



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



With the support of
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Edo State

Heartbeat of Nigeria

Ososo Tourist Centre

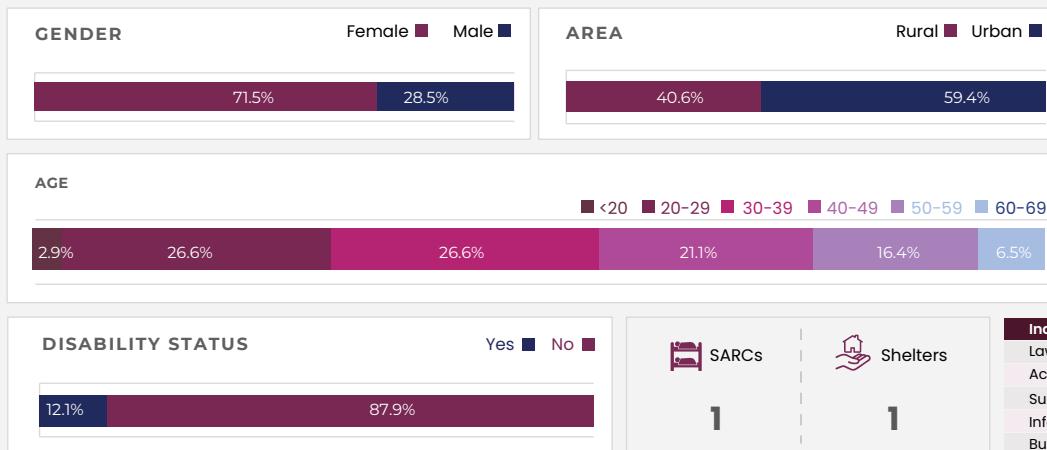
Edo State

Population: 5,256,806

49.9% Female 50.1% Male

Overall Grade 66.3%

Respondents Demography (n = 1,079)



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

BUDGET ALLOCATION

₦440.93m

(This accounts for 0.1% of the total state budget)

BUDGET PERFORMANCE

₦291.00m

(This accounts for 66.0% of total allocation to the ministry)



Per Capita Spending

₦111.01

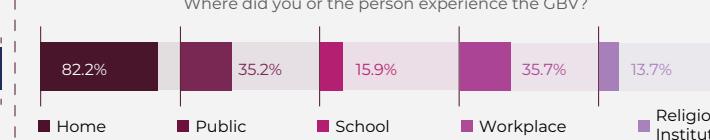
Indexes	Indicators			Total Grades
Laws and Policies	LP ₁	LP ₂	LP ₃	—
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ ₁	ALJ ₂	ALJ ₃	ALJ ₄
Support Services	SS ₁	SS ₂	SS ₃	SS ₄
Information and Awareness	IA ₁	IA ₂	IA ₃	IA ₄
Budget and Spending	BS ₁	BS ₂	BS ₃	—

GBV Context 2025

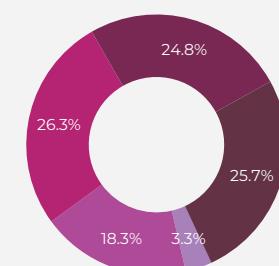
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



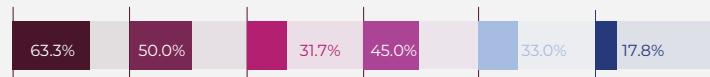
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



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



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



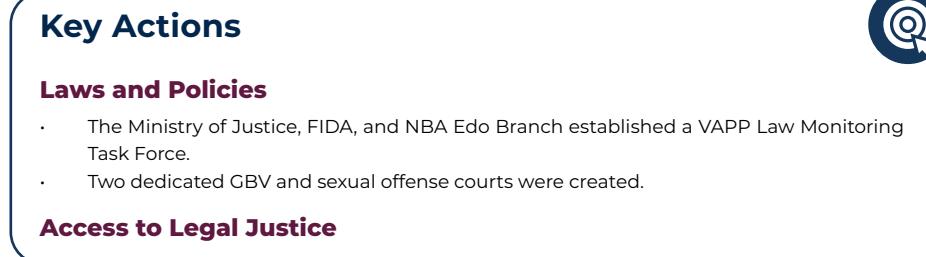
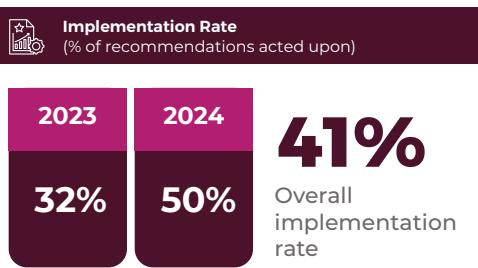
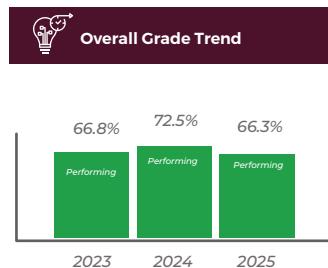
Where did you or the person first seek help?



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

■ Family/relatives ■ Religious leader (Pastor, Ulama, Imam, Deity)
 ■ Police/law enforcement authority ■ Employer/Work colleague/Labour group
 ■ Friends/neighbors ■ I did not seek help
 ■ Traditional/community leader or group ■ Lawyer

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



- The Citizens' Rights Department (CRD), Ministry of Justice, strengthened its Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) platforms including the General Complaints Unit and Correctional/Custodial Centre Watch Unit.
- The Edo State Police Command established GBV Desks in all 18 LGAs.
- Free Legal Aid Clinics by FIDA, NBA, and CSOs offered pro bono legal services, while NGOs like BraveHeart Initiative (BHI) support survivors to ensure perpetrators are prosecuted.

Support Services

- With support from RULAAC, a new Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is being equipped in Uromi, Edo Central.
- The Senator Daisy Danjuma Women Centre now operates a 100-bed facility, offering shelter, medical, legal, and psychosocial counselling for survivors of GBV, trafficking, and irregular migration.
- The Edo Specialist Hospital in Benin City serves as a one-stop GBV Response Centre.

Information and Awareness

- Community radio and television programs aired on Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS) and major FM stations on GBV related issues.
- The Edo State GBV Law was translated into Pidgin English and made available in audio format across social media and local platforms.
- Establishment of GBV Clubs in 65 secondary schools through the Ministry of Education/SUBEB.

Change Spotlight

In 2025, Edo State established two Gender-Based Violence Courts within the High Court system, supported by various organizations including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Women Affairs. This initiative led to over 100 convictions under the VAPP Law and quicker case hearings.

The BraveHeart Initiative has contributed to seven convictions in 2025. Community engagement through radio programs, GBV clubs in 65 schools, and simplified VAPP Law materials reached over one million residents, including marginalized groups. This collaborative effort has renewed hope for survivors, transforming laws into tangible protection and ensuring justice for citizens across Edo State.



Edo State GBV Assessment Survey

Overall Grade 66.3%

LAWS AND POLICIES



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

Yes ■ No ■

51.8% 48.2%



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

Yes ■ No ■

56.4% 43.6%



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

Yes ■ No ■

31.0% 69.0%

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?

Yes ■ No ■

21.6% 78.4%



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

Yes ■ No ■

34.8% 33.0% 9.4% 18.5% 4.3%

■ Agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Indifferent ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



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

Yes ■ No ■

67.0% 43.8% 23.2% 23.9% 7.2%

■ Police ■ Hospital ■ Support group ■ Legal ■ None



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

Yes ■ No ■

51.3% 48.7%

ACCESS TO LEGAL JUSTICE



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

53.7% 45.4% 0.9%

■ Formal justice: e.g., police, courts, etc.
■ Informal justice: e.g., traditional or religious heads, community groups, etc.
■ I will not seek justice



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

31.5% 42.6% 25.9%

■ Yes, I would
■ It depends on the robustness and effectiveness of the witness protection program
■ No, I would not



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

■ Yes ■ No

39.6% 60.4%

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS



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

■ Yes ■ No

31.9% 68.1%



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

39.8% 25.9% 34.0% 0.3%

■ Mostly useful ■ Completely useful ■ A little bit useful ■ Not useful at all



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

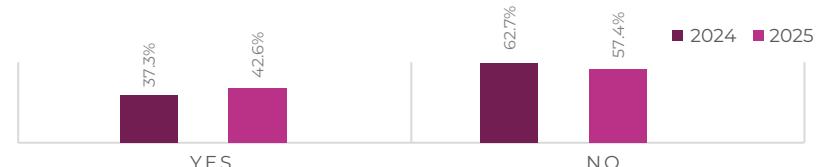
40.9% 35.4% 37.3% 32.9% 25.2% 32.5% 23.4% 25.7%

■ Audio ■ Visual ■ Sign ■ Picture ■ Simplified ■ Subtitle ■ Braille ■ None

Edo State GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade 66.3%

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



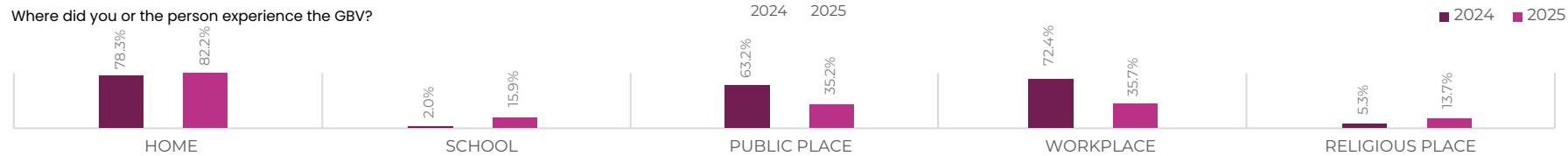
42.6%

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

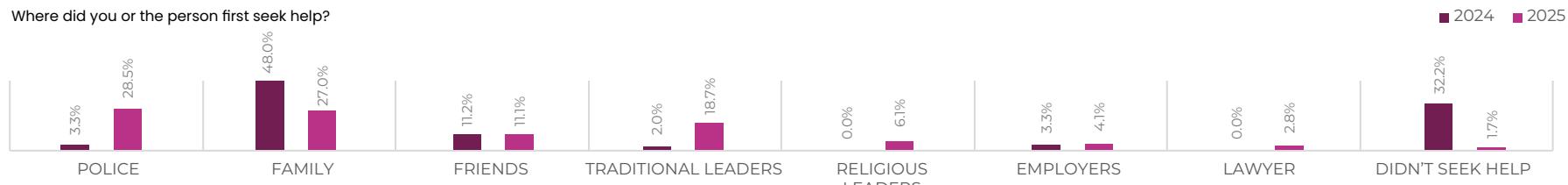
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



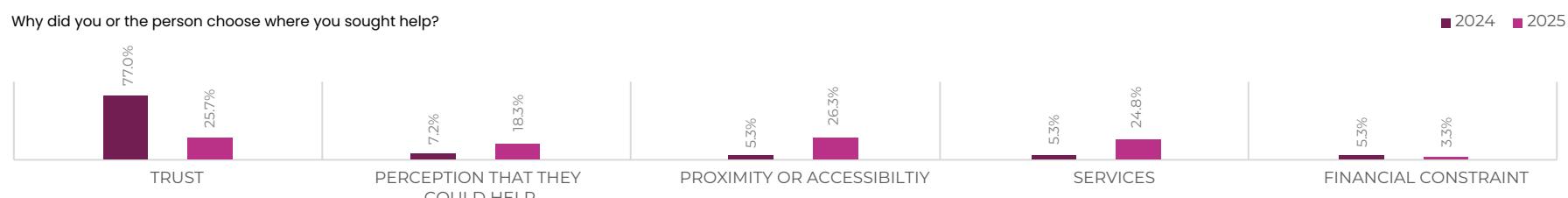
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

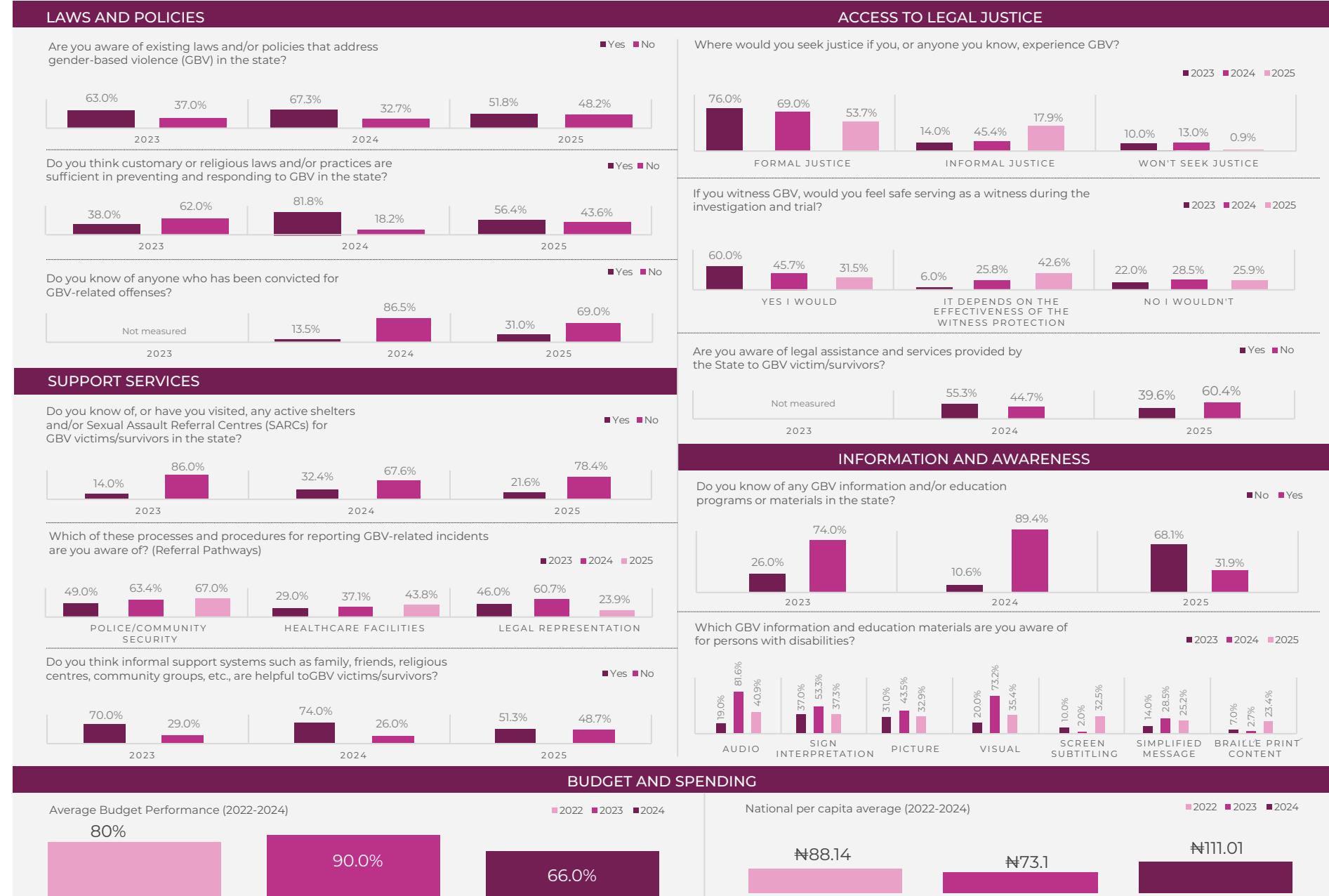


Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



State Data Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade 66.3%





KEY INSIGHTS

Laws and Policies

Current State in 2025

Edo State's legal response to GBV is guided by the domesticated Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law (VAPP Law, 2021), which mirrors the federal legislation but incorporates state-specific adaptations. The law covers both civil and criminal offences addressing inhuman treatment of widows, spousal battery, intimidation, child abandonment, and psychological abuse. FIDA added that it "includes offences such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and FGM, and sets out legal procedures, penalties, and survivor support mechanisms."

Despite this robust framework, public awareness shows that 51.8% of respondents are aware of GBV laws and policies. Confidence in the effectiveness of existing laws is moderate, with 54.6% of citizens considering them effective. However, enforcement indicators point to stronger institutional performance. The Ministry of Justice reported "over 100 convictions under the VAPP Law between December last year and September 2025". Nonetheless, awareness of actual convictions remains low (31%), limiting public perception of justice delivery.

Awareness of customary and religious laws addressing GBV is evenly split, with 50.9% of respondents aware and 49.1% unaware. While 56.4% believe these laws aid GBV prevention, stakeholders stress that traditional systems frequently obstruct justice. The Ministry of Justice noted, "When cases are reported to a Chief or community head, they often try to hide them and avoid involving the police." Similarly, FIDA stated that "most of these cases are handled within the family to cover up the offense," while the Nigerian Bar Association confirmed that "traditional institutions sometimes compromise justice by resolving GBV issues outside formal courts."

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, Edo State's GBV legal framework remained institutionally strong but suffered from declining public engagement and visibility. Awareness of GBV laws increased from 63% in 2023 to 67% in 2024, before dropping to 51.8% in 2025. A Ministry of Women Affairs official noted, "People know the law exists but don't see it being used effectively. Without visible justice, interest fades."

Perception of the effectiveness of customary and religious laws increased from 38% in 2023 to 81.8%

in 2024 and then dropped to 54.6% in 2025. With expanded court capacity and high conviction rates, visibility increased sharply, with public awareness of convictions increased from 13.5% in 2024 to 31% in 2025. The Ministry of Justice attributed the earlier rise to "intensified activism and dedicated GBV courts," while the 2025 drop reflected "victim withdrawal, intimidation, and family pressure." Institutional coordination challenges persist. As FIDA explained, "Some victims are intimidated or pressured to withdraw," while a Police official cited "logistical challenges like duplication machines and stationery shortages" limit case handling efficiency.

Access to Legal Justice

Current State in 2025

Formal justice mechanisms in Edo State remain strong, with 53.7% of respondents preferring formal systems. Stakeholder insights reveal that specialized structures including two dedicated GBV courts (Criminal Courts 3 and 4), gender desks across police divisions, and formalized prosecution protocols have improved case handling and coordination.

The Ministry of Justice, Legal Aid Council, FIDA, the Nigerian Bar Association, and NGOs like BraveHeart Initiative (BHI) provide free legal representation and operate a coordinated referral system from initial reporting through prosecution, yet awareness of these state-provided legal assistance services remains limited at only 39.6%. Service accessibility remains uneven, with coverage strongest in Benin, Auchi, and Ubiaja judicial divisions but weaker in central LGAs like Ekpoma and Igueben, leaving many rural survivors unaware or unable to access formal support.

Witness protection mechanisms remain a critical barrier to justice delivery, with only 31.5% of respondents willing to serve as witnesses and 42.6% requiring guaranteed protection first—reflecting persistent concerns about intimidation, financial inducement, and inadequate security measures that frequently result in case withdrawals and collapsed prosecutions.

Confidence in informal justice systems remains notable, with 53.4% of respondents believing traditional structures help survivors, yet stakeholders caution that family-based settlements and community mediation often undermine formal prosecution, reinforce impunity, and lead survivors to withdraw cases due to stigma.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Edo State's access to legal justice landscape evolved through institutional strengthening but declining formal reliance. Preference for formal systems fell from 76% in 2023 to 53.7% in 2025, while

informal systems rose from 14% in 2023 to 45.4% in 2025. Stakeholders attributed this to accessibility challenges rather than rejection of formal justice. The Ministry of Justice explained that "many survivors begin cases formally but withdraw due to delays or intimidation, returning to community leaders who respond faster." FIDA added that "when processes drag, survivors go back to elders or pastors to avoid further stigma." Encouragingly, the proportion unwilling to seek justice at all increased from 0.9% in 2023 to 0.9% in 2025, suggesting decreasing awareness and willingness to pursue redress.

Willingness to serve as witnesses dropped from 60% in 2023 to 31.5% in 2025, while those whose participation depends on protection rose from 6% to 42.6%. Stakeholders observed that fear of retaliation, especially in rural areas, still prevents people from testifying. This underscores the need for a functional witness protection framework to sustain recent judicial reforms.

Support Services

Current State in 2025

Edo State operates one active Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Benin with a second under development in Uromi, Esan North-East LGA. The state has one government-owned shelter located within the Senator Daisy Danjuma Women Center, and collaborates with other shelters, utilizing existing orphanage homes that are distributed across the 18 local government areas, with at least two or more shelters in each LGA. The SARC and partner shelters provide comprehensive free medical, psychosocial, legal, and economic empowerment support.

Despite this infrastructure, only 21.6% of respondents were aware of or had utilized these facilities, with just 34.8% of users perceiving them as effectively functional, adequately equipped, and sustainable, consistent with stakeholders' account of limited outreach, resource constraints, and prevailing stigma, particularly in rural areas. Survivors frequently seek informal support from family, friends, religious centres, and community leaders instead, with 51.3% perceiving informal systems as more effective than formal structures.

Formal referral pathways show uneven recognition: police pathways are most known (67% awareness), followed by hospitals (43.8%), while legal representation (23.9%) and support groups (23.2%) remain less visible. Overall awareness of comprehensive support services – medical, legal, psychosocial, and economic assistance – stands at only 36%. However, where accessible, services are holistic and delivered through partnerships between the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Health, SARC, FIDA, and other stakeholders, covering medical examination, trauma-informed counselling, police support, vocational training, and shelter.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Despite existence of functional shelters and referral centres, awareness of SARCs and shelters has fluctuated significantly from 14% in 2023 to 32% in 2024, then declining to 21.6% in 2025. Stakeholders attribute this decline to inconsistent outreach, urban-rural disparities in service location, and limited community knowledge, with one official noting: "We have functional shelters and referral centres across the state, but many survivors, especially in rural areas, are not aware of them. Outreach is not as consistent as it should be."

Perception of SARC effectiveness has also declined from 49% in 2024 to 34.8% in 2025, reflecting operational pressures including limited funding, understaffing, delayed equipment upgrades, and overburdened facilities that affect service quality and sustainability. However, confidence in informal support systems appears to be evolving, with traditional rulers and faith-based organizations increasingly incorporating GBV awareness into their programs and receiving sensitization on state policies and laws to support survivors within communities.

Information and Awareness

Current State in 2025

The Ministry of Women Affairs disseminates gender education materials through banners, pamphlets, flyers, and radio jingles, including a Pidgin English version of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) law, alongside GBV training manuals and standard operating procedures. The Ministry of Education has incorporated GBV topics into various subjects (Social Studies, Civic Education, Religious Studies) and established GBV clubs at primary and secondary school levels, complemented by awareness initiatives like School O'clock and the Edu Rescue Initiative covering all 18 LGAs.

However, public knowledge of GBV programs remains limited, with only 31.9% of respondents aware of active initiatives, while 68.1% remain uninformed. Television remains the dominant information source (50.9%), followed by NGOs/CSOs (47.4%) and radio (43.3%). Other channels; schools (20.1%), healthcare facilities (20.1%), religious centers (18.3%), traditional leaders (16.6%), and workplaces (9.3%) play relatively minor roles. Stakeholders confirmed these gaps are most pronounced in rural communities, with uneven media coverage, especially affecting remote areas despite radio and local TV outreach efforts.

Challenges such as parental influence, community interference, insufficient school counselors, and the absence of a dedicated GBV curriculum, with current content embedded within family life and HIV education programs persist in the state. Stakeholders also noted that awareness campaigns are often seasonal, concentrated around the 16 Days of Activism, rather than sustained year-round.

Encouragingly, among those aware, perceived usefulness shows mixed ratings: 25.9% rated materials as "completely useful," 39.8% as "mostly useful," and 34% as "a little useful," suggesting room for improvement in content quality and relevance. Inclusivity in information delivery remains weak; only 23.4% of respondents are familiar with braille materials, 25.2% with simplified content, and 40.9% aware of audio, visual (35.4%), picture-based (32.9%), screen subtitled (32.5%), and sign interpretation materials (37.3%). While the Ministry of Women Affairs uses pictorial materials, simplified messages, and collaborates with disability organizations through the GBV Management Committee, challenges persist including limited production and dissemination capacity and shortage of sign language interpreters.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Exposure to GBV programs over the three-year period increased from 74% in 2023 to 89% in 2024, then dropped sharply to 31.9% in 2025. Stakeholders attributed this decline to reduced donor support and funding constraints in 2025 that curtailed community outreach activities, logistics challenges

limiting institutional visibility, and weak inter-agency coordination that affected sustained advocacy and legal literacy programs. As one official explained: "In 2024, we were very visible in the communities because of donor support and active outreach programs. But in 2025, activities reduced due to funding constraints."

However, perceptions of content quality show a complex pattern: "completely useful" ratings moved from 64% in 2023 to 83% in 2024, then declined to 25.9% in 2025, while "mostly useful" and "a little useful" ratings increased from 11% in 2023 to 39.8% and 8% in 2023 to 34% respectively in 2025. This suggests that while fewer people are being reached, there is growing emphasis on practical guidance that translates awareness into action, including clear information on survivors' rights, legal options, and reporting pathways.

Awareness of disability-accessible materials remains limited and fluctuating throughout the period, indicating that inclusion efforts are often short-term and dependent on external funding rather than sustained state-driven continuity. Radio, television, and NGO-led community sensitization remain the dominant outreach methods, with gradual institutional progress seen through curriculum integration efforts, GBV clubs in schools including PWD institutions, and collaborative frameworks with disability advocacy organizations, though systematic monitoring and evaluation systems to track awareness effectiveness remain underdeveloped.

Budget and Spending

Budget Analysis 2024

Edo State allocated ₦440.9 million to GBV programs in 2024, representing 0.09% of its total state budget. Of the allocated amount, ₦291 million was actually spent, achieving a 66% implementation rate. This means approximately one-third of the budgeted resources remained unutilized by the end of the fiscal year. The actual GBV expenditure constituted 0.07% of the state's total spending, closely reflecting the budget allocation share. On a per capita basis, Edo State spent approximately ₦111.01 per female resident in the state on GBV-related programs. .

Changes Over Time (2022 to 2024)

Edo State's average performance in the Womanity Index budget and spending domain over the last three years is linked to reductions in both budget performance and the absence of GBV-specific line items in recent years. The state recorded GBV-related budget allocations of ₦274.5 million in 2022, ₦207.8 million in 2023, and ₦440.9 million in 2024. Actual spending improved from 80% in 2022 to 90% in 2023 but dropped significantly to 66% in 2024. In 2022, the state included two GBV-specific line items in its budget. However, no GBV-specific line items were included in the 2023 and 2024 budgets, marking a regression in policy prioritization. Edo State's per capita spending was ₦111.01 in 2024, ₦73.10 in 2023, and ₦88.14 in 2022. Although 2024 reflects an uptick, the uneven movement across the three years demonstrates inconsistent commitment to GBV-related expenditure.

Human Angle Stories

In search of greener pastures, 17-year-old Amina travelled to Benue State, where her caregiver subjected her to repeated physical assaults. One particularly violent incident left her with severe injuries, leading to her hospitalization. The case caught the attention of the Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs. The Commissioner immediately contacted her counterpart in Plateau State, and through this inter-state collaboration, Amina was safely repatriated to her home state.

Her story emphasizes the importance of responsive state-level leadership in addressing GBV cases, especially for survivors who are displaced or lack family support. It also shows how inter-state coordination can bridge service gaps, ensuring that survivors are not left stranded in unfamiliar environments.

KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
Laws and Policies	Awareness of GBV laws is moderate but declining; enforcement and community engagement are uneven.	Intensify public sensitization campaigns focused on GBV laws, including expanded school-based sexual education.
	Informal customary and religious laws often perpetuate GBV and obstruct formal justice pathways.	Strengthen collaborations with traditional and religious leaders to align their roles with statutory GBV frameworks.
	Perceived effectiveness of enforcement is hindered by victim intimidation and financial inducements.	Implement better victim and witness protection to reduce case withdrawals and enhance prosecution success.
Access to Legal Justice	Preference for formal justice is growing but informal mediation remains widely used and sometimes obstructs justice.	Foster integration of informal justice actors into formal systems through training and guidelines.
	Awareness of legal aid services is low, especially in rural areas.	Expand and publicize legal aid awareness programs to improve coverage and visibility in underserved locations.
	Legal aid coverage concentrated in Benin Metropolis; fewer than 20% of rural survivors accessed legal aid services.	Expand Legal Aid Council coverage to all LGAs through mobile legal clinics in rural areas and implement state-funded fee waivers for all GBV-related cases to eliminate financial barriers to justice.
	Witness protection remains weak, causing fear and reluctance to testify.	Develop a robust, adequately funded witness protection program to encourage participation in GBV trials.
Support Services	Limited availability and functionality of state-run services. Edo has two SARCs (Benin and Uromi), but only one is fully functional. Only one government shelter exists, serving mainly minors.	Establish at least one fully functional SARC per senatorial district within a year, ensure 24/7 operations through dedicated state budget lines, and strengthen service integration by linking SARCs with primary health facilities and co-managing shelters with NGOs for wider survivor reach and sustainability.
	Over-reliance on NGOs and faith-based organizations as first responders.	Strengthen survivor-centred referral systems and enhance community awareness of available support services.
	Informal support systems often help survivors but can also discourage formal justice seeking.	Build capacity in informal networks to support survivors while encouraging formal justice engagement.
Information and Awareness	Low awareness of GBV rights and services in rural areas of Edo State. Less than 25% of respondents in Edo State could identify where to report GBV; majority only learn about services post-incident.	Run GBV awareness campaigns in all LGAs, especially rural areas, distribute IEC materials in local dialects, and deploy mobile teams to reach remote communities and promote reporting.
	Underutilized schools and GBV clubs in Edo State. Only 15% of respondents across Edo State cited schools as a source of GBV information; school-based clubs exist but not system-wide.	Integrate GBV education in all schools, equip GBV clubs for peer awareness, and link schools with SARCs for reporting and support.
	GBV education content needs enhancement in depth and clarity.	Revise and enrich educational materials to make them more comprehensive, survivor-focused, and easier to understand.
Budget and Spending	The drop in budget execution from 90% in 2023 to 66% in 2024 indicates weakening implementation capacity, with ₦149.9 million left unspent. This suggests gaps in planning, coordination, or absorptive capacity within implementing agencies.	Establish quarterly budget performance reviews and improve coordination between the Ministry of Women Affairs and relevant line ministries to ensure full utilization of allocated funds and prevent year-end lapses.

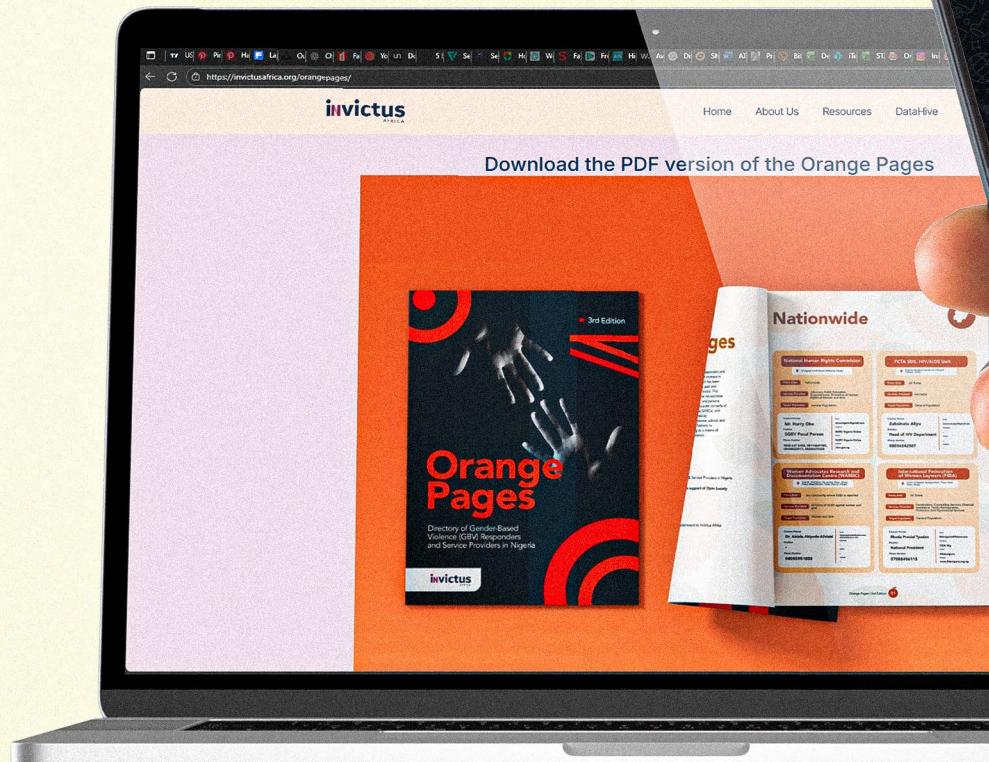


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