

Activity: Equity versus Equality



TIME ESTIMATE
25 minutes



MATERIALS
Sheets of paper and writing materials for all participants

PURPOSE

To apply and solidify our understanding of equity and equality by assessing practical examples of actions and circumstances in the food system.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants will classify the statements as pertaining to equity or equality in the food system. They will then justify their reasoning as a means of analysis and reflection. This activity is adapted from [Just Health Action](#).

STEPS

- 1 Review the statements in the example section below. Ask participants if the example better represents (in)equity or (in) equality. Ask them to justify their choice.

Example	(In)equity or (in)equality?
A city is having financial problems and has made a decision to cut its budget for its 25 community centers. It cuts the budget by having the same reduction in healthy vending machine food funding for all centers.	
A meeting has been planned to discuss the accessibility of healthy foods in a community; it will be held in English. However, approximately 25% of people in the community do not speak English as a first language.	
One community has less access to healthy and affordable food than the rest of the city and has requested funding and assistance to build a community garden. The City has recognized that there is an issue of historically unequal treatment in this neighborhood and has agreed to the request.	
A city has three times more green spaces per resident in its north part than in its south part.	
Access to public transport to grocery stores and affordable markets is not the same in all areas in the city.	
A community with lower income and a higher percentage of people of color compared to the rest of the city has the highest obesity rates and the highest number of convenience food vendors per person in the city.	
Develop your own example!	

- 4 Ask participants individually or in small groups of 2-3 people to develop recommendations that make each situation more equitable, if applicable.

- 5 Regroup as a class and discuss their recommendations. With each share, ask participants to again justify why their recommendation could achieve an equitable vs. equal outcome.
 - Remind participants of the definitions of equity and equality if they are struggling to distinguish the two terms:
 - Equality: denotes that each person within a community or system is treated the same, which may lead to a fair outcome, however, not always an equitable one.
 - Equity: refers to treating individuals “according to their circumstances” so that they can experience similar outcomes to the rest of the community or system. An equitable approach requires careful consideration of actors’ positionalities and intersections within society as opposed to a universal approach that may be ‘equal’.¹

¹ Dressel, Paula (2014). “[Racial Equality or Racial Equity? The Difference it Makes](#)”. Race Matters Institute.

ASSESSMENT

Provide learners with a new set of statements (or withhold examples indicated above) and have them classify each as either an example of (in)equity and (in)equality, along with a 1-2 sentence explanation justifying their choice.

NOTES: