



# Understanding equity language

Version 1, approved on 17/01/23. Next review on 19/06/23.



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## Understanding equity language

Language and identity are complex. How we describe ourselves is extremely personal – we'll all be comfortable with different terms. This document outlines language and meaning when working with or talking about those of us who are protected under [the Equality Act 2010](#). It's not about right or wrong answers but about helping us think more carefully about the language we use. There is also [our Communicating about people guide](#) which is designed to be a short practical guide for how you might consider language when writing or speaking about people and covers some of the same topics as this guide.

We've called this document 'understanding equity language', rather than 'equality' because we feel that equity is more accurate in terms of what we're trying to do as an organisation.

- **Equality** means treating everyone the same way, regardless of their differences.
- **Equity** recognises that everyone has different circumstances and need different resources and opportunities to succeed.

It's more important than ever that we're mindful of language so we can become an anti-racist organisation, support children and young people and those of us experiencing poverty.

We're still learning, and this document is based on the information and research we have now. It'll be reviewed regularly by [the Equity Innovation team](#). We won't always have a shared opinion on language and how we describe ourselves. But we can use the information in this document to challenge our own thinking, and that of others when we feel they might have made a mistake.

If you're still feeling unsure about what language to use after reading this document and our [Communicating about people guide](#), take a look at the [Resources](#) section. Or you can get in touch with the Equity Innovation team at [equity@mind.org.uk](mailto:equity@mind.org.uk). You can also share ideas, comments or insights from your own work that you think would help us to build on this guidance.

## The language of marginalisation

You might have heard terms such as ‘hard to reach’, ‘difficult to engage’ or ‘seldom heard’ used to define groups of people. These terms put the burden on the person to justify why services aren’t catering for their needs.

Whereas talking about ‘multiple discrimination’, ‘multiple disadvantage’ or ‘marginalisation’ emphasises the disadvantage faced by the group. It puts the onus on services to address this disadvantage instead.

Depending on the specific context, other terms might be appropriate, for example: ‘over-represented’ (e.g. young black men are over-represented in inpatient services), ‘under-represented’, ‘multiply disadvantaged’ (e.g. because of the experience of mental health problems and homelessness), ‘often overlooked’, ‘less well engaged by services’.

### Marginalised

To marginalise a group or a person is to exclude them and treat them as less important. People can be marginalised for different reasons. It could be because of:

- Their race or ethnicity
- They identify as LGBTQIA+
- They have minoritised faith
- Are disabled
- They experience poverty or discrimination based on their social class

And people can experience greater exclusion or discrimination based on how multiple aspects of their identity overlap or intersect.

### Multiple Discrimination

Multiple discrimination is when someone is discriminated against for more than 1 reason, for example on the basis of their gender and religion, age or disability.

### Over-represented

Over-representation is where members of a particular group are represented in greater numbers in a particular situation than their population, or level of need, would suggest. An example from Race Equality Foundation is:

- “Men from African and Caribbean backgrounds are over-represented in mental health services. They come to the attention of services via the police and the criminal justice

system. That means they are more likely to receive the harsher end of services, like seclusion, control and constraint.”

### **Under-represented**

Under-representation is similar to over-representation, but in the other direction – Black people are under-represented in accessing primary mental health services, e.g. accessing services via GP.

## Exploring allyship and intersectionality

2 words which are key when we're thinking about equity are allyship and intersectionality. So, it's important to understand what they mean.

Allyship is an important aspect of inclusivity as being an ally helps to advance the interests of an oppressed or marginalised group. Being an effective ally is key as we move to becoming an anti-racist organisation. It's important for us to work in partnership with people who belong to communities to deliver our strategic ambitions. Allyship means different things to each of us, but we've included a broad definition below.

Alongside allyship, intersectionality is extremely important as we explore our 3 strategic priority areas. Each area doesn't sit in isolation – we need to think about how these identities, and the privileges and disadvantages connected to them intersect with each other, as well as how other identities can affect them too.

### Ally

An ally is not a member of an underrepresented group but someone who takes action to support that group.

At Mind, for example, we might be a straight ally who is championing LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace, or a disabled member of staff who is championing the inclusion of people from racialised communities.

We don't need to be from any specific background or have a protected characteristic to be an ally. Allyship is extremely important in creating equality.

### Intersectionality

Rooted in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities can come together to create different levels of discrimination and privilege. Examples of these aspects include gender, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, and height.

## Age

Supporting young people with a focus on trauma is a key strategic priority for us. We need to make sure we're talking about this in the right way.

### Children

Legally, anyone under the age of 18 is regarded as a child. As a result of our scoping research, we've found that those from 11 upwards usually prefer the term 'young people'.

At National Mind, our work is focused on those 11 and over.

### Young people

This is anyone aged 11 years old up to 24 years old. Our research found that even though 11–17-year-olds are legally classified as children, they identify more with the term 'young people'.

We'll use this term for people aged 11-24 unless required for the context (like in legal documents and policy responses).

### Young staff

Staff members who are aged 25 or under are classified as young staff.

### Older people

This is anyone aged 60 or over. While some people don't mind the following terms, some do, so it's best to avoid 'the elderly', 'pensioners', 'senior citizens' and similar. Instead, we'll use the term 'older people/person' (but never just 'old person').

### Trauma

We define trauma as how people are affected by highly stressful, frightening or distressing situations – not limited to a specific diagnosis (e.g., PTSD).

## Disability

[The Equality Act 2010 defines disability](#) as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on our ability to do normal daily activities.

It's important to remember that some of our disabilities are visible - but many aren't. Mental health can be classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. The focus is on the effect of your mental health problem, not the diagnosis.

A disability may be an important part of our identity – but it won't always be. We won't always think of ourselves as disabled, either because we don't identify with the term, or aren't aware that it applies. Where possible, let people self-identify.

### Disabled people

We follow the social model of disability. This means we use 'disabled people' rather than the medical model which is 'people with disabilities'. The social model recognises that we can be disabled by society, because society is largely designed and run by people who aren't disabled and puts extra barriers in the way.

That means things like a non-accessible toilet. Or a hearing loop not fitted in a meeting room. Or the presumption that someone can or should be able to do something. [Find more information about the social model of disability.](#)

But we may also feel disabled by our condition or impairment and may identify with the medical model. It's not for us to say that only the social model applies. Again, when you can, allow someone to self-identify.

The term 'disabled people' covers those of us living with an impairment, including:

- Physical or sensory impairments
- Mobility impairments
- Learning difficulties
- Cognitive impairments or neuro-divergent people (the term preferred by many people who have, for example, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- Long-term health conditions
- Mental health problems

Please note that several impairments or long-term conditions which fall into the above categories are hidden impairments.



## **Ableism**

Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against disabled people based on the belief that typical abilities are superior.

Ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability.

## **Deaf people**

The word 'deaf' is an umbrella term used to describe people with all degrees of deafness. For profoundly Deaf people in the UK, British Sign Language (BSL) is usually their first or preferred language.

The capital 'D' is not a typing error – it is used to denote the pride that people have in their deafness. BSL users belong to a Deaf community that is very proud of its language, heritage and culture.

Deaf people consider themselves a linguistic minority and not disabled. To the Deaf community, deafness is not a problem that needs to be fixed.

## **Learning disability**

A learning disability affects the way a person understands information and how they communicate. This means they can have difficulty understanding new or complex information, learning new skills and coping independently.

A learning disability is different from a learning difficulty, like dyslexia or dyspraxia. A learning difficulty only affects an individual's relationship to the processing of information, usually when reading, writing, and spelling.

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong. Examples include, Down's Syndrome and Fragile X.

## **Learning difficulty**

There are many different types of learning difficulty. Some of the more well-known are dyslexia, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia and dyscalculia. A person can have 1, or a combination.

As with learning disability, learning difficulties can also exist on a scale. A person might have a mild learning difficulty or a severe learning difficulty. The same is true of learning disabilities.

## **Neurodiversity**

Neurodiversity is a relatively new term. It highlights the view that neurological differences should be recognised and respected like other human variations. It's used to counter negative social connotations that currently exist.

It also makes it easier for people of all neurotypes to contribute to the world as they are, instead of trying to think or act more 'typically'. [Neurodiversity encompasses all specific learning differences \(SpLD\)](#).

### **Non-disabled privilege**

Non-disabled privilege describes the privilege that people who are not disabled have because society is largely built around their needs, and they see themselves as the norm.

### **Outdated language**

Language is always evolving, but it is important to use the correct language when talking about disability. Find out more about [the origins of some outdated language](#) and why we don't use it anymore.

See more resources on inclusive vs. outdated language in the resources [at the end of this document](#).

## Faith

Faith can be an important part of our identities. For some of us, our faith guides us in tough times, giving us strength when we need it most. It's important that everyone at Mind and those we work with feel able to bring their full selves, including their faith, to whatever the project or service. That's why it's important we think about our language around faith.

We shouldn't confuse [race](#) with faith when they aren't linked. Try not to make assumptions about faith. It is not just South Asian people who practice Islam or Hinduism for example, in the same way that it is not just white people who practice Christianity.

Different faith communities view mental health problems in different ways and may use different language to describe it. When we've spoken to Muslim communities, we've found people react more positively to the use of the term 'emotional health' instead. This is the language which was used in the [Our'an and Emotional Health booklet](#) which [we developed with 9 local Minds in 2014](#).

When working with different faith communities, it's a good idea to talk to them and find out more about their approach to mental health and the language they prefer to use.

## Gender and sexual orientation

Gender and sexual orientation aren't the same thing and shouldn't be confused with one another.

- [Gender](#) is a social construct and is often, but not exclusively, seen in terms of masculinity and femininity. Gender identity is someone's personal perception of themselves and might not match the sex they were assigned at birth.
- [Sexual orientation](#) is a person's sexual attraction to other people, or for some people, a lack of sexual attraction.

For example, if someone is transgender it doesn't necessarily mean that they are also gay. In the same way someone who is cisgender isn't necessarily straight.

That said, LGBTQIA+ is a widely used initialism that covers many different sexual orientations and gender identities. As with any term that groups together lots of different identities, we've got to be careful when we use it.

- For example, if you're speaking to only people who identify as trans and non-binary, name those 2 groups specifically – don't use the initialism.

When defining gender in co-production work, surveys and key stats, make sure you include more than just male and female/men and women. You need to also include non-binary and other gender identities to allow people to self-describe. This is shown on the standard Equality Monitoring form.

If you need to find out the titles people have, for example on a form, include the gender-neutral title 'Mx' alongside Mrs, Mr, Ms and Miss, and also give an option for people who would prefer not to say.

Don't assume people's identities or pronouns when you are holding a meeting, workshop or coproduction activity. It is often helpful to use pronouns in your signature and ask people to introduce themselves with their names and their pronouns if they are comfortable to do so in meetings/workshops/interviews.

This limits the mistake you might make about someone's pronouns. When introducing a meeting or other event we would suggest saying 'welcome folks' or 'welcome all' rather than 'ladies and gentlemen'. The first 2 are more inclusive.

### A note on the LGBTQIA+ initialism

This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning and asexual. The '+' is often used to acknowledge that there are many other sexual orientations and gender identities that should not be forgotten including pansexual, non-binary, etc.

LGBTQIA+ covers 2 protected characteristics under the Equality Act (sexual orientation and gender reassignment).

We use the term LGBTQIA+ communities (plural) because LGBTQIA+ as an initialism covers many different communities and we shouldn't look at them as one homogeneous group.

## Gender

### Agender

This is when a person doesn't identify as any particular gender, or combination of genders. It refers to a gender identity that is neutral and genderless.

### AFAB

This is an abbreviation which stands for 'assigned female at birth'. This abbreviation should only be used after the full term has been used, because this term isn't widely used yet.

In line with our tone of voice, it's good to avoid abbreviations. This term is often used by trans and non-binary people as a way to reference the gender someone was originally given at birth, while also recognising that they didn't identify with that gender either.

### AMAB

This is an abbreviation which stands for 'assigned male at birth'. This abbreviation should only be used after the full term has been used because it's not widely used/understood yet.

We should also avoid abbreviations as set out in our tone of voice guidelines. This term is often used by trans and non-binary people as a way to reference the gender someone was originally given at birth, while also recognising that they didn't identify with that gender either.

### Cisgender

Cisgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity matches the gender assigned to them when they were born.

Using 'cisgender' equalises the 2 identities of transgender and cisgender, hence normalising them instead of defining one in opposition or contrast to the other.

### Cishet

Cishet is usually used to describe the privilege given when someone identifies with the gender and sexual orientation society assumes of them.

### **Cisnormativity**

Cisnormativity is the assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender. Even though transgender people are in the minority, for any transgender people and allies, it's offensive to assume everyone's cisgender unless otherwise specified.

### **Deadnaming**

This is calling a trans or non-binary person by their birth name after they have changed their name.

Never use someone's dead name if you already know their preferred name. This term is usually associated with transgender people who have changed their name as part of transitioning.

### **Femme**

Femme is a term used in LGBTQIA+ culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. It's an umbrella term that includes 'low femme' 'high femme' and 'hard femme'.

We would recommend that you don't use these words to describe someone unless you know they identify with them, and are comfortable with you describing them in this way.

### **Gender dysphoria**

Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

### **Gender expression**

How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender.

Remember - a person who doesn't conform to societal expectations of gender might not identify as trans.

### **Gender fluid**

Gender fluid refers to someone who feels that their gender can change and vary over time. People who are gender fluid may use they/them pronouns similar to non-binary and genderqueer people.

### **Genderqueer**

This term refers to someone's sense of being or not being any particular gender. Like identifying as a man, a trans woman, or non-binary. They do not identify with the traditional gender binary of male-female.

### **Gender identity**

Gender identity refers to an individual's knowledge of their own gender.

### **Gender non-conforming**

Someone who doesn't conform to what society expects of them and their gender.

### **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. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected by the Equality Act 2010.

### **Intersex**

A term describing someone who may have the biological attributes of both sexes, or whose biological attributes don't fit societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

### **Male privilege**

Male privilege is the system of every-day advantages or privileges that are available to men solely on the basis of their sex.

### **Non-binary**

Non-binary is a term used by people whose gender identity doesn't fit into the gender binary of male/man or female/woman. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, with other people rejecting them entirely.

People who identify as non-binary will sometimes prefer to refer to themselves using pronouns which are not gendered, for example 'they'.

## Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

## Transgender

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe a range of people whose gender identity or gender expression differ in some way from the sex assigned to them at birth.

You can be transgender without having gender reassignment surgery. We need to move away from the perspective that you are only transgender when you've had reassignment surgery.

## Transexual

Transsexual is a term that was used in the past with a connection to the medical diagnosis to describe someone whose gender is not the same as the one assigned at birth.

This is an outdated term, but some people still use this term to describe themselves.

## Transitioning

This covers the steps a transgender person might take to live in the gender they identify as. Like changing their name, going through medical interventions, hormone therapy and surgeries. It might also include changing official documents or telling friends and family. Not all transgender people have the same process of transition, and there is no one correct way of transitioning.

## Trans man

A trans man is a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man (some use the acronym FTM, female to male). Importantly some trans men will prefer to simply be called men, without any modifier. It's best to ask which term someone prefers.

## Transphobia

The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, trans.

## Trans woman



A trans woman is a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman (some use the acronym MTF, male to female). Importantly some trans-women will prefer to simply be called women, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term someone prefers.

### Sex

We are assigned a sex (male, female, or intersex) at birth based on our physical appearance. Sex and gender aren't the same thing.

### Women/Woman

We use the term women/woman at Mind, but it is useful to understand the origins of some of the other spellings of woman you might have seen or heard.

In the 1970's, some Feminists coined the term womyn. This alternative spelling of the word was introduced as a way to avoid the suffix 'man,' in protest of the biblical concept that women are simply subsets of men. It was meant to be a progressive term to demonstrate that 'womyn' are their own free, separate and individual entities.

The word was hit with scrutiny by some members of the LGBTQIA+ community as the word wasn't inclusive of transgender women.

After this point the word womxn was created which was created to expand the concept of womxnhood to include womxn of colour, transgender womxn and womxn identified groups.

### Pregnancy and gender

Please remember that even though many people who give birth are women, this is not always the case. Non-binary people and transgender men can also give birth so it's important the language we use for pregnancy and maternity is gender neutral as far as possible.

We're not asking you to erase women with your language, they're also a marginalised group and we need to recognise that. Instead, we're asking you to avoid gendered language where possible. The [information on our website](#) does this well. Some people might prefer to use the term paternity to describe being a parent.

## Sexual orientation

### Ace

An umbrella term used specifically to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction. This encompasses asexual people as well as those who identify as demisexual and grey-sexual.

Ace people who experience romantic attraction or occasional sexual attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic or sexual attraction.

### **Aromantic**

A person who doesn't experience romantic attraction. Some aromantic people experience sexual attraction, while others do not.

Aromantic people who experience sexual attraction or occasional romantic attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their attraction.

### **Asexual**

A person who doesn't experience sexual attraction. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not.

Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic attraction.

### **Allies**

This refers to people who are straight and cisgender, but who support people in LGBTQIA+ communities

### **Bi+ or bisexual**

Bi+ or bisexual is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi+ people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoromantic identities.

### **Biphobia**

The fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

### **Comphet**

Comphet stands for compulsory heterosexuality. When somebody experiences "attraction" to the opposite gender because that expectation has been pushed on them by patriarchal norms.

The term is often used in lesbian circles. This happens to gay men to an extent as well, but not nearly as often or strongly.

### **Gay**

Gay is used to describe being attracted to people of the same gender. Most often used to describe men, but not always.

### **Homophobia**

The fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, gay or bi people. Homophobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bi.

### **Homosexual**

Homosexuality/homosexual tends not to be used very frequently because of the negative connection to the fact that it was classified by the World Health Organisation (and others) as a mental disorder until 1990.

At Mind, we use the word gay not homosexual.

### **Heterosexual**

Heterosexual is the term that identifies an individual who is attracted to the opposite sex (i.e. a male attracted to females or vice versa). The term 'straight' is often used as a synonym, especially in spoken or informal communications.

A positive example is the use of the phrase 'straight allies' to talk about heterosexual people that support LGBT rights movements.

### **Heterosexual privilege**

Heterosexual or straight privilege describes the advantages someone has because they're heterosexual (straight).

This privilege means never having to worry about 'coming out', feeling unsafe when holding hands with your significant other in public or censoring yourself around different groups that find your orientation uncomfortable or wrong.

### **Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity is the belief that heterosexuality is the default, preferred, or normal mode of sexual orientation.

It assumes the gender binary (i.e., that there are only 2 distinct, opposite genders) and that sexual and marital relations are most fitting between people of opposite sex.

### **Lesbian**

A woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

### **Lesbophobia**

The fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian.

### **Pan or pansexual**

A person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

### **Queer**

Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The term was reclaimed in the late 80's by the queer community who have embraced it.

However, some people who are LGBTQIA+ still see this word as a slur and dislike its use, so we advise not using it when describing people. It's also an umbrella term - we advise against using these and instead describing people in the most specific term you can.

### **Questioning**

This is the process of exploring your sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **Sexual Orientation**

This is a person's sexual attraction to other people or lack of sexual attraction. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity.

We recommend using the term sexual orientation when discussing the attraction someone feels to people of the same, opposite or more than one sex/and or gender.

We'd advise not using the term sexuality when meaning sexual orientation. Sexuality has a broader meaning and is more about the ways in which a person goes about expressing themselves as a sexual being.

## Race

Language holds a lot of power when it comes to race and ethnicity. **Race** (a social construct, a category based on perceived biological difference), **ethnicity**, (a way to categorise people based on ancestry and country of origin) and **nationality** are understood differently by different people, and there aren't always clear distinctions within them or between them. But we've given some definitions below, along with other terms, to help you understand them better.

Think about the differences between communities you're talking about or to. Saying you are going to look at Asian experiences is still very broad. East Asia is very different to South Asia, and even within countries in each region, cultures and values are very different. The same is true of black communities, for example Black African experiences may be different to those of us who might identify as Black Caribbean.

Take a look at data and insights to understand the experiences of different minoritised ethnic groups. This will help you understand the audience you're targeting and what language you should be using.

- [Our research insights hub](#) and [anti-racism key messages document](#) are really helpful
- Our scoping research around [becoming an anti-racist organisation](#) will also give you more detailed insights on the mental health of different communities.

Think carefully about if you need to talk about someone's racial or ethnic identity. For example - news stories sometimes mention someone's race when it isn't relevant, and they wouldn't do the same if speaking about a white person.

We've chosen not to use capital letters on any terminology because this makes it more accessible for those of us with visual impairments. But based on feedback from our audiences, we understand that when it comes to race and ethnicity, capitalisation can be important to people in affirming their identity in a society where such affirmation isn't the norm.

For example, the word 'Black' or 'Brown' when talking about race. We'd encourage you to make your own decisions about whether or not to capitalise, based on your audience's preferred language.

In addition, we also chose not to capitalise 'w' in white because, as stated by an [article by the Centre of Mental Health](#):

- “We will not capitalise ‘white’. This is because ‘Black’ refers to a shared history, community and identity in a way that ‘white’ does not. Capitalising ‘white’ also has different connotations, including being linked to white supremacist groups.”

### **Anti-racist**

Being anti-racist is an active commitment to working against racial injustice and discrimination. Part of this process is making conscious and thoughtful decisions about our behaviour.

It is not just about working against racial injustice and discrimination interpersonally, but requires an emphasis on identifying, challenging, and changing systems of oppression. To be anti-racist we need to reflect and allow space for self-improvement. [Visit the Race Equity page for more information.](#)

Being anti-racist means challenging things and being an active solution to the problem – white supremacy, instead of being a passive bystander within it. This is different from ‘not being racist’.

In the words of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, the ‘nonracist’ identity does not exist, he explains that the opposite of racist is not ‘not racist’ rather it is anti-racist. Being “not racist” is defined as passivity and neutrality which is inherently racist as you’re either against racism or for it.

Being anti-racist is what it truly means to be against racism. It actively promotes race equity and justice. [Read more about Mind’s anti-racist commitments.](#)

### **Biracial**

Biracial refers to 2 races, usually used to describe people whose parents are from different races. The adjective is also used to describe couples - for example biracial couples.

It is not a suitable word to use as it implies that people who are mixed have parents from 2 racial groups, whereas this is rarely the case. This term is exclusionary for this reason.

Biracial is often used in the US but it’s not a word we identify with in the UK. Mixed race is the preferred term as it is more inclusive of a range of people. Find out more about the definitions for [mixed race](#), [mixed heritage](#) and [dual heritage](#).

### **Black, Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC)**

The term is mainly used in the US. This term is very similar to people of colour, but the black and indigenous part was added to account for the distinct and different experiences of oppression faced by black and indigenous people within the US historically and currently.

It also recognises the distinct and different experiences of oppression faced by black and indigenous people within the US historically and currently). It’s this context that means this

term might not work as well when talking about something that's happened in the UK. Plus, [it's better to be as specific as you can](#) when talking about a group of people too.

### **Black Lives Matter (BLM)**

This is a liberation movement formed in the US in 2013 in response to police brutality towards Black people there. The movement was sparked particularly by the response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer.

Since this time the movement has spread to the UK and Canada. [Their mission](#) is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.

### **Black people**

This term normally refers to people with African ancestry. This term also includes people with African ancestry whose ancestors migrated via the Caribbean islands. The term 'black people' was used historically to include all non-white people in various political struggles and is used similarly in some contexts today. At Mind, when we talk about black people, we are referring to the first 2 definitions.

### **Brown people**

This term describes people of South Asian descent, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. As with the other definitions, you need to be specific when you can. This is often a term which is more likely to be used by people who identify as brown themselves.

### **Dual heritage**

This refers to an upbringing in which one's parents are of different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

### **Ethnicity**

Ethnicity usually refers to a group of people who share a long-standing cultural, national or language identity. Race and ethnicity are different. But in different geographical contexts, someone's race and ethnicity may be the same.

For example black Americans may identify as black both racially and ethnically due to being unsure of their specific ethnic ancestry due to slavery and colonisation. It is important we are using the terms race and ethnicity appropriately, and not using them interchangeably.

### **Minoritised ethnic**

Minoritised ethnic refers to a group of people of a particular race or nationality living in a country or area where most people are from a different race or nationality.

If this language is used, we recommend that you phrase it as minoritised ethnic rather than ethnic minority. This is because by not putting 'ethnic' first, 'minoritised ethnic' better recognises the fact that everyone has an ethnicity including white British people.

Where possible we'd like to move away from using ethnic minority, but there might be times where it's appropriate to use, for example if your audience prefers this term.

### **Mixed heritage**

This term refers to people whose ancestors are not from a single ethnicity or race. A person with a white British father and a white French mother, can be said to have a mixed culture, or to be mixed heritage, but they are not mixed race as both parents come from the same racial group.

### **Mixed race**

Being mixed race is when your parents have different racial backgrounds, usually but not exclusively, black, Asian or white. Academics often refer to someone as mixed race when they are a descendant of 2 or more groups believed to constitute different racial groups.

There are many people who fit into the category of mixed race. Mixed race people do not always have a white parent - you can be mixed race and have black and Asian parentage, for example.

Mixed race people are the fastest growing group in the UK, so make sure to consider mixed race people in your work. And please don't assume that all mixed race people assimilate to a particular race either, like assuming a mixed race person of black and white parentage would define themselves as black or be comfortable being bracketed as this.

Consider mixed race people in their own right. If someone is both mixed race and mixed heritage, we'd suggest using mixed race, depending on the person's preference. In addition, allowing selection of a mixed-race category and allowing them the autonomy to specify how they identify within that.

### **Multiracial**

Multiracial describes more than one racial group. The term is commonly used to describe groups of people, for example a multiracial community, a multiracial school. Multi-ethnic, similarly, is often used for this purpose.



Even though it's sometimes used to describe individual people who have parentage from more than one racial group, it's more commonly understood to describe groups of people. The term can be misinterpreted as meaning 'multicultural' or 'diverse'.

We prefer to use the term mixed race as this is more commonly used by people as well as in the government census. Please remember that people will have their own way to identify, and some people might prefer the term multiracial.

### **Nationality**

Nationality refers to the nation-state to which a person, through birth or change of citizenship, belongs to as a citizen.

### **Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME), Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) and Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER)**

The term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and its various acronyms are problematic because they put different groups into a single category. It groups lots of different identities and challenges experienced into one.

#### [Research by Bond explains why the term BAME is problematic:](#)

- "It is disempowering in the way that it centres the term 'minority', and on the basis that it separates Black and Asian people from a myriad of other identities, homogenising the experiences of disparate groups of people."

Some organisations have used the term BAMER where they include refugees in this definition. At Mind we do not do this as this homogenises different races and ethnicities even more than the term BAME.

We want to move away from using the term 'BAME', 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' for the reasons above. That said, there are still some situations where we think it would be okay to use the term.

Examples of when you might use this term:

- When people have said they identify with the term and use it to describe themselves
- If another organisation you're working with uses the term as their supporters/clients use this term. You should raise that this isn't a term that Mind endorses though.
- It's still used in many research studies and by government bodies, so you might have to use the term if this is the information you're looking at. But please do state the caveat below if you do need to use it.

If you're going to use the term 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' **we would recommend adding an asterisk or footnote**, if possible, which says:

- "We understand that the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic homogenises groups of people. But we have chosen to use this term, as those we have spoken to/are working with identified with this term."

Make sure to spell out the whole acronym and to spell out the letters when speaking it rather than saying 'BAME'. This avoids the term being even more vague and homogenising.

### People of Colour

This term has been more predominately used in the US but has been adopted by the UK in more recent times. It's preferred by some people as it doesn't associate people of colour as the minority and white as the majority, whereas the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic does.

Other people still find this term problematic as it treats all racialised communities as one homogenous group. Also the fact that it reinforces white normativity - it suggests that white people have an absence of colour and exist as the neutral whereas non-white people have an addition of colour that deviates away from the white norm.

There is no one right term to use and we suggest you always lead with specifying who exactly you are talking about and when in doubt lead with what the people or group you're referring to wants to be called.

It's important to be open when someone corrects you or tells you that they prefer different language and be open to the fact that we won't always get it right. The best thing to do is acknowledge it, apologise, and make the change.

We encourage people to choose what term is appropriate given the situation. Also, given that some people don't like racialised communities either as a term.

### People from racial minorities

A group of a certain race that are in the minority compared to a larger group, the rest of the population. Some people identify with this term and might describe themselves as 'from a minority background' or 'from a racial minority'.

### Race

Race is a label whose origin comes from the creation of a racial hierarchy that was designed to justify violence and the oppression of groups of people based on their racial categorisation.

For example, the idea of a racial hierarchy, with white people at the top, was used to justify colonialism and slavery. Racial categories were also wrongly used to explain perceived differences in biology, physiology, and even evolution, backed by scientific racism.

As a result, race in its current understanding is still used to categorise people. Because race has been constructed, racial categorisation is something that is put onto people, hence why we use the term racialised. Being racialised is something that is dependent on how society views you and what racial category society places you in.

This matters because society is designed to place more value and positive attributes on someone who fits the racial category of white than someone who doesn't. And this has a big impact on how people are able to experience the world around them.

Some groups' racialisation has changed over time, where at one time they were racialised as non-white, but now they are racialised as white. This further illustrates how race is a social construct that has been created to be used to serve a specific purpose.

For some race describes an important part of our identity. We may connect and have a sense of solidarity with people who share our experiences of race and racism.

To learn more about race, its history, and its modern day implications [this article is a helpful summary](#).

### **Racial trauma**

The impact racism can have on your mind and body is sometimes described as racial trauma. There's no universal definition of racial trauma. Some professionals use it to mean all the effects that encountering racism can have on how we think, feel and behave.

Others, like those using the race-based traumatic stress injury model, use it to describe a specific group of symptoms. [Find out more via our racism and mental health information](#).

### **People from racialised groups/communities**

Organisations like the Centre for Mental Health use the term racialised group or people from racialised communities because it describes the impact of the environment around people. This is instead of just being about what's intrinsic to the people themselves.

Racialised communities also allows those who are phenotypically white but are racialised, such as traveller communities, to be encompassed in these terms. Also, it recognises that race is a social construct and therefore whiteness is and has been redefined resulting in certain groups moving in and out of its categorisation.

This term acknowledges that racialisation is an active process done unto non-white people, not something that is inherent in having a non-white identity.

But this still does include a wide range of people and groups within that, so the same caution has to be applied as with the term Black Asian and Minority Ethnic. We need to ask ourselves whether this term is reflective of the people we're talking about, and whether we could be more specific.

If your audience asks you why you've used the term racialised communities or aren't sure what it means, you can use the following FAQ:

- "We're using the term 'racialised communities' because it acknowledges that people are categorised by race because of white-led systems in society. Because of these systems, they receive different treatment.

We understand any umbrella term can be problematic. People don't all have the same experience of race or racism. You might face challenges that other racialised people don't face, or even understand. The language we use matters and must grow with us. [Share your feedback on our use of language by emailing raceequity@mind.org.uk.](mailto:raceequity@mind.org.uk)"

We recommend you use this term if it's relevant to the groups or communities you are speaking to or about. This term is used in the [Race Equity in Mind Initiative](#) because it's the most appropriate terminology to talk about racial inequity.

### **Roma people**

Roma people originated in the Punjab region of northern India as a nomadic people and entered Europe between the eighth and tenth centuries C.E.

They were called "Gypsies" because Europeans mistakenly believed they came from Egypt. Please note - gypsy is now considered by many as an offensive term.

### **Travellers**

The travelling community is an Irish minority ethnic group. Travellers have traditionally lived nomadically, moving from place to place.

### **White privilege**

A privilege is any perk or advantage which is granted to 1 person or group of people but denied to others. So 'white privilege' refers to the day-to-day advantages that come from being white (or assumed by others to be white) and thus not facing racism.

As we live in a racial hierarchy, those who are visibly white experience racial privilege (whether that is financially, socially, in housing, career etc.) regardless of the other ways they struggle and/or experience discrimination.

Some people feel that this term is not clear enough, because it only links privilege to skin colour. But this kind of privilege can also apply to other racialised traits – like names and accents.

Those who are visibly white do not always get categorised as 'white' in certain spaces. For example, in a white-British environment, Roma people may feel marginalised. However, this does not detract from the fact that they have proximity to whiteness and the power that brings.

White people may experience prejudice, discrimination, stigma and disadvantage for many other reasons. But not facing an extra layer of disadvantage on the basis of race is still a privilege.

## Preferred list of terms

This is our list of preferred terms for situations where you have no choice but to use something that talks about multiple communities.

- **People of colour**
- **People of colour or people from minoritised communities** (if we are also talking about minority white groups)
- **People of colour and other marginalised groups** (if we are also talking about minority white groups)
- **Communities experiencing racial inequality**
- **People from racialised communities.** Particularly when speaking to race inequity because this refers to being categorised by race because of white-led systems, and how this categorisation is used to label and oppress people.
- **Racially minoritised people/communities.** We recommend 'racially minoritised' or 'minoritised ethnic' rather than minority ethnic as it recognises that people have been minoritised through the same social processes of power and domination that racialise people, rather than just distinct statistical minorities. It also better reflects the fact that groups that are minorities in the UK are majorities in the global population.
- **Black and brown people**



## Refugees and asylum seekers

This section has been included in this document as refugees and asylum seekers are marginalised in society in a similar way to those with protected characteristics. In the UK, 2 terms are used to describe those who come here seeking refuge – asylum seeker and refugee.

### Asylum seeker

An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for asylum with the UK authorities under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

### Immigrant

This is when a person comes to live permanently in a foreign country. They don't have to have been forced from or pushed out of their own country. It can be a choice.

### Migrant

A person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions.

### Political migrant

This can be when someone moves to get away from a certain political regime.

### Refugee

A refugee is someone the authorities think is at risk of persecution and whose asylum claim has been accepted.

The category asylum-seeker will include people who might eventually be recognised as refugees, some whose claim will be refused, and others who will be given some other form of residence permit, like humanitarian leave to remain.

### Vulnerable migrants

We use this as an umbrella term to describe people who've been adversely affected by circumstances leading to or resulting from migration. Their vulnerability refers to their circumstances rather than an attribute of the people themselves.

The concept of vulnerable migrants includes:

- Asylum seekers
- Refugees or refused asylum seekers
- Trafficked persons

- Survivors of torture
- Separated children
- Roma, gypsies and travellers
- Immigration detainees
- Undocumented migrants
- Low-skilled migrant workers from any nation if they're marginalised due to multiple disadvantages



## Poverty and social deprivation

People will be comfortable with different terms and categorise themselves in the way they choose. Our role isn't to debate how someone might view their social position. Despite someone's financial status, some people don't think of themselves as experiencing poverty.

The term can mean different things to different people. Sometimes it may be best to explain the issue at hand, rather than using the term 'poverty'. For example, you might ask the question "how does money impact your mental health?".

We do use 'poverty' when talking about what we are doing as an organisation and when we talk about poverty as a wider societal issue. We say 'people facing poverty' rather than 'people in poverty' to frame poverty as an experience someone is having, and to reduce implication of blame.

We try not to use the term 'poverty' when talking directly to or about someone who might be experiencing poverty themselves.

Please refer to the [Poverty Audience Toolkit](#) if you are unsure about language or anything else related to your work around poverty.

When talking about issues around poverty, it's also a good idea to look at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's ['Talking about poverty' framing toolkit](#). The toolkit gives you guidance on how to talk about poverty that will help change the debate around it.

It's based on research from the FrameWorks Institute about people's attitudes towards poverty and what works best to build support and convince people of the need for change. We're up against some common beliefs among the British public including:

- **Post-poverty** - people don't believe poverty exists today, in this country
- **Self-makingness** - people blame individuals for being in poverty and believe they should try harder and work more. They don't see the wider context
- **The game is rigged** - people think there will always be poverty and nothing will ever change

**Poverty**

Is the experience of not having enough material resources to meet current needs.

**Deep poverty**

Is experiencing a more extreme level of poverty – being more than 50% below the poverty line.

**Persistent poverty**

Is experiencing poverty for 2 or more out of the last 3 years.

**Inter-generational poverty**

Is the relentless cycle in which poverty is passed down from one generation to the next.

**The poverty line**

Is a level of resources set in models that aim to measure poverty, below which people are determined to be experiencing poverty. Different models set this line in different ways and it isn't always as simple as an income level.

**Social exclusion**

In this context is the failure of society to provide people facing poverty with rights and benefits normally available to its members, such as work opportunities, adequate housing, health care, education and training.

All of these make the experience of poverty worse and lower the likelihood of someone moving out of poverty. Mind's longer-term poverty strategy includes reducing the amount of social exclusion people experiencing poverty face.

But for now, we're more focused on the financial side of poverty and the links to mental health.

**Social class**

An individual's or group's position within the social hierarchy, typically based on power, prestige, and wealth.

**Social housing**

This is housing provided for people on low incomes or with particular needs by government agencies or non-profit organisations.

**Social deprivation**

The limited access to society's resources due to poverty, discrimination, or other disadvantage.

Below, we've also given some definitions that are sociological terms. We've included them to help your understanding of social deprivation and poverty. But they're unlikely to be commonly understood by the public, so be mindful about using these terms when you're co-creating with people or producing external communications.

### **Cultural Capital**

This phrase describes how power in society is transferred and social classes maintained. An example of this is how families pass on their cultural capital to their children by introducing them to dance and music, taking them to theatres, galleries and historic sites for example.

Bourdieu identified 3 sources of cultural capital:

- Objective - cultural goods, books, works of art
- Embodied - language, mannerisms, preferences
- Institutionalised - qualifications, education credentials

### **Meritocracy**

A system that fosters and rewards personal effort, ability, and talent through competition to determine social standing.

Meritocracy is controversial as many believe it frames "success" and "failure" in life as fair and just, as stemming from differences in individual efforts, rather than entrenched inequities within society.

### **Social mobility**

The movement of people in a population, as from place to place, from job to job, or from one social class or level to another.

### **Socioeconomic privilege**

This doesn't necessarily mean being rich, it means having enough resources to be able to take on the opportunities that life has given you, such as unpaid internships or an after-school tutoring job — little privileges that can give you a head start.

### **Socioeconomic status**

The position or standing of a person or group in a society as determined by a combination of social and economic factors that affect access to education and other resources crucial to an individual's upward mobility.



## Resources

Here's a list of extra resources that can give you more context on the themes raised in this document. You can also [visit the Equity Innovation intranet page](#) for more resources.

### Language of marginalisation

- [Over representation: Sociology Index](#)
- [Open Education Sociology Dictionary](#)
- [I am not 'hard to reach'](#)

### Exploring allyship and intersectionality

- [What is an ally?](#)
- [What is intersectionality and why is it important?](#)
- [What is intersectionality?](#)

### Age

- [Age UK](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Age UK: The Equality Act](#)

### Disability

- [Inclusive language: words to use and avoid when writing about disability](#)
- [Privilege Uncensored: What does it mean to be able-bodied? \(Please note- we wouldn't use the phrase able-bodied this is just the name of this article\)](#)
- [Definition of Disability under the Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Social Model of Disability](#)
- [What is Autism? National Autistic Society](#)
- [Best practices for avoiding ableist terminology](#)

- [Ableism 101: What it is, what it looks like and what we can do to fix it](#)
- [British Deaf Association](#)
- [RNID](#)
- [National Deaf Children's Society](#)

## **Faith**

- [Introduction to Buddhism](#)
- [Introduction to Christianity](#)
- [Introduction to Hinduism](#)
- [Introduction to Islam](#)
- [Introduction to Jainism](#)
- [Introduction to Judaism](#)
- [Introduction to Rastafari](#)
- [Introduction to Sikhism](#)

## **Gender**

- [List of LGBTQ+ terms](#)
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual glossary of Terms](#)
- [The Gender Unicorn](#)
- [The Gender Bread Person](#)
- [Gender Inclusive Language](#)
- [LGBT Resource Centre Pronouns](#)
- [LGBT Foundation](#)
- [Mind LGBTIQ+ Information Product](#)

## **Race & Ethnicity**

- [A guide to race and ethnicity terminology and language, The Law Society](#)

- [NHS Race and Health Observatory](#)
- [What is White Privilege? BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Please, don't call me BAME or BME!](#)
- [Use of language: race and ethnicity](#)
- [Mixed Heritage-Identity, Policy and Practice](#)
- [The Difference between 'not racist' and anti-racist](#)
- [6 Ways to be Antiracist, because 'not being racist' isn't enough](#)
- [Race Reporting Guide](#)
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)
- [What is White Privilege Really?](#)
- [Racial Identity Development](#)
- [Facilitating anti-racist and other difficult dialogues](#)
- [Responsive Dialogue Guiding Principles](#)
- [Third Sector Podcast](#)
- [Why White Charity Leaders Need to Talk About Race](#)
- [The Limitations of Privilege Politics](#)

### **Refugees and Asylum seekers**

- [Asylum Seekers, Migrants or Refugees. Which word is correct?](#)
- [The battle over the words used to describe migrants](#)
- [Migrant or Refugee? Why it matters which word you choose?](#)
- [UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'Migrant'- which is right?](#)

### **Sexual orientation**

- [What does it mean to be Asexual?](#)
- [What is Intersex?](#)

- [What is Pansexuality?](#)
- [Stonewall Glossary of Terms](#)
- [What is an Ally?](#)
- [Examples of Heterosexual Privilege](#)
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual glossary of Terms](#)

### **Social deprivation and poverty**

- [Framing toolkit- Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [Talking about poverty in the UK- what works? Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [What is Cultural Capital?](#)
- [Poverty and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Social Exclusion, Social Deprivation and Health](#)
- [What is poverty? Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [Citizens Advice- look here for information on housing, benefits etc](#)



