# Protected characteristics

([Equality and Human Rights Commission 2016](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/protected-characteristics?return-url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.equalityhumanrights.com%2Fsearch%3Fkeys%3Dprotected%2Bcharacteristics))

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### Age

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year-olds).

### Disability

A person has a disability if she or he has 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 (Sex)

A man or a woman.

### Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

### Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple.

Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

### 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

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic, or national origins.

### Religion or belief

Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

### Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.