



Glossary: Health Equity

For decades, researchers have observed pervasive health differences among racial and ethnic minority populations including lower quality of care and poorer outcomes. Progress on addressing the healthcare needs of underserved and vulnerable populations will be facilitated by a common understanding of key terms. For example, while these populations overlap, they are not the same. All individuals have the potential to be categorized as a “vulnerable” during their lives, though racial and ethnic minorities are consistently over represented in disadvantaged socioeconomic and environmental populations. This mini-glossary lists terms you may encounter on to the path to health equity.

Term	Definition
Cultural Competency	The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, helps to ensure the needs of all community members are addressed.
Cultural Humility	The ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is open and other oriented in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the other person.
Health Disparity	Preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations. Populations can be defined by factors such as race or ethnicity, gender, education or income, disability, geographic location or sexual orientation.
Health Equity	Attainment of the highest level of health for all people; requires valuing everyone equally, with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and healthcare disparities.
Health Equity Impact Assessment	The assessment of the potential differential impacts on health, where those differences would be considered to be avoidable and unfair.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
Marginalized Population	Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.
Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)	The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.
Social Exclusion	The relational processes that lead to the exclusion of particular groups of people from engaging fully in community and social life.

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Social Inclusion	The process of improving the conditions on which individuals and groups take part in society.
Structural Racism	A system in which law and policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other societal norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.
Targeted Universalism	Targeted universalism alters the usual approach of universal strategies (policies that make no distinctions among citizens' status to achieve universal goals and instead suggests we use targeted strategies to reach universal goals.
Underserved Population	Populations that have limited access to primary healthcare services.
Vulnerable Population	Individuals and/or their communities at greater risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to economic, social, environmental, and political resources, as well as limitations due to disability or illness.