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TARGETING SPANISH-SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS:
Results From A Methodological Experiment In The 2019 National Household Education Survey (NHES:2019)

MAKING RESEARCH RELEVANT

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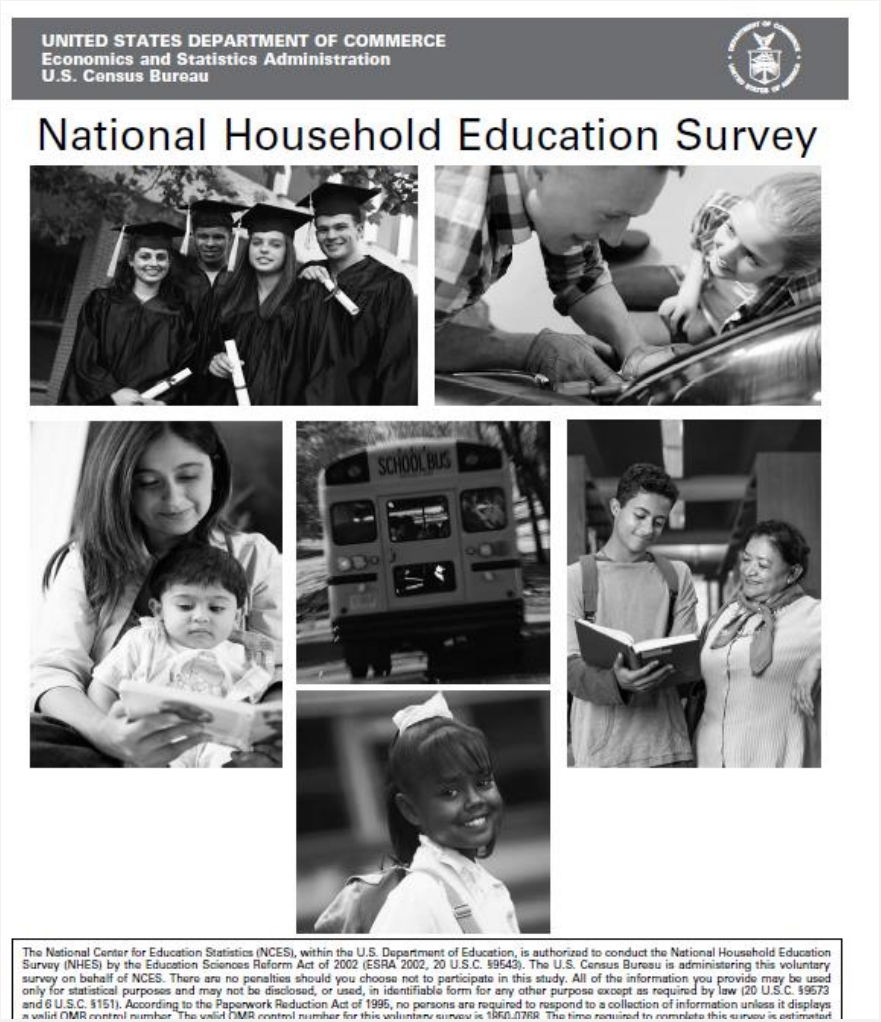
Outline

- About the NHES
- About the Targeted Spanish Experiment
- Results
- Conclusions

National Household Education Survey (NHES)



- Sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education
- Cross-sectional, repeated, yielding nationally representative estimates
- Parent responds about sampled child
- Offered in Spanish and English
- Screener sample size in 2019: 205,000
- ABS frame, conducted through mail with web and paper instruments (sequential mixed-mode)

Purpose of the Targeted Spanish Experiment

- **Purpose:** To assess the effectiveness of sending tailored materials to households that, based on information available on the sampling frame, were likely to be Spanish-speaking.
- **Research question:** Can we increase response among Spanish-speaking households by providing materials tailored specifically to them?
- Materials were developed to appeal to Spanish-speaking households based on focus groups conducted with Spanish speakers.
    - Seven in-person focus groups conducted with Spanish-speaking persons in Rockville, Maryland, and Denver, Colorado, from April through June of 2018

Purpose of the Targeted Spanish Experiment

Nonresponse bias in survey estimates is large when both the nonresponse rate is high and the characteristics of the respondents and nonrespondents are very different



Design of the Targeted Spanish Experiment

- **Treatment - Tailored likely-Spanish-speaking-household materials (*n*=15,000).**
  - Web-push protocol
  - Likely Spanish-speaking cases (*n*=3,370) received tailored materials.
  - Not-likely-Spanish-speaking cases (*n*=11,630) received the same materials as the baseline web-push.
- **Control - Baseline web-push (*n*=40,000).**
  - Regardless of whether they were likely to be Spanish-speaking, none of the cases received the tailored materials.

Criteria to Flag Likely Spanish-Speaking Households

- Spanish-speaking households were identified based on information available on the frame:
  - (1) the address is flagged as having a Hispanic surname,
  - (2) the address in a tract with 40% or more Hispanic persons, or
  - (3) the address in a tract in which 10 percent or more of households have Spanish as their primary language and "limited English-speaking" status.

Materials Developed from the 2018 Focus Groups

1. Icons on the envelopes emphasizing that the survey is voluntary



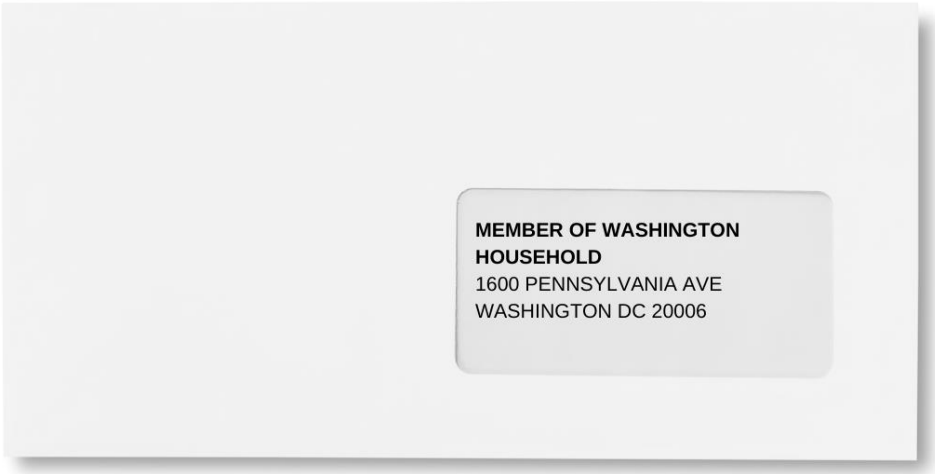
Materials Developed from the 2018 Focus Groups

2. Spanish-first presentation of the bilingual letters and questionnaires.

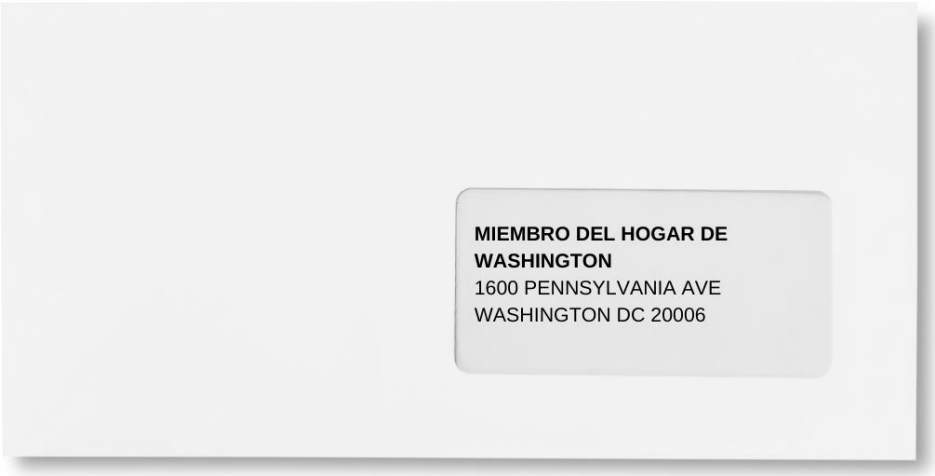
3. A bilingual addressee line on the letters that appeared through the envelope's address window.

Addressee Line

English Example



Spanish Example



Materials Developed from the 2018 Focus Groups

4. Customized letters containing the same icons used on the envelopes, a list of Hispanic-affiliated nongovernmental organizations that had endorsed the survey, and language emphasizing that responses are important.



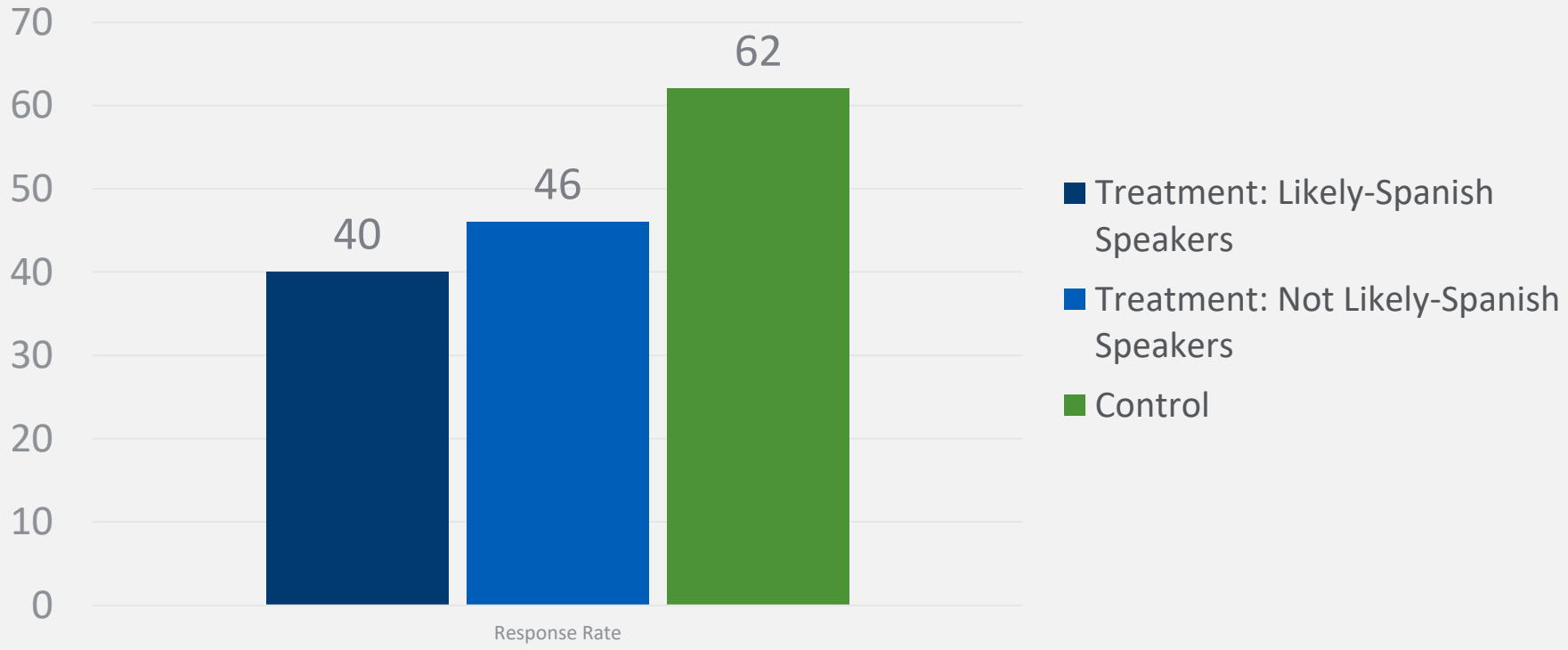
Materials Developed from the 2018 Focus Groups

5. In the third and fourth screener mailing packages, an alternate version of the paper screener with images of Hispanic families on the cover, instead of the images of families from a wide range of racial/ethnic backgrounds that are used in the baseline version of the questionnaire.



The tailored materials reduced response rates among likely-Spanish-speaking households, the opposite of the expected effect.

Response rate, by whether household flagged as being likely Spanish speakers and targeted mailing condition: 2019



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), 2019.

Results

- The tailored materials reduced the response rates among likely-Spanish-speaking households, the opposite of the expected effect.
- The tailored materials did not increase the percentage of respondents who responded to the survey in Spanish.
- There was no subset of likely-Spanish-speaking households for which the tailored materials had a positive effect.
  - Patterns of variation in the *magnitude* of the decrease point to some hypotheses about the reasons for the unexpected results.

Response rate decrease was generally smaller than average among addresses whose *address-level* characteristics suggest a higher probability that the household living at the address is in fact Spanish-speaking.

Selected household characteristics[2]	Cases flagged as being likely Spanish speakers[1]				
	Number of sampled house-holds	Screener response rate		t statistic	
		Targeted	Baseline		
Race/ethnicity of head of household					
White	2,250	47.76	56.71	-3.77	*
Black	530	36.27	43.92	-1.59	
Hispanic	5,410	40.59	44.88	-2.76	*
Asian/Pacific Islander or Other	380	43.69	54.24	-1.56	
Missing	2,540	32.33	37.10	-2.42	*

Conclusions

- Challenges of targeting using address-based sampling (ABS) frames.
- Ineffectiveness of the materials themselves.
- Suspicion of the government.
- Due to their negative effect on response rates among likely-Spanish-speakers, the next NHES administration will not use the tailored materials

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