

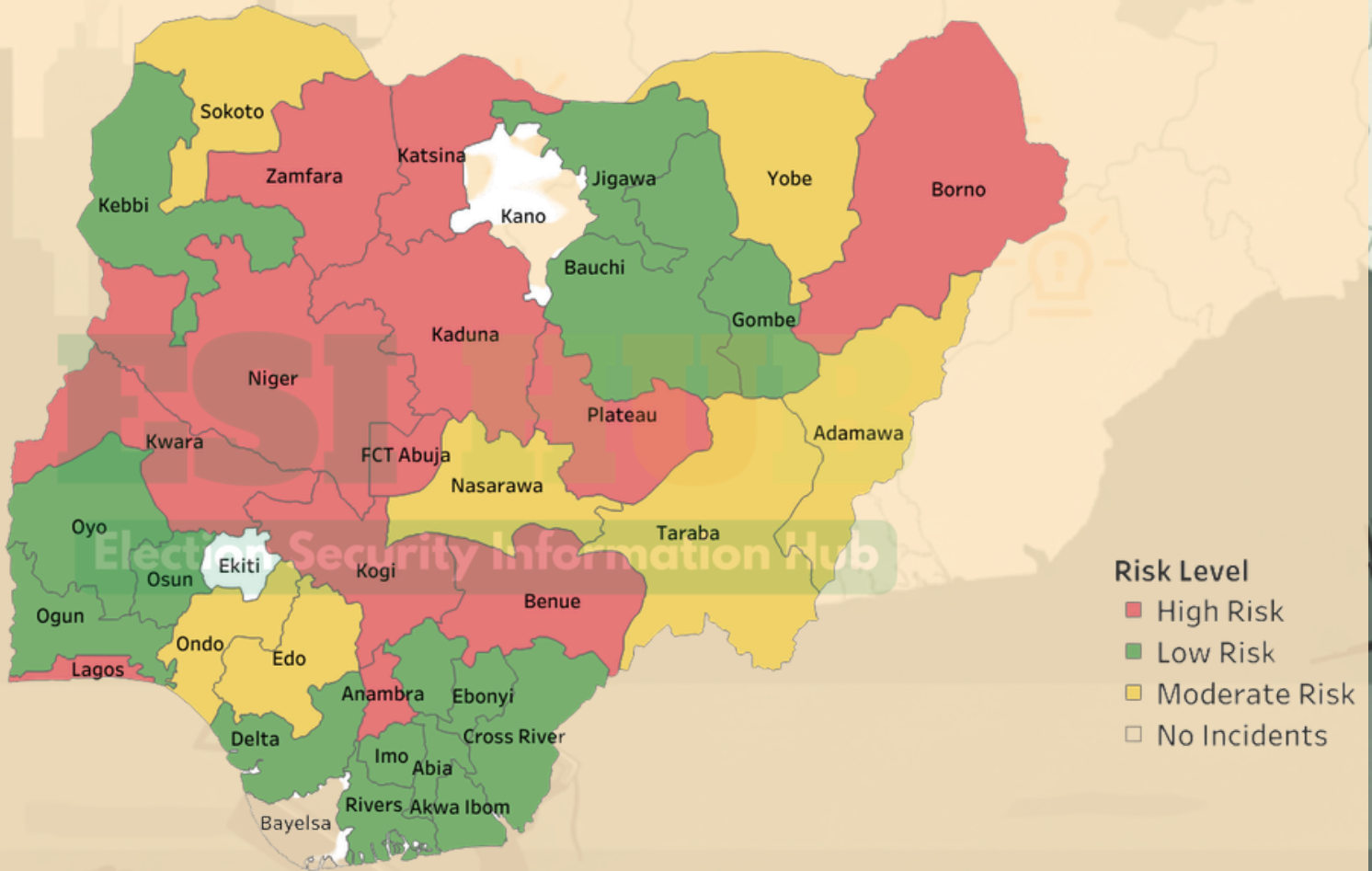


Funded by the European Union



MONTHLY THREAT ASSESSMENT REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2025

NATIONAL RISK MAP - SEPTEMBER 2025



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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

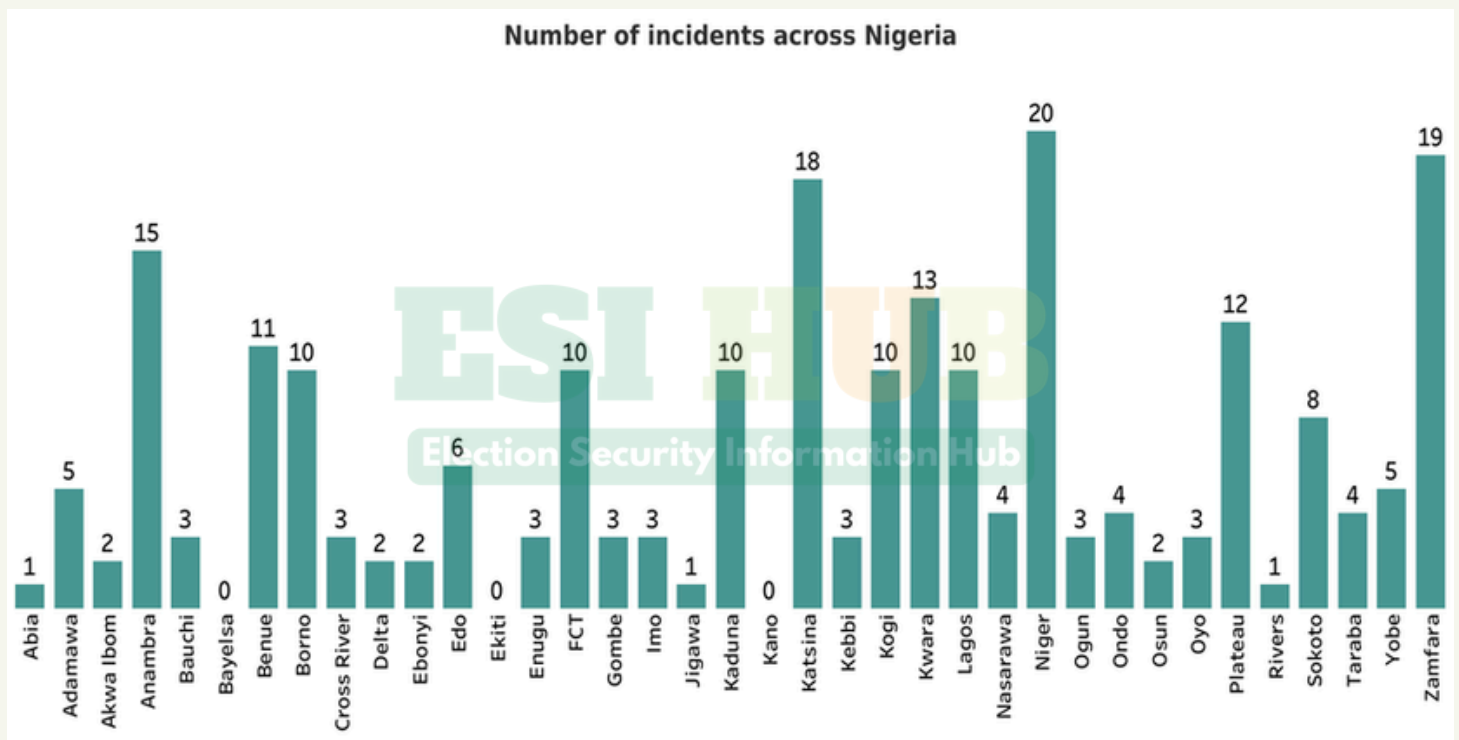
The Kukah Centre (TKC), founded by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, is a non-profit policy and research institution dedicated to promoting democracy, good governance, and national cohesion in Nigeria. Through evidence-based research, data-driven analysis, and inclusive dialogue, the Centre works to strengthen human-rights protection, accountability, and sustainable peace. Its interventions are designed to generate actionable insights that inform governance reforms, deepen civic participation, and reinforce institutional resilience.

As the Secretariat of the National Peace Committee (NPC), The Kukah Centre provides administrative support to the NPC — a non-governmental, non-partisan body of eminent Nigerians that has been central to Nigeria’s democratic stability since its establishment in 2015. The Committee is widely recognized for facilitating the National Peace Accords, through which political parties and candidates commit to issue-based campaigns and respect for electoral outcomes. Beyond the accords, the NPC engages in preventive diplomacy, mediation, and dialogue, consistently helping to de-escalate political tensions and safeguard democratic transitions across electoral cycles.

In alignment with this peacebuilding mandate, The Kukah Centre accepted to host the Election Security Information (ESI) Hub under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) programme. The ESI Hub functions as a central coordination and data-intelligence platform that tracks electoral offences, identifies insecurity flashpoints, and generates verified, real-time analysis to inform decision-making. By integrating systematic data collection, geospatial analysis, and strategic communication tools, the Hub provides actionable insights to key stakeholders, including INEC, security agencies, civil society organizations, media, and development partners. Thereby enhancing early warning, countering disinformation, and advancing the shared goal of peaceful, credible, and inclusive elections in Nigeria.

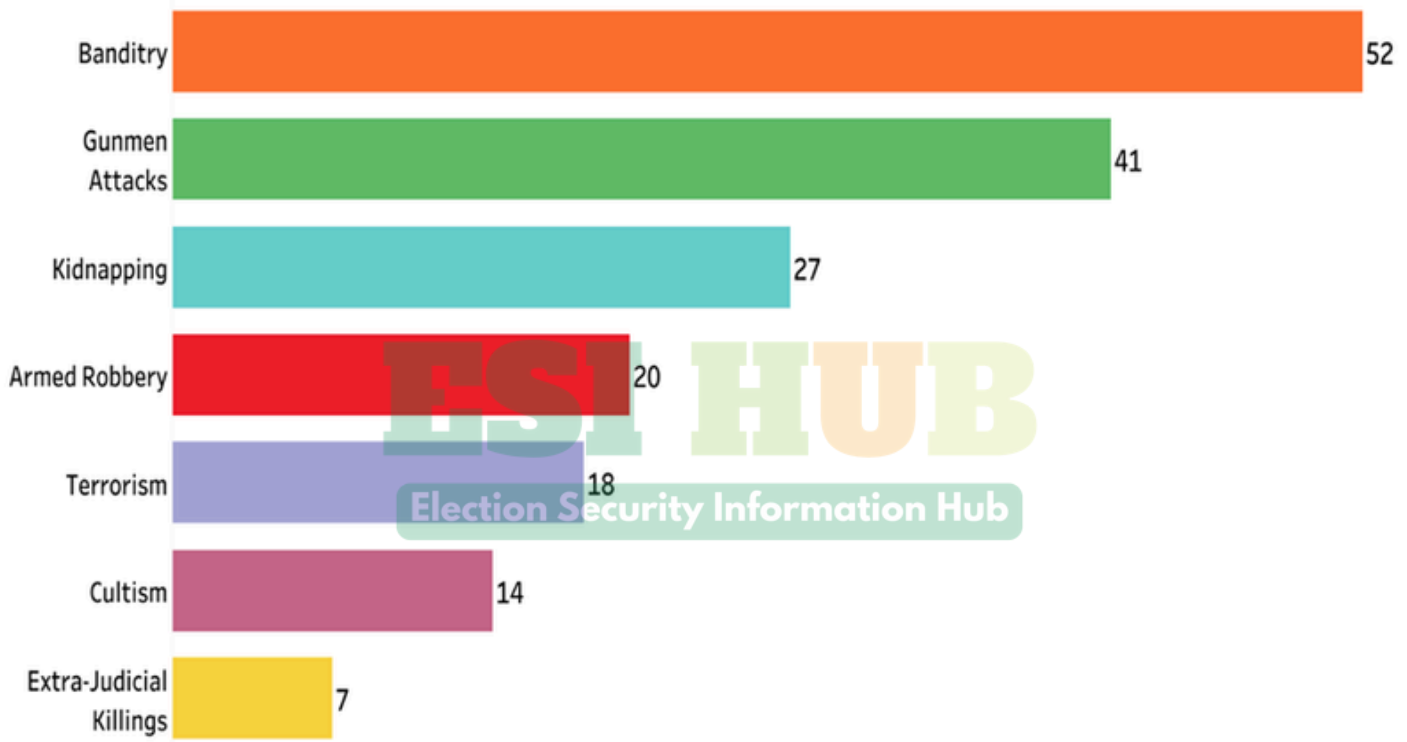
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the domestication of the ESI hub at the Kukah Centre, one of the central objectives of the hub included the provision of Monthly Security Assessment. The first report covered the month of September, and between 1 and 30 September 2025, the ESI Hub recorded 229 incidents of insecurity across 27 states, comprising 200 verified and 29 unverified cases. The unverified cases represent incidents still undergoing field confirmation, media triangulation, or security agency validation. In several instances, information gaps such as missing casualty figures, conflicting source accounts, or lack of corroborating official statements prevented full verification at the time of reporting. These incidents resulted in 773 casualties—437 deaths, 152 injuries, and 184 kidnappings alongside the displacement of about 300 persons and the destruction of homes, farms, and public infrastructure.



The dominant threat categories were banditry (52 incidents), armed gunmen attacks (41), and kidnappings (27). The North-West and North-Central zones remained epicentres of violence, with Zamfara, Niger, and Katsina recording the heaviest casualty burdens. In the South, Anambra and Lagos witnessed recurring cult-related and politically linked violence, while Kwara emerged as a new flashpoint signalling the southward expansion of armed criminal networks.

Top Threat Categories



Overall, 12 states Zamfara, Niger, Katsina, Anambra, Lagos, Plateau, Kaduna, Kwara, Borno, Benue, Kogi and the FCT accounted for nearly half of all national incidents. Women and youth were disproportionately affected through abductions, intimidation, and economic exploitation, underscoring the human and developmental cost of insecurity.

These findings highlight persistent insecurity that transcends electoral seasons. They reaffirm the urgency of evidence-based, multi-stakeholder collaboration among the NPC, INEC, security agencies, CSOs, media, and development partners to strengthen early-warning systems, improve public trust, and safeguard Nigeria’s democratic resilience.

METHODOLOGY

The Election Security Information (ESI) Hub is an initiative of The Kukah Centre (TKC), which serves as the technical secretariat of the National Peace Committee (NPC). It operates under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) programme specifically the Support to the National Peace Committee Project implemented by TKC. The Hub contributes to the EU's broader objective of strengthening democratic governance, peacebuilding, and credible elections in Nigeria.

Conceived as a central coordination, research, and data-intelligence platform, the ESI Hub monitors, analyses, and communicates patterns of election-related insecurity while also tracking broader governance risks that may indirectly influence electoral processes. Its mandate is to bridge the evidence gap between field-level security incidents and strategic decision-making, providing actionable insights that inform policy, coordination, and preventive response.

Through its core components the Election Security Trends Reports, Electoral Offences Tracking System (EOTS), and ESI Studio the Hub generates verified data and analysis to support early warning and early response (EWER), strengthen institutional accountability, and promote collaborative peacebuilding. It works closely with security agencies, INEC, civil-society organisations, media partners, and development actors, ensuring that national peace and security efforts are grounded in credible, real-time evidence.

This Monthly Security Assessment, the inaugural edition under the ESI Hub framework, focuses on both election-related incidents of insecurity and broader trends of insecurity trends with potential electoral implications. It situates these within Nigeria's wider governance and democratic landscape, showing how armed violence, disinformation, and institutional weaknesses intersect to threaten peace and political stability.

1

Strengthen understanding of security dynamics influencing democratic and electoral integrity across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

2

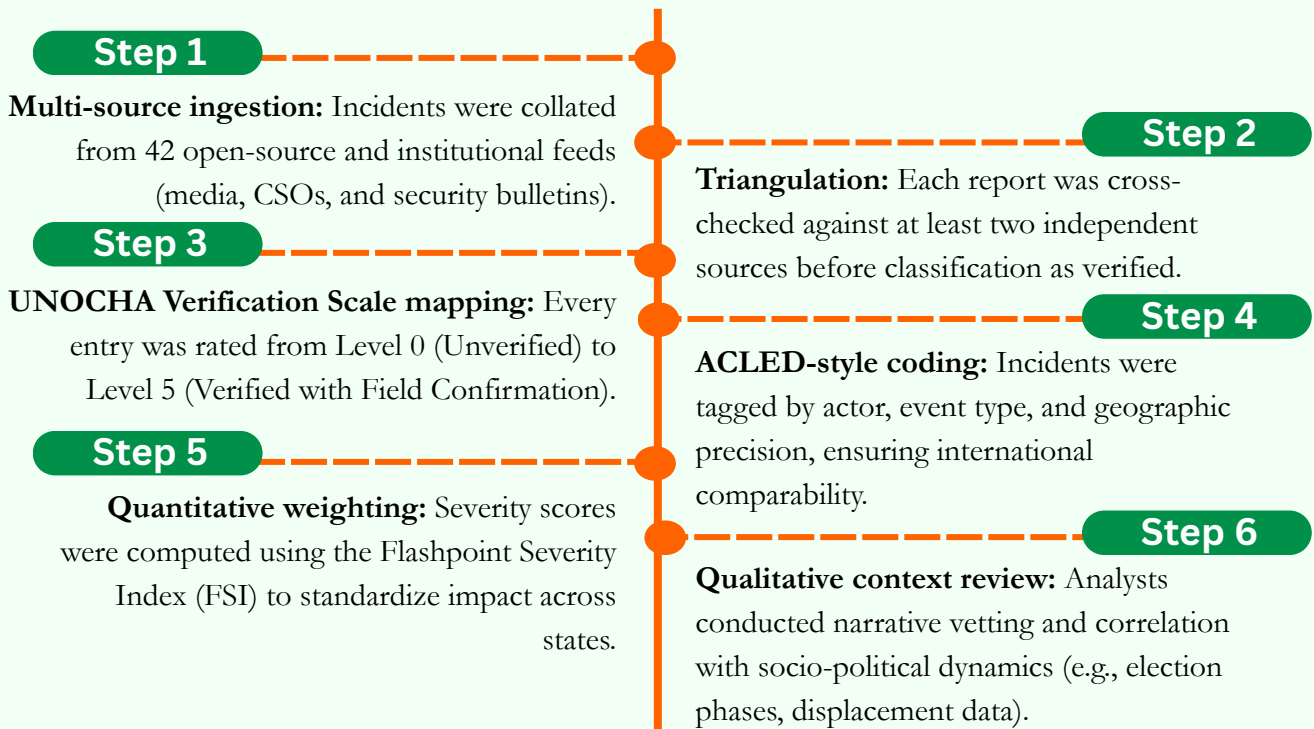
Support early-warning, coordinated response, and accountability mechanisms among security, governance, and peace institutions.

3

Provide a verified, gender-responsive data foundation for continuous monitoring, comparative analysis, and strategic planning across electoral cycles.

This security assessment applies a six-step hybrid methodology adapted from the Operational Framework of the Election Security Information (ESI) Hub and refined in alignment with international standards such as the UNOCHA Verification Scale, ACLED data validation protocols, and EU-SDGN II early-warning benchmarks. The approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative analysis to ensure data reliability, accuracy, and contextual depth.

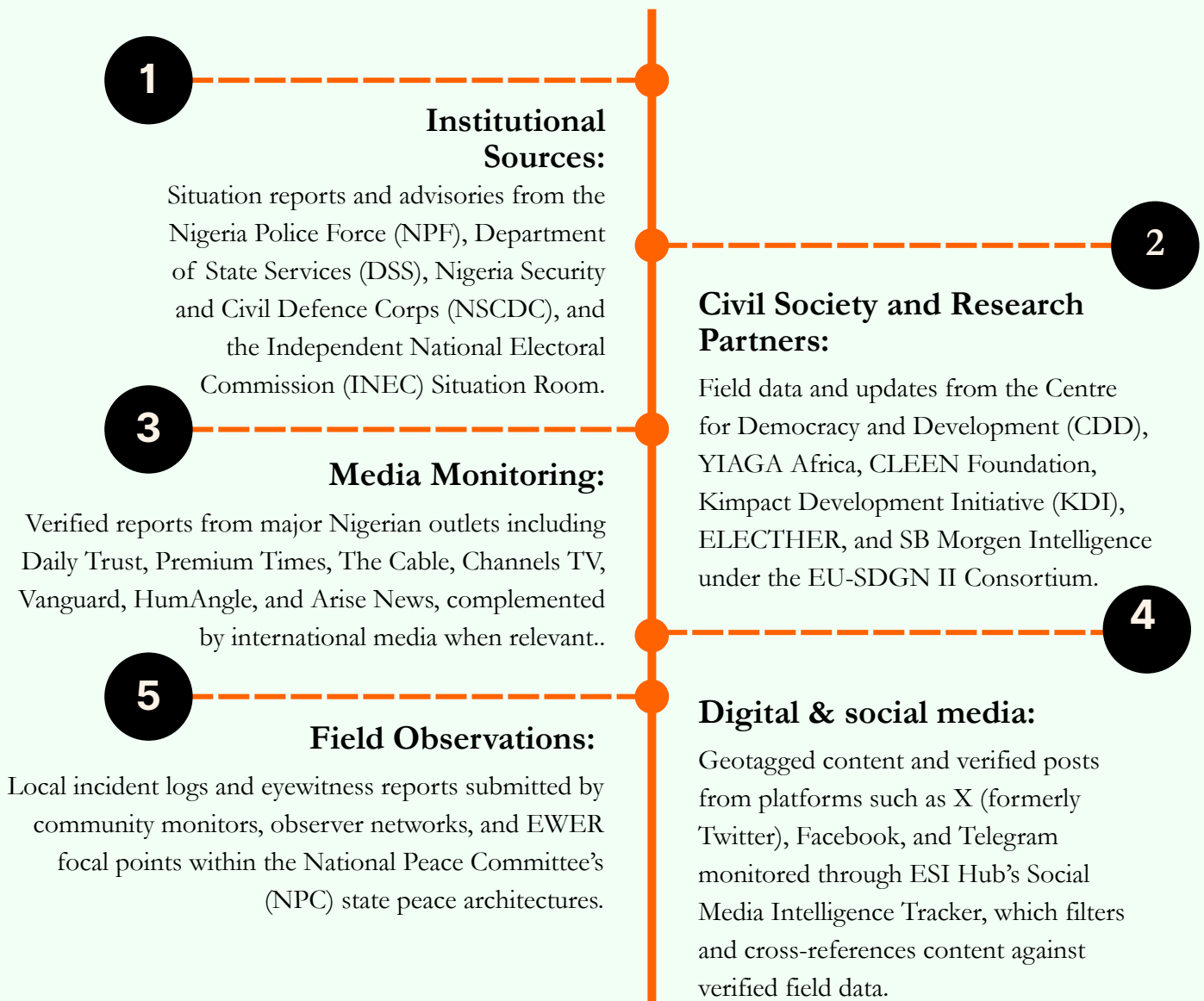
In practice, this alignment is reflected in the data-collection and verification process:



This methodology not only ensures consistency with global verification norms but also allows the ESI Hub dataset to serve as a traceable, evidence-based reference for policy, humanitarian coordination, and electoral risk mapping.

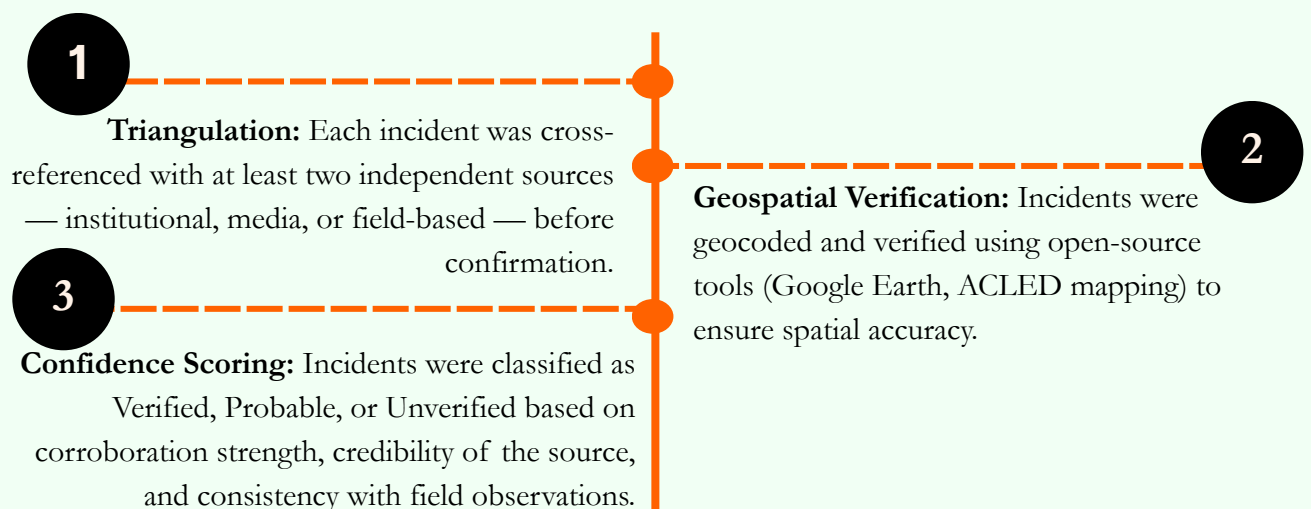
Data Sources

Data for this report were obtained from multi-source inputs combining primary and secondary channels to check accuracy, verify and confirm data in order that findings are mutually corroborated and authentic.



Data Verification and Validation

To ensure reliability, all data underwent a three-stage validation protocol consistent with the ESI Hub's verification framework:

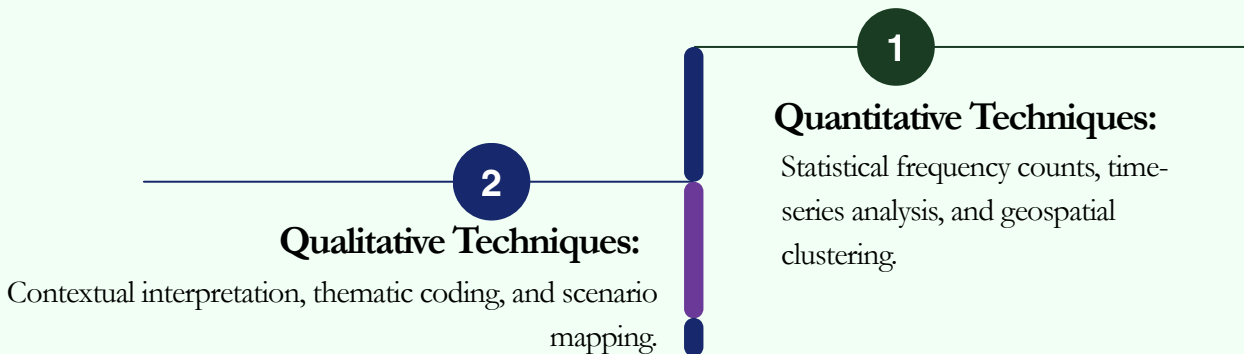


The validated dataset was then subjected to peer review within the ESI analytical team and internal/external review with partners.

Data Processing and Analysis

Following verification, data were cleaned, standardized, and consolidated using the ESI Hub’s database schema. Duplicate entries and unverifiable reports were excluded.

Analysis combined:



Findings were visualized through charts, infographics, and heatmaps for trend interpretation.

Time Frame and Scope

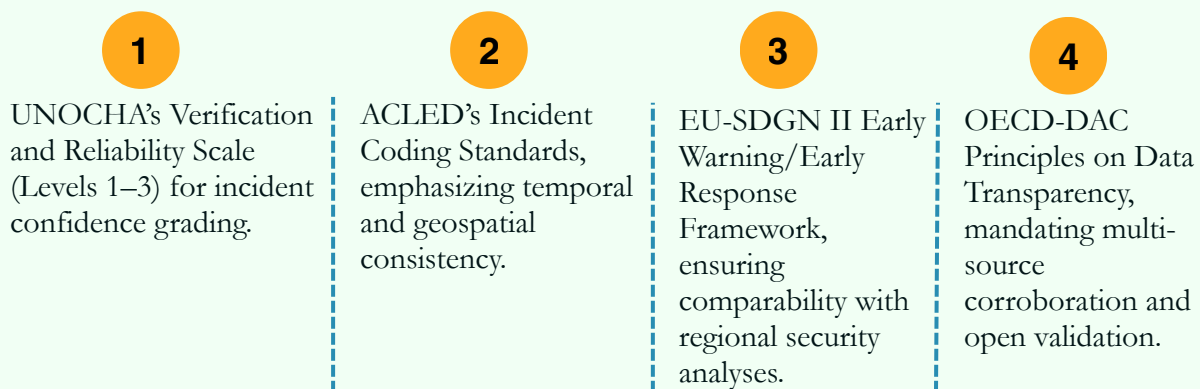
This assessment covers 1–30 September 2025, capturing all incidents of insecurity recorded within that period across 36 Nigerian states. However, incidents of insecurity were recorded within that period only in 27 states. Only incidents falling within the reporting window were analyzed.

Limitations

While every effort was made to ensure accuracy, constraints such as underreporting in rural or conflict-prone areas, information blackouts, and delayed verification may limit data completeness. These limitations are transparently acknowledged to preserve analytical integrity.

Alignment with International Best Practices

The methodology aligns with:



Purpose

Beyond serving as an analytical tool, this methodology underpins accountability, transparency, and preventive action. It enables security agencies, INEC, civil society, and development partners to translate verified data into evidence-based interventions that strengthen Nigeria’s democratic resilience.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS



Communal Clash refers to violent confrontations between ethnic, religious, or geographically defined groups, often fueled or exacerbated by electoral competition. These clashes can be triggered by political mobilization along ethnic lines, disputes over polling unit locations, or manipulation of existing grievances by political actors to intimidate voters, indigene-settler dichotomy, voter suppression in rival areas, overvoting, the deployment of partisan security personnel to support electoral malpractice. The violence often results in displacement, preventing legitimate voters from participating and can undermine the credibility of election results in affected areas.



Terrorism primarily refers to acts of violence perpetrated by non-state extremist groups (such as Boko Haram or ISWAP) aimed at disrupting electoral processes, intimidating voters and election officials, or undermining the legitimacy of the state and its democratic institutions. Terrorist attacks can involve bombings, abductions, or direct assaults on polling centers, effectively disenfranchising populations in affected regions, creating a climate of fear, and challenging the state's capacity to conduct credible elections.



Banditry refers to the organized criminal activities of armed groups (e.g., kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, village raids) that directly impact electoral processes by creating pervasive insecurity, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. These bandit groups can disrupt voter registration, prevent the deployment of electoral materials and personnel, force the relocation or closure of polling units, and intimidate or abduct voters, candidates, or election observers, thereby suppressing turnout and compromising the fairness of elections in affected regions for purely financial or opportunistic gains.



Extra Judicial Killings refer to unlawful killings carried out by state security forces (police, military) or state-backed non-state actors, often under the guise of maintaining order during election periods. These killings can be used to suppress opposition, intimidate voters or protesters, eliminate political rivals, or enforce curfews and restrictions in ways that disproportionately affect specific populations. Their occurrence erodes public trust in security agencies and the electoral process, and can incite further violence or lead to widespread apathy.



Farmer Herder Conflict refers to violent confrontations between sedentary farming communities and nomadic or semi-nomadic herders primarily over access to land, water, and grazing routes. These disputes often escalate when armed community militias, vigilante groups, political actors or criminal opportunists intervene, amplifying the cycle of retaliation. Electoral competition can heighten existing tensions by politicizing resource disputes, leading to targeted attacks or displacement that disenfranchise communities, alter voter demographics, or create no-go areas for electoral officials and voters. The insecurity arising from these conflicts directly undermines the ability to conduct free, fair, and inclusive elections in affected rural areas.



Gunmen Attacks is a descriptive term for violent incidents perpetrated by unidentified or unaligned armed individuals or groups, which directly threaten the integrity and safety of the electoral process. These attacks often target electoral infrastructure (e.g., INEC offices, polling units), electoral personnel, security forces, voters, or even politicians, leading to casualties, destruction of materials, and widespread fear. Such attacks are frequently opportunistic or politically motivated, designed to disrupt elections, suppress turnout, or facilitate other forms of malpractice, often without a clear ideological backing like terrorism.



Kidnapping refers to the abduction of individuals, often for ransom, which becomes a significant threat during electoral periods. This can involve the targeting of election officials, security personnel, candidates, their families, or even ordinary voters to disrupt election logistics, extort funds for political campaigns, or intimidate political opponents and communities. The pervasive fear of abduction can suppress voter turnout, hinder the deployment of election materials, and create a climate of fear that undermines the freeness and fairness of the electoral process.



Thuggery refers to the organized use of intimidation, coercion, and physical violence by politically sponsored groups or individuals ("thugs" or "political touts") to manipulate electoral outcomes. These groups are often employed by politicians or parties to disrupt opponents' rallies, snatch ballot boxes, intimidate voters at polling units, perpetrate voter suppression, or facilitate ballot stuffing. Thuggery is a pervasive feature of Nigerian elections, directly undermining their credibility and contributing significantly to electoral violence and distrust.



Armed Robbery though a general crime, can become particularly prevalent and impactful during election periods. Criminal gangs may target electoral officials, security convoys, or even ordinary citizens during transportation of electoral materials or sensitive financial assets (e.g., cash for ad-hoc staff payments). Such incidents not only result in loss of life and property but also disrupt the logistics of elections, create widespread fear, and can lead to the loss of sensitive election materials.



Cultism refers to the activities of secret confraternities or fraternities, often operating in tertiary institutions and urban areas, which are frequently co-opted or sponsored by political actors during elections. Members of these cult groups (also known as "campus cults" or "street cults") are used as political thugs to intimidate voters, snatch ballot boxes, instigate violence at rallies or polling units, and assassinate rivals.

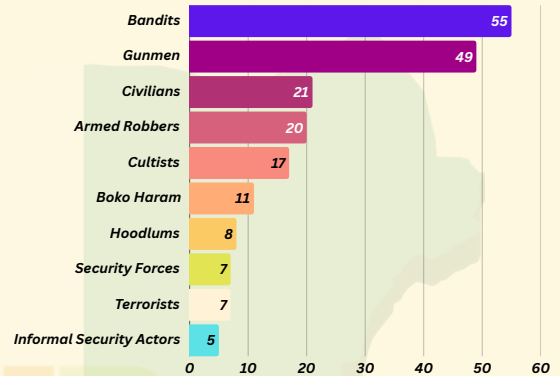
OVERVIEW OF THE INCIDENCES OF INSECURITY

INSECURITY DASHBOARD - SEPTEMBER 2025

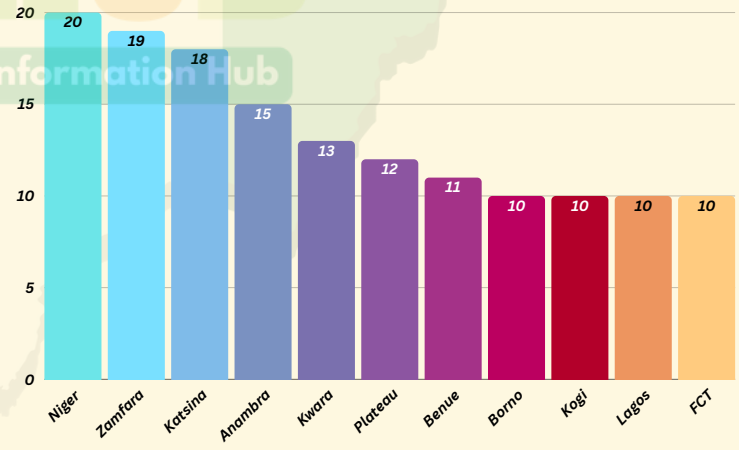
Key National Security Metrics - September 2025



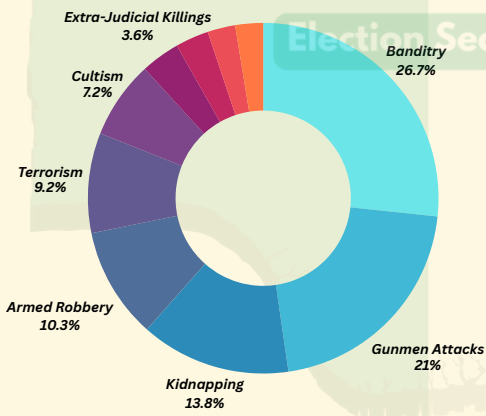
Top Actors by Incident



Top States by Incident



Distribution of Threat Categories



Source: The ESI Hub

National Overview of Insecurity (September 2025)

The security landscape in September 2025 remained complex, fluid, and deeply entrenched within Nigeria’s broader governance and socio-economic challenges. Across the country, 229 incidents of insecurity were recorded between September 1 and September 30, 2025, cutting across 27 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The month was characterized by persistent armed banditry, gunmen attacks, kidnappings, political thuggery, and targeted assassinations, resulting in 773 casualties. Although levels of insecurity varied across regions, the patterns revealed a sustained deterioration in rural safety and an upsurge in urban political and criminal violence.

Evolving Drivers and Emerging Dynamics

Nigeria's insecurity in September 2025 unfolded against the backdrop of intensifying economic hardship, demographic pressure, and political tension. These dynamics deeply tied to inflation, unemployment, displacement, and digital polarisation created an enabling environment for violent actors to expand operations and for political interests to manipulate insecurity for strategic gain.

The persistence of insecurity in September reflected both long-standing structural drivers and newly emerging stress factors. Inflationary pressure, rising food insecurity, and unemployment continued to heighten community tensions, while farmer-herder disputes and resource-based rivalries in the North Central zone intensified due to competition over land and shrinking livelihoods. In the South, urban criminality and cult-related violence expanded in tandem with political mobilization ahead of upcoming off-cycle elections. Weak deterrence mechanisms and the limited reach of state authority allowed non-state actors ranging from bandits to politically affiliated youth groups to consolidate control over local territories.

1. Economic Stress and Rural Predation: By mid-2025, Nigeria's inflation rate had climbed above 33%, with food inflation surpassing 40%, eroding purchasing power and deepening rural poverty^[1]. Armed groups in the North-West and North-Central exploited this distress by imposing "harvest levies" and looting produce, mirroring insurgent-style taxation documented in earlier conflicts^[2]. Rising fertilizer and transport costs further constrained farmers, forcing migration and increasing vulnerability to predation. These dynamics transformed rural insecurity from sporadic raids into systemic economic extortion.

2. Urban Poverty, Political Mobilisation, and Youth Gangs: Urban unemployment, estimated at 37% among youth^[3], has entrenched a generation of politically mobilised young people operating as mercenary enforcers, social media propagandists, and campaign thugs. In Lagos, Anambra, and Edo, cult groups and urban gangs monetized violence, offering protection services or crowd intimidation to political patrons. This pattern represents a shift from ideological to transactional violence, where insecurity functions as a political currency^[4].

3. Displacement, Mobility, and Criminal Expansion: As of September 2025, Nigeria hosted more than 3.2 million internally displaced persons, most concentrated in the North-East and North-West^[5]. Many displaced persons have migrated southward toward Niger, Kwara, and Kogi, creating competition zones over land, labour, and local authority. These corridors—especially along the Abuja–Lokoja–Okene axis—have become staging points for bandit expansion and illicit trafficking, linking northern and southern criminal networks.

4. Governance Fatigue and Declining Institutional Trust: Persistent governance failures—including unpaid salaries, limited rural policing, and allegations of selective enforcement—have weakened institutional legitimacy. In many states, citizens increasingly rely on vigilante networks, hunters' unions, and ethnic militias to secure communities^[6]. While these groups fill a protection vacuum, they often become unregulated power brokers, deepening cycles of reprisal and eroding state monopoly of force^[7].

¹ National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2025). Consumer Price Index Report – August 2025. Abuja: NBS.

² International Crisis Group (ICG). (2024). Revisiting Banditry in Nigeria's North West. Brussels: ICG.

³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2025). Nigeria Human Development Update 2025: Youth, Work, and Insecurity. New York: UNDP.

⁴ Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD). (2024). Political Economy of Urban Violence in Nigeria. Abuja: CDD West Africa.

⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2025). Nigeria Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Round 47. Geneva: IOM.

⁶ CLEEN Foundation. (2023). Community Policing and Citizen Security in Nigeria. Lagos: CLEEN.

⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2024). "Between Fear and Vigilance": Civilian Security Groups in Nigeria. New York: HRW.

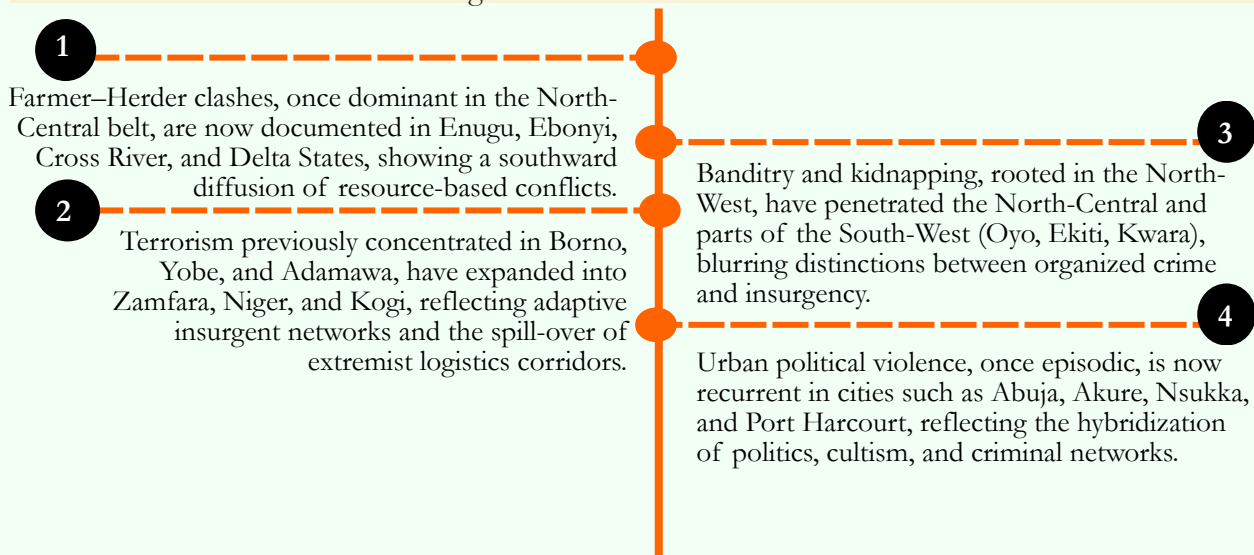
5. Digital Disinformation and Polarisation: Nigeria’s online environment has become a major vector for identity-based manipulation and disinformation. The rise of AI-assisted propaganda, hate speech, and regional echo chambers has amplified tension, particularly in the South-East and South-South^[8]. Disinformation not only fuels fear but also preconditions violence, as seen in the viral ethnic hate messages circulating before local clashes in Lagos and Onitsha.

Taken together, these shifting socio-economic realities reveal a mutation of violence: from episodic unrest to a structural feature of Nigeria’s political economy. Economic collapse, joblessness, displacement, and political instrumentalisation of insecurity have created a feedback loop where violence both expresses and sustains social fragility. This transformation blurs the line between criminality, politics, and survival—requiring multidimensional policy interventions that combine economic stabilization, youth inclusion, and digital governance reforms.

Geographic Distribution and Historical Context

Nigeria’s insecurity map reflects long-running, zone-specific trajectories that have increasingly converged into overlapping conflict ecosystems. Historically, different threats were geographically distinct: insurgency in the North-East, banditry in the North-West, farmer herder conflict in the North-Central, militancy in the South-South, and cult or political violence in the South-East and South-West.

However, these boundaries have eroded. The migration of armed actors, illicit weapons flows, and cross-zonal political alliances have created a fluid geography of violence where no conflict type remains confined to its traditional region.



These overlapping geographies reveal that Nigeria’s security crisis has evolved from regional silos into a national system of interconnected risks, requiring cross-zonal intelligence coordination and multi-state early-warning mechanisms. The spatial diffusion of conflict also implies that election-related insecurity is now a nationwide concern, not restricted to historically volatile zones.

⁸Dubawa & CJID. (2024). Mapping Disinformation Networks in Nigeria. Lagos: CJID.

North-West (From cattle rustling to ransom economies)

Violence in the North West crystallized from localized cattle rustling in the 1990s–2000s into networked banditry after 2011, driven by arms diffusion from the Sahel, weak rural policing, and conflict markets around gold mining and extortion corridors in Zamfara/Katsina/Sokoto. By 2014–2018, groups normalized mass abductions, roadside taxation, and reprisal raids, effectively exercising quasi-territorial control in forest belts (e.g., Rugu/Kuyanbana). These criminal formations now behave like insurgent enterprises, sustaining revenue through kidnap-for-ransom and commodity predation, with recurrent spillover into Niger and Kaduna^[9].

Why it matters now: September 2025's concentration of casualties in Zamfara and persistent attacks in Katsina/Sokoto mirror this evolution: bandit groups retain mobility, financing, and community intimidation capacity, outpacing deterrence in rural LGAs^[10].

North-East (Insurgency adaptation and fragmentation)

The North East's arc is defined by Boko Haram's emergence (2009), the 2013–2015 territorial phase, and subsequent factionalization between JAS and ISWAP. Counter-insurgency recaptured many population centers, yet Lake Chad & Sambisa sanctuaries persisted. ISWAP adopted “hearts-and-wallets” taxation along the Komadugu–Yobe axis, while JAS kept punitive violence against civilians. Air and ground operations periodically degrade leadership, but groups replenish through cross-border logistics and economic coercion^[11].

Why it matters now: Fewer incidents, higher deaths per event in Borno/Yobe are consistent with the region's pattern of low-frequency, high-impact engagements (ambushes, IEDs, air-ground misfires) that continue to challenge civilian protection and humanitarian access^[12].

North-Central (Corridor of contestation)

Historically a buffer zone, the North Central became a conflict corridor linking North West criminality to North East insurgency. Long-standing farmer–herder disputes intensified from the 2000s due to land-use change, population growth, and climate stress on transhumance routes, especially in Benue/Plateau/Nasarawa. Simultaneously, gunmen networks exploited highways and forests of Niger/Kogi/Kwara to target communities and transit, sometimes intersecting with political intimidation dynamics near the FCT^[13].

Why it matters now: September's high incident counts in Niger and displacement events in Plateau fit this geography: mixed threats (banditry, gunmen, communal reprisal) thrive where governance reach is thin and terrain favors rapid strikes^[14].

⁹ International Crisis Group. (2020). Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling Back the Mayhem.

¹⁰ SBM Intelligence. (2023). The Economics of Nigeria's Banditry. Centre for Democracy & Development. (2022). Ungoverned Spaces & Criminal Economies.

¹¹ United Nations OCHA. (2021). North-East Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview. Institute for Security Studies. (2022). Boko Haram/ISWAP Dynamics. Zenn, J. (2020). Demystifying Boko Haram.

¹² UNOCHA. (2023). North-East Situation Reports. Nigerian Air Force Communiqués. (2022).

¹³ Mercy Corps. (2015). The Economic Costs of Conflict in Nigeria. CDD. (2021). Farmer–Herder Violence in the Middle Belt. IOM DTM. (2022). Displacement Tracking.

¹⁴ ACLED. (2024). Nigeria Event Data. SBM. (2024). Corridors of Insecurity.

South-East (Political contestation, identity grievance, and armed agitation)

Post-2015, the South East’s risk profile blended political rivalry, disinformation, and secessionist-linked agitation. Enforcement operations, sit-at-home coercion, and targeted killings created a cycle of fear and retaliation in selected LGAs. Parallel to this, electoral thuggery and intra-party factionalism periodically escalated into street violence, while online identity rhetoric amplified polarization and elite signaling^[15].

Why it matters now: September’s incidents in Anambra/Ebonyi—thuggery, threats, and identity-coded rhetoric—reflect how politics-security convergence shapes urban centers and peri-urban corridors, especially near off-cycle election timelines^[16].

South-West (Urban criminal markets and political patronage)

Since the 1990s, university cult groups evolved into urban gangs entangled with protection rackets, transit hubs, and political mobilization. Lagos/Ondo/Osun exhibit dual risks: (1) economic crime (robbery, inter-gang clashes) along markets and transport nodes, and (2) political thuggery tied to rallies, signage, and ward control. These are sustained by patronage and the profitability of city-scale rackets^[17].

Why it matters now: September’s clashes in Ikorodu/Ajeromi-Ifelodun and rally disruptions in Ondo/Osun highlight metropolitan vulnerability: less lethal than northern violence but corrosive for civic life, turnout, and perception of order^[18].

South-South (Factional politics, resource patronage, and localized militancy)

The South South’s volatility historically links resource governance, local power struggles, and post-amnesty fragmentation. Political seasons often heighten intra-party rivalry and micro-militancy, with episodic abductions and protests. Urban centers and LGA HQs become flashpoints when party structures and economic claims collide^[19]. September incidents in Edo/Delta show episodic but salient violence where factional competition meets economic grievance, with rapid contagion potential during candidate selection and ward restructuring^[20].

Regional Patterns and Historical Context



²¹ Small Arms Survey. (2020). Illicit Arms in West Africa. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2021). Kidnap Economies

²² UNEP. (2021). Climate Security in the Sahel. FAO. (2020). Transhumance & Conflict Risk.

²³ CLEEN Foundation. (2018). Crime & Policing in Nigeria. National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Crime & Conflict Indicators.

²⁴ Dubawa. (2022). Election Misinformation Ecosystems. CDD West Africa. (2023). Fact-Checking Nigeria’s Elections.

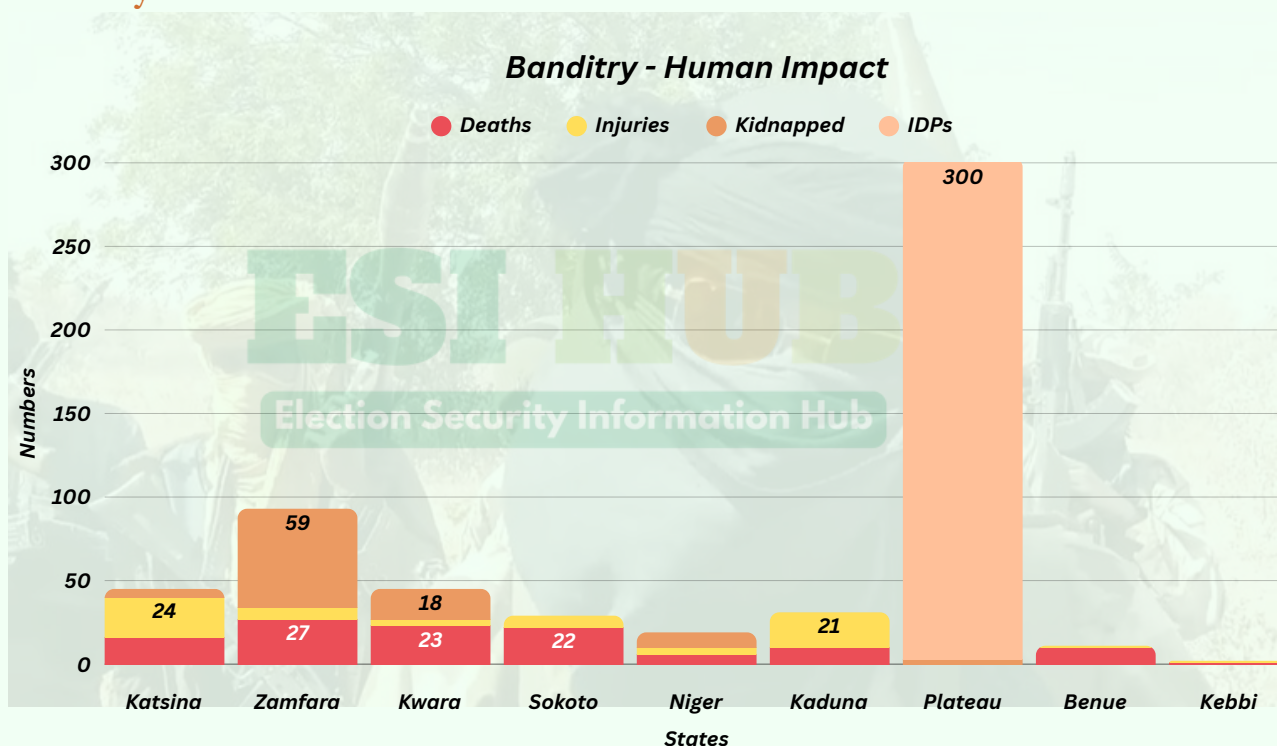
Regional Patterns and Historical Context

Niger State recorded the highest number of incidents (20), driven largely by armed banditry, abductions, and insurgent-linked violence rather than direct political conflict. Most incidents occurred in Shiroro, Rafi, and Munya LGAs, underscoring the state’s growing exposure to cross-border criminal networks from the North West. Meanwhile, Zamfara State suffered the heaviest human toll, with 213 deaths resulting from sustained bandit raids and reprisal attacks on rural communities.

Historically, these dynamics mirror the evolution of insecurity across Nigeria’s geopolitical zones. In the North West, localised cattle rustling that persisted for decades escalated between 2008 and 2011, transforming into organized banditry by 2014, with Zamfara and Katsina emerging as epicentres of mass abductions and ransom-driven violence. In the North East, the Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009, evolved into a prolonged conflict marked by terror attacks, mass displacement, and humanitarian crises that continue to define the region’s instability. In the South, cultism that originated in universities during the 1990s gradually evolved into criminal and political thuggery by the 2000s, as armed youth groups became instruments of electoral manipulation and community control.

Taken together, the September 2025 trends reaffirm that Nigeria’s insecurity is not episodic but structurally rooted in decades of economic fragility, governance gaps, and the politicization of violence. The continuation of these patterns suggests that, without coordinated reforms and preventive security interventions, localised violence will remain a national risk multiplier—fueling displacement, eroding trust in institutions, and constraining democratic consolidation.

Banditry



Banditry dominated Nigeria’s insecurity landscape in September 2025, with 52 verified incidents nationwide. Most attacks occurred in Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna, Kwara, and Sokoto, causing over 120 deaths, 40 injuries, 70 kidnappings, and 3 000 displacements.

Sokoto State recorded repeated clashes. On 1 September, troops rescued 17 kidnapped girls, though two farmers were killed in Isa LGA^[25]. Locals later killed four terrorists in Shagari^[26] and six bandits in Tureta^[27]. A village head and one resident were murdered in Tangaza^[28]. Seven traders were injured when gunmen attacked vehicles in Rabah^[29].

Kaduna State saw several ambushes. In Kachia, eight people were killed and 20 injured^[30]. Troops foiled rustling in Giwa, killing two assailants^[31], while an airstrike neutralised a hideout in Chikun^[32] and a civilian was shot in Giwa-Kauran Fawa^[33].

Zamfara State remained the deadliest. In Gusau, two security personnel died^[34] and three civilians were killed, three injured in Unguwar Kade^[35]. Five soldiers and 10 villagers were killed in Lilo^[36]. Multiple abductions followed: four farmers in Zurmi^[37], 12 residents in Bukkuyum^[38], and 40 worshippers in Tsafe^[39]. In Gummi, two miners were executed^[40] one person injured on the Gusau–Keta road^[41] and three villagers wounded in Bayan Dutsi^[42]. On 26 September, five worshippers were killed during dawn prayers in Yandoto^[43].

Katsina State reported nine verified attacks. Eight vigilantes died in Dandume^[44]; seven civilians were killed and three abducted at Magaji Wando^[45]. Troops repelled assaults in Malumfashi, Dutsin-Ma, Faskari, Matazu, Kankara, Kankia and Dan Musa killing and wounding several combatants. At least 28 deaths, 14 injuries, 22 abductions were confirmed across these operations.

²⁵ Zagazola. (2025, September 1). Troops of Operation FANSAN YANMA rescue 17 kidnapped girls in Sokoto, two farmers killed. Zagazola. *Small Arms Survey*. (2020). *Illicit Arms in West Africa. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2021). Kidnap Economies*

²⁶ NewsNG. (2025, September 6). Troops repel terrorist attacks in Sokoto, rescue driver as locals accost seven terrorists, kill four. NewsNG. <https://newsng.ng/troops-repel-terrorist-attacks-in-sokoto-rescue-driver-as-locals-accosted-7-terrorists-killed-4/>

²⁷ Daily Post. (2025, September 7). Residents kill six bandits, rescue kidnapped relatives in Sokoto community. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/07/residents-kill-six-bandits-rescue-kidnapped-relatives-in-sokoto-community/>

²⁸ Vanguard. (2025, September 19). Village head assassinated as Lukarawa bandits strike Sokoto community. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/village-head-assassinated-as-lukarawa-bandits-strike-sokoto-community/>

²⁹ Vanguard. (2025, September 19). Village head assassinated as Lukarawa bandits strike Sokoto community. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/village-head-assassinated-as-lukarawa-bandits-strike-sokoto-community/>

³⁰ Zagazola. (2025, September 7). Bandits kill eight, leave 20 wounded in Southern Kaduna attack. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/bandits-kill-eight-leave-20-wounded-in-southern-kaduna-attack>

³¹ Zagazola. (2025, September 12). Troops recover rustled cattle, foil bandits' attack in Kaduna. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/troops-recover-rustled-cattle-foil-bandits-attack-in-kaduna>

³² Zagazola. (2025, September 13). NAF airstrikes neutralise bandit hideout in Chikun in Kaduna. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/naf-airstrikes-neutralise-bandit-hideout-in-chikun-in-kaduna>

³³ Latest Nigerian News. (2025, September 24). Bandit attack leaves one dead, another injured in Kaduna community. Latest Nigerian News. <https://www.latestnigeriannews.com/d/65375/breaking-bandit-attack-leaves-one-dead-another-injured-in-kaduna-community.html>

³⁴ Global Upfront. (2025, September 6). Police officer, civilian JTF killed in Zamfara bandits' ambush as Operation FANSAN YANMA troops foil bandits' attack in Katsina State. Global Upfront News. <https://globalupfront.com/2025/09/06/police-officer-civilian-jtf-killed-in-zamfara-bandits-ambush-as-operation-fansan-yanma-troops-foil-bandits-attack-in-katsina-state/>

³⁵ Daily Post. (2025, September 8). Zamfara: Bandits attack Unguwar Kade, leave three dead. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/08/zamfara-bandits-attack-unguwar-kade-leave-3-dead/>

³⁶ Leadership. (2025, September 10). Bandits kill five soldiers, 10 villagers in Zamfara ambush. Leadership. <https://leadership.ng/bandits-kill-5-soldiers-10-villagers-in-zamfara-ambush/>

³⁷ Independent. (2025, September 15). Four farmers abducted by bandits in Zamfara. Independent Nigeria. <https://independent.ng/four-farmers-abducted-by-bandits-in-zamfara/>

³⁸ Zagazola. (2025, September 15). Again, bandits abduct 12 persons in Zamfara community amidst peace truce. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/again-bandits-abduct-12-persons-in-zamfara-community-amidst-peace-truce>

³⁹ Zagazola. (2025, September 15). Despite peace deal, bandits abduct 40 worshippers during early morning prayers in Tsafe, Zamfara. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/despite-peace-deal-bandits-abduct-40-worshippers-during-early-morning-prayers-in-tsafe-zamfara>

⁴⁰ Zagazola. (2025, September 19). Bandits kill two miners in Zamfara. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/bandits-kill-two-miners-in-zamfara>

⁴¹ Daily Post. (2025, September 21). Zamfara: One injured as bandits ambush vehicle on Gusau–Keta route. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/21/zamfara-one-injured-as-bandits-ambush-vehicle-on-gusau-keta-route/>

⁴² Daily Post. (2025, September 23). Bandits attack Zamfara village, injure three, abduct several others. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/23/bandits-attack-zamfara-village-injure-three-abduct-several-others/>

⁴³ Nigerian Eye. (2025, September 26). Bandits kill five worshippers, abduct others in Zamfara mosque attack. Nigerian Eye. <https://www.nigerianeye.com/2025/09/bandits-kill-five-worshippers-abduct.html>

⁴⁴ Zagazola. (2025, September 6). Bandits ambush C-Watch operatives in Katsina, kill eight, burn patrol vehicles. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/bandits-ambush-c-watch-operatives-in-katsina-kill-8-burn-patrol-vehicles-2>

⁴⁵ Premium Times. (2025, September 6). Bandits kill seven, abduct three in Katsina attack. Premium Times Nigeria. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/819226-bandits-kill-seven-abduct-three-in-katsina-attack.html>

Niger State recorded six major incidents. A magistrate and one civilian were injured in Kontagora. The State witnessed multiple coordinated assaults in September 2025, underscoring the southward spread of armed violence. The most notable occurred in Borgu LGA, where three civilians were killed and a teenage girl injured during a night raid^[46]. The attack reflected the persistent mobility of bandit cells infiltrating rural communities despite ongoing military operations.

Kwara State emerged as a new hotspot for armed banditry in September 2025, with escalating violence spreading across Ifelodun, Edu, and Pategi LGAs. The deadliest assault occurred on 24 September in Matogu, Pategi, where ten people—including a pregnant woman—were killed and seven others abducted^[47]. The attack, carried out by suspected Fulani bandits, marked a clear southern expansion of organised bandit networks previously concentrated in the North-West.

Across all theatres, community vigilantes and security forces conducted joint responses, but persistent casualties and serial abductions confirmed the resilience of armed networks operating along the Zamfara–Niger–Kwara corridor.

Collectively, these regional dynamics demonstrate that banditry has evolved from opportunistic crime into an entrenched governance vacuum. Armed groups now exercise coercive control over taxation, mobility, and rural economies, stretching state response capacity across a corridor from Zamfara through Niger to Kwara, and leaving both humanitarian relief and electoral logistics increasingly vulnerable to disruption.

Structured Criminal Enterprise – Bandit groups function as ransom-based economies, with abductions for profit, forced taxation, and livestock rustling sustaining operations.

Geospatial Expansion – The crisis now spans a contiguous corridor from Zamfara → Katsina → Niger → Kwara, exploiting porous borders and informal markets.

Militarisation & Retaliation – Escalating clashes between bandits, vigilantes, and community militias—especially in Katsina and Kwara—blur the line between protection and reprisal.

Collapse of Peace Deals – Zamfara’s repeated violations of its 2024 truce demonstrate state incapacity to enforce negotiated settlements.

Field monitors and IOM DTM Nigeria (Sept 2025) estimate ≈3,200 newly displaced persons, including 1,280 women and 1,050 children, primarily from Zamfara, Niger, and Kwara.

112 homes and 76 hectares of farmland were destroyed; markets in Gusau and Paikoro were deserted.

Displacement camps in Wushishi (Niger) and Kaura Namoda (Zamfara) reported overcrowding, food shortages, and limited healthcare. Women-headed households comprised over 40 % of new arrivals, showing the gendered toll of protracted rural violence.

⁴⁶ Zagazola. (2025, September 20). Bandits kill three, injure teenager in Niger community attack. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/bandits-kill-three-injure-teenager-in-niger-community-attack-2>

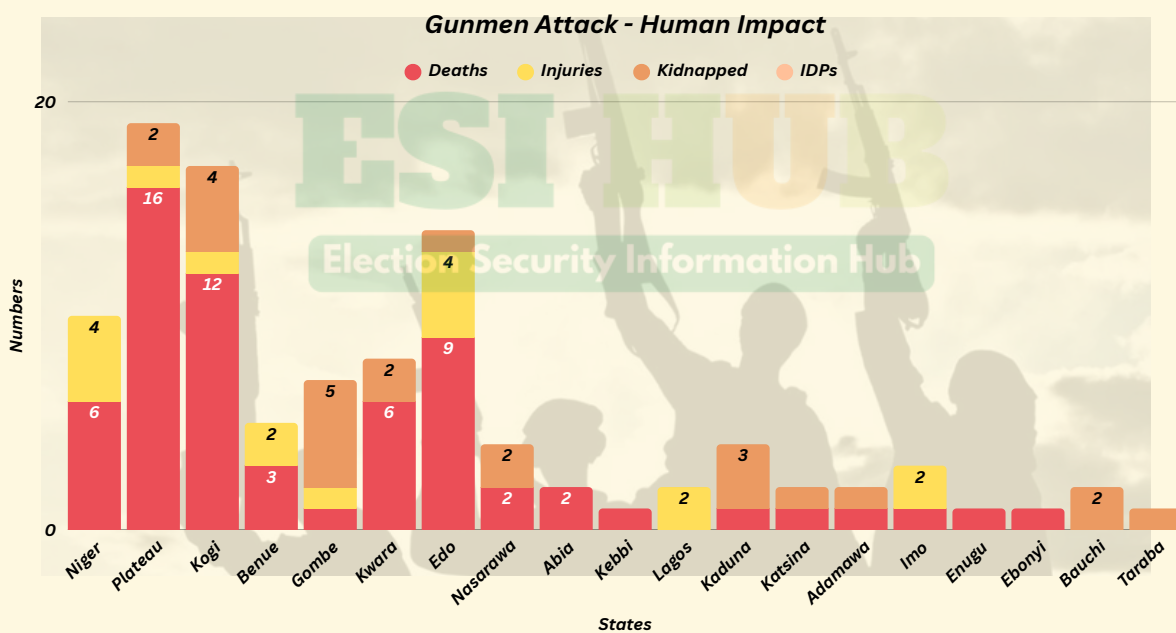
⁴⁷ Channels Television. (2025, September 24). Bandits kill pregnant woman, others in Kwara. Channels TV. https://www.channelstv.com/2025/09/24/bandits-kill-pregnant-woman-others-in-kwara/amp/?utm_source=webpush&utm_medium=push&utm_campaign=BanditsKillPregnantWoman,OthersInKwara

Banditry has transcended crime into a systemic governance failure. Continuous attacks have forced traditional rulers and local officials to flee their posts, collapsing ward-level administration. The destruction of roads and persistent displacement threaten INEC’s logistics, voter registration, and polling access ahead of forthcoming off-cycle elections.

High-risk LGAs such as Tsafe (Zamfara), Shiroro (Niger), and Batsari (Katsina) now operate as de facto no-go zones, risking voter disenfranchisement. Arterial routes—Minna–Bida, Kwara–Bacita, Abuja–Kaduna—remain insecure, jeopardising material deployment and observer safety.

Without enhanced intelligence coordination, anti-ransom enforcement, and livelihood restoration, banditry will persist as both a security and democratic risk multiplier.

Gunmen Attack



Source: The ESI Hub

September 2025 unfolded under the grip of relentless gunmen attacks that bled across Nigeria’s heartland. From the plains of Niger to the forests of Kogi and the crowded streets of Lagos, no region was spared. Forty-one verified incidents claimed 176 lives, wounded 93 others, and displaced hundreds — revealing a country where organised crime, reprisal killings, and insurgent-style raids are fusing into one violent continuum.

In Niger State, armed men stormed villages along the Rafi–Shiroro–Kontagora belt (ESI-026, 099, 172, 174, 220), torching homes, killing farmers, and abducting traditional rulers. Entire families fled as grain stores burned and patrols combed the bushes for missing villagers.

On the Plateau, renewed clashes in Bokkos and Mangu (ESI-022, 046, 074, 125, 126) turned once-peaceful communities into charred ruins — 28 lives lost, including miners and farmers ambushed at dawn.

In Benue, the killers came early (ESI-184, 207, 211, 225), striking during harvest, shooting farmers and setting barns ablaze in Otukpo and Katsina-Ala.

Kogi was no safer — gunmen ambushed patrols, killing five officers (ESI-086, 165, 181, 182), while a village leader was cut down in Omala (ESI-171), leaving the community leaderless and afraid.

In Kwara, men praying in a mosque were gunned down and others killed in fresh rural raids (ESI-003, 027, 192), while in Nasarawa, a prominent businessman and a pastor's wife were abducted in separate night attacks (ESI-002, 186).

The North West told its own grim story. In Katsina, bandits overran vigilante outposts in Dandume and Sabuwa, killing eight and abducting villagers too poor to pay ransom. Kaduna saw more bloodshed in Jema'a and Giwa^[48], where traders and travellers were gunned down, while a Customs officer was shot dead in Kebbi^[49].

Further east, Adamawa, Gombe, and Taraba suffered low-level raids small, fast, and brutal leaving behind kidnappings and scattered bodies.

In the South, gunmen moved from rural hideouts into cities. Edo mourned eight NSCDC officers^[50] and a university graduate killed in broad daylight^[51]. In Imo, policemen were ambushed and killed^[52]. Even Lagos wasn't spared hoodlums attacked the FAAN airspace facility in Ikeja, injuring guards and police^[53].

Across every region, the story was the same: broken communities, absent protection, and a spreading sense that nowhere is truly safe. Nigeria's map of violence is no longer shaped by insurgency alone — it is now a patchwork of fear, where gunmen move like smoke between states, blurring the lines between terrorism, crime, and survival.

Three trends characterised the evolution of gunmen attacks in September: Fluid Motives and Actors: Many incidents defied strict classification, combining elements of communal reprisal, banditry, and political intimidation. Targeted Precision: Attacks increasingly focused on community leaders, farmers, and security officers, reflecting a deliberate shift toward intimidation and symbolic violence. Geographic Expansion: Violence spread from remote rural enclaves into peri-urban zones and strategic highways, signalling the erosion of traditional buffer areas.

The human toll was staggering. Displacement data from the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) showed over 2,100 persons displaced in affected LGAs, including 840 women and 690 children. Dozens of schools and markets remained closed in Bokokos, Gwer East, and Rafi, disrupting education and trade. Food security deteriorated sharply as attacks forced farmers to abandon farmlands, compounding inflation and rural poverty.

⁴⁸ Daily Post. (2025, September 9). Gun attack claims life of local trader in Kaduna. Daily Post. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/09/gun-attack-claims-life-of-local-trader-in-kaduna/>

⁴⁹ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 17). Customs officer shot dead in Kebbi gunmen attack. Punch. <https://punchng.com/customs-officer-shot-dead-in-kebbi-gunmen-attack/>

⁵⁰ Vanguard Newspaper. (2025, September 6). Gunmen kill 8 NSCDC personnel, abduct Chinese expatriate in Edo attack. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/gunmen-kill-8-nscdc-personnel-abduct-chinese-expatriate-in-edo-attack/>

⁵¹ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 19). Gunmen kill fresh graduate in Edo barber's shop. Punch. <https://punchng.com/gunmen-kill-fresh-graduate-in-edo-barbers-shop/>

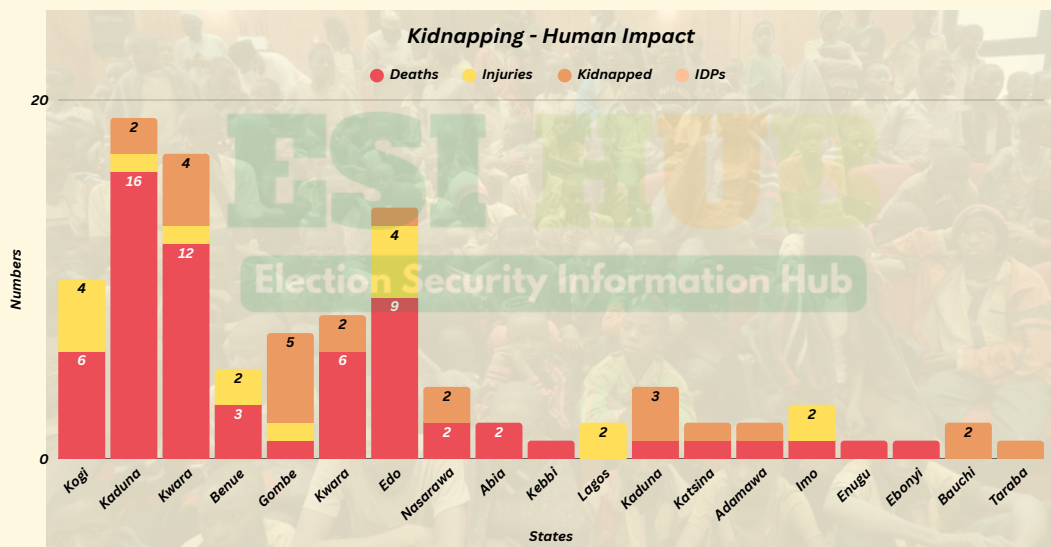
⁵² Vanguard Newspaper. (2025, September 28). One killed, two injured as police, gunmen clash in Imo. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/one-killed-two-injured-as-police-gunmen-clash-in-imo>

⁵³ Zagazola. (2025, September 27). Hoodlums attack FAAN airspace site, injure police officer and guard in Lagos. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/hoodlums-attack-faan-airspace-site-injure-police-officer-and-guard-in-lagos>

The concentration of gunmen attacks in Benue, Plateau, and Niger—all politically active states—poses a direct risk to voter confidence and participation. Displacement of rural populations and attacks along Abuja–Lokoja–Minna transport corridors threaten INEC’s logistics and observer mobility. Perceived security bias and delayed responses further erode public trust, legitimising self-help and vigilante justice.

Ultimately, the September 2025 pattern reflects a deepening cycle of impunity and territorial insecurity. The fusion of communal resentment, criminal enterprise, and governance failure continues to sustain gunmen violence as an alternative mechanism of control. Breaking this cycle demands intelligence-led response, local mediation, and restoration of civilian trust—without which decentralised armed power may continue to expand at the expense of Nigeria’s democratic stability.

Kidnapping



Source: The ESI Hub

Kidnapping remained one of the most pervasive and psychologically destabilising forms of insecurity during the September 2025 reporting period. Unlike banditry or insurgency, which are often territorial, kidnapping reflected a transactional and adaptive logic—merging financial extortion, targeted intimidation, and political opportunism. A total of 27 verified incidents were recorded across 15 states, resulting in the abduction of at least 184 persons, including community leaders, commuters, clergy, traders, students, and security personnel.

The North-Central and North-West zones remained the epicentres, particularly Kogi, Niger, Kaduna, and Plateau States, where abductions occurred alongside bandit raids and highway ambushes. In Kogi State, recurring attacks along the Lokoja–Okene and Omala–Adavi corridors highlighted the state’s vulnerability. Notable incidents included the abduction of the Abejukolo District Head^[54], the murder of a commuter during a highway ambush in Adavi^[55], and the kidnapping of a Catholic priest in Olamaboro^[56]. Late in the month, gunmen abducted^[57] multiple victims near Lokoja, including a pregnant woman^[58].

⁵⁴ Daily Trust. (2025, September 2). Gunmen abduct Kogi traditional ruler. Daily Trust. <https://dailytrust.com/gunmen-abduct-kogi-traditional-ruler/>

⁵⁵ The Punch. (2025, September 8). Gunmen attack bus in Kogi, abduct three, kill one. The Punch. <https://punchng.com/gunmen-attack-bus-in-kogi-abduct-three-kill-one/>

⁵⁶ Vanguard. (2025, September 15). Gunmen abduct Catholic priest in Kogi. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/gunmen-abduct-catholic-priest-in-kogi/>

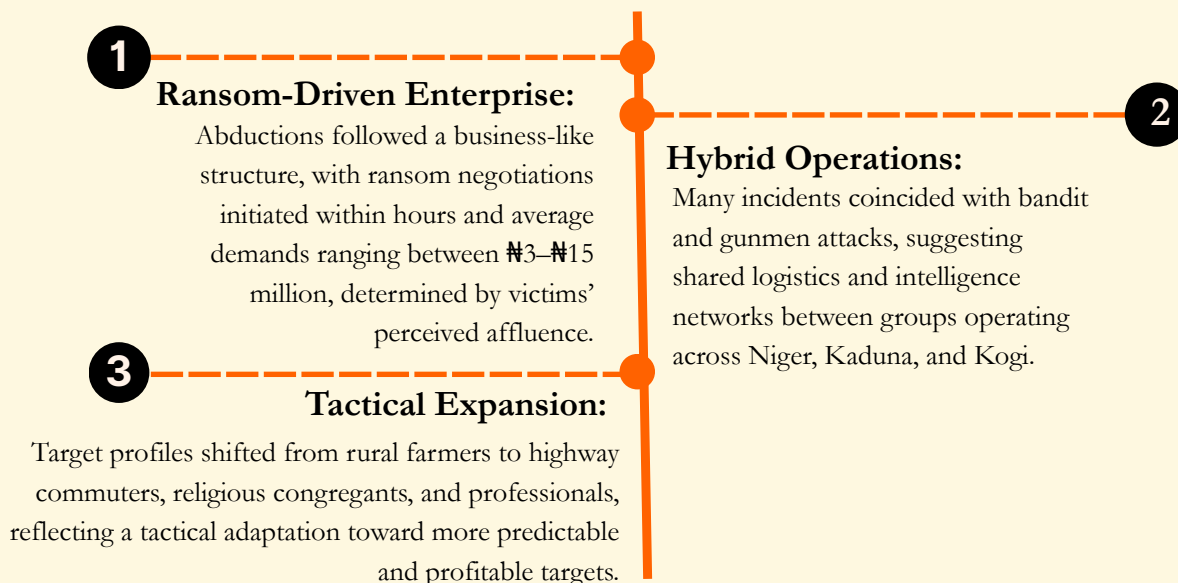
⁵⁷ Emergency Digest. (2025, September 28). Gunmen demand ₦65 million ransom. Emergency Digest. <https://emergencydigest.com/2025/09/28/gunmen-demand-million-ransom/>

⁵⁸ Zagazola. (2025, September 28). Gunmen abduct pregnant woman in Kogi. Zagazola. <https://t.co/NsNH2a2jm>

In Niger State, kidnapers operated along the Kontagora–Shiroro axis, seizing a school principal and a woman^[59] and later abducting the daughter of a judge in Lafia^[60]. Kwara also recorded the abduction of the APC chairman’s wife and daughter in Patigi^[61].

Further north, Kaduna and Katsina experienced serial attacks targeting villages, students, and travellers between 12–17 September, including the Kankara highway abduction involving passengers and students^[62]. In Plateau, a monarch was murdered after his abduction in Kanam^[63], while a state lawmaker was kidnapped in Jos North^[64]. Other notable cases included the kidnapping of two Immigration officers in Benue^[65], a foiled attempt along the Benin–Lagos road in Edo^[66], and a ₦50 million ransom demand for an abducted pharmacist in Enugu^[67].

Three dynamics defined the kidnapping landscape in September 2025:



The human toll was severe. Victims’ families endured trauma, displacement, and financial strain, often selling assets or pooling community funds for ransom. Field reports and IOM data estimated that over 820 people, including 290 women and 210 children, were displaced due to abductions or threats thereof.

In Niger and Plateau, widespread farm abandonment during harvest season led to losses exceeding ₦280 million, while Kogi and Kwara experienced temporary transport shutdowns that disrupted inter-state trade and spiked food prices. Women comprised nearly 40% of abductees, while adolescent boys faced heightened risk of recruitment into criminal networks.

The persistence of kidnapping continues to erode grassroots governance and democratic participation. The flight of traditional rulers and local officials has weakened community leadership structures, while fear of abduction has discouraged voter registration and campaign travel across conflict-prone areas.

⁵⁹ The Guardian. (2025, September 8). Armed bandits kidnap school principal, woman in Niger. The Guardian Nigeria. https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/armed-bandits-kidnap-school-principal-woman-in-niger/#google_vignette

⁶⁰ Daily Post. (2025, September 25). Unknown gunmen abduct judge’s daughter, one other in Nasarawa. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/25/unknown-gunmen-abduct-judges-daughter-one-other-in-nasarawa/>

⁶¹ Daily Trust. (2025, September 8). Bandits abduct APC chairman’s wife, daughter in Kwara. Daily Trust. <https://dailytrust.com/bandits-abduct-apc-chairmans-wife-daughter-in-kwara/>

⁶² Zagazola. (2025, September 17). Despite peace deal, bandits strike again, abduct passengers including student in Katsina. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/despite-peace-deal-bandits-strike-again-abduct-passengers-including-student-in-katsina>

⁶³ Business Day. (2025, September 16). Kidnappers kill Plateau monarch, dump body in the bush. Business Day. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/kidnappers-kill-plateau-monarch-dump-body-in-the-bush/>

⁶⁴ Tribune Online. (2025, September 23). Gunmen kidnap lawmaker in Plateau. Tribune Online. <https://tribunonline.com/gunmen-kidnap-lawmaker-in-plateau/>

⁶⁵ Daily Post. (2025, September 18). Kidnappers demand ₦10m each for two Immigration officers abducted in Benue. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/18/kidnappers-demand-n10m-each-for-two-immigration-officers-abducted-in-benue/>

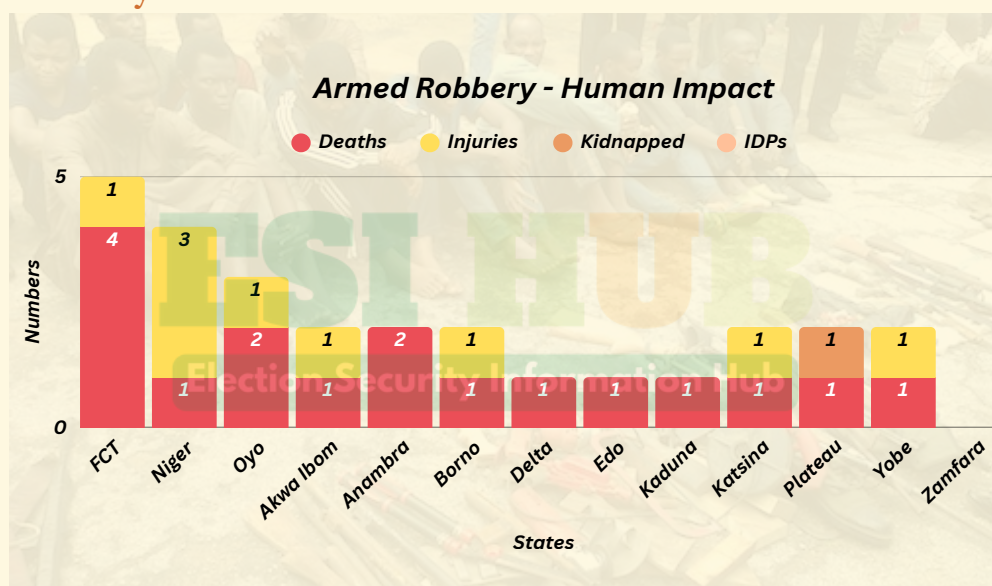
⁶⁶ The Sun. (2025, September 14). Police foil kidnapping, rescue victims along Benin–Lagos road, Ekpoma. The Sun Nigeria. <https://thesun.ng/police-foil-kidnapping-rescue-victims-along-benin-lagos-road-ekpoma/zamp>

⁶⁷ Barrister NG. (2025, September 24). Gunmen demand ₦50 million ransom for abducted Enugu pharmacist, threaten to kill him if family involves police. Barrister NG. <https://barristerng.com/gunmen-demand-%E2%82%A650-million-ransom-for-abducted-enugu-pharmacist-threaten-to-kill-him-if-family-involves-police/>

Strategic corridors such as the Abuja–Lokoja, Minna–Kaduna, and Benue–Taraba roads—critical for election logistics—remain exposed to ambushes, complicating INEC’s deployment and observer safety. With several kidnap cells reportedly linked to ex-political enforcers, the risk of criminal remobilisation for electoral coercion remains high.

Ultimately, kidnapping in September 2025 evolved into a systemic threat to governance and democratic legitimacy—a criminal economy that thrives on weak enforcement, community vulnerability, and institutional distrust. Addressing it demands inter-state coordination, community policing, and intelligence-driven deterrence, alongside livelihood recovery in high-risk areas

Armed Robbery



Armed robbery remained a prominent driver of urban insecurity across Nigeria in September 2025, reflecting the erosion of safety in key economic and transit hubs. A total of 20 verified incidents were recorded, with notable concentrations in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Oyo, Niger, Anambra, Delta, and Edo States. These crimes displayed a distinctly urbanized pattern, marked by opportunistic attacks on commuters, traders, and hospitality facilities rather than rural banditry or highway ambushes.

The FCT experienced multiple high-profile incidents underscoring Abuja’s growing vulnerability. On 2 September, a Bolt driver was killed and his vehicle stolen along the Gwarimpa–Kubwa expressway^[68]. Less than two weeks later, an Uber driver was stabbed to death during a robbery at a bakery in Takushara community^[69]. The month ended with the fatal shooting of an ARISE TV anchor during a night-time robbery in Katampe, highlighting the spread of violent crime into residential enclaves^[70]. Separately, in Kwali Area Council, hoodlums stabbed a commercial motorcyclist to death while attempting to seize his bike^[71].

In Oyo State, Ibadan’s Ring Road corridor remained a hotspot. On 3 September, police engaged a two-man robbery gang in a shoot-out, killing one suspect and arresting another^[72]. Five days later, robbers shot and killed a journalist in daylight at Molete–Oke Ado^[73].

⁶⁸ Trust Radio. (2025, September 2). Bolt driver killed, car stolen in Abuja. <https://trustradio.com.ng/en/bolt-driver-killed-car-stolen-in-abuja>

⁶⁹ Daily Post. (2025, September 15). Uber driver stabbed to death in Abuja bakery attack. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/15/uber-driver-stabbed-to-death-in-abuja-bakery-attack/>

⁷⁰ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 29). ARISE TV anchor killed in Abuja armed robbery. <https://punchng.com/aise-tv-anchor-killed-in-abuja-armed-robbery/>

⁷¹ Daily Trust. (2025, September 5). Hoodlums stab cyclist to death in FCT community. Daily Trust. <https://dailytrust.com/hoodlums-stab-cyclist-to-death-in-fct-community-2/>

⁷² Tribune Online. (2025, September 3). Police engage armed robbers in gun duel, kill one, another critically injured in Ibadan. Tribune Online. <https://tribuneonline.com/updated-police-engage-armed-robbers-in-gun-duel-kill-one-another-critically-injured-in-ibadan/>

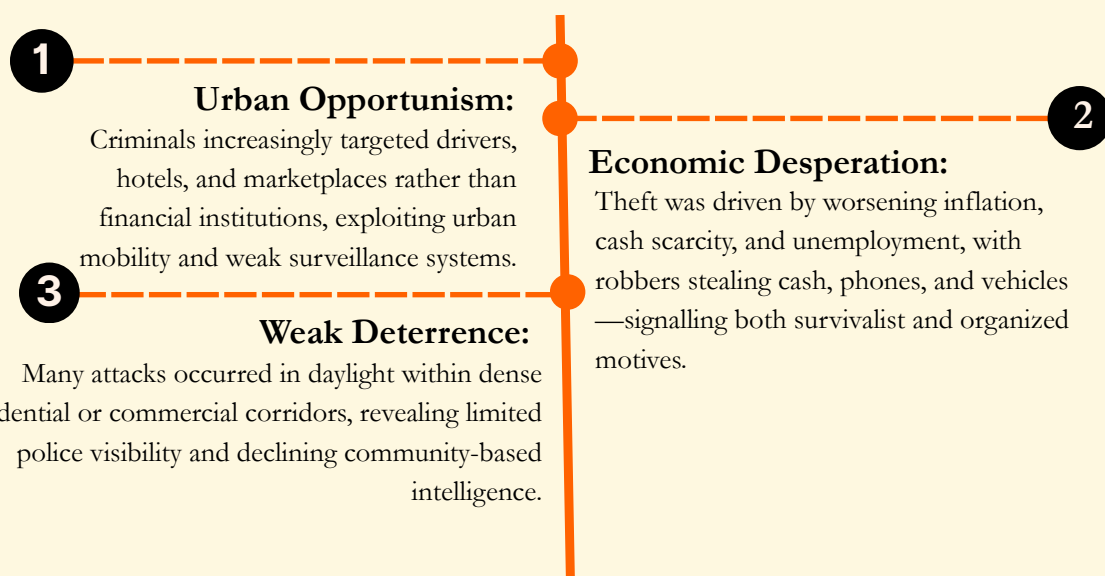
⁷³ Vanguard. (2025, September 8). Armed robbers kill Ibadan journalist in daylight attack. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/armed-robbers-kill-ibadan-journalist-in-daylight-attack/>

Niger State also recorded several incidents along the Abuja–Kaduna and Minna–Suleja corridors. On 8 September, robbers attacked an elderly businessman in Tunga Market, shortly after he withdrew funds from a filling station^[74]. The next day, security forces foiled a robbery on the Abuja–Kaduna highway near Gauraka^[75]. Later, three hotel guests were injured in a Madalla attack^[76], and one person was killed in an armed assault at Suleja APC Quarters^[77].

In the South East, Anambra State recorded two incidents—police foiled road robberies in Oba^[78] and burglars broke into Polaris Bank in Awka, carting away cash^[79] (ESI-202509-154). In the South South, Delta State’s Udu LGA witnessed a night-time break-in at Udu High Court offices, where valuables were stolen^[80].

Elsewhere, Plateau State’s Bassa LGA recorded the murder of an Okada rider whose motorcycle was stolen^[81]. Akwa Ibom’s Itu LGA saw armed men raid an NYSC lodge, injuring a corps member^[82]. Katsina State’s Kofar Kaura area logged a phone-snatching attack on a businessman^[83] and Yobe’s Karasuwa LGA reported the killing of a suspected motorcycle thief by a mob^[84].

Three dominant patterns defined armed robbery during the period:



Field monitoring suggests overlap between former cult members, political enforcers, and robbery gangs, particularly in Abuja, Ibadan, and Awka. These groups have repurposed arms from election-related thuggery into economic crime, reinforcing cycles of insecurity and impunity.

⁷⁴ Vanguard. (2025, September 8). Suspected armed robbers attack petrol dealer in Minna, flee with ₦8m. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/suspected-armed-robbers-attack-petrol-dealer-in-minna-flee-with-n8m/>

⁷⁵ Zagazola. (2025, September 9). Security forces foil robbery on Abuja–Kaduna highway in Niger. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/security-forces-foil-robbery-on-abuja-kaduna-highway-in-niger>

⁷⁶ Prompt News Online. (2025, September 15). Armed robbers attack hotel, leave three injured. Prompt News Online. <https://promptnewsonline.com/armed-robbers-attack-hotel-leave-three-injured/>

⁷⁷ TG News. (2025, September 25). Man killed in Suleja robbery, another slain and teens abducted in Kontagora attack. TG News. <https://tgnews.com.ng/man-killed-in-suleja-robbery-another-slain-and-teens-abducted-in-kontagora-attack/-in-fct-community-2/>

⁷⁸ The Telegraph Nigeria. (2025, September 6). Police foil robbery attacks on Anambra roads, recover stolen vehicles. The Telegraph Nigeria. <https://telegraph.ng/news/2025/09/06/police-foil-robbery-attacks-on-anambra-roads-recover-stolen-vehicles/>

⁷⁹ The Nigerian Voice. (2025, September 19). Burglars invade Polaris Bank, cart away cash. The Nigerian Voice. <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/356886/burglars-invade-polaris-bank-cart-away-cash.html>

⁸⁰ The Star. (2025, September 16). Thieves break into Delta court, steal gun, others. The Star Nigeria. <https://www.thestar.ng/thieves-break-into-delta-court-steal-gun-others/>

⁸¹ Linda Ikeji’s Blog. (2025, September 9). Assaultants kill okada rider, steal his motorcycle in plateau-2.html. Linda Ikeji’s Blog. <https://www.lindaikojisblog.com/2025/9/assaultants-kill-okada-rider-steal-his-motorcycle-in-plateau-2.html>

⁸² The Cable. (2025, September 11). Robbers attack corps members’ lodge in Akwa Ibom, cart away valuables. The Cable. <https://www.thecable.ng/robbers-attack-corps-members-lodge-in-akwa-ibom-cart-away-valuables/>

⁸³ Zagazola. (2025, September 22). Phone snatchers attack businessman in Katsina. Zagazola. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/phone-snatchers-attack-businessman-in-katsina>

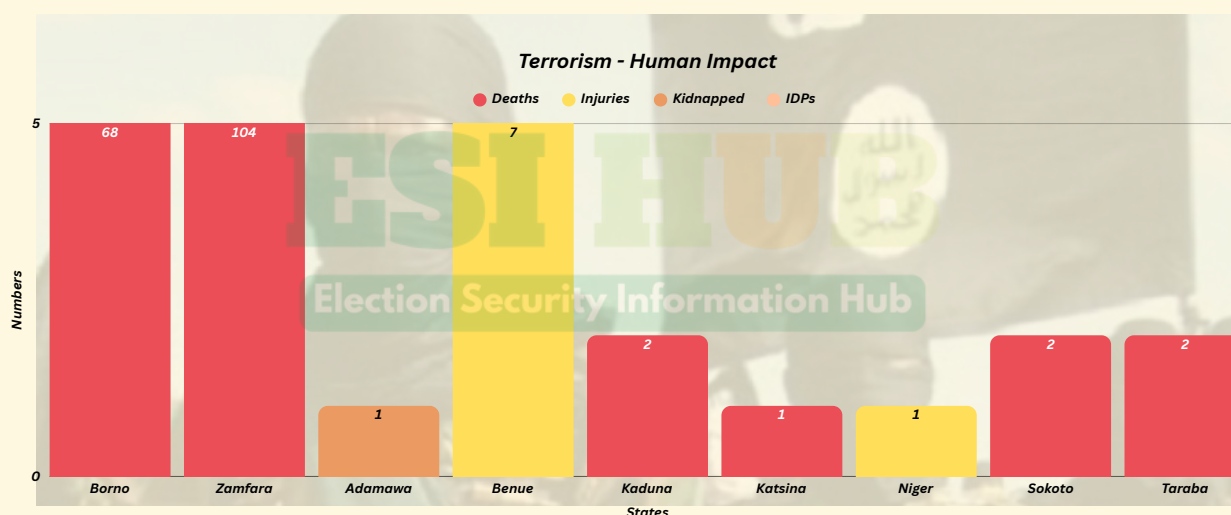
⁸⁴ National Trail. (2025, September 26). Suspected motorcycle thief killed in Yobe. National Trail Online. <https://nationaltrailonline.com.ng/suspected-motorcycle-thief-killed-in-yobe/>

The proliferation of armed robbery undermines urban governance and public trust in security institutions. Recurrent daylight attacks in high-density areas such as Katampe, Molete, and Awka highlight the failure of deterrent policing. In the short term, escalating robberies deter night-time economic activity and erode citizens’ confidence in state protection.

Electorally, robbery hotspots coincide with major campaign and logistics corridors—notably the Lagos–Ogun–Niger–FCT and Anambra–Delta–Edo axes—posing risks to INEC operations, voter turnout, and political gatherings. Criminal networks accustomed to weapon handling may again be co-opted by political actors for coercion, further blurring the boundary between economic crime and political violence.

Without decisive investment in community policing, rapid-response patrols, and inter-agency coordination, armed robbery could evolve into a sustained “shadow economy” of insecurity—undermining urban stability and threatening credible elections in 2026.

Armed Robbery



Terrorism continued to exact a profound toll across Nigeria’s northern belt in September 2025, underscoring both the resilience of extremist groups and the enduring fragility of the counterinsurgency framework. The North-East remained the epicentre of violence, with Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa accounting for the majority of incidents linked to Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Verified reports also indicated spill-over activity in Taraba, Niger, and Kaduna, highlighting the expanding geographic reach of militant networks despite sustained military pressure.

In Borno State, multiple high-impact incidents illustrated the persistence of insurgent capacity. On 1 September, Boko Haram fighters killed five farmers in Ngoshe (Gwoza LGA) during a dawn raid targeting rural labourers preparing for harvest^[85]. Five days later, an overnight attack on Darajamal (Bama LGA) left more than 60 civilians dead before troops counter-attacked, killing over 30 militants and reclaiming the settlement^[86]. On 20 September, an airstrike near Banki neutralised 32 insurgents after an ambush that killed a soldier and a civilian, though field accounts later raised concerns about collateral civilian casualties^[87].

⁸⁵ Business Day. (2025, September 1). Boko Haram insurgents kill five farmers in Borno fresh attack. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/boko-haram-insurgents-kill-five-farmers-in-borno-fresh-attack/>

⁸⁶ BBC News. (2025, September 6). Boko Haram kills over 60 in NE Nigeria attack. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3rvxdw52vdo>

⁸⁷ News Nigeria. (2025, September 20). NAF neutralises 32 insurgents after attack on Banki. <https://newsng.ng/naf-neutralises-32-insurgents-after-attack-on-banki-that-claimed-two-soldier-civilian/>

Earlier in the month, two Immigration officers were killed in Monguno, and a separate engagement in Umbo Gen saw troops eliminate three Boko Haram operatives without sustaining losses^[88].

In Adamawa (Madagali LGA), troops from Operation Hadin Kai foiled a Boko Haram kidnap attempt on 15 September, while later that week militants abducted a civilian in the Mayo area signalling continued asymmetric harassment of rural populations^[89]. Yobe's Gujba axis also witnessed renewed raids on farming communities, with armed groups looting food stores and livestock. Further west, Taraba (Takum LGA) saw the army neutralise two terrorists during a late-night ambush on 16 September, and Niger (Rafi LGA) reported clashes in Kainji Lake National Park that resulted in insurgent casualties and arms recovery^[90].

Across the North-West corridor, violence reflected both ideological and criminal convergence. Between 9–11 September, terrorists in Zamfara (Maru, Dansadau) abducted eight residents while disguised in hijabs, and later that week troops repelled coordinated attacks in Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara, killing at least nine militants but losing three soldiers. A further ambush on 21 September in Kachia LGA (Kaduna) left two terrorists dead, illustrating the spread of insurgent tactics beyond the traditional Lake Chad–Sambisa axis.

The humanitarian impact of these sustained operations was severe. Field monitors estimated that over 1,100 people were newly displaced in Konduga, Marte, and Gujba LGAs alone during the month, swelling the North-East IDP population beyond 2.1 million. Most new arrivals were women and children, resettled in already overstretched camps in Muna Garage (Maiduguri) and Nguru (Yobe), where shortages of shelter, healthcare, and education persisted. The destruction of farmlands and looting of livestock deepened food insecurity at the height of the harvest season, while repeated displacements fractured family networks and local governance structures.

Operationally, insurgent groups demonstrated adaptive capacity. Open-source intelligence and field reporting indicate that ISWAP and Boko Haram splinters maintain logistical cooperation across the Sambisa–Gwoza–Lake Chad corridor, enabling coordinated ambushes and shared supply lines. Their shift from direct territorial control to asymmetric disruption—targeting roads, markets, and humanitarian convoys—reflects a recalibrated strategy focused on resource extraction and psychological dominance rather than occupation.

Three key dynamics defined terrorism during September 2025. Tactical Evolution: Insurgent groups have shifted from territorial control to frequent, low-visibility ambushes and bombings designed to exhaust security forces and instill fear.

Economic Exploitation: Militants now rely heavily on looting, extortion, and informal taxation of rural communities to fund operations. Crisis of Confidence: Civilian trust in the military has eroded following incidents such as the Konduga airstrike, reigniting debate over accountability and engagement protocols.

⁸⁸ Zagazola. (2025, September 6). Troops crush ISWAP terrorists after deadly attack on Darajamal community in Borno. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/troops-crush-iswap-terrorists-after-deadly-attack-on-darajamal-community-in-borno>

⁸⁹ Daily Post. (2025, September 15). Troops repel terrorist attack, foil kidnap attempt in Adamawa. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/15/troops-repel-terrorist-attack-foil-kidnap-attempt-in-adamawa/>

⁹⁰ Daily Post. (2025, September 15). Troops repel terrorist attack, foil kidnap attempt in Adamawa. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/15/troops-repel-terrorist-attack-foil-kidnap-attempt-in-adamawa/>

These trends have deepened governance fragility. Continuous attacks have driven local officials from rural areas, forced school closures, and depopulated farming communities. In the resulting vacuum, insurgents impose parallel systems of taxation, justice, and aid distribution—blurring the line between coercion and governance and weakening citizens’ faith in state authority.

The electoral consequences are significant. Large portions of Borno, Yobe, and northern Adamawa remain inaccessible for registration, logistics, and polling. Displacement, fear, and propaganda depress participation, while extremist narratives cast democratic institutions as illegitimate. Coordination among INEC, security agencies, and humanitarian actors remains strained, impeding safe deployment of election materials. Without stronger early-warning systems, civilian protection, and intelligence-sharing, insurgency will continue to pose both a security threat and a democratic risk in Nigeria’s North-East.

Cultism and Gang Violence

Cultism and gang violence remained one of Nigeria’s most pervasive urban security challenges during the September 2025 reporting period, reflecting deep intersections between criminal youth networks, political patronage, and economic marginalization. A total of 16 verified incidents were documented across Lagos, Anambra, Osun, Edo, Ogun, and Rivers States, underscoring the persistence of violent subcultures that destabilize urban communities and blur the boundaries between crime and politics.

In Lagos, violence surged across Ikorodu, Lagos Island, and Yaba, with repeated clashes between the Eiye and Aye (Black Axe) confraternities. On 1 September, Eiye members invaded Bayeku in Ikorodu by boat, attacking Aye strongholds and leaving one person injured (Naija Confra, 2025). Days later, during a masquerade festival on 5 September, a clash on Lagos Island killed three people and triggered a major police deployment^[91]. Another intra-cult feud erupted in Akoka, Yaba, on 17 September, when rival Aye factions exchanged gunfire, killing one member. The police later launched intensified anti-cult operations across all area commands (Twitter, 2025).

In the South-East, Anambra State remained the epicentre of cult-linked violence, recording multiple clashes involving the Vikings (DNKI) and Aye (NBM) confraternities across Onitsha, Awka, Ihiala, and Idemili North. On 11 September, cultists attacked mourners at a burial in Ogidi, killing four people and injuring fifteen^[92]. Between 6–18 September, at least five additional incidents—including attacks at Okija, Awka, and Nsugbe—left several injured, with arrests confirmed by the Anambra State Police Command^[93], ^[94].

In Edo, Osun, and Ogun, cult violence was equally pronounced. On 18 September, two students were shot dead at a “signing-out” party at Auchi Polytechnic (Edo) following a clash between rival groups^[95]. Two days earlier, Boripe (Osun) recorded a campus cult brawl that left two students injured and six suspects arrested^[96]. In Atan-Ota (Ogun), suspected cultists hacked a man to death on 23 September^[97], highlighting the persistence of cult-linked street killings even outside political flashpoints^[98].

⁹¹ Daily Post. (2025, September 4). Three killed as cult clash disrupts masquerade festival in Lagos Island. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/04/three-killed-as-cult-clash-disrupts-masquerade-festival-in-lagos-island/>

⁹² People’s Gazette. (2025, September 12). Cultists attacked, killed mourners at burial ceremony in Anambra: Police. <https://gazettengr.com/cultists-attacked-killed-mourners-at-burial-ceremony-in-anambra-police/>

⁹³ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 5). Three killed in Lagos masquerader festival clash. <https://punchng.com/three-killed-in-lagos-masquerader-festival-clash/>

⁹⁴ The Eagle Online. (2025, September 17). Four suspected cultists arrested after clash in Anambra community. <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/four-suspected-cultists-arrested-after-clash-in-anambra-community/>

⁹⁵ Daily Post. (2025, September 18). Edo: Two killed at Auchi Poly signing-out party clash. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/18/edo-two-killed-at-auchi-poly-signing-out-party-clash/>

⁹⁶ Guardian Nigeria. (2025, September 11). Two students injured in Osun campus cult clash, police arrest six. <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/two-students-injured-in-osun-campus-cult-clash-police-arrest-six/>

⁹⁷ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 23). Suspected cultists hack Ogun man to death. <https://punchng.com/suspected-cultists-hack-ogun-man-to-death/>

⁹⁸ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 23). Suspected cultists hack Ogun man to death. <https://punchng.com/suspected-cultists-hack-ogun-man-to-death/>

Cult-related violence in September 2025 reflected a convergence of economic desperation, political manipulation, and social dislocation. Rival groups across Lagos, Anambra, Edo, and Osun fought over control of informal revenue streams such as motor parks, markets, and nightlife hubs, using intimidation and illegal levies to assert dominance. Increasingly, cult networks are being politically co-opted — mobilized for campaign intimidation and crowd control under youth mobilization committees, blurring the line between political activism and organized crime.

Once confined to campuses, cultism has expanded into community-based operations, offering unemployed youth identity, income, and informal protection. Many now operate openly as “youth associations,” coordinating activities through social media platforms like TikTok and X, where videos display weapons and territorial claims.

The social impact is severe. In neighbourhoods such as Ikorodu, Upper Iwaka, and Uselu, gang control has eroded trust, reduced school attendance, and forced business closures. Economically, recurrent violence disrupts commerce, raises operational costs, and reinforces the poverty-crime cycle that sustains recruitment. Politically, the use of cult groups as coercive tools corrodes law enforcement neutrality, shrinks civic space, and undermines voter confidence.

The implications for election security are significant. The presence of armed youth militias near polling centres heightens intimidation risks and threatens turnout. Ensuring credible elections will require strict enforcement of the Electoral Act (2022), dismantling of local protection rackets, and stronger coordination between INEC, security agencies, and community intelligence networks.

Sustainable mitigation hinges on youth reintegration, depoliticised policing, and livelihood alternatives. Without systemic intervention, cultism will remain both an economic survival mechanism and a political weapon—sustaining cycles of fear, violence, and urban instability.

Political Thuggery and Assassination



September 2025 saw a marked intensification of politically motivated violence, with incidents of thuggery, intimidation, and assassination cutting across Nigeria’s North-Central, South-West, South-East, and South-South zones. These events underscore the continued weaponization of violence as an instrument of political control and intimidation, even outside the official campaign calendar.

In Abuja (Mabushi, FCT), on 4 September, a violent altercation between touts and commuters escalated into tragedy when a family of four was killed following a mob attack triggered by a traffic accident. Reports indicated that the mob set upon the victims after a collision, leading to chaos and further assaults before law enforcement intervened. The incident, verified through multiple sources, highlights the growing intersection between urban thuggery and a broader culture of impunity, where informal actors exert coercive control in public spaces^[99].

Similarly, on 10 September in Akure South LGA, Ondo State, suspected political thugs allegedly affiliated with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) attacked an African Democratic Congress (ADC) meeting in Ward 8, injuring three people and destroying property. Eyewitnesses and party officials described the attack as a “brazen act of political intimidation,” aimed at silencing opposition mobilisation and discouraging multi-party engagement ahead of the 2025/2026 electoral cycle^[100].

The month also recorded two politically sensitive assassinations targeting clergy and community leaders, underscoring how elite rivalry and localized vendettas are increasingly taking lethal forms. On 20 September, a Catholic priest was assassinated in Eha-Ndiagu, Nsukka LGA (Enugu State) by unidentified gunmen who ambushed him on his way home from evening mass. Residents attributed the killing to unresolved political tensions within local government and church networks, though no arrests were made^[101]. Less than ten days later, in Umuebu community, Ukwuani LGA (Delta State), a pastor was killed in his residence under suspicious circumstances, prompting police investigation into possible political or land-related motives^[102].

September’s incidents reveal the deepening fusion of political and criminal violence, where political actors increasingly mobilise non-state enforcers through local party networks and cult affiliations. Urban centres such as Akure, Mabushi, and Nsukka have become flashpoints, with political competition intersecting community insecurity and producing cycles of retaliation.

Three patterns stand out. First, partisan co-option of non-state actors remains common, as political elites deploy thugs and touts to disrupt meetings and intimidate rivals. Second, violence is expanding beyond electoral seasons, signalling that political aggression has become part of routine governance struggles. Third, the killing of civic and religious figures has intensified public fear and weakened trust in security institutions.

These dynamics carry serious implications for Nigeria’s democratic stability. Electoral integrity is undermined as intimidation deters participation, especially among women and youth. Institutional credibility suffers when security responses appear selective or delayed, while the normalisation of violence shrinks civic space and erodes confidence in peaceful political engagement. Economically, recurrent attacks in commercial hubs like Abuja and Akure disrupt local trade and deepen hardship.

⁹⁹ The Capital Mirror. (2025, September 4). Touts attack kills family of four in Abuja crash. Retrieved from <https://thecapitalmirror.com/2025/09/04/touts-attack-kills-family-of-four-in-abuja-crash/>

¹⁰⁰ Closing Spaces. (2025, September 10). Three hospitalised after suspected APC thugs attack ADC meeting in Ondo. Retrieved from <https://closingspaces.org/incident/three-hospitalised-after-suspected-apc-thugs-attack-adc-meeting-in-ondo/>

¹⁰¹ Premium Times. (2025, September 21). Gunmen kill Catholic priest. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/822473-gunmen-kill-catholic-priest.html>

¹⁰² Zagazola. (2025, September 28). Police investigate killing of pastor in Delta. Retrieved from <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/police-investigate-killing-of-pastor-in-delta>

Unless the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, and the National Peace Committee (NPC) strengthen coordination, early-warning systems, and enforcement of Sections 128–132 of the Electoral Act (2022), political thuggery risks evolving into a sustained feature of Nigeria’s political landscape

Extra-Judicial Killings

September 2025 recorded 7 verified incidents of extra-judicial killings across six states — Benue, Anambra, Ondo, Cross River, and others — reflecting persistent challenges of mob justice, abuse of power by security actors, and weak accountability mechanisms in Nigeria’s justice and law enforcement systems.

In Benue State (Makurdi LGA, 2 September), a suspected motorcycle thief was lynched and set ablaze by a mob after a failed robbery attempt. Police authorities confirmed the incident but offered no follow-up on arrests or investigations, reflecting the persistence of vigilante-style justice in response to perceived insecurity^[103]. Similarly, in Ondo State (Akoko South-West LGA, 20 September), a teenage boy accused of stealing cocoa pods was allegedly beaten to death by community members. The police command acknowledged the incident and promised an investigation, yet no suspects had been charged as of the end of the reporting period^[104].

In Anambra State, two separate incidents underscored the escalation of both state and civilian-led violence. On 4 September, police operatives rescued a suspect from lynching after he allegedly murdered his apprentice and hid the body in a refrigerator in Okpoko (Ogbaru LGA)^[105]. A few days later, on 9 September, paramilitary operatives under the state’s security outfit reportedly opened fire on residents in Onitsha North, killing a pregnant woman and injuring three others. The state police command confirmed the shooting and announced an investigation, though no disciplinary outcomes were reported^[106].

In Cross River State (Yakuur LGA, 6 September), a mother accused police officers of fatally shooting her son after he attempted to “preach” to the state governor during a public event. The police declined to comment officially on the case, and no evidence of disciplinary action was recorded as of the time of reporting^[107].

Across all documented cases, patterns of impunity and weak oversight remained evident. Civilian-led mob justice in Benue and Ondo highlights a deep erosion of trust in formal judicial mechanisms, while the incidents in Anambra and Cross River illustrate continuing concerns about excessive use of force and lack of accountability among both formal and informal security actors.

The human impact of these incidents was profound: at least 16 civilians were killed and several others injured in acts of extrajudicial violence, leaving families without recourse to justice. Each case underscores systemic weaknesses in Nigeria’s criminal justice architecture—where both security agencies and communities often bypass lawful processes in favor of immediate, violent retribution.

¹⁰³ The Sun. (2025, September 2). Jungle justice: Motorcycle snatcher set ablaze in Benue. Retrieved from <https://thecapitalmirror.com/2025/09/04/touts-attack-kills-family-of-four-in-abuja-crash/>

¹⁰⁴ Western Post. (2025, September 23). Boy allegedly beaten to death for stealing cocoa in Ondo. Retrieved from <https://www.westernpost.ng/boy-allegedly-beaten-to-death-for-stealing-cocoa-in-ondo/>

¹⁰⁵ Punch. (2025, September 4). Anambra man kills apprentice, hides corpse inside fridge. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/anambra-man-kills-apprentice-hides-corpse-inside-fridge/>

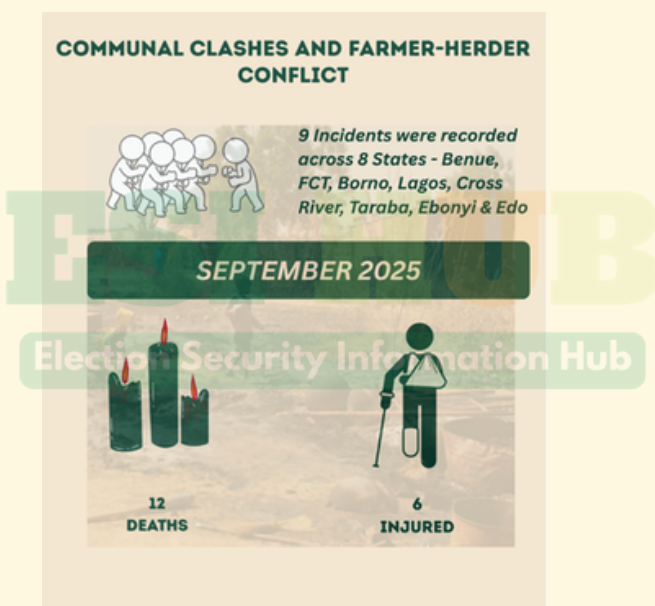
¹⁰⁶ Daily Post. (2025, September 9). Operatives of Anambra paramilitary agency shoot pregnant woman dead, injure three others. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/09/operatives-of-anambra-paramilitary-agency-shoot-pregnant-woman-dead-injure-three-others/>

¹⁰⁷ Punch. (2025, September 6). Policemen killed my son for attempting to preach to Cross River governor – Mother. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/policemen-killed-my-son-for-attempting-to-preach-to-cross-river-gov-mother/>

From an electoral and governance standpoint, such incidents carry wider implications. The normalization of extrajudicial killings diminishes citizens' confidence in law enforcement neutrality and raises fears of bias or abuse during electoral security operations. In politically charged contexts, heavy-handed tactics by state or paramilitary actors can be perceived as instruments of suppression, discouraging civic participation and amplifying mistrust in state institutions.

To mitigate these risks, there is a need for independent oversight mechanisms, strengthened internal accountability frameworks, and community-based justice awareness campaigns. Collaboration between the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Police Service Commission (PSC), and civil society organizations such as CLEEN Foundation and Amnesty International Nigeria remains vital to promoting lawful policing and ensuring justice for victims.

Communal Clashes and Farmer Herder



Communal violence and farmer–herder clashes persisted as major destabilising forces across Nigeria’s Middle Belt and adjoining regions in September 2025, with verified incidents in Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, Ebonyi, Cross River, FCT, and Borno. These conflicts, unlike the opportunistic logic of banditry, were rooted in long-standing disputes over land ownership, grazing rights, and resource access, often triggered by encroachment, cattle rustling, or crop destruction.

In Ebonyi (Afikpo South LGA) on 1 September, a man was beheaded over a protracted land dispute in Oso-Edda community—a feud reportedly spanning more than a decade and linked to delayed government demarcation efforts^{[108],[109]}. Two days later, Benue (Katsina-Ala LGA) recorded a farmer–herder clash after members of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association alleged the killing of livestock and the disappearance of one herder. The police disputed casualty figures, underscoring persistent data gaps and contested narratives around communal violence^[110].

¹⁰⁸ Punch Newspaper. (2025, September 1). Suspect arrested for beheading man over Ebonyi land dispute. <https://punchng.com/suspect-arrested-for-beheading-man-over-ebonyi-land-dispute/>

¹⁰⁹ □ Daily Post. (2025, August 31). Man beheaded over land dispute in Ebonyi. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/08/31/man-beheaded-over-land-dispute-in-ebonyi/>

¹¹⁰ Daily Post. (2025, September 2). Benue: Fulani herders, govt differ on alleged killing of over 70 cows. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/02/benue-fulani-herders-govt-differ-on-alleged-killing-of-over-70-cows/>

Across the North Central, clashes flared again on 13 September in Kwali Area Council (FCT), where security forces restored calm after confrontations between farmers and herders left three people injured^[111]. Similar tensions surfaced in Benue (Gwer West LGA) on 26 September, where suspected armed herders killed two farmers near Naka—a pattern emblematic of recurring revenge cycles along the Benue–Nasarawa corridor^[112].

Further east, Taraba (Ibi LGA) reported a renewed communal clash on 25 September, injuring one person and prompting emergency stakeholder meetings, while Cross River (Ikom/Obubra axis) saw two people beheaded during violent village hostilities^[113]. In Edo (Ikpoba-Okha LGA), a community leadership tussle left two dead, reflecting the way intra-community disputes increasingly overlap with regional political and ethnic divisions^[114].

The humanitarian toll was substantial: over 300 people were displaced across Plateau–Benue corridors, with women and children forming the majority of new arrivals in informal shelters. Victims reported burned homes, looted food stores, and destroyed harvests, exacerbating rural poverty and food insecurity as the lean season approached.

Three dynamics defined the September pattern. First, boundary and grazing disputes intensified along migration corridors in Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. Second, proliferation of small arms—including locally fabricated weapons—lowered the threshold for escalation, turning property disputes into lethal encounters within hours. Third, conflict overlap emerged as a key risk: farmer–herder incidents coincided spatially with banditry and gunmen attacks, complicating attribution and enabling criminal exploitation of insecurity.

The economic impact extended beyond casualties. Destruction of crops and livestock at harvest time curtailed market access in Benue’s Logo–Katsina-Ala axis and Plateau’s Mangu–Bokkos belt, raising food prices and deterring traders from rural markets. These shocks amplify inflationary pressure and contribute to long-term urban migration and youth unemployment.

From a governance perspective, these conflicts reveal structural weaknesses in early-warning systems, mediation, and neutral enforcement. While local peace committees and traditional councils intervened sporadically, they lacked authority to enforce grazing agreements or compensation frameworks. This vacuum allowed grievance narratives to spread faster than resolution mechanisms, perpetuating cycles of reprisal.

¹¹¹ Daily Post. (2025, September 2). Benue: Fulani herders, govt differ on alleged killing of over 70 cows. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/02/benue-fulani-herders-govt-differ-on-alleged-killing-of-over-70-cows/>

¹¹² Daily Post. (2025, September 27). Suspected armed herders kill two farmers in Benue. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/09/27/suspected-armed-herders-kill-two-farmers-in-benue/>






¹¹³ Daily Trust. (2025, September 17). Two beheaded as hostility rages in Cross River villages. <https://dailytrust.com/2-beheaded-as-hostility-rages-in-cross-river-villages/>

¹¹⁴ Daily Trust. (2025, September 17). Two beheaded as hostility rages in Cross River villages. <https://dailytrust.com/2-beheaded-as-hostility-rages-in-cross-river-villages/>

Farmer–herder and communal conflicts directly threaten electoral logistics and participation. Displacement disrupts voter registration and polling-unit planning; insecurity along rural routes impedes material deployment; and polarisation within agrarian communities suppresses turnout in volatile constituencies. Perceptions of state bias—in arrests, relief distribution, or security deployment risk further politicising communal disputes ahead of the 2026 off-cycle elections.

Mitigation demands joint civil–security de-escalation teams, rapid mediation, and enforcement of compensation protocols under the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) framework. Integrating community early-warning data into the ESI Hub’s monitoring system will also strengthen preventive response before reprisal cycles lock in.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ACROSS NIGERIA’S SIX GEOPOLITICAL ZONES – SEPTEMBER 1- 30, 2025.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SECURITY INCIDENTS BY GEOPOLITICAL ZONE							
	SS	SW	SE	NE	NC	NW	Nigeria
 Incidents	14	22	24	30	80	59	229
 Deaths	2	10	16	77	96	169	437
 Injury	3	13	23	2	37	35	184
 Kidnap	4	1	1	0	56	81	152
 IDP	0	0	0	0	300	0	300

September 2025 revealed a cross-zonal realignment of insecurity, showing how violence now functions as both a political instrument and a structural governance failure. With 229 incidents recorded (200 verified, 29 unverified), the month underscored that threats once confined to specific regions have become nationally networked — shaping electoral logistics, voter confidence, and the credibility of democratic institutions.

Although violence was nationwide, its political expression and electoral consequence varied across zones.

North-West — Epicentre of Armed Banditry and Electoral Displacement

The North-West remained the most volatile and politically consequential region.

Zamfara and Katsina accounted for over one-third of national fatalities, marked by mass abductions and rural sieges. Bandit networks have evolved into parallel governance structures that extort communities and disrupt mobility.

Implication for Elections: Several LGAs face functional disenfranchisement as persistent violence threatens voter registration, deployment of materials, and turnout.

North-Central — Corridor of Political Violence and Resource Clashes

The North-Central served as Nigeria's bridge of instability, connecting insurgency from the North with political violence from the South. Farmer–herder clashes in Benue and Plateau overlapped with politically charged abductions in Kogi and Kwara, reflecting the fusion of communal and electoral tensions.

Implication for Elections: Violence along strategic corridors such as Abuja–Lokoja and Minna–Kontagora heightens the risk of campaign suppression and logistical breakdown for INEC operations.

North-East — Theatre of Terrorism and Voter Displacement

Boko Haram and ISWAP maintained lethal presence in Borno and Yobe, with low-frequency but high-fatality attacks.

Implication for Elections: Continued displacement, restricted access, and trauma among civilians undermine electoral inclusion, especially for internally displaced voters, and raise legitimacy concerns in conflict-affected LGAs.

South-East — Identity Polarisation and Political Intimidation

The South-East's insecurity was largely political and perceptual, driven by intimidation, propaganda, and elite manipulation ahead of the Anambra polls.

Implication for Elections: High risk of low voter turnout due to fear, misinformation, and polarised rhetoric. Electoral officers and candidates require enhanced security and confidence-building measures.

South-West — Urban Criminality and Politicised Thuggery

The South-West recorded urban-centred violence tied to cultism, robbery, and partisan street clashes in Lagos, Osun, and Ondo.

Implication for Elections: While casualties were low, public fear and visible disorder can deter civic engagement and reduce confidence in the neutrality of urban policing.

South-South — Factional Rivalries and Electoral Manipulation

The South-South remained a theatre of elite conflict, particularly in Edo and Rivers, where intra-party rivalries escalated into localised violence.

Implication for Elections: Political violence here directly targets voter mobilisation and party operations, raising concerns about the fairness of intra- and inter-party competition.

Summary Insight

The North-West and North-Central zones pose the highest security threat to election logistics, the North-East presents a displacement and inclusion challenge, while the Southern zones (South-East, South-West, and South-South) face political manipulation, intimidation, and voter apathy risks.

Collectively, these patterns highlight the urgent need for region-specific electoral security frameworks, combining peace messaging in the South with early-warning and rapid-response coordination in the North.

Regional Impact and Strategic Implications

September's security landscape reflects cross-regional variations in both intensity and electoral significance, underscoring that insecurity is no longer confined to traditional hotspots but now intersects directly with governance and democratic processes.

While every zone experienced violence, the scale, drivers, and implications varied, shaping different risk profiles for electoral actors and humanitarian responders.

North-West (Epicentre of Banditry and Rural Terror)

The North-West recorded the highest human and territorial impact, with Zamfara and Katsina leading in fatalities, abductions, and displacement. The collapse of local governance structures has created de facto armed jurisdictions where electoral logistics, voter registration, and campaign mobility are severely constrained.

Implication: The NPC and INEC must prioritise early-warning deployment and inter-agency patrol coordination in Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto to safeguard electoral staff and infrastructure.

North-Central (Corridor of Political Violence and Communal Clashes)

The North-Central zone exhibited dual-layered insecurity—communal clashes in Plateau and Benue, and politically motivated abductions and thuggery in Kogi and Kwara. These incidents disrupted governance, displaced rural voters, and curtailed campaign activities.

Implication: This corridor connects insurgency zones in the North with political hotspots in the South, making it a strategic stabilisation priority for peacebuilding interventions and NPC-led dialogue initiatives.

North-East (Persistent Terrorism and Humanitarian Disruption)

Despite a lower frequency of incidents, the North-East retained the highest lethality per attack, with Boko Haram and ISWAP maintaining operational reach in Borno and Yobe. Each strike caused mass casualties and renewed displacement, limiting humanitarian access and civic participation.

Implication: Continued insecurity risks mass disenfranchisement of IDPs and calls for enhanced coordination between INEC, NEMA, and the NPC's peace architecture to ensure inclusion of displaced populations in electoral processes.

South-East (Political Intimidation and Identity-Based Polarisation)

The South-East's insecurity was driven by elite rivalry and identity-based mobilisation, especially in Anambra ahead of its gubernatorial polls. Disinformation and factional violence threatened civic tolerance and social cohesion.

Implication: The NPC and media partners must intensify peace messaging, counter-narrative campaigns, and inter-party mediation to prevent escalation during campaigns.

South-West (Urban Criminality and Politicised Thuggery)

The South-West faced medium-intensity, high-visibility violence concentrated in Lagos, Osun, and Ondo. Cult groups and political thugs disrupted rallies and markets, eroding public confidence in urban security.

Implication: Strengthening police neutrality and electoral crowd-control protocols will be essential to maintaining urban peace during elections.

South-South (Factional Politics and Organised Rivalries)

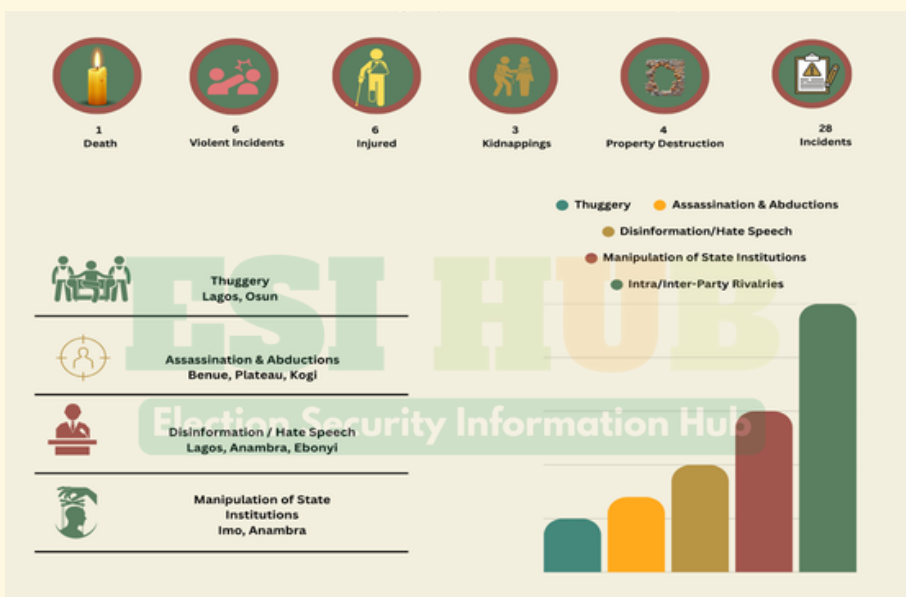
Intra- and inter-party violence in Edo and Rivers reflected elite capture of local political economies, producing targeted attacks and voter intimidation.

Implication: Political violence in this zone poses a high reputational risk to Nigeria’s democratic image; hence, the NPC and civil society partners should deploy preventive diplomacy and conflict mediation mechanisms before campaign escalation.

Comparative Insight

While the North-West drives the highest humanitarian impact, the North-Central presents the greatest electoral disruption risk, and the South-East and South-South exhibit the highest potential for politically induced instability. This pattern suggests that Nigeria’s 2026–2027 pre-election environment requires differentiated regional interventions — humanitarian coordination in the North, political mediation in the South, and joint civil-security planning in central corridors.

ELECTORAL OFFENCES TRACKING SYSTEM (EOTS)



The Electoral Offences Tracking System (EOTS), managed by the Elections Security Information (ESI) Hub, serves as Nigeria’s central mechanism for identifying, documenting, and analysing violations that threaten electoral integrity and democratic stability. Anchored in Section 14(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended)—which guarantees citizens’ right to free participation in governance—and guided by the Electoral Act 2022, the system recognises that electoral offences are not isolated breaches of law but manifestations of deeper political, institutional, and socioeconomic fragilities.

At the legal and moral level, Part VII of the Electoral Act criminalises acts such as bribery, voter intimidation, vote-trading, and disorderly conduct. Complementing this, the National Peace Accord (NPA)—under the facilitation of the National Peace Committee (NPC)—obliges political actors to commit to non-violence, respect for the rule of law, and restraint in political expression. Together, these frameworks constitute Nigeria’s normative shield against the weaponisation of politics.

However, data from September 2025 reveal a worrying trend of disregard for both statutory and moral obligations. Despite the country not yet entering the official pre-election phase, 28 incidents of politically motivated violence, intimidation, disinformation, and institutional manipulation were recorded nationwide. These incidents resulted in 1 death, 6 injuries, 3 kidnappings, and 4 cases of property destruction, distributed across 10 states—notably Lagos, Anambra, Benue, Kogi, Osun, Ondo, Kebbi, Plateau, Edo, and Imo.

This pattern points to an early politicisation of insecurity and a re-politicisation of state institutions, where coercion, propaganda, and patronage increasingly shape civic space. What might superficially appear as localised disturbances in fact reflects the deep entanglement of political competition with Nigeria’s broader insecurity matrix. Thuggery and intimidation, often financed by local elites, coexist with disinformation and hate speech that exploit identity fault lines. The effect is an ecosystem of manipulation that corrodes public trust, widens polarisation, and weakens the institutional scaffolding that underpins credible elections.

The persistence of these offences underscores four converging dynamics.

First, political monetisation continues to transform youth groups and cult networks into instruments of coercion, repurposing economic desperation into political violence. Second, disinformation and hate speech have become potent digital tools for destabilisation, amplifying ethnic stereotypes and undermining civic rationality. Third, institutional complicity or inertia—manifest in selective enforcement, delayed investigations, and weak sanctions—has entrenched impunity, emboldening repeat offenders. Finally, economic hardship and elite rivalry provide the combustible backdrop against which local disputes escalate into political crises, further fracturing an already fragile governance architecture.

From a governance perspective, these offences reveal the erosion of state impartiality. Security agencies are repeatedly accused of selective enforcement, while political officeholders use administrative leverage to suppress opposition or manipulate justice. In Imo State, the detention of a lawyer critical of the government illustrated how judicial mechanisms may be misused to silence dissent. In Anambra, councillors reported threats from politically aligned actors discouraging cross-party engagement. These developments demonstrate the gradual substitution of law with loyalty, weakening citizens’ confidence in institutions meant to safeguard their rights.

Equally concerning is the weaponisation of information disorder. In Lagos, viral social media posts alleging attacks on Igbo traders at the Alaba International Market—though false—ignited ethnic fear and online hostility. Exclusionary messages such as “Igbos must never rule Lagos” spread unchecked, reinforcing divisions and normalising prejudice in civic discourse. In Anambra, fabricated claims of assassination plots circulated widely, triggering anxiety and security responses based on misinformation. This convergence of fake news and hate speech reveals how digital spaces have become accelerants for political manipulation, capable of shaping perceptions long before ballots are cast.

The impact of these offences extends beyond immediate casualties. Politically motivated violence disrupts community cohesion, disinformation corrodes social trust, and intimidation deters civic engagement. Together, they form a continuum that undermines governance legitimacy and reduces citizens’ willingness to participate in the democratic process. Civil society monitors reported reduced public turnout at town-hall meetings in affected LGAs, while women and youth—often targets of online harassment—expressed increasing fear of political participation. Economically, the cost of insecurity in campaign spaces discourages investment in civic education, media coverage, and political logistics, thereby weakening Nigeria’s electoral infrastructure at the subnational level.

The risk trajectory heading into the pre-election period is therefore pronounced. The continued overlap between political thuggery, cult-linked violence, and institutional manipulation increases the likelihood of coordinated attacks on opposition events or electoral facilities. Heightened ethnic rhetoric risks fuelling urban tension in diverse states such as Lagos and Anambra. Meanwhile, unchecked disinformation may compromise the credibility of election management bodies and peace initiatives by eroding public confidence before voting even begins. If left unmitigated, these trends could crystallise into pre-electoral crises that challenge not only voter turnout but also the perceived legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

The electoral implications are multifaceted. Persistent insecurity in politically competitive states like Benue, Plateau, and Kogi threatens candidate mobility and observer access, while intimidation of journalists and lawyers undermines transparency and accountability. The normalisation of hate narratives jeopardises inclusive participation, particularly among ethnic minorities and women. In the long term, failure to sanction electoral offences risks institutionalising violence as a legitimate form of political bargaining, weakening Nigeria’s democratic consolidation.

The September findings therefore reinforce an urgent policy imperative: electoral integrity cannot be safeguarded through legal frameworks alone—it must be sustained through enforcement, civic vigilance, and institutional neutrality. Strengthening early warning and response systems, empowering peace committees at state and LGA levels, and ensuring swift prosecution under the Electoral Act 2022 remain central to restoring public trust. Coordinated fact-checking and responsible media regulation can help reduce the influence of disinformation, while political actors must be held to the commitments of the National Peace Accord.

Ultimately, the EOTS data illuminates the intricate linkage between political behaviour, governance fragility, and national security. The convergence of thuggery, hate speech, and institutional capture represents not just a breach of electoral law but a structural challenge to Nigeria’s democracy—one that requires proactive collaboration between INEC, security agencies, civil society, and international partners to pre-empt escalation and protect civic space ahead of future polls.

Thuggery and Pre-Election Violence

Thuggery persisted as the most visible manifestation of politically motivated violence during the September 2025 reporting period, accounting for six verified incidents across Osun, Ondo, Lagos, Benue, Kogi, and Kebbi States. These ranged from the violent disruption of political meetings to vandalism of campaign offices and one targeted assassination. The recurrence of such incidents reflects how violence has been normalised as a competitive instrument for asserting dominance within or between political parties.

Reports from field monitors suggest that most violent episodes were triggered by intra-party rivalries or opposition mobilisation efforts. Political elites routinely deploy youth gangs and cult networks as proxies for intimidation, weaponising socioeconomic desperation for political advantage. The transactional nature of recruitment—cash-for-loyalty—continues to entrench violence within local political economies.

The immediate toll includes loss of life, injury, and destruction of property, but the broader consequence is the erosion of civic confidence. Frequent violence around political gatherings discourages citizens from attending meetings, curtails women’s participation, and fosters apathy among first-time voters. In rural LGAs where youth unemployment is high, thuggery also serves as an informal labour market for violence, creating a self-sustaining cycle that heightens pre-electoral volatility.

Unchecked thuggery distorts the fairness of political competition by silencing dissenting voices and constraining campaign mobility. The fear of confrontation dissuades parties from open engagement, shrinking democratic space. As elections approach, such incidents risk escalating into polling-day violence, particularly in high-density states such as Lagos and Benue, where thugs are often co-opted for voter suppression or ballot snatching. Unless deterrence through swift prosecution is enforced under the Electoral Act 2022, violence may be institutionalised as a legitimate campaign strategy.

Intimidation and Institutional Manipulation

Incidents recorded in Imo and Anambra during September underscored how intimidation can extend beyond physical coercion to include the manipulation of legal and administrative institutions. In Imo (Owerri North LGA), the detention of a lawyer critical of the state government drew public concern over the misuse of judicial authority. In Anambra (Awka North LGA), councillors reported harassment by politically affiliated actors seeking to deter engagement with rival parties.

These cases highlight the subtle evolution of intimidation from street-level violence to state-linked coercion. Instead of overt assault, political actors increasingly exploit bureaucratic and legal instruments to silence critics or weaken opposition structures. This trend blurs the boundary between governance and partisanship, undermining rule-of-law norms that should safeguard pluralism. The effect of institutional intimidation is cumulative. It breeds public cynicism, discourages whistleblowing, and alienates reform-minded officials. Over time, such practices hollow out judicial and administrative neutrality—key pillars for electoral credibility. Communities observing selective justice may resort to self-help or disengagement from civic processes, weakening conflict-resolution pathways and increasing political polarisation.

When citizens perceive courts, police, or local councils as partisan, confidence in the electoral process collapses. This perception threatens turnout, dispute resolution, and post-election peace, as aggrieved actors are less likely to trust institutional remedies. For INEC and peacebuilding partners, the priority must be reinforcing inter-agency impartiality through transparent accountability and public communication.

Disinformation and Hate Speech

Disinformation and hate speech emerged as strategic instruments of political mobilisation and social disruption during the reporting period. Viral online messages in Lagos (Ikeja and Eti-Osa LGAs) falsely alleged that Igbo-owned shops at Alaba International Market had been burned, while exclusionary posts declaring that “Igbos must never rule Lagos” circulated widely. Similar misinformation in Anambra (Onitsha North LGA) claimed an assassination plot against a political figure, sparking panic and inflaming tension.

These incidents reveal a pattern of coordinated digital propaganda that manipulates identity and fear. Political operatives increasingly rely on social media micro-targeting, using ethnic cues and fabricated security alerts to shape voter perception long before official campaigns begin. The porous nature of Nigeria’s information ecosystem—marked by limited fact-checking and partisan online influencers—has amplified the reach of such narratives.

Disinformation corrodes social trust and diverts public discourse from policy to identity. False claims can provoke communal clashes or reprisals, as seen in prior cycles where online rumours translated into street violence. The economic cost is also significant: small traders in Lagos reported reduced foot traffic following online rumours of market attacks. Psychologically, sustained exposure to hate speech normalises prejudice, lowering the threshold for violence.

Information disorder directly undermines electoral integrity. When citizens base political choices on misinformation or perceive elections through an ethnic lens, legitimacy weakens even before votes are cast. Disinformation also threatens observer safety and material deployment, as false security alerts can obstruct logistics. Mitigation requires an integrated approach—real-time digital monitoring by INEC and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), partnerships with fact-checking organisations, and proactive civic education to build media literacy.

Identity-Based Incitement and Violent Rhetoric

Identity-based incitement and violent rhetoric continued to feature prominently in Nigeria’s political discourse during the September 2025 reporting period, reflecting the persistent instrumentalisation of ethnicity and religion for political mobilisation. Three verified incidents were recorded in Lagos (Eti-Osa LGA, 25 September), Anambra (Onitsha North LGA, 12 September), and Ebonyi (Abakaliki LGA, 20 September). In Lagos, a viral video declaring that “Igbos must never rule Lagos” inflamed inter-ethnic hostility online, while in Anambra, a civic protest against insecurity devolved into ethnic provocation. In Ebonyi, a political leader allegedly urged supporters to “eliminate IPOB members,” a statement interpreted as both exclusionary and inflammatory.

These incidents highlight the increasing use of digital platforms as amplifiers of ethnic nationalism and political exclusion. Political actors and partisan influencers strategically deploy identity rhetoric to consolidate support, marginalise opponents, and redirect public attention from governance failures. The blurring of political communication and hate propaganda underscores a deeper crisis in civic ethics and media accountability.

The social cost of identity incitement is profound. It deepens mistrust across ethnic and religious lines, heightens communal tension, and widens polarisation. In multi-ethnic urban areas like Lagos, such rhetoric not only threatens physical safety but also erodes social coexistence in markets, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. When hate speech becomes normalised, reprisals are more easily justified, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of hostility.

Identity politics undermines Nigeria's constitutional guarantees of equality under Sections 15 and 42 of the 1999 Constitution. The infusion of ethnic sentiment into electoral discourse discourages minority participation, fuels apathy, and increases the likelihood of targeted violence during campaigns. In environments already marked by inter-communal fragility, inflammatory rhetoric may translate into voter intimidation or suppression. INEC's credibility could also suffer if misinformation tied to ethnic narratives spreads unchallenged. To mitigate these risks, multi-stakeholder counter-speech initiatives, religious and traditional leader engagement, and digital literacy programs remain essential.

Political Rivalry, Assassination, and Abduction

Targeted violence linked to political rivalry persisted as a critical governance concern during the month. Two major incidents, one assassination and one politically motivated abduction—were documented in Benue (Makurdi LGA) and Plateau (Bassa LGA). On 23 September 2025, an APC chieftain in Benue was assassinated outside his residence, reportedly after receiving threats linked to intra-party disputes. That same day in Plateau, the district head of Irigwe and two women were abducted under circumstances believed to stem from local political rivalries and community division.

These events reflect a broader pattern of targeted political elimination—where contestation for influence, resource control, and party dominance manifests through violence rather than legal or administrative means. The weaponisation of abduction and assassination within political structures signals a declining tolerance for opposition and internal dissent. It also underscores the permeability between political and criminal networks, with hired violence becoming a predictable element of electoral strategy.

The immediate impact is a chilling effect on political participation and free expression. The assassination of community leaders disrupts local governance, creates leadership vacuums, and provokes fear among political aspirants. At the societal level, it reinforces perceptions that politics equals danger, discouraging qualified citizens—especially women—from seeking office. The targeting of traditional rulers, as seen in Plateau, further destabilises peacebuilding structures, as such figures often serve as mediators between state and citizens.

Persistent targeted violence undermines the integrity of electoral competition and the safety of candidates and voters alike. In contexts where political rivalry escalates unchecked, campaigns may be truncated, voter turnout reduced, and the credibility of results questioned. INEC's operations could also be constrained by security advisories in affected LGAs, limiting observer deployment or ballot distribution. Without swift investigation and visible accountability, such incidents risk fostering impunity and eroding confidence in democratic institutions. Strengthening protective security for candidates, enhancing intelligence coordination, and ensuring non-partisan policing are vital to preserving electoral integrity.

Intra- and Inter-Party Rivalries

September 2025 witnessed renewed episodes of intra- and inter-party violence, underscoring the fragility of internal party democracy and the prevalence of personality-driven politics. Notable clashes occurred in Edo (Oredo LGA) and Anambra (Awka North LGA). In Edo, rival APC factions engaged in violent confrontation during a ward meeting, leading to vandalism of campaign offices and vehicles. In Anambra, disputes within the PDP over zoning and candidate selection escalated into physical altercations that disrupted local meetings.

The recurring nature of such disputes reflects the weak institutionalisation of party systems, where internal disagreements are resolved through coercion rather than mediation. Party executives often lack credible mechanisms for conflict resolution, allowing personal ambition, regional rivalry, and patronage networks to dictate outcomes. These dynamics convert routine organisational disagreements into full-blown security risks.

Factional violence damages party cohesion and undermines public confidence in political institutions. At the community level, it displaces grassroots supporters, disrupts civic meetings, and intimidates potential candidates. The prevalence of physical clashes over internal matters also diverts law enforcement resources from broader security operations. When unresolved, rivalries fragment political representation and increase the likelihood of parallel structures or splinter groups contesting legitimacy.

Weak internal democracy directly affects the credibility of the electoral process. Disputed primaries and violent factionalism complicate candidate nomination, delay campaign rollouts, and generate pre-election litigation that distracts from issue-based politics. In volatile contexts, such disputes may spill into polling-day disruption as rival factions mobilise supporters to challenge INEC's authority or contest results. To mitigate these risks, political parties must institutionalise intra-party conflict resolution frameworks, while INEC should enforce compliance with internal democracy provisions under the Electoral Act 2022. Collaborative engagement with peace committees can also pre-empt escalation during nomination phases.

Institutional Fragility and Enforcement Gaps

September's incidents suggest recurring pressure points across the security–justice chain. Reports of selective enforcement, slow response times, and limited case follow-through continued to surface, particularly in LGAs with overlapping threats (banditry, gunmen attacks, political thuggery). Operationally, security deployments appeared reactive rather than preventive in several corridors, while prosecutorial outcomes for electoral offences were rarely publicised, reinforcing perceptions of low deterrence.

A coordinated posture, preventive policing, transparent communications, early mediation, and fast-track prosecution of emblematic cases—offers the best prospect of reducing escalation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Security Agencies

Nigeria's security institutions must transition from reactive enforcement to preventive and intelligence-led peace governance.

1

Adopt proactive policing: Shift from ad hoc deployment to preventive, intelligence-driven operations emphasizing early detection, mediation, and restraint.

2

Strengthen coordination: Operationalize a shared digital incident dashboard linking ICCES, the ESI Hub, and ISPA for unified situational awareness.

3

Enhance accountability: Institutionalize post-incident learning reviews within all formations to identify lessons and reinforce professional standards.

4

Deepen community engagement: Embed community liaison officers within divisional commands to strengthen civilian trust and local intelligence.

5

Reinforce professionalism: Integrate human-rights-centred Rules of Engagement across all training academies to ensure proportional and ethical response.

B. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

CSOs remain vital partners in sustaining peace and accountable governance.

1

Leverage technology to build a unified civic data hub aggregating verified citizen reports.

C. Media

The media plays a critical role in shaping narratives and safeguarding public trust.

1

Adopt a Media Integrity Charter to promote responsible reporting and self-regulation.

2

Strengthen fact-checking capacity through coordinated verification networks during sensitive periods.

3

Promote peace journalism by investing in training and fellowships that humanize conflict and foster social cohesion.

CONCLUSION

The September 2025 data present a complex, multi-dimensional threat landscape for Nigeria's elections. Incidents of terrorism, banditry, gunmen attacks, thuggery, cultism, political assassination, abduction, and disinformation were geographically and operationally diverse, highlighting both rural and urban vulnerabilities. Elite manipulation, institutional compromise, and systemic impunity further amplified the risks.

Electoral offences were coordinated and strategic: thuggery, intimidation, disinformation, ethnic incitement, and institutional manipulation often intersected to restrict voter access, suppress opposition, and undermine democratic legitimacy.

Addressing these risks requires coordinated, data-informed, and context-sensitive engagement across stakeholders. Security agencies, INEC, the NPC, CSOs, and development partners are encouraged to strengthen collaboration through preventive measures and long-term institutional reforms that enhance transparency, trust, and accountability. Sustained collective action will be essential to reduce violence, mitigate polarization, and safeguard Nigeria's democratic stability.

The September 2025 security assessment reaffirms that electoral security is inseparable from broader societal stability, requiring sustained vigilance, evidence-based planning, and proactive engagement from all actors involved in safeguarding Nigeria's democracy.