What is Data Equity? Why does it Matter?

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SESSION 1: 2026 DATA EQUITY SUMMIT
Building Data Equity Capacity
1:00 – 3:00PM TUESDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2026



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Question…

What is Equity?

One answer…

What is Equity?

…all men (humans) are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness…

Declaration of Independence, 4th July 1776

How do we implement this ideal?

How do we implement this ideal?

…That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men (humans), deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed…

Declaration of Independence, 4th July 1776

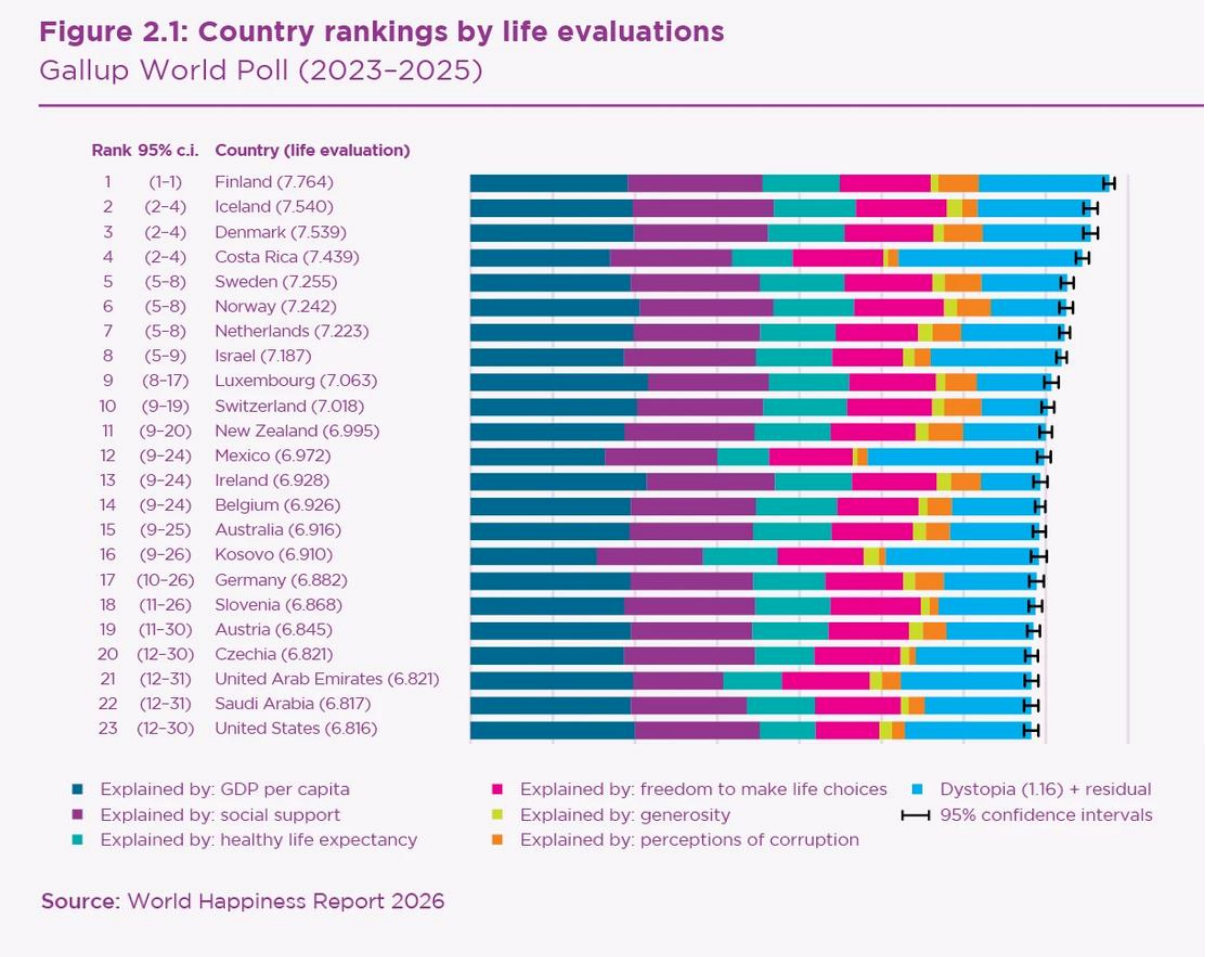
Institutions & governance/policy, accountability framework, transparency & engagement

Why does Equity Matter?

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Inequity leads to:

- An unhappier society

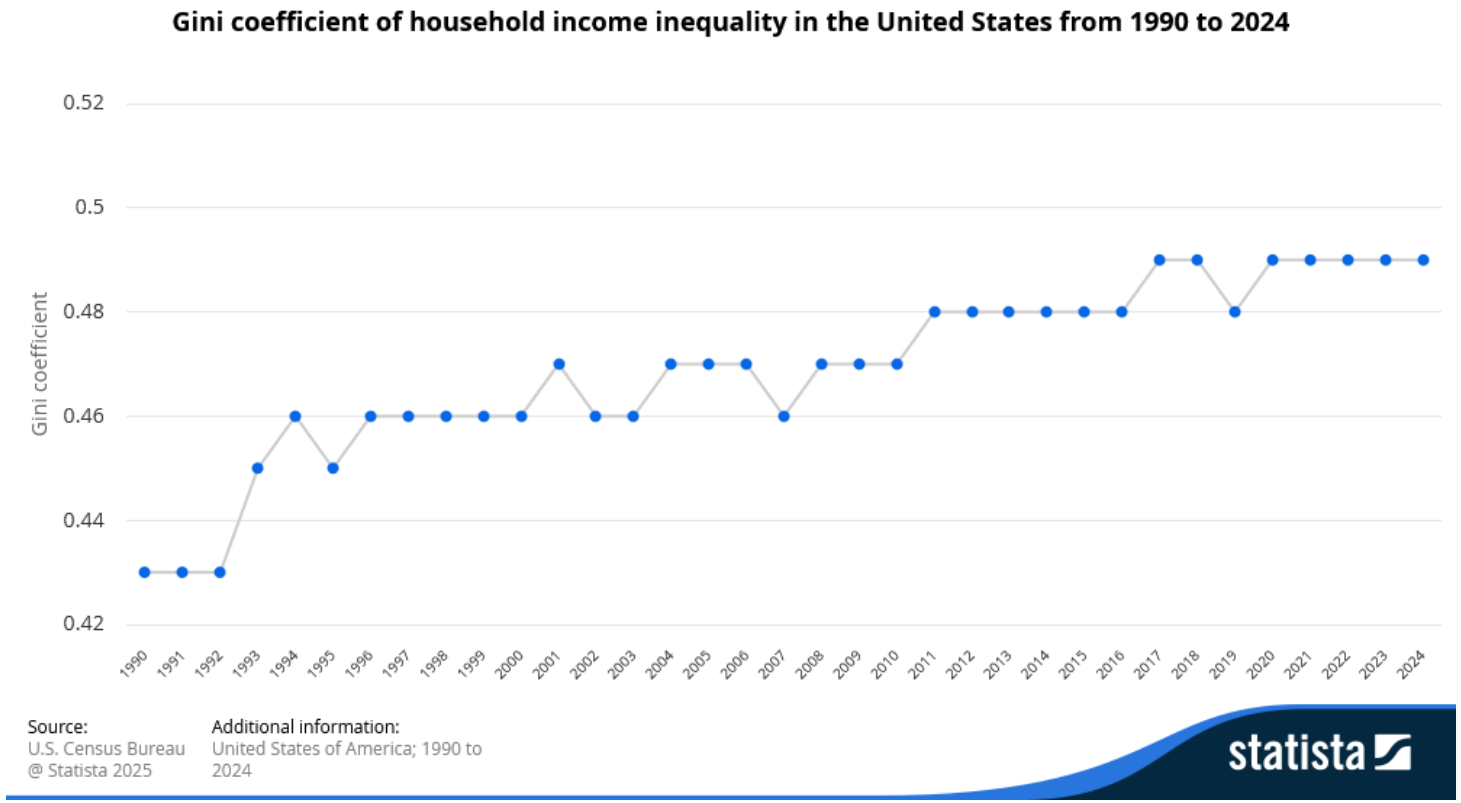


[World Happiness Report 2026]

Why does Equity Matter?

Inequity leads to:

- An unhappier society
- Wealth inequality & social instability



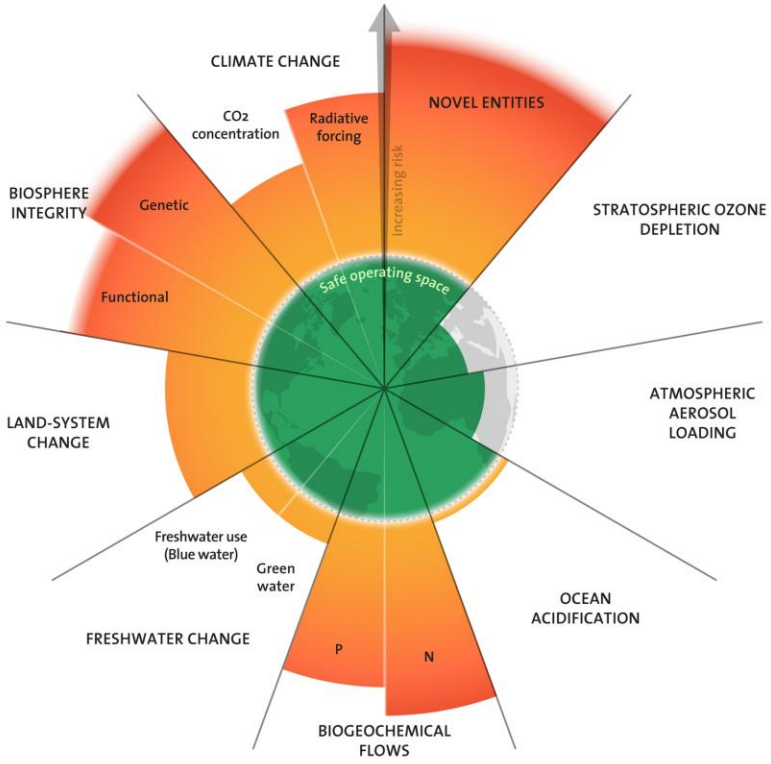
[GINI Index]

[Letters to an American, 24th October 2026, Heather Cox Richardson]

Why does Equity Matter?

Inequity leads to:

- An unhappier society
- Wealth inequality & Social instability
- Ecological Collapse



Stockholm Resilience Centre

Tragedy of the Commons

What is Data Equity?

Data Equity

Using data entrusted to us to ensure that people in the data thrive (i.e. respecting their unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness)

…but data captures only a very small aspect of who a person is…

Data Equity

Data Equity is the work of embedding within our institutions & governance/policies, accountability frameworks, transparency & engagement structures practices and guardrails *to* ensure that our data-informed decisions promote equity, given that data captures only a small aspect of an individual.

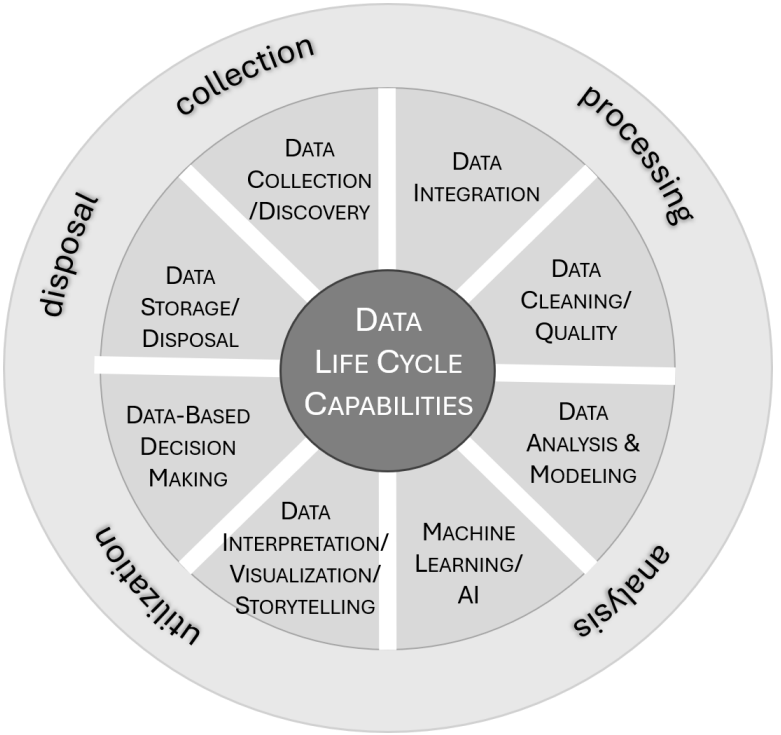
Do we need a separate Data Equity culture?

- Using data equitably requires a different set of skills
- Inequities that arise take from the mis-use of data take much longer to be recognized
- “Consent of the governed” can be compromised

Developing a Data Equity Culture

in our institutions and policies to ensure the consent of the governed

- Data Literacy
- Embed Data Equity into Data Governance
- Community engagement & effective data two-way communications
- Transparency, Accountability, Metrics
- Continuous Improvement



Data Lifecycle

Building Data Equity Capacity

- Data Literacy → Michael Metiva, SORA
- Embed Data Equity into Data Governance → Rachel Bruneau, OED
- Community engagement & effective data two-way communications
- Transparency, Accountability, Metrics → Shubha Devadoss & Margaret Braun, OHA
- Continuous Improvement