

# WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

*Understanding terms & acronyms utilized by people to describe themselves, others and situations*

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## INTRODUCTION

"Preferred pronouns", "BIPOC", and "Cis-gendered" are all terms we hear on the news and in conversations. These and many other terms are utilized to help us develop more inclusive ways of talking about the people we meet and interact with. But, what do these terms and acronyms mean and why should we use them?

Cooperative Extension professionals interact with many different people and communities. Extension programming should be respectful and inclusive of all community members. In an effort to be inclusive, Extension professionals need to show regard for each person's individuality by utilizing appropriate words and terminology when referring to either individuals, groups or situations.

Words often have different meanings for different people. To promote dialogue around diversity, equity and inclusion, understanding common vocabulary can help Extension professionals and volunteers better relate to and show respect for community members participating in Extension programs. This publication is designed to foster better communication by providing definitions to some of the commonly used terms. These terms and acronyms are intended to help Extension professionals and volunteers be more inclusive and welcoming to all by choosing our words intentionally. These terms are meant as a starting place. For readers who would like to learn more, additional resources are listed at the end of the publication.

## TERMS & ACRONYMS

**Ableism (verb):** Prejudice and/or discrimination aimed toward disabled people. Intentional or unintentional attitude of superiority coming from non-disabled individuals towards disabled people as a way to minimize or discount difference.

**Ally (noun):** Someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of multiple identities such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.). An ally acknowledges oppression and actively commits to reducing their own complicity, investing in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

**A-Sexual (noun; adjective):** A person who has no romantic or sexual attraction to another person.

**Assigned Sex at Birth (noun):** The anatomical parts of a person present at birth that designate them as biologically male or female. An individual's assigned sex at birth may or may not coincide with their gender identity or personal anatomy. Please see "Gender Identity".

**Bigot (noun):** A person who is obstinately devoted to their own opinions and prejudices and is intolerant towards other diverse social groups.

**Bi-Sexual (noun; adjective):** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of one's own gender identity and to other gender identities. An attraction to more than one sex.

**BIPOC (*adjective*):** (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Acronym often used to denote a collective of individuals belonging to a group(s) that have been/are marginalized because of their skin color and/or racial or ethnic identity. I.e. anyone who doesn't "look" white.

**Cisgender (*noun; adjective*):** A person who identifies as the gender that is normally associated with their assigned sex at birth. Example: A person who is born with female anatomy and identifies as a girl/woman.

**Color Blind (*adjective*):** The belief that everyone is the same without respect to societal, economic, historical, racial, or other differences. No racial differences are seen or acknowledged.

**Disability (*noun*):** Physical or mental impairment that affects a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

**Discrimination (*noun*):** The unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favors one group over others on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, religion and other categories.

**Diversity (*noun*):** A wide range of identities, broadly including race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. Diversity can also apply to different ideas, perspectives and values.

**Ethnicity (*noun*):** A social construct grouping people who share a common culture.

**Equity (*noun*):** The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is necessary to provide equal opportunities to all groups.

**Gay (*noun; adjective*):** A term used to refer to any person who is romantically involved with or attracted to someone of the same gender identity or sex.

**Gender Expression (*noun*):** The way in which a person chooses to express their gender identity. This may be visible things such as attire and hairstyles or behaviors.

**Gender Fluid (*adjective*):** A person who does not have a set gender identity and often changes their appearance and/or behavior. Gender fluidity recognizes no gender rules and does not conform to "traditional" societal norms.

**Gender Identity (*noun*):** The way an individual thinks of themselves and asks others to refer to them regarding their personhood. For some people, their gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth and for others it may not. Please see, "Assigned Birth Sex"; "Gender Expression"; "Gender Fluid"; "Gender Non-Conforming"; "Preferred Pronouns"; and "Transgender" for additional terminology related to respectful gender identification.

**Gender Non-Conforming (*adjective*):** An individual whose outward expression of gender (ex. Clothing, hair style, behaviors) does not correspond with the societal norms associated with their perceived visible gender.

**Homophobia (*noun*):** A fear, discomfort, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

**Inclusive practices (*noun*):** A mindset and process of deliberately creating spaces that are welcoming and encourage individuals to share their unique perspectives and experiences.

This means being open to people based not only on their outward appearance, but also being inclusive of individuals with ideas, religious, and/or cultural beliefs that may not be mainstream or familiar to you as the community organizer.

**Intersectionality (noun):** Acknowledgment of how multiple forms of discrimination (racism, sexism, classism, etc) intersect and overlap to generate unique experiences of oppression. To understand that all oppression is linked.

**Intersex (noun, adjective):** A variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that is outside the medical system's binary classification of 'female' or 'male'.

**Lesbian (noun, adjective):** An individual who identifies as a woman or female who is romantically involved with others who identify as woman or female.

**LGBTQIA+ (noun, adjective):** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, A-Sexual, Plus) Acronym often used to denote a broad category of individuals who have romantic relationships with others of the same sex and/or identify as a gender that differs from their assigned sex at birth and others.

**Marginalized Group (adjective):** People who have been or are still being discriminated against due to various factors that put them outside the conventional culture. Examples of marginalized groups include people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, people who appear not white (BIPOC), people who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth, people who identify as LGBTQIA+ .

**Microaggressions (noun):** Brief and subtle behaviors, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm through the invalidation of the target person's identity and may reinforce stereotypes. Examples of microaggressions include a person who is not white (BIPOC) being told they speak "good English" or someone saying something is "gay" to mean they think something is bad.

**Misogyny (noun):** A hatred, prejudice, or conscious/unconscious discrimination against women.

**Preferred Pronouns (noun):** The pronouns (he/she, his/her, they/them, etc) that someone uses when referring to themselves or when others refer to them. This may or may not be the pronoun most commonly associated with a person's appearance.

**Prejudice (noun):** An attitude or opinion (usually negative) regarding an entire category of people.

**Privilege (unearned privilege) (noun):** The set of social, cultural, and/or economic advantages held by individuals who are not marginalized because of their membership in a specific social group. This also relates to a sense of entitlement by the dominant social, cultural, religious and/or ethnic group. Privilege implies that wherever there is a system of oppression there is not only an oppressed group but also a privileged group, who thus benefit from the oppressions that this system puts in place.

**Queer (adjective, noun):** An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who is not heterosexual or cisgender that transgresses society's view of gender or sexuality.

**Race (noun):** A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly race), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time.

**Racism (noun):** A set of beliefs that establishes a social, moral and intellectual hierarchy based on the idea that a person's skin color and/or visible physical features determines their place in a hierarchy. The systemic oppression of a racial group based on the belief of their inferiority.

**Racist (adjective):** A person who thinks and/or acts in a way that shows their beliefs in the superiority of one person over another based on skin color and/or visible physical features. Someone who believes that race determines human traits and capacities and that these different characteristics make one specific race inherently superior.

**Sexual Orientation (noun):** An individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.

**Stereotype (verb, noun):** A preconceived notion and/or widely held but fixed and oversimplified view of a particular person or cultural group. Many stereotypes are rooted in prejudice.

**Systemic Racism (noun):** Social and/or formal rule(s) that provide unequal outcomes based on someone's perceived race.

**Transgender (adjective):** A person who identifies as a gender that is different from the gender usually associated with their assigned sex at birth. Example: A person who is born assigned female at birth but identifies as a man.

**Unconscious Bias or Implicit Bias (noun):** Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which can be both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. These include, but are not limited to, associations between people/groups and social traits.

## ADDITIONAL EXTENSION RESOURCES

University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Office of Diversity  
<https://diversity.ca.uky.edu/extension>

University of Kentucky, Office of LGBTQ\* Resources  
<https://www.uky.edu/lgbtq/>

Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS)  
<https://www.manrrs.org/>

University of Kentucky, Office of Institutional Diversity  
<https://oid.uky.edu/>

University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute  
<https://hdi.uky.edu/>

University of Kentucky Libraries, Anti-Racism Readings  
<https://jhorne.createuky.net/antiracism/>

University of Kentucky, Martin Luther King Center  
<https://www.uky.edu/mlkc/home>

Kentucky Department of Education: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging  
<https://education.ky.gov/DvEqIn/Pages/default.aspx>

Explore Kentucky, DEI Resources  
<https://www.explorekentucky.us/dei-resources>

Kentucky State University; Office of Diversity of Inclusion  
<https://www.kysu.edu/student-engagement-and-campus-life/diversity-and-inclusion/index.php>

Kentucky Chamber; The Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
<https://www.kychamber.com/DEICenter>

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- St. Cloud Technical & Community College. Office of Cultural Fluency, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary of Terms. <https://sctcc.edu/office-cultural-fluency-equity-and-inclusion-glossary-terms>
- The Catholic University of America. Being an Ally. <https://cultural.catholic.edu/resources/baa.html>
- University of Washington College of the Environment. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Glossary. <https://environment.uw.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/tools-and-additional-resources/glossary-dei-concepts/>
- The Anti-Violence Project. Glossary. "Microaggressions." <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#microaggressions>
- The Anti-Violence Project. Glossary. "Privilege." <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#privilege>
- Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Vanderbilt Nurse Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. DEI Glossary. <https://www.vumc.org/vndei/dei-glossary>



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## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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