



Rivers State



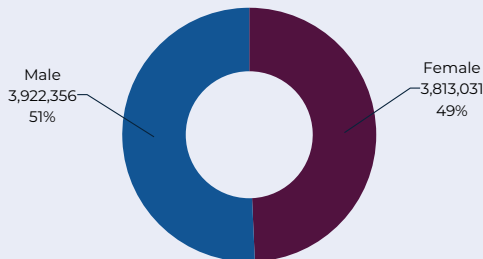
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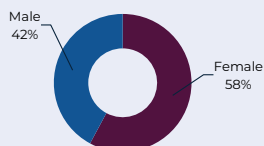




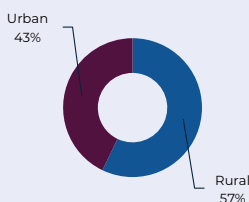
Total Population
7,735,387



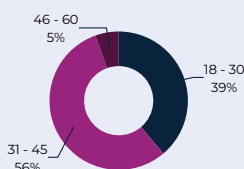
Respondents: 420



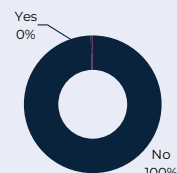
Location



Age Group



Disability Status



GBV Context



No. of GBV cases **1100**



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



No. of active shelters **4**



No. of Family Support Units (FSUs) **1**

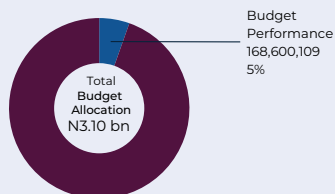


Index Grades

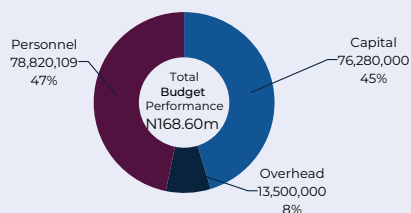
| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Laws and Policies | ● |
| Access to Legal Justice | ● |
| Support Services | ● |
| Information and Awareness | ● |
| Budget and Spending | ● |

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

Budget Performance (2023)

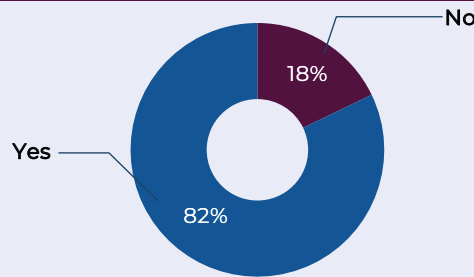


Budget Expenditure (2023)

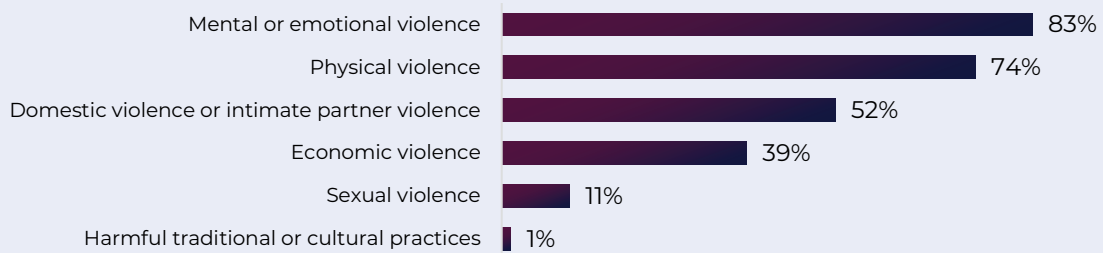


Per Capita Spending **N21.8**

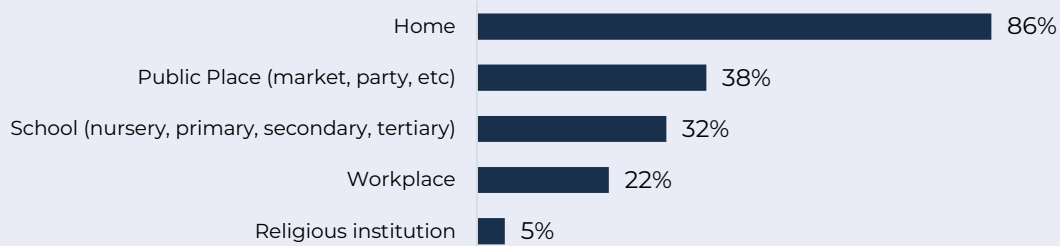
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence (GBV) in the last five years?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



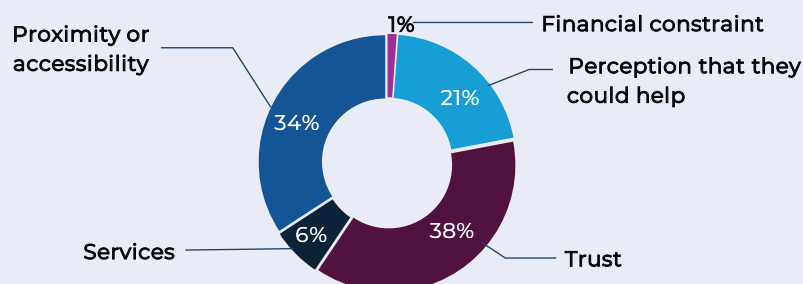
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

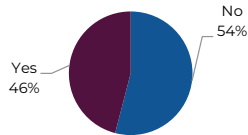


Why did you or the person choose where to seek help?

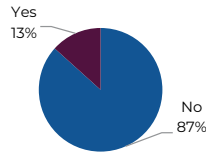


Laws and Policies

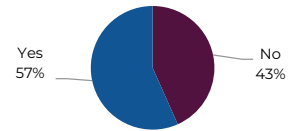
Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state?



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

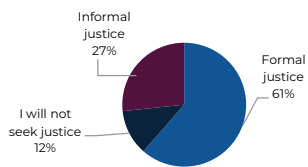


Do you know of anyone who has been convicted for GBV-related offenses?

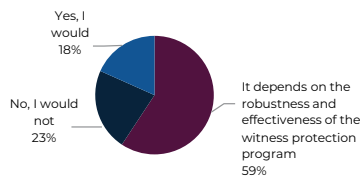


Access to Legal Justice

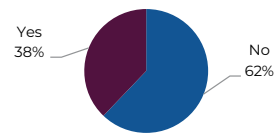
Where would you seek justice if you, or anyone you know, experience GBV?



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

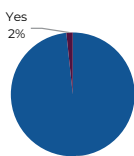


Are you aware of legal assistance and services provided by the State to GBV victims/survivors?

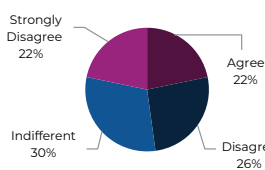


Support Services

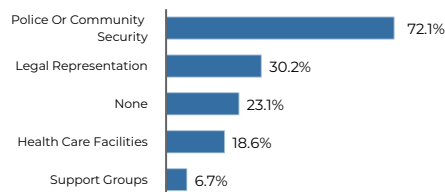
Do you know of, or have you visited, any active shelters and/or Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for GBV victims/survivors in the state?



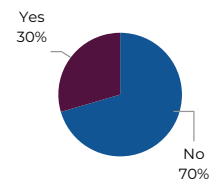
Do you believe that these shelters and/or SARCs are effectively functional, adequately equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable over time?



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

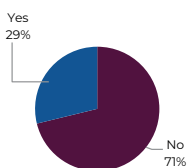


Do you think informal support systems such as family, friends, religious centres, community groups, etc., are helpful to GBV victims/survivors?

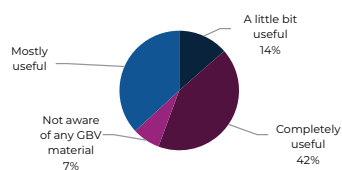


Information and Awareness

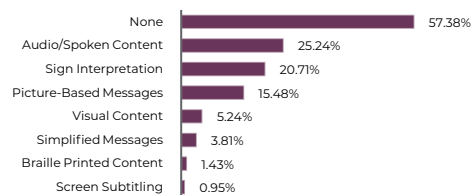
Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state?



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

Rivers State witnessed a significant surge in reported gender-based violence (GBV) cases in 2023, with 800 incidents reported. While 300 cases were prosecuted, 25 are still pending in court. Despite several laws, including the VAPP Law of 2020 and the Child Rights Law, effective implementation and enforcement remain major challenges. Survey results reveal that only 46% of the public is aware of these laws and policies, and only 13% are aware of GBV cases resulting in convictions. To address this issue, Rivers State needs to prioritize increased funding for GBV prevention and response programs, enhanced sensitization and training for public and law enforcement agencies, strengthened law enforcement, and legal reforms to ensure clarity and effectiveness in addressing GBV. Despite enacting the Rivers State Dehumanizing and Harmful Practices Abolition Law No. 11 of 2023, which explicitly prohibits harmful practices against widows, these practices persist. This is largely due to the weak implementation and enforcement of the law and its associated penalties. To address this issue, Rivers State is actively reviewing the Rivers State Administration of Criminal Justice Law to strengthen legal frameworks and enhance the response to gender-based violence.

Access to Legal Justice

The state has a comprehensive GBV reporting system that includes the Police, NSCDC, NAPTIP, the Ministry of Social Welfare, NGOs like FIDA, and the Family Court. Reports can also come from whistleblowers, social media, and journalists. Prosecution is carried out by the Police, NSCDC, the Ministry of Justice, and private attorneys, with cases often escalating from the Magistrate Court to the High Court after investigations and filings by the Department of Public Prosecution. These same bodies supported by NGOs spearhead law enforcement, although their effectiveness is moderate. The survey shows that 61% of the population would seek formal justice. Legal aid services are accessible, with state and NGO-provided pro bono legal representation, including support from the Legal Aid Council, FIDA, and public defenders. Witness protection is not robust, with options like safe houses and private family court proceedings, especially for children. Informal justice systems include traditional rulers, religious councils, and alternate dispute resolution centres. While these systems can resolve disputes, respondents criticized their lack of legal training, inconsistent practices, and bias. There are no specialized and exclusive police units; however, there are human rights desks at some of the police divisions/headquarters and exclusive judges on SGBV/GBV at the family court, which require capacity building to enhance their effectiveness and also improve the long litigation process which persists as a gap in the justice system making people lose interest in reporting and after reporting, withdraw or abandon their cases.

Support Services

Rivers State has no established Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). However, there are 25 GBV Centres staffed with trained healthcare professionals. These centres are strategically located in 21 of the 23 Local Government Areas, ensuring wider accessibility. The GBV Centres offer a range of services, including counselling, HIV testing, pregnancy testing, and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for rape victims. They also facilitate referrals to other relevant agencies like the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, and NGOs. The state currently operates four active shelters, with the Safe Home in Borokiri, Port Harcourt, being the most accessible. However, the distance from other LGAs to the state capital poses a challenge for accessing this shelter. The Safe Home provides comprehensive services, including accommodation, a child-friendly witness room, a crèche, a library, a probation unit, a counselling unit, and dedicated courtrooms. In Rivers State, GBV cases can be reported to various agencies, including the Police, NSCDC, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women Affairs, and Ministry of Justice. Depending on the nature of the GBV incident, appropriate referrals are made to ensure victims receive the necessary support. Within communities, traditional leaders, religious leaders, police, community security groups, and health facilities often serve as initial points of contact for reporting GBV. These entities may handle cases directly or refer them to formal agencies. The state operates two dedicated hotlines managed by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. However, 71.07% of the respondents believe that informal support systems, such as family, friends, religious centres, and community groups, are ineffective in supporting GBV victims and survivors.

Information and Awareness

GBV sensitization campaigns are periodically conducted in the state by government agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs/NGOs). These campaigns utilize various IEC materials, including audio, radio, TV, print media, and social media. However, only 29% of the surveyed population is aware of available GBV information and education programs. In secondary schools, comprehensive sex education, GBV prevention, and response are taught in collaboration with gender-based coalition organizations, the National Orientation Agency, and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. While these efforts are commendable, GBV awareness programs and IEC materials often lack inclusivity for persons with disabilities. While materials are available in audio, visual, and simplified formats, Braille-printed content and screen subtitling are absent. Adequate funding is essential to improve the effectiveness of GBV awareness campaigns. This includes increasing frequency, expanding coverage to all local government areas, and ensuring the inclusion of diverse formats to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Budget and Spending





In 2023, the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs received a budget allocation of N3.11 billion. However, the ministry only spent N168.6 million, resulting in a low budget performance of 5%. This low-budget execution reflects a de-prioritization of issues affecting women, children and vulnerable members of the society. The expenditure was allocated as follows: N78.82 million for personnel, N13.5 million for overhead, and N76.28 million for capital projects. With a population of 9.27 million, this translates to a meagre ₦21.80 per person, highlighting the urgent need for improved budget allocation and spending to address critical needs, including gender-based violence (GBV). Some specific GBV-related budget allocations for 2023 included N90 million for the rehabilitation of the Safe Home in Port Harcourt, N26 million for transportation for rapid response to rape incidents, and N14 million for the construction of a women's safe haven.




Human Angle Story




Following a GBV awareness program in a community, a girl approached an NGO's Executive Director to disclose a harrowing ordeal of sexual abuse by her father. The girl expressed fear of returning home. Upon further inquiry, it was revealed that the mother was aware of the abuse but had failed to report it due to threats from the father. Despite the mother's reluctance, the NGO, led by a human rights lawyer, took up the case. The girl was placed in a safe shelter, and legal proceedings were initiated. The case is currently ongoing in court.

Rivers State

| Indexes | Key Findings | Recommendations |
|---|---|--|
| Laws and Policies  | Rivers State Prohibition of the Curtailment of Women's Rights to Share in Family Property Law, No.2 of 2022. | Improving the willpower of the government and stakeholders will help establish these laws by going the extra mile to ensure their implementation. |
| | Rivers State repealed and replaced the Dehumanizing and Harmful Practices (Abolition) (Amendment) bill, 2019 to strengthen penalties and clarify protections for widows. Despite this, harmful practices persist. | Adequate training should be carried out for effective enforcement and implementation. More efforts are encouraged to ensure a wider spread of awareness of the intricacies of this policy. |
| | Domesticated laws fail to reach grassroots levels, stagnating at state level, leaving LGAs and communities uninformed. | Funding should be available to ensure the state properly implements these laws. Stakeholders should conduct regular awareness programs across all LGAs, utilizing diverse channels such as roadshows, radio programs, town hall meetings, and community outreaches to educate the public on existing laws and policies. |
| | | More funding should also be made available for proper sensitization and awareness programs. |
| Access to Legal Justice  | The current allocation of GBV judges is insufficient, with only a few designated judges in regular courts and two dedicated judges in the family court, hindering efficient trial processing. | Increase the number of designated GBV judges in courts statewide and allocate necessary funding to establish specialized GBV courts with dedicated judges, ensuring timely and effective justice for GBV survivors. |
| | Delays in GBV case hearings and external pressures lead to report withdrawals, compromising justice for survivors. | accelerated hearings should be allotted to reported cases, and victims' families should be educated and supported to resist pressures to withdraw reports or accept monetary compensation, thereby holding perpetrators accountable. |
| | A pro bono legal assistance program exists for indigent GBV survivors, but awareness is lacking. | Promote pro bono legal aid through targeted awareness campaigns to empower indigent GBV survivors to access justice. |
| Support Services  | The state lacks a functional Sexual Assault Referral Centre and has insufficient GBV shelters and service centers, leaving survivors without adequate support. | Establish more GBV shelters and service centers, increase funding for existing ones, and activate the SARC to ensure survivors receive necessary care and support. |
| | Inadequate funding for GBV survivor support programs, hindering livelihood enhancement and recovery efforts. | The government should partner with CSOs/NGOs to attract donor organizations to fund projects that will enhance the livelihood of GBV survivors. |
| | Low awareness of GBV referral pathway. | Increase staff strength to distribute awareness programs and sensitize the public about the various referral pathways. |
| Information and Awareness  | GBV IEC materials lack accessibility features for people with disabilities, limiting their reach and effectiveness. | Develop and disseminate disability-friendly GBV IEC materials, incorporating diverse accessibility features and media formats to ensure inclusive awareness and support. |
| | Lack of sex education in school curricula and inadequate training for teachers on addressing sexual harassment, leaving students vulnerable to GBV. | There should be consultative meetings involving the stakeholders on the need for sex education to be incorporated into the school curriculum and comprehensive training for the teachers on sexual harassment. |
| | Inconsistent and limited GBV awareness programs, with inadequate coverage of local governments, except for radio broadcasts. | Expand coverage of GBV awareness programs to reach all local governments, utilizing diverse channels, including traditional and non-traditional. |

| Indexes | Key Findings | Recommendations |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Budget and Spending</p>  | <p>The Ministry of Women Affairs recorded the third lowest budget execution rate, 5%, among the 36 states.</p> <p>A spending per capita of ₦21.8 by the Ministry of Women Affairs is grossly inadequate.</p> | <p>The government should ensure that allocated funds to the Ministry are fully disbursed to enable the Ministry to respond sufficiently to GBV.</p> <p>The government should increase budget allocation and spending to the Ministry to enable it to adequately address the GBV needs of the state.</p> |

WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER
2023 Policy Recommendations
Rivers State

| S/No. | Recommendations | Implementation Status | Remarks |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| Laws and Policies | | | |
| 1 |  Create and implement consistent GBV awareness programs, including the availability of the laws and policies that prevents and responds to GBV. | Partially Implemented | GBV awareness programs is available on the special days and other times and are been carried out by the various MDAs and organizations. |
| 2 | | Partially Implemented | The law enforcement agencies do not fully implement and enforce these laws. |
| 3 | | Not Implemented | The law does not envisage that there should be provision for budget and training, and most of the relevant personnel lack capacity building to carry out the duties stated in the laws. |
| 4 | | Partially Implemented | Some laws where gaps were identified have been reviewed and efforts are been made to review the Rivers State Administration of Criminal Justice laws. |
| Access to Legal Justice | | | |
| 5 |  Ministries with different functions relating to GBV should take responsibility at every stage of reporting, prosecution, and enforcement. | Partially Implemented | There is lack of enforcement system. |
| 6 | | Partially Implemented | The witness protection program is not robust and effective but it is in existence, and one of the reasons the family court was established. |
| 7 | | Partially Implemented | Pro-bono services for indigent persons is in existence though sensitization and awareness is low. |
| 8 | | Partially Implemented | The Family court is functional and has helped to preserve more constructive relationships in th families though there is low sensitization about its existence. |
| 9 | | Not Implemented | There are are long litigation process which make people lose interest in reporting and after reporting, withdraw or abandon their cases. |
| Support Services | | | |
| 10 |  SARCs comprising of a holistic structure should be made available in each LGA in the state. | Not Implemented | There is a functional SARC comprising of a holistic structure in the State capital though not available in all LGAs. |
| 11 | | Not Implemented | There is a Safe home and active shelters though not sufficient for the population. CSOs/ organizations that collaborate with the government supports with skill acquisition programs though not sufficient for the population. |

| WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER 2023 Policy Recommendations Rivers State | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|--|
| 12 | Sensitization and awareness programs should be carried out to make the GBV reporting pathways known to the public. | Partially Implemented | Sensitization and awareness programs are been carried out but not taken to the grassroots as most of the people living in the rural communities are not aware of the appropriate GBV reporting pathways. |
| 13 | Sensitization programs should form a primary function for the Ministries allocated to attend to GBV issues to enable awareness of the public on GBV. | Partially Implemented | Sensitization programs are been carried out but more work needs to be done. |
| Information and Awareness | | | |
| 14 | The state should make provision for IEC materials for sensitization, awareness, and intervention programs. | Partially Implemented | The MDAs uses IEC materials through collaboration with NGOs/CSOs. |
| 15 | The state should encourage regular sensitization programs. | Not Implemented | Sensitization programs are carried out in the State though not regularly. |
| 16 | Comprehensive sex education should be included in the school curriculum to be studied as a subject in secondary schools. | Not Implemented | Sex education is taught in secondary schools in a collaborative manner with gender based coalition organizations and National Orientation Agency but not as a subject imbded in the school curriculum. |
| 17 | The GBV awareness programs should be disability friendly to accommodate people living with disability. | Partially Implemented | it is not completely disability friendly as pictures and audio messages are used but other forms of disabilities are not put into consideration. |





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