



AT THE CROSSROAD
OF INEQUALITIES /
DISCRIMINATION

Online training on intersectional discrimination

4. Intersectional discrimination

The aim and objectives of this section are to introduce the basic concepts and terms in the field of intersectionality. After completing this section, you will:

- be able to define basic concepts such as intersectionality and intersectional justice;
- recognise the importance of the intersection of different individual identities and the intersectional discrimination involved;
- know why it is necessary to address intersectionality to ensure intersectional justice;
- recognise intersectional discrimination and intersectional justice.

4.1 Definition of intersectionality and its origin

People belong to different social and socially constructed categories at the same time, such as 'race', gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, disability and others, which together affect our experiences of discrimination and privilege. We therefore have different personal characteristics/circumstances or identities.



The concept of intersectionality explores how different forms of social and identity discrimination intersect, and how these intersections affect individuals and groups in unique and complex ways.

Intersectionality as a concept was most clearly coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American lawyer and professor. In 1989, she analysed how women of African descent in the US are uniquely affected by overlapping racial and gender discriminations that cannot be understood if we consider only racism or sexism.

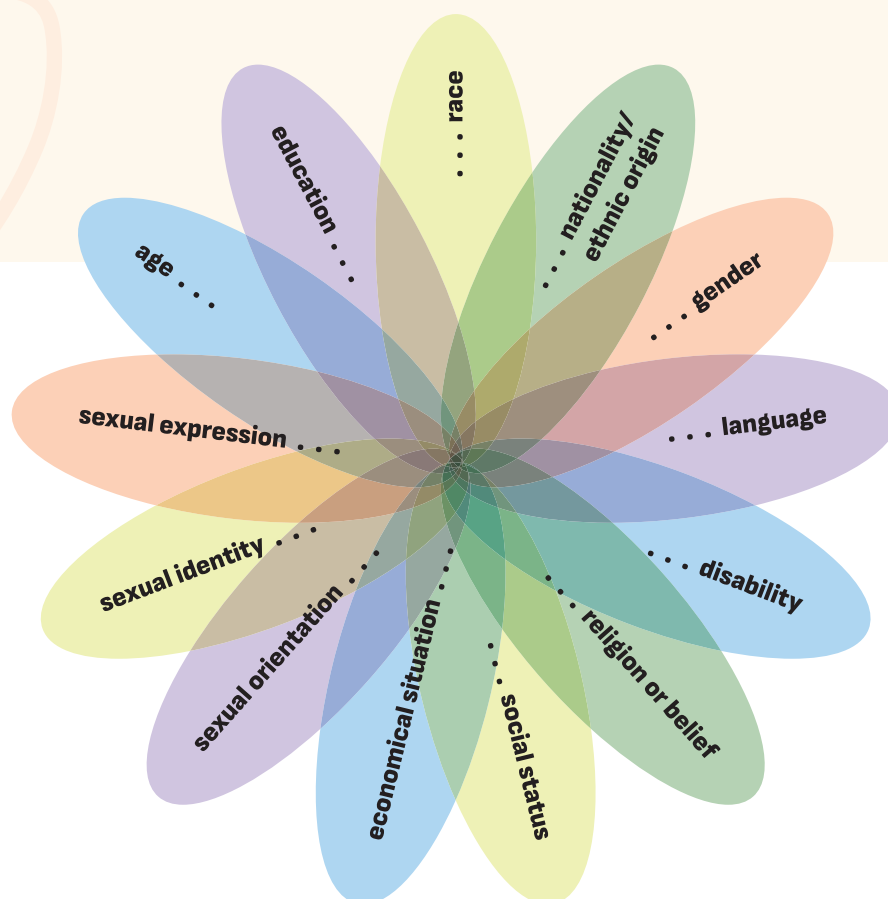
The theory of intersectionality has since gained wide recognition. It seeks to understand and address social injustice more comprehensively. It emphasises that traditional approaches to combating discrimination often neglect how different forms of oppression intersect to create unique forms of discrimination.

4.2 What is intersectional discrimination?

Intersectional discrimination refers to situations where an individual or group faces multiple forms of discrimination at the same time. It refers to simultaneous effect or intersection of different discriminations. These personal circumstances, identities and social categories do not add up, but rather intersect, thus creating a 'new reality'. This is not a simple sum of individual personal characteristics/circumstances or individual discriminations, but a specific situation created by the simultaneous interaction of personal characteristics/circumstances and their associated discriminations.

Intersectional discrimination recognises that traditional approaches to combating discrimination that address only one type of discrimination (e.g. only racism or only sexism) are often inadequate to address the complexities experienced by people with multiple, overlapping identities.

This means that, for example, ethnicity or 'race' or gender should not be addressed in isolation if we want to understand the inequality experienced by either a black woman or a girl who is the child of migrant parents.



Types of intersectionality and examples of intersectional discrimination:

- **Structural intersectionality** explores how one level of discrimination can reinforce another level of discrimination. We are therefore interested in how and in what ways racism 'reinforces' sexism, how class structures 'reinforce' homophobia, how homophobia 'reinforces' racism, and so on. Structural intersectionality refers to the need to take into account the broader social context that influences one's identity/identities and related experiences.
- **Political intersectionality** refers to the different policies shaped by groups to which an individual may simultaneously belong. The policies of these groups may even be contradictory or exclusionary. Political intersectionality is therefore a question of marginalisation: how feminism marginalises the question of ethnicity, how religious doctrine excludes the question of sexual orientation, etc.
- **Representational intersectionality** refers to the way different identities and experiences are represented in media, culture, art and other forms of public discourse. For example, when a discourse on racism fails to recognise a discourse on sexism, the positions of power against which both discourses are directed are reinforced.



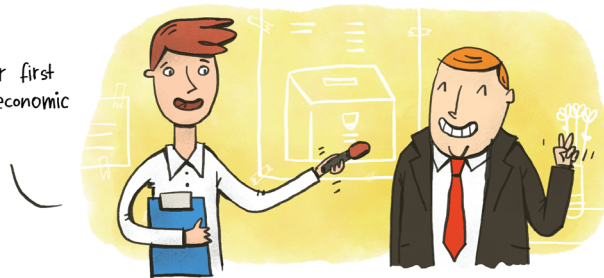
Imagine the following situations and consider which of the above examples of intersectionality they are.

1. A woman in her early twenties is rejected at a job interview because she is (too) young and Roma. The employer rejected her because she is a woman and has children, and is expected to have more children because, according to the employer, this is typical of the Roma community. She was also rejected because of her young age, saying that she was not experienced enough. In this case, there is a mix of racial discrimination, stereotypes, sexism, age discrimination and gender discrimination.
2. A young religious man of African descent, who is also gay, lives in a small town. He wants his same-sex marriage to be recognised and is campaigning for a change in legislation. At the same time, he is part of a religious community fighting against changes to the definition of civil partnership. Because he lives in a rural area, he has fewer opportunities for employment and access to services. As a Black man, he also faces racial discrimination.
3. A young man who is both Muslim and a member of the LGBTQ+ community may face challenges in finding a representation for his dual identity in the media and popular culture, which often portray stereotypical and one-sided images of Muslims or LGBTQ+ people. His complex identity may be rarely represented in the media, which means that only partial or simplistic representations of his identity often appear in public discourse. For example, the media might focus only on his religious identity in the context of immigration or integration, while his sexual orientation might remain invisible or be treated separately, without the context of his religious affiliation.

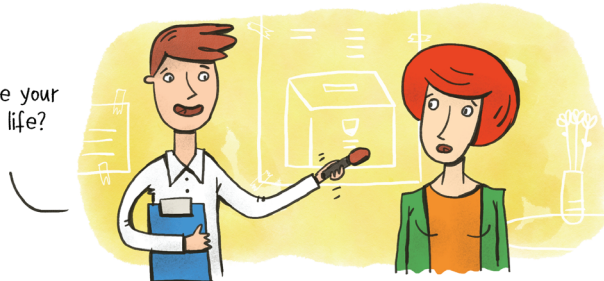
Answers:

1. *This is a case of structural intersectionality.*
2. *This is a case of political intersectionality.*
3. *This is a case of representational intersectionality.*

If you win, what will be your first steps to increase economic growth?



If you win, how will you balance your personal and work life?



If you win, what will you say to those opposing continued migration into the country?



4.3 What is intersectional justice?

Intersectional justice is a concept that focuses on identifying and addressing the intersecting systems of inequality and discrimination that affect individuals and groups with multiple intersectional identities.

Intersectional justice is achieved when the different interests, values and needs in society are balanced or satisfied in some way that is acceptable to the majority of people. It is about achieving some kind of balance between different aspects of justice, such as equality, freedom, solidarity, equality before the law, and fairness.

Intersectional justice is based on the understanding that social injustices such as racism, sexism, ageism and homophobia do not occur in isolation, but intersect, and work together in complex ways.

The concept of intersectional justice has evolved precisely to address the shortcomings of approaches that address individual forms of discrimination independently of each other.



Imagine the following situations and examples of intersectional justice in different areas.

Education

The different needs of learners are taken into account, based on their racial, gender, economic and other identities. This ensures equal access to educational opportunities and support for all.

Employment

Development of an employment programme in the municipality that specifically addresses the needs of women from minority ethnic groups. This programme would recognise how gender, 'race' and economic status intersect and affect access to employment opportunities.

Healthcare

An example of intersectional justice could be the creation of a healthcare programme that targets older LGBTQ+ people. This programme would recognise how sexual orientation, age and health status intersect to affect access to appropriate health services for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Youth work

A youth centre is designing a programme to improve digital literacy among young people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds and gender identities. The programme includes an analysis of needs, tailored workshops in several languages, and the use of culturally relevant examples. It provides the necessary technologies and mentoring for young people from diverse communities.

Culture

A cultural festival includes artists from different ethnic groups, genders and social backgrounds. The festival showcases works that depict different perspectives on 'race', gender, economic status, history, political beliefs, etc. Access to the venue is also available for the people with reduced mobility. The festival organisers offer discounted tickets for visitors from less favourable economic backgrounds.

Local community

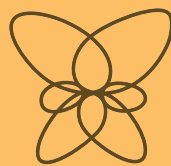
The local community arranges a community garden. All residents of different ethnic groups, genders, ages and from economic backgrounds use the garden. The garden is designed to be accessible to people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

Economy

A programme to promote entrepreneurship among women, youth, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. The programme offers tailor-made training and mentoring specifically designed to address the specific challenges and needs of these groups.

Tourism

A tourist area arranges access paths and facilities for visitors regardless of their physical ability, gender, age, ethnicity or economic status. Access to facilities is adapted for wheelchair users and information materials are available in several languages, and in Braille. Audio guides are also available.



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