

Firewood®

A DE&I Imagery Tipsheet for Marketers



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.



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.

Men

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.



Appearance

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

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

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

Accessories

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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.



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

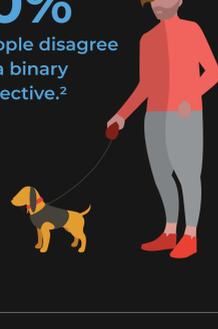
Some trans men wear baggy clothing to minimize their chest and adopt postures or gain weight to alter their body shape.



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

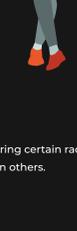
Don't presume quirkiness or eccentricity and over-index on exceptional hair colors or clothing.

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.



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



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.

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.

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.



Hairstyle

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

Latinx people

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



Clothing

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

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 considered "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.

Roles

Reflect their highly entrepreneurial spirit.



Activities

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

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.

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.



Appearance

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

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.



4.5% ↑ of people identify as LGBTQ in the US.⁵

Representation

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



Scene elements

Images can be inclusive of LGBTQ+ communities, even when an individual's sexual orientation is indiscernible or there are no people—communication is represented by elements in a scene, for example decorative family photos, a flag in a window, or symbols on a mobile phone case.



Colors

Various communities identify with colors that can be used as cues in clothing and environments.

LGBTQ+ Transgender Bisexual LGBTQ+ with Black and Brown



People with disabilities

15% of people have disabilities, globally, not all visible.⁶

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.

Gut check

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

Diversity

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

Accessibility

Inclusivity means 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.

Stereotypes

Avoid putting dark glasses on people with vision impairment.

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 hello@firewoodmarketing.com

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¹ Fleming, Molly. The importance of representing trans people in advertising. Marketing Week, April 23, 2020.

² Ipsos. What the Future. Ipsos, 2020.

³ Rico, Brittany, 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 Newport, Frank. In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%. Gallup, May 22, 2018.

⁶ World Health Organization. World report on disability. World Health Organization, 2011.