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# Preventing **VIO-ELECTION**

*Pre-election Environment Risk Assessment of the 2023  
Bayelsa, Imo & Kogi States Governorship Elections*

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# **Preventing VIO-ELECTION**

*... pre-election Environment Risk Assessment of the 2023  
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This document has been produced by Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) to provide information on Pre-election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) in the buildup to the 2023 governorship elections in Imo, Bayelsa, and Kogi States. KDI certifies that all the views expressed in this document do not reflect the views of the Foreign Commonwealth and Department Office and the British Government but accurately reflect the analytical views of the information gathered by KDI's trained field researchers and research analysts. While reasonable care has been taken in preparing this document, KDI, FCDO, and the British Government shall bear no responsibility for any errors, or views expressed herein for actions taken resulting from the information provided in this report.



The NEVER project is supported by:



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The Election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) is predicated on the Nigeria Election Violence Report (NEVR) methodology by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). We appreciate IFES for building KDI's capacity on this methodology and granting KDI permission to continue with this methodology.

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for the effective coordination of the on-the-field data collection.



## About KIMPACT

Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) is an independent non-governmental organization that advances good governance, democratic rights, public policy, and public engagement. We do this by building informed and active citizens through capacity development, advancing public policies, data-driven advocacy and reforms that give a more supportive environment for citizen-led development.

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## List of Abbreviations

|     |       |  |
|-----|-------|--|
| 1.  | ANPP  | All Nigerian Peoples Party                               |
| 2.  | APC   | All Progressive Congress                                 |
| 3.  | APGA  | All Progressives Grand Alliance                          |
| 4.  | BVAS  | Bimodal Voter Accreditation System                       |
| 5.  | CVR   | Continuous Voter Registration                            |
| 6.  | EPT   | Election Petition Tribunal                               |
| 7.  | ESRA  | Election Security Risk Assessment                        |
| 8.  | INEC  | Independent National Electoral Commission                |
| 9.  | IPOB  | Independent People of Biafra                             |
| 10. | ICCES | Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security |
| 11. | IFES  | International Foundation for Electoral Systems           |
| 12. | KII   | Key Informant Interview                                  |
| 13. | LP    | Labour Party   |
| 14. | LGA   | Local Government Area                                    |
| 15. | NEVER | Nigeria Election Violence Education and Resolution       |
| 16. | NEVR  | Nigeria Election Violence Report                         |
| 17. | OYM   | Obedient Youths Movement                                 |
| 18. | PDP   | Peoples Democratic Party                                 |
| 19. | UNPP  | United Nigeria People's Party                            |

# Executive Summary

Nigeria, one of Africa's most ethnically diverse countries, is usually a victim of multiple overlapping conflicts. While election periods present opportunities for Nigerians to choose a government that will advance the people's collective wishes, they are also usually marked by elevated levels of tension and violence. Following the 2023 General elections, Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi states are on the brink of off-cycle governorship elections slated for November 11, 2023. Voters and other stakeholders' behaviour will be heavily influenced by the conduct and outcome of the 2023 general elections, which are still contested at the Supreme Court. As such, KDI conducted this Election Security Risks Analysis (ESRA) to add to the widespread efforts to improve the conduct and outcome of the upcoming elections. This report delves into the state of the pre-election environment and the election security risk factors ahead of the 2023 governorship elections in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi states. Recognising the wide-ranging implications of election security in Nigeria, this study explores the impact of the actions and activities of various state and non-state political actors on the electoral landscape in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi states.

## Methodology

Using a mixed-method research design, the study was conducted across all the LGAs in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states. Quantitative and qualitative datasets were used to evaluate the pre-election environment in all three states. KDI also used tested early warning indicators to examine signals of electoral insecurity. The quantitative method involved a survey, while the qualitative approach included key informant interviews and a desk review with electoral security experts, CSO groups, media, and other relevant stakeholders. Also, secondary data from relevant publications and media substantiated the findings. The overall target population for the survey is the voting population in the three states.

## Summary of Findings

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The study found that all three states have a history of electoral violence, and the state of the pre-election environment already projects a likely repeat of the trend in the three states. However, the findings show varying political tension and volatility levels across the states. While Imo state has experienced huge number of electoral and non-electoral violence for most of 2023, Kogi and Bayelsa have experienced a surge in electoral violence in the last two months leading to the election. Accordingly, Kogi state has experienced the most significant fatalities from electoral violence.

While the dominant political parties across the three states varies, we have seen how the emergence of a third force, such as LP and SDP in Imo and Kogi states, has changed the consistent dominance of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) across the three states. The actions of their party supporters have significantly led to the tension and violence experienced in the states. The exception is in Imo, where the violence witnessed is a function of multi-dimensional crises in the state. Based on the findings of this study, it is expected that the elections will be keenly contested in all three states. This projection follows the observation of the trend and pattern of the violence witnessed in this pre-election phase and the pattern of candidate selection by political parties in the three states designed along senatorial or ethnic divides to give the parties a political edge.

The widespread presence of non-state armed groups also portends a potential for violence in Imo and Kogi states. But violence is also expected in Bayelsa as it is likely that non-state armed groups could fully leverage the difficulty of navigating the riverine terrain. Despite the increasing number of violence tracked and observed as we move closer to the elections and the high degree of uncertainties as highlighted earlier - we believe there are opportunities to explore to ensure the peaceful conduct of the election. Thus, if all concerned stakeholders carry out strategic violence prevention interventions, the chances are high that the conduct of the election will be peaceful in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi come November 11, 2023.

**Background**





On the 11th of November 2023 – Citizens in Bayelsa, Kogi and Imo States will be going into an election to elect a governor for the next administration in their states. These elections are just seven months away from the February/March 2023 general elections – which denotes that Bayelsa, Kogi and Imo States gubernatorial elections are off-cycle.

There are currently eight off-cycle governorship elections in Nigeria – a trend that started in 2006 in Anambra. The cases of Bayelsa and Kogi, which surfaced in 2007, resulted from different legal tussles where various courts overturned several election results. The house speakers temporarily replaced the governors before returning in elections held later in the year<sup>1</sup>. The most recent disruption to this electoral cycle was after the 2019 elections in Imo state when the Supreme Court overturned the election result and declared Hope Uzodinma as the winner<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the off-cycle elections will be held amid several ongoing electoral disputes from the 2023 general elections. Undoubtedly, the 2023 general elections came with so much experience (significant upsets and gains in many ways), throwing up salient issues. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The role and use of electoral technology.
- Quality engagement cum increase in youth digital activism.
- Ethnic and religious sentiments seem to have deeply polarized the country.
- The increasing number of cancelled or invalid votes
- Electoral violence: reported cases of thugs attacking voters in different places, destroying ballots and intimidating voters and electoral officials.

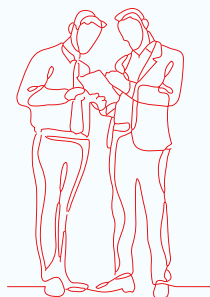
As in the 2023 general elections, the trajectory, intensity, and impact of electoral violence in the off-cycle elections are not different from those mentioned above. Historically, the handover of power from one governor to another in Bayelsa State has been marred by electoral violence. Before and after the advent of the off-cycle gubernatorial election in the state<sup>3</sup> in 2008, Bayelsa gubernatorial elections have been characterized by different forms of pre- and post-electoral violence, including inter and intra party conflicts, kidnappings, assassinations, and arson. Political tensions were high in 2012, with reports of explosions at party secretariats and two other bombings suspected of being related to political tensions surrounding the gubernatorial elections. In addition, ex-militant and community-based cultists are constant tools politicians use to perpetuate violence; they use threats to give their preferred candidates an advantage in the political race, as reported by Partnership Initiative in Niger Delta in 2015<sup>4,5</sup>. In 2019, twenty-one (21) persons lost their lives following violence that broke out during a political campaign rally in Nembe area three days before the state's November 16, 2019 governorship election<sup>6</sup>.

Similarly, Kogi State has not been any better regarding Electoral Violence. Historically, elections in the state have witnessed a spate of electoral violence and unprecedented irregularities, particularly the gubernatorial elections. The 2007 gubernatorial election that derailed the state from the regular election cycle to off-cycle was marred using instruments of violence and force – this left several voters killed, injured, assaulted, and/or disenfranchised. The strain on inter-relations of the ethnic groups has impacted negatively on the socio-economic and political

stance of the communities. This continued until the incumbent governor (Gov. Yahaya Bello) took the reins of power in 2016. The Kogi West agitation is now intensifying, and the “16-16-16” agitation is also intensifying. This indicates that the Kogi Central believe they should maintain power to compensate for the 16 years used by Kogi East before the power would move to the Kogi West for another 16 years.

Imo State is not behind in this. The heightened insecurity problems in Imo State due to agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and their outlawed Eastern Security Network (ESN) operations that have started since 2007 have made it increasingly difficult to separate from political issues – because the state also stands out as a distinct point of intersection of individuals, groups and tribes competing for economic and political space. The activities of the non-state armed groups in previous times have spiralled into the electoral landscape, leaving the environment in a state of anomy and fright. This was experienced leading up to the 2019 general elections when the secessionist group in Southeast Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), called for a boycott of the election.

No state with the upcoming off-cycle gubernatorial election is immune from the unabated insecurity plaguing the country. Likewise, the electoral insecurity in some quarters is independent of the larger political violence. Establishing an operational early warning system and a robust, multi-stakeholder electoral security framework that monitors and detects early warning signals, indicators, risk factors, players, and activities that may portend risk for the impending off-cycle gubernatorial elections becomes essential. KDI uses her Election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) to achieve those mentioned above.



## Election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA)

The Election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) of the Nigeria Election Violence Education and Resolution (NEVER) Project is a holistic assessment framework of the pre-election environment towards identifying early warning signals and risks to the peaceful conduct and administration of the election and ultimately informing relevant institutions of information that could assist them in securing the election environment.

Multiple institutions, security agencies, and international communities have found the ESRA to be a valuable predictive tool. ESRA make data on electoral violence available to stakeholders for violence mitigation planning.

### Where this tool has been helpful.

- 2019 General Elections
- All off-cycle elections (2019-2022)– Bayelsa, Kogi, Edo, Ondo, Anambra, Ekiti and Osun
- 2023 General Elections

## The Conduct of the Study

To achieve ESRA's objective, KDI conducted a study across all the LGAs in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states using a mixed-method research design and triangulated quantitative and qualitative datasets to search the pre-election environment using tested early warning indicators to examine signals of electoral insecurity. The indicators assessed in this ESRA include the following under-listed:



**Security History  
of the States**



**The Electoral  
Factors**



**Media  
Landscape**



**The Geographi-  
cal/Economic  
Factors**

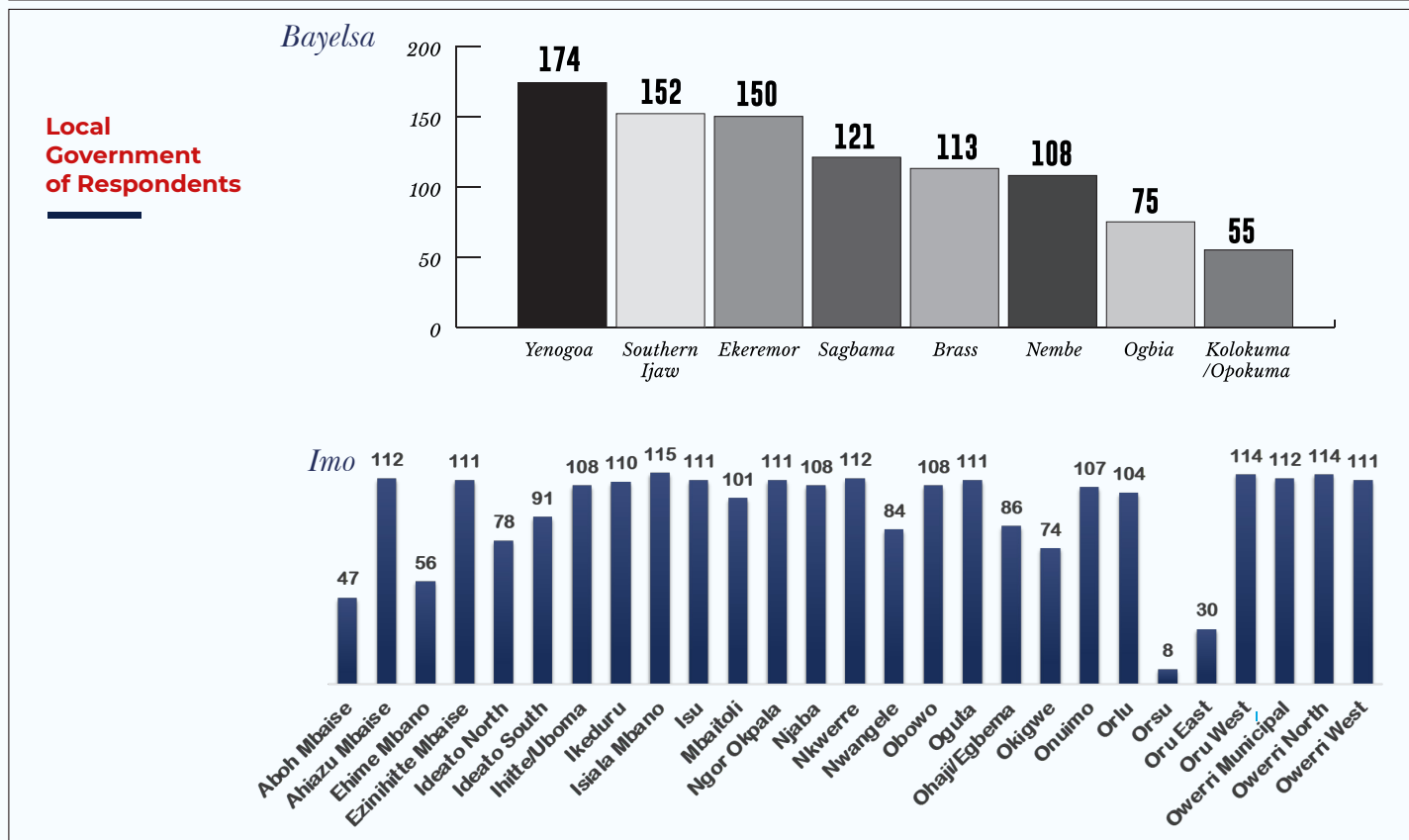
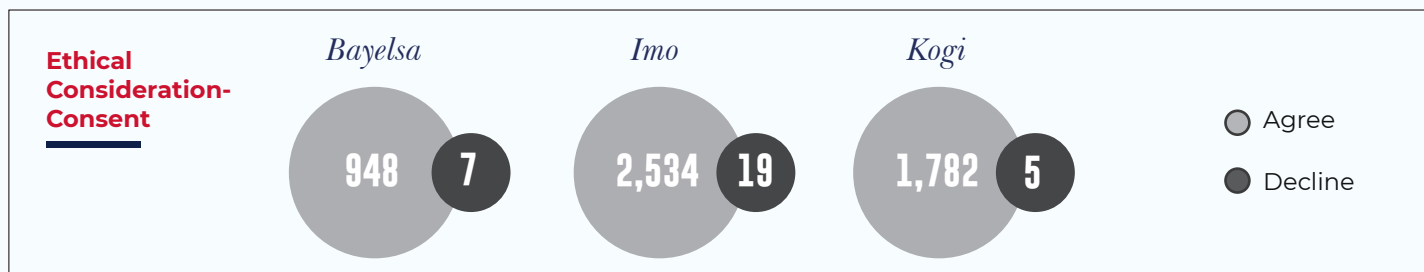


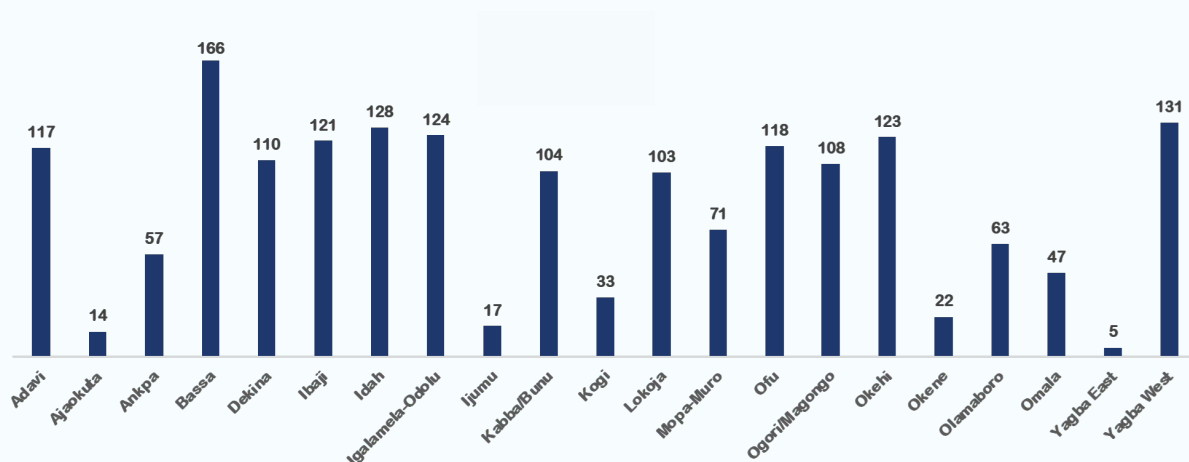
**WPSI (Women,  
Peace and  
Security  
Indicator**

The quantitative method involves a survey, while the qualitative approach involves Key informant Interviews and a desk review with electoral security experts, CSO groups, media, and other relevant stakeholders. Also, secondary data from relevant publications and media were used to substantiate the findings.

The overall target population for this survey is the voting population – age 18 and above living

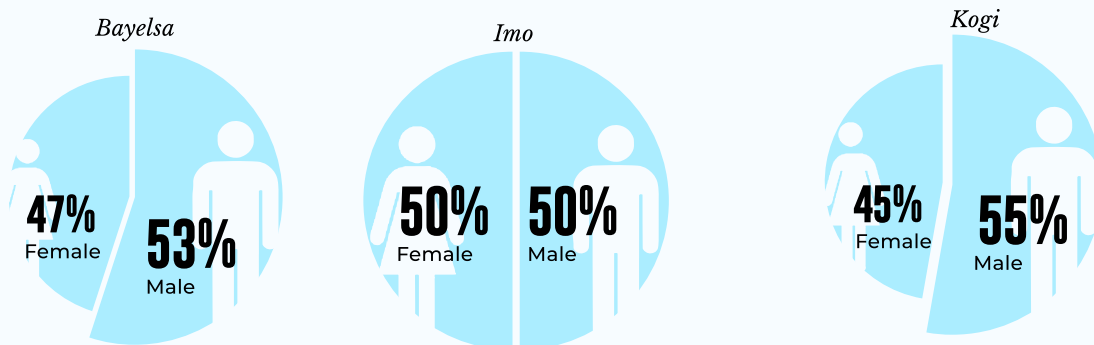
in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states. This study featured a random sample from the targeted population, and the population definition was predicated on registered and non-registered voters. With a 95% confidence interval and + or – 2% margin of error – Data were collected between September and October 2023 by KDI's field researchers through a survey. 955, 2534, and 1787 responses were drawn from Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states using the ESRA questionnaire.





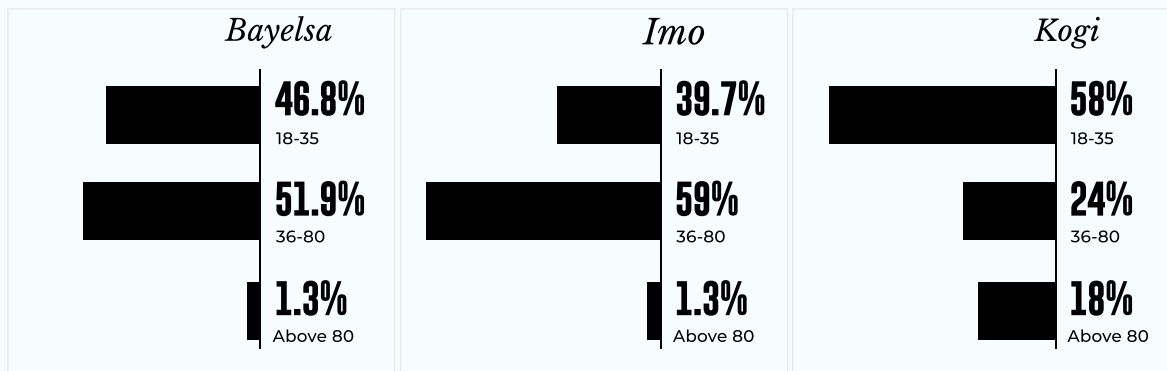
### Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender distribution of the respondents drawn for this qualitative study in each state was broadly inclusive – with Gender disaggregation of respondents at the marginal divide of close to 50%. In the case of Imo State, it is 50:50 per cent disaggregation. Not just regarding Gender, the age distribution shows all strata of age divides were captured- starting from 18, which is the voting-eligible age.



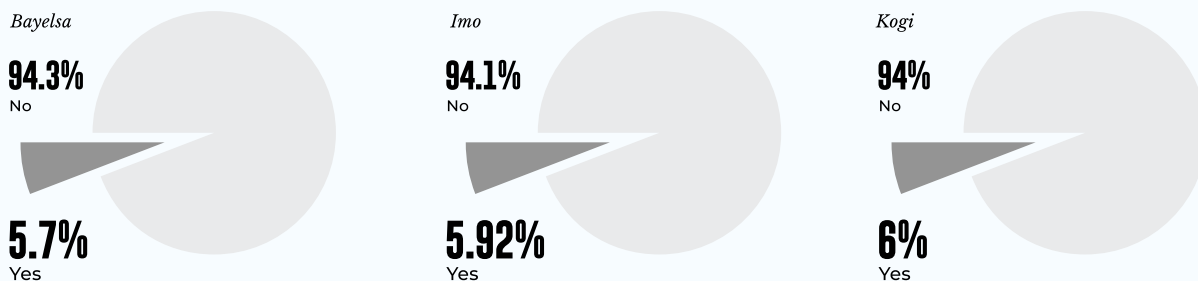
## Age Distribution of Respondents

Young people between the age of 18-35 was not less than 40% of the respondent in each of the states. In comparison, the study had age 36-80 as the demographic with the highest percentage of respondents, except for Kogi State, which had its highest response rate from 18-35. Also, it is essential to state that Kogi State had a high response rate from individuals above 80 years.

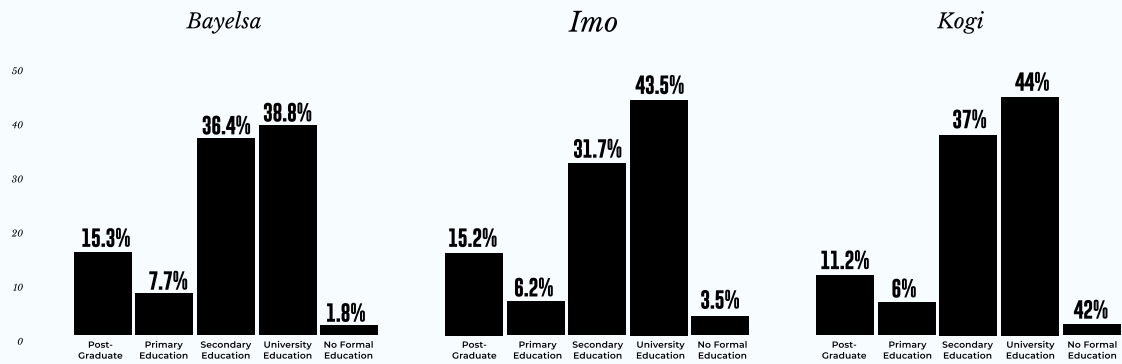


## Disability status of Respondents

Approximately 6% of the respondents in each off-cycle state are people with disabilities – this ranges from physical disabilities to low vision. Additionally, the research collected data from all literacy levels – data was elicited from individuals with formal and informal education. This study ensured it incorporates diverse perspectives and experiences for ethical, inclusive, and equitable consideration.



## Literacy level of Respondents



## Part 2

### BAYELSA STATE





Sections 178(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, mandates the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct such governorship elections not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before the expiration of the term of the last holder of the office. Knowing fully well that the tenure of the incumbent governor ends on February 13, 2024 - The Electoral Commission set 11 November 2023 as the governorship election day. This was made known on 25 October 2022, when the INEC released the timetable, setting out key dates and deadlines for the election<sup>7 8</sup>.

Sequel to this and in fulfilment of the requirement of Section 28(1) of the Electoral Act 2022, which mandates the commission to publish the notice of election not later than 360 days before the date fixed for the poll – INEC on the 14 November issued the statutory notice of elections in Bayelsa state.

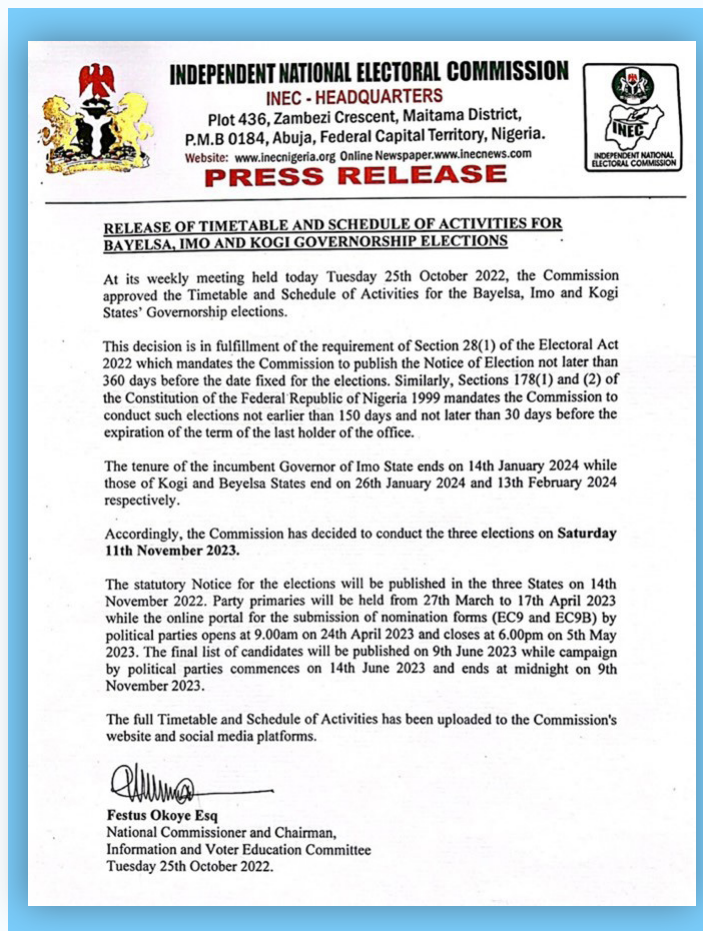
According to the timetables of election activities released by INEC, the political party primaries should occur between 27 March and 17 April 2022. The All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party set their primary for 10 April and 12 April, respectively.

Former Governor of Bayelsa State and immediate past Minister of State for Petroleum, Chief Timipre Sylva, won the direct primary election and emerged as the governorship candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC). He defeated the party's former candidate in the last gubernatorial election, Chief David Lyon, and four others<sup>9</sup>.

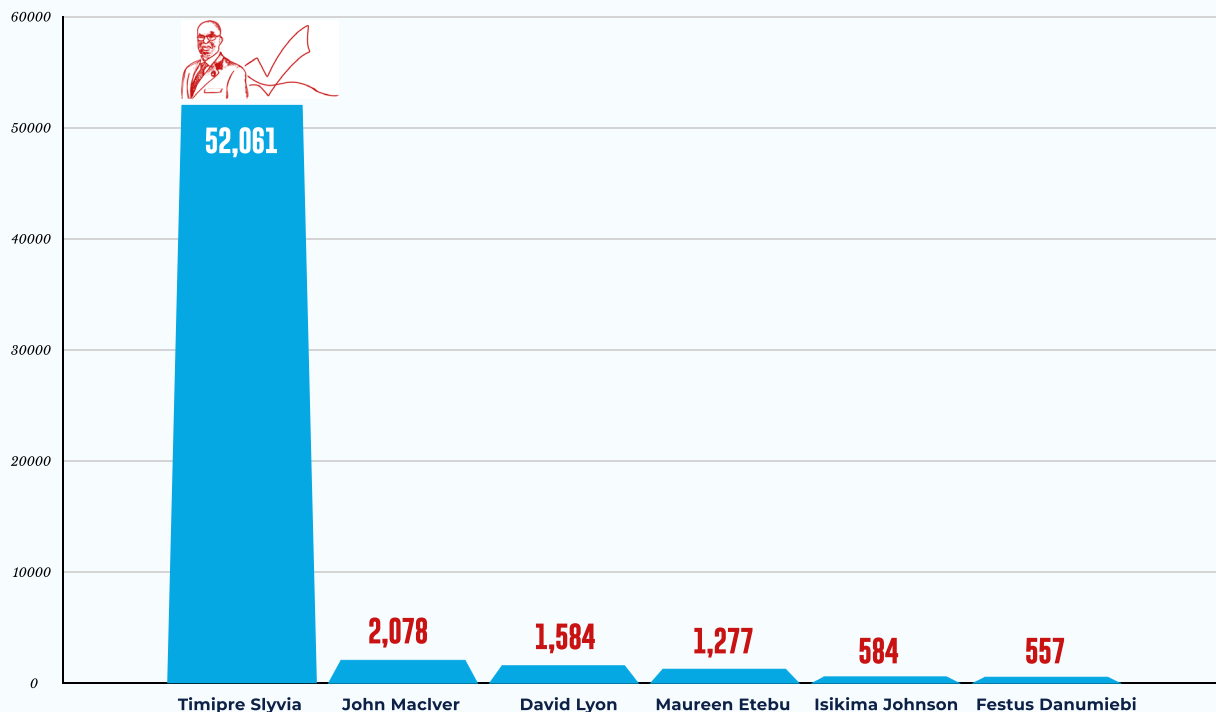
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***Since public campaigning started officially on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, there have been political developments, escalated physical outbreaks of violence, and potential for violence signs and signals. Hence, the need for the study.***

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## Number of votes in APC primary elections



Source: <https://www.thecable.ng/timipre-sylvia-wins-bayelsa-apc-guber-primary>

The incumbent governor of Bayelsa, Douye Diri, the sole aspirant for the PDP primary, polled 305 yes votes from the delegates to emerge as the party's candidate<sup>10</sup>. Regardless of the aforementioned, INEC made it known that sixteen (16) political parties fielded candidates in Bayelsa state for the off-cycle gubernatorial elections. Since public campaigning started officially on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, there have been political developments, escalated physical outbreaks of violence, and potential for violence signs and signals. Hence, the need for the study.

### Highlights of Key Findings for Bayelsa State.

- Bayelsa state has electoral and non-electoral violence history; this is somewhat reflected in the state's current political landscape.
- Bayelsa State has its dominant political parties, each with its stronghold in various Local Government Areas (LGAs). These dynamics with unhealthy inter-party rivalries, Unresolved internal party disputes and communal clashes may increase the likelihood of election day

violence.

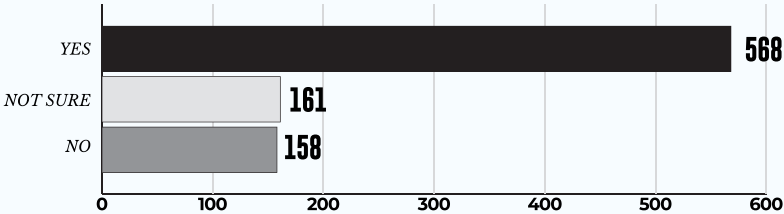
- The frequent defections of politicians from one party to another in Bayelsa State have a massive potential for violence and can contribute to an increased risk of electoral violence.
- The activities of non-state armed actors (cultists) and the difficult riverine terrain in Bayelsa state may increase the likelihood of election day and post-election violence and irregularities.
- Following the general election of 2023, the public confidence of Bayelsa's residents in INEC is diminishing.
- The media activities are being threatened by the unhealthy political rivalry in some LGAS, affecting media coverage in these areas.
- The majority of the state's residents are uncertain about the likelihood of peaceful elections, highlighting the state's delicate situation.

**01.**

**Bayelsa state has electoral and non-electoral violence history; this is somewhat reflected in the state's current political landscape.**

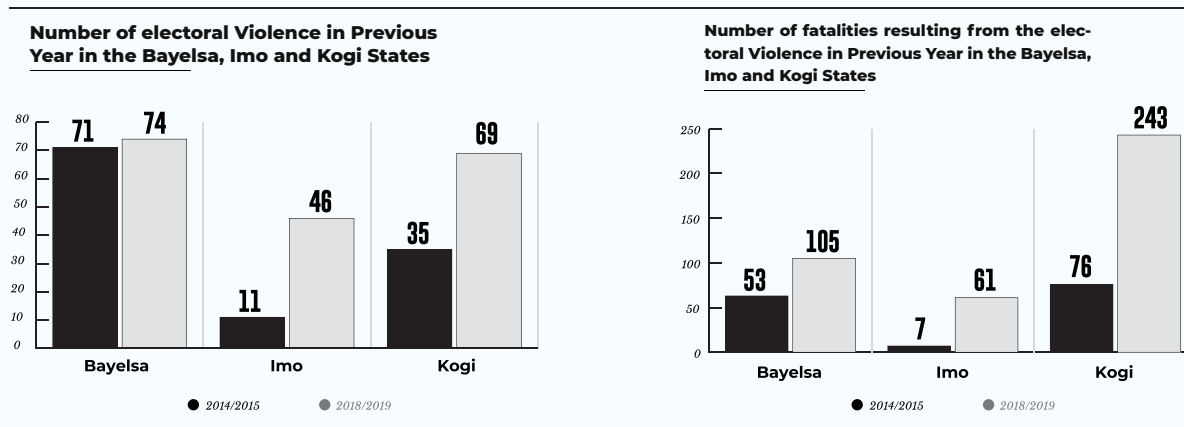


**Has there been a history of political violence regarding elections in your LGA/Community?**



Bayelsa has a history of political and electoral violence, which sometimes can be attributed to various factors such as the struggle for political power, resource control, and ethnic tensions. Bayelsa state is one of the oil-rich states in Nigeria. The struggle for control of the crude oil wealth and other benefits related to oil production, such as contracts, jobs, scholarships, and compensation, contribute to the political violence. This creates fierce competition among political actors and their supporters, who use violence to secure their interests. Crude oil and politics are inextricably linked as politicians see its control as the significant control of state power. This often led to intense competition for the capture of state power. Based on this, not just oil resources but the entire re-

sources of the state are controlled, distributed, and appropriated<sup>11</sup>. In a bid to get power at all costs to be able to harness the benefit of having control of an oil-rich state -ex-militant and community-based cultists are constant tools politicians use to perpetuate violence; they use threats to give their preferred candidates an advantage in the political race, as reported by Partnership Initiative in Niger Delta in 2015<sup>12</sup>.



KDI went back in time to unearth the available documentation of electoral violence since 2014 in Bayelsa state. In comparison with the other two states (Imo and Kogi States). It revealed that Bayelsa state in 2014/15 and 2018/19 had the highest number of political/electoral violence incidents recorded.

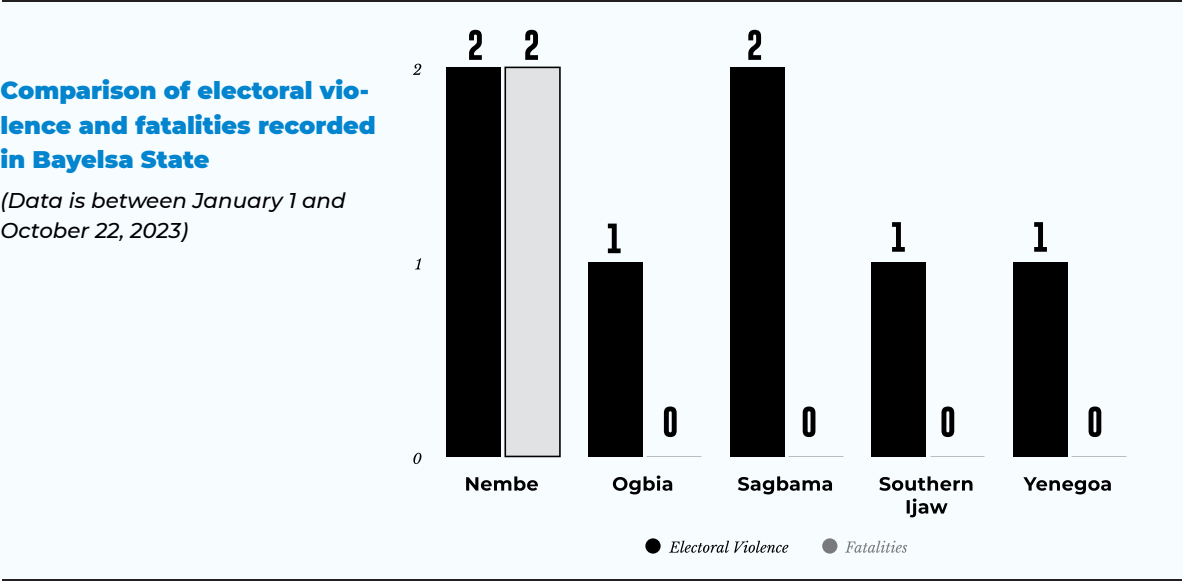
Elections in Bayelsa state are symptomatic of the enduring character of electoral violence in most Niger Delta states, where the complex interplay of political and other socio-cultural forces complement each other in the struggle for political power. This is also evident with the previous electoral violence recorded in previous elections. In the 2003 general elections, the election witnessed widespread violence across the state. In Nembe, it was reported that the clash between supporters of the United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) on April 10th, 2003, at Bassambiri led to the death of many<sup>13</sup>. In Southern Ijaw, the clash between the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) supporters and the PDP on April 19, 2003, at Oporoma, the Local Government headquarters, resulted in the death of seven persons. In Sagbama Local government, a similar clash resulted in the razing of the house of a local transition committee chairman and the office of INEC with dozens of cars.

The 2007 gubernatorial election in the state, even though it appeared relatively peaceful, witnessed twin attacks on the headquarters of the state chapter of the PDP. In 2012, there were two bombings

suspected to be linked to political tensions around the gubernatorial elections<sup>14</sup>. November of 2013 was characterized by violence reportedly stemming from continued political tensions surrounding the Ijaw National Congress Elections in October 2012. These ugly incidents included the reported targeting and kidnapping of youth group members and political allies supporting each candidate<sup>15</sup>.

The 2015 gubernatorial election in the state was the most violent in terms of documented violent incidents. The election was characterized by voter intimidation, ballot box snatching, and hijacking of electoral materials, in addition to tumultuous violence in most parts of the state, namely Brass, Ekeremor, Nembe, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw, and Yenagoa local governments. These were evident in the pre-elections sporadic shootings in Nembe local government, precisely in Ogbolomabiri where two persons were shot. In Ekeremor, gunmen on the early morning of election day attacked the house of Minister of State for Agriculture, Heineken Lokpobiri, the Director-General of the campaign team of the APC candidate<sup>16</sup>. Southern Ijaw witnessed on Election Day heavy gunplay and dynamites at Oporomo, headquarters of the local government, where it was alleged that five persons lost their lives. In 2019, twenty-one (21) persons lost their lives following violence that broke out during a political campaign rally in the Nembe area three days before the state's November 16, 2019, governorship election<sup>17</sup>.

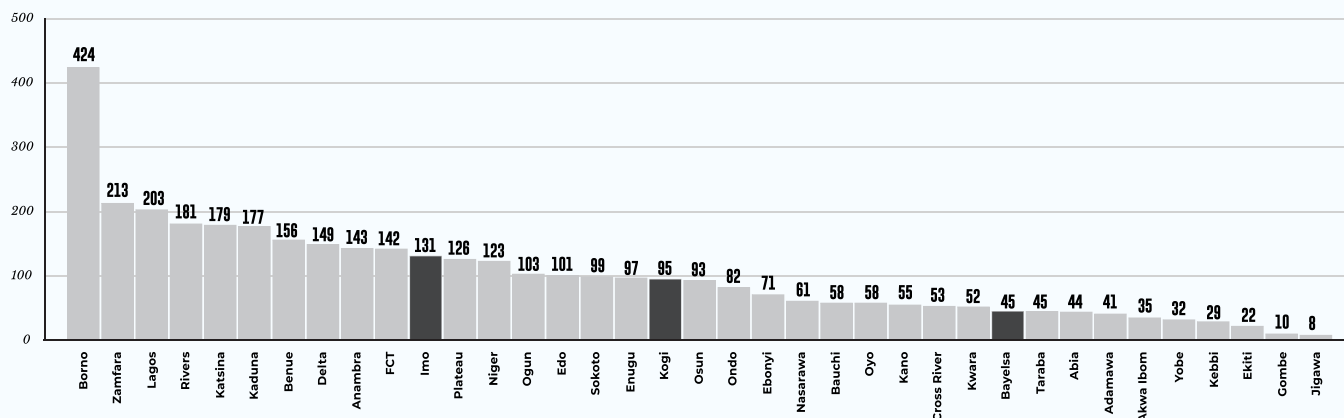
Currently, Bayelsa is rife with cult and gang-related violence and reprisal attacks. It is increasingly challenging to disassociate this armed conflict from political conflict. Politicians allegedly support these cult groups because they serve and are being used to disrupt the electoral process and



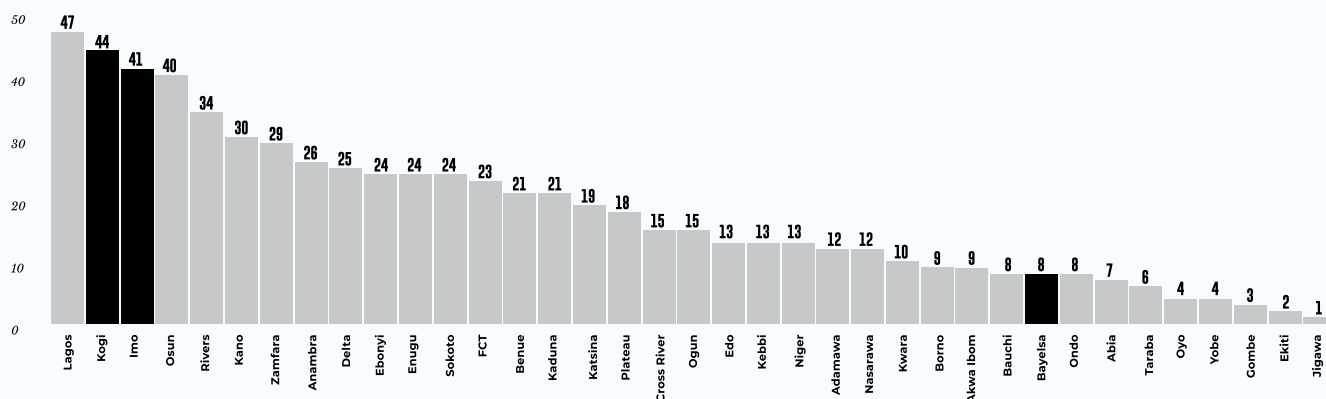
achieve their political pursuits. Also, many former militant leaders and their foot soldiers have shifted to politics and aligned with different political figures. The protracted battles for supremacy among the many cult groups and ex-militants struggling for political relevance portend risk for the sanctity of the forthcoming election.

In comparing non-electoral violence and electoral violence – data shows that Bayelsa’s cases of non-electoral and electoral are relatively low compared to other states.

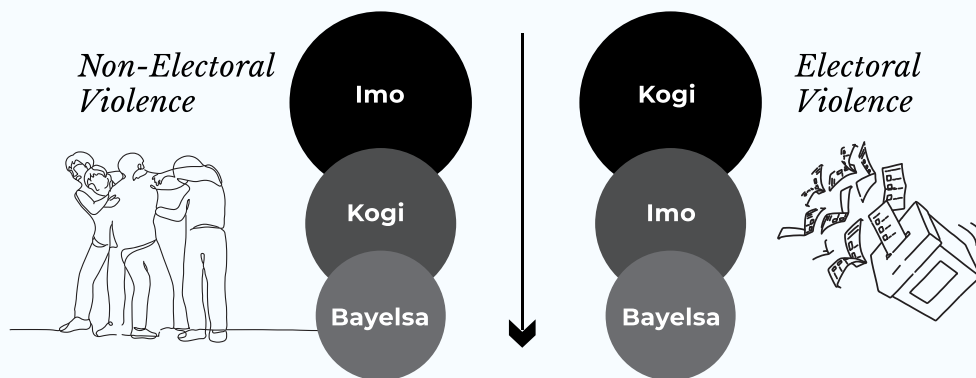
**Number of Non-electoral Violence Incidents per State between January 1 and October 23, 2023**



**Number of Electoral Violence Incidents per State between January 1 and October 23, 2023**



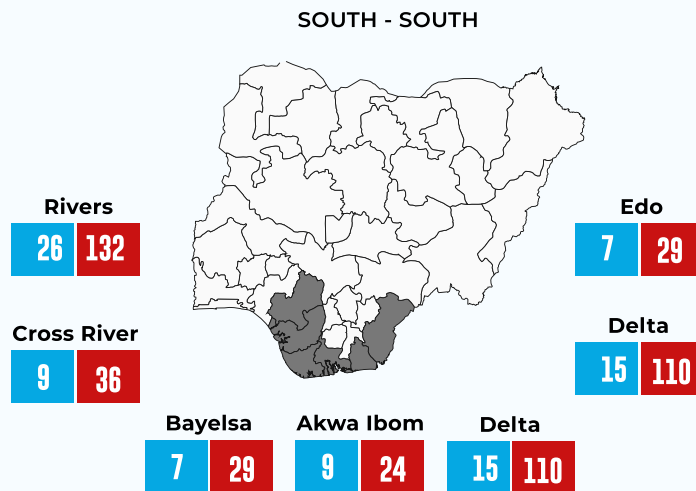
## Comparing the ranking between the three states with off-cycle elections



However, what remains important to note is that some of the escalations in Bayelsa, especially in LGAs like Nembe, were colossal and drew the country's attention. For instance, the invasion of Opu-Nembe (Basambri), in Nembe Local government area of Bayelsa State, by suspected armed thugs in military uniform on 13 August 2023 at about 7 pm. Additionally, in the last two months before this report, the count of electoral violence was significantly low. However, this is gradually increasing as we move closer to the election.

### Comparison of Electoral Violence across Geopolitical zones where elections will take place

(Data is between January 1 and October 22, 2023)



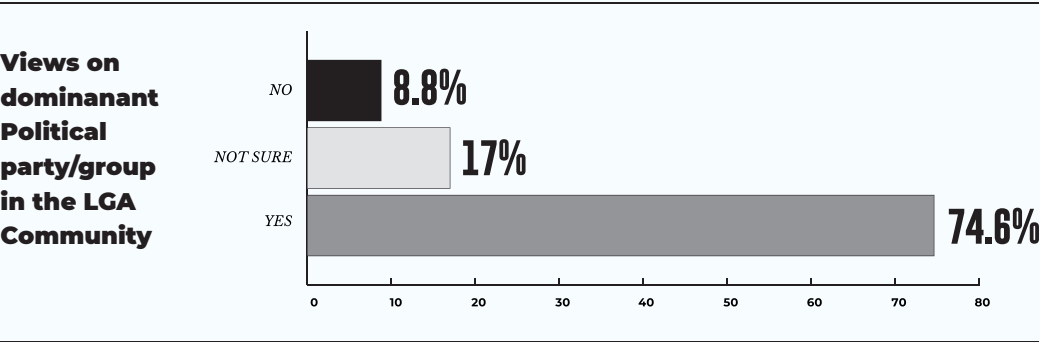
● Electoral Violence ● Non-Electoral Violence

Many experts during this assessment have alluded to the fact that low records and documentation of violence are an interplay of three major factors.

- The early escalation of the conflict in the state may be one major factor: It is widely known that the shooting on August 13 marked the fourth of such occurrence in 2023 within Nembe and its surrounding areas. These incidents signal that the conflict is in a win-lose phase characterized by strategies of threat and competition<sup>18</sup>. The early intensification of the conflict has undoubtedly sparked heightened public discussions, and focus on efforts to mitigate it.
- Public campaigns by political parties commenced on 14 June 2023. Yet, not many public campaigns were seen in the first two months of this public campaign. This lack of frequent political activities is also responsible for this.
- Low Media coverage: Findings revealed that some communities around Nembe/Brass areas have issued a strict warning for the media to shun their communities – especially coming to cover events. Also, this is somewhat believed to be a contributory factor to this low count of happenings in Bayelsa- Very significantly, recent violence tracked and verified are based on the NEVR data gathering methodology, many of which do not make it to mainstream media.

## 02.

**Bayelsa State has its dominant political parties, each with its stronghold in various Local Government Areas (LGAs). These dynamics, with unhealthy inter-party rivalries and unresolved internal party conflicts, set the stage for a heightened risk of election-day violence.**





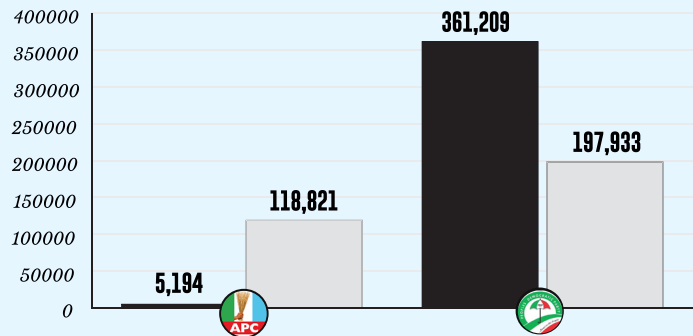
Every art of politics was said to be local. This is in no way different from what is obtainable in Bayelsa state. Bayelsa's political landscape is influenced by local dynamics that interplay with power structures. This often plays a major role in determining party dominance in different LGAs. The pre-election environment assessment moved to unravel this – the majority (74.5%) of the quantity returned showed that there exists dominance of a certain political party in LGAs in Bayelsa State.

Desk research complements this and has shown that the PDP has traditionally held sway in Bayelsa State. The state has been a stronghold for the PDP, with a robust grassroots presence and a history of producing top political leaders.

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>NAME</b>             | <b>TIME IN OFFICE</b>               | <b>POSITION</b> | <b>SENATORIAL DISTRICT</b> | <b>LGA</b>       | <b>PARTY</b> |
|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1          | Dlepreye Alamieyeseigha | 29 May 1999 – 9 December 2005       | Governor        | Central                    | Southern Ijaw    | PDP          |
| 2          | Goodluck Jonathan       | 9 December 2005 – 29 May 2007       | Governor        | East                       | Ogbia            | PDP          |
| 3          | Timipre Sylva           | 29 May 2007 – 16 April 2008         | Governor        | East                       | Brass            | PDP          |
| 4          | Werinipre Seibarugo     | 16 April 2008 – 27 May 2008         | Acting Governor | Central                    | Yenagoa          | PDP          |
| 5          | Timipre Sylva           | 27 May 2008– 27 January 2012        | Governor        | East                       | Brass            | PDP          |
| 6          | Nestor Binabo           | 27 January 2012– 14 February 2012   | Acting Governor | West                       | Sagbama          | PDP          |
| 7          | Henry Dickson           | 14 February 2012 – 14 February 2020 | Governor        | West                       | Sagbama          | PDP          |
| 8          | Douye Diri              | 14 February 2020 – present          | Governor        | Central                    | Kolokumo/Opokuma | PDP          |

## Comparative Analysis of APC and PDP Votes in Bayelsa in 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections

● 2015  
● 2019

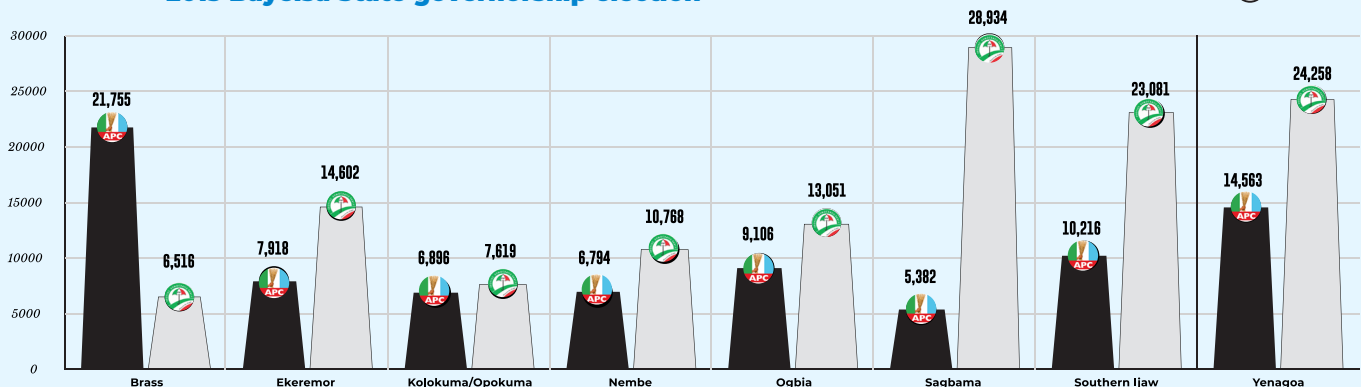


The PDP has produced all elected Governors of the state and dominated the State House of Assembly and local government chairmanship positions. The same applies to the federal level, where it had won almost all elections in the Senate and House of Representatives. Not until recently, precisely in 2015, Bayelsa state prides itself as a PDP state and stronghold. But the emergence of the APC and its inroads into the state's political space is evidenced in the outcome of the 2019 general elections, where it wrested one senatorial seat and two House of Representatives seats. Between 2015 and 2019 – the APC continuously challenged the dominance of the PDP in the state, and in the 2019 presidential elections – the APC vote rose more than 21.9 percent but the PDP vote dropped over 45 percent.

In the 2015 governorship election, APC won just one local government, Brass, the home of Timipre Sylva, while PDP won the remaining seven. Conversely, in 2019, the APC won in six local government areas, leaving PDP with just two. As the election year goes by, APC gradually became a force to reckon

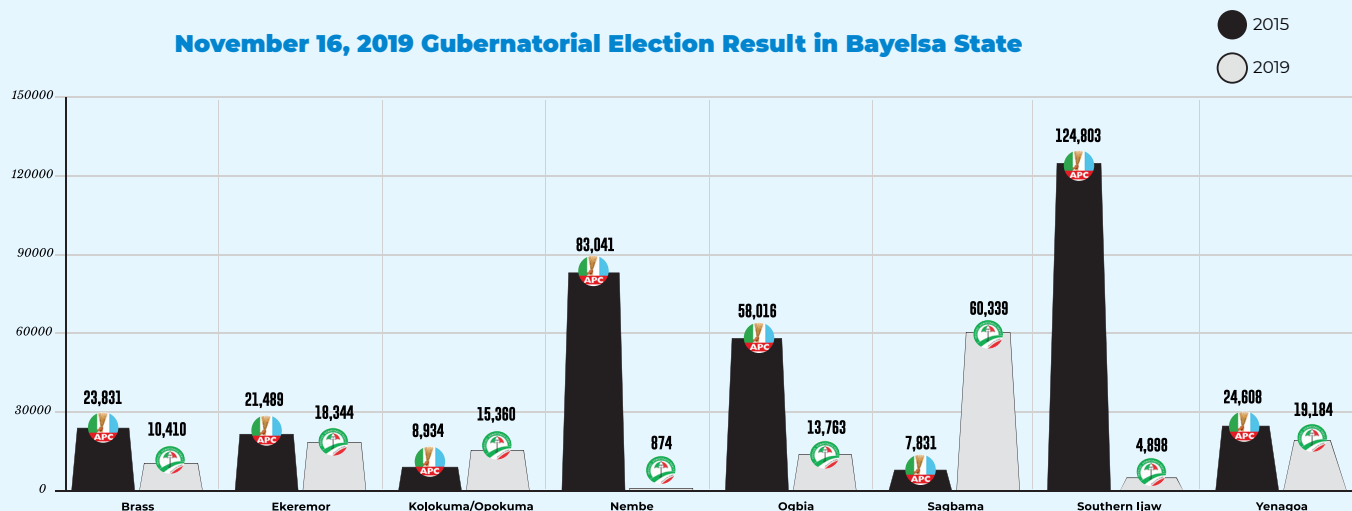
## Distribution of votes by local government in the 2015 Bayelsa State governorship election

● 2015  
● 2019



on with in the Bayelsa political landscape. Despite the APC victory in the 2019 governorship election . The pre election , its governorship and deputy governorship candidates on September 18, 2019, in a suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1101/2019.

### November 16, 2019 Gubernatorial Election Result in Bayelsa State

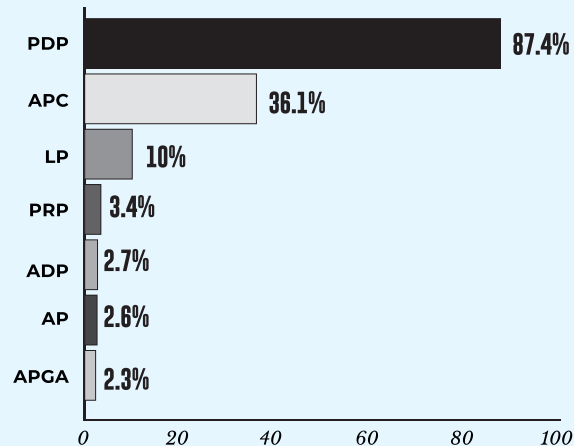


The PDP prayed the Court to disqualify the Deputy Governorship candidate of the APC on the ground of discrepancies in the forms (documents) he submitted to INEC.

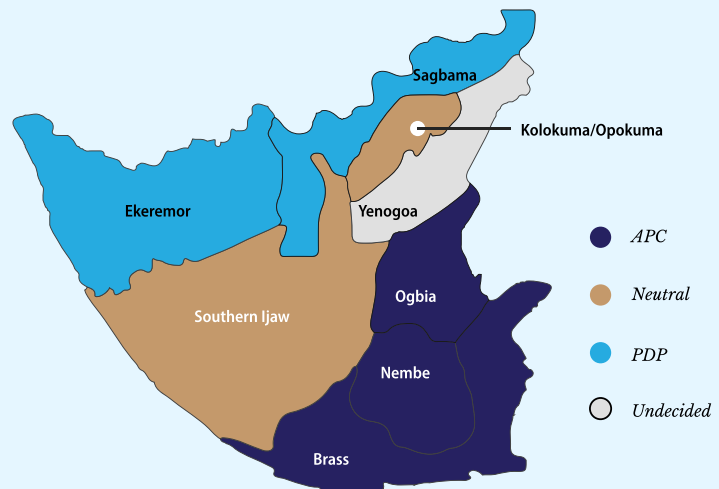
This litigation process moved to the appeal court and the Supreme Court. Ruling on the appeal, on February 13, 2020, less than 24 hours before the swearing in of the APC Governor-elect, the Supreme Court, in agreement with the application of the PDP, set aside December 23, 2019, judgement and consequently upheld the November 12, 2019 judgement of the Federal High Court that disqualified the APC running mate because there was no evidence to prove that the documents with about nine different names from the ones contained in his Form CF001 belong to the deputy governor-elect (Degi-Eremienyo). It further noted that the affidavits of correcting names and regularising names filed by him were not enough as he ought to have followed due process. Arising from this, the Supreme Court ruled that the disqualification of the deputy governor had infected the joint ticket with which he contested with the David Lyon at the poll, hence, the nullification of their earlier victory.

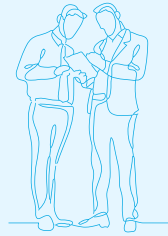
Nonetheless, this does not rule out the fact that APC has effectively transformed into a significant force in the state. Its giant strides in elections, especially in the 2019 governorship election, have placed it directly in strong competition with PDP, challenging its dominance over the political space in Bayelsa. Furthermore, this study then looked into the current political landscape with the understanding of the historical facts – it then discovered that PDP and APC are still the leading dominant political party in the state. Each of the two parties has LGAs believed to be their stronghold.

### Views on Dominant Political Party in the LGA/Community



### Distribution of Political parties into Bayelsa LGA, where they are believed to have a stronghold





**61.2%  
OF BAYELSA**

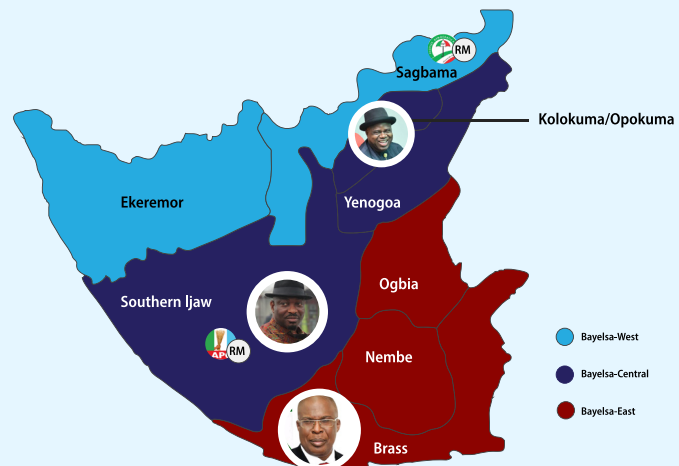
**...respondents believe  
there is a likelihood of  
strong competition for  
the contested seats in  
their LGA/Community**

Ekeremor and Yenagoa LGAs look more like swing LGAs in the coming election. However, the rivalry between PDP and APC is a phenomenon that has brought about intense competition and political tension in previous elections, and the current election may likely not be an exception. This is not far from why 61.2% of Bayelsa respondents think there is high likelihood of intense competition for the governorship seat in their LGAs. At the same time, the pre-election phase is characterized by the APC and PDP fighting for the soul of the state, especially in Nembe, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa LGAs. Labour Party governorship candidate Udengs Eradiri, a former president of the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and Commissioner for Youth in the state, had accused the APC and PDP of planned irregularities. He rightly alleged that while one of the parties boasted of amassing over N30 billion to compromise INEC officials and buy votes, the other tried to use violence to win the poll<sup>19</sup>.

Linking the dominance and stronghold variable to the relative tension in the states - It showed

- Strong personalities are standing as candidates in Bayelsa State.
- Intense levels and resentful campaigning are ongoing in Bayelsa State.

### **Senatorial distribution of leading candidates and their running mates**



## Portfolios of the APC, PDP, and LP Governorship Candidates in the 2023 off-cycle Governorship election in Bayelsa State.



### Doye Diri (PDP)

- Senator, Bayelsa Central (2019)
- Incumbent Governor



### Timipre Marlin Sylva CON (APC)

- House of Assembly Member in the Old Rivers State (1992)
- Former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (2019 - 2023)
- Former Governor of Bayelsa State from 2007 - 2012



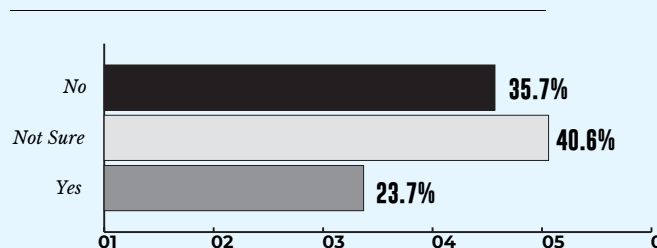
### Udengs Eradiri (LP)

- Former President of the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC)
- Commissioner of Youth in the State.

Obviously, there are strong personalities with national, state, and local experience of governance vying for the seat of the first citizen in Bayelsa state, and political party campaigns are gradually becoming a hub where tension and dangerous speeches emanate. This portends security risks to pre-election, election day and post-election environment.

The study showed the role of internal party crises in exacerbating the existing tension and increasing the likelihood of violence in the election. Mainly, there are internal party crises in some political parties in Bayelsa. However, exploring secondary data showed that internal party crises are not one of the significant factors exacerbating the existing tension in the state, and this study could not draw a link between the two points. This corroborates what respondents believed in response to the inquiry asking if internal party crises led to the cases of electoral violence recorded in the state. In response to this inquiry - the majority (40.6%) cannot ascertain, while (35.7%) opined a straight NO.

### Views on conflicts resulting from internal party democracy (e.g party primaries, nomination of the candidates in any political party. etc.)

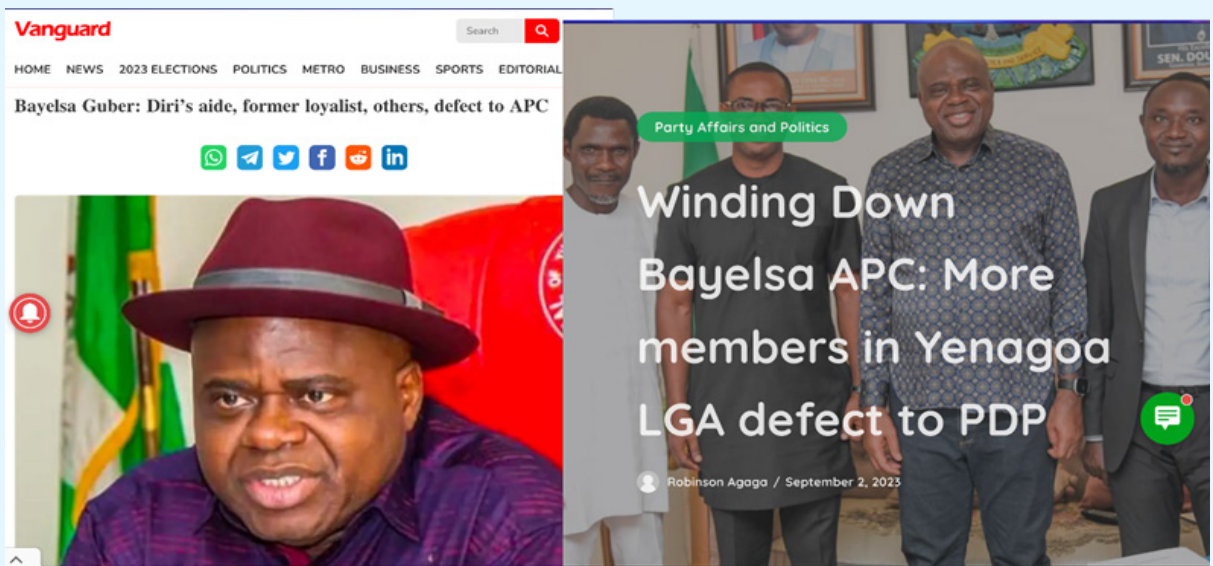


There are no doubts on issues in the Bayelsa state chapter of the APC and PDP- Some stakeholders feel resentful about the emergence of former Minister of State for Petroleum, Chief Timipre Sylva, as the flag bearer of APC. Some of these stakeholders include the Minister of State for Petroleum, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, and 2019 governorship candidate David Lyon. Conducting key informant interviews, there were vital pointers that there might be a schism between Lokpobiri and Sylva because Sylva did not back Lokpobiri's ministerial bid. On the other hand, Lyon thought he would be given the right of first refusal in consideration of the APC gubernatorial candidate nomination because of the way he was sacked as the governor-elect by the Supreme Court in 2020. The duo and many others have alleged to have seemingly distanced themselves from Sylva's campaigns and political activities ahead of the November 11 governorship elections.

All these resentments have only led to a hurricane of defections across the major political parties. For instance, towards the November 11, 2023, governorship election:

- Not less than eighteen (18) PDP leaders in Otuan Ward 5, Southern Ijaw Local Council earlier defected to the APC, along with their over 1,000 supporters, including the PDP Organizing Secretary in the Ward, Miebi Adeyn; PDP Women Coordinator, Alami Philip; Philip Amabebe; Clapperton Ogbolowari; Omoni Sunday; Victor Bob; Morris Gbere; Bomo Alaseigha; Felix Souton and Tolu Ozato.

## Waves of Defection in Bayelsa



Many people, including some of the governor's aides and LP members, were also received by APC. Some of those that decamped include two former commissioners, Chief Saviour Ibegu (from Ogbia) and Chief Diodei Week (Southern Ijaw); three former local government chairmen- Victor Isiah (Brass), Nathaniel Sylva (Brass), a former senior special assistant to Diri, and Ebinyu Turner (Ogbia). Other defectors and their followers were Gideon Ogufe, a retired Assistant Police Commissioner (ACP); former youth president from Okumbiri, Akposeye Odoni; Oweifabo Felix Ebikeme; Dime Jonah and Goodluck Dime<sup>20</sup>. Conversely, one of Sylva's political allies and a former member of the House of Representatives, Mr. Israel Sunny Goli, defected to the PDP, even as some former legislators from 1999 pledged support for Diri. Some close associates of the APC candidate recently jumped ship, including a former acting governor of the state, Chief Werinipre Seibarugu, and his supporters. Seibarugu, Speaker of the House of Assembly under Sylva's first tenure, was among the former state lawmakers who visited Diri to declare their support for his re-election bid. Coordinator of the Seibarugu Dynasty, Mr Ebiye Waripamo, said: "We left Jerusalem and went to Egypt, but now we are back in Jerusalem, and this is where we will stay. We are not going back again<sup>21</sup>."

***The gale of defection did not just start today in Bayelsa state, but the effects and dynamics have always been different.***

Towards the 2019 governorship election in the state, several prominent political figures and supporters defected to other parties shortly after the PDP primary elections. Some of these political figures include:

- Mr Gabriel Jonah, the younger brother of the state's deputy governor, led a significant defection from the PDP to the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nembe. He was also accompanied by members of the "Otita Transformation Movement" (known as "Otita Force").
- In other parts of the state, such as Nembe, Ekeremor, Kolokumo/Opokumo, Sagbama, and Southern Ijaw local government areas, several political figures, former government officials, and party members left the PDP for the APC. Notable figures who defected include a former senator, former House of Assembly members, special advisers, former councillors, and others. Some senior government officials, commissioners, and chairpersons also joined the APC.

In contrast, some members of the APC defected to the PDP in various local government areas. Senator Dickson, a PDP leader, reacted to these defections in 2019. He categorically stated that despite the defection of over 150 prominent leaders, including the State Chairman of the PDP and commissioners to the major opposition party in the state towards the build-up to his re-election in 2015, he still won the contest. Given this, he remained upbeat about the party's victory at the poll, especially when no prominent member of his Restoration team had defected. Contrary to the above notion, this exodus undermined the dominance of the PDP in the state, unlike in 2015.





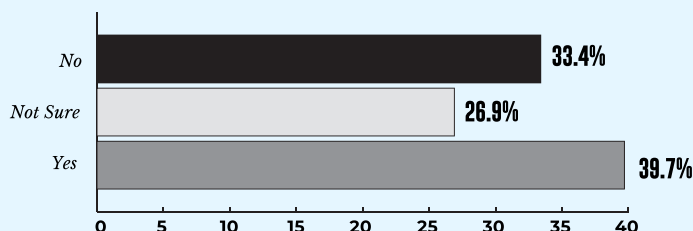
***Aside from the effect of winning or losing an election due to eminent member cross-carpeting – defection is a potential for violence because when members decamp, they sometimes speak unfounded words and do everything to ensure they earn their new principal's loyalty.***



### 03.

## The activities of non-state armed actors (cultists) and the difficult riverine terrain in Bayelsa state may increase the likelihood of election day and irregularities

**Presence of non-state armed actors such militants, armed gunmen or cultists in your LGA/Community?**



Insecurity and violence have become part of everyday realities across different towns and villages in Bayelsa State. The state is characterized by various insecurity issues, ranging from militancy, cultism, kidnapping, oil theft, illegal artisanal refining, inter and intra-communal conflicts, electoral violence, land and boundary disputes. One of the most common insecurity issues in Bayelsa State is cultism and cult-related violence.

39.7% of the respondents, which constitutes the highest divide of the respondents, alluded to the fact that there is the presence of non-state actors in Bayelsa State - Palpably, the remnant power structure of militants and community-based cultists has caused a conflict transformation in Bayelsa state. These actors and power structures have found a way to interplay with the political landscape - where they are constant tools politicians use to perpetuate violence; they use threats to give their preferred candidates an advantage in the political race<sup>22</sup>. This made electoral violence another notable insecurity in the state.

Currently, Bayelsa is rife with cult and gang-related violence and reprisal attacks. It is increasingly challenging to disassociate this armed conflict from political conflict. Politicians support these cult groups because they serve and are being used to disrupt the electoral process and achieve their political pursuits. Also, many former militant leaders and their foot soldiers have shifted to politics and aligned with different political figures. The protracted battles for supremacy among the many cult groups and ex-militants struggling for political relevance portend risk for the sanctity of the forthcoming election.

Six other states border Bayelsa, and through these states, Bayelsa can be accessible via land and

water. For instances<sup>23</sup>:

- Bayelsa shares a border with Rivers State, and the two states are interconnected by a network of rivers and creeks, including the Nun River. These waterways allow for the movement of people, goods, and services between the states.
- Bayelsa State share a boundary with Delta State. The Forcados River, which is part of the Niger Delta region, provides a significant water link between Bayelsa and Delta State.
- Bayelsa's southern border is adjacent to Akwa Ibom State. The state's proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and numerous rivers and creeks offers water links to Akwa Ibom and other coastal areas.
- To the northeast, Bayelsa shares a boundary with Ondo State. While this border is primarily land-based, smaller water links may exist in areas where rivers and creeks intersect.

It is common knowledge that the formation of cult groups in Bayelsa

State emerged from Rivers State<sup>24</sup>. If this had happened in previous times by the influx of court groups from Rivers state - the easy access links of Bayelsa with the other states at the Niger Delta region can aid the influx of machinery to Bayelsa, and they can potentially be tools to foment trouble in elections.

Furthermore, Bayelsa's riverine terrain poses distinct challenges. The riverine nature of Bayelsa State poses some challenges to the conduct of elections in the state. Some of these challenges are:

- Difficulty in transporting election materials and personnel: The state has a difficult geographical terrain, with many creeks, swamps, and wetlands that make road access difficult or if not impossible. This means that election materials and personnel must be transported by boats or



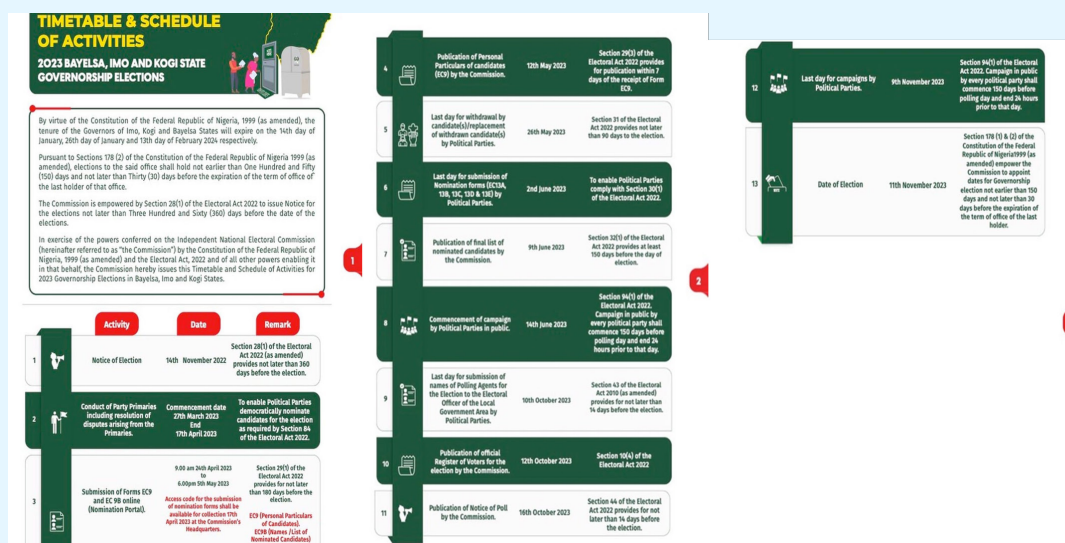
other means of transportation, which are costly, scarce, and prone to attacks by sea pirates or militants <sup>25</sup>.

- Risk of violence and insecurity: Bayelsa has a history of armed groups, such as militancy, cultism, sea piracy, and kidnapping, that have threatened the safety and integrity of the electoral process in the past. It is plausible with the current political landscape<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, navigating the creeks demands extensive local knowledge, and security officials may likely lack this understanding because a large percentage are often deployed from outside the state. Consequently, the creeks have been susceptible to election rigging and disruptions. Past elections have witnessed incidents such as ballot boxes being thrown into the water and ad-hoc officials being pushed into the water from speedboats.”

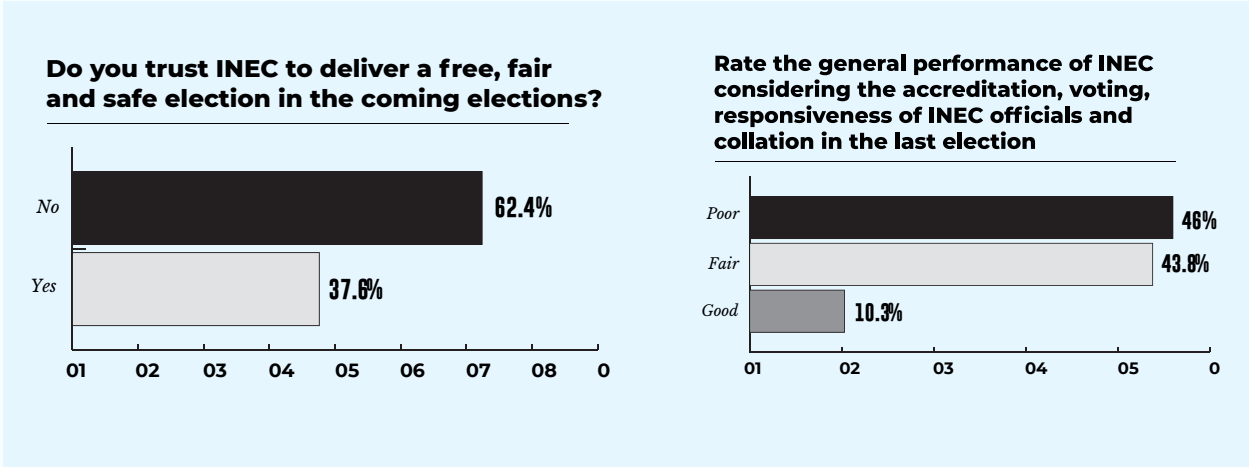
## 04.

### Following the general election of 2023, the public confidence of Bayelsa’s residents in INEC is diminishing.

The timetable released by INEC on the 25th of October 2022, on the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi off-cycle elections, shows that INEC had performed 11 out of the 13 points activities released. As of the time of this report, PVC distribution is ongoing. On Saturday, 14 October 2023, INEC underwent a mock accreditation exercise. This involved utilizing the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and uploading polling unit results (of the exercise) to the IReV.




However, INEC continues to suffer from negative public perception and a trust deficit due to complexities around the 2023 general elections. The study reveals that the majority considers INEC's performance unsatisfactory during the last general election and does not trust the commission to conduct free and fair elections in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi States. This perception in the court of public opinion was largely shaped by issues such as the incompetence of ad hoc officials and logistical and technological challenges. Unchangeably, the upcoming off-cycle elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States are a litmus test for INEC to redeem its image.




This survey explored the views of citizens in Bayelsa state on what they think could be a significant challenge to the effective administration of the elections. It is essential to nip this in the bud before the election because existing negative public perception can exacerbate this – which may result in violence.


**What Citizens think could be significant challenges to the coming elections**




Lack of Accountability and Transparency by Officials



Violence

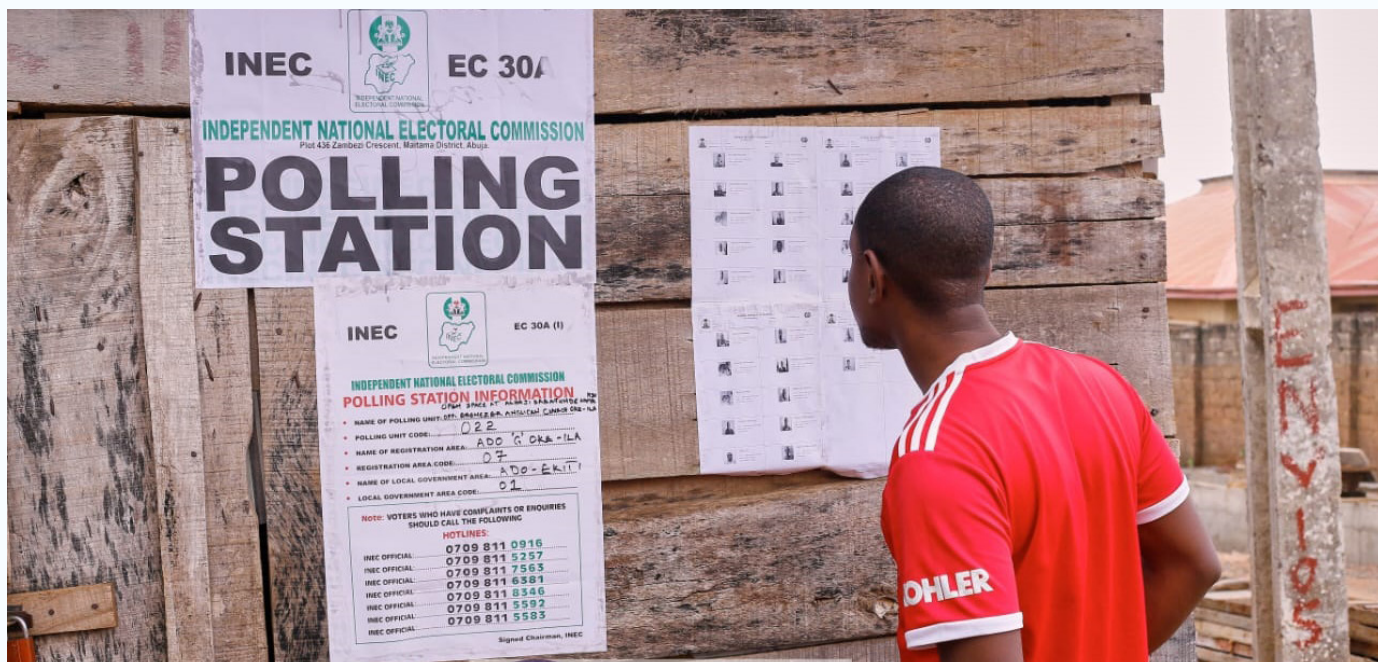


Interference by Political Elite or Incumbent



Incompetence of Electoral Officials





# Voter Education

Voter education is the means of providing citizens with all the information about participating in elections. The electoral institution and other relevant state agencies charged with public enlightenment and national orientation should spearhead and provide voter education. The under-listed points earmarked some of the reasons for civic and voter education. These include:

- Increased voter turnout during elections.
- Improved voter knowledge of new accreditation procedures based on the permanent voters' card.
- Reduction in the number of invalid votes at elections.
- Encouragement of ethical voting.
- Reducing electoral violence.
- Curbing vote buying.
- Countering misinformation, disinformation, and malformation.
- Strengthen citizen faith and trust in the electoral system.

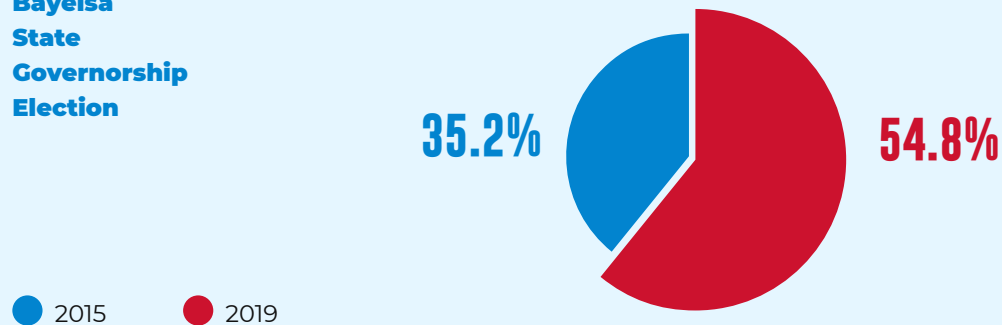
All these are crucial for democratic consolidation and stability. However, there has not been much noticeable voter education in the states compared to previous off-cycle or general elections. Some of the factors responsible for this include,

- **Violence and insecurity:** In Bayelsa, the intimidation and harassment, as seen in the destruction of campaign materials, hamper CVE.
- **Post 2023 General Election dispute resolution/Litigation:** Volunteer Citizens and stakeholders that ordinarily would have been involved in CVE have their attention caught off by the issues that have trailed the 2023 general elections, especially the litigations.

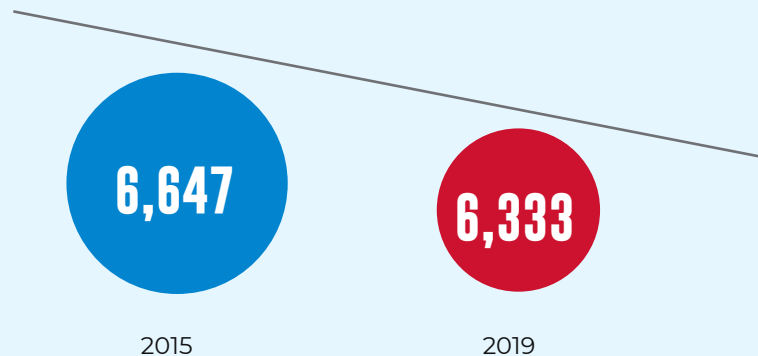
If much has not been done on CVE, which is globally accepted as the leading antidote to ills in any democratic society. In that case, we may enter the elections without adequate education for voters to salvage the perception issues, counter fake news or build citizen trust in the process. This could be an underlying cause of violence in the coming elections.

Moreover, it is also essential to state that voter apathy and invalid votes may also be another effect of this inadequate or ineffective CVE. Voter turnout in the 2019 governorship election in Bayelsa state was higher than that of 2015, and Invalid votes were reduced in 2019 from what it was in 2015; this is grossly uncommon in the history of sub-national elections in Nigeria – if this gain is to be sustained, it won't happen in the atmosphere of violence and inadequate CVE.

### Trends of Turnout in Bayelsa State Governorship Election



### Invalid votes in previous Governorship Election in Bayelsa State



Civil society organizations should intensify their voter sensitization, especially targeting first-time voters; religious leaders should lend their voices to spread the message of the peaceful election using their platform and gate-keepers of the communities. Traditional rulers must be engaged to use their platforms to reach out and sensitize the citizens on the need for peaceful elections.

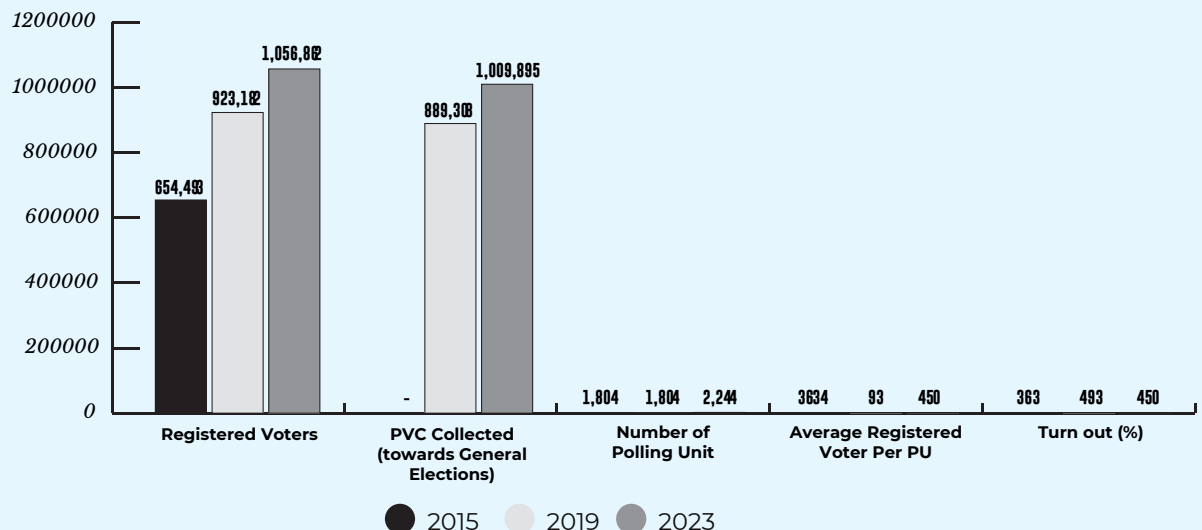


# Polling Unit (PU) Distribution

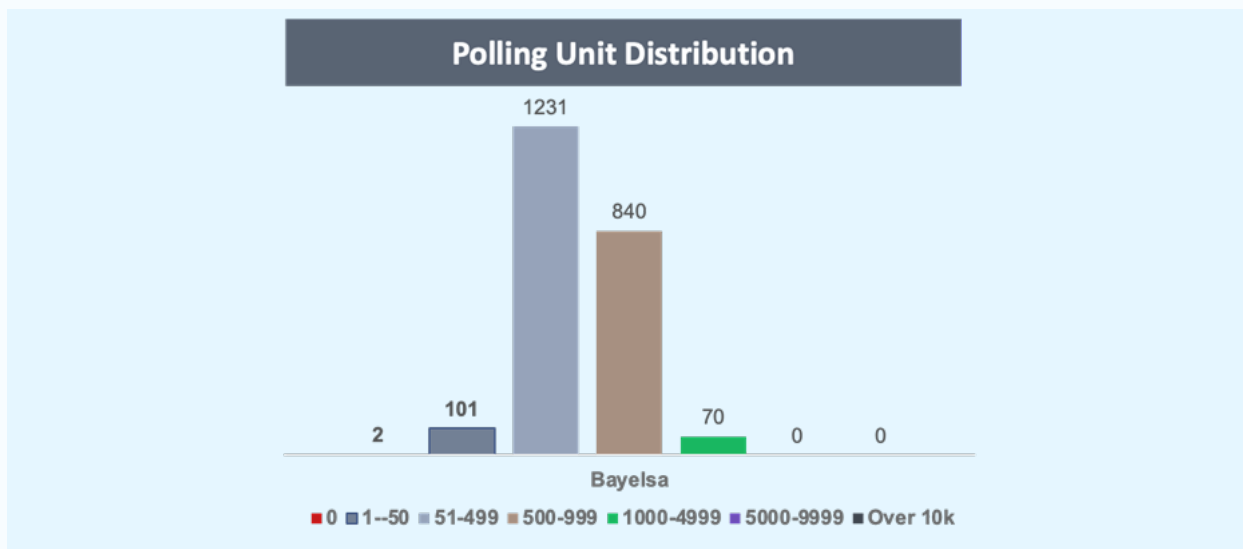


In 2021, INEC, after so many stakeholder consultations, created over 56,872 additional polling units in the country, bringing the total polling unit to 176,846 from 119,973. It is the first-time additional polling units have been created since 1996<sup>27</sup>. 440 polling Units were created in Bayelsa state, making the total number of polling units to be 2,244 from 1,804 that it used to be. As the people of Bayelsa head to the November 11, 2023, governorship election – the number of polling units remains at 2,244.

## Number of Registered Voters, PVC Collected, Polling Units, Average Voter Per PU and Turnout in the elections



In comparing the PVC collection rate to the number of PU available before each election- the average number of voters per PU continues to oscillate in comparing the PVC collected before each governorship election (the PVC collected in 2023 was the figure released by INEC before the 2023 general election because as of the time of this report, the commission is yet to release the total number of PVC collected in Bayelsa). Interestingly, the state hasn't crossed the threshold of over 500 voters per PU since 2015, and turnout in the last governorship elections increased from what it was in 2015.



Creating additional PU will reduce the number of people clustered at one point on election day and reduce the tension and aggression that may be borne out of long waits for voting. Since the creation of the PUs, what has remained is the question of how widely spread voters are or whether voters are mobilized enough to transfer their polling units to the new polling units around them. In Ekiti, Osun and the 2023 general elections- KDI observed a polling unit with only 20 voters, and just adjacent to the PU, there was another PU with over 500 voters. As of the January 25th, 2023 in Bayelsa state,

- two (2) polling units have zero voters,
- 101 PUs with voters between 1-50,
- 1231 PUs with voters between 51-499
- 840 PUs with voters between 500-999,
- 70 PUs with voters between 1000-4999, and there are no polling units with over 5000 voters.

There were indications that INEC redistributed voters more evenly across polling units ahead of the 2023 general elections, either in the exact location or within a maximum distance of 250 meters

from the original location. This redistribution raises questions about the ability of INEC to inform voters of their new polling unit locations ahead of the elections because locating PU by potential voters was an issue in the 2023 general elections, and this has lingered from the point where new PUs were created in 2022.

There are no signs that this has been taken care of ahead of Bayelsa's 2023 off-cycle governorship election. CVE should have taken care of these issues to ensure proper distribution of voters across polling units. As we have always noted in previous elections, there is a notable correlation between the number of registered voters in a PU and turnout in the same PU. Polling units with severe over-crowding experienced lower voter turnout, while most polling units with high turnout are PU with fewer number of registered voters.

KDI has continuously expressed her belief in the BVAS innovation and its opportunity to increase election transparency. However, the BVAS machine can slow the election process and might make voting go into the night, especially in PUs with large numbers of registered voters.

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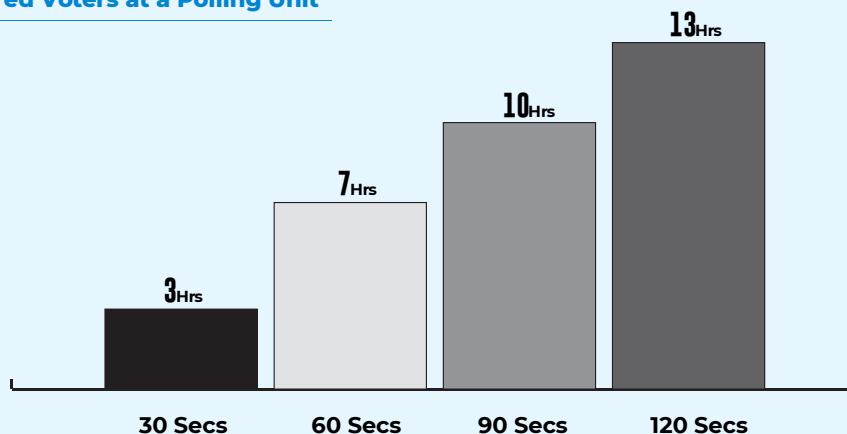
#### QUICK SCENARIO:

*There are 1231 PUs in Bayelsa State with registered voters between 51-499 and 840 PUs with registered voters between 500-999. Take, for instance, a polling unit with over 450 registered voters, considering the high PVC collection rate based on INEC data – if 400 voters turn out to vote in that polling unit, all things being equal, voting will end in that PU at 6.30 pm if BVAS accredits a voter at 90secs and if BVAS accredits for 2 minutes, it will take 13 hours for the last voter to be accredited, and this is going to be around 9.30 pm*

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#### BVAS Accreditation Speed in relation to 400 Registered Voters at a Polling Unit



The commission had said it would deploy two or more BVAS to PU with over 1,000 registered voters, and we think INEC should lower this threshold by considering deploying two or more BVAS to PU with more than 500 Registered voters for off-cycle elections because there are more PUs with voter between 500 and 999. Also, the commission should consider using PVC collected as a threshold for BVAS deployment.

## 05.

### Observed Political Party Activities are Taking Unconventional Forms.

Unlike the previous elections, as of the time of this report, political parties in the Bayelsa State are not doing much of the usual LGA by-LGA Campaign. However, the support groups were seen at the community level doing rallies. Recall that the official start date for political parties' public campaigns was June 14th, 2023 but there hasn't been a high rate of campaign activities in Bayelsa for June, July, and August, 2023.

The Bayelsa State All Progressives Congress (APC) Gubernatorial Campaign Council flagged off its campaign later than Saturday, October 14, 2023<sup>28</sup>- a date earlier scheduled while PDP kicked off its campaign on the last Friday of September in Brass LGA<sup>29</sup> while LP, on the 19 September 2023, flagged off campaigns for the November 11, 2023, governorship elections<sup>30</sup>.

There are insinuations in some quarters that political parties may be rethinking campaign finance – because the resources involved are enormous, and sustaining campaigns for five months may be **cost-intensive**. Most parties have devised ways to abstain from conventional campaigns for a few month despite the official commencement of public campaigns. Some political analysts had positioned that it is only because **the political parties don't see any need to engage the voters or citizens** on their plans for the state they want to govern. The norm for political parties is to engage in campaigns that are not issue-based – they often want to campaign based on rhetoric and personality disparagement.

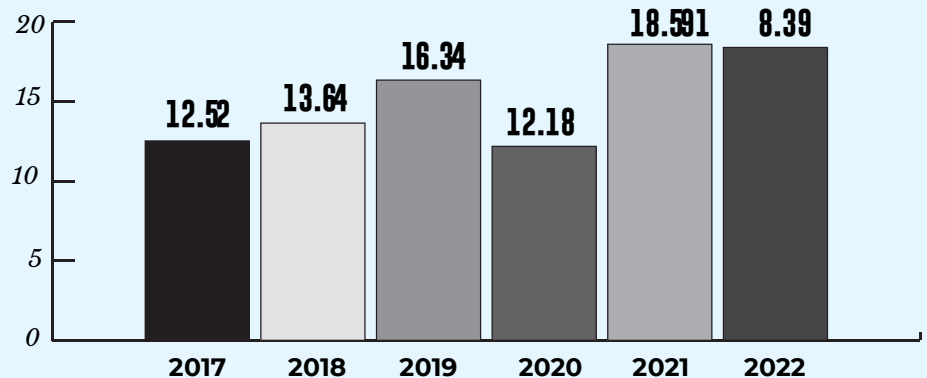
Financial experts had positioned that many **political parties are conserving funds to start the campaign few weeks into the election and have more to spend for election day vote buying**. KDI drew a trend of socio-economic data in Nigeria, especially in Bayelsa, to know what vote-buying would look like in the forthcoming elections.

- The Fiscal Sustainability Index, an annual release from Budget Foundation in her State of States, Bayelsa state ranked 35 out of 36 states in 2022.
- Between 2017 and 2022, the IGR of Bayelsa state grew from 12.52b to 18.39b, while its debt grew

from 144.03b to 173.55b.

### Internal Generated Revenue of Bayelsa State between 2017 -2022

(Amount in Billions)

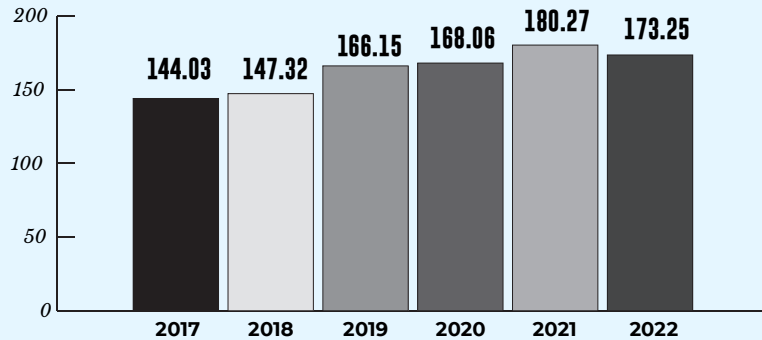


Debt in itself may not be a bad idea. Still, most governments do not invest more in capital expenditure – for instance, Bayelsa government spending priority in 2022 shows that recurrent expenditure outweighs capital expenditure. Such disposition to spending money borrowed on things that won't improve IGR is a challenge to economic development. The state of the economy in Bayelsa, coupled with the disposition of citizens to vote buying- ***KDI predicts widespread vote-buying in the forthcoming election.***

**IGR GREW BY  
5.87B WHILE  
DEBT GREW  
BY 29.52%**

## Debt profile of Bayelsa State between 2017 - 2022

(Amount in Billions)



In previous elections, votes were bought between N1,000 and N10,000. With the socio-economic situation of the country and that of Bayelsa state especially– vote-buying will most likely go below 1,000 in some quarters, while some urban areas may be priced lower than 2,500. Political parties and candidates have left internal vote-buying to get their party ticket to institutional inducement.

06.

## Assessing Electoral Justice Ahead of the Off-cycle Governorship Election



It is increasingly difficult to separate Nigeria's judiciary and electoral processes. For instance, before the 2023 general election, over 1800 pre-election litigations arose from political party primaries and the nomination process. After the 2023 general election, there were 1209 petitions against one elective seat or another. The court is inundated with this electoral dispute resolutions.

The pre-election environment in Bayelsa is not resistant to litigations, especially in the APC camp. A recent court judgment was given against a suit raising concerns about Timipre Sylva's candidacy. An APC governorship aspirant brought this suit, Justice Inyang Ekwo dismissed Mrs Ogbomade Johnson and this. Mrs Johnson sought to remove the APC and Sylva from the list of candidates for the elec-

tion while also praying for an order of perpetual injunction restraining Sylva from parading himself as the APC's governorship candidate in Bayelsa, among other reliefs.

Nonetheless, the court ruled in favour of Sylva. Justice Ekwo held that Mrs Johnson failed to prove her case that the APC did not conduct a valid governorship primary election in Bayelsa on April 14. Justice Ekwo rejected the Police report relied on by the plaintiff, saying it was not the duty of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to monitor the conduct of political parties' primary elections.

However, a subsequent ruling by another Federal High Court in Abuja, presided over by Justice Donatus Okorowo, on Monday, October 9, disqualified Sylva from contesting the election. The court argued that Sylva, having served as governor for two terms and sworn in twice, would breach the Constitution if allowed to run again. Disqualifying him, the Justice said a win and swearing in of Sylva would make him spend more than the stipulated eight years or two terms.

Justice Okorowo cited the Supreme Court's decision in the Marwa vs. Nyako case, which established that no one could exceed the constitutional term limits. All parties agreed that Sylva had been elected as governor twice. The ruling emphasized that allowing Sylva to contest again would set a precedent for individuals to run for office multiple times. In summary, the legal battle over Timipre Sylva's eligibility to run for the governorship election in Bayelsa State has raised constitutional and legal issues related to term limits. Except there is a relief from a superior court, the ruling will threaten Sylva's ambition. It is essential to state that the Campaign Council had assured supporters to appeal the judgment.

Amid all these, Sylva appears calm, and there has not been any violent reaction to this judicial development. However, different scenarios lie ahead.

- If he wins the election and the higher courts rule in his favour after that, he will proceed with governance.
- If he wins the election but loses his appeal, the APC might be compelled to field the runner-up in the primary – David Lyon.
- If he loses the election before the final judgment, the court process becomes an academic exercise and merely for the records.
- If he loses the case before the election, APC will go into the poll without a candidate.

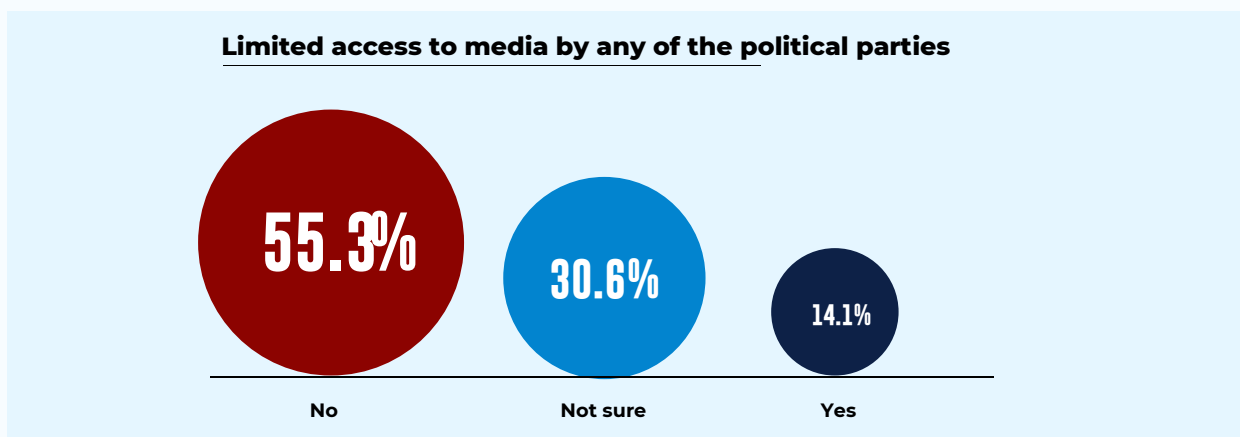
As imperative as the outcomes of this appeal process are to the electoral landscape, it also creates a certain level of uncertainty. Sometimes, these pre-election cases linger close to the elections and cause undue hardship for the litigants. Citizens and even political parties cannot prepare because they are left hanging. Political parties sometimes cannot go all out, and citizens find it difficult to decide who to vote for.

In a democratic society, the judiciary is pivotal in safeguarding political system stability, upholding the legal framework, and fortifying democratic governance. The concept of electoral justice holds significant importance in all democratic contexts, whether they are in the nascent or mature stage. It is evident from the preceding that pre-election litigations have an adverse effect on Nigeria's electoral processes.

**07.**

### **The media activities are being threatened by the unhealthy political rivalry in some LGAS, affecting media coverage in these areas.**

Equal access to media by political party was not an issue in Bayelsa state. More than half (55.3%) of the respondent thinks the political parties' access to the media was not limited. In comparison, a sizeable number (30.6%) are not sure of limitations on the media access to political parties.



What has been an issue in Bayelsa regarding media is its interplay with insecurity. Community leadership tussle based on political motivation is a common phenomenon in Bayelsa state. Some communities around Nembe/Brass areas have warned the media to shun their communities – especially coming to cover events. This study moves to unearth the motive behind this. Discussion with an expert revealed that this could be due to so many reasons, these include:

- These communities may not want sensitive information or images of the violence, their homes, or their community members to be broadcast or published.



- Communities may be concerned about the accuracy and fairness of media coverage. They might fear that media personnel, intentionally or unintentionally, could misrepresent the situation. This is closely linked to the perceived mistrust between these communities and the media that think the affiliations and loyalty of most media rest with the opposing power structure whose stronghold is not within the Nembe/Brass communities.

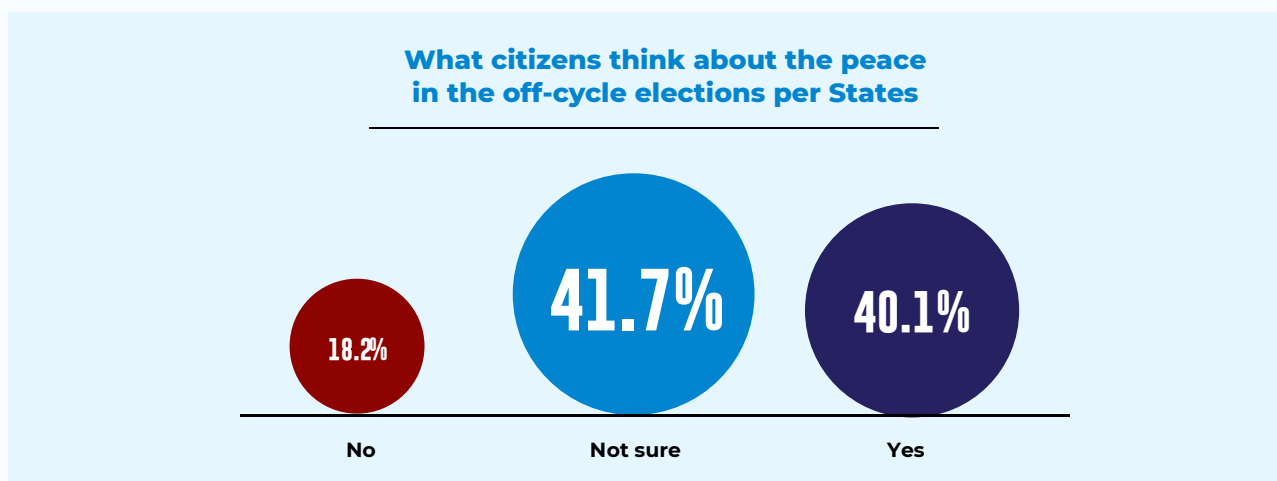
Implicatively, this raises the question of information suppression and human rights concerns. This potential for violence is a factor to address before election day because if care is not taken care of – there may be attacks on the media personnel on election duty.

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***Most of the state's residents are uncertain about the likelihood of peaceful elections, highlighting the state's delicate situation.***

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40.1% think the election will be peaceful. This is against the odds from the history of election-day violence in Bayelsa. At the same time, the majority (41.7%) of the respondents are unsure what lies ahead regarding a peaceful election in Bayelsa's November 11 governorship election. This uncertainty is not far from the early warning signals explicitly discussed in this report's earlier.



## Noticeable Early Warning Signals that lead to the precarious state of things in each state



Cult  
Activities



Widespread  
use of small  
and light  
weapons



Hate speech  
and provoca-  
tive actions by  
political party  
chieftains



Intimidation and  
Harassment of  
party Supporters

## Uncovering Areas at Risk of Election Violence in Bayelsa's November 11 Governorship Election

Electoral violence (EV) is a severe problem in Nigeria that affects security and development. It happens at different stages of the electoral process for various reasons and goals depending on the timing and the target. Some of these reasons include:

- EV can deter or disrupt rival supporters' activities, such as campaigning or attending rallies before election day.
- On election day, EV can be used to reduce or neutralize the influence of opponents in their strongholds.
- It can also be used to prevent the mobilization, performance, or reaction of the opponents' supporters.
- Furthermore, it can divert or overwhelm the security forces to enable the tampering or delegitimization of the electoral process.

The Electoral Act 2022 and previous acts allow elections to be suspended or cancelled due to EV, which makes it a strategic tool to win elections. As electoral reforms make rigging harder, strategic EV become more attractive, and it is vital to identify and secure vulnerable areas before the 2023 Bayelsa Governorship elections because the primary goal of all EV is political gain. It can be used in planned or spontaneous ways by different actors. Perpetrators of EV target opposition strongholds, especially those with large numbers of registered voters.

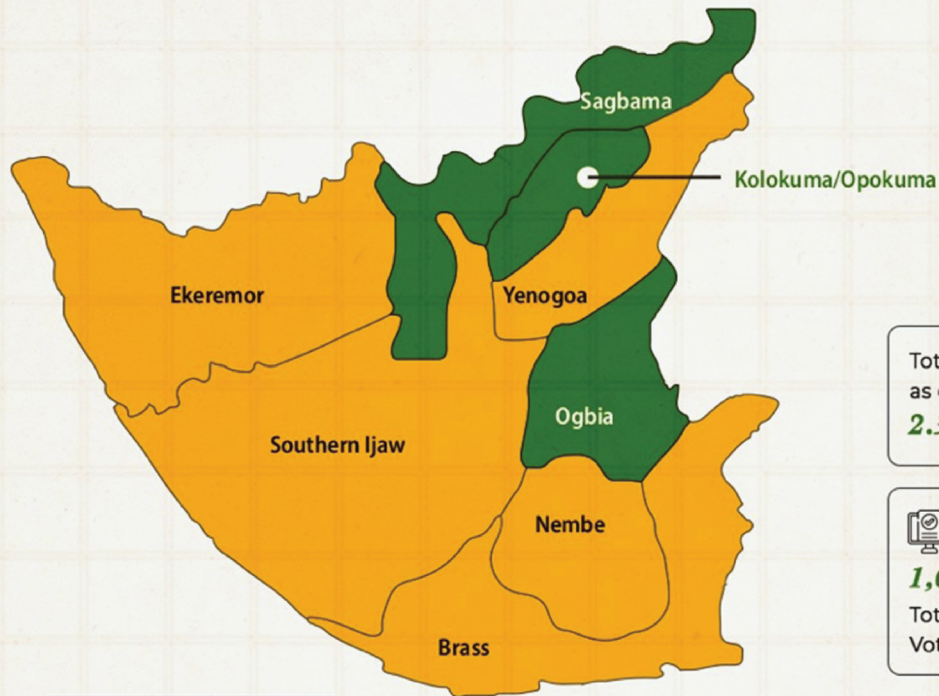
This study triangulated data from multi-layer pre-election environment information gathered to identify the LGA most at risk of strategic EV and help security forces prioritize their efforts.

**Violence** Hotspot Mapping of the  
2023 Off-cycle Election States

# Bayelsa State






As of 17th October, 2023



Total Population  
as of 2022  
**2.394 Million**

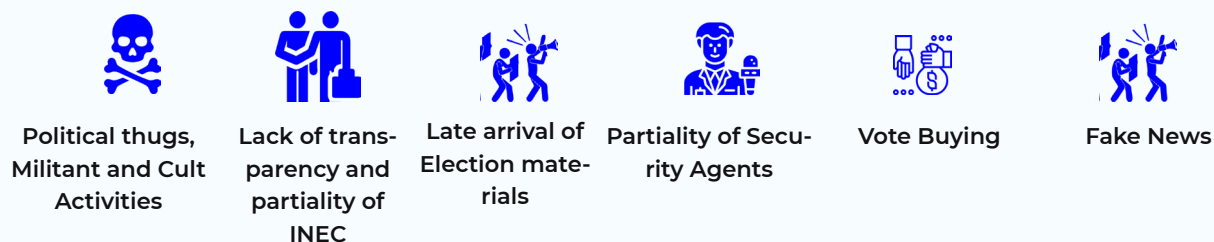
  
**1,056,862**  
Total Registered  
Voters

**LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE**

-  Unlikely
-  Somewhat Likely
-  Likely



## Risk factors, actors and actions that could generate tension or cause violence on election and post election day



The study reveals that political thugs, militant and cult activities are the leading risk factors that could cause electoral violence. A lack of transparency and partiality of INEC and other electoral administrative issues, such as the late arrival of election materials, follow this. The Partiality of security agencies, vote buying, and fake news are also significant risk factors that are also seen as vital, as it is not far in the degree to the topmost.

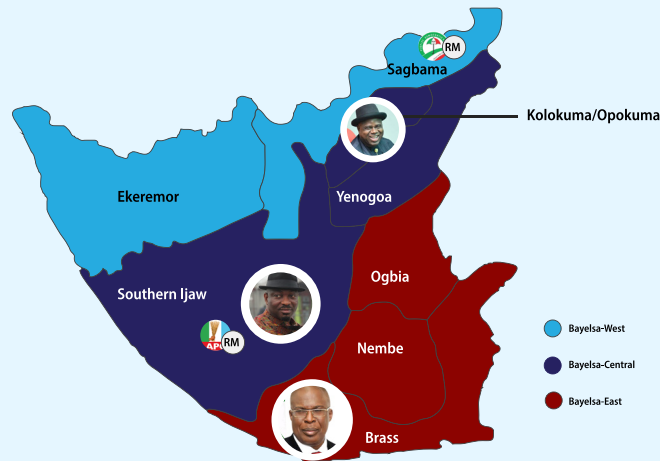
### Insights on the Hotspot

The ESRA, using a clustering predictive modelling technique, revealed that Sagbama, Ogbia and Kolokuma/Opokuma (Kolga) have the possibility of being relatively peaceful in the upcoming governorship election. The other five (5) LGAs -Brass, Nembe, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor, and Yenagoa are projected as somewhat likely to experience violence.

The dynamics of Bayelsa politics look different as there are multiple strong personalities in the state's political terrain. First, looking at the strong personalities standing as candidates in the forthcoming election based on geography, Gov. Douye Diri of PDP hails from KOLGA (Bayelsa Central). At the same time, his running mate comes from Sagbama LGA (Bayelsa West). The APC candidate, Chief Timipre Sylva, is from the Brass/Nembe extractions (Bayelsa East), while his running mate, Joshua Macciver, is from Southern Ijaw (Bayelsa Central). Udengs Eradiri, the LP governorship candidate, hails from Southern Ijaw (Bayelsa Central). This has left Ekeremor and Yenagoa as the neutral ground where all the parties will come jostling for votes.

**Kolokuma Opokuma (KOLGA)** has a pleasant history of non-violence elections. Even though the

### **Senatorial distribution of leading Candidates and their running mates.**



LGA has been in the political limelight due to its son as the incumbent governor seeking re-election, the indigenes will likely identify with the governor's re-election bid. Despite how APC swept most of the other LGAs – KOLGA was one of the two LGAs that remained a PDP stronghold. All of these point to the fact that the LGA will experience relative peace.

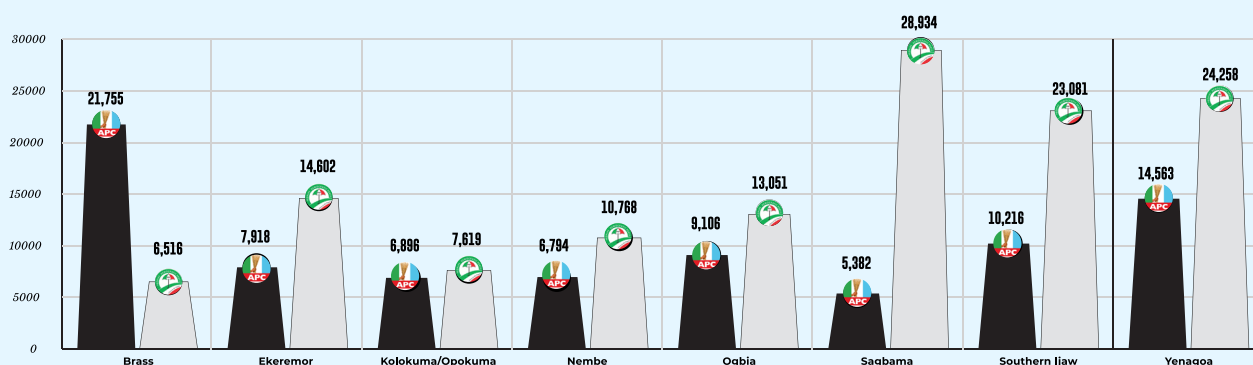
**Sagabma LGA** is the second LGA where PDP won in the last election. Except for the perceived cold war between Dickson and Diri, Sagbama has always been a no-go area for the opposition parties. The PDP control a more significant percentage of the votes from Sagbama. While there is a recorded gale of defection in other local government areas, the stakeholders in the Sagabama seem committed to the success of the PDP. All of these point to the fact that the LGA will experience relative peace. Nonetheless, The Election Petition Tribunal recently annulled the election of Honourable Fred Agbedi representing Sagbama Ekeremor Federal Constituency and ordered a re-run in some wards in Ebedebiri community and other areas. Other contestants are capitalizing on this development to prove that the end has come to the dominance of the PDP in the area.

**Ogbia LGA** is the homestead of former President Goodluck Jonathan. Jonathan hinted that he has taken leave from partisan politics but remains a factor in Ogbia politics. While Jonathan claims to have exited partisan politics, his wife, Dame Patience Jonathan, is said to be deeply involved. Also, the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Samuel Ogbuku and the former Chairman of Ogbia local government, Ebinyor Turner, who recently defected to the APC, are in this LGA. The likes of Senator Ben Agadaga and the incumbent chairman of Ogbia local govern-

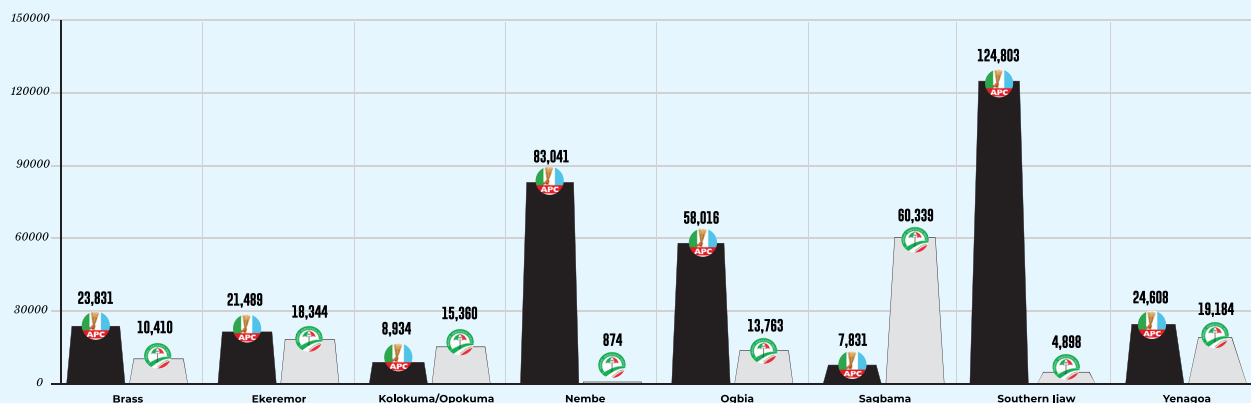
ment, Mizo Ibu Williams are working tirelessly to ensure Diri's return. Nevertheless, not many of the indices indicate the possibility of violence in the LGA.

**Ekeremor, Southern Ijaw, Nembe and Brass LGA** are the big four LGAs that make up a significant majority in land mass, population and voting strength. Any political party that claims victory in these four local governments is almost sure to win the governorship race. The sheer size of the quarter makes them the attention of any politician who aspires to conquer the political landscape of Bayelsa. It is, therefore, no surprise that, throughout history, the local governments have wit-

**Distribution of votes by local government in the 2015 Bayelsa State Governorship Election**



**November 16, 2019 Gubernatorial Election Result in Bayelsa State**



nessed violence, given their indisputable electoral sway. In addition, the 'Big Four' are riverine areas. Their topography makes it difficult for security operatives and election observers to visit except for trained naval forces. This, in a way, engenders the possibility of electoral malpractice and connected violence.

**Nembe and Brass LGA** are the LGAs that have always been a hot spot in Bayelsa politics. Election in the area is always characterized by violence. Recently, some stakeholders were recently barred from Nembe Bassambiri. Okpoama-Brass is the homestead of the governorship candidate of the APC, Sylva, former chairman of the Brass local government; Isaiah has defected to the APC; similarly, a former member of the House of Representatives on the platform of the APC has joined the PDP. The immediate past Deputy Governor, Rear Admiral Gboribogh John Jonah, the former Chief Whip, Bayelsa House of Assembly, Dr. Jonathan Obuebite and many others. It is going to be a straight battle between the PDP and APC. Any sense of frustration from either side could trigger violence because these party stalwarts command huge followership.

**Southern Ijaw LGA** is the homestead of the deputy governorship candidate of the APC, Joshua Macciver and the incumbent Secretary to the State Government, Gideon Ekeowei. Also, the Labour Party (LP) candidate is not a pushover in the area, as he once led the Ijaw Youth Council as its National President. With the feat of the Labour Party in the last general election nationwide, Eradiri could spring a surprise. However, with the command influence of Macciver and the recent defection of the former Commissioner for Agriculture, Dodei Week, APC could create an upset at the poll. However, the frosty relationship between the former governorship candidate of the APC, Lyon, who happens to come from the area and his boss, Sylva. Since Lyon was denied the opportunity to fly the party's flag, it is something to note. Since then, Lyon has withdrawn to his shell. Nobody can say whether he is working for or against Sylva. All of these strong personalities will want to deliver the LGA for their party, which is a potential risk to the peaceful conduct of the elections. The perceived rift within the APC camp is also a factor that is a potential risk for the elections.

**Yenagoa local government area:** The capital of Bayelsa has over 45 per cent of the people residing in the locality are not indigenes; when it comes to voting, they travel down to the riverine areas, which seriously depopulates Yenagoa as well as its probability for violence. Going by the population of the youth in the locality, the Labour Party may have the upper hand, but the influence of Honourable Oforji, who has been described as a grassroots mobiliser and defection of the followers of the former Speaker of the House of Assembly, Wwerinipre Sebarugu may be an added advantage for Diri. Also, the APC may capitalise on federal might to garner votes from the area. To a tolerable extent, it is likely to experience one form of violence or the other.

## Part 3

### IMO STATE





Imo state is undoubtedly the odd one among the three states holding off-cycle elections on November 11th, 2023. Gubernatorial elections in Imo State were previously held during the regular national elections cycle until the Supreme Court Judgement over the 2019 Imo governorship election, delivered on January 14th, 2020. The judgement which declared Hope Uzodinma as the governor of the state was widely received with mixed reactions by citizens of Imo State and Nigerians. The assertion of Hope Uzodinma as the governor of the state occasioned an intense controversy around the value of elections in Nigeria and the legitimacy of political leaders chosen by courts.

The administration of Gov. Hope Uzodinma has run its course, and the state is on the brink of another governorship election. However, considering the circumstances surrounding the last governorship elections in the state, it is clear that the memories of the post-election litigations will play a role in the political behaviour of the electorate towards the upcoming election.

Presently, the pre-election environment in Imo state is already being plagued by several multidimensional issues that revolve around political violence (electoral and non-electoral violence), social unrest, widespread insecurity, harsh economic conditions due to the sit-at-order of the IPOB, and political domination. The electoral landscape is becoming increasingly contentious as the election draws nearer, and this is generally seen because of the multifaceted political and social crises besieging the state. The findings of this study unravel some of the prevalent issues in Imo State, the current impact of these issues on the pre-election landscape and their most probable impact on the conduct of the election.

Under a broad assertion, KDI has discovered that the upcoming Imo State governorship election will be held within the context of strong competition between the dominant political parties in the state. The activities of IPOB, ESN fighters and Ebube-Agu operatives are also expected to play a role in the eventual conduct of the election. As such, the findings of this study in Imo state show that the issues being witnessed in this pre-election phase will have implications on peace and security during the election, voters' turnout, the effectiveness of the conduct of the election and the overall post-election political atmosphere in the state.

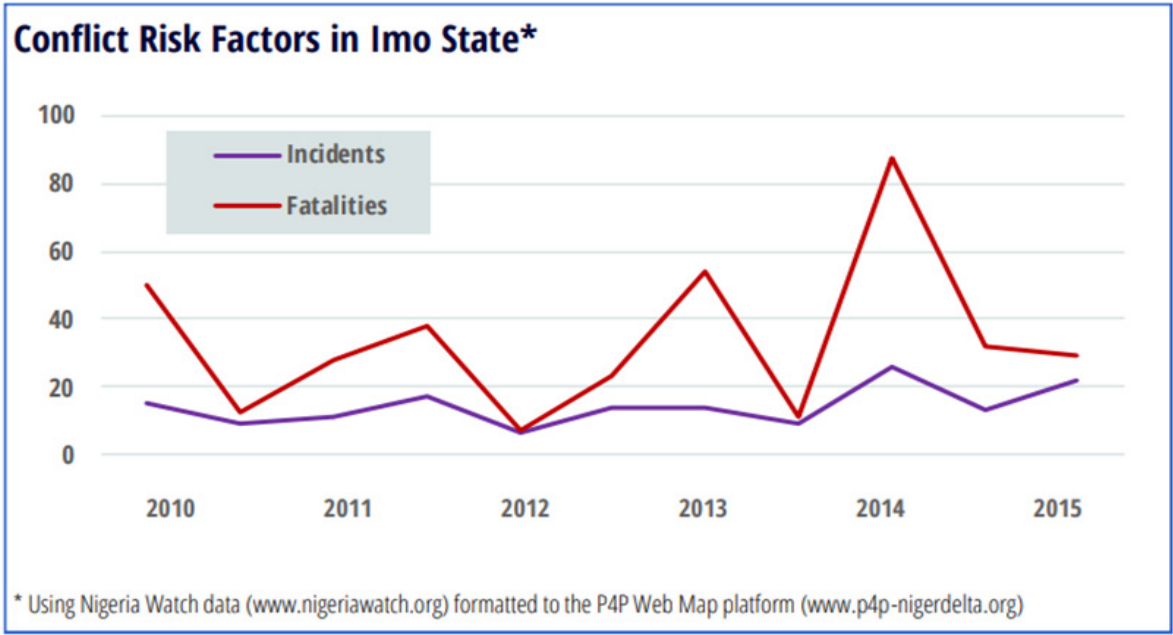
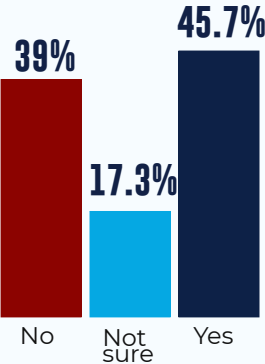
## A History of Electoral Violence in Imo

Generally, Imo State, like Kogi and Bayelsa states, has a history of political violence that resurfaces in every governorship election cycle. While a simple majority of this study's respondents alluded to that, it is important to state that there is a marginal difference between those who alluded and those who opined that Imo does not have a history of political or electoral violence. Depending on the demographic divide that you belong to – Imo state, as back as 2010, used to be one of the states with the lowest violence-per-capita in the Southeast region<sup>31</sup>. Notable electoral violence started be-

coming evident in the 2011 election that was keenly contested between Rochas Okorocha who had left PDP to APGA and the then incumbent, Ikedi Ohakim of the PDP. INEC initially declared the election inconclusive due to reports of irregularities but later confirmed Okorocha's win. The election created a context of violence for the following election in 2015.

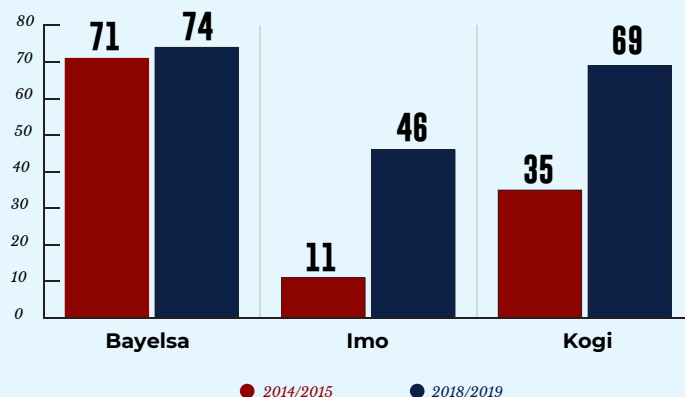
In a politically risky move, Okorocha defected to the APC and contested against Emeka Ihedioha of the PDP in another violent election in 2015. The power tussle during the 2015 governorship election was based around the exercise of the power of incumbency by the APC, and the PDP also wanted to regain control of the state following Rochas Okorocha's defection. Nevertheless, he emerged victorious in the second round of the 2015 elections, the first round of which was initially declared inconclusive.

**History of Political Violence in LGAs/Communities**

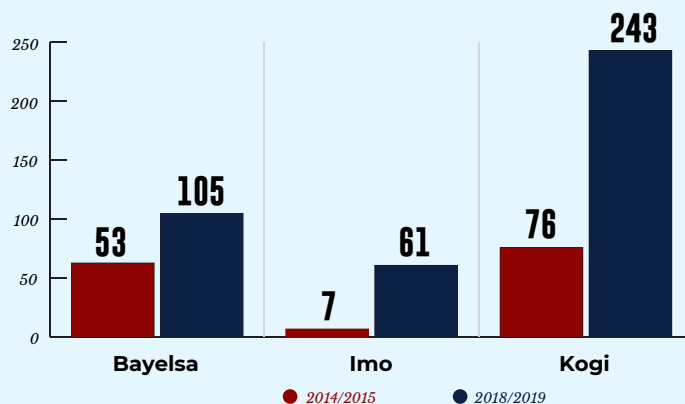


The same trend resurfaced in 2019 at the Election Petition Tribunal (EPT). It dragged up to the Supreme Court, where the final judgement was delivered in favour of Hope Uzodimma, the APC candidate. The 2019 election in Imo featured unprecedented electoral violence and fatalities, and several factors played out during that election, including the strong contestation of the seat by the dominant political parties.

**Number of Political Violence in Previous Year in the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States**



**Number of fatalities resulting from the Political Violence in Previous Year in the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States**



Nonetheless, multidimensional armed conflict started to be at the front burner of public discourse in Imo State in 2014/2015. However, it became a full-blown armed conflict intertwining with politics in 2019. The role of the secessionist agitation cannot be over-emphasized—notably the formation of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2012. The activities of the IPOB started with protests and later started featuring violence, confrontations, and threats.

The Nigerian Government and IPOB have a turbulent relationship, with each accusing the other of foul play. The government of Nigeria declared the organisation to be a terrorist organisation in September 2017, and IPOB should not be tolerated. IPOB, on the other hand, rebut this, saying that the state of Nigeria is unfavourable in its disposition to them and is about a witch-hunt on their organisation. They have been very vocal about their plight and have been defiant against the Nigerian State several times. They have deliber-

ately gone against them differently, like holding unauthorised rallies, sit-at-homes and demonstrations<sup>32</sup>. It should be noted that violence in Imo became exacerbated due to the emergence of the farmers-herders clashes and the consequent establishment of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) group by IPOB. In late 2020, IPOB created the 'Eastern Security Network' as its paramilitary wing<sup>33</sup> in response to perceived attacks by herders on the Igbo community, including alleged crimes like grazing on farmlands, rape, and killings<sup>34</sup>. The ESN under the leadership Nnamdi Kanu has extended its tentacles by taking things a notch higher. There have been increased attacks in the region on government facilities like the correctional service centres, police stations, DSS State offices, INEC offices, and the targeting of security agents. The Armed Forces, Police, Customs, Immigration among other officers of the law inclusive.

Owing to the influence of IPOB, ESN, and the state-sponsored security outfit known as Ebube-agu, the present violence landscape in Imo State is multidimensional. As such, the general pre-election environment in Imo has been politically and violently charged. This trend is now prevalent in the two other states conducting off-cycle governorship elections on November 11, 2023.

## **The Current State of Political and Electoral Violence in Imo State**

Beyond the violent political activities of political party affiliates, the capture and prolonged detention of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of IPOB, is another major factor which has led to extensive violence in Imo State. While there has not been a lasting resolution to his trial, IPOB freedom fighters across the Southeast geopolitical zone have carried on violent agitations against his detention, and Imo state has been one of their major strongholds.

Findings show that they have rendered some areas inhabitable due to violence and have taken hold of several areas across the state. Specifically, Orsu LGA has been a focal area for them. In Orsu LGA, many people now regard any association with anything politics as a threat to life. It was important to state that KDI-trained field researchers struggled to collect on-field data through questionnaires in Orsu. Still, the little information received was well substantiated by other qualitative data collected during the desk review meeting and Key Informant Interview (KII).

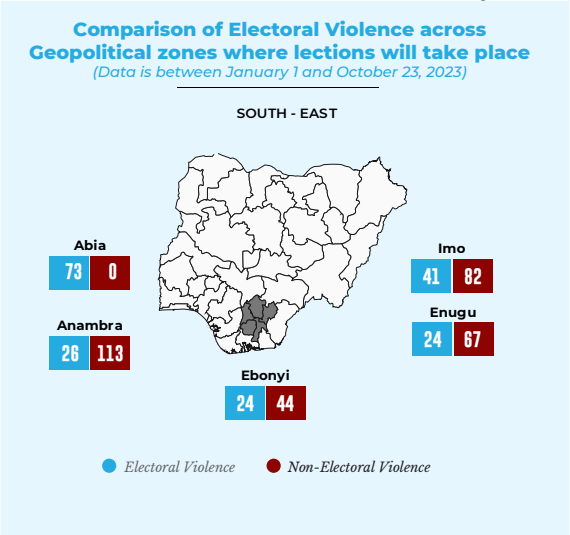
It is important also to note that Imo state recorded the highest number of respondents who declined consent to participate in this study among the three states surveyed. Many of those who declined consent were based in Orsu LGA. Reports that came in also hinted that the INEC office in Orsu has practically relocated from the LGA due to widespread hostility and violence against government parastatals, and this goes to show the impact of unabated violence and the dominance of

IPOB and ESN fighters in Imo state. It should be recalled that INEC, ahead of the 2023 general elections, declared that the general elections might not be held in Orsu, Orlu and Njaaba LGAs<sup>35</sup>, as well as in several wards in other LGAs due to the activities of gunmen. Yet, there were allegations that the electoral umpire declared results for those places where the election did not hold<sup>36</sup>.

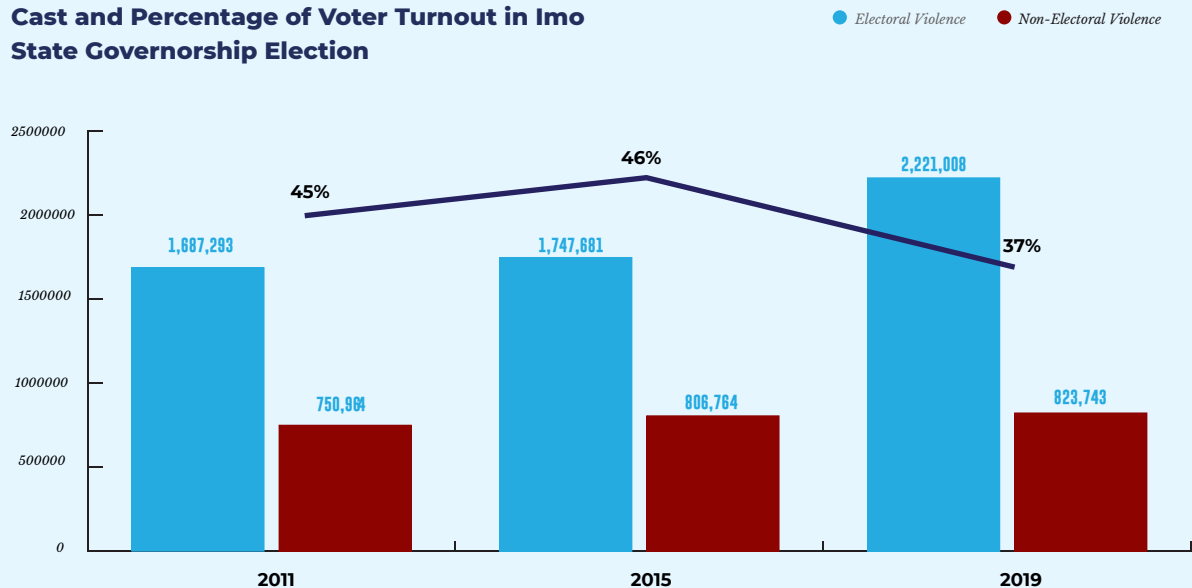
While it is not clear if politicians are sponsoring the activities of IPOB and ESN fighters, their actions have borne a significant political undertone. Many have also opined that the ESN fighters are the face behind the unknown gunmen. They have significantly attacked and destroyed notable government properties, assassinating military members, police, and some political figures. As such, separating the havoc they are wrecking from the political and electoral landscape becomes increasingly difficult. For instance, between 2019 and January 2023, over 51 attacks across 15 states occurred on INEC facilities. Twelve (12) of these fifteen (15) states are in the southern gulf of the country, and all five (5) states in the southeastern part of Nigeria have witnessed these coordinated attacks perpetually, not just on INEC facilities but also on some police formations. Imo and Ebonyi lead the log of southeastern states that have witnessed this attack.

***Separating electoral violence from non-electoral violence in Imo-state is becoming increasingly difficult. The activities of the Freedom fighters are impacting political developments during the upcoming governorship elections.***

In the Southeast Zone, Imo now ranks first in the frequency of electoral violence incidents in 2023 – the state used to be second after Ebonyi less than two months ago. Drawing lessons from the November 6, 2021, governorship election in Anambra, where the pre-election environment was severely charged, and fatalities were recorded before the election. It should be recalled that the impact of the widespread pre-election violence in Anambra led to the 10% voter turnout recorded in that election. That was the lowest-ever voter turnout to be recorded in any Nigerian election. Of the 2,466,638 registered voters in that election, only 253,388 votes were cast at the polls, of which 8,108 were rejected<sup>37</sup>. With the spate and nature of violence in Imo state, if all measures are not taken – the state risks low voter turn, such as it happened in Anambra in 2021.



### Comparison of Registered Voters, Total Vote Cast and Percentage of Voter Turnout in Imo State Governorship Election



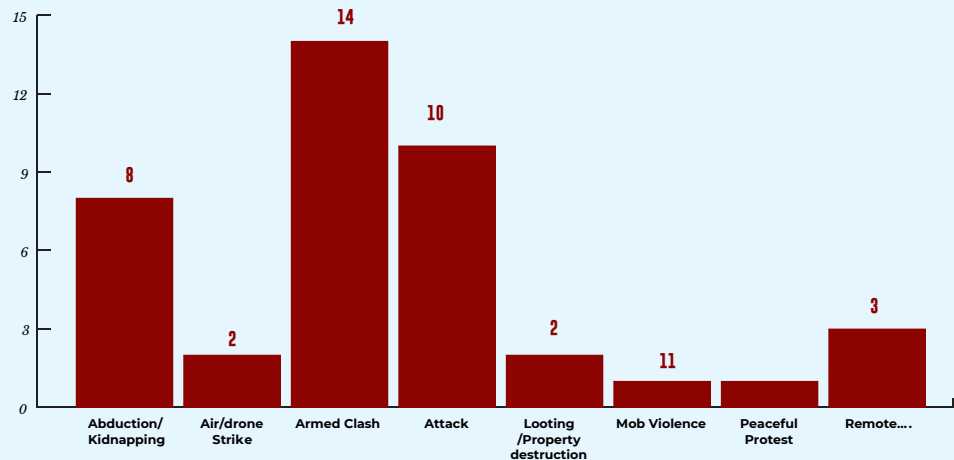
In the past governorship election in Imo since 2011, voter turnout has not been more than 46%, and voter turnout fell in the last election with over 6% - considering that turnout in general elections is also on a downward trend. All indicators regarding participation in elections, especially violent-free pre-election environment, point towards a pessimistic view that turnout will continue downward in Imo State.

Unmistakably, Imo state cannot be said to be violently charged across all the LGA; there are exceptions in capital cities like Owerri.

Official data from KDI's electoral violence monitoring dashboard shows that seven LGAs in the state have recorded at least one fatality from as many incidences of electoral violence. This shows that the actions of politicians and political stakeholders have been so violently conducted that twenty-eight (28) people have been killed. Electoral violence has also been observed in fourteen (14) out of the state's twenty-seven (27) LGAs. Accordingly, most of the violence that has been witnessed has been armed clashes by unknown gunmen, politically motivated abductions, and inter-party clashes. This trend is a negative precursor to the upcoming election.

### Electoral Violence Incident Types across LGAs in Imo State

(Data between January 1st and October 22, 2023)

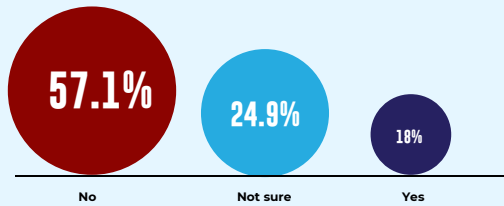


## The Impact of the Dominant Political Parties on the Electoral Landscape

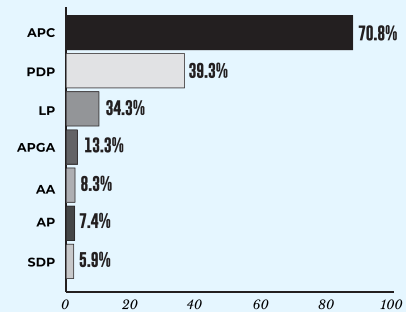
The actions of political stakeholders in this election, including candidates and their party affiliates, have significantly impacted the pre-election environment, and they are poised to impact the conduct of the election in major ways. Almost two-thirds (57.1%) of the respondents in Imo affirmed that there are dominant political parties in their LGAs. Nonetheless, the APC, PDP, and LP are perceived to have overshadowed the electoral landscape. However, the APC is reported to be visible in almost all the LGAs in the state. APGA used to be a leading force in the southeastern part of Nigeria alongside PDP and APC – However, it seems the advent of LP and the momentum gathered toward the 2023 general election is taking a toll on APGA in the southeast, especially in Imo State

Looking at the dominance of political parties per LGA shows the potential for power play in some LGAs. For instance, APC and PDP hold strong to Ezinhitte Mbano, Ihitte/Uboma, Mbaitoli, Onuimo, Owerri Municipal and Owerri West. At the same time, respondents believe that APC and Labor Party dominated Ehime Mbano, Ezinhitte Mbano, Ikeduru, Ngor Okpala, Oru West, Owerri Municipal and Owerri West. PDP and Labour Party hold firmly to Ezinhitte Mbano, Owerri Municipal and Owerri West.

**Views on dominant Political party/group in the LGA/Community**



**Views on dominant Political Party/group in the LGA/Community**



**Distribution of Political parties into Imo LGA, where they are believed to have a stronghold.**

#### **PDP**

- Aboh Mbaise
- Ahiazu Mbaise
- Ezinihitte Mbano
- Ihitte/Uboma
- Mbaitoli
- Nwangele
- Onuimo
- Owerri Municipal
- Owerri West

#### **Accord**

- Orlu
- Onuimo
- Obowo
- Idato South

#### **APC**

- Ehime Mbano
- Ezinihitte Mbano
- Idato South
- Ihitte/Uboma
- Ikeduru
- Isiala Mbano
- Isu
- Mbaitoli
- Ngor Okpala
- Njaba
- Nkwerre
- Obowo
- Oguta
- Onuimo
- Oru East
- Oru West
- Owerri Municipal
- Owerri North
- Owerri West

#### **Labour**

- Ehime Mbano
- Ezinihitte Mbano
- Ikeduru
- Ngor Okpala
- Obowo
- Orlu
- Oru West
- Owerri Municipal
- Owerri West





### Hope Odidika Uzodinma

- Imo State, Youth Leader NPN (1983)
- PDP, National Executive Committee (1999 - 2017)
- Senator, Imo West (2011 - 2019)
- Incumbent Governor



### Senator Samuel Nnaemeka Anyanwu (PDP)

- Chairman of Ikeduru Local Government Council (2014)
- Member, Imo State House of Assembly (2007)
- Senator, Imo East (2015)
- National Secretary, PDP

Apparently, the first step to winning an election as a political party is to win strongholds. The quest to win, coupled with the strong personalities standing as candidates and the unhealthy rivalry and competition, portends a risk to security in the pre-election, election day and post-election. Not even when the perception is that the forthcoming election is a strong avenue to challenge the dominance of the APC in Imo state, and that is borne out of the widespread unenthusiastic feeling of the technicalities used by the Supreme Court to decide who won the 2019 governorship election in the state. On the other hand, it is being influenced by the realities facing Imo indigenes – in terms of the unabated insecurity and the plummeted economy of the state.



**50.2%  
OF IMO**

**...respondents believe  
there is a likelihood of  
strong competition for  
the contested seats in  
their LGA/Community**

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has officially flagged off its campaign ahead of the election, and the party is set to present an intense competition against the APC for the Imo governorship seat. However, there were allegations that the incumbent APC administration of Gov. Hope Uzodinma has mounted unfair competition and executive impunity to counter opposition parties. Such moves include unfair rules to restrict access to outdoor advertisements. These are generally seen as attacks on opposition political parties, and they usually heighten political tension and electoral violence.

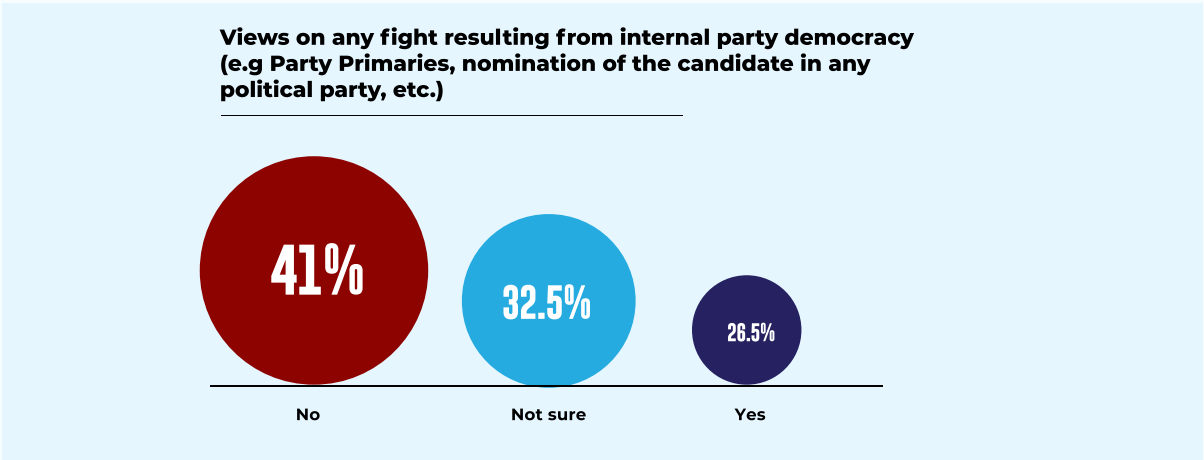
The strong contestation for the governorship seat has also reconditioned the nature of political campaigns in Imo, where reports indicate that interparty fights have characterised the campaigns,

hate speeches and resentments. Drawing from past elections where APC and PDP have keenly contested governorship seats, such elections usually feature violence, voter intimidation, harassment, and vote buying.

Although the 2023 general elections were relatively peaceful in Imo State, that can be attributed to the widespread support for the Labour Party as reflected in the emergence of the party as the winner of the presidential election in Imo and the 3 seats the party won in the National Assembly. The circumstances surrounding this upcoming election point to a strong contestation of the governorship seat and political parties that will be looking to secure their votes at all costs due to the recent discovery that INEC might not necessarily transmit election results via the IREV portal.

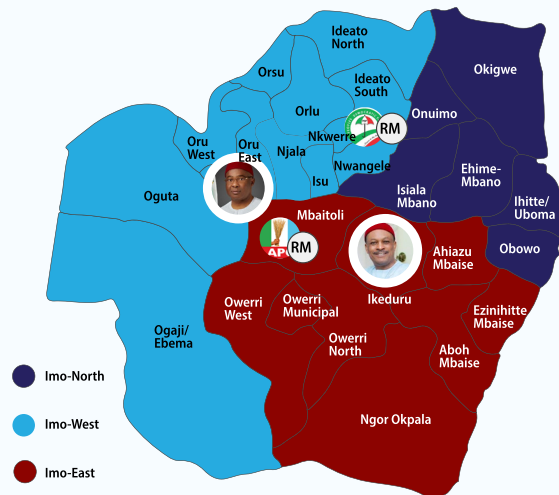
## The State of Internal Affairs of Parties

As indicated by most of the respondents, the internal affairs of the most dominant political parties contesting the Imo governorship seat have been smoothened out in a way that does not affect their stand in the election. All parties appear prepared for the contest, and campaigns have been equally flagged off.



The candidacy of the major political parties was designed to give each of them an edge in the election. As a result, KDI also views that as an indication of a keenly contested election. The incumbent governor remains the candidate of the APC, even as his emergence still bears public resentment from the Supreme Court decision which declared him the winner of the 2019 election.

### Senatorial distribution of leading Candidates and their running mates.



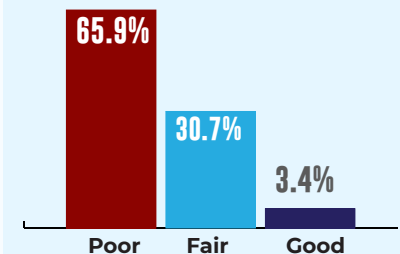
Sen. Sam Anyanwu, candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), is a notable former federal lawmaker and party-man. He will be leveraging the party's popularity during the National Assembly election and the party's popularity from the 2019 election.

Achonu Nneji of the Labour Party is less popular than the other contenders. Still, he has his party's popularity in the 2023 general election to ride on, as the Labour Party won one senatorial district and two federal constituencies in the state during the 2023 general elections. However, the dynamics of Imo politics quickly shifted during the state House of Assembly Election, where the APC won 26 out of the 27 available seats.

Findings also show that inducement levels are high in Imo state, leading to multiple public endorsements of candidates by religious leaders, traditional rulers, and professional bodies. This clearly points to the influence of money in the state's politics. It also shows the extent to which vote buying will play a major role in deciding the path the election will take. It is then important for stakeholders, especially the security agencies and anti-graft agencies, to work tirelessly to see that vote trading does not raise its ugly end as such in the elections.

The efforts of INEC and security agencies are crucial to fairness and peace in the upcoming election. Yet the public's trust levels in INEC's capacity to conduct a free and fair election in the state have dwindled. The coalition of CSOs led the call for the removal and replacement of the current REC in Imo<sup>38</sup> back in April 2023.

### Rate the general performance of INEC considering the accreditation, voting, responsiveness of INEC officials and collation in the last election

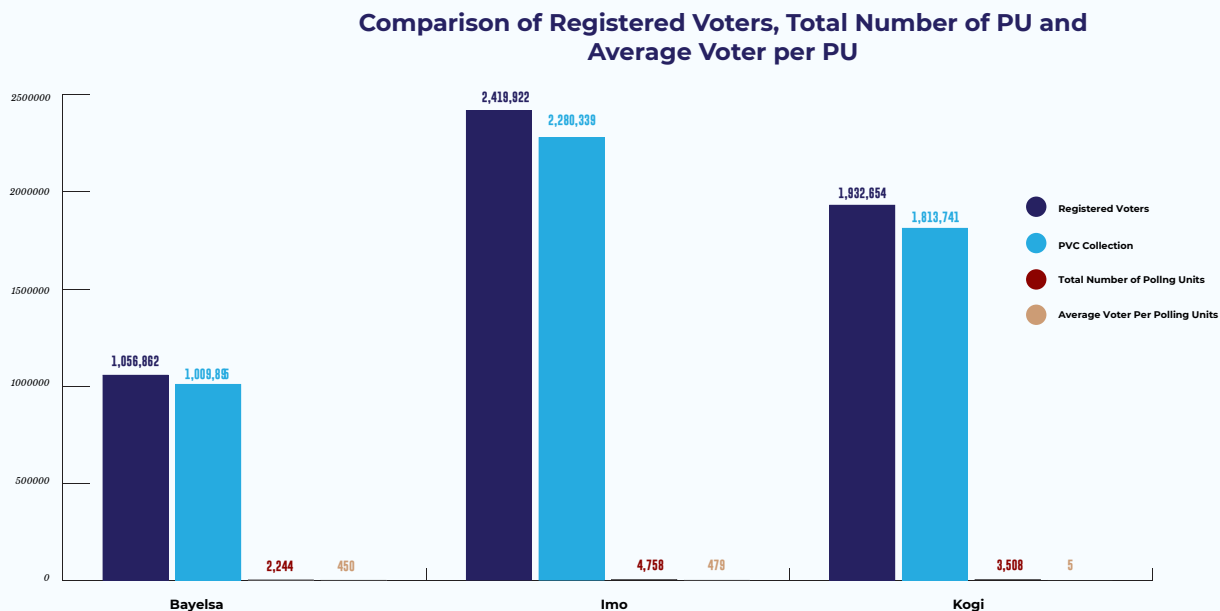


following the general elections. There have been renewed calls by opposition parties for the national chairman to remove the REC in Imo based on the allegation that she has been compromised and assisted the APC in rigging during the last election<sup>39</sup>.

There were allegations that she announced results for polling units where elections did not take place during the general elections. But what's most important is that the public believes that the Imo state INEC authority has the power to make a difference in the election.

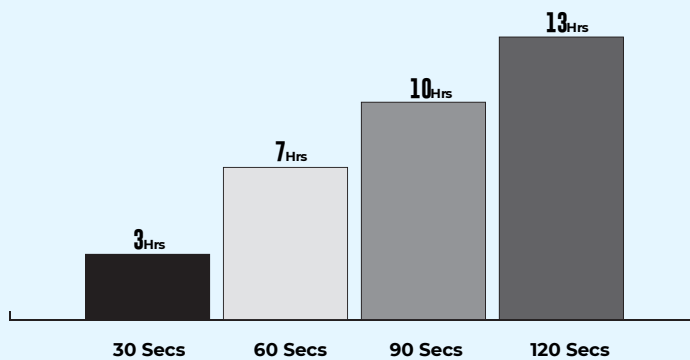
It has also been observed that INEC needs to prepare enough personnel and tools to cover the election day processes, as the average number of registered voters in each polling unit is 479.

***In any PUs with over 450 registered voters, considering the high PVC collection rate based on INEC data – if 400 voters turn to vote in that polling unit. All things being equal, voting will end in that PU at 6.30 pm if BVAS accredits a voter at 90secs and if BVAS accredits for 2 minutes, it will take 13 hours for the last voter to be accredited, and this is going to be around 9.30 pm. INEC must train polling officers well and ensure near-instant backup for BVAS that could malfunction, as a lack of all these measures could create a bottleneck. This could create agitation, considering the public perception of INEC across the state.***





### **BVAS Accreditation Speed in relation to 400 Registered Voters at a Polling Unit**



## **Noticeable Early Warning Signals that lead to the precarious state of things in each state.**

- Political thugs activities
- Restriction of political activities by incumbent government
- Dangerous speech and provocative actions by political chieftains
- Widespread uses of small and light weapons/kidnappings

## **Risk factors, actors and actions that could generate tension or cause violence on election day and post election**

- Political thugs and cult activities
- Lack of transparency and partiality of INEC
- Vote buying
- Fake news
- Partiality of Security Agents

## **Uncovering Areas at Risk of Election Violence in Imo State's November 11 Governorship Election**

The impact of electoral violence can be far-reaching, and there are already indications pointing to a repeat of violence in the upcoming election. It has been observed that different political parties have mounted their dominance across different LGAs in a way that can bring about unhealthy competition within those LGAs. Situations like this tend to portend security risks to the pre-election environment, election day, and post-election.

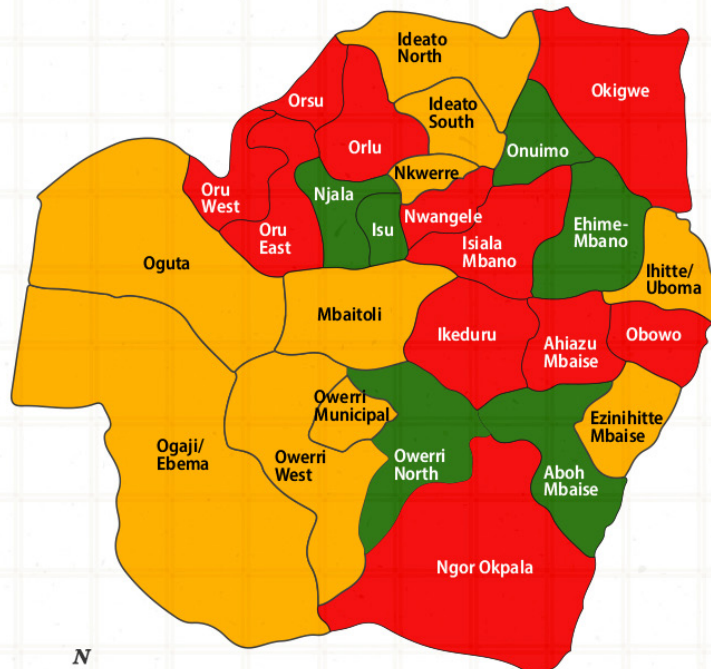
LGAs like Owerri West, Owerri Municipal, Mbano, and Ezinihitte are expected to be keenly contested as the three major political parties have their strongholds in those LGAs. The Hotspot Map below also shows all the LGAs where the election is highly probable to be violent.

In all, based on the findings of this study, which show the multidimensional violent conflicts in Imo state and the intense competition between political parties, there is a strong likelihood that the election will be keenly contested across the state.

## Violence Hotspot Mapping of the 2023 Off-cycle Election States

# Imo State

As of 17th October, 2023



Total Population  
as of 2022  
**4.928 Million**

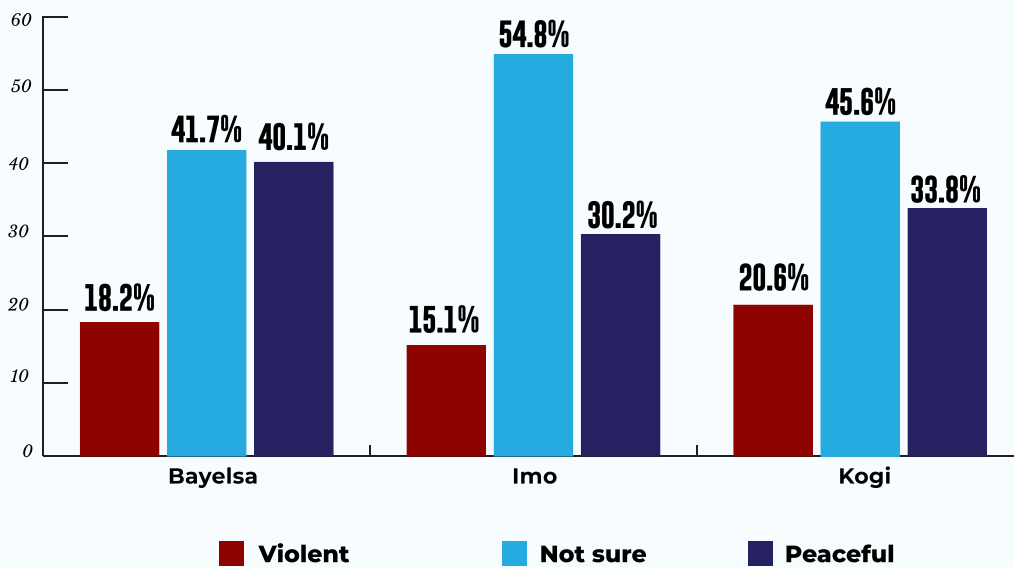
**2,419,922**  
Total Registered  
Voters

### LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE

- Unlikely
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely



### What Citizens think about the peace in the off-cycle elections per states





## **Part 3**

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## **KOGI STATE**

Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, Kogi State has conducted six (6) governorship elections, and the State's 7th governorship election will be held on November 11, 2023, across the 21 LGAs. Kogi State, also known as the Confluence State, is one of the States located in Nigeria's North-Central area, with an estimated population of 4.46 million people in 2022. It is the only state in Nigeria that shares a border with ten other states: the Federal Capital Territory to the north, Nasarawa State to the northeast, Benue State to the northeast, Enugu to the southeast, Anambra to the south, Edo to the southwest, Ondo to the west, Ekiti to the west, Kwara to the west, and Niger to the north.

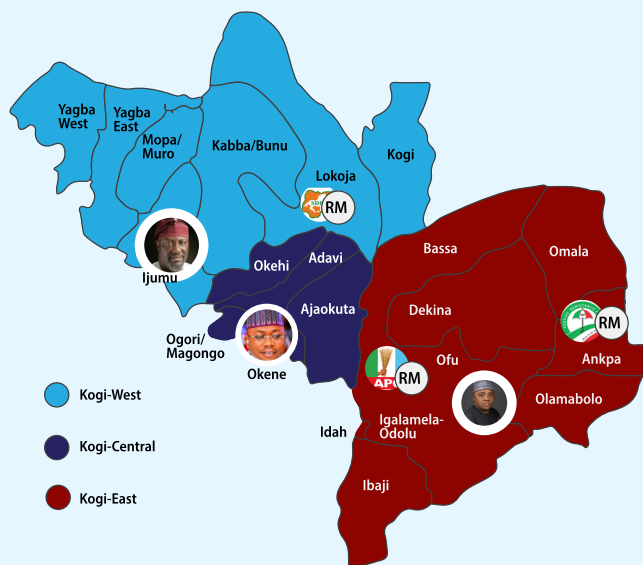
INEC announced that campaigns in public by the political parties were to commence on Wednesday, 14th June 2023, in line with Section 94(1) of the Electoral Act 2022 and end on November 9th, which is 24 hours before election day. Out of the one million, nine hundred and thirty-two thousand, six hundred and fifty-four (1,932,654) registered voters, 1,813,741 PVCs were collected and are expected to take part in the November 11th Governorship election in the State across the 3508 polling units. The 18 political parties in the State are fielding candidates. Amongst the 18 candidates, only one is female. INEC conducted a mock accreditation exercise of voters ahead of the off-cycle elections across the LGAs, using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and uploading results from the polling units to the IREV to use lessons learnt from the exercise to ensure a smooth process on the election day.

## **Geographical/ Political Landscape of Kogi State**

Elections in Kogi State are peculiar because of the ethno-religious dynamics of the State's politics. The three major ethnic groups in the State are Igala, Ebira and Okun, with Igala as the most populous, comprising up to 58% of the State's population, and they are mostly Muslims. The State is divided into three senatorial districts: Kogi West Senatorial District covering seven (7) local government areas including Kaba, Buni Kogi/Koto Karfe, Mopa Muro, Ijumu, Yagba East, Yagba West and Lokoja. Kogi East Senatorial District, which is the largest of the three senatorial districts, has nine local government areas and covers Idah, Ibaji, Igalamela/Odolu, Ofu, Dekina, Ankpa, Olamaboro, Bassa and Omala. Kogi Central Senatorial District covers five (5) local government areas: Adavi, Ajaokuta, Okehi, Okene, and Ogori-Mangogo.

The gubernatorial candidates from the major political parties were selected across the three senatorial districts; the All-Progressive Congress gubernatorial candidate hails from Okene, Kogi Central, and his deputy is from Ofu in Kogi East. The PDP gubernatorial candidate hails from Ijumu in Kogi West, and his deputy is from Ankpa in Kogi East. The SDP candidate is from Ofu in Kogi East, and his deputy hails from Lokoja in Kogi Central.

**Senatorial distribution of leading Candidates and their running mates.**

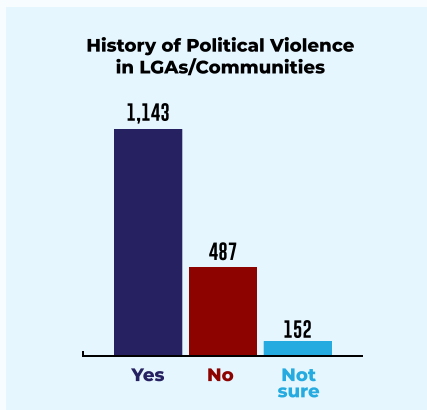


Uniquely, this is the first time since the emergence of democracy in 1999 that candidates from three major ethnic groups in the State are contesting in the gubernatorial elections. Beyond a high likelihood of intense contestation among the candidates, it will likely lead to the people of the State voting along ethnic lines due to tribal sentiments and loyalty to their tribal communities.

## Kogi State has a Deep History of Political Violence (Electoral and Non-Electoral Violence)

The respondents' perspective from Kogi on the history of political violence in the State. A vast majority think the state has a deep history of political violence. The state has been a flashpoint of violence since the country returned to democracy in 1999<sup>40</sup>.

Politically, the Igala have held sway to power since the creation of the state using the 1963 census figures to claim numerical superiority over other ethnic groups. The domestication of political power by the Igalas has heightened tension, bitterness and animosity among the three dominant ethnic groups and some minority groups, such that violent conflicts have been recorded in the state. Essentially, the heterogeneity of Kogi State is not the only source of political instability but rather



the failure to manage the differences among the diverse ethnic nationalities.

During the 2003 general elections in Kogi State, many lives were lost, while several others sustained various degrees of injuries across the state. Human Rights Watch recorded that in Idah local government area, a leading politician and a chieftain of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Mr Salifu, was shot dead while attempting to snatch a ballot box. In a related development, fighting broke out in Okene local government council involving supporters of PDP and ANPP that started early in the morning of April 12, 2003. The intensity of the violence was quite high, such that the supporters of both parties were armed to hijack election ma-

terials. This happened the day preceding the election and continued through the election as well. In continuation of the scale of election violence in Kogi State, fighting was also reported between PDP and ANPP supporters, leading to the shooting and subsequent death of two people on April 12, 2003, in Ogori-Magongo (Kogi Central Senatorial District) local government. It suffices to say that the 2003 general elections were bloody across the country, particularly in Kogi state.

In 2009, tensions rose with members of the PDP in Okene Local Government over financial issues, resulting in riots that claimed the lives of two people. Okene is not new to violence, as any little provocation can spark serious violence with severe consequences. Following the 2011 general elections in Nigeria that subsequently led to the post-election violence, the violence spread to Okene, culminating in the death of people. The same spate of violence was witnessed in Ofu local government. Specifically, two persons were killed in a politically related form of violence in 2009 involving PDP and ANPP supporters, following the ruling by the Supreme Court that upheld the election of the State Governor, Mr Ibrahim Idris, whose election was challenged by the opposition, citing allegations of fraud. With this development, political tension continued into 2010, when political thugs killed ten people in the months of February, May and August.

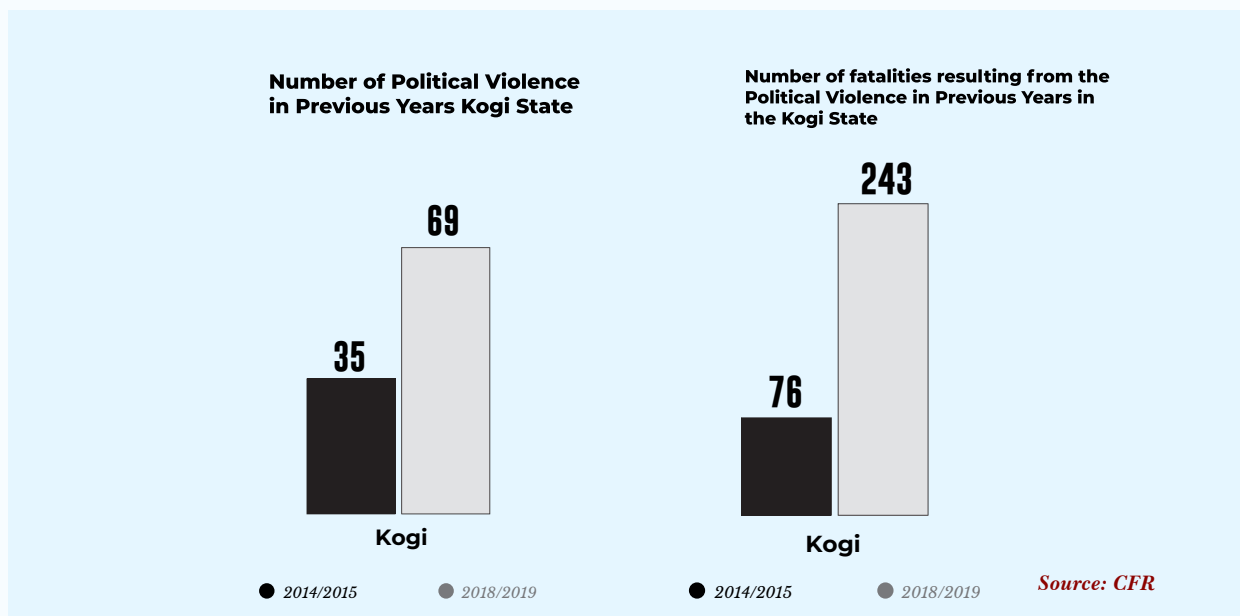
In 2015, Governor Yahaya Bello was first elected as Kogi governor after being chosen on the APC platform as a replacement for the late Abubakar Audu, who originally won the election but died before the result was declared<sup>41</sup>. The Audu-Faleke ticket won 240,867 votes, and the incumbent Governor Idris Wada of PDP won 199,514, a difference of 41,353 votes. Surprisingly, Yahaya Bello, who came second during the party primaries with the late Audu, was adopted as the APC's candidate for the supplementary election.

In 2015, there were reports of violence in the State. Some thugs in Dekina, Dekina local government

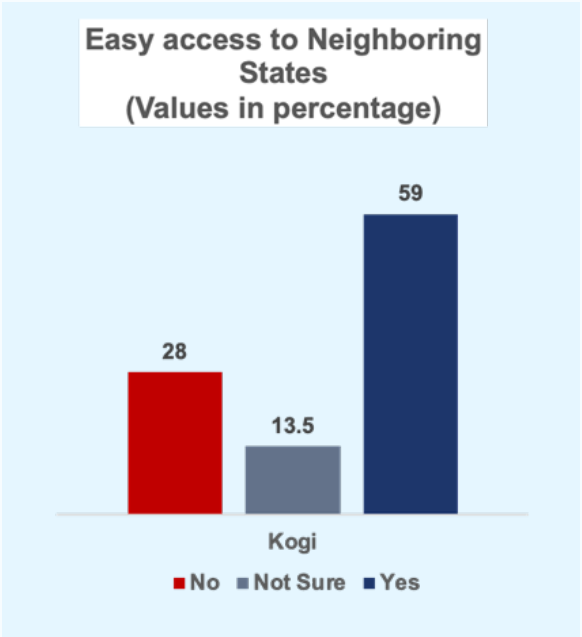
area, razed down the office of INEC. Out of 91 polling units where the supplementary election was supposed to occur, 29 units were in Dekina. According to an eyewitness, some thugs invaded the office at about 5 a.m. and set it on fire angrily in the early hours of Friday. The eyewitness account revealed that the thugs came in a bus and shot sporadically before razing down the office.

The last governorship election in the State was in 2019; lapses and security breaches led to electoral violence. The last governorship elections in the State that were held in 2019 across the 21 LGAs recorded over 10 deaths, 79 cases of violence and election malpractices, including two persons that were killed by stray bullets when hoodlums tried to snatch ballot boxes at the Adankolo polling unit. In the same year, over 35,000 security operatives under the umbrella of the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) deployed to Kogi state to safeguard the conduct of the November 16, 2019, governorship election could not stop violence and bloodshed in the state, especially, the murder of Mrs Acheju Abuh, the woman leader of Wada/Aro Campaign council, Ochadamu ward is a case in point who was burnt alive in her home by political thugs<sup>42</sup>.

During the recent February 25th general elections, violence was recorded in the State, and there were reports of interference of thugs in some polling units in Anyigba and Dekina in the Kogi East and Mopa in the Kogi West as well as parts of Kogi Central, where thugs allegedly carted away voting materials—the pre-election day anxiety, threats of violence and affected voter turnout. Election day was, however, marred by violence and activities of political parties and security agents, leading to the disruption of polls in several areas.



Beyond electoral-related violence, there is prevalence of communal clashes, banditry, and farmer-herder crisis in the State have contributed to making the State a hot-bed. There have been several reports of kidnappings in Kogi State, one of which was the kidnap of Oba of Idofin and his wife in Yagba East Local Government Area by gunmen on Monday, 19 June 2023. There was also the kidnap of Passengers who were travelling on the Peace Mass Transit Bus. This incident occurred on Wednesday, July 26, 2023<sup>43</sup>. Also, KDI received a report of unrest in Ayingba in Dekina LGA of Kogi East, on Sunday, 28 August 2023, when the SDP candidate went to commission his campaign office. The office was allegedly vandalized on two (2) separate occasions, with one person reported dead from the incident.



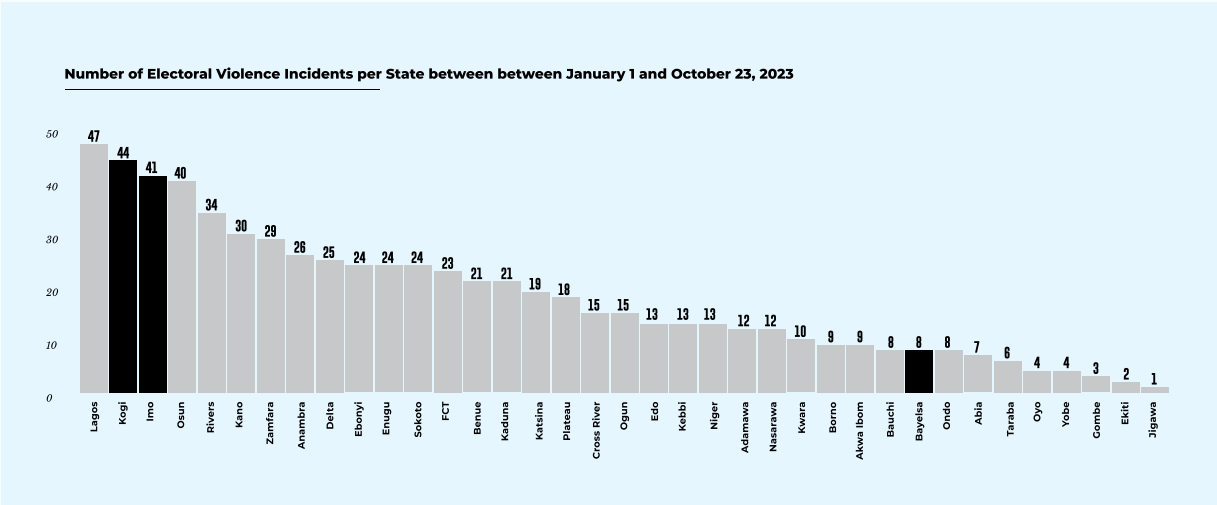
shows the level at which external machinery is available in Kogi state for use in elections for any purpose. The most plausible of this purpose is to foment trouble. This is important information that the security agencies who will be deployed to Kogi state for the election need to know for adequate preparation.

This organized armed group conflict, especially the farmer-herder crisis in Kogi, may not be far from the open access to Kogi state from neighbouring states. Kogi State shares a boundary with nine (9) states, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). For instance, Kogi shares a boundary with Niger, Nasarawa states, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to the north; to the eastern part is Benue and Enugu states; while in the western part are Edo, Ondo, Ekiti and Kwara States.

Access roads from each state to Kogi States can aid the influx of armed groups because the state is linked to many states in Nigeria. Anecdotal records have it that there are terrorist cells in Kogi state. Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, while reacting to the Owo church Massacre on June 5, 2022, said that insurgents from a terrorist cell in Okenne, Kogi State, were involved in attack<sup>44</sup>. This also

# Current Security Situation in Kogi State Towards the Gubernatorial Elections

In Kogi State, the 2023 off-cycle election is occurring at a time when certain violent conflicts, such as banditry, remain prevalent. Taking a comparative look at the record of the number of electoral violence incidents per State between January 1 and October 6, 2023, across Nigeria, Kogi is the fifth State with the highest number of electoral violence incidents amongst the 36 States, including the FCT. Lagos takes the lead with 42, Kano-30, Osun-26, Rivers-26 and Kogi-25, the highest in the North Central region of the country.

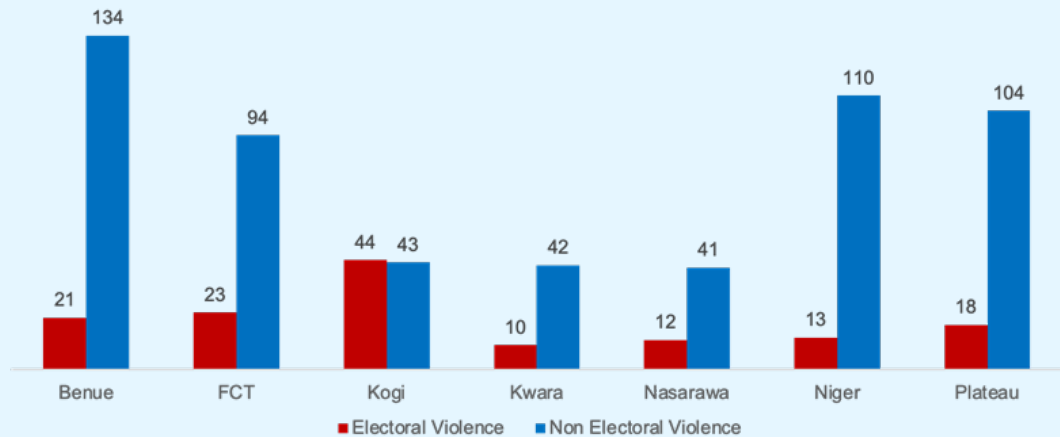


Before the elections, Kogi State had a high incidence of farmer-herder crisis and banditry. However, the dynamics have shifted towards a rapid rise in electoral violence. The farmer-herder crisis and banditry that used to plague the state have surprisingly reduced, and electoral violence has filled the atmosphere of the state with tension amidst accusations and counter-accusation attacks by the opposition and the ruling party, APC.

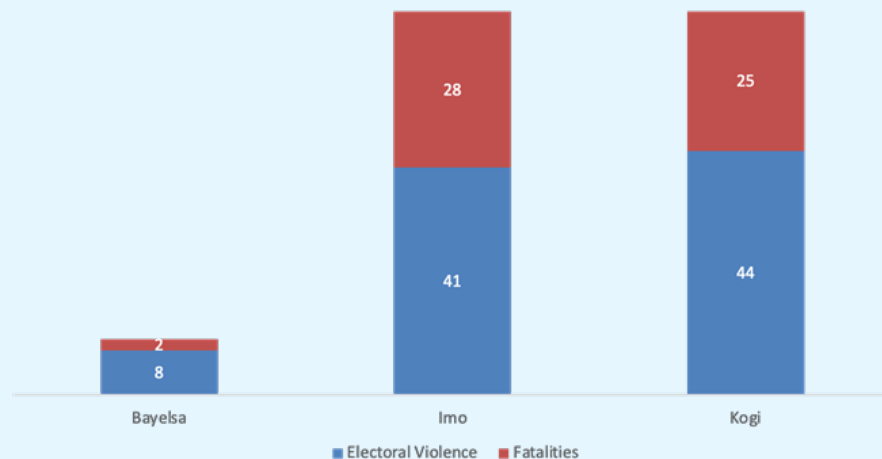
In the months leading to the polls, there has been an increase in the number of electoral violence cases witnessed in the State. Defections by party members to other parties and accusations by politicians, amongst others, have intensified political conversations and, in some cases, violence among party officials and supporters. Political declarations, defections by party members to other parties, accusations by politicians, and hate speech, amongst others, have intensified political conversations and, in some cases, violence among party officials and supporters.

**Comparison of Electoral Violence across Geopolitical zones where elections will take place (Data is between January 1 and October 23, 2023)**

**North Central**

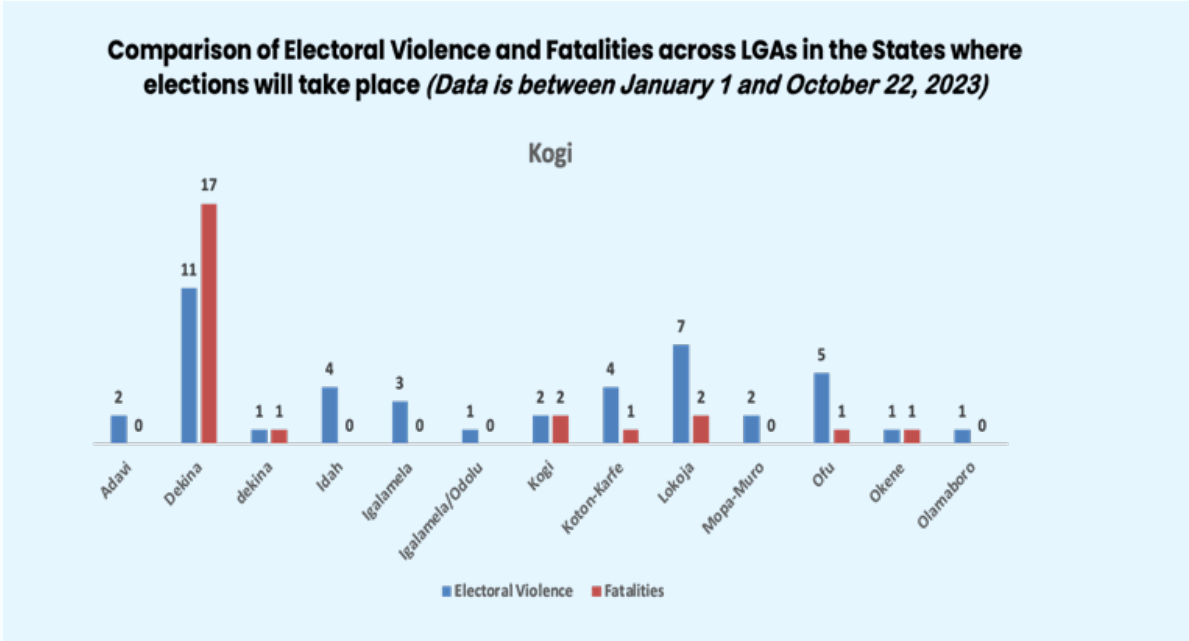


**Comparison of Electoral Violence and Fatalities in the 3 states where elections will take place. (Data is between January 1 and October 22, 2023)**





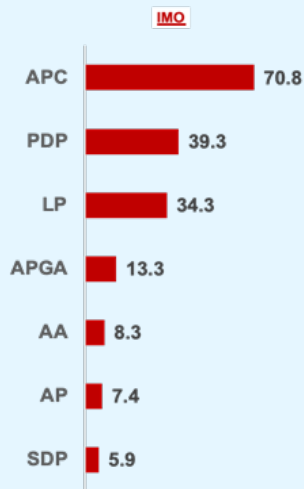
Comparatively, Kogi has the highest number of electoral violence among the three States holding the off-cycle gubernatorial elections on November 11, 2023. This trend of violence has led voters and other stakeholders to express concern over a likely impending crisis during the elections. The survey highlighted the changing dynamics of violence in the State; electoral violence has become more prevalent than other forms of violence in the State. This has further exacerbated the political tension in the State ahead of the gubernatorial poll. This creates a palpable tension that election day and post-election may be more heated than now.



The number of electoral violence cases and fatalities across the 21 LGAs in Kogi is uneven, with areas like Dekina having as high as 17 fatalities and 11 electoral violence cases. In contrast, areas such as Olamaboro have no (0) fatalities and 1 electoral violence case. Kogi State has its dominant political party with a corresponding stronghold per LGAs. This, coupled with the unresolved internal party issues, is a precursor for the high likelihood of electoral violence.

The incumbent governor, Yahaya Bello, will not be a candidate in the gubernatorial elections as he has served as a governor since 2016 and completed two tenures, a constitutional tenure limit for governors in Nigeria. Despite this, the power of incumbency can be seen playing out in the political arena. Yahaya Bello, who is an APC member, has thrown his support behind the APC candidate, Ododo, who hails from the same LGA. The State public's views postulate that three dominant political parties are vying for the gubernatorial seats. The political parties are the APC, SDP and the PDP.

**Views on dominant political party/group in the LGA/Community  
(Values in Percentage)**



Political permutations have been done along ethnic lines in the State to leverage areas with high voting strength due to their numbers and political inclinations. The profiles of the gubernatorial candidates also conceptualise their status and can be used to identify their areas of strong-holds.

In Kogi State, the strongholds of the dominant political parties are distributed across various LGAs. There are LGAs where more than one party have strongholds, such as -the PDP and the APC having strongholds in Adavi, Bassa, Ijimu, Kabba/Ibunu, Lokoja, Okene, Okehi, and Yagba East. The APC and SDP also both have a strong presence in Ankpa, Dekina, Idah, Igalemela-odolu, and Ofu LGAs. The APC and SDP also both have a strong presence in Ankpa, Dekina, Idah, Igalemela-odolu, and Ofu LGAs. The PDP and SDP both have strongholds in Omala LGA, while Mopa-Muro LGA is dominated by the Accord party.

**Distribution of Political parties into Kogi LGA, where they are believed to have a stronghold.**

**PDP**

Adavi, Bassa, Ijumu, Kabba/bunu, Lokoja, Okene, Omala, Okehi, Yagba East

**Accord**

Mopa-Muro

**APC**

Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Idah, Igalemela-odolu, Ijumu, Kabba/bunu, Kogi, Lokoja, Ofu, Ogori, Magono, Okehi, Okene, Yagba East and Yagba West

**SDP**

Adavi, Bassa, Ijumu, Kabba/bunu, Lokoja, Okene, Omala, Okehi, Yagba East

Additionally, the aforementioned, coupled with the strong personalities standing as candidates in the election, is another factor that is causing unhealthy rivalry and intense competition within this LGA, which portends risk to security on election day and post-election.

## Portfolios of the APC, PDP, and LP Governorship Candidates in the 2023 off-cycle Governorship election in Bayelsa State.



### Sen. Dino Melaye

- Former Senator, 8th National Assembly
- Senate Committee Chairman on Aviation in Nigeria.



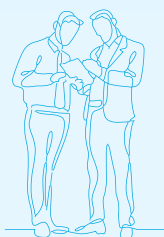
### Alhaji Ahmed Usman Ododo

- Former member of the Nigerian Youth parliament
- Former chairman of the Kogi state youth council



### Murtala Ajaka

- Former National Assembly Liaison Officer of the Action Congress (AC)
- Former Deputy National Publicity Secretary at the National Convention of the governing All Progressives Congress (APC)



**67.4%  
OF KOGI**

**...respondents believe there is a likelihood of strong competition for the contested seats in their LGA/Community**

The profiles and personalities of the three major candidates for the gubernatorial elections in Kogi State on November 11th are not far from the reasons 67.4% of the respondents believed there is a likelihood of strong competition for the contested seats at various LGAs.

***The unhealthy rivalry witnessed in the Kogi state Political landscape today is an offshoot of the acrimonious party primaries and selection of candidates.*** Political actors have been involved in defections and cross-carpeting to other political parties, which has amplified intra- and inter-party crises. Strong levels and resentful campaigning are ongoing in Kogi State.

The APC had written a letter to INEC on January 25th to notify them of the party's decision to use an indirect primary to select the gubernatorial candidate for the 2023 governorship election. However, the party rescinded its earlier decision to use indirect primaries and adopted the indirect primary. Ahmed Usman Ododo, the candidate that the incumbent governor endorsed, clinched the APC ticket with a total of 78,704 votes, followed by Barr. Mohammed Ozigi Salami scored 1,506 votes, while Senator Smart Adeyemi, representing Kogi West Senatorial district, scored 311<sup>45</sup>. the incum-

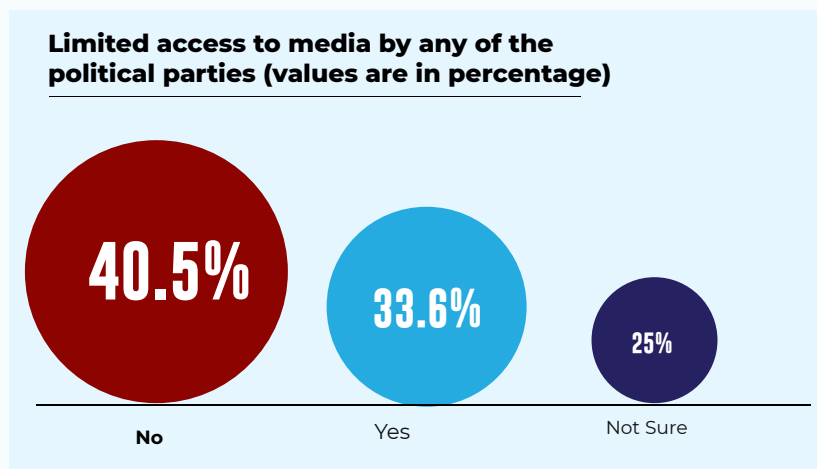
bent Deputy Governor. Mr. Onoja and the current Chief of Staff, Pharm. Mohammed Asuku had earlier withdrawn from the gubernatorial race on the eve of the primary election. Alhaji Murtala Yakubu Ajaka was disqualified from participating in the party primaries through a court order that was said to have emanated from a court case from the camp of Governor Yahaya Bello and Usman Ododo. This led to a lot of resentment from the likes of Smart Adeyemi, Alhaji Murtala Yakubu Ajaka and Edward Onoja. As it stands today, Mr Onoja has been mum on the issues without an active role in the yard of the Ahmed Usman Ododo. Alhaji Murtala Yakubu Ajaka defected to pick the governorship ticket in SDP. So many violent reactions had trailed this – from SDP/APC Supporters group clashes to alleged Assassination attempts on the Governor's and Alhaji Murtala Yakubu Ajaka convoys on different occasions.

The PDP also adopted the indirect primary method for the selection process. Former Senator Dino Melaye, who represented Kogi West in the National Assembly, won the PDP's ticket with 313 votes; Jabiru Usman polled 127 votes; a former deputy governor, Yomi Awoniyi, scored 77 votes; and the PDP governorship candidate in 2019, Musa Wada had a total of 56 votes. However, some PDP chieftains resent Dino's emergence – some believe Dino Melaye comes around from Abuja to Kogi whenever he has ambition. He is not often seen after elections in the party affairs. All the aforementioned have been the major issues intertwining with other political factors causing unhealthy rivalry.

# Media Landsape

The media is an essential part of a democratic election. They play the watchdog role in democratic elections to safeguard the transparency and fairness of the process. It is, therefore, crucial that the media report is correct and factual. Various stakeholders, including voters and security officials, rely on the media for information. The media, therefore, needs to be objective and unbiased in their reporting and avoid fake, inflammatory and sensational news that could exacerbate the electoral violence.

Comparatively, a larger proportion of the respondents (40.5%) said there was no limited access to media by any of the political parties in the State. 33.6% of the respondents affirmed that there was limited access to the media by political parties in the State, and 26% were unsure of the situation of the media and the political parties.



Despite this, there have been subtle restrictions on the media and advertising landscape in Kogi State. For instance, access to State-owned media has been posing some difficulty to opposition parties, leading to limited access to the media by some political parties. August 2023, the Kogi State Signage agency issued guidelines on the use campaign materials

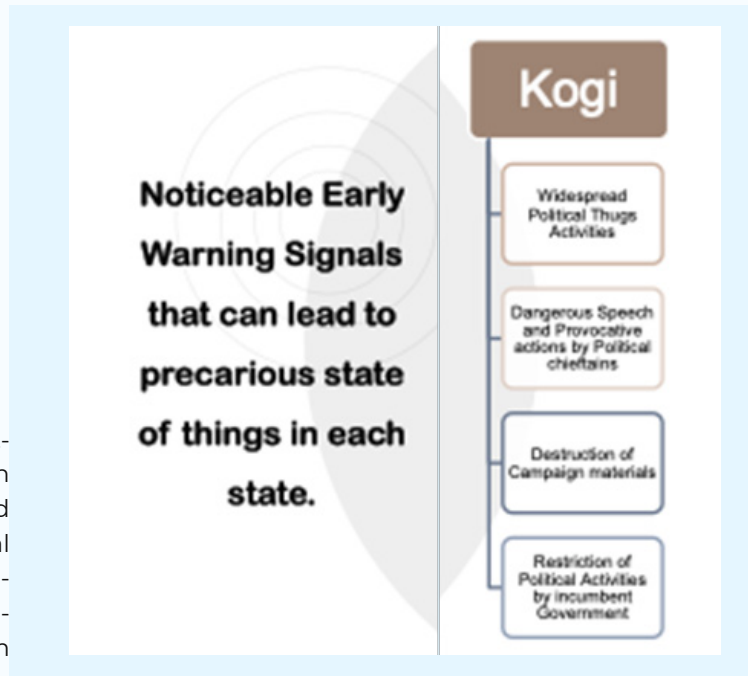
of and banned campaign posters of all candidates in Lokoja metropolis, Kabba/Bunu, Ijumu, Yagba West, Ankpa, Idah, Ayingba, Adavi, Okene and Okehi towns. The sum of 5,000,000 fee payment to the Agency by Political Parties wishing to deploy campaign materials within the State, each billboard erected by Parties, Candidates or Supporters attracts a fee of N2,000,000.00. The sum of N1,000,000.00 will be charged as a fee payable to the Agency by Political Parties for every ban-

ner displayed in public places. The Agency shall charge a refundable Caution fee of N50,000,000.00 (Fifty Million Naira only) for deploying all campaign materials before, during and after the election <sup>46</sup>. While this may be a way to generate revenue for the state, many reactions have trailed the timing of this announcement. Why during the electioneering period?

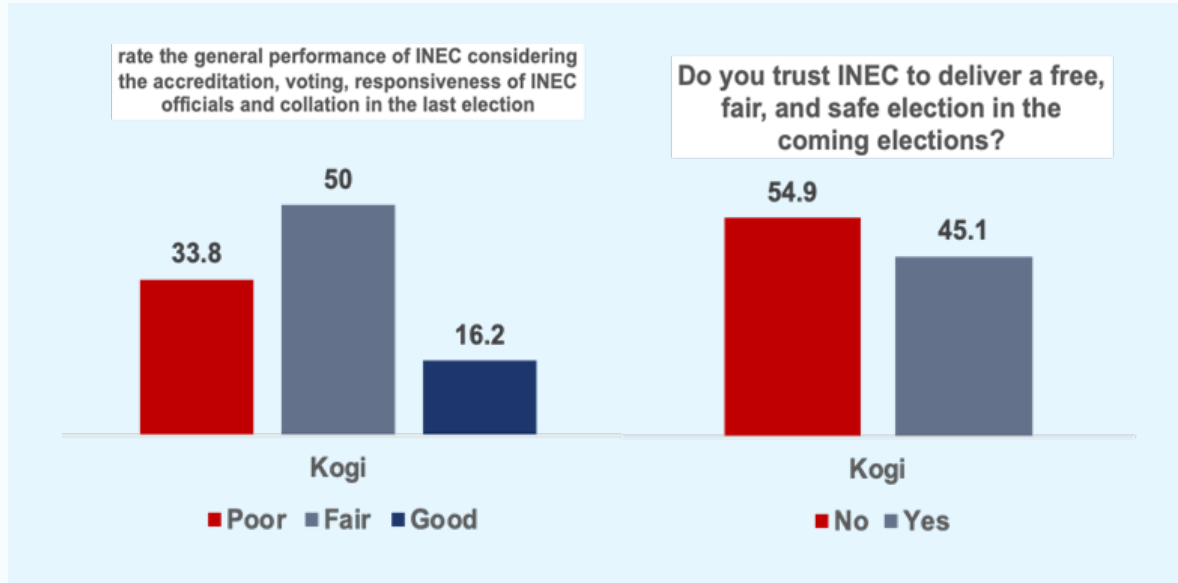
Furthermore, the pre-election atmosphere has been charged with provocative media campaigns and hate speeches by the gubernatorial candidates and members of the political parties. This is one of the major early warning signals seen from the long-term observation of the pre-election environment.

While making media rounds, the gubernatorial candidates have been using accusatory and what can be termed as dangerous speeches. They all acknowledged the rising cases of electoral violence in the State; however, they kept making accusatory messages and shift the balls to one another.

It then behooves on relevant stakeholders, such as the National Peace Committee and traditional leaders to ensure they the candidates and other political chieftain are engaged to sheath their sword to allow process go on without rancor.



## Diminished Public Trust and Negative Perception of INEC and its Likely to Impact on Electoral Violence In Kogi State



Comparatively, most of the respondents in Kogi state rated INEC fair in the conduct of the 2023 general elections in their states. This also can be said to be a popular opinion after the 2023 general elections. Furthermore, the majority (54.9%) of the respondents do not trust INEC to deliver a free and fair election in the coming gubernatorial election. The trust deficit between the citizens of the State and INEC can be a potential for violence and can exacerbate the political tension in the State. The lack of confidence in INEC can increase the likelihood of agitation and citizens' interference in electoral procedures and processes.

Kogi State has been experiencing a decline in voters' turnout in previous elections.  
Decline in voter turnout- Is it related to Violence or lack of trust in INEC?

- In the 2011 governorship election, the state had 1.33 million registered voters. But on election day, only 518,949 people voted, representing a meagre 39% voter turnout.
- In 2015, the number of registered voters increased by 4% from 1.33 million to 1.38 million. However, voter turnout declined by 2% point from 39% to 37%. And only 2 out of every 5 persons who registered to vote actually voted in the 2015 state's governorship 2015 election. That is, 3 out of every 5 persons who registered to vote did not eventually vote.
- The registered voters in the 2019 election stood at 1.65 million, a 19% increase from the previous election. Out of the 1.65 million registered voters, more than a million did not cast their vote.

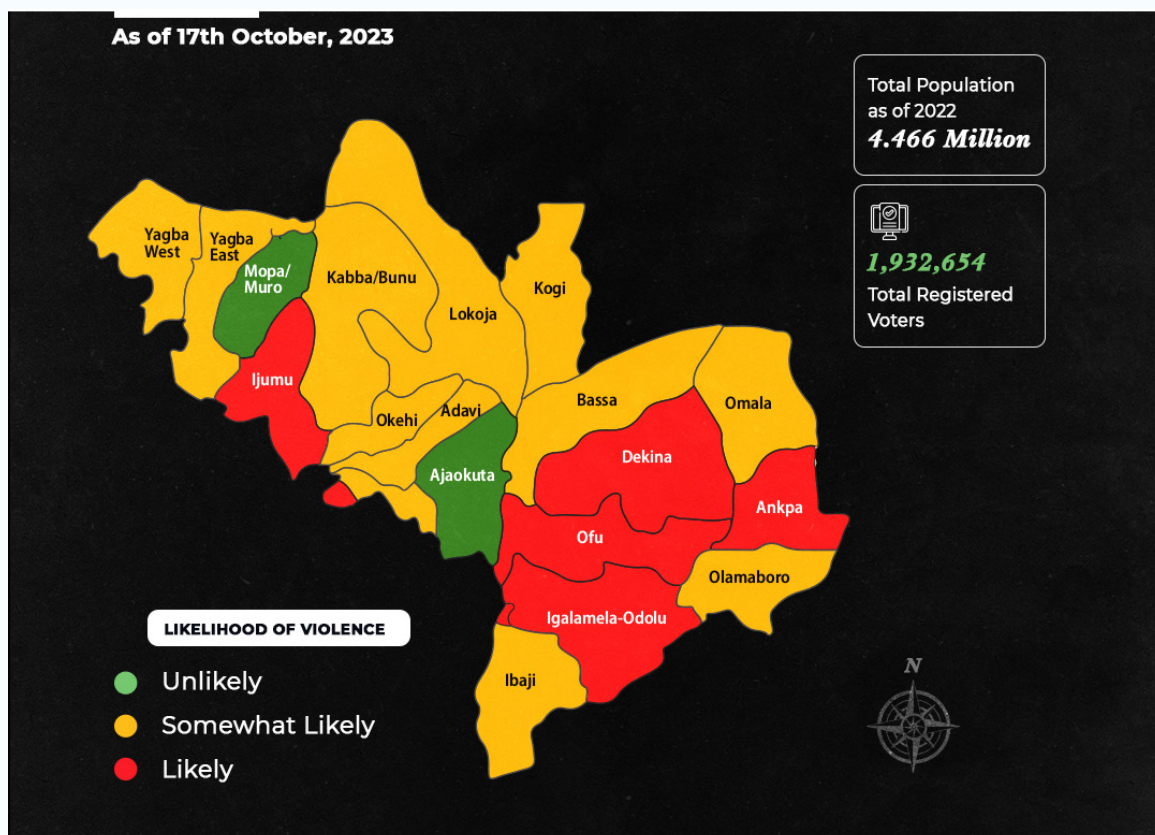
Only 624,514 people cast their vote, representing only 38% voters turnout. This means that 2 out of every 5 registered voters voted in the election.

In the 2023 general election, voter turnout dropped to 25%, the lowest in the period under review. Out of 1.65 million registered voters, only 476,038 people voted. This means that only 1 in every 4 registered voters in the state voted in the last presidential election. This implies too that 3 in every 4 registered voters in Kogi State did not vote in the last presidential election. (Source, Dataphyte)

## Anxiety Regarding Peaceful Elections

From the survey, the possibility of electoral violence was gauged using three indicators: Unlikely, somewhat likely and Likely. Yagba West, Yagba East, Kabba/Bassa, Adavi, Ibaji, Olamaboro, Omala, Lokoja, Bassa and Okehi are somewhat likely to experience violence. Ijumu, Ofu, Dekina, Anyigba and Igalamela-Odolu have a high tendency of experiencing violence. Ajaokuta and Mopa/Muro LGAs are unlikely to experience violence.

However, the majority of the most citizens are uncertain about what lies ahead regarding peaceful elections in Kogi State. The uncertainty and build-up of tension towards the elections might lead to low voter turnout.

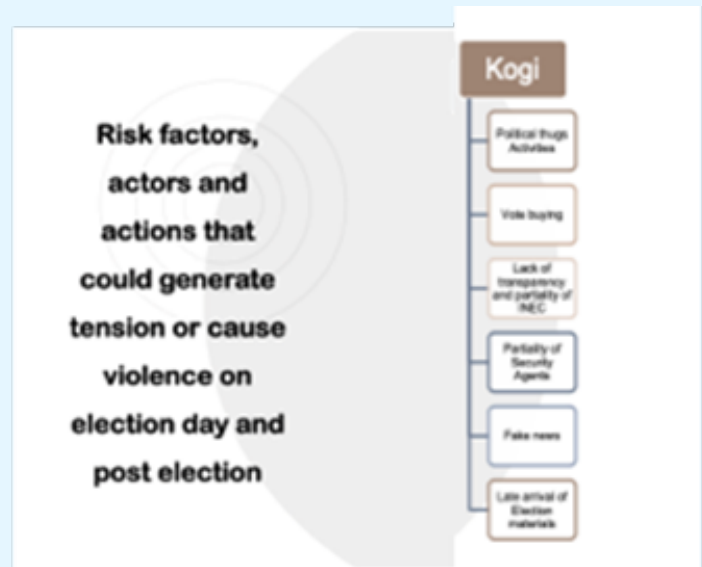




Certain features of violence characterise Kogi State, ranging from political thugs' activities, vote buying, lack of transparency and partiality of INEC, partiality of security agents, fake news and late arrival of election materials. These factors also generated political tension during the 2023 general elections.

As the gubernatorial elections draw closer, electoral violence is rising and ravaging the peace in Kogi State. There are recurring events of politically motivated violence and attacks on political opponents and their supporters. This is alarming and calls for urgent strategies to mitigate violence and secure the lives in the pre-election, election and post-election

phases of the 2023 gubernatorial elections. The peculiar security issue prevalent in the State prior to the elections was kidnapping, banditry, and other forms of conflict. However, it has experienced a rapid rise in electoral violence towards the elections, ranging from attacks, political thuggery, amongst others.



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## OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Despite the increasing number of violence tracked and observed as we move closer to the elections and the high degree of uncertainties as highlighted earlier - we believe there are opportunities to explore to ensure the peaceful conduct of the election. Thus, if all concerned stakeholders carry out strategic violence prevention interventions, the chances are high that the conduct of the election will be peaceful in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi come November 11, 2023. KDI recommends the following:

## **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**

- The perceived negative public perception and widespread lack of confidence in INEC portends a potential for violence. Therefore, the commission needs to ensure that all logistical issues relating to sensitive materials and the commencement of the election are sorted ahead of time to avoid glitches during the election, as such glitches could trigger tension and conflict at the voting points.
- We encourage INEC to ensure that all its staff, including its ad-hoc staff, are properly trained to deliver a seamless processed election. They should also ensure that they are well-enlightened about the dynamics and importance of this election in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states.
- Institutional synergy is important in these elections. INEC, through the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Electoral Security, should ensure proper coordination with security agencies before, during, and after the election to ensure a successful election cycle in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states. Additionally, the commission should intensify their collaboration with anti-graft agencies to counter vote-traders' activities at polling centers.
- INEC had promised to use the IReV in these three states- it is important that the commission proactively plan for cyber-attacks or glitches on election day and communicate effectively. They should not leave the public guessing, as this can fuel misinformation and disinformation.
- INEC should ensure its information management is topnotch in these elections, and the commission should communicate proactively with the public towards the elections to boost confidence and trust in the electoral process.
- INEC should leverage its power to extract real commitments from political parties, their candidates, and other key stakeholders in the state towards the security of the election, lives, and properties.

## **Civil Society Organizations**

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and other state and non-state stakeholders should also prioritise sensitising the electorate extensively on the dangers and impact of vote-selling.
- A broad collaboration between CSOs and media organisations is also recommended for proper education of the electorates and extensive reach of the peace messages to them.
- CSOs and other stakeholders should continue to seek engagements with major political actors and electoral stakeholders to ease the delivery of their commitment to peaceful elections.

- Civil Society Organisations and Development partners should prioritise capacity development for the political leaders on relationship building, strategic communication, and conflict resolution beyond and during an election. Some electoral violence-related issues in the states are because of fallout and the inability to resolve conflicts.
- Internal Party Crisis has been a significant issue in our electoral process. CSOs working to strengthen institutions in Nigeria should design a massive intervention strategy to tackle this menace.

## **Political Parties and Chieftains**

- Political parties and their candidates should play by the rules and desist from rhetoric (Hate Speech) that could cause disunity and hatred. Hate Speech will only incite followers to perpetrate violent acts.
- Inter-party clashes due to parties crossing paths during rallies are becoming incessant - Political party leaders need to ensure improved coordination and management of their party's events to provide room for opposition parties' campaign events. This is important in reducing the frequency of inter-party clashes.
- Political parties and their candidates should demonstrate open commitment to a credible election process by desisting from the inducement of voters with money and materials, as this has detrimental effects on the election process and democracy. We charge parties to shift focus from voter inducement to issues-based campaigns, as voter inducement limits the credibility of elections.
- Political parties and their candidates should ensure that their polling agents are well-trained in their roles and responsibilities to prevent them from fomenting trouble at polling units.

## **Security Agencies**

- It is widely known that security agencies, especially the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), will deploy personnel to each state; KDI advises proper training and enlightenment for the police officers being deployed to the state. So that they kept abreast of intricate details about prevalent insecurity in the states and threats against the election, this is recommended as a strategy to prevent police officers from doing more damage than good concerning the election.
- This report has noted certain LGAs as violence hotspots based on the analysis of the study. Security agencies, INEC, and other ICSS stakeholders are enjoined to use this report for their strategic election planning and deployment to ensure the best violence mitigation in the Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi governorship states.
- Security agencies need to be trained in identifying vote-buying. Special units like the financial intelligence unit need to be on alert to investigate and form a partnership with INEC to prosecute violators of fiscal-electoral laws.
- Security agencies should collaborate with community residents and leaders to foster a bot-

tom-up approach to securing the election process. A bottom-up approach is particularly recommended because community residents are believed to understand the precarious nature of their localities more and can significantly assist security agents in discharging their duties.

- There should be a massive sensitization campaign on the identification of fake Police. Given this, there is a need for an identification plan for all security personnel deployed on election day.
- Election Security Control Center should be proactive in communications towards having an appropriate and swift response team for intervention on violence issues if any erupt.
- Election Security Control Center should also popularise their dedicated hotlines for the elections among the citizens so that citizens can call in to give them security information.

## **Community and Religious Leaders**

- As gatekeepers of the communities, traditional rulers must be engaged to use their platforms to reach out and sensitise the citizens on the need for peaceful elections. Just like the Oba of Benin did in Edo State.
- Traditional Leaders and Religious leaders should, as much as possible, stay neutral and never allow hate against any political party to dominate their messages to followers.

## **Media House**

- Media houses are encouraged to ensure that they do not publish provocative content as this could lead to violent conflicts before, during, and after the election. They should verify all news and always ensure they publish information based on physical and hard evidence.
- Media houses should ensure that they create spaces for fair play by granting access and coverage to the activities of all political parties and their candidates without appearing to the public as being partial.
- Media houses should ensure that their platforms are used as avenues to educate voters, especially on the use of new election technologies and procedures.

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