

January 2021 Working Definition of Ableism

by Talila A. Lewis

ABLEISM a·ble·ism \ 'ābə-,li-zəm \ noun: A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.

a working definition by Talila "TL" Lewis*; updated January 2021 *developed in community with Disabled Black and other negatively racialized people, especially Dustin Gibson

I have been updating this [working definition of ableism](#) for some years. This version simplifies some of the language from [previous versions](#) and explicitly includes desirability, misogyny, imperialism, language and religion as ideologies/characteristics used by societies, institutions, people to assign value to others. Please review context provided with the previous versions of the definition (linked above).