

Hispanics demonstrate wide variation in trust of health information sources

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Micrograph showing a lymph node invaded by ductal breast carcinoma, with extension of the tumour beyond the lymph node. Credit: Nephron/Wikipedia

Hispanic adults reported significant diversity in their trust of health information sources, suggesting that information tailored to ethnic subgroups or targeted to various age groups may be beneficial, according to results of a study published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

Hispanics are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Previous research has shown disparities in cancer risk and survival between Hispanic Americans and whites, and among various Hispanic subgroups.

"Lack of knowledge about cancer services, exacerbated by relatively limited access to those services, is considered a major contributor to those disparities," said the study's lead author, Marlene Camacho-Rivera, MS, MPH, ScD, assistant professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn, New York. "In this study, we aimed to assess trust in [health information](#) across various sources and evaluate how that trust may vary by gender, age, ethnic background, and socioeconomic background."

Camacho-Rivera and colleagues examined data from the National Cancer Institute's Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS), a nationally representative data collection program that oversamples African American and Hispanic populations. The researchers examined data from respondents who self-reported Hispanic ethnicity and from records of those who had requested Spanish-language surveys. In total, the study reflected data from 1,521 people. Forty-six percent were Mexican or Mexican American; 16 percent were Cuban or Puerto Rican; and 37 percent were of other Hispanic backgrounds.

Participants were asked how much they would trust [information](#) from the following sources: a doctor or other health care professional; government health organizations; charitable organizations; religious

organizations or leaders; friends and family; the internet; television; radio; and newspapers or magazines.

Overall, respondents reported the highest levels of trust in health care professionals, with 91 percent saying they had a high level of trust in information received from doctors or other [health care professionals](#). The next most trusted sources were government health agencies (68 percent reported a high level of trust), the internet (63 percent), and charitable organizations (53 percent).

Some other key findings:

- Hispanics age 75 and older were nearly three times as likely to trust health information from religious sources compared with those aged 18 to 34.
- Older Hispanics were more likely than younger Hispanics to trust in health information from non-medical sources, such as family, the internet, and faith-based organizations.
- Hispanic women were more likely than Hispanic men to trust information from the internet and from religious organizations.
- Trust in print media among Hispanics went down over time; respondents were 46 percent less likely to report high trust in print media between 2012 and 2018.
- Respondents of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent were twice as likely to trust information from print media compared with Mexican Americans.
- Respondents who had lived in the United States for less than 10 years were nearly nine times more likely to [trust](#) information from government health agencies than those who had lived in the United States for more than 10 years or were U.S.-born.

Camacho-Rivera said that in recent years, internet use has expanded dramatically among the Hispanic population in the United States, with

about 84 percent of the Hispanic population now routinely using the internet. However, Hispanics are more likely than whites to lose internet access due to cost, and more likely to report frustration in their information-seeking.

"As a Latina, I would want fellow Hispanics to know that not all health information that is available may be credible and evidence-based," Camacho-Rivera said. "It is important to ask questions of health care providers, in order to make informed decisions, and not just take all information at face value.

"While we have seen increases in health information-seeking due to increased access to the internet, smartphones, and social media, we also recognize the potential for technology to exacerbate health disparities," she continued. "It is not enough for us to simply put information out into the public domain and expect individuals to act on it; we must also support community spaces and resources that can help people benefit from the information."

Camacho-Rivera said the results of the study indicate that the Hispanic community would benefit from culturally tailored health information as part of a continuing effort to narrow health disparities in cancer and other chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Ideally, [health care](#) providers, community health workers, and lay [health](#) advisers would help Hispanics identify the most accurate information from the growing number of available sources.

Camacho-Rivera noted that while certain ethnicities, such as Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican, were well represented, some Central and South American groups had small sample sizes, and further research would be necessary to confirm those findings.

More information: Camacho-Rivera et al. Differences of trust in

cancer information from various sources among Hispanic adults in the United States: Analysis of the 2014 HINTS. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* (2020). [DOI: 10.1158/1538-7755.DISP18-A012](#)

Marlene Camacho-Rivera et al, Heterogeneity in Trust of Cancer Information among Hispanic Adults in the United States: An Analysis of the Health Information National Trends Survey, *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention* (2020). DOI: 10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-19-1375

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