JULY 2022 | CIPE’s Inclusive Communication document serves as a desk review consolidating current standards and practices as defined by multilateral international and humanitarian organizations for more inclusive English-language communication as of the date of its publication. CIPE published the desk review for use by staff and partners as part of its commitment to the value of inclusion. This document does not constitute CIPE policy on the topics presented, and any questions regarding those policies should be directed to CIPE’s Human Resources department at hr@cipe.org.
# Table of Contents

Acronyms ................................................................................................................................. 2
Purpose of This Document .......................................................................................................... 3
Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 4
Executive Summary ...................................................................................................................... 5
Gender-Sensitive Language and Its Meaning for the Advancement of Gender Equality ................. 6
Gender Sensitivities in the English Language ........................................................................... 8
  The use of pronouns .................................................................................................................. 8
  The use of gendered nouns ........................................................................................................ 12
  The use of feminine and masculine or gender-neutral forms for functions and professions .... 14
  Titles/ proper nouns ................................................................................................................ 15
  Stereotypical expressions ........................................................................................................ 16
  The use of adjectives to describe groups ............................................................................... 17
Gender in Visuals and Images ................................................................................................... 19
Gender Sensitivity in Other Languages ................................................................................... 22
Inclusive Language: Speaking With and About LGBTQ+ Community .................................... 24
Inclusive Language: Speaking With and About Persons With Disabilities ............................... 28
Resources ...................................................................................................................................... 32
Acronyms

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990
ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CIPE – Center for International Private Enterprise
COR – the Classification of Occupations in Romania
CWEE – Center for Women’s Economic Empowerment
EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality
EU – European Union
ILGA – the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, and others
NB – Nota Bene (used in written text to draw attention to what follows)
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA – Personal Assistant
SUPERA – Supporting the Promotion of Equality in Research and Academia
UN – the United Nations
UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Purpose of This Document

“Inclusive Communication: Gender-Sensitive, Inclusive and Accessible Language” consolidates current standards and practices as defined by multilateral international and humanitarian organizations for more inclusive English-language communication. CIPE staff have provided examples to communicate and integrate gender equality in written and verbal scenarios. The document incorporates international standards and guidance developed in resources and published by experts, international organizations, and development partners with expertise in promoting gender-sensitive communication, like the European Institute for Gender Equality, the United Nations, and the European Parliament, among others. This document also includes more inclusive practices from gender experts, gender activists, and philologists.

Languages are fluid and ever-changing, and as the international development field works to promote gender equality and inclusivity for all people, how to communicate and the words the community uses also change. As part of CIPE’s commitment to the value of inclusion, this document can serve CIPE staff and partners as an example of how to address and communicate about gender, inclusivity, and accessibility following international guidelines. This document does not constitute CIPE policy on the topics presented, and any questions regarding those policies should be directed to CIPE’s Human Resources department at hr@cipe.org.

**CIPE’s Value of Inclusion:** CIPE recognizes the diversity within the private sector; we actively work to engage and assist a wide array of partners and stakeholders including populations who have previously operated on the margins of the economy, to support their full participation in the business community. To that end, we respect and invite participation from people representing all economic strata, political affiliations, genders and ethnic and religious backgrounds.
Introduction

Women make up at least 50 percent of the world’s populations, including marginalized groups such as youth, persons with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+. CIPE is committed to promoting gender equality and accessibility in its programs around the world, and advances strategies in emerging markets to build more inclusive, thriving economies and democracies that deliver for all citizens. CIPE’s Center for Women’s Economic Empowerment (CWEE) promotes women’s leadership through private sector engagement, advocacy, and partnerships with governments and civil society.

Communication shapes perceptions about the roles played by women, men, and non-binary1 people in society and in the labor market. Using gender-inclusive and accessible language demonstrates respect toward people and promotes equality in communications. Research2 reveals that children perceive gender roles and gender socialization starting at an early age, and language plays an instrumental role in shaping how we think about gender differences and inclusivity. Specific linguistic rules or applications can further exacerbate gender differences and can often leave women and other minority groups invisible, for example by referring to an unknown person automatically as “he.” Language adapts as concepts for gender inclusivity evolve. This document serves as a desk review of international standards and guidelines for inclusive communication and consolidates the information in the form of more inclusive practice among the stakeholder community.

---

1 People whose gender is not male or female use many different terms to describe themselves, with non-binary being one of the most common. https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive
2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3Aweo74kY
Executive Summary

Language is living, it changes and adapts to new realities. While languages have frequently excluded people representing various minority groups, like women, LGBTQ+ and persons with disabilities, or used discriminatory terms and phrases, language evolves. Now, as the international development community looks to promote inclusiveness and bring access to opportunities to marginalized groups, the language used in these settings is also changing to reflect new realities and respect for those populations.

This desk research notes how written and spoken discourse is assessed from a gender-equality perspective, as well as to be inclusive towards persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

It includes six main sections:

1. **Gender-sensitive language and its meaning for the advancement of gender equality** presents the main definitions used to describe gender mainstreaming in language.

2. **Gender sensitiveness in the English language** covers practices and recommendations for using gender-sensitive language. It provides examples on how nouns and pronouns, titles and proper nouns and expressions are adjusted in the English language in a way to make women, men, and non-binary people visible when there is a need to emphasize gender, and how to avoid gendered language to be more inclusive.

3. **Gender in visuals and images** notes ways to avoid gender discrimination through images and other visuals.

4. **Gender sensitivity in other languages** introduces considerations in languages other than English to promote gender sensitivity.

5. **Inclusive language: speaking with and about the LGBTQ+ community** presents main definitions and examples on how to avoid discriminatory language in relation to the LGBTQ+ community.

6. **Inclusive language: speaking with and about persons with disabilities** discusses integrating inclusive language when referring to disability and how to avoid stereotypical and biased language related to persons with disabilities.
Gender-Sensitive Language and Its Meaning for the Advancement of Gender Equality

Language plays an essential role in shaping how people perceive the world and helps people build cultural and social understanding in society. The way we communicate contributes to the attitudes and norms we have in society. Words can enforce and perpetuate stereotypes and biases or help break them down.

Using gender-sensitive language is one way to promote gender equality, break down gender stereotypes and barriers and change social and cultural attitudes.

**Gender-sensitive language** represents the non-sexist and inclusive method of communication and refers to women, men, and non-binary people. It means “speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes”. It is also known as “gender-neutral”, “gender-inclusive”, “gender responsive” or “non-sexist language”.

Experts differentiate between various terms used to denominate gender-discriminatory language. For example, the EIGE explains the distinction between sexist language and gender-biased language as the following:

“Essentially, sexist language is the same as gender-discriminatory language. However, there is a subtle difference in how people use the terms: sexist language is commonly seen as language that the user intends to be derogatory; gender-discriminatory language, on the other hand, also includes language people use without any sexist intention.”

An example of sexist language: “She’s just the secretary, she can go get the coffee while we stay here and discuss business.”

**Gender-biased language** either implicitly or explicitly favors one gender over another and is a form of gender-discriminatory language.

---

An example of gender-biased language: “Every day, each citizen must ask himself how he can fulfil his civic duties.”

In order to treat all genders equally, efforts have been employed since the 1980s to propose a gender-neutral/gender-fair/non-sexist use of language, so that no gender is privileged, and prejudices against any one gender are not perpetuated. Despite these efforts, even some international conventions contain elements of gender-biased language, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which uses the term “brotherhood” in Article One when referring to all genders.

Having in mind the impact of language on the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, several international documents, conventions, and recommendations have incorporated recommendations to avoid sexist language and instead use a gender-sensitive discourse. In this regard, several national and international organizations have developed guidelines and toolkits for gender-sensitive and inclusive language, for example, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the European Commission. At the international level, many countries have also undertaken efforts to institutionalize gender-sensitive language by adopting relevant policies.

---

4 Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication, EIGE, 2019, p. 9


Gender Sensitivities in the English Language

English speakers and writers have traditionally been taught to use masculine nouns and pronouns in situations in which the gender of their subject(s) is unclear or variable, or when a group to which they are referring contains members of both sexes. This practice exists in other languages as well, depending on their grammatical typology. However, this practice is not considered gender-inclusive because communication excludes women as subjects.

The following presents examples on how to make communication more gender-sensitive.

THE USE OF PRONOUNS

In English, as in many other languages, the traditional grammatical convention stipulates the use of the masculine gender as “inclusive” or a “generic” one. This practice can promote gender bias, which may be avoided by following several recommendations:

1. If it is relevant for the communication to make gender visible, use both feminine and masculine reference words. One can choose to use “he or she”, or “she or he” when it is relevant to refer to both genders. As an alternative, the writer can use slashes to refer to both feminine and masculine forms of words: “she/he”, “his/hers”, “him/her”. As a shorter version, the formula “s/he” can be used as well.

   EXAMPLES
   
   Each candidate shall meet regularly with his or her constituency.
   
   A child may want to become a physician when she or he (s/he) grows up.

2. Alternate genders and pronouns. This option will only work in some situations - usually those that refer to hypothetical situations in which the referent is equally likely to be a male or a female.

---


8 Idem
3. **Use two different words.** In cases in which highlighting gender would make the sentence more inclusive, two separate words can be used. This strategy should be used only when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Children</em> should attend the first cooking class with their parents.</td>
<td><em>Boys and girls</em> should attend the first cooking class with their parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All of the soldiers</em> responded negatively to question 5 in the survey on gender inclusivity.</td>
<td><em>All of the soldiers, both men and women,</em> responded negatively to question 5 in the survey on gender inclusivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Omit the pronoun altogether.** Whenever possible, writers should look at ways to modify the sentence to make it gender-neutral. Another option is to substitute the pronoun “she/he” with the pronoun “one”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each project manager should send one of his assistants to the conference.</td>
<td>Each project manager should send one of the assistants to the conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good student does his best to succeed.</td>
<td>A good student does everything to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He</strong> can argue the correctitude of this practice.</td>
<td><strong>One</strong> can argue the correctitude of this practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

9 [https://www.unicef.org/esa/about](https://www.unicef.org/esa/about)

5. **Use plural forms for both pronouns and reference words.** Also, the plural forms of pronouns can substitute singular nouns. Because the correctitude of this practice is debated by many grammar experts, it is recommended to use it in speech rather than in writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each employee should fill in his leave plan.</td>
<td>All employees should have their leave plans completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each employee should fill in his leave plan.</td>
<td>Each employee should fill in their leave plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Use the passive voice.** When choosing this option, please have in mind to use it with moderation throughout the document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each employee should fill in his leave plan.</td>
<td>Leave plans should be filled in by employees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB.** As a general rule, it is recommended to use the active voice when writing/speaking about women to show their empowerment.

7. **Use the pronouns in the second person.** This option is less recommended for official texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>He</strong> shall read the instructions with caution.</td>
<td><strong>You</strong> shall read the instructions with caution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are not sure about someone's pronoun, the best way to find out is to ask them. Signing your name with your pronouns or introducing yourself out loud to others with your pronouns clarifies which pronouns you prefer to use and sends a signal of inclusivity and acceptance for others who may wish to be called by a preferred pronoun.

8. **Avoiding female/male binary through pronouns.** People whose gender is not male or female use many different terms to describe themselves, with **non-binary** being one of the most common.
Other terms include *genderqueer, agender, bigender,* and more. None of these terms mean the same thing – but all speak to an experience of gender that is not simply male or female.\(^\text{11}\)

Some non-binary/genderqueer people use gender-neutral pronouns (omitting the pronoun at all or using the plural form). Usage of singular ‘they’, ‘their’ and ‘them’ is the most common. Non-standard pronouns – commonly referred to as neopronouns\(^\text{12}\) – such as xe, ze, sie, co, and ey are sometimes used as well. Some others use conventional gender-specific pronouns ‘he’ or ‘she’, alternately use ‘he’ and ‘she’, or use only their name and do not use pronouns at all.

The following chart provides examples of some nonbinary gender pronouns in a variety of forms:\(^\text{13}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRONOUNS OF REFERENCE</th>
<th>NOMINATIVE (SUBJECT)</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE (OBJECT)</th>
<th>POSSESSIVE DETERMINER</th>
<th>POSSESSIVE PRONOUN</th>
<th>REFLEXIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>they / them / theirs</strong></td>
<td>They wrote a carefully-researched article.</td>
<td>I cited them.</td>
<td><em>Their</em> carefully-researched article won an award.</td>
<td><em>Theirs</em></td>
<td>They cited themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ey / em / eirs</strong></td>
<td>Ey wrote a carefully-researched article. (“ay”)</td>
<td>I cited em.</td>
<td><em>Eir</em> carefully-researched article won an award. (&quot;air&quot;)</td>
<td><em>Eirs</em> (“airs”)</td>
<td>Ey cited emself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ze / hir / hirs</strong></td>
<td>Ze wrote a carefully-researched article. (“zee”)</td>
<td>I cited hir. (“heer”)</td>
<td><em>Hir</em> carefully-researched article won an award.</td>
<td><em>Hirs</em> (“heers”)</td>
<td>Ze cited hirself. (“heerself”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ze / zir / zirs</strong></td>
<td>Ze wrote a carefully-researched article. (“zee”)</td>
<td>I cited zir. (“zeer”)</td>
<td><em>Zir</em> carefully-researched article won an award.</td>
<td><em>Zirs</em> (“zeers”)</td>
<td>Ze cited zirself. (“zeerself”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^{11}\) [https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive](https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive)


\(^{13}\) [https://writing.umn.edu/sws/quickhelp/grammar/nonbinary.html](https://writing.umn.edu/sws/quickhelp/grammar/nonbinary.html)
THE USE OF GENDERED NOUNS

"Man" and words ending in or starting with "man" are the most commonly used gendered nouns. Historically, some male-specific generic words also referred to women. However, this practice can make women invisible and can be avoided by substituting gendered nouns with gender-inclusive generics or gender-neutral nouns. The same is applied to words that have “-man” as a prefix or suffix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDERED NOUN</th>
<th>GENDER-NEUTRAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife</td>
<td>Partner, spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
<td>Solidarity; human fellowship; human kinship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of wise men</td>
<td>Advisory panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common man</td>
<td>Average person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDERED NOUN</strong></td>
<td><strong>GENDER-NEUTRAL NOUN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early man</td>
<td>Early peoples-civilizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englishman</td>
<td>English person/ English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatherland</td>
<td>Homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding fathers</td>
<td>Founders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forefathers</td>
<td>Ancestors; forebears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternal twins</td>
<td>Non-identical twins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>First-year student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman’s agreement</td>
<td>Honorable agreement; unwritten agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guys (in oral communication, refers to men and women)</td>
<td>All; ladies (if there are only women among the audience); colleagues etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord; landlady</td>
<td>Owner; proprietor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Person, individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhood</td>
<td>Adulthood (when referring to people in general and not to males)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankind</td>
<td>Humankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man-made</td>
<td>Handmade, artificial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man-made disaster</td>
<td>Human-induced disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower</td>
<td>Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>Native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The origin of man</td>
<td>The origin of humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To man (verb) a project</td>
<td>To staff a project; to hire personnel for the project; to run/operate a project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE USE OF FEMININE AND MASCULINE OR GENDER-NEUTRAL FORMS FOR FUNCTIONS AND PROFESSIONS

Like gendered nouns, the masculine version of functions and professions historically have been considered to be generic. This can contribute to women’s exclusion as well, including from the job market. Because of this historical context, languages created words reflecting men as holding most jobs and professions, while women belonged to only certain categories of professions. To reflect current reality and to encourage women to access non-traditional professions, it is recommended to avoid masculine or feminine generic occupational titles in favor of gender-neutral forms. The exception represents only those situations when we write or speak about women in non-traditional professions, when it is recommended to use “woman/women” or “female” before the profession (i.e., woman politician/ female politician) to emphasize women’s representation in those sectors.

If language is gendered (provides different forms for feminine and masculine professions), use both forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barman; barmaid</td>
<td>Bartender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Chair, chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning lady</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressman</td>
<td>Congress person, legislator, representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery boy</td>
<td>Courier; messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostess</td>
<td>Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Homemaker, consumer, customer, shopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailman</td>
<td>Mail carrier, letter carrier, postal worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Birthing specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>Ombudsperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policeman</td>
<td>Police officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TITLES/ PROPER NOUNS

The best way to avoid any confusion in your use of proper nouns is to use the same rules to discuss women and men. Courtesy titles used for men do not indicate their marital status, but do so for women. This is why it is recommended to use courtesy titles without making reference to marital status. In an official context, refer to both men and women by only their last names and/or their full titles. When referring to several people with the same last name, use their full name every time you refer to him/her. Use “Dr.” (in the sense both of “medical doctor” and “Ph.D.”) and “Professor” (abbreviation: “Prof.”) for both genders. A gender-neutral title does not indicate someone's gender identity. Frequently Mr. is used for the male binary gender and Mrs./Miss/Ms. are used for the female binary gender. Mx. is a gender-neutral title that is preferred by some people (pronounced “mix”, “max” or “em-ex”).

**NB.** In the case of non-binary, use the name a person asks you to use. This is one of the most critical aspects of being respectful of a non-binary person, as the name you may have been using may not reflect their gender identity.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spokesman</td>
<td>Spokesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steward, stewardess</td>
<td>Flight attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchman</td>
<td>Guard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss; Mrs.</td>
<td>Ms. (unless the woman herself prefers the courtesy title Mrs. or Miss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. John Smith</td>
<td>Jane and John Smith; Ms. Jane and Mr. John Smith; Mrs. and Mr. Smith (when the woman herself prefers the courtesy title Mrs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Smith and Jane</td>
<td>Mr. Smith and Ms. Smith; Jane and John Smith; Mr. John Smith and Ms. Jane Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

14 [https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive](https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive)
### COMMON PRACTICE | MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

| Mr./Ms. Smith (when you address someone who has a non-binary gender identity) | Mx. Smith |
| Jane | Jane Smith; Smith; Ms. Smith |
| Jane | President Smith; Doctor Smith |

**STEREOTYPICAL EXPRESSIONS.**

When writing and speaking about women and men in a certain way, try to invert the roles (i.e., if you write/speak about a woman try to imagine that you write/speak about a man in the same manner). If the statement looks unnatural after inverting, probably it is based on a gender stereotype. Do not use “girl” to refer to a grown woman, as it shows infantilization. Avoid using stereotypical roles and attributes and expressions that could have a negative connotation. The following may serve as examples of gender-biased expressions:  

- “She throws/runs/fights like a girl.”
- “In a manly way.”
- “Oh, that’s women’s work.”
- “Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful.”
- “Men just don’t understand.”
- “Feminine intuition.”
- “Weaker sex.”
- “Men don’t cry.”

---


COMMON PRACTICE | MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE
---|---
**My girls** in the office will cope with this task. | **My colleagues** will cope with this task.
Husband **helps** his wife with household duties. | Husband and wife **share** the household duties.
Ministers and **their wives** are invited for the dinner. | Ministers and **their partners** are invited for the dinner.
Fathers **babysit** their children. | Fathers **care for** their children.
Hello, **guys**! (if the greeting is addressed to a mixt group or a group composed of only women). | Hello **everyone**!
I need to speak with the secretary. Is **she** in the office? | Is the secretary in the office?
Jane is a **career woman**. | Jane is **focused on her career**.
All the **ladies** on the committee supported the proposed amendment. | All the **women** on the committee supported the proposed amendment.

In addition, try to include sex-disaggregated data whenever feasible and possible. Quote both men and women as experts and sources of information or to provide opinions. Where relevant, consider stories that feature women and men of diverse backgrounds. Ensure a balance between stories featuring female-driven initiatives and partnerships and those featuring male-driven initiatives and partnerships.

THE USE OF ADJECTIVES\(^7\) TO DESCRIBE GROUPS

Male and female refer to biological aspects of being human, while men and women refer to gender identity. When describing groups of people, it is preferred to use the gender term.

---

\(^7\) [https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/terms/women.html](https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/terms/women.html)
The training will target **males and females**.

The training will target **men and women**. Or, the training will target all people.
Gender in Visuals and Images

“Visuals and images” are used to refer to the creation and use of logos, infographics, banners, photographs, images, icons, videos, etc. for communication activities. They could be used in articles, posts on social media, brochures, guidelines, and other types of knowledge products, video spots, etc. Gender stereotypes could be perpetuated through such types of products, or could be used in a way to promote gender inclusivity and/or reinforce visibility of the less represented categories. For visuals and images, one should consider the cultural, religious, and customary aspects specific to countries/regions where those products will be published and used. Images should always be respectful of local cultural norms and sensitivities to promote gender equality while avoiding discrimination, stereotypes, and bias. Some countries, due to their cultural and traditional backgrounds, may opt for different depictions of women, men, and non-binary people versus other countries.

When designing a visual and image product, the following should be considered:

• Avoid stereotypical depictions of the person based on gender, like engendered division of labor or engendered access to decision-making. Instead, try to reflect women in images related to male-dominated professions or economic sectors.

• Try to include a diversity of gender (race, ethnicity, age, etc.) in the images you use on web pages, posters, etc., and consider how you might overcome stereotyping (ex: show a female scientist/doctor or/and a male pre-school teacher or nurse).

• Make sure to maintain at all times a representation of equal power relations among all actors voicing their opinions and being visually represented. If you portray a woman and a man in a sector, try to show them as equals and avoid reflecting the man as a lead and the woman as the subordinate.

• Use both men and women as voice-overs for video and audio spots.

• Positioning of featured actors plays an essential role in pointing out power dynamics. Thus, do not only represent women sitting and men standing or men in front and women behind in the same image. Do not only portray women as smiling and docile and men as serious and self-confident.

• Avoid the selection and publication of photographic material which encourages mainstream stereotypes concerning color coding, such as ‘pink is a color specific for women and blue is for men’, also avoid using pastel-colored palettes associated with the feminine. When designing infographics, it is highly advisable to expand the color spectrum and avoid stereotypical colors.
• Try to have a balanced representation of genders in photos. Although sometimes it is difficult to have an equal number of people of all genders, it is important that the portrayal of the less represented gender be demonstrated as balanced.

• Try not to use icons representing women with a skirt and long hair, unless culturally appropriate to do so. Try to choose a more neutral icon if possible.

• Use images that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to be respectful without perpetuating gender stereotypes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depict women only in private sphere and men only in public ones.</td>
<td>Depict people in both private and public spheres regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, etc. in a balanced way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portray women as teachers, nurses, housewives, etc., and men as scientists, politicians, businesspeople, etc.</td>
<td>Portray people including in non-traditional professions for their gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show women in administrative positions and men in leadership ones.</td>
<td>Alternate the depiction of people in administrative and leadership positions based on their gender (i.e., present a woman leader, a non-binary leader, a man secretary, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present women in submissive positions (sitting, smiling, etc.) versus other people.</td>
<td>Present all people in assertive positions or alternate their depiction based on gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image of doctors and nurses]</td>
<td>![Image of medical professionals in assertive positions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose blue for men and pink for women.</td>
<td>Try a variety of colors to depict genders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image of various objects]</td>
<td>![Image of colorful faces]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender Sensitivity in Other Languages

CIPE acts in a multilingual working environment and this feature should be considered in written and verbal communication. The principles of gender-neutrality and gender sensitivity should be applied based on the grammatical typology of each working language.

The “EU Gender-neutral language in the European Parliament” toolkit (2018) classifies the language families as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE FAMILY</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Natural gender languages** (such as Danish, English, and Swedish) | Personal nouns are mostly gender-neutral and there are personal pronouns specific for each gender. These languages can replace the use of gender-specific terms with gender-neutral terms. | chairman -> chair / chairperson  
spokesman -> spokesperson  
headmaster / headmistress -> director / principal  
“He” used as a generic reference -> He or she |
| **Grammatical gender languages** (such as German, Romance languages, and Slavic languages) | Every noun has a grammatical gender and the gender of personal pronouns usually matches the reference noun. Various approaches are recommended, such as the use of feminine correspondents of masculine terms (for instance for job titles). Replacing the generic masculine with double forms for specific referents has also gained acceptance in many languages. As a result of this increasingly widespread form, the use of generic masculine terms is no longer the only |
| | Profesora  
Administradora  
Geschäftsführerin  
Rettrice  
Psycholożka  
Tutti i professori e tutte le professoresse;  
Todos os investigadores e todas as investigadoras. |

---

19 Gender-neutral language in the European Parliament, 2018, p. 5-6  

20 Guidelines for gender-sensitive communication in research and academia, SUPERA, 2020, p. 50  
https://www.ciencia.gob.es/stfls/MICINN/Ministerio/FICHEROS/SUPERA_guidelines_gender_sensitive_communication.pdf
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE FAMILY</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accepted practice, even in legislative and official acts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderless languages (such as Estonian, Finnish, and Hungarian)</td>
<td>They have <strong>no grammatical gender and no pronominal gender.</strong></td>
<td>No need for a particular strategy to be gender sensitive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academia and public authorities from some countries which use grammatical gender languages have come up with recommendations and/or public policies to support the use of gender-sensitive communication. Particular care and sensitivity should be taken to understand what may be or may not be appropriate in a local language. As noted, languages are constantly evolving and grammatical structures have changed in an effort to be more inclusive through language.
Inclusive Language: Speaking With and About LGBTQ+ Community

People from the LGBTQ+ community often face extreme discrimination around the world, forcing many to hide their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in order to protect themselves and their families. Considering that language is mostly constructed on a binary system (male vs female), some people representing the LGBTQ+ community may feel themselves outside the system, being unable to speak about how they identify themselves. The use of inclusive language can reduce the feeling of exclusion among LGBTQ+ community members.

The abbreviation “LGBTQ+” can come in different forms; however, there is no one standard when referring to a group that covers sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The “L” refers to lesbian, “G” to gay, and “B” to bisexual. The abbreviation LGBT started in the 1990s, replacing LGB, with the addition of “T” for transgender. Later, some added to the LGBT abbreviation with the letter “Q”, which can refer to “questioning” or “queer”. Those who add intersex people may use the extended LGBTQI. Some organizations and activists add additional letters to the abbreviation, to include other categories of people, as well. While there is no one standard for the order of the letters or which letters should be included, some now use the term “LGBT+” to refer to the first four groups, plus all additional. The following provides some guidance on inclusive language use.

1. Language is often used in a binary manner, referring to male and female; however, the examples provided offer more inclusive gender-neutral pronouns and titles.

2. Instead of assuming someone’s identity, ask. Ask the person about their preferred pronouns. Use more inclusive language to not assume that a person is heterosexual, for example, refer to a “partner” rather than a “husband” or “wife”.

3. LGBTQ+ terminology is diverse and constantly evolving. Language used to describe different LGBTQ+ people and by different parts of the LGBTQ+ community changes over time and can differ across cultures and generations. There will also be differences in how people individually use or define particular terms. Older texts and contexts may contain outdated terminology, or even terms that would now be considered offensive.

---

4. *Lesbian* and *gay male* are preferred to the word *homosexual* when used as an adjective referring to specific persons or groups, and the terms *lesbians* and *gay men* are preferred to *homosexuals* used as nouns when referring to specific persons or groups. The word *homosexual* should be avoided because of negative historical stereotypes related to pathology and criminal behavior, it is ambiguous, and it is often assumed to refer exclusively to men and thus rendering lesbians invisible.²²

5. Speak about a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity only if it is relevant to the context.²³

Unless otherwise sourced, ILGA-Europe²⁴ provides the following definitions for related terms:

- **Bisexual**: when a person is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one gender.

- **Gay**: a man who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men. Gay is sometimes also used as a blanket term to cover lesbian women and bisexual people as well as gay men. However, this usage has been disputed by a large part of the LGBTQ+ community and gay is therefore only used here when referring to men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to men.

- **Gender expression**: refers to people's manifestation of their gender identity. Typically, people seek to make their gender expression or presentation match their gender identity/identities, irrespective of the sex that they were assigned at birth.

- **Gender identity**: refers to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.

- **Intersex**: a term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical ideals of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal, or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a

²² [https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language](https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language)

²³ A person’s gender identity or sexual orientation is covered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects employees from discrimination (and when hiring employees) based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation or gender identity should not be discussed in interviews or as the basis of a hiring decision. See [Protctions Against Employment Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (eeoc.gov)](https://www.eeoc.gov) for more Information.

single category.

- **Lesbian:** a woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

- **Non-binary:** Most people – including most transgender people – are either male or female. But some people do not fit into the categories of “man” or “woman,” or “male” or “female.” For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people do not identify with any gender. Some people’s gender changes over time. People whose gender is not male or female use many different terms to describe themselves, with non-binary being one of the most common. Other terms include genderqueer, agender, or bigender.

- **Pansexual:** someone who is attracted to people of all gender identities, or someone who is attracted to a person’s qualities regardless of their gender identity. (The prefix “pan” means “all,” rejecting the gender binary that some argue is implied by “bisexual.”)

- **Queer:** has become an academic term that is inclusive of people who are not heterosexual - including lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and trans people.

- **Sexual orientation:** refers to each person’s capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

- **Trans person/people/man/woman:** is an inclusive umbrella term referring to those people whose gender identity and/or a gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It includes but is not limited to: men and women with transsexual pasts, and people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, or with any other gender identity and/or expression which is not standard male or female and express their gender through their choice of clothes, presentation or body modifications, including undergoing medical procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-gay</td>
<td>Homophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological man; biological woman</td>
<td>Cisgender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born female/male</td>
<td>Assigned female/male at birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both genders/ opposite gender</td>
<td>All genders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and girls/ women and men</td>
<td>That people; participants, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers and sisters</td>
<td>Siblings; kindred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine/female pronouns; masculine/male pronouns</td>
<td>She/her pronouns; he/him pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He or she</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermaphrodite</td>
<td>Intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Lesbian; gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual relationship</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies and gentlemen</td>
<td>Esteemed guests; dear audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex change; sex reassignment</td>
<td>Gender affirmation; transition care; change of gender marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual preference</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transsexual</td>
<td>Trans; transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transvestite</td>
<td>Cross dresser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inclusive Language: Speaking With and About Persons With Disabilities

The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities\(^\text{27}\) does not specifically define the terms of disability or persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, in Article 1, the Convention specifies that “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. The Convention makes reference to four categories of impairments, resulting in many forms of disabilities, which affect the person’s participation in society. Disability could be broken down into a number of broad sub-categories, which include the following main types of disability:\(^\text{28}\)

1. Mobility and physical impairments
2. Spinal cord disability
3. Head injuries - brain disability
4. Vision disability
5. Hearing disability
6. Cognitive or learning disabilities
7. Psychological disorders
8. Invisible disabilities (which are not immediately apparent to others).\(^\text{29}\)

Using inclusive language is one of the steps toward inclusion, since it contributes to shaping perceptions about a certain group of people. Respectfully addressing a minority group contributes to building trust among people, increasing social integration, and reducing discrimination. The disability community is large and includes a multitude of types of disabilities. The following provides guidance on inclusive language to refer to this group.


\(^{28}\) [https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/](https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/)

\(^{29}\) This list of disability types is not exhaustive. The American Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability and offers protections. Any applicant to or employee of CIPE who would like an accommodation based on disability should reach out to CIPE Human Resources, hr@cipe.org.
1. Respect the person's preferences on terminology and language use by asking them. As Andrew Pulrang\(^\text{30}\) - a freelance writer with disability states, “the most essential guideline for disability language is to use whatever words each individual disabled person prefers. Any well-meaning person’s reasons for the choices they believe in are largely secondary compared to respecting what how [the] disabled person wants to be talked about and referred to”.

2. Learn about and use the two major linguistic preferences to address disability.\(^\text{31}\) People-first language puts the person first, as in “people with disability.” It is commonly used to reduce the dehumanization of disability. Another popular linguistic prescription is the identity-first language, as in “disabled people.” Many use this style to celebrate disability pride and identity or simply because they prefer this usage. The use of one or the other comes down to personal preference. One suggested middle-ground is to use these two styles interchangeably to acknowledge and respect the individual preferences of an exceptionally diverse group of people.

3. When writing/reporting/speaking about someone with a disability, refer to the disability only when it is relevant to the story or the context. Instead of saying “A blind musician had a concert last week”, just state, “A musician had a concert last week”.

4. When speaking about or with a person with a disability, bear in mind that they may have other identities as well (women, men, different age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.). Be respectful of all their identities and use appropriate language accordingly.

5. Avoid portraying persons with disabilities as superhumans. Avoid phrases like “despite their disability,...”. Such reflections of disability emphasize the idea that persons with disabilities are not able enough to enjoy a normal life and that their accomplishments have been made in spite of their condition. Speak about a successful person with disability like any other successful person.

6. When describing people without disabilities, continue to be respectful of all people.\(^\text{32}\) When describing people without disabilities, do not use terms like “normal, healthy, able-bodied.” Instead, use “non-disabled” or “people without visible disabilities.” Such terms are more accurate because some disabilities are not visible.


\(^{32}\) Idem
7. Do not use subjective descriptors such as "unfortunate", "pitiful", or "sad" when describing people with disabilities. Emphasize abilities. For example, instead of saying, "John is confined to his wheelchair," use a positive expression of ability such as, "John uses a wheelchair." Or, "Mary is partially sighted," rather than, "Mary is partially blind."

8. Do not refer to persons with disabilities as a different group of people, as “the other”. Instead of using phrases like “these people need special conditions”, try to use more neutral ones, like, “some people with disabilities need reasonable accommodations”.

9. Sometimes people with disabilities need special assistance to be able to undertake some actions. In this respect, they are supported by personal assistants. When speaking with a person with a disability, talk with that person directly and not with their assistant. When speaking with a person with a hearing disability, try to look at their face, as some can lipread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able-bodies, normal, healthy</td>
<td>Person without disability, non-disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormal, crippled, handicapped</td>
<td>Person/s with disability, people with disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind$^3^4$</td>
<td>Use &quot;blind&quot; for someone who has complete loss of sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use &quot;legally blind&quot; for someone who has almost complete loss of sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use &quot;limited vision,&quot; &quot;low vision,&quot; &quot;partially sighted,&quot; &quot;visually impaired&quot; for someone who is neither legally nor completely blind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain-damaged, retard, crazy (to speak about a person with disability)</td>
<td>Person with a brain injury, person with mental/intellectual/psychological/cognitive disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth defect</td>
<td>Congenital disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Personal assistant (PA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON PRACTICE</th>
<th>MORE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf&lt;sup&gt;35&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Use “deaf and hard of hearing community” when referring to the community of people with all kinds of hearing loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use capitalized “Deaf” when referring to Deaf culture and the community of Deaf people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use “partial hearing loss” or “partially deaf” for those who have some hearing loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid “deaf and dumb” and “deaf-mute” since people with speech and hearing disabilities can express themselves “in writing, through sign language, and in other ways.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The term “hearing impaired” is also not recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differently abled, special, gifted</td>
<td>Person/s with disability, people with disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled restroom/handicapped restroom</td>
<td>Accessible restroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarf, midget</td>
<td>A person of short stature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyper, hyperactive</td>
<td>Person with ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraplegic, paraplegic person</td>
<td>Person with paraplegy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow, slow learning, retarded</td>
<td>Person with learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffers from/victim of/stricken with&lt;sup&gt;36&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Use of neutral language like “they have/are living with muscular dystrophy” is preferred to “they suffer from muscular dystrophy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair</td>
<td>Wheelchair user, person who uses a wheelchair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>35</sup> Idem  
<sup>36</sup> Idem
Resources

(Re) Nombrar. Guía para una comunicación con perspectiva de género:
https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/guia_para_una_comunicacion_con_perspectiva_de_genero_mmgyd_v_presidencia_de_la_nacion.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2f_ictNFnT0JTfseyCByyo29GUiQyMqyddjk7VlPUBL927w6e68eamm_Z7Q

Disability Language Guide. Labib Rahman:

Echilibrul de gen in produsele mediatice. Asociatia Presei Independente:


Gender-Sensitive Language. What is "gender-sensitive language" and why should I use it?:


Gender-neutral language in the European Parliament:

Gender-sensitive language. Guidelines. UNESCWA:


Guía del BCRA para una comunicación inclusive:


Guidelines for gender-sensitive communication in research and academia, SUPERA:
https://www.ciencia.gob.es/stfls/MICINN/Ministerio/FICHEROS/SUPERA_guidelines_gender_sensitive_communication.pdf

Guidelines for using gender-sensitive language in communication, research and administration. Reutlingen University:


Manual de comunicación no sexista. Hacia un lenguaje incluyente. Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres:
http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/101265.pdf

MANUAL DE LENGUAJE ADMINISTRATIVO NO SEXISTA. Asociación de Estudios Históricos Sobre la Mujer: https://www.nodo50.org/mujeresred/manual_lenguaje_admtyo_no_sexista.pdf

PRIORITY GENDER EQUALITY GUIDELINES. UNESCO:

Priručnik za upotrebu rodno osetljivog jezika:
https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2019-07/Prirucnik_za_upotrebu_rodno-osetljivog_jezika_latinica_0.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1CSUhsl7r8OKfX-

