Future Tales Report

Marginalised women's vision of a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls

ZERO TOLERANCE

CAMPAIGNING FOR 30 YEARS

www.zerotolerance.org.uk

Artwork by Rama Mustafa

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Thank you to our committed and dedicated partners that work tirelessly to support marginalised women, without whom this work would not have been possible:

Amina – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre

Community Renewal

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre

Feniks – Counselling and Personal Development Services

Migrant Voice

Saheliya

Scottish Arab Women's Association

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Artwork by K.Dubiel

About the project

In 2020–2021, Zero Tolerance undertook a gap analysis of men's violence against women and girls prevention work in Scotland.

We identified a lack of work currently underway to prevent violence against minority ethnic groups, disabled, and trans women. We focused the Future Tales project on minority ethnic groups and trans women.

For the Future Tales project we worked collaboratively and creatively with minority ethnic and trans women to envision a world without violence against women and girls, that represents them. As part of Zero Tolerance's 30th anniversary, we ran an engagement project to bring women from some marginalised communities together and join us in our work to end violence against women and girls. These workshops created a safe space and opportunity for discussion as we explored a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls through the art of linocut.

We worked in with minority ethnic groups, migrant women, and trans women to explore issues affecting their lives in order to inform violence against women and girls prevention practice.

By definition, marginalised communities experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic,

political, social and cultural dimensions. Working closely with organisations providing direct services for marginalised women helped us ensure women felt comfortable and supported to share their experiences, especially where there were barriers to participation (such as language). This has enabled women whose voices are often underrepresented in politics, public policy, design of service provision and feminist spaces to share their experiences and knowledge.

In the summer of 2022, we ran seven workshops in Edinburgh and Glasgow with 78 women and one non-binary person from marginalised communities. We asked them to imagine a Scotland without violence against women and girls. We spoke and created art about what this would look like.

Our participants initially commented on the difficulty of imagining a Scotland free from violence against women and girls, but they identified the freedoms they would have based on the fears they hold now. Women often talked about how violence against women and girls and the norms and assumptions that are linked to it have affected their lives. They imagined a world with greater freedom, equality and respect, without racism, fear or division.

Women across the sessions spoke most about the following topics:

- Racism, islamophobia and xenophobia
- Cultural context
- Safety in public spaces
- Gender roles
- Beauty standards and appearance
- Work

This report aims to capture some of the issues affecting minoritised women that were discussed during our workshops. Participants led conversations and the topics mentioned in this report are not an exhaustive list of all factors contributing to how women from minoritised communities experience inequality and violence. For example, in our sessions, trans women did not raise issues to do with cultural context, racism, Islamophobia or xenophobia, but we know these issues do affect some trans women. We acknowledge that there are many other aspects of inequality and violence that we have not discussed due to time limitations and the format of this engagement activity.

We did not use existing research as a basis for discussions or women's comments, but we have referenced relevant research where women's testimony has been substantiated by it.

Racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and violence against women and girls

This section talks about racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia and injustices the women we spoke with experienced in Scottish society.

First, it is helpful to explain the terms we use. The term 'minority ethnic women' is intended to be inclusive of the diversity of race and ethnicity in Scotland. However, the term can imply that this group of women are all the same and can cloud the complexity of different identities. The needs of women who are Black, Asian, central eastern European, Roma or those with other identities are all different. The racialised and gendered oppression they experience takes shape in distinct ways that will affect each community and each woman differently (Verloo 2006). We must recognise this when working to end men's violence against all women and girls, as prevention work for one community may not be successful for another.

It is important to note that violence against women and girls is deeply gendered and manifests in many ways across different class, race and cultural contexts and that survivors' experiences are shaped by their intersectional identities and locations (Crenshaw 1991, Gill and Virdee 2021). When we talk about an intersectional approach, we refer to how

people's social identities (such as gender, race, class, religion, immigration status, sexuality, gender identity) are all linked and can overlap to create compounding experiences of discrimination.

Muslim women told us they face difficulties with Islamophobia, as traditional dress (hijab, niqab, burqa or chador) is both a gender- and religious-specific marker associated with Islam. They felt perpetrators targeted them when wearing traditional dress for anti-Muslim hate crime (Awan and Zempi 2020: 3, Seta 2016). Muslim women said that they are simultaneously considered, 'victims of their own culture and a threat to Scottish culture'. Often the sexism and racism they experience in public attacks both their religion and their womanhood. There is no direct correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation, but discrimination can happen due to real and perceived belonging to the Muslim community.

Building on what our participants said, feminist analysis of men's violence against women and girls locates male dominance, gender inequality and misogyny as central to all forms of violence against women and girls (Seta 2016: 28). However, in mainstream culture and media, considerations of power relations between men and women and their impact on marginalised communities is rarely discussed, except as evidence of violence perpetrated within marginalised communities being because of their 'backward' cultural attitudes to women. You can see this rhetoric used often in reporting on issues such as so-called 'honour' killings, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). This is significant as 74% of the British public state that they know, 'nothing or next to nothing about Islam', and 64% say that anything they know is, 'acquired through the media' (Faimau 2016: 1). Muslim women who took part in our research stated that people often assumed they support homophobia, gender inequality and traditional gender roles, which is not the case as Muslim women's beliefs are diverse.

In our discussions, women expressed the importance of Muslim women not being viewed as passive victims without agency. Some Muslim women said that wearing their traditional dress was not oppressive but a choice that could represent an act of defiance against colonialism, and against the sexualisation and beauty standards of Western society. There was strong agreement from women across the diverse communities we spoke to that this related to society's concerns about norms and expectations around the way women look.

A participant from South West Asia and North Africa (SWANA)[1] described having so much racism targeted at her in connection with wearing the hijab, including the bullying of her son, that her husband and son begged her to stop wearing it. Her husband was concerned about her safety. She described this as being difficult for the whole family, and that she still feels that she needs to hide her identity as a Muslim woman:

[1] South West Asian and North African is a decolonial term used to refer to the region referred to as the 'Middle East' and refers directly to the geographical location (SWANA Alliance 2022).

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> **I am Glasgow born and bred. The way I look blinds them to the person I am and all they can see is their stereotype of me as an Asian woman in traditional outfit with poor English. When I wore the hijab, people then talked to me in a patronizing and dismissive tone, once even accusing me of theft and then not apologising. My husband challenged them later, but I still was feeling crushed.**

The marginalised women we spoke to highlighted experiences of overt and covert racism that were woven into the fabric of their everyday lives and interactions. Minority ethnic women discussed the regularity with which they are called racial slurs in public spaces, combined with gendered insults such as, 'bitch, slut, whore', that often go unchallenged.

In line with research by Black feminists (e.g. Davis 2001: 182), Black women spoke to us about their experiences of hyper-sexualisation and fetishization. They acknowledged that all women experience sexual objectification, but participants agreed that the sexual objectification of Black women means more unwanted male attention. They described this attention as frequently sexual right from the start, including comments about women's bodies, questions like, 'can you twerk for me?', and unwanted physical touch. This sexualisation is deeply rooted in race and participants say they are targeted by men due to racist perceptions, reinforced by modern media, that Black women are, 'promiscuous, exotic, animalistic'.

Women also reported everyday experiences of covert racism: microaggressions[2] such as assumptions that they do not speak or understand English, retail workers being polite to the White people ahead of them, but then rude and hostile when they went next, and having security guards follow them round shops. In line with other research (e.g. Chakraborty *et al.* 2019: 124) our participants said that microaggressions are hard to quantify and easy for people in authority to minimise, recategorize as a 'joke' or 'a misunderstanding', or to blame 'oversensitivity' by the women being targeted. These reactions are then experienced as a collective, societal gaslighting[3] , as it serves to make them question their experiences and their reality. One woman said, **'This is really difficult to deal with because the nature of gaslighting is to deny the other person's feelings, making them feel inadequate and in the wrong, delusional. So, the victims are already doubting themselves'.**

Our participants asserted that the cumulative impact of these experiences is exhaustion and burnout. One participant described being tired of marginalised communities being regarded as resilient, as this is not a choice, and this discourse did not lead to meaningful change:

> **I need to constantly scan for risks and dangers in public spaces, trying to plan what to do if something happens. It's exhausting.**

[2] Microaggressions are a subtle but significant form of racism that are insults directed at people of colour that can be verbal/non-verbal/visual (Chakraborty *et al.* 2019)

[3] Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse used by a person or group to make the person targeted question their sanity, perception of reality and make them feel unstable, not credible and like they cannot trust themselves. Racial gaslighting is defined by Davis and Ernst (2017) as a political, social, economic and cultural process that upholds white supremacy by pathologising those who challenge it.

The sum of these experiences is exhaustion and more:

> **I didn't have this energy in me to be constantly fighting for my voice to be heard.**

In a Scotland free from violence against women and girls (see Section below), our participants said women would feel safe to walk through the streets without having to keep making risk assessments to avoid sexist and racist harassment in public spaces. Evidence shows, in line with our participants' comments, that marginalised women experience significant impacts on their mental health due to the trauma of racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. This includes physical and emotional symptoms such as hypervigilance, social withdrawal, low self-worth, worry and depression and sleep disturbances (Chakraborty *et al.* 2019).

The impact of institutional racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

In our sessions, women shared experiences of gender-based harassment and violence that cannot be separated from their experiences of racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. This section highlights the pressures women experience to keep issues within their communities and avoid support from statutory agencies that may 'other' people from diverse backgrounds.

Women described their fear that professionals may believe violence against women and girls is a fundamental characteristic of their community as a major barrier to accessing support, particularly when this violence takes a form such as so-called 'honour-' based violence or forced marriage. (Gill and Virdee 2021: 136)

Women from other marginalised groups who took part, such as Polish women and Muslim women, also described difficulties discussing issues they were experiencing due to fears that institutions would 'other' their community (also referred to in the literature (Gill and Virdee 2021)). Our participants emphasised the importance of advocates that understand their experiences to support them in their discussions with statutory agencies.

The Roma women highlighted that they never reveal experiences of violence or abuse to anyone outside their community because of the fear that state services such as social work might accommodate their child through child protection procedures. They felt suspicious of talking therapies even where confidentiality is guaranteed as, **'you are seen as weak, grassing and gossiping about your community behind their back'.** Therapy is seen as dangerous because it is more common to deal with problems internally within the community.

The women we spoke with discussed the significant negative effect this has on their mental health and self-esteem as, **'the message you're being given is to hate yourself, or who you are is bad, and you have to unlearn those messages'.** Some participants said that these experiences mean they sometimes harbour mistrust for institutions and organisations and would rather turn to the women in their community or the 'by and for' organisations, run by people of their community, for support and help. One woman stated, **'I'm afraid [institutions] will misunderstand. I come [to Amina] because they understand me, my religion, culture, who I am'.**

All participants identified fears that some Scottish institutions and statutory services, such as social work, 'other' women in their communities as being 'abnormal', creating an environment of fear and mistrust. Women from the communities we spoke to were most likely to seek help from 'by and for' services where they could get support that was tailored to their unique experiences. Zero Tolerance's pre-existing awareness of this issue is why we chose to partner with specialist agencies to engage with women. Increased cultural understandings of all communities in statutory services is essential to build trust, so these services work effectively for everyone.

Understanding violence against women and girls in different cultural contexts

Distinct cultural contexts and identities influence women's experiences of men's violence against women. This section includes testimony from women from a variety of different ethnic minority backgrounds. When we explored cultural context with the participants, they discussed the pressures they face as part of their cultural norms, values and traditions. Even though the women came from many cultures and didn't feel the same pressures, it was common that they experienced pressure from their cultural context. We do not make generalisations about minority ethnic women and have identified the community women were from where possible, to highlight the experiences specific to them.

An issue raised by many women and across ethnicities was that there is no single cultural understanding of violence against women. For example, one woman from a country in SWANA stated that, **"the women I speak to don't understand that the violence that happens to them isn't okay because it isn't acknowledged as wrong or an issue in our culture."** Another participant from SWANA in another group, echoed this stating that **"we hear a lot about how, we as women have rights here [in Scotland]. Back home this doesn't exist. You need to suffer in silence."**

Another woman from Poland stated she grew up witnessing women experiencing different forms of abuse and it was accepted as, **"they didn't know what constitutes abuse."**

Other women asserted, **"the definition of rape is absent from some cultures. The woman cannot seek help because what happened to her is not perceived as something bad, criminal, illegal. It is not considered rape to expect sex from your wife and force her to it."**

It was highlighted that it is difficult to point out abuse to other women in their community without being seen as denouncing their culture or religion. For this reason, it was emphasised that it is important that feminists who shared their religious and cultural background help address these issues so they cannot be ignored as **"an attack, from the perspectives of people from the west."**

One woman spoke about her husband who, **"promotes women's rights among other men, talking to them about it and he is not popular with [other men] because of that."** The men joke, with a slight hint of seriousness, that because of him, 'the women are getting stronger, and it is too much for us'.

One of the key issues women discussed, regardless of the cultural context, was that many of the cultures they belong to have a strong adherence to harmful gender roles. Women from all backgrounds identified that other women had the potential to adopt and reinforce the harmful gender roles in their community as much as men, including mothers-in-law. A woman of South Asian heritage stated that her mother was often criticised by her paternal grandmother for encouraging her dad and brother to do household chores. In another group, one participant from South Asia said she felt pressure from her mother-in-law and wider family who lived with them to privilege her son. She said:

> **"There is so much pressure around and we succumb to it…there should be no difference, there should be no hierarchies, but there still are between sons and daughters and between husbands and wives.**

Another participant said,

> **My Polish mother in law's thinking is so backward. She wouldn't let her son/my partner do things that are deemed not manly… I have to cook and have all the meals prepared for him and ready, it didn't matter whether I was pregnant or tired.**

Women in our discussions said that religious institutions are sometimes powerful in reinforcing traditional gender roles, even if there were more progressive ways to interpret religious texts. Some participants said that a few influential members of the community use religion as an excuse to prop up norms that give men power to dominate and exploit women. Polish women told us that the Catholic Church and its influence is the reason that progress in Poland feels much slower than in Scotland. This should be read

in the current political context in Poland, namely the right-wing populist and national conservative party that is in power and works closely with the Catholic Church.

This was echoed by Muslim women.

> **There is nothing in Quran that allows men to overpower women. Some men use religion as an excuse to oppress women. It is not acceptable. This goes against our religion.**

Our participants felt strongly that it was possible to be both feminist and Muslim and were aware that some people misinterpret the Quran, stating it, **'emphasises that relationships between spouses should be based on unconditional love, tenderness, tranquillity, peace, and kindness'.** Participants wanted to emphasise that, **'identifying harmful practices doesn't make you prejudiced, but assuming we all are abused because of our religion does'.**

A lot of women believed before they moved to Scotland that it would be much more progressive and that Scottish women 'had it much better'. Living in Scotland showed them that this was not always the case, and while they said it was not good that women from Scotland were also subject to the same or similar gender roles and stereotypes, it was also reassuring that stereotypes and violence against women and girls also happen in Scottish communities.

It is important that there is a greater understanding of the dynamics of violence against women and girls in different communities. For example, in South Asian families women are likely to experience abuse not just from their spouse but from wider family members as well (Gill and Virdee 2021). It is critical that 'by and for' services are funded, trained and resourced appropriately, as they provide support that considers the complexities and nuances of religious and cultural experiences and values that may be lacking in other organisations.

Safety in public spaces

As Betsy Stanko stated, **"our everyday behaviour reflects our precautions, the measures we take to protect ourselves"** against the **"everyday terror"** women experience in public spaces of verbal and/or physical attack (Stanko 1985: 9).

Most women report fear of public spaces when it is dark (Stanko 1985), however the marginalised women in our groups reported that this fear was also present during the day, making the fear and need for hypervigilance constant. This is exacerbated by an inability to predict or control men's behaviour or determine when it might lead to verbal or physical abuse (Stanko 1985: 11, Seta 2016). Our participants said that constant vigilance is exhausting, it does not prevent gendered and racist attacks, plus it has a negative impact on their mental health and self-esteem, increasing their isolation. This testimony is supported by academic literature (Seta 2016, Awan and Zempi 2020).

In this report, we have previously drawn upon testimony from Muslim women that perpetrators targeted them because they perceived them to be a woman of colour wearing traditional dress. Muslim women that spoke with us asserted that, **'wearing hijab is something that singles you out in the street and very often we are a target of catcalling and insults in the streets because of the way we dress'.**

Our participants who experienced oppression at the intersection of race and gender reported being less likely to go out at night at all, unless it was absolutely necessary. One woman stated that, **'the visibility of being an Asian or African woman means I can't hope to go unnoticed or unseen'.** Many women we spoke to across diverse cultures and backgrounds commented on their experiences of catcalling. They were deeply concerned that they experienced this form of harassment the most at the extremely young ages of 13 to 16.

The Polish women we worked with reported a preference for taking taxis at night as they felt unsafe on public transport, as it often meant humouring men who wanted to converse with them:

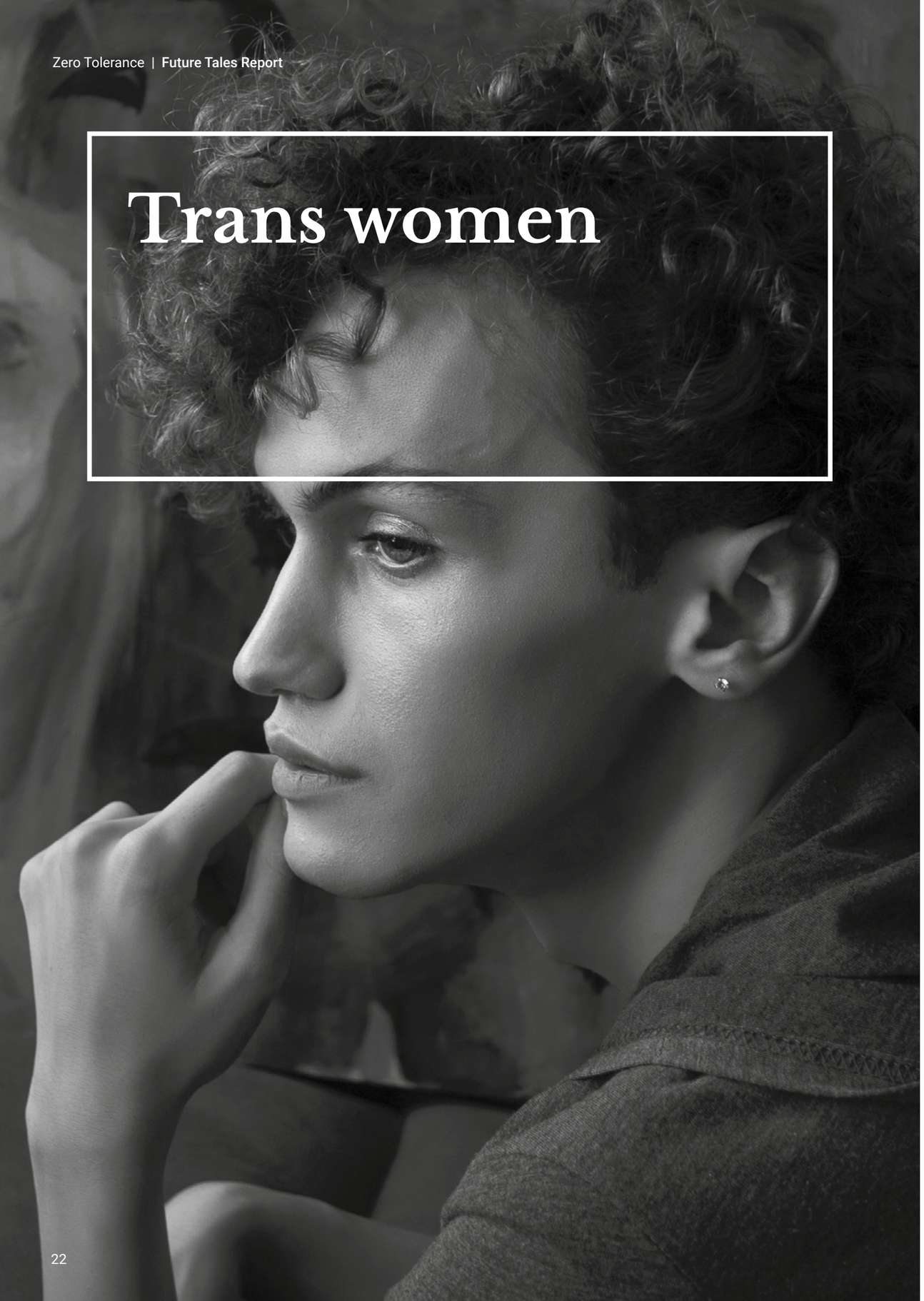
> **I was always afraid that it can lead somewhere or escalate if I wasn't responding nicely. Or maybe if I respond nicely, it can be seen as an invitation to something more.**

Our participants who had to go out at night said that they take several precautionary measures for safety: they always walk fast; remain conscious of their surroundings (do not use headphones), position their house keys between their fingers for protection and send their active location to friends or family to track their progress home. Those we spoke with highlighted taking these measures would not prevent violence, just provide a starting point for investigation if they were attacked.

One woman spoke poignantly of how her son is soothed by being walked around in his pram when he cannot sleep. She said that if there were no violence against women and girls, she would be able to soothe him easier at night:

> **There are so many types of violence I am afraid to walk in the evening with my little son. I have to take care of myself.**

Though women face dangers from the men in their own homes, the persistent and ever-present fear in public spaces of experiencing misogynist and racist hate crimes is something marginalised women cannot ignore. Verbal and physical attacks have a significant effect on emotional well-being, increasing depression, anxiety, social isolation and low self-esteem (Chakroborty *et al.* 2019, Awan and Zempi 2020).



Trans women

Trans women experience gendered oppression in some of the same ways that cis women do, and some of their experiences are distinct to them.

The term transmisogyny was coined to describe the oppression experienced by trans women because of their dual identity as women and transgender.

Trans women participants spoke about their experiences of violence; in a Scotland without it, they felt that they would feel more comfortable in all public spaces. The women we spoke to told us they often experience microaggressions from people who identify them as trans, such as hostility, stares, and rudeness. Trans women told us that transmisogyny can look like being misgendered, particularly by people who are in power, as even if it is done purposefully, it is easy for perpetrators to deny.

They also told us they are afraid to go to nightclubs on their own and that even if they attended with friends, they were sexually harassed and violated. One participant told us they are often sexually harassed by gay men in LGBTQI+ spaces and at one point was told that it was, **'fine because I'm gay and you're a woman so I'm not interested'**. Trans women are afraid to challenge men in situations like this due to fear of the potential for hostility and violence.

One young trans woman told us she had been rejected by her family for her trans identity and that:

> **"In a gender equal Scotland, I would be able to go home. I would go home.**

Gender roles

This section will discuss what participants told us about the impact of gender roles on their lives.

The gender roles and norms women said they are most restricted by related to their roles as mothers and the expectations that women should be responsible for *all* childcare and domestic labour, while sometimes having a job as well. Participants highlighted that most cultures have gender stereotypes and if these aren't followed it is 'frowned upon', 'heavily criticised', or worse.

> **All the women I know are strong, they deal with so many obstacles, they juggle so many roles, tasks and chores and they push forward. Still they are called a weak sex. I don't think so.**

Most of the participants we spoke to reject the traditional conception of women as weak. They felt the strength of women is clear in the multiple roles they fulfil as mothers, partners, and in paid and unpaid labour that in many instances goes unseen and unappreciated. Many participants commented that women do all this while sometimes experiencing multiple forms of abuse. They felt strongly that their work never ended – be it childcare, laundry, making sure the house was clean or cooking dinner:

> **I have realised that myself. I saw the dichotomy, this kind of Madonna-whore complex, an impossible standard that you can never fulfil.**

Participants also highlighted how men and boys are negatively affected by gender roles. For example, feeling they can't be sensitive or facing criticism for not acting 'manly' enough. Polish women asserted that the biggest insult men can receive is to be called 'baba' meaning old woman, and the polish equivalent to 'boys don't cry' is, *'co ty? Baba jesteś'*, which translates as, 'What are you? Some kind of old whining woman?'.

Trans women shared with us that they felt men were violent to them because in their eyes trans women have rejected being a man for something these men see as contemptible.

> **Men are brought up like this. Learning that being a woman is the worst thing and to be compared to one is insulting, hence women themselves are not worthy and lesser than men.**

Trans women also said that gendered socialisation and social roles, particularly at school, are linked to homophobia as well as transphobia. Without the 'social segregation' of boys and girls, it would have been easier to, **'accept my trans identity and would make it easier for trans identities to be accepted as well'**. There was optimism that the future could bring a Scotland without systemic gender roles that force people into boxes with specific expectations. One woman said in these spaces:

> **My transness felt like the end of the world… You experience violence as a cis woman before they realise you are trans, and then you experience it as a trans woman.'**

Women told us they often feel restricted by traditional beliefs about gender roles. They noted this is based on gender stereotypes that prescribe what men and women should be and how they should act in different domains of their lives.

Beauty standards and appearance

Beauty standards in Scotland, like much of Europe, often centre on slim, blonde-haired, blue-eyed women who have very little body hair.

One woman commented that body hair is considered so disgusting on women that even adverts for women's razors show women shaving hairless legs. Women said they are expected to look a certain way, and that this is reinforced by social media, marketing and celebrity culture, **'which exist to tell you that you are not enough and that you should strive for something that you do not have and someone you are not'.**

This emphasis on ideals of beauty is exclusionary to many women of colour. Our participants spoke about it creating a sense of shame over various parts of their body, which has been damaging to their self-esteem. Asian women who grew up in the UK felt that their youth was spent trying to hide thick dark hair and being shamed about their body appearance. Black women particularly felt shame regarding their hair, often experiencing unwanted touching and comments:

> As an Asian woman I have a naturally dark hair. I was so self-conscious of my body after moving to Europe. In my class at school no one had such dark body hair. Even boys. It was horrible to be singled out and commented on as an odd one. Now I have learnt to love it; to love myself. My arms are so fluffy, I like them!

> It is similar with embracing your naturally curly hair. Women go to such lengths to tame it, to have what is seen as nice straight hair. More and more women go natural now. I have seen the change.

Some women we spoke with said they engaged in excessive grooming in their teenage years to fit in more with their peers. The women expressed that they are more confident now and happy, but expressed their desire for their own children to grow up seeing members of their own community as valid and beautiful:

> I used to iron my hair all the time. I wanted to transform to look more Western. We should stop commenting on how the other women look to stop perpetuating these ideal imagined non-existent women. This is a patriarchal idea of a woman as smooth and silky; a woman controlled and overpowered whose all energy goes into personal grooming.

Asian and Black women described the pressure to conform to White European beauty norms, and the power that they have found in embracing their natural appearance. They hoped for their children to have a world where a diversity of beauty is celebrated.

Trans women are also expected to conform to society's gendered standards for women. For example, they spoke about feeling pressured to wear stereotypically feminine clothing like dresses and skirts, while other women can wear trousers without having their identity questioned. Many trans women find themselves desperately trying to meet these standards to gain societal acceptance of their identity and meet the ideal that is expected of cis women. Trans women spoke of the desire to exist outwith the confines of cisgender norms, saying, **'shaving all the time irritates the skin on my face and sometimes it needs a break'.**

The barriers faced by trans women go far beyond beauty standards and appearance, but the trans women we spoke to described the concept of 'passing' to be an awful notion. Passing is a controversial topic and means that you conform to society's expectations and standards for women: that if someone saw you, they would not realise that you were trans. In a world without violence against women and girls, trans women would not have to 'pass' to avoid violence. Acceptance of a trans woman's identity should not be based on how well she ascribes to traditional standards of womanhood and beauty.

Asian and Black women described the pressure to conform to White European beauty norms, and the power that they have found in embracing their natural appearance. They hoped for their children to have a world where a diversity of beauty is celebrated.

Overall, women felt their value should not be based on their body or how they look. Women from all communities hoped that their daughters would see women from diverse backgrounds in media and advertising and appreciate the beauty in themselves and others that is not limited to narrow western European ideals like blonde hair, blue eyes and slim body shapes.

[4] When someone is perceived as the gender they live as rather than the one they were assigned at birth.

Paid and unpaid work

Participants reflected on work as being both that done within the labour market and the unpaid work of raising children and household chores.

The women experienced the devaluation of their unpaid work, as they were expected to undertake this 'second shift', a term used to describe the reality that women do most of the childcare and housework after they come home from their paid employment (Engender 2021). They also noted the additional difficulty of experiencing unfair treatment based on their race and gender while doing paid work.

Research shows that in the workplace women of colour and Muslim women wearing traditional dress face significant barriers to being treated equally (Seta 2016). The testimony of women we spoke with reinforced this. They had to work twice as hard in their workplaces, feeling it necessary to always demonstrate their usefulness by volunteering for extra shifts or projects, being hard-working, reliable, and approachable. Despite this effort, they were still treated unfairly.

One women of South Asian heritage said she was one of only two Asian women in her workplace. Both women came from diverse cultural backgrounds, had different religious practices, and there was a 30-year age gap. Despite this, the women were constantly mis-identified and confused with the other, which was incredibly distressing, demoralising, and invalidating:

> **There is as well this intersection where being a woman and being Asian meet. You have to work twice as hard if you are a brown woman. It is also exhausting to be all the time proving yourself useful, hardworking, reliable. Sometimes I find myself as the only Asian in the room, and I feel that the others don't understand this pressure I am under. It is tiring.**

From an early age, children learn from observing their environment what is expected of them based on their gender. The women we spoke with asserted that this gives children strong and lasting cues about what they can and cannot do. Some commented that their daughters sometimes tried to do different sports and were rejected by their boy-peers. In another instance, someone's daughter was told that she could not be a firefighter while dressing up at nursery. It was felt that rigid gender roles are sometimes being forced on children. They said that there are now more women in engineering and male nurses, but that change is particularly slow. They want to see role models for their children so they can see you do not have to be White or a man or Scottish to occupy certain roles.

We can see that Black and Asian women's experiences of work are shaped by their experiences of both racialised and gendered oppression. A Scotland without violence against women and girls will need to tackle both to fulfil the aspirations of our participants.

Artwork by M.Lis

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In a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls...

The women we spoke with felt a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls would be a significantly different place.

Women's equality and safety would be realised and as a result the lives of everyone, including men, would be improved. They told us that **in a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls…**

- We would have the same expectations of men and women and respect everyone regardless of their gender and looks.
- Women would dress how they like and feel safe.
- We would have achieved intersectional equality.
- Women would feel confident, safe and supported to use public services such as social work and other support services.
- We would benefit from more confident and assertive women.
- We would have a more productive society.
- We would have greater freedom and less fear.

Women described a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls as **safe, free, happy, empathetic, equal, fearless, open, education, cooperation, support, productive, normal, confident, respected, welcoming, community, equality, liberty, supportive, beautiful, diverse, undivided, just, acceptance, love, creative, proper, nirvana, feminist, richer, fair, and trans joy.** We used their responses to create the word-cloud shown in Figure 1[5].

Figure 1

[5]This information was collated from a data gathering exercise using sticky notes at one of the workshops.

How do we get there?

The women who took part in this work highlighted several actions that are essential to maintain a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls.

- Universally see violence as unacceptable and have zero tolerance for it.
- Make firm plans to prevent violence against women and girls.
- Challenge all forms of inequality, discrimination, and oppression.
- Listen to the voices of all women and build alliances with different communities of women.
- More women in positions of power, especially those from marginalised communities.
- Campaign to raise awareness and change public attitudes of men's violence against women and girls.
- End gender roles and stereotypes. They should not be replicated in education, at home, in the media, or the workplace.
- Ban sexist and pornographic media. Stop airbrushing women in magazines.
- Work with minoritised communities in a way that recognises cultural differences and different levels of understanding of violence against women and girls.
- Train professionals on best practice in working with marginalised communities.
- Focus on prevention and education, especially aimed at men and boys.

Conclusion

As part of our 30th anniversary, Zero Tolerance undertook this engagement project to bring together women from some marginalised communities to discuss a Scotland free from men's violence against women and girls. One of the critical takeaways from this project is to reinforce existing feminist knowledge that women's experiences of racism, prejudice, and transmisogyny are inseparable from their experiences of violence against women and girls and gender inequality. Women's ethnicity and gender identity add a layer of complexity to how they are experiencing inequality and violence and contribute to the discrimination they face in every area of their life, including at home. Therefore, to create a Scotland free from violence against women and girls we must also tackle women's experiences of racism, prejudice, and transmisogyny.

Moreover, the conversations highlighted the importance of acknowledging that minoritised communities are not homogenous. Nevertheless, some common themes emerged. These themes were discrimination based on race, religion and xenophobia; cultural pressures from within their own community; fears about their safety in public spaces; gender roles and stereotypes that constrain women; exclusionary beauty standards; and the unpaid and paid labour burden.

It is critical that the women's sector, services, and the Scottish government work to build relationships and develop solutions with groups of marginalised women that are tailored to the specific needs of their communities. Only then will we be able to understand their experiences and

Next steps

Zero Tolerance is working with partners to identify the next steps required for the primary prevention of violence against women and girls across Scotland. These actions will build on the recommendations that came from participants outlined in the section, **'How do we get there?'.**

We will work collaboratively with our partners and centre women's experiences with the aim of developing campaigns and policy interventions to address the issues raised during the workshops. We recognise that this work should target individual and group attitudes as well as behaviours, with relationship building central to its success. We will develop partnerships across sectors and communities to ensure prevention work tackles all forms of systemic inequality, as well as gender inequality, to create a multi-sectoral, coordinated and inclusive approach to tackling gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

A note on the author of this report

It is important to acknowledge that a White British woman with no experience of oppression at the significant intersections of race, ethnicity, or religion has written this report. However, the report has sought to centre the experiences of those who do have this experience. Women from the communities discussed have reviewed this report to ensure that the analysis does not misrepresent the women who participated in this work.

Artwork by Huda

Artwork by Magda M

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