

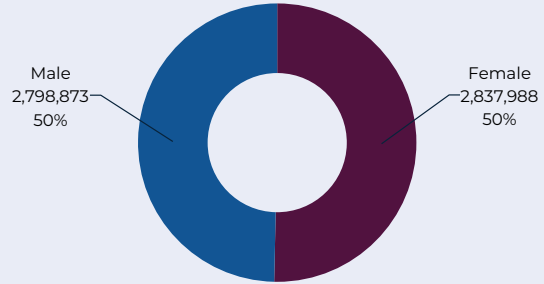


# Imo State

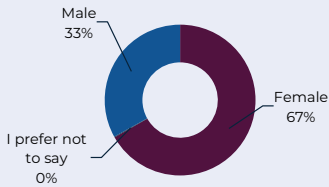




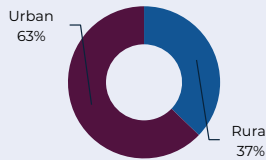
**Total Population**  
**5,636,861**



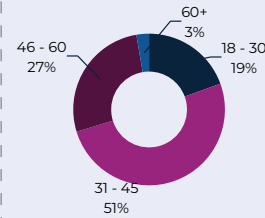
**Respondents: 632**



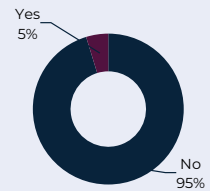
**Location**



**Age Group**



**Disability Status**



**GBV Context**



No. of GBV cases **504**



No. of active Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) **N/A**



No. of active shelters **N/A**



No. of Family Support Units (FSUs) **2**

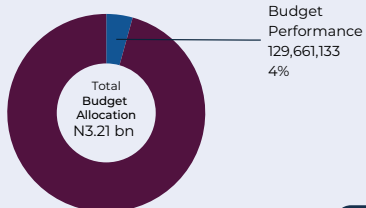


**Index Grades**

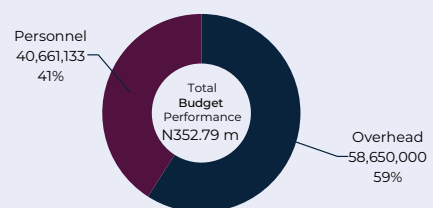
Laws and Policies	●
Access to Legal Justice	●
Support Services	●
Information and Awareness	●
Budget and Spending	●

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

**Budget Performance (2023)**

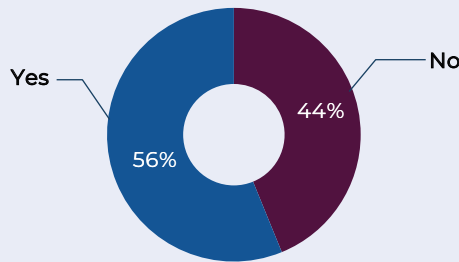


**Budget Expenditure (2023)**



Per Capita Spending **N23**

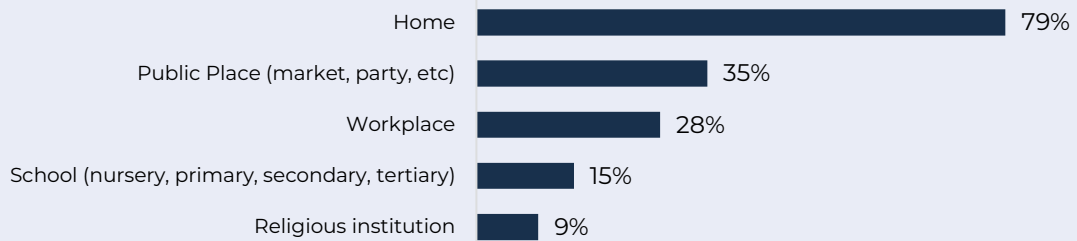
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence (GBV) in the last five years?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



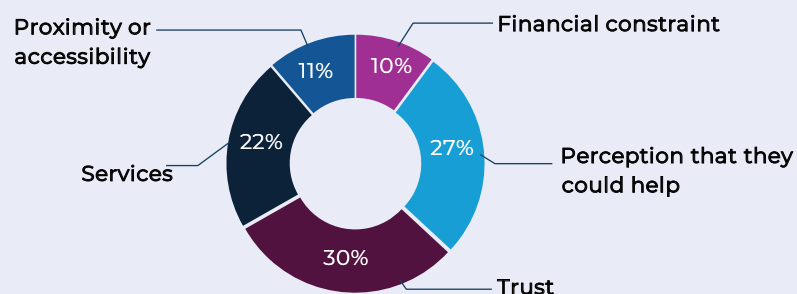
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

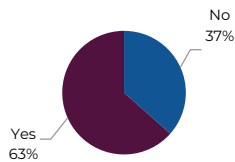


Why did you or the person choose where to seek help?

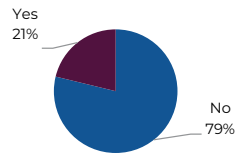


## Laws and Policies

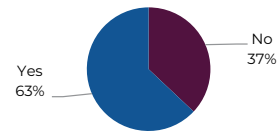
Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state?



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

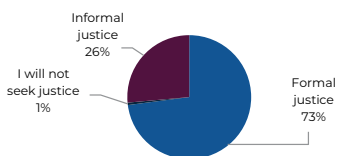


Do you know of anyone who has been convicted for GBV-related offenses?

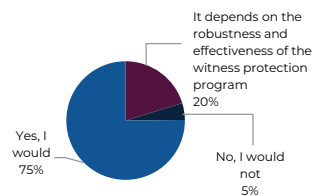


## Access to Legal Justice

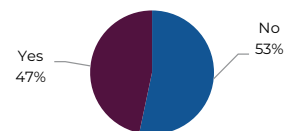
Where would you seek justice if you, or anyone you know, experience GBV?



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

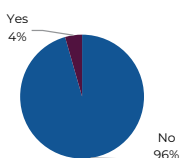


Are you aware of legal assistance and services provided by the State to GBV victims/survivors?

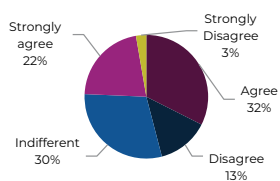


## Support Services

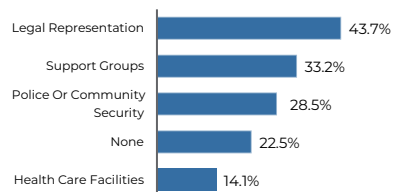
Do you know of, or have you visited, any active shelters and/or Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for GBV victims/survivors in the state?



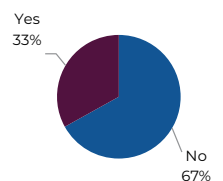
Do you believe that these shelters and/or SARCs are effectively functional, adequately equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable over time?



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

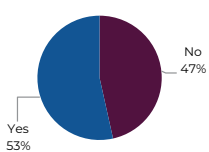


Do you think informal support systems such as family, friends, religious centres, community groups, etc., are helpful to GBV victims/survivors?

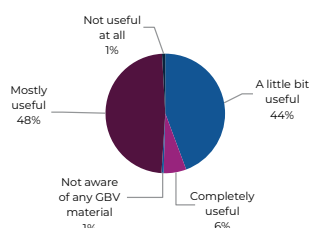


## Information and Awareness

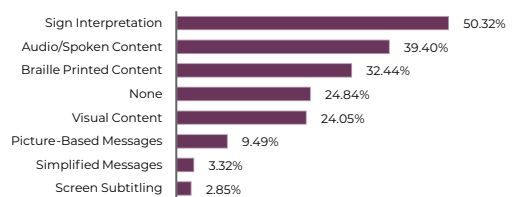
Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state?



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

Imo State has enacted several GBV-related laws and policies, including the VAPP Law (2021), FGM Law (2017), and Child Rights Law (2004). These laws aim to protect citizens against GBV, criminalize harmful practices, and support survivors. However, their application remains limited. Some sections of the law have been used in prosecuting GBV offenders, but a good number of cases are still ongoing. However, the absence of a VAPP Implementing Agency in Imo state impedes implementing and enforcing the VAPP law. While 54 GBV cases were reported in court, only one conviction was secured. Imo state still lacks a comprehensive offenders register, and GBV database, and more efforts are required in this light. Awareness of the GBV laws still poses a challenge, as the survey results show that 63% of respondents are aware of GBV-related laws. However, gaps in awareness persist among judicial and security officers. This limits effective enforcement and reporting. Despite their cultural roots, customary laws often contradict state laws, particularly on widowhood practices and disinheritance.

### Access to Legal Justice

73.2% of respondents prefer the formal justice system citing accessibility and enforcement capacity, although certain gaps prevail, while 26.4% chose informal justice avenues. The informal justice system, while culturally embedded, is seen as moderately effective, with 62% acknowledging its responsiveness. 0.5% stated that they would not seek justice at all. The long delay in GBV case determination discourages citizens, especially victims, from seeking redress. 68.7% are aware of customary and religious laws and practices (not coded) that address GBV, while 31.4% are unaware. Most communities have various groups that deal with such cases. A majority, 62.9%, agreed with the effectiveness of customary and religious laws in responding to GBV. Imo State lacks a dedicated GBV reporting system.

The police, with widespread stations across communities, is the most accessible and recognized pathway for reporting GBV. Victims rely on various platforms, including the police, FIDA, CSOs, and ministries such as Women Affairs and Justice, depending on proximity. Legal Aid, FIDA, and the Ministry of MoJ handle prosecution, but the state has no robust witness protection programs. While underage rape victims benefit from chamber hearings, broader witness protection mechanisms remain unimplemented. Only the MoJ and MoWA have specialized FSUs run by their specialized Gender Units. There is no specialized court for GBV. However, a magistrate court in Orlu serves as a “Family Court” with a section for ‘Adoption and GBV’. Imo has no dedicated GBV judges. Magistrates are assigned to various family courts that handle GBV cases. This accounts for the delay in handling such cases in courts as well as the administrative bottlenecks victims faced in obtaining justice.

### Support Services

Imo State has no shelter but there is a building called “Deborah House”, in Owerri. However, it is under-equipped, underfunded, and non-functional, having not admitted any victims since its launch. This reflects the low awareness of its existence among the citizens, as 95% of the surveyed population do not know the facility. There are no CSO-owned SARCs, but some CSOs improvise with their office spaces, but these arrangements cannot serve victims adequately. Respondents expressed the need for at least one function. The Deborah House is not very accessible because it is in Owerri Municipal and is not even accessible to people in the Orlu or Okigwe zones of the state. No official support system for GBV victims and survivors, but the MoWA and MoJ said they do their best to support victims, most times from personal pockets. Even when support systems are captured in annual budgets, they don’t get to access funds as there is little to no disbursement or utilization of capital expenditures for the year.

The reporting and referral pathway in Imo State largely relies on the police due to their widespread presence and accessibility. Medical units and forensic services are not prominently used in prosecuting GBV cases due to a lack of investment in such facilities. CSOs, alongside the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), facilitate referrals, counselling, and case management. Despite their pivotal role, CSOs face challenges such as interference from unprofessional law enforcement officers. Informal support systems, including family, friends, and community groups, are recognized by 37% of the survey population as essential but limited in effectiveness due to a lack of formal frameworks.

## Information and Awareness

Imo State's use of IEC materials for GBV sensitization is largely driven by partnerships with organizations like UNFPA, UNICEF, and USAID, as the government lacks standalone initiatives. These partners produce IEC materials such as radio jingles, pamphlets, and TV shows and occasionally are used by agencies like the MoWA and the National Human Rights Commission NHRC. However, these efforts are sporadic and lack consistent public visibility, as only 53% are aware of such awareness programs. Sex education in schools is limited, taught only as part of subjects like Biology, and does not comprehensively address GBV prevention and response. Efforts to integrate it into the curriculum face resistance due to misconceptions, although 98% of the studied population supports introducing GBV education in schools for better prevention and response. IEC materials for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are absent, as current resources are limited to audio and visuals, excluding Braille and sign language format.

## Budget and Spending




A specific GBV budget line exists in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Vulnerable Groups, with significant allocations to address GBV and support vulnerable populations. Notable allocations include N350 for a psychiatric hospital/referral center, N200 million for a halfway home, N150 million each for the establishment of a SARC in Owerri and capacity development for managing domestic violence shelters, and N100.58 million for constructing 3 VAPP buildings in each of the state zones. However, only 4% of the total N3.01 billion allocated budget was utilized, signaling poor performance. In the 2023 budget, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Vulnerable Groups underperforms significantly. Of the N129.66 million spent, N40.66 million went to personnel costs, N58.65 million to overheads, and N30.35 million to other expenditures, while no capital expenditure was recorded. With a state population of 5,636,861, actual spending per capita amounts to a mere ₦23, highlighting the urgent need for improved budget implementation and accountability.



## Human Angle Story



In Egbu village, Owerri North LGA, a widow was asked to come and drink the water used in bathing her husband's corpse to prove that she was innocent of his death. As this was being discussed in a WhatsApp group, our respondents, who were aware of the Imo VAPP Law, called their attention that what they were doing was wrong. He posted the law and the relevant sections to support his position, and the villagers responded that it was their custom and tradition. He insisted on exposing them to the full weight of the law, and the people abandoned the tradition afterward. The woman was free, and neither has any other woman been forced into such. - Mr. Benjamin Mbakwem (UNICEF FGM and Consultant for SE/SS).




# Imo State

Indexes	Key Findings	Recommendations
<b>Laws and Policies</b>  	The absence of a VAPP Implementing Agency, which the law provides for, makes implementation ineffective as offenders escape justice.	<p>Review of obsolete GBV-related laws and policies to reflect current realities.</p> <p>Urgent constitution and inauguration of VAPP or GBV implementing Agency for speedy and adequate law implementation.</p> <p>Provide dedicated courts and judges for GBV cases only and pro-bono lawyers for free legal services.</p>
	The VAPP Act has not been fully operationalized across the state.	Domesticate and operationalize the VAPP Act across all local government areas in Imo State.
	Most of the laws lack specific procedures that will make them powerful. They have not been tested, for example, the FGM and C laws.	<p>Strengthen the enforcement of existing GBV laws, ensuring that relevant agencies are trained and equipped to implement them.</p> <p>Sensitize communities on formal legal frameworks and the limitations of informal justice systems to improve reporting and adherence to legal processes.</p>
<b>Access to Legal Justice</b>  	VAPP law seeks the presence of a secondary witness in the prosecution of rape cases.	Provision of a robust Witness Protection program.
	Lack of dedicated GBV courts and judges in the state.	Creation of dedicated courts and appointment of dedicated judges for GBV cases.
	Extortion from victims and survivors by some of the judicial security officers.	More oversight and monitoring of judicial officers.
	Lack of legal representatives provided by the state to victims of GBV.	State provision of pro-bono lawyers and services.
	Forensic and medical evidence crucial for prosecutions is unavailable due to the absence of functional facilities in the state.	Establish forensic labs and medical units in SARCs to strengthen evidence collection and case prosecution.
<b>Support Services</b>  	No active shelter or SARC. Medical, psychosocial, and financial support systems from the state are lacking.	Active shelters should be provided to house victims and survivors of GBV, while SARC should be made optimally functional. Reporting and referral pathways should be available and affordable to victims and survivors.
	Low awareness rate of GBV support systems across the state.	Awareness level about GBV and the campaign against it must be sold to the nooks and crannies of the state. Such information will constitute support for many victims.
	Medical, psychosocial, and financial support systems from the state are lacking.	<p>Improve funding to ensure that relevant pathways are made available and affordable to victims and survivors.</p> <p>Also, making budgetary provisions for trained personnel.</p>

Indexes	Key Findings	Recommendations
<p><b>Information and Awareness</b></p> 	<p>Information and awareness about GBV and the VAPP Law are still very low in Imo State.</p> <p>Inclusion for PWDs, especially those with hearing and visual impairment, is low as there are no disability-sensitive IEC materials by the state.</p>	<p>Expanded awareness programs and activities should be implemented to break the culture of silence, while GBV programs and services should be made available online.</p> <p>Intensified awareness and sensitization programs around GBV across all groups in the state, with state/CSO-sponsored media programs running regularly.</p> <p>IEC materials should be PWD-friendly and sensitive, while advocacy visits are paid to the commissioner for education to kick-start the process of developing and adding sex and GBV education to the school curriculum.</p> <p>Consistent state/CSO-sponsored media campaigns must be run every time. IEC materials should be PWD-friendly and sensitive.</p> <p>Inclusion of Sex and GBV in school curricula at various levels.</p>
<p><b>Budget and spending</b></p> 	<p>Poor performance of budgetary provisions for GBV issues</p> <p>The lack of budgetary prioritization limits the effectiveness of legal, medical, and support services for GBV survivors.</p>	<p>Establish a monitoring and accountability framework to ensure budgeted funds are disbursed and utilized effectively.</p> <p>Partner with international development organizations to secure training, IEC materials, and infrastructure development funding.</p>



**WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER**  
**2023 Policy Recommendations**  
**Imo State**

S/No.	Recommendations	Implementation Status	Remarks
<b>Laws and Policies</b>			
1	There should be enforcement of the laws.	Partially Implemented	Some sections of the laws have been used in prosecuting GBV offenders a good number of the cases still ongoing. However, the absence of a VAPP Implementing Agency in Imo state impedes the implementation and enforcement of the VAPP law.
2	 There should be speedy and adequate implementation of the law.	Partially Implemented	The law has been implemented during the prosecution, conviction and imprisonment of a pastor who raped a female and felt he would go free but with the intervention of CSOs, MoWA, MOJ etc, the man was convicted. Though adequate implementation is tied to the creation of the VAPP implementing agency to oversee and strengthen the implementation of the law.
3	Huge awareness programs and activities should be embarked on by both government and CSOs on the availability of the laws and policies.	Partially Implemented	CSOs are almost the only group that is embarking on awareness programs and activities. From the supply side during the KII, the government is yet to organize awareness programs and activities on GBV.
<b>Access to Legal Justice</b>			
4	 Enhancement of reporting and other pathways making them available and affordable to victims and survivors.	Partially Implemented	There are no clear cut GBV reporting systems in Imo state but CSOs in Imo state and security have enhanced their reporting systems by providing phone lines that can be used to report crimes including GBV.
5	There should be provision of a robust 'Witness Protection' program.	Not Implemented	There is nothing like witness protection in Imo state and no efforts to establish one.
6	Provision of dedicated courts and judges for GBV cases.	Partially Implemented	There are no dedicated GBV judges but there are Magistrates assigned to various family courts and they handle GBV cases.
<b>Support Services</b>			
7	 There should be provision of more SARCs.	Not Implemented	Imo state have just only one SARC called the Deborah House located Hospital junction road and this is in owerri zone. Imo state have 3 senatorial zones and 27 LGAs and just one SARC. no efforts are made in providing more SARCs.
8	Capacity training for all officers and actors.	Partially Implemented	CSOs like Community and Youth Development Initiatives CYDI, Alliance for Africa have done capacity training where some security persons and actors have been brought together on GBV training.
9	Sensitization on the availability of reporting and referral platforms.	Not Implemented	
<b>Information and Awareness</b>			
10	Sex education should be included in the school curriculum.	Not Implemented	

WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER  
2023 Policy Recommendations  
Imo State

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Awareness and sensitization programs should be intensified across parts of the state by both the government and CSOs.

Partially Implemented

CSOs are the ones doing all the awareness and sensitizations.



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