

**NON.
NO.
NEIN.**

Say No!
Stop
violence
against
women

Violence against women is rooted in women's unequal status in society, and that status reflects the unbalanced distribution of social, political, and economic power among women and men in society. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time and a form of discrimination that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women (1). Violence against women undermines women's dignity and integrity and imposes serious harms on families, communities and societies. In the EU, estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women (or 61 million out of 185 million) have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, since the age of 15 (2).

The full extent of violence against women is difficult to estimate, as it continues to be under-reported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality. In Malta, just under 60 % of the population tend to trust the police (3).

In EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2015 it was found that where people tend to have more trust in justice institutions, levels of disclosed violence are higher (4). It is estimated that in Malta, 22 % of women have experienced violence, which is 11 % lower than in the EU overall (5).

The European Institute for Gender Equality has estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence against women in Malta could amount to EUR 90 million per year. This figure was calculated according to the methodology used in EIGE's 2014 study (6), which Member States can replicate, as done by Estonia in 2016 (7).



What are the facts?

- The 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey data results show that since the age of 15:
 - 22 % of women in Malta have experienced physical and/or sexual violence;
 - 26 % of women in Malta have been stalked;
 - 50 % of women in Malta have been sexually harassed (8).
- According to the same survey, 19 % of people in Malta said they knew someone who has been a victim of domestic violence (9).
- From 2010 to 2012, an estimated 0.9 per 100 000 people in Malta were registered as victims of human trafficking (10).



When trust in police is low, victims are less likely to report violence.



Is violence against women a crime in Malta?

Malta has no specific violence against women law but does criminalise numerous forms of violence.

Malta's criminal code considers rape a crime against the 'peace and honour of families' and rape is generally prosecuted only by complaint of the victim. Marital rape (including where the marriage has been annulled or dissolved) is clearly included and warrants an additional degree of punishment (11).

Malta enacted its Domestic Violence Act in 2006 and amended it in 2014 to increase the punishment of persons found guilty of harassment (12) and to include stalking as a crime (13). Forced marriage was also introduced as a crime in 2014 (14).

Malta has a specific criminal law outlawing female genital mutilation (FGM) (15), which is punishable even when committed outside of Malta (16).

What is being done to eliminate violence against women in Malta?

Malta signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) on 21 May 2012 and ratified it on 29 July 2014 (17). The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.

Between 2013 and 2015, Malta's National Commission for the Promotion of Gender Equality (NCPE) worked on an ambitious project called 'Forms of violence in Malta — a gender perspective' that aimed to raise awareness of different forms of violence against women and girls; provide information to policymakers; improve professional practice; and raise awareness and disseminate information on FGM (18).

The Commission on Domestic Violence carries out awareness campaigns on domestic violence, intimate partner violence and

Good practices show the way

Provision of emergency shelter for women and girls experiencing domestic violence has consistently increased over recent years and Malta is one of the few countries approaching Women Against Violence Europe's (WAVE) minimum standard for shelters per head of population. Four countries exceed the minimum number of shelter places (Denmark, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovenia), and two countries come within 5 % of the minimum (Malta and the Netherlands) (19).

gender-based violence. It has an advisory role with the relevant ministry on policies related to violence against women and to this end it also carries out, or commissions, specialised, relevant research. Moreover, the Commission on Domestic Violence produces leaflets and information cards with contact numbers of service providers that provide assistance, which it distributes to police stations, local councils, educational institutions and others.

How are women and girls protected?

Women in Malta have access to barring orders that mean the accused can be removed from the family home for a maximum period of 6 months ⁽²⁰⁾. However, the Maltese legal system does not currently provide for any emergency barring orders that can be imposed independently of legal proceedings ⁽²¹⁾. This is being addressed in the proposed bill on gender-based violence and domestic violence ⁽²²⁾.

The Maltese government established its Domestic Violence Service in September 1994. Professional social workers provide support to victims of domestic violence and their children. The service provides for victims' immediate needs, helping them develop a safety plan, as well as providing ongoing support ⁽²³⁾.

Victim Support Malta, the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity, the Ministry for Health, and the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security have joined together to provide a programme for sexual assault victims ⁽²⁴⁾.

What help is available in Malta?

A specialist team has been set up in order to work with sexual assault victims in Malta. The team operates 24/7 and is based in Mater Dei Hospital ⁽²⁵⁾.

For women and children experiencing domestic violence, Malta has four shelters with 41 beds ⁽²⁶⁾.

Women and girls with questions about FGM support services can call the NCPE (2590 3850) or send an email to equality@gov.mt

Women experiencing violence in Malta can access free confidential legal advice by phone (79708615) on Tuesday and Thursday from 15:00 to 17:30 or on Friday from 11:30 to 13:30 ⁽²⁷⁾.

SOAR Malta (Surviving Abuse with Resilience) offers support and courses to victims of intimate partner violence.

In the case of LGBTIQ persons, the Rainbow Support Service offers help through the provision of information, consultation and psycho-social welfare services.



Malta has no national women's helpline.

For victims of violence, Victim Support Malta can be contacted during office hours by phone (21228333) or by email (sart@victimsupport.org.mt). Victims of sexual assault can contact the sexual assault team at Victim Support Malta at this number (25454184/25454286) or can go directly to Mater Dei Hospital and ask for the sexual assault response team.

When calling the generic emergency 24 hour service (179), cases of intimate partner violence or domestic violence or similar cases are referred to their dedicated unit at Appoġġ, the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU).



Appoġġ assists in cases where women and girls are suffering from violence ⁽²⁸⁾.

Endnotes

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European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.



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