

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is Hong Kong's statutory body responsible for enforcing the city's anti-discrimination laws, handling complaints, and promoting equality through education, research, and policy advocacy. It administers four key anti-discrimination ordinances that protect people from unfair treatment in areas such as employment, education, provision of goods and services, and club membership.

Types of discrimination covered

Hong Kong's four main anti-discrimination ordinances are:

Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) protects against discrimination on the grounds of:

- Sex (male/female)
- Pregnancy
- Marital status (single, married, separated, divorced, widowed)
- Breastfeeding

Also covers sexual harassment and victimisation (retaliation for making a complaint).

Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) covers physical, mental, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities, including mental illness and past disabilities. Prohibits:

- Direct discrimination (treating someone less favourably because of disability).
- Indirect discrimination (applying a requirement that is harder for people with disabilities to meet and not justifiable).
- Disability harassment and vilification.

The Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) protects people who have responsibility for the care of an immediate family member (for example, a child or an elderly parent).

The Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) prohibits discrimination, harassment, and vilification on the grounds of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin.

Across these ordinances, the law recognises:

- **Direct discrimination** – treating someone worse than another person in a comparable situation because of a protected characteristic (sex, pregnancy, disability, family status, race).
- **Indirect discrimination** – a neutral requirement or condition applied to everyone that disproportionately disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, and which is not objectively justifiable.

- **Harassment** – unwanted conduct (including sexual or disability harassment) that humiliates, intimidates, or offends.
- **Victimisation** – retaliating against someone because they made a complaint, were involved in a complaint, or helped someone else complain.

When you need to complain

To use the EOC's complaint mechanism, your situation must:

- Relate to one of the protected grounds: sex, pregnancy, breastfeeding, marital status, disability (including mental health), family status, or race.
- Involve an unlawful act under the ordinances, such as discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in areas like:
 - Employment (recruitment, promotion, termination, terms of employment).
 - Provision of goods, services, and facilities.
 - Education.
 - Club membership and activities.

Time limit: A complaint must be lodged in writing within 12 months of the alleged discriminatory act. The EOC may consider out-of-time complaints, but the standard position is to complain within this 12-month window to preserve your position.

You should consider complaining to the EOC when:

- You believe you have been treated less favourably or subjected to harassment/victimisation because of a protected characteristic.
- Internal channels (for example, HR, school, service provider) have not resolved the matter, or you want an independent conciliation process.
- You are considering legal action and want the EOC's assistance and possible conciliation first, as litigation typically follows (not precedes) an EOC complaint.

How to make a complaint (step-by-step)

The EOC requires that complaints under the four ordinances be made in writing by the aggrieved person or an authorised representative. You can:

Use the online complaint form (recommended) Link: EOC Online Complaint Form – <https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/Form/Index/2> You select which ordinance(s) your complaint is under (Sex, Disability, Family Status, Race), then provide details of what happened, who was involved, and when.

Send a written complaint by post or letter. Address: Equal Opportunities Commission 16/F, 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong.

Include: your name, HKID number, contact details, the organisation/person you are complaining about, facts of the incident(s), and what loss or harm you have suffered.

Complain in person at the EOC office. You may visit the EOC office above during opening hours; staff can assist you in putting the complaint into writing if you have difficulty drafting it yourself.

Fax (for written complaints) Fax number for discrimination complaints: 2106 2324.

Remember: Once you complain, the EOC will normally send details of your complaint (including your name and allegations) to the respondent as part of its investigation and conciliation process.

The EOC first assesses and may investigate; if appropriate, it will then try to conciliate (mediate) between you and the respondent. If conciliation fails or is inappropriate, you may consider taking the case to court, sometimes with EOC assistance.

Enquiry hotline and contact details. If you are unsure whether your situation falls under the anti-discrimination laws or need help before drafting a written complaint, you can contact the EOC:

- **Enquiry hotline:** 2511 8211 (for questions and procedural guidance).
- Opening hours: Monday–Friday, 8:45 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.; closed Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays.
- Outside hours, you can leave a message and contact number; staff will return your call when on duty.

Office address (for in-person enquiries/complaints): Equal Opportunities Commission 16/F, 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong.

The EOC cannot award compensation itself, but it can investigate, attempt conciliation, and, in some cases, provide legal assistance for court proceedings if your case raises important questions of principle or public interest.