

Culturally Responsive Health: Terminology



This factsheet identifies some common terms and acronyms. It is important to be aware of different terms; however, deciding which terms to use depends on many factors. Centre the safety and wellbeing of the people you are working with by using language that they use and are comfortable with.

Asylum seeker: someone whose request for protection (safety from persecution or other danger) has yet to be processed. All refugees have been asylum seekers. Seeking asylum from persecution is a human right and is not illegal.

Anti-racist: an approach, activity, policy, resource, or group/organisation combating any form of racism.

Bilingual/multilingual: speaking two or more languages. Receptive bilingualism is the ability to understand another language but not speak it, a common skill among children of migrants.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. More commonly used in North America.

Black/Blak: a term that some people use to describe their own identity or a group that they identify with. It may be written with a capital 'B' inferring that the term is historically linked to civil rights movements and symbolically linked to critical race theory.¹

BME: Black and minority ethnic. More commonly used in the United Kingdom, BME describes people from minority groups, particularly those who are viewed as having suffered racism or are in the minority because of their skin colour and/or ethnicity.

CALD: Culturally and linguistically diverse. CALD is used by some state/territory governments and some community agencies. The blanket use of the term CALD does not always reflect the complexity of diversity and may reinforce certain assumptions around which groups are positioned as the norm and which groups are positioned as other.

Colonisation: settling among and establishing control over an Indigenous people of an area or the action of appropriating a place or domain for one's own use. It can also include establishing systems and beliefs that place one culture as dominant over others.

Culture: the whole range of social values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of an identifiable group of people with a shared background and traditions.

Cultural appropriation: adoption of cultural elements (e.g. art, language, customs) for one's use or profit; often without understanding, acknowledgement or respect for its value in the original culture. It is distinguished from an equal cultural exchange due to an imbalance of power, often as a by-product of colonisation and oppression.

Cultural awareness: understanding that cultural differences exist.

Cultural competence: the ability to think and act appropriately and effectively when interacting with people from different cultures. On an organisational level, cultural competence means that an organisation has put in place practices that support cultural competence.

Cultural humility: the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are important to the person.² Cultural humility focuses on self-humility rather than achieving a state of knowledge or awareness.

TRUE FACTSHEET:
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE HEALTH

Cultural safety: an environment where people feel safe, included, and valued based on their culture and where identity is considered a source of strength.

Diaspora: the dispersion of any people from their original homeland.

Ethnicity/ethnic identity: belonging to a social group that has a common cultural tradition: usually including a long shared history, geographical origin, and language.

EAL/D and ESL: English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) is used in place of English as a second language (ESL).

Intersectionality: an approach largely advanced by Black women,³ arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another and that interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalised in society.

LOTE: Language other than English.

Migrant: a person who moves from one country to another, including forced and voluntary migration.

NESB: Non-English speaking background. Declining in use, it may not be a preferred term by some communities as it positions English as the norm or preferred.

Oppression: systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalising, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access.⁴

Person of Colour (PoC): a person who is not white or of European parentage. More commonly used outside of Australia. This term is complex in who decides to use it for themselves and how it can be interpreted.

Privilege: unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege). Privilege is often invisible to those who have it, but nevertheless puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.⁵

Race: a contentious historical social construct used to categorise people according to skin colour or physical characteristics. Academically, the concept of race can be seen as unstable, complex, and constantly being transformed by political struggle.⁶

Racism: ideology of superiority of a particular race, then applied to and embedded in structures, institutions, practices, attitudes, and beliefs, which then serve to further perpetuate and transmit this ideology. Racism can also be the generalisation of behaviours or characteristics to all members of a particular cultural or ethnic identity.

Refugee: someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence and whose claim for protection has been determined to have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.⁷ Some may prefer people from refugee backgrounds as it enables them not to be labelled as refugees after resettlement in a new country. Refugees resettled in Australia have permanent residency and can apply for citizenship after four years.

Endnotes

¹ For more see: Crenshaw, Gotanda and Peller (1995) *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. The New Press.

² Hook (2013) *Cultural Humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients*. Journal of Counseling Psychology.

³ Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term when arguing that the experience of being a Black woman cannot be understood in terms of being Black and of being a woman considered independently, but must include interactions between the two identities.

⁴ WPC Glossary from 14th Annual White Privilege Conference Handbook, White Privilege Conference (2013).

⁵ Colours of Resistance *Privilege* www.coloursofresistance.org/definitions/privilege

⁶ Winant and Omi (2014) *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge, 3 edition.

⁷ UNHCR (2017) *Refugees*. www.unhcr.org/en-au/refugees

This resource has been developed in conjunction with the Culturally Responsive Health Advisory Group.



For further information on **Culturally Responsive Health**, please visit:
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