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Common characteristic

The common characteristic must be:

• an **innate characteristic** - usually, these are characteristics the person is born with (e.g. sex and gender), but it should be noted that the characteristics do not need to be immutable or unchangeable; or

• a **common background that cannot be changed**, such as hereditary status, social or educational background or past experiences; or

• a characteristic or belief that is so **fundamental to identity or conscience** that a person should not be forced to renounce it.

The mere fact of persecution cannot be the only element that gives content to ‘particular social group’, as that would be to deprive this ground of any meaningful content.

It is not necessary that the members of the group who share common characteristics know each other, have cohesiveness or are connected in any way. The size of the group is also irrelevant.

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