

Being Black in the EU: Experiences of people of African descent

Questions & Answers

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Methodology Q&A

Why was this survey carried out?

Despite binding EU anti-discrimination legislation since 2000 and legal developments in recent years, people of African descent continue to face shocking levels of racism and discrimination across the continent.

The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) conducts regular surveys to provide the EU and its Member States with reliable data on the views and experiences of immigrants and descendants of immigrants, and ethnic minorities living in the EU. The survey findings support policymakers in assessing the state of play and developing evidence-based policies to tackle racism and discrimination.

This report focuses on the experiences of people of Sub-Saharan African origin in 13 EU countries. It is part of a wider survey on immigrants and descendants of immigrants. It builds on previous FRA surveys from [2008](#) and [2016](#).

The findings will inform the European Commission's first report on the implementation of the [EU anti-racism action plan \(2020-2025\)](#) and future equality assessments. It will also feed into the mid-term assessment of the EU action plan on integration and inclusion (2021-2027).

How was the survey carried out?

For this report, the survey collected information from almost 6 800 people of sub-Saharan African descent in 13 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden). FRA collected the data either in person or online:

- in Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, the data was collected using face-to-face interviews.
- in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg, respondents were sampled from the population registers, contacted by post and asked to fill in an online questionnaire.

An international Belgium-based survey company, Ipsos NV, collected the survey data in the 13 EU countries under the supervision of FRA staff.

FRA developed the questionnaire based on its previous surveys on immigrants and their descendants - [EU MIDIS II Survey](#) (2016), [Roma and Travellers Survey](#) (2019) and [Roma Survey](#) (2019). FRA also translated all survey materials into languages spoken in the sub-Saharan African countries covered in this report.

When was the survey carried out?

The fieldwork took place between October 2021 and October 2022. During this time, measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 were in place in several countries. This affected the time required for the data collection, as well as the sampling methodology used.

How were the 13 EU countries selected?

The countries were selected based on the size of the target population, their vulnerability, or the possibility to compare results with previous FRA surveys.

Based on estimated population data, most people of sub-Saharan African origin in the EU live in these 13 countries.

What did the survey ask?

The survey asked about people's experiences of discrimination in different areas of life, including during police stops. It included questions on racist harassment and violence. It enquired about their rights awareness and integration in society.

Who took part in the survey?

Respondents were either born in a sub-Saharan African country (immigrants) or have at least one parent from sub-Saharan Africa (descendants of immigrants). In France, the sample also includes respondents from overseas departments and territories, and the Caribbean.

- All respondents are 16 years or older and have been living in the survey country for at least 12 months.
- 47% of respondents are women, while men make up 53% of the sample. The median age is 36 years.
- 46% have citizenship of their country of residence and 84% were born outside the survey country.
- When asked about their religion, 54% identify themselves as Christian and 34% as Muslim. 8% of respondents indicate that they had no religion.

The report refers to all respondents as people of African descent.

How were respondents selected?

As in the 2016 survey, respondents were identified based on their country of birth (immigrants) or the parents' country of birth (descendants of immigrants).

For this survey, FRA used four different sampling methods to select respondents:

- in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Luxembourg, FRA drew the sample from the population register. Respondents were contacted directly by post and asked to complete the questionnaire online.
- in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, FRA used a multistage random probability sampling design. Respondents were selected through the random route method and interviewed face-to-face.
- in Sweden and Poland, respondents were interviewed in location centres selected based on pre-defined procedures.
- in Belgium and Ireland, respondents were selected using a quota-sampling method. The quotas were defined to correspond to the target population's characteristics. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face.

More information on the sampling methodology will be detailed in the Technical Report, to be published in early 2024.

How many respondents were asked in each EU country?

The number of respondents in the 13 EU countries ranged from 419 in Italy to 579 in Germany, with an average of 519 per country.

Are the survey findings representative?

The survey is representative of immigrants who were born in a sub-Saharan African country and of descendants of immigrants – people with at least one parent born in sub-Saharan Africa – living in the 13 countries surveyed.

However, the results in Sweden must be interpreted with caution as the potential impact of Covid-19 measures during the data collection could have affected the results.

Are the results comparable with previous surveys?

Several factors affect the comparability of survey results: different countries and target groups selected for surveying in each wave, changes and improvements in the sampling methodology, and changes in the mode of data collection. Therefore, this report focuses on comparing selected indicators only.

Measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 may also have affected some 2022 responses, such as those about everyday activities. In this regard, the 2022 results for Sweden (impact of Covid-19 measures) and Luxembourg (change of methodology) should be interpreted with caution, especially when comparing the 2022 results with the findings of the 2016 survey.

Findings Q&A

What are the main changes compared to 2016?

The 2022 survey findings do not show any progress. Compared to 2016, respondents mention higher levels of racial discrimination in all areas of life.

Overall, the 12-month prevalence of racial discrimination has risen from 24% to 34%. It has increased the most when searching for accommodation, looking for a job, at work and in education. For example, the 12-month prevalence of discrimination in the housing market has risen from 6% in 2016 to 28% in 2022. There has been no progress when it comes to racist harassment or violence. As in 2016, 30% of respondents say they experienced racist harassment and 4% a racist attack in the five years before the survey.

Reporting of discrimination, harassment and violence remains extremely low. Most people still do not report discrimination to any official body.

The police stop less people of African descent, but over half of them still perceive their last stop as racial profiling. Covid-19 measures might have impacted the frequency of police stops.

How common is discrimination?

- Overall, 47% say they experienced discrimination on any ground in the five years before the survey and over a third (36%) one year before the survey.

- The highest levels of discrimination on any ground are in Austria (12 months: 67% and 5 years: 76%), Germany (12 months: 65% and 5 years: 77%) and Finland (12 months: 57 and 5 years: 66%).
- The lowest are in Poland (12 months: 19% and 5 years: 21%), and Portugal (12 months: 17% and 5 years: 27%).
- In comparison, only 17% of the general population say they experienced discrimination in the 12 months before the last Special Eurobarometer 493.
- Discrimination is a recurring experience. 55% experienced discrimination more than three times in the 12 months before the survey.
- Skin colour, followed by ethnic or immigrant background, are the most common grounds for discrimination mentioned by respondents of African descent.

How common is racism?

- Racial discrimination is discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic or immigrant background or religion.
- Almost half of respondents (45%) experienced racism in the five years before the survey and over third (34%) one year before the survey. This is an increase compared to 2016 (5 years: 39% and 12 months: 24%).
- The highest levels of racism are in Austria (12 months: 64% and 5 years: 72%), Germany (12 months: 64% and 5 years: 76%) and Finland (12 months: 54% and 5 years: 63%).
- Compared to 2016, the 12-month prevalence of racial discrimination increased the most in accessing housing, looking for work, at work and in education.
- 67% experienced racial discrimination in more than one area of life in the 5 years before the survey.
- Young people, people with higher education, people with disabilities, as well as people who wear traditional or religious clothing or self-identify as a minority (e.g., LGBTIQ), experience more racism.
- Only 9% of victims reported discrimination or made a complaint in the year before the survey, and very few reported incidents to an equality body.
- The highest reporting rates are in Sweden (27%). The lowest are in Portugal (2%) and Spain (4%).
- Women, older people and people with higher education report more often. Most do not report because they think nothing would change by reporting it.
- Those who experienced racial discrimination show lower trust in the police (with a score of 5.5 on a scale of 0–10) than those who did not experience it (with a score of 6.7).

How common is racist harassment?

- As in 2016, racist harassment remains widespread.
- 30% experienced racist harassment in the five years before the survey; one fourth (24 %) in the year before the survey.
- The 5-year prevalence of harassment is highest in Germany (54%) and Finland (52%). The lowest rate is in Portugal (10%).

- Young women are more likely to experience racist harassment. People with higher education and those wearing religious clothing are harassed more often.
- Every 10th woman who experienced racist harassment (11%) characterised the most recent incident as sexual.
- Only 12% of victims reported the most recent incident to any official body.

How common is racist violence?

- 4% of respondents experienced a racist attack in the five years before the survey and 2% in the year before the survey.
- Almost a third of the victims experienced racist violence repeatedly.
- The highest 5-year rates are in Finland (11%), Germany (9%) and Denmark (8%).
- Young men and people who wear religious clothing experience more violence.
- 64% of victims did not report the most recent incident anywhere, mostly because they felt reporting would not change anything (36%).
- Most victims of racist violence (61%) suffer from psychological aftereffects (e.g., depression or anxiety), and 22% are afraid to leave the house.

How does the police treat minorities?

- The police stopped 26% of people of African descent in the five years before the survey and 12% in the year before the survey. Respondents in Austria, Germany and Ireland were stopped most often.
- Among those stopped by the police in the year before the survey, 58% of people perceived their latest stop as racial profiling.
- The highest rates are in Germany (69%), Spain (66%) and Sweden (58%), and the lowest in Finland (34%), Poland (32%) and Luxembourg (22%).
- Young people are more likely to be stopped. Men are three times more likely to be stopped than women (38% compared with 18%). But more women than men perceive their recent stop as racial profiling (65% compared with 56%).
- Those who perceive their stop as profiling also show much lower trust in the police (with a score of 3.9 on a scale of 0–10) than those who do not experience racial profiling (with a score of 6.1).
- Most respondents (58%) say that they were treated respectfully by the police.

How common is racism in education?

- Racism in education has increased since 2016.
- 18% of respondents, compared to 9% in 2016, felt racially discriminated against when in contact with school in the five years before the survey and 13% in the year before the survey.
- 23% of parents say their children were bullied at school in the year before the survey. In Ireland (39%), Germany and Finland (both 38%) and Austria (37%) over a third of parents mention such experiences.
- In comparison, in 2016 18% of parents of African descent said that their children experienced racism at school in the year before the survey.

- 36% of respondents completed only lower secondary education compared to 25% of people generally.
- Young people of African descent (mostly young men) are three times more likely to leave school early than young people generally (36% vs. 10%).

How common is racism in employment?

- Racial discrimination has increased both when looking for work and at work compared to 2016.
- The 5-year prevalence of racial discrimination *when looking for work* increased from 25% to 34% since 2016.
- Every third respondent experiences racial discrimination when looking for work (5 years: 34%, 12 months: 28%). The 5-year rates are highest in Austria (59%), Germany (56%) and Finland (53%).
- The overall 12-month prevalence of racial discrimination when looking for a job is the highest in Italy (49 %), Germany (48 %) and Austria (48 %).
- The 5-year prevalence of racial discrimination *at work* increased from 24% to 31%.
- 31% felt racially discriminated at work in the 5 years before the survey, and 23% did so in the year before the survey.
- People of African descent have a similar employment rate (71%) to the general population (73%). However, 32% work in elementary occupations, compared to 8% people generally.
- 30% of people of African descent have a temporary contract. This is about three times more often than people generally (11%).
- Respondents are often over-qualified for their job (35% compared to 21% of people generally).
- 31% lost income during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 14% of young respondents of African descent are neither in employment nor in education.

What is the housing and poverty situation?

- Compared to 2016, the 5-year prevalence of racial discrimination in the housing market increased from 21% to 31%.
- 31% experienced racism when searching for accommodation.
- 23% were prevented from renting by a private landlord in the 5 years before the survey.
- Young people (43%) and those who wear religious clothing (37%) experience the highest levels of racism in the housing market.
- Racial discrimination in the housing market is highest in Germany (62%), Austria (49%), Belgium (44%) and Italy (43%).
- People of African descent are also at higher risk of poverty, social exclusion and energy poverty compared to people generally.
- 11% of respondents own a property compared to 70% of people generally.
- 45% live in overcrowded housing compared to 17% of people generally.
- 33% face difficulties to make ends meet and 14% cannot afford to keep their house warm compared to, respectively, 18% and 7% of people generally.

How common is discrimination in healthcare?

- Almost one in 10 respondents (9%) felt racially discriminated against when using healthcare services in the year before the survey.
- The highest 12-month prevalence of racial discrimination in access to healthcare is in Austria (28%) and Germany (27%), followed by Finland (18%). The lowest rates are in France, Poland and Portugal (5% in each).
- Respondents are nearly twice as likely to have had unmet medical needs compared to people generally (9% vs. 5%).

How aware are people of their rights?

- 29% know of an organisation that supports discrimination victims. This remains the same as in 2016.
- Awareness of equality bodies is highest in Denmark (67%), Poland (64%), France (57%), Austria (53%) and Sweden (52%).
- The rates are the lowest in Luxembourg (19%), Spain (20%) and Italy (23%).

What can be done to improve the situation?

To tackle racism and discrimination effectively, FRA calls on EU countries to:

- **discrimination** – properly enforce anti-discrimination legislation and effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions;
- **equality bodies** – raise awareness of equality bodies among people of African descent. Countries should also ensure that equality bodies have enough resources to tackle discrimination and support victims;
- **equality data** – collect equality data, including data on ‘ethnic or racial origin’ to be able to assess the situation and monitor progress;
- **harassment and violence** – identify and record hate crimes and consider bias motivation as an aggravating circumstance when determining penalties;
- **victim support** – ensure that victims can seek redress, make reporting easier and raise awareness of available support;
- **racial profiling** – take concrete steps to prevent and eradicate discriminatory institutional practices and culture in policing, drawing on [FRA’s guide on preventing unlawful profiling](#);
- **education, employment, housing and healthcare** – develop specific policies to:
 - support the full socioeconomic inclusion of people of African descent so that they can get decent work and improve their job security,
 - facilitate recognition of foreign educational and training qualifications,
 - address discrimination in the housing market and ensure adequate housing and housing assistance for all,
 - ensure equal rights to healthcare.

Lastly, the European Commission should extend the [EU anti-racism action plan](#) beyond 2025.