

DEI in Testing Glossary

This document is a reference to help ATP Members understand terms related to DEI within the learning and assessment ecosystem (processes and technology supporting assessment and learning).

Access - The elimination of discrimination and other barriers that contribute to inequitable opportunities to join and be a part of a work group, organization, or community (APA, 2021b)

Accessibility – Within testing, the degree to which a test can be accessed, understood, and used by as many people as possible.

Accommodation - changes to the regular testing environment and auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams or other high-stakes tests. Exams administered by any private, state, or local government entity related to applications, licensing, certification, or credentialing for secondary or postsecondary education, professional, or trade purposes are covered by the ADA and testing accommodations, pursuant to the ADA, must be provided ([ADA Requirements: Testing Accommodations](#)).

Adverse or Disparate Impact - Group differences in test performance that result in disproportionately negative effect on a protected group, even though the impact may be unintentional (adapted from SHRM [Disparate Impact \(shrm.org\)](#)). The negative effect includes different group proportions of candidates identified for selection or placement. In studies of test fairness, the term impact is used to describe the observed difference between the average scores for two groups on a particular test or test item.

Asset Framing - Defining people or groups by their aspirations and contributions before acknowledging their challenges and investing in them for their continued benefit to society ([The Power of Perception - Change Agent \(comnetwork.org\)](#))

Bias – Partiality or an inclination or predisposition for or against something ([bias – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)). Biases may be unreasonably negative feelings, preferences, or opinions about a social group, grounded in stereotypes and prejudices.

Test Bias - the tendency of scores on a test to systematically over- or underestimate the true performance of individuals to whom that test is administered, particularly because they are members of specific groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, male or female gender) ([test bias – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)). If the test is used for selection, members of a subgroup may be rejected when they were capable of adequate performance.

Differential Item Functioning (DIF) - the circumstance in which two individuals of similar ability do not have the same probability of answering a question in a particular way. This often is examined to assess whether men and women or individuals of different ethnicity are likely to provide disparate answers on a test. If so, the fairness of the test can be called into question ([differential item functioning – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)). The DIF may be related to group differences in knowledge of or experience with some other topic beside the one of interest.

Disability – Any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system). [ADA Requirements: Testing Accommodations](#)

Discrimination - The unjust and differential treatment of the members of different age, gender, racial, ethnic, religious, national, ability, identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, and other groups at the individual level (e.g., behavioral manifestation of prejudice involving negative, hostile, and injurious treatment of the members of targeted groups; [\(apa.org\)](#).

Diversity - Involving the representation or composition of various social identity groups in a work group, organization, or community. The focus is on social identities that correspond to societal differences in power and privilege, and thus to the marginalization of some groups based on specific attributes—for example, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, spirituality, disability, age, national origin, immigration status, and language. There is a recognition that people have multiple identities and that social identities are intersectional and have different salience and impact in different contexts [\(apa.org\)](#).

Equity - Providing resources according to the need to help diverse populations achieve their highest state of health and other functioning. Equity is an ongoing process of assessing needs, correcting historical inequities, and creating conditions for optimal outcomes by members of all social identity groups but with special attention to the needs of historically underrepresented and underserved groups [\(apa.org\)](#)

Fairness - In psychological testing means providing equal opportunity for all the test-takers to demonstrate their true performance on the measured construct. Fairness offers comparable validity across groups within the population of interest. Fairness in testing is closely related to test validity, and the evaluation of fairness requires a broad range of evidence that includes empirical data, but may also involve legal, ethical, political, philosophical, and economic reasoning.

Historically Underrepresented Groups - groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States and, according to the Census and other federal measuring tools, includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans.

This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs, and housing, resulting in marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved. ([Common Terms | Emory University | Atlanta GA](#))

Inclusion - An environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to bring in their whole selves (and all their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity [\(apa.org\)](#). Policies and practices that create an inclusive environment are important for inclusion.

Privilege - Unearned power that is afforded to some but not others based on status rather than earned merit; such power may come in the form of rights, benefits, social comfort, opportunities, or the ability to define what is normative or valued (Bailey, 1998; Johnson, 2018; McIntosh, 1989). Privilege arises in relation to systems of oppression. A person has privilege not because they desire to have privilege or promote inequity but because they exist within a society where biased values, attitudes, behaviors, institutions, and systems have become integrated and normalized [\(apa.org\)](#).

Protected Groups - A category by which people qualified for special protection by a law, policy, or similar authority. Applicants, employees and former employees are protected from employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age (40 or older), disability and genetic information (including family medical history). ([eeoc.gov](#))

Underserved Communities – refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. This includes Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. ([Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government | The White House](#))