

16 Facts on Gender-Based Violence Across the Sahel



As part of the 2025 global campaign for the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**, Project 21 wishes to provide 16 evidence-based insights into Gender-Based Violence (GBV) characteristics across the Sahel. Drawing from nearly 52,000 consultations conducted in 2025 with displaced and host communities, these insights highlight drivers, risks, and forms of GBV reported in the Sahel region, as well as within its major forced displacement situations.

GBV throughout the region

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Togo

1. Most displaced populations are women and children

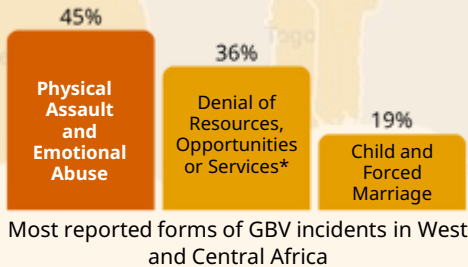
According to UNHCR, women and children make up **81%** of refugees and asylum seekers in the region. They face disproportionate exposure to protection risks as displacement amplifies their specific gender and/or age-related vulnerabilities.



3. Physical assault and emotional abuse are the most reported forms of GBV

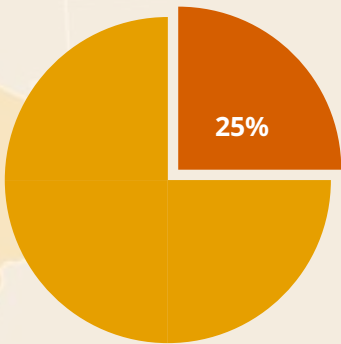
Physical assault and psychological abuse constitute the majority of reported GBV incidents, together accounting for nearly **half** of all reported incidents.

**Including denial of humanitarian assistance*



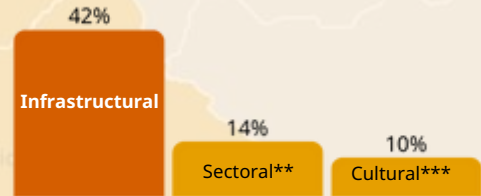
2. GBV is one of the most reported protection threats

Since January 2025, **1 in 4** protection incidents reported in the framework of Project 21 is related to GBV. This constitutes a worrying trend considering that GBV is too often underreported.



4. Primarily infrastructural challenges prevent effective access to GBV assistance

GBV support services remain out of reach for at least **1 in 4** people. Reported difficulties include either absence, insufficiencies, or remoteness of GBV care services.



Most reported challenges to effectively access GBV care services

***Including humanitarian challenges encountered to inform all persons at risk and/or surviving GBV incidents on available services and/or to ensure adequate, appropriate and/or standard-compliant service delivery due to operational and/or financial constraints*

****Including challenges related to socio-cultural norms, fear of being identified and/or socially rejected, as well as a preference for community-based mechanisms*




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PROJECT 21



GBV in Central Sahel

Burkina Faso, Mali, Western Niger

-  5. Where movement restrictions and humanitarian access challenges are the most severe, communities report GBV incidents at **twice the usual rate**.
-  6. **Denial** of resources, opportunities and services is the **most reported** form of GBV. Such denials (including of humanitarian assistance) represent **over 40%** of all reported GBV incidents.
-  7. **8 out of 10** persons at risk and/or surviving GBV rely on their family and friends for GBV support.




GBV in Coastal Countries

Northern Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo

-  11. Child and forced marriage represent **60%** of all reported GBV incidents.
-  12. **2 in 5** communities declare that the fear of negative judgement and/or social rejection prevent women to seeking GBV support.
-  13. **7 in 10** respondents identify leaders and representatives of displaced communities as key interlocutors to receive GBV support and/or guidance.




GBV in the Sudanese Situation in Eastern Chad

Ennedi-Est, Ouaddai, Sila, Wadi Fira provinces

-  8. **1 in 5** affected families identify dangerous areas threatening women and girls' safety within the refugee camp.
-  9. **More than half** of women declare facing attacks while performing vital activities such as fetching water, collecting firewood, and/or harvesting in fields.
-  10. Due to the loss of their traditional support networks, **half** of forcibly displaced persons reveal that they fully depend on NGOs and UN agencies for GBV assistance.

GBV in Lake Chad Basin

Regions of the Far North (Cameroon), Diffa (Niger), Lac (Chad)

-  14. **82%** of those reporting rising GBV within their community directly link it to food insecurity and hunger.
-  15. Women feel less safe using public toilets than going to the market — a danger reported **three times** higher in the Lake Chad Basin than elsewhere in the region.
-  16. **Half of all concerns raised** by women in community gatherings relate to demands for equal access to land, work, income and socio-economic opportunities.

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