

# FAIR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN OHIO

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April is Fair Housing Month, which highlights our nation's obligation to ensure that everyone has equal access to safe, affordable housing. However, housing discrimination still occurs. In 2020 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development closed 436 Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity cases filed by Ohio residents. About half of these complaints were filed primarily on the basis of disability discrimination.

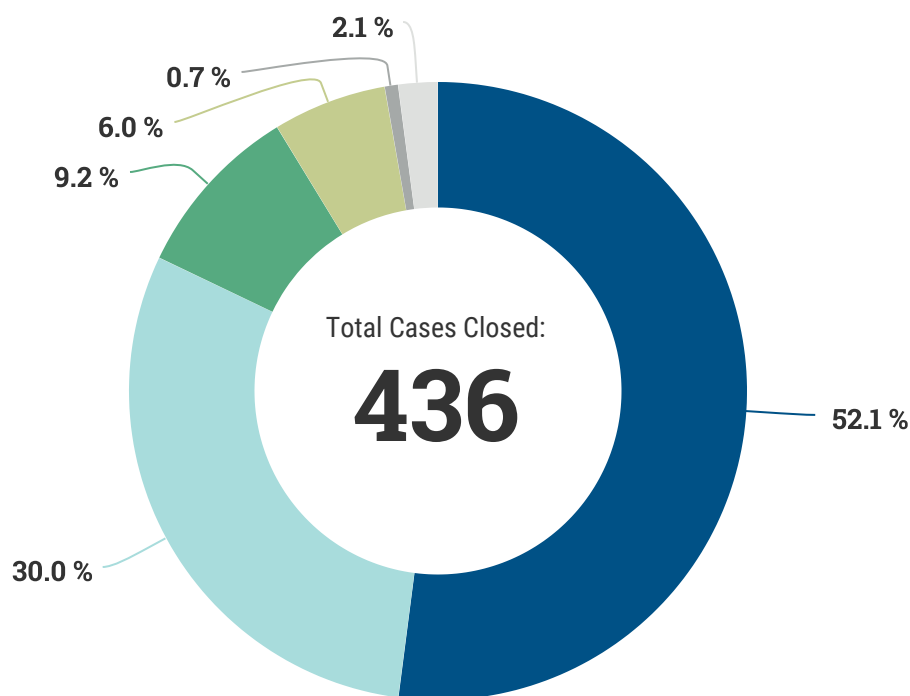
Bases of fair housing discrimination are defined in Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (a.k.a., the Fair Housing Act). There are seven protected categories: disability, race, color, national origin, sex, familial status and religion (defined below), in addition to protection from retaliation in response to a previously filed fair housing complaint.

While disability is a broad category, the high prevalence of disability discrimination complaints suggest Ohio's housing may not be easily accessible for those with disabilities. For example, 53% of housing units in multi-unit structures in Ohio are inaccessible to someone in a wheelchair, according to the 2019 American Housing Survey. Similarly, organizations such as Disability Rights Ohio have shown in their report *Opening Doors: Confronting Housing Discrimination* that Ohio's current housing stock may also impede the ability to house Ohioans with disabilities and that zoning laws and restrictive covenants may reduce housing availability for those with special needs, such as individuals with mental illness.

Responses to the 2019 American Community Survey indicate that one in six Ohio adults has some type of disability, which suggests removing barriers to accessible housing is a critical need in Ohio. Ensuring that new multifamily housing is built in accordance with accessibility standards is one of the federal government's major areas of enforcement under the Fair Housing Act. Additionally, local actions, such as removing restrictive zoning, or allowing the construction of more supportive housing, may also be necessary to create an equitable housing landscape.

Whether you are a renter or a homeowner, if you believe you are a victim of discrimination by a landlord, real estate company or other entity, you have a right to file a fair housing discrimination complaint within a year of the incident. Visit HUD's website for more information: [hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/online-complaint](http://hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint).

## 2020 Ohio Fair Housing Cases Closed by Primary Basis for Discrimination



- Disability
- Race, Color or National Origin
- Sex
- Familial Status
- Religion
- Retaliation



**Disability** discrimination is based on disabilities that substantially limit major life activities, such as blindness, deafness, mobility impairments, chronic fatigue, head injuries, intellectual or learning disabilities and mental illness, as well as HIV infection, alcoholism and drug addiction.



**Race** discrimination is based on characteristics associated with a particular racial group, including but not limited to skin color. **Color** discrimination is specifically based on skin complexion or tone. **National Origin** discrimination is based on country of birth, ancestry or ethnicity.



**Sex** discrimination is based on sex classification, gender identity or sexual orientation. It also includes sexual harassment, demands for sexual favors and creating a sexually hostile environment to live in.



**Familial Status** discrimination is based on the presence of children under age 18 or women who are pregnant. In a housing context, this includes placing unreasonable restrictions on the number of persons who may reside in a unit.



**Religion** discrimination is based on an individual's religious beliefs or membership in a religious organization. In a housing context, that may include zoning ordinances designed to limit use of private homes as places of worship.



**Retaliation** discrimination in housing is specifically defined as punishing someone for filing a prior fair housing complaint. This typically arises in the form of non-renewal of a lease or threats of eviction.