



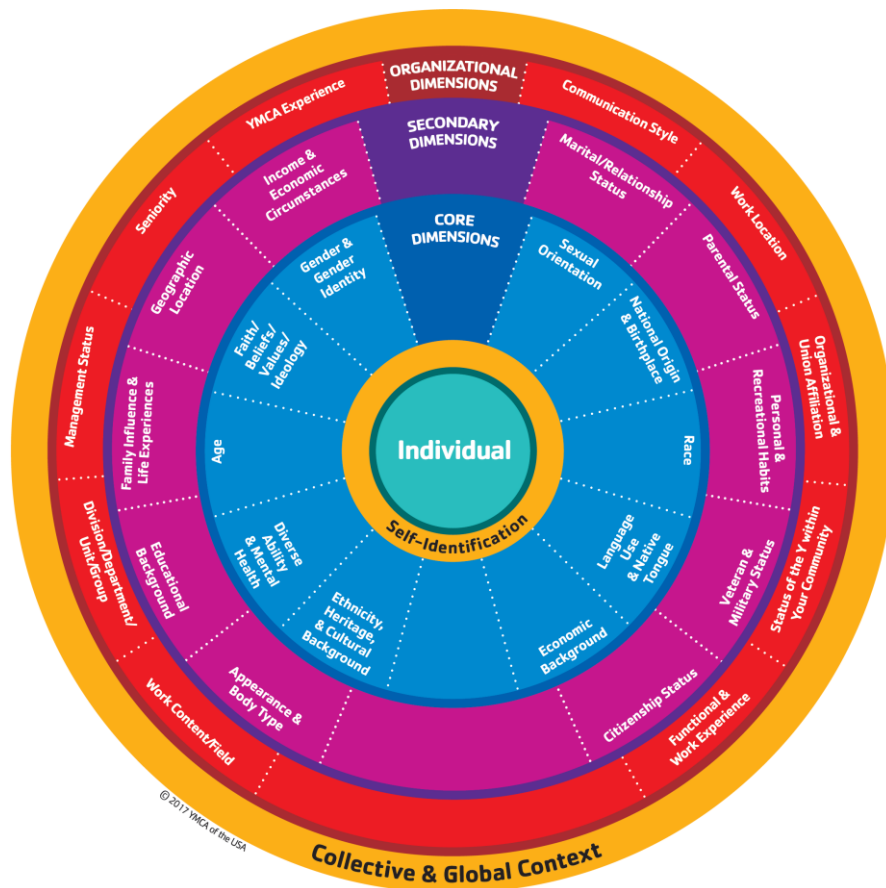
FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DIVING IN TO DIVERSITY

A Glossary of Dimensions to Accompany the Dimensions of Diversity Wheel

At the Y, we believe that in a diverse world, we are stronger when we are inclusive and our doors are open to all. Our Movement is made up of people from all backgrounds who are joined together by a shared commitment to our cause of strengthening community and helping all people reach their fullest potential with dignity.

The **Dimensions of Diversity Wheel** is an evolving framework that illustrates some of the key dimensions of diversity and the importance of understanding the intersectionality across multiple dimensions that informs an individual's identity and experiences.



Learn about the different dimensions of the Diversity Wheel on the following pages.

CORE DIMENSIONS

Core dimensions are central to our personal experience, have sustained and often direct influence in our lives, and are frequently the dimensions that we most closely identify with. Many of these dimensions are harder to willfully change – reflecting “how we were born” or “what we were born into.” Though some may naturally evolve and change over the course of our lives, the way we understand these dimensions was often shaped in childhood with lasting effects on our perceptions of our identity today.

AGE

An expression of an individual commonly measured in whole years since birth. Many societies commonly create arbitrary divisions to mark periods of life; for example, legal systems may define specific ages for when an individual is allowed (or obliged) to do certain activities.ⁱ

DIVERSE ABILITY & MENTAL HEALTH

Diverse ability refers to the wide range and spectrum of ability, whether physical, emotional, or mental that an individual identifies with. This can include one’s status as having a disability under the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mental health is a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community.ⁱⁱ Mental disorders often fall under the ADA, but because they are often not clearly visible, mental health is specifically called out in this dimension.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The circumstances and events that shape the economic situation of an individual during their upbringing from birth to adulthood, sometimes referred to in relation to Socio-Economic Status (SES). An example could be an individual who resided in a wealthy suburban area with access to good schools, but whose household had limited economic resources. Regardless of an individual’s current income, one’s economic background and experiences shape how they view money, wealth, and class over the course of their lifetime.

ETHNICITY, HERITAGE & CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The characteristics of a group of people that share a common and distinctive national, religious, linguistic, and/or cultural heritage. In common usage, there may be some degree of fluidity between these terms. Distinct from race, ethnicity includes various cultural norms, one’s country/ies of origin or heritage, among other factors, while race is primarily (but not exclusively) dictated by appearance and other external factors. In the context of the U.S. Census, ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not.

FAITHS/BELIEFS/VALUES/IDEOLOGY

One’s experiences, attitudes, and practices related to how they view the world and their existence in it. Some individuals may identify most strongly with values such as caring, honesty, respect, or responsibility. Some may ascribe to a particular faith or religion such as Christianity or Hinduism or identify as having no faith/religion. And for some, this dimension may speak to their involvement or affiliation with a political group or ideology, or the absence of such affiliation.ⁱⁱⁱ

GENDER & GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity is an internal – therefore not visible to others – perception and definition of an individual’s gender, based on how they align with the gender spectrum (i.e., the many ways people can identify with various aspects of historical and traditional gender expectations).^{iv} Gender, or gender expression, is the external display of one’s gender through a combination of dress, demeanor, social/cultural behavior, and other factors which are generally (though not absolutely) placed on binary scales of masculinity and femininity. While these terms can be used interchangeably, a more inclusive approach is to use both terms.

LANGUAGE USE & NATIVE TONGUE

Refers to the language(s) used by an individual, including their unique changes dependent on varying situations as well as dialect, intonation, phraseology, and accent. Native tongue is the predominant language of an individual also known as a first language – in some countries, “native language/tongue” refers to the language of one’s ethnic group.^v Language use can also include code-switching, a term used to describe the practice of moving among variations of languages, dialects, or vernacular to suit different contexts.^{vi vii}

NATIONAL ORIGIN & BIRTHPLACE

Place of birth or origin, generally determined by geographic location (including country) at time of birth. This may also be used to describe the location of an individual's upbringing.

RACE

A specious classification of human beings created by Europeans in the United States to link socio-political status and physical traits together and create a new form of social identity that allowed for the further enslavement (indentured and permanent) of people (e.g. Africans, Irish, Native). The construct of race was backed by false science but became the norm of classification of humans in the United States and was later exported throughout the world in forms that vary from place to place.^{viii}

Distinct from ethnicity, race has more to do with common location and appearance (among many other visual/observable factors, like clothing, accent, etc.), while ethnicity has to do more with national origin, heritage, and cultural norms and practices. For example: someone could be born ethnically Jewish* (e.g. if your mother is Jewish, you would be considered to be born Jewish) – but could be any race – white, black, native, etc.

*Note: Judaism is also a religion and individuals who identify as Jewish may also have a strong faith—however, as noted on the Dimensions of Diversity wheel, faith/beliefs/values/ideology is a separate dimension of diversity.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One's innate sexual attraction towards others – whether of the same or different sex(es); the desire for intimate, emotional, spiritual, physical, and/or psychological attraction that one feels towards someone of the same, opposite, both, or multiple genders/sexes.^{iv}

SECONDARY DIMENSIONS

Secondary dimensions often have a greater degree of control, choice, or self-determination to change by the individual, though societal and structural barriers/inequities may hinder their ability to do so. These dimensions often change over time and can inform our daily experiences. Our core dimensions interact closely with our secondary dimensions. For example, one's gender (a core dimension) can impact their income (a secondary dimension).

APPEARANCE & BODY TYPE

Appearance is the visual, external show, outward aspect or look of an individual.^{ix} Many different factors influence appearance, such as clothing/accessories, lighting, and environment. Body type refers to the general shape or figure of an individual which is determined by skeletal structure and the biological distribution of muscles and fat.^x Some elements of appearance are based on personal choice. Body type may inform the types of personal choices that an individual may (or may not be able to) make about their appearance.

*Note: In many contexts, body type is not necessarily changeable and therefore, in some contexts, this may be considered as an additional core dimension.

CITIZENSHIP STATUS

An individual's status in relation to being a citizen (in the country of reference) of a country. In the United States, some of these statuses include: Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR), Nonimmigrant, U.S. National green card holder.^{xi}

*Note: There may be multiple factors influencing one's ability to change citizenship status related to core dimensions such as race, and ethnicity, heritage, and cultural background; so in some contexts, this may be considered as an additional core dimension.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Any experience in education that an individual acknowledges, whether formal (such as institutions) or informal (such as homeschooling and other forms of life experience). It could refer to various stages of schooling, such as high school/secondary school, college, graduate school, etc. Education refers to the acquisition of knowledge, values, beliefs, habits, and skills. Methods of education include means such as discussion, training, teaching, and observation.^{xii}

FAMILY INFLUENCE & LIFE EXPERIENCES

One's combined individual and collective events and cumulative experiences that can include trauma, loss of a loved one, marriage, divorce, adoption or birth of children, relocation for work or family, etc. While core dimensions largely speak to our experiences in childhood and upbringing, this dimension speaks to our current engagement with family, other people in our lives, and events that have taken place in adulthood.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Current place of residence. This can refer to the type of locale or region (such as rural, urban, or suburban). This can also speak to the name of a city, area of a city, county, state, or country.

INCOME AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

A combined measure of work experience and an individual's current economic and social position in relation to others based on income, education, and occupation.^{xiii} One's current income and economic situation are different from economic background, which was established in childhood.

MARITAL/RELATIONSHIP STATUS

A broad term that can describe a wide range of options that define an individual's relationship with a significant other(s). Also called civil status, this can be legally recognized (or not) for the purposes of official forms, documents, and taxes.

PARENTAL STATUS

One's status as a caregiver (past or present) for someone to whom they are in some way related; this can include legal guardians and parents who are biological, surrogate, adoptive, shared, grand-, or stepparents.

PERSONAL & RECREATIONAL HABITS

The activities, hobbies, and events (singularly or on an ongoing basis) that a person engages in in daily life or for recreation. These habits can be related to maintaining one's spiritual, mental, or emotional well-being (such as prayer or meditation), one's appearance (such as exercise), or another aspect of life.

VETERAN & ACTIVE MILITARY STATUS

Current or past involvement in any of the five U.S. armed services branches (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard). This may also refer to family members of current and past enlisted soldiers, sailors, and airmen.^{xiv}

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS

These dimensions contribute to how we experience our time with the Y from an organizational and professional lens. They help to shape how we approach our work and how we connect with others across the Y Movement and across other organizations and institutions.

COMMUNICATION STYLE

The skills and manner in which an individual imparts or exchanges information to others. This can include both verbal and non-verbal as well as written and other forms of communication, specifically in a work context. Commonly defined or described in terms of aggressiveness, passivity, assertiveness, or any combination of the three.^{xv}

DIVISION/DEPARTMENT/UNIT/GROUP

The specific gathering of people that includes your immediate colleagues as well as coworkers involved in projects and plans. Often determined by the respective organization, this is a grouping of individuals who are specialized to complete work that falls under the division/department/unit/group name.

FUNCTIONAL & WORK EXPERIENCE

Experience (both formal and informal) in specific fields of work either professionally or voluntarily.

MANAGEMENT STATUS

The title and type of leadership involved in direct and indirect supervision of an individual's work.

ORGANIZATIONAL & UNION AFFILIATION

The organizations and institutions that factor into personal experiences, professional development, and how individuals function at work. An example could be one's house of worship, one's YMCA membership, or one's union participation. In the case of some organizations, this dimension may tie into the core dimensions of Faith/Beliefs/Views/Ideology (e.g., one may identify as Christian, and their organizational affiliation would be their church).

SENIORITY

The length of service for an employee, whether in a single position or spanning multiple roles. Often related closely to experience, status in the workplace, and promotion. Seniority functions differently for every organization.^{xvi}

STATUS OF THE Y WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

How the YMCA functions and is seen or recognized in an individual's specific community, including how facilities and spaces are used, programming and engagement, and how social responsibility and equity are elevated in the community. This can also refer to how a specific YMCA branch or service area may be understood in relationship to another.

WORK CONTENT/FIELD

Skills, experience, education, personality, and products that define a specific work type or discipline.

WORK LOCATION

The geographic or general location in which an individual works (e.g. on-site, off-site/remote, branch location or association/metro office, etc.). This influences an individual's needs regarding transportation, physical activity, and the people in the communities they serve.

YMCA EXPERIENCE

The relevant experiences, education, training, and overall time spent as part of the YMCA Movement. This often can determine one's engagement and understanding within their role at their YMCA.

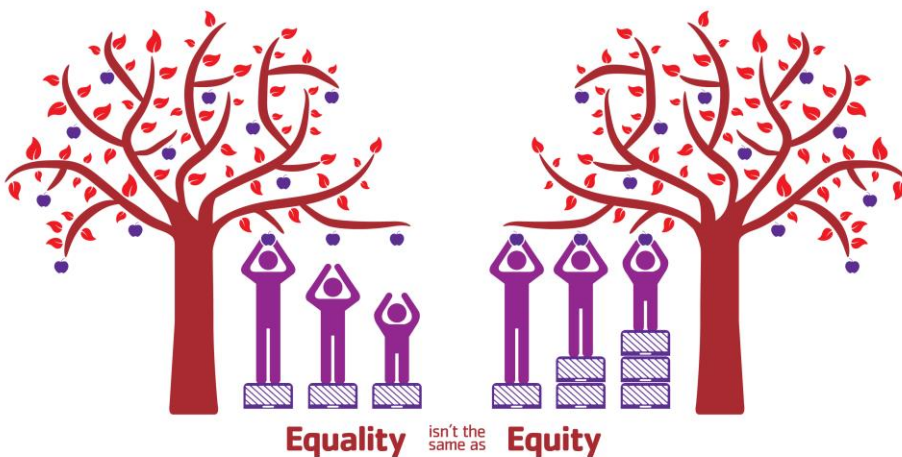
ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

DIVERSITY

The presence of differences that make each individual unique and that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another.

EQUITY

Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all, where individuals are not at a disadvantage from achieving their potential because of their background or social position. Equity requires intentionality around identifying and eliminating the institutional, systemic, and societal barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups (based on certain characteristics including ability, age, economic background, ethnicity, faith, gender, national origin, race, or sexual orientation), and developing the solutions and support systems that are relevant to social structures, trends, and emerging opportunities.



Equality: This approach means everyone is treated the same.

Equity: This approach recognizes unique disparities and provides relevant support systems for overcoming barriers.

INTERSECTIONALITY

An approach arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive.^{xvii}

PRIVILEGE

An unearned advantage or benefit enjoyed by members of a group, a phenomenon derived through a history of oppression of other groups. Privilege is best understood as the systematic advantage that is conferred to one group at the expense of another. Terms such as white privilege, male privilege, and heterosexual privilege make explicit the relationship between privilege and the group for whom it is intended to function.

UNDERSERVED

Having little or no access to benefit from programs, support, services, opportunities, resources, etc. that meet needs, wants, and/or interests. Underserved populations are ones that are disadvantaged in relation to other groups because of structural/societal obstacles and disparities.

For more information, visit the [DIG community](#) on Link or call (800) 872-9622.

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