





Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote Third National Pre-Election Observation (PREO) Report



Background

Nigeria's 2023 general elections is Africa's biggest elections in 2023. The election is an opportunity for Nigerians to elect leaders for respective offices which include the office of the President, 469 Legislators of the National Assembly, 28 Governors and 993 State Assembly legislators in a potentially contentious election. The elections which will be conducted amidst a troubled economy, rising insecurity and fractured state and society relations remain a symbol of hope for the people in a developing democracy lasting through 23 years of uninterrupted civilian rule. The enthusiasm observed during the continuous voter registration exercise, collection of permanent voters cards and citizen's engagement in the pre-election phase indicates hope in the value of democracy as freedom of the people to freely choose their leaders. The success of the 2023 election will therefore be assessed on the level of compliance to generally acceptable integrity standards for elections in a democracy. Upholding a higher level of integrity quotient for the election remains paramount amidst a competitive and contentious elections especially in ensuring generally acceptable outcome of the election.

The pre-election observation presents a national outlook on pre-election activities with a special focus on the preparatory activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Orientation Agency (NOA), civil society, campaigns by political parties ,incidents of violence and rising security challenges. The findings from the third reporting period indicates that INEC's preparatory activities were ongoing with political party campaigns extended to more local government area. However, voter education remains poor, with more incidents of voter inducement. The report highlights trends in the preparation for the election by INEC across the six geo-political zones and the spread of campaigns by the four leading political parties; All Progressive's Congress, Labour Party (LP), New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) and the People Democratic Party (PDP). Notably, political parties have intensified their campaigns for votes with high visibility of party campaigns and ongoing party meetings in States and Local Government Areas across the country. Hate speech on the basis of age, health, gender, religion, ethnicity or disability has remained relatively constant over time but the prevalence of each kind of hate speech varies by geo-political zone. In addition, the violence monitoring tool revealed the rising threat of violence and insecurity, in local government areas that are difficult to access for election-related activities due to insecurity. It also tracks attacks on INEC's facilities and personnel and insecurity.

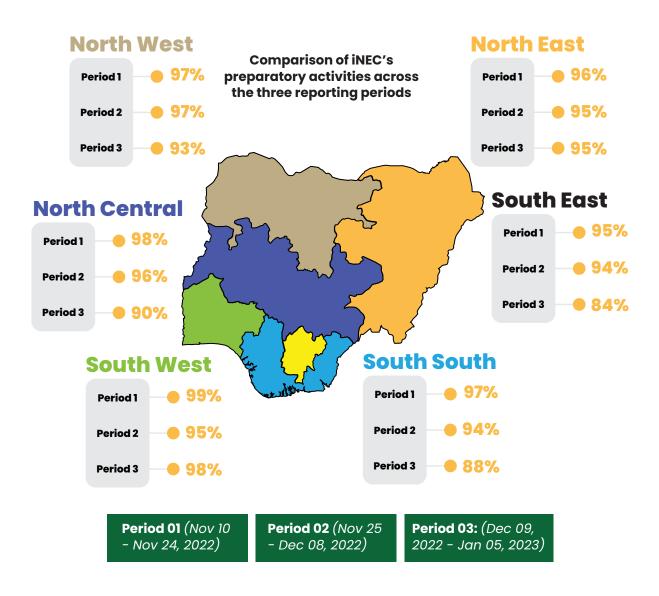
Yiaga Africa reiterates many of the same recommendations that emerged in previous reporting periods. Yiaga Africa encourages electoral actors with a mandate to provide voter information, especially on key changes to the electoral process, to increase activities in those areas where voters are relatively uninformed. We encourage candidates, media houses and citizens especially social media influencers to refrain from using incendiary language and to maintain a respectful campaign environment. We recommend that the upsurge in fuel prices and shortages be closely monitored as economic grievances could exacerbate tensions and serve as catalysts for electoral violence.

This report contains key findings of the third observation period (between December 09, 2022 and January 05, 2023) and is based on reports received from 748 of 774 LGAs. Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote will deploy its trained Long Term Observers (LTOs) across the 774 LGAs until February 24, 2023.

Summary of Key Findings

Preparations by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Yiaga Africa's WTV LTOs have continued to track election preparatory activities undertaken by INEC across the 774 LGAs. The citizen observers tracked and reported a wide range of preparatory activities undertaken by the commission including engagements with stakeholders (political parties, CSOs, media, and security agencies). The LTOs also observed INEC's procurement and deployment of election materials such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) to the state offices. In this reporting period it was observed that the Commission continued the training of its personnel among many activities. INEC's preparatory activities were observed in 92 percent of the LGA's observed. Although there was a noticeable slight decline of 4 percent from the previous 96 percent reported in the second period, the Commission conducted more activities in this period as compared to previous periods.¹



¹ Yiaga Africa defined preparations broadly to include such activities as training election officials, organiziging briefings with stakeholders or distribution of election materials.

Collection of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs)

In this reporting period, WTV LTOs observed the collection of PVCs as conducted by INEC. The Commission intensified its efforts to make PVCs available to registered voters and fixed Monday 12 December 2022 to Sunday 22 January 2023 as the dates for the collection of PVCs in all the 774 LGA offices of the Commission throughout the federation. Additionally, the Commission planned to devolve the collection of PVCs to all 8,809 registration areas/wards from January 6th to 15th, 2023.

From the observation of the PVC collection at the LGA level, 81 percent of the LTOs reported they witnessed the collection of PVCs while 16 percent reported that they heard about the collection of the PVCs in their LGAs. This is an increase of 17% when compared to the second reporting period where 64% witnessed the collection of PVCs in their LGAs.

Voter Education/Information

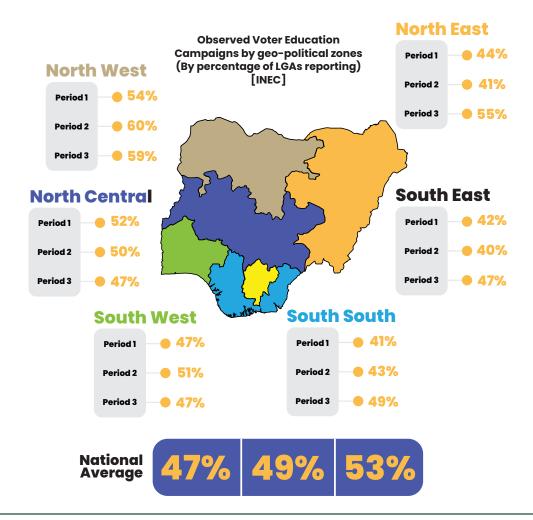
Voter education and public orientation remain the core mandate of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) respectively. However, voter education is a joint responsibility of all stakeholders in the electoral process. Yiaga Africa's LTOs observed voter education workshops and voter information campaigns organized by each of the above actors. Yiaga Africa's findings suggest that overall levels of activity by all three actors and in all six geo-political zones were generally higher in the third reporting period, reflecting an increase in activities to prepare Nigerian voters for the upcoming polls.

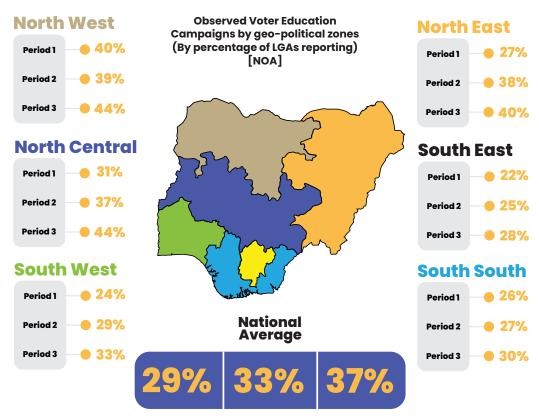
The WTV LTOs observed that voter education and information activities are currently conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in a total of 96 percent of the 774 LGAs. Voter education as observed by the WTV LTOs was carried out through different mediums of disseminating information to citizens like workshops, radio programs/jingles, television programs/announcements, street and market sensitization, billboards, posters and flyers among others. In 53percent of the 774 LGAs, WTV observers witnessed voter information campaigns by INEC, 37percent by NOA and 59percent by CSOs.

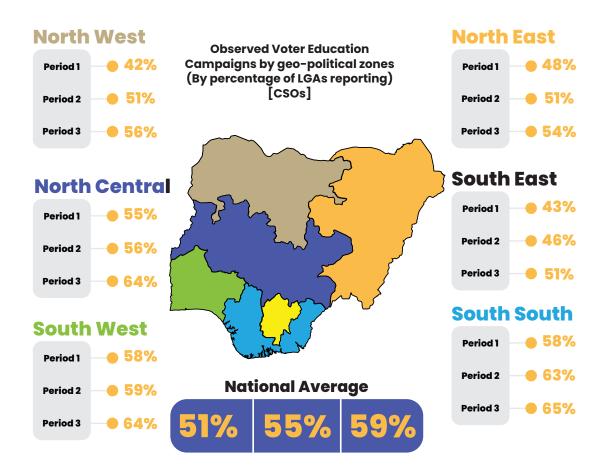
Observed Voter Education Campaigns by geo-political zones (By percentage of LGAs reporting)

In the third reporting period, WTV LTOs specifically reported targeted voter education in their respective communities as follows:

• The WTV LTOs observed and reported voter education activities targeted at marginalized groups (Women, Youth, and Persons with Disability). WTV LTOs reported voter education targeting youth in 96percent of the LGA's. The LTOs reported voter education targeting Persons with Disabilities and Women in 75 percent and 87percent of the LGAs respectively. The WTV LTOs also witnessed or heard of voter information messaging on the new Electoral Act as conducted by INEC in 53percent of the 774 LGAs, conducted by NOA in 30 percent of LGAs, and as conducted by CSOs in 58 percent of LGAs across the country.







Political Party Campaign

Yiaga Africa WTV LTOs observed the distribution of political party campaigns throughout the country by reporting on the presence of party posters and party rallies in each local government area. WTV LTOs used a broad definition of rallies to include both party and candidate rallies and ward congresses organized within the states. Overall, Yiaga Africa observed a rise in the level of party campaigning across the reporting periods, suggesting that political parties are intensifying their campaigns as the general elections approach.

For the third reporting period, WTV LTOs observed and reported campaigns associated with the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 88percent of the LGAs, the Labour Party (LP) in 65percent of the LGAs, New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) in 56percent of the LGAs and People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 86percent of the LGAs across the country.

Campaign Posters Observed in the third reporting period

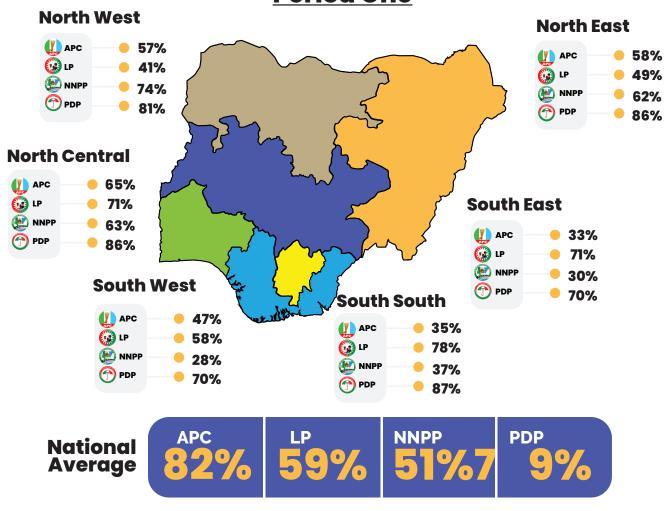
The public display of candidates' posters is another means of popularizing the party and candidates running for elective positions and political parties have explored its advantage in different ways in order to solicit voters' support at the polls. In this campaign strategy, both print and electronic posters have been observed by WTV LTOs being used by political parties across the country, which are billboards, flyers, stickers and online posters among others. Within this reporting period, WTV LTOs reported sighting campaign posters for candidates associated with APC in 96 percent of the LGAs, LP in 96 percent of the LGAs, NNPP in 95 percent of the LGAs, PDP in 96 percent of the LGAs and other political parties in 96 percent of the LGAs across the country.

Political Party Campaigns (Rallies) by Geo-Political Zones across the three reporting periods

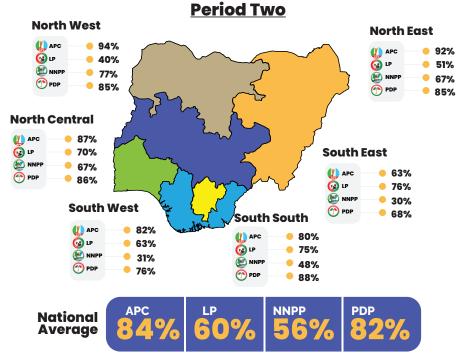
Yiaga Africa observed the conduct and frequency of campaigns across the geo-political zones for four political parties: APC, LP, NNPP and the PDP. The observation of campaigns includes the campaigns for respective elective offices by the listed parties across the LGA. The LTOs reported more campaigns for these four parties in this third reporting period with the APC and PDP recording the most report on campaigns. The campaigns tracked include campaigns by the political parties for the respective offices contested for in the 2023 general elections. The data also suggest that while the four parties listed above are conducting campaigns across the six geo-political zones, the North Central zone had the most report of campaign activities in this reporting period.

Yiaga Africa's data suggests that the All Progressives Congress (APC) is campaigning more across all six geo-political zones. Distribution of PDP posters was equally spread across the geo-political zones across all reporting periods. Yiaga Africa's data suggests that the APC, LP and PDP recorded high levels of campaign in more LGAs in the North Central in this reporting period. The data shows the trends in the campaign per geo-political zones by the political parties observed.

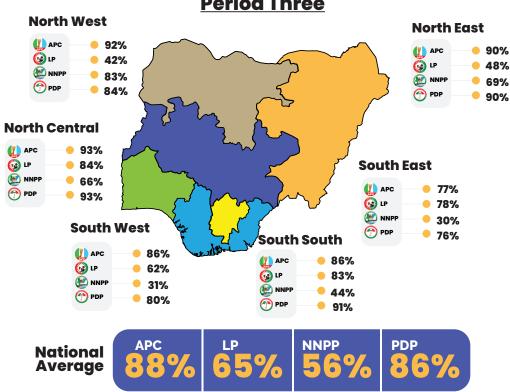
Political Party Campaigns by geo-political zones Period One



Political Party Campaigns by geo-political zones



Political Party Campaigns by geo-political zones Period Three



Purchase of Permanent Voters Cards (PVC)s

Consistent with the observations from the previous reporting periods, Yiaga Africa's LTOs have continued to report the purchase of permanent voters cards by candidates, political parties and private individuals. In 4 percent of LGA's in 19 states, the LTO's reported that they heard of PVCs being sold or bought in their LGAs. The reports were received from Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, River, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara States.

Early Warning Signs

WTV LTOs in the third reporting phase, reported witnessing or hearing about incidents of violence in the form of hate speech, attacks at rallies; attacks on INEC facilities/ activities and against candidates or their supporters; voters' inducement and vandalism, or destruction of properties belonging to either candidates or their supporters

During this period of observation, WTV observed and reported the following critical incidents in their various LGAs:

Physical violence and verbal attacks during any political party rallies/meetings/on campaign trail

The increase in politically motivated violence has sparked fears that a violent campaign period could have adverse effects on citizens' participation and may impact turnout on election day.

Three percent of WTV LTOs reported cases of violence at party rallies and campaign trails and 2 percent heard of physical violence against women at campaign rallies.

- Reports about physical violence at campaign rallies were received from 17 states (Benue, Kogi, Niger, Bauchi, Taraba, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Akwa-Ibom, Cross-River and Rivers),
- Reports about verbal violence during party activities were received from 22 states across the country except for FCT, Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, Imo, Ebonyi, Bayelsa, Edo, Lagos, Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekitiand Ogun.

An incident was reported from Delta state over PDP internal party crises in Isoko North LGA that led to a violent outburst during ward to ward campaign rally in Emevor ward 07 of Isoko North LGA on December 8, 2022, leading to the hospitalization of two persons.

Incitement of Violence and Destruction of Party/ Candidate Property

In the third report period, an increased percentage (3percent) of Yiaga Africa's observers in all geo-political zones observed candidates encouraging their supporters to commit acts of violence. An increased percentage (9percent) also observed the destruction of party/candidates' property. Yiaga Africa calls oncandidates and their supporters to uphold the commitments of the Abuja Peace Accord signed on September 26, 2022, and to reject inflammatory language and violence during the campaign period.

Yiaga Africa LTOs reported incidents of vandalism of campaign billboards in Ankpa, Kogi State. The incidents occurred between December 25 and 30, 2022. The campaign

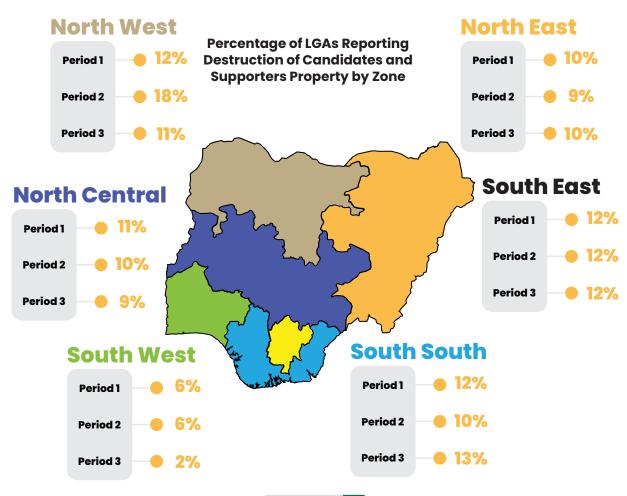
billboards of the PDP presidential candidate that was erected in Owele, beside Suliyat Filling Station were vandalised by hoodlums on December 30, 2022. Campaign posters of candidates contesting for the house of representatives under the platforms of the APC and PDP were vandalised, and billboards for candidates of the Labour Party were also vandalised. An APC party supporter was beaten to a pulp in Okesi, in Ogori Magongo LGA of Kogi State. In an incident occurred on December 16, it was alleged that he accused a House of Representatives aspirant of underperforming, during his stint as the LGA chairman, which infuriated the supporters.

Hoodlums suspected to be supporters of the APC set the PDP Head Office in the Jeka da fari area of Gombe ablaze. The incident occurred on December 12, 2022. On January 4, 2023, some political thugs attacked party members during an APC campaign rally in Ifon, Ose LGA of Ondo State. The altercation ensued because the thugs had tried to stop the campaign rally from holding, they had accused the APC house of representatives, candidate of neglect, in the last four years.

Specifically, in this reporting period, WTV long-term observers have reported cases of vandalism and destruction of parties' campaign billboards and attacks on party supporters in 45 LGAs in 19 states and LGAs as follows: Kogi (Ankpa, Omala), Kwara (Ilorin West, Offa, Baruten), Niger (Kontagora), Plateau (Jos South), Bauchi (Gamawa), Borno (Ngala, Bama), Gombe (Gombe, Nafada), Yobe (Damaturu, Fika), Kaduna (Kajuru), Kano (Ungogo, Rogo), Katsina (Jibia, Kurfi), Kebbi (Kebbi), Zamfara (Shinkafi), Imo (Obowo, Otoko), Onuimo (Okwe), Cross-Rivers (Akampa), Rivers (Rivers, Eleme, Okrika), Ondo (Idanre) and Osun (Osogbo).

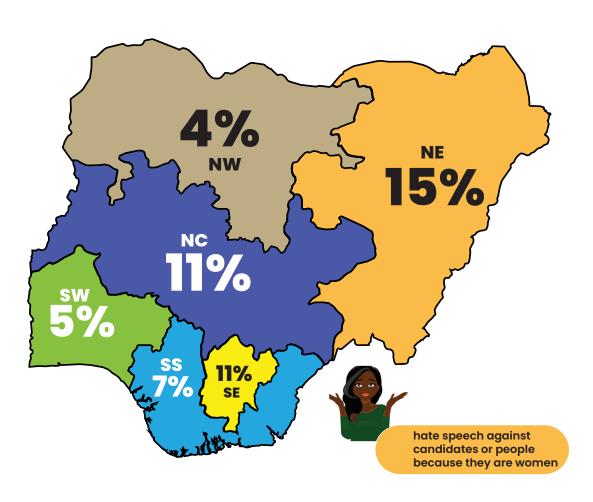
Hate Speech by Geo-Political Zone and Target

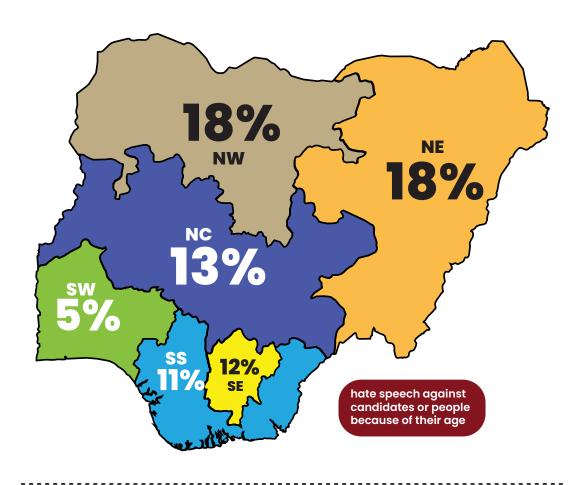
Hate speech which Yiaga Africa has defined as the use of derogatory language to incite violence against a targeted group, is concerning behaviour in the pre-election period as

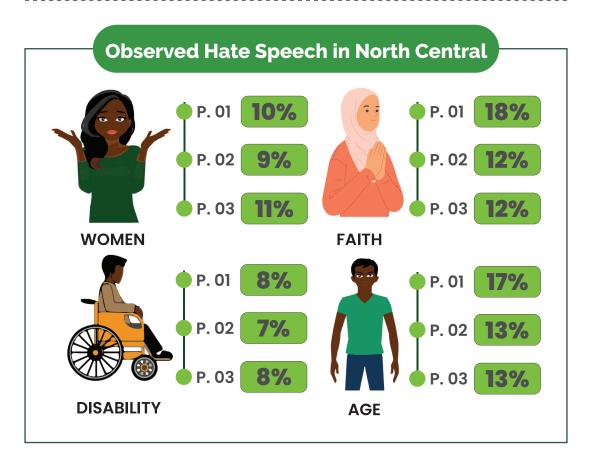


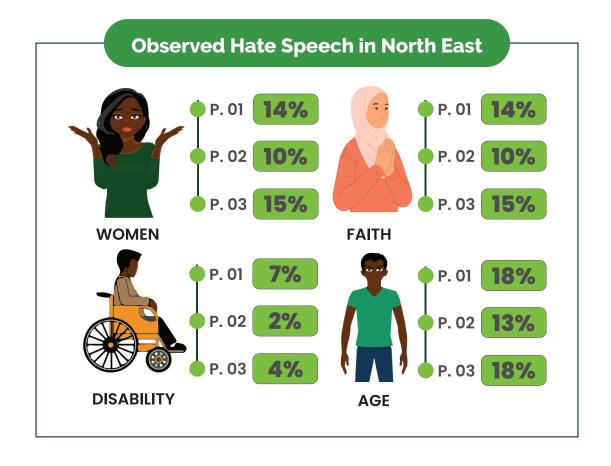
incendiary language can serve as an early warning sign for politically motivated conflict. In Yiaga Africa's PREO efforts, observers, directly and indirectly, observe candidate rallies, political gatherings, media reports, and statements by candidates and parties for inflammatory and divisive rhetoric directed at individuals based on age, origins, gender, religion and physical disabilities.

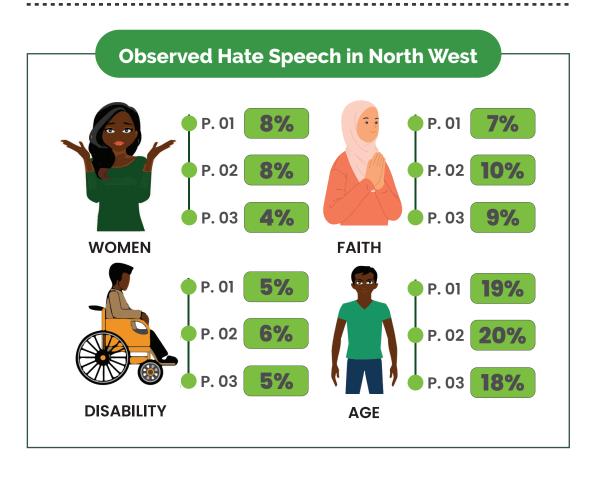
- 4% of observers witnessed, while 5% heard hate speech against candidates or people because they are women. These were observed as follows: North Central 11%, North East 15%, North West 4%, South East 11%, South 5% and South West 5%.
- 3% of observers witnessed, while 11% heard hate speech against candidates or people because they are their age. These were reported as follows: North Central 13%, North East 18%, North West 18%, South East 12%, South South 11% and South West 5%.

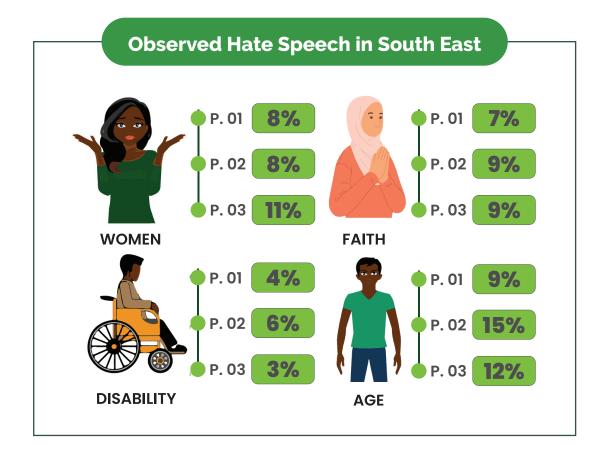


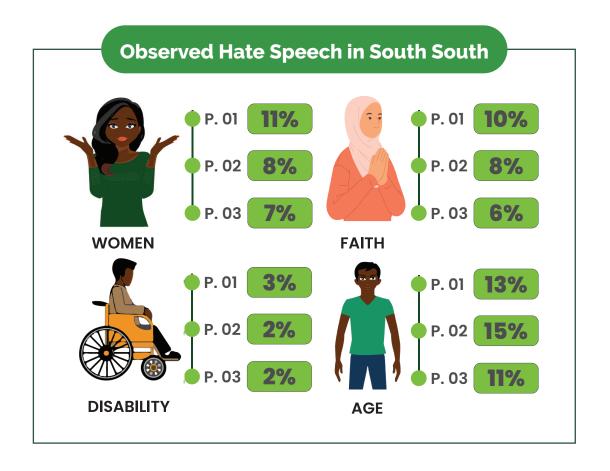


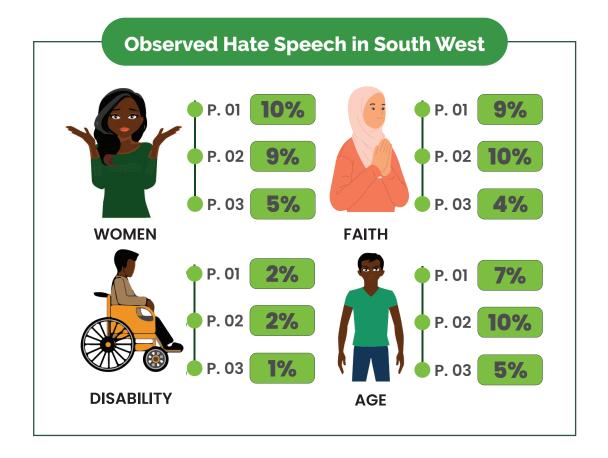












Attack and or Destruction of INEC Facilities/Materials

In the third reporting period, WTV LTOs heard of disruption of Permanent Voters Card collection and threats to INEC officials in five wards (ward 1, 5, 6, 7 & 9) in Ikpoba Okha LGA of Edo State. As a result, INEC Edo State has decided to move the collection centres for Ward 1 and Ward 9 to the INEC local government office in Ikpoba Okha.

Increase in the activities of armed bandits, terrorists, herdsmen, or secessionist groups:

Three percent of WTV LTOs witnessed, and 6percent heard of an increase in the activities of armed bandits, terrorists, herdsmen and secessionist groups in their LGAs. These incidents were more prevalent in Katsina (8 reports), Zamfara (7 reports), Benue (6 reports) Enugu and Imo (4 reports), Bauchi, Cross River, Ebonyi, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, and Taraba (3 reports, each), Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Borno, Kaduna, Kogi, and Nasarawa (2 reports, each) Delta, Kwara, Lagos and Rivers (1 report, each) More specific details according to the zone of occurrence are provided below:

North West: WTV LTOs reported an attack on the Mallagum community in Kaura LGA, in Kaduna State. Over thirty (30) persons lost their lives as a result of farmer/herder clashes. The attack went on for three days, the 13th, 15th and 19th of December 2022. It was said that violence erupted after a farmer who confronted herders for leading their cattle to his farm to eat his farm produce was killed along with two of his family members, this led to a reprisal attack by residents and several reprisal attacks by herders on the residence of the community.

Similarly, in Kamuru Community in Zangon Kataf LGA in Kaduna state, there was an attack by unknown gunmen on the 12th and 13th of December 2022, two persons were killed and a woman was kidnapped.

Also in Sokoto, bandits, after attacking some communities and seizing their livestocks, used Yartsakawa Community in Rabah LGA as their escape route to avoid being caught. WTV LTOs report that Sabon-Birni in Isa LGA is a stronghold for bandits in Sokoto State.

South East: On the 24th of December 2022, a community youth leader and 7 others were killed at Abor, Eha-Amufu by suspected Fulani herders in Isi Uzo LGA in Enugu State,. In the same LGA, Ema-Amufu, residents fleed their homes after herders attacked on the 14th of December 2022.

On January 2, 2023, former governor of Imo state, Ikedi Ohakim was reportedly attacked in the Oriagu community of Ehime Mbano LGA by gunmen who killed four of his police orderlies while he narrowly escaped death.

LGAs with reports of Security Threats Limiting Access for Election

As part of the pre-election observation, WTV is also tracking accessibility to locations where INEC is expected to conduct elections. The third reporting period coincided with the period when Yiaga Africa LTOs deployed further to the communities within the LGAs to recruit polling unit observers for the 2023 general elections. Some of the concerns/complaints from the LTOs include access to some communities that have either been deserted or are currently ravaged by insecurity, which may impact the conduct of the 2023 elections.

Niger State: Reports from **Shiroro LGA** suggest that Mashekari Polling Unit in Kushaka/Kurebe Ward is situated in a community that shares borders with Kaduna state. In recent times, the community has come under attack by herdsmen, and most members of the community have fled to Kaduna State.

Taraba State: Reports from **Bali LGA** indicate that residents around Sansani Primary School polling unit, in Badakosh ward were displaced during the recent clear-out operations carried out by the joint task force on Banditry. Specifically, residents of Nabayi and Sansani communities have deserted the communities. Also, from Taraba, WTV received reports that the residents around the vicinity of Zegete polling unit in Tsokundi ward of **Wukari LGA** have deserted the community. The community has been under incessant security threats ranging from banditry, kidnapping and communal clashes among the inhabitants of the communities within the ward. It is said that most of the residents have taken refuge in Chanchangi ward in Takum, LGA. WTV also received reports that those living around the Kunwai Market Square, Open Space 1 in Garbabi ward of **Gashaka LGA** have deserted the community. In recent times, the community has become haven for bandits.

Zamfara State: There are some LGAs that cannot be accessed due to bandit activities and these are, **Maru LGA** (Dankurmi kumbi Community), **Maradun LGA** (Faru Magami Community), **Kaura Namoda LGA** (Dan Isa Community), Shinkafi LGA (Sabaje Community) and also in Alko Saka Jibi Community in **Kaura Namoda LGA** people have relocated due to several attacks by bandits.

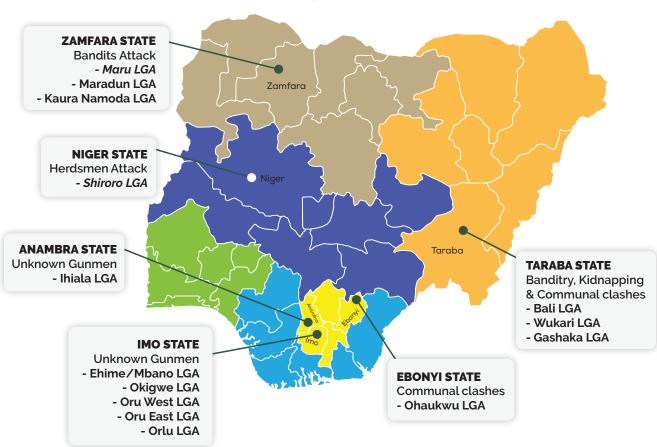
Katsina State: Jibia LGA have been experiencing security challenges that can threaten elections. INEC have relocated some polling units within some wards that are currently inaccessible. Some Polling units in seven (7) Wards have been relocated. The wards are G/Baure Mallamawa Ward (8PUs), Faru Maje Ward (6PUs), FarFaru Ward (8PUs), Mazanya Ward (3PUs), Yangayya Ward (9PUs), Gangata Ward (All PUs), Bugaje Ward (6PUs).

Anambra State: Report from **Ihiala LGA** in Anambra, suggest that residents of Lilu Primary School in Lilu ward deserted the community. The community has been taken over by unknown gunmen.

Ebonyi: From Ebonyi, WTV also received reports that the residents around Amuzu Play Ground polling unit in Wigbeke II ward of **Ohaukwu LGA** have relocated from the community as a result of the Ezza/Effium crisis. There are concerns that INEC may not conduct election in the community.

Imo State: Perennial security threats have also limited Yiaga Africa's engagements in Imo States. Reports from five (5) LGAs indicate difficulties in recruiting observers due to ongoing security threats and the unwillingness of the residents to serve as observers on the project. Some of these communities or non-state actors have out rightly stated that "there will not be election in the LGAs" which raises the concerns that INEC may not conduct elections in the LGAs/Communities. Some of the affected polling unit/wards are; Umuchele Owerre Hall 2, in Agbaja Ward of Ehime/Mbano LGA, Umueze Gemaro Square in Okigwe I/Umueze Gemaro Square of Okigwe LGA, Progressive Central School in Otulu Ward in Oru West LGA, Ihitte Primary School in Akata Ward of Oru East LGA, Umuezike Ama Udara Square II in Ogbebiri/Obibi Ward and Isiorji Hall polling unit in Ohaeke Ward both in Orlu LGA.

States with reports of Security Threats Limiting Access for Election





To the Federal Government:

1. We recommend that the upsurge in fuel prices and shortages be closely monitored as economic grievances could exacerbate tensions and serve as catalysts for electoral violence.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

- 2. INEC should leverage available partnerships and invest in popularizing the new polling units in the state and the planned deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), the INEC results from the portal and the plan (IDP) voting internally displaced person camps across the country.
- 3. To protect the integrity of the election INEC, in collaboration with NOA, CSOs and other relevant bodies, should increase voter education engagements across the country. This should include intentional voter education targeted at women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Security Agencies:

- 4. Security agencies should employ preventive measures to neutralise existing security threats in various parts of the country, to enable voters t exercise their constitutional right to vote in a peaceful and secure environment.
- 5. Security agencies, especially the police, should publicize hotlines for citizens to make complaints, report incidents, or access information on incidents.

Political Parties:

- 6. Yiaga Africa calls upon candidates and their supporters to uphold the commitments of the Abuja Peace Accord signed on September 26, 2022, and to reject inflammatory language and violence during and after the campaign period.
- 7. Political parties and candidates should desist from encouraging thuggery through monetary gifts during campaigns, as this encourages violence.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- 8. CSOs across the country should continue to engage in get-out-the-vote campaigns to mobilize citizens to participate in the electoral process. Specifically, they should engage more in targeted campaigns to increase the participation of marginalized groups.
- g. CSOs should continue to provide support for the institutional processes of a democratic election by creating awareness and voter education on PVC collection, and educating the citizens on the election process.

Citizens:

- 10. Yiaga Africa calls on all registered voters across the country who have not collected their permanent voter cards (PVCs), to kindly do so, as the collection of PVCs is still ongoing in all INEC LGA offices until January 29th.
- 11. 11. Yiaga Africa calls on citizens to shun all forms of voter inducement as it undermines the democratic process.

Methodology

The process used in this PREO involves the deployment of 822 carefully selected and trained LTOs in each state and LGA across the nation to systematically observe and gather data regarding those locations' particular environments as well as any indications of impending conflict and electoral violence. The observers have a checklist they can use to note the important details and produce verified findings. Forty eight observers are movable within a state and only report serious situations, while 774 observers submit biweekly reports on a series of questions related to local government.

The WTV project recruits LTOs from their local government areas (LGAs), where they will be expected to observe electoral activities such as voter education and information, political campaigning, activities of marginalized groups (youth, women, and PWDs), as well as violence associated with elections. They track the activities of INEC, political parties, NOA, CSOs, women, young people, and people with disabilities. All findings from the observers are transmitted to the WTV data center via coded SMS on a bi-weekly basis. During the reporting period, the observers are also expected to report any critical incidents and early warning signs that occur within their LGAs, which are then verified and shared with the relevant stakeholders to resolve the issue.

Yiaga Africa PREO findings are obtained from the entire LGAs within the country and not from a representative of the entire state thus providing an indication of emerging trends during the pre-election period. Unlike the WTV election-day observation methodology, which relies on sample-based observation, Yiaga Africa WTV PREO uses a more traditional approach that investigates the activities in all LGAs in the country. Yiaga Africa, therefore, encourages users of this report to independently corroborate and respond appropriately to trends identified in this report.













