RESPONDING TO RACE/ETHNICITY QUESTIONS & HISPANIC/LATINO IDENTITY

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HISPANIC/LATINO?

The term "Hispanic" was developed to describe all people with roots in Latin America. It is similar to the terms "Latino" or "Latina" and are often used interchangeably. Combining groups into one race or ethnicity helps them become sizeable enough to gain political, economic, and social power and resources. This is why groups representing specific ethnicities in the U.S. (e.g. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban) in the 1970s and 1980s advocated for an aggregated "Hispanic" category after years of not showing up in national data (NPR, 2017).

There are many different terms to describe the Hispanic/Latino category, as defined by the OMB. These terms include Latinx and Latine, which are gender-neutral alternatives to "Latino/a" and are becoming increasingly accepted, especially among younger generations. In 2019, the Pew Research Center found that "only 23% of U.S. adults who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino have heard of the term Latinx, and just 3% say they use it to describe themselves" (Noe-Bustamante et al, 2020). For the purposes of this guide, we will use the terms Hispanic/Latino interchangeably.

There are 62.1 million Hispanic/Latino identifying individuals in the U.S., which is 18.8% of the population. This group accounted for more than half of U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020 (Jones, et al).

WHY IS HISPANIC/LATINO THE ONLY ETHNIC GROUP INCLUDED ON FORMS?

As described above, the idea of a 'race' is more related to groups having a shared appearance than a shared culture or language. The Hispanic/Latino population as a whole can be considered multiracial due to a combination of African, European, and Indigenous heritage. Some people present as White, Black, and/or indigenous, but solely identify as Hispanic/Latino. This may be why 93.9 percent of the "Some Other Race" category on the 2020 U.S. Census also selected Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. As a result, this category is the second-largest race reported on the census. Thus, future questionnaires may provide a combined race/ethnicity question, which include the Hispanic/Latino category with other racial groups.

Identifying as another race in addition to Hispanic/Latino (such as White, Black, or American Indian/Alaska Native) can be important for illustrating the racial diversity of the population, as well as any inequities due to racism (especially anti-Black racism). The explanation above of "perceived race" or "street race" may be helpful in deciding how you want to identify yourself on these forms.

WHY SHOULD HISPANIC/LATINO CATEGORY BE DISAGGREGATED INTO MORE SPECIFIC GROUPS?

It is recommended to report ancestry within the Hispanic/Latino category. This is important because, as described above, there is a lot of diversity found within this population and grouping together all Hispanic/Latino people can hide important disparities. For example, some mental health studies find that health issues, such as rates of depression and substance use disorder, differ across different Hispanic/Latino groups (PolicyLink, 2018). More specific groups can always be combined into the larger Hispanic/Latino category, but having the ability to disaggregate is important so that leaders make decisions based on a complete understanding of the population, making sure that no one is left behind.

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO DISAGGREGATED QUESTIONS?

There is no 'right' way to answer questions about race and ethnicity. The way you respond to question(s) about race and ethnicity may also depend on how the question is formatted.

Self-reporting provides the most accurate responses to race and ethnicity questions. This means that these questions should be open-ended questions, giving people the opportunity to write in any response you wish. In this case, you should write out the race/ethnicity that you feel best represents your identity. If you identify with more than one racial/ethnic group, you should list all of them.

Sometimes, it can be hard for institutions and people who manage data to organize many written race/ethnicity responses, so instead they offer specific racial/ethnic categories for you to choose from. Including more specific race/ethnicity categories allows more options for accurate self-reporting.

Most forms will include a multiple-choice race/ethnicity question. In this case, the race/ethnicity options may vary. For example, there may only be one Hispanic/Latino category, or there may be more specific categories to choose from. You may or may not decide to select a more specific group. However, selecting all of the relevant racial/ethnic groups that you identify with is recommended for more accurate reporting.

Here are some example scenarios of how someone might respond to different race/ethnicity question formats:

Scenario 1: Multiple choice, limited disaggregated options; respondent is Dominican American but prefers to only identify as Hispanic and Black	**Scenario 2:** Multiple choice, limited disaggregation; respondent identifies as Cuban American
What is your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)? ☐ White ☑ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ☑ Black ☐ Middle Eastern or North African ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian, Native, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, or Alaska Native ☐ Some other Race or ethnicity: _____ ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not to anser **Since "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish" was selected as your race or ethnicity, which group best represents your ethnicity or ancestry (check all that apply)?** ☐ Columbian ☐ Cuban ☐ Dominican ☐ Ecuadorian ☐ Honduran ☐ Mexican ☐ Peruvian ☐ Salvadoran ☐ Another option: _____ ☐ Don't know ☑ Prefer not to answer	**What is your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)?** ☐ White ☑ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ☐ Black ☐ Middle Eastern or North African ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian, Native, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, or Alaska Native ☐ Some other Race or ethnicity: _____ ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not to anser **Since "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish" was selected as your race or ethnicity, which group best represents your ethnicity or ancestry (check all that apply)?** ☐ Columbian ☑ Cuban ☐ Dominican ☐ Ecuadorian ☐ Honduran ☐ Mexican ☐ Peruvian ☐ Salvadoran ☐ Another option: _____ ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not to answer

Scenario 3: Write-in only option; respondent identifies as Puerto Rican	Scenario 4: Multiple choice, limited disaggregated options; respondent identifies as Mexican and Guatemalan
What race or ethnicity best describes you? _Puerto Rican_	**Since "Hispanic/Latino," was selected as your race or ethnicity, which group best represents your ethnicity or ancestry (cehck all that apply)?** ☐ Columbian ☐ Cuban ☐ Dominican ☐ Ecuadorian ☐ Honduran ☑ Mexican ☐ Peruvian ☐ Salvadoran ☑ Another option: _Guatemalan_ ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not ot answer

WHAT DISAGGREGATED RACE/ETHNICITY GROUPS CAN I EXPECT TO SEE ON A FORM OR SURVEY?

The table below shows the different groups that can fall within the Hispanic/Latino category. In some regions of the U.S., these populations may be very small, so they are unlikely to be included as a specific option.

- Please note that this table may not include every possible category, and it's possible that there is overlap between these ethnicities and a broader race group besides the Hispanic/Latino category.

Category: Hispanic or Latino			
Argentinian	Cuban	Nicaraguan	Venezuelan
Belizean	Dominican	Panamanian	Another South American group not listed here
Bolivian	Ecuadorian	Paraguayan	Another Central American group not listed here
Brazilian	Guatemalan	Peruvian	Another Caribbean group not listed here
Chilean	Guyanese	Puerto Rican	Another Hispanic/Latino group not listed here
Columbian	Honduran	Uruguayan	
Costa Rican	Mexican	Salvadorian	

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Jones, et al. **Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population Is Much More Multiracial.** United States Census Bureau. 12 August 2021. Available from: https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html

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Noe-Bustamante et al. **About One-in-Four U.S. Hispanics Have Heard of Latinx, but Just 3% Use It.** Pew Research Center. 2020 August 11. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/

PolicyLink. **Making the Case for Data Disaggregation to Advance a Culture of Health.** 2018. Available from: https://www.policylink.org/our-work/community/health-equity/data-disaggregation