

Three in four people hold negative view of Indigenous people: study

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Credit: Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

Most Australians tested for unconscious bias hold a negative view of Indigenous Australians which can lead to widespread racism, new

analysis from The Australian National University (ANU) shows.

People's bias is regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, religion, [education level](#), geography or political leanings, according to the findings.

The ANU researchers say 75 per cent of Australians tested using the Implicit Association Test by a joint initiative of universities including Harvard, Yale and the University of Sydney hold a negative implicit or unconscious bias against Indigenous Australians.

Their findings are published in the Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues.

The researchers analysed the "implicit bias" of over 11,000 Australian participants over a 10-year period, and how this can lead to racist attitudes or behaviour.

"The results are shocking, but not surprising," said Australian report author Mr Siddharth Shirodkar, a PhD researcher based in the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences.

"These results show there may be an implicit negative bias against Indigenous Australians across the board, which is likely the cause of the racism that many First Australians experience.

"It is the first data of its kind for Australia and this evidence shows implicit or [unconscious bias](#) toward our first Australians is not imagined.

"This study presents stark evidence of the solid invisible barrier that Indigenous people face in society.

"But the data is actually not about Indigenous Australians, it's about the

rest of us."

The results show it is likely that many people who hold these views have no awareness of their prejudice.

"As it is often unconscious, implicit bias can seep seamlessly into the everyday decisions at all levels of society," said Mr Shirodkar.

"If you implicitly see Indigenous people in a negative light then that is going to affect all of your interactions and dealings with Indigenous people. We can only imagine the impact of that collective negativity on outcomes for Indigenous Australians."

The test measured how quickly participants paired positive and negative words with historical images of Indigenous and Caucasian Australians.

Regardless of their occupations or levels of education, on average people displayed a negative bias against Indigenous faces. The same was found for people from all religions, as well as people who do not identify as being part of any religion.

Almost all ethnicities on average displayed bias against Indigenous Australians but people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were statistically unbiased toward either group.

"It suggests Indigenous Australians are likely to be in the best position to make unbiased decisions about other Indigenous people," said Mr Shirodkar.

Australian male participants showed a higher negative bias than females and people with all levels of education were guilty of bias.

Western Australian and Queensland participants recorded the highest

average scores for bias. Participants from the Northern Territory and the ACT recorded the lowest average levels of bias in the country.

As the test is online and free for anyone to undertake, researchers say it is more likely to draw in people who want to prove their lack of bias.

"The results may therefore under-report the extent of implicit [bias](#) in Australia," Mr Shirodkar said.

More information: The Australian Implicit Association test: [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/ ... ralia/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/...ralia/takeatest.html)

Bias against Indigenous Australians: Implicit association test results for Australia: [search.informit.com.au/document ... 703197478;res=IELIND](https://search.informit.com.au/document.aspx?d=703197478;res=IELIND)

Provided by Australian National University

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