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## Latino Race and Ethnicity, and Proposed Changes for the 2020 Census

*NiLP Note: By 2017, the Census Bureau is required to recommend questions for the 2020 Census to the Congress and among the issues that this will involve is how the Bureau plans to count race and ethnicity. The Census currently asks two questions, one of one's Hispanic identity and the other on one's race. There are currently proposals under consideration to combine both questions into one as a way to improve the quality of these racial-ethnic data. However, this proposal has proven to be controversial in some quarters. In the recent "Fact Tank" report below by the Pew Research Center, they outline problems with the Census Bureau's current understanding of race in the Latino community.*

*It is interesting to note that the Pew findings on Latino concepts of race and ethnicity are nearly the opposite of those in [an April NiLP survey](#) of 345 Latino opinion leaders in the United States. Asked how they would characterize Latinos along general racial and ethnic lines, two-thirds of the Latino opinion leaders (66 percent) feel that Latinos are primarily an ethnic/national origin group, compared to only 6 percent who see it primarily as a racial group. A quarter (25 percent) thinks Latinos are a combination racial and ethnic/national origin group.*

Do you consider Latinos or Hispanics to be primarily a racial or ethnic/national origin group, or something else?	
A Racial Group	6.1
An Ethnic/National Origin Group	66.1
Both	25.1
Unsure	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NiLP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

*This NiLP survey is not based on a sample but is a close approximation of an Latino elite poll, raising questions of whether there is a significant difference in racial-ethnic perceptions between Latino leaders and the general Latino population. This could be based on generation, socio-economic level and other factors and in these ways tends to complicate how the Latino community and its leaders will respond to the Census proposals to change the race and ethnic questions.*

In the NiLP survey, the Latino opinion leaders were asked: "The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and 5 Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change?" While a plurality oppose this change (38 percent), a close 35 percent support it, with 19 percent stating they do not know enough about it to give an opinion.

**The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change?**

	Do you consider Latinos or Hispanics to be Total An Ethnic/ National				Total
	A Racial Group	Origin Group	Both	Unsure	
Yes	55.0%	31.5%	39.5%	33.3%	35.0%
No	20.0%	43.5%	29.6%	22.2%	38.0%
I don't know enough to give an opinion	20.0%	17.1%	18.5%	44.4%	18.4%
I don't believe the Census should be asking about one's race	0.0%	4.2%	3.7%	0.0%	3.7%
Unsure	5.0%	3.7%	8.6%	0.0%	4.9%

Source: NiLP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

There is, therefore, currently no consensus on this Census issue among Latino leaders, indicating the need for further community education on the issues involved in the proposed changes in how the Census Bureau plans to collect racial and Hispanic data in the 2020 Census. With only 4 percent feeling that the Census Bureau should not be collecting such racial and ethnic data, there is a near consensus that the Bureau should be doing so.

There were, however, some racial differences in response to this question by the Latino opinion leaders. While pluralities of those identifying racially as White (44 percent) and those identifying as some other race (40 percent) oppose combining the race and Hispanic questions into one, the largest percentage of those identifying racially as Black (42 percent) favor combining the questions into one. This last finding is surprising since the groups raising serious questions about valuable racial information that would be lost by combining these questions are largely Afro-Latino.

The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change?

	Racial Self-Identification				Total
	White	Black	Other Race	Refused /NA	
Yes	29.5%	42.3%	33.8%	38.1%	32.3%
No	43.8%	23.1%	40.0%	23.8%	39.6%
I don't know enough to give an opinion	18.2%	23.1%	18.5%	28.6%	19.4%
Unsure	4.0%	11.5%	6.2%	4.8%	5.2%
I don't believe the Census should be asking about one's race	4.5%	0.0%	1.5%	4.8%	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: NiLP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

Further surprising is that two-thirds (67 percent) of those identifying specifically as Afro-Latino support combining the questions. Support for the combined question was strongest among those Latino opinion leaders who considered Latinos to be primarily a racial group (55 percent in support) or partially racial (40 percent). The largest percentage (44 percent) of those who consider Latinos to be primarily an ethnic or national -origin group opposed this proposal.

As the Census Bureau starts to conclude its testing of its proposals to make changes in the race and ethnic questions for the 2020 Census, the Latino community needs to fully debate the issues involved in order to express its preferences to the Bureau and the Congress. The juxtapositioning of the Pew with the NiLP findings indicates that this debate needs to take place sooner rather than later.

---Angelo Falcón

Fact Tank

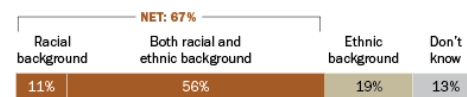
## Is Being Hispanic A Matter Of Race, Ethnicity Or Both?

By **Ana Gonzalez-Barrera** and **Mark Hugo Lopez**  
Pew Research Center (June 15, 2015)

When it comes to reporting their racial identity, Latinos stand out from other Americans. In the 2010 census, for example, 94% of the U.S. population selected at least one of the five standard, government-defined racial categories - white, black, Asian, American Indian or Pacific Islander. But among Latinos, just 63% selected at least one of these categories; 37% of Latinos, or 19 million, instead selected only "some other race," with many offering [write-in responses](#) such as "Mexican," "Hispanic" or "Latin American."

### Two-Thirds of Hispanic Adults Say Being Hispanic is Part of Their Racial Background

% of Hispanic adults who say being Hispanic is part of their ...



Note: Hispanic is based on self-identification of race or origin. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 6-April 6, 2015  
(n=2,438 sampled Hispanic adults)

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Federal policy defines "Hispanic" not as a race, but as an ethnicity. And it prescribes that Hispanics can in fact be of any race. But these census findings suggest that standard U.S. racial categories might either be confusing or not provide relevant options for Hispanics to describe their racial identity. They also raise an important question long pondered by social scientists and policymakers: Do Hispanics consider their Hispanic background to be part of their racial background, their ethnic background or both?

[A new Pew Research Center survey](#) of multiracial Americans finds that, for two-thirds of Hispanics, their Hispanic background *is* a part of their racial background - not something separate. This suggests that Hispanics have a unique view of race that doesn't necessarily fit within the official U.S. definitions.

This distinctive view of race is consistent across demographic subgroups of Latino adults. For example, 69% of young Latino adults ages 18 to 29 say their Latino background is part of their racial background, as does a similar share of those in other age groups, including those 65 and older. Similar views are held among Hispanics who use Spanish as their main language (67%) and those who use English as their main language (66%).

This finding sheds light on some of the challenges the Census Bureau has faced in asking Hispanics about their [ethnic and racial background in surveys](#). Since 1980, the Census Bureau has asked everyone in the U.S. about their Hispanic origin separately from their race, and since 2000 it has allowed people to select more than one race in addition to their Hispanic background.

But [attempts by the Census Bureau](#) to reduce the use of the "some other race" category in the 2010 census by adding a note on the questionnaire explicitly stating that "Hispanic origins are not races" had limited impact. That year, 37% of Hispanic respondents selected "some other race," not much smaller than the 42% who said the same [in 2000](#).

To address these challenges in preparation for the 2020 decennial census, the Census Bureau is considering asking everyone living in the U.S. about their race or origin [in a combined question](#). In other words, the form would ask people to identify their race or origin and would include Hispanic along with black, white, Asian, American Indian and Pacific Islander.

[Preliminary results from some experiments](#) using the combined question show that when Hispanic origin is integrated into the race question, a large majority of Latinos (81% on average) mark just the Hispanic box and no other race category.

As the total number U.S. Hispanics has rapidly increased in the last few decades, the Census Bureau has been under pressure to accurately measure racial identity of Hispanics. For example, race and Hispanic origin are used in the enforcement of Equal Employment Opportunity and other anti-discrimination laws. At 54 million, Hispanics make up 17% of the nation's population, and they are projected to grow to be 29% of the U.S. population by 2060, according to the [Census Bureau](#). Between 1990 and 2013, the nation's Hispanic population grew faster than any other racial or ethnic group.

*Ana Gonzalez-Barrera is a research associate focusing on Hispanics, immigration and demographics at Pew*

*Mark Hugo Lopez is director of Hispanic research at Pew Research Center.*

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*"Hispanic and Latino Identity Is Changing" By Mark Hugo Lopez, [New York Times](#) (June 17, 2015)*

*"Census Bureau Considers Dropping 'Race' from Survey" By Nick Gass, [Politico](#) (June 18, 2015)*

*"Two-Thirds of Latinos Consider Hispanic Their Race: Pew Report" by Suzanne Gamboa, [NBC News](#) (June 11 2015)*

*"What Do Latinos Actually See As Their Race? New Report Says..." By Raquel Reichard, [Latina](#) (June 11, 2015)*