

Key Terms for Understanding Climate Equity

Displacement: Displacement can result from gentrification when neighborhoods become financially out of reach for people living there. It can also occur through cycles of disinvestment, increasing vacancies, and demographic turnover. Displacement manifests itself physically (i.e., evictions or service disruption) and economically (i.e., very high and/or frequent rent increases and sharp increases in housing costs relative to comparable neighborhoods).¹

Distributional Equity: Is achieved when programs and policies result in fair distributions of resources and benefits across all segments of a community as well as the fair distribution of the burdens and costs.²

Equity: Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.³ To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept, the antidote to structural racism and social and economic disparities.⁴

Frontline Communities: Frontline communities are those that experience continuing injustice—including people of color, immigrants, people with lower incomes, those in rural areas, and Indigenous people—due to a legacy of systemic, largely racialized, inequity that influences their living and working places, the quality of their air and water, and their economic opportunities.⁵

Gentrification: A process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood —by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in—as well as demographic change, in terms of race, income, and or education level.⁶

Inclusion: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power, leadership, and offers a true sense of belonging.⁷

Just Recovery: Disaster recovery that does not displace communities or widen health and wealth disparities, but instead contributes to the positive restoration and transformation of historically marginalized communities and results in equitable outcomes from recovery efforts. This is an emerging body of work based on the just transition framework developed by environmental justice and labor union movements.⁸

Institutional Racism: Institutional racism occurs within and between institutions. Institutional racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions (schools, mass media, etc.). Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they act in ways that advantage and disadvantage people, based on race.⁹

¹ [Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook](#), The Greenlining Institute, 2019

² [Equity in Sustainability: An Equity Scan of Local Government Sustainability Programs](#), USDN, 2016.

³ [The Equity Manifesto](#), Policy Link.

⁴ [Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#), TheAnnie E. Casey Foundation, 2014.

⁵ [Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook](#), The Greenlining Institute, 2019

⁶ [Gentrification Explained](#), Urban Displacement Project, UCLA, ongoing.

⁷ [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), Racial Equity Tools.

⁸ [Coastal Justice: Climate Change and Social Resilience in Florida](#), Levin College of Law, UF, 2018.

⁹ [Structural Racism](#), Race and Public Policy Conference, 2004.



Intersectionality: An approach which posits 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.¹⁰

Procedural Equity: Inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in processes to develop or implement sustainability programs and policies.¹¹

Racial Equity: Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.¹²

Redlining: The practice of denying mortgage loans or other types of investment to individuals or communities based on their racial and ethnic composition. Banks and other institutions—often following government mandates—refused to offer mortgages or offered worse rates to customers in communities of color, one of the clearest examples of institutionalized racism in the history of the United States. Although the practice was formally outlawed in 1968 with the passage of the Fair Housing Act, it continues in various forms to this day.¹³

Social Cohesion: A cohesive society works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility. Social cohesion is a vital tool for low-income communities because they typically experience unique housing, economic, and health disadvantages even before extreme weather strikes.¹⁴

Social Vulnerability: Social vulnerability refers to the inability of people, organizations, and societies to withstand adverse impacts from multiple stressors to which they are exposed, including but not limited to wealth/income, lack of or limited access to resources, knowledge, and vulnerable residential settings. These impacts are due in part to characteristics inherent in social interactions, institutions, and systems of cultural values.¹⁵

Structural Racism: The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.¹⁶

Structural Equity: Decision-makers institutionalize accountability; decisions are made with a recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups in society and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for subordinated groups.¹⁷

¹⁰ [Equity Assessment Tool 2nd Pilot Completion](#), City of Austin, 2019.

¹¹ [Equity in Sustainability: An Equity Scan of Local Government Sustainability Programs](#), USDN, 2016.

¹² [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), Racial Equity Tools.

¹³ [Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook](#), The Greenlining Institute, 2019

¹⁴ [Social Cohesion The Secret Weapon in the Fight for Equitable Climate Resilience](#), Center for American Progress, 2015.

¹⁵ [Coastal Justice: Climate Change and Social Resilience in Florida](#), Levin College of Law, UF, 2018.

¹⁶ [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), Racial Equity Tools.

¹⁷ [Equity in Sustainability: An Equity Scan of Local Government Sustainability Programs](#), USDN, 2016..



Transgenerational Equity: Decisions consider generational impacts and don't result in unfair burdens on future generations.¹⁸

White Privilege: White privilege refers to whites' historical and contemporary advantage in all of the principal opportunity domains, including education, employment, housing, health care, political representation, media influence, and so on. Whites' advantage in each one of those areas is significant, but the accumulated benefit across all domains adds up to a pattern that has concentrated and sustained racial differences in wealth, power, and other dimensions of well-being.¹⁹

¹⁸ [Equity in Sustainability: An Equity Scan of Local Government Sustainability Programs](#), USDN, 2016

¹⁹ Structural Racism and Community Building, [The Aspen Institute](#), 2004.