

September 15 to October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month celebrating the influence and contributions made by members of the Latinx communities. We often hear different names associated with this community as always what we call people is important to making sure she/he feels included. If you are not sure, ask what they prefer.

### **Definitions**

**Hispanic** -of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent and especially of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin living in the U.S.

**Latina** – a female living in or with Latin American heritage

**Latino** – a person living in or with Latin American heritage

**Latinx** -used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina

There are many members of the Latinx community that have left their mark in the aviation and STEM related fields here a few.

**Major Oscar Perdomo** was one of a handful of pilots who distinguished themselves as an "Ace in a Day". He flew a P-47 Thunderbolt with the 464th fighter squadron, 507th fighter Group USAAF in the Pacific Theater. During his last combat mission, he shot down four Nakajima "Oscar" fighters and one Yokosuka "Willow" Type 93 biplane trainer. Perdomo received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions.

[Dr Ellen Ochoa](#) was the first Hispanic female in space flying on the shuttle Discovery in 1993. She was also the 11th Director of the Johnson Space Center and the first Hispanic to hold this position.

**Brigadier General Robert L. "Bob" Cardenas** flew over 60 different aircraft in his career. During WWII, he flew combat missions in B-24 Liberators in the skies over Germany. As a test pilot, after the war, Cardenas was the commander for the B-29 which launched Chuck Yeager's sound breaking X-1; in addition to being the Chief Air Force Test Pilot of the Northrop YB-49 flying wing.

**Olga E. Custodio** was the first Hispanic female military pilot. In 1981 she received her wings and became a T-38 instructor pilot. She retired from the Air Force with the rank of lieutenant colonel in October 2003.

Additional Resources

[Science At NASA Happy Hispanic Heritage Month!](#) (YouTube Video)

New book released in August (2020) celebrates [Latinas in Aviation](#).

[Hispanic Astronaut Fact Sheet](#)