



# Race & Ethnicity Abroad

The University of Michigan is committed to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and encourages all Wolverines to go abroad. This resource is provided to help you think critically about cultural attitudes and perceptions surrounding your social identity in a global context. U-M acknowledges that many students relate to multiple identities and welcomes you to use this resource as a tool to explore opportunities abroad.

## GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



### Reflecting on your identities

Expressing your racial/ethnic identity can be a significant source of growth, challenge, and reflection in a new and unfamiliar environment. You may already be familiar with navigating challenges associated with your race and ethnicity on campus, but there will likely be a different context to navigate in your host culture. When preparing for an experience abroad, it is important to consider how your racial/ethnic identity will be perceived within the context of your host country.

Talking with other students of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds who have traveled overseas can be a great resource to help you become more aware of these new dynamics and give you some ideas about how to navigate your specific identities in a new culture.

Remember that students of all identities go abroad and that traveling overseas is an opportunity to experience life in another culture, explore alternate perspectives, and become a more engaged global citizen.

### Considering cultural context

Race and ethnicity can be perceived differently depending on where you travel. Navigating your racial/ethnic identity

in another country may be similar to your experience in the U.S. or the complete opposite. For example, you may experience a greater sense of community overseas, encounter increased racism, or a combination of both. Furthermore, your nationality (typically, the country of your passport) may even take precedence while you are abroad.

Your racial/ethnic identity may influence your interactions with local people and how you will be treated in your host country. In order to be prepared, you are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the country where you plan to travel.

### Owning your identities

Owning and navigating your identities abroad can be an important aspect of your overseas journey. Students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds travel abroad frequently, and while you may have unique experiences due to your identities, these can be opportunities for growth.

Set yourself up for success abroad by taking ownership of your experience and planning as much as you can before you depart. Research your host country, connect with on-campus resources, and plan how you will stay in touch with your support system while away from home.

Explore Education Abroad Opportunities at [global.umich.edu](https://global.umich.edu)

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As you consider and prepare for an international experience, use the following questions to guide you. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list and you may relate to multiple identities. You are encouraged to discuss these topics in-person with an education abroad advisor in your school or college. **The Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs (MESA)** can also provide guidance and resources as you prepare for your experience.

## Research & reflect

- How might my racial/ethnic identity influence where I choose to travel?
- How does my preferred host country perceive and treat individuals of my racial/ethnic identity?
- In addition to being of a racial/ethnic identity, what other social identities do I hold? How will these identities affect my experience abroad?
- What is my citizenship status? What effect will this have on my ability to travel?
- **Nationality vs. racial identity:** In the U.S., you may be identified first by your race. When you're abroad, it is possible that you may be identified first as an American. How will you prepare for this possible shift in the way others perceive your identity?
- **Being in the majority vs. minority:** Will you be traveling to a country where you will be perceived to be in the majority? Alternatively, will you be perceived as a minority? How will these experiences differ from being in the U.S.?

**Heritage seeker:** Heritage Seekers are

- individuals who travel to countries where they have ancestral connections. What are you looking to get out of this experience? What views does the host culture have of heritage seekers? What are your expectations for how you will be received by members of your host culture? What will you do if their reaction doesn't meet your expectations?

## Meet with an on-campus advisor

- How is race/ethnicity understood in different parts of the world?
- What opportunities and challenges have other students of a similar racial/ethnic identity faced in my preferred host country?
- What is the historical context around race/ethnicity in the country I am interested in visiting? How might this affect my interactions there and the way people perceive me?
- Are there local tensions in my host country around my social identity groups that might influence my experience abroad?
- How can I be connected with students and alumni with similar identities who have been abroad?
- Will my FAFSA or other U-M funding sources transfer over to my education abroad experience? What sources of funding are available for education abroad opportunities?
- What on-campus support and resources can I access overseas?

**Additional resources, including funding, on-and off-campus support, and pre-departure materials can be found on Global Michigan at [www.global.umich.edu](http://www.global.umich.edu).**



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