

HEALTH EQUITY RESOURCES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Equity is the absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically or by other means of stratification. **Health equity** or “equity in health” implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential. (*World Health Organization*)¹

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care. (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*)²

What’s the difference between health inequities and health disparities or inequalities?

Inequities are created when barriers prevent individuals and communities from accessing these conditions and reaching their full potential. Inequities differ from **health disparities**, which are differences in health status between people related to social or demographic factors such as race, gender, income or geographic region. Health disparities are one way we can measure our progress toward achieving health equity. (*American Public Health Association*)³

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.⁴

Implicit bias: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (*Kirwan Institute*).⁵

Racism: Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.⁶ Racism can operate on multiple levels:

- **Structural/systemic racism:** The ways in which the joint operation of institutions (i.e., inter-institutional arrangements and interactions) produce racialized outcomes, even in the absence of racist intent.⁷
- **Institutional racism:** Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race.⁸

¹ https://www.who.int/topics/health_equity/en/

² <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

³ <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity>

⁴ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/discrimination>

⁵ <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>

⁶ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/racism>

⁷ <https://www.intergroupresources.com/race-and-racism/>

⁸ Jones CP. Levels of racism: a theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *Am J Public Health.* 2000 ;90(8):1212-5.

- **Internalized racism:** acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth.⁸
- **Interpersonal/racism:** An individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviors and is "a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice" ([Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 329](#)) that occurs *between individuals*.⁷

RECOMMENDED READING ON HEALTH EQUITY, RACE, AND RACISM

GENERAL READING

Books

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. Text publishing, 2015.

Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Random House, 2017.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to be an Antiracist*. One World/Ballantine, 2019.

Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Liveright Publishing, 2017.

Websites

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion \(NCCDPHP\), Health Equity](#): Based at the nation's premiere public health agency, the NCCDPHP works to reduce the risk factors for chronic diseases, especially for groups affected by health disparities.

[Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#): Based at The Ohio State University, this interdisciplinary research institute works to deepen understanding of the causes of—and solutions to—racial and ethnic disparities.

[Prevention Institute, Health Equity](#). The Prevention Institute is a non-profit organized, based in Oakland, California and dedicated to improving community health and well-being.

[Race Forward](#): Race Forward—which provides information on research, media outreach, and practice—is home to the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#), a national network of local government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

[Racial Equity Tools](#): A compilation of tools, research, tips, curricula and ideas to help people increase their understanding and to work toward solutions, sponsored by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, MP Associates, and World Trust Educational Services.

[Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Achieving Health Equity](#): The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds a wide array of programs which are working to help build a national Culture of Health.

Professional publications

Health equity

Braveman P. What are health disparities and health equity? We need to be clear. *Public Health Rep.* 2014;129 Suppl 2:5-8.

Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, and Plough A. [*What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?*](#) Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017.

Racism

Jones CP. Levels of racism: a theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *Am J Public Health.* 2000;90(8):1212-5.

Williams DR, Lawrence JA, Davis BA. Racism and health: evidence and needed research. *Annu Rev Public Health.* 2019;40:105-125.

Policy solutions

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. [*Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity.*](#) National Academies Press, 2017.

Smedley BD. Multilevel interventions to undo the health consequences of racism: The need for comprehensive approaches. *Cultur Divers Ethnic Minor Psychol.* 2019;25(1):123-125.

Economic benefits of improving equity

AcS G, Pendall R, Treskon M, Khare A. [*The Cost of Segregation. National Trends and the Case of Chicago, 1990–2010.*](#) Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2017.

LaVeist TA, Gaskin DJ, Richard P. [*The Economic Burden of Health Inequalities in the United States.*](#) Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2009.

Noel N, Pinder D, Stewart III S, Jason Wright J. [*The Economic Impact of Closing the Racial Wealth Gap.*](#) McKinsey and Company, 2019.

Standard and Poor's Rating Services: [*How Increasing Income Inequality Is Dampening U.S. Economic Growth, And Possible Ways To Change The Tide.*](#)