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FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT) COUNCIL ELECTIONS CONTEXT ANALYSIS



2026



Political Context Analysis of Elections in Nigeria: A Case Study of FCT Council Elections





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1.0 Introduction

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, is the Capital of Nigeria, and occupies a distinctive position within its political and administrative architecture. As the seat of the Federal Government, the FCT is not only naturally significant but also politically strategic. While it does not enjoy the status of a full state, democratic governance at the grassroots level is exercised through its six Area Councils, namely Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and Abaji, whose elections are critical to local representation, service delivery, and social cohesion within the environs.

In recent years, the FCT has experienced rapid urban expansion, population influx, heightened political competition, and evolving security risks, all of which intersect with electoral processes. The aftermath of the 2023 general elections underscored both the growing political consciousness of FCT residents and the potential for localised tensions, particularly in peri-urban and rapidly urbanising councils. As preparations intensify for the forthcoming Area Council elections, there is an urgent need for a structured and evidence-based understanding of the prevailing political, security, socio-economic, and institutional context.

To structure this inquiry, the analysis that follows will be guided by the overarching analytical questions established in the initial framework, specifically examining: the actors and methods of power contestation; the interplay between formal rules and informal practices; the role of informal norms and patronage; and the identification of key risks and opportunities for engagement.

2.0 Purpose and Scope of the Analysis

The main purpose of this report is to systematically analyse the political, institutional, social, and power dynamics shaping the FCT Area Council Elections, scheduled for **February 21, 2026**. The analysis focuses on assessing factors that influence electoral integrity, political competition, citizen participation, and the risks of manipulation or violence. To guide this assessment, the analysis is structured around four cross-cutting questions:



1. *Who holds political power, how is it exercised, and how is it contested during elections?*
2. *What formal electoral rules exist, and how are they applied or bypassed in practice?*
3. *Which informal norms, incentives, and patronage systems shape political behaviour?*
4. *What are the key risks, spoilers, and opportunities for political/electoral reform or engagement?*

Its scope is defined as follows:

Electoral Cycle Phase:	Pre-election period, with a specific focus on candidate nomination, campaigning, and preparations.
Level:	Local government (Area Council) level across the six area councils of the FCT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abaji - 10 wards, 280 pollig units • Abuja Municipal (AMAC) - 12 wards, 979 polling units • Bwari - 10 wards, 530 polling units • Gwagwalada - 10 wards, 359 polling units • Kuje - 10 wards, 370 polling units • Kwali 10 wards, 304 polling units
Actors:	State actors (INEC, FCT Administration), political parties, candidates, security agencies, and non-state actors (media, civil society, voters).
Focus Election:	The 2026 FCT Area Council elections to elect 6 Council Chairmen and 62 Councillors.

3.0 Methodology

This context analysis is based on desktop research, drawing exclusively on the review and synthesis of existing qualitative and quantitative secondary sources. The approach enables systematic examination, triangulation, and validation of information with primary sources. The analysis employs the following methods:

i

Desk Review:

A comprehensive review of relevant policy and strategy documents, legal and institutional frameworks, electoral guidelines, prior assessments, situation reports, and peer-reviewed academic literature to establish the political, media analysis, security reports, legal, and governance context of the elections.

ii

Secondary Data Analysis:

Examination of publicly available and institutional data drawn from sources such as Independent National Electoral Commission reports, security and risk briefings, media monitoring outputs, governance and conflict datasets, and lastly, political parties to identify trends, patterns, and risk factors relevant to the election.

iii

Primary Data Analysis:

Consultative engagements were conducted with key stakeholders, including INEC officials, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), and community leaders. These engagements served to validate desktop findings, contextualise quantitative data, and capture emerging risks not reflected in secondary sources.

The analysis covers developments within the most recent electoral cycle and pre-election period (from 2022 to 2026), leading up to the forthcoming Area Council elections.

4.0 Political and Institutional Environment

4.1 Constitutional and Legal Framework

The overall governance of FCT occupies a unique space in Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution (as amended). Unlike the remaining 36 states, the FCT is directly administered by the Federal Government through an appointed Minister (currently His Excellency Nyesom Wike), who wields executive authority. Furthermore, the constitution provides for Area Councils as the sole elected tier of government within the territory, but their powers are not as explicitly enumerated as those of Local Governments in the states. This constitutional gap creates a complex legal environment for the 2026 elections. The Electoral Act 2022 is the primary legislation governing the conduct of these polls, setting the rules for candidacy, campaigns, voting, and dispute resolution. In addition, elected Area Council Chairmen are responsible for local service delivery, yet they operate under the supervisory authority of the appointed FCT Minister and the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). This often led to tensions over resource control, policy direction, and political allegiance, blurring the lines of democratic accountability.

There is also legal ambiguity on incumbency advantage. While the Electoral Act prohibits the use of state apparatus for partisan gain, the unique structure of the FCT, where “state” and “federal” governance are fused in the FCTA, creates grey areas. The ability of the FCT Administration, led by a political appointee, to launch or fast-track development projects during the campaign period raises significant questions about the legal and fair use of incumbency advantage at the federal-territorial level. This framework sets the stage for a contest where legal interpretations of power and fairness are as contested as the political outcomes themselves.

4.2 Electoral Management and Administration

In preparation for the election, INEC has demonstrated preparedness by publishing a detailed timetable and completing key pre-election activities. The final list of candidates from 17 political parties was published in September 2025. Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) was devolved to ward levels from September to October 2025 to enhance accessibility. INEC has also commenced media accreditation for election coverage, which will close on February 8, 2026. INEC has also started training its ad-hoc staff on the election logistics, procurement, and most importantly, the deployment of BVAS technology. According to the INEC Chairman, *“These elections will serve as important testing grounds for refining voter registry management, election logistics, and the deployment of technology such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS).”*¹

Key Details	Status/Detail
Election Date	February 21, 2026
Seats Contested	6 Chairmanship, 62 Councillorship (68 total)
Total Number of Wards	62
Total Polling Units	2,822

Revised Register of Voters	1,680,315 registered voters
Total number of contestants	570 candidates in 68 constituencies for the positions of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, and 62 Councillors.
Accredited Parties	17 political parties
Final Candidate List Published	September 22, 2025
Campaign Window	September 24, 2025 – February 19, 2026

5.0 Political Actors and Power Dynamics

This section addresses the central question: **Who holds power, how is it exercised, and how is it contested during the FCT elections?** The analysis below examines both formal party structures and the informal networks that critically shape political outcomes.

5.1 Political Parties

The political landscape features the traditional parties like the All-Progressives Congress (APC) vs. the People Democratic Party (PDP) contest. The APC holds a strong incumbency advantage from controlling federal structures in the FCT. A significant new dynamic is the rise of the African Democratic Congress (ADC).

The ADC is actively positioning itself as a major third force, attracting high-profile figures through new alliances and promoting a reform-oriented, grassroots-focused agenda. Its growing presence could disrupt the two-party system, but the party must also manage internal conflicts at the state level. Smaller parties are participating, but the exclusion of the Labour Party (LP) has simplified the race for the main contenders. Below is the list of candidates and their political parties as released by INEC:

FCT Area Councils - Chairmen (2022) & 2026 Chairmanship Contestants ²

Area Council	Incumbent Chairman	Party	2026 Chairmanship Candidates
Abaji	Umar Abubakar Abdullahi	APC	Sokodabo Musa Bilyaminu (PDP); Umar Abubakar Abdullahi (APC); Mohammed Ibrahim (ADC); Samuel Danjuma (ADP); Aminu Sadiq (NNPP); Loko Mohammed Angulu (YPP); Anumnu Leader Abigail (A)

Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC)	Christopher Zakka Maikalangu	APC	Zadna Dintani (PDP); Christopher Zakka Maikalangu (APC); Jibrin Alhassan (NNPP); Nemieboka Godson (AA); Agbon Akanimoh (A); Paul Ogidi (ADC); Richard Elizabeth (ADP); Eze Chukwu (APGA); Chukwu Obumneme (APM); Ugoh Micheal (APP); Muhammad Umar (BP); Samson Usseini (NRM); Iber Shimakaha (PRP); Madaki Robert (YPP); Swani Buba (ZLP); Simon Obinna (SDP);
Bwari	John Gabaya	PDP	Adamu Julius (PDP); Haruna Shekwolo Audi (APC); Nwosu Michael Chuks (A); Musa Josiah Abinlo (ADC); Salisu Shuaibu Galadima (NNPP); Danjuma Garba (ZLP); Abubakar Abdullahi (SDP); Akogwu Micheal (NRM); Ekee Izuchukwu (APGA); Audu Aliyu (ADP); Adamu Wilson (AA)
Gwagwalada	Jubrin Abubakar	APC	Yahaya Usman Shehu (APC); Mohammed Kasim (PDP); Shehu Attahiru Ibrahim (YPP); Dada Mohammed Wunmi (NNPP); Bala Gano Haladu Khalid (SDP); Dahiru Hudu (APM); Biko Ezekiel (APGA); Shanabo Abubakar (ADP); Danjuma Afanyibada (ADC); Osakue Christopher (AA); Ezeh Lawrence (A)
Kuje	Suleman Sabo	APC	Zakwoyi Danlami (PDP); Ubam Bako (NNPP); Mustapha Aliyu (ADP); Jerry Samuel (A); Knabayi Stephen Adalo (ADC); Kure Adamu (AA); Danjuma Shekwolo (APC); Abdullahi Galadima (APGA); Musa Shekara (APM); Zephaniah Dikko (SDP); Aju Ukwa (ZLP)
Kwali	Danladi Chiya	APC	Daniel Nuhu Kwali (APC); Obiako Patrick Ndubuisi (A); Oniobo Israel Oghenekome (AA); Yakubu Dogara (APGA); Bandoji Jeremiah (ADC); Agada Friday (ADP); Umar Yakubu Yanuti (APM); Kaura Hassan (NNPP); Haruna Mohammed (PDP)

5.2 Political Elites and Informal Power Brokers

Power dynamics are uniquely shaped by the FCT's administration. In the run-up to the 2026 Area Council elections in FCT, the Minister has taken on a highly visible and politically charged role. Though formally a chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Wike has publicly shown strong support for candidates of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), urging communities to back the APC in the polls and linking local development projects to the party's agenda. At a road-project flag-off in Tunga Madaki, for instance, he framed infrastructure delivery as part of the federal government's "Renewed Hope" agenda and encouraged residents to "reward" the APC with their votes, even while acknowledging his PDP identity.³

This posture reflects multiple strategic interests: by aligning with the ruling party's electoral prospects in Abuja, Wike strengthens his influence within the current federal power structure and elevates his political visibility ahead of the 2027 general elections. At the same time, his actions have stirred controversy within his own party, with some PDP Chieftains arguing that his active support for APC candidates effectively undermines his membership in the PDP.⁴

At a broader level, Wike's involvement in the FCT local polls underscores his interest in shaping grassroots political outcomes in the capital, a space that carries symbolic weight and national attention. Through rhetorical emphasis on performance and infrastructure, he seeks to tie electoral support to tangible development, positioning himself as a figure who transcends narrow party lines while navigating the complex terrain of national politics.⁵

5.3 The Indigene and Settler Dynamic

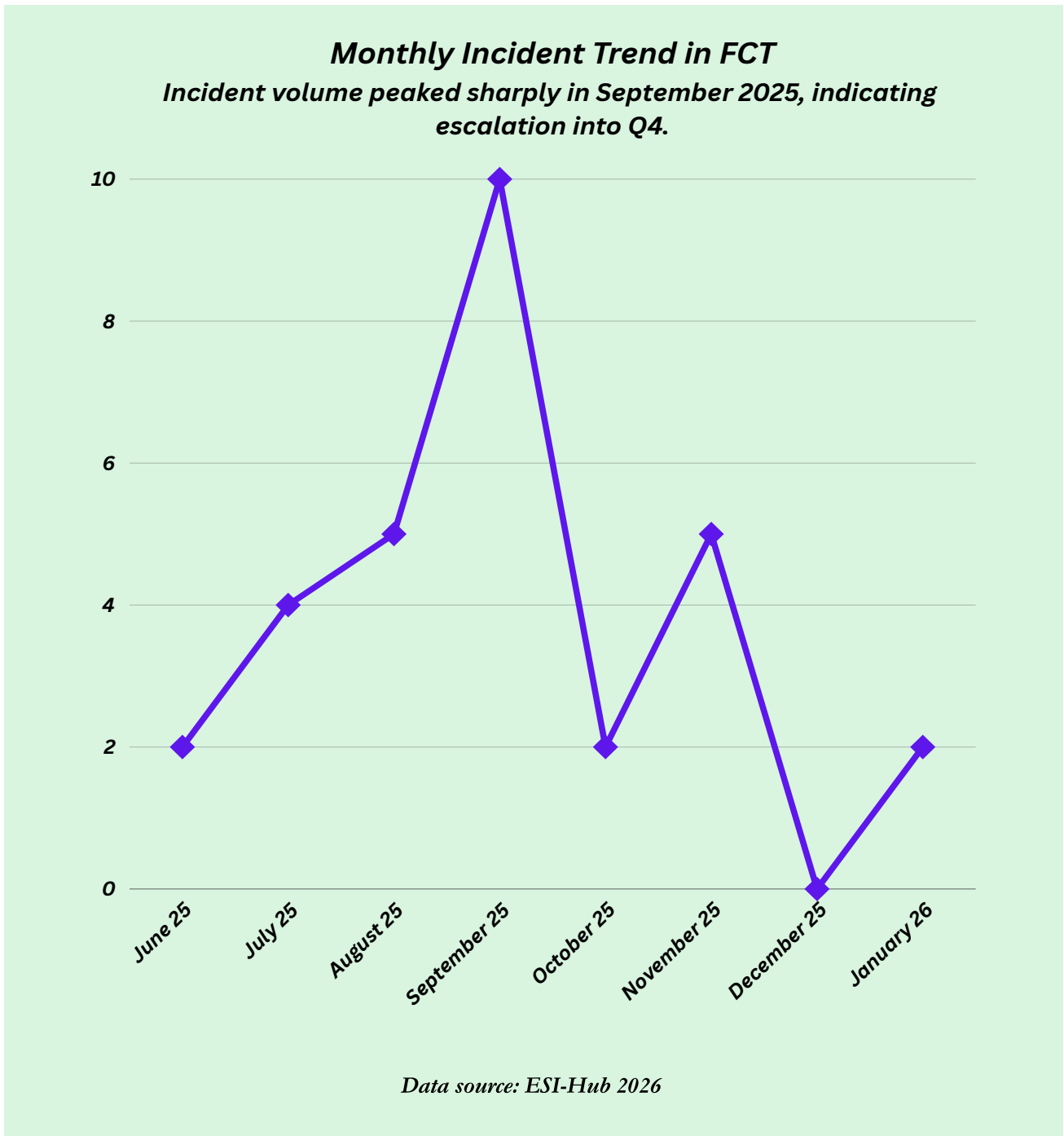
In the FCT, elections for Area Councils are *not officially driven by "indigene vs. non-indigene" identity*. Voters across the six councils participate based on registration and residency, and INEC publishes candidate lists without reference to place-of-origin categories. There's no legal requirement that only FCT indigenes can contest or win these local seats, and many political parties field candidates from diverse backgrounds in the race.⁶ That said, debates over indigene identity *do* appear in broader FCT political life, especially among local civic groups and indigenes who feel excluded from federal appointments and national inclusion. Some leaders have publicly warned that continued neglect of indigenous concerns, such as exclusion from ambassadorial nominees or federal boards, could influence political alignment in both the 2026 council elections and the 2027 general elections. In everyday election conduct, however, most voters and candidates tend to focus on local service delivery, party engagement, and visibility - *not formal indigene/settler divisions*. While identity sentiments may influence individual views, they are not a central structural feature of the FCT Area Council polls themselves.

6.0 Security and Conflict Dynamics

The security environment in the FCT during the pre-election period is characterised by persistent, high-impact criminal violence rather than overt political conflict. This ambient insecurity acts as a critical risk multiplier for the electoral process. The landscape outlined below directly informs the key risks to electoral integrity, presenting a primary threat of disrupting logistics and suppressing voter turnout through fear, a potent form of non-violent electoral manipulation.

6.1 Incident Profile and Electoral Risk Contexts

Between June 19, 2025, and January 8, 2026, the Federal Capital Territory recorded 29 security incidents across its Area Councils. While no incidents were classified as directly election-related, the scale, persistence, and geographic spread of violent crime represent a significant indirect threat to participation, logistics, and public confidence.

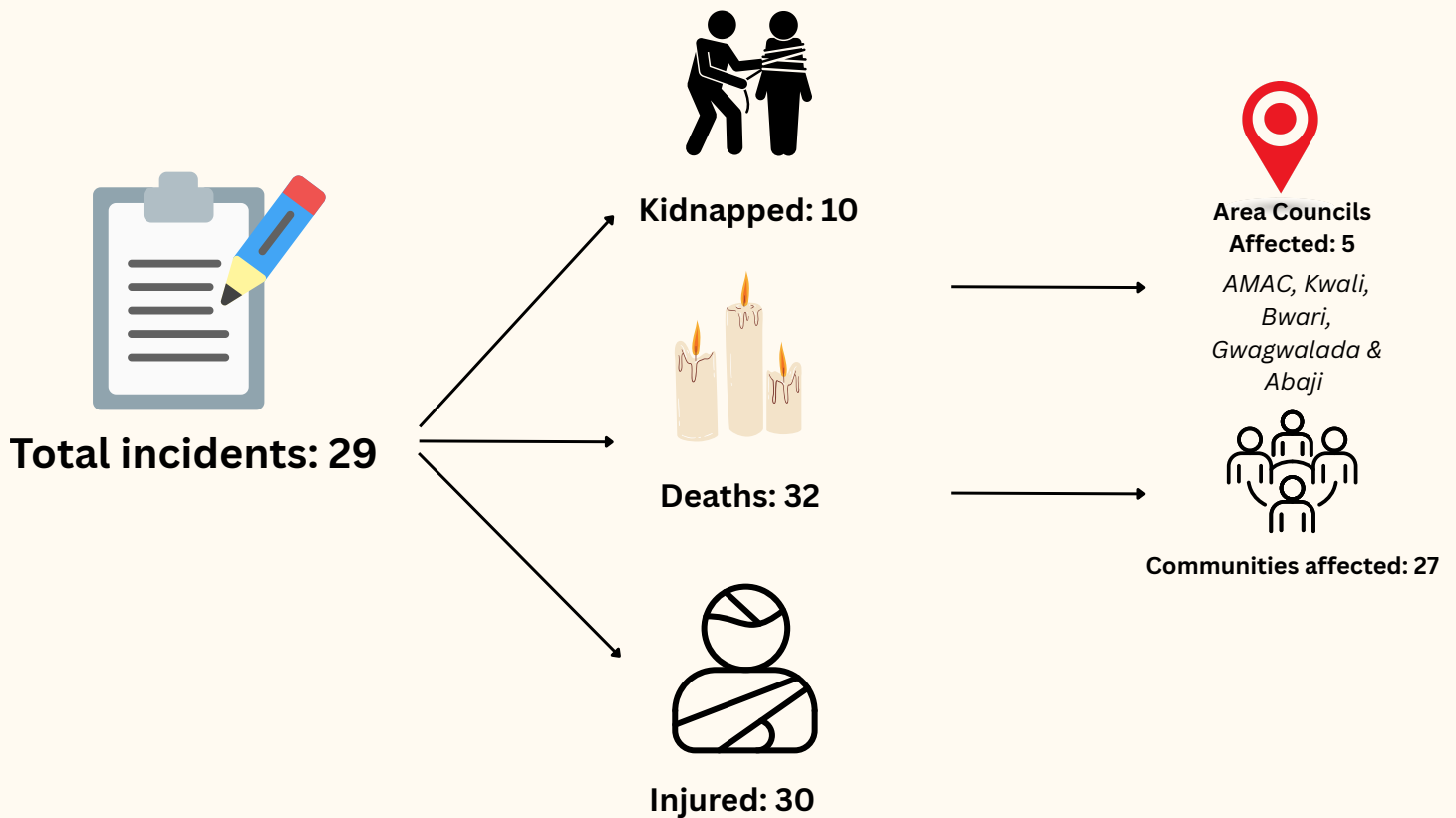


The recorded human impact was severe:

- **32 Fatalities** (1.10 deaths per incident)
- **30 Injured Persons**
- **10 Kidnappings**

This high casualty-to-incident ratio underscores an environment where violence, when it occurs, tends towards severe outcomes, raising concerns about voter intimidation and the safety of election personnel.

FCT Security Incident Snapshot (Jun 2025 – Jan 2026)

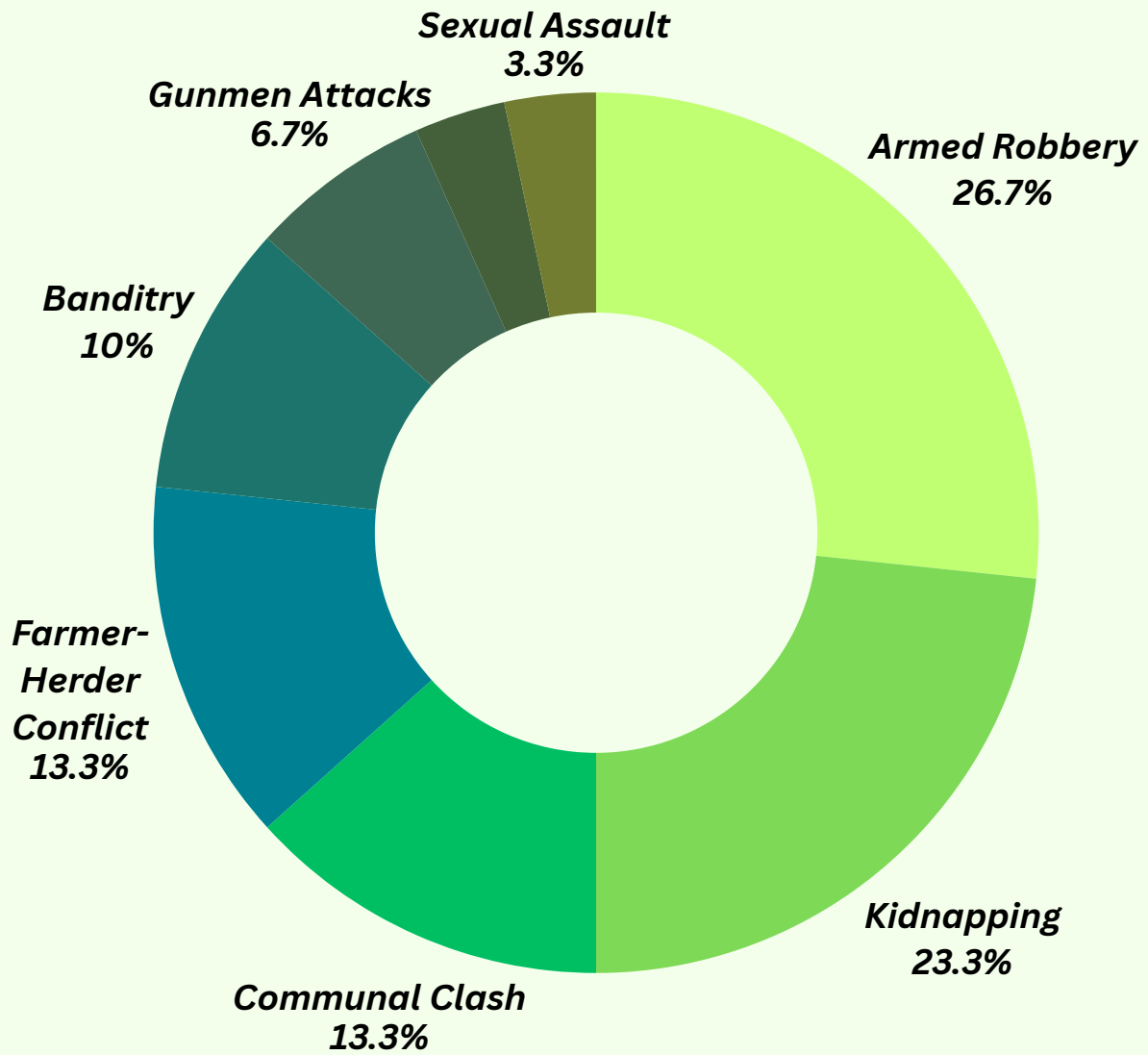


The FCT recorded casualties, low-election-related insecurity driven by violent crime and communal conflict.

Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

THREAT COMPOSITION IN FCT

Criminal violence outweighs politically linked threats.



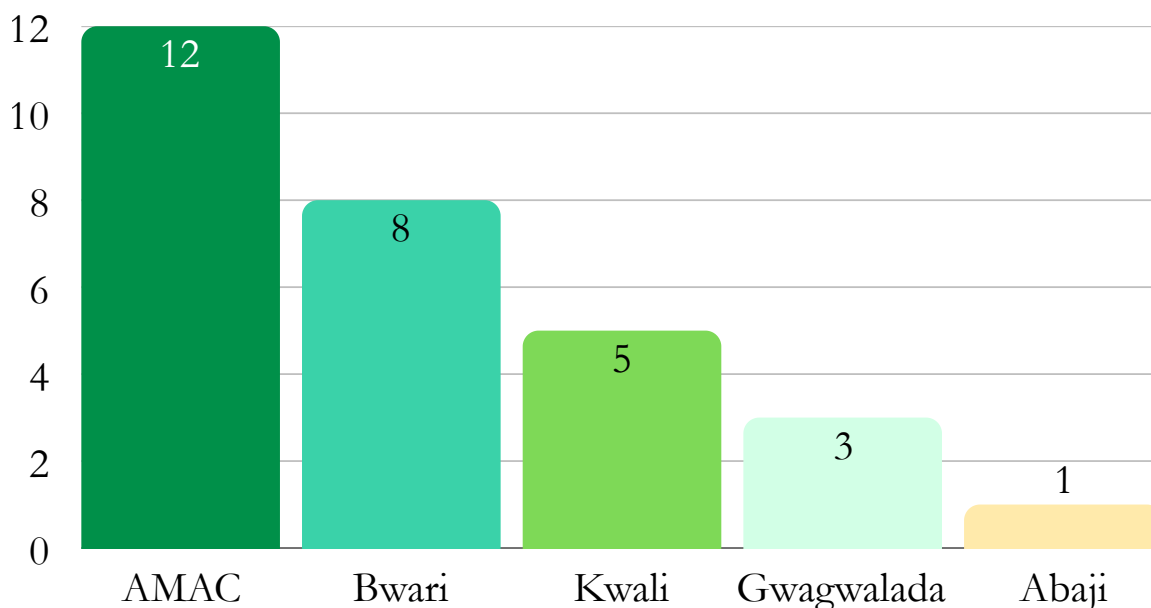
Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

6.2 Spatial Distribution of Risk and Hotspots

Incidents were unevenly distributed, confirming that election risk in the FCT is localised rather than uniform. The data reveals a clear hierarchy of risk across the territory:

INCIDENTS ACROSS AFFECTED LGAS

Incidents are heavily concentrated in AMAC and Bwari



Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

Area Council	Incidents Recorded	Primary Risk Characteristics	Electoral Flashpoint Severity
AMAC	12 Incidents (41% of total)	Primary Urban Hotspot. Accounted for 53% of total deaths. Dominated by armed robbery and kidnapping in high-density areas, which directly affects public confidence and commercial mobility.	High Risk
Bwari	8 Incidents	High-Severity Peri-Urban Hotspot. Exhibited elevated casualty levels per incident. Persistent exposure to kidnapping clusters and attacks with significant security force engagement.	High Risk

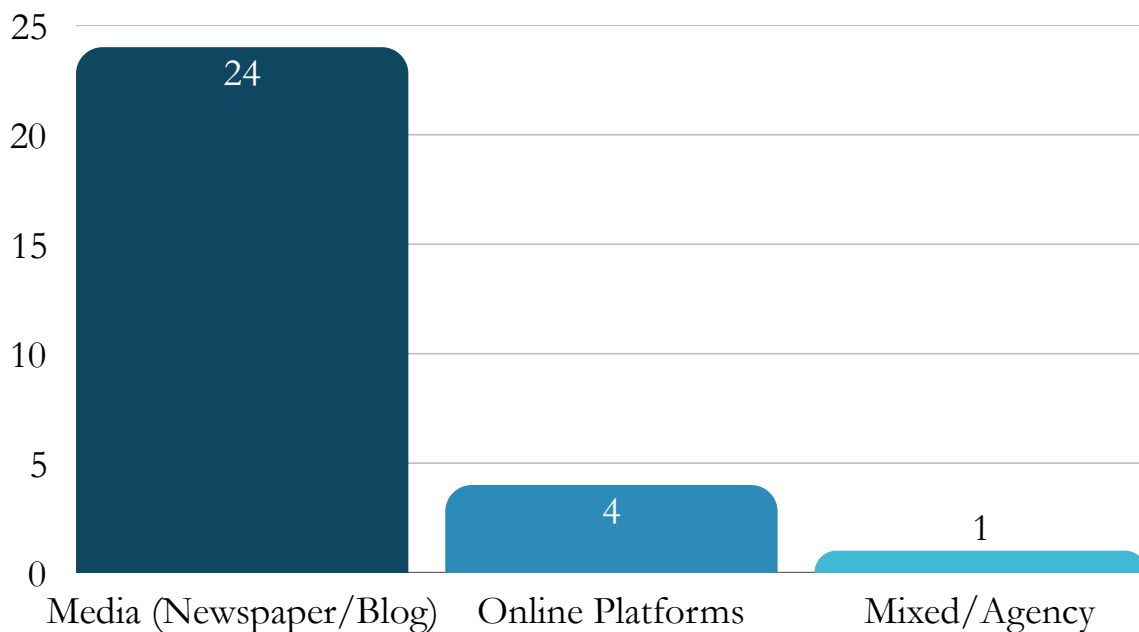
Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

Kwali	5 Incidents	Communal Conflict Hotspot. Recorded the highest injury burden (12 injuries from 5 incidents), driven by farmer-herder clashes and land disputes. High potential for grievance-driven escalation.	Medium Risk
Gwagwalada	3 Incidents	Moderate Risk. Experienced a mix of criminal and communal incidents contributing to background instability.	Medium Risk
Abaji	1 Incident	Low-Frequency, High-Impact. Despite only one recorded incident, it resulted in 2 fatalities, highlighting the risk of isolated, severe events.	Low Risk
Kuje	0 Incidents*	Data not specified in the recent report. Historical profile suggests vigilance regarding land disputes and youth mobilisation.	To be monitored

Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

SOURCES OF INCIDENT REPORTING

Media reporting dominates, suggesting potential under-reporting in rural LGAs.

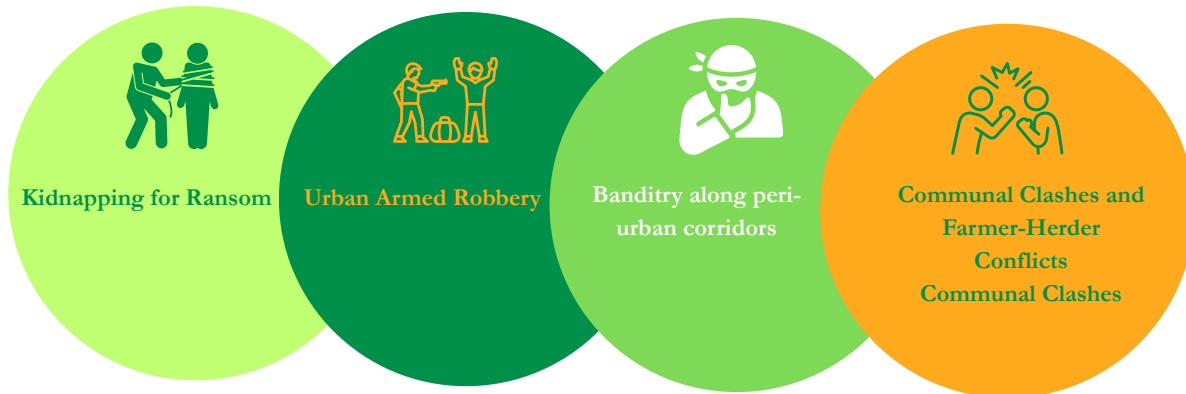


Data source: ESI-Hub 2026

6.3 Temporal Trends and Threat Evolution

Incident frequency increased progressively, peaking between August and September 2025 with 13 recorded incidents, a period coinciding with intensified national political activity. The persistence of incidents into October, November 2025, and January 2026 indicates that insecurity in the FCT is structural rather than episodic, reducing the likelihood that risks will subside without targeted intervention before the February 2026 polls.

The dominant threat modalities evolved to include:



6.4 Community Perceptions and Emerging Threat Indicators

Based on insights from critical stakeholders and community leaders, corroborated by research conducted through the Election Security and Information (ESI) Hub, several risk indicators were identified across key councils, particularly Kuje, Bwari, Gwagwalada, and AMAC. These include the escalation of unguarded political statements and inflammatory rhetoric, the subtle mobilisation of identity politics, lingering communal tensions in some settlements, and the growing spread of misinformation capable of heightening anxiety and distorting public perception of the process.

In Kuje, these risks are compounded by a high rate of unrecorded farmer-herder conflict and recurring reprisal attacks—incidents that, while absent from official incident tallies, remain potent threats to electoral peace. Gwagwalada faces persistent challenges linked to political thuggery and voter intimidation, often mobilised along youth and ward-level patronage lines. AMAC, as the primary urban hotspot, remains particularly vulnerable to the weaponisation of political speech and the rapid amplification of divisive rhetoric through social media and informal party networks.

6.5 Direct Electoral Implications

The ambient insecurity presents four primary indirect electoral risks:

<p>1. Voter Turnout Suppression:</p> <p>Concentrated violence in AMAC, Kuje, and Bwari may discourage voter turnout, especially during early morning and late evening polling hours.</p>	<p>2. Logistical Disruption:</p> <p>Transport corridors affected by armed robbery and banditry overlap with key INEC deployment routes for personnel and materials.</p>	<p>3. Staff Deployment Risk:</p> <p>Ad-hoc INEC staff and security personnel face elevated risks in high-risk area councils, potentially affecting the timely opening of polling units.</p>	<p>4. Post-Election Stability:</p> <p>Areas with existing communal tensions (notably Kuje Kwali) are vulnerable to grievance-driven violence following result announcements.</p>
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6.6 Role of security agencies: neutrality vs politicisation (ICCES)

The effectiveness of security agencies under the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) will be decisive for election credibility. Their mandate is to ensure a secure, impartial environment through neutral law enforcement. However, this neutrality faces significant pressure within the FCT's charged political atmosphere. The primary risk is that security forces could be perceived or act in alignment with partisan interests. This could manifest as uneven deployment favouring certain areas, selective enforcement of campaign laws, or a failure to curb political thuggery linked to powerful actors.

7.0 Citizens, Media, and Civic Space

7.1 Citizen Participation

Voter turnout trends and voter apathy

The 2022 FCT election had a low turnout of 26.7%. INEC has identified combating “Voter Apathy and Void Votes” as a primary goal for its 2026 voter education campaign. In FCT, local elections have repeatedly drawn only a fraction of the electorate, and this pattern of voter apathy reflects deeper attitudes toward grassroots politics. Although these councils are legally the closest tier of government to the people, many residents do not see them as relevant to their daily lives. In the Abuja Municipal Area Council, only a tiny proportion of registered voters came to the polls in recent elections, and in some polling units, there were reports of virtually no one arriving to cast a ballot. One common explanation from voters was that local government officials rarely demonstrate a visible impact through service delivery or community improvement, which diminishes the motivation to participate.⁷ This sense that the council level lacks influence is compounded by logistical frustrations.

Election days have experienced late arrival of materials, malfunctioning accreditation technology, and, at times, difficulties locating voters' names or their reassigned polling units. These practical hurdles can be discouraging, convincing many that the effort of voting outweighs any potential benefit.⁸ There are also broader structural factors at play. Compared to presidential or national assembly elections, local contests attract far less publicity, campaign engagement, and voter education, leaving many Abuja residents unaware of when elections will occur or why their vote matters. Fear of potential violence, real or perceived, as well as disillusionment with politics more generally (including scepticism that individual votes truly influence outcomes), has further weakened turnout. Together, these experiences have created a cycle in which low participation begets low accountability and weak grassroots leadership, reinforcing citizens' belief that local elections are not worth their time. Without intentional efforts to address both the logistical barriers and the perception that local government is distant or ineffective, this pattern of apathy is likely to persist.

This cycle of apathy and low accountability creates a permissive environment for the monetisation of political processes, including vote-trading and elite capture of local offices, themes explored in the political economy of these elections.

Barriers faced by women in politics

The 2026 FCT Area Council elections feature a crowded and competitive field. According to INEC, out of the total of 637 candidates vying for 68 seats, 6 chairmanship, and 62 councillorship positions. The candidate profile reveals a stark gender imbalance in leadership positions. Out of the 65 individuals contesting for the six council chairmanship seats, only 3 (4.6%) are women. These candidates are Anumnu Leader Abigail (Action Alliance party) in Abaji, Richard Elizabeth (Action Democratic Party) in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), and Aju Loveday Ukwa (Zenith Labour Party) in Kuje. Female representation is slightly better for the vice-chairmanship positions, where 12 out of 78 candidates (15.4%) are women.

Barriers faced by PWDs and youth

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) face persistent physical and procedural exclusion, as many polling units lack essential accessibility features such as ramps and sign language interpretation. This, coupled with high transportation costs, effectively disenfranchises voters with mobility or sensory impairments, despite existing INEC policies. For youth, exclusion is less about apathy and more about a structural misalignment between electoral processes and their realities. Factors such as urban migration away from registered wards, prohibitive costs of candidacy due to party gatekeeping, and a deep-seated distrust in the tangible outcomes of local governance create a significant participation gap. Indigenous FCT youths feel this marginalisation acutely, compounded by historical grievances over land and political representation. These overlapping barriers (stigmatisation, financial constraints, and physical insecurity) reinforce a cycle of political marginalisation, ensuring these groups remain numerically significant yet systemically excluded from meaningful electoral participation and representation.

7.2 Media and Information Environment

The media ecosystem for the FCT Area Council elections operates within a dual-layered and high-risk environment, characterised by competition between professional oversight and the rapid spread of manipulative information.

Traditional Media and Regulatory Oversight

INEC has instituted a formal online media accreditation process to manage election coverage, which closed on February 8, 2026. While this provides a framework for official reporting, traditional media faces a crisis of trust. Outlets have been criticised for sometimes prioritising speed over verification, publishing official statements without independent fact-checking. This practice can inadvertently amplify misinformation. INEC leadership has explicitly urged journalists to rely solely on its official channels to counter false narratives, highlighting the tense relationship between regulatory guidance and press independence.

Social media and the Disinformation Industry

Social media is the primary battleground for information, serving simultaneously as a tool for citizen journalism and a vector for coordinated disinformation. Borrowing from national election patterns, social media is often used to inflame ethnic and religious tensions with triggering phrases (weaponised narratives), aimed at polarising the electorate and suppressing turnout in key areas.

Secondly, political actors operate “situation rooms” that secretly finance social media influencers to spread false content. Payment is often made through cash, cryptocurrencies, gifts, or promises of future political appointments. Lastly, content strategy campaigns frequently use emotionally recycled, charged, or out-of-context visuals (for instance, old images from conflict zones) to provoke unsuspecting citizens and create a form of “digital wildfires” of false information that might go viral.

The Blurred Line and Its Consequences

A critical vulnerability is the eroding boundary between traditional and social media. Unverified claims that originate on social platforms are sometimes picked up and reported by mainstream outlets, granting harmful narratives a false cloak of legitimacy. This cycle, combined with the rise of untrained news bloggers, makes it exceedingly difficult for voters to distinguish credible journalism from manipulation, directly threatening the integrity of the electoral discourse.

8.0 Political Economy of Elections

The political economy of the FCT elections reveals a system where elections function less as a public good for democratic selection and more as a high-stakes **investment marketplace**. Access to the FCT's significant state resources and federal contracts is the ultimate return on investment, shaping every phase of the electoral cycle from candidate selection to voter behaviour. This section details the market dynamics of monetisation that critically undermine electoral integrity and accountability.

8.1 The High Cost of Office and Market Entry Barriers

Running for an Area Council office is prohibitively expensive, creating a significant barrier to entry that favours wealthy individuals and those backed by powerful financiers. Political parties charge exorbitant nomination and expression of interest fees. For example, for the 2026 elections, parties have set fees ranging from ₦500,000 to over ₦2 million (on average) for chairmanship nomination forms. These fees are non-refundable and exclude the costs of procuring the party's membership card and registering supporters as party agents. The formal fees are a fraction of the total investment, and the real expenditure lies in securing the party ticket. It often requires significant informal payments to leaders, party delegates, and the so-called godfathers during primaries. In councils where primaries are not competitive, and candidates are “affirmed,” the cost shifts to negotiations with a smaller circle of party elites for the right to bear the party's flag. Consequently, this financial barrier systematically excludes competent but less-resourced individuals, particularly women and youth, and ensures that candidates are primarily accountable to their financiers rather than the electorate. It transforms the candidate selection process into a commercial transaction.

8.2 Campaign Financing and the Monetisation of Political Structures

Campaigns are capital-intensive, funded through different channels that create post-election obligations. Candidates invest personal fortunes as a long-term investment using personal wealth & business proceeds. Powerful figures provide funds for future loyalty and control over council appointments. Lastly, incumbents and those with access to the FCT Administration are often alleged to divert public funds for re-election. With regards to expenditure structure, funds are allocated to logistical “mobilisation” (i.e., paying party agents and supporters), media campaigns, and informal security payments, rather than policy-based voter engagement.

8.3 Vote Trading as a Transactional Livelihood Strategy

At the grassroots level, the election economy manifests as direct market exchange between candidates and an economically vulnerable electorate. For instance, on election day, polling units can become marketplaces. In the same vein, party agents operate price lists for vote buying, with prices fluctuating based on race competitiveness and bargaining rates. Furthermore, beyond cash, palliative inducements such as food items, clothing, recharge cards, and promises of post-election jobs or small contracts. This trend is fueled by acute poverty and high youth unemployment in the country. For many voters, the immediate, guaranteed material benefit outweighs the abstract future benefit of voting for better governance, turning voting into a short-term survival strategy that decouples choice from accountability.

9.0 Risk, Scenario, and Stakeholder Mapping

The preceding analysis of political, security, and social dynamics combines into three primary risk clusters for the 2026 FCT polls:

9.1 Risk Analysis

The synthesis of political, security, and institutional dynamics identifies three interconnected high-priority risk clusters for the 2026 FCT Area Council elections. These risks are not isolated but are mutually reinforcing.

Risk Category	Primary Drivers & Evidence	Potential Impact on Electoral Process
<p>Credibility & Legitimacy Risk</p>	<p>High -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived Bias of FCT Administration: The FCT Minister's obvious partisan campaigning for APC candidates shapes state and party lines, creating a non-level playing field. Legal Exclusion of a Major Party: INEC's barring of the Labour Party (LP) may be seen as a technicality that disenfranchises a segment of the electorate and narrows political choice. History of Low Turnout: The 2022 voter turnout of 26.7% indicates deep public apathy, which can undermine the perceived mandate of winners. 	<p>Erodes public trust in the fairness of the process, provides grounds for legal disputes, delegitimises elected officials, and fuels post-election grievances.</p>
<p>Violence & Instability Risk</p>	<p>Medium-High -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ambient Insecurity as Multiplier: The documented escalation of kidnappings and armed crime (especially in Bwari, Kuje, and AMAC) creates a climate of fear that can suppress turnout and disrupt logistics, functioning as a form of non-violent electoral manipulation. Politicised Security Actors: The risk of security agencies being perceived as aligned with the FCT Administration's partisan stance. Local Flashpoints: Land disputes and intense party competition in specific wards are clear triggers for localised violence. 	<p>Physical harm to citizens and officials, disruption of voting and collation, declaration of invalid polls in affected areas, and a broader chilling effect on political participation.</p>

<p>Institutional & Logistical Failure Risk</p>	<p>Medium</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> INEC Operational Stress Test: Off-cycle elections such as FCT, Ekiti, and Osun elections serve as a “test run” for 2027, increasing scrutiny on new leadership and the deployment of BVAS/technology in a complex environment. Voter Apathy Cycle: Logistical hurdles (late materials, missing names) have historically reinforced apathy. A repeat could lead to a collapse in participation. Information Disorder: The weaponisation of social media to spread false narratives about results or incite tension can outpace official communication and trigger unrest. 	<p>Breakdown of the result management process, heightened tension due to misinformation, collapse of public confidence in INEC, and increased likelihood of litigation.</p>
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9.2 Scenario Building

Based on the interaction of the risks identified in Section 9.1, three plausible scenarios are outlined for the electoral period and immediate aftermath. These scenarios are now explicitly anchored in the **Priority Risks** from the accompanying Risk Matrix, making them practical tools for developing targeted mitigating interventions and early- warning checklists.

Scenario	Description & Key Characteristics	Triggers & Early Warning Indicators
<p>Scenario A: Credible & Contested (Most Likely)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elections proceed with minor logistical issues. Turnout slightly improves but remains low. APC wins a majority amid allegations of federal advantage. Results are legally credible but heavily challenged in tribunals. Outcome: A legally valid but politically disputed outcome, testing institutional legitimacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vote Buying (Score: 12): Observed, large-scale distribution of cash/goods in specific wards. Result Collation Disputes (Score: 12): Delays in IReV uploads from 2+ high-stakes Area Councils. Thuggery & Intimidation (Score: 16): Isolated clashes between party youth wings in AMAC, Bwari, or Gwagwalada.

<p>Scenario B: Peaceful but Illegitimate (Higher Risk)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter apathy deepens; turnout collapses below 20%. • Election seen as a foregone conclusion due to structural bias.- Ambient insecurity suppresses voting in peri-urban hotspots. • Process is peaceful but hollow, failing the public trust test. • Outcome: A severe crisis of legitimacy for FCT local governance, fuelling long-term public disengagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security Breach (Score: 15): A major kidnapping or armed attack in Bwari, Kuje, and Kwali in the 72 hours before the poll. • Thuggery & Intimidation: Coordinated online campaigns calling for an election boycott gain traction. • Vote Buying: Visible absence of last-minute vote-buying, indicating a boycotted or non-competitive poll.
<p>Scenario C: Violent & Unstable (Worst- Case)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-stakes violence erupts in Bwari, Kuje, and AMAC.- Clashes involve political thugs, security forces, and citizens.- Critical INEC infrastructure (collation centres) is attacked. • Voting is suspended in several wards.- Outcome: A constitutional and security crisis requiring the Supreme Court's intervention and a disputed administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thuggery & Intimidation (Score: 16): Assassination or severe attack on a leading candidate. • Security Breach (Score: 15): Mobilisation of armed gangs across council borders, verified by security sources. • Result Collation Disputes: Proven, large-scale compromise of BVAS or a cyber-attack on the result transmission system.

9.3 Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder Roles and Influence

The Core Role of the National Peace Committee (NPC)

The NPC is the anchor for electoral peace. Its mandate is to facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and uphold the moral commitments of the Peace Accord. As national tensions influence local FCT politics, the NPC's role as a neutral, respected convener is critical for fostering trust among all parties.

High Influence, High Interest

These stakeholders are central to the election's execution.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):	Security Agencies:
Administers all technical and logistical aspects of the poll. Its credibility, tested by a new leadership and past challenges, is paramount for public trust.	The Nigeria Police Force, the military, and agencies under ICCES are responsible for maintaining order. Their neutrality and professionalism are essential, especially given the national backdrop of insecurity and the risk of violence during campaigns.
Political Parties & Candidates:	FCT Administration:
The conduct of parties like the APC and PDP sets the electoral tone. Their adherence to the Peace Accord and campaign laws directly determines the level of violence or peace.	Led by the Minister, this body controls the state apparatus and resources. Its perceived neutrality is crucial; any partisan use of incumbency could severely skew the playing field.

High Influence, Lower Direct Interest

These entities shape the environment but are not direct electoral actors.



Judiciary and Courts: They provide the final arbiter for post-election disputes. The speed and perceived fairness of their judgments are vital for resolving conflicts and legitimising outcomes.



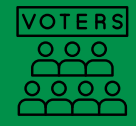
Media Organisations: They control public information flow. Responsible reporting is a major tool against disinformation, while partisan or sensational coverage can inflame tensions.



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Election Observers: CSOs act as independent watchdogs, monitoring the process and advocating for transparency, which helps hold Inner Circle actors accountable.

Lower Influence, High Interest

These groups are the electorate and the most affected communities.



Voters (General Population): As the ultimate decision-makers, their participation confers legitimacy. High voter apathy, as seen in 2022, remains a significant threat to the election's mandate.



Youth and Student Groups: A large demographic whose engagement or alienation can impact turnout and stability. They are often targets for mobilisation or recruitment into political thuggery.



Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and Vulnerable Groups: They require specific accommodations for inclusive participation. Their access to the poll is a key measure of electoral fairness.



Business Community and Market Associations: Economic stability is their primary interest. They can be influential advocates for peace to prevent disruptions to commerce.

Stakeholder Influence Matrix

Stakeholder Group	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Primary Role & Current Context
INEC	Very High	Very High	Election administration. Under scrutiny to replicate past successes amidst logistical and credibility challenges.
Security Agencies	Very High	Very High	Law & order enforcement. Must navigate general insecurity and remain neutral in a politically charged climate.
Political Parties	Very High	Very High	Contesting elections. Their conduct, adherence to laws, and internal democracy are major peace determinants.
FCT Administration	High	High	Controlling state resources. Its neutrality is critical to prevent abuse of incumbency advantage.
Judiciary	High	Medium	Electoral dispute resolution. Its efficiency and perceived impartiality are key to post-election stability.
Media	High	Medium	Information shaping. Must combat disinformation and avoid becoming a tool for political incitement.
CSOs & Observers	Medium	High	Independent monitoring and advocacy. Essential for public oversight and confidence-building.
Voters	Medium (Collectively)	Very High	Legitimising the outcome. Overcoming apathy and resisting vote-buying are their key challenges.

Youth Groups	Low-Medium	High	Mobilising peers. Can be a force for positive engagement or, if marginalised, a source of unrest.
PWDs/Vulnerable Groups	Low	High	Participating inclusively. Their access is a benchmark for the election's fairness.

10.0 Strategic Entry Points and Programmatic Actions

The analysis of this report reveals an electoral environment in the FCT characterised by institutional ambiguity, a monetised political economy, pervasive insecurity, and profound public apathy. Effective programming must be pragmatic, targeted, and adaptive to these realities. The following recommendations offer strategic entry points for the National Peace Committee and other stakeholders, grounded in a "Do-No-Harm" framework and human rights principles.

10.1 Strategic Entry Points and Programmatic Actions

The following initiatives are designed as tangible, scalable interventions that leverage existing community structures and address the core risks identified in this analysis.

1.

Independent State-based Peace Architecture (ISPA)

To counter the localised flashpoints of violence, thuggery, and intimidation identified in Bwari, Kwali, Kuje, Gwagwealada, and AMAC, institutionalised community-level mediation is critical. Therefore, there is a need to establish an Independent State-based Peace Architecture (ISPA) in all six Area Councils and their most volatile wards. Membership must include Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, Women and Youth Representatives, Security Agencies (Police, NSCDC), and INEC Electoral Officers. This will directly mitigate thuggery and intimidation (Priority 1) and security breaches (Priority 2) by creating a trusted, local mechanism for de-escalation before state security intervention is required.

To address the risks stemming from the FCT Minister's partisan posture and potential post-election disputes, formal channels for dialogue among contestants are essential to build minimum trust. Therefore, there is a need to facilitate a sustained FCT Inter-Party Dialogue Platform, convened under the moral authority of the NPC. This platform should move beyond a one-off peace accord signing to facilitate meetings where parties can agree on specific codes of conduct, address logistical grievances with INEC, and establish a joint incident reporting mechanism. This will directly mitigate the issues of credibility & legitimacy risks, as well as result in collusion disputes (Priority 3), by creating a forum for problem-solving that can isolate spoilers and build consensus on process integrity.

2.

Inter-Party Dialogue Platform to Prevent Elite-Triggered Crises

3.
Youth-Led Peace Campaigns to Counter Manipulation and Apathy

To disrupt the cycle where unemployed youth are weaponised as political thugs and targeted by disinformation, youth agency must be harnessed for peace. There is a need to support Youth-Led Peace Campaigns that leverage peer-to-peer influence. This includes training youth ambassadors in conflict-sensitive reporting, supporting them to create digital content (short videos, podcasts) that promote issue-based voting. This will directly address the issue of counters Thuggery and Intimidation (Priority 1) and the weaponisation of social media, while also tackling Voter Apathy by making civic engagement relevant to youth culture.

To combat the “digital wildfires” of disinformation and hate speech that inflame tensions, credible local information channels must be amplified. There is a need to forge strategic media partnerships for Peace Messaging. This involves:

(a) Curating content (audio jingles, talk show scripts, fact-check alerts) for local radio stations; and
 (b) Training community journalists on conflict-sensitive election reporting. This will directly mitigate the information disorder risk that fuels all other scenarios and supports transparent result collation by ensuring credible information on the process is widely available.

4.
Media Partnerships for Peace Messaging – Securing the Information Environment

5
Collaboration with Traditional Institutions to Resolve Structural Grievances

To address the underlying drivers of conflict in hotspot areas, the enduring authority of traditional institutions must be engaged. There is a need to initiate formal collaboration with traditional institutions. Programmes should support Traditional Councils in hotspot areas such as Kwali, Kuje, and Bwari to:

(a) Mediate latent land and indigene-settler disputes ahead of the election period;
 (b) Lead community dialogues on the dangers of political violence; and
 (c) Use their moral authority for oral persuasion (royal pronouncements) against selling votes or engaging as thugs. This will directly address the structural drivers of violence (land disputes, identity politics) and provide a culturally legitimate counterweight to vote-buying (Priority 3).

10.2 Do-No-Harm Considerations

<p>1. Elite Co-Option of ISPA: Ensure ISPA have diverse membership and clear terms of reference to prevent capture by a single political interest or traditional ruler.</p>	<p>2. Securitising Dialogue: Maintain the Inter-Party Platform as a civil society-convened space, not a state security briefing, to preserve its neutrality and encourage candid dialogue.</p>	<p>3. Unintended Exclusion: In partnering with traditional institutions, consciously design parallel avenues for women and youth to voice concerns, ensuring these structures do not reinforce existing patriarchal power imbalances.</p>
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10.3 Adaptive Strategies for Shifting Conditions

<p>1. Pre-Election Focus (Now – Feb 20, 2026): Prioritise ISPA establishment, Inter-Party Dialogue, and Traditional Institution collaboration to prevent violence and build trust.</p>	<p>2. Election Day & Immediate Post-Election: Activate all Media Partnerships and Youth Campaigns for real-time rumour management and peace messaging. ISPA shift to active monitoring and incident reporting.</p>	<p>3. Post-Election Litigation Period: Sustain the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform to manage grievances and prevent protests from escalating, while Media Partnerships focus on accurate information regarding tribunal processes.</p>
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10.4 Human Rights Considerations

All programs must explicitly:

<p>1. Amplify Marginalised Voices: Ensure ISPA, youth campaigns, and media content actively include and represent women, PWDs, and youth.</p>	<p>2. Protect Civic Space: Monitor and document any intimidation of ISPA members or media partners, framing such actions as violations of the right to participate in public affairs.</p>	<p>3. Promote Electoral Justice: Use these platforms to advocate for the rights of voters to a free, fair, and safe process, positioning electoral integrity as a fundamental human rights issue.</p>
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10.5 Clear Implications for Programme Design

Programme Area	Integrated Action (Combining Analysis & New Proposals)
Election Security & Early Warning	The Independent State-based Peace Architecture (ISPA) network is a community-based early warning system. It feeds verified, local incident reports to a central desk managed by CSOs, which can then engage security agencies (ICCES) with specific, actionable intelligence.
Civic Engagement Initiatives	Move beyond generic voter education. Youth-Led Peace Campaigns and Media Partnerships should disseminate the targeted messages and performance scorecards for incumbents, driving strategic, issue-based engagement.
Policy Dialogue & Advocacy	Use evidence and relationships built through the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform and Traditional Institution collaboration to advocate for a clear policy reform that addresses the root cause of conflicts.
Party Reform Programmes	The Inter-Party Dialogue Platform serves as a soft entry for party reform. Discussions on codes of conduct can naturally evolve into technical working groups on transparent campaign finance and democratic primaries, building trust for deeper engagement.

11.0 Strategic Policy Recommendations for the National Peace Committee

Pre-Election Period:

- Engage critical stakeholders, including security agencies, through the dissemination of early warning advisories on identified flashpoint areas to facilitate conflict prevention and targeted deployment.

Election Day:

- Establish a dedicated Situation Room at the ESI Hub to monitor and track election security data in real time.
- Facilitate early response mechanisms by promptly reporting verified incidents to relevant security agencies.

Post-Election Period:

- Sustain the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform through regular sessions throughout the post-election litigation period.
- Establish a joint incident reporting mechanism to enable cross-party documentation of violations and coordinated grievance management.

Endnotes

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