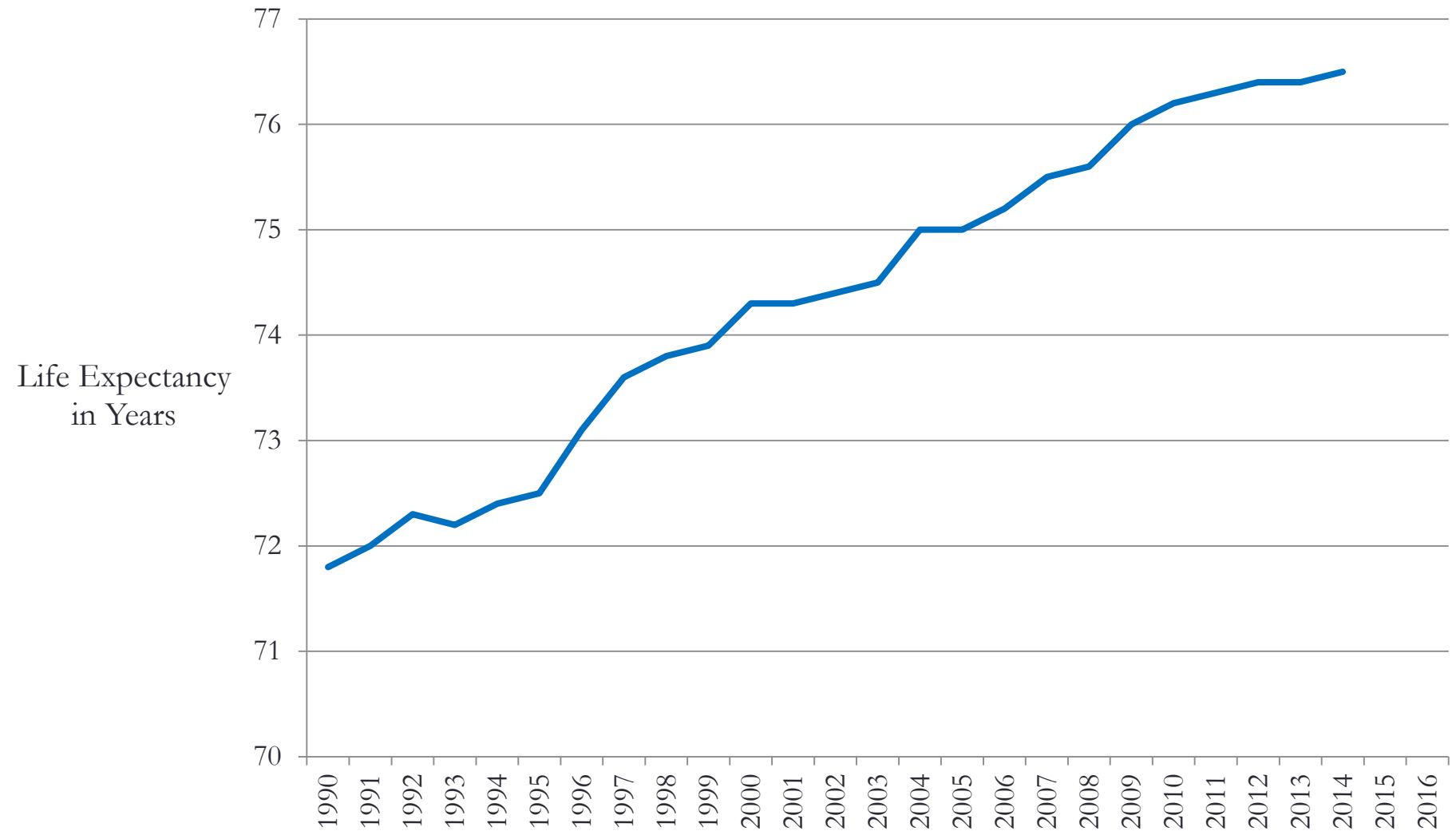
Understanding the Regional Divergence in Adult Mortality in the United States

Andrew Fenelon, PhD

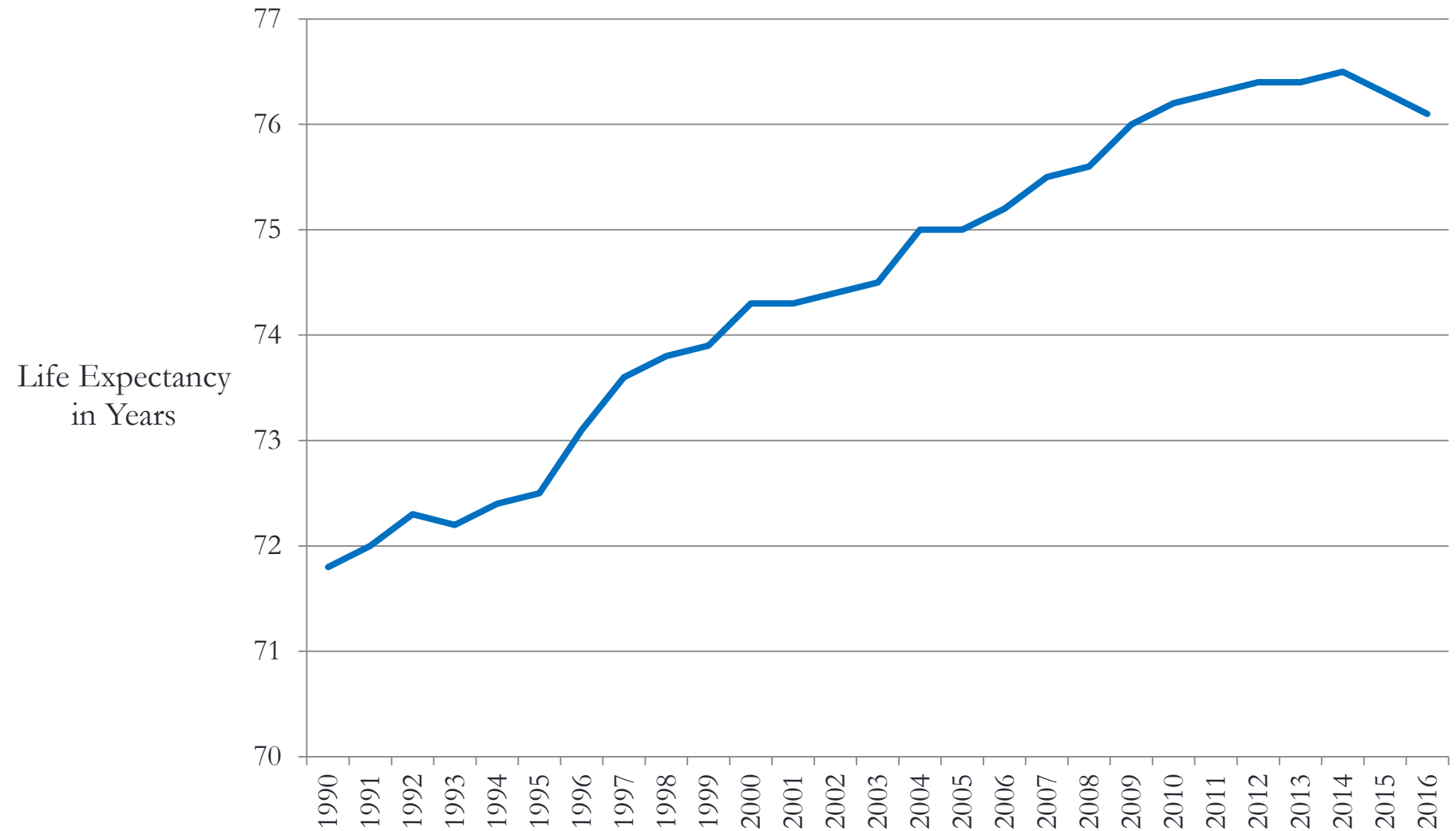
University of Maryland, College Park



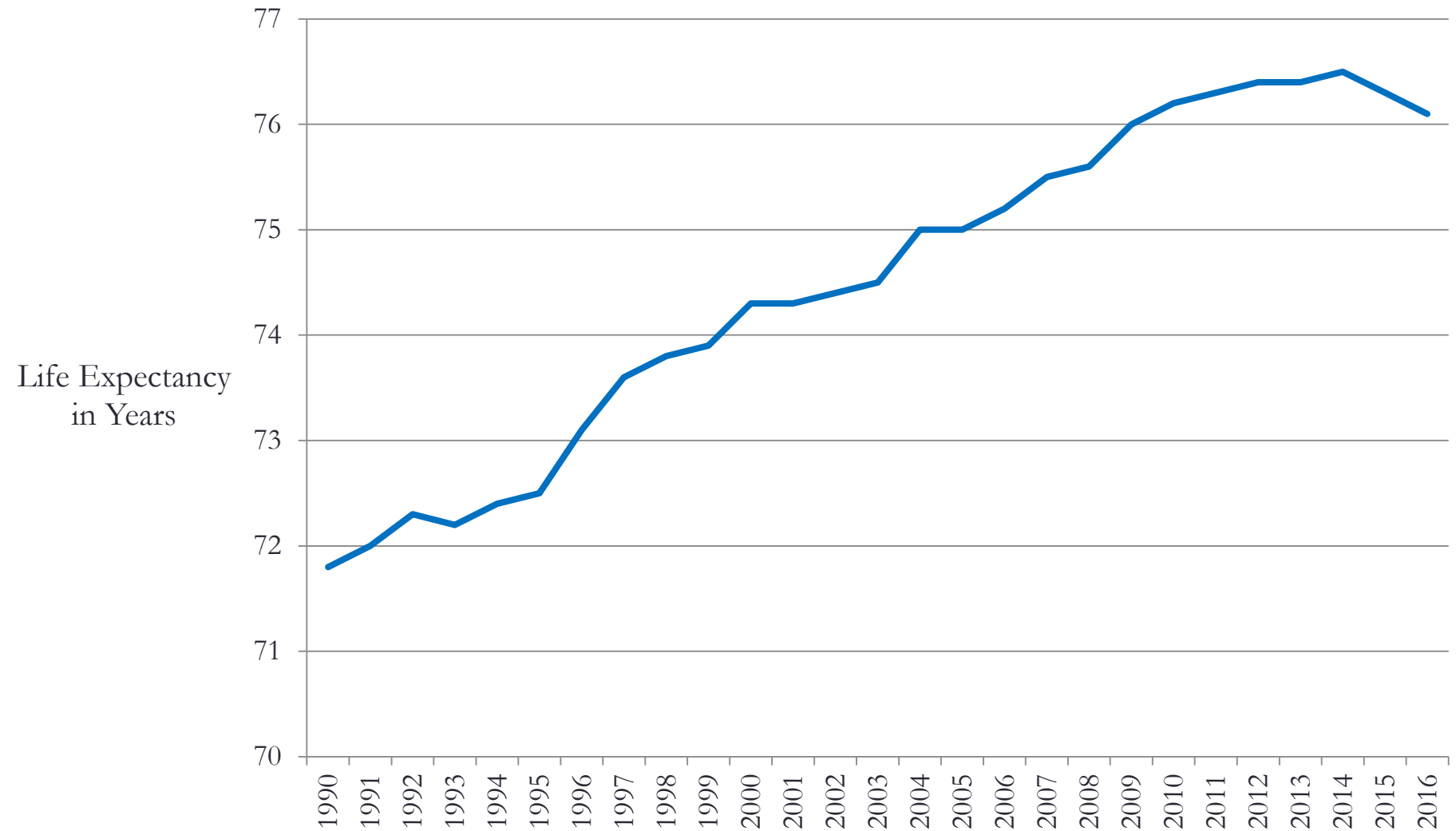
American Life Expectancy



American Life Expectancy



American Life Expectancy is in Peril



A Problem

Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) Among OECD Countries, 2015

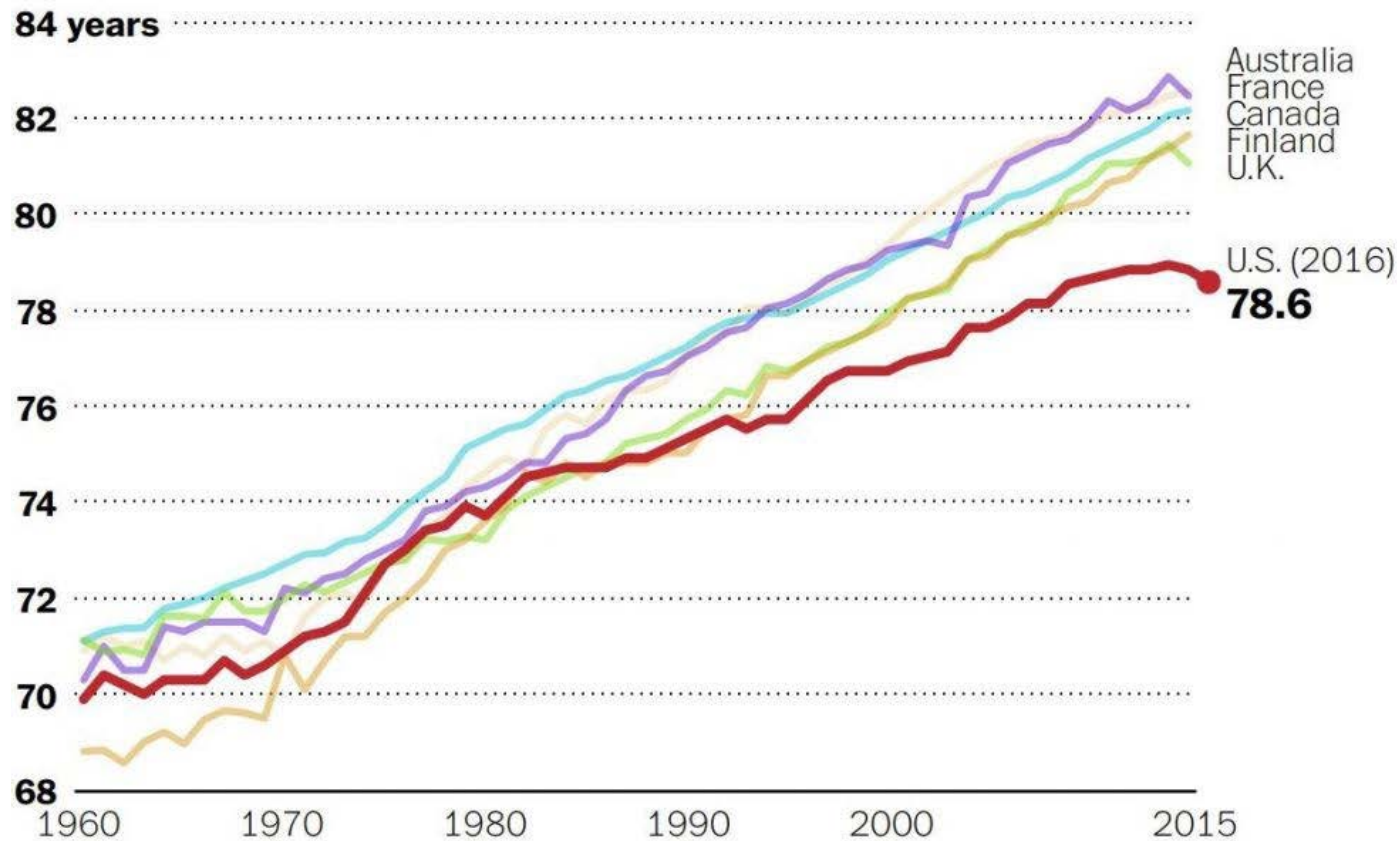


The United States ranks
26th of 35 high-income
countries with an average
life expectancy of just 78.8
years

Some Context for the Problem

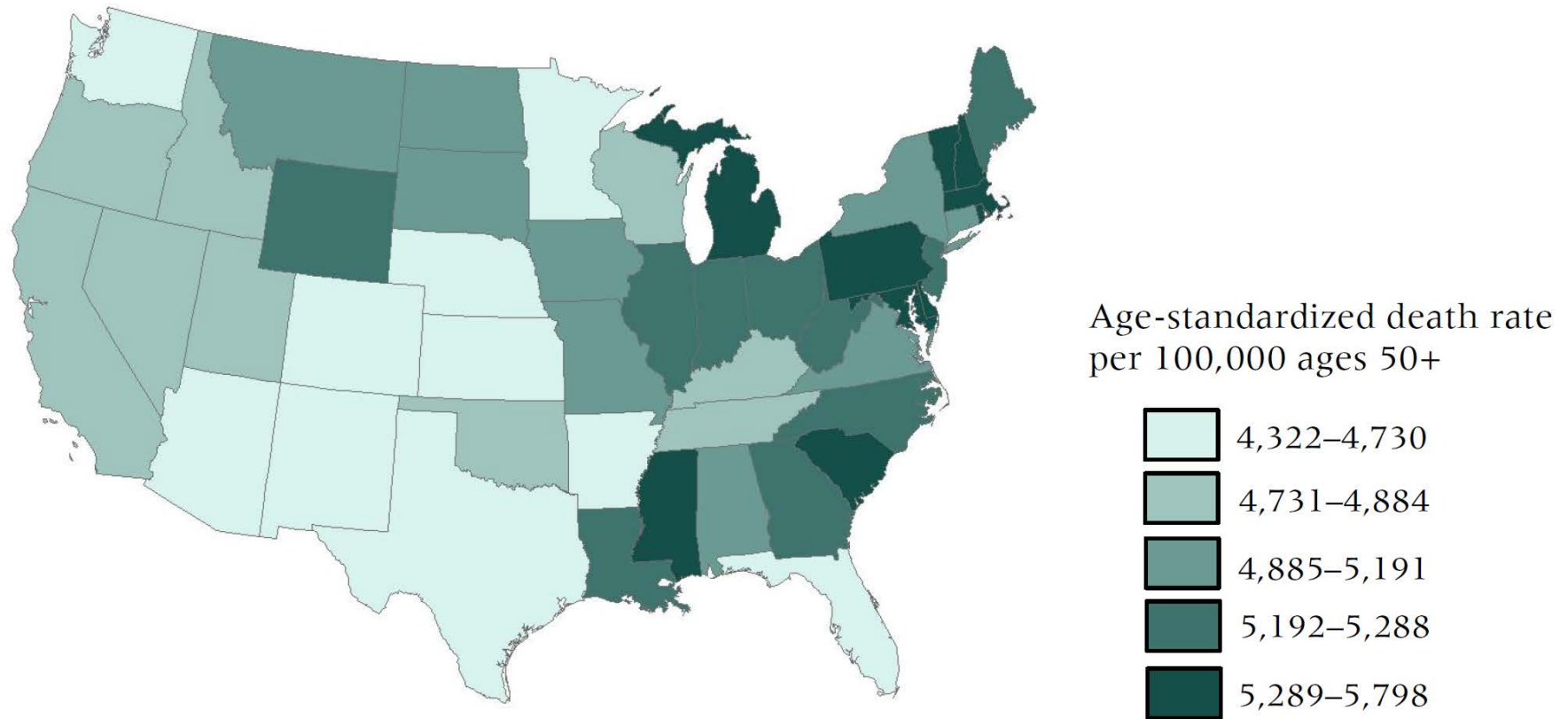
American exceptionalism

Life expectancy at birth, selected OECD countries



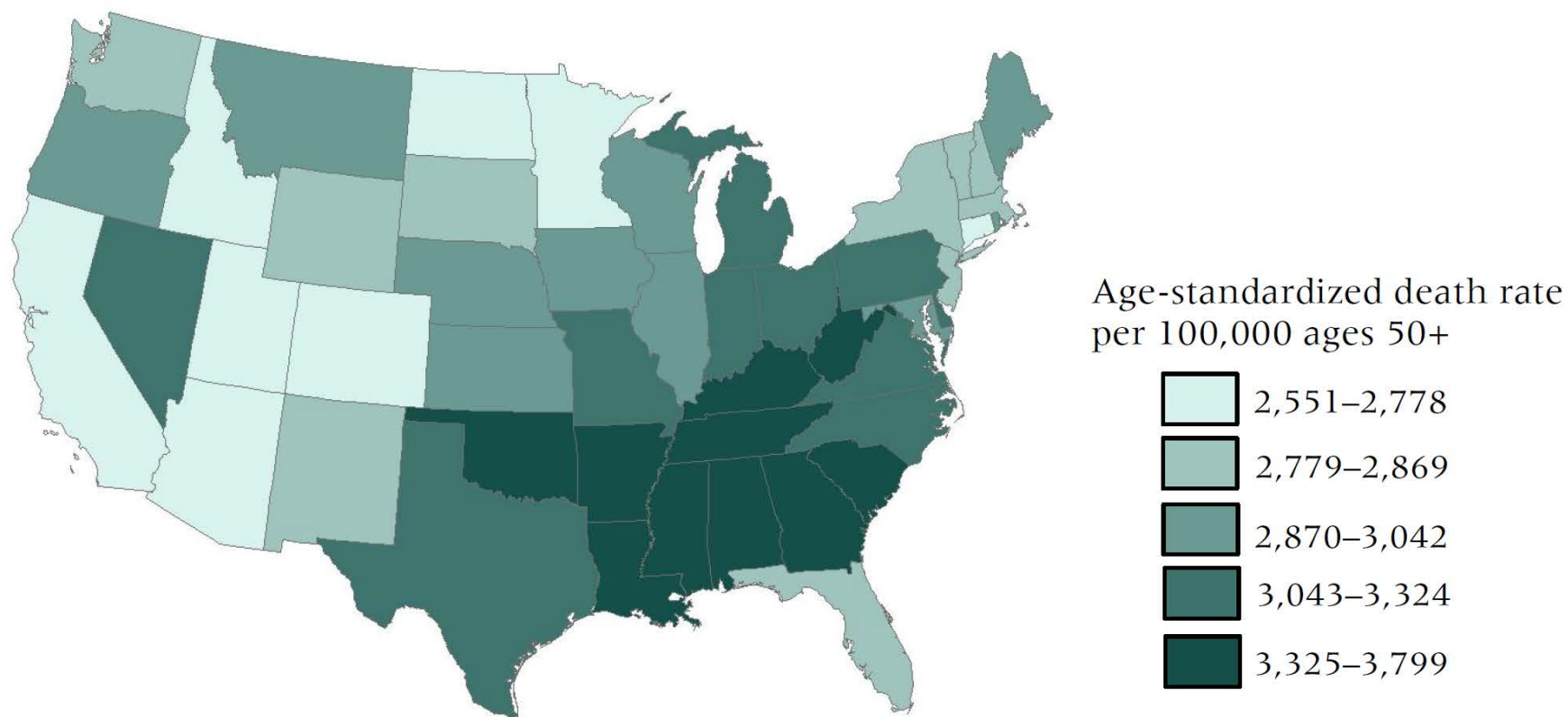
Adult Mortality by State

1965



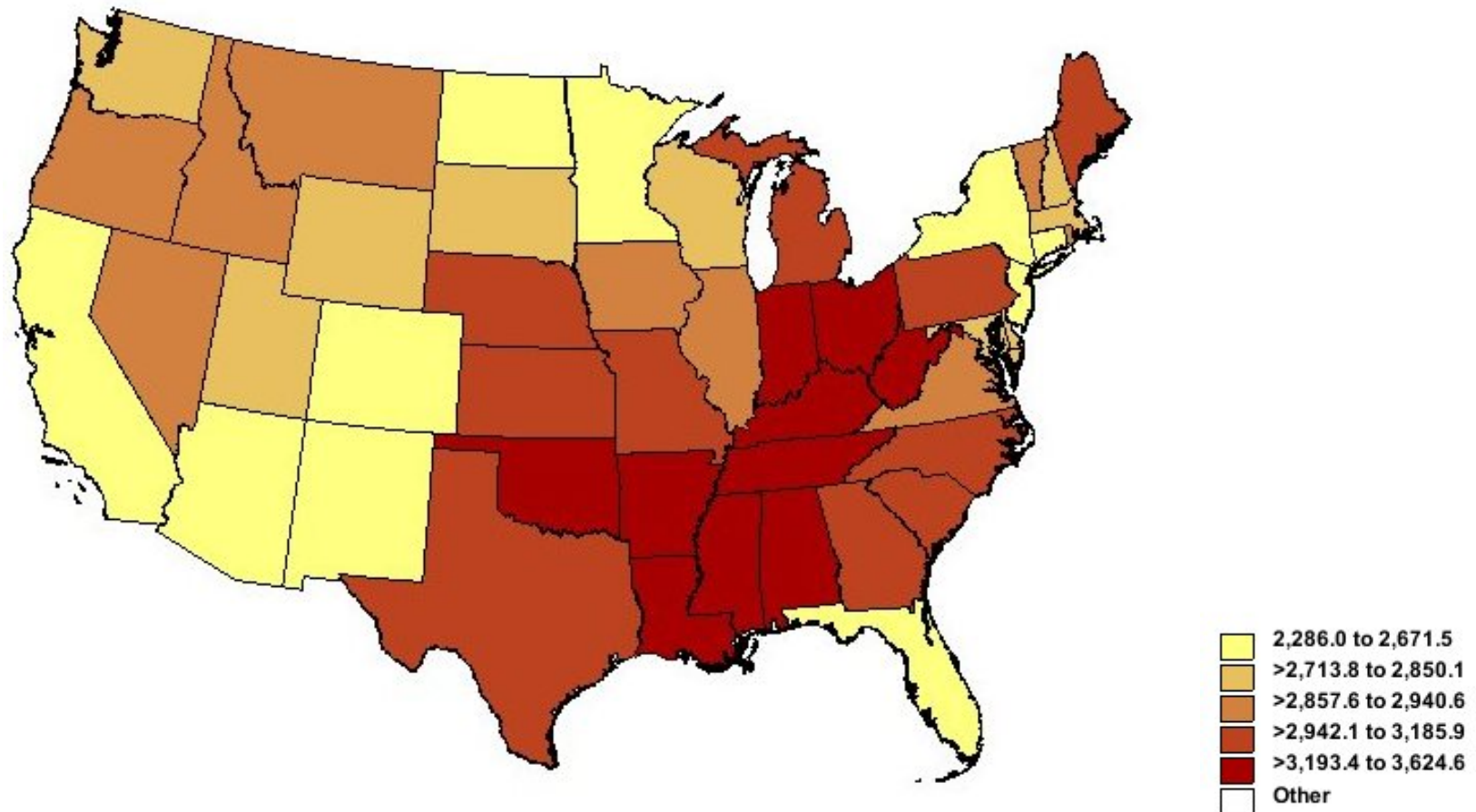
Adult Mortality by State

2004



Adult Mortality by State

2015



Source: CDC Wonder

Regional Divergence

- The regional divergence in American adult death rates has two major components

Regional Divergence

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 1. The Southern Disadvantage

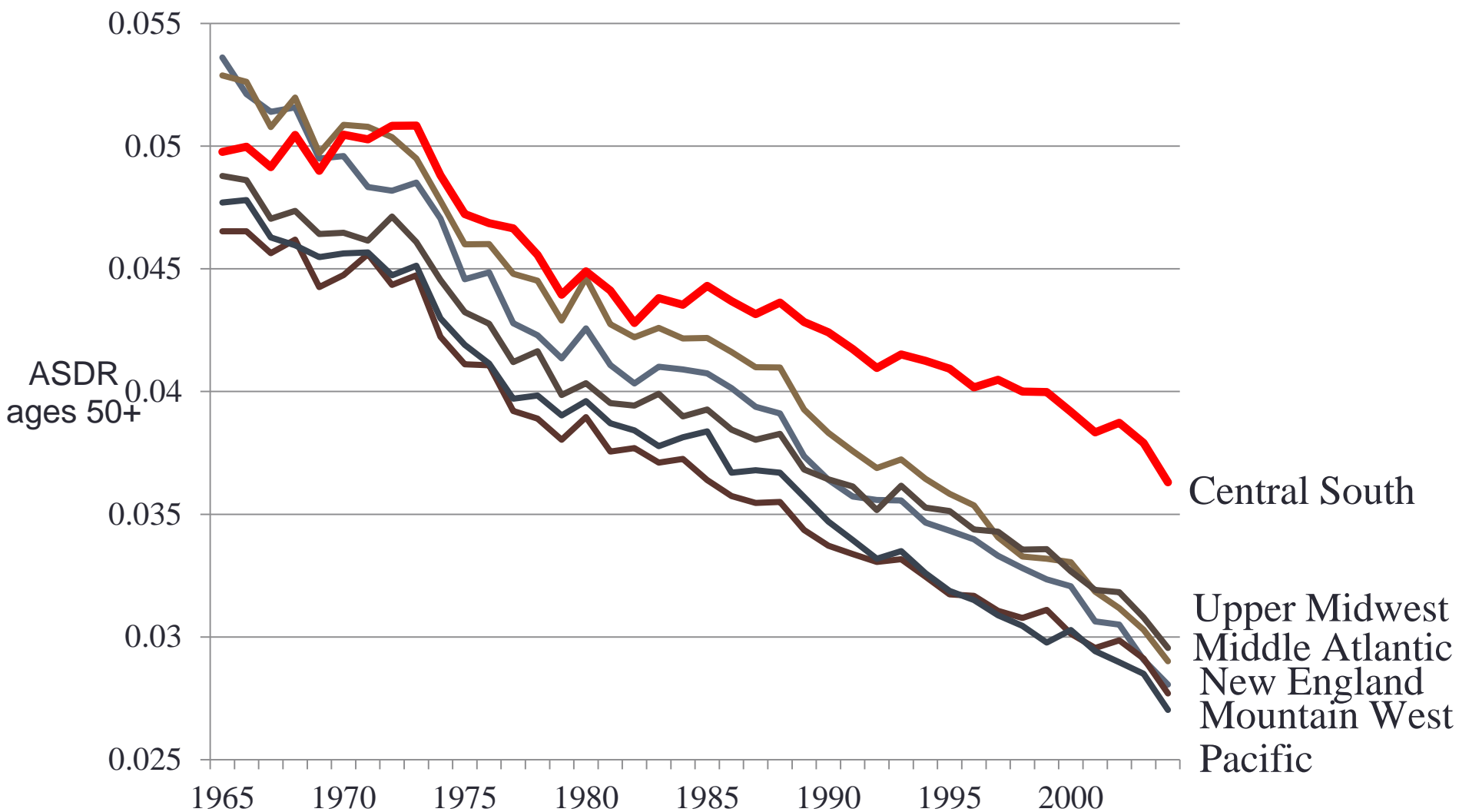
Regional Divergence

- The regional divergence in American adult death rates has two major components
 1. The Southern Disadvantage
 2. Exceptional East Coast improvements

The Southern Disadvantage

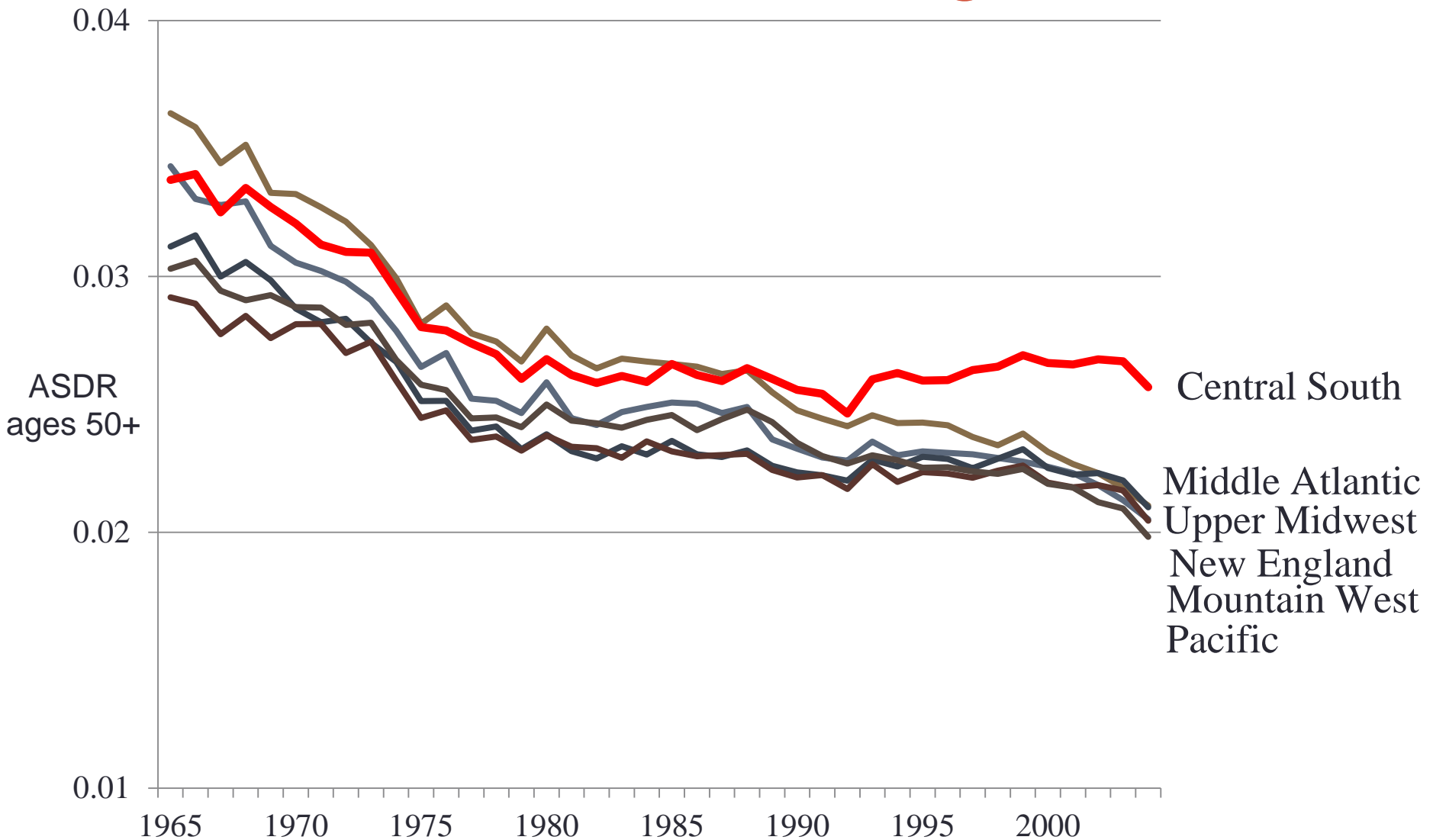
- A growing gap between the southern states and other US regions
- Particularly the Central South
 - Kentucky
 - Tennessee
 - Mississippi
 - Alabama

The Southern Disadvantage, Men



Source: Fenelon (2013) *Population and Development Review*

The Southern Disadvantage, Women

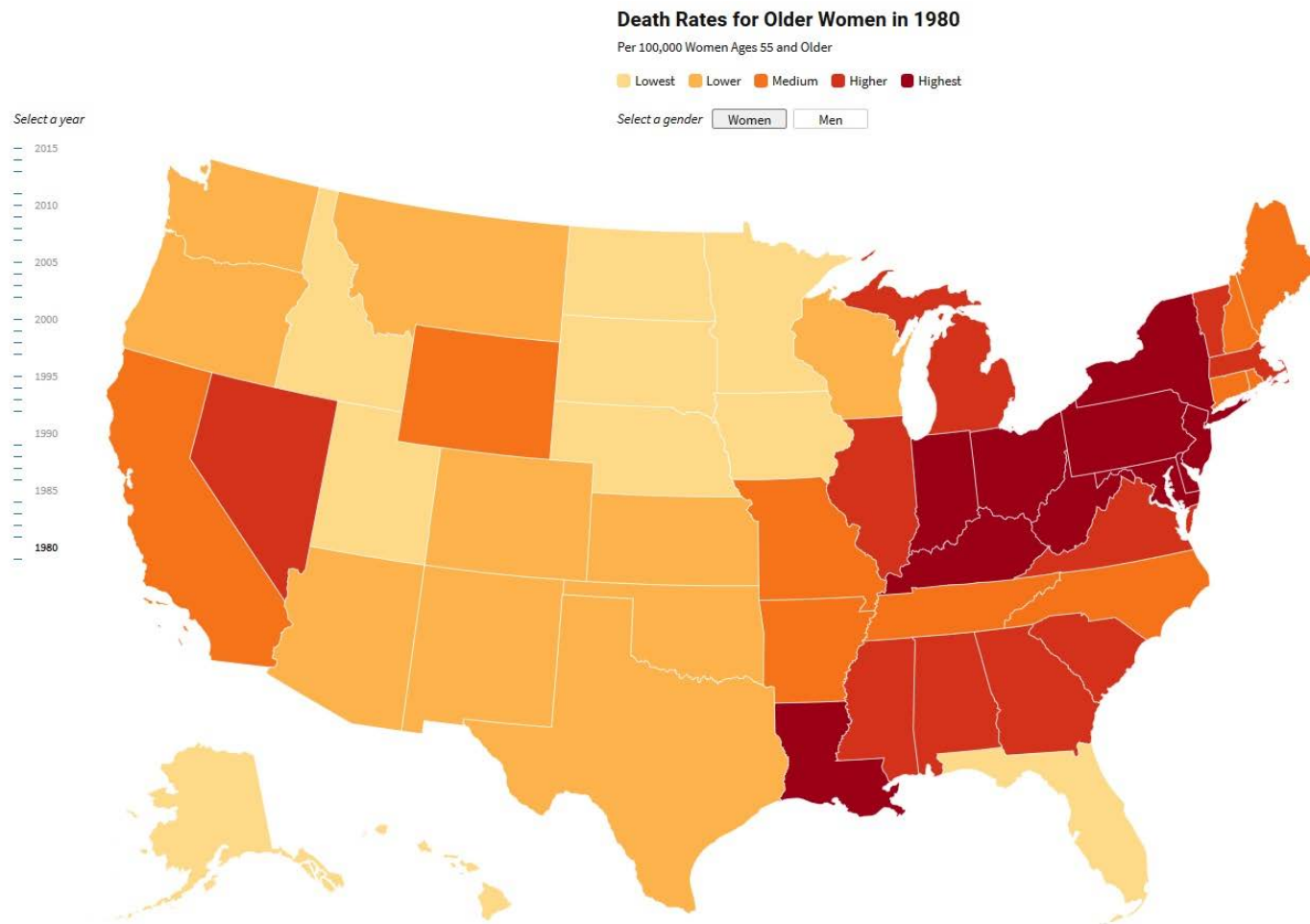


Source: Fenelon (2013) *Population and Development Review*

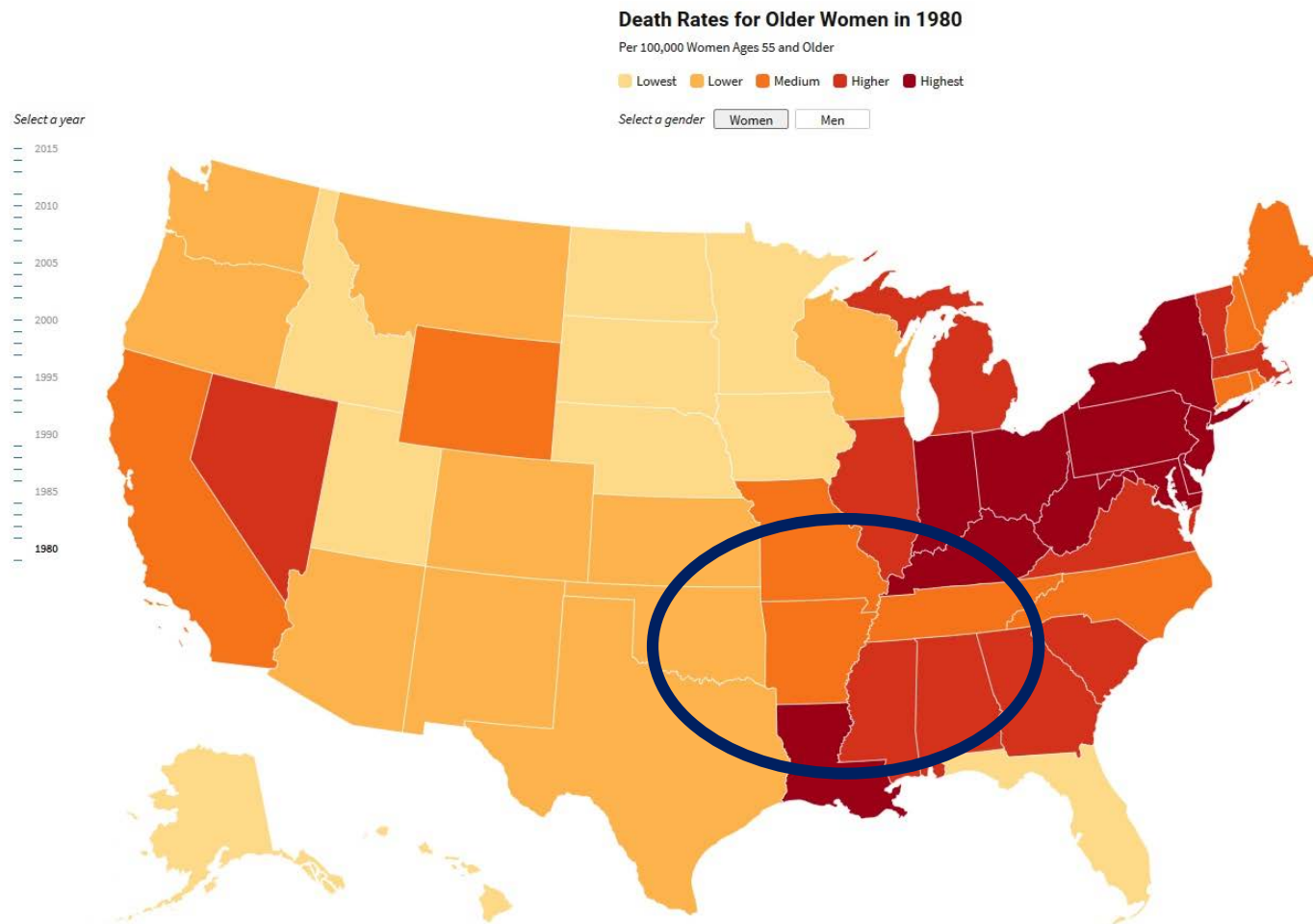
Data Visualization of Regional Divergence

- Population Reference Bureau
- Funded by the National Institute on Aging
- Michigan Center on the Demography of Aging
- <https://assets.prb.org/prb17/mortality/index.html>

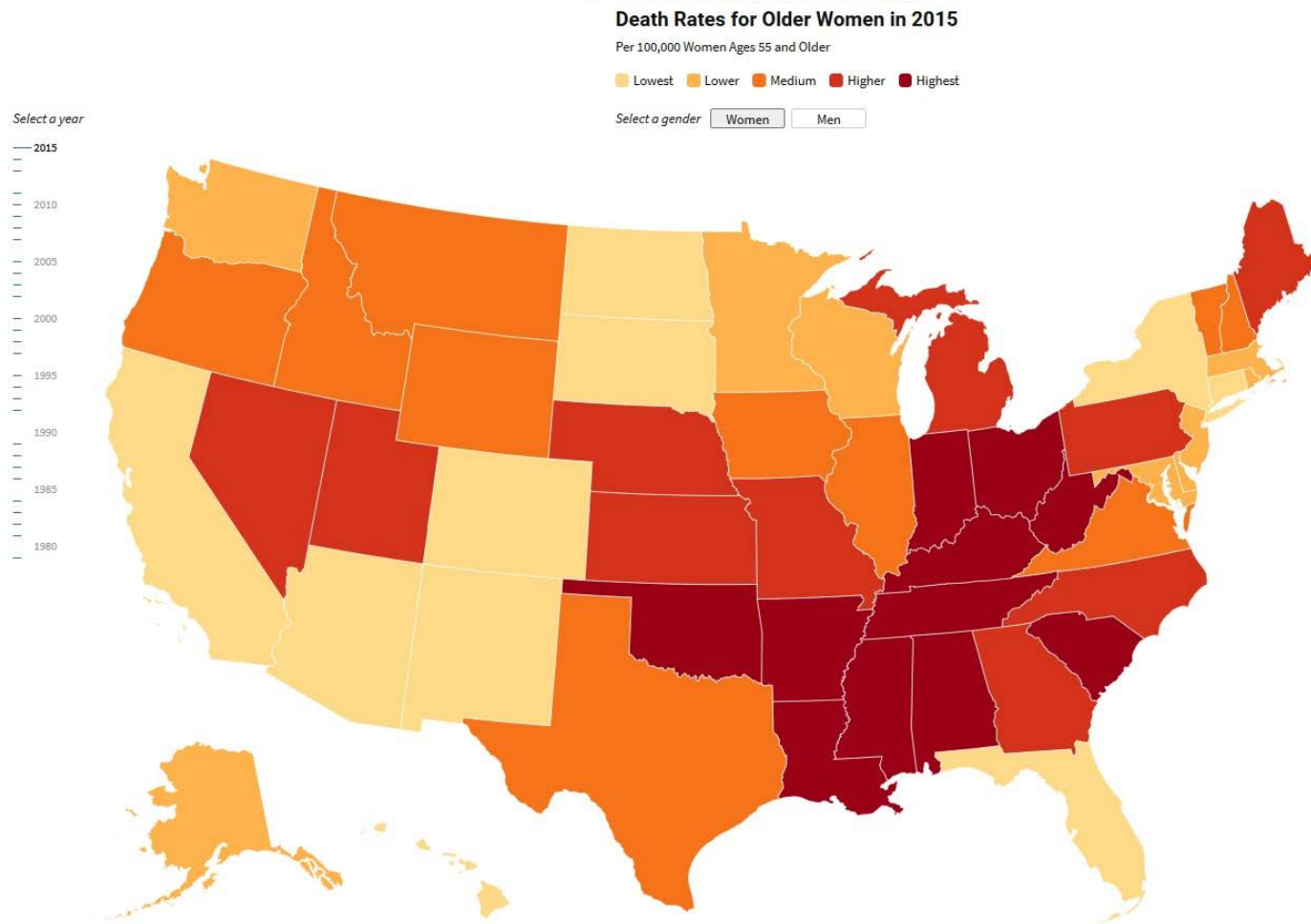
The Southern Disadvantage



The Southern Disadvantage

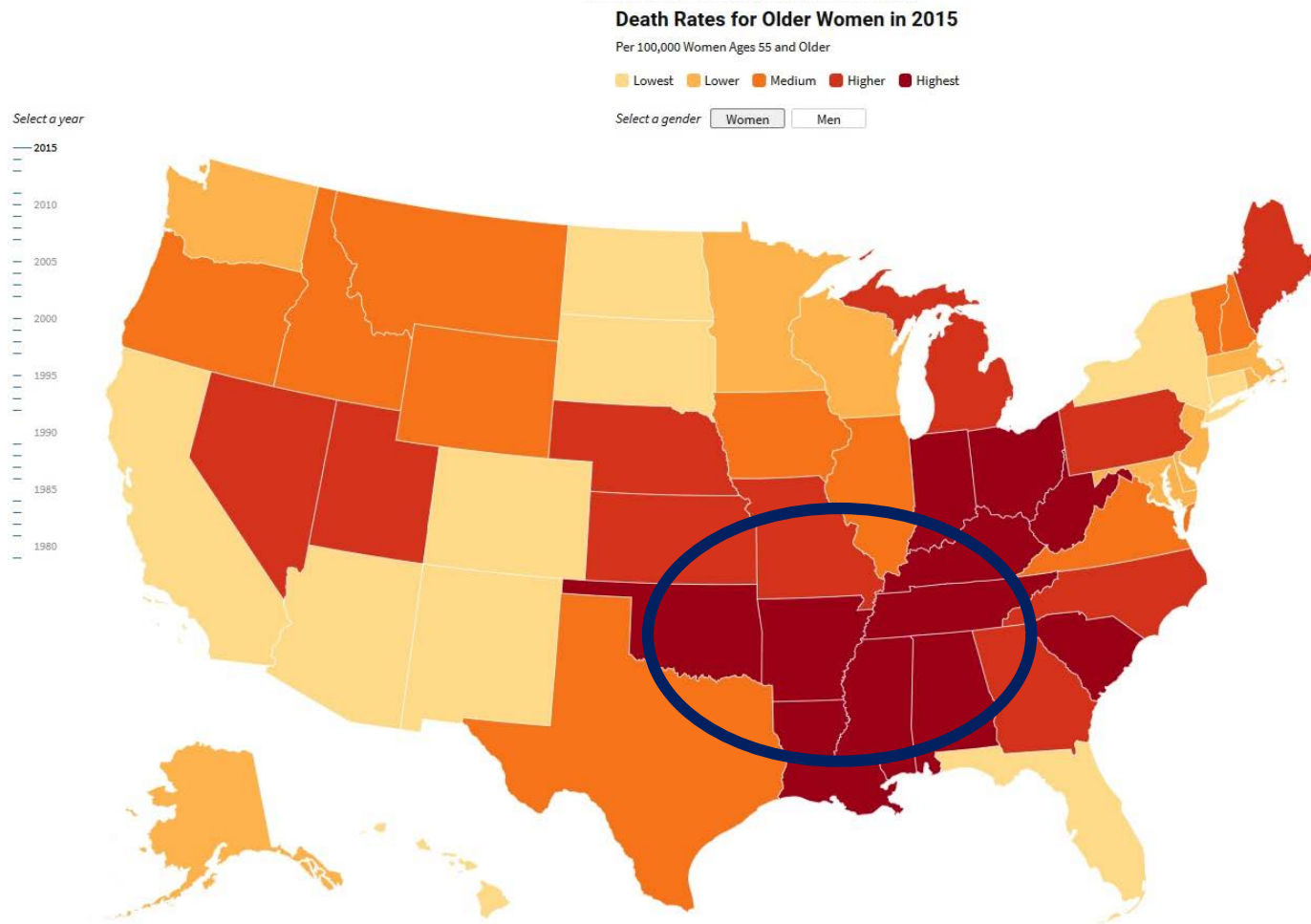


The Southern Disadvantage



Source: Population Reference Bureau – Declines in Adult Death Rates Lag in the South

The Southern Disadvantage

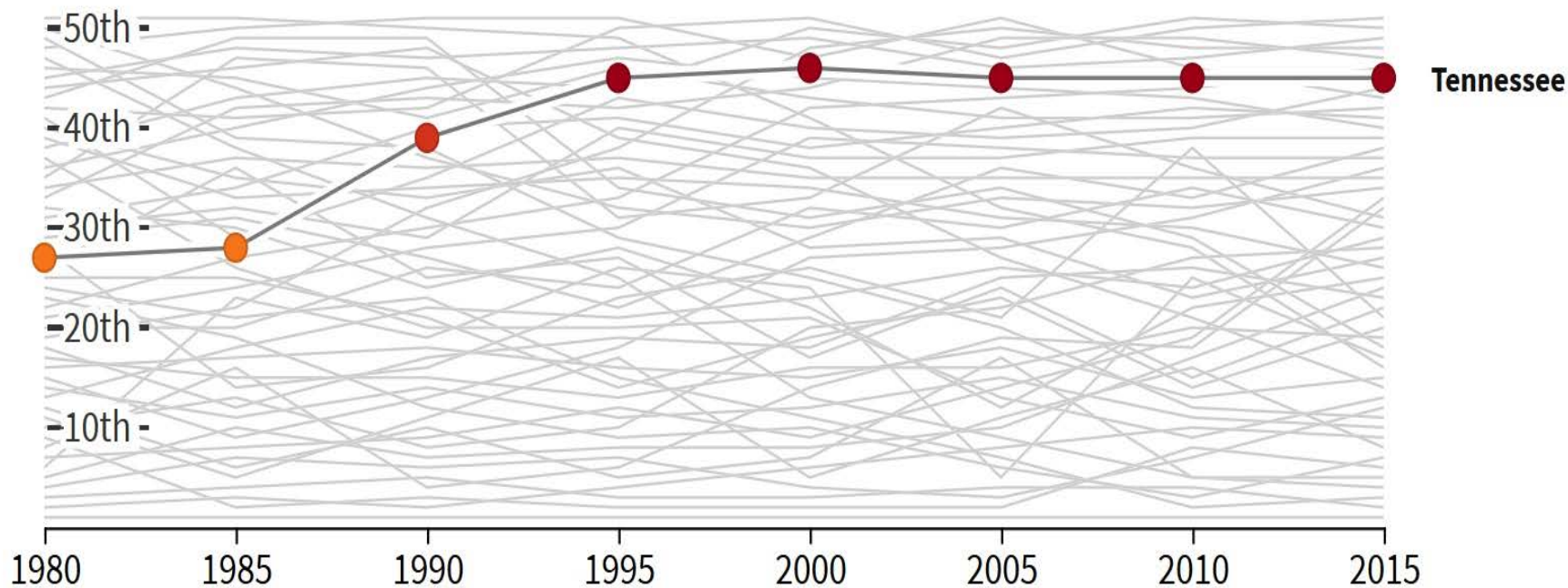


Tennessee

SELECT STATE OR GROUP OF STATES TO HIGHLIGHT

Tennessee

Lowest Lower Medium Higher Highest



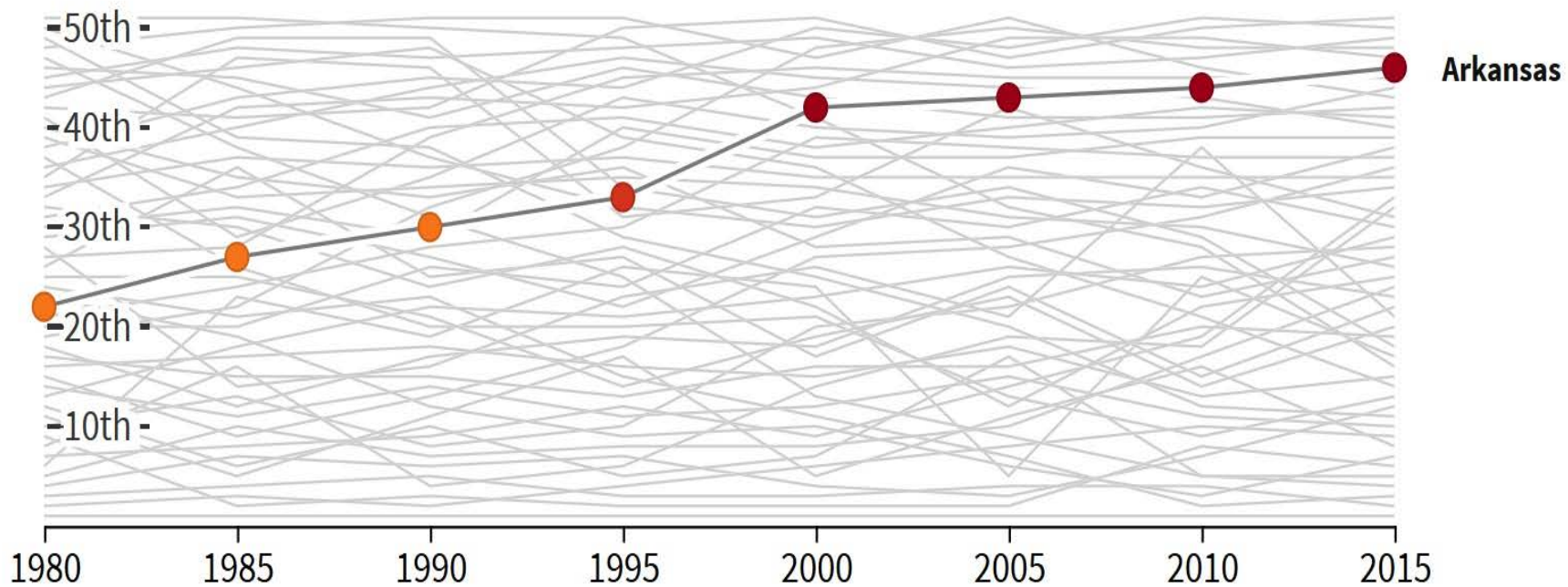
Arkansas

SELECT STATE OR GROUP OF STATES TO HIGHLIGHT

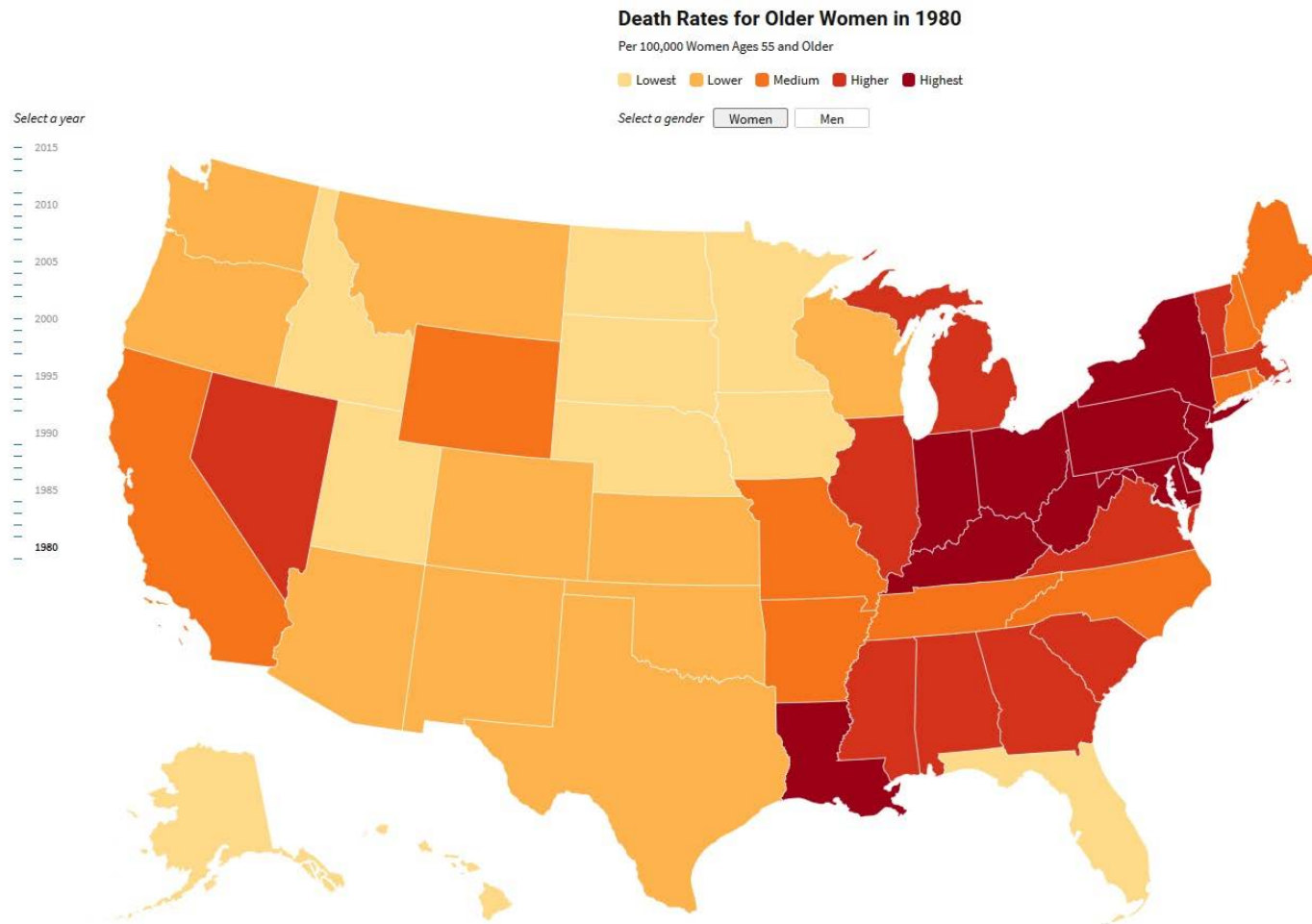
Arkansas



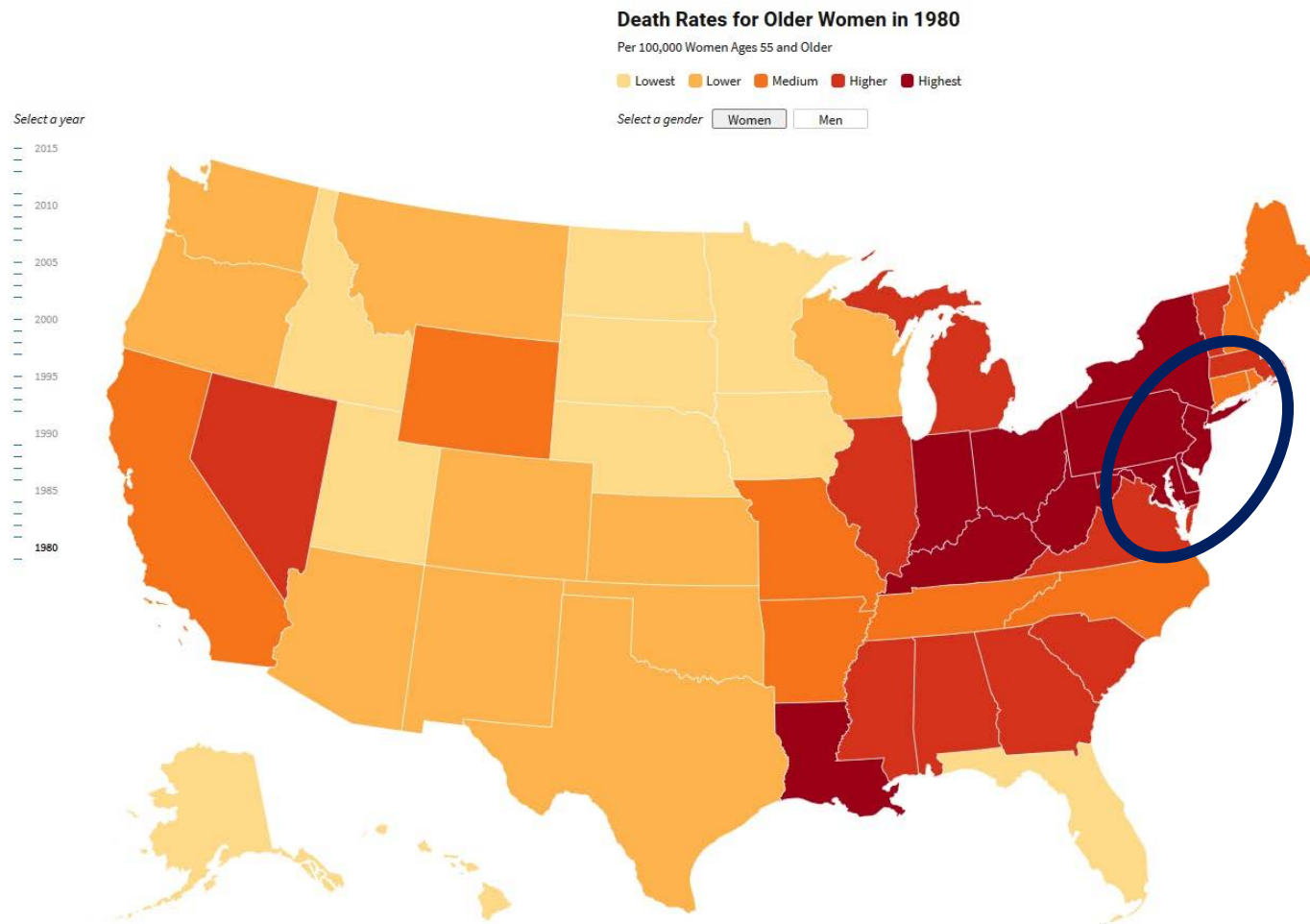
Lowest Lower Medium Higher Highest



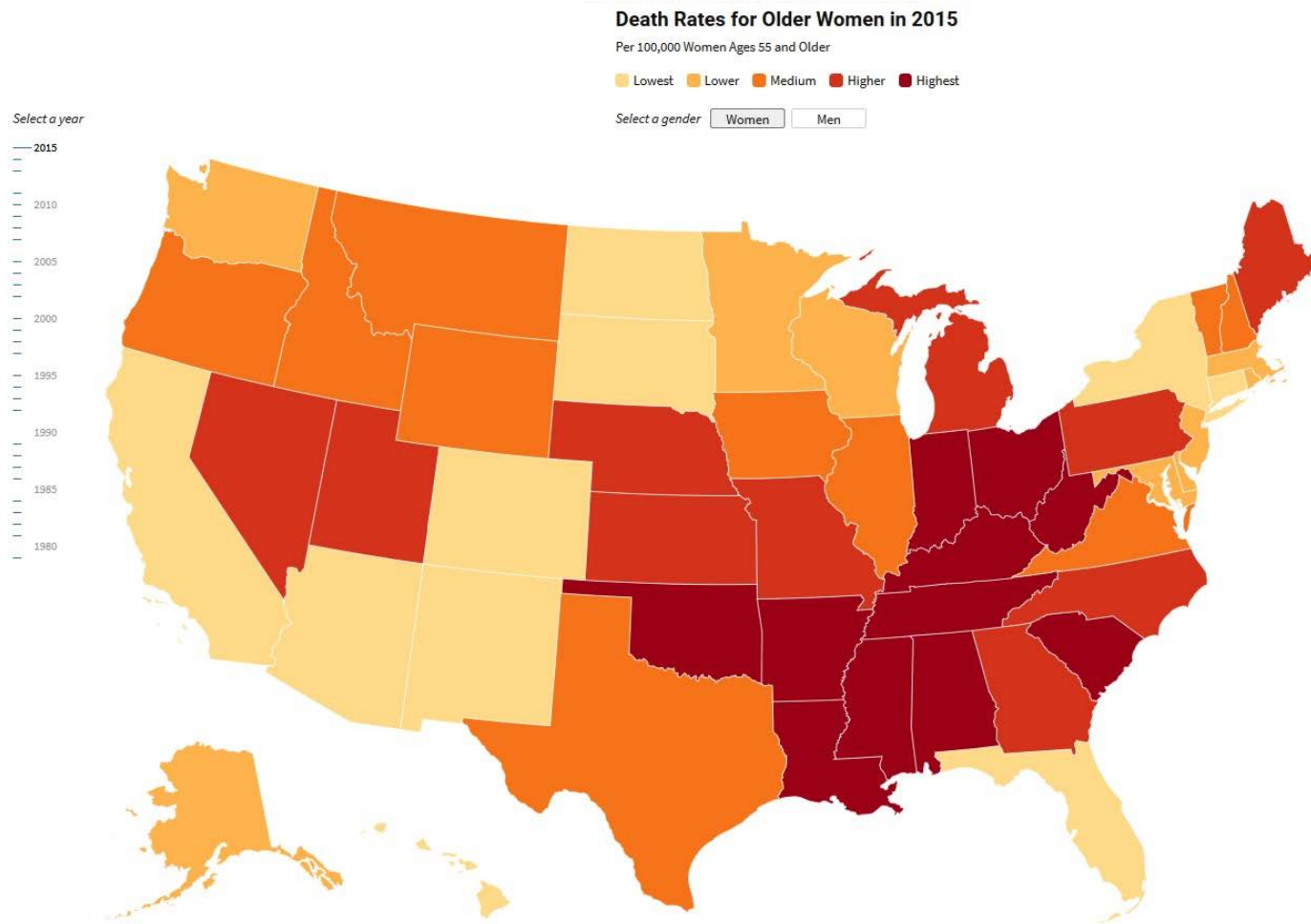
East Coast Improvement



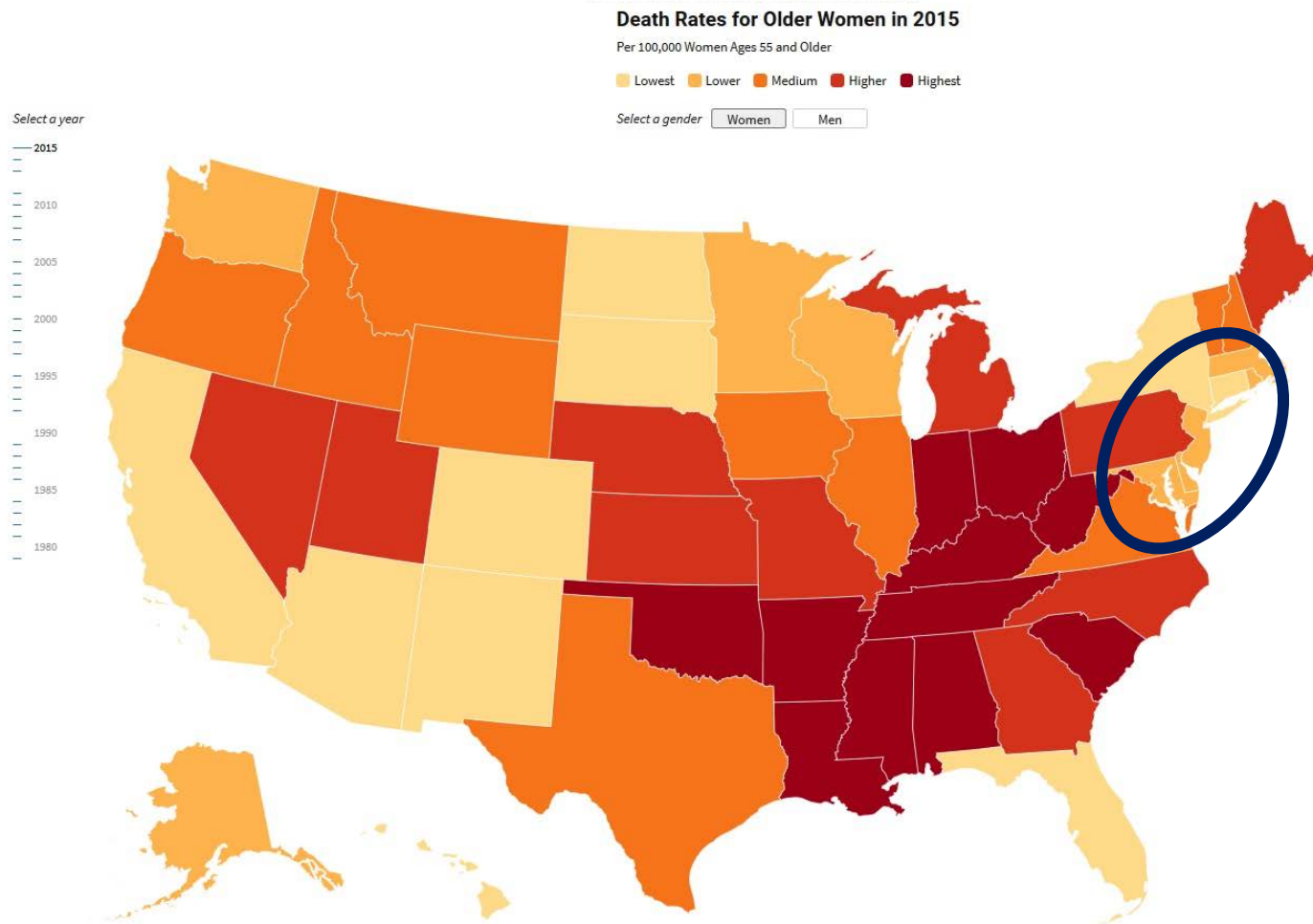
East Coast Improvement



East Coast Improvement



East Coast Improvement

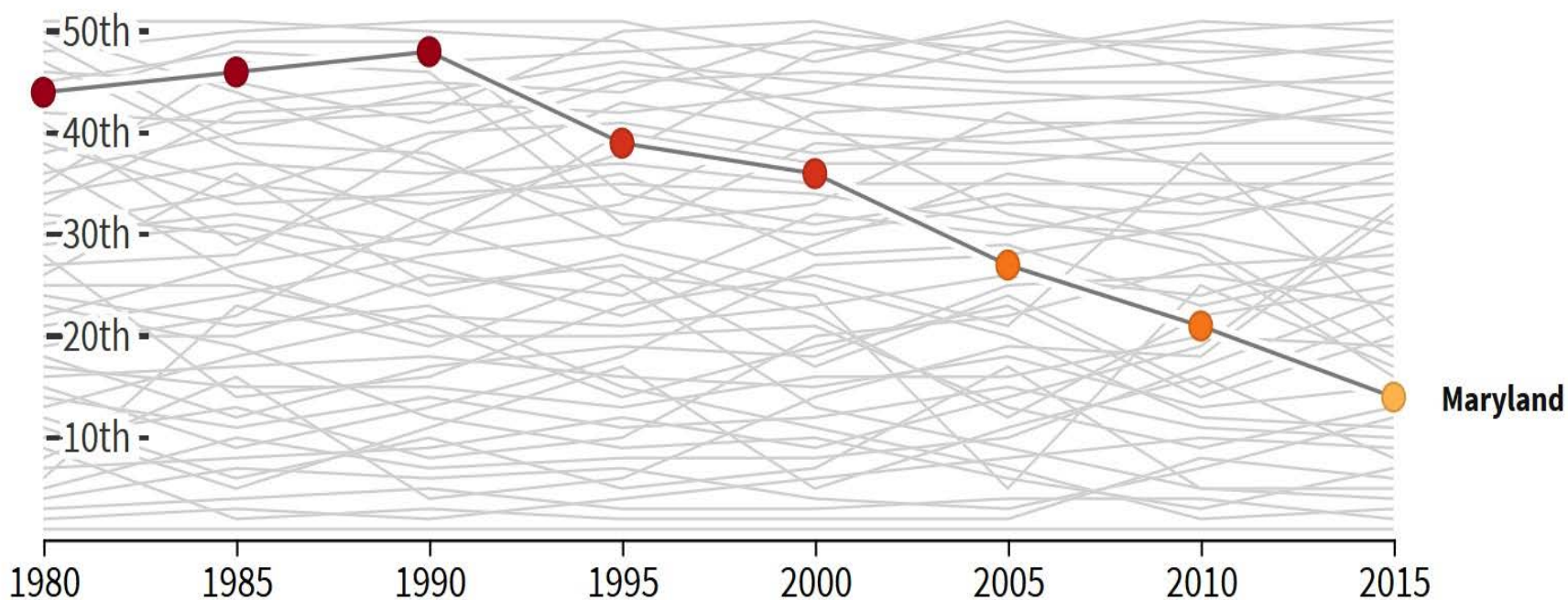


Maryland

SELECT STATE OR GROUP OF STATES TO HIGHLIGHT

Maryland

Lowest Lower Medium Higher Highest

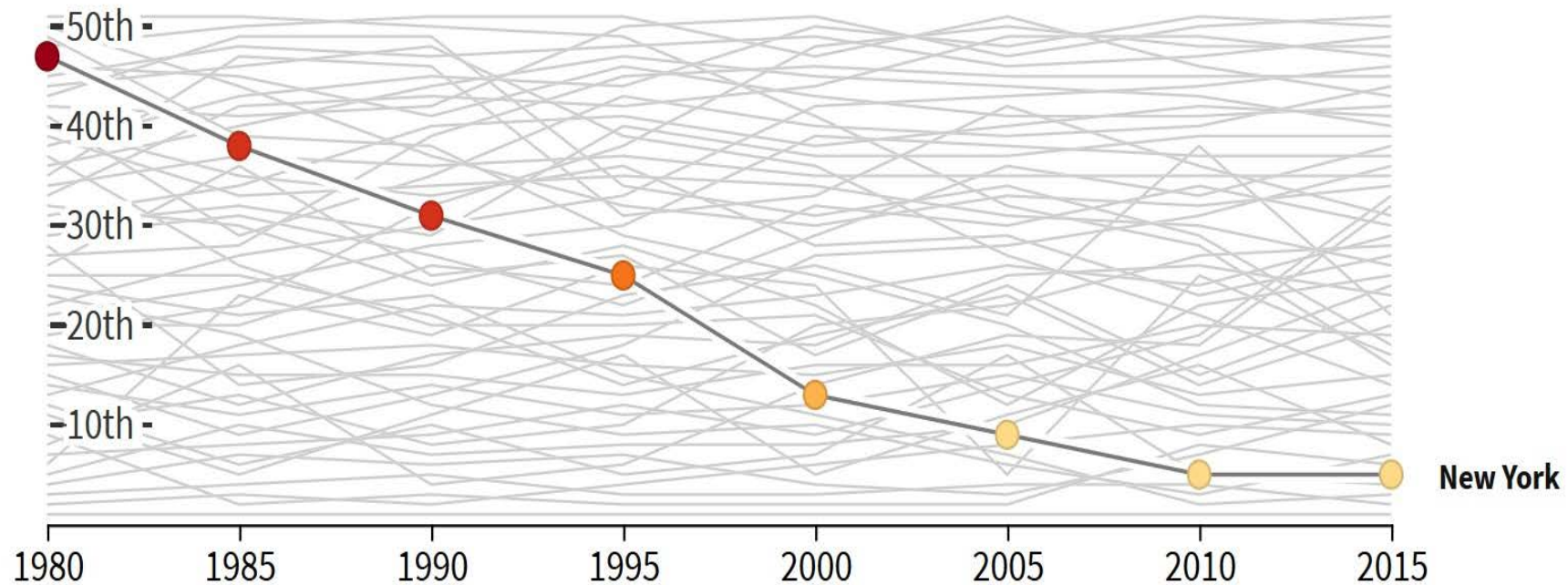


New York

SELECT STATE OR GROUP OF STATES TO HIGHLIGHT

New York

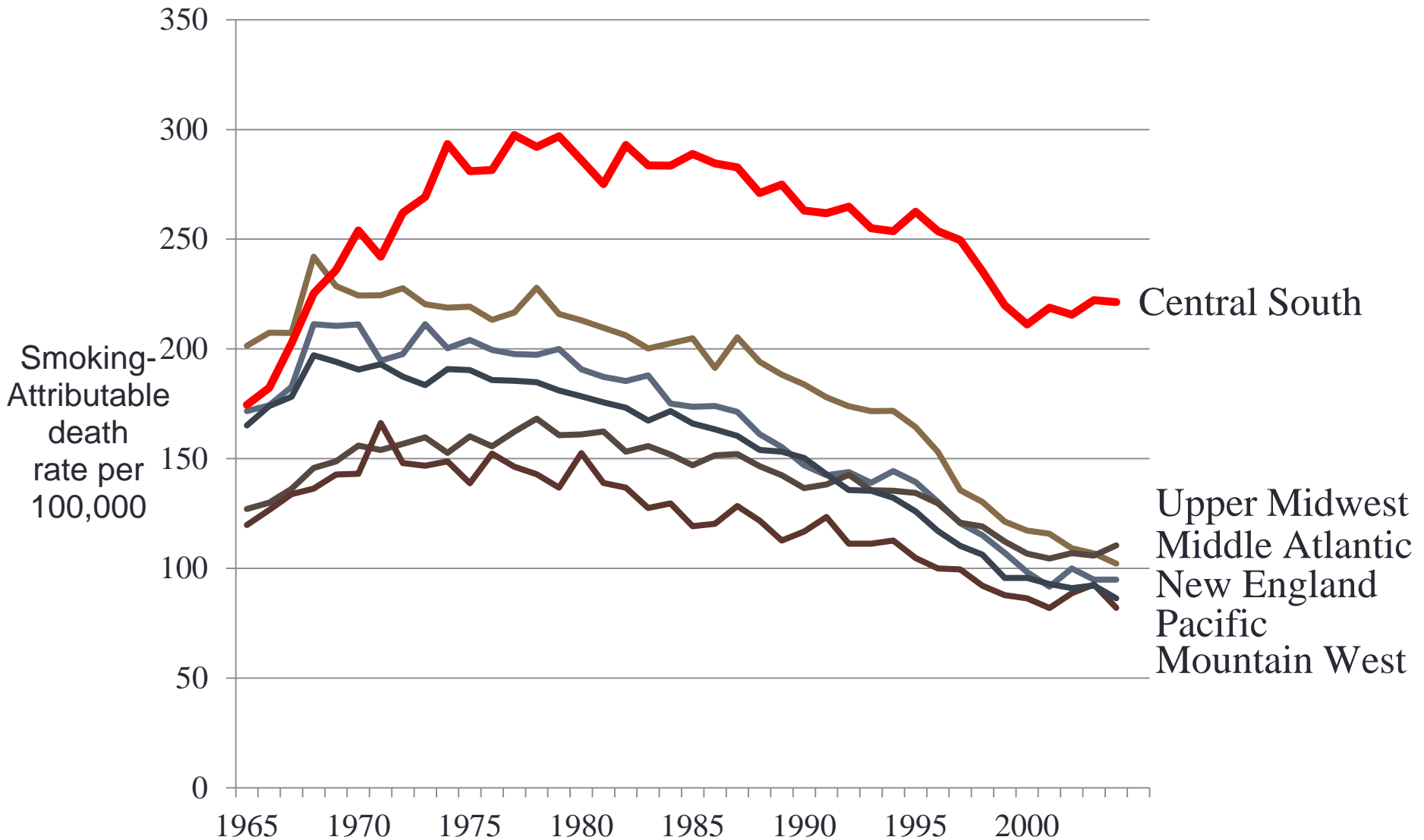
Lowest Lower Medium Higher Highest



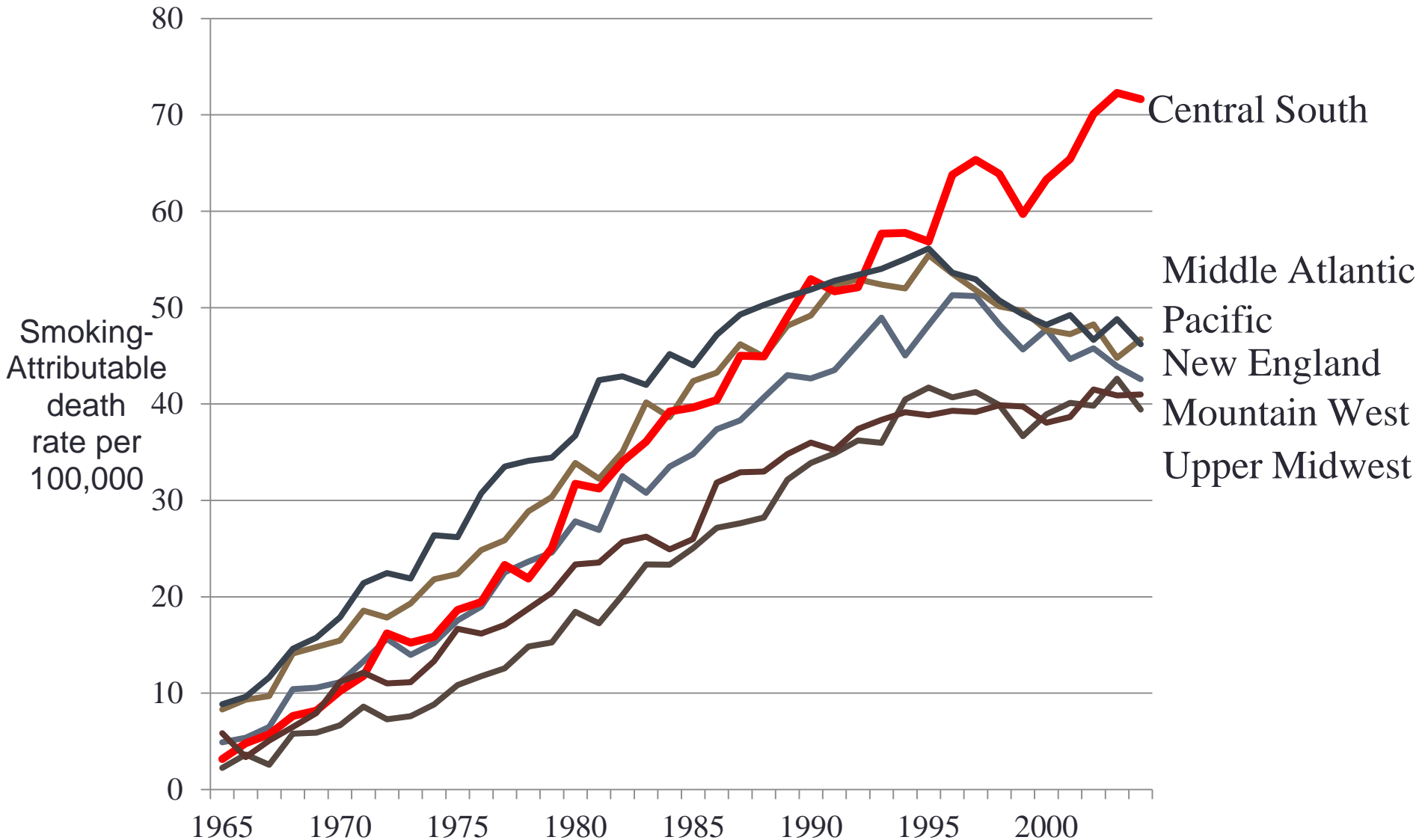
Explaining the Divergence

The Role of Cigarette Smoking

Smoking-attributable mortality, men



Smoking-attributable mortality, women

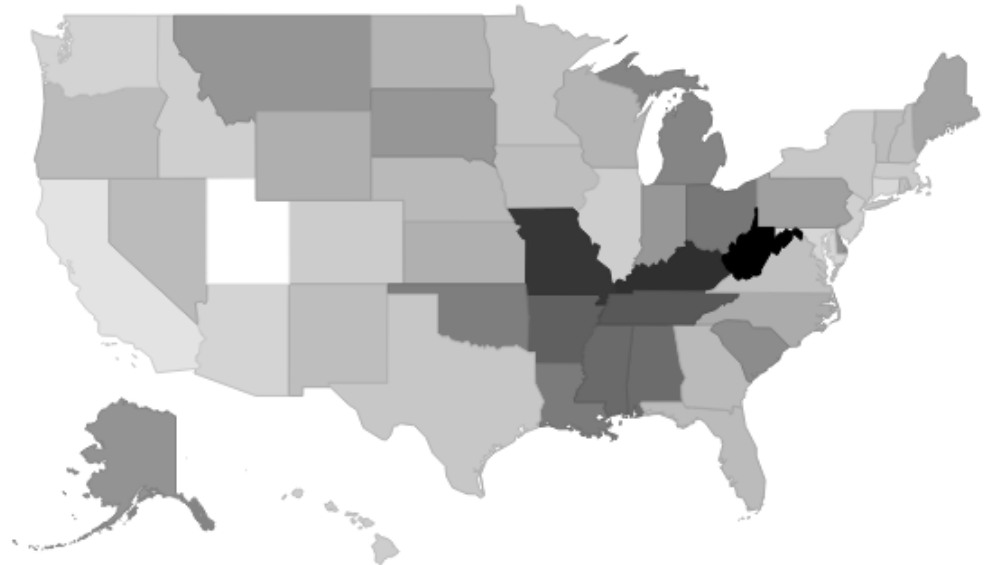


Source: Fenelon (2013) *Population and Development Review*

A Caution about the Role of Smoking

- Cigarette smoking behavior is not just an individual decision
- We should avoid blaming the victim, and instead seek to understand the underlying factors that contribute to smoking

Smoking Prevalence by State



Summary

- The states with the highest adult mortality are largely in the South
- This pattern is relatively recent, and has occurred largely since 1980
- Mid-Atlantic states on the East Coast have seen exceptional mortality improvements



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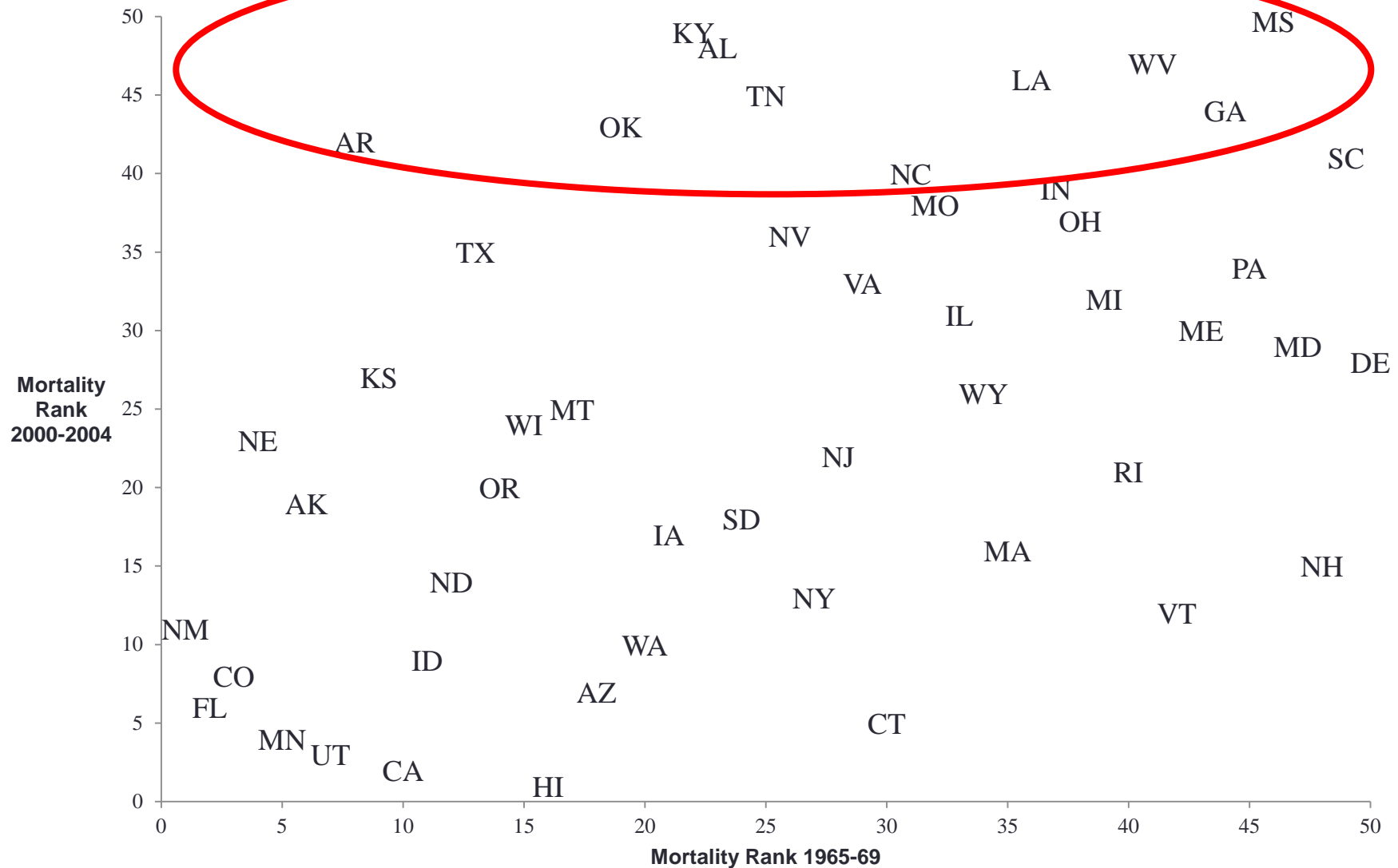
afenelon@umd.edu



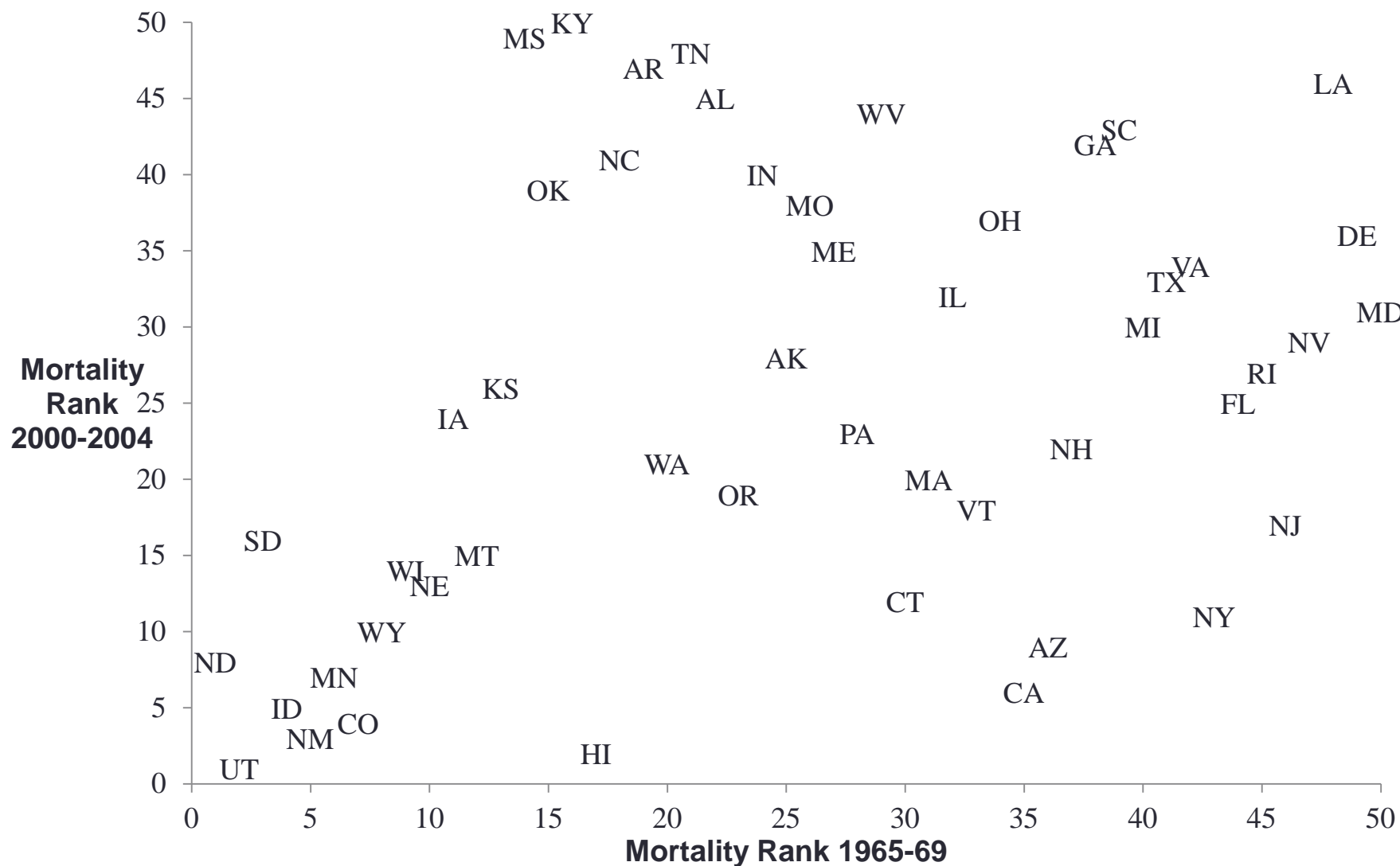
State Mortality 1965 and 2004



State Mortality 1965 and 2004



State Mortality 1965-2004



State Mortality 1965-2004

