

Can religious discriminating ever be lawful? Yes.. if it is:

- A genuine occupational requirement
- Positive action
- Justifying indirect discrimination

In limited circumstances, a company may be able to claim that a person needs to be of a certain religion due to the nature of the post – ie a Catholic Care Home, could specify that care staff minister to residents spiritual needs. This would be general occupational requirement. They could not claim the same for the admin posts.

The British Humanist Association also reserves some leadership posts for committed humanists, but not administrative or other posts which do not effect its policy and communication work in advocating humanist convictions and stances.

In rare cases, discrimination can take place, if there is a justification for indirect discrimination – ie Fire-Fighters must be clean shaven to allow breathing apparatus to work safely, and therefore some men from certain religions are excluded.

We should show each other respect and courtesy in our dealings with people of other faiths and beliefs by:

- respecting other people's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions
- learning to understand what others actually believe and value, and letting them express this in their own terms
- respecting the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behaving in ways which cause needless offence
- recognising that all of us at times fall short of the ideals of our own traditions and never comparing our own ideals with other people's practices
- working to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict
- always seeking to avoid violence in our relationships

When we talk about matters of faith with one another, we need to do so with sensitivity, honesty and straightforwardness. This means:

- recognising that listening as well as speaking is necessary for a genuine conversation.
- being honest about our beliefs and religious allegiances
- not misrepresenting or disparaging other people's beliefs and practices
- correcting misunderstanding or misrepresentations not only of our own but also of other faiths whenever we come across them
- being straightforward about our intentions
- accepting that in formal inter-faith meetings there is a particular responsibility to ensure that the religious commitment of all those who are present will be respected

All of us want others to understand and respect our views. Some people will also want to persuade others to join their faith. In a multi-faith society where this is permitted, the attempt should always be characterised by self-restraint and a concern for the other's freedom and dignity. This means:

- respecting another person's expressed wish to be left alone
- avoiding imposing ourselves and our views on individuals or communities who are in vulnerable situations in ways which exploit these
- being sensitive and courteous
- avoiding violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements, or the misuse of any kind of power
- respecting the right of others to disagree with us

We have a great deal to learn from one another which can enrich us without undermining our own identities. Together, listening and responding with openness and respect, we can move forward to work in ways that acknowledge genuine differences but build on shared hopes and values



Religion and belief factsheet

Definitions of religion and belief

Religion	In order to be protected under the Equality Act 2010, a religion or belief must be recognised as being cogent, serious, cohesive and compatible with human dignity. The concept includes that are widely recognised in Britain.
Belief	For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, belief is defined as including philosophical beliefs, such as humanism, which are considered to be similar to a religion. Other categories of beliefs, such as support for a political party, are not protected by the Equality Act.
Non belief	The law also protects people who have no religious belief, for example humanists or atheists.



Under human rights and anti discrimination legislation you have the right to hold your own religious beliefs or other philosophical beliefs similar to a religion. You also have the right to no religion or belief.

Under the Single Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for someone to discriminate against you because of your religion or belief (or because you have no religion or belief):

- In any aspect of employment
- When providing goods, facilities and service
- When providing education
- In using or disposing of premises, or
- When exercising public functions

Common religions and beliefs from the UK (other religions are also covered by the legislation)



Buddhism

Festivals: There are a number of different traditions within Buddhism arising from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and different cultures will therefore celebrate different festivals, with some traditions not celebrating any festivals, so Buddhist members of staff should be asked what festivals, if any are important to

them. Buddhist festivals follow the lunar calendar, and will therefore take place on a different day each year. **Food:** Most Buddhist's are vegetarian reflecting their adherence to the concept of non-harm to self and others and are also unlikely to wear leather clothing or shoes. For more information visit: www.buddha.net.





in the spirit of reason and free enquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.' For more information visit www.ihcu.org



Christianity

This is a wide encompassing faith with many denominations. Which all have their own specific needs, observations and rituals. Festivals: Christmas Day 25th December/Ash Wednesday – Feb/March, Maundy Thursday/Good Friday/Easter Day – March/April. **Food:** Some denominations avoid alcohol. **Clothing:** Some denominations forbid the use of cosmetics and require their females to dress particularly modestly, including head covering. For more information visit: Denominations of Christianity.

Hinduism

Festivals: Hinduism is a diverse religion and not all Hindus will celebrate the same festivals. There are a number of occasions during the year when some Hindus may fast. **Clothing:** Hindu women will often wear a bindi, which is a small red spot on the forehead which denotes she is of Hindu faith. Many married women may also wear a necklace (magal sutra) which is placed around their neck during the marriage ceremony in addition to a wedding ring. Some Orthodox Hindu men may wear a small tuft of hair (shikha) similar to a ponytail, but often hidden beneath remaining hair or a clay marking (tilak) on their foreheads. **Food:** Most Hindu's are vegetarian and will not eat fish or eggs. None will eat Beef. Bereavement: Following cremation close family will observe a 13 day mourning period during which they will remain at home, so may request extended leave. <http://hinduism.ygoy.uk> <http://hinduism.ygoy.uk>

Humanism

Although termed a religion by some, Modern Humanism, is better defended as a non-theistic worldview; a philosophy which influences the views and actions of its proponents. As defined by the International Humanist and Ethical Union, Humanism is, ' a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic-based on human and other natural values

Islam

Prayer: Observant Muslims are required to pray 5 times a day. Each prayer takes around 15 minutes and can take place anywhere clean and quiet. Prayer times are: Dawn(Fajr), Mid Day (Zuhr), Late Afternoon (Asr), After Sunset (Maghrib), Late Evening (Isha) Friday midday prayers are particularly important to Muslims, and may take a little longer, and must be said in congregation, so may require Muslims to attend the nearest Mosque or Prayer Gathering. Festivals: The dates of festivals are reliant on the sighting of the new moon and vary year from year. Ramadan, in the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar is a significant time for Muslims. Fasting is required between dawn and sunset. Eid Al-Fitr – 3 days to mark the end of Ramadan, Eid Al-Adha takes place 2 months and 10 days after Eid Al-Fitr, All Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime, and may therefore seek an extended leave period. Clothing: Muslims are required to cover the body. Women may wish to cover the whole body except their face, hands and feet. Food: Muslims are forbidden to eat any meat which derives from a pig, or any food which is derived from a carnivorous animal. Bereavement: Burial must take place as soon as possible after death, leave may be required at very short notice. For more information visit: www.islam.com www.islam.com

Judaism

Observant Jews are required to refrain from work on the Sabbath and Festivals. The Sabbath and all other festivals begin one hour before dusk and so practising Jews will need to be home by then. Festivals: Passover – March/April, Shavuoth May/June, New Year Sept/Oct, Day of Atonement Sept/Oct (one day fast), Tabernacles Sept/Oct Clothing: Orthodox Jewish men keep their head covered at all times. Orthodox women may wish to dress modestly and may wish to keep their heads covered. Food: Jews are required to eat only kosher food which has been treated and prepared in a particular manner. For more information visit www.somethingjewish.co.uk

Other ancient religions

These include religions covered by the Council of British Druid Orders, and examples are Druidry, Paganism and Wicca. There are also other ancient religions less commonly practised such as Astaru, Odinism and Shamanism Festivals: Examples of festivals: Candlemass 2 February, Spring Equinox 21/22 March, Beltaine 30 April, Summer Solstice 21/22 June, Lughnasadh 2 August. Autumn Equinox 21/22, September, Samhain 31 October, Winter Solstice 21/22 December. Food: generally vegetarian or vegan, although not always. Clothing – Some items of jewellery associated with pagan faiths such as ankh, pentagram, hammer and crystal. For more information visit: www.cobdo.org.uk

Rastafarianism

Festivals: Birth of Haile Salassie 1- 23 July, Ethiopian New Year – 11 September Anniversary of Crowning of Haile Salassie 1-2 November, Christmas 25 December. Food: vegetarian including avoidance of eggs. Many eat only organic food. Clothing – hair is worn uncut and plaited into 'dreadlocks', often covered by a red, green and gold hat? Other: While the faith supports the smoking of ganja (marijuana), this practise remains unlawful on the UK, and is unaffected by employment equality. To find out more visit: www.rasta-man.co.uk

Sikhism

Festivals: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 5 January. Vaisakhi 14 April, martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev 16 June, Sri Gru Granth Sahib Day 1 September, Divali, October, November, Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur 24 November, Birthday of Guru Nanak November Food: Sikhs do not eat Halal meat. Some do not eat beef, and many are vegetarian. Clothes: Practicing Male Sikhs observe the 5 K's of faith – Kesh – uncut hair – observant Sikhs do not remove any hair from the body. Sikh men, and some women wear a turban Kanga – wooden comb usually worn in the air Kara – metal bracelet worn on the wrists – Kachhahera knee length underpants Kirpan – short sword worn under the clothing that is not visible. For more information visit: www.sikhismguide.org

But it's not a religion... so what is a belief?

A belief must be a deeply held philosophical belief that plays an integral role in the everyday life of the person. For example a person who has a deeply held belief in man made climate change may refuse to travel by car or plane, or a person with a strongly held belief in veganism and animal welfare may not wish to share food storage with people who use meat, or may refuse to use a leather chair.

Before taking action on grounds of discrimination, the person would need to demonstrate that the implications of their belief plays an intrinsic role in their day to day living. For example an employee could not request separate food storage facilities at work, and then eat out with colleagues in a local mainstream restaurant.

It does not cover membership of political parties, and cannot be a belief that would cause distress or harm to another person.

What is discrimination due to religion or belief?

Some examples –

1. A Sikh man takes his employer to a tribunal for banning 'headwear'. He later leaves the company, who refuse to give a reference labelling him as a troublemaker. – this would be unlawful victimisation.
2. A Christian woman mentions at interview a church she attends. Despite being the best candidate. She is not appointed as the manager does not want to work with someone who believes in God. This is direct discrimination.
3. A manager arranged for his team to go to monthly football matches. During a trip a group of employee's chant anti Muslim slogans and make offensive remarks about Islam – the manager does nothing to stop his staff's behaviour, This is religious harassment and companies are liable for behaviour by staff at an event at, or associated with work.
4. A religious woman frequently tells colleagues they are sinners and will go to hell. This is religious harassment.
5. A man who is an atheist is targeted by a colleague who leaves religious texts on his desk, and tries to engage him in conversation about Christianity. He complains to his manager, who tells him to ignore her. This is an example of harassment from a colleague on grounds of religious belief.