

# Navigating Identity: Latino, Latinx, Latine or Hispanic?

The cultural, ethnic, linguistic and national identities of people with Latin American and Spanish-speaking backgrounds are varied and multifaceted.

The terms used to describe them have evolved, reflecting changes in society's perspectives on gender inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

## Latino and Latina

"Latino" and "Latina" are perhaps the most commonly used terms to describe individuals of Latin American descent.

Spanish, like many languages, is deeply entrenched in gendered grammar.

Many argue that "Latino" and "Latina" fail to encompass the full spectrum of gender identities. "Latino" is still used by many people as a gender-neutral default.

## Understanding Latinx & Latine

"Latinx" and "Latine" originated in Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ communities as gender-neutral alternatives for people of Latin American heritage.

The terms have gained popularity, especially among younger generations and those identifying as non-binary, transgender or gender non-conforming.

While intended to be inclusive, some Latinos argue that "Latinx" is offensive. Detractors say the term is an English construct, doesn't follow the traditional structure of the Spanish language and is difficult to pronounce.

Pronounced Latin-ay, the letter "e" in "Latine" is intended to be more inclusive of gender identities and conforms with Spanish pronunciations.

## The Complexities of "Hispanic"

"Hispanic" is widely recognized and used to describe individuals with origins in Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain.

The term was coined by the U.S. government for demographic purposes in 1980.

"Hispanic" has been criticized for focusing on language rather than culture. Some individuals feel it oversimplifies the rich diversity of backgrounds within the community.



## Hyphenated Identities

Latinos and Hispanics in the U.S. come from countries with distinct histories, languages and traditions.

Hyphenated identities like Mexican-American, Dominican-American or Puerto Rican-American allow them to bridge the gap between their cultural roots and American experiences.

## Words Matter

When referring to people of Latin American and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, it's important to consider both cultural sensitivity and individual preferences.

Fifty-seven percent of Hispanic Americans said they don't care what label is used: "Hispanic," "Latino," "Latinx" or another term, according to a 2022 Gallup survey. While 23% prefer "Hispanic," 15% of those surveyed said they favor "Latino." Only 4% say they prefer the term "Latinx."

"Language is evolving, as society evolves, as people evolve," says UnidosUS' Luis Quiñones. "As new generations grow up and want to be more inclusive, language matters. My stake on it is, if it's a push for inclusivity, I support it. But if a Boomer tells me please call me 'Latina' or 'Latino,' I have to respect and honor it because that's the way they feel about their own identity."



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Q** How can we actively engage in conversations with Hispanic/Latinx colleagues to better understand their experiences and perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of their identities?
- Q** In what ways can employers and employees promote and celebrate the cultural diversity that Hispanic/Latinx employees bring to organizations?
- Q** What innovative ideas or actions can employees propose to leadership to promote a more inclusive and supportive workplace for Hispanic/Latinx colleagues?
- Q** How can you ensure your own behavior and interactions reflect a commitment to inclusivity, contributing to a workplace where Hispanic/Latinx employees can thrive?
- Q** What steps can you take to continuously educate yourself about the cultural backgrounds and experiences of Hispanic/Latinx colleagues to promote understanding and respect?

