

FACT SHEET FIVE

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ANTI-RACISM



What is the misconception?

Anti-racism is often misunderstood as simply being “not racist”. Many people think it means avoiding racist actions or beliefs, or staying neutral when faced with racism, without taking further steps. Others mistake anti-racism for performative actions, like making public statements without following through with meaningful change. To some, anti-racism is seen as optional, rather than a shared responsibility. These misunderstandings reduce anti-racism to surface-level gestures. This ignores the deep, sustained work needed to dismantle systemic racism.

What is the reality?

Anti-racism is not passive, it’s active. It requires a consistent, dedicated, and ongoing approach alongside targeted action at the various levels of society in which racism exists. It also requires us to understand and address how power and privilege operate in society, and to examine our personal biases, so that we can work to transform the systems that perpetuate inequality. It is about building racial literacy and developing an anti-racism skillset that produces trauma-informed and strength-based approaches to tackling racism that recognise the intersecting impact of other forms of discrimination – such as discrimination on the basis of gender or disability.

Why is this misconception harmful?

It promotes passivity:

Thinking of anti-racism as optional stops us from challenging racism. If we don’t view tackling racism as active work, we avoid addressing the systems that cause harm.

It shifts responsibility:

This misconception that anti-racism is not everyone’s responsibility puts all the work on communities harmed by racism. This ignores the fact that we all have a role in building fairer systems.

It holds back change: Approaching anti-racism as a temporary effort prevents us from making the long-term commitment needed to create real, lasting change.



How can we challenge this misconception?

- Commit to anti-racism as an ongoing practice.
- Develop an anti-racist skillset that allows us to question and challenge the various ways racism shapes our society. Use these skills to take meaningful action within and beyond your sphere of influence.

THE FIVE A’S OF AN ANTI-RACISM SKILLSET

The skill	What it looks like in action
Awareness	Anti-racism begins with awareness of our own biases, privileges and of the systemic nature of racism.
Active listening	Anti-racism requires centring the voices of those most impacted by racism and ensuring their experiences and needs shape actions.
Advocacy	Anti-racism involves using our influence to amplify voices from communities that experience racism.
Accountability	Anti-racism involves taking responsibility for our actions and continuously working to align them with anti-racist principles.
Action	Anti-racism involves translating understanding and commitment into meaningful efforts to eliminate racism.