

# **Lesbian Persistence**

**Input to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence  
against women and girls to the GRC**

**Forms of sex-based violence against women and girls:  
new frontiers and emerging issues**

**January 2025**

A Scottish civil society organisation  
Working to increase the profile of lesbians socially, politically and culturally  
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# Lesbian Persistence

Response to the call from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the GRC for input on forms of sex-based violence against women and girls: new frontiers and emerging issues

## Introduction

Lesbian Persistence is a Scottish civil society organisation which works to increase the profile of lesbians socially, politically and culturally. We understand women and girls to be females, and lesbians to be same-sex attracted women, and use those definitions throughout this submission.

Our interest in this consultation stems from the historic invisibility and ongoing neglect of lesbians in national and international policy-making, even when that is primarily concerned with women. This is evident in the two major international treaties which affect us. Neither CEDAW nor the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women mention lesbians. Nor do the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking, or the Convention on Consent to Marriage. All four are blind to the ways the issues they address specifically impact lesbians.

We are particularly concerned with the impacts of the intersection of (female) sex and (lesbian) sexual orientation. Whilst lesbians are affected by the same issues as heterosexual women, there are some key differences. For example, lesbians' unique medical needs are routinely neglected. Lesbians also face issues which do not apply to heterosexual women, such as institutional lesbophobia.

There is a lack of lesbian representation within Scottish (and international) culture. This absence is evident in all forms of media, including in the arts and literature, and underscores lesbian invisibility and marginalisation. The impact of gender-identity ideology (GII) has been profound, further contributing to lesbian invisibility. We consider the marginalisation of lesbians and the denial of our existence as a class of same-sex attracted females, to be a form of passive violence against lesbians.

## Data

One difficulty in preparing this document was the almost complete lack of data about lesbians. If they are mentioned at all in research, lesbians are nearly always merged with "women", "gay men" or the ubiquitous "LGBTQIA++". The issues for lesbians – relating to sexual orientation – have nothing in common with those for people within the "transgender" umbrella - relating to the unclear and undefined concept of "gender identity". Conflating the two is an insult to lesbians' experience and reality.

A 2024 research review of lesbians in the UK by The Lesbian Project found that, "Even the highest-quality evidence – systematic reviews and meta-analyses – are often poor quality when they summarise data about lesbians."<sup>1</sup> It identified several significant issues with methodology, quality, and evidence gaps, meaning that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about lesbians in the UK in many areas.

From necessity, therefore, some of the evidence we provide has had to be extrapolated from other data. However, we believe the conclusions we draw are accurate representations of lesbians' lives and experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lesbians in the UK in 2024: Safety*. (n.d.). *The Lesbian Project*. Retrieved from <https://www.thelesbianproject.co.uk/resources/lesbians-in-the-uk-in-2024-safety>

There is no single agreed definition of the scope of violence against women and girls,<sup>2</sup> far less clarity about violence towards lesbians. The Scottish Government's definition of VAWG does not recognise any particular violence experienced by lesbians.

In this submission we will consider aspects of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological violence against lesbians.

## **1. Gender-identity ideology presents particular risks of violence against lesbians**

GII holds that heterosexual men can identify as "women". However, as they remain sexually attracted to women, they are considered "lesbians". The extent to which a "change of sex" is recognised varies from country to country. In the UK, the only legal recognition (currently being challenged in the Supreme Court) is for those with a gender recognition certificate. But the legal situation has been overtaken by on-the-ground practice, in which many individuals, organisations, NGOs and local and national governments act on the basis of self-ID.

There are several ways in which GII leads to emerging forms of violence against lesbians. (We say more about related issues of consent in our submission on consent, which should be read in conjunction with this.)

### **a. Coercing lesbians into heterosex**

Many previously lesbian or LGB organisations and service providers have embraced GII, insisting that men who call themselves "lesbians" must be welcomed into lesbian associations, friendship groups and dating pools. Lesbians - particularly those who are young and newly out - are increasingly told that they must be willing to consider those men as potential sexual partners. Those who do not accept men as "lesbians" risk being accused of *transphobia* and *bigotry* and of being shunned by friends and their community. Male transactivists have gone so far as to run a workshop on how (heterosexual) men can get lesbians into bed.<sup>3</sup>

There is evidence that some lesbians are being coerced into unwanted sex with males.<sup>4</sup> Coercing a woman to have unwanted sex is rape. Some see it as "corrective rape".<sup>5</sup>

Forcing women into heterosexual relationships against their will is a pernicious and lesbophobic form of violence against lesbians.

### **b. Coercing lesbians to transition**

Whilst GII pushes to replace the concept of "sex" with that of "gender-identity", it is ironic that the concept of "transitioning" relies entirely on a correct understanding of sex. GII is deeply homophobic: its chief aim appears to be to encourage (mostly) gay men and lesbians to present as heterosexual members of the other sex, through a combination of harmful medical procedures and social conceits.

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<sup>2</sup> Violence Against Women and Girls - Public Briefing - February 2024." Scottish Police Authority, 14 Mar. 2024, [www.spa.police.uk/publication-library/violence-against-women-and-girls-public-briefing-february-2024/what-we-mean-by-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg/](http://www.spa.police.uk/publication-library/violence-against-women-and-girls-public-briefing-february-2024/what-we-mean-by-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg/).

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, B., et al. (2025). *Cotton ceiling 2.0: Bev Jackson. The Critic Magazine*. Retrieved January 28, 2025, from <https://thecritic.co.uk/cotton-ceiling-2-0/>

<sup>4</sup> Lowbridge, Caroline. "The lesbians who feel pressured to have sex and relationships with trans women" <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-57853385> and <https://www.gettheloutuk.com/blog/category/research/lesbians-at-ground-zero.html>

<sup>5</sup> X.com. (n.d.). X (formerly Twitter). Retrieved from <https://x.com/sappholives83/status/1881637741739258001>

The Cass report revealed that, without intervention, many of the young women referred to GIDS would grow into healthy adult lesbians. The education system,<sup>6</sup> medical industry and wider society are teaching young children that they might be “born in the wrong body” and encouraging young girls to transition into “boys”. (And vice versa. In a horrifying Facebook post a mother boasts about how she transitioned her effeminate 5 year old son into her “daughter”.<sup>7</sup>)

Surgical and chemical interventions do lasting and irreversible damage. The surgical removal of breasts and wombs robs women of their ability to breastfeed or to bear children; a phalloplasty does not create a functional penis, and leaves indelible scars on the patient sometimes resulting in long-term pain; an enlarged Adam's apple, lower voice and facial hair do not disappear when testosterone is stopped.

Puberty blockers deny children the natural processes of pubertal physical and mental development. They can also cause a range of long-term health conditions resulting in a shorter life-expectancy, and a loss of sexual function.

The mutilation of healthy lesbian bodies, justified as “transition”, is supported culturally, politically and socially. This is a conversion practice, an egregious form of violence visited on vulnerable, young lesbians who often have comorbidities including diagnoses of autism, depression, physical or sexual trauma, or neuro-diversity.

The prescription of cross-sex hormones and the removal of healthy body parts is lesbophobic violence against lesbians individually, and also as a class - such interventions are intended to remove lesbian women from society and replace them with a facsimile of “men”.

### **c. Forcing women to share accommodation with men in prison**

The inclusion of men who say they are women in women's prisons is a form of psychological violence, intimidation and harassment against female inmates. All women forced to share prison accommodation with men are subjected to unnecessary fear. Female inmates who are survivors of sexual assault or rape may be re-traumatised by the presence of males. This can seriously impact their mental health and rehabilitation. In Scotland, a woman who objected to the presence of a male inmate is currently being prosecuted for an alleged offence 'aggravated by prejudice to transgender identity'.<sup>8</sup>

There is evidence that women suffer sexual violence by men housed in the women's estate.<sup>9</sup> In some US states, women prisoners are even being provided with contraception.<sup>10</sup>

Lesbians who are in prison or held by police may be strip-searched by men who identify as transwomen in many jurisdictions globally. This is state-sanctioned sexual assault.

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<sup>6</sup> Scottish Government. (2021). *Supporting transgender pupils in schools: Guidance for Scottish schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/08/supporting-transgender-young-people-schools-guidance-scottish-schools/documents/supporting-transgender-pupils-schools-guidance-scottish-schools/supporting-transgender-pupils-schools-guidance-scottish-schools/govscot%3Adocument/supporting-transgender-pupils-schools-guidance-scottish-schools.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1GizD41fNY/>

<sup>8</sup> Greenock Telegraph. (n.d.). *Greenock prison inmate charged with alleged transphobia*. Retrieved from <https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/23801484.greenock-prison-inmate-charged-alleged-transphobia/>

<sup>9</sup> ReduXX. (2025, January 25). *Germany: New report reveals that trans-identified male inmates have been sexually assaulting, harassing female inmates in women's prisons*. ReduXX. Retrieved from <https://reduxx.info/germany-new-report-reveals-that-trans-identified-male-inmates-have-been-sexually-assaulting-harassing-female-inmates-in-womens-prisons/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://nypost.com/2024/03/16/opinion/why-are-womens-prisons-passing-out-condoms/>

Lesbians are overrepresented in prisons, so are disproportionately affected by these assaults on their rights and bodies.

## 2. Physical violence towards lesbians because of their sexual orientation

Between 2014 and 2022, Scots reported being abused due to their sexual orientation more than 7,500 times.<sup>11</sup> In June 2023, The National newspaper reported an ‘alarming rise in hate crimes against LGBT people in Scotland’,<sup>12</sup> with 1,818 reports in 2023-24.<sup>13</sup> The Scottish Women’s Rights Centre says lesbians may experience higher rates of gender-based violence<sup>14</sup> than other groups.

The Scottish Government report on Hate Crime Strategy records an increase in hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation from 2014-2022. The report’s Commitment 7 says: “We will work to ensure that the level and availability of disaggregated hate crime data is improved.”<sup>15</sup> Yet there remains a lack of lesbian-specific or sex-disaggregated data. Nevertheless, it seems likely there has been a sharp increase in violence experienced by lesbians due to their sexual orientation.

## 3. Psychological violence

Psychological heterosexism and lesbophobia have a significant impact on lesbians’ emotional and mental well-being.<sup>16</sup> There are widespread cultural tropes about lesbians (including concepts of the sexually predatory lesbian, butch lesbians, lesbians existing as titillation for the male gaze and male fantasy, marginalisation, and lesbian representation within porn culture) which are deeply harmful to lesbians and which display many forms of psychological violence towards lesbians.

Lesbian erasure, lesbian invisibility and the absence of lesbian-specific safe spaces and services in Scotland make it harder for lesbians to find, meet and connect with other lesbians. This is detrimental to lesbians’ well-being.

The presence of male transvestites and autogynephiles in lesbian space and on lesbian dating sites is a persistent form of psychological violence towards lesbians.

## 4. Sexual Violence

The little research about sexual violence against lesbians which exists reveals an increased prevalence of sexual abuse. A research review by Gosling and Stoianov found that “A higher proportion of lesbians are sexually assaulted than heterosexual women, and a higher proportion have also experienced severe

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<sup>11</sup> Rodger, Hannah. “LGBT Scots Seeing ‘unacceptable’ Rise in Violent Hate Crimes against Them.” *The Herald*, The Herald, 9 Jan. 2022, [www.heraldscotland.com/politics/19833294.lgbt-scots-seeing-unacceptable-rise-violent-hate-crimes/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/19833294.lgbt-scots-seeing-unacceptable-rise-violent-hate-crimes/).

<sup>12</sup> Garton-Crosbie, Abbi. “‘alarming’ Rise in Hate Crimes against LGBT Scots Due to ‘Culture War Narratives.’” *The National*, The National, 13 June 2023, [www.thenational.scot/news/23587514.alarming-rise-hate-crimes-lgbt-people-scotland/](http://www.thenational.scot/news/23587514.alarming-rise-hate-crimes-lgbt-people-scotland/).

<sup>13</sup>

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/hate-crime-in-scotland-2023-24/html/#sexual-orientation-table-4a-b-and-c-table-14> “Information for LGBTQ+ Survivors.” *Scottish Women’s Rights Centre*,

<sup>14</sup> [www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk/information-lgbtq/#:~:text=Gender-Based%20Violence%20can%20happen,rates%20of%20gender-based%20violence.](http://www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk/information-lgbtq/#:~:text=Gender-Based%20Violence%20can%20happen,rates%20of%20gender-based%20violence.)

<sup>15</sup> “Hate Crime Strategy.” *Scottish Government*, The Scottish Government, 24 Mar. 2023, [www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-scotland/pages/12/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-scotland/pages/12/).

<sup>16</sup> Ummak, E., Toplu-Demirtaş, E., & Aracı-İyiyaydin, A. (2023). Internalized Heterosexism and Exposed Psychological Intimate Partner Violence: Experiences of Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Turkey and Denmark. *Violence and victims*, 38(2), 213–233. <https://doi.org/10.1891/VV-2021-0128>

childhood sexual abuse. Experience of sexual assault is linked to poor mental and physical health outcomes.”<sup>17</sup>

Lesbians are at particular risk of sexual violence, being targeted because of their lesbianism as well as their sex. Some men consider punitive or “corrective” rape of lesbians acceptable, and justify their sexual violence as suitable punishment. Other males see lesbians as a “challenge”, who would be heterosexual if only they met the “right man” - that is, himself. These attitudes are closely related to the pornographic interest in lesbians, discussed below.

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2022-23 recorded 14,602 sexual crimes against women and girls.<sup>18</sup> There has been a long-term, increasing upward trend since 1974. We can extrapolate that lesbians are experiencing increased levels of sexual violence.

The extraordinarily low levels of convictions for rape effectively mean that rape has been all-but decriminalised. In 2020-21, there were 2,298 reported rapes in Scotland, of which 152 (6%) were prosecuted, leading to only 78 (3%) convictions.<sup>19</sup> At best, this suggests an indifference by the government and criminal justice system to sexual violence. At worst, complicity.

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape demonstrated a clear link between poverty and sexual violence.<sup>20</sup> The interplay of poverty with other factors (including lesbian invisibility, compulsory heterosexuality, and trauma) contributes to the vulnerability of lesbians to sexual violence and exploitation. We are particularly concerned with how these issues impact young lesbians and women with emerging lesbian identities.

The recent Jay Report on the impacts of CSA<sup>21</sup> found that one of the key ‘evidence gaps’ relates to the LGBT group. This is particularly worrying given that “The prevalence of child sexual abuse among female sexual minorities was significantly higher than among male sexual minorities.”<sup>22</sup> The consequences of this are life-long and profound.

Heterosexual men claiming to be “lesbians” are becoming so accepted and emboldened that “educational” resources (such as a workshop on how to break through the “cotton ceiling”<sup>23</sup>) contribute significantly to the erosion of lesbian boundaries. All such crossing of lesbian boundaries is a form of sexual violence.

## 5. Economic and Patrimonial Violence

A 2023 paper<sup>24</sup> by Human Rights Watch revealed the unique violence and discrimination that LBQ plus women face around the world. The research, conducted in 26 countries, uncovered consistent patterns of forced marriage, property rights’ violations and police violence. “Lesbians, bisexual, queer women and

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<sup>17</sup> Gosling, Matilda and Stoianov, Diane. “Research and Policy Review Series no 5: Safety Review” <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6377568471806f6c30273d9b/t/672a97c04e1cff6ee564caff/1730844610982/5.+Safety+Review.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> “Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2022-23.” *Scottish Government*, The Scottish Government, 19 Sept. 2023, [www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2022-23/pages/6/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2022-23/pages/6/).

<sup>19</sup> Rape Crisis Scotland. (n.d.). *Resources, stats & key info*. Retrieved from [https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources-stats-key-info/#rslider\\_3](https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources-stats-key-info/#rslider_3)

<sup>20</sup> *Poverty and Sexual Violence*, [www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/pages-pdf/poverty\\_and\\_sexual\\_violence.pdf](http://www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/pages-pdf/poverty_and_sexual_violence.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> “The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Section 1 and Section 2 Parts A to J (Accessible).” GOV.UK,

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/iicsa-report-of-the-independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-abuse/the-report-of-the-independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-abuse-section-1-and-section-2-parts-a-to-j-accessible](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/iicsa-report-of-the-independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-abuse/the-report-of-the-independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-abuse-section-1-and-section-2-parts-a-to-j-accessible).

<sup>22</sup> Xu, Y., & Zheng, Y. (2015). Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Abuse among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of child sexual abuse*, 24(3), 315–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2015.1006746>

<sup>23</sup> Mumsnet. (n.d.). *All about the cotton ceiling*. Retrieved from [https://www.mumsnet.com/talk/womens\\_rights/4551804-all-about-the-cotton-ceiling](https://www.mumsnet.com/talk/womens_rights/4551804-all-about-the-cotton-ceiling)

<sup>24</sup> Kilbride, Erin. ““This Is Why We Became Activists.”” *Human Rights Watch*, 8 Sept. 2023, [www.hrw.org/report/2023/02/14/why-we-became-activists/violence-against-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-women-and-n](http://www.hrw.org/report/2023/02/14/why-we-became-activists/violence-against-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-women-and-n) on.

non-binary people around the world face violence from security forces, family members and others, along with widespread discrimination that prevents them from building relationships, homes and families.... The scale of brutal violence, legal discrimination and sexualised harassment that these communities face is rarely documented.”

The report reveals that masculine-presenting lesbians face particular challenges within heteronormative patriarchal structures, but also stresses that attacks on feminine-presenting individuals are significant. Such attitudes to lesbians’ presentation are discriminatory, irrespective of stereotypical notions about gender representation and non-conformity. No form of lesbians’ presentation provides an excuse for violence.

## **6. Symbolic and linguistic violence**

The misuse of language to promote GII is a form of linguistic and existential violence against women and girls. Increasingly we see the word “women” removed from official documents, and replaced with offensive alternatives such as “uterus havers”. (There is no equivalent move to replace the word “man” in favour of “prostate havers”) This has serious practical consequences for women - for example the use of “people with a cervix” in literature encouraging women to go for screening for cervical cancer, means that many women who do not know what that part of their anatomy is called, or who are less literate, or whose first language is not English, are excluded from essential health information.

Women whose male partners now claim to be “women” are finding themselves unwittingly redefined as lesbians (being women in a relationship with another “woman”). This misuse of language abuses the women concerned, and confuses any meaningful discussion about lesbians. In this new linguistic world, *lesbian* now includes not only same-sex attracted women, but also some heterosexual women and some heterosexual men.

Such misuse of the word *lesbian* obliterates lesbians as a sex-class and denies them agency. It is extremely difficult for women to come out as lesbians, or find lesbians community, if *lesbians* no longer refers exclusively to same-sex attracted women.

The introjection of biological men into previously lesbian space, and the erosion of lesbian culture and communities is a form of symbolic violence towards homosexual women.

## **7. Sex-based violence**

We use the term “sex-based violence” rather than “gender-based violence” because violence is directed at women on the basis of their sex, not the undefined concept of gender. We cannot “identify” out of our oppression by claiming to be “men”.

## **8. Domestic violence**

Interestingly, the available research on violence against lesbians is almost entirely focused on lesbian-on-lesbian violence. This stands in stark contrast to the lack of research into lesbophobic or sex-based violence against lesbians.

There are many studies on lesbian rates of domestic violence and the reasons for it. Gosling and Stoianov’s research review<sup>25</sup> concludes that “Lesbians and heterosexual women either have similar chances of being victims of domestic abuse, or lesbians are more at risk of it – the research is inconclusive.”

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<sup>25</sup> Gosling, Matilda and Stoianov, Diane. “Research and Policy Review Series no 5: Safety Review” <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6377568471806f6c30273d9b/t/672a97c04e1cff6ee564caff/1730844610982/5.+Safety+Review.pdf>

## 9. Institutional Violence

In some countries lesbianism is illegal. Such institutional lesbophobia forces lesbians into hiding, and contributes to an atmosphere which legitimises violence against them.

There is a lack of political policy or structural framework in Scotland directed at lesbian needs. There are no lesbian-specific services and no dedicated public space for lesbians. This discrimination is a contributing factor in lesbian erasure.

The Scottish NHS systematically fails to address lesbian-specific health issues. For example, childless women are more likely to have diagnoses of breast cancer, cancer of the womb, endometriosis and other life-challenging illnesses.<sup>26</sup> Lesbians are less likely to have children, so need their particular health vulnerabilities to be fully addressed.

There are no lesbian-specific mental or sexual health services in Scotland. This contrasts with the huge resources the NHS has dedicated to supporting the “transition” of lesbians to become, superficially, “heterosexual men”. Many of the women and girls affected would have benefitted instead from mental health support.

There is an absence of policy within the Scottish Social Work Sector pertaining to safeguarding issues for young lesbians, or lesbians in care. There are no specific services for lesbians fleeing domestic violence, nor any related to homelessness, financial marginalisation, prostitution, trauma, addiction or sexual abuse and exploitation.

The disproportionately high number of lesbians within the Scottish Criminal Justice System receive higher rates of punitive treatment, such as spending longer in solitary confinement.<sup>27</sup>

The failure to take any account of lesbians’ needs causes specific harms, and amounts to systemic institutional violence.

## 10. Workplace violence

According to the 2023 Scottish Household Survey,<sup>28</sup> 23% of gay, lesbian and bisexual people suffer from discrimination in the workplace and 14% experience harassment. There is no break-down showing the reality for lesbians. Neither is there any data related to the employment of lesbians in Scotland.

Workplaces are structurally coercive - employees have limited power, and women and lesbians at work are not in a position to give consent to any fetishistic behaviour that is allowed by employers. On the contrary, they may be prevented from expressing any view about it. There are currently two UK court cases resulting from female nurses objecting to the presence of males in their changing rooms.<sup>29</sup> Being confronted with men in a state of undress may be even more distressing for lesbians than for heterosexual women.

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<sup>26</sup> Richmond M. Pregnancy saves lives. *West J Med.* 2000 Jul;173(1):12. doi: 10.1136/ewjm.173.1.12. PMID: 10903277; PMCID: PMC1070958.

<sup>27</sup> Initiative, Prison Policy. “Visualizing the Unequal Treatment of LGBTQ People in the Criminal Justice System.” *Prison Policy Initiative*, [www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/03/02/lgbtq/](http://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/03/02/lgbtq/).

<sup>28</sup> “Discrimination and Harassment in Scotland, Results from the 2023 Scottish Household Survey.” *Scottish Government*, The Scottish Government, 28 Nov. 2024, [www.gov.scot/publications/discrimination-and-harassment-in-scotland-results-from-the-2023-scottish-household-survey/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/discrimination-and-harassment-in-scotland-results-from-the-2023-scottish-household-survey/).

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/scottish-politics/5169032/nurse-nhs-fife-trans-doctor-tribunal/> and <https://news.sky.com/story/nurses-suing-their-employer-for-allowing-trans-women-to-use-their-changing-rooms-13160104>

## 11. Media Violence

There is a clear relationship between media violence and in-person violence and aggression. Many gender-critical lesbians have been targeted on-line by GII activists who police their views and may also target them in real life. Recently, a woman who is attempting to establish an on-line lesbian community, was ejected from a bar in London and assaulted<sup>30</sup> after trans activists objected to her presence.

## 12. Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking

The saturation of porn culture and the popularity of 'lesbian' as a search criterion have negative consequences for lesbians. From street prostitution to high-end 'sex-parties', lesbian sexuality and lesbian images proliferate for male consumption. Lesbian sexuality is seen as an important part of the sexual currency that operates in these worlds. This puts all lesbians at risk.

The complex interplay between trauma and sexual abuse, poverty and addiction, particularly exposes vulnerable lesbians to sexual commodification. The absence of lesbian-focused support services compounds the many dangers that lesbians face in these environments.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Lesbians experience amplified forms of violence because they are both women and homosexual, in a heteronormative and misogynistic society. These two systemic oppressions situate lesbians in a marginal space where they are disadvantaged and subject to extensive forms of violence: socio-economically, culturally, physically, psychologically, bodily and institutionally, additionally compounded by porn culture.

Lesbians also face new forms of violence as a consequence of pervasive gender-identity ideology. Lesbian spaces have been destroyed and invaded by men engaged in paraphilic behaviour; lesbians are denied bodily autonomy, and their bodies subjected to surgical mutilation; and lesbians' psychological survival is compromised by trans-misdiagnosis.

Violence against lesbians is not recognised or by governments, public and private organisations, researchers, law or policy makers. This lesbian-blindness is caused by a combination of institutional lesbophobia and ignorance due to the dearth of lesbian-specific data. Even when lesbians are mentioned, data is often compromised by conflation with LGBTQ considerations. This lack of data legitimises institutional failure to act, because the institutions are not constrained to take into account non-existent information. Additionally, the desires of men claiming to be women are often prioritised over the needs of lesbians and heterosexual women.

It is past time that this cycle of ignorance (in both senses) is broken. This requires, as a minimum that:

- a. Research on violence against women and girls, equality impact assessments and policy developments fully consider the needs of, and impacts on, lesbians.
- b. Data is disaggregated, in order to identify lesbians separately from other women, homosexual men, or men who claim to be women.
- c. Institutional lesbophobia is acknowledged and steps taken to overcome it. In particular, lesbian-specific services must be provided and promoted in all sectors, including criminal justice,

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<sup>30</sup> The Daily Mail. (2025, January 25). *Lesbian women's rights campaigner forced out of trans bar*. The Daily Mail. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14033963/lesbian-womens-rights-campaigner-forced-trans-bar.html>

social work, health, education. and sexual assault and gender-distress services.

- d. The emotional, physical and sexual harm done to lesbians through the imposition of gender-identity ideology must be acknowledged.
- e. Lesbians' rights should not be eroded by legislation embedding gender-identity ideology.
- f. National and international legislation must be enacted to make provision for women-only and lesbian-only space, facilities and associations.
- g. Action, such as educational programmes, and legislative oversight must be taken to counter the sexualised depiction of lesbians in pornography and in mainstream culture.
- h. Urgent consideration must be given to the needs of gay and lesbian victims of child sexual abuse.

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January 2025.