

# Inclusive visual storytelling for women.

Getty Images and SeeHer have a joint mission of changing the way women are portrayed in marketing and advertising. We have partnered to create a practical guide to help marketers create and select visual content to create unbiased, inclusive and effective advertising that will lead to measurable results.

**Join us. If advertising aligned with the real world, imagine the potential.**

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## INCLUSIVE VISUAL STORYTELLING FOR WOMEN:

# Helpful practice to promote diversity.

### Do you see women like you in marketing and advertising?

Inclusive imagery—*photography and video that portrays people of diverse races, ethnicities, abilities, and other often underrepresented communities*—is a powerful tool for empowering positive perceptions. This is especially important for women, who have traditionally been underrepresented and portrayed in ways that maintain outdated stereotypes.

### If you can see her, you can be her™.

Just  **44%** of women say they see themselves reflected in the women they see in the media.<sup>1</sup>

In our multicultural and media-savvy world, connecting with consumers in a way that shows understanding and respect is more than socially responsible—it's good for business.



for ads and programming that realistically portray women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

1. Source: Edelman Intelligence, Impact of Beauty Stereotypes Quant Study; 2019.

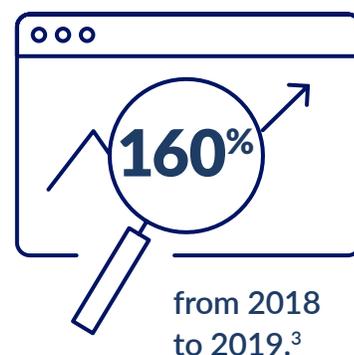
2. Source: IRI. 2-5X sales lift for ads and programming that scored 100 or above in SeeHer's Gender Equality Measure (GEM™) score.

# Promote inclusion with diverse visuals.

Female audiences are as diverse as any other—all ages, races, lifestyles, and perspectives. To accurately depict this diversity, we need to understand their lives, priorities, and aspirations. The more we know, the more confident we can be about taking an inclusive approach that truly reflects all women.

Here's a look at factors to consider when depicting women in marketing and advertising.

**Getty Images**, a world leader in visual communication, found that searches for **diverse workplace**, **diverse group**, and **multicultural group** grew by more than



3. Source: Getty Images Top 1 Million Global YoY Searches, January 2020.

# Gender

Push for a broader sense of equality.

Gender encompasses attitudes, feelings, roles, and behaviors. Think of gender as two separate concepts: **gender identity**, how you see yourself; and **gender expression**, how you express your gender identity.

Gender identity and gender expression have typically taken two forms—masculine and feminine. In recent decades, our understanding of gender has grown. Trans, androgynous, and gender fluid are just some gender identities beyond conventional norms.



of women in ads are inaccurately portrayed through some form of **stereotyping**, **objectification**, or **diminished character**.<sup>4</sup>

**Gender is complex and highly personal. Reflecting the full spectrum of gender in a way that respects differences and empowers underrepresented groups is a brave, bold step toward greater inclusivity.**

4. Source: ANA.

## Questions to think about: Visualizing gender.

- ❓ Have you considered how imagery might be reinforcing gender stereotypes in your community?
- ❓ Are the roles depicted in the imagery you choose equally attributable to women and men? (E.g., who is the caregiver, who has power in the image, what jobs are they doing?)
- ❓ Are you embracing people of all gender identities as possible choices for your portrayal of women, including trans and gender-fluid individuals?
- ❓ When focusing on children, are the colors stereotypically gendered (e.g., pinks and blues)?
- ❓ Are you giving space to the variety of ways “femininity” can be expressed? Are you depicting diverse gender expressions and presentations in terms of dress, grooming choices, etc.

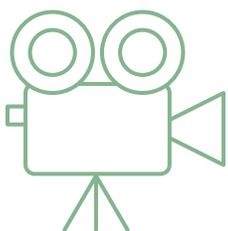
# Race & Ethnicity

Put women of color in focus.

The concepts of race and ethnicity are more complex than skin color or national origin.

Showcasing this vast diversity from a female point of view, means prominently featuring women from a wide range of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, including mixed-race and multiple-race origins, as well as women from indigenous and other underrepresented groups.

If female writers are in the writers' room, **female character representation on-screen** is, on average,



**50%**  
higher.<sup>5</sup>

**Inclusive imagery should go beyond simply showing women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds—it should challenge harmful stereotypes.**

## Questions to think about: Visualizing diversity of race and ethnicity.

- ? Are you using stereotypes to represent women of nonwhite ethnicities? Are you avoiding stereotypes in terms of setting, behavior, clothing, etc.?
- ? Are you relying on “tokenism” or just making a symbolic or minimum effort to depict race?
- ? Are nonwhite women featured in a variety of roles and professions (e.g., employer AND employee, different industries), and displaying a variety of hobbies and interests?
- ? Are you showing women with a range of skin tones, facial features, hair textures, and authentically reflecting the diversity within communities of color?
- ? Are you representing women’s race/ethnicity alongside other intersections of their identity? (E.g., disabilities, gender identity or expression, age, etc.)
- ? Are you reflecting the cultural nuances and traditions of different races/ethnicities (around food, celebrations, activities, etc.)?

5. Source: Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE), UCLA.

# Sexual Orientation

Celebrate your audience with pride.

Sexual orientation is often described in terms like straight, gay, lesbian, and bisexual. But there are women who describe themselves as asexual, pansexual, and more. Using the umbrella term LGBTQ+ encompasses a panoply of orientations outside of heterosexuality.

Showcasing LGBTQ+ women in nonstereotypical careers, navigating real-life moments, living on their own, as single parents, enjoying fulfilling family and personal lives—and doing it all across races, genders, and ages—is a powerful way to demonstrate inclusivity in storytelling.

**Sexual orientation**  **Gender identity**

— and should be treated that way. —

## Questions to think about: Visualizing sexual orientation.

- ❓ Are you using real LGBTQ+ women to represent the LGBTQ+ community?
- ❓ Are you only showing LGBTQ+ women in romantic stories or as parents? What about single LGBTQ+ women living full lives? With friendship groups, parents or grandparents, at work, at home and beyond?
- ❓ Are you showing LGBTQ+ women of various races and ethnicities?
- ❓ Are you showing LGBTQ+ women living fulfilling, positive lives, and having shared experiences within and outside of their communities?
- ❓ Are you representing senior LGBTQ+ women? Are you doing it in a positive way?
- ❓ Are you representing LGBTQ+ women alongside other intersections of their identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, body type, etc.)?

# Bodies

**Model a more realistic look.**

The media has traditionally promoted an idealized, unrealistic female image.

Imagery portraying women in all their natural shapes, sizes, and complexions helps establish new body image norms and connects with audiences in a way that feels positive, empowering, and more authentic—every brand’s goal.

**Showing women with more realistic and diverse bodies helps promote positive self-image, sets brands apart, and can even boost brand perception.**

The weight of the average American woman is



The weight of the average female fashion model is



## Questions to think about: Visualizing bodies.

- Are you representing women with larger bodies? Shorter bodies? Are you selecting imagery that features them living full lives?
- Are you being conscious of the positioning of women with larger and shorter bodies? Do they look comfortable and proud?
- Have you considered the styling of women with larger and shorter bodies? Are they dressed in less sophisticated or more ill-fitted clothing than their slimmer and taller counterparts?
- Have you considered the representation of women with different skin conditions?
- Have you considered images of pregnant women or women with post-partum bodies? Are they being portrayed as active, dynamic individuals?
- Are you considering how the bodies of women of all sizes appear in the visuals you choose? Can their positioning be interpreted as unnecessarily sexualized or objectified?
- Are you digitally altering the physical appearance of the women in your imagery?

6. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

7. <https://thehub.com/2018/10/11/how-much-do-models-weigh/>

# Ability

Empower change with authenticity.

For women living with disabilities, inclusivity means shifting away from stereotypes and good intentions, and focusing on the richness of real life.

Imagery that highlights the individual rather than the physical or cognitive difference, more accurately reflects the millions of women who live active, dynamic lives in spite of disabilities.

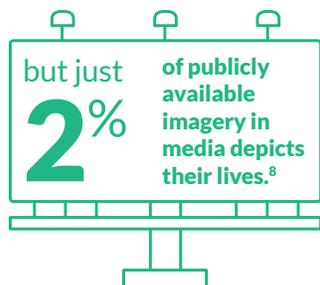
Disabilities to consider when using inclusive imagery:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Communicating
- Movement
- Mental health

Nearly **1 in 4**



people have a disability,



**Promoting imagery of women with disabilities affirms that they are proud, productive members of our communities.**

8. <https://creativeinsights.gettyimages.com/en/repicture/our-partnerships/the-disability-collection>

## Questions to think about: Visualizing abilities.

- ? Are you showing women with disabilities as active members of society?
- ? Are you only showing women with disabilities being helped, cared for, or trying to overcome their challenges?
- ? Are you only featuring women in wheelchairs or with other easily identifiable differences? What about women with cognitive challenges or an invisible disability?
- ? Are you conveying positive messages, such as love, friendship, or achievement?
- ? Have you considered the camera angle? Is the viewer looking down at the differently abled subject?
- ? Are you focusing on a woman's disability rather than on her whole identity?
- ? Are you showing the whole range of life experiences that a person with disabilities may have? Are you representing women with disabilities alongside other intersections of their identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, age, etc.)?

# Age

Shine on women throughout their journey.

As different as we all are, we all get older. Older women make up a powerful and growing block. Despite this, a study by YouGov found that 79% of over-50s don't believe they are accurately portrayed in advertising.<sup>9</sup>

Including older women from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles in imagery is a way to promote greater inclusivity, and provides a more realistic reflection of the varied and important roles older women play in our lives.

Among characters over 40,

women represent



Most of the older characters you see in movies and TV shows are men.<sup>10</sup>

## Questions to think about: Visualizing age.

- ❓ Are you showing a multidimensional experience of what it means to be an older woman?
- ❓ Are you focusing on what older women can't do and not on what they can do?
- ❓ Have you considered that rather than being cared for, older women (seniors in particular) might be caring for their children and/or parents?
- ❓ Are you showing women over 40 as contented, active, and fulfilled?
- ❓ Are you taking an expansive view of the sorts of relationships older women have? (E.g., LGBTQ+ spouses/partners, friend groups, platonic companions, etc.)
- ❓ Are you representing older women alongside other intersections of their identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, body type, religion, etc.)?

9. Source: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/10/26/those-aged-50-and-over-feel-they-are-inaccurately->

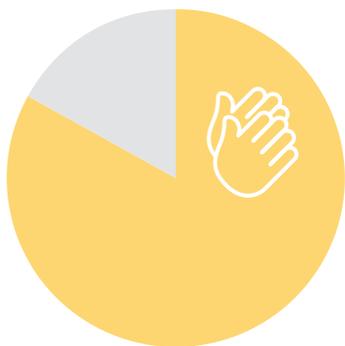
10. Source: Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, University of Southern California.

# Religion

Turn a complex subject into an opportunity to stand out.

Religion is deeply important to many women, and religious affiliation is also increasingly diverse. White Christians account for less than half of the American public. Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and other communities, are growing.<sup>11</sup>

Featuring religion does not require an obvious reference such as a cross, menorah, or hijab. A truly inclusive depiction of women of different religions means avoiding stereotypes and showing them outside of a religious context.



**83+%**

of the world's population consider themselves religious.<sup>11</sup> An inclusive approach reflects the many ways religion shapes women's lives.

## Questions to think about: Visualizing religion.

- ? Have you researched women of different faiths in your own community (demographics, social norms, common practices, etc.)?
- ? Are you focusing on the individual or their faith?
- ? Are you showing a range of women from different religious backgrounds?
- ? Are you showing women with people from other religious or nonreligious backgrounds?
- ? Are you using tokenistic iconography to visually speak to a faith (e.g., Islam, Christianity, Hinduism), or even a holiday like Hanukkah?
- ? Are you representing women of different faiths alongside other intersections of their identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, body type, age, etc.)?

11. Source: <https://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol32/27/>

# Inclusivity should always be authentic.

The power of inclusive photography and video is in their ability to portray the diverse women we know or see in the world around us. The more authentic an image feels, the more it will resonate and promote greater cultural awareness. Authenticity is key to building trust, and crucial to representing all women with humanity and dignity.

1. Source: Edelman Intelligence, Impact of Beauty Stereotypes Quant Study; 2019.

2. Source: IRI. 2-5X sales lift for ads and programming that scored 100 or above in SeeHer's Gender Equality Measure (GEM™) score — Source: IRI.

3. Source: Getty Images Top 1 Million Global YoY Searches, January 2020.

4. Source: ANA.

5. Source: Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE), UCLA.

6. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

7. Source: <https://thehub.com/2018/10/11/how-much-do-models-weigh/>

8. Source: <https://creativeinsights.gettyimages.com/en/repicture/our-partnerships/the-disability-collection>

9. Source: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/10/26/those-aged-50-and-over-feel-they-are-inaccurately->

10. Source: Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, University of Southern California.

11. <https://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol32/27/>

# Appendix

## Important terms to know.

### BODY IMAGE

A subjective picture of one's own physical appearance established both by self-observation and by noting the reactions of others.

### DISABILITY

Any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them [CDC].<sup>12</sup> There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's:

- Vision
- Movement
- Thinking
- Remembering
- Learning
- Communicating
- Hearing
- Mental health

### ETHNICITY

An ethnic group or ethnicity is a category of people who identify with each other, usually on the basis of presumed similarities such as common language, ancestry, history, society, culture, nation or social treatment within their residing area.

### GENDER

The behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one's sex.

### GENDER EXPRESSION

The physical and behavioral manifestations of one's gender identity. People vary greatly in the extent to which they hold and convey gendered thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Gender expression refers to the way people convey their gender through mannerisms, behaviors, or expressions.

### GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male nor female.

### INCLUSIVE

Including everyone, *especially* allowing and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability).

### LGBTQ+

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and the plus is designed to include other fluid or more abstract sexual orientations.

### RACE

Race is defined as "a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits," while the term ethnicity is more broadly defined as "large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background."<sup>13</sup>

According to scientists, neither race nor ethnicity (see ethnicity) is detectable in the human genome; however, they are both widely accepted social constructs used to categorize seemingly distinct populations and continue to be critical points of representation in many parts of the world. Below are races/ethnicities that are commonly considered in casting:

- **White/Caucasian**  
A person having origins in Europe.
- **Black**  
A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Including, for example, direct descendants of Africa, as well as African-American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, and so forth.
- **Hispanic/Latinx**  
A person having origins in any of the countries in Latin America and/or of Spanish descent, regardless of race.
- **Asian**  
A person belonging to the pan-ethnic group that has origins in East Asia, South Asia or Southeast Asia.
- **East Asian**  
A person deriving from the east Asian subregion of the continent which includes countries such as China, Japan, Taiwan, North and South Korea, etc.

12. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>

13. Merriam-Webster.

# Appendix

## Important terms to know.

### RACE (CONTINUED)

- **South Asian**

A person deriving from the southern region of the Asian continent which includes countries such as India, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka.

- **Southeast Asian**

A person deriving from the region geographically south of China, east of India and Bangladesh, north of Australia, and west of New Guinea. This area includes countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, etc.

- **Middle Eastern or North African (MENA)**

A person having origins (regardless of religious affiliation) in countries comprising what's commonly referred to as the "Middle East" and/or North Africa.

- **Indigenous Peoples**

A person descending from ethnic communities that inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. These peoples are spread around the world, but are particularly populated in the Americas, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>14</sup>

- **Multiracial/Biracial/Mixed Race**

A person who identifies with more than one racial/ethnic group.

### RELIGION

Religion can be explained as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.<sup>15</sup> There are several religions and religious denominations around the world with varying customs that may affect the way people dress, what they eat, what activities they do, how they marry and raise children, and much more.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A person's sexual identity or self-identification as heterosexual (straight), gay, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

14. [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf)

15. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>

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## Join the conversation.

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