



# **First Peoples data report**



**Victorian Equal Opportunity  
& Human Rights Commission**

**Accurate data about the experiences of First Peoples is critical for ensuring policy decisions and public services meet the needs of First Peoples communities. With a strategic focus on promoting the rights of First Peoples, we are continually working to improve the data we collect from our enquiry and complaint services, and the ways we share it with other organisations serving First Peoples.**

Our third First Peoples data report is a result of our **First Peoples data strategy** under the **Aboriginal community engagement strategy** 2020–22. The data strategy is underpinned by principles of privacy and consent, respecting self-determination and data sovereignty, supporting cultural rights, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

**We acknowledge that the complaints and enquiries we have received represent just a fraction of the instances of discrimination experienced by First Peoples. This data should not be seen or published as representative of all experiences of discrimination experienced by First Peoples.**

Even when people know about our services, there are many barriers that may deter First Peoples from reporting discrimination. This includes mistrust of government services and systems due to past government policies such as displacement and separation of families. Barriers to reporting have also resulted from a history of poor complaint-handling, inaction and lack of systemic change across public services. In recent years, we have made changes to ensure our processes are culturally safe for First Peoples and to actively promote our safe reporting pathways to First Peoples communities. It will take time and ongoing improvement to our services to ensure First Peoples get the outcomes they seek from the complaint process.

We acknowledge that there are some limitations in the data we have available. While our complaint team began recording Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent in 2017–18, we started asking this question explicitly in 2019–20.

We'll continue to publish this data report each year and provide it directly to First Peoples stakeholders. In doing so, we hope to help identify emerging issues for First Peoples communities and to continue to shape effective policies and services.

#### **About our complaints data**

When a person makes a complaint about discrimination, we record some key details including:

- what type of discrimination the person experienced – for example, discrimination based on race, sex, disability, age or sexual orientation (these characteristics are known as protected attributes)
- where the discrimination occurred – for example, in employment, in education or in the provision of goods and services (these places are known as areas of public life).

A single complaint can include more than one type of discrimination.

Cover artwork: Gorakor Wunbuni Yingurni 'Walk gently today' (Dja Dja Wurrung) by Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gamilaroi artist Madison Connors.

# Key findings

Since 2017–18, 250 First Peoples have made complaints to the Commission

Since 2017–18, we've received 339 enquiries from First Peoples raising 635 issues of discrimination

Racism and disability discrimination continued to be the most common types of discrimination in the complaints and enquiries we received

The most common places where First Peoples experienced discrimination continued to be in the provision of goods and services and at work

Discrimination against First Peoples often occurred while seeking services from retail businesses and health providers

In the last 3 reporting years, just over half of First Peoples who made complaints were women

Complaints about discrimination in goods and services rose by 40% in 2024–25

First Peoples complaints to the Commission continue to rise each year. There were 49 complaints in 2024–25.

### About our complaints process

We can help resolve complaints under 2 Victorian laws: the Equal Opportunity Act and the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. Under these laws, anyone (of any age – usually those under 18 are supported by a parent or carer) can make a complaint if they believe they have experienced discrimination, sexual harassment, racial or religious vilification, or victimisation. Complaints are normally about individual experiences.

We can also accept representative complaints, which are issues affecting a lot of people, but these are less common. Generally we may receive up to 2 of these a year, but are yet to receive any representative complaints from First Peoples.

### [Read more about our complaint process](#)

Sometimes we become aware of systemic issues, where laws, policies or practices discriminate against a group of people because of their personal attributes. In those situations, we may use our investigation function to look at whether the organisation involved is fulfilling its obligations under the Equal Opportunity Act and recommend changes to ensure it is treating people fairly.

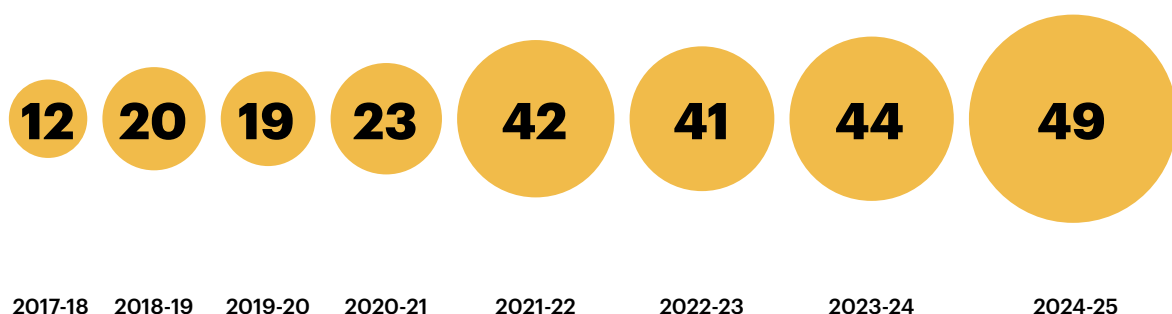
### [Read more about our investigations](#)

# Complaints

## How many First Peoples made complaints to the Commission?

Since 2017–18, 250 First Peoples have made complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment, victimisation and vilification to the Commission. This includes 49 people who made complaints in 2024–25. The number of complaints received from First Peoples has continued to rise over the last 8 years and we will continue our work to raise awareness of this service within the community. See Figure 1.

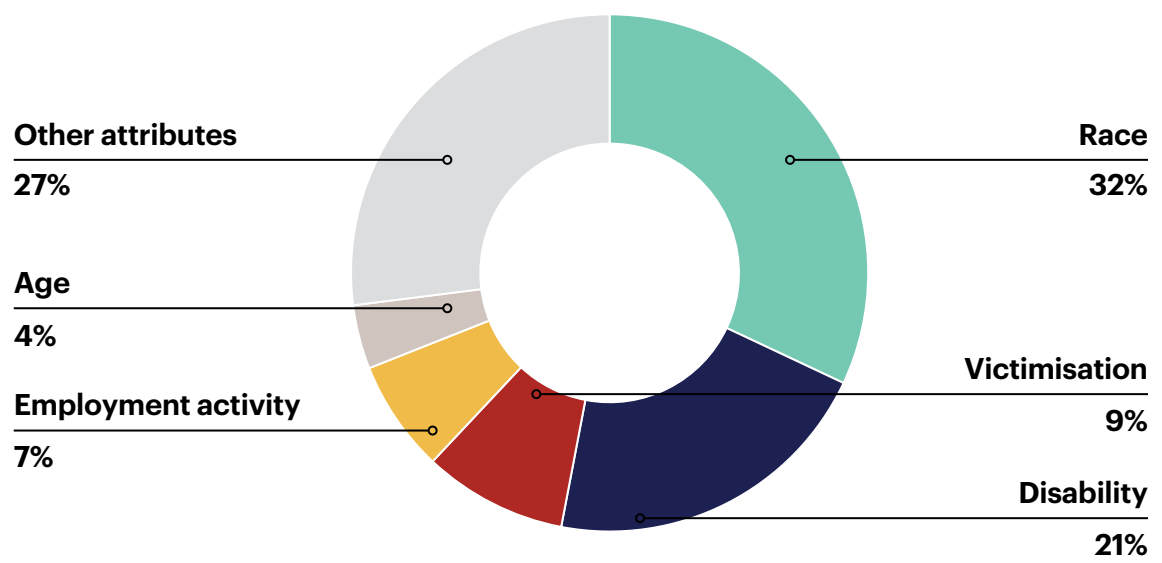
**Figure 1. Complaints from First Peoples, 2017–18 to 2024–25**



# What types of discrimination did First Peoples experience?

In 2024–25, of the 49 complaints made by First Peoples, race discrimination (55%) and disability discrimination (34%) were the most common issues raised. The results for this year were broadly consistent with the issues raised in complaints since 2021–22 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Most common issues raised in complaints from First Peoples, 2021–22 to 2024–25**

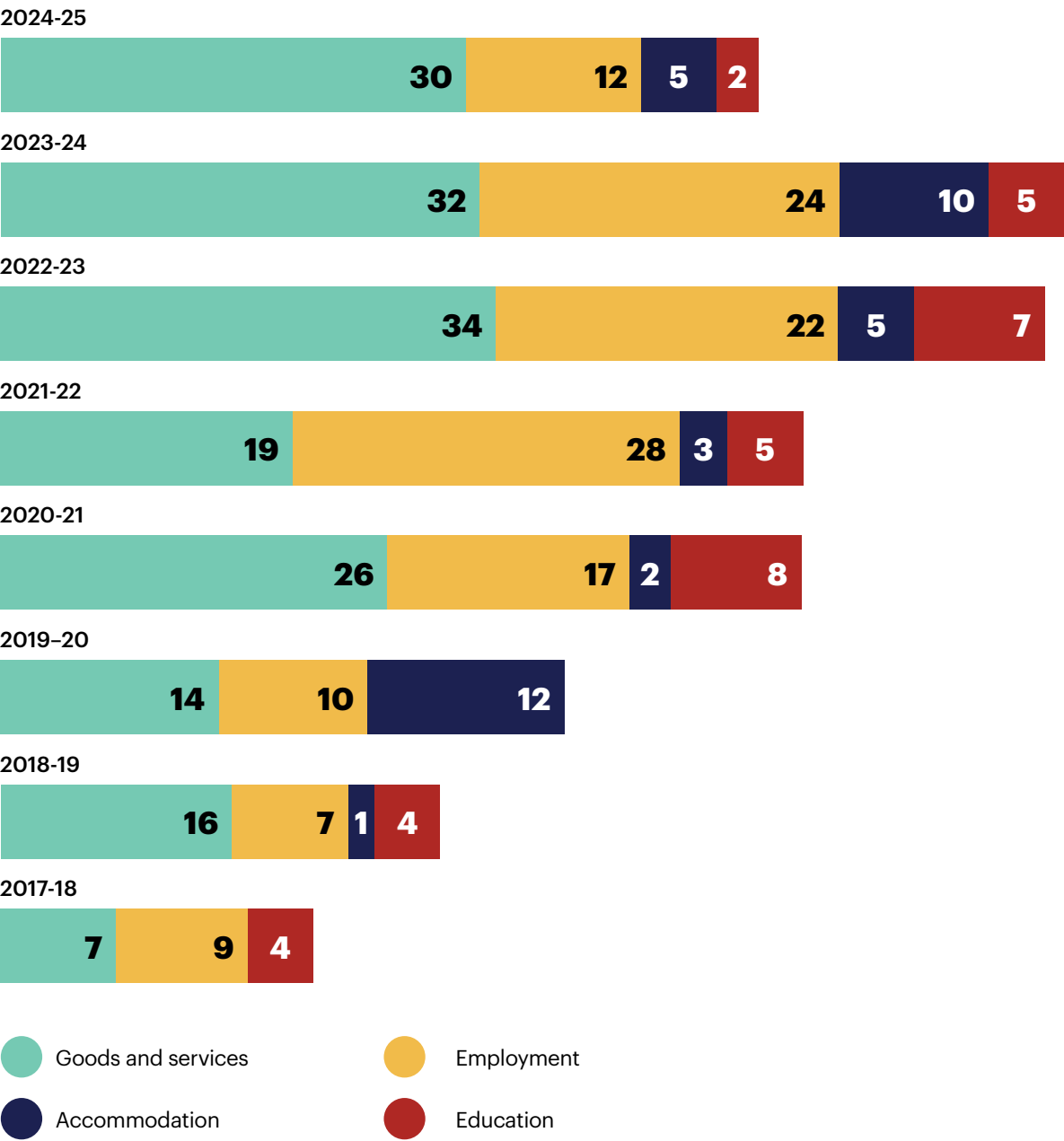


While we do receive anecdotal reports that racial vilification and discrimination on the basis of spent convictions are common experiences, we only receive a small number of complaints raising these issues – typically 1 or 2 complaints each year.

# Where did First Peoples experience discrimination?

In 2024–25, employment and provision of goods and services were the most common places where First Peoples experienced discrimination, consistent with previous years. In goods and services, the highest numbers of complaints were made against retail and food outlets, health providers, and local and state government bodies. See Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Most common areas of public life where First Peoples experienced discrimination, 2017–18 to 2024–25**



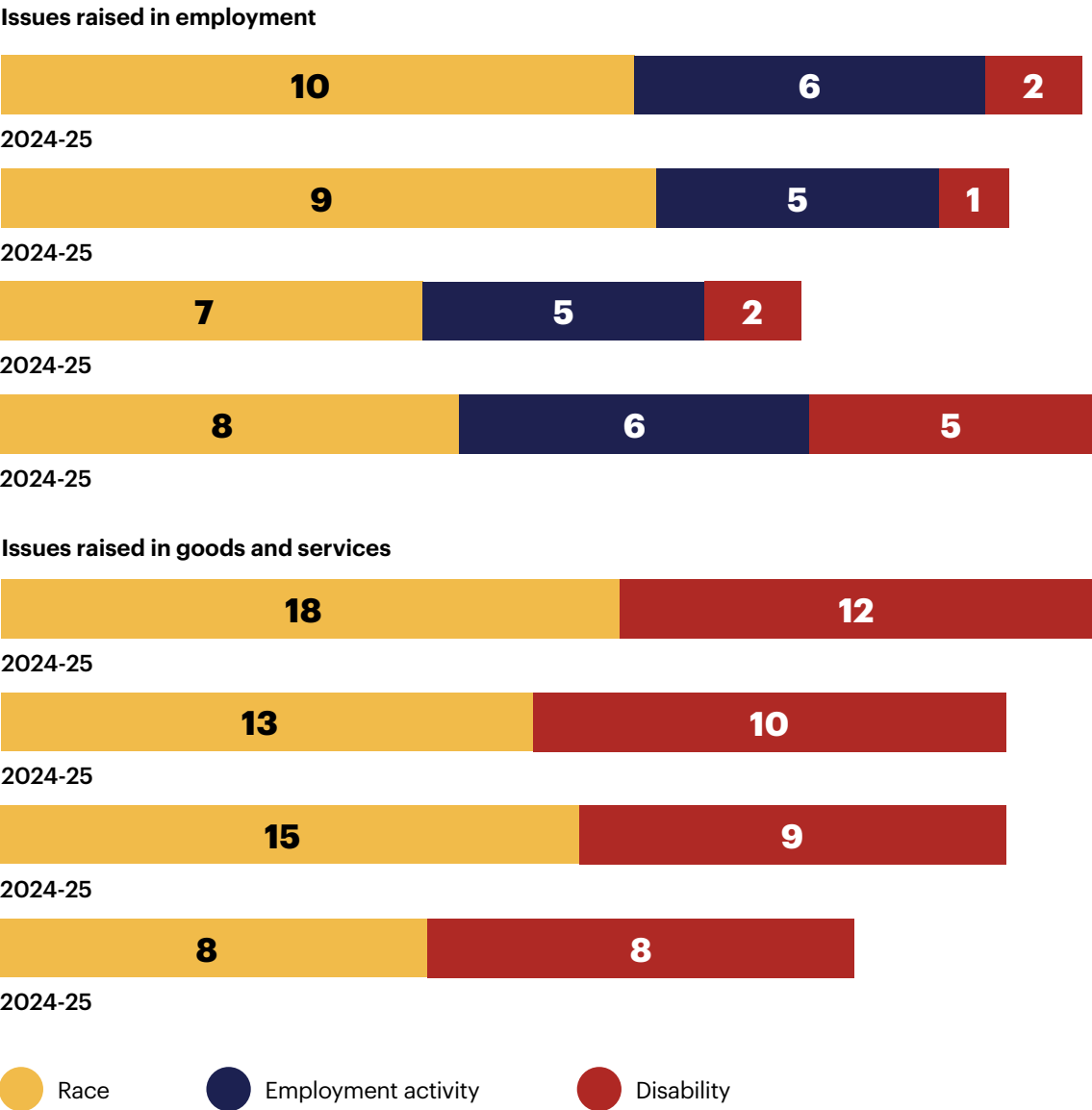
While we hear anecdotally that sports clubs are common places for people to experience discrimination, we have received very few complaints related to that area of public life.

Complaint data shows that First Peoples experience a high percentage of race, employment activity and disability discrimination in relation to employment. When accessing goods and services, there is a high percentage of race and disability discrimination being experienced.

It should be noted that a complaint can include one or more issue of discrimination; for example, a complaint may include race as well as sex discrimination during employment. Another example is disability discrimination as well as carer status discrimination in goods and services.

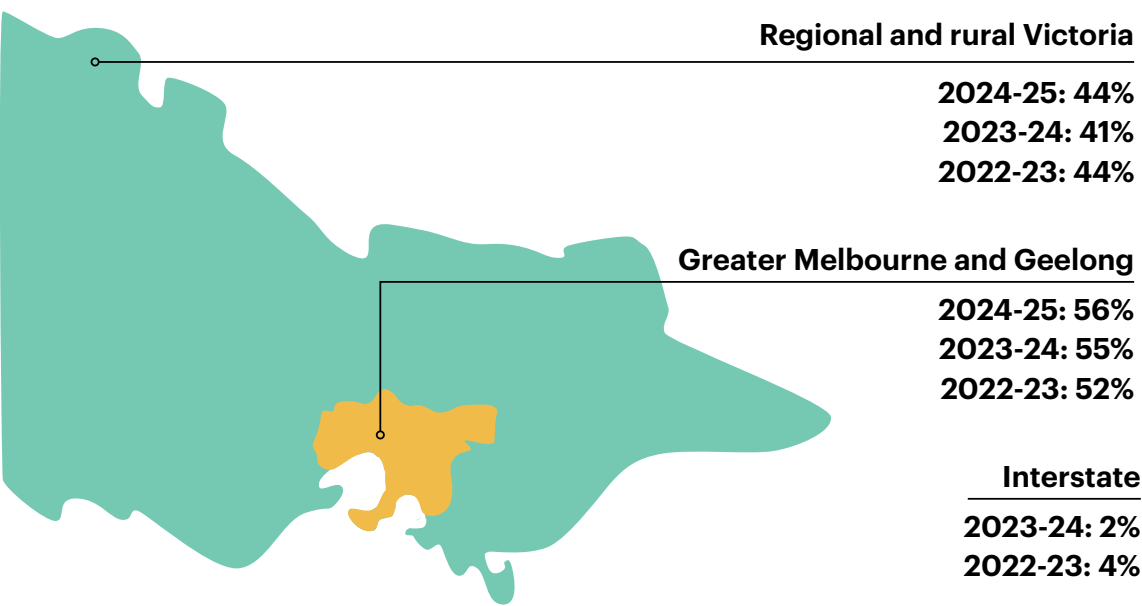
Figure 4 provides the proportions of 3 types of discrimination raised by First Peoples in the areas of employment and goods and services in the past 4 years.

**Figure 4. Proportions of 3 types of discrimination raised by First Peoples in the areas of employment and goods and services, 2021–22 to 2024–25**



Over the past 3 years, the Commission has received complaints from First Peoples across Victoria. From our complaint data over the period 2022 to 2025, we can see the locations where First Peoples have made complaints (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Where First Peoples made complaints across the state, 2022-23 to 2024-25**



The Greater Melbourne and Geelong figures have remained consistent, as have those from regional and rural Victoria. Over the past 3 years, a small number of individuals who were based outside of Victoria experienced discrimination by Victorian organisations.



# Which organisations did First Peoples raise complaints about?

Over the past 4 years (see Figure 6), retail businesses, health/medical services, state government organisations, First Peoples organisations, education providers, real estate businesses and construction businesses were the most common organisations that First Peoples raised complaints about.

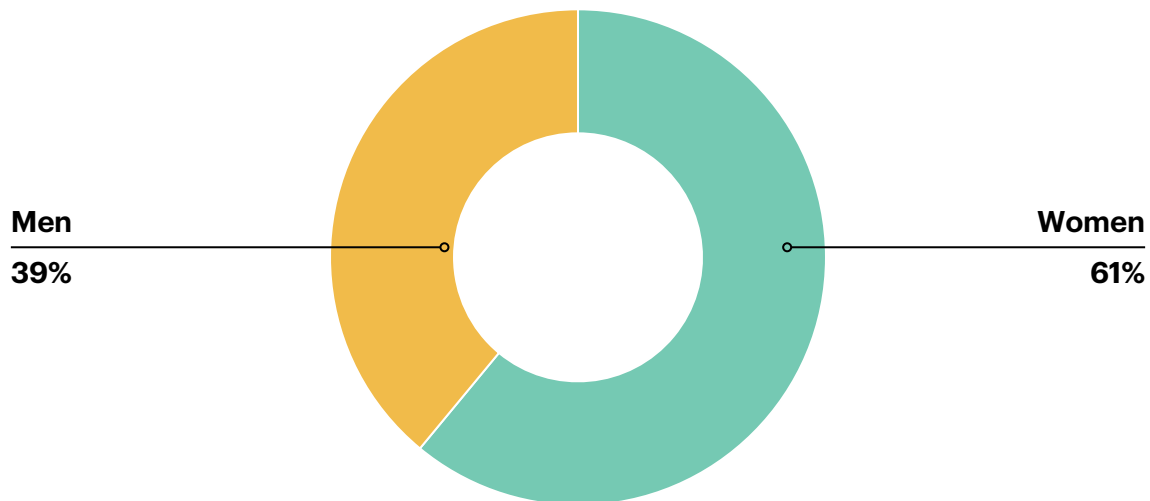
Figure 6. Most common organisations that First Peoples raised complaints about, 2021–22 to 2024–25



## Who made complaints to the Commission?

Over the last 4 years, 61% of First Peoples complainants were women (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Gender of First Peoples complainants, 2021–22 to 2024–25**



## What outcomes do people seek from complaints?

When someone makes a complaint to the Commission, they may seek any of a range of different outcomes important to them and their community. Some common outcomes people seek are:

- an acknowledgement of their experience
- an apology to them or their community
- an undertaking to change or stop the behaviour
- compensation
- being given their job back
- a statement of service or reference
- access to a service
- cultural awareness or cultural safety training
- training in equal opportunity laws so the organisation understands the behaviour should not happen again
- review and updating of equal opportunity and diversity policies.

# Enquiries

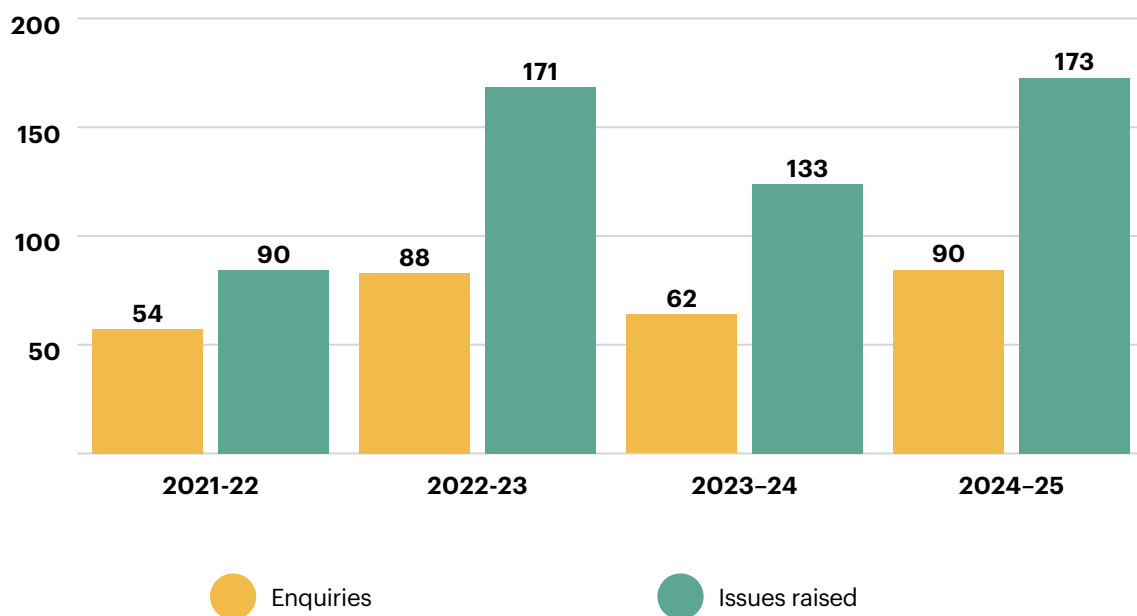
## About our enquiries data

When someone makes an enquiry, we record the issue they are enquiring about. Our list includes around 30 issues such as human rights, discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. A single enquiry can raise multiple issues.

## How many enquiries did we receive from First Peoples?

In 2024–25, First Peoples made 90 enquiries, raising 173 issues (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Enquiries and issues raised by First Peoples, 2021–22 to 2024–25**



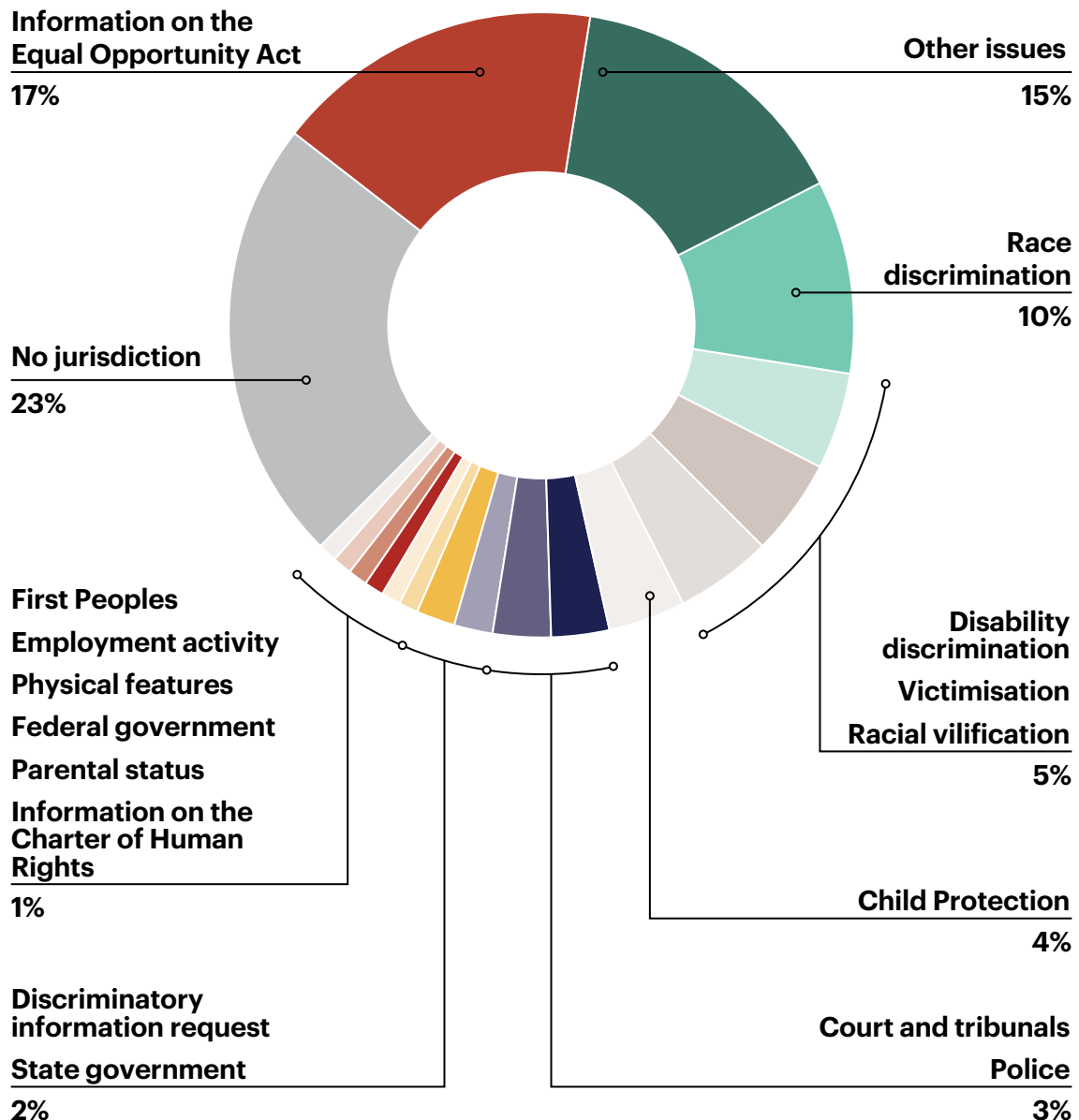
## Improving the data we collect from enquiries

While we have in the past minimised the number of questions we ask people when they make an enquiry, to avoid over-collecting data, we now tailor our enquiry service by providing the opportunity for people to identify whether or not they wish to disclose whether they are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

# What types of discrimination did First Peoples enquire about?

Since 2021–2020, race discrimination and disability discrimination have been the most common issues raised in enquiries. This continued in 2024–25 (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Most common issues raised in enquiries from First Peoples, 2024–25**



# Making our services more accessible for First Peoples

In recent years, we have been working to make our complaint service more accessible and culturally safe for First Peoples complainants – by fast-tracking complaints from First Peoples and providing additional support to start the process. Since these improvements, we have seen significant increases in the numbers of enquiries and complaints we have received from First Peoples. Streamlining our service in this way has made the process more flexible and removed some barriers to making a complaint.

We've also focused on establishing pathways for warm referrals from relevant stakeholders including:

- Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
- Fair Work Ombudsman
- JobWatch
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)
- Victorian Ombudsman
- Disability Discrimination Legal Service
- eSafety Commissioner
- Health Complaints Commissioner
- Mental Health Complaints Commissioner
- Victoria Legal Aid
- WorkSafe Victoria

## Further data

To First Peoples organisations: More data detailing the types and numbers of issues raised in each complaint may be available – email us to discuss further.







# Contact us

Enquiry line	1300 292 153
Fax	1300 891 858
NRS voice relay	1300 555 727 then quote 1300 292 153
Interpreters	1300 152 494
Email	<a href="mailto:enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au">enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a>
Find us on Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/veohrc">facebook.com/veohrc</a>
Follow us on Instagram	<a href="https://instagram.com/veohrc">instagram.com/veohrc</a>
Follow us on X	<a href="https://x.com/veohrc">x.com/veohrc</a>
Web	<a href="https://humanrights.vic.gov.au">humanrights.vic.gov.au</a>