

A group of tennis players and spectators celebrating on a tennis court. The players are in the background, wearing dark tracksuits and holding tennis rackets, with their arms raised in celebration. The spectators are in the foreground, wearing light-colored shirts, also celebrating with their arms raised. The entire scene is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter.

**Sporting  equals**

# **Terminology**

## **Language Resource**

February 2021

# Developing appropriate terminology to build confidence in engaging with ethnically diverse communities to allow for respect & relatability.

There has been a growing concern and appetite for change when looking at terminology and language, surrounding how we describe the communities impacted by racial discrimination. This guide starts the discussion on what terminology and language the sport and physical activity sector should use when dealing with or describing racial discrimination and inequality.

Systemic racism is incredibly complex and to tackle it effectively, we need terminology and language which is more specific to the communities experiencing racism in order to improve inclusivity. Understanding what is and is not appropriate terminology and language is the first step to helping us have more confident and respectful discussions about the issue of racial discrimination and inequality.

Terminology will continue to be fluid and progress as society expands and grows. The important value to take away from this resource is how vital community engagement is not only in regard to terminology but wider inclusion and diversity aims. With strong community engagement we can continue to hold these conversations to ensure the correct terminology is being adopted and we stay in tune to specific community needs with due respect and empathy.

The sport and physical activity sector should ensure consideration is given to appropriate terminology and language when seeking to engage with the diverse communities that they wish to attract. This guide therefore provides information on factors to be considered in the ongoing discussion of terminology and language and when developing good sector and organisational practice.

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Outdated/Inaccurate Terms	Why	Suggested Alternate Terms	Why
<p><b>Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)</b></p>	<p><i>Do not use the term Black Asian and Minority Ethnic or Black and Minority Ethnic, or the acronyms BAME or BME – as it is unhelpful in description. It blends ethnicity, geography, nationality - and in doing so erases key identity reducing it to an 'other.'</i></p> <p><i>These descriptions also imply that individuals are a homogeneous group. Both descriptions also single out specific ethnic groups, which can be divisive and exclusionary. The descriptions also tend to refer to people who are not white, which excludes white ethnic groups who may also be under-represented or face barriers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be specific if you can on who you are describing e.g. African communities, South Asian communities, Chinese, Jamaican, Nigerian, Indian, Roma, Pakistani, Somali, Bangladeshi etc.</li> <li>• Also explain any generic terms with more specific descriptions of who in particular you are looking to engage.</li> </ul>	<p><i>These specific terms show an awareness of the need to develop actions to address specific inequality.</i></p>
<p><b>Acronyms for any terminology</b></p>	<p><i>Ethnically diverse groups should not be reduced to an inaccurate acronym. Be more specific and detail who you are referring to.</i></p>	<p>Instead of acronyms, if you're referring to 'people who are ethnically and culturally diverse, and who experience racism' in our society be sure to qualify it with detail of who you are talking about.</p>	<p><i>It is important to deliver respect to the communities and cultures you are attempting to engage. Reducing people and their cultural heritage to an acronym is not the way to achieve that.</i></p>

Outdated/Inaccurate Terms	Why	Suggested Alternate Terms	Why
<p><b>Minority Ethnic or Ethnic Minority</b></p>	<p><i>Do not use the term minority ethnic or ethnic minority – as the communities that this term describes fails to realise that the origins of these communities are not in any way a minority. There are many cities and towns; they are much larger than a minority and globally are the majority by culture, ethnic identity and other factors.</i></p> <p><i>For example, there are many groups defined under minority ethnic, including those of Romany heritage, Irish traveller heritage, South East Asian heritage, West and Central Asian heritage and more. Minority is a negative term that can imply inferiority or being of lower priority and therefore suggest that less resources are needed when in fact the opposite is true.</i></p>	<p>Be specific if you can on who you are describing e.g. Romany Heritage, Irish Traveller, Arab community, Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Bangladeshi, Chinese etc.</p>	<p><i>These terms provide acknowledgement of the harm caused and gives context in many instances where a collective term is sought.</i></p> <p><i>It will also require you to then articulate who you are referring to, and may, depending on context, refer to South Asian people, Chinese people and others whose oppression is not captured by current terminology.</i></p> <p><i>Please use with awareness the phrase 'people who experience racism', and don't make it an acronym ever.</i></p>
<p><b>Coloured</b></p>	<p><i>This is an offensive term. In the UK and USA for many people this term has uncomfortable resonance with the racist terminology 'coloureds.'</i></p>	<p>Be more specific (see above). If you are defining groups who have experienced racism then please use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'people who experience racism' or 'communities who have been impacted by racism.'</li> <li>• Followed up by more detail on who you are describing.</li> </ul>	<p><i>These terms show an awareness of the need to develop actions to address any inequality. Support these generic terms with more specific descriptions of who in particular you are looking to engage.</i></p>

Outdated/Inaccurate Terms	Why	Suggested Alternate Terms	Why
<b>Blacks</b>	<i>This is an offensive term. Never say 'blacks' just as you wouldn't say 'whites.'</i>	<p>Be specific if you can on who you are describing, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ghanaian, Jamaican, Senegalese, Ethiopian etc.</li> <li>• 'African Caribbean'</li> <li>• 'People of African or Caribbean heritage.'</li> </ul>	<i>Giving respect to the hugely varied cultures that fall under this swathing term is a must. We need to recognise the individual cultures and not group together these communities by racialising colour in such an uncomfortable way. By recognising the individual cultures you will enable a level of respect, empathy and relatability with your audience.</i>
<b>Hard to Reach</b>	<i>This is seen as ignorant and a negative perception of the little expertise or empathy an organisation may have to ethnically diverse communities. The term also implies that the individuals/communities choose to not engage.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'People/communities who face barriers to participation/engagement.'</li> <li>• 'Underrepresented communities'</li> <li>• 'Disengaged communities'</li> </ul>	<i>This highlights an awareness of societal barriers and challenges that individuals/communities face, which then leads to them not being engaged as much as they could be or choose to be.</i>
<b>Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC)</b>	<p><i>US Term. Inaccurate in its use in the UK.</i></p> <p><i>People of Colour, is becoming more recognised in the UK due to an online presence and reclaiming of the word colour by ethnically diverse communities. In the UK, whilst not offensive, some are uncomfortable due to its proximity to referring to individuals and communities as "Coloured."</i></p>	<p>Be more specific on who you are describing e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African communities, Caribbean, Somali, Nigerian, Grenadian, Indian, Vietnamese etc.</li> </ul>	<i>These terms show an awareness of the need to develop actions to address any inequality. Support these generic terms with more specific descriptions of who in particular you are looking to engage.</i>

**Please note:** For administrative purposes e.g. website, presentations or policy use, sometimes collective terminology is needed.

Use terms such as **ethnically diverse** or **diverse ethnic communities**.



**Sporting Equals are offering a briefing workshop to organisations on**  
***“Developing terminology to support respect and reliability”***

For more information about this and other training and support services offered by Sporting Equals, contact: [info@sportingequals.org.uk](mailto:info@sportingequals.org.uk)



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