



## "Latine" Explained: Our Commitment to Inclusive Language

During my last semester at Columbia, I took a class taught by Ed Morales, an esteemed academic, author, and journalist, focused on the cultural production of descendants of Latin Americans living in the United States. In this class, we carefully considered the causes and impacts of shifting racio-ethnic identities in U.S.-Latin American communities. Various terms describe people of Latin American descent, including Latino/a, Latinx, and Latine. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they have distinct origins and meanings within Latin American communities.<sup>1</sup>

Spanish traditionally genders all nouns, whether animate or inanimate, as either male by ending a word in -o, or female by ending a word in -a. This has implications for terms like "Latino," which is increasingly viewed as outdated for describing Latin American heritage since it typically defaults to the masculine form when describing groups of people. As a result, the use of -o and -a endings in Spanish to signify masculine and feminine genders is criticized by many for its lack of inclusivity.

This, in turn, has led to the rise in the use of "Latinx" and "Latine" as gender-neutral alternatives. "Latinx" was an early attempt at creating a monolithic, gender-neutral term; however, it is criticized for its inability to integrate smoothly into speech, especially Spanish. On the other hand, "Latine" [pronounced *lah-tee-ney*] emerged from a search for gender-inclusive language by activists in Latin America. Because it is easier to pronounce and follows the convention in Spanish where some nouns end in "e" instead of "a" or "o," such as "*estudiante*" (student), "Latine" has become increasingly popular with both English and Spanish speakers.<sup>2</sup>

Adopting "Latine" respects the linguistic and cultural heritage of Spanish-speaking communities. It acknowledges the need for evolving language to meet contemporary understandings of identity while maintaining a connection to the roots of the Spanish language. This balance between tradition and progress is crucial in honoring the past while paving the way for a more inclusive future. Additionally, this term acknowledges the existence and impact of queer individuals in our lives, even when it may not be immediately apparent. It fosters belonging by allowing individuals to see themselves reflected in our language and encourages dialogue by opening up conversations about our diverse experiences and identities.

In our continuous effort to foster inclusivity and respect within our community, we must adopt language that embraces our commitment to diversity. We understand that language is a powerful tool in shaping our social realities, and we aim to use it to reflect our values of inclusivity, equity, and respect for all individuals.

Therefore, use "Latine" when addressing audiences or groups for which you do not have clear data on gender identifications. When referring to individuals who have specified their gender, use "Latino" for men and "Latina" for women. For instance, someone who identifies as a woman might prefer to be called "Latina" rather than "Latine."

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<sup>1</sup> [Hispanic, Latin@, Latinx or Latine? // Cambio Center](#)

<sup>2</sup> [A Brief Explainer on Latine and Latinx - Hispanic Executive](#) & [In Argentina, a Bid to Make Language Gender Neutral Gains Traction](#)