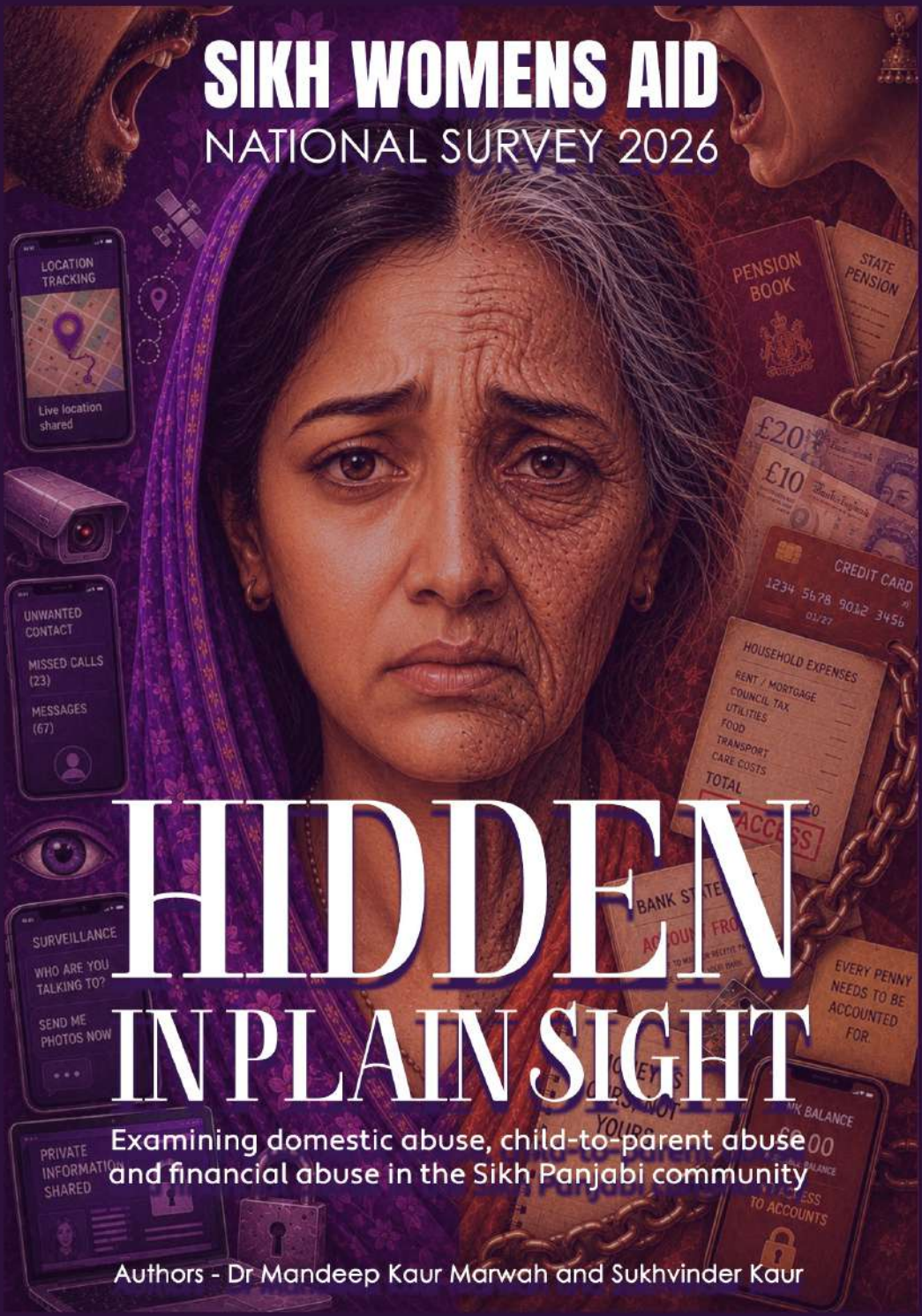

SIKH WOMENS AID
NATIONAL SURVEY 2026
HIDDEN
IN PLAIN SIGHT
Examining domestic abuse, child-to-parent abuse and financial abuse in the Sikh Panjabi community
Authors - Dr Mandeep Kaur Marwah and Sukhvinder Kaur
LOCATION TRACKING
Live location shared
UNWANTED CONTACT
MISSED CALLS (23)
MESSAGES (67)
SURVEILLANCE
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
SEND ME PHOTOS NOW
PRIVATE INFORMATION SHARED
PENSION BOOK
STATE PENSION
£20
£10
CREDIT CARD
1234 5678 9012 3456
HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES
RENT / MORTGAGE
COUNCIL TAX
UTILITIES
FOOD
TRANSPORT
CARE COSTS
TOTAL
ACCESS
EVERY PENNY NEEDS TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR
TO ACCOUNTS



DEDICATIONS

This report is dedicated to the memory of Tarnjeet Kaur Riaz (Chagger) and Bhajan Kaur. Tarnjeet, aged 44, was murdered by her partner in Leicester during 2024. Her family remembered her warmth, humour and care for others, describing her as the backbone of their family. Just one week after Tarnjit's tragic murder, Bhajan, aged 76, was murdered by her adult son at her home also in Leicester.

We honour their lives and hold their families in our thoughts. In their memory, we reaffirm our commitment to recognising domestic abuse across intimate partner and wider family relationships, and to ensuring that women's safety is taken seriously at every age.

To the women and girls who have shared their experiences

We thank every Sikh Panjabi woman and girl who has participated in our surveys since 2021, including our 2026 survey. Your insights, experiences and stories shape our understanding of abuse and the barriers to seeking support.

They will help guide how Sikh Women's Aid develops and expands its services over the next five to ten years.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in us.
We carry a responsibility to ensure that what you have shared informs meaningful change.

To our donors and funders

We gratefully acknowledge our donors and funders, including The Circle NGO, Comic Relief, Lloyds Foundation, The Henry Smith Foundation, The Eveson Trust, the Prism Gift Fund, the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, The Treebeard Trust and The Smallwood Trust. Your support helps Sikh Women's Aid sustain its work and respond to the needs of Sikh Panjabi women and girls. Thank you for supporting our commitment to safety, dignity and accessible specialist support.

Sikh Women's Aid

CONTENTS

1. FOREWORD

1.1 - THE BARRONESS GILL CBE 1

1.2 - ANGELA KANDOLA 2
DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

2. EXECUTIVE BOARD REMARKS 3

3. HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

4. METHODOLOGY 6

5. 2026 SURVEY RESULTS
What Sikh Panjabi Women and Girls told us

5.1 - Respondent Demographics 9

5.2 - Theme One – Domestic Abuse 13
Awareness and experiences

5.3 -Theme Two – Child-to-Parent Abuse 21
Awareness and experiences

5.4 -Theme Three – Financial Abuse 30
Awareness and experiences

5.5 -Theme Four – Reporting and Seeking Support 40
Barriers, experiences and outcomes

6. IN HER OWN WORDS 47

7. CONCLUSION 53

8. RECOMMENDATIONS 55

FOREWORD

1.1 THE BARRONESS GILL CBE



Sikh Women's Aid's Hidden in Plain Sight report provides an important insight into the experiences of Sikh Panjabi women and girls and brings greater visibility to forms of domestic abuse that remain poorly understood and too often unspoken.

Two findings particularly stand out to me: child-to-parent abuse and financial abuse.

More than a third of respondents who answered the relevant question had experienced or witnessed child-to-parent abuse. Where a child was identified as the person causing harm, adult sons were most frequently named. Abuse by an adult child presents challenges. Parents can experience fear, intimidation and control while also feeling love, responsibility and concern for the welfare of their child. This complexity can make abuse difficult to disclose and difficult for professionals to recognise. Domestic abuse must not be understood solely through the lens of intimate partner relationships.

The findings on financial abuse are equally important. 35% of women who answered the question reported having experienced financial abuse, and 53% of those answering the question about leaving said financial concerns had prevented them from leaving a marriage or relationship sooner.

Financial abuse is about more than money. It can restrict independence, remove choices and make leaving an abusive situation significantly harder. Perhaps most concerning is the silence surrounding these experiences. Although women demonstrated a strong understanding of financial abuse, 93% said it was discussed either not very openly or not at all within Sikh communities.

As a member of the House of Lords, I believe evidence such as this must inform how we understand and respond to domestic abuse. Policy, safeguarding and frontline services must recognise abuse within wider family relationships and understand the cultural, familial and financial barriers that can prevent women from seeking help.

I commend Sikh Women's Aid for continuing to bring these experiences into public and professional conversations, and I thank every woman who contributed to this research.

Their voices are clear.

Our responsibility is to listen and ensure that what has remained hidden in plain sight is no longer overlooked.

The Baroness Gill CBE
House of Lords

FOREWORD

1.2 ANGELA KANDOLA

DEPUTY PCC FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



In July 2026, I had the privilege of co-hosting Sikh Women's Aid's Remembrance Day in Nottingham, where we came together to remember South Asian and Sikh Panjabi women and girls whose lives had been taken through domestic abuse, honour-based abuse and harmful practices.

It was a powerful reminder of the devastating consequences when abuse is not recognised, victims are not heard and opportunities to intervene are missed.

Sikh Women's Aid's latest report, Hidden in Plain Sight, provides further evidence of why we must strengthen our collective response to violence against women and girls.

The findings on child-to-parent abuse are particularly concerning. More than a third of respondents who answered the relevant question had experienced or witnessed this form of abuse. Financial abuse also emerges as a significant concern, with 53% of women answering the question about leaving reporting that financial worries had prevented them from leaving an abusive relationship sooner.

These findings challenge us to recognise abuse in all its forms, including within wider family relationships, where victims may face additional emotional, cultural and financial barriers to seeking help.

As Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, I am committed to improving trust and confidence in policing, particularly among communities whose voices and experiences have not always been adequately represented.

Victims should never have to fit a particular profile or experience a particular type of abuse before their concerns are taken seriously. Police, safeguarding professionals and support services must work together, exercise professional curiosity and ensure that every disclosure receives an informed and appropriate response.

2. Executive Board Reflections

Hidden in Plain Sight tells a story that demands the attention of professionals and our community. Sikh Panjabi women and girls may recognise abuse yet still face considerable barriers to speaking about it, seeking support or leaving. Awareness alone does not give a woman the freedom or means to change her circumstances.

***Izzat,* or family honour, remains a powerful barrier to disclosure, including among younger women. Abuse may also extend beyond an intimate partner; a finding that has been consistent across all three research projects carried out by Sikh Women's Aid (SWA), yet still largely invisible to statutory bodies and front-line professionals. Respondents identified partners, in-laws and adult children as perpetrators, alongside experiences involving honour-based abuse, forced marriage, dowry and abuse connected to the birth of a daughter. Responses focused primarily on intimate partners risk overlooking these wider family relationships.**

Adult child-to-parent abuse brings this complexity into focus. A mother may fear her adult son while remaining deeply concerned for his wellbeing. She may want the abuse to stop without wanting the relationship to end. Her love and concern do not diminish the harm or her right to protection. For Sikh Panjabi mothers, enmeshment with their adult sons is something seen routinely in our casework. Mothers will withdraw from their entire family and sometimes, their other children to protect an abusive son because of the perceived shame of honour as her son's behaviour is seen as a reflection of her parenting by the community so denial, diminishing the harm he causes becomes the norm over her own personal safety.

Financial abuse further restricts women's choices. Respondents described financial concerns preventing them from leaving sooner. The intersection of elder abuse and financial abuse is a known issue in the community. Adult children exploiting their parents' finances, adult sons with multiple and dynamic risk needs such as drugs, alcohol and mental health must be viewed and assessed as risk factors..

As a specialist organisation led by-and-for Sikh Panjabi women, Sikh Women's Aid will continue to ensure that women's experiences shape how abuse is understood, risk is assessed and support is provided.

We thank every woman and girl who contributed. Our responsibility now is to turn what each one has shared into stronger protection, accessible support and greater freedom and empowerment for women and girls to make decisions about their own lives.

Professionals must consider the whole family, while our community must place women's safety above family reputation.

3. Executive Summary

Hidden in Plain Sight 2026 *reveals how abuse within Sikh Panjabi families can be concealed by silence, normalisation and powerful expectations about family loyalty, community reputation and izzat (honour). Domestic abuse is not confined to intimate relationships. It may be perpetrated or reinforced by adult children, parents, siblings and extended family members, with women experiencing multiple perpetrators and overlapping forms of control.*

The report draws on two methodologically separate sources: the 2026 National Sikh Women's Survey, completed by 650 self-selecting Sikh Panjabi women, and Sikh Women's Aid's casework data covering 1 January 2025 to 30 September 2026. The survey provides evidence of women's experiences and perceptions. Casework illustrates the complexity of cases reaching specialist support. The datasets have not been combined, and casework is used to provide context rather than statistically validate the survey findings.

Among the 536 survey participants who answered the question on personal experience, 59% reported having experienced domestic abuse. Of the 333 women who identified the forms of abuse experienced, 83% reported emotional abuse, 68% psychological abuse, 68% controlling behaviour, 60% physical abuse, 47% coercive control and 45% financial abuse.

The findings expose the significance of adult family violence. More than one third of women answering the relevant question, 37% of 498, had experienced or witnessed child-to-parent abuse. Where the child was identified, adult sons were the most reported perpetrators, accounting for 73% of 93 valid responses. This abuse may involve intimidation, physical violence, financial exploitation, enforced isolation and control over an older parent's home, relationships and decisions. Mothers may be reluctant to disclose the harm because they fear criminalising their sons, losing family relationships or being blamed and judged by the wider community.

Financial abuse was experienced by 35% of the 457 women who answered that question. Among the 184 women who described its impact, 65% experienced stress, 44% lost independence, 44% found it more difficult to leave or remain separated, and 43% experienced debt. Financial concerns had prevented 53% from leaving an abusive situation sooner. Financial abuse is therefore not simply a money problem. It is a means of restricting choice, creating dependency and prolonging exposure to harm. It may also intersect with dowry related abuse, control by in-laws, housing insecurity and the exploitation of older mothers by adult children.

Abuse remains heavily underreported. Of the 269 respondents who had experienced domestic abuse and answered the police reporting question, 58% had never reported it. Among the 132 respondents who described the outcome of police involvement, 70% reported that no further action was taken. Only seven reported that the case resulted in a prosecution. These findings raise serious questions about whether women feel able to report abuse and whether disclosure leads to protection, accountability or lasting safety.

Sikh Women's Aid's operational data provides further context. Between 1st January 2025 and 30th September 2026, the service received 344 referrals involving 263 individuals, while its client profile report contained 317 client records. These are different measures and must not be treated as interchangeable.

Taken together, the evidence tells a consistent story. Sikh Panjabi women may face harm from several directions while being expected to preserve the family structures in which it occurs. **Older women can become particularly invisible where an adult child controls their finances, communication or access to other relatives**. Apparent compliance may be interpreted as free choice without sufficient consideration of coercion, fear or dependency. Women who seek help may then encounter fragmented responses, repeated retelling, inconsistent risk assessment and cases closed because they are unable or unwilling to pursue formal action.

PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

*At **a local level**, frontline services must assess abuse across the whole family network, establish coordinated safeguarding pathways and provide sustained access to specialist by-and-for advocacy.*

*At **a regional level**, adult family violence must be embedded within violence against women and girls' strategies, commissioning and professional development. Police, social care, health and housing services must strengthen risk assessment and examine what happens after women disclose abuse.*

*At **a national level**, government should establish a clear adult family violence framework, strengthen the response to financial abuse, improve data and research, and provide sustainable, long-term funding for specialist by-and-for services.*

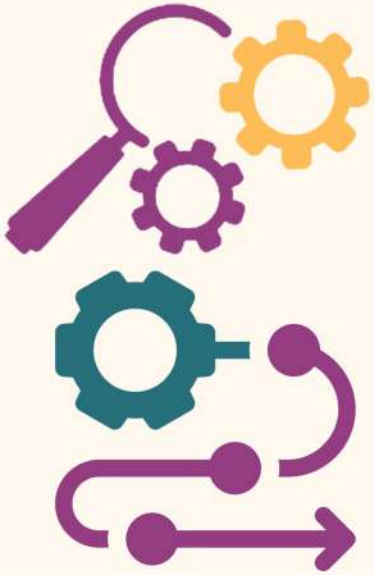
Adult family violence must be recognised as domestic abuse, not dismissed as family conflict. Financial abuse must be addressed as a means of coercion and control. The responsibility for safety must rest with the systems responding to abuse, not with a woman's willingness to report, leave or support a prosecution.

What remains hidden cannot be addressed. The evidence in this report demands recognition, accountability and a response capable of seeing the whole pattern of harm, rather than only the incident that finally comes to professional attention.

4. Methodology

The survey received 662 responses. Of these, 650 were from women who identified as Sikh Panjabi and female, and this report is based on those 650. Not everyone answered every question: 650 answered the questions about themselves, 541 (83%) reached the domestic abuse section, 458 the financial abuse section, and 452 the section on reporting to the police. Percentages throughout are based on the number of women who answered each question, and that number is given where it is not 650. Please bear this in mind when comparing one question with another.

The survey was designed by Sikh Women's Aid and had 40 questions in five sections: about you; understanding and experience of domestic abuse; child-to-parent abuse; financial abuse; and reporting to the police. Two screening questions confirmed that respondents identified as Sikh Panjabi and as female. The survey was run online through SurveyMonkey in English and Panjabi from 27th May 2026 to 4th September 2026 and women were invited to take part through various channels. The survey was distributed via our website and our subscribed mailing list for our newsletter made up of over 1000 professionals, community members and activists. It was also shared across all our social media platforms (FaceBook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, BlueSky and TikTok). On Facebook in particular, we shared the survey in local, regional and national Sikh Panjabi FaceBook groups. WhatsApp circulation was another method of distribution. SWA staff also attended many community events over the Summer of 2026 which included, the Birmingham Mela where 50,000 South Asians attended over two days. We also attended local women's groups and events (Tiyaa Deh Mele), we were invited to speak at three Gurdwaras across the UK, all where we gave out leaflets with QR codes links to the survey.



Taking part was voluntary and anonymous, and no payment was offered. Because anyone could take part rather than being selected, the women who responded are not a representative cross-section of all Sikh Panjabi women, and it is not possible to calculate a response rate.

No names or contact details were collected, and internet addresses and other identifying information were removed before analysis. Where a question is reported on a smaller number of women than answered it, the reason is explained in the text. Where women could tick more than one answer, percentages show the proportion of women ticking each option, so they add up to more than 100%. For questions offering "all of the above" alongside individual items (Q13, Q18, Q24), women who ticked it are counted in Sections 6 to 9 as having ticked every item.

Each characteristic was looked at on its own, without taking the others into account



We also looked at whether results differed by disability, by age (18–34, 35–54, 55 and over), by region (West Midlands, London and East Midlands only) and by experience of child to parent abuse. Each of these comparisons used the same eight key measures, chosen before the analysis began; anything reported outside that set is flagged as a tentative finding.

Sections 1 to 5 report the figures from SurveyMonkey's summary results, recalculated from the individual responses where a question is reported on a smaller group. Sections 6 to 9 were calculated from the individual responses. When comparing groups in those sections, we only describe a difference as clear if it is large enough that chance alone is unlikely to explain it; smaller differences are described as uncertain. No formal statistical tests were used. Where fewer than 30 women in a group answered a question, we give numbers rather than percentages.

Question 40 invited respondents to share anything not already covered by the survey. Of 123 numbered responses, 96 contained substantive material and 27 were excluded because they said only No, N A, Nothing else or an equivalent.

Each substantive response was read in full and assigned to every applicable theme. Coding was therefore non-exclusive: one response may contribute to several themes and comment types.

Counts represent the number of responses coded to a theme, not the number of allegations, incidents, perpetrators or people affected.

Ditai kitai na santokheean antar trisna bahut agiaan andhaar.

MEANING:

THEY ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH ANYTHING THEY ARE GIVEN BECAUSE WITHIN THEM THERE IS EXCESSIVE CRAVING AND THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE.

Sikh Women's Aid
Service Delivery Overview

Between January 2025 and 8 October 2026[1], Sikh Women's Aid recorded 348 incoming referrals across its services. A total of 208 referrals were received during 2025, while 136 were recorded between January and September 2026. Comparing equivalent nine-month periods, referral volume fell by 22.3%, from 175 referrals in January to September 2025 to 136 during the same period in 2026. Demand nevertheless remained variable, with lower referral numbers between March and May 2026 followed by a renewed increase in June.



Direct and community-facing routes played a central role in enabling people to reach Sikh Women's Aid. Referrals recorded through Sikh Women's Aid, self-referral and the Sikh Helpline together accounted for 60.1% of all referrals. This demonstrates the importance of maintaining accessible routes through which women can seek help independently and outside formal statutory systems. External agencies also contributed referrals, including social services, education establishments, police, NHS services and specialist victim-support organisations.

Almost all referrals were accepted: 341 of 348 referrals, or 98%, were recorded as accepted. Seven referrals were rejected, and none were recorded as pending or on a waiting list at the time of extraction. Acceptance should not, however, be treated as confirmation that the service user subsequently engaged with or completed support.

The referral information demonstrates the importance of recognising domestic abuse beyond incidents of physical violence. Among referrals with a recorded reason, emotional abuse, coercive control and psychological abuse collectively accounted for 43.1%. Financial abuse was recorded as frequently as physical abuse. These findings indicate that many women approach Sikh Women's Aid while experiencing sustained patterns of control, intimidation, psychological harm and economic restriction that may be less visible to families, communities and professionals.

Counselling was recorded as the presenting reason for 104 referrals, representing 39.5% of referrals. This provides evidence of demand for therapeutic support but should not be treated as a complete measure of access to the Counselling service.

Culturally specific forms of harm, including caste-based abuse, dowry abuse, honour-based abuse and spiritual or faith-based abuse, were present in the data but recorded in very small numbers as they were often intersecting with other forms of harm.

[1]The date range applied to this piece of data analysis reflects the time elapsed between our two -yearly report publications.

5. 2026 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 What Sikh Panjabi Women and Girls told us

Respondents Profile

Most women who took part were in midlife. Just under three quarters were aged between 35 and 64.

The largest single group was aged 45–54 (31%), followed by 35–44 (26%) and 55–64 (17%).

Younger women were less well represented: 4% were aged 18–24 and two women were under 18.

A further 6% were aged 65 or over. This means the findings say most about women in mid adulthood. Younger and older women are included, but in smaller numbers.

Age profile of survey respondents

Age Range

National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women



Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents were aged 35–64, so the findings speak most strongly to women in midlife.

*The narrative did not state the 25–34 figure directly. 16% is the calculated remainder after the published age percentages; rounding may affect the exact value.

Region

Where survey respondents lived

National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women



Over three quarters of respondents lived in the West Midlands, London and East Midlands.
The findings are therefore most reliable for the Midlands and London.

Note: The report narrative gives 76% as the combined share for the three leading regions; the individually rounded figures sum to 77%. Only regions explicitly stated in the narrative are shown. Other English regions were not quantified in the supplied passage.

Most women lived in areas with long-established Sikh Panjabi communities.

Over three quarters (76%) lived in just three regions: the West Midlands (35%), London (21%) and the East Midlands (21%).

A further 10% lived in the South-East. Few responses came from Wales (6 women), Scotland (3), the North-East (9), the North-West (9) or Yorkshire (21), and none from Northern Ireland. The findings are therefore most reliable for the Midlands and London.

Current marital/ relationship status

Just over half of the women were married (57%). A further 4% were living with a partner, 3% were in a relationship but living apart, and two were in a civil partnership. Almost one in five had been through a marriage that had ended or broken down: 13% were divorced and 6% separated.

A further 14% were single and 2% widowed. Only 1% preferred not to say. The high number of separated and divorced women is relevant to later questions about leaving abusive relationships.

Current marital or relationship status

Q5 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women



Almost one in five respondents had been through a marriage that had ended or broken down.

Percentages are rounded. Civil partnership was reported as a count of two women, rather than a percentage.

Immigration status

Almost all the women had secure immigration status: 96% were British citizens. Small numbers had Indefinite Leave to Remain (8 women), work visas (8), settled status (5) or family visas (3). One woman was an asylum seeker, and none described themselves as undocumented or as refugees. This is an important gap. Women with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds face particular and severe barriers to getting help, and this survey did not reach them in meaningful numbers. The findings should not be assumed to apply to them.

Immigration status

Q6 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women

96%

British citizens

Almost all respondents had secure immigration status.

Other statuses reported



The survey did not reach women with insecure immigration status in meaningful numbers.

The findings should not be assumed to represent women with insecure status or no recourse to public funds.

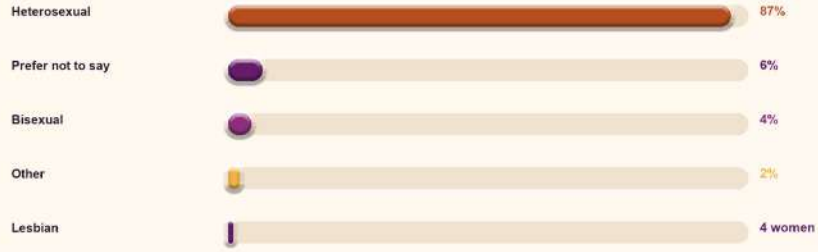
Sexual Orientation

Most women described themselves as heterosexual (87%). A small number identified as bisexual (4%) or lesbian (4 women), and 2% selected "other". Notably, 6% preferred not to say — more than those selecting any minority sexual orientation.

This may reflect how sensitive it feels to disclose sexual orientation in research within one's own community.

Sexual orientation

Q7 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women



More respondents preferred not to state their sexual orientation than selected any single minority category.

Percentages are rounded. Lesbian respondents were reported as a count of four women.

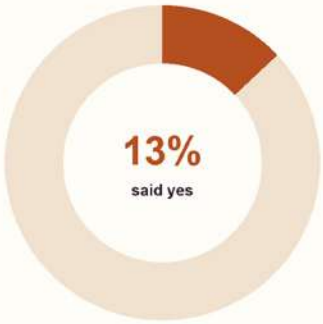
Disability

Just over one in eight women (13%) said they had a disability; 87% said they did not (two women skipped this question). This is broadly in line with the general population and matters for making services accessible.

Among the 87 women with a disability, a physical disability was the most common (63%), followed by a mental health-related disability (29%) and neurodiversity (25%).

Respondents identifying as disabled

Q8 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 648 women; two skipped the question



87 women

identified as disabled

This is the respondent base used for the disability-type question.

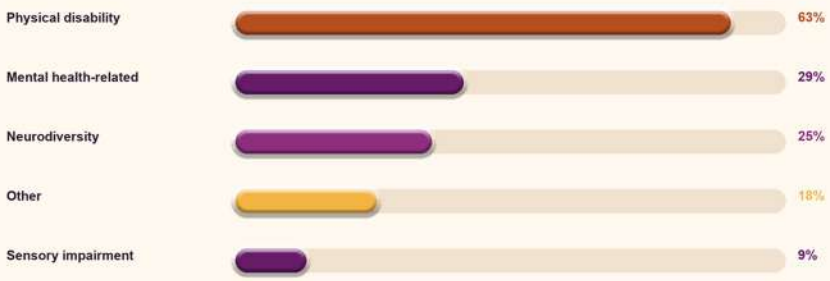
87% said they did not consider themselves disabled

Just over one in eight respondents identified as having a disability.

Two women skipped this question, so percentages use a base of 648 rather than 650.

Types of disability reported

Q9 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 87 women identifying as disabled



Physical disability was the most commonly reported disability type.

Respondents could select more than one disability type, so percentages add to more than 100%.

Sensory impairments were reported by 9%, and 18% selected "other". Women could tick more than one type, so the percentages add up to more than 100%, and some women live with more than one condition. (One woman who said she had no disability at Q8 went on to answer Q9; her answer is not included here.)

Children and Parental make-up

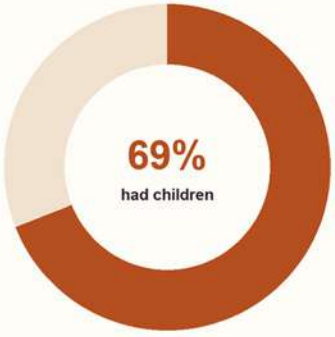
Around seven in ten women had children (69%). Of these, two children was the most common (54%), followed by three (22%) and one (20%). Larger families were uncommon: 2% had four children and 1% had five or more.

Of the 449 women with children, almost a quarter (24%) were single parents, 73% were not, and 2% selected "other".

Close to a quarter of the mothers in this survey are therefore raising children alone, which has direct implications for housing, childcare and financial support.

Respondents with children

Q10 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 650 women



Around seven in ten

respondents were mothers.

Questions about family size and single parenthood therefore use a smaller respondent base.

31% did not have children (calculated remainder)

Most respondents had children, making housing, childcare and financial support important contexts for later findings.

The 31% without children is the calculated complement of the reported 69%.

Number of children

Q11 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 449 women with children



Two children was the most common family size among respondents who were mothers.

Percentages are rounded and describe only women who said they had children.



Single-parent status

Q12 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 449 women with children



24%

almost one in four

mothers were single parents

Close to a quarter of mothers were raising children alone, with implications for housing, childcare and financial support.

Reported percentages total 99% because of rounding.

Sikh Women's Aid
Service Delivery Data

337

Since the publication of Sikh Women's Aid's previous report "Gender, Power and Abuse" in November 2024, our frontline work has continued to show the scale and complexity of abuse experienced by Sikh Panjabi women. Sikh Women's Aid recorded 348 incoming referrals across its services. A total of 208 referrals were received during 2025, while 136 were recorded between January and September 2026. Of these, **337 referrals were accepted (98.0%, n=344).**

These figures describe demand for SWA's services. They are not prevalence estimates, and the three OASIS[2] reports measure different aspects of our work. The **348 referrals, 265 individual people referred and 319 client records** must not be treated as interchangeable figures. Some women may have more than one referral or receive more than one form of support. Of the 265 individuals referred, 217 were allocated to advocacy and 106 to counselling; these allocations overlap and should not be added together.

348

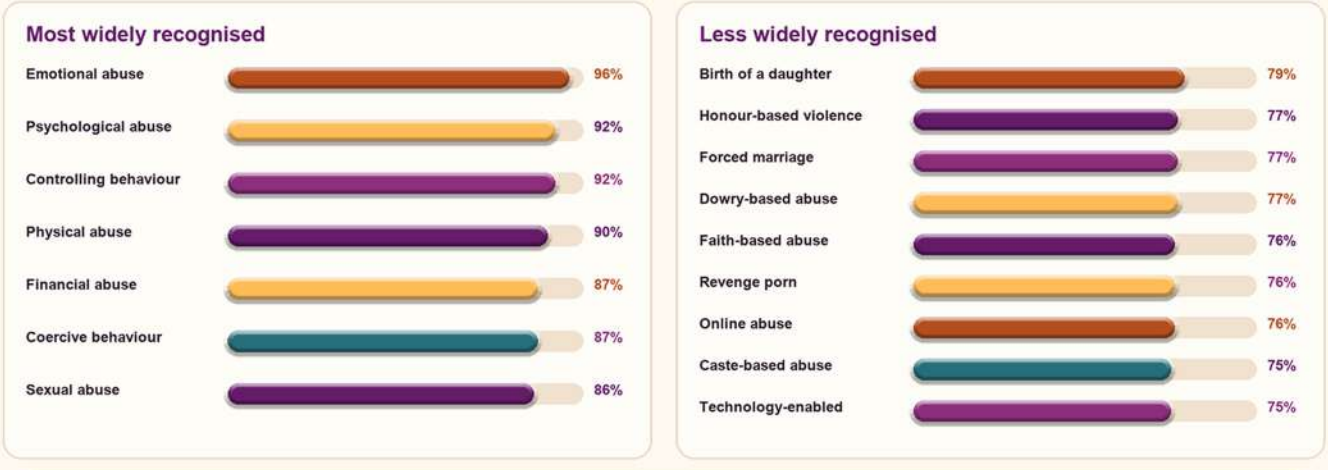
174

Where a reason was recorded, domestic abuse and emotional abuse were the most frequently recorded categories, each accounting for **33 of 174 recorded reasons (19.0%)**. Coercive control and psychological abuse were each recorded in **21 cases (12.1%, n=174)**, while financial abuse was explicitly recorded in **nine cases (5.2%, n=174**). These figures reflect what was entered in the referral-reason field, not necessarily the full range of abuse experienced by each woman.

5.2 Survey Theme One
Domestic Abuse

Which behaviours did you consider to be "domestic abuse" before taking this survey?

Q13 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 541 women



Recognition was high across all forms, but the lowest recognition fell on culturally specific and technology-enabled abuse.

Multi-response question. Women selecting 'all of the above' were counted as recognising every form, so percentages exceed 100% when added.

[2]OASIS is a secure case management system used by SWA to record referrals, client needs, risk, support provided and case outcomes.

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Women who ticked "all of the above" are counted as recognising every form of abuse. On that basis, recognition was high across the board but not even. Of the 541 women who answered, the most widely recognised forms were emotional abuse (96%), psychological abuse (92%), controlling behaviour (92%), physical abuse (90%), financial abuse (87%), coercive behaviour (87%) and sexual abuse (86%).

Recognition was lowest for the forms of abuse most specific to our community and to modern life: abuse related to the birth of a daughter (79%), honour-based violence (77%), forced marriage and dowry-based abuse (both 77%), faith-based abuse (76%), revenge porn and online abuse (both 76%), caste-based abuse (75%) and technology-enabled abuse (75%). The gap of around twenty percentage points between the most and least recognised forms falls on exactly the forms that generic services are least likely to spot.

How would you describe your understanding of domestic abuse in the Sikh/Panjabi community?

Q14 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 541 women



Women's understanding was grounded predominantly in lived experience, witnessing abuse or professional knowledge.

Single-choice question. The 'more than seven in ten' statement combines respondents who experienced or witnessed abuse.

43%

Women could choose one answer only. Of the 541 who answered, 43% had direct personal experience of domestic abuse 31% as an adult and 12% as a child. A further 19% had seen abuse within their family or friendship circle as a child, and 10% as an adult. Another 19% knew about it through their work. Only 9% chose "none of the above". Taken together, more than seven in ten women had either experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.

This is a striking figure, though it partly reflects that women with a personal reason to take part were more likely to do so.

What was your family or community's perception of non-physical behaviours such as control, emotional pressure or financial restriction?

How non-physical abuse was perceived

Q15 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 541 women



Silence and normalisation were far more common than recognising controlling or financially restrictive behaviour as abuse.

Multi-response question, so percentages add to more than 100%.

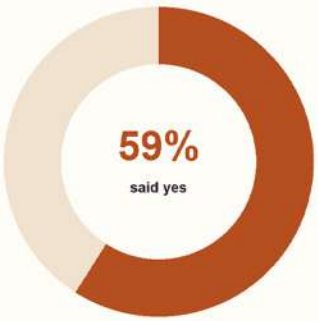
Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Silence was the most common answer: 49% of the 541 women said these behaviours were never discussed, and 41% said they were seen as normal.

A further 9% said they were seen as deserved. Only 22% said such behaviours were understood to be abuse, and 13% said they were not noticed. The picture is of families and communities where controlling behaviour and financial restriction are either treated as normal or simply not talked about, and only a minority name them as abuse.

Have you ever experienced domestic abuse?

Personal experience of domestic abuse

Q16 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 536 women



59%

had experienced domestic abuse

This is the central finding of the survey.

36% said no | 5% were unsure

A clear majority of respondents answering the question said they had experienced domestic abuse.

The survey was self-selected. Women affected by abuse may have been more likely to participate, so this is not a population prevalence estimate.

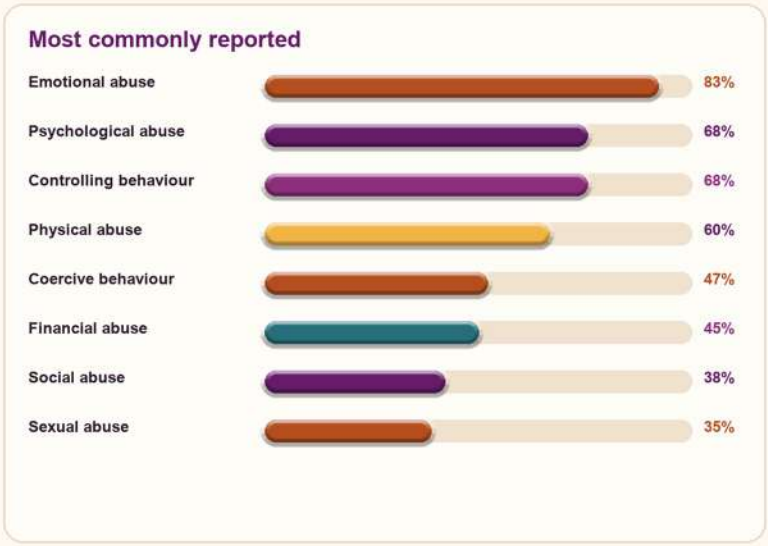
Of the 536 women who answered, 59% said they had experienced domestic abuse, 36% said they had not, and 5% were unsure.

Even allowing for the fact that women affected by abuse may have been more likely to take part, this is a very high figure and is the central finding of the survey.



Types of abuse experienced

Q17 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 333 women





Non-physical abuse was most common: it is often harder to see, evidence and name, despite its widespread impact.

Multi-response question, so percentages add to more than 100%. Community-specific forms were less frequent but still reported by substantial numbers.



83%

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Of the 333 women who answered, emotional abuse was the most common (83%), followed by psychological abuse and controlling behaviour (both 68%), physical abuse (60%), coercive behaviour (47%), financial abuse (45%), social abuse (38%) and sexual abuse (35%).

Forms of abuse specific to our community were reported less often, but still by substantial numbers of women: abuse related to the birth of a daughter (11%), faith-based or spiritual abuse (11%), honour-based abuse (10%), forced marriage (7%), dowry-based abuse (6%) and caste-based abuse (6%).

The fact that non-physical abuse is the most common type matters: the abuse women experience most often is the abuse that is hardest to see, hardest to prove and least likely to lead to a prosecution.



CASE STUDY
Harjit and Balraj

IMPORTANT: The names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the survivor's identity.



"Harjit" was an older woman experiencing domestic abuse from her adult son, "Balraj", who lived with her. Following the death of Harjit's husband, the abuse escalated. Balraj regularly took her money to buy alcohol and drugs, damaged her home and assaulted her on multiple occasions. Although the police had previously attended incidents, the abuse continued.

Harjit's daughter contacted Sikh Women's Aid when the situation became unsafe. Once the referral was allocated, Harjit's caseworker began supporting her. Harjit was terrified of reporting Balraj. She feared community judgement, particularly at the Gurdwara, and struggled with the pressure of being seen to "take her only son to court".



With sustained reassurance from her caseworker, Harjit agreed to make a statement. Her caseworker successfully advocated for her to be accompanied because of her distress. However, when Harjit arrived at the police station, the officer was unaware that a video statement had been arranged and it could not be completed. A Domestic Violence Protection Notice was issued, but Harjit was too frightened to return home and stayed with her daughter.

Ten days later, her caseworker accompanied her to a further appointment. Harjit was directed between police stations before her statement was eventually taken. She was told there might not be sufficient evidence to proceed, and an application was made for a non-molestation order.

Her caseworker continued to provide practical and emotional support. This included helping Harjit seek safer accommodation, resolving housing benefit and rent issues, applying for funds to replace essential items, liaising with her solicitor and repeatedly contacting the police for updates.

Several months passed before court proceedings began. Balraj failed to attend two hearings, resulting in warrants being issued. He later pleaded guilty and received a community order prohibiting him from contacting Harjit. Her caseworker attended court with her and supported her through the delays and uncertainty.

Harjit continues to live with her daughter. Although she is trying to rebuild her life, she still does not feel safe enough to return home.

Child-to-Parent Abuse

Child-to-parent abuse is not confined to children or adolescents. Government guidance recognises that it can continue across the life course and include abuse by adult children. Where the person causing harm is aged 16 or over, the behaviour falls within the statutory definition of domestic abuse. It can include physical violence, threats, humiliation, coercive and controlling behaviour, damage to property, theft and financial abuse.[3]

OVER 16

There is no current national UK prevalence figure for child-to-parent abuse as a distinct form of domestic abuse. The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that **2.7% of people aged 16 and over experienced abuse by a family member in the year ending March 2025,** but this category combines different family relationships and does not identify abuse by children against their parents. Differences in definitions, age limits and recording practices also make the available child-to-parent abuse studies difficult to compare.[5]

The most substantial recent UK study examined violence and abuse by children and young people under 25 in London. Its analysis of Crime Survey for England and Wales data found that child-to-parent abuse accounted for **1.2% of all violence identified in the survey analysis**. Approximately **40% of those identified as victims had not reported the abuse to the police**, demonstrating that police records capture only part of the problem.[3]

40% NOT REPORTED

The same study found a clear gendered pattern in cases recorded by the Metropolitan Police. **Eighty-one per cent of the children or young adults reported for child-to-parent abuse were male, while 69% of victims were female and were most commonly the mother of the person causing harm.** Almost two-thirds of reported cases involved a son or daughter aged between 19 and 25. Violence against the person accounted for 60% of the recorded offences and criminal damage for 25%. These findings are important, but the study did not include adult children over 25 and cannot establish how many older parents experience abuse from adult sons or daughters across the UK.

[3] *Home Office, Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance (Home Office, July 2022), paras 32–35, pp. 24–25. Available at: Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance.*

[4] *Office for National Statistics, Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2025 (ONS, 26 November 2025). The family-abuse estimate covers abuse by family members generally and is not specific to child-to-parent abuse. Available at: Domestic abuse in England and Wales.*

[5] *Iain Brennan, Natasha Burnley, Matthew Cutmore, Amanda Holt, Johnny Lillis, Jo Llewellyn, Shona MacLeod, Malika Shah, Rebecca Van Zanten and Letizia Vicentini, Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse in London (London's Violence Reduction Unit, March 2022), particularly pp. 32–38 and Annex Three. Available at: London CAPVA needs assessment.*

Recent analysis of **172 Section 42 adult safeguarding enquiries** provides further evidence that domestic abuse against older people is frequently perpetrated by family members and can be missed by safeguarding systems. Women accounted for **117 of the 166 cases in which the victim's sex was recorded (70%)**, while suspected perpetrators were male in **108 cases (65%)**. Where the suspected perpetrator was male, he was a son in **45 of 108 cases (42%).**[6]



In almost one-third of the safeguarding cases examined, evidence of domestic abuse was present, but the case had not been formally identified as domestic abuse. Cases involving sons, daughters and other relatives were particularly likely to have been missed. Abuse usually involved more than one form of harm. Emotional abuse commonly occurred alongside physical violence, coercive control or financial abuse.[4]

The study was based on one regional safeguarding partnership and should not be treated as nationally representative, but it provides important evidence about what may be absent from official recording.[4]

Research concerning South Asian older people is particularly limited. A 2018 review identified only 16 relevant empirical studies internationally. It found no prevalence studies of elder mistreatment among South Asian communities living outside South Asia and only limited qualitative evidence from the UK. [5] *The prevalence estimates identified in South Asian countries varied widely and cannot be applied to South Asian communities in Britain.*[5]



More recent UK studies of child-to-parent and elder abuse rarely provide findings that distinguish between South Asian communities, faiths or cultural backgrounds.

The Section 42 study, for example, found that information about perpetrators' ethnicity and other demographic characteristics was missing from most case files. [4]

There is therefore no robust published prevalence estimate for the abuse of older Sikh Panjabi parents by their adult children. The absence of data should not be mistaken for an absence of abuse. It shows that these experiences remain poorly identified, inconsistently recorded and substantially under-researched.

[6] Hannah Bows, Paige Bromley and Bridget Penhale, 'Domestic abuse against older adults—What can s42 case files tell us?', The British Journal of Social Work, vol. 55, no. 6 (2025), pp. 2816–2834. The study analysed 172 Section 42 enquiries undertaken by one safeguarding partnership during 2019. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaf074.



Within the experiences reported to Sikh Women's Aid, abuse of older mothers by adult sons does not present as a single incident or a simple family disagreement. It can involve physical assault, intimidation, damage to the home, taking money, pressure concerning property or inheritance, and control over contact with relatives and professionals. An adult son may restrict visits, answer his mother's telephone, speak on her behalf or prevent professionals from seeing her alone.[7] The abuse can therefore remain concealed even when several agencies are involved.

Older Sikh Panjabi mothers may face additional barriers to disclosure. SWA's casework indicates that maternal responsibility, attachment to an adult son and fear of his criminalisation can exist alongside fear of further harm. Women may worry about izzat, family division and judgement within the wider community or Gurdwara. The pressure may be particularly acute where the person causing harm is an only son or is expected to provide care and security in later life. These factors do not cause abuse, nor do they apply to every Sikh Panjabi family. They can, however, shape how abuse is understood, minimised and disclosed.

These barriers are consistent with wider research. Government guidance identifies shame, stigma, fear of blame, fear of not being believed and concern about a child being removed or criminalised as reasons parents may be reluctant to disclose child-to-parent abuse. It cautions that recorded incidents are likely to represent only a small proportion of the abuse taking place. [7]

SWA's casework also shows the danger of treating mental capacity as evidence that an older woman is free from coercion. A woman may have capacity while still being frightened, isolated, financially controlled or unable to speak without the person causing harm being present. Similarly, minimising an incident, declining to make a statement or saying that a son "will not do it again" does not establish that the risk has ended. Government research has also identified limited prevalence data, inconsistent recording and significant barriers to identifying abuse within family and care relationships.[8]

Effective intervention requires professionals to recognise the adult son as the person alleged to be causing harm, create safe opportunities to speak with the mother independently, and assess the combined pattern of physical, emotional, financial and controlling behaviour. It also requires sustained, culturally informed and multi-agency support. Without this approach, abuse by adult sons can continue to be treated as a private family difficulty while older mothers remain unsafe and largely invisible within both domestic abuse and adult safeguarding systems.

[7] Ashfaque Ahmed Talpur, Tony Ryan, Parveen Ali and Sharron Hinchliff, 'Elder mistreatment in South Asian communities: a review of the literature', The Journal of Adult Protection, vol. 20, nos. 5/6 (2018), pp. 193–206. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-06-2018-0011.

[8] Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office, Safe Care at Home Review (GOV.UK, 2023), Chapter 5, paras 123–139. Available at: Safe Care at Home Review.

5.3 Survey Theme Two

Child-to-Parent Abuse

Awareness & Experiences

What was your understanding of child-to-parent abuse before completing this survey?

Q18 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 498 women

72% selected 'all of the above'



Every listed behaviour was recognised as abuse by more than four in five respondents.

Multi-response question. 9% said they had not previously thought of these behaviours as abuse; overlapping answers suggest the survey widened understanding for some.

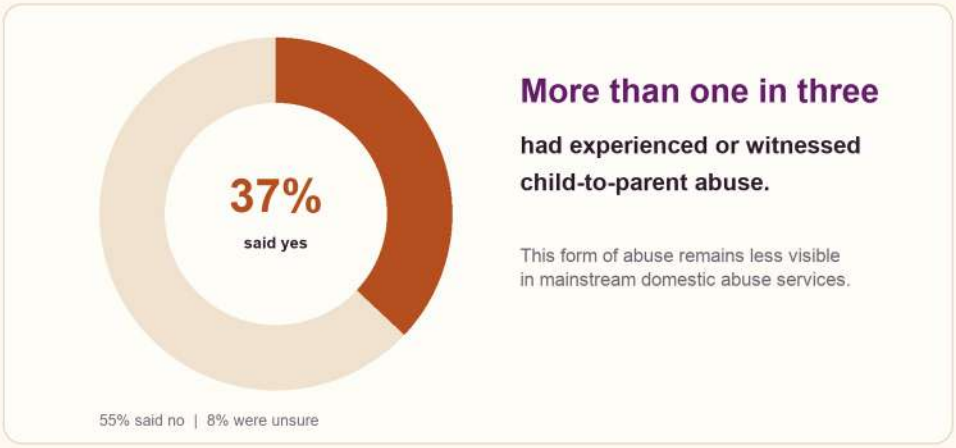
Women could tick more than one answer, and those who ticked "all of the above" are counted as recognising every behaviour. On that basis recognition of child to parent abuse was broad. Of the 498 women who answered, 72% ticked **"all of the above"** outright, and every behaviour listed was recognised by more than four in five women.

The most widely recognised were shouting at, threatening or intimidating a parent (93%) and physical violence towards a parent (91%). Behaviours involving money followed closely: stealing from or pressuring a parent for money, gold or assets (88%), pressuring a parent to sign documents or hand over assets (87%), damaging property (87%) and threats about inheritance or property (86%).

The least recognised, though still above four in five, were threatening self-harm or suicide to manipulate a parent (84%), restricting access to food or drink (83%) and family members excusing or playing down the behaviour (83%). Just under one in ten (9%) said they had not previously thought of these behaviours as abuse although 24 of those 47 women also ticked "all of the above", so this more likely means the survey had widened their understanding, rather than that they recognised none of the behaviours.

Have you experienced or witnessed child-to-parent abuse?

Q19 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 498 women



Over a third of women (37% of the 498 who answered) had experienced or witnessed child to parent abuse.

55% said they had not and 8% were unsure. This is a much higher figure than is usually recognised in mainstream domestic abuse services and deserves attention when services are designed.

Child-to-parent abuse was reported at a level that warrants explicit attention in service design and safeguarding practice.

This figure describes respondents to the survey and should not be treated as a population prevalence estimate.

Who was the primary perpetrator of the child-to-parent abuse you witnessed or experienced?

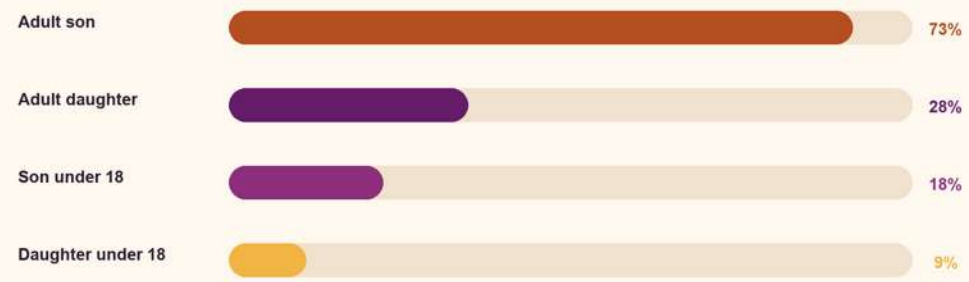
Although 216 women answered this question, only 93 named a child as the person responsible. Among the 93, an adult son was named by 73% and an adult daughter by 28%.

A son under 18 was named by 18% and a daughter under 18 by 9%. Women could name more than one person, and 19 did.

Overall, 86% named an adult child and 24% a child under 18 (nine named both); 84% named a son of any age and 31% a daughter.

So, in this survey, child-to-parent abuse was mostly carried out by sons, and mostly by adult children rather than under-18s. Because of this narrower definition, these figures are based on 93 women rather than 216.

Q20 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Valid base: 93 women who named a child



Within the valid child-perpetrator responses, the person causing harm was usually an adult child and most often a son.

Although 216 women answered the survey question, only 93 named a child. Women could name more than one person; 19 did, so percentages exceed 100% when added.



Are you aware of any personal difficulties or challenges for the perpetrator? What were the personal difficulties or challenges in relation to the person who caused harm?

Q21 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 216 women

58%
No difficulties known

37%
Aware of difficulties

5%
Unsure

Most respondents were not aware of personal difficulties or challenges affecting the person causing harm.

This question records respondents' awareness. It does not establish whether any difficulty was clinically assessed or causally related to abuse.

Of the 216 women who answered, 58% said no, 37% said yes, and 5% were unsure.

Did personal difficulties contribute to the abuse?

Q22 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 117 women

53%
Believed they contributed

21%
Did not believe they contributed

26%
Unsure

Just over half believed the difficulties contributed, while more than a quarter were unsure.

These are respondents' perceptions. Difficulties or challenges do not cause or excuse abusive behaviour.

Of the 117 women who answered, 53% believed these difficulties contributed to the abuse, 21% did not, and 26% were unsure. When asked what the difficulties were (women could tick more than one), alcohol problems were the most common (46%), followed by untreated mental health problems (38%), family honour or shame (32%), drug misuse and conflict between the generations (both 23%), financial dependence (22%), unemployment (18%) and having been exposed to domestic abuse in the past (13%).

Alcohol and untreated mental ill health stand out, alongside family honour and shame as a factor particular to our community. These are factors that women noticed alongside the abuse, they are not causes and should not be presented as excuses for abusive behaviour.

Difficulties reported alongside the abuse

Q23 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 117 women



Alcohol problems, untreated mental ill health and family honour or shame were the most frequently noticed challenges.

Multi-response question. These factors were noticed alongside the abuse; they are not causes and must not be presented as excuses for abusive behaviour.

Manmukh moolahu bhulaaian vich lab lobh ahankaar. Jhagra kardian andin gudrai sabad na karai veechaar.

MEANING:

THOSE THAT HAVE FORGOTTEN THEIR TRUE SELF - MOOL, FOLLOW THEIR OWN MISGUIDED THINKING ARE CAUGHT IN GREED AND EGO. THEIR DAYS PASS IN ARGUMENTS AND CONFLICT RATHER THAN REFLECTING UPON THE SHABAD.

Dhan joban jag thagia lab lobh ahankaar.

MEANING:

THE WORLD IS DECEIVED BY WEALTH, YOUTH, GREED AND EGO.

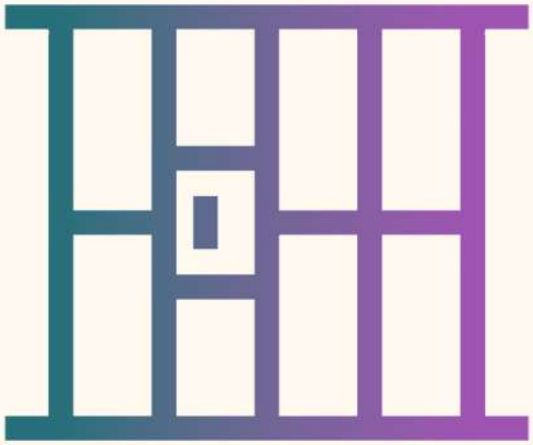
CASE STUDY
Gurmeet and Rajinder

IMPORTANT: The names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the older woman and her family. This remains a live and unresolved case.



"Gurmeet" is an older woman whose family reports that she has become completely isolated from them through a gradual pattern of coercive control by her eldest son, "Rajinder".

Gurmeet previously had close relationships with her daughter, younger son and granddaughters. After Gurmeet and her husband moved into Rajinder's home, he reportedly began restricting visits, excluding relatives and taking control of his parents' decisions.



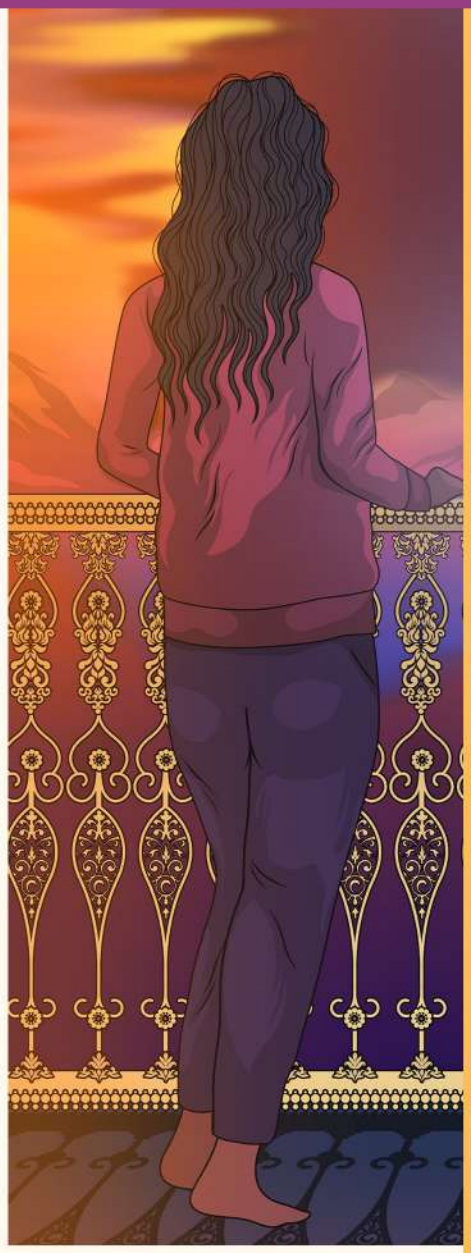
Before his death, Gurmeet's husband told family members that he felt like "a prisoner" and that Gurmeet "just did as she was told" by Rajinder. Despite these disclosures, no protective action was taken. Following her husband's death, the family reported that Rajinder's control intensified.

Although Rajinder and his younger brother both hold Power of Attorney, the family says Rajinder has prevented his brother from exercising his responsibilities. The younger son has reportedly been permitted to see Gurmeet only through a window. Other relatives say they have been turned away, ignored at the door or described as a "threat".

Gurmeet's daughter raised concerns with Adult Social Care, resulting in a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry. The case was closed on the basis that Gurmeet had mental capacity. The family remained concerned that this did not address the reported coercion, isolation and restrictions on her contact with others.

Over several years, relatives approached the GP, police, solicitors and safeguarding services. Their concerns did not result in sustained protective action. Professionals who contacted Rajinder reportedly received angry telephone calls and threats of legal action. When Gurmeet's daughter attempted to visit in 2024, Rajinder ended the visit and subsequently made a harassment complaint against her.

CASE STUDY
Gurmeet and Rajinder



One of Gurmeet's granddaughters contacted Sikh Women's Aid after attending a webinar. Once the referral was allocated, the caseworker began advocating on behalf of the family and liaised with solicitors, an elder-abuse organisation and relevant statutory agencies.

The caseworker repeatedly raised concerns with Adult Social Care about Gurmeet's welfare and isolation. The local authority stated that it had checked on Gurmeet and that she appeared safe and well. It also confirmed that her identity had been verified, but no further information was shared with the family or the caseworker.

The caseworker supported the family to pursue several possible routes, including mediation, a Subject Access Request, a Freedom of Information request and contact with elected representatives. Mediation could not proceed because Rajinder declined to participate. The family was subsequently advised to contact the Office of the Public Guardian.

The caseworker and Gurmeet's daughter submitted a report to the Office of the Public Guardian. They were informed that it could not act because Gurmeet was considered to have mental capacity. The family's concerns about coercion, isolation and the operation of the Power of Attorney remained unresolved.

Adult Social Care later confirmed that a worker had visited Gurmeet but did not disclose the outcome. It subsequently stated that Gurmeet appeared safe, did not want safeguarding involvement and that the case would be closed with no further action. The family continued to report that they could not see or speak to her independently. On one attempted visit, nobody answered the door and the letterbox had reportedly been sealed.

The caseworker submitted a formal complaint to the local authority. Written consent from Gurmeet was requested, but the family could not obtain it because they had no independent access to her. The complaint was escalated, but repeated requests for further information and delayed responses prevented progress. After several months without a substantive reply, the caseworker supported the family to complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

The caseworker has also requested a multi-agency meeting so that the safeguarding concerns can be considered collectively. A response is still awaited.

Gurmeet's case remains unresolved. Her family has had no meaningful independent contact with her, and concerns about isolation, coercion and control of her relationships and affairs remain unanswered.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse is one aspect of the wider legal definition of economic abuse. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, economic abuse includes behaviour that substantially restricts a person's ability to acquire, use or retain money or property, or to obtain goods and services. It can involve restriction, exploitation or sabotage and may be perpetrated by a partner, former partner or family member.[9] Financial abuse can therefore include controlling income, taking wages or benefits, withholding money, creating debt in someone else's name, stealing savings or assets, preventing employment and exerting pressure over property, gold or inheritance.



The most recent UK prevalence study was conducted by Ipsos UK for Surviving Economic Abuse in 2024. It surveyed almost 3,000 women and used weighting to produce a nationally representative sample of UK women aged 18 and over. The study found that **15% of women had experienced economically abusive behaviour from a current or former partner during the previous 12 months**, equivalent to an estimated 4.1 million women.[10] This research concerned abuse by partners and former partners; it did not measure economic abuse by adult children, in-laws or other relatives.

The impacts extended well beyond the immediate loss of money. Among women who had experienced economic abuse, **23% said it had prevented them from leaving the relationship, 36% reported resulting mental ill health, 19% had borrowed money to pay for essential items or bills, and 11% reported becoming homeless.** These findings show that economic abuse can remove the practical means to leave, create long-term debt and insecurity, and continue affecting a victim after the relationship has ended.

The study also reported that **29% of women from Black, Asian and other racially minoritised backgrounds experienced economic abuse from a partner or former partner**, compared with 15% of all women surveyed. However, the published findings combine several different ethnic groups and do not provide separate results for South Asian, Indian, Panjabi or Sikh women. They identify inequality requiring further investigation but cannot establish prevalence within any individual community.

[9] ***Home Office, Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance (Home Office, July 2022), paras 63–65. Available at: Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance.***

[10] ***Surviving Economic Abuse, Measuring Economic Abuse: Preliminary Findings on the Prevalence and Impact of Economic Abuse on Women in the UK (November 2024). The survey was conducted by Ipsos UK using a nationally representative, weighted sample of almost 3,000 UK women aged 18 and over. Available at: Measuring Economic Abuse.***

There is some research on economic abuse affecting South Asian women, but the evidence remains limited. Qualitative studies have identified the control of women's earnings, restricted access to household money, appropriation of gold and dowry, interference with employment, and financial pressure from husbands and in-laws.[11]



This evidence shows how economic abuse can operate through both intimate and wider family relationships, but small and non-representative samples mean that it cannot establish prevalence.

1474 CASES

Research on honour-based abuse further demonstrates that financial abuse can form part of a wider pattern of family control. A study of **1,474 cases identified by police and specialist services in England and Wales** found that 29% involved abuse by family members and 31% involved abuse by both an intimate partner and family members. South Asian victims were particularly prominent in these two groups. The study found that honour-based abuse frequently involved multiple perpetrators and overlapping controlling, physical, sexual, emotional and financial behaviours. It also identified cases in which partners and in-laws acted together, with mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law appearing among the additional perpetrators.[12]

Dowry-related abuse can form part of this wider pattern. It may involve demands for money, gold, property or gifts before or after marriage; the appropriation of assets intended for the woman; or pressure and abuse when a woman or her family cannot meet further demands. **Research with victims reporting honour-based abuse to the police has described dowry-related exploitation in which demands from husbands or in-laws increased the financial pressure on women and their families and reinforced pressure to remain in a marriage to protect family honour.** [13] Dowry-related abuse should not be treated as a private dispute about wedding gifts. Where demands, appropriation or threats are used to control or punish a woman, they may form part of economic abuse, coercive control and honour-based abuse.

[11] Punita Chowbey, 'How Pakistani and Indian women confront marital violence: narratives of economic abuse and financial strategies', Families, Relationships and Societies, vol. 10, no. 1 (2021). The study is qualitative and should not be used to estimate prevalence. Available at: Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive.

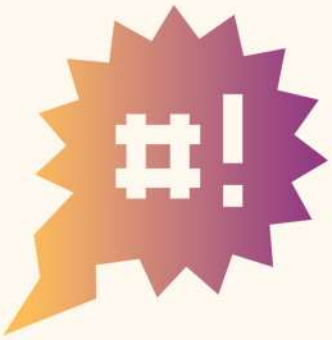
[12] Lis Bates, 'Honor-Based Abuse in England and Wales: Who Does What to Whom?', Violence Against Women, vol. 27, nos. 10–11 (2021), pp. 1774–1795. The study examined 1,474 cases recorded by police and specialist victim services and does not represent unreported honour-based abuse. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220952168.

[13] Roxanne Khan, Rachael Hall and Liz Lowe, 'The experience of interactional justice for victims of "honour"-based violence and abuse reporting to the police in England and Wales', Policing and Society, vol. 28, no. 6 (2018). The study includes victim accounts of withholding or taking money, preventing employment and dowry-related exploitation. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2018.1427745.

The evidence base nevertheless has important gaps. Recent economic-abuse prevalence research concentrates mainly on partners and former partners. Research on South Asian elder mistreatment remains limited and has not produced a reliable UK prevalence estimate. A 2018 review found no prevalence studies of elder mistreatment among South Asian communities living outside South Asia and only limited qualitative evidence from the UK.[14]

Existing research on honour-based abuse also rarely provides sufficiently complete information about religion to support separate analysis of Sikh women; in one major study, religion was missing in most cases.[15] There is no robust published estimate of financial abuse among Sikh Panjabi women, older Sikh women or Sikh parents abused by adult children.

SWA's frontline evidence provides important practice context. In practice, financial abuse is frequently identified as a concurrent issue alongside physical violence, emotional and psychological abuse, coercive control, housing insecurity, immigration concerns and difficulties accessing benefits or essential items.



The intersection with adult child-to-parent abuse is particularly important. SWA has supported older mothers whose adult sons have taken money to fund alcohol or drug use, pressured them over property or inheritance, damaged their homes, controlled household finances or used dependence and intimidation to obtain money. In other cases, an adult son has controlled access to his mother, spoken on her behalf or exercised practical control over her affairs, making it difficult for relatives or professionals to establish her wishes independently.



Financial abuse in this context cannot be separated from the emotional complexity of the parent-child relationship. An older mother may depend on her son for housing, transport, communication or care while also being frightened of him. She may minimise the abuse because she does not want him to become homeless or criminalised, or because reporting him could be understood as publicly rejecting her maternal responsibility. Concerns about izzat and judgement within the family, community or Gurdwara can reinforce that pressure. These factors do not cause financial abuse and should not be generalised to every Sikh Panjabi family. They can, however, give an abusive adult child additional means to control his mother and make disclosure more difficult.

[14] *Ashfaque Ahmed Talpur, Tony Ryan, Parveen Ali and Sharron Hinchliff, 'Elder mistreatment in South Asian communities: a review of the literature', The Journal of Adult Protection, vol. 20, nos. 5/6 (2018), pp. 193–206. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-06-2018-0011.*

[15] *Lis Bates, 'Honor-Based Abuse in England and Wales: Who Does What to Whom?', Violence Against Women, vol. 27, nos. 10–11 (2021), pp. 1774–1795. The study examined 1,474 cases recorded by police and specialist victim services and does not represent unreported honour-based abuse. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220952168.*

5.4 Survey Theme Three

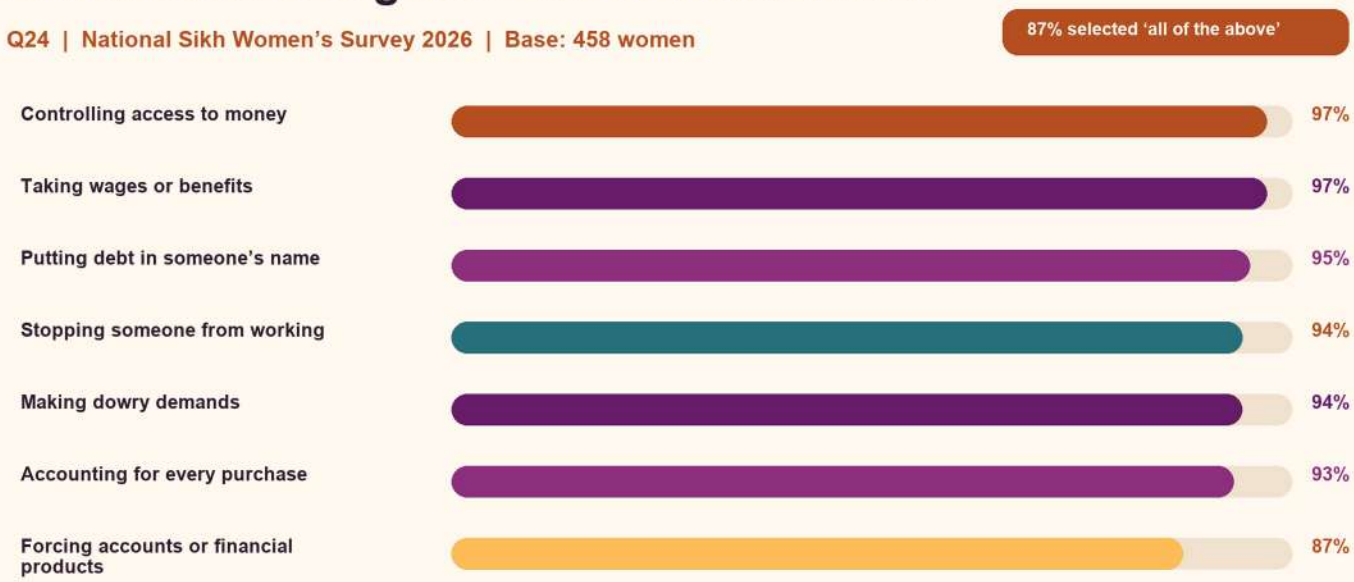
Financial Abuse

Awareness & Experiences

Which of the following do you consider to be financial abuse?

Behaviours recognised as financial abuse

Q24 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 458 women



Recognition of financial abuse was almost universal, with only small differences between the listed behaviours.

Multi-response question. Women selecting 'all of the above' were counted as recognising every item.

87% OF 458 WOMEN

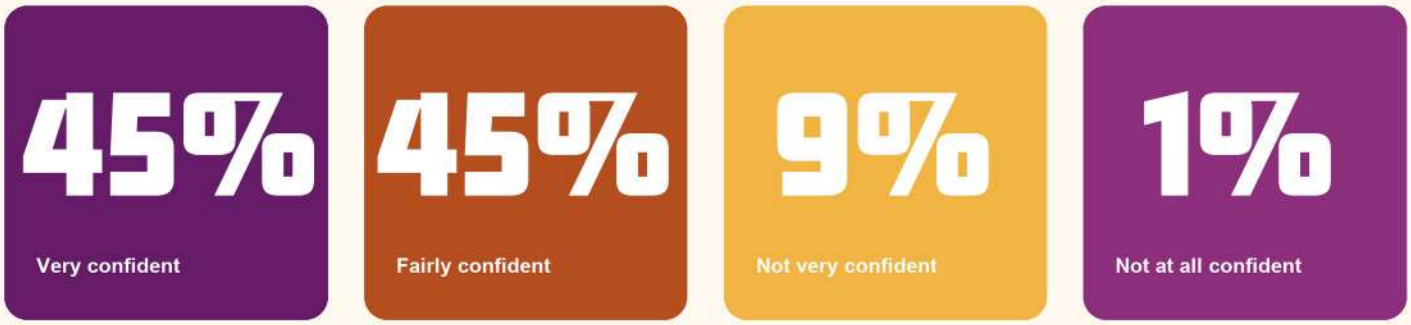
Women could tick more than one answer, and those who ticked "all of the above" are counted as recognising every item. Recognition of financial abuse was almost universal. Of the 458 women who answered, **87% ticked "all of the above"** outright.

Once those are included, almost every behaviour listed was recognised by more than nine in ten women — controlling a partner's access to money (97%), taking someone's wages or benefits (97%), putting debt in someone's name (95%), stopping someone from working and making dowry demands (both 94%), making a partner account for every purchase (93%) and forcing someone to open accounts or take out financial products (87%). The differences between items are too small to rank.

How confident are you that you could recognise financial abuse if it was happening to someone you know?

Confidence in recognising financial abuse

Q25 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 458 women



Nine in ten respondents felt confident that they could recognise financial abuse happening to someone they knew.

Single-choice question; reported percentages total 100%.

How openly is financial abuse discussed within Sikh communities?

Q26 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 458 women



Despite high recognition, 93% said financial abuse was discussed not very openly or not at all.

The supplied narrative combines 'somewhat openly' and 'very openly' as 7%.

Confidence was high: 90% of the 458 women who answered were very confident (45%) or fairly confident (45%) that they could recognise financial abuse if it was happening to someone they knew. Only 9% were not very confident and 1% not at all confident.

This is a striking contrast with the next question. Asked how openly financial abuse is discussed within Sikh communities, almost everyone said it is not: 93% answered "not very openly" (48%) or "not at all" (45%). Only 7% felt it was discussed somewhat or very openly.

The picture is of a community in which women largely know what financial abuse looks like, but where there is almost no space to talk about it.

What stops people in our communities from talking about financial abuse?

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Two barriers stood out among the 458 women who answered: izzat or family honour (76%) and not recognising the behaviour as abuse (76%). Close behind were fear of being judged (69%) and the behaviour being seen as normal within families (68%).

Half of the women said people do not know where to get help (50%), and 28% mentioned fears linked to immigration status. Izzat and normalisation sit side by side: the behaviour is both socially protected and not seen for what it is.

Raising awareness on its own is therefore unlikely to be enough without also working to change community attitudes.

Q27 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 458 women



Izzat and normalisation operate together: abuse may be socially protected while also not being recognised for what it is.

Multi-response question, so percentages add to more than 100%.

76% UNABLE TO RECOGNISE THE BEHAVIOUR AS ABUSE...

Financial abuse is as serious as physical abuse

Q28 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 458 women



Agreement was overwhelming: 91% regarded financial abuse as equally serious as physical abuse.

The reported percentages total 101% because of rounding.

91% AGREED

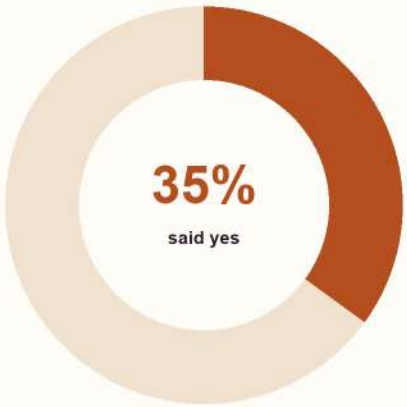
Agreement was overwhelming: 91% of the 458 women who answered agreed or strongly agreed, with 62% strongly agreeing. Only 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 6% neither agreed nor disagreed and 1% were unsure.

Women clearly do not see financial abuse as a lesser harm, which strengthens the case for services and community messaging to address it directly.

Have you ever experienced financial abuse?

Q29 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 457 women

Of the 457 women who answered, 35% had experienced financial abuse, 60% had not, and 5% were unsure. Looking at all 650 women in the survey, that is 25% - about one in four.



35%

had experienced financial abuse

Equivalent to 25% of all 650 survey respondents.

60% said no | 5% were unsure

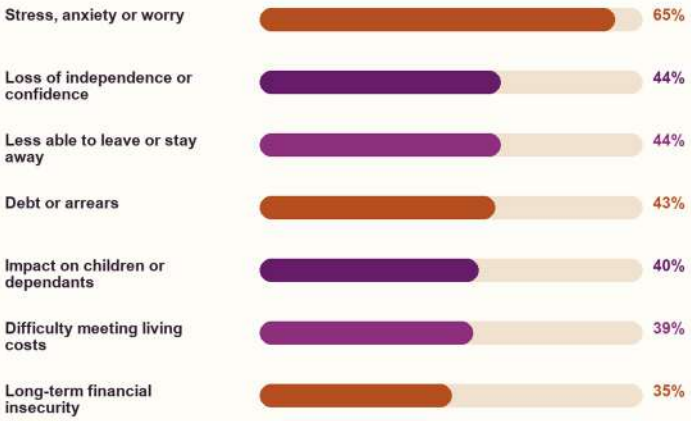
More than one in three women answering the question reported having experienced financial abuse.

The 35% uses the valid base of 457. The 25% figure uses all 650 women in the survey.

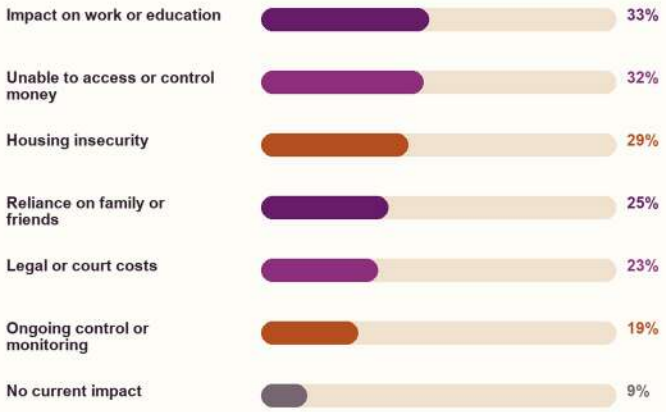
How has financial abuse impacted you?

Q30 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 184 women

Most frequently reported



Further impacts



The most common impact was emotional, while financial abuse also reduced independence and made leaving or staying away harder.

Multi-response question, so percentages add to more than 100%.

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Of the 184 women who answered, the most common impact was emotional rather than material: stress, anxiety or worry about money (65%).

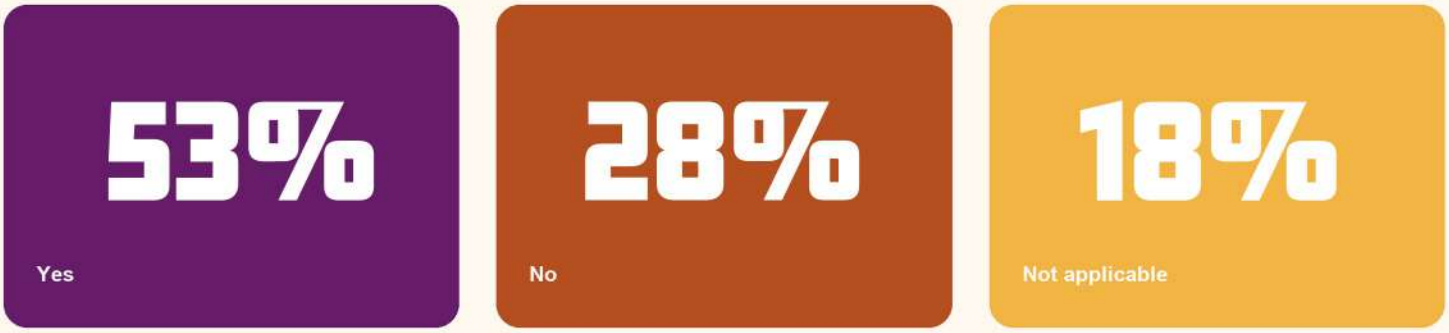
This was followed by loss of financial independence or confidence (44%) and being less able to leave or stay away from an abusive situation (44%), debt or arrears (43%), an impact on children or dependants (40%), difficulty meeting day-to-day living costs (39%), long-term financial insecurity including savings, pension or inheritance (35%), an impact on work or education (33%), being unable to access or control their own money (32%), housing insecurity (29%), having to rely on family or friends (25%), legal or court costs (23%) and ongoing financial control or monitoring (19%).

Only 9% said there was no current impact.

The finding that financial abuse affected women's ability to leave in 44% of cases links this section directly to the barriers to reporting and leaving described below.

Did financial concerns prevent you from leaving a marriage or relationship sooner?

Q31 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 184 women



For more than half, money worries were not only a consequence of abuse but one of the factors keeping them in it.

Reported percentages total 99% because of rounding.

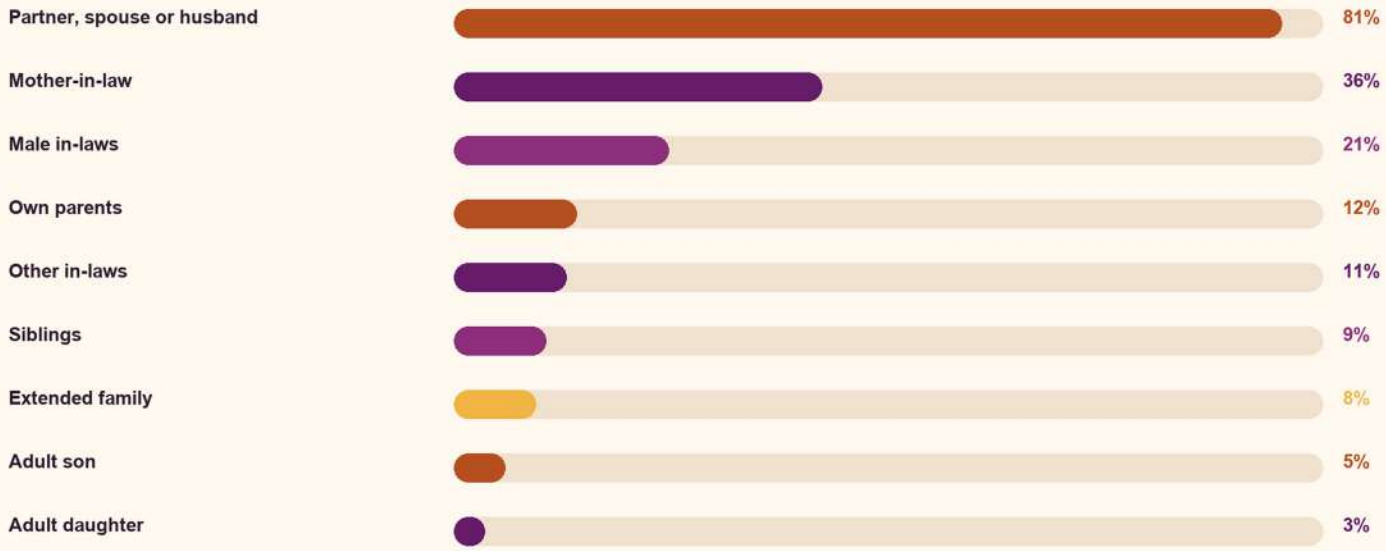


Just over half of the 184 women who answered said yes (53%); 28% said no and 18% said the question did not apply to them.

This is one of the clearest findings in the survey: for most women affected, money worries were not just a consequence of abuse but one of the things keeping them in it.

Who were the perpetrators of financial abuse?

Q32 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 183 women



Financial abuse often involved wider family relationships: mothers-in-law alone were named in more than a third of cases.

Multi-response question, so percentages add to more than 100%. This has direct implications for whole-family risk assessment and safety planning.

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Of the 183 women who answered, 81% named a partner, either spouse or husband. In-laws featured prominently: mothers-in-law in 36% of cases, male in-laws in 21% and other in-laws in 11%. Women's own parents were named by 12%, siblings by 9%, extended family by 8%, and adult children by 5% (sons) and 3% (daughters).

The scale of in-law involvement, mothers-in-law alone were named in over a third of cases, sets this apart from the usual picture of financial abuse as something that happens only between partners, and has direct implications for how risk is assessed and safety plans are made.

Are you aware of any personal difficulties or challenges for the perpetrator?

Q33 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 183 women



Responses were almost evenly divided between awareness and no awareness of personal difficulties or challenges.

The unsure response was supplied as a count of three women rather than a percentage.

Answers were fairly evenly split among the 183 women who answered: 54% said no, 45% said yes, and three women were unsure.

Did these personal difficulties or challenges contribute to the abuse?

Q34 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 98 women

73%
Believed they contributed

22%
Unsure

4 women
Did not believe they contributed

Among those answering, a large majority believed the reported difficulties contributed to the abuse.

These are respondents' perceptions. Personal difficulties do not cause or excuse abusive behaviour; the 'no' response was supplied as a count.

Of the 98 women who answered, a large majority (73%) believed they did, 22% were unsure and only four women said they did not.

What were the personal difficulties or challenges in relation to the person who caused harm?

Q35 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 98 women



Alcohol problems, untreated mental ill health and family honour or shame were again the most frequently reported challenges.

Multi-response question. These factors were noticed alongside abuse; they are not causes and must not be presented as excuses.

Women could tick more than one answer, so the percentages add up to more than 100%. Of the 98 women who answered, alcohol problems were again the most common (58%), followed by untreated mental health problems (46%), family honour or shame (41%), financial dependence (35%), drug misuse (31%), unemployment (23%), having been exposed to domestic abuse in the past (18%), conflict between the generations (17%) and criminal behaviour (13%).

The order is very similar to Q23: alcohol, untreated mental ill health and honour or shame come up consistently, whether the abuse is by a child or by a partner or in-law.

CASE STUDY
Amarjit and Jasdeep

IMPORTANT: The names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the older woman and her family. This remains a live case.

"Amarjit" was referred to Sikh Women's Aid by the police following an incident involving her adult son, "Jasdeep". Amarjit did not make a statement about the incident.

When her caseworker first attempted to contact her, Jasdeep answered the telephone. The caseworker informed the police and raised concerns that he could be interfering with attempts to speak to Amarjit privately. The caseworker escalated the matter, identifying risk indicators associated with domestic homicide cases. The police stated that they had completed a welfare check and that responsibility for contacting Amarjit now rested with SWA.

When the caseworker eventually spoke to Amarjit directly, she minimised the incident and said that Jasdeep "would not do it again". Within a week, a further incident occurred and the police made a second referral. Amarjit again downplayed what had happened.



Given the repeated incidents and apparent escalation, her caseworker asked the police to undertake a joint visit. The police responded that there was "no requirement" for them to attend. They were also unable to confirm whether a social worker was involved and advised the caseworker to establish this independently.

After continued enquiries, the caseworker identified Amarjit's allocated social worker, who confirmed that services had been involved with the family for several years. A professionals' meeting was arranged. Although its time was changed without the caseworker initially being informed, she was able to attend the rescheduled meeting.

Jasdeep's former wife also contacted Sikh Women's Aid. She described a longstanding pattern in which Amarjit protected her son and did not feel able to make a statement against him. She remained concerned about Amarjit's safety.



The caseworker continued attempting to engage Amarjit, but she repeatedly declined support. The police and social worker also confirmed that Amarjit did not want to pursue criminal proceedings or other formal action.

Despite this, the caseworker has maintained contact with Jasdeep's former wife and continues to work with the professionals involved. They are seeking opportunities to speak with Amarjit safely and independently, build trust and encourage her to accept safeguarding support.

Amarjit remains vulnerable because of the reported long-term pattern of abuse; repeated incidents and the difficulty professionals have experienced in speaking with her away from Jasdeep. Multi-agency involvement is continuing, but progress remains limited.

REPORTING & SEEKING SUPPORT

Reporting domestic abuse is rarely a single event. Women may disclose gradually to relatives, friends, health professionals, specialist services or the police, and may seek practical help without initially describing their experience as abuse. Fear of the perpetrator, concern for children or other relatives, financial dependence, housing and immigration insecurity, shame, and uncertainty about what will happen after disclosure can all delay or prevent help-seeking.[16]

The scale of recorded domestic abuse represents only part of the harm taking place. In the year ending March 2025, the police recorded approximately **1.4 million domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes** in England and Wales, including 816,493 crimes. Women accounted for **72.1% of victims of recorded domestic abuse-related crimes**.[17] Police data cannot measure prevalence because it excludes abuse that is not reported or recorded.

1.4 MILLION

Reporting also does not guarantee that a case will progress through the criminal justice system. During the same year, the police referred **76,393 domestic abuse suspects** to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision. The CPS recorded **54,987 completed prosecutions**, of which **41,070** resulted in a conviction.[17]

These figures relate to different cases and stages of the system and cannot be treated as a single pathway from report to conviction. They nevertheless illustrate the distance between the number of incidents recorded by the police and the number of cases ultimately prosecuted.

[16] Scottish Government, Minoritised Ethnic Women's Experiences of Domestic Abuse and Barriers to Help-Seeking: A Summary of the Evidence (August 2024). Available at: Scottish Government evidence review.

[17] Office for National Statistics, Domestic Abuse in England and Wales Overview: November 2025 (ONS, 26 November 2025). The police, CPS and court figures measure different units and cohorts and cannot be directly compared as a case progression rate. Available at: ONS domestic abuse overview.

Research has identified additional barriers for South Asian women. These include izzat and fear of community judgement, pressure to preserve the marriage or wider family, concern about bringing shame upon relatives, financial and immigration dependency, limited knowledge of available support, and fear that professionals will misunderstand the familial or cultural context of the abuse. Women may also encounter pressure from several family members rather than a single perpetrator.[16]

Additional research continues to find that South Asian women are not a homogeneous group and that statutory services do not always recognise the different forms, relationships and circumstances through which abuse is experienced.[18]

SWA's casework shows that women often require support across several systems at the same time. **A caseworker may need to advocate with the police, housing services, benefits agencies, solicitors, social care and the courts while also providing continuing emotional support. Women may minimise abuse, withdraw from formal action or remain unsure about reporting while still needing safety planning and practical assistance.** These responses should not be interpreted as evidence that the abuse was not serious or that the risk has ended.[19]



The quality of the response following disclosure matters. Delays, missed appointments, poor communication, repeated retelling and a lack of cultural understanding can compound trauma and reduce confidence in statutory services.

Conversely, consistent contact with a trusted specialist caseworker can give a woman the time, information and advocacy she needs to make informed decisions. Seeking support must therefore be understood as a process rather than a test of whether a woman is willing to report immediately or support a prosecution.[19]

[18] Razia Sultana, Nusrat Husain, Omolade Allen and Peter Taylor, 'Barriers and Facilitators for Help-Seeking Behaviors in British South Asian Women Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence: A Qualitative Study', Families in Society (online publication, 2025). The study is qualitative and should not be used to estimate prevalence.

[19] Sikh Women's Aid, anonymised advocacy and domestic abuse casework records, 2024–2026. These records provide practice evidence from women supported by SWA and should not be interpreted as prevalence data and does not represent unreported honour-based abuse.

5.5 Survey Theme Four

Reporting and Seeking Support

Barriers, Experiences & Outcomes



The number of women each question is based on changes through this section, and the reason is explained under each question. In short: Q36 looks only at women who had experienced abuse (269), Q37 only at women who had reported it (132), and Q38 only at women who answered all parts of the question consistently (87).

Have you ever reported any abuse you have experienced to the police?

Q36 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Adjusted base: 269 women

58%
NEVER REPORTED

42%
HAD REPORTED

20 women who answered 'no' at Q16 had nevertheless reported abuse to the police.

A clear majority of women who had experienced domestic abuse had never reported it to the police.

Percentages are restricted to the 269 women who reported domestic abuse at Q16, rather than all 452 women who answered Q36. Of 20 women unsure at Q16, one had reported.

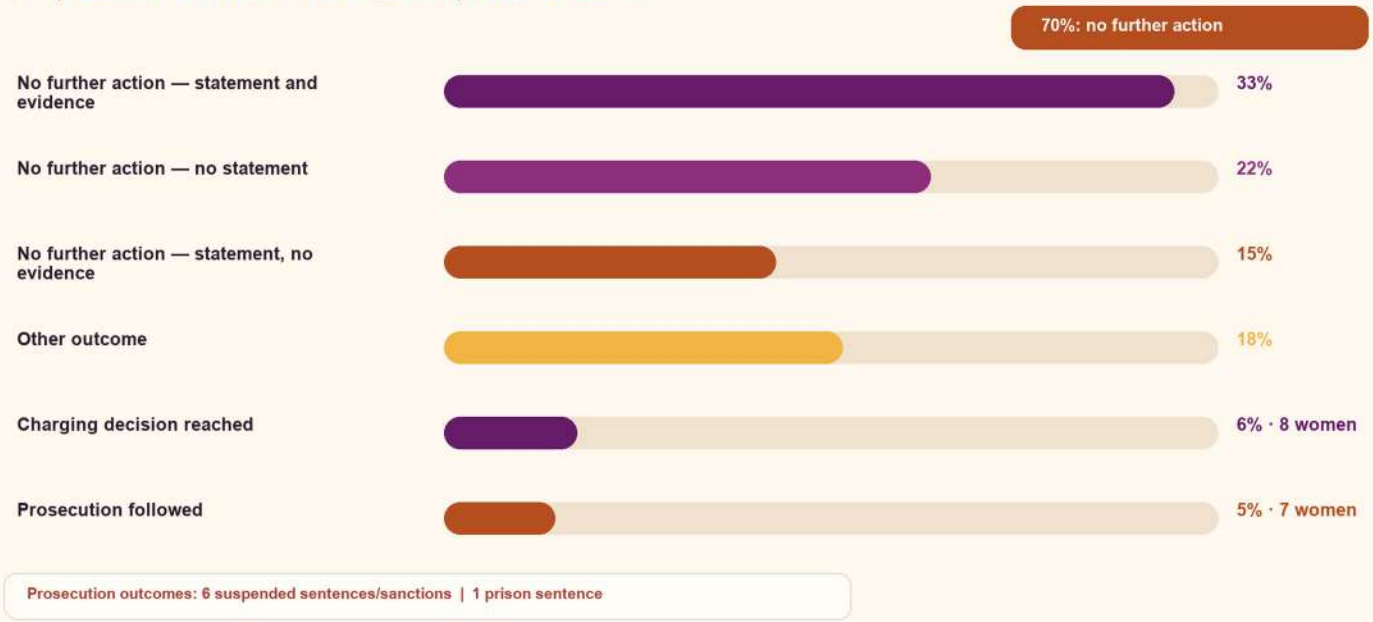
In total, 452 women answered this question, but that includes women who had not experienced abuse and so had nothing to report. The figures here are therefore based only on the 269 women who said at Q16 that they had experienced domestic abuse. Of these, 58% had never reported it to the police and 42% had.

Reporting is more common than the figure for everyone who answered (30%) would suggest, but a clear majority of women who experienced abuse still never went to the police. Two further points sit behind this.

Twenty women who said "no" at Q16 had nonetheless reported abuse to the police — in line with Q17, where a similar group described experiences of abuse without calling them abuse. And of the 20 women who were unsure whether they had experienced abuse, only one had reported.

If you did report, what was the outcome?

Q37 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Base: 132 women



Prosecution outcomes: 6 suspended sentences/sanctions | 1 prison sentence

Seven in ten women who reported saw no further action—including a third who had provided both a statement and evidence.

Reported outcome categories total 99% because of rounding. The seven prosecution outcomes comprised six suspended sentences/sanctions and one prison sentence.

70% NO FURTHER ACTION TAKEN

For the women who did report, the outcomes were poor.

Of the 132 who answered, 70% saw no further action taken. This included 33% who had given a statement and provided evidence, 15% who had given a statement without evidence, and 22% who had not given a statement.

A charging decision was reached in 6% of cases (8 women), and a prosecution followed in 5%: a suspended sentence and sanctions in 6 cases and a prison sentence in just one. A further 18% described another outcome.

That a third of women gave both a statement and evidence yet still saw no further action is likely to be a major reason why so few women report (Q36).

Jinh man hor mukh hor se kaandhe kachiaa. ||

MEANING:

THOSE WHO HAVE ONE THING IN THEIR MIND BUT SAY SOMETHING DIFFERENT WITH THEIR MOUTH ARE DESCRIBED AS FALSE OR INSINCERE.

How satisfied were you with the police support given to you when you reported?

Q38 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Adjusted base: 87 women

Percentage agreeing with each statement



Reported disagreement rates

Case not taken forward: 29% | Listened to and supported: 37% | Blamed, dismissed or not believed: 45%

A disagreement rate was not supplied for 'I felt unsupported'. No value has been estimated.

Around a third found the police supportive, around a third experienced the response as harmful, and 44% said their case was not taken forward.

Based on 87 women who answered all five main statements consistently. This excludes 44 of the 131 women who answered any part of the question, including five with contradictory responses.

Women were asked how far they agreed with six statements about the police response. Many answered some statements and skipped others, so each statement was answered by a different number of women (between 102 and 125), which makes them hard to compare.



The figures here are therefore based on the 87 women who answered all five main statements and whose answers were consistent (five women who agreed both that they felt supported and that they felt unsupported or blamed are not included). On this basis, 44% agreed that their case was not taken forward, while 29% disagreed.

Experiences were split down the middle: 32% agreed they felt listened to and supported while 37% disagreed; 36% agreed they felt unsupported; and 33% agreed they felt blamed, dismissed or not believed, while 45% disagreed. Overall, around a third of these women found the police supportive, around a third found the experience actively harmful, and in more than four cases in ten the case was not taken forward.

Narrowing the question in this way leaves out 44 of the 131 women who answered any part of it, and those left out may have had different experiences from those included.

What was the primary reason that stopped you from reporting?

Q39 | National Sikh Women's Survey 2026 | Adjusted base: 152 women

Most frequently selected reasons



Smaller numbers

Did not know who to talk to	7 women
Lacked family support	7 women
Believed police would not help	5 women
Children might lose their father	4 women
Thought they would not be believed	3 women
Distrust of police	2 women
Fear of retaliation from adult children	2 women
Guilt	2 women

Not recognising abuse was the largest single barrier, followed by fear, hope that the person would change, and concerns about shame and family breakup.

Restricted to women who reported abuse at Q16 but had not reported it at Q36. Written answers also referred to childhood abuse, family discouragement and distrust of police.

In total, 308 women answered this question, but their written comments show that many of them had no abuse to report: of the 73 who chose "other" and wrote an answer, around 55 said in effect that they had never experienced abuse.

The figures here are therefore based only on the 152 women the question was meant for those who said at Q16 that they had experienced domestic abuse and at Q36 that they had not reported it. On this basis, the biggest barrier was not recognising the behaviour as abuse at the time (19%), followed by fear of the consequences (16%), hoping the person would change (13%), shame or stigma (11%) and not wanting to break up the family (11%).

Smaller numbers said they did not know who to talk to or lacked family support (7 women each), believed the police would not help (5), worried that their children would lose their father (4), thought they would not be believed (3), or mentioned distrust of the police, fear of retaliation from adult children, or guilt (2 each). "Other" falls to 9% on this basis, compared with 27% when everyone is included, which confirms that the answer options themselves were working.

Among the remaining written answers, the recurring themes were having been a child at the time, being actively discouraged from reporting by family, and distrust of the police.



Question 40 invited respondents to share anything not already covered by the survey. Of 123 numbered responses, 96 contained substantive material and 27 were excluded because they said only No, N A, Nothing else or an equivalent.

Question 40 was an optional free-text question. The frequency of a theme shows how often it appeared among the 96 substantive comments, not prevalence within all 650 survey respondents or the wider Sikh Panjabi population. Respondents chose what to mention, and short comments provide less context than detailed accounts. Themes can overlap, and one long response can contribute to several categories but counts only once within each theme.

Each substantive response was read in full and assigned to every applicable theme. Coding was therefore non-exclusive: one response may contribute to several themes and comment types. Counts represent the number of responses coded to a theme, not the number of allegations, incidents, perpetrators or people affected.

The source includes allegations about individuals, organisations and institutions. The analysis records what respondents reported and does not determine whether an allegation is substantiated. References to religion, ethnicity, migration or community groups have been presented as the respondent's concern or experience and have not been generalised beyond the text.

The analysis distinguishes lived experience, witnessed or third-party concerns, recommendations, general reflections, survey-methodology feedback, service feedback and feedback about Sikh Women's Aid. The wording of each summary stays close to the response. Allegations and interpretations are not treated as independently verified facts.

PROFILE OF SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS

Comment types are also non-exclusive. For example, a lived-experience comment may include recommendations or feedback about a service.

Comment type	Responses
LIVED EXPERIENCE	45
GENERAL REFLECTION	37
RECOMMENDATION	29
WITNESSED OR THIRD-PARTY CONCERN	7
SERVICE FEEDBACK	3
SWA FEEDBACK	7
SURVEY METHODOLOGY FEEDBACK	7

What the comments show

Gender inequality, cultural expectations and normalisation of abusive behaviours formed the strongest pattern. Respondents described male preference, unequal expectations in marriage and domestic labour, victim-blaming, and abuse being presented as an ordinary part of family life.

The comments do not describe a single experience shared by all Sikh Panjabi families. They show how some respondents understand gendered expectations as enabling or concealing abuse in their own lives and communities.

Silence was described as maintained through shame, fear of community judgement, family disbelief, concern for children, attachment to family, and the status or position(s) held of alleged perpetrators within Sikh organisations or faith establishments. Several respondents described pressure to remain in abusive relationships or not to disclose what happened behind closed doors.



Theme	Responses
GENDER INEQUALITY, CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS AND NORMALIZATION OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS	28
SILENCE, SHAME, COMMUNITY PRESSURE AND BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE	27
AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PREVENTION	27
COERCIVE, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE	24
CHILDREN AND INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT	23
ABUSE WITHIN WIDER FAMILY STRUCTURES	22
FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC ABUSE	21
POST-SEPARATION ABUSE AND ONGOING RISK	14
SERVICE AND SYSTEM RESPONSES	14
FAITH, GURDWARA AND COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS	11
SEXUAL ABUSE, CONSENT, HARASSMENT AND EXPLOITATION	10
HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPACTS	10
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE, THREATS AND HIGH-RISK HARM	7
SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE	7
MARRIAGE, MIGRATION AND IDENTITY CONTEXTS	4
DIGITAL AND ONLINE ABUSE AND STALKING	1
RESILIENCE AND POSITIVE CHANGE	1
CONTRIBUTING CIRCUMSTANCES	1

Wider family abuse was a distinct finding. Respondents described abuse by mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, parents, brothers, uncles and adult children.



The elder-abuse accounts connected coercive control with dependence, property, inheritance, powers of attorney and professional assumptions that a person with mental capacity could not also be subject to undue influence.

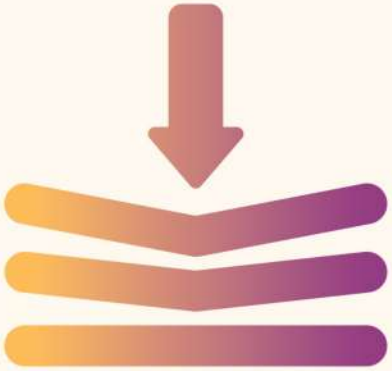
Children appeared both as direct victims and as witnesses. Respondents described the long-term effect of seeing a parent abused, being verbally threatened, experiencing sexual or emotional abuse in childhood, and carrying trauma into adult relationships, health and financial life. Post-separation comments also described children remaining subject to control or being affected by continuing disputes.

Financial abuse included non-payment of child maintenance, control or concealment of household money, pressure on older people to fund weddings, theft or alleged forgery involving property and assets, fabricated reasons for obtaining money, and barriers to securing housing or a mortgage after leaving. Other respondents identified employment and financial independence as protective factors.

Service and system responses were inconsistent. Some comments described police intervention or culturally informed support as helpful.

Others reported being passed between services, being sent home, professionals interpreting safeguarding concerns as private family disputes, and alleged enabling of post-separation abuse by courts or family-court services.

These are respondent accounts and have not been independently tested.



Andhule sojhi boojh na kaaee lobh buraa ahankaara he.

MEANING:

A PERSON BLINDED BY GREED AND EGO LACKS TRUE INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING.

6. IN HER OWN WORDS

The following are extracts from accounts of lived experience and witnesses of abuse as answered in Question 40.

RESPONSE 1

Perpetrators are sometimes further enabled when their behaviour is encouraged by outsiders.

When I was eight months pregnant with my daughter, and my son was three, my husband left our home and never returned. It happened completely out of the blue.

I later discovered that he had been having an affair. The other woman was aware that he was married, that we had a child and that another baby was on the way.
He continues to financially abuse me because he neither sees his children nor contributes towards their needs. He has also lied about his income in applications to the Child Maintenance Service.

After he disappeared, I was told that his mother had been giving him money "to pay the bills". Neither of them disclosed this to me at the time. He never paid any of our household bills. I always paid them.

RESPONSE 2

I have witnessed my wealthy parents, both in their 80s, being taken advantage of by their sons and pressured to pay for their adult grandchildren's weddings. When the responsibility was not theirs, I saw them being subjected to emotional blackmail and remarks such as, "My children, their grandchildren, are upset with you if you don't pay. They won't talk to you now."

However, private medical care was not paid for when their elderly grandmother, my mother, needed it, and she unfortunately passed away. A wait that could have been avoided had their money been spent on private medical care for themselves, rather than on a wedding and numerous parties.

There is too much pressure on our elderly community to pay unnecessary costs instead of focusing on where it really matters. There were times when the elderly grandmother was ignored while they had a full on party in the next room. There was no consideration, no care and no appreciation. It is a lost generation obsessed with materialistic things and outward displays to impress others.

RESPONSE 3

I divorced my ex husband, but within the community I was looked down upon and spoken to as though he had divorced me.

Women from the older generation asked whether I had managed to get my daughters married, but my son was never mentioned. I still suffer from long term depression and anxiety, as well as other health problems caused by stress.

I no longer attend the congregation at the Gurdwara because of sexual advances from so called committee members. One committee member took a photograph of me without my knowledge and shared it with unknown men who were not from my community. I did not know who I could complain to.

I feel very isolated. I want to attend the Gurdwara, but I feel intimidated.

RESPONSE 4

I think it is important to explore this issue in greater depth. We talk about abuse at a very high level, and I appreciate that the survey includes "siblings". However, when we look more closely, it may come down to education and upbringing.

My experience has been personal and now relates to abuse by a sibling. You are right about the belief that "Munda, kayal rakda" meaning "sons will look after us in old age", while at the same time, he has no income or means to support himself and continues to live at home in his fifties.

Education from an early age is very important, as is teaching respect. We are taught to respect our elders, aunties and uncles, but what about respecting the people within our own homes?

Anyone outside the family would say that my brother is amazing, polite and kind. At home, behind closed doors, it is a very different story. We have not said anything because we are afraid of what might happen to my parents and me.

RESPONSE 5

My brother intimidates my dad. My mum knows that my brother has abused him before, but she has said that she would never leave her son because she wants to keep the peace. My dad is so intimidated by my brother, and by my mum's support for him, that he simply accepts what is happening.

My brother has taken thousands of pounds from my dad, as though he is entitled to the money. My sister and I have begged my dad not to give him anything. However, behind closed doors, my mum persuades my dad and emotionally pressures him into complying. My dad made a will several years ago, dividing everything equally between his three children.

We are concerned that my brother will abuse and pressure my dad because he believes everything

RESPONSE 6

The abuse I suffered involved watching my mother being physically and emotionally abused by my father when I was a child. Back then, it was not spoken about, but it was nevertheless common in many households. Reporting it was therefore not an option. My father was also verbally abusive towards us children and regularly threatened to kill himself and us.



RESPONSE 7



So much is hidden in the community under the guise of honour and respect. It is heartbreaking. My father was physically, emotionally and financially abused by my brother and sister in law, who are or were professionals. Very recently, my brother passed away. I was not told of his passing and was not allowed to attend the funeral.

RESPONSE 8

Abuse from in-laws is very normalised within the Sikh community. The belief that children should be seen and not heard still exists in many Panjabi Sikh families today. Most people see abuse towards children as not being serious.

RESPONSE 9



I divorced my partner of 10 years, whom I had married through a love marriage, because he was cheating on me. He also lied about having cancer and took money from me, my family, his own family and his son. He said this money was for private scans because the NHS was taking too long.

He admitted that the cancer was a lie, and I decided I had had enough.

RESPONSE 10

The law needs to come down heavily on perpetrators. It is extremely difficult to leave a partner because of the fear of being found by him, or of the children being taken away by him or his family.

There are also economic reasons, shame within the community and pressure from a woman's own family and relatives. It is very much a man's world.

RESPONSE 11

There are perceptions about what women are meant to do, such as serving their husbands and families, and the expectation that they must continue to give. Sex is not discussed within families, and the majority of women are virgins before marriage.

There is not enough understanding or experience of consent or rape within marriage, which needs to be addressed before marriage. All these issues need to be discussed within the family structure.

RESPONSE 12

There can be a significant cultural and identity clash within families when one parent was born in the UK and the other was born in Punjab. In my experience, this can contribute to conflict and abuse within the family.

For example, a parent born and raised in Punjab may hold very traditional cultural views and use religion to justify abusive behaviour. In my family, the abuse has not only taken place between the parents through coercive control and emotional and psychological abuse. It has also affected the children, including me.

My experiences have included honour-based abuse, emotional abuse and psychological abuse. I have also been bullied because of my neurodivergence.

My cousins and I have created a safe space where we can talk about the similar issues we have experienced as children of parents with different upbringings and views on life. We discuss how this has affected us and support one another in processing our trauma and experiences.

It is reassuring to know that younger members of our community, like us, are willing to speak openly, support each other and work together to break the cycle of abuse.

RESPONSE 13

My husband is a multimillionaire music artist. To the community, he is a hero who is booked for gigs every weekend. For me and his children, we live in a waking nightmare in which his long-standing drug addiction, adultery and extreme coercive and controlling behaviour have made our lives unbearable. He continues to abuse me following our separation through the Family Court. He starves our children when it is his weekend to have them and nearly crashed his car with the children inside because he was intoxicated.

With the help of "specialist financial advisers", he has hidden all his assets in his mother's and sister's names, so on paper he owns nothing. This is the financial position that is considered by the courts. The reality is that this man cannot even cook a meal for his children. He does not know what their allergies are and has never attended a school parents' evening for them. However, this means nothing in the Family Court.

I am like an emotionless robot trying to navigate the Family Court, children's social care, the police and Cafcass. I do not understand how professionals cannot see him abusing us. When my children scream and cry because they do not want to see him, I am accused of "alienating" them. My children's disclosures that they were not being fed during visits with him were dismissed as "lies encouraged by the mother".

RESPONSE 14

There is still so much shame around divorce, especially for divorced women. Men and women are treated very differently after a marriage ends. Men can move on, get married again and even have another wife chosen for them from India. Divorced women, however, are often shunned, judged or excluded.

Sikhi teaches us that men and women are equal, but Panjabi culture and patriarchy can change how this is practised. These attitudes do not only come from men. Sometimes women also judge other women and continue the same behaviour.

RESPONSE 15

Some family members or parents would rather their daughter suffer in an abusive and toxic marriage than have her return to her maternal home because of their old fashioned mindset.

RESPONSE 16

The abuse we suffered was from our mother in-law, who still threatens to commit suicide if she does not get her way. My eldest sister in-law encourages her behaviour.

Both are trying to make us and our father in-law homeless.

RESPONSE 17

Domestic and sexual abuse has sadly been a theme in my family.

My grandad sexually abused my mum, my dad sexually abused me, and my older brother was abusive towards the whole family and still is.

My husband is coercive, although I said I would leave and he is now going to therapy. It is scary because I do not know whether we will last.

RESPONSE 18

There is a need to teach children self-love and healthy boundaries. There is also a need for mothers to stop seeking emotional support from their sons.

7. CONCLUSION

Hidden in Plain Sight brings together the experiences shared by 650 Sikh Panjabi women through the 2026 National Sikh Women's Survey and the issues encountered through Sikh Women's Aid's frontline work.

Although these are methodologically separate sources of evidence, they point to the same central concern: women may recognise abuse but still face substantial barriers to naming it, seeking help and securing safety.



The survey demonstrates that abuse cannot be understood solely through an intimate-partner framework. Respondents identified harm by partners, in-laws, parents, siblings and adult children.

Among the 93 women included in the child-to-parent perpetrator analysis, 73% identified an adult son. Among 183 women identifying perpetrators of financial abuse, 36% named a mother-in-law and 21% a male in-law, alongside the 81% who named a partner, either spouse or husband. These findings require services to assess risk across the wider family rather than focusing on one relationship.



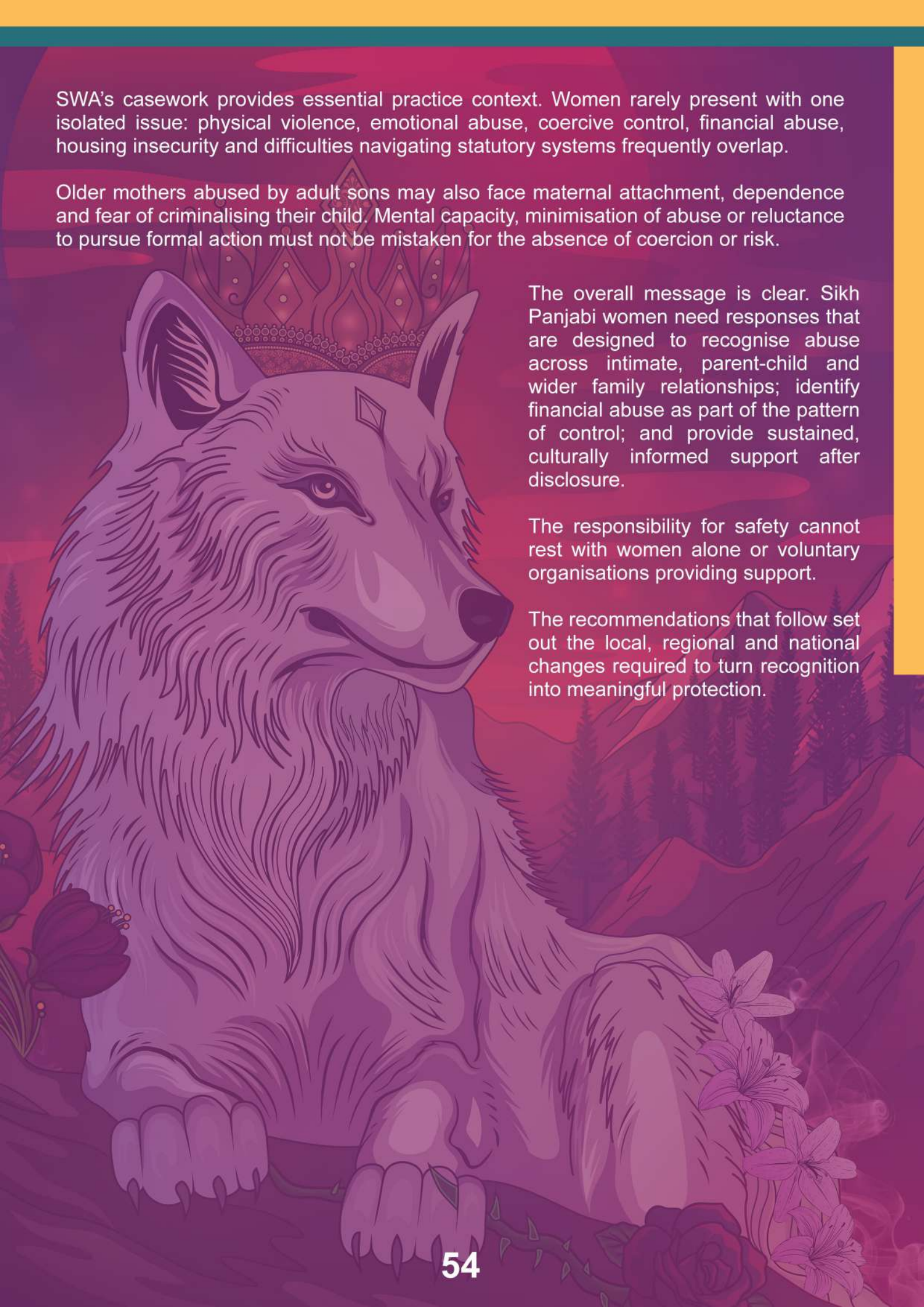
Financial abuse emerged as a significant means of restricting women's choices. Of the 457 women answering the question, 35% had experienced financial abuse. Among the 184 women who described its impact, 53% said financial concerns had prevented them from leaving a marriage or relationship sooner. Financial abuse was not simply a consequence of other harm; it affected women's ability to leave, remain safe and rebuild their lives.

The findings also show that recognition does not necessarily lead to reporting. Among the 269 women who had experienced domestic abuse and formed the valid base for the police-reporting analysis, 58% had never reported it.

Of the 132 women who reported and provided an outcome, 70% said no further action was taken. Izzat, shame, family pressure, fear of judgement and concern about the consequences of disclosure all contributed to silence, but women's decisions were also shaped by their expectations and experiences of statutory services.

SWA's casework provides essential practice context. Women rarely present with one isolated issue: physical violence, emotional abuse, coercive control, financial abuse, housing insecurity and difficulties navigating statutory systems frequently overlap.

Older mothers abused by adult sons may also face maternal attachment, dependence and fear of criminalising their child. Mental capacity, minimisation of abuse or reluctance to pursue formal action must not be mistaken for the absence of coercion or risk.



The overall message is clear. Sikh Panjabi women need responses that are designed to recognise abuse across intimate, parent-child and wider family relationships; identify financial abuse as part of the pattern of control; and provide sustained, culturally informed support after disclosure.

The responsibility for safety cannot rest with women alone or voluntary organisations providing support.

The recommendations that follow set out the local, regional and national changes required to turn recognition into meaningful protection.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS



The findings require coordinated action across domestic abuse, adult safeguarding, policing, health, housing and financial services. Too often when we see victims let down, it's where siloed responses and decision-making takes places without seeing the victim survivor as a whole person with intersecting needs.

The following recommendations should be implemented with survivors and specialist by-and-for organisations involved in their design, delivery and evaluation.

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Identify abuse across the whole family

Police, social care, health, housing and domestic abuse services should routinely assess whether harm is being caused by an adult child, in-law or other relative. Victims must be spoken to privately, with physical, emotional, financial and controlling behaviour considered together.

2 Establish a coordinated safeguarding pathway

Each local authority should have a multi-agency pathway for adult family violence, with a named lead professional and clear responsibilities across police, social care, health, housing and specialist services. Mental capacity, minimisation or reluctance to pursue formal action must not be treated as evidence that risk has ended.

3 Provide sustained specialist advocacy

Local commissioners should fund consistent caseworker support across safeguarding, policing, courts, housing, benefits and recovery. Women should remain eligible for support whether they report to the police, leave the family home or support a prosecution.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Include adult family violence in regional VAWG strategies

4 Police and Crime Commissioners, Integrated Care Boards and regional VAWG partnerships should explicitly include abuse by adult children and wider family members within strategies, needs assessments and commissioning plans.

Improve risk assessment and professional practice

5 Regional safeguarding partnerships and police forces should update risk assessments and training to identify financial exploitation, isolation, multiple perpetrators, property or inheritance pressure, misuse of Powers of Attorney and obstruction of professional access. This work should be developed with specialist by-and-for organisations.

Audit what happens after disclosure

6 Police forces and safeguarding partnerships should review repeat incidents, cases closed when a victim declined formal action and safeguarding enquiries closed because of mental capacity. Audits should establish whether victims were seen privately, risk was properly assessed and agreed actions were completed.

Is dehi andar panch chor vaseh kaam krodh lobh moh ahankaara.
Amrit looteh manmukh nahi boojheh koi na sunai pookaara.

MEANING:

WITHIN THE HUMAN BEING RESIDE FIVE THIEVES: LUST, ANGER, GREED, ATTACHMENT AND EGO. THESE ROB A PERSON OF WHAT IS SPIRITUALLY VALUABLE, WHILE THOSE LACKING UNDERSTANDING FAIL TO RECOGNISE WHAT IS HAPPENING.

NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce a national adult family violence framework

7 The Government should establish a framework which includes a statutory definition covering abuse by adult children, in-laws and other relatives. It should distinguish adult child-to-parent abuse from adolescent violence and set clear expectations across policing, safeguarding, health, housing and domestic abuse services.

Strengthen the response to financial abuse

8 National guidance should recognise financial abuse by adult children and wider family members, including control of benefits, debt, gold, dowry, property, inheritance and legal documents. Banks, benefits agencies, housing providers and the Office of the Public Guardian should have clear procedures for referral, investigation and protection.

Improve data and research

9 National datasets should record the relationship between the victim and person causing harm, including adult sons, adult daughters and in-laws. Government should commission research into adult family violence, financial abuse and barriers to reporting among Sikh Panjabi and other under-researched communities.

Sustain specialist by-and-for services

10 Government and regional commissioners should provide ring-fenced, multi-year funding for specialist by-and-for advocacy, counselling, community engagement and research. Funding must reflect the complexity and duration of cases involving multiple perpetrators, financial abuse, adult safeguarding, housing and criminal or civil proceedings.

Sikh Women's Aid

SIKH WOMENS AID
NATIONAL SURVEY 2026

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Examining domestic abuse, child-to-parent abuse and financial abuse in the Sikh Panjabi community

Sikh Women's Aid
Supporting Sikh Panjabi Women and Children

Sikh Women's Aid (SWA) was founded by Sikh Panjabi women in 2021 as the first national female led 'by-and-for' charity set up in England dedicated to supporting Sikh Panjabi women and children affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, and faith-based exploitation and abuse. Based in the West Midlands, SWA is a vital lifeline for women and children in the Sikh Panjabi community, offering culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support.

Our services include a confidential helpline, advocacy, counselling and emotional support, and access to practical resources for victims and survivors. We work closely with statutory agencies to ensure holistic care and provide a bridge for women who may otherwise face cultural and systemic barriers to accessing help.

Our vision is to see an end to violence, abuse, and oppression, enabling Sikh Panjabi women and children to live safe, empowered lives.

If you or someone you know needs help, please reach out.
Together, we can break the silence and build a future free from abuse.

Contact us on 03330901220 or email us at info@sikhwomensaid.org.uk or visit our website

WWW.SIKHWOMENSAID.ORG.UK

Remember, you are not alone; help is available.

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