Lagos records 24,009 sexual, gender-based violence in five years

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Lagos State ranked as the 19th best city to visit in the world has experienced a shocking surge in sexual and gender-based violence over the past five years, exclusive data obtained by PUNCH Healthwise indicated.  
  
The document showed that the number of reported cases rose steadily, from 3,446 in 2019 to 6,389 in 2023.  
  
It was noted that a total of 24,009 cases, which include sexual, physical and psychological abuses, were reported in all the 20 Local Government Areas of Lagos State between January 2019 and December 2023.  
  
A breakdown of the data revealed a steady increase in reported cases over the five-year duration.  
  
In 2019, 3,446 SGBV cases were recorded, followed by 4,302 in 2020, and 3,943 in 2021.  
  
However, findings showed that the numbers surged in 2022 and 2023, with 5,929 and 6,389 SGBV cases reported, respectively.  
  
PUNCH Healthwise had earlier reported that Lagos was among the top five states with the highest reported cases of SGBV in Nigeria in 2024.  
  
While states across the country recorded 6,142 SGBV cases between January and May of 2024, it was discovered that Lagos ranked fourth on the list with 279 reported cases.  
  
The new data obtained by our correspondent, however, showed that in 2023 alone, Lagos had 6,389 reported cases of SGBV for adults and children.  
  
A breakdown showed that 3,813 cases were reported for adults, while 2,576 cases were reported for children.  
  
A further breakdown of the data showed that 90 per cent of adult cases were female, while 10 per cent were male.  
  
Fifty four per cent of children cases were females, with males having 46 per cent of reported cases for children.  
  
PUNCH Healthwise discovered that on assault reported for adults, there were 99 rape cases, 114 sexual harassment, 110 threats to life, 2,649 domestic violence, 3 attempts to rape, 9 sexual assaults by penetration, 506 denials of resources, and 323 non-SGBV.  
  
For assault cases reported for children in 2023, there were 263 cases of defilement, 153 physical assaults, 1,953 emotional violence, 136 neglect, 35 child molestation, 20 child labour, and 16 non-SGBV.  
  
Our correspondent also observed that Alimosho topped the list of local governments with reported SGBV cases for adults with 588 cases, while Ikorodu came second with 382, and Eti-Osa, third with 286 cases.  
  
Kosofe and Ikeja came fourth and fifth with 271 and 252 SGBV reported cases, respectively.  
  
On assault reported for children, Alimosho also came first with 497 cases, while Ikorodu and Kosofe came second and third with 230 and 228 cases.  
  
Oshodi came fourth with 225 cases and Eti-Osa, fifth with 173 SGBV cases.  
  
Lagos had a total number of 4,412 walk-in clients and 1,977 Virtual Referral and Response Service clients.  
  
Reacting to the data, a human rights activist, Dare Folarin, called for increased awareness campaigns, improved access to justice, and enhanced support services for victims.  
  
While urging the government to take decisive action to tackle the growing epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence, he noted that the data highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing SGBV in the state.  
  
“We need more than just words, we need action. The government must take concrete steps to address the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence and ensure that survivors receive the support and justice they deserve.  
  
“The government must recognise sexual and gender-based violence as a serious crime and a violation of human rights.  
  
“We need a coordinated response that involves all stakeholders, including law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community members,” he stated.  
  
Also, the Executive Secretary of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi said the state government has adopted a two-thong approach to addressing the menace of SGBV, which includes prevention and providing immediate support to survivors.  
  
While admitting that the state records more than 300 reported SGBV cases monthly, Vivour-Adeniyi said the agency is providing medical, legal, psychosocial, counselling, rescue and sometimes, empowerment to SGBV survivors.  
  
She added, “Since, September 2023, we’ve noticed that we attend to an average of 300 new clients monthly for SGBV, and domestic and sexual violence for all gender – men, women, boys and girls.  
  
“Now, the domestic and sexual violence agency is the statutory agency set up by the state government to prevent and ensure holistic response is provided to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence.  
  
“What we do, in essence, is adopt a two-formed approach.  
  
“In the unfortunate instance that the case has happened, we ensure that the whole referral pathway is activated. What that means is survivors, as you would appreciate, require multidisciplinary and various services. They require medical, legal, psychosocial, counselling, rescue sometimes, empowerment, and of course, access to justice.  
  
“In the cases of rape, and sexual violence; they need to make sure they access medical attention, ensure the case is represented as a dissertation, and then get a survivor advocate to accompany the survivor to ensure that they stay through the course and the case is subsequently assigned to the high court.  
  
“In terms of domestic violence, the response is not so straightforward because we are dealing with adults. We are survivor centres; so, we try to do what the survivor wants within the ambit of the law.  
  
“Long and short of the story, we strive to make sure that when survivors report, they can access holistic support.”  
  
On the government’s effort to prevent reoccurrence of cases, she said, “In terms of prevention, which we are very heavy on. What we’ve tried to do is use data to drive policymaking.  
  
“The data that we’ve been keeping for the past five, six, and seven years has helped us to identify local governments with high prevalence. It has helped us to conduct surveys and commission research to understand society’s perception of these issues.  
  
“And so with the information gathered, we’re now able to programme scientifically.  
  
“What we’ve done is to map out the different stakeholders in the society. We’re looking at children, young people, adults, and community leaders. We’re looking at religious clerics, traditional rulers, men and women. We’re also looking at how to mainstream gender equality and discrimination. How we can mainstream that into the different sectors for sustainability purposes.”  
  
She added that the government is leveraging introducing issues like gender-based violence, gender equality, gender equity, patriarchy, masculinity, and femininity into the education institution for sustainability purposes.  
  
Vivour-Adeniyi added, “Another one we’re doing is engaging the registrars on marriages, as well as the churches and the mosques to introduce compulsory premarital counselling, compatibility tests and issues of gender-based violence during their compulsory counselling sessions.  
  
“Why is this so? Again, research has shown that at least, 60 per cent of the survivors saw the signs of domestic violence during courtship. But for whatever reason, perhaps they didn’t understand the enormity of what they were dealing with, and for whatever reason, they chose to go ahead with the relationship.  
  
“Another area we’re looking at is from the preventive lens, to work closely with the traditional rulers. We go to their kingdoms. They invite us to their kingdoms and we engage with the populace on these issues, empowering them with information, more importantly, empowering them with information as the services that exist in their communities,” she stressed.