American Community Survey (ACS)
Why We Ask: Hispanic Origin

We ask whether someone is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin to create statistics about this ethnic group. Hispanic origin statistics are used in planning and evaluating government programs and policies to ensure they fairly serve the needs of each community and to monitor against discrimination in these programs and in society.

Though many respondents expect to see a Hispanic, Latino or Spanish answer category on the race question, this question is asked separately because people of Hispanic origin may be of any race(s). The Census Bureau collects this data in accordance with the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity.

The question as it appears on the 2016 ACS paper questionnaire. This topic was introduced on the Decennial Census in 1970, and was transferred to the ACS when it replaced the Decennial Census long-form in 2005.

Examples of Federal Uses
- Required to identify vulnerable populations which may be at disproportionate risk of experiencing limitations in health care access, poor health quality, and suboptimal health outcomes.
- Required to enforce against discrimination in education, employment, voting, financial assistance, and housing.
- Used in many reporting and research tasks to investigate whether there are differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics in education, employment, home ownership, health, income and many other areas of interest to policymakers.

Examples of Other Uses
State and local agencies use these statistics to understand the needs of all the groups in their communities over time. Some social, economic, or housing trends may have different impacts for Hispanics; understanding these changes may highlight future social and economic challenges. Researchers and advocacy groups use these statistics to examine the size and characteristics of Hispanic groups over time.