

2020 SALDEF National Sikh American Survey: **Key Findings**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

Despite Sikhs having lived in the United States for over a century, limited information is known about the Sikh American community. Up to this point there has not been a national survey that measures the multiple facets of the lives of Sikhs living in the United States. SALDEF, a national Sikh American civil rights, advocacy, and education organization, has the mission to empower Sikh Americans by building dialogue, deepening understanding, promoting civic and political participation, and upholding social justice and religious freedoms for all Americans. To address the lack of information on the experiences, perspectives, and advocacy needs of Sikh Americans, SALDEF developed the first National Sikh American Survey. The survey's findings will help policymakers, researchers, foundations, elected officials, news organizations, and Sikh organizations understand Sikhs across the United States.

The SALDEF research team developed a survey of 48 questions across eight topics: demographics, Sikh at work and school, cultural connection, political engagement, use and perception of news, access to resources, discrimination, and awareness of SALDEF. The survey was open to all Sikhs 13 years of age or older, currently living in the United States. The survey was programmed on SurveyMonkey and was open for 27 days. It had a final sample of 1,861 responses.

Survey Results

The survey revealed many important experiences of the respondents, including the following:

Sikh at Work and School

- 87% of employed respondents had no or few other Sikhs at their workplace.
- 62% of current student respondents had no or few other Sikhs at their school.

Cultural Connection

- Respondents had, on average, at least three Gurdwaras within 50 miles from where they lived. Respondents living in the Northeast had the most Gurdwaras near them, whereas those living in the Midwest had the least.
- 44% of respondents indicated that they explain different aspects of Sikh often or very often.

Political Engagement

- 93% of all adult citizen respondents reported that they were registered to vote.
- 89% of respondents said they did vote in 2016, as compared to 96% who plan to vote in 2020.
- 71% of respondents ranked racial justice and 69% ranked health care in their top five most important policy issues.
- Respondents commonly reported signing an online petition (77%), donating money to a campaign or cause (61%), liking or following a campaign or organization online (57%), and posting on social media about an issue (57%), within the past 12 months.
- Only 6% of respondents felt that elected officials always hear the needs of the Sikh American community.

Discrimination

- 15% of respondents said they only sometimes felt safe practicing Sikh, with respondents living in the South feeling the least safe.
- 58% of respondents indicated that they have been bullied or harassed because of their Sikh identity. Respondents living in the West reported higher rates of bullying or harassment (60%).
- 63% of respondents who wear turbans indicated that they had been discriminated against for wearing one. Those living in the South experienced the highest rates of turban-related discrimination (70%).

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey, the research team developed seven recommendations:



Recommendation 1: Address discrimination against Sikh Americans

Policymakers and elected officials must help eliminate discrimination against Sikh Americans. Strategies could include promoting awareness about Sikh through school curriculum, publicly engaging with and learning from Sikh communities, and improving Sikh Americans' ability to report bullying and harassment.



Recommendation 2: Utilize the political power of Sikh Americans in national and local politics.

National political campaigns should work on harnessing the power of Sikh Americans by mobilizing them to support their work and candidacy.



Recommendations 3: Engage Sikh Americans in conversation on equality

Since this report revealed high levels of political activity among respondents, policymakers should hear Sikh Americans' voices and perspectives when developing policies on issues they care about, such as social justice.



Recommendation 4: Hold news organizations to a higher standard when discussing Sikh

Journalists and media professionals should educate themselves on biases against Sikhs. Policymakers and elected officials have a responsibility to facilitate this education process to serve their constituents, mitigate the harm Sikh Americans face, and prepare to challenge these misconceptions in the media.



Recommendation 5: Further Investigate and Engage outreach to Sikh Americans living in the Midwest and the South of the United States

Sikh organizations must focus their resources to connect with Sikhs living in the South and Midwest and introduce programs that increase their feelings of safety and connection.



Recommendation 6: Promote the discussion of Sikh in school curriculum

Sikh organizations should focus on promoting the incorporation of accurate information on Sikh into school curriculums at all levels.



Recommendation 7: Develop research materials in both English and Punjabi

Sikh organizations should offer future iterations of the survey, or any other information, in both Punjabi and English to cover a wider base of the Sikh community.



INTRODUCTION

Despite Sikhs having lived in the United States for over a century, limited information is known about the Sikh American community. While a few studies have documented critical aspects of the Sikh American experience, up to this point there has not been a national survey that measures the multiple facets of the lives of Sikhs living in the United States. The U.S. Census is counting Sikhs as a separate ethnic group in 2020, but there are still limitations to that data. SALDEF, a national Sikh American civil rights, advocacy and education organization, has the mission to empower Sikh Americans by building dialogue, deepening understanding, promoting civic and political participation, and upholding social justice and religious freedoms for all Americans. To address the lack of information on experiences, perspectives, and advocacy needs of Sikh Americans, SALDEF developed the first National Sikh American Survey. The report begins by explaining the methods used to create, advertise, and implement the survey. It then details the most important findings of the survey. The report concludes with seven recommendations based on the survey's findings that policymakers, researchers, foundations, news organizations, elected officials, and Sikh organizations will find useful to understand Sikhs across the United States.

¹ Studies include the 2014 report "[Go Home Terrorist](#)" A Report on the Bullying Sikh American School Children" by the Sikh Coalition, the 2020 report "[Sikhs In the United States: A Profile of Who We Are](#)" by the National Sikh Campaign, and the [2010 Bay Area Civil Rights Report](#) by the Sikh Coalition.

SURVEY PROCEDURES

SALDEF created a research team consisting of the executive director, several staff and board members, and a research coordinator, with the support of interns. The research team developed a survey of 48 questions across eight topics: demographics, Sikh at work and school, cultural connection, political engagement, use and perception of news, access to resources, discrimination, and awareness of SALDEF. The survey was open to all Sikhs above 12 years of age, currently living in the United States.

The research team developed the initial survey questions to best measure the experiences of Sikh Americans. When possible, the research team adapted existing survey questions to reflect the Sikh population, including the Pew Research Survey of U.S. Muslims,² the 2018 Monmouth University Poll,³ and the 2018 Civic Engagement Survey.⁴ After the survey's initial development, the research team tested the survey with several volunteer Sikh Americans through individual interviews. In the interviews, the research team asked a series of follow up questions to gauge if the survey questions were clear and accurately measured respondents' perspectives. The feedback from these interviews were incorporated into the final list of survey questions.

Concurrently, the research team created an outreach plan to target Sikh Americans across the country. They advertised on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to reach a wide audience. Members of the team also appeared on a Punjabi television show and published articles on Punjabi news sites to broadcast the survey to a wider base within the community. While the research team implemented a very extensive outreach plan, there were several limitations which will be highlighted later in the report.

The team created the survey using SurveyMonkey. The survey was open for 27 days and took an average of ten minutes to complete. The data was cleaned and analyzed on Microsoft Excel. There were 2,130 total responses. After removing ineligible and incomplete responses, the survey had a final sample of 1,861. The results of the analysis are detailed below.

² Mohamed, B., Smith, G., A., Cooperman, A., & Schiller, A. (2017). *Pew Research's 2017 Survey of U.S. Muslims*. Pew Research. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>

³ Murray, P. (2018). *National: Voters Prefer Political Outsider...But with Experience*. 2018 Monmouth University Poll https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll_us_082218.pdf

⁴ Public Religion Research Institute & The Atlantic (2018). *PRRI/The Atlantic 2018 Civic Engagement Survey*. <https://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Civic-Engagement-Topline.pdf>

RESULTS

This section shares the results of seven topics covered in the survey:

Demographics

Sikh at Work and School

Cultural Connection

Political Engagement

Use and Perception of News

Access To Resources

Discrimination

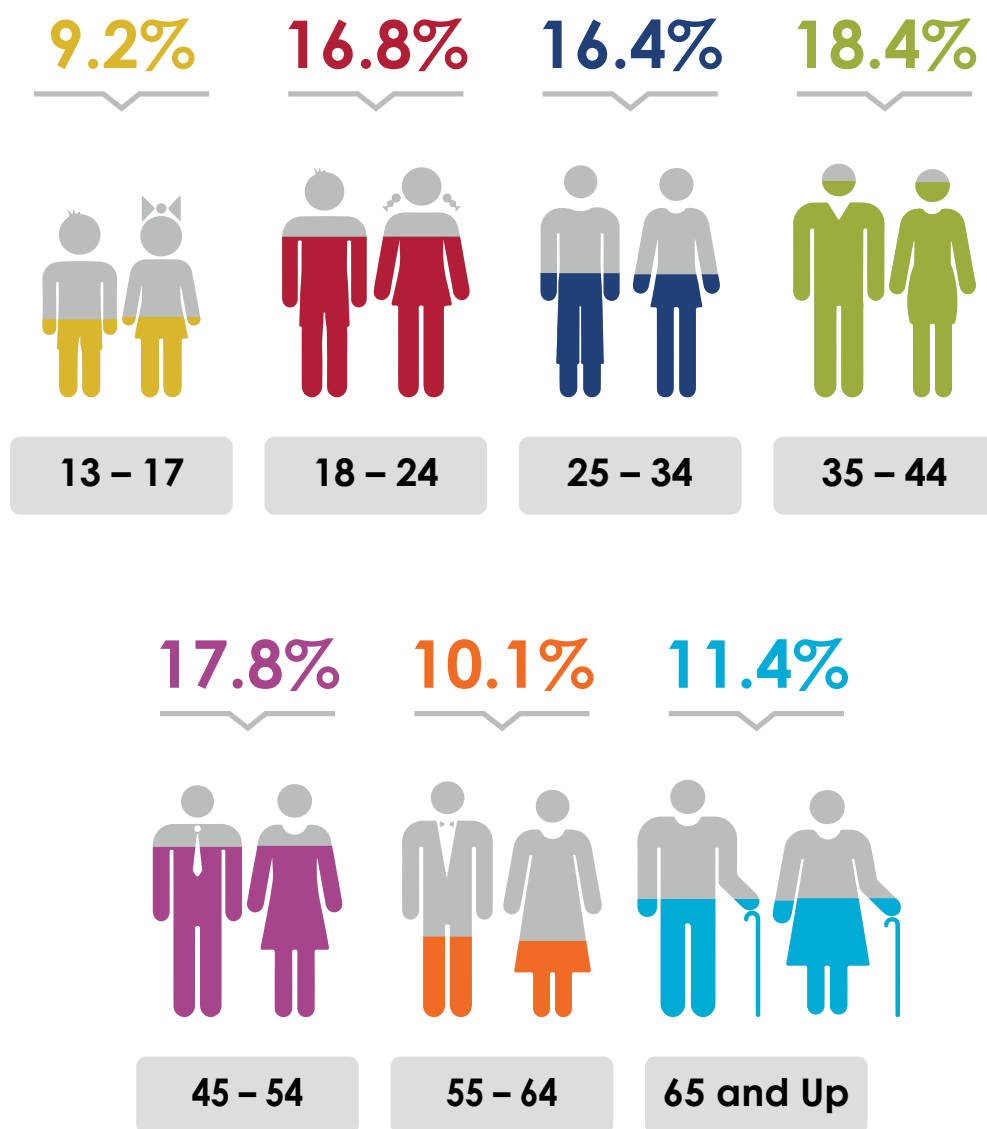
Results are shared for categories that have five or more responses. Therefore, some of the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Demographics

The survey asked several demographic questions to determine how representative the respondents were of the Sikh American population. While some groups are well represented, others reveal that this is not a completely representative sample. Therefore, this report does not reflect the experiences of the entire Sikh American population, but rather, only demonstrates the experiences of the survey respondents.

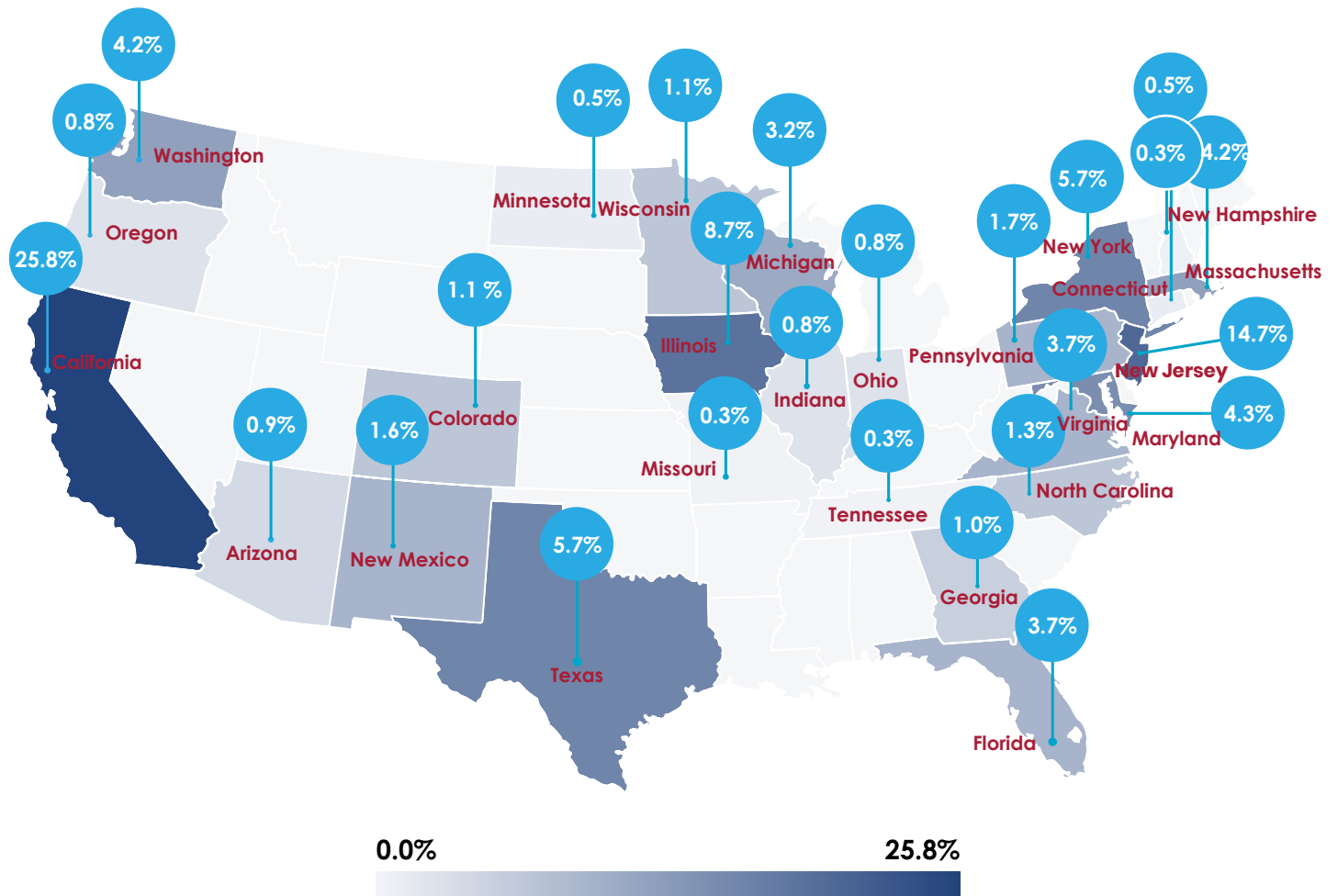
The survey first asked the age of all respondents. The survey was open to those 13 years of age or older, so respondents 12 and under were removed. Figure 1 below shows that survey respondents were fairly equally distributed by age.

Figure 1. Age



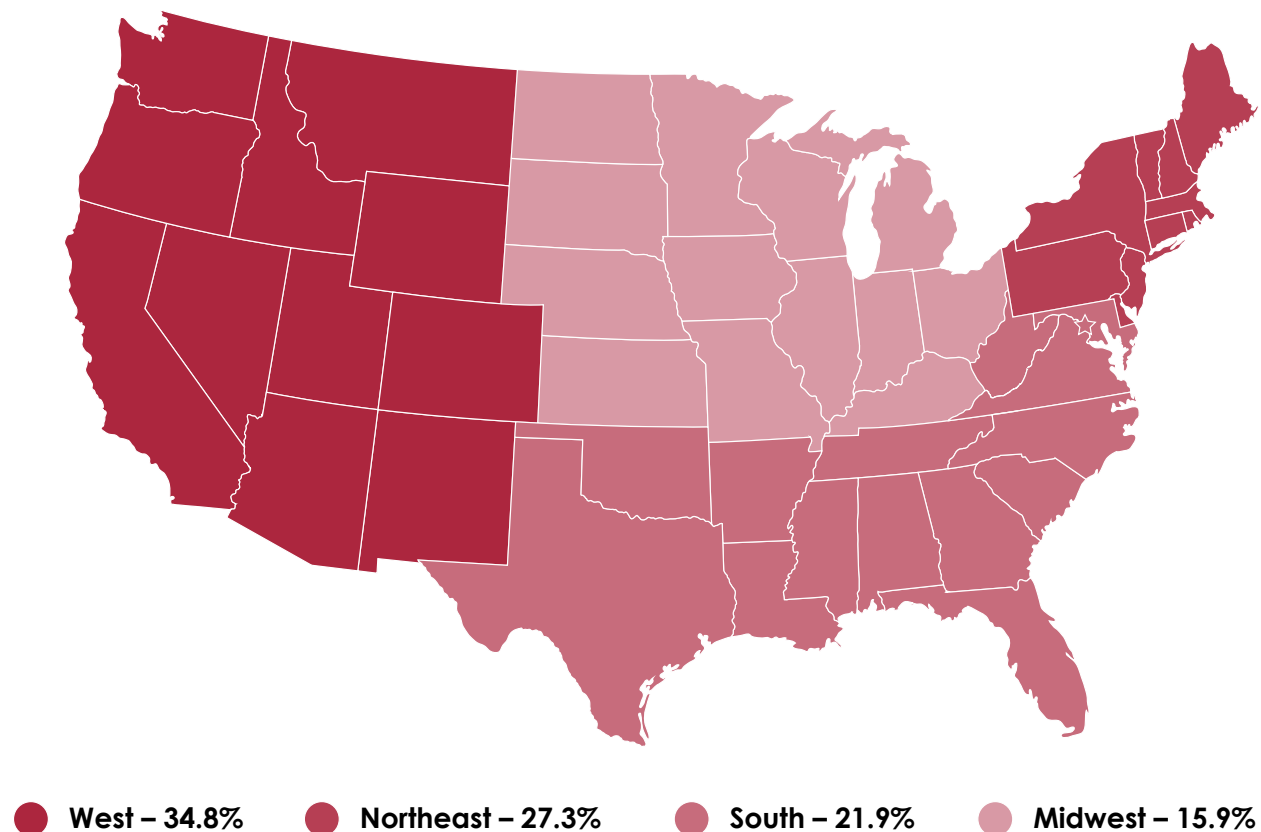
Respondents were asked in which state or territory they lived. 46 states and territories are represented in this sample, with high levels of participation from California, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, and New York (Figure 2). Certain states with significant Sikh American populations, such as New Mexico, Florida, and Washington,⁵ did not yield high levels of participation. Due to this fact, all viewpoints from various facets of the Sikh community are not reflected in these results. Respondents were then divided into four regions, Northeast, West, South, and Midwest, based on U.S. Census categorization (Figure 3).

Figure 2. State



⁵ Luthra, N. & Ghuman, S. S. (2020). Sikhs in the United States: A Profile of Who We Are. National Sikh Campaign. <http://www.sikhcampaign.org/demographics>

Figure 3. Region



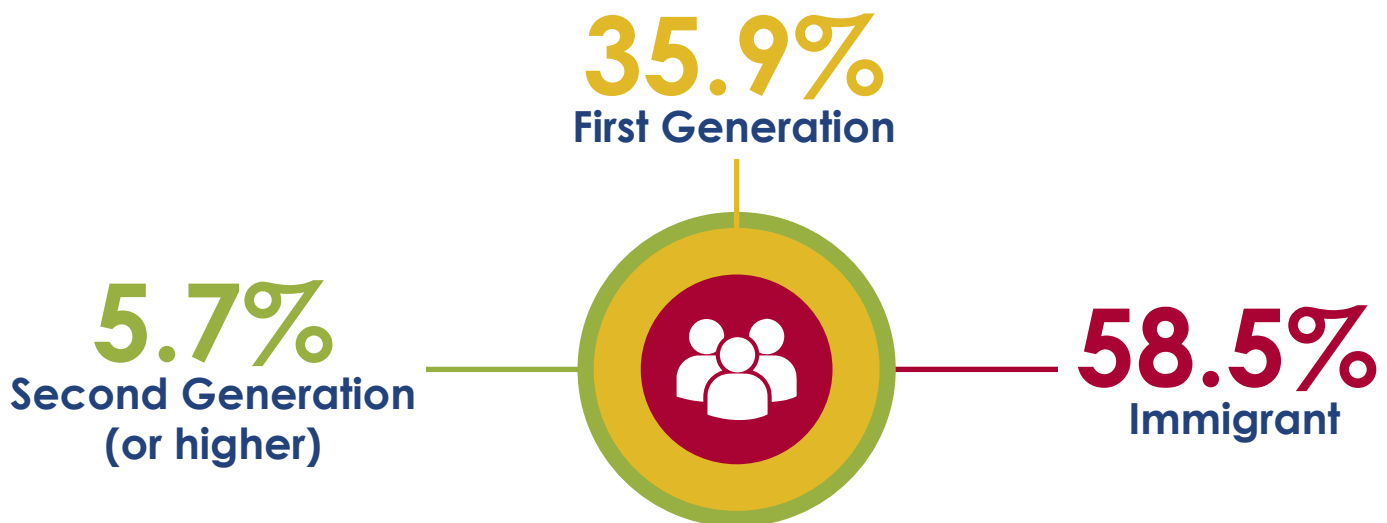
Participants were asked to identify their gender and race/ethnicity. About 50% of respondents identified as men and women, and about 90% identified as Asian (Figure 4).⁶

Figure 4. Race/Ethnicity



Participants revealed whether they were immigrants, first-generation, or second-generation or higher, and shared their citizenship status. Figures 5 and 6 show that over half of the respondents were immigrants (59%) and 90% were citizens.

Figure 5. Generation Level



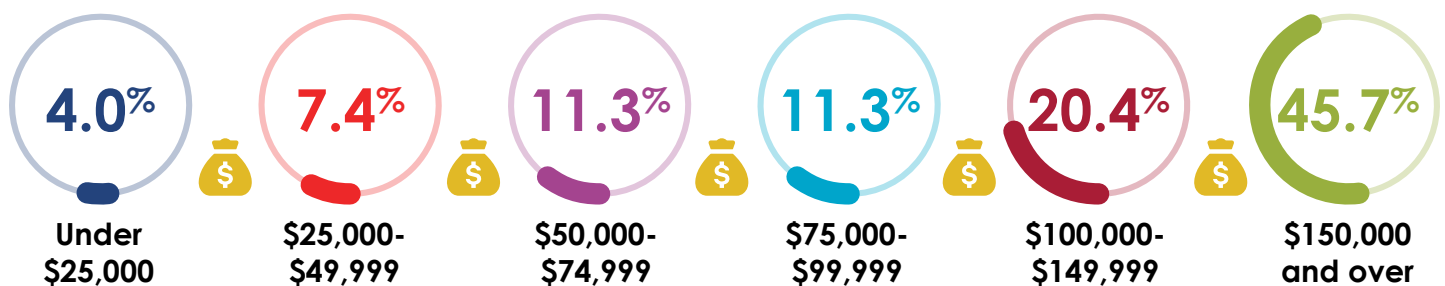
⁶ About 5% of respondents indicated that they identified as another race. This was mainly because several respondents wrote "Sikh" in the "other" text box, as they were instructed to do for the 2020 Census. The research team could not definitively recode these answers into an existing category, and they were thus left as "other."

Figure 6. Citizenship Status



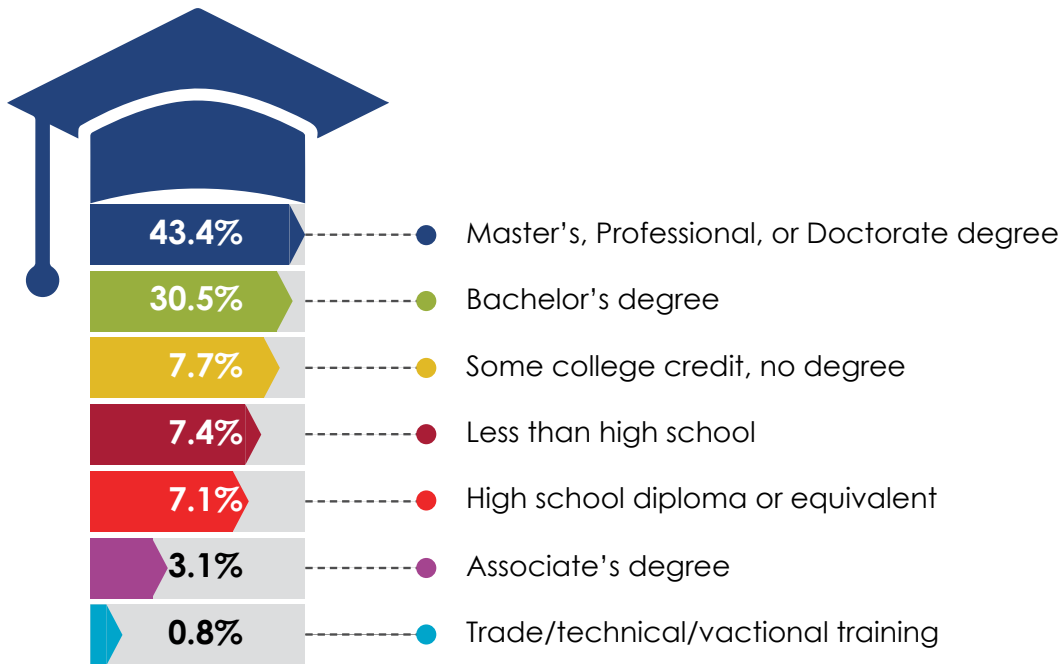
The survey also assessed socioeconomic status of respondents. More than half of respondents who were at least 18 years old indicated that they worked full-time (57%), and 30% indicated that they worked part-time. Two-thirds of respondents had an annual household income of \$100,000 or greater (Figure 7). Of respondents who were at least 18 years old, 74% had a Bachelor's, Master's, Professional, or Doctorate degree (Figure 8) which is higher compared to previous studies.⁷ Additionally, 63% were homeowners, and 26% were business owners. Overall, the respondents in this survey were highly educated and fell into a higher income bracket.

Figure 7. Household Income



⁷ Luthra, N. & Ghuman, S. S. (2020). Sikhs in the United States: A Profile of Who We Are. National Sikh Campaign. <http://www.sikhcampaign.org/demographics>

Figure 8. Highest Degree Earned



Sikh at Work and School

Employed respondents and student respondents were asked about their experiences at work and school. They were both asked how many other Sikhs were at their workplace (Figure 9) and school (Figure 10), respectively. Most respondents indicated that there were no or few other Sikhs, with little variation across regions.

Figure 9. Number of Sikhs at Workplace

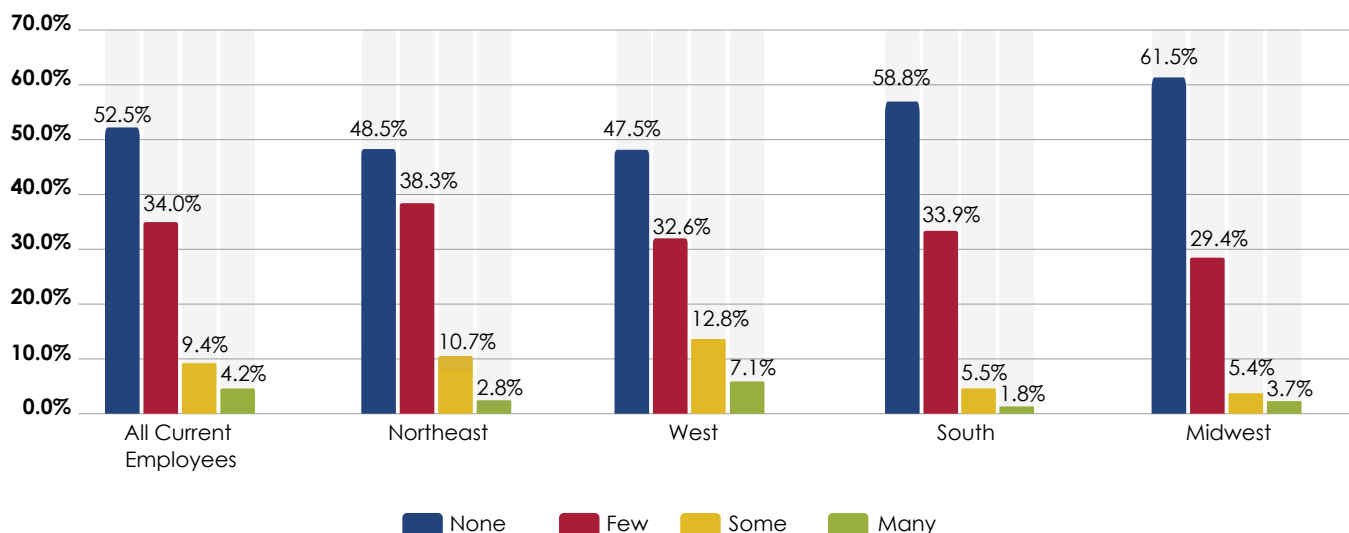
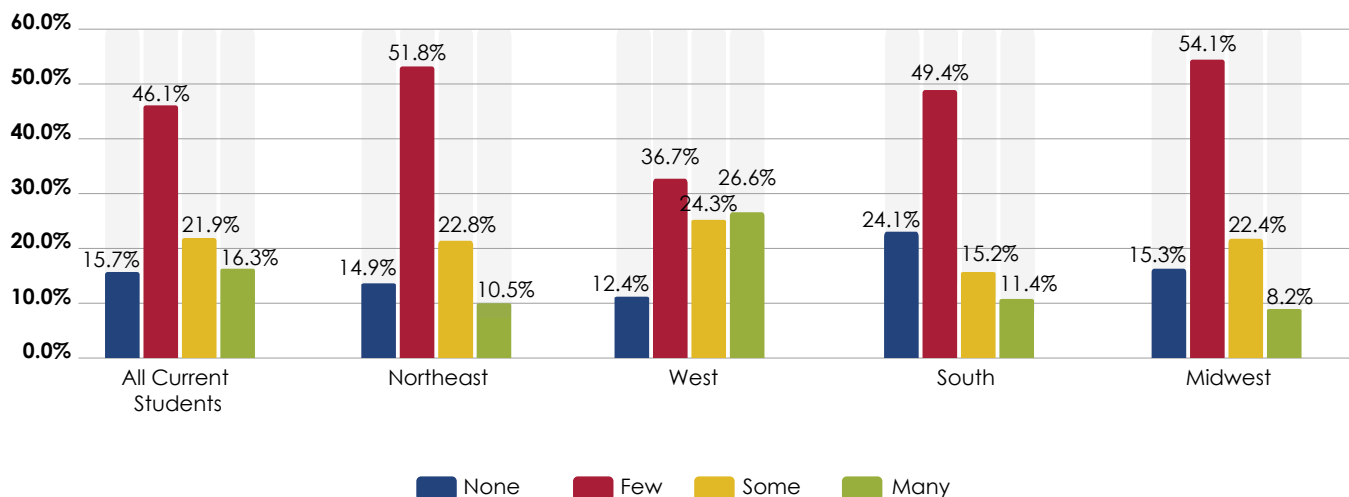
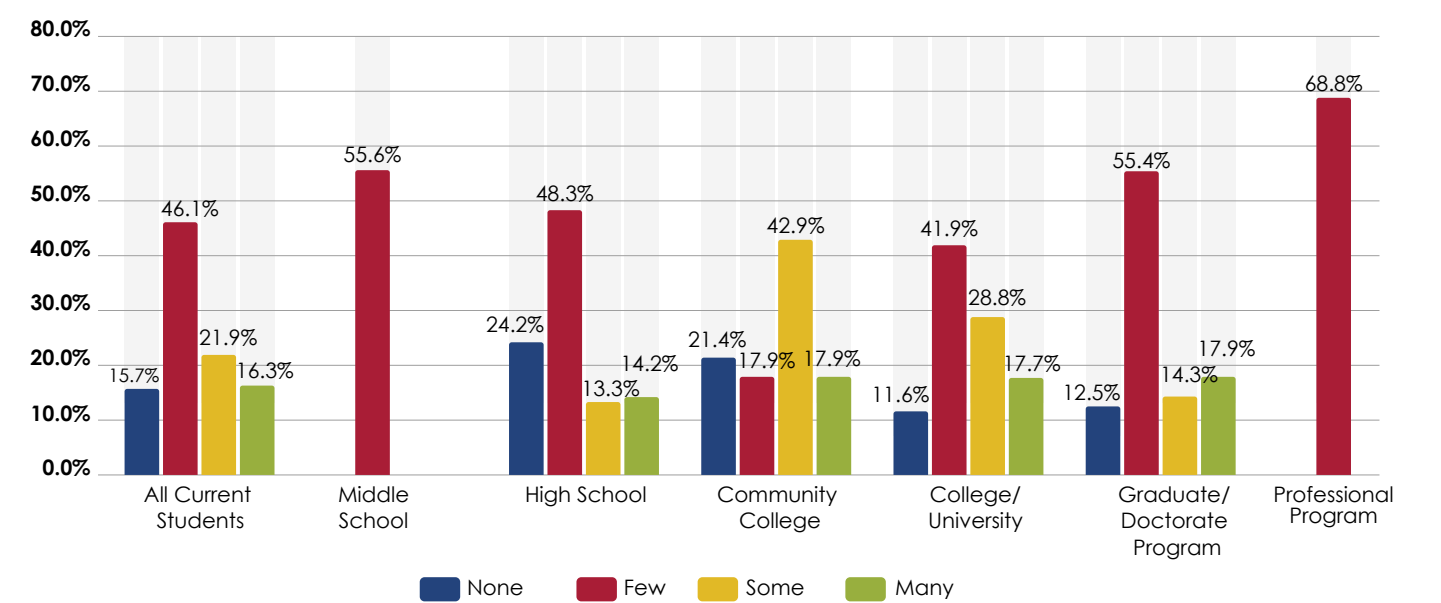


Figure 10. Number of Sikhs at School by Region



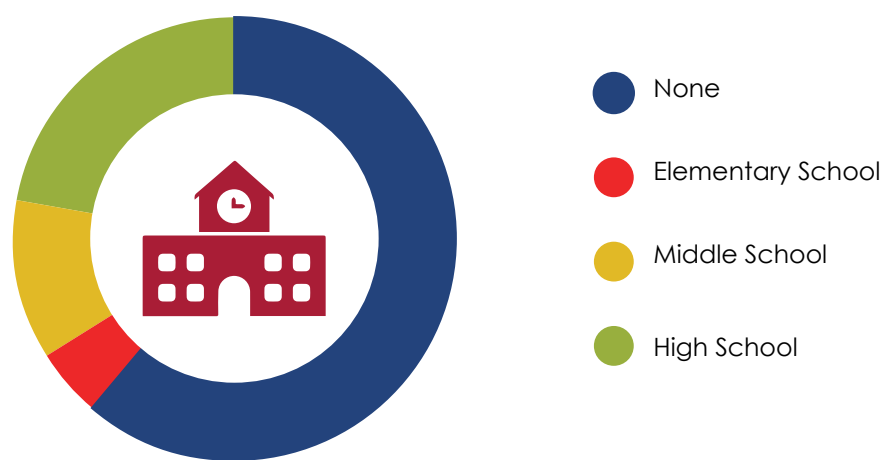
Results for number of other Sikhs at school were also analyzed by type of school. Figure 11 shows that respondents currently attending a community college or a college/university were more likely to report that there were some or many other Sikhs at their school, compared to respondents enrolled in other types of schools.

Figure 11. Number of Sikhs at School by School Type



Respondents who were educated in the United States were also asked if Sikh was discussed in their elementary school, middle school, or high school curriculums. While about one-fourth (24%) of respondents did indicate that Sikh was mentioned in high school, two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that Sikh was not discussed in any of their schools (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Sikh in School Curriculum



Cultural Connection

Respondents were asked several questions about how they maintained connections to the Sikh culture. This included their proximity to and frequency of attending Gurdwara, the Sikh house of worship. Figure 13 shows that on average, respondents had at least three Gurdwaras within 50 miles from where they lived. Respondents living in the Northeast had the most Gurdwaras near them, whereas those living in the Midwest had the least. Before COVID-19, most respondents attended Gurdwara weekly across all regions (Figure 14).

Figure 13. Number of Gurdwaras within 50 miles

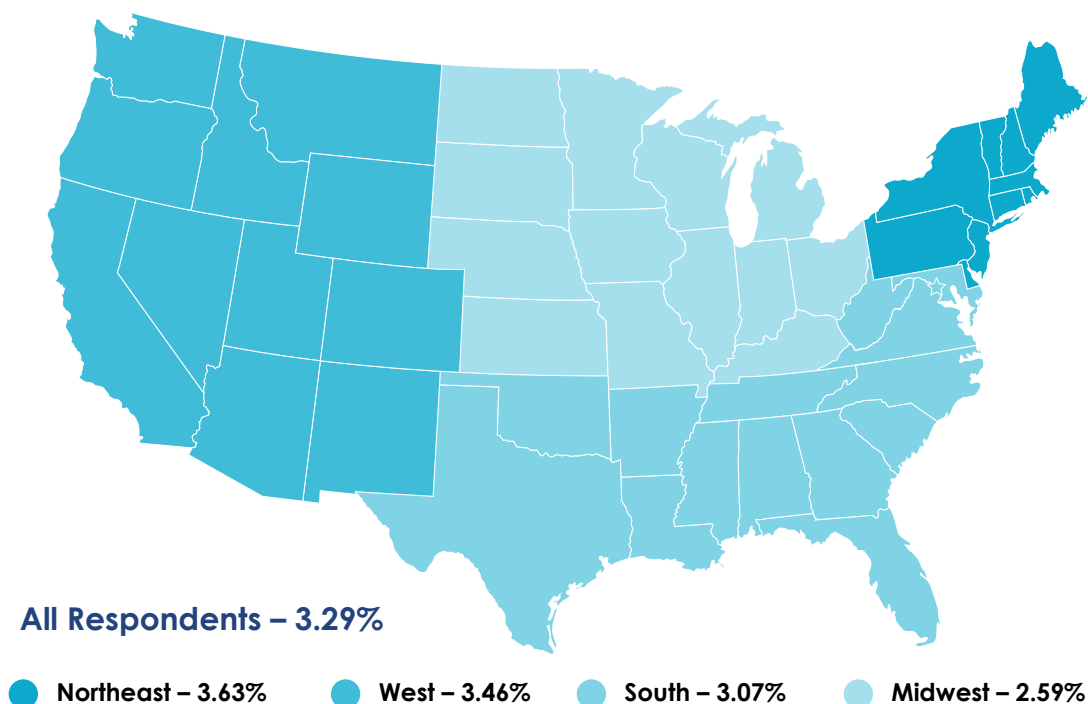
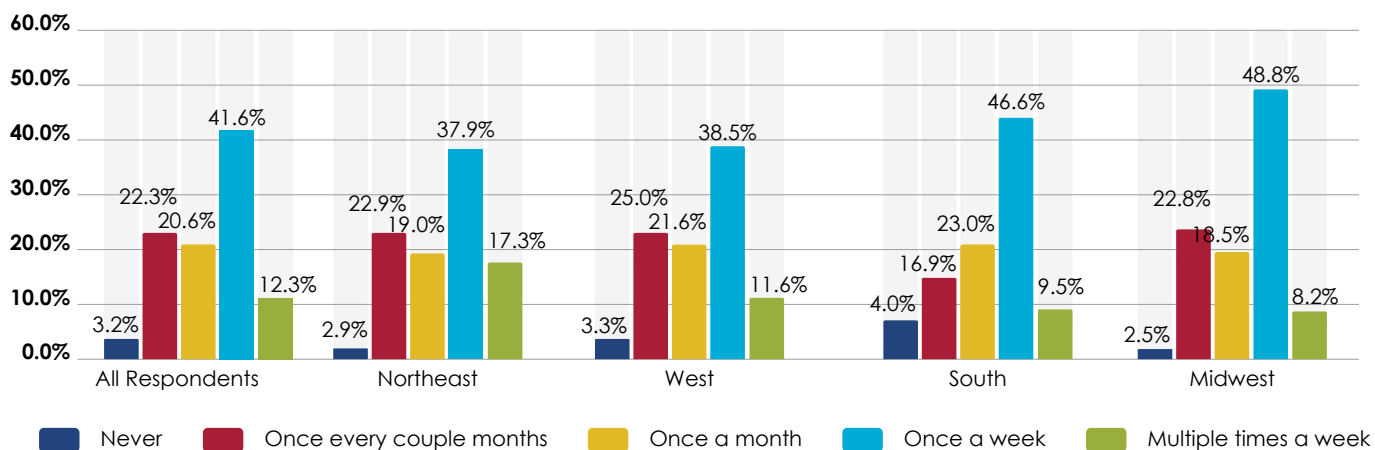
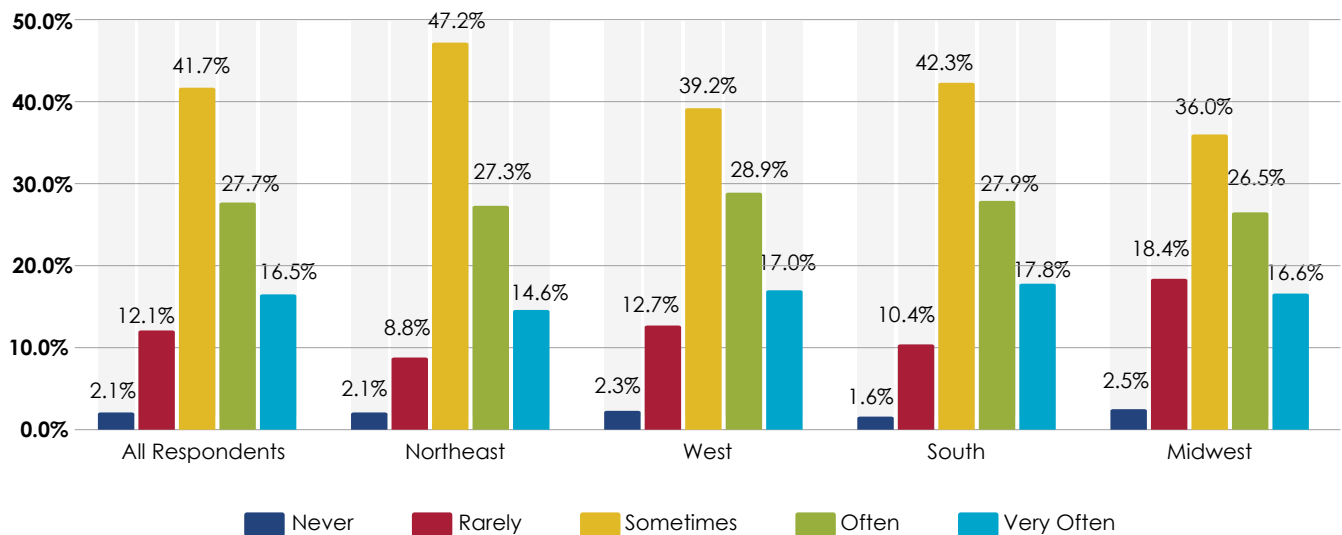


Figure 14. Frequency of Gurdwara Attendance



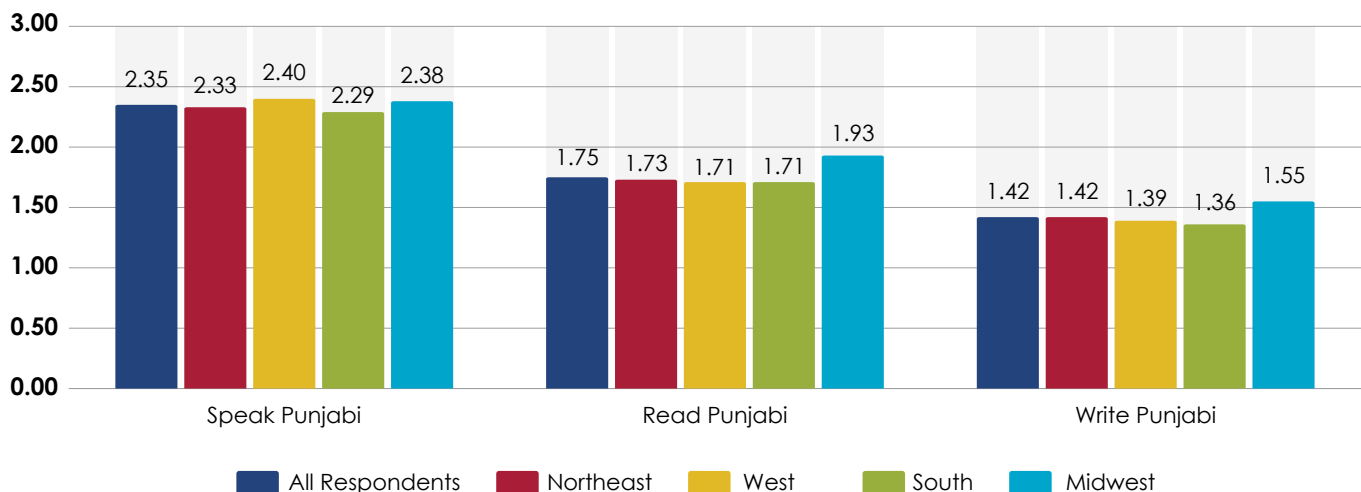
To measure respondents' peers' general understanding of Sikh, they were asked to identify how often they had to explain aspects of Sikh to others. Respondents most frequently indicated that they sometimes had to explain different aspects of Sikh to others (42%) while about 44% of respondents indicated that they had to explain different aspects of Sikh often or very often (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Frequency of Explaining Aspects of Sikh to Others



Finally, respondents were asked to measure their proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing Punjabi, the primary language among Sikhs. The survey used a four-point scale, with zero meaning that they cannot speak/read/write Punjabi at all, and three meaning they can do so fluently. Figure 16 shows that on average, respondents could speak and read Punjabi fairly well, and write Punjabi somewhat well. There was little variation among regions.

Figure 16. Proficiency in Punjabi



Political Engagement

The survey asked many questions about respondents' voting history, political views, recent political activity, and their views on the importance of a variety of policy topics. 93% of all adult citizen respondents reported that they were absolutely sure they were registered to vote (Figure 17).⁸ The survey then asked respondents eligible to vote in 2016 if they did vote, and those eligible to vote in 2020 if they planned on voting. 89% of respondents said they did vote in 2016, as compared to 96% who plan to vote in 2020 (Figure 18). Voter turnout among eligible Sikh Americans was much higher in 2016 than that of all eligible Americans, which was only 55% in 2016.⁹

Figure 17. Sikhs Registered to Vote

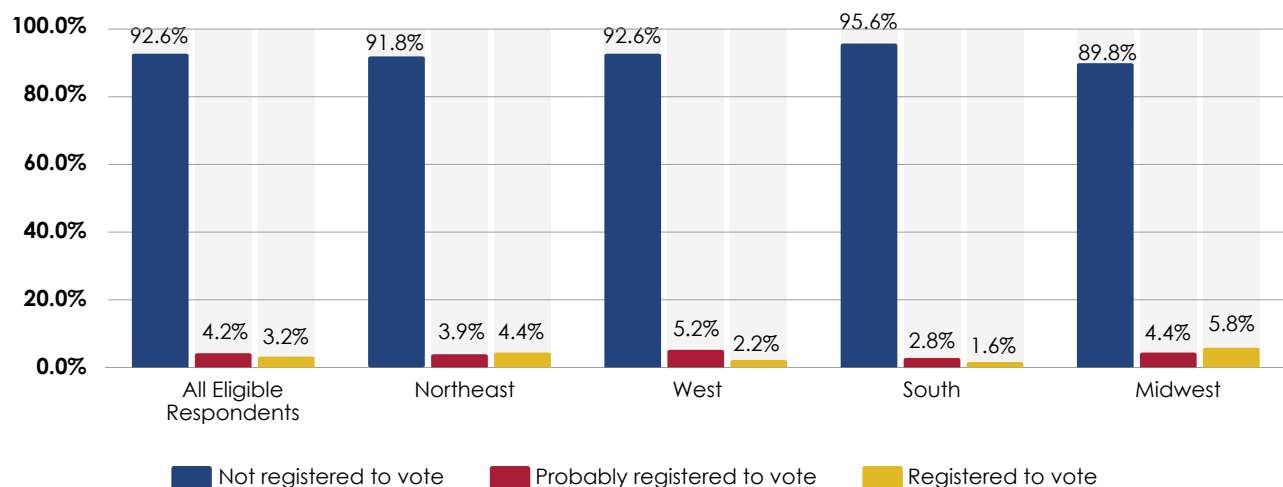
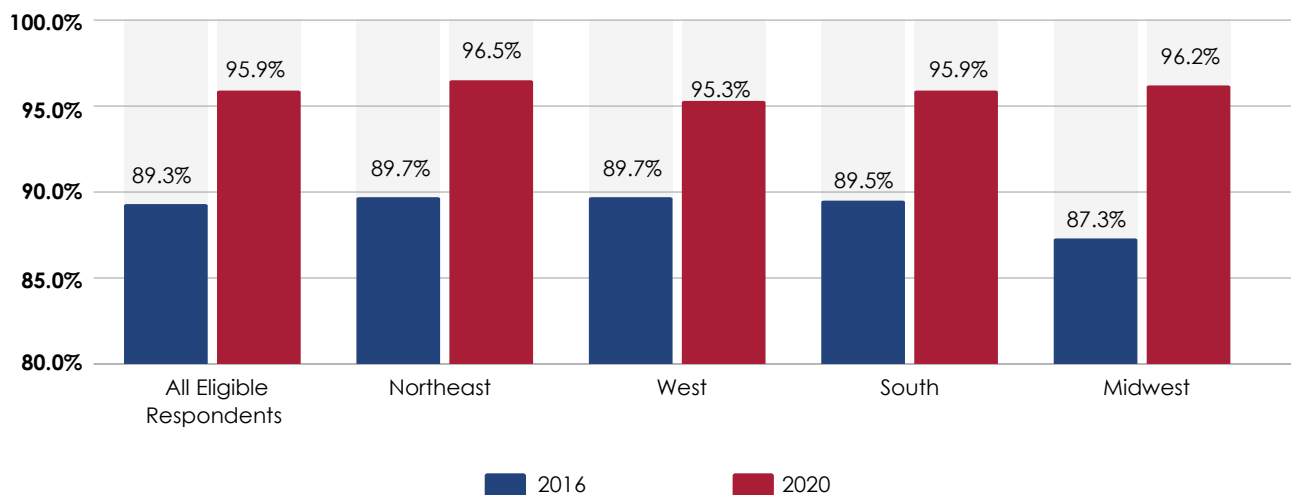


Figure 18. Voting in 2016 and 2020

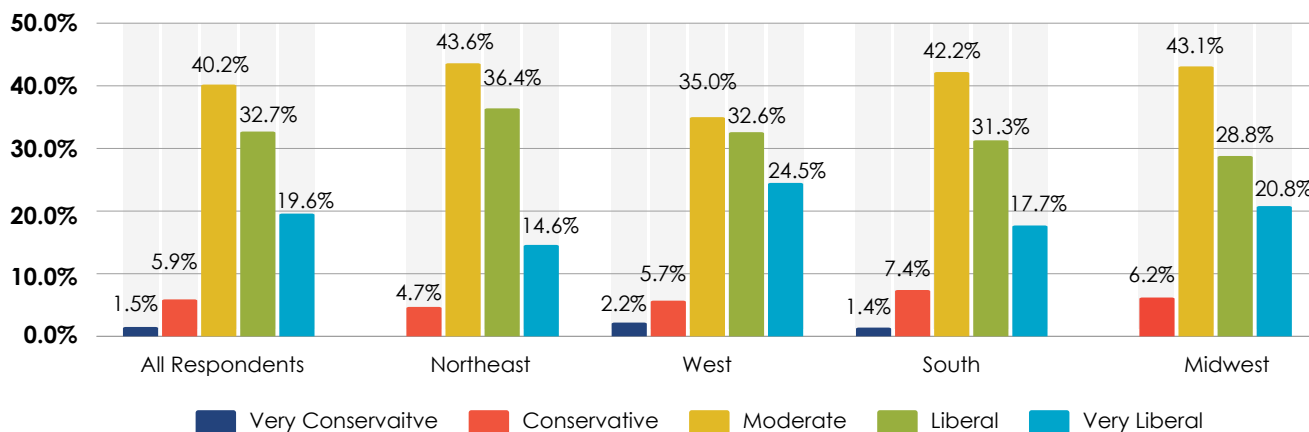


⁸ This question was adapted from the Pew Research 2017 Survey of U.S. Muslims. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>

⁹ Wallace, G. (2016, Nov. 30). Voter turnout at 20-year low in 2016. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/11/politics/popular-vote-turnout-2016/index.html>

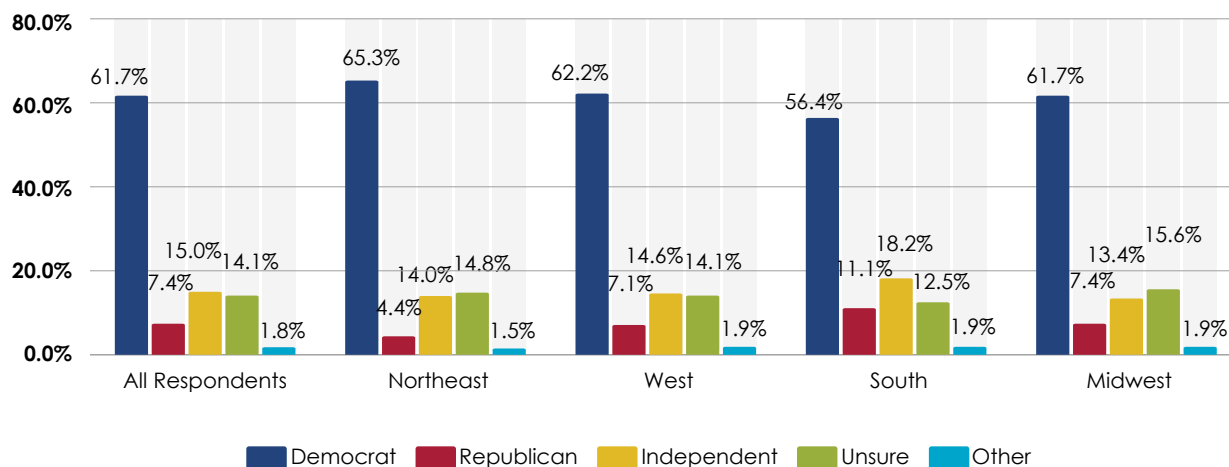
Respondents were asked to define their political views.¹⁰ A large portion of respondents indicated that they were politically moderate (40%). More than half of the respondents (52%) said that they were liberal or very liberal. While few respondents reported that they were conservative or very conservative, respondents living in the South most often did (9%). The results are detailed in Figure 19.

Figure 19. Political Views



Respondents were also asked if they identified with a political party. The majority of respondents identified as Democrats (62%). 15% reported that they were independent and 7% identified as Republican. The Northeast had the most Democrats (65%) while the South had the most Republicans (11%) and independents (18%). The results are detailed in Figure 20.

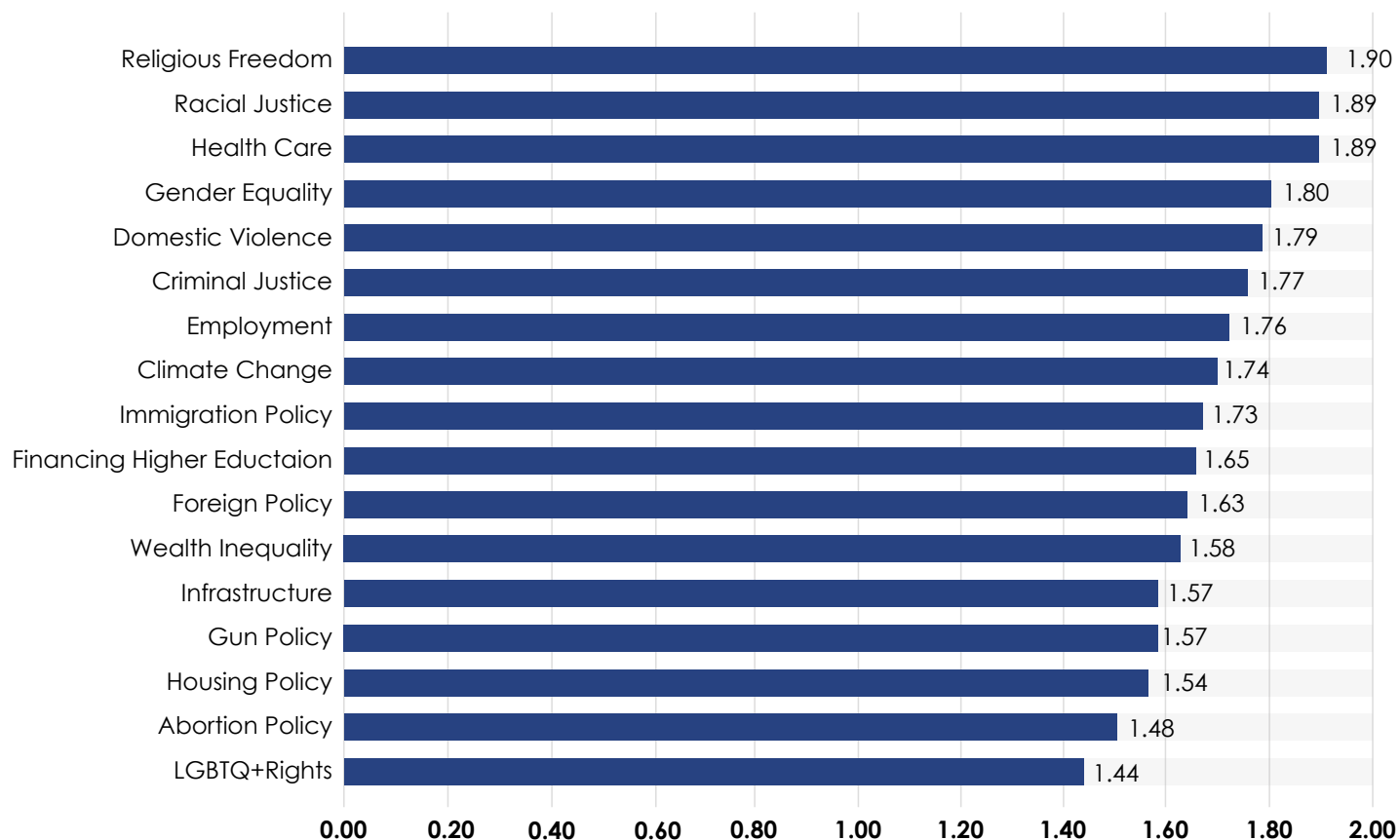
Figure 20. Political Party Affiliation



¹⁰ This question was adapted from the Pew Research 2017 Survey of U.S. Muslims. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>

Respondents were given 17 policy issues and asked to rank their levels of importance.¹¹ The survey used a three-point scale with zero meaning not at all important and two meaning very important. Items were randomized to not skew survey results. Respondents indicated that religious freedom, racial justice, and health care were the most important issues, and abortion policy and LGBTQ rights were the least important, although they were still ranked between somewhat and very important. Gender equality and domestic violence policy were also very important to survey respondents. The results for every policy issue are detailed in Figure 21.

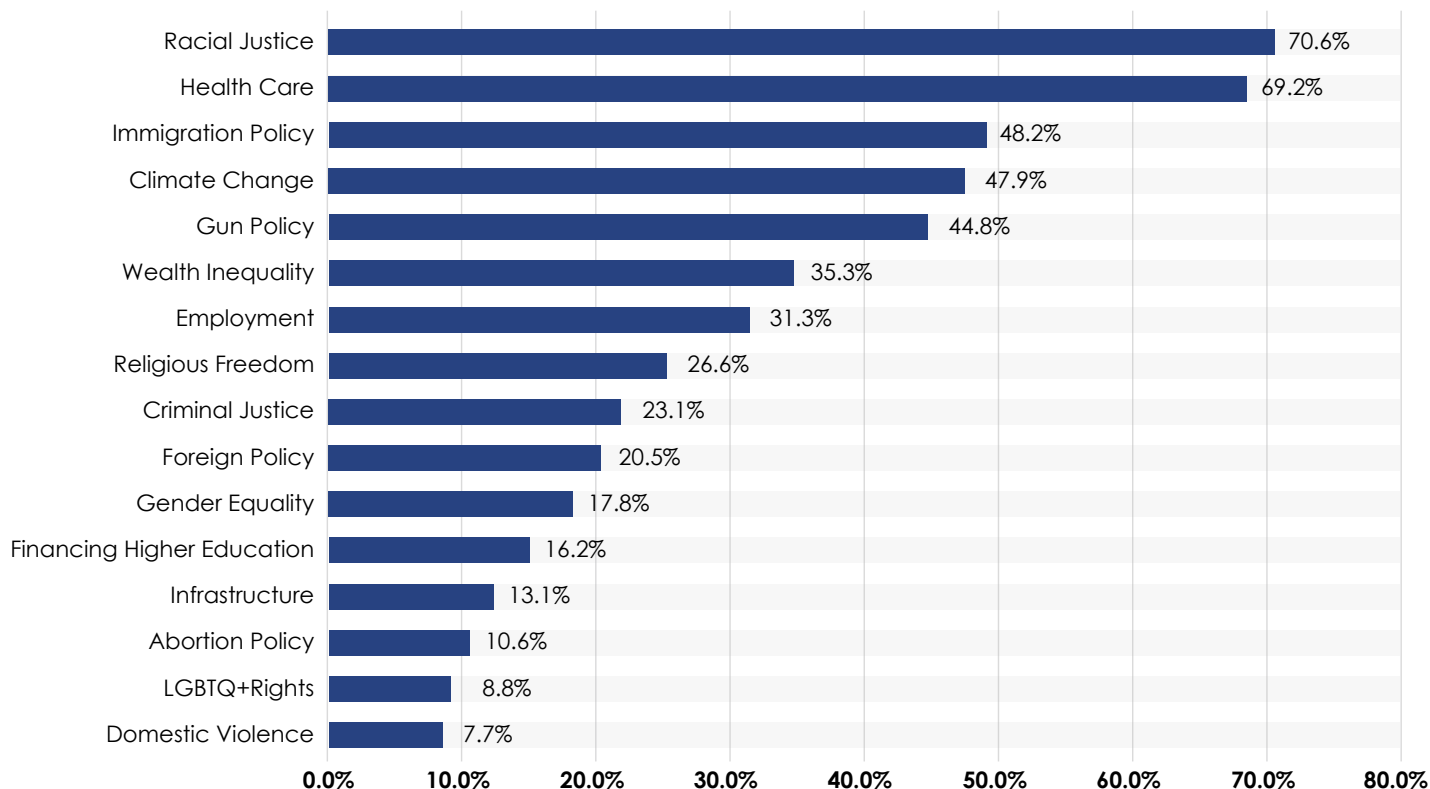
Figure 21. Policy Issues by Level of Importance



¹¹ Adapted from the Monmouth University Polling Institute's 2018 Monmouth University Poll https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll_us_082218.pdf/ and the Public Religion Research Institute and The Atlantic's 2018 Civic Engagement Survey <https://www.pri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Civic-Engagement-Topline.pdf>

Respondents were asked to rank the top five policy issues out of 17 items.¹² Items were again randomized to not skew survey results. 71% of respondents ranked racial justice and 69% ranked health care as one of their top five most important policy issues. Nearly half of respondents included immigration policy (49%), climate change (48%), and gun policy (45%) on their list. While domestic violence was very important to respondents in the previous question, very few prioritized this as a top issue (8%). The results of the full list of policy issues are included in Figure 22.

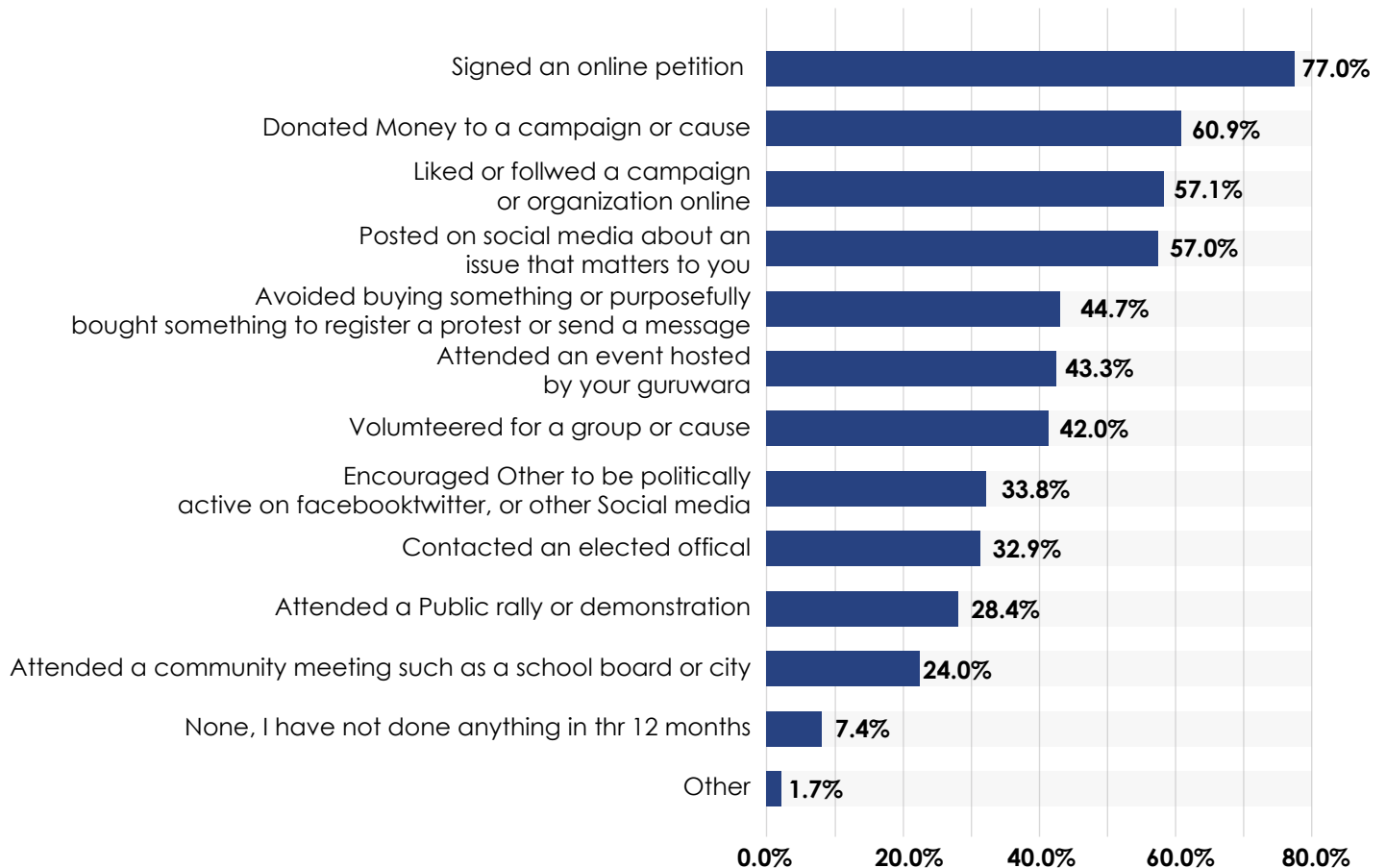
Figure 22. Top Five Policy Issues



¹² This question was adapted from the Monmouth University Polling Institute's 2018 Monmouth University Poll https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll_us_082218.pdf/ and the Public Religion Research Institute and The Atlantic's 2018 Civic Engagement Survey <https://www.prii.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Civic-Engagement-Topline.pdf>

To measure political engagement, respondents were asked to select which political activities had they done in support of a group, cause, or campaign over the last 12 months.¹³ There were 11 activities they could choose from. The most common activities respondents identified doing were signing an online petition (77%), donating money to a campaign or cause (61%), liking or following a campaign or organization online (57%), or posting on social media about an issue (57%). Only 7% of respondents indicated that they had done nothing on the list. Overall, the respondents actively engaged in issues they cared about. The full list of the results is displayed in Figure 23.

Figure 23. Political Activity in the Past 12 Months



¹³ This question was adapted from the Public Religion Research Institute and The Atlantic's 2018 Civic Engagement Survey. <https://www.pri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Civic-Engagement-Topline.pdf>.

The survey measured whether the needs of the Sikh American community are heard by their local, state, and federal officials. It used a four-point scale, with zero meaning the officials never hear the needs of the Sikh American community and three meaning they always do. Overall, respondents most often selected that officials only sometimes hear the needs of the Sikh American community. Compared to state and federal officials, they felt that local officials most often hear their needs. Only about 6% felt that elected officials always hear the needs of the Sikh American community. In fact, 41% of Sikh Americans reported that their federal officials never do. The results for overall responses and responses by region are listed in Figures 24 and 25.

Figure 24. How Often Elected Officials Hear Sikhs' Needs

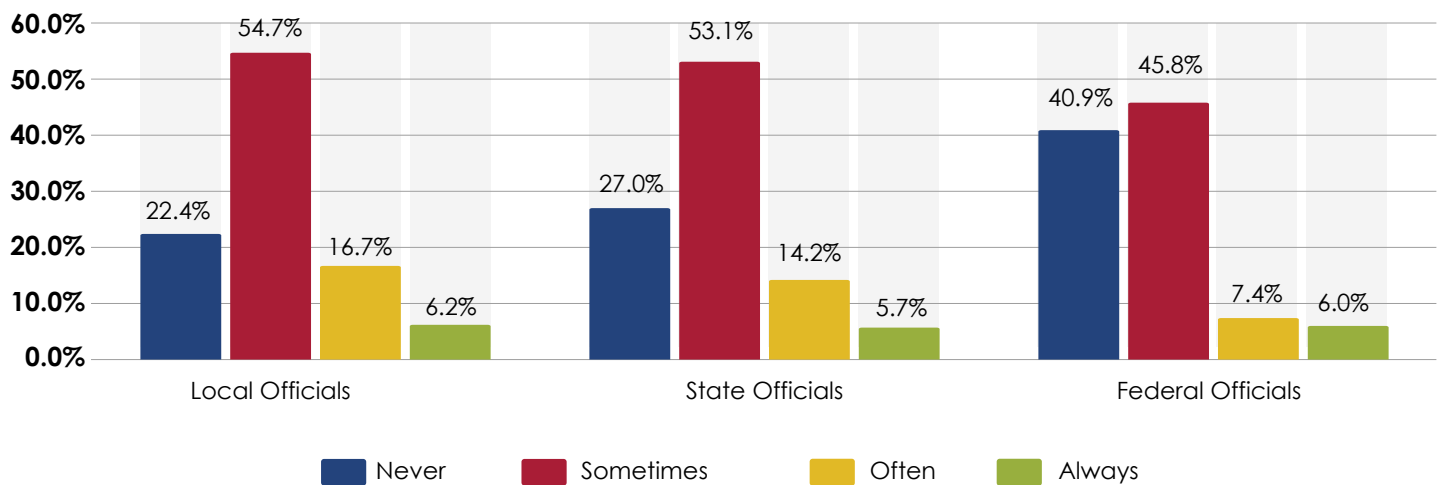
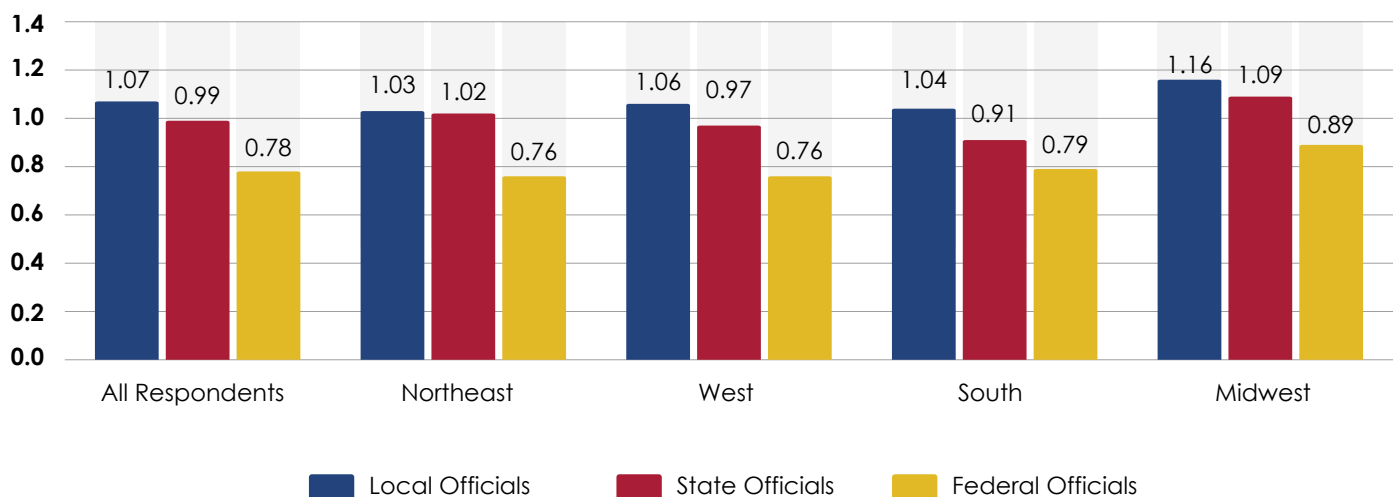


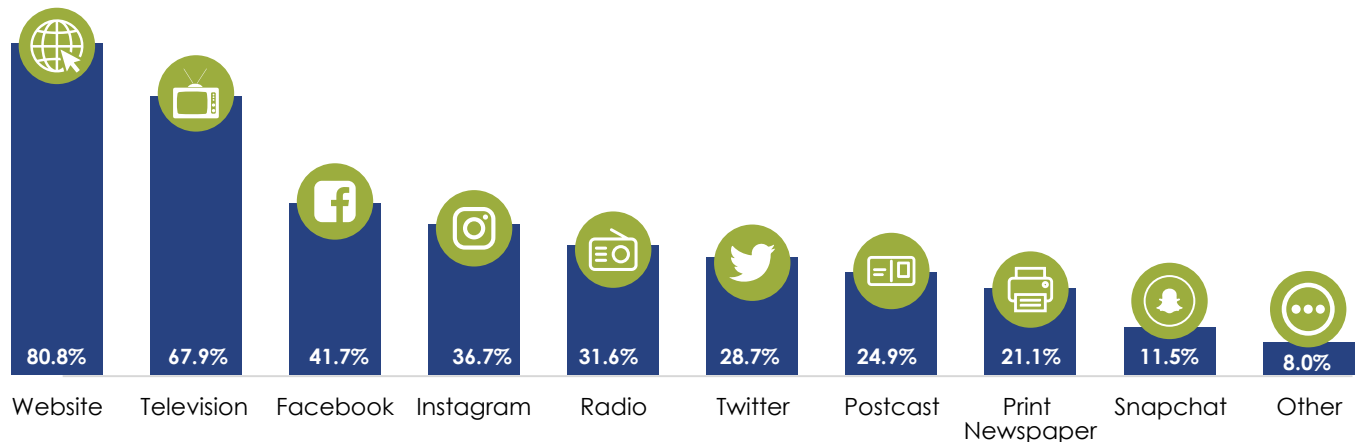
Figure 25. How Often Elected Officials Hear Sikhs' Needs by Region



Use and Perception of News

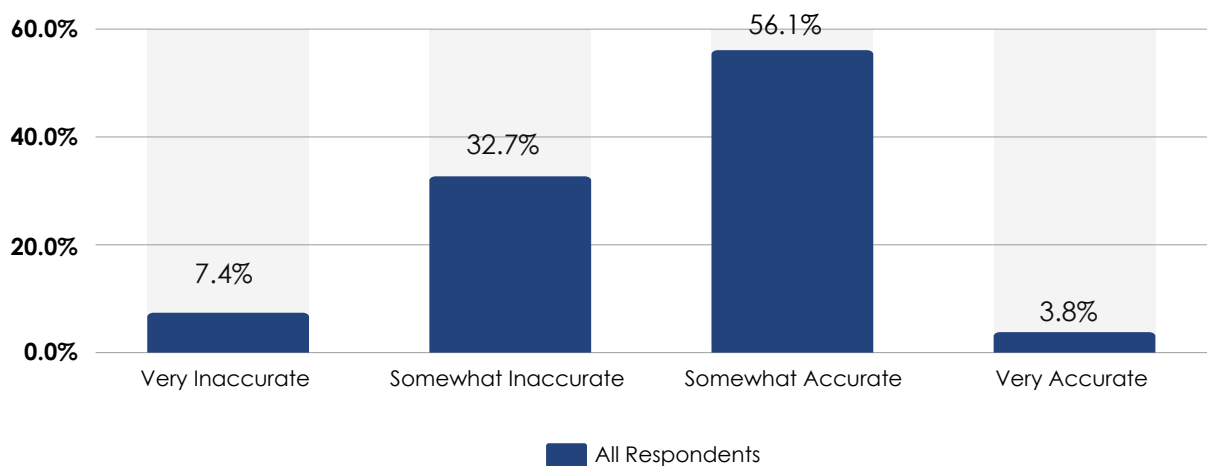
The survey also explored how respondents consumed news and perceived news organizations. Most respondents reported that they used a website to get their news (81%) followed by television (68%) and Facebook (42%) (Figure 26). While 95% reported that they primarily get their news in English, this percentage likely underestimates how many consume their news in Punjabi. Since all survey materials were provided in English, it most likely prevented those who primarily speak Punjabi from taking the survey.

Figure 26. News Sources



Respondents were asked if they felt American news organizations generally covered Sikhs and Sikh accurately or inaccurately.¹⁴ While most respondents indicated that news organizations somewhat accurately portrayed Sikhs and Sikh (56%), 40% reported that coverage was somewhat or very inaccurate (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Perception of News Organizations' Portrayal of Sikhs

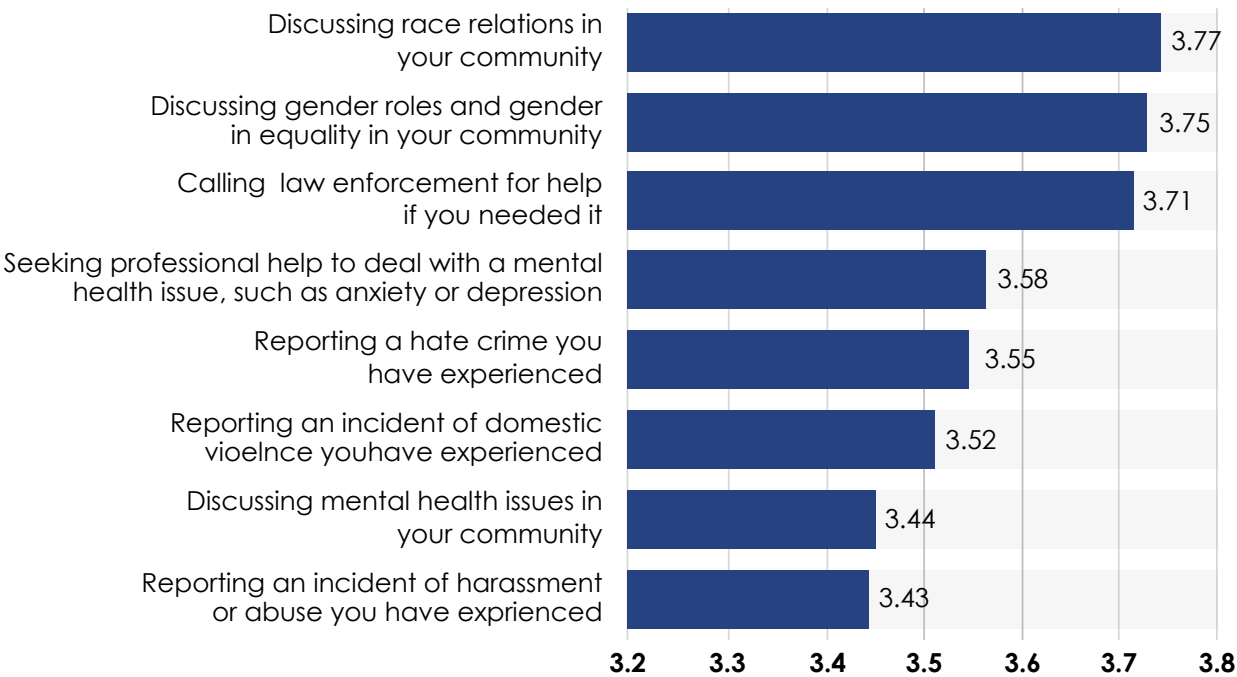


¹⁴ This question was adapted from the Pew Research 2017 Survey of U.S. Muslims. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>

Access to Resources

To measure respondents' access to various resources, the survey asked how comfortable they were with eight situations involving law enforcement, discrimination, mental health, domestic violence, and gender and racial equality. The survey used a five-point scale with zero meaning very uncomfortable and four meaning very comfortable. As shown in Figure 28, respondents were most comfortable discussing race relations and gender roles in their community and least comfortable with discussing mental health issues and reporting an incident of harassment or abuse they have experienced.

Figure 28. Comfort with Accessing Help



Discrimination

The survey assessed respondents' experiences of discrimination based on their Sikh identity. They were asked if they felt safe practicing Sikh in the United States. More than half of the respondents indicated that they felt safe practicing Sikh most of the time (53%) and nearly one-third (31%) said they felt safe always (Figure 28). Still, 15% of respondents said they only sometimes felt safe practicing Sikh. The responses were also averaged on a four-point scale, with zero meaning never feeling safe and three meaning always feeling safe. The data shows that respondents living in the South felt the least safe (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Feel Safe Practicing Sikh

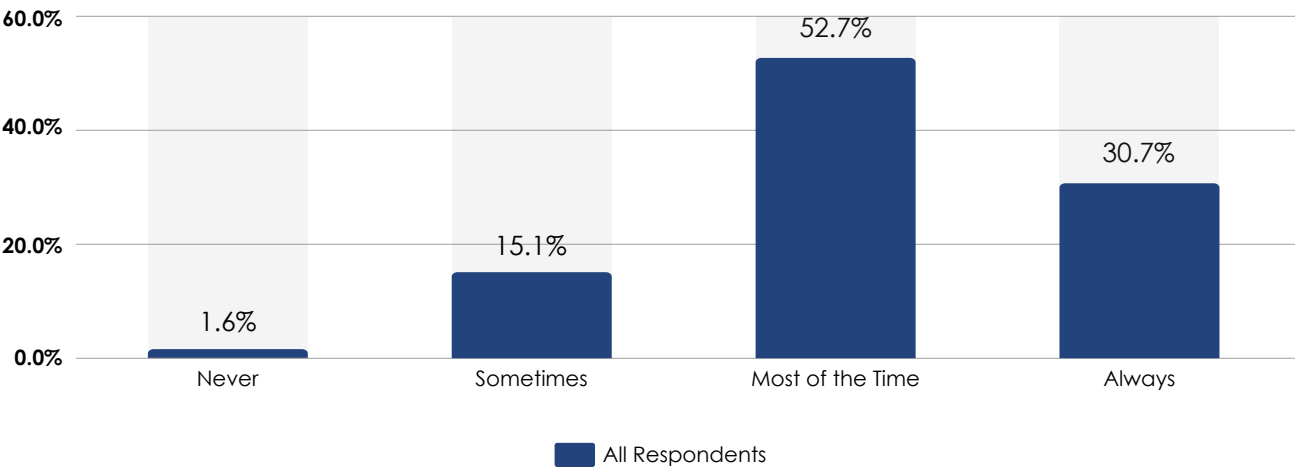
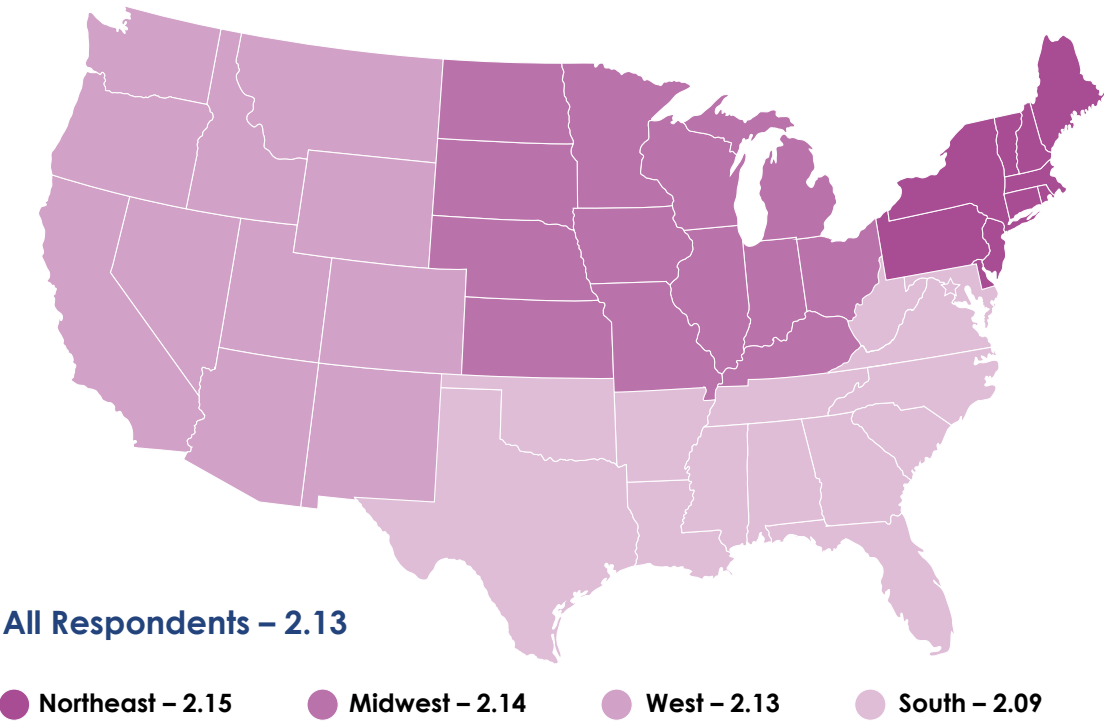


Figure 30. Feel Safe Practicing Sikh by Region



Respondents were asked if they felt safe attending Gurdwaras in the United States. More than half of respondents indicated that they felt safe attending Gurdwaras all the time (56%) and more than one-third (37%) said they felt safe most of the time (Figure 31). The responses were also averaged on a four-point scale, with zero meaning never feeling safe and three meaning always feeling safe. Respondents living in the Midwest felt the least safe (Figure 32).

Figure 31. Feel Safe Attending Gurdwaras

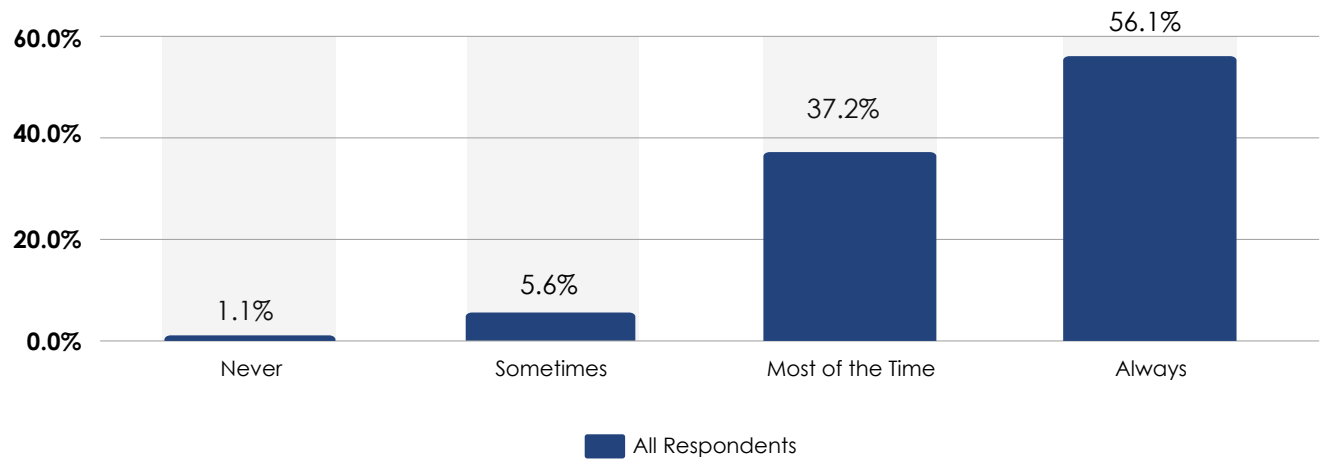
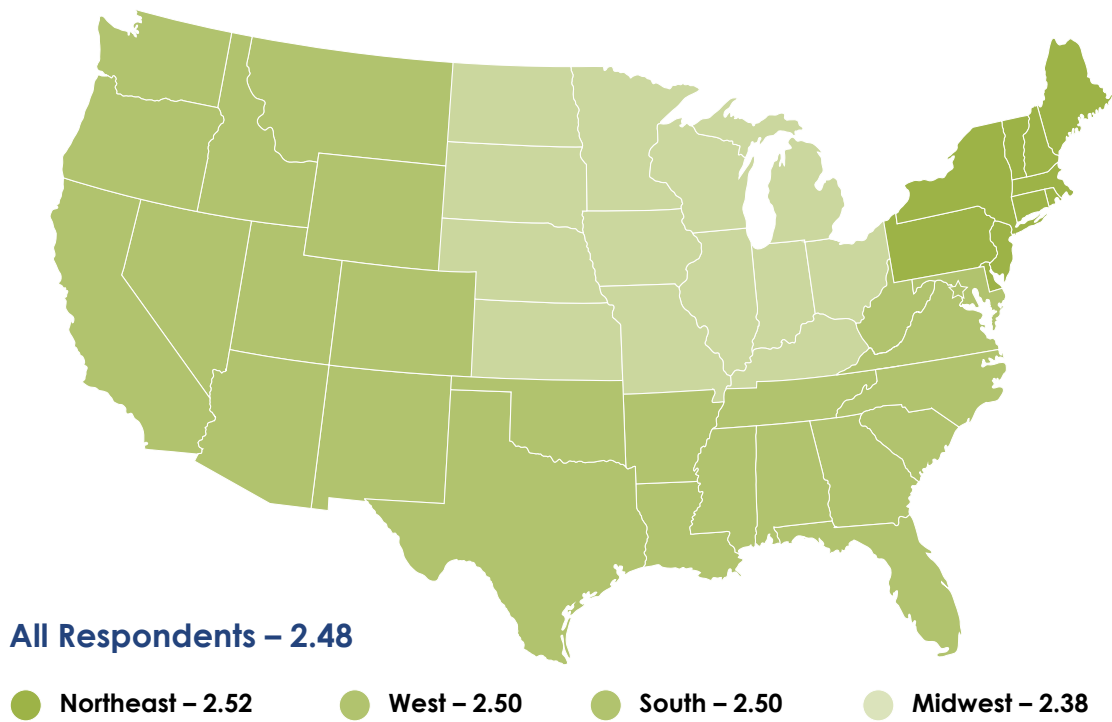
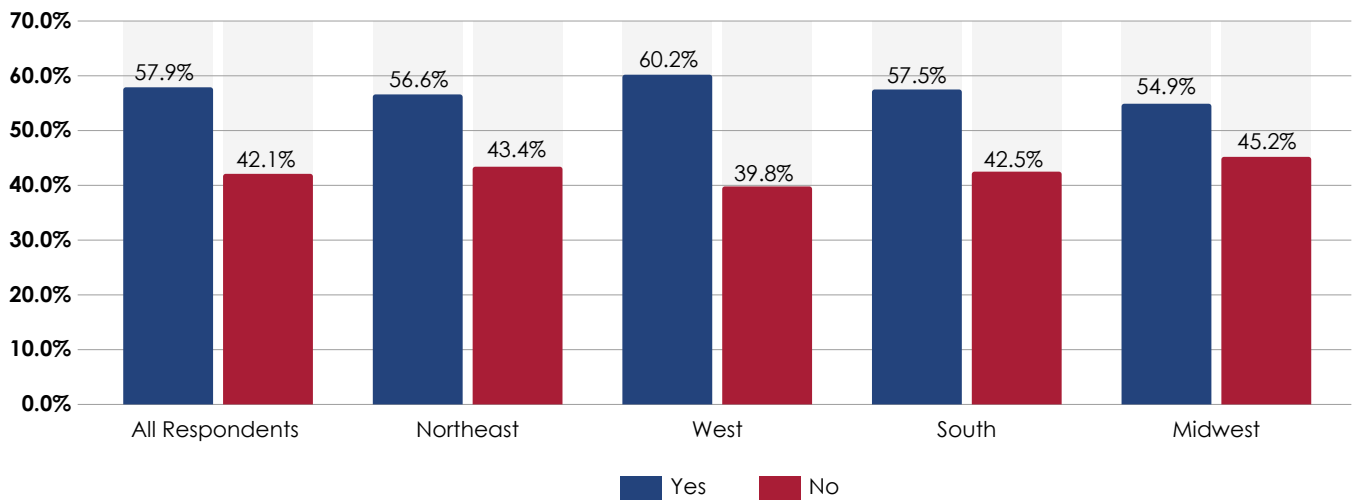


Figure 32. Feel Safe Attending Gurdwaras by Region



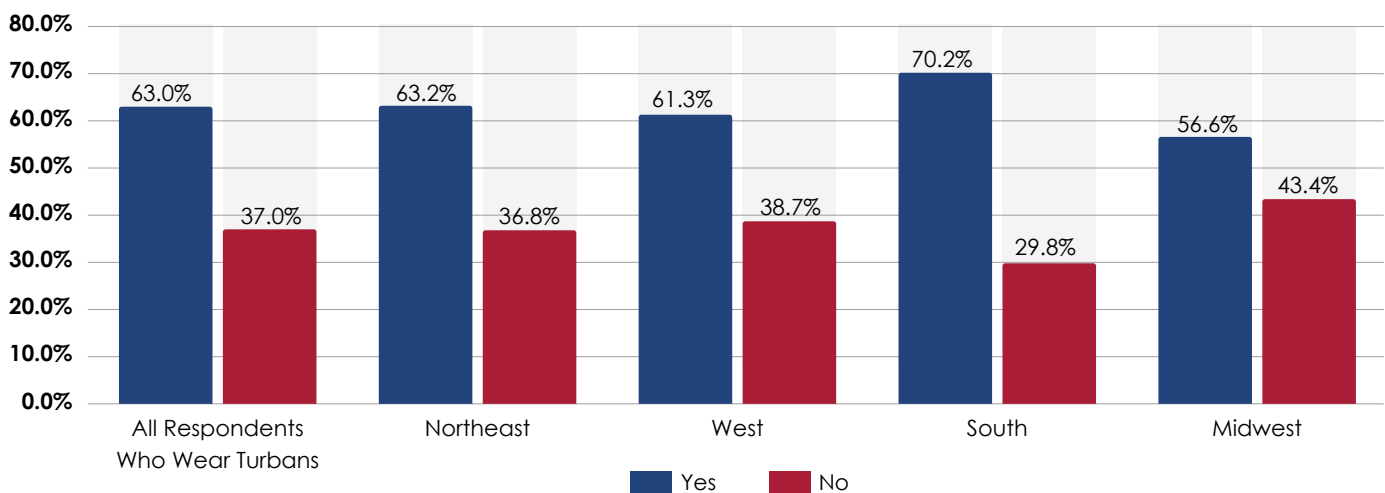
The survey also asked respondents if they were ever bullied or harassed because of their Sikh identity. 58% of respondents indicated that they had been bullied or harassed (Figure 33). While there was not much variation across region, respondents living in the West reported higher rates of bullying or harassment (60%) as compared to those living in the Midwest that had the lowest rates (55%).

Figure 33. Bullying or Harassment Because of Sikh Identity



Respondents who wear turbans were also asked if they had ever been discriminated against specifically for wearing a turban (Figure 34). 63% of respondents indicated that they had. Those living in the South experienced the highest rates of discrimination for wearing a turban (70%) compared to those living in the Midwest who experienced the lowest rates of discrimination for wearing a turban (57%).

Figure 34. Discrimination for Wearing a Turban



While a minority, 14% of Sikh Americans reported that Americans were somewhat or very unaccepting Sikhs (Figure 35). Nearly two-thirds said Americans were somewhat accepting (63%) and nearly one-fourth (24%) said they were very accepting. As shown in Figure 36, Sikhs living in the Northeast felt the most accepted (2.12) and Sikhs from the West and South felt the least accepted (2.06).

Figure 35. Acceptance of Sikh Americans

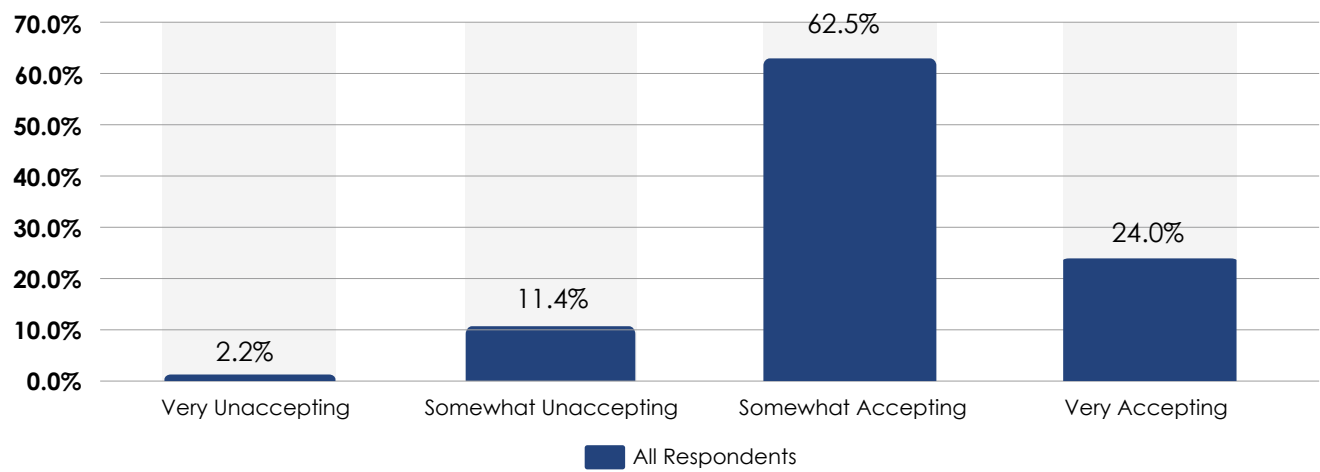
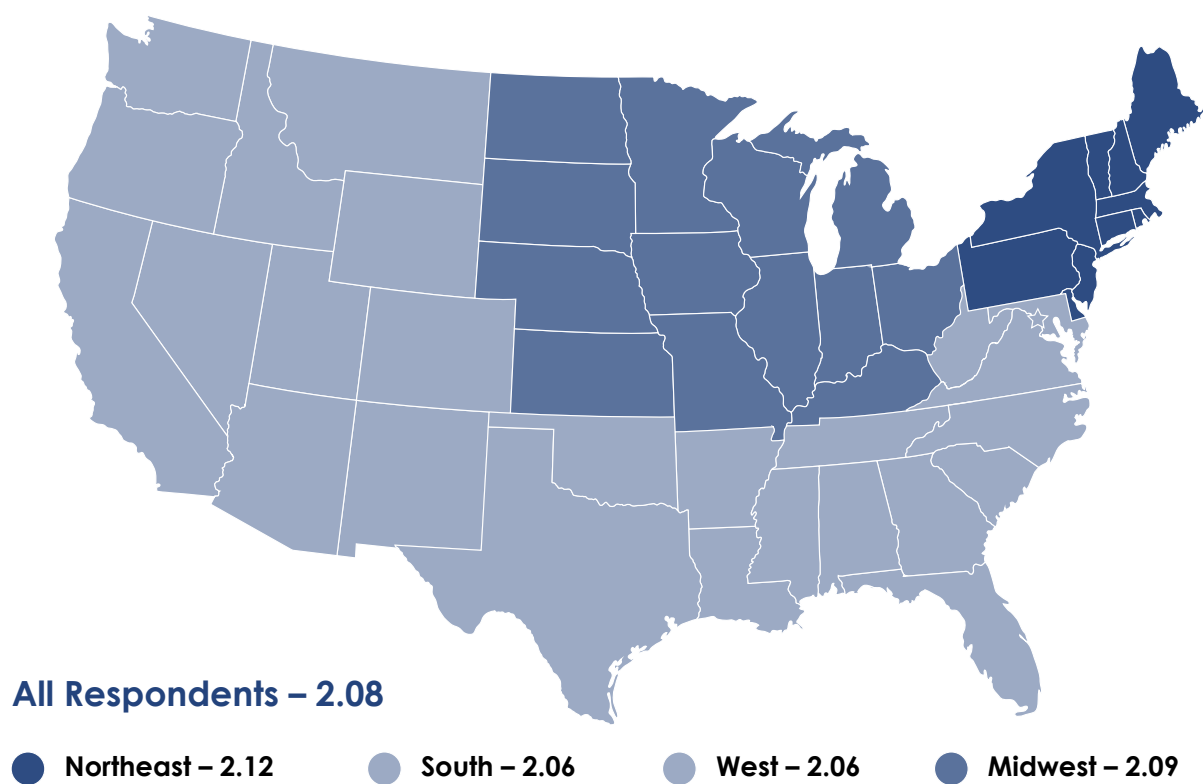


Figure 36. Acceptance of Sikh Americans by Region





LIMITATIONS

The research team faced several limitations during the creation and implementation of the outreach plan of the survey. The first limitation was the sampling strategy. Even though the survey was advertised and spread across many different mediums, such as social media, email, and word of mouth, this survey may not have reached Sikh Americans who are not connected to SALDEF. Therefore, the data could be skewed. For example, those connected to SALDEF may be more politically active, or care more about social issues, versus those who are not. Also, since multiple people from the same household could have taken the survey, the data on household income, political views, common news sources, among others, could be impacted. Finally, responses came from several key states, such as California, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, and New York. This survey did not reach large populations of Sikh Americans in other states and hence, their views may be underrepresented.

Another limitation the research team faced was the survey mode. Firstly, the survey was only offered in English. Many Sikh Americans may not speak or read English fluently. This hinders their ability to complete the survey. Therefore, the survey may underrepresent Sikhs who only speak Punjabi, who could have different experiences in the United States compared to those who are fluent in English. Additionally, since this was an online survey, it may underrepresent Sikhs who do not have Internet access, or those who do not know how to use the Internet.

It is important to note that this survey was created and implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted all aspects of the project. For example, the research team could not recruit survey participants in person. Additionally, the current social climate may affect certain questions, such as annual income and employment status, connection to Sikh culture and community, and recent political activity.

Despite these limitations, the survey results offer valuable perspectives from survey respondents. The ability to quantify the experiences of such a large group of Sikh Americans from across the country is unique and unprecedented. Therefore, the research team can confidently make the following seven recommendations for policymakers, researchers, foundations, elected officials, news organizations, and Sikh organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Policymakers and Elected Officials

Recommendation 1: Address discrimination against Sikh Americans

This report confirms that bullying and harassment is a pervasive problem in the lives of respondents.

- 58% of respondents have been bullied or harassed because of their Sikh identity
- 63% of respondents who wear turbans reported discrimination for wearing a turban.
- Discrimination can lower self-esteem and cause higher rates of anxiety and depression.¹⁵



Policymakers and elected officials must help eliminate discrimination.

Strategies could include promoting awareness about Sikh through school curriculum, publicly engaging with and learning from Sikh communities, and improving Sikh Americans' ability to report bullying and harassment. It is also essential to educate Sikhs on the common forms of harassment they might encounter and how to best react safely and get help.



Recommendation 2: Utilize the political power of Sikh Americans in national and local politics

This report shows that respondents were very politically active.

- Within the past 12 months of taking the survey, 61% of respondents donated money to a campaign or cause, 57% posted on social media about an issue they cared about, and 34% encouraged others to be politically active on social media.
- 93% of eligible respondents were registered to vote, and 89% voted in the 2016 election.
- Despite their enthusiasm for, and commitment to national politics, respondents felt that compared to local and state officials, their needs were heard the least often by federal officials.
- With the presidential election on the ballot in 2020, 96% plan to vote, a seven-percentage point increase from 2016. This signals enthusiasm for the upcoming election.

¹⁵ Do, K. A., Wang, C., & Atwal, K. (2019). Peer victimization and the perpetual foreigner stereotype on Sikh American adolescents' mental health outcomes: The moderating effects of coping and behavioral enculturation. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 10(2), 131–140. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000132>

National political campaigns should work on harnessing the power of Sikh Americans by mobilizing Sikh Americans to support their work and candidacy. Candidates should also make every effort to understand and address Sikhs' policy needs.



Recommendations 3: Engage Sikh Americans in conversation on equality

Respondents were overall passionate about issues related to equality.

- 71% ranked racial justice as one of their top five most important policy issues facing the nation right now. This can be attributed to the recent killings of several Black men and women at the hands of the police, which reignited and the Black Lives Matter Movement across the country.
- When identifying issues on a scale from “not at all important” to “very important,” religious freedom (1.90 out of 2), racial justice (1.89 out of 2), health care (1.89 out of 2), and gender equality (1.80 out of 2) were listed highest. All these issues aligned with issues associated with social inequality.

Since this report revealed the high levels of political activity among respondents, policymakers should hear Sikh Americans' voices and perspectives when developing policies on these topics.

Recommendations for News Organizations

Recommendation 4: Hold news organizations to a higher standard when discussing Sikh

Many respondents were concerned with the portrayal of Sikhs and Sikh in the media.

- While a minority opinion, 40% of respondents felt that news organizations' coverage of Sikh Americans and Sikh is inaccurate.
- Given the high rates of discrimination that respondents face (58%), inaccurate portrayals of Sikh Americans and Sikh in the media can severely harm the Sikh community.

Journalists and media professionals should educate themselves on biases against Sikhs. Policymakers and elected officials have a responsibility to facilitate this education process to serve their constituents, mitigate the harm Sikh Americans face, and prepare to challenge these misconceptions in the media when they arise.



Recommendations for Sikh Organizations

Recommendation 5: Further Investigate and Engage outreach to Sikh Americans living in the Midwest and the South of the United States

The report's analysis by regions uncovers disparities in respondents' ability to connect with their own community and faith.

- Respondents living in the Midwest reported the lowest number of Gurdwaras within driving distance (less than three) and respondents living in the South reported the second lowest.
- Respondents living in the South reported feeling the least safe in practicing Sikh (2.09 out of 3) while respondents living in the Midwest reported feeling the least safe attending Gurdwaras (2.38 out of 3).
- Respondents living in the Midwest and South were also less likely to encounter other Sikhs in their daily lives as they were more likely to not have other Sikhs present in their workplace (62% and 59%, respectively).

As a result, Midwestern and Southern Sikh Americans may require more support in practicing their Sikh faith and feeling connected to their Sikh community. **Sikh organizations must focus their resources to connect with Sikhs living in those areas and introduce programs that increase their feelings of safety and connection.**



Recommendation 6: Promote the discussion of Sikh in school curriculum

This report uncovers that Sikh is not prominent in many of the respondents' schools.

- 62% of respondents currently attending school or college reported that other than their siblings, there were no or few other Sikhs at their school.
- 67% of respondents said that Sikh was not discussed in any school curriculum.
- Previous research reflects that Sikh is not commonly discussed in depth in social studies textbooks, which may even contain misinformation about Sikh.¹⁶ This suggests that there are no formal ways for non-Sikhs to learn about Sikh culture, or even engage with Sikh students at school.
- Unsurprisingly, this leads to a general lack of knowledge about Sikh. Most respondents said that they must explain aspects of Sikh to others at least sometimes (42%), with more than one-fourth reporting that they must explain aspects of Sikh often (28%).

Sikh organizations should focus on promoting the incorporation of accurate information on Sikh into school curriculums at all levels. This will begin to address non-Sikhs' minimal exposure to Sikh and enhance the general population's knowledge of the religion.



Recommendation 7: Develop research materials in both English and Punjabi

This report demonstrates the importance of developing materials in both English and Punjabi. Only 5% of respondents who consume news reported doing so primarily in Punjabi. This data does not reflect the Sikh American population that largely immigrated from the Punjab region in India. This could be because the survey's research materials, including both outreach and the actual survey, were not geared towards Sikh Americans who primarily speak Punjabi. **Sikh organizations should offer future iterations of the survey, or any other information in both Punjabi and English to cover a wider base of the Sikh community.**



¹⁶ Colbert-Lewis, S., & Benghe, D. E. (2018). An analysis of the presentation of Sikh in social studies textbooks. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 13(2), 238–253. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SSRP-09-2017-0051>

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