



**Guidelines** on  
**Inclusive Language  
and Images**  
in **Scholarly Communication**



*Updated October 2022*

The content contained within each of the Toolkits for Equity in Scholarly Publishing is for informational and educational purposes only. It is NOT intended to be used as legal advice. Always research local, state, and national laws and consult with a lawyer before making any legal decisions regarding workplace antiracism.

This document is published under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/legalcode>) license. As a result, you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and remix, transform, and build upon the material. However, we ask that if you are adapting or customizing the content you not substantially dilute the language or materially alter the spirit in which the content was originally written. We welcome others' efforts to customize these guides to reflect their own specific contexts (regional, professional, etc.).



You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. You may NOT use the material for commercial purposes. If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

This license does NOT extend to third-party content, text or images that have been cited. Please contact the original authors of any third-party content if you wish to reuse or adapt.

If you are using this toolkit, we'd love to hear about it so we can track its impact in our community. Please contact the publishers directly at [equitytoolkits@gmail.com](mailto:equitytoolkits@gmail.com) to let us know how the toolkits have helped you or your organization.

# Contents

## Introduction

### Language Guidelines

Introduction to language guidelines	6
Age	9
Crime and incarceration	12
Family and relationship status	17
Gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation	20
Geopolitics	28
Health	35
Immigration	43
Race and ethnicity	45
Religion; atheism; spirituality	52

### Image Guidelines

Inclusive images	56
Data visualization	60
Accessibility	63

### End Notes

Resources	66
Contributions and participants	70
Acknowledgments	71

# Introduction

## Background

*“[G]atekeepers—funders, project officers, editors, peer reviewers, federal agencies, and others—can play an important role in enforcing a racial equity lens in the work they fund and publish because of the amount of influence they have on researchers’ careers” (Schwabish and Feng, 2021).*

Scholarly communication is often defined as “the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use” (ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee, 2018). It is meant to serve the public and advance the pursuit of knowledge. It is important that this is done in a way that includes the whole- not just of scholarly communication itself, but of society.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help all authors, editors, and reviewers recognize the use of language and images that are inclusive and culturally sensitive. The guidelines will serve as a global tool and educational resource that can be used by individuals, institutions, and publishers. By addressing the various forms of bias and discrimination currently found in published research, the intent of these guidelines is to set an industry standard that promotes proactive inclusive communication going forward.

## Implicit bias

Inclusion is the act or state of comprising part of a whole, making everyone feel valued and important (Merriam-Webster, Rozaki). This should be done intentionally because everyone has biases that they may not be aware of. Oftentimes people think of bias as something conscious. While explicit bias can be overt and intentional, implicit bias is unconscious or hidden. People are unaware of their implicit biases, and they are therefore involuntary and unintentional (Anti-Defamation League).

<b>Bias</b>	an inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment
<b>Explicit bias</b>	the <b>conscious</b> attitudes, stereotypes, and overt intentional actions (positive or negative) toward members of a group merely because of their membership in that group
<b>Implicit bias</b>	the <b>unconscious</b> attitudes, stereotypes, and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group

Schwabish and Feng note that the biases a person has “influence the decisions made during a research project, such as the questions that are asked, how data are gathered, how findings are

interpreted, and who the main audience is for the work.” Researchers and authors can examine their own biases and determine how these might affect their work. So too can other stakeholders involved in the publishing process, whether they are colleagues, editors, or peer reviewers (Schwabish). By taking the time to examine the potential biases existing in their own work as well as the work of others, researchers and authors can help to make the world of scholarly communication more inclusive.

See the [Resources](#) section for a list of tools that can help identify implicit biases.

## References

ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee. (2018, August 2). *Principles and strategies for the reform of scholarly communication*. Association of College & Research Libraries.

<https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/principlesstrategies>

Anti-Defamation League. (n.d.). *Implicit bias*.

<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/implicit-bias>

*Implicit bias, unconscious bias*. (2016, June 2). Diversity Style Guide.

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/implicit-bias-unconscious-bias/>

*Inclusion definition and meaning*. (n.d.). The Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inclusion>

Powell, J. A. R. A. A. (n.d.). *Act, Communicating, Implicit Bias*. Racial Equity Tools.

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/act/communicating/implicit-bias>

Rozaki, E., Kovačić, V., Charalampous, N., González, R. L., & Gabriels, W. (2020). *Inclusive Communication Manual*. Erasmus Student Network AISBL.

[https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN\\_Inclusive\\_Communication\\_Manual.pdf](https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN_Inclusive_Communication_Manual.pdf)

Schwabish, J., & Feng, A. (2021, September). *Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization*. Urban Institute.

<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization>

# Introduction to language guidelines

## General

**What is inclusive language?** According to the Linguistic Society of America, “Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.”

While each section in this part of the guidelines delves into a specific topic, there are several overarching ideas to keep in mind.

## Framing

First, consider how the narrative is framed. The FrameWorks Institute defines framing as “the choices we make in what we say and how we say it,” including “what we emphasize, how and what we explain, [and] what we leave unsaid.”

Who is telling the story? From what perspective is the situation viewed? It is easy for authors to write from their own perspective, an ethnocentric point of view, simply because this is how they naturally see the world. Other times, the point of view is that of whatever group is considered “default” or has power in society. One example of this is Eurocentrism, or Western bias.

<b>Ethnocentrism</b>	the attitude that one's own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others
<b>Eurocentrism</b>	the tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences

It is common for the default point of view to be centered on so-called Western countries, like the US, UK, and other predominantly white, higher-income countries. As discussed in the [Geopolitics section](#), one must consider if this is the most appropriate framing for the text, particularly if the context is international or the subject of the text exists outside the “default” group.

Has anyone been left out? Whether intentional or not, it is possible for the dominant voice or perspective to silence those who are not included (Woodley). For example, Usha Lee McFarling notes that health equity tourism is growing, “where researchers with little or no background or training in health equity research, often white and already well-funded, are rushing in to scoop up grants and publish papers” without including or citing the Black and Brown researchers whose work already exists in the field. Another example is the book *Bad and Boujee: Toward a Trap Feminist Theology*, which was written by a White woman. The book was pulled after publication due to accusations of cultural appropriation and problematic portrayal of the very culture it focused on, Black women in hip hop (Alter and Harris, 2022).

## Order and lists

Keep the status quo and “default” groups in mind when ordering information and presenting lists. It is common to present statistics or numbers in order from largest to smallest, or vice versa. However, this can sometimes be problematic as it may result in the dominant power group always being listed first. For example, in countries like the US, documenting statistics of population will usually result in White being listed first, reinforcing the idea that White is the default or “normal” race in that country. It may also imply that that group is the intended audience (Schwabish). To avoid this, the information might be ordered randomly or in alphabetical order.

## Relevancy and specificity

Ask whether the information is relevant to the topic at hand. Does a person’s **immigration** status, **race**, **gender identity**, and so on matter in this context? If it does, it is best to be as specific as necessary. Avoid generalizations. Don’t say “older Asian people” if you mean “Chinese women over the age of 70.”

## Person-first language

In most cases it is preferable to emphasize the person over the attribute. For example, “person with cancer” instead of “cancer patient”, “man in prison” instead of “inmate.” Emphasizing the attribute can reduce the person to a label and dehumanize them.

## Ask

Whenever possible, ask the person or group what terms they use. Language is always evolving and there is not always agreement about the best word to use. For examples, see the sections on **Race** and **Gender identity**.

## References

Alter, A., & Harris, E. A. (2022, April 15). *A white author’s book about black feminism was pulled after a social media outcry*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/arts/jennifer-buck-bad-and-boujee-book-pulled.html>

Anti-Defamation League. (n.d.). *Challenging biased language*.

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-biased-language>

FrameWorks Institute. (n.d.). *Framing 101*.

<https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/tools-and-resources/framing-101/>

Linguistic Society of America. (2016, November). *Guidelines for inclusive language*.  
<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/guidelines-inclusive-language>

McFarling, U. L. (2021, September 23). *'Health equity tourists': How white scholars are colonizing research on health disparities*. STAT.  
<https://www.statnews.com/2021/09/23/health-equity-tourists-white-scholars-colonizing-health-disparities-research/>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.-a). *Ethnocentrism*. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnocentrism>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.-b). *Eurocentrism*. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eurocentrism>

Schwabish, J., & Feng, A. (2021, September). *Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization*. Urban Institute.  
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization>

Woodley, L., Pratt, K., Bakker, A., Bertipaglia, C., Dow, E. El Zein, R., Johns, B., Kuwana, E., Lower, E., Roca, A., & Santistevan, C. (2021). *CSCCE Glossary: Inclusive language in community building*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5718783>



# Age

Ageism makes judgments and assumptions about an individual regarding their perceived age. Discrimination against older adults has received more research than other age categorizations, but it is not the only kind of ageism.

Ageism includes adultism, which discounts children and teenagers. It is never wise to lump people together by their ages or physical features as this deprives each person of their individualism.

Ageism thrives on negative and inaccurate stereotypes. Society typically groups individuals by age; one such grouping that is largely typical is from the American Medical Association:

- Neonates/newborns: birth to 1 month
- Infants: 1 month to 1 year (12 months)
- Children: 1 to 12 years
- Adolescents: 13 through 17 years
- Young adults: 18 to 24
- Adults: 18 years or older
- Older adults: 60 years or older

To avoid age discrimination, only include an individual's age or age grouping if it is essential to the text and/or context. Avoid [gender stereotypes](#) both in general and in reference to age; persons should be described as they [self-identify](#), whether that's binary, non-binary, male, female, and so forth.

Avoid suggesting stereotypes when describing age, including the following words meant to imply a specific age or age range:

- ancient
- antiquated
- childish
- cougar
- dated
- emerging adult
- fossil
- geezer
- geriatric (unless in the phrase "geriatric medicine" or similar instances)
- immature
- infirm
- medieval
- middle-aged
- old lady/man
- over the hill
- senile (unless talking about the specific medical condition of senility)

- the aged
- the elderly
- the old
- youngster

## Reframing aging

Ageism can be countered by changing how aging is discussed or described in scholarly literature:

- Usually, there’s no need to refer to a person’s age. When the need does arise, use a person’s specific age number rather than an age range to avoid stereotypes or negative connotations .
- Whenever possible, ask a person about their preferred terminology regarding age, such as “senior” versus “older adult.”
- Avoid ages to suggest stereotypes of a life stage, e.g., teenager, tween, or oldster.
- Avoid language that patronizes, sentimentalizes, distorts, or characterizes people based on their age.
- Avoid assumptions regarding age and stereotypes—not every teenager is hormone-fueled nor every senior senile and slow. “Baby Boomers” don’t all act or think alike.
- Do not assume that older individuals live with a disability due to age.

## Age in research

For formal research, age should be reported as part of the description of participants in the paper’s methodology section. Specific age ranges with means and medians should be given instead of descriptions like “younger than 18 years” or “older than 65 years” (American Psychological Association).

Avoid	Preferred
Descriptions of age that suggest ability or a deficit, such as describing someone as a teenager, elderly, aged, senior, senior citizen, dependent, etc.	A specific age if known, otherwise a general description if required, such as early career or primary school age
Geriatric	Geriatrics is the field of study of the health of older people; do not use to refer to a person
Senile, senility	<b>Dementia</b> , person with dementia, a person with dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease

Avoid	Preferred
Social security recipient, social security beneficiary	People who are receiving social security and specify why (e.g., older than age 62, due to a <b>disability</b> )
Medicare recipient, Medicare beneficiary	People who receive Medicare and specify why (e.g., older than age 62, due to a disability)
Age	Identify age only if relevant and necessary for the text in context to the overall paper
Elderly, elders, the aged, aging dependents, senior citizens	Older adults, older people, persons aged 65 and older, an older population

## References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2020: the official guide to APA style* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.

Centre for Ageing Better. (2021, December). *Challenging ageism: A guide to talking about ageing and older age*.

<https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Challenging-ageism-guide-talking-ageing-older-age.pdf>

Editors of Merriam-Webster. (2022, January 10). *What does “adultism” mean?* The Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/what-does-adultism-mean>

Frey T, Young RK. Age and Sex Referents. In: Christiansen S, Iverson C, Flanagan A, et al. (2020). *AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors*. 11th ed. Oxford University Press.

<https://www.amamanualofstyle.com/view/10.1093/jama/9780190246556.001.0001/med-9780190246556-chapter-11-div1-28>

Reframing Aging Initiative. *Communication Best Practices: Reframing Aging Initiative Guide to Telling a More Complete Story of Aging*. 2022.

<https://www.reframingaging.org/Portals/GSA-RA/images/RAI%20Communication%20Best%20Practices%20Guide%20202328.pdf?ver=yoPyMu-AfQLqH9ZuzKqjNw%3d%3d>

# Crime and incarceration

## Crime

**Avoid stereotypes.** Various racial and ethnic groups can be portrayed very differently in the media. In the United States, for example, Black people and Latinx people are often portrayed on the news as persons who commit crimes and break the law (Vaes et al). At the same time, they are systemically under-represented as victims or defenders of the law in the same programming.

In a 2017 study, Jeroen Vaes, Marcella Latrofa, et al. analyzed how Italian journalists cover crime. They found that the style and language changed when reporting on crimes involving marginalized racial or ethnic minorities (“outgroups”), revealing linguistic biases (2019: 13). Thus, unconscious bias in journalists can “help to create and maintain a distorted and stereotyped image of minority group members” as aggressors and people who break the law (2019: 14).

A well-documented bias is the use of passive tense when reporting on sexual abuse cases. (Vaes, et al.) For example: The girl was raped by an older man (this places the perceived responsibility of the crime on the victim). Instead of: An older man raped the girl. Another factor contributing to bias is the use of certain adjectives that either make the crime seem worse (aggravating adjectives) or less severe (attenuating adjectives).

The study found that aggravating adjectives were used more often when journalists reported on crimes committed by racial or ethnic minority groups (2019:17) and that “the way members of racial/ethnic minorities are depicted in the media is detrimental to the development and maintenance of crime-related stereotypes that typically target such social groups” (2019:20)

The study concluded that while “newsmakers might be under pressure to color and sensationalize their news reports, the present findings plead for more factual-based and neutral language when reporting crimes in the media, especially when the crime suspect is a member of a racial/ethnic minority” (2019: 21).

General guidelines to follow are:

### Avoid

Inferring inflamed or moralistic adjectives.  
“A Tunisian irregular immigrant sexually abused a 15-year-old girl.”

### Preferred

“An undocumented man sexually abused a 15-year-old girl.”

(Context would be needed to determine if his nationality is relevant to the narrative.)

## Avoid

Using aggravating/attenuating adjectives if it shows an inherited or implicit bias.

Example of aggravating language: “The Muslim immigrant from Somalia did not accept the Western lifestyle of his daughter.”

Example of attenuating language: “An uncensored employee was pressured by the police and finally confessed.”

Passive tense where responsibility of the crime is placed on the victim.

“Yesterday morning the victim was cleaning the call center offices when she got assaulted.”

## Preferred

Use more factual, neutral language.

Can the statement be supported by empirical evidence or is it biased?

In other contexts, you would need to assess if more information is needed to impart accurate and constructive information. You need to question if the author is “censoring” themselves and for what purposes?

Use active tense and, where possible, place the alleged perpetrator as subject.

“While cleaning the call center offices yesterday morning, a man (or an unidentified assailant) assaulted a woman.”

## References

Counseling@Northwestern. (2019, October 16). *Inclusive language guide*. The Family Institute at Northwestern University.

<https://counseling.northwestern.edu/blog/inclusive-language-guide/>

Vaes, J., Latrofa, M., Suitner, C., & Arcuri, L. (2019). They are all armed and dangerous! Biased language use in crime news with ingroup and outgroup perpetrators. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications*, 31(1), 12–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000216>

## Incarceration

Language used to describe people who are affected by the criminal justice system should be respectful and person-centered (Tran, World Health Organization).

The WHO style guide of 2013 states that “Stigma-free language can positively influence media narratives, public opinion, and, above all, ensure that policy changes are inclusive of this priority population.”

In their article, “Words Matter,” Tran et al. advocate four guiding principles for writing about people who are incarcerated or have been in the criminal justice system.

- **Engage people and respect their preferences.** Ask about the language the person prefers to identify as/with. Extending this – language usage must be adapted to local contexts and communities.
- **Use stigma-free and accurate language.** Using language to talk about people who are incarcerated is often reflective of one’s own biases, opinions, and moral point of view. Expressing from this [point of view](#) does not lend itself to supporting respectful interactions. For example, “terms that devalue, exclude, discriminate, stereotype, objectify, dehumanize, and reinforce a ‘criminal self-image’, such as *offender, criminal, felon, prisoner, convict*, should be avoided. *Inmate* should not be used as it is ambiguous and refers to people living in any institution, including psychiatric hospitals” (Tran).
- **Prioritize the individual.** Incarceration is not the only experience an individual has and it does not define them. Avoid use of terms like murderer, rapist, or pedophile as they emphasize the crime instead of the person. Use person-centered language to describe the condition a person has or the circumstances in which they live.
- **Cultivate awareness.** It is important to realize the power and influence that language has on shaping discourse and opinion. Therefore, authors should be aware of the language they choose to use. They should strive to be humane and constructive and use language that “promotes respect, dignity, understanding, and positive outlooks” for persons in the criminal justice system, and encourage others to do the same (Tran).

Avoid	Preferred
Abuse; misuse	(Heavy) <a href="#">substance use</a> ; substance use disorder; <sup>1</sup> dependence syndrome <sup>2</sup>
Correctional, offender, penitentiary, or prison health services	Health services in detention settings; healthcare in prison
Crazy; mental; insane; psycho; mentally ill; emotionally disturbed; demented	Person with a <a href="#">mental health</a> condition; person with dementia

Avoid	Preferred
Dungeon; hole	Solitary confinement
Drug user; abuser; addict; junkie; dependent	Person with a substance use disorder; person with dependence syndrome; person who uses psychoactive substances
Ex-prisoner; ex-offender; ex-inmate; ex-felon; ex-con; criminal; thug; post-carceral	Person who was in contact with, involved in, interacted with or experienced the criminal justice system; person with convictions; person who was formerly incarcerated
Illegal immigrant; illegal; unlawful non-citizen; visa overstayer; undocumented alien	Person who lacks resident documentation; undocumented immigrant; irregular immigrant
juvenile delinquent	young person with justice system involvement
Murderer; rapist; drug dealer	Person convicted of murder; person charged with rape; person arrested for selling drugs
Prisoner; inmate; felon; offender; convict	Person who is incarcerated; person who experienced incarceration; person in detention/jail/prison; person living in detention/jail/prison; person involved in, or experiencing the criminal justice system
Prostitute or prostitution	Person involved in sex work, or in sale or trade of sexual services; sex worker
Probationer; parolee	Person on probation; person on parole

Adapted from Table 1 in Tran et al.<sup>1</sup> Per DSM-5.<sup>2</sup> Per ICD-10.

**In terms of representation through photographs**, exercise caution in searching for **images** that portray the criminal body in a negative, stereotyped, or stigmatized light. Researchers Diana Miranda and Helena Machado conducted a study of people who were incarcerated in three Portuguese prisons. They noted that each person’s photograph was taken upon arrival at the prison when many of them were experiencing **homelessness**, were under the influence of drugs, or were freshly bruised from interactions with the police. These photographs, though used on their prison identification cards, were never updated regardless of the length of their sentence. In fact, people who later served another prison term would use the same photograph from their original stay. The study showed that “portraying elements of unworthiness, unpleasantness, and immutability plays a significant role in the parole board’s decisions and produce an embodied sense of identity and perpetuation of stigma” (Miranda).

Avoid selecting images that show the criminal body as abnormal, ugly, and deviant; or someone with a “mean face” or characteristics that are monsterish or animalistic (Miranda).

Do not only select images of the criminal body where the subjects are Black, Latino, or other [historically marginalized groups](#) commonly stereotyped as criminals.

## References

Cox, A. (2020). The language of incarceration. *Incarceration*, 1(1), 1–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2632666320940859>

Miranda, D., & Machado, H. (2018). Photographing prisoners: The unworthy, unpleasant and unchanging criminal body. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 19(5), 591–604.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895818800747>

Tran, N. T., Baggio, S., Dawson, A., O’Moore, A., Williams, B., Bedell, P., Simon, O., Scholten, W., Getaz, L., & Wolff, H. (2018). Words matter: A call for humanizing and respectful language to describe people who experience incarceration. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-018-0180-4>

World Health Organization. (2013). *WHO style guide* (2nd edition).  
[https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sg13\\_web\\_v4%20pdf%20-%20adobe%20reader.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sg13_web_v4%20pdf%20-%20adobe%20reader.pdf)



# Family and relationship status

**Guardians.** Because not all children live with their parents, a more inclusive term, such as “caregiver” or “guardian”, should be used when referring to the homelife of children whose family relationships are unknown. Other options include “adult”, “grown-up”, and “person in charge.”

**Gender-neutral caregiver terms.** Because not all parents are heterosexual couples or identify as men and women, avoid using “mother” and “father” when you don’t know the gender of a parent. Similarly, use “parenting” instead of “mothering” or “fathering” when the gender of a parent is not known. See the [section on gender](#) for more guidance on gender-neutral terms. When you don’t know the caregiver’s role in a child’s life, use “caregiver”, “guardian”, or a different inclusive term instead of parent.

**Terms for birth and adoptive parents.** Use positive adoption language to treat birth and adoptive families with respect. For example, use “birth parent” or “biological parent” instead of “real parent” or “natural parent.” “Parent” alone is usually appropriate for an adoptive parent unless you need to note the adoption or distinguish between the adoptive and birth parents.

**Caregivers.** Generally, use “caregiver” instead of “caretaker” to refer to people providing care. Also consider your audience when choosing which term to use. For example, while “carer” is used in Australia, the UK, and South Africa, it is not common in Canada or the US. Avoid the assumption that a woman is the primary caregiver in any situation.

**Marital status.** Refer to someone’s marital status only when that information is necessary. When it is necessary, refer to the parties in the relationship equally. For example, don’t default to describing women in relation to men, and give everyone’s name and position in parallel construction rather than giving a woman’s first name only. If the relationship is between a man and a woman, don’t always state the man’s name first. In addition, use honorifics such as Mr., Ms., or Mrs. only when you have confirmed which honorific someone wants to use; some people use the gender-neutral [Mx.](#), and some use no honorific at all. If you do use honorifics, include everyone’s full names instead of referring to, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Smith. Note that Ms. is preferred over Mrs. or Miss if the person’s preference is unknown.

**Avoid assumptions about partners.** When you want to refer to someone’s partner and you don’t know their gender, use a [gender-neutral](#) term, such as “partner” or “significant other”, rather than “husband” or “wife.” Don’t assume that people in a committed relationship are married or are in a [heterosexual](#) relationship or that there are only two people in a loving relationship.

**Avoid stereotypes.** Don’t assume that all married women are or want to be mothers or that all older adults are grandparents. Don’t assume that people without children are more career-focused or willing to work long hours than their peers with children.

Avoid	Preferred
Please have your parent sign this.	Please have your guardian sign this.
The open house is for moms and dads to learn about the school.	The open house is for caregivers to learn about the school.
He doesn't know his real mother.	He doesn't know his birth mother.
He has been her caretaker for three years.	He has been her caregiver for three years.
Gordon Moore and his wife, Betty, founded the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.	The couple Gordon Moore and Betty Moore founded the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.
Jeffrey Tok, the director of the Uytengsu Teaching Laboratory at Stanford University, and his wife, Zhenan Bao, attended the meeting.	Zhenan Bao, the K. K. Lee Professor of Chemical Engineering at Stanford University, and Jeffrey Tok, the director of the Uytengsu Teaching Laboratory at Stanford, attended the meeting.
Employees and their wives are welcome to attend.	Employees and their significant others are welcome to attend.

## References

- Caregivers Nova Scotia. (n.d.). *Caregiving language*.  
<https://caregiversns.org/who-we-are/caregiving-language/>
- GSMA. (2020, November). *Inclusive language guide*.  
[https://www.gsma.com/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GSMA-Inclusive-Language-Guide\\_2020.pdf](https://www.gsma.com/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GSMA-Inclusive-Language-Guide_2020.pdf)
- Leventry, A. (2020, March 25). *More inclusive ways to invite caregivers to school events*. Scary Mommy.  
<https://www.scarymommy.com/more-inclusive-ways-to-invite-caregivers-to-school-events>
- Maggio, R. (2021, October 13). *Unspinning the spin: The women's media center guide to fair and accurate language*. Women's Media Center.  
<https://womensmediacenter.com/unspinning-the-spin/>
- National Center on Disability and Journalism. (2021, August). *Disability language style guide*.  
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

Ottoboni, M. (2007, December). *Family language labels: Effects on students living with Non-Parental caregivers* (Master's Thesis, Dominican University of California). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED498837>

# Gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation

## General guidance

As with many of the topics covered in these guidelines, there is some disagreement on preferred terminology and how inclusive language should be. For example, the United Nations guidance stops at proscribing harm – “Use non-discriminatory language” – whereas other guidelines go farther – “Language can harm or heal; it can further oppression or create liberation – the choice is ours” (Kapitan). These conflicting opinions may represent various theoretical, ideological, or geographical views. Furthermore, within a single set of guidelines, some principles may be in tension with each other and must be weighed against one another. This is because language is ever evolving and constantly in flux. It may at times be difficult to determine which terminology is appropriate because terminology involves changing struggles regarding identity, visibility, and power.

## Determine relevance

Denote a specific gender, sex, and gender identity where it is relevant (e.g., the appointment of a chairwoman was one step towards meeting legal requirements.) (American Psychological Association, United Nations). Otherwise use neutral terms (e.g., the chairperson) and neutralizing strategies (e.g., passive voice to eclipse the subject, plurals, “one”, etc.) (American Psychological Association).

**Note:** Seek explicit permission from sources before publishing details about their sexual orientation or gender identity, especially if they may be harmed by doing so. Anonymizing them may also be an option (Global Press Journal).

## Allow people to self-identify

Acknowledge people’s agency in determining the language they use to describe themselves and how they are described by others. To avoid misgendering and other forms of misidentification, ask what language the person uses. Where appropriate, explain how the terms are used.

<b>Misgendering</b>	incorrectly identifying a person by using the wrong label (such as Mr. or Ms.) or pronoun (such as she or he)
---------------------	---

**Note:** The phrase “preferred pronouns” should not be used as it implies that gender identity is a choice. Rather, simply use “pronouns” or “identified pronouns” or “self-identified gender identity” (Blazucki).

When a person does not use specific terms to describe themselves (e.g., queer) or cannot be asked which terms they use, possible considerations include using neutral terminology, using

general terms, omitting that aspect of their identity, or explaining why particular terms were used.

Where disagreement among members of the same community is relevant, or where divergence regarding self-identifying and other-identifying language is relevant, this can be reflected when appropriate. Also consider the position of the *Radical Copyeditor*: “When a marginalized person claims language to describe their oppressed identity, they are **speaking themselves into existence** in a society that is trying to annihilate them. When a privileged person rejects an accurate descriptor of their privileged status, they are **refusing to acknowledge that they are privileged**” (Kapitan, 2019).

Note that where someone holds a position with an official title, such as chairman, authors should “use the formal title adopted by the person currently holding the position even when the gender noted in it does not appear to match the gender of the person holding it” (Global Press Journal).

### Distinguish clearly between gender, sex, and gender identity

Take care to distinguish between three interrelated terms gender, sex, and gender identity when necessary: gender denotes a primarily socio-cultural construct; sex denotes biological assignment; and gender identity primarily denotes a person’s psychological sense of their gender (American Psychological Association).

<b>Gender</b>	refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Gender is a social construct and a social identity. Use the term gender when referring to people as social groups.
<b>Cisgender</b>	refers to a person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth
<b>Transgender</b>	refers to a person whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth
<b>Sex</b>	refers to biological sex assignment; use the term sex when the biological distinction of sex assignment (e.g., sex assigned at birth) is predominant
<b>Gender identity</b>	is a component of gender that describes a person’s psychological sense of their gender

## References

American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Gender*. APA Style. <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/gender>

Blazucki, S., & McMillan, J. (Eds.). (2021, December). *The stylebook on LGBTQ terminology*. NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists. <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>

GLAAD. (n.d.). *Glossary of terms: Transgender*. GLAAD Media Reference Guide 11th Edition. <https://www.glaad.org/reference/trans-terms>

Global Press Journal. (n.d.). *Global press style guide*. <https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>

Kapitan, A. (n.d.). *Gender*. Radical Copyeditor. <https://radicalcopyeditor.com/tag/gender/>

Kapitan, A. (2019, July 24). *Ask a radical copyeditor: Are there limits to Self-Identity language?* Radical Copyeditor. <https://radicalcopyeditor.com/2018/07/24/are-there-limits-to-self-identity-language/#more-1452>

United Nations. (n.d.). *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*. UNITED NATIONS Gender-Inclusive Language. <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>

## Gender and sex

### General comments

Consider arranging a list of groups in an order that disrupts the usual hierarchies of domination (American Psychological Association). For example, consider varying the order of terms such as nonbinary, female, and male so that male is not always listed first.

People of different genders should be described equally in terms of their title and first or last name. See the first example in the below table.

### Use non-gendered terms and avoid stereotypes

Care should be taken to use gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language. In general, expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes should be avoided, as should terms that insinuate only one gender is involved in the specified task or role.

To determine if the language used is problematic, consider if changing the term from masculine to feminine or vice versa modifies the meaning or emphasis of the sentence (United Nations). In the below example, “You throw like a boy” would not generally be considered an insult.

When referring to all human beings, non-gendered terms are preferred: individuals, people, persons.

When referring to all human beings in a role or occupation, non-gendered terms are preferred: fire fighter, mail carrier, homemaker.

## Avoid

Dr. Joshua Smith and Anna are both attending the luncheon.

You throw like a girl.

man; mankind

ladies and gentlemen; you guys

manpower

man-made

female doctor; male nurse

fireman; mailman; housewife;  
stewardess; waitress; freshman

## Preferred

Dr. Joshua Smith and Dr. Anna Jones are both attending the luncheon.

That was a weak throw.

humanity; humankind; human race

folks; everyone; colleagues; friends; all

staffing; human resources

artificial; human-caused; synthetic

doctor; nurse

fire fighter; mail carrier; homemaker; flight attendant; server; first-year student

## References

American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *General principles for reducing bias*. APA Style.

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/general-principles>

United Nations. (n.d.). *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*. UNITED NATIONS Gender-Inclusive Language. <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>

## Gender identity

### Use of nonbinary, gender neutral, and gender-specific language

In general, nonbinary and gender-neutral language should be used.

Some pronouns people may use include gender-specific binary terms such as “she” and “he”, as well as gender-neutral terms such as “they” and “them”. (Note that these examples are not exhaustive. Refer to the [Resources](#) for more information.) Whereas specific pronouns and terms such as “she” and “he” may at times be appropriate, “they” and “them” have the advantage of also including nonbinary persons.

The singular gender-neutral “they” is preferred over alternating “she/he” and “he/she” as the latter excludes people who do not use those pronouns. However, the APA notes that usage of “he or she” and “she or he” (without slashes) may be appropriate when referring only to persons who use these pronouns.

Adjectives should be used to describe people rather than labeling them with nouns. Example: “lesbian women” or “a lesbian woman” instead of “the lesbians” or “a lesbian” (American Psychological Association, 2020).

When gender-specific nouns are required, use “man” and “woman.” Example: “transgender man” and “cisgender woman” rather than “transgender male” and “cisgender female.”

When gender-specific adjectives are required, use “male” and “female” as in “a female researcher.”

When the age range is broad and age-specific terms such as “girl” or “woman” are therefore inaccurate, “male” and “female” can be used as nouns. “Female” and “male” are also appropriate to denote a transgender person’s sex assignment at birth. For example, “person assigned female at birth”, not “person assigned girl at birth” (American Psychological Association, 2019). The dated term “transsexual” should only be used where persons prefer this themselves.

To denote the assignment of a sex term to a person at birth, use “assigned sex” or “sex assigned at birth” (American Psychological Association, 2019).

To avoid binary and gender specific forms, use “partner” or “spouse”, “another sex” or “another gender”, and “mixed gender” or “mixed sex” when referring to partners or to parents instead of “opposite sex” or “opposite gender” (Blazucki). When partners or parents have the same sex or gender, use “same gender” or “same sex.”

## Consider context

The language surrounding reproductive health is inherently gendered. The terms women’s health, pregnant women, and maternity care are just a few examples. Using gender-neutral terms such as reproductive health, pregnant people, and perinatal care is preferable as it is inclusive of transgender and nonbinary people. However, Helen Green and Ash Riddington encourage a gender-additive approach, “using gender-neutral language alongside the language of womanhood in order to ensure that everyone is represented and included.” They note that the language used to describe people influences how likely they are to seek healthcare. Use of phrases such as “pregnant women and people” is inclusive of transgender and nonbinary people while not erasing women, who can also be disadvantaged in healthcare (Green and Riddington 2020). It is important to use the language most appropriate for the context.

Avoid	Preferred
biologically male; biologically female; born male; born female	sex assigned, designated, or assumed at birth
Gender Identity Disorder	Gender Dysphoria <sup>1</sup> ; gender incongruence <sup>2</sup>
hermaphrodite	intersex



Avoid	Preferred
sex change; pre-op; post-op; pre-operative; post-operative	transition; transitioning
sex change; sex change operation; Sexual Reassignment Surgery; top surgery; bottom surgery	Gender Confirmation Surgery
transvestite	cross-dresser [if the person self-identifies as such; not a synonym for transgender]
gender non-conforming	gender expansive
opposite sex	another sex; different sex
women's health; pregnant women; maternity care; women who menstruate	reproductive health; pregnant people; perinatal care; people who menstruate
preferred pronouns	pronouns
transsexual; transgendered; transgender(s) (n.)	transgender (adj.)

<sup>1</sup> Per DSM-5. <sup>2</sup> Per ICD-11.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Gender*. APA Style. <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/gender>
- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2020: the official guide to APA style* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Blazucki, S., & McMillan, J. (Eds.). (2021, December). *The stylebook on LGBTQ terminology*. NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists. <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>
- Green, H., & Riddington, A. (2020, December). *Gender inclusive language in perinatal services: Mission statement and rationale* (N. Hopkins, Ed.). Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals. <https://www.bsuh.nhs.uk/maternity/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/01/Gender-inclusive-language-in-perinatal-services.pdf>
- Intellect style guide* (5th edition). (2021). Intellect. <https://www.intellectbooks.com/asset/1255/house-style-guide-5th-ed-2021.pdf>
- Trans and/or gender expansive people*. (n.d.). Google Inclusive Marketing. <https://all-in.withgoogle.com/audiences/trans-gender-expansive/>

## Sexual orientation

### General comments

The APA (2019) advises authors to use “sexual orientation” rather than “sexual preference” and “sexual identity.” Sexual orientation includes the “degree to which a person feels sexual and emotional attraction” as reflected in terms such as sexual, demisexual, and asexual (American Psychological Association.) Sexual orientation also includes the direction of attraction so that a person can be attracted to, for example men, masculinity, women, femininity, to some or neither of the former.

### Specific terminology

There is no consensus on the appropriate umbrella term for LGBTQIA+ people. Cumulative abbreviations commonly used within the US include LGBTQ or LGBTQ+ and LGBTQIA or LGBTQIA+. LGBT is considered dated by some. SOGIESC, SOGI, and SOGIE are used in some countries outside the US and are also acceptable (GLAAD, IOM).

<b>LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA, LGBTQIA+</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual (or ally)
<b>SOGIESC, SOGIE, SOGI</b>	sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics

These cumulative abbreviations are general umbrella terms that amass a broad range of more specific terms. Accordingly, use the general and specific terms appropriately. Use the umbrella term (e.g., LGBTQIA+) if the complete range is intended; use the specific term (e.g., lesbian) if only that is meant.

These abbreviations denote groups and not an individual; hence avoid the singular “She is a LGBTQ+ person”; conversely the plural “LGBTQ+ persons” is acceptable (Thomas).

The term “homosexual” is generally considered offensive in the United States due to its clinical history and persistent negative connotations; “heterosexual” and “straight” are acceptable (Blazucki, GLAAD). However, note that “homosexual” remains acceptable in many non-English speaking contexts (IOM).

Additionally, the phrase “gay lifestyle” or “LGBTQ+ lifestyle” should not be used as there is no one singular community or lifestyle and these terms can imply choice.

Be specific whenever possible and define ambiguous language, e.g., when using “gay”, it is advisable to specify whether this is limited to men or extends to gay people of various genders. Ex: “gay men” or “gay people”. Avoid using the term “queer” as a synonym for lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Use caution with reclaimed terms that were initially derogatory (e.g., queer, moffie) and which some people still consider slurs. It may be advisable to avoid using them at all (Blazucki). There is disagreement about whether these terms are acceptable if the user is part of the designated community or whether their use should solely be regulated by whether harm is done or not (Kapitan, 2021). *Sic* may be used when citing derogatory or initially derogatory language to signify that its use is questionable.

Use terms with care as the meanings may vary according to settings and users (Global Press Journal). Be attentive to and use local terms where appropriate such as “hijra” and “two-spirit” (Thomas). See the *SOGIESC Full Glossary of Terms*, listed in the references below and in the [Resources](#) section, for a list of terms used around the world.

Avoid	Preferred
practicing; avowed; admitted; confessed; acknowledged [gay person]	out [gay person]
homosexual [in the US]; queer	gay; lesbian; bisexual
LGBT; gay community	LGBT+, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA, LGBTQIA+
sexual preference; sexual identity; sexuality	sexual orientation

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Sexual orientation*. APA Style. <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/sexual-orientation>
- Blazucki, S., & McMillan, J. (Eds.). (2021, December). *The Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology*. NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists. <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>
- GLAAD. (n.d.). *Glossary of terms: LGBTQ*. GLAAD Media Reference Guide 11th Edition. <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>
- Global Press Journal. (n.d.). *Global press style guide*. <https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>
- Kapitan, A. (2021, October 10). *What’s in a word: Queer*. Radical Copyeditor. <https://radicalcopyeditor.com/2021/10/10/queer/>
- SOGIESC full glossary of terms*. (2020, November). International Organization for Migration. <https://iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/IOM-SOGIESC-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf>
- Thomas, H., & Hirsch, A. (2016). *A Progressive’s Style Guide*. Sum Of Us. [https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS\\_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf)

# Geopolitics

## General

Encyclopedia Britannica defines geopolitics as “analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations” and notes that it has come to be used as a synonym for international politics (Deudney, 2013). When writing about geopolitics it is important to consider the point of view, tone, and imagery that the language puts forth. Some words conjure particular images or associations and can affect the way that the subject is seen (Levisen and Fernández, 2021).

## Point of View

Consider who is controlling the narrative. As noted in the [introduction](#) to the language section of this guide, “A dominant culture or set of group dynamics can result in silencing [voices], without any individual intending to do so” (Woodley, 2021). In the paper, “Journalism studies still needs to fix [Western bias](#),” Thomas Hanitzsch argues that the field still struggles with Western bias despite efforts to change. He notes that Western countries are both the majority producer and subject of research, and “in part, this Western dominance has resulted from, and is reinforcing, a concentration of academic and textbook publishers in the Anglo-Saxon world using English as the default language” (2019: 214). Although he is specifically referring to the field of journalism studies, the same can be said for scholarly communication as a whole (Spragg, Skopec).

## Relevancy and Specificity

Is the characteristic in question necessary to the story? Would the same information be included for someone in a situation that could be considered the opposite of the one in question? For example, consider if it’s relevant to mention that someone is from a [lower income](#) family when the background of someone from a higher income family would not be mentioned. If it is, the APA recommends being specific to reduce ambiguity.

Guidance on some general terms:

<b>act of terror</b>	Can be used “when referring to coercive actions, whether violent or nonviolent, designed to create fear for the purpose of political or ideological manipulation” (Global Press Journal).
<b>armed group</b>	Use instead of more politicized words that may carry bias, such as rebel, radical, guerilla, militant, or terror group.
<b>culture</b>	Do not use culture to refer to countries, <a href="#">races</a> , or other large groups of people who have similarities but may not share a specific cultural element.

<b>act of terror</b>	Can be used “when referring to coercive actions, whether violent or nonviolent, designed to create fear for the purpose of political or ideological manipulation” (Global Press Journal).
<b>ethnic</b>	Do not use to describe people.
<b>foreign</b>	Do not use to describe people.  Be mindful that this word is based on the writer’s perspective. It may be used to describe specific things that do not originate in the country a story is being told from (i.e., foreign language).
<b>modern</b>	Refers to time. Do not use in place of sophisticated or advanced when describing a person, place, or thing.
<b>street children</b>	Do not use the phrase street children or other common variations to describe children who live or work in vulnerable situations.
<b>terrorist</b>	Do not use to describe people.
<b>tribal warfare</b>	Do not use. Terms such as ethnic conflict or civil war may be appropriate.

## References

- Deudney, D. H. (2013, June 12). Geopolitics. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/geopolitics>
- The Diversity Style Guide*. (2022). <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>
- Global Press Journal. *Global Press Style Guide*. <https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>
- Global Press Style Guide Tip Sheet*. (2020). [https://www.poynter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/style\\_guide\\_tip\\_sheet\\_poynter.pdf](https://www.poynter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/style_guide_tip_sheet_poynter.pdf)
- Hanitzsch, T. (2019). Journalism studies still needs to fix Western bias. *Journalism*, 20(1), 214–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807353>
- Levisen, C., & Fernández, S. S. (2021). Words, People and Place: Linguistics meets Popular Geopolitics. *Journal of Postcolonial Linguistics*, (5), 1-11. <https://iacpl.net/jopol/issues/journal-of-postcolonial-linguistics-52021/words-people-and-place/>
- Mungai, C. (2019, July 3). “Foreign” lands are not foreign in a globalized world—and it is time international news media realized this. Nieman Reports.

<https://niemanreports.org/articles/foreign-lands-are-not-foreign-in-a-globalized-world-and-it-is-time-international-news-media-realized-this/>

Rozaki, E., Kovačić, V., Charalampous, N., González, R. L., & Gabriels, W. (2020). *Inclusive Communication Manual*. Erasmus Student Network AISBL.

[https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN\\_Inclusive\\_Communication\\_Manual.pdf](https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN_Inclusive_Communication_Manual.pdf)

Skopec, M., Issa, H., Reed, J. et al. The role of geographic bias in knowledge diffusion: a systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Res Integr Peer Rev* 5, 2 (2020).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-019-0088-0>

Spragg, L. (2021, February 23). *Decolonising Academia: Is AUP's New Partnership Programme Doing Enough to Challenge Western Bias in Scholarly Publishing?* Medium.

<https://medium.com/digital-publishing-strategy/decolonising-academia-is-aups-new-partnership-programme-doing-enough-to-challenge-western-bias-e64f2f514d77>

Thomas, H., & Hirsch, A. (2016). *A Progressive's Style Guide*. Sum Of Us.

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS\\_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf)

Woodley, L., Pratt, K., Bakker, A., Bertipaglia, C., Dow, E. El Zein, R., Johns, B., Kuwana, E., Lower, E., Roca, A., & Santistevan, C. (2021). *CSCCE Glossary: Inclusive language in community building*. Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5718783>

World Health Organization. (2013). *WHO style guide* (2nd edition).

[https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sg13\\_web\\_v4%20pdf%20-%20adobe%20reader.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sg13_web_v4%20pdf%20-%20adobe%20reader.pdf)

## Global Location

The terms Global North and Global South are often used in scholarly communication, and the popularity of Global South in particular has expanded rapidly in recent years (Haug). While there isn't one agreed-upon definition, Global South is generally used as a synonym of or replacement for "developing countries" or "Third World countries." However, like many of the umbrella terms mentioned in these guidelines, there is disagreement about its use (GSSC). It is generally seen as a better alternative to "Third World", which is now considered demeaning or pejorative (Silver). However, some argue that "Global South" is just as problematic (Teixeira da Silva). The Global Press Style Guide recommends avoiding "developing world", "emerging economy", and "Global South" in favor of including the relevant economic data. Another alternative is to use the World Bank's designations, which are updated annually based on each economy's gross national income (GNI). The classifications are low, lower middle, upper middle, and high income (Serajuddin, World Bank Group).

It should be noted that Global North and Global South are not technically geographical references. Australia, for example, is not considered part of the Global South but lies in the southern hemisphere.

In general, it is best to be specific. Name the locations being discussed or outline the criteria being used. Some examples are included in the table below.

<b>America; Americans</b>	Do not use in place of the United States or residents of the United States. The US is not the only country in the Americas.
<b>Arab; Arab World</b>	Do not use in place of Muslim. When referring to a nation or people from an Arabic-speaking country, it is better to specify the nation/nationality instead.
<b>continental references (e.g., Asian, African)</b>	Do not use to generally describe people, practices, language, or culture. It is better to be more specific.
<b>Old world</b>	Do not use to refer to the Eastern Hemisphere, whether geography, language, or culture. Instead, specify the relevant country, context, or culture.
<b>Western world; First World; Third World; Global North; Global South; underdeveloped countries; developing, developed countries; emerging economies</b>	Do not use. It is best to be specific. Possible alternatives include low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries

## References

Global South Studies Center. (2015, January). Concepts of the Global South. *Voices from around the World*, 2015(1).

<https://gssc.uni-koeln.de/en/wissenstransfer/voices-from-around-the-world/concepts-of-the-global-south>

Sebastian Haug, Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner & Günther Maihold (2021) The 'Global South' in the study of world politics: examining a meta category, *Third World Quarterly*, 42:9, 1923-1944, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2021.1948831

Serajuddin, U., & Hamadeh, N. (2020, July 1). *New World Bank country classifications by income level: 2020–2021*. World Bank Blogs.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-country-classifications-income-level-2020-2021>

Silver, M. (2021, Jan 8). *Memo to People of Earth: 'Third World' Is An Offensive Term!* NPR.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/01/08/954820328/memo-to-people-of-earth-third-world-is-an-offensive-term>

Teixeira da Silva JA. Rethinking the use of the term ‘Global South’ in academic publishing. *European Science Editing* 2021;47. DOI: 10.3897/ese.2021.e67829 World Bank Group. (n.d.). *World Bank Country and Lending Groups*. The World Bank. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

## Socioeconomic status

<b>Caste</b>	a division of society based on differences of wealth, inherited rank or privilege, profession, occupation, or <b>race</b> ; a system of rigid social stratification characterized by hereditary status, marriage within a specific group as required by custom or law and social barriers sanctioned by custom, law, or <b>religion</b>
<b>Class</b>	a group sharing the same economic or social status
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>	the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation

In their tip sheet for The Journalist’s Resource, Denise-Marie Ordway and Heather Bryant offer the following guidelines:

**Avoid stereotypes.** People experiencing poverty are often portrayed as victims, criminals, or exceptions. This extends to a person’s habits, such as smoking, food choices, cleanliness, or the way they speak. Consider including people who are experiencing poverty in all types of research and narratives, not just those that center on income or poverty or stories of despair. Are the mannerisms being depicted important or do they perpetuate biases?

**Avoid overgeneralizations.** Consider if an expression really reflects the opinions or values of all. People who are or have experienced poverty can easily be excluded by blanket statements regarding purchasing habits or experiences that are considered “normal,” such as regularly going out for coffee or upgrading to the latest smartphone as soon as it is released.

**Consider your audience.** All too often, narratives about people experiencing poverty are not written for them. Consider whether a group is being spoken about, for, or to. Is there authority to speak about or for the group? Were they consulted?

**Avoid vague terms, obscure references, and jargon.** Be specific to avoid ambiguity. Additionally, coded language and pejorative terms should be avoided. For example, do not use “inner city” to mean “predominantly Black neighborhoods” or if a specific area is being referenced.



Avoid	Preferred
distressed neighborhoods; disadvantaged; in need; less fortunate; inner city; ghetto; slum; the projects	neighborhoods that are under-resourced/underserved; with high poverty rates; with access to fewer opportunities
disinvested	low opportunity
homeless people; the homeless; homelessness	people experiencing homelessness; people experiencing unstable housing; housing insecurity
food desert; food stamps; the hungry	food insecurity; food poverty; SNAP (in the US); people experiencing hunger
poverty-ridden; poverty-stricken; poor; the poor; low-class	people experiencing poverty; people with incomes below the federal poverty level; economically insecure; without economic advantages
uneducated; less educated; undereducated; well educated	state the specific level of education (e.g., high school diploma)
blue collar; working class	lower income

## References

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Socioeconomic status*. APA.org.  
<https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status/>
- American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Socioeconomic status*. APA Style.  
<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/socioeconomic-status>
- Bien-Aimé, S. (2017, August 1). *The false divide between “Well educated” and “Less educated.”* Conscious Style Guide.  
<https://consciousstyleguide.com/false-divide-well-educated-less-educated/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, December 9). CDC’s Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication.  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health\\_Equity.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html)
- Counseling@Northwestern. (2019, October 16). *Inclusive language guide*. The Family Institute at Northwestern University.  
<https://counseling.northwestern.edu/blog/inclusive-language-guide/>
- Inclusive Language in Socioeconomic Status, Culture, Race, Ethnicity. (n.d.). EPFL.  
<https://www.epfl.ch/schools/enac/about/diversity-office/inclusive-language/socioeconomic-status/>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.-a). *Caste*. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caste>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.-b). *Class*. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/class>

Ordway, D., & Bryant, H. (2018, September 4). *Covering poverty: What to avoid and how to get it right*. The Journalist's Resource.  
<https://journalistsresource.org/economics/covering-poverty-avoid-get-right/>

# Health

## Appearance

Seldom discussed, yet present in every interaction, whether in person or virtually, appearance discrimination is a barrier for any individual whose physical features don't meet or aspire to the societal norms of what is considered attractive.

Inclusive writing devoid of appearance discrimination excludes descriptions or judgments of physical appearance unless essential and relevant to the topic. "Body neutrality" is a movement in which individuals speak of the physical body in positive-only terms. As a rule, avoid descriptions of appearance unless essential to the subject of the text.

Much of what is written about appearance discrimination is within employment law and practices, including recruitment, hiring, performance and retention. Writing in the *Washington Law Review*, Adamitis (2000) asserts, "An individual's personal appearance may reflect, sustain, and nourish his personality and may well be used as a means of expressing his attitude and lifestyle." Appearance ranks among the top three discriminatory actions routinely occurring within hiring. Economists estimate a "beauty premium" in wages of 4%-12% for attractive individuals. Conversely, there is also an "ugliness" penalty when individuals don't meet beauty norms of any given culture or group.

Appearance discrimination takes many forms:

<b>Lookism</b>	assessing an individual on their physical appearance
<b>Beauty premiums</b>	benefits conveyed consciously or unconsciously to an individual whose appearance meets or exceeds societal norms for attractiveness

Individuals encounter appearance discrimination primarily related to the following factors (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission):

- height and weight
- body size and body shape
- facial features, proportions, and overall relationship
- body and facial hair
- moles, scars, birthmarks, and other distinguishing body elements

Appearance discrimination may be observed as follows:

- employees of a certain enterprise have similar appearances, build, or facial features
- club goers seeking entertainment may be excluded entry if their physical features don't conform to unspoken expectations

- sports teams of similar builds and stature that seem to lack additional players beyond the physical norms visually apparent among a specific team
- a teacher pointing out a specific attribute of a student’s physical appearance, such as a person with eyes that don’t fully align or a crooked nose

Avoid	Preferred
birth defect, defect	describe the specific disability or anomaly without the use of the word “defect”
body shape, stature, or size; weight, obese, overweight	avoid describing body size, stature, height, breadth, or shape unless relevant or essential to the context or information

## References

Elizabeth M. Adamitis, Notes and Comments, Appearance Matters: A Proposal to Prohibit Appearance Discrimination in Employment, 75 Wash. L. Rev. 195 (2000). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr/vol75/iss1/6>

Adomaitis, Alyssa Dana Dana; Raskin, Rachel; and Saiki, Diana (2017) "Appearance Discrimination: Lookism and the Cost to the American Woman," *The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal*: Vol. 2, Article 6.

*The Diversity Style Guide*. (2022). <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

## Weight and Size

Like many topics in these guidelines, a person’s weight or size should only be mentioned when it is directly relevant. Please see below for terms and practices to avoid and consider instead in the realm of weight- and size-related topics:

Avoid	Preferred
placing blame on an individual	acknowledge systemic root causes of obesity
medical jargon outside the medical profession	use accurate plain language
idealizing or pathologizing specific	body acceptance-oriented language; body acceptance- or positivity-oriented language as preferred by the community referred to.

Avoid	Preferred
weights or body shapes	Also, consider additional factors (socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, culture, etc.) that may bias your perception or impact the conversation about weight
praising or criticizing changes in weight	
characterizing foods as <i>bad</i> or <i>good</i>	
commentary on clothing choice or body shape	
weight stigma; weight bias	fatphobia
obese; extremely obese; morbidly obese; overweight; fat*	higher weight; unhealthy weight; larger. Person with obesity” may be acceptable in medical contexts.
midget; dwarf*	little person; person with dwarfism (if accurate); person of short stature; person of restricted growth

\*Note that the terms “fat” and “dwarf” are not considered offensive by all people and may be used if that is the person’s preference.

## References

- Admin. (2018, March 23). *The weight inclusive approach*. Empowered Eating. <https://empowereatingrd.com/maryland-eating-disorder-expert/the-weight-inclusive-approach/>
- Correct terminology*. (2013). Understanding Dwarfism. <http://understandingdwarfism.com/correct-terminology>
- FAQ. (2020). Little People of America. <https://www.lpaonline.org/faq-#Midget>
- National Eating Disorders Association. (2019, February 22). *Tips for responsible media coverage*. <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/tips-responsible-media-coverage>
- Ospina, M. S. (2016, July 7). 11 influencers discuss the differences between body positivity & fat acceptance*. Bustle. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/170978-11-influencers-discuss-the-differences-between-body-positivity-fat-acceptance>

*The Health at Every Size® (HAES®) Principles.* (2020, August 29). Association for Size Diversity and Health. <https://www.sizediversityandhealth.org/health-at-every-size-haes-approach/>

World Obesity Federation. (n.d.). *The do's and don'ts when talking about obesity.* [https://www.worldobesity.org/downloads/healthy\\_voices\\_downloads/HV\\_Language\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.worldobesity.org/downloads/healthy_voices_downloads/HV_Language_guidelines.pdf)

## Disability and ableist language

**Disabilities, disorders, diseases, and other health conditions.** There is no consensus on what differentiates a disability from a disorder, disease, or other health condition. Different places have legal definitions of “disability,” but no universal definitions exist. Some people with disabilities prefer one term over another (Mattlin, 2019). Some people don’t consider their condition an impairment, so the term “disability” might not be appropriate (O’Reilly, 2015). For example, under the social model of disability, the environment, not a physical or cognitive difference, is disabling.

Although people with disabilities, disorders, and other conditions have diverse experiences and needs, this section discusses all disabilities and health-related conditions together because they share some considerations related to language. Not all guidelines will apply in the same way to people with disabilities versus those with mental illness, for example. In all cases, use respect for people as a guide, and refer to the general guidelines of this resource.

**Mention only when necessary.** Mention someone’s disability or health condition only when it is necessary for readers to know and when you have confirmation of the diagnosis. Never disclose someone’s health information without their knowledge or consent.

**Content framing.** Carefully consider how you frame someone’s disability or illness. Avoid “inspiration porn,” which objectifies people with disabilities by treating them as inspirational simply for having a disability and by using them to make nondisabled people feel better about themselves (Pulrang 2019). In addition, referring people with disabilities or other health conditions as “patients” is not appropriate. If you are not discussing a context in which someone is receiving medical care, the term “person” is more appropriate; even in some medical contexts, people may prefer to be called a “person” more than a “patient.”

**Respect how people want to be described.** Defer to people’s preferences when deciding how to describe someone’s health, whether a disease, disability, mental illness, or other condition. This deference applies to all aspects of description, including the specific terms to use (e.g., “blind” versus “low or limited vision” ), whether to use people-first or identity-first language, and whether to describe someone as a “survivor” (Perry , 2021 ; Berry, 2019). When you cannot ascertain someone’s preference, use the preference associated with groups of people with a condition. For example, many in the Deaf community and autism community have been outspoken about preferring identity-first language (National Association of the Deaf, Organization for Autism Research, 2020 ; Brown, 2011). In contrast, when preference is not

known, person-first language is generally preferred for people with mental illnesses (American Psychiatric Association).

**Capitalization.** In general, follow a standard dictionary for the capitalization of health conditions. An exception is distinguishing between “Deaf,” which denotes people who identify with the Deaf community, and “deaf,” which refers to the audiological condition or people who do not identify with the Deaf community (National Association of the Deaf).

**Avoid objectifying people.** Avoid using “the” or “a” or “an” plus an adjective to refer to groups. Instead, use descriptions that refer to people.

**Use neutral, non-stigmatizing terms.** Do not portray people with disabilities, disorders, or health conditions as powerless or helpless. For example, avoid the terms “victim,” “suffering,” “afflicted,” “stricken,” “damaged,” and “impaired.” Similarly, avoid militaristic terms, such as saying someone “lost a battle” with a health problem. Opt instead for neutral terms like “has” or “person with.”

Do not use terms that stigmatize people with physical, cognitive, or mental illness. For example, avoid terms associated with crime, such as “committed suicide” and “drug abuse”; use “died by suicide” and “drug use” instead.

**Be specific.** Avoid generalizing about large groups of people and using nonspecific words that blur important distinctions or assume deficits. For example, avoid using the word “normal” as a contrast with people with disabilities or disorders. Also take care when using “healthy” as a contrast, especially when discussing disabilities. Use specific wording instead (Bottema-Beutel 2021).

**Avoid slurs, outdated terms, and euphemisms.** Use clear, direct, accurate terms to describe people. Do not use slurs or outdated terms (e.g., “mental retardation,” “handicapped”). Avoid euphemisms, like “handicapable,” “special needs,” “physically challenged,” and “differently abled.” Instead, use the terms “disabled” and “disability.” Also avoid “able-bodied” to refer to people without disabilities, as that term assumes that all people with disabilities do not have able bodies. Use “nondisabled” or “people without disabilities” instead.

**Ableism.** Do not use terms related to disability, mental illness, or disease flippantly or metaphorically to mean something negative. Even words that are no longer used to refer to people with disabilities or health conditions should still be avoided if their historical use was to denigrate disabled people or enforce stereotypes. See the glossary of ableist terms and phrases from Lydia X. Z. Brown on the blog *Autistic Hoya* for examples of words to avoid. While some people with disabilities and diseases are reclaiming terms (e.g., “crip” and “crazy”), care should be used to avoid offense, especially when people outside those communities use the terms (Kirby, 2016; Raving, 2019).

**Take care with details.** Consider your content’s purpose, platform, and audience when deciding what details to include about people’s mental illnesses. Suicide prevention organizations urge writers to not discuss details about suicide or self-harm methods (Time to Change). Similarly, organizations on eating disorder awareness recommend not including details such as specific

weights and food eaten, as they can trigger others (Beat). The needs of various authors will differ, but in each case, the writer should take care to treat the topic with respect and avoid unnecessary details that could lead others to harm themselves.

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
The student, who has muscular dystrophy, requested extended office hours.	The student requested extended office hours.  The student, who has muscular dystrophy, has written a petition requesting university officials make dorm rooms more accessible for people with disabilities. [ The context is relevant]
The disabled	People with disabilities, disabled people
An epileptic	A person with epilepsy
An addict	A person with substance use disorder
Confined to a wheelchair	Uses a wheelchair
The person failed chemotherapy.	Chemotherapy was not successful.
He's been clean for two months.	He has been in recovery for two months.
The trial included 100 people with bipolar disorder and 95 healthy controls.	The trial included 100 people with bipolar disorder and 95 people without bipolar disorder.
They are a high-functioning autistic person.	They are an autistic person who requires support in managing sensory overload but little support in expressive communication.
The speech was tone deaf.	The speech didn't acknowledge people's frustrations with the process.
Your presentation is schizophrenic.	Your presentation lacks transitions between ideas.
That policy crippled the economy.	That policy damaged the economy.
The new requirement is moronic.	This new requirement is pointless.
A double-blind study	A double-anonymized study



## References

- American Psychiatric Association. (n.d.). *Words matter: Reporting on mental health conditions*. <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/reporting-on-mental-health-conditions>
- Beat. *Media Guidelines for Reporting Eating Disorders*. <https://beat.contentfiles.net/media/documents/beat-media-guidelines.pdf>
- Berry, L. L., Flynn, A., & Davis, S. (2019, February 4). *People diagnosed with cancer often don't embrace the term 'survivor.'* The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/people-diagnosed-with-cancer-often-dont-embrace-the-term-survivor-110942>
- Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S. K., Lester, J. N., Sasson, N. J., & Hand, B. N. (2021). Avoiding ableist language: Suggestions for autism researchers. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0014>
- Brown, L. X. Z. (2011, August 4). *The significance of semantics: Person-First language: Why it matters*. Autistic Hoya. <https://www.autistichoya.com/2011/08/significance-of-semantics-person-first.html>
- Brown, L. X. Z. (2021, November 16). *Ableism/Language*. Autistic Hoya. <https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html>
- FAQ. (n.d.). National Association of the Deaf. <https://www.nad.org/about-us/faq/>
- Kirby, A. (2016, August). *Crip: A story of reclamation*. Now Then. <https://nowthenmagazine.com/articles/crip-a-story-of-reclamation>
- Mattlin, B. (2019, March 7). Disability and disease aren't interchangeable. *Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/disability-and-disease-arent-interchangeable/2019/03/07/5c904946-d325-11e8-b2d2-f397227b43f0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/disability-and-disease-arent-interchangeable/2019/03/07/5c904946-d325-11e8-b2d2-f397227b43f0_story.html)
- O'Reilly, M., Karim, K., & Lester, J. N. (2015). Should autism be classified as a mental illness/disability? Evidence from empirical work. In M. O'Reilly & J. N. Lester (Eds.), *The palgrave handbook of child mental health* (pp. 252–271). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137428318\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137428318_14)
- Organization for Autism Research. (2020, September 30). *1,000 people surveyed, survey says. . .* <https://researchautism.org/1000-people-surveyed-survey-says/>
- Perry, R. (2021, July 6). Person-First vs. Identity-First Language. AccessATE. <https://accessate.net/features/2519/person-first-vs-identity-first-language>
- Pulrang, A. (2019, November 29). *How to avoid "inspiration porn."* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2019/11/29/how-to-avoid-inspiration-porn/?sh=589ecc215b3d>

Raving, S. (2019, January 28). *To fight mental health stigma, we need to reclaim the word crazy*. Medium.

<https://medium.com/invisible-illness/to-fight-mental-health-stigma-we-need-to-reclaim-the-word-crazy-dec3a3cda70f>

Time to Change. *Guidelines: Media and mental health*.

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/Time%20to%20Change%20Media%20Guidelines.pdf>

# Immigration

The language used to describe people’s immigration or citizenship status can reinforce stereotypes, dehumanize individuals and groups, render them invisible or hyper visible, and regulate their access to civil and human rights. Using inclusive language can help reframe discussions around borders and national belonging and intervene in the larger meaning-making processes that construct and maintain an evolving and interconnected network of notions and assumptions about immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. These terms mean different things and are not interchangeable.

<b>Asylum seeker</b>	a person seeking international protection; a person who has applied for asylum but not yet received a decision; not all asylum seekers will become refugees
<b>Refugee</b>	a person fleeing conflict or persecution; all refugees are first asylum seekers
<b>Migrant</b>	a person moving away from their usual place of residence for reasons other than conflict or persecution, may be voluntary or forced; not synonymous with refugee

In general, avoid referring to people’s immigration status unless contextually relevant and essential. Avoid inaccurate and demeaning terminology, such as that listed in the table below.

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
alien; noncitizen <sup>1</sup>	immigrant; person; individual
illegal	undocumented; irregular
anchor baby	child of undocumented immigrant
chain migration	family-based migration (if relevant)
ethnic; exotic; foreign	do not use to describe people; name the country of origin instead
natural; naturalization	avoid except in reference to US immigration law
host country	country of destination; destination country
home country; sending country	country of origin

<sup>1</sup> These terms were previously used by the US government but have been phased out in favor of the terms in the “preferred” column

## References

Autheman, C., Saad, N., & Dalal, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Media-Friendly glossary on migration*. Panos Europe Institute and The United Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).

<https://www.unaoc.org/resource/media-friendly-glossary-for-migration/>

Global Press Journal. (n.d.). *Global press style guide*.

<https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>

Minority Rights Group International. (2020, May 18). 5.3: *Terminology matters: From 'economic migrants' to refugees*. Covering Migration.

[https://coveringmigration.com/learning\\_pages/terminology-matters-from-economic-migrants-to-refugees/#5-3-3](https://coveringmigration.com/learning_pages/terminology-matters-from-economic-migrants-to-refugees/#5-3-3)

National Association of Hispanic Journalists. (2021, March). *Cultural competence handbook*.

<https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NAHJ-Cultural-Compliance-Handbook-Revised-12-20-2.pdf>

Pierigh, F., & Speicher, S. (2017, November). *Changing the narrative: Media representation of refugees and migrants in Europe*. World Association for Christian Communication - Europe Region and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.

[https://www.refugeesreporting.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Changing\\_the\\_Narrative\\_Media\\_Representation\\_of\\_Refugees\\_and\\_Migrants\\_in\\_Europe.pdf](https://www.refugeesreporting.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Changing_the_Narrative_Media_Representation_of_Refugees_and_Migrants_in_Europe.pdf)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Who We Help*. UNHCR.

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/who-we-help.html>

# Race and ethnicity

It is important to talk about matters related to race and ethnicity using terms that the community prefers and uses to self-identify rather than defaulting to what is generally accepted by dominant power holders and structures. This may require questioning and reimagining terms that have been historically used in favor of those identified by and for specific communities. Despite common belief, a person's race, ethnicity, or nationality cannot be determined simply by looking at them.

<b>Race</b>	a social construct that describes people with shared physical characteristics; not based on biology; not synonymous with skin color, ethnicity, or nationality
<b>Ethnicity</b>	the social identity and mutual sense of belonging that defines a group of people through common historical or family origins, beliefs, and standards of behavior (i.e., culture)
<b>Nationality</b>	refers to the country that a person belongs to, either by birth or naturalization

**Do not mention race or ethnicity if it is not relevant.** If race is mentioned, consider whether mentioning that someone is white is relevant; do not treat it as the default.

## **What assumptions about default characteristics are made about people within the story?**

Avoid portraying people as stereotypes. Consider whether the context contributes to a stereotype. For example, see the study about Italian news coverage in the [Crime](#) section of these guidelines. Example: A Black man who is a good athlete ; a Japanese American boy who is good at math.

**Avoid generalizations and vague terms.** Do not use continents as descriptors as this lumps large and often diverse groups of people together. Example: "Chinese American" instead of "Asian American" ; "Nigerian" instead of "African" ; "from the United States" instead of "American." See also: [Geopolitics](#).

Do not use umbrella terms, such as "Black, Asian, and minority ethnic" (BAME) or "people of color", when a more precise word or phrase is appropriate. For example, do not use BAME if the group referenced is only Black Britons. Note: the Roma, Gypsy, and Irish Traveller peoples are considered minority ethnic populations in the UK, and using BAME or BME as a synonym for people of color is inaccurate.

**Are terms capitalized where they should be?** Many style guides now recommend capitalizing "black", although there is still some disagreement about whether "white" should be capitalized. Example: "Black woman", "White man" (National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists). Note that in some countries like South Africa it is not common to capitalize these words.

**Consider the context.** For example, while “black” is a term that some in the US have embraced, not all people with African ancestry identify this way. In Nigeria people are more likely to identify as part of a particular ethnic group, such as Yoruba or Igbo. Also, a person with Haitian ancestry who was born in the United States may identify as Haitian rather than Black or Haitian American.

**Has the community self-identified using this term?** Note that there can be disagreement within communities about what terms are preferred. When writing about someone, it is best to ask how they self-identify or what their preferred terms are. For example, only 3% of US adults who identify as Hispanic or Latino prefer the term “Latinx” (Noe-Bustamante). Similarly, the Native Governance Center “does not recommend that non-Native folks use the terms American Indian or Indian,” whereas other organizations recommend this language. Some Roma peoples prefer the term “Gypsy”, while others find it offensive.

**Be respectful.** Do not use pejorative or derogatory terms, and do not use dehumanizing or fetishizing language. In particular, do not use food words to describe the color of someone’s skin or appearance. Example: caramel, cocoa, chocolate. The same goes for comparing people to animals.

The following definitions may be useful but should not be considered comprehensive. See the Resources for more information.

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	In Australia: Legally, someone who is a descendant of an Aboriginal inhabitant of Australia, sees himself or herself as an Aboriginal person and is recognized as Aboriginal by members of the community in which he or she lives or has lived (ALRC 2003); a broad term that groups nations and custodians of mainland Australia and most of the islands, including Tasmania, Fraser Island, Palm Island, Mornington Island, Groote Eylandt, Bathurst, and Melville Islands.
African American	In Canada: An umbrella term that refers to First Nations, Métis, and the Inuit in Canada. “Indigenous” is somewhat preferred but specifics are better.  People in the United States who share a lineage that can be traced directly or indirectly to Africa. Can be but is not always synonymous with Black. It’s best to ask.
Alaska Native	An umbrella term that includes Inupiat and Yupik, Alaskan Indians (Athabascan, Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian), and Aleut. They are culturally distinct and most prefer to be called “Alaska Native” instead of being grouped as American Indian (Diversity Style Guide).

American Indian; Native American	Both are generally acceptable and can be used interchangeably. “Native American” gained traction in the 1960s for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Over time, “Native American” has been expanded to include all Native people of the continental United States and some in Alaska. “Native American” is used only to describe groups of Native Americans— two or more individuals of different tribal affiliation. Identify people by their preferred tribal affiliation.
Asian Pacific Islander	Refers to both Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. It’s best to be specific about what communities are being referenced (Guide to Covering Asian Pacific America).
Biracial; multiracial	Combination of two (or more) races. It’s best to ask how someone identifies as not all biracial or multiracial people use these terms. Do not use “mixed” as an alternative.
Black diaspora	Black people of African descent who are scattered throughout the world; refers to Black people whose ancestors were removed from the African continent through slavery and colonization and dispersed worldwide.
First Nations	Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit.
Gypsy; Traveller	Romani Gypsy and Irish Traveller are distinct ethnic groups under UK race relations legislation. Both terms should be capitalized when referring to the peoples. Do not use as a general term meaning “wanderer.”  Note: Some Roma people find the term “Gypsy” offensive. Whenever possible, ask what term is preferred (PIRC; Guardian).
Hawaiian	A person who is of Polynesian descent. Do not use to refer to someone living in Hawaii.
Hispanic	Refers to persons of Spanish-speaking origin or ancestry
Indian	A person with ancestral ties to India. Use “Indian American” to refer to a U.S. permanent resident or citizen with ancestral ties to India. Do not confuse with “American Indian”. Do not use to refer to Indigenous peoples of the United States.
Indigenous	"While an official definition of ‘Indigenous’ is not agreed on, the United Nations has developed an understanding of the term based on self-identification, historical continuity to pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, links to territories and resources, distinct social, economic and political systems and possession of distinct languages, cultures and beliefs. In the case of the United States, tribal membership or citizenship denotes Indigenous identity. These factors make the words Indigenous and Aboriginal identities, not adjectives, and

NAJA urges outlets to capitalize these terms in order to avoid confusion between indigenous plants and animals and Indigenous human beings. Finally, avoid referring to Indigenous people as possessions of states or countries. Instead of Wyoming’s Indigenous people, say the Indigenous people of Wyoming " (Diversity Style Guide).

Latino/a/x refers to anyone of Latin American origin or ancestry

Reserve; reservation Land, either ancestral land or land Native nations were forcibly removed to. Note that these are not the same as a Native nation’s name (Native Governance Center)

Tribal affiliation identify Indigenous people by their specific tribes, nations, or communities whenever possible. Ask what the preferred term is.

Tribe Use with caution. Better to use “nation” or specify the ethnic group unless “tribe” is the preferred term. Within the United States, many Native Americans prefer the term “nation” because their people have signed treaties with the United States that recognize them as nations. Some Native Americans prefer their national affiliation instead of using the generic term Native American, e.g., Navajo, Hopi, Cherokee.

Avoid referring to different ethnic groups as tribes. For example, Hutu and Tutsi are ethnic groups, not tribes.

Terms to avoid or use with caution:

Avoid	Preferred
black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME); black and minority ethnic (BME)	Name the specific groups instead. Previously used in the UK until 2021.
Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)	Being specific is preferred. “People of color” may be acceptable; do not use POC.
POC	Being specific is preferred. “People of color” may be acceptable; do not use POC.
model minority	Do not use as this is a stereotype and is considered offensive.
minority	Avoid using to describe people. Be specific whenever possible. Not synonymous with people of color.



	Pejorative. Do not use.
Colored	Note: In some African countries, “colored” denotes those of mixed racial ancestry and is acceptable.
skin-colored; nude	Avoid or be specific as to its meaning. Often exclusionary as it usually refers to white skin.
Mulatto	Outdated term for a person with one white parent and one black parent. Avoid as it is considered insensitive. Biracial or multiracial may be appropriate.
native	Should only be used as an adjective, not a noun.
nonwhite	Avoid. Be specific instead.
Oriental	Pejorative; do not use to refer to people. May be acceptable in certain uses (e.g., oriental rugs).
master/slave	main/secondary; primary/secondary; leading/alternative; source/replica.
whitelist/blacklist	blocklist/allowlist; exclude list/include list; avoid list/prefer list
Caucasian	Do not use to mean white.
Powwow	Acceptable only if referring to the title of a specific American Indian event. Avoid if referring to a general gathering.
ethnic; exotic	Avoid. These terms can be seen as marginalizing and offensive as they are often used to denote things from countries outside North America and Western Europe. Name the specific country or culture the item being described comes from.
Eskimo	"A member of the Indigenous people who have traditionally inhabited Alaska and other Arctic regions, including eastern Siberia in Russia, Canada and Greenland." Some consider the term pejorative, and it should be used with caution.
mixed	Be specific. Multiracial is also acceptable.
gypped	Derogatory. Do not use.
Untouchable	Dalit

## References

- American Medical Association & Association of American Medical Colleges. (2021). *Advancing health equity: Guide on language, narrative and concepts*.  
<https://www.ama-assn.org/equity-guide>
- American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Racial and ethnic identity*. APA Style.  
<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2021, September 6). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Australian Government Style Manual.  
<https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/inclusive-language/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples>
- Gabriel, D. (2016, May 12). *Racial categorisation and terminology*. Black British Academics.  
<https://blackbritishacademics.co.uk/about/racial-categorisation-and-terminology/>
- Global Press Journal. (n.d.). *Global press style guide*.  
<https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>
- Guardian News & Media Limited. (2021, April 30). *Guardian and Observer style guide*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-b>
- Kendi, I. (2019). *How to Be an Antiracist* [E-book]. Random House Publishing Group.
- Miller, K., Alderman, D., Carnahan, L., Chen, L., Foti, J., Goldstein, B., Hogan, M., Marshall, J., Reczek, K., Rioux, N., Theofanos, M., & Wollman, D. (2021, April). *Guidance for NIST staff on using inclusive language in documentary standards*. National Institute of Standards and Technology. <https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.IR.8366>
- MP Associates, Center for Assessment and Policy Development, & World Trust Educational Services. (2021, October). *Racial equity tools glossary*. Racial Equity Tools.  
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>
- National Association of Black Journalists. (n.d.). *NABJ style guide*.  
<https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguide>
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists. (2021, March). *Cultural competence handbook*.  
<https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NAHJ-Cultural-Compliance-Handbook-Revised-12-20-2.pdf>
- Native Governance Center. (2021, October 2). *How to talk about Native nations: A guide*.  
<https://nativegov.org/resources/how-to-talk-about-native-nations/>

Nitt, V. A. P. B. (2020, November 30). *Guide to Covering Asian Pacific America*. Asian American Journalists Association. Retrieved October 31, 2021, from <https://www.aaja.org/2020/11/30/guide-to-covering-asian-pacific-america/>

Noe-Bustamante, L., Mora, L., & Lopez, M. H. (2020, August 11). *About One-in-Four U.S. Hispanics Have Heard of Latinx, but Just 3% Use It*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/>

Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC), London Gypsies & Travellers, & Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange. (2022, January). *Media that moves full report*. <https://publicinterest.org.uk/MediaThatMoves-FullReport.pdf>

Race Disparity Unit. (2021, December). *Writing about ethnicity*. GOV.UK. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity>

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2015). *Guidelines for the ethical publishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and research from those communities*. Aboriginal Studies Press. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/ethical-publishing-guidelines.pdf>

*The Diversity Style Guide*. (2022). <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

The University of British Columbia. (2021). *Indigenous peoples: Language guidelines (3.0)*. [https://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc\\_indigenous\\_peoples\\_language\\_guide.pdf](https://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc_indigenous_peoples_language_guide.pdf)

Thibodeau, P. (2020, September 8). *SAP sets alternatives to master/slave, blacklist/whitelist*. Tech Target. <https://www.techtarget.com/searchsap/news/252488768/SAP-sets-alternatives-to-master-slave-blacklist-whitelist>

# Religion; atheism; spirituality

## Religion and beliefs

When describing people's religious affiliation or referring to groups of people with shared religious or nonreligious beliefs and worldviews, using non-inclusive language can alienate, dehumanize, and discriminate. Religious slurs and more subtle faith-based prejudicial discourse can effectively create moral hierarchies and value-based boundaries, dividing the world into in-groups ("us") and out-groups ("them"). Such linguistic utterances, even if they occur behind closed doors and are heard by a small group of people, can reverberate through time and space, shapeshift into discriminatory policies, and manifest as hate crimes. Reframing conversations around religions and worldviews starts with using inclusive language in scholarly and everyday communications.

In general, unless contextually relevant and essential for communicating meaning, specifying people's religious affiliation or beliefs is unnecessary. In some contexts, language that excludes nonreligious people (humanists, agnostics, atheists, secularists, etc.) should be avoided. For example, if the referent group includes nonreligious people, rather than saying "religions" say "religions and beliefs" or "religions and worldviews."

**Avoid stereotypes.** For example, Islam is often portrayed as an inherently violent religion, and Muslim children have reported being called "terrorists" and "bombers" by classmates (Bhatti). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is often depicted as endorsing polygamy despite the fact that the practice was banned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Church has repeatedly clarified its stance publicly.

**Consider context and perspective.** Many religious groups experience harassment around the world depending on local demographics. Those groups banned most often by local governments in 2019 include Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, and Ahmadis (Majumdar). According to a Pew Research Center study, the number of countries where religious groups, which includes people who are religiously unaffiliated, experienced harassment reached a new high in 2019—harassment occurred in 190 out of the 198 countries studied (Majumdar and Villa). Christians and Muslims are the two largest and most dispersed religions in the world, and they experienced harassment in the most countries in 2019, both in countries where they are not the religious majority as well as those where they are. (It should be noted that the study reports the number of countries in which harassment occurred, not the severity nor frequency of harassment.) Jews were harassed in the third most countries in 2019 despite their comparatively small population size. Whereas most of the religious groups analyzed, including those who are religiously unaffiliated, faced harassment in more countries from governments and public officials than private entities in 2019, Jews faced social harassment in more countries than government harassment that year (Majumdar and Villa).

Terms to avoid or use with caution include:

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
Black Muslim	member of the Nation of Islam  Note: Not the same as a Black person who is Muslim.
born-again	Avoid unless self-described
before Christ (B.C.), anno Domini (A.D.)	Before the common era (B.C.E.), common era (C.E.)
Arab; Arab World	When referring to a nation or people from an Arabic-speaking country, it is better to specify the nation/nationality instead (See <a href="#">Geopolitics</a> ). Not synonymous with Muslim.
Mormon Church; Mormons	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; the Church; Church of Jesus Christ. LDS church is acceptable on second reference. People are Latter-day Saints.
Koran; Quaran	Quran
fundamentalism; fundamentalist	Avoid unless self-described. May be considered pejorative.
unbeliever; nonbeliever	nonreligious; spiritual but not religious (if applicable); religiously unaffiliated.
Xmas; x-mas	Christmas
Voodoo	Vodou. Do not use as a general reference to witchcraft or other practices.
Non-Christians	Be specific
cult; sect	Generally best to avoid as these terms have negative connotations.
denomination	Christian bodies.
devout; serious; practicing; committed	Subjective; better to be specific. May be acceptable if self-identified.
faith-based (ex: faith-based group)	faith (ex: faith group)
idol	Use with caution as this term may be considered pejorative in some religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Islam).
defrocking	laicization

Avoid	Preferred
Moslem	Outdated. Use Muslim.
proselytize	evangelism (Protestant) or evangelization (Catholic or Orthodox)
Islam (in reference to people)	Islam is the religion. People are Muslim.
religious left; religious right; progressive	Avoid as these terms are vague; better to specify which groups are being referenced.
unchurched	Use with caution as it may be offensive; put in quotes.
religions; religious	religions and worldviews; religions and beliefs; religious and nonreligious
Merry Christmas	Happy holidays or season's greetings are preferred if the recipient's beliefs are unknown.
Christian name	First name, forename, given name

## References

- Bhatti, T. (2021, March). *Defining Islamophobia: A Contemporary Understanding of How Expressions of Muslimness are Targeted*. The Muslim Council of Britain. [https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FULL-SPREAD-IslamophobiaReport\\_020321\\_compressed.pdf](https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FULL-SPREAD-IslamophobiaReport_020321_compressed.pdf)
- The Diversity Style Guide*. (2022). <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>
- Global Press Journal. (n.d.). *Global press style guide*. <https://globalpressjournal.com/style-guide/>
- Majumdar, S. (2021, November 15). *41 countries ban religion-related groups; Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is among the most commonly targeted*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/11/15/41-countries-ban-religion-related-groups-jehovahs-witnesses-bahais-among-the-most-commonly-targeted/>
- Majumdar, S., & Villa, V. (2021, September 30). *Globally, social hostilities related to religion decline in 2019, while government restrictions remain at highest levels*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/30/globally-social-hostilities-related-to-religion-decline-in-2019-while-government-restrictions-remain-at-highest-levels/>

*Non-religious inclusive language guide*. (2021). Humanists UK.  
<https://humanists.uk/wp-content/uploads/Humanists-UK-Non-religious-inclusive-language-general-guide.pdf>

Powell, J. (n.d.). *Act, Communicating, Implicit Bias*. Racial Equity Tools.  
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/act/communicating/implicit-bias>

Religion Newswriters Association. (n.d.). *Religion stylebook*. Religion Stylebook.  
<https://religionstylebook.com/>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (n.d.-a). *Common questions*.  
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/common-questions>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (n.d.-b). *Polygamy: Latter-day Saints and the practice of plural marriage*.  
<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/polygamy-latter-day-saints-and-the-practice-of-plural-marriage>

# Inclusive images

**What are inclusive images?** Inclusive images intentionally include a variety of people and seek to portray people respectfully and disrupt stereotypes. In many cases, this means showing marginalized people in active, strong roles and not defaulting to showing those who have historically held power in society. A Forum One blog post originally published in 2019 by Acacia Betancourt recommends asking several questions to avoid bias when choosing images. Most importantly: Who is missing or excluded? A related question is who has historically been missing or excluded from this type of content.

Consider multiple characteristics when deciding what people to show in images. Avoid using the same combinations of characteristics. For example, when you show Black people, don't always show people with the same skin tone, hair texture, and body size. Diversity in images should be a concern not only when full people are shown but also when only part of people, such as just hands, are shown. A selection of characteristics to consider are below:

- [Race and ethnicity](#)
- [Gender and gender expression](#)
- [Sexual orientation](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Age](#)
- [Body type](#)
- [Hair style](#)
- [Skin tone](#)
- [Relationship status](#)
- Clothing, including clothing from certain cultures or [religions](#)

**Finding images that show diversity and inclusion.** Some databases purposefully focus on photos showing diversity or images of people who are marginalized because of their race, gender, age, or other characteristics. A selection of these resources is below. Another strategy is to use targeted search functions within more general image banks. For example, use search terms that include a specific race, or use filters that exclude a socially dominant group (e.g., exclude "White" from search results).

- [All Go](#): Body-size diversity
- [Body Liberation Stock](#): Body-size diversity
- [Centre for Ageing Better's library](#): Older people and age-positive icons
- [CreateHER](#): Women of color
- [DisabilityImages.com](#): People with disabilities
- [Diversify.photo](#): Photos by people of color
- [Gender Spectrum Collection](#): Gender diversity
- [Getty Images, Disability Collection](#): People with disabilities
- [Getty Images, Project #ShowUs](#): Female-identifying and nonbinary people
- [If/Then Collection](#): Women in STEM



- [Jopwell Collection](#): Black, Latino, and Native American professionals
- [Nappy.co](#): Black and Brown people
- [PhotoAbility](#): People with disabilities
- [RawPixel.com](#): Diverse people
- [Reclaimphoto.com](#): Photos by underrepresented photographers
- [TONL](#): Cultural diversity

**Examine your portfolio.** Think about your entire portfolio when assessing the diversity and inclusion in your images. It is unrealistic to expect that a single photo or illustration will show the diversity in your audience (and in fact may come across as performative). Taking a portfolio approach will allow you to use several images to show a wide variety of people. Periodically examine the images your organization uses so that you can identify what people tend to get left out. The If/Then Initiative offers a toolkit to identify gender representation in images, and this tool can be modified to apply to any characteristic. Beyond single factors like [gender](#), your assessment should also account for variety within a characteristic. For example, when you show women, do you tend to show women of a certain [race](#) or [body type](#)? Identify what patterns in your imagery may exclude people and how you can introduce greater diversity.

**Pair with policy changes.** Showing diversity and inclusion in images alone and not in your organization’s content or actions will appear hypocritical to audiences. Inclusive images should be combined with policies to make the organization more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

**Don’t be performative.** Do not make superficial attempts to show diversity and inclusion in images. For example, do not just put a photo of [people of color](#) on the cover of a textbook but nowhere else in that book (King, 2007).

**Avoid stereotypes.** Inclusive images do not simply have diverse people in them. They should also portray people respectfully and avoid stereotypes. For example, avoid “inspiration porn” which uses people with [disabilities](#) only as objects of inspiration, and avoid “poverty porn,” which people in extreme [poverty](#), who are largely portrayed as people of color, are shown without dignity (Nichols, 2018 ; Dortonne, 2016).

Before including images of a certain population, do research on how to most respectfully portray them. For example, one study argues that photos of people in [prison](#) can contribute to stigma if the images contain “elements of unworthiness, unpleasantness and immutability” (Miranda and Machado, 2019). The Conscious Style Guide also has resources that can aid in researching inclusive images.

Some aspects to consider when evaluating whether an image is appropriate include the following:

- Who is in the foreground, and who is in the background or out of focus?
- Who is in a position of power, and who is in a subordinate role?
- Who is shown in full view, and who is partly obscured?
- Who is larger, and who is smaller?

- Who is behaving appropriately, and who is not? For example, consider [this Red Cross safety poster](#), in which four of the five actions labeled “Not cool” are done by Black children. In contrast, both “Cool” actions are done by White people (Holley, 2016).
- What environments are people shown in?

In addition to evaluating each image on its own, examine the entire project (e.g., book or article) to identify problematic patterns. For example, are images of [people of color](#) always shown in a less important sidebar instead of the main text? (King, 2007). Also, ensure that any objects of cultural or [religious](#) significance are treated respectfully and are appropriate for the context. Take special care with illustrations, as cartoons and similar formats often contain stereotypes.

Hiring a diverse team of professionals to create, locate, and review images can help prevent the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes in images.

**Do no harm.** Beyond avoiding stereotypes, inclusive images preserve people’s dignity and avoid causing harm to others. For example, the organization Time to Change recommends not using images that show self-harm or people with mental [illness](#) in acute distress as those images may be triggering. Similarly, Beat, a UK eating disorder charity, recommends not using images of emaciated body parts.

## References

Beat. *Media Guidelines for Reporting Eating Disorders*.

<https://beat.contentfiles.net/media/documents/beat-media-guidelines.pdf>

Betancourt, *Acacia*. “How to Choose Diverse and Inclusive Photos.” Forum One, originally posted 2019; reposted Oct. 20, 2021.

<https://www.forumone.com/ideas/how-to-choose-diverse-and-inclusive-photos/>

Dortonne, N. (2016, December 8). *The dangers of poverty porn*. CNN.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/08/health/poverty-porn-danger-feat>

Holley, P. (2016, June 27). ‘*Super racist’ pool safety poster prompts Red Cross apology*.

Washington Post.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/06/27/super-racist-pool-safety-poster-prompts-red-cross-apology/>

IF/THEN. (n.d.). *Gender representation toolkit*. IF/THEN® Collection.

<https://www.ifthencollection.org/toolkit>

King, D., & Domin, D. S. (2007). The representation of people of color in undergraduate general chemistry textbooks. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 84(2), 342.

<https://doi.org/10.1021/ed084p342>

Miranda, D., & Machado, H. (2018). Photographing prisoners: The unworthy, unpleasant and unchanging criminal body. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 19(5), 591–604.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895818800747>

Nichols, M. (2018, October 17). *What is inspiration porn?* Unpacking Disability with Meriah Nichols. <https://www.meriahnichols.com/what-is-inspiration-porn/>

Time to Change. *Guidelines: Media and mental health*.  
<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/Time%20to%20Change%20Media%20Guidelines.pdf>

Yin, Karen. “*Design + Images*.” Conscious Style Guide. Accessed Jan. 31, 2022.  
<https://consciousstyleguide.com/design-images/>

# Data Visualization

*"[T]he choices we make about the colors, shapes, words, and representations in our data analysis and visualizations can affect how people perceive the final results, how change might be implemented, and how that change will impact different people and communities" (Schwabish and Feng, 2021).*

It is important to be inclusive in all visual aspects of a publication, not just photographs or other images of people. In their guide *Do No Harm: Applying Equity Awareness in Data Visualization*, Schwabish and Feng provide the following recommendations.

**Demonstrate empathy.** Help readers connect with the data and remember that it represents the lives and experiences of people. This might be done by pairing data-driven charts with personal stories or by making charts interactive. Also, recognize the needs of your audience. Is the content [accessible](#)? Would it be more useful if it were translated into a different language? Is the issue being framed in a way that introduces [bias](#)? Empathy can also be embedded into the graphics themselves. For example, consider using icons for data points that represent or reflect people instead of dots or bars on a graph.

**Reflect lived experiences.** As mentioned in the writing section, whenever possible it is best if data can be developed in conjunction with communities instead of about them. Ideally this would be considered from the beginning of the project.

**Consider the data.** Are the data biased or the product of oppressive data collection systems? Data visualizations amplify data and may therefore amplify the harm that bias can do. Consider how and why the data were collected and generated. Who is represented and who is missing? Who will benefit from or be harmed by the data? Schwabish and Feng note that applying the principles outlined in their guide will not fix data or analysis that is inherently biased.

**Use language with an equity awareness.** Titles, text, and labels are important as they are often the first thing readers see when looking at a graph or chart. The principles outlined in the language section of these guidelines should be considered when writing text to accompany data visualizations. For example, use person-first language and inclusive language in chart labels. Schwabish and Feng use the example of a graph showing the relationship between race and poverty where the axes were labeled "More Black" and "More Poverty." They note that, "A more inclusive way to label the legend might be 'Larger proportion of people experiencing poverty' and 'Larger Black population.'"

**Order data purposefully.** Consider the order in which data is presented, particularly if it presents people in an implied hierarchy. For example, do all the charts depicting demographic information start with "White" or "Male" as the default or first position? Consider starting with the particular group the study is focused on or sorting the data alphabetically or according to sample or population size. This is another example where interactive charts may be useful.

**Consider missing groups.** Noting information that is missing or limited acknowledges the missing communities and may encourage others to include them in the future. Conversely, if the

data is not directly relevant to the study or the point being made, does it need to be collected at all? Also consider whether aggregating smaller sample sizes is the best approach as it may inadvertently harm or erase those communities. If necessary, Schwabish and Feng offer several alternatives to the label “Other,” including “another race,” “additional groups,” “all other self-descriptions,” and “identity not listed.” Regardless of the term, the AMA recommends noting which groups are included in such categories (Frey). Finally, if data about a group is purposely excluded, it may be worth mentioning. For example, in situations where sample sizes are too small, this may be noted instead of omitting the category.

**Using colors with an equity awareness.** Color palettes should meet basic [accessibility](#) guidelines, offer sufficient contrast for readers with low vision or colorblindness, and avoid reinforcing [gender](#) or [racial](#) stereotypes. Schwabish and Feng provide the example of a chart showing racial and ethnic data where “White” is represented in blue, “International” and “Unknown” in shades of gray, and “Black or African American,” “Hispanic or Latino,” “American Indian or Alaskan Native,” “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,” “Asian,” and “Two or more races” are all varying shades of red. The effect of this graph is that “White” is seen as default and all other categories are either lumped together or fade into the background. Also consider the connotation that certain colors may have and consider omitting them. Orange, yellow, green, and red may fall into this category (Calder).

**Using icons and shapes with an equity awareness.** Consider whether the icons and shapes used are appropriate given the context or if they might reinforce stereotypes. Schwabish and Feng use the example of an icon of a baby in a chart about infant mortality. Other examples are similar to those for photographs. Are nurses always represented as [women](#) and doctors as men? Are [Black people](#) always in images representing poverty or crime? Also consider whether the use of a specific icon might cause readers to misrepresent the data.

**Embrace context and complexity.** According to Schwabish and Feng, data should not “speak for themselves” because data are not neutral. More complex designs should be used when necessary to foster better understanding of the data. Conversely, Schwabish and Feng also note that not all data needs to be visualized.

**Accessibility.** It should be noted that many data visualizations are exclusive of people with disabilities. Marriott et al. notes that such designs are “premised on implicit assumptions about the reader’s sensory, cognitive, and motor abilities.” For example, in the spring of 2020 during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, a popular data visualization encouraged readers to “flatten the curve.” The graphic was a quick and simple way to understand the situation, but such depictions are not accessible to people who are blind or have low vision (Ehrenkranz, Marriott). Marriott et al. points out that interactive graphics may also be inaccessible to users with motor disabilities. See the next section for more information on accessibility.

## References

Calder, C., & Supadulya, V. (2019, January 9). *Inclusive color sequences for data viz in 6 steps*. Medium.

<https://medium.com/design-ibm/inclusive-color-sequences-for-data-viz-in-6-steps-712869b910c2>

Ehrenkranz, M. (2020, April 9). *Vital coronavirus information is failing the blind and visually impaired*. VICE.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/4ag9wb/vital-coronavirus-information-is-failing-the-blind-and-visually-impaired>

Frey T, Young RK. Race and Ethnicity. In: Christiansen S, Iverson C, Flanagan A, et al. *AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors*. 11th ed. Oxford University Press; 2020.

<https://www.amamanualofstyle.com/view/10.1093/jama/9780190246556.001.0001/med-9780190246556-chapter-11-div2-23>

Marriott, K., Lee, B., Butler, M., Cutrell, E., Ellis, K., Goncu, C., Hearst, M., McCoy, K., & Szafir, D. A. (2021). Inclusive data visualization for people with disabilities: A call to action. *Interactions*, 28(3).

<https://interactions.acm.org/archive/view/may-june-2021/inclusive-data-visualization-for-people-with-disabilities>

Schwabish, J., & Feng, A. (2021, September). *Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization*. Urban Institute.

<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization>

# Accessibility

Both written and visual content should be accessible to people with disabilities. It has been estimated that 15% of the world's population has a disability (United Nations, Marriott). Common disabilities include but are not limited to those that affect motor skills, vision, hearing, and cognitive functioning. For this reason, it is often necessary to provide content in multiple or alternate formats. While outlining full accessibility guidelines is beyond the scope of this document, here are some basic principles to keep in mind.

## Text

- Use simple sans serif fonts, such as Arial or Calibri. Serif fonts, such as Times New Roman or Garamond, can be harder for people with cognitive disabilities or dyslexia to read.
- Avoid fonts that are cursive, italicized, or otherwise hard to read.
- Use bold for emphasis instead of italics or underlining.
- Text should be left-aligned instead of justified.
- Use plain language—avoid jargon and idioms.
- Break up denser texts by utilizing white space. Keep paragraphs short and include space between paragraphs.
- Use built-in styles and headings to create sections as this kind of formatting is easier to navigate for people who use screen reading devices.
- Use font size 12 or larger.
- Underline and embed hyperlinks. Avoid lengthy URLs.
- Supply documents as plain text instead of PDFs or create accessible PDFs. Standard PDFs are not accessible to people who use screen readers.
- Provide alternative text (alt-text) for all non-text elements. Alt-text is a concise written description of what is shown in the visual.
- Ensure there is sufficient contrast between the text and background.

## Images

- Include alt-text that is concise, non-repetitive, and informative.
- Avoid text-as-image or embedded text within images. These will not be picked up by screen reading devices and cannot be scaled for readers who may increase the text size.

## Charts

- Ensure sufficient contrast, not only for people with low vision but also for printing in grayscale or black and white.
- Choose colors that are accessible to people with colorblindness. Avoid rainbows. Avoid reds, especially when paired with greens.
- Don't rely on color alone. For example, consider using shapes or textured lines.

## Tables

- Include headers for each row and column.
- Avoid empty rows or columns.
- Avoid split or merged cells.
- Provide alt-text that summarizes the table.
- Use simple table structures.
- Never use tables to control layout and do not nest tables.

## Audio and Video

- Include captions or subtitles.
- Consider providing a separate text transcript.
- Be aware of photosensitivity and include a warning if a video includes any flashing or high-intensity effects or patterns.
- Avoid auto-play.

The most common accessibility issues are missing alt-text, poor color contrast, and important information being difficult to find (CBM). Many programs, such as those in the Microsoft Office suite, have accessibility checking functions built into them. There are also online tools that can provide accessible color palettes, audit the accessibility of websites, and simulate color blindness so authors can check their own figures. See the Tools and Resources section for links.

## References

CBM. (2018). *Digital accessibility toolkit*.

[https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/CBM-Digital-Accessibility-Toolkit.pdf](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/CBM-Digital-Accessibility-Toolkit.pdf)

Katsnelson, A. (2021). Colour me better: fixing figures for colour blindness. *Nature*, 598, 224–225. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-02696-z>

Marriott, K., Lee, B., Butler, M., Cutrell, E., Ellis, K., Goncu, C., Hearst, M., McCoy, K., & Szafir, D. A. (2021). Inclusive data visualization for people with disabilities: A call to action. *Interactions*, 28(3).

<https://interactions.acm.org/archive/view/may-june-2021/inclusive-data-visualization-for-people-with-disabilities>

Rozaki, E., Kovačić, V., Charalampous, N., González, R. L., & Gabriels, W. (2020). *Inclusive Communication Manual*. Erasmus Student Network AISBL.

[https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN\\_Inclusive\\_Communication\\_Manual.pdf](https://siem-project.eu/documents/ESN_Inclusive_Communication_Manual.pdf)

Schwabish, J., & Feng, A. (2021, September). *Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization*. Urban Institute.

<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization>



United Nations. (2022, March). *Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines*.  
[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_disability-inclusive\\_communication\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf)

# Resources

## Tools

- <http://alexjs.com> – Catch insensitive, inconsiderate writing
- [Project Implicit](#) – Test your own implicit biases.
- [Am I doing my job inclusively?](#) – Checklist
- [Critical Analysing of Information](#) - Checklist
- [Personal Self-Assessment of Anti-Bias Behavior](#) – Interactive worksheet
- [Lighthouse](#) – A Google Chrome extension that audits any website and creates a report on its accessibility
- [The Racial Equity in Data Checklist](#)
- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)
- [Accessibility Checker](#) – For Microsoft Office apps
- [Gender Decoder](#) – Tool (originally built for job ads) to detect gender biased language
- [Humaaans](#) – Free mix-and-match illustrations featuring a wide range of skin tones, hair styles, and abilities
- [Chartability Workbook](#) – Check that data visualizations are accessible

## Images

- [Building Inclusion into the Creative Process](#)
- [Conscious Style Guide: Design + Images](#)
- [Data Visualization Resources and Tools](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Data Visualization: General Recommendations](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion in Images](#)
- [Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization](#)
- [Guidelines: Media and Mental Health](#)
- [How to Choose Diverse and Inclusive Photos](#)
- [How to: Pick the perfect website colours \(a resource guide\)](#)
- [Inclusive Color Sequences for Data Viz in 6 Steps](#)
- [Inclusive Communication Manual](#)
- [Is It Ever OK to Publish Photographs of Human Remains?](#)
- [Media Guidelines for Reporting Eating Disorders](#)
- [PDF Accessibility Overview](#)
- [Pearson Race and Ethnicity Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Guidelines \(Products\)](#)
- [Photographing Prisoners: The Unworthy, Unpleasant and Unchanging Criminal Body](#)
- [Better Allies: Stock Photos and Illustrations](#)
- [Towards a Non-Discriminatory, Inclusive Use of Language and Images in Our Journal](#)
- [Why It Is Crucial to Make Cultural Diversity Visible in STEM Education](#)

## General

- [A Progressive's Style Guide](#)
- [A Short Glossary of Inclusive Language](#)
- [ACS Inclusivity Style Guide](#)
- [All In: Google Inclusive Marketing](#)
- [Bias-Free Language](#)
- [Conscious and Inclusive Language](#)
- [Conscious Style Guide](#)
- [CSCCE Glossary: Inclusive Language in Community Building](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Resources](#)
- [Diversity Style Guide](#)
- [Global Press Style Guide](#)
- [Inclusive Communication Manual](#)
- [Inclusive Language Guide](#)
- [Radical Copyeditor](#)
- [The Language of Inclusion](#)
- [Using Inclusive Language in the Workplace](#)

## Specific by topic

### Age

- [Challenging ageism: A guide to talking about ageing and older age](#)
- [Reframing Aging Initiative Guide to Telling a More Complete Story of Aging](#)

### Crime and Incarceration

- [Reporting at the intersection of immigration, policing, and incarceration](#)
- [The Language Project](#)
- [Words matter: A call for humanizing and respectful language to describe people who experience incarceration](#)

### Gender, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation

- [An Ally's Guide to Terminology](#)
- [Gender Inclusive Language in Perinatal Services](#)
- [Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ](#)
- [Glossary of Terms: Transgender](#)
- [Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language in English](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign: Glossary of Terms](#)
- [SOGIESC Full Glossary of Terms](#)
- [The Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology](#)
- [Trans Journalists Association Style Guide](#)
- [Transgender Language Reform](#)

- [Unspinning the Spin: The Women’s Media Center Guide to Fair and Accurate Language](#)

## Geopolitics

- [Bias-Free Language: Socioeconomic Status](#)
- [Communicating about Intergenerational Urban Poverty and Race in America](#)
- [Covering Poverty: What to Avoid and How to Get It Right](#)
- [Redefining Rural America](#)
- [Reporting Poverty: A Guide for Media Professionals](#)
- [World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)

## Health

- [Advancing Health Equity: Guide on Language, Narrative and Concepts](#)
- [Bias-Free Language: Disability](#)
- [Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines](#)
- [Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- [Disability Writing & Journalism Guidelines](#)
- [Gender Inclusive Language in Perinatal Services](#)
- [Guidelines for Writing about People with Disabilities](#)
- [Guidelines: How to Write about People with Disabilities](#)
- [Guidelines: Media and Mental Health](#)
- [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#)
- [How Should a Health Brand Talk About Weight? PWDA Language Guide: A Guide to Language about Disability](#)
- [Suicide Reporting Toolkit](#)

## Immigration

- [Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe](#)
- [Covering Migration: Tools and Resources for Quality Migration Coverage](#)
- [Cultural Competence Handbook](#)
- [Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration](#)
- [Reporting at the intersection of immigration, policing, and incarceration](#)

## Race and Ethnicity

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#)
- [Advancing Health Equity: Guide on Language, Narrative and Concepts](#)
- [Bias-Free Language: Racial and Ethnic Identity](#)
- [Cultural Competence Handbook](#)
- [Guide to Covering Asian Pacific America](#)
- [Guidelines for the Ethical Publishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Authors and Research from those Communities](#)
- [How to Talk About Native Nations: A Guide](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines](#)
- [Key Terminology Guidebook for Reporting on Aboriginal Topics](#)

- [National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association Reporting Guides](#)
- [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)
- [Style Guide for Reporting on Indigenous People](#)
- [Terminology Style Guide](#)
- [World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Writing About Ethnicity](#)

## Religion and Beliefs

- [Non-Religious Inclusive Language Guide](#)
- [Religion Stylebook](#)
- [World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)

## Contributors and participants

Sabrina Ashwell, American Chemical Society (Research & Writing)  
Amber Avila, George Washington University (Production)  
Patty Baskin, American Academy of Neurology (Working Group Advisor)  
Roshan Cader, Wits University Press (Research & Writing)  
Carolyn Davis Cockey, MLS, LCCE, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (Research & Writing)  
Naomi Curston, Intellect Books (Research & Writing)  
Claire D'Andola, Wiley (Research & Writing)  
Sara DiBari, Journal of American Medical Association Psychiatry (Research & Writing Chair)  
Kim Eggleston, IOP Publishing (Publicity & Marketing)  
Catherine Forest, American Society of Clinical Oncology (Production)  
Brian E. Giblin, Oxford University Press (Project Co-lead)  
Habeb Ibrahim, King Saud University (Research & Writing)  
Ana Jimenez-Moreno, C4DISC (Project Administrator)  
Francie Likis, Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health (Research & Writing)  
Wendy Lochner, Columbia University Press (Research & Writing)  
Lisa McAllister, Wolters Kluwer (Production)  
Stephan Meyer, University of Basel (Research & Writing)  
Saeide Mirzaei, Wisconsin School of Business Center for Professional & Executive Development (Research & Writing)  
Brooke Morris-Chott, Core, a division of the American Library Association (Production)  
Jenny Peng, Oxford University Press (Project Co-lead)  
Mia Ricci, American Geophysical Union (Publicity & Marketing Chair)  
Thomas Roche, University of Georgia Press (Production)  
Amy Rollason, Intellect Books (Production)  
Damita Snow, CAE, American Society of Civil Engineers (Research & Writing)  
C.A. Townsend, Freelancer (Production)  
Randy Townsend, PLOS (Production Chair)  
Helena Pérez Valle, eLife (Research & Writing)

# Acknowledgments

The entire working group would like to express our gratitude to C4DISC for providing a space and a platform to share this contribution with the scholarly community.

We would also like to thank Patty Baskin, who provided advice, guidance, and support as we developed the toolkit, Ana Jimenez-Moreno, who provided administrative support and helped coordinate our group, and PubPub, our publishing platform.

An additional thank you to the Oxford University Press Sensitivity Steering Committee for reviewing the guidelines.

Lastly, many people contributed to this project from across the globe and from many backgrounds and communities. Our sincere thanks for those who dedicated time and effort to compiling and reviewing these guidelines.