

Differences Among Hispanics by Choice of Survey Language

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Introduction

In the last few decades, the United States has seen a steady increase in the Hispanic population. The 1980 Census counted 22 million Hispanics and by the 2000 Census they had grown to 35 million, representing 13% of the population (Guzman, 2001, Ramirez and de la Cruz, 2003). As the Hispanic population continues to grow it has become more important than ever that nationally representative surveys include Hispanics. But surveys that do not interview in Spanish may be missing a sizeable portion of the Hispanic population.

Census 2000 data also shows that 49% of Hispanics over age 5 who speak Spanish do not speak English very well (Shin and Bruno, 2003). In addition, we know that 2 out of 5 Hispanics are foreign born and that about half of them entered the United States in the last decade, thereby making them more likely to not speak English very well (Schmidley, 2003). Therefore, they are very likely not to respond to surveys that are only provided in English. What impact does excluding this group of Hispanics have on our estimates for Hispanics? This paper uses data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth to compare the characteristics and behaviors of Hispanics who responded to NSFG in Spanish with those that responded in English.

Data

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) is a periodic survey designed to provide reliable national data on fertility, marriage, divorce, contraception, infertility, and the health of women in the United States. In 2002 the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) conducted Cycle 6 of the NSFG surveying a nationally representative sample of women and men 15-44 years of age. This is the first time the NSFG includes men in its sample. Blacks and Hispanics were oversampled. The female interview averaged about 80 minutes in length, while the male interview averaged about 60 minutes. The overall response rate was 79% resulting in a final sample of 7,643 women and 4,928 men. Among these, 2713 were Hispanic men and women.

The NSFG is especially appropriate for this analysis for several reasons. First, the NSFG was conducted in both English and Spanish and various steps were taken to ensure that the questionnaires and all the supporting materials were accurately translated (Martinez, et al, 2004). Second, the interviews were conducted in person by professional, trained female interviewers, including bilingual interviewers. Third, in addition to the basic demographic data, the NSFG also collected a rich array of data on contraceptive use, sexual activity, and childbearing experience.

Proposed Analysis

A third of Hispanics interviewed in the 2002 NSFG answered the survey in Spanish. To the extent possible, the analysis will focus on measurements that are common to both males and females but differences by gender will also be discussed. The first part of the analysis will look at the demographic characteristics of Hispanics

who responded to the NSFG in Spanish versus those that responded in English. We will look at their age, education, marital status including cohabiting, whether they are foreign born, labor force participation, poverty status, and number of family members in the household. Differences by Hispanic subgroups will be explored.

The second part of the analysis will look at how these two groups differ in their behavior. We will look at some important public health behaviors such as: mean age at first birth, parity, number of marriages, number of partners in the last 12 months, current contraceptive use, birth expectations, whether they had a HI V test in the last year, and whether they had a pap/pelvic exam in the last 12 months (women).

Results

These cannot be included here until the public use file is released in late October.

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