**Definition:** **Spanish** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Inhabitants of Spain or people of Spanish descent, as well as the culture and Romance language of such persons. The standard Spanish language, Castilian, originated in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragón (Catalan and Basque languages are also spoken in Spain).

### Summary Article: SPANISH
From *Cassell’s Peoples, Nations and Cultures*

The people of the Kingdom of Spain, whose population in 1996 was around 39.7 million. Although Spain has existed as a unitary state for 500 years, the extent to which its inhabitants share the Spanish identity varies considerably from region to region. The Spanish identity is strongest among the CASTILIANS, ARAGONESE, NAVARRESE and ASTURIANS. The GALICIANS, BASQUES and CATALANS all maintain distinct non-Spanish identities and have strong separatist movements. The ANDALUSIANS, VALENCIANS, BALEARIC ISLANDERS and CANARY ISLANDERS have vibrant regional identities, but lack these separatist tendencies.

**Origins of the Spanish**

People could be described as ‘Spanish’ (*His-paniensus*) as long ago as Roman times, but the term signified geographical rather than ethnic origin — that is, someone who came from the Iberian peninsula. The early inhabitants of Iberia were a diverse mix of CELTIC and IBERIAN peoples. Between the 8th and 6th centuries BC GREEKS and PHOENICIANS founded colonies along the Mediterranean coast. Iberia was conquered piecemeal by the ROMANS between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC. Its population became Romanized and, by around AD 400, Christianized.

By this time all of the indigenous languages, with the exception of the ancestor of modern Basque, had been replaced by local Latin dialects. In the course of the Middle Ages these developed into separate Romance languages: Castilian and its close relatives Navarrese and Aragonese, Catalan, Galician and PORTUGUESE. This linguistic diversity lies at the root of Spain's many regional identities and also of the PORTUGUESE national identity, which began to develop separately in the 12th century.

As Roman power collapsed in the 5th century, Iberia was invaded by a succession of Germanic tribes, including the VANDALS, SUEBI, ALANS and VISIGOTHS. The Visigoths were the most successful, conquering all of Iberia and ruling it until 711, when the Islamic MOORS invaded from North Africa. The Visigothic kingdom collapsed and the Moors quickly overran the whole peninsula, except the mountainous north and northwest, where small Christian kingdoms reestablished themselves and gradually began to win back territory from the Moors. The experience of the wars of reconquest led the Spanish peoples to identify strongly with a militant Catholicism.

The Christian kingdoms have a complex history of mergers and separations for dynastic reasons. By the time the last Moorish state, Granada, was conquered in 1492, Spain was divided into three kingdoms: Castile, the largest, Aragon and Navarre. The marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1464 brought the two kingdoms together in a union of crowns in 1479, and with Ferdinand's annexation of Navarre in 1515 all of modern Spain was united under a single crown. The three kingdoms were formally unified as the kingdom of Spain by Ferdinand's grandson Charles V in 1517.

[https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/spaniards](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/spaniards)
Empire and identity

Following Columbus's accidental discovery of the New World in 1492, Spain built a vast American empire, whose inhabitants were forcibly converted to Christianity and frequently ruthlessly exploited. The mixing of native American and Spanish influences in this empire led to the development of the LATIN-AMERICAN identity.

The prestige of belonging to Europe's richest and most powerful kingdom helped cement the Spanish identity, but it was only partly successful in overriding older regional identities. Identification with Spain was easiest for the Castilians, as they were the dominant ethnic group of the kingdom, and the capital, Madrid, was in their province. Identification with Spain was also easy for speakers of Navarrese and Aragonese, but Catalans, Basques and Galicians retained their strong local identities based on language and separate historical experiences. Attempts to suppress non-Spanish regional identities peaked under the Franco dictatorship (1939–75), which cracked down particularly harshly on expressions of Basque and Catalan traditions. This repression served only to strengthen regionalist and separatist tendencies, however. After Franco's death and the restoration of democracy, the Spanish government recognized the strength of regionalist sentiments and has attempted, with considerable success, to satisfy them through the introduction of autonomous devolved regional governments. However, the Basque separatist organization ETA (see BASQUES) continues to wage an armed campaign against the Spanish authorities.

In contrast to the unified national identity of the Portuguese, Spanish identity includes those of separatist minorities such as the Catalans, Basques and Galegos.


https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/spaniards