

Discrimination in employment

Many groups of people have experiences which leave them feeling discriminated against in their job search. Discrimination in employment is real and does occur. The Human Rights Act 1993 protects those seeking employment and those in employment from unlawful discrimination – including employees, voluntary workers, contract workers and those seeking work through employment agencies.

In terms of job seeking, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against any person on the grounds of their:

- Sex
- Marital status
- Family status
- Religion
- Colour
- Race or ethnicity
- Disability
- Age
- Political opinion
- Employment status
- Sexual orientation

This includes failing to make a job offer or offering less favourable terms for employment.

The Act also includes indirect discrimination where conditions or requirements exclude applicants, such as a minimum height requirement that may serve to exclude most people of a certain sex or racial background. There are exceptions to the general rules of the Act and these are covered in the information booklets provided by the Human Rights Commission.

Discrimination in employment can be hard to prove at times and is always discouraging to the job seeker. Self-esteem is often lost when you feel that some aspect of yourself is not acceptable in the job market and there seems no way to deal effectively with that. Careers, Internships & Employment encourages job seekers to familiarise themselves with the Pre-Employment Guidelines of the Human Rights Act, available in our Resource Area.

If you feel that you are facing discrimination in your job search, you can contact the Human Rights Commission on their free-phone number 0800 496 877, and you can make an appointment with a Career Consultant at Careers, Internships & Employment to discuss your situation and how you could address it.