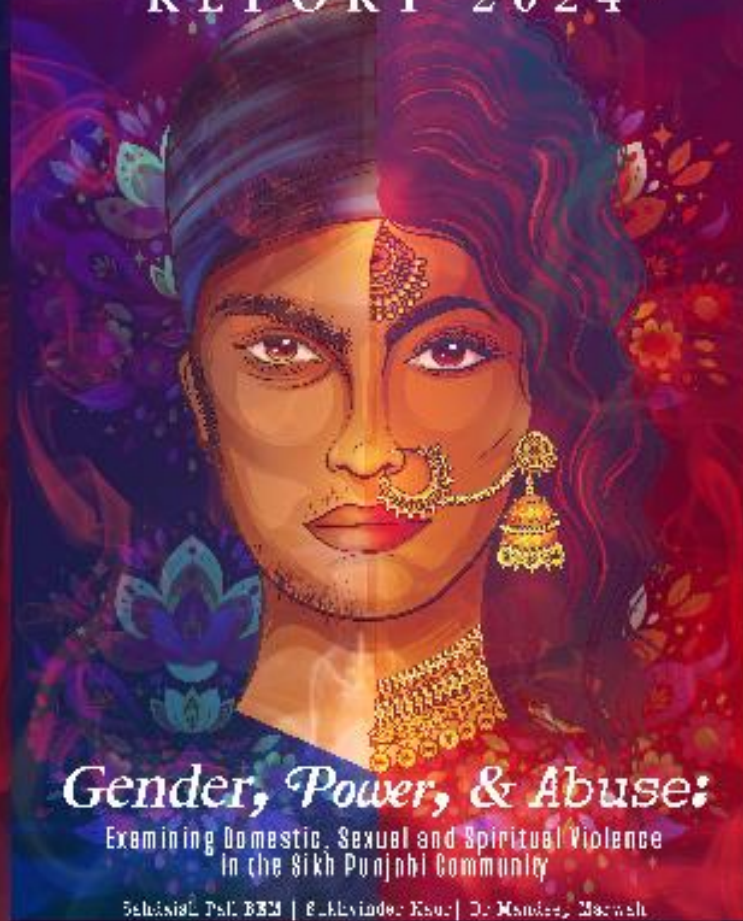


SIKH WOMEN'S AID REPORT 2024



GENDER, POWER & ABUSE

EXAMINING DOMESTIC, SEXUAL AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE SIKH PANJABI COMMUNITY

SIKH PUNJABI COMMUNITY IN THE UK

Language spoken – Panjabi.

- **West Midlands is the now region that houses the largest population of Sikhs.**
- People of other religions also speak Panjabi in parts of Panjab that are in both India and Pakistan.
- Sandwell has overtaken Birmingham as the local authority with the largest Sikh population.

**Number of Sikhs in England and Wales by English Region & Wales
Census 2011 and Census 2021**

Region	2011	2021	% increase
East	18,213	24,284	33.3%
East Midlands	44,335	53,950	21.7%
London	126,134	144,543	14.6%
North East	5,964	7,206	20.8%
North West	8,857	11,862	33.9%
South East	54,941	74,348	35.3%
South West	5,892	7,465	26.7%
West Midlands	133,681	172,398	29.0%
Yorkshire and The Humber	22,179	24,034	8.4%
Total England	420,196	520,092	23.8%
Wales	2,962	4,048	36.7%
Total England and Wales	423,158	524,140	23.9%

3 YEARS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Where we are now:

- 5 - 7 helpline calls a week
- 3 – 5 self-referrals via email
- 9 staff members (CEO, 3 DV Support Workers, 2 Specialist Mental Health Therapists, 1 Community Development Support Worker, 1 Volunteer coordinator, 1 Policy and Bid writer)
- Launched: The Phulkaari Podcast – Awareness and Prevention
- Conducted Three National Surveys to inform policy and SWA service delivery
- Launched: Annual Sikh Women's Aid Remembrance Day

A JOURNEY OF
RESILIENCE
FUNDED BY THE
HERITAGE LOTTERY
FUND

A JOURNEY
OF *Resilience*

UNVEILING SIKH WOMEN'S STORIES OF STRENGTH AND SURVIVAL



3 YEARS OF SERVICE DELIVERY: LAKHVEER KAUR



- Lakhveer was an international student here in the UK
- Lakhveer was in an abusive relationship and was six months pregnant before her passing
- We fundraised £10,000 for her repatriation and funeral expenses.
- Lakhveer had no family in the UK, and we worked with the Indian Embassy to repatriate her remains to India.
- When this wasn't possible, and with the family's wishes, our team carried out the funeral of Lakhveer and her baby who was named Kamaljeet, here in the UK, funded by the Indian Embassy.
- All fundraised monies were given to Lakhveer's family when repatriation was impossible due to time lapsed.

ANNUAL SIKH WOMEN'S REMEMBRANCE DAY

- PC Kirpal Kaur Sandhu – 1973
- Harbans Kaur Lally – 1985
- Gurjit Dhaliwal – 1985
- Surinder Kaur – 1996
- Kuldeep Kaur Sidhu - 2008
- Amrit Kaur Ubhi – 2011
- Varka Rani – 2013
- Amandeep Kaur Hothi – 2014
- Amandeep Kaur – 2016
- Gina Landar – 2016
- Kiran Dauda – 2017
- Kulwinder Kaur – 2017
- Sarbjit Kaur – 2018
- Balvinder Gahir – 2020
- Ranjit Gill – 2021
- Sukhjeet Uppal – 2021
- Geeta Aulak – 2021
- Amarjit Kaur Ubhi – 2021
- Sukhjit Kaur – 2021
- Kamaljeet Kaur – December 2023
- Maya Devi – 2023
- Bhajan Kaur – 2024
- Tarnjit Riaz (Chagger) – 2024
- Paramjeet Gill – 2024
- DA related death – 2024 - London
- DA Related death – 2024 – Birmingham
- DA related death – 2025 – London

The dead cannot cry out for justice...
It is the duty of the living to do so for them...

Lois McMaster Bujold





SIKH WOMEN'S AID 2024

SURVEY FINDINGS

HEADLINE FIGURES

Total number of responses – 867

Total number of completed responses - 675

Total number of questions – 52

The average time is taken to complete the survey – 16 minutes

- **99% were Women**
- **99% were Sikh/Panjabi**

EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

61% of all respondents have experienced domestic abuse (compared to 62% in 2022)

75% of all respondents who experienced domestic abuse suffered multiple forms of abuse

Top 5: Primary form of abuse:

- **Emotional Abuse – 21%**
- **Controlling behaviour – 19%**
- **Physical Abuse – 13%**
- **Coercive behaviour – 13%**
- **Sexual Abuse – 10%**

Top 5: Secondary forms of abuse were:

- **Emotional Abuse – 74%**
- **Controlling Behavior – 60%**
- **Psychological Abuse – 60%**
- **Coercive behavior – 49%**
- **Physical Abuse - 43%**

PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE DATA

Top Three Primary Perpetrators

Husband/Partner/Boyfriend: 46%

Own Parents – Father: 14%

In laws – Mother: 11%

62% of women who experienced domestic abuse had more than one perpetrator

Top Three Secondary Perpetrators

Mother in Laws: 44%

Sister in Laws: 34%

Husband/Partner/Boyfriend: 34%

DURATION & FREQUENCY OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Duration

- 21 + years: 25%
- 11 – 20 years: 23%

Frequency

- Daily – 26%
- Multiple times a week – 25%

DISCLOSURE AND SEEKING SUPPORT

- 39% of all women who experienced domestic abuse said alcohol was a contributing factor to the abuse they suffered
- 83% of women who experienced abuse disclosed mainly to family and friends with only 15% of respondents accessing domestic abuse services
- Therapists and Mental Health professionals (31%) and GP's (19%) were the preferred methods of disclosure.

REPORTING TO POLICE

- **42% of women who experienced abuse reported to the police**
- **64% of these women's reports were NFA'd (no further actioned)**
 - NFA - I made a statement and provided evidence: 28%
 - NFA - I didn't make a statement 17%
 - NFA - I made a statement but had no evidence 12%
 - NFA - I retracted my statement 7%
- **19% of victims who reported achieved a successful prosecution**
 - Charging Decision: 9%
 - Prosecution – Guilty - suspended sentence and sanctions: 7%
 - **Prosecution – Guilty - Custodial Sentence 3%**
 - Prosecution – Not guilty

DECIDING NOT TO REPORT TO THE POLICE

- 58% of women who experienced abuse DID NOT report it to the police
 - I am/was fearful of the consequences: 42%
 - I didn't want to break up my family: 42%
 - Shame/Guilt: 37%
 - I am hoping/hoped they will/would change: 35%

All of the above fall under the definition of Honour Based Abuse.

Do victims describe their symptoms of abuse in these words?

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 70% depression/anxiety
- 57% inability to trust others
- 40% sleep disturbances
- 40% relationship problems
- 37% difficulties with intimate relationships
- 33% anger issues
- 25% suicidal thoughts

SEXUAL ABUSE

- 33% of respondents when asked, had experienced sexual abuse
- 54% as a child, 30% as an adult and 16% as both an adult and a child
- **70% were under 18 when the sexual abuse started**
- **32% said the abuse was a one-off incident, 68% said the abuse happened more than once.**

Who was the perpetrator of the abuse?

- Husband/Boyfriend – 28%
- "Uncle" / Family Friend – 26%
- Cousin - male – 17%
- Extended Family -male – 14%

SEXUAL ABUSE - SEEKING SUPPORT

- **41% have told no-one about their experience of sexual abuse.**
- Family and friends alongside a mental health professional/therapist are women's preferred options disclose the abuse.
- A therapist was preferred over telling their spouse/partner when disclosing abuse.
- **83% of women did not report what happened to the police.**
- Shame/Guilt - 47%
- I am/was fearful of the consequences – 34%
- Don't/didn't know who to talk to – 30%
- I didn't think the police would do anything – 19%

IMPACT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- depression and anxiety – 51%
- inability to trust others – 50%
- difficulties with intimate relationships – 45%
- relationship problems – 37%
- sleep disturbances – 33%
- anger issues – 28%
- suicidal thoughts/self harm – 26%

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE PREVELENCE

Out of 675 respondents, 8.00% reported having been subjected to abusive practices linked to faith, religion, spirituality, or belief. This figure is consistent with survey results from previous years.

This equates to **54 Sikh Panjabi women who responded to this survey.**

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE CASEWORK AND HELPLINE DATA

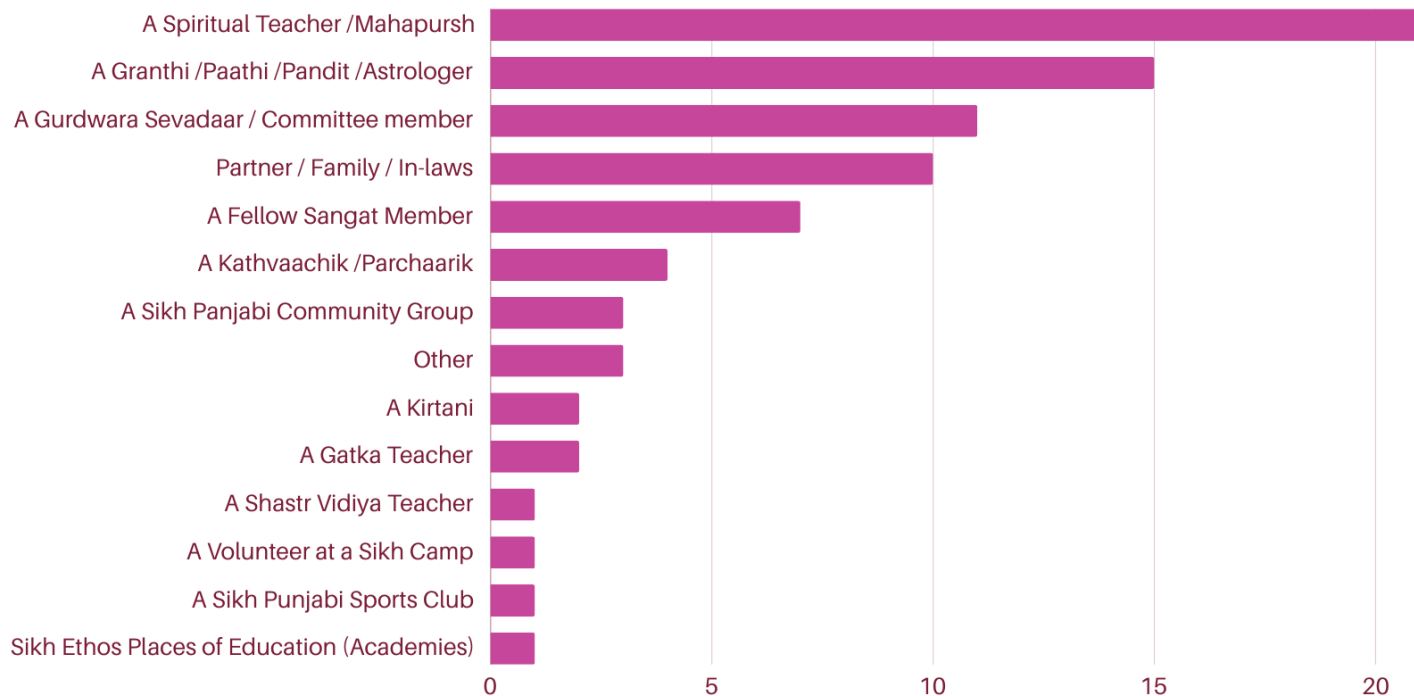
- Our helpline data shows that between November 2022 and November 2024, abuse linked to faith, religion and belief made up 16% of all casework.
- This figure is double what our survey respondents identified and suggests the hidden nature of this type of abuse.
- Our casework and survey show that Faith and Spiritual abuse is a prevalent form of secondary abuse, and it intersects with more commonly known forms of abuse to further control and silence victims.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE PREVALENCE

- 38.00% of this cohort indicated that the abuse they experienced was a one-off incident, while a more significant proportion, **62.00%, reported that the abuse occurred more than once or repeatedly.**
- The majority of respondents who reported the gender of their perpetrator identified the perpetrator as male (87.76%). A smaller proportion reported the perpetrator as female (12.24%).

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE PERPETRATORS

Spiritual and Faith-based abuse: Who was the primary perpetrator?

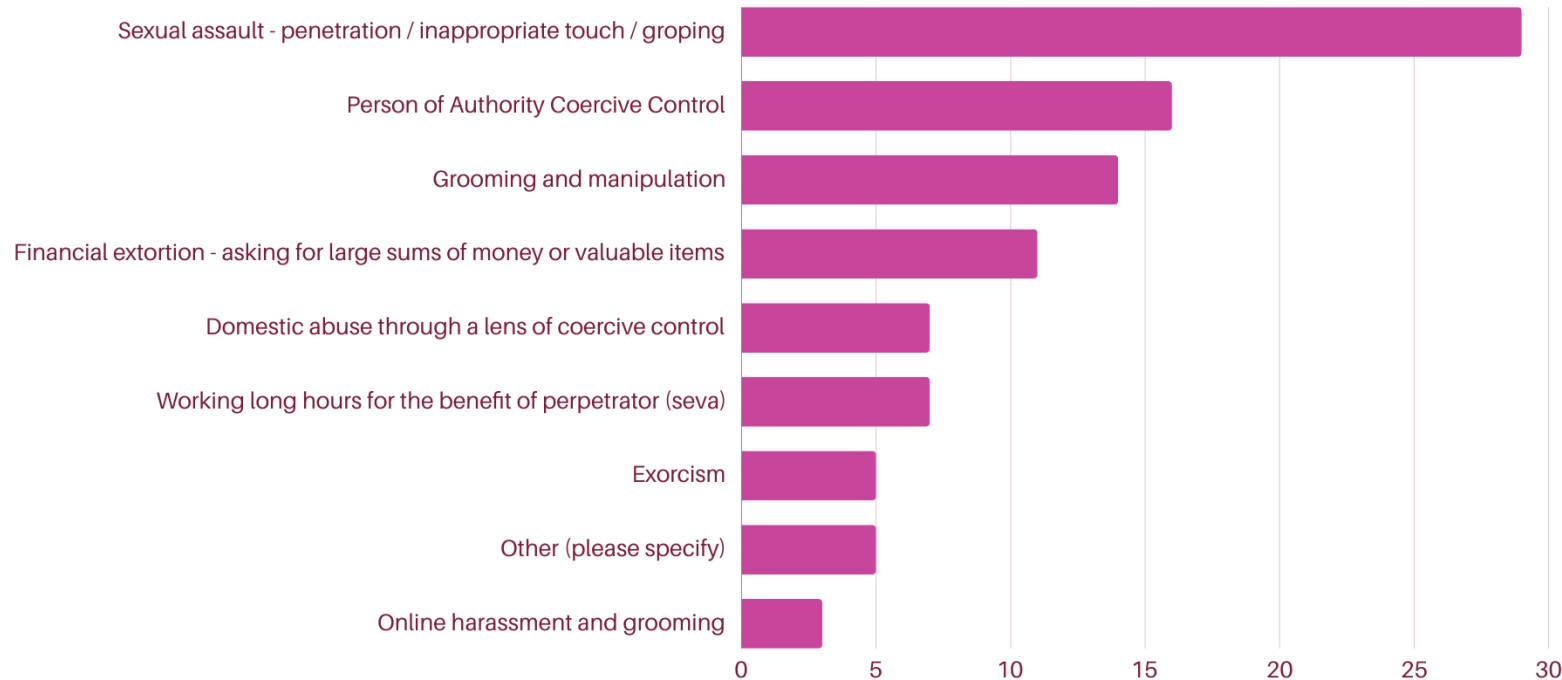


A notable feature when analysing perpetrators of faith-based abuse was that **every role that we listed as holding significant positions of authority and trust in a faith setting was reported as a perpetrator.**

This data evidences that perpetrators can operate at every level within a faith setting or faith leadership structure.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE ABUSED PERPETRATED

Spiritual and Faith-based abuse: What was the nature of the abuse you suffered?



In total, there were 97 responses from the 54 individuals who experienced abuse linked to faith and belief, as this was a multiple-choice question, with some participants identifying more than one form of abuse.

The most common form reported was sexual assault, including penetrative sexual assault, inappropriate touching, and groping of intimate areas (29 responses).

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PERPETRATOR

- The majority of respondents (50 total) reported **encountering the perpetrator through attendance at a religious venue (30%)** or through their **parents (20%)**. Encounters via **family members, such as grandparents, siblings, partners, or children**, were also common, reported by 20%. 'Other' was selected by 10%.
- **Friends** accounted for 10% of introductions, while **extended family (including aunties, in-laws, and uncles)** represented 6%. Additionally, 4% encountered the perpetrator through **social media or online platforms**.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE DISCLOSURE

Out of 50 respondents, 91 responses were recorded across various support options. The majority, 27 individuals, reported turning to **other family members** for support, while 18 sought help from **friends**.

12 respondents indicated they **confided in no one**, and 10 contacted a **therapist or mental health professional**. Three respondents selected "Other" as their answer, and five noted that they relied on **other congregation members for support**.

Additionally, 4 individuals sought assistance from **specialist domestic abuse support services**, while 3 each reached out to the **police, a faith leader, or community organisations**. Only 2 respondents consulted their GP; **one turned to faith-setting management or committee members**.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE

POLICE REPORTING

- Out of the total respondents who answered this question, 5.09% said they had reported their abuse to the police, **while a significant 84.91% indicated that they had not reported their abuse.**
- Among the 8 respondents who reported their abuse, 50.00% indicated that there was **no further action taken after they made a statement and provided evidence.** Additionally, 25.00% reported that **no further action was taken after they made a statement but had no evidence.**
- **12.50% of respondents who reported noted a charging decision, as well as a prosecution resulting in a suspended sentence and sanctions, which was also noted by 12.50%.**

No respondents reported a custodial sentence.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE

BARRIERS TO REPORTING

As this was a multiple-choice question, There were 140 responses given by 53 respondents, and **84.91% (45)** of women who suffered Spiritual Abuse did not report their abuse.

When we asked respondents about what prevented them from reporting, they said:

- Among the respondents who shared their reasons for not reporting or sharing their situation, **the most common concerns included a belief that the police would not understand**, cited by 17 respondents, and **fears of not being believed**, reported by 15 respondents.
- Additionally, 15 respondents expressed **fear of the consequences of reporting**, while 14 felt that **the abuse happened a long time ago, leading them to believe there was no point in reporting now**. Other reasons included **uncertainty about who to talk to** (13 people), **feelings of shame or guilt** (13 people), and a **lack of trust in others** (12 people).
- A notable concern was the **fear of losing their community by speaking up**, reported by 11 people, and **being informed that reporting to the police would mean they were going against their faith** (7 people) and **fears for their safety** (7 people). Finally, 5 respondents indicated **they do not trust the police**.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE

POLICE REPORTING & OUTCOMES

- Out of the total respondents who answered this question, only 5.09% said they had reported their abuse to the police.
- Among the 8 respondents who reported their abuse, 50.00% indicated that no further action was **taken after they made a statement and provided evidence.** Additionally, 25.00% reported that **no further action was taken after they made a statement but had no evidence.**
- **12.50% of respondents who reported noted a charging decision and a prosecution resulting in a suspended sentence and sanctions, which was also noted by 12.50%.**

No respondents reported a custodial sentence.

SPIRITUAL & FAITH-BASED ABUSE SUMMARY

Faith-based and spiritual abuse affected 8% of respondents, a significant increase when explicitly asked about abuse linked to faith compared to when framed within domestic abuse contexts (0.46%). Perpetrators often held positions of religious authority, such as spiritual leaders and Gurdwara volunteers, reflecting an abuse of trust in familial, religious and community spaces.

The analysis reveals intersecting patterns of abuse, highlighting systemic issues such as cultural stigmas, lack of awareness and understanding, and insufficient legal outcomes.

Each type of abuse has unique and compounded impacts, necessitating targeted interventions that address cultural and religious sensitivities.

EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Ring fenced funding streams for By-and-For Support Services.**
- 2. Community Education and Awareness.**
- 3. Inclusion of the experiences of Sikh Panjabi women in Policy Advocacy.**
- 4. Legal Definition of Spiritual Abuse.**
- 5. Understand and develop targeted responses to female perpetrators.**
- 6. Co-ordinated and joined up response to Sikh Panjabi victims/survivors.**
- 7. Community Policing must understand local needs and concerns.**
- 8. Review and adapt risk assessment models to meet diverse needs**
- 9. Screening of perpetrator's use of drugs and alcohol.**
- 10. Public health routine enquiry to consider underlying issues behind the presentation of poor health in Sikh Panjabi women.**

Thank you for listening

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