

Know Your Rights - Discrimination in Housing, Who is Protected?

Housing discrimination occurs when an individual is treated differently than other individuals based upon race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, receipt of public assistance, sexual orientation, or familial status.

Under the laws of the state of Minnesota, generally, those individuals who rent or own a home or are seeking to purchase a home, may not be discriminated against by a landlord, seller, owner, realtor, or lender **because of** the factors above.

Could it be discrimination if a landlord refuses to rent to an individual who is a single mother?

A landlord in this situation may have violated several of your rights. If the landlord's decision is motivated because the individual is single that is a violation of the individual's rights. Discrimination based on marital status applies to individuals whether married, single, remarried, divorced, separated, or a surviving spouse. To the extent that the landlord's decision is based upon the fact that you are a mother, this too, may violate your rights. Familial status refers to the number of children you have, including pregnancy. There are exceptions however. A landlord may set limits on the number of individuals that live in the apartment, provided that the limit is reasonable and motivated by legitimate business reasons and not based upon a desire to eliminate individuals with children. Furthermore, if the decision is made because the prospective tenant is female, again, this would be discrimination based on gender.

Is it illegal for a landlord to charge different rates of rent to individuals in an apartment building?

Possibly. If the decision to charge a higher or lower rent is based upon race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, receipt of public assistance, sexual orientation, or familial status, then the decision may be illegal. If, however, the decision is based upon another reason, like number of bedrooms in the rental property, then the landlord's decision may be completely acceptable. Additionally, individuals in the "majority" categories, despite popular misconception, are also protected under the laws. For example, it may be a violation for an African American landlord to charge a higher rent to a Caucasian individual if it is based on race.

Other forms of discrimination could include, but are not limited to, eviction, refusal to make repairs, or refusal to sell a home, if the decision is motivated **because of** race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, receipt of public assistance, sexual orientation, or familial status.

If you feel you have been a victim of discrimination, contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights at 1-800-657-3704, 190 E. 5th Street, Suite 700, St. Paul, MN 55101, online at www.humanrights.state.mn.us or an attorney. This article is intended for educational purposes only, and in no way provides or intends to provide legal advice.