



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



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# Lagos State

Centre Of Excellence

Owu Fall

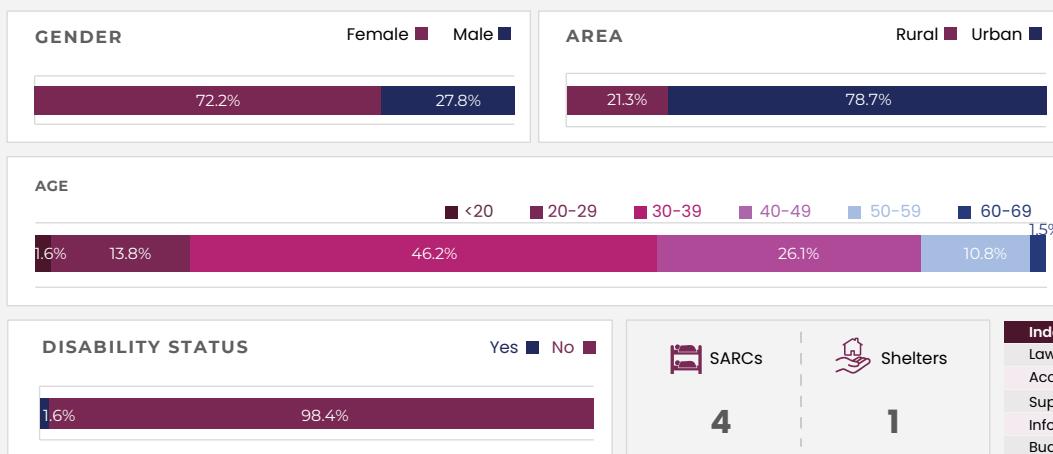
# Lagos State

Population: 16,212,270

48.5% Female 51.5% Male

Overall Grade 91.3%

## Respondents Demography (n = 1,068)



## Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

### BUDGET ALLOCATION

**₦4.90bn**

(This accounts for 0.2% of the total state budget)

### BUDGET PERFORMANCE

**₦4.26bn**

(This accounts for 87.1% of total allocation to the ministry)



Capital ■ Personnel ■ Overhead ■ (Actual Spend)



Per Capita Spending

**₦542.33**

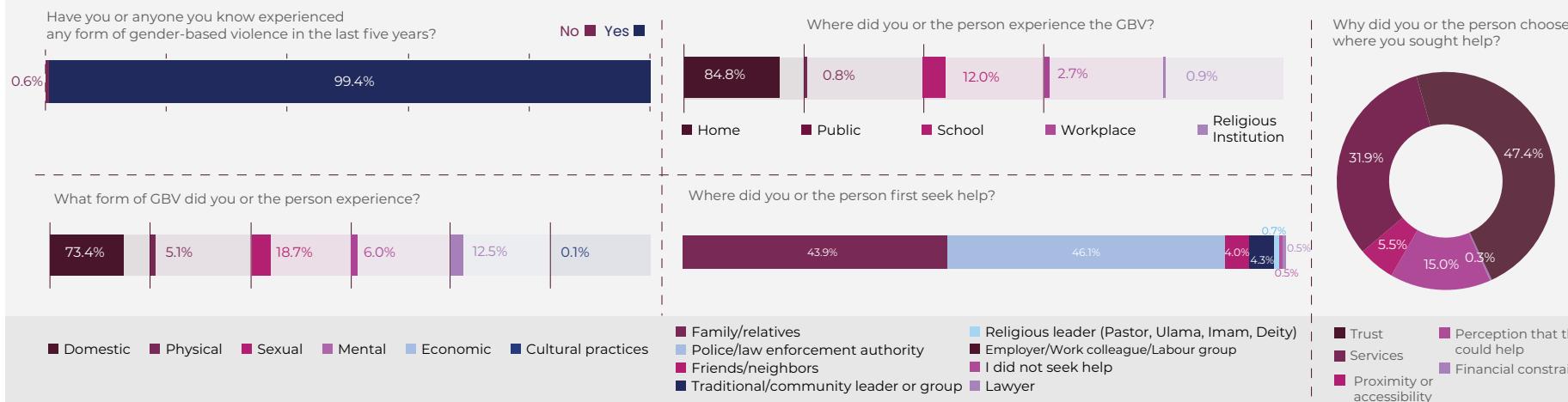
Total Grades
91.7%
93.8%
93.8%
93.8%
83.3%

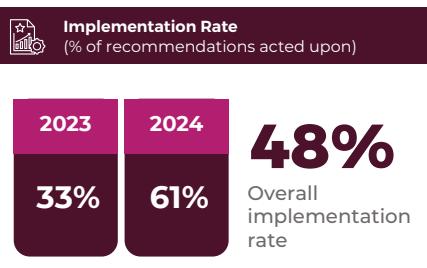
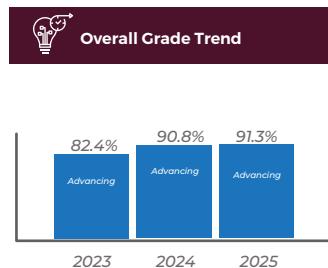
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## GBV Context 2025





### What Has Changed

#### Positive Developments

- Public awareness of GBV laws surged to 79.4% in 2025 (up from 63% in 2024), driven by intensified advocacy campaigns.
- Willingness to seek justice through formal channels reached 97.3%, up from 80.3% in 2023, showing strong public trust.
- Awareness of healthcare reporting options more than doubled from 39.4% to 70.5%, improving access to medical support.
- Conviction rates improved significantly with over 140 convictions in the past year.

#### Areas of Concern

- Public awareness of actual convictions remains critically low at 26.1% (2025), undermining the impact of improved prosecution.
- While SARCs are available and offer comprehensive services, geographic access remains limited in areas such as Badagry, Lagos Island, Epe, and communities bordering Ogun State. Awareness of these facilities is also low, with only 39.1% of respondents familiar with them.
- Over half of residents (53.1%) still do not feel safe serving as witnesses despite improvements in witness confidence.



### Key Actions



#### Laws and Policies

- On August 14, 2025, the Lagos State Government, in collaboration with the Cece Yara Child Advocacy Centre, officially launched the Lagos State Child Sexual Abuse Investigative and Interview Protocol.

#### Access to Legal Justice

- The state launched an online reporting portal at [www.lagosdsvcms.org](http://www.lagosdsvcms.org), allowing survivors and mandated reporters to securely submit case details and upload evidence including pictures, audio recordings, video files, and medical reports.
- FIDA trained paralegals in communities including Makoko, Bariga, LASU axis, and Ikorodu to serve as first responders and connect survivors to formal services.
- The state established Family Support Units (FSUs) or Gender Desks in every police station across Lagos, staffed by trained personnel..

### Support Services

- The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) opened "Eko Haven" 2023 – a 30-bed shelter located in Ikorodu to provide immediate accommodation and support services to high-risk survivors of domestic violence.

### Information and Awareness

- The DSVA introduced "Ask INU" (I Need You), a WhatsApp-based AI Chatbot that provides immediate information and referrals by messaging 08128937058, offering timely, confidential, and accurate information about available support services.
- The DSVA established "King and Queens Clubs" in schools specifically to fight abuse, empowering students as advocates within their peer groups.
- The state conducts the annual "Purple the Environment" initiative every September, involving all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) with mandatory participation across all local government areas.

### Change Spotlight

On August 14, 2025, the Lagos State Government officially launched the Lagos State Child Sexual Abuse Investigative and Interview Protocol. The 41-page protocol represents a historic milestone in Nigeria's justice system, being the first of its kind in the country. The protocol introduces international best practices in forensic interviewing, tailored to the Nigerian context. Its goal is to reduce secondary trauma for child survivors, improve the quality of evidence, and strengthen the prosecution of perpetrators. By adopting this protocol, Lagos State becomes the first state in Nigeria to align its justice processes with globally recognized standards.



## Lagos State GBV Assessment Survey

Overall Grade 91.3%

### LAWS AND POLICIES



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

Yes ■ No ■

79.4% 20.6%



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

Yes ■ No ■

38.1% 61.9%



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

Yes ■ No ■

26.1% 73.9%

### 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 ■

39.1% 60.9%



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

Yes ■ No ■

29.9% 65.8% 3.3% 1.0%

■ 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 ■

73.6% 70.5% 34.0% 19.8% 3.9%

■ 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 ■

26.5% 73.5%

### ACCESS TO LEGAL JUSTICE



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

97.3% 2.7%

■ 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?

44.8% 2.2% 53.1%

■ 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

73.2% 26.8%

### INFORMATION AND AWARENESS



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

■ Yes ■ No

71.3% 28.7%



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

76.5% 15.9% 7.6%

■ 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?

0.4% 1.6% 11.5% 10.2% 15.9% 4.4% 0.3% 77.2%

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

## Lagos State GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade 91.3%

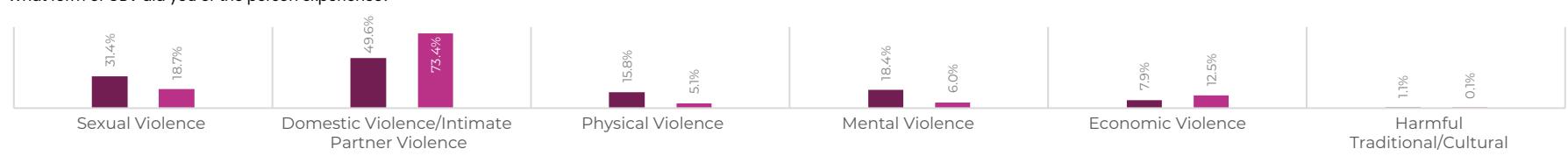
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



# 99.4%

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

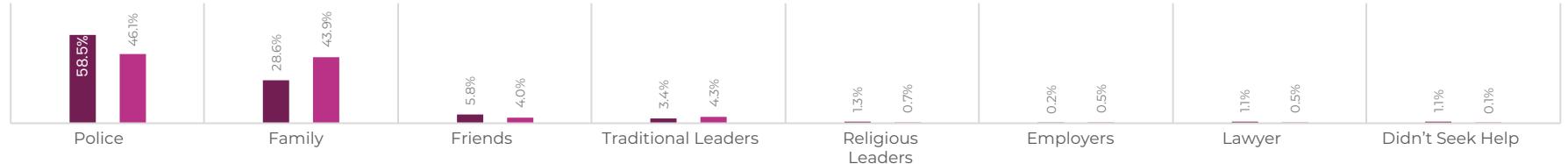
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



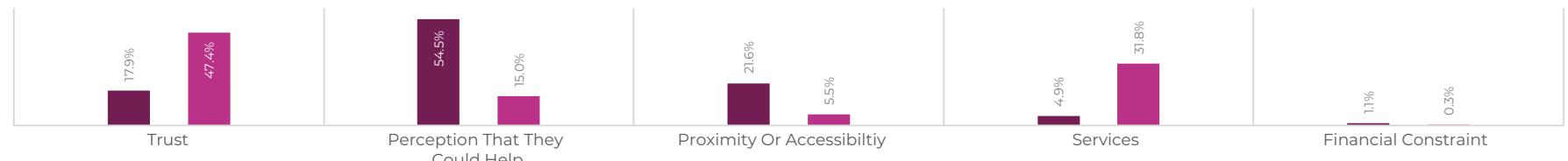
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

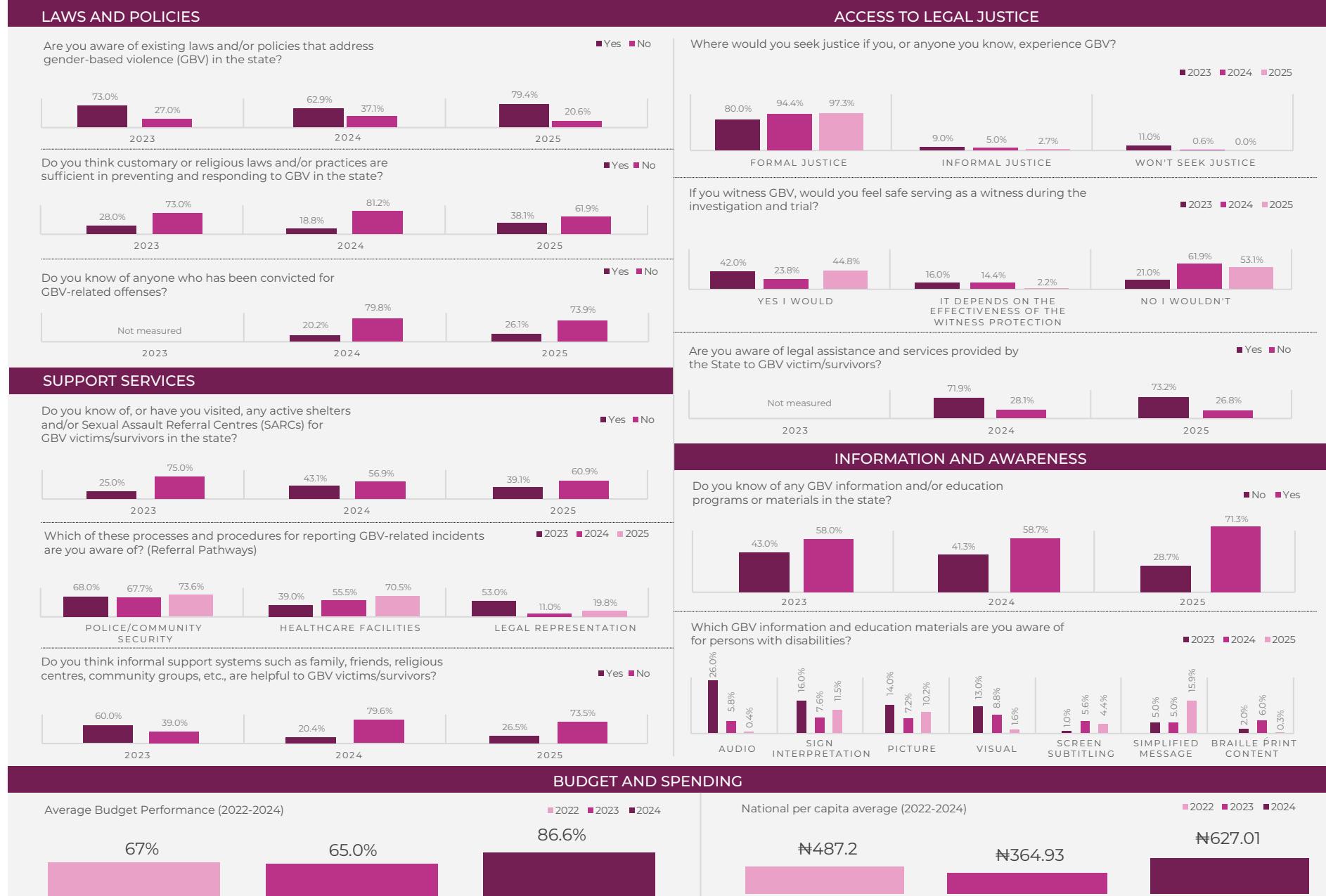


Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



## Lagos State GBV Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade **91.3%**





## KEY INSIGHTS

### Laws and Policies

#### Current State in 2025

Lagos State currently operates under the Domestic Violence Law of Lagos State rather than the VAPP Act. The state has not domesticated the VAPP Act because relevant provisions are already embedded across multiple laws, including the Criminal Law 2015, Administration of Criminal Justice Law, Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) Law, Child Rights Law, and the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Unified Protocol and Referral Pathway. Public awareness of GBV laws in Lagos State is high (79.4%), and confidence in formal legal structures is strong, with most respondents (94%) viewing them as effective tools for GBV prevention and response.

Further strengthening its legal framework, the state government recently launched the Lagos State Guidelines for Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, aiming to promote safer, more inclusive work environments. Additionally, the DSVA Law is currently undergoing amendment, with a bill transmitted to the Lagos State House of Assembly in 2024. The proposed amendment introduces key provisions from the VAPP Act such as spousal battery, economic abuse, and forceful ejection from the home, alongside new elements like technology-facilitated sexual and gender-based violence.

Official records show marked improvement in conviction rates, over 140 convictions in the past year, and routinely updates its Sex Offenders Register. Yet, public awareness remains low, with only 26.1% of residents aware of these convictions, highlighting a disconnect between enforcement and visibility, and underscoring the need for greater transparency and public communication.

Customary and religious laws and practices appear to have limited influence in addressing GBV. Many residents are unaware of their existence (68%) and believe they do not contribute meaningfully to prevention or response efforts (61.9%). This reinforces strong public trust in formal legal frameworks in the state. However, key informant perspectives reveal a more nuanced reality: while formal systems are preferred, informal mechanisms remain influential at the community level, particularly in initial case handling before matters reach official channels. Recognizing their influence, the State Government has introduced policies to guide the response of religious institutions and customary courts, promoting more effective referrals.

### Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

After a decline in 2024 (from 72.4% to 63%), public awareness of laws and policies addressing GBV rose to 79.4% in 2025, suggesting that renewed advocacy efforts by the DSVA have had a positive impact. This increase aligns with intensified awareness campaigns described by government officials, including the annual "Purple the Environment" initiative every September, which involves all MDAs. The Ministry of Education confirmed that this statewide program reaches all local government areas, with mandatory participation signaled through official circulars from the Head of Service.

Over the years, the majority of residents still view traditional frameworks as ineffective in addressing GBV. Although the proportion of residents expressing confidence in these informal systems increased slightly from 27.6% in 2023 to 38.1% in 2025, this shift highlights the need for sustained engagement. It is important to ensure that growing optimism about customary and religious practices does not erode strong public trust in the formal legal framework.

### Access to Legal Justice

#### Current State in 2025

Lagos State has a well-structured and coordinated GBV response system, especially for sexual assault cases. Survivors follow a clear formal process involving petitioning, interviews, medical evaluation at SARCs, and police intervention through the Family Support Unit (FSU), leading to prosecution. Cases involving serious bodily harm are immediately escalated to police for investigation and prosecution, with the Office of Public Defender (OPD) providing support throughout the legal process. Stakeholders report seamless referrals between DSVA, OPD, FIDA, police FSUs, and NGOs, creating an interconnected support network. This reflects the state's commitment to justice and aligns with strong public trust in formal systems, with 97.3% of residents preferring official channels over informal mechanisms.

Legal aid services are extensive and decentralized across the state. OPD officials confirmed offices covering "the whole length and breadth of Lagos State," including remote areas like Badagry and Epe. Beyond OPD's multiple sub-offices, services are available through the Federal Legal Aid Council, FIDA's five Lagos branches, human rights offices at all local government headquarters, and specialized desks at police stations. FIDA has also trained paralegals in communities including Makoko, Bariga, LASU axis, and Ikorodu, who serve as first responders and connect survivors to formal services. Furthermore, DSVA in-house lawyers provide pro-bono legal advice and representation in cases requiring protection or restraining orders. The State also has private law firms signed on

to a pro bono scheme, with selected firms providing quality legal services to survivors at no cost. Awareness of these legal services is relatively high (73.2%); however, stakeholders noted that while awareness has grown, more can be done to expand geographic accessibility.

A major strength of Lagos State's justice system is its comprehensive network of specialized units. The state has 22 Family Support Units, coordinated by the Officer in Charge of the Gender Desk at the Lagos State Police Command, which is led by an Assistant Commissioner of Police. In addition, Lagos operates two dedicated GBV courts and has appointed two specialized judges to handle GBV-related cases. Additionally, there are over 40 Family Court Magistrates and Judges across the state, further strengthening access to justice for survivors.

Despite these strengths, serious challenges persist during legal proceedings ranging from lack of tracking for absconded defendants, to family interference, and police bureaucracy. Also, concerns about safety during legal proceedings persist. Over half of Lagos residents do not feel safe serving as witnesses (53.1%), pointing to a gap in the effectiveness of the witness protection unit.

### Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

The state recorded steady progress in public confidence in the formal justice system for addressing GBV. The proportion of residents willing to seek justice through official channels rose from 80.0% in 2023 to 97.3% in 2025. This increase reflects both infrastructural improvements and attitudinal changes among justice sector actors, with training programs for police officers and judicial personnel conducted regularly.

Despite fear remaining a barrier over the years, public confidence in serving as a witness during GBV investigations and trials also improved. Although only 23.8% of respondents felt safe serving as witnesses in 2024, this figure rose to 44.8% in 2025. Further work is needed to ensure that more individuals feel secure participating in the justice process.

Awareness of legal assistance and services for GBV survivors remained relatively stable, with a slight increase from 72% in 2024 to 73.2% in 2025.

## Support Services

### Current State in 2025

Lagos State currently operates four SARCs: Mirabel Center in Ikeja, Idera Center in Alimosho, WARIF in Yaba, and Cece Yara Center in Cbagada, Shomolu. Stakeholders confirmed these facilities' distribution but noted significant geographic gaps, with Badagry, Lagos Island, Epe, and areas bordering Ogun State remaining underserved. Despite their presence, only 39.1% of respondents reported knowing about or having visited these centers or shelters. Although, among those who are aware, confidence in the quality of these facilities is high, with 95.7% believing they are well-equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable. These formal support systems are seen as more reliable than informal ones, such as help from family, friends, religious centres, and community groups (73.5% vs. 26.5%). Beyond SARCs, shelter services are available through Project ALERT and DSVA's partner organizations, providing temporary accommodation when survivors cannot safely return home. Overall, while services are available and trusted, more work is needed to improve

public awareness and access.

Awareness of broader support services is also strong. About 73.4% of residents know about available medical, legal, psychosocial, and economic support for GBV survivors. Similarly, most residents are familiar with formal reporting channels, especially through the police (73.6%) and hospitals (70.5%). However, fewer people know about other reporting options, such as support groups (34%) and legal representation (19.8%). Key informants confirmed these patterns, noting that police FSUs and hospitals serve as primary entry points, with strong referral mechanisms to legal services. However, they acknowledged that legal referral pathways are less visible to the public, despite being well-established among service providers. This suggests a need for targeted public education, specifically legal referral options.

### Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Over the years, awareness and access to SARCs remained low, despite some positive gains (from 25% in 2023 to 39.1% in 2025). This suggests that while more residents are becoming aware of these services, continued outreach is needed to improve visibility and access.

Police reporting and referral channels remained the most recognized over time, rising from 67.8% in 2023 to 73.6% in 2025. Awareness of healthcare-based reporting options also grew significantly, from 39.0% in 2023 to 70.5% in 2025, showing increased visibility of medical support services. In contrast, awareness of legal referral pathways dropped sharply, from 53.0% in 2023 to just 19.8% in 2025. This indicates a major gap in public knowledge about legal referral options and highlights the need for targeted advocacy to promote legal referral options and ensure survivors can access the full range of available services.

Perceptions of informal support systems also changed significantly. In 2023, only about a quarter (26.0%) of Lagos residents viewed informal systems such as help from family, friends, and religious centres, as ineffective in supporting GBV survivors. By 2025, this figure rose sharply to 73.5%, likely influenced by state-led advocacy efforts. This shift reinforces the growing public trust in formal support structures and the importance of strengthening institutional responses to GBV.

## Information and Awareness

### Current State in 2025

Public exposure to GBV educational initiatives in Lagos State is relatively strong, with 71.3% of residents indicating familiarity with GBV information and awareness programs, and 92.4% noting their usefulness. The DSVA plays a central role in this effort, conducting sensitization campaigns across local government areas, markets, and schools using simplified IEC materials translated into major local languages. These materials are widely distributed during community outreach, helping to improve public understanding of GBV issues.

There is overwhelming public support (93%) for teaching GBV and child sexual abuse topics at all levels of education, from nursery to tertiary institutions. This support aligns with existing practices. The Ministry of Education confirmed that while no formal curriculum exists, a comprehensive Child Protection Policy serves as the guiding document for all schools. This policy informs the work of school counselors who systematically address student welfare, including GBV prevention.

Additionally, DSVA established "King and Queens Clubs" in schools not just as peer advocacy groups, but as a means of mainstreaming GBV prevention into the education sector.

The Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs works to ensure inclusive access to GBV information for persons with disabilities. However, awareness of these inclusive formats remains low, with only 15.9% of residents aware of simplified messages, 11.5% aware of sign interpretation, and 10.2% aware of picture-based messages. A key challenge is the lack of trained officers in government ministries and agencies who can respond to GBV cases involving persons with disabilities. The absence of staff skilled in sign interpretation and other inclusive practices may hinder access to justice for this group.

### **Changes Over Time (2023–2025)**

Between 2023 and 2025, Lagos State recorded steady improvements in public awareness and engagement with GBV education programs. Awareness rose from 57.9% in 2023 to 71.3% in 2025, reflecting the impact of consistent sensitization efforts led by DSVA. The perceived usefulness of GBV materials also increased significantly, with 76.5% of respondents in 2025 finding the content mostly useful, compared to just 39.5% in 2023.

While awareness of disability-inclusive formats such as simplified messages, sign interpretation, and picture-based content has grown, overall visibility remains low. This highlights the need for more inclusive outreach and trained personnel across agencies to ensure that persons with disabilities can access and benefit from GBV educational and support services.

### **Budget and Spending**

#### **Budget Analysis 2024**

With established GBV budget lines across the Ministry of Women Affairs, DSVA and the ministry of justice, Lagos State allocated ₦5.7 billion to GBV in 2025, representing 0.2% of the total state budget. Of this amount, ₦4.26 billion was spent, reflecting an impressive 87.1% budget performance, one of the highest among all states assessed. Actual GBV expenditure also accounted for 0.23% of total state spending. On a per capita basis, the state spent approximately ₦627.01 per female population on GBV-related programs, which is significantly higher than in most other states. While this reflects commendable commitment and strong budget implementation, it remains relatively low when compared to the size and needs of Lagos State's population.

### **Changes Over Time (2022 to 2024)**

Since the establishment of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) in 2021, budgetary allocations to the agency have increased steadily. In 2022, DSVA received ₦100 million, of which 62.4% was expended. The allocation rose to ₦622.68 million in 2023, with an actual spend of ₦348.68 million (56.0%). In 2024, the agency received ₦520.92 million and recorded a significantly higher implementation rate, spending ₦497.19 million (95.4%). Improvements in Lagos State's GBV spending reflect the state's overall budget performance, rising from 65% to 86.6% across the review period.

The state also recorded two GBV-specific line items under the Ministry of Justice: "Furnishing

and Equipping the DNA Forensic Centre with Specialised Equipment," allocated ₦22.59 million but implemented at ₦168.55 million (60.70%); and "Provision of IT Equipment for Database Development," budgeted at ₦47.39 million with an actual implementation of ₦29.62 million (62.50%). Despite these improvements, Lagos continues to underperform in per capita spending on GBV-related interventions. Per capita spending stood at ₦627.01 in 2024, ₦364.93 in 2023, and ₦487.20 in 2022. The increase in 2024, following a decline in 2023, reflects a rebound in investment, although the fluctuations across the three-year period point to inconsistent funding patterns for GBV-related interventions.

### **Human Angle Stories**

A little girl was sexually assaulted by the security guard at her school. After finding out where to get help, her father was referred to the DSVA, which then connected him with the Police Family Support Unit (FSU).

After the statement was taken, the Police Investigative Officer swung into action and apprehended the alleged perpetrator. The young survivor was further assessed at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, where it was medically established that she had been assaulted. The case was instituted in court, and the alleged perpetrator was remanded to a correctional facility.

## KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

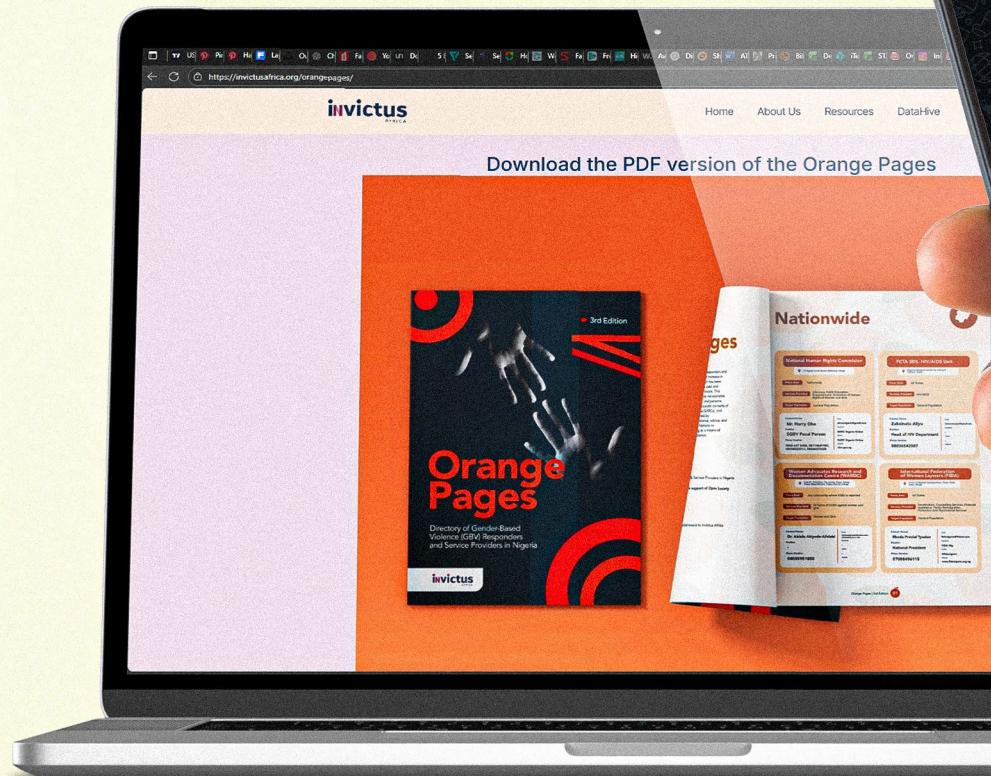
Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
 <b>Laws and Policies</b>	Public awareness of GBV laws increased significantly from 63% in 2024 to 79.4% in 2025, following renewed advocacy efforts including the annual "Purple the Environment" initiative.	Sustain and expand the "Purple the Environment" campaign beyond September to ensure year-round visibility of GBV laws across all local government areas.
	Despite over 140 convictions in the past year, only 26.1% of residents are aware of actual convictions, revealing a critical gap between legal enforcement and public visibility.	Launch a systematic public communication strategy to publicize conviction outcomes through multiple channels, including traditional and social media, to strengthen public confidence in the justice system.
 <b>Access to Legal Justice</b>	Only 44.8% of residents feel safe serving as witnesses in GBV cases, with over half (53.1%) still expressing safety concerns.	Strengthen the witness protection framework by conducting a comprehensive review of existing protocols and implementing visible security measures, including dedicated witness support officers at GBV courts.
	Stakeholders reported challenges including tracking of absconded defendants, family interference, and police bureaucracy during legal proceedings.	Establish a centralized digital case management system to track defendants and streamline police procedures, while developing clear protocols for managing family interference in GBV cases.
 <b>Support Services</b>	Only 39.1% of residents know about or have visited the four operational SARCs, despite high confidence (95.7%) among those aware of them. Geographic gaps persist in Badagry, Lagos Island, Epe, and areas bordering Ogun State.	Expand SARC coverage by establishing at least two additional centers in underserved areas, prioritizing Badagry and Epe, while intensifying community-level awareness campaigns about existing facilities.
	Awareness of legal referral pathways dropped sharply from 53.3% in 2023 to 19.8% in 2025, indicating a major knowledge gap despite well-established referral systems among service providers.	Develop targeted public education campaigns specifically highlighting legal referral options, and ensure that all frontline service providers (police, responders, healthcare workers) actively inform survivors about available legal assistance.
 <b>Information and Awareness</b>	Awareness of disability-inclusive formats remains critically low: only 15.9% know about simplified messages, 11.5% about sign interpretation, and 10.2% about picture-based messages.	Train designated GBV focal officers in all government ministries and agencies on disability-inclusive communication, including sign interpretation, and mandate the production of all GBV materials in accessible formats.
 <b>Budget and Spending</b>	Despite strong budget performance and consistent increases in allocations to the DSVA, per capita spending on GBV services remains low (₦487.20 in 2022, ₦364.93 in 2023, and ₦627.01 in 2024) relative to the state's population of over 16 million and the high demand for services.	The State Executive Council should increase GBV budget allocations to at least 1% of the total state budget in the next cycle, targeting a minimum of ₦1,000 per capita spending to align service provision with the state's population size and growing demand.



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