



2021

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DURING COVID-19

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UJA-Federation of New York is grateful to the many individuals who gave their time and expertise to ensure the success of the UJA Covid-19 Impact Study.

We would like to thank the Impact and Performance Assessment Department. Annette Jacoby, Ph.D.; Emily Sigalow, Ph.D.; Yuanfei Li, Ph.D.; and Tori Leiber contributed to the design and implementation of the research, and, together with Michael Nestor and Renee Berkowitz, analyzed the results and wrote this report. Special thanks to Annette Jacoby, study director, who oversaw this study and ensured that it was of the highest quality.

The members of the New York Jewish Community Study Committee provided oversight for this study, approving the selection of vendors and providing valuable feedback on the survey instrument. We especially want to thank Jodi J. Schwartz, chair of the committee, for her leadership.

We would like to thank our colleagues in the Community Planning and Agency Resources Division for their contributions to this study. Thank you for providing ideas and feedback on the survey instrument, study design, and this report.

We acknowledge SSRS Research Director Eran Ben-Porath, Ph.D., for overseeing the survey design and implementation, as well as members of the SSRS team and their technical advisors, including Cameron McPhee, Margie Engle-Bauer, Sam Skipworth, and Pearl Beck. We particularly want to thank technical advisor Ira Sheskin, Ph.D., of the University of Miami for his thoughtful consultation throughout the course of the project, including questionnaire review and reviewing weighting outcomes to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

Finally, we would like to thank Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, Ph.D.; Michelle Shain, Ph.D.; and Sabrina Townsend for their input and advice on the survey instrument.

INTRODUCTION

The public health response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including stay-at-home orders, quarantines, and social distancing, was, and still is, necessary for combating the spread of Covid-19, but it also engendered conditions conducive to relationship violence and abuse. Many Americans found themselves locked at home with abusive partners and no place to escape.¹ Additionally, isolation, job loss, reduced income, food and housing insecurity, and cramped housing produced by the pandemic all created a domestic environment ripe for the escalation of violence. At the same time, many New

Yorkers lost access to traditional counseling and support services, and shelters were often locked down or closed. As part of the UJA Covid-19 Impact Study, we asked questions about this critical topic and analyzed patterns in relationships between violence, geography, and key demographics.

On a topic like relationships violence, it is likely that surveys underestimate the problem, as people are often reluctant to admit they have experienced violence and abuse. Thus, the percentages in this report should be viewed as, perhaps, somewhat higher than they are in reality.

The report focuses on three main areas:

1 | Overall Experience with Relationship Violence

2 | Change in Experience with Relationship Violence During Pandemic

3 | Help-Seeking Behavior

Study Methodology and Defining Jewish Households

The UJA Covid-19 Impact Study collected information from a **representative sample of 4,400 New York area adults** who are Jewish or living in a household with one or more Jewish adults to learn more about the ways the coronavirus pandemic has affected the lives and livelihoods of the Jewish community. The broad coverage area included the **five New York City boroughs, as well as Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties**. To learn more about the methodology, you can read our [brief](#) or [detailed methodology report](#).

This study aims to understand the impact of Covid-19 on **all members of the Jewish community**, across all — and regardless of — levels of observance, religious belief, and belonging to Jewish communal organizations.

This study relies on an **expansive definition of who is a Jew** by considering anyone who identifies as a Jew or lives with a self-identified Jew as a member of the Jewish community. For the purposes of this study, a Jewish adult is defined as someone aged 18 and over who self-identifies as Jewish or partially Jewish, either religiously, ethnically, culturally, or because of family background. This study counts those respondents who identify religiously with both Judaism and another religion, such as Christianity or Buddhism, as Jewish respondents. A household is defined as a Jewish household if it includes one or more Jewish adults ages 18 and over. To learn more about this, please visit our report [“Who counts as Jewish in the survey.”](#)

KEY FINDINGS

1 4% of adults in Jewish households indicate they have experienced violence in their close relationships

2 LGBTQ adults face a high rate of relationship violence

LGBTQ adults are five times as likely to indicate violence in their relationships when compared to non-LGBTQ adults.

3 Size of social network is a factor in relationship violence

Adults who report having fewer friends, family, and neighbors to call on for help report violence at a higher rate than adults with larger social networks.

4 The pandemic exacerbated violence in relationships

Of those who currently experience some form of relationship violence, one-third say the violence worsened during the pandemic.

5 Victims of violence are not seeking help

Almost two-thirds of the victims of violence did not seek, or are not planning to seek, professional help.

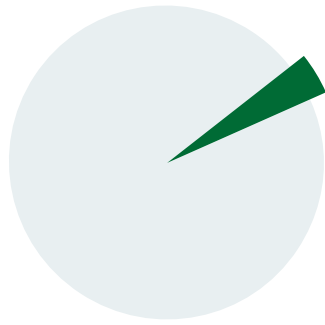
How Domestic Violence Was Measured

To measure domestic violence, this study utilizes a modified version of three questions taken from the **CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey**. Domestic violence is defined by the CDC as “physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse.”² For this study, the questions were modified to also include a broader range of domestic relationships, including non-romantic relationships with parents, friends, or siblings. The three modified questions used in this study are:

1. Considering your current partners or friends, or any past partners or friends, is there anyone who is making you feel unsafe now? (yes/no)
2. In the past year, have the police ever been called to your home because of a fight or argument, no matter who was fighting or who was at fault? (yes/no)
3. In the past year, on any occasion, were you physically hurt by someone you know or knew intimately, such as a current or past partner, parent, friend, or sibling? (yes/no)

A “yes” answer to one or more of these questions is considered an indication of possible domestic abuse.

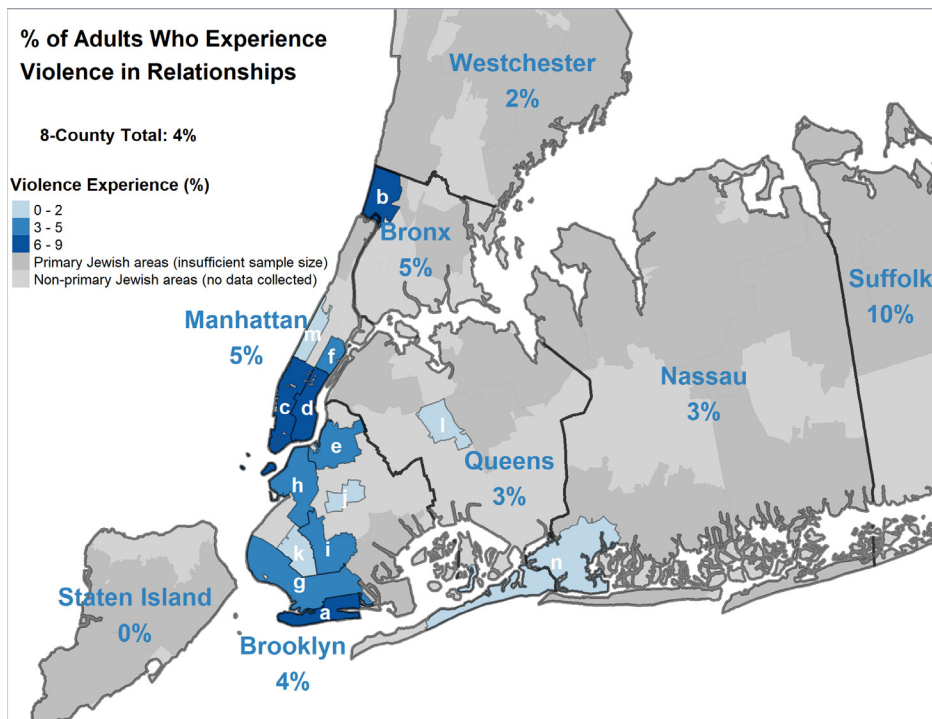
OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE



4% of respondents in Jewish households experience some form of violence in their intimate and personal relationships.

Regional Differences

Compared to the overall eight-county area, **Suffolk County has a higher rate of violence**, with **1 in 10** respondents indicating they have experienced relationship violence.



Rates of reported relationship violence are also higher in **the neighborhoods of Coney Island/ Brighton Beach/Sheepshead Bay (8%) and Riverdale/Kingsbridge (7%)** than they are in the overall eight-county area.

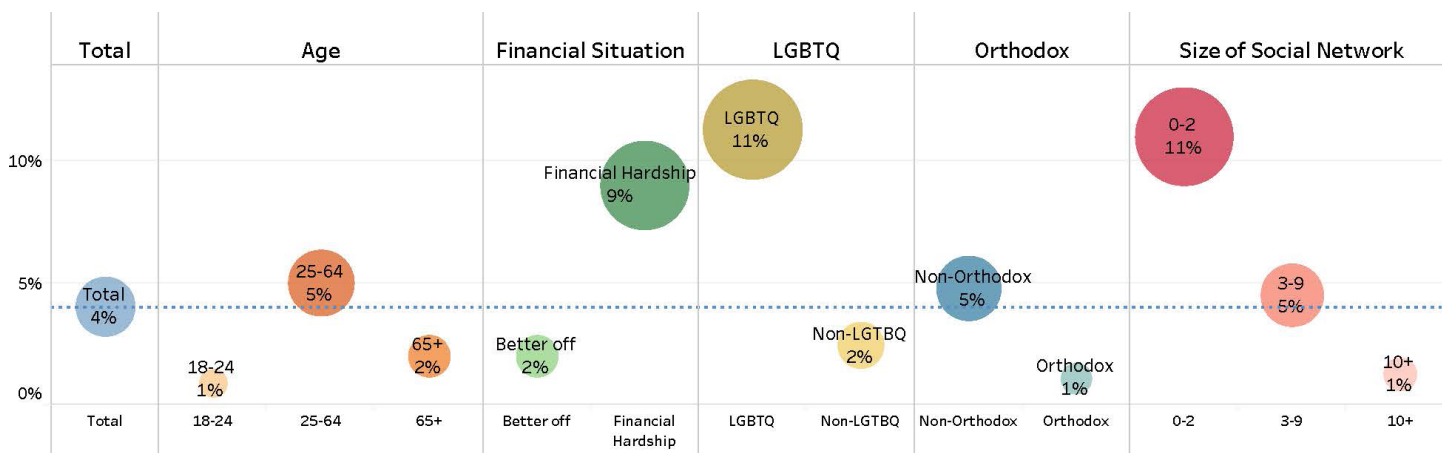
SECTION 1: OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Neighborhood Identifier	Neighborhood Name	Percent
a	Coney Island/Brighton Beach/Sheepshead Bay	8%
b	Riverdale/Kingsbridge	7%
c	Lower Manhattan West	6%
d	Lower Manhattan East	6%
e	Bensonhurst/Gravesend/Bay Ridge/Kings Bay/Madison	5%
f	Upper East Side	5%
g	Williamsburg	5%
h	Flatbush/Midwood/Kensington	4%
i	Brownstone Brooklyn	4%
j	Crown Heights	2%
k	Forest Hills/Rego Park/Kew Gardens Area	2%
l	Borough Park	2%
m	Upper West Side	1%
n	The Rockaways/Five Towns	1%

Social and Demographic Patterns

Three groups of adults in Jewish households are particularly at risk for relationship violence in New York: people in households with **financial hardship**, those who identify as **LGBTQ**, and people with **smaller social networks**.

FIGURE 1. % of Population Living in Jewish Households Experiencing Violence



SECTION 1: OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

In general, **respondents of working age (25-64) experience higher rates of relationship violence**. These respondents are **twice as likely** to indicate relationship violence compared to younger and older populations.

Almost one in ten people living in households with financial hardship experience relationship violence. Respondents who are just managing or not able to make ends meet are **over four times as likely** to indicate relationship violence as those who are financially better off. Past research has shown that economic hardship and related stress elevates the risk of domestic violence, so the findings in this study are consistent with the literature.³

People who identify as LGBTQ also indicate relationship violence at a rate much higher than the overall community (11% compared to an overall of 4%). Put differently, compared with the non-LGBTQ population, LGBTQ adults report relationship violence at a rate **five times higher**.

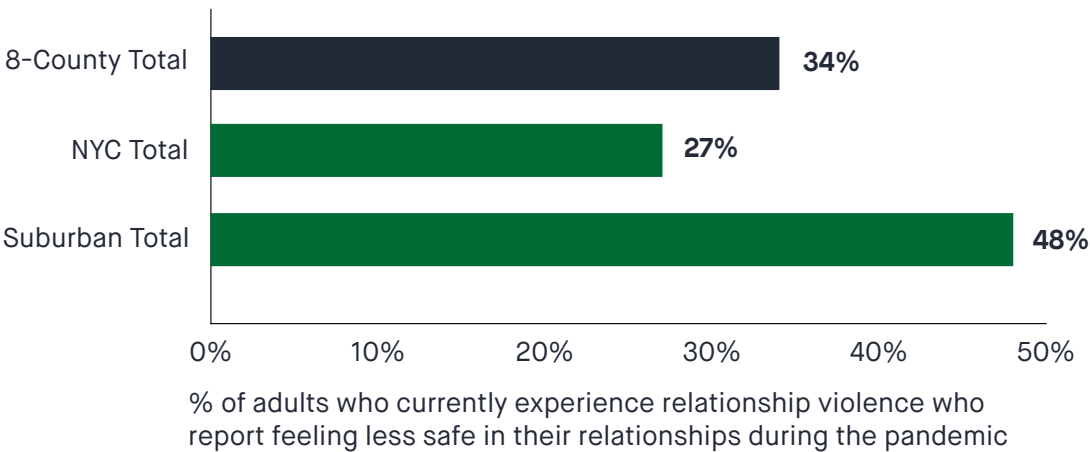
The number of relatives, friends, or neighbors whom respondents can call on for help is an important factor in relationship violence. **Respondents with a social network of 0-2 people are more than twice as likely** to experience violence than those with a social network of 3-9 people. **Only 1% of respondents with a social network of 10 or more people** report relationship violence. These findings are also consistent with past research, which has demonstrated the protective effects of social networks on domestic and inter-partner violence.⁴

CHANGES IN EXPERIENCE WITH RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Of those who currently experience some form of relationship violence, **one-third** say the **violence worsened** during the pandemic.

This problem increased mainly in the **suburbs**, with **almost half** of respondents in the suburban counties indicating an increase in relationship violence during the pandemic.

FIGURE 2. Respondents Who Report Worsening of Relationship Violence during Pandemic, by Region

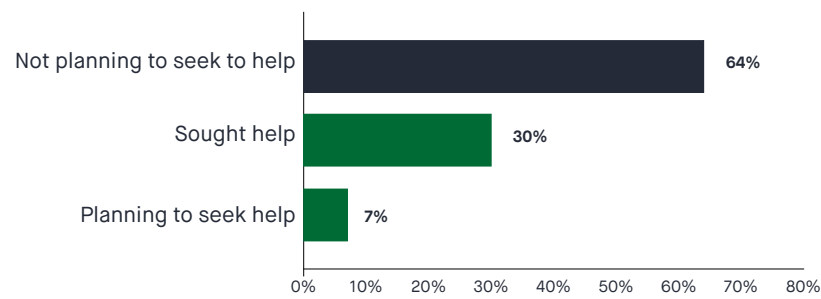


HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

Almost two-thirds of people who report relationship violence did not seek, and do not plan to seek, professional help.

Overall, a higher percentage of adults living in **New York City (88%)** did not or will not seek help for their problems with substance abuse compared to **81%** of respondents living in **suburban counties**.

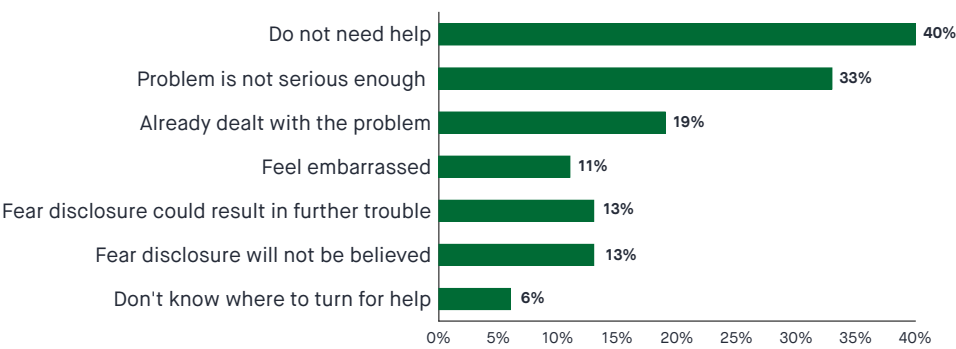
FIGURE 3. Did respondents who report relationship violence seek, or do they plan to seek, professional help?



Four in ten respondents who experience relationship violence did not, and are not planning to, seek help because they **do not believe they need assistance**. Other reasons cited for not seeking help include the belief that **the problem is not serious enough (33%)** and/or that **they have already dealt with the problem (19%)**.

Of respondents who report seeking help or planning to seek help for relationship violence, **87% have seen or plan to see a private counselor or therapist**.

FIGURE 4. Reasons respondents did not seek and are not planning to seek help for relationship violence problem



NOTES

1. Boserup, B., Elkbulli, A., & McKenney, M. (2020, December 1). *Alarming trends in US domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic*. The American journal of emergency medicine. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32402499/>; Gosangi, B., Park, H., Thomas, R., Gujrathi, R., Seltzer, S. E., et al. 2020, August 13). *Exacerbation of physical intimate partner violence during covid-19 pandemic*. Radiology. <https://pubs.rsna.org/doi/10.1148/radiol.2020202866>; Kluger, J. (2021, February 3). *Domestic violence is a pandemic within the covid-19 pandemic*. Time. <https://time.com/5928539/domestic-violence-covid-19/>; *The shadow pandemic: Violence against women during covid-19*. UN Women. (n.d.). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>
3. Renzetti, C. M. "Economic Stress and Domestic Violence." Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource on Domestic Violence, September 2009. <http://vawnet.org>.
4. Coker, Ann L., Paige H. Smith, Martie P. Thompson, Robert E. McKeown, Lesa Bethea, and Keith E. Davis. "Social support protects against the negative effects of partner violence on mental health." *Journal of women's health & gender-based medicine* 11, no. 5 (2002): 465-476.