



Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity

WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

People of Latin American* origin or descent. “Latinx” (LAT-uhn-eks or luh-TEE-neks) is a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to “Latino/Latina/Latin American” and is fast growing as the preferred identifier among U.S. Latin American communities. In some circles, people from non-Spanish speaking countries (e.g., Haiti, Brazil, Belize) might consider themselves Latinx given those countries are in Latin America and were colonized by European-Latin nations (Spain, France, Portugal). But there’s still debate and the choice to adhere to a cultural label is personal.

HERE'S WHY AUTHENTICITY MATTERS

Latinx communities contribute greatly to the U.S. and its economic growth. They are 1 in 5 Americans, more likely to be employed, more entrepreneurial (starting new businesses) than the overall U.S. population, and include senators, teachers, doctors, realtors, restaurateurs, etc. But Hollywood disproportionately portrays Latinx people as criminals and poor, which dehumanizes them and fuels an anti-Latinx environment that makes modern-day Latinx concentration camps possible. That cost for inauthentic representation is simply too high.

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LATINX PEOPLE

OVERREPRESENTED STORIES & HARMFUL STEREOTYPES

- **Working Class:** Maids, housekeepers, nannies, gardeners, mechanics, valets/parking attendants, or service industry employees catering to white characters’ needs.
- **Criminals:** Gang and drug cartel members or people who are associated with them. Romanticized, exaggerated, or demonized depictions of organized crime help fuel the false narrative that Latinx people are inherently violent and don’t reflect the racist, sexist, economically elitist systems that create breeding grounds for gang affiliations.
- **Immigration All the Time:** Stories only about undocumented immigrants*, ICE raids, families torn apart by deportation, and border crossings. Not only are Latinx individuals more than their immigration statuses, but many Latinx families have been in the U.S. for generations. There are also many *non-Latinx* immigrants in the U.S. (For more tips, see our Migrants factsheet.)
- **Colorblind Existence:** Latinx characters described without any specific culture or heritage that influences their beliefs, behavior, and language choices in and outside their communities. Colorblind portrayals overlook significant aspects of Latinx experiences and ignore how people think, speak, and feel.
- **The “Latin Lover”:** Hypersexualized men as experts at suave seduction and women as hypersexualized objects of desire, offensively called “hot,” “spicy,” “feisty,” and “exotic.”
- **Misuse of Code-Switching:** Relying too heavily on code-switching to identify Latinx people results in caricature representations rather than character-specific purposes for fluctuating between two or three different languages (e.g., it’s more often used at home or among members of the same Latinx communities).
- **Disinterest in Higher Education:** Latinx characters portrayed as lazy and/or possessing limited intelligence perpetuates a falsehood and ignores the fact that systemic racism is often the greatest barrier to Latinx people being able to access higher education.

THINGS WE'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF

- **Middle and Upper Class:** White-collar professionals (e.g., lawyers, teachers, CEOs, etc.), entrepreneurs, and/or specialists in their fields.
- **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics):** Those in medical, scientific, and engineering fields to better reflect the actual workforce and provide role models for future generations.
- **Young Adult:** Positive coming-of-age portrayals of Latinx youth.
- **LGBTQIA+:** Portrayals and representation of queer characters within Latinx communities, particularly transgender and non-binary characters.
- **Indigenous and Afro Latinxs*:** Indigenous and Afro Latinx communities, characters, and stories that reflect their unique experiences (e.g., more positive portrayals as well as stories depicting the racism/colorism* that exists from other segments of Latinx communities).
- **Cultural / Ethnic Specificity:** Characters with specific ethnic backgrounds. There are countless differences across Latinx communities including the type of Spanish and/or Indigenous/Native language and idiomatic expressions used and the cultural customs and traditions shared.
- **Second-Class Citizens:** Annually, tens of thousands of Latinx people are born in U.S.-controlled territories and have American citizenship but not equal voting rights. Explore the unique rules that govern Puerto Ricans and the predominantly Afro Caribbean people of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the challenges they face.
- **Diversity in Language:** Characters who use and speak English, Spanish, Portuguese, and/or Indigenous languages to varying degrees and levels of fluency (e.g., not all Latinx people speak Spanish well or at all). Some Latinx people are bilingual or trilingual, while others speak only one language.

*Denotes a term in the glossary

QUICK FACTS

→ The U.S. Latinx population was 59.9 million in 2018 (12.1 million more than in 2008), comprising 18.3% of the U.S. population and making it our largest, fastest-growing cultural and ethnic minority.

→ In 2018, Latinx people comprised at least 50% of the population in 102 U.S. counties. LA's 4.9 million Latinx individuals are 49% of the county.

→ 24% of Latinx people identify as Afro Latinx.

→ During the 2016–2017 TV season, only 6.2% of scripted characters in broadcast shows were Latinx characters. The percentage was 5.3% for cable scripted and 7.2% for digital scripted shows.

→ In the top 100 films of 2018, Latinx characters comprise only 5.3% of the 3,895 speaking or named characters with an ascertainable race/ethnicity. 47 of those 100 top films had *no* Latinx speaking characters, and 70 had *no* Latinx women on screen.

ONLINE REFERENCES & RESOURCES:

- [Ain't I Latina](#)
- [Black Latinas Know Collective](#)
- [The CentAm Collective](#)
- [Hispanic Federation](#)
- [Latinx House](#)
- MPAA: ["2018 Theme Report"](#)
- [National Hispanic Council on Aging](#)
- Pew Research Center: ["Afro-Latino: A deeply rooted identity among U.S. Hispanics"](#)

["Three-Fourths of Hispanics Say Their Community Needs a Leader"](#)

["U.S. Hispanic population surpassed 60 million in 2019, but growth has slowed"](#)

- [Power 4 Puerto Rico](#)
- Refinery29: [No I'm Not a Proud Latina](#)
- Remezcla: ["Latino vs. Hispanic vs. Latinx: A Brief History of How These Words Originated"](#)
- [Negra Soy: Why I've Moved Away From the Term Afro-Latina](#)
- UCLA Social Sciences: ["Hollywood Diversity Report 2019"](#)
- [Unidos US](#)
- USC Annenberg: ["Inequality in 1,200 Popular Films"](#)
- Variety: ["Latinos Still Have Highest Moviegoing Rate in U.S., but Asians Are Close Behind"](#)

GLOSSARY

Afro Latinx:

Afro Latinx are Black Latinx people who refer to themselves in varied, nuanced ways. For instance, those from Latin America and the diaspora self-identify using terms including but not limited to Black Latinx (negro(a)/x in Spanish), Afrodescendiente (afrodescendiente in Spanish), and Afro Latinx.

Colorism:

Also called Skin Color Stratification. Prejudice or discrimination against those with dark skin tones, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group. Privileges light-skinned BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) over dark in areas such as income, education, housing, and the marriage market. (Colorism is prevalent across many cultures, not just the Latinx culture.)

Hispanic vs. Spanish:

"Hispanic" refers to a person of linguistic Spanish origin or descent and, though technically different, "Hispanic" and "Latinx" are now often used interchangeably, especially by the U.S. government. "Spanish" applies only to those from Spain and is often used incorrectly to describe Latinx people. Avoid this, given the European colonization of indigenous and Afro Latinx peoples.

Latin American:

A term used in the U.S. to denote someone born and living in parts of North, Central, or South America where Spanish or Portuguese is the main language (including the Caribbean). Outside the U.S., people consider themselves to be of their nationality (i.e., not Latin American but Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian, etc.).

Undocumented Immigrant:

An individual residing in any given country without legal documentation. In the U.S., this includes people who entered without inspection and/or proper governmental permission and those who had a legal visa that's no longer valid. At all costs, avoid using dehumanizing and radicalized terms such as illegal immigrants, illegals, alien, and illegal alien to refer to undocumented immigrants.

For in-depth definitions of the above terms and definitions of additional terms (Asian Latinx, code-switching, coyotes, Latino/Latina/Latinx), please visit our [Expanded Glossary](#).

In-kind support and materials for this factsheet were provided by the following partner organizations. Please contact them for additional information, story guidance, and in-room consultations.



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A list of the most up-to-date contact information for all of our partner organizations can be found on our website:

[WriteInclusion.org/factsheets](#)

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:



Geena Davis Institute
on Gender in Media
"If she can see it, she can be it."