

*now including*

**2026 WORKPLACE  
LANGUAGE TRENDS**



*People & Culture*  
**GLOSSARY**

**YOUR 2026 GUIDE TO THE LANGUAGE  
OF MODERN LEADERSHIP & WORK**





# Updated for 2026: The New Language of Work

In 2026, the language of the workplace continues to evolve faster than ever.

Artificial intelligence now sits alongside human intelligence. Climate resilience has expanded into climate equity. And, leadership itself is being redefined, from authority to awareness, from extraction to regeneration.

This updated glossary captures the new vocabulary shaping how organizations communicate, collaborate, and care. It bridges technology and humanity, offering a shared foundation for leaders, teams, and changemakers committed to creating workplaces where people, and organizations can succeed.

Whether you're designing talent systems or shaping organizational culture, this resource supports clear, inclusive, and forward-looking communication.

Let's speak the language of the modern workplace, one that values belonging, appreciation, and conscious growth.



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# Workplace Language Trends for 2026

1. **Digital Empathy:** The ability to demonstrate compassion, inclusion, and respect in digital interactions—especially in hybrid or AI-assisted workplaces.
2. **Algorithmic Bias:** Recognition that automated systems can reproduce or amplify social inequities if not intentionally designed for fairness.
3. **Conscious Leadership:** A leadership model rooted in self-awareness, equity, emotional intelligence, and shared accountability.
4. **Regenerative Culture:** An organizational approach that restores people, planet, and purpose, going beyond “sustainability” toward net-positive human and environmental impact.
5. **Quiet Growth:** A shift away from “quiet quitting” to sustainable engagement, where employees grow at a balanced pace aligned with personal values.
6. **AI Collaboration Ethics:** Guidelines ensuring responsible use of AI tools in recruitment, decision-making, and performance management.
7. **Psychological Flexibility:** The ability to adapt to uncertainty and change while maintaining personal and organizational values.
8. **Cultural Resilience:** The capacity of diverse teams to adapt, maintain identity, and thrive through disruption.
9. **Equity Audit:** A data-informed review process to identify disparities in pay, promotions, access, or representation within an organization.
10. **Human Sustainability:** A holistic framework for employee wellbeing that integrates mental, physical, financial, and social health.



# People & Culture Glossary of Terms

- **Ableism:** Beliefs or practices that rest on the assumption that being able-bodied is “normal” while other states of being need to be “fixed” or altered. This can result in devaluing or discriminating against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. Institutionalized ableism may include or take the form of un/intentional organizational barriers that result in disparate treatment of people with disabilities (PwDs).
- **Accessibility:** The "ability to access" the functionality of a system or entity, and gain the related benefits. The degree to which a product, service, or environment is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessible design ensures both direct (unassisted) access and indirect access through assistive technology (e.g., computer screen readers). Universal design ensures that an environment can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.
- **Accommodation:** A change in the environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to have equal opportunity, access and participation.
- **Accountability:** Accountability is the management of resources, services, and internal processes for the purpose of serving the public trust, which is the ultimate mandate of a nonprofit organization. To be fully effective, accountability principles should go beyond formal rules and be incorporated, explicitly or implicitly, into the strategic planning of nonprofit organizations.
- **Acculturation:** The process of learning and incorporating the language, values, beliefs, and behaviors that makes up a distinct culture. This concept is not to be confused with assimilation, where an individual or group may give up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to that of the prevailing culture.



- **Affirmative Action:** Proactive policies and procedures for remedying the effect of past discrimination and ensuring the implementation of equal employment and educational opportunities, for recruiting, hiring, training and promoting women, minorities, people with disabilities and veterans in compliance with the federal requirements enforced by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).
- **Ageism:** Discrimination against individuals because of their age, often based on stereotypes.
- **Ally:** Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with groups of people who are the victims of oppression or discrimination, in the struggle for equal justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression and discrimination, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in the oppression of and/or discrimination against those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression and discrimination.
- **Anti-Oppression:** Recognizing and deconstructing the systemic, institutional and personal forms of disempowerment used by certain groups over others; actively challenging the different forms of oppression.
- **Asexuality:** Generally characterized by not feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity.
- **Authority:** refers to accepted power—that is, power that people agree to follow. People listen to authority figures because they feel that these individuals are worthy of respect. Generally speaking, people perceive the objectives and demands of an authority figure as reasonable and beneficial, or true.



- **Background:** The cultural or social environment in which a person was brought up or has lived. A person's experience, training, and education.
- **Belonging:** is the feeling of being part of something and mattering to others. We create it through inclusion, which consists of intentional acts. It is the emotional outcome that people want in their organization.
- **Bias:** Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in an unfair or negative way.
- **TYPES OF BIAS:**
  1. **Anchoring bias:** Anchoring bias takes place when your decision is overly influenced by the first piece of information that you receive about something.
  2. **Attentional bias:** Attentional bias happens when you base a decision on only one thing, to the exclusion of all other relevant evidence.
  3. **Commitment confirmation bias:** Commitment confirmation bias happens when you grow so attached to an idea that you make bad choices in order to appear consistent.
  4. **Confirmation bias:** Confirmation bias occurs when you only pay attention to information that confirms your pre-existing opinions, discounting anything that would disprove them.
  5. **Diagnosis bias:** Diagnosis bias occurs when you judge someone based on your first impression, and refuse to change your opinion in the face of new evidence.
  6. **Gender bias:** Gender bias happens when you treat somebody differently because of their gender.
  7. **Performance bias:** Performance bias happens when you make assumptions about someone's performance based on their race, gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics.
  8. **Primacy bias:** Primacy bias takes place when you focus only on what happened first, ignoring all other aspects of a situation.
  9. **Recency bias:** Recency bias happens when you judge something based only on what happened most recently, instead of considering the whole situation.
  10. **Stereotype threat:** Stereotype threat happens when you unconsciously confirm negative stereotypes about a cultural, racial, ethnic, or gender group to which you belong.
  11. **Value attribution bias:** Value attribution bias happens when you assign something a value and then allow that perception to color all subsequent interactions.



- **Bigotry:** Intolerant prejudice which glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups.
- **Biphobia:** fear or hatred of people who are bisexual, pansexual, or omnisexual.
- **Bisexuality:** Romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.
- **Black Lives Matter:** Black Lives Matter is a human rights movement, originating in the African-American community, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism toward black people. The movement began with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin in February 2012.
- **Bullying:** Intimidating, exclusionary, threatening or hostile behavior against an individual.
- **Charity:** Generous actions or donations to aid the poor, ill, or needy.
- **Chicano/a:** A term adopted by some Mexican Americans to demonstrate pride in their heritage, born out of the national Chicano Movement that was politically aligned with the Civil Rights movement to end racial oppression and social inequalities of Mexican Americans. Chicano pertains to the particular experience of Mexican-descended individuals living in the US, but not all Mexican Americans identify as Chicano.
- **Cisgender:** A gender identity where an individual's self-perception of their gender aligns with their perceived sex.
- **Classism:** Biased attitudes and beliefs that result in, and help to justify, unfair treatment of individuals or groups because of their socio-economic grouping. Classism can also be expressed as public policies and institutional practices that prevent people from breaking out of poverty rather than ensuring equal economic, social, and educational opportunity.



- **Collusion:** When people act to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression. Example: able-bodied people who object to strategies for making buildings accessible because of the expense.
- **Colonialism:** Control by individuals or groups over the territory/behavior of other individuals or groups. (Horvath) Imperialism refers to the political or economic control, either formally or informally, and creating an empire. Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.
- **Colorblind:** Term used to describe personal, group, and institutional policies or practices that do not consider race or ethnicity as a determining factor. The term “colorblind” deemphasizes or ignores race and ethnicity as a large part of one’s identity.
- **Community:** Group of people forming a dynamic social unit within a larger association, and sharing common values, interests, work, identity, or location; feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.
- **Conscious Bias:** the person is very clear about his or her feelings and attitudes, and related behaviors are conducted with intent. In its extreme is characterized by overt negative behavior that can be expressed through physical and verbal harassment or through more subtle means such as exclusion.



- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Corporate Social Responsibility is a form of corporate selfregulation integrated into a business model. CSR policy functions as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby a business monitors and ensures its active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standards, and international norms. CSR is a process with the aim to embrace responsibility for the company's actions and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere who may also be considered as stakeholders. CSR is titled to aid an organization's mission as well as a guide to what the company stands for and will uphold to its consumers.
- **Critical Race Theory:** The Critical Race Theory movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism and principles of constitutional law.
- **Cultural Appropriation:** Originally coined to describe the effects of colonialism, cultural appropriation generally entails adopting aspects of a minority culture by someone outside the culture, without sufficient understanding of its context or respect for the meaning and value of the original. Cultural appropriation done in a way that promotes disrespectful cultural or racial stereotypes is considered particularly harmful.
- **Cultural Assimilation:** An individual, family, or group gives up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to the dominant culture.



- **Cultural Competence:**

- Knowledge, awareness and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding, sensitivity, appreciation, and responsiveness to cultural differences and the interactions resulting from them. The particulars of acquiring cultural competency vary among different groups, and they involve ongoing relational process tending to inclusion and trust-building. (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity)
- A process of learning that leads to the ability to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by the presence of social cultural diversity in a defined social system.

- **Cultural Pluralism:** Recognition of the contribution of each group to a common civilization. It encourages the maintenance and development of different life styles, languages and convictions. It strives to create the conditions of harmony and respect within a culturally diverse society.

- **Cultural Racism:** Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly radicalized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.



- **Culture:** A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.
- **Demographic:** the vital or social statistical characteristics of human populations such as age, race, sex or income.
- **Denial:** The refusal to acknowledge the societal privileges that are granted or denied based on an individual's identity components. Those who are in a stage of denial tend to believe, "People are people. We are all alike regardless of the color of our skin." In this way, the existence of a hierarchical system of privileges based on ethnicity or race are ignored.
- **Design Thinking:** A human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.
- **Disability:** Physical or mental impairment, the perception of a physical or mental impairment, or a history of having had a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- **Discrimination:** The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, physical ability, religion and other categories.
- **Diversity:** Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is allinclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender – the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used – but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.



- **Diversity v. Inclusion v. Belonging:** Diversity typically means proportionate representation across all dimensions of human difference. Inclusion means that everyone is included, visible, heard and considered. Belonging means that everyone is treated and feels like a full member of the larger community, and can thrive.
- **Empowered:** Having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself.
- **Empowerment:** When target group members refuse to accept the dominant ideology and take actions to redistribute social power more equitably.
- **Environmental Equity:** Measures the amelioration of the myriad inequities and disproportionate impacts that groups in society have faced, especially in the realm of environmental protection and access to nature and the environmental goods that aren't equally shared.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity:** (EEO - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in any aspect of employment based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.
- **Equality:** Evenly distributed access to resources and opportunity necessary for a safe and healthy life; uniform distribution of access to ensure fairness.
- **Equity:** The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.



- **ESL (E)nglish as a (S)econd (L)anguage:** A term used to describe language learning programs in the United States for individuals for whom English is not their first or native language.
- **Essentialism:** The practice of categorizing an entire group based on assumptions about what constitutes the “essence” of that group. Essentialism prevents individuals from remaining open to individual differences within groups.
- **Ethnicity:** A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).
- **Ethnocentrism:** The practice of using a particular ethnic group as a frame of reference, basis of judgment, or standard criteria from which to view the world. Ethnocentrism favors one ethnic group’s cultural norms and excludes the realities and experiences of other ethnic groups.
- **Eurocentrism:** The practice of using Europe and European culture as a frame of reference or standard criteria from which to view the world. Eurocentrism favors European cultural norms and excludes the realities and experiences of other cultural groups.
- **Executive Management:** the highest organizational leadership level of any company and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the company. It consists of the President and chief executive officer (CEO) and other executives. Executive Management’s responsibilities include overall conduct of the business and all operational matters, organization of the company as well as allocation of resources, determination and implementation of strategies and policies, direction-setting and ensuring timely reporting and provision of information to the Board. Executive Management is also responsible for oversight, implementation and audit of environmental, social and related policies.



- **Female:** An individual of the sex that is typically capable of bearing young or producing eggs.
- **Feminism:** Theory and practice that advocates for educational and occupational equity between men and women; undermines traditional cultural practices that support the subjugation of women by men and the devaluation of women's contributions to society.
- **Fluid:** Someone who is fluid - also called gender fluid -- is a person whose gender identity (the gender they identify with most) is not fixed. It can change over time or from day-to-day. Fluid is a form of gender identity or gender expression, rather than a sexual orientation. Fluid relates to how a person identifies themselves internally and presents themselves to the world. A person who is gender fluid may identify as male one day, female the next, both male and female, or neither. It affects their gender expression -- the way a person presents themselves to society (masculine, feminine, both, or neither).
- **Gaslighting:** First popularized in the 1944 movie Gas Light, it means a deliberate attempt to undermine a victim's sense of reality or sanity. In a work context, it usually means behaviors that undermine the success, self-confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing of the target. For people in underrepresented or less powerful groups, it is more likely to occur, with more severe and harmful cumulative effects. Tactics can include withholding (critical information, meeting invitations, silent treatment), isolation (exclusion, causing conflict with coworkers), and discrediting (consistently shooting down the target's ideas, ignoring or taking credit for them).



- **Gay:** People of the same sex who are attracted sexually and emotionally to each other. More commonly utilized to describe male attraction to other males.
- **Gender:** A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth; a set of social, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations.
- **Gender Expression:** How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress, mannerisms and/or behaviors that society characterizes as “masculine” or “feminine.”
- **Gender Identity:** A personal conception of one’s own gender; often in relation to a gender opposition between masculinity and femininity. Gender expression is how people externally communicate or perform their gender identity to others.
- **Gender Neutral:** A term used to describe people of any gender. As its name suggests, the sexual orientations or gender identities of gender neutral are not defined.
- **Global Environmental Racism:** Race is a potent factor in sorting people into their physical environment and explaining social inequality, political exploitation, social isolation, and quality of life. Racism influences land use, industrial facility siting, housing patterns, infrastructure development, and “who gets what, when, where, and how much.” Environmental racism refers to any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color.
- **Governance:** Refers to all of processes of oversight, whether undertaken by a government, organization or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through the laws, norms, power or language. It relates to the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that led to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of rules, decisions, norms and institutions. A nonprofit organization’s system of governance includes a decision-making body (Board of Directors) who engages a leader (Chief Operating Officer or Executive Director) who implements those decisions.



- **Handicap:** (See Disability)
- **Harassment:** Unwelcome, intimidating, exclusionary, threatening or hostile behavior against an individual that is based on a category protected by law.
- **Hazing:** Verbal and physical testing, often of newcomers into a society or group, that may range from practical joking to tests of physical and mental endurance.
- **Health at Every Size:** Known by the acronym HAES, a social and health promotion movement that challenges social stigma based on weight, size and shape. The movement emphasizes body positivity, health outcomes, and eating and movement for wellbeing rather than weight control.
- **Heterosexism:** The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and invisibility.
- **Heterosexuality:** A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.
- **Hispanic:** The U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanic as people who classified themselves as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories, which also included the subgroups Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican or Cuban.
- **Homophobia:** A fear of individuals who are not heterosexual. Often results in hostile, offensive, or discriminatory action against a person because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer identified, or because they are perceived to be. These actions may be verbal or physical and can include insulting or degrading comments; taunts or 'jokes'; and excluding or refusing to cooperate with others because of their sexuality.



- **Homosexuality:** is romantic attraction, emotional attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual behavior between members of the same sex or gender.
- **Hourly Employee:** is paid for the number of hours they work per week at a determined rate.
- **Human Rights:** The basic rights and freedoms, to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.
- **Identity Group:** A particular group, culture, or community with which an individual identifies or shares a sense of belonging. Individual agency is crucial for identity development; no person should be pressured to identify with any existing group, but instead the freedom to self-identify on their own terms.
- **Implicit Bias:** Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.
- **Inclusive Language:** Words or phrases that include all potential audiences from any identity group. Inclusive language does not assume or connote the absence of any group. An example of gender inclusive language is using "police officers" instead of "policemen".



- **Inclusion:** The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.
- **Indigenous:** Originating from a culture with ancient ties to the land in which a group resides. Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means and reduced them to a non-dominant (Indigenous continued) or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant. (Example: Māori in territory now defined as New Zealand; Mexicans in territory now defined as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma; Native American tribes in territory now defined as the United States).
- **Individual Racism:** The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism; can occur at both a conscious and unconscious level, and can be active or passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of Whites.
- **Institutional Racism:** Refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as People of Color. An example includes City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.



- **Institution:** A society or organization founded for a religious, educational, social, or similar purpose.
- **Intent vs. Impact:** This distinction is an integral part of inclusive environments; intent is what a person meant to do and impact is the effect it had on someone else. Regardless of intent, it is imperative to recognize how behaviors, language, actions, etc. affect or influence other people. An examination of what was said or done and how it was received is the focus, not necessarily what was intended.
- **Internalized Racism:** Occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power.
- **Intersectionality:** The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, and their multiple effects on the same individuals or groups. Also refers to the view that overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and inequality can more effectively be addressed together.
- **"-isms":** A way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group: race (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), age (ageism), religion, sexual orientation, language, etc.
- **Latinx:** Used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina to describe a person of Latin American origin or descent.
- **Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted sexually and emotionally to other women.



- **Leader (Leadership):** The individuals who are the leaders in an organization, regarded collectively; The activity of leading a group of people or an organization or the ability to do this. Leadership involves:
  - Establishing a clear vision;
  - Sharing that vision with others so that they will follow willingly;
  - Providing the information, knowledge and methods to realize that vision; and
  - Coordinating and balancing the conflicting interests of all members and stakeholders.
- **LGBTQ (IA):** Acronym for “Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (Questioning Intersex Allies).” The description of the movement expanded from gay and lesbian to LGBTQ and some include questioning, intersex, allies, same-gender-loving, asexual, pansexual, and polyamorous.
- **Male:** an individual of the sex that is typically capable of producing relatively small, usually motile gametes which fertilize the eggs of a female.
- **Management:** Entrusted with a leadership role, a manager is responsible for overseeing a department or group of employees within a specific organization or company.
- **Marginalization:** The placement of minority groups and cultures outside mainstream society. All that varies from the norm of the dominant culture is devalued and at times perceived as deviant and regressive.
- **Mentor:** someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.
- **Merit:** a good quality or feature that deserves to be praised. formal: the quality of being good, important, or useful: value or worth.
- **Microaffirmation:** A microaffirmation is a small gesture of inclusion, caring or kindness. They include listening, providing comfort and support, being an ally and explicitly valuing the contributions and presence of all. It is particularly helpful for those with greater power or seniority to “model” affirming behavior.



- **Microaggression:** A comment or action that unconsciously or unintentionally expresses or reveals a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group, such as a racial minority. These small, common occurrences include insults, slights, stereotyping, undermining, devaluing, delegitimizing, overlooking or excluding someone. Over time, microaggressions can isolate and alienate those on the receiving end, and affect their health and wellbeing.
- **Movement Building:** Movement building is the effort of social change agents to engage power holders and the broader society in addressing a systemic problem or injustice while promoting an alternative vision or solution. Movement building requires a range of intersecting approaches through a set of distinct stages over a long-term period of time. Through movement building, organizers can :
  - Propose solutions to the root causes of social problems;
  - Enable people to exercise their collective power;
  - Humanize groups that have been denied basic human rights and improve conditions for the groups affected;
  - Create structural change by building something larger than a particular organization or campaign; and
  - Promote visions and values for society based on fairness, justice and democracy.
- **Multicultural:** Of, or pertaining to, more than one culture.
- **Multiculturalism:** The practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, attitudes, and opinions within an environment. The theory and practice promote peaceful coexistence of all identities and people.
- **Neo-Colonization:** Term for contemporary policies adopted by international and western “1st world” nations and organizations that exert regulation, power and control over “3rd world” nations disguised as humanitarian help or aid. These policies are distinct but related to the “original” period of colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European nations.



- **Neurodiversity:** Neurodiversity or ND, refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense. The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the hum population (used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders). A concept that describes individuality and uniqueness in cognitive functioning. The inclusion in a group, organization, etc. of people with different types of brain functioning.
- **Non-binary:** A way of identifying and/or expressing oneself outside the binary gender categories of male/masculine and female/feminine.
- **Norm:** An ideal standard binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate power and acceptable behavior.
- **Oppression:** The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.
- **Pan-Africanism:** Describes the theory relating to the desire to educate all peoples of the African diaspora of their common plight and the connections between them. Some theorists promote linking all African countries across the continent through a common government, language, ideology, or belief.
- **Pansexuality:** A term reflective of those who feel they are sexually, emotionally, and spiritually capable of falling in love with all genders.
- **Partner:** A person or entity who engages in a mutual undertaking, through formal or informal arrangements, with shared responsibility, risks and benefits.



- **Pay Equity:** Providing equal compensation for employees who are similar in terms of job duties and important characteristics such as experience, tenure, location, and job performance.
- **Pay Equality:** Refers not just to equal pay for people in similar situations, but also to the equality of opportunity, motivating factors, and acceptance that lead to the proportional holding of positions across the pay spectrum.
- **People/Person of Color:** Is not a term that refers to real biological or scientific distinction between people, but the common experience of being targeted and oppressed by racism. While each oppressed group is affected by racism differently and each group maintains its own unique identity and culture, there is also the recognition that racism has the potential to unite oppressed people in a collective of resistance. For this reason, many individuals who identify as members of racially oppressed groups also claim the political identity of being People of Color. This in no way diminishes their specific cultural or racial identity; rather it is an affirmation of the multiple layers of identity of every individual. This term also refrains from the subordinate connotation of triggering labels like “non-White” and “minority.”
- **Philanthropy:** using wealth to bring about social change, a desire to improve the wellbeing of humankind by preventing and solving social problems by supporting projects and endeavors from which we all benefit, such as libraries, museums, and scientific research; and it also supports efforts that may be too unpopular or controversial to gain the widespread support of the general public or government.



- **Policies:** A set of written documents and principles that define, regulate and inform how you and your organization operate. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Board charter
  - Finance policy
  - Human resources policy
  - Code of conduct - your 'organizational rules' covering what is acceptable or unacceptable
  - Whistle-blower policy
  - Data protection policy
  - Equal opportunity policy
- **Polyamory:** The practice or acceptance of having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the consent of all involved.
- **Power:** Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within (which references an individual's internal strength). Learning to "see" and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.
- **Post-racial:** Denoting or relating to a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist.
- **Prejudice:** A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.



- **Privilege:** An unearned, sustained advantage that comes from race, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status, age, and other differences.
- **Process(es):** A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end. Organizational processes include formal or informal ways of taking action. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Hiring processes
  - Budgeting processes
  - Program planning processes
  - Technology selection processes
  - Succession planning processes
  - Board recruitment processes
- **Pronouns:** Words to refer to a person after initially using their name. Gendered pronouns include she and he, her and him, hers and his, and herself and himself. "Preferred gender pronouns" (or PGPs) are the pronouns that people ask others to use in reference to themselves. They may be plural gender-neutral pronouns such as they, them, their(s). Or, they may be ze (rather than she or he) or hir (rather than her(s) and him/his). Some people state their pronoun preferences as a form of allyship.
- **Queer:** An umbrella term used by people who wish to describe themselves as neither heterosexual nor cisgender.
- **Race:** A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the political needs of a society at a given period of time.
- **Racial and Ethnic Identity:** An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and the ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.



- **Racial Equity:** The condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer influenced how one fares. Racial equity is one part of racial justice and must be addressed at the root causes and not just the manifestations. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.
- **Racism:** Individual and institutional practices and policies based on the belief that a particular race is superior to others. This often results in depriving certain individuals and groups of civil liberties, rights, and other resources, hindering opportunities for social, educational, and political advancement.
- **Racism (endorsed by Dismantling Racism Training):** A system of advantage based on race. A system of oppression based on race. A way of organizing society based on dominance and subordination based on race. Penetrates every aspect of personal, cultural, and institutional life. Includes prejudice against people of color, as well as exclusion, discrimination against, suspicion of, and fear and hate of people of color. Racism = Prejudice + the POWER to implement that prejudice.
- **Religion:** An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or group of gods. A personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.
- **Reverse Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of members of a dominant or majority group. (Society of Human Resources Management); according to the National Multicultural Institute, this term is often used by opponents of affirmative action who believe that these policies are causing members of traditionally dominant groups to be discriminated against. The Supreme Court considers it to be illegal to consider race and other demographic categories in hiring and other employment related decisions.
- **Role:** is the function you fill within your organization.
- **Role model:** a person whose behavior is looked up to and is imitated by others



- **Safe Space:** A space in which an individual or group may remain free of blame, ridicule and persecution, and are in no danger of coming to mental or physical harm.
- **Salaried Employee:** is someone who receives a fixed amount of pay (salary) regardless of how many hours they work each week.
- **Self-care:** the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.
- **Sex:** System of classification based on biological and physical differences, such as primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Differentiated from gender, which is based on the social construction and expectations of the category's "men" and "women." (University of Maryland)
- **Sexual Orientation:** An enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction. A person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are sexually attracted.
- **Social Justice:** Is justice that follows the principle that all individuals and groups are entitled to fair and impartial treatment. Social justice attempts to prevent human rights abuses. Social justice is based on notions of equality and equal opportunity in society. It focuses on the full and equal participation of all citizens in economic, social and political aspects of the nation. Social justice can also refer to advantages and disadvantages distributed in a society. Social justice derives its authority from the codes of morality in each culture and differs from culture to culture. United Nations' objectives of social justice policies include social, economic and cultural rights, including right to an adequate standard of living; right to work and equal pay for equal work; right to education; and right of minorities to enjoy their own religion, language and culture.



- **Social Power:** Access to resources that enhance chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, and fulfilling life.
- **Social Sector:** The term social sector refers to that part of social and economic activity done for the purpose of benefiting society and which is funded, in part or whole, through charitable gifts. Other common terms relating to those organizations in this sector are nonprofit, not-for-profit, philanthropic sector, mission-based sector, non-governmental organizations, and tax-exempt organizations. Since not all charitable giving goes to entities that have official tax-exempt status bestowed by a governmental entity, the term "tax exempt" is not as inclusive in its definition, as are the other terms.
- **Stereotype:** A positive or negative set of beliefs held by an individual about the characteristics of a certain group.
- **Sustainability:** As it relates to corporate social responsibility, sustainability means managing a business using sustainable methods: methods that will not deplete, destroy, or completely use up natural resources; methods that can persist over long periods of time; methods that are able to last perpetually.
- **Technical Assistance:** Non-financial assistance provided by specialists. It can take the form of sharing information and expertise, instruction, skills training, transmission of working knowledge, and consulting services and may also involve the transfer of technical data.
- **Tolerance:** Acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe a person whose gender identity is something other than their Sex Assigned at Birth (SAAB). The SAAB is a person's first association with gender, typically based on physical sex characteristics.



- **Transphobia:** The fear or hatred of transgender people or people who do not meet society's gender role expectations.
- **Transsexual:** A person who lives full-time in a gender different than their assigned birth sex and gender. Some pursue hormones and/or surgery while others do not. Sometimes used to specifically refer to trans people pursuing gender or sex confirmation.
- **Unconscious bias:** (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair. Many researchers suggest that unconscious bias occurs automatically as the brain makes quick judgments based on past experiences and background. As a result of unconscious biases, certain people benefit and other people are penalized. In contrast, deliberate prejudices are defined as conscious bias (or explicit bias). Although we all have biases, many unconscious biases tend to be exhibited toward minority groups based on factors such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, able-bodiedness, and other such traits.
- **Underrepresented:** insufficiently represented or spoken on behalf of.
- **Underserved:** refers to populations which are disadvantaged because of ability to pay, ability to access care, ability to access comprehensive healthcare, or other disparities for reasons of race, religion, language group or social status.
- **URM:** An abbreviation for Under-Represented Minorities. Some institutions have defined sub-groups within larger racial/ethnic minority groups that are particularly underrepresented relative to their size.
- **User Centered Design:** A framework of processes in which the needs, wants, and limitations of end users of a product, service or process are given extensive attention at each stage of the design process.



- **White Fragility:** Term used to describe the privilege that accrues to white people living in a society that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This builds an expectation of always feeling comfortable and safe, which in turn lowers the ability to tolerate racial stress and triggers a range of defensive reactions.
- **White Privilege:** Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.
  - **Cultural White Privilege:** A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.
  - **Institutional White Privilege:** Policies, practices and behaviors of institutions -- such as schools, banks, non-profits or the Supreme Court -- that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices and behaviors maintain, expand or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.
  - **Interpersonal White Privilege:** Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.
  - **Structural White Privilege:** A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels. The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and



other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

- **White Supremacy:** White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.



# Top 10 New People & Culture Terms for 2025

1. **Psychological Safety:** A shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, where individuals can express ideas, raise concerns, and admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences. In 2026, this extends to digital safety: ensuring virtual and AI-enabled workspaces also protect voice, visibility, and belonging.
2. **Intersectional Allyship:** Support that accounts for the complexity of overlapping identities, recognizing how different forms of privilege and oppression intersect.
3. **Techquity:** The equitable design, governance, and application of technology to ensure fairness, transparency, and access for all communities. In 2026, this concept includes AI equity, ensuring algorithms and data systems are intentionally built to prevent bias, and digital transparency, where users understand how data shapes decisions.
4. **Cultural Taxation:** The invisible burden placed on employees from marginalized backgrounds to represent or educate others without compensation.
5. **Inclusion Fatigue:** The emotional exhaustion experienced by individuals who consistently advocate for inclusion, often with limited support.
6. **Neurodiversity-Affirming:** An approach that values the natural variation of human minds and promotes environments where neurodivergent individuals can thrive. In 2026, this includes sensory-smart design, flexible scheduling, and hybrid inclusion practices that reduce overstimulation and support varied work styles.
7. **Positionality:** An awareness of how one's identities and social positioning affect perspective, privilege, and power in social and professional contexts.
8. **Belonging Uncertainty:** A feeling of doubt experienced by underrepresented individuals about whether they are truly accepted or valued in a group or organization.
9. **Restorative Practices:** Conflict resolution and community-building strategies focused on dialogue, accountability, and healing, especially within DEIB contexts.
10. **Equity-Centered Design:** A process of building systems, policies, or experiences that prioritize equity from the start, often co-designed with those most impacted.



# Evolving Together

Language reflects who we are, and who we aspire to become.

As our workplaces transform through technology, climate awareness, and cultural change, our shared vocabulary must evolve with equal intention and care.

This glossary is more than a reference tool.

It's a living resource, designed to grow with the leaders, teams, and organizations shaping the future of work.

Each new term represents a conversation, a shift in awareness, and an opportunity to build more connected, equitable, and regenerative workplaces.

At Liderança Group, we believe that lasting impact starts with shared understanding, and courageous action.

If your organization is ready to strengthen its leadership culture, align strategy with purpose, or build a people-centered plan for 2026, we invite you to connect with our team.

Let's continue evolving, together.

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