THE POWER OF PRIVILEGE

HOW PRIVILEGE AFFECTS ED&I IN THE WORKPLACE



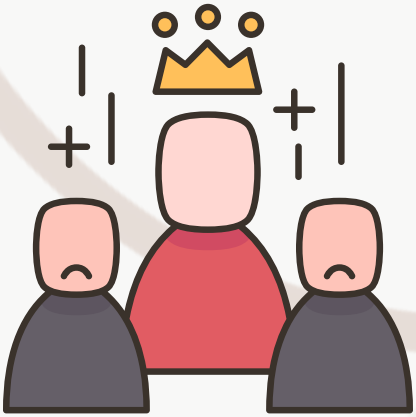
Diversity+

The Art of Thinking Independently Together

WHAT IS PRIVILEGE?

The Oxford dictionary describes privilege as:

"a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group."



To **have** privilege, is to hold certain advantages based upon a characteristic or status.

Often, these privileges are unknown to the person benefiting from them. Instead, they are **institutionalised and unconscious**.



In the **workplace**, privilege can exist in terms of:

Salary

Promotional opportunities

Day-to-day treatment

Availability of resources

...amongst other things.

WHO HAS PRIVILEGE?

Realistically, everyone potentially holds some form of privilege.

How much privilege an individual has in a situation depends on individual demographics and the circumstances of the situation at hand.

But there are patterns of certain groups holding the most privilege, and it is important to acknowledge these and understand the impact they can have on your workplace EDI journey.

TYPES OF PRIVILEGE



Gender Privilege

Gender privilege, often referred to as male privilege, is a system of advantages and benefits that are available to men based on their gender, while women and other marginalized genders experience disadvantage.

A 2023 report from HiBob found that only 16% of women received promotions in the UK, compared to 23% of men.



Racial Privilege

Racial privilege refers to a system that is structured to privilege one group over others.

e.g. White privilege, or white skin privilege, is the societal privilege that benefits white people over non-white people in some societies, particularly if they are otherwise under the same social, political, or economic circumstance.

According to the 2023 McGregor- Smith Review, White employees are more lilkely to be promoted than all other minority ethnic groups (BME), despite BME groups having a higher likelihood of being overqualified for their positions.



Disability Privilege

Disability privilege refers to the advantages and unearned benefits that people without disabilities (abled people) experience due to societal structures and expectations that are often built around the assumption of ability, while people with disabilities face systemic barriers and discrimination.

Research from the House of Commons showed that, at the end of 2023, the disabled employment rate was only 54.2% - almost 28% less than the employment rate of non- disabled people.



Class Privilege

Class privilege refers to the advantages and benefits that individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds enjoy, often leading to greater opportunities and resources compared to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research shows that individuals from a lower- income background earn 17% less than their colleagues, even when working in the same position, according to a government social mobility report.



Education privilege

Educational privilege is the idea that certain individuals or groups have an easier time succeeding in education, not because of their own merit or effort, but because they have access to resources, opportunities, and support systems that others lack.

e.g. students from wealthier families may have access to better schools, tutoring, and educational materials, while those from lower-income backgrounds may face financial barriers to accessing quality education.

Decision-makers in government, business, and the judiciary are often dominated by those who have been educated privately and at elite universities.



Cultural or Religious privilege

Cultural or Religious privilege comes with being a member of the dominant religion or culture – to have one's own religious practices and observances recognised as the norm. E.g. In many Western countries, Christian faiths hold privilege over others. In the media, alternative faiths are often portrayed as novel, strange, overly mystical or even dangerous.

A survey of members' personal experiences was completed by around 25% of practising ethnic minority members. It showed that more than 60% of all respondents have experienced bias, racism or discrimination at some point on their route to qualification or during their careers. (LSS Racial Inclusion Group findings 2022)



Sexuality Privilege

Sexuality privilege refers to the unearned advantages and societal norms that benefit individuals based on their sexual orientation, particularly heterosexuality, while disadvantaging those who identify as LGBTQ+.

LGBTQ+ colleagues are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing harassment in the workplace, with a full one-third of those who identified as LGBTQ+ reporting to have experienced bullying, harassment or sexual harassment in the workplace, compared to 27% of heterosexual respondents. (LSS 2022)



Gender Identity Privilege

This is the privilege that comes with having a gender identity (how a person identifies and express oneself in gendered terms) that conforms to the gender identity that was assigned at birth and to societal and cultural expectations of such a gender identity.



Passing Privilege

Passing is the ability to appear to belong to another group. The ability to pass is itself a privilege because it allows an individual to claim the advantages of a more privileged group.



Culture Capital or Social Asset Privilege

Cultural capital is defined as the ‘assets’ of a person that can be used to increase success in life. These assets can be either tangible, such as clothes or educational certificates, or intangible, such as knowledge or life experiences.

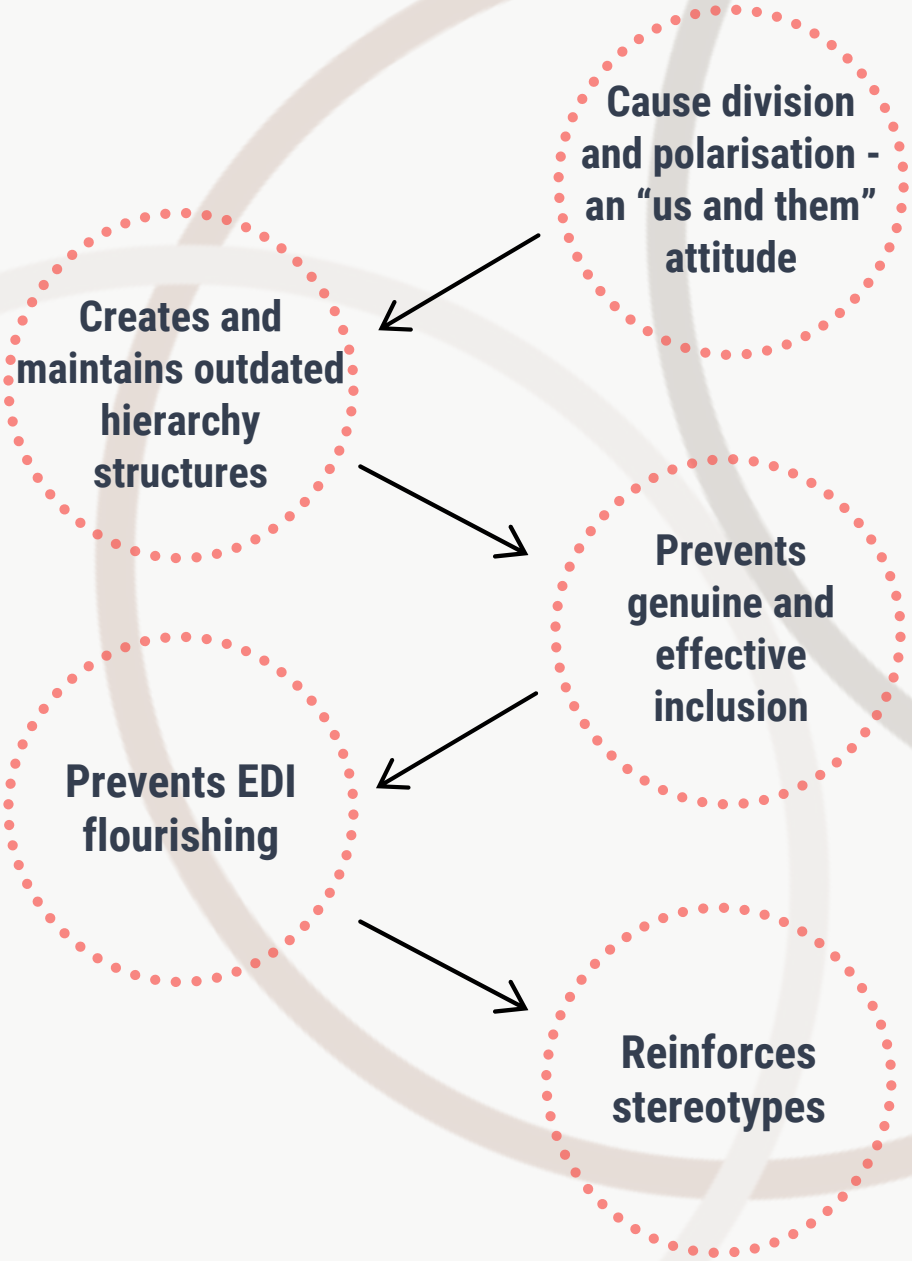
HOW PRIVILEGE AFFECTS OUR WORKPLACES

While privilege cannot be avoided, it is often an underlying root of workplace inequalities.

Often, we are entirely unaware of the privilege we hold and how it impacts our professional journey.



A lack of understanding and accepting of privilege can:



PRIVILEGE IN THE SCOTTISH LEGAL SECTOR AND BEYOND

Scottish Legal Sector

Statistics from the Law Society of Scotland Profile of the Profession 2023



Education

21% of respondents attended private school, a significantly high number compared to the Scottish national average of 13% (Tutorful)

Gender

When looking at those in private practice equity partner positions, 23% of males hold this position compared to only 8% of females, suggesting gender privilege in career progression.





Ethnicity

Those who are White Scottish, Irish or British earn, on average, 7% more than those of other ethnic groups, showcasing an ethnicity privilege and pay gap.

Politics



According to a report from The Sutton Trust, 20% of MPs attended Oxbridge at undergraduate level - a staggeringly high statistic compared to the national average of less than 1% (The New Statesman).

Teaching



According to the Scottish Government, minority ethnic teachers currently account for only 1.8% of the workforce in Scotland, a severe under-representation of the wider population at 12.9% (Census 2022).

Finance



The Bridge Group reported that almost 90% of senior roles in the financial sector are held by those from a higher socio-economic background.

Media



The National Council for the Training of Journalists reported that 72% of journalists come from a household with a parent in one of the three highest occupational groups, compared to only 44% of the working population.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND MEASURE PRIVILEGE

We all hold a responsibility to reduce the effects of privilege within our workplace if we wish for EDI to flourish.

Knowing how to **understand** and **measure** privilege, as well as take **action**, is key.



UNDERSTAND

1 Learn about unconscious bias

Unconscious bias has a deep effect on privilege. Knowing our unconscious stereotypes and assumptions of others, based on demogaphics, is a critical step in understanding the power of privilege.

2 Listen to your employees and colleagues

Often it is the voices of those around you that help with knowing the impact of privilege.

Take any privilege concerns of your employees and colleagues seriously. Act with integrity and honesty when investigating.

MEASURE

3 Collect data on privilege

Create an EDI strategy that includes anonymous employee surveys. Analyse the results to understand if there are privilege concerns within your team. Use these results to determine your actions.

4 Use EDI tools to measure privilege

Utilise tools such as our Calculator of Privilege to measure both individual privilege and that of the larger organisation.



5 Share the results

Once you have the results, share these with your wider organisation. Show people you care and let others share their suggestions for improvement, perhaps at a dedicated team meeting or to introduce an initiative to help combat the unfairneffects of privilege.

ACTION

6 Share your privilege

Acknowledging your own privilege is the first, personal step towards creating change. Take time to process the results of your privilege measurements, and consider how your demographics may have affected your current position in life.

7 Be an authentic ally

Use your privilege for more equitable outcomes for others. Show support in what you say and do. Insist on transparency and accountability.

8 Take action

Take privilege concerns seriously. Discuss how to tackle privilege within your organisation. Investigate thoroughly.

Always act with integrity, honesty and compassion.

THANK YOU FOR READING
OUR EBOOK

Need help with cultural intelligence and EDI in your organisation?

Diversity+ can help you with:

- Creating a bespoke EDI strategy for your organisation
- Delivering EDI events and learning sessions on topics including Cultural Intelligence
- Measuring privilege with our innovative Calculator of Privilege tool

Book a call

Diversity+
The Art of Thinking Independently Together