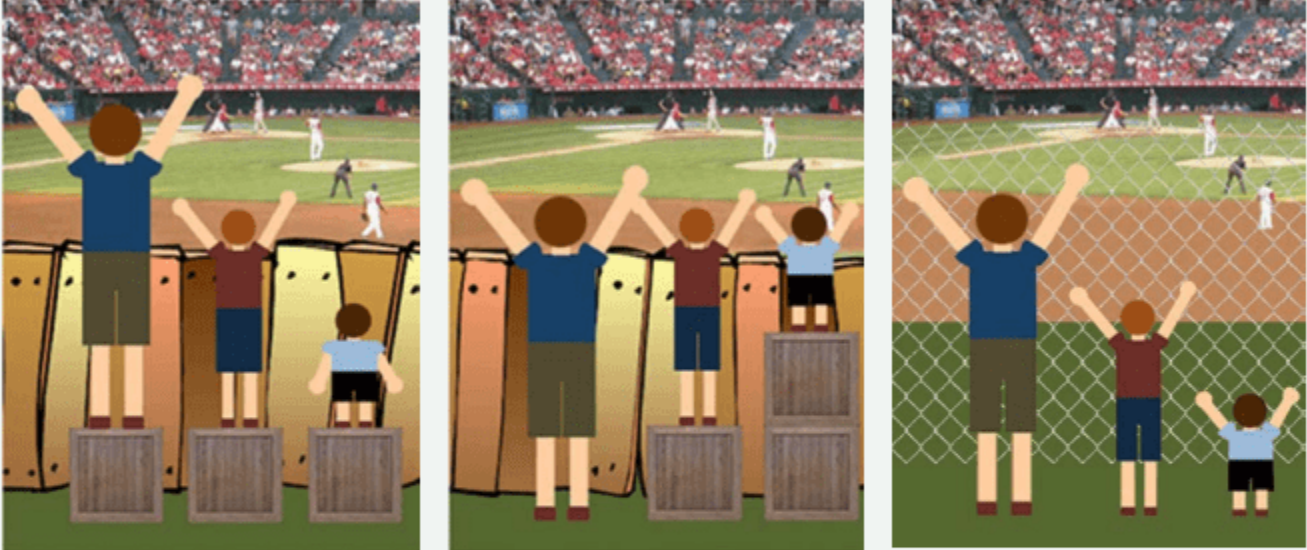


Equity Delighteth in Equality

Examples

Here are some visuals that illustrate the difference between equality and equity.

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



The image consists of three panels illustrating the concepts of equality, equity, and justice. Each panel shows three people of different heights (tall, medium, and short) standing behind a fence at a baseball game. In the first panel, all three are standing on their own feet, but the shortest person cannot see over the fence. In the second panel, the tallest person is standing on a wooden crate to see over the fence, but the medium and shortest people still cannot see. In the third panel, the tallest person is standing on the crate, the medium person is standing on a smaller crate, and the shortest person is standing on the ground, and all three can now see over the fence.

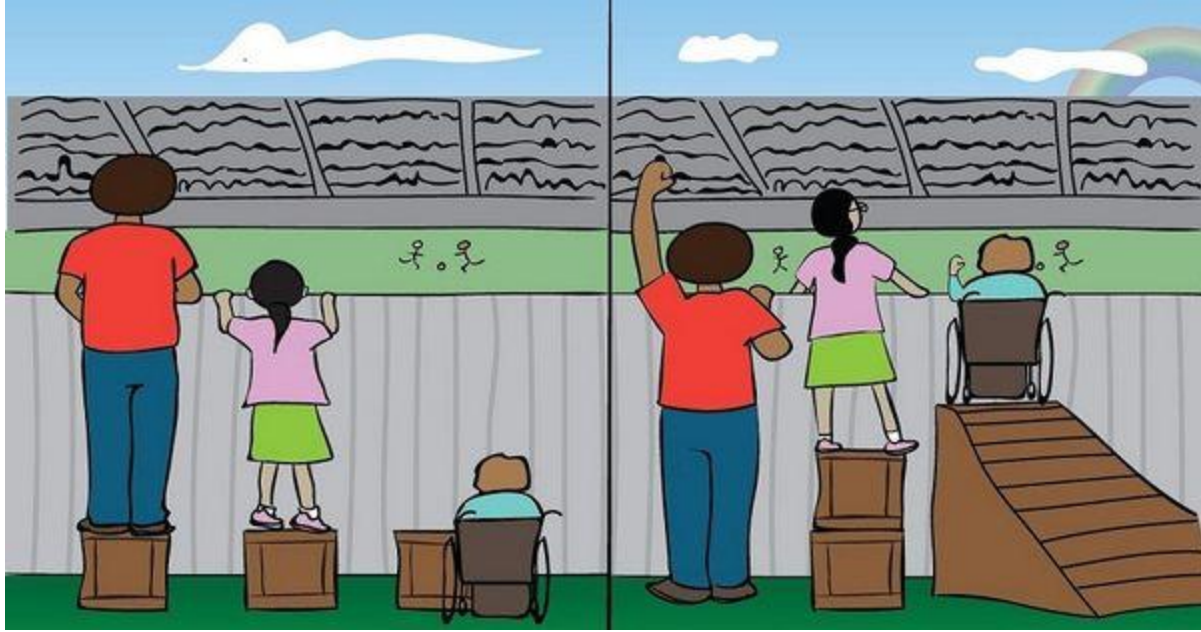
In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.

In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.



A picture illustrating the concepts of equality, equity and justice. Courtesy of [Courtesy Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities](#), by City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa



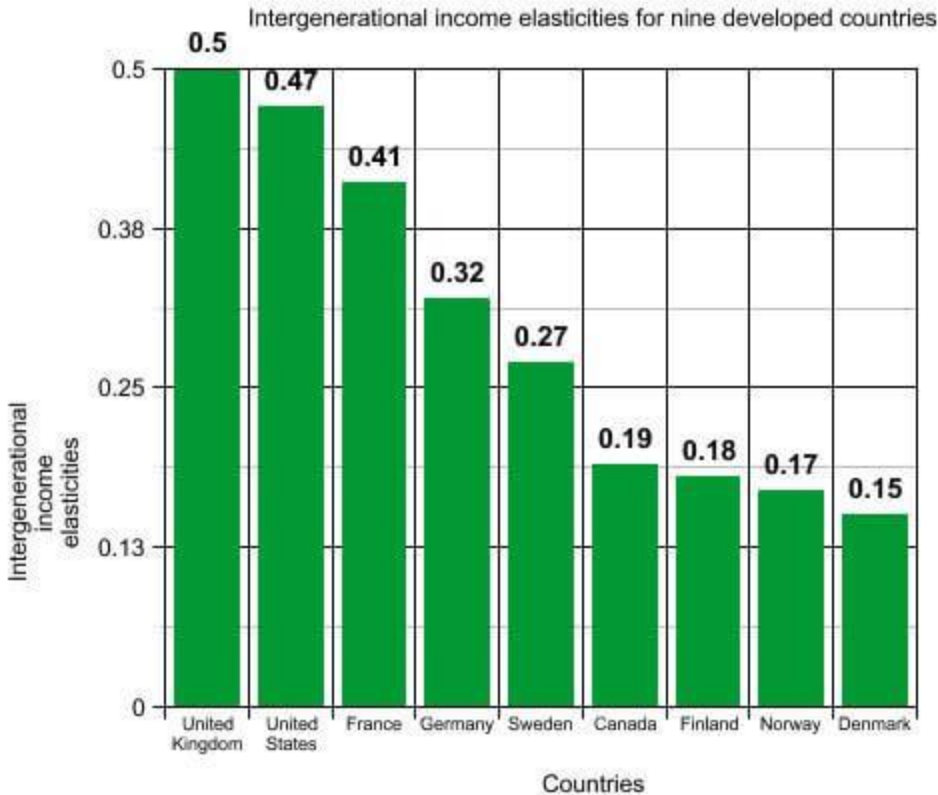
A version of the equality vs. equity picture that highlights the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities. Image courtesy [Maryam Abdul-Kareem](#).

The Case for Equity

The rationale for policies that promote equity is that economic and social class advantages tend to accumulate and self-perpetuate. It is widely known—and confirmed by research study after research study—that children's performance in school and on standardized tests is strongly correlated with family income and maternal education.

In a strictly "equal" world that does not take into consideration such historical trends, all segments of the population would be treated equally. And children from high income families will perform better at school and consequently get better college and job opportunities, eventually out-earning their counterparts from poorer families.

Over time, such divergence in outcomes will continue and widen. Indeed, a [study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found](#) a substantial "grandparent effect" in intergenerational economic mobility.



Source: Economic Mobility Project, Corak, Miles. 2006. "Do Poor Children Become Poor Adults? Lessons from a Cross Country Comparison of Generational Earnings Mobility." *Research on Economic Inequality*, 13 no. 1: 143-188.



Chart showing intergenerational economic mobility in various developed conditions (lower number means more economic mobility). The United States had about 1/3 the ratio of economic mobility of Denmark and less than half that of Canada, Finland and Norway. Only the UK has lower economic mobility than the U.S.

Affirmative Action

One example of striving for equity and not simply equality is affirmative action. Affirmative action is the policy of explicitly favoring those who tend to suffer from discrimination, especially in relation to employment or education; it is a type of positive discrimination that aims to counter the effects of traditional negative discrimination that a segment of the population tends to suffer.

For example, universities may have an affirmative action policy that they will accept a certain minimum number of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Public universities and government agencies in India have an affirmative action policy that sets aside a certain number of "seats" in colleges or [jobs](#) for people from historically subjugated social classes.

These policies violate the [principle](#) of equality. If the policy treated all candidates (whether students or jobseekers) equally, the aforementioned perpetuation of economic advantages will continue.

Taxes

Another way that governments try to engineer equality and equity is through taxes. A progressive tax system levies higher taxes on higher income brackets. For example, the first roughly \$10,000 in income is taxed at 10%, income between \$10,000 to \$38,000 taxed at 12%, \$38,000 to \$84,000 at 24% and so on until income over \$500,000 is taxed at 37%, with tax rates in between for income ranges between those figures. A flat income tax of 20% would be **equal** but not **equitable** because those with higher incomes presumably have a higher ability to pay. So a **progressive tax system is considered more equitable**.

An example of equality but no equity in the tax system is sales taxes. Sales tax on a product is the same no matter who is purchasing it. Whereas [income taxes](#) are levied by the federal government (and some state governments), sales taxes are levied only by state and local governments. One way in which state governments try to make the sales tax system more equitable is by maintaining low tax rates on essentials. For example, in Washington state, there is no sales tax on groceries. The rationale is that food and dairy are essentials for all people, so levying a tax on them will be more taxing (no pun intended) on the poor, who have to spend more of their discretionary income on these necessities.

Americans with Disabilities Act

In 1990 Congress passed the landmark [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#); the law addressed the issue of equality head-on for people with disabilities. First of all, the law prohibits discrimination based on disability, ensuring that people with disabilities are not treated unfairly. This promotes equality.

But the law goes further; it requires covered employers to provide [reasonable accommodations](#) to employees with disabilities, and imposes [accessibility requirements](#) on public accommodations. When you provide reasonable accommodations you let people with disabilities fully participate in society. For example, sidewalk ramps allow people with physical and visual disabilities to navigate independently in their neighborhoods.

Such accommodations are sometimes criticized by business groups because they can sometimes add to the cost of constructing a building, venue or public space. However, without such measures it would be extremely difficult—if not impossible—for people with certain disabilities to meaningfully engage in society. This would reduce equal access and be inequitable.

Women-friendly policies

Another example of equity is women-friendly policies in the workplace. Studies have shown that career growth for many women stalls when they take time off from work after childbirth. Some

women resign when they become mothers and then find it very difficult to re-enter the workforce a few years later. Even women who take extended maternity leave from their job find that their peers get promoted over them.

Given such structural barriers women have to face, there is a case to be made for women-friendly policies for greater equity in the workplace. Many offices provide lactation rooms for nursing mothers. Many companies provide extended maternity (and paternity) leave to their employees. Many nations mandate paid maternity leave, some for over 6 months. In fact, the United States is among only 4 nations of the world with no mandated paid maternity leave.^[1]

References

- [Do Grandparents and Great-Grandparents Matter? Multigenerational Mobility in the U.S. - NBER](#)
- [Economic mobility - Wikipedia](#)
- [Equity \(economics\) - Wikipedia](#)
- [Social equity - Wikipedia](#)
- [Equity theory - Wikipedia](#)
- [More illustrations for equality vs equity - Pinterest](#)