

RTPI Inclusive Language Guide

For Staff and Volunteers

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1. Introduction

The language we use is important. On the one hand language can help people assert their identity and on the other show acceptance of that identity. By the same token, language has the potential to reject or silence that identity.

Through our CHANGE action plan, we have committed to creating welcoming and inclusive space(s) and engagement for all our colleagues, members, partners and stakeholders irrespective of their identities and heritage. The language that we use across all forms of communication is a direct reflection of that commitment. Language is fluid and constantly evolving so how we demonstrate that commitment is not always straightforward; words and phrases that are acceptable today can become unacceptable tomorrow.

This guide has been created to help colleagues and volunteers navigate through these complexities and provide some strategies that can help communicate a message whilst minimising offence.

2. How to use

Our aim is that the guide can be used in two ways. On the one hand as a quick look up to check on a particular word or term, and on the other as a longer read providing more general guidance and explanation on our approach to inclusive language.

Whilst this guide offers advice and guidance on how to use terminology, it is important to note that there is no fool-proof way of discussing or describing identity and eliminating potential for offence. How people describe and feel about their identity is very personal and language, however carefully chosen, will not always be able to accurately reflect all those nuances. The best way to look to avoid offence is to:

- 1. We only talk about someone's identity when it is part of the story being told**
- 2. Where possible check with subject about how they wish to be described**

The above steps will not always be possible. This guide offers some suggestions for how to proceed in those circumstances.

3. Race and ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are both commonly used and are often used together or interchangeably. However, they are not the same and it is important before undertaking a piece of communication to understand the difference.

What is Race?

Race is a social construct based on physical attributes or traits - skin colour being the most significant – but it can also include other traits such as hair texture.

In apartheid South Africa hair texture through the infamous pencil hair test in addition to skin colour was used to distinguish between races. The construct is rooted in White supremacy and efforts to prove biological superiority and maintain dominance over others. As a result of this there is a long history of scientific racism and eugenic ideas that have explored things like skull size, brain weight, and muscle density to “prove” that races are, firstly biologically distinct, and secondly that this distinction results in important physical, behavioural, and intellectual capabilities. 21st Century science has proven that this is false. The Human Genome project found that there is greater genetic diversity within “racial groups” than between them. Despite this the idea of race as biological difference persists; that racial groups are genetically/biologically different from each other and is the basis for the dehumanising racial discrimination that people still experience.

Ethnicity

By contrast ethnicity is broader than race and is not usually based on physical differences. Typically, an ethnic group would be described as sharing:

- cultural experiences such as religious practices and/or non-religious traditions
- ancestry
- language or dialect
- common geographical origins

The connection between geography and ethnicity can often create the idea that ethnicity also includes physical difference, but this is not the case. This idea can make ethnicity feel like a more comfortable way to talk about racial identities, but this is not a wholly accurate way of thinking about ethnicity.

In the UK there are officially [18 ethnic groups](#) which includes the majority White British population as well as other smaller groups such as White Irish. When we talk about ethnic minorities what is generally meant is any group that is not White British,

including not only White Irish but also White Gypsy or Irish Travellers or even White Germanic or Scandinavian.

Ethnicity can be more personal and subjective and subject to changing interpretations where race tends to be more fixed.

Using the acronym BAME

The acronym stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and is typically used in the UK as an umbrella term to describe anyone who is not White British. It includes both racial groupings, for example, Black Britons and ethnic groupings such as White Irish. This conflation of race and ethnicity is part of the challenge with the use of the acronym. By linking the two it can be seen to downplay race and racism by “lumping” together people who experience racial discrimination with people who do not.

If not carefully used the broadness of the group can cause inadvertent inaccuracies in communications, particularly when describing someone as ‘the first’. If, for example, we call someone ‘the first from a UK ethnic minority background’ then we are really saying that only someone who is White British has been in that position before. To say that we must be certain that a White Irish, Scandinavian or White Jewish person, or a person of another White background has never been in that position. It would not be accurate to describe Wei Yang as the RTPI’s first president from a UK ethnic minority background when we know that, e.g., Walter Bor, our President between 1970-71 is Austrian with Jewish parentage. Wei Yang can be accurately described as our first president from a Black or Asian community.

Be as specific as possible and avoid the acronym BAME and/or the phrase ethnic minorities.

This will help eliminate any inadvertent inaccuracies in communications as well as mitigate against any accusation that race or racism is being downplayed whilst respecting all identities.

Example:

Kamala Harris is the first female vice president and the highest-ranking female official in U.S. history, as well as the first African American and first Asian American vice president.

Not

Kamala Harris is the first female vice president and the highest-ranking female official in U.S. history, and the first BAME vice president **or** Kamala Harris is the first female vice president and the highest-ranking female official in U.S. history, and the first from an ethnic minority.

Some terms to use:

Black African – for people whose grandparents, parents or themselves have migrated from a country in Africa and can be described as Black.

Black Caribbean - for people whose grandparents, parents or themselves have migrated to the UK from a country in the Caribbean and can be described as Black.

South Asian Heritage - for people who have themselves or whose ancestry is from a country on the sub-continent of India even if they migrated from countries in Africa or the Caribbean.

East Asian Heritage - for people whose ancestry is from China, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan even if they migrated from countries in Africa, the Caribbean or USA.

Ethnic minority communities - there are many groups covered under this one group such as people with Romany heritage, Irish traveller heritage or Jewish heritage. Where possible be clear which group you are talking about and be specific. Where it is not possible to be specific, the collective term used should be ethnic minority communities.

Mixed heritage - typically describes people whose ancestors are of different races. Normally parents and/or grandparents but not exclusively. It can also include people with heritage from different ethnic groups. Mixed heritage is a very broad term and because it can include people from all different cultures and backgrounds it does come down to how individuals define themselves. Where possible we aim to specify, as far as possible, individual identity e.g. Mixed Black African and White.

Of course, it is not always possible to have enough data for each group and there will be times when data needs to be consolidated. In these circumstances we aim to avoid wherever possible the acronym BAME and instead group people in the following ways:

Individual identity name	Secondary grouping	Final Grouping
Black African Black Caribbean	Black African and Caribbean	People from a Black or Asian community
South Asian East Asian	South and East Asian	
Mixed Black African and White Mixed Black Caribbean and White Mixed South Asian and White Mixed East Asian and White Mixed Black African and South Asian Mixed Black Caribbean and South Asian Mixed Black Caribbean and East Asian Mixed Black African and South Asian	Mixed heritage	Or People with African, Caribbean or Asian Heritage

What does this mean when writing about individuals?

The main general point of advice is to only reference race and/or ethnic identity if it is central to the content and to be clear and specific about that identity.

Never use a collective term to describe an individual. We do not say Simon Ovba is a BAME individual, but we do say Simon Ovba is of Black Caribbean heritage.

We need this level of specificity to help negotiate often complex historical migration patterns. A mixture of forced and voluntary migration reshaped the human geography of the world and in the process created and recreated identities. For example, West Indies cricketer Rohan Kanhai and his family are part of the forced migration of Indian workers to the West Indies that started in the 1800s. They could not accurately be described as Indian, South Asian or Black Caribbean but describing him as ‘of South Asian Heritage’ enables us to speak to his origin story without necessarily tying him to a specific country or location.

Never make any assumptions or ask anyone to make any assumptions about an individual based on their name or physical appearance.

Only use identity descriptors for individuals if they are known and if in doubt check with the individual or do not use.

If possible, avoid the acronym BAME. If this is not possible it should always be written as **BAME communities**.

A quick note on capitalisation

We capitalise all racial and ethnic groups, for example, Asian, Black, Mixed, White, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, and Other. This is because some groups such as Asian and Indian start with a capital letter and this maintains a consistent approach for all groups.

4. Religion

Religions are systems of faith and worship. Religious systems include rituals, sermons, commemoration, or veneration (of deities and/or saints), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. All religions have sacred histories and narratives, which may be preserved in sacred scriptures, and symbols and holy places.

There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide and the major world religions, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism will have followers around the world.

There can be a tendency to link religion to specific groups of people. It is one of the tenets of anti-Semitism that Jewish people have specific physical characteristics – this is categorically not the case – for example there have been communities of practicing Jews in Ethiopia for centuries.

When writing about religion and people's faith we must make sure that we do not:

- Confuse or inadvertently use religion to represent a specific group of people.
- Confuse or inadvertently use religion to represent a specific national identity.

5. Inclusive gender language

As part of our commitment to create an inclusive environment we need to take care to use language that does not discriminate against a particular sex or gender identity.

What is the difference between sex and gender?

Sex is assigned at birth and is related to the physical body and biology and as result is typically binary, male or female. This is what will be on legal documentation such as birth certificates or passports. If someone is going through the legal gender reassignment process, they will be changing their sex and will have new legal documents issued with the sex updated.

Gender is a way to describe how someone feels about their identity. It is not related to the physical body and biology and is fluid. Someone might identify as male or female or something different. They may then choose to express that gender in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, how they dress or present themselves.

Broadly there are four categories under which gender identity or expression fall. Of course, someone's gender identity is very personal, so people will use different terms:

- **Trans/Transgender** – someone whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex that they were assigned at birth.
- **Cisgender** – someone whose gender identity or gender expression matches the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are Cisgender would not normally use this to self-identify and would most likely say male/man or female/woman.
- **Transsexual** – a term that is less common these days, mainly used by doctors to refer to someone who has had surgery as part of their transition.
- **Non-binary/genderqueer** – someone who does not feel that they are either male or female. They might feel like a combination of the two or at times, one or the other.

When writing we will generally be writing about someone's gender identity and here are some things to keep in mind:

- Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a unique and personal way. This could be through the clothes they wear, the interests they have or some other unique way.
- As a result, it is not possible to know what someone's gender identity is – only they know how they feel and no one should ever feel pressured to label themselves
- Ascribing the wrong gender identity to someone, even inadvertently, can feel to that individual like an attack or an attempt to silence their identity.

To avoid this the RTPI recommends striving for gender neutral language as much as possible and the guidance here includes several strategies/ideas to achieve this:

Avoid gendered pronouns and use names instead

In informal writing, such as emails, plural pronouns may be used to ensure gender inclusiveness. Such strategies may not work as well for formal writing.

Less Inclusive

“Before submitting your document, send it to Steve for **his** review; **he** will return it to you with comments.”

More Inclusive

“Before submitting your document, send it to Steve for **their** review; **they** will return it to you with comments.”

This can also help avoid making a mistake about some gender identity particularly where names are gender neutral.

Less Inclusive

Before the seminar can you contact Kim and make sure that he can access the online platform.

More Inclusive

Before the seminar can you contact Kim and make sure that they can access the online platform.

Use the pronoun one

In formal writing the use of the pronoun ‘one’ can be used to ensure gender inclusiveness.

Less Inclusive

“A staff member in Manchester earns less than **he** would in New York.”

More Inclusive

“A staff member in Manchester earns less than **one** in New York.”

Use gender neutral words and omit gendered words

Less Inclusive

“Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue **his/her** efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.”

More Inclusive

“Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.”

“A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before **he** may apply for permanent residence.”

“A person must reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before applying for permanent residence.”

“Plans to outsource some 19 services have not proceeded at the anticipated pace, as there are significant **manpower** shortages.”

“Plans to outsource some 19 services have not proceeded at the anticipated pace, as there are significant **staffing** shortages.”

Use the reflective pronoun ‘who’

Less Inclusive

If a member of public is not happy with one of our members, **he/she** can raise a complaint using the RTPI complaints procedure.

More Inclusive

A member of public **who** is not happy with one of our members can raise a complaint using the RTPI complaints procedure.

Omit gendered titles and use either names or earned titles. We don’t need to know the marital status of women at all times. This approach also relieves you of worrying about whether someone is Ms or Miss!

Less Inclusive

Sylvia Law became in 1974 the first woman to be elected as President of the Royal Town Planning Institute. **Ms Law** was awarded an OBE in 1975.

More Inclusive

Sylvia Law became in 1974 the first woman to be elected as President of the Royal Town Planning Institute. **Law** was awarded an OBE in 1975.

Noted political scientist Carole Pateman was elected as a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, April 2015. **Mrs Pateman’s** ground-breaking work The Sexual Contract is an important critique of modern society.

Noted political scientist Carole Pateman was elected as a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, April 2015. **Prof. Pateman’s** ground-breaking work The Sexual Contract is an important critique of modern society.

Only reference gender identity if relevant to the content and where possible check with individuals what pronoun they would prefer to use.

6. Disability

At the RTPI we have adopted the social model of disability. This model developed by disabled people, is based on the idea that people are disabled not by their bodies or any condition, visible or invisible, but by society. This can be both physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets, or by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people cannot do certain things. In this context we should use the term 'a disabled person'.

As with gender we advise to refer to a disability only when it is relevant to the story being told.

However, what is "relevant" is not always clear. Should a story about residents complaining about noisy airplanes flying over their houses note that one of the residents who is complaining is a wheelchair user? Should someone who is blind be identified as such in a story about people who have been stranded while hiking and had to be rescued?

In the first case, we suggest the answer is "no." The fact that someone is a wheelchair user does not make the airplane noise any more or less irritating. In the second case, the answer is "maybe." If the hiker's blindness contributed to them getting stranded, making note of that fact is relevant. If the person's sight had nothing to do with the situation, leave it out.

Disabilities are not defects, they are instead simply variations between people. Disabled people often complain that their disability is mentioned even when it is not relevant to the story or content, presenting them as an oddity. Below are some basic guidelines that can help avoid this:

Avoid negatively charged language

Less Inclusive

Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson is a Welsh politician and television presenter who is **confined to a wheelchair**

David **suffers** from autism.

More Inclusive

Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson is a Welsh politician and television presenter who is a **wheelchair user**.

David is **autistic**.

Do not use disability as a noun

Less Inclusive

We have to take care to make sure that we include **the mentally ill** in planning.

More Inclusive

We have to take care to make sure that we include **people with mental health conditions** in planning.

Whenever possible name the condition that someone has been diagnosed with. This applies to visible and invisible disabilities and neurodivergent forms.

7. Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species. Neurodiversity is not a trait that any individual possesses or can possess. When an individual or group of individuals diverges from what might be considered dominant societal standards of “normal” neurocognitive functioning, they don’t “have neurodiversity,” they are neurodivergent. There is a subtle but significant difference of meaning between the two terms and it is important to understand that difference.

Examples of their usage.

Incorrect

Their **neurodiversity** means we must have an appropriate engagement strategy.

Correct

Their **neurodivergence** means we must have an appropriate engagement strategy.

“Planning needs to have multiple engagement strategies to accommodate the **neurodiversity** within communities.”

“Planning needs to have multiple engagement strategies to accommodate forms of **neurodivergence** such as autism and dyslexia.”

Some forms of neurodivergence

- **Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD or dyspraxia)**

Dyspraxia is a form of neurodivergence that affects coordination, movement, balance and organisation abilities. It can often affect fine motor skills making it difficult to grasp and manipulate objects which can make everyday functions such as writing difficult.

- Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a form of neurodivergence that can affect accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It can also include challenges with information processing, short-term memory and timekeeping.

However, these challenges don't stem from a deficiency in language, word processing or motor-control, they are the consequences of a unique brain processing function that means people with dyslexia often have a broad range of cognitive features and strengths too.

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which can feature inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity, is another form of neurodivergence.

- Dyscalculia

Is a form of neurodivergence that is characterised by challenges in processing numbers and performing accurate and fluent calculations.

- Autistic Spectrum (ASD)

Autism is , characterised by repetitive patterns of behaviour and difficulties with social communication. Struggling to deal with change, mandatory actions or other points of view can be elements of this learning difference.

Neurodivergent individuals can find it more difficult to engage with written content. Long passages, complex language and concepts can be especially difficult to follow. Thinking about things like layout, font size and background colour can make it easier for neurodivergent readers to engage with written content. Below are some suggestions about how we might format our work to help not just neurodivergent readers but all readers.

Given the range of neurodivergent forms it is not possible to have one universal approach that will work for all. Colleagues are encouraged to think not about using all these suggestions but picking the ones that will work best for both the content and how it will be published.

Readable fonts

- Use only our brand font Arial

- Font size should be 12-14 point or equivalent (e.g. 1-1.2em / 16-19 px). Some readers may request a larger font.
- Larger inter-letter / character spacing (sometimes called tracking) improves readability, ideally around 35% of the average letter width. If letter spacing is excessive it can reduce readability.
- Inter-word spacing should be at least 3.5 times the inter-letter spacing.
- Larger line spacing improves readability and should be proportional to inter-word spacing; 1.5/150% is preferable.
- Avoid underlining and italics as this can make the text appear to run together and cause crowding. Use bold for emphasis.
- Avoid text in uppercase/capital letters and small caps, which can be less familiar to the reader and harder to read.

Headings and structure

Use headings and styles to create a consistent structure and to help people navigate through your content. In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Home' tab:

- For headings, use a font size that is at least 20% larger than the normal text. If further emphasis is required, then use bold.
- Use formatting tools for text alignment, justification, indents, lists, line and paragraph spacing to support assistive technology users. In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Layout' tab:
- Add extra space around headings and between paragraphs.
- Ensure hyperlinks look different from headings and normal text. You can use one of the RTPI blue brand colours.
- Have a clear and logical numbering system - it helps separate topics and points and is easier to navigate

Colour

- Use single colour backgrounds. Avoid background patterns or pictures and distracting surrounds.
- Use sufficient contrast levels between background and text.
- Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.

- Avoid green and red/pink, as these colours are difficult for those who have colour vision deficiencies (colour blindness).
- Consider alternatives to white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids such as whiteboards. White can appear too dazzling. Use cream or a soft pastel colour.
- When printing, use matt paper rather than gloss. Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.

Layout

- Left align text, without justification.
- Avoid multiple columns (as used in newspapers).
- Lines should not be too long: 60 to 70 characters.
- Use white space to remove clutter near text and group related content.
- Break up the text with regular section headings in long documents and include a table of contents.

Writing Style

- Be concise; avoid using long, dense paragraphs.
- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.
- Use images to support text. Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures. Pictograms and graphics can help to locate and support information in the text.
- Consider using bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose.
- Give instructions clearly.
- Don't use double negatives.
- Avoid abbreviations where possible; always provide the expanded form when first used, along with the abbreviation in brackets.

8. Sexual Orientation

We talk about sexual orientation, not sexual preference to describe the gender or genders that one is attracted to. Sexual orientation should at all times be treated as an identity and not a lifestyle.

In general it is unlikely that a person's sexual orientation will be relevant to the content and if that is the case then it should not be mentioned. Particular care should be taken to not inadvertently "out" someone, particularly if they would prefer their sexual orientation to remain private. Where it is necessary/relevant to discuss someone's sexual orientation then we should use only the term(s) that they have agreed to/chosen.

For the purposes of this guide Trans or Transgender has been "categorised" as a gender identity – and is covered in the section inclusive gender writing.

Using the Acronym LGBTQIA

In full the acronym usually means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual though Ally sometimes replaces Asexual. Generally, we will be writing about our membership, and we are not likely to be able to speak with confidence about those who might identify as Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and/or Ally. Currently we are not collecting this data and though this may change the chances of us having sufficient data around those identities in the short or even medium term is unlikely. With that in mind, we aim to avoid presenting a uniform or universal LGBTQIA experience by being as specific as we can be and focus on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people.

Avoid use of the word "homosexual".

Instead, specify the gender of participants. The term "gay" can also be used to describe women or girls. The preferred terminology will depend on the self-identification of the individuals being described - when possible, check.

Less Inclusive

The sample consisted of 200 adolescent homosexuals.

More Inclusive

The sample consisted of 200 gay male adolescents.

The sample consisted of 100 gay male adolescents and 100 adolescent lesbian girls.

The sample consisted of 80 gay male adolescents, 95 adolescent lesbian girls, and 25 gender-fluid pansexual adolescents.

Avoid use of the term “homosexuality”

Less Inclusive

The survey asked respondents about their homosexuality

More Inclusive

The survey asked the respondents about their experience of being a lesbian woman or a gay man.

The survey asked people about their experience of their sexual orientation.

Avoid confusing sexual orientation and sexual behaviour.

Less Inclusive

15% of straight people report having homosexual fantasies.

15% of straight people report having lesbian fantasies.

More Inclusive

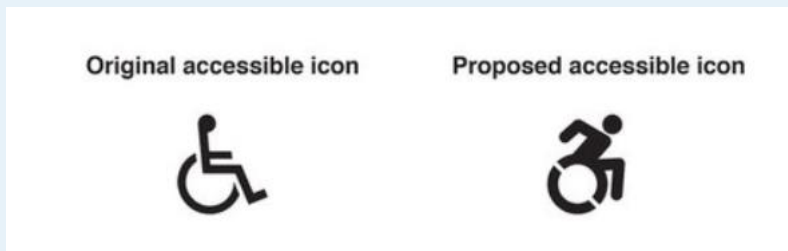
15% of straight people report having same sex fantasies.

15% of straight people report having female-female fantasies.

Some notes on meaningful visual representation

Careful use of images and imagery is a great way to demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion, however getting this wrong can seem like tokenism and send out the wrong message. More than the creation of a random collection of images featuring different people, meaningful representation is about the acceptance of our differences, empathy for how others experience the world, and their ability to express themselves, personally and professionally. Beyond simply appearing in images people are increasingly looking for companies and brands that produce images that capture people’s true lifestyles. We can achieve this by choosing images based on the principles of truth and transparency, this means:

- Choose imagery that reflects the whole journey, from story to subject(s) to audience(s). People want and expect imagery to be representative of themselves and the world they see around them – e.g., in a story about disability avoid images that show people with a disability as passive, victim figures. The calls to revise the accessible symbol to show the primacy of personhood and accentuate the notion that the person first decides how and why they navigate the world is a good example of this.



- Avoid images that have only one person demonstrating diversity e.g., an image with 7 people 6 of whom are white and male, and one is Black and female.
- In an ideal world we would use images of real people e.g. planners in action but this is not always possible in those instances we will need to use stock imagery. Choose stock images carefully and strive to select ones that show people engaged in activity that accurately reflects the message you are trying to convey. Think about the age ranges on display, how 'natural' the image looks, and the range of body types and shapes being reflected in the image.
- Avoid linking diversity and inclusion exclusively to stories/messages about diversity and inclusion. If the content is about working from home, then select a range of images that include people of all backgrounds and genders; if the story is about family, use a variety of family types.

Quick look up

You can use this section to look up a particular terms or acronyms, find out what they mean, if they should be used and in what context. This list is not exhaustive and will need to be constantly updated as language continues to evolve. You can help with that by contacting the EDI team on edigroup@rtpi.org.uk to flag any issues with the existing terms and/or to advise on any omissions.

Word/term	Definition	Usage
ACE	An umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction.	Fine to use, providing it is relevant to the story/content.
African Communities	An umbrella term for a group of people from the continent of Africa e.g. term would include Somalis, Ghanaians, Nigerians and South Africans.	Should only be used in reference to groups from the continent of Africa and must not be used to suggest race. The South African community in the UK includes White South Africans.
African or (The) African Community	An umbrella term for the groups from the continent of Africa e.g., Somalis, Ghanaians, Nigerians and South Africans.	Should not be used. Presents the idea that a continent of over 1,000 languages across 54 sovereign states can be reduced/represented in a meaningful way as one large homogenous group. If a single group is being discussed name that group – e.g., the Nigerian community or the Zulu community

African Diaspora	An umbrella term for the collection of Black communities and descended Black African peoples wherever they are in the world.	<p>Can be an effective less politicised/racialized way of describing groups of people instead of the word Black. e.g. can easily include Black Caribbean, Black South Americans, Black Britons and Black Africans.</p> <p>Might not be appropriate if also trying to include people with mixed heritage.</p>
African Heritage	A term to describe individuals with ancestry or descended from African peoples	<p>Can be an effective less politicised/racialized way of describing individuals instead of using the word Black, particularly when used to describe individuals Talib Kweli of African Heritage or Talib Kweli with African Heritage.</p> <p>Can be used to include people with mixed heritage, though this is not advised.</p>
Afro-Caribbean/African Caribbean	A person or group of people of African ancestral origins whose family “settled” in the Caribbean before emigrating and who self identifies, or is identified, as Afro-Caribbean. Excludes White, South and East Asian Caribbean people.	African Caribbean is preferred
Ally	A person who supports members of a community that they are not a member of.	There are no issues with its use if the term is relevant to the story/content
Asian	Strictly, this label applies to anyone originating from the Asian continent. In practice, this term is used in the United Kingdom to mean people with ancestry in the Indian subcontinent. In the United States, the term has broader meaning, but is	Use of this term is not advised.

	mostly used to denote people from China, Japan, and the Philippines.	
Asian Diaspora	An umbrella term for the collection of communities descended Asian peoples wherever they are in the world e.g., Chinese Jamaicans, British Indians would all be part of the Asian Diaspora.	Can be an effective less politicised/racialized way of describing groups of people.
Asian Heritage	A term to describe individuals or groups with ancestry or descended from Asian peoples e.g., Trinidadian Indians and Asian Americans	Can be an effective less politicised/racialized way of describing individuals. But more specific terms should be used when possible, particularly when describing individuals Can be used to include people with mixed heritage, though this is not advised.
Asian Indian	A term currently used synonymously with South Asian (see below), but with the important limitation that major South Asian populations such as Pakistani and Bangladeshi may not identify with it.	More specific terms should be used whenever possible.
BAME	British acronym standing for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. Typically used to describe Black and/or Asian communities it is technically an umbrella term for all minority groups except White British. This confusion between typical use and technical meaning contributes to the term being both poorly understood and potentially offensive collapsing as it does several disparate identities under one title.	To be avoided in favour of more specific terms e.g. East Asian Heritage, Chinese, Black African depending on which group or groups is being described.
Bangladeshi Heritage	A person whose ancestry lies in the Indian subcontinent who self identifies, or is identified, as Bangladeshi.	Only to be used to describe someone who identifies as Bangladeshi.

Bi-sexual	An umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender.	Fine to use, providing sexual orientation is relevant to the story/content
Black	A clear racial identity used to identify individuals based on a range of physical characteristics most importantly skin colour, but also others such as hair texture.	Use cautiously. Lots of people will not object to being called Black but for others the reduction of identity to a set of physical characteristics is highly problematic. Use ONLY if the individual concerned is comfortable/happy to be identified as Black
(The) Black Community	An umbrella term to identify based on a range of physical characteristics most importantly skin colour, but also others such as hair texture.	Should not be used. Presents the idea people from different countries and continents can be meaningfully described as a singular entity.
Biphobia	The fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi-sexual based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people.	
Butch	Butch is a term used in LBT culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically masculine way. There are other identities within the scope of butch, such as 'soft butch' and 'stone butch'.	You should not use these terms about someone unless you know they identify with them.
Caucasian	An 18 th century term for White people with its origins in racial science; popular in both science and everyday language.	Links to racial science are problematic. Should not be used.
Cisgender or cis	Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.	Not a way that people would normally describe themselves but can be used if the fact of someone's gender having not changed from birth is relevant/material to the story.

Coloured	An umbrella term to identify people based on a range of physical characteristics most importantly skin colour, but also others such as hair texture.	Used to be a popular, acceptable term but is now considered offensive and should not be used.
Chinese Heritage	A person with ancestral origins in China, who self identifies, or is identified, as Chinese	Only to be used to describe someone who identifies as Chinese
Deadnaming	Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with Trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.	Particular care should be taken to avoid this. Where a name change has occurred we will use only the new name including when referring to the individual before the name change.
Disabled person	Someone who as a result of difference in a physical/mental condition faces physical or attitudinal barriers	In line with social model of disability this is the preferred term.
East Asian Heritage	An umbrella term to identify an individual or a group based on ancestry from a country in East Asia e.g. North Korea, China, Japan	To be used only when there is need to group together people from e.g. North Korea, China, Japan
Ethnicity	The social group a person belongs to, and either identifies with or is identified with by others, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, diet, religion, geography. Increasingly, the concept is being used synonymously with race but the trend is pragmatic rather than accurate.	Not to be used as a substitute for race and if possible, should be avoided with specific groups being referred to instead e.g. White Irish, or Gypsy travellers
Ethnic minority group	Usually, but not always, this phrase is used to refer to racial groups. This is inaccurate. Alternatively, it may be used to describe a specific identifiable group, for example, Gypsy travellers, and less commonly, Irish in the UK.	Not to be used as a substitute for race and if possible, should be avoided with specific groups being referred to instead e.g. White Irish, or Gypsy travellers
Ethnocentrism	The tendency to perceive and interpret from the standpoint of one's own culture.	Fine to use.

European	European primarily means an inhabitant of Europe, or one with ancestral origins in Europe but is often used as a synonym for White	Should be used only to describe a person, irrespective of race or ethnicity, who is an inhabitant of Europe
Gay	Refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also, a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.	We use this only in relation to men with a sexual orientation with men.
General population	Everyone in the population being studied, irrespective of race or ethnicity.	Fine to use
Gender dysphoria	The clinical diagnosis for someone who experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.	Use sparingly/cautiously. People will tend to think of themselves as a Trans person as opposed to someone with a clinical/mental health issue.
Gender expression	How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender. A person who does not conform to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans.	Fine to use this term in the context of discussion of gender expression but it should not be confused with gender identity.
Gender identity	A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.	Although this term is fine to use, it's more appropriate to use the correct pronoun or gender identity term e.g. non-binary
Gender reassignment	Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender.	Stonewall's Trans Advisory Group feels that this term should be reviewed. On that basis its use is not recommended.
Heterosexual/straight	Refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women or to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.	Fine to use.

Homosexual	This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender.	To be avoided. Gay or Lesbian are now the preferred terms.
Hindu(s)	Someone who practises the Hindu faith. In the past has also been used as synonym for Indians and in some countries, this may still be the case. This is incorrect as there are many faiths practiced across the Indian sub-continent including Christianity, Islam and even no faith.	Should only be used to describe someone who practices Hindu religion
Hispanic	A person of Latin American descent (with some degree of Spanish or Portuguese ancestral origins), who self identifies, or is identified, as Hispanic irrespective of other racial or ethnic considerations. In the United States this term, often used interchangeably with Latino/Latina and more recently LatinX is considered an indicator of ethnic origin.	The gender neutral LatinX are the preferred term.
Indian Heritage	A term to describe an individual or groups whose ancestry lies in India.	Should be used only to describe someone or group of people with Indian ancestry. Care should be taken not to include someone who might identify as being from another country on the Indian sub-continent i.e. Pakistan
Indigenous	This term is usually used to mean a person who belongs naturally to a place in the sense of long-term family origins. It is sometimes used to identify the majority population, for example, in the United Kingdom as an alternative to the word White. In some parts of the world, for example, Australia, the word indigenous is used specifically to refer to Aboriginal populations	Use of this term is not advised.
Intersex	A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological	Fine to be used

	attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary	
Irish	Technically, a person whose ancestry lies in Ireland and who self identifies or is identified, as Irish. Typically, this term is used to describe a White population (see, White).	NOT to be used as a synonym for White. Only to be used to describe an Irish national, irrespective of race. If content needs to reference race then the appropriate White Irish or Black Irish is to be used instead.
Jew(s)	Someone who practices the Jewish faith.	Should only be used to describe someone who practices Judaism. Great care should be given to not conflate Jews with any specific nationality or race. NOT to be used as a synonym for state of Israel.
Lesbian	Refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.	Fine to be used
LGBT	The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi and trans. Sometime written as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex and Allies)	In the main we will be speaking to lesbian, gay, bi and trans so LGBT is the preferred choice.
Majority population	Umbrella term for the largest single racial or ethnic group in any given population or place. In the UK this will generally mean White British.	NOT to be used as a synonym for race. Who the majority population is will be dependent on context - that context should be spelt out.
Minority ethnic group	See ethnic minority	
Mixed Heritage	typically describes people whose ancestors are of different races. It can also include people with heritage from different ethnic groups. Mixed heritage is a very broad term and	Where possible we aim to specify, as far as possible, individual identity e.g., Mixed Black African and White

	because it can include people from all different cultures and backgrounds it does come down to how individuals define themselves	
Mixed Black African and White	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from both a country in Africa and White.	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed Black Caribbean and White	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from both a country in Caribbean and White .	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed South Asian and White	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from both a country on the sub-continent of India and White	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed East Asian and White	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from East Asia and White	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed Black African and South Asian	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from African and Indian sub-continent	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed Black Caribbean and South Asian	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed Black Caribbean and East Asian	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from the Caribbean and East Asia	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Mixed Black African and South Asian	Describes someone who identifies as having ancestry/heritage from the continent of and Indian sub-continent	Should only be used to describe someone that claim this identity
Muslim(s)	Someone who practices the faith of Islam.	Should only be used to describe someone who practices Islam. Great care should be given to not conflate Muslims with any specific nationality or race.

Native	Sometimes this word is used to refer to populations born, or with family origins, in a place (see indigenous). This is also a pejorative term meaning populations belonging to a non-European and imperfectly civilised or savage race, so writers need to take care.	To be used only in the context of Native Americans
Neurodiverse	Is the diversity of human minds, the variation in neurocognitive functioning within human beings. These variations can include those labeled with Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum and others.	Fine to use but not as a trait that any individual possesses or can possess. Should only be used to describe the existence of neurodiversity.
Neurodivergent	Means having a mind that functions in ways which diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of “normal”.	Fine to use but not as a synonym for any specific form neurodivergence e.g. autism or dyspraxia
Neurominority	A population of neurodivergent people about whom all share a similar form of neurodivergence that is largely innate and is an intrinsic and pervasive factor in their psyches, personalities, and fundamental ways of relating to the world.	Fine to use
Neurotypical	Means having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of “normal.”	Fine to use
Non-binary	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn’t sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.	Fine to use
Non-White	A broad umbrella term to describe anyone that is not White.	NOT to be used. We do not describe people by who they are not.
Occidental	This is a very rarely used term meaning a native or inhabitant of the Occident (West), and effectively a synonym for European, but readers need to be aware of it as the antonym of Oriental.	NOT to be used.

Oriental	A term meaning a native or inhabitant of the Orient (East) e.g. China. Formerly a popular, even polite term it has fallen out of use and become associated with representations of East Asia in a stereotyped way that is regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude.	NOT to be used.
Orientation	Orientation is an umbrella term describing a person's attraction to other people. This attraction may be sexual (sexual orientation) and/or romantic (romantic orientation). These terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof. Orientations include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.	We aim to write about orientation and to be specific. So not orientation in general but a specific orientation e.g. lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.
Outed	When a lesbian, gay, bi or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent.	Term is fine to use but great care should be taken not to inadvertently out someone.
Pakistani	A person whose ancestry lies in the Indian subcontinent who identifies, or is identified, as Pakistani (see South Asian). Some Pakistanis may have birth or ancestral roots in the current territory of India but identify with Pakistan, a country created in 1947.	Only to be used when describing someone who is Pakistani.
People of Colour or PoC	An umbrella term for people who are not white. An American more positive version of non-white. Its lack of specificity makes it more suited for informal contexts.	Not to be used in official RTPI writings or communications because of its lack of specificity and informality.
Queer	Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as	Although the word has been reclaimed it can still cause offence and its use is not recommended.

	a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the LBGT community and many have embraced it	
Race	Race is a social construct based on physical attributes or traits, skin colour being the most significant but can also include other traits such as hair texture	Can and should be used when talking about racial identities. Should not be used as a synonym for ethnic identities.
Racism/institutional racism	Systemic discrimination leading to large scale inequalities based on race. Racism is differentiated from racial prejudice (see racial prejudice) by its association with power structures meaning that despite individual belief or ideas policies, practices or cultures can advantage one racial group above others.	Can and should be used when talking about systemic racial discrimination.
Racial prejudice	Negative beliefs, perceptions, or attitudes towards one or more racial group.	Can be used.
South Asian Heritage	A person whose ancestry is in the countries of the Indian sub-continent, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.	Ideally used only as an umbrella term for people from the Indian sub-continent.
Western	A person or populations with ancestry in a region conventionally known as the west, effectively European and North American countries.	Not a helpful term, readers are not likely to understand it well given its broad geography and lack of specificity – it is possible for anyone living in, for example, the UK to be described as Western
White	A clear racial identity used to identify individuals based on a range of physical characteristics most importantly skin colour, but also others such as hair texture.	Use cautiously and remember that White also includes minority ethnic groups e.g. White travellers



Contact us

Contact the EDI team on edigroup@rtpi.org.uk if you have any questions or comments on this guide.