

Protected Groups

Protected groups are identified in the Equality Act 2010 as sharing a particular characteristic against which it is illegal to discriminate. These groups are as follows (definitions taken from the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance):

- **Age:** A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18-30 year olds).
- **Disability:** A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender re-assignment:** The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognized as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **Race:** Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion and belief:** Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sex:** A man or a woman.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.