

The Ministry of Health says the number of people seeking medical care after experiencing gender-based violence has increased sharply, with nearly 10,000 more survivors accessing services between 2020 and 2025.

State Minister of Health Ivan Butera told lawmakers Tuesday that the rise in reported cases is largely due to greater awareness among survivors about the importance of reporting abuse and seeking help from health facilities and authorities.

“In the 2020/2021 year, about 33,800 people sought medical care after violence,” Butera said. “Data collected at the end of last year shows that number rose to 42,000.”

Butera told members of the parliamentary Committee on Governance, Gender and Women’s Empowerment that women continue to be the most affected, accounting for 88% of cases, while men represent 12%. The ministry said the most common form of violence is sexual violence, which has slightly decreased from 52% in 2020 to 47% now. Physical violence, including beating and injury, accounts for 40% of cases, while the remaining 10% involves property-related gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence includes physical and psychological abuse, sexual violence and denial of property rights, the ministry said.

MINISANTE said the root causes include attitudes that treat victims as inferior in power or rights, a lack of respect for gender equality, poverty and domestic conflict. Excessive alcohol and drug use were also cited as factors that escalate violence.

The ministry warned that gender-based violence has severe consequences, including rape, physical and psychological injury, and sometimes forced marriage. Survivors may face long-term social and economic impacts.

To address the issue, MINISANTE said it has expanded support through Isange One Stop Centers, which offer urgent medical care, psychological counseling and evidence collection for legal proceedings. The centers aim to protect survivors from long-term harm.

Butera said many survivors still fear reporting abuse. The ministry’s research indicates only four out of 10 survivors speak out, while six out of 10 remain silent.

The ministry has also increased the number of health professionals working on

gender-based violence cases, with nurses and doctors now totaling 6,500—more than four times the 1,500 recorded in 2024.

MINISANTE urged families to support survivors rather than abandon them.