



 print this page  back to web version

## Fact Sheets

[View latest](#) | [View all](#)

### Institutional racism

*Institutional racism* or systemic racism describes forms of racism which are structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when organisations, institutions or governments discriminate, either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights.

This form of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, so that the practices of that group are seen as the norm to which other cultural practices should conform. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and marginalises others.

Institutional racism is often the most difficult to recognise and counter, particularly when it is perpetrated by institutions and governments who do not view themselves as racist. When present in a range of social contexts, this form of racism reinforces the disadvantage already experienced by some members of the community. For example, racism experienced by students at school may result in early school dropout and lower educational outcomes. Together with discrimination in employment, this may lead to fewer employment opportunities and higher levels of unemployment for these students when they leave school. In turn, lower income levels combined with discrimination in the provision of goods and services restrict access to housing, health care and life opportunities generally. In this way, institutional racism may be particularly damaging for minority groups and further restrict their access to services and participation in society.

For more definitions, see <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/library/glossary/>

**Source:** *Racism. No way!* website, <http://www.racismnoway.com.au>

**Theme:** Racism in Australia

© Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers 2000  
This page: [/cgi-bin/printversion/printversion.pl](#)

Racism, No way! is an Australian anti-racism education initiative managed by the Department of Education and Training on behalf of education systems nationally.