

Privilege primer

An introductory resource for understanding privilege in its many forms. Including a self-contained exercise and further resources*

Reflective exercise

Introduction: Privilege is: “The absence of barriers and presence of built-in advantages.” Taking privileges into account is a key part of valuing the differences among us and in service users.

This exercise and the resources below are intended to help explore privilege and highlight the fact that everyone has some privilege, and some people have more privilege than others. This is not meant to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed about their privilege or lack of privilege related to any part of their identity.

Instead, our aim is that in identifying some of our individual privileges, we gain perspective that can help us recognise how we can manage our privileges individually and collectively to work for social justice.

Privilege ‘count’ exercise: How many of the statements below are true for you?

1. If one of your parents graduated from university.
2. If you have never experienced being put down based on something you cannot change (for example: race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, sexual orientation).
3. If you have never had to prepare, or warn your family or friends to prepare to defend against bias or prejudice.
4. If you do not consider yourself to have either visible or invisible disabilities.
5. If public holidays coincide with the holidays that you celebrate.
6. If you have never been worried that when seeking professional help, something you cannot change will work against you.
7. If you always feel comfortable showing affection to your partner in a public place
8. If you have never experienced being followed in a store for no apparent reason.
9. If you studied the culture or history of your ancestors (that is, people of the same ethnic heritage as you) in school.
10. If English is your first language

Reflective prompts: Your count out of 10 is a proxy for your privilege for the 10 dimensions above. What emotions did this exercise bring up for you? How does this affect your awareness of privilege?

Further resources

[The privilege wheel:](#) A model for considering different dimensions of privilege and how they interact to create an intersectional view of an individual’s privilege.

(Short read <5 mins) - Why we recommend it: This is a powerful (non-exhaustive) visualisation of how any one individual can be both privileged and underprivileged - take a minute to reflect on where you fall in the different sections of the wheel.

[The invisible knapsack, Peggy McIntosh \(1989\):](#) An exploration of white privilege and how this is apparent for people who have access to this privilege.

(Short read 10-15 mins) - Why we recommend it: A collection of ‘real-world’ examples of white privilege, can you think of times where you have/have not experienced some of the examples?

[The coin analogy](#) - Dr Stephanie Nixon (University of Toronto) discusses her view of privilege and how this relates to public health ethics and practice.

(Short video - 10 mins) - Why we recommend it: Dr Nixon explores the importance of understanding both sides of the privilege ‘coin’ and how naming privilege is key to addressing inequities in health.

**All further resources are linked in the clickable headers*