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Association between Preferred Language and Risk of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 Infection in Children in the United States

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The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on Black, Hispanic, and other individuals of color, although data on the effect of a person's language on SARS-CoV-2 infection are limited. Considering the barriers suffered by immigrants and non-English-speaking families, we tested whether children with a preferred language other than English was associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection. Children from families with a preferred language other than English had a higher predicted probability of SARS-CoV-2 test positivity (adjusted odds ratio, 3.76; 95% CI, 2.07-6.67) during the first wave of the pandemic. This discrepancy continued into the second wave (adjusted odds ratio, 1.64; 95% CI, 1.10-2.41), although the difference compared with families who prefer to speak English decreased over time. These findings suggest that children from non-English-speaking families are at increased risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection, and efforts to reverse systemic inequities causing this increased risk are needed.

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