



Glossary of terms

Below you will find 50 terms that are relevant and helpful regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. Some terms may be familiar to you, and others may be new. Of course, definitions vary from source to source. Our sources are cited at the end of the list.

1. **Ableism:** Beliefs or practices that rest on the assumption that being able-bodied is “normal” while other states of being need to be “fixed” or altered. This can result in devaluing or discriminating against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities.
2. **Access:** Equitable acquisition of resources or benefits for people living with disabilities or historically marginalized peoples.
3. **Ally:** A term used to describe people who recognize their privilege and use it to work in solidarity with targets of oppression.
4. **Anti-racism:** Active dismantling of racism.
5. **Anti-semitism:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Jewish people, based on fear and/or hatred of Judaism and Jewish people.
6. **Assimilation:** The process in which members of the oppressed group adopt traits of the dominant group, often as part of forced acculturation.
7. **Bias:** Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared with another, usually in an unfair or negative way.
8. **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous and people of color
9. **Cisgender:** A term used to describe people whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.
10. **Cognitive dissonance:** Tension between conflicting attitudes and beliefs with behaviors, that results in mental discomfort and dissonance-reduction responses.
11. **Color-blindness:** Disregard of racial differences based on the belief that racial inequality no longer exists.
12. **Colorism:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against dark-skinned people of color, based on light-skinned favoritism.
13. **Cultural appropriation:** Adopting aspects of a minority culture by someone outside the culture, without sufficient understanding of its context or respect for the meaning and value of the original.
14. **Discrimination:** The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on conscious or unconscious prejudice.
15. **Diversity:** The condition of being different or having differences. Differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, health, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, religion, physical size, education level, job and function, personality traits and other human differences.

16. **Equity:** Fair treatment for all while striving to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers.
17. **Gaslighting:** A form of psychological abuse by shaming, casting self-doubt, and/or altering the perception of truth.
18. **Gender:** A system based on socially constructed traits that classify people as being “feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc...”
19. **Gender expression:** External appearance of gender identity - hair, behavior, clothes, voice, etc.
20. **Gender identity:** Individual or internal sense of gender.
21. **Gender non-conforming or gender non-binary:** A way of identifying and/or expressing oneself outside the binary gender categories of male/masculine and female/feminine.
22. **Genderqueer:** A term to describe people whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid and/or different from the gender binary social construct.
23. **Gentrification:** The process by which high/mid-socioeconomic status or racially privileged people shift the economics or demographics of neighborhoods, resulting in displacement of low-socioeconomic or racially oppressed people.
24. **Heteronormativity:** A system of oppression that favors heterosexuality, based on the assumption that everyone is or should be straight.
25. **Homophobia:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against homosexuality and/or queer people.
26. **Implicit bias:** Unconscious beliefs or stereotypes about a social group.
27. **Inclusion:** Welcoming, encouraging and respecting the involvement, empowerment and dignity of all people.
28. **Institutional racism:** A system of oppression that uses policies and practices to preserve white supremacy.
29. **Intersectionality:** The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect, and their multiple effects on the same individuals or groups. Also refers to the view that overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and inequality can more effectively be addressed together.
30. **LGBTQTQIA+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual communities.
31. **Marginalization:** The process of oppression by which target groups are excluded from participation in society.
32. **Microaggression:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions in indirect, subtle or unintentional forms.
33. **Microaffirmation:** A small gesture of inclusion, caring or kindness — including listening, providing comfort and support, being an ally and explicitly valuing the contributions and presence of all.
34. **Minority:** A term used to describe people who experience discrimination from the dominant social group.
35. **Misogyny:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against women, based on the hatred of women.
36. **Neurodivergent:** When neurological differences are recognized and respected, as with any other kind of human differences or variations.
37. **Normalization:** The process by which prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions become commonplace and unquestioned.

38. **Oppression:** A system of control based on prejudice, using power at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels by one social group on another.
39. **Patriarchy:** A system of oppression based on male supremacy.
40. **Prejudice:** Unjustified, preconceived beliefs about a social group.
41. **Privilege:** An unearned, sustained advantage that comes from race, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status, age and other differences.
42. **Queer:** Originally a derogatory slur, since reclaimed as an inclusive term to describe those within the LGTTQIA+ community — often to emphasize fluidity of sexual attraction and gender identity.
43. **Racism:** A system of oppression based on white supremacy.
44. **Salient/-cy:** The traits of a group identity that an individual is more conscious of and more impacted by, depending on the social context.
45. **Sex assigned at birth:** A term used to describe a determined “biological sex” based on external genitalia.
46. **Sexism:** A system of oppression based on the preservation of patriarchy.
47. **Stereotype:** Prejudicial thoughts that are normalized against a social group.
48. **Transgender:** A term used to describe people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from their sex assigned at birth.
49. **Transphobia:** Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions based on hatred and/or fear of transgender identity or people.
50. **Xenophobia:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against people who are different from oneself because of fear or hatred of strangers.

Sources

- Columbia School of Social Work, <https://socialwork.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/DEI-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf>
- University of Michigan, <http://diversity.umich.edu/about/defining-dei>
- Harvard Human Resources, https://dib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/dib_glossary.pdf