

Business Case Briefing

Religion and belief

What is the business case?

The UK workforce is characterised by diverse religious faiths and beliefs. Different employment sectors are characterised by predominantly different religions/beliefs. Such faiths and beliefs are therefore can be very relevant to recruitment and retention strategies. Recognition of diverse faiths is also an important element of employment conditions, and also can be very influential in achieving market advantage.

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 protects workers, including those on vocational training programmes, from discriminatory employment practices based on actual or perceived religion or similar belief defined as religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.

Defining characteristics of religion and beliefs by employment sectors

In the 2001 Census 8.6 million people in Great Britain said they had no religion, 41 million said they were Christian, and 1.6 million were Muslims, the largest non-Christian religious faith. The following summarises what we know about employment sectors and employment status by the main religious faiths in the UK.

- Non-Christian faiths are characterised by higher self-employment. In 2004 a third of Jewish adults were self-employed, followed by around a fifth of Muslims and Buddhists, compared with around one in ten Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and those with no religion.
- Certain religious groups are concentrated in particular industries. For example in 2004 37 per cent of Muslim men in employment were working in the distribution, hotel and restaurant industry compared with 17 per cent of Christian men; Muslim and Sikhs were more likely to be working in the transport and communication industry (more than one in seven) compared with less than one in ten from any other religious group; and Jewish men were more likely than men from any other religion to work in the banking, finance and insurance industry (around a third of Jewish men).
- Among women in employment, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu women were most likely to work in the distribution, hotel and restaurant industry (over a quarter of each group compared with around a fifth of women from most other groups; Sikh women were more likely than other women to work in manufacturing (one in seven) with less than one in ten women from any other religion.
- However there are also higher unemployment rates among some religious groups. For example, unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than for any other religion, for both men and women.

What can employers do?

- Employers need to be aware of religious holidays and religious practices, including dietary practices, and to allow suitable space and time for prayers/religious observances ~ make flexible working patterns work for you and your workforce
- HR staff need to be sensitive to areas of cultural and other faith-based differences which may intrude on team working and management issues, and to provide opportunities for external advice and mediation.

Follow the links below:

[Employers' toolkit – case studies and action tips](#)

[Useful links](#)

Use of quizzes in understanding diversity issues –

<http://www.royalmailgroup.com/portal/rmg/content1?catId=17300228&mediaId=17300292>