



Glossary of DEIA terms

A reference tool for diversity, equity,
inclusion, and accessibility terminology

Abridged version 4.0 – February 2026



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

ccdi.ca

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CCDI Glossary of DEIA terms

The CCDI Glossary of DEIA terms is a reference and starting point for terms, language, and ideas used in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

Our hope is to invite more people to feel comfortable and confident with the language of DEIA and ultimately join the conversation. To help accomplish this goal, we did our best to express all terms in everyday language and model the practice of reviewing the changing of language often.

Please keep in mind that context, culture, tone, and self-determination all play a role in what terminology is acceptable at any given time. For this reason, it is always best practice to ask about an individual's preferred way to be addressed. For a few high-level guidelines to support your practice, please see the Appendix.

What you will find in the document

The CCDI Glossary of DEIA terms includes:

- 14 sections, based on overarching topic areas such as gender and religion.
- An introductory paragraph for each section, explaining the types of terms included and how the team approached the section.
- Words included in a definition that are defined elsewhere are underlined and hyperlinked.
- Navigation to synonyms or antonyms by clicking on “see also” or “contrast with” words.
- Open-source reference links for each entry for further learning.

NOTE: With the rapid pace of changes on the internet, we cannot guarantee that all links will remain active after publication.

The 2026 update

The 2026 version is based on the collective efforts of 13 internal CCDI employees and 3 community supporters. The team focused on new terms to add, terms to remove, and terms to keep but refresh. Throughout the process, gaps in internal knowledge were filled with support from community members. We also graciously received some feedback on our "First Nation, Métis, and Inuit terminology" section from an Employer Partner, which informed our discussions and decisions as well.

Overall, this year's update was quite extensive. A few key changes to highlight are:

- Creation of separate sections for "Ethnicity" and "Race" terminology,
- Addition of a section titled "Citizenry and documentation" to help show the unique elements of words related to these topics.
- Inclusion of more terms in the "Socioeconomic status" and "Religion, faith, and spirituality" sections to bring more depth.
- Removal of older, outdated, discriminatory, derogatory, or hurtful language in an effort to support language we would like to see.

Suggestions on how to use the document

One of the exciting elements about the Glossary of DEIA terms is how many ways it can be used to support your learning and DEIA efforts in your organization. Some ideas to get you started:

- Add a definition as a “Did you know” in your email signature to help people understand the correct language to use.
- Encourage employees to read out definitions at the start of a team meeting or Townhall. Tip: cite the source so people know where to go for additional information.
- Audit your policies and communications to reflect the current terms used.
- Visit the [inclusive language guidelines](#) for some general practices to keep in mind when searching for respectful words in any situation.

CCDI's approach to language

The Glossary of DEIA terms started in an effort to create clarity and consistency in how we talk about concepts related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. By defining and contextualizing a broad range of terms, we aim to help our community engage in conversations with awareness, care, and confidence.

This includes recognizing that:

- A group may reclaim offensive language that was once used to harm them.
- A person may change the terminology they use in reference to themselves (e.g., identity-first language and person-first language).
- The meaning or usage of a word may change to be more inclusive (e.g., gender-neutral language and pronouns).

How to support future updates

We appreciate any community support to review or explore additional terms that would support your work. We kindly ask for you to send any suggestions for new terms, friendly

amendments to existing terms, along with references and context to support our efforts to research@ccdi.ca.

Inclusive language guidelines

Practices to support inclusive language in the workplace:

1. **Be respectful.** Avoid stereotypes, assumptions, and derogatory terms.
2. **When in doubt, ask.** Is a person's identity relevant? If yes, use the language used by the person to describe themselves.
3. **Do not change people's names or pronouns.** Use the name and pronouns offered. Take time to practice saying it. Use accents where applicable (e.g., á, ï).
4. **Use gender neutral terms for groups.** General terms like “folks,” “people,” or “guests” are excellent options.
5. **Be descriptive.** Use adjectives or nouns rather than labels.
 - a. YES = older adults or individuals living in poverty
 - b. NO = the elderly, the poor
6. **Keep history in mind.** Avoid possessive phrases like “Canada's Indigenous Peoples” or “our Indigenous Peoples”. Instead use “Indigenous Peoples in Canada”.
7. **Once you learn a phrase is bad, stop using it.** Words like “stakeholder”^a, “grandfather clause”^b, and “master”, especially in reference to “master-slave” relationships^c, have negative associations for many. Instead, use terms like “relevant parties”, “legacy clause”, and “primary” as replacements.

Keep in mind, it took time to learn inappropriate phrasing, it will take time to learn new phrasing. Be patient with yourself and others.

When you make a mistake:

1. Listen to feedback
2. Acknowledge or apologize
3. Do not dwell
4. Practice for the future

^a [Terminology in Indigenous content](#), Government of British Columbia, 2025.

^b [“Grandfathering” is an offensive term | Let's stop using it](#), Inspire Property Management Ltd, 2022.

^c [Groups in wine, real estate, and technology have scrapped the word 'master' from their standard lingo](#), Business Insider, 2020.

General and fundamental DEIA

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is a framework that promotes the fair and full participation of all people, particularly marginalized groups, or groups that have been underrepresented or subject to discrimination based on identity and/or disability. This section explores general DEIA terminology and its connections to equality, equity, and acknowledging that human rights come with inclusivity and belonging. This section also exists specifically because there are overarching terms that can act as a foundation, and terms that can be related to more than one section.

Acceptance

Approval and embracing of differences beyond simply tolerating them.¹ Not to be confused with [tolerance](#).

Anti-oppression

An approach that uses processes and frameworks to actively identify, challenge, and disrupt oppressive practices and systems. At its core, anti-oppression recognizes how power operates to grant certain groups greater access to resources and opportunities while marginalizing others. Building an anti-oppressive practice involves principles such as holistic and [intersectional](#) analysis, disrupting harmful [power](#) dynamics, and cultivating critical consciousness.^{2 3 4}

Barrier

Obvious or subtle obstacle that prevents or restricts members of society from accessing, using, or doing something that others can readily access, use, or do. Can be physical, economic, financial, informational, and/or organizational policies/practices.⁵

Employment barriers

The formal or informal policies or practices that result in the restriction or [exclusion](#) of [equity-deserving group](#) members on factors not related to job requirements.⁶

Systemic barriers

Policies, practices, or behaviours in society that exclude equity-deserving groups.⁷

Belonging

Level of security and comfortability that an employee experiences at work when they are accepted, [included](#), and supported. Feelings of belonging support engagement, high performance, and employee well-being, and help teams build cohesion and achieve organizational goals.⁸

Bias

A conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit) opinion, preference, [prejudice](#), or inclination, formed without reasonable justification, that prevents a balanced or even-handed judgement.⁹

Affinity bias

People's tendency to connect with individuals most like themselves.¹⁰

Confirmation bias

Only noticing or accepting information that aligns with current beliefs.¹¹

Ingroup bias

People's tendency to favour, prefer, and uplift the group that they are a member of.¹²

Outgroup bias

The tendency to view people from outside of one's group unfavourably.¹³

Bigot/bigotry

Someone who has and upholds a [biased](#) attitude or opinion toward an individual or group.¹⁴

See also: [bias](#)

Bullying

Repeated behaviours that are intimidating, threatening, degrading, humiliating, or hostile and that physically or psychologically harm the victim.^{15 16}

Bystander Intervention

Choices, behaviors, and actions an individual or organization can take to support a [marginalized person or group](#) when witnessing incidents of [discrimination](#), [bullying](#), or [violence](#).^{17 18}

Carewashing

Term used to describe the practice where companies or organizations outwardly present themselves as caring, socially responsible, or ethical, without genuinely following through with meaningful action. It often involves using marketing tactics to appeal to consumers' values (such as environmental sustainability, social justice, or [inclusivity](#)), while their actual practices, policies, or products don't align with the claims made. Essentially, it's seen as a form of "greenwashing" or "virtue signaling" when the primary goal is to improve brand image rather than truly contribute to positive change.¹⁹

Code-switching

Historically, code-switching referred to the process of switching from one [language](#) or [dialect](#) to another depending on the social context. The term has evolved to refer to the process of changing behaviour, appearance, mannerisms, and/or language to conform to dominant narratives or expectations for a specific context. Code-switching in its modern form is most often performed by members of [equity-deserving groups](#) to avoid being stigmatized and associated with negative [stereotypes](#) of their group.^{20 21}

Coded language

The use of seemingly neutral words and phrases to express an opinion – often [racist](#), [sexist](#), or [xenophobic](#) – in an indirect way. Examples include “urban” as code for Black people, or “at-risk youth” as code for [racialized](#) or low-income students.^{22 23}

See also: [dog whistle](#)

Cognitive diversity

Having a variety of ideas, opinions, and perspectives within a group.²⁴

Colonialism/Colonization

The practice of domination where one nation occupies land for the purpose of subjugating, conquering, and exploiting the [colonized](#) territory and its people.^{25 26 27 28}

Anti-colonialism

Action to dismantle systemic [power](#) structures with the goal of justice for people [oppressed](#) by colonialism.²⁹

Decolonization

An ongoing process that aims to deconstruct settler colonial ideologies such as [white supremacy](#), give value to [Indigenous](#) knowledge, and dismantle [power](#) imbalances. Decolonization is the active work to give back the colonized territory’s independence and undo the effects of colonialism on the social, political, and economic aspects of a people’s life.³⁰

Settler colonialism

The long-term forced physical occupation of lands by a non-[Indigenous](#) population. Settler colonialism involves the imposition of the colonizer’s identity including their language, culture, and religion while erasing the identity of the colonized people.^{d 31}

^d Note: There are many types of colonialism that impact people all over the world. For more detail on other forms of colonialism, see [What Is Colonialism? Definition and Examples](#) from Thought Co.

Content warning

A statement made prior to sharing potentially disturbing content to maintain [psychological safety](#) in an environment. This might include graphic references to topics such as sexual abuse, self-harm, violence, or disorders. Warnings can take the form of an image, video clips, audio clips, or a passage of text.

Corporate social responsibility

Policies and practices where a business is accountable to itself, relevant parties, and the public while aiming to positively impact the community and the environment.³²

Discrimination

Intentional or unintentional denial of equal treatment, civil liberties and opportunity to individuals or groups with respect to education, housing, health care, employment and access to services, goods, and facilities. Can occur based on these or other aspects [ancestry](#), place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, record of offences, [race](#), complexion, [nationality](#), [sex](#), age, [religion](#), [gender identity](#), [gender expression](#), political affiliation, marital or family status, [sexual orientation](#), and [disability](#).^{33 34}

Individual discrimination

The unequal and prejudiced treatment of individuals based on their identity or membership to a particular group.

Systemic/institutional discrimination

Systemic discrimination is institutionalized. Systemic discrimination is embedded and practiced in social institutions, such as government, policies, religion, education, and organizations. Results in the exclusion and stereotyping of the targeted groups.³⁵

Legal discrimination

A way of understanding discrimination through a legal lens or framework. The aim is to hold parties responsible for discriminatory treatment based on the grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability, or being granted a pardon on a previous conviction, as outlined in the Canadian Human Rights Act.^{36 37}

Diversity

Diversity is about the individual and the collective. It refers to the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics we all possess, and the mix that occurs in any group of people. These include race, [ethnicity](#), age, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs,

[economic status](#), physical abilities, life experiences, and perspectives. Importantly, diversity also recognizes the ways these identities intersect and how they shape our experiences, influence our relationships with others, and impact communities. It acknowledges that these identities do not exist in isolation, but within systems of [power](#) and [privilege](#) that affect access, opportunity, and [equity](#).^{38 39 40}

Dog whistle

[Coded language](#) used in political messaging that is intended to be understood only by a small target audience. These messages are often [racist](#), [xenophobic](#), [sexist](#), or [antisemitic](#).⁴¹

Dominant group

A group with the [power](#) and [privilege](#) in society to influence systems. The dominant group can be but is not necessarily the majority (see [People of the global majority](#)).^{42 43}

Emotional labour

The effort taken to manage emotions to suit a particular context or to be considered socially acceptable. In the context of [diversity](#) and [inclusion](#), equity-deserving groups (particularly [racialized people](#)) are often subject to a great deal of emotional labour in the wake of world events or in times of racial tension where discussions of [race](#) are more common at work.⁴⁴

Emotional tax

The mental and physical impacts on members of equity-deserving groups due to constant discomfort that comes with protecting themselves against [bias](#) and [discrimination](#).⁴⁵

Employee resource group (ERG)

Employee-led groups that serve many purposes depending on the organization, its focus, structure, sector and/or industry. Their primary purpose is to provide [equity-deserving groups](#) with a formal structure within the organization to support their unique needs.⁴⁶

Affirmative action

An initiative started in the United States in the 1960's to help rectify the historical discrimination of equity-deserving groups through policies, programs, and procedures related to job hiring, post-secondary admissions, government contracts, and various social benefits. It has no legal standing in Canada and is related to, but distinct from, the Canadian focus on employment equity.⁴⁷

Employment equity

In general, employment equity is a set of policies and practices that encourage the establishment of working conditions that are free from barriers, seek to correct conditions of disadvantage in employment, and promote the principle that it requires special measures to accommodate differences in the workplace. Specifically, for Canada this is related to the Employment Equity Act which has specific requirements for Canadian businesses and recognizes four designated groups to focus on: women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities^{48 49}

Environmental justice

The belief that all individuals deserve equal access to healthy living conditions. Environmental justice can be made possible by enforcing environmental regulations that protect vulnerable communities.^{50 51}

Epistemic injustice

Biased treatment suffered by a person when they are not adequately believed or understood, because they belong to an equity seeking group (e.g. women, sexual minorities, Indigenous groups, racialized people, people with disabilities or neurodiverse people).⁵²

Equality

Equality involves offering the same resources or opportunities to everyone. In a workplace setting, this means ensuring that all employees have equal access to resources like training, support, and career advancement. However, this approach assumes that everyone starts from the same place and has the same needs, which often isn't the case, especially for groups that may face systemic disadvantages. While equality focuses on uniform distribution, fairness recognizes individual circumstances and aims to remove the unique barriers people face, helping to ensure true inclusion and success.

See also: Equity

Equity

Where everyone is treated according to their diverse needs in a way that enables all people to participate, perform, and engage to the same extent.⁵³

See also: Equality

Equity-deserving groups

Groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged and [under-represented](#). These groups include but are not limited to the four designated groups in Canada – women, [visible minorities](#), [Indigenous Peoples](#), and people with [disabilities](#) – and people in the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) community, people with diverse [gender identities](#) and [sexual orientations](#). This term is gradually replacing equity-seeking in Canada, as it takes the onus off of historically disadvantaged and under-represented groups and emphasizes that these groups are inherently deserving of the equity that they have historically been denied.^{54 55 56}

See also: [equity-seeking groups](#) and [marginalized groups](#)

Equity-seeking groups

Groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged and [under-represented](#). These groups include but are not limited to the four designated groups in Canada – women, [visible minorities](#), [Indigenous](#) Peoples, and people with [disabilities](#) – and people in the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) community, people with diverse [gender identities](#) and [sexual orientations](#). Equity-seeking groups identify [barriers](#) and unequal access, and actively seek [social justice](#) and reparation.^{57 58} This term has been criticized and is gradually being replaced by equity-deserving in Canada, as it implies that historically disadvantaged and under-represented need to actively seek and ask for equity, rather than inherently deserving it.^{59 60 61}

See also: [equity-deserving groups](#) and [marginalized groups](#)

Erasure

The [exclusion](#) of people and [cultures](#) within history, resulting in inaccurate depiction and dismissal of the pain, achievements, and impacts of a group. Erasure can also occur through the denial of an individual or group's identity.⁶² Examples include bi-erasure, [Indigenous erasure](#), and [Black erasure](#).

See also: [bi erasure](#)

Essentialism

The belief that an entire group naturally possesses the same characteristics, ignoring individual differences within the group (e.g., the belief that there is a gender gap in certain industries because women are not interested in those jobs). Can lead to [stereotypes](#).⁶³ Other, more specific terms include gender essentialism and cultural essentialism.

Exclusion

Exclusion is the conscious or unconscious act of denying access or leaving someone out. DEIA is often concerned with rectifying the impacts of historical exclusion, which is the systematic marginalization or [discrimination](#) of a group of people through laws, policies or practices that result in unequal access.^{64 65}

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)

Intersectional analysis implemented by the Government of Canada since 1995, that goes beyond biological ([sex](#)) and socio-cultural ([gender](#)) differences to consider other factors, such as age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography (including rurality), language, race, religion, and sexual orientation. This analytical tool supports the development of responsive and inclusive policies, programs, and other initiatives.⁶⁶

Ghettoization

Segregation of specific areas belonging to a minority community deemed inferior by a majority group in a position of [power](#). These areas can be jobs, neighborhoods or specific types of transportation.⁶⁷

Harassment

Unwelcome comments or behaviours based on [protected grounds](#) that offend or humiliate the victim. Harassment is a form of [discrimination](#).^{68 69}

Hate crimes

Targeted [violence](#) against an [equity-deserving group](#).⁷⁰

Health equity

Health equity is achieved by providing individuals with [equal](#) opportunities to attain their full health potential regardless of social, economic, demographic, geographic, or other factors.⁷¹

Historical disadvantage

[Underrepresentation](#) and other [barriers](#) faced by [equity-deserving groups](#) due to historic patterns of [systemic and institutional discrimination](#).⁷²

Human rights

Basic rights that all people are entitled to. The [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), and [provincial human rights legislation](#) outline the rights that Canadians are entitled to.⁷³ The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) from the United Nations govern the national and provincial human rights legislation.⁷⁴

There are five types of human rights: civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. Civil and political rights include the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, the right to privacy and the right to freedom from discrimination. Economic, social, and cultural rights include the right to work, the right to food and water, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to take part in cultural life and the right to social security.⁷⁵

Impostor syndrome

Impostor syndrome is a psychological pattern in which individuals doubt their abilities and feel like impostors, despite their achievements and qualifications. Seeing themselves under-represented in the workplace (particularly in management positions), impostor syndrome disproportionately affects [equity-seeking groups](#). This doubt can hinder career development and self-confidence, as individuals go so far as to question their success, attributing it to luck rather than competence. This can sometimes lead to [self-censorship](#).⁷⁶

Inclusion

Inclusion is about how a collective of people come together to create an environment where individual [diversity](#) is respected and valued. The practice of inclusion stems from a recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of all people that relies on practices such as removal of [barriers](#), fostering a sense of [belonging](#), and respect for the unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics that each individual brings to a group. Inclusion is not the same as integration because integration focuses on the person changing to better fit the environment, where inclusion focuses on changing the environment to better fit the people.^{77 78 79 80}

See also: [inclusiveness/inclusivity](#)

Inclusive education

Inclusive education is an educational movement meant to support the creation of classrooms, curriculum, and policies that encourage the full participation of all students in every classroom. This is distinct from “mainstreaming”, which originated in the 1980’s and 1990’s and focuses primarily on selectively integrating students with [disabilities](#) into so-called mainstream classrooms for some part of the school day but not all.^{81 82 83}

Inclusive design

A design methodology that recognizes, considers, and involves the full range of human [diversity](#). Generally used in digital and technology design, inclusive design aims to create flexible products that users can customize to meet individual needs rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. Inclusive design is facilitated through input from people with various perspectives, including a diverse range of people on the design team.^{84 85 86}

See also: [universal design](#)

Inclusiveness/inclusivity

The outcome of the process of [inclusion](#). Inclusion uses [diversity](#) as a resource to reach inclusiveness.⁸⁷

See also: [inclusion](#)

Intergenerational trauma

The trauma experienced and inherited through generations. Research has found that trauma can be passed down genetically through changes in DNA expression, socially through traumatic events affecting social interactions, or structurally through the continued marginalization of traumatized groups. Intergenerational trauma has been found to affect the families of Holocaust survivors, [residential school](#) survivors, refugees, and other groups who experienced traumatic events.^{88 89}

Internalized dominance

Where individuals unconsciously believe they are superior or inferior to other groups due to systemic inequalities and social conditioning.⁹⁰

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a metaphor proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to help people see their [social identity](#) and connect it to others as well as systems of [oppression](#). It helps explain how overlapping experiences of [privilege](#) and marginalization can shape how people are treated and what [barriers](#) or privileges they might experience. Examining how identities like race, gender, and class enable or limit an individual depending on the situation. For example, a low-income person with a [disability](#) may face barriers such as not being able to afford accessible transportation, a unique experience based on both class and disability identities together. Intersectionality helps us see how overlapping identities can create unique challenges that often go unacknowledged.^{91 92}

Marginalized groups

Members of society that face [exclusion](#) due to societal and [systemic barriers](#).⁹³ This term is still used in some pieces of legislation, however, [equity-seeking groups](#) or [equity-deserving groups](#) are more appropriate terms to use in most cases.

See also: [under-represented minorities \(URM\)/under-represented groups \(URG\)](#)

Merit

Merit refers to the assessment of an individual's skills, experience, and performance based on predetermined criteria, often used to justify decisions like hiring or promotions. However, these criteria are shaped by systems of [power](#) such as white supremacy and patriarchy, embedding [biases](#) that disadvantage [equity-deserving groups](#).⁹⁴

See also: [meritocracy](#)

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is the belief that career outcomes are solely based on merit, ignoring how systemic inequities and [biases](#) shape opportunities, thus reinforcing existing disparities.^{95 96}

See also: [merit](#)

Microaggression

Microaggressions are subtle actions, comments, or environmental cues that communicate bias or [exclusion](#) toward [equity-deserving groups](#). Though often unintentional, they can have significant cumulative impacts on an individual's well-being and sense of [belonging](#). Some prefer terms like everyday [discrimination](#) or subtle acts of exclusion (SAE) to emphasize that the harm caused is not always minor or incidental.^{97 98}

See also: [microaffirmation](#)

Multiplicity

Having multiple [social identities](#) (e.g., being female, Black, and [straight](#)).⁹⁹

Organizational culture

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, behaviours, beliefs, and practices that shape how people work together within an organization. It influences everything from decision making and leadership styles to communication, workplace habits, and employee experiences.

This culture includes both the explicit emotional expectations (such as promoting happiness, enthusiasm, or calmness) and implicit emotional cues (like unspoken norms around whether it's acceptable to express frustration, sadness, or excitement).

Emotional culture

Emotional culture in organizations refers to the shared set of emotional norms, values, and practices that shape how emotions are experienced, expressed, and managed within a workplace. It encompasses the ways in which employees and leaders collectively understand, regulate, and respond to emotions in their interactions and work processes.¹⁰⁰

Psychological safety

The feeling of being safe to express ideas, feelings, and questions or to make mistakes without repercussions.¹⁰¹

Othering

Behaviour or language that makes a person or group feel inferior or like they do not [belong](#).¹⁰²

Oppression

Unjust treatment or exercise of [power](#) and control by some ([privileged](#) or dominant) group or groups of people over other (oppressed or subordinate) group or groups of people resulting from and maintained by social, systemic, and/or institutional values (including [prejudice](#)), policies, and practices. Oppression is manifest in the exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, dominance over, and/or [violence](#) towards members of the subordinate group. Oppression can be overt or covert.¹⁰³

Internalized oppression

Occurs when members of [equity-deserving groups](#) accept the misinformation and [stereotypes](#) that society communicates to them about their group.^{104 105} When this happens, people may unconsciously feel less worthy, capable, or good compared to others. This leads them to internalize the oppression they're facing, accepting and acting on negative stereotypes as if they were true.

See also: [anti-oppression](#)

Passing/to pass or blending

Refers to an [2SLGBTQIA+](#) person perceived as [cisgender](#) and/or [heterosexual](#) or being not visibly 2SLGBTQIA+. Passing or blending is important to some people, but not to others. It may be done purposefully for safety or other reasons, or inadvertently. The use of "passing" is sometimes disputed as it implies that it is a goal to be achieved. Passing can also refer to

someone who could be perceived to be a [race](#) or [ethnicity](#) that they are not based on appearance.¹⁰⁶

See also: [white passing](#)

Power

Unequally distributed access to [privileges](#) such as information, opportunity, and resources, and the ability to influence decisions, rules, standards, and policies to benefit oneself or one's social group. Power, and the level of power possessed by any individual or group, affects their ability to live comfortable, safe lives. Power is relational and it operates between individuals, [cultures](#), institutions, and social groups.^{107 108 109}

Positionality

Positionality is a statement made, most commonly by a researcher, about how the person relates to the overall topic(s) being addressed. In research, this is often a statement made by the researcher addressing how the researcher connects to the subject of the research project, the people participating in the research, and the context in which the research is occurring. Often positionality statements share personal social identities or previous knowledge of a topic to assist the reader in understanding how the person making the statement relates to the subject and may influence how information is being interpreted, knowing or unknowingly, from those positions mentioned.^{110 111}

Prejudice

Pre-judgement or negative assumptions made about an individual or social group based on [stereotypes](#) rather than experiences. Prejudicial attitudes prevent equal treatment and lead to [discrimination](#).^{112 113}

Privilege

Unearned access, benefits, and opportunities possessed by members of a social group with a high level of [power](#) (e.g., [White privilege](#), socioeconomic privilege, cisgender privilege). Privilege occurs when structures and institutions have been historically designed for the benefit of or to be accessed by a particular group.^{114 115}

Prohibited grounds/protected grounds

Personal characteristics defined in [human rights](#) legislation that are legally protected from [discrimination](#).¹¹⁶ Prohibited grounds are defined in the Canadian Human Rights Act as [race](#), [national](#) or [ethnic](#) origin, colour, religion, age, [sex](#), [sexual orientation](#), [gender identity](#) or [expression](#), marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, [disability](#), and conviction for

an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.¹¹⁷

Pseudoscience

Any statement, claim or belief that is presented in scientific terms, but is not supported by current scientific methods and standards. Some ways to show a claim comes from pseudoscience are that claims are untested, the person or group making the claim refusing to allow others to test their results, or no further research conducted in the area. Additionally, the most common rebuttal of pseudoscientific claims is to attack the person calling the results into question or their character but not defending the claim itself.¹¹⁸

Reclaimed language

Words that were used offensively to describe a community but has been reclaimed by members of that community for their own use. Reclaimed language is generally still harmful and offensive when used outside of the community. Language is reclaimed as a form of empowerment, to take the negative power out of the word, and to claim the community's space. Examples include "queen" and "[queer](#)".¹¹⁹

Respect

Respect means recognizing the inherent worth of every individual and demonstrating this through words and actions that reflect dignity and consideration. In the context of [diversity](#), [equity](#), and [inclusion](#), respect involves valuing and understanding differences and fostering an environment where all perspectives are heard and appreciated. Respect may also be individually defined and therefore involves recognizing and adapting to individual expectations as relationships develop.^{120 121 122 123}

Restorative justice

Restorative justice is an approach to addressing conflict and harm that focuses on healing, accountability, and repairing relationships, rather than punishment. It brings together those who caused harm, those affected, and the community to collectively find meaningful solutions. Rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, restorative justice emphasizes recognizing harm, fostering [inclusion](#), and promoting transformation.¹²⁴

Reverse discrimination

The belief that members of [equity-deserving groups](#) receive unfair advantages as a result of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and that these programs create [barriers](#) for

members of a [dominant group](#). Discrimination based on a [protected ground](#) can happen to anyone regardless of their [social identities](#) and is prohibited by [human rights](#) legislation, but this term is most often used by opponents of [equity](#) initiatives.^{125 126}

Self-censorship

Self-censorship is the preventive censorship of one's own words, deeds or achievements. Self-censorship may be motivated by modesty or by fear of censure, reprisals, loss of advantage, etc., from the state, an institution or a company on which one depends. For example, [discrimination](#) and systemic obstacles encountered by [equity-seeking groups](#) may lead them to stop applying for certain jobs in anticipation of the obstacles they fear they'll encounter.¹²⁷

Silencing

Situations where a [dominant group](#) overpowers, dismisses, or dominates conversations or spaces over minority groups.¹²⁸

Sizeism/size discrimination

[Discrimination](#) based on attitudes and [stereotypes](#) related to a person's body size.¹²⁹

Social identity

A person's identity and sense of who they are in relation to the groups to which they [belong](#) and how those groups are perceived by themselves and others.¹³⁰

Stereotype

An assumption about a certain group, and the notion that the assumption applies to all members of the group. Stereotypes can be positive but are generally negative and ignore the [diversity](#) that exists within a group.¹³¹

Stereotype threat

A theory that describes the experience of a member of a [stereotyped](#) group when they feel the risk of being negatively evaluated based on their group membership and a desire to avoid confirming a stereotype. The negative feelings and stress caused by stereotype threat can impact how someone performs.^{132 133}

Supplier diversity

Providing [diverse](#) suppliers with equal access. Actively seeking out diversity in the supply chain network of the organization and maintaining relationships with diverse suppliers through inclusive practices.¹³⁴

Tokenism

Tokenism is the [inclusion](#) of members of equity-seeking groups to project an image of diversity and avoid claims of [discrimination](#). In workplaces this can look like outwardly celebrating a commemoration without changing policies that impact the same group like adding a rainbow to your logo during Pride Season without providing gender neutral washrooms.¹³⁵

Tolerance

Setting aside differences in [culture](#), beliefs, or values without necessarily embracing or agreeing with them.¹³⁶

Contrast with: [acceptance](#)

Tone policing

A tactic used in discussions or arguments to shift attention from the message's content to the way it was delivered.¹³⁷ Example: "Calm down. There's no point in engaging if you can't even have a civil conversation."¹³⁸

Trigger

Something that causes a distressing reaction and affects one's emotional and mental state. A trigger can bring up traumatic memories and influence behaviour.¹³⁹

Trigger warning

A statement that comes before presenting content that could potentially cause distress.¹⁴⁰

Uncolonization

An intentional practice of recognizing and dismantling colonial habits, assumptions, and systems embedded in everyday life. It focuses on how colonial logics shape personal choices, relationships, and organizational structures. Unlike [decolonization](#), which is Indigenous-led, centering sovereignty, land reclamation, and movements such as [Land Back](#), uncolonization begins with settlers transforming their own mindsets and practices. Its purpose is to clear

space for decolonizing efforts to take root authentically. While decolonization advances Indigenous voices, leadership, and actions, uncolonization is a settler responsibility: the work of unlearning internalized colonial patterns so that Indigenous-led decolonization can unfold without being undermined or co-opted. Together, the two clarify distinct but interconnected roles—settlers engage in uncolonizing work to prepare the conditions for Indigenous-led decolonization.^{141 142}

Under-represented minorities (URM)/under-represented groups (URG)

Groups that are not proportionally represented in positions of economic influence and leadership, including on corporate boards and in senior management. These groups include women, [racialized persons](#), those who identify as [2SLGBTQIA+](#), [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#) and [Métis](#) Peoples, and people with [disabilities](#).¹⁴³

See also: [equity-seeking groups](#), [equity-deserving groups](#) and [marginalized groups](#)

Underserved populations

Groups who face [systemic barriers](#) that prevent them from accessing or receiving the same quality of services as people not facing those [barriers](#).¹⁴⁴

Violence

Violence is an intentional act, behaviour, or use of [power](#) that results in or has the likelihood to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm.¹⁴⁵

Institutional violence

A form of violence that uses [power](#) to cause harm and enforces structural [oppression](#).¹⁴⁶

Ways of knowing

Ways of knowing encompasses the diverse systems in which knowledge is generated, experienced and transmitted, ranging from rational, evidence-based reasoning to storytelling, spiritual guidance, ancestral memory, and land-based practice. In Indigenous contexts, ways of knowing are understood as holistic, cumulative and relational: fundamentally they are linked to community, the natural world, and cultural identity, and often passed on through ceremony, metaphor, and daily living.

Ways of knowing include different approaches to knowledge, such as learning from facts or from lived experience, and considering how we justify our beliefs, how we gathered knowledge, and how we decide what counts as reliable understanding. Bringing these perspectives together we see that ways of knowing is a multidimensional concept bridging

cultural, philosophical common practical understandings of how humans engage and interpret the world.^{147 148}

Woke

Woke refers to being “awake” to racial injustice and social awareness. Over time, the term expanded to reflect a broader consciousness of systemic inequalities, including sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and class-based discrimination. In recent years, woke has become politically charged and used sincerely by some to signal social awareness, and used critically or pejoratively by others to dismiss progressive movements as performative or overly ideological. Despite its politicization, the term still reflects ongoing conversations about justice, equity, and accountability.¹⁴⁹

Age

Age shapes how people are seen, treated, and included in society and the workplace. Discrimination based on age can occur toward both younger and older people, often through stereotypes that assume capability based on age. This section recognizes the role of age alongside other identities that help ensure equity during all life stages.

Adultism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) of young people based on the belief that younger people are less valuable or less capable.¹⁵⁰

Ageism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) based on age.^{151 152}

Generations

Groups of people born in specific time frames, set based on historical events, historic birth rates, and other factors. Generations are often assumed to have similar shared experiences, ideals, and attitudes, leading to the application of generalizations and [stereotypes](#) based on generation.¹⁵³ Note: The exact time frame for the generations varies, particularly with generation X, millennials, generation Z, and generation alpha. Contested dates are noted with “~”.

Silent generation

People born between 1925 to ~1945. People of the silent generation were children during the Great Depression and World War II.^{154 155 156}

Baby boomers

People born between ~1946 to 1964 when the birthrate in Canada and other countries grew rapidly after World War II. Baby boomers make up a large portion of the current workforce and are reaching retirement age.^{157 158 159}

Generation X

People born between 1965 to 1980, when Canada’s birthrate slowed after the baby boom. The portion of this generation born between 1966 and 1971 are sometimes referred to as “baby busters”.^{160 161 162}

Millennials

People born between ~1981 to ~1996. Millennials are the children of baby boomers and grew up throughout the rise of technology.^{163 164 165}

Allyship

Allyship is about moving beyond words to action. It is the practice of using one's privilege, influence, and voice to support equity-deserving groups in meaningful ways. This section explores terms connected to allyship, including how people can take action, create inclusive environments, and recognize the difference between intent and impact.

Accomplice

An accomplice is someone who goes beyond allyship by using their privilege and position to actively challenge systems of oppression, even when doing so involves personal, social, or professional risk. While allies may offer support or solidarity, accomplices take concrete actions to dismantle inequities, often standing alongside marginalized individuals in moments of exclusion, harm, or injustice.¹⁷³

Advocacy

Advocacy means actively supporting or speaking up for marginalized or underrepresented individuals or groups, in ways that ensure their voices, rights, and needs are respected and acted upon.¹⁷⁴

Ally/allyship

Rooted in the term “alliance”, an ally is an individual in a position of [privilege](#) or [power](#) who makes consistent efforts to understand, uplift, empower, and support [equity-deserving groups](#). An ally is not a member of the group but seeks to stand in solidarity with an equity-deserving group to end [oppression](#), [discrimination](#) and/or [prejudice](#).^{175 176}

Brave space

A term that emerged out of the critiques of [safe spaces](#). A brave space encourages dialogue. It is conceptualized around recognizing differences and holding each person accountable to do the work of sharing experiences and coming to new understandings - a feat that is often hard, and typically uncomfortable.¹⁷⁷

Bystander

A person who witnesses a harmful incident or interaction but does not intervene, despite having the opportunity to do so.^{178 179}

Contrast with: [upstander](#)

Citizenry and documentation

This section explains key terms that relate to ancestry, migration, and belonging. Legal statuses, how we connect to land, and who we think belong here are ideas that help us understand how nations define citizenship and how communities shape their sense of self across borders.

Diaspora

Diaspora refers to a population of people who live outside their ancestral or national homeland, often as a result of migration, displacement, or forced relocation. Diasporic communities often maintain strong cultural, emotional, or political ties to their place of origin while also navigating complex, multiple identities in their country of residence.¹⁹⁰

Heritage

Heritage refers to what we inherit from the past, value in the present, and seek to pass on to future [generations](#).¹⁹¹ It can be categorized into three types:

- Tangible heritage includes human-made objects and structures such as buildings, monuments, and museum artifacts.
- Natural heritage refers to natural environments such as landscapes, waterways, and wildlife that shape cultural knowledge and ways of life.
- Cultural heritage includes traditions, [languages](#), music, dance, crafts, and customs that connect people to their histories and identities.

Immigrant

In Canada, immigrant is a legal designation for someone who has been granted the right to permanently live in the country. This includes people with landed immigrant, permanent resident, or naturalized statuses. More broadly, an immigrant is someone who has made the choice to move and settle in a country other than the one they were born in.¹⁹²

Nationality

The state of belonging to a particular country or being a citizen of a particular nation.¹⁹³

Nationalism

An ideology that places an individual's loyalty to and identification with a nation or country above other interests.¹⁹⁴

Disability, accessibility, and neurodiversity

Today, disability and neurodiversity are increasingly recognized as part of human diversity, shaped not only by individual differences but also by the norms, structures, and expectations that determine inclusion or exclusion. This section provides key terms that reflect the social model and rights-based understandings of disability, as well as concepts that help us imagine more inclusive, accessible, and equitable communities.

Note: It is generally accepted in disability communities that [disabled](#) and [disability](#) are not bad words, and euphemisms for these words should be avoided unless requested. See [Diversability](#). An excellent resource for appropriate use of disability terminology, beyond what is described in this glossary, is the [National Center for Disability and Journalism's Style Guide](#). Also see our [inclusive language guidelines](#) at the beginning of this document.

Ability

Having the mental and/or physical capacity to do a task or activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, job functions, self-care activities, etc.²⁰⁰

Ability Diversity

Diversity of persons living with impairments, disabilities, and neurodiverse people. This term is used to designate a group of people who have a multitude of different identities without having to name them all.²⁰¹

Able-bodied

Someone who does not have a physical [disability](#). It is important to note that able-bodied is not the opposite of [disabled](#), and the preferred antonym is [non-disabled](#).²⁰²

Ableism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) based on conscious or unconscious beliefs that people with [disabilities](#) are less valuable, and therefore less able to contribute and participate in society. Ableism may be embedded in institutions and can limit opportunities and inclusion of persons with disabilities in community and corporate life.²⁰³

Accessibility/accessible

Implementation of a certain flexibility to meet needs. It refers to the design of products, devices, services or environments for people living with one or more visible or invisible, congenital or acquired disabilities.²⁰⁴ Accessibility is not exclusive to people with reduced

Ethnicity and culture

Ethnicity and culture shape identity and how we connect with others. Both concepts relate to shared ancestry, language, and traditions, as well as evolving beliefs, values, and customs. This section explores key terms to better understand how ethnicity and culture shape identity as well as lived experience.

Acculturation

The process by which a person or a group of people from one culture adopts cultural characteristics of another culture while retaining their own culture. The acculturation process can be mutual and beneficial, allowing for the exchange and adaptation of traditions, beliefs and cultural productions. Cultural Appropriation on the other hand is when a power dynamic is incorporated, and a dominant culture appropriates elements of a 'subordinate' culture without permission.²⁸²

Contrast with: [Cultural appropriation](#)

Canadian Multiculturalism Act

A federal policy that acknowledges the coexistence of multiple cultures and ethnicities within a society, “to preserve individual cultural freedom and recognize the contributions of diverse ethnic groups”.^{283 284}

Cultural accommodation

Process where one culture integrates into another without losing its identity.²⁸⁵

See also: [interculturalism](#) and [reasonable accommodation](#)

Cultural appreciation

Act of recognizing, respecting, and celebrating the culture of a particular group. It involves engaging with members of that culture and learning from their experiences.²⁸⁶

Contrast with: [cultural appropriation](#)

Cultural appropriation

The theft of cultural elements or objects from [equity-deserving groups](#) for use, commodification, or profit without understanding the cultural significance and historical context.^{287 288}

See also: [acculturation](#) and [cultural appreciation](#)

First Nations, Métis, and Intuit terminology

The language we use to talk to and about Indigenous people in Canada carries deep political, cultural, legal, and historical weight. This section illustrates the key terms that continue to appear in Canadian laws and policies, while also emphasizing the importance of context and Indigenous identity. Understanding these terms and their limitations is important for recognizing both the legacy of colonial control and the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples and utilizing culturally responsive language that supports collective efforts toward decolonization and reconciliation.

Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal Peoples is the collective term used in Canada's Constitution Act, 1982 to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Although recognized in legislation, the term was not chosen by these communities, has problematic interpretations, and is increasingly being replaced by [Indigenous Peoples](#). While some organizations and legal frameworks continue to use Aboriginal, many communities prefer Indigenous. Always use the term requested by the community you are engaging with.^{318 319 320}

See also: [Indigenous Peoples](#)

Anti-Indigenous racism

The ongoing [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed at [Indigenous Peoples](#). Anti-Indigenous racism is systemic and institutional, existing in federal policies such as the [Indian Act](#) and the residential school system.³²¹

See also: [racism](#)

Band

A self-governed [Indigenous](#) group with common cultural characteristics, traditions, and practices, that had their lands set apart as defined in the [Indian Act](#). Using this term outside of the legislative context should be avoided and [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), or [Métis](#) should be used instead. There are over 600 recognized bands in Canada.³²²

Band council/First Nation council

The governing body of a band or [First Nation](#), including the Chief, who is elected according to the [Indian Act](#) or through other means determined by the band. This term should only be used to describe leadership operating under the Indian Act.^{323 324}

Gender, gender identity, and gender expression

Gender is shaped by culture, history, and personal identity. While some people's gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth, others experience and express gender in different ways. This section offers trans-affirming terms to support understanding of the diverse, complex, and personal nature of gender.

2SLGBTQIA+ and other acronyms

2SLGBTQIA+ is an acronym that stands for [Two-Spirit](#), [Lesbian](#), [Gay](#), [Bisexual](#), [Transgender](#), [Queer/Questioning](#), [Intersex](#) and [Asexual/Ally](#).⁴¹⁶ A plus sign or asterisk added to any acronym indicates the inclusion of [sexual orientations](#) and [gender identities](#) not explicitly included in the acronym. There are many acronyms that may be preferred by different individuals. The following is a comprehensive but incomplete list of acronyms:

- LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.
- LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and [Asexual/Ally](#).⁴¹⁷
- 2SLGBTQIA+: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Ally. A plus sign or asterisk added to any acronym indicates the inclusion of [sexual orientations](#) and [gender identities](#) not explicitly included in the acronym. Some individuals and organizations choose to put two-spirit at the beginning of the acronym as a [reconciliation](#) effort to put the [Indigenous](#) expression of [gender](#) and sexual orientation at the forefront.⁴¹⁸
- LGBTIQAPD: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual/Ally, [Pansexual](#), and [Demisexual](#).⁴¹⁹
- LGBT*IQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, [Trans*](#), Intersex, and Queer/Questioning.
- QTPOC: Queer, Trans, and Intersex [People of Colour](#). The term acknowledges the [intersectionality](#) of [race](#), gender, and sexual orientation. Other terms include QTIBIPOC (Queer, Trans, and Intersex, Black and Indigenous Peoples of Colour), QPOC (Queer People of Colour), and QTPOC (Queer and/or Trans People of Colour).⁴²⁰
- QUILTBAG: Queer/Questioning, Unlabelled/Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Trans*/Two-Spirit, Bisexual, Asexual, and Gay/[Genderqueer](#).⁴²¹
- AGL: All Gender Loving. This is a term sometimes used by the Black community to express their sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.⁴²²
- SGL: Same Gender Loving. This is a term sometimes used by the Black community to express their sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.⁴²³

Language

Language can be a source of inclusion and connection, but also of exclusion when used to create hierarchies of legitimacy and belonging. The terminology in this section reflects both descriptive and social understandings of language. It highlights how language is tied to identity and how it can be used as a basis for bias and discrimination.

Accent

An accent is the distinctive way people pronounce words, influenced by region, [culture](#), social background, or first language. Unlike a dialect, which also includes differences in grammar and vocabulary, an accent focuses only on pronunciation. Everyone speaks with at least one accent, and some people shift their accent depending on the situation. In essence, it is a natural feature of spoken language that reflects [identity](#) and linguistic history.⁵³⁸

Allophone

In French Canada, a resident of a province or territory whose mother tongue is neither French nor English.⁵³⁹

Anglophone

A person who is fluent in the English language in most everyday situations. There is no unanimity as to the objective definition of this notion, but some take into account the first language, others the language spoken at home, the country of origin and the language of education.

It is worth mentioning that an English speaker can also be fluent in one or more other languages.⁵⁴⁰

Canadian bilingualism

Canadian bilingualism refers to the official recognition and use of both English and French as the country's two official languages, as established in the [Official Languages Act](#) (1969, revised 1988 and 2005). This framework requires federal institutions to provide services in both languages and guarantees Canadians the right to communicate with the federal government in either English or French. Rooted in the country's colonial history, bilingualism has become a defining feature of Canada's national identity, politics, and education. In recent years, the recognition of Indigenous languages has expanded this linguistic landscape. The [Indigenous Languages Act](#) (2019) acknowledges the right of [Indigenous Peoples](#) to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen their languages, recognizing them as integral to culture

Race, racism, and racialization

In Canada and beyond, ideas about race have been used to divide, exclude, and justify unequal treatment, from colonization and slavery to immigration restrictions and segregation. Today, racism continues to show up in institutions, policies, and everyday interactions. This section offers key terms to help unpack how race, racism, and racialization are constructed and how they continue to shape our world.

Ancestry

Lineage; family or ethnic origins.⁵⁵¹

Anti-Arab racism

The ongoing [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed at people of Arabic descent. Anti-Arab racism became more prominent and interlinked with [Islamophobia](#) following the 9/11 attack.^{552 553}

See also: [racism](#)

Anti-Asian racism

The ongoing [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed at people of [Asian](#) descent. Asian Canadians were historically subject to systemic and institutional racism. However, instances of anti-Asian racism became more prominent during the global COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁵⁴

See also: [racism](#)

Anti-Black racism

The ongoing [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed at Black people or people of African descent. Anti-Black racism is embedded in our systems and institutions, impacting educational outcomes, career progression, health outcomes, and racial profiling in law enforcement.^{555 556}

See also: [racism](#)

Anti-Indigenous racism

The ongoing [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed at [Indigenous Peoples](#). Anti-Indigenous racism is systemic and institutional, existing in federal policies such as the [Indian Act](#) and the residential school system.⁵⁵⁷

See also: [racism](#)

Relationship and family status

Relationship and family status refers to the diverse ways people build, define, and sustain their connections with partners, children, and families. It includes legal structures, like marriage, adoption, and custody, as well as social and cultural practices such as arranged marriage, blended families, or pluriparentality. It also encompasses relationship orientations; monogamous, non-monogamous, or polyamorous, each shaped by the boundaries and consent of those involved. Recognizing these varied forms of family and partnership affirms that no single model is universal, and that all people deserve respect, rights, and dignity in how they choose to define their closest relationships.

Note: This section contains a noncomprehensive selection of some common terms related to [non-monogamous](#) or [polyamorous](#) relationships. There is a great deal of diversity within non-monogamous or polyamorous relationships, as each relationship has unique boundaries and characteristics agreed upon within the relationship. To learn more, see [Learning the Lingo](#) from More than Two or the [Polyamory Glossary](#) from Ready for Polyamory.

Adoption

Where a family takes over [custody](#) and care of a child in a formal way and become the legal family of the child. There are four types in Canada: International, private, public, and relative/kinship. Adoption can also be open or closed.⁶³⁸

Arranged marriage

An arranged marriage is when families or community members play a central role in helping someone find a marriage partner. This is a common tradition in many cultures and can look very different depending on the people involved. Arranged marriages exist on a spectrum and can vary significantly across cultural, religious, and familial contexts. What matters most is whether or not the person getting married has a choice in the decision.⁶³⁹

Bigamy

Act of entering into a marriage with one person while still legally married to another. In Canada, it is considered an offence under the Canadian Criminal Code, regardless of consent or cultural and religious practices.⁶⁴⁰

See also: [polygamy](#)

Blended family

A family where both partners have children from previous relationships.⁶⁴¹

Religion, faith, and spirituality

Religion, spirituality, and faith shape how people understand the world, create meaning, and connect with community, encompassing diverse traditions ranging from organized religions and ancient philosophies to personal spiritual practices and secular or non-religious worldviews. At the same time, discrimination such as antisemitism, Islamophobia, or faith-based exclusion shows how religion can also be a site of marginalization. This section introduces key terms that reflect the wide range of religious, spiritual, and secular identities, and the ways they continue to shape both personal and collective experiences.

African diaspora religions

Religions of the African diaspora, or Afro-diasporic religions, are spiritual traditions that developed among African people who were displaced by the Atlantic slave trade and preserved by their descendants. They are practiced mainly in the Caribbean, Brazil, northeastern South America, and the southern United States.⁶⁸⁰

Candomblé

Candomblé is an African diasporic religion that emerged in Brazil, rooted in the cultural resilience of enslaved West Africans who sought to preserve their spiritual traditions despite oppression and forced Christianisation. To protect themselves from persecution, practitioners outwardly identified as Catholics. As a result, many of the orixás (deities) of Candomblé, though derived primarily from West African traditions, became linked with Roman Catholic saints. In Candomblé, every person is believed to be guided by a personal orixá, each with its own symbolism, attributes, and domain of influence. Today, while Candomblé is widely practiced in Brazil and beyond, it continues to face prejudice and misunderstanding rooted in anti-Black racism and religious intolerance.^{681 682 683 684}

Santería

Santería, also called La Regla de Ocha-Ifá and La Regla de Lukumí, is an Afro-Cuban religion that arose from the blending of Yoruba spiritual traditions with Catholicism by enslaved people brought from West Africa and the Congo Basin to Cuba. Santería developed as a way for enslaved Africans to preserve their spiritual traditions while outwardly conforming to colonial Catholicism. Practiced in secret under colonial restrictions, it linked orishas (deities) with Catholic saints while retaining African ritual practices such as divination, offerings, and initiation. Central to Santería is the relationship between practitioners and their orishas, who guide and protect them in daily life. Although it is now practiced widely across the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, Santería often remains low-profile due to stigma, misunderstanding, and the persistence of anti-Black racism.^{685 686 687}

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the patterns of emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction to others that exist on a spectrum and can be fluid over time. Orientation is distinct from both gender identity (who someone is) and sexual behavior (what someone does), though these experiences often intersect. The language used to describe sexual orientation continues to evolve, and prejudices such as homophobia, biphobia, and queerphobia still pose barriers to equity and inclusion.

2SLGBTQIA+ and other acronyms

See [2SLGBTQIA+ and other acronyms](#)

Aromantic

Someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction to others and has little to no interest in romantic relationships. Aromanticism exists on a spectrum and can fluctuate. It is sometimes shortened to Aro.^{733 734}

See also: [romantic orientation](#)

Asexual

Someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction to others and has little to no interest in sexual activity or sexual relationships. Asexuality exists on a spectrum and can fluctuate. It is sometimes shortened to Ace.^{735 736}

Being read

See [Being read](#)

Bi erasure

[Biases](#) or attitudes that include denying entirely that [bisexuality](#) exists, calling it a phase, or the insinuation that people who identify as bisexual are questioning their sexuality or not ready to [come out](#) as [gay](#) or [lesbian](#).⁷³⁷

See also: [Erasure](#)

Socioeconomic status

The term socioeconomic status (SES) refers to the combined social and economic standing of individuals, families, or groups, usually measured by income, education, and occupation. This status shapes people's access to resources, opportunities, and life outcomes, influencing housing, food security, education, healthcare, and mobility. At the same time, SES is connected to systemic inequities such as classism and income equality, which reinforce cycles of exclusion. Understanding SES helps us address economic justice, ensure fair pay, bridge digital divides, and better support under-resourced and unhoused communities.

Classism

[Discriminatory](#) practices and [biases](#), for or against, based on socioeconomic status.⁷⁷²

Economic justice

Founded on the belief that justice intersects with the economy, economic justice is the idea that economic policies and institutions should have the ultimate goal of providing equal opportunities for individuals to thrive.^{773 774}

Educationism

Subtle form of [discrimination](#) against those who are less educated or who don't hold post-secondary academic credentials.⁷⁷⁵

Equal pay for equal work

Refers to equal pay provisions in employment standards legislation that addresses situations where men and women are performing the same or comparable jobs. Equal pay for equal work takes skill, effort, responsibilities, and working conditions into consideration when determining comparable jobs.⁷⁷⁶

Contrast with: [pay equity](#)

Food insecurity/Food poverty

A lack of reliable access to enough safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to meet daily needs for an active, healthy life.⁷⁷⁷

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