

Marriage and civil partnership

Discrimination law

Marriage and civil partnership is one of 9 'protected characteristics' covered by discrimination law (Equality Act 2010).

Marriage and civil partnership discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, and victimisation.

Discrimination can happen in any area of work. It can result from decisions made at work or from how people behave towards each other.

It could be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It can happen in the workplace, at work social events or when people are working remotely.

What marriage and civil partnership mean by law

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership.

Marriage is 'a formal union' legally recognised in England, Scotland and Wales as a marriage.

Civil partnership is a partnership registered under the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

Marriages and civil partnerships can be between:

- people of the opposite sex
- people of the same sex

By law, if you're married or in a civil partnership you are protected even when not living together.

A person who married or entered a civil partnership abroad is protected, providing the marriage or civil partnership is legally recognised in England, Scotland and Wales.

Who is protected by discrimination law

At work, the law protects the following people against discrimination:

- employees and workers
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants
- former employees

You are not protected if:

- single

- living with a partner – but not married or civil partners
- engaged to be married
- the marriage is ended or the civil partnership dissolved

Understanding more about discrimination

[Find out about the different types of marriage and civil partnership discrimination](#)

If you need more general discrimination advice, you can read [discrimination and the Equality Act 2010](#). This includes advice on employer responsibilities and on other protected characteristics.

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about marriage and civil partnership discrimination at work, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).