16 Facts to Challenge Misogyny and Change Culture

Misogyny - prejudice, discrimination, or hostility towards women and girls - remains a significant barrier to safety, equality, and wellbeing in our communities.

The following facts are designed to challenge common myths, spark honest conversations, and encourage practical action. Each fact is grounded in UK law, research, and guidance, with prompts to help teams, workplaces, and communities reflect on their own culture and practices.

This resource is intended to support the “16 Days of Action” campaign, and can be used at any time to raise awareness, strengthen safeguarding, and promote respectful, inclusive environments. Some of the topics discussed may be sensitive or distressing; please take care of yourself and others, and seek support if needed.

Fact #1

False reports of rape are extremely rare

Fact #1

UK data shows false allegations were found to make up about 0.6% of rape prosecutions—far less than most people think. Under-reporting is far more common: most sexual assaults are never reported.

Prompt: What would it look like in our team to 'start with belief' while still following fair process?

Sources:
https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/perverting-course-justice-and-wasting-police-time-false-allegations
https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-men-are-more-likely-to-be-raped-than-be-falsely-accused-of-rape

Fact #2

Most sexual violence is hidden

Fact #2

For a variety of reasons, around 80% of victims do not report sexual assault to police. This means official figures capture only a fraction of the reality.

Prompt: What might the barriers be for people in our community feeling able to report sexual assault? How can we help to remove them?

Sources:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/natureofsexualassaultbyrapeorpenetrationenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020

Fact #3

Intoxication can remove the capacity to consent

Fact #3

UK law requires consent to be freely given with capacity. If someone is incapacitated through alcohol or drugs, or is unconscious, they cannot legally consent. Any sexual activity in that state is rape or sexual assault.

Prompt: What practical checks do we use to make sure consent is clear, ongoing, and with capacity?

Sources:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/section/74
https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-chapter-3-consent

Fact #4

Clothing style or behaviour never causes assault

Fact #4

The only thing that causes rape is a person deciding to commit it. Victims of assault range in age, clothing style, and context - from children to elderly women, in every type of clothing.

Prompt: When victim-blaming creeps into our conversations, how do we call it in—kindly but firmly?

Sources:
https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/myths/what-you-wear-or-does-not-cause-rape/

Fact #5

Sexist jokes increase acceptance of violence

Fact #5

Misogynistic or sexist ‘banter’ reinforces harmful stereotypes and normalises abuse. It is never ‘just banter’.

Prompt: What’s a respectful way to challenge a ‘joke’ that punches down?

Sources:
https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/sexist-jokes-and-violence-research

Fact #6

Leaving an abusive relationship is dangerous

Fact #6

It takes an average of seven attempts to leave an abusive relationship. The risk of serious harm or homicide rises significantly when someone tries to exit an abusive relationship.

Prompt: How can we make leaving safer—e.g., safety planning, housing, work flexibility?

Sources:
https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/leaving-abusive-relationship/

Fact #7

Misogyny is a systemic issue

Fact #7

Misogyny is not an isolated attitude - it's a systemic issue embedded in social structures.
It destabilises communities, perpetuates violence, and creates conditions that foster radicalisation and terrorism.

Prompt: What may be early signs of objectification, oppression or dehumanising talk about women - and how do we intervene?

Sources:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

Fact #8

Culture is never an excuse for harm

Fact #8

Human rights are universal. No tradition or custom justifies abuse, discrimination, or violence.

Prompt: How do we discuss ‘culture’ without excusing abuse?

Sources:
https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Fact #9

Accountability matters

Fact #9

Phrases like ‘boys will be boys’ excuse harmful behaviour and lower expectations. Boys and men are capable of respect and empathy - holding them to high standards benefits everyone.

Prompt: What standards of respect do we expect from boys/men, and how do we consistently reinforce them?

Sources:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

Fact #10

Countering misogyny
benefits everyone

Fact #10

Challenging misogyny is not about hating men. It dismantles toxic stereotypes and supports healthier masculinity, improving life for all genders.

Prompt: How do we show that challenging misogyny is about fairness, not hating men?

Sources:
https://menshealthforum.org.uk/

Fact #11

Children who experience domestic abuse need support, not labels

Fact #11

Exposure to domestic abuse inevitably has a traumatic impact on children, but this is a personal experience and it does not doom children to become abusers or victims of abuse. With early help, safe environments and tailored support children exposed to abuse can thrive.

Prompt: Do we recognise support needs for child victims? What does this look like?

Sources:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/domestic-abuse

Fact #12

Most sexual violence is by someone known

Fact #12

The majority of rapes and assaults are committed by partners, ex-partners, or acquaintances—not strangers.

Prompt: How does knowing most harm comes from 'known' people change our prevention strategies?

Sources:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/natureofsexualassaultbyrapeorpenetrationenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020

Fact #13

Domestic abuse is common

Fact #13

Approximately 3.8 million adults experienced domestic abuse in 2024 across England and Wales. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men will experience domestic abuse in their lives. Around 25% of all children in England live with an adult who has experienced abuse. It affects millions, across all backgrounds.

Prompt: What does taking prevalence seriously mean for our resourcing, training, and action plans?

Sources:
Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse/victims-in-their-own-right-babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-accessible

Fact #14

Domestic abuse happens beyond intimate partners

Fact #14

UK law includes abuse by family members too.
Children who see, hear, or experience its effects are victims in their own right.

Prompt: Are our policies and referrals set up to identify abuse beyond intimate partners?

Sources:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted

Fact #15

Alcohol, drugs, or mental health do not cause abuse

Fact #15

Violence is a choice rooted in power and control. Substance use may worsen risk but is never the cause.

Prompt: When someone excuses harm by saying 'I was stressed/drunk', how do we refocus on accountability?

Sources:
https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/myths-about-domestic-abuse/

Fact #16

Non-fatal strangulation is a serious crime

Fact #16

Since 2022, it is a specific offence in England and Wales. Consent is not a defence where serious harm is intended or caused. There is no safe way to strangle or choke someone. Strangulation is a major red-flag for homicide risk.

Prompt: Do our safeguarding and reporting pathways treat strangulation as a serious risk indicator?

Sources:
https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/non-fatal-strangulation-and-non-fatal-suffocation