

What is National Origin/Ethnicity Housing Discrimination?

National origin/ethnicity is a protected characteristic under federal, state, and local fair housing laws. You are protected from national origin/ethnicity discrimination in all aspects of housing, including when renting, buying, or selling a home, or while residing in your home. That means that you cannot be treated differently by landlords, sellers, agents, banks, management companies, operators of facilities, co-op boards, or other housing providers because of where you were born, or where your family comes from. You also may not be treated differently because of your culture, ancestry, language, accent, physical appearance, or because you associate with people of a certain national origin/ethnicity.

What are examples of National Origin/Ethnicity Discrimination?

- Steering a prospective buyer or renter toward or away from certain neighborhoods because of their ethnicity
- Using derogatory or offensive terms to harass, intimidate, humiliate, or degrade people based on their national origin
- Refusing to rent, sell, insure, or finance housing, refusing to negotiate for housing, or otherwise making housing unavailable to individuals because of national origin
- Offering an apartment with substandard housing conditions to a tenant or refusing to make repairs to a tenant's apartment because of their ethnicity
- A housing provider failing to take corrective action regarding a complaint of ethnicity-based graffiti or vandalism

Differential treatment based on limited English proficiency

Although language is not a protected characteristic under fair housing laws, it can be a gateway for landlords and other housing providers to discriminate against people due to their national origin, ethnicity, race, or citizenship status. A housing provider may be engaging in discrimination if they:

- Include "English-speakers only" in an advertisement for an apartment
- Refuse to consider a prospective tenant because of their accent
- Ask a tenant not to speak languages other than English on the property
- Rent to people who speak one non-English language but not to people who speak a different non-English language

Are non-U.S Citizens covered?

Yes. Fair housing protections apply to everyone, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

Where can I learn more?

If you think you are experiencing any form of housing discrimination, contact the FHJC. We will help sort out the facts and provide you with information about your rights and options under fair housing laws. You can also contact us – anonymously if you prefer – if you know about housing discrimination that is happening to others. Our counseling and investigative services are provided for free, regardless of income.