



## WHAT IS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION?

Racial discrimination happens when someone is treated unfairly or negatively because of their race, the colour of their skin, their cultural background, where they are from, etc. This includes harassment and the use of racial slurs.

Racial discrimination is against the law when it occurs in a “protected areas” like school, work, restaurants, stores, hospitals, etc. Discriminating against someone in one of these Code-protected places could result in a human rights complaint.

## MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

**Myth:** “It’s just a joke. It doesn’t mean anything.”

**Reality:** Even if something is said as a joke, it can still have harmful effects. Racial discrimination, even in the form of jokes, reinforces stereotypes and can hurt people. What might seem like a harmless comment to one person can make others feel disrespected or unsafe. Jokes based on race often downplay real-world racism and perpetuate harmful ideas.

**Myth:** “Everyone talks like that. It’s not a big deal.”

**Reality:** Just because some people might use hurtful language or make jokes that seem “normal” in certain groups, doesn’t mean it’s okay – especially in Code-protected places like schools or businesses. How we speak reflects and reinforces our beliefs. When racist language is normalized, it sends a message that discrimination is acceptable, even if unintentionally. These words can hurt, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and create an environment where prejudice thrives.



SASKATCHEWAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION



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# WORDS MATTER

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS



## WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

All human beings are born with equal and inalienable human rights. These rights are based on the principle of respect for the dignity and equality of all people - regardless of race, religion, gender, disability, or any other characteristic.

Human rights are universal and fundamental. They are basic freedoms and protections that apply to all people.

Human rights are protected by a set of laws. These laws tell us how governments must treat people and how organizations and people must treat each other.

### A SHORT HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SK

**1947:** The *Saskatchewan Bill of Rights Act* is passed.

**1948:** United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**1972:** The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is created.

**1979:** *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* comes into effect.

**1982:** Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is passed.

## HOW AM I PROTECTED?

It is against the law for anyone to discriminate against you. There are **15 protected characteristics** covered under the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

- COLOUR
- RACE
- PLACE OF ORIGIN
- NATIONALITY
- ANCESTRY
- DISABILITY
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- SEX
- FAMILY STATUS
- AGE (18+)
- MARITAL STATUS
- RELIGION
- CREED
- RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
- GENDER IDENTITY



## WHERE AM I PROTECTED?

Under *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, there are **10 protected areas** where discrimination is prohibited.

- EMPLOYMENT
- EDUCATION
- HOUSING
- PUBLIC SERVICES
- TRADE ASSOCIATIONS
- CONTRACTS
- PURCHASE OF PROPERTY
- OCCUPATIONS
- TRADE UNIONS
- PUBLICATIONS

The *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* protects your freedom of expression, but this cannot be used to violate the rights of others.

# WORDS MATTER

Words have power. The things we say can build people up or tear them down. When it comes to discrimination, the words we use can either challenge harmful stereotypes or reinforce them. Using hurtful language, even if it's not meant to be cruel, can spread hate, create divisions, and have real-world consequences. On the other hand, choosing to speak with kindness, respect, and understanding can help create a world where everyone feels valued.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Think before you speak.** Pause, take a breath, and think about whether the comment you are about to say might offend or hurt someone.

**Educate yourself.** Take the time to learn about other cultures, histories, and experiences. A little bit of understanding and empathy goes a long way.

**Apologize and learn.** If you say or do something that is offensive or racially insensitive, own up to it. Apologize and do better next time.

**Challenge racism and other forms of discrimination.** If you hear others making racist remarks, don't be afraid to speak up (safely and respectfully).