

Violence against Women: Myths to avoid Perpetuating

✘ MYTH	✔ REALITY
Men and women are equal in Scotland: rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse are problems that only affect a few people.	Every 13 minutes a Scottish woman experiences violence. One in ten women in Scotland has experienced rape & one in five women in Scotland has had someone try to make them have sex against their will.
Men experience domestic abuse in equal numbers to women.	Domestic abuse is a crime that is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women. 79% of all recorded incidents of domestic abuse in 2016-17 in Scotland had a female victim and a male accused.
Domestic abuse is a private issue; what goes on behind closed doors is no-one else's business.	Domestic abuse is a crime. It is against the law.
A woman cannot be raped by her husband.	No means no, whether you are married or not. The law is clear that if a person says no, is drunk or unconscious, there is no consent.
Rape is less serious if a woman is raped whilst involved in prostitution.	Rape is always rape and women who sell sex can withhold consent the same as any other woman.
If a woman initiates kissing or other physical contact she is consenting to sex.	No, she is just consenting to kissing or other physical contact.
Women who were raped caused it or partly caused it by their dress, drinking or conduct.	Men are responsible for whether they choose to rape or not.
If a woman doesn't fight back, she consents.	Freezing is a common reaction to fear, not just 'flight or fight'.
Only young, attractive women are raped.	Women of all ages, backgrounds and physical conditions are raped.
Often women who regret consensual sex later claim it was rape.	There are no more false reports of rape than of any other crime.
Rape is a crime of sexual passion.	Rape is a crime of violence, abuse and degradation, involving sexual behaviours but primarily motivated by violence.

✘ MYTH	✔ REALITY
Men commit violence against women, such as rape or domestic abuse, when they lose control.	Violence against women is a form of control; an assertion of dominance, not a loss of it.
Abusers are sometimes provoked into being violent.	Violence is always a choice. No woman is responsible for her abuser's actions.
Alcohol, football and other external factors all contribute to men becoming violent.	There is no excuse for violence against women. While substance use may increase the severity of physical acts of violence, it is not the root cause of abuse.
Domestic abuse only happens in poor families.	Domestic abuse affects women of all ages, classes and backgrounds. Abusive men are as likely to be professionals such as accountants or solicitors as they are cleaners or unemployed.
Abusers are likely to have been abused themselves.	Abusers can be from any walk of life or background.
Abusers often suffer from mental illnesses.	There is no evidence to support this. However around 55% of women who access mental health services have experienced domestic abuse.
Domestic abusers are 'beasts' and 'monsters'.	Domestic abusers are skilled at presenting a 'normal' façade to friends, relatives and co-workers. Unfortunately, the men who commit these crimes are ordinary men, usually someone's dad, brother, uncle or friend, who behave in a terrible way behind closed doors.
Abuse only occurs when a relationship breaks down.	Abuse can occur at any time in a relationship.
Women always have the option of leaving their abuser.	Women do not feel able to leave for a variety of reasons: the way the abuser has isolated them from family and friends, financial dependence, children, lack of self-esteem and other mental and emotional health issues, often caused by the abuse. She may fear escalation of violence – around half of women killed by their partners are in the process of leaving.
Domestic abuse only happens when couples live together.	Domestic abuse can happen at any time in a relationship and can continue after separation.

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Zero Tolerance is a Scottish charity: SC023484