

KNOW THE REAL SCORE

**Racism in Sport.
Do you know enough?**

Racism in sport, an introduction

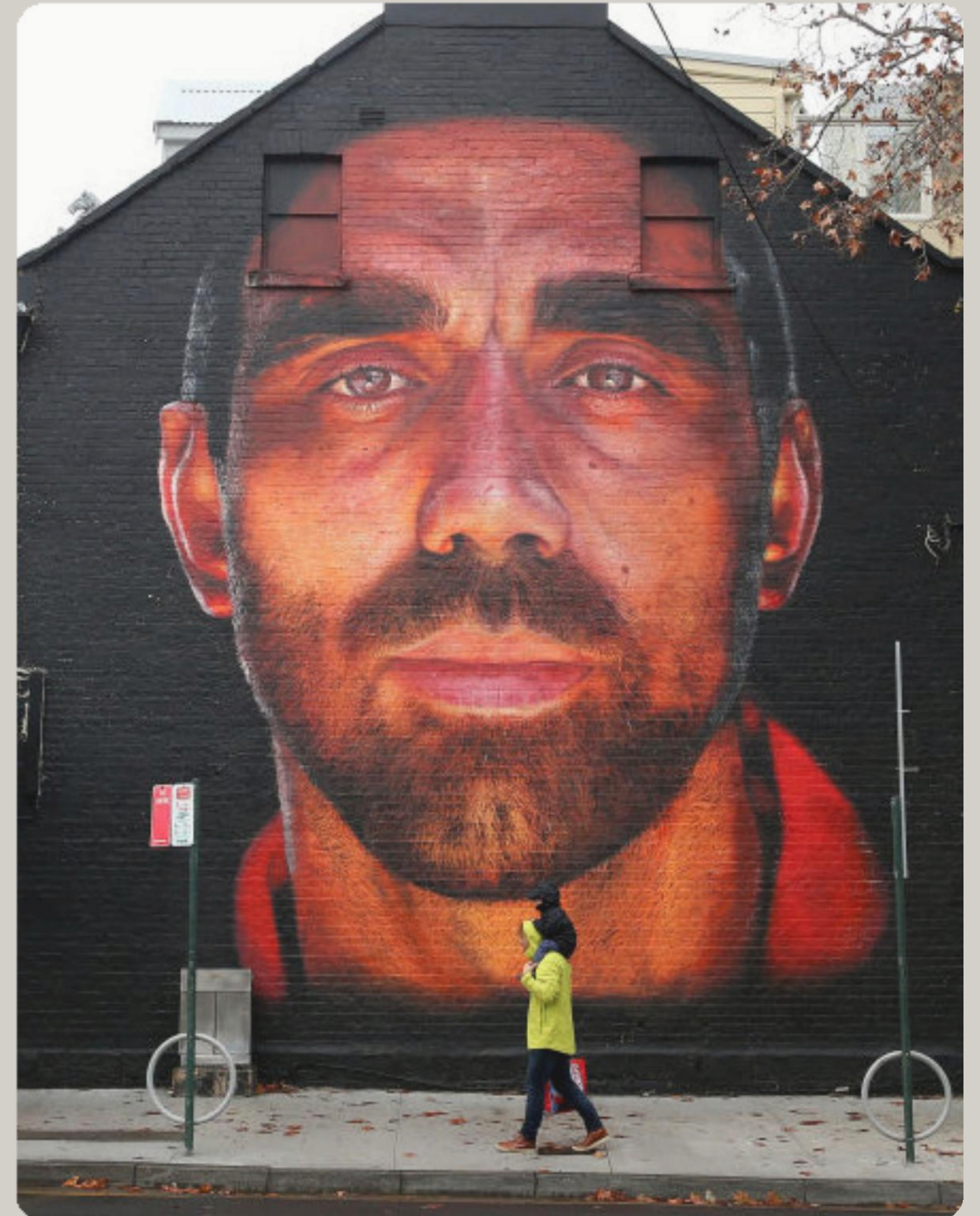
In Australia, sport has long been part of our national identity, but can it play a powerful role in driving social change?

Racism in sport shows up not only in individual incidents, but also in structural and systemic barriers that prevent all Australians from competing on a level playing field. We know more than 75% of Australians are passionate about sport and care about social issues, and when sport takes a stand, it can influence the whole community—not just fans.

Yet despite three decades of awareness and action, we haven't seen a real reduction in racism in sport. Why is this? Sport has the power to unite us, but it also mirrors the challenges we face as a society. To move forward, we need to ask what more we can do to create safer, fairer, and more inclusive sporting environments.

To **Know The Real Score**, we took a **Fan Pulse** looking at:

- How common racism is in Australian sport, and how people see it.
- How fans view racism in their sport, and what they've done about it.
- How cultural celebrations can help Australians better understand different cultures and reduce racism.
- How racism in sport affects people's sense of belonging, and what that means for participation.
- What has been shown to work in tackling racism in Australian sport.

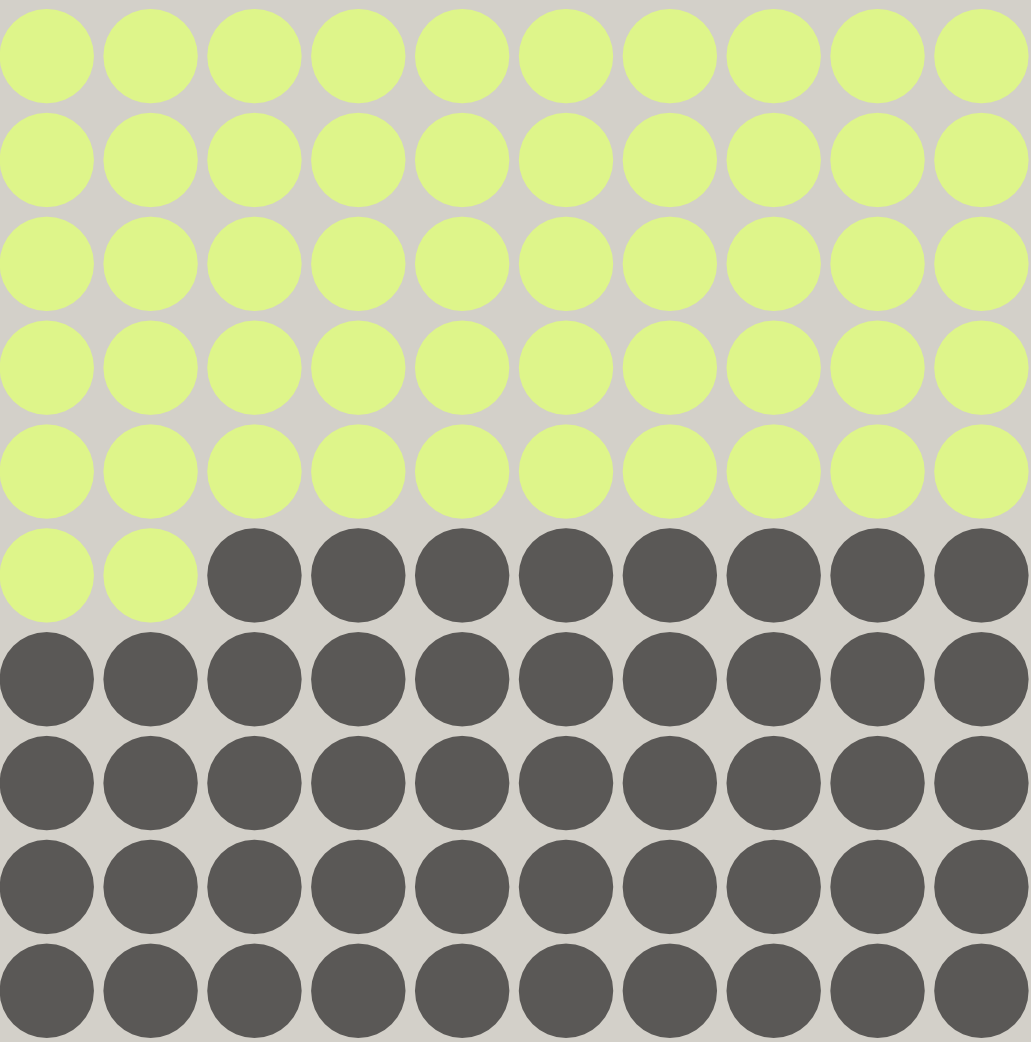


Who did we speak to?

To **Know The Real Score** we took a **Fan Pulse**, speaking to a broad range of Australians across February and March 2025. Australia is a diverse country and we wanted to get a sense from all Australians...

To make sure we heard from all Australians, we surveyed 2,111 Australians and ask their experience and fandom for sport and how it intersects with racism.

Of the Australians we spoke to:



52%
identified
as women

48%
identified
as men



5.9%
identified as Aboriginal or
Torres Strait Islander peoples.



22%
were born outside
of Australia



7%
spoke a primary language at
home that was not English



As a nation, we aren't exactly convinced that racism is a problem in Australia

Racism is a hotly contested topic in Australia, one that continues to divide opinion.

Are we a racist nation?

Do we consider this to be a problem in our country?

Almost half of Australians do not believe racism is an issue, but not everyone sees it the same way.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - and to a lesser extent, people who don't speak English as their first language, are more likely to feel that that racism is a real problem in this country.

51% All Australians

58% Non-native English Speakers

81% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

% who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that racism is a problem

It's hard to recognise racism as a problem if you don't see it in yourself

Just **over half of all Aussies** see racism as a problem, but only a quarter can spot racial prejudice in themselves, making it hard to tackle an issue we won't/don't/can't admit exists.



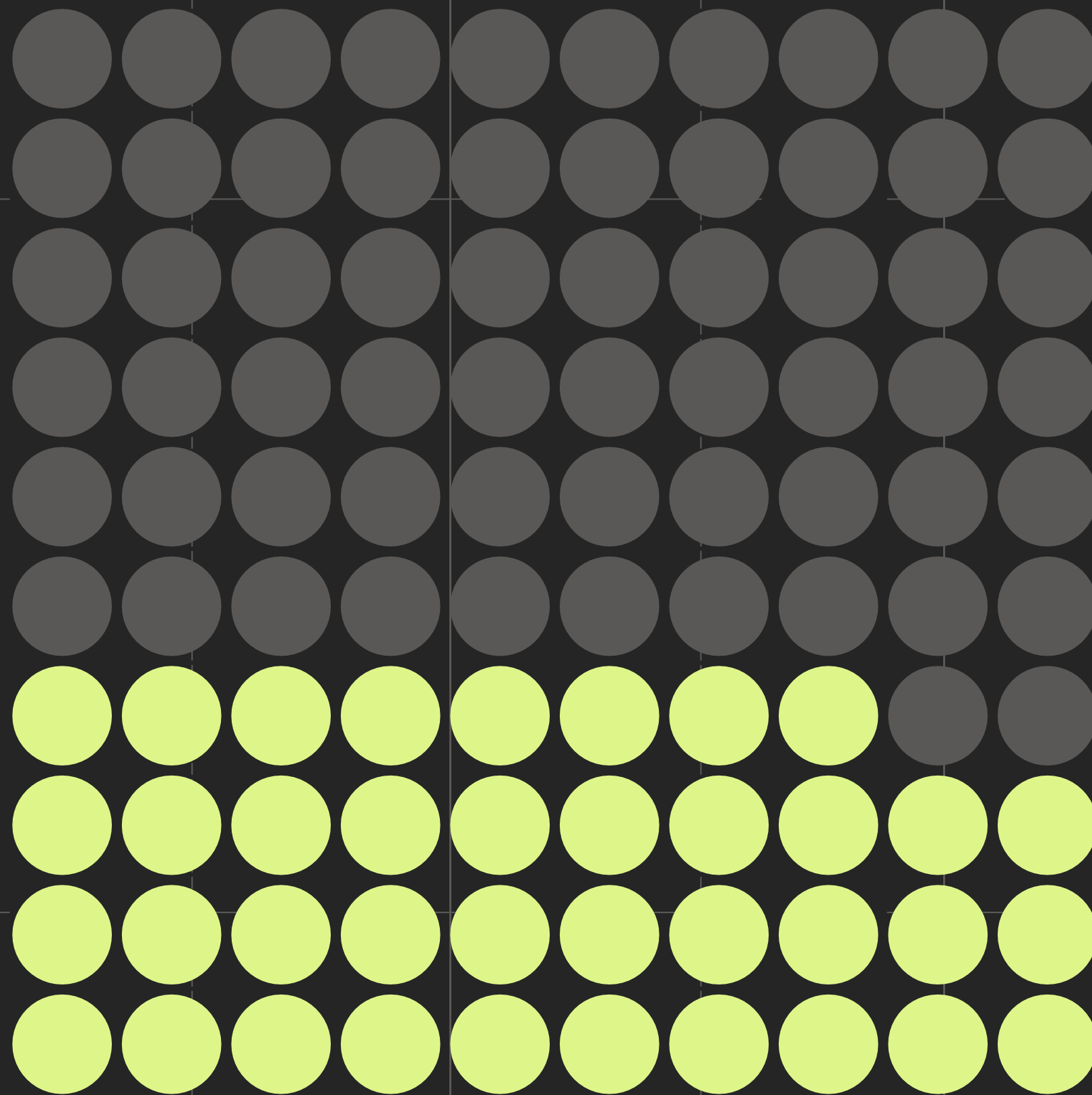
25%

of Australians admit that they hold a prejudice against other cultures

Sport has often shone a light on racism in Australia, but that light can also be blinding.

The conversation around racism in Australia, has always been explicably linked to sport. From high profile athletes calling out fan behavior, violence in the stands, to on-field racial vilification – sport, more than any other institution, has put racism in the media headlines.

Despite prolific attention, Australians still see sport in a positive light....



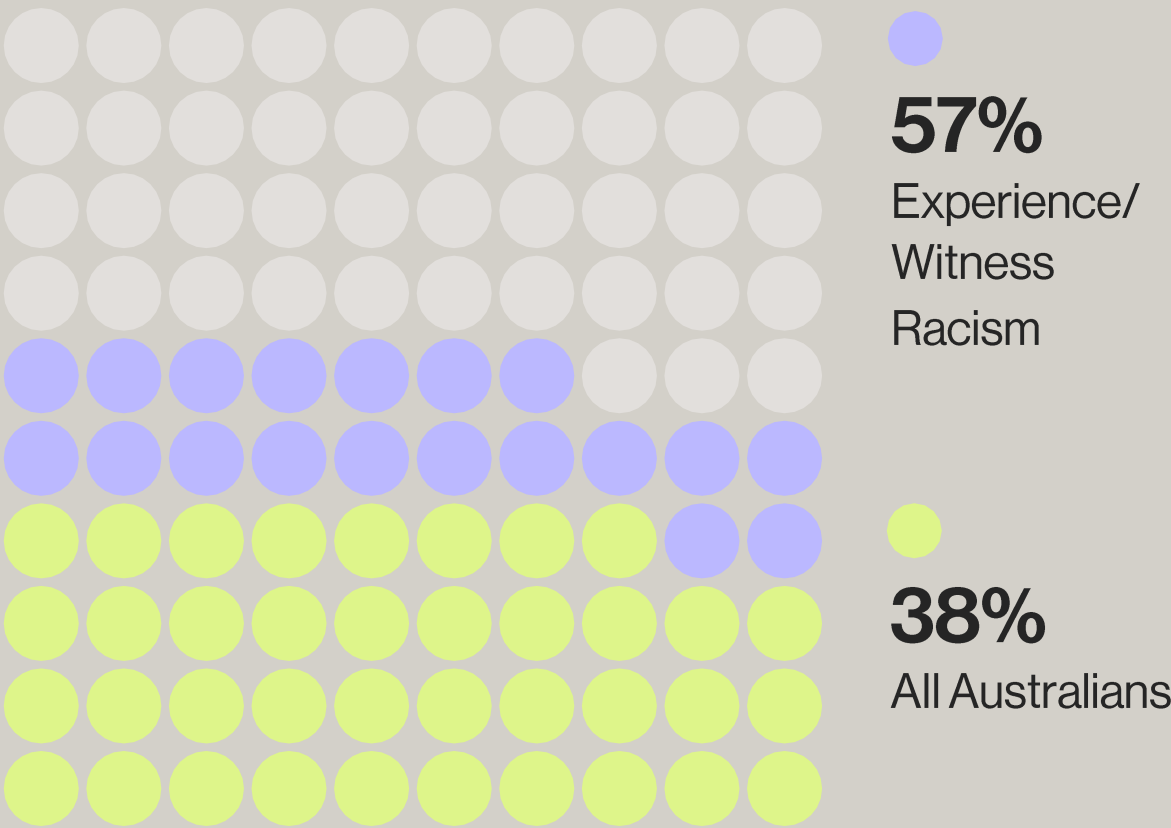
Today, only
38%
of all Australians think
racism is a problem
in sport.

Our own experience shapes what we believe when it comes to racism in sport.

Many factors including our experience with racism, cultural identity and age can impact our perception of racism in Sport in Australia.

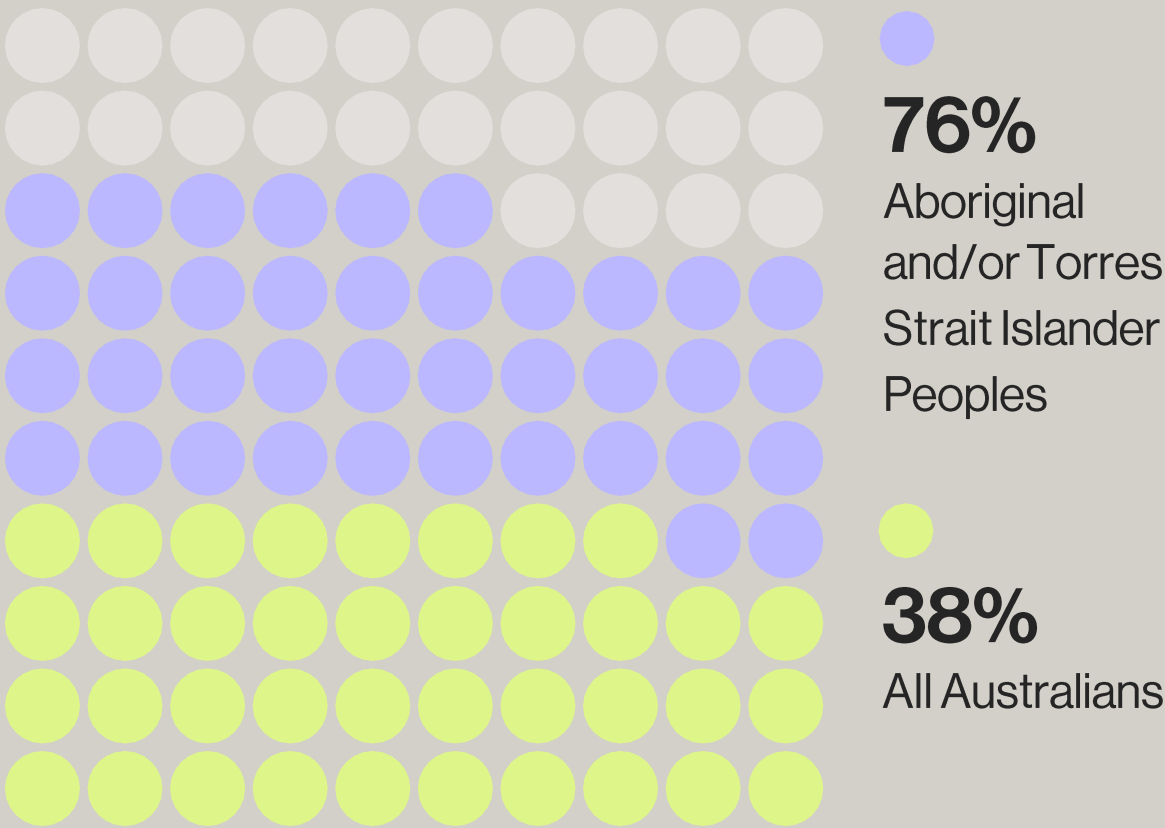
Experienced Racism

When we witness or experience racism we are more likely to see racism as an issue in sport



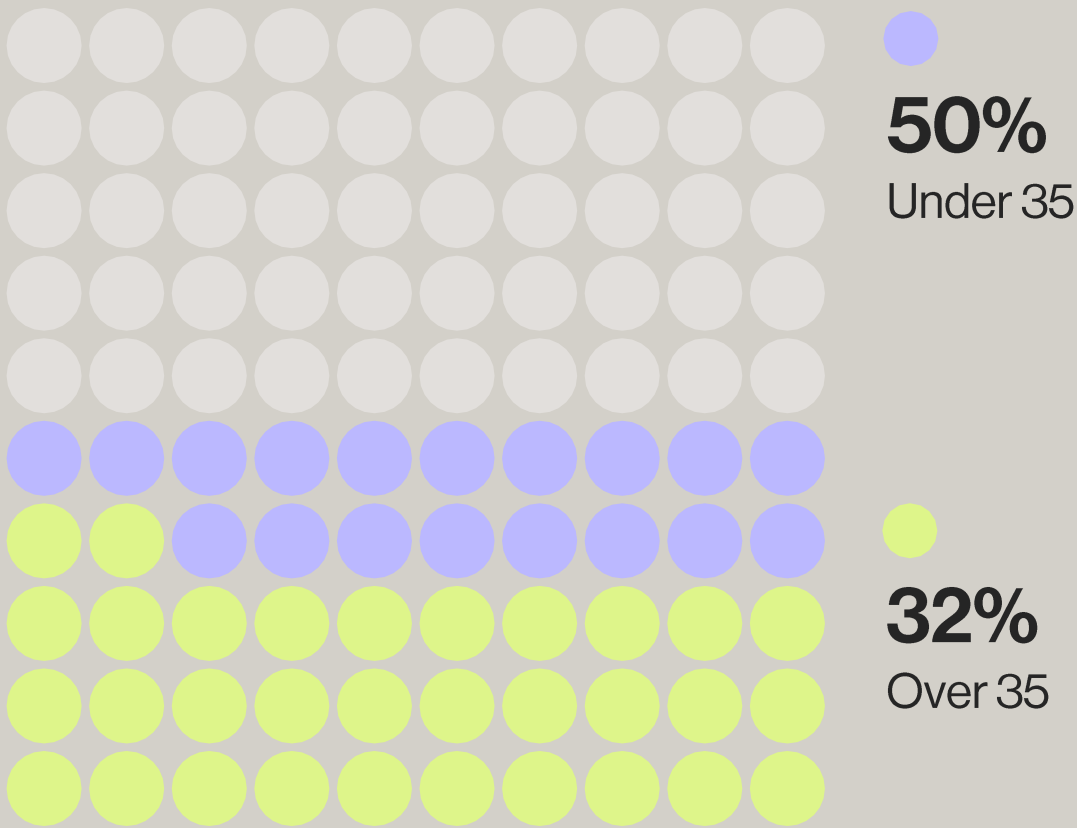
Cultural Identity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more than twice as likely to perceive racism as an issue in sport than All Australians



Age

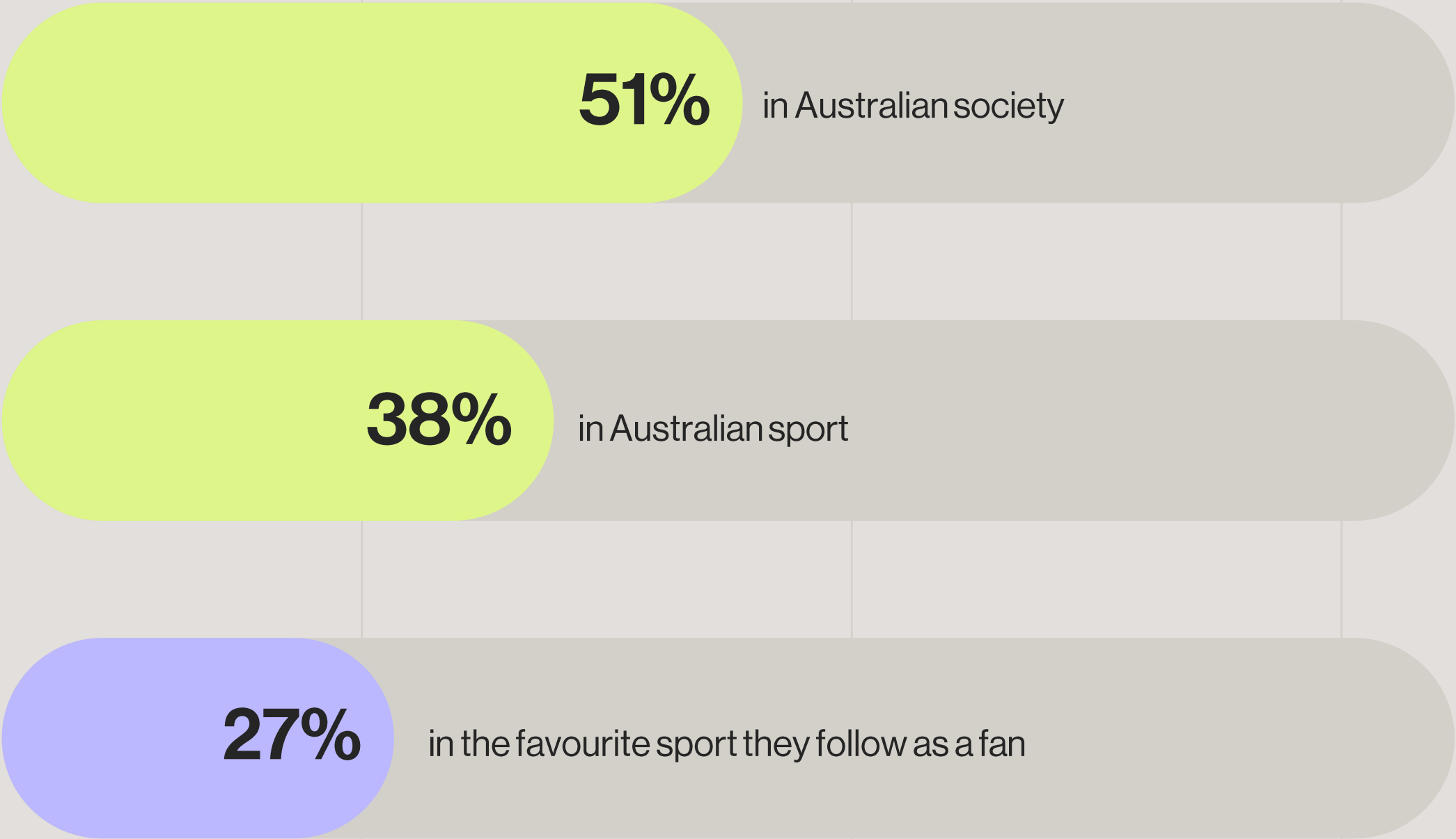
Under 35 year olds perceive racism in sport as a more significant issue than those over 35



And our passion for sport is the ultimate form of rose coloured glasses...

The more passionate we are about our sport, the stronger our rose coloured glasses become, so much so that we are blind to the issue of racism in our favourite sport in comparison to Australian society.

Australians are **twice as likely** to perceive racism as a problem in Australia than in their favourite sport...

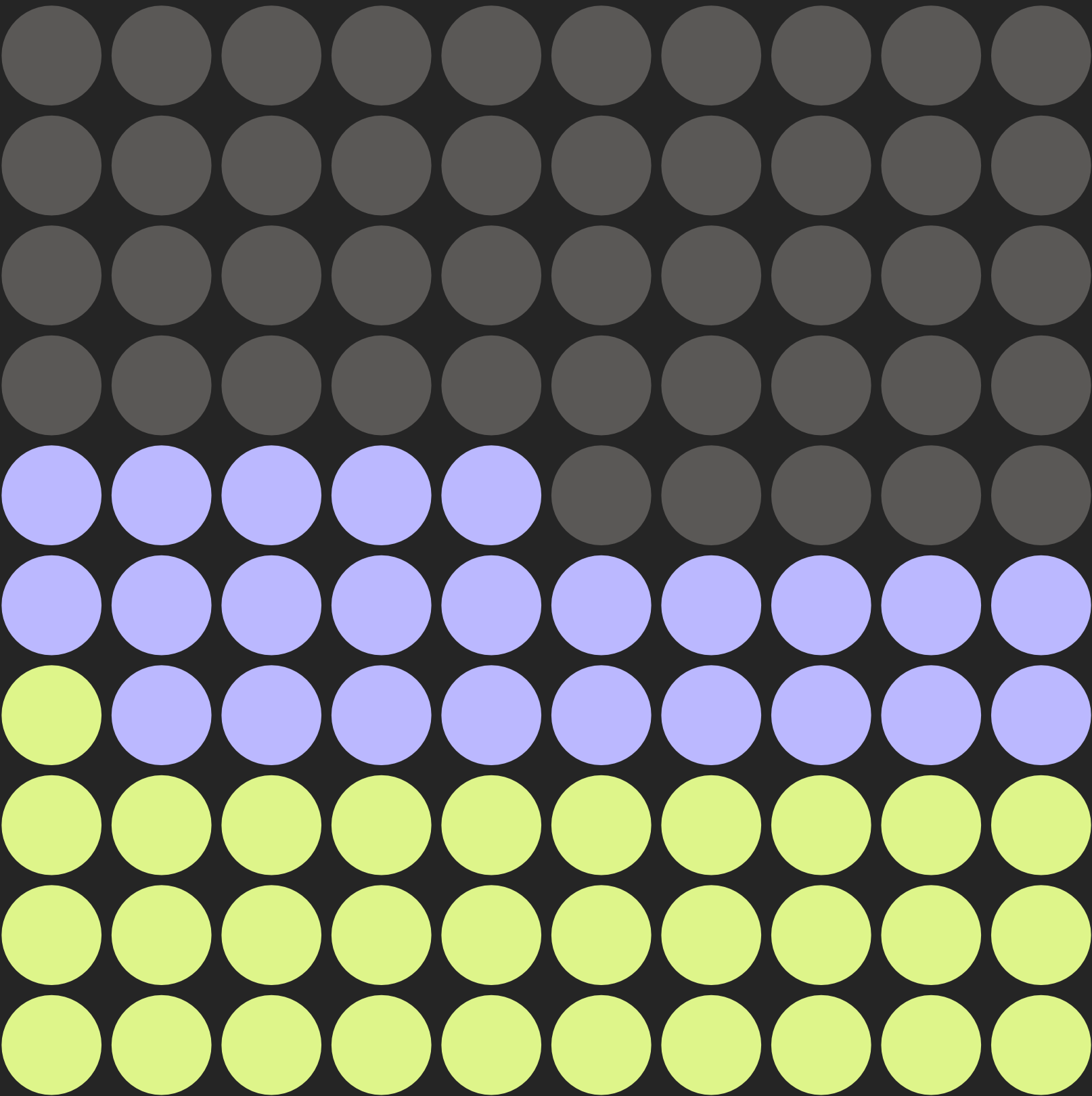


% who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that racism is a problem

As a sporting nation, we believe sport is being effective at tackling racism...

Over 1 in 2 Australians think their sport is effective in addressing racism.

However, experiencing or witnessing racism impacts how effective we think our favourite sport to as both a fan and a participant is at addressing racism



● **55%**
of Australians think sport is effective at addressing racism

● **31%**
of fans think their favourite sport is effective at addressing racism

So effective that sport is seen as more inclusive of race...

Just half of the Australians engaged in sport, feel that it is an inclusive environment.

The perception is that sport is a predominantly level playing field when it comes to race (when compared to gender or sexuality), but that is not the reality.

Sports fans think sport is highly inclusive of...

59% Race

51% Gender

44% Sexuality



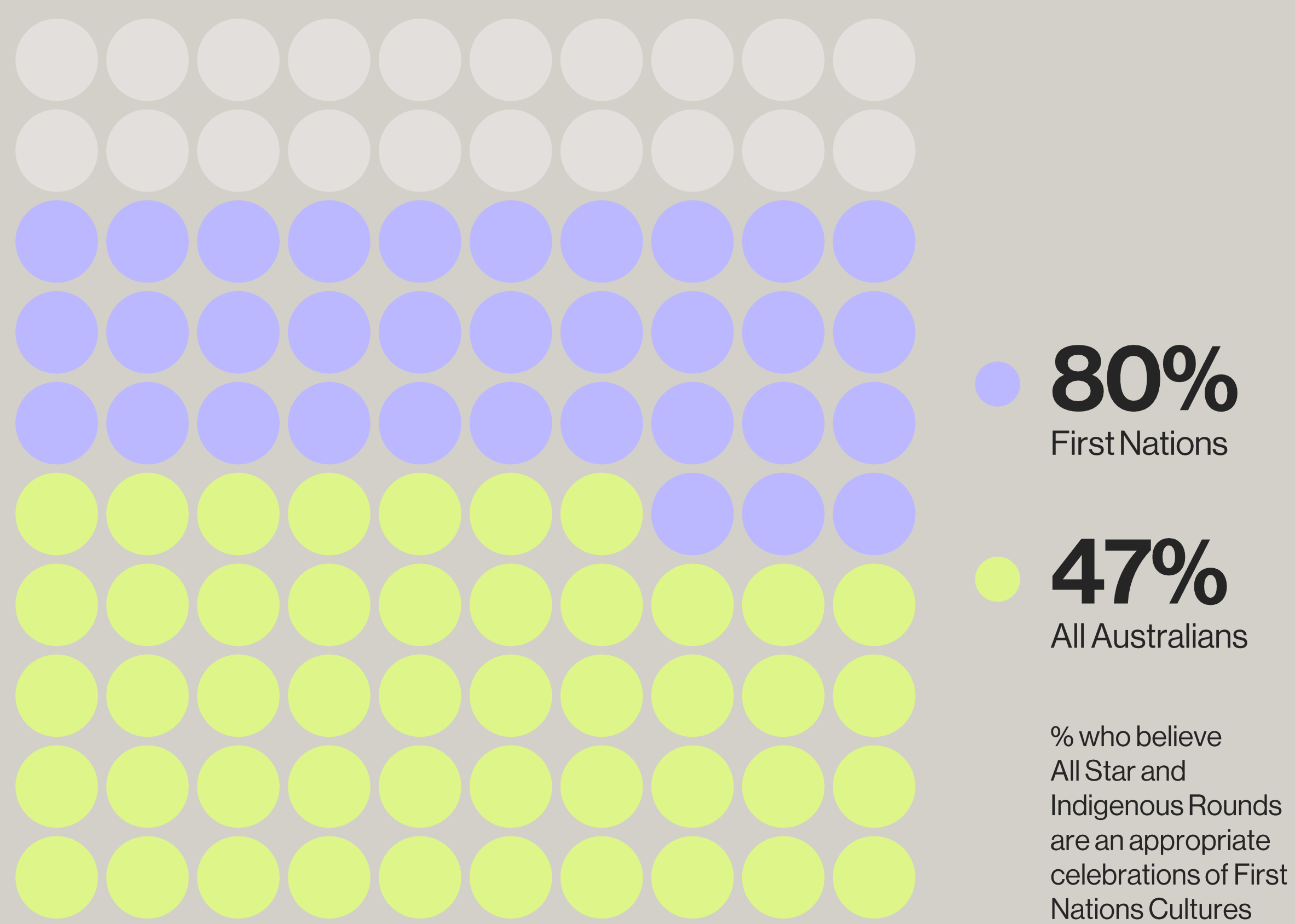
Most Australians feel that sport already does more than enough

One of the ways that sport highlights it's attempts at addressing racism is through celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultures through Welcome to Country ceremonies and Indigenous Rounds.

These are established ways to show respect, raise awareness and help everyone appreciate First Nations heritage.

Despite the intention of sports bodies, less than **1 in 2 Aussies** support All Star games and Indigenous Rounds, feeling it is not an appropriate sport-led celebration of First Nations Culture

That low level of support isn't universal, with 80% of First Nations people believe these initiatives appropriately celebrate their cultures.





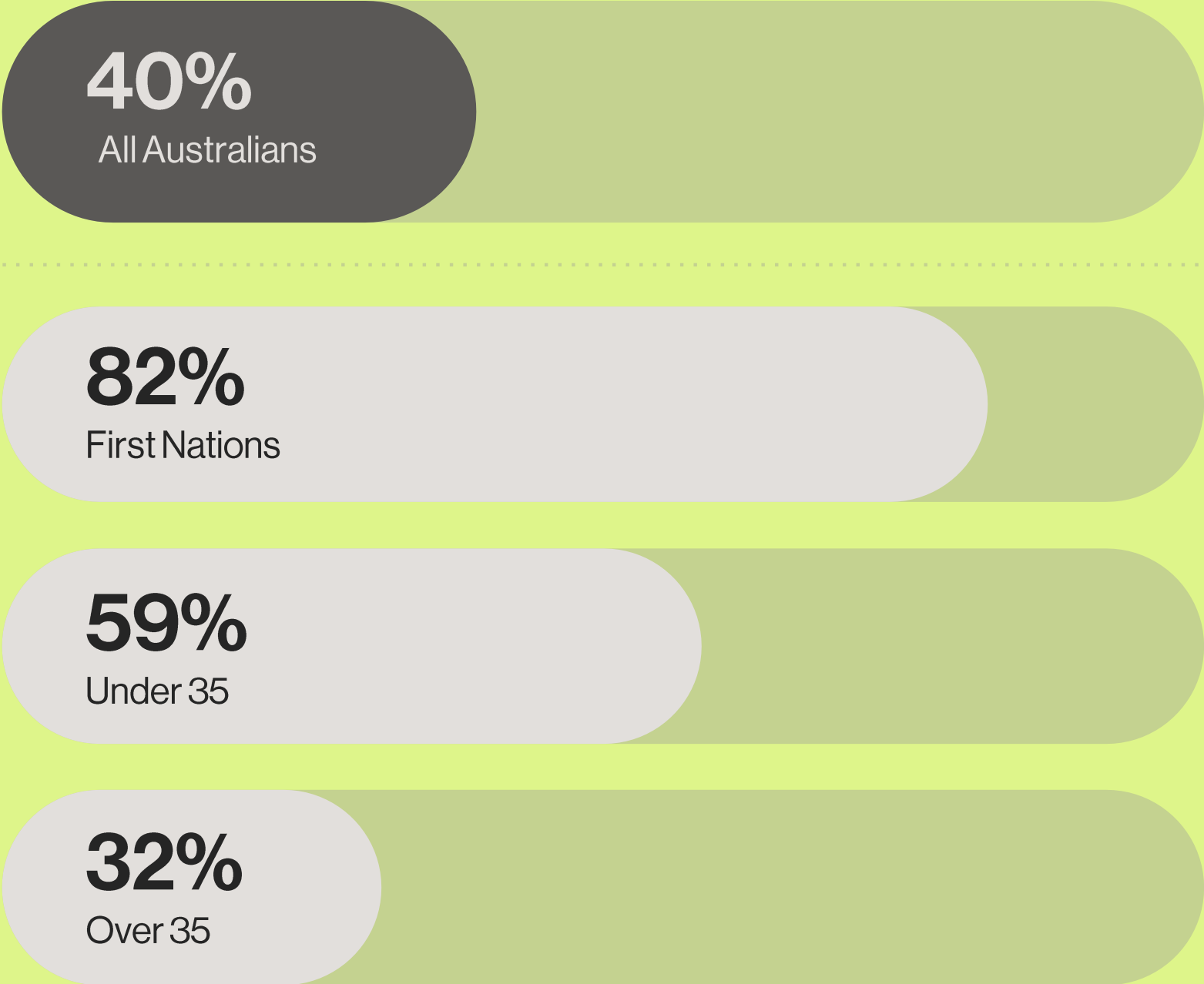
A Welcome to Country ceremony is performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners for people visiting their Country. These ceremonies vary from speeches of welcome to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies.

And this sparks much debate amongst fans...

One of the most contentious current debates is whether Major sporting events should host a Welcome to Country Ceremony.

Only **2 in 5 Australians** are supportive of Welcome to Country ceremonies at sporting events, however, there is a real divide in this opinion.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Under 35's have stronger support towards Welcome to Country Ceremonies and we see a real generational gap in our thinking.



% support for Welcome to Country at sporting events

The reality is that sport isn't always a safe and welcoming space...

Whether it is cheering on our favourite teams from the stands, scrolling our social feeds for sport content, or volunteering at our local community sport field, racism exists in across all the different ways that we engage with sport as Australians. .

These experiences of racism affect players, fans and communities where we can see that there's work to do to make sport in Australian inclusive for everyone.

Where Aussies have experienced racism in sport:



% who have personally experienced or witnessed an incident of racial prejudice in the last twelve months



This sporting reality worsens for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples...

When attending or volunteering at sporting events, it is

10 TIMES MORE LIKELY

that First Nations people will experience or witness racism than the general population, at a professional, community or junior level.

We know it isn't easy to call racism out...

There's no one clear way that people respond to racism. Our background and past experiences shape how we react.

People who have witnessed or experienced racism are more likely to speak up.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are significantly more likely **(31% vs 24%)** to ask the victim if they're ok, or anonymously report the abuse **(31% vs 22%)**, than they would be to simply walk away from the situation **(14% vs 28%)**.

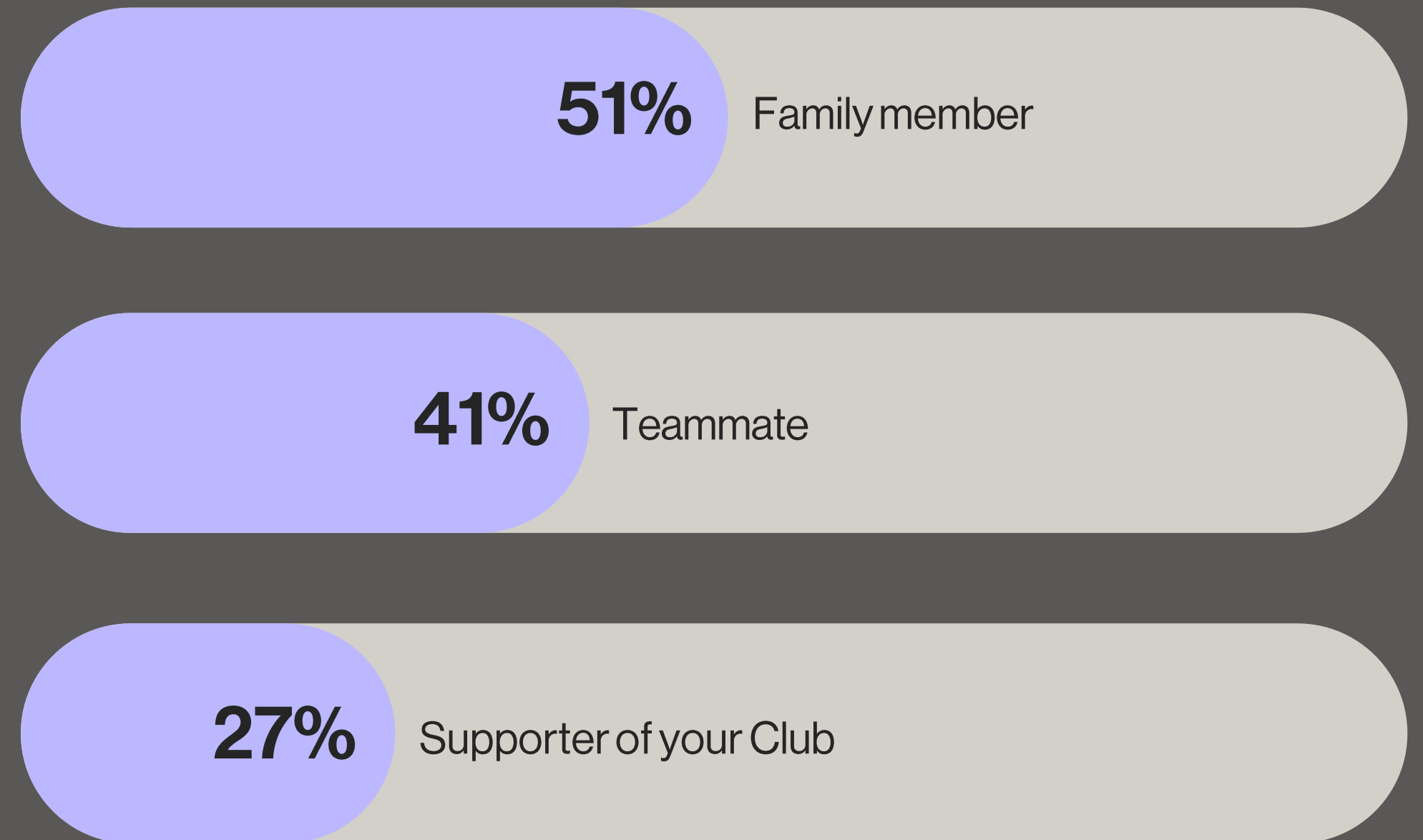
Age makes a difference, those over 35 are more likely to walk away **(29% vs 25%)** and less likely to report **(19% vs 28%)**, compared with younger people.



% who would be most likely to respond by (All Australians)

Particularly with those we do not have a close relationship with...

Australians are much less likely to directly **call out racial abuse** to the perpetrator if they are not well known to them. They are much less likely to do so to a stranger in society, or a fellow club supporter at a sporting event than their own family.



% directly call out the abuse to the perpetrator

Racism in sport impacts the culture of sport and how we belong

Racism in sport can make players, fans and communities feel excluded or unwelcome, which affects their sense of belonging. When people don't feel like they belong, they are less likely to participate, support teams or engage with the sport. This doesn't just harm individuals, it affects the culture, growth and inclusivity of sport as a whole, the very future of sport in this country.

A sense of belonging is vital for participation in sport, attracting fans and growing audiences.

By making spaces safer for people from all racial backgrounds it can help the long term sustainability of a club, increase membership, volunteers and participants and expand sponsorship opportunities.

It also supports a stronger, better-connected sporting community, boosts community support and public image, demonstrates club commitment, and enriches the culture of a club by making everyone welcome.



22%

of people who perceived racism as an issue in Australian sport, felt like they didn't belong in their favourite sport.

When we harness the power of sport, the change can be significant.

Despite the majority of Australians not agreeing or understanding why Indigenous rounds and Welcome to Country Ceremonies are important, they are an excellent opportunity for sports to take proactive action to celebrate First Nations cultures, and can be an incredible platform for change...

These are more than just celebrations.....

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous Rounds have the ability to **kick-start conversation** around social issues with friends and colleagues, **offer a platform** to call out others for their behaviour - an opportunity to create real change...

65%

Start conversations on social issues with friends or colleagues

60%

Call out friends for their behaviour

33%

Seek out further information

30%

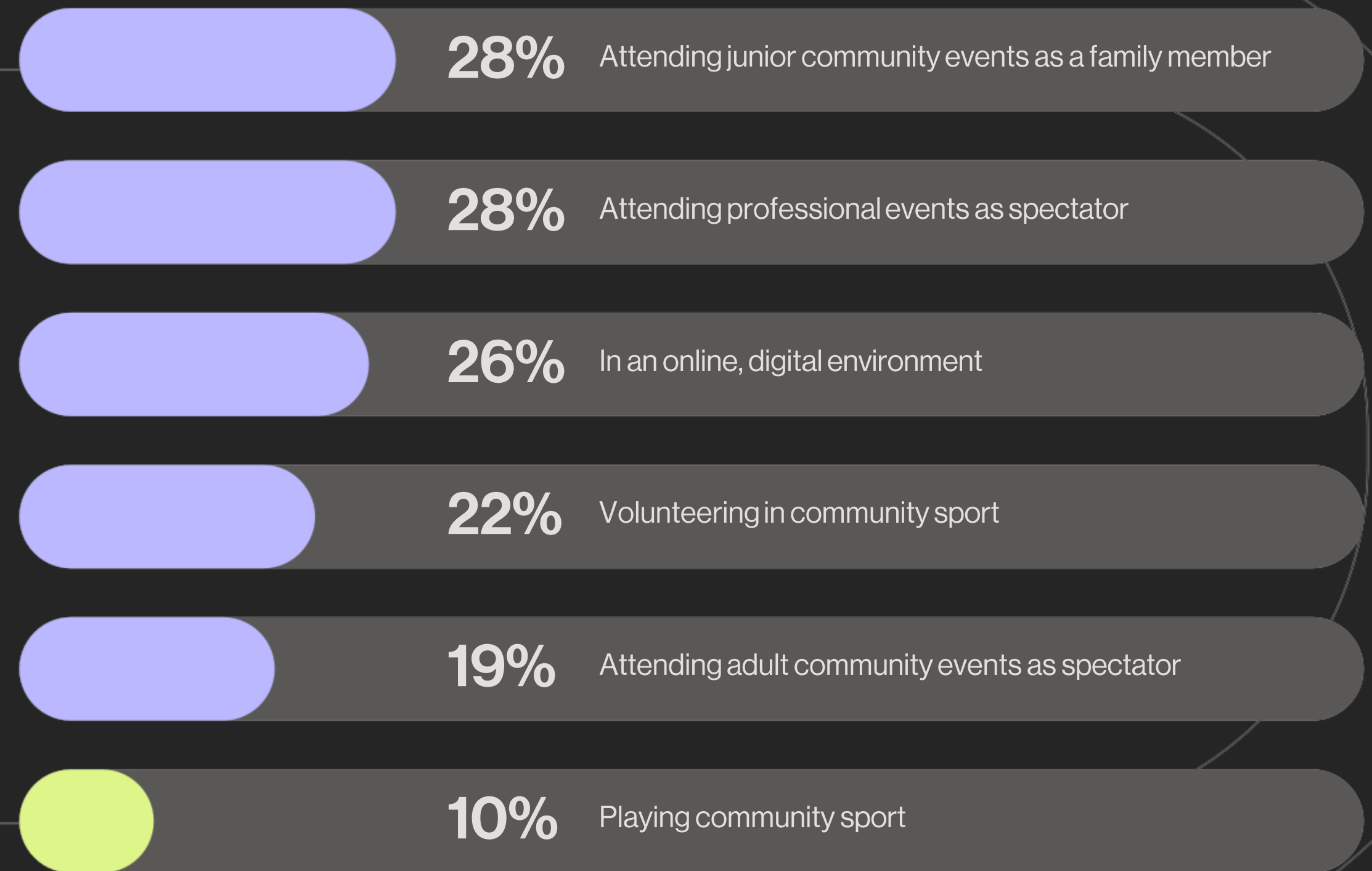
Change your own behaviour

Sport can create a unique culture and sense of belonging, uniting people in a shared purpose...

One place in sport, is not like the others. When playing community sport, Australians are around **half as likely** to experience racism in comparison to any other sporting environment.

On the field, players share a collective goal. It unites people,

shifting the focus away from differences and towards what they have in common. This sense of shared purpose demonstrates how sport can not only bring people together, but create the conditions for real change in attitudes and culture.



% who have personally experienced or witnessed an incident of racial prejudice in the last twelve months

BETTER SPORTING CULTURE

BETTER BELONGING

This sense of belonging can transcend sport, and impact society at large.

On the playing field, we can unite towards a shared goal and a shared purpose that extends beyond our differences. We know when we create this sense of belonging on the field, it can go beyond just impacting our sporting experience but actually leads to a greater sense of belonging within Australian society.

If we work together through sport as fans, participants, spectators, we can have a huge role in preventing racism. By having conversations with friends, family, deepening our knowledge and creating safe places for our players, we can create better sporting cultures on and off the field, and a better belonging for all in sport and ultimately in Australia.



91%

of those who felt like they belong in their favourite sport, also felt a sense of belonging in Australian society. Sport isn't just a game - it's a way to create connection, inclusion and a more united community.

So, what is the change we want to make?

KNOW THE REAL SCORE

www.knowtherealscore.com.au

With the trust and power of sport, we want to create a world where all people feel a sense of belonging in both society and in sport.

In a collaboration between No2ndPlace, Vic Health, the ABC and Western Sydney University, we have created Know The Real Score for Australian sports fans. It is designed, through the lens of sport, to bring awareness to racist attitudes and behaviours as well as institutional and structural racism that exist within Australian society. This will help people to identify their contribution to fighting racism in sport and provide information



on how to improve their allyship with clear simple steps and conversation starters. By bringing awareness to these behaviours and actions, along with educational resources on how to be a better ally, we can support actions toward reducing racism, improving social cohesion and belonging in sport and society. Know the Real Score will engage with the sporting community from sports fans, to coaches, large organisations, to grassroots clubs with the aim of ultimately contributing to improved social cohesion and race relations.





No2ndPlace

An agency that uses the power of sport to create enduring social change which is measured by the impact we have on society

We ensure sports bodies deliver on their societal ambitions
Help brands make a difference
Assist governments to drive diplomacy
Educate communities
Elevate role models

ALL THROUGH THE POWER OF SPORT

If you want to know more about the insights in this research, or the data driving the story, please get in touch at www.no2nd.place or hello@no2nd.place

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and water upon which we live and play and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We also wish to celebrate the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to sport in Australia and the power of sport to promote reconciliation. Always Was. Always Will Be.