

The Pace of Functional Decline among Mexican-Origin Elders

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### **Abstract**

This study employs a longitudinal data set, the Hispanic Established Epidemiologic Studies of the Elderly (H-EPESE), and growth mixture models to identify the correlates of different patterns of decline in functional capacity, measured by objective Performance Oriented Mobility Assessments (POMAs), among 3,050 Mexican-origin individuals 65 and older at baseline in 1993-94. The panel was recontacted six more times over the subsequent fourteen years. Results reveal three general patterns of decline (1) high initial functioning followed by decline (48% of the sample); (2) moderate initial functioning followed by decline (37.5% of the sample) and (3) poor initial functioning followed by continuing poor functioning or slight improvement (14.5% of the sample). Individuals with the most seriously impaired physical functioning tended to be older, more poorly educated, and less financially stable than respondents with better functioning or less decline. Implications of the patterns of decline are discussed for public policy.