

# PRIVILEGE WHEEL

In the United States, demographic characteristics, while not the *only* indicators/drivers of privilege, are inextricably linked with privilege. Privilege allows you to exert power—and, in the immortal words of Spider-Man’s Uncle Ben, “With great power comes great responsibility.” So where are your demographic privilege points? And what are you doing with them?

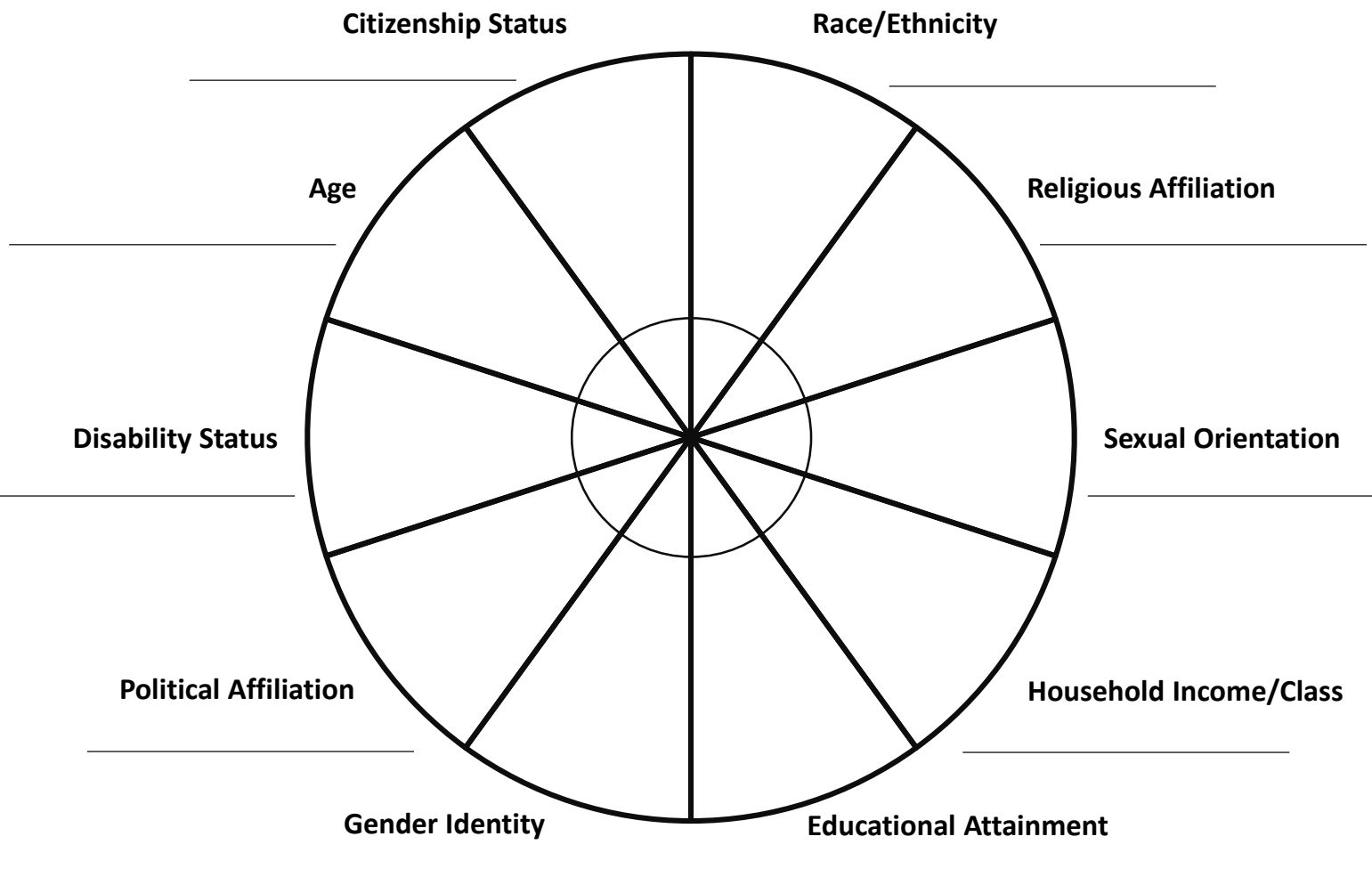
**(1)** Review the terminology and definitions (other side of paper), and then write on the blank line below each demographic category in the Privilege Wheel what group you think is accorded the most privilege in your community. For example, in most (but not all) communities in the United States, white people have the most privilege when it comes to Race/Ethnicity, so you would write “White.”

**(2)** In the outer circle, color in the portion of the wedges where your demographics align with the most privileged group and place a star next to categories where you think the reality is complicated.

**(3)** In the inner circle, for each wedge you colored in, reflect on how your privilege in this area manifests for you. Color that smaller corresponding wedge:

- *Green* if you have mostly used that privilege in ways that have positively impacted the community.
- *Yellow* if your privilege in that area has largely had a neutral impact on the community.
- *Red* if you have mostly used that privilege in ways that have negatively impacted the community.
- Leave it *white* if you don’t know and/or haven’t thought about it.

**This worksheet is yours alone, and you won’t be asked to share or show it, so please be honest in your responses.**



# DEFINITIONS

**Bias** – a conscious or unconscious preference that inhibits a person’s capacity for impartial judgment.

**Privilege** – Privilege operates on a personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional level and gives advantages, access, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups. Privilege is almost never an earned state; it is commonly invisible to/taken for granted by those who have it, and is conferred based on those whose characteristics match the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not, and regardless of their stated intent.

**Race/Ethnicity** – a social and artificial construct with exceeding social, economic, and political significance. Race is often associated with physical characteristics like skin color, hair type, eye shape, eye color, lip shape, etc. Ethnicity refers to a group or people of the same nationality or land of origin who share a distinct and/or common culture. Some examples: white, African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Arab, Native American.

**Religious Affiliation** – A religion is an institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices related to the divine. Religious affiliation specifically refers to which system or institution one most aligns with, and can include certain non/anti-religious answers including “atheist” (does not believe in the divine) and “agnostic” (does not have an opinion as to the nature of the divine). Some examples: Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Jewish, Muslim/Islamic, agnostic, atheist, Buddhist, spiritual.

**Sexual Orientation** – An individual’s physical and/or emotional attraction to another individual. A person’s sexual orientation is separate from that person’s gender identity. Some examples: straight, gay, bisexual, asexual, queer, same-sex attracted.

**Household Income (HHI)/Class** – Household income is the total annual revenue of everyone in one household unit. Class is a relative social ranking or category based on income, standing financial resources, education, status, and/or power. While household income is strictly about annual revenue, class categories are usually associated with levels of access to resources including money, contacts, and education. Some examples: \$100,000+ HHI, middle class, upper class, \$0-\$18,000 HHI.

**Educational Attainment** – Education attainment is the highest level of formal education a person has achieved. Some examples: high school, some college, college (Bachelor’s), Master’s, and Doctorate or terminal degree.

**Gender Identity** – Gender identity refers to socially-constructed roles, behavior, activities, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender identity is also an individual’s self-conception, as distinguished from biological sex, which is based solely on physical characteristics. In addition to man/male, woman/female, and non-binary (among other options), there is also the potential qualifier of “transgender,” meaning one’s gender identity does not match one’s assigned biological sex, and “cisgender,” which means one’s gender identity does match one’s assigned biological sex. “Gender nonconforming” or “gender fluid” is another identifier, used to indicate that one doesn’t adhere to stereotypical understandings of gender expression or roles.

**Political Affiliation** – Political affiliation is one’s association with a political party or faction, and that party or faction’s ideals. It can be qualified within the party/faction, as in “moderate Democrat,” or “left-leaning Republican.” Some examples: Democrat, Republican, Green, Libertarian, with modifiers such as “conservative,” “liberal,” “moderate.”

**Disability Status** – Disability is a term used to define factors that limit significant life activities or experiences considered to be typical among individuals who do not experience a disability. Such restrictions may be physical or mental, and may be permanent or temporary. Some examples of disability: vision/hearing impairment, mobility impairment, mental disorder, autism, etc.

**Age** – Age refers to how long a person has been alive. In the United States, certain ages (and age groups) are associated with different roles, levels of power and influence, and rights. Significant ages include 18 (ability to vote, “adulthood”), 21 (ability to legally drink alcohol), and 62 (current age to receive Social Security, “retire”).

**Citizenship Status** – Citizenship status refers to whether one holds citizenship status, temporary or permanent residency, or legal or illegal non-citizenship in the United States. Citizenship and certain immigration statuses bring with them a host of protections and privileges.