



RESTORATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Handout 3

5 Main Types of Privilege

Behind every privilege is an imbalance of power. It's invisible to those who possess it and ever-present for those who don't.

Privilege describes benefits that belong to people because they fit into a specific social group or have certain dimensions to their identity. You can have (or lack) privilege because of your race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, wealth, and class, among many other characteristics.

Having privilege means having an advantage that is out of your control and that you didn't ask for. You may not even notice it until you educate yourself about its existence. Privilege and the lack of privilege are how power is distributed.

It is hard to acknowledge our own privilege because privilege is the other side of oppression. Some people are against talking about privilege because they don't want to be framed as the aggressors or complicit in a system that gives them an advantage at the expense of others. Other critics of the word 'privilege' mistake it for a blanket term that suggests that, if you have a privilege, your whole life has been easy.

Ultimately, privilege is not a concept designed to make people feel guilty or to diminish their achievements. Instead, waking up to how you may have certain privileges is an essential first step towards being able to decisively act, in small and large ways, to use your privilege and make the systems we were born into fairer.

Below, we describe five types of privilege with simple examples.

White privilege:

In many countries, white privilege benefits white people at the expense of people of color. Lacking white privilege can include being directly typecast or treated differently but it can also mean not seeing yourself catered for by the society you live in. While the existence of white privilege is ever-present and noticeable to those who don't possess it, white people may not notice their advantages. For example, a white person in the UK or the US does not need to search high and low to find products to suit their skin, like band-aids or make-up and will not know what it is like to turn on the TV to find that nobody looks like them or their family.

Religious privilege:

Religious privilege includes being able to find a place of worship near you and feeling a sense of connection between your religious celebrations and wider society. For example, automatically having a day off from work for your religious holidays is a religious privilege.

Gender privilege:

Gender privilege usually refers to male privilege, a set of privileges distributed to men on the basis of their gender. In many cases, men are centered and catered for in career progression and pay and can be treated more respectfully and listened to more in everyday conversations.



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Heterosexual privilege:

Straight privilege described the advantages favorably granted to someone because of their heterosexual orientation. Possessing this privilege means never having to worry about 'coming out', never feeling unsafe when holding hands with your significant other in public or never censoring yourself around different groups that find your orientation uncomfortable or wrong. Straight privilege also means seeing your romantic and family aspirations represented in films, music, everyday conversations and even Valentine's Day cards.

Socio-economic privilege:

Socio-economic privilege is a complex concept because it looks very different for everyone. While to some people it means being able to afford luxury goods, to others it means being able to afford to go to university or simply to have a roof over your head and a place to sleep at night. Having socio-economic privilege doesn't necessarily mean being rich but it can mean having enough resources to be able to take on the opportunities that life has given you, such as unpaid internships or an after-school tutoring job — little privileges that can give you a head start in the job market.

The bottom line?

Most of us are privileged in at least one way. That doesn't mean we didn't work hard or that we didn't experience any other hardships in life. Privilege can be hard to admit and even harder to talk about but it is important to understand our own privilege so we can give a voice to those less privileged.

In order to use your own privilege for good and to be a good ally you have to be aware, listen and speak up. Focus on equity instead of equality so that everyone is given what they need to be successful.

Source: <https://www.hivelearning.com/site/resource/diversity-inclusion/5-main-types-of-privileges/>