



# BEYOND THE NUMBERS: LATINX/HISPANIC HERITAGE



There are over 61 million Latinx/Hispanic individuals [living](#) in the U.S., and nearly 10 million of those people are living with mental health [conditions](#). But those numbers don't tell the whole story.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A mix of Indigenous and colonial heritage, Latinx/Hispanic cultures vary greatly in regions across the U.S., with Mexicans and Puerto Ricans making up the vast [majority](#) of these populations.. While the label of "Latinx and Hispanic" consists of those who are from Latin America or who come from a country that was or is primarily Spanish speaking, not all Latinx individuals are Hispanic, and not all Hispanic individuals are Latinx. For the purposes of this toolkit, these groups will be listed as "Latinx/Hispanic," and specific communities within those identities will be named when relevant. There are more than 20 different countries that make up these groups, all with different cultures, beliefs, and experiences.



Throughout history, many Latinx/Hispanic communities worldwide have [faced](#) political unrest, war, and oppression within their countries, often at the hands of U.S. government interventions, such as in Bolivia, Cuba, and Guatemala, to name a few. These eras of oppression led to a large number of internationally [displaced](#) persons, a contributing factor of the existing immigration crisis in the U.S. and leading to a high amount of undocumented individuals. Not all Latinx/Hispanic communities crossed borders to get to the U.S. though, with a large number of Mexican Americans predating present-day U.S. territories, including before the U.S. took over much of what once was Mexico. Additionally, Puerto Ricans are U.S. [citizens](#) with limited citizenship rights, due to territory not being officially recognized as a U.S. state.



There have been many [contributions](#) to U.S. culture by Latinx/Hispanic communities and individuals, specifically food, music, language, and politics. There is no doubt that these communities have made their marks on U.S. society in various ways.



## BARRIERS TO WELL-BEING

From the historical effects of mass genocides and colonization to current day immigration and xenophobia, as well as various inequities across the U.S., those within Latinx/Hispanic communities have had to rise up to be given basic dignity and respect. These experiences have led to [cycles](#) of generational trauma that often place the burden of healing onto the most recent generation. Xenophobia in health care, conforming to a different culture, and threats of violence can be major [obstacles](#) that prevent individuals from seeking help. These [threats](#) can also cause fear in U.S.-born Latinx/Hispanic individuals due to stereotyping and biases. Additionally, systemic oppression in the U.S. has led to [challenges](#) around wealth, housing, food, and health care for both those born in the U.S. and those who immigrated here. For [undocumented](#) individuals, especially those who do not qualify under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) relief program, lack of health insurance, work permits, and fear of deportation can cause immense stress and inaccessible support.



One of the biggest challenges that Latinx and Hispanic communities face is access to health care and health education. Despite improvements, language [barriers](#) continue to play a major role in the ability for Latinx/Hispanic individuals to find care that is culturally and linguistically responsive, and financially accessible. Mental health concerns may also be difficult to [address](#) within this community due to Latinx/Hispanic individuals focusing on physical symptoms rather than the psychiatric ones, or use of idioms of distress that are often misinterpreted, misunderstood, or do not fall within the Western medical models of illness.

