



Speak Out Against Racism – Teacher and Student Surveys

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the SOAR Project.

The SOAR project is a collaborative study on racism and racial bullying in Australian schools. We are interested in finding out what Year 5-9 students in NSW and Victorian schools and their teachers think about racism, racial bullying, standing up for others, health and wellbeing and school connectedness. A random selection of state primary and secondary schools have been invited to participate.

The main focus of the project is to find out what makes bystanders speak out when they see racism and racial bullying occur in the classroom or playground, or even on the way to and from school. We will engage students, teachers and school executive in the study to gain a holistic understanding of racism in Australian schools. SOAR researchers are developing a program to encourage students and teachers to act when they witness racism, which will be piloted with Year 5 students in a small number of schools in NSW and Victoria. By surveying students and their teachers before and after and evaluating the pilot program, SOAR Project aims to improve our knowledge of bystander responses to racism and racial bullying in school settings.

Further information can be found at: <http://rssh.anu.edu.au/schools-centres/socialresearch/content/soar-speak-out-against-racism>

What is the purpose of the surveys?

The SOAR teacher survey seeks to gain insight into the opinions and experiences of teachers in NSW and Victorian schools in relation to racism and racial bullying, school climate (cultural diversity and social interactions), racial attitudes and diversity beliefs.

The SOAR student survey seeks to gain insight into the opinions, experiences and behaviour of 3000 Year 5-9 students in NSW and Victorian schools in relation to racism and racial bullying, prosocial behaviour, bystander responses, health and wellbeing and school connectedness.

What are the benefits for my school?

The data collected from the surveys will help us understand i) why and how often bullying and racism occurs in schools, ii) how these experiences affect students and the school community; and iii) what schools and the community can do about it.

Participating schools will receive an individualised report containing school-level data on student perspectives on diversity, racial bullying and bystander responses.

Is participation in the surveys mandatory?

No. Teacher and student participation in the surveys is voluntary. Responses are confidential and individual responses are not revealed. Students whose parents have not consented to their participation will be removed from class and will not be required to undertake the survey.

Teacher participation in the survey is anonymous.

Student participation in the survey is anonymous. While the student survey does ask for student names, this is only to link student data with NAPLAN results and school attendance records of students whose parents have consented to the data linkage. All student data will be identified and no student names will be used in the reporting of data.

What kind of questions will be asked?

The survey questions will ask a range of questions relating to teacher and student experiences of and thoughts on racism, bullying, cultural diversity and the school environment. Some additional questions will be asked in order to gain a demographic profile of the teachers and students, such as country of birth.



Speak Out Against Racism – Teacher and Student Surveys

Frequently Asked Questions

In the **student survey**, students will be asked questions on:

- Experiences of racial discrimination (direct and witnessed)
- Racial attitudes
- Bystander responses to racism
- Self-efficacy to intervene in incidents of racism
- Engagement and openness to cross-racial contact
- Peer pro-social norms
- Interracial school climate
- Social and emotional development
- School connectedness
- Sleep

Are school students old enough to talk about racism?

Research demonstrates that children as young three to four years of age are aware of racial difference and stereotypes, and by around eight years are aware of racism and think about it deeply (Derman-Sparks et al 1980, Coles-Ritchie & Smith 2016). This is particularly the case for students who have experienced or witnessed racism themselves (Priest et al 2016). Giving children the opportunity to talk about racism can be beneficial to their self-esteem, by giving them agency and validating their experiences, and protect them from any harmful effects.

Aren't we reinforcing stereotypes by asking students about race and difference?

It is a commonly held belief that children don't notice racial difference, and so by asking children about their attitudes toward different groups we are forcing them to "see race". On the contrary, research shows that children already recognise difference from as young as three or four years children, and have begun to internalise bias and stereotypes. It is important to challenge these stereotypes from early on, rather than pretend that difference doesn't exist. "Colourblind" approaches to racism that try and avoid discussions about difference have actually been found by research to reinforce prejudice and stereotypes (Apfelbaum et al 2012, Husband 2016, Copenhagen-Johnson 2012).

Does naming racial stereotypes reinforce them?

Stereotypes are categorical beliefs about characteristics of particular groups in society that can be held consciously or unconsciously - for example, "women aren't good at science" or "men aren't good at cooking". Science shows that naming, measuring and raising awareness of common stereotypes is an essential first step of challenging and countering them, as we can then provide counter-stereotypes and examples of why these stereotypes don't hold true. In the SOAR survey, the same stereotype traits are asked of all racial and ethnic groups, and both 'positive' and 'negative' stereotype traits are measured, in order to ensure stereotypes towards particular groups aren't reinforced.

How will the surveys be conducted?

For teachers: The survey will be conducted online in Term 2 2017. Teachers will be given a web-link to complete the survey online during school hours or in their own time. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes.

For students: Researchers will liaise with schools to discuss procedures and processes for the survey visit. Schools will be provided with information and consent forms for parents. We will liaise with each individual school in to establish a time for participating students to take the survey as a group.

The survey will be conducted online in Term 2 2017. Two members of the research team will be on-site to answer any questions students may have about the survey questions. The survey will take 20-30 minutes on average, and no more than 40 minutes for most students.



Speak Out Against Racism – Teacher and Student Surveys

Frequently Asked Questions

Schools will need to make school computers available for students to complete the survey. Schools will be provided with information and consent forms for distribution to parents. If your school is part of the intervention you will be asked to do this survey again at the end of Term 4 2017.

Schools will be invited to be part of the school-based program intervention based on preliminary analysis of student and staff survey findings, together with demographic characteristics of schools. These findings will be used to identify intervention schools in each state, plus comparison schools who will be matched as closely as possible on demographics and baseline survey findings. These comparison schools will be offered first access to the intervention materials at completion of the study, and will be invited to a showcase forum with all schools to launch the study findings and discuss implications for future research, policy and practice to be held in 2018.

What other data is being collected?

We are seeking parents' permission for student surveys to be linked to administrative data already collected for NAPLAN assessments and for school attendance records. This will allow us to examine how experiences asked about in the survey influence NAPLAN assessments and school attendance. This will only occur for students whose parents or caregivers return a consent form saying they DO consent for this to occur in sections 2 and 3 on the consent form. All analysis will be done at a group, aggregate level and not for individual students, and all identifying information will be removed from the data.

We are also inviting secondary school students to take part in a daily diary substudy using text messages. Only students whose parents consent by marking 'Yes' in section 3 of the consent form will participate.

Who will be able to see the survey data?

Schools will be able to see their own aggregated data in their individualised school-level reports. They will not see individual student or teacher responses.

SOAR researchers will never identify students or teachers in any publication. No school will be identified unless they have given permission.

All data will be held at the Australian National University for five years while researchers analyse and publish the data. After five years, de-identified project data will be archived at the Australian Data Archive located at the Australian National University. For students, archiving will only happen if their parents have agreed to the data being archived by marking it on the consent form in section 5.

Will feedback will be provided?

Once this project has been completed we will produce a brief summary of the findings to report back to the schools and participants involved in the project.

Schools will receive individualised school-level reports in Term 4 2017.