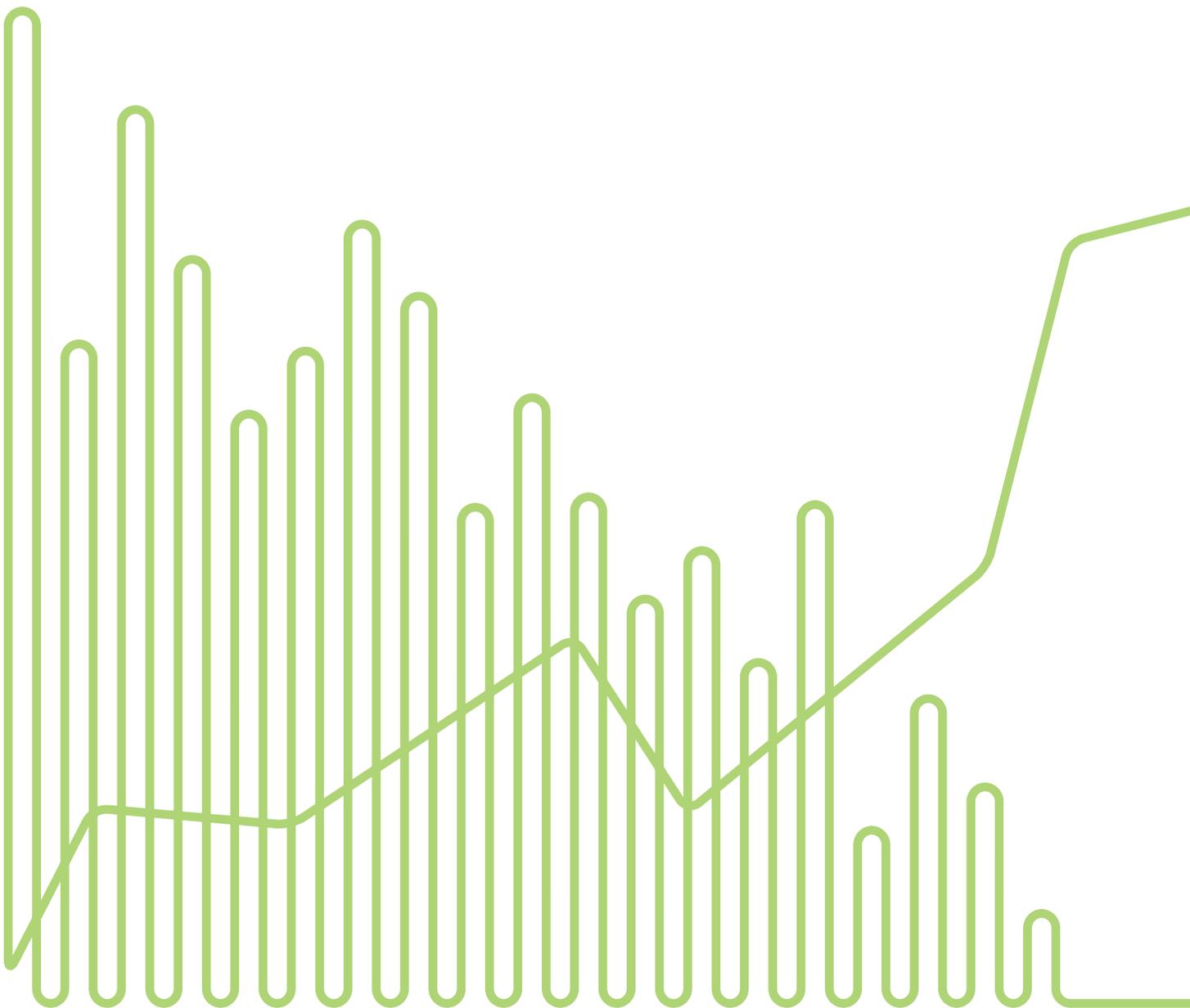


Findings from the 2013 survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity



Foreword



I am proud to present this summary report of the *2013 survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity*, the second led by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). The survey was developed in partnership with The University of Melbourne, the Social Research Centre and experts across Australia.

Discrimination based on a person's ethnicity, race, culture or religion imposes an enormous cost on the individual and has devastating effects on families and communities. It has the potential to harm us all by undermining community relations and social cohesion, stifling productivity and placing an unnecessary burden on our health and welfare.

Over the past 10 years VicHealth has identified discrimination and its resulting disadvantages as one of the important drivers of mental ill health. Mental illness is among the top three causes of burden of disease and injury in Australia. That's why VicHealth has adopted improving mental wellbeing as a strategic focus in our Action Agenda for Health Promotion. For a decade we have supported activity that builds the evidence of the link between race-based discrimination and health, as well as promoting cultural diversity.

Past VicHealth research has found that that 97% of Victorian Aboriginal respondents and nearly two-thirds of those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds had been the target of racism in the past 12 months. This research also found that the more racist incidents someone experiences, the more likely they are to suffer from severe psychological distress. But we have also found very heartening facts—the overwhelming majority of Victorians are against racism. They are ready to step up and make racism a thing of the past.

This work has not been possible without the diverse and valuable partnerships we have forged with Victorian workplaces, local governments, communities, sports clubs, schools, the arts sector and universities to build communities where social cohesion and cultural diversity are promoted.

The *2013 survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity* demonstrates that race-based discrimination must stop—and, as this research clearly shows, the time for change has arrived. This is also demonstrated by the recent release of the Scanlon Foundation's 2014 *Mapping Social Cohesion* report which shows that whilst 85% of the people surveyed agreed that multiculturalism is good for Australia, experiences of racism remain close to the highest levels recorded since the surveys began in 2007. These findings are concerning but unfortunately not surprising.

All over Victoria, and indeed Australia, great work is happening to reduce racism. *beyondblue's* recent *Stop. Think. Respect.* campaign has been incredibly successful. The Australian Human Rights Commission's *National Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015* is a fantastic vehicle for ensuring that the work continues to be supported. I thank all those involved and trust that this report will be of immense value to every person who is working to eradicate racism. I hope this work will not only raise awareness of the problem of discrimination and its associated health, social and economic costs, but will also contribute to momentum in reducing it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerril Rechter'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jerril Rechter
VicHealth CEO

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- City of Darebin
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Foundation House
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- Australian Human Rights Commission

The following experts contributed to the review of the questionnaire and draft report:

- Professor Andrew Markus, Monash University
- Associate Professor Anne Pederson, Murdoch University
- Associate Professor Chris Sibley, The University of Auckland
- Dr Justine Dandy, Edith Cowan University
- Professor Kevin Dunn, University of Western Sydney
- Professor Michelle Grossman, Victoria University
- Con Pagonis, Municipal Association of Victoria

This report was written and edited by Ms Kim Webster, Freelance Researcher in consultation with staff at VicHealth who contributed to this project.

Terms used in this report

Aboriginal – the term used in this report when referring to Victoria’s original inhabitants and custodians. Elsewhere, the terms ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ may be used to describe Australia’s first peoples.

Acculturation – a process of adjustment that occurs when one culture comes into contact with another (Berry 1997; Graves 1967; Redfield, Linton & Herskovits 1936).

Assimilation – in this report, an approach to acculturation in which minority groups are expected to give up their distinctive linguistic, cultural and social characteristics and become indistinguishable from the majority of the population. It is contrasted with *multiculturalism* (see below).

Attitude – an evaluative judgement (positive or negative) of an object, a person or a social group (Crano & Prislin 2008).

Culture – distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and ways of life of a group of people that may share ethnicity, race, gender or other characteristics. It is a dynamic concept that is influenced by environmental, historical, political, geographical, linguistic, spiritual and social factors (Paradies et al. 2009).

Ethnic identity – an individual’s sense of self in relation to their affiliation to their ethnic group; that is, the extent to which an individual self identifies, commits, experiences feelings of belonging and maintains shared values and attitudes towards their cultural group of origin (Liebkind 2006; Phinney 1996). Ethnic identity is not fixed but rather changes in response to changing environmental circumstances.

Ethnicity – describing a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more dimensions of collective individuality and feel a sense of unique collective individuality (Paradies et al. 2009).

Explicit prejudice – prejudice that is consciously held and usually deliberately thought about. It is typically openly reported by the person holding it and is within their control (Plous 2003). See also *implicit prejudice*.

Health/mental health – a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO 1948). Mental health is the embodiment of social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It provides individuals with the vitality necessary for active living, to achieve goals, and to interact with one another in ways that are respectful and just (VicHealth 2005).

Implicit prejudice – prejudice that is typically unconsciously held; that is, the person holding such prejudice is not usually aware that they do so. Implicit prejudices are not usually within the control of the person holding them (Plous 2003). See also *explicit prejudice*.

Multiculturalism – used in this report to mean a public policy approach that respects and values the diversity of ethnicities, cultures and faiths within a society and encourages and enables their ongoing contribution within an inclusive context that empowers all members of the society. It involves policies and practices that seek to recognise, manage and maximise the benefits of diversity with the intent of developing a culturally diverse society that is harmonious (Rosado 1997 cited in Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) 2009; Vasta 2007). As an approach to *acculturation* it is contrasted with *assimilation* (see above). A feature of Australian multiculturalism is that the right to express one’s culture and beliefs sits within an overriding commitment to Australia and its institutions including parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, equality of the sexes and freedom of speech and religion (Soutphommasane 2014).

Overt prejudice – obvious negative evaluations of particular groups (in this report ethnic and racial groups). Overt prejudice is usually consciously held (Plous 2003). See also *explicit prejudice*.

Prejudice – an unfair negative attitude toward a social group or a member of that group (Dovidio & Gaertner 1999). Prejudice can be *overt or subtle and implicit or explicit*.

Race – a basis for categorising different groups within a society according to a set of characteristics that are socially significant (e.g. religion, dress, accent).

Race-based discrimination – racist behaviours and practices resulting in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society (Paradies et al. 2009). This definition encompasses overt forms of racism such as racial violence, open threats or rejection as well as subtle forms such as race-based bias, exclusion and using racial stereotypes. Race-based discrimination can occur at individual, interpersonal, organisational, community and societal levels (see *racism*).

Racism – behaviours, practices, beliefs and prejudices that underlie avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion (Paradies et al. 2009). Racism can be:

- internalised – when a person incorporates racist attitudes, beliefs or ideologies into their worldview (e.g. an Indigenous person believing that Indigenous people are naturally less intelligent than non-Indigenous people) (Paradies, Harris & Anderson 2008).
- interpersonal – during interactions between individuals e.g. bullying, harassment, rudeness, being ignored or excluded.
- systemic – when systems, institutions and cultures operate to produce inequalities in the control of, and access to, resources in a society e.g. a school requires all students wanting to play in its basketball team to wear a uniform of shorts and a sleeveless vest. This means that young women from ethnic backgrounds with dress codes requiring them to cover their arms and legs are excluded from the team (Paradies et al. 2009).

Social norms – the rules of conduct and models of behaviour expected by a group (VicHealth et al. 2009).

Stereotype – the association of a person or a social group with a particular set of positive or negative characteristics. Stereotyping is understood to provide the cognitive basis for prejudice and discrimination (Devine 1989). As is the case with prejudice, people can hold both *implicit* and *explicit* prejudices (Plous 2003).

Subtle prejudice – views that do not appear prejudiced but nevertheless represent negative evaluations and may be harmful if they manifest in behaviours (Pettigrew & Meertens 1995; Plous 2003). Subtle prejudices are often unconsciously held. See also *implicit prejudice*.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: ‘CULTURE’, ‘ETHNICITY’ AND ‘RACE’

As indicated above, distinctions can be made between groups on the basis of culture, ethnicity or race, each of these describing different but related concepts. The term ‘cultural diversity’ is commonly used in Australia to refer to racial and ethnic diversity despite culture having a much wider meaning beyond race or ethnicity. Unless otherwise stated, when the term ‘cultural diversity’ is used in this publication, it should be taken to mean diversity on the grounds of race and ethnicity as defined above. Moreover, at law, religion is commonly considered a concept distinct from race, ethnicity and culture. For the purposes of this report it is considered as a social category.

Executive summary

Victoria has a strong track record of nurturing cultural diversity and working towards equality for all. However, prejudice, race-based discrimination and intolerance remain common, resulting in negative health, social and economic consequences for affected individuals and groups and for the wider community. In particular there is a link between exposure to self-reported discrimination and poor mental health. Race-based discrimination is also among the barriers to closing the gap in health, social and economic status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Responses to racial, ethnic and cultural diversity are shaped by influences in our social context, such as the beliefs of significant others, the messages we read or hear in the media, what we are taught in school and the values and skills we acquire in our families and communities (Paradies et al. 2009). This context can be changed and strengthened, so there is great potential to work together to reduce racism and promote acceptance of diversity. Such efforts are ongoing within the community.

Understanding community attitudes is an important component of these efforts because attitudes influence social norms, which in turn influence behaviour. Community attitudes towards racism, race, ethnicity and culture can therefore be seen as a barometer of our progress in creating environments that are inclusive and welcoming of racial and ethnic diversity.

In July 2013 the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and its partners undertook a telephone survey of a cross-section of 1250 Victorians over the age of 18 years. Participants were asked a series of questions during a 10-minute telephone interview regarding their attitudes toward various aspects of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

This is the second such survey, the first being conducted in 2006 using a similar methodology and survey instrument.

The aims of the 2013 survey were to:

- benchmark attitudes toward racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in Victoria
- monitor changes in these attitudes between 2006 and 2013
- strengthen understanding of the factors shaping attitudes.

Key findings

Overt prejudice

- Just over half of all respondents do not believe that there are groups that do not 'fit in' (54%) or identify any groups toward whom they feel 'cold' (59%). However, 40% can identify at least one group they believe does not 'fit in' and 41% identifies a group toward whom they feel cold.
- Respondents who express prejudiced attitudes about certain groups are more likely to feel negative towards people from Muslim, Middle Eastern, African and refugee backgrounds, than people from other backgrounds.

Subtle prejudice

- Most respondents favour cultural diversity (78%). However, they are less inclined to appreciate the importance of supporting and nurturing this diversity, with 52% agreeing that minority groups should 'behave more like mainstream Australians'.
- A third of respondents perceive certain minority ethnic groups as posing a risk to their way of life and one in five believe certain groups present a threat to the economic security of 'other Australians', by taking jobs away.
- Aboriginal Australians are valued by most respondents as 'holding a special place as the first Australians' (83%). However 3 in 10 respondents do not appreciate the barriers to success that Aboriginal people face (28%), while more than 4 in 10 believe that current levels of government support for Aboriginal people are too high (43%).
- Most respondents agree that it is acceptable to acknowledge race and ethnic difference (66%) and are aware of race-based discrimination (78%) and the need to take action to combat it (79%).
- In contrast to the high level of recognition of discrimination, fewer recognise the privileges associated with being part of the majority group in Australia (49%).

Factors associated with prejudice

- Most respondents reported they have frequent, positive contact with members of other groups (70%).
- The overwhelming majority of respondents believe that it is important to treat people from racial and ethnic backgrounds fairly (95%) and that the community has an expectation that people will do so (84%).
- Very few respondents (9%) reported feeling uncomfortable around people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Factors influencing whether people hold overt prejudice

The key factors influencing whether respondents reported positive feelings toward minority ethnic groups are:

- having frequent, positive intercultural contact
- believing that more needs to be done to address race-based discrimination
- agreeing that there are benefits in racial and ethnic diversity. This is a key tenet of multiculturalism, an approach based on valuing diversity and enabling people to practice their culture free of discrimination.

Respondents reporting negative feelings are more likely to agree that minority ethnic group members should behave more like other Australians. This is a key tenet of assimilation, an approach based on the belief that minority ethnic groups should 'blend in' with the majority group.

Changes in attitudes between 2006 and 2013

- There was a 17% increase between 2006 and 2013 in the proportion of people agreeing that there are ethnic and racial groups that do not 'fit in'.
- There were improvements on some measures of subtle prejudice and a worsening trend on others.

Findings at a glance

Victoria's diversity strengths	The challenges ahead
Overt prejudice	
<p>A small majority of respondents (54%) disagree that there are racial, ethnic or cultural groups that do not 'fit in'.</p>	<p>2 in 5 believe there are groups that do not 'fit in' and the proportion doing so increased by 17% between 2006 and 2013.</p>
<p>A majority of respondents do not identify any group toward which they feel 'cold' (59%).</p>	<p>A sizeable minority feel 'cold' toward Australians from African (11%), Muslim (22%), Middle Eastern (14%) and refugee (11%) backgrounds.</p>
Subtle prejudice	
<p>8 in 10 respondents agree that people from minority ethnic groups benefit Australia.</p>	<p>The proportion doing so decreased by 9% between 2006 and 2013.</p> <p>A majority of respondents (52%) agree that minority ethnic groups should behave more like 'mainstream Australians'.</p>
<p>8 in 10 respondents agree that Aboriginal people hold a special place as the first Australians.</p>	<p>Around 3 in 10 disagree that 'being Aboriginal makes it harder to succeed' while 2 in 5 believe that 'Aboriginal people get more government money than they should'.</p>
<p>A majority of respondents (6 in 10) disagree that ethnic minority groups take jobs from other Australians. More than a half (53%) reject the claim that these groups threaten the Australian way of life and the percentage rejecting the claim increased by 7% between 2006 and 2013.</p>	<p>1 in 5 respondents agree that ethnic minority groups threaten the jobs of other Australians and 1 in 3 believe that they threaten the Australian way of life.</p>
<p>More than 6 in 10 respondents agree that it is OK to talk about racial and ethnic differences and 8 in 10 believe that race-based discrimination is a problem that should be addressed. There was a 6% increase in recognition of the privileges associated with being part of the majority ethnic group between 2006 and 2013.</p>	<p>There was a 5% decline in people recognising race-based discrimination as a problem and barely half (49%) recognise that there are privileges associated with being part of the majority ethnic group.</p>
Factors influencing prejudice	
<p>A large majority of respondents have frequent and positive contact with people from other cultures and report feeling comfortable around them.</p>	
<p>9 in 10 respondents believe it is personally important to them to treat people from racial and ethnic minorities fairly and more than 8 in 10 believe that others expect them to do so.</p>	

Implications of the findings

While most respondents hold favourable attitudes, continued effort is needed to promote greater acceptance of cultural diversity and to reduce race-based prejudice in Victoria. This is similar to findings from the national 2014 *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey. The results of this survey suggest that there is a specific need to better understand and address the negative attitudes held by some people towards people from refugee, Middle Eastern and African backgrounds and those of the Islamic faith.

The survey also shows that some respondents hold ambivalent views about Aboriginal Victorians; most recognise their symbolic importance as the 'first Australians', but about a third do not acknowledge the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal Victorians, while 2 in 5 do not support current levels of government expenditure to address the problem. These findings suggest the importance of a continuing emphasis on addressing prejudice and discrimination affecting Aboriginal Victorians.

The majority of respondents have a high level of motivation to treat people from different backgrounds fairly. However, activating this motivation is at least partly dependent upon people recognising and understanding subtle forms of prejudice as well as overt prejudice. The survey included a number of statements measuring subtle forms of race-based prejudice, some of which attracted relatively high levels of endorsement. There would therefore appear to be a need to increase literacy and understanding about racism in the community so as to raise awareness about these forms of prejudice and the significant harms associated with them (Priest 2014).

Ultimately, cultural diversity is a fact of life in Victoria and most respondents in the survey report that they have frequent and positive contact with people from other backgrounds. There is evidence from other research that this contact, if taking place under certain conditions, can help to reduce prejudice (e.g. when people are brought together on equal terms and when there are opportunities for them to cooperate and form meaningful friendships) (Paradies et al. 2009). Work to foster such conditions already takes place across a range of settings in Victoria such as schools, recreation facilities and workplaces. The findings of this research that most respondents have frequent and positive contact with people from different cultures suggest that there is likely to be a strong foundation for strengthening these conditions.

The finding of the survey that there is a strong social norm against race-based discrimination in Victoria is promising. Continued action is clearly required to maintain and extend the factors known to support this social norm, including robust legislative protections, social marketing initiatives and leadership that takes a strong stand against racism and intolerance (Paradies et al. 2009). There is widespread support for action in the Victorian community with the overwhelming majority recognising that race and ethnic discrimination is a problem about which more ought to be done.

There is no single organisation or individual who can bring about the change required to eliminate race-based discrimination. It is a complex issue requiring a comprehensive response. Collectively key influences such as schools, sporting organisations and clubs, local governments, workplaces and the arts sector can all make a difference through implementing a range of practical approaches such as bystander projects. VicHealth has gathered evidence and implemented projects in all of these settings over the past 10 years; the findings and resources resulting can guide thinking and future action to reduce race-based discrimination and promote acceptance of cultural diversity.

About this report

Background

Victoria is home to a proud Aboriginal community laying claim to one of the world's oldest living cultures (Australian Geographic 2011). It has a long history of migration, with Victorians currently originating from more than 200 countries and between them speaking more than 260 languages and following more than 130 faiths (Victorian Government 2013a). There has been a longstanding commitment to nurturing the rich cultural diversity this heritage brings. Although policies and programs to support this commitment have fluctuated, it has nevertheless endured across successive Victorian and Australian governments since the 1970s (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013). Such support recognises that nurturing diversity has advantages not only for Aboriginal Victorians and for newcomers, but that it has benefits for all in the forms of a vibrant cultural, intellectual and artistic life, a cohesive community and a strong and productive economy (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013; Victorian Government 2013a).

Successive Victorian and Australian governments have also recognised that sustaining a culturally diverse community involves creating an environment in which people from all cultural backgrounds feel included and in which they can practise their cultures free from discrimination (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013). Such a commitment is reflected in a robust legislative framework and in Australia's endorsement of key human rights instruments designed to protect against discrimination and promote acceptance of diversity (see box).

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR REDUCING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY – KEY INSTRUMENTS

International

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007

Australia is also party to instruments targeted to other specific populations (e.g. children) or settings (e.g. education) that seek to protect against discrimination and promote acceptance of diversity.

Australian Government

The people of Australia – Australia's multicultural policy

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

National Anti-Racism Strategy

Victorian Government

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

Multicultural Victoria Act 2011

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013–2018

Victoria's Advantage – unity, diversity, opportunity. Victoria's Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship policy

Local government

Municipal Association of Victoria
Statement of Commitment to Cultural Diversity

As a result of these sustained efforts, Australia is regarded as among one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world (Markus 2013). Compared with other countries it has relatively low levels of prejudice on the grounds of race, culture and faith (Markus 2014), and can claim wide community support for cultural diversity (Dunn et al. 2004; Dunn et al. 2005; Forrest & Dunn 2010; Markus 2014; VicHealth 2007).

Despite this, there is evidence that a sizeable proportion of individuals continue to hold attitudes that are intolerant of diversity (Forrest & Dunn 2010; Markus 2014). Furthermore, various surveys suggest that self-reported discrimination remains a problem in Australia (Dunn 2014; Markus 2014; VicHealth 2007), and that it may be increasing (Markus 2014)¹. In addition, people from some minority ethnic groups continue to experience disadvantage (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012a).

Monitoring prevailing attitudes to race and cultural diversity is an important way of determining whether existing pro-diversity and anti-discriminatory practices and policies are having the intended impact.

In 2007 VicHealth released its report *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health*. This report documented the evidence on the linkages between racism and intolerance and poor health and reported on a community survey that was undertaken to provide a benchmark of the prevalence of discrimination and community attitudes toward race and diversity (VicHealth 2007).

Following the release of this report, VicHealth partnered with a wide range of organisations to introduce a number of initiatives designed to promote cultural diversity and reduce race-based discrimination (see box overleaf on page 15).

In 2013 VicHealth collaborated with The University of Melbourne to repeat the community attitudes survey to monitor the progress towards achieving these goals. This second VicHealth survey builds on both the 2006 survey and lessons from its partnership work. The 2013 survey has a focus on attitudes toward race and diversity and their correlates rather than experiences of discrimination. In contrast to the 2006 survey it incorporates a specific focus on attitudes toward Aboriginal Victorians. The survey therefore complements the national, annual *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey which collects information on experiences of discrimination in the context of a broader survey on migration and social cohesion (Markus 2014).

The aims of this survey are to:

- benchmark attitudes towards racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in Victoria
- monitor changes in these attitudes between 2006 and 2013
- strengthen understanding of the factors shaping attitudes.

¹ See p36 for further discussion on the strengths and limitations of longitudinal data on experiences of race-based discrimination.

VICHEALTH'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS TO REDUCE RACE-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND SUPPORT ACCEPTANCE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Researching the issue and building the evidence

The *Building on our strengths* framework was developed to guide action to reduce discrimination.

Research projects were undertaken to explore the impacts of race-based discrimination on the health of Victorian Aboriginal communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and children and young people, as well as to strengthen pro-social bystander action to prevent discrimination and identify means of reducing race-based discrimination through the workplace.

VicHealth has also supported research led by others to document the economic costs of race-based discrimination and the emerging problem of cyber-racism.

Trialling and evaluating new approaches

New and innovative approaches to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity have been trialled through:

- the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) program, a multi-faceted approach to working with local communities and community organisations to reduce race-based discrimination, conducted in partnership with Victorian local governments
- the *See Beyond Race* campaign – implemented as part of the LEAD program, the campaign used a range of media to challenge racial stereotypes and encourage awareness of our common humanity. The stories of people in the campaign were also featured in local newspapers, via a partnership with local media
- The Arts About Us program – developed in partnership with arts organisations across Victoria to develop arts activities that give voice to those who have experienced discrimination, raise awareness of the problem and engage the wider community in a discussion about cultural diversity and the harms of race-based discrimination
- the Building Bridges program – developed in partnership with schools and community organisations across Victoria to explore ways in which intercultural contact could be strengthened to reduce race-based discrimination.
- a pilot in a large aged care organisation in Victoria designed to explore ways of reducing race-based discrimination through the workplace.

Sharing the learning with others

Learning is being shared through:

- a partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria to enable lessons from the LEAD program to be shared with other Victorian councils
- professional development and resources for organisations participating in VicHealth's programs to increase participation in active recreation and organised sport.
- publications and resources based on research and practice experience.

Key partners

While this work has engaged many hundreds of organisations across Victoria, key partners include:

- City of Whittlesea
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Lowitja Institute, Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research
- The McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing, The University of Melbourne
- *beyondblue*
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Onemda, VicHealth Koori Health Unit, The University of Melbourne
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

Why study attitudes toward race and diversity?

Although attitudes may influence behaviour directly, their main impact is through their influence on broader social norms and cultures (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005). Among the strongest influences on how people actually behave in a given situation are:

- what they believe other people, especially influential individuals, believe or expect of them. These are often referred to as informal social sanctions
- expectations communicated through other formal social controls such as the rules of an organisation or laws (Paradies et al. 2009; Pedersen, Walker & Wise 2005).

At the same time, collectively, attitudes influence the ways in which communities, organisations and institutions respond to particular issues, both informally (e.g. via organisational cultures) or formally (e.g. via rules) (Cialdini & Trost 1998; Newby-Clark et al. 2002).

It is also important to note that attitudes are neither innate nor fixed. Rather, they are formed, shaped and can be changed by influences in the family, community and organisations and broader institutions such as the media and the legislature (Paradies et al. 2009).

If manifested in social norms and behaviours, attitudes may result in discrimination toward people from minority ethnic backgrounds in interpersonal interactions as well as during contact with organisational and community cultures, systems and policies. They may also influence:

- the responses of bystanders, such as work colleagues and people in informal social settings, to racism they witness (Russell et al. 2013)
- how professionals in the legal and social service systems respond to discrimination reported to them (Nazione & Silk 2011).
- the actions of policy-makers and civic society. This may in turn have implications for the development of policies and programs to respond to the problem
- how people subject to discrimination themselves respond (Brondolo et al. 2003; Caldwell et al. 2004; Noh & Kaspar 2003; O'Brien Caughey, O'Campo & Muntaner 2004).

Because attitudes are a reflection of social norms, they are also a good barometer of how we are faring in building a society that is free of discrimination and embraces cultural diversity.

Past research has shown that a relatively small proportion of Australians hold attitudes that are prejudiced based on notions of racial inferiority or racial separatism (i.e. the notion that people from different races should not marry one another) (VicHealth 2007; Dunn et al. 2004). However, many experts have argued that these forms of racism, based on perceived biological or natural inferiority, have been replaced by different forms (Plous 2003). These newer forms of racism are often expressed in terms of incompatibility between the cultures of certain groups and the national identity (or what it means to be Australian), and beliefs about which groups 'belong' in a community or country. They are justified by beliefs that differences between cultures cannot be resolved (Markus 2001; Sniderman et al. 1991).

These beliefs may be underpinned by other beliefs that, if manifest in behaviours, may have harmful impacts (Noh, Kaspar & Wickrama 2007), and that many experts believe are subtle forms of prejudice in themselves (Plous 2003). Discussed in greater detail further in this report, these include attitudes in relation to:

- how acculturation (see the glossary of terms on page 7 for a definition of this term) of minority ethnic groups should be supported
- whether minority ethnic groups represent a threat to the material wellbeing or 'way of life' of the majority group
- the acknowledgement of ethnic and racial difference
- whether discrimination is a problem warranting attention
- whether there are benefits in being part of the majority ethnic group that are generally not available to minority ethnic groups.

Many of these subtle forms of prejudice may be held unconsciously. People may not be aware that they hold them (Plous 2003), or prejudices may be held without people intending to or realising that they will have adverse effects on the groups concerned (Staats 2013).

Prejudice and race-based discrimination

Prejudice and a lack of acceptance of cultural diversity contribute to race-based discrimination and its negative consequences. Research indicates that race-based discrimination remains common in Australia.

- In 2014 nearly 1 in 5 Australians reported experiencing discrimination because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion (Markus 2014).
- More than 1 in 20 Australians report having experienced a physical attack because of their race (Dunn cited in Australian Human Rights Commission 2012b).
- The 2013 *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey noted a seven percentage point increase in the rate of self-reported discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion between 2012 and 2013, the largest proportion since the survey commenced (Markus 2013)². This level was almost matched in the 2014 survey, which recorded 18% (Markus 2014).

Self-reported racial discrimination is also common among Australian children and young people:

- A national school-based study found that 70% of secondary school students from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds had experienced racism (Mansouri & Jenkins 2010).
- In a study of Victorian primary and secondary students, over a third had experienced racism and more than 1 in 5 reported that they had done so on a daily basis (Priest et al. 2014).

The extent of the problem is also apparent in the proportion of people who have witnessed racism or say that they would perpetrate it:

- In a recent survey commissioned by *beyondblue* nearly 1 in 10 respondents reported that they would engage in discriminatory behaviour against Aboriginal Australians in certain circumstances, and 3 in 10 said they had witnessed such behaviour (*beyondblue* & TNS Social Research 2014).
- In a 2011 study of racism in workplace, sports and social settings, 34% of respondents reported that they had witnessed race-based discrimination in the past 12 months in at least one of the three study settings (Russell et al. 2013).
- In a study of Victorian school children, 66% reported having witnessed other students being called names because of their cultural group (Priest et al. 2014).

Discrimination harms health, especially the health of children and young people

There is a link between exposure to self-reported discrimination and poor health, in particular poor mental health (Table 1 on page 18). This is because (Paradies et al. 2009):

- discrimination can produce stress, fear and other negative emotions which can have negative psychological and physiological consequences
- affected individuals may internalise negative evaluations and stereotypes and this can lead to poor psychological wellbeing
- people may disengage from appropriate self-care, such as having adequate sleep or exercise
- it may increase the likelihood of engaging in behaviours that are risky to health such as smoking or alcohol misuse, in an attempt to manage associated stress
- it disrupts access to social and economic resources such as education, health care, jobs, housing and social connections. People who have poor access to these resources generally have poorer health
- discrimination may involve violence, injury and associated morbidity.

Children of parents who are exposed to discrimination are at higher risk of developmental and mental health problems than other children (Priest et al. 2013). Children and young people may also suffer the health impacts of direct exposure to discrimination (Priest et al. 2013). Adverse experiences in childhood and adolescence can have a negative impact on mental health and life chances throughout the life course (Moore 2006).

Discrimination affecting one generation can also compromise the social and economic prospects of future generations, contributing to intergenerational cycles of poverty, disadvantage and poor health (Mays, Cochran & Barnes 2007).

² See p36 for further discussion on the strengths and limitations of longitudinal survey data.

Table 1: Association between self-reported race-based discrimination and poor health outcomes

	Well established ¹	Established in some studies ²	Emerging ³
Negative outcomes for mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological, psychiatric, emotional distress Depressive symptoms Anxiety Stress 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychiatric disorders (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder) Suicide risk Sleep disturbance Chronic fatigue
Negative outcomes for mental wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of life Work and personal satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-esteem General mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological wellbeing
Negative outcomes for physical health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heart disease Infant low birth weight/ decreased gestational age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported pain Breast cancer Workplace injury, illness and assault
Development of health risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overweight and obesity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High blood pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other risk factors for heart disease and stroke (e.g. increased heart rate, early coronary artery calcification) Abnormal/higher fasting glucose (diabetes risk factor) Damage to red blood cells (risk factor for a range of health problems)
Behaviours increasing the risk of poor health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoking Substance misuse Alcohol misuse 		
Impacts on health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of screening tests Access to healthcare services and treatment Adherence to treatment 	

¹ More than 60% of studies show an association.

² Less than 60% of studies show an association.

³ Association explored in less than five studies.

Only statistically significant associations are reported.

Source: Reproduced from VicHealth 2012, summarised from Trener, Franklin & Paradies, 2012.

Discrimination has social costs

Discrimination and intolerance threaten intergroup relations, social cohesion and community safety by:

- disrupting social ties between groups and causing conflicts between them (Pe-Pua & Dandy 2013). At its worst it may result in larger-scale conflicts such as the riots in the Sydney suburb of Cronulla in 2005.
- causing minority ethnic communities to turn more exclusively inwards for their identity and support, carrying the risk of these communities becoming increasingly distant from the majority culture (Dandy & Pe-Pua 2013).
- creating a climate of fear that may extend beyond those directly subject to discrimination to other members of affected groups. This can in turn curtail their activities and aspirations (Harrell 2000; Poynting & Noble 2004; Szalacha et al. 2003).
- increasing the risk of those subject to discrimination becoming engaged in interpersonal violence (Caldwell et al. 2004).

All forms of terrorism are extremely rare in Australia (Institute for Economics & Peace 2012). However, terrorism is a problem that threatens perceptions of community safety. When the threat is perceived to be associated with a particular faith or culture, this can have flow-on impacts for intercultural relations (Soutphommasane 2014). At the same time, maintaining sound intercultural relations is important to reduce the risk of terrorism. Nations with high levels of intergroup cooperation and respect experience lower levels of terrorism, while those in which social cohesion is poor tend to have higher levels of the problem (Institute for Economics & Peace 2012).

Discrimination costs individuals, businesses and the economy

Discrimination is costly to businesses and the economy because it may (Trennery, Franklin & Paradies 2012):

- contribute to the under-utilisation of skills
- stifle creativity
- result in low levels of staff commitment, trust and satisfaction, and negatively affect staff morale
- result in lower productivity and higher absenteeism
- result in higher staff turnover and associated costs
- contribute to health and social services costs (e.g. for treatment of health problems, income support payments).

There are health, social and economic benefits in promoting acceptance of diversity, while ensuring freedom from discrimination

Achieving optimal health outcomes for minority ethnic groups requires conditions that are not only free from discrimination but also in which cultural diversity is positively valued and nurtured. This is because in such conditions:

- people can more readily identify with both their culture of origin and the majority culture (Phinney, Jacoby & Silva 2007). This is better for mental health than when people identify exclusively with their culture of origin, or when they try to 'blend in' by identifying exclusively with the majority culture (Berry 1997; 2006; 2010).
- people from minority ethnic communities are able to interact with the majority culture without their cultural differences becoming a barrier to success.
- ethnic groups, services and organisations are able to develop (Bloemraad 2005) and people can more readily form supportive links with their like-ethnic communities. These links are important for supporting ethnic identity (see p24) and for social support (Mirales-Lombardo, Mirales & Golding 2008; Predelli 2008; Schrover & Vermeulen 2005). They can serve as a 'buffer' against the stresses of exposure to racism (Finch & Vega 2003; Gee et al. 2006; Han et al. 2007).

We all benefit from ethnic and racial diversity in the form of exposure to new and different ideas, artistic, cultural and culinary traditions and ways of organising civic and family life. However, these benefits depend on people maintaining and sharing what makes them culturally distinctive.

Reducing race-based discrimination and promoting acceptance of diversity is also important for Victoria's economic wellbeing, ensuring that Victoria:

- remains an attractive destination for business and other skilled migrants and international students, from whom the economy benefits (Joint Committee on Migration 2013)
- reaps the productivity, creativity and economic benefits associated with cultural diversity (Herring 2009; Joint Committee on Migration 2009).

Australia should comply with national and international human rights obligations

Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or culture is a breach of human rights in itself and because it compromises the realisation of other human rights (WHO 2001). As a signatory to a number of international human rights instruments (see p13), Australia has a commitment to reduce discrimination and promote acceptance of diversity. This extends particularly to Aboriginal people. We also have a special obligation to ensure safe, inclusive and welcoming environments to people from refugee backgrounds, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of discrimination, having experienced marginalisation and trauma prior to arrival (Porter & Haslam 2005).

The survey method

The survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity was undertaken in July 2013. A 10-minute telephone survey was administered to 1250 randomly selected Victorians aged 18 years and over. The 2006 survey used a similar methodology and involved a survey of 4016 Victorians.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on an instrument used in the survey conducted in 2006. Respondents were asked a series of questions that are considered to reflect attitudes towards cultural diversity in general and, specifically, in relation to a selective set of backgrounds. The categories created for the survey were labelled as Asian, Aboriginal Australian, African, Anglo-Australian, Mediterranean European, Middle Eastern, refugee, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds. These categories were formed on the basis that they reflect ways in which people from particular backgrounds are commonly characterised in the community.

The questionnaire was reviewed with the assistance of an advisory group comprising national experts in research and practice in reducing racism and promoting acceptance of diversity (see p6). It included a series of questions designed to gauge:

- overt prejudice toward people from different cultural backgrounds
- attitudes identified in other research as being associated with negative evaluations of minority ethnic groups, sometimes referred to as 'subtle' prejudice
- other factors that may influence responses to minority ethnic groups.

Responses were sought on a five-point scale (referred to as a Likert scale), typically including 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Demographic data was also collected to enable the relationship between attitudes and factors such as gender and age to be explored.

To the extent possible, questions and question wording from the 2006 survey were retained in 2013. However, some adjustments were made to reflect emerging issues, and changing language and theoretical understandings. This involved adding some new questions from existing survey instruments, as well as some new questions devised for the purposes of the survey (see Appendix 1 for wording differences).

The survey was pilot tested prior to being administered. Ethics approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Anglicare Victoria.

The sample

In 2013, 875 interviews were conducted with respondents who were contacted via landline and 375 were with respondents who were contacted via their mobile phones. In 2006 all interviews were conducted via landline. In both surveys, the phone number samples were supplied by a commercial sample vendor.

In 2013, response rates were 27% for those contacted on a landline and 19% for those contacted on a mobile phone. The response rate in 2006 was 54%. While the 2013 rates are not high, they are comparable with other similar telephone surveys (Kohut et al. 2012; see also VicHealth 2014).

In both surveys non-English language interviewing was available in the most commonly spoken languages in Victoria other than English. In 2006 they were Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian and Greek. In 2013 a sixth language, Arabic, was included. A total of 119 individuals were unable to participate due to language problems.

Sample weighting

It is usual to adjust the data collected by sample surveys to take account of unequal chances of selection and the effects of non-coverage and non-response. This is commonly referred to as 'weighting' the data. Part of the weighting process involves aligning the sample to external population benchmarks so that it mirrors the population as a whole as closely as possible. In this case the data was weighted to benchmarks from the 2011 Australian Census at the time the surveys were undertaken. This strengthens our ability to say that the results from the survey have a high likelihood of representing those of the total population.

Tests of statistical significance

When a sample has been randomly selected, some differences found can be due to chance, rather than being an actual difference. To help decide whether a difference is likely to represent a real change, rather than just being a random variation, tests of statistical significance were carried out. Unless otherwise stated, only results found to be statistically significant with 95% confidence ($p \leq 0.05$) are reported.

Key findings: Overt prejudice

What was asked?

- Do you believe that there any racial or ethnic groups that do not fit in Australian society?
- Which racial or ethnic groups do you believe do not fit in Australian society?
- On a scale from very cold to very warm, how do you feel about particular groups represented in the Victorian population? (see Table 2 on p22 for groups)

Why were these questions asked?

Race-based prejudice has been measured in a range of ways in past research. As discussed earlier (see p16), contemporary racism is more likely to be based on the notion of cultural incompatibility than on concepts of racial superiority or racial separatism. Recognising this, two approaches were used in this survey to measure self-reported, overt race-based prejudice.

Respondents were asked whether there are any racial or ethnic groups they believed did not fit into Australian society. This measure was designed to gauge prejudice based on notions of cultural incompatibility.

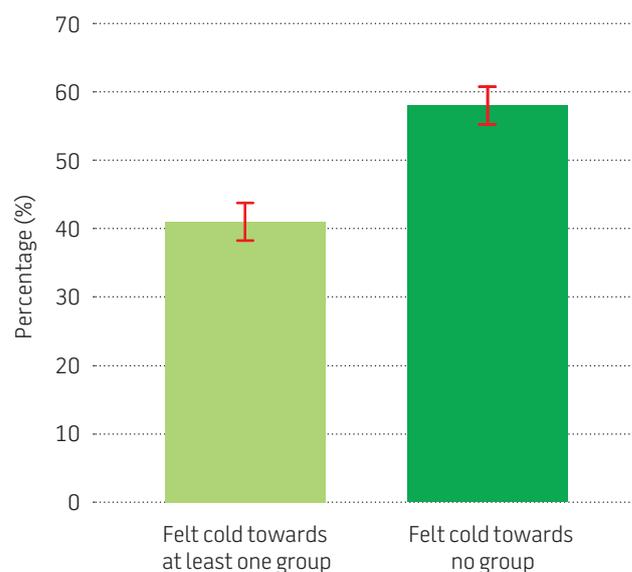
To assess feeling toward particular groups, respondents were asked how they felt towards people from a list of backgrounds represented in the Victorian population on a five-point scale from 'very cold' to 'very warm'. Referred to as a 'feeling thermometer', this approach has been used in a number of surveys internationally, such as the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey and the American National Election Studies. It is regarded as a good indicator of generalised prejudice (Nelson 2008). This measure is distinct from the first measure in that it addresses the emotional aspects of prejudice.

What did people say?

Although the majority of respondents (54%), disagreed that there were groups that did not fit into Australia, a substantial proportion – 2 in 5 (40%) – did believe there were such groups. Only a small number of people who agreed there were groups that did not fit were prepared to identify a specific group. However, among those doing so, 'Muslims' were the most frequently mentioned, with 15% of those identifying any group identifying Muslims as a group that did not 'fit in'.

The majority of respondents (59%) did not identify any groups towards whom they felt cold or very cold. However 41% of the sample was prepared to identify at least one group (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Feelings toward racial and ethnic groups, 2013 data.



I = 95% confidence interval.

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents report feeling either neutral, 'warm' or 'very warm' towards most of the groups considered. Very few people (less than 5%) report feeling 'cold' or 'very cold' toward Australians from Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal, Mediterranean or Jewish backgrounds. However, 10% or more of the sample report feeling 'cold' or 'very cold' toward people from African (11%), Muslim (22%), Middle Eastern (14%) and refugee (11%) backgrounds. The proportion reporting feeling 'cold' or 'very cold' toward those from Asian backgrounds lies between these two groups (6%).

Table 2: Feelings about various racial or ethnic groups in Australia

Racial or ethnic background	% cold/very cold	% neither cold nor warm	% warm/very warm
Asian	6	32	61
Aboriginal	3	31	62
African	11	35	50
Anglo-Australian	2	28	69
Mediterranean European	2	28	69
Middle Eastern	14	38	45
Refugee ¹	11	35	49
Muslim	22	35	40
Jewish	4	35	57

¹ Refugee status was included as a category in this question: while not a specific racial or ethnic group, there is considerable community and media discourse in Australia about 'refugees' as a social category and common perceptions of refugees as an 'out-group' in society.

Key findings:

Subtle prejudice

Prior research has shown that there is a link between measures of overt prejudice toward racial and ethnic groups such as those described on page 22 and other attitudes people hold about racial and ethnic groups different to their own. These include attitudes in relation to:

- how the acculturation of newcomers to Australia should be supported (Verkuyten 2011)
- whether minority ethnic groups represent a threat to economic security and way of life (Stephan et al. 2005)
- whether racial and cultural differences should be acknowledged (Apfelbaum, Norton & Sommers 2012)
- whether racism and discrimination are problems and whether and how they should be addressed (Vorauer & Sasaki 2011)
- whether the Anglo-Australian majority have privileges not generally available to racial and ethnic minorities (Forrest & Dunn 2006).

As well as being linked to race-based prejudice, if these views are manifest in the actions of individuals or the policies and practices of organisations such as schools or sporting clubs or in the media, they can be harmful in themselves. Indeed, as discussed earlier (p16), many researchers maintain that these attitudes are themselves subtle forms of prejudice.

Attitudes to acculturation

What was asked?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that:

- people from racial or ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society
- people from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like 'mainstream Australians'.

Why were these questions asked?

Both the Victorian and Australian governments have adopted multiculturalism as an approach to supporting acculturation and diversity (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2013; Victorian Government 2013a). There has been some debate in the academic literature and the community about the meaning of multiculturalism and the extent of government commitment to its key elements (see for example Berman & Paradies 2008; Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013). Nevertheless, it has been the prevailing policy approach in Australia for more than 40 years (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013; Soutphommasane 2014). Among the key elements of multicultural policies are that:

- cultural diversity is an asset (support for this element is addressed in the first question in the list above)
- this diversity should be positively valued and supported
- individuals from ethnic minority groups have the right to practise their distinctive cultures free from discrimination (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013).

Similarly, policies supporting Aboriginal Australians have evolved since the post-protection era. Among other things, this has included an emphasis on respect for Aboriginal identity and spiritual beliefs (Paradies et al. 2009). Again, while commitment to this and the resources to realise it have fluctuated, it remains a feature of contemporary policies of both the Victorian and Australian governments (Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014; Victorian Government 2013b).

This contrasts with an alternative approach to acculturation where Aboriginal people and newcomers from minority ethnic groups are expected to shed the values and practices of their culture of origin and 'blend in' with the majority culture. Known as assimilation, this was abandoned as an explicit policy approach to responding to diversity in Australia in the 1970s for a range of reasons, including its harmful consequences for the health of both newcomers and for Aboriginal Australians (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2013; Paradies et al. 2009). This is in contrast to the health benefits associated with acceptance of diversity (see box on p24).

Assimilation beliefs are regarded as a form of prejudice because the premise on which they are based is that the majority ethnic culture is the 'standard' to which other racial and ethnic groups must conform (Verkuyten 2011). Support for assimilation in the Victorian community is gauged in the second of the two questions in the list above.

What did people say?

Most people in Victoria (78%) believe that 'people from racial or ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society' (Table 3). This is consistent with findings from other studies showing that Australians have a high level of support for cultural diversity per se; that is, for a society made up of people from many different cultures (Dunn et al. 2004; Dunn et al. 2005).

Despite this relatively high level of support for diversity per se, more than half of all respondents support the key tenet of assimilation that 'people from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like mainstream Australians' (52%). Only a third (33%) of respondents reject this proposition. In addition to indicating a concerning level of this form of prejudice, this finding suggests a poor level of appreciation of some of the deeper aspects of multiculturalism and their associated benefits.

Analysis of the relationship between these two beliefs shows that respondents agreeing that there are benefits in diversity are more likely to reject the idea that people from minority ethnic groups should behave more like ‘mainstream Australians’. This relationship has also been found in other studies (Levin et al. 2012; Perry, Paradies & Pedersen 2014).

This suggests that strengthening understanding of the benefits of diversity is likely to be important in efforts to reduce race-based discrimination.

Table 3: Attitudes toward approaches to acculturation¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
People from racial or ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society	78	9	9
People from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like mainstream Australians	52	13	33

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded ‘don’t know’ or ‘refused’ are not included.

DO APPROACHES TO ACCULTURATION MATTER FOR HEALTH?

When one cultural group comes into contact with another, both groups undergo a process of psychological, cognitive and social change. This is commonly referred to as acculturation (Berry 1997; Graves 1967; Redfield, Linton & Herskovits 1936). When this contact occurs as a result of migration or colonisation, the settler or colonised group generally has less power, and hence is obliged to make the largest changes (Birman 1994; Sam 2006; Sonn & Fisher 2010).

An important condition for mental health (regardless of our cultural background) is a secure and positive ethnic identity (Beiser & Hou 2006; Bombay et al. 2010; Chae & Foley 2010; Costigan et al. 2010; Dockery 2010; Negy et al. 2003; Sellers et al. 2003; Zubrick et al. 2010) (see p7, where ethnic identity is defined). While there have been some mixed findings, a positive and secure ethnic identity has been found in some studies to be associated with:

- stronger links with one’s like ethnic group (Pearson & Geronimus 2011; Smith & Silva 2011). These provide important sources of social support, a critical resource for mental health and wellbeing (Pearson & Geronimus 2011; Smith & Silva 2011)
- a greater capacity to engage in cross-cultural relationships (Phinney, Jacoby & Silva 2007)
- improved educational outcomes (in the case of young people) (Anglin & Wade 2007; Armenta 2010; Chavous et al. 2003; Costigan et al. 2010)
- a lower likelihood of engaging in interpersonal violence (Caldwell et al. 2004)
- a lower likelihood of suffering negative health consequences of exposure to racism (Finch & Vega 2003; Mossakowski 2003; Gee et al. 2006; Han et al. 2007).

Ethnic identity is not fixed but rather is shaped and responds to changes in social context (Phinney 1996; Phinney et al. 2001), including those occurring as a consequence of migration or colonisation. The optimal conditions for mental health are those in which people from minority ethnic groups are able to develop a bi-cultural identity (Kovacev & Shute 2004; Torres & Rollock 2007; Lafromboise, Coleman & Gerton 1993); that is, an identity that reflects aspects of their culture of origin as well of that of the host or post-colonial nation (Phinney, Jacoby & Silva 2007).

However, the capacity for this to occur is determined by the context: it is important that conditions enable people from minority ethnic groups to maintain strong connections with their culture of origin, while also being able to develop a ‘national’ identity and connection to the wider society (Phinney et al. 2001). This in turn is dependent upon an environment in which people can become adept at interacting with both cultures. This requires:

- strong minority ethnic communities and associated cultural institutions (to serve as a basis for the maintenance of ethnic identity and social support) (Bloemraad 2005)
- a national identity that authentically values and embraces, rather than derogates, diversity and minority cultures (Phinney et al. 2001)
- a welcoming and inclusive local environment, enabling minority ethnic groups to interact with the majority culture and to participate equally, without their differences becoming barriers to success (Sakamoto, Wei & Truong 2008).

This is often referred to as an ‘integration’ or a ‘multicultural’ approach to acculturation (Berry 2005; 2006; 2010; Binning et al. 2009; Shih & Sanchez 2009). It has been found to be associated with better health outcomes than the alternatives of:

- separation, whereby minority ethnic groups identify exclusively with their community and culture of origin
- assimilation, whereby minority ethnic groups ‘blend into’ and identify primarily with the majority culture.

A multicultural approach is favoured by newcomers themselves, with most reporting a strong sense of ‘ethnic pride’ while also having a high level of motivation to live according to the standards and values of their new society (Nesdale & Mak 2000). The *Mapping Social Cohesion* surveys show that most new arrivals see themselves as Australian while also identifying with their country of birth (Markus 2013).

Feelings of threat

What was asked?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that:

- racial or ethnic minority groups take away jobs from other Australians
- the Australian way of life is weakened by people from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds maintaining their cultural beliefs and values.

Why were these questions asked?

Prior research has shown that people are more likely to hold prejudicial views toward minority ethnic groups if they feel that these groups threaten them (Stephan et al. 2005):

- in material terms (e.g. by competing for jobs, education, housing and other resources). This is gauged in the first question in the list above and is referred to by researchers as 'realistic threat'
- by influencing their 'way of life' and their values. Gauged in the second question in the list, this is often referred to as 'symbolic threat'.

The belief that cultural diversity compromises the Australian way of life is a form of prejudice because it views minority ethnic cultures both as threatening to and less important than the majority ethnic culture.

What did people say?

Table 4 shows that while approximately 1 in 5 respondents (21%) believe that minority ethnic groups 'take away jobs from other Australians', most do not hold this view (64%). However, a higher proportion believe that minority ethnic groups represent a symbolic threat. Just over a third (34%) agree with the statement 'minority ethnic groups maintaining their cultural beliefs and values represents a threat to the Australian way of life'. Over half (53%) reject this view.

As discussed elsewhere in this report (see p24), maintaining one's cultural beliefs and values can help to promote health and wellbeing. However, this depends upon diversity being valued as part of a national identity and conditions in which people are able to identify with their culture of origin. The right to maintain one's culture is also a key tenet of multiculturalism, providing further evidence of the need to strengthen understanding of the principles, purposes and benefits of this approach.

Table 4: Perceptions of racial and ethnic minority groups as a threat¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
Racial or ethnic minority groups take away jobs from other Australians	21	12	64
The Australian way of life is weakened by people from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds maintaining their cultural beliefs and values	34	10	53

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

Acknowledgement of race and ethnicity

What was asked?

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree that we shouldn't talk about racial or ethnic differences.

Why was this question asked?

As the prevalence of blatant or old-fashioned forms of racism has declined and laws have been introduced to prohibit unequal treatment on the basis of race and ethnicity, some people have argued that racism against minority ethnic groups is a thing of the past (see, for example, Wilson 1987) and that the best way to address ethnic and racial inequalities between groups is to avoid taking into account racial group membership and race-based differences 'when decisions are made, impressions are formed and behaviours are enacted' (Apfelbaum, Norton & Sommers 2012). This is often referred to as a 'colour-

blind' approach. There has been considerable debate in the international community, especially in the United States, about this approach (Apfelbaum, Norton & Sommers 2012; Walton et al. 2014).

In contrast, others have argued that being blind to the significance of ethnicity, culture or race and denying the problem of racism is potentially harmful to minority ethnic groups, and works against identifying and addressing the underlying causes of discrimination and inequity (see box on page 26).

There are a range of attitudes associated with a colour-blind approach. The question above gauges one of these.

What did people say?

The majority of respondents (66%) indicated that they disagree with the notion that we should not talk about racial and ethnic differences (Table 5). Nevertheless more than a quarter of respondents (27%) agree with the statement.

Table 5: Acknowledgement of race and ethnicity¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
We shouldn't talk about racial or ethnic differences	27	6	66

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

IS BEING BLIND TO RACE AND ETHNICITY THE BEST WAY TO REDUCE INEQUITY?

A 'colour-blind' approach is based on the understanding that the best way to end discrimination is by treating people the same regardless of their racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The focus, it is argued, should be on what makes us similar and our common humanity.

Others, have identified problems with the approach, noting that:

- it does not take into account the evidence that both race and ethnicity continue to exist as social constructs
- it does not recognise the historical forces that have shaped cultural differences and inequalities between groups and so assumes that there is 'level playing field' from which we all start, regardless of our backgrounds
- it neglects the disadvantage that ethnic minority groups may experience when interacting with systems that have evolved to reflect the beliefs, values and practices of the majority culture
- the assumption that racism is no longer a problem is contradicted by the evidence that people from minority ethnic groups experience high rates of discrimination and that attitudes endorsing ill-feeling and prejudice continue to be held by a sizeable percentage of the population. Recognising the existence of the problems of racism and race inequity is key to addressing them

- many people from minority ethnic groups are proud of the beliefs, values and practices that make them culturally distinctive. As discussed earlier this pride is important for mental health and wellbeing (see box on p24). However, a colour-blind approach can lead to the inference that there is something wrong with valuing a distinctive cultural identity (Williams 2011).

Denying these larger social forces, and the subsequent failures of people, can lead to blame and stigma. It may also lead to self-blame and hence have consequences for self-esteem and confidence (Williams & Williams Morris 2000).

Experimental research shows that a colour-blind approach, despite the best intentions, can backfire (Neville et al. 2013; Apfelbaum et al. 2012; Plaut 2010). It can lead to greater prejudice among majority-group members (Apfelbaum, Sommers & Norton 2008; Richeson & Nussbaum 2004); it can contribute to majority-group members being less warm to people from minority ethnic groups in social settings (to avoid the perception of being biased) (Apfelbaum, Sommers & Norton 2008) and inhibit the performance of groups affected by discrimination (Holoien & Shelton 2012).

Awareness of race-based discrimination

What was asked?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that:

- people from racial or ethnic minority groups experience discrimination in Australia
- something more should be done to reduce discrimination experienced by people from racial or ethnic minority groups in Australia.

Why were these questions asked?

As discussed earlier (see p17) discrimination against racial and ethnic minority groups remains prevalent and acknowledging this is a first step toward addressing the problem.

It is important to gauge the extent to which discrimination is denied because denial can be harmful in itself. It can create an environment in which people may feel silenced. This can actually compound the stress caused by the initial experience (Gyull, Mathews & Bromberger 2001). Denial can also work against people affected by discrimination taking action to minimise the health impacts of discrimination. Studies show that:

- taking action (e.g. by seeking social support or making a complaint) is associated with a lower risk of health problems than denying the problem or keeping it to oneself (Brondolo et al. 2003; Krieger & Sidney 1995; Noh & Kaspar 2003; O'Brien Caughey, O'Campo & Muntaner 2004)

- people who recognise that racism and discrimination occur are at a lower risk of experiencing negative health and behavioural responses than people who believe that the wider society has an uncritical appraisal of their cultural or religious group (Caldwell et al. 2004). This is likely to be because people who recognise potential social barriers to achievement are less likely to blame themselves and to suffer associated mental health consequences. Having a realistic appraisal may enable people to be better prepared to deal with discrimination if it occurs.

Recognising the existence and harms of subtle forms of discrimination is especially important in this regard. Studies show that people suffering these forms of discrimination are more likely to suffer negative health consequences than people reporting acts that are obviously discriminatory (Harrell 2000; Gyull, Mathews & Bromberger 2001). This may be because it is harder to take action in response to behaviour that is ambiguous (i.e. that could be interpreted in more than one way). Further, discrimination occurring in these circumstances may be more readily dismissed by others.

Understanding the level of awareness of discrimination and support to address it can also assist governments and bodies established to address the problem to determine the extent to which awareness raising is necessary.

What did people say?

Nearly 8 in 10 respondents (78%) agree that race-based discrimination is a problem in Australia, and a similar proportion (79%) agree that 'something more should be done about race-based discrimination' (Table 6). Only 7% of respondents who recognised that there was a problem did not agree that something should be done about it.

Table 6: Awareness of race-based discrimination¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
People from racial or ethnic minority groups experience race-based discrimination in Australia	78	7	12
Something more should be done to reduce race-based discrimination experienced by people from racial or ethnic minority groups in Australia	79	7	11

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

Awareness of majority-group privilege

What was asked?

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree that Australians from an Anglo background (of British descent) enjoy an advantaged position in our society.

Why was this question asked?

Efforts to reduce racism and inequity in recent years have mainly focused on the experiences of groups directly affected by race-based discrimination. However, researchers have found that unequal outcomes between groups are also a result of privileges held by the majority ethnic group that are not generally available to minority ethnic groups. These privileges are not earned but rather accrue to people because of their membership of the ethnic majority (Lund & Scipio 2010; McIntosh 1988). Many of these privileges stem from the greater role that Anglo-Australians have played in shaping culture and institutions over time. This means that these systems are more suited to their needs (Lund & Scipio 2010; McIntosh 1988). At the same time, the culture of the Anglo-Australian majority has become the standard or 'norm' against which other groups are judged.

This does not mean that all people in the majority group consciously seek to maintain their privilege or set out to make people in minority ethnic groups feel excluded. Indeed many of the privileges enjoyed by the majority group are so taken for granted that they are invisible. Many people are unlikely to be aware they benefit from them (see box on page 28).

Awareness of this privilege is important because it can:

- strengthen understanding of why some groups struggle to achieve within important, everyday contexts such as education and employment. This in turn can help to prevent these struggles being seen as failings of minority ethnic groups and the stigma often associated with such failure
- lead to greater understanding of the importance of respecting a range of views and ways of doing things and the need for an inclusive approach in which differences do not become obstacles to success
- heighten awareness that we all have a role in reducing inequity, not just those who are directly affected by discrimination and those working with them.

What did people say?

In contrast to the large proportion of respondents recognising the problem of discrimination (Table 6), there is a lower awareness of the privileges enjoyed by Anglo-Australians (Table 7). Just under half (49%) agree with the statement, with more than a third (36%) disagreeing.

Table 7: Awareness of majority-group privilege¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
Australians from an Anglo background (of British descent) enjoy an advantaged position in our society	49	11	36

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

SOME TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED BENEFITS OF BEING PART OF A MAJORITY CULTURE

- The affirmation that comes from seeing one's identity, cultural background and the contributions of one's group positively represented in day-to-day contexts such as school curriculum, story books, commercials and movies
- Being able to readily purchase items suitable for one's complexion or one's distinctive cultural needs (minority racial and ethnic groups may find it difficult to purchase cosmetics and bandaging suitable for their skin colour or faith-based articles such as the hijab, modest clothing or a turban)
- Seeing numerous positive role models from one's own cultural background represented in the media and popular culture
- Being able to access basic resources such as education, health care and employment without having to learn about or adapt to the cultural practices and values of another group
- Being able to talk about an issue without being seen to represent one's entire cultural group
- Not having the negative behaviour of some members of one's cultural group interpreted as further evidence of the inferiority of one's culture or its incompatibility with 'mainstream Australian' values
- Not having to worry about the prospects of negative treatment on the basis of racial or ethnic background, such as being surveilled when shopping (VHREOC 2008; beyondblue & TNS Social Research 2014), excluded when applying for a job (Booth et al. 2003) or denied housing (VHREOC 2012).
- Knowing that one's children are unlikely to be teased or bullied by other children because of their ethnic or racial background (Priest, Ferdinand et al. 2014; Priest, Perry et al. 2014; Priest, Walton et al. 2014).

Source: Adapted from McIntosh 1988.

Specific attitudes toward Aboriginal Australians

What was asked?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that:

- Aboriginal people hold a special place as the first Australians
- being Aboriginal makes it harder to succeed in Australia today
- Aboriginal people get more government money than they should.

Why were these questions asked?

All the questions in the survey were concerned with ‘minority racial and ethnic’ groups, and while this included Aboriginal Australians, most questions did not specifically distinguish between Aboriginal Australians and people from other racial and ethnic minorities. Other research has found that some people vary in their attitudes toward different minority groups (e.g. Indigenous minority groups as opposed to migrants and refugees) (Zick et al. 2008; Ehrke et al. 2014). These questions were therefore included to provide respondents an opportunity to report their specific views about Aboriginal Australians.

The barriers Aboriginal Australians face to success have been documented in numerous reports in recent years (SCRGSP 2011) and have been recognised by successive Australian governments (Altman, Biddle & Hunter 2009; Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee 2014). Addressing these barriers will require a range of strategies to be undertaken by Aboriginal communities in partnership with the business and government sectors and non-Aboriginal Australians. However, among these is the effective implementation of government policies focussed on ‘closing the gap’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians (COAG 2009). Such policies have involved allocation of additional resources, as well as efforts to ensure that the needs of people from Aboriginal backgrounds are met more effectively within mainstream services and programs (Australian Government Department of Finance and Deregulation 2010; Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee 2014). Analyses of these efforts indicate that while

there have been improvements on some indicators, on others progress has been poor (Altman, Biddle & Hunter 2009; Mitrou et al. 2014). While there are many reasons for this, continued funding pressures have been a barrier in some areas (Australian Government Department of Finance and Deregulation 2010). Maintaining and/or extending the resource-base for reducing the gap, has been identified as important to ensuring continued progress (Australian Government Department of Finance and Deregulation 2010; Altman, Biddle & Hunter 2009).

Past research has shown that people can hold positive attitudes toward the symbolic place of Aboriginals (gauged in the first of the questions in the list above), but have a poor understanding of social and economic disadvantage experienced by them and the need for this to be addressed in government expenditure (gauged in the second and third questions in the list above, respectively).

What did people say?

The warmth reported toward Aboriginal Australians identified in people’s responses to the ‘feeling thermometer’ (see p22) is similar to the high level of support reported for the statement, ‘Aboriginal people hold a special place as the first Australians’, a view held by nearly 83% of respondents (Table 8). Substantial proportions recognise the barriers Aboriginal people face to success (59%), and the appropriateness of current levels of expenditure (30%). However, many do not:

- Twenty-eight per cent disagree that ‘Being Aboriginal makes it harder to succeed in Australia today’.
- Forty-three per cent agree that ‘Aboriginal people get more government money than they should’.

This indicates that while the majority have positive evaluations of the symbolic place of Aboriginal Victorians, many holding such views do not recognise the disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people, and they oppose the level of government support provided. As discussed earlier (p27), denial of discrimination is a form of prejudice that can be harmful to those who are its target.

Table 8: Attitudes toward Aboriginal Australians¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
Aboriginal people hold a special place as the first Australians	83	6	9
Being Aboriginal makes it harder to succeed in Australia today	59	8	28
Aboriginal people get more government money than they should	43	15	30

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded ‘don’t know’ or ‘refused’ are not included.

Key findings: Factors influencing responses to race and diversity

Intercultural contact

What was asked?

- How frequently do you have positive contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups?
- How frequently do you have negative contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups?

Why were these questions asked?

Contact between cultural groups is understood to be among one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice. Such contact is understood to provide opportunities for people to:

- learn about other groups and hence to help counter stereotypes
- engage in activities with people from other groups that they may otherwise have avoided because of the prejudices they hold. This behavioural change often results in attitudinal change
- develop intercultural friendships. The positive emotions associated with these relationships may then be generalised to others from the group concerned. Such relationships may also reduce the anxiety associated with inter-group contact (Barlow, Louis & Hewstone 2009).

However, the nature of this contact matters. In particular, it is important that the contact is positive. Frequent negative contact with members of other cultural groups has been shown to increase prejudice to a greater extent than positive contact reduces prejudice (Barlow et al. 2012). There is good evidence that strengthening the conditions under which contact takes place can positively influence prejudice reduction (Paradies et al 2009). This is discussed further on p38.

What did people say?

Most respondents reported having positive contact with members of other ethnic groups either 'often' (38%) or 'always' (32%) and a further 21% did so 'sometimes' (Table 9). Only 9% said that they 'never' or 'rarely' have positive contact with members of other ethnic groups. Most respondents reported 'never' or 'rarely' experiencing negative contact (73%), although almost a quarter (22%) reported this occurring at least some times. Only 5% of respondents reported having negative contact 'often' or 'always'.

Table 9: Frequency and quality of intercultural contact in Victoria¹

	% never/rarely	% sometimes	% often/always
How frequently do you have positive contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups?	9	21	70
How frequently do you have negative contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups?	73	22	5

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

Motivations to avoid prejudice

What was asked?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree that:

- it is important to me that I treat people from other racial or ethnic groups fairly (internal motivation)
- people expect me to treat those from other racial or ethnic groups fairly (external motivation).

Why were these questions asked?

A range of factors are important in reducing prejudice, and studies show that the motivation to avoid prejudice is among these. People who have a high level of motivation to avoid prejudice are less likely to score high on measures of prejudice (Dunton & Fazio 1997 cited in Legault et al. 2008). Various forms of motivation have been distinguished by researchers, and each of these has different implications for actions to address prejudice (Legault et al. 2008). Key among these are 'internal' and 'external' sources of motivation (Table 10). An individual can have variable levels of both these forms of motivation.

As there is a strong relationship between social norms (i.e. what people believe is expected of them) and attitudes and behaviour (see p16), measuring people's perceptions of the expectations of others provides an indication of the social norms climate in relation to race-based discrimination.

What did people say?

Most respondents (84%) agree that other people expect them to treat others fairly (Table 11). This suggests that respondents have a high level of external motivation to avoid prejudice and that there is a strong social norm in Victoria against unfair treatment. An even larger proportion (95%) agree that it is important to them personally that they treat people from other racial or ethnic groups fairly, suggesting that respondents have a very high level of internal motivation. Respondents were more likely to strongly agree that it was important to them personally that they treat people fairly (i.e. that they were internally motivated) than they were to strongly agree that others expect them to do so (i.e. that they were externally motivated) (52% v. 23%).

Table 10: Sources of motivation to avoid prejudice

	Internal motivation	External motivation
Definition	Prejudice avoidance is a valued personal goal	Prejudice avoidance is driven by formal and informal social sanctions (i.e. what people think is expected of them by others or laws and regulations)
Link to racism	Associated with lower levels of overt and subtle racism	
Context considerations	Likely to apply across contexts regardless of prevailing norms Dependent on individuals being aware that beliefs/actions are prejudicial/discriminatory	More likely to apply to particular contexts in which formal and informal anti-racism norms exist However, attitudes formed as a consequence of external motivations can become internalised
Implications for reducing prejudice	Important to raise awareness of the existence and consequences of prejudice, especially subtle forms which may not be readily apparent	Important to establish and maintain social norms against racism and discrimination (e.g. strong leadership, organisational standards)

Sources: Crandall, Eshleman & O'Brien 2002; Legault et al 2008; Plant & Devine 1998.

Table 11: Motivations to avoid prejudice¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
It is important to me that I treat people from other racial or ethnic groups fairly (internal motivation)	95	2	2
People expect me to treat those from other racial or ethnic groups fairly	84	7	6

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

Anxiety associated with contact with other ethnic and racial groups

What was asked?

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree that they feel uncomfortable around people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Why was this question asked?

When people interact with people from different cultures they may experience anxiety, 'the feeling of being uneasy, tense, worried or apprehensive about what might happen (Gudykunst cited in Griffin 2006). A certain level of anxiety can be helpful, because it can motivate people to be mindful when communicating cross-culturally, helping to avoid misunderstandings. However, if the level of anxiety is too great, people may seek to manage it by resorting to stereotypes, creating 'out-groups' or avoiding future interaction (Gudykunst & Kim 2003; Plant & Devine 2003).

What did people say?

High levels of anxiety about intercultural encounters do not appear to be a predominant concern among respondents. The great majority disagree that they 'feel uncomfortable around people from other racial or ethnic groups' (83%). Only 9% of respondents agree with this statement (Table 12).

Table 12: Anxiety associated with contact with other ethnic and racial groups¹

	% agree	% neither agree nor disagree	% disagree
I feel uncomfortable around people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds	9	7	83

¹ Percentages may not add up to 100% as those who responded 'don't know' or 'refused' are not included.

Key findings:

Factors influencing overt prejudice

The relationship between each of the measures discussed above and feelings toward specific groups were assessed. These groups included people from Asian, Aboriginal Australian, African, Anglo-Australian, Mediterranean European, Middle Eastern, refugee, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds. It was found that people are more likely to feel 'warm' toward each of the groups if they also agree that:

- people from racial and ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society (i.e. they endorsed one of the key tenets of multiculturalism, an approach to acculturation defined on p7)
- more needs to be done to address racism
- they had frequent positive contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups.

People are more likely to feel 'cold' toward each of the groups if they agree that:

- people from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like 'mainstream Australians' (a key tenet of assimilation, an alternative approach to acculturation defined on p7)
- they had frequent negative contact with other groups.

These attitudes have a stronger influence on evaluations of people from Muslim, Middle Eastern, African and refugee backgrounds than they do on those of Asian, Jewish, Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal backgrounds.

People who had a high level of positive feeling toward Aboriginal Australians tended to feel more positively toward other groups as well. There are inconsistent findings in past research as to whether the same factors underpin prejudice toward different minority ethnic groups (e.g. attitudes toward Indigenous minority ethnic groups, as opposed to those toward people from refugee backgrounds) (Ehrke et al. 2014; Zick et al. 2008). At present not enough is known to draw definitive conclusions about implications for practice; that is, whether addressing race-based prejudice as a general phenomenon will help to reduce prejudice directed toward all minority ethnic groups, or whether addressing prejudice toward one group is likely to have a positive impact on prejudice toward other minority ethnic groups.

Key findings: Changes in attitudes over time

Among the aims of the survey was to determine whether or not there have been changes in attitudes towards race and cultural diversity over time. One of the two measures of overt prejudice and five of the measures designed to gauge more subtle prejudice were included in both the 2006 and 2013 surveys. There were some minor word changes in the questions. These need to be taken into account when considering the results: it is possible that even minor changes of wording can influence the way people respond. The specific questions used from both surveys as a basis for comparison can be found in Appendix 1.

There were some differences in the demographic composition of the 2006 and 2013 samples. Additional analysis was undertaken to account for the influences of these differences on changes in attitudes between 2006 and 2013*. The findings given in figures 1 and 2 have been adjusted to allow assessment of these differences. Hence they may be different to figures given in the Executive Summary, on pages 20–29 of this report and in the report of the 2006 survey.

The overall patterns of attitudes in both surveys were very similar. However, at a more specific level there was a worsening trend on some measures, and improvements on others. For example, a larger proportion of respondents in 2013 (58%) agreed that ‘there are groups that do not fit into Australian society’ compared with 2006, when only 41% agreed with this statement (Figure 2).

Figure 2. “There are racial or ethnic groups that do not fit in Australian society”¹, % agree/strongly agree, 2006 and 2013².



¹ Data adjusted for differences in the demographic composition of the 2006 and 2013 samples.

² Specific question wording for each survey is at Appendix 1.

I = 95% confidence interval.

* Demographic variables (gender, age, region, education and whether born in Australia) were entered as covariates in logistic regression models of time predicting each of the attitude variables.

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3, the respondents in the 2013 survey were less likely than those in 2006 to agree that:

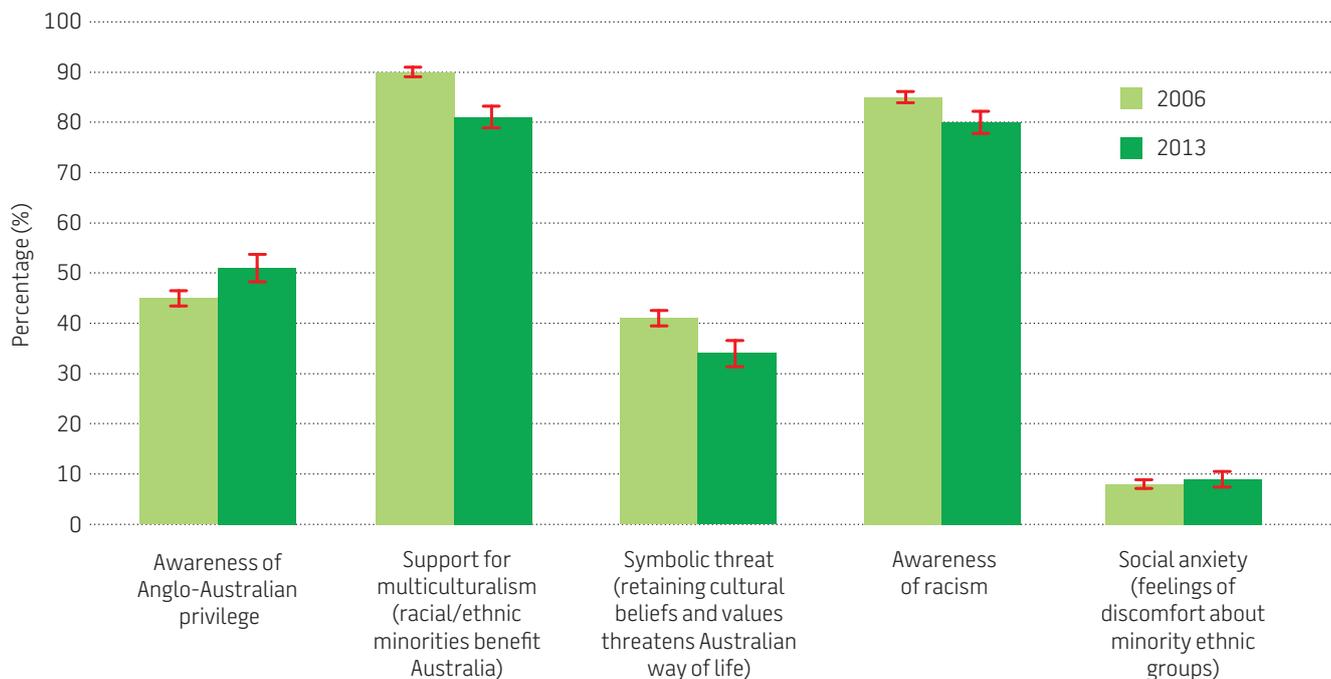
- people from racial and ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society (81% agreed in 2013 compared with 90% agreeing to a similarly worded statement in 2006)
- people from racial or ethnic minority groups experience race-based discrimination in Australia (80% agreed in 2013, compared with 85% agreeing to a similarly worded statement in 2006).

However, they were:

- less likely to agree that Australia is weakened by ethnic groups retaining their cultural values (34% agreed in 2013 compared with 41% agreeing to a similarly worded statement in 2006)
- more likely to be aware that Australians from an Anglo background enjoy an advantaged position (51% agreed with this in 2013 compared with only 45% agreeing to a similarly worded statement in 2006).

The proportion agreeing that they felt 'uncomfortable around people from other backgrounds' was similar in both surveys (8% in 2006 v. 9% in 2013).

Figure 3. Attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities¹, 2006 and 2013² (% agree/strongly agree).



¹ Data has been adjusted for differences in the demographic composition of the 2006 and 2013 samples

² Specific question wording for each survey is at Appendix 1

* Statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

■ = 95% confidence interval.

Discussion and implications of findings

Strengths and limitations of the survey

Both the 2006 and 2013 surveys involved a large sample (4016 and 1250 respectively) and a cross-section of Victorians. Although participant numbers were considerably lower for the 2013 iteration of the survey, the sample is still substantial enough to be robust statistically. Further, the relative proportions for specific population subgroups remained consistent over time (proportion of respondents born outside of Australia was 25.4% for the 2006 survey and 26.9% for the 2013 sample).

Including both landline and mobile interviews in the 2013 surveys meant that a broader range of people were included in the survey than would have been the case if only landline interviewing had been used. This is because fewer young people, especially young men, Aboriginal Australians and people born overseas, live in households with landlines. Further, an increasing number of homes have mobile phones only (ACMA 2011). Wherever possible survey questions were drawn from validated survey instruments.

Non-response bias, the potential distortion of results due to a particular profile of people choosing to partake instead of refusing participation, may have affected the survey finding. Because information about the people refusing to participate is unavailable, the impact of response bias cannot be quantified. The response rates for the 2013 survey, although low, are comparable to other similar surveys (e.g. see VicHealth 2014), yet considerably lower than in 2006 (54%).

Conversely, for those who chose to participate, there was the potential for response bias, in particular in regards to social desirability; hence some people may have given answers they believe to be socially acceptable, rather than what they actually believe (Briñol & Petty 2005).

Similarly, in considering findings on changes between 2006 and 2013, it is possible that response bias may account for some of the findings. Also, wording changes made to questions between the two surveys may have influenced responses to some degree. Unfortunately, the survey design did not allow an assessment of whether these influences would have resulted in attitudes appearing more or less prejudiced.

Potential explanations

Several factors may account for the persistence of overt and subtle prejudice in the community and the negative changes in survey findings over time. Some studies have shown that intolerance toward racial and ethnic minorities increases when people are forced to compete for resources such as jobs, housing and government services (Hadler 2012). This, it is argued, can build the sense of feeling threatened by 'newcomers' or by disadvantaged groups who may be perceived as attracting benefits not available to others. Since the 2006 survey, Australia has felt the impact of the global financial crisis (albeit somewhat less severely than many other nations) (Markus 2013) and increasing income inequality (Richardson & Denniss 2014). There has been a continued use of migration policy as a means of filling labour and skill shortages (Joint Committee on Migration 2013). It is possible that collectively these changes may have led to a heightened sense of threat, which has subsequently manifest in increased race-based prejudice.

Another explanation relates to recent global geopolitical events such as the rise of extremism and terrorism (Institute for Economics & Peace 2012) and the growth in the global refugee population (UNHCR 2013). It is therefore possible that changes in attitudes between the 2006 and 2013 survey reflect the influence of public and media discourse surrounding the management of refugee issues, in particular asylum seeker boat arrivals, conflict in the Middle East and domestic and international extremism and terrorism. Community attitudes are highly susceptible to changes in the social norms climate, in particular the ways in which issues are represented in the media and popular culture and by opinion leaders (Cialdini & Trost 1998; Newby-Clark et al. 2002). Systematic analysis of debate and media coverage of these issues suggests that refugees are frequently portrayed in a negative light (e.g. as 'illegals' or 'queue jumpers') (Every 2013; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos 2012), while the actions of extremists identifying with the Islamic faith are sometimes conflated with the faith in general, resulting in prejudice toward Muslims in Australia (Soutphommasane 2014). It has been argued that this coverage risks generating negative stereotypes which are generalised to all people in the groups concerned and to them being increasingly cast as 'out-groups' (Hanson-Easey, Augoustinos & Moloney 2014; Pe-Pua & Dandy 2013; Poynting & Noble 2004).

A mapping of data on race-based prejudice from the British Social Attitudes Survey between 1983 and 2013 found that attitudes toward race fluctuated over time, with increases generally occurring in response to both clusters of factors above; that is, economic and geopolitical crises (Taylor & Muir 2014). While these issues pre-date the 2006 survey, it is possible that the change between 2006 and 2013 reflects the cumulative impact of successive cycles of media and community discourse. The fact that 'Muslims' are the most likely to be identified as a group toward whom respondents feel 'cold' or as not 'fitting in' is evidence of this possibility.

Another potential explanation relates to access to and use of the world wide web and social media. These can be vehicles for strengthening intercultural relations and understanding. However, evidence is increasing that they are also used to promote racial intolerance and perpetrate harassment of racial and ethnic minorities, often referred to as cyber-racism (Australian Human Rights Commission 2011).

Surveys of the experience of race-based discrimination

The focus of the current survey on community attitudes complements the focus of other surveys which look more specifically at the issue of self-reported race-based discrimination. As discussed earlier the 2014 *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey found an increase in the percentage of Australians reporting discrimination. It is possible that similar limitations noted in the current study (see above) explain some or all of the change in self-reported discrimination found. Further, the findings from the *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey may be in part explained by an increase in willingness to report discrimination to researchers, rather than to an actual increase in the experience of discrimination itself (Markus 2014). This may be due variously to a heightened sensitivity to race-based discrimination, a higher level of 'racism literacy' among affected groups or a greater level of confidence that they have less to lose in social desirability terms in acknowledging experiences of victimisation. In this respect the change in reported discrimination over time may be encouraging.

A possible alternative explanation is that this is a real increase, influenced by increases in prejudice. Research does show that there are relatively higher rates of self-reported discrimination after adjustments are made methodologically to account for social desirability effects (for a review see Habtegiorgis & Paradies 2013). However, in a climate of heightened prejudice, it is possible that social desirability is more likely to contribute to under-reporting. Other factors found to contribute to under-reporting are the pain associated with managing acknowledgement of victimisation and the difficulty, in the context of increasingly more subtle forms of discrimination, of attributing experiences to racism (Habtegiorgis & Paradies 2013). These factors may have greater significance in times of heightened community prejudice. The fact that numerous studies conducted over many years have found race-based discrimination to be a common problem suggests the need to sustain efforts to prevent it, regardless of whether rates are currently increasing or not.

Implications for prevention

Overall the results of the current Community Attitudes survey and other surveys on self-reported discrimination demonstrate that continued and potentially increased attention is required to fully realise Victoria's commitment to cultural diversity. This is likely to require continuation of approaches to reduce prejudice and promote cultural diversity more broadly as well as specific attention to addressing negative attitudes toward people from certain backgrounds in particular.

Research undertaken by VicHealth to develop the *Building on our strengths* framework to guide action to address discrimination indicates that this action requires an approach that uses multiple strategies targeted to individuals, organisations, communities and broader societal institutions in ways that reinforce one another. The survey findings have a number of implications for implementation of this approach.

Awareness raising

The survey found that respondents claim to have a high level of internal motivation to avoid prejudice (i.e. that it is important to them personally that they treat people from minority ethnic groups fairly). This may be in part explained by a social desirability bias (see p36). However, it appears to contradict the sizeable proportions of respondents also holding views consistent with more subtle forms of bias and prejudice. Activating internal motivation to avoid prejudice requires awareness of the existence and consequences of prejudice. However, other research indicates that the lay community has a relatively low level of recognition of contemporary forms of prejudice and discrimination, particularly more subtle forms (Sommers & Norton 2006). Together these findings suggest that there is a continuing role for awareness-raising initiatives to reduce prejudice in Victoria. Such efforts need to focus on strengthening understanding of the existence and harms of subtle, less visible forms of racism and prejudice. Particular areas warranting attention include strengthening awareness of the:

- benefits of diversity. Although appreciation of diversity remains high, there was a sizeable worsening trend, with 9% decrease in people agreeing that there were benefits in diversity between 2006 and 2013
- health, social and economic benefits of supporting people from diverse backgrounds to maintain their distinctive values and practices free from discrimination
- barriers to success faced by Aboriginal Australians and the need for affirmative approach to addressing these
- overall benefits of migration to the economy and employment growth
- often invisible benefits of being part of a majority group, and the contribution these make to race-based inequalities
- problem of race-based discrimination. Although this is recognised by nearly 8 in 10 respondents, there was a 5% decline in the proportion doing so between 2006 and 2013.

Strengthening social norms

The survey also indicates that respondents have a very high level of external motivation (i.e. that they believe that they are expected by others to avoid prejudice). This, along with evidence from other research (see Paradies et al. 2009), suggests that there is a clear role for approaches that seek to establish and maintain strong social norms against race-based discrimination. Examples of this include continued efforts by respected individuals to exercise leadership, the maintenance of clear legislative prohibitions, and initiatives within organisations to develop formal and informal sanctions against racism and discrimination.

Interventions that support pro-social bystander behaviour show particular promise in this respect. A bystander is one who observes behaviour that is prejudiced or discriminatory. In recent years there has been increasing interest in exploring ways in which bystanders can be encouraged to respond to race-based discrimination, or be what some researchers have called 'pro-social' bystanders (Nelson et al. 2010).

Much racism occurs in everyday contexts beyond the gaze of those whose role it is to enforce the law or apply organisational sanctions against racism. Further, some racist actions are not actually against the law (e.g. racist joke-telling in a private setting) but can nonetheless be hurtful or antecedents to more serious behaviours. Increasing the capacity of bystanders to behave in constructive, pro-social ways can help to harness social sanctions against such behaviour.

Increasing positive contact

Sustained positive contact between groups can assist in reducing prejudice under certain conditions. Optimally, these are conditions in which:

- there is equal status between groups
- competition is avoided
- participants are engaged in collaborative activity, working toward a common goal
- contact takes place in an environment in which diversity is valued and supported
- opportunities are provided for participants across groups to form personal acquaintances (Paradies et al. 2009)

A multicultural context such as in Australia, where intercultural contact is an inevitable feature of day-to-day life (e.g. in schools and workplaces), has many opportunities to strengthen the conditions in which contact takes place. The findings of the survey suggest that there is a sound basis from which to build, with the great majority of respondents reporting their intercultural contact to be both frequent and positive.

Prejudice towards particular groups

The findings of the survey also indicate the need for a focus on addressing prejudice affecting particular groups in the community including:

- Aboriginal Australians
- people of the Islamic faith
- people from African backgrounds.

Although the survey demonstrated a high level of positive feeling about the special place held by Aboriginal Australians, for sizeable proportions of respondents this is not matched by an appreciation of the historical and contemporary disadvantages affecting many Aboriginal Victorians. Three in 10 respondents disagree that 'being Aboriginal makes it harder to succeed' and 2 in 5 agree that 'Aboriginal people get more money than they should'. Nor is it manifest in lower levels of self-reported discrimination, which remain high among Aboriginal Victorians (Ferdinand, Paradies & Kelaher 2012). A recent survey conducted by *beyondblue* and its partners found a large proportion of Australians had witnessed race-based discrimination against Aboriginal people and state that there are circumstances in which they would engage in racist behaviour toward them (beyondblue & TNS Social Research 2014). As a contributor to Aboriginal disadvantage, addressing discrimination will be important to reduce the gap in health, social and economic status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Second, a number of the current survey findings indicate people from Islamic backgrounds are particular targets of prejudice in Victoria among some people. Similar patterns have been found in other Australian research (Markus 2014; Pe-Pua & Dandy 2013). There is also evidence of increasing harassment of members of Islamic communities in the wake of recent international and domestic terrorist incidents (Poynting & Noble 2004; Soutphommasane 2014). These contextual factors (extremism, terrorism and their conflation with Islam) are unlikely to abate, at least in the near future.

In addition to the earlier explanation that discrimination affecting people from Islamic backgrounds is most likely to reflect prejudice formed in response to perceptions of recent international and domestic events, another possibility often cited in lay discourse is that such treatment is the inevitable lot of the most recently arrived, and is a temporary inconvenience to be tolerated pending acceptance by the majority culture. This is a position that is difficult to sustain in light of the growing evidence of the harms of race-based discrimination. It is also an unlikely explanation for anti-Islamic sentiment given Australia's long history of Muslim settlement (Poynting & Mason 2007).

Third, addressing racism affecting people from African backgrounds is especially important given evidence of economic and social marginalisation of this group (Australian Human Rights Commission 2010; Surjeet 2009). Many people from African backgrounds are from refugee or refugee-like circumstances and have suffered social exclusion and war-related trauma prior to arrival (Surjeet 2009). This may make them especially vulnerable to the mental health impacts of discrimination.

A focus on children and young people

Studies show that children and young people experience particularly high rates of racism and that this can have serious negative impacts on their health in the immediate term and into the future. Efforts to address racism among children and young people are likely to have a particular impact given that they are at a life-cycle stage in which values are being formed. Together these factors suggest the importance of a focus on addressing racism and prejudice in those settings in which children and young people predominate, especially schools.

Conclusions

The results of the *2013 survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity* reveal that overall most respondents display reasonably positive attitudes to minority ethnic and racial groups and are supportive of cultural diversity. However, the survey also reveals the persistence of a substantial level of subtle prejudice as well as some ongoing overt prejudice within the community. Furthermore, the survey shows some deterioration in attitudes since a similar survey in 2006. This was substantial on one of the measures of overt prejudice (a 17 percentage point difference). These patterns are similar to those found in other studies conducted in recent years. Furthermore, surveys such as the *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey indicate that race-based discrimination remains common and on some measures has increased (Markus 2014).

While Victoria has a strong track record in nurturing cultural diversity and working toward equality for all, taken together the results of the current Community Attitudes survey and other surveys show that prejudice and race-based discrimination and intolerance remain unacceptably common in the community and that this has the potential to create negative health, social and economic consequences for affected individuals and groups and for the wider community.

As discussed, there is no single organisation or individual who can bring about the change required to eliminate race-based discrimination. It is a complex issue requiring a comprehensive response. Collectively key influences such as schools, sporting organisations and clubs, local governments, workplaces and the arts sector can all make a difference through implementing a range of practical approaches such as bystander projects. VicHealth has gathered evidence and implemented projects in all of these settings over the past 10 years of which the findings and resources resulting can guide thinking and future action to reduce race-based discrimination and promote acceptance of cultural diversity.

The health, social and economic benefits of accepting cultural diversity and reducing race-based discrimination are well established and successive Victorian and Australian governments have committed to nurturing cultural diversity by addressing one of the underlying contributors to the problem – the attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities in the community as a whole – along with legislative reform and program development to ameliorate its consequences. In 2012 this was formalised in the adoption of a four-year National Anti-Racism strategy coordinated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012b). Despite this, the survey suggests that more work remains to be done to understand and address the factors that contribute to prejudice and discrimination.

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Appendix 1:

Survey questions and statements for which wording was changed between 2006 and 2013

2006	2013
Are there any cultural or ethnic groups that do not fit into Australian society?	Do you believe that there are any racial or ethnic groups that do not fit into Australian society?
It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures	People from racial and ethnic minority groups benefit Australian society
Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways	The Australian way of life is weakened by people from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds maintaining their cultural beliefs and values
Australians from a British background enjoy a privileged position in our society	Australians from an Anglo background (that is of British descent) enjoy an advantaged position in our society
You feel secure when you are with people from different cultural backgrounds	I feel uncomfortable around people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds
There is racial prejudice in Australia	People from racial or ethnic minority groups experience race-based discrimination in Australia



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