

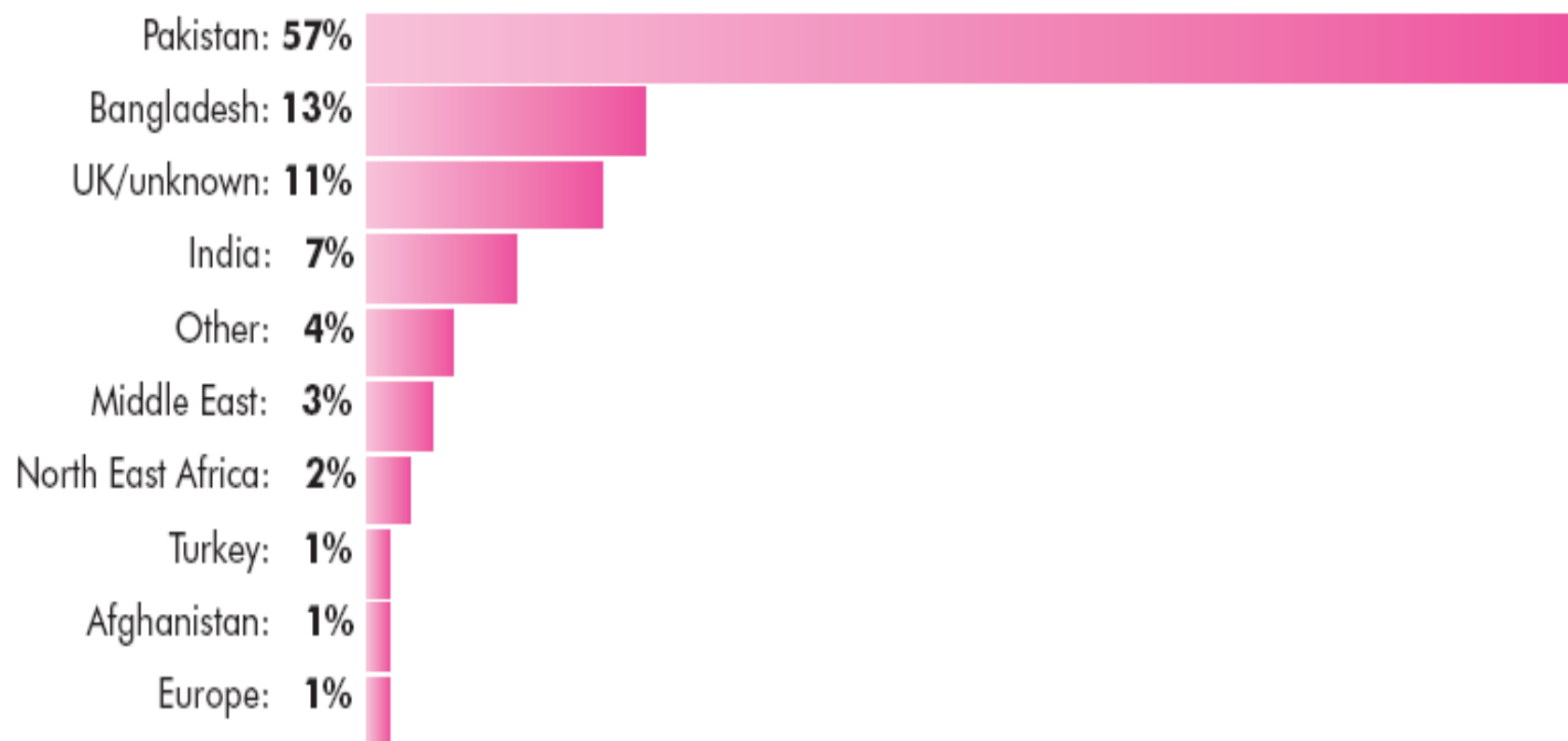
Forced Marriage in the UK

A scoping study on the experience of women from Middle Eastern and North East African communities

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Need for research – not just an 'Asian' issue

Reports of forced marriage to the FMO (2008)



Middle East and North East Africa

Refuge



For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

Middle East: Armenia, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

North East Africa: Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan



Objectives of scoping study



- To explore the experiences of forced marriage for women in the UK whose families originate from the Middle East and North East Africa
- Develop survivor led recommendations on how Refuge (and other providers) can improve service provision for women from the Middle East and North East Africa who have experienced forced marriage

- A research review of existing knowledge on forced marriage in the Middle East and North East Africa
- Interviews with at least 10 service users from the Middle East and North East Africa who had experienced forced marriage
- Interviews with at least 6 caseworkers about their experience of supporting women from the Middle East and North East Africa who had experienced forced marriage

- Systematic search of academic databases and relevant government and voluntary organisation websites – yielded only a small amount of research literature
- Wider internet research – also limited findings

Interviews with service users



- Searched Refuge's REMIT – electronic casework system – for forced marriage cases
- 24 cases identified in total: 7 women were from the Middle East and North East Africa
- Approached Ashiana and the Asian Women's Resource Centre to identify an additional 3 women for interview
- 9/10 women chose for their caseworker to be interviewed on their behalf; cross referenced with case files and written statements

Interviews with case workers



- Specialist outreach worker: Somalia (Refuge's VAST project)
- Staff members of Refuge's specialist refuge for African and African- Caribbean service
- Staff members of Ashiana's specialist forced marriage service (for South Asian, Iranian and Turkish women)
- Staff members of Refuge's generic services who had supported forced marriage victims from these regions

Findings: literature review



- Evidence that forced marriage occurs across communities
- Overwhelming lack of research on women's experiences outside of the South Asian community

Interviews with survivors



- **Middle East:** Turkey (3) Iraq (1)
- **North East Africa:** Somalia (4) Sudan (1) Eritrea (1)

Patterns in forced marriage



- Aged between 17 and 31
- Two women born in UK; 4 women came to UK in early childhood; four women came to the UK when adults
- 7 cases – feared forced marriage; 2 cases – forced to marry in UK/overseas; 1 case – came to UK as a result of a forced marriage
- Forced to marry cousins, men from family's country of origin; 'suitable' men i.e. right tribe, desirable ethnic/religious background
- Older men

Motives and 'triggers'



- Controlling unwanted behaviour (3 cases)
- Preventing 'unsuitable' relationships (2 cases)
- Attempting to strengthen family links (1 case)
- Achieving financial gain (1 case)
- Protecting family honour (1 case)
- Transgressing perceived cultural ideals (2 cases)
- Women coming to the end of their education (2 cases)

Role of family



- All the women reported being forced into marriage by immediate and extended family members
- However, women also spoke about family members (including male siblings, cousins and boyfriends) who played supportive roles

Use of duress



- Physical abuse
- Threats to kill
- Emotional abuse
- Threats to send back 'home'
- False imprisonment
- Monitoring of movements
- Financial abuse: interference with education and access to money

Avoidance strategies



- Prolonging education
- Running away
- Pretending to conform and 'go along' with plans for a period of time
- Trying to retain ownership of passport
- Trying to avoid perpetrators of abuse
- Exploring support available

Accessing support



- Informal sources i.e. friends and family
- Police
- School/college
- Child's play group
- GP
- Housing
- British Embassy
- Forced Marriage Unit

Barriers to support



- Bringing 'shame' on the family
- Not wanting to upset family/get them into trouble
- Desire to keep low profile due to immigration issues
- Scared external agency would make things worse
- Mistrust of outside agencies based on past experience
- Limited proficiency in English
- Unaware support was available

Support needs



- Emotional support
- Addressing social isolation
- Need for specialist services and peer support
- Safety planning
- Financial support
- Immigration issues
- Accommodation
- Substance misuse

Additional themes identified by caseworkers



- Parallels in supporting South Asian women
- Forced marriage not recognised as happening in particular communities – i.e. as 'Asian' issue
- Confusion about the definition of forced marriage – *"I was forced into an arranged marriage"*
- Examples of 'false' marriage – arranged marriages but information withheld
- Forced to 'stay' in marriage

Conclusions



- Lack of research into forced marriage across communities
- Lack of recognition of forced marriage across communities both by professionals and women themselves
- Lack of understanding about what forced marriage
- Lack of knowledge about the support that is available

Recommendations



- Need for further research
- All awareness materials/guidelines etc. to reflect forced marriage experiences across communities
- Immediate access to emotional/psychological support
- Access to specialist services
- More prevention work
- Enable help seeking

For further information



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