



**THANS**  
Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

Opinion

# Victim Blaming Normalizes Violence Against Women

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At the outset of the #MeToo era, the slogan “Believe women” became a rallying cry for the movement and was used as a tool to challenge victim-blaming attitudes and to engage wider audiences in conversations about gender-based violence. Victim-blaming suggests that a survivor has either provoked an assault or that they did not do enough to stop it. Victim blaming is destructive, inflicting additional trauma to the victim.

This is fundamentally a gendered issue. Research has shown that victims of gender-based violence are among the most frequent targets of victim-blaming, and women are more likely than men to be victims of such violence, including intimate partner violence and domestic violence. This means that victim-blaming disproportionately affects women.

Despite the progress made during the #MeToo movement, recent high-profile events, both provincially and internationally, have highlighted that our society does not believe women and continues to hold harmful beliefs about victims of violence. This is particularly evident when scrolling through social media platforms such as Twitter, Tik Tok and Facebook. Though these platforms can provide community and connections, they can also often become the site of hateful rhetoric. Not only do women frequently experience harassment online, but it is also on these platforms that harmful myths and misconceptions about victims of violence are shared.

One of the most common, and damaging, myths found online is that of the ‘Perfect Victim’. This is a belief about how a victim should look and behave to be deemed credible and worthy of sympathy. Generally, the perfect victim does not drink or do drugs, has corroborating evidence and a clear memory of the assault, dresses “appropriately”, reported the crime immediately, cut off contact with her abuser as soon as abuse took place, does no wrong, and is uncomplicated. This person does not exist. This myth ignores the complexity of gender-based violence, and the various barriers that women face when attempting to escape violence or to report it. The myth of the perfect victim is also inextricably linked with victim-blaming, as it suggests that anyone who does not fit into this socially constructed category is responsible for the violence they experienced.

These harmful myths and misconceptions are often packaged in a variety of ways, such as memes mocking someone crying on the stand, imitation videos, and trending hashtags. Whatever form they’re presented in, these ideas normalize violence against women and effectively silence victims and survivors, while discouraging future victims from speaking out of fear of similar treatment.