Dynamics of Disability and Dependency: Examining the Hispanic Paradox throughout Adult Life
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Background
• Research shows that Hispanics in the United States have lower adult mortality than non-Hispanic whites (hereafter whites)
• Less is known about adult life course functioning among Hispanics (e.g., Laditka & Laditka, 2009, 2017)
• We studied functioning in activities of daily living (ADLs), distinguishing between disability (having difficulty but not having help) and dependency (having help), among Hispanic, African American, and white women and men

Data and Methods
• Data were from the Health and Retirement Study (10 waves 1994-2012, ages 51+, n=35,797, 152,822 functional status and death transitions)
• Multinomial logistic Markov models estimated monthly probabilities of transitioning among ADL status levels and to death, adjusted for age, sex, education, and race/ethnicity
• Using the probabilities we created large populations with microsimulation, measuring monthly disability status for each individual, age 51 through death

Discussion and Implications
• Results suggest that Hispanics have relatively high rates of ADL impairments that require help from another person at midlife and older ages, similar to the rates of African Americans
• Hispanics live notably longer than African Americans or whites
• The number of Hispanics 65+ is projected to quintuple between 2012 and 2050
• Results highlight the need to better understand dynamics of functional status among Hispanics, given the large projected growth in the Hispanic population, their greater needs for help with ADLs, and their longer life expectancy

Results
• Life expectancy was consistent with NCHS estimates, for all groups, at all ages
• Life expectancy was greater for Hispanics than African Americans or whites, e.g., at age 70: 88.1, 85.2, 86.4 (not shown in figures)
• Women with high school education illustrate primary results:
  • Population percentage having ADL difficulty was higher for African Americans than for Hispanics or whites at ages 60-90 (all p<0.01), at age 70: 38.4%, 33.9%, and 34.9% (no significant differences between Hispanics and whites)
  • Population percentage needing ADL help was higher for Hispanics and African Americans than for whites at ages 60-90 (p<0.01), at age 70: 6.3%, 7.5%, and 4.6%, respectively (no significant differences between Hispanics and African Americans)
• Population percentage needing ADL help was higher for Hispanics and African Americans than for whites at ages 60-90 (p<0.01), at age 70: 6.3%, 7.5%, and 4.6%, respectively (no significant differences between Hispanics and African Americans)
• Results described above were similar for men

Related research

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