



**Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission**

---

Input to the preparation of the 2024 report of the  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:  
pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/21

---

Intersectional discrimination against Africans and people of African descent,  
and advancing racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach

---

Australian Human Rights Commission

---

31 March 2024

ABN 47 996 232 602  
Level 3, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001  
General enquiries 1300 369 711  
Complaints info line 1300 656 419  
TTY 1800 620 241

Australian Human Rights Commission  
[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	3
2	Manifestations of systemic racism .....	3
3	Actions to advance racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach.....	5

## 1 Introduction

1. The Australian Human Rights Commission (Commission) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to inform the preparation of the 2024 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/21. The [call for input](#) is in relation to the intersectional discrimination against Africans and people of African descent, and advancing racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach.
2. The Commission is Australia's National Human Rights Institution. It provides plays an important national role in the promotion of core human rights principles, including the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.
3. The Commission's submission draws on its recent and current work to respond to the following terms of reference from the OHCHR's call for input:
  - i. multiple, intersecting and compounding manifestations of systemic racism as experienced by different groups of Africans and people of African descent, in connection with sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, migration status, minority status, disability, religion, socioeconomic and other status;
  - ii. actions by States and others to advance racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach, including in relation to: the design, implementation and evaluation of laws, policies, programmes, action plans, special measures, processes and other initiatives relating to health, education, employment, housing, law enforcement and the criminal justice system, and other sectors

## 2 Manifestations of systemic racism

4. In Australia, the 2021 census shows that 414,378 (1.6%) of Australians identified as being of African ancestry. The Commission notes that these figures may be an underrepresentation as race data is not consistently and adequately collected in Australia.

5. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent published [a report](#) in September 2023, which found that in Australia, people of African descent experience significant structural racism across areas including employment, education, health and the legal system. This, along with experiences of interpersonal racism in everyday life, compounds the discrimination and harms that people of African descent face, and impacts their enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. This leads to racial disparities, which are also evident in many other countries.
6. The Working Group's report was informed by the findings of the Commission's scoping consultations to progress a *National Anti-Racism Framework* (the Framework), explored further in the following section.
7. The scoping consultations for the Framework raised several key manifestations of systemic racism experienced by African Australians and those of African descent. These were published in the *National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report* (the Scoping Report) and relate to media representation, harmful public narratives, racialised policing, lack of comprehensive data, and challenges across education, employment and access to services.
8. The Commission has also previously undertaken consultations for past related projects such as: *In our own words - African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues*; the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign; and the *Sharing the Stories of Australian Muslims* project. These consultations raised similar manifestations of systemic racism experienced specifically by African Australians and those of African descent were raised. These include:
  - a) *Media representation*: Media reporting about African Australian communities is often biased and prejudicial. This is amplified in situations where there is an intersection with religion, particularly in African Australian Muslim communities. Social media can also be a space where racism is directed towards African Australians.
  - b) *Leadership narratives*: Political and leader statements can be deficits-based and perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices. They are also often intertwined with media narratives, with negative portrayals similarly amplified when it intersects with religion.

- c) *Policing*: Young African Australians, particularly young men, experience disproportionate levels of policing and disproportionate policing responses when they interact with the police.
- d) *Data*: Lack of comprehensive, national data on the prevalence and impacts of racism was highlighted as an important means of raising awareness about the extent of racism experienced by communities and individuals, as well as securing the appropriate resources and funding to address racism. It was a main priority for many to establish effective and ethical mechanisms for data collection, management, and reporting, which would protect communities from unethical processes that often result in deficit understandings of negatively racialised and First Nations communities.
- e) *Employment*: Young African Australians face specific challenges in securing and keeping employment as race-based bias is evident. During COVID-19 this cohort experienced higher levels of unemployment because of the nature of the work many of them do (which is often insecure work, and industries adversely affected by the pandemic). African Australian women also faced similar challenges with employment during COVID-19.
- f) *Education*: Young African Australians experience race-based harm in educational settings.
- g) *Access to services*: Inadequate settlement services for newly arrived migrants was flagged as a serious concern, particularly for people arriving from conflict or refugee contexts.

### 3 Actions to advance racial justice and equality through an intersectional approach

9. The Australian Human Rights Commission's domestic mandate includes to promote an understanding of and compliance with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*, which promotes equality between people of different backgrounds, and protects people from unfair treatment or vilification on the basis of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Combatting racial discrimination and promoting racial equality is therefore a key function of the Australian Human Rights Commission.
10. In line with this, the Commission has a dedicated Race Discrimination team led by a Race Discrimination Commissioner. Across the Commission's anti-racism work, the team aims to centre the experiences of negatively racialised individuals and communities, and amplify community solutions.

11. The Commission is currently progressing the development of a *National Anti-Racism Framework* (the Framework). The Framework aims to provide a shared vision, as well as a focus for specific actions, to tackle racism in its interpersonal, institutional, and systemic forms.
12. The Commission undertook a scoping phase for the Framework between March 2021 and April 2022. This phase entailed more than 100 consultations with communities and organisations, and receiving 164 public submissions – many from community members.
13. The findings of this scoping phase culminated in the Commission's [National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report](#) (Scoping Report), published in December 2022. The Commission is using the Scoping Report as an evidence base for the development and implementation of the Framework.
14. The Commission's scoping consultations identified that an intersectional approach is crucial to understanding racism and anti-racism action. Intersectionality is therefore a guiding principle on the ongoing Framework development.
15. The Scoping Report also identified various community priorities to respond to the issues, including those mentioned in the previous section of this submission, faced by negatively racialised communities in Australia. These priorities included the need to:
  - urgently address racism at a national level, including systemic racism and particularly in the criminal justice system
  - increase racial literacy in Australia through public education and awareness-raising
  - build more culturally safe workplaces and education institutions
  - improve legal protection frameworks with timely and meaningful remedies for discrimination, adequate redress and less barriers to access
16. The Commission's continued development of the Framework involves:
  - identifying the necessary measures that form part of a comprehensive response to racism and its prevention, including national policy frameworks on multiculturalism, reconciliation and social inclusion;

- building capacity for partnerships across society to address racism, acknowledging that it will require action from across the community, business, and government sectors;
- ensuring accountability mechanisms to measure progress over time in reducing the incidence of racism; and
- promoting community understanding of racism and acceptance of anti-racism initiatives.

17. To progress the Framework development, the Commission is currently:

- undertaking research and consultation with experts in the key priority areas raised in the initial scoping for the Framework.
- progressing community-level consultations on the development of the Framework with First Nations and multicultural communities. FECCA, the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, has been commissioned to engage with multicultural communities across the nation. These will include further comprehensive consultation with African communities and people of African descent, to ensure that their concerns and priorities are reflected in the Framework.
- mapping existing government programs and policies relevant to anti-racism at the national, state, territory and local levels, to identify gaps and opportunities to enhance and promote existing initiatives.

18. Alongside the Framework, the Commission is also undertaking a significant anti-racism public awareness and education project. Much of these outputs are currently in development, including:

- a refresh and rebrand of the Commission's existing [Racism It Stops With Me](#) campaign
- resources on racial literacy and 'shared understandings', about what racism, anti-racism and racial equity mean, especially in an Australian context
- online and in-classroom resources for racial literacy in primary schools

19. Recent resources published as part of the public awareness and education project include:

- [Racism and anti-racism conversation guide](#)

- [Guide to creating anti-racism messaging and campaigns](#)
- [IDERD factsheet](#)
- [Guide to conducting a Cultural Temperature Check within your organisation](#)