What is the Australian Reconciliation Barometer?

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer (the Barometer) is a biennial, national research study that measures the progress of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

At Reconciliation Australia we partner with business, government, education and the community sector to achieve our vision for a reconciled, just and equitable Australia. The tool we use to track our progress towards reconciliation is the Australian Reconciliation Barometer.

This fourth edition of the Barometer shows that there is much goodwill for reconciliation. The vast majority of Australians believe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is important, and most Australians have a desire to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Additionally, most Australians believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold an important and significant place as the First Australians.

Despite these positive results, there are areas that need significant improvement. For example, we do not agree on a set of facts about our shared history, particularly in relation to the colonisation of Australia. Too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still experience racial prejudice, the trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is low and we still have to encourage institutions to work towards closing the gap in equality. Significantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to feel less secure in their cultural rights than other Australians—this is a potential barrier to improving our relationship.

The goodwill for reconciliation indicates that we can continue to make strong progress towards a reconciled nation.

How do we measure reconciliation?

In 2014, the Barometer used five dimensions to measure progress towards reconciliation:

- **Historical acceptance**: Whether all Australians acknowledge the injustices and actions of the past and their impacts (both historical and contemporary) and are making amends for past wrongs.

- **Race relations**: The importance of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, as well as the perceived and experienced levels of trust, discrimination and prejudice between us.

- **Institutional integrity**: Whether the nation’s political, organisational and community structures and leadership actively support the achievement of reconciliation.

- **Equality and equity**: Material equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in areas such as health, education and employment, as well as cultural security and the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to freely exercise self-determination and their individual and collective rights as First Peoples.

- **Unity**: Recognition and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and whether these are viewed as an integral part of a shared national identity by all Australians.
Historical acceptance

The vast majority of us believe that all Australians should learn about past issues of European settlement, but not many of us can agree on how past wrongs impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Building a better understanding of the past can lead to a better future.
We widely agree it is important to learn more about past issues, but are unable to accept some facts.

85% of the general community and 92% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians believe it is important to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories.

35% of the general community do not accept, or are unsure about, the fact that government policy enabled Aboriginal children to be removed from their families without permission.

We also don’t agree on the ongoing impact of past wrongs.

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents strongly agree that past policies have been a cause of poor education (41%), and discrimination (38%), compared to just 17% respectively of the general community.

36% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents strongly agree that past policies have been a cause of the lack of respect for their people, and inadequate living conditions (37%), compared to just 15% and 14% respectively of the general community.
Race relations

Currently, our trust for each other is low and levels of prejudice are too high. We must strive to improve race relations, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still too likely to experience racism.

Key findings across the five dimensions of reconciliation

Almost all of us believe our relationship is important

86% of the general population and 96% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population believe the relationship between us is important.

64% of non-Indigenous Australians believe we are better off with many cultural groups.

Trust is low

Only 26% of the general population believe trust is high for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and 39% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents believe their trust is high for non-Indigenous Australians.

Prejudice is high

45% of general respondents believe prejudice is high and 62% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents believe prejudice is high.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to believe Australia is a racist country. 35% of the general community believe Australia is a racist country, while 48% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents believe it is.
Our level of personal interaction is low

Only 30% of the general community socialise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

When people learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures through personal experience or education, they are more likely to believe the relationship is very important compared to when people learn from the media (48% vs 38%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more likely to have experienced and witnessed racial prejudice in the past six months

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much more likely to experience racial discrimination.

31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have experienced verbal abuse in the last 6 months compared to 13% of the general population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have witnessed verbal abuse in the last 6 months compared to 22% of the general population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much more likely to experience discrimination from teachers or principals and their employer. This compares to 7% of the general community who have experienced discrimination at school and 12% of the general community who have experienced discrimination at work.
Photo: Sarah Brown and Patrick Tjungarryi at Western Desert Dialysis. Image by Justin Brierty courtesy of The Centralian Advocate.
Institutional integrity

There is a high perception that institutions can do more to advance reconciliation.

Building trust and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all institutions will be crucial to the progress of reconciliation.

Photo: Representatives from Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, Indigenous Governance Awards 2012 finalists. Image by Wayne Quilliam.
Key findings across the five dimensions of reconciliation

Most Australians believe community, business, government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations all need to do more to reduce problems of prejudice and to improve the relationship

Most of us believe that institutions can do more to reduce prejudice and discrimination

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<th>National sample</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government departments</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private sector businesses</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community sector organisations</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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Proportion of respondents who believe institutions should do more to reduce problems of discrimination and prejudice between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples.
Equality and equity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel less secure in their cultural and material rights than other Australians. Improving cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is likely to improve relationships and outcomes.

Photo: Employees from Australian Red Cross. Image by Cole Bennetts.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents are more likely to consider their living conditions to be worse than other people’s and are more likely to see barriers to employment and education.

- **28%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples believe their living conditions are worse than the majority of Australians compared to **15%** of the general population.

- **34%** compared with the general community (24%).

- **45%** compared with the general community (39%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel less secure in their cultural rights than other Australians.

- Only **51%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents feel they can be true to their culture or personal beliefs.

  This is compared to **69%** of the general community who feel they can be true to themselves.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are less likely to feel they have the right or opportunity to raise issues.

  Compared to the general community (47-50% compared to 53-59%).
Unity

Almost all Australians believe it is important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, but we currently know little. We believe we can become a reconciled nation, but don’t know what to do to achieve this. The challenge that stands before us is to turn this goodwill into action, to increase pride in, and to celebrate, the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Key findings across the five dimensions of reconciliation

Our levels of knowledge are low, but we believe it is important to know more

83% of the general community believe it is important to know about the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and 80% believe it is important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

77% of the general community believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Only 30% of the general community believe they have a high level of knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

We believe that we can become a better and reconciled nation

65% of the general population believe that it is possible for all Australians to become united and 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents believe this.

Some of us would like to do something to contribute to reconciliation, but most of us don’t know how

44% of the general population would like to do something to improve reconciliation but only 24% know what they can do.

68% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians would like to do something to improve reconciliation but only 47% know what they can do.
We believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a unique place as the First Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia’s national identity.

71% of the general community and 87% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a unique place as the First Australians.

We are generally proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents than non-Indigenous respondents are proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. 85% compared to 57%.

These results have increased slightly from the 2012 Australian Reconciliation Barometer for the general population. 57% in 2014 vs 51% in 2012, but have decreased slightly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (85% in 2014 vs 97% in 2012).
Photo: Girringun Board Director Claude Beeron with Girringun Chair Charlie Morganson at Girringun Art Centre in Cardwell. Image by Wayne Quilliam.
What can I do?

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer provides evidence that we are making progress towards achieving our vision for a reconciled, just and equitable nation, but we still have a significant amount of work to do.

Contributing to reconciliation can sometimes seem difficult, but there are many ways we can work together to build better relationships across our workplaces, schools and communities. Here are a few ideas:

- Learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, peoples and cultures through Reconciliation Australia’s online cultural awareness program. It’s free to use, and is designed to take you on an awareness-raising journey. Start your journey at www.shareourpride.org.au
- Take part in National Reconciliation Week, or hold your own event between 27 May and 3 June (each year). Visit www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw to find out more.
- Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in your workplace, organisation or community group. Visit the RAP online hub to find out more at www.reconciliation.org.au/raphub
- Join the Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning program to support your school or early learning service to develop environments that foster a high level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures. www.reconciliation.org.au/schools
- Become a friend of Reconciliation Australia on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ReconciliationAus, or follow us on Twitter @RecAustralia to keep in touch with news and the latest developments in reconciliation.
- Get involved with your state or local reconciliation group.
- Find out more about RECOGNISE—the campaign to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution and remove racial discrimination. You can show your support at www.recognise.org.au
- Talk at home, work, or with your friends about the results of the Australian Reconciliation Barometer. Help others put the results in context and reflect on your own relationships with friends and family by asking: What are the ingredients of a good relationship? What makes you feel respected and what happens when you feel disrespected? What do you do to build trust in your personal relationships?

The full report for the 2014 Australian Reconciliation Barometer is available at www.reconciliation.org.au
Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.