

THE VOICES OF WOMEN IN SHETLAND 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR STAKEHOLDERS

BACKGROUND

Every year during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Shetland Women's Aid invite women living in Shetland to share their voices through the *Women in Shetland* survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

This summary highlights key findings from the 2025 responses. The full report provides a detailed analysis of women's experiences of safety, inequality, and gender-based violence in Shetland, using women's own words. Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to read it in full.

We publish these findings so that women's voices can be heard. It is important to our organisation that women's voices are not dismissed and are not minimised. Meaningful change requires collective responsibility and measurable action - and it begins with listening to the community.

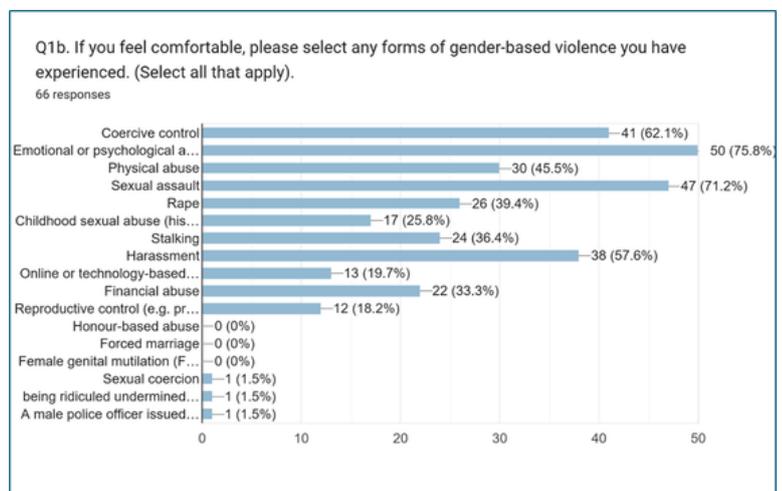
KEY FINDINGS

- 116 women responded to the survey.
- 53% reported experiencing discrimination because they are women.
- 57% reported being affected by gender-based violence in Shetland.
- 58% of those affected did not receive specialist support.
- Over 75% of those affected did not report to police.

Behind every statistic is a woman with a lived experience.

The survey did not ask women to disclose their direct experiences of gender-based violence in detail. Instead, we asked those who have been affected by GBV to indicate, if they felt comfortable to do so, any forms of violence they have experienced from a list available.

A vast array of qualitative responses can be found in the full survey report.



Shetland
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WOMEN ARE ASKING FOR CHANGE

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR LOCAL CHANGEMAKERS

- **ESTABLISH UNIVERSAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TRAINING ACROSS PUBLIC-FACING ROLES**
- **EMBED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AWARENESS WITHIN LICENSING REQUIREMENTS**
- **ENSURE CONSISTENT REFERRAL PATHWAYS TO SPECIALIST SERVICES**
- **RECOGNISE POST-SEPARATION ABUSE WITHIN CIVIL AND FAMILY COURT PROCESSES**
- **EMBED SAFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCLOSURE ACROSS FRONTLINE SERVICES**
- **ESTABLISH SAFE HOUSING PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN LEAVING ABUSE**
- **EMBED STRUCTURED, ONGOING PREVENTION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**
- **PROMOTE VISIBLE MALE LEADERSHIP IN CHALLENGING HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR**

Violence against women in Shetland is not inevitable. Cultural norms are not set in stone. Systems can improve, and our islands have the capacity to change.

The women who completed our survey have done their part. They have spoken. The responsibility now sits with all of us – as professionals, leaders, neighbours, and community members – to listen and respond.

“The biggest change would come from services believing women early, responding safely every time, and refusing to normalise the slow, invisible forms of harm that destroy women’s lives. In a community this small, silence is powerful; so is action. The next generation needs to see adults stand up for them now, not after things go too far.”



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