Please cite as: EASO, '2.16.1. Violence against women and girls: overview' in *Country Guidance Nigeria*, Oktober 2021.

2.16.1. Violence against women and girls: overview

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: February 2019
*Minor updates added October 2021

COI summary

[Main COI references: Targeting, 3.13; Country focus, 4]

Sources describe the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria as widespread or endemic. Most perpetrators of domestic violence are the person's current husband or partner, though other family members are also common perpetrators, such as mothers, stepmothers, siblings, or fathers and stepfathers. Rape is also common and widespread.

A Demographic and Health Survey study in 2013 has shown that 28 % of all women between 15 and 49 have experienced some form of physical violence in the context of domestic violence, since they turned 15. The percentage of those who experienced violence in the year before the survey was 11 %, decreasing from 15 % in 2008. Overall, 7 % of women aged 15-49 had experienced sexual violence at least once.

Sources indicate that domestic violence is socially or culturally acceptable to many Nigerians. Women experiencing domestic violence do not often approach police with complaints due to a lack of trust in the force. Police has exhibited bias and discriminatory attitudes in their treatment of female victims of violence and they have often refused to intervene in domestic violence disputes or blamed the victim for their treatment. Furthermore, societal stigma with regard to rape, reduces the likelihood of victims reporting it or of perpetrators being prosecuted or punished. It is reported that young single IDP women face a higher risk of abduction and sexual abuse, including reports of abuse by soldiers and CJTF in camps [See also Security situation 2021, 1.6.4.3]. Furthermore, in 2020 an increasing number of domestic violence and gender-based violence cases was reported in several states, mainly during the imposed lockdowns dure to COVID-19 [Security situation 2021, 2.21.3, 2.27.3, 2.28.3].

Trafficking to other countries, as well as within the border of Nigeria, is a phenomenon which predominantly affects women and girls [Trafficking; Targeting, 3.15; see also Victims of human trafficking, including forced prostitution].

Women with no support network and female-headed households, especially in some areas, may have additional vulnerabilities [Key socio-economic indicators, 2.4.3, 2.9.1].

It is also reported that women in Nigeria, and especially single women, often face discriminatory practices, concerning work, education and living conditions [Key socio-economic indicators, 2.3.3, 2.4.3 and 2.6.3]. Furthermore, many incidents of criminal violence and communal conflicts had an impact on the safety and livelihoods of women, particularly in Edo and Delta states [Security situation 2021, 2.36.3].

In 2015, Nigeria passed new legislation, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, which aims to provide legal framework for the prevention of violence, especially against women and girls. Rape and other forms of violence are penalised. However, this is a federal act and only applies to the Federal Capital Territory. 13 states have similar laws in place.

In 2014, the existence of shelters and services for abused women had also been reported , however they were not functioning effectively or at all due to financial problems [Country focus, 4.1.2].

Risk analysis

Women and girls could be exposed to acts which are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. certain forms of physical violence including of domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking). Where the risk is discrimination and/or mistreatment by society and/or by the family (e.g. stigmatisation), the individual assessment of whether this could amount to persecution should take into account the severity and/or repetitiveness of the acts or whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures.

Not all women and girls would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution. The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: area of origin, age, being an IDP living in a camp, family status, socio-economic status, level of education, support network (family or other), etc.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for different reasons under Article 10 QD, depending on the specific circumstances of the case. For example, women and girls who have been sexually abused may be subjected to persecution for reasons of membership of particular social group, based on their common background which cannot be changed (past experience of sexual abuse) and distinct identity in Nigeria (in relation to stigmatisation by society).

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu