

Glossary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Terms



Ableism	Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability that contribute to a system of oppression; usually of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness, disabilities or less developed skills.
Accessibility	The extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with physical disabilities, such as self-opening doors, elevators for upper levels or raised lettering on signs.
Accommodation	A change in the environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to have equal opportunity, access and participation.
Accomplice	All accomplices are allies, but not all allies are accomplices. While an ally is willing to stand in support of a marginalized voice, risk is rarely involved. An accomplice uses the power and privilege they have to challenge the status quo, often risking their physical and social well-being in the process.
Ageism	Refers to two concepts: a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons.
Ally	A person who is not a member of a marginalized or disadvantaged group but who expresses or gives support to that group.
Acculturation	A process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs, patterns, and behaviors of another group. Acculturation (n.) The process of learning and incorporating the language, values, beliefs, and behaviors that make up a distinct culture. This concept is not to be confused with assimilation, where an individual, family, or group may give up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to that of their new host country.
African American	Refers to people in the United States who have ethnic origins in the African continent. While the terms “African American” and “black” are often used interchangeably in the United States, it is best to ask individuals how they identify. For example, some individuals in immigrant communities may identify as black, but do not identify as African American.
Alaska Native	Umbrella term for the indigenous peoples of Alaska, a diverse group consisting of over 200 federally recognized tribes and speaking 20 indigenous languages. This is a general term; Alaska Native people may prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s). The term “Eskimo” is considered derogatory by some Alaska Native people and should be avoided.

Anglo or Anglo-Saxon	Of or related to the descendants of Germanic peoples (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) who reigned in Britain until the Norman conquest in 1066. Often refers to white English-speaking persons of European descent in England or North America, not of Hispanic or French origin.
Anti-Racist	A person who identifies and challenges the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.
Anti-Semitism	Hatred, discrimination, hostility, or oppression of or against Jewish people as a group or individuals.
Arab	Of or relating to the cultures or people that have ethnic roots in the following Arabic-speaking lands: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. "Arab" is not synonymous with "Muslim." Arabs practice many religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and others.
Asexual	Someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people have emotional needs and can experience emotional or romantic attraction. Asexuality is considered an identity, and is different from celibacy, which is a choice.
Asian-American	Of or related to Asian Americans. The U.S. Census Bureau defines "Asian" as "people having origins in any of the original peoples of Asia or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who indicated their race or races as 'Asian,' 'Indian,' 'Chinese,' 'Filipino,' 'Korean,' 'Japanese,' 'Vietnamese,' or 'Other Asian.' Asian Americans are approximately 3.6 percent of the total U.S. population, and 4.2% including persons of mixed race.
Assimilation	The process by which one group takes on the cultural and other traits of a larger group; usually refers to the forced acculturation of a marginalized group by the dominant or White group.
Bias	Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement.
Bicultural	Of or related to an individual who possesses the languages, values, beliefs, and behaviors of two distinct racial or ethnic groups.
Bigot	A person who is obstinately devoted to their own opinions and prejudices and is intolerant towards other diverse social groups.
BIPOC	An acronym used to refer to black, Indigenous and people of color. It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systemic racism. As with any other identity term, it is up to individuals to use this term as an identifier.
Biracial	A person who identifies as being of two races or who's biological parents are of two different racial groups.
Birth Assigned Sex	The designation that refers to a person's biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One's sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female.
Bisexual	An identity term for people who are attracted to people of two genders, usually to both men and women. Bi* is used as an inclusive abbreviation for the bi, pan, and fluid community.

Black	Of or related to persons having ethnic origins in the African continent; persons belonging to the African Diaspora. Some individuals have adopted the term to represent all people around the world who are not of white European descent, although this usage is not common. “Black” is often used interchangeably with “African American” in the United States.
Cisgender	An abbreviation for individuals in whom there is a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. Often referred to as a cis-male or cis-female, these terms describe the antonym to transgender.
Classicism	Prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socio-economic status and income, usually referred to as class. Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class.
Color Blind(ness)	The racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. The term “colorblind” de-emphasizes, or ignores, race and ethnicity, a large part of one’s identity.
Communities of Color	A term used primarily in the United States to describe communities of people who are not identified as White, emphasizing common experiences of racism.
Covert Racism	Expresses racist ideas, attitudes or beliefs in subtle, hidden or secret forms. Often unchallenged, this type of racism doesn't appear to be racist because it is indirect behavior.
Cultural Appropriation	The non-consensual/misappropriate use of cultural elements for commodification or profit purposes – including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. – often without understanding, acknowledgment or respect for its value in the context of its original culture.
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DEI	Acronym for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DEIA	Acronym for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility
DIB	Acronym for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging
Decolonize	The active and intentional process of unlearning values, beliefs and conceptions that have caused physical, emotional or mental harm to people through colonization. It requires a recognition of systems of oppression.
Disability	Having a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Discrimination	The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities and other categories that may result in differences in provision of goods, services or opportunities.
Diversity	Diversity describes the myriad ways in which people differ, including the psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, economic class,

	education, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, mental and physical ability, and learning styles.
Emotional Tax	The combination of being on guard to protect against bias, feeling different at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity, and the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work.
Empowerment	The state of being empowered to do something: the power, right, or authority to do something.
Equality	Equality is the condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.
Equity	Equity ensures that individuals are provided the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities, as the general population. While equity represents impartiality, i.e. the distribution is made in such a way to even opportunities for all the people. Conversely equality indicates uniformity, where everything is evenly distributed among people.
Ethnicity/Ethnic Group	A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, cultural heritage, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.
First Nations	Indigenous peoples of Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. The term “Aboriginal Peoples” can be used to refer to the first inhabitants of Canada as a group (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in aggregate.) These are general terms; many First Nations people prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s).
Gay	An identity term used to describe a male-identified person who is attracted to other male-identified people in a romantic, sexual, and/or emotional sense. Also an umbrella term used to refer to people who experience same-sex or same-gender attraction.
Gender	Gender is the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers "appropriate" for men and women. It is separate from ‘sex’, which is the biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's gender may not necessarily correspond to their birth assigned sex or be limited to the gender binary (woman/man).
Gender Identity	Refers to all people's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man, woman, both, in between, or outside of the gender binary, which may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth. Because Gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others, which differentiates it from gender expression.
Gender Non-conforming	An individual whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.
Harassment	The use of comments or actions that can be perceived as offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning and unwelcome.
Health Equity	Attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

Heterosexism	The individual, societal, cultural, and institutional beliefs and practices that favor heterosexuality and assume that heterosexuality is the only natural, normal, or acceptable sexual orientation. This creates an imbalance in power, which leads to systemic, institutional, pervasive, and routine mistreatment of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.
Heterosexual	An identity term for a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people or a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people.
Hispanic/Latino	The U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanics as “those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 questionnaire (Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Cuban. "Hispanic" is term was instituted by federal agencies and some find the term offensive as it honors the colonizers and not the indigenous groups the term represents. The term Hispanic is typically used on the East Coast and in the South to describe persons from Latin America, whereas other parts of the country typically use the term Latino.
Homophobia	The irrational fear, dislike, hatred, aversion, intolerance, and ignorance of homosexuality and of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two Spirit and queer (LGBTQQ) individuals.
Homosexual	A person who is primarily attracted to members of what they identify as their own sex or gender. Many people reject the term homosexual because of its history as a term denoting mental illness and abnormality - the terms Gay or Lesbian are preferred.
Implicit Bias	Negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold; also known as unconscious or hidden bias.
Inclusion/Inclusiveness	Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.
Indigenous	Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.
Institutional Racism	Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.
Intent Vs. Impact	Our intentions (what we want or hope to do) do not always align with what we say or do which can impact how others receive what one says and does. INTENT Refers to what you hope or want to do when choosing to perform an action. IMPACT Refers to the reality (e.g. results) of your actions/ behaviors. The resulting impact may not always align with what you intended. Owning the impact: When one’s impact is being called into question, especially if the action is perpetuating oppression, it is important to recognize the action is being called into question not the person/overall character.

Internalized Racism	Internalized racism is a phenomenon that occurs when a group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of a racist system by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that reinforce that system. In the U.S. this generally involves reinforcement of white supremacy. Internalized racism involves four essential and interconnected elements.
Interpersonal Racism	Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. When private beliefs are put in interaction with others, racism resides in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of racial prejudice, hate, bias and bigotry between individuals (2nd Definition) These are biases that occur when individuals interact with others and their private racial beliefs affect their public interactions.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
Intersex	The term “intersex” refers to atypical internal and/or external anatomical sexual characteristics, where features usually regarded as male or female may be mixed to some degree. This is a naturally occurring variation in humans and not a medical condition and is distinct from transsexuality.
JEDI	Acronym for Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.
Justice	The systematic and proactive reinforcement of public policies, institutional practices, cultural messages, and social norms needed to achieve and sustain equity for all.
Lesbian	The term is used to describe female-identified people attracted emotionally, physically, and/or sexually to other female-identified people.
LGBT/LGBTQIA/LGBTA/LGBTI QQ, etc.	LGBTQ: This acronym is an umbrella term used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer or questioning people. Another common acronym used is LGBTQIA, which encompasses intersex and asexual identities, although there doesn't seem to be consensus within the intersex or asexual communities about wanting to be included in or directly linked to the LGBTQ community.
Marginalized/Marginalization	The process by which minority groups/cultures are excluded, ignored or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community. A tactic used to devalue those that vary from the norm of the mainstream, sometimes to the point of denigrating them as deviant and regressive.
Micro-inequity	Small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be different- Mary Rowe, MIT.
Microaggression	Everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to historically marginalized groups by well- intentioned members of the majority group who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent.
Multicultural	Of or pertaining to more than one culture.
Multicultural Competency	A process of embracing diversity and learning about people from other cultural backgrounds. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect

	for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.
Multiethnic	An individual that comes from more than one ethnicity.
Multiracial	An individual that comes from more than one race.
Native American	Can be used to refer broadly to the indigenous peoples of North and South America, but is more commonly used as a general term for the indigenous peoples of the contiguous United States. This term has been used interchangeably with the term "American Indian," although some Native Americans find this latter term offensive since "Indian" is a misnomer. These are general terms which refer to groups of people with different tribal affiliations; many Native American individuals prefer to identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s).
Oppression	The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.
Pacific Islander	Pacific Islander, or Pasifika, refers to the Indigenous inhabitants of the Pacific Islands, specifically persons whose origins are of the following sub-regions of Oceania: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia.
Pansexuality	The romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people regardless of their gender.
Patriarchy	Actions and beliefs that prioritize masculinity. Patriarchy is practiced systemically in the ways and methods through which power is distributed in society (jobs and positions of power given to men in government, policy, criminal justice, etc.) while also influencing how we interact with one another interpersonally (gender expectations, sexual dynamics, space-taking, etc.).
Performative Allyship	When an individual or group of power/majority/privilege (e.g., white, male, abled, unqueer, etc) loudly profess(es) their actions in the name of 'allyship,' while actively conducting harm to, taking focus away from, and being unhelpful towards the group they claim to support, often to receive praise and attention, without taking critical action to dismantle the systems of harm.
Person/People of Color	Used primarily in the United States to describe any person who is not white; the term is meant to be inclusive among non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism. (This definition parallels the Communities of Color definition.)
Power	Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access to and control over resources. Wealth, Whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates.
Prejudice	A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or group toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

Privilege	Unearned social power (set of advantages, entitlements, and benefits) accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to the members of a dominant group (e.g., white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children, and rich people with respect to poor people).
Queer	<p>Queer is a word that describes sexual and gender identities other than straight and cisgender. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people may all identify with the word queer. Queer is sometimes used to express that sexuality and gender can be complicated, change over time, and might not fit neatly into either/or identities, like male or female, gay or straight.</p> <p>The word “queer” has history to it that’s hurtful — “queer” used to be (and sometimes still is) used to put down or disrespect LGBT people. But more and more, people use the word with pride to identify themselves. So don’t call someone “queer” unless you know they’re cool with it. The best thing to do is ask what labels people prefer.</p>
Race	A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period. There are no distinctive genetic characteristics that truly distinguish between groups of people. Created by Europeans (Whites), race presumes human worth and social status for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power. Race is independent of ethnicity.
Racism	The term “racism” specifically refers to individual, cultural, institutional, and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups. Racism is often grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race over groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.). Racism can also be defined as "prejudice plus power." The combination of prejudice and power enables the mechanisms by which racism leads to different consequences for different groups.
Racial and Ethnic Identity	An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe themselves based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.
Racial Justice	The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.
Religion	A system of beliefs, usually spiritual in nature, and often in terms of a formal, organized institution.
Reverse Racism	Perceived discrimination against a dominant group or political majority. Commonly used by opponents to affirmative action who believe that these policies are causing members of traditionally dominant groups to be discriminated against.
Safe Space	A place where anyone can relax and be able to fully express, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability.

Scientific Racism	The use of scientific techniques, theories, and hypotheses to sanction the belief of racial superiority, inferiority, or racism. Examples include Tuskegee Syphilis Trial, the stem cells of Henrietta Lacks, Indigenous Races of the Earth, etc.
Sex	The biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's sex may differ from their gender identity.
Sexual Orientation	Refers to the sex(es) or gender(s) to whom a person is emotionally, physically, sexually, and/or romantically attracted. Examples of sexual orientation include gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc.
Stereotype	Widely held beliefs, unconscious associations and expectations about members of certain groups that are presumed to be true of every member of that group, and that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgment. Stereotypes go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information and are highly generalized and/or inflammatory.
Structural Racism	The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage Whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.
Tokenism	Performative presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for the participation of members of a certain socially oppressed group, who are expected to speak for the whole group without giving this person a real opportunity to speak for her/himself.
Tolerance	The attitude of someone who is willing to accept someone else's beliefs, way of life, etc. without criticizing them even if they disagree with them.
Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e. the sex listed on their birth certificates). Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies by using hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery. Transgender people may identify with any sexual orientation, and their sexual orientation may or may not change before, during, or after transition (linked definition). Use "transgender," not "transgendered."
Transition	The process that people go through as they change their gender expression and/or physical appearance (e.g. through hormones and/or surgery) to align with their gender identity. A transition may occur over a period of time, and may involve coming out to family, friends, coworkers and others; changing one's name and/or sex designation on legal documents; and/or medical intervention. Some people find the term "transition" offensive and prefer terms such as "gender affirmation". It is best to ask individuals which terms they prefer.

White Privilege	Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. White people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.
White Supremacy	Historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.
Workplace Inclusion	An atmosphere where all employees belong, contribute, and can thrive. Requires deliberate and intentional action.

The terms contained in this glossary have been reproduced from the following resources:

- *Anti-Violence Project. [Glossary](#). The University of Victoria.*
- *Colors of Resistance. [Definitions for the Revolution](#).*
- *Cram, R. H. (2002). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*.*
- *Equity and Inclusion. [Glossary](#). UC Davis.*
- *Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., et al. (2009). [Glossary](#). Center for Assessment and Policy Development.*
- *Center for Diversity & Inclusion. [Glossary of Bias Terms](#). Washington University in St. Louis.*
- *Ontario Human Rights Commission. [Glossary of human rights terms](#).*
- *Harvard Human Resources. *Glossary of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB) Terms**