10 tips for improving diversity, equity, and inclusivity in news coverage
Identify people the way they identify themselves

- First, make sure the identifier is relevant to the story.
- Don’t assume someone’s identity.
- Do ID people equitably.
- Set the precedent.
- Pay attention to how someone self-identifies.
- It’s okay to ask directly if necessary.
Talk to someone who is part of the group you are writing about

- You don’t need to belong to a particular identity group to cover that group effectively — but the less expertise you have in a subject, the more deeply sourced you should be.
- Talk to someone who’s had the specific experience you’re writing about.
- Remember everyone has their own perspective and agenda.

Resources

- Look to issue-focused websites and associations.
- Ask your colleagues who they would talk to or where they would start looking for sources.
- Reddit, LinkedIn, and Facebook groups can be helpful for finding unofficial sources.
- Advocacy organizations or special interest lawyers might be able to put you in touch with people who have personal experience in the subject at hand.
3. Remember that representation matters in every story

- Don’t make someone’s identity a proxy for a particular issue.
- Similarly, think carefully about the context in which you are showing or quoting someone.
- Everything is intersectional. One facet of identity does not determine a person’s views.
4 Remember one person does not stand in for an entire group

- Diversity exists within underserved communities.
- Get multiple sources from within the community or population you’re writing about, and look for different characteristics and perspectives.
- Engaging with the communities you’re covering helps inform coverage and build trust.
Unconscious bias can be really tough to recognize

- Something can go through multiple rounds of edits and issues can still be missed.
- Avoid coded language or labels that may reinforce stereotypes.
- Use extra caution when including identifiers in headlines and display text.
- Watch out for passive voice — is your phrasing unintentionally shifting responsibility?

Questions to ask to help recognize unconscious bias

- What is my perspective?
- What are my motives?
- What are my assumptions?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- How impartial is my story?
- How deep is the reporting?
Empathy is especially important when covering underserved populations

- Letting someone tell you their story in their own words paints a full picture of their experiences.
- Do your research, but keep an open mind.
- Cultivate long-term connections within the communities you’re covering.
Give credit where credit is due

- Some movements may have been around for a long time but may only get mainstream attention when celebrities adopt the cause.
- Make sure you are exploring the real origins of a movement and acknowledging criticisms or potentially problematic aspects.
Look for views beyond those that bolster your argument

- Engaging with conflicting viewpoints can help deepen your understanding and reporting.
- It’s not always necessary to give equal weight to opposing views. But it may be worth providing greater context for why someone holds a certain point of view; it can help readers (and reporters) understand why these divides exist.
Explore the human impacts of policies

- Talk to the people who make the policies but also the people who live with the policies. (Remember to seek out those “unofficial” sources.)
- Don’t prioritize the intent of a policy over its potential or actual impact.
Get a second (or third) look

- Find out what resources your newsroom has (DEI+ experts, employee resource groups, the Language, Please inclusivity reader directory, etc.).
- Consult your colleagues with expertise on the issue (though make sure to ask thoughtfully).
- Go beyond just accepting or rejecting suggestions — try to understand the reasoning to help inform your thinking next time.
Language, Please

languageplease.org

Thank you!