*https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/hispanic-and-latino-identity-is-disappearing*

**Hispanic and Latino Identity Is Changing**



*While some Hispanics consider their background one of race, increasingly they prefer to identify with a nationality (Mexican or Cuban or Dominican).*

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The U.S. Hispanic community’s views of identity are changing, as they have been for decades. Forty years ago, that term — “Hispanic” — was proposed to group people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latin American ancestry in government statistics. No one had even heard of “Latino” back then.

But today, while both terms are widely used, Pew Research Center [surveys](https://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/10/22/3-hispanic-identity/) show that Hispanics prefer to identify themselves with terms of nationality (Mexican or Cuban or Dominican) rather than pan-ethnic monikers (Hispanic or Latino or even American).

It was not always this way. U.S. social attitudes toward diversity and intermarriage, and big demographic trends, such as the recent wave of Mexican immigration, have affected Hispanics’ sense of identity. For example, [today’s young Hispanics](https://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/12/11/iii-identity/) hear their parents say “be proud of your Hispanic identity and speak Spanish.” But among Hispanics who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, being American and speaking English were more emphasized.

Today, one-in-four Latino newlyweds [marries someone who is not Latino](https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/02/16/chapter-1-overview/). Only Asians marry out at a higher rate. And among Latino newborns who live with their parents, 27 percent have one non-Latino parent.

These trends could have implications for what Hispanics call themselves in the future — and even whether they consider themselves Hispanic at all. Already two million Americans say they are not Hispanic although they indicate their ancestry includes roots in a Spanish-speaking country. More than likely they are the children or grandchildren of a couple that includes one Hispanic and one non-Hispanic parent.

Other changes are underway too. Immigration is no longer the driving force of the Hispanic community’s growth. Instead, [U.S. births](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/26/u-s-hispanic-and-asian-populations-growing-but-for-different-reasons/) are — driving down the share of the community that is foreign born (just [35.5 percent](https://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/04/29/hispanic-nativity-shift/) of Hispanics are immigrants). This may affect Hispanic identity, too. [Our surveys](https://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/10/22/3-hispanic-identity/) show that among second- and third-generation Hispanics, smaller shares identify themselves by the names of their ancestors’ home countries. The likelihood of [speaking Spanish also fades](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/24/a-majority-of-english-speaking-hispanics-in-the-u-s-are-bilingual/) with each new U.S.-born generation.

Currently the U.S. Census Bureau does not regard Hispanic to be a race, but rather an ethnicity. However, a new Pew Research Center survey shows that two-thirds of Hispanics see their Hispanic background [at least in part as a racial one](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/15/is-being-hispanic-a-matter-of-race-ethnicity-or-both/).

We’ve seen Hispanic identity evolve through recent decades. But as the number of interracial and interethnic couples grows and immigration slows, “Hispanic” and “Latino” may be used less in the future.