



## **Women's organisations disappointed by Lord Bracadale's recommendations, seek further dialogue with Scottish Government**

Engender, Rape Crisis Scotland, and Scottish Women's Aid are disappointed by the recommendations in the inquiry's report. The question of how to tackle misogynistic online abuse, sexual harassment in public spaces, and incitement to misogyny is one being raised worldwide. Women and girls face epidemic levels of misogynistic hate in schools, in the workplace, on city streets, and online. We called for a standalone misogynistic hate crime to be created in Scotland as a way of disrupting this epidemic.

We think the recommendations put forward in this report do not pay enough attention to international experience and evidence. Other nations and states have found that simply adding gender to a laundry-list of groups protected by hate crime legislation leads to underreporting, under-investigation, and under-prosecution<sup>1</sup>. We don't want a law that languishes unused, giving impunity to perpetrators.

Scotland is leading the way in some of its action to tackle violence against women. We have a "gold standard" Domestic Abuse Act, the framing of which drew on the expertise of an international community of gender and law advocates. We think that the same creativity needs to be applied to tackling misogynistic hate crime.

Violence against women experts were conspicuously missing from Lord Bracadale's advisory group. We look forward to sharing our expertise and that of our international networks in constructive dialogue with Scottish Government around the content of a law that challenges misogynistic hate and harassment in Scotland.

Emma Ritch, executive director of Engender, said:

"Gender equal representation in politics, women's equality in the workplace, and equal participation in community life are all undermined by misogynistic abuse. We want to see misogyny prevented. There must also be consequences for those perpetrators whose deliberately toxic behaviour in public spaces, online, and in workplaces and schools curtails the freedoms of women and girls to learn, work, and live our lives."

Sandy Brindley, chief executive of Rape Crisis Scotland, said:

"Women and girls are facing epidemic levels of misogynistic abuse, online, in the streets, on public transport and in our schools. We think there is a need for a bolder approach to considering how the law can better protect women's rights."

Marsha Scott, chief executive of Scottish Women's Aid, said:

"Scotland's commitment to ending violence against women requires an ambitious and robust challenge to misogyny and abuse. Misogynistic abuse surrounds and supports domestic abuse and the attitudes about women and girls that allow violence against women to flourish in Scotland. Fresh thinking is needed to tackle this violation of women's human rights. We look forward to being at the table in further discussions for how Scotland meets this challenge."

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1999 and 2008, New Jersey recorded four gender-bias incidents, 3,521 race-bias incidents, 2,589 religious-bias incidents, 579 motivated by sexual orientation bias, and 25 disability-bias incidents. (Jessica P. Hodge (2011) *Gendered Hate: Exploring Gender In Hate Crime Law* Northeastern University Press: Boston p. 64)