



Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response: **What Has Changed?**



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Ebonyi State

Salt of the Nation

Edda Culture and Art Centre

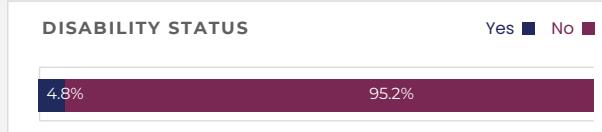
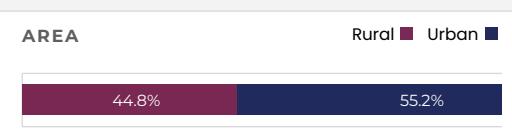
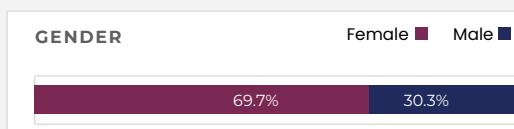
Ebonyi State

Population: 3,603,564

52.5% Female 47.5% Male

Overall Grade 65.8%

Respondents Demography (n = 1,094)



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

BUDGET ALLOCATION

₦1.09bn

(This accounts for 0.3% of the total state budget)



BUDGET PERFORMANCE

₦255.57m

(This accounts for 23.5% of total allocation to the ministry)



Capital ■ Personnel ■ Overhead ■ (Actual spend)



₦134.97



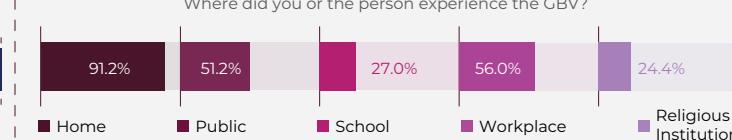
Indexes	Indicators			Total Grades
Laws and Policies	LP ₁	LP ₂	LP ₃	—
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ ₁	ALJ ₂	ALJ ₃	ALJ ₄
Support Services	SS ₁	SS ₂	SS ₃	SS ₄
Information and Awareness	IA ₁	IA ₂	IA ₃	IA ₄
Budget and Spending	BS ₁	BS ₂	BS ₃	—

GBV Context 2025

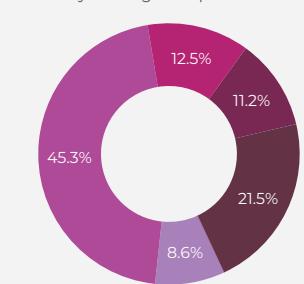
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



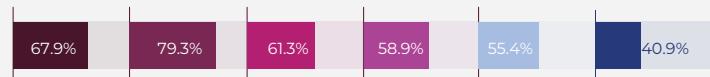
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



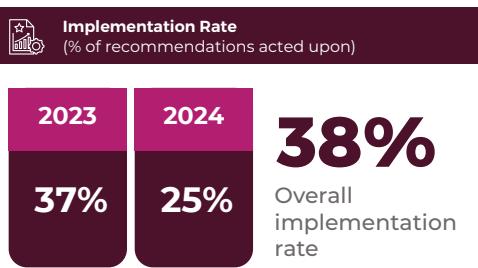
Where did you or the person first seek help?



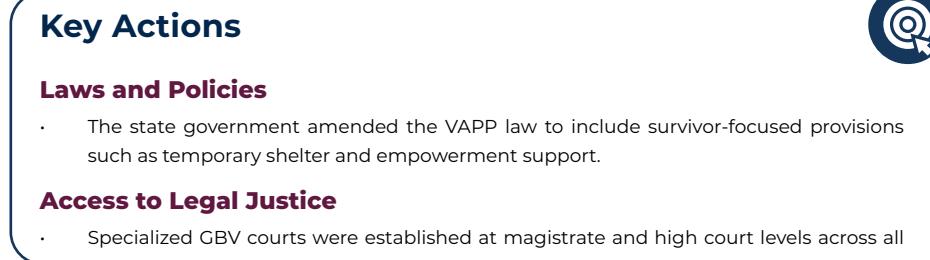
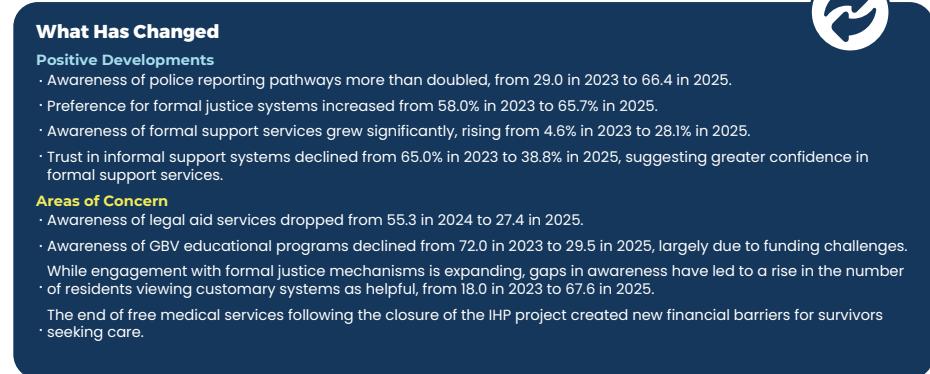
■ Domestic ■ Physical ■ Sexual ■ Mental ■ Economic ■ Cultural practices

■ Family/relatives ■ Police/law enforcement authority ■ Friends/neighbors ■ Traditional/community leader or group ■ Employer/Work colleague/Labour group ■ Religious leader (Pastor, Ulama, Imam, Deity) ■ Lawyer

■ Financial constraint ■ Perception that they could help ■ Proximity or accessibility ■ Services ■ Trust



Index	2023	2024	2025
Laws and Policies	LP 50.0%	LP 58.3%	+1 ▲ LP 66.7%
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ 43.8%	+2 ▲ ALJ 81.3%	ALJ 81.3%
Support Services	SS 62.5%	SS 56.3%	SS 50.0%
Information and Awareness	IA 62.5%	IA 62.5%	+1 ▲ IA 81.3%
Budget and Spending	BS 31.5%	+2 ▲ BS 75.0%	-1 ▽ BS 50.0%



three senatorial districts, staffed by trained judicial officers.

- A dedicated GBV Response Team was institutionalized, comprising the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Women Affairs, and key partners.
- The Ministry of Justice created the Department of Sexual Assault and Violence Response to handle GBV cases more effectively.
- In 2025, police adopted standard operating procedures for GBV case handling, covering medical referral, suspect arrest, incident documentation, and case tracking.

Support Services

- Survivor support services were strengthened with UNFPA support, including a six-month livelihood empowerment scheme reaching 20 survivors monthly (2025).
- Referral pathways were standardized by the Ministries of Women Affairs and Health, improving coordination across health facilities, police, and social services compared to 2023.
- Free psychosocial and legal services continued through the Ministry of Justice and the State GBV Response Team, even after donor-funded medical services ended.

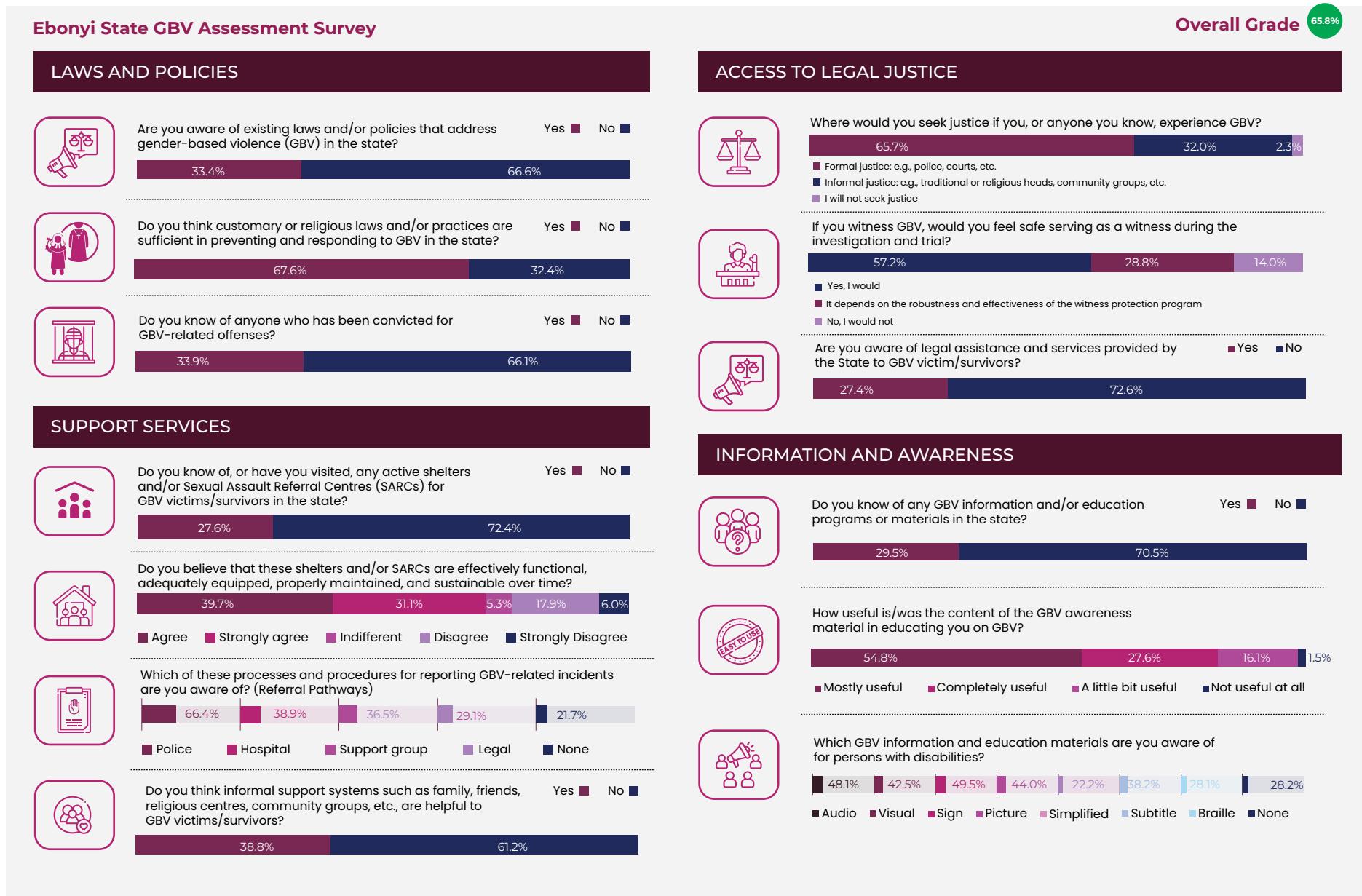
Information and Awareness

- GBV and child sexual abuse prevention were integrated into school curricula by the Ministry of Education, with support from UNFPA and UNESCO.
- The Disability Bill, passed in March 2025, strengthened inclusive communication and service delivery frameworks.

Change Spotlight

Ebonyi State improved access to justice for GBV survivors by setting up specialized courts in all its three senatorial districts. Led by the Ministry of Justice, this reform reduced travel time and costs for survivors, who previously had to go to Abakaliki for legal proceedings. With trained judicial officers in place, survivors could seek justice more easily. This change led to real results. Convictions under the VAPP law rose from 9 in 2024 to 12 in 2025, showing stronger prosecution and increased survivor trust. FIDA Ebonyi also reported that more survivors chose formal legal action instead of informal settlements.

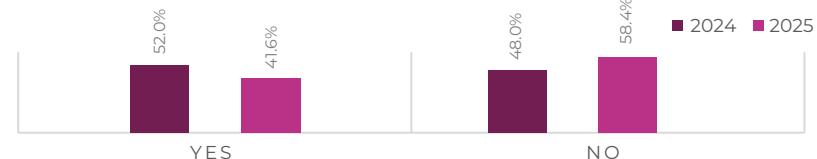




Ebonyi State GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade 65.8%

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



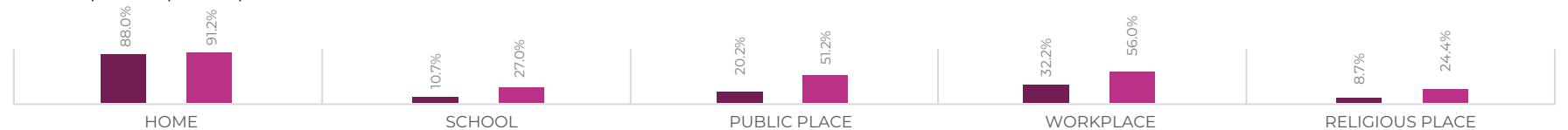
41.6%

of Ebonyi State population have either experienced GBV or knows someone who have experienced GBV

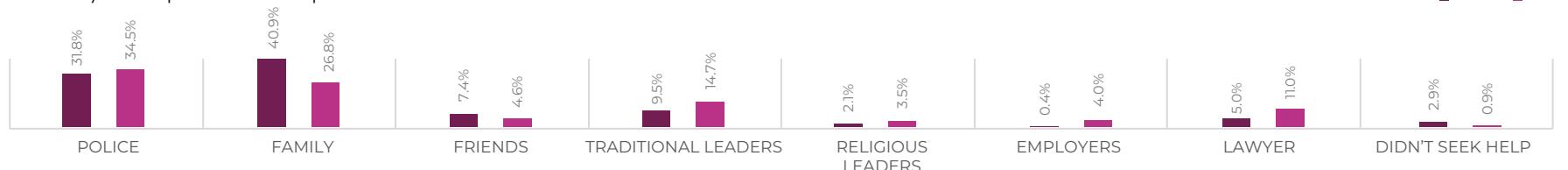
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



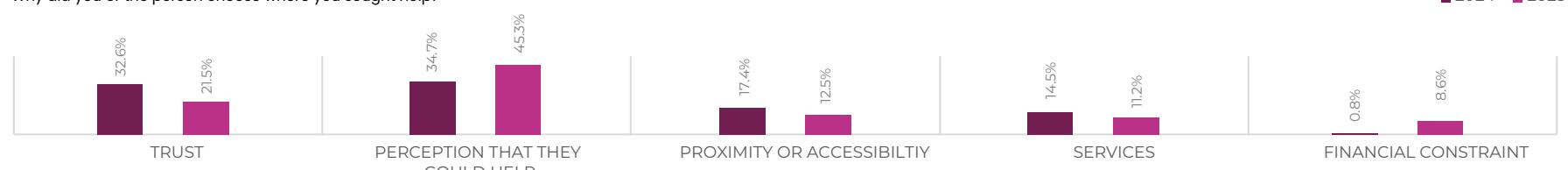
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

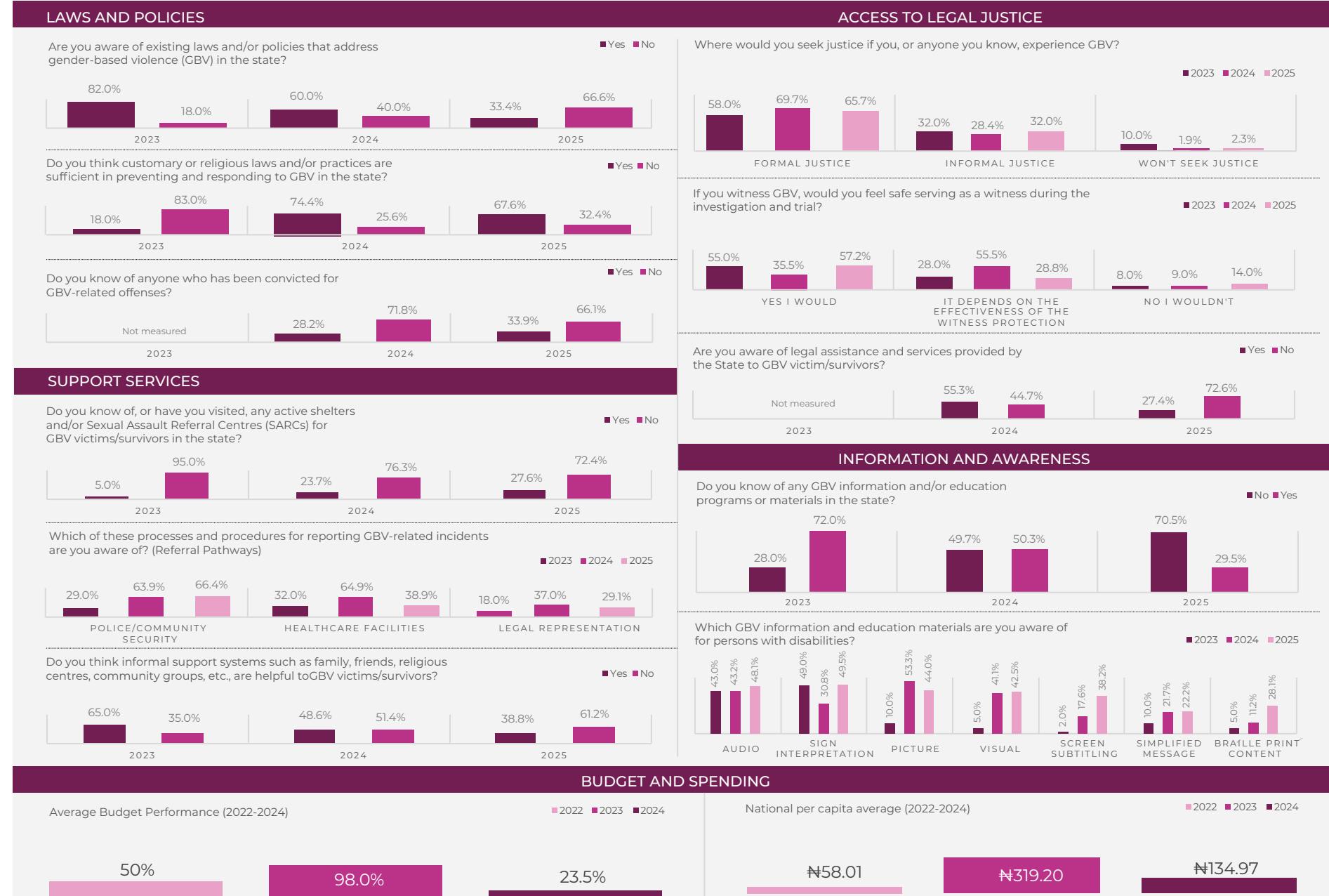


Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



State Data Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade 65.8%





KEY INSIGHTS

Laws and Policies

Current State in 2025

Ebonyi State domesticated the VAPP law in 2018 and reviewed it in 2022 with support from UNFPA. The revised law added new provisions for survivor support but has not been published as a single document, making it hard to access.

Survey results show a gap between public awareness and trust in GBV laws. Only 33.4% of people in the state know about the laws, and nearly 70% believe they were effective. This suggests that public trust may be based more on perception than direct knowledge.

Legal reforms have led to more convictions, rising from 9 to 12 in the past year. The Ministry of Justice credits this to better training of prosecutors and the setup of specialized GBV courts in the three senatorial districts.

Traditional and religious practices still shape community responses to GBV, with 40% aware of their existence and 67.6% viewing customary systems as helpful. Harmful widowhood practices remain rife, however, the Ministry of Women Affairs, FIDA, and community leaders have intensified efforts through training and sensitization across all LGAs. FIDA notes that these harmful traditional practices are gradually reducing.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Public awareness of GBV laws dropped significantly from 82.0% in 2023 to 33.4% in 2025, despite major legal reforms. Stakeholders from the Ministry of Justice and FIDA confirmed that these reforms improved accountability and led to more convictions, yet they also warned that without consistent sensitization, the gap between policy and public knowledge will remain.

In contrast, belief in the effectiveness of customary and religious practices grew significantly. In 2023, only 18.0% of respondents saw these practices as sufficient for addressing GBV; by 2025, that number rose to 67.6%. This shift reflects a growing reliance on traditional systems, possibly due to their accessibility or perceived fairness. Meanwhile, awareness of GBV convictions dropped from 28.2% in 2024 to 33.9% in 2025, raising concerns about visibility and public confidence in formal prosecution. Together, these trends point to a widening gap between statutory reforms and

community-level engagement, with poor funding and cultural resistance identified as key barriers.

Access to Legal Justice

Current State in 2025

Many residents are willing to engage with the justice system. About 65.7% said they would seek justice through formal channels such as the police or courts if they or someone they know experienced GBV. In addition, 57.2% said they would feel safe serving as witnesses in GBV cases. However, this growing trust is still affected by strong reliance on community-based systems: 32% of respondents said they prefer informal justice systems over formal, as 58.4% believe these community-based systems help survivors get justice. Stakeholders noted that while formal systems are expanding, informal justice remains easier to access in some areas, especially where cultural norms discourage reporting to formal authorities.

Legal aid coverage is comprehensive. Multiple providers, including the newly created Office of Public Defender, FIDA, Legal Aid Council, and NGOs like HELP Foundation and I-Prevob, offer free services across all 13 LGAs. According to the Ministry of Justice, "No area of the state is underserved."

However, only 27.4% of respondents are aware of government-provided legal support services. This low awareness continues even though free legal aid is available in all LGAs. Stakeholders from state MDAs confirmed that poor dissemination and limited public engagement are key reasons why many people remain unaware of these services. The Ministry of Justice emphasized that while the ministry is committed to providing comprehensive legal aid, weak communication channels limit public knowledge of these resources.

Specialized GBV infrastructure exists but is incomplete. While the state has no Family Support Units, Human Rights Desk Officers are present across all LGAs in police commands and divisions. The state has also established designated GBV courts called "special courts" with one at the magistrate level and one at the high court level in each of the three senatorial districts. Judicial officers have received GBV training in the past year, strengthening their capacity to handle cases sensitively and effectively.

A major concern identified by stakeholders is the role of informal justice systems. The Ministry of Justice reported that traditional leaders both support and obstruct formal justice processes due to inadequate training and information about GBV. While some trained leaders appropriately refer cases to the GBV Response Team, many mediate for extended periods before referring cases,

delaying justice in critical matters like rape, land disputes, and inheritance.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, access to legal justice in Ebonyi State showed both progress and setbacks. Public preference for formal justice systems rose from 58.0 in 2023 to 69.7 in 2024. However, this figure declined slightly to 65.7% in 2025, suggesting that initial enthusiasm may have been difficult to sustain without continued outreach and support. Confidence in serving as a witness fluctuated, with no significant improvement between 2023 (55.0%) and 2025 (57.2%). Many respondents emphasized that their engagement is conditioned on the strong witness protection programs.

Awareness of legal aid services, however, declined sharply from 55.3% in 2024 to just 44.7% in 2025. Stakeholders from the Ministry of Justice confirmed that while legal support is available in all LGAs through multiple providers, poor funding and weak communication have limited its reach. The recent creation of the Office of Public Defender represents an effort to expand services, but without improved public awareness campaigns, these resources remain underutilized.

Support Services

Current State in 2025

Ebonyi State operates one Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital (formerly FETHA 1) and one shelter under the Ministry of Women Affairs. According to the Ministry of Health, the SARC is functional, but the Shelter is not. The Ministry of Women Affairs confirmed that the state government provides minimal support for operations, and with NGO support having closed out, there is no separate budget to run the Shelter. Neither facility is distributed across the state's 13 LGAs, as both serve the entire state from single locations. Only a small portion of residents (27.6%) have visited or are aware of the SARC, among whom (23.9%) question whether these services are functional or sustainable.

The state's referral pathway operates flexibly, though stakeholders note it needs improvement. According to the Ministry of Health, survivors sometimes come directly to hospitals before going to police, while others report to police first and are then referred for medical care. The Ministry of Justice acknowledged that while pathways are effective, they require review to ensure placement at all MDAs, LGAs, and facilities that engage with GBV issues.

Support services such as medical, legal, psychosocial, and economic support exist but are incomplete and limited. Many people (67%) are unaware of these services. Legal services remain free through the Ministry of Justice, and the GBV Response Team provides free psychosocial support. However, a major gap emerged: medical services are no longer free. According to both the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women Affairs, the Integrated Health Program (IHP) project that previously funded free medical care for GBV survivors has closed out, leaving survivors to pay for services even at the SARC. This creates a significant financial barrier, particularly since most victims are indigent. Because of this gap, survivors often turn to informal support systems like family, religious centres, and community groups. These are seen by many (38.8%) as more reliable, even though they may not offer the full range of help survivors need.

On a more positive note, awareness of formal reporting routes has grown. Most people now know how to report cases through the police (66.4%), though fewer are familiar with hospitals (38.9%) or support group channels (36.5%).

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, more people in Ebonyi State became aware of formal support services for GBV survivors: 5.0% in 2023 to 27.6% in 2025. While this marks progress, it still reflects low overall engagement with these services.

Police reporting channels saw the most progress, with awareness more than doubling over the period: 29.0% in 2023 to 66.4% in 2025. In contrast, healthcare-based reporting became less visible. Meanwhile, trust in informal support systems declined sharply. In 2023, 65.0% of respondents viewed them as helpful, but by 2025, this had dropped to 38.8%. This shift may reflect a growing understanding that informal support is not as comprehensive as what the formal system offers. However, engagement with the formal system is still limited due to low visibility and limited access..

Information and Awareness

Current State in 2025

Findings from 2025 reveal that most residents (70.5%) in the state remain unaware of GBV awareness programs. Despite these gaps, those who have encountered awareness materials generally find them useful. This shows that the problem lies more in access than in content quality. At the institutional level, awareness materials and programs do exist but face distribution challenges. According to the Ministry of Education, the state uses jingles on radio and television, fliers, billboards, and megaphones during road walks to disseminate information across all LGAs. However, the Ministry of Women Affairs revealed that no new IEC materials have been developed or distributed in the past year, and fliers are currently unavailable due to lack of funding. The ministry noted that they previously received NGO support for production, but these organizations have since closed out their programs, leaving the office without materials.

There is also strong public support for integrating GBV and child sexual abuse education into school curricula. The state has made significant progress in this area. The Ministry of Education confirmed that GBV and child sexual abuse prevention education has been included in the curriculum for primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, with support from UNFPA and UNESCO.

Regarding disability inclusion, both the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women Affairs confirmed that the state uses audio/spoken content, visual content, screen subtitling, sign interpretation, picture-based messages, and simplified messages to communicate with persons with disabilities – only braille print is not currently used. The Ministry of Women Affairs noted that the state "has done so well on this," citing the passage of the Disability Bill in March 2025, though implementation is still pending. Survey data indicates that while sign language (49.5%) and audio content (48.1%) are gaining visibility, other formats like braille (28.5%) and simplified messages (22.2%) remain poorly known.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Ebonyi State has made progress in improving the quality and inclusiveness of GBV awareness programs, especially for persons with disabilities. However, these improvements have not led to stronger public engagement. Awareness dropped sharply from 72.0% in 2023 to 29.5% in 2025, suggesting that outreach efforts weakened or failed to reach new audiences. This decline aligns with stakeholder reports of funding constraints. With NGO support ending and no new IEC materials produced in the past year, the state has struggled to maintain the momentum of previous awareness campaigns. Without better visibility and consistent communication, even well-designed materials may not create the impact needed.

Budget and Spending

Budget Analysis 2024

Ebonyi State's GBV budget performance in 2024 reveals concerning implementation challenges despite having designated funding. With ₦1.08 billion allocated (0.28% of the state budget), only ₦255.57 million was actually spent, representing a mere 23.5% execution rate. The resulting per capita spend of ₦134.97, suggesting that three-quarters of the intended GBV funding failed to reach its programmatic targets. This underperformance points to potential systemic issues in fund release, project execution, or absorption capacity within the state's GBV response infrastructure, ultimately limiting the scope and impact of interventions meant to address gender-based violence in the state.

Changes Over Time (2022 to 2024)

In 2024, Ebonyi State's Ministry of Women Affairs received an allocation of ₦1.08 billion, yet actual spending amounted to only ₦255.56 million, reflecting a performance of 23.5%. This marks a substantial decline from the state's exceptional 98% performance in 2023. Allocations increased steadily from ₦3.5 million in 2022 to ₦10 million in 2023 and rose significantly to ₦166.50 million in 2024. However, execution rates for these line items remained at 0% in all three years. Per capita spending was ₦134.97 in 2024, ₦319.20 in 2023, and ₦58.01 in 2022. The sharp increase in 2023 followed by a notable drop in 2024 indicates irregular investment patterns rather than sustained prioritization.

Human Angle Stories

22-year-old Glory was sexually assaulted by a family friend, an experience that left her deeply traumatized. Although the man was arrested, his relatives came pleading, and Glory's family insisted that the matter should not go beyond them, citing friendship and the man's drunkenness at the time of the crime.

Her story reveals the deep hold of informal justice systems over survivors in Ebonyi. Despite existing laws and specialized courts, family and community pressures still prevent cases from reaching formal systems.

KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

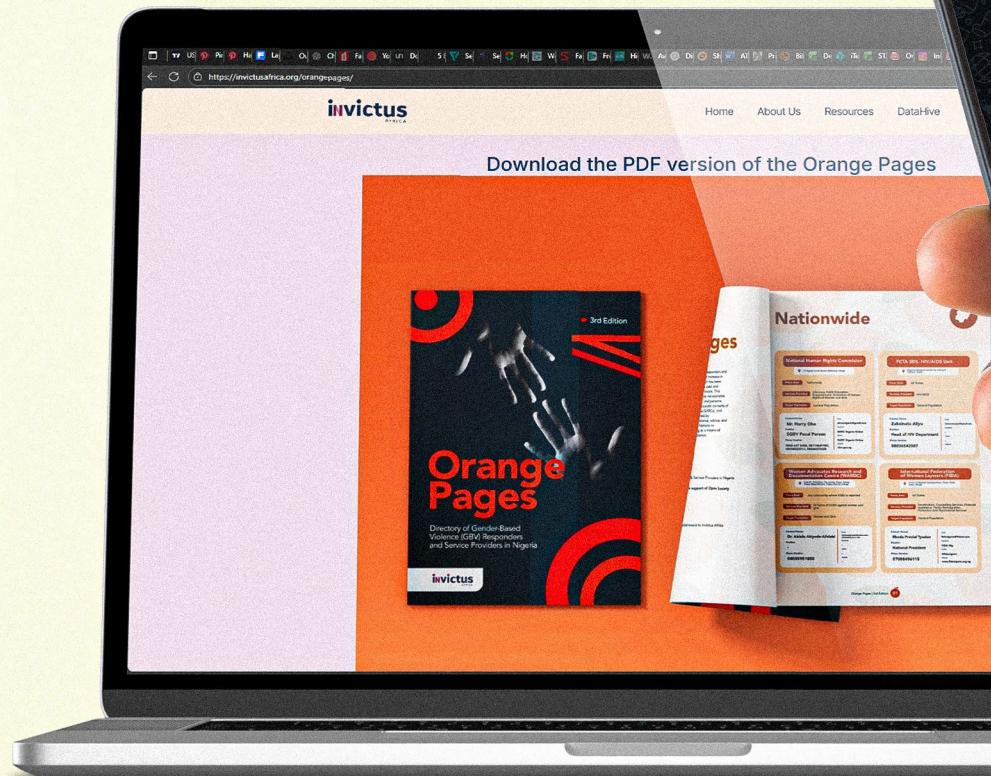
Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
Laws and Policies	Public awareness of GBV laws dropped from 82.0% in 2023 to 33.4% in 2025, despite legal reforms.	Launch a state-wide legal literacy campaign through radio, schools, and community town halls to raise awareness from 33.6% to at least 60% in the next 12 months.
	The amended VAPP law (2022) has not been harmonized and published as a single document, limiting accessibility.	Fast-track harmonization and publication of the amended VAPP law. Allocate dedicated funding for printing and distribution to all MDAs, LGAs, police stations, courts, and community-based centers.
	Growing reliance on traditional systems over formal legal framework, with 67.6% of residents viewing customary systems as helpful for addressing GBV.	Strengthen collaboration between the GBV Response Team and traditional leaders through structured training programs on harmful practices and formal referral pathways.
Access to Legal Justice	While legal aid services are available in all 13 LGAs through multiple providers, only 33.9% of residents are aware of these services.	Scale up Legal Aid outreach via radio programs, community announcements, and partnerships with religious and traditional leaders to reach underserved populations.
	Police enforcement faces critical funding gaps for mobility, investigation, and transporting witnesses to court.	Provide a dedicated budget line for police logistics (fuel, case documentation, survivor transport) to strengthen GBV investigations. Establish a transparent reimbursement system to ensure cases are not delayed due to lack of resources.
Support Services	The state operates only one functional SARC and one non-functional shelter serving all 13 LGAs, with only 27.6% of residents aware of the SARC.	Activate the non-functional shelter and establish at least one additional SARC in each senatorial district. Allocate a separate, dedicated budget line for shelters and SARC operations in the state budget.
	Medical services are no longer free for GBV survivors following the closure of the IHP project, creating significant financial barriers for indigent victims who must now pay for services even at the SARC.	Create and operationalize a state-funded Victims Support Fund to fully cover or subsidize forensic and medical care, and other support services for survivors.
Information and Awareness	Public awareness of GBV programs dropped sharply from 72.0% in 2023 to 29.5% in 2025, even though the state conducts sensitization activities across all 13 LGAs.	Scale up community sensitization campaigns using traditional rulers, youth leaders, and women's associations to double awareness rates. Use parent-teacher meetings and school events to extend GBV awareness beyond students to families and communities.
	No new IEC materials have been developed or distributed in the past year, and fliers are currently unavailable due to lack of funding following the end of some NGO support.	Establish a budget line for IEC materials and leverage partnerships with UNFPA/UNESCO to produce low-cost, durable awareness tools.
	While the state uses multiple formats to reach persons with disabilities (audio, visual content, sign interpretation), braille print (28.1%) and simplified messages (22.5%) are uncommon.	Accelerate implementation of the Disability Bill (passed March 2025) and expand accessible communication formats to include braille print and simplified messages.
Budget and Spending	Ebonyi State's GBV budget execution dropped sharply to 23.5% in 2024, with 0% execution of GBV-specific line items for three years and consistently low per capita spending, signalling major gaps in fund release and programme implementation.	Improve timely fund release and strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure allocated GBV funds are fully utilised and translated into effective interventions.



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