

**CALL IT  OUT RACISM REGISTER 2023-2024**

**‘IF YOU DON'T THINK RACISM EXISTS  
COME TAKE A WALK WITH US’**



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## CONTENT WARNING:

This report contains content that is confronting and distressing. Please take care when reading.

## ARTWORK CREDIT:

Special thanks to Kirsten Gray for the cover artwork. Kirsten is a Muruwari/Yuwalaraay woman, mother, artist, and advocate. See Yuluwirribaa:

<<https://yuluwirribaa.myshopify.com/>>

**Artwork description:** This piece is called 'Guurramali' which means to resist or stand strong in the Yuwaalaraay language.

Our people stand strong in culture, and strong in their resistance to injustice, whether in their dealings with prisons and police, child welfare or land and climate justice - this is what this piece is about. This is a journey we have been on since colonisation and that we will continue on for many years yet. It is a journey where we also need non-Indigenous people to walk with us to achieve good outcomes for our people.

We are guided by our ancestors, by our land, and by our culture. These shape who we are and how we live, but also give us strength to stand up to unjust systems of power. You can see mob being guided by stars, sitting by the river and camping together in this piece. There is a 'yuluwirri' or rainbow in the centre, which signifies the hope we have for better outcomes for First Nations people as a result of standing in solidarity, together.

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## Acknowledgement

The authors of this report acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing connections that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, sea and community.

The Jumbunna Research Institute (UTS) and the National Justice Project acknowledge those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have reported incidents of racism to *Call It Out*, and those who have reported on behalf of or as witnesses of racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This Report would not have been possible without their courage, and we are honoured to hear and hold the experiences shared with us through the *Call It Out* Register (the Register).

The stories shared on the Register confirm how difficult it can be to call racism out, evidencing the significant emotional and other impacts of racism and of speaking out about it. While we have not been able to include all stories shared to the Register in this report, all those who have reported incidents to *Call It Out* are contributing to the telling of a larger story about racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this country. All reports made to the Register have been listened to and heard, whether or not they are explicitly referenced in our reports.

The *Call It Out* Register and our reporting on stories of racism shared to it are both made possible with the generous support of volunteers, donors and pro bono services that have helped bring this project to life, with special thanks to The Big Smoke and Sarah Bock at eLearn Australia.

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## **1. Guest Author Introduction, Professor Lindon Coombes**

Having worked consistently in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over 25 years, I have seen many changes. Some for the better, some for the worse. In that time though, many things have remained both constant and prevalent. One of these is racism.

Racism remains an insidious and all too common aspect of life for Indigenous people in Australia. While the way racism can be presented has shifted in its nature and expression, and will continue to do so, the fundamentals of this problem remain alarmingly consistent and seemingly impervious to the best efforts of many seeking its eradication.

While racism remains an imposing adversary, there is reason for hope. And this hope often comes from the darkest moments. One of our darker moments in this regard was the 2023 referendum.

There can be no genuine discussion on the Voice referendum without discussing the impact of racism, both throughout the campaign and in its aftermath.

While there was significant thought and debate given to the ideas of nation building and the righting of wrongs, the undercurrent of racism was ever present. This is its insidiousness. It infects clear and rational debate and thought. Arguments for and against a simple advisory body that was safe from political interference could not get clear air without the cloud of racism.

And while some may have made their decision on the referendum free from racial implications, the gut punch delivered all too early on the night of the count was loaded with it.

Indigenous people felt that punch and knew the power of racism that was behind it.

As a result, racist views were emboldened and Indigenous people and communities withdrew to digest the impact of this moment and begin a period of healing. While some of this is reflected in this report, it has also been clear in the work of the Jumbunna Institute in the post referendum period. Communities withdrew and were quiet, planned consultations were delayed or cancelled and it became apparent that some of our research and projects would just have to wait.

The result is that Indigenous people have taken the time to recover, to reflect and to refocus on what our ambitions are and how we go about achieving them.

We have learnt that we need to better understand the forces that actively work against us, as well as the unconscious biases that have been hardwired into Australian culture and worldviews as a result of our colonial past, and this report is a key tool in this endeavour.

This report explores the impacts of the referendum, the racism that plays out in our institutions and systems of governance and in the everyday places we live, work and play.

There are many people to thank for this report and they are acknowledged elsewhere, however I would like to note the work of Jumbunna staff and our key partner The National Justice

Project and their CEO George Newhouse. I would also like to thank the people who contributed their time and experiences to the Register.

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1 About the *Call It Out* Register**

The Jumbunna Institute for Education and Research (Jumbunna Research), in collaboration with the National Justice Project (NJP), developed *Call It Out* as an online register (the Register) to record all forms and levels of racism and discrimination experienced by First Nations peoples.<sup>1</sup> *Call It Out* was officially launched on 21 March 2022 to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

*Call It Out* provides a simple and secure online reporting mechanism without the usual barriers which often inhibit reports of racism. It is intended to provide First Nations peoples who have experienced racism in all forms and witnesses to such racism with an accessible platform on which to share their experiences.

The Register is an independent, Indigenous-controlled reporting mechanism which is distinct from traditional complaints and legal processes. Reports of racist issues and incidents to complaints bodies, for instance, may be restricted or limited to specific forms of racism, and responding to racism through antidiscrimination and other laws and complaints mechanisms can be difficult to initiate and navigate, with often fairly prescribed remedies available. In contrast, *Call It Out* is an ongoing, respondent generated initiative with a national focus. The Register provides the opportunity to identify patterns of racism at institutional and structural levels, including to inform evidence-based advocacy and campaigning initiatives that proactively strive towards eliminating racism and discrimination towards First Nations peoples in this country.

### **2.2 Aim of the Register**

A key objective of *Call It Out* is to generate evidence to support First Nations leaders, organisations and advocates in garnering support and resources to develop further tools and strategies to address racism and discrimination, including through systemic and cultural change.

Racism and discrimination take many forms. They can be direct and indirect, interpersonal, online and institutional, for instance. Unlike other mechanisms that are limited by distinct parameters, *Call It Out* is designed to allow respondents the freedom to share any experiences

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<sup>1</sup> We have used the terms Aboriginal, First Nations and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people interchangeably. The term Indigenous is used where it is in the narrative recorded on the database. We only use the term Indigenous when describing a 'non-Indigenous' person. We recognise that this approach does not reflect the diversity of, and that there is not consensus amongst First Nations peoples in Australia about how to be described. We apologise if this approach causes offence or misrepresentation. This is not our intention.

they consider relevant to shape a comprehensive representation of First Nations peoples' lived experiences of racism and discrimination.

By using the Register to call out racism, First Nations peoples and their allies help to tell the true story of racism in this country. Collecting, analysing and reporting on First Nations peoples' experiences of racism enables us and community leaders to continue the fight against racism and protect future generations.

Reports made to *Call It Out* will enable Jumbunna Research together with National Justice Project to:

- Develop comprehensive reports on racism and discrimination experienced by First Nations peoples
- Support First Nations organisations and leaders to identify problem areas and to respond to racism and discrimination
- Explore measures to counter racism and discrimination against First Nations peoples
- Educate the community about racism and discrimination against First Nations peoples
- Support appropriate investment in Indigenous-led anti-racism activities and initiatives
- Analyse the actions and demographics of perpetrators to better understand how to counter the behaviours of individuals and characteristics of systems that manifest as racism
- Measure patterns in the circumstances, nature, frequency and geographic spread of discrimination and racism; and
- Advocate for law reform and social change.

## 2.3 The Call It Out App

The new *Call It Out* App (released in early 2024) is designed to make reporting racism as accessible as possible – enabling people to share their experiences anytime, anywhere. The app is specifically designed to *not* collect, share or have access to personal information on the user's phone. Any personal details provided in reports are held securely, kept confidential and never shared with anyone.

You can download the *Call It Out* mobile app for free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#), or use the [Web App](#).

The *Call It Out* app was created with support from by Sarah Bock at eLearn Australia.

## 2.4 About this Report

This is the third report published on the information recorded in the *Call It Out* Register. The first report was an Interim Report released in 2022, providing analysis of incidents recorded on the Register during the first six months of its operation until 20 September 2022. A second report was released in 2023 and provided an analysis of incidents recorded during the first 12 months of the *Call It Out* Register, covering the period 21 March 2022 to 20 March 2023. We refer to this as our Annual Report for 2022-23.

We now provide analysis of the incidents of racism recorded in the *Call It Out* Register for the 12 month period covering 21 March 2023 to 20 March 2024. We will continue to produce *Call It Out* reports annually over coming years to enable analysis of the changing nature and extent of racism over time. This report includes a discussion of reports logged in the period leading up to and following the referendum for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice to Parliament held in October 2023. We recognise the significant rise in racism against First Nations people during this period and have included in this report a stand-alone section focussed on incidents arising in the context of the referendum on the Voice to Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

The Register contains 16 questions covering the nature of the incident, details of where, when and who was involved and possible responses to racism. Questions ask for multiple choice and/or free text answers.

To be recorded as an incident there is a minimum threshold of recorded answers which must be met. Questions asking for confidential information on the person completing the report (which includes their name and email/phone number) and their agreement to the use of anonymised information, along with an additional three questions on the nature of the incident must be completed for a response to be counted as a registration of an incident on the Register.

Over the twelve-month period 21 March 2023 to 20 March 2024, there were 479 registrations of incidents on the database which fulfilled these criteria. From the 479 registrations we removed 23 reports which were made by individuals who used the platform to promote racism. We removed three further registrations which were valid reports of racism that targeted persons who were not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The total number of validated reports used for the analysis in this report is 453. It should be noted that this is a count of *registrations* rather than *incidents* as a single registration can cover ongoing or multiple events, incidents or issues, including those that are structural or ongoing rather than occurring at a single point in

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Foster, B. Indigenous helpline 13YARN inundated with racism-related calls post referendum. National Indigenous Times. May 16, 2024. (<<https://nit.com.au/16-05-2024/11443/indigenous-helpline-13yarn-inundated-with-racism-related-calls-post-referendum>>), Knowles, R. NITV. The Voice referendum failed and racism rose. Is misinformation responsible? October 14, 2024. (<<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/the-referendum-failed-and-racism-rose-is-misinformation-responsible/occpe57xw>>), Timms, P. First Nations support workers report a rise in racism ahead of Voice referendum. ABC News. September 21, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-21/first-nations-mental-health-support-referendum/102886384>>), and Begley, P. The ugly emergence of racism within the Voice debate. ABC News. September 19, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-19/racism-voice-debate/102876644>>).

time. We note that in this report we have used the term ‘racism’ to describe it in all its forms, along with discrimination based on race, racial vilification and racist violence.<sup>3</sup>

There are two Appendices incorporating all data tables utilised in this report. Appendix A includes data tables from all 453 registrations. Appendix B includes data tables from the 81 registrations relating to The Voice Referendum.

The quotations used in this report are drawn from the narratives shared to the Register. Throughout this report the quotations which are identified as ‘Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male’ and ‘Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female’ are drawn from reports entered into the Register by First Nations people who directly experienced the racism reported.<sup>4</sup> Those reporting incidents could also identify gender ‘in another way’. These reports are identified in the report as ‘Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-binary’. The quotations by someone reporting racism on behalf of their First Nations friends or family are identified as ‘Friend or relative report’. All other witnesses of racism are identified as ‘Witness report’.

We have identified those quoted in this report based on how they have self-identified/responded to the question ‘Who is filling out this form?’ In this report, ‘witness’ and ‘friend or relative’ reports are not always identified by Aboriginality or gender. *Call It Out* records the gender of the person experiencing racism, not of the person reporting it. Nor did the Register record the Aboriginality of third parties (witnesses, family members or friends) in 2023-24.<sup>5</sup> We have also removed from all data any identifying details about victims or perpetrators to maintain privacy, except in some cases where these are in the public domain.

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<sup>3</sup> We also note that although our focus in this report is on race-based issues, we acknowledge that individuals may experience these issues alongside other forms of discrimination (based on disability, age, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> In March 2024 the *Call It Out* Register was updated to include an optional question recording Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background of friends, family members and witnesses.

### 3. What the Register Reveals About Racism

#### 3.1 Who reported the incident and where they reported

Individuals completing the Register were asked to identify whether they were a First Nations person who had experienced racism, a witness of racism towards a First Nations person or a friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism. This was a compulsory question for a registration to be accepted.

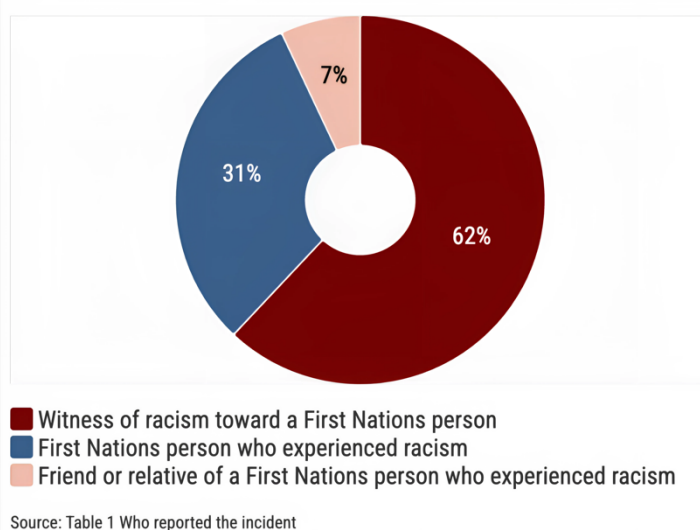
Figure 1 indicates almost two thirds of registrations of incidents (62%) were reported by a witness. Nearly one third were reported by a First Nations person who directly experienced racism (31%) and the remainder by a friend or relative of the person who experienced racism (7%).

This represents an increase in reports by witnesses (up 14 percentage points) and friends or relatives (up 5 percentage points) compared with 2022-23.

Numbers of reports lodged in 2023-24 by First Nations persons directly experiencing racism were lower than those of the previous year by 11 percentage points.

The relatively higher rates of witness reports in 2023-24 perhaps reflects the impact of the Voice Referendum ‘debate’ and the related increase in reported instances of online and media related racism. (See also discussion of racism online and in the media below at [2.4.1] and of racism and the Voice Referendum below at [4]).

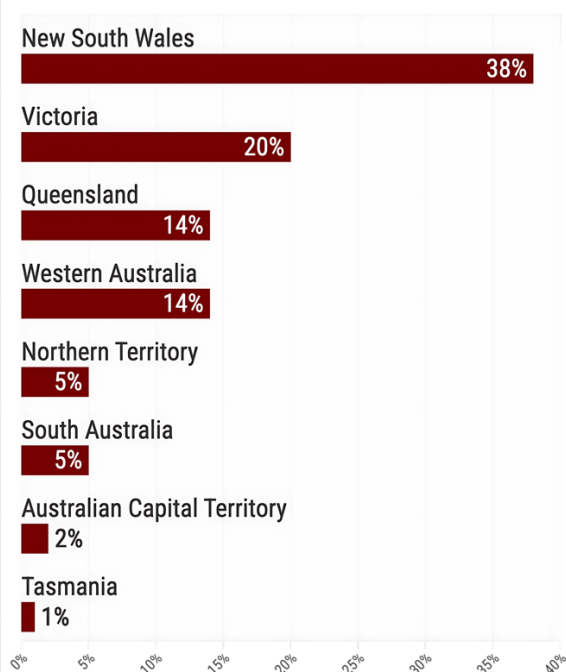
**Figure 1 Who reported the incident**



Individuals completing the Register were also asked to indicate in which Australian state or territory the incident occurred or was observed. This was a non-compulsory question. Just over half of respondents (57% or 260/453) answered and, as Figure 2 below shows, there were reports from every state and territory in Australia.

Some 38% of registrations were recorded in NSW, followed by Victoria (20%) and Queensland and Western Australia (both 14%).

**Figure 2 Geographic location of reported incidents**



Source: Table 2 Geographic location of reported incidents

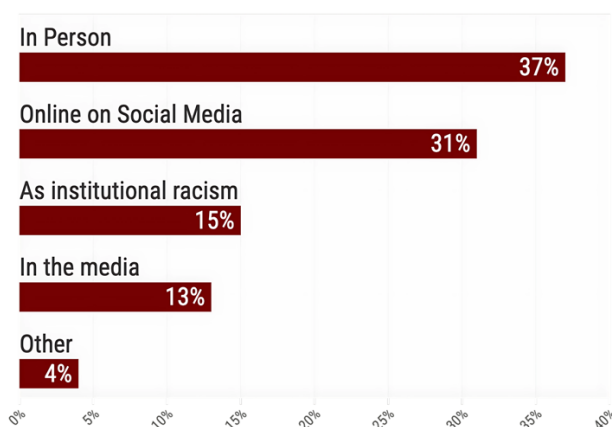
According to the ABS 2021 Census, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population distribution nationally was in order of size, New South Wales 34.5%, Queensland 27.8%, Western Australia 12.2%, Victoria 8%, Northern Territory 7.8%, South Australia 5.3%, Tasmania 3.4% and Australian Capital Territory 1%.<sup>6</sup> While the registrations broadly mirrored the relative Aboriginal population distribution nationally, Victoria was over-represented and Queensland was under-represented.

### 3.2 How the incident was experienced or witnessed

Individuals completing the Register were asked how the incident was experienced or witnessed. This was a compulsory question for a registration to be accepted. Individuals could choose more than one answer in recognition of the multiple layers of even single experiences of racism being reported to the Register.

As shown in Figure 3, more than four in 10 of all incidents (44%) were witnessed or experienced in traditional or social media. Slightly more than one in three incidents were witnessed or experienced in person (37%) and a further 15% were witnessed or experienced as institutional racism. Some 85 of the 453 respondents provided multiple responses (n=567) (see Table 3 in Appendix A).

**Figure 3 How the incident was experienced or witnessed**



Source: Table 3 How the incident was experienced or witnessed by who reported the incident

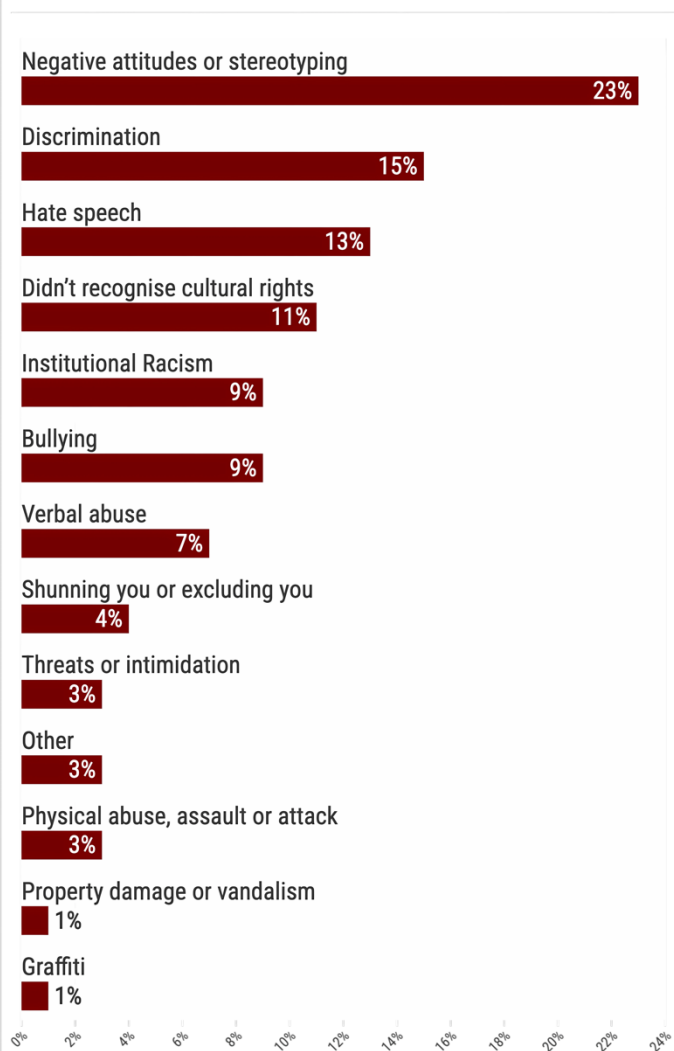
<sup>6</sup> See Australian Bureau of Statistics. Estimates and projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for 2011 to 2031. (<<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-and-projections-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/2011-2031#methodology>>). Released 24/07/2024.

Witnesses of racism towards First Nations people were proportionately more likely to identify racism online or in the media (56%), whereas First Nations people who self-reported experiences of racism and friends or relatives reporting racism were proportionately more likely to identify in person racism (both 55%) (see Table 3 in Appendix A).

There is a marked difference in these statistics compared with those recorded in our last annual report. Online and media related incidents were much more frequently reported in 2023-24 compared with 2022-23 (21 percentage points higher) and in person incidents were much less frequently reported (14 percentage points lower). Institutional racism was reported at similar frequencies across both time periods.

### 3.3 Type of racism

**Figure 4 The type of racism experienced or witnessed**



Source: Table 4 The type of racism experienced or witnessed\* by who reported the racism

Individuals were asked to classify the type of racism being reported from a choice of 13 options. This was a compulsory question for a registration to be accepted. Those completing a report could identify more than one option and many people did so – again evidencing multiple layers of racism. Some 341 of the 453 respondents provided multiple responses (n=1383) (see Table 4 in Appendix A).

As shown in Figure 4, the most common types of racism were negative attitudes or stereotyping (23%) and discrimination (15%). Reports by witnesses were somewhat more likely to identify negative attitudes or stereotyping compared to reports from First Nations people directly experiencing racism or friends/relatives (4 percentage points higher). All groups reported discrimination at a similar frequency (see Table 4 in Appendix A).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Statistics captured in Figure 4 are similar to those recorded in 2022-23, though with some increase in 2023-24 in the frequency of reports of hate speech (4 percentage points higher) and of non-recognition of cultural rights (3 percentage points higher).

### 3.3.1 Racist stereotyping

As above, racist attitudes or stereotyping is the predominant type of racism identified in the Register. The pervasive nature of stereotyping is indicated by the extent to which it is identified as ‘ongoing’ by those reporting to the Register (17%) (see Table 8 in Appendix A and at [2.4] below).

As highlighted in our earlier reporting, racist attitudes and stereotyping underpins racism consistently and in whatever context it arises. Single incidents reported to *Call It Out*, therefore, were categorised as stereotyping alongside other forms for racism. The following incident, for instance, was identified by the Aboriginal woman reporting it as discrimination, hate speech, verbal abuse and racist attitudes/stereotyping.

We received a letter in the mail to our ... [named Aboriginal organisation]. The receptionist opened it and passed it to me. I read it. Someone who lives in the area took the time to cut out a clipping from the [named newspaper] ... that reported about the Reparations for the Stolen Generation. It was roughly cut out and words in pen were written all over the clipping.

"boongs will take what yas can"

"abos"

"coons". (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

The stereotype in this case was of Aboriginal people seeking financial benefits or hand-outs that they don't deserve. This and other stereotypes reported to *Call It Out* in 2023-24 were similar to those recorded in 2022-23. They include descriptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as law breakers or otherwise engaging in anti-social behaviour. 'Was finishing soccer training in the CBD parklands and the coach said "alright hurry up time to go before the Aboriginals get us"'. Other examples are as follows.

In a training booklet issued to sales assistants the question was asked what would we do/should we do if, while on the shop floor, a fellow member of staff had determined that an Aboriginal person (wearing a hoody) was going to shop lift, and, therefore, started following this fictional suspicious individual around the shop floor? (Witness report)

Comedian [named] made racist, stereotypical comments at a paid corporate event. "I'd like to acknowledge the traditional rent-seekers, past, present and emerging... But seriously, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners – violent black men. I hope there are some real feminists in the audience who appreciate that part... Interesting that woman-basher Bennelong is the name given to the land of the Sydney Opera House, whereas his victim and wife, Barangaroo, gets just a dubious casino, [named] offices and sandstone cutaways built over the land named after her." (Witness report)

Demonstrating how racist attitudes like these underpin and entrench racism, stereotypical assumptions about criminal and anti-social behaviour of First Nations people can lead to higher

numbers of interactions with police. This increases First Nations criminalisation, which then falsely confirms this same stereotype.

Members of the strata company vandalise the apartment complex and call police and report damage saying it was caused by the First Nations persons in adjoining state housing. Strata management encourages occupants of apartments to false witness these occurrences. (Witness report)

Other stereotypes describe First Nations people as of lesser intelligence.

Employer stated that First Nations people are not able to advocate for themselves in a healthcare setting as they do not know what is happening and that he believes things need to be explained to them like a baby. (Witness report)

I remember working as a dental assistant and one day, some dental students came in to see if the dentist on duty could do a survey. One of the students was Aboriginal, and the receptionist said that she couldn't believe it. I asked her why and she said, "because Aboriginals aren't that smart". (Witness report)

Incidents reported to the Register also spoke of dismissal or denial of Indigeneity due to assumptions made about skin colour and other physical features attributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is done by both First Nations people and others.

A family friend making a comment on Christmas that anyone who can claim to be Aboriginal can throw a few dots down and charge thousands of dollars for a painting - regardless of talent or Aboriginality. Was having a dig both at the value and authenticity of Aboriginal art but also at fair skinned Blackfellas. It's another layer of the racist attitudes that we have to deal with. Mob think we get off easy being fair skinned, but really, we cop it both from the white community and the Black community. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I experienced many instances on social media questioning my bloodline and bullying me to prove my bloodline. I experienced private messages with extreme threatening abuse from an ex work colleague. I debated with other social media groups trying to dispel the lies and I was also attacked. One group deleted me for what I do not know as I was always polite and emotionally stable. On my own Facebook page, I was harassed and bullied. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

One report described a mother not disclosing the Aboriginality of her children to avoid possible stereotyping in a school setting. The incident in question evidences the above stereotype of First Nations people looking for financial benefits, as well that of laziness (see also [2.4.1]).

A lady I knew is partner of an Indigenous Man, they have 2 children together. The lady was telling me at the time that she did not tick the 'Aboriginal' box of school forms when filling them out for her daughters as she did not want them knowing her children were Aboriginal. I was horrified and asked Why. She told me she didn't want people thinking her children were lazy or received extra funding from the government. (Witness report)

### 3.3.2 Discrimination

Discrimination is identified in *Call It Out* reports as incidents involving (unfair or unequal) *different* treatment (such as sending racist letters to an Aboriginal workplace, as above). They also, however, identify discrimination and racism in broader terms, including as patronising attitudes. A First Nations woman working in a university described racism perpetrated by her non-Indigenous colleagues as follows. '[They] would believe that they are not racist whilst being condescending towards me and other Aboriginal people and displaying that white saviour mentality'. Another First Nations woman spoke of 'politicians and government systems designed to 'save' Blackfellas'.

Also identified as discriminatory is the denial and dismissal of both racism and its impacts as experienced by First Nations people. 'Denying that First Nations people are discriminated against at all in Australia while simultaneously discriminating against First Nations people' (Witness report). The way this arises for individuals reporting racism is discussed below at [2.3.3] and [2.3.4], but here, this point relates to wider societal denial or dismissal about historic and contemporary racism impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a group.

One First Nations man, for instance, called out a media report on racism with 'no mention of Indigenous people. By the way it is written it implies we are among the least discriminated against'. Reports also described responses on social media to a post informing people about *Call It Out*. The comments in question denied racism targeting First Nations people and therefore the need for the Register, which was seen as divisive, while simultaneously highlighting racism targeting 'white' people.

It's basically 'divide and conquer'...let's just stick together and be proud Australian.

Nobody's interested. Nobody cares. Nobody's bothered...

If one disapproves of the person's behaviour, the war cry is racism when it's not.

Ur the racist pricks inciting and stretching it on & on giving ur selves a pathetic purpose.

There is an anti - colonial thing happening. The issue about statues being cut off disfigured and buildings graffities. That's one issue that's gathering momentum and no convictions.

I be calling out all races...Racism towards any race is not acceptable. Especially towards white people because I am personally white.

Also identified as racist is dismissal of colonisation – it didn't happen or have the impacts claimed. The second comment below also denigrates pre-colonial First Nations culture and history (see [2.3.4]).

[Health worker colleague] said to me "speaking of power imbalances, you know the convicts who were sent over to Australia, I reckon they were ... as traumatised by the Monarchy and the Crown just as much as Aborigines were traumatised by colonisation". (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I was trying to explain the findings of Dark Emu [book about pre-colonial food production and land management by First Nations people] to a family member who has

negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people. However, in response, [he] argued how can that be the case if “all they are known for is sniffing petrol.” He further suggested that they are a population that victimised themselves. (Witness report)

This type of racist attitude avoids responsibility for and minimises feelings of guilt and shame associated with colonisation and its impacts. One witness reported the ‘Idea that the state of Indigenous affairs is not the fault of “white people” but inherent, because even if it wasn’t the British, colonisation would have happened anyway’. Another reported the following response in their workplace after raising a lack of diversity policies and negative attitudes to an Acknowledgement of Country (see also [2.3.4]).

My boss (General Manager) said that she thinks it is “ridiculous, how many times can we fucking say sorry, why should I apologise. I didn’t do anything.” I explained that ... our company benefits from existing structures of colonialism, but she kept pushing back and iced me out for the rest of the day. (Witness report)

There were also reports about refusal to recognise why we might need to rethink our celebrations on 26 January, given the connection of this date for many First Nations people with the racist harms of colonisation.

Musician playing at the [bowling club] starts talking about "Australia Day" and asked the crowd whether anyone has an issue with it. Saying how he's sick of the media carrying on about it and he has every right to celebrate Australia. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Racism is identified in these reports as both the national celebration of the beginnings of colonisation and the dismissal of First Nations (and other critical) perspectives of and emotional responses to this event.

I was discussing an incident with a Senior HR Leader regarding Jan 26 which has a negative impact. I suggested the actions observed were close to if not racist. The response by the so-called leader was to Google (while I was talking) the definition of Racism, then proceed to tell me what I just explained did not fit the Google definition so therefore was not racist. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

I am feeling triggered by right wing 26 January events in my local area. Just the ignorance to any respect for the hurt that this day causes community is really frustrating. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

A senior staff member [was] blatantly dismissing ... the reasons why there is a large movement to change Jan 26. Using phrases such as “people are too sensitive” “I am going to celebrate with a flag”. (Witness report)

### 3.3.3 Institutional racism

Reports of institutional racism constituted 9% of all types of incidents recorded on the Register (see Table 4 in Appendix A). As discussed above at [2.2], when describing *how* the incident was experienced or witnessed, reports of institutional racism constituted 15% of all reports (see Table 3 in Appendix A). (See also discussion of location and perpetrator of incidents below at [2.5], and of racism related to the criminal legal system below at [2.4.4]).

As discussed in our previous report, institutional racism is not always well understood and can be challenging both to identify and to call out. For this reason, we have again received reports that might be categorised as institutional racism but that were not identified as such in reports, causing an under-count in numbers of incidents involving institutional racism.

Institutional racism was, however, fairly easy to spot for some. As was the case in 2022-23, reports in 2023-24 pointed to disparities in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes as evidence of this form of racism. One witness pointed to worsening Indigenous rates of adult incarceration and out-of-home care as highlighting ‘the structural and institutional nature of racism being experienced by First Nations peoples’.

Institutional racism may occur where systems, organisations or institutions, including as law, policy and practice, obviously treat Aboriginal people differently, with negative consequences. Government systems and institutions are often singled out as institutionally racist – and we discuss below in detail reports made to *Call It Out* about the criminal legal system, as an example of this. But others can also be implicated, including media, sports, non-government services and institutions (e.g., health, education) - and wider society, given the systemic nature of community-embedded racist attitudes.

A further example of institutional racism within a government system that singles out Indigenous people for (negative) differential treatment is provided by a First Nations mother. She reported what she perceived to be over-surveillance of unborn Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies within New South Wales health services.

Having a prenatal check up at the local doctor. The doctor tells me that because my baby and I are identified as Aboriginal in the system, my baby and my birth are automatically considered 'high risk'. The (non-Indigenous) doctor I believe is completely ignorant and probably assumes this is to 'protect' my baby and I from any 'high risk' complications. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

This mother continues as follows.

Knowing how the health system, working in collaboration with child protection and police, operates to systematically surveil and discriminate against First Nations people raising children, I feel instantly tense. I know I need to be careful what I say to the midwife and medical teams going forward. I feel like I need to ensure I am strong and not struggling and everything is perfect to avoid unwanted attention. Which is all ridiculous because my baby is not at risk. We are healthy and we will create a safe environment, but this is what intergenerational fear of discriminatory intervention by

the state does. It actually creates additional risks. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Institutional racism can also occur where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are treated *the same* as others within a system or institution. As an example, one report suggested that our education system fails to meet the needs of Aboriginal students or ensure they feel safe, which explains their low levels of school attendance. The report notes that if we disregard the existence of any institutional racism in this instance (see discussion of denial of racism above) the non-attendance of Aboriginal students can quite easily (but falsely) be solely attributed to the failure of First Nations parents (a further example of racist stereotyping).

I was having a discussion with someone I knew that were talking about the ‘problem’ of the Indigenous local youth not attending school regularly. I asked the person if perhaps the ‘problem’ was the education system that did not cater to the needs of the children, or maybe the ‘problem’ was something in the system that made the children feel unsafe. The response was ‘the parents should be more responsible and not let their trauma and alcohol problems get in the way of their children’s education’. To me this showed both discrimination towards parents by over-simplifying their trauma and also assuming alcohol was a problem for all the parents. [It] showed no understanding of intergenerational trauma. I raised these issues but the person just shut the conversation down. (Witness report)

Other policies and laws that appear neutral but that have disproportionately negative impacts on First Nations people were identified as institutional racism. One report discusses the refusal by the High Court of Australia (HCA) to hear an appeal from a Federal Court decision determining that legislation requiring First Nations people to access the age pension at the same age as others was not a breach of the *Race Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth). The report points to the difference in life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Age pension legislation and policy were themselves identified as racist in other reports.

This was a case of aged care pension discrimination and the HCA has played a part in aggravating the institutional disadvantage perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples despite the awareness that they require the support [of a pension earlier in life]. (Witness report)

Policy framed by government as intended to provide Aboriginal people with equal access to services by relocating them from remote locations in which they lived was also identified as racism. Such policy was seen as dismissing their need to be connected to Country (see also discussion of cultural rights below at [2.3.4]).

This blog post [includes a] comment talking about the only solution being to round up all the Aboriginal people in the NT and bring them to the cities. This ... fails to recognise cultural rights and that Nation groups have ties to their lands and shouldn't have to move for their human rights to be recognised. (Witness report)

Availability of health services for mothers and babies living outside regional and urban centres were also identified as an example of institutional racism. One witness report cited a media

article discussing Aboriginal mothers preferring to birth on Country but not having access to adequate birthing facilities outside centres. Given Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concerns about contact with mainstream health services leading to babies being removed (this is evidenced by statistics cited in the report in question and self-reports like that of the First Nations mother discussed above), the article notes that mothers do not feel culturally and otherwise safe birthing off-Country.<sup>8</sup> In these instances, institutional racism is avoided by offering mothers/babies the same services as others but that also respond to their particular cultural and other needs (reflective of culture, culturally safe and located on Country).

Another report cited an article about the racist practice of a midwife in Western mother/baby health services. This type of incident could be institutionally racist where the actions of the midwife are part of a pattern of behaviour across an institution and/or where the relevant institution fails to take appropriate action to prevent or respond to such behaviour.

..... [It] detailed how a Wiradjuri mother had her birth plan ignored by her midwife and had her placenta thrown away, contributing to perinatal depression due to her feeling like she lost control of her pregnancy. (Witness report)

A similar example provided is where school students perpetrate racism against another student and staff and the institution as a whole fail to take action in response.

My daughter is in year 4 at school... this is not the first incident but this week she was called “An ugly dirty black monkey looking thing that should f@rk off back to Africa” This happened in front of a cohort of school children this was not addressed by teaching staff. I am still waiting for a phone call to resolve this. (Friend or relative report)

There are multiple reports to *Call It Out* describing the failure of institutions and organisations to avoid or eliminate discrimination impacting First Nations people (see also discussion of barriers to calling out racism below at [3.3.2]). Relevant procedures and policies may be in place, in some cases, but are not appropriately implemented. Another example related to schooling illustrates this point.

My son has been called derogatory names such as the N word, monkey and blackface 6 times over the last few years either at school or after school care. Each incident has been reported to the school. Each time I have asked the school to provide details about how it has addressed the offence with the offending child. Given each incident has been perpetuated by a different child, I consider the problem “school wide”, requiring a school wide response that explains what intergenerational trauma is, what racism is, and the impact of the two. The school has only ever pointed to its anti-bullying policies but refused to directly address my two requests. Nor has the school ever apologised to my son or acknowledged it with my son ... (Friend or relative report)

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<sup>8</sup> The article cites statistics indicating that almost half of all unborn babies referred (often by health workers) to child services in Queensland are Indigenous, despite making up only 7% of Queensland births. See: Williams, C. and King, C. Women’s business. Meet the Black matriarchs changing the narrative of First Nations births. ABC News. July 9, 2022. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-09/first-nations-women-reclaim-childbirth-maternal-health-naidoc/101211040>>).

Other incidents reported refer to tokenistic efforts of organisations to set up Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). These were identified by one First Nations woman as ‘not for Aboriginal communities or people, it is just so the companies can tick their box’. Committees, Boards and similar inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input into decision-making are also singled out, as was the appointment of non-Indigenous people as Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs.

White privileged male who thinks he is supportive of change but always wants baby steps before actioning anything. He is controlling and wants to control every step of the Non-Profit including censoring Aboriginal lived experience. He claims he has an Aboriginal Advisory Board, but only 4 of the 10 people on it are Aboriginal, the rest including himself are white. I explained that’s a board of Aboriginal interest, not an Aboriginal Advisory Board. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

... [A]cross most jurisdictions non-Indigenous MPs are being appointed to these portfolios. Where is the media and general public's outrage on the systemic silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and the inherent absence of sovereignty and self-determination in the laws, policies and practices that disproportionately and discriminatorily impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? (Witness report)

Another report described the commissioning by government of research into racism against Aboriginal people in health services conducted by Aboriginal (and other) researchers and the subsequent failure of the agency in question to respond to the research findings or make them public.

From 2009-2014 I was part of a team of nine people [including Indigenous researchers] who investigated the impact of racism upon the health of Aboriginal men.... [We] conducted focus groups throughout [named Local Health District] to gather information, and returned twice to those communities to ensure what we had written was what we were told ... At the conclusion of the research we presented the final report ... to the executive members of the [Local Health District]. Suffice to say, the report was so embarrassing to an organisation which took pride in its ‘cultural safety, awareness, competence etc. etc.’, that the report was never published, never saw the light of day. As one team-member put it ‘We should have covered it with dust BEFORE we gave [them] a copy!’ ... Since 2008 the [named government health service] beginning researchers program has published/provided a link on its website to the approximately 160 research projects completed. There is only one completed project that is not listed. Obviously, no prizes for guessing ... (Witness report)

### 3.3.4 Cultural and other Indigenous Rights

Those using the *Call It Out* Register have the option to select non-recognition of cultural rights to describe the incident reported. Multiple reports did so (11% of all reports). Examples about connection to Country detailed above at [2.3.3] and as follows may constitute non-recognition of cultural rights.

Just wanting to report about the [named town] Aboriginal community who were completely displaced by the 2022 floods, exactly two years ago today. There are numerous families and communities that have not been adequately supported or rebuilt, but I consider the failure of the government to adequately prioritise a sustainable, long-term plan to ensure that the community is able to get back to their Country and community is unacceptable. This is a failure to recognise and prioritise this communities' rights to Country and to continue their cultural practices. I reject that this is "too hard". Something needs to be done. (Witness report)

A number of reports also spoke about attitudes to the practice of Welcoming people to Country/Acknowledging Country. One First Nations man identified that 'A white Artist released a song called "Don't welcome me to my own country"'. The following comment references public attitudes related to the Voice to Parliament, discussed in detail in Section 5.

A certain ex-AFL player and media personality called for booing at Welcome to Country during the AFL finals. I find this so disrespectful and unacceptable. He needs to wake up and stop the division over the YES vote and his disrespectful attitude towards First Nations People. I've had enough of this blatant racism and the platform he is given. Both the AFL and [named sports club] need to act ASAP. (Witness report)

A report by an Aboriginal person identified the challenges faced in trying to get Australian sport administrators to implement a national Acknowledgement of Country program.

[Sport] Administrators thinking we are 240 years old, when our nation is thousands of years old. This is how they think, Corporate [Sport] Administrators, which is so sad ...I have tried so hard to explain to [them] that the [program] is for all Australians, and not an Aboriginal Cricket initiative, as white Australia has a black history, but they still can't see past 240 years! (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Online discussion on social media about the return of Indigenous artefacts held by the Manchester Museum in the UK was also reported as racism. This discussion provides a further example of denial of past racist practice highlighted above (theft of cultural artefacts), as well denigrating Aboriginal culture. Comments posted included the following.

Such trivial trinkets would have been freely given to the professor. Hilarious that we are supposed to pretend that this ephemera from the 1950's is sacred....

But will instantly trade for a dollar, VB tinny or your bike...

To be honest they were glad to get rid of the junk, 60,000yrs and managed to invent a stick.

Wow fucken shells with dots on them totally works of art [cry laughing emojis].

Just fucken shells they are all over the beach in the water they are not yours.

Soon to feature on eBay! [cry laughing emoji]. (Witness report)

Denigration of culture in Aboriginal art and dance was also reported by witnesses.

Yellow paint ... thrown over Ochoa family hand paintings ... in a sandstone cave. (Witness report)

Upon hearing about Indigenous art that is soon to be hung in the workplace, a patron suggested "so we are just going to be looking at dots". (Witness report)

Our school posted a 30 second video to the school Facebook page of students dancing a dance from the local area with one of their elderly male Elders dancing with them. Most of the students dancing (both male and female) are under 10 years of age - some as young as five. The video reached 30 000 views, and while many comments were extremely positive, we had to censor quite a few racist comments. (Witness report)

Cultural appropriation in both the art and fashion worlds was reported too.

I would also like to add the ongoing exploitation of white peoples' galleries and institutions well-funded by the gov and private investors and art collectors, the national galleries and white business owner framers and mass producers of 'art' for consumption, who continue to exploit and generate a lot of wealth off First Nations artists ... [This is all] highly unregulated and allows people to exploit and not pay their First Nations artist properly for their ability to make art and support their community and family and have their basic needs met and be able to create generational wealth for their families and society. (Witness report)

The founder of [named fashion label] has been appropriating Indigenous culture for [their] fashion brand. It is alleged that [they take] designs from Indigenous artists without disclosing [their] intentions for their artworks. One artist [was] approached ... to submit an art piece for an [event] gown, only to be informed that the garment would not be their property and that they would need permission to use it. Furthermore, [named person from label] allegedly plans to showcase the dress at multiple venues without the consent of the artist involved. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

The report of appropriation in the fashion world identified this as both a 'lack of awareness and respect for Indigenous culture' and 'disregard for the rights and autonomy of Indigenous artists'.

It is concerning to see [this person] engage in blakspaining and tokenism, curating runways and events and speaking on behalf of Indigenous people without consulting them [and] ... where he has taken it upon himself to represent and speak for Indigenous people without their consent or input. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

On this same note, the Register received reports about non-recognition of a range of Indigenous specific rights, sometimes alongside cultural rights but also as a stand-alone issue. A Federal Court determination that permitted coal seam gas mining in NSW, despite significant opposition from the local Aboriginal community, was identified in one report as disparagement of ‘cultural knowledge’, with the court identifying the community as ‘better off aligned to and working for’ the mining company who was ‘destroying country for coal seam gas’ (Friend or relative report). The lodging by another mining company of a notice seeking ministerial approval to mine on Wintawari Country in WA was also called out (Witness report). The Wintawari Guruma Aboriginal Corporation claimed this was done without prior consultation.<sup>9</sup>

Both these mining related reports are examples of a lack of recognition of sovereignty over land and/or self-determination and participation in decision-making – enshrined as rights in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).<sup>10</sup> One self-report identified the interdependence of Indigenous specific (sovereign) rights and human rights and simultaneous breaches of both categories of rights as underpinning the significant race-based inequality of First Nations people in this country.

Because Australia was established as a Commonwealth colony using the legal foundation principle of the lie of Terra Nullius, it failed and continues the failure to recognise the legal legitimacy, law and values of the Ancient moral constitution of the Original First Nations people's Sovereignty and human rights and their entitlement to racial legal equality. Australia instead relies upon their ability to usurp/coerce Original First Nations peoples to accept their assumed colonial racial superiority while the First peoples are expected to accept racial legal inferiority. This legal, and political approach allows the continued administration of systematic racism and institutional discrimination. For the First peoples, the continuous and destructive effects of intergenerational trauma and the escalation of post-traumatic stress disorders result from being forced to accept racial inequality and legalised racial injustice. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

This same report identifies various ‘policies and human rights disadvantages’, both past and present, as racist - countering claims (as above) that Australia’s colonial history is absent of racism. These include political processes or mechanisms, including the proposed Voice to Parliament and approaches to establishing Treaty.

Aboriginal Protection Act  
Aboriginal Assimilation Act  
Aboriginal social segregation  
Aboriginal inequality  
Aboriginal domestic slavery

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<sup>9</sup> Robinson, T. Pilbara traditional owners ‘profoundly disappointed’ as Equinox Resources lodges Section 18 request. ABC News. February 25, 2024. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-25/traditional-owners-section-18-equinox-resources-section-18-wa/103503324>>).

<sup>10</sup> *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, GA Res 61/295, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007).

- Stolen generations
- Stolen wages
- Stolen lands
- Criminal/youth detention administration
- Aboriginal custody over-representation
- Aboriginal housing tenancy administration
- Land rights legislation
- Native title act administration
- Pathways to treaty political proposal
- Aboriginal voice to colonial parliament/constitutional reform referendum (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

### 3.3.5 Aggressive racism

Aggressively racist behaviour was also reported to *Call It Out*. Taken together, physical and verbal abuse, hate speech, bullying, threats, intimidation and damage to property comprised a relatively high 35% of responses. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these types of racism were more likely to be reported by First Nations people who directly experienced racism rather than by witnesses, friends or family (see Table 4 in Appendix A). Aggressive racist incidents were also often identified as ongoing (see further at [4] and Table 8 in Appendix A).<sup>11</sup>

Aggression as identified above was evident in reports about neighbours and family members, as well as strangers. ‘Was told by a woman she would never have gone to my brother’s funeral if she had known we had nigger blood in us.’ (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

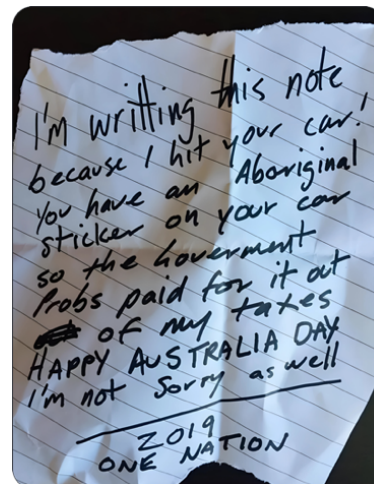
Then the [non-Indigenous neighbours] next door would yell at me over the fence "fuck off you abo junkie", push parts of the fence down to enter and destroy pergola, plants, pots and anything they could find ... [She] stood on a chair and hit my tree until she knocked the tawny frogmouth out of my tree. It died. I also had a ring-tailed possum living in my tree, I found it dead also, but I didn't witness her kill it. My family's totem is the possum. She listens to all my conversations and watches me from her two storey home, every time I'm outside. They both (across the road and next door) yell at me degenerately about my race and tell me they know how I got my house. Paid for like everyone else. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

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<sup>11</sup> Table 8 identifies that 39% of incidents identified as ‘ongoing’ might be defined as aggressive racism (i.e., physical and verbal abuse, hate speech, bullying, threats, intimidation and damage to property)

One witness reported an incident shared on social media, as follows.<sup>12</sup>

An Indigenous woman returned to her car in the car park of a shopping centre and found her car had been hit and a note was left that said “I'm writing this note because I hit your car! You have an Aboriginal sticker on your car so the government probs paid for it out of my taxes. HAPPY AUSTRALIA DAY. I'm not sorry as well. 2019 One Nation.” (Witness report)



Two further incidents discussed in the media and reported a number of times to *Call It Out* involved alleged physical aggression by members of the public against Aboriginal children perceived to be breaking the law –by a public figure in [Central Australia]<sup>13</sup> and a resident in [Kimberley].<sup>14</sup>

[A public official] and another unknown male assaulting very young Indigenous male in [Central Australia] as 'citizen's arrest'. Unknown male states to child “you’re lucky I don’t punch you right in the head” and if he “catches you around here again, I will kill you”. Do not believe this would have happened to a non-Indigenous child. Part of vigilantism against young Aboriginal people in the NT and everywhere. (Witness report)

Physically aggressive racism was described in other reports, including violence targeting Aboriginal children and young people.

I was walking to work in the morning ... Up ahead there was a young First Nations boy in his mid-teens messing around with a Lime scooter. A white man in his 50s approached and grabbed the scooter out of his hands and threw it. He was really aggressive and scary. He called the kid a 'black cunt' and walked off. The First Nations boy walked off also. I kept walking to work and overheard the man say to a person he was with, 'I don't know what we're going to do with these fucking Abo's'. (Witness report)

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<sup>12</sup> Williams, P. Pauline Hanson reacts to a racist note allegedly left on Indigenous woman's car in Brisbane. ABC News. January 19, 2019. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-19/pauline-hanson-reacts-racist-note-left-on-indigenous-womans-car/10726062>>).

<sup>13</sup> See: Vivian, S. Parents want action taken against Tennant Creek mayor for 'citizen's arrest' of child after mayor defends conduct. ABC News. December 1, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-01/tennant-creek-mayor-jeffrey-mclaughlin-citizens-arrest-letter/103150526>>).

<sup>14</sup> See: Deves, E., McKnight, G. and O'Connor, T. WA children's commissioner 'appalled' by vision showing children cable tied together in Broome. ABC News. March 6, 2024. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-06/broome-man-charged-with-restraining-children-at-vacant-house/103552664>>).

A student from one of my English classes was walking in the street with her daughter when she was verbally attacked by two women. My student ignored the perpetrators, who physically pushed her to the ground, breaking her arm. (Friend or relative report)

First nations AFL players have brought to light some of the physical abuse they experience from racist crowds at games as well as opposition players. This includes physical attacks, spitting coming from the stands.<sup>15</sup> (Witness report)

Another Aboriginal witness reported a video shared on social media showing a woman wearing an Aboriginal flag jumper being run down in a car by a man, with the caption: ‘If you don’t think racism exists come take a walk with us physically and you’ll see it first-hand’ (Witness report).

Aggressively racist behaviour appears rife online, based on reports to *Call It Out*.

There was lots of discussion of online racism, including surrounding Australia/Invasion Day. My cousin posted a change the date post on the local central coast community page and received the following message from an unknown man: ‘... f4ck off you grub, don’t need to change the date need to change where you’ll be sleeping tonight, black blue and bloody on the side the rode ya Mong.’ She then shared her response: ‘This is the abuse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face on Jan 26 and every day. You still gonna stand there and tell me racism doesn’t exist in Australia?’ (Friend or relative report)

These incidents include online material aimed at provoking violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One online space dedicated to crime in Alice Springs included public posts or comments referring to locking all Aboriginal up; for instance, ‘build a wall around them and sell boutique hunting trips for people to shoot them like animals’. Comments/posts were identified as pushing ‘the idea that the army should be sent in to kill all Indigenous Australians on sight, although maybe “some” might be worth saving’. Also described as occurring online in the NT (and again, with some targeting of young Aboriginal people) is the following.

The owner of the [named retail location] in Alice Springs ... created an online space that not only allowed, but encouraged hate speech about First Nations people, such as comments suggesting they would be better dead, they would run them over in cars. (Witness report)

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<sup>15</sup> See: Durkin, P. Indigenous stars launch racism class action against AFL. Financial Review. September 15, 2023. (<<https://www.afr.com/companies/sport/indigenous-stars-launch-racism-class-action-against-afl-20230915-p5e531>>).

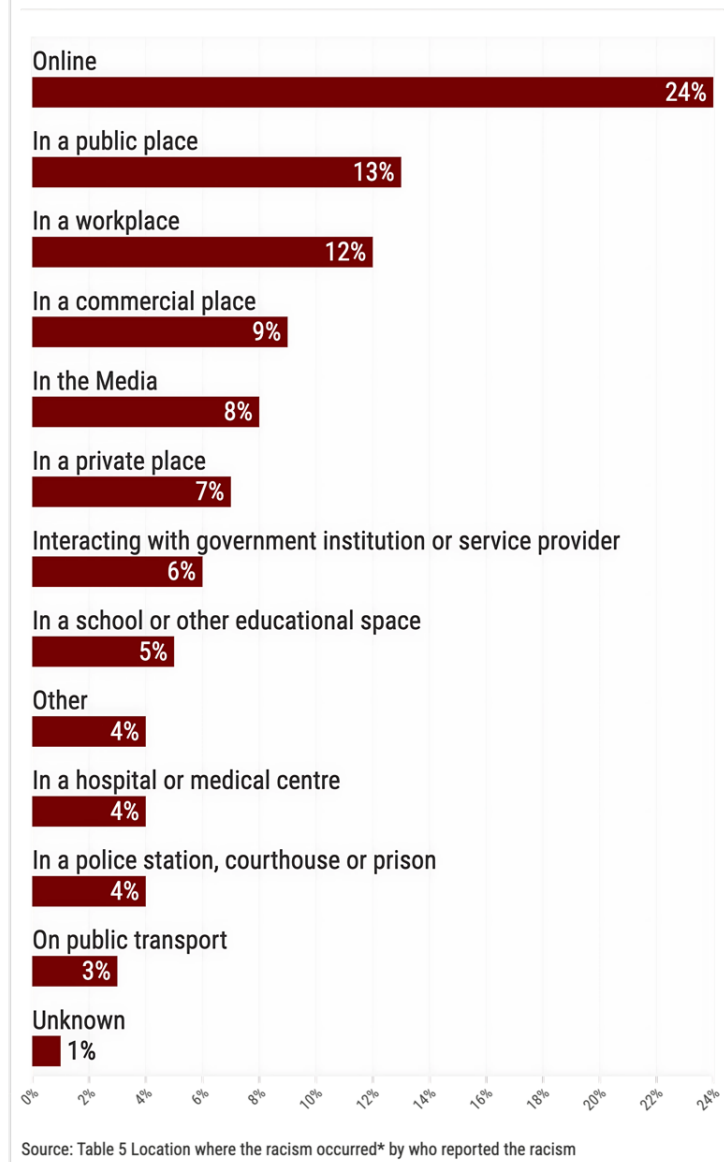
### 3.4 Where and when the incident occurred

Individuals were asked to indicate where the incident reported occurred from a choice of 13 items. This was a voluntary question and of the 453 valid registrations, 90% of people (409) answered the question. Of the 409 respondents, 87 people indicated multiple places (see Table 5 in Appendix A).

As shown in Figure 5, the most common incidents occurred online and in the media (32%). This represents a marked increase (by 11 percentage points) of such reports compared to our 2022-23 statistics. The second most common location for racist incidents reported is public places (13%). This also represents an increase from last year (up four percentage points).

Workplace related incidents were the third most commonly reported location, constituting 12% of all reports. Workplaces were the most common location for racist incidents reported to *Call It Out* last year (17% of reports in 2022-23). The proportion of identification of commercial places as the location for racist incidents also decreased in 2023-24 (from 16% in 2022-23 to 9% in 2023-24).

**Figure 5 Location where the incident occurred**



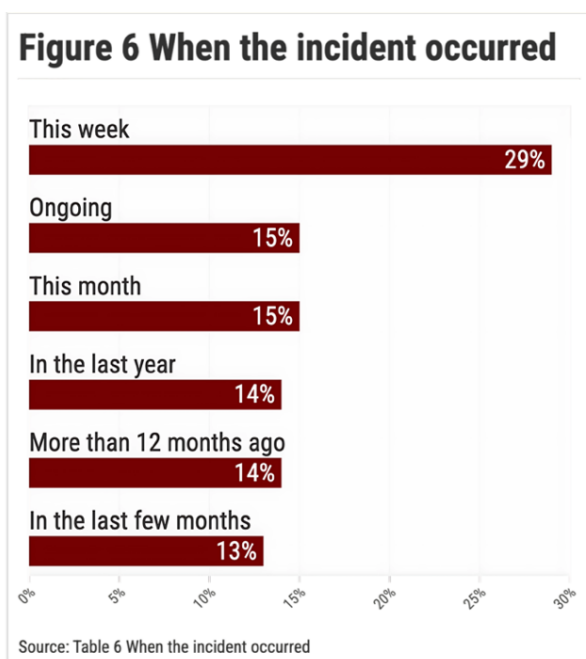
Notably, reports that identified the location as government and private institutions or services (justice, education, health, transport, ‘interacting with government institution or service’) together accounted for 22% of incidents (compared to 27% of responses in 2022-23) (see also discussion of institutional racism above at [2.3.3]).

There is some variation in locations identified by different groups using the Register.

- First Nations people who directly experienced racism were proportionately considerably more likely to report racism in the workplace (20%) than either friends/relatives (9%) or witnesses (8%) (see Table 5 in Appendix A).
- Witnesses to racism were proportionately much more likely to report racism online and in the media which, taken together, constituted 42% of witness reports (see Table 5 in Appendix A).

Those completing the Register were also asked to indicate when the incident reported occurred or whether it was ongoing. This voluntary question was answered by most people (409/453 or 90%), with 44 reports selecting multiple responses.

Figure 6 shows that just over one in six incidents (15%) were ongoing (see Table 6 in Appendix A). Further analysis indicates the following.



- Online incidents were most frequently nominated as the location for ongoing racism (15%), followed by the workplace (14%) and public places (11%) (see Table 7 in Appendix A).

- The types of racism most frequently nominated as ongoing were negative attitudes or stereotyping (17%) and discrimination (14%), followed by institutional racism (11%), not recognising cultural rights (11%), verbal abuse (11%), hate speech (10%) and bullying (9%) (see Table 8 in Appendix A).

A comparatively high 29% of incidents reported were identified as occurring this week, perhaps reflecting the impact of the Voice Referendum ‘debate’ and the related increase in reported instances of racism online and in media.<sup>16</sup>

We again point out that the Register question identifying when an incident in question occurred does not fully capture the entrenched and endemic nature of racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reported to *Call It Out*.

As noted earlier, a single incident can simultaneously exhibit racism in multiple forms (e.g., institutional racism, stereotyping and non-recognition of cultural rights). Reports also often

<sup>16</sup> By comparison in 2022-23, the most common responses were in the last year (26%), ongoing (24%) and this week (21%).

contain multiple incidents of racism experienced or witnessed by the same person - sometimes occurring over many years and across generations. Racism is identified in the Register as historic (and therefore, in some respects, familiar), contemporary and eternal in nature.

Online hatred that aligns with the oldest of colonialist perspectives about First Nations people reinforces my belief that a significant portion of Australia will always be racist. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Given this, our count of the overall number of reports made to *Call It Out* is again a significant undercount of incidents experienced. First Nations people highlighted the widespread nature of racism – stating, for instance, ‘There is SOOO much more but I haven't the time to write a book here’ and ‘Three incidents [occurring] in the last 24 hours. I thought I would just stick to them’ and identifying ‘the feeling that everyone and everything in Australian society is against treating Aboriginal people as equal citizens’.

The multiple contexts in which racism arises are also starkly evident both within individual reports and across all reports received by *Call It Out*. Racism can emerge at any time and place - while dining in a restaurant, over a backyard fence, during family conversations, in our institutions of power (courts, parliaments) and in the lunchroom at work, for instance (see also discussion of range of perpetrators below at [2.5]). ‘I stepped into the staff lunchroom and a female employee was saying how we as Aboriginal People are going to take their lands, parks etc.’, reported one First Nations woman. Another First Nations man stated,

Look, it's ongoing, everywhere I go as a Whadjuk Noongar Yamatji man from Perth. When I go to my local shops, to speaking to my Neighbours, who always give snide stereotypical comments about my peoples, it's just rife ... it's disgraceful. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

### **3.4.1 Racism online and in the media**

Online platforms and media clearly provide a space for racism to be called out. We received a substantial number of reports on racist incidents targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that were originally reported in the media. Some First Nations reports also talk about using online platforms to discuss and seek support in response to experiences of racism (see below at [3.3.1]).

Online and media related racism, however, is clearly a major issue. Around one in three reports to *Call It Out* were identified as located in these spaces (32%), which were also proportionately more frequently identified as the location of racism in witness reports in particular (42%) (see Table 5 in Appendix A).

Channel 9 posted a video on Facebook about the upcoming Indigenous Allstars Rugby League game. The video is of the 2010 pre-game war cry. 298 people used the laughing emoji which triggered me (referendum trauma) & then I read the disgraceful comments. This garbage is worse than ever & will never stop. (Witness report)

[A young Aboriginal person with an online profile] uploaded a video online [of] his house which has water marks on wall. The first comment he received was about

someone calling [his] home disgusting and this is why he thinks the stolen generation is a good thing. [This person] has over a thousand comments and 80% negative. I googled where he's from and the [local] river flooded the nearby town and many residents lost their homes. [He] also had a fishing video which received over a million views and he also again received racist comments. (Witness report)

As a further demonstration of the type of stereotyping of First Nations people discussed above at [2.3.1], one report described an online thread about an advertisement recruiting Aboriginal people to install fibre optic cables. The post reads, in part, as follows.<sup>17</sup>

To the credit of the person who constructed the job ad, they have conveniently listed all (or presumably all) of the various Acts that allow them to blatantly discriminate against the vast majority of Australians based solely on race; despite a widely held (but sadly false) belief that doing so is illegal ....

Online responses to this post included the following. 'My colours are red, white, and black. I'd fly the flag but it's illegal here now' (presumably referring to a Nazi flag). 'Despite the decent salary many would rather sit on welfare where you're not obligated to show up anywhere or do anything.' 'Sadly, this job ad was written by a person who favours division rather than inclusion'.

I can't think of a single time I've ever required a product, service, or anything of the sort and thought "oh thank goodness it's not a White guy!".... "Awesome, my [data network] is being installed by aborigines! I know they'll do a great job with their technical expertise and take pride in their work!"

A point we return to in discussion of barriers to calling racism out at [3.3.2], this report identifies the post, the commentary and the relevant platform holder's lack of response to the latter as racist. Others reported this same issue, with some platform owners identified as setting up a space *specifically for* the voicing of racist attitudes.

More dog whistling. [This] is one of many race-baiting, anti-Aboriginal topics this forum allows. It also allows racists to comment below. It also puts people who call out this racist behaviour in a sin bin. The moderators either allow, are complicit or leave the topics and posts up permanently or long enough to cause social harm. (Witness report)

The forum in general condones a lot of hate speech calling for stripping the rights of Indigenous Australians, and violence against them, up to their genocide. There are continued posts making claims about them all being child rapists, abusers and murders. ... There are some on there pushing back but those who run it don't care or share those terrible views themselves so nothing is ever done about the hate speech on there. (Witness report)

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<sup>17</sup> See: OzBargain. Taxpayer-funded paid traineeships – Permanent full-time employment, \$71k per year salary, no quals or experience required. Online. 27 January 2024. (<<https://www.ozbargain.com.au/node/828470>>).

Other reports about journalism and media organisations referenced media articles stereotyping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as criminals. One witness stated, ‘You NEVER see any of these stories involving non Indig[enous] ppl. Ever.’ Reports also suggested that police were tipping off media to ensure they were ready to capture images of First Nations people during police interactions. There were suggestions too that the media was reporting negatively about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undermine the YES campaign for the Voice to Parliament (see below at [4.2.5]).

### **3.4.2 Racism in public spaces and commercial places**

Racism occurring in public places was fairly frequently reported (13%). These reports, in part, spoke of the need to control Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use of public space.

Our local Indigenous community wanted to add a yarning circle to their land (which is used as a dog park). The president of the [local] community council changed their plans and [tried to] keep information away from committee members because he didn’t want the yarning place to go through because it impacted ... his life at his local dog park. He brought up dog owners’ mental health, which I find so disrespectful. Saying we don’t want Aboriginal people gathering there! (Witness report)

One report described the exclusion of Aboriginal people from a public park in a WA city. The Aboriginal person reporting the incident identifies that on approaching the area in question he saw a police van parked on the street and the park in question locked up. Police and security staff were identified as ‘trying to intimidate Aboriginal people and "move them on"', but with nowhere for them to go. This incident and public discussion about anti-social and offending behaviour by Aboriginal people in the city more broadly (including as falsely reported in the media (see also [2.4.1]) is identified as creating tensions that Aboriginal people are then (unfairly) blamed for. The welcome extended to tourists is also contrasted with that provided to Aboriginal visitors to the city.

I am not homeless and I am just going about my business but I also feel discriminated against and singled out by what the Council has been saying and the media reporting. .... The council and the media use the term "antisocial behaviour" but what they really mean is Aboriginal people being on the streets but they provide no place for people to sit in the shade, access toilets and a drink of water, instead using the police and security staff to chase them away, resulting in anger, frustration and conflict - all blamed on Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people always come to [the city] over the summer for the school holidays - many are extended family to me - they are made to feel unwelcome, but the Council goes out of its way to welcome the "grey nomads" and other visitors - just not Aboriginal people. [The local park] has extra facilities to welcome tourists who want to stay overnight there. But there are no facilities for Aboriginal people to camp and they are made to feel not welcome. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Stereotyping of Aboriginal people as offenders/anti-social and their shunning in public spaces is evident in the following reports about incidents in streets and on public transport. Shunning constitutes 4% of reports (see Figure 4) and 3% of reports identified public transport as the location of the racism (see Figure 5). One witness report recounts a Gumbaynggir man's everyday experience of racism on the street.<sup>18</sup>

I was in the city and in a rush to catch my ferry back home to [named town], I remember there was a young lady walking down to [named town] as well... As I started walking faster I could see her grab her purse and pull it closer to her, after already continuously looking back at me over her shoulder. As the rain started spitting, I walked faster and she too quickened her pace but ended up slipping on the floor. I walked over and helped her up asking if she was ok, she said: 'yes... but I turned around and saw that you were black and thought you were going to rob me'. She didn't even thank me for helping her up... (Witness report)

Another witness report details a Yalanji man's experiences of ongoing racism and its lasting impacts.<sup>19</sup>

It's hard to think of just one time to talk about because it becomes so normal that it happens on a regular basis. But for me, just last week, I was on a packed train and an older white lady wouldn't sit next to me. Even when I asked if she'd like a seat, she gave me a filthy look and just wouldn't budge. It wasn't until the couple in front of me got up, that she went and sat down. She clearly did want to sit, but not next to a blackfella... (Witness report)

Verbal abuse and vilification in public spaces were also reported.

I was walking along and this woman started abusing [me] from in her car calling me a black bastard paedo old prick. I was the only one present. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

I was young and it happened about 20+ years ago, me and my sisters was called black gins as we walked near the local hotel. It happened so often we stopped walking past there and walked around or across the other side of the road but it would still happen. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Friend posted a photo of graffiti at the train station while she is taking her Black kids to school ... "Abos r crims n slaves. White power". And Australia says racism doesn't exist. (Friend or relative report)

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<sup>18</sup> Morelli, L. NITV. 10 times Indigenous Australians have experienced 'everyday' racism. February 27, 2017. (<<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/10-times-indigenous-australians-have-experienced-everyday-racism/d1qooe7zl>>).

<sup>19</sup> Morelli, L. NITV. 10 times Indigenous Australians have experienced 'everyday' racism. February 27, 2017. (<<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/10-times-indigenous-australians-have-experienced-everyday-racism/d1qooe7zl>>).

Discrimination reported in commercial settings was similar to that reported in 2022-23, incorporating unequal treatment in cafes and on commercial passenger transport services (e.g., refused service) and in stores (e.g. over-surveillance by security).

Security harass ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) people everywhere in my city. There is no location where I don't see security harassment. Using self-service checkouts normally warrants unnecessary attention from staff. We have more than enough money to pay for our goods. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

One witness reported an incident that was shared by a First Nations man on social media about an incident involving him and his wife.

[Ride share] driver in [named city] today drove straight to us took one look at [name provided] and I and then cancelled for no reason at all. Apparently, [ride share drivers do] this to Aboriginal people now. This caused us to miss our flight and we had to wait 40 minutes. We also were refused service from a taxi driver who insisted on taking a young woman in her 20's despite [name provided] being first in line. He didn't allow us to share the taxi which was a 12 seater or accept our offer of a second fare. This has now cost us another airfare and accommodation which now we have to make up somewhere else in our budget. (Witness report)

### **3.4.3 Racism in the workplace**

Racism in the workplace was identified in our previous reporting as a very significant issue - comparatively frequently reported to *Call It Out* (including as ongoing racism rather than as a one-off incident). It is still a major issue, manifesting as stereotyping, bullying, and undervaluing of/lack of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, for instance. Difficulties challenging and seeking resolution of workplace related incidents is also, once again, a common issue raised in reports to the Register (see also [3.3]).

Further issues raised relate to stereotyping negatively impacting on access to work.

I did recruitment for a 5 star hotel. I put forward 2 very experienced Aboriginal candidates for a housekeeping and food and beverage role. The HR manager said "look, I don't think they will be a good fit here as we are a 5 star hotel". I said I worked in a 5 star hotel and that hotel employed 21 First Nations staff and [was] a very successful hotel at that. The HR manager said, we have a different clientele here and it wouldn't work. The Housekeeping manager also said, the candidate will most likely not turn up and won't be committed to housekeeping for the next 5 years (the role was for 2 shifts per week). (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Reported to me during work trip that [named mining company] told [local service provider] ... that they won't employ local Aboriginal people [on remote community] because they all have criminal records. It was also suggested that [company] did have Aboriginal employment strategy/obligations but nobody is sure if or how they are honouring these. (Witness report)

Feelings of invisibility, being unheard and isolated in the workplace were all described in reports made to *Call It Out*.

My boss made me feel horrible by making jokes about the stolen generations and ... stereotypes. All of my coworkers joined in until the point where I was crying. When I stormed out in a fit of rage one man followed me and made amends, saying he was sorry and didn't know how much it affected me. But from now on nobody is treating me the same. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people describe negative reactions to sharing of Aboriginal cultural and other knowledge in the workplace, including in instances where this is precisely what they are employed to do (see discussion of advisory boards etc above at [2.3.3]). One Aboriginal person reported this issue as an employee of a government department with a high proportion of Aboriginal clients.

Lack of understanding of role of Aboriginal staff in the government organisation. I'm constantly being asked to provide 'education' on the impacts of colonisation and why there is a huge gap in health and living standards for Aboriginal people and communities to people who have no interest in hearing what I have to say. I have been met with blatant contempt, obvious signs such as eye rolls, sighs and people turning away from me.

This same report describes unconstructive (and racist) responses by other workers to Aboriginal-specific measures for Aboriginal clients, including those introduced at the Aboriginal employee's instigation.

Some other employees were upset that Aboriginal workers were developing a special line for calls. So, when Aboriginals were transferred through to me some would experience racism. One worker told one of my clients after he asked to speak with an Aboriginal worker 'oh you're pulling the Aboriginal card are you' ...

It just went on, got worse, so I advised management I needed the workplace to have cultural training, they asked me to do it with another fellow. People did not like that, there were questions about why we needed to do this, why are we not talking about other cultures like Arabic etc? They'd say they could work with Aboriginals, why am I needed?

This situation lead to a lack of safety for this Aboriginal employee.

I feel incredibly unsafe in the space and have felt this in all Government jobs I have had over the past 20 years. I am the only female Aboriginal health worker in my organisation and the first ever in the organisation. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Lack of safety came up in other reports about workplace racism, but the need for cultural safety was also reportedly dismissed by employers.

My supervisor said I couldn't do my job because I mention cultural safety issues. He said cultural safety could mean I have an ex-partner that wants to bash me. He marked

my performance review as not being able to do my job. He didn't ask me what the cultural issue was and said it was my responsibility to make sure he understood. The workplace refused to acknowledge this as a racial issue and said it was a communication issue. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Denying cultural and other First Nations knowledge of First Nations employees was also raised in reports.

Another example would be sitting in a meeting being told that despite being an Aboriginal woman, daughter and mother I do not know what families from my own Country need and that a person who is male and has been in the region less than 5 years knows more about what local Aboriginal families need than I do. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

#### **3.4.4 Criminal legal system**

*Call It Out* again received multiple reports about racism occurring in the areas of health, education, justice and child protection (see also discussion of institutional racism above at [2.3.3]). In this report we focus on racism in the legal system, particularly in the criminal legal system.

Earlier, we identified reports pointing to worsening Indigenous rates of adult incarceration as evidence of the occurrence of institutional racism. Multiple reports described in detail racism impacting First Nations people at all stages of contact with the criminal legal system. Policing was often a focus, including failure to respond adequately to Indigenous victims of crime.

Started 30 yrs ago when I found out I was Aboriginal and identified. 3 years of domestic abuse nearly losing my life. Abuser told police that I was a "drunken junkie drug addict of an abortion and needed sorting out". The police believed him, not me. A prosecutor finally put him in gaol. Thank god. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Over-policing (including police profiling), inappropriate use of force and racist attitudes in general targeting First Nations people were also reported.

... housemate and I witnessed a man in a heightened state cause some altercation in the street. In response 5 police cars and a SWAT team turned up in the streets. This was a gross overuse of resources for 1 man. Then the local kids ... many of whom are Indigenous, came out to watch the interaction happening. Police officers were putting the man into the paddy-wagon and the children were all shouting 'you'll be okay uncle'. This would have been traumatic for these young children to watch. The man kept yelling out 'I can't breathe, I can't breathe'. He was worried and was being pushed into the paddy wagon. The police eased off once he started yelling this. The children were saying things to the police like 'this is our home' 'this is our street' and one of the police officers mocked the children by saying 'what, you live on the streets?!'. The whole situation really brought to the fore the power imbalance between the local Aboriginal community ... and the police officers. (Witness report)

Media reports about racist policing in the NT in particular were shared by witnesses, including the following. We note too that we received reports, also drawn from media, about racism experienced by Aboriginal staff in the NT police service.

There is video footage of [an] NT Police Constable physically abus[ing] a 14 year old Indigenous child before arresting him. He is seen slamming the lid down on this child in a wheelie bin and dragging him across the ground before arresting him. This reflects the racist attitude prevalent in the NT police and their cruelty against First Nations peoples.<sup>20</sup> (Witness report)

An ongoing issue of racism ingrained within the Northern Territory Police Force. Northern Territory police officers have highlighted how "basically the whole" of the Alice Springs police station referred to a so-called "Aboriginal-only" section of an Alice Springs pub as "the animal bar", and that his colleagues had created an annual "Coon of the Year" award.<sup>21</sup> (Witness report)

One detailed report provided by an Aboriginal mother describes an incident occurring in her home. She reports a heavy-handed police response from the outset to her request for assistance with her two daughters (aged 17yrs), who she identified to police as needing to attend hospital due to mental health issues (they were self-harming).

I wanted the outbursts to stop. I explained to police that I was actively seeking help for them ... They're sick I said, and they don't need to be in trouble, but they need help to stop .... it's their brains and they can't help it. Police said they will arrest them if I make a statement or put an AVO against them if I don't. I said I'll take the AVOs, not charging and arresting as I don't want to set my daughters back in life.

Against these instructions, the police officers went on to arrest the daughters, using force. Police threatened to taser a third young person in the home.

As me and the paramedics were heading inside, several police officers cut in front and took off up my stairs into my home. I didn't give them permission at any time to enter ... That's when I heard screaming. My daughter was on my chair in the dining room with her puppy in her arms. [The police officers] were standing over my daughter telling her she was under arrest. [One officer] grabbed her right arm and was squeezing her wrist .... I could see the indentation from his fingers in my daughter's right arm. And his face had a nasty mean look. I was terrified for my daughter when I seen the way he was looking at her. That's the look of a very angry man. [She] was crying saying please stop it was hurting her ... While this is happening, two more officers have my other daughter ... down on the floor in the hallway pulling her hair and screaming at her to get up, she was arrested. [She] had severe anxiety attacks and she started to lose

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<sup>20</sup> See Mackay, M. Constable Zachary Rolfe's 'excessive' force incidents discovered too late for disciplinary action, Kumanjayi Walker inquest hears. ABC News. March 4, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-04/kumanjayi-walker-inquest-zachary-rolfe-excessive-force-incidents/102051694>>).

<sup>21</sup> See Fryer, B. Racism is not behind us says social justice commissioner. ABC News. March 1, 2024. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-01/racism-is-not-behind-us-says-social-justice-commissioner/103528820>>).

[consciousness]. I ran to the front door [telling the] paramedics ... my daughter has lost consciousness and was on the floor. She had two police officers pulling at her arms yanking her and her eyes were closed...

At one stage I had about 10 police in my home without permission. There were not that many to begin with. The police were rude, dismissive, racist and violent. They caused more violence that day in my home than there has ever been. They accused both my daughters of things they didn't do in the AVO statements ... All I could think about was getting these MEN off my daughters. Not one female officer was even present. Just full-grown men bashing 17 year old Aboriginal girls with severe anxiety and depression. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Police failure to follow protocol when Indigenous people are in police custody was also raised.

... police arrested a woman in front of her partner and family, and told the family she was going to the [named location] Police Watch House. This led to a situation where the woman was not able to be supported. They then lied to the woman and said they (the police) could not contact ... (Indigenous Legal Service) and the police failed to provide an Indigenous Support Person as they are required to do under State Legislation. The person was held in custody for two days before the matter was heard in the ... Magistrates Court, where the Magistrate released her. (Friend or relative report)

Further, a report by a First Nations man identified heavier sentences for Aboriginal people in the criminal legal system.

Courts, Policing and institutions are all complicit in the ongoing discrimination or harassment and heavy-handedness of The Courts. I had a case where the precedent was a 3-month sentence for a non-Aboriginal person. I received a 9-month sentence, and I was much younger and particulars of the case graded it as less severe offending. I received a disproportionate sentence (three times as severe) and the only difference I can see is that I was Aboriginal. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Others discussed First Nations deaths in correctional settings. These reports, in part, evidence stereotypes about the criminality of Aboriginal people - identified as the primary cause for First Nations contact with the legal system. Attitudes of members of the public demonstrate little sympathy for those who have passed away in custody.

I saw a reddit post on r/Australia about the [name of deceased person] inquest. The top and most upvoted comment essentially placed all the blame on [name of deceased person] with words to the effect of, 'This is what happens when you eat a bunch of meth' and 'why are we feeling sorry for a criminal'. (Witness report)

These reports also evidence the dismissal of racism and its impacts (discussed above in [2.3.2]). In this instance, this is about ignoring or explicitly denying or dismissing connections between racism in the criminal legal system, long-term impacts of colonisation, First Nations deaths in

custody and over-representation. One report detailed comments posted online in response to a story about a painting related to Aboriginal deaths in custody.

Maybe the elders should all pull together and encourage the young ones to forget about the past and look to a brighter future. Get them into employment programs and teach them not to hate. I'm not an invader and being called one is offensive, I've never done anything wrong to the Aboriginal people, but I've been called many offensive names and been threatened many times. Why can't we all just get along.

That just highlights that aboriginals should take some personal responsibility, stop committing crimes and don't blame everyone else for their personal life choices if they end up in jail.

So, you know the main reason they are locked up is from domestic violence.

All I see is a 1000% over representation. But of course, that's all the white man's fault huh 😞 take some responsibility and fix your own backyard!! (Witness report)

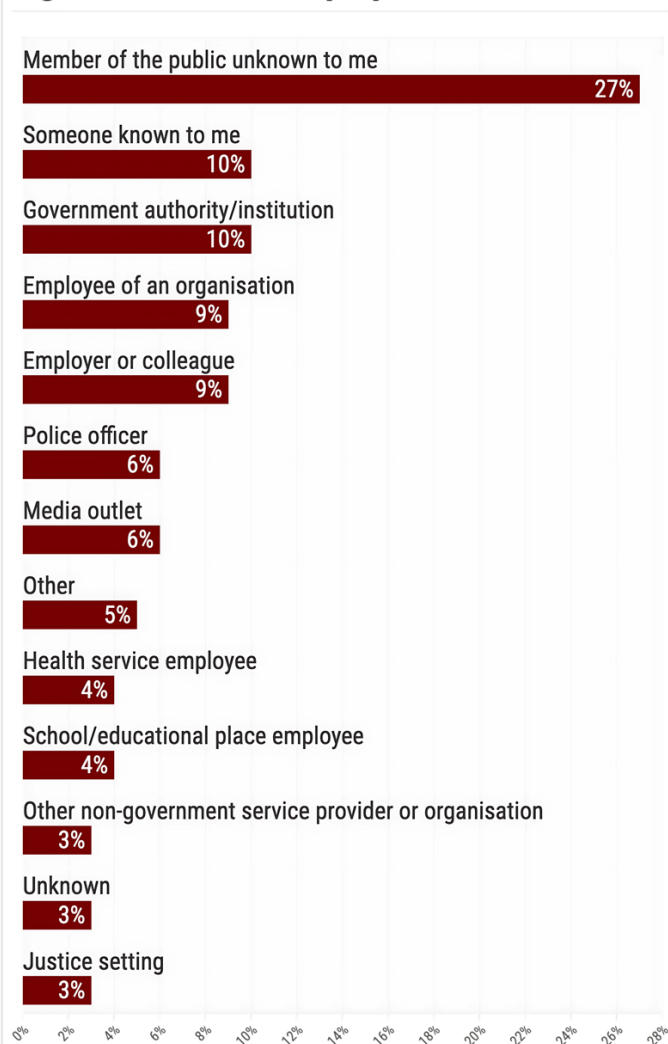
One witness report also spoke about coronial processes, reporting that during an inquest investigating a death in police/correctional custody the 'Coroner asked clients to remove tee shirts with images of their family member who had passed away.' (Witness report)

### 3.5 Perpetrators of racism

Those completing the Register were asked to nominate who the perpetrator of the racism was from 13 different options. This was an optional question which was completed by 421 respondents (93%). Multiple responses were made by 105 individuals. (See Table 9 in Appendix A).

Figure 7 shows that the most commonly identified perpetrator was a member of the public unknown to the person reporting the racist incident (27%). This group constituted just 14% of perpetrators identified in 2022-23. Those known to the person reporting racism and government authorities/institutions each equated to 10% of perpetrators.

**Figure 7 Who was the perpetrator**



Source: Table 9 Who was the perpetrator

We note that other perpetrators may also have been working within government institutions, including police officers, health service and school employees, together constituting 14% of perpetrators. (See Figure 7 and also discussion of racism in the workplace above at [2.4.3] and racism in the criminal legal system above at [2.4.4]).<sup>22</sup>

Those completing the Register were asked to identify the gender of the perpetrator, with 401 people (89%) completing this optional question. Figure 8 below shows that of those completing the question, 72% responded to this question.

There was a notable difference in the gender of identified perpetrators. Males constituted 42% of perpetrators and females constituted 30%. By comparison, in 2022-23, there was little difference in identified perpetrators between females (39%) and males (38%).

<sup>22</sup> Some health service and education employees identified as perpetrators may work in non-government organisations. Those identified as employer or employee perpetrators may be government employees or employers too.

In 16% of cases gender was unknown and in 11% of cases the gender was not applicable.<sup>23</sup> This might arise where the perpetrator is institutional or perpetrating racism via unidentified media or online sources. Some 45 people identified more than one gender – indicating that there was more than one perpetrator.

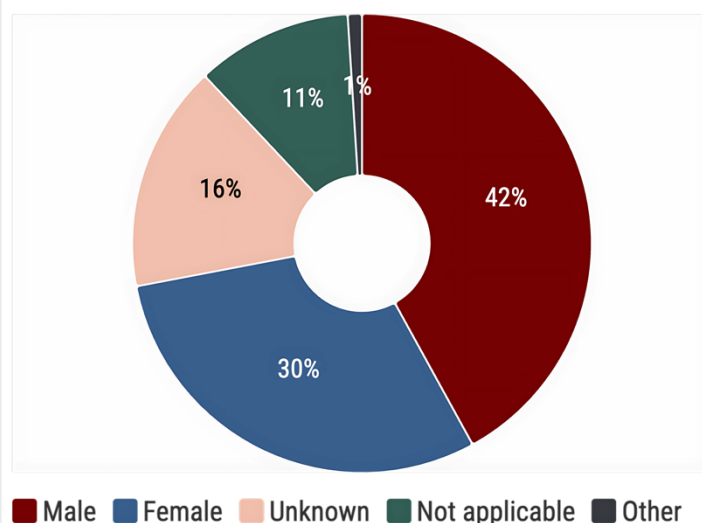
There appears to be little difference in the type of racism perpetrated by either males or females, with discrimination, negative attitudes and stereotyping prevalent for both male and female perpetrators (see Table 11 in Appendix A).

However, there were some notable differences in relation to the type of perpetrators by gender. Male perpetrators were comparatively more frequent among unknown members of the public and police. One report by a First Nations man on this point is as follows. ‘Online comments were seemingly men. Nazi graffiti was probably men. That is all I can really say.’ Females were comparatively more frequently identified amongst employee, employer, colleagues, government authority/institution and some specific services (health services and education) perpetrators (see Table 12 in Appendix A).

Alongside gender differences, and relevant to the discussion above about the breadth of contexts in which racism occurs (see above at [2.3.1] and [2.4]), *Call It Out* reports identify a broad spectrum of perpetrators, confirming there is no single template for ‘a racist’. Reports described perpetrators as ‘normal looking people...tramping home from work’ and as those appearing before a coronial inquest, looking ‘like average people’. Racism is perpetrated by strangers, but also arises within family, friendship, neighbour, school and sports team relationships.

I was at a bar with a "so called friend" when some people I hadn't seen for a long time came over to me to shake my hand and catch up. These people offered me a drink but not my "Friend". My "so called friend" said to me "Hey, where's my drink?" to which I replied, "These people here bought me a drink, ask them" to which he replied, "So it's only for you half cast cunts, is it?" (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

**Figure 8 Gender of the perpetrator**



Source: Table 10 Gender of the perpetrator

<sup>23</sup> These statistics are fairly similar to those reported in our 2022-23 Annual Report, although there was a five percentage point increase in cases where the gender was unknown.

Myself and 2 teammates were warming up for a game and one mentioned a stray dog nearby wasn't black enough to go walkabout. Other teammate laughed. On way back from game on team bus another teammate changed suburb of Joondalup to Coondalup. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

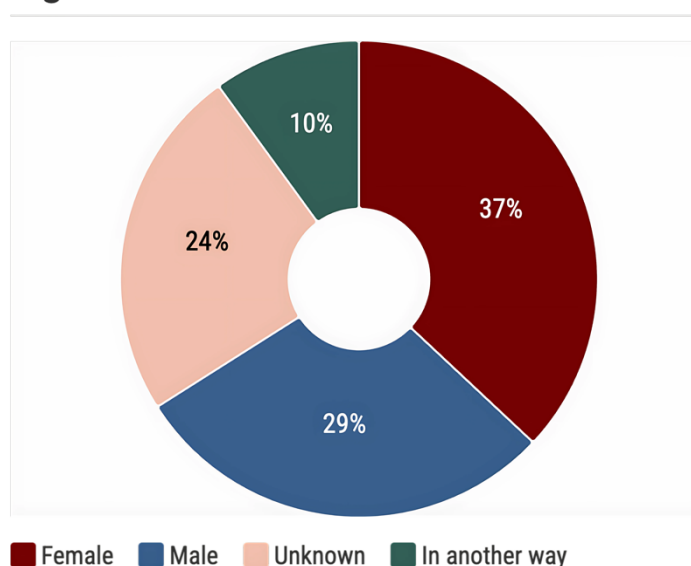
Perpetrators emanate from all social classes, age and cultural groups; named in reports, for instance, as a deputy school principal and teachers, 'white, very senior privileged lawyers', a mayor and local councillors, 'white' managers in the workplace, a midwife, a truck driver, 'young girls making coffee', a 'patron at place of work', 'someone hiding behind an account on X' and a 'politician, former police officer, possible future PM'. School-based racist incidents identify multiple children and young people as perpetrators. Other racial groups identified as perpetrators include a security worker at an airport of 'Indian appearance', a 90 year old South Asian and a tour group travelling here from China. One First Nations woman suggested that migrants coming to Australia 'have even less understanding of and relation to our histories here in Australia'. Of note, Aboriginal perpetrators were also identified, including one Aboriginal politician who trades 'in dangerous misinformation and lies'.

### 3.6 The victim of the incident

Those completing the Register were asked whether the victim identified as male, female, in another way, or if the gender of the victim was unknown. The question was completed by 340 respondents. Figure 9 shows that over a third of victims were identified as female (37%), and just under a third as male (29%).<sup>24</sup> A significant number of victims were identified as 'unknown' (24%).

More than two thirds (354) of people filling in the Register answered the question on the age of the victim. Of those 354 responses, some 90 people (25%) indicated that the victim's age was either unknown or not applicable. Thus, 264 individuals identified an age group for the victim (see Table 14 in Appendix A).<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 9 Gender of the victim**



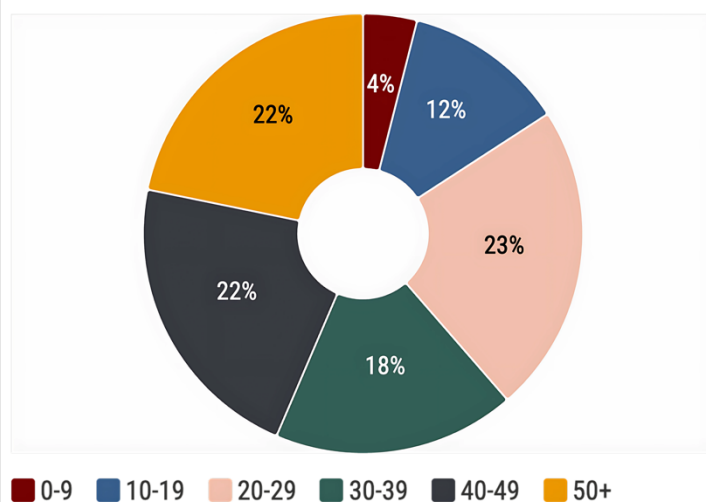
Source: Table 13 Gender of the victim

<sup>24</sup> In 2022-23, the majority of identified victims were women (52%). Although the percentage is smaller in 2023-24, they are still more likely to be reported as victims of racism than men.

<sup>25</sup> These statistics are fairly similar to those reported in our 2022-23 Annual Report.

Figure 10 shows that there were minimal differences in percentages of those subjected to racism in the age groups 50yrs+, 40-49yrs and 20-29yrs. Collectively, almost half of all victims were aged 40yrs or over (43%). Younger victims 0-19yrs constituted 19% of reports. These were identified in reports involving multiple victims, both parent and children; incidents targeting younger victims alone; and historical firsthand experiences.

**Figure 10 Age of the victim**



Source: Table 14 Age of the victim by who reported the incident

We also examined the age group of the victim by the type of racism identified. There was little difference across the age groups, with negative attitudes, stereotyping and discrimination being proportionately the most prevalent for all ages (see Table 15 in Appendix A).

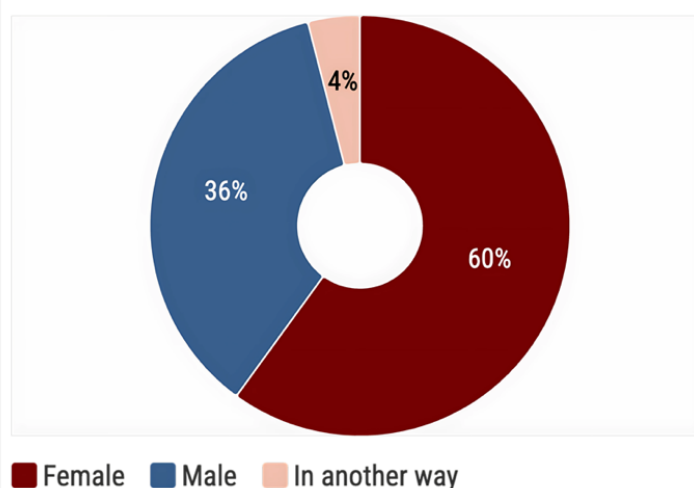
In terms of the location of the incident, not surprisingly, those in the youngest age group were identified as proportionately less likely to have experienced racism in the workplace and more likely to have experienced racism in a

school or educational setting and in private. The group identified as proportionately most likely to experience racism in the workplace were those in the 40-49 age bracket (see Table 16 in Appendix A). In 2023-24 there was a notable increase in reports identifying the gender and/or age of the victim as unknown/not applicable (both 13 percentage points higher) compared with those recorded in 2022-23. These increases were also relative to the increase in reports of online and media related racism targeting First Nations people as a group (discussed above at [2.2] and [2.4.1]).

### 3.7 Self-Reports of racism by gender

In this section we look more specifically at the people who self-reported racism to the *Call It Out* Register and we have broken down the data by gender to identify differences in experiences between women and men. Thus, in this section we have omitted from the

**Figure 11 Gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**



Source: Table 17 Gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism

discussion third party reports of racism by either witnesses, or friends or relatives. The reason for doing this is that it provides for a clearer analysis of direct experiences of racism.

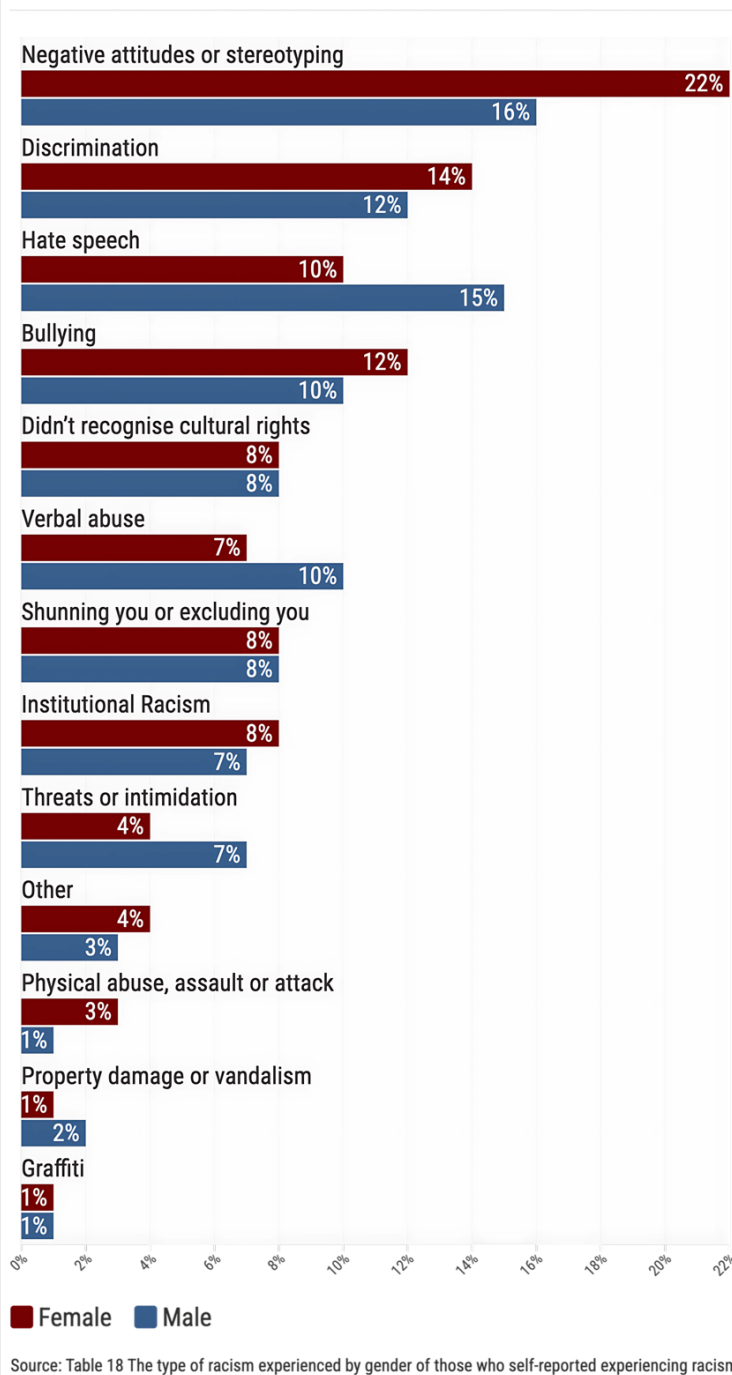
Previously in Figure 1 we indicated that 31% of all reports on the Register were self-reported. Figure 11 above shows the gender of those who self-reported racism where gender was recorded in 2023-24 (see also Table 17 in Appendix A).

Women registered nearly twice as many self-reported experiences of racism on the Register compared to men (60% by women compared to 36% by men), while 4% of those who self-reported identified their gender in another way.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 12 shows that the most significant difference in the type of racism experienced by gender was that women were more likely to report negative attitudes and stereotyping than men (22% compared to 16%).

Men were more likely than women to report hate speech (15% compared to 10%). Otherwise, there was little difference in the reports on the type of racism identified by men and women (three percentage points or less) (see Table 18 in Appendix A).

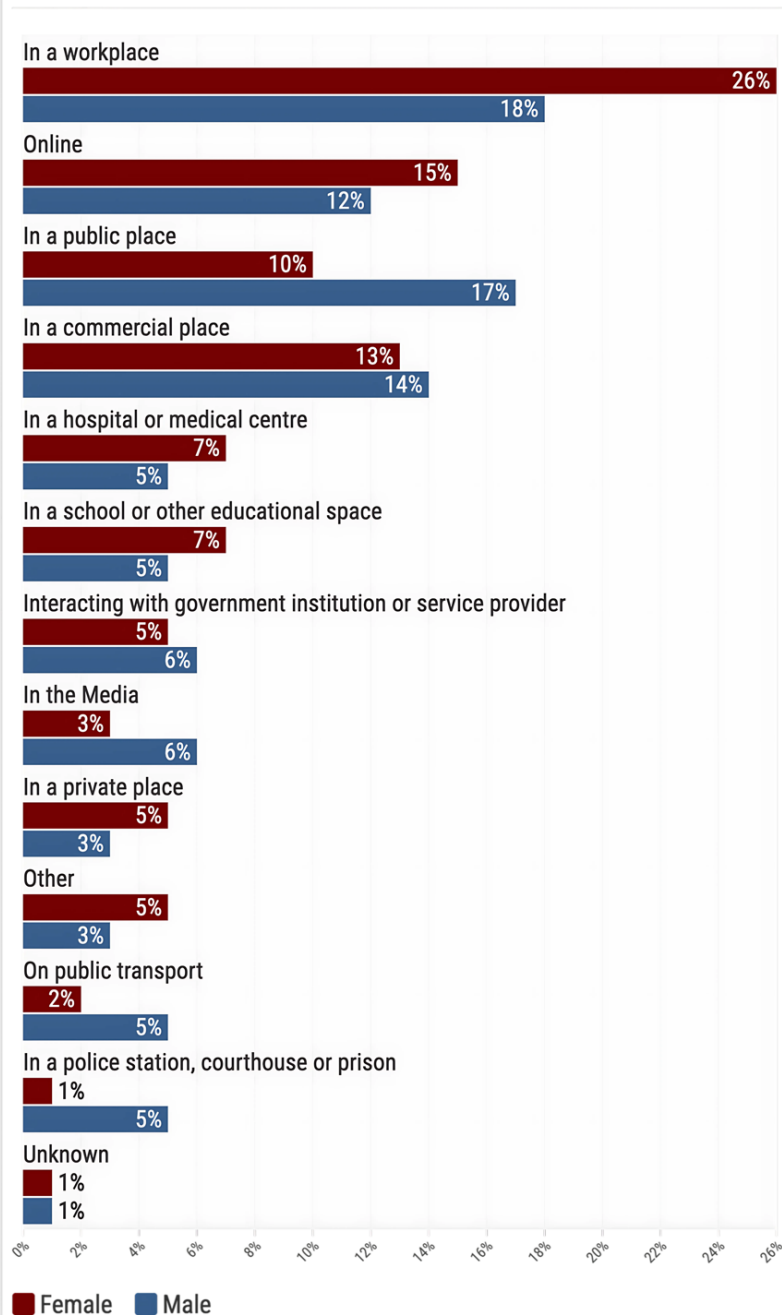
**Figure 12 The type of racism experienced by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**



<sup>26</sup> These statistics were similar to those in our 2022-23 Annual Report where 64% of those who self-reported racism were women.

There were differences in where the racist incident reported occurred by the gender of the person experiencing it. Figure 13 shows that women were proportionately more likely to self-report racism in the workplace than men (26% compared to 18%). Women were also proportionately more likely to report racism in a private setting than men (5% compared to 3%). Men were proportionately more likely to report racism occurring in a public place (17% compared to 10%) and by police (5% compared to 1% - note the small numbers) (see also Table 19 in Appendix A).

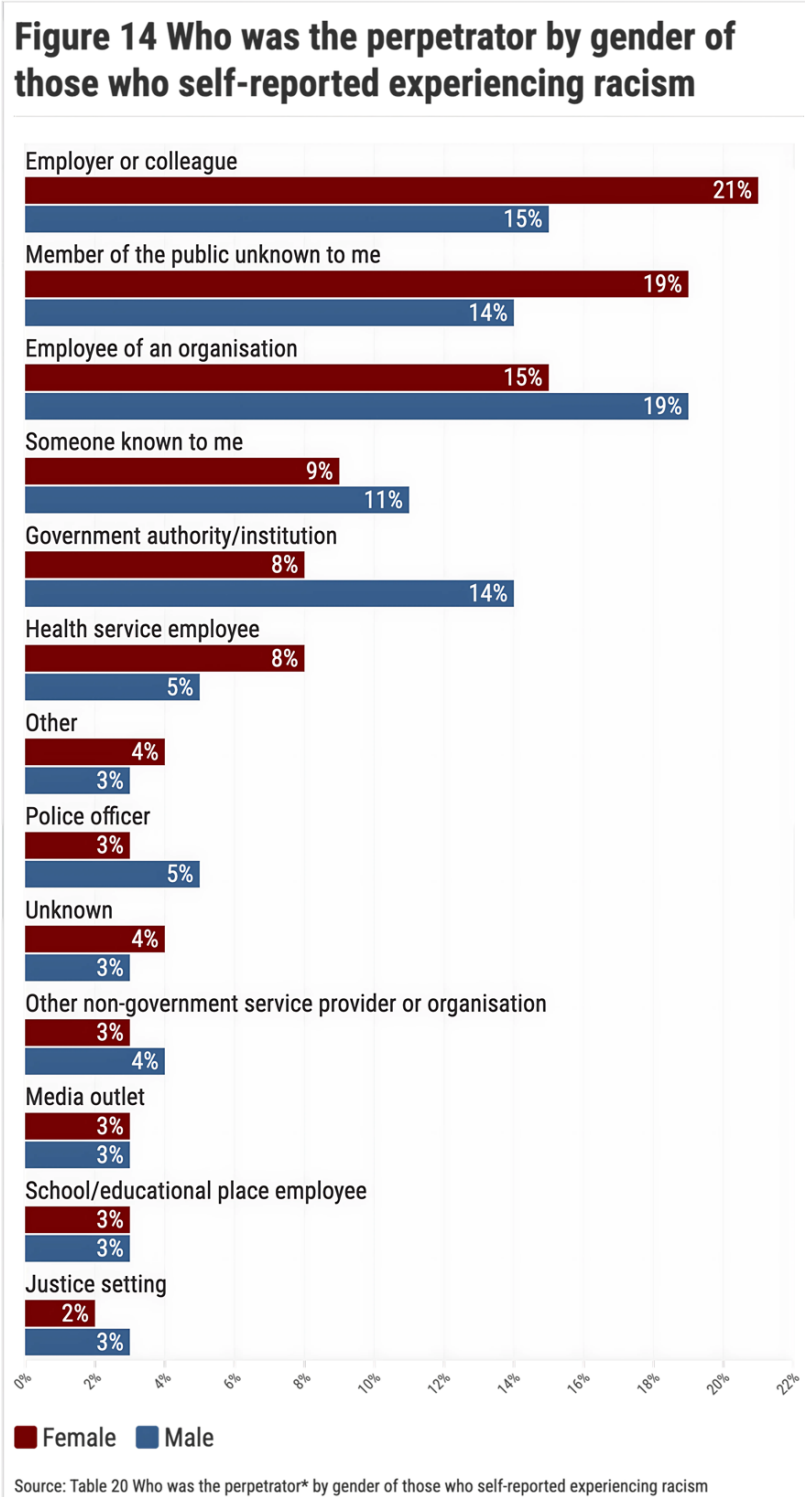
**Figure 13 Location where the racism occurred by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**



Source: Table 19 Location where the racism occurred\* by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism

We also examined who the perpetrator was for those who self-reported by gender.

Figure 14 shows that women were more likely than men to identify the perpetrator as being an employer or colleague (21% compared to 15%) or an unknown member of the public (19% compared to 14%) (see also Table 20 in Appendix A). Men were proportionately more likely than women to self-report perpetrators as employees of an organisation (19% compared to 15%) or government authority/institution (14% compared to 8%) (see also Table 20 in Appendix A).



### 3. Responses to Racism

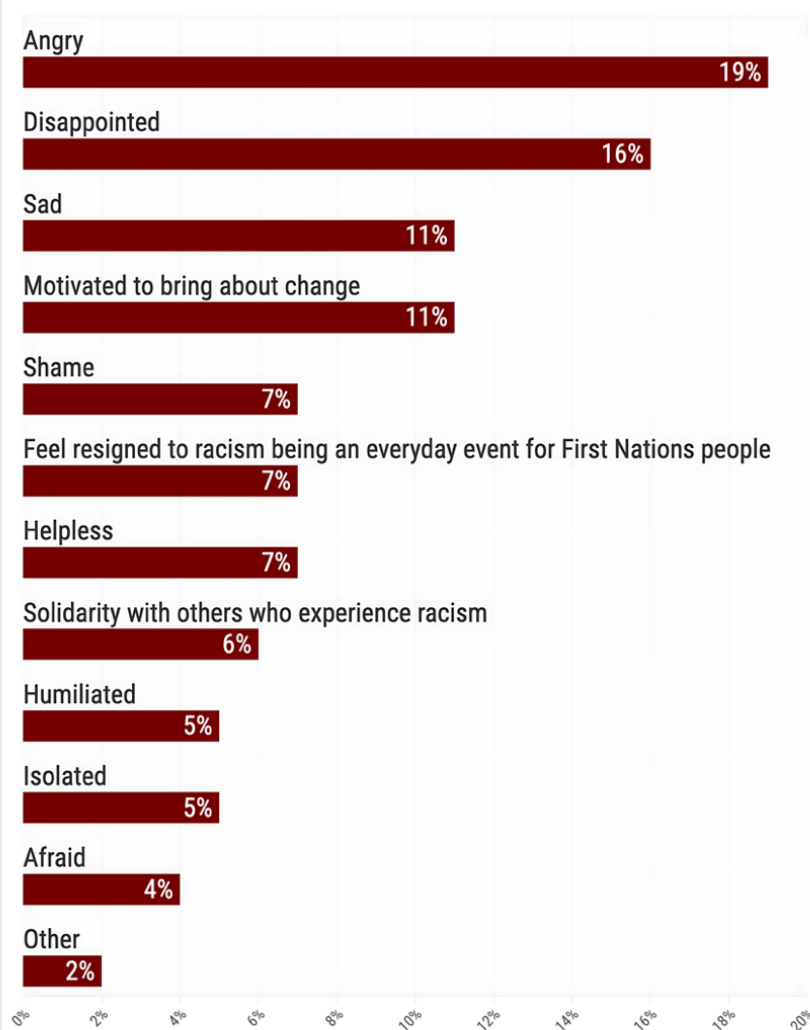
Questions on the *Call It Out* Register asked how the person reporting racism felt about it, identifying its emotional impacts, and whether and how they responded or took action in response to racism. The sharing of perspectives on more effective responses to racism were also invited.

#### 3.1 Emotional and other impacts of racism

Those completing the Register were asked to nominate how they felt about the incident being reported from a range of 12 options. More than one response could be nominated. Some 386 (85%) of the 453 people completing the Register chose to answer this question. The majority of this group (331) indicated multiple responses (1480 in total) (see Table 21 in Appendix A).

As shown in Figure 15, the most common feeling identified was anger (19%), followed by disappointment (16%), sadness (11%) and motivation to bring about change (11%) (see Table 21 in Appendix A). Anger and disappointment were also the most common emotional impacts across each of the age categories (see Table 22 in Appendix A).<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 15 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed**



Source: Table 21 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed

<sup>27</sup> Compared to 2022-23, those reporting racism in 2023-24 were a little more likely to feel angry, disappointed and sad (a difference of two to three percentage points only).

### 3.1.1 Emotional impacts of racism

Just under one in five of those reporting racism on the Register (17%) identified feeling motivated to bring about change and/or solidarity with others experiencing racism in response to the incident reported.<sup>28</sup>

It was so extensive, I reported it. I was not supported. The person was re-instated and I moved jobs. I am very vocal about racism in the workplace now. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

This incident has taken a toll on my mental health, but it has also made me want to fight harder to make Australia a culturally safe place. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Overwhelmingly, however, many identified the huge toll of racism extracted from First Nations people, and how incidents *and* calling them out can silence, shock, shame and otherwise negatively impact emotions.

Really dirty business. It's over now, I'm still getting over it ... I'll never work for them mongrels again ... That place felt like 13 tigers worked there. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

All groups reporting racism to the Register were likely to experience a range of emotional responses, with anger being the most common (see Figure 15 and Table 23 in Appendix A).

[I avoided] going to the places where those incidents happened for months. I was very angry that I had no control over what happened and what might happen again. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

I'm so sorry to say, I lost my temper and argued. I'd always promised myself that I wouldn't do this but I became so upset at what I believe was incorrect and very hateful comments, I argued. (Witness report)

Disappointment and sadness were also relatively common, including for the First Nations man reporting racism perpetrated by sports teammates, described earlier.

Feeling hurt/sad/disappointed with teammates for 1) saying these things in the first place and 2) for the other teammates for not standing up for me/First Nations people. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Sadness is felt vicariously by those witnessing racism. One First Nations woman saw a video posted on a named news channel's TikTok account 'calling an Indigenous woman a "bush pig"', followed by comments by 'white people laughing and agreeing and praising the creator for her comments.' 'It makes me disgusted. As an Indigenous woman it hurts to hear my sisters being referred to as something so racist and ignorant.' The First Nations man who was

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<sup>28</sup> This compares to 21% of responses in 2022-23.

subjected to racism at a bar by his 'so called friend', described earlier at [2.5], wrote of leaving the bar and going back to 'camp'. He then 'cried for my people'.

Sadness was felt when racism perpetrated by a family member or friend was called out, fracturing close relationships.

After years of exhausting conversations, trying to help her be less racist, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was like all that work was for nothing and it hasn't been the same since. It breaks my heart to say that. I love my family, but I can't continue to subject myself to that pain. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-binary)

And it was also felt by those who love and care for individuals targeted by racism, demonstrating the wide ranging impacts of incidents. A relative who reported a group chat between her nephew and school 'friends' in which her nephew was racially denigrated (also cited in Section 5) describes sadness felt across the wider family unit.

My nephew was crying and incredibly distressed by the event. This of course flows on to his mother, myself and other members of our family, I feel physically and mentally unwell by the compounding racism from this referendum & the impact this has had on my 12-year-old nephew. (Friend or relative report)

Trauma was reported too. The comment below describes impacts of the incident involving failure on the part of a Local Health District to publicise Indigenous research on racism, described earlier.

The report describes the research and its ongoing invisibility as traumatising for Aboriginal people involved. As you can imagine, this research process was very traumatic for the researchers and the community members involved. The trauma has been compounded – layered – by the fact that both the Aboriginal members of the research team and Aboriginal community members have (again) been silenced. (Witness report)

Trauma and fear arose from the incident involving heavy-handed policing of three young people in their home, also described earlier. Their Aboriginal mother states, 'the mental trauma police have added on my family is going to affect us for a very long time to come. I've never been so scared for my life and especially my kids' lives.' Feeling unsafe was discussed by others, including where reports about racism are not responded to appropriately.

I've worked in academia in both professional and academic roles for some time. I thought I could deal with this sort of nonsense but the extent of the gaslighting floored me and the organisational attitude that stemmed from it, i.e. that I am stupid and a liar, made me feel unsafe in a way I never have before because I couldn't fight it. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I just felt like I wasn't safe or supported at the place I spent most of my time at - school. I felt betrayed that a teacher that is supposed to uplift and do good by me was saying to

my face that I should neglect my culture. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

As this last comment suggests, isolation and distrust are further emotional impacts of racism. A further example is as follows.

... was told by my Supervisor that my colleagues are frightened of me. I said I believe my colleagues are frightened of their racism that is exposed in my presence, because I name their racism. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

The broad sweep isolating effect of racism is described by another First Nations woman as follows.

I feel like it's always been an issue for me, and I just can't get away from it. I am always seen as intimidating, even when helping others. I have tried playing small, but that doesn't work because people walk over me. And if I speak up and advocate for myself, I'm seen as even more aggressive. I just think I'm now at the point of disengaging more and going out less... it affects me in others way as well, like with friendships but also intimate relationships. I feel like I can't establish trust at times because I'm waiting for the person to get scared of me or something like that... I don't imagine I'd do anything intentionally to scare anyone, but it's what I've experienced in the past that I'm fearful someone will make me out to be something I'm not. And on the other side of that, who would want to be with someone that experiences this type of treatment constantly? It really dims the mood/ experience for others. So I just choose to stick to myself in that way most of the time... it's easier for everyone if I'm alone. Racism doesn't just make me feel shame when it happens to me, I also feel like it affects those around me, and I don't want to be seen as yet another issue for people to have to advocate for... I'd rather support others to advocate for more important issues. I don't want to be in a position to be a burden to anyone. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Other emotions identified include helplessness and feeling worthless or devalued.

I feel unwelcome and unwanted. I feel devalued and dehumanised. I am lacking confidence and second-guessing everything - decisions I make in the workplace - as they are constantly moving the goals posts. Lack of clarity is starting to make me feel incompetent and worthless. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

As an Aboriginal person (who has nowhere to hide from racism) receiving [a letter of hate] in our own place, our organisation, a place where we belong was absolutely disgusting, and disheartening and made us feel (again) like subhuman. It made us sick to our stomach and we then were reminded that this was never ever going to stop for Aboriginal people. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

### 3.1.2 Health and other impacts of racism

Reports shared to the Register in 2023-24 once again point to significant mental and other health implications of racism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Health impacts arise during and following an incident (including due to poor responses to challenges to racism) and can be physical and/or psychological.

I still get sweaty palms when I think about when it happened and feel my heart race a little faster. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Couldn't sleep that night, felt emotional. Keep replaying it. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I suffer from PTSD, so this incident knocked me off balance totally. I was afraid to say things in public in case I started talking about this kind of racism and was seen as irrational. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

The stress of this situation exacerbated a pre-existing autoimmune disease I have and led to me experiencing facial pain similar to trigeminal neuralgia as well as depression. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I was impacted with a longer recovery time as the insurance company was bias[ed] and so was the governmental workplace. So, their non-recognition of my injury exasperated my condition that was only meant to last 3 months, it lasted 18 months, adjustment disorder consist[ing] of anxiety, depression, stress ... (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Health impacts (physical, psychological) can be long-term, as the following incidents indicate in the description of incidents experienced as a child that cast a long shadow.

As a child growing up in the Pilbara (Western Australia) being one of only two Aboriginal families amongst predominantly white families experiencing racism was hell. Every waking hour I was verbally abused by children (who were younger than me), my classMATES there would be a group of boys about 5 who were my age that would wait for me at the bottom of the stairs every recess and lunch time just to take turns punching me on same arm every day calling me BOONG COON ROCK APE NIGGA until they were satisfied. In my later years I developed LIPOMA which needed surgery to remove as it was growing too big (the size of a golf ball), and I now have a scar to always remind me of the persons who did this. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

One witness report recounts the experiences of a Gomeroi man and the lasting impacts of repeated and targeted racism endured in childhood.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See: Morelli, L. NITV. 10 times Indigenous Australians have experienced 'everyday' racism. February 27, 2017. (<<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/10-times-indigenous-australians-have-experienced-everyday-racism/d1qooe7zl>>).

In primary school when anything went missing or stolen – who do you think got the blame? Every single time, from such an early age, me and the two other Indigenous kids would always be taken aside and asked if we were the ones that stole it... imagine being the one to be constantly picked on and blamed... I'm now 41-years-old and still to this day, when things go missing, I get anxious because I was always the first one to blame. (Witness report)

Some spoke of having suicidal thoughts following racism. 'The recent incidents have impacted me to the point where I did try to take my life and was hospitalised for it' (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male). As above, deaths in custody but also death or harm in health service provision were also attributed to racism.

Concerns for unborn baby's health during birth not listened to nor concerns shared by mother of person giving birth. Concerns were not appropriately escalated and led to injury to baby. (Witness report)

[Named person] died less than 24 hours after being discharged from [named hospital] in 2021. A doctor who incorrectly diagnosed an Aboriginal man with drug-related side-effects... less than 24 hours before he died... admitted his diagnosis was "without foundation". The doctor admitted he used "cognitive bias" when diagnosing him, and it was a "matter of regret" he did not refer him for scans. "In retrospect, absolutely [I should have] ... There is a lot of marijuana use in the community. It's just pattern recognition". The Doctor [admitted] he never read [named person's] triage or clinical notes... [and] formed this diagnosis before even speaking to or assessing him. Its prejudice that killed [named person]. It must stop and patients need culturally safe care and not false assumptions being made about them. (Friend or relative report)

### **3.2 Emotional and other impacts of racism by self-reports and gender**

We investigated emotional responses to the question about how the incident made the person feel by those who self-reported racism. More than half, or 77% (110/142) of this group chose to respond to this question and most of those chose multiple responses (103) to the question.

For both men and women, the most frequent feelings were anger (both 13%) and disappointment (13% women and 11% men), followed by sadness (12% men and 10% women), humiliation (11% men and 9% women) and feeling resigned to racism being an everyday event (10% men and 9% women) (see Table 24 in Appendix A).

Overall, for those who self-reported racism there was very little difference by gender in feelings arising due to experiences of racism. Along with small differences related to sadness and humiliation (above), men were slightly more likely than women to self-report feeling helpless (10% men compared to 8% women). Conversely, women were somewhat more likely than men to self-report feeling afraid (7% women compared to 5% men).

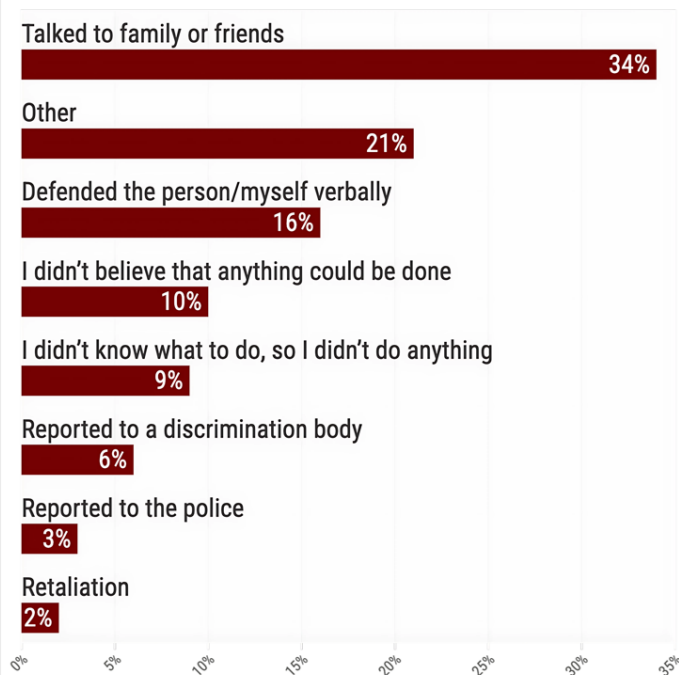
### 3.3 Responding to racism

All persons completing the Register were asked whether and how they responded to racism from a choice of 8 options. More than half (284 or 63%) of those filling in the Register completed this question, and around half of those people (123) provided multiple responses (see Table 25 in Appendix A).

Figure 16 shows that the most common response (34%) was to talk with family and friends (see Table 25 in Appendix A). This was also the most common response across all age groups (see also Table 23 in Appendix A).

One in six responses (16%) involved the person verbally defending either themselves or the person experiencing the racism. Reporting an incident to either an anti-discrimination body (6%) or the police (3%) together comprised just under one in ten responses and one in ten responses reflected a belief that nothing can be done (10%) (see Table 25 in Appendix A).<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 16 Responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed**



Source: Table 25 Responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed\*

#### 3.3.1 Calling out racism

Our previous reporting indicated that many of those using the Register identified the importance of calling racism out, including to ensure accountability of those perpetrating it. This view was again confirmed in 2023-24 data. ‘Call it out and shame them!’, one witness said. The First Nations man reporting appropriation of Aboriginal culture in fashion (described earlier) identified it as ‘crucial that we hold individuals like [this] accountable for their actions’ and ‘ensure that Indigenous culture is respected and celebrated in an authentic and inclusive manner’.

Challenges to racism can involve defending oneself/the person targeted by racism verbally, lodging a complaint or otherwise reporting racism, including directly to whomever is seen as responsible for it (in combination, 25% of responses). We note that though talking to friends and family is identified as the more common stand-alone response to racism (34%), the

<sup>30</sup> These statistics are similar to those recorded in our 2022-23 Annual Report.

majority of 'Other' responses (21% in Figure 16) described proactive responses to racism that include various forms of advocacy, education and reporting. Reports were made, for instance, to HR staff, a union, online platforms, a school, a workplace, and local councils (e.g. about removal of racist graffiti) and of course to *Call It Out*. As such, a fair proportion of those reporting racism were taking action of one form or another. Some sought broader positive change, while others focused on more immediate resolution of the incident experienced.

I have been in an ongoing process with the management of the place where it happened. I have also been in an ongoing process with my workplace to work on an anti-racism policy and to redress the impact it has had on me in my work. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

One witness stated that he 'called' a perceived racist 'out' and 'told him what he said was disgusting'. The First Nations man called a 'half cast cunt' in a bar (described earlier) called his 'so called friend' 'a couple of days later to express how it made me feel'. Some used social media to call out racism or to share information about *Call It Out*.

Commented providing a link to [*Call It Out*] and other resources for mob, aiming to not give [the racists online] the attention they wanted but [to] reach the mob reading [the racist material]. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Used my LinkedIn profile to post about hidden racism in large Organisations and Non-profits, post about censorship of Aboriginal peoples' voices, and informed people I was sacked for calling out racist behaviours but without shaming the organisation to avoid legal action. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

The Aboriginal man perceived as a potential robber in the street (described earlier) stated,

It didn't hit me until I was on the ferry later on and I actually processed what had just been said to me. I was so hurt I posted it on Facebook and received a lot of support from friends ... (Witness report)

As this indicates, reaching out to family and friends is sometimes helpful. This is not the case for everybody, however.

I told my siblings about what had happened, but it was palmed off. Was told "She grew up in a different time. She doesn't know any better". I don't believe that for a second. I think it's a pathetic excuse. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-binary)

I also felt like I had nowhere to go after the incident, I didn't want to burden other mob with my feelings and I knew I wouldn't find genuine solidarity elsewhere. I just felt defeated. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-binary)

Also captured in 'Other' responses in Figure 16, avoidance is identified as a further response to racism, including avoiding sites of racism or conversations that require directly challenging racists.

In the moment, I just 'grey rocked' her - like, agreeing without agreeing and trying to shift the conversation. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I wanted to start a conversation but I didn't think it would go well and I didn't want to ruin my day. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Avoidance may be constructive - a form of self-preservation perhaps, including where it is seen as just not worth it to take on a racist.

This was upsetting to see on a local page, the attitude the woman has was that our youth don't deserve cultural activities. You can't even argue with that much stupidity. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Sometimes, however, it is not so useful a response – where it looks or feels more like exclusion, shunning or isolation. These are identified in other parts of this report as forms of racism (e.g. isolation in workplaces, exclusion from stores, shunning on transport).

I hate how normal this has become in online spaces that other people are doing it for entertainment and our best defence is to just stay offline or scroll knowing that it is festering in these groups whether we say or don't say anything. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

As discussed in our last Annual Report, not being able to call out racism can lead to feelings of shame and lowered self-esteem, particularly where there is a sense of responsibility to do so.

I'm so ashamed to say that I didn't do anything. I didn't feel like getting into it with them and I felt frustrated and hopeless that no amount of education can change these strongly held and racist, beliefs. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

This has a severe impact on me as a graduate teacher who feels uncomfortable seeking help or being confrontational. I'm closely connected to community at my school and was nervous taking a job that was so close to home but thought it was important to make my family and community proud ... I feel a lot of pressure to speak up and be a voice and represent the communities' needs but don't feel safe to do so which makes me shame and not strong enough for the job I've taken on. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

It makes me feel uncomfortable in my workplace as a fair skinned Aboriginal person. I am still finding my feet and my voice. I am not yet comfortable confronting people who say these things and so it just leaves me feeling really helpless and upset. I feel embarrassed that I can't do more to help my patients. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

A further proactive or positive response to racism discussed in reports to *Call It Out* is drawing on culture.

During compo at the end of my case I volunteered at a high school ... to train trainers on the first day back from holidays, a teacher's learning day ... I created a webpage to

culturally heal myself from the damage they'd done ... I wrote everything I am to remind me who I was ... working with my culture is a religion ... I had to pick myself up through culture and heal myself as they were not taking responsibility for nothing. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

This is absolutely appalling! It's sad and depressing. We are all just people, luckily for us we are finding our culture again, and it's absolutely beautiful! I love who I am... (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

### **3.3.2 Barriers to calling out racism**

Sometimes remedies *are* forthcoming when racism is called out (e.g. sanctioning of a perpetrator, an apology, a policy change). The First Nations man who experienced racist comments from his teammates, described earlier, 'reported the incidents to our club President and he addressed the Club and these types of events will not be tolerated and [there'll be] possible suspensions.' As detailed below, however, this is far from the norm – and this and other barriers significantly inhibit the taking of action against racism.

#### **Nothing to be done about racism**

As above, those using the Register identified feeling that nothing could be done about racism (10%). Some did nothing as they didn't know what to do (9%). Together, these two responses account for one in five of all recorded responses (see Table 22 in Appendix A).

Emotional responses of resignation and helplessness discussed above are relevant to both these responses (see Figure 15). A sense of being overwhelmed and how this might prevent challenges to racism is captured in the following comments.

There's so much we need to do. Racism is fairly entrenched in this country. Changing it is such a daunting task. I'm scared we can't fix it. (Witness report)

Another day in the colony. I feel sad for any mob who have seen it and felt angry but helpless like me. People either don't realise or don't care that this is just one drop of the storm that we feel all the time and it adds up. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

...when I go anywhere in public, I know what some people really think :-(. How can this ever change? It just won't! (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

As above, it is quite possible that calling out racism will *not* produce the result sought. It would be reasonable to question whether challenging racism is worth it, given this. There are many instances recorded on the Register of attempts to tackle racism going nowhere.

I reported three different instances of written racial slurs, racial profiling and discrimination/bullying in the workplace in each instance the non-indigenous people were spoken to and supported, I was not given any kind of natural justice and was not updated through appropriate channels of the outcome of each case, my report on the internal system was deleted and not actioned appropriately, the organisations' only HR

policies and toolkits were not followed at the behest of the Executive Director who didn't deem a formal process necessary, when I tried to raise these systemic issues, I was denied/dismissed and silenced, my team removed and I was then isolated. I was asked on one occasion if I would accept an apology, which I denied. I have since been battling severe psychological injury, which my employer refuses to accept liability for, although they claim to be zero tolerance to racism. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

When the Aboriginal man told his 'so called friend' how his remarks at the bar made him feel, as above, the reply was 'I'm sorry mate, but I can't go around walking on eggshells and worrying about what I say.' Another First Nations man stated as follows.

When it is online comments, I often report it to the Facebook, Instagram, etc. But I have also had these rejected most of the time by the organisation I notify. I wouldn't go to the police, good luck with that. More likely to be made fun of and even targeted by them. I did nothing except [report to *Call It Out*], what is there to do? (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

The multiple poor responses to racism recorded in the Register confirm that there is little recognition or understanding of racism and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see discussion above at [2.3.3]), but also of our legal and other responsibilities to not perpetrate it. Rather, examples shared in the Register describe a pushing back of responsibility to avoid or deal with racism onto those affected by it. When racism is called out, people may deflect or be defensive - and sometimes retaliatory (see below).

... as soon as I got in the car this [work colleague, a clinical nurse] said to me 'I just wanna let you know ... I get a lot of reports and complaints written about me but that's actually because people get offended when I'm just trying to make people think, it's not my fault they get offended, they are always misinterpreting what I've said'. Then he immediately transitioned into saying 'also I don't hate gay people or Aborigines (lol at the disgusting use of that word). I don't care what colour you are, I don't see colour, we are all equal'. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Legal and other formal complaints mechanisms may also be difficult to navigate where they fail to respond appropriately to racism and its impacts - in the following case, as a cause of injury for a workers compensation claim.

In my case the case worker for the insurance company believed the stereotypical explanations that [these] were just attitudes coming from people in my workplace and neglected my case. I pursued it and it was tough. No one really understood. I did see a counsellor who was Aboriginal but she was hard to get. I got her through the EAP (Employee Assistance Program) but that was even a battle. Mate. OMG.

... I took *the insurance and government* to court as they downplayed the occurrences that deteriorated me over 4 years working there. I wanted to make sure it did not happen again to other First Nations people, so not only the workplace discriminated me, but the insurance people did too. Many people wouldn't have stuck out the complaint process

like I did ... They blamed it on something else rather than understand it, so I took them to court ... felt alone, but followed through to protect others like me. ... (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Further, not knowing what to do about racism encompasses a lack of awareness of rights to make a complaint or report and/or how to go about it.

I can't eat, I can't sleep, and I can't rest until the MEN who bashed my daughters are charged and dealt with in a court of law. ... I did ask an officer who came to my house to deliver paperwork "how do I make a statement against a police officer", and he ignored me because he's protecting his own. I guess Police are above the law. Actually, my daughters and I pay our taxes. The police work for the us, the community. Not for each other... (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Not knowing who a perpetrator is may also be a barrier - particularly relevant in the context of online racism. 'I do not know this person other than her name ... I am looking to find out more info on this person as she needs to be held accountable or called out for this behaviour.' (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-binary) 'On their profile it appears they're female, white, from [named town] in QLD and have kids. I couldn't find a workplace or school or I would've reported them there too.' (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female) If platforms are overseas, complaints are also difficult.

The site is hosted on a .com address and hosted on servers overseas so it's been able to escape any sort of action by Australian authorities even if it is run by an Australian, which has led it to gaining a large group of racists pushing their agenda of hate. (Witness report)

I left the Facebook group but because it's an open group, anyone can see the posts. I know nothing much can be done about social media, but I felt like it needs to be known that behind the keyboard people are saying whatever they want with no repercussions. Anyone who speaks up against it gets called woke or snowflake if you say it's racist or stereotyping. I just want it made aware that the racism Australia claims doesn't exist here is very real. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

A further point related to not knowing what to do or feeling nothing can be done is that this can lead to physical retaliation. The potential negative consequences of this type of response are identified in reports. Of note, retaliation was the least identified response to incidents reported to *Call It Out* (just 2% for all reports and 0% for self-reports).

I was the only Aboriginal in the bar that night. If I had reacted with violence I would have been seen as the troublemaker. I was outnumbered, which is usually the case in my experience. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

I reported all incidents to the school. My son reported incidents to the teachers on some occasions but also retaliated at other times and was then punished by the school. (Friend or relative report)

## Negative consequences of calling out racism

Calling out racism can have various negative consequences. It can, as above, fracture family relationships and lead to significant health issues. Serious practical ramifications also include loss of employment. Leaving work may be self-initiated following a complaint of racism. Or individuals may be forced out of work as retaliation for raising a complaint.

My boss deliberately gave me incorrect information then rejected a future time sheet meaning I didn't get paid. I believe she did this because I had complained about a racist poster when I first started work. When I complained I was told I was at fault for filling in the time sheet incorrectly and that my boss wouldn't lie. I took that to mean I was stupid and a liar. Then I was forced to return to work in an office that had made me physically ill. Despite my GP and specialist agreeing, I was again accused of lying. Naturally I left. This happened over a period of 4 months. There was also the usual racist carry on of ignoring, sneering, supporting others but not me, withholding information about my work etc. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

As RAP Coordinator I asked the Aboriginal Project Coordinator to make an internal use video to help educate the staff about January 26th and how it's the reason we need to have a RAP. This Coordinator used her personal story and how it's affected her family and the generations before her. When presented to the CEO he said it was too long, divisive, and a few other things. I explained to him that saying it was divisive was actually racist, that him wanting to censor the voice of an Aboriginal person's history was too. A week later he called me into the office and terminated me under probation in front of a Director. He handed me a signed letter of termination by HR who were not present. I had also asked a staff member to attend as my support person who was apologised to for having to witness it. They then informed my colleagues that I had been terminated for misconduct, something that was never said to me. I was in probation and so that was the guise used to get rid of me. I had also expressed verbally my concerns that the organisation wasn't ready for 'Innovative' RAP and that apparently was wrong of me to say. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

As a further example, consequences reported to the Register included disengaging from education because of a poor school response to a student complaint about racism.

He developed a strong sense that the school does not care about him, and in fact punishes him if he "calls it out". He has since developed a lack of interest in succeeding at school despite being a bright student and one that has represented the school across several sports. The lack of action is breaking his heart. (Friend or relative report)

Examples of retaliation after taking a stand on racism in retail locations include the following.

I just got refused service in a [retail location] in Perth for not 'listening' to the shopkeeper's position on why Aboriginal people are 'all on drugs and should get over

what happened 100 years ago'. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Just heard on the radio that there has been a 50% increase in verbal abuse and rudeness towards [named retail store] staff every day since announcing they are not selling Australia Day merch. Even though the staff aren't necessarily Blackfellas, I am taking this as an attack on Blackfellas and the decision by [named retail store] to not engage in this harmful, hurtful day in support (yes recognising it's probably more about the \$\$ than the solidarity). BUT still - to these everyday racist, ignorant Australians - it is about that and they're all assholes. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

### **Bystanders and witnesses**

Reports describe not feeling supported by bystanders or witnesses to racist incidents (e.g. work colleagues) at the time these are occurring and/or when they are being called out. 'Tried telling other teachers but they did nothing' (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female).

Female student in a high school Australian history class made a grossly inappropriate, negative and stereotypical remark about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, repeating what her father had told her. The teacher didn't acknowledge or address the racism or the perpetrator, despite my Aboriginal friend being present in the classroom. (Witness report)

A lack of bystander support can present as a barrier to initiating and/or following through on challenges to racism, both for those targeted by racism and those witnessing it. Meanwhile, some non-Indigenous bystanders reported feeling uncomfortable calling out or not being in a position to challenge racism in place/on behalf of First Nations people.

There has been a couple of events with this person. First, they questioned the right for certain Art techniques (for example dot painting) to be sacred to First Nations peoples. And while I did my best to try to explain the reasons why white people should not still be trying to strip First Nations peoples of their culture, I am not Aboriginal, and not a debater. (Witness report)

Those witnessing racism may also be, in part, wary of the consequences of challenging it. They too reported, for instance, losing employment after calling racism out in the workplace.

Racial stereotyping of Indigenous peoples, repeating misinformation. When I called them out, they threatened to fire me, so I left. (I was employed there for nearly 20 years). (Friend or relative report)

Bystanders are stepping forward to call out racism, however, as evidenced by the number of third party reports shared with *Call It Out* (see also below at [3.4.1]). These bystander reports record other action taken by witnesses to racism. 'I filmed the whole interaction with police so as to keep a record.' 'Reported the page. Boycotted the bakery'. They also identified some witnesses taking care of First Nations people impacted by racism. 'I made sure the victim was

okay ... I was afraid to call the man out.’ ‘I reached out to the person who owned the page to see if they were ok.’ (Witness reports)

### **Fear and power**

Related to this last point is that those perpetrating racism have perceived and/or real power that inhibits challenges by those targeted and by bystanders or witnesses. Examples are as follows.

Executive directors, branch director, management, Human Resources and even some of my Aboriginal colleagues have sided with the department, I’m guessing with fear of losing their job from being forced to take a side. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Spoke about it with the affected co-worker (but not the perpetrator who is also my superior). I wish I had called it out in the correspondence at the time and have learned from my mistake and will do so in future. (Witness report)

We submitted an official complaint to [named organisation]. After getting no outcome, we complained to a number of government agencies [including the] Human Rights Commission, etc. We tried to get a lawyer to do pro bono and support us, but they all declined [as named organisation] ... has a lot of power. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Fear of retaliation or a similar negative reaction to challenging racism is described as follows.

Also, I didn’t overly challenge him cos we were alone in a car out in whoop-whoop, he was also my supervisor for the day and also, I don’t know what his level of reactivity is. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I wanted to talk out. I felt so uncomfortable. I was scared to say anything in case the whole room is racist. I believe in standing up against arrogance and racism. But I was scared, and I did nothing. I’m a hypocrite. I should have said something. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

### **3.3.3 Responses to the incident for those who self-reported racism by gender**

We also investigated responses to incidents for women and men who self-reported racism. These are shown in Figure 17 below.

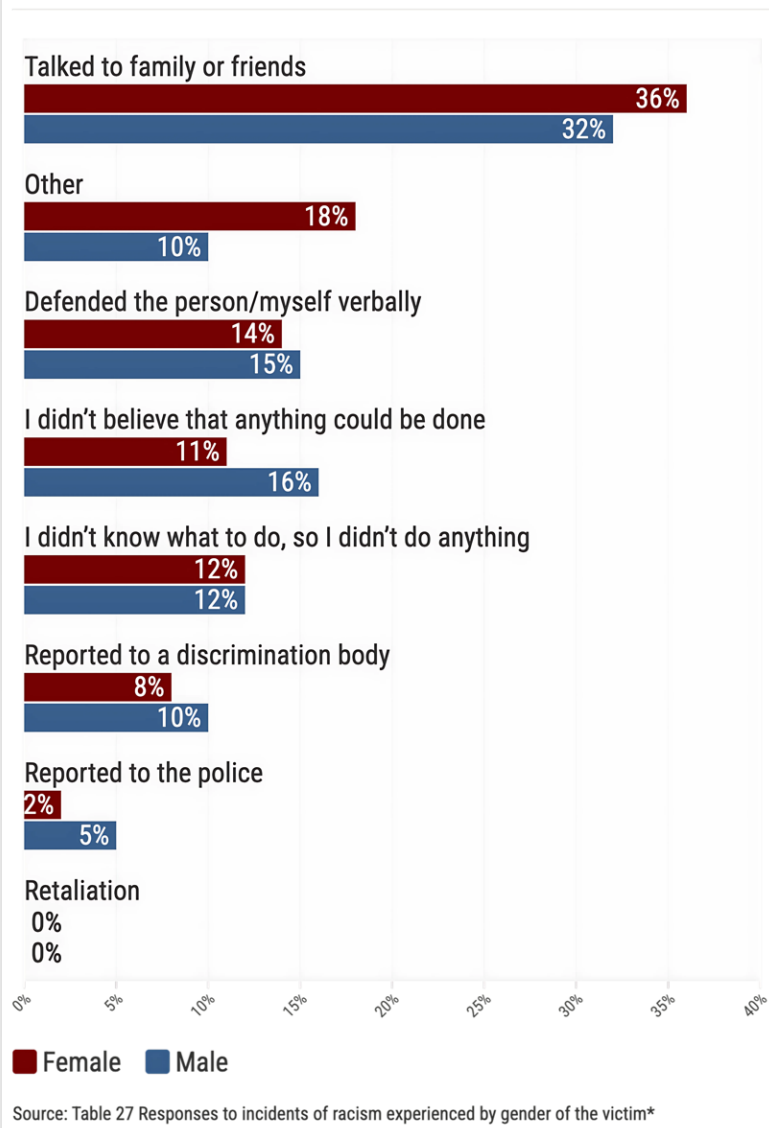
Talking with family and friends was the most frequent response for both women and men (36% and 32%, respectively). (See Table 27 in Appendix A). In 2022-23 there were 11 percentage points difference between the proportion of men and women identifying responding to racism by talking with family and friends. In 2023-24 this difference was much smaller (only 4 percentage points). This was largely because the proportion of men identifying this response increased by 8 percentage points in 2023-24.

Again, a majority of the ‘Other’ category of responses captured a sizeable number of proactive reports (direct confrontation, reporting to a workplace, online platform and to ‘independent complaints bodies’), as well as avoidance of confrontation.

Additionally, men were proportionately more likely to not believe anything could be done (16% men compared to 11% women) or report to a discrimination body (10% men compared to 8% women).

Statistics captured in Figure 17 identifying retaliation as the least common self-reported responses to racism are similar to those recorded in 2022-23, though with some further decrease in 2023-24 in frequency (0% recorded for both women and men in 2023-24, down from 7% for men and 1% for women in 2022-23).<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 17 Responses to incidents of racism experienced by gender of the victim**



<sup>31</sup> These comparisons exclude data captured in 'Other' responses (see Figure 17).

### 3.4 How to combat racism

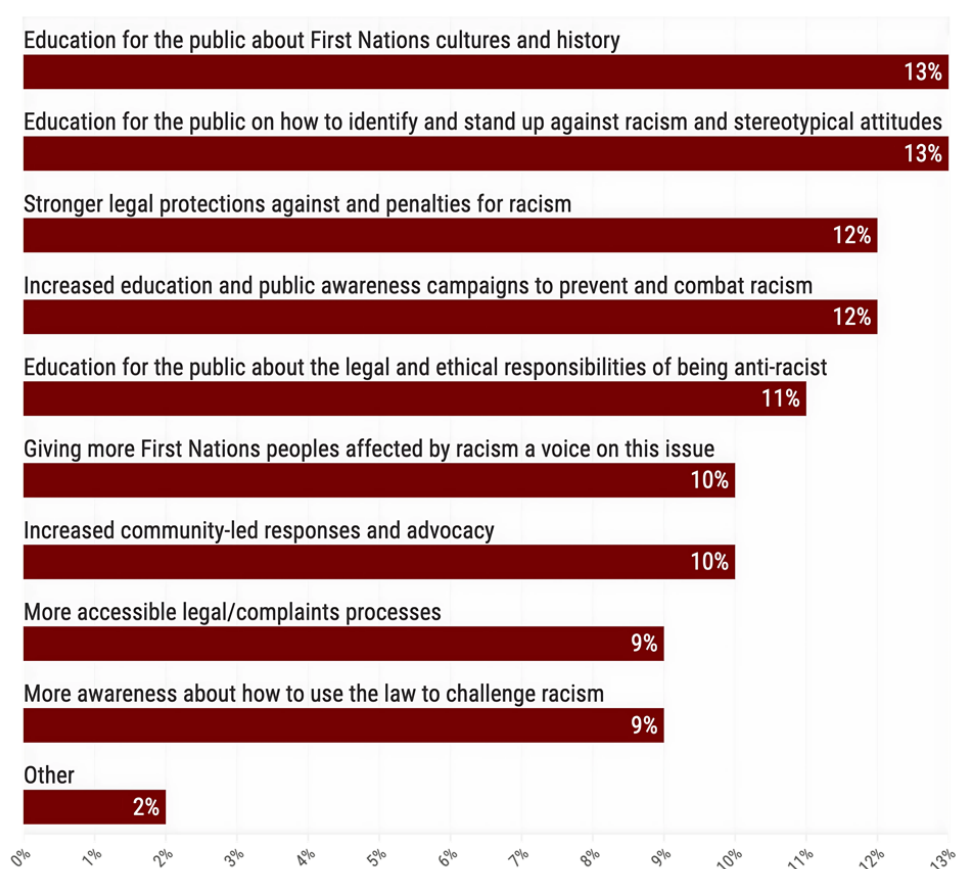
The Register also contained a question on how to combat racism. More than half (328 or 72%) of the 453 registrants completed this question. Multiple selections were made by 295 of the 328 respondents and there was a total of 1967 responses (see Table 28 in Appendix A).

Figure 18 shows, as was the case in our 2022-23 report, that because most people selected multiple answers there was little differentiation between options identified. There were only four percentage points differentiating the most common response, ‘Education for the public about First Nations cultures and history’ (13%) and the least common responses, ‘More accessible legal/ complaints processes’ and ‘More awareness about how to use the law to challenge racism’ (9%).

We also analysed the responses to the question of what needs to be done to combat racism for those who self-reported racism and by gender.

Some 66% (94/142) of the self-reported group chose to respond to this question. There was little differentiation by either gender or the type of response. The difference between men and women’s responses was 2 percentage points or less (see Table 29 in Appendix A). There was also little difference between 2022-23 and 2023-24 data about how to combat racism.

**Figure 18 What needs to be done to combat racism**



Source: Table 28 What needs to be done to combat racism

### 3.4.1 Strategies to combat racism

As recorded in our previous Annual Report, the above responses indicate that multiple different approaches and strategies are required. One First Nations woman suggested ‘We need to do everything we can, I feel like it’s getting worse. People are getting more confident and apathetic about it.’ Other examples highlighting a need for multi-layered strategies include the following.

Education is so important. I see this with teaching, the impact it can have is enormous. But also, the laws need to be strengthened and more resources provided to relevant bodies. Also, Indigenous people being accepted and a greater part of society would help. Hard to eliminate racism when they lock us up more than any group on earth. Hard to eliminate racism when we are impoverished, education is underfunded, and discrimination is rife. And when society at large doesn't recognise the role they play in keeping us down. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

As is evident in this last comment, many people spoke about the absolute necessity for *everybody* to step in to combat racism, given the size of the problem and the shared responsibility for addressing it. ‘I feel like I need to help make a change. This racism is happening all the time’, stated one First Nations woman. Taking action means being ‘actively anti-racist’ rather than just avoiding perpetrating racism oneself, a witness reported – which in part comes from educating people about how to step in to challenge racism.

I find that even though my other non-Indigenous friends are respectful, will listen, would never personally perpetrate racism or vilify anyone, that’s very different from actively being anti-racist. Though it creates safe spaces for reprieve, it doesn’t stop what’s happening outside that space. For wider community support / preventing racism down the line I think this is a good place to start, while making sure that there’s support and complaint mechanisms for First Nations people who are experiencing discrimination. I think this would also be beneficial in terms of sharing the load in a sense - it would be exhausting and hurtful as a First Nations person to be constantly supporting family or friends who experience racism too. More people need to be aware of how to help and how to be respectful and culturally humble. (Witness report)

The researcher who reported non-publication of health related racism research also spoke about the importance of bystander action.

[I] continually advocated both within and without [named Local Health District], with little responses other than ‘that’s a shame.’ I must stress that this is not a fight that Aboriginal people should take on; we white people need to be forceful advocates as the issue of racism and health affects us all, as perpetrators of racism and recipients of racism. (Witness report)

## **Accountability, protection**

More effective legal mechanisms are seen as essential, for some, in ensuring accountability. Increasing awareness about how to use the law to challenge racism, stronger legal protections and penalties for racism and more accessible legal/complaints processes, together constituting 30% of responses (Figure 18). Comments included the following.

[Named TV network] doesn't filter out racist comments, they should be held responsible too, legally. (Witness report)

We need a robust vocal community and government stance on racism. It needs to be placed in a legal context for individuals and businesses to act on racism or to not perpetrate it. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Embed specific racism protections within the fair work act. (Witness report)

This includes accountability for historic racism. 'Aboriginal people need to take the Australian govt to the Hague for colonisation and war crimes', one First Nations man stated.

Independent (Aboriginal-led) oversight of complaints pertaining to institutions (such as police, corrections) was also prioritised in one First Nations report. This is an example of community-led responses and advocacy and giving more First Nations people affected by racism a voice on racism (together, 20% of preferred responses in Figure 18).

I strongly believe that in the case of Police, a Civilian Committee of Oversight is required to oversee all complaints about police and deaths in custody. This needs to include respected Indigenous Elders. (Friend or relative report)

Other proactive approaches to sanctioning racism and those complicit in it - at all levels of society and within organisational structures - were also described by those using the Register.

More accountability for organisations who protect themselves and throw their staff under the bus. And by that, I mean financial penalties, public apologies and acceptance of their role in upholding racism, and resignation of Executives that chose to be complicit. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

## **Political power, education**

Political solutions to racism were also identified, including 'sovereign, autonomous governance', according to one First Nations woman. Government mandating or educating organisations to set up anti-racist strategies was also raised.

When someone from the community approaches Councils and asks why there is no promotion of the government Anti-racism initiative and they don't provide answers, then these Councils need to be educated about why someone would ask that. There needs to be a clear directive from governments to Council LGA's that it's an important policy ... (Witness report)

Discussion throughout this report makes it clear that there is not enough understanding and awareness of the long history of First Nations occupation of this country and of the nature of

colonisation, the racism embedded within it and its ongoing impacts. Also missing is knowledge of formal legal protections of human and cultural rights.

Education is a key mechanism for addressing these knowledge gaps. As one First Nations man experiencing racism states, 'just makes me feel like there's so far to go with educating people about the true history of our people and Country.' This education must be meaningful, however. One report identifies, for example, that organisations (like police services) may well provide cultural awareness training to staff but this can be inadequate on its own or in its current form to effectively combat racism.

We white people need to be educated to understand the privileges we enjoy due to our whiteness. And while 'Cultural Awareness etc' programs are important, there needs to be a much greater awareness of what my white culture means to the perpetration of racism. What is the white culture I bring to relationships, and what is its impact? (Witness report)

Comments more broadly include that we need to 'Teach the truth about history' (Witness report) and more 'education on the impacts of cultural genocide and colonisation' (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female). And while a 'School based focus on anti-racism and how to identify and stand up to racism' is important, and it is positive that school students are learning more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history in the present day, adults also need education in this context. The media is seen as having a role to play in this space.

It's wonderful to see our young students exposed to an education that is truthful and highlights the beauty of this country's Original culture. We should all feel proud of how Indigenous people cared for this land so successfully for such time immemorial. The unfortunate part is that this education is not mandatory for adults. The parents of our students also need to learn the truth. I have hope for our future but the present seems hopeless. Journalists need to include more Indigenous relevant news in their reporting that is unbiased and honest. (Witness report)

'White Australians' too 'need to speak about why they ... believe what they do', according to one First Nations man. This is another form of accountability and in effect, reverses the onus placed on First Nations people to educate, to change minds.

## 4. Racism and the Voice Referendum

### 4.1 Background

The Voice to Parliament Referendum was held on 14 October 2023. The Referendum sought to amend the Australian Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the establishment of an advisory body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (The Voice). The Voice would provide advice to parliament and government on matters affecting Indigenous Australians. We acknowledge differing views about the Voice among First Nations peoples. Our purpose in this section is to discuss the racism that arose as a result of the Referendum.

The Voice Referendum occurred midway through the *Call It Out* reporting period for 2023-24. The Voice Referendum sparked significant and increasingly highly polarised public debate about Indigenous rights during the course of 2023 and the lead-up to the Referendum coincided with widespread reports of increased racist behaviour and rhetoric.<sup>32</sup> Community organisations, advocacy groups and independent statutory authorities noted a rise in racism on social media platforms and in public forums, and increased reports of verbal and physical abuse and discrimination against First Nations peoples.

For example, Advance Australia publicised the ‘No’ case with a racist cartoon in *The Financial Review*.<sup>33</sup> The newspaper and its publisher later apologised. The Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) featured comedian Rodney Marks making racist jokes about First Nations men.<sup>34</sup> Prominent ‘No’ campaigners promoted various unfounded claims and conspiracy theories about the proposed Voice advisory body.<sup>35</sup>

Racism on social media platforms was prevalent. In late May 2023, the Australian e-Safety Commission reported a more than 10% rise in the proportion of complaints made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples concerning online cyber abuse, threats, and harassment.<sup>36</sup> The First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria went from blocking two people a day for racist abuse

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<sup>32</sup> Ian Anderson, Yin Paradies, Marcia Langton, Ray Lovett, Tom Calma. (2023) ‘Racism and the 2023 Australian constitutional referendum’, *The Lancet*, Vol 402, pp. 1400-1403

<sup>33</sup> McGlade, H. Our country deserves better than misinformation and hate. National Indigenous Times. July 10, 2023. (<<https://nit.com.au/10-07-2023/6722/our-country-deserves-better-than-misinformation-and-hate>>).

<sup>34</sup> MC, A. As vote nears, ‘horrific racism’ mars Australian Voice referendum campaign. Aljazeera. October 6, 2023. (<<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/6/as-vote-nears-horrific-racism-mars-australian-voice-referendum-campaign>>).

<sup>35</sup> Sakkal, P. and Knott, M. Anti-Voice campaign director says white people will be ‘paying to live here’ if referendum succeeds. Sydney Morning Herald. September 20, 2023. (<<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/anti-voice-campaign-director-says-white-people-will-be-paying-to-live-here-if-referendum-succeeds-20230920-p5e68c.html>>).

<sup>36</sup> Schultz A. Voice debate spurs rise in cyber abuse, threats and harassment. The Sydney Morning Herald. May 21, 2023. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/voice-debate-spurs-rise-in-cyber-abuse-threats-and-harassment-20230520-p5d9wp.html>

on social media to blocking about 50 people a day, citing the national debate on the Voice as the reason for this escalation.<sup>37</sup>

The promotion of *Call It Out* online was also affected by rising levels of racism. The paid ‘boosting’ of posts promoting *Call It Out* via Meta (to Instagram and Facebook) was stopped because of the level of racist responses during the lead-up to the Referendum. The problem was particularly pronounced on Facebook.

Heightened levels of racism also led to a spike in Indigenous people seeking mental health support. 13YARN, the national crisis support line for First Nations peoples feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping reported a 108% increase in callers reporting abuse, racism, and trauma between March and June 2023. Overall call numbers also increased. Three of 13YARN's busiest weeks occurred between August and September – two months out from the referendum date.<sup>38</sup>

The Federal *Race Discrimination Commissioner*, Chin Tan, stated just prior to the Referendum that:

Misinformation and disinformation have run rampant, bringing racism in this country to the fore. For such ideologies to be permitted and often uncontested in the national debate is profoundly dangerous, and totally unacceptable. I am disappointed at the way some people have engaged in the debate and have stoked racial tensions and caused harm to First Nations peoples.<sup>39</sup>

Looking back at 2023, the Australian Human Rights Commission noted that, ‘Last year, the Voice Referendum mainstreamed a shocking level of racism for the duration of the campaign and has continued to impact First Nations communities’.<sup>40</sup>

## 4.2 The Voice Referendum and *Call It Out* Reports

Given the context provided above, it is not surprising that references to the Voice and the Referendum featured relatively prominently among the registrations of incidents of racism on *Call It Out* during the 2023-24 reporting period. Nearly one in five of all reports (18% or 81/453) during 2023-24 specifically mentioned the Voice and/or the Referendum. These

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<sup>37</sup> Dunstan J, Yu A. Victoria’s Aboriginal treaty body urges Facebook parent company Meta to clamp down on racist abuse. ABC News. May 26, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-26/aboriginal-treaty-first-peoples-assembly-facebook-racist-abuse/102394960>>).

<sup>38</sup> French, E. and Vyver, J. Voice to Parliament referendum impacting mental health of Indigenous Australians as charities report increase in racism. ABC News. October 3, 2023. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-03/indigenous-mental-health-impacts-of-voice-referendum-debate/102923188>>).

<sup>39</sup> Tan, C. Whatever the voice vote’s result, Australia has a racism problem we must tackle. (Opinion piece by Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan in *The Guardian Australia*). October 6, 2023. (<<https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/whatever-voice-votes-result-australia-has-racism-problem-we-must-tackle>>).

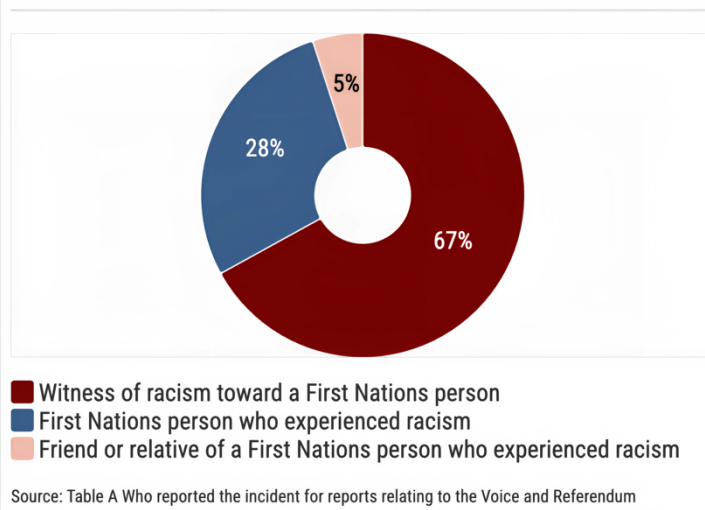
<sup>40</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *The National Anti-Racism Framework: A roadmap to eliminating racism in Australia* (Report, November 2024) p.8.

references to the Voice and Referendum occurred within the recorded narratives of the incident and/or the file uploads provided by the person reporting.

Figure A shows that two thirds (67%) of incidents of racism which were related to the Voice and the Referendum were made by witnesses of racism. Slightly more than a quarter (28%) were made by a First Nations person who directly experienced the racism reported.

A significant proportion of reported incidents about the Voice and Referendum occurred on social media (41%) or in other media (16%). More than a quarter were experienced in person (28%). Witnesses of racism towards First Nations people were more likely to report racism online or in the media than other groups. First Nations people who experienced racism were more likely to report racism 'in person'. (See Tables C & D in Appendix B).

**Figure A Who reported the incident for reports relating to the Voice and Referendum**



#### 4.2.1 The Type and Location of the Racism Reported

References to the Voice and the Referendum gave rise to various forms of racism. The two most frequently cited in the data were 'Negative attitudes or stereotyping' (26%) and 'Hate speech' (17%). Other forms of racism frequently cited in the reports were 'didn't recognise cultural rights' (12%), 'discrimination' (11%), 'verbal abuse' (9%), 'bullying' (8%) and 'institutional racism' (8%). (See Table E in Appendix B).

The reports on the Voice and the Referendum made by both First Nations people who directly experienced racism 'in person' and their friends and relatives were proportionally more likely to identify 'verbal abuse', 'bullying' and 'threats and intimidation' than the reports made by witnesses of racism. (See Table F in Appendix B).

The three major locations for racist incidents involving the Voice and the Referendum were online (42%), in the media (16%) or in a public place (15%). (see Table G in Appendix B).

#### 4.2.2 Interpersonal Racism

First Nations people reported being aggressively confronted in public places. The two examples immediately below show people being abused in public simply because they were identifiably Aboriginal and irrespective of their actual views on the Referendum. The abuse was directed at them because they were Indigenous people.

It was about the 'Yes' vote (referendum). I was walking up the street in my work shirt which has an Aboriginal pattern / design on it and was asked by an older non-Aboriginal

(looking) woman if I was voting Yes or No. I explained that I choose not to share my personal views about the vote, believing that everyone has a right to present their own views at the poll on the day. She raised her voice stating that we were going to take away her land and that her husband has worked flat out all his life for that land, that Aboriginal people never worked to get the land in the first place. Her rant continued as I tried to walk away from her feeling ashamed and embarrassed. She followed me with raised voice and creating a scene. Other people around were saying that they agree with her (also older people) - Aboriginal people should not be allowed to have the voice in place because 'it separates' Australians. I was afraid that they would keep following me. I went to the bathroom area and turned to her and said 'I am going in here to wee - do you really want to follow me to the toilet?' She then turned away and started heading in a different direction. I did not answer her back or argue a point, in fact I did not even tell her what my personal view and vote would be for the referendum. She abused me because I was wearing an Aboriginal shirt and looked Aboriginal. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

The following describes a further incident of this nature, also confirming points made previously about absent bystander support and mixed responses to direct confrontation as a response to the incident.

I was seated in the grassed outside area in the afternoon. A visibly intoxicated white woman in her mid 60's was in the vicinity with a glass of wine in hand and had struck up conversation with a colleague. The woman and my colleague were in conversation for around 15 minutes. The woman then noticed me seated only few meters away and walked over to myself uninvited. She then began to speak in a highly aggressive tone and to berate the upcoming referendum vote, dumping her racism on myself. She then began a tirade in a highly insulting manner stating that 'Melbourne will no longer be Melbourne and Sydney will no longer be Sydney' and stated what more do Aboriginal people want and that the Labor government will divide the nation and ruin Australia along with many other racially charged misinformed comments directed at me.

I then began to deescalate the situation and stated that those comments were not true and asked her to provide evidence as to where she had heard these things stated. She could not reply and at this point my colleague had also stated that her comments were not true and proceeded to get up and leave the situation for myself to deal with, though she informed the staff that the woman was highly intoxicated. The woman then walked a few meters away...

I walked up to the pool deck to inform my other colleagues of what had happened. To which they asked me if 'I was ok' and that it was a really unfortunate and terrible thing to happen. I then decided to go back to address the woman again and told the three of them that I was unhappy to leave the conversation on that note. I then proceeded to walk back alone to the woman on the lawn and inform her that what she did was highly inappropriate, and I would be happy to have a conversation with her about the referendum, though she did not have any right to be aggressive and that she owed me

an apology. She then did give a somewhat coherent apology and began to leave the area.

I was told the next day by management that the on-duty manager did not make it to the scene until after we had all departed the area. The manager which I spoke to the next day was not understanding of the magnitude of the incident and very flippant in their acknowledgement. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

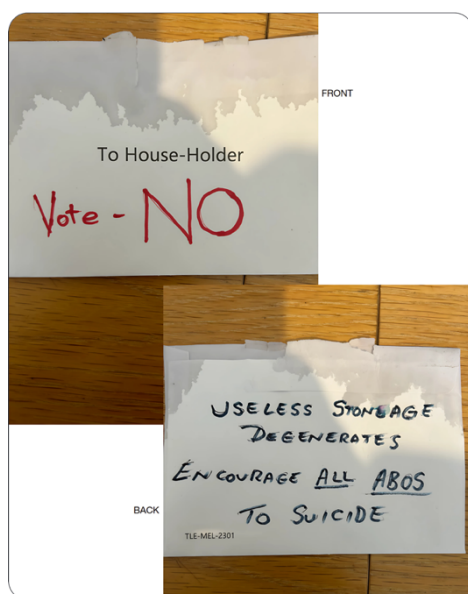
Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people received various forms of racial abuse in the workplace. For example,

I received anonymous hate mail to my workplace enclosing baseless disinformation about the Voice referendum, and fear mongering about what the Voice will lead to. The front page addressed to me was full of insults and hate speech. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Non-Aboriginal people witnessed racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in various forms. The example immediately below shows the cultural and emotional load placed on First Nations people to explain and justify the Referendum.

I was sitting with my friend in a park when a man approached us. He noticed my friend (who is a First Nations man) wearing an Indigenous flag pin. He walked up and started talking about how he's seen stuff about the Voice to Parliament and then asked my friend for his opinion. I had a limited time to see my friend and this interaction ended up taking up precious time because a random stranger wanted my friend to advise him on the Voice. After we ended the conversation with this random stranger, I then debriefed with my friend and ensured he was okay. He shared that it has been difficult with conversations around the Voice ramping up. (Witness report)

Non-Indigenous supporters of the Voice received racist mail.

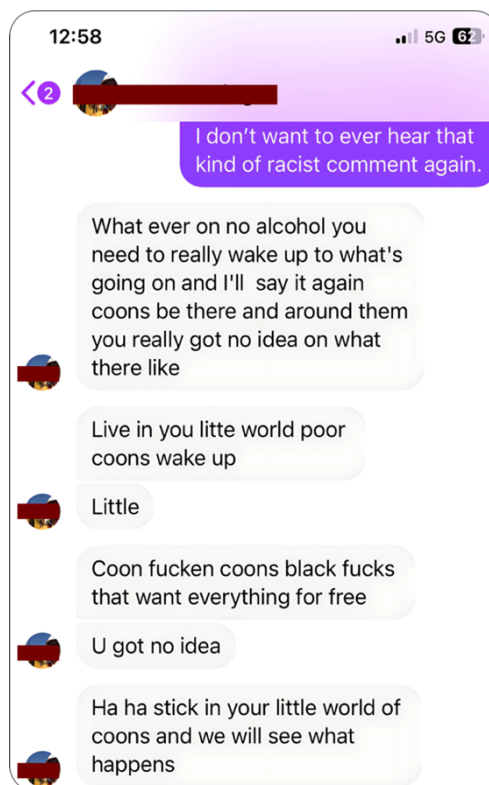


We have a 'Vote Yes' sign in our front window. This used envelope appeared in our letterbox and doesn't seem to be something sent to others in our street. The sentiment has shocked and appalled myself and my husband. (Witness report)

Other non-Indigenous witnesses reported racism within their extended family groups.

My cousin asked how I would vote. I tried to ignore this but he kept persisting so I said “yes”. He wanted to know why and I explained intergenerational trauma and that I thought it was hope for a better future in closing the gap. He responded with extremely disgusting racist comments about all Aboriginal people and kept saying his granddaughter is one of them. (My cousin’s daughter had a baby whose father was Indigenous). He used exceptionally derivative hate-filled language and it actually concerned me whether he was becoming an extremist and /or his grandchild was at harm. I’m just not sure... (Friend or relative report)

The same person provided further information, with screenshots of the abusive racist messages received from their cousin: ‘This is just a small part of what he was saying below. It makes me concerned for his grandchild’.



#### 4.2.3 Graffiti and Property Damage

Racist graffiti in public places was also evident. For example,

Someone spraypainted graffiti on a pathway that read ‘Earn Your Voice’ alongside a Nazi symbol. A random person shared the image on a Crimes Alert Facebook group for Cairns. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Female)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who supported the Voice with signs on their houses or lawns were also targeted, as the examples below show:

The road outside our house was graffitied with “No” messages. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Female)



Our and our neighbours Vote Yes yard signs were ripped out of the ground and thrown onto the nature strip. It was definitely done by a human and not the weather. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Female)




We are the only Aboriginal family in our street, and we have a “Vote Yes” poster taped to the front of our house. Overnight, someone who lives nearby (has to be a local as we live in the quiet end of the street that only residents drive down, and they avoided our security camera which views the front of our house and the footpath) graffitied the road with “No” covering the width of the road, painted in both directions for any traffic going in or out. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Female)

#### 4.2.4 Social Media

As noted above, many of the reports on *Call It Out* were related to the use of online social media (42%). Online social media featured strongly in examples shared of intense personal abuse.

There were a few. Two were Australian and one was an Indigenous NO voter who challenged my bloodline and my community. This person has deleted me and blocked me. However, I have the Facebook post showing the abuse. In the instance of the person I once worked with, she was a NO voter and she attacked me on my Facebook post and then whilst I was in bed, as it was later in the night, the person sent further abusive messages privately on messenger and then blocked me. They were extremely abusive and this rattled me as they were personal...

On the Unvaxxed Australia Facebook group I defended my stance on the campaign and pointed out some myths. This person continued to challenge me and asked me if I was a pure blood. I responded that I was Aboriginal/convict. He then told me I was Australian not Aboriginal and that I was not acknowledging the suffering of my convict ancestry. I, in great detail outlined the differences and the history of my Aboriginal ancestors suffering. I was then deleted from the group. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

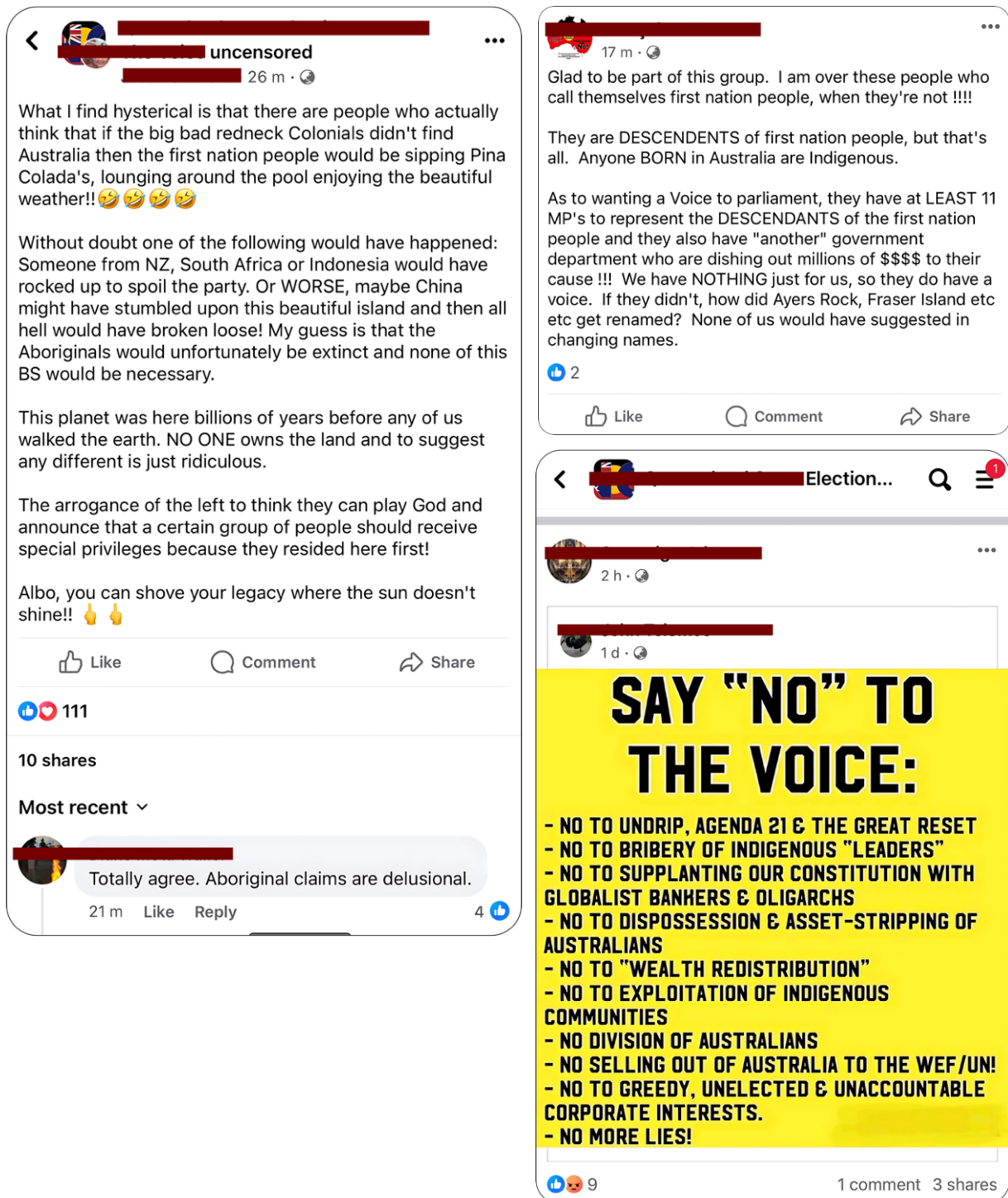
Online where I would write YES from my mob    they would follow with racist remarks. Not just one person. It has been many people. Especially on Sky News videos on Facebook. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Facebook featured as a site for the propagation of racism tied to the Voice and the Referendum.<sup>41</sup> For example, the following are taken from a regional Facebook group with

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<sup>41</sup> See for example, <[https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOS\\_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=v7YzmG&v=1305453006984557](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOS_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=v7YzmG&v=1305453006984557)>.

10,000 members and focussing in part on the ‘The Voice Uncensored’. It advocated for ‘an open civil discussion about Politics’.



*Call It Out* also received multiple screenshots of racism on other social media (including Twitter/X and Instagram) as well as descriptions of various racist posts tied to the need to vote ‘No’ in the Referendum. The reports sent to *Call It Out* were made both by First Nations people and non-Indigenous witnesses. Because the posts are highly derogatory and offensive, particularly against some identifiable Indigenous people, we do not reproduce them here.

Examples of non-Indigenous people witnessing racism on social media, are shown below:

Witnessed verbal harassment online and honestly disgusting things being said in a group chat, directed at a First Nations person. They had to block this person because he was so incessant. We were all previously friends, the Voice campaign really showed peoples true colours and racist Australia came into fruition. They were sending One Nation videos, telling the First Nations person that Indigenous people don't die in custody and that they are arrested more often because they disproportionately commit more crimes. They were using slurs, they just became increasingly enraged when everyone stopped replying. They said it was bullshit that Indigenous people face discrimination and that the Government should decide what is best for First Nations people because they aren't capable. He "doesn't have a racist bone in his body" though. (Witness report)

Attacking First Nation's person on her views in The Voice referendum, bullying and berating her. When called out by allies, posted messages denying racism exists, claiming not to be racist while using terms like "coloured people". (Witness report)

#### **4.2.5 The Well-Rehearsed Tropes of Racism**

The Voice and the Referendum brought to the fore well-rehearsed tropes of racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including questioning who are the 'real' Aboriginal people, the negative impacts of miscegenation and multiculturalism, myths and stereotypes about government funding, and about 'white' First Nations people.

##### **Too White**

A frequent refrain was that some First Nations people were 'too white' to be Aboriginal.

A white photojournalist contacted me pretending to be an Aboriginal person and demanding I provide her with proof of Aboriginality. It was obvious very quickly that she was not Aboriginal and when I challenged her she admitted it. Then she began posting on Facebook about "race-shifters", evaluating people by colonial blood-quantum. In this post she identified me and several other Aboriginal people as "too white". This person is not Aboriginal and yet still felt it was totally fine to both enact virtual blackface and interrogate the blackness of Aboriginal people online. As an excuse she said it was important to ask these things in the lead up to the Referendum. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

Attention was also drawn to prominent media statements and their effect on perceptions of Aboriginality.

Relative explained that [named Aboriginal journalist] is not really Aboriginal, his skin has only relatively recently got noticeably darker (from a tanning machine). Seems to be related to media attached in part to the NO campaign for the referendum. (Witness report)

The media report identified was a *Sydney Morning Herald* article which reported on the comments of the head of the Australian Jewish Association, David Adler, who also sat on the advisory board of Advance, a campaign group supporting the No vote. Adler had posted on

social media photos of Stan Grant several times and questioned the colour of Grant's skin and whether he was doing a 'Black Face'. He also publicly raised questions about Lidia Thorpe's Aboriginality ('What % Aboriginal are you? You appear quite white').<sup>42</sup>

## Too Privileged

Another well-rehearsed trope of racism in Australia is that Aboriginal people received special privileges which were not available to non-Indigenous people. These privileges were 'unearned' and First Nations people were 'undeserving'. Both First Nations and non-Indigenous people registered incidents on *Call It Out* which drew attention to these racist stereotypes arising in relation to the Voice and the Referendum. Some arose in public places, others involved friends and relatives.

I was out for dinner at a restaurant with my family (my wife and two children). We were seated next to a table of 3 middle aged white women who were loudly discussing their views on the Voice and other Indigenous issues including:

- the real Aboriginals don't want the Voice, just the "white ones"
- myths about the amount of government funding spent on Indigenous people
- negative stereotypes about free cars, houses etc
- that Welcome to Country is a made up practice, not a traditional ceremony

My wife and I (both Aboriginal) and our children had to listen to this for at least 20 minutes. We did not confront them as we did not want to risk escalating things in front of our children. It unfortunately marred what was otherwise a nice family dinner. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male)

Tour guide dismissed and laughed at not being allowed to move rocks around to prevent people accessing areas in 4WDs and the use of gates instead. Called me a dickhead for wearing a vote Yes badge. (Witness report)

The incident was a discussion with my grandpa about the Voice Referendum, and about how he voted No because he thinks First Nations peoples are given enough funding and rights. He said they are using money for drugs and committing crimes and don't deserve additional help. (Witness report)

I asked my friend's view on the Australian Indigenous Voice referendum. He actively advocated me to vote 'No' ... saying having the Voice will delay government decisions and there are other more important priorities. While it is a personal political opinion, I think it nevertheless promoted a culture of exclusion, denial of Aboriginal rights and approval of their current treatments which needs to be changed. (Witness report)

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<sup>42</sup> Sakkal, P. No campaigner's comments on Stan Grant, Lidia Thorpe labelled 'disgusting', 'grotesque'. The Sydney Morning Herald. August 14, 2023. (<<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/no-figure-s-stan-grant-lidia-thorpe-comments-labelled-disgusting-grotesque-20230814-p5dw9m.html>>).

## The Voice is Racist

Both First Nations and non-Indigenous people reported being aggressively challenged in public places for showing support for the 'Yes' campaign, often with the argument that the Voice was racist against non-Indigenous people.

Standing in line at the airport awaiting our Uber, colleague and I proudly wearing our Yes merchandise. A man approached us to find out if he could sit on the Yes panel... we said well you could if Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, [his] response 'well we are racist and why can't he be on the Voice panel'. He was asking about what it is then and why he can't be part of it and we could both feel at this point he is getting more aggressive and this was becoming an argument not a conversation. We asked him to please remove himself from our space, to please leave the conversation, so eventually he proceeds to walk away saying he is recording us. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

There were several registrations on *Call It Out* in relation to prominent anti-voice 'Recognise a Better Way' board member, Kerry White. White made comments, reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, that if the Voice Referendum was successful, white people would be paying to live in Australia and that the proposed Voice advisory body was designed to remove parliament and 'will end up taking over'. She was also reported as describing the Stolen Generations as a 'mistruth'. She allegedly stated, 'you can call me a conspiracy theorist if you like, but I know the way that these people work and that's what will end up happening. Aboriginal people will be running this country, and all the white people here will be paying to live here'.<sup>43</sup>

Others who contributed to *Call It Out* questioned the lack of accountability and asked, 'how is it lawful to publicly peddle blatant lies?'.

### 4.2.6 Voting Day

There were a number of complaints made in relation to polling. Some of these complaints involved both members of the public and officials at various polling sites.

[Names polling site] pre poll voting. Older "Karen" verbally abused myself & son handing out flyers & making untrue racial accusations. We didn't engage with her. She spat vitriol & stormed in to vote spewing hate, not listening to me explain why her accusations re "you lot" ie us Mob don't actually get given things we're not entitled to etc... Straight after, out comes a woman working there & starts aggressively telling me to move box etc in a very rude way. I explained what I was told re 6m distance (funny how this happened after No campaigner left - same location outside entrance... She returns with an employee [named] misquoting me (& interrupted when I explained what I said) & went off at (Yes volunteer) girl wearing Yes tee to bathroom (which is

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<sup>43</sup> Sakkal, P. and Knott, M. Anti-Voice campaign director says white people will be 'paying to live here' if referendum succeeds. Sydney Morning Herald. September 20, 2023. (<<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/anti-voice-campaign-director-says-white-people-will-be-paying-to-live-here-if-referendum-succeeds-20230920-p5e68c.html>>).

allowed, she wasn't in the chamber outside the polls!). Blatant misuse of power & the way she approached me seemed racist as well (certainly not in a proper way if you have a difference of opinion on regulations & want to make a request or discuss it like a normal, rational person) as she was rude, but nowhere near as aggressive or sneering etc towards Yes23 volunteer (a white woman). Pretty clear where her allegiance lies but that isn't supposed to affect how someone behaves while in a professional role. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

I was doing my early vote for the referendum and the lady (older white female) who works for the AEC [Australian Election Commission] who was handing out the voting pencils said to another older white lady who was approaching her, 'Smile. It may never happen'. She then looked at me who was standing a few feet behind them. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

NO campaigners at the market with campaign materials saying that since the referendum was announced there has been a dramatic increase in native title claims (insinuating that this is all a big scam to take back more land). (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

#### **4.2.7 Political / Social Exclusionary Practices Pre- and Post- Referendum**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people referred on *Call It Out* to the political and social processes of exclusion which were occurring both prior to and post the Referendum. Some of these involved the simple denial of a right to speak by preventing any discussion.

A local man wrote a very simple post of support for The Voice and asked the local community (a FB [Facebook] group with over 7000 people in the group - our area has a population of only 8,500 people so most of the town is on this local FB group) what is happening to help educate and promote the Voice. At first this attracted a positive response - including my own response - I then went offline and within 2 hours so many people had anonymously complained to the admin about the 'political brainwashing' that the post was removed. The man who posted it was told not to talk about controversial political posts and it was explained to him that many people were against the Voice and were Angry that he posted about it. (Witness report)

There was also reference to the denial of history, discussed earlier in this report (see above at [2.3.4] and [3.4.1]). In this context several reports on *Call It Out* concerned an Indigenous member of Federal Parliament.

[They have] engaged in profoundly damaging mischaracterisation of the effect of colonisation on First Nations peoples. The gas lighting is at the most extreme end of the scale and feeds into the most distorted and fabricated narratives about Indigenous history. (Witness report)

There was a strong feeling expressed in various reports on *Call It Out* that the lead-up to the Referendum and the outcome of the vote had facilitated the normalisation of racism.

Racism is so normalised in people's attitudes and behaviours. The filters are off - it almost feels like it is okay to be racist. I think the referendum No campaign has a lot to say for that. (Witness report)

Just racist ignorant white Australians emboldened since the referendum to spew their vile garbage all over social media. (Witness report)

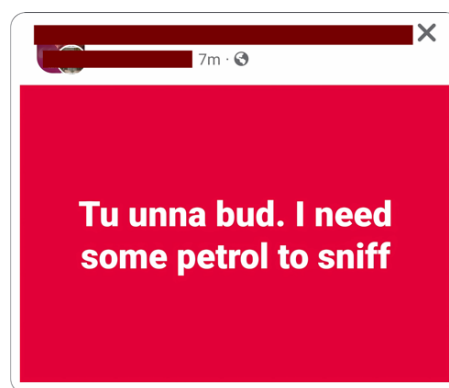
There was also a clear rolling back of the historical and cultural recognition of First Nations people, particularly around Acknowledgements of Country. Several people responding on *Call It Out* noted how local councils were dropping Acknowledgements of Country over the period from late 2023 to early 2024. In South Australia these included the Playford, Northern Areas and Naracoorte Lucindale local councils who removed an Acknowledgement of Country from their council meeting procedures.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.2.8 Post Referendum Racism and Trauma

Racism on social media continued after the Referendum. For example,

After the referendum, I had seen multiple Instagram comments with the term 'petrol heads' used to describe Indigenous people. The context of this being an argument why the No vote was the correct decision. (Witness report)

One point that was particularly evident from the incidents recorded on *Call It Out* was that the traumatic effects of racism associated with the Voice have continued after the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 vote.



It was on Monday, the day after the vote came out as No, so already I was extremely upset and fragile not only because of the outcome but because students had already been saying racist comments towards me earlier in the day. This teacher whom I had never met before began yelling at me as I tried to go into the library. I told her why I was going in there and she proceeded to chase me through the library until I stopped. I said to her "I have had an awful day can you please just leave?" she then proceeded to pry and say "what could've possibly made you so upset to run from a teacher". I did not run from her. I then explained why I was sad in hopes she would understand and then leave me be. She responded with, "why tell them you are Aboriginal?" I said "what?" and she went on with "if you tell people you are Aboriginal, they are going to be racist to you." I began to sob in front of her and somewhat yelled that we should teach people not to be racist instead of suppressing our identity. She then told me that I was being hysterical, incompetent and "drawing too much attention to us". She then

<sup>44</sup> See Boisvert, E. and Chave, B. Acknowledgement of Country removed from Naracoorte Lucindale Council meetings. ABC News. March 4, 2024. (<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-04/acknowledgement-of-country-removed-from-council-meetings-sa/103520644>>); and Torre, G. Third South Australian council drops Acknowledgement of Country. National Indigenous Times. March 4, 2024. (<<https://nit.com.au/04-03-2024/10076/third-south-australian-council-drops-acknowledgement-of-country>>).

held me in the library for about 20mins blocking me as I tried to walk away so that I couldn't leave, talking about how I need counselling etc, and should not be so sensitive. Eventually I got around her. (Self-report, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female)

The sense of triumphalism of the No vote reinvigorated an apparent 'right' to denigrate any Aboriginal person on the basis of their race.

My 12 year old nephew was involved in a group chat with his school 'friends' last night, they made comments including 'ur a monkey', 'no wonder why everyone voted no', 'at least I have a voice', 'Proud to be the one who stole ur land', 'Why are u talking i thought everyone voted no for u to not have a voice'. (Friend or relative report)

My 14 year old friend told me that the morning after the referendum she went to breakfast with her 50 year old aunt. My friend was wearing her Indigenous 'It's in my DNA t-shirt' and her aunt was wearing her Uluru Statement from the Heart t-shirt. They were just walking to go get brunch when the abuser yelled out 'you're wearing the wrong shirts today'. (Friend or relative report)

Someone in the public was trying to get a council person... to tell a First Nations man to get off public lawn. The council person resisted for a bit and said the man was probably upset and to leave him because of the Voice referendum being voted down. So, the person in the public shouted "put some sunscreen on him". (Witness report)

#### **4.2.9 Responses to Racism Associated with the Voice**

The emotional responses to racism associated with the Voice were similar to those recorded more generally on *Call It Out*. The top four emotional responses to racism, again, were anger, disappointment, motivation to bring about change and sadness. (See Table 21 in Appendix A, and Table H in Appendix B).

In relation to what people did in response to the incident, the most frequent action for those reporting incidents related to the Voice, and for those reporting incidents of racism more generally, was to talk with family and friends. Roughly one in three people, again, spoke to their family and friends as the first option.

In relation to racism and the Voice, one in four people (26%) recorded that they didn't believe that anything could be done, or they didn't know what to do, so they didn't do anything. This was a slightly higher proportion than those reporting racism generally (19%). Very few people reported racism associated with the Voice to an anti-discrimination body (3%). However, there was evidence of other forms of reporting – more people reported racism directly to Facebook and Twitter, than to an anti-discrimination body, and others chose to report the racism to workplace management, co-workers or the local council.

Similar to the general group reporting racism, some 16% of people reporting racism in relation to the Voice chose to defend the person affected or themselves verbally. For response to the incidents of racism both in relation to the Voice and more generally. (See Table 22 in Appendix A, and Table I in Appendix B).

Both those reporting racism generally and those reporting specifically in relation to the Voice generally favoured similar responses in how to combat racism. (See Table 25 in Appendix A, and Table J in Appendix B).

### 4.3 Final comments on Voice and Referendum

The period leading up to the Voice Referendum, the Referendum itself and the period following when the opportunity for constitutional change was rejected all impacted on the frequency, nature and impact of racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The incidents recorded on *Call It Out* show that both traditional media and social media became key avenues for the expression of derogatory and racist views of First Nations people. Interpersonal aggression, bullying and violence related to the Voice were also evident.

Much of the content of the incidents recorded on *Call It Out* rested on various forms of denial: denial of First Nations people's identity, culture and history; denial that a person's skin colour was 'black enough'; denial of the right to speak; and denial that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 'deserving' of anything but contempt. The effects were visceral and traumatic: escaping to a public toilet to avoid the rants of an unknown assailant and the shame and embarrassment it caused; receiving unidentified hate mail; the inherent racism in being confronted, questioned or ridiculed in public, in private and online about the Voice simply because you are identifiably Aboriginal and irrespective of your views on the Referendum and whether you are an adult or a child.

Harassment, exclusion, fear mongering, misinformation and the politicisation of Indigenous issues were all overwhelmingly techniques used for *silencing* First Nations people.

While the evidence from various sources shows an upsurge in racism, one of the First Nations women describing racism on *Call It Out* also noted that 'It's [racism] an everyday occurrence. The Referendum seems to have made it more visible to non-Indigenous people, but I experience it all the time'. The point raised here is the important one of racism as ongoing trauma. The concept of 'complex trauma' shows that trauma is not necessarily 'a single catastrophic event, [but] can be a repetitive or ongoing accumulation of threats to our survival'.<sup>45</sup> Understanding the incidence of and responses to trauma is inherently a political field: whose stories are included and acknowledged and whose trauma is recognised and acted upon?<sup>46</sup> The Referendum exposed in a particularly blatant and unashamed manner the deeper historical and contemporary roots of racism against First Nations People in Australia.

While there is no simple relationship in the broader non-Indigenous Australian community between support and opposition for the Voice and the incidence of racism against First Nations people, it is worth reflecting on what we know about these factors. As research from the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute found, support for the Voice was highly polarised on

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<sup>45</sup> Hemphil, P. (2024) *What it Takes to Heal*, Cornerstone Press, London, p. 31. Duran, E (2019) *Healing the Soul Wound. Informed Counselling for Indigenous Communities*, New York.

<sup>46</sup> Herman, J. (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Basic Books, New York; Hemphil, P. (2024) *What it Takes to Heal*, p.28.

political and demographic grounds, including amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups. The proportion of Liberal/National voters who thought we should establish the Voice was 21% in July 2023, while support among Labor voters was 63%. Support for the Voice was consistently high for overseas-born Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds (58% in 2023). ‘All of the decline in support for the Voice between July 2022 and 2023 was recorded among Australian born people (a decline of 11 points) and overseas-born people from English speaking backgrounds (a decline of 10 points)’.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> O’Donnell, J., (2023). *Mapping Social Cohesion 2023*. Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. Melbourne, p. 18. Available: <<https://scanloninstitute.org.au/research/mapping-social-cohesion#reports>>.

## 5. Conclusion

This report presents accounts of racism shared to the *Call It Out* Register over a 12 month period (March 2023-March 2024). The Register provides a safe space where racist incidents in all forms can be anonymously called out. The Register is distinctive because it allows those who directly experience racism, as well as friends, relatives and bystanders, to report it. *Call It Out* is also a unique archive and resource for First Nations people in Australia.

This report is based on 453 reports of racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Nearly two thirds of reports (62%) were made by a person witnessing racism and a third (31%) by First Nations people directly experiencing it. The remainder were made by friends/relatives (7%).

Witness reports were significantly higher in 2023-24, compared to 2022-23. This is likely to be attributable to the increase in racist incidents associated with the referendum on the Voice to Parliament, discussed in detail in our report. This same increase is likely to also explain the higher rates of reporting to the Register of particular forms of racism, including online and media related incidents, comparatively frequently reported by witnesses. These types of incidents accounted for 44% of all reports, 32% of reports identifying the location of incidents, and 56% of witness reports.

The high proportion of witness reports about online and media related racism are indicative of the significant increase in racism in the public arena associated with the referendum. We suggest that this may have made it more difficult for First Nations people to self-report racism (due to fatigue), as well as laying bare the enormity of this issue to third parties, who then stepped in to report it. We note too that witnesses, friends and relatives reporting referendum and other incidents to *Call It Out* are both non-Indigenous and Indigenous.

In 2023-24, workplace related racism remained the most common location for racism reported by First Nations people (20% of self-reports), as was the case in our last annual report. Types of racism most frequently reported by all groups were stereotyping (23%), discrimination (15%), hate speech (13%) and non-recognition of cultural rights (11%).

Stereotyping is more frequently identified (and identified as ongoing) as it sits under much of the racism reported in the Register. This and other ‘layering’ of types of racism is evidenced by the fact that around 75% (341) of the 453 reports recorded on the Register reported multiple types of racism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are stereotyped as law breaking, lazy, unintelligent and as likely to have certain physical attributes, with labelling of some as ‘too white’ to be Aboriginal. The consequences of stereotyping are enormous - as an underpinning of racist behaviour and action and causing First Nations people to not identify their cultural background. One report recounts that to avoid stereotyping of her children in a school setting a mother chose not to identify them as Aboriginal, for instance.

Hate speech and other forms of aggressive racism, including physical and verbal abuse, bullying, threats, intimidation and damage to property, comprised a relatively high 35% of responses. Perpetrators include neighbours, strangers and police officers, as examples. anti-

Examples include anti-Voice hate mail, white supremacist graffiti and vigilantism inciting violence against young and adult Aboriginal people. Those posting online encouraged such action in Alice Springs - 'shoot them like animals' or 'run them over with cars', they wrote.

The most frequently identified perpetrators were members of the public unknown to the person reporting an incident (27%), aligned in part with the increase in reported online and media related racism. We note too that not being able to identify a perpetrator is identified within the Register as a significant barrier to taking action against racism. Men were significantly more likely to be identified as perpetrators (42% compared with 30% female perpetrators) and other common categories of perpetrators are those working in government and other services (24%) and employees and employers (18%).

The report discusses institutional racism in detail, constituting 9% of reports identifying type of racism but other data on location and perpetrators indicate it occurs more frequently than this, again suggesting a likely undercount in *Call It Out* statistics (see below) and a need for greater understanding of the nature of institutional racism. To this end, the report discusses patterns of behaviour within an institution and poor institutional responses to racist incidents as constituting institutional racism.

Institutions perpetrating racism singled out in reports to *Call It Out* include those of government, with a section of the report dedicated to discussion of the criminal legal system in this context. Reports identify different and negative treatment within this system that contributes to much worse justice outcomes for First Nations people, including over-policing and inequity in court outcomes. However, we have also identified institutional racism as law, policy and practice that (a) appears neutral but that has negative consequences for First Nations people (e.g. providing the same services to First Nations people, without regard for culture) and (b) is intended to provide different positive treatment to First Nations people but fails in this regard (e.g. Reconciliation Action Plans, government-led Treaty processes).

We have explicitly explored the gender dimensions of racism by analysing just the 102 self-reports of racism where the gender was known (excluding third party reports made by witnesses and family and friends from this analysis). Women registered nearly twice as many self-reported experiences of racism compared to men (60% women compared to 30% men). In general, there was little difference in the reports on the type of racism by gender, though women were more likely to self-report stereotyping (22% compared to 16%) and men were more likely to report hate speech (15% compared to 10%). There was very little difference between First Nations women and men in the feelings associated with racism, nor with what they thought needed to be done to combat it.

We again emphasise that *Call It Out* statistics tell but a small part of the story about racism and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Each single report counted once may in fact record a litany of racist incidents and multiple layers of racism. First Nations persons identified that they are being selective in sharing just one or two of countless experiences they might report. One First Nations woman stated that she had enough experiences of racism to fill a book.

Beyond statistics, the reports provide other means to gauge the extent of this problem and its impacts. Taken as whole, they clearly indicate that there is really no space free of racism in this country and that anyone can perpetrate it – from children to the elderly and people of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Fellow passengers on a train, school principals, family members and members of the judiciary are but a few examples of perpetrators reported to *Call It Out*. Reports identifying racism's unbroken connection to history also goes some way to capturing the entrenched nature of racism.

Also relevant are the major tolls of racism extracted from First Nations people. As recounted in the reports these include deaths in custody, evictions from housing, loss of work, disengagement from school, for instance, as well as a broad spectrum of significant health and emotional impacts. Racism *and* calling it out leads most commonly to anger (19%) and disappointment (16%) but also deep feelings of poor self-worth, distress and isolation. This toll and these impacts are felt at a micro level where incidents impact individuals, but they also touch the lives of families, friends and the wider community, including, of course, where racism is institutional. This is recognised by one First Nations man reporting that after experiencing racism he 'cried for my people'. After seeing a racist comment targeting a First Nations woman online, another First Nations reported that 'it hurts to hear my sisters being referred to as something so racist and ignorant.'

The reports to the Register speak of non-Indigenous Australians wanting complete control over First Nations people. This includes their movement through public spaces. One report speaks of 'grey nomads' being more welcomed into city spaces than Aboriginal people visiting the town and others of 'unknown assailants' raging and ranting against First Nations people on the street during the Voice campaign. As a further form of control, many reports speak of the denial of history and of Indigenous voices, including where these recount First Nations experiences of racism. This was particularly evident as part of the Voice to Parliament campaign. One aunty reported a comment made to her nephew by his friends after the referendum vote - 'Why are u talking i thought everyone voted no for u to not have a voice'? Similarly, denial of cultural rights also features prominently in reports. While First Nations people spoke of the importance of culture, including as resilience against racism, incidents reported describe its denigration and appropriation. Denying there is anything special about First Nations culture, Indigenous-specific rights and responsibility for perpetrating and reducing racism is a way of holding onto power that serves non-Indigenous people interests.

Finally, reports spoke of the urgent need for multi-layered action *on the part of everyone* to tackle the terrible scourge of racism targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including as a counterweight to the apparent widespread apathy towards this issue. As one report citing a racist comment to an online post about deaths in custody states, 'Nobody's interested. Nobody cares. Nobody's bothered'.

Also evident is that the size of the problem can overwhelm. One Indigenous woman who feels the racism directed towards her in every public space asks, 'How can this ever change?' An Indigenous man also asked, 'What is there to do?' His comment related to the lack of avenues for taking meaningful action against racism, including to achieve a sense of justice when a wrong has been done and significant harm caused. The reports detail numerous barriers to the

latter. These include not knowing about or difficulties navigating formal complaints mechanisms, poor understanding of legal obligations to not perpetrate racism and a defensiveness to allegations of racism, as well as negative repercussions of calling racism out).

Just under one in five of those reporting racism on the Register (17%), however, did identify feeling motivated to bring about change and/or solidarity with others experiencing racism. And via reports to *Call It Out* and otherwise, people are taking action – both witnesses to and First Nations people directly impacted by racism.

Our intention through this report is to further galvanise these and other efforts to eliminate racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For as one report recounts, ‘the issue of racism ... affects us all’, whether as perpetrators of racism or when targeted by it.

## Appendix A: Data Tables 2023 –2024

**Table 1 Who reported the incident**

	N	%
Witness of racism toward a First Nations person	281	62
First Nations person who experienced racism	142	31
Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism	30	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=453

**Table 2 Geographic location of reported incidents**

	N	%
New South Wales	99	38
Victoria	52	20
Queensland	36	14
Western Australia	36	14
Northern Territory	14	5
South Australia	14	5
Australian Capital Territory	6	2
Tasmania	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=260.

**Table 3 How the incident was experienced or witnessed by who reported the incident**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In Person	105	55	18	55	87	25	210	37
Online on Social Media	35	18	4	12	136	40	175	31
As institutional racism	27	14	7	21	50	15	84	15
In the media	17	9	1	3	57	17	75	13
Other	6	3	3	9	14	4	23	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=453; Responses N=567.

**Table 4 The type of racism experienced or witnessed\* by who reported the racism**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	94	20	19	20	199	24	312	23
Discrimination	63	13	16	17	123	15	202	15
Hate speech	57	12	8	9	112	14	177	13
Didn't recognise cultural rights	36	8	8	9	109	13	153	11
Institutional Racism	32	7	13	14	82	10	127	9
Bullying	52	11	7	8	60	7	119	9
Verbal abuse	39	8	10	11	49	6	98	7
Shunning you or excluding you	32	7	4	4	18	2	54	4
Threats or intimidation	26	6	3	3	16	2	45	3
Other	18	4	3	3	18	2	39	3
Physical abuse, assault or attack	10	2	1	1	25	3	36	3
Property damage or vandalism	7	1	0	0	6	1	13	1
Graffiti	4	1	1	1	3	0	8	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1383</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=453; Responses N=1383.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table 5 Location where the racism occurred\* by who reported the racism**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Online	27	13	4	12	108	32	139	24
In a public place	27	13	7	21	40	12	74	13
In a workplace	41	20	3	9	26	8	70	12
In a commercial place	24	12	6	18	22	7	52	9
In the Media	11	5	0	0	34	10	45	8
In a private place	12	6	0	0	28	8	40	7
Interacting with government institution or service provider	12	6	1	3	19	6	32	6
In a school or other educational space	15	7	4	12	11	3	30	5
Other	10	5	2	6	12	4	24	4
In a police station, courthouse or prison	6	3	3	9	14	4	23	4
In a hospital or medical centre	11	5	2	6	10	3	23	4
On public transport	7	3	1	3	8	2	16	3
Unknown	2	1	0	0	3	1	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N= 409; Responses N=573.

\* Data includes multiple responses for location where the racism occurred

**Table 6 When the incident occurred**

	N	%
This week	140	29
Ongoing	73	15
This month	72	15
In the last year	68	14
More than 12 months ago	66	14
In the last few months	64	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=409; Responses N=483.

**Table 7 Ongoing racism by location where the racism occurred\***

	N	%
Online	24	15
In a workplace	21	14
In a public place	17	11
In a commercial place	14	9
Interacting with government institution or service provider	14	9
In the Media	13	8
In a police station, courthouse or prison	10	6
In a school or other educational space	9	6
In a hospital or medical centre	9	6
In a private place	8	5
Other	7	5
On public transport	6	4
Unknown	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=45; Responses N=155.

\* Data includes multiple responses for location where the racism occurred

**Table 8 Ongoing racism by the type of racism experienced or witnessed\***

	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	51	17
Discrimination	41	14
Institutional Racism	33	11
Didn't recognise cultural rights	33	11
Verbal abuse	32	11
Hate speech	31	10
Bullying	28	9
Shunning you or excluding you	18	6
Threats or intimidation	14	5
Physical abuse, assault or attack	10	3
Other	6	2
Property damage or vandalism	4	1
Graffiti	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=45; Responses N=301.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table 9 Who was the perpetrator**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Member of the public unknown to me	171	27
Someone known to me	65	10
Government authority/institution	61	10
Employee of an organisation	58	9
Employer or colleague	57	9
Police officer	40	6
Media outlet	38	6
Other	32	5
Health service employee	24	4
School/educational place employee	24	4
Other non-government service provider or organisation	22	3
Unknown	21	3
Justice setting	17	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=421; Responses N=630.

**Table 10 Gender of the perpetrator**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	191	42
Female	138	30
Unknown	75	16
Not applicable	49	11
Other	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=401; Responses N=459.

**Table 11 The type of racism experienced or witnessed\* by gender of the perpetrator\*\***

	Male		Female		N/A, Other & Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	136	21	105	24	83	19	324	21
Discrimination	89	14	65	15	73	16	227	15
Hate speech	82	13	50	11	52	12	184	12
Didn't recognise cultural rights	76	12	51	11	49	11	176	12
Institutional Racism	45	7	42	9	58	13	145	9
Bullying	61	10	39	9	30	7	130	9
Verbal abuse	55	9	31	7	25	6	111	7
Shunning you or excluding you	24	4	28	6	22	5	74	5
Threats or intimidation	26	4	17	4	13	3	56	4
Physical abuse, assault or attack	21	3	4	1	13	3	38	2
Other	21	3	10	2	7	2	38	2
Property damage or vandalism	4	1	3	1	12	3	19	1
Graffiti	1	0	0	0	6	1	7	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=401; Responses N=1529.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table 12 Who perpetrated the racism\* by gender of the perpetrator\*\***

	Male		Female		N/A, Other & Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Member of the public unknown to me	90	28	47	19	50	20	187	23
Government authority/institution	24	8	24	10	38	15	86	11
Someone known to me	38	12	31	13	12	5	81	10
Employee of an organisation	30	9	32	13	17	7	79	10
Employer or colleague	31	10	36	15	11	4	78	10
Media outlet	16	5	10	4	27	11	53	6
Police officer	21	7	8	3	23	9	52	6
Health service employee	12	4	16	7	11	4	39	5
School/educational place employee	10	3	12	5	16	6	38	5
Other	16	5	10	4	10	4	36	4
Other non-government service provider or organisation	12	4	8	3	11	4	31	4
Unknown	11	3	5	2	15	6	31	4
Justice setting	7	2	6	2	15	6	28	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>819</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=400; Responses N=819.

\* Data includes multiple responses for who perpetrated the racism

**Table 13 Gender of the victim**

	N	%
Female	126	37
Male	97	29
Unknown	82	24
In another way	35	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=340.

**Table 14 Age of the victim by who reported the incident**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-9	2	2	1	4	8	6	11	4
10-19	9	9	8	33	14	10	31	12
20-29	18	18	3	13	39	28	60	23
30-39	26	26	1	4	21	15	48	18
40-49	27	27	5	21	25	18	57	22
50+	19	19	6	25	32	23	57	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=264.

**Table 15 Age of the victim by type of racism experienced or witnessed\***

	0-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	21	16	43	21	32	28	41	25	41	25	178	23
Discrimination	24	18	33	16	12	10	16	10	24	15	109	14
Hate speech	17	13	26	13	11	10	15	9	22	13	91	12
Didn't recognise cultural rights	6	4	18	9	16	14	18	11	15	9	73	9
Institutional Racism	7	5	22	11	10	9	15	9	17	10	71	9
Bullying	15	11	13	6	9	8	15	9	12	7	64	8
Verbal abuse	16	12	10	5	7	6	10	6	13	8	56	7
Shunning you or excluding you	3	2	13	6	8	7	10	6	8	5	42	5
Threats or intimidation	10	7	6	3	3	3	4	2	9	5	32	4
Other	2	1	8	4	4	3	12	7	3	2	29	4
Physical abuse, assault or attack	13	10	7	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	24	3
Property damage or vandalism	1	1	3	1		0	2	1		0	6	1
Graffiti	0	0		0	1	1	2	1		0	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=264; Responses N=778.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table 16 Age of the victim by location where the racism occurred\***

	0-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Online	8	12	12	15	10	17	20	26	22	28	72	20
In a workplace	4	6	14	18	11	19	16	21	12	15	57	16
In a public place	12	18	14	18	7	12	6	8	10	13	49	14
In a commercial place	9	13	3	4	13	22	6	8	9	11	40	11
In a private place	11	16	5	6	7	12	3	4	2	3	28	8
In the Media	4	6	3	4	1	2	4	5	10	13	22	6
In a school or other educational space	9	13	3	4	2	3	1	1	4	5	19	5
In a hospital or medical centre	1	1	5	6	2	3	5	6	4	5	17	5
Interacting with government institution or service provider	2	3	7	9	1	2	4	5	1	1	15	4
In a police station, courthouse or prison	1	1	7	9	2	3	3	4	2	3	15	4
Other	2	3	3	4	1	2	6	8	2	3	14	4
On public transport	3	4	2	3	1	2	3	4	2	3	11	3
Unknown	2	3		0	1	2		0		0	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=257; Responses N=387.

\*Data includes multiple responses for location where the racism occurred

**Table 17 Gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism\***

	N	%
Female	61	60
Male	37	36
In another way	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=102.

\* Gender was not recorded for 40 of those who self-reported racism.

**Table 18 The type of racism experienced\* by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	43	22	20	16	4	31	67	20
Discrimination	27	14	15	12	2	15	44	13
Hate speech	20	10	19	15	1	8	40	12
Bullying	23	12	12	10	2	15	37	11
Didn't recognise cultural rights	16	8	10	8	1	8	27	8
Verbal abuse	13	7	12	10	1	8	26	8
Shunning you or excluding you	15	8	10	8	1	8	26	8
Institutional Racism	15	8	9	7	0	0	24	7
Threats or intimidation	8	4	9	7	1	8	18	5
Other	8	4	4	3	0	0	12	4
Physical abuse, assault or attack	5	3	1	1	0	0	6	2
Property damage or vandalism	2	1	2	2	0	0	4	1
Graffiti	2	1	1	1	0	0	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=102; Responses N=334.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table 19 Location where the racism occurred\* by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In a workplace	22	26	14	18	1	17	37	22
Online	13	15	9	12	2	33	24	14
In a public place	9	10	13	17	1	17	23	14
In a commercial place	11	13	11	14	0	0	22	13
In a hospital or medical centre	6	7	4	5	1	17	11	6
In a school or other educational space	6	7	4	5	0	0	10	6
Interacting with government institution or service provider	4	5	5	6	0	0	9	5
In the Media	3	3	5	6	0	0	8	5
In a private place	4	5	2	3	1	17	7	4
Other	4	5	2	3	0	0	6	4
On public transport	2	2	4	5	0	0	6	4
In a police station, courthouse or prison	1	1	4	5	0	0	5	3
Unknown	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=98; Responses N=170.

\* Data includes multiple responses for location where the racism occurred

**Table 20 Who was the perpetrator\* by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism**

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employer or colleague	21	21	11	15	0	0	32	18
Member of the public unknown to me	19	19	10	14	2	50	31	17
Employee of an organisation	15	15	14	19	0	0	29	16
Someone known to me	9	9	8	11	1	25	18	10
Government authority/institution	8	8	10	14	0	0	18	10
Health service employee	8	8	4	5	0	0	12	7
Other	4	4	2	3	1	25	7	4
Police officer	3	3	4	5	0	0	7	4
Unknown	4	4	2	3	0	0	6	3
Other non-government service provider or organisation	3	3	3	4	0	0	6	3
Media outlet	3	3	2	3	0	0	5	3
School/educational place employee	3	3	2	3	0	0	5	3
Justice setting	2	2	2	3	0	0	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=102 Responses N=180.

\* Data includes multiple responses for perpetrator of the racism

**Table 21 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed**

	N	%
Angry	288	19
Disappointed	237	16
Sad	162	11
Motivated to bring about change	159	11
Shame	107	7
Feel resigned to racism being an everyday event for First Nations people	105	7
Helpless	104	7
Solidarity with others who experience racism	94	6
Humiliated	71	5
Isolated	68	5
Afraid	59	4
Other	26	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1480</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=386; Responses N=1480.

**Table 22 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed by age of the victim**

	0-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Angry	34	21	42	20	32	15	40	16	46	20	194	18
Disappointed	22	14	39	18	36	17	38	15	36	15	171	16
Sad	22	14	28	13	22	10	27	11	21	9	120	11
Motivated to bring about change	15	9	20	9	19	9	20	8	25	11	99	9
Shame	13	8	24	11	20	10	17	7	18	8	92	9
Feel resigned to racism being an everyday event for First Nations people	9	6	17	8	18	9	27	11	19	8	90	8
Solidarity with others who experience racism	12	7	12	6	14	7	19	7	24	10	81	8
Helpless	16	10	18	9	15	7	18	7	13	6	80	7
Humiliated	7	4	4	2	17	8	21	8	16	7	65	6
Isolated	9	6	4	2	14	7	22	9	12	5	61	6
Other	3	2	3	1	3	1	6	2	4	2	19	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1072</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=262; Responses N=1072.

**Table 23 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed by who reported the incident**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Angry	79	13	20	20	189	24	288	19
Disappointed	72	12	14	14	151	19	237	16
Sad	62	10	12	12	88	11	162	11
Motivated to bring about change	42	7	9	9	108	14	159	11
Shame	44	7	7	7	56	7	107	7
Feel resigned to racism being an everyday event for First Nations people	56	9	7	7	42	5	105	7
Helpless	52	9	7	7	45	6	104	7
Solidarity with others who experience racism	31	5	7	7	56	7	94	6
Humiliated	59	10	4	4	8	1	71	5
Isolated	54	9	2	2	12	2	68	5
Afraid	38	6	7	7	14	2	59	4
Other	12	2	4	4	10	1	26	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1480</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=386; Responses N=1480.

**Table 24 Emotional responses to incidents of racism experienced by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism who reported the incident**

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Angry	42	13	29	13	3	18	74	13
Disappointed	42	13	25	11	2	12	69	12
Sad	31	10	27	12	2	12	60	10
Humiliated	30	9	25	11	1	6	56	10
Feel resigned to racism being an everyday event for First Nations people	29	9	23	10	1	6	53	9
Isolated	30	9	21	9	1	6	52	9
Helpless	26	8	22	10	1	6	49	9
Shame	24	7	16	7	2	12	42	7
Motivated to bring about change	25	8	15	7	1	6	41	7
Afraid	24	7	11	5	2	12	37	6
Solidarity with others who experience racism	16	5	14	6	1	6	31	5
Other	7	2	2	1		0	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=110; Responses N=573.

**Table 25 Responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed\***

	N	%
Talked to family or friends	156	34
Other	95	21
Defended the person/myself verbally	74	16
I didn't believe that anything could be done	45	10
I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything	40	9
Reported to a discrimination body	27	6
Reported to the police	12	3
Retaliation	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=284; Responses N=456.

\*Data includes multiple responses for responses to the incident

**Table 26 Responses to incidents of racism experienced or witnessed\* by age of victim**

	0-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Talked to family or friends	25	40	33	42	25	33	28	30	30	35	141	36
Other	8	13	12	15	18	24	20	22	18	21	76	19
Defended the person/myself verbally	9	14	12	15	14	18	16	17	14	16	65	16
I didn't believe that anything could be done	7	11	11	14	7	9	11	12	6	7	42	11
I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything	7	11	5	6	6	8	10	11	5	6	33	8
Reported to a discrimination body	3	5	3	4	3	4	5	5	9	10	23	6
Reported to the police	3	5		0	2	3	2	2	3	3	10	3
Retaliation	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=243; Responses N=396.

\*Data includes multiple responses for response to the incident

**Table 27 Responses to incidents of racism experienced by gender of the victim\***

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Talked to family or friends	37	36	23	32	1	14	61	33
Other	19	18	7	10	2	29	28	15
Defended the person/myself verbally	15	14	11	15	0	0	26	14
I didn't believe that anything could be done	11	11	12	16	2	29	25	14
I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything	12	12	9	12	1	14	22	12
Reported to a discrimination body	8	8	7	10	1	14	16	9
Reported to the police	2	2	4	5	0	0	6	3
Retaliation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=217; Responses N=184.

\*Data includes multiple responses for response to the incident

**Table 28 What needs to be done to combat racism**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Education for the public about First Nations cultures and history	248	13
Education for the public on how to identify and stand up against racism and stereotypical attitudes	246	13
Stronger legal protections against and penalties for racism	234	12
Increased education and public awareness campaigns to prevent and combat racism	231	12
Education for the public about the legal and ethical responsibilities of being anti-racist	207	11
Giving more First Nations peoples affected by racism a voice on this issue	205	10
Increased community-led responses and advocacy	198	10
More accessible legal/complaints processes	185	9
More awareness about how to use the law to challenge racism	178	9
Other	35	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1967</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=328; Responses N=1967.

**Table 29 How to combat racism by gender of those who self-reported experiencing racism\***

	Female		Male		In another way		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Education for the public on how to identify and stand up against racism and stereotypical attitudes	46	12	26	13	2	13	74	12
Education for the public about First Nations cultures and history	45	12	24	12	2	13	71	12
Increased education and public awareness campaigns to prevent and combat racism	44	11	23	11	2	13	69	11
Giving more First Nations peoples affected by racism a voice on this issue	44	11	22	11	1	7	67	11
Stronger legal protections against and penalties for racism	42	11	23	11	2	13	67	11
Education for the public about the legal and ethical responsibilities of being anti-racist	42	11	18	9	2	13	62	10
More awareness about how to use the law to challenge racism	39	10	19	9	1	7	59	10
More accessible legal/complaints processes	36	9	22	11	1	7	59	10
Increased community-led responses and advocacy	40	10	17	8	1	7	58	10
Other	8	2	7	3	1	7	16	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=94; Responses N=602.

\*Data includes multiple responses for how to combat racism

## Appendix B: The Voice and Referendum Data Tables 2023-24

**Table A Who reported the incident for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	N	%
Witness of racism toward a First Nations person	54	67
First Nations person who experienced racism	23	28
Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=81.

**Table B Geographic location of reported incidents for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	N	%
New South Wales	16	38
Western Australia	9	21
Victoria	7	17
Queensland	5	12
South Australia	3	7
Tasmania	1	2
Australian Capital Territory	1	2
Northern Territory	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=42.

**Table C How the incident was experienced or witnessed for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	N	%
Online on Social Media	41	41
In Person	28	28
In the media	16	16
As institutional racism	9	9
Other	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=81; Responses N=101.

**Table D How the incident was experienced or witnessed\* by who reported the incident for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N		N	%	N	%
Online on Social Media	7	29	2	40	32	44	41	41
In Person	15	63	1	20	12	17	28	28
In the media	0	0	0	0	16	22	16	16
As institutional racism	0	0	0	0	9	13	9	9
Other	2	8	2	40	3	4	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=81; Responses N=101.

\* Data includes multiple responses for how the incident was experienced or witnessed

**Table E The type of racism experienced or witnessed\* for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	64	26
Hate speech	42	17
Didn't recognise cultural rights	28	12
Discrimination	27	11
Verbal abuse	21	9
Bullying	20	8
Institutional Racism	19	8
Other	11	5
Threats or intimidation	7	3
Shunning you or excluding you	1	0
Property damage or vandalism	1	0
Graffiti	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>

Respondents N=81; Responses N=242.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table F The type of racism experienced or witnessed\* by who reported the racism for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	First Nations person who experienced racism		Friend or relative of a First Nations person who experienced racism		Witness of racism toward a First Nations person		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Negative attitudes or stereotyping	18	31	2	13	44	26	64	26
Hate speech	10	17	2	13	30	18	42	17
Didn't recognise cultural rights	3	5	3	20	22	13	28	12
Discrimination	3	5	3	20	21	13	27	11
Verbal abuse	6	10	3	20	12	7	21	9
Bullying	7	12	2	13	11	7	20	8
Institutional Racism	3	5	0	0	16	10	19	8
Other	3	5	0	0	8	5	11	5
Threats or intimidation	4	7	0	0	3	2	7	3
Property damage or vandalism	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Graffiti	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Shunning you or excluding you	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Physical abuse, assault or attack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=81; Responses N=242.

\* Data includes multiple responses for type of racism

**Table G Where the racism occurred for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	N	%
Online	39	42
In the Media	15	16
In a public place	14	15
In a commercial place	5	5
Other	4	4
In a private place	4	4
In a workplace	3	3
Interacting with government institution or service provider	3	3
In a school or other educational space	2	2
In a police station, courthouse or prison	2	2
In a hospital or medical centre	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=78; Responses N=93.

\* Data includes multiple responses for where the racism occurred

**Table H Emotional response for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Angry	61	19
Disappointed	47	15
Motivated to bring about change	36	11
Sad	28	9
Solidarity with others who experience racism	25	8
Feel resigned to racism being an everyday event for First Nations people	24	8
Shame	20	6
Afraid	19	6
Helpless	19	6
Isolated	14	4
Humiliated	13	4
Other	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=74; Responses N=314.

\* Data includes multiple responses for emotional response

**Table I Response to the incident for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Talked to family or friends	29	31
Other	22	23
Defended the person/myself verbally	15	16
I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything	14	15
I didn't believe that anything could be done	10	11
Reported to a discrimination body	3	3
Reported to the police	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=59; Responses N=94.

\* Data includes multiple responses for response to incident

**Table J How to combat racism for reports relating to The Voice and Referendum**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Stronger legal protections against and penalties for racism	62	14
Increased education and public awareness campaigns to prevent and combat racism	58	13
Education for the public about First Nations cultures and history	55	12
Education for the public on how to identify and stand up against racism and stereotypical attitudes	54	12
Education for the public about the legal and ethical responsibilities of being anti-racist	48	11
More accessible legal/complaints processes	44	10
Increased community-led responses and advocacy	44	10
More awareness about how to use the law to challenge racism	43	9
Giving more First Nations peoples affected by racism a voice on this issue	41	9
Other	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents N=73; Responses N=457.

\* Data includes multiple responses for how to combat racism