

# Justice Needs and Satisfaction in **Nigeria** **2023**

Legal problems in daily life



Hiil is passionate about social impact. We aim to empower 150 million people to prevent or resolve their most pressing justice problems by 2030. Why?

Each year, 1 billion people have a new justice problem. Shockingly, over 70% of those people do not find a satisfactory resolution. w30% don't even feel sufficiently empowered to take action. This has a significant impact on their lives and on society: From violence to seriously damaged relationships and business conflicts.

To make a long story short, justice systems, as they are currently organised, do not deliver what people need in their most difficult moments.

The problem is that the same models to deliver justice in past centuries are still used today. This makes the process of getting justice often slow, difficult and costly.

We truly believe basic justice care for everyone is possible. With data and technology, we can co-create high-quality justice based on what we need now.

At Hiil we call it user-friendly justice. Justice that is affordable, accessible and easy to understand. It is justice that works.

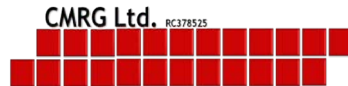
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Government of the Netherlands



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## Executive summary

This report presents the justice experiences of 6,573 randomly selected Nigerian adults, outlining the legal problems they encounter, their impact, and the steps they take to address them. It is the first time such data has been collected since the publication of the Justice Needs and Satisfaction (JNS) report in 2018, and it offers a people-centred perspective on justice in Nigeria.

The report presents the initial results of our updated JNS methodology. Unlike previous research projects, we have recruited a representative panel of Nigerian adults whom we will follow over the next four years (2022-2025). In the project's second, third, and fourth years, we will inquire about new legal problems experienced in the previous year and problems previously reported but still need to be resolved. This approach enables us to track the development and resolution of legal problems over time and explore new questions in the first year of the study.

Approximately 81% of Nigerians experience at least one legal problem in the past year, with many facing multiple problems. Of those who experience at least one legal problem,

52% encounter at least two. Overall, people in Nigeria experience about 184 million legal problems each year.

At the time of data collection in late 2022, approximately 55% of all legal problems were resolved either partially or completely, with about 82% of those resolutions deemed fair or very fair. Since all reported problems occurred less than a year ago, it is not surprising that approximately 33% of problems have not yet been resolved. We will revisit these problems in next year's study to determine if that has changed. Additionally, roughly 12% of problems are abandoned, with people either ceasing their efforts to find a resolution or never attempting to do so in the first place. Based on these findings, an estimated 102 million problems cannot be resolved fairly and expeditiously each year.

The most common legal problem categories experienced by Nigerians include disputes with neighbours, domestic violence, land disputes, crime, and housing problems. At least 16% of the people have encountered one legal problem in each category. The most common legal problem



category is neighbour problems. The most common specific neighbour problems are shared expenses and communal services, children disrupting the neighbourhood, and excessive noise. These may result from the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns, with many people spending more time at home.

Each legal problem category comprises several distinct problems that people encounter. For instance, domestic violence problems primarily involve emotional or psychological abuse, physical violence, and financial deprivation. Regarding land problems, disputes over boundaries, land usage, buying and selling land, and land titles and ownership are the most common issues. Nigeria's most prevalent crime problems include theft, robbery, and house-breaking. Lastly, specific housing problems include: landlord harassment, obtaining repairs or services from the landlord or others, negotiating the rent, or determining the value of the property.

Legal problems have a profound impact on the lives and well-being of Nigerians. People rate their legal problems with an average seriousness score of 7.49 out of 10. Ongoing problems are perceived as more serious than those resolved or abandoned, making them particularly

intriguing to investigate further in the upcoming years. Of the most common problems, crime and land problems have the lowest resolution rates. This suggests that these problems are both severe and challenging to resolve.

Approximately 86% of Nigerians with a legal problem take some form of action to address their most serious problem. Various paths to resolution exist, involving different sources of help. Most legal problems are resolved outside formal institutions typically associated with justice. People often rely on their inner circle to address their most pressing legal problems, frequently seeking help from family and friends. Nearly half of those who take action seek assistance from family members, while one out of four approaches their friends for help. This indicates the importance of social networks for people dealing with legal problems. Beyond one's social network, the most frequent sources of help include the police (11%), community/traditional leaders (8%), religious authorities/leaders (6%), landlords (6%), local public authorities (5%), and lawyers (5%).

There are significant gender disparities concerning the sources of help people consult. Women are more likely to rely on family members and neighbours within their social networks, while

men tend to turn to friends for help. Men are also more inclined to seek help from the police and community/traditional leaders outside their social networks. Both genders are equally likely to seek help from religious leaders and negotiate directly with the other party.

Although the differences are minimal, people in rural areas are more likely to seek help from community/traditional and religious leaders. Moreover,

those in urban areas are slightly more likely to seek aid from the police. Other demographic factors, such as education level, age group, and income level, do not show significant differences.

Certain demographic differences can be explained by the fact that specific sources of help are more commonly sought by people facing particular types of problems. For instance, people with domestic violence problems



typically turn to family members and friends for help rather than seeking assistance outside their social network. Regarding land problems, people usually approach family members first. If that fails, they are likely to seek help from traditional/community leaders or negotiate directly with the other party.

In the case of neighbour-related problems, people typically first approach their neighbours. If that does not work, they turn to family members or negotiate directly with the other party. Only some people seek help from institutional sources.

In crime problems, people turn to family members and friends, and if seeking assistance outside their social network, they are more likely to seek help from the police. Regarding housing problems, people usually turn to family members and may involve neighbours and friends or negotiate directly with the other party.

The sources of help offer different interventions to try to resolve legal problems. 65% primarily offer advice, likely because Nigerians seek help from their social networks. The other common interventions include decision making/settling the matter and mediation between parties.

Not all sources of help are equally helpful. Excluding social networks,

community or traditional leaders and religious leaders are deemed very helpful, while the police are also seen as helpful. Employers, on the other hand, are considered relatively unhelpful.

When examining problem categories, domestic violence is the most serious legal problem and the second most common. However, it also has the highest resolution rate. We have included a dedicated chapter on domestic violence problems in the report to understand more about this.

Based on the insights provided by the people of Nigeria, HiiL suggests several actions for policymakers, service providers, and innovators working to ensure access to justice for all. The most important actions include:

- Continuously collecting and learning from people-centred justice data to enhance legal service provisions and monitor progress.
- Prioritising and addressing the most burdensome problem categories, particularly domestic violence problems.
- Tailoring prevention and resolution mechanisms to the target population, considering demographic differences in the types of problems people experience and their resolution strategies.
- Ensuring that the regulatory environment for legal services enables innovative justice providers to fill the service gap between social networks and the formal justice system.
- Improving the quality of justice services provided by sources of help that are accessible but whose interventions do not meet people's needs. The development of treatment guidelines could play a role in this.





# 1 Introduction



This report discusses Nigerians' legal needs and experiences with the justice system. We conducted interviews with 6,573 randomly selected adults in Nigeria between November and December 2022 in collaboration with Communication & Marketing Research Group Limited (CMRG). We visited all six geopolitical zones of the country and selected three states in each zone based on their economic diversity, resulting in interviews conducted in 18 states. The interviews asked about legal problems experienced in the past year, the steps taken to resolve these issues, and the people's perceptions of the resolution process and outcomes. The report provides a unique and people-centred understanding of the justice needs of people in Nigeria.

HiiL (The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law) is dedicated to creating more accessible justice by developing people-centred services, which they call "user-friendly justice." This type of justice is easy to access, understand, and effective. HiiL aims to enable 150 million people to prevent or resolve their most pressing legal problems by 2030. HiiL encourages legal innovation and supports the most promising innovations to scale to achieve this goal. However, collecting data on people's legal needs and justice journeys is where it all begins.



HiiL has worked in Nigeria since 2015, having built solid relationships with key high-level stakeholders across the justice sector. Throughout these years, we have actively supported a wide range of successful justice innovators, published a JNS (2018), organised Justice Transformation Labs in Imo, Kaduna, and Ogun states, identifying pressing justice needs, developing goals, targets, and pathways to begin addressing the justice gap, and finalising strategy documents to guide implementation. HiiL has also worked with justice experts to develop guidelines on land justice and family justice in Ogun state as well as organised a Justice innovation lab in Imo state to develop a community justice centre prototype. Through its partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, HiiL is currently implementing a people-centred justice programme in Nigeria (2022-2025) that integrates data collection, research, innovation and stakeholder engagement.

Having up-to-date data on justice needs is essential for effectively allocating scarce resources to improve access to justice. Our first and only Justice Needs and Satisfaction (JNS) study in Nigeria was published in 2018, and the data no longer accurately reflects the current situation. Due to the significant social changes and upheaval experienced in the country since then,

a new data collection exercise was necessary. This report aims to inform policymakers, justice innovators, and other stakeholders about Nigeria's most pressing legal problems, where people go for help when facing those problems, and whether they can find resolution.

Chapter 2 of the report explains the methodology used to conceptualise, operationalise, and measure justice needs and satisfaction and arrive at the findings and implications. The chapter also provides a detailed overview of the panel of 6,573 Nigerians<sup>1</sup> who were interviewed and form the basis of the study. The following three chapters analyse the data gathered and present findings on the justice gap (Chapter 3), the impact of legal problems (Chapter 4), and the resolution of legal problems (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 focuses on domestic violence, one of Nigeria's most serious legal problems. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the main findings and implications of the study.

<sup>1</sup> 'Nigerians' in this report refers to all adults who reside in Nigeria, as the study did not inquire about their immigration status or nationality.



# 2

## Methodology





HiiL's Justice Needs & Satisfaction (JNS) survey aims to measure legal needs from a people-centred perspective. It asks people about their justice problems and their paths to resolving them, including the formal and informal justice providers they engage for help. The survey follows OECD guidelines<sup>2</sup> and has been applied in over twenty countries. The focus is on understanding justice as it relates to people's everyday lives and recognising that formal legal institutions are not the only sources of justice.

HiiL recognises that the standard Justice Needs and Satisfaction (JNS) survey, which only asks about people's justice problems and experiences in the past year or past four years, has limitations. It does not allow for tracking the development of justice problems and the steps people take to resolve them over time. Without regular repetition of the study, the findings may become outdated, especially in light of major societal changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address these shortcomings, HiiL is introducing a new JNS methodology: a panel study. With this approach, we will follow the justice experiences of a representative group of people over a number of years. Each year, we will ask the panel members the same questions about any justice problems they may have encountered in the past twelve months. We will also ask panel members about problems they reported in the previous year and are still trying to resolve. Additionally, we will ask some new questions related to our findings from the previous year's study. This report summarises the first findings of this panel-based JNS study in Nigeria, which will span four years.

The initiation phase of this research took place in the early months of 2022, comprising background desk research and the development of the research methodology and survey instrument. HiiL assembled a cadre of justice experts and key stakeholders from various Nigerian organisations to tailor the survey instrument to the country's specific context in October 2022. This adaptation workshop was instrumental in ensuring that the survey instrument captured relevant and valid data for Nigeria. Concurrently, HiiL and Communication & Marketing Research Group Limited (CMRG) conducted trained the enumerators to administer the survey instrument and

conduct interviews. We subsequently executed a pilot study to evaluate the administration of the survey instrument in practice. Data collection took place in November and December 2022. In January 2023, HiiL presented

the preliminary study findings to the reference group as part of a triangulation workshop. The reference group provided valuable feedback, interpretations, and explanations, greatly enhancing the final report.



<sup>2</sup> OECD/Open Society Foundations (2019), Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9a36c-en>.

**Representing the Nigerian Population: An Introduction to the Nigerian Justice Panel**

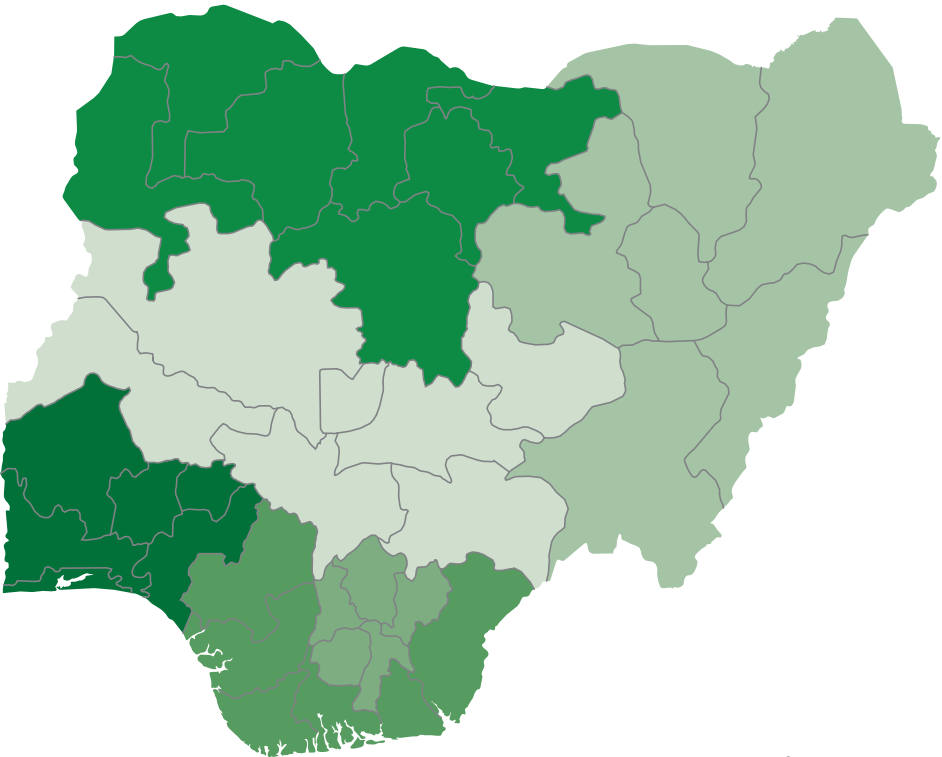
A Nigerian justice panel is a group of 6,573 adult Nigerians selected to represent the diverse population of Nigeria. The panel includes Nigerians from all six geopolitical zones of the country. Within each zone, we selected three states that represented the economic diversity of Nigeria. In each

state, we covered three senatorial districts. The map below shows the exact number of people surveyed from each zone. The distribution of panel members across the six zones is similar to the actual national distribution of the Nigerian population.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> National Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Demographic statistics bulletin: 2021 Nigeria. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241207>.



Number of panel members by six geopolitical zones



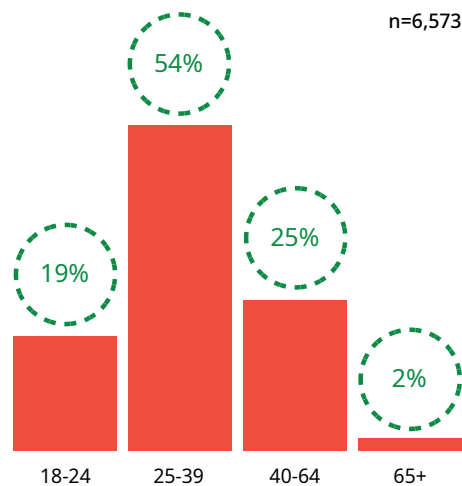
Number of panel members

South West:	1,618
North West:	1,509
South South:	946
South East:	896
North East:	875
North Central:	729



The panel members are split between men (51%) and women (49%)<sup>4</sup> and are representative of both rural (49%) and urban (51%) areas<sup>5</sup>. The age distribution of the panel ranges from 18-96 years old, with 98% of members falling between the ages of 18 and 64 and the remaining 2% being seniors aged 65 and over<sup>6</sup>. The majority of the panel (73%) falls in the 18-39 age bracket. The Nigerian justice panel makes it possible to gather important data and insights on Nigeria's justice system and work towards access to justice for all Nigerians.

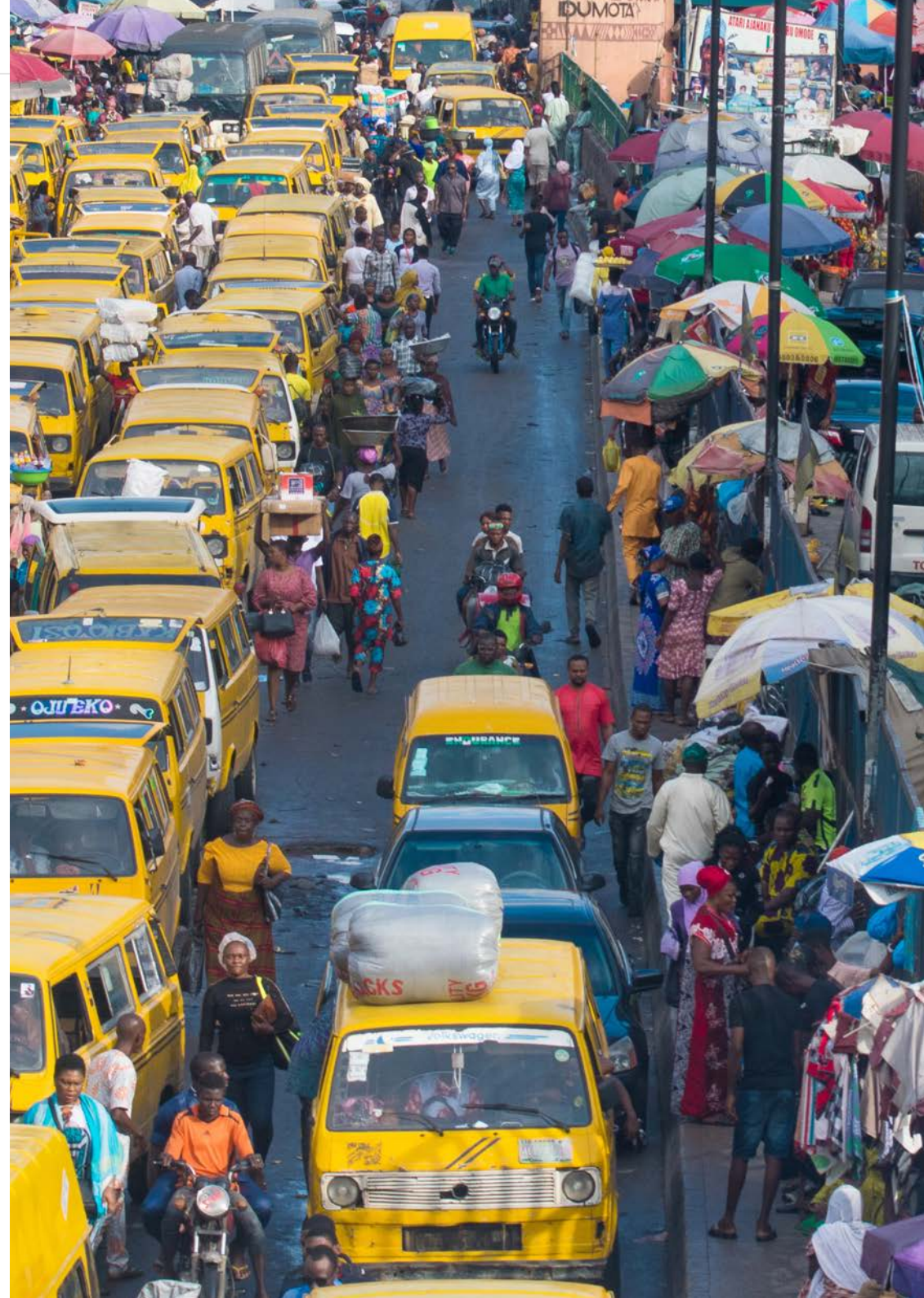
Age categories



<sup>4</sup> World Bank. (2021). Statistical information on the gender distribution of the population. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.IN>.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank. (2021). Statistical information on the population residing in rural areas. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>.

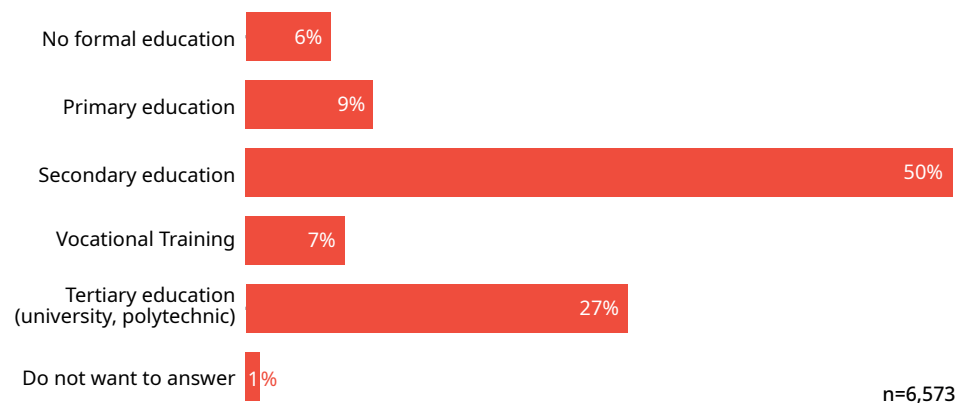
<sup>6</sup> World Bank. (2021). Statistical information on the age structure of the population. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS>.



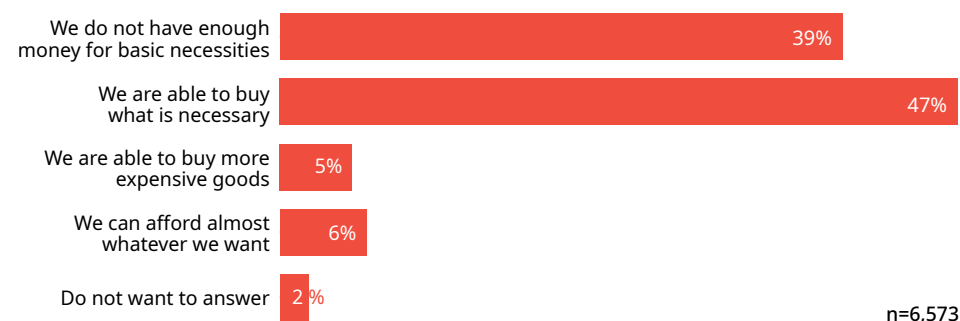
Around 6% of the people in our panel have not received any formal education, while 9% have only completed primary school. Half of the panel members have completed secondary education, 7% have undergone vocational training, and 27% have earned a university degree. Younger people are more likely to have received secondary education than older people. There are no significant differences in education level between genders.

In this report, a division will be made between two groups of panel members: those with no formal education or primary education, referred to as (no or primary education), who make up 16% of the total, and those with secondary education or higher, referred to as (secondary or higher education), who comprise 83% of the total.

### Education level



### Financial situation



In addition to gathering information about the gender, age, living environment, and education level of the panel members, we also asked them to evaluate their financial situation. Almost 40% of the respondents disclosed that they lack the funds to pay for their basic needs, while the majority (47%) said they could purchase what they needed, and a small fraction (5%) said they could buy expensive items or anything they desire. To simplify our analysis, we combined the last two groups into one category: people who can cover their basic needs (58%), including (6%) of those who can afford expensive items. The other two groups comprise people who cannot pay for their basic needs (40%).

We asked the panel members if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview next year. All 6,573 people who participated in this year's survey agreed to be re-contacted for the follow-up survey next year. This means we will have a sample of 6,573 Nigerians<sup>7</sup> for the second year of the study, allowing us to monitor the development of the legal problems they reported experiencing in the past year.

<sup>7</sup> We asked 7,954 people to participate, but 6,573 agreed to participate and become part of the panel. The participants who agreed to join the survey panel also consented to be contacted again for next year's survey. We anticipate a decrease in the number of participants for the next survey. However, we still expect a high response rate since all the participants agreed to be contacted again.



# 3

## Justice Gap





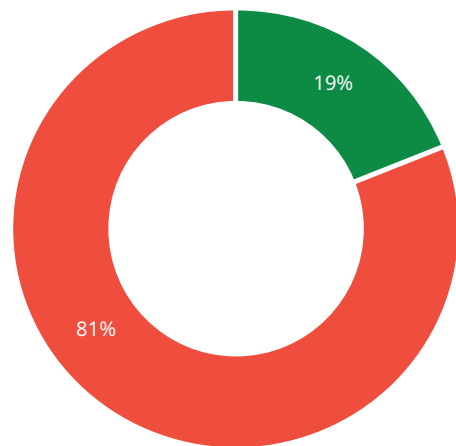
This chapter examines the incidence and types of legal problems Nigerians face. We explore the number of people facing legal problems annually and their specific problems. Additionally, we assess the extent to which they can resolve these problems.

#### Four out of five Nigerian adults experienced at least one legal problem in the past year.

Legal problems are a frequent reality for many Nigerians, with 81% of adults having experienced at least one legal problem in the past year. Many people encounter multiple legal problems: 52% of those who reported experiencing a legal problem had encountered two or more legal problems. Thus, the average number of legal problems per person is 2.0.

For people who can cover basic needs and those who cannot, the average number of legal problems is slightly lower for the latter group, at 1.87, compared to 2.13 for the former group. Regarding age groups, young adults between the ages of 25-39 have the highest average number of legal problems at 2.08, followed closely by middle-aged adults with an average of 1.97 legal problems. Youth between the ages of 18-24 have an average of 1.95 legal problems, while seniors have the lowest average of 1.78.

Prevalence of legal problems



One or more problems reported

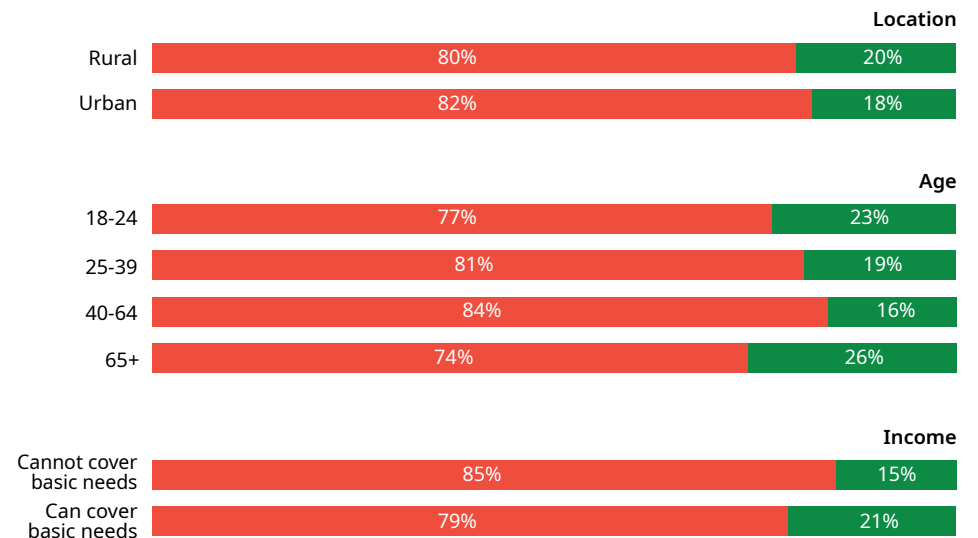
No problems reported

n=6,573

Certain demographic groups are more likely to encounter legal problems than others. Urbanites tend to experience legal problems more than Nigerians living in rural areas. Older people tend to experience more legal problems than younger people, except for seniors aged 65 and above. People who can't cover basic needs are more likely to face legal problems than those who can afford them.

There are no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of legal problems between men and women, or between education categories (no or primary education and those with secondary or higher education).

#### Prevalence of legal problems (by demographics)



One or more legal problems reported

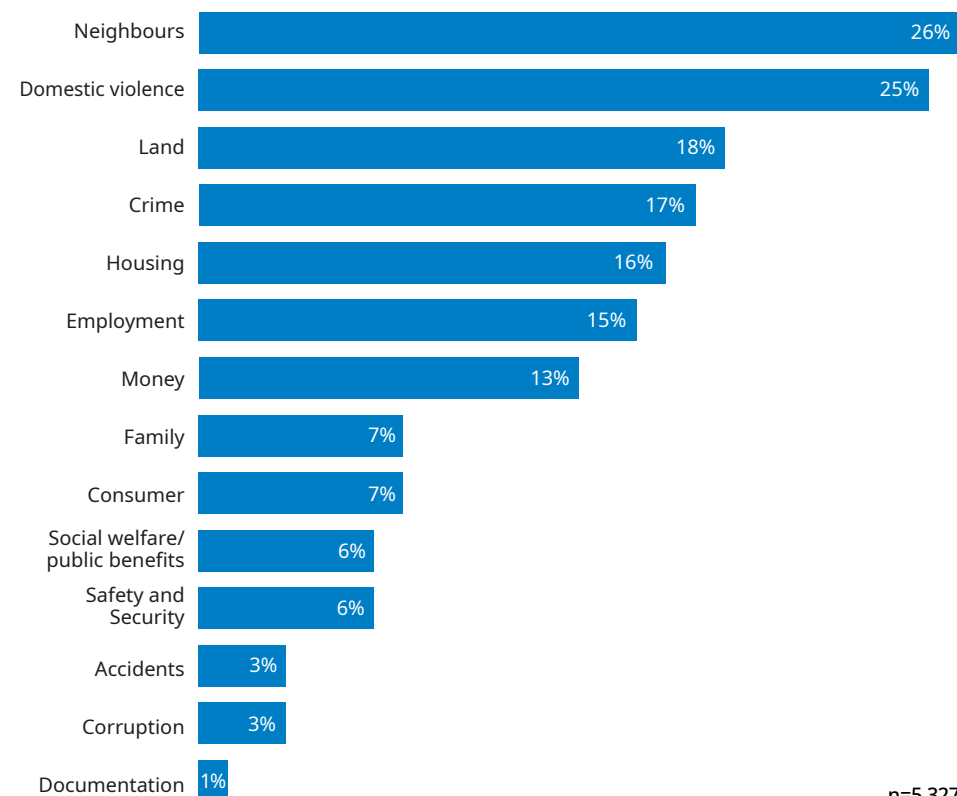
No problems reported

### The most frequent problem categories Nigerians experienced occur at home or in the neighbourhood

In Nigeria, people experience various legal problems in their daily lives. The five most common are disputes with neighbours, domestic violence, land disputes, crime, and housing problems. Among these, disputes with neighbours were the most common legal problem faced by Nigerians in the past year. These disputes often arise from disagreements over shared expenses and communal services, children disrupting the neighbourhood, and excessive noise from neighbours. These account for over 50 per cent of all neighbour-related problems. The COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns may have contributed to this rise in neighbour problems. Our reference group of Nigerian justice experts and practitioners confirmed this during a meeting in Abuja on January 19th, 2023, stating that the pandemic was a catalyst of neighbour problems.



### Most common legal problems categories (as % of people who reported at least one legal problem)



n=5,327

The second most prevalent legal problem category in Nigeria is domestic violence. This most often takes the form of emotional or psychological abuse, physical violence, and economic deprivation. These specific problem categories account for over 80% of all domestic violence problems. Recent studies have concluded that there was an increase in domestic violence due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions in Nigeria as well as in many other African countries.<sup>8</sup> This finding was confirmed by the reference group. Chapter 6 gives more detailed insight into domestic violence in Nigeria.

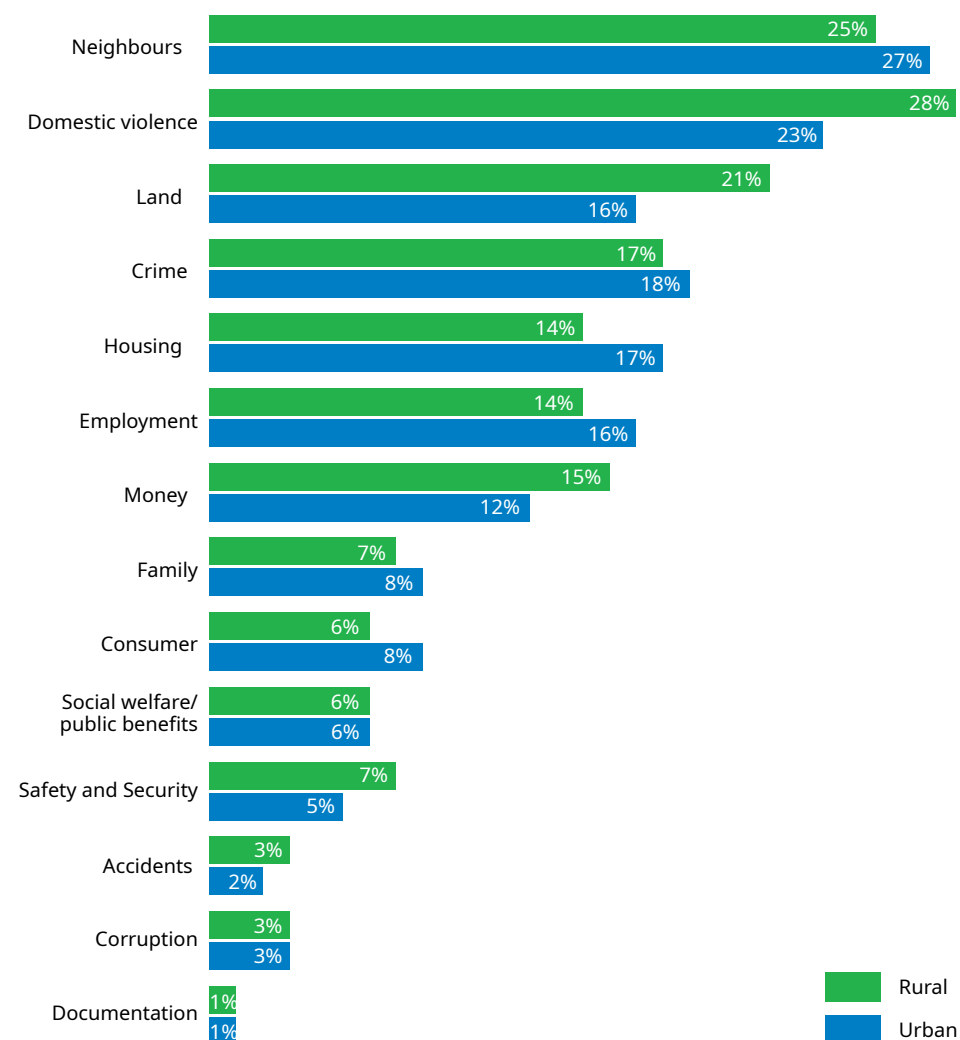
The other common legal problem category is land problems. Nigeria's most frequent land problems include disputes over boundaries, land use, buying and selling land, and land titles and ownership. These problems account for 60% of all land problems. The most commonly occurring crime problems in Nigeria are theft, robbery, and house-breaking, which account

for nearly 80% of all crime problems. Theft/stealing is the most prevalent specific crime problem. The most common specific housing problems are harassment by the landlord, getting the landlord or others to do repairs or provide other services and agreeing on the value of or paying the rent. Together these account for over 50% of all housing-related problems.

#### Land and domestic violence are even more prevalent among rural residents

The occurrence of certain problems varies between rural and urban residents. Unsurprisingly, housing and employment problems are common among urban residents. Urbanites also often experience neighbours, crime, family and consumer problems. Meanwhile, rural residents tend to experience higher rates of domestic violence, land problems, money problems, safety and security, and accidents.

#### Most common legal problems categories by location (as % of people who reported at least one legal problem)



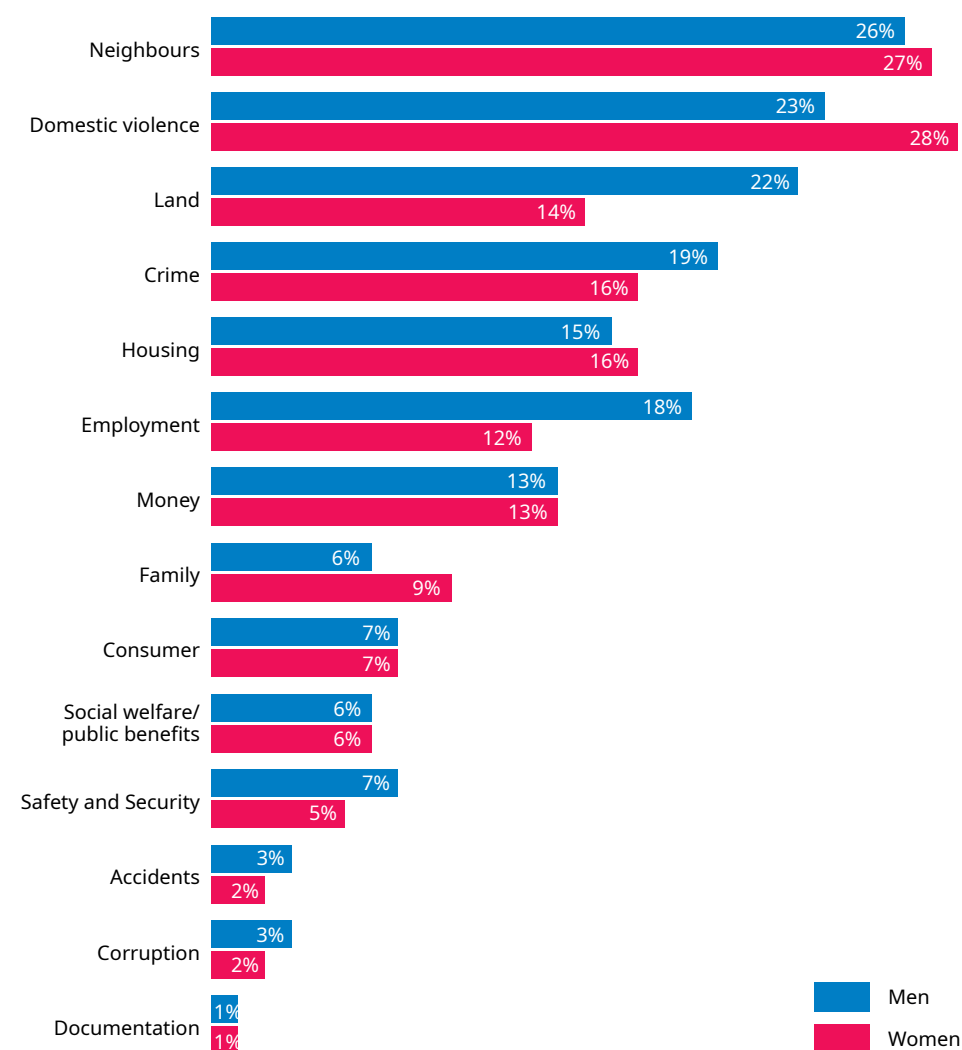
<sup>8</sup> Uzobo, E. and Ayinmoro, A.D., (2021). Trapped between two pandemics: a scoping review of domestic violence cases under COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. International quarterly of community health education. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0272684X211022121>



Men encounter problems related to economic activities such as land and employment at notably higher rates than women. The reference group indicates a gender gap in land rights and ownership in Nigeria, which is supported by a study conducted by FAO on the same topic. Meanwhile, women are more likely than men to experience problems related to home such as domestic violence, neighbour problems and familial disputes.



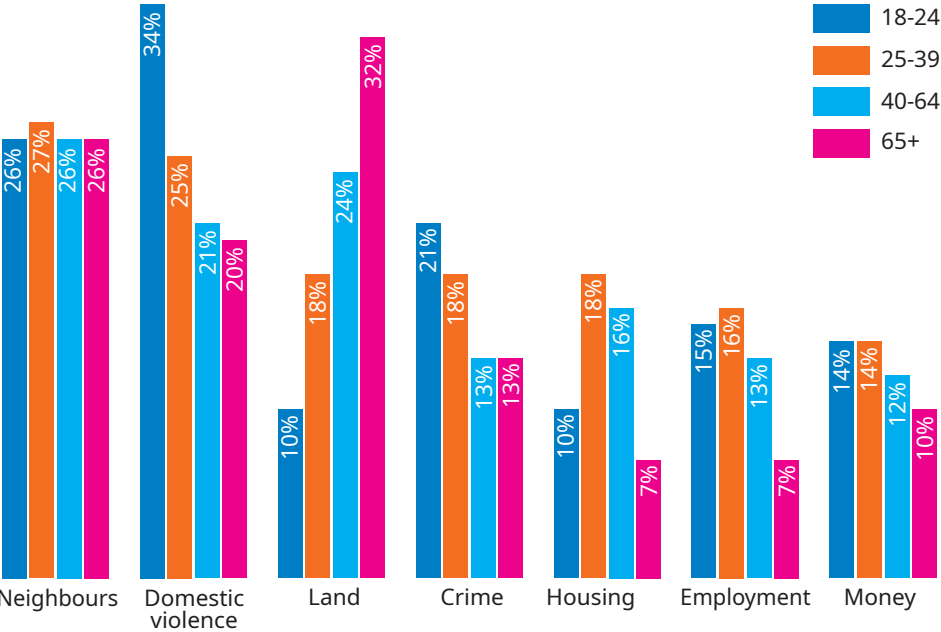
### Most common legal problems categories by gender (as % of people who reported at least one legal problem)



The type of legal problems people encounter varies across different age groups. Domestic violence problems are more prevalent among young people (between the age of 18-24), one third of young people (between the age of 18-24) who reported legal problems report domestic violence and less common among older age groups. On the other hand, land problems are more likely to be experienced by older

people, particularly seniors. Crime problems are more likely to decrease as age increases. Housing problems are most often experienced between the ages of 25 and 64. Employment problems are also more often experienced at a young age (between 18 to 39). Money-related problems are experienced by different age groups at roughly the same rates.

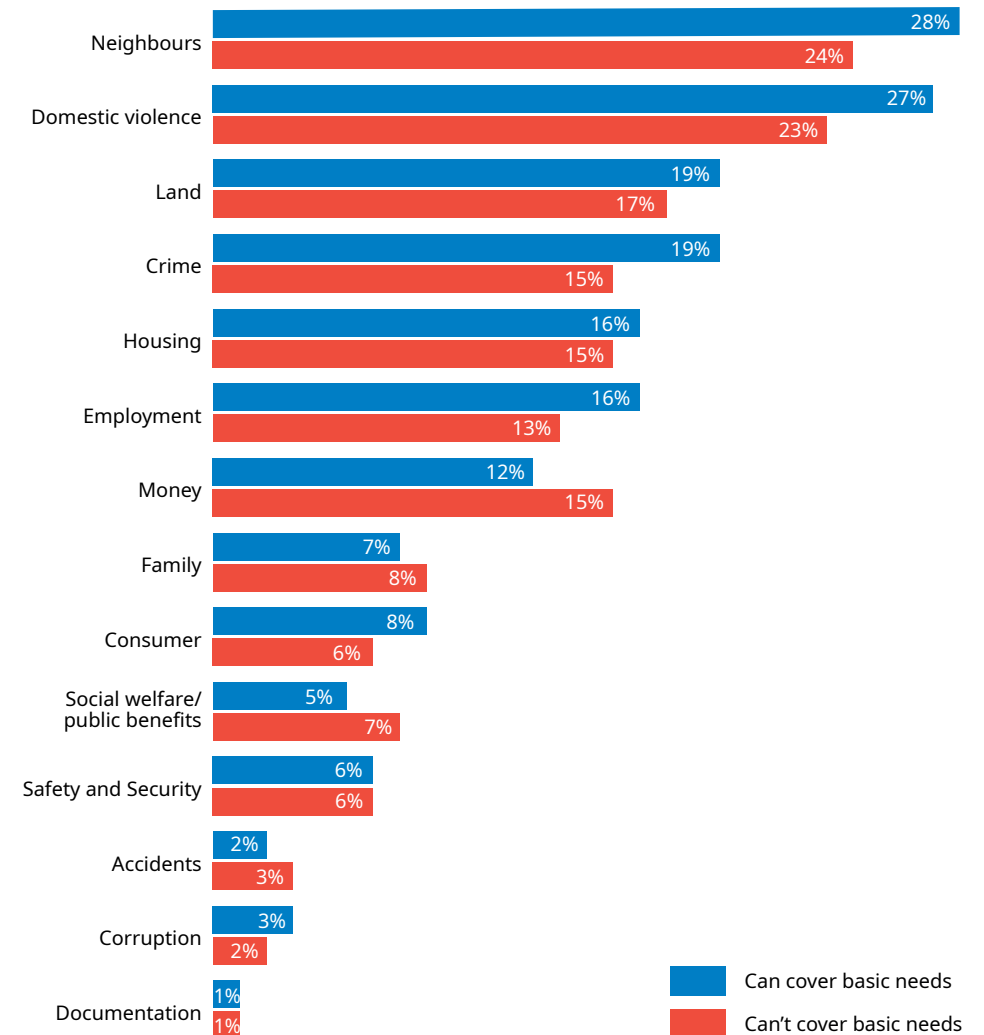
Most common legal problems categories by age group  
(as % of people who reported at least one legal problem)





Neighbour problems, domestic violence, land problems, crime, and employment problems are more common among Nigerians who can cover their basic needs. Problems related to livelihood such as money, family and social welfare/public benefits-related problems are more common among those who cannot cover basic needs.

#### Most common legal problems categories by income (as % of people who reported at least one legal problem)

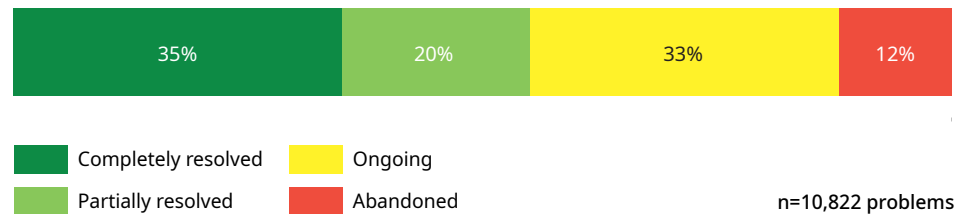




### While most problems are resolved, a third of them remain ongoing

We asked to what extent each reported problem had been resolved and found that more than half of them were either fully resolved or partially resolved at the time of data collection. This indicates that approximately one third of the problems remained unresolved.

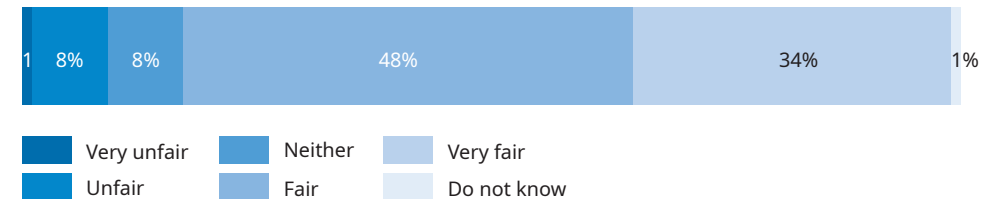
#### Resolution status - all legal problems



All the reported problems took place less than one year ago. This means that people have not had a significant amount of time to address them. This likely explains why approximately one third (33%) of the problems remain ongoing: many people are still trying to find a resolution. In next year's survey, we will investigate whether the resolution status of these problems has changed. Around 12% of the problems were abandoned, which means that the people who reported them either did not try to resolve them or gave up trying to find a solution.

For each partially or completely resolved problem reported, we asked about people's perception of the fairness of the resolution. A large majority of people (82%) perceive the resolution of their problems as fair or very fair. Only a small percentage (9%) feel the resolution was unfair. This indicates that most problems are resolved satisfactorily, with a positive outcome.

#### Fairness of the resolution (partially or completely resolved problems)



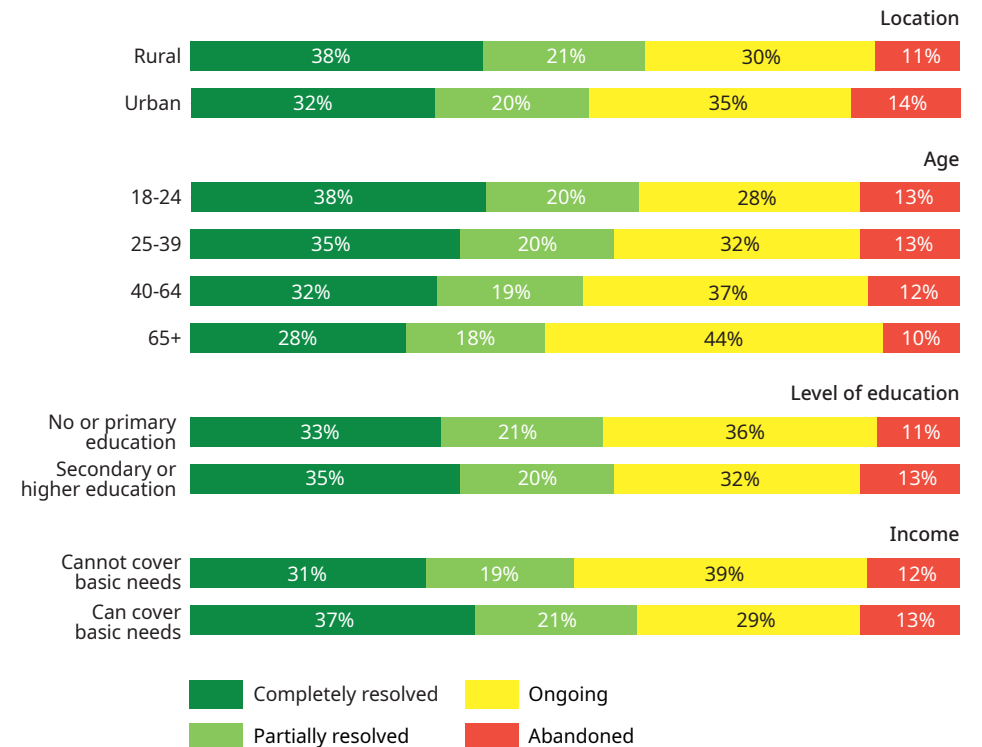
**Senior, poorer and relatively low-educated Nigerians are more likely to have ongoing problems.**

People living in rural areas tend to have higher resolution rates than those in urban areas. However, there is no difference in the number of ongoing problems faced by men compared with women.

Nigerians are less likely to resolve their problems as they get older, mostly due to an increase in the percentage of ongoing problems they experience. Nigerians have a higher chance of resolving their problems if they have obtained a secondary education or higher and if they can cover their basic needs. Once again, the difference in resolution rates is due to the percentage of ongoing problems, as the rate of abandoned problems is nearly identical across these groups.



**Resolution status demographic differences  
(all legal problems)**



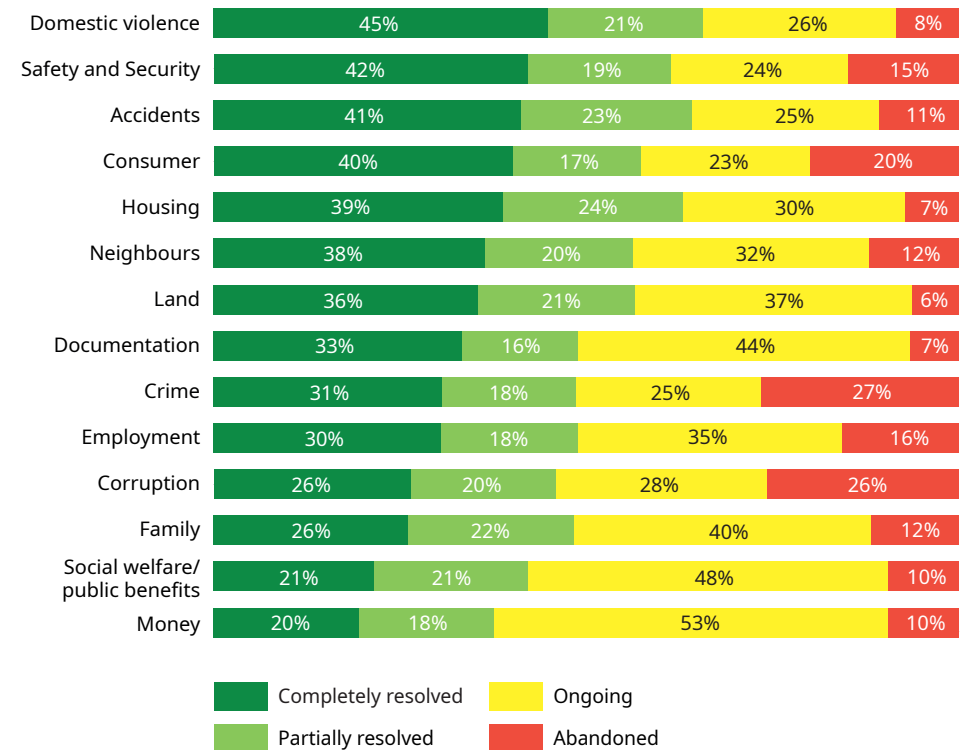
### Crime and land problems are the most difficult to resolve

The fact that crime and land are among the most common problems and are often ongoing or abandoned underscores the significant impact of these problems on people's lives. Domestic violence problems tend to be resolved at a higher than average rate. One reason might be that people tend to engage their inner circle to solve domestic violence problems and social/family contacts tend to be successful at resolving problems in Nigeria.

The reference group confirmed that the reason might be cultural and societal

norms that prioritise the stability of the family unit and may discourage women from speaking out about domestic violence or seeking a divorce. Women may feel pressure to maintain their marriage or relationship, especially if they have children or are financially dependent on their partner. They may feel that they have no choice but to continue living with their partner and may accept any resolution that provides some degree of relief or improvement in their situation. Problems related to housing, and neighbours are resolved slightly less frequently. On the other hand, family and money problems are the problem categories with the lowest resolution rates.

### Resolution status by problem category (all legal problems)





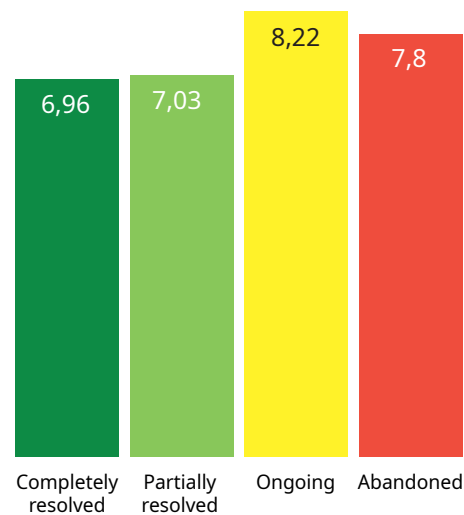


IMO CITY TRANSPORT

### Legal problems can significantly affect the lives of people.

The legal problems faced by Nigerians significantly impact their lives and overall well-being. We evaluated the severity of these problems on a scale of 1 to 10, with ten being the most severe. The results showed that the average seriousness score given by people was 7.49, highlighting the essential need for the effective resolution of these problems. Ongoing problems are generally considered more severe than those that are resolved or abandoned. When a problem is more impactful, people will be more determined to find a solution and less likely to give up. Conversely, problems that have less of an impact are more easily abandoned. The impact of a legal problem on an individual's life could also be heightened because they are actively trying to resolve it.

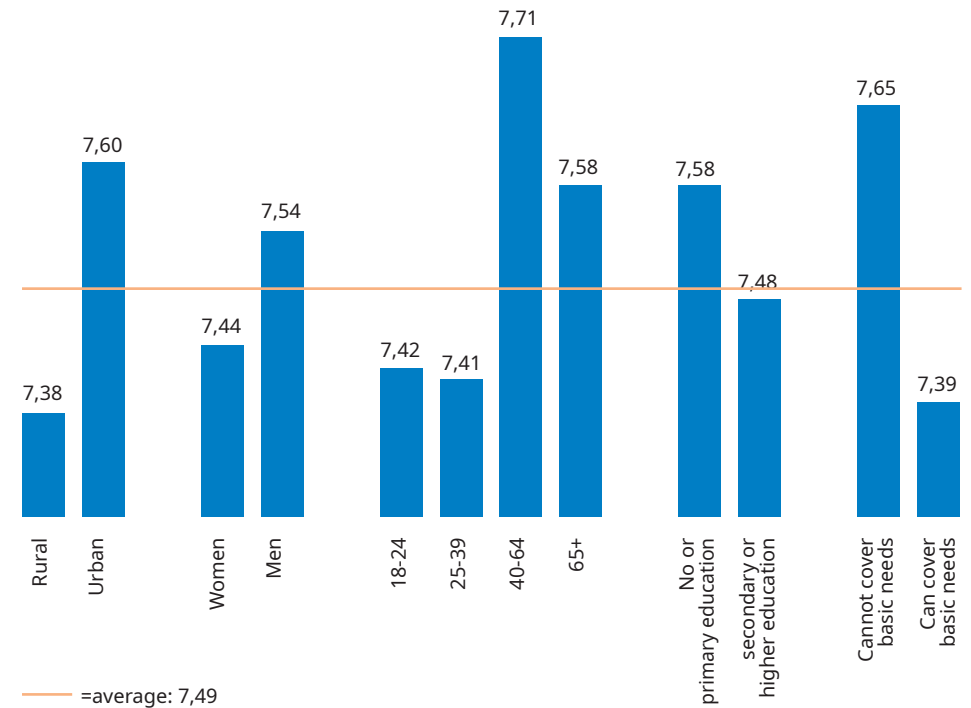
**Average seriousness score by resolution status (all legal problems)**



There are variations in the perceived seriousness of problems among different demographic groups. Men generally rate their problems as more severe than women. Older Nigerians view legal problems as more serious than younger ones. Those living in urban areas rate their problems more serious than those in rural areas.

Additionally, people who struggle to meet their basic needs tend to view their problems as more serious than those who are more financially secure. People with relatively lower levels of education tend to rate their problems as more serious than their more highly educated counterparts.

**Average seriousness score demographic differences (all legal problems)**



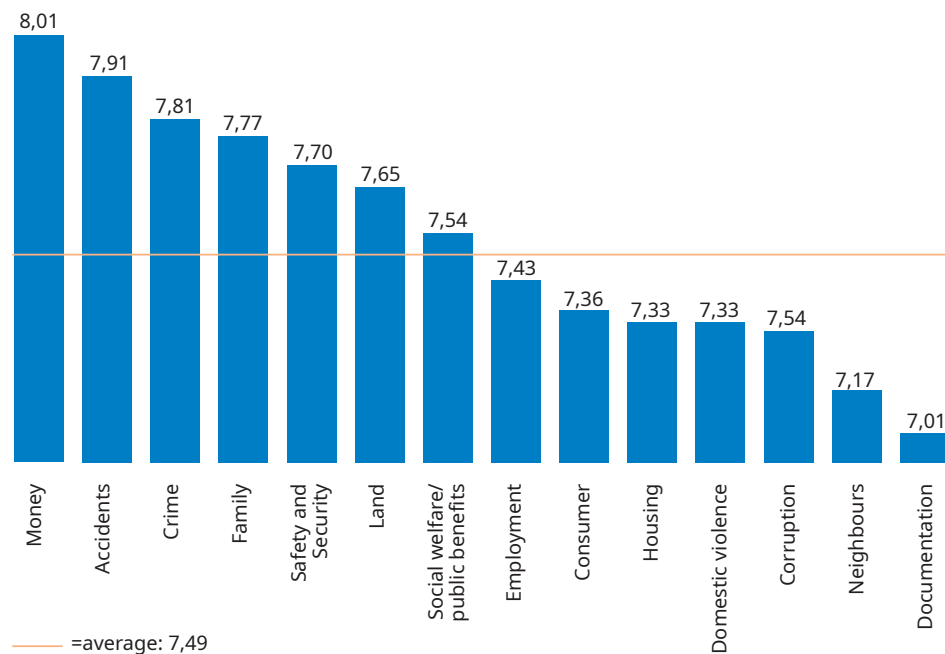


### Nigerians perceive the legal problems they experience as very serious

The average seriousness of problems by category shows that prevalence and seriousness are correlated. Problems such as neighbour problems, domestic violence, employment and housing problems are among the most common problems in Nigeria, but their average seriousness is below average.

The seriousness of legal problems is directly correlated with their resolution rate. Money problems, accidents, crime and family issues are among the categories with the lowest resolution rates and are assessed as the four most serious problem categories. This indicates that these problems are both very serious and difficult to resolve.

#### Average seriousness score by problem category (all legal problems)



### Quantifying the justice gap

The JNS survey is representative of the entire country. As a result of the data provided by Nigerians in the panel, we can approximate the gap between the fair resolutions people seek and those they are able to achieve

On an annual basis (using an estimated adult population of around 114 million)<sup>10</sup>:

- **92 million** Nigerians experience at least one legal problem
- Nigerians collectively experience **184 million** legal problems
- **101 million** of these problems are completely or partially resolved
- **83 million** of those resolutions are considered fair or very fair
- **61 million** problems are ongoing
- **22 million** are abandoned

Putting together the problems that are ongoing, abandoned or unfairly resolved, the justice gap in Nigeria reaches a total of 101 million problems that do not receive a fair and timely resolution every year.

### Legal problems that arise in Nigerians' homes and neighbourhoods are among the most serious

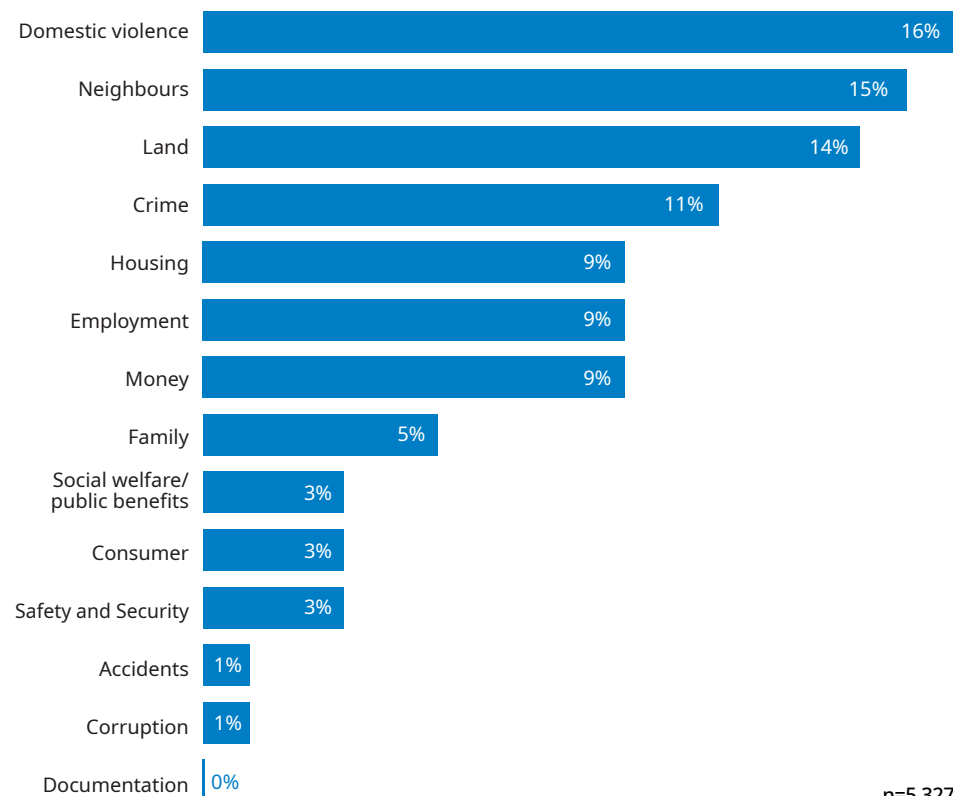
Rural residents are more likely to report land and domestic violence problems than urban residents, who are more likely to report housing, crime, and employment-related problems<sup>11</sup>.

Women are more susceptible to domestic violence and neighbour-related problems, while men are more likely to report crime, employment, and land problems.

<sup>10</sup>The values presented in this section are rounded and are considered rough approximations.

<sup>11</sup>As described in the methodology chapter, we initially examined the seriousness and resolution status of all legal problems. We then asked people who had experienced multiple legal problems to identify the most serious one. For people who faced only one legal problem, that problem was considered the most serious. This allowed us to delve into the consequences and resolution strategies associated with this particular problem, which are the focus of this report moving forward.

### Most serious legal problems (one most serious problem per person)



n=5,327

Young people more frequently experience domestic violence, while seniors more frequently report land problems. According to our reference group, this is unsurprising because younger people typically do not own land. This helps to explain the positive correlation between age and land problems.

People who cannot afford their basic needs tend to experience money

problems, while those who are able to meet their basic needs are more likely to report crime problems.

People with no or primary education encounter land and crime problems more often—those with secondary or higher education are more likely to experience housing, employment, and money problems.





# 4

## Impact of legal problems



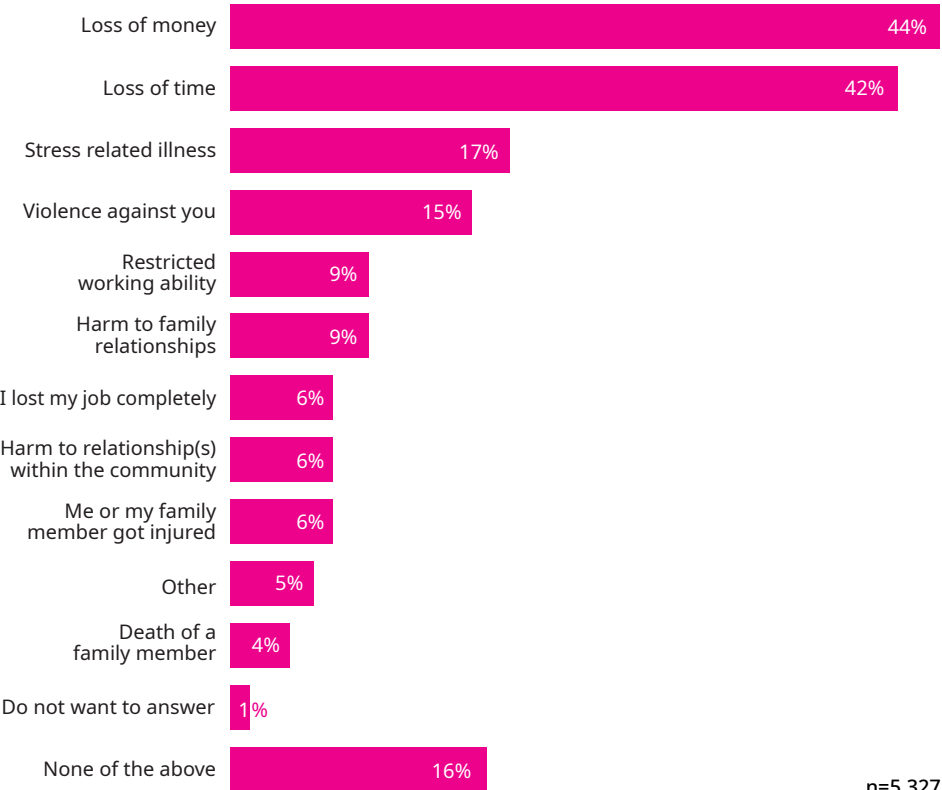


In the previous chapter, we demonstrated the prevalence and nature of the legal problems Nigerians face. The following section will delve more deeply into these problems by examining their impact. To what extent do these problems disrupt people's lives, and what are the primary consequences of these problems?

**Legal problems can result in many negative consequences, which may impact various aspects of people's lives.**

The impact of legal problems on people's lives is evident through the numerous negative consequences they face. A striking 83% of people with legal problems experience at least one negative consequence related to their most serious problem. On average, they encounter approximately two negative consequences. These are diverse in nature and may for example take the form of violence, stress-related illness, harm to relationships, and a restricted ability to work.

Most common consequences



n=5,327



Most people with a legal problem experience negative consequences as a result, with loss of time and money being the two most common. These consequences are each experienced by more than 40% of people who report a legal problem. Stress-related illness and violence against the respondent are also frequently reported – each one is experienced by around a quarter of people with a legal problem. Our findings also suggest that Nigerians experience other consequences not captured by the questionnaire. We plan to investigate this further in the second year of the study. There are no notable variations between different demographic groups when it comes to negative consequences.

The heatmap chart below demonstrates that negative consequences often arise logically from specific problem categories. The chart is organised by columns which represent different problem categories. The intensity of the colours within each column increases with the percentage of people experiencing the negative consequences identified in the rows.

The consequences are arranged in descending order to indicate that those at the top of the table are experienced more frequently than those at the bottom. The only exception is the final row of the chart, where darker

green indicates a higher percentage of people who *did not* experience any negative consequences.

The link between problem categories and negative consequences helps to explain the differences in the negative consequences experienced by different demographic groups, at least to some extent. For instance, men are more likely to encounter land and crime problems such as disputes over boundaries and theft/stealing. They are also more likely to face the negative consequences associated with such problems.

On the other hand, women are more likely to experience stress-related illnesses commonly associated with neighbour, domestic violence and family problems – three problem categories that women experience more frequently than men.

Monetary loss is a common negative consequence experienced by people dealing with crime, consumer, land, money, and accident problems. The loss of time is a frequent repercussion for people facing land, documentation, and corruption problems. Notably, an overwhelming 92% of those who encountered documentation problems reported experiencing a loss of time. However,

it is important to note that the number of people reporting documentation problems in the dataset is very low.



### Legal problems consequences by problem categories

	Land	Domestic violence	Housing	Neighbours	Employment	Family	Social welfare/ public benefits	Crime	Consumer	Accidents	Money	Documentation	Safety and Security	Corruption	Total
Loss of money	54%	34%	41%	26%	39%	34%	36%	71%	64%	52%	53%	50%	45%	55%	44%
Loss of time	52%	44%	41%	35%	37%	40%	35%	42%	45%	43%	34%	92%	46%	53%	42%
Stress related illness	18%	21%	16%	13%	15%	25%	21%	16%	10%	39%	16%	33%	23%	5%	17%
Violence against you	20%	19%	15%	14%	12%	25%	8%	14%	8%	0%	8%	17%	26%	7%	15%
Restricted working ability	12%	8%	6%	5%	15%	7%	10%	6%	8%	10%	8%	33%	13%	14%	9%
Harm to family relationships	13%	10%	5%	8%	5%	25%	10%	5%	3%	3%	6%	0%	11%	3%	9%
I lost my job completely	9%	7%	3%	1%	21%	4%	4%	5%	1%	5%	6%	8%	8%	12%	6%
Harm to relation-ship(s) within the community	8%	7%	5%	8%	3%	8%	4%	6%	2%	1%	4%	0%	9%	5%	6%
Me or my family member got injured	7%	9%	2%	5%	4%	5%	4%	7%	1%	10%	1%	0%	13%	0%	6%
Other	3%	5%	6%	10%	4%	4%	6%	4%	2%	5%	6%	0%	3%	7%	5%
Death of a family member	8%	3%	1%	1%	2%	4%	6%	4%	1%	14%	5%	17%	10%	0%	4%
Do not want to answer	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	5%	1%
None of the above	9%	15%	19%	23%	19%	15%	25%	10%	16%	6%	21%	0%	9%	5%	16%

 Low  High

 Low  High



## 5

## Dispute resolution





The previous chapters have established that legal problems are common in Nigeria and significantly affect people's lives. To further explore and understand how people address their legal problems, we asked a few crucial follow-up questions: What measures do people undertake to resolve their problems? To what extent do these efforts succeed? Are there easily accessible paths to justice that can help people resolve their most pressing legal problems?

We define sources of help as the institutions or individuals people engage when they encounter a legal problem.

#### List of all the sources of help sorted by alphabetical order

- Area gangs/Cult groups
- Central public authority
- Colleague
- Community/traditional leader (e.g., Emir, Oba, Eze, Baale, Mai Ungwa, Onyi Isi Obodo, Town Union President)
- CSO/NGO representative
- Employer
- Family member
- Formal court
- Free legal aid organisation
- Friend
- Government-based human rights organization (e.g., NHRC, NAPTIP, Public complaints commission, etc.)
- Landlord
- Lawyer
- Local public authority (e.g., LGA Chairman, local Government, vigilantes, etc.)
- Medical professional
- Negotiated directly with the other party
- Neighbour
- Other
- Peer groups (self-regulating groups)
- Police
- Religious Authority/Leader (Pastor, Imam, Deity)
- Teacher

### Nine out of 10 Nigerians take action to resolve their most serious problem

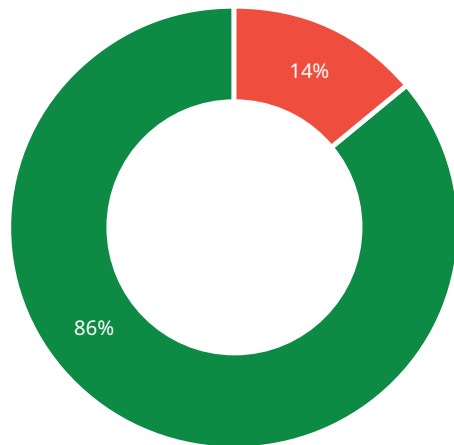
Most Nigerians are keen to find solutions for their legal problems. Virtually every Nigerian who experiences a legal problem takes some form of action to address their most serious problem.



Factors such as education level, gender, age, and financial well-being do not significantly affect people's probability of taking action. Nevertheless, their geographic location does have a considerable effect on their likelihood of taking action.

People residing in rural areas are more likely to take action to resolve their most pressing legal problems compared to urbanites. This could be due to a variety of factors, such as having a more closely knit community

that provides support and advice or having easier access to sources of help. The prevalence of land problems, the most common category of problems where people take action more frequently, is another factor.

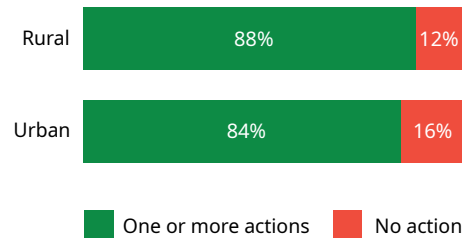
Action rate





 One or more actions  
 No action

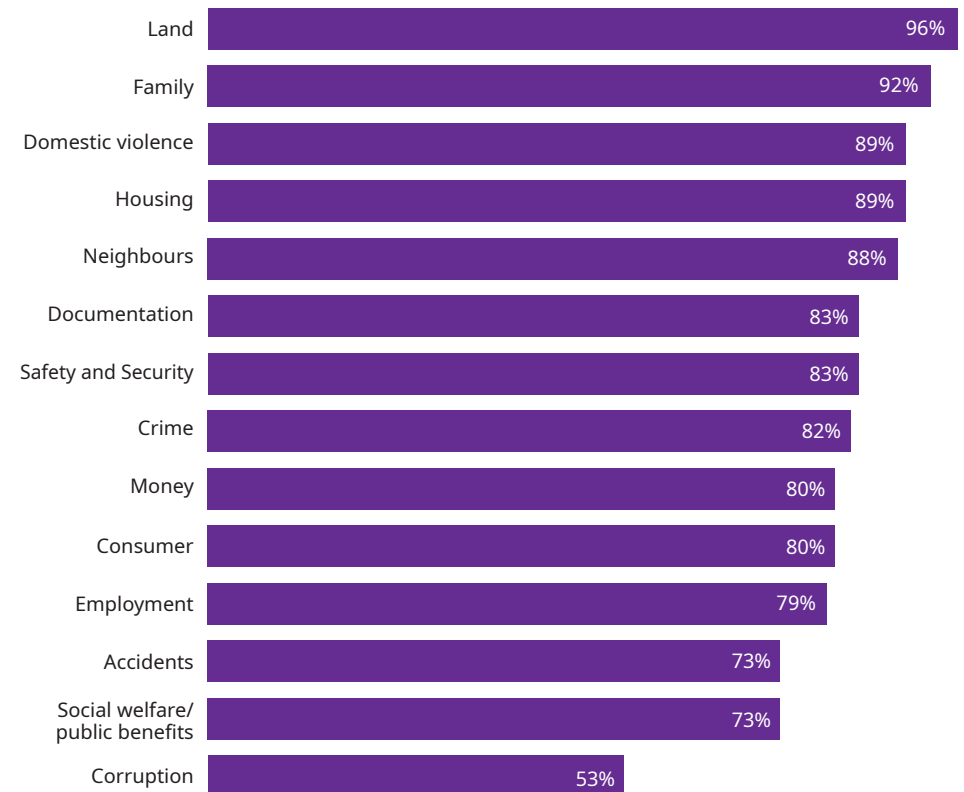
n=5,327

Action rate by location



 One or more actions  
 No action

Taking action: Wide variation across problem categories





According to the graph above, Nigerians are more likely to take action for land and family-related problems than other problem categories. On the other hand, the rates of taking action are the lowest for the categories of corruption, accidents, and social welfare/public benefits. To better understand the trend of people not taking action to resolve their legal problems, we asked respondents who did not take action about their reasons for not doing so.

### Hopelessness and doubt are some of the most common reasons for not taking action

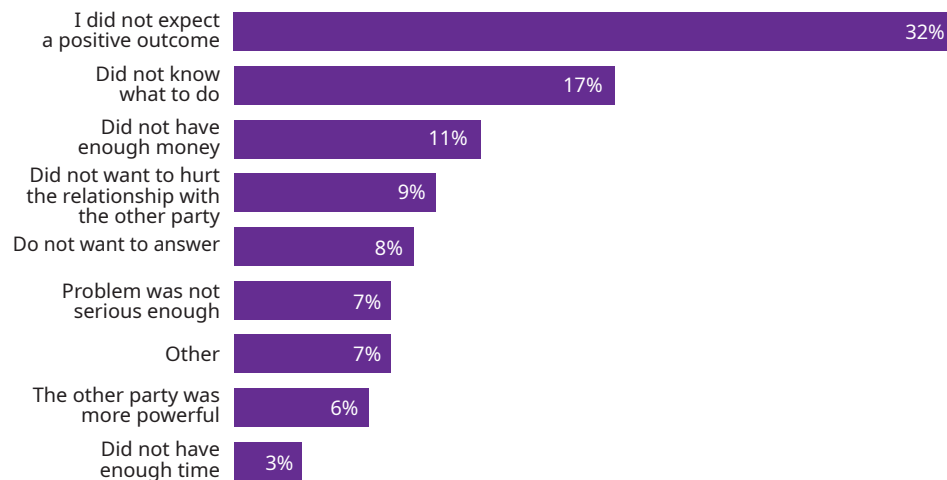
Three out of five people who did not take action to address their legal problem reported that they either did not anticipate a positive outcome, did not know how to proceed, or lacked the financial means to do so. These reasons may also be influenced by the nature of the specific legal problem that people are facing.

### Nigerians tend to get help from their inner circle to resolve their most serious legal problems

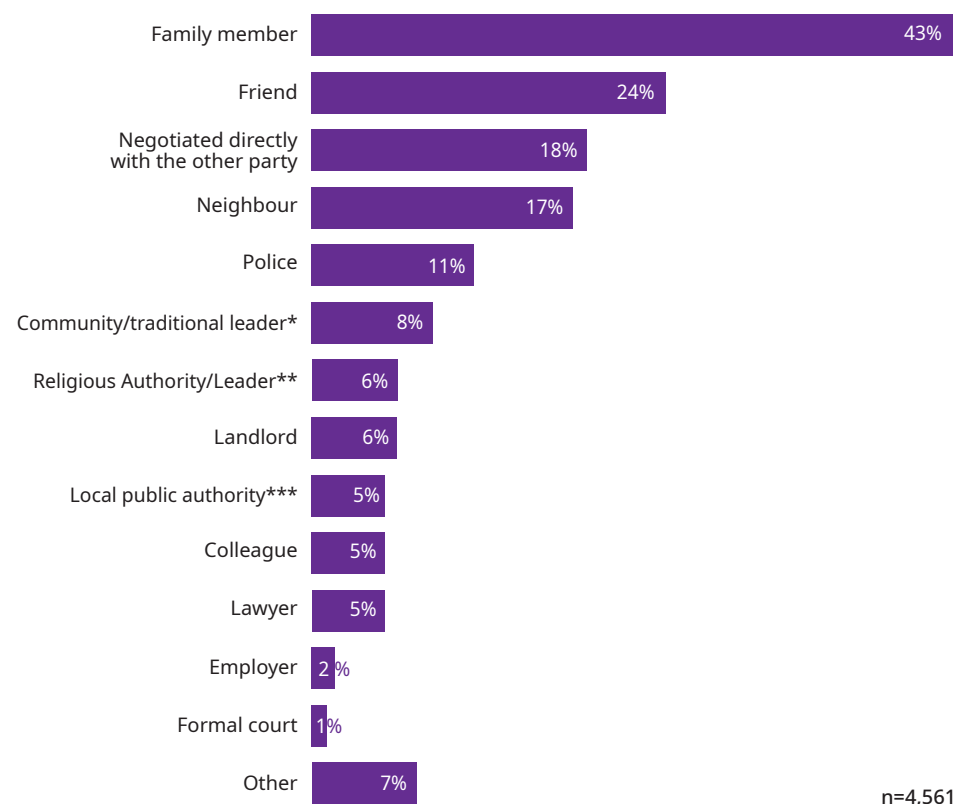
People use various methods and resources to address their legal problems. In Nigeria, people frequently turn to their inner circle to resolve their most pressing legal problem, often seeking help from family and friends. Nearly half of those who take action seek assistance from family members, while one out of four chooses to approach their friends for help.

The importance of social networks is evident. Outside of the inner circle, common sources of help include police, community/traditional leaders, and religious leaders. In contrast, only a minority of people with legal problems engage with actors typically associated with the justice system, such as lawyers, notaries, or formal courts. This indicates that most legal problems are resolved outside of formal institutions that people would usually associate with the resolution of legal problems.

#### Action rate



### Most common sources of help (as % percentage of people taking action)



\*e.g. Emir, Oba, Eze, Baale, Mai Ungwa, Onyi Isi Obodo, Town Union President

\*\*e.g. Pastor, Imam, Deity

\*\*\*e.g. LGA Chairman, local Government, vigilantes, etc.

Nigerians who seek help to address their most pressing legal problem engage on average 1.6 sources of help. If we only consider third-party assistance, excluding negotiations with the other party, the average drops to 1.5. Many Nigerians seek assistance from multiple sources. Common combinations of sources of help include family members and friends, family members and neighbours, and all three combined.

Only a small percentage of people seek help from other sources, which have been grouped into a single category called "other" for clarity and easier understanding<sup>12</sup>. This chapter will focus primarily on the most commonly used sources of help that have sufficient representation, unless there is a compelling reason to examine a less common source of help in more detail.

### Unequal access to the justice system: Demographic disparities in help-seeking behaviours

A closer examination of the extent to which various demographic groups utilise different sources of help provides insight into which groups can access various sources of help and who is being served. There are significant disparities between men and women when it comes to the sources of help they engage. Women are more likely to turn to family members and neighbours within their social networks, while men more frequently rely on friends. Men are also more likely to seek assistance from the police and community/traditional leaders outside of their social networks. Both genders are equally likely to seek help from religious leaders and negotiate directly with the other party.

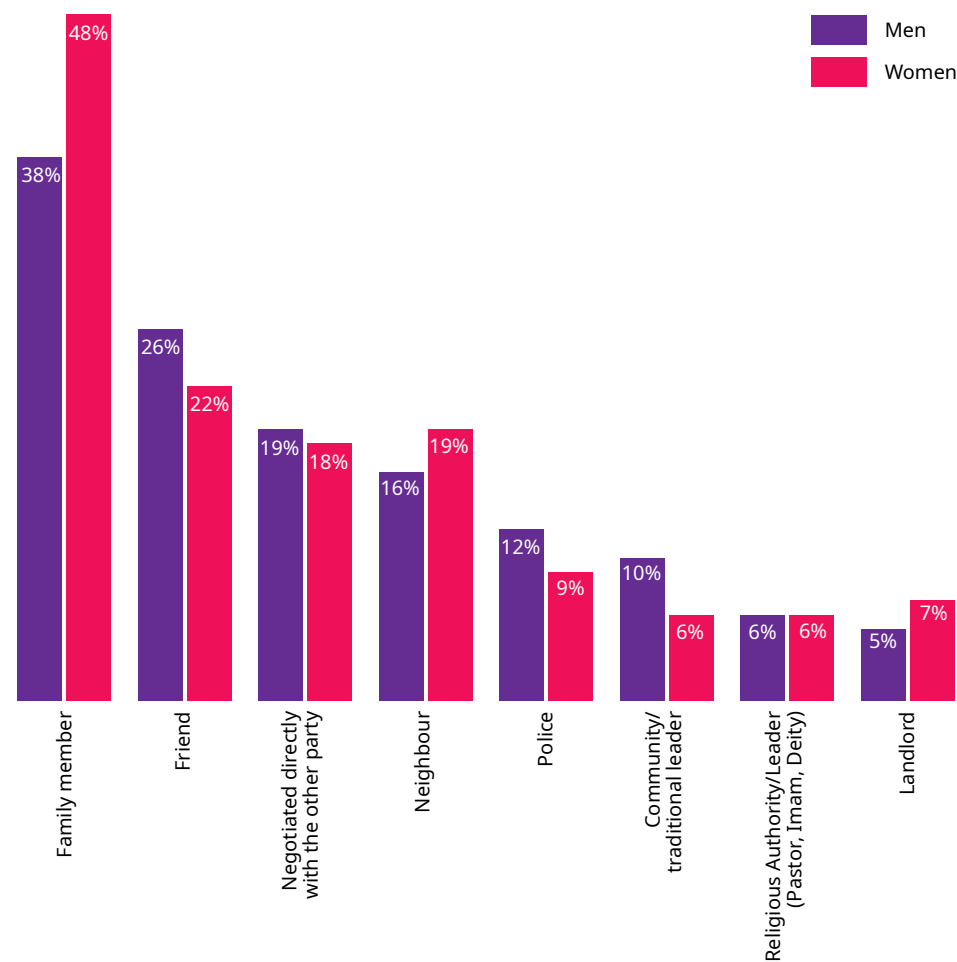
<sup>12</sup> The category named 'Other' includes other sources of help that are not specifically named, as well as government-based human rights organizations (e.g., NHRC, NAPTIP, Public Complaints Commission, etc.), representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs), peer groups (self-regulating groups), central public authorities, medical professionals, area gangs/cult groups, teachers, and free legal aid organizations."





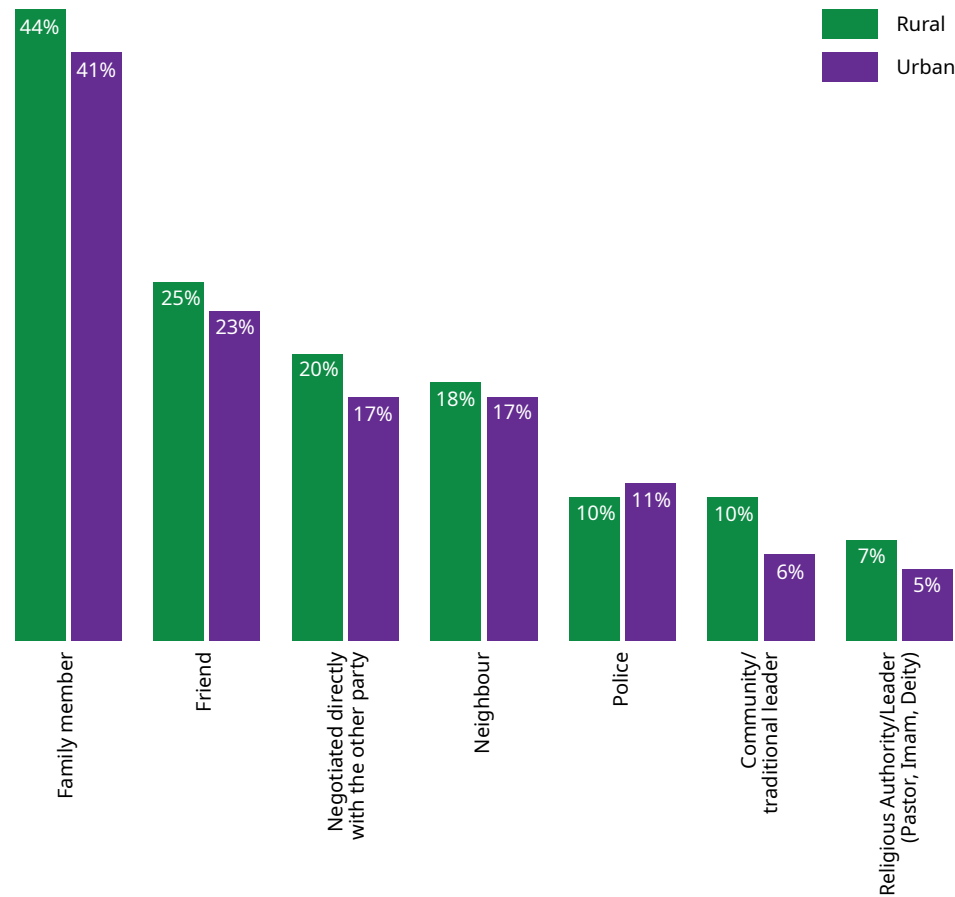


### Most common sources of help by gender



When considering the location, it is apparent that people in rural areas are slightly more likely to seek help from family members or friends. Although the differences are minimal, they are more likely to reach out to community/traditional and religious leaders. On the other hand, people in urban areas are slightly more likely to seek assistance from the police, but again, the difference is small. Other demographic factors such as education level, age group, and income level do not show significant differences.

### Most common sources of help by location



### People engage different sources of help for different problems

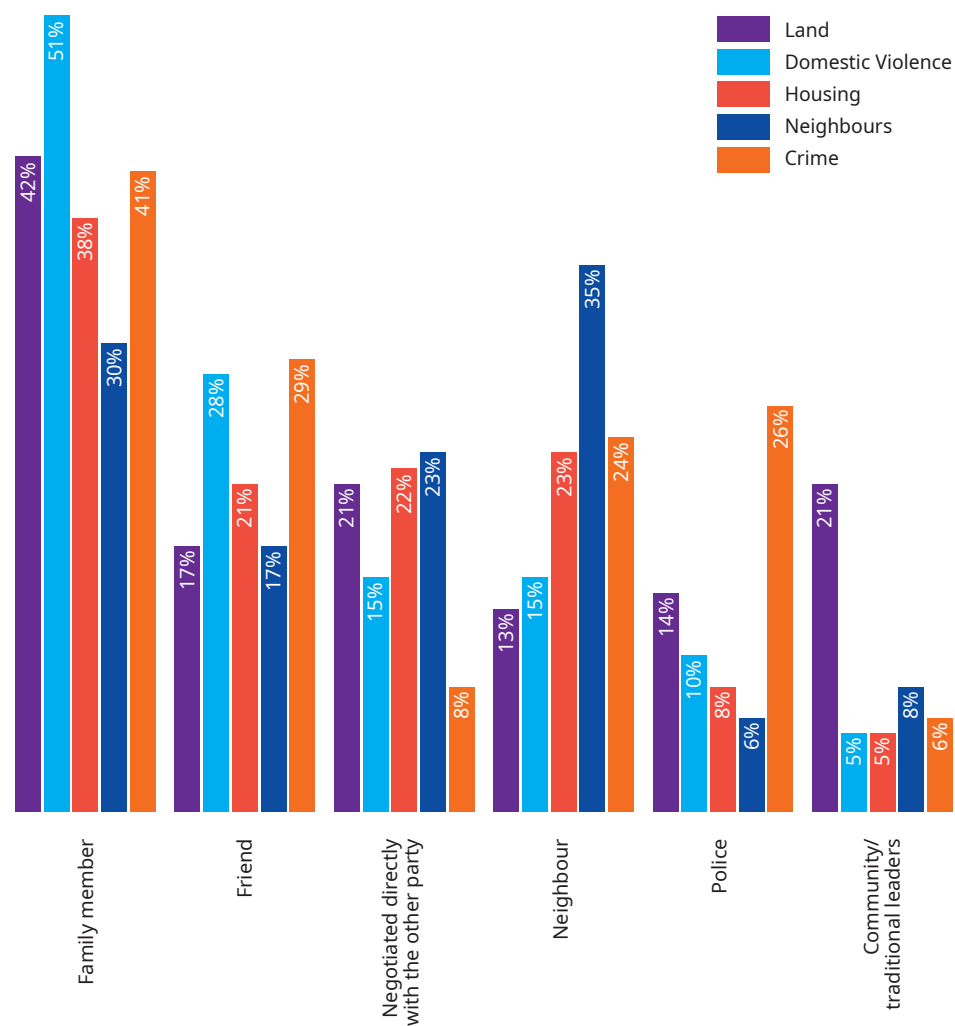
The sources of help that people engage to resolve their legal problem vary by problem category. Analysing the sources of help sought for the five most common problem categories highlights this. Nigerians confronted with domestic violence, for example, most often seek help from family members and friends rather than engaging with people outside of

their social network. People with land problems typically turn to family members as well. If that doesn't work, they are likely to seek assistance from traditional or community leaders or negotiate directly with the other party.

Neighbour-related problems often prompt people to approach their neighbours first. If that doesn't work, they turn to family members. Few people seek assistance from institutional sources.



## Sources of help by problem categories

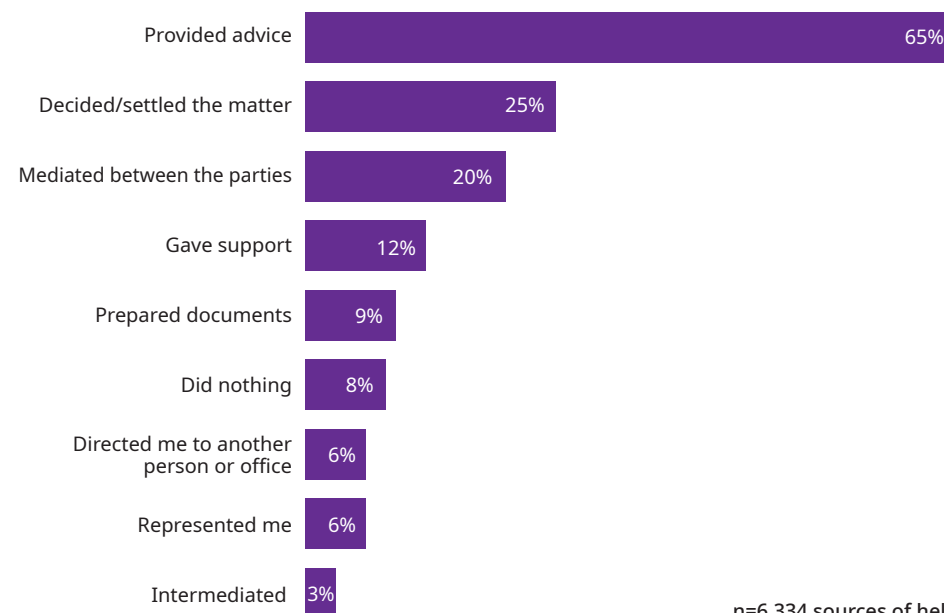


People faced with crime problems most often engage family members and friends for help. When seeking assistance outside their social network, they are most likely to seek assistance from the police. People with housing-related problems typically turn to family members and may also involve neighbours and friends, or negotiate directly with the other party.

## Sources of help overwhelmingly provide advice

Various sources of help used by Nigerians, offer different types of support during the resolution process. Among these sources, 65% primarily provide advice. This is likely because Nigerians primarily seek help from their social networks. The other common interventions are decision-making/settling the matter and mediation between parties.

## Most common interventions (as per % of sources of help)



n=6,334 sources of help



While providing advice and support (emotional, moral, financial, or material) can be beneficial interventions, previous research has shown that they are generally less directly associated with resolving legal problems. In contrast, interventions such as mediation and deciding/settling the matter are offered by approximately 20% of the sources of help and tend to have a stronger association with problem resolution<sup>13</sup>.

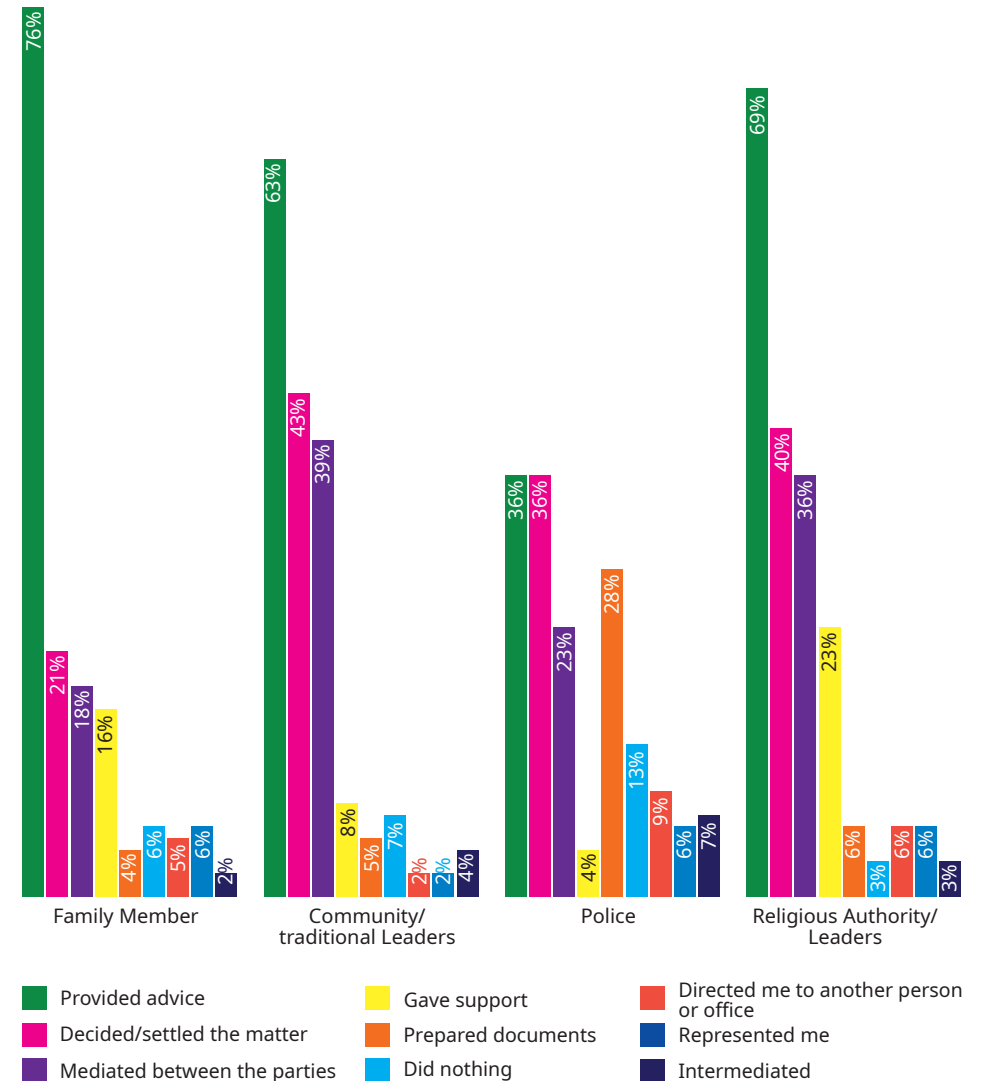
### Traditional and religious leaders help in many ways

The interventions offered by various sources of help can differ greatly, providing insight into which sources are most effective in resolving legal problems. The graph below depicts the interventions provided by the most common sources of help, with the blue bar on the left representing "provide advice."

<sup>13</sup> Sandefur, R.L., McDowell, T.W., & Greene, J.M. (2018). The impact of legal assistance on legal problems and non-legal outcomes: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 15(4), 685-722. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jels.12191>



### Most common interventions by sources of help





Family members primarily offer advice but also frequently mediate between parties. The police offer a wide range of interventions but often provide advice, make decisions/settle matters. Community or traditional leaders mostly provide advice, make decisions, settle the matter, and mediate between parties. Religious authorities or leaders offer similar interventions, but they also give (emotional, moral, financial, or material) support.

### Not all sources of help are equally helpful

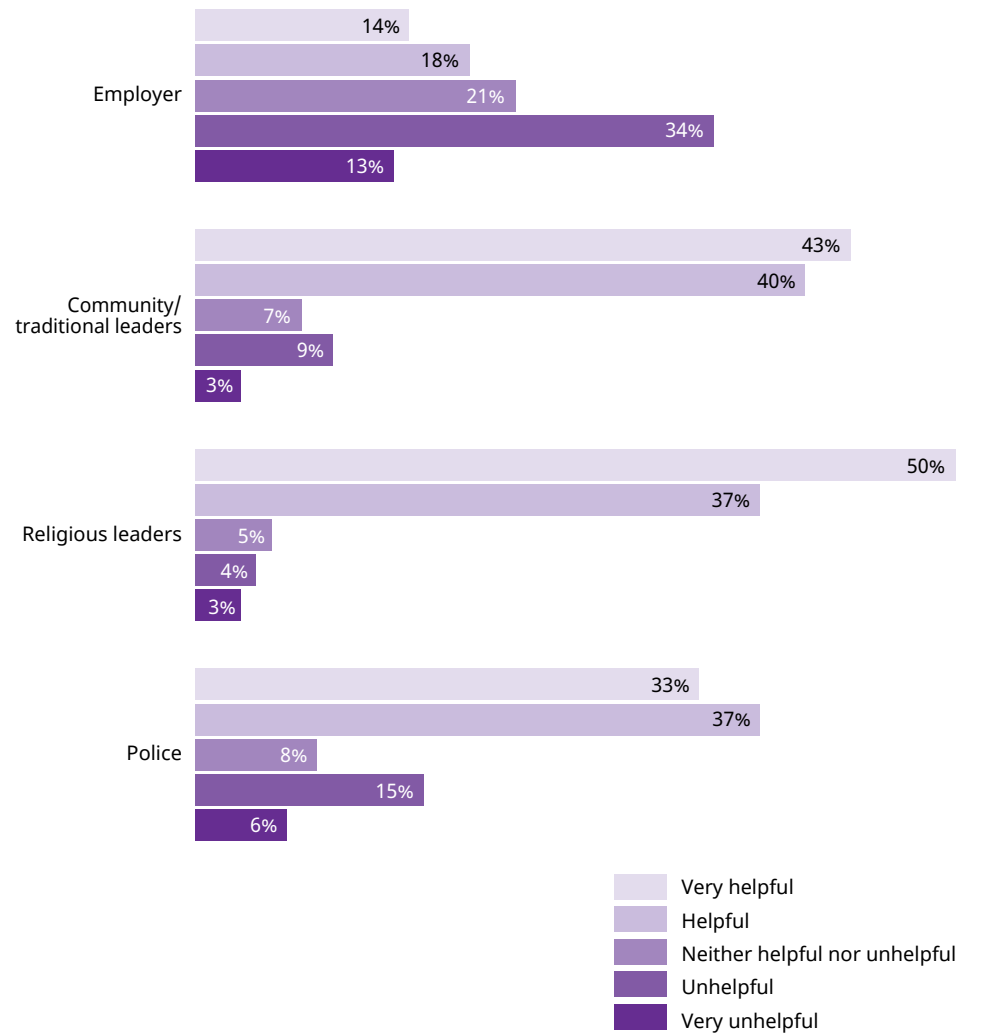
To gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of different sources of help, we asked people to rate their level of helpfulness in resolving their most serious problem. Excluding social networks, community or traditional leaders and religious leaders are considered very helpful. The police are also seen as relatively helpful. Employers, on the other hand, are considered unhelpful. The reference group has confirmed that there might be situations where the employer is the source of the legal problem, such as workplace discrimination or harassment. In such cases, the employer may be reluctant to acknowledge and address the problem, leaving employees feeling unsupported.







### Helpfulness by sources of help

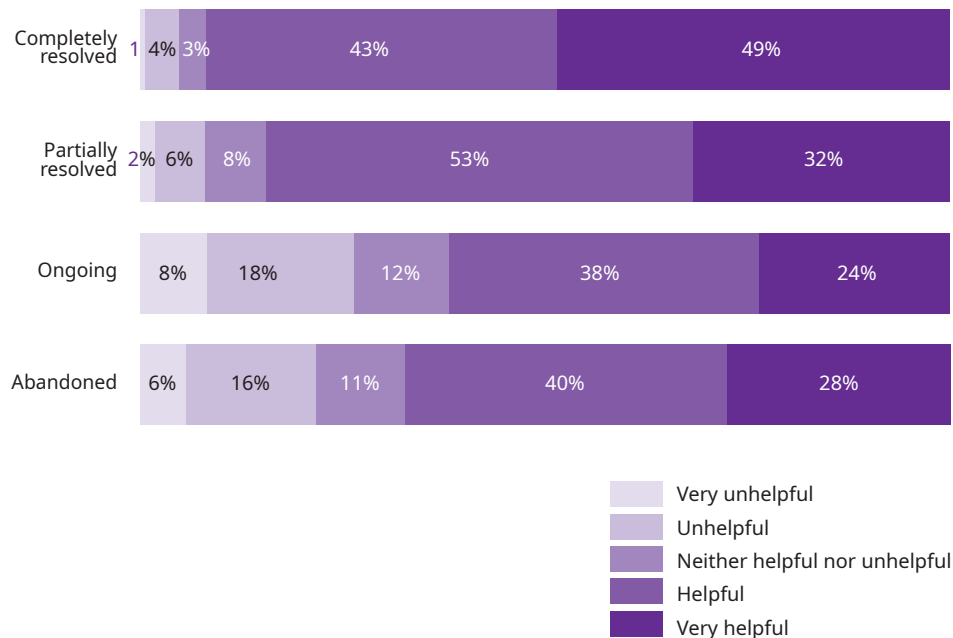




### Sources of help are less useful when problems are ongoing

Ongoing problems may pose more complex challenges and require more sustained efforts and time to resolve, making them more difficult for any one source of help to address effectively.

#### Helpfulness by resolution

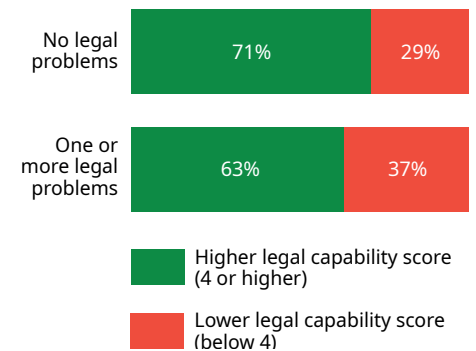


### People who have not faced a legal problem perceive themselves as more capable of handling any legal problems they may encounter than those who have

We used questions with four possible answers to gauge people's confidence in handling a real or hypothetical legal problem - what we call their "legal capability."<sup>14</sup> The average legal capability score - with one representing the lowest and five the highest - was 3.87. Participants who reported no legal problems had a higher average score (4.03) than those who reported one or more legal problems (3.83). Approximately 66% of the participants had a legal capability score of 4 or higher.

People in urban areas feel more capable of dealing with their legal problems than those in rural areas. Men generally assess their legal capabilities to be higher than women do. Those with secondary or higher education feel more confident handling legal problems than those without even primary education. The same trend can be seen among those who can cover their basic needs compared to those who cannot. However, there are no significant differences in perceived legal capability across age groups.

#### Legal capability score (by problem prevalence)



<sup>14</sup> The following is the question with four possible answers: considering your (most serious problem), to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 1) I understood or came to understand my legal rights and responsibilities 2) I knew where to get good information and advice about resolving the problems 3) I was able to get all the expert help I needed 4) I was confident I could achieve a fair outcome.

# 6

## In focus: Domestic Violence







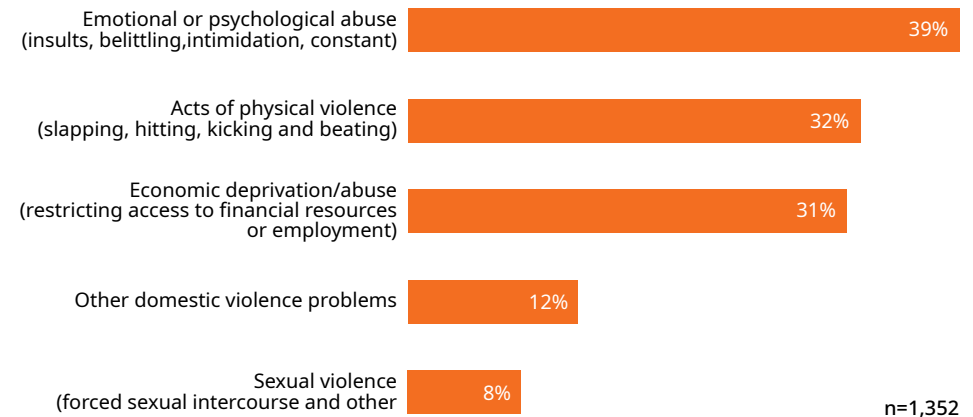
One of the most prevalent and serious legal problems Nigerians experience is domestic violence. Although it is the most serious, people succeed in resolving domestic violence problems at relatively high rates. This brief chapter will explore the category of domestic violence problems and how Nigerians address them.

### Emotional and psychological abuse: The most prevalent forms of domestic violence

Two out of five Nigerians who reported domestic violence reported emotional or psychological abuse. This aligns with the findings of a recent case study HiIL carried out on intimate partner violence (IPV) in Nigeria, Uganda, and the Netherlands: “Focusing on outcomes for survivors of intimate partner violence.” It confirms that IPV is a form of domestic violence that may involve physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse by a current or former spouse or intimate partner. Based on interviews with survivors of IPV and the practitioners who help them, it highlights the need for IPV-specific justice and support services to be more people-centred.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> HiIL. (2022) Focusing on outcomes for survivors of intimate partner violence. <https://dashboard.hiil.org/focusing-on-outcomes-for-people/focusing-on-outcomes-for-survivors-of-intimate-partner-violence/>

### Prevalence of domestic violence problems (as % of people with domestic violence problems)



Our reference group of Nigerian justice experts and practitioners identified a power imbalance in the relationship, cultural norms, and societal attitudes that condone violence, as well as personal factors such as alcohol or drug abuse, mental health issues, and a history of trauma or abuse as factors that contribute to domestic violence. They also shared that the increased stress, financial insecurity, social isolation, limited access to services, and increased time spent at home brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of domestic violence cases in Nigeria.

In response to high-profile violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) declared a state of emergency in June 2020. Nigeria already has the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015. The Act seeks to prohibit all forms of violence against persons in both private and public life and provide maximum protection, effective remedies for victims, and punishment for offenders. It has become increasingly popular, with more states domesticating different versions according to their culture and religious

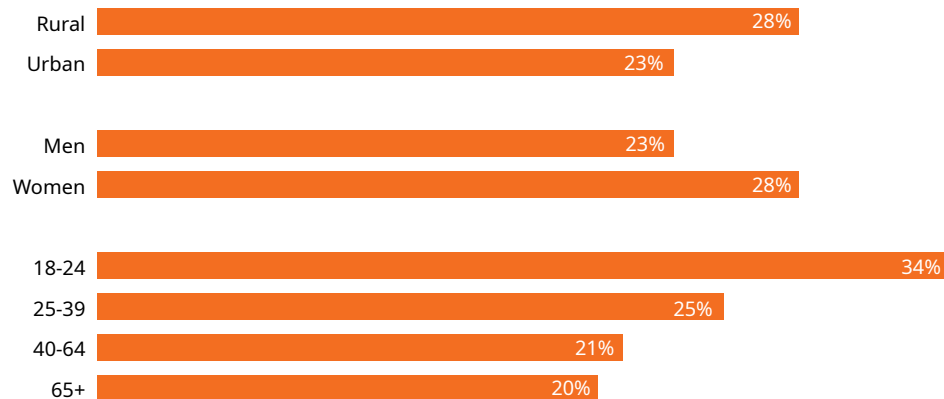


beliefs. The law criminalizes various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, and discrimination against persons with disabilities. It also provides for establishing special courts and including victim support services to aid survivors of violence.

### Domestic violence is particularly prevalent among youth

Domestic violence problems are widespread, with a quarter of people who report legal problems reporting domestic violence in the past year.

### Domestic violence across demographic groups (as % of people with problems)



Those who face domestic violence problems often confront multiple problems simultaneously, with an average of 2.0 problems per person who reports domestic violence.

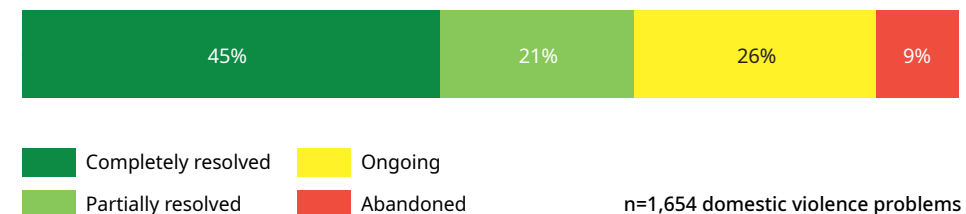
Certain demographic groups are more likely to experience domestic violence: those living in rural areas, women, and younger people. While one's financial situation, and education level do not significantly impact the likelihood of experiencing domestic violence.

### People often resolve their domestic violence problems quickly

Despite the prevalence of domestic problems in Nigeria, a significant proportion of Nigerians deal with them effectively. Around 66% of domestic violence problems experienced in the past year were either fully or partially resolved at the time of data collection. Furthermore, 86% of these resolutions were considered fair or very fair, indicating that 57% of domestic violence problems were resolved quickly (within one year or less) and fairly. The reference group stated that cultural and societal norms might significantly prevent women from speaking out about domestic violence or seeking a divorce. These norms prioritise family stability and may pressure women to maintain relationships, especially

if they depend financially on their partners or have children. Due to this pressure, women may feel compelled to continue living with their partners and accept any relief or improvement resolution.

### Resolution status of domestic violence problems quickly



n=1,654 domestic violence problems

### Domestic violence has a serious impact on Nigerians' lives

Domestic violence has a significant impact on the lives of those affected. As discussed in Chapter 4, Nigerians generally place high importance on their legal problems. On a seriousness scale of one to ten, Nigerians rate their domestic violence problems with an average score of 7.31, slightly lower than the average seriousness score of 7.49 for all problems. Moreover, people who experience domestic violence problems typically face multiple negative consequences. Specifically, around 84% of individuals who report domestic violence as their most serious problem experience at least one negative consequence, with an average of 2.0 negative consequences. These findings highlight the severe and pervasive impact of domestic violence on various aspects of people's lives.

### Most common consequences (as % of people with problems, most serious problem only)



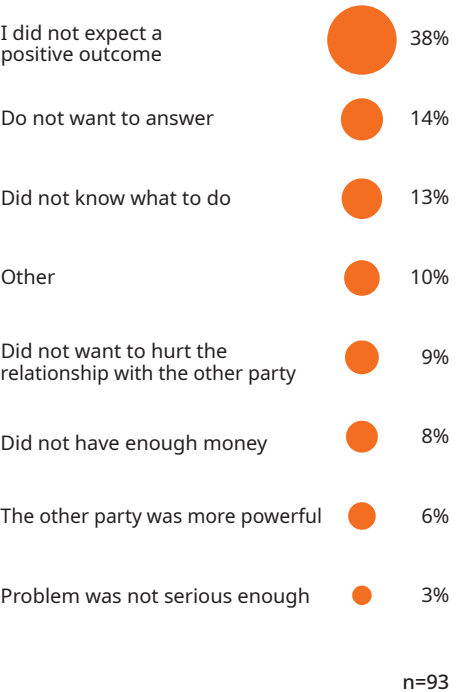
The most common consequence of domestic violence is loss of time, followed by financial loss experienced by one out of five people affected by domestic violence. This is consistent with Hiil's 2022 case study, which found that one of the main outcomes that survivors of intimate partner violence in Nigeria seek from the resolution process is economic empowerment and independence.<sup>12</sup> Other negative consequences include stress related to illness, and violence against the person who reported the domestic violence.

### Lack of belief in a positive outcome is a common reason that Nigerians faced with domestic violence do not take action

Nine out of 10 Nigerians experiencing domestic violence take action to resolve it, consistent with the average across all problem categories. However, those who do not take action cite negative expectations about the outcome they can achieve or a desire to avoid answering. Conversations with the reference group confirmed that some victims might be reluctant to report abuse due to fear of retribution, lack of trust in the legal system, limited legal awareness, cultural and religious beliefs, and financial dependence. These factors can inhibit victims

from seeking help, highlighting the importance of raising awareness and providing confidential and empathetic support to victims of domestic violence.

### Main reason for not taking action (one reason per person)



<sup>16</sup> Hiil. (2022) Focusing on outcomes for survivors of intimate partner violence. <https://dashboard.hiil.org/focusing-on-outcomes-for-people/focusing-on-outcomes-for-survivors-of-intimate-partner-violence/>







Most people experiencing domestic violence take action to resolve the problem, often by seeking support from their inner circle. Half of those who report domestic violence as their most serious problem engage family members for help. One out of five speaks with friends. The neighbours or

the victim speak directly to the other party (usually a current or former spouse or intimate partner). Police, religious leaders, colleagues, and community leaders are common sources of support outside the inner circle. Formal legal channels such as lawyers and the court system are rarely utilised.

#### Most common sources of help (as % of people taking action)



\*e.g. Emir, Oba, Eze, Baale, Mai Ungwa, Onyi Isi Obodo, Town Union President

\*\*e.g. Pastor, Imam, Deity

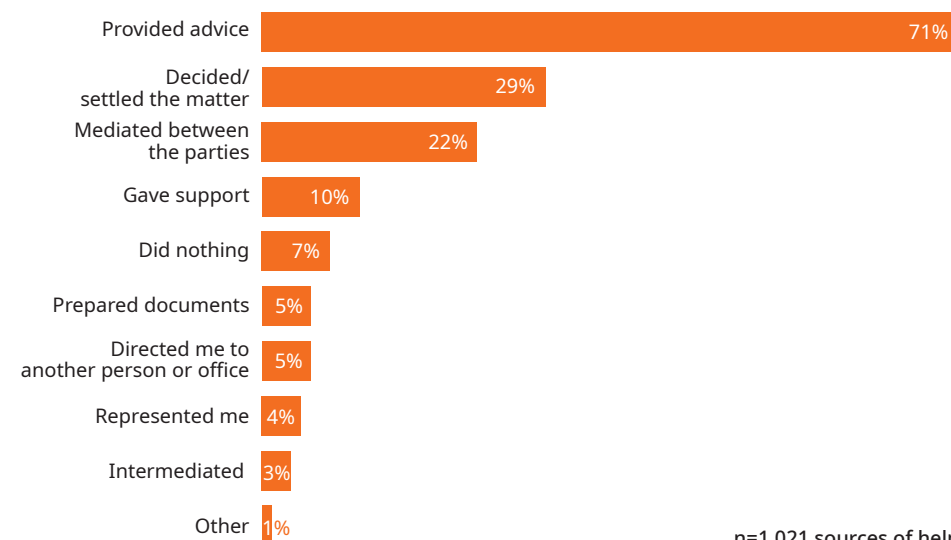
\*\*\*e.g. LGA Chairman, local Government, vigilantes, etc.

#### Most sources of help intervene in domestic violence by providing advice

The number of sources of help involved in addressing domestic violence indicates a commitment to taking action to resolve legal problems. Around 70% of these sources of help advise those experiencing domestic violence, highlighting the importance of this intervention in addressing the problem.

These findings are supported by the high percentage of sources of help engaged that people with domestic violence problems find helpful. Approximately eight out of 10 sources of help are considered helpful or very helpful, making it one of the highest rates among all problem categories, alongside land and family problems. As noted above, this has resulted in the highest resolution rate of all problem categories, with many Nigerians achieving a prompt resolution when attempting to address their domestic violence problems.

#### Most common interventions (as per % of sources of help)



# 7

## Findings and Implications



This study provides a people-centred perspective on Nigerians' legal problems and justice journeys based on their personal experiences and perceptions. The resulting data reveals a significant justice gap, with an estimated 101 million out of 184 million legal problems requiring fair and timely resolution every year.

The study's insights provide clear guidance on where justice leaders should focus their efforts to address this gap, emphasising the need for a more people-centred and data-driven approach. While there are some positive developments and unique opportunities, the status quo needs to be improved.

This final chapter summarises the main findings and their implications for Nigerian policymakers, justice providers, and legal innovators. We emphasise the importance of the five pillars of people-centred justice:

- Utilising data
- Implementing best practices
- Supporting and scaling innovative solutions
- Creating an enabling environment
- Strengthening the movement towards access to justice for all

### The importance of people-centred justice data for improving access to justice and the need for ongoing data collection in Nigeria

Access to people-centred justice data is crucial for understanding the justice gap and improving the availability of high-quality justice services. The current study provides data on Nigerians' legal needs and resolution experiences, which policymakers, justice providers, and legal innovators can use to increase access to justice. They can focus on the most burdensome legal problems, strengthen effective justice services, and support legal innovations to fill existing gaps.

Given the ongoing social change, regularly updating people-centred justice data is essential to reflect current realities as closely as possible. The current research project will run for three more years, providing annual updates on common legal problems experienced by Nigerians and their paths to resolution. This will fill knowledge gaps and provide insights into the evolution of legal problems over time.

Once the study concludes, Nigerian decision-makers can establish a mechanism for regularly collecting people-centred justice data, with support from international donors.

HiiL can provide expertise to build and sustain this data collection capacity.

### Prioritising resources to address the most burdensome legal problems in Nigeria

To optimise the use of limited resources, prioritising prevention and resolution efforts towards legal issues that have the greatest impact on Nigerian society is crucial. The current study offers valuable insights into identifying the most burdensome problem categories.

The top five legal problems experienced in Nigeria are neighbour disputes, domestic violence, land disputes, crime, and housing issues. However, these categories carry a different level of burden on society and its people. Domestic violence, while serious, has a high rate of resolution. On the other hand, land and crime problems have a low resolution rate and are considered among the most serious.

The justice gap can be reduced significantly by allocating resources towards increasing the fair resolution of land and crime problems, and increase public awareness through educational campaigns that promote the prevention of domestic violence and encourage victims to report domestic violence incidents beyond their inner circle.





### How demographic factors impact access to justice

Legal problems are not experienced equally by everyone, nor are the types of legal problems. Demographic factors, such as gender, age, education level, financial situation, and rural or urban residence, play an important role in determining the likelihood of experiencing certain legal problems and achieving fair resolutions. It is essential to consider these demographic differences when developing policies and services to ensure they effectively serve those who need them the most.

For instance, young people perceive domestic violence problems as the most serious, whereas older people regard land problems as the most serious. Domestic violence and land problems mostly affect people living in rural areas, while employment and housing problems are more prevalent in urban areas.

Women experience domestic violence problems more often than men, whereas men are more commonly affected by crime, land, and employment problems. People who cannot afford basic needs experience more money problems. In contrast, people who can afford their basic needs are more likely to experience

crime, employment, neighbour, and domestic violence problems. This indicates that addressing land and employment problems necessitates diverse approaches, including technology-driven solutions. On the other hand, tackling domestic violence problems may demand tech-based interventions and heightened public consciousness achieved through educational initiatives advocating for domestic violence prevention. These efforts may include legal assistance, financial support, and other forms of aid.<sup>17</sup>

It is crucial to consider these demographic differences when designing innovative justice solutions. Using the data presented in this report and consulting those who have experienced these legal problems firsthand as experts, a human-centred design approach is the ideal way to design effective solutions.

<sup>17</sup>These are just some innovations currently providing solutions  
Stand To End Rape Initiative - <https://standtoendrape.org/>,  
THR Media - <https://thrmedia.org/>

### Create an enabling environment for innovative sources of help

Many Nigerians turn to their personal networks when seeking assistance to address their legal problems. For instance, those with land or domestic problems typically seek help from family, friends, or traditional/community leaders. However, these sources of help offer social interventions that are only sometimes an effective means of resolving legal problems. Meanwhile, institutional sources of help, such as the police and traditional/community leaders, play a marginal role in closing the justice gap. Although they are the most commonly engaged sources of help for people with crime and land problems and are generally perceived positively, they are only engaged by a small percentage of people who take action. These results highlight the insufficiency of existing services in addressing legal problems and the necessity of making way for new and creative justice providers to fill this gap. HiiL has identified [seven types of justice innovations](#) that have the potential to improve access to justice for a large number of people.

The Nigerian authorities can play a significant role in closing the justice gap by ensuring that the regulatory environment for legal services is conducive to these types of justice

innovations. These innovations need not compete with the formal justice system but complement it, with ample potential for collaboration between private entities and the public sector.<sup>18</sup>

Some legal problems, for instance, those related to employment, must be addressed more effectively by employers. Only one in three people report that their employer was helpful or very helpful in resolving their employment problems. Therefore, improving employers' performance in resolving employment problems may be an effective way to increase the number of fair resolutions reached by people with employment-related problems.

Guidelines can be a useful tool in improving the interventions offered by justice providers. HiiL has developed several evidence-based guidelines on preventing and resolving the most common types of legal problems, providing practitioners and users with actionable recommendations of interventions that have proven to be effective.

<sup>18</sup> These are 1) Community justice services, 2) User-friendly contracts and other legal documents, 3) Platforms offering mandatory one-stop dispute resolution, 4) Problem-solving courts for crime, 5) Claiming services helping people to access vital public services, 6) Prevention programmes or services, 7) Online information, advice, and representation.



These general guidelines are being adopted to specific countries through a group of local experts. In Nigeria, we narrow them to states. HiiL is for example currently working together with local experts to develop family justice and land justice guideline catalogues in Ogun state.

### Join the movement for people-centred justice

The access to justice challenge in Nigeria is significant, but it also represents important opportunities. Merely making minor adjustments to the current supply of services and legal systems will not suffice in addressing the needs of millions of people with unmet justice needs. What is required is a transformation that prioritises the Nigerian people through a people-centred approach to justice.

As outlined above, this approach entails collecting data on legal needs, identifying successful interventions, introducing and scaling innovative solutions, creating an environment that fosters progress, and ensuring accountability. These components

have been tested and implemented in various countries, including Nigeria, where HiiL has conducted justice transformation labs in Imo, Ogun, and Kaduna State<sup>19</sup>. However, comprehensive system-wide reforms are necessary to address justice problems effectively on a large scale. These reforms need not be expensive, and the social and economic benefits would outweigh the costs.

Around the world, a global movement towards people-centred justice has gained momentum as more and more countries are adopting policies and services that prioritise the needs of the people. This presents an opportunity for Nigeria to join this movement and work towards transforming its justice system into one that is more inclusive and effective in serving the people.

<sup>19</sup> HiiL (2022) Justice Transformation in Kaduna State, Nigeria. <https://www.hiil.org/projects/justice-transformation-in-kaduna-state-nigeria/>



# About the JNS

Justice is not just about the number of reported crimes. Nor is it about courts and laws. It is about common people. Their daily lives, their pain and frustration – and the justice outcomes that they get or do not get.

That is why we listen to people in each country to measure their satisfaction. We collect the voices of thousands with our Justice Needs & Satisfaction Survey (JNS) tool. It is the state of play that reveals people's actual legal problems, experiences and access to justice.

Adjusted to the specific context of the country it provides in-depth understanding for people working in the justice sector.

We also make the data available to policy-makers through clever interfaces, so they can work with the findings. The responsible use of this data leads to knowledge, creates empowerment, and builds accountability.

The countries we have worked in since 2014 include Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, Mali, Morocco, the Netherlands, Tunisia, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Ukraine, and the United States. In 2023, we plan to publish reports on Iraq, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, and Colombia

For more information, data, and insights, visit:

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