

Is it Hispanic, Chicano/Chicana, Latino/Latina, or Latinx?

What term should be used: Hispanic, Chicana, Latino, or Latinx? No matter which term is used, people often disagree. It's an emotionally charged topic and there are important usage variations depending on the region, generation, political inclination, etc. Before using a specific term, inform yourself, and know why you are using it. In addition to these terms, many people prefer to identify themselves by their country of origin or heritage. When in doubt about how to refer to someone, the best approach is to ask them how they identify themselves. Following are definitions of the various terms, which are intended to help provide some clarity; however, it is best to keep in mind and recognize the complexity of their usage.

For the GENIAL Summit, we decided to use the term Latino because it is more commonly used among Informal Science Learning (ISL) practitioners in the West Coast of the United States.

In California, generally, the terms Latino and Latina are most common, while on the East Coast and in Texas and New Mexico, Hispanic is more commonly used. People in the ISL field who are concerned with issues of audience identity use these terms and care about their use; however, the people/audiences themselves are much less concerned about these labels and most likely identify with their country of origin or descent.

HISPANIC

Someone who is a native of, or descends from, a Spanish-speaking country.

The term hispano/hispana (Hispanic) wasn't invented in the United States; it's a Spanish word that means "belonging or relating to Hispania, Spain," and "belonging or relating to Hispanoamérica (countries in the Americas where Spanish is spoken)." Hispanic came in use officially in the United States in the early 1970s during the Richard Nixon presidency. The U.S. government decided to adopt Hispanic to have a universal term that could serve to include all Spanish-speaking groups in the United States. Typically, a person born in or who descends from Spain is referred to as Spanish or a Spaniard.

CHICANO/CHICANA

Someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States.

Chicano or Chicana is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States. The term became widely used during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s by many Mexican Americans to express a political stance founded on pride in a shared cultural, ethnic, and community identity.

LATINO/LATINA

Someone who is native of, or descends from, a Latin American country.

The term Latino/Latina includes people from Brazil and excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Not all Brazilians identify themselves as Latino/Latina, but many do. Thus, Hispanic refers more to language, while Latino/Latina refers more to culture.

LATINX

A gender-neutral term to refer to a Latino/Latina person.

The “x” replaces the male and female endings “o” and “a” that are part of Spanish grammar conventions. This term comes from American-born Latinos/Latinas who want to be more inclusive and gender neutral, which is more akin to the English language.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Embracing Diversity U.S. [“What Makes a Latino, Hispanic, or Latinx?”](#)

[Huffington Post video on the definitions](#)

Pew Research Center Study. [“‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino’: When Labels Don’t Fit.”](#)