



**Tackling Violence**  
**against**  
**Women & Girls**



**UNISON North West**  
**VAWG Strategy & Resources**

# Introduction

In recent years there has been an unprecedented rise in misogyny and violence against women and girls (VAWAG) across the world. It is rife and, on a scale, never seen before.

Over one in four women are estimated to be victims of sexual assault or attempted assault in their lifetime, and one in 12 women are victims of VAWG each year, although the actual number is likely to be much higher. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) reported that, in 2022-23, 20% of all police-recorded crime was related to violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls can have long-term impacts on victims, affecting them physically, mentally, socially and financially.

In July 2024 the NPCC reported that in the previous 12 months, over one million VAWAG related crimes were recorded by police, equal to 3000 offences each day. The data also found that recorded VAWAG-related crime had increased by 37% in the last 5 years.

On International Women's Day 2025 Minister Jess Phillips read out from the front benches the names of the 95 women contained in the Femicide Census, registered as being killed by a man over the past year.

An average of 1 killing every 3 days – an unacceptable number. The minister went on to affirm that the government's commitment to halving violence against women and girls was not an abstract goal – but a top priority.

Unison General Secretary Christina McAnea on the same day stated that “The campaigning never stops. UNISON, with its million-plus women members, continues to use our influence to push for change, and to speak up whenever there is injustice, discrimination or abuse. The vast majority of those delivering public services, responding to such violence are women. Without women, those essential public services couldn't function.”

Yet - It is women who are more likely than men to be exploited in the workplace. To be on low wages, unfair contracts, and face abuse at the hands of unscrupulous employers. They're also at greater risk of physical or sexual violence and harassment. Just for doing their jobs.

**STOP  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN**





Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a broad term encompassing various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological harm, that disproportionately affect women and girls. It is a major human rights violation with far-reaching consequences, impacting individuals and societies.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as:

*Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

Examples of violence against women and girls (VAWG) include:

- rape and other sexual offences
- stalking
- domestic abuse
- intimate image abuse
- female genital mutilation
- forced marriage

Data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the extent of violent crime in England and Wales found that in the year ending March 2024 that Women were more likely to have experienced violent crime and that Domestic abuse-related crimes represented almost 16% of all offences recorded by the police in the last year.



### **Forms of VAWG:**

VAWG manifests in various forms, including:

- Physical violence: This includes hitting, slapping, kicking, and other forms of physical harm.
- Sexual violence: This encompasses rape, sexual assault, and other forms of sexual coercion.
- Psychological violence: This includes emotional abuse, intimidation, threats, and controlling behavior.
- Harmful practices: This category includes female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and honor-based violence.
- Economic abuse: This involves controlling a person's access to financial resources and preventing them from achieving their economic potential.
- Online violence: This includes cyberstalking, online harassment, and the sharing of intimate images without consent.

### **The Impacts of VAWG:**

VAWG has devastating consequences for individuals and society, including:

- Physical injuries: This can range from minor bruises to serious injuries, including death.
- Mental health issues: VAWG can lead to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health problems.
- Social isolation: Survivors may experience isolation from their social networks and communities.
- Economic hardship: VAWG can impact a person's ability to work, attend school, and support themselves.
- Reduced access to justice: Survivors may be less likely to report violence and may face barriers to accessing legal and support services.

There are numerous Contributing Factors, VAWG is deeply linked to gender inequality and societal norms that perpetuate violence against women. Other factors, such as poverty, conflict, and lack of access to education and resources can also contribute.

### **Addressing VAWG**

Addressing VAWG requires a multi-faceted approach that includes:

- Prevention: This involves changing societal norms, promoting gender equality, and addressing the root causes of violence.
- Support for survivors: This includes providing access to safe housing, counselling, legal aid, and other essential services.
- Accountability: This involves holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and ensuring that justice is served.
- Policy changes: This includes enacting laws that criminalise violence against women, protecting survivors, and promoting gender equality.
- Data collection and research: This is crucial for understanding the scope and nature of VAWG and informing effective prevention and response strategies.



# Why is this a Trade Union Issue?

Violence against women and girls is deeply linked to women's inequality in society and has a huge impact on individuals, hinders progress towards gender equality and is disproportionately experienced by women who face other forms of inequality such as race, ethnicity, social class, disability, age etc.

These women are more likely to experience violence and are less likely to access support and justice.

So, this is a Trade Union issue, it is an equality issue, and it is a Health and Safety Issue.

It is clear in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 that employers are required to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers.

They have a duty of care to protect staff, which includes protection from sexual harassment and all forms of violence at work.

## Why is Violence against Women and Girls a Trade Union issue?

Violence against women and girls is a form of discrimination that impacts women's health, safety, and dignity at work. All Unions have a responsibility to fight for safe and equitable workplaces, and violence and domestic abuse can significantly affect a woman's ability to work and thrive.

Moreover, addressing violence against women is crucial for building solidarity and creating a more just society for all workers.



# Why is this a Trade Union Issue?

## Workplace Impact:

Violence against women, including domestic abuse, can affect job performance, job security, and overall well-being. A woman experiencing abuse may struggle with concentration, attendance, and may even feel unsafe in the workplace.

Plus, the workplace is changing with more working from home for example. It is important to consider how support can be maintained as we all work in different ways.

## Equality and Discrimination:

Violence against women is rooted in gender inequality and power imbalances. Unions are committed to fighting discrimination and creating equal opportunities for all workers, including women. Ignoring violence against women and girls undermines this commitment.

## Solidarity and Union Goals:

Addressing violence against women and girls strengthens solidarity among union members and helps achieve broader union goals of social justice and equality. A union that actively tackles this issue demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of its members, their families, communities and wider society.

## Support for Survivors:

Unions can play a vital role in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This can include offering resources, advocating for policy changes, and raising awareness among members and employers.

## Legal Advocacy and Systemic Change:

Trade unions can be a powerful platform for collective action, legal advocacy, and systemic change to prevent and address violence against women and girls in the workplace and beyond. We can lobby for laws that protect workers and provide support for victims/survivors.

*UNISON recognises that controlling and abusive behaviour can occur in mixed and same sex relationships, within extended families, and can affect men as well as women. However, the vast majority of the victims/ survivors of domestic abuse are women and children and women are also considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence and sexual abuse*



# Why is this a Workplace Issue?

In some cases, violence is a daily reality. And the majority of those targeted are women. Among them, a hospital nurse threatened with a gun while she assessed a patient and just recently an A&E nurse stabbed in the neck – thankfully now recovering, but still with potentially life-changing injuries.

This is just one end of the spectrum. But sexism and misogyny are also still facts of life for women. UNISON's own data confirms this. In local government, a quarter of staff have experienced sexual harassment while at work. And the majority of those affected were female.

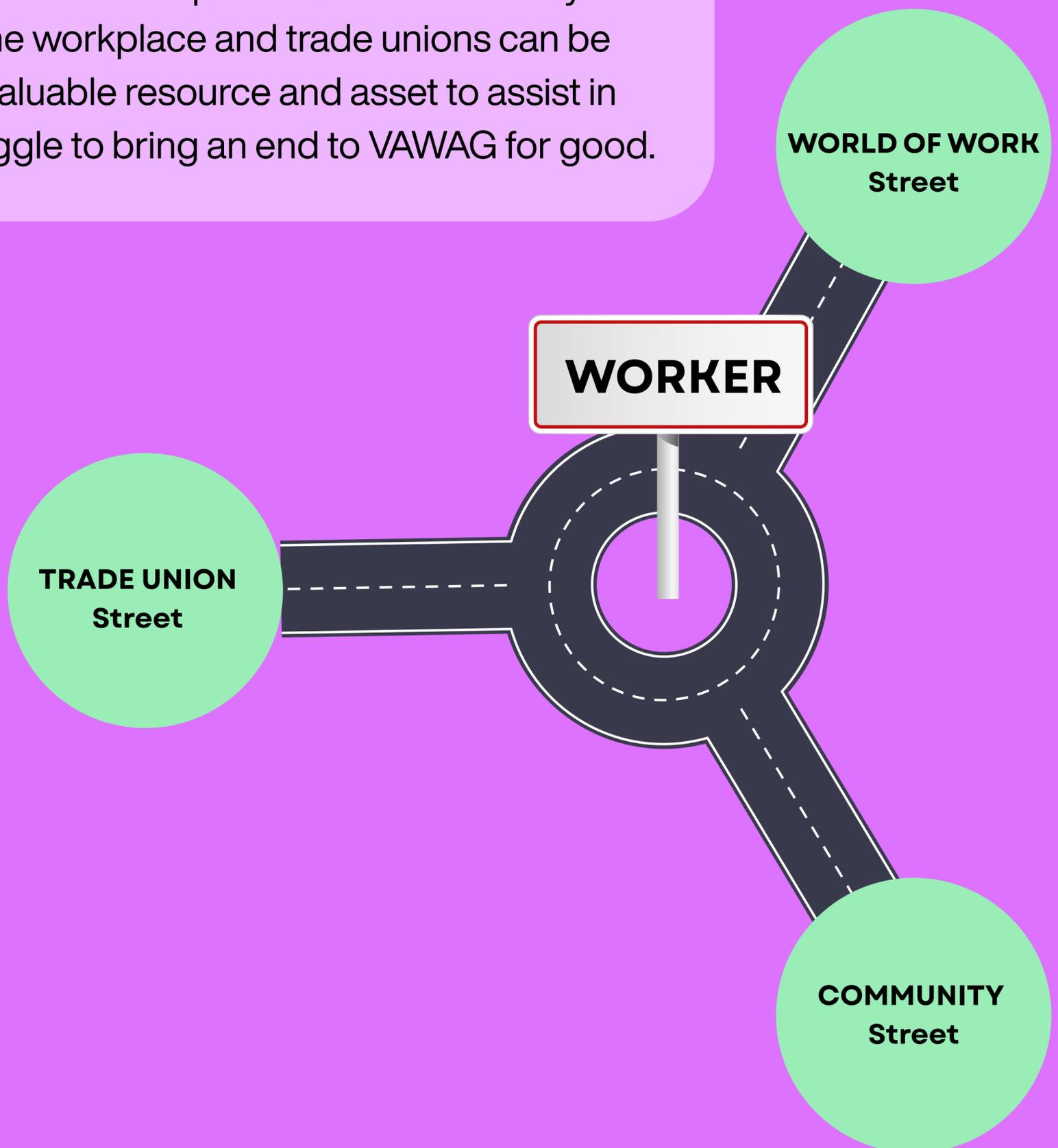
No one should feel that they are not safe from physical or sexual violence at work, or in any area of their lives. Violence and misogyny are also daily occurrences in both communities and in the very places where women should expect to be safe – their homes and their workplaces.

Yet - It is women who are more likely than men to be exploited in the workplace. To be on low wages, unfair contracts, and face abuse at the hands of unscrupulous employers. They're also at greater risk of physical or sexual violence and harassment. Just for doing their jobs.





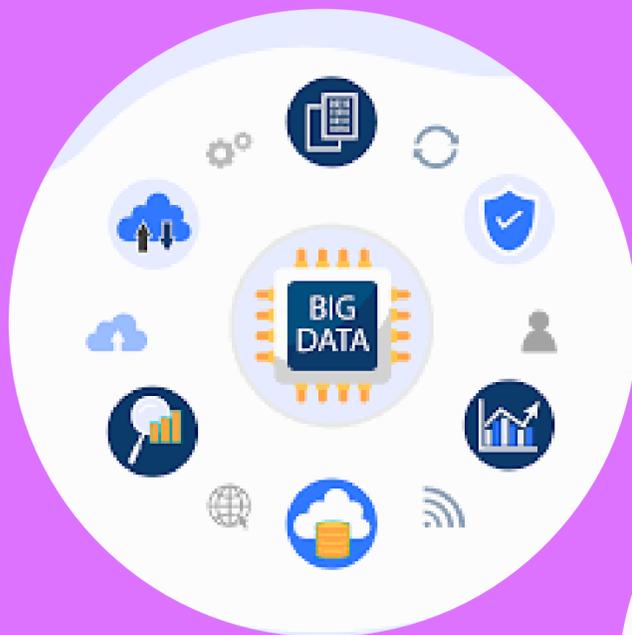
Safer streets, safer homes and safer communities are all vital in making progress in the battle against violence against women and girls, however an understanding of abuse and violence in the workplace as well as the ways in which the workplace and trade unions can be such a valuable resource and asset to assist in the struggle to bring an end to VAWAG for good.





## Data - Global, national, local !

[to be completed for final version]





# Best Practice

Ensure employers commit to creating a culture of respect and accountability

Ask employers to sign up to **UNISON's VAWAG Charter** link....

Provide comprehensive training and awareness programs for all employees, including supervisors, on recognising, preventing, and responding to violence and harassment

Tackle Management about implementing their Violence at Work Policy

Establish a clear zero-tolerance policy for all forms of violence and harassment

Provide comprehensive support services for survivors of violence, including confidential counseling, legal assistance and to other resources

Create a culture where employees feel safe reporting incidents of violence & harassment without fear of retaliation



# Signposting



This interactive map shows services across Greater Manchester for women and girls who are facing violence

Each pin links to an address and website where you can seek further support

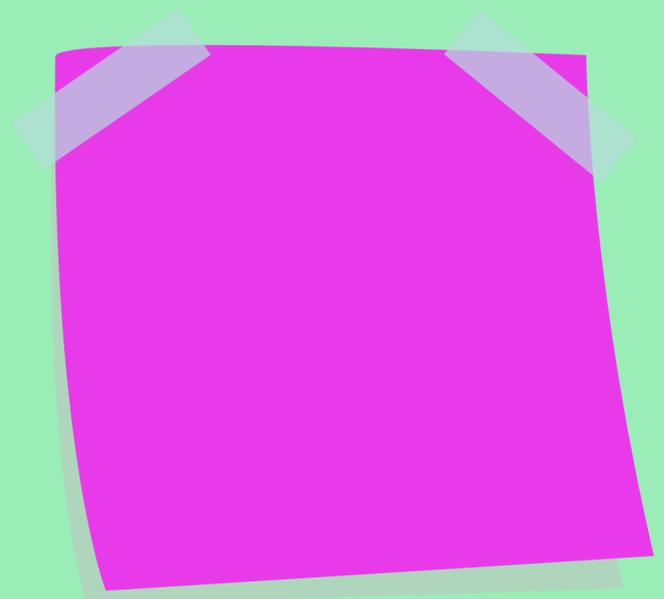
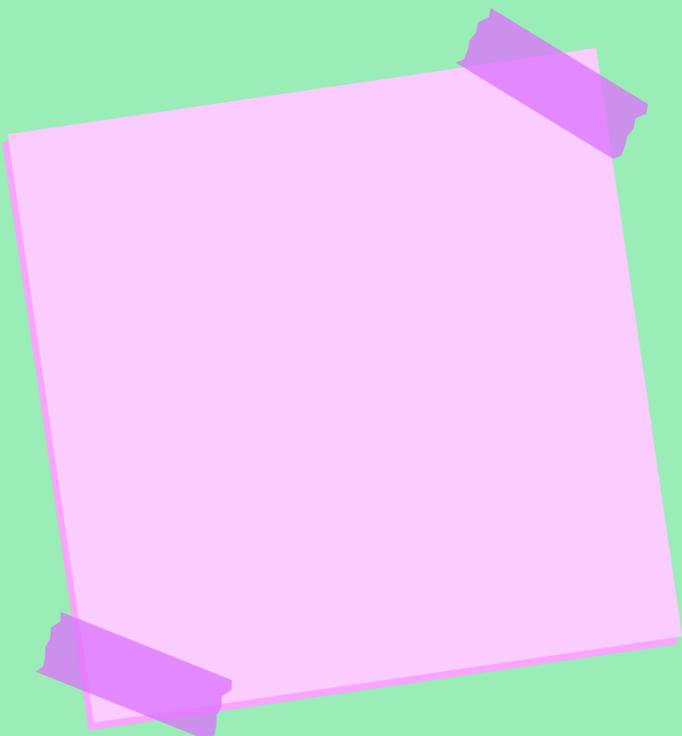
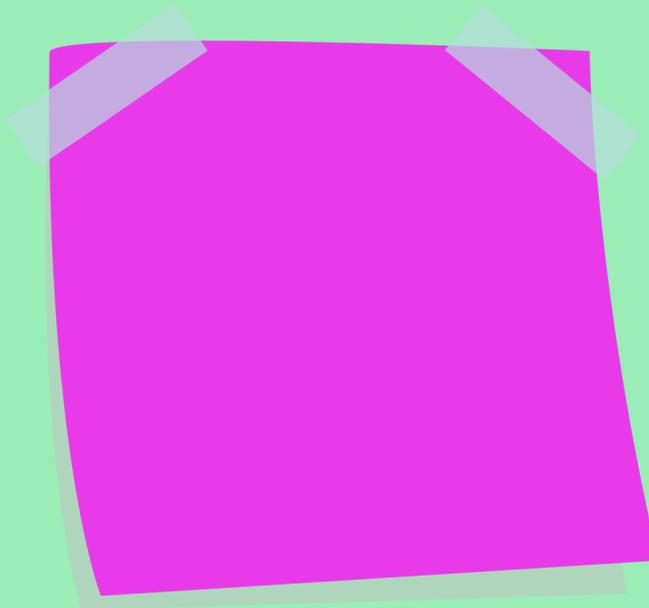
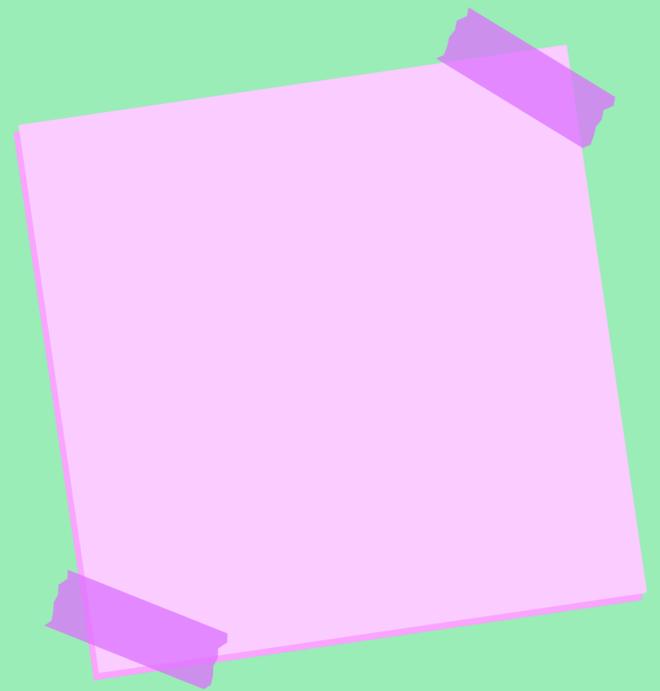


Scan code to access interactive map!



# Case Studies

Each of the QR codes on this page links to a video telling a survivor's story





# L&D resources

[to be completed for final version]

