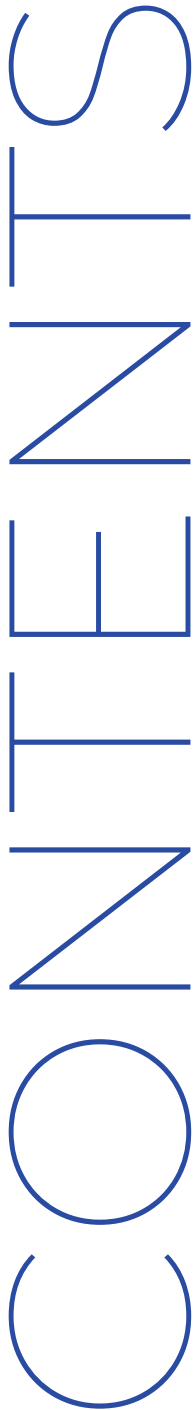


RELIGION AND BELIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

A Guide for Civil
Servants in the UK

2025

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Acknowledgements

Freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is fundamental to living in a cohesive, tolerant and diverse society where individuals can think, express and act upon religious convictions and philosophical beliefs without fear of discrimination, harassment or persecution.

The UK government is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) by enshrining this right in legal frameworks. As employees of the UK government, Civil Servants must uphold the legal frameworks set forth by the government. Beyond a legal obligation, protecting FoRB in the workplace enables employers and employees to create an environment where the dignity of every individual is guaranteed. Eliminating the fear of discrimination or retaliation fosters an inclusive and respectful working environment, enhancing job satisfaction, morale and productivity.

This booklet is intended to guide Civil Servants on protecting FoRB in the workplace. It explains the importance of safeguarding this freedom, outlines the UK legal provisions that protect this right and provides practical advice on ensuring it is upheld in the workplace. The hope is that Civil Servants will use this guide to improve practices and policies and the implementation thereof.

WHY IS FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IN THE WORKPLACE IMPORTANT?

The need to ensure that all employees have the freedom to hold and express their religion and belief in the workplace goes beyond a legal requirement. Celebrating belief in diversity in the workplace has been shown to greatly benefit workplace culture and improve productivity among employees.

Inclusive Employers note in their report, “There is wide acceptance of the corporate and social benefits of workforce diversity. As ethnic and religious workplace diversity grows, consideration of religious inclusion will be critical to achieve and retain the benefits afforded” (2019). This is particularly true in governmental contexts due to the inherently pluralistic nature of civil government’s aims.

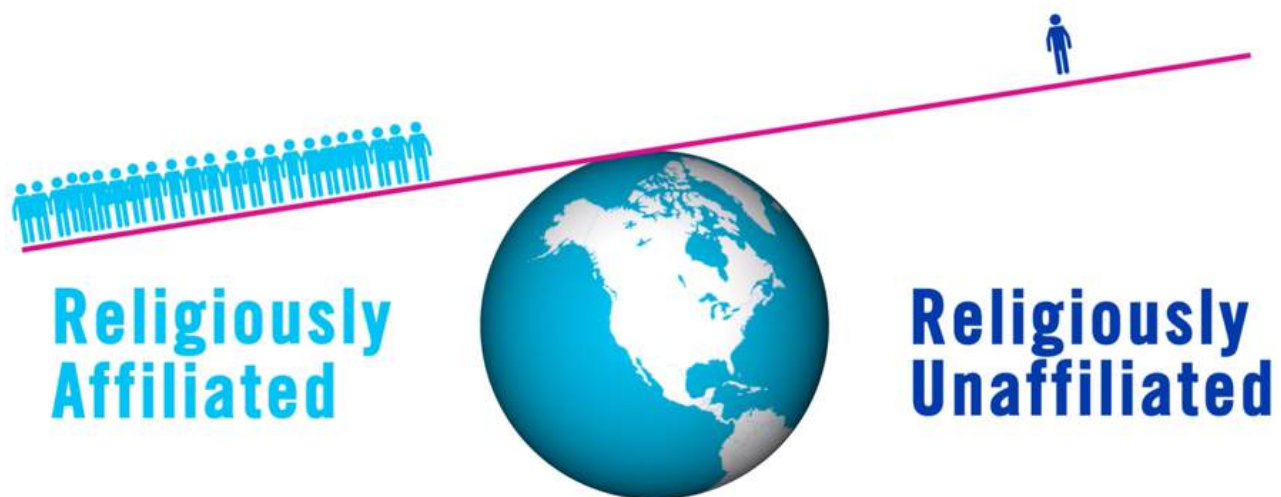
To promote goodwill, employee well-being and positive workplace relationships, Civil Servants must work to nurture personal expressions of faith or belief. Civil Servants are in a unique position to positively benefit the diverse and beautiful community of religions and beliefs, including those of non-believers, throughout the UK.



Source: Dina Gerdeman (2018), Religion in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know

What is the status of religious diversity in the UK and around the world?

Religion is not in decline. In fact, the Pew Research Center predicted that in 2050 the world will have 2.3 billion more religiously affiliated people compared to 0.1 billion religiously unaffiliated people. The growing prevalence of religiously affiliated people in the UK and globally necessitates increased religious literacy of not only beliefs and practices but also how religion impacts the workplace and coworkers.



Source: Religious Freedom and Business Foundation (2019), Religious Freedom Helps Businesses Grow

The UK has also experienced a surge in religious diversity. The UK census conducted in 2021 reported an increase in the number of people who described themselves as Muslim (6.5% in 2021, 4.9% in 2011) and Hindu (1.7% in 2021, 1.5% in 2011). Those without a religious affiliation increased by 12.0 percentage points (37.2% in 2021, 25.2% in 2011). These changes combined with the fact that England's biggest cities are becoming more ethnically diverse underscore the reality that the workplace has been transforming dramatically in recent years (*Religion, England and Wales 2022*).

There is significant religious diversity within the UK Civil Service as well. The Civil Service's workforce data from 2021 indicates that 47.2% of staff reported they identify as Christians and 39.6% as non-religious. The next most common religions were Islam with 4.3% and Hinduism with 1.8%. However, it should be noted that only 68% of Civil Servants reported their religion, so caution should be taken when interpreting these statistics (*Statistical Bulletin 2022*).



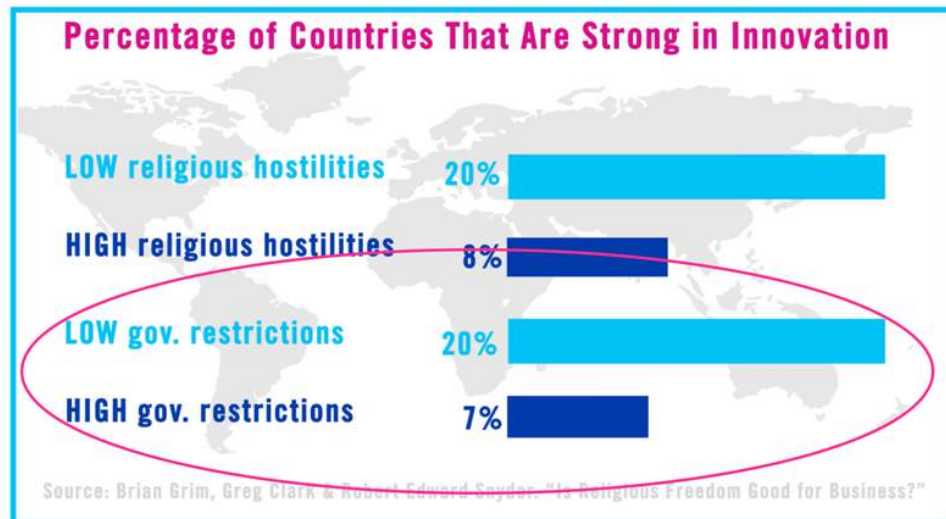
Source: Augustana College (2022), The Benefits of Religious Diversity in the Workplace

Certainly, the Civil Service is not immune to trends of growing religious diversity. Thus, practices and policies within the Civil Service must adapt to create an environment where all feel safe and welcome to express their identities, religions and beliefs.

How does freedom of religion or belief benefit business?

Restrictions on freedom of religion or belief are generally not good for business. Government restrictions on FoRB can greatly impact the economic success of a country.

In countries where governments respect FoRB, innovation is more than twice as strong compared to countries where governments do not (Grim, 2014). Protection of FoRB leads to reduced corruption, more peace, fewer harmful regulations and more diversity and growth, overall contributing to an environment where religious and moral values inform business ethics, foreign investors can rely upon the stability of the country and religious diversity enables diversity in thought and perspectives.



Even though the Civil Service is in the public versus the private sector, the same principles of FoRB in businesses apply to workplaces in government agencies. Beyond economic benefits, respecting FoRB in the workplace benefits the bottom line.

“Religious freedom is good for business, and business is good for religious freedom.”

-Brian Grim, Founder of Religious Freedom and Business Foundation

FoRB in the workplace fosters respect and trust between employers and employees and among coworkers. Practices and policies that ensure FoRB can “improve employee morale, increase retention of valued employees and help with conflict resolution” (Grim, 2014).

How prevalent is religious discrimination in the UK?

Even though academic experts, business leaders and government officials acknowledge the importance of protecting FoRB in the workplace, businesses and institutions are only beginning to implement practices and policies, which are designed to specifically address FoRB in the workplace. Religious discrimination continues to occur regularly, and thus, remains a prominent concern.

Researchers found that 39% of participants in a survey conducted in the UK were uncomfortable discussing religious festivals they celebrate at work. Only 22% felt comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols in the workplace (*Religion at Work* 2023).

32%
Accommodations for
religious observance

23%
Attitudes towards
religious discussion

14%
Lack of support

14%
Lack of diversity

9%
Role demands

8%
Lack of awareness and
understanding



Accommodations for religious observance, attitudes towards religious expression and lack of support are the most common barriers to religious expression at work. The chart to the left represents the identified themes that make religious expression at work difficult. Ultimately, FoRB in the workplace is a complicated matter.

Source: Pearson Kandola (2023), *Religion at Work*

Efforts to protect FoRB in the workplace and promote religious expression must not only target policies but also the implementation of such policies as well as attitudes towards religious diversity. While the UK government has laws that protect FoRB in the workplace, expressions of religion or belief are not treated as they ought to be, necessitating a change in workplace culture.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS OR BELIEF DISCRIMINATION?

Religious or belief discrimination is discrimination is when someone is treated differently because of their religion or belief, or lack thereof. The freedom to practice a religion and hold a belief is protected under various international frameworks and UK legislation.

It is critical to understand religion or belief discrimination, the legislation that prevents it, and how it can occur. By doing so, Civil Servants can create work environments where all feel safe, accepted and valued for their beliefs and customs. Fostering environments that promote free expression, greater authenticity and trust among one another leads to more cohesive and effective teams.

Civil servants who practise a particular religion or hold specific beliefs must not be discriminated against for their religious affiliation, lack thereof, or association with someone from a certain religious background or who has specific beliefs. Civil servants can adopt certain practices and attitudes to ensure inclusivity.



Source: Randy Gepp (2017), Religious Accommodation in the Workplace: Avoiding Legal Trouble

What UK laws protect religion or belief in the workplace?

The main UK legal frameworks that protect freedom of religion or belief in the workplace are the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Human Rights Act 1998

The [Human Rights Act 1998](#) is a UK law that grants fundamental human rights to every resident of the UK, whether they are British citizens or foreign nationals. This Act protects FoRB, guaranteeing a person the right to hold a religion or belief and change that religion or belief. Furthermore, the Act protects the right to express those beliefs as long as they do not interfere with or infringe on public safety, public order, health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others (*Human Rights Act 1998*).

Equality Act 2010

Religion or belief is also a protected characteristic under the [Equality Act 2010](#) which protects employees from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on religion or belief. Those without a religious faith and those with a faith are protected under this Act (*Equality Act 2010*).

What constitutes religion or belief?

All protected religions and beliefs are equal under the law; any religious or philosophical belief cannot override another.

Religion

Under the Equality Act, religion may include major organised religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, or minor religions such as Paganism. However, it must have a clear structure and belief system to be considered a religion. Religious discrimination can occur even when the discriminator and the victim share the same religion. For example, discrimination on the grounds of being Sunni or Shia within Islam or Protestant or Catholic within Christianity.

Belief

Belief includes religious or philosophical beliefs. These beliefs must satisfy certain criteria and go beyond political opinions.

Philosophical belief is a belief about a weighty substantial aspect of human life and behavior. Humanism, atheism, and agnosticism fall under the protected characteristic of belief.



Source: Inclusive Employees, Religious Diversity in the Workplace

What are the ways in which religious or belief discrimination can occur?

Religion or belief discrimination can occur in a variety of ways. It may be intentional or not, formal or informal. Before learning the steps necessary to prevent religious or belief discrimination, civil servants must understand and identify what forms discrimination of religion or belief may take.

Discrimination most often takes the following four forms:

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is the most obvious and easily identifiable form of discrimination. It occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others because of their religion or belief, or lack thereof. This situation is specifically known as **ordinary direct discrimination**.

Example of ordinary direct discrimination

Audrey interviews two women for a Civil Service position. One is Hindu and the other is not religious. The Hindu candidate is most qualified for the position and performs best during the interview. However, Audrey chooses to hire the candidate who is not religious because she believes the other coworkers, who are Christian or not religious, will prefer this decision. This constitutes ordinary direct discrimination because the Hindu candidate is not hired because of her religious affiliation.

Direct discrimination by association occurs when someone a victim is associated with, such as a friend, family member or colleague is of a certain religion or holds a particular set of beliefs.

Example of direct discrimination by association

Jack, a project manager, is a Christian but has a close friend and colleague Aaron, who is Jewish. Aaron often faces prejudice and negative remarks from their supervisor, Mr. MacDonald, because of his religion. One day, Jack applies for a promotion he is well-qualified for. Mr. MacDonald tells Jack that he will not be considered for the role he spends too much time with Ahmed, implying that his association with a Jewish colleague reflects poorly upon him. Despite Jack's qualifications, Mr. MacDonald's decision is based solely on Jack's association with Aaron, constituting direct discrimination by association which is unlawful.

Direct discrimination also occurs **by perception** when a victim is discriminated against because they are perceived to hold, or not hold, a religion or belief. Regardless of whether the perception is correct or not, this form of discrimination is unlawful.

Example of direct discrimination by perception

Eleanor is often seen reading books on philosophy during her lunch breaks. Her supervisor, Mrs. Green, wrongly assumes Eleanor is an atheist based on her reading material and her involvement in a secular discussion group. Despite Eleanor's commitment to her work and excellent performance, Mrs. Green excludes her from a high-profile project, stating that the team needs someone with "strong moral values" which she mistakenly believes Eleanor lacks because of her perceived atheism. Mrs. Green's actions are based on her perception of Eleanor's beliefs and lack of religion. This amounts to direct discrimination by perception.

Discrimination could mean a decision not to employ someone or turn them down for a promotion based on their religion or beliefs. Whether the direct discrimination is ordinary, by association, or by perception, it is unlawful in all circumstances.

Indirect Discrimination

This form of discrimination is less obvious and can often be unintended. It is most often a rule or policy or even a practice that is applied to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who have a particular religion or belief. In the Equality Act, indirect discrimination occurs due to a 'provision, criterion or practice' which is not defined in the Act but most likely means an employer's policies, procedures, requirements, rules and arrangements, even if informal and whether it is written down or not.

Example of indirect discrimination

Omar is Muslim and attends the weekly prayer services at the local mosque every Friday. However, his supervisor recently changed the team meetings from Wednesday afternoons to Friday afternoons. Because the new time conflicts with the time of the prayer services, Omar is no longer able to attend the team meetings. Although Omar's supervisor did not intentionally mean to exclude him, the new practice of holding team meetings when Omar attends his worship services violates Omar's freedom to practice his religion and therefore is a form of indirect discrimination.

Harassment

Harassment is 'unwanted conduct' related to religion or belief. This 'unwanted conduct' has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Bullying, nicknames, threats, intrusive or inappropriate questions, insults, whether they be verbal, written or physical and unwanted jokes or gossip which the employee finds offensive are all considered harassment. Excluding someone such as ignoring or not inviting someone to meetings or events is also harassment.

The impact of unwanted conduct as perceived by the victim is more important than the perception of the harasser and their intent. However, whether it is reasonable for the victim to feel the way they do is also taken into account when an allegation of harassment is brought before an employer or employee tribunal.

Example of harassment

Maria is a devout Jehovah's Witness. She often reads her Bible during lunch breaks and does not celebrate holidays due to her religious beliefs. Her coworkers often mock her refusal to participate in office celebrations and holiday parties. They have excluded her from all social gatherings, and Maria frequently hears her coworkers gossiping about her behind her back. The persistent harassment has adversely affected Maria's job performance and morale, and she finds it difficult to go to work because of the hostile and degrading environment in the office. The actions of Maria's coworkers are considered to be harassment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone suffers a 'detriment' which causes disadvantage, damage, harm or loss because the person:

- Made an allegation of discrimination
- Supported a complaint of discrimination
- Gave evidence relating to a complaint about discrimination
- Raised a grievance concerning equality or discrimination

An employee may also experience victimisation because they are suspected of doing one or more of the above or because it is suspected they may do so in the future.

Example of victimisation

Karam has been harassed by a supervisor because he wears a turban, a religious practice in the Sikh faith tradition. His colleague, Holly, has seen this happen multiple times and supports Karam's harassment claim. Their supervisor threatens Holly with dismissal because she decides to support Karam's claim of harassment. Holly's potential dismissal is considered victimisation under the Equality Act.

Exemptions to the Law

In limited circumstances, it may be lawful for an employer to state that an employee or job applicant must be of a particular religion or belief. This is known as an 'occupational requirement' and for it to be lawful, such requirement must fit all of the following criteria:

- Be crucial to the position and not just one of several important factors
- Relate to the nature of the job
- Be 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'

An example of an 'occupational requirement' in the civil service may be in a government department responsible for managing religious affairs or cultural heritage. A supervisor in this department is hiring an employee to lead the coordination of religious events or provide advice on matters related to diverse religious practices in the UK. In such a role, it could be considered an occupational requirement for the candidate to have a deep understanding and personal affiliation with a specific religion or belief. This requirement ensures that the employee can effectively engage with religious communities, understand their needs, and provide appropriate guidance and support.

Employers should exercise caution and may want to consult legal counsel before claiming an occupational requirement, as proving its necessity is difficult and typically arises under rare circumstances. Additionally, the occupational requirement should be reevaluated each time the position is advertised, even if the requirement was deemed justified previously. Circumstances may have changed, rendering the requirement no longer necessary.

Limitations to Religion and Belief in the Workplace

Every employee is entitled to freedom of religion or belief in the workplace, even if religious or philosophical beliefs may be considered highly controversial or offensive. However, freedom of religion or belief does not guarantee unlimited freedom of expression.

Employees are allowed to express their religious or philosophical beliefs as long as the expression does not amount to discrimination or harassment of other persons or groups. Sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race and ethnicity are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Comments that discriminate against individuals or groups based on protected characteristics are considered unlawful, even if those comments pertain to religious or philosophical beliefs.

Every person has the right to be protected against discrimination, harassment or persecution. Civil Servants should actively work towards creating a workplace environment where all feel free to express their identities and beliefs.

HOW CAN CIVIL SERVANTS PROTECT FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IN THE WORKPLACE?

Expression and understanding of religious and belief diversity in the workplace are vital for building a productive and welcoming culture. How, then, might Civil Servants best implement FoRB values? The following suggestions are for employers and employees as they all contribute to creating an environment where FoRB is protected.

Faith or belief remains an integral part of a person's belief system, values and well-being and often shapes their ethics and work approach, even within the workplace. There are many important areas to consider to create a more inclusive environment where all feel safe to hold and express their religion or belief, which shapes their identity inside and outside the workplace. The following areas to consider are not all-inclusive but offer a start for employers and employees to reevaluate practices and policies as they work to protect FoRB in the workplace.



Source: Farah Hussain (2023), Religious Diversity in the Workplace and Why It's Important for Inclusion

Areas to consider:

Social Gatherings

Civil Servants should ensure that social gatherings or events, formal and informal, are inclusive of those of different religions or beliefs and accommodate needs linked to religion or belief. Feeling part of a team does not mean that employees need to participate in activities they are uncomfortable with. When planning an event, Civil Servants should consider the day of the week and whether the event's date will clash with a religious holiday. The best practice is to communicate with team members to understand their preferences and offer a variety of choices and activities throughout the year so all feel included.

Case Study

A work team regularly holds informal social gatherings at a local pub. However, one team member, who is a Buddhist, does not consume alcohol due to her religious beliefs and feels uncomfortable in such a setting. Consequently, she never attends these gatherings and eventually feels excluded from the group. To address this, the team decides to meet at a local cafe where their Muslim colleague feels comfortable and can participate in the informal gatherings.

Dress

The Civil Service allows employees to wear clothing or symbols associated with a religion or belief, such as crosses, head coverings and turbans. All employees should be encouraged to wear their clothing with no expectation of judgement or unusual treatment. However, clothing should not interfere with the employee's ability to carry out their duties. Civil Servants should refer to the policies on dress codes of their department or agency for further guidance.

Case Study

James is a devout Orthodox Jew and wears a yarmulke because of his religious beliefs. However, his office has a strict dress code policy that prohibits any headgear. James discusses his concern with his supervisor, explaining the religious significance of the yarmulke. Recognizing the importance of accommodating James' religious practices, his supervisor agrees that James can wear a discreet, black yarmulke that complements the office attire. James is granted this accommodation because wearing the yarmulke is based on a religious belief commitment and does not interfere with James' ability to perform his work duties.

Food and Fasting

When providing food for an event or meeting, it is important to consider the religious dietary restrictions of employees. To ensure inclusivity, it is best to enquire about attendees' dietary preferences beforehand, perhaps through an email RSVP. Subsequently, liaise with the caterer to accommodate various dietary needs. Many religions have limitations or restrictions on alcohol consumption. When consuming alcohol at an event, be aware of the needs of coworkers who may not drink alcohol for religious reasons.

Additionally, some religions require adherents to fast at different times of the year. Strive to reach an understanding where fasting is approached with empathy, allowing fasting employees the flexibility to work during these times. They may opt to adjust their work schedules, beginning or ending tasks at different times, and may also prefer reduced lunch breaks.

Case Study

Amira, a devout Muslim, fasts from dawn to sunset during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which affects her usual lunch break routine. Her office has a policy requiring all employees to take their lunch break at a set time. Amira's manager agrees to let her adjust her working schedule during Ramadan. Additionally, Amira is provided with a quiet room where she can rest or pray during her lunch break. This solution respects Amira's religious observance while ensuring that office productivity and policies remain intact.

Multi-Faith or Quiet Rooms

Some religions require adherents to pray at different times of the day. Employees affiliated with such a religion may need access to a space for religious observances. Most if not all Civil Service locations should provide access to a multi-faith or quiet room for religious individuals. If a location does not, contact inclusion@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. Departments and agencies should make information on the location of the room readily available to employees. Additionally, it is important to ensure that these rooms remain protected for their intended purposes. Multi-faith or quiet rooms should not be used as storage spaces or meeting rooms.

Case Study

David has no religious affiliation and works in an office with a multi-faith room. While he does not use it for religious purposes, David values it as a quiet space for meditation and reflection. Understanding that the multi-faith room is intended for all employees, regardless of their religious beliefs, David's supervisor encourages him to use the space whenever he needs a moment of peace.

Annual Leave and Attendance

Although there is no legal requirement to provide time off for religious purposes, employers should approach such requests with empathy and strive to be reasonable and flexible when feasible. Denying these requests without due consideration could potentially constitute discrimination. The Civil Service's annual leave and working policies should aim to accommodate as many requests as possible. However, employers must strike a balance between meeting individual needs and maintaining business operations. Furthermore, employers should avoid showing undue favouritism towards any specific religious group at the expense of others with different or no religious beliefs.

Some religious individuals may also request time off during the workday to perform prayers at specific times of the day. Employees should be able to carve out time during their schedules for religious observances to maintain an inclusive workplace.

Case Study

Lila, a devout Buddhist, works in an office where many of her colleagues take time off for major holidays like Christmas, Eid, or Diwali. Lila values time off for her Buddhist holidays, which are important to her spiritual practice. Lila discusses her needs with her supervisor, and, as a result, Lila is able to take annual leave to attend significant Buddhist events such as Vesak.

Varied Beliefs within a Shared Faith

Understanding that people who identify with the same religion or belief may differ significantly in how they interpret and express their faith is critical. These differences can arise from various factors such as cultural backgrounds, personal experiences and individual perspectives. The best way to navigate this is to communicate with coworkers sensitively and respectfully.



Source: Inclusive Employees, Religious Diversity in the Workplace

How do you prevent religious discrimination?

Advice for Employers

Religious Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment

Do not discriminate against a job applicant if that applicant includes religious experience on a resume.

Establish a safe, anonymous reporting system for employees who feel they have been discriminated against or harassed, including for reasons related to an employee's religion or belief.

Religious Accommodation and Inclusion

An employer should ensure that its dress code policy allows an employee to request a reasonable accommodation if religious beliefs require certain grooming and dress practices.

An employer may ensure that events provide options for employees whose religious beliefs require certain dietary restrictions.

An employer may consider allowing employees to take a "floating holiday" that may be used on a date of the employee's choice, which may include a religious holiday.

An employer may consider allowing employees to form religious or faith-based employee groups, provided that the employer does so on a nondiscriminatory basis.

An employer may consider creating designated spaces that employees may use for prayer or other religious devotional practices.

An employer should never allow employees to feel compelled or pressured to participate in religious or faith-based observances or activities. For example, suppose a group of employees in a religious or faith-based group chooses to have a prayer meeting on employer premises. In that case, other employees should not be implicitly or explicitly pressured to attend the meeting.

Inform and Train Employees

Train line managers and supervisors to address and recognise religious discrimination and handle discrimination complaints effectively.

Ensure all employees are informed about the locations of relevant policies.

Remind employees of their duty to avoid discriminatory behaviour.

Educate employees to identify and comprehend discrimination.

Offer regular training on equality and diversity.



Source: Bonnie Azoulay (2020, 6 Tips for Navigating your Religious Needs at Work (From People Who've Done It)

Civil Service Networks

Civil Service Networks assist and support Civil Servants while raising awareness of the challenges underrepresented groups face. Employee networks are not only a place for dialogue but also serve to shape ideas and deliver them in partnership with government departments.

Members of the Civil Service interfaith and belief network group consist of the chairs of our cross-Whitehall faith and belief networks. It brings together the Civil Service Jewish Network (JNet), the Civil Service Muslim Network, the Civil Service Hindu Connection, Humanists in Government, the Home Office Sikh Association and Christians in Government.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employer-sponsored, employee-led affinity and allyship organisations. They provide an official platform for diverse communities within an organisation to support each other and engage with and educate others.

These groups aim to ensure that every employee feels welcomed and valued, and they also foster an environment where diverse perspectives can contribute to business decisions.

Research indicates that the presence of faith-and-belief-oriented ERGs enhances overall inclusion for other groups, including those defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability, age, and family responsibilities.

For more information on ERGs, visit the following website:

<https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/ergs>

What do you do if you have experienced religious or belief discrimination?

If you feel that you have experienced or are experiencing discrimination in your workplace, there are several ways to seek protection. The first and most important is to bring up the issue with your line manager or supervisor. Many issues can be resolved in encouraging ways through discussion within the workplace. Many issues of discrimination or disruption of religious or belief identity in the workplace arise from ignorance, rather than from malintent.

However, not all issues can be resolved within the workplace. If this is the case, refer to the duties of part 11 within the 2010 Equality Act, which outlines the Public Sector Equality Duty, a list of responsibilities that all public sector employers must fulfil. Violations of these duties or other duties within the Equality Act could be grounds for a legal claim or action within your specific public sector entity.

For details on these duties, refer to these links:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/11>

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9448/>

If informal action is unsuccessful in resolving the discrimination, reach out to ACAS, Citizens Advice or a trade union representative.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/contact>

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm>

You may also be able to take a claim to an employment tribunal for discrimination.

How can Civil Servants evaluate and benchmark workplace religious inclusivity?

Many corporations are beginning to measure their religious equity, diversity and inclusion. Benchmarking religious inclusivity is different from benchmarking inclusivity of other social groups. For example, religious inclusivity is an accommodation mindset rather than affirmative action. Religious inclusivity is about policies and activities.

The Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Index is an international benchmarking survey companies use to track their progress in embracing religion and belief in the workplace. Whether it is a corporation or a government agency, the REDI Index is a reliable tool for employers and employees to evaluate how their current policies and practices in the workplace foster inclusivity of religion or belief. Civil Servants should review the REDI Index below to assess their policies and practices and make the necessary adjustments.

REDI Index

1. Does your company's main public-facing diversity landing page mention religion and/or describe how religion is part of your diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments?
2. Does your company have formally approved, faith-and/or-belief-oriented employee resource groups (ERGs) or other such official employee-led groups whose aim is to foster a diverse, religiously inclusive workplace aligned with your company's purpose?
3. Has your company described its practices related to faith-oriented ERGs or other faith-oriented activities to other companies through individual consultations, diversity conferences, or otherwise during previous 12 months?

REDI Index (continued)

4. Has your company specifically addressed religion (incl. faith and belief) as a topic in your internal diversity and inclusion training during the previous 12 months?
5. Does your company provide professional chaplaincy* services to serve its employees?
6. Does your company seek to understand the faiths and beliefs of its clients, customers, partners and/or stakeholders, in order to serve them?
7. Does your company have procedures that are communicated annually to employees about how to request a religious accommodation, such as time off for a religious sabbath, holiday or prayer time?
8. Does your company have procedures that are communicated annually to employees about how to report instances of religious discrimination (including religious non-accommodation)?
9. Have your employees – in an official capacity – participated in any external religious diversity conferences or faith-related professional events or company-sponsored/approved religious inclusion events during the previous 12 months?
10. Does your company currently match employee donations to faith-based and religious organisations?
11. Does the company hold events to celebrate and educate about the various cultures and faiths of its employees and through them equitably promote religious inclusion publicly in the communities where the company works?



Source: Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, REDI Index and Monitor Report 2024

CONCLUSION

By regularly reevaluating and seeking to improve policies and practices, Civil Servants, whether employers or employees, can create environments where all feel safe and welcome to express their religion or belief (or none).



Why?

- FoRB benefits businesses and economies.
- The world and the UK are becoming increasingly more religiously diverse.

What?

- The Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 protect FoRB.
- Violations of FoRB can take many forms in the workplace.



How?

- Employers and employees should regularly reevaluate practices and policies to ensure FoRB is protected.

Committing to freedom of religion or belief within public institutions sets a powerful example for the broader community. Civil Servants can help to foster a more inclusive society by upholding these principles.

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Freedom of Religion and Belief in the Workplace

A Guide for Civil Servants in the UK

What is religious discrimination?

When someone is treated differently because of their religion or belief, or lack thereof

What do you do if you have experienced religious experience?

Talk to a supervisor.



Reach out to ACAS, Citizens Advice or a trade union representative.



Take a claim to an employment tribunal.

How to protect FoRB in the workplace?

- Improve equality, diversity and inclusion
- Put policies and procedures in place
- Inform and train staff
- Create ways for staff to be heard
- Allow employees to form religious or faith-based employee resource groups

Why is it important?

- Religious diversity is increasing
- Increases productivity
- Improves workplace culture
- Fosters respect and trust

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Short Introduction to Equality Law

For further information on the Equality Law 2010.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9448/>

Civil Service Faith and Belief Toolkit

This toolkit offers additional information on religion and belief in the workplace, specifically for UK Civil Servants.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/faith-and-belief-toolkit/the-civil-service-faith-and-belief-toolkit#our-employee-networks-and-how-to-get-in-touch>

Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity and Inclusions (REDI) Index

Individuals and organisations can learn more about the REDI Index and participate in the survey as well.

<https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/redi>

Religious Freedom and Business Foundation

The Religious Freedom and Business Foundation is dedicated to educating the global business community, policymakers and non-governmental organisations about the impact of faith and religious freedom in the workplace and economy. Their site has additional information on religion and belief in the workplace.

<https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/>

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Brigham Young University, London

Brian Grim, Religious Freedom and Business Foundation

Yusuf Ahmet, Baringa

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to promote and advocate for international freedom of religion or belief.



All-Party Parliamentary Group for
International Freedom of Religion or
Belief

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/>



<https://theforbfoundation.org>