

Inclusive Language and Community Names

5 Principles to Inclusive Language¹

1. **Put People First** -Address the individual first and put them ahead of their characteristics. A “people-first” language keeps the individual as the most essential element; there is more to each of us than our descriptors.
2. **Avoid Idioms, Jargon, and Acronyms** - Jargon and acronyms can exclude people who may not have specialized knowledge of a particular subject, and this can limit effective communication. Only use acronyms after the full term has been expressed or clearly explained.
3. **Avoid Phrases that Suggest Victimhood or Deficit** - For example, “afflicted by,” “confined to a wheelchair”, “at-risk or needy”, “minorities”. Instead use language that empowers, e.g. “People with disabilities” vs “the disabled”, “historically resilient” or “historically underrepresented” or “racially minoritized” (as termed by Dr. Tamara Stevenson of Westminster College) vs “minorities”.
4. **Use Inclusive Terms** - Try to make your language and your message as inclusive as possible. For example, when speaking to an audience, make sure your speech relates to all your listeners, honors identities, and uses gender-inclusive language. For example, instead of saying “Ladies and gentlemen” you can say “folks”. Instead of saying “she or her” say “they”
5. **If Unsure, Ask** - Or Google. Strive to include language that reflects peoples’ authentic selves.

NOTE: This ‘beginner’s guide’ offers an introduction to some of the terminology around inclusive language and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) topics. It’s not meant to be an all-encompassing list of the different words or terms that communities use.

Important note:

Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality are not all the same things. This chart explains the difference between the terms.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Race	Physical characteristics that define a person as being a member of a specific group	Skin color, hair color and texture, eye color, facial features, physical build
Ethnicity	Cultural characteristics that define a person as being a member of a specific group	Language, accent, religion, styles of dress, hairstyles, social customs, food and dietary preferences or restrictions
Nationality	The legal sense of belonging to a specific political nation state	Citizenship (birthright or naturalized)

¹ <https://multicultural.utah.gov/poweroflanguage/>

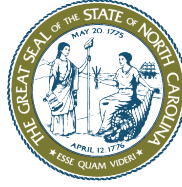


LGBTQ+

- **LGBTQ+** - Shorthand or umbrella term for individuals who have a non-hetero/cis-normative gender or sexuality. LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. The '+' includes all other non-heterosexual/cis normative identities not included within the LGBTQ acronym
- It is not appropriate to call someone or a group of people “homosexual” (i.e., do not say “he is a homosexual” or “the homosexuals”)
- **Queer** - an umbrella term to describe individuals who do not identify as straight and/or cisgender.
 - It is important to consider the context when using the word queer as it was formally used as a derogatory word. It has since been reclaimed.
 - Never add “a” in front of the word. Ex. “He is queer”
- **Cisgender** - A person whose gender identity matches with their assigned sex at birth. For example, if Steve was born a male and identifies as a man, then he identifies as “cisgender” or “cis” for short.
- **Genderqueer/Non-Binary/Gender Non-Conforming** - used to describe people whose gender falls outside of the woman/man gender binary. Individuals in this group may or may not identify with the term “transgender.” Other terms may include Gender Fluid.
- Here is a link to more info on important terminology:
 - <https://dicp.hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/files/HMS%20SOGI%20terminology%203.22.17.pdf>
 - A more extensive list of LGBTQ+ Terminology: <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>
- Here are links to information about Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE):
 - SOGIE Defined - <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/TSH-Every-Body-Tool-English.pdf>
 - The Gender Unicorn - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV_zXX54I_c

When Referring to Multiracial/Multiethnic Groups

- **When referring to groups, always try to specifically name the groups first.** Explicitly saying “Women, Latinx people, Asian people, Indigenous people” is always better than trying to group everyone under one term.
- **If specifically referring to the groups is not possible, there are *some* accepted terms you can use.** The above being said, it can be mouthful to list out all the groups you are referring to. Below are some generally accepted terms that you can use. Please do note, however, that the problem with every label below is they are not ideal as they are just nicer ways to say “non-white, rich, able-bodied cisgender men” and thus add a sense of



“otherness” to the groups you are referring to. They also deny the groups you are referring to the right to name themselves.

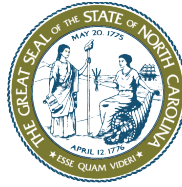
- **People of Color (POC)** – referring to anyone who is not white.
- **Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC)** – referring to encompasses all people self-identifying by the general categories of African American or Black; nonwhite Hispanic, Latino or Chicano; Asian or Pacific Islander; American Indian or Native American.
- **Historically Marginalized Populations (HMP)** – referring to groups who were (and some continue to be) denied full participation in mainstream cultural, social, political, and economic activities. HMPs can include people of color, women, LGBTQ+, low-income individuals, prisoners, the disabled, senior citizens, and many more. Many of these communities were ignored or misrepresented in traditional historical sources.
- **AHNs** – referring to African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and Native Americans
- **LGBTQ+** - referring to Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, Queer, and any other point on the sexual orientation and gender identity spectrum
- ***Stray away from the term “minority” when possible*** – It is generally accepted this day in age that the term “minority” is racist language. “Minor” implies lesser or less important, and these groups are not that.
- On your own time, consider reading this article: <https://cacm.acm.org/blogs/blog-cacm/245710-underrepresented-minority-considered-harmful-racist-language/fulltext>

Immigration Status

- Do not use the word “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien” to refer to individuals who are not U.S. citizens/permanent residents, who do not hold visas to reside in the U.S., or who have not applied for official residency.
- These words dehumanize the individual by stripping their identity down to a legal status. Instead of saying “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien”, use “**undocumented**”.

African American vs. Black

- Black and African American are not always interchangeable. Some individuals prefer Black because they do not identify as African and/or American.
 - Individuals can also identify as Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, etc.
- **Never** say “blacks” or “the blacks” when using the term “black” to refer to this racial group.



Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi2

- **Asian** - refers to people who are from or descended from countries in East and Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent.
- **Asian Americans** - refers to Americans who trace their origins to these regions
- **Pacific Islander** - Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian, and other peoples of the Pacific Island Nations
- **Desi** - refers to individuals whose cultural and ethnic identity are related to the Indian subcontinent and the diaspora
- **Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA)** - including East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander. This term ultimately includes all people of Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins to the countries, states, jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of these geographic regions.
- Use APIDA when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. Otherwise, use the preferred term of the individual or group, including nationalities if necessary.

Hispanic vs. Latino/a vs. Latinx/Latine vs. Chicano/a/x



Click on the image above for a video explaining the terms more

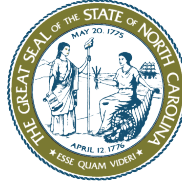
- Please note that all these terms refer to one's **ethnicity** and not their **race**.

https://www.csusm.edu/apidafsa/who_is_apida/index.html



- **Hispanic** – denotes people ethnically from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and Spain.
 - Older generations usually (not always) identify more with this term
- **Latina/o** – used to describe people of Latin American descent, regardless of the language that is spoken in that country. Latino = male (or a group containing both males and females) and Latina = female.
 - Younger generations identify more with this term
- **Latinx/e** – a gender-neutral alternative for Latino (for a male) or Latina (female) used to describe people of Latin American descent.³
 - “Latinx” was the original coined term and became mainstream in the 90’s/early 2000’s, but in the Latino community there is a lot of arguments against this term because it “anglicizes” the Spanish word and is hard to pronounce in Spanish. Thus, “Latine” was created because it fits better with the Spanish language.
 - Not many people identify as Latinx/e, but young people will usually use Latinx/e when speaking of the population.
- **Chicano/a/x** - Someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States.
 - Chicano/a/x is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States. The term became widely used during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s by many Mexican Americans to express a political stance founded on pride in a shared cultural, ethnic, and community identity.
- If you cannot specifically refer to groups by their nationality (i.e., Puerto Ricans, Mexicans Hondurans, Brazilians, etc.), then think about the group you are surveying. And use the proper term above. If you are unsure, the general safe thing to use is Hispanic/Latino or Hispanic/Latinx if you want to be more gender inclusive.

³ <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article254212398.html>



Ability Status and Disabilities⁴

- Use People/Persons with Disabilities, a person with a disability. **Do not** use terms such as disabled person, handicapped people, or a crippled person.
- **Emphasize abilities** and avoid using subjective descriptors. For example, instead of saying “John is confined to his wheelchair say “John uses a wheelchair”
- **Do not refer to a disability or condition unless it is crucial to your subject and relates to the full understanding of your listener or reader.**

NOTE: Language is ever-changing. Some terms which were popular/appropriate 10-20 years ago are no longer popular/appropriate today. Likewise, terms which are popular/appropriate today could suddenly become unpopular/inappropriate in the next 5, 10, or 15 years. What is important is that we continue to learn and adapt to keep our language and culture as inclusive as possible.

For any additional questions
please contact Catherine Rivera from the N.C. Commerce DEI Team,
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nccommerce.com/dei

⁴ <https://www.reachcils.org/guidelines-writing-and-referring-people-disabilities/#:~:text=Emphasize%20the%20individual%20not%20the,person%20with%20a%20visual%20impairment.>