



## New laws against discrimination

Norway has enacted new laws against discrimination. The laws are enforced by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud. Here is an overview of the acts:

- Act relating to equal status between the sexes (Gender Equality Act)
- Act on prohibition of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion etc. (the Anti-Discrimination Act)
- The Working Environment Act's equal opportunity chapter (Chapter 13)
- The anti-discrimination provisions in the Tenancy Act, Owner-Tenant Act, Housing Cooperative Act and Home Building Association Act

## Compensation and damages

People who have been subjected to discrimination may demand compensation and/or damages for the offence. The rules for compensation differ in the various laws that forbid discrimination. Neither the Ombud nor the Boards of Appeals can take a position on a compensation claim or determine the amount of a claim. Such matters must be decided by the ordinary courts should the parties fail to come to an agreement.



## Contact information:

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## Are you being discriminated against?

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud:

- Handles complaints about discrimination
- Provides free and confidential guidance on your rights

## What is discrimination?

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or age. Discrimination may be illegal. You can complain about discrimination to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud.

## Examples of discrimination

- An employer who will hire only Norwegian men aged 18 to 30 discriminates against female job applicants, applicants with a different national origin and job seekers who are older.
- A restaurant or bar that only admits white people discriminates against anyone with a different skin colour.
- A housing company that will only let to Norwegian heterosexual couples discriminates against homosexual renters and renters of a different national origin.
- An employer who fires a woman because she wears a religious head covering.
- A visually-impaired person is told that she is not a candidate for a job due to her impaired functionality.
- A woman is fired because she is pregnant.

## What is illegal?

The prohibition against discrimination varies in different areas of society. Here is a brief overview:

**Working life.** Discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age is prohibited. The prohibition applies to all aspects of working life. For example, it is illegal to discriminate during hiring or firing. Harassment is also prohibited.

**Housing market.** Discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation is prohibited. The prohibition applies to both selling and letting. Letting out rooms in your own home is exempt from the prohibition.

**Community life.** The prohibition against discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion applies to all areas of society.

## How can discrimination be proven?

The object of your complaint is required to provide information to the Ombud. In discrimination cases, the burden of proof is shared. This means that if there are grounds to believe that a person has been discriminated against, the opposite party must document that discrimination has not taken place. If a person who is best qualified does not get a job, the employer must prove that discrimination has not taken place. This means that if you believe that you have been discriminated against in applying for a job and bring the matter before the Ombud, the employer must inform the Ombud why you did not get the job.

## What does the Ombud do?

The Ombud is a spokesperson for equality and non-discrimination and protects the rights of individuals. Anyone can turn to us for help instead of filing a lawsuit. The Ombud is part of the government, but is an independent agency. This means that the decisions and actions of the Ombud shall not be subject to political pressure.

## What can the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud do?

The Ombud provides guidance and advice on legal rights. You can contact the Ombud for an opinion on whether you have been subjected to illegal discrimination. The Ombud also provides advice on how you can proceed with your case.

The Ombud handles complaints and decides whether illegal discrimination has taken place. Anyone who believes they have been discriminated against may submit the case to the Ombud. The Ombud will investigate the matter and assess whether illegal discrimination has occurred.

The services of the Ombud are free of charge.