**Scottish Human Rights Commission**

**The Istanbul Convention**



**Easy Read**





## What is the Istanbul Convention?

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| a map of Europea group of people next to the Human Rights Act law documenta signed document | The Istanbul Convention is a European human rights treaty about violence against women and girls.  **Human rights** are freedoms that are protected in law.  They make sure we are treated fairly and with dignity.  A **treaty** is a written agreement between countries that says how they will follow international law. |
| a man with his fist raised to punch a woman who has her hands raised in front of herA group of sad women next to an equals sign with a red line through it, next to a happy group of mena frowning woman holding a checklist with red crosses on it | The Istanbul Convention defines this violence as **gender-based**.  This means that women experience violence because they are women.  This violence happens because women and girls are not seen as equal with men and boys.  This violence and inequality shows that the human rights of women and girls are not being protected. |
| a man and woman either side of a flipchart on a stand showing the numbers 1 and 2 with green ticks next to thema woman holding her hand in front of her in a 'stop' gesturea police officer helping a young woman who is sat on the grounda judge in a courtroom2 policy documents with green ticks on the covers | By signing the convention, countries agree to:   * work to stop violence from happening * make sure they respond properly when it does   This work is known as the 4 Ps:   * **prevent** – stop something from happening * **protect** – keep people safe * **prosecute** – to take someone to court if they have committed a crime * and have **policies** – documents that:   + explain what they want to achieve   + show the work they are going to do |
| a smiling girl holding an Easy Read documenta UK map next to the year 2022 on a calendar page and a woman giving the thumbs upa group of people next to the Human Rights Act law documenta man looking closely at something and a woman writing information down | Autism-Europe has made an [Easy-Read version](https://rm.coe.int/istanbul-convention-easy-to-read-final/16809e8251) of the Convention.  The UK, including Scotland agreed to meet the standards in the Convention in 2022.  The Scottish Human Rights Commission checks how human rights are being protected in Scotland. |
| a woman giving the thumbs up next to a list with green ticks on it | A group of experts on violence against women, called **GREVIO**, has been set up to check how countries are meeting the standards.  The group makes recommendations so that countries work together to give advice and to move forward in their work.  A **recommendation** is what the group thinks should happen. |
| a report document with blue arrows coming from it | We have sent a report to GREVIO to help them with their checks.  It is called a monitoring report. |
| a group of women who look sad and serious | The Scottish Government says that it wants to do many things to prevent, protect, prosecute and have policies about violence against women.  There is a big difference between this and the experiences of women and girls in Scotland who have had violence happen to them. |
| a group of happy women with speech bubbles above their head, in front of a report document | We listened to women and girls who are part of **survivor** groups in Scotland.  A **survivor** is a person who has experienced gender-based violence.  They shared their experiences, which we  published in a report called ‘In Our Words’. |
| A group of women with speech bubbles above their heads | The report uses the words of **victim-survivors** to show what they felt about reporting or getting support after experiencing violence.  **Victim-survivors** are people who have experienced a crime or action that has caused them harm.  They might prefer to call themselves a victim or a survivor of crime. |

## The most important things in the monitoring report

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| a group of people next to the Human Rights Act law document | Scotland’s national policies for violence against women and girls are based on human rights including the Istanbul Convention. |
| a plan documentthe cover of the Equally Safe document showing lots of overlapping hands | The Scottish Government and local government have a national **strategy** called Equally Safe which describes how they will protect women and girls from violence.  A **strategy** is a big plan. |
| a smiling woman giving the thumbs up and holding a clipboard with a green tick on it | We found that this strategy has helped people to understand what gender-based violence against women and girls is. |
| a thinking woman with a green tick and red cross in a thought bubble above her heada confused woman shrugging her shoulders, with a question mark next to her head | There is a big difference between what Equally Safe says and what women and girls say about their actual experiences.  Equally Safe does not have a very clear way of checking how things have changed.  This makes it difficult to say if Equally Safe has made things better for people. |
| A group of older women and a group of young women next to a BSL signer and a girl holding an Easy Read document | There needs to be more understanding about how different groups of women and girls might need different types of support or information. |
| people looking at a graph on a tablea group of people next to the Human Rights Act law document | We do not have enough **data** and **evidence**, especially about groups of women who are treated even more unequally.  **Data** is facts, figures and information.  **Evidence** is information that proves something is true.  Human rights can help us to know what data and evidence is needed. |
| a speaking woman with a speech bubble coming from her mouthmoney with a red line through it | Victim-survivors want to share their stories to make things better for other women and girls.  The organisations that work with victim-survivors are not usually given funding to do this work properly. |
| a police officer and a sad young woman in front of a map of Scotland | Getting support after being the victim of violence is difficult for women because support services are not the same in all parts of Scotland. |
| money with a red line through itthe years 2024 and 2025 on calendar pages with a red arrow pointing to the right | Many support services for victim-survivors:   * do not have enough **funding** – money for the work they do * funding amounts do not always stay the same or are enough for future services |
| a police officer next to a law documenta police officer talking to a woman in a police stationA group of staff looking at a computer screen | Changes to **criminal law** are good but it is too early to say if they are working well.  **Criminal law** deals with cases where the law has been broken.  The police and victims of crime need to:   * work better together * be better at sharing information |
| the legal aid logo of 2 black stick figures leaning over opposite sides of a tablemoney - coins and notes - and a finger pushing buttons on a calculator | It is expensive to go to court.  **Legal aid** is money provided by the government to cover legal costs for people who cannot afford them. |
| an angry, threatening man pointing his finger at a woman who looks scareda man and woman talking in front of a woman holding a clipboard | It is difficult to get **legal aid** for:   * **civil** cases where women need protection from somebody accused of violence * cases to agree parenting arrangements with a partner accused of violence |
| 2 men disagreeing - one is saying 'yes' - the other is saying 'no' | **Civil law** is when 2 people or organisations disagree about something, but it is not a crime. |
| a frowning woman giving the thumbs down and holding a clipboard with a red cross on it | Victim-survivors do not always have good experiences when they go through criminal court cases. |
| a frowning man giving the thumbs down and holding a sign with a red cross on it, with 3 red dots leading to a smiling man giving the thumbs up and holding a sign with a green tick on it | The Scottish Government wants to make some changes to criminal court to make it less stressful and frightening for women and children. |
| a man having handcuffs put on him by a police officer | Some people are worried that the human rights of people accused of crimes will not be properly protected. |
| a woman shrugging her shoulders with a question mark beside her heada prisoner behind bars | We cannot tell if the **penalties** for people convicted of violence against women and girls are fair.  Victim-survivors do not feel that the penalties are fair.  **Penalties** are punishments for breaking the law – for example a prison sentence. |
| a woman putting a comforting hand on the shoulder of a woman who is upset | When the Scottish legal system deals with children and young people who have carried out crimes, it needs to consider how harmful violence against women and girls is. |
| a hand giving the thumbs down next to the UK Parliament building, next to a  scared older woman being pointed at by a group of young people | The UK Government does not agree to parts of the Istanbul Convention that protect **migrant** women and girls.  This makes them much more unsafe.  A **migrant** is a person who moves from one place to another, to find work or better living conditions.  We think that the UK should agree to these parts of the Convention. |
| the Scottish Parliament building and the UK Parliament building next to a woman writing on a list of 'conditions', next to a green tick | The Scottish Government should do everything that it can to help migrant women who cannot get support from the UK Government.  The Scottish Government should work with the UK Government to make sure that migrant women can get support. |
| A group of smiling women in front of a poster showing a group of people next to the Human Rights Act law document | The Scottish Government has plans for a new human rights law.  It must apply to victim-survivors of violence against women. |

## The most important things from the In Our Words report

## Prevention

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| a woman holding her hand in front of her in a 'no' gesturea teacher helping 2 young children with writing | We worked with groups of women who have experienced gender-based violence.  We asked them what is needed to stop violence against women?  Many of them wanted to see:   * more education * children to be taught about equality and healthy relationships, when they are very young |
| a police officer | * people to take violence against women seriously * punishment for violent people   They thought the programmes that work with violent men have not changed how the men behave. |
| a police officer helping a woman who is sat on the ground, being supported by a man | Some women had good support from the services that help women after they report violence or experience violence.  However this was not always the case. |
| 2 woman talking to 2 men | Women wanted ways to share their stories and views with people making decisions so things could be better for other women. |

## Protection

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| 2 women talking in front of an image of money | We asked the women to describe good and bad support for women who need protection from violence.  The women who described positive support thought that there needed to be more money for the organisations who supported them. |
| 2 women talkinga group of smiling women in front of a poster showing a smiling woman giving the double thumbs up | Many women had waited a long time to get mental health support but it helped their **recovery**.  Recovery means:   * managing their symptoms * getting control of their life * learning new ways to live the life they want |
| a man and woman shaking hands | Most women wanted to see more information and **respectful** communication.  **Respect** means treating people with kindness and showing that their thoughts and feelings are important. |
| an angry man holding his hand in front of the face of a woman | Many women felt they were blamed for what had happened to them.  This made them feel less likely to report if they ever experienced violence again. |
| a worried woman with a thought bubble above her head showing a large house | Women with a learning disability were worried that if they asked for help, their children would be **taken into care**.  **Taken into care** means the children could be sent to live:   * with another relative * with a foster carer * in a children’s home |

## Prosecution

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| a woman pointing to the top of a list | We asked the women:   * what needs to happen for a successful prosecution * what makes prosecution difficult |
| a frowning woman giving the thumbs down in front of an image of a judge in a courtroom, and a police officer | Almost all the women had something bad to say about the **criminal justice system** – this means police and courts. |
| 2 women who look sad and frightened | They felt that they were not taken seriously or treated with respect.  Sometimes they felt that people treated them as evidence and not as people. |
| a frowning woman giving the thumbs down next to a list with red crosses on it | Most of the women said:   * the impact of being treated like this was very harmful * they did not think that people treated them this way on purpose * the way the criminal justice system works is the problem most of the time   Many women described what happened to them in courts as being a story that was told about them that did not feel true. |
| 2 women either side of a whiteboard, showing an image of a judge in a courtrooma woman talking to a solicitor at a desk | We asked the woman how this could change and they suggested:   * more training for people who work in the police service and in court * being told what was happening more often |
| a man in court, with 2 police officers either side | Some women felt it was more difficult to get a fair sentence, even when somebody was found guilty. |
| a woman talking, next to a court building | Some of the women talked about having to go to court to discuss their children or to agree **child contact** with the person who used to be their partner.  **Child contact** is the arrangement made for a child to see the parent they do not live with. |
| 2 sad children - one is crying and the other one has put a comforting arm round her shoulder | This had been very difficult for them and for the children.  Some women thought that the safety of their children was at risk. |

## Policies

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| A police officer and law document, next to the Equally Safe document | We did not ask women to talk about what laws or policies they knew about.  Some of the women already knew some laws or policies like Equally Safe. |
| 2 women pointing to the Equally Safe document | The women who knew about Equally Safe were positive about it, but thought it needed to be checked more often, to see if it was working well. |
| a thinking woman with a green tick and red cross in a thought bubble above her head | Some women felt there were sometimes differences between what the Scottish Government wanted to do in one area of policy and what it did in another area.  Many women wanted more ways to take part in policy decisions. |

