

American Muslim women report depression linked to internalized stigma and abuse

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A new study of Muslim women in the U.S. found a significant association between heightened vigilance, as a measure of internalized stigma, and increased risk for depression. The study, which also examined the link between depression and the women's experiences with physical and sexual abuse, is published in *Journal of Women's Health*.

Henna Budhwani, PhD, MPH and Kristine Hearld, PhD, University of Alabama at Birmingham, report that the study participants experienced physical abuse (30.3%) and [sexual abuse](#) (15.5%) at rates similar to those of American women in general. In the article entitled "Muslim Women's Experiences with Stigma, Abuse, and Depression: Results of a Sample Study Conducted in the United States," the researchers state, "With such a high rate of foreign-born persons in this sample, we expected that negative consequences of internalized stigma would be mitigated by the healthy migrant effect." However, this was not the case and, as they concluded, "Being foreign-born was not protective against depression."

The accompanying Editorial entitled "[Anti-Muslim Racism and Women's Health](#)," by Dena Hassounah, Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing, is a call to action to meet the [health](#) needs of American Muslim women. The author points out that nearly one-third of Muslims have reported some type of discrimination in healthcare settings. Gender can play an important role, making it difficult for American Muslim women to disclose [intimate partner violence](#) to their healthcare provider.

"The internalized stigma the Muslim women in this study feel can be compounded by the stigma our society places on mental illness and [depression](#), creating additional obstacles for them to receive the [health care services](#) they need," says Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Women's Health*, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond,

VA, and President of the Academy of Women's Health.

More information: Henna Budhwani et al, Muslim Women's Experiences with Stigma, Abuse, and Depression: Results of a Sample Study Conducted in the United States, *Journal of Women's Health* (2017). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2016.5886](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2016.5886)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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