



# Abia State



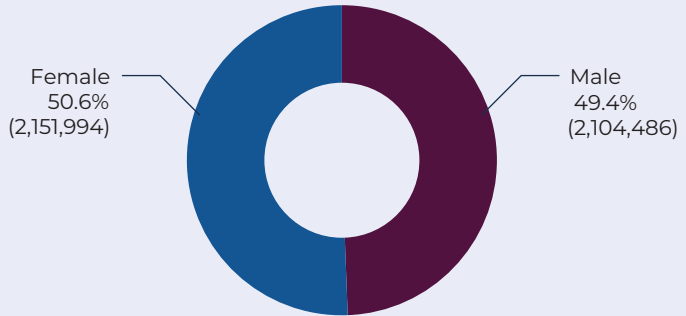
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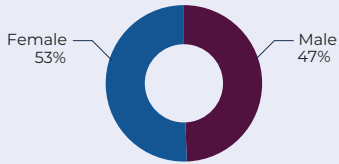




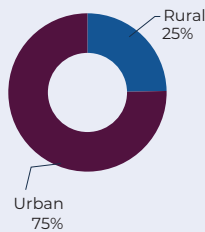
**Total Population**  
**4,256,480**



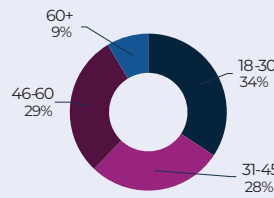
**Respondents: 417**



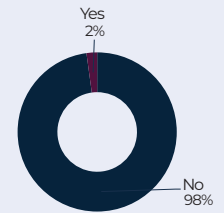
**Location**



**Age Group**



**Disability Status**



**GBV Context**



No. of GBV cases **1,267**



No. of active Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) **NA**



No. of active shelters **1**



No. of Family Support Units (FSUs) **4**

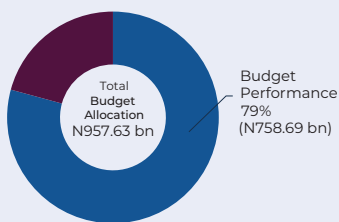


**Index Grades**

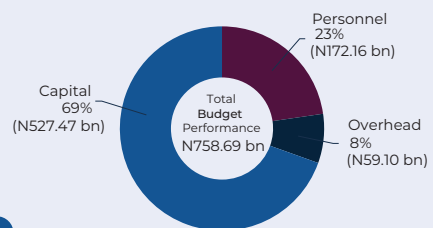
- Laws and Policies ●
- Access to Legal Justice ●
- Support Services ●
- Information and Awareness ●
- Budget and Spending ●

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

**Budget Performance (2023)**

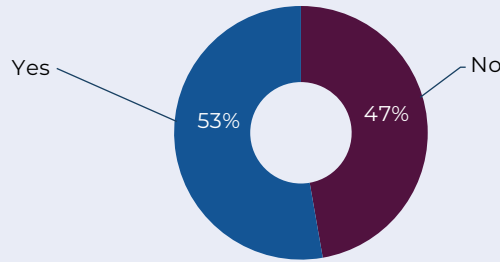


**Budget Expenditure (2023)**



Per Capita Spending **N178.2**

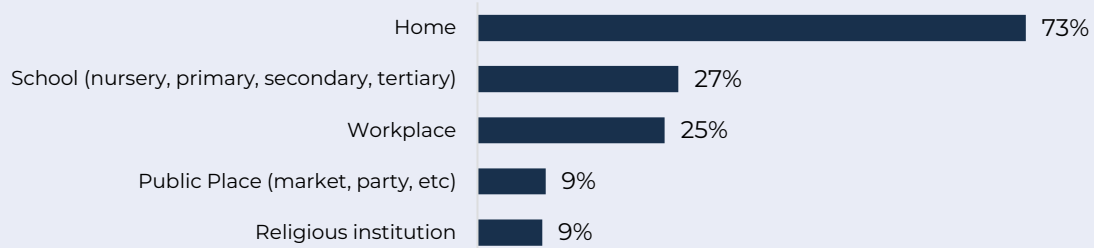
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence (GBV) in the last five years?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



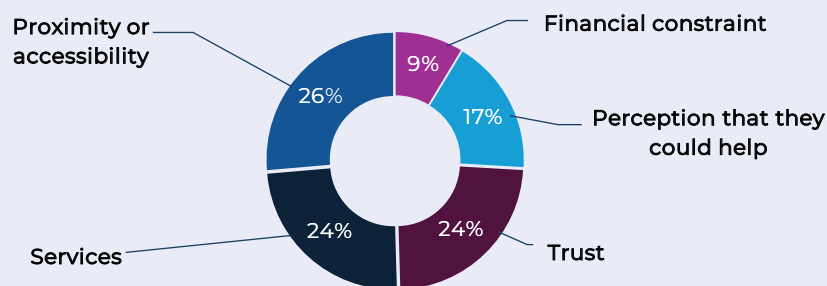
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

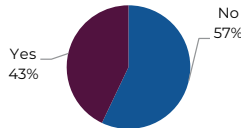


Why did you or the person choose where to seek help?

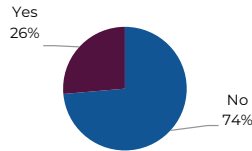


## Laws and Policies

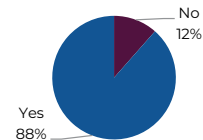
Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state?



Do you think customary or religious laws and/or practices are sufficient in preventing and responding to GBV in the state?

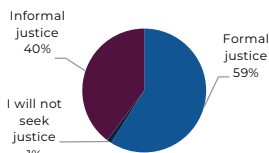


Do you know of anyone who has been convicted for GBV-related offenses?

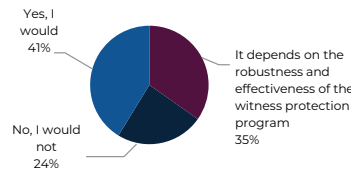


## Access to Legal Justice

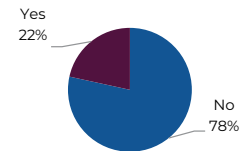
Where would you seek justice if you, or anyone you know, experience GBV?



If you witness GBV, would you feel safe serving as a witness during the investigation and trial?

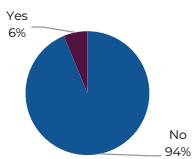


Are you aware of legal assistance and services provided by the State to GBV victims/survivors?

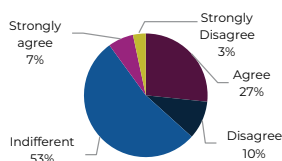


## Support Services

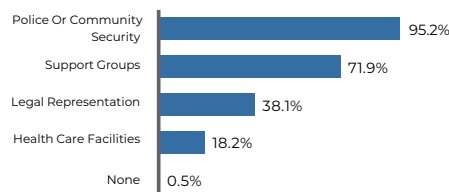
Do you know of, or have you visited, any active shelters and/or Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for GBV victims/survivors in the state?



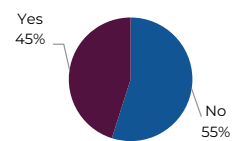
Do you believe that these shelters and/or SARCs are effectively functional, adequately equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable over time?



Which of these processes and procedures for reporting GBV-related incidents are you aware of? (Referral Pathways)

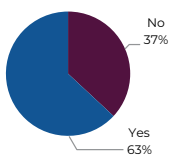


Do you think informal support systems such as family, friends, religious centres, community groups, etc., are helpful to GBV victims/survivors?

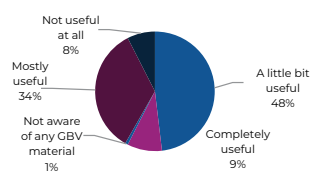


## Information and Awareness

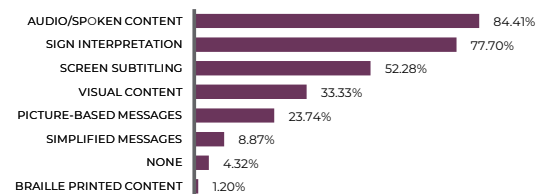
Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state?



How useful is/was the content of the GBV awareness material in educating you on GBV?



Which GBV information and education materials are you aware of for persons with disabilities?



## Key Insights

### **Laws and Policies**

The VAPP Law, passed in Abia State in 2019, addresses diverse forms of abuse, including rape, sexual harassment, emotional, psychological, and economic violence, and promotes gender equity. The law is currently under review at the State House of Assembly to address identified gaps, such as the need to define harmful widowhood practices and expand the scope of protection orders. Additional laws, including the Child Rights Law of 2019, the Female Inheritance Law of 2019, and the Standard Operating Procedure for Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response (2021), strengthen protections for women, children, and victims of violence. The state also adheres to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to promote gender equality. Despite the existence of these laws, awareness of them remains low, as only 46% of respondents had knowledge of GBV laws in the state. The VAPP Law requires an amendment to enhance its adequacy in addressing GBV. These include expanding the definition of incest to include grandaunts and granduncles, criminalizing coercion, extending the geographic scope of protection orders nationwide, defining harmful widowhood practices, and including intent to cause distress in property damage offences.

### **Access to Legal Justice**

However, weak enforcement institutions, untrained personnel, poor communication tools, and interference from customary and religious practices impede the effective implementation of these laws. The lack of witness protection, inadequate compensation for victims, and delays in prosecution further undermine justice. In the past 12 months, 1,267 GBV cases were reported across the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and NHRC. Only 39 cases were resolved despite progress, highlighting significant gaps in law enforcement and victim support mechanisms. Stricter enforcement and awareness are essential. 88% of respondents believe that religious and customary laws, though majorly unwritten and informal, help address GBV in Abia. Despite reforms to codify informal laws, some remain obnoxious, which must be abolished without further delay.

In Abia State, the Ministry of Women Affairs serves as the primary point of contact for GBV victims. Upon reporting, cases are documented for police investigation, with some settled through mediation at MoWA, while others are escalated to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution, supported by DPP, pro bono lawyers, and NGOs. 59% of Respondents prefer the formal justice system despite its bureaucracy and delay, whereas 40% prefer the informal system because it is more friendly and less adversarial. Free legal services are rendered by government lawyers at the MoJ, though victims often bear transport and logistical costs, which can discourage them from pursuing cases. Abia state lacks a robust witness protection program. However, in some cases, victims and witnesses are not brought into the open court for witnessing as a protective measure. Long prosecutions and delays persist in the state, apparently due to the lack of dedicated GBV judges and courts. Informally, cases are handled by community groups, such as Ezes-in-Council, which adjudicate using punishments like warnings, fines, floggings, movement restrictions, and banishment. However, criminal cases are referred to the police. The informal justice system, though effective in some cases, operates without a written framework, presenting challenges in consistency and enforcement.

### **Support Services**

Abia State has one shelter but no established SARCs for GBV victims, though there is an ongoing effort to construct SARCs in the state's three senatorial zones. Currently, victims are supported through the MoWA and NGOs, who provide temporary shelter, counselling, medical assistance, and vocational training to abused victims they rescue. In addition, community-based organizations, such as Ikpirikpe Women's groups in Ohafia, collaborate with traditional rulers, vigilante groups, and religious leaders to offer informal support. Religious institutions, especially churches, provide counselling, guidance, and financial support and often assist with logistics for legal proceedings. 45% of the population studied believe that the informal systems are effective.

The Ikpirikpe Women are daring, and nobody stands in their way to dispense justice on GBV cases such

as wife battery, assault, rape, child trafficking, et cetera. They collaborate with traditional rulers and Umu Ada, age grade, and vigilante groups. Also, women report GBV matters to their religious leaders, who offer counselling and guidance. Churches also have marriage counselling units and disciplinary committees to handle such cases. Despite agreeing that the informal support systems help, respondents fear they can become unnecessarily biased against victims/survivors on certain matters. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, such as the lack of specific budget lines for GBV and inadequate government commitment to addressing the issue. Victims often face logistical costs that hinder their access to justice. While the government offers some formal support, such as legal representation and witness protection, it falls short in terms of comprehensive, sustainable services like functional SARCs and shelters.

## Information and Awareness

Abia State has made some progress in its efforts to raise awareness about GBV through IE materials. The state's sensitization initiatives include a comprehensive tour of secondary schools, seminars, and workshops. Billboards featuring powerful messages like "Say No to Child Exploitation" and "Stop Gender-Based Violence" are strategically placed across the state. The Ministry of Women Affairs, NAPTIP, and NHRC all distribute IEC materials, including posters, handbills, and leaflets. Additionally, weekly radio programs such as "Know Your Rights" on Flo FM help spread awareness. Comprehensive sex education is provided in secondary schools and tertiary institutions and integrated into various courses and events. However, no specific IEC materials are tailored for persons with disabilities (PWDs), though Braille machines and white sticks have been provided for the visually impaired. In collaboration with local women's groups, the state government continues to intensify its outreach efforts, aiming for broader inclusivity and effectiveness in GBV awareness campaigns.

## Budget and Spending

Abia has a dedicated budget line for addressing GBV in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development's 2023 budget. The ministry was allocated a total of N957.62 million, achieving 79% budget performance, with N758.69 million spent. This expenditure includes N172.158 million on personnel, N5.06 million on overhead, and N527.46 million on capital projects. Specific GBV-related allocations included N5 million for COVID-19 sensitization/advocacy on GBV and sexual assault and another N5 million for constructing a state social/children's home. Given the state's population of 4,502,787, per capita spending on Ministry activities amounts to ₦178.2, far from the ideal of N1000. While the ministry's performance reflects substantial progress, increased prioritization of GBV-specific programs is essential to ensure comprehensive support for survivors.

## Human Angle Story



Edem was a familiar face at his neighbor's house, Madam Amaka. He used to help them put on their generator. One day he raped the 12-year-old child of Madam Amaka. The woman had a shop opposite the house and came in late that particular day. As the woman entered the house, the perpetrator rushed out of her house. The woman raised the alarm, and the man was arrested and taken to the Police Station in Umuahia. The matter is ongoing. It was initially heard at the Magistrate Court but has now been transferred to the High Court.



# Abia State

Index	Key Findings	Recommendations
<b>Laws and Policies</b> 	<p>The VAPP Law needs some amendments by adding grandaunts and granduncles among those who can commit incest (s.2), adding the offence of coercion, expanding the scope/reach of the Protection Order to nationwide (s.35), defining “Harmful Widowhood Practices”, and including “intent to cause distress under section 31.</p>	<p>Strictly enforce the GBV laws without fear or favour.</p> <p>Revise and expand existing laws to establish a more comprehensive legal framework to protect GBV victims and hold perpetrators accountable, including clearer victim protection laws.</p>
	<p>Low awareness of the existing laws and policies.</p>	<p>Ensure funding prioritization for more sensitization and awareness programs to spread across all LGAs and even rural communities in the state.</p>
<b>Access to Legal Justice</b> 	<p>GBV cases are handled through a combination of government institutions, including the Ministry of Women Affairs, NAPTIP, Civil Defense, and the Police, but delays and inefficiencies exist.</p>	<p>There is a need for better coordination of all relevant MDAs handling GBV cases in the state.</p>
	<p>Legal proceedings for GBV cases are often slow, with limited victim support during the trial process.</p>	<p>Increase training for law enforcement and judicial officers on handling GBV cases to improve efficiency and reduce prosecution delays.</p>
	<p>There is a witness protection program in the state. During the prosecution of cases, witnesses' names are not mentioned. They are not allowed to appear in the general courtroom to avoid being recognized. For rape victims, both the victim and witnesses are shelved from public view.</p>	<p>Witness protection programs should be strengthened, while long prosecution should be discouraged.</p> <p>Provide legal support for victims through the provision of pro bono lawyers or a state-supported legal aid scheme. This should be extended to reach more people and made totally free, especially for indigent victims and their relatives.</p>
<b>Support Services</b> 	<p>There is no SARC for victims to access comprehensive care and support.</p>	<p>Expedite the establishment and operationalization of SARCs and shelters in strategic locations to improve victim access to medical, legal, and psychological services.</p>
	<p>Informal support systems, particularly traditional groups, and religious organizations, play a significant role in supporting GBV victims, but there are concerns about bias and lack of accountability.</p>	<p>Create oversight mechanisms to prevent bias and ensure justice, strengthening and formalizing the role of traditional and informal systems in GBV cases.</p>

## Index





## Key Findings

## Recommendations

Index	Key Findings	Recommendations
<b>Information and Awareness</b> 	The state has made significant progress in GBV awareness through IEC materials and sensitization programs in schools, communities, and media outlets. However, low awareness of these programs persists.	Information and awareness about GBV should be made to penetrate every nook and cranny of the state. Much more is needed to improve on what is currently being done on sensitization and awareness creation.
	There is a lack of PWD-friendly IEC materials.	<p>The frequency of these sensitization programs should be deliberately increased to reach a greater number of people. Multimedia channels should be explored for this purpose.</p> <p>Ensure that all awareness programs reflect diverse and inclusive messages, including targeted outreach to marginalized groups and persons with disabilities.</p>
<b>Budget and Spending</b> 	The state budget does not have a specific budget line for GBV information and awareness, which limits dedicated funding for GBV-related campaigns.	Advocate for including a dedicated budget line for GBV within the state's budget to ensure that adequate resources are allocated for implementing GBV policies, services, and awareness programs.



## WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER 2023 Recommendations Abia State

S/No.	Recommendations	Implementation Status	Remarks
<b>Laws and Policies</b>			
1	The VAPP Law should be reviewed by addressing problematic sections and updating it in alignment to changing dynamics.	Partially Implemented	VAPP law 2019 is under Review at the State House of Assembly
2	 Government should engage in collaborative efforts with CBOs/NGOs to increase awareness of Laws and Policies and shore up support for implementing institutions to carry out their duties effectively.	Partially Implemented	From the local government to state levels, there are collaborative efforts between government, CBOs/NGOs, informal sector to create awareness about GBV laws, policies, and implementation. This was collaborated by the different KI officers at the MDAs
<b>Access to Legal Justice</b>			
3	 Government should allocate funds to the prosecution of GBV cases and invest in its witness protection program and the training of staff in line with modern technological advancements.	Partially Implemented	There is witness protection program in the state.
4	Government should make provision for dedicated GBV judges to promote speedy dispensation of justice.	Not Implemented	Responses from KII in MDAs indicate that the state is yet to appoint dedicated judges for GBV cases
<b>Support Services</b>			
5	 Government to establish and equip SARCs in each Local Government Area, ensuring accessibility for GBV victims/survivors.	Not Implemented	Currently, there are no Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Abia State but there is an ongoing SARC under construction
6	Improved collaboration between government, NGOs/CBOs for the provision of support services.	Partially Implemented	The GBV Team in Abia comprises of Federal MDAs (Civil Defense, NAPTIP, state MDAs, SA, Judiciary, NGOs, Media and CBOs)
<b>Information and Awareness</b>			
7	Government should make annual budgetary allocations for the implementation of comprehensive GBV awareness campaigns and programs in the state.	Not Implemented	
8	 Awareness campaigns to be intensified across formal and informal institutions in the state with more regular radio and tv programming.	Fully Implemented	Abia State is progressing with sensitization tour and conducting seminars in secondary schools. There is improvement in GBV campaigns and sensitization across institutions, schools. Media Houses that host weekly GBV programs include Flo FM, BCA, and weekly meetings of the GBV Teams to chat way forward



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