What is the difference between Race and Ethnicity?

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts. Race may be explained as a person’s self-identified category that reflects a social definition within one or more groups; not a biological, anthropological, or genetical definition. An individual can self-report as:

- White,
- Black or African American,
- American Indian,
- Asian,
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander,
- Some Other Race, or
- Two or More Races

In addition to Race, a complementary category was considered in the 2000s to classify individuals with more detail; Ethnicity. The individual’s Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic or Latino origin, or not. Thus, the two ethnic categories are: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.

Thus, an individual can self-identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish of any race, such as White/Hispanic, or White/Non-Hispanic; just like it can be Black/Hispanic, or Black/Non-Hispanic; or any other combination of races and ethnicity. An individual can also report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as “American Indian” and “White.” People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.