



Glossary of DEIA terms

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

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INTRODUCTION

This expansive glossary aims to provide a reference for anyone interested in terminology used within diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

The language used around DEIA and social justice topics is constantly evolving. Context, connotation, tone, and self-determination all play a role in what terminology is acceptable. For example, language that is offensive may be [reclaimed](#) by the group it was used to harm, the terminology that someone may prefer in reference to themselves may change (e.g., [identity-first language](#) and [person-first language](#)), or the way a word is used may change to be more inclusive (e.g., [gender-neutral language](#) and [pronouns](#)). As terminology evolves, it is always best practice to ask about an individual's preferred way to be addressed.

It is our goal to create a comprehensive and accurate glossary; however, there can be definitions that have evolved or have nuances that are missing. The nature of language is such that the meanings of words are often very subjective and based on context. If you notice something that should be added, updated, or removed while engaging with this glossary, please reach out to us at research@ccdi.ca.

GENERAL DEIA TERMINOLOGY

Acceptance

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

Allochthonous/non-native person

In Canada, a person who is not of Indigenous origin, that is, who does not belong to one of the three [Indigenous Peoples](#), namely, [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#) or [Métis](#).² The word can also describe someone living in a country where they were not born. However, using this word to refer to a non-Indigenous person is often discouraged due to its discriminatory connotations.

Attitudes

Beliefs that influence behaviour towards and perception of an individual and/or groups.³

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.⁴

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.⁵

Systemic barriers

Policies, practices, or behaviours in society that exclude equity-deserving groups.⁶

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.⁷

Bias

A conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit) opinion, preference, [prejudice](#), or inclination, formed without reasonable justification, that prevents a balanced or even-handed judgement.⁸

Affinity bias

People's tendency to connect with individuals most like themselves.⁹

Confirmation bias

Only noticing or accepting information that aligns with current beliefs.¹⁰

Ingroup bias/ingroup favouritism

People's tendency to favour, prefer, and uplift the group that they are a member of.^{11 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

A person who witnesses an incident but does not intervene or otherwise take part.¹⁷

Contrast with: [upstander](#)

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.^{18 19}

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.^{20 21}

See also: [dog whistle](#)

Cognitive diversity

Having a variety of ideas, opinions, and perspectives within a group.^{22 23}

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

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.²⁴

Dialogue

Communicating with the goal of expressing different perspectives and coming to multiple understandings without necessarily agreeing.²⁵

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](#).^{26 27}

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.²⁸

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](#).^{29 30}

Diversity

Diversity is about the individual. It is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics we all possess, and the mix that occurs in any group of people.^{31 32} [Race](#), [ethnicity](#), age, [gender](#), [sexual orientation](#), religious beliefs, economic status, physical abilities, life experiences, and other perspectives can make up individual diversity.^{33 34}

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](#).³⁵

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](#)).^{36 37}

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.³⁸

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](#).³⁹

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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹

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](#).^{42 43}

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.^{44 45}

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).⁴⁶

Equality

Where everyone is treated the same regardless of individual differences and needs.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸

Contrast with: [pay 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.⁴⁹

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](#) people, 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.^{50 51 52}

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](#) people, 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.^{53 54} 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.^{55 56 57}

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.⁵⁸ 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](#).⁵⁹ Other, more specific terms include gender essentialism and cultural essentialism.

Exclusion

Denying access or leaving someone out either consciously or unconsciously.⁶⁰

Fairness

Processes and outcomes that are impartial.⁶¹

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.⁶²

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.⁶³

Harassment

Unwelcome comments or behaviours based on [protected grounds](#) that offend or humiliate the victim. Harassment is a form of [discrimination](#).^{64 65}

Hate crimes

Targeted [violence](#) against an equity-deserving group.⁶⁶

Health equity

Health equity is achieved by providing individuals with fair opportunities to attain their full health potential regardless of social, economic, demographic, geographic, or other factors.⁶⁷

Historical disadvantage

[Underrepresentation](#) and other [barriers](#) faced by [equity-deserving groups](#) due to historic patterns of [systemic and institutional discrimination](#).⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰

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.⁷¹

Impostor syndrome

Feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt despite actual achievements and success. Impostor syndrome is common in members of [underrepresented groups](#) due to awareness of [biases](#), experiences of [microaggressions](#), and a historical lack of representation.^{72 73}

Inclusion

Inclusion is creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values [diversity](#).⁷⁴ It is a mindful and equitable effort to meet individual needs so everyone feels valued, [respected](#), and able to contribute to their fullest potential.⁷⁵ Where diversity occurs naturally, creating the mix in the organization, inclusion is the choice that helps the mix work well together.^{76 77}

See also: [inclusiveness/inclusivity](#)

Inclusiveness/inclusivity

The outcome of the process of [inclusion](#). Inclusion uses [diversity](#) as a resource to reach inclusiveness.⁷⁸

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.^{79 80}

Internalized dominance

Where individuals unconsciously believe they are superior or inferior to other groups due to systemic inequalities and social conditioning.⁸¹

Intersectionality

A term coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how [social identities](#) may overlap to create compounding [barriers](#) for individuals. It is described as a framework for approaching issues from multiple perspectives and understanding how multiple groups, or individuals with multiple identities, may be affected. For example, approaching [feminism](#) with an intersectional lens would involve acknowledging and addressing the unique barriers faced by [women of colour](#), women with [disabilities](#), or [trans women](#).^{82 83 84 85}

Marginalized groups

Members of society that face [exclusion](#) due to societal and [systemic barriers](#).⁸⁶ 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 \(URG\)](#)

Mentor

A person who guides another, often at a more junior level, to support their professional growth.⁸⁷ Mentorship is the act of providing guidance in a mentor role.

See also: [sponsor](#)

Merit

Assessment made based on a clear definition of someone's knowledge, experience, and ability through formal evaluation of performance and achievement. Merit is often used to evaluate for promotions or hiring.^{88 89} It is important to note that the "clear definition" used to measure merit is often based on criteria that is rooted in systems of [power](#) like [white supremacy](#) and [patriarchy](#), and are often influenced by unconscious [biases](#).

See also: [meritocracy](#)

Meritocracy

A workplace that claims career decisions (e.g., pay, promotions, hiring) are based exclusively on merit, and that [race](#), [gender](#), or other differences do not influence decisions.^{90 91}

See also: [merit](#)

Microaggression

Small interactions with people or the environment that communicate [bias](#) towards equity-deserving groups. While microaggressions may be unintentional, they can have cumulative negative effects on an individual's well-being and sense of [belonging](#). Examples include asking a [person of colour](#), "where are you really from?" or a woman in a meeting being repeatedly spoken over or dismissed by her male colleagues.^{92 93 94 95}

See also [microaffirmation](#)

Multiplicity

Having multiple [social identities](#) (e.g., being female, Black, and [straight](#)).⁹⁶

Norm

Behaviours or characteristics of a group that are considered societal standards.⁹⁷

Othering

Behaviour or language that makes a person or group feel inferior or like they do not [belong](#).⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹

Internalized oppression

Occurs when members of equity-deserving groups accept the misinformation and stereotypes that society communicates to them about their group.^{100 101} 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.¹⁰²

See also: [white passing](#)

Pay equity

Equal pay for work of equal value. The goal of the Pay Equity Act is to ensure and enforce that jobs traditionally performed by women are paid fairly when compared to jobs of equivalent value that are traditionally performed by men. The value of these jobs is determined by skill, effort, responsibilities, and working conditions.¹⁰³

Contrast with: [equal pay for equal work](#)

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.^{104 105 106}

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](#).^{107 108}

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.^{109 110}

Prohibited grounds/protected grounds

Personal characteristics defined in [human rights](#) legislation that are legally protected from [discrimination](#).¹¹¹ 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.¹¹²

Psychological safety

The feeling of being safe to express ideas, feelings, and questions or to make mistakes without repercussions.^{113 114}

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 "[dyke](#)", "[fag](#)", "homo", "queen", and "[queer](#)".¹¹⁵

Restorative justice

Non-adversarial and non-retributive approach to address conflict and crime. It emphasizes healing in persons harmed, the meaningful accountability of persons responsible for causing harm, and the involvement of community members in creating healthier, safer, and stronger communities.

Although restorative justice can take on many forms, its processes have some common values, such as the recognition of harm, inclusion, accountability, safety, interaction and transformation.^{116 117}

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.^{118 119}

Silencing

Situations where a [dominant group](#) overpowers, dismisses, or dominates conversations or spaces over minority groups.¹²⁰

Sizeism/size discrimination

[Discrimination](#) based on [attitudes](#) and [stereotypes](#) related to a person's body size.¹²¹

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.^{122 123}

Social justice

The view that all people should have [equitable](#) access to resources, opportunities, and [human rights](#). Social justice is actions taken towards addressing the root cause of inequities and is rooted in the belief that all people have equal value.^{124 125}

Sponsor

A person who takes action to advance the career of another by advocating for them, connecting them with leadership, and amplifying their work.¹²⁶ Sponsorship is the act of advocating for another in the role of a sponsor.

See also: [mentorship/mentor](#)

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.¹²⁷

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.^{128 129}

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.¹³⁰

Tokenism

Focusing on limited representation of [under-represented groups](#) for the appearance of being inclusive without any action towards meaningful [inclusion](#).^{131 132 133}

Tolerance

Setting aside differences in [culture](#), beliefs, or values without necessarily embracing or agreeing with them.^{134 135}

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.¹³⁶ Example: "Calm down. There's no point in engaging if you can't even have a civil conversation."¹³⁷

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.¹³⁸

Trigger warning

A statement that comes before presenting content that could potentially cause distress.¹³⁹

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](#).¹⁴⁰

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](#).¹⁴¹

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.¹⁴²

Institutional violence

A form of violence that uses [power](#) to cause harm and enforces structural [oppression](#).¹⁴³

Youngism

[Discrimination](#) against an individual for being relatively younger than other people or employees.^{144 145}

AGE

Adultism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) of young people based on the belief that younger people are less valuable or less capable.¹⁴⁶

Ageism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) based on age.^{147 148}

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.¹⁴⁹

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.^{150 151 152}

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.^{153 154 155}

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”.^{156 157 158}

Millennials

People born between ~1981 to ~1996. Millennials are the children of baby boomers and grew up throughout the rise of technology.^{159 160 161}

Generation Z

People born between ~1997 to ~2011. This generation is most characterized by the existence of social media throughout their lives. Also known as “Centennials”.^{162 163 164}

Generation alpha

People born between ~2010 to 2025. Generation alpha is the most recent cohort and are the children of millennials.^{165 166}

ALLYSHIP

Advocacy

Speaking up on behalf of a group either as a group member or as someone outside of the group.^{167 168}

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](#).^{169 170}

Anti-oppression

Strategies and actions that actively challenge existing [intersectional](#) inequities and injustices.¹⁷¹

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.¹⁷²

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.^{173 174 175}

See also: [universal design](#)

Intent vs. impact

The distinction between someone’s intent (what they meant to do) and their impact (its effect on someone else).¹⁷⁶

Microaffirmation

Small gesture of [inclusion](#), caring, or kindness by being an [ally](#) and valuing or uplifting contributions by all individuals. Achieved by actively listening and providing comfort and support to members of equity-deserving groups.¹⁷⁷

See also [microaggression](#)

Performative allyship

When someone who is not a member of an [equity-deserving group](#) expresses support for a group in a way that is not helpful or could even be harmful. People engaged in performative allyship do not acknowledge personal responsibility in or take meaningful action against the systemic issues faced by the equity-deserving group.¹⁷⁸

Contrast with: [allyship](#)

Respect

Treating someone positively through actions and words that show esteem for the individual. Respect in a diversity, equity, and inclusion context involves understanding and valuing differences.¹⁷⁹

Safe space

A “safe space” is a space where people feel psychologically safe to express honest impressions, thoughts, and [attitudes](#) without fear of ridicule. A safe space is one that doesn’t incite judgement based on identity or experience – where the expression of both can exist and be affirmed without fear of repercussion and without the pressure to educate.¹⁸⁰ A safe space can be as small as between two people or can be expanded to include all members of a larger team, network, department, or organization. It can even be an expectation of the organizational culture overall.¹⁸¹

See also: [brave space](#)

Upstander

Someone who takes action in support of another person or cause or who intervenes in situations of [bullying](#) or [violence](#).¹⁸²

Contrast with: [bystander](#)

CULTURE

Cultural accommodation

Process where one culture integrates into another without losing its identity.¹⁸³

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.¹⁸⁴

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.^{185 186}

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

Cultural assimilation

Giving up or being forced to give up one's culture, values, and behaviors, to adapt to or blend into the dominant culture's social and cultural practices.¹⁸⁷

Cultural competence

Awareness and understanding of different [cultures](#) and practices, and the ability to accept and bridge differences between cultures for effective communication. Cultural competence has become especially important as globalization increases and individuals must effectively interact with people from other cultures.^{188 189}

Cultural genocide

Set of deliberate decisions and measures adopted by a group or people with the aim of systematically annihilating another people or community, usually by destroying its identity and cultural expressions.¹⁹⁰

Cultural humility

Cultural humility is a commitment to self-reflection, lifelong learning, mitigating [power](#), and institutional accountability by accepting personal limitations and increasing self-awareness of [biases](#) and misperceptions to build relationships.^{191 192}

Cultural mediation

An interdisciplinary practice widespread in Quebec that establishes links between cultural institutions, artists and the public (mainly from [equity-deserving groups](#)), with the aim of fostering the autonomy, expression and active participation of citizens in cultural life.¹⁹³

Cultural pluralism/Pluriculturalism

The ability of minority groups to maintain their cultural uniqueness and within a larger society.¹⁹⁴ This approach to culture emphasises the complexity and diversity of identities and lived experiences under an individual perspective. These identities or groups coexist somewhat independently, with limited integration or assimilation. The key distinction between pluriculturalism and multiculturalism is that the former emphasizes the preservation of distinct cultural identities, while multiculturalism emphasizes the interaction, exchange, and integration of diverse cultural traditions within a common societal framework. (i.e. the case of Canadian society).¹⁹⁵

Contrast with: [multiculturalism](#)

Cultural racism

The portrayal and association of minority cultures with negative [stereotypes](#) that perpetuate the belief that the dominant culture is superior.¹⁹⁶

Cultural shock/Identity shock

Emotional and intellectual experience that arises in those who, placed by occasion or profession outside their socio-cultural context, find themselves engaged in an approach to the foreign. It triggers a reaction of disorientation, frustration or rejection, or on a positive note, astonishment and fascination.¹⁹⁷

Cultural taxation

Form of additional, invisible and uncompensated work demanded of employees coming from equity-seeking groups. Organizations make such impositions on equity-seeking groups because of assumptions that they are best suited for specific responsibilities, like event planning or assignments, simply because of their ethnicity or presumed knowledge of cultural differences. This burden is not formally rewarded or recognized by the organization.^{198 199}

Culture

Collective set of beliefs, behaviors, ideas, philosophies, and practices shared by groups of people and passed down through generations.²⁰⁰

Exoticisation

Portraying as strikingly unusual (or strange) the body, appearance and sexuality of the non-Western, non-white other. This staging of the other reduces a person to the rank of object and merchandise.²⁰¹

Fetishization

The act of making someone an object of sexual desire based on some aspect of their identity. It is frequently associated with Western cultures when referring to Black, [Indigenous](#), [people of color](#) (BIPOC).²⁰²

Interculturalism

Model where people from different [cultures](#) interact with each other to the extent that both are expected to make accommodations to build relationships.²⁰³

In Quebec, interculturalism is a model developed during the 1980s, that serves as an approach for integration, particularly concerning the [cultural assimilation](#) of newcomers and minority groups. Contrasting with the Canadian multiculturalism model, interculturalism in Quebec emphasizes cultural equality through the promotion of French language and secularization in public spheres. Given the contentious discussions on reasonable accommodation policies, there is a growing need for an official policy on interculturalism, although currently, there are no established laws to formalize the adaptation of minorities within this framework.²⁰⁴

Multiculturalism

A theory and practice that encourages people to coexist in a culturally diverse environment by acknowledging and respecting differences.²⁰⁵

Contrast with: [cultural pluralism/pluriculturalism](#)

DISABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND NEURODIVERSITY

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](#) and [Differently abled](#). 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](#). See our note on using preferred language in the [introduction](#).

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.^{206 207}

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.²⁰⁸

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](#).²⁰⁹

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.²¹⁰

Accessibility/accessible

A building, facility, structure, program, activity, resource, product etc. that is readily usable, or the extent to which it is readily usable by a person with a [disability](#).^{211 212 213 214}

Accommodation

Adjustments made to policies, programs, practices, facilities, or resources to allow for equitable access in the workplace. Accommodations are made in the hopes of improving [accessibility](#) by eliminating existing [barriers](#).^{215 216}

Duty to accommodate

Employers, organizations, service providers, and public institutions' legal obligation to provide accommodations to individuals for equitable access, so long as the accommodation is reasonable.²¹⁷

Reasonable accommodation

The limit of required accommodations where they are proportionate to what an organization can implement without undue hardship, while supporting the needs of the individual.²¹⁸ In Quebec, conciliation deemed acceptable by a community, in order to enable an individual or an [equity seeking group](#) to retain or obtain rights, or to maintain a custom, religious or cultural tradition, with mutual respect and a minimum of compromise, while avoiding offending the common public culture in place. It is a means to put an end to [discrimination](#) based on disability, religion, age or any other ground.²¹⁹

Undue hardship

The limit of hardship where an employer can decline a proposed accommodation. Undue hardship can only be claimed in cases of excessive cost, lack of outside sources of funding (e.g., government funding), and risks to health and safety, and the employer must provide sufficient evidence of undue hardship.^{220 221}

Adaptability

The extent that something (a building, structure, tool, etc.) can be altered to meet the needs of people with different [disabilities](#).²²²

Alt attribute

Alternative text provided along with an image that improves [accessibility](#) of digital information. Alt attributes are useful for people who are [blind](#) or have [low vision](#) who use screen readers, or someone with a slow internet connection where images may fail to load. Also commonly referred to as “alt text”.^{223 224}

Assistive technology/adaptive technology (AT)

Devices, equipment, software, and hardware used by people with [disabilities](#) to assist them with tasks and activities. These technologies can be used to adapt or replace existing equipment. Examples include wheelchairs, walkers, prosthetics, hearing aids, computer-based equipment, closed captioning, braille, screen readers, etc.^{225 226 227 228}

Audism

[Prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) against [deaf](#) or individuals with [hearing loss](#).²²⁹

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)

Tools and strategies for people with communication [disabilities](#) or who are [non-speaking](#) to communicate in ways outside of speech. Can be aided (e.g., computer-based systems that read typed words out loud) or unaided (e.g., [sign language](#)).^{230 231}

Blind/blindness

A general term describing vision loss that interferes with daily activities, including the total inability to see. Blindness does not necessarily mean that someone only sees complete darkness.²³²

Braille

A reading and writing system for people who are [blind](#) or have [low vision](#) made up of raised dots that are read through touch.^{233 234}

Captioning/closed captioning

On-screen text that displays all dialogue, music, and sound effects in a video to increase accessibility for people who are [deaf](#) or [hard of hearing](#).^{235 236}

Deaf

Having little to no functional hearing, even with amplified sound. This is the preferred term for people who are deaf, rather than “hearing impaired”.^{237 238}

See also: [hard of hearing](#) and [hearing loss](#)

“Big-D” Deaf

People who are deaf may refer to themselves as “Deaf” with a capital “D” (colloquially referred to as “big-D Deaf”). When capitalized, Deaf is “a sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or [hard of hearing](#) who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on [Sign language](#).”

See also: [“small-d” deaf](#)

“Small-d” deaf

People who are deaf may refer to themselves as “deaf” with a lower-case D (colloquially referred to as “small-d deaf”). When lower-case, deaf refers to “people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community.”²³⁹

See also: [“big-D” Deaf](#)

D/deaf

A collective noun that refers to “Deaf” people (see [“Big-D” Deaf](#)) and “deaf” people (see [“small-d” deaf](#)).²⁴⁰

Deaf blindness/dual sensory impairment/multi-sensory impairment (MSI)

A combined visual and hearing [disability](#).²⁴¹

Design equity

The concept that products, technology, buildings, etc. should be designed with all abilities in mind.²⁴²

See also: [universal design](#) and [inclusive design](#)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

A psychiatric diagnostic manual containing standardized criteria for the diagnosis of mental illnesses. The manual is currently on version 5.²⁴³

Differently abled

A term coined in the 1990s as an alternative to [disabled](#) and other terms. This term should be avoided as it may be considered offensive and condescending to some individuals.²⁴⁴

Digital divide

Gaps in access to information and communications technology experienced by people, groups, regions, and countries. People with [disabilities](#) are more heavily affected by the digital divide due to physical [barriers](#), inaccessible technology, and inaccessible design.^{245 246}

Disability

Refers to a broad range of medical conditions an individual can have from birth, due to an accident, or developed over time, which impact an individual's ability to function.²⁴⁷ Disability can also be described as a broad range of functional or social limitations that impact an individual's ability to perform an activity.²⁴⁸ These two definitions reflect two perspectives on disability: the [medical model](#) and the [social model](#). Disabilities can be visible or [invisible](#), permanent, temporary, or [episodic](#), and can include, but are not limited to:

- Addiction (e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling)
- Developmental disability (e.g., autism, ADHD, Down syndrome)
- Health disability/chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, cancer, asthma)
- Learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, dysnomia)
- Mental health condition/mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia, depression, anxiety disorder)
- Physical disability (e.g., cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, amputation)
- Sensory disability (e.g., hearing or vision loss)

Disability culture

A group identity shared by people with [disabilities](#) who have a history of [discrimination](#).²⁴⁹

Disability etiquette

Recommendations on physical contact and language/terminology use when [non-disabled](#) people interact or engage with people with [disabilities](#).²⁵⁰

Disabled

Someone with physical, psychological, or neurological differences that limit their capacity to do a task or activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, job functions, self-care activities, etc. Many people with [disabilities](#) will refer to themselves or prefer to be referred to as disabled.²⁵¹

See also: [identity-first language](#) and [person-first language](#)

Disclosure of disability

When someone with a [disability](#) shares information about their disability with other people, particularly at work. Someone may disclose their disability to request an [accommodation](#) or in more casual conversation.^{252 253}

See also: [self-identification](#)

Diversability

A term coined by Tiffany Yu, founder of the organization [Diversability](#), to showcase the diversity within [disability](#). The organization [does not suggest](#) that the term “diversability” should replace “disability”, and it is recommended to avoid using the term in such a way.^{254 255}

Environmental barrier

An obstacle that prevents buildings or other locations from being readily accessible to people with [disabilities](#). (e.g., stairs).²⁵⁶

See also: [barrier](#)

Episodic disability

Lifelong conditions that result in “episodes” of disability, or fluctuating degrees of wellness and disability.^{257 258} For a comprehensive list of episodic disabilities, see [What is Episodic Disability?](#) from Realize Canada.

Handicap

Anything that prevents or limits a person’s success in a task or activity. A [disability](#), or a lack of [accessibility](#), can be the reason for a handicap, but the provision of [accommodations](#), [assistive technology](#), and other supports can reduce or eliminate a handicap for someone with a disability. Handicap (or handicapped, to describe a person) is not frequently used outside of legal contexts as it can be offensive. “Handicapable” should always be avoided.^{259 260 261}

Hard of hearing

When someone has hearing loss where some hearing exists and an [assistive device](#) such as a hearing aid is sufficient for them to understand speech.²⁶²

Hearing impaired

Having partial to total inability to hear.²⁶³

See also: [deaf](#) and [hard of hearing](#)

Hearing loss

A broad term describing a range of hearing function, from partial to total inability to hear in one or both ears.²⁶⁴

Identity-first language

Language use that places the [disability](#) identity first. For example, “[disabled](#) person” instead of “person with a disability”. Identity-first language is preferred by many people with disabilities, particularly those who view their disability as an important part of their identity (see [Social model of disability](#)). However, it is best to only use this type of language if you know that it is what the person prefers.²⁶⁵

Contrast with: [person-first language](#)

Impairment

An apparent, hidden, inherited, self-inflicted, or acquired physical, sensory, intellectual, learning, or medical condition that limits the functioning ability of an individual. An individual who is impaired requires an [accommodation](#).²⁶⁶

Inspiration porn

Used as a disparaging term within [disability culture](#) to describe the [tokenization](#) of someone with a [disability](#) as a portrait of success.²⁶⁷

Integration

The full [inclusion](#) and [acceptance](#) of people with [disabilities](#) in society.²⁶⁸

Invisible disability/hidden disability

An umbrella term for disabilities that are not easily seen or noticed. Examples include, but are not limited to, chronic pain or fatigue, mental illness, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, and chronic illnesses. Invisible disabilities tend to be taken less seriously or denied altogether, making it challenging for people with invisible disabilities to get the support or [accommodations](#) they require.^{269 270}

Lip-reading/visual hearing/speechreading

Understanding speech by watching someone’s mouth movements.²⁷¹

Low vision

Permanent vision loss that cannot be corrected and interferes with activities.²⁷²

Mainstreaming disability

Involving the concerns and experiences of people with [disabilities](#) in all aspects of policy and program development.²⁷³

Medical model of disability

The medical model suggests that disability is caused by a condition, impairment, or difference. This model sees disability as a deficiency or abnormality and implies that disability is addressed by medical or other treatments. Under the medical model, medical professionals are the experts on disability, and it is the responsibility of the disabled person to “fix” their disability.^{274 275 276 277 278}

Mobility aid

Devices that assist with movement such as walking or that help an individual navigate their surroundings. Examples include crutches, walkers, guide dogs, etc.²⁷⁹

See also: [assistive technology/adaptive technology \(AT\)](#)

Neurodivergence/neurodivergent

Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that is significantly different from what is considered “typical” by societal standards. That is, thinking, behaving, or learning differently than these standards. Examples of cognitive differences that fall under neurodivergence include autism, ADHD, and dyslexia.^{280 281}

See also: [neurotypical](#)

Neurodiversity/neurodiverse

The idea that different brains function differently, that neurological differences are normal variations, and that these variations add value to society and the workplace. Please note, neurodiverse and neurodiversity refer to groups. When referring to individuals, the correct term is [neurodivergent](#). Neurodiversity includes people who are [neurotypical](#).^{282 283}

Neurotypical

Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls **within** what is considered “typical” by societal standards. That is, thinking, behaving, or learning in ways that are in line with these standards.^{284 285}

See also: [neurodivergence/neurodivergent](#)

Non-disabled

Someone without a [disability](#).²⁸⁶

Non-speaking

Individuals who communicate in ways other than speech. This term is increasingly being used instead of “non-verbal” to emphasize that many non-speaking people communicate with words, such as through [AAC](#), even if they cannot speak them.^{287 288}

Participation restrictions

Limitations to an individual's involvement in a task or activity.²⁸⁹

Person-first language

Language that places emphasis on the person as an individual first and less emphasis on their [disability](#). For example, “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person”. Person-first language should be used unless you know that an individual prefers identity-first language.^{290 291}

Contrast with: [identity-first language](#)

Physical accessibility

How readily usable a physical space is for people with physical [disabilities](#) (e.g., elevator, parking lot, building, etc.).²⁹²

Psychophobia

[Discrimination](#) against people living with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health illnesses.²⁹³

Service animal

An animal, most commonly a dog, that is trained to do specific tasks that help a person with a [disability](#) participate safely in activities.²⁹⁴

Self-identification

Someone telling their employer or potential employer that they have a [disability](#) through voluntary forms completed during application, onboarding, or for organizational diversity initiatives.²⁹⁵

See also: [disclosure of disability](#)

Sign language/signing

A visual-spatial language with its own distinct grammar, syntax, and vocabulary comprising hand gestures, body movement, and facial expressions. Sign language is commonly used by people who are [deaf](#) and can also be used by people with other [disabilities](#) that affect verbal communication. There are many different sign languages, with American Sign Language (ASL) and la Langue des Signes Quebécoise (LSQ) as the only two languages recognized in Canada. Maritimes Sign Language (MSL) is a regional and endangered dialect used in Atlantic Canada.^{296 297 298}

Social model of disability

The social model suggests that disability is caused by the design and structure of society and the environment, both physical and social. That is, disability is socially constructed. This model sees disability as an aspect of someone's identity, just like race or gender, and implies that disability is addressed by removing societal and environmental [barriers](#). The social model also addresses the diversity of experiences of people with disabilities. Different people, even if they share a diagnosis, experience disability differently and have different needs. Under the social model, people with disabilities are the experts on disability, and it is everyone's responsibility to listen and remove the barriers that cause disability.^{299 300 301 302 303}

Spoon theory/'spoons'

Created by Christine Miserandino, an award-winning writer, blogger, speaker and lupus patient advocate, as a way of describing the impact of her lupus to her friends. The theory aims to explain how someone with a [disability](#) may have a limited amount of energy in a day to perform tasks and activities. The metaphor is having a fistful of spoons, where the spoons represent energy. For each task, a spoon is removed, depleting the person's allotted amount of energy. Spoon theory is embraced by some in the disability community but is seen as patronizing by others.³⁰⁴ To read Christine Miserandino's story, see [The Spoon Theory written by Christine Miserandino](#) on ButYouDontLookSick.com.

Stimming

Stimming, or "self-stimulatory behaviour", describes specific repetitive behaviours, including hand-flapping, finger-flicking, rocking, jumping, repeatedly touching a particular texture, or using an object, such as a sensory tool. Stimming may be done to gain sensory input, reduce sensory input (related to sensory overload), relieve stress and anxiety, for enjoyment, or many other reasons depending on the individual. While stimming is most often associated with autism, it is also connected to other forms of [neurodivergence](#), such as ADHD and obsessive-compulsive disorder. [Neurotypical](#) people also engage in stimming, although to a lesser extent.^{305 306 307}

Suffers

Terms like "suffers from depression" are not preferred, and terms like "living with depression" should be used instead.³⁰⁸

Universal design

Products, technology, buildings, etc. that are designed, as much as possible, to be usable by all people regardless of [disability](#).³⁰⁹

See also: [design equity](#) and [inclusive design](#)

GENDER & GENDER IDENTITY

Note: Some of these terms are offensive, and some have been reclaimed for use within the communities that they belong to. They are included here for informational purposes.

See [reclaimed language](#)

2SLGBTQIA+ and other acronyms

2SLGBTQIA+ is an acronym that stands for [Two-Spirit](#), [Lesbian](#), [Gay](#), [Bisexual](#), [Transgender](#), [Queer/Questioning](#), [Intersex](#) and [Asexual/Ally](#).³¹⁰ 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.³¹¹
- LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and [Asexual/Ally](#).³¹²
- 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.³¹³
- LGBTIQAPD: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual/Ally, [Pansexual](#), and [Demisexual](#).³¹⁴
- LGBT*IQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, [Trans*](#), Intersex, and Queer/Questioning.
- QTIPOC: 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 People of Colour), QPOC (Queer People of Colour), and QTPOC (Queer and/or Trans People of Colour).³¹⁵
- QUILTBAG: Queer/Questioning, Unlabelled/Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Trans*/Two-Spirit, Bisexual, Asexual, and Gay/[Genderqueer](#).³¹⁶
- 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.³¹⁷
- 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.³¹⁸
- SOGI: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This term is most often used within the United Nations and international [human rights](#) context and is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities.³¹⁹

- SOGIESC: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, [Gender Expression](#), and Sex Characteristics. Similar to SOGI, it is an acronym that intends to be inclusive of all forms of the mentioned identities.³²⁰
- TGNC/TGNCNB: Transgender and [Gender Non-Conforming](#). “NB” may be added for [non-binary](#) identities.³²¹

Agender

Someone who does not identify with any [gender](#) or does not see themselves as aligning with all or any masculine or feminine characteristics.^{322 323} Other terms include gender neutrois, gender-neutral, or genderless.³²⁴

Androgynous

Someone who identifies outside of the [gender binary](#), whose [gender expression](#) is outside of the gender binary, or who identifies with both feminine and masculine characteristics. This is no longer a frequently used term, as it often refers to [AFAB](#) women who are [masculine-presenting](#).³²⁵

Assigned female at birth (AFAB)/assigned male at birth (AMAB)

These terms are used to describe someone’s [gender](#) assigned at birth and were created to acknowledge arbitrary assignments of gender.³²⁶

Being read

Assumptions about [gender identity](#), [sex assigned at birth](#), or [sexual orientation](#) based on an individual’s outward appearance and/or behaviour.³²⁷

See also: [passing/to pass or blending](#) and [stealth](#)

Bigender

Someone who identifies with two [genders](#). Someone who is bigender may experience two genders at once, move between the two, or identify with parts of each. They may identify with both [binary](#) genders, or one or more [non-binary](#) genders.^{328 329}

Butch

A term used within the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) community to describe masculine [gender expression](#) or behaviour. This term is generally offensive and has been [reclaimed](#) by the community.³³⁰

Ciscentrism/cisnormativity

The assumption by individuals or society that everyone is [cisgender](#), that cisgender is the default, “normal”, or superior.^{331 332}

See also: [cissexism](#)

Cisgender

A term that describes someone whose [gender identity](#) aligns with the [sex assigned to them at birth](#). The term is often shortened to “cis”.^{333 334 335}

Cissexism

Actions that [discriminate](#) against or [exclude transgender](#) people based on the belief that being [cisgender](#) is what is “normal” or superior.^{336 337}

See also: [ciscentrism/cisnormativity](#)

Cissexual

Someone who identifies with the same [sex assigned to them at birth](#). Not commonly used.³³⁸

See also: [cisgender](#)

Coming out

The process where someone accepts their [gender identity](#) and/or [sexual orientation](#) (coming out to themselves) and starts sharing it with other people (coming out to others). Coming out is not a simple or straightforward process, and individuals may be “out” in some circumstances (with friends and family) but not others (at work or school). Also sometimes referred to as “coming out of the closet”.^{339 340 341}

Congruence

A feeling of harmony with all dimensions of one’s [gender](#).³⁴²

See also: [dimensions of gender](#)

Cross-dresser

Someone who wears clothing associated with a different [gender](#). Some people who cross-dress are [trans](#) while others are not. Cross-dressing is done privately or publicly, and some of the time or all of the time. Cross-dresser has replaced the term “transvestite” but may still be considered offensive.³⁴³

Dead name

The name that a person, usually a [trans](#) or [non-binary](#) person, was given when they were born but they no longer use. Some people use the term “birth name”, but the word “dead” is used to emphasize the seriousness of not using the person’s birth name. Use of someone’s dead name is offensive and, in the case of a trans person, generally [misgenders](#) them.³⁴⁴

Dimensions of gender

[Gender](#) is shaped by our body, identity, and social gender (how others see our gender). These dimensions are related but separate and can vary.³⁴⁵

Demigender

Someone who identifies in part with a specific [gender](#).³⁴⁶

Drag performers

People who dress in ways that exaggerate [gender stereotypes](#), typically for performances and entertainment. Drag performers include Drag Queens and Drag Kings.³⁴⁷ [AFAB](#) drag queens may be referred to as “bio [biological] queens” or “faux queens”, but some find this terminology offensive.³⁴⁸

Enbyphobia

[Discrimination](#) and [violence](#) against non-binary people.³⁴⁹

Endosex

An endosex person is someone born with primary and secondary sex characteristics that fit into one of the binaries, normative medical categories of what is considered “male” or “female”. These people are not [intersex](#) and cannot identify themselves as such.³⁵⁰

Female-to-male spectrum (FTM)

Someone who was [assigned female at birth](#) and whose [gender identity](#) or [expression](#) falls somewhere on the broad spectrum of masculinity.³⁵¹

Feminine-presenting/masculine-presenting

Someone who expresses [gender](#) in a feminine or masculine way. Separate from [gender identity](#), this refers to the way gender is expressed.³⁵²

See also: [gender expression](#)

Feminism

An ideology, social movement, or political movement advocating for women’s rights and the social, economic, and political equality of all [genders](#).^{353 354} It is important to note that feminism is not “anti-men”, and that [patriarchal](#) structures harm everyone.^a

See also: [radical feminism](#)

Femme

Someone who identifies in a feminine way, or who is [feminine-presenting](#), through behaviour, [gender roles](#), relationship roles, appearance, or [social identity](#).^{355 356}

^a For more information about how patriarchal structures harm everyone, please see [How Patriarchy Hurts Men Too](#) from Next Gen Men and [What Is Patriarchy \(And How Does It Hurt Us All\)?](#) from Everyday Feminism.

Gender

The socially constructed ideas about the behaviour, actions, and [roles](#) performed by a particular sex. Gender is fundamentally different from [biological sex](#).³⁵⁷

Gender affirming

A broad description of actions or behaviours that validate someone's [gender](#), such as using someone's correct [pronouns](#) (gender-affirming language).³⁵⁸

Gender-affirming garments

Clothing items that help someone feel more aligned with their [gender](#). Examples include binders (a garment that restricts the chest), bras and breast forms, wigs, or any clothing associated with the gender with which they identify.³⁵⁹

Gender attribution/gender perception

Assumptions about [gender](#) based on an individual's outward appearance and/or behaviour.³⁶⁰

See also: [being read](#) and [passing/to pass or blending](#)

Gender-based violence

[Violence](#) and [oppression](#) based on one's [gender identity](#) or [gender expression](#).³⁶¹

Gender bending

Dressing or behaving in a way that counters traditional masculine or feminine characteristics.³⁶²

Gender binary

The concept that there are only two [genders](#), that those genders are opposite and distinct, and that everyone belongs to one of the two.^{363 364}

Gender confirming surgery/gender affirming surgery

Procedures that help [transgender](#) people or people with [non-normative gender identities](#) affirm their true [gender identity](#). There are multiple surgeries that fall under this term, including facial surgeries, "top surgery", and "bottom surgery". The latter two terms are often used to avoid having to go into detail. "Sex reassignment surgery" was previously used in medicine to describe these procedures but is falling out of use.^{365 366}

Gender dysphoria

A medical term in the [DSM-5](#) that replaced gender identity disorder (GID). The term describes internal feelings of conflict in a person whose [gender identity](#) does not align with the [sex](#) or [gender](#) they were assigned at birth. GID is no longer used and is considered offensive due to the implication that a trans person has a disorder. Gender dysphoria is generally less offensive but is still contested.^{367 368}

See also: [gender euphoria](#)

Gender euphoria

Validation, comfort, confidence, certainty, satisfaction, or joy felt by a trans or non-binary person when their mind, body and/or [gender expression](#) are aligned with their [gender identity](#), or when their gender identity is [affirmed](#). Feelings of [gender](#) euphoria result in a certain kind of freedom or liberation, which can be external, internal, and/or social.³⁶⁹ The concept of gender euphoria emerged from the [transgender](#) community in opposition of the common assumption that transgender people experience only gender dysphoria.³⁷⁰

See also: [gender dysphoria](#)

Gender expansive

Someone who identifies with a broader and more flexible concept of [gender](#). Can be an umbrella term for those who are exploring their [gender expression](#) and/or [gender identity](#).³⁷¹

Gender expression

How someone publicly shows or presents their [gender](#) through their appearance, name, pronouns, speech, and behaviour. Gender expression can align with [gender identity](#) but is a separate concept.^{372 373 374}

Gender gifted

A term that celebrates having a non-normative gender identity by describing it as a gift.^{375 376}

Gender identity

How someone internally, mentally, or psychologically perceives their [gender](#). Someone's gender identity can align with or differ from the gender they were assigned at birth. A person's gender identity can change over time as they learn about themselves and learn more terminology. Gender identity is distinct from biological [sex](#).^{377 378 379}

See also: [gender expression](#) and [gender modality](#)

Gender modality

The relationship between a person's gender identity and that assigned at birth. When referring to [gender identity](#), the words "cis" and "trans" are gender modalities.³⁸⁰

Gender-neutral language

Language that does not assume or assign a [gender](#).

For example:

- "Thanks, friends" instead of "thanks, guys"
- "Partner" instead of "husband" or "wife"
- Gender-neutral [pronouns](#) like "they" instead of "he" or "she"³⁸¹

Gender non-conforming (GNC)

An umbrella term for someone who [identifies](#) or [expresses](#) themselves outside of the [gender binary](#).³⁸² The term may refer to someone who identifies as [trans](#) or it may not.³⁸³

Gender norms

Behaviour, appearance, and roles that society considers acceptable for men and women. Gender norms are heavily influenced by the [gender binary](#) and contribute to [power](#) imbalances and gender inequality.

Gender policing

Imposing [cisnormative](#) beliefs on someone who does not express themselves within the [gender binary](#) or who does not fit within prescribed [gender norms](#). Gender policing occurs through [harassment](#) or [violence](#), exclusionary laws, and social messaging.³⁸⁴

See also: [cissexism](#)

Gender roles

Social and cultural expectations placed on an individual based on their [sex assigned at birth](#). Gender roles vary greatly within different cultures.^{385 386}

Gender spectrum

The representation of [gender](#) as a continuum rather than a [binary](#) concept, including all [gender identities](#) and [expressions](#).

Genderfluid

Someone who does not have a fixed [gender identity](#). They may move between many [gender identities](#) and [expressions](#).^{387 388}

Genderqueer

An umbrella term for someone who [identifies](#) or [expresses](#) themselves outside of the [gender binary](#) or who does not follow [gender stereotypes](#).^{389 390}

See also: [gender non-conforming \(GNC\)](#), [non-binary \(NB\)](#) and [non-normative gender identities](#)

Indigiqueer

An identity term that may be used by someone who is both [Indigenous](#) and [queer](#) that emphasizes the [intersections](#) of both identities. The term was created by Cree filmmaker Thirza Cuthand in 2004. Joshua Whitehead, a Two-Spirit, Oji-nêhiyaw Indigiqueer scholar who popularized the term, describes it as “a braiding of two bridges”³⁹¹ - indigeneity and queerness - and “the forward moving momentum for two-spiritness”.³⁹² Someone who identifies as Indigiqueer may or may not also identify as [Two-Spirit](#).^{393 394}

Intersex

Someone who is born with anatomy, hormones, or genetic make-up that differs from the general medical definitions of male and female. Someone who is intersex may have one or more of a variety of differences that are usually of no medical risk. They are generally assigned a [binary gender](#) and [sex](#) at birth by their doctors and family, but this is becoming an outdated approach. Intersex people may identify with the [trans](#) community, but also may not. The term “hermaphrodite” was previously in use but is now outdated and offensive.^{395 396 397}

In French Canada, intersex activists prefer to use the word “intersexuation” rather than intersexuality, since the latter is composed of the word sexuality and is more easily confused with sexual orientation.³⁹⁸

See also: [endosex](#)

Male-to-female spectrum (MTF)

Someone who was [assigned male at birth](#) and whose [gender identity](#) or [expression](#) falls somewhere on the broad spectrum of femininity.³⁹⁹

Masc

Someone who identifies in a masculine way, or who is [masculine-presenting](#), through behaviour, [gender roles](#), relationship roles, appearance, or identity.⁴⁰⁰

Masculinism

Masculinism argues that men are experiencing an identity crisis and are suffering from the feminization of society caused by the excessive influence of feminists.

For its part, the Quebec masculinist movement is following the wave generated by several American influencers. According to this trend, men are in decline, and women are an obstacle to personal development. Masculinist influencers advocate conservative values, such as traditional gender roles. They sell “guaranteed formulas” on social networks to enable them, they claim, to achieve true masculinity.^{401 402}

Misandry

Misandry is [prejudice](#) or hatred towards men. This term is controversial and is often used in retaliation against [feminism](#) and women who outwardly condemn [patriarchal](#) systems and [toxic masculinity](#).⁴⁰³

See also: [misogyny](#)

Misgender

The act of referring to someone, intentionally or not, with a term that does not align with their [gender identity](#). This includes using the wrong [pronouns](#), using a [transgender](#) person’s [dead name](#), or using an incorrect gendered term (sir or ma’am, husband or wife, etc.).⁴⁰⁴

Misogynoir

A term coined by [queer](#) Black feminist Moya Bailey that describes [misogyny](#) directed towards Black women. Misogynoir is a unique form of [anti-Black racism](#), and the term highlights the [intersection](#) of [race](#) and [gender](#) and how they both contribute to [bias](#).^{405 406}

Misogyny

Misogyny is [prejudice](#) or hatred towards women. It is based in the belief that masculinity and maleness are more desirable, superior, more powerful, and/or dominant.⁴⁰⁷

See also: [misogynoir](#)

Mx.

A [gender-neutral](#) prefix that replaces Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc. Generally used by those who identify outside of the [gender binary](#). The term is pronounced like “mix”.⁴⁰⁸

Neo-pronouns

[Pronouns](#) that are [gender-neutral](#). These pronouns are preferred by some people with [non-normative gender identities](#) and may be used by those who are not comfortable using “they/them” as gender-neutral pronouns. Examples include “ze/zir” and “ey/em”.⁴⁰⁹ Pronunciation varies, so it is best to ask the person who is using them.⁴¹⁰

Neurogender

[Gender identity](#) and umbrella term used to describe how the neurotype of a [neurodivergent](#) person influences or is strongly linked to their gender. For example, an autistic person might consider themselves as neurogender.⁴¹¹

Nibling

A [gender-neutral](#) term for niece or nephew.⁴¹²

Non-binary (NB)

A way of [identifying](#) and/or [expressing](#) oneself outside the [binary gender](#) categories of male/masculine and female/feminine. Non-binary identities exist on and off the [gender spectrum](#), and it can be a specific or umbrella term.⁴¹³

Non-normative gender identities

Gender identities that fall outside the [gender binary](#) or may conflict with societal cisnormativity.⁴¹⁴

See also: [gender non-conforming \(GNC\)](#), [genderqueer](#), and [non-binary \(NB\)](#)

Outing someone

Revealing someone else's non-heterosexuality, [transness](#), [intersex](#), non-monogamy or other sexual practices considered as “marginal” without their consent. This can be done accidentally or intentionally, both of which are extremely harmful to the person who is “outed”.^{415 416 417}

See also: [coming out](#)

Pangender

A [gender identity](#) term that a person may use if they don't identify with just one [gender](#).⁴¹⁸

Patriarchy

Societal structures that exist where men hold the majority of the [power](#) and control, and masculinity and maleness are perceived as superior.⁴¹⁹

Pinkwashing/Rainbow Washing

Term used to describe a political or economic strategy that enables states, organizations and companies to give themselves a progressive image by superficially demonstrating their support for [2SLGBTQIA+](#) struggles. This action maintains a positive reputation without making any significant contribution to improving the living conditions of [2SLGBTQIA+](#) persons.⁴²⁰

Preferred gender pronouns (PGPs)

An outdated term that refers to the pronouns that align with someone's [gender identity](#).⁴²¹

Pronouns are not a preference, but a fact. This term should be replaced by using only the word [pronouns](#).⁴²²

Pride

In reference to [2SLGBTQIA+](#) pride.

Being comfortable and unashamed about one's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#).⁴²³

Pronouns

Words that refer to a person when not using their name. Gendered pronouns include she/her and he/him. Gender-neutral pronouns include they/them or [neo-pronouns](#) such as ze/zir and ey/em.⁴²⁴

See also: [gender-neutral language](#)

Questioning

Someone who is in the process of exploring their [gender identity](#) or [sexual orientation](#), but who does not identify with a specific label.^{425 426}

Radical feminism

Where [feminism](#) aims for shifts in policy towards social, economic, and political [gender](#) equality, radical feminism aims to completely dismantle [patriarchal](#) structures. Radical feminists believe

that societal structures and systems have been built to oppress women and give men more [power](#), and that gender equality cannot be achieved without removing them entirely.^{427 428}

Sex assigned at birth (SAAB)

Describes the [sex](#), separate from [gender identity](#), that someone was given at birth based on their external anatomy. Other terms include designated sex at birth (DSAB) and sex coercively assigned at birth (SCAB).^{429 430}

Sex/biological sex

The medical term based on physical characteristics and anatomy used to designate people as male, female, or [intersex](#). Biological sex is distinct from [gender identity](#).^{431 432 433}

See also: [sex assigned at birth](#)

Sexism

The belief that masculinity and maleness are superior to femininity and femaleness.⁴³⁴

Benevolent sexism

A subtle form of sexism where one's actions or [attitudes](#) are positive on the surface, but still perpetuate harmful [gender roles](#) and [stereotypes](#).⁴³⁵

Internalized sexism

Where an individual perpetuates sexism, [gender roles](#), and gender [stereotypes](#) by accepting, believing, and enacting them towards themselves and others of the same [gender](#). For example, women and girls affected by internalized sexism may value themselves less because of sexism they have experienced.^{436 437}

See also: [internalized oppression](#) and [internalized dominance](#)

Oppositional sexism

The concept that masculinity and femininity are opposite and distinct, and that men should only be masculine, and women should only be feminine.⁴³⁸

Sexual objectification

The fact of considering a person as an object of sexual desire by reducing them to their body or physical appearance. The objectified person is deprived of their ability to have their opinions and aspirations heard and respected.⁴³⁹

Stealth

Someone who is [transgender](#) but who is not [out](#).⁴⁴⁰

See also: [passing/to pass or blending](#)

TERF

An acronym for “Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist”. Refers to [radical feminists](#)^b who exclude [trans women](#)’s rights from their [advocacy](#) of women’s rights, stemming from the false belief that [transgender](#) women are not women.⁴⁴¹

Third gender

Someone who does not identify as a man or a woman, specifically in cultures that recognize the existence of multiple [genders](#) (e.g., Indigenous cultures in regions of Mexico, Samoa, and Madagascar). Each culture has its own word to describe this third gender (e.g., Fa’Afa’ines in Samoa and Hijras in South Asia).^{442 443}

Toxic masculinity

Expectations placed on men to conform to [stereotypes](#) of masculinity or prove their “manliness” through the expression of strength, dominance, assertiveness, and [power](#). Toxic masculinity does not imply that all men are toxic or that masculinity is toxic. Instead, the term describes the harm these expectations can cause to people of all [genders](#).^{444 445}

Trans*

An umbrella term for people who do not identify within the [gender binary](#), that includes [non-binary](#), [gender non-conforming](#), and [transgender](#) individuals. The asterisk is used in written communication to indicate inclusivity.⁴⁴⁶

Transness

The fact of being [trans](#) (or [transgender](#)). In Quebec, this term is translated as “transitude”.⁴⁴⁷

Trans man

Someone who was [assigned female at birth](#) and identifies as male. They may be at any point along their [transition](#) or may not be transitioning at all. Some people prefer to be referred to as a trans man, whereas some may prefer to be referred to as a man.⁴⁴⁸

Trans woman

Someone who was [assigned male at birth](#) and identifies as female. They may be at any point along their [transition](#) or may not be transitioning at all. Some people prefer to be referred to as a trans woman, whereas some may prefer to be referred to as a woman.⁴⁴⁹

^b Use of the term should be done with careful consideration, as many radical feminists are not trans-exclusionary and not all trans-exclusionary feminists are radical feminists. For further explanation on the use of this term, see [Why the words we use matter when describing anti-trans activists](#) from The Conversation.

Transantagonism

Active hatred or [violence](#) towards [trans*](#) people or people who do not fit into the [gender binary](#). This term is used as an alternative to transphobia to more accurately describe the perpetration of violence as more than just feelings of fear or discomfort.⁴⁵⁰

See also: [transphobia](#)

Transfeminine

Someone who is [transgender](#) and identifies or presents as feminine.⁴⁵¹

Transgender

An umbrella term used to describe a person whose [gender identity](#) is anything other than their [sex assigned at birth](#). The term is also used more narrowly to describe someone who identifies as or is [transitioning](#)/has transitioned to the “opposite” sex. May be shortened to “trans”.^{452 453 454}

Transition

The process of changing one’s [gender expression](#) to align with their [gender identity](#). Transition is not a linear process and is a deeply personal experience. There are four general aspects of transition:

1. Social: name, pronouns, clothing, hair, etc.
2. Medical: hormone therapy
3. Surgical: [gender affirming surgeries](#)
4. Legal: changing legal identification, birth certificate, driver’s license, passport, etc.

It is important to understand that the transition process can vary greatly from person to person, there is no set start or end point, and a person does not need to do all four steps to transition. The term transition can also be misleading as a person is not changing their [gender](#), they are changing their bodies and appearance to align with their already existing [gender identity](#).^{455 456 457}

Transmasculine

Someone who is [transgender](#) and identifies or presents as masculine.⁴⁵⁸

Transmisogyny

[Transphobia](#) that is based in [misogyny](#), or the idea that masculinity and maleness is superior, targeted at [trans women](#) and [transfeminine](#) people.⁴⁵⁹

Transphobia

Fear, dislike, or hatred of and [discrimination](#) against [trans*](#) people. Transphobia exists through offensive jokes, [exclusion](#), denial of services, employment discrimination, intentional [misgendering](#), [harassment](#), and [violence](#).^{460 461}

See also: [transantagonism](#)

Transsexual

Used in different ways, transsexual can refer to someone who identifies with a [gender](#) or [sex](#) other than the one assigned at birth. It may refer to someone who wishes to or has [transitioned](#) hormonally and surgically. It is sometimes used inaccurately or offensively, and [transgender](#) or trans are preferred.^{462 463 464}

Transvestite

An outdated medical term used to associate [cross-dressing](#) with mental illness and sexual perversion. This is generally an offensive term.^{465 466}

Two-Spirit (2-Spirit)

Two-Spirit was a term introduced by [Elder](#) Myra Laramée in 1990 at the third annual Native American and Canadian Aboriginal LGBT people gathering in Winnipeg.⁴⁶⁷ It is “an English umbrella term to reflect and restore [Indigenous](#) traditions forcefully suppressed by [colonization](#), honouring the fluid and diverse nature of [gender](#) and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous people rather than, or in addition to, identifying as [LGBTQI](#).”⁴⁶⁸ The teachings, roles, and responsibilities for a Two-Spirit person differ from community to community. Not all [queer](#) Indigenous people use this term, but Two-Spirit is an identity specific to being Indigenous and can only be claimed by Indigenous people.⁴⁶⁹ For more information, see the [Two Spirit information sheet](#) from OUT Saskatoon.

Using “x”

Terms like “womxn”, “folx”, and “Latinx” are sometimes used by individuals and organizations to signify inclusivity in spaces and practices, or to remove gendered assumptions. The use of x in these ways is contested, as some find it [performative](#) or even [exclusionary](#).⁴⁷⁰ Further reading is recommended before using these terms. For more information, see [What You Need To Know About the Letter ‘X’ in Words Like Folx, Womxn, and Latinx](#) from Well + Good, and [Is ‘Latinx’ elitist?](#) From NBC News.

Wimmin/womyn

Alternative spellings of the words “woman” and “women”. Both words have roots in early [feminism](#) and were coined to avoid the suffix “man” and “men” in the traditional spellings.

Xenogender

Nonbinary [gender identity](#) used to describe those individuals who consider that their [gender](#) cannot be related to any standard form of categorization, neither masculine, nor feminine; neither agender, nor neutral.^{471 472} For example, some people may consider themselves as “energender”, if they understand their gender in function of the energy they sense, depending on their environment.

INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGY

Aboriginal Peoples

A collective term used when referencing more than one group of Indigenous individuals, linked to specific language from Canada's Constitution Act of 1982, but is largely being replaced by Indigenous Peoples.^{473 474 475}

See also: [indigenous peoples](#)

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.^{476 477}

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.^{478 479}

Blood memory

A term used by [Indigenous](#) communities to refer to memories and experiences that are stored in one's body and passed down through generations. Blood memories can be described as an ancestral or genetic connection to language, songs, ceremonies, land, and teachings.⁴⁸⁰

Cultural blindness

Failure to recognize, understand, and respect the cultural identities, histories, marginalizations, and needs of [Indigenous](#) people. The 1969 White Papers by the Canadian government advocated that [First Nations](#) be seen as Canadians in the attempt to eliminate racism and discriminatory treatment towards this community, which only made the government blind to cultural differences and Indigenous traditions, knowledge, and languages.⁴⁸¹

Cultural safety

Continuous process in the development and delivery of policies and services related to [Indigenous](#) people, through healthcare, community healing, and areas of social policy. It involves creating an environment where Indigenous individuals feel respected, valued, and understood, and Indigenous communities can access services without the fear of [discrimination](#) or marginalization based on their cultural identity.⁴⁸²

Descendian

A person with distant [Indigenous](#) ancestry or cultural Indigenous background who takes advantage of their presumed genealogy to claim benefits reserved for Indigenous persons in Canada.⁴⁸³

Elders

Recognized and respected members of the [First Nations](#) community who pass down traditional teachings.⁴⁸⁴ Elder, as a title, should be capitalized to indicate honour.⁴⁸⁵

Enfranchisement

It was a legal process for terminating a person's [Indian status](#) and conferring full Canadian citizenship. Enfranchisement was a key feature of the Canadian federal government's [assimilation](#) policies regarding [Indigenous peoples](#). However, a 1985 amendment to the Indian Act eliminated this idea of enfranchisement: as well as eliminating the Act's discriminatory section, the government gave individual [bands](#) the right to decide their own conditions for membership.^{486 487}

First Nation

Introduced in 1970 to identify the [Indigenous Peoples](#) that are not [Inuit](#) or [Métis](#). First Nations replaced the label "[Indian](#)", which is considered offensive. In Canada, there are over 630 First Nation communities and over 50 languages.^{488 489}

Indian

A term that was used to legally identify the [Indigenous Peoples](#) of Canada under the [Indian Act](#). This term should not be used unless required for clarity, in legal discussions around the Indian Act, or when referring to [Indian status](#).⁴⁹⁰

Indian Act

A federal legislation that was passed in 1876 recognizing "[Indians](#)", their reserved lands, and the federal government's obligation to the [Indigenous Peoples](#) of Canada.⁴⁹¹

Indian Day School

Indian Day Schools were racially segregated educational institutions that operated in Canada from the late 19th century until 2000. These schools were intended to assimilate Indigenous children into mainstream Canadian society by eradicating their cultural practices, languages and traditions. The Indian Day School system was closely linked to the larger residential school system. However, there are important distinctions between the two, namely that students were educated in their own communities and returned home to their families at the end of each day.⁴⁹²

Indian status

The legal status of a person under the [Indian Act](#). Using this term outside of the legislative context should be avoided.^{493 494}

Non-status Indian

[Indigenous](#) individuals who either do not have status under the [Indian Act](#) or who have lost their status either themselves or through their ancestors.⁴⁹⁵

Status Indian

People registered under the [Indian Act](#).⁴⁹⁶

Treaty Indian

Individuals to whom a [treaty](#) applies due to their lineage, and who qualify for the benefits of that treaty.⁴⁹⁷

Indigenization

It involves the respectful, meaningful, ethical weaving of [First Nations](#), [Métis](#), and [Inuit](#) knowledge, lived experiences, worldviews, and stories into teaching, learning, and research.⁴⁹⁸

Indigenous

An umbrella term that encompasses the [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), and [Métis](#) Peoples of Canada.⁴⁹⁹

Globally, [Indigenous Peoples](#) refers to the people who have occupied specific lands since time immemorial.⁵⁰⁰

Indigenous Peoples

Is an internationally recognized term that is most often linked to the introduction of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It is the most common collective word used presently when referencing more than one group of Indigenous individuals. In Canada, this term is used to reference the three Indigenous groups recognized in the Constitution Act of 1982; namely the [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), and [Métis](#). [Indigenous](#) communities often prefer Indigenous Peoples over Aboriginal Peoples, although it is best practice to use as specific of language as possible, for example, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or the specific Nation or [Band](#) you are engaging with.^{501 502 503}

See also: [aboriginal people](#)

Inuit

[Indigenous](#) people that reside primarily in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland, which is comprised of four regions in Canada: the Inuvialuit Settlement Regions (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Québec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). In Inuktitut, the Inuit language, “Inuit” directly translates to “the people”. Inuk refers to one person, and Inukuk to two. The word “Eskimo” was previously used to refer to Inuit but is considered derogatory.⁵⁰⁴

Land claims

The recognition of [territorial](#) ownership to address wrongs made against [Indigenous Peoples](#) by the federal and provincial or territorial governments. Land claim negotiations are ongoing across Canada.⁵⁰⁵

See also: [Modern treaties](#)

Comprehensive claims

A type of land claim that is specific to the traditional use and occupancy of land by [First Nations](#), [Métis](#) and [Inuit](#) whose rights and title have not been addressed through [treaties](#).^{506 507}

Specific claims

A type of land claim where the Government of Canada failed to meet its obligations under [treaties](#), the [Indian Act](#), or other agreements.⁵⁰⁸

Medicine Wheel

The medicine wheel is a symbol of [Indigenous](#) North American culture and [religion](#) and are used for religious, healing, and teaching purposes. Interpretations and uses vary across communities and cultures.^{c 509 510 511}

Métis

Broadly described as people with European and [Indigenous](#) ancestry, the Métis Peoples are recognized under the [Indian Act](#) as a distinct nation in Canada.^{512 513} Officially, someone who is Métis “self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other [Aboriginal Peoples](#), is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation”.⁵¹⁴

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

A human rights crisis and call to action regarding the disproportionate rates of [violence](#) towards [Indigenous](#) women and girls and numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.⁵¹⁵ “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls & Gender Diverse People” may also be used to reflect that [Two-Spirit](#) and [gender-diverse](#) Indigenous people also experience disproportionate rates of violence.⁵¹⁶

Native

Refers to and is being replaced by the term [Indigenous](#), as “Native” may be considered offensive. The term may be used by those who self-identify as Native but should be avoided by non-Indigenous people.⁵¹⁷

Oral tradition

The verbal passing down of history and stories from generation to generation.⁵¹⁸

Peoples

Peoples is a term used when referring to more than one [cultural](#), [ethnic](#), or [racial](#) group, as opposed to the term “People”, which refers to a single group. For example, “Indigenous Peoples” refers to the multiple groups that fall under the umbrella term of [Indigenous](#). Similarly, “First

^c For more information on the medicine wheel, the following resources provide further reading: [Four Directions Teachings](#), [The seven lessons of the medicine wheel](#), [The Medicine Wheel](#), and [The Seven Teachings](#).

Peoples” refers to the many cultural and ethnic groups that were the original inhabitants of [Turtle Island](#).^{519 520}

Powwow

A modern powwow is a social event or celebration where people meet to dance, sing, visit family and friends, and celebrate [Indigenous](#) communities and culture.^{521 522} Use of the word powwow to describe meetings in general, like in business settings, should be avoided.

Pretendian

Term used to describe someone who falsely claims to be Indigenous without legitimate ancestral ties to Indigenous communities, a practice seen in both Canada and the US. It is often considered a form of cultural appropriation and can be offensive to those who truly identify as First Nations, Inuit or Métis.⁵²³

Reconciliation

In reference to Indigenous reconciliation.

The effort made by individuals, groups, institutions, and government to acknowledge past and ongoing effects of colonization on [Indigenous Peoples](#) and action to establish and maintain [respectful](#) relationships between [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous communities.⁵²⁴ Reconciliation in Canada is an ongoing process that involves addressing past harms and giving [power](#) back to [First Nations](#), [Métis](#), and [Inuit](#) communities.⁵²⁵

See also: [racial reconciliation](#)

Regalia

Traditional and often sacred clothing, accessories and artifacts worn or carried during ceremonies such as [powwows](#), celebrations, and pan-national gatherings.⁵²⁶ Regalia is diverse and reflects the wearer’s life, interests, and family history. Garments may be passed down through generations or crafted by the wearer or their family members.⁵²⁷

Reserve

Reserves are land areas governed by the [Indian Act](#) for exclusive use by specific [First Nations](#). While reserves may serve as spiritual and physical homelands for [Indigenous](#) communities, the regulations in place through the Indian Act continue to [oppress](#) those living on reserve.^{528 529}

Residential schools

Government-sponsored and church-run schools established to convert [Indigenous](#) youth and assimilate them into Canadian society. [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), and [Métis](#) children were forced away from their families, traditions, cultures, and languages, causing long-term harm. An estimated

150,000 Indigenous children were placed in the residential school system, and thousands never returned home.^{d 530 531}

Resurgence

Transformative movement of resistance and [decolonization](#) that refers to a revitalization and reclaiming of culture, languages, traditions, and self-governance by Indigenous peoples. It involves a movement towards restoring Indigenous ways of life, promoting cultural practices, asserting land rights, and reclaiming self-determination. This resurgence is a response to historical injustices, colonization, and ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Canada.⁵³²

Smudging

A [First Nations](#) tradition with medicinal and ceremonial purposes. The traditions and meanings behind smudging vary across communities and cultures. Generally, the practice involves burning a bundle of dried herbs, often sweetgrass, sage, or cedar. Smudging may be used as a healing practice for the mind, body, and spirit or to cleanse and protect oneself or one's environment from negative thoughts and actions.^{533 534 535}

Time immemorial

A phrase used by [Indigenous](#) people to describe their connection with [ancestral lands](#) that is not defined by historical dates.^{536 537}

Traditional territory

The geographic area that [Indigenous Peoples](#) or their ancestors traditionally occupied and used prior to [colonization](#).⁵³⁸

Ceded territory

Lands that [Indigenous Peoples](#) surrendered or legally signed away to the Crown or to Canada through military or political pressure.^{539 540}

Unceded territory

Lands that [Indigenous Peoples](#) never surrendered or legally signed away to the Crown or to Canada.^{541 542}

Treaty

An agreement between [Indigenous Peoples](#) and the British Crown/Canadian government. Treaties aim to establish peaceful relations and ongoing obligations regarding land, resources, and governance rights. Treaty rights vary greatly between treaties but may include fishing and hunting, land occupation, and the extent of self-governance.⁵⁴³ Many of the rights and obligations established in [historic treaties](#) have not been upheld by the Crown and the Canadian government, leading to the creation of [modern treaties](#) and [land claims](#).

^d The [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Memorial Register](#) is an ongoing project intended to honour and remember the children lost as a result of residential schools.

Historic treaties

70 treaties signed between 1701 and 1923 between [First Nations](#) and the British Crown and Canadian Government.⁵⁴⁴ The historic treaties include the [Treaties of Peace and Neutrality](#), [Peace and Friendship Treaties](#), [Upper Canada Land Surrenders](#) and the [Williams Treaties](#), [Robinson Treaties](#) and [Douglas Treaties](#), and the [Numbered Treaties](#).⁵⁴⁵

Modern treaties

Treaties negotiated between [Indigenous](#) groups and the Office of Native Claims from 1975 to the present. Modern treaties address government failures to meet treaty obligations and rights that were not addressed by [historic treaties](#).^{546 547}

See also: [land claims](#)

Numbered treaties

11 treaties signed by the Canadian government and [First Nations](#) between 1871 and 1921. These treaties covered a large area of Canada, from northeastern British Columbia, north into parts of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, through the prairie provinces, and into parts of northern Ontario. The earlier of these treaties – Treaties 1 to 7 – facilitated existing and future assimilation policies, and the remaining treaties provided access to natural resources.^{548 549 550}

Douglas Treaties

14 land purchases made between 1850 and 1854 by James Douglas, governor of the British colony of Vancouver Island. These treaties have been historically disputed as they were not signed in good faith, and additional clauses were inserted after signing. Also called the Fort Victoria Treaties.^{551 552}

Peace and Friendship Treaties

Treaties signed in the Maritimes between 1725 and 1779 with the intention to end hostilities and encourage cooperation between the British and the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy [First Nations](#).^{553 554} Unlike the treaties signed later in other parts of Canada, the Peace and Friendship Treaties did not involve the surrender of land and resources.⁵⁵⁵

Robinson Treaties

Two treaties signed in 1850 between William Robinson, former fur trader in the Muskokas and member of the colonial legislature, and [Indigenous](#) communities, mainly Ojibwa, in the northern Great Lakes region.⁵⁵⁶

Treaties of Peace and Neutrality

Treaties signed between 1701 and 1760 that formed military alliances between [Indigenous](#) groups and the British and the French. These treaties include the Albany Deed, 1701; the Treaty of Swegatchy (Oswegatchie), 1760; and the Huron-British Treaty, 1760.⁵⁵⁷

Upper Canada Land Surrenders

Over 30 [land cessions](#) in the Great Lakes region, negotiated by agents of the Indian Department and [Indigenous Peoples](#) between 1764 and 1862. These land surrenders

consisted of one-time cash payments, little to no reserves, and the surrender of all rights associated with the use of the land.⁵⁵⁸

Williams Treaties

The 1923 Williams Treaties [ceded](#) all lands, including hunting and fishing rights, in the region between Georgian Bay, the Ottawa River, Lake Simcoe and the lands west of the Bay of Quinte to the Crown for a fixed one-time cash payment.⁵⁵⁹ These treaties addressed discrepancies and issues with documentation found in the previous [Upper Canada Land Surrenders](#).⁵⁶⁰

Tribe

A term that was used to refer to [Indigenous](#) communities or nations. While this term is still commonly used in the United States, it has become outdated in Canada and replaced by the term “nation”.⁵⁶¹ Use of the word tribe to describe groups of people in general (e.g., a group of friends or a group of colleagues) should be avoided.

See also: [band](#) and [first nation](#)

The White Paper

Also known as the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, the White Paper is a 1969 policy that aimed to abolish the [Indian Act](#) and eliminate the recognition of [Indigenous Peoples](#). The goal of the proposal, according to the federal government, was to make [Aboriginal Peoples](#) equal to Canadian citizens.⁵⁶²

Turtle Island

Turtle Island is the name used by some [Indigenous](#) people to refer to the continent of North America. This name is based on creation stories, passed down through [oral tradition](#), that describe the role of a turtle in the formation of the land. Many versions of this story exist, and not all include a turtle.^{563 564}

LANGUAGE

Allophone

In French Canada, a resident of a province or territory whose mother tongue is neither French nor English.⁵⁶⁵

Glottophobia

Contempt, hatred, aggression, rejection, and exclusion of people based on the fact that their accents and language varieties are considered as incorrect, inferior, wrong, illegitimate or unacceptable.⁵⁶⁶ Also known as linguicism.

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 master one or more other languages.⁵⁶⁷

Francophone

A person who is fluent in the French 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 a French speaker can also master one or more other languages.⁵⁶⁸

RACE & ETHNICITY

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.⁵⁶⁹

Contrast with: [Cultural appropriation](#)

Afro-Latino

People of African descent in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as well as people of African descent in the United States whose origins are in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁵⁷⁰ This term originated in the 1970's when Black activists in Brazil were fighting for Black citizens to be recognized on the country's census. The Afro-Latino identity is complex and can be subjective.^{571 572} Other terms that individuals may use to describe themselves include Afro-[Hispanic](#), Black Hispanic, or Black [Latino](#).⁵⁷³

Ancestry

Lineage; family or ethnic origins.⁵⁷⁴

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.^{575 576}

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.⁵⁷⁷

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.^{578 579 580}

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.⁵⁸¹

See also: [racism](#)

Anti-racism

An active effort to eliminate all forms of racism.⁵⁸²

See also: [racism](#)

Apartheid

An Afrikaans word that describes a social system and/or policy that enforced the [discrimination](#) of non-whites and the segregation of Black and white people in South Africa during white minority rule.⁵⁸³

Asian

People whose origin, ancestry, or ethnic identity is tied to any of the Asian regions: Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, or West Asia.⁵⁸⁴

Biracial

A person who has two racial ancestry groups.⁵⁸⁵

See also: [multiracial/multiethnic](#)

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

An ideological and political movement founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate [white supremacy](#) and incidents of racially motivated [violence](#) against Black people. By combating and countering acts of violence, the movement intends to create space for Black imagination and innovation.⁵⁸⁶ BLM gained global prominence in 2020 following George Floyd's murder, and to this day BLM continues to advocate for Black Lives.^{587 588}

Canadian Multiculturalism Act

A federal policy that acknowledges, promotes, and protects [cultural pluralism](#).^{589 590}

Caucasian

An outdated racial classification term that originally referred to the peoples of the Caucasus region that spans between Europe and Asia. The term evolved in meaning to describe people who are white. This term should be avoided and can generally be replaced with "white".^{591 592}

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.^{593 594 595 596}

Anti-colonialism

Action to dismantle systemic [power](#) structures with the goal of justice for people [oppressed](#) by colonialism.⁵⁹⁷

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.⁵⁹⁸

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.^{e 599}

Colourism/shadism

The [discriminatory](#) practice of preferring people with fair or lighter skin over dark skin.

Colourism/shadism is based on European beauty standards and is rooted in [racism](#). Also practiced within racial and ethnic groups.^{600 601}

Covert racism

Racist [attitudes](#) or actions that are subtle or indirect in nature. Covert [racism](#) can occur through implicit [biases](#), [microaggressions](#), [racial colourblindness](#), racially [coded language](#), and more.^{f 602 603}

Critical race theory (CRT)

An intellectual movement and framework used to analyze policies, practices, institutions, and systems to uncover the ways that they create and maintain racial inequality. CRT asserts that [racism](#) is an everyday experience for [people of colour](#), [race](#) is socially constructed for the purpose of [oppression](#), institutions are inherently [racist](#), and society is largely uninterested in remedying [institutional racism](#).^{604 605 606}

Cultural Communities

In Quebec, a community made up of non-[Indigenous](#) people who are not descended from French or British settlers. This term is generally used in the plural.⁶⁰⁷

See also: [culture](#)

^e 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.

^f For a more comprehensive list of covert racism examples, see [Overt and Covert Racism](#) from R-Squared.

Diaspora

Community members of the past or current generation that voluntarily or forcibly left their ancestral homelands and are living in a host country.⁶⁰⁸

Environmental racism

The intentional disposal of toxic waste into or near equity-deserving communities. This toxic waste further impacts equity-deserving communities and their inhabitants by making them more susceptible to chronic illnesses.^{609 610}

Ethnicity

A socially defined category describing a group of people that share a common culture, tradition, language, history, geography, religion, and racial identity.^{611 612}

Ethnocentrism

The view that your own cultural group is superior and to judge other cultures based on that standard.⁶¹³

Eurocentrism

A cultural phenomenon that considers European or Western nations as being more civilized and superior. Eurocentrism evaluates non-Western societies from a Western perspective.⁶¹⁴

Global majority/people of the global majority (PGM)

A term used to refer to [racialized](#) and [Indigenous](#) communities in place of “[visible minority](#)”. This term is seen by many as more empowering and accurate, as racialized and Indigenous people represent over 80% of the global population.^{615 616}

Hispanic

A term used to identify a person from a Spanish-speaking country, primarily in Latin America, irrespective of other racial or ethnic factors. Some former Spanish colonies, such as Equatorial Guinea, are also Spanish-speaking and considered Hispanic.^{617 618}

See also: [Latino/Latina](#) and [Afro-Latino](#)

Internalized racism

Where an equity-deserving group perpetuates [racism](#) by believing and supporting racist ideas and beliefs towards their own community or themselves. Structurally, there is a system in place that rewards equity-deserving communities for supporting systemic inequities and punishes those who do not.^{619 620}

Jim Crow Laws

First passed in the Southern USA after the American Civil War to legally discriminate against and segregate Black people. Jim Crow laws systemically separated Black and white people in schools, transportation, and other public places.^{621 622}

Latino/Latina

People whose origin, ancestry, or ethnic identity is tied to Latin America.⁶²³

Model minority

A term based on [stereotypes](#) of people of Asian descent that portray them as polite, law-abiding, intelligent, and upwardly mobile. The model minority myth ignores differences within and between Asian communities, is used against other minority groups, and erases the [discrimination](#) experienced by Asian people.^{624 625 626}

Multiracial/multiethnic

An individual with two or more racial/ethnic identities.⁶²⁷

See also: [biracial](#)

Nationality

The state of belonging to a particular country or being a citizen of a particular nation.⁶²⁸

Nationalism

An ideology that places an individual's loyalty to and identification with a nation or country above other interests.⁶²⁹

Nativism

An ideology that prioritizes the interests of "native" inhabitants. This concept is almost exclusively discussed within USA politics, and primarily refers to an opposition to immigration and support for immigrants.^{630 631}

Neo-racism/Cultural Racism

Expression frequently used to describe contemporary [racism](#), centered on the theme of immigration and the idea of the irreducibility of differences. Racism is no longer based on physical characteristics, but on cultural differences. This ideology outlaws cultural or social mixing, as it could destabilize the [power](#) group. In this way, cultural diversity is seen not as a source of wealth, but as an element of exclusion.⁶³²

Person of colour/people of colour (POC)

An alternative term for visible minority used to identify non-white racial and ethnic groups. In Canada, [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), and [Métis](#) Peoples are generally not classified by this term as they are distinct under the constitution.⁶³³

Quebec Bashing

[Prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#) directed towards the government, [culture](#), or the French-speaking population of Quebec.⁶³⁴

Race

Idea (or social construct), created to separate people based on the assumption that one group of people is superior to another group. It is a complex term with constantly shifting meanings that was built from ideas that skull shapes and brain sizes determined intelligence and is not grounded in biology. Current understandings of race are shaped by societal and historical influences largely based on differentiating people by ascribed characteristics, or characteristics you are born with, such as skin colour, hair texture, and facial features.^{635 636}

Race relations

The quality and pattern of interactions between diverse racial groups. There are two components of race relations: the elimination of racial intolerance and the removal of systemic racial disadvantages.⁶³⁷

Racial colourblindness

A racial ideology where a person chooses to not see race and/or skin colour. Colourblindness leads to a dismissal of the lived experiences of people of colour, inequities, history of [violence](#) and current perpetuated trauma in our society.^{638 639}

Racial identity/ethnic identity

Awareness of one's racial and ethnic group based on biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.⁶⁴⁰

Racial inequity

When different racial groups have different levels of [power](#) and privilege in a society.⁶⁴¹

Racial justice

Reinforcement of equitable policies and practices with an aim to create a fair and equal system for all races.⁶⁴²

Racial profiling

Differential treatment of a member of a racialized group based on [stereotypes](#) and assumptions rather than behaviour. For example, a police officer stopping a [racialized person](#) on stereotypical assumptions based on their [race](#), colour, or [ethnicity](#).^{643 644}

Racial reconciliation

Rebuilding relationships between minority groups and the institutions that harmed them. Reconciliation can be achieved through three key steps: recognizing systemic and institutional [racism](#) and their effects, engaging in dialogue, and working towards [restorative justice](#).^{645 646}

Racialization

Process where ideas of race are used to organize or differentiate spaces that are not actually racial in nature. This process categorizes everyone based on the particular racialized categories present in a given time and location. The common element of all racialization processes is the belief in a racial hierarchy, where certain groups are seen as superior to other groups of people.^{647 648}

Racialized persons/racialized group

An alternative term for [visible minority](#) used to identify non-white racial groups. This term is preferred over visible minority as a racialized group is not necessarily in the minority. The term does not place “whiteness” as the default, and it acknowledges [race](#) as a social construct with negative effects.^{649 650}

Racism

A set of beliefs that organizes our lives and life chances based on the idea of race. Basically, racism assumes that there are foundational and fundamental differences between groups of people with different characteristics. Based on these assumed differences, decisions are made to continue and enhance those differences in such a way that people in power benefit and simultaneously justify their positions of power.^{651 652}

Individual racism

Racial [discrimination](#) that stems from conscious or unconscious individual beliefs, [attitudes](#), and actions that perpetuate the ideology that one racial or ethnic group is inherently superior. Individual racism is learned from and influenced by [systemic racism](#) and is rooted in the unequal distribution of [power](#) between white and [racialized people](#).^{653 654}

Institutional racism

Policies, practices, and dynamics embedded in established institutions (government, religion, education, organizations, etc.) that result in disadvantage or advancement of specific groups of people. These systemic practices normalize racism and may not be obvious.^{655 656}

Structural racism/systemic racism

Social production that points to the bigger picture of history, society, culture, institutions, and the economy.⁶⁵⁷ [Racialized people](#) have been historically left out of the development of society and its systems, resulting in deeply entrenched disadvantages, [barriers](#), and [biases](#).^{658 659} Systemic racism is at the root of large-scale discrepancies between white and racialized people in many areas including income and wealth,⁶⁶⁰ health outcomes,⁶⁶¹ homelessness,⁶⁶² unemployment,⁶⁶³ and involvement with the justice system.^{664 665}

Racist

An individual, institution, or organization that supports [racism](#) through policies, practices and actions that perpetuate [discrimination](#) towards people based on the membership of a racial group.⁶⁶⁶

Redlining

Shorthand for race-based exclusionary real estate practices. The term originated from the use of red markings on maps to indicate mixed-race or primarily Black neighbourhoods, and now refers to a number of systemic [discriminatory](#) practices that primarily target racialized people, including the denial of real estate financial services based on location and unfair and abusive loan terms. The most notable Canadian example of redlining is the [history of Africville](#), but the practice still occurs today. Historically and in the present, redlining has lasting impacts on wealth inequality between racial groups.^{667 668 669}

Reverse racism

[Discrimination](#), [prejudice](#) or intolerance directed towards members of dominant racial groups. Reverse racism is a myth. Members of the dominant groups can experience individual racism; however, they cannot be systemically [oppressed](#) due to the lack of social or institutional [power](#) needed by minority groups to oppress the dominant.⁶⁷⁰

See also: [racism](#)

Scientific racism

Scientific techniques or theories used to justify and perpetuate racial inequality.⁶⁷¹

Segregation

The institutional act or practice of separating people along [protected grounds](#): ethnic, racial, or religious identity. This practice results in economic, social, and political inequality between the segregated and non-segregated people.⁶⁷²

Visible minorities

A term used to identify non-white [racial](#) and [ethnic](#) groups in the federal [Employment Equity Act](#). [First Nations](#), [Inuit](#), and [Métis](#) Peoples are not classified by this term as they are distinct under the constitution. [People of colour](#) and [racialized groups](#) are preferred terms.⁶⁷³

White fragility

A state in which white people are unable to tolerate racial stress. White fragility presents in defensiveness or “defensive moves” such as arguing, silence, or leaving the situation. White fragility functions and is supported by [white privilege](#).⁶⁷⁴

White passing

When a non-white person lacks certain physical characteristics tied to their [racial](#) or [ethnic](#) group in a way that makes them appear to be white. People who are white passing may experience privileges in society that someone with darker skin or other features would not experience. Being “white passing” may also cause someone to struggle with their identity.⁶⁷⁵

See also: [White privilege](#)

White privilege

Unearned access, benefits, and opportunities white people are given in society due to the historical imbalance of [power](#) between white and [racialized people](#).^{676 677}

White supremacy

The ideology that white people and their beliefs are superior to other [races](#). Although not exclusively, white supremacy has been associated with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis.^{678 679}

Woke

The origin of the term ‘woke’ comes from the United States. It’s slang for ‘awake’, and it comes from the expression “stay woke!” (stay awake!) which was sung by some singers and poets belonging to Black communities in the early 20th century. Since then, it has been used out of its original context, by other movements and political ideologies in different periods.^{680 681}

In 2014, following the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, “stay woke” suddenly became the cautionary watchword of the movement “Black Lives Matter”. In fact, the #StayWoke hashtag served as an emotional and spiritual purpose for the causes pointing at the inequities of the American justice system.⁶⁸²

Over the past few years, the term ‘woke’ has been appropriated by several politicians in North America and has also become a double-edged sword: it’s used as a shorthand for political progressiveness by the left, and as a denigration of leftist culture by the right.⁶⁸³

Xenophobia

The fear or dislike of things that are perceived to be “foreign”, including people from other countries.⁶⁸⁴

RELATIONSHIP & FAMILY STATUS

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 new legal family of the child. There are four types in Canada: International, private, public, and relative/kinship. Adoption can also be open or closed.⁶⁸⁵

Closed adoption

Adoption where there is no contact between the child and their birth parents or other biological family members.⁶⁸⁶

International adoptions

Adoption of a child from another country, whether through an agency or the adoption of a family member.⁶⁸⁷

Open adoption

Adoption where the child maintains contact with their birth parents or other biological family members. Open adoptions can involve various levels of contact and do not necessarily involve visitation. Both private and public adoptions can be open adoptions.^{688 689}

Private adoptions

Adoption of a child through a private agency.⁶⁹⁰

Public adoptions

Adoption of a child who is in the care of a government children's aid agency (foster care).⁶⁹¹

Relative or kinship adoption

Adoption of a child who is a family member or stepchild.

Arranged marriage

A marriage where both partners are chosen by family or religious or cultural leaders.⁶⁹² There are diverse ways in which families may approach arranged marriages.

Cooperative traditional arranged marriage

Potential partners are selected by the person getting married and other involved parties, and a selection is made together.⁶⁹³

Forced marriage

An arranged marriage without the consent of the bride and groom. Illegal in many countries.⁶⁹⁴

Modified traditional arranged marriage

Potential partners are selected by others, but the person getting married has the final say in who they marry.⁶⁹⁵

Traditional arranged marriage

The bride and groom consent to the marriage but have no say in the final selection of a partner.⁶⁹⁶

Bigamy

A relationship where one person is married to two people. This term is generally used when referring to illegal marriage fraud where one or both spouses are unaware.^{697 698}

See also: [polygamy](#)

Blended family

A family where both partners have children from previous relationships.⁶⁹⁹

Caregiver

Someone who provides care to family or friends with health conditions, disabilities, or age-related challenges.^{700 701}

Closed relationship

A [monogamous](#) or [polyamorous](#) relationship where the people involved have agreed to not seek out any additional partners.⁷⁰²

Common-law partners

A couple who is unmarried and living together and who qualifies for some of the same legal benefits as legally married couples, depending on province of residence. Criteria for the legal recognition of common-law status varies across provinces but is defined federally as living together for 12 continuous months, having a child together through birth or adoption, or having shared custody of a child. Other terms include domestic partner (Nova Scotia), adult interdependent partners (Alberta), and de facto unions (Québec).^{703 704 705}

Daddy track

A term referring to the [stereotype](#) that men who are committed to their children are less committed to their careers, resulting in these men being overlooked for promotions or raises.⁷⁰⁶

See also: [mommy track](#) and [daddy track](#)

Ethical non-monogamy/consensual non-monogamy

Any type of relationship where the people involved consent to some level of non-exclusivity. The central idea of ethical [non-monogamy](#) is that specific boundaries for the relationship are set within the relationship, everyone involved is aware, and consent is freely given.^{707 708}

Hierarchical relationships

[Polyamorous](#) relationships where partnerships are categorized in terms of priority and may have different “rules” or boundaries.^{709 710}

Primary partner

Generally used in a hierarchical [polyamorous](#) relationship, the primary partner is the person who is considered the most important. This can be decided due to the existence of a relationship before entering polyamory, living situation, family situation, or any other reason. Some people have multiple primary partners, but it is most often just one.^{711 712}

Secondary partner

Generally used in a hierarchical [polyamorous](#) relationship, a secondary partner is the person or people second in priority to the primary partner. The secondary partner is usually given less time or energy in the relationship, which is an agreement made between all parties in the relationship.^{713 714}

Tertiary partner

Generally used in a hierarchical [polyamorous](#) relationship, a tertiary partner someone who may be a casual member of a polyamorous relationship. A tertiary partner given a limited amount of time or energy, which is an agreement made between all parties in the relationship.⁷¹⁵

Intended parents

Intended Parents are people who cannot conceive on their own and choose to build their family using third-party reproduction, which can include egg, sperm or embryo donation and [surrogacy](#) arrangements. The intended parents become the child’s legal parents once the child is born.⁷¹⁶

Mommy/caring tax

A term that refers to lost wages for people, most commonly women, who must take time off to care for their children or other people in their care.⁷¹⁷

Mommy track

A term referring to the [stereotype](#) that women who are committed to their children are less committed to their careers, resulting in these women, or working women in general, being overlooked for promotions or raises.⁷¹⁸

See also: [daddy track](#) and [parent track](#)

Monogamy

Having one romantic and/or sexual relationship at any given time.⁷¹⁹

Nesting partner/anchor partner

A term for the partner within a [polyamorous](#) relationship with which someone shares a home. Can be used without the connotation of hierarchy within the relationship(s).^{720 721}

Non-monogamy

An umbrella term that describes having more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship at the same time.⁷²²

Open relationship

A relationship where the people involved are seeking or open to romantic or sexual activity outside of the relationship. The term can apply to a couple (two people) or an already [polyamorous](#) relationship with more than two people. People in an open relationship may or may not consider themselves polyamorous, particularly if the relationship is only open in terms of sexual activity.^{723 724 725}

Parent track

A term referring to the [stereotype](#) that parents who are committed to their children are less committed to their careers, resulting in these parents being overlooked for promotions or raises.⁷²⁶

See also: [mommy track](#) and [daddy track](#)

Parenting arrangements

Decisions around where children live, who they spend time with, and who makes parenting decisions in the case of divorce, separation, or parents who are otherwise not in a relationship. Parenting arrangements can be made with or without legal interference.⁷²⁷

Child access/contact/parenting time

Access (spouse), now referred to as “parenting time” in new legislation passed in 2021, is the amount of time each parent is responsible for the child. Access (non-spouse), now referred to as “contact”, is legal orders on who is allowed to have contact with the child during parenting time.

Custody

Custody refers to rights to decision making and responsibility for the child/children. New legislation passed in 2021 has changed the language for this term to “decision making responsibility” and “parenting time”, referring to legal orders on who is to make decisions around the child and the amount of time each parent is responsible for the child.

Partner

A [gender-neutral](#) term for someone with whom a person is in a relationship with.⁷²⁸

See also: [significant other \(SO\)](#) and [spouse](#)

Polyamory/polyamorous

Having or maintaining more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship at the same time. Everyone involved in the relationship(s) is aware of and consents to the arrangements. The term is often shortened to “poly” or “polyam”.^{729 730}

Polycule

A network of interconnected [non-monogamous](#) relationships; named as such because when these relationships are drawn as a diagram, they often resemble drawings of molecules.^{731 732}

Polygamy

Not to be confused with [polyamory](#), polygamy is the practice of being married to multiple people at the same time. Polygyny refers to having multiple wives, and is the most common, and polyandry refers to having multiple husbands. The legality of polygamy varies around the world, but the practice is illegal in Canada.^{733 734 735}

See also: [bigamy](#)

Relationship orientation

A term used to describe the type of relationships that someone engages in (e.g., [monogamous](#), [non-monogamous](#), [polyamorous](#), etc.).⁷³⁶

Significant other (SO)

A [gender-neutral](#) term for someone with whom a person is in a relationship.⁷³⁷

See also: [partner](#) and [spouse](#)

Social marriage

A marriage that is not legally recognized, but the couple considers themselves married and exchanges vows or gifts.⁷³⁸

Spouse

A [gender-neutral](#) term for someone with whom a person is in a relationship with. Usually refers specifically to a legally married partner.⁷³⁹

See also: [partner](#) and [significant other \(SO\)](#)

Surrogacy

Where a person with a uterus (the “surrogate”) agrees to carry and deliver a child for another family. There are different arrangements for surrogacy, where the surrogate may or may not be biologically related to the child. In Canada, surrogacy is legal if done altruistically, meaning that the only payment that is permitted is the reimbursement of expenses.⁷⁴⁰

Triad

A term to describe a three-person relationship where all parties are romantically involved. This type of relationship is the most common [polyamorous](#) relationship depicted in the media.⁷⁴¹

RELIGION & FAITH

Agnosticism

Based on “not knowing”, agnosticism is the belief that the existence of any God, higher power, etc. is unknown and will never be known.⁷⁴²

Antisemitism

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”⁷⁴³ Some other resources to explore include: [Government of Canada: News Release](#) and [The Stain of Antisemitism in Canada](#) from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

See also: [Judaism](#)

Atheism

The absence of belief in any God.⁷⁴⁴

The Bahá'í Faith

A spiritual ideology based on the teachings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh – two Divine Messengers sent by God. The central tenant of Bahá'í is to “inspire individuals and communities as they work to improve their own lives and contribute to the advancement of civilization”.⁷⁴⁵

Buddhism

A non-theistic philosophy and religion developed from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), known as the “Awakened One”. There are many branches of Buddhism, and followers of Buddhism are called Buddhists.⁷⁴⁶

Christianity

A monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Messiah and son of God. There are over 45,000 Christian denominations, with the main branches being Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestantism. Christianity is the most practiced religion in the world.⁷⁴⁷

Confucianism

A non-theistic ideology emerged from the teachings of a Chinese philosopher, Kong Qiu (Confucius). Confucianism's main teaching is doing the right thing in one's life and focuses on values such as learning from the past, humanness, respect for parents and ancestors, honesty, reciprocity, righteousness, and loyalty.⁷⁴⁸

Creed

Someone's religion or spiritual beliefs.⁷⁴⁹

Druzism

A small monotheistic religion based on Shi'a Islam that incorporates other beliefs and philosophies. The Druze follow seven commandments: a truthful tongue, cultivation and protection of the brethren, excision of fallacies and falsehoods, rejection of the villain and aggressor, adoration of the lord in every era and at all times, cheerful acceptance of whatever comes from Him (God), and spontaneous submission to His Will (God's will). The Druze have a long history of persecution that has resulted in the practice of hiding their religious beliefs.⁷⁵⁰

Druidism

Druidism, also known as Druidry, encompasses the spiritual and religious practices of the Druids, who were part of the educated class in ancient Celtic societies. Serving as priests, teachers, and judges, they were renowned for their profound bond with nature and the natural world. Today, Druidism is still practiced by modern spiritual communities, with a focus on connecting with nature and honoring ancient traditions.⁷⁵¹

Faithism

[Discrimination](#) or [exclusion](#) based on religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs.⁷⁵²

Hinduism

A religion that encompasses a broad range of philosophies, influences, texts, and beliefs. There are many forms of Hinduism, with some recognizing a single major deity (Brahman) and multiple gods and goddesses. Hinduism is the third most practiced religion in the world and is considered the world's oldest organized religion.^{753 754}

Indigenous religions

Various religions practiced by [Indigenous Peoples](#) in North America. Common beliefs of these religions include creation stories, supernatural beings, sacred organizations, and shamans. [Indigenous religions](#), like Indigenous communities, are diverse in their ideologies and beliefs. Many Indigenous religions were lost in the effects of colonization and are being reclaimed by the affected communities.⁷⁵⁵

Islam

A monotheistic faith where Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah (God). Followers of Islam are referred to as Muslims. There are two dominant Islamic sects: Sunnis and Shi'ah. Islam is the second most practiced religion in the world.^{756 757}

See also: [islamophobia](#)

Islamophobia

The fear, hatred, and [prejudice](#) directed towards individuals practicing the Islamic faith or who identify as Muslim.⁷⁵⁸

See also: [Islam](#)

Jainism

A religion rooted in ancient and traditional Indian teachings, Jainism centres on the values of harmlessness, renunciation, and limited use of the world's resources. Jains take five vows: non-violence, non-attachment to possessions, not lying, not stealing, and sexual restraint. Jainism is described by its followers as an eternal belief system.⁷⁵⁹

Judaism

A monotheistic religion that began with Abraham, the first prophet of Judaism. There are several forms of practice including Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist. Many Jews see Judaism as a way of life and a community beyond a religion. Central values of the religion include repairing the world, charity, peace, family, community, justice, and living a holy life.⁷⁶⁰

See also: [antisemitism](#)

Neopaganism

Modern religious movement that draws inspiration from pre-Christian and non-Christian traditions, often emphasizing nature worship, polytheism, and rituals. Adherents of Neo-Paganism typically seek to reconnect with ancient spiritual practices, celebrating the cycles of nature and incorporating elements of folklore, mythology, and magic into their beliefs and practices.⁷⁶¹

Non-religiousness

A person that is not involved or affiliated with any religion or religious activity.⁷⁶²

Rastafarianism/Rastafari

A religion and political movement that draws from selected readings of the Christian Bible. Rastafarianism emerged in resistance to British occupation and [oppression](#) in Jamaica. One principle of Rastafari is referred to as “levity”, or balanced lifestyle, and includes wearing hair in natural dreadlocks, wearing red, green, gold, and black (representing blood, herbs, royalty, and Africanness), and a natural, vegetarian diet.⁷⁶³

Religion

A set of spiritual belief systems involving rituals and philosophy of life, that are generally within a formal, organized institution.⁷⁶⁴

Secularism

Someone with a strong belief in the separation of church and state. Secularists are usually atheists, but not always.⁷⁶⁵

Shinto

A Japanese religion that believes in kami (spirits) that reside in places, natural processes, objects, and shrines. There are many forms of Shinto, and it is often seen more as a Japanese way of life than an organized religion.⁷⁶⁶

Sikhism

A monotheistic faith based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine other gurus. The focus of Sikhism is on the continual learning of God through meditation and rightful living. Some Sikhs choose to commit to the practice of Amrit, which includes donning the “five articles of faith”: leaving hair uncut, a comb in the hair, a steel sword, an iron bracelet, and a specific undergarment. Many Sikh men and women wear turbans.⁷⁶⁷

Taoism

A non-theistic tradition founded by Lao Zi in China. Taoism is focused on harmony with the Tao (the “path” or the “way”), the rightful way of living one’s life, and the idea that everything is made up of opposing forces (“yin and yang”).⁷⁶⁸

Theism/theistic

Belief in one or multiple god(s) or a religion that follows this belief. Religions that believe in one god are “monotheistic”, and religions that believe in multiple gods are “polytheistic”.⁷⁶⁹

Wicca

A modern pagan religion that draws on a diverse set of ancient pagan and 20th-century mystical motifs for its theological and ritual practices. It emphasizes the worship of both a Goddess and a God, and the practice of magic and nature worship.⁷⁷⁰

Zoroastrianism

An ancient religion and philosophy that considers the spirit of Ahura Mazda to be the Creator based on the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster. The main concepts of the religion include the dualism of good and evil, the struggle between truth/order and falsehood/chaos, and how humans can eliminate chaos and evil through living a good life of good thoughts, words, and actions. Conversion to the religion is prohibited, and followers of the religion have been historically persecuted, making Zoroastrianism one of the smallest religions in the world.⁷⁷¹

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Note: Some of these terms are offensive, and some have been reclaimed for use within the communities that they belong to. They are included here for informational purposes. See [Reclaimed language](#)

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.^{772 773}

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.^{774 775}

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](#).⁷⁷⁶

Biphobia

Fear, dislike, or hatred of and [discrimination](#) against [bisexual](#) people. Biphobia presents through offensive jokes, [exclusion](#), [bi erasure](#), [harassment](#), and [violence](#). Biphobia exists both within and outside of the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) community.^{777 778}

Bisexual

A term describing people who are emotionally, [romantically](#), and/or physically attracted to both men and women. It can also more broadly describe people who are attracted to more than one [sex](#), [gender](#), or [gender identity](#), in any capacity, and not necessarily in the same way. Sometimes shortened to “bi”.⁷⁷⁹

Coming out

See [Coming out](#)

Conversion Therapy

Set of treatments and practices designed to make a gay, lesbian or bisexual person heterosexual, or a trans person cis. Conversion therapies are a direct consequence of the pathologization of [2SLGBTQIA+](#) identities and sexualities, and their unethical practices lead to disastrous results: loss of self-esteem, psychological distress and suicidal ideation. In Canada, conversion therapies have been banned since 2021.⁷⁸⁰

Cross orientation

A term coined by the [asexual](#) community to describe when an individual's [romantic orientation](#) is different than their [sexual orientation](#). For example, a woman who is sexually attracted to men and romantically attracted to women is both [heterosexual](#) and [homoromantic](#).⁷⁸¹

See also: [romantic orientation](#) and [sexual orientation](#)

Demiromantic

Someone who has little to no romantic attraction to others unless a strong emotional connection is formed, while sexual attraction may form more easily.⁷⁸²

See also: [romantic orientation](#)

Demisexual

Someone who has little to no sexual attraction to others unless a strong emotional connection is formed, while romantic attraction may form more easily.^{783 784}

Dyke

Someone who is [lesbian](#) and generally [masculine-presenting](#). This is a [reclaimed term](#) within the community but is still used offensively.^{785 786}

Faggot/fag

A [gay](#) man. This is a [reclaimed term](#) by some within the community but is still used offensively towards gay men or men who are perceived to be [2SLGBTQIA+](#).^{787 788}

Gay

Someone whose emotional, [romantic](#), and/or physical attraction is to people of the same [sex](#) or [gender](#). More commonly used to describe male attraction to other males, but men, women, and [non-binary](#) people may also use the term.⁷⁸⁹

Heteroflexible/homoflexible

Someone who is primarily attracted to a specific [gender identity](#) but who is open to attraction or relationships with people with other [gender](#) identities.⁷⁹⁰

Heterocisnormativity

Assumption of individuals and society that everyone is [cis](#), [heterosexual](#) and monogamous. This term is part of a binary vision of the world and assumes an alignment between sex assigned at birth, [gender identity](#) and sexuality.⁷⁹¹

See also: [heteronormative/heteronormativity](#)

Heteronormative/heteronormativity

The assumption by individuals or society that everyone is [heterosexual](#), that heterosexuality is the default, “normal”, or superior.⁷⁹²

See also: [heterosexism](#)

Heterosexism

Actions that discriminate against or exclude people who are not [heterosexual](#) based on the belief that heterosexuality is what is “normal” or superior.⁷⁹³

See also: [heteronormativity](#)

Heterosexual/heteroromantic/straight

Someone whose emotional, [romantic](#) and/or physical attraction is to people of the [sex](#) or [gender](#) “opposite” of their own. People of any [gender identity](#) may refer to themselves as heterosexual or straight.^{794 795}

Homoantagonism

Active hatred or [violence](#) towards those with sexuality that is not [heteronormative](#). This term is used as an alternative to homophobia to describe the perpetration of violence more accurately as more than just feelings of fear or discomfort.⁷⁹⁶

Contrast with: [homophobia](#)

Homonormativity

The privileging of and bias towards heteronormative ideals within [2SLGBTQIA+](#) communities. This term is based on the idea that the norms and values of heterosexuality must be reproduced in non-heterosexual people if they are to be worthy of acceptance in society. For example, one partner presenting as more feminine and one as more masculine in a gay couple, and this being seen as more acceptable than two feminine-presenting partners.^{797 798}

See also: [transnormativity](#)

Homophobia

Fear, dislike, or hatred of and [discrimination](#) against [2SLGBTQIA+](#) people. Homophobia presents in many forms, and can be structural/systemic, interpersonal, or internalized.^{799 800}

Contrast with: [homoantagonism](#)

Internalized homophobia

Shame, guilt, or self-hatred someone feels towards themselves based on their [sexual orientation](#).⁸⁰¹

See also: [internalized oppression](#) and [internalized dominance](#)

Homosexual/homoromantic

Someone who is primarily or only attracted to people of the same [gender](#). It is generally not a preferred term, and other terms such as [lesbian](#), [gay](#), [queer](#), and others are more commonly used.⁸⁰²

Indigiqueer

See [Indigiqueer](#)

Lesbian

A woman whose emotional, [romantic](#), and/or physical attraction is to women. [Non-binary](#) people may also use the term.⁸⁰³

Lesbophobia

Fear, dislike, or hatred of and [discrimination](#) against [lesbians](#). Lesbophobia often stems from [stereotypes](#) or [misogyny](#).⁸⁰⁴

Outing someone

See [Outing someone](#)

Panphobia

In reference to [pansexuality](#).

Fear, dislike, or hatred of and [discrimination](#) against pansexuals. Panphobia presents through offensive jokes, [exclusion](#), the denial of pansexuality as a [sexual orientation](#), [harassment](#), and [violence](#). Panphobia exists both within and outside of the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) community.⁸⁰⁵

Pansexual/panromantic

Someone who is attracted to more than one [sex](#), [gender](#), or [gender identity](#), in any capacity, and not necessarily in the same way. Can be shortened to “pan”.^{806 807}

See also: [romantic orientation](#)

Pride

See [Pride](#)

Queer

An umbrella term used by some who identify as neither [heterosexual](#) nor [cisgender](#). It is becoming more widely used within the community because of its inclusiveness and is sometimes used for convenience in place of [acronyms](#), but should not entirely replace the acronyms. This term has been used offensively as a slur and has been [reclaimed](#) for use within the community. [Transgender](#) people may or may not use the term queer as the communities have diverse histories.^{808 809}

Queerbaiting

A marketing tactic used in entertainment and media where content hints at [2SLGBTQI+](#) representation but does not outwardly depict it. This tactic is used in an attempt to appeal to an 2SLGBTQIA+ audience without the risk of losing non-2SLGBTQIA+ viewers who may object to actual representation.^{810 811}

Queerphobia

An umbrella term that includes [homophobia](#), [lesbophobia](#), [panphobia](#), [biphobia](#), and [transphobia](#).⁸¹²

Questioning

See [Questioning](#)

Romantic orientation

Describes an attraction or absence of romantic and emotional attraction that a person feels towards other people, regardless of their gender. Some examples of romantic orientations are, heteroromanticism, homoromanticism, biromanticism and aromanticism. Romantic attraction is often aligned with sexual attraction, but not always.

See also: [sexual orientation](#) and [cross orientation](#)

Sexual orientation

Describes an individual's sexual attraction or lack of sexual attraction to others (e.g., [asexual](#)). Sexual attraction is often aligned with romantic attraction, but not always. (see [Cross orientation](#)).⁸¹³

See also: [romantic orientation](#) and [cross orientation](#)

Sexual preference

Separate from [sexual orientation](#), sexual preference is the type of sexual activity that a person **likes** to participate in. This term can be disrespectful if used interchangeably with sexual orientation as it falsely implies that sexual orientation is a choice.⁸¹⁴

Sexual prejudice

A broad term referring to all negative [attitudes](#) that are based on [sexual orientation](#).⁸¹⁵

Transnormativity

The privileging of and bias towards heteronormative ideals within trans communities. This term therefore privileges trans persons who make binary transitions, who make social, legal and medical transitions and who also adopt a gender expression that conforms to their gender identity.⁸¹⁶

See also: [homonormativity](#)

Two-spirit (2-spirit)

See [Two-Spirit](#)

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Classism

[Discriminatory](#) practices and [biases](#), for or against, based on socioeconomic status.⁸¹⁷

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.^{818 819}

Educationism

Subtle form of [discrimination](#) against those who are less educated or who don't hold post-secondary academic credentials.⁸²⁰

Socio-economic privilege

Benefits available to an individual due to their income, education, and level of financial security as well as perceptions of class and status based on these factors (socioeconomic status).⁸²¹

Socio-economic status

Also seen as socioeconomic status or SES, is a term used to describe the combined social and economic status of individuals, families, or groups. Socioeconomic status is typically indicated by three levels, more specifically, high, middle, and low, which compare relative income, education level, and job type as a way of understanding an individual or family's access to resources and opportunities.^{822 823 824}

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APPENDIX: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

Language is constantly evolving, thus we can never provide a complete list of terms and phrases to use or avoid, instead this brief guide is meant to help you navigate language use more generally in the workplace.

Using inclusive language involves choosing terminology that respects and acknowledges the diversity of individuals and communities, particularly those who have historically been marginalized or excluded. It also means avoiding terminology that reinforces stereotypes or perpetuates discrimination based on systems of structural inequality such as racism, sexism, and ableism.

Mindfulness around language choices helps to create an inclusive environment where people feel valued and welcomed. It can help to build stronger relationships and communities, as well as work towards the elimination of discrimination and bias.

Thoughtful language use recognizes that members of any social identity group have many intersecting identities, so terms favoured by one individual may not resonate with all members of any group. Therefore, a key thing to keep in mind is being open to feedback and a willingness to make changes as you learn more. We are all experts in our own identities.

As you learn, mistakes happen. Here at CCDI, we like to use those mistakes as learning opportunities. The best approach is to acknowledge the mistake, apologize if necessary, and commit to doing better in the future. It's important to listen to feedback from those who were affected by your language and take steps to learn more and avoid making those same mistakes going forward.

Inclusive language: General guidelines

- **Take your time:** It took years to learn the terminology you presently use; it will also take time to change that language. Consider the type, context, audience, and purpose of the communication in determining what language choices may be appropriate.
- **Use respectful language:** Avoid stereotypes, assumptions, generalizations, and derogatory or discriminatory terms. Keep humanity at the front of mind.
- **When in doubt, ask for clarification:** Consider whether an individual's identity is relevant to the situation. If it is, clarify as needed and respect people's wishes for how they would like to be described or what words they prefer. Keep in mind that universal consensus around terminology is not the goal and can vary greatly from person to person within the same identity group.

- **Be descriptive rather than prescriptive:** Use the adjective form of words (e.g., older adults) or nouns with descriptive phrases (e.g., individuals living in poverty) instead of labels (e.g., the elderly, the poor). Similarly, use “wheelchair user” or “person who uses a wheelchair” rather than “wheelchair-bound” which overlooks the wheelchair as an empowering medical tool.
- **Respect names:** How we refer to ourselves is an integral part of how we understand our own identities and can have meaningful connections to history, family, and culture. Respect the name that is offered, do not ask for or create nicknames, take time to practice and learn the pronunciation, include accents and diacritics where applicable, and avoid previous names if there has been a change.
- **Use group terminology:** When speaking to or about a large group, use gender-neutral language. This can also be helpful when a person’s pronouns are unknown. General terms like “folks,” “people,” or “guests” are excellent options.
- **Be aware of colonial history and the process of colonization:** This includes Treaty relationships and agreements with Métis communities, as well as how historical perceptions continue to impact Indigenous communities today. Avoid language that reinforces colonialism, such as using possessive phrases that imply ownership like “Canada’s Indigenous Peoples” or “our Indigenous Peoples”. “Indigenous Peoples in Canada” is a good alternative.

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