

Learning about Power, Privilege and Oppression

Religious Discrimination

Religious discrimination involves treating a person unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs. Laws protect not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious, ethical, or moral beliefs.

Waves of immigration throughout the history of the United States contributed to the nation's religious diversity, but minority religious groups have long faced misconceptions about their beliefs and practices, often combined with outright bigotry. Stereotypes, the "pictures in our heads" of other groups of people, can have social and legal consequences.

Here are some examples of religious discrimination:

- An individual's **affiliation** with a particular religious group. For example, harassing an individual because she practices Buddhism.
- **Characteristics**, such as dress, associated with a particular religion. For example, harassing someone wearing a yarmulke or a woman wearing a hijab.
- Harassing or otherwise discriminating because of the **perception** or belief that a person is a member of a particular religious group, whether that perception is correct or not.
- Harassing or otherwise discriminating because of an individual's **association** with a person or organization of a particular religion.
- Any behavior that one finds distressing, humiliating, or offensive can be considered harassment, whether intentional or unintentional.

Additional reading and resources:

- [Religious Discrimination](#), U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- [Why does Interfaith Leadership Matter?](#) Interfaith Youth Core
- [Stereotypes and Prejudice](#), The Pluralism Project, Harvard University
- [Ten Ways to Fight Hate: A Community Response Guide](#), Southern Poverty Law Center

For more resource and reading, see our [Anti-Oppression Reading and Discussion Resource List](#).