



Anti-Discrimination & Harassment (EEOC) — Your Protections at Work

Who Is Covered / Scope

Federal laws enforced by the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** protect many employees across public, private, and non-profit sectors. Coverage depends on employer size and type of discrimination claim.

- **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act** covers employers with **15 or more employees**.
- **Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)** covers employers with **20+ employees** for age 40+.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** covers employers with **15+ employees** regarding disability accommodations.
- **Equal Pay Act (EPA)** applies to virtually all employers — prohibits wage discrimination based on sex.
- Some laws (e.g. pregnancy, discrimination, harassment) apply regardless of employer size under some state or local laws too.

Core Rights

1. **Equal Treatment** — No discrimination or harassment based on **race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity/sexual orientation/pregnancy), national origin, age, disability**.
2. **Harassment Protections** — Harassing behavior that creates a hostile or abusive work environment is prohibited.
3. **Reasonable Accommodations** — If you have a disability or religious practice, your employer must accommodate unless it poses undue hardship.



4. **Retaliation Prohibited** — You are protected from retaliation for complaining, filing, or supporting investigations of discrimination.

Things to Watch Out For / Caveats

- **Timing matters** — Many claims must be filed within **180 days** of the incident (some extended by state law).
- **Internal processes first** — Some employers require you to use internal complaint channels before filing externally.
- **Proof & documentation** — Keep dates, names, emails, witnesses, policies referenced.
- **Mixed motives** — Even if an employer claims “other reasons,” discrimination can be actionable if it was a motivating factor.

Steps You Can Take

- Document incidents: what was said/done, when, who was present.
- Use your employer’s internal complaint or HR process. Put things in writing.
- If not resolved internally, file a charge with the **EEOC** (or your local fair employment agency) within 180 days (or more under certain state laws).
- If the EEOC issues a *Right to Sue* or gives the complaint *notice*, you may proceed to court or a settlement.

Resources / Where to Get Help

- EEOC — official site and guidance: eoc.gov
- EEOC “Know Your Rights” publications: eoc.gov/laws/guidance
- File a charge (EEOC): eoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination



FAQ

Q: Does this cover religious discrimination?

A: Yes. Title VII protects religious beliefs and practices. Employers must reasonably accommodate unless undue hardship arises.

Q: Can I file for unequal pay even if my employer has fewer than 15 employees?

A: Yes. The **Equal Pay Act** applies broadly, regardless of employer size.

Q: What counts as harassment vs. protected speech?

A: Harassment is unwelcome conduct based on a protected characteristic that is severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile environment. Protected speech can include lawful complaints about discrimination.