



Powerfully inclusive marketing visuals

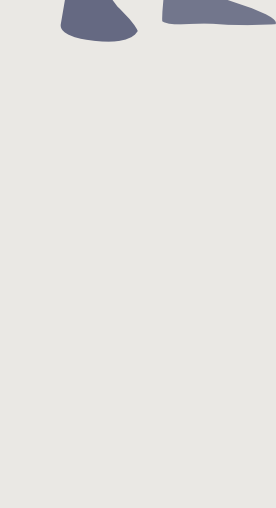
Considerations for diversity, equity, and inclusion

As marketers, we can deepen customer connections by ensuring that audiences see themselves reflected authentically in our content. Each piece of marketing creative doesn't need to represent everyone—instead, our work as a whole should be inclusive.

It's important to consider not only who is represented in images, but how, and adjust for cultural differences globally. Also, keep intersectionality in mind, combining aspects of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, and others not covered here.

Gender

Champion gender equity. Be sure to represent the spectrum of gender expressions and consider how genders are represented—roles, activities, and appearances.



Men

Men

Roles

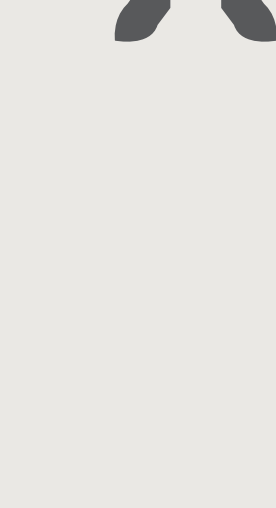
Represent a balance of dominant and supporting roles, such as business owner and employee.

Activities and occupations

Think beyond traditional gender roles. Show men as helpers, caregivers, homemakers, nurses, stay-at-home dads, or doing grocery shopping. Avoid the "clueless dad" trope.

Appearance

Consider a range of hairstyles and clothing—men with long hair, carrying a purse, or wearing a scarf, sarong, or tunic—keeping in mind any potential religious or cultural meanings.



Women

Roles

Are women represented as empowered, with authority, and assertive?

Activities and occupations

Show women in more ways than as nurturers and helpers. For example, as soccer coaches, not soccer moms. As ambulance drivers, not nurses. Include sometimes-overlooked occupations like athlete, scientist, workplace leader, and mechanic.

Ambitions

Portray a variety of meaningful goals from professional to societal, avoiding superficial personal ones, such as being thin.



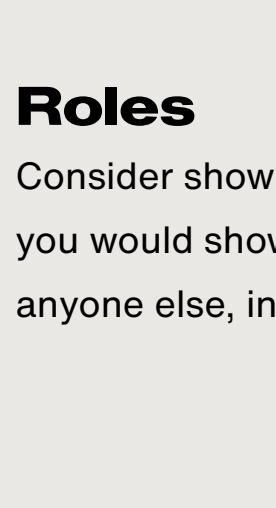
Appearance

Many women prefer realistic, natural, unfiltered portrayals over photoshopped, unattainable standards of beauty—don't perpetuate homogenous or idealized beauty standards.

Accessories

Avoid over-feminizing appearance. Include women with short hair, pants, non-revealing clothes, backpacks, or messenger bags.

Transgender people



Representation

Transgender people make up at least an estimated 1% of the population.¹ Don't only remember them for Pride. Also, watch for gender imbalance—trans women portrayals typically outnumber those of trans men in advertising.

Appearance

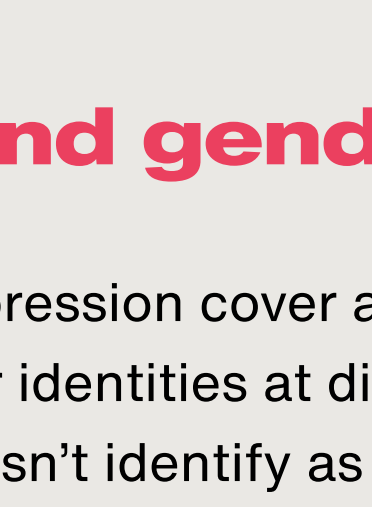
Portray a variety of looks. Some people express gender in overt ways to send very clear, gendered messages. But not everyone does.

Clichés

Being transgender is deeper than physical appearance so avoid clichés of transgender women applying makeup or putting on wigs or pantyhose, and of transgender men shaving.

Roles

Consider showing transgender people where you would show cis people—in day-to-day life like anyone else, including as spouses and parents.

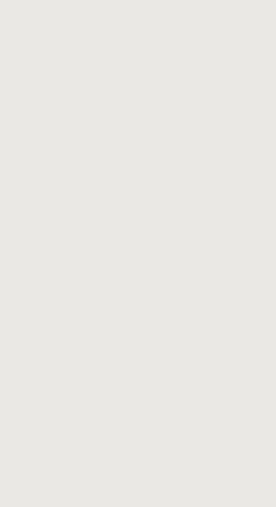


Trans women and trans femme

Be aware of a bias toward always portraying trans women as ultra feminine or glamorous.

Trans men and trans masculine

Some trans men wear baggy clothing to minimize their chest and adopt postures or gain weight to alter their body shape.



Nonbinary and gender-expansive people

Gender identity and expression cover a broad spectrum, with some individuals moving between gender identities at different times, in different circumstances. A nonbinary person doesn't identify as only a woman or a man.

40% of people disagree with a binary perspective.²



Appearance

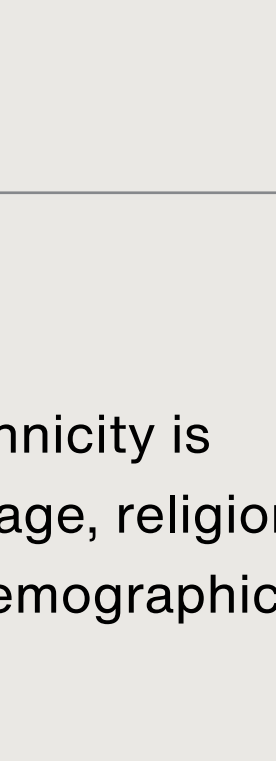
Nonbinary people don't have one specific look. Some people have an androgynous expression, others don't. Include people who aren't slim and youthful.

Dress

When representing an androgynous look, consider unisex clothing, tailoring that minimizes female curves (of people who don't identify as women), and gender-neutral colors.

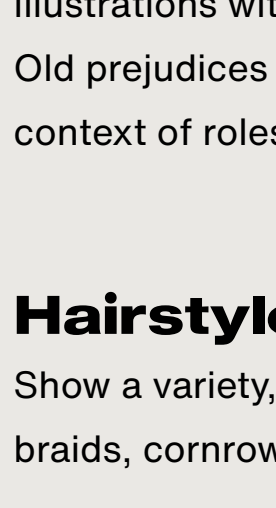
Clichés

Don't presume quirkiness or eccentricity and over-index on exceptional hair colors or clothing.



Race and ethnicity

Race is mainly physical attributes, while ethnicity is cultural identity, based on traditions, language, religion, dress, nationality, heritage. Consider the demographics of your region's audience.

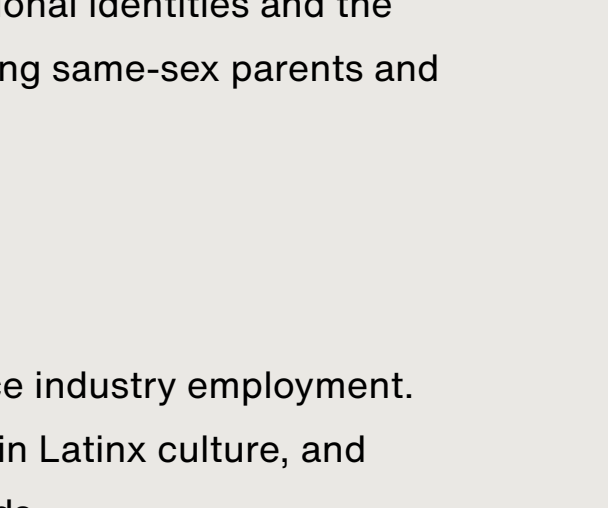


Roles and representation

When representing couples, consider that approximately 10% of married people in the US have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity. The largest combination is Latinx and non-Latinx white.³

Check that you aren't unconsciously favoring certain races to appear more empowered than others.

Be bold about showing a non-white hero or a couple of people, instead of a multiracial group.



Appearance

Skin tones
Represent a variety, including dark brown for Black people. Illustrations with yellow skin are often interpreted as white. Old prejudices favored lighter skin—be careful of this in context of roles and hierarchy.

Hairstyle
Show a variety, including natural curls, dreadlocks, twists, braids, cornrows, fades, shaves, and a range of hair colors.

Clothing
Consider religious head coverings and ethnic dress, such as tunics, saris, bindis, yarmulkes.

Activity and occupation

Black people
Avoid stereotypes of music, dancing, sport, and only urban environments. Showcase intersectional identities and the breadth of Black family life, including same-sex parents and multi-generational families.

Latinx people
Avoid stereotypes of soccer, service industry employment. Consider the importance of family in Latinx culture, and large, multi-generational households.

Asian people
Avoid stereotypes of tech geeks, overrepresentation in business settings, and underrepresentation in home, social, and outdoors settings.

Age

There's life after 40, 50, 60 ... Marketing images frequently over-emphasize youth and the benefits of being young, leaving out those who are partnered "older," or depicting them as being less vibrant than their youthful counterparts. Marketing that speaks to all ages features an array of ages, and does so in a way that avoids clichés and stereotypes.

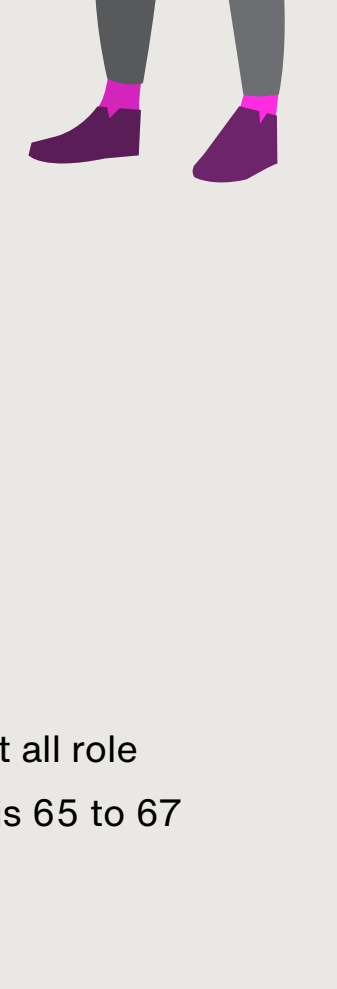
Young adults 19–34 years old

Stereotypes
As a generation, younger people are civic-minded and socially conscious. Avoid stereotyping them as self-obsessed or entitled.

Activities
Although the most active group online, also depict them in other activities. Try showing them reading a book or giving a presentation.

Roles
Reflect their highly entrepreneurial spirit.

Settings
Show them mixing with people of other ages in a variety of settings.

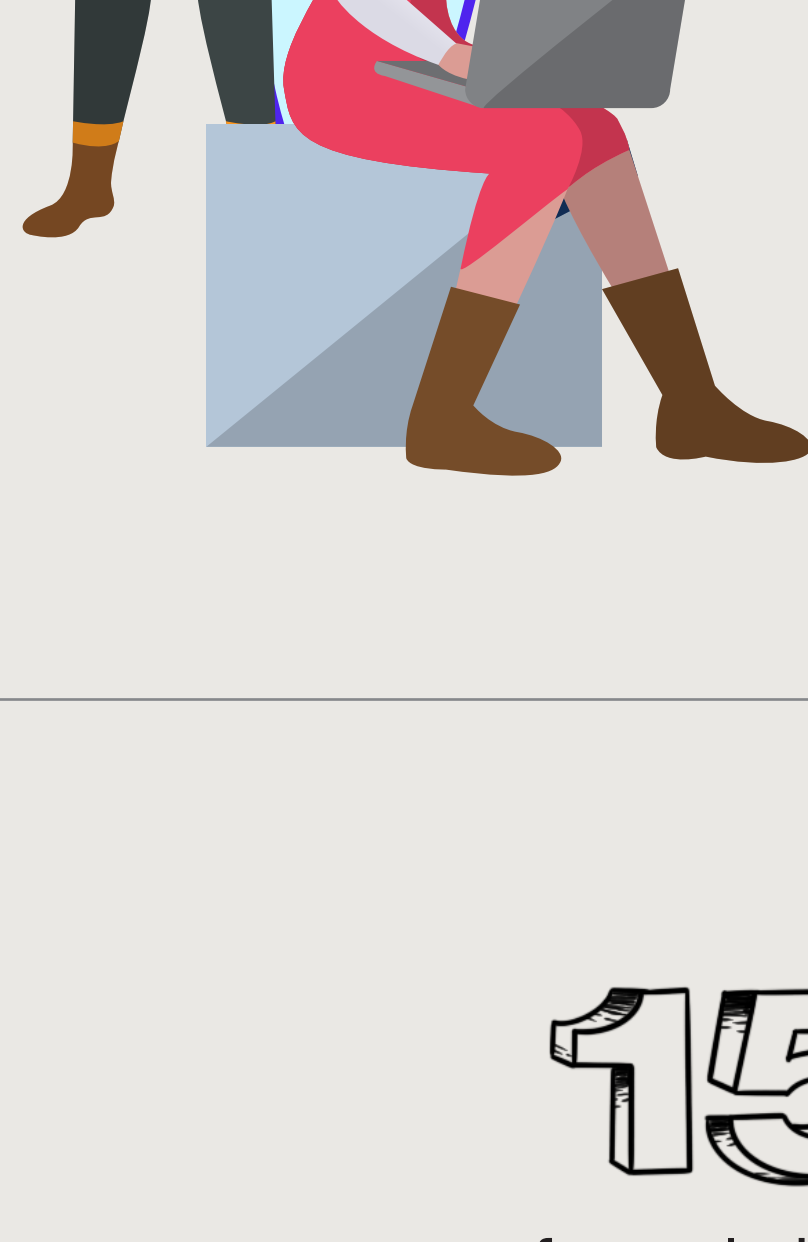


Older adults 50+ years old

Representation
Consider multiple life stages, depicting them as active and engaged.

Stereotypes
Show tech-savvy 50+-year-olds shopping online, playing games, connecting via social media, and using wearables—not struggling with basics.

Appearance
Don't default to outdated characteristics, such as gray hair or pastel or neutral-colored clothing.



Roles
Include work settings at all role levels. Retirement age is 65 to 67 in many countries.⁴

Settings
Portray with friends and family, not isolated or dependent on others.

People with disabilities

15% of people have disabilities, globally, not all visible.⁵

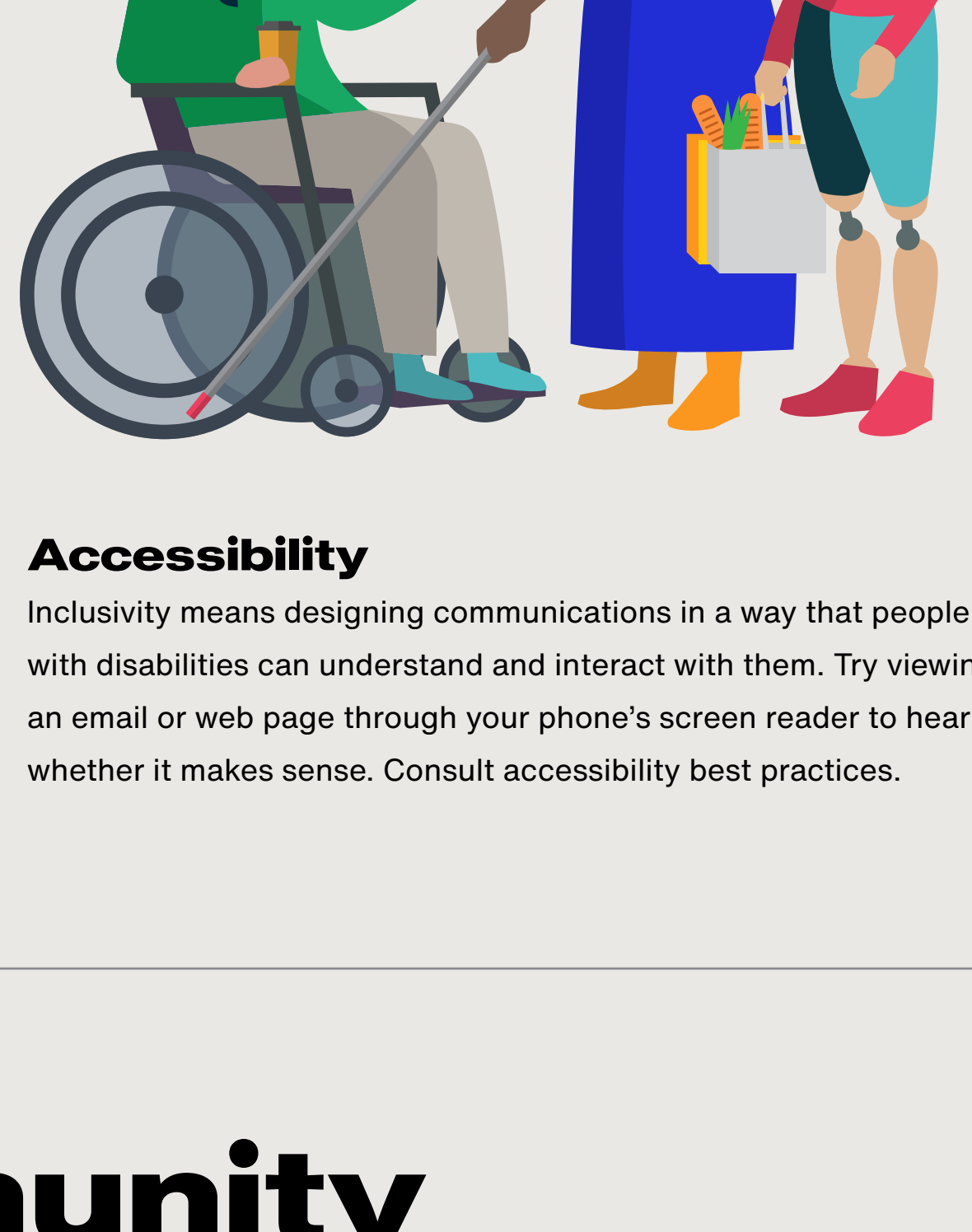
Roles
Portray people with disabilities in everyday situations, positive and active roles. Ideally as the main focus but realistic supporting roles are also appropriate—as a spouse or friend.

Activities
Communicate independence, not dependence on others or focus on limitations.

Diversity
Represent a variety of disabilities, not just mobility—include someone with vision or hearing loss, or a cognitive impairment.

Stereotypes
Avoid putting dark glasses on people with vision impairment.

Gut check
Are you intending to reach and connect with people with disabilities, or are you employing a trope to inspire other audiences?



Accessibility
Inclusivity means designing communications in a way that people with disabilities can understand and interact with them. Try viewing an email or web page through your phone's screen reader to hear whether it makes sense. Consult accessibility best practices.

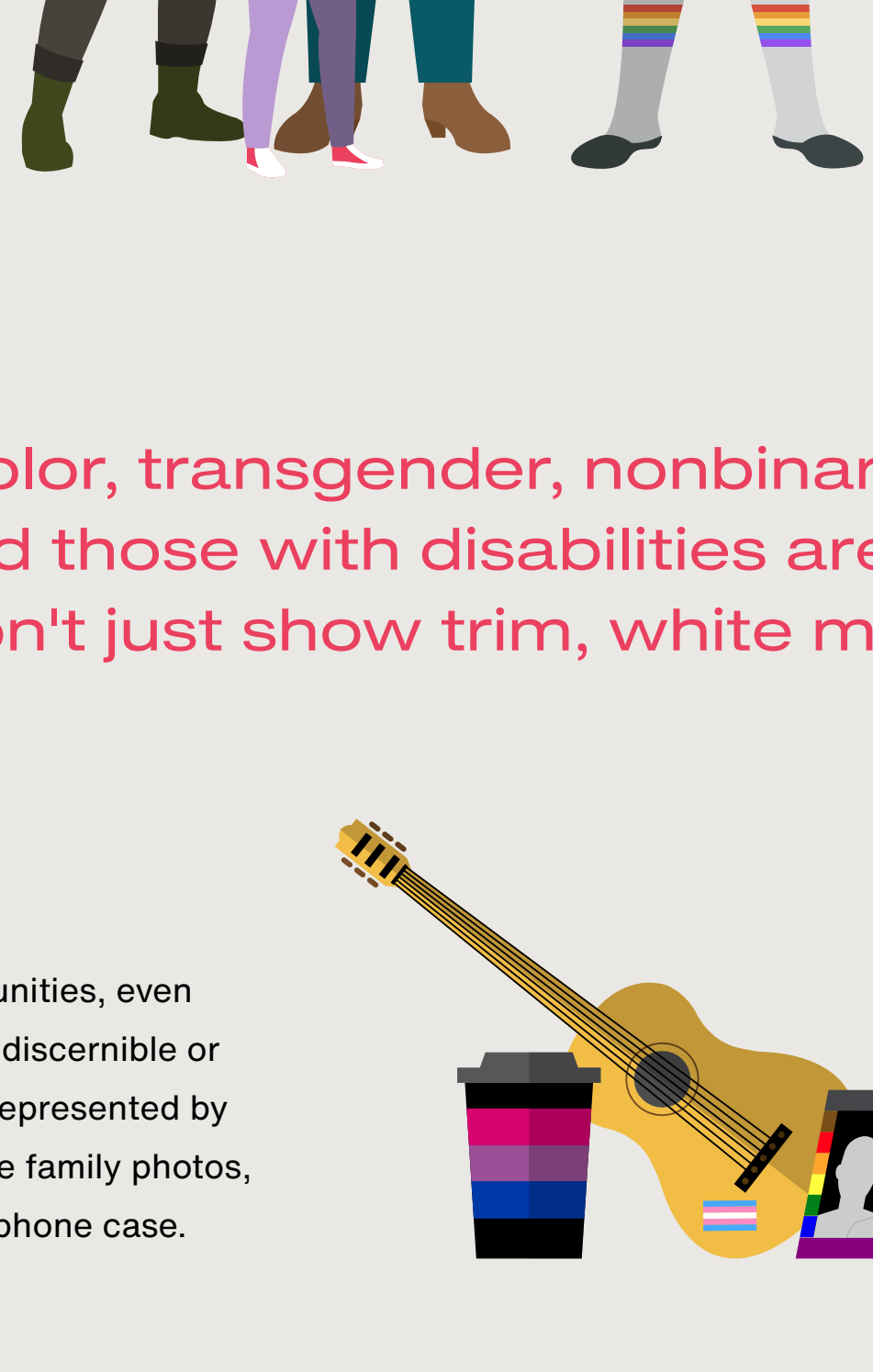
LGBTQ+ community

Stereotypes
Watch out for using "flamboyant" poses to indicate sexual orientation.

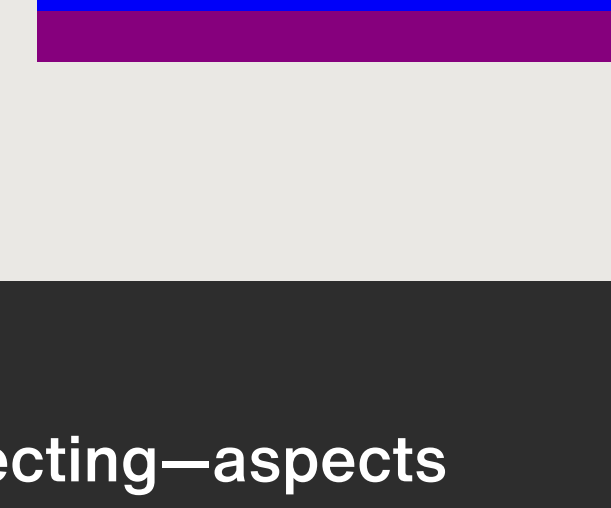
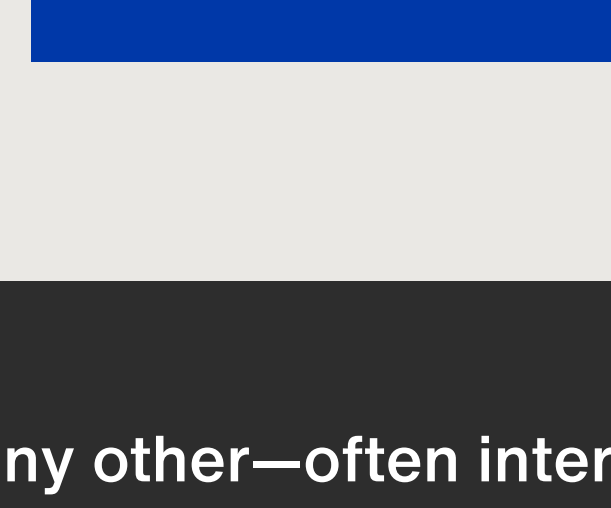
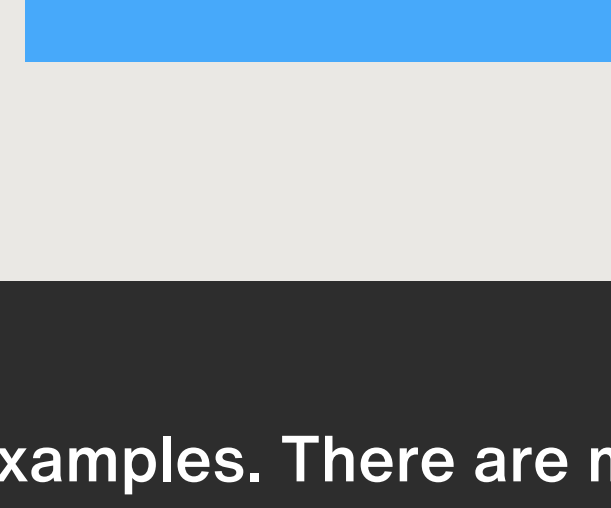
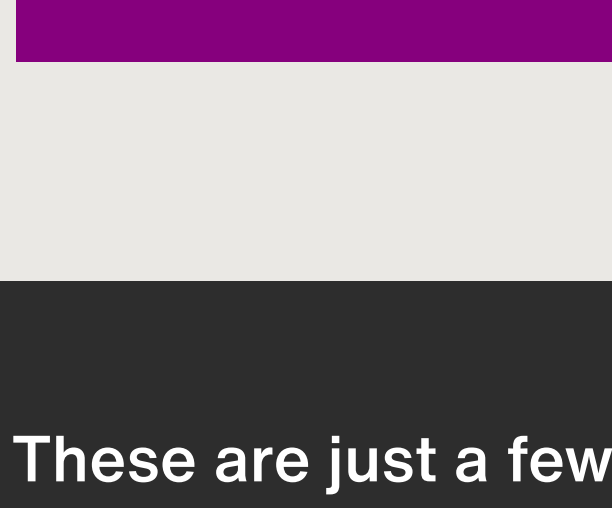
Family
Show same-sex couples with, and without, children.

Households
People in the background—someone cooking while their partner works on a laptop—can help indicate same-sex households.

Representation
Women, people of color, transgender, nonbinary, and older people, and those with disabilities are often overlooked. Don't just show trim, white men.



4.5% of people identify as LGBT in the US.⁶



These are just a few examples. There are many other—often intersecting—aspects to diversity such as socioeconomic status (people at the lower end of the scale tend to be underrepresented), and geographic location (Are you overrepresenting urban centers on the East or West Coast?).

For more info or help assessing your marketing, contact inclusivemarketing@mediamonks.com

¹ Fleming, Muffy. The importance of representing trans people in advertising. Marketing Week. April 23, 2020.
² Ipsos. What the Future. Ipsos. 2020.
³ Rico, Britanny, Rose M. Kreider, Lydia Anderson. Race, Ethnicity and Marriage in the United States: Growth in Interracial and Interethnic Married Couple Households. US Census Bureau. July 9, 2018.
⁴ The Small Business Trends Alliance (SBTA). Small Business Trends. 2020. SBTA. 2019.
⁵ World Health Organization. World report on disability. World Health Organization. 2011.
⁶ Newport, Frank. In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%. Gallup. May 22, 2018.