

Core Principles of Research Ethics

Research ethics is based on several core principles surrounding a respect for human dignity: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice.

Respect for Persons

Respect for Persons “recognizes the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due” (TCPS2, 2022, p. 6) and requires a respect for the participant’s autonomy and the protection of those with developing, impaired, or diminished autonomy (TCPS2, 2022, Ch.1). **Autonomy:** the ability to deliberate about a decision and to act based on that deliberation (TCPS2, 2022, p.6). An important mechanism for respecting participants’ autonomy in research is free, informed, and ongoing consent. For more information, please see [Chapter 1](#) of the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, 2022.

Concern for Welfare

Welfare is the quality of a person’s experience of life in all its aspects and consists of the impact of factors such as physical, mental, and spiritual health, and physical, economic, and social circumstances. Researchers and REBs should aim to protect the welfare of participants and to promote their welfare above any foreseeable risks (TCPS2, 2022, p. 7-8).

Justice

Justice refers to “the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably” (TCPS2, 2022, p.9). **Fairness** requires “treating all people with equal respect and consent” (TCPS2, 2022, p. 9). **Equity** requires distributing both the risks and benefits of participation in research so that no section of the population is disproportionately burdened by the risks or harms of the research or denied the benefits of the knowledge generated from the research. The principle of justice is especially important when evaluating research that involves vulnerable or marginalized groups, inclusion criteria, and potential or real imbalances of power (TCPS2, 2022).

For more information on research ethics, please see:

- [BVC Policy 500-3-2 \(2011\): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants](#)
- [TCPS2 \(2022\)](#)