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Royal Architectural Institute of Canada
Institut royal d'architecture du Canada

RAIC Promoting Equity and Justice

Glossary of Terms

The dialogue around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is growing as we come to understand the impact of intended and unintended oppression. To support meaningful discussions, a common understanding of terminology is essential.

The purpose of this glossary is to promote dialogue around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion by identifying the generally understood meaning of words and concepts. The goal is to provide a basic framework to help reduce any reluctance people may have to engage in these necessary conversations as well as to be understood as intended.

This list of words and definitions is not exhaustive and this resource should be considered a living document that can be continually edited and updated.

This resource was prepared by the [RAIC Promoting Equity and Justice Advisory Committee](#) with support of RAIC staff. The committee welcomes and appreciates suggestions and proposed additions as it continues to develop and expand this resource.

Please send any comments and feedback to PEJ@raic.org

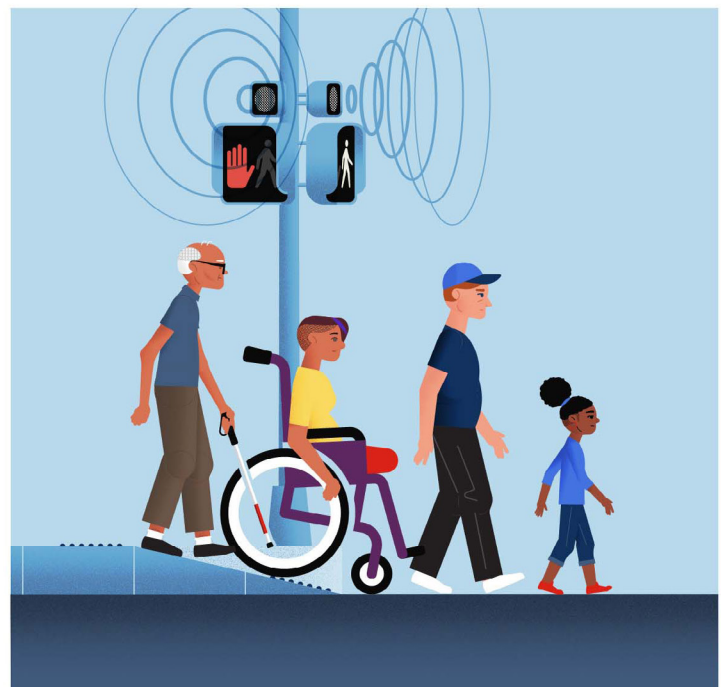
EQUALITY:

Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.



EQUITY:

Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.



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TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Ableism	Ableism is the belief that it is “normal” to not have a disability and that “normal” is preferred. The most dominant disability narrative in Western societies, ableism is a set of beliefs that produces disability as a counter-image to able-bodiedness and, hence, as deviance or unwanted difference. It is discrimination on the basis of disability.	(n.d.) This is Ableism. Inclusions Canada. https://inclusioncanada.ca/this-is-ableism Tarvainen, M. (2019). Ableism and the life stories of people with disabilities. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research</i> , 21(1). https://www.sjdr.se/articles/10.16993/sjdr.632
Accessibility	The extent to which a space is readily approachable and usable by people with disabilities. A space can be described as a physical or literal space, such as a facility, website, conference room, office, or bathroom, or a figurative space, such as a conversation or activity.	Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019, September). Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/5abyvzsh
Accountability	Taking responsibility for your actions. In the context of equity and justice it is taking responsibility for harm, making things right, being willing to understand, change, and transform the harmful behavior and its underlying motivations. Accountability requires acknowledgement, communication, the opportunity to repair harm, and the chance to prove that we can change and be worthy of trust again.	Stanford Social Innovation Review. Anderson, P. (2021, June 28) Building a Culture of Accountability. Retrieved October 19, 2022 https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building_a_culture_of_accountability
Ally	A person who helps and supports a person or cause who is in a difficult situation; they actively promote and advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.	Atcheson, S. (2021, December 10). Allyship - The Key to Unlocking the Power of Diversity. <i>Forbes</i> . Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/28m69bx4
Allyship	Allyship is the state of being an ally and supporting another person or group. An active and consistent practice of using power and privilege to achieve equity, inclusion, and justice while holding ourselves accountable to marginalized people’s needs. Allyship is the state of being an ally and supporting another person or group.	Anti-Racism in Academia. Anti-Racism in Academia. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/3n5jwmx3
Anti-Racism	Active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, to redistribute power in an equitable manner.	Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019, September). Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf
Colonialism	A practice of domination which involves the subjugation of one people to another. Similarly, imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent area or people.	Kohn, M., & Reddy, K. (2017, August 29). Colonialism. <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> . Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Colorism	Prejudice or discrimination, especially within a racial or ethnic group, favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin.	Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Colorism definition & meaning. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colorism
Condemnation	To declare something to be reprehensible and wrong.	Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Condemn Definition & Meaning. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/condemnation
Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.	Discrimination. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/32ehxd24
Diversity	A range of many people or things that differ from one another based on a variety of characteristics (age, race, gender, ethnicity).	Government of Canada Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/5apujhzc
Environmental Justice	The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.	Environmental Justice. Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/jxnk5c63
Equality	Being equal in rights, status and opportunity. Each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. It can take place in different forms such as racial equality, gender equality, financial status equality, etc.	Equality. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/yc2zppez
Equity (see image)	Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the necessary resources and opportunities needed to achieve an equal outcome.	Equity vs. Equality: What's the Difference? George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health. (2020, November 5). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/yy7jmrsp
Equity-Deserving Groups/ Communities	Communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-deserving groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation. See also Marginalized ; Vulnerable .	Equity-Seeking Groups. Canada Council for the Arts. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Ethnic Identity	An individual's sense of being a person who is defined, in part, by membership in a specific ethnic group. This sense is usually considered to be a complex construct involving shared social, cultural, linguistic, religious, and often racial factors but identical with none of them. See also Racial Identity .	APA Dictionary of Psychology - Ethnic Identity. American Psychological Association. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://dictionary.apa.org/ethnic-identity
Ethnicity	Belonging to a particular nation or group of people that shares a cultural tradition. Ex: Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, Métis), Black or African (including African American, Caribbean, Latinx or Latin American (including Hispanic or of other Spanish origin), Middle Eastern or North African, Asian, White, Mixed heritage or two or more races.	Ethnicity. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ethnicity?q=Ethnicity
Gender Pronoun	The term one uses to identify themselves in place of their name (i.e. ze/hir/hirs, ey/em/eirs, they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, etc.). The use of the specific gender pronoun identified by each individual should be respected and should not be regarded as optional.	Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019, September). Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/5abyvzsh
Homophobia	The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same gender. Homophobia occurs in a broader heterosexist social context that systematically disadvantages LGBTQ+ people and promotes and rewards anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment.	Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019, September). Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/5abyvzsh
Implicit Bias	Prejudice or an assumption made about something/someone that is not consciously recognized by the individual holding said bias. It is the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that can occur within society.	Merriam-Webster. (2022). Implicit Bias Definition & Meaning. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/implicit%20bias
Inclusion	Inclusion is creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity. It is a mindful and equitable effort to meet individual needs so everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute to their fullest potential. Where diversity occurs naturally, creating the mix in the organization, inclusion is the choice that helps the mix work well together.	Glossary of Terms. Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://ccdi.ca/media/3507/ccdi-glossary-of-terms-v11-eng.pdf

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Indigenous Decolonization	The repatriation of Indigenous land and life, as well as the ongoing theoretical and political processes used to contest and reframe narratives about Indigenous community histories and the effects of colonial expansion, genocide, and cultural assimilation. Indigenous people engaged in decolonization work adopt a critical stance towards White, western-centric practices and discourse and seek to reposition knowledge within Indigenous cultural practices. This is commonly referred to as decolonization.	Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2019, September). Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/5abyvzsh
Institutional Oppression	The systemic mistreatment of people within a social identity group enforced by society and its institutions based on that person's membership in the social identity group. It occurs when established laws, customs and practices produce inequalities based on one's belonging to the targeted social group. If oppressive consequences occur as a result of the systems of the institutions, the institution is oppressive whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have oppressive intentions. Institutional oppression creates a system of invisible barriers which limit those that belong to the unfavored social identity group.	Institutionalized Oppression. Portland Community College. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/3sa5nzzb
Institutional Power	The ability or official authority to decide what is best for others. The ability to decide who will have access to resources. The capacity to exercise control over others.	Power & Privilege Definitions. Pillar Non-Profit. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://network.pillarnonprofit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Understanding-Privilege-and-Oppression-Handout.doc.pdf
Intersectionality	The understanding that inequalities and oppression cut across different identity categories, and that those social identities have multiple dimensions; for instance, sexual orientation and gender identity and constituted differently in relation to a number of other social subjectivities, such as age, ethnicity, region or country of origin.	Intersectionality Toolkit. Luther College. (2022, June 17). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/a4wawr46
Marginalized Groups/ Communities	Groups of people and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power dynamics across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.	Marginalized Populations - Glossary of Essential Health Equity Terms. National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/45nd5kvu
Micro-aggression	Microaggression is a term used for commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups.	Examples of Racial Micro Aggressions adapted from Wing, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, Esquilin (2007). https://tinyurl.com/2s43b9ht

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Prejudice	A favorable or unfavorable opinion about a person or group, usually formed without knowledge or reason. It can be based on a single experience which is then assumed about all potential experiences. These unfavorable opinions are often derived from stereotypes; a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a of person or thing.	Institutionalized Oppression. Portland Community College. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/3sa5nzzb
Privilege (1)	Operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In Canada, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups: White people; Able-bodied people; Heterosexuals; Males; Christians; Middle or owning class people; Middle-aged people; English-speaking people.	Understanding Privilege and Oppression - Vanderbilt University https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Understanding-Privilege-and-Oppression-Hand-out.doc
Privilege (2)	Privilege is characteristically invisible to people who have it. People in dominant groups often believe that they have earned the privileges that they enjoy or that everyone could have access to these privileges if only they worked to earn them. In fact, privileges are unearned and they are granted to people in the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not, regardless of their stated intent. Unlike targets of oppression, people in dominant groups are frequently unaware that they are members of the dominant group due to the privilege of being able to see themselves as persons rather than stereotypes. Formally defined, race is an arbitrary classification of modern humans, sometimes, especially formerly, based on any or a combination of various physical characteristics, such as skin colour, facial form, or eye shape. It is a way of arbitrarily dividing humankind into different groups for the purpose of keeping some on top and some at the bottom; some in and some out. Its invention has very clear historical roots; namely, colonialism. White Europeans used race to sort humans by place of origin as well as skin colour, creating the social hierarchy which served as the foundation of slavery.	Understanding Privilege and Oppression - Vanderbilt University https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Understanding-Privilege-and-Oppression-Hand-out.doc
Racial Identity	An individual's sense of being defined, in part, by membership in a particular racial group. The strength of this sense depends on the extent to which an individual has processed and internalized the psychological, sociopolitical, cultural, and other contextual factors related to membership in the group. Given the socially constructed nature of racial categories, racial identifications can change over time in different contexts. For example, a mixed-race person might identify as mixed race in one context and Black in another. See also Ethnic Identity .	APA Dictionary of Psychology - Racial Identity. American Psychological Association. (2002). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://dictionary.apa.org/racial-identity

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Socioeconomic Status	The social standing or class of an individual, often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Examining socioeconomic status can reveal inequities when it comes to accessing resources and highlight issues regarding privilege, power and control.	Socioeconomic Status. American Psychological Association. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.apa.org/topics/socio-economic-status
Stereotype	A fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality and may cause hurt and offence.	Stereotype. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype_1?q=stereotype
Sustainable	Sustainability consists of fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations, while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being.	What is sustainability? Definition, types and examples. Santander Scholarships Blog. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.becas-santander.com/en/blog/what-is-sustainability.html
Systemic Barriers	Policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.	Barriers and Solutions. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/ts4pujkc
Systemic Oppression	Similar to institutional oppression, it is the systems and structures within society that have processes that put minorities and racialized groups at a disadvantage.	Lens of Systemic Oppression – National Equity Project Retrieved August 26, 2022 https://tinyurl.com/2yhhapf8
Systemic Racism	Patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons. A form of racism that is embedded through laws and regulations within society or an organization. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power, education, etc. Similar to institutional racism, systemic racism is found within the systems that make up society through its institutions.	Racism and racial discrimination: Systemic discrimination (fact sheet). Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/4u9wnbby
Tokenism	The act of doing something only to prevent criticism and give off the appearance that people are being treated fairly. Ex. Hiring a person that belongs to a minority group for “diversity purposes”.	What is Tokenism, and Why Does It Matter in the Workplace? Vanderbilt Business School. (2020, June 22). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://business.vanderbilt.edu/news/2018/02/26/tokenism-in-the-workplace

TERM	DEFINITION	CITATION
Unconscious Biases	Referring to the unconscious assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes that human brains have about different groups. These learned mental shortcuts affect how we perceive and respond to people.	Unconscious Biases. University of Victoria. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://www.uvic.ca/equity/employment-equity/bias/index.php
Vulnerable Populations	groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability. See also Equity-Seeking and Equity-Deserving ; Marginalized .	Vulnerable Populations - Glossary of Essential Health Equity Terms. National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022 https://tinyurl.com/2f6h4uvw
White Supremacy	The belief that white people are the superior race and should dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups. Also: the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races.	White Supremacy. Merriam-Webster. (2022). Retrieved August 26, 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/96baefdk