

Children who experience racial discrimination show higher risk markers for later cardiometabolic disease

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School children who experience racial discrimination show higher risk markers for later cardiometabolic disease, including diabetes, heart disease or stroke, according to new research from The Australian National University (ANU) and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI).

The first-of-its-kind study examined the link between Australian primary school students' experiences of [racial discrimination](#) and a range of cardiometabolic risk markers, including obesity, blood pressure and inflammation.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Naomi Priest, who is based at ANU and the MCRI, said cardiometabolic disease is a leading cause of adult morbidity and mortality globally.

"But the links between children's experiences of racial discrimination and their future risk of cardiometabolic diseases is an important yet underexplored area," she said. "This study

addresses that.

"Racism and racial discrimination are everyday experiences for many Australian children and young people from Indigenous and minority ethnic groups.

"Findings from our study show that among primary school-aged children these experiences of racial discrimination can 'get under the skin' to influence overweight and obesity, blood pressure and markers of inflammation.

More than 120 students from Victoria participated in the study, which examined a range of cardiometabolic risk markers including body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, weight-height ratio, blood pressure and a range of inflammatory markers.

Nearly half (47 percent) of the children from Indigenous and minority ethnic groups (including Pacific Islander, Maori, Middle Eastern, African, Latin American, South Asian and South East Asian students) reported two or more experiences of racial discrimination.

"We found students who reported two or more experiences of racial discrimination had increased BMI, waist circumference, systolic blood pressure and some markers of inflammation.

"This reinforces the ongoing need to address racism and racial discrimination as important determinants of chronic disease risk and to address the inequitable burden of chronic disease experienced by those from Indigenous and minority [ethnic groups](#)."

"Addressing racism and racial discrimination remains a critical priority to ensure a just and fair

society for all. This study reinforces it is also required to address population health and health inequities throughout life."

The study's findings are published in *Brain, Behaviour, and Immunity*.

More information: Naomi Priest et al. Experiences of racial discrimination and cardiometabolic risk among Australian children, *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* (2020). DOI: [10.1016/j.bbi.2020.02.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.02.012)

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