

Introduction

Bangladeshis represent one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in New York City - the group has experienced an almost 75% increase in its population, from 42,865 in 2000 to 74,692 in 2011.¹ While most Bangladeshis who arrive in New York City settle in Queens, Parkchester in the Bronx has increasingly become home to Bangladeshi families and businesses, particularly around Starling Avenue.²

Although a significant portion of the Bangladeshi population is Muslim and demographic shifts continue to transform neighborhoods such as Parkchester, there is relatively little public discourse about this community despite rising anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment in New York City, as well as in other parts of the US. In response, Sapna NYC, a Bronx-based non-profit organization that seeks to improve the lives of South Asian immigrant women in New York City, and members of their Community Leaders and Advocates Program (CLAP) developed a needs assessment that could account for the needs and concerns of community members.

Key findings from the study point to respondents' fears related to violence directed at Bangladeshis and Muslims and their concerns related to experiencing domestic conflict. These findings, in conjunction with existing research that points to the prevalence of mental health conditions among Bangladeshi women, underscore the urgent need to increase public awareness of this community.

Implementation

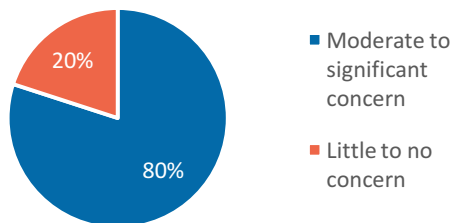
By using a participatory action research (PAR) approach whereby researchers and community members work together to effect desired change, Sapna NYC staff and CLAP members launched the needs assessment in December 2016. Using their social networks, CLAP participants interviewed 100 respondents, almost all of whom were Bangladeshi women who resided in Parkchester. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44.³

Key Findings

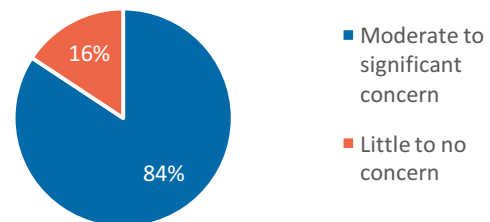
Concerns over Safety

80% of respondents expressed moderate to significant levels of concern that they or a family member would be a victim of a crime in the neighborhood because they were Bangladeshi and/or Muslim. Further, 84% of women in the sample who covered their heads expressed moderate to significant levels of concern that they would be a victim of a crime in the neighborhood for doing so.

How concerned are you that you or a family member will be the victim of a crime in our neighborhood because you are Bangladeshi/ Muslim?



How concerned are you that you will be the victim of a crime in our neighborhood because you cover your head?



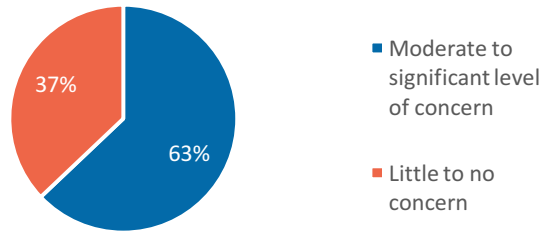
¹ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/nny2013/nny_2013.pdf

² <http://www.aafny.org/cic/briefs/bangladeshi2013.pdf>

³ 70% of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44.

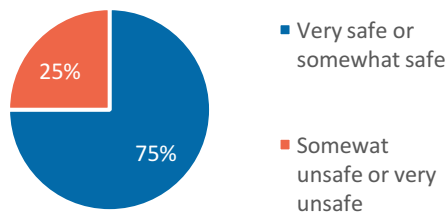
Among respondents who had school-age children, 63% expressed at least some concern that their child would be a victim of bullying or violence at school for being Bangladeshi and/or Muslim while 37% of respondents expressed little to no concern about this issue.

How concerned are you that your child will be the victim of bullying or violence at school because they are Bangladeshi/ Muslim?

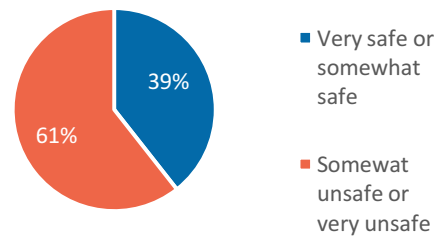


In a slightly different vein, 75% of respondents expressed feeling somewhat safe to very safe while being outside of their homes during the day. However, fewer respondents (39%) felt safe outside of their homes at night.

How safe do you feel being outside your home alone during the day?



How safe do you feel being outside your home alone at night?



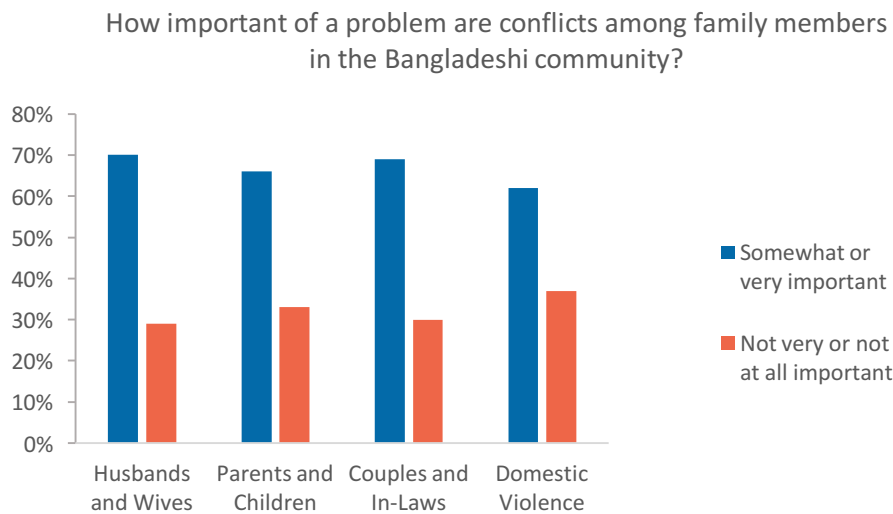
These findings align with accounts from community members and media reports⁴ of increasing violence in Parkchester towards Bangladeshis, especially when they are perceived to be Muslim. Sapna NYC staff have also reported seeing an uptick in violence against Bangladeshis in the area during the month of Ramadan as individuals are often leaving mosques after prayers at night, when pedestrian traffic is low. While such incidents have typically involved men, anecdotal evidence suggests that women are increasingly being targeted.

Domestic Concerns

Approximately 70% of respondents believed that family disputes were a somewhat to very important problem in the Bangladeshi community. Specifically, this entails disputes between husbands and wives, parents and children, and couples and in-laws. Further, over 60% of respondents believed that domestic violence in this community was a somewhat to very important problem. These concerns may partly stem from the relatively

⁴ <http://www.ibtimes.com/new-bronx-tale-bangladeshis-growing-presence-borough-creates-hope-conflict-1202071> and <http://newamericamedia.org/2016/01/bangladeshi-man-attacked-in-bronx-hate-crime.php>

large household size among Bangladeshis in New York City, whereby in-laws, parents, children, and other relatives⁵ often inhabit the same housing unit.



Mental Health Concerns

Although the survey did not focus on issues related to mental health, media attention and existing research⁶ on Bangladeshi women in New York City point to the prevalence of mental health conditions in this community as many recently arrived Bangladeshi women may experience forms of social and linguistic isolation. Further, many women experience poverty and discrimination as well as forms of gender inequalities within and outside their homes. Consequently, the concerns raised in the survey may exacerbate existing struggles prevalent in this community.

Conclusion

This document highlights the concerns of Bangladeshi women in Parkchester and attests to their fear of being subject to hate crimes and their concerns over domestic issues which may, in turn, exacerbate existing challenges that many Bangladeshi women face. Increased public awareness is necessary to better support not only these women, but more broadly, the growing yet vulnerable Bangladeshi communities in New York City.

⁵ Bangladeshi households have been found to be larger (averaging 4.3 people) than average New York City households (averaging 2.63 people). Likewise, Bangladeshis are more likely to live in crowded conditions than other New Yorkers. See <http://www.aafny.org/cic/briefs/bangladeshi2013.pdf>

⁶ https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/nyregion/bangladeshi-women-isolated-in-new-york-city-need-more-support-advocates-say.html?_r=2 and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4552248/>