

DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

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Language is fluid and changes over time. Here, we present definitions for use as a springboard to launch meaningful conversations that result in changes that have lasting, positive impacts on firms and individuals.

Organizations need to discuss these definitions, see how they fit with their internal conversations, and gauge how their constituencies will respond. The presentation of this information should not supplant ongoing work, but rather support efforts to embed DEI into workplace culture and communication efforts. It also should not prevent organizations from staying updated on language usage and making necessary adjustments over time.

In analyzing the data, we found a broad range of definitions. To find patterns in how people articulated the terms, we looked for high frequency words that were common among respondents. These terms do not provide a clear conclusion that would bring us to universally accepted terms. Rather, it loudly sounded the alarm for more refinement in the terms and language surrounding DEI.

This is not an exhaustive list of diversity-related terms. These terms provide a foundation that allows people to explore other aspects of diversity from a common lens.

In the presentation of the terms themselves, there is no intent to present a hierarchy of sorts. Rather, they inform — and ideally are in conversation with — each other.



DIVERSITY-RELATED DEFINITIONS

- **Diversity** is the presence of differences that include demographics (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, language, education, socioeconomic status, religion, or political affiliation) and psychographics (e.g., thoughts/cognitions, values, attitudes, experiences, and personal background). Diversity is fluid and can encompass identities and the intersection of those identities, as well as differences in thoughts/cognitions, culture, experiences, neurodiversity, special needs, (dis)abilities, physical attributes, and other characteristics.
- **Equality** is providing equal access, resources, and opportunities, which includes providing the same rights, materials, and offerings to all.
- **Equity** is promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness, and includes providing proportionate access, resources, and opportunities based on people's individual needs and differences. Equity elevates equality by recognizing that people start from different places, acknowledging and correcting imbalances of power, both present and historical, for both individuals and groups to which they may belong. Equity is rooted within the procedures and processes, and how resources are distributed by institutions or systems.
- **Inclusion** is an outcome to ensure all individuals feel heard, welcomed, accepted, and respected in an organization. In an inclusive environment, individuals feel they have value, they contribute, they feel empowered, and they have a sense of belonging within that environment.
- **Social Justice** focuses on creating an equitable society with systemic equality in opportunity, rights, and justice. Inclusion, diversity, and lack of bias and discrimination, as well as equality and protection in laws and government are some of the elements of social justice.