

# Domestic & Sexual Violence in South Asian Communities

May 2017

## 1. Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey, there are:

- ◆ 3,982,398 multi-race, multi-ethnic and single-race Asian Indians, of which 3,699,957 are single-race.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ 518,769 multi-race, multi-ethnic and single-race Pakistanis, of which 482,704 are single-race.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ 187,816 multi-race, multi-ethnic and single-race Bangladeshis, of which 176,748 are single-race.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ 140,319 multi-race, multi-ethnic and single-race Nepalese, of which 134,469 are single race.<sup>4</sup>

U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates. Retrieved May 2017.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey:

- ◆ Of the 713,131 Hindi speakers in the U.S., 79% (564,122) speak English 'very well' and 22% (149,009) speak 'less than very well'.
- ◆ Of the 429,352 Urdu speakers in the U.S., 70% (302,104) speak English 'very well' and 30% (127,248) speak 'less than very well'.
- ◆ Of the 385,948 Gujarati speakers in the U.S., 65% (251,040) speak English 'very well' and 35% (134,908) speak 'less than very well'.

U.S. Census Bureau data on "Language spoken at home for the population 5 years and over," from the 2015 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates. Retrieved May 2017.

## 2. Domestic Violence

In a study of a convenience sample of 208 South Asian women recruited through community outreach in the Greater Boston area:

- ◆ 21% reported having ever experienced physical and/or sexual abuse at the hands of their intimate partner; 15% reported such experience during the previous year.

Hurwitz EJH, Gupta J, Liu R, Silverman JG, Raj A. Intimate partner violence associated with poor health outcomes in U.S. South Asian women. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. 2006; 8:251-261.

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<sup>1</sup> This represents a 6% increase (+212,821) in the number of single-race, multi-race and multi-ethnic Asian Indians and a 6.0% increase (+208,905) of single-race Asian Indians from 2014 to 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This represents a 6% increase (+29,603) in the number of single-race, multi-race and multi-ethnic Pakistanis and a 7% increase (+31,215) of single-race Pakistanis from 2014 to 2015.

<sup>3</sup> This represents a 11% increase (+18,613) in the number of single-race, multi-race and multi-ethnic Bangladeshis and a 10% increase (+16,719) of single-race Bangladeshis from 2014 to 2015.

<sup>4</sup> This represents a 4% increase (+5,827) in the number of single-race, multi-race and multi-ethnic Nepalese and a 6% increase (+8,138) of single-race Nepalese from 2014 to 2015.

In a face-to-face interview study of 1,577 Asians recruited from Asian organizations and gathering places in the greater Houston area in Texas:

- ◆ 20% of Indian respondents (154 male and female) reported experiencing at least one form of intimate partner violence based on the 8-item Conflict Tactics Scale, ranging from "thrown objects at the respondent" to "used a knife or gun on the respondent" during the previous year.

Leung P, Cheung M. A prevalence study on partner abuse in six Asian American ethnic groups in the USA. *International Social Work*. 2008; 51(5):635-649.

A study on lifecourse experiences of intimate partner violence and help-seeking (**Lifecourse IPV and Help-Seeking Study**), which assessed experiences of IPV among 56 Indian and Pakistani abused women (and 87 Filipina women) aged 18-60 recruited via various community outreach methods in the San Francisco Bay Area, found that:

- ◆ 96% of Indian and Pakistani victims reported having experienced having experienced physical violence by an intimate partner.
- ◆ 50% of Indian and Pakistani victims reported having experienced stalking by an intimate partner.
- ◆ 64% of Indian and Pakistani victims reported having experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner.
- ◆ Indian and Pakistani victims born in the U.S. or who had immigrated to the U.S. pre-adolescence (1.5+ generations) were more likely to experience all three forms of IPV - physical violence, sexual assault, and stalking, compared to those born outside the U.S. and those who immigrated post-adolescence.
- ◆ Younger Indian and Pakistani victims were more likely to experience stalking by intimate partners compared to their older counterparts.

Yoshihama M, Bybee D, Dabby C, Blazeovski J. Lifecourse experiences of intimate partner violence and helpseeking among Filipina, Indian, and Pakistani women: Implications for justice system responses. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice; 2010.

A study of 160 South Asian women (who were married or in a heterosexual relationship), recruited through community outreach methods such as flyers, snowball sampling, and referrals in Greater Boston (**Raj and Silverman Study**), found that:

- ◆ 42% of the participants reported that they had been physically and/or sexually abused in some way by their current male partners in their lifetime; 36.9% reported having been victimized in the past year.
- ◆ 30% reported having experienced partners' physical abuse, and 18.8% report having experienced partners' sexual abuse. 65.2% of the women reporting physical abuse also reported sexual abuse.
- ◆ 16% reported injury or the need for medical services as a result of a partner's violence.
- ◆ Women who reported intimate partner violence were more likely than those who did not report violence to indicate that they had experienced "poor physical health in 7 or more of the last 30 days" (20% vs. 7%), "depression [in] 7 or more of the last 30 days" (32% vs. 10%), "anxiety [in] 7 or more of the last 30 days" (34% vs. 20%), and "suicidal ideation during the last year" (16% vs. 3%).
- ◆ No significant difference was found in the prevalence of domestic violence between arranged marriages and non-arranged marriages.

Raj A, Silverman J. Intimate partner violence against South-Asian women in Greater Boston. *Journal of American Medical Women's Association*. 2002; 57(2).

### 3. Abuse by In-Laws

Of a convenience sample of 169 South Asian women who were married at the time of the survey:

- ◆ 6% reported having experienced emotional abuse by in-laws. The proportion of women who reported emotional abuse by in-laws was significantly higher among those reporting partners' violence in their current relationship (15%) than those who did not report such violence (3%).

Raj A, Livramento KN, Santana CM, Gupta J, Silverman JG. Victims of intimate partner violence more likely to report abuse from in-laws. *Violence against Women*. 2006; 12: 936-949.

In a telephone interview survey of a random sample of Gujarati adults aged 18-64:

- ◆ 7% of female respondents reported that in-laws had called them names.

Yoshihama M. The Shanti Project, Baseline Community-Wide Survey. Unpublished raw data.

### 4. Homicide: Domestic-Violence Related

A report on 160 U.S. domestic violence related homicides in Asian families based on newspaper clippings and information from advocates for a six-year period from 2000–2005 found that:

- ◆ 30 of 158 (19%) victims with known ethnicities were South Asian.
- ◆ 32 of 122 (26%) perpetrators with known ethnicities were South Asian.

Dabby C, Patel H, Poore G. Shattered Lives: Homicides, Domestic Violence and Asian Families. Oakland, CA: Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence; 2010.

### 5. Help-Seeking

The Raj and Silverman Study found that:

- ◆ 11% of South Asian women reporting intimate partner violence indicated receiving counseling support services for domestic abuse.
- ◆ Only 3% of the abused South Asian women in the study had ever obtained a restraining order against an abusive partner. This rate is substantially lower than that reported in a study of women in Massachusetts, in which over 33% of women who reported intimate partner violence in the past 5 years had obtained a restraining order.

#### Seeking Help from Family Members

In a study of 62 battered women (20 African American, 22 Hispanic, and 20 South Asian) who had accessed domestic violence services:

- ◆ South Asian women were more likely to seek help from family members than African American or Hispanic women. The difference was notable in the proportion of women who disclosed the violence to their father (40% of South Asian, compared to 11% of African American and 9% of Hispanic) or their brother (55.0% of South Asian, compared to 17% of African American and 22% of Hispanic).
- ◆ Following disclosure, South Asian women were significantly more likely to be advised by family members "to stay in the marriage" than other groups of women.

Yoshioka MR, Gilbert L, El-Bassel N, Baig-Amin M. Social support and disclosure of abuse: Comparing South Asian, African American, and Hispanic battered women. *Journal of Family Violence*. 2003; 18:171-180.

## Seeking Help from the Police, Domestic Violence Programs, Legal Services, or Healthcare

The Lifecourse IPV and Help-Seeking Study found that:

- ◆ 55% of Indian and Pakistani abused women had called the police at least once, 41% had used domestic violence shelters at least once, 57% had used non-residential domestic violence programs at least once, 61% had sought legal assistance at least once, and 50% had sought healthcare related to IPV at least once.
- ◆ Amongst the 3 generational groups surveyed – 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5+, and 2<sup>nd</sup> – likelihood to contact police or to seek help from legal services and domestic violence programs did not appear to differ.
- ◆ 1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian and Pakistani victims were more likely to seek healthcare compared with the 1.5+ generations. There was no significant age cohort difference in the likelihood of seeking healthcare related to IPV.
- ◆ Younger victims were more likely to contact outside agencies, such as the police, legal services, and domestic violence programs (shelter or non-residential) compared to older victims, regardless of immigration/generational position.
- ◆ The police appear to be an important gateway to services: If victims contacted both a domestic violence program and the police, they were more likely to have contacted the police first. Similarly, if victims reached out to both the police and legal service programs, a majority of them reached out to the police first.

## Resources and Barriers

The Lifecourse IPV and Help-Seeking Study found that abused Indian and Pakistani women seeking help from friends or outside agencies identified the following as the most helpful:

- ◆ Sources of response: Asian domestic violence programs (38%); friends (26%); and family (19%). Other sources of most helpful response include: Helping professionals (other than legal or medical) such as counselors and case managers (15%); non-Asian domestic violence programs (13%); and legal assistance programs (13%).
- ◆ Types of response: Information and referrals (54%); displays of caring and/or concern e.g., showing concern for the survivor, willingness to help, "being there for me," "standing by me," taking personal interest in the survivor, and being supportive (34%); tangible and concrete assistance e.g. a place to stay, monetary help, and food (27%); and emotional support (24%).
- ◆ The most frequent barriers Indian and Pakistani victims encountered when seeking help from criminal justice systems (CJS) agencies included:
- ◆ Shame/reputation/privacy (32%); fear of the consequences/safety concerns (28%); hope for change or that they were not ready (28%); lack of knowledge/familiarity (24%); and factors related to CJS agencies (eg., the perception that CJS cannot be trusted or that CJS interventions are limited/ineffective) (24%).

## Other

A study of Asian individuals through self-administered questionnaires at ethnic fairs and community events in Boston found that:

- ◆ 79% of South Asian respondents reported being hit regularly as children, whereas 70% of Cambodian, 61% of Chinese, 80% of Korean, and 72% of Vietnamese respondents did.
- ◆ 8% of South Asian respondents reported having witnessed their fathers regularly hit their mothers, whereas 28% of Cambodian, 18% of Chinese, 30% of Korean, and 27% of Vietnamese respondents did.

- ◆ 5% of South Asian respondents said a woman who is being abused should not tell anyone about the abuse, whereas 22% of Cambodian, 18% of Chinese, 29% of Korean, and 9% of Vietnamese respondents did.
- ◆ 82% of South Asian respondents indicated that a battered woman should turn to a friend for help, whereas 44% of Cambodian, 37% of Chinese, 41% of Korean, and 29% of Vietnamese respondents did.
- ◆ 74% of South Asian respondents supported a battered woman calling the police for help, whereas 47% of Cambodian, 52% of Chinese, 27% of Korean, and 49% of Vietnamese respondents did.

Yoshioka M. and Dang Q. Asian Family Violence Report: A study of the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese communities in Massachusetts. Boston, MA: Asian Task Force against Domestic Violence; 2000.

## 6. Resources

### Translated Materials

Materials on domestic violence in over 110 languages are available from [Hot Peach Pages](#).

[Bengali](#) | [Gujarati](#) | [Hindi](#) | [Punjabi](#) | [Tamil](#) | [Urdu](#)

### National Domestic Violence Hotline

For crisis intervention, safety planning, information about domestic violence and referrals to local service providers. Assistance available in English and Spanish, as well as other languages through interpreter services.

Livechat at [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org) | 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

### Love is Respect

Offers crisis counseling and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Livechat at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) | 1-866-331-9474 | Text LOVEIS to 22522

### Directories

- ◆ [Directory of Domestic and Gender Violence Programs Serving Asians and Pacific Islanders](#) | [Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence](#) | [PDF and online database](#)
- ◆ [Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center](#), International Domestic Violence Response
- ◆ [Hot Peach Pages](#), International Directory of Domestic Violence Agencies.

### Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

For questions, information, publications, training requests and technical assistance:

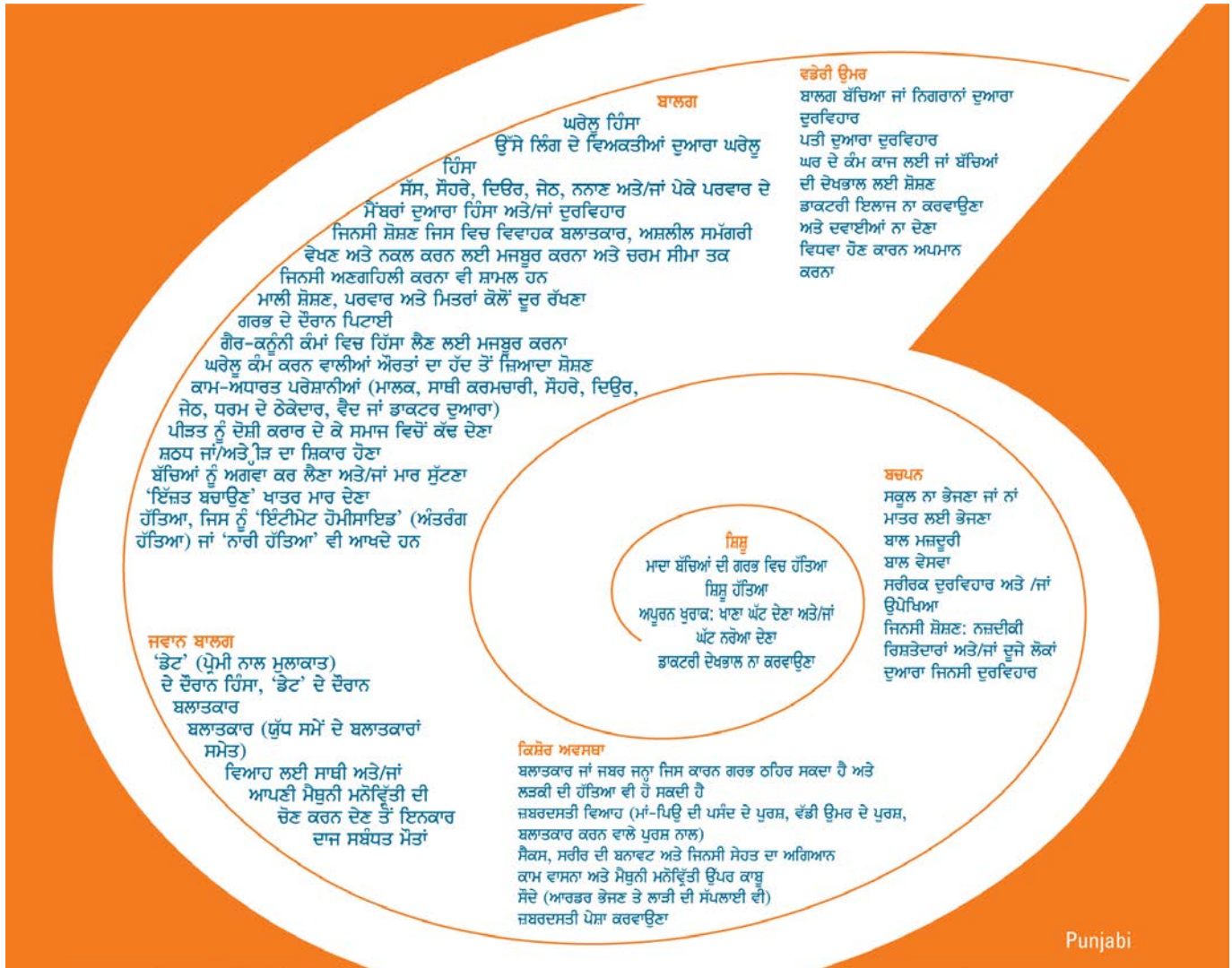
[www.api-gbv.org](http://www.api-gbv.org) | 415-568-3315 | [info@api-gbv.org](mailto:info@api-gbv.org)



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# ਆਪਣੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਔਰਤ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਹੇ ਗਏ ਦੁਰਵਿਹਾਰ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਚੱਕਰ

## Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence



Punjabi

Translated versions of the Lifetime Spiral in Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, Tagalog and Vietnamese available at [api-gbv.org](http://api-gbv.org). January 2002. Revised 2010.



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From the aborting of female fetuses to intimate homicide, girls and women may encounter numerous oppressions during infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and as elders. Some of these are confined to one stage in the lifecycle, some continue into subsequent stages.

The Lifetime Spiral reveals patterns of victimization by enumerating the types of violence, vulnerabilities, and harms women and girls face. It also implicitly shows the presence of different abusers located over the lifecourse. A grandmother may withhold nutritious food for a baby girl, a brother may perpetrate incest, a priest may molest a teen girl, a father may insist on a forced marriage, a college student may date rape a classmate, a co-worker may engage in sexual harassment, a husband may batter during pregnancy, a brother- or sister-in-law may stalk, an ex-boyfriend may kill, a community may ostracize homosexuals, a family may silence or shame.

In addition to physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuses, violence is about living in a climate of fear, shame, coercive control, and devaluation. It is often experienced in the context of additional oppressions based on race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, type of labor performed, level of education, class position, disability, and immigration or refugee status. Raising awareness about the historical nature of gender violence confronts victim-blaming, informs advocacy, and empowers survivors.



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