

SUMMARY REPORT

Expert Panel Meeting on Communicating about Overweight/Obesity with Hispanic Audiences

A Meeting Sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on July 14-15, 2016

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Executive Summary

Obesity and weight issues affect communities across the nation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to strengthen community-level health initiatives throughout the United States and to help communities prevent obesity and other chronic diseases and promote healthy living. One group that has a higher burden of obesity in the United States is Hispanics.* However, little is known about the best ways to communicate about obesity with populations who are affected more severely than others, including Hispanic audiences.

As part of its efforts to identify existing evidence and opportunities to improve obesity-prevention communication with Hispanic audiences, CDC, with the assistance of contractor FHI 360, convened a panel of experts on July 14 and 15, 2016, to discuss promising cultural, social, environmental, and other factors that may influence communication and marketing to Hispanic populations about nutrition, physical activity, body image, and other issues relevant to obesity prevention. The nine panel members were representatives from academic, nonprofit, commercial, and government sectors with a mix of expertise relevant to obesity prevention and marketing with Hispanic populations. Panelists participated by both telephone and web conference. On each day, the panel discussion lasted 2 hours. The specific objectives of the expert panel were to share key lessons learned about communicating with Hispanic audiences, consider potential unintended effects when communicating with these audiences, and identify key communication opportunities and promising practices related to overweight and obesity.

Major Themes and Issues Discussed

Panelists discussed four topic areas related to specific aspects of communicating about overweight and obesity with Hispanic audiences:

- Audience characteristics and cultural factors that impact communication.
- Audience segmentation and key audience segments for overweight/obesity communication.
- Strategies for developing communication that resonates with Hispanic audiences.
- Approaches and channels for reaching Hispanic audiences.

Key themes and issues are summarized here.

This report summarizes the content of the expert panel discussion, but should not be considered a comprehensive assessment on the topic of communicating with Hispanic audiences about overweight and obesity. The panelists had limited time to discuss these complex issues, and emphasis was placed on identifying the most promising opportunities and the most important factors to effect positive change in obesity prevention.

* Throughout this executive summary, for ease of reading, we used only the term Hispanic, regardless of the term (“Hispanic” or “Latino”) used by panelists.

Audience Characteristics and Cultural Factors that Impact Communication

Panelists were asked to discuss cultural or other audience characteristics that are particularly important when communicating with Hispanic audiences about obesity and weight issues and to recommend the best ways to address the diversity that exists within this population.

- **Diversity within the Hispanic population requires careful tailoring of communication.** Panelists highlighted that communications will resonate better when adapted for the target audience segments taking into consideration factors such as country of origin; generation in the United States; language preference; economic status; immigration history; and needs, values, and preferences. Panelists also mentioned tailoring and adapting materials to reflect differences in community context—for example, a rural setting, an urban population, or a farming/migrant worker setting.
- **Level of acculturation heavily influences Hispanics' eating and physical activity behavior.** The panel noted that recent immigrants may have healthier diets and more active lifestyles than families who have been living in this country for longer periods. Including messages about

preserving or reviving traditional diets from countries of origin may be a way to maintain both the health and culture of Hispanic families.

- **Family plays a central role in shaping attitudes and behaviors.** Panel members discussed that multiple generations commonly live in one household, and older generations may influence eating and cooking behaviors of younger members. Grandparents and other extended family caregivers may not follow the nutrition and physical activity standards set by the parents. On the other hand, older generations may positively influence eating and cooking behavior and encourage younger family members to eat healthfully.
- **Gender roles affect attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity, but they are evolving, particularly within more acculturated families.** Communication targeting women, the panel said, should empower them to make healthy decisions about food purchases and preparation. Messages for men should draw inspiration from the positive aspects of *machismo* to encourage men to make changes that improve family health and nutrition.
- **Food is closely connected to expressions of love and caring.** To avoid shaming, the panel suggested that messaging should be guided by a cultural understanding of food-related behaviors—such as giving treats as a sign of love or continuing to eat when full out of respect for elders.
- **The cultural value of *fatalismo* can impact health-related attitudes and behaviors.** The panel noted that the belief that an individual has very little control over health and illness, often viewed as fate or God's will (i.e., *fatalismo*), can make it difficult for some Hispanic audiences to think about future effects of an unhealthy diet or inactive lifestyle.



- **Hispanics' perceptions of ideal body shape and weight may differ from what is portrayed in the mainstream U.S. media.**

Panelists noted a curvier shape is generally desirable for women, and being overweight is acceptable for men as they age. They also mentioned a need to better understand the interplay between nutrition and physical activity where weight is concerned and to help audiences understand the energy balance formula.

- **Individuals' context and environment can make it hard for them to eat healthy and be physically active, even when they know how to do so.**

Panelists said that communication must discuss both individual behavior change and broader action messages for families and communities to improve the environment to support healthier behaviors.

Audience Segmentation and Key Audience Segments for Overweight/Obesity Communication

Panelists were asked about key factors they consider when segmenting Hispanic audiences for health communication initiatives, methods of segmenting, and key audience segments that present the greatest potential for having a positive impact on obesity through communication.

- **Women, particularly millennial moms, are a key segment among Hispanic audiences.**

Given traditional gender roles in much of the Hispanic population, panelists noted that designing materials and messages to appeal to women is very important. Millennial moms were identified as one key audience segment as many are highly acculturated or bicultural and have a high level of social media use, which connects them to the community at large.

- **Youth can be effective influencers in their families.**

Panel members pointed out that because tweens, ages 9–14 years, have not yet fully established their behaviors and routines, there is an opportunity

to help them make physical activity and healthy eating an everyday part of their lives. Even younger children can be a potential audience for reaching not only the youth themselves but also their families.

- **Given the respect for elders, grandparents can influence family nutrition and physical activity.**

Panelists said that communicators should explore how to encourage grandparents to pass down healthy aspects of the culture (food, eating together) and to model and celebrate healthy traditions.

- **Segmentation should consider community context, barriers faced, and lifestyle or affinity.**

It is important to consider community context (e.g., urban, rural, migrant farming community setting) and barriers to healthy nutrition and physical activity, as the needs of audiences in different community settings can vary significantly. Likewise, audiences can be segmented by affinity or common interest such as religion, membership in a business or community organization, or an interest such as sports, dance, or music.

Strategies for Developing Communication that Resonates with Hispanic Audiences

Panelists were asked to discuss approaches or opportunities for appeals, message framing, and message content for communicating about obesity and weight issues with Hispanics.

- **Effective messages incorporate cultural values associated with food, physical activity, and attitudes toward weight and body image.**

Panelists noted that messages about being healthy and active are likely to resonate with Hispanic audiences more than messages focused on weight. They suggested communicating ways to make traditional foods healthier or addressing portion control and focusing on culturally relevant physical activities such as dancing, playing soccer, or walking as a family.

- **Using the preferred language of target audience segments is essential.**

Preference for Spanish or English language depends on many factors, including age, generation, and level of acculturation. For English materials, panelists suggested a few Spanish words or phrases relevant to the context can trigger some cultural connection. Likewise, Spanish materials can include English words that are commonly used among a target audience or community.

- **Producing bilingual materials may help reach all generations in a family and those who have different levels of acculturation.**

Whether messages are in English or Spanish, panel members recommended they be developed in the native language with cultural competency in mind. To develop materials in a second language, adapting (or transcreating) will be much more effective than simply translating from English to Spanish.

- **Messages and materials should emphasize empowerment and self-efficacy as they relate to healthy eating and physical activity.**

Panelists suggested concentrating on messages that center on small, easily attainable changes that individuals and families can achieve within their community context. At the same time, they noted, it may also be appropriate to include messages about what individuals might do to help make changes in their community that support healthy behavior.

- **Communication should avoid stereotypes.**

Several common themes or strategies in communication to Hispanic audiences were noted by the panel as being overused or potentially ineffective, such as the *abuela* (grandmother) approach and the notion that Hispanic parents want their children to be *gordito* (big).

- **Messages must be sensitive to not convey shaming.**

Panelists recommended emphasizing the positive aspects in a family or community.

It is also helpful to tailor messages to address the particular challenges facing low-income Hispanic communities.

- **Public health messages with an emotional appeal tend to be more effective with Hispanic audiences than materials packed with data.**

Panel members suggested messages make an emotional appeal, include only necessary science, and state simple, concrete ways to adopt desired behaviors or actions.

- **Hispanic audiences tend to prefer materials with culturally relevant images and minimal text.**

Panelists suggested featuring a range of images representing the diversity among this population or images specific to a target segment, as well as including images of diverse body shapes.

- **Formative research and message and materials testing are vital to communication success.**

Panelists stated that audience research is essential to understand specific Hispanic audience segments and tailor or adapt materials appropriately. Testing messages and materials with the target audiences is equally important to ensure text and imagery resonate and to avoid unintended negative effects.

Approaches and Channels for Reaching Hispanic Audiences

The panel was asked to identify the best approaches and channels for reaching Hispanic audiences. They were also asked what we can learn from successful communication efforts and whom to engage as key intermediaries or spokespeople.

- **When considering messengers or spokespeople to reach Hispanic audiences, starting inside the community is desirable.**

Panelists emphasized that messages coming from within the community are more likely to connect with the target audience as people look to others in their own circle for advice and information.

- **Traditional and low-tech media channels, including radio and television, are effective in reaching some audience segments.**

Panelists noted that radio and television are still popular forms of communication and effective ways to reach Hispanic audiences, particularly older Hispanics and low-income communities.

- **Mobile and digital technology are increasingly important channels for reaching Hispanic audiences, particularly younger groups.**

The panel said that Hispanic audiences, particularly younger Hispanics, connect frequently through mobile technology (also the primary way they access the Internet) and social media. Technology usage and access can vary, however, by factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and location.

- **In addition to media, face-to-face communication is a key approach for programs to reach low-income Hispanic audiences.**

Interpersonal, face-to-face communication (such as through *promotoras*) was noted by panelists as a particularly desirable program strategy for reaching some Hispanic audiences, especially in low-income communities.

- **Businesses and corporations can be partners for reaching Hispanic audiences.**

Panel members discussed that businesses and corporations can help disseminate messages or co-sponsor campaigns and events focused on reaching Hispanic audiences. Businesses can also be engaged more broadly in outreach efforts to help make healthy living easier for Hispanic audiences.

Conclusion

The insights generated by this expert panel discussion can help public health communicators develop culturally competent obesity prevention messages and materials that resonate with target Hispanic audiences and reinforce desired healthy living and community environments.





Summary Report



I Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to strengthen community-level health initiatives throughout the United States and to help communities promote healthy living and prevent obesity and other chronic diseases. CDC emphasizes reaching people who are at greatest risk of death, disability, and suffering from chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes). It carries out its community work by funding the implementation of programs in towns, cities, counties, and tribal areas; technical assistance and training; applied research; program evaluation; and partnerships.

CDC's work aims to help communities change the broader context for healthier living by creating an environment and conditions that make it easier for people to practice healthy behaviors. This approach aligns with the Health Impact Pyramid,¹ in which initiatives at the top of the pyramid (e.g., counseling and education and clinical interventions) focus on approaches that require increased individual efforts, while those at the base (e.g., changing the context to make individuals' default decisions healthy and addressing socioeconomic factors) focus on increasing population impact, and thereby have a sustained public health benefit.

Communication's role within public health is to reach wider audiences and create a context that encourages healthy living and builds support for and enhances program impact. By increasing awareness and support, communication also lays a foundation for sustainability. For the purposes of this report we are using communication interchangeably with media and marketing. All are ways to share information through mass outlets that reach key audiences for public health work. Communication is also more than public service announcements, brochures, and presentations. It includes widely diverse activities that help engage, inform, and educate individuals, groups, and communities to impact knowledge and attitudes and encourage perspectives and approaches to make healthy living easier.

Obesity is one of the health issues affecting communities across the nation. It is linked with serious health problems, and for many groups continues to be a rising concern. Although communication has been acknowledged as an integral component of public health programs such as those aimed at preventing obesity and related behaviors,^{2,3} we know little about the best ways to communicate about obesity with populations who are affected more severely than others.

One group that has a higher burden of obesity in the United States is Hispanics.* About 47% of Hispanic adults have obesity compared with 38% of non-Hispanic whites.⁴ The prevalence of obesity is even higher in some subpopulations. In the 2013–2014 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), among Mexican Americans—the largest Hispanic subpopulation—42% of men had obesity compared with 35% of non-Hispanic white men. Among Mexican American women, the obesity rate was 51% compared with 38% among non-Hispanic white women.⁵

The data show a similar picture for Hispanic children and youth. In the 2015–2016 NHANES, 26% of Hispanic children ages 2–19 had obesity compared with non-Hispanic white children, of whom 14% had obesity.⁴

According to data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Hispanic adults are less likely than non-Hispanic white adults to get the recommended amount of physical activity needed to maintain a healthy weight. About 54% of Hispanics in 2015 reported not meeting federal physical activity guidelines, compared with 44% of non-Hispanic whites; and only 17% of Hispanics reported regular leisure physical activity, compared with 23% of non-Hispanic whites.⁶ Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites have similar low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption, with only about one-quarter of men and women meeting dietary guidelines.⁷

As part of its efforts to identify the existing evidence and opportunities for CDC and its partners to improve obesity-prevention communication with Hispanic audiences, CDC, with the assistance of contractor FHI 360, convened a panel of experts on the afternoons of July 14 and 15, 2016, to discuss this topic.



* Throughout this executive summary, for ease of reading, we used only the term Hispanic, regardless of the term (“Hispanic” or “Latino”) used by panelists.



Expert Panel Meeting Overview

Meeting Objectives

The expert panel was convened to generate insights that CDC could share with communities and partners to inform their overweight- and obesity-related communication with Hispanic populations. Specific objectives were:

- Share key lessons learned about communicating with Hispanic audiences.
- Consider potential unintended effects when communicating with Hispanic audiences.
- Identify key communication opportunities and promising practices.

Panelists

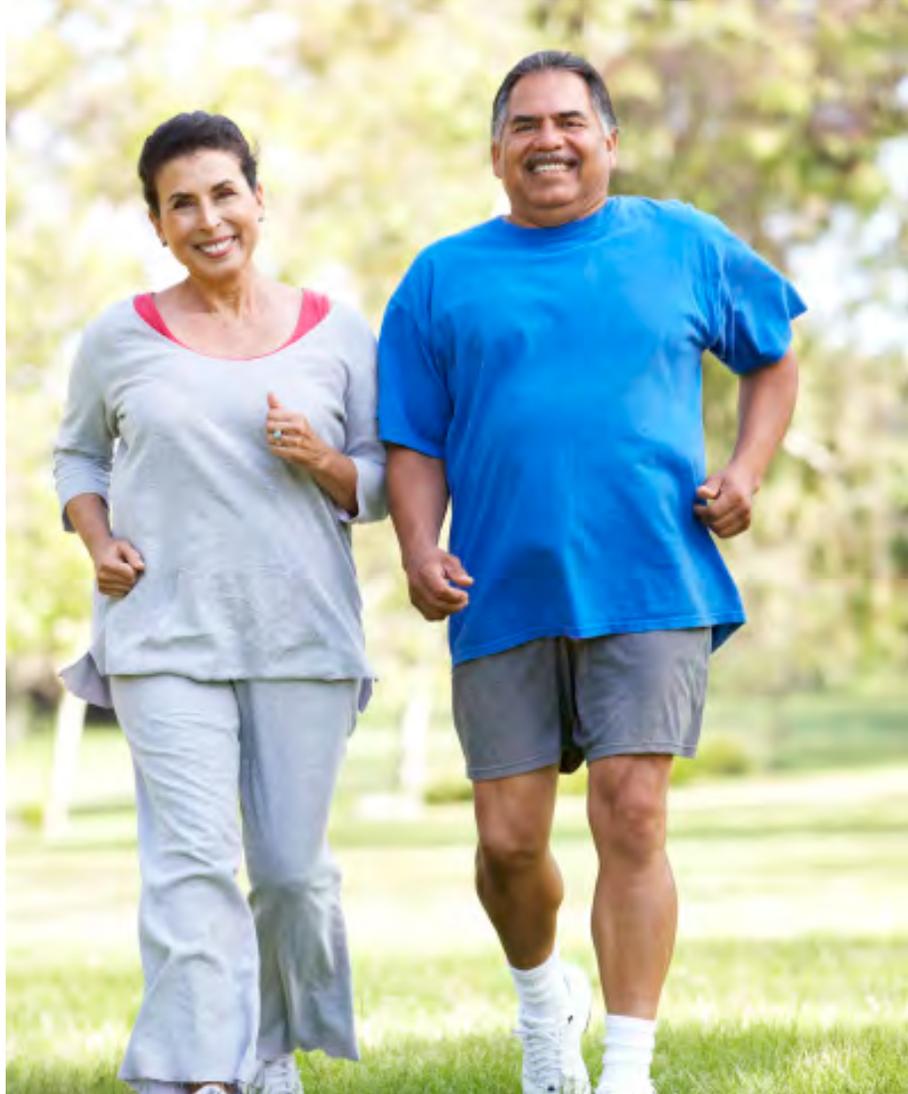
The nine panel members included representatives from academic, nonprofit, commercial, and government sectors. The expert panel represented a mix of expertise and experience relevant to obesity prevention (including nutrition and physical activity) and communication and marketing with Hispanic populations.

Agenda and Structure of the Meeting

To inform the meeting agenda, prioritize topics, and provide context to panelists for meeting discussions, FHI 360 conducted a scan of relevant literature and interviewed panelists individually by phone. The meeting was structured to expand on four key topic areas that emerged from these pre-meeting activities related to specific aspects of communicating about overweight and obesity with Hispanic audiences:

- Audience characteristics and cultural factors that impact communication.
- Audience segmentation and key audience segments for overweight/obesity communication.
- Strategies for developing communication that resonate with Hispanic audiences.
- Approaches and channels for reaching Hispanic audiences.

At the start of each discussion session, the facilitator reviewed relevant key points that emerged from the pre-meeting interviews with each panelist. Panelists then



engaged in a facilitated discussion of the topic to further define existing evidence and opportunities. Although the conversation was structured around the above key topics, the facilitator encouraged informal discussion. This stimulated rich conversation and helped this diverse group of experts think broadly and creatively about the topics.

Panelists and the facilitator joined the meeting by both telephone and web conference. This enabled them to collectively participate via web camera and created a more interactive environment. On each day, the panel discussion lasted 2 hours.

This report summarizes the content of the expert panel discussion, but should not be considered a comprehensive assessment on the topic of communicating with Hispanic audiences about overweight and obesity. The panelists had limited time to discuss these complex issues, and emphasis was placed on identifying the most promising opportunities and the most important factors to effect positive change in obesity prevention efforts.



Major Themes and Issues Discussed

The themes and insights that emerged from the panel discussion are summarized here. Select insights from the literature scan conducted as part of the pre-meeting activities are also included to provide additional detail and context to the panel discussion summaries.



Audience Characteristics and Cultural Factors that Impact Communication

Panelists were asked to discuss cultural or other audience characteristics—including cultural values, perceptions about weight and health, and culturally linked attitudes about nutrition and physical activity—that are particularly important when communicating with Hispanic audiences about obesity and weight issues. They were also asked to recommend the best ways to address the diversity that exists within this population. The following insights resulted from this discussion.

- **Diversity within the Hispanic population requires careful tailoring of communication.**

The panel underscored the importance of understanding the incredible diversity of experience and cultural identity among Hispanic audiences. However, panelists acknowledged, it is not uncommon—out of convenience—for public health campaigns and other outreach efforts to treat Hispanics as a homogeneous group. Successful health communication efforts, panelists agreed, require taking time to understand the needs, values, and preferences of each target audience segment.

Panelists also highlighted that communications will resonate better when adapted for the target audience. For example, such an approach would ensure the people featured and the regional variations and preferences in language used in materials suit the dominant population in a target audience segment. Tailoring and adapting materials also reflects differences in community context—for example, a rural setting, an urban population, or a farming/migrant worker setting.

Panelists noted that characteristics like country of origin, generation in the United States, language preference, economic status, and immigration history all

“This notion of diversity and reflecting diversity, accepting diversity, championing it, celebrating it, I think is really interesting and should definitely be part of what we do.”

~ Panelist

influence how Hispanic audiences interact with their families and communities and think about their health, suggesting opportunities to tailor messages to different groups. In addition, a panelist noted, interracial, intercultural marriages are more prevalent, which affects diversity.

- **Level of acculturation heavily influences Hispanics' eating and physical activity behavior.**

Panelists agreed that acculturation—in which individuals adopt the beliefs, religion, language, and other cultural patterns of the dominant or host group—and generational status (e.g., first, second, etc. generation living in the United States) are important, often intertwined, dimensions of diversity and culture. A panelist noted that more acculturated Hispanics, and young people especially, are sensitive to being “boxed in” by traditional demographic categories and may identify themselves as being multicultural.

Panelists noted that epidemiological evidence shows recent immigrants may have healthier diets and more active lifestyles than families who have been living in this country for longer periods. Each region of Latin America and the Caribbean has its own typical dishes and food preparation methods, but overall, Hispanics who adhere to the diets of their native countries typically use more fresh produce and fewer processed ingredients in their cooking, and they prepare more meals at home. Panelists suggested including messages about preserving or reviving traditional diets from countries of origin as a way of maintaining both the health and culture of Hispanic families. That said, a panelist noted that younger generations may not see traditional foods or methods of preparation as being healthy, and so they avoid them.

- **Family plays a central role in shaping attitudes and behaviors.**

Panelists discussed that in Hispanic populations, families commonly have multiple generations living in one household, and early childcare for Hispanic children is often provided by extended family, including grandparents, who may or may not conform to the nutrition and physical activity standards set by the parents. For instance, grandparents can be reluctant to accept healthy changes in how foods are served or prepared. On the other hand, older generations may be a positive influence as they may use more fresh produce and tend to cook more at home, and they may scold younger family members for not eating healthfully.

- **Gender roles affect attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity.**

Mothers/wives make most of the decisions about the food their family buys and how it is prepared. Panelists noted mothers and wives may be responsible for the grocery shopping, decide on cooking methods, and influence when and how much their children eat, but they may not always feel confident or supported when making those decisions. A panelist noted that women may feel constrained by what their

family will eat, particularly the husbands/fathers. Panelists suggested communication targeting women should empower them in their decision-making roles related to food purchases and preparation. Communication should also encourage husbands and fathers to support healthy changes for their families.

Gender-based cultural values of machismo and marianismo affect behavior related to obesity. *Machismo* is associated with traditional concepts of masculinity, including a desire to be a good provider and protect one's family. Panelists suggested that communication can draw inspiration from the positive aspects of this cultural value to encourage men to make changes that improve family health and nutrition. Among women, panelists noted the cultural concept of *marianismo*, which sees women putting their husband's and family's needs above their own. Although this could be a barrier to women making healthy changes, it could also be a motivator to model healthy behavior to their families.

Gender roles are evolving, particularly within more acculturated families. Panelists noted that traditional gender roles are shifting in some Hispanic families, with women working outside the home and men pitching in with household tasks including cooking. Messages about healthy eating should not necessarily be directed only at women; they can encourage both men and women to make time for cooking healthy meals. A panelist shared that grilling is popular, particularly with younger Hispanic men; showing backyard grilling and including healthy food choices like grilled vegetables may be a good way to engage this audience segment.

"In California, there's been a campaign of 'My kitchen, my rules,' and it's been converted to Spanish: 'Mi cocina, mis reglas.' ... It was meant to focus on the idea that... what you're bringing in and cooking in your kitchen [is in your control]. This is also a very important message for Latina moms, in terms of really taking control of what's happening in their homes."

~ Panelist

■ **Food is closely connected to expressions of love and caring.**

Panelists noted that giving treats or cooking a favorite, decadent meal is an act of love so it is important to address these practices with understanding instead of shaming. In many Hispanic households, a panelist noted, one is expected to eat everything on the plate. It can be considered disrespectful or rude to not eat food that is offered even if one is not hungry. Younger children especially get full very quickly but are expected to stay at the table. Panelists suggested that emphasizing portion control and the fact that portion varies by age and activity level can help address this practice.

■ **The cultural value of fatalismo can impact health-related attitudes and behaviors.**

Fatalismo is the belief that an individual has very little control over health and illness, which are often viewed as fate or God's will. Panelists



noted that this belief can result in a tendency to “live in the moment,” which can make it difficult for some Hispanic audiences to think about how an unhealthy diet or inactive lifestyle will affect their future quality of life. Resisting a treat now to gain a potential future benefit or to reduce future risk may not be a concept that resonates.

“We see a lot of pressure on young girls especially to be very thin in the general market.... that’s not necessarily what we [Hispanics] perceive as attractive.”

~ Panelist

“By training, I understand that individual actions can influence norms... in their families, in their neighborhoods, and their communities. But, I also feel that another area of approach [is] broader messages and action messages about how our community works together to change the system that creates the disadvantages. The fact that our communities don’t have access to healthy food is a systemic issue.”

~ Panelist

■ **Hispanics’ perceptions of ideal body shape and weight may differ from what is portrayed in the mainstream U.S. media.**

Panelists agreed that many Hispanics, regardless of country of origin, generally find a curvier shape for women to be more attractive. For men, being overweight seems to be more acceptable as they age. Panelists noted this may be due in part to different expectations for men with age—with younger men presumed to be active through work or sports, and older men presumed to be less active.

Panelists also noted a need to better understand the interplay between nutrition and physical activity where weight is concerned. Messages should help audiences understand the energy balance formula—that too many calories consumed and too few calories burned can result in overweight and obesity.

■ **Individuals’ context and environment can make it hard for some Hispanics to eat healthy and be physically active, even when they know how to do so.**

Panelists suggested that communication must discuss both individual behavior change and broader action messages for families and communities to improve the environment to support healthier behaviors. They highlighted several factors that can impede individuals’ ability to make healthy choices and establish healthy community norms.

Poverty was high on the list. Panelists noted that food that is readily available and affordable to low-income families is often not healthy, and many food-insecure families feel they must choose between cheaper fast food or junk food and more expensive healthy food that may be less accessible. Lack of safe, free, or low-cost places for physical activity, or the lack of infrastructure to commute on foot or by bike to work or stores with healthy food was also noted by panelists.

Panelists also pointed out that ads for high-fat, high-sugar, and high-salt foods directed at this population are prevalent and can influence dietary behavior. Similarly, ads for weight-loss products that promise quick results can be quite compelling, though most are misleading or false. Panelists suggested that improving media literacy among Hispanic audiences is important to help them understand the influence of marketing and discern which messages are true.

Audience Characteristics and Cultural Factors that Impact Communication

Diversity and Acculturation

- Hispanics in the United States come from more than 20 countries of origin, with the largest sub-population groups being Mexican (64.6%), Puerto Rican (9.5%), Salvadoran (3.8%), and Cuban (3.4%).⁸
- Culturally appropriate communication must appreciate similarities across Hispanic subgroups, while recognizing aspects that differ from group to group based on country of origin, acculturation, socioeconomic and legal status, and the interactions between the Hispanic community and broader community or region.^{9, 10, 11, 12, 13}
- Acculturation goes well beyond language preference to include behaviors, attitudes, norms, and values; these may differ across settings such as work, home, and social environments.⁸
- A strong association has been found between body mass index and generational status among Hispanic women with second- and third-generation Hispanics having a higher prevalence of obesity than their first-generation counterparts; and Hispanic men who speak English at home as their primary language (indicating a higher level of acculturation) are also more likely to have obesity.^{15, 16}
- Most studies link greater acculturation with eating fewer fruits, vegetables, and beans, and eating more fast foods, simple sugars, salty snacks, fats, and sugar-sweetened beverages than their less acculturated peers.^{11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18} More acculturated Hispanics tend to spend less time cooking dinner and more money at restaurants than less acculturated Hispanics.¹⁴
- More highly acculturated Hispanics tend to exercise more than their less acculturated counterparts.^{15, 16, 19, 20}

Core Values

- *Familismo* is a core cultural value among Hispanics, even the highly acculturated. It is characterized by familial obligations, close and frequent social interactions, providing financial and emotional support, and a desire to meet familial expectations for behavior.²¹ Communication can capitalize on *familismo* by emphasizing physical activity as a way

to stay healthy so an individual can care for his or her family, or by showing how families can be active together to promote healthy lifestyles for all members.²²

- Women often bring about change in the family, and their decisions and behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity can influence the entire family.^{9, 11, 23} However, cultural roles for women and the view that a woman's priority is caring for her family do not allow much time for physical activity and other activities to care for her own health.^{24, 25, 26, 27}
- Extending interventions to include family members has been shown to improve recruitment, participation, and desired outcomes.^{13, 16, 22, 27}
- *Respeto* refers to showing the proper level of courtesy and respect with people of a particular age, sex, or social status.²¹ It is often tied closely to *familismo*, in the form of respect for one's parents and other elders⁹ and can affect decisions about health behavior within the family.

Body Image

- In one study, Hispanic women who had overweight or obesity were more likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to underestimate their weight and body size. This underestimation increased as years living in the United States increased.²⁸

Environmental and Contextual Factors

- Many Hispanic adults report a lack of time for meal preparation or physical activity because of work demands and other changes in daily life due to immigrating to the United States.^{11, 15, 22, 23, 29}
- Research suggests that ads on Spanish-language versus English-language TV networks are more likely to promote consuming low-nutrient, calorie-dense foods and beverages such as fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages, particularly for Hispanic children.³⁰
- Sidewalks, recreation areas, traffic enforcement, bike lanes or paths, bus stops within walking distance of home, and grocery stores near homes positively influence physical activity levels among Hispanics. Perception of neighborhood safety has also been shown in some studies to influence physical activity.^{16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31}

B

Audience Segmentation and Key Audience Segments for Overweight/Obesity Communication

Panelists were asked about key factors they consider when segmenting Hispanic audiences for health communication activities, methods of segmenting, and key audience segments that present the greatest potential for having a positive impact on obesity through communication. The following discussion points emerged on this topic.

“When we talk about millennial moms, I really think that’s the bullseye because that’s really where a lot of the change is happening. That is a bilingual, bicultural [audience] segment that has one foot in American culture, and is very much influenced by that culture, but their heart is still very Latino.”

~ Panelist

■ **Women, particularly millennial moms, are a key segment among Hispanic audiences.**

Panelists noted that given traditional gender roles in much of the Hispanic population, designing materials and messages to appeal to women is very important. They agreed that targeting moms can have far-reaching effects on family health because moms shop, cook, and take kids to restaurants. Changing mom’s behavior impacts the whole family.

Panel members identified millennial moms in particular—those born approximately between 1980 and 2000—as a key audience segment. They are the “fast-food generation” because they are busy with their kids and sometimes jobs. Panelists stated that influencing these moms will influence their children and possibly other family members, including grandparents who may live with the family. A couple of panelists also noted that millennial moms are influencers in both the Hispanic community and their community at large in part because many are highly acculturated or bicultural, in addition to having a high level of social media use.

Panelists cautioned that although Hispanic women, and even more distinct segments such as millennial moms, may share many attributes, they are not homogeneous. It is important to incorporate cultural elements that are appropriate for a given target market.

■ **Youth can be effective influencers in their families.**

Tweens, ages 9–14 years, were another audience panelists identified as effective influencers in their families. In addition, they have not yet fully established their behaviors and routines, so there is an opportunity to help them make physical activity and healthy eating an everyday part of their lives. One panelist noted, however, that children in this age group often drop out of organized sports because sports become more competitive and demanding of time and resources; thus, they lose an outlet for staying active. Another panelist indicated that for this younger, digitally connected generation, proactive involvement in message design and dissemination is really important.

Even younger children can be a potential audience for reaching not only the youth themselves but also their families. One panelist shared an example from the tobacco control movement in which children received anti-tobacco messages

at school that they brought home to show their parents. Panelists agreed such a strategy could be used to communicate about overweight/obesity issues.

- **Given the respect for elders, grandparents can influence family nutrition and physical activity.** Given the respect for older family members in the Hispanic culture, panelists identified grandparents—both *abuelas* and *abuelos*—as a potential audience segment. They suggested communicators explore how to encourage grandparents to pass down healthy aspects of the culture (food, eating together) and to model and celebrate healthy traditions.

- **Segmentation should consider community context, barriers faced, and lifestyle or affinity.** As noted previously, it is important to segment audiences by community context (e.g., urban, rural) and barriers to healthy nutrition and physical activity, since the needs of audiences across different community settings can vary significantly.

Likewise, audiences can be segmented by affinity or common interest such as religion, membership in a business or community organization, or an interest such as sports, dance, or music. A panelist noted that affinity groups can help communicators connect to people through their personal interests, and those groups can create a context in which to model desired behavior.



“There are also opportunities to develop campaigns that work with grandparents and young children, because as we see, the grandparents are [often] taking care of the grandchildren.”

~ Panelist

FROM THE LITERATURE

Audience Segmentation and Key Audience Segments for Overweight/Obesity Communication

- Women are typically in charge of selecting and preparing foods for the household, which means they can influence family nutrition.^{11, 23}
- Hispanic families commonly include multiple generations in one household, and the concept of “family” is often broader than the nuclear family, including extended family members, close family friends, and neighbors.^{10, 17, 21, 22}
- Engaging local nonprofit and other community groups that have been working with Hispanic populations can be an effective way to learn about reaching this audience.²³

C

Strategies for Developing Communication that Resonates with Hispanic Audiences

After reflecting on previous discussions about Hispanic audience characteristics, cultural values, and considerations for segmentation, panelists discussed approaches or opportunities for appeals, message framing, and message content for communicating with Hispanics about obesity and weight issues. They were also asked to discuss ways to reflect or embed core values in messages about obesity and weight issues; strategies for addressing Hispanics' perceptions about healthy weight when communicating about these issues; and considerations for language and design in materials for Hispanic audiences.

“Traditional, cultural forms of physical activity are under-appreciated and should be lifted up and celebrated as other ways of getting your moderate to vigorous physical activity minutes in.”

~ Panelist

- **Effective messages incorporate cultural values associated with food, physical activity, and attitudes toward weight and body image.**

Panelists noted that messages about being healthy and active are likely to resonate with Hispanic audiences more than messages focused on weight. Given the role of food as an expression of love, panelists suggested communicating ways to make traditional foods healthier or addressing portion control rather than steering audiences away from favorite traditional foods. One panelist shared an example of eating one taquito and a salad instead of eating three taquitos, and others suggested presenting lower fat cooking methods for traditional dishes.

As noted earlier, cultural values related to gender roles may impact nutrition and physical activity behavior. For instance, a wife/mother may feel that taking time to exercise competes with her family's needs. The panel suggested emphasizing how physical activity can be done in 10-minute increments, as part of daily routines, and focusing on activities that are accessible to those with limited income. They also shared examples of culturally relevant physical activities such as dancing (e.g., dancing while cleaning, folk dancing), playing soccer, or walking as a family. A panelist pointed out that suggestions for less traditional physical activities among Hispanic audiences, such as biking, may require additional information about technique or safety.

- **Using the preferred language of target audience segments is essential.**

Whether individuals prefer Spanish or English language depends on many factors, including age, generation, and level of acculturation. Panelists also indicated language is a contextual issue. Younger Hispanics—as well as those who are second-generation and beyond—tend to prefer English but may switch to Spanish when talking to older family members. Panelists noted that some young Hispanics may not speak Spanish at all and may not have a strong connection to Hispanic culture depending on how long they or their families have lived in the United States and the racial/ethnic makeup of their communities.

For English materials, panelists suggested a few Spanish words or phrases relevant to the context can trigger some cultural connection. Likewise, Spanish materials can include English words that are commonly used among a target audience or community. However, a panelist cautioned that for individuals who have tried to shun Spanish in favor of English as the perceived “language of success,” using Spanish could be offensive.

- **Producing bilingual materials may help reach all generations in a family and those who have different levels of acculturation.**

A common approach for bilingual materials panelists noted is to put English on front and Spanish on back (or vice versa). Bilingual materials are not always necessary, however, if the target audience segment has a known preference for one language. Whether messages are in English or Spanish, panelists recommended they be developed in the native language with cultural competency in mind. It was noted that to develop materials in a second language, transcreation—the process of adapting materials for another language and cultural group while maintaining the essence of the source text—will be much more effective than simply translating one language to the other.

- **Messages and materials should emphasize empowerment and self-efficacy as they relate to healthy eating and physical activity.**

Panelists stressed that communication should not point out unhealthy behavior but rather show how to practice healthy behaviors and the benefits of doing so. They stated that many Hispanics are in the United States to provide a better future for their families; taking control of their health can be framed as part of that goal. Panelists emphasized that messages and materials should promote self-efficacy and empowerment to foster people’s belief that they can make positive changes for themselves and their families. This can help address *fatalismo* and counter environmental or contextual challenges.

Panelists encouraged communicators to concentrate messaging around small, easily attainable changes that individuals and families can achieve within their community context, without confronting systemic or environmental barriers—such as shopping in the outer aisles of the grocery store to avoid temptations of unhealthy foods. At the same time, they noted, for some audiences it may be appropriate to include messages about what individuals might do to help make changes in their community that support healthy behavior. As an example, a panelist noted that if individuals cannot buy fresh vegetables because produce is not sold at the local store, they can ask the store to start carrying them.



“[The] notion of controlling your own destiny... Latinos are really driven by this notion of providing a better future for their family. And so much is out of their control, but health is actually in their control. How can that change of taking control over your own health be connected to what’s driving them forward?”

~ Panelist

“We need to show very positive and very constructive ways that they can incorporate exercise and prepare healthy meals.”

~ Panelist

Panelists also suggested avoiding the words “diet” and “exercise” as they can have negative connotations of being deprived or having to make time for rigorous activity. Preferred phrasing included “living a healthy life” or “living an active life.”

■ **Communication should avoid stereotypes.**

Panelists noted several common themes or strategies in communication to Hispanic audiences that may be overused and be ineffective with some segments:

- ▶ The *abuela* (grandmother) approach, which features a grandmother figure sharing information or modeling behavior—This approach may not resonate with more acculturated audiences.
- ▶ The notion that Hispanic parents want their babies or children to be *gordito* (big)—While some families come from countries where food is scarce and want their children to be bigger to fend off possible hunger, this is not generalized to all Hispanics.
- ▶ A focus on or association with Hispanic Heritage Month—As a panelist noted, for Hispanics, every month is Hispanic Heritage Month.

■ **Messages must be sensitive to not convey shaming.**

Panelists cautioned that shaming can result if messages focus on what the audience is doing wrong. For instance, panelists noted, love is at the heart of behaviors like giving treats or serving favorite foods. Health communication efforts should empathize with this cultural practice, and approach the issue by expressing understanding that parents want what is best for their children. Panelists recommended that communication emphasizes the positive aspects in a family or community and convey pride, beauty, and positive, healthy traditions. In regions with a high percentage of recent immigrants, health messages should focus on preserving healthy behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity that immigrants bring from their home countries.

In addition, it was noted that communicating healthy behaviors to an audience that cannot achieve them because they lack necessary skills or face barriers in their environment can also have the effect of shaming. Panelists recommended communicators tailor messages to address the challenges facing low-income Hispanic communities. A panelist described regional ads that encouraged people to drink more tap water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages; in one community that had water quality issues, the message was changed to encourage drinking bottled water instead.

■ **Public health messages with an emotional appeal tend to be more effective with Hispanic audiences than materials packed with data.**

Panelists suggested messages make an emotional appeal, while including the necessary science, though panelists acknowledged the challenge of finding the right mix of story, emotion, and facts. The emotional appeal creates a connection and gives a reason to act. This can be effective when followed by simple, concrete ways to adopt desired behaviors or actions. One example shared by a panelist was a prostate cancer screening campaign for Hispanic males that provided an

emotional motivator—“Be there for her *quinceañera*” (15th birthday)—and then gave the data about increased risk for Hispanics, the need for screening, and how to get screened. The ad successfully tapped into the fathers’ devotion to family, which motivated them to schedule a cancer screening.

■ **Hispanic audiences tend to prefer materials with culturally relevant images and minimal text.**

Panelists noted that audiences need to identify with the people featured in marketing materials. For Hispanic audiences, they suggested featuring either a range of images representing the diversity among this population or images specific to a target segment. When dealing with messages about nutrition, physical activity, and healthy weight, panelists observed that materials tend to picture fit people, which can alienate the target audience. They recommended communication includes images of diverse body shapes. It is also important to show people in the diversity of contexts and settings relevant to target audience segments. If communicating with a rural audience, for instance, it may be appropriate to include farm workers.

Panelists discussed the importance of using the right visuals when communicating with Hispanic audiences (i.e., reflect the audience, look like a professional production). One panelist noted her community’s preference for professional stock photos versus candid community shots. Colors should also appeal to the specific target community; this can be determined through formative research and testing materials with members of the target audience.

Panelists urged that all text used in materials should reflect the literacy level of the target audience. *Fotonovelas*—small booklets with dramatic stories told through photographs and captions—and *radionovelas* were suggested as effective formats for low-literacy audiences. Numbers as well as words, panelists noted, can be difficult to understand; when using numbers, convert percentages and statistics into meaningful numerals, such as 1 in 5, or every third person.

■ **Formative research and message and materials testing are vital to communication success.**

Panelists stated that audience research is essential to understand specific Hispanic audience segments so that materials can be tailored and adapted appropriately. Testing messages and materials with representatives of the target audiences, they noted, is equally important to be sure text and imagery resonate and to avoid any unintended negative effects.

Throughout the discussion, the panel also indicated a few areas for further Hispanic audience research and testing to help guide communicators. These areas included better understanding of how audience segments make decisions related to food purchases, evaluating physiological reactions to marketing messages (similar to commercial advertising tests), and testing the effectiveness of behavioral economics approaches that make the healthy behavior the default behavior (e.g., having to opt out of the healthy meal in a school lunch program).

“I think the millennials are going more for infographics. Things that are fun, certainly easy to read, short, bulleted information versus a lot of text.”

~ Panelist

Strategies for Developing Communication that Resonates with Hispanic Audiences

Language

- Language, particularly among first-generation immigrants, contributes to the problem of low literacy in the United States since many of these individuals know only enough English to function in their workplace and community.⁹
- Language may influence choices of media and responses to health messages.⁹
- When targeting Hispanics who do not speak Spanish, English-language materials should also be tailored to their cultural values and preferences.³²
³³ In addition, it may be wise to include Hispanics visually and verbally in mainstream media messages so they feel the messages are also directed to them.³³

Empowering Messaging

- Messages that emphasize advocacy, self-efficacy, empowerment, and social justice are effective among minority audiences, including Hispanics.^{25, 34, 35}

- Gain-framed messaging—which emphasizes the benefits of a behavior—is more effective than loss-framed messaging at persuading prevention-related behaviors, such as physical activity, among Hispanic audiences.^{23, 25}

Cultural Relevance

- Consider tailoring interventions and communication not only by language preference but also by age; level of acculturation; and attitudes and beliefs toward obesity, physical activity, and nutrition.^{20, 22}
- Video interventions, including *telenovelas*, have generally proven effective in changing knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors among Hispanic populations.⁹
- Feature healthy foods that are specific to the target audience, low-cost, and easy to prepare,²⁷ and emphasize utilitarian physical activity—that is, exercise done in the course of typical daily activities, like walking to the store, a restaurant, or work.¹⁹
- With all messages, consider the literacy level of the target audience.^{13, 19, 23}



D

Approaches and Channels for Reaching Hispanic Audiences

The panel was asked what the best approaches and channels are for reaching Hispanic audiences, both generally and specifically, and what can be learned from other successful efforts in Hispanic communities. In addition, panelists discussed key intermediaries or spokespeople.

■ **When considering messengers or spokespeople to reach Hispanic audiences, starting inside the community is desirable.**

Panelists emphasized that messages that come from within the community are more likely to connect with the target audience because people look to others in their own circle for advice and information. The panel stressed that seeing a role model from the community who successfully adopted healthy behaviors can empower others to do the same. A panelist also noted that engaging a real person from the community will be more culturally relevant because the individual naturally reflects aspects of his or her own culture.

The panel also suggested tapping into affinity groups—such as faith communities, business organizations, or sports leagues—where influential members can model desired behavior. It was noted that for some audience segments, celebrity spokespeople can also be effective. For instance, a panelist mentioned that through Fuel Up to Play 60 Español, NFL players have had a substantial influence among Hispanic youth. The panel also indicated that local celebrities, such as a local leader, priest, or even popular barber shop owner, can effectively convey health messages.

■ **Traditional and low-tech media channels, including radio and television, are effective in reaching some audience segments.**

Panelists noted that radio and television, including Telemundo and Univision, are still popular forms of communication and effective ways to reach Hispanic audiences, particularly older Hispanics and low-income communities. A panelist shared that robocalls and utility bills have been successful channels to reach rural audiences with health messages.

■ **Mobile and digital technology are increasingly important channels for reaching Hispanic audiences, particularly younger groups.**

The panel reiterated that Hispanic audiences, particularly younger Hispanics, connect frequently through digital and mobile technology and are comfortable using it to access information. Panelists observed that mobile technology is the primary way Hispanic audiences access the Internet. Relatedly, one panelist felt it was important to note that Hispanics who do access the Internet often do so via smartphone, which does not provide the same kind of experience, particularly with regard to depth of content and functionality.

“This notion that an external force can push messages out into the community is becoming less effective. It has to be coming from that community....it has to be about people pulling the message into their life and then sharing that with the people around them.”

~ Panelist

“I think, more than anything, digital is what we need to look at as a primary [channel] instead of TV. Millennials and younger kids are just not watching TV anymore. And, just about everybody has a phone and a smartphone at that.”

~ Panelist

They also commented that social media can reach millennial moms and tweens, and suggested that blogs, specifically, may be an effective digital channel for reaching Hispanic millennial moms. A few examples of popular blogs included *Latina MomsRising*, *Web City Girls*, *Remezcla*, and *SaludToday*; the *Salud America!* website was also mentioned as a popular digital resource.

In addition, panelists indicated that YouTube videos can effectively show/model positive behaviors for Hispanic audiences. The use of short recipe videos, such as the “TASTY” videos popular on Facebook, and healthy-cooking demonstrations on Univision or Telemundo were also discussed. A panelist suggested that communicators explore ways to combine digital with the physical (e.g., Pokemon Go! or the VERB! campaign’s “yellow ball,” which encouraged participants to do a physical activity with the ball and post the activity online).

Panelists observed that factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and location affect digital and mobile technology use and access: Hispanic individuals who are older, are of low socioeconomic status, or live in rural communities may be less likely to connect to the Internet.

Panelists noted that although older Hispanics may not access information digitally, younger family members can convey messages they access online to grandparents, who often live with the family or serve as caregivers.

■ **In addition to media, face-to-face communication is a key approach for programs to reach low-income Hispanic audiences.**

The panel noted that interpersonal, face-to-face communication is particularly desirable for reaching some Hispanic audiences, particularly in low-income

communities. Community health workers, also known as *promotoras*, were discussed as an example of an effective program strategy that incorporates this approach; these trained and respected members of the community can engage at an interpersonal level and share health messages. One panelist, for example, noted communication activities by community health workers (e.g., using materials such as flipchart) have been an effective approach for reaching low-income, rural Hispanic audiences where technology is not available. The panel also observed that health centers and community events can be venues for programs to have face-to-face communication.



■ **Businesses and corporations can be partners for reaching Hispanic audiences.**

Panel members discussed how businesses and corporations can be important communication partners by helping disseminate messages or co-sponsoring campaigns and events focused on reaching Hispanic audiences. They also discussed opportunities for health programs to engage businesses more broadly in outreach efforts to help make healthy living easier for Hispanic audiences. The panel suggested encouraging businesses to market products that facilitate healthier eating. A panelist, for example, suggested communications focused on reaching local grocery stores and *bodegas* to encourage them to offer healthier options.

“Health-based initiatives have grown in just about every corporation across the country... they are doing a lot in diversity and really trying to promote that among their community. These companies that reach a lot of people, through their employees and employee networks, I think, [are] a channel.”

~ Panelist

FROM THE LITERATURE

Approaches and Channels for Reaching Hispanic Audiences

- TV and radio rank high among Hispanics as sources of information across levels of acculturation.^{33, 36, 38} Newspapers and magazines are also highly ranked, though they appear to be more common sources among more highly acculturated Hispanics.^{33, 36}
- Hispanics use smartphones more frequently than other racial/ethnic groups and are more likely than non-Hispanics to access the Internet through mobile devices.³⁶
- Using geo-ethnic media (targeted toward a specific ethnicity or community) in combination with mainstream media is an effective strategy for reaching Hispanics of varying levels of acculturation and use of Spanish language.^{21,33,36,37,38,40}
- Partnerships with social service agencies, business associations, schools, local government officials, and other community-based organizations may be an effective way to reach Hispanics,²³ which can result in messages being received from multiple entities.
- Interpersonal communication connections—friends, family, health professionals—are identified frequently among Hispanics in relation to achieving health goals.^{41,42,43}
- *Promotoras* (also called community health workers) can communicate face-to-face with Hispanic patients, reducing the chances for misunderstanding about health promotion information and increasing the acceptability of that information. One review found nearly one-quarter of interventions promoting nutrition and physical activity among Hispanics employed *promotoras*.¹³



Major Themes and Issues Discussed

A. Audience Characteristics and Cultural Factors

- Diversity within the Hispanic population requires careful tailoring of communication.
- Level of acculturation heavily influences Hispanics' eating and physical activity behavior.
- Family plays a central role in shaping attitudes and behaviors.
- Gender roles affect attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity.
- Food is closely connected to expressions of love and caring.
- The cultural value of *fatalismo* can impact health-related attitudes and behaviors.
- Hispanics' perceptions of ideal body shape and weight may differ from what is portrayed in the mainstream U.S. media.
- Individuals' context and environment can make it hard for them to eat healthy and be physically active, even when they know how to do so.

B. Audience Segmentation and Key Audience Segments for Overweight/Obesity Communication

- Women, particularly millennial moms, are a key segment among Hispanic audiences.
- Youth can be effective influencers in their families.
- Given the respect for elders, grandparents can influence family nutrition and physical activity.
- Segmentation should consider community context, barriers faced, and lifestyle or affinity.

C. Strategies for Developing Communication that Resonates with Hispanic Audiences

- Effective messages incorporate cultural values associated with food, physical activity, and attitudes toward weight and body image.

- Using the preferred language of target audience segments is essential.
- Producing bilingual materials may help reach all generations in a family and those who have different levels of acculturation.
- Messages and materials should emphasize empowerment and self-efficacy as they relate to healthy eating and physical activity.
- Communication should avoid stereotypes.
- Messages must be sensitive to not convey shaming.
- Public health messages with an emotional appeal tend to be more effective with Hispanic audiences than materials packed with data.
- Hispanic audiences tend to prefer materials with culturally relevant images and minimal text.
- Formative research and message and materials testing are vital to communication success.

D. Approaches and Channels for Reaching Hispanic Audiences

- When considering messengers or spokespeople to reach Hispanic audiences, starting inside the community is desirable.
- Traditional and low-tech media channels, including radio and television, are effective in reaching some audience segments.
- Mobile and digital technology are increasingly important channels for reaching Hispanic audiences, particularly younger groups.
- In addition to media, face-to-face communication is a key approach for programs to reach low-income Hispanic audiences.
- Businesses and corporations can be partners for reaching Hispanic audiences.

IV Conclusion

The expert panel discussion identified a number of cultural, social, environmental, and other factors that may influence communication to Hispanic populations about nutrition, physical activity, weight, body image, and other issues relevant to obesity prevention. The insights generated can help public health communicators develop culturally competent messages and materials that resonate with target Hispanic audiences and reinforce desired healthy living and community environments.

The panelists expressed many common and overlapping insights on communicating with Hispanic audiences about obesity and weight issues, and many of those insights echo key findings and insights noted in the literature on the topic. However, this expert panel summary should not be considered an exhaustive examination of the topic, given the small number of experts participating and the limited time allotted for discussion. When communicating with Hispanic audiences—as with any audience—whether at the local or national level, the best way to improve the likelihood of successful outcomes is to conduct formative research to learn as much as possible about the specific target audience and test messages and materials to help ensure they are relevant, culturally appropriate, and aligned with the local context.



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