

Equity terms and definitions

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Operationalizing equity

Centering

The act of placing something at the center. When we “center” equity we make it the focus of our work, the value from which other activities or processes are directed.

DEI

An acronym standing for “diversity, equity, inclusion.” Each term has a variety of definitions and their uses are evolving. “Diversity” refers to difference and variety, which may include a variety of identities, ideas, values, perspectives. “Equity” refers to fairness and justice and recognizes that a condition of inequity today is the result of a history of inequity. A state of equity may be defined as one in which the distribution of benefits and burdens in a society cannot be predicted based on one’s identity or geography. “Inclusion” refers to an environment in which all will feel welcomed and valued.

Distributional equity

Equity in the distribution of benefits and burdens. These can be broadly interpreted to include: goods, services, opportunities, costs, and harms. An assessment of distributional equity compares how a benefit or burden (for example, participation in an energy efficiency program or poor air quality resulting from proximity to a freeway) is allocated to different groups or individuals in a population.

Procedural equity

Equity in the act of decision-making, including designing and implementing policies and programs. Attaining procedural equity means creating the conditions such that all groups in a population are represented among decision-makers and can provide input to the decision-making process.

An equitable end state

Energy democracy

A condition in which all the members of an energy system have a voice in decision making for that system. Predominantly used by advocates, activists, and organizers.

Energy equity

Equity in all aspects of the energy system, including its benefits, burdens, costs, and participation. Functionally equivalent to *energy justice*.

Energy justice

Defined by scholars as “a global system that fairly disseminates both the benefits and costs of energy services, and one that has representative and impartial energy decision-making.”

Primarily used by legal scholars and other academic researchers. Functionally equivalent to *energy equity*.

Just transition

A transition from a fossil-fuel based economy to a clean energy economy that protects and respects the needs of fossil-fuel workers and in which investment in a new energy system is leveraged to address historic inequities.

The experience of energy inequity

Energy burden

The proportion of household income spent on energy, calculated as energy spending divided by total household income. Energy spending may or may not include the costs of transportation.

Energy insecurity

The inability to meet basic energy needs and the hardship experienced in trying to meet basic energy needs.

Energy poverty

A lack of access to energy.

Groups experiencing energy inequity

BIPOC

An acronym meaning “black,” “indigenous,” “people of color” and pronounced “by-pock.”

Environmental justice community

Communities that are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards, including poor air and water quality. Many, if not most, environmental justice communities include a large proportion of households that are lower income and people of color.

Fenceline community

Communities residing adjacent to environmental hazards.

Frontline community

Communities experiencing the first and worst impacts of climate change, widely understood as comprising those with lower incomes and people of color.