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The news reporter stated, "The victim's injuries were non-life-threatening," but the punctuation here raises a question. Is non-life-threatening correctly punctuated with two hyphens as shown? Or should it be nonlife-threatening in this particular context? 2 @PeterShor's comment is also correct from a statistical point of view. Generally, though, we refer to the significance of a test statistic not a variable since there is no way to test whether a variable is significant, only a relationship, comparison, difference, etc. So, for example, in a regression model of y on x, the coefficient on x is non-significant | not significant. The x variable cannot be significant on its own. "Un-" is defined as "a prefix meaning 'not,' freely used as an English formative, giving negative or opposite force in adjectives and their derivative adverbs and nouns... and less freely used in certain other nouns." "Non-" is defined as "a prefix meaning 'not,' freely used as an English formative, usually with a simple negative force as implying mere negation or absence of something (rather than the opposite or reverse of it, as often expressed by un-)." So "unchristian" means in some way opposed to Christian virtues, but "non-Christian" just means "not Christian." "Unprofessional" means not up to professional standards of behavior (not showing up for appointments, say), but "nonprofessional" just means not in a profession. Logically, then, "non-dead" might mean something like "not having died" (true of rocks and living people), and "undead" might mean "living." But word constructions don't always make sense. "Non-dead" isn't a word and "undead" means non-living and supernaturally animated. Go figure. The miscommunication between the OP and her interlocutor is an example of what sometimes happens in interaction between people whose ways of speaking are shaped by an education or professional experience that revolves around analysing phenomena in quantitative terms, and those with other kinds of backgrounds. The differences that the latter group characterises as qualitative, may be quite spontaneously characterised as quantitative by the former. (So, no, the OP is far from being the only person to have had the experience of such miscommunication.) Consider, for example, the difference between moving and standing still. To many people that is probably a very clear, definite, qualitative difference. Such people may speak of moving things as having this or that speed, but would never speak of the speed of an object that is standing still. A scientifically trained person, on the other hand, finds it quite natural to say that such an object has the speed that equals zero. In such a person’s conceptual framework, the difference between moving and standing, standing still is merely quantitative; it’s the difference between having the speed of zero and having some other speed. A person who is accustomed to this way of thinking may feel compelled, when speaking of things that are in fact moving, to say that they have some non-zero speed; to people on the other side, ‘non-zero’ in such a context seems redundant, as they would never apply the concept of speed to motionless things. Now, the same division can be seen when people speak of probabilities. The everyday framework for conceptualising them has the concepts such as impossible, possible (but improbable), probable (likely), certain. The differences among these at first appear to be qualitative, and are spoken of as such. People who are trained to analyse probabilities in quantitative terms, however, think of them as a continuum between zero and one. In that framework, something that is impossible has the probability of zero, something that is certain has the probability of one, and everything that is possible but not certain has some probability that is between these extremes. A person who is accustomed to that framework may feel the need to use the phrase ‘non-zero probability’ or ‘non-zero chance’ to make it clear that whatever is talked about is not impossible. To a person who is not accustomed to it, such a phrase seems strange, just like the non-zero speed in the above example. (Incidentally, to answer directly the question posed in the title, yes, non-zero in this context means more than zero as the scale of probabilities does not go below zero.) So, saying that something has a non-zero chance is just a way of saying that it is ###The nuance of language often escapes those without a similar educational or professional background, leading to misunderstandings. However, this phenomenon is not unique to any specific regional variation of the English language; rather, it's a universal aspect of human communication across languages. The use of hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes in writing is a nuanced topic. When discussing compound adjectives, it's essential to avoid ambiguous terminology. Instead, opt for clear language, such as non-finitely-generated groups. In mathematics, the standard answer is to use an EN DASH (codepoint U+2013) as a higher-order HYPHEN (codepoint U+2010). However, this approach can be alienating for some readers. In one instance, I modified my writing style to use a non- prefix instead of an en dash in certain cases. The Unicode standard attributes multiple code points to the Dash character property. Understanding these nuances is crucial when working with different languages and scripts. Non-repudiation refers to a state where the purported maker of a statement cannot dispute its validity or contract, much like having an unalterable receipt that proves data integrity. This concept is vital in computer security, allowing for trust in digital communications. The term "non-repudiable" seems most accurate; however, "non-refutable" and "non-reputable" are also used, although the latter may be more colloquial. ###ARTICLE