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Hispanics and Latinos. Who are they? What's the difference?

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Hispanics/Latinos currently make up more than 18 percent of the total U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That's 58.9 million people, up from just 14.8 million in 1980.¹ This growth trend is expected to continue: According to Pew Research Center projections, Hispanics will number 107 million by 2065, nearly 29 percent of the total U.S. population.²

"Hispanic or Latino" is a federally recognized ethnicity; it's the largest minority group in the country.³ It's important to note that this is not a singular group. The terms represent different cultures, races, and different countries of origin. *Hispanic* is defined as a person who has a Spanish-speaking origin or ancestry, which includes Spain. *Latino* (or "Latina" for a woman, "Latinx" to be gender-neutral) refers to Spanish-speakers as well but only people from Latin America.⁴

About 65 percent of Hispanics/Latinos were born in the United States.⁵ Hispanics made up 11 percent of eligible voters in the United States in 2016.⁶ U.S. Hispanic purchasing power is significant: \$1.7 trillion

per year, which is larger than the GDP of most countries.⁷

According to Carolina Demography, there are nearly 1 million Hispanics/Latinos in North Carolina. Between 2010 and 2016, North Carolina's Hispanic population grew by 132,000 new residents, an increase of 16.5 percent, which is slightly above the national average of 13.9 percent. Just 9 percent of North Carolinians are Hispanic, compared to the national average of 18 percent.⁸

Hispanics are heavily concentrated in two counties: 1 out of 4 live in Mecklenburg or Wake. Forsyth, Guilford, and Durham counties also have large Hispanic populations. But that is not the case in every county; in 2016, 24 North Carolina counties had fewer than 1,000 Hispanic residents.⁹

Nearly 60 percent of Hispanics or Latinos living in North Carolina are U.S.-born citizens. These people, as well as Hispanics moving in from out of state, have been the drivers of the state's Hispanic population growth in recent years. Since 2010, the number of Hispanics arriving in

North Carolina from foreign countries is flat.¹⁰

I am one representative of the Hispanic population in North Carolina. I identify as Latina, as white, and as a resident of Orange County. I moved here for a job opportunity in 2013. My parents are immigrants from different countries; one is a naturalized U.S. citizen, and the other is a permanent U.S. resident. I grew up in a multicultural household. I am a U.S. citizen born abroad, and I have two passports. I speak Spanish and English at home and with my family.

Visit this QR code for the sources cited here and a cool cartoon by artist Terry Blas on what it means to be Hispanic versus Latino and on his own multicultural upbringing.

