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“Wokespeak” Woes

An investigation into the impact of inclusion-related word
use on political activism and performative allyship

An Honors Capstone Project by Natalie Anderson

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INTRODUCTION

Words matter. Specifically, the words we use to refer to other people are exceedingly important because they can affect how people perceive others and how individuals see their own identity. New terms are introduced to better represent the identities of certain groups or to draw attention to long-ignored injustices. However, the degree in which words matter is a topic that has sparked some debate. Attempts to regulate or educate others on more inclusive language are often faced with pushback due to the work that would be required to consistently use a particular word or phrase. Additionally, some words that are considered the most accurate or the most “politically correct” may not even be used by those who are members of the group that the word describes. For example, the term “BIPOC” (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) has gained traction on social media and in some communities as of late. However, many people whose identities fall into BIPOC do not use this term, which brings up questions about the validity of its usage in the first place.

The fact that the development of new lexicon often reflects changes in our socio-political culture is a testament to the importance and power of language. However, is the language that is used to discuss these important topics really as important as the issues themselves? Disagreements over the proper terminology often seem frivolous when others are arguing over who does or does not deserve inalienable human rights and freedoms. This particular category of vocabulary can be referred to as “wokespeak,” which is a term in itself that is rather controversial. It is commonly defined as “words that display an awareness of social issues,” and it is often used by

conservatives to insult liberals and their use of “politically correct” terms (Harmon, 2021). This thesis explores the role of wokespeak as both a form of activism and a performative way of displaying one’s social awareness.

BACKGROUND

The evolution of “woke” and “wokespeak”

Wokespeak has become prevalent over the past few years, as a result of the introduction of the term “woke” and the spreading of “Woke” Culture. However, the word “woke” existed for many years before that, and it was first used by Black communities in the 1960s to signify “being aware” (Hall, 2021). “Woke” slowly took on a more political definition, and began to be used to refer to a person who is “aware of social issues such as racial injustice and inequality.” There is evidence of “woke” being used as a political term as early as the 1970s, particularly with the phrase “stay woke,” but it did not grow in popularity until the 2010s. According to Perry Bacon Jr (2021), the term surged in popularity when it began being used by Black activists in the Black Lives Matter movement. Columnist Rebecca Solnit (2021) emphasizes how “woke” originated in black communities and “its illness and decline came after it was kidnapped by old white conservatives,” like so many other words that are appropriated from Black culture. At first, it was used to encourage others to be aware and educate themselves about racial injustice in America. However, over time, “woke” has pejorated and has been adopted by conservatives who use it as an insult to condemn liberals for what they view as hypersensitivity and defense of “cancel culture.” Many conservatives seem to believe

that “wokeness” gives liberals too much power because they can “cancel” or publicly shame people who do not agree with them. The term “wokespeak” is also used mostly by the political right to critique the left for their use of more inclusive words and phrases.

Wokespeak backlash

Although inclusive language can help individuals to feel more understood and represented, some people see the effort required to learn and employ new vocabulary as unnecessary and tedious. In David Oliver’s article published in the British Medical Journal (2020), “Caring about language doesn’t mean we can’t care,” he shares that many nurses are pushing back against the adoption of new and more inclusive language in the workplace because they see regulating their language as “frivolous” or a waste of time that could be better used for patient care. In contrast, Oliver argues that using more inclusive language is an important aspect of patient care and that it is worth the time and effort that it takes to make a patient feel more comfortable and understood. Although focusing on the language we use may seem trivial, especially in a fast-paced environment such as a hospital, language matters and it should be considered an important aspect in creating not only a positive work environment, but also a better world community.

Wokespeak & Cancel Culture

Although wokespeak is positive in the way that it promotes social justice issues, many people question its importance because it is constantly changing. In addition, the price of using the wrong term is, at times, being “canceled,” which means to denounce

or stop supporting someone. Cancel culture tends to be prevalent on social media, and people are often quick to cancel others for a gaffe rather than attempting to educate them on the importance of using a different term. In an opinion piece titled “‘Wokespeak’ is changing faster than I can keep up” by Black journalist Clarence Page (2021), he points out that although society has become more liberated, people are more punitive in the way they judge the virtue of others. If people are afraid to engage with others due to fear of being canceled, there is little hope in helping people that might not be aware to educate themselves on those important issues. Wokespeak can be counterproductive in the way that its goal is to build inclusivity, but it also alienates others who do not have prior knowledge of the niche terms.

Terms Used in this Study

“BIPOC”

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) has become the current term that is in fashion when referring to Black people and other people of color, at least in some communities. According to a podcast episode of the Takeaway, BIPOC first appeared around 2013 and has since gained traction among progressive voices, especially in the wake of the BLM movement (Vega, 2022). The acronym stems from the term “people of color (POC),” which has been in use since the 1960s when groups like the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets used it to unite their movements and encourage solidarity among people of color (Grady, 2020). “People of color” is also an example of person-first language because it was derived from the older term “colored people.” Although the goal of the term “people of color” is to promote solidarity and inclusivity, at

times it causes certain identities within the umbrella term to be erased. For example, the linguist Deandre Miles-Hercules emphasizes that when referring to those who are most often affected by police brutality, the term “person of color” is not very accurate. Since Black people are disproportionately affected by this issue, using the term “person of color” is misleading because it implies that Asians and other people of color are impacted to the same degree.

The critiques of the term “POC” are very similar to that of “BIPOC.” Although “BIPOC” can be useful in contexts when the uniting of communities is emphasized, it fails to highlight the issues affecting individual groups and it can be misleading. In Meera E. Deo’s 2021 essay “Why BIPOC Fails,” she provides an example of how using “BIPOC” in a research setting can spread misinformation. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers would collect and present data on how the virus was affecting the BIPOC community. However, in many of these studies, data is not collected from Indigenous communities. Thus, the term could actually be serving to exclude Native Americans from more conversations rather than advocating for them. In addition, the use of “BIPOC” here is inaccurate because it implies that Indigenous people are included in the study even though they are not.

Another critique that people have of the term “BIPOC” is that it was adopted rather haphazardly into our vocabularies without much thought or evaluation. In Deo’s essay, she shares her belief that a wider conversation and deep reflection is necessary before adopting new terms like BIPOC. Throughout the essay, she encourages allies and academics to not simply accept and use whatever new terminology is in style; but instead to think critically about the language we use and the meaning behind it. Deo

questions the need for a change to the term at all, since “BIPOC” is essentially a synonym for “POC,” except “Black” and “Indigenous” are placed at the front to emphasize how those groups have faced unequal levels of injustice. She argues that this change is more symbolic than equivalent to actual progress.

“Latinx”

In recent years, “Latinx” has emerged as an inclusive term used to describe people of Latin American descent in a gender-neutral way. The term first began being used in the United States about a decade ago and was created, along with similar terms like “Latin@,” for the purpose of providing a gender-neutral option for those who do not wish to use “Latino” or “Latina.” The goal of the term is to help nonbinary individuals feel represented, and the replacement of a word-final vowel with an ‘x’ is a common orthographical change being taken up as of late in order to purposely defy the gender binary that characterizes languages like Spanish. Although the term has received some positive feedback for its message of inclusivity, “Latinx” has also faced a lot of backlash and has not gained popularity among the group it is meant to describe. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2020, “only 23% of U.S. adults who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino have heard of the term Latinx, and just 3% say they use it to describe themselves” (Noe-Bustamante). And among the population that do not use the term, a small portion also find the term offensive. Many native Spanish speakers see the genderization of Spanish as an important aspect of its linguistic tradition and do not think it should be eliminated. In Charlotte Allen’s essay for the Wall Street Journal (2021), “‘Latinx’ isn’t popular with latinos; on behalf of all hispanic americans, I say no más to this politically correct linguistic monstrosity,” she shares that

“many Hispanics view the word ‘Latinx’ as a colonialist effort by ignorant gringos to impose their own ideological fixations on the rest of the world.” Many people argue against the validity of the term as a part of Spanish as well because of how it departs from Spanish grammatical rules. The Royal Academy of Spanish (RAE), which is widely considered an authoritative source on the Spanish language, refuses to accept the term (Watkins, 2022). This rejection demonstrates the controversial nature of “Latinx.”

While some people feel strongly against the usage of “Latinx,” there has been an uptick in its usage especially among academic circles in later years. Latinx scholars Vidal-Mortiz and Martinez (2020) argue in favor of the usage of the term, asserting that “Latinx” is not “a trend or rupture in linguistic usage,” but “a continuity of internal shifting group dynamics and disciplinary debates.” The fact that the term itself is so controversial reflects the important topics surrounding identity and community that “Latinx” is connected to. In Lourdes Torres’ 2020 piece on “Latinx,” he predicts that debate over the term will continue because “politically charged terms quite often coexist unless a consensus is reached, and this is rarely accomplished across institutions, generations, political perspectives, and so on.” The debate over “Latinx” is certainly a reflection of how language plays an important role in our political systems.

“Partner”

“Partner,” which can be defined as “a person with whom one shares an intimate relationship, or one member of a couple” has emerged as a more gender-neutral way to refer to someone with whom one is in a relationship (“Partner”). According to Michael Bronski, a professor of women and gender studies at Harvard University, the term was originally used to describe a business relationship before it was adopted by the gay

community in the late 1980s (Kitchener, 2019). It has recently begun to be used by straight couples, mostly by liberal and educated young people, in order to be more inclusive and respectful of others' gender identities. "Partner" seems to be favored over other gender-neutral alternatives such as "lover" or "significant other" because of how it implies equal contribution to a relationship. In Caroline Kitchener's 2019 analysis of the term, she shares that many unmarried, long-term couples see the benefit of using "partner" because it implies the seriousness of the relationship outside of the context of marriage. When Gavin Newsom was sworn in as Governor of California in 2019, his wife Jennifer forgoed the traditional title of "first lady" for "first partner," which reflects the rising popularity of the term. However, some people, specifically members of the LGBTQ+ community, question its popularity and suggest it is merely "a performance of wokeness" (Kitchener, 2019). Despite the controversy surrounding its use, the pervasiveness of "partner" illustrates how the world and our language is changing to be more inclusive and more accommodating to different identities.

"Elderly"

With advancements in healthcare, people in the US, the UK and other areas of the world are living longer and healthier lives, which has led many people to believe that it is time for a change to the language used to describe older adults and the aging process. The Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy recently put out a piece that suggested a switch from terms like "elderly" or "senior" to "older adult" when referring to a person over 65 years of age (Avers, 2020). These changes to terminology are being made in hopes of helping to reframe the aging process and many people's negative perceptions of older people. Dr. Jenny Robinson (2021) shared that many older adults

are offended by the term “elderly” because of the negative connotations of the word and its association with dependency and frailty. At the same time, others criticize new phrases like “older adults” because they see it as patronizing or an attempt at sugarcoating their situation (“Is language like ‘seniors’ and ‘elderly’”). Despite criticisms, efforts to improve upon the language used regarding older adults are beneficial because they can provoke discussions and make people with different identities feel valid.

“Disabled”

“Disabled” is a common term used to describe “having a physical or mental condition that limits movements, senses, or activities,” although more and more people are questioning the validity of the term as of late (“Disabled”). Efforts to be more inclusive and recognize the struggles of the disabled community has led to a reexamination of the language used to describe them. The pejoration of the term “disabled” and other similar terms can be attributed in part to how these groups are “othered” by the rest of society. Othering is a phenomenon in which individuals and groups are treated and marked as different and inferior from the dominant social group. It is represented in language when a distinction is created between “us” and “them,” in which the out-group is often vilified by the in-group (Cherry, 2020). Othering can cause terms like “disabled” or “elderly” to take on a negative connotation due to its association with the unknown or outsiders.

Disabled author and advocate Rebecca Atkinson (2015) postulates that her unease with the term “disabled” may stem from her perception of the prefix “dis,” which she believes has an “inherently negative connotation” due to its association with words like “discredit” or “disengage.” Subtle spelling differences have been employed to

change the meaning and implications of the term. For example, publications have been capitalizing the first letter (Disabled) in order to emphasize the shared identity of people with disabilities and the barriers they face, according to the Alliance for Inclusive Education (“Why do we use capital D”). Additionally, some people have taken up capitalizing the A (disAbled) in order to draw attention to the abilities of the person being described and deemphasize the negative connotation of “dis.” Another alternative phrase that has been taken up by some groups is “differently abled,” which was created in order to emphasize the abilities of the subject rather than their disabilities. However, this term has also faced backlash from the disabled community because it diminishes the degree of their health conditions by equating them to simply different abilities. All humans are different so they are all differently abled, and the term only serves to ignore the disabled conditions of those being described (Belanger, 2019). None of these alternative terms have been accepted by the majority as the best term to describe people with disabilities, suggesting that more critical thought and development is needed to replace the term.

One way in which some people feel that language surrounding disabilities can improve is by using phraseology called “people-first language.” The idea behind people-first language is that the phrasal structure “a person with a disability” should be used instead of “a disabled person,” in order to emphasize that the individual is a person first and their disability is just one aspect of their being. According to Tanya Titchcosky (2001), there is evidence of people-first language being used as early as the 1990s, beginning predominantly among health and medical professionals. In addition,

people-first language was employed in the Black community when “colored person” became “person of color.”

In response to the rise of people-first language, identity-first language has also become popular by some members of the disabled community. Identity-first language uses the opposite structure of people-first language, thus the phrase “disabled person” would be used instead of “person with a disability.” According to the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, the goal of identity-first language is to bring one’s disability to the forefront, which allows the individual to claim the disability and choose their identity rather than permitting others to do so (Brown, 2011). In addition, it is a way of reclaiming their disability and showing their pride in their identity despite any negative perception of it. In Crocker and Smith’s piece (2019), the authors point out how identity-first language has been embraced by the Deaf community because they view the individual’s disability as an integral part of their identity. The prevalence of identity-first language in the Deaf community may also stem from the fact that many members view deafness not as a disability, but rather a medical condition and that “being deaf means that you are a member of a community of individuals who happen to have hearing impairments, but should not carry a negative connotation.” The approach of the Deaf community in comparison to other groups within the disabled community illustrates how it is important for these groups to use specific verbiage that is in line with the desires of the individual or community in order to achieve their goals.

METHODOLOGY

I wanted to pursue this topic for my capstone project because as a linguist and a social media user, I have developed a strong interest in the way that language functions on the Internet. I have always been interested in the way people communicate online and the way people manipulate the way they are portrayed through their language use online to appear more likable or “politically correct.” In particular, I was intrigued by language that aimed to be more inclusive in the way that it represents people’s identities and injustices they face based on those identities. Although I feel that the introduction of more inclusive language is a positive thing, I have observed that many people on the Internet seem more concerned with portraying themselves as morally superior, more educated, or more “woke” instead of spreading the message of inclusivity. At times, it seems like the goal of being more inclusive is lost in the sea of people trying to prove they are more woke than each other. In this capstone project, I hoped to gain insight into what people’s true motivations are when they use wokespeak: whether that is to be an advocate or an ally for underrepresented groups or to be perceived as politically correct.

For the purpose of this thesis, an online survey was conducted to determine the opinions and usage of certain terms that are used to refer to peoples’ identities. The survey was created using the software Qualtrics and included 17 multiple choice questions and 2 free response questions. The participants were asked to share their age, gender identity, and race/ethnicity for demographic purposes. 62 people participated in the survey, and they were all college students between the ages of 18-45. The survey was distributed online on various social media platforms. All participants were made aware that the survey was conducted anonymously and for

research purposes. The participants were asked about their usage of terms such as “BIPOC”, “Partner”, and “Latinx” and the reasoning behind their decision to use the word or not. The participants were asked not only about their usage of new terms such as “BIPOC” and “Latinx,” but they were also asked to examine their usage and perception of words like “Elderly” and “Disabled.” These terms were included in order to gauge participants’ opinions on older terms that some people consider offensive and see if these were used more or less frequently than newer terms. The definitions of the terms were not provided in order to not influence the participants’ opinions about the significance of the words. They were asked to determine if their choice to use a certain term is based on the accuracy of the term itself or the pressure they feel to be politically correct. They were also asked for their opinion regarding the role of language in inspiring or reflecting changes in society. There were two free response questions at the end in which participants were encouraged to elaborate on their thoughts on the role of language, language change, and societal changes, and were given the opportunity to provide their final thoughts on the survey in general.

RESULTS

Of the 62 people who completed the survey 61% were female and 39% were male (Figure 1), and the majority were in the 18-24 age range (Figure 2). With respect to ethnicity, most respondents were White/Caucasian (70.59%), while 16.18% of participants selected Asian and 7.35% selected Hispanic (Figure 3).

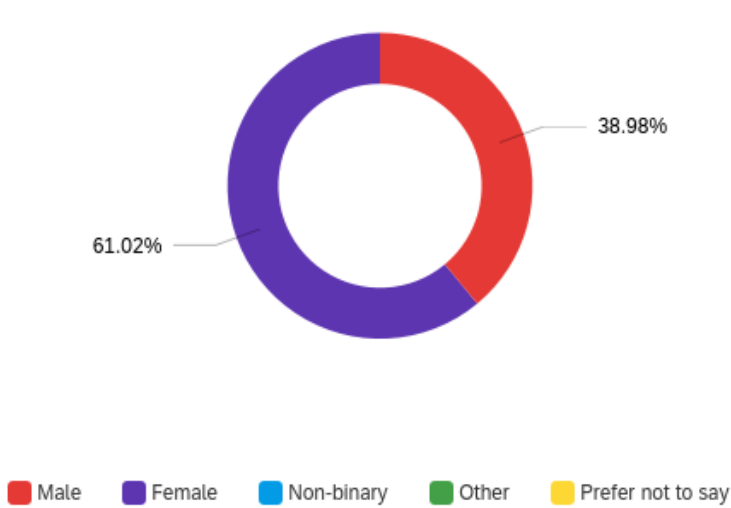


Figure 1. Q1: Please select your gender.

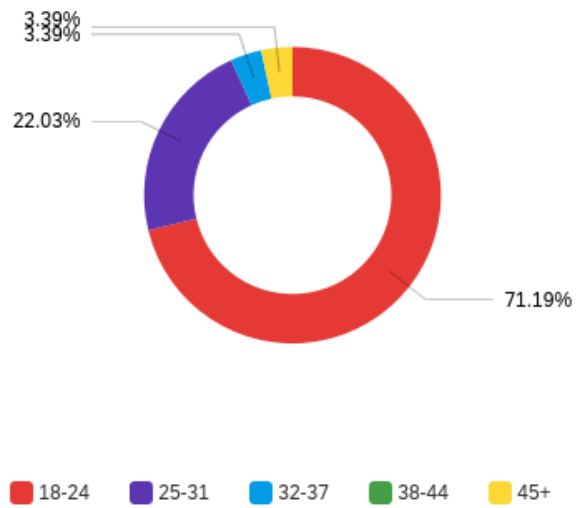


Figure 2. Q2: Please select your age range.

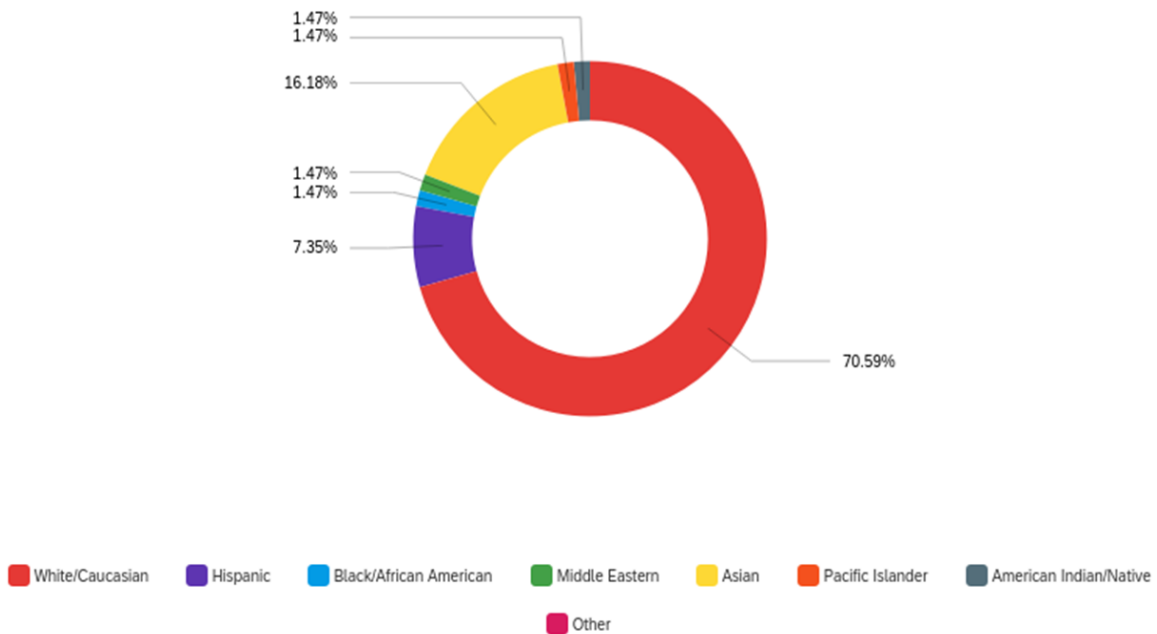


Figure 3. Q3: Please select your race and ethnicity.

For the question in which participants were asked about their usage of the term “BIPOC,” it was notable that almost 50% responded that they do not use the word at all (Figure 4). For the question in which participants were asked about their usage of the

term “elderly,” over 66.67% responded that it is the most accurate available term (Figure 5). Additionally, a large majority of participants responded that they have heard or used “elderly” in casual discussions with friends and family (Figure 6). When participants were asked about their usage of “Latinx,” 37.74% said that they do not use the term at all, while 28.3% of participants said they use it in order to be politically correct (Figure 7). 52% of participants shared that they used the term “partner” because it is the most accurate available term. The second highest selected option was “I do not use this word,” which garnered 24% of responses (Figure 8). “Partner” also seemed to be used in a variety of different contexts by those surveyed. For the question regarding the usage of the term “disabled,” 58.94% of responses were that they use it because it is the most accurate available term.

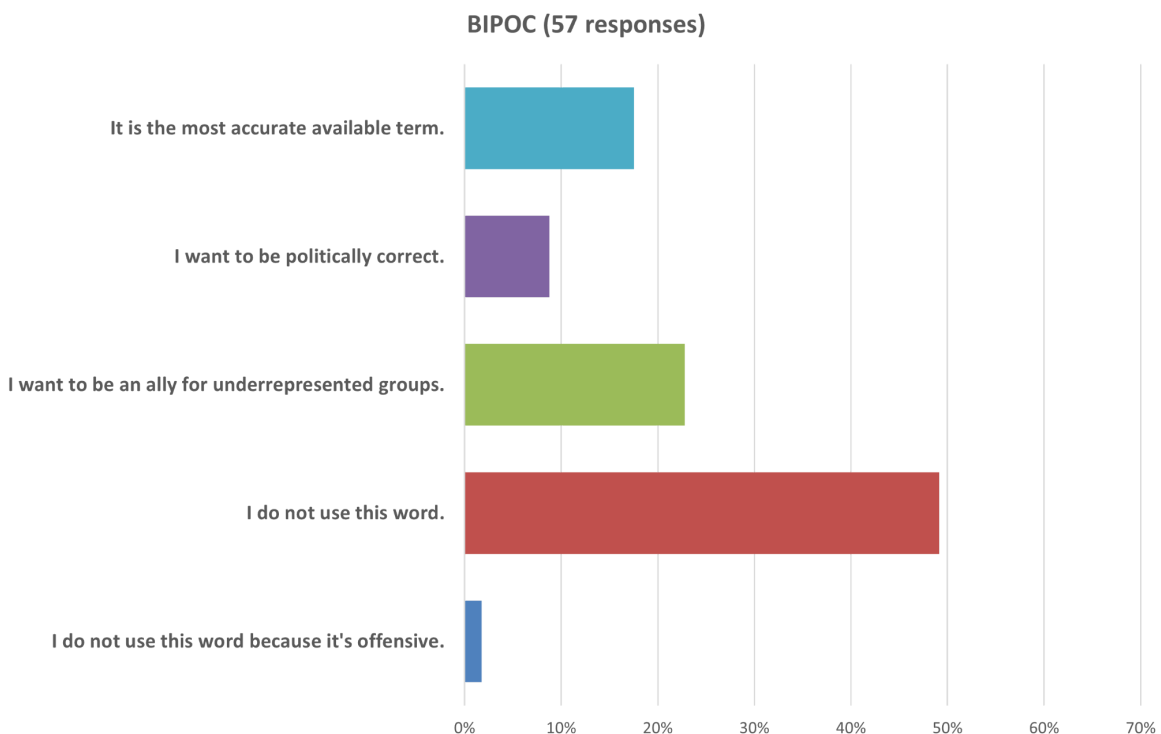


Figure 4. Q4: “BIPOC” - I use this term because...

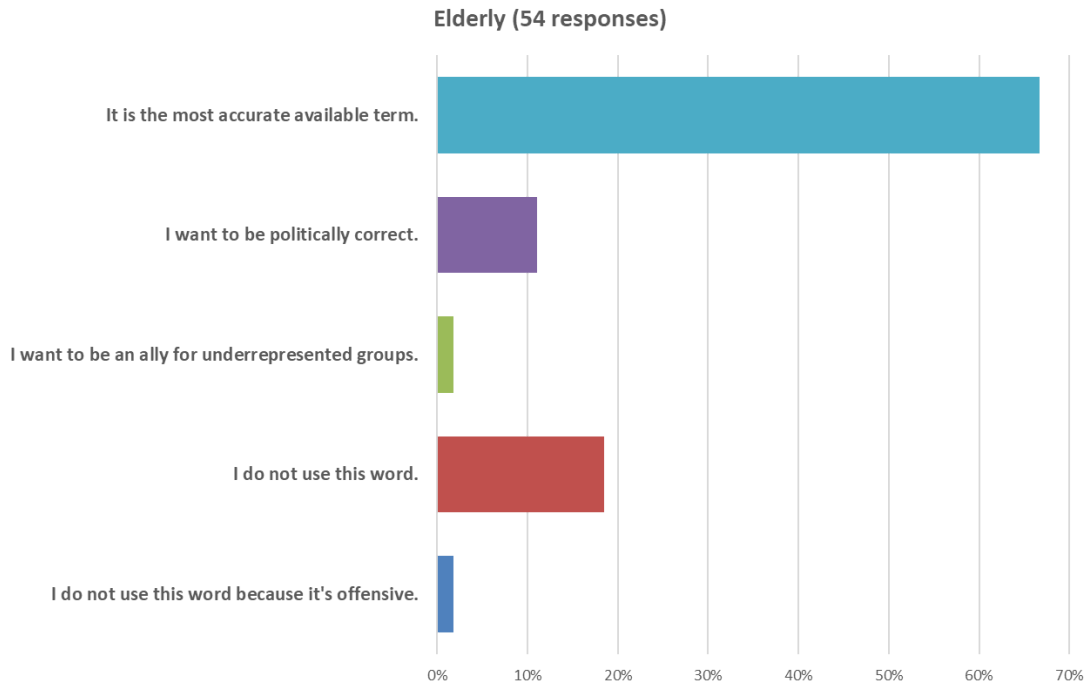


Figure 5. Q6: “Elderly” - I use this term because...

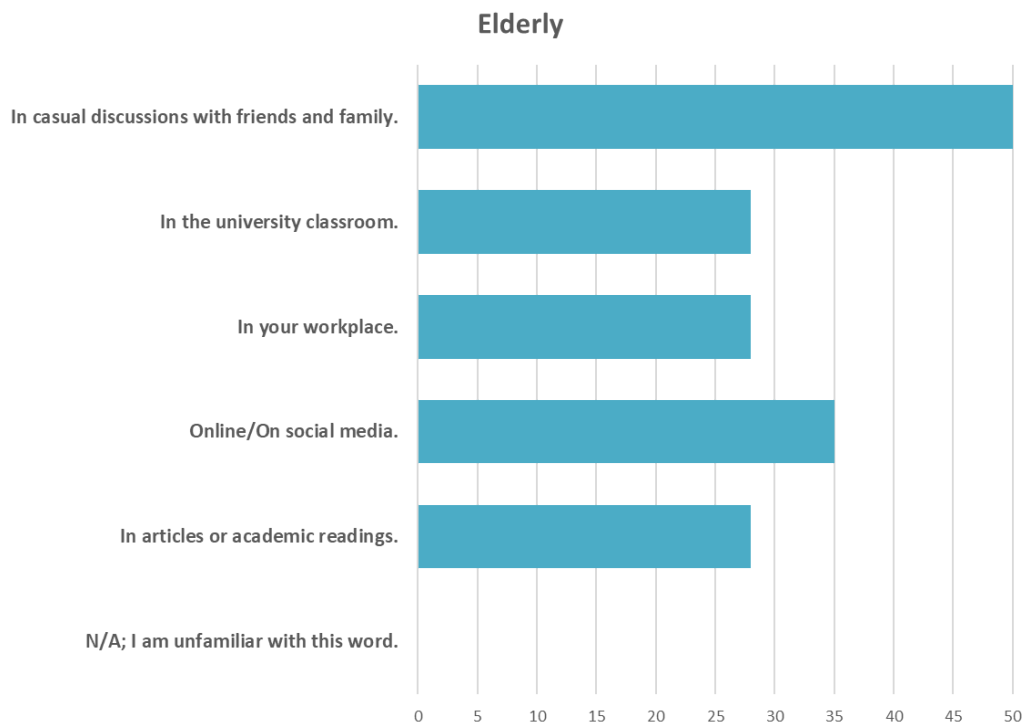


Figure 6. Q7: “Elderly” - In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term?

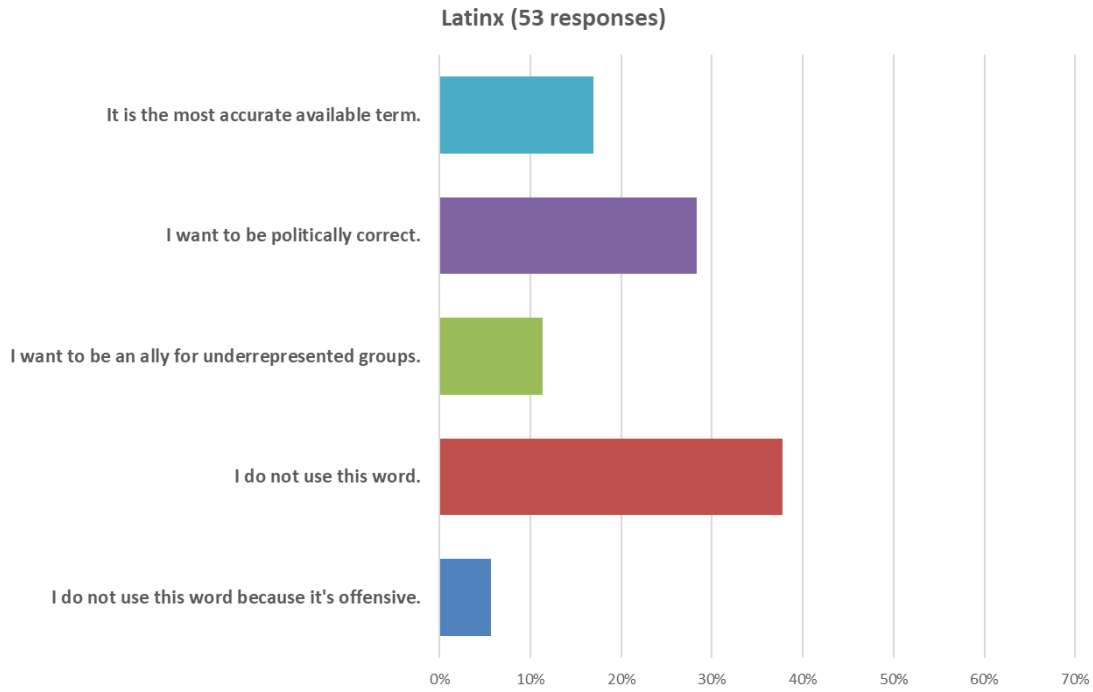


Figure 7. Q8: "Latinx" - I use this term because...

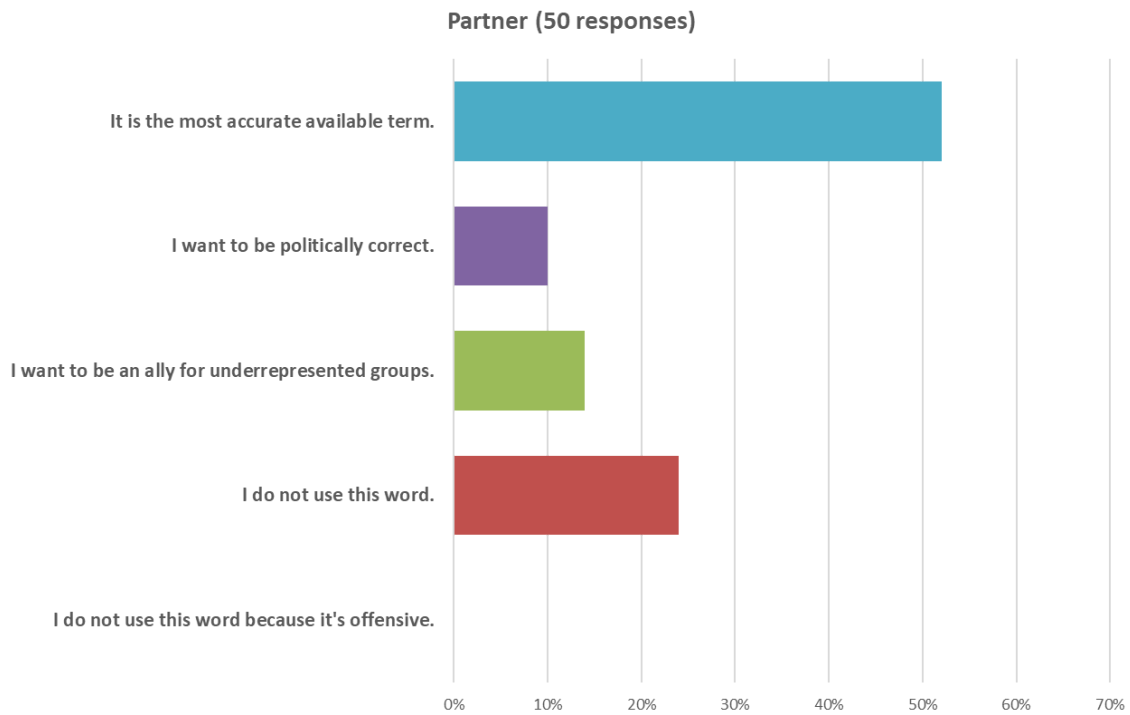


Figure 8. Q10: "Partner" - I use this term because...

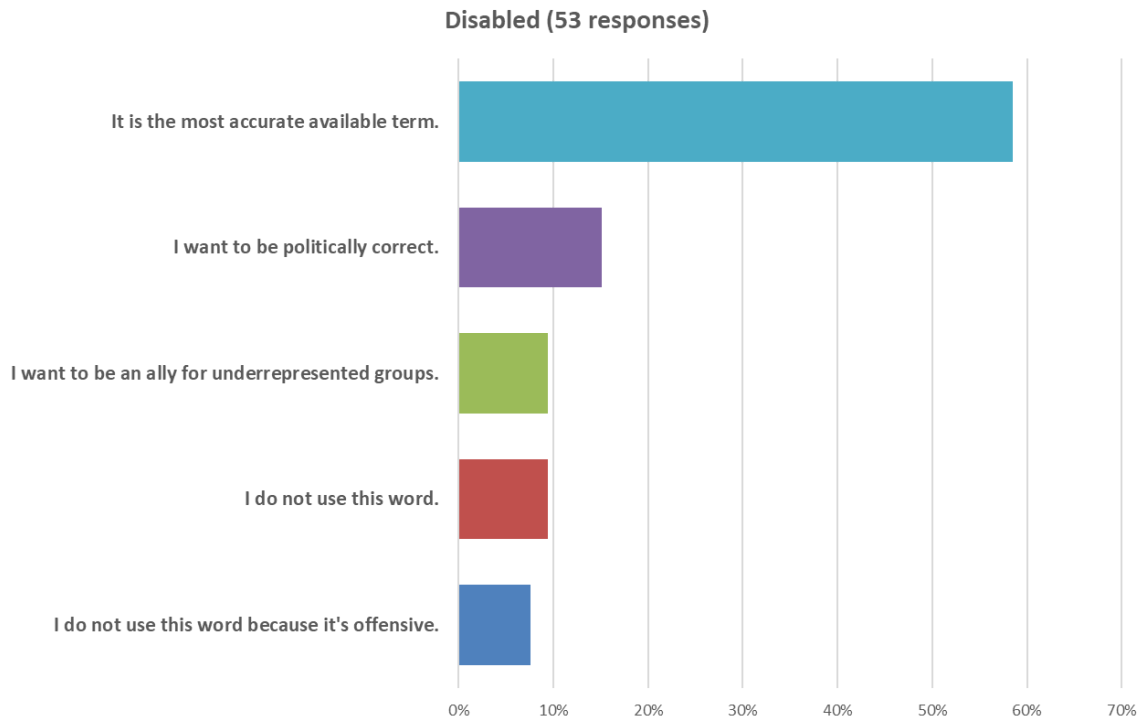


Figure 9. Q12: "Disabled" - I use this term because...

When participants were asked whether they feel pressure to speak in a way that is considered "politically correct," 38.87% of responses were "probably yes" (Figure 10). When participants were asked whether they think the way that language changes can reflect changes in society, almost all participants responded with "yes."

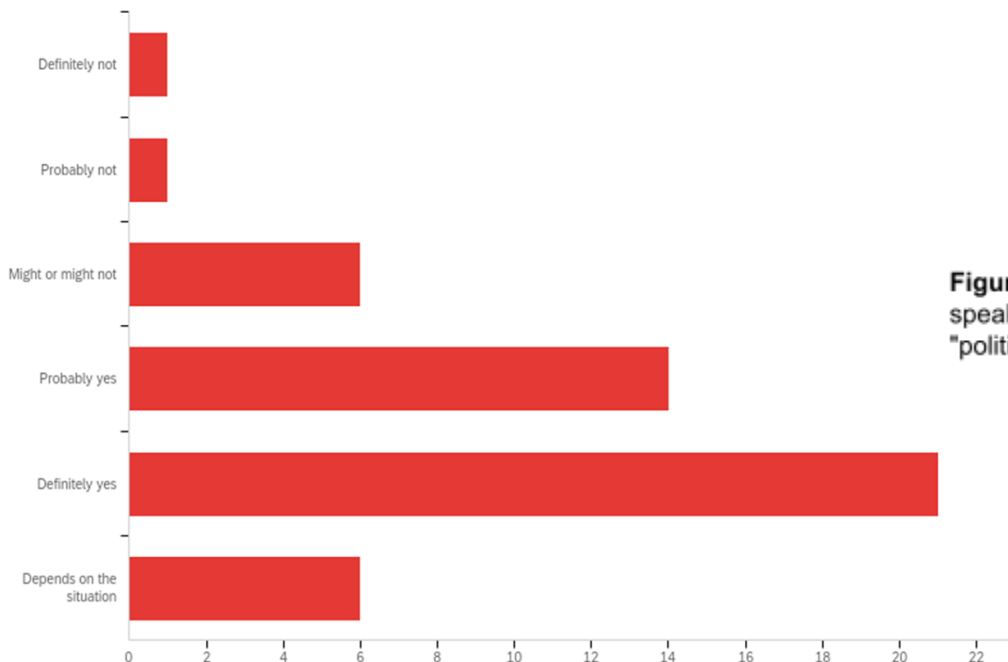


Figure 10. Q15: Do you think speaking in a manner that is "politically correct" is important?

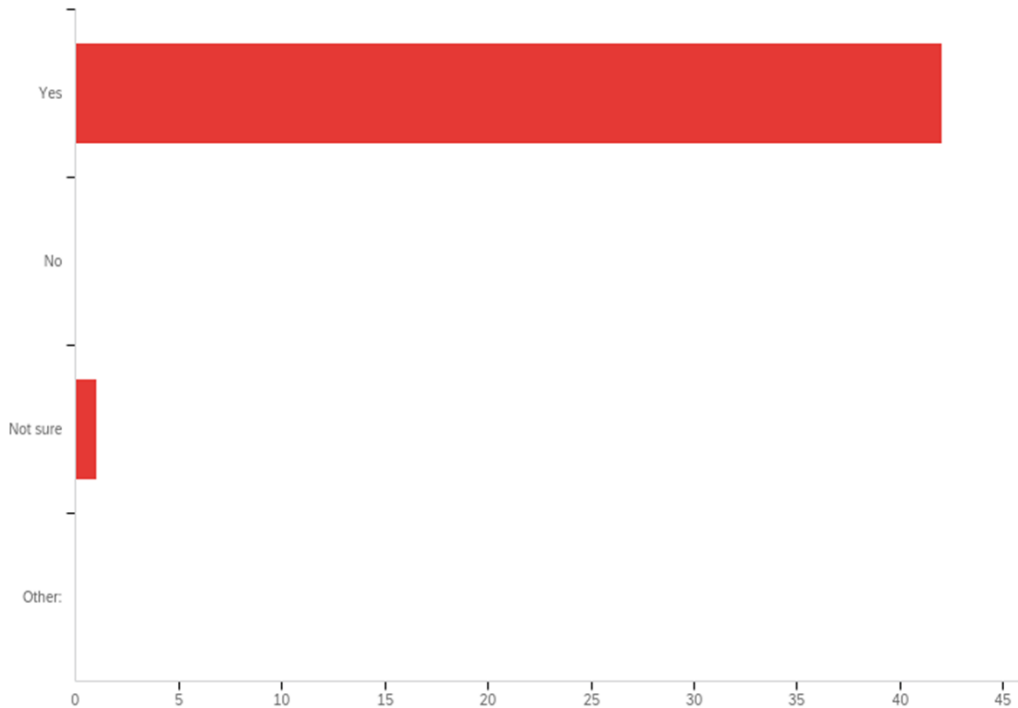


Figure 11. Q16: Do you think that the way language changes can reflect changes in society?

DISCUSSION

This survey was intended to collect information about people’s awareness and use of a select number of terms (i.e., BIPOC, Latinx, Elderly, Partner, Disabled) to describe various groups of individuals. One aspect of the survey results that is notable is that the majority of participants said they do not use the terms “BIPOC” or “Latinx.” Additionally, 3 participants responded that they do not use the term “Latinx” because it is offensive. Although these terms are considered the most “politically correct,” these results could indicate that these terms are too new and not yet widely adopted or there is hesitancy to use these terms among some communities. Members of the survey sample that selected “Hispanic” or “African American/Black” also indicated that they do not use “Latinx” or “BIPOC” respectively. This pattern is similar to data that has been

collected from large-scale surveys, such as the November 2021 poll by Bendixen & Amandi International that found out of the 800 Hispanic people surveyed, only 2% chose to identify by the term “Latinx” (Garger, 2021) suggesting this term is not widely utilized by Hispanics.

Although “BIPOC” and “Latinx” are newer terms and not yet popularly used by this survey population, it is interesting to note that many participants indicated they think that the way language changes is important. When asked whether the way language can reflect changes in society, one participant answered, “Finding new words or ways to describe things help shift meanings and represent people in ways they might not have been seen before.” Another participant shared, “When language changes to be more inclusive or causes no/less offense to minority groups it will reflect changes in our society as it shows we are becoming more aware of others feelings and that we have a better understanding of the consequences of our language.” Even though not everyone agrees on what specific terms should be used or are the most “politically correct,” it seems like most people are in agreement that language change is a positive and necessary phenomena that can have the power to affect how people are perceived and how they perceive themselves.

It was interesting that for all the terms except for “partner,” at least one participant responded that the given term offended them. This could indicate how the positive connotations of the word “partner,” such as support and togetherness, could influence people’s perception of the word. It also may indicate that “partner” is becoming more widely accepted in its usage while “disabled” was found to be offensive by 7.55% of those who responded, possibly due to the pejoration of the term from othering.

For “BIPOC,” 41 people selected that they heard or used the term online or on social media and 36 people selected that they heard or used the term in a classroom setting. For “Latinx,” 36 people selected they heard or used the term online or on social media, 33 people selected in articles or academic readings, and 32 people selected “in the university classroom.” This reflects how these terms are mostly used in academics and online rather than being employed commonly in casual speech.

Interestingly, participants use “elderly” and “disabled” in many different contexts, with the most selected option for both questions being “in casual discussions with friends and family.” This may indicate that these words have been used longer and are more common than words like “BIPOC” or “Latinx.” In addition, it reflects how the pejoration of both of those terms may be related to how long they have been in usage, and how older adults and the disabled community have been othered and marginalized for a longer period of time in the U.S.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that have affected the results. The first limitation was the small number of participants. Additionally, most participants were residing in Washington and were between the ages of 18-24, and these factors could affect their responses in the survey. The survey was shared on a few different social media sites, but it would have benefitted from being more widely distributed. The majority of participants also identified as White/Caucasian, while only a small portion of those surveyed indicated they were part of a minority group. The race/ethnicity of those participating may have affected responses because some of the words used in this

study describe specific racial/ethnic identities. If this study was conducted again using a larger population of participants with a wider range of ages, geographic locations, and races/ethnicities, it may be more representative and produce significant findings. Finally, the terms used in this study were only a small portion of a large category of words that could be considered “wokespeak.” The limitations of this study did not allow for the inclusion of words like “homeless,” “houseless,” “unhoused,” or other words used to describe people without permanent homes. Additionally, gender-neutral alternatives to traditionally masculine nouns were not included, such as “mail carrier” or “firefighter.” Due to the wide variety and substantial amount of words that fall into this category, not all of them were able to be addressed in this small-scale study.

CONCLUSION

Based on my research and the data I collected from my survey, it is clear that words related to people’s identities can be controversial and provoke a wide variety of opinions. The controversy surrounding these terms reflects the polarizing topics surrounding identity and self-expression that lie behind what could be interpreted as frivolous debates over words. Strong preferences and opinions about what terms should or should not be used indicate the importance of words themselves. Words have the ability to subtly connote meaning indirectly and can convey information about and represent different identities. They can affect the way people perceive others’ identities and how people perceive themselves because they have the power to disparage or validate people’s identities and lifestyles. Debates and discussions over the correct use of words can inspire more productive and important discussions surrounding the issues

the words describe. Many conversations that are being had about older adults and the disabled community, for example, have never been addressed and the injustices that these groups face have long been ignored. Thus, it makes sense that new words are being created to better describe and facilitate these necessary conversations, and new words will continue to be created and will fluctuate in use among different communities as our world continues to change and hopefully grow more accepting of diversity. One of the biggest critiques of “wokespeak” and inclusion-related word use is that it allows people to police others' language and attempt to cancel those who use the “wrong” word. My survey results indicate that the words themselves are not as important as the conversations and discussions surrounding them, which can serve to educate and inform others that all people deserve equality and respect, regardless of their race or ethnicity, gender identity, age, or socioeconomic background. Although some people may be motivated to use “wokespeak” in order to simply appear as “woke” and avoid being canceled, my survey reflects that a large majority of people are motivated by a legitimate desire to show respect and accurately address people of a variety of identities. It is impossible to determine people’s true motivations behind the way they speak, but what is most important is that we continue to have conversations about and rethink the way people are treated and represented in society. Words can strongly affect the way people and groups are represented and perceived, thus we must continue to adapt and use language in order to promote positive change.

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Appendix A

1. Please select your gender.
 - a. Male.
 - b. Female.
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Other
 - e. Prefer not to say

2. Please select your age range.
 - a. 25-31
 - b. 32-37
 - c. 38-44
 - d. 45+

3. Please select your race/ethnicity. (Select all that apply)
 - a. White/Caucasian
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. Black/American
 - d. Middle Eastern
 - e. Asian

“BIPOC”

4. I use this term because...
 - a. It is the most accurate available term.
 - b. I want to be politically correct.
 - c. I want to be an ally for underrepresented groups.
 - d. I do not use this word.
 - e. I do not use this word because it's offensive.

5. In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. In casual discussions with friends and family.
 - b. In the university classroom.
 - c. In your workplace.
 - d. Online/On social media.
 - e. In articles or academic readings.

- f. N/A; I am unfamiliar with this word.

“Elderly”

- 6. I use this term because...
 - a. It is the most accurate available term.
 - b. I want to be politically correct.
 - c. I want to be an ally for underrepresented groups.
 - d. I do not use this word.
 - e. I do not use this word because it's offensive.
- 7. In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. In casual discussions with friends and family.
 - b. In the university classroom.
 - c. In your workplace.
 - d. Online/On social media.
 - e. In articles or academic readings.
 - f. N/A; I am unfamiliar with this word.

“Latinx”

- 8. I use this term because...
 - a. It is the most accurate available term.
 - b. I want to be politically correct.
 - c. I want to be an ally for underrepresented groups.
 - d. I do not use this word.
 - e. I do not use this word because it's offensive.
- 9. In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. In casual discussions with friends and family.
 - b. In the university classroom.
 - c. In your workplace.
 - d. Online/On social media.
 - e. In articles or academic readings.
 - f. N/A; I am unfamiliar with this word.

“Partner”

- 10. I use this term because...
 - a. It is the most accurate available term.
 - b. I want to be politically correct.
 - c. I want to be an ally for underrepresented groups.
 - d. I do not use this word.

e. I do not use this word because it's offensive.

11. In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)

- a. In casual discussions with friends and family.
- b. In the university classroom.
- c. In your workplace.
- d. Online/On social media.
- e. In articles or academic readings.
- f. N/A; I am unfamiliar with this word.

“Disabled”

12. I use this term because...

- a. It is the most accurate available term.
- b. I want to be politically correct.
- c. I want to be an ally for underrepresented groups.
- d. I do not use this word.
- e. I do not use this word because it's offensive.

13. In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)

- a. In casual discussions with friends and family.
- b. In the university classroom.
- c. In your workplace.
- d. Online/On social media.
- e. In articles or academic readings.
- f. N/A; I am unfamiliar with this word.

14. Do you feel pressure to speak in a way that is considered "politically correct"?

- a. Definitely not
- b. Probably not
- c. Might or might not
- d. Probably yes
- e. Definitely yes
- f. Depends on the situation

15. Do you think speaking in a manner that is "politically correct" is important?

- a. Definitely not
- b. Probably not
- c. Might or might not
- d. Probably yes
- e. Definitely yes

- f. Depends on the situation
16. Do you think that the way language changes can reflect changes in society?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other:
17. Please explain your reasoning behind your answer to the previous question.
18. Do you think that language can motivate changes in society?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other:
19. Please explain your reasoning behind your answer to the previous question, or share any relevant final thoughts here.

Appendix B

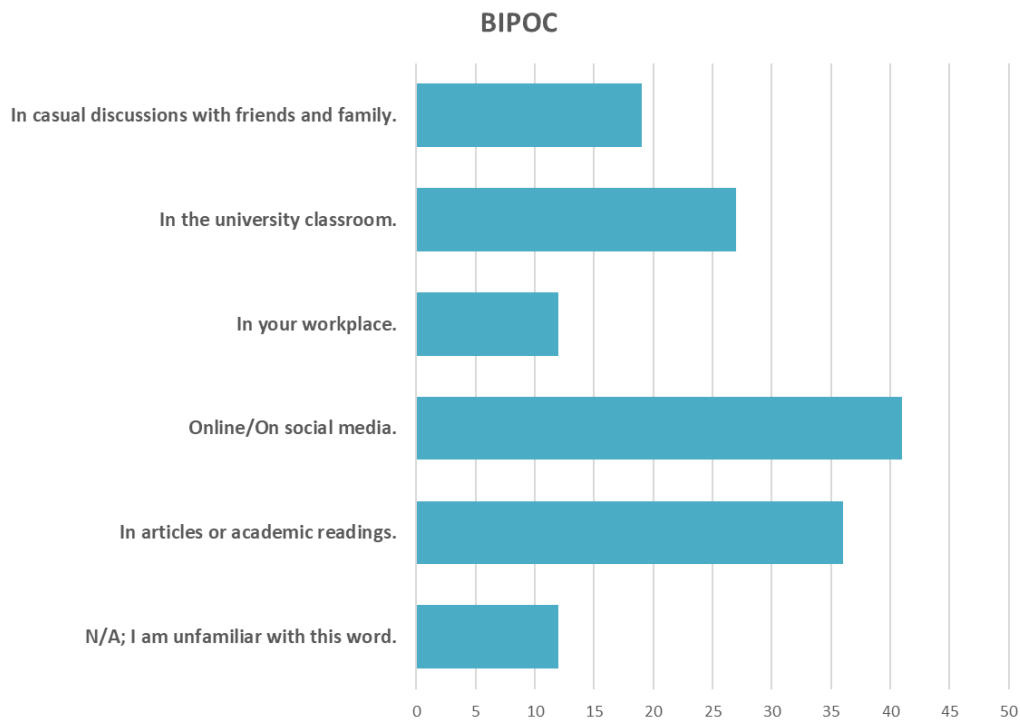


Figure 12. Q5: “BIPOC” - In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply)

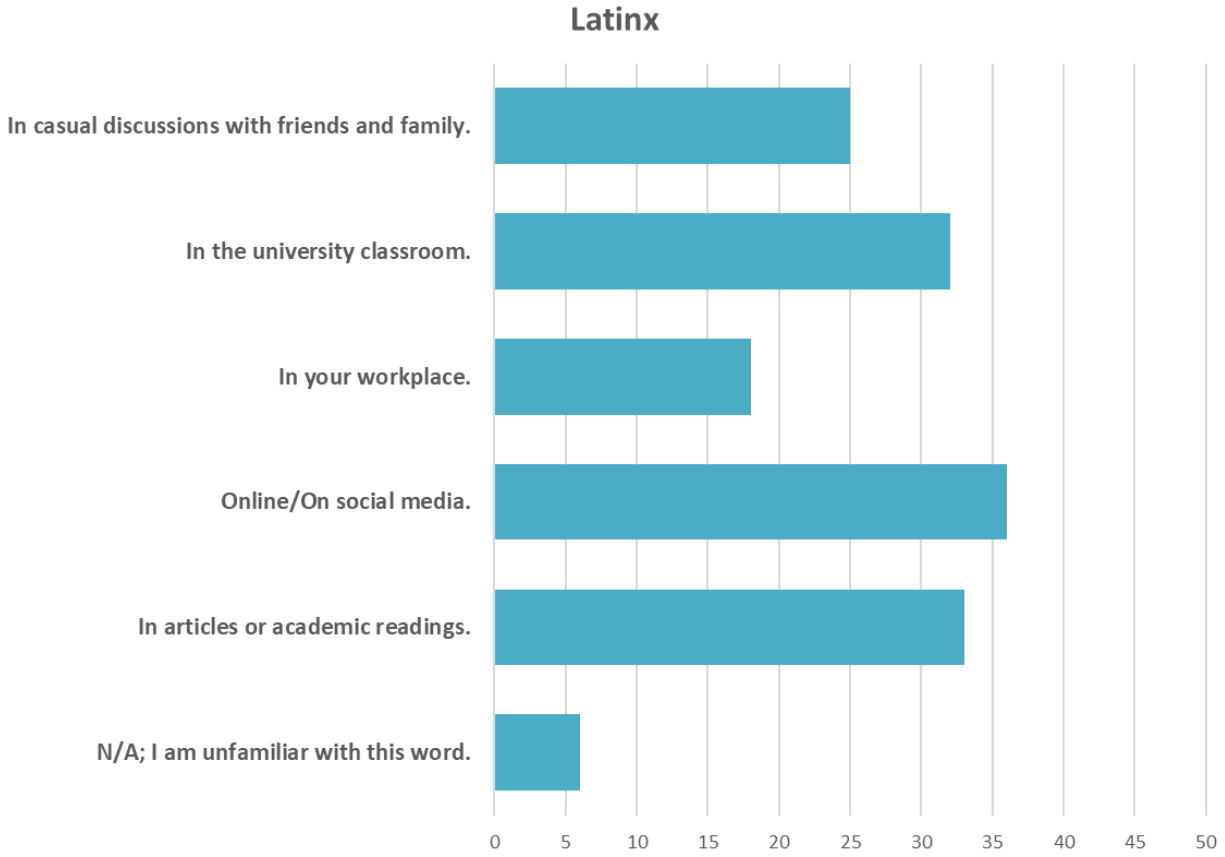


Figure 13. Q9: “Latinx” - In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply.)



Figure 14. Q11: "Partner" - In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply).

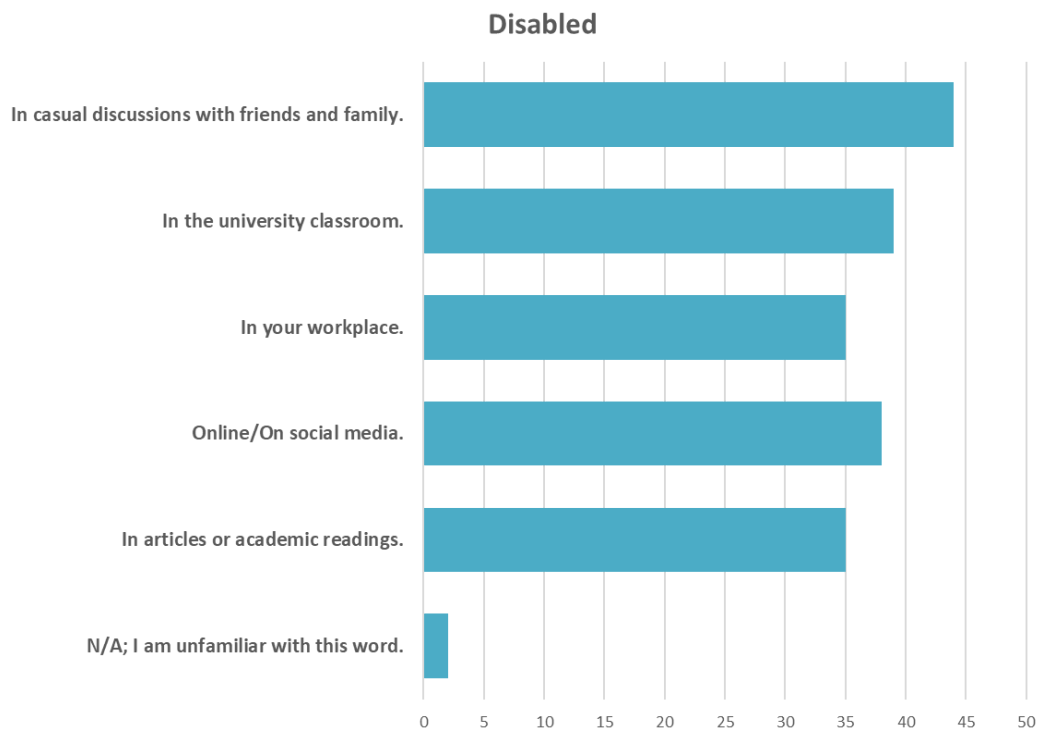


Figure 15. Q13: "Disabled" - In what contexts have you heard or personally used this term? (Select all that apply).

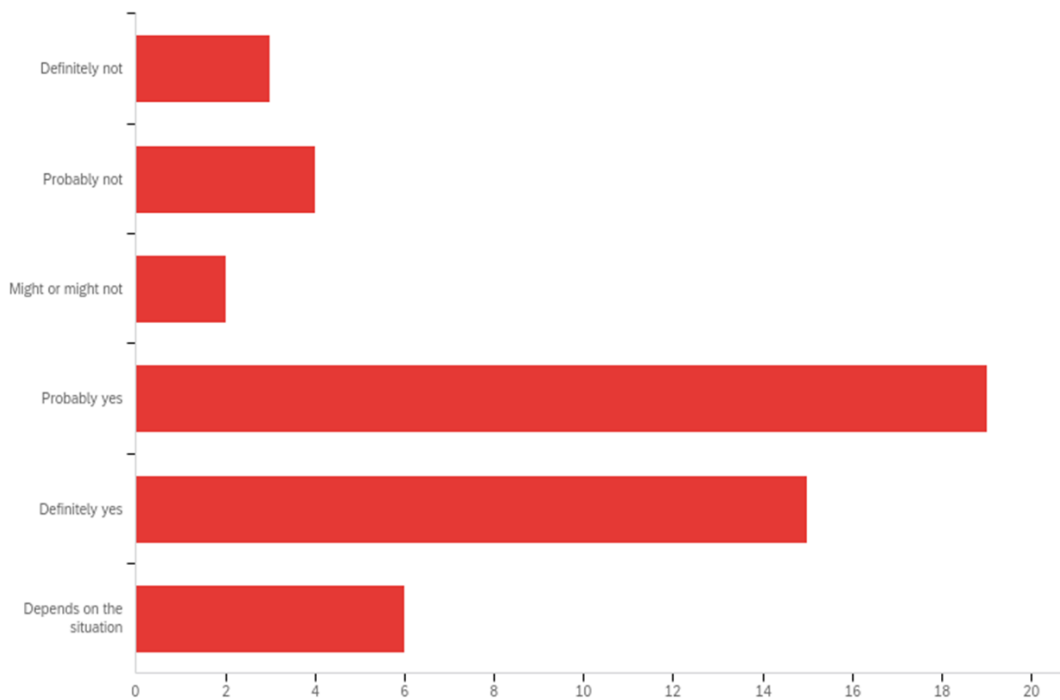


Figure 16. Q14: Do you feel pressure to speak in a way that is considered "politically correct"?

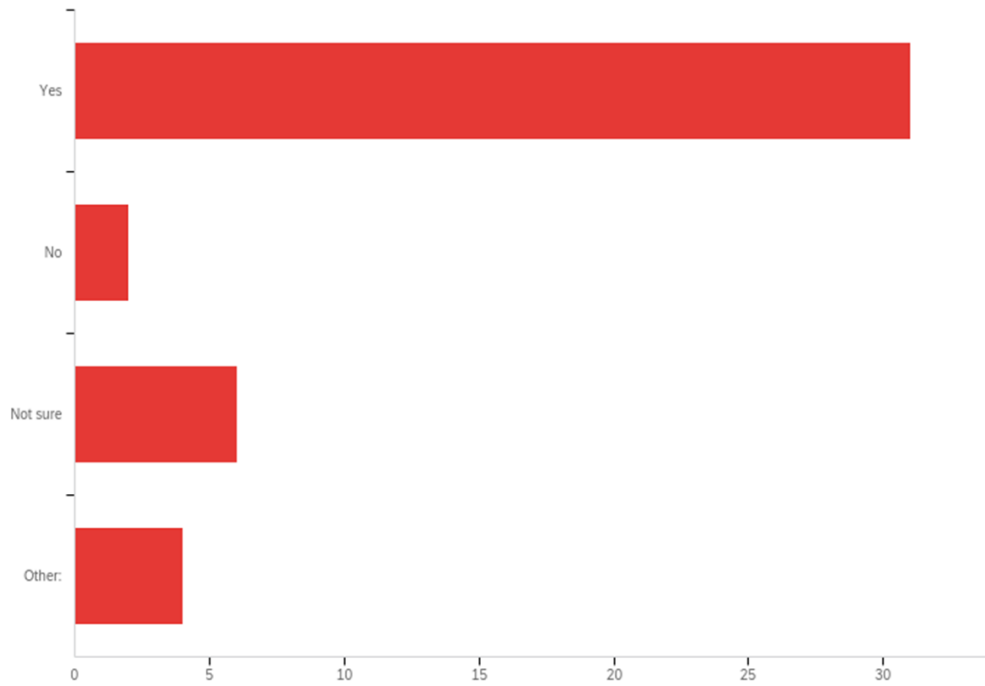


Figure 17. Q18: Do you think that language can motivate changes in society?