

Terminology around race and ethnicity

The intention of [the Antiracist Wales Action Plan \(ArWAP\)](#) is to understand the widespread racial inequalities present in Wales, and take action resulting in measurable changes to the lives of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Wales. The intention is to progress to a Wales that is antiracist by 2030. It is important to have a shared understanding of the language we will use in pursuit of this goal. While there is an interesting [history of terminology about race](#), this article will focus on current use of language used to discuss race that will be used in the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) reports and documents. In doing so it will draw on [national guidance](#), [statistical input](#), [research and the ArWAP](#). Another key factor to bear in mind is that language is continuously evolving, and we will be open to refreshing our terminology to ensure we use appropriate and respectful terms.

The construct of **'race'** [has arisen as a social function](#) that places people into categories based on physical characteristics (e.g. Black or White) – recognising this means acknowledging the ways racial difference is used to perpetuate inequalities.

By contrast, **ethnicity** is a self-defined and broader concept, encompassing aspects such as culture, language, ancestry or national origins (e.g. African, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Irish, Roma). Ethnicity is regarded as a more positive celebration of identity than one emerging from the shared negative experiences of racism.

What will we do? The Race Equality Standard recognises that racial identity drives the shared experiences of racism of many people. The WRES provides a basis for addressing these in healthcare. In acting upon the data, we will be careful not to conflate groups and erase identities in terms of recognising experience of individual staff. When necessary we will use the collective term 'ethnic minority', and the acronym 'BME' will only be used in graphs for brevity. We will not use the acronym BAME which emphasises certain ethnic minority groups while excluding others.

What will we do? We will default to be specific about the ethnic groups we are referring to, respectful of the need to ensure confidentiality when there are small numbers. We will only use collective terminology where there is a legitimate need to do so.

[The Equality Act 2010](#) describes the protected characteristic of 'race' as defined by skin colour, ethnicity or national origin. Importantly, there is some overlap with the protected characteristic of religion for Jews and Sikhs who are considered as ethnic groups under the Act (although it is notable [from census data](#) that the vast majority of these individuals perceive this background a religious and not an ethnic categorisation). By contrast Muslims are considered a religious group only, not an ethnic group.

What will we do? At this point the WRES will not report specifically on religious groupings.

Intersectionality is a term that describes the ways in which inequality based on gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, etc, overlaps to create unique disadvantages for an individual. [It originally described](#) the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women, but now considers all the protected characteristics. It does not create a hierarchy of disadvantage, but rather recognises the complexity of individual experience of people with multiple protected characteristics.

What will we do? We will initially report race and ethnicity data intersected by gender when it is available. Once again we will absolutely respect confidentiality when there are small numbers of individuals.

The WRES in Wales was born of [the Antiracist Wales Action Plan](#) and is central part of an active commitment to work against racial injustice. Antiracism requires action at both personal level (regarding our behaviours, actions and knowledge) as well as organisational level (with regard to processes, practices and values). As such, antiracism is an *active* position, taking action, rather than non-racism which is a more passive bystander opposition to racial discrimination.

The WRES will succeed when we use commonly understood language that allows everyone to take action to reduce racial inequality.