

The Differences Between Equity And Equality – Things to Know



Equality means giving everyone the same resources and opportunities. Equity takes social injustice into account. This helps us understand that individuals and communities have different needs based on lived experiences of oppression and/or privilege. Different needs call for different types or amounts of resources (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence [NRC DV] & National Sexual Violence Resource Center [NSVRC], 2021).

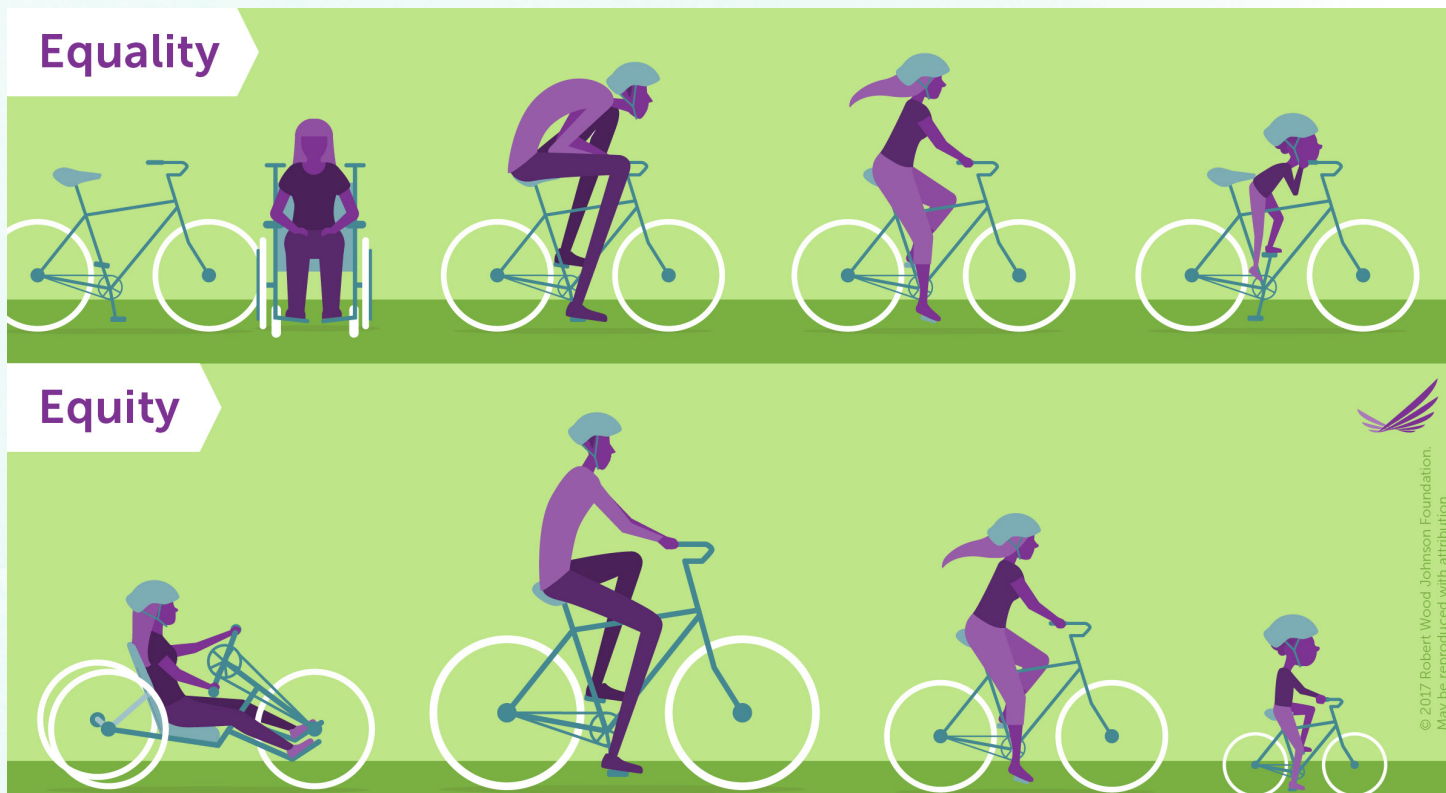
“Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color”

- (Race Forward, n.d.).

It is important to know the difference between these terms, equity and equality, and how they relate to each other because sometimes a solution for one person may not help someone else.

To illustrate this point, imagine if you wanted to increase bike riding in your community, so you gave every person a 10-speed bike. For some people, this is all they would need in order to go on a bike ride. But if we think about this through a lens of racial equity, we will understand that we would need to eliminate racial disparities so that everyone is able to go on a bike ride. Why would this be?

Some communities have a history of racial injustice and are not safe places to ride bikes, because of poor road and traffic conditions or lack of ability to gather safely outside. Racial equity would mean changing the infrastructure of the community so that bike riding is safe both physically and socially.



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There are also stereotypes about bike riding being seen as a fun or athletic activity that is reserved for white people, which can be seen in media and sports. This means people of color may face unfair and racist scrutiny when riding a bike. Incorporating racial equity would mean making sure that everyone has enough leisure time and opportunity to go on bike rides. This could mean having widespread access to well-paying jobs and shorter commutes to work. Incorporating racial equity would also mean changing social perspectives so that riding a bike is seen as something fun for everyone to do.

The example of bike riding is a way to illustrate the importance of incorporating racial equity. So what would racial equity look like in sexual violence prevention?

In our work to prevent sexual violence, we can expand our vision from individual needs to community needs and incorporate racial equity in order to make widespread change that works for more people. One possibility for this could look at changing policies and practices, like updating a school dress code and training teachers and staff so they can eliminate bias and fairly enforce these rules. Studies have shown that many school dress codes perpetuate racial and sexual stereotypes (Sherwin et al., n.d.). They also show that many adults perceive Black children to be older than they are, which is called adultification bias (Georgetown Law, 2019). This bias leads to more scrutiny of Black girls (Gandhi, 2021) and can lead to unfair punishment like being sent out of class and even discipline by police (National Women's Law Center, 2018). If we did not incorporate racial equity into the work of updating student dress codes, we could miss the ways that dress codes can be racist and lead to unfair punishment. Doing this work to change dress code policy and enforcement can reduce risk factors for sexual violence, like weak educational and social policies and harmful social norms (NSVRC, 2022).

Whenever we are working with a community, we can make our prevention into something that benefits everyone by incorporating racial equity. This way, the solutions we are creating will help as many people as possible.

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