



**March 2026**

## **MSP Call to Action – Reject the weaponisation of men’s violence against women and girls**

We all want to live in safety, freedom, and fairness. And most of us want that not just for ourselves and our loved ones, but also for our wider communities, and even for those we’ve never met.

It’s these shared values that have helped us take strides towards equality in Scotland.

But the far right and other anti-equality movements are deliberately undermining these shared values.

They are using a specific political tactic to try to advance racist, transphobic, and anti-refugee attitudes: the weaponisation of violence against women and girls. However, the root cause of violence against women and girls is gender inequality, and this tactic opposes our progress towards a Scotland where everyone is free, safe, and equal.

As an MSP, you have a unique opportunity to:

- publicly reject this tactic
- affirm that Scotland stands for equality, human rights, and social justice
- revive our progress towards ending men’s violence against women and girls



## **Background**

Zero Tolerance is Scotland's expert organisation on the primary prevention of men's violence against women and girls. Our expertise in primary prevention is built on more than 30 years of experience and a robust evidence base, and is firmly grounded in feminist theory and practice.

Primary prevention means tackling men's violence against women and girls at its root – which is gender inequality. It's a long-term strategy to prevent violence from ever happening in the first place by challenging and transforming the attitudes, behaviours, and structures that underpin and sustain this violence and abuse.

Together, we can end men's violence against women and girls in Scotland.

## **Key findings and considerations**

### **What is the weaponisation of men's violence against women and girls?**

The root cause of violence against women and girls is gender inequality. The weaponisation of violence against women and girls is a tactic that distorts the public's understanding of this issue. It is done by co-opting concern about women's safety to wrongly position minorities – specifically Muslim, refugee, ethnic minority, and transgender people – as the 'real threat' to women and girls.

This tactic takes advantage of the public's concern about men's violence against women and girls to push agendas that oppose gender equality, human rights, and social justice.

It's a centuries-old approach that has now re-emerged and is on the rise across Europe, the UK, and Scotland. And it's having a chilling effect on the rights of women and girls in Scotland.



## The impact

- **Physical harm to your constituents**

Political movements using this tactic are encouraging violent action against already at-risk minorities. These include ethnic minority, refugee and migrant, and transgender people.

- **A breakdown of community cohesion**

Fear, division, and violence are being sown in our communities, and no public place is exempt. This hostile messaging has entered our homes through the media, is repeated in parliament, and is even hollered by racist protestors at school gates.

- **Risking the progress we've made towards a violence-free future**

By distorting understanding of the cause of men's violence against women and girls – which is gender inequality – this tactic:

- undermines Equally Safe's strides towards impactful prevention
- risks neglecting our commitment to the Istanbul Convention
- may ultimately lead to us failing to realise women and girls' human rights

- **Erosion of public trust that the government will follow through on promises**

The government has scaled back its ambitions and commitments to the prevention of men's violence against women and girls: it has dropped the Misogyny Bill, delayed the Human Rights Bill, and developed exclusionary and unevidenced policies. For example, adding sex as a characteristic in hate crime legislation, against the recommendations of the independent Working Group on Misogyny led by Baroness Kennedy who found a more fundamental approach is required to tackle misogyny.



## What you can do

### 1. Call out misinformation

In spaces where you have influence, reassert our evidence base. This will ensure that public consultations and debates on gender, safety, and equality are informed by evidence and lived experience – not misinformation.

We've included some key evidence at the end of this briefing.

### 2. Publicly reject the weaponisation of men's violence against women and girls

Name the tactic, without repeating the messaging, and make it clear publicly why you won't stand for it. This will:

- disrupt and reframe the narrative
- raise awareness of the issue
- show solidarity to those most affected

In turn, this allows you to build relationships and do the work that matters to your community.

### 3. Recommit to your duties under Equally Safe and the Istanbul Convention

Urge the Scottish Government to:

- bring forward the Human Rights Bill
- reject the draft Scottish Statutory Instrument to include sex in hate crimes legislation and instead take forward the Misogyny Bill
- invest in sustainable funding for the expert women's sector

These are inclusive, evidence-based primary prevention approaches that tackle men's violence against women and girls at its root.

If you want to take further action to curb the weaponisation of men's violence against women and girls, please reach out to us at [info@zerotolerance.org.uk](mailto:info@zerotolerance.org.uk).



## **Violence against women and girls in Scotland: Facts and figures**

Men's violence against women and girls occurs in every community across Scotland, and it's increasing (Scottish Government, 2023).

- In the last 10 years, Police Scotland have recorded a 45% increase in sexual crimes and a 9.9% increase in domestic abuse incidents (Scottish Government 2016; Scottish Government, 2024a; Scottish Government, 2025a).
- 81% of incidents of domestic abuse in Scotland involve a female victim and a male suspected perpetrator (Scottish Government, 2024a).
- In Scotland, 1 in 3 girls aged 13 to 17 year's old report experiencing some form of sexual violence (Scottish Government, 2018).

The majority of perpetrators of men's violence against women and girls are known to their victims.

- In Scotland, 90% of domestic abuse incidents and 37.58% of sexual abuse incidents occur in the home (Rape Crisis Scotland, 2022).
- 50% of incidents recorded by Police Scotland were between ex-partners (Scottish Government, 2024a).
- 47% of female homicide victims in Scotland are killed by a partner or ex-partner (Scottish Government, 2025b).



Minority ethnic women in Scotland face a distinct risk of violence because of the compounding interactions of structural inequalities of sexism and racism and the higher likelihood of insecure migration status (Scottish Government, 2024b).

- Minority ethnic women who report abuse wait 1.5 times longer than white women before getting help (Scottish Government, 2024b).

Transgender women are the group at highest risk of physical violence or sexual attack within the LGBT+ community (Serano, 2007; Faye, 2021; Zero Tolerance, 2023; FRA, 2024).

- 80% of transgender people in Scotland have experienced emotionally, sexually, or physically abusive behaviour from a partner or ex-partner (Scottish Trans, 2010).



This briefing is co-signed by the following organisations:

- Close the Gap
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Educators for Peace
- End Violence Against Women Coalition
- Engender
- Equality Network
- Girlguiding Scotland
- LGBT Health and Wellbeing
- Living Rent
- National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
- Rape Crisis Scotland
- Scottish Trades Union Congress
- Scottish Trades Union Congress Black Workers' Committee
- Scottish Trades Union Congress LGBT+ Committee
- Scottish Trades Union Congress Women's Committee
- Scottish Trans
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Scottish Youth Parliament
- The Young Women's Movement
- UNISON - Scottish Black Members Committee
- White Ribbon Scotland
- Women Against the Far Right Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland



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Zero Tolerance is supported by



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