

Gender-sensitive Communication

Terms you need to know

Gender-sensitive language

Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect.

There are number of different ways gender relationships can be expressed with accuracy, such as avoiding the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender and ensuring, through inclusive alternatives, the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language.

Source: [EIGE Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus](#) 

Sexist language

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.

From now on, to avoid confusion, we will refer only to **gender-discriminatory** language in this toolkit (not sexist language).

Example of sexist language: “Women must earn less than men because they are less intelligent.”

Gender-discriminatory language

Gender-discriminatory language is the opposite of gender-sensitive language. It includes words, phrases and/or other linguistic features that foster stereotypes, or demean or ignore women or men. At its most extreme it fails to treat the genders as equal in value, dignity, integrity and respect.

Example of gender-discriminatory language: “Ambassadors and their wives are invited to attend an after-dinner reception”

Gender-biased language

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

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

Gender-neutral language

This is not gender-specific and considers people in general, with no reference to women or men. It is also called **gender-blind language**.

Example of gender-neutral language: “People do not fully appreciate the impact they have on the environment.”