

## UNAIDS PREFERRED LANGUAGE

The following table includes language to be sensitive to when reporting on HIV and AIDS. It is intended to aid in an understanding of the complexities of reporting on HIV. In some cases, you may want to consider an alternative word or phrase. In others, you may end up using language that could be considered sensitive. The important thing is to be aware of the issues that surround these terms and their usage.

<b>WRONG TERMINOLOGY</b>	<b>WHY</b>	<b>CORRECT TERMINOLOGY</b>
AIDS/ HIV carrier	This is a stigmatising term, which focuses on an individual as a carrier of disease. It is important to emphasise that HIV is a disease that can be managed and lived with, rather than focusing on the diseased status of the individual.	<b>person living with HIV,</b> <b>HIV-positive person,</b> <b>HIV-infected person</b>
AIDS infected person	People can be infected with HIV, but no one can be infected with AIDS, because it is not a virus or single disease.  AIDS is a syndrome of opportunistic infections and diseases that can develop at the end stage of the continuum of HIV disease.	<b>person living with HIV,</b> <b>HIV-positive person,</b> <b>HIV-infected person</b>
AIDS Orphan	Referring to these children as ‘AIDS orphans’ not only stigmatises them, but also labels them as HIV-positive, which they may not necessarily be.  Identifying a human being by his/her medical condition alone also shows a lack of respect for the individual.  UNAIDS uses ‘orphan’ to describe a child that has lost either one or both parents.	<b>children orphaned by AIDS,</b> <b>orphans and other children</b> <b>made vulnerable by AIDS,</b> <b>children affected by HIV</b> <b>and AIDS</b>
AIDS patient	<b>Only to be used in a clinical setting.</b>  Otherwise use “person living with HIV” or “HIV-positive person”.	<b>AIDS patient</b>
AIDS sufferers	Many people living with HIV are healthy and happy. People infected with HIV can have periods of relatively good health. They should not be portrayed as suffering.	<b>person living with HIV,</b> <b>HIV-positive person,</b> <b>HIV-infected person</b>

<b>WRONG TERMINOLOGY</b>	<b>WHY</b>	<b>CORRECT TERMINOLOGY</b>
<p>AIDS test</p> <p>HIV/AIDS test</p>	<p>There is no test for AIDS.</p> <p>There is a test that determines the presence of HIV antibodies; therefore it tests for HIV infection, not AIDS.</p> <p>The progression to AIDS is the last stage of HIV disease.</p>	<p><b>HIV test,</b></p> <p><b>HIV antibody test</b></p>
<p>AIDS victims</p> <p>innocent victims</p>	<p>People who are living with HIV or who have AIDS are not victims. To call someone a victim stigmatises them by implying powerlessness.</p>	<p><b>person living with HIV,</b></p> <p><b>HIV-positive person,</b></p> <p><b>HIV-infected person</b></p>
<p>AIDS virus</p>	<p>There is no such thing as an AIDS virus.</p> <p>The virus associated with AIDS is called the <i>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</i>, or HIV.</p>	<p><b>HIV</b></p>
<p>body fluids</p>	<p>This phrase is very broad and can refer to a range of body fluids, not all of which can transmit HIV. It is always better to be specific.</p>	<p>Specify the fluids :</p> <p><b>blood,</b></p> <p><b>semen, vaginal fluids,</b></p> <p><b>breastmilk</b></p>
<p>catch AIDS</p>	<p>HIV is not a contagious disease but an infectious disease.</p> <p>As an infectious disease, HIV is transmitted from bodily fluid to bodily fluid such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk.</p> <p>Since HIV is not a contagious disease, it cannot be caught or transmitted through casual contact – sneezing, coughing.</p>	<p><b>contract HIV,</b></p> <p><b>become infected with HIV,</b></p> <p><b>become HIV positive</b></p>
<p>commercial sex work</p>	<p>Commercial sex work is considered a tautology, which is saying the same thing twice over in different words.</p>	<p><b>sex work,</b></p> <p><b>commercial sex,</b></p> <p><b>sale of sexual services</b></p>

<b>WRONG TERMINOLOGY</b>	<b>WHY</b>	<b>CORRECT TERMINOLOGY</b>
<p>drug addict</p> <p>drug abuser</p>	<p>These terms create a false sense of security for those may use drugs but don't identify themselves as addicts or abusers.</p> <p>It is important to distinguish between behavior (which can place an individual at increased risk of transmitting and acquiring HIV) and addiction, particularly when talking about HIV transmission.</p>	<p><b>drug user</b></p>
<p>full-blown AIDS</p>	<p>This is an older slang term that is rarely used anymore.</p> <p>Progression to AIDS is one stage of HIV disease.</p>	<p><b>AIDS</b></p>
<p>gay / homosexual / bisexual</p>	<p>These terms, particularly gay and bisexual, refer to an identity that may or may not be tied to a behavior.</p> <p>In many countries and cultures, men who have sex with other men may not perceive themselves as gay, bisexual, or homosexual.</p> <p>It is important to distinguish between behavior (which can place an individual at increased risk of transmitting and acquiring HIV) and sexual identity, particularly when talking about HIV transmission.</p>	<p><b>men who have sex with men (MSM)</b></p>
<p>high(er) risk groups</p>	<p>These terms should be used with caution as they can increase stigma and discrimination.</p> <p>These terms may also lull people who don't identify with such groups into a false sense of security.</p> <p>'High-risk group' also implies that the risk is contained within the group rather than the behaviour of an individual such as having, 'sex without a condom', 'unprotected sex', or 'using non-sterile injection equipment'.</p>	<p><b>key populations at higher risk</b></p>
<p>HIV/AIDS</p>		<p><b>HIV</b></p> <p><b>AIDS</b> (<i>only when referring to AIDS</i>)</p>

WRONG TERMINOLOGY	WHY	CORRECT TERMINOLOGY
HIV/AIDS	In relation to clinical description	<b>AIDS diagnosis,</b> <b>HIV-related disease</b>
HIV/AIDS epidemic		<b>AIDS epidemic,</b> <b>HIV epidemic</b>
HIV/AIDS prevalence	<i>(note incidence cannot be used for prevalence since it has a different technical meaning)</i>	<b>HIV prevalence</b>
HIV/AIDS prevention	Efforts are targeted to prevent the spread of HIV, including prevention of new HIV infections.	<b>HIV prevention</b>
HIV virus	This term is redundant since HIV stands for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus”	<b>HIV</b>
innocent (victim), guilty	This infers that certain modes of transmission are worse than others and that some HIV-positive individuals deserve their status.	<b><i>Omit these words</i></b>
intravenous drug user	UNAIDS does not use the term ‘intravenous drug users’ because subcutaneous and intramuscular routes may also be involved.	<b>injecting drug user</b>
people living with HIV/AIDS		<b>people living with HIV</b> <b>PLWH</b>
prevalence rates	HIV prevalence quantifies the proportion of individuals in a population who have HIV at a specific point in time.  We do not say prevalence rates because a time period of observation is not involved. ‘Prevalence’ is sufficient.	<b>prevalence</b>
prostitute	This term has a negative connotation and does not accurately describe situations in which girls and women may be forced into exchanging sex for money or food due to poverty, powerlessness, violence and gender inequality.	<b>Sex worker</b>

WRONG TERMINOLOGY	WHY	CORRECT TERMINOLOGY
promiscuous	<p>This term is based on the perception of an individual's lifestyle rather than their risk of exposure to HIV infection.</p> <p>For example, an individual may be in a polygamous marriage, which is socially and religiously acceptable in many societies, but may be infected by their partner who is HIV-positive.</p> <p>It is important not to use language that judges others behaviors or is based on misconceptions or stereotypes.</p>	<p><i><b>This is a value judgment and should be avoided</b></i></p>
risk of AIDS	<p>People can be infected with HIV, but no one can be infected with AIDS, because it is not a virus or a single disease.</p>	<p><b>risk of HIV infection,</b> <b>risk of exposure to HIV</b></p>
risk group	<p>It is behaviours, not memberships to a group, which places individuals in situations which may lead them to contract HIV.</p> <p>By focusing on groups, we create a false sense of security for individuals who may not belong to a group, but may be practicing behaviour that exposes them to HIV infection.</p> <p>Additionally, people with behaviours which may place them at higher risk of exposure to HIV do not necessarily identify themselves with any particular group, i.e. drug user, sex worker.</p> <p>At the same time, not all individuals who belong to a particular group will expose themselves to HIV infection. For example, an injecting drug user who does not share his injecting equipment with others.</p> <p>Some populations however may be at increased risk of exposure to HIV.</p>	<p><b>risk</b></p>
risky sex	<p>Risky sex does not clearly inform which action specifically deals with the risk to HIV, i.e. not using a condom.</p>	<p><b>unprotected sex</b></p>

WRONG TERMINOLOGY	WHY	CORRECT TERMINOLOGY
safe sex	<p>Safe sex implies complete safety from HIV transmission. Abstinence, in this case, may be considered the only form of safe sex. Sex in it self is only 100% safe from HIV when both partners are aware of each other's HIV negative status, and neither partner is in the window period between HIV exposure and the appearance of HIV antibodies detectable by the HIV test.</p> <p>Since it is difficult to be 100% sure of this, there is therefore always an inherent risk when having sex.</p> <p>The term safer sex more accurately reflects the idea that choices can be made and behaviours adopted to reduce or minimise risk of HIV.</p>	<b>safer sex</b>
scourge, plague, dreaded disease	<p>These terms creates a lot of fear and only serves to increase stigma and discrimination.</p> <p>They are overly dramatic and over used. They also may imply judgment and it may be better to substitute with less dramatic language such as medical terms.</p>	<p><b>disease,</b></p> <p><b>epidemic,</b></p> <p><b>illness</b></p> <p><b>incurable disease</b></p>
sharing (needles, syringes, etc.)	<p>'Sharing' does not distinguish between needle borrowing and needle lending. A person aware of his or her HIV-positive status may try to avoid lending, but may continue to borrow or vice versa. Also 'sharing' has positive connotations, e.g. sharing a meal in injecting drug use communities (and wider communities also) which are not appropriate in writing about HIV risk.</p>	
	<p>'contaminated' is used only if it caused infection, that is, the equipment contained HIV; 'unclean', 'dirty'</p>	<b>using contaminated injecting equipment</b>
	<p>"non-sterile" is used if it carried the risk of HIV exposure: that is, it may or may not have carried the virus</p>	<b>using non-sterile injecting equipment</b>

WRONG TERMINOLOGY	WHY	CORRECT TERMINOLOGY
sufferer, victim	<p>These terms imply passiveness and helplessness.</p> <p>Many people living with HIV are healthy and happy. People infected with HIV can have periods of relatively good health. They should not be portrayed as suffering.</p> <p>A HIV-positive person is also not a victim of HIV. More often than not, a HIV-positive person is a victim of stigma and discrimination.</p>	<p><b>person living with HIV,</b></p> <p><b>HIV-positive person,</b></p> <p><b>HIV-infected person</b></p>