Terminology Guidance – Race and Ethnicity

The preferred terms used to identify people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is continually changing, and individual preferences may vary across people and contexts. When describing the racial and ethnic backgrounds of participants, researchers should be sensitive to these preferences and avoid language that perpetuates cultural biases or stereotypes. These recommendations offer guidance on how to approach these topics in a respectful and inclusive manner.

We have chosen to capitalise White and Black in this statement, for consistency's sake and to indicate both terms refer to racialised categories, which are social constructs, but we respect the fact that authors may choose not to capitalise white and/or black in their manuscript.

Race, ethnicity, and nationality

Authors may sometimes use the terms "race" and "ethnicity" equivalently. However, these terms have important distinctions that should be considered.

Race refers to a social construct used to categorize groups of people based on physical features, including skin color. Different racial identities include but are not limited to: Black, White, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Aboriginal.

Ethnicity refers to broader cultural experiences that are shared across a group of people, such as language, customs, food, nation, and religion. Latino, Somali, Romani, and Jewish people are all examples of ethnic groups.

While race and ethnicity may be related to a person's nationality, authors should avoid assumptions or generalizations about a person's nationality based on their race or ethnicity. If possible, authors should use specific terms to refer to a person's place of origin, such as "Korean American" instead of "Asian American".

Terms for Indigenous Peoples

Like other racial and ethnic groups, indigenous peoples are not a monolith, and preferred terminology may vary across people and nations. Whenever possible, authors should refer to indigenous nations as specifically as possible, using the names that they call themselves, such as "Inuit people", "Māori people" or "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people".

Terms used to refer to racial minority groups

Whenever possible, racial or ethnic groups should be referred to as specifically as possible. However, we recognize that in some cases, authors may choose to reference non-white people more broadly. In these cases, we recommend using terms such as "people of color", "underrepresented/marginalized groups", "BAME/BME people (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic)", or "racial/ethnic minority groups", being mindful of the fact that the definition of a marginalized or underrepresented group may differ by region.

Comparisons between racial or ethnic groups

Certain phrasing can perpetuate biases or stereotypes that place people of color as outsiders. To avoid this, authors should use equivalent language when comparing or referencing multiple groups of people. For instance, instead of referring to "Black and European American people", authors should instead say "Black and White" or "African American and European American" people.

Non-preferred language

- Referring to white/European individuals as "Caucasian". This terminology is associated with eugenics and white supremacy.
- Using color words to refer to groups other than Black or White people.
- Using outdated and offensive racial terms, such as "Afro-American", "Eskimo", "Gypsy", or "Oriental".
- Conflating racial or ethnic background with low socio-economic status or being "underprivileged".
- Referring to groups as "minorities" without a specifier.
- Using the term "African American" to refer to non-American Black people