



Racism in Australia

First Report from the Racism Register (2025 - 2026)

An initiative of the Equity Institute



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Racism Register acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we live, work and gather across Australia, and pays respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long endured, and continue to endure, the impacts of colonisation, dispossession and systemic racism. We acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonisation in shaping contemporary experiences of racism, discrimination and structural inequality. These injustices are deeply rooted in histories of violence, dispossession and erasure.

We also acknowledge that racism in Australia must be understood within this broader historical and continuing context. We honour the sovereignty, strength and enduring contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ongoing struggle against racism and injustice.





Message from the Founders



We launched the Racism Register from a shared conviction that stories, when documented and supported by data, can drive systemic change.

This work is deeply personal to us. As parents, we are invested in helping to build a future in which our children, and all children, can grow up in a society that not only recognises racism, but is willing to confront it with honesty, courage and accountability. We want our children to inherit a world where their dignity is protected, their experiences are taken seriously, and justice is not conditional.

For too long, experiences of racism in Australia have been minimised, dismissed or left undocumented. Despite the profound impact racism has on individuals, families and communities, there has been no consistent, accessible national mechanism for capturing these realities as they are lived and experienced. Too often, racism remains invisible in public discourse unless it reaches a threshold deemed newsworthy, leaving everyday harms unacknowledged and unaddressed.

*Elizabeth Tekanyo (left) & Elizabeth Lang (right)
Co-Founders, Racism Register*

The Racism Register was created in response to this gap. It is a community-led initiative that seeks to document, analyse and make visible experiences of racism across Australia. At the heart of this work is a simple but powerful truth: when experiences are documented, patterns become visible; when patterns become visible, accountability becomes possible; and when accountability becomes possible, systemic change becomes harder to ignore.

This work has also shaped us. Working together in anti-racism education has reinforced that racial literacy is not a destination, but an ongoing practice. It requires listening with care, reflecting honestly, and being willing to examine how our perspectives are shaped by history, power and lived experience. Dismantling racism is about responsibility. It requires humility, courage and a sustained commitment to recognising not only interpersonal racism, but also the systems and structures that allow racism to endure. We offer the Racism Register as both a tool for documentation and a call to action. We hope it contributes to a deeper national understanding of racism in Australia, strengthens accountability, and supports the collective work needed to create a more just and equitable future for all.

We also acknowledge the painful global context in which this report is being published. At a time when communities across the world are living through mass violence, war, genocide and displacement, the urgency of confronting racism, dehumanisation and injustice is even more stark. These realities remind us that silence has consequences, and that documentation, truth-telling and accountability matter.

About the Racism Register



The Racism Register is a national reporting platform that documents experiences of racism across Australia. It was established in March 2025 to help address a significant gap in the Australian context: while racism is widely experienced, many incidents remain underreported, dismissed or undocumented.

The Register provides a dedicated platform through which individuals can safely share their experiences of racism, including what happened, where it occurred, and how it affected them. Through its online survey, the Racism Register collects both quantitative and qualitative data, including the settings in which incidents occur, the forms of racism experienced, and detailed written accounts. This approach makes it possible to identify patterns across different contexts while also capturing the depth, complexity and human impact of racism as it is lived.

The significance of the Racism Register lies in its capacity to turn individual experiences into collective evidence. Experiences of racism are often treated as isolated, anecdotal or invisible. By documenting them systematically, the Register helps make patterns visible, strengthens public understanding of how racism operates across different settings, and contributes to advocacy, accountability and systemic change.

The Racism Register sits within a broader ecosystem of community-led and community-responsive efforts to document racism in Australia. This includes First Nations-led register, Call It Out, which documents racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the Islamophobia Register Australia and the documentation of antisemitic incidents by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Together, these efforts highlight both the scale of racism in Australia and the importance of community-based reporting mechanisms.

In this report, racism includes interpersonal, institutional and structural forms of inequality based on race, ethnicity, culture or perceived identity.

The Racism Register is an initiative of the Equity Institute, an organisation committed to advancing racial equity through research, advocacy and community-led action.

The Racism Register aims to:

- document patterns of racism across different settings
- amplify lived experiences
- support research, advocacy and public awareness
- inform policy and institutional responses
- strengthen accountability and contribute to systemic change

Executive Summary



This 2026 report presents the first published findings from the Racism Register, a national platform documenting experiences of racism across Australia. The Racism Register is an initiative of the Equity Institute, an organisation committed to advancing racial equity and addressing racism through research, advocacy and community-led action.

From March 2025 to March 2026, the Racism Register analysed 147 valid reports from a total of 160 submissions, capturing incidents across seven Australian states and territories.

□ The data shows that racism is not isolated or rare. It occurs across everyday environments and institutional settings, and is experienced by individuals in public spaces, workplaces, education, healthcare, and government services.

Where It Happens

Workplaces (37.4%) and public spaces (35.4%) account for the majority of reported incidents — present in both professional environments and everyday public interactions.

How It Happens

Verbal abuse remains the most common form, reported in 60.5% of cases. Significant proportions also involve unfair treatment (36.7%), microaggressions (36.1%), and racial profiling (28.6%).

How Often

46.3% of respondents reported a one-time incident, 42.2% reported repeated incidents. For many individuals, racism is an ongoing part of daily life rather than an isolated occurrence.

Who Is Involved

Most incidents involved strangers (46.3%), but a significant number involved workplace colleagues (25.2%) and managers or supervisors (18.4%), as well as law enforcement (12.2%) and government employees (7.5%).

The impact of racism extends beyond the moment of the incident. Respondents described strong emotional reactions, including fear, anger, and distress. Many also reported ongoing effects such as reduced sense of safety, hypervigilance, lower self-confidence, and withdrawal from social or professional environments. A consistent pattern across the data is a loss of trust in institutions when incidents are not acknowledged or addressed. Taken together, the findings show that racism in Australia is both interpersonal and systemic. It occurs across multiple settings, is often repeated, and is shaped by both individual behaviour and broader institutional practices.

The data also highlights the limitations of existing reporting systems. Many incidents are not formally reported, and individuals may be uncertain about where to report or whether their experience will be taken seriously. As a result, the findings presented here likely represent only a portion of the full extent of racism experienced across Australia. These findings point to the need for coordinated action across institutions, government, and communities. Strengthening reporting pathways, improving institutional accountability, and increasing awareness of both overt and subtle forms of racism are essential steps in addressing the issue. The Racism Register provides a community-led evidence base to support this work. By documenting lived experiences, it contributes to a clearer understanding of how racism is experienced and where responses are needed.

The Year at a Glance



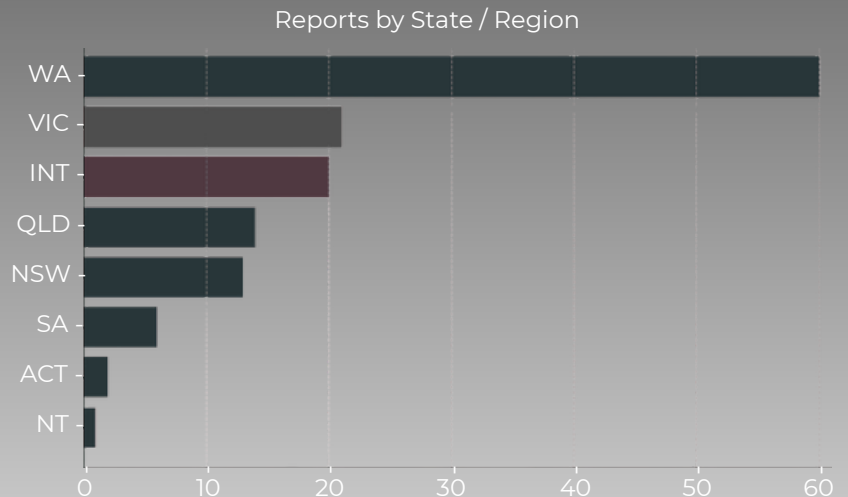
Key Statistics

160	Total reports
147	Included in analysis
70%	Direct victims
7	States represented

These reports capture experiences of racism across multiple states and territories in Australia.

A National Issue

Although reporting is highest in WA, the consistency of themes across all states suggests that the challenges of systemic racism are a nationwide concern.



Big Picture: Engagement on the Racism Register

- Total page views: 1,081
- Reports started: 593
- Total submissions: 160
- Completion rate: 27.0%
- Average completion time: 17 minutes and 2 seconds

All complete responses were retained in the dataset for quantitative analysis to preserve transparency of submissions. Some (6) responses included general commentary that did not describe a specific experience or observed incident of racism. These responses were included in overall counts but excluded from qualitative analysis and interpretation, which focus on responses describing lived experiences of racism.



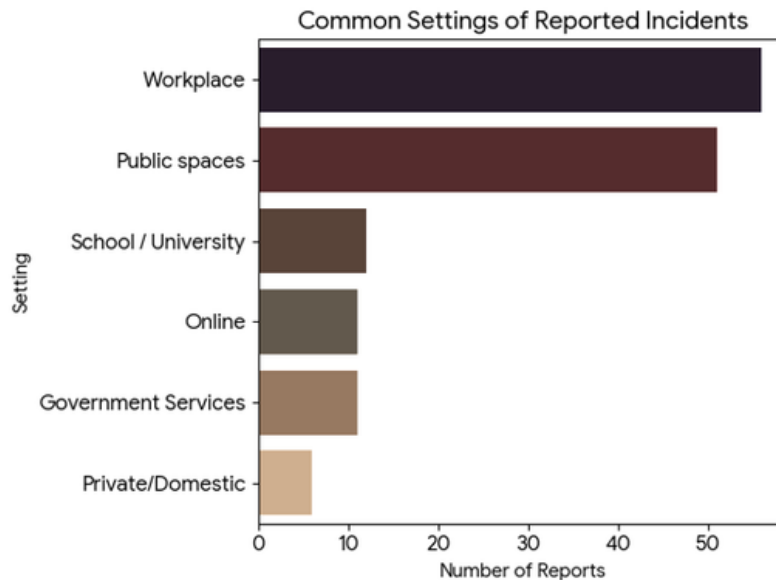


Examples of Racist Australian Media Coverage





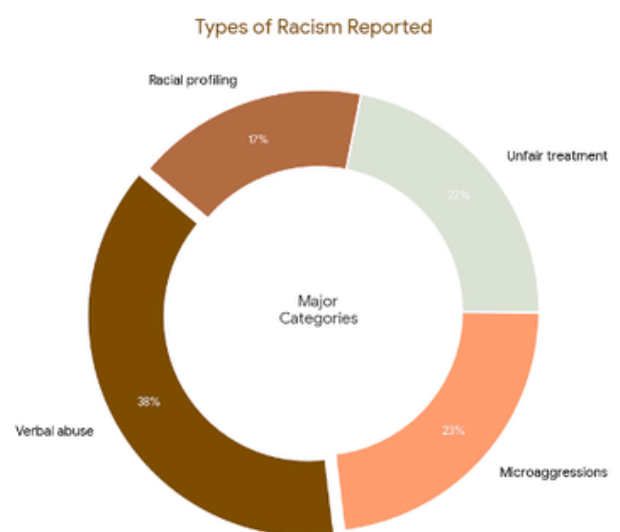
Racism Occurs Across Everyday Environments



Verbal Racism Remains the Most Common Form

Racism was most frequently reported in workplaces, followed closely by public spaces, which together account for the majority of incidents.

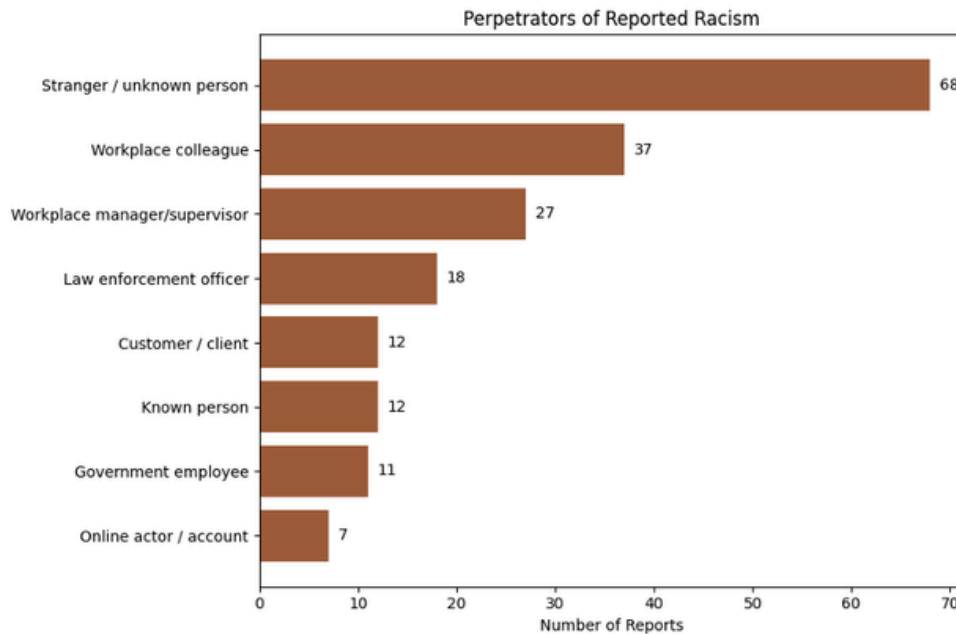
These findings show that racism is present both in everyday public interactions and in professional environments where fairness and accountability are expected.



Perpetrators Span Both Public and Institutional Contexts



Most incidents involved strangers or unknown individuals, particularly in public settings.



However, a significant number of reports also involved:



Workplace-related individuals



Authority figures, including service providers and officials



Known individuals such as peers or neighbours

This reflects the presence of racism across both interpersonal interactions and institutional relationships.



Racism is Often Repeated, Not Isolated

While some incidents were described as one-off events, many reports highlighted ongoing or repeated experiences.

These repeated interactions contribute to cumulative harm and reinforce patterns of exclusion and marginalisation.

Lived Experience

“Went for Geelong Festival of Sails on Sat 24 Jan 2026, we just parked in one spot in Hearne Parade day time carpark, one male in his 40-50s, sitting in a White Volkswagen Tiguan number plate xxxxx, yelled at us like 'go, go away, you are not welcomed here, Chinks, fxxking go...I confronted him, talked back and recorded his face and number plate. told him I will report.”



“I was called a diversity hire, multiple times, but when called out, they said they were joking. The same person said to me that because of my religion, I would have a hard time working with anyone in the LGBTQIA community. The same person asked me, while laughing, if I came to Australia by boat. When a grievance was lodged, the person said she didn't mean any harm and the case was dropped.”



“I was in a public hospital for overnight surgery. There were a few Hazara women in the ward. The night nurse clearly treated the Hazara women differently than the white women. I would ask for water politely and she would bring me water and slam the glass on my table aggressively and walk off and not even look at me. Later in the night I turned off the lights so I could sleep and she was very rude and yelled at me. She was only rude to the Hazara women none of the white women.”



About the Data



Data source

The data used in this report were collected through the Racism Register's online survey, administered via Typeform. The survey allows individuals to report their experiences of racism across Australia.

Reporting period and data analysis

This report is based on responses collected during the 2025 reporting period. There were a total of 160 responses, of which 147 are valid and included in the analysis. Responses were classified as valid, partial, or invalid based on completeness and relevance. Clearly incomplete or non-meaningful responses were excluded from analysis, while partial responses were retained where they contributed to understanding patterns of racism.

Voluntary and anonymous reporting

Participation in the survey is voluntary, and responses are submitted anonymously. Respondents can choose which questions to answer and how much detail to provide. All data in this report is de-identified and based on voluntary, self-reported experiences.

What the data includes

The dataset includes the following information reported by respondents:

- **Location:** Information about where respondents are based (e.g. state or country). The analysis in this report focuses on incidents that occurred in Australia. A small number of responses from outside Australia were excluded from the main analysis but retained for context.
- **Setting:** Where the incident occurred, grouped into categories such as public spaces, workplaces, schools and universities, government services, and online spaces. Service-based interactions, including car rental services, were grouped under institutional or service settings due to the structured nature of the interaction and power dynamics involved.
- **Type of racism:** The form of racism experienced, including categories such as verbal abuse, discrimination, microaggressions, and physical abuse.
- **Perpetrator:** Information about who was responsible for the incident, based on both structured survey responses and written descriptions.
- **Descriptions of incidents:** Open-text responses describing what happened, providing context and detail about each experience.
- **Limitations:** This dataset has several important limitations:
 - **Underreporting:** Not all incidents of racism are reported. The data reflects only those who chose to submit their experiences.
 - **Self-reported data:** All responses are based on individuals' own accounts and perspectives.
 - **Incomplete responses:** Some respondents did not answer all questions or provided limited detail.

Finding 1: Where the Racism Occurs



Racism is most commonly reported in workplaces and public spaces, which together account for the majority of incidents.

Workplaces recorded 55 incidents (37.4%), making them the most frequent setting. These reports involve colleagues, managers, and clients, showing that racism is present within professional environments where people expect fairness and respect.


This is closely followed by 52 incidents (35.4%) in public spaces, including streets, shops, and public transport. This shows that racism is also a common part of everyday life.

Other settings were reported less often, but remain significant. Schools and universities accounted for 12 reports (8.2%), while both government services and online spaces recorded 11 reports each (7.5%). A smaller number of incidents occurred in private or domestic settings (6 reports, 4.1%).

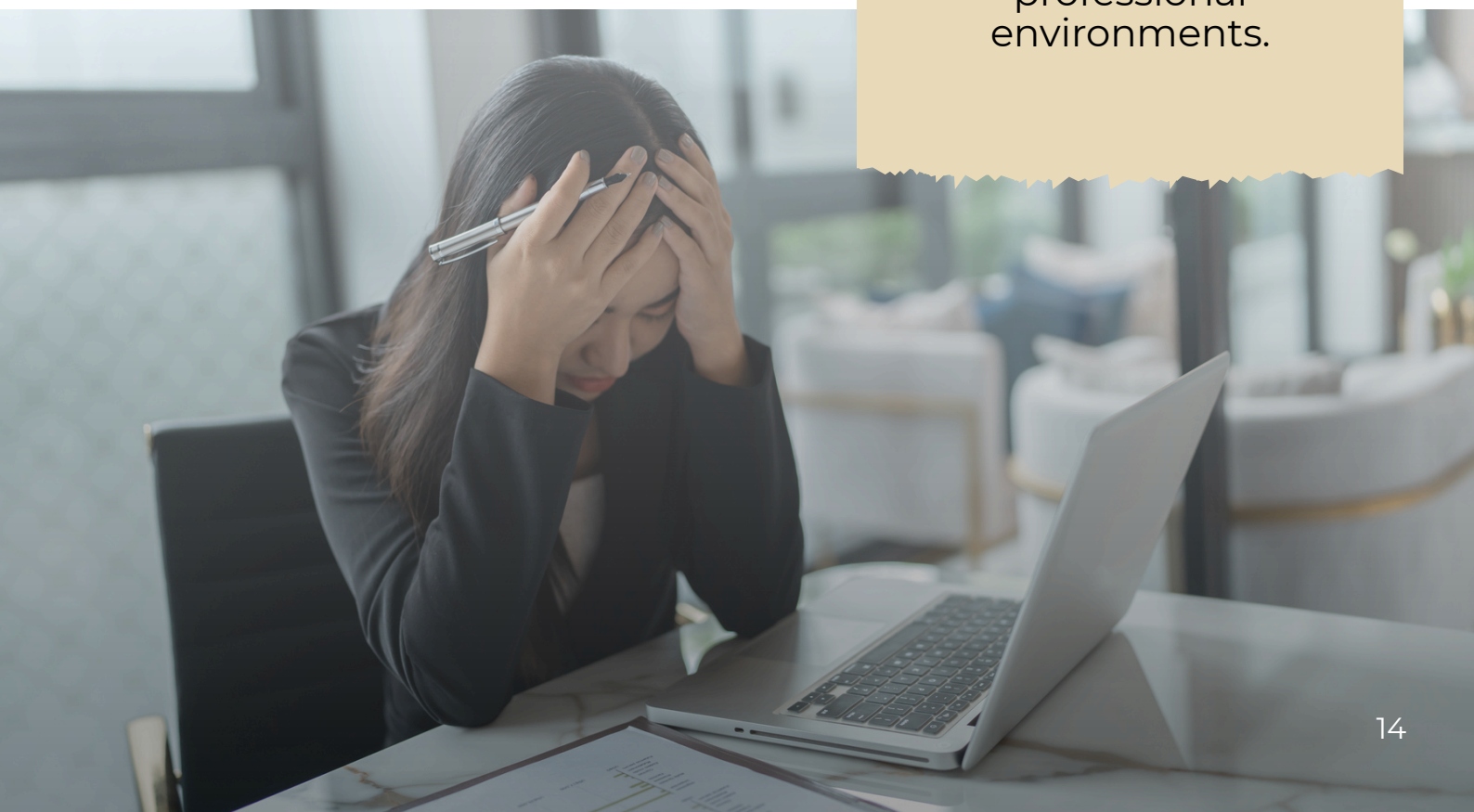
Interpretation

Racism in public spaces is often visible and immediate. However, incidents in workplaces may be more complex, shaped by power dynamics, job security, and barriers to reporting.

The presence of racism across education, government services, and online spaces shows that it is not limited to one setting. Instead, it cuts across multiple areas of daily life.



Racism is embedded in both everyday interactions and professional environments.



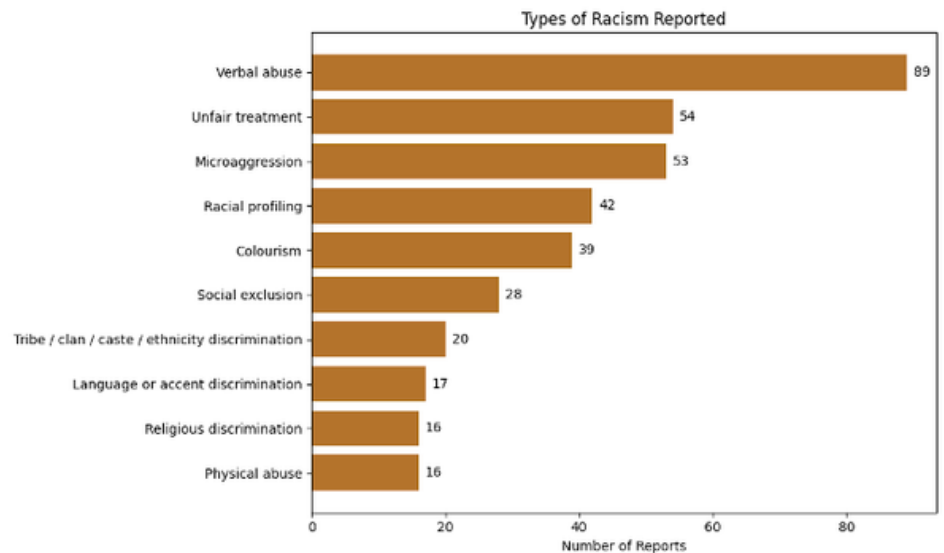
Finding 2: Types of Racism Reported



The data shows that racism is most commonly experienced through direct and overt forms, particularly verbal abuse.

Verbal abuse was reported in 89 cases (60.5%), making it the most common form. These incidents include slurs, insults, and aggressive behaviour, showing that explicit racism remains widespread.

Other frequent forms include unfair treatment (54 reports, 36.7%) and microaggressions (53 reports, 36.1%). While unfair treatment reflects unequal access to opportunities or services, microaggressions include subtle behaviours such as exclusion, condescension, or questioning someone's identity.



Racial profiling (42 reports, 28.6%) and colourism (39 reports, 26.5%) show that individuals are often judged or treated differently based on their appearance or perceived identity.

Reports also highlight social exclusion (28 reports, 19.0%), where individuals are ignored or left out in social or professional settings.

More specific forms of discrimination were also reported, including:

- Tribe, clan, caste, or ethnicity-based discrimination (20 reports, 13.6%)
- Language or accent discrimination (17 reports, 11.6%)
- Religious discrimination (16 reports, 10.9%)

Finally, physical abuse (16 reports, 10.9%), while less common, represents the most severe form of reported racism.

Interpretation

The high number of verbal abuse cases shows that explicit racism remains common. At the same time, microaggressions and unfair treatment highlight how racism can be subtle, ongoing, and harder to address.

Other forms, such as racial profiling and language-based discrimination, show how different aspects of identity shape people's experiences. Taken together, these findings show that racism operates across a spectrum - from visible acts to everyday behaviours that accumulate over time.



Finding 3: Who the Perpetrators Are



Most reported incidents involved strangers or unknown individuals, accounting for 68 reports (46.3%). This shows that racism often occurs in everyday public settings, where people may face abuse from individuals they do not know.

However, a significant proportion of incidents also occurred in workplaces. Workplace colleagues were identified in 37 reports (25.2%), and managers or supervisors in 27 reports (18.4%). These findings highlight that racism is not only a public issue, but also present in professional environments.

Other perpetrators include law enforcement officers (18 reports, 12.2%), pointing to experiences within policing and security contexts. Customers or clients (12 reports, 8.2%) were also reported, showing that racism can occur in service roles where individuals interact with the public.

In some cases, racism came from people known to the individual. Known persons accounted for 12 reports (8.2%), indicating that racism can occur within personal or social relationships. Reports involving government employees (11 reports, 7.5%) further suggest that experiences of racism extend into public service settings.

A smaller number of incidents involved online actors or accounts (7 reports, 4.8%), highlighting that racism also occurs in digital spaces.

Interpretation

While racism in public spaces is often visible, workplace incidents can be harder to address. Power dynamics, job security, and reporting barriers may shape how people experience and respond to these situations.

Reports involving police and government staff also raise concerns about racism in settings where individuals may have limited control or recourse.

Overall, racism is not limited to one type of perpetrator. It occurs across everyday interactions, workplaces, and institutions.

Racism most often comes from strangers, but a large share also occurs in workplaces and institutional settings.



Finding 4: Geographic Distribution



Reports were recorded across multiple Australian states, as well as a smaller number of incidents occurring internationally.

Western Australia recorded the highest number of reports (60), accounting for a substantial proportion of all cases. This is followed by Victoria (21 reports), and Queensland (14 reports) and New South Wales (13 reports).

A total of 20 reports were recorded internationally, indicating that experiences captured by the Racism Register are not limited to Australia, but reflect broader patterns across different contexts.

Other states recorded fewer incidents, including South Australia (6 reports), Australian Capital Territory (2 reports), and Northern Territory (1 report).



Interpretation

The high number of reports from Western Australia may reflect a combination of factors, including greater awareness, engagement, or reporting activity in that region. At the same time, the presence of reports across several states shows that racism is not isolated to one location, but occurs across different parts of Australia.

The inclusion of international reports also suggests that the experiences captured share similarities with those occurring beyond Australia, highlighting the broader relevance of these patterns.

Racism is experienced across multiple locations, but the concentration of reports in specific regions highlights the importance of local context in understanding how and where incidents occur.

Reports are geographically concentrated, with a particularly high number in Western Australia, while still reflecting experiences across multiple regions.

Finding 5: Patterns of Occurrence



The data shows that racism follows clear patterns in how it occurs. It is experienced as both one-off incidents and repeated exposure, and across both public and institutional settings. It also operates at different levels, from direct interpersonal interactions to broader structural conditions.

Frequency

One-off and Repeated Incidents

Racism is not always a single event. 46.3% of respondents reported a one-time incident, while 42.2% experienced repeated incidents.

This near-even split is significant. It shows that racism can be episodic, but is often ongoing. While one-off incidents can have a serious impact, repeated experiences suggest that racism is embedded in everyday environments. Over time, this can shape how people experience safety, belonging and participation in daily life.

Public and Institutional Contexts

Racism occurs across both public and institutional settings.

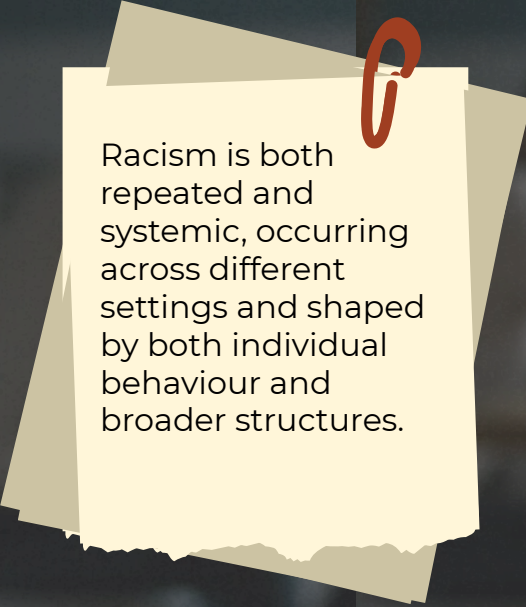
In public spaces, incidents often involve strangers and can be sudden and unpredictable. In contrast, racism in workplaces, education, and government services may involve ongoing interactions and power dynamics.

This shows that racism is not only visible in public spaces, but also present in structured environments where individuals depend on fair treatment.

Interpersonal and Structural Patterns

Racism is experienced through both interpersonal behaviour and structural processes.

Many reports describe direct interactions such as verbal abuse or exclusion. At the same time, experiences such as unfair treatment and racial profiling point to broader patterns of inequality within systems. These forms often overlap. An individual act of racism may occur within a setting where organisational practices or power structures make it harder to challenge.



Racism is both repeated and systemic, occurring across different settings and shaped by both individual behaviour and broader structures.

Experiences of Racism



This section draws on respondents' own descriptions of what happened. Together, these accounts show that racism is experienced across public, professional, educational, online, domestic, and institutional settings. The examples below illustrate both overt racism, such as slurs and threats, and subtler forms, such as exclusion, profiling, and unequal treatment.

Racism in Public Spaces

Public-space incidents are often immediate and unpredictable. They commonly involve strangers and include verbal abuse, harassment, public humiliation, and threats. What stands out in these accounts is not only the racism itself, but the way it disrupts ordinary activities such as walking home, parking, shopping, or using transport.

*"... one male in his 40-50s ... yelled at us like 'go, go away, you are not welcomed here, Chinks, fxxking go' and threaten to have lost our stuff if we park here."
(Respondent #10)*

*"While walking with my friends home, 3 men were walking in front of us, one of the men silently muttered the words 'stupid immigrants'."
(Respondent #7)*



*"... an older man and his male partner passed me by and started accusing me of vile things my people have done. And that I should go back to my own country. Loudly and with so much anger, he kept saying racial slurs and attempted to punch me."
(Respondent #86)*

Experiences of Racism



Racism in Schools and Universities

In education settings, racism appears through peer harassment, teacher conduct, exclusion, and repeated microaggressions. These experiences matter because they affect learning, confidence, and belonging at a formative stage of life.

“Some of my classmates ... have been targeting me with racist and discriminatory comments. They often refer to me using offensive terms like ‘brown munda,’ and they make hurtful remarks about my religion and nationality.”
(Respondent #77)



“They (my school friends) told me they believed all lives mattered except for black lives... and that mine was the exception.”
(Respondent #135)

*“So I was at ***** High in Canberra ... this dude ... came up to me and called me the n word. This isn't the first time ... and the teachers didn't do anything.”*
(Respondent #146)

Experiences of Racism



This section draws on respondents' own descriptions of what happened. Together, these accounts show that racism is experienced across public, professional, educational, online, domestic, and institutional settings. The examples below illustrate both overt racism, such as slurs and threats, and subtler forms, such as exclusion, profiling, and unequal treatment.

Racism in Public Spaces

Incidents in public spaces are often sudden and unpredictable. They frequently involve strangers and can include verbal abuse, harassment, public shaming and threats. What is striking in these accounts is not only the racism itself, but how it interrupts everyday activities such as walking home, parking, shopping or using public transport.

"... one male in his 40-50s .. yelled at us like 'go, go away, you are not welcomed here, Chinks, fxxking go' and threaten to have lost our stuff if we park here."
(Respondent #10)

"While walking with my friends home, 3 men were walking in front of us, one of the men silently muttered the words 'stupid immigrants'."
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Experiences of Racism



Racism in Online Spaces

Online racism is often persistent, anonymous, and easily repeated. It includes slurs, hate messages, racist comments, and coordinated harassment. For respondents, the online setting can intensify exposure because abusive content can spread quickly and remain visible.

*"... one person began sending messages with comments expressing disapproval of a Muslim selling cars in Australia ... the same person started sending more violent messages ... that all Muslims should be kicked out of the country."
(Respondent #28)*

*"Video shared online of 2 employees of xxxxxxx Company using the "N" word slur during their job. One employee was covered in dust on their face from riding on a motorcycle in a dusty area. The other employee commented "you look like a N*****" and laughed, and the other employee repeated the sentence and laughed."
(Respondent #129)*



*"I have had some crazy white supremesist harassing me online by commenting racial slurs on all of my videos."
(Respondent #23)*

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Experiences of Racism

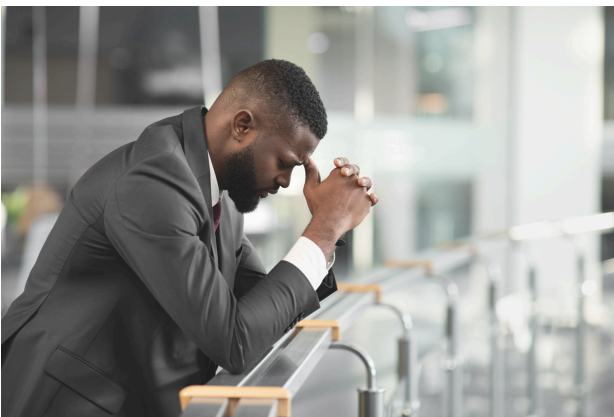


Racism in Private and Domestic Spaces

Racism in private or domestic settings is often ongoing, intimate, and destabilising because it affects people in places where they should feel safe. These accounts include neighbour harassment, racist material delivered to homes, and repeated monitoring or intimidation.

*"I was checking the mail box at home, a place where i should safe. Only to be greeted with a white Australia only flyer."
(Respondent #20)*

*"My neighbour called me a nigger."
(Respondent #30)*



*"... they have knocked my door on odd hours just to complain ..."
(Respondent #55)*

Experiences of Racism



Institutional Racism

Institutional racism appears when people are treated unfairly in systems they depend on, including housing, healthcare, government services, and policing. These incidents are especially serious because they involve authority, discretion, and unequal power.

Housing and Rental

Housing-related incidents point to barriers in access, unequal scrutiny, and exclusion from opportunities that should be assessed fairly.

*"... not treated fairly at private rental application process, even though they have given a very strong application ... They felt it as a clear case of racism as they are coming from African countries."
(Respondent #123)*

*"Real estate agent stated that if it was up to him he would never let refugees enter Australia and that he would bomb everyone."
(Respondent #141)*

Government Services

In government settings, racism can appear through condescension, stereotyping, bureaucratic disregard, or unequal treatment.

*"... after being denied healthcare ... I filed a report only to read my name spelled wrong the whole time ... That's just disheartening and I know the government agency just won't care at this point."
(Respondent #4)*

*"... I entered the lift and one of the security people looked at my backpack and started to question me in a way that felt like I was being singled out."
(Respondent #122)*

Healthcare

Healthcare incidents often reflect differential treatment, where respondents feel ignored, dismissed, or treated less respectfully than others.

*"... In a public hospital, staff were warm to my white husband but turned hostile when I asked why my child had not been seen..."
(Respondent #147)*

Policing and Law Enforcement

Policing-related incidents highlight how racism can be felt most sharply when linked to surveillance, suspicion, or authority.

*"While wearing keffiyehs and attending a Pro-Palestine rally... my sister was pushed into a stationary train... police said it could not be considered racially motivated as nothing was said."
(Respondent #150)*

*"... one of the security people looked at my (South Asian ethnicity) backpack and started to question me ..."
(Respondent #122)*

Experiences of Racism: Children and Young People



A small number of responses were received from children and young people under 18 years of age. Of the 152 respondents who provided age data, 3 were under 18, with 2 providing detailed responses about their experiences.

While this represents a limited sample, it highlights the importance of ensuring that children and young people are included in efforts to document experiences of racism. Future work will require more concerted efforts to support safe, accessible, and age-appropriate data collection for children and young people.

Despite the small number of responses, these accounts provide important insight into how racism is experienced in educational settings.

Both reported incidents occurred in schools, including primary and secondary school environments. In each case, the racism involved direct verbal abuse from other students, including the use of racial slurs. These incidents were not isolated, with at least one respondent indicating that the behaviour occurred repeatedly.

The reported experiences were based on visible characteristics, particularly skin colour.

The emotional impact on young people was immediate and significant.

Respondents described feeling:

- angry
- anxious
- afraid
- offended and disgusted

These responses highlight the early and harmful impact of racism on children, particularly in environments where safety, inclusion, and learning should be prioritised.

Although the number of responses is small, these findings are consistent with broader patterns identified in the report, including the prevalence of interpersonal racism, the role of repeated incidents, and the impact on emotional wellbeing.

Key Insight

Even at a young age, racism is experienced as direct, repeated, and harmful, particularly within school environments.

Interpretation

The presence of racism in schools raises concerns about safety, inclusion, and the effectiveness of responses within educational settings. Early exposure to racism may have lasting impacts on confidence, belonging, and participation. These findings highlight the importance of prevention, early intervention, and stronger support systems for children and young people.

*So I was at ***** High in Canberra, I previously moved to the city, and was minding my own business when this dude, ***** came up to me and called me the n word. This isn't the first time as he has been really rude to me and my friends, telling us to shut up when we aren't talking, saying the f word at us and threatening my younger brother twice after school. The teachers didn't do anything and he isn't stopping, and his friends were really glad that some of the immigrants were going overseas or other schools.*

*I was called n*gga*

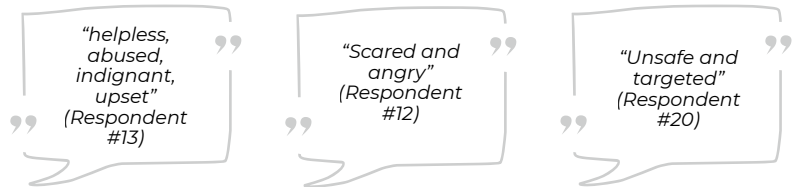
Impact on Individuals



This section draws on respondents' descriptions of how racism affected them, based on reported emotional responses and longer-term impacts. The data shows that racism has both immediate emotional effects and ongoing consequences for individuals' wellbeing, behaviour, and sense of belonging.

Emotional and Psychological Impact

Respondents frequently described feelings of distress, anger, fear, and sadness following racist incidents. These reactions were often immediate, but could also persist over time.



These responses show that racism can have a strong emotional impact, even when the incident itself is brief.



Loss of Safety and Hypervigilance

Many respondents described feeling unsafe or on edge, particularly in public or shared spaces. This often led to increased caution and awareness of surroundings.



Damage to Self-Worth and Confidence

Some respondents described impacts on their self-esteem and sense of identity, particularly where racism was repeated or occurred over a long period.

These impacts highlight how racism can affect not only immediate emotions, but also how individuals see themselves.

“It was a devastating moment in my life. I felt I am worthless and born by a mistake in this world.”
(Respondent #50)

Impact on Individuals



Social Withdrawal and Isolation

Racism also contributed to withdrawal from social environments, either as a coping mechanism or due to exclusion by others.

These experiences show how racism can reduce connection and participation in social settings.

“
“I couldn't tell anyone... I had to bear it myself.”
(Respondent #50)
”

Loss of Trust in Systems and Institutions

A key pattern in the data is a decline in trust, particularly in workplaces, healthcare, and public services.

These responses suggest that when racism is not addressed, it can affect confidence in institutions and willingness to seek support.

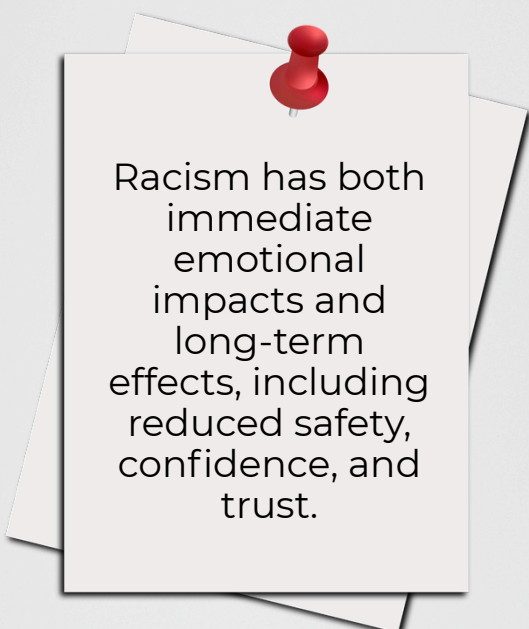
“
“I do not trust that I will be treated equally or with respect in future interactions...”
(Respondent #147)
”

“
“I know the agency just won't care at this point.”
(Respondent #4)
”

Interpretation

The data shows that the impact of racism extends beyond individual incidents. Emotional responses such as fear, anger, and distress are often accompanied by longer-term effects, including hypervigilance, reduced self-confidence, and withdrawal from social or professional environments.

Importantly, when incidents are not addressed or acknowledged, this can lead to ongoing mistrust in institutions and systems, reinforcing the broader impact of racism on everyday life. The impact of racism is not limited to what happens in the moment, it shapes how individuals feel, behave, and engage with the world over time.



Racism has both immediate emotional impacts and long-term effects, including reduced safety, confidence, and trust.



What the Data Shows



The data provides a detailed picture of how racism is experienced across different settings and contexts. Taken together, the findings suggest that racism is not random or isolated, but follows recognisable patterns across everyday life, institutions, and systems. These patterns help explain not only where racism occurs, but how it is sustained and why its impact can be ongoing.

Systemic and Structural Racism

While many incidents involve direct interactions between individuals, the data also points to racism operating at a broader, systemic level. Experiences such as unfair treatment in workplaces, differential treatment in healthcare, and barriers in housing access suggest that racism can be embedded in how decisions are made and how systems function.

In these cases, racism is not always expressed through explicit language. Instead, it appears through outcomes, such as who is believed, who is prioritised, and who is given access to opportunities or services. This makes it harder to identify and challenge, particularly when there is no single moment or statement that clearly defines the incident as racist.

The findings suggest that structural racism is often experienced through patterns of disadvantage, rather than isolated actions. This includes repeated experiences of being overlooked, questioned, or treated differently in ways that accumulate over time.

Recurring Patterns Across Institutions

A key finding across the data is the consistency of experiences reported in different institutional settings. Respondents describe similar patterns in workplaces, schools, healthcare, and government services, including being dismissed, subjected to closer scrutiny, or treated as less credible.

The recurrence of these patterns across multiple sectors suggests that racism is not confined to one type of institution. Instead, it reflects broader norms and practices that can be reproduced across different environments. This consistency also indicates that individuals may encounter racism in multiple areas of their lives, rather than in a single context.

Importantly, this repetition can reinforce the impact of racism. When similar experiences occur across different settings, it can contribute to a sense that discrimination is not incidental, but part of a wider system.

Everyday and Overt Racism

The data highlights that racism is experienced along a spectrum, ranging from overt acts to more subtle, everyday behaviours. Overt racism, including verbal abuse and direct discrimination, is often visible and immediate. These incidents can be clearly identified and are more likely to be recognised by others.

At the same time, many respondents described experiences that are less visible but equally significant. These include microaggressions, exclusion, and condescending treatment. While these actions may appear minor in isolation, they often occur repeatedly and can have a cumulative effect.

This distinction is important because it challenges the idea that racism is only defined by extreme or explicit acts. Instead, the data shows that everyday interactions can also play a significant role in shaping how racism is experienced. These forms may be harder to report or address, but they contribute to ongoing patterns of inequality.

What the Data Shows



Recognition and Institutional Response

Another important pattern in the data relates to how racism is recognised and responded to. In several cases, respondents described situations where their experiences were not acknowledged or formally recognised as racism, particularly in institutional contexts.

This gap between lived experience and formal recognition can affect whether incidents are addressed and whether individuals feel supported. Where recognition depends on narrow criteria, such as explicit verbal evidence, broader contextual factors may be overlooked. This can limit accountability and reinforce the perception that certain forms of racism are not taken seriously.

The way institutions respond to incidents therefore, plays a critical role, not only in addressing individual cases, but also in shaping trust and confidence in systems.

Underreporting and Normalisation

The data also suggests that the incidents captured represent only part of a larger picture. Several factors contribute to underreporting, including uncertainty about reporting processes, perceptions that incidents are too minor, and a lack of confidence that reporting will lead to meaningful outcomes.

In addition, repeated exposure to racism can lead to a degree of normalisation. Some respondents indicated that such experiences have become expected, which may reduce the likelihood of reporting over time. This means that the data likely underestimates the overall prevalence of racism.

Understanding this limitation is important when interpreting the findings. The patterns observed are significant not only for what they show, but also for what they may not fully capture.

Key Insight

The data shows that racism operates across multiple levels, including individual interactions, institutional practices, and broader social patterns. It is experienced both as visible incidents and as everyday behaviours that accumulate over time.

Interpretation

Taken together, the findings point to racism as a patterned and systemic issue, rather than a series of isolated events. The presence of similar experiences across different settings, combined with both overt and subtle forms of racism, highlights the complexity of how racism is expressed and experienced.

Addressing racism therefore requires more than responding to individual incidents. It also requires attention to the systems, practices, and environments that shape how people are treated in everyday life.

Recommendations



The findings highlight the need for coordinated action across institutions, government, and communities. Addressing racism requires not only responding to individual incidents but also strengthening systems, building awareness, and improving accountability.

Institutions

Institutions play a key role in shaping everyday experiences and must take active steps to prevent and respond to racism.

In schools and universities, there is a need for clearer processes to address racism when it occurs, including consistent responses from teachers and staff. Creating inclusive learning environments requires not only policies but also active engagement with students and ongoing support for those affected.

In workplaces, organisations should strengthen reporting pathways and ensure that complaints are handled fairly and transparently. This includes recognising power dynamics, particularly where incidents involve managers or supervisors, and ensuring that employees feel safe to raise concerns without fear of negative consequences.

For service providers, including healthcare, housing, and public services, there is a need to ensure equitable treatment in both practice and decision-making. This includes improving staff awareness, strengthening accountability, and ensuring that individuals are treated with respect when accessing essential services.

Government and Policy

The government has a critical role in setting standards, ensuring accountability, and supporting effective responses to racism.

There is a need for stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that institutions respond appropriately to reports of racism. This includes clearer guidelines on how racism is identified and addressed, particularly in cases where discrimination may not be explicit but is evident through context or outcomes.

Improving reporting mechanisms is also essential. Reporting processes should be accessible, easy to navigate, and responsive. This includes ensuring that individuals understand where to report incidents, what will happen after a report is made, and that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Community and Education

Community awareness and education are important for recognising racism, responding to it effectively, and supporting those affected.

Increasing public awareness can help challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours, while also encouraging individuals to recognise and respond to racism when they witness it.

Expanding anti-racism training and education across schools, workplaces and community settings can strengthen racial literacy and build greater understanding of both overt and less visible forms of racism. This includes developing practical skills to recognise racism, respond effectively, and create safer, more equitable environments.

Future Directions



This report provides an important snapshot of experiences, but continued work is needed to deepen understanding and strengthen responses.

Ongoing data collection will be essential to track trends over time and identify emerging patterns. This includes improving the quality and reach of reporting systems to ensure a broader range of experiences are captured.

Building partnerships with community organisations, researchers, and institutions can strengthen both data collection and response efforts. Collaborative approaches can help ensure that findings are translated into meaningful action.

Future reports will continue to analyse trends, highlight lived experiences, and provide evidence to inform policy and practice.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the development of this report and to the ongoing work of the Racism Register.

First and foremost, we thank the individuals who shared their experiences through the Racism Register. Their willingness to speak about personal, painful and often deeply challenging experiences of racism made this report possible. We recognise the courage involved in coming forward and are deeply grateful for the trust they placed in this platform. Their experiences are the foundation of this report.

We also acknowledge the volunteers who support the Racism Register, including students and other contributors who have assisted with research, administration, communications, data collection, analysis and report preparation. As a volunteer-led initiative, the Register depends on the time, care and commitment of people who believe in the importance of documenting racism and contributing to systemic change.

We extend our sincere appreciation to those who offered advice and guidance during the establishment of the Racism Register. In particular, we acknowledge Call It Out, the Islamophobia Register Australia, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and the Australian Human Rights Commission data team for their generosity in meeting with us and sharing valuable insights from their experience documenting racism and discrimination. Their guidance strengthened the development of the Register and highlighted the importance of collaboration across the broader reporting, research and advocacy ecosystem.

We also acknowledge the Racial Justice Centre as a formal partner of the Racism Register. We are grateful for their support and for the pro bono and low-bono legal services they provide to individuals who wish to pursue legal pathways in response to racism and discrimination. This partnership strengthens the Register's capacity to connect lived experiences with practical avenues for redress and accountability.

We also gratefully acknowledge Typeform for providing a full one-year subscription in 2025 to host the Racism Register survey. This support was instrumental in enabling the secure and accessible collection of reports during the Register's formative stage.

We also thank the community organisations, advocates and individuals who have supported the promotion of the Racism Register and encouraged participation. Their support has helped strengthen the reach, relevance and impact of this work.

Take Action



Racism persists when it is ignored, minimised or left undocumented. The Racism Register exists to help make experiences visible, strengthen accountability, and contribute to systemic change. There are many ways to be part of this important work.

Report racism

If you have experienced or witnessed racism, you can submit a report through the Racism Register. Sharing these experiences helps build a stronger national evidence base and makes visible the patterns that are too often dismissed as isolated incidents.

Submit a report at:

www.racismregister.org.

Partner with us

We welcome opportunities to work with organisations, researchers, educators, advocates and community groups who share a commitment to confronting racism and advancing racial justice. Partnerships can support stronger reporting pathways, community engagement, research, education and systemic advocacy.

Support the Register

Sustaining and growing the Racism Register requires collective investment. We welcome support through funding, strategic partnerships, pro bono contributions, research collaboration, and philanthropic backing from those who share our commitment to racial justice, accountability and systemic change. Reach out to us at admin@racismregister.org.

Share the Register

You can help expand the reach of the Racism Register by sharing it with your networks, workplaces, communities and organisations. Greater awareness helps ensure that more people know there is a platform where their experiences can be documented, recognised and counted.

Why this matters

Every report contributes to a larger picture. When experiences are documented, patterns become visible. When patterns are visible, accountability becomes possible. Change begins with making racism impossible to ignore.

To learn more, report an incident, or connect with us, visit:

www.racismregister.org.

Copyright and Use of Data



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The data presented in this report is based on voluntary, self-reported experiences submitted through the Racism Register survey. All data has been de-identified and presented in aggregated form to protect the privacy and safety of individuals. Any quotes included have been anonymised and do not contain identifying information.

While care has been taken in the collection and analysis of this data, it does not represent the full extent of racism experienced across Australia. All findings should be interpreted in the context of underreporting and the limitations of self-reported data.

The Racism Register does not independently verify individual reports. The purpose of this report is to document patterns, amplify lived experiences, and contribute to public understanding and policy discussion.

Any use of this data should not misrepresent the findings or the individuals whose experiences are reflected in this report.

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This report is part of an ongoing effort to build a national evidence base on racism in Australia.



