



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Primer

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# How to use this primer

- Review the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Primer* to understand key concepts.
- Use the primer as a reference as you work through the blueprint and create the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy.
- This resource can also be provided directly to employees, managers, and senior leaders to expand individual knowledge on key DEI concepts.
- Click on the index of letters located on the left side of each slide to navigate to terms beginning with the corresponding letter.

**Diversity** refers to the unique traits that individuals possess.

These traits can be understood in two general ways:



**Inherent diversity:** Traits that are central to identity, e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.



**Acquired diversity:** Traits that are acquired through experience, e.g. diversity of thought, cross-cultural communication skills, language, or social skills.

**Inclusion** is a state in which all employees feel a sense of belonging, valued for their differences and empowered to participate and contribute freely.

## Ableism

Ableism is a discriminatory practice against people with disabilities and is manifested through cultural beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that perceive them as inferior. Ableism is woven through social, economic, and political structures and perpetuates normalization of able-bodied discourse in such structures. Examples include non-accessible buildings and using discourse/terms like “climbing the corporate ladder” or “that’s crazy.”

## Anti-racism

Anti-racism is the practice of opposing racism by challenging values, structures, systems, and behaviors that further perpetuate systemic racism and aims to change the status quo. It is an active process that deconstructs power imbalances between racialized and white people. What does anti-racism practice look like?

- Being conscious of the lived experiences of racialized people.
- Actively confronting and changing existing barriers faced by racialized people (i.e. barriers to employment, resources, policies, and procedures within institutions).

## Allyship

An ally is someone, a group of people, or an organization that uses their/its inherent privilege and power to advocate for and support marginalized groups facing oppression. It embodies a continuous process of learning, re-learning, and unlearning. Allies are those who seek to listen and learn how they can support marginalized groups. They are willing to be uncomfortable and challenge their learned behaviors/isms that perpetuate discrimination. How to be an ally?

Check your privilege and power by:

- Understanding how you contribute to oppressive systems by examining your implicit biases and prejudices.
- Using your power and privilege to lift marginalized groups.
- Listening and learning by accepting constructive criticism.
- Not speaking for marginalized groups. Learn how to listen to and amplify underrepresented voices.

## Biases

Biases are mindsets, beliefs, and prejudices that are inherently held about specific groups of people, often with no justification. While biases can be both negative and positive, people from marginalized groups have historically been subject to negative biases that impact them gravely. Two common types of biases are unconscious (also known as implicit) and conscious (explicit).

Unconscious biases are thoughts and beliefs resulting from socially constructed stereotypes about certain marginalized groups. These biases operate subconsciously, and individuals may be unaware they even have them. For example, when you think of a CEO, you may automatically think of a white male.

Conscious biases are directly expressed beliefs or attributes that demean and mistreat individuals or other negative behaviors. For example, not promoting women because of gender role preconceptions.

See McLean & Company's [Biases & Heuristics Catalog](#).

## BIPOC

BIPOC is an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. While POC is an umbrella term, referring to non-white individuals who face discrimination in a dominantly white culture, BIPOC recognizes and emphasizes the unique struggles of Black and Indigenous people (i.e. anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism). It acknowledges that injustice is experienced differently and at different levels by Black and Indigenous people.

See [POC](#).

## Belonging

Belonging is the feeling of being accepted for your authentic self.

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## Culture

Culture refers to the collective shared aspects and traditions that certain groups identify with. These may include language, food, geography, history, or ethnic origin. It is often a way of life and a rooted part of individuals' identities.

Please note, this is different from organizational culture, which is the pattern of behaviors within organizations.

## Covert discrimination

Covert discrimination is manifested through discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, and ideas that are not expressed outwardly but rather through indirect behaviors (i.e. prejudices, biases, stereotypes). For example, telling jokes at work about how individuals of Asian ethnicity are good at doing math.

## Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

CSR is a business practice that is constantly evolving. It is an organization's commitment to be accountable in social, economic, environmental, and political spaces and be responsible for how it operates in these spaces. It has historically been used as an umbrella term for several concepts, including sustainability, social enterprise, corporate ethics, corporate governance, and corporate citizenship, as it touches every aspect of the business (HR, Marketing/Branding & Communications, Manufacturing, etc.).

For example, Ben and Jerry's, an ice cream manufacturer, made an intentional effort to dismantle white supremacy and racism by using its platform to advocate for and amplify Black voices against police brutality. Similarly, LEGO pulled all advertising for products that had a police theme (i.e. police/police vehicles) and donated four million dollars to Black charities (Global News).

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## Discrimination

Discrimination is the act of treating an individual unfairly based on the grounds of their identity categories (**gender identity, ethnic/ cultural identity, disability, family status, sexual orientation**).

See [overt discrimination](#), [covert discrimination](#), and [systemic discrimination](#).

## Diversity

The unique traits that individuals possess. It can be understood in two general ways:

- Inherent diversity, e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, disability
- Acquired diversity, e.g. diversity of thought, cross-cultural communication, language, social skills

## Employment status

Employment status refers to an individual's contract of employment at an organization. For example, employees may be part-time, full-time, or casual. For example, some parents may need accommodation to switch to part-time work in the event of a temporary family situation.

## Employee resource group (ERG)

ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that aim to create safe spaces for employees who identify with diverse identity categories (e.g. POC, LGBTQIA, women, single parents, veterans). These groups may also be referred to as business employee resource groups (BRGs) or affinity groups. Often, these groups operate within the overarching DEI strategy to foster an inclusive and diverse culture. ERGs are generally aligned with organizational values and are shown to improve employee engagement.

However, it is important to remember that ERGs cannot bear the brunt of the labor of carrying out DEI initiatives, as this further creates inequalities and burdens employees from marginalized groups.

For more information on ERGs, see McLean & Company's research [Create a Pathway for Employee Resource Groups to Connect to Organizational Support](#).

## Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a shared set of cultural traditions and practices, generally concentrated around nationality. For example, Indian, Chinese, European.

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## Equality

Equality refers to treating all individuals the same and does not take into consideration the underpinnings of power, privilege, and systemic inequalities. A key assumption in this concept is that individuals all have a level-playing field and have equal access to opportunities, and this is perceived as a “fair” practice. Equality only focuses on fair treatment, not the outcome.

## Equity

Equity focuses on the outcome of “fair treatment.” Fairness looks different based on an individual’s power and privilege in society. While equality focuses on equal opportunity, equity takes it a step further and addresses the accommodations required to achieve a fair outcome. It considers individual differences.

For example, affirmative action is a common equity practice seen in hiring policies that mandate that organizations hire a specific number of people in a specific underrepresented marginalized group.

However, affirmative action is a complex area where people from marginalized backgrounds may be tokenized or treated as quotas, leading to disengagement and turnover.

## Environmental social governance (ESG)

An ESG program is an organization’s intentional approach to understand, measure, and address its impact to the environment and society.

- **Environment:** The organization’s impacts to the natural world, including policies to reduce the organization’s impact to the environment (e.g. climate change, pollution level).
- **Social:** The organization’s relationships with and impact on its employees, contractors, consumers, and the broader community (e.g. employee wellbeing, community outreach).
- **Governance:** Focuses on the systems an organization creates to integrate “E” and “S” components of ESG into their operations, interactions with its people partners, and ethical decision making (e.g. board management practices, anticorruption and antifraud policies, transparency in reporting, compensation).

For more information on ESG, see *McLean & Company’s [ESG Primer](#)*.

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## Family status

Family status refers to an individual's caregiving responsibilities or commitment in relationships. For example, caring for children from a parental or guardianship capacity (i.e. biological, adoptive, foster care), caring for aging parents or family members, family members with disabilities, or families headed by LGBTQ2IA+ persons.

## Gender identity

Gender is a social construct of roles and behaviors. It is fluid and can often be an identifying characteristic of how individuals perceive themselves and others. Gender identity is how individuals experience and express their self-perceptions. For example, male-ness, female-ness, or non-binary.

## Gender expression

Gender expression is how an individual presents their perceived gender identity outwardly. For example, their preferred pronoun or how they choose to dress.

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## Inclusion

It is a state in which all employees feel a sense of belonging, valued for their differences and empowered to participate and contribute freely. For example, oftentimes, homogenous workforces are perceived as inclusive because they are like-minded. However, inclusivity goes beyond like-mindedness and embraces the uniqueness of individuals and their intersectionality.

See McLean & Company's [Embed Inclusion Into Your Culture](#) blueprint.

## LGBTQ2IA+

An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex, Androgynous or Asexual, (+ includes Pansexual, Demisexual, etc.).

## Intersectionality

A concept that was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which explains why people experience inequality in society differently from others with whom they share some identity categories. The concept highlights that characteristics of one's identity are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist to create unique experiences for each individual.

For example, women who identify as persons of color (POC) are faced with multiple points of converging oppressions. Their gender identity does not exist independently from their racial identity. Rather, these two identities are converged, making the experiences of POC women and the level at which they experience oppression different.

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## Microaggressions

Behaviors that are often based on stereotypes and biases about a marginalized group. These behaviors are subtle and reinforce stereotypes by invalidating an individual's identity in a negative manner. For example, telling a racialized individual that they speak "good English" or asking them "where they're from."

## Overt discrimination

Overt discrimination is the deliberate and publicly expressed, unfair treatment of marginalized groups or individuals. It is generally premeditated, manifested through hate and intolerance, and often perpetuated by individuals belonging to dominant races or cultures or those with prejudices and biases against certain minority groups. For example, refusing to hire someone because of their age or race.

## Oppression

Oppression is the institutional and systemic use of power over a marginalized group to maintain status quo and inequality. Such inequalities are woven through social, economic, and political structures through hierarchical relationships, cultural hegemony, and dominant discourse.

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## Person-first language

Person-first language is a means of respectfully communicating with and about persons with disabilities. Its central focus is on speaking about the individual and not the disability they have. For example, saying a person who has a disability or a person with a disability as opposed to disabled person.

## POC

POC is an acronym for Persons/People of Color. It is often used as an umbrella term, referring to non-white individuals who identify themselves as a member of a racialized group.

See [BIPOC](#).

## Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities refers to an individual or people who identify as having a disability.

## Privilege

Privilege refers to the unearned advantages that dominant/white groups hold, which is often unconscious. Privilege manifests itself in several ways in social, economic, and political circumstances. Privilege is rooted in colonialism and is woven through systems and institutions that operate today.

## Psychological safety

Psychological safety refers to the feeling of being able to act, speak up, take risks, and be yourself without the fear of facing negative consequences in one's career and everyday life.

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## Race

Race is a concept that refers to groups of people based on their physical attributes like skin color.

## Systemic discrimination

Discrimination that is embedded in policies, procedures, and institutions that favor dominant groups over marginalized groups.

## Systematic inequality

Systematic inequalities are intentional practices that maintain inequities such as wage secrecy policies or segregation.

## Sex

Sex refers to biological characteristics and is usually categorized as female or male based on reproductive/sexual anatomy.

## Systemic inequality

Systemic inequalities are intentional practices that maintain the unequal treatment of minority groups through policies, programs, systems, and structures (i.e. dress code policies. (i.e. inequities such as wage secrecy policies or segregation).

# Works Cited

Wray, Meaghan. "Lego donates \$4M, Ben and Jerry's vows to 'dismantle white supremacy' amid George Floyd protests." *Global News*, 4 June 2020. Web.



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