Adolescent Resilience and Social Change in Spain
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Critical developmental processes that characterize adolescence are highly responsive to social-ecological inputs and carry lifelong health impacts. Research on adolescent resilience has prepared an analytic approach well-suited to study this phenomenon; it evaluates young people’s experiences with adversity in order to identify resources they can access to optimize adaptive success. For immigrant youth, adversity includes particular challenges of adapting to life in a new country. Here, we examine social-ecological factors associated with adolescent resilience in a diverse, multinational cohort of adolescents aged 12-17 years-old. Data come from the Longitudinal Studies of Immigrant Families Project (PELFI), a prospective, multi-site study of immigrant health in Spain. 304 adolescents (230 from immigrant families; 156 born in Spain) completed health surveys at baseline in 2015 and at a 2-year follow-up. Although the cohort represents a diversity of youth backgrounds, the 2-year follow-up period included a series of refugee crises and political turmoil in Spain that all youth witnessed, thereby creating a natural experiment design through which we explore differences in adolescent resilience and track changes over time. Resilience was assessed using the cross-culturally validated Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28), which specifically examines individual, familial/relational, and broader social factors associated with resilience. Results show that factors are expressed differently by sex and country of origin, but adolescents’ overall scores are high. Moreover, resilience is positively associated with educational achievement (p<.02), and highly responsive to age. These findings advocate continued investigation of multiple pathways of resilience, and underscore their time-sensitive and context-sensitive dimensions.