

FACT SHEET FOUR

THE MYTH THAT “RACISM IS A THING OF THE PAST”



What's the myth?

Some people believe that racism is no longer an issue in modern day Australia. They may point to the abolition of overtly racist policies like the White Australia Policy, the celebration of multiculturalism, or diversity in the media as signs that equality has been achieved. This belief assumes that because some progress has been made, racism no longer exists.

What's the reality?

Racism is not a thing of the past – it is still deeply present today. While overtly racist policies may have been overturned, their legacies remain. Modern racism shows up by negatively affecting particular communities – especially First Nations people – in the justice system, in pay gaps, in unequal access to housing, healthcare and education, and our migration policies – which often preference those who look, sound and think the most like white people. Racism has evolved into forms that might be less visible, but no less damaging.

Why is this myth harmful?

It denies ongoing harm: Seeing racism as a historic issue erases the real and ongoing impacts of racism.

It leads to inaction: Thinking racism is over stops us from recognising the need for change and taking action.

It perpetuates inequality: Treating racism as a thing of the past means we miss opportunities to change the systems that still disadvantage communities that experience racism today.



How can we challenge this myth?

- Understand that racism takes many forms and shifts over time, and that rates and the prevalence of racism are on the rise in Australia.
- Understand that confronting racism requires persistence, hard work and collective action.
- Amplify anti-racist initiatives, particularly ones that are led by communities that experience racism.

