

Sikh Women's Aid



From Her, Kings are Born

Impact and prevalence of domestic and sexual violence
in the Sikh/Panjabi Community

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This report looks to evidence the prevalence and impact of domestic and sexual violence on Sikh/Panjabi men and women living in the UK to help inform service delivery.

First Mehl:

From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married.

Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come.

When his woman dies, he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound.

So why call her bad? From her, kings are born.

From woman, woman is born;
without woman, there would be no one at all.

O Nanak, only the True Lord is without a woman.

That mouth which praises the Lord continually is blessed and beautiful.

O Nanak, those faces shall be radiant in the Court of the True Lord. ||2||

Raag Aasaa - Guru Nanak Dev Ji - Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji - Ang 473
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji – Living Guru (spiritual teacher and guide) of
the Sikhs.

Dedications

The authors of this report would like to begin by giving particular thanks to the following people:

The team at National Sikh Police Association who supported Sikh Women's Aid in not only circulating the survey but also circulating the launch of this report ensuring a strong police presence from across the country.

Turiya Charity for ensuring we had access to authentic literature to capture the faith aspect of the report in a respectful way.

Meena Kumari for her support and guidance from concept to production.

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The entire proof reading and review team for their invaluable insights and feedback throughout the editing process.

Our amazing families who have held the fort so this report could be produced and presented today.

Finally, **the team at Sikh Women's Aid would like to express its gratitude to every single participant who engaged with our survey.** It is down to your frank and honest engagement with us that has allowed this report to be presented to the Sikh/Panjabi community and sector partners.



Staying silent brings peace

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black floral patterned top, is holding a white sign. She has her right index finger pressed against her lips in a universal gesture for silence. The background is a solid purple color.

**EK CHUP,
SAU SUKHI**

Foreword

Dame Vera Baird QC

Victims Commissioner for England and Wales

Nazir Afzal OBE

Former Chief Prosecutor and Chief Exec of the Police & Crime Commissioners

Mandip Singh and Gurdeep Singh

Directors of Gurdwara Aid

Harvinder Singh Rai

President of the National Sikh Police Association UK

Meena Kumari

Trainer/Founder of H.O.P.E Training & Consultancy (Helping Other People Everyday)





I welcome this report, although it is hard to do so when it shows, from no fewer than 674 respondents to the survey, that there is rampant, hidden violence against women and girls in the Sikh/Panjabi community. 70% of the women who responded saw themselves as survivors of domestic abuse yet only 34% of those had told anyone before now. Child sexual abuse (CSA) is referred to by 35% of all those asked, 87% of it against females.

It is a tribute to Sikh Women's Aid that they also clearly acknowledge the needs of the 14% of male victims and the 13% of male CSA victims.

They are demanding culturally appropriate support organisations for Black, Asian and other minoritised women who here as in other research, are proved to be neglected both by the criminal justice system and in the provision of specialist support.

Underpinning all this urgent need to campaign is a longer-term need for culture change, to raise the status of women and stop their casual victimisation.

I congratulate Sikh Women's Aid on this important first step and look forward to working with them as new allies in the fight for justice for victims.

Dame Vera Baird QC

Victims Commissioner for England and Wales





It's testament to the courage and resilience of Sikh Women's Aid that we have this report at all given the hostility they have faced from some quarters. Nothing in this report should surprise anyone with involvement in safeguarding or a true understanding of abuse.

The fact that vast majority of abuse takes place in the family or by people you know is consistent with the experience of victims in every community in the world.

The fact that stranger abuse is much rarer, but often the only focus of attention, is also consistent with every other community. The least safe place for a woman or girl is her own home. Any strategy that ignores that fact will fail.

Any strategy that focuses on what women "should do" rather than male violence will always fail. Any successful response will involve addressing male power and control whilst simultaneously supporting victims and potential victims.

This report provides the basis for a safer and stronger community. It should be welcomed unequivocally.

Nazir Afzal OBE

Former Chief Prosecutor and Chief Exec of the Police & Crime Commissioners





It is very refreshing to see Sikh Women's Aid publishing this pivotal piece of work which starts to unravel and understand the depth and width of the issue within the UK Sikh Punjabi and Gurdwara community in the context of the current time.

They are ideally placed to undertake this work as Subject Matter Experts. They are one of the few Sikh organisations who are trained, qualified and have many years of experience as practitioners in this much needed area.

Simply put, the need for this data is critical for several reasons, primarily:

- To correctly identify the extent and context of these issues.
- To be able to separate religion and Punjabi culture.
- To be able to access and raise funding for comprehensive university led academic research that the Government and state agencies can rely on and recognise.
- This needs to lead to thoughtful and effective victim support that also looks at establishing routes to best deal with perpetrators, that are fully resourced, funded and professionally run.
- To be able to implement a program of education based on factual data. We would recommend this should be aimed at both children and adults through Sunday school, Punjabi and other classes for children, and regular sessions for congregation attending Gurdwaras.

Gurdwara Aid has been working towards implementing safeguarding programs in Gurdwaras since 2019. We wholeheartedly welcome and fully support this initiative by Sikh Women's Aid.

Mandip Singh and Gurdeep Singh
Directors of Gurdwara Aid





It is a bittersweet moment to receive reports of this nature. Some chapters will make for sombre reading and illuminate what we as a community often try to hide. These types of reports expose not only systemic failures but hint at historic short sightedness and a deficit of leadership. It points to a timid approach by institutions displaying no real courage to wrestle these heavy-duty issues with any sincere vigour.

The mere existence of these reports also tells us that as a community we were once unwillingly to acknowledge some harsh truths, that we once felt helpless or unequipped, it tells us that today's legacy is perhaps rooted in denial, procrastination, prioritises being mismanaged and even in cover ups.

For such reports to be truly meaningful we must allow them to pinch our conscience and jolt our gaze towards some of the most painful issues in society, we must then be honest with ourselves and acknowledge our part in the failures.

The Sikh Women's Aid report is bold, direct, and courageously asserts itself as a granite hard read for the community. It will be difficult to ignore this piece of work as it presents compelling findings impressively interweaved with stated cases, surveys, statistics, and the Sikh faith.

I welcome the report and trust the Sikh Women's Aid team will give energy and a new vision for the community to finally pick up the can which has been kicked down the road for so long.

Harvinder Singh Rai

President of the National Sikh Police Association UK





What Sikh Women's Aid have been able to do with this report and findings is show the extent and nature of the levels of abuse within Sikh/Punjabi community.

This body of work will enable national and local services to be able to understand on how we support women, men, and children better. Safeguarding people from abuse should be a top priority for all. I thank Sikh Women's Aid for this report and for all the work they have done and will go onto do.

Meena Kumari

Trainer/Founder of H.O.P.E Training & Consultancy (Helping Other People Everyday)



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1: Executive Summary

Introduction

Sikh Women's Aid has been established to provide support services to women and girls in response to the emerging crisis of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The founding team has over 40 years combined experience supporting victims.

The team has now led the first survey of its kind to capture and evidence experiences of Domestic and Sexual Abuse (DSA) in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The survey took place over the Summer of 2021 and sought to learn and provide a baseline of evidence from individuals of their experiences as children and adults of the impact the abuse had on their lives. Sikh Women's Aid are confident that the survey reached the intended audience and the sample size upon closure of the survey was 674 respondents.

Background

There has been little to no academic research that has looked at Sikh/Panjabi victims of abuse. Although the report is not academic in nature, it does provide, perhaps for the first time ever, an insight into Sikh/Panjabi victim's experience of abuse. The Sikh Faith is a testament to women and their role in society. Sadly, experience and anecdotal evidence suggests some of it's followers have lost the core of the faith's message that seeks to celebrate women and their contribution and role in society.

There is a conflict between the high values of the Sikh Faith and what is practised by some Sikh/Panjabi people in their daily lives. It is the experience of Sikh Women's Aid that historic toxic cultural practises that originate from Sikh/Panjabi ancestral lands in India, often continue to be practiced today within the community in the diaspora.

Summary of Findings

70% of respondents reported that they had experienced domestic violence and abuse (DVA). Despite 97% of respondents identifying themselves as having an awareness of DVA, only 34% of respondents informed anyone or accessed support services. Nearly half (47%) of all respondents who experienced DVA had more than one perpetrator. Men from the Sikh/Panjabi community also experience DVA (14%).

When looking at the figures for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), over a third of all respondents (35%) have experienced CSE/CSA. Females are disproportionately impacted (87%) but some males (13%) are also impacted. 1 in 7 respondents that said, 'yes' to having experienced CSE/CSA, had more than one perpetrator. The data suggests that victims are more likely to be abused by someone in their family setting or someone known to them (38%), than by online exploitation (1.5%).

65% of respondents reported that the abuse they suffered had left a long-lasting impact on their physical or mental wellbeing. When the data was further aggregated, it was found that 62% of all respondents had experienced at least one form of impact listed in the survey. 47% of all respondents stated that they had experienced two or more forms of impact listed in the survey.

72% of respondents who said 'yes' to being impacted by the abuse they suffered as adults or as children, stated they had suffered depression and anxiety. 67% had problems developing trust with others. 46% suffered with anger issues. 43% suffered a breakdown of intimate relationships.



Summary of Recommendations

More academic based research needs to be carried out on the extent of abuse within the Sikh/Panjabi Community.

Preventing violence and abuse from happening in the first place is key to making a significant difference to the overall prevalence of these crimes. To end VAWG, DVA and CSE/CSA, a focus on early education and respectful relationships is essential.

Properly funded prevention programmes done well, can challenge the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against and oppress women and girls in the Sikh/Panjabi community and across all communities.

Culturally sensitive and trauma informed projects and services need to be funded so that victims can access appropriate services. This may include bi-lingual DSA programmes and specialist counselling.

Multi-lingual, culturally appropriate perpetrator programmes need to be developed which include campaigns and awareness of the consequences for perpetrators of abuse including female perpetrators.

Funding must be awarded to those community organisations who have been rigorously checked, ensuring that they have the right policies and procedures in place, deeming them fit for purpose.



2: Objectives

Sikh Women's Aid has been established to provide support services to women and girls in response to the emerging crisis of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The founding team has over 40 years combined experience supporting victims. The team has now led the first survey of its kind to capture and evidence experiences of Domestic and Sexual Abuse (DSA) in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The survey took place over the summer of 2021 and sought to learn and provide a baseline of evidence from individuals of their experiences as children and adults and the impact it had on their lives.

Sikh Women's Aid has launched a helpline number available on their website and social media platforms. The team is currently only able to provide emotional support and signposting to victims whilst they plan and develop their service profile. At the time of writing this report (October 21), Sikh Women's Aid had supported twenty victims over a 12-week period.

The purpose of the survey and this report is as follows:-

1. As a newly formed organisation, Sikh Women's Aid needed an evidenced baseline to enable strategic planning of services with the survey forming part of the planning process.
2. To ensure any service delivery and provision provided by Sikh Women's Aid is done so with specific needs and priorities of victims from the Sikh/Panjabi community in mind.
3. Sikh Women's Aid is committed to transparency and to partnership working. Due to the high response rate and the evidence of DSA gathered from within the Sikh/Panjabi Community, Sikh Women's Aid feel they have a responsibility to share the data with partners across the voluntary, community and statutory sectors whilst recognising the limitations of the survey.



3: Background

The Sikh/Panjabi community in the United Kingdom is often regarded as an affluent caring and charitable community. The community's contributions to society are often subject to much praise and media attention. Research shows that:

- Sikhs are twice more likely to have a degree or higher qualification compared to the average population
- Sikhs are least likely to be unemployed, consistent with basic Sikh principle of working to earn an honest living
- 92% of Sikhs are owner occupiers, the highest for any group in the UK
- Sikhs donate over £1.2 million a day to charities, equivalent to more than 6.5 times the average annual charitable donation per person
- The UK jobless rate in 2016 was at an 11-year low of 4.8%, but the Survey showed the figure for Sikhs was 2.7%

(British Sikh Report 2016)

Despite being an affluent and charitable community, Sikh Women's Aid believes that abuse is also a hidden problem in the community and this needs to be addressed.

There is currently little to no academic research that looks into the impact of abuse in the Sikh/Panjabi Community (Aujla, Shain, Lillee, 2019). This section covers the background of the Sikh/Panjabi Community's difficult relationship with acknowledging DVA and CSE/CSA and its attitudes towards women, in a bid to educate sector partners around how honour-based codes and oppressive practises prevent victims from disclosing abuse and seeking help.

3.1: Domestic Abuse in the UK

The Government definition of domestic abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Forms of abuse can include:

- Physical abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Economical abuse
- Sexual abuse

The Government also recognises that domestic violence and abuse can also include so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

DVA is repetitive and life threatening. It does not have to be inherently 'violent', but perpetrators may use a whole range of abusive behaviours. An estimated 7.5% of women (1.6 million) and 3.8% of men (786,000)



experienced domestic abuse in the last year (ONS, 2019) and it is also under-reported (ONS, 2018). On average, the police in England and Wales receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour (HMIC, 2015) yet, it is estimated that less than 24% of domestic violence crimes are reported to the police (RiseUK, 2019). In 75% of the domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019, the victim was female (ONS, 2019). The physical and emotional harm incurred by victims and survivors of DVA is estimated to be £47 billion; the biggest component of the total estimated £66 billion cost of domestic abuse in England in Wales (Oliver, R., Alexander, B., Roe, S., & Wlasny, M. 2019).

It is the belief of Sikh Women's Aid that anyone can experience DVA regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability, or lifestyle. DVA can take place in heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender relationships. DVA is largely a hidden crime, occurring mainly in homes behind closed doors. As such, it can be difficult to record the context in which DVA is being perpetrated, or accurately measure the impact of the abuse on those who experience it due to the lack of reporting. DVA is often not the sole concern with victims, as sometimes there are other complex issues that also impact on individuals including, mental health concerns and drug or alcohol abuse (toxic trio).

During the initial stages of the Covid-19 crisis, housing charity, 'Refuge' reported around 50% increase in demand to its helpline, and a 300%+ increase in visits to its National Domestic Abuse Helpline website. However, demand has spiked again significantly where calls and contacts to the helpline have risen to a weekly average increase of 66%, and visits to their website (where women can request a safe time to be contacted), have seen a phenomenal 950% rise compared to pre Covid-19. (Refuge Charity, 2020).

It is the experience of Sikh Women's Aid having participated in specialist Black, Asian and other minoritised* DVA consultations and networking opportunities that there has been a poor response/support for Black, Asian and other minoritised victims of DVA. It was found that there were significant gaps in understanding of Black, Asian and other minoritised communities and a lack of cultural competence. Sikh Women's Aid found that victims struggled even more, because for many of them, there was no escaping the perpetrator, especially those victims with multiple perpetrators who live within extended family settings.

For some women and girls, gender inequality is not the only structural challenge they face in accessing support: racism often means that the specific needs of Black, Asian and other minoritised victims are an afterthought. While the government has recognised the increase in domestic violence during the lockdown, little attention in recent policy briefings has been given to the specific impact this is having on BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) organisations and the communities they serve. (A. K. Gill, 2020).

* Note on language

Sikh Women's Aid have chosen to use the term 'Black, Asian and other minoritised communities/people' as we share the view of various Black and Brown feminists that while ethnically and culturally diverse people are not a minority, they have been in society due to wider social prejudices. Sikh Women's Aid have used the word 'victims' when discussing those that have experienced abuse.



3.2: Setting the scene: Sikh Faith perspective of women

The founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji directly challenged all forms of discrimination when the faith was founded. 'In all beings is the Lord pervasive, the Lord pervades all forms, male and female' (Guru Granth Sahib, ang 605).

There are many passages like this that clearly state that the light of God rests equally within both sexes. Both men and women can therefore attain salvation by obeying the Guru's (a teacher who themselves are spiritually enlightened) teachings. Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings were against rituals or customs that discriminated against women. He did not consider women to be impure and/or evil and his teachings reflect this.

There are many bold compositions in praise of women throughout Sikh Scripture:

'We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman, we are engaged and married to woman. We make friendship with woman and the lineage continued because of woman. When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman. Why should we talk ill of her, who gives birth to kings? The woman is born from woman; there is none without her. Only the One True Lord is without woman' (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Guru Nanak, ang 473).

To ensure equal status for women, the Sikh Guru's made no distinction between the sexes in matters of initiation, instruction or participation in congregation. The Sikh Guru's forbade female infanticide in their code of conduct for Sikhs, prohibiting Sikhs from having any contact or relationship with those who indulge in this practise: 'With the slayers of daughters. Whosoever has social contact; him do I curse'. And again, 'Whosoever takes food from the slayers of daughters, Shall die un-absolved' (Cunningham, JD 1849).

Long before Lord William Bentick declared Sati illegal (Madras Regulation 1 of 1829 Bengal), the 3rd Sikh Guru made a seminal pronouncement by annulling the draconic requirement of the cremation of the living wife on her husband's funeral pyre. He also encouraged widow re-marriage: "A virtuous wife is not one who burns herself alive with her dead husband. She, indeed, would be a sati who dies through shock of separation. But, says Guru Nanak, a true sati is she who bears the shock of separation with courage and lives her natural span of life in a disciplined, dignified and virtuous manner," (Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 787).

'The 52 commands of Guru Gobind Singh Ji', the tenth spiritual teacher of the Sikh faith, is a popular text amongst many Sikhs/Panjabis. Command 16 states, 'Do not subject your wife to cursing, or verbal abuse.' There is an emphasis on mannerisms and speech, so a faith that encourages positive dialogue with its women is very unlikely to encourage other more serious forms of mistreatment against them. This stance is further solidified by command 15 which states, 'Other than your wedded wife, consider all women as your mothers and sisters. Do not indulge in carnal marital relationships with them.' There is a clear expectation of Sikh men to treat women with love and respect and this is consistent across all forms of Sikh literature.

When looking at the attitudes and behaviours of Sikh men towards women in the founding years of the faith, we can look to historical texts that demonstrate exemplary behaviour in defending and restoring a woman's honour. Sri Gur Panth Prakash, a 19th century text detailing Sikh history of the 18th century, provides some episodes of Khalsa attitudes and methods of dealing with rapists. One episode relates to the daughter of a poor Brahmin belonging to the Hindu faith, who had been abducted by a local Mughal (ruling governance at the time) official. Upon hearing of this, the Khalsa misls (military groups) laid siege to his abode and eventually imprisoned him. The offending official was tied to his bed and his entire house was set on fire. The entire Khalsa then adopted the victim as their daughter and guaranteed her safe keeping and well-being (pp 718, Bhangoo, 2015). Girls who were subjected to rape were adopted by the Khalsa armies at the time and



they were married into Khalsa homes with full respect and honour (pp 719, Bhangoo, 2015). Although this occurred during a time of warfare for the Khalsa, seeking justice for a woman subjected to rape and then restoring her honour within the community was a very progressive notion during an extremely conservative time when rape victims were otherwise abandoned by their families.

The Sikh Rehitnamas (code of conduct) which are given to Sikhs who are initiated into their military order (Khalsa) with baptism, again give further directions as to the treatment of women. 'A Sikh of the Khalsa (an initiated Sikh who has received baptism) should respect his woman, bestowing on her the same treatment that he renders to his mother. For a Panjabi man, that means a considerable reverence. A weapon should never be used against a woman and a respectable woman should never be cursed' (Sikhs of the Khalsa, p243, McLeod, 2005).

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the living and written embodiment of the Sikh Guru's teachings that its followers are expected to implement in their daily lives. Sikh historical texts such as Sri Gur Panth Prakaash and others give examples of such Sikhs who lived by their Guru's commands in word, action and thought. The code of conduct was to provide a disciplinary framework for all those who undertook baptism to give them the best possible chance of spiritual and worldly salvation. This section evidences the harmony across scripture, Sikh history and the Sikh codes of conduct in how Sikhs are expected to treat women and there is absolutely no place for violence, abuse and rape. On the contrary Khalsa Sikhs defended and punished those who committed crimes against women.

3.3. Domestic Abuse in the Sikh/Panjabi Community.

Research suggests that VAWG starts pre-birth within the Sikh/Panjabi community. So not only are we dealing with DSA within the community, but we are also dealing with a gender-based violence crisis that places little to no value on the lives of women and girls. In Panjab, which is in the northern part of India and considered a 'homeland' for some Sikh/Panjabi people, female infanticide is still a real problem. Although this practise has been outlawed in India, there are recorded figures which illustrate a disparity in male/female birth rates, with the Panjab having a higher male than female birth-ratio. Census figures (2011) show that male bias, distorted sex ratios and practice of female feticide, continue in this region. The child sex ratio has fallen to 914 females for 1000 males, the lowest since independence. Though the child sex ratio has improved marginally in Panjab, it is still at the bottom with only 846 females for 1000 males (Manchanda, 2014).

A study that looked at gender-based sex selection in India stated that half a million girls a year are being aborted in India. (Jejeebhoy, Basu, Acharya, Zavier, 2015) more than the total number of girls born in England and Wales which is 331,035 live female births (BBC, 2017).

It is the experience of Sikh Women's Aid after working with affected victims, that pregnant women from the UK are sometimes forced by husbands or family members (in-laws) to travel to India to check for the sex of the baby and when it's confirmed as a female foetus, an abortion is booked privately in clinics and carried out. Concerns regarding foeticide (sex selective abortion) in the UK have arisen due to this practice to a point where hospitals within South Asian geographically dominated areas now refuse to provide information on the sex of the child at early pregnancy scans. This is reinforced by Rani Bilkhu, from the campaign group Jeena International, who said, 'British Asian women, as well as those born in South Asia and married to men in the UK, were aborting girls because of the cultural pressure to have sons – often from their in-laws. We have a high rate of women coming to us and saying, 'We are being threatened and coerced to having abortions, we're being thrown down the stairs,' (Sandhu, N. 2020).



In 2017 the British Sikh Report asked, 'What is the most important issue affecting women?' Nearly 75% of respondents felt that violence towards women was a concern for Sikh women.

It is the experience of Sikh Women's Aid that the Sikh community are a very proud community and there can be a reluctance to ask for help when dealing with hardship. Victims will mostly disclose within their social and community setting, rather than going to the police.

The history of distrust between BAME communities and the police (Bowling & Phillips, 2002) translates to chronic underreporting of certain crimes within minority communities, resulting in many opting to use informal support services (Belur, 2008) or self-reporting to domestic abuse services (Imkaan, 2008).

However, through their work with victims, Sikh Women's Aid have found that women experience coercive control over a long period of time, so domestic abuse becomes normalised. Safelives' (2020) dataset with 42,000 clients showed that, 'BME clients suffered abuse for 1.5 times longer before seeking help compared to those from a white British or Irish background'. Research shows that 'a woman facing domestic violence has to make 11 contacts with agencies before getting the help she needs, however, this rises to 17 if she is BME'. (Brittain et al, 2005).

3.4. Domestic Homicide in the Sikh/Panjabi Community

Combined with the increase in DVA due to Covid19 lockdowns, it is the belief of Sikh Women's Aid that a perfect storm has been created where some Sikh/Panjabi women and girls are at their most vulnerable placing them at high risk due to the lack of community and sector support that does not fully understand the barriers victims face and how to effectively support Sikh/Panjabi victims of abuse.

Domestic homicide in the Sikh/Panjabi community is also rarely discussed. The Home Office, in its latest publication of Domestic homicides stated: 'In total, 24% of victims who were killed by domestic homicide, (where ethnicity was known) were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. Whilst the majority of victims were White, the proportion of BAME victims since Covid appears to be higher than the previous 15-year domestic homicides average, the 2019/20 domestic homicides data, and the general population. (Bates, L. Hoeger, K. Stoneman, M.J. Whitaker, A, 2021).

Over the years there have been a number of Domestic Homicides within the Sikh/Panjabi community:

1. Firstly, there is the case of Kiranjit Alhuwalia. Kiranjit, an Indian housewife who entered into an arranged marriage with Deepak Ahluwalia, a British Asian factory worker around 1979. She was subjected to severe violence and forms of mental torture for 10 years which was evidenced during her trial by multiple reports to the police, and suicide attempts. Deepak taunted Kiranjit about his extra-marital affairs and Kiranjit's mental health issues as a result of the abuse. Talking about her life with Deepak, Kiranjit said:

'If he got angry, that was it, shouting, abusing, throwing things, pushing me around, threatening me with knives. So many times, he would strangle me. I'd end up with bruises and unable to speak for a few days.'

'I remember it was his birthday and I worked overtime and I bought a gold ring for him as a birthday present. That same week, he lost his temper and with that ring he broke my tooth. He punched me in the face.'

'I couldn't escape, couldn't get a divorce. There was family pressure to have a kid. Everyone said, 'if you have a child, maybe he'll change. He'll become a responsible man.' He never changed. He just got worse.'



In May 1989, unable to handle the depravity and constant abuse, she set fire to her husband during his sleep by pouring a mixture of petrol and caustic acid on his feet. Deepak died from his injuries ten days later and Kiranjit was tried and convicted for murder, she was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The conviction was appealed in 1992 on the grounds that expert evidence and psychiatric reports had not been presented at the original trial. Kiranjit appealed on the grounds that the original trial overlooked her history of abuse at the hands of Deepak as provocation which then caused her to snap and attempt to kill him. Kiranjit has always maintained that her intention was to hurt him, not kill him. In September 1992, a re-trial was ordered and Kiranjit was found guilty of manslaughter due to diminished responsibility and sentenced to three years and four months (the time she had already served). Kiranjit was released immediately in a landmark case called, R v Ahluwalia, which redefined provocation in cases of battered women in the UK.

A film was made about this case called, 'Provoked' which received worldwide praise with the BBC saying, 'Provoked avoids sentimentality and illustrates how one woman's bravery helped fuel a nationwide crusade and irrevocably altered British laws on domestic violence'.

2. Surjit Atwal, 27, from Coventry, was killed in December 1998 after reportedly voicing her desire to end her marriage after years of alleged domestic and emotional abuse. Her mother-in-law and husband conspired to murder her by duping Surjit to attend a family wedding with her mother-in-law in India where she disappeared. Her mother-in-law and husband were eventually convicted and jailed thanks to the testimony of her sister-in-law who had overheard the pair planning her murder but was also threatened with murder if she disclosed their plans. Surjit's body has never been found.

3. Varkha Rani, 29, from Walsall, was attacked at her home with a metal pipe from a vacuum cleaner in 2014. Her husband, Jasvir Ram Ginday, 29 from Walsall, strangled her, then burnt her body in a garden incinerator. During the trial, it was revealed that Ginday had alleged his wife had threatened to 'expose' him as homosexual to family and friends, after apparently discovering 'compromising' material on an iPad and iPhone.

4. Seeta Kaur, 33-year-old from Edmonton, London, allegedly died of a sudden heart attack on a trip to India, but her family say they have amassed considerable evidence that she was in fact strangled for disobeying her husband. The family alleges she was murdered by her husband whilst on a trip to India in 2015 in, 'a classic case of honour killing'.

5. Sarbjit Kaur, 38, from Wolverhampton was found dead at her house on 16th February 2018. She had been murdered by her husband Gurpreet Singh. A post-mortem examination revealed she had died of asphyxiation. Singh's first wife, Amandeep Kaur, died in India four years before the murder, with authorities concluding she suffered a brain haemorrhage. He had faced charges of attempting to arrange her death but was later acquitted.

6. Ranjit Gill, 43, was found in Emerson Valley in Milton Keynes on 2nd January 2021. Her husband was charged with murder after Ranjit's body was found with 'significant injuries'.

7. Balvinder Gahir, 54, died from serious head injuries in 2021 in Lillington, Leamington Spa. She was murdered by her ex-husband who was aided by their son. Both were given prison sentences for their involvement in Balvinder's murder.



3.5: Sexual Abuse of adults and children from the Sikh/Panjabi Community

A recent study into child abuse by Office of National Statistics (ONS), defined Child Sexual Exploitation as a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 years into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

ONS further classified Child Sexual Abuse as forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (for example, masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing). They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The NSPCC reported in 2020 that police recorded more than 200 child sex offences, on average, every day last year.

There were 73,518 recorded offences including rape, online grooming and sexual assault against children in the UK in 2019/20, up 57% in the 5 years since 2014/15.

Where gender and age were recorded:

- Girls were 4 times as likely to be victims.
- There were more than 8,000 offences committed against 14-year-olds, making it the most common age group to report offences.
- There were 12,374 sex crimes recorded against children under 10.
- 449 offences were recorded against babies yet to reach their first birthday.

It is the belief of Sikh Women's Aid that Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSE/CSA) where the perpetrator is from within the community, is one of the most taboo subjects and is not discussed in the Sikh/Panjabi Community. It has been allowed to run rampant within the community and a strict honour-based code has been successful in silencing the victims from reporting or discussing any incidents. This is due to the belief that people finding out about incidents of CSE/CSA, will bring 'shame' on the family and damage the prospects of marriage for the victim and potentially their siblings. Counsellor Emma Kenny commented on this topic by stating she has noticed the number of Sikh girls requiring help after enduring sexual abuse, is on the rise. 'We have cases where Sikh children have actually been forbidden from speaking up or removed from their home environment when they talk about the fact they are being sexually exploited or groomed,' (BBC, 2013).

In 2019 a ground-breaking documentary was broadcast on an on-demand network where three Panjabi Sikh sisters from Canada revealed their story of child sexual abuse. The documentary was made by the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada which is Canada's public film and digital media producer and distributor. As an agency of the Government of Canada, the NFB produces and distributes documentary films, animation, web documentaries, and alternative dramas.



The documentary is called 'Because we are Girls' (available to view on Amazon Prime). The sister's abuser was known to the family and had resided with them when they were young girls and the abuse sadly went on for years. The sisters did try to disclose the abuse to their parents only to be ignored. As adults, the sisters reported their perpetrator to the police and secured a conviction but due to a technicality, the perpetrator avoided any jail time for his crimes. The concluding part of this documentary featured a conversation whereby the three sisters confront their parents for their lack of action and support during the disclosure and during the court proceedings. The sisters disclose how this led them to carry shame and guilt as a result of their parent's actions.

'Because we are Girls' has now triggered a movement of women from the Sikh/Panjabi community emerging from the shadows of patriarchy, matriarchy, and shame to talk about their experiences of sexual abuse. This in turn is now sparking conversations regarding gender discrimination which Sikh Women's Aid hope, is the start of change and awareness to deconstruct the honour and shamed based mindset that causes harm to women and girls from within the community.

The UK Criminal Justice System is also failing miserably at prosecuting rape. This then acts as a further barrier for victims wanting to report historical sexual abuse due to 'lack of evidence'. In June 2021, the Government published its end-to-end review of the Criminal Justice System's response to rape. In the last five years, reporting of rape has increased, from 24,093 adult rapes in 2015/16 to 43,187 adult rapes in 2019/20. However, over the same period the number of prosecutions has fallen by 59% and convictions by 47%. There has also been a sharp increase in the number of victims dropping out of prosecutions during the lengthy investigation and trial process. 25% of cases dropped out five years ago and in 2020 this figure has increased to 43% (MoJ, 2021).

3.6: Sexual abuse in Faith based settings

Attempts to draw attention to the issue of rape and murder within the Sikh/Panjabi community have also been historically silenced. In 2004, a young female playwright Gurpreet Bhatti was set to debut her stage production, "Behzti" (dishonour) which covered the subject of murder and rape in a Gurdwara. As a consequence of the storyline, there were violent protests that took place outside the theatre where the play was being shown. This forced the play to be cancelled.

Speaking about the play ten years later (2014), Bhatti said 'I was advised by West Midlands Police to leave the building. Protests against my play Behzti (Dishonour), were becoming increasingly heated and I was told I was in danger. I arrived home in London, and hours later a police officer called to inform me of a threat to abduct and murder me. I laughed in disbelief. He didn't laugh; he told me to get out of my flat. The next day, after a huge demonstration outside the theatre, the Rep pulled the play. I was devastated. As the author I felt strongly that I had placed myself in the firing line, that I could and should endure the venom of the protesters. But when the Rep cancelled Behzti, it shattered me.'

In 2021, one of the biggest inquiries into CSA in faith settings revealed its findings. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) discovered cases of abuse in most major UK religions, with some found to have no child protection policies in place at all (BBC, 2021).

There were two Gurdwaras (Sikh place of worship) who submitted evidence during the enquiry, one was the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Smethwick and the other was Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southall. The full report mentioned that, 'Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Smethwick stated that their Granthis (volunteer leaders of prayers and communal worship within Sikh Gurdwaras) were not subject to a DBS check, although previous



employers were contacted for a reference. Those references were, 'to ensure they lead an exemplary life and are respectable individuals'. This is not the same as checking their suitability to work with children. Granthis are not required to undergo any child protection training.

At the time of the public hearing in 2020, Mr Jatinder Singh Bassi, one of the trustees of the Gurdwara and a member of the Sikh Council UK, told us that all volunteers and staff teaching at the Gurdwara now receive an enhanced DBS check. The Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Smethwick receives approximately 1,000 visitors per day. Its records showed only one allegation in the previous 10 years.' (IICSA, 2021).

Richard Scorer, a specialist abuse lawyer at Slater & Gordon, who acted for seven victim and survivor groups in the inquiry said, 'Today's report confirms that some religious groups have catastrophically failed to protect children in their care.' He added, 'It is clear from the report that too many religious organisations continue to prioritise the protection, reputation and authority of religious leaders above the rights of children. In the light of today's report, the arguments for mandatory reporting and independent oversight of religious bodies are overwhelming.' (BBC, 2021).

Sikh Women's Aid have supported many victims of CSE/CSA across all settings, this includes, abuse at home, abuse via grooming gangs outside of the community and CSE/CSA in faith settings. It is Sikh Women's Aid's experience based on supporting victims that some UK faith-based settings belonging to the Sikh/Panjabi Community are inadequate at best and willingly negligent at worst, at dealing with complaints/allegations of abuse in faith settings.

3.7: Conflict of faith and practitioners of the faith?

Based on Sikh Women's Aid's experience of supporting victims, what little research is available and compared to the faith perspective, there is conflict between the high values of the Sikh faith and what is practised by a demographic of Sikh/Panjabi people.

Panjab has high female infanticide rates across India and yet there are multiple references in Sikh scriptures, Sikh history and the Sikh codes of conduct that abhor such practices and shun its practitioners. Sikh Women's Aid cannot stress enough to sector partners that domestic and sexual abuse is NOT and should never be looked at as, 'Sikh Culture', when victims are reporting, especially to the Police. DSA are crimes and victims who report, need to be taken seriously and supported.

The Sikh faith is a testament to women and their role in society. Sadly, Sikh Women's Aid believes some of the faith's followers have lost the core of its message, which seeks to celebrate women, their contributions and role in society. It is the experience of Sikh Women's Aid that toxic cultural practises that originate from Sikh/Panjabi ancestral lands in India, have simply immigrated to the UK with its new inhabitants and continue to be practiced today within the community.



4: Sikh Women's Aid - Methodology

The primary aim of the survey was to help inform decision making on the future service delivery based on the needs of the community. The second aim was to get a baseline of the prevalence and impact of DVA and CSE/CSA in the Sikh/Panjabi Community nationally. The survey was presented to participants via an online survey which was accessed via a URL link. Written guidelines and graphics were sent alongside the survey with instructions of who the target demographic/audience were and what the purpose of the survey was.

There were fifteen questions that participants were asked to complete in total. Sikh Women's Aid gathered no identifying data beyond the gender of the participant because they felt it was more important that people felt comfortable in completing the survey honestly and without fear and this ensured anonymity this way.

The survey was structured in four segments: -

Domestic Violence (DV):

- The participants existing knowledge of domestic violence,
- The participants experience (if any) of DV,
- Who the perpetrator(s) was/were,

Accessing Support

- Did the participant access support?
- Who did they reach out to?

Child Sexual Exploitation/Abuse (CSE/CSA)

- The adult participants experience (if any) of CSE/CSA,
- Who the perpetrator(s) was/were,
- Where the abuse took place,

Impact of abuse on participants

- Was the participant impacted by their experience of abuse?
- How was the participant impacted by their experience of abuse?

The last question was for participants to add anything they felt was not covered in the survey that they wished to express. This question was left open ended and the comments written by respondents proved very insightful as they shared personal accounts of abuse. Some themes emerged from this that will be discussed in the summary of findings. The survey used predominantly multiple-choice questions with the last question being left open.

4.1. Distribution and sampling

The wording and messaging around ALL promotional material attached to the distribution of the survey were targeted directly to members of the Sikh/Panjabi Community. The survey was shared to followers on all Sikh Women's Aid social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and this was picked up and shared not just within the DVA and VAWG sector but prominent members from across the entire broad-church of the Sikh/Panjabi community. The survey topic and target audience were clearly communicated in all associated social media posts.

Sikh Women's Aid also reached out to personal contacts who work across the private sector and



Sikh/Panjabi community leadership networks. Sikh Women's Aid found WhatsApp and direct emails were the best methods of quickly circulating the survey at a national level to members of the community. Prominent women from the Sikh community, who also sit on Sikh Women's Aid advisory board, circulated the survey amongst Sikh/Panjabi contacts including, makeup artists, wedding planners, actors, comedians, and television personalities who all circulated the survey amongst their own social networks.

Sikh Women's Aid also reached out to dozens of Sikh/Panjabi school teachers across England, in particular in areas where Sikhs/Panjabi's are more densely populated and asked them to circulate the survey in their own children's 'School WhatsApp chats' which helped generate an accelerated response rate. Facebook groups with a large Sikh/Panjabi presence were used as another method of circulation. For example, the survey was posted on the City Sikhs group page which has almost 32k members from across all professional sectors.

Sikh Women's Aid are confident that the survey reached the intended audience and the sample size upon closure of the survey was 674 respondents.

4.2. Limitations

As with any data gathering exercise, there are limits and circumstances that cannot be controlled. This survey, the questions and subsequent report was not done from an academic research perspective. Sikh Women's Aid are a service provider and our initial purpose in doing this exercise was for internal use to inform service delivery. Sikh Women's Aid deliberately gathered no identifiable information to ensure maximum participation due to reluctance of the Sikh/Panjabi community discussing DSA.

The trade-off was not gathering more demographic information from respondents. Sikh Women's Aid did not ask if respondents were from the Sikh/Panjabi community because the survey was distributed with clear guidance about the target audience. Sikh Women's Aid also carried out a very targeted marketing and advertising campaign to promote the survey to ensure the right demographics were reached.

It is also important to acknowledge, that the respondents were not given the questions in Gurmukhi (native language of Sikhs/Panjabis) so this would have made the survey inaccessible to those who cannot speak English. Sikh Women's Aid recognises that the role of female perpetrators of CSE/CSA was overlooked in the responses. Sikh Women's Aid recognises the gaps in the collection of responses and are looking to engage academic professionals to gather more specific data to build on the academic rigour this work requires in any future surveys.

Many of the distribution networks that Sikh Women's Aid are members of, are from the DV and VAWG sector, so there is a potential that the results are influenced due to the background and experience of respondents. To combat this, Sikh Women's Aid made an equal effort to circulate the survey across all sectors and career paths that have links with the Sikh/Panjabi community, to ensure a balanced response could be achieved.

There was some feedback from participants (0.5%) via the last question that they were unsure about continuing the survey if they had not been affected by any of the issues raised within the questions. A further 0.5% responded negatively. So, in the interests of transparency, Sikh Women's Aid wants to acknowledge these responses and recognise the limitations of the software used to carry out the survey.

It is important to note that the questions asked in this survey and report were not designed and written from an academic research perspective. Its primary objective was to gather a national baseline to inform the



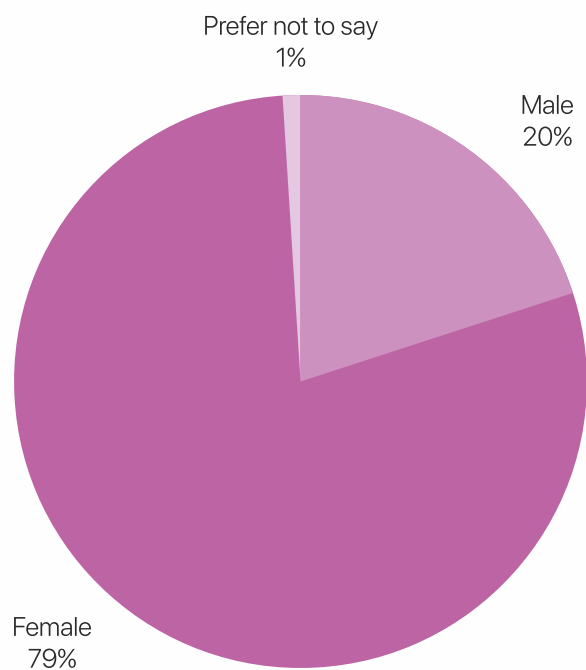
service delivery. Sikh Women's Aid felt they had a responsibility to publish this report given how stark the findings were, and also due to the lack of research in existence about the prevalence and impact of DVA and CSE/CSA within the Sikh/Panjabi community. It is hoped that these findings will be seen as a 'first step' and will inspire others from academia to explore and study the themes emerging from the findings to carry out more targeted research.



5. Summary of findings

Where there was an option for respondents to select 'non applicable' within the survey to any question, those figures have been removed to ensure accuracy.

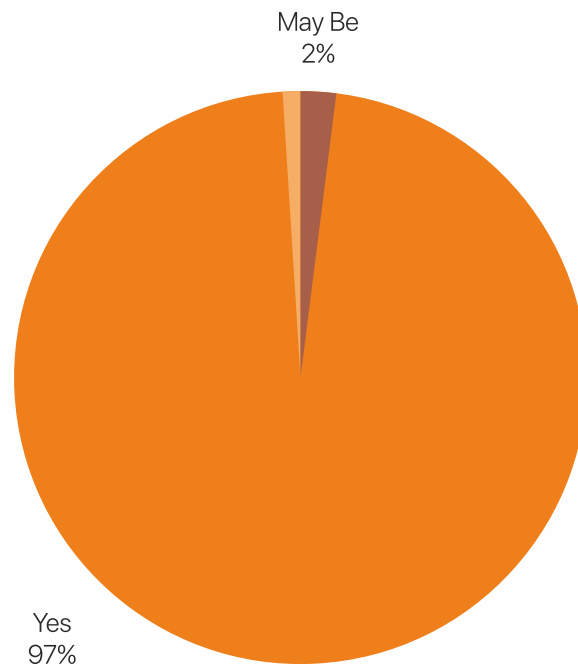
5.1: Are you male or female?



80% of all participants who completed the survey are female and 20% are male.

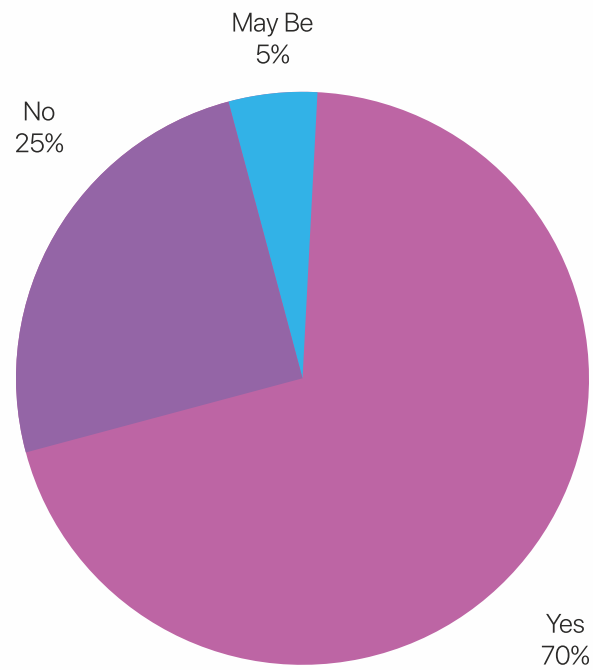


5.2: Do you understand or have awareness of what Domestic Abuse is?



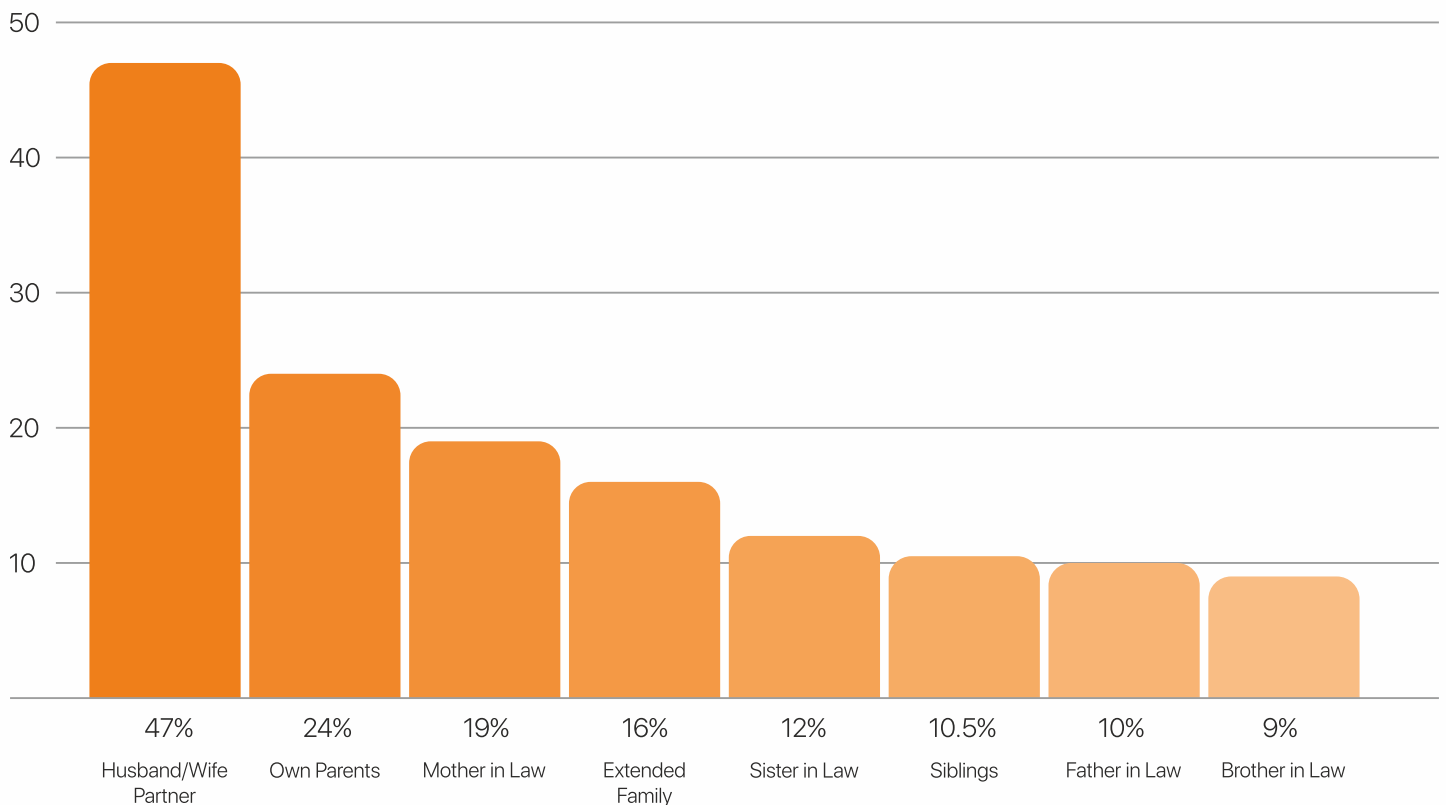
Almost all participants (97%) said that they understand and have awareness of what domestic abuse is.

5.3: Have you ever experienced domestic abuse? (physical, emotional, economic, sexual or coercive control)



70% of all respondents said that they had experienced Domestic Abuse.

5.4: Who was/were the person/people who perpetrated abuse against you?



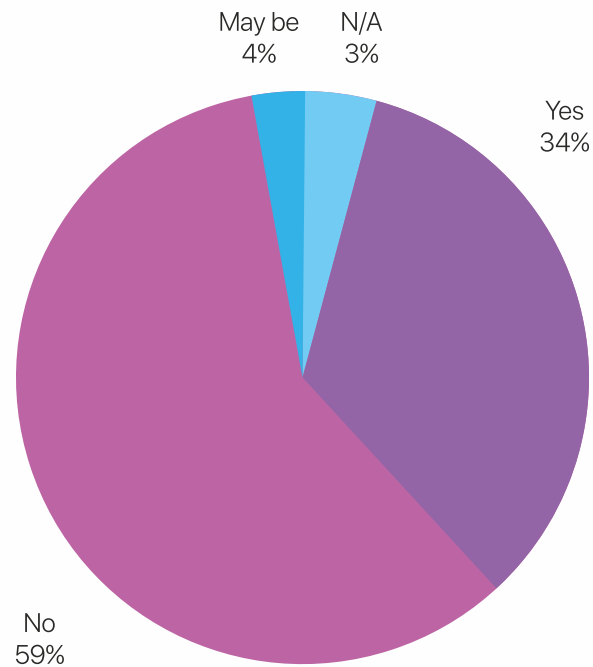
With regards to the respondents who said 'yes' to experiencing domestic violence, the top three perpetrators identified, all exist within the home setting:

- 47% stated it was a Partner
- 24% stated it was their Own Parents
- 19% stated it was their Mother-in-law

Sikh Women's Aid gave participants multiple choice answers because Sikh Women's Aid know from experience of working with victims from Sikh/Panjabi households, that they can often have multiple perpetrators. The data identified that almost 1 in 2 people had more than 1 perpetrator (47%).

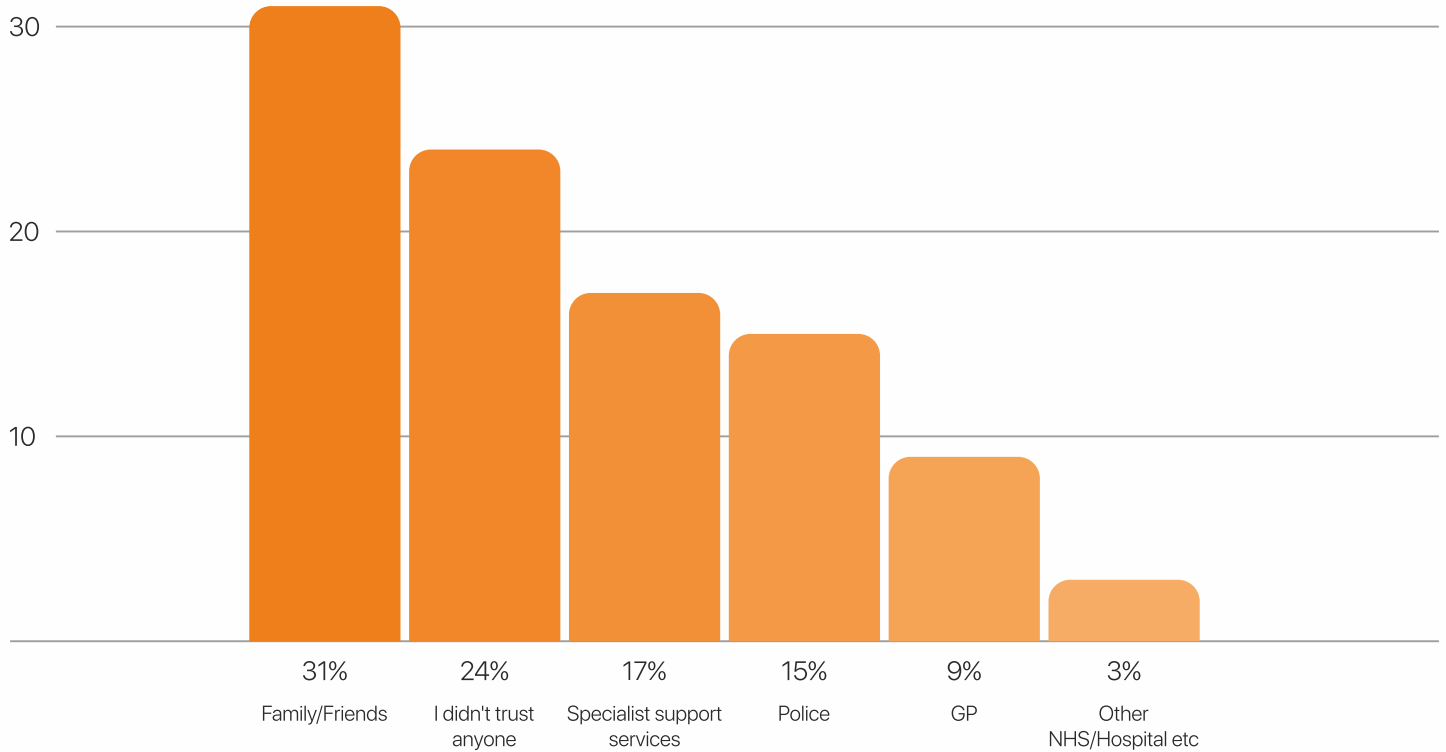


5.5: Did you ever access support services or tell anyone after experiencing abuse?



59% of victims did not access any support service. This suggests that only 1 in 3 (34%) victims have sought support or told someone after experiencing abuse.

5.6: Where did you go for support?

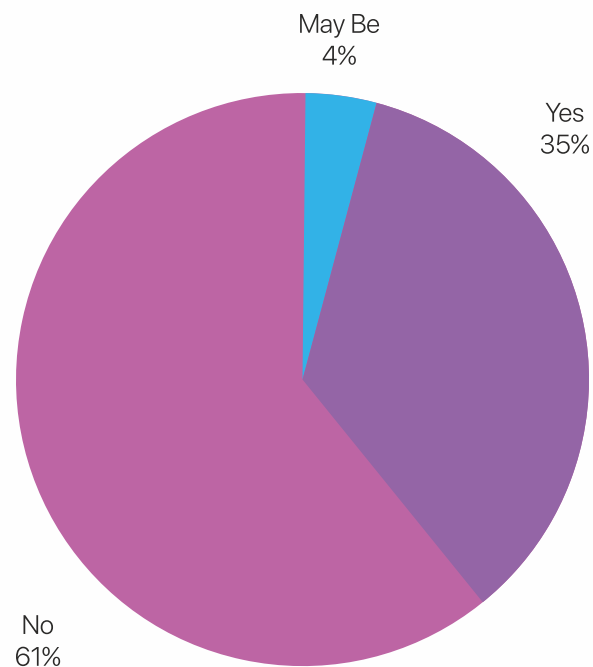


31% of participants only told family and friends and 24% of people stated that they did not trust anyone.

- Everyone has access to a GP yet only 9% went to the GP for help,
- Only 3% informed other NHS services,
- 15% reported to the police.

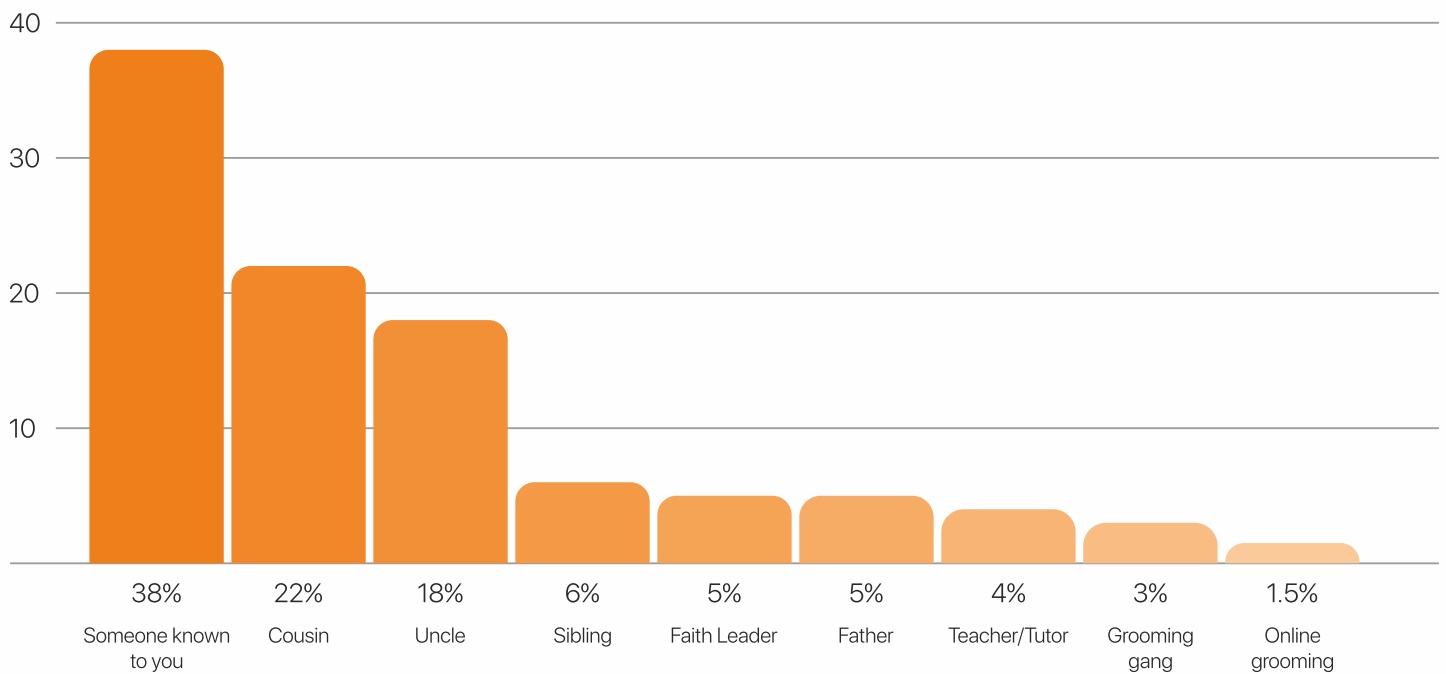


5.7: Have you ever experienced sexual abuse as a child?



35% of all respondents said they experienced CSE/CSA. Of that 35% that said 'yes', 87% are female and 13% are male. Therefore, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by CSE/CSA. However a smaller number of men and boys are also impacted by CSE/CSA.

5.8: Who was the perpetrator?



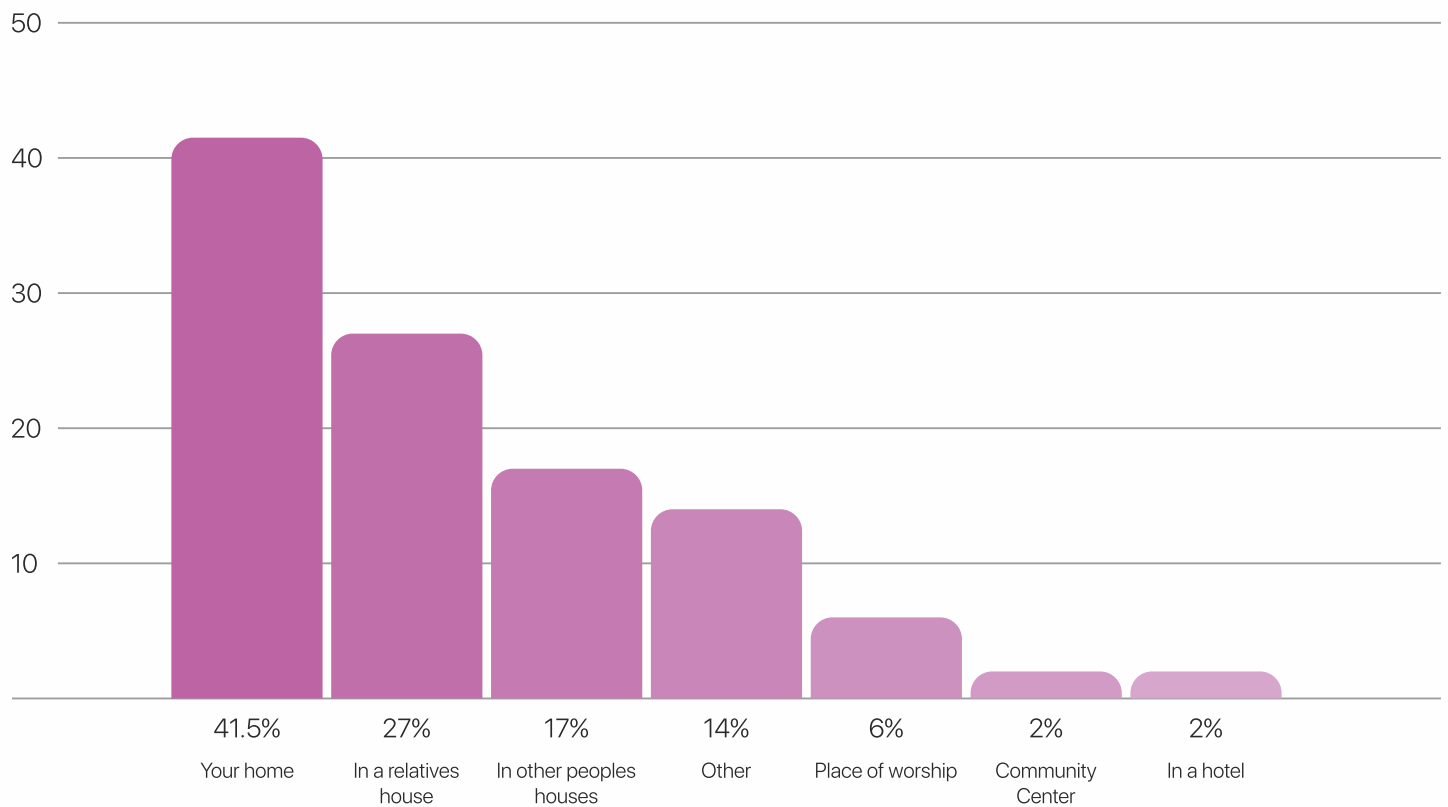
Of all those who responded 'yes' to experiencing CSE/CSA;

- 38%, said it was someone known to them/family friend etc
- 22% said it was a cousin
- 18% said it was an uncle
- 6% said it was a sibling
- 5% said it was their Faith Leader/Father respectively.

Grooming via gangs and/or online grooming scored the lowest with 3% and 1.5% respectively.

Of those respondents who experienced CSE/CSA, 1 in 7 identified they had more than one perpetrator.

5.9: Where did the sexual abuse take place?



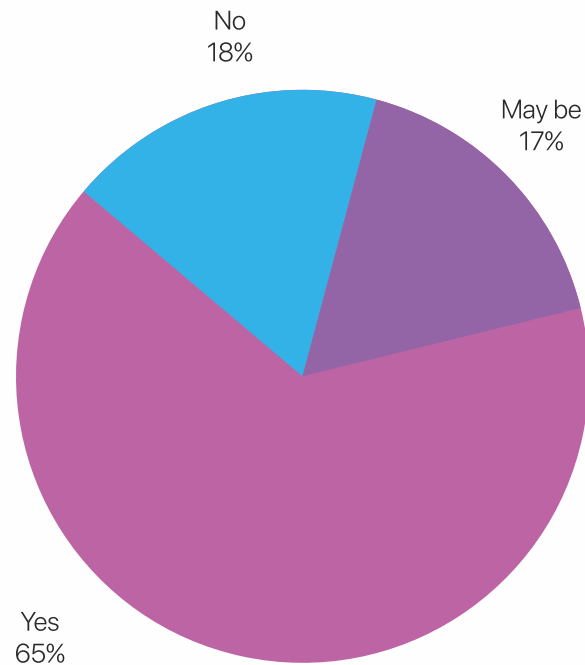
When asked about where the CSE/CSA took place, the top three locations were:-

- 41.5% said it happened in the home
- 27% said it happened in a relative's home
- 17% said it happened in other people's homes

6% of respondents said they were sexually abused as children in a place of worship.

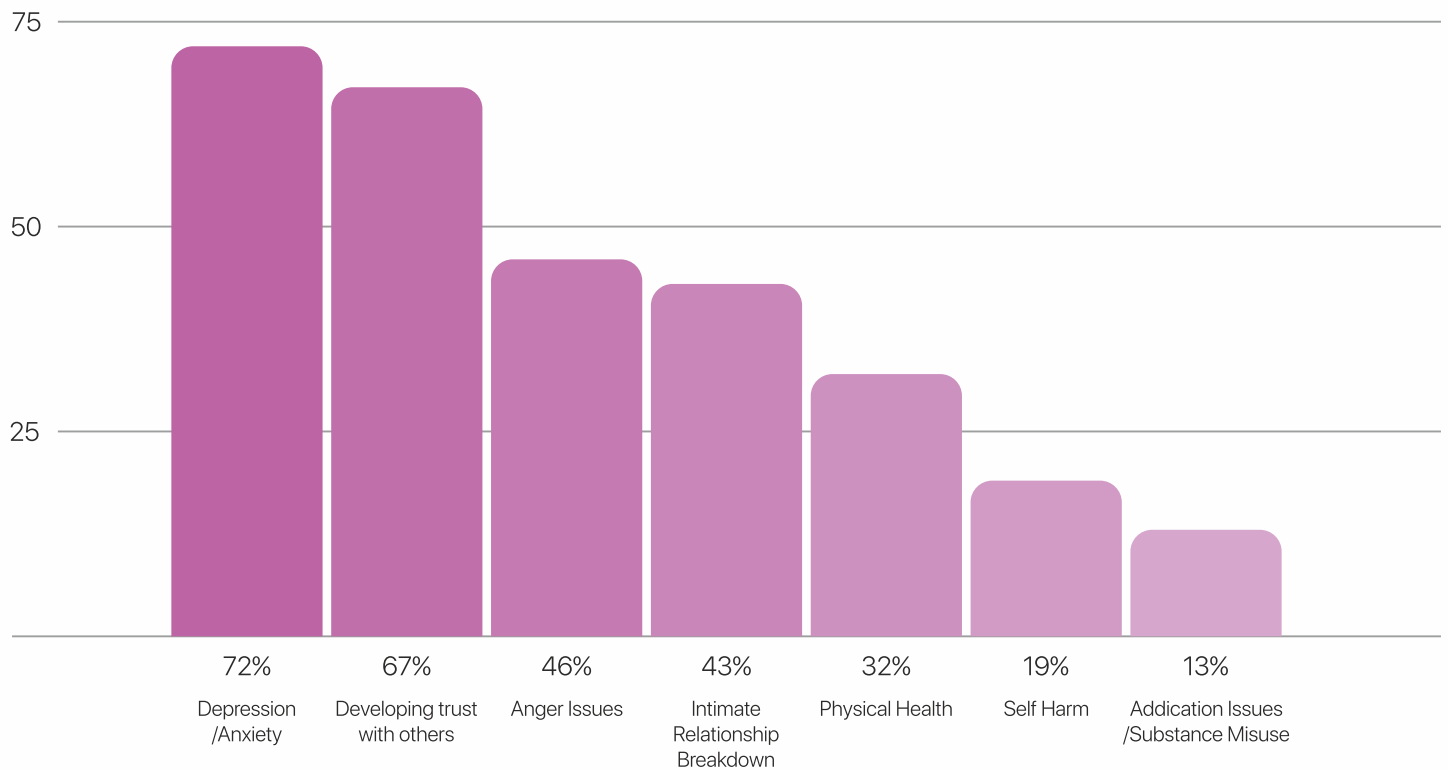


5.10: Do you feel that this experience has left a long lasting impact on your physical and mental wellbeing?



Of those respondents who said they were abused, 65% said that it left a long-lasting impact on them. 17% were unsure if it had impacted on them.

5.11: How do you feel this negative experience of abuse has impacted on you?



When looking at how respondents were impacted on by the abuse they suffered: -

- 72% said they suffered with depression/anxiety
- 67% said they had problems developing trust with others
- 46% said they suffered with anger issues
- 43% said they had suffered intimate relationship breakdown

5.12 Victims Voices

These are extracts of respondent's comments and feedback from question 15 of the survey. There were 130 responses in total with over 80 case studies/life stories. Due to sheer length and detail in the responses, Sikh Women's Aid have shared small extracts of responses received. The comments demonstrate the Sikh/Panjabi Community's lived experiences of abuse.

DVA

- 1: Emotional abuse happens all the time in Asian families. It is one rule for the son, daughter and another rule for the son in law/daughter in law. When you marry an Indian, you marry a lifetime of slavery and mental abuse.
- 2: Coercive control and gas-lighting by my mother-in-law and husband, was a huge factor in my decision to divorce.
- 3: It's hard to know what abuse is, especially verbal and mental abuse, when it is considered normal in our community. Some elders say, it's nothing and that they have gone through worse.
- 4: I stayed in an 18-year marriage because I chose him myself. I was so embarrassed and ashamed.
- 5: Huge Homophobia by Panjabi's make Sikhs, and many closeted gay Sikhs victims of abuse as well. Our community needs to address homophobia so that people can feel safe. I have been threatened with violence for being gay.
- 6: Divorce was the only answer which then resulted in further physical harm and financial bankruptcy threats from everyone from in-laws side. Fraudulent tactics were used by my ex-husband to gain advantage financially during divorce.
- 7: Husband had a beard and turban and was automatically seen by our community as saintly. I can't explain how important this part is. If you wear a turban and go to Gurdwara you're automatically given the benefit of the doubt by Panjabi culture. He beat and abused and starved me and my children.
- 8: Alcohol abuse by men has led to a majority of women suffering domestic abuse in silence. Very much still happening today.
- 9: Domestic violence and abuse is hidden in the Sikh community. The perpetrators are never brought to justice because of shame and embarrassment.

Support Services

- 1: I had left my family for this man and had no family support and being Sikh I was cut off! In the end I had to tell the police to help after numerous call outs, if they didn't help, I would end up doing harm. Eventually he got charged and put into prison.
- 2: I contacted a well know service run by a Singh who said he would help me but when he realised my husband was a trustee in a Gurdwara that paid this man for delivering workshops, he changed his tune. He started saying my experience is my karam (fate). I then approached a Sikh women's org who helped me.



3: Social services shouldn't play games and take the children away; they should help and guide the victim to obtain court orders and injunctions. They are professionals and can see who the abuser is, so why persecute the victim too?

4: My case is still going through courts. My children are being dragged through court as well and I feel nobody understands.

5: Police weren't very supportive; more training is needed around domestic abuse for police officers.

CSE

1. I might have raised my voice if I ever knew about right touch and wrong touch. Our parents, society should be open about every kind of abuse, so that one can understand the behaviour of others. I think I might have fought back if I ever knew I'm not supposed to endure it.

2. My uncle touched my breasts while we were in the back of the car, driving back after a wedding. He had been drinking. I am not sure whether you would count that as 'abuse', as it was a one-off assault.

3. I was only 7 when I experienced sexual abuse from my grandfather.

4. The hardest part of it all was when I was a teenager and realized there was nothing 'special' about what happened to me. I was raped by multiple family members. I never lost my virginity to the love of my life but to a paedophile.

5. I was groomed by my cousin. He was a few years older than me. He said he wanted to be a good husband to his future wife and practise on me.

Impact

1. The key was to keep a 'perfect image' of the family in peace. Nobody wants to go against the grain of sorting this out. We don't talk about it often, it impacts our connections with one another hugely.

2. How does one escape a troubled home? I indulged in self harm.

3. Was so angry. Had no help. If someone would have just hugged me and helped me understand this. I would have been way better off.

4. I feel that abuse is endemic in our culture, it's almost part of the culture, to be expected. If this continues the cycle of abuse will continue into the generations!

5. My dad is alcoholic and due to his addiction my family suffered a lot. We were treated differently and often bullied by other kids, our cousins also made fun of us



6. Conclusion

The results of the survey have highlighted several areas of concern:-

Domestic Abuse

- 70% of respondents reported that they had experienced domestic violence. Despite 97% of respondents identifying themselves as having an awareness of DVA, only 34% of respondents informed anyone or accessed support services.
- Nearly half (47%) of all respondents who experienced domestic abuse had more than one perpetrator.
- Men from the Sikh/Panjabi community also experience DVA (14%)

In Sikh Women's Aid's experience, often within the DVA sector, it is stated that there is no evidence that DVA is worse in Black, Asian and other minoritised communities compared to the general population. National statistics suggest that almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime (ONS 2019).

Therefore the survey data suggests there are higher rates of DVA within the Sikh/Panjabi community. The statistics are supported by some of the comments left by respondents who have said that abuse within the Sikh/Panjabi culture is normalised and endemic. Shame and honour act as barriers to reporting and silences victims.

Multiple perpetrators are a common theme amongst Black, Asian and other minoritised communities. The survey highlighted that 1 in 2 victims had multiple perpetrators for DVA including female perpetrators. Sikh Women's Aid therefore questions the effectiveness of generic perpetrator programmes that are developed mainly for single perpetrators/abusive husbands and partners.

Support Services Accessed

The data suggests that victims are most likely to inform family and friends about the abuse taking place (31%). However many of the respondents didn't tell anyone about the abuse due to lack of trust (24%). Only 17% accessed specialist services.

Intersectionality issues such as language, honour code/silencing, and multiple perpetrators, makes accessing support services harder for victims from a Sikh/Panjabi background. It is the view of Sikh Women's Aid that women from the Sikh/Panjabi community now need to be classified as 'hard to reach' by sector partners such as the police. Understanding of cultural belief systems that prevent victims from reporting is required to better support them. Many respondents commented that they did not trust the police due to lack of action against their perpetrator.

Although there has been a national drive to train GP's and NHS staff to identify and look out for signs of DVA, Sikh Women's Aid are alarmed at the lack of reporting by victims into these services by respondents.

Since the launch of the Sikh Women's Aid helpline number, many women have contacted them seeking emotional support. 90% of all those spoken to called because they were looking in particular for a Sikh women's organisation, as they reported that they had been let down by generic support services. Some examples given were: -



- Police treating the victim as a perpetrator,
- Lack of understanding of cultural issues affecting the victim by generic services,
- Local specialist services not returning calls to victims,
- Being let down by solicitors,
- Family courts – child contact and custody issues,
- Lack of understanding by statutory services.

Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

An alarming statistic is that over a third of all respondents (35%) said they have experienced CSE/CSA. Females are disproportionately impacted (87%) but some males (13%) are also impacted. What is even more shocking is that 1 in 7 respondents that said 'yes' to having experienced CSE/CSA, identified more than one perpetrator.

When compared with the Crime Survey for England and Wales (ONS 2019) which estimates that 7.5% of adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16 years, this is a worrying outcome and requires further investigation and research.

The data shows, victims are more likely to be abused by someone known to them (38%), than by online exploitation (1.5%) or grooming gangs (3%). This evidence shows that although CSE/CSA via grooming gangs and online does exist and therefore needs to be addressed, these numbers are low in comparison.

These statistics highlight that a child is more likely to be abused in buildings known to victims, in their own home (41.5%) and/or a relative's home (27%).

The data also indicates that you are more likely to be abused by a faith leader (5%), in a faith setting (6%) than you are in online or street grooming situations. 6% of respondents reported CSE/CSA taking place in a place of worship, however only 5% of respondents stated they experienced CSE/CSA by a faith leader. This raises the question of who else is assaulting children within faith-based settings.

These statistics fall in-line with national figures which report that sexual abuse was most likely to have been perpetrated by a friend or acquaintance of the victim.

Impact of Abuse

65% of respondents reported that the abuse they suffered had left a long-lasting impact on their physical or mental wellbeing. 17% of respondents were unsure if their experience had impacted on them. When the data was further aggregated, it was found that:-

- 62% of all respondents had experienced at least 1 form of impact listed in the survey
- 47% of all respondents stated that they had experienced 2 or more forms of impact listed in the survey.

72% of respondents who said 'yes' to being impacted by the abuse they suffered as adults or as children, stated they suffer depression and anxiety.

67% had problems developing trust with others.

46% suffered with anger issues

43% suffered a breakdown of intimate relationships.

These figures evidence that abuse has a profound and long-lasting impact on its victims and there is a



desperate need for culturally sensitive, trauma informed support services/programs to help victims of abuse from the Sikh/Panjabi community to heal and recover.

Victim's voices

Sikh Women's Aid have grouped responses to this question by themes highlighted by respondents

- Lack of Awareness - This led to respondents accepting the abuse or the abuse becoming normalised. Victims stated there is a desperate need for the community to be educated about how harmful abuse is and its long-lasting impact.
- Alcohol and drink as contributing factors were mentioned by multiple victims. Many of the respondents talked about the negative impact of witnessing abuse taking place in the household as children. Some respondents also talked about how they turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism to deal with the abuse they suffered. Some victims felt they had been let down by statutory services who didn't refer the perpetrator for appropriate addiction support.
- Emotional/psychological abuse was mentioned numerous times. Respondents have stated that this type of abuse is very common in Sikh/Panjabi families and how there is a lack of understanding of other non-physical forms of abuse. Some respondents commented on how emotional and psychological abuse is normalised and therefore not a recognised form of abuse in the community itself.
- Lack of belief in 'the system' was mentioned by multiple victims. Respondents shared their experiences of being let down by voluntary and statutory support services.
- Police failings was the most common theme raised as concerns by victims. Some of the respondents talked about the lack of response when they reported incidents of abuse to the police. They also commented that they felt they were not believed by the police and some respondents said they had to report multiple times before any action was taken.
- Victims mentioned that they contacted support services who promised to call back but never did. This is also a theme discussed on the Sikh Women's Aid helpline.
- LGBTQ+ Sikh respondents highlighted homophobia as being an issue in the community. Victims stated that there is little to no support for Sikhs/Panjabi who are struggling with their sexuality and respondents stated that they experienced threatening behaviour for identifying as LGBTQ+ by family members and the wider community. Although the survey did not specifically ask questions around sexual orientation, Sikh Women's Aid will ensure that their service delivery considers the needs of Sikh/Panjabi people who identify as LGBTQ+.



7: Recommendations

The first recommendation is that academia colleagues need to dedicate resources, people, and funding to carry out more detailed research on VAWG and DV, CSE/CSA and its impact in the Sikh/Panjabi community. Currently there is little to no targeted research on how the Sikh/Panjabi community is impacted by abuse of any kind. It is the view of Sikh Women's Aid that this lack of data and information allows perpetrators of abuse to thrive within the Sikh/Panjabi community supported by the honour shaming and silencing of victims.

Domestic Violence

There needs to be regular campaigns to raise awareness within the Sikh/Panjabi community about all forms of DVA and how this can impact on individuals and children. These campaigns need to be hosted as national awareness campaigns and they must be supported by government and the Ministry of Justice. They need to be appropriately funded so that as wide an audience as possible can be reached.

Culturally appropriate training for the police force needs to be delivered to educate them on Gender Based Violence, CSE/CSA and DVA in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The police need to understand the complexities of Gender Based Violence within Sikh/Panjabi communities i.e. infanticide and honour-based violence. They must be made aware of the signs to look out for and learn how to respond in a trauma informed way.

Accessing Support Services

Multi-lingual, culturally appropriate perpetrator programmes need to be developed which include campaigns and awareness of the consequences for perpetrators of abuse including female perpetrators. This may in some way deter people from abusing but also highlight to victims, what their rights are according to the law in the UK. These campaigns should be run in different languages, on Asian television channels, and in places of worship. In-laws need to be targeted to reduce abuse taking place.

Specialist support services to be commissioned to deliver culturally competent support. Funding must be secured having carried out rigorous checks to ensure that the community organisations have the right policies and procedures in place and are fit for purpose. Minimum standards should be an expectation for organisations to be able to access the funding. Service user feedback should be collected to evaluate the service being delivered.

There needs to be investment in police forces to ensure specialist trained officers/departments are properly funded so that support can be provided in a professional and timely manner.

The police need to rebuild trust with the community so that victims feel encouraged and confident to report abuse. Victims also need to feel encouraged to report abuse early, so that support can be provided before situations escalate.

Child Sexual Exploitation

There is a common belief within a large demographic of the Sikh/Panjabi community that girls within the community are disproportionately vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation as adults and children by perpetrators from outside the community, with an emphasis placed on other faith communities. However, in line with the outcomes of this survey, children are more likely to experience abuse from family members, cousins, and people known to them. Parents need to also acknowledge that there is a greater risk of



CSE/CSA happening within the home and/or extended family network. This is the narrative that parents need to be taught about, so they can educate and protect their children accordingly.

Parents also need to be informed of the impact on those children who have experienced abuse and the support they require. This is so that their trauma can be addressed by specialists who will help them to deal with their suffering and over time, help them lead happier and healthier lifestyles.

There is a need to encourage victims and family members to report abuse to the police immediately. Perpetrators need to be held to account. Currently, the lack of reporting to the criminal justice system, has created a sense of security for perpetrators and allows them to continue abusing confidently.

There must be collective community action to make safeguarding practices in places of worship mandatory. Gurdwaras have access to wider community members, some of whom will be vulnerable people. Those that are experiencing 'bad times', stress, anxiety, depression and looking for answers will visit places of worship, looking for guidance and some form of relief. This potentially opens up the congregation to possible opportunities for abuse and exploitation as they are vulnerable. This work must filter through to other Sikh spaces including classes in faith-based institutions and Sikh Camps. In cases of DVA and CSE/CSA, all gurdwaras have a responsibility to signpost victims to specialist and mainstream organisations.

Meaningful education in schools is so important. Healthy relationship teaching that can equip children and young people with the knowledge of what to do if they find themselves in an abusive or exploitative situation, and to help identify poor or negative behaviours so this can be challenged.

Impact of abuse

More research needs to be carried out on the extent of alcohol abuse within the Sikh/Panjabi Community. This form of addiction is ruining the lives of children who are growing up with huge levels of trauma that also require support.

Culturally sensitive and trauma informed projects and services need to be funded so that victims can access appropriate services. This may include bi-lingual DVA programmes and specialist counselling.

Preventing violence and abuse from happening in the first place will make a significant difference to the overall prevalence of these crimes. To end VAWG, DVA and CSE/CSA, focusing on early education and respectful relationships is key. Properly funded prevention programmes can, challenge the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against and oppress women and girls in the Sikh/Panjabi community and across all communities. It is also important to educate, inform and challenge young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent.



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Appendices

App1: Questionnaire

Sikh Women's Aid Survey

If you are affected by any of the questions in this survey please contact:

Sikh Women's Aid on 0333 090 1220

WM BAME HBV and FM helpline on 0800 953 9777 or National Domestic Violence helpline on 0808 200 0247

Are you male or female?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Do you understand or have awareness of what domestic abuse is?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Have you ever experienced domestic abuse - physical, emotional, economic, sexual or coercive control?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Who was/were the person/people who perpetrated abuse against you?

- Husband/Wife/Partner
- Mother in Law
- Sister in Law
- Father in Law
- Brother in Law
- Siblings
- Extended Family
- Own Parents
- N/A

Did you ever access support services or tell anyone after experiencing abuse?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



Where did you go for support?

- Specialist support services
- Police
- GP
- Other NHS - Hospital
- Family/Friends
- I didn't trust anyone
- N/A

Have you ever experienced sexual abuse as a child?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Who was the perpetrator?

- Uncle
- Siblings
- Father
- Cousin
- Teacher/Tutor
- Faith Leader
- Online grooming
- Grooming gand
- Someone known to you, Family friend etc

Where did the sexual abuse take place?

- Your home
- In a place of worship
- In a relatives house
- In a community center, training center etc
- In a hotel
- In other peoples houses, building etc
- Other

Did you ever tell anyone about the sexual abuse experience?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- N/A



Do you feel that this experience has left a long lasting impact on your physical or mental wellbeing?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

How do you feel this negative experience of abuse has impacted on you?

- Depression / Anxiety
- Physical Health
- Developing Trust with others
- Self Harm
- Addiction Issues / Alcohol Abuse / Drug Abuse
- Anger Issues
- Intimate Relationship breakdowns



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