



Edo & Ondo Political and Security Trends

**Pre-Election Assessment of the Edo and Ondo
2024 Governorship Election**

May - June 2024

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Introduction

In September and November 2024, the residents of Edo and Ondo States will go to the polls to elect a governor who will direct their political, social, and economic affairs as the state's political leaders. These elections are expected to be conducted according to the Election Legal framework in Nigeria, which includes the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act of 2022, and all other related policies of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC has scheduled the Edo and Ondo state governorship elections for September 21st, 2024, and November 16th, 2024, respectively. This is in compliance with Section 8(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, which requires that such elections be held no earlier than 150 days and no later than 30 days before the expiration of the term of the last officeholder. The incumbent Governors of Edo and Ondo States' tenure will end on November 11th, 2024, and February 23rd, 2025, respectively. The Edo State Governorship election will be held on Saturday, 21st September 2024.

INEC scheduled the Edo state gubernatorial party primaries from February 1st to 24th, 2024, while the Ondo state governorship party primaries were conducted from April

6th to 27th, 2024. All the political parties that fielded candidates adhered to the specified legal timelines. For the Edo state governorship election, INEC directed the political parties to submit a list of nominated candidates through the online portal from March 4th to 24th, 2024, for Edo, while April 29th to May 20th, 2024, for Ondo. The Electoral Act in Section 32(1) mandates the Commission to publish the list of candidates at least 150 days before the election. Accordingly, the INEC published the list of candidates expected to contest in the Edo governorship election on April 22, 2024. From the published list, 17 political parties will contest in Edo state's 2024 Off-cycle Gubernatorial Election. Following the publication of the list of contestants, the Commission lifted the ban on campaigns from April 24th, 2024, to midnight of September 19th, 2024, in line with Section 94(1) of the Electoral Act stipulating that campaigns commence 150 days to the polling day and end 24 hours before the election day.

As part of INEC's preparation for the September 2024 and November 2024 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States, the Continuous Voters registration exercise was conducted between May 27 and June 5, 2024, both on weekdays and weekends. The CVR

exercise enabled prospective voters who had not previously registered to vote to register ahead of the gubernatorial elections. The uncollected permanent voter cards from the 2023 general elections were also available at the registration centres for collection.

Ahead of the September 2024 Edo elections, the pre-election environment is increasingly dominated by political tension resulting from both intra-party and inter-party conflicts. In addition to the heated political atmosphere, the insecurity in Edo is becoming increasingly tense. Known and unknown rivalries are fueling fears and resulting in various crimes. In May and June 2024, the state experienced instances of political violence, cultist activities, and gang clashes, leading to the loss of lives and properties. There have also been reports of assaults, kidnappings, vandalism, and murder in various parts of the state. The alleged rift between the traditional institution and the government over the arraignment of the traditional ruler has also kept citizens on edge. As the political campaigns in Edo gain momentum, only a handful of political parties have been observed engaging in campaign activities. The presence of armed groups is increasing, which has impacted the state security forces' ability to maintain order and peace. Local governments such as Esan West, Esan South, Ovie North, Esan South West, and Igueben have all experienced insecurity and kidnapping. These incidents have affected the local vigilante groups established by the government to protect the people, as they have become targets in clashes between herdsmen and farmers.

The upcoming elections in Edo and Ondo States will provide an opportunity to evaluate the commitment of stakeholders to promoting electoral integrity and implementing progressive reforms as outlined in the Electoral Act 2022. Both states are experiencing heightened political tension, with significant implications for the major participating parties. In Edo, The All Progressive Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP) are the key players in the elections. Similarly, the Ondo election involves a competitive contest expected to be closely fought. Incumbent Governor Aitedatiwa, who assumed office following Rotimi Akeredolu's death, will compete with candidates from 16 other political parties. The strength of opposing parties is subject to change based on the current political dynamics at play; however, potential parties that are likely to be strong in their opposition are the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Party (APC), Labour Party(LP), New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and Social Democratic Party(SDP). The strength of these competing parties will depend on each party's candidate's popularity, the political alliances that have brokered, and their campaign strategies to dominate the political space in a significant number of local government areas in the state. While the incumbent governor has served just a few months in office, there is a likelihood that the influence of incumbency will come into play in the elections. However, that influence is dependent on the ability to gain relevant public support and achieve some political negotiations capable of influencing the election outcome.



Background and Importance of the Elections in Edo and Ondo State

At the commencement of the fourth republic in Nigeria, a uniform electoral cycle existed for the conduct of elections into the office of the President, Governors and seats in both the National and State Assemblies. However, off-cycle elections were occasioned due to court rulings on election outcomes in some states affecting the periods for the conduct of elections in those specified states like Edo and Ondo States. The off-cycle governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states typically take place the year after the general election, and after the off-cycle governorship elections in Kogi and Bayelsa states, and more recently, the off-cycle governorship elections in Imo state. Edo and Ondo state elections serve as significant opportunities for measuring improvement in the electoral process.

Known by the sobriquet, the 'heartbeat of the Nation', Edo State was created in 1991 and has 18 local government areas (LGAs). Edo state is one of the more historically located ethnic minority states in Nigeria and was previously

part of the Mid-Western region/state (1963-75) and Bendel state (1975-1991). It is part of the south-south geopolitical zone, which encompasses the oil-rich Niger Delta region (Edo is an oil-producing state, contributing 2.06% of the country's total stock) and is one of the hotbeds of minority politics in the country¹. Benin is the capital city; the state covers a land area of 17,802 square kilometres and an estimated population of 4,700,000² (2022). It comprises three major ethnic groups: Edo (Binis), Esan, and Afemai (Owan/Etsako) with Akoko Edo. Benin City is one of the cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria, with residents from different parts of the country and diversity in religion and beliefs. Edo State is home to a diverse population, including Igbo, Yoruba, Igala, Ibibio, Fulani, and Efik residents, many of whom are traders and farmers. This multicultural makeup makes non-Edo citizens and their associations important electoral constituents.

As with the previous elections, the September 21 off-cycle elections in Edo

¹ E.E Osaghae, 2020, *Edo 2020 Governorship Election; Background Paper*.

² https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/NGA012__edo

have the characteristics that placed elections like it in as critical elections. Sub-national elections like these often reflect the national electoral climate and give major political parties the opportunity to regain lost ground. The outcome of the Edo elections will impact national policies and dynamics. Edo elections often have high electoral participation and mobilisation, resulting in shifts in party controls and a high risk of electoral violence.

The off-cycle elections in Edo State began when the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s Oserheimen Osunbor was declared the Edo State gubernatorial contest winner on April 14, 2007. Adams Oshiomhole, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) candidate who came second, challenged Osunbor's victory in court. Oshiomhole emerged victorious in 2008 through the tribunal and the Court of Appeal, ending Osunbor's tenure as governor. Subsequent governorship elections were held in the state in 2012, 2016, and 2020 following the legal decision. The 2024 gubernatorial election raises more anxiety than the 2020 election. The incumbent Governor, who had previously won the election on the platform of the APC before defecting to the PDP for the 2020 election, is throwing his political weight on the PDP candidate against strong opponents from the APC and Labour Party. The pre-election phase is currently riddled with more intra-party conflicts than inter-party contention arising from either controversial primary elections

or internal party disagreements, as observed in the APC, LP and PDP.

Ondo State, the 'Sunshine State,' was created in 1976. It has 18 local government areas (LGAs) and covers a land area of 14,793 square kilometres, with Akure as its administrative capital. Ondo has an estimated population of 5,316,600³ (2022). The state is predominantly Yoruba and one of Nigeria's most educationally advanced states. Since 1999, Ondo has had successive elections and transitions into the governor's office and House of Assembly. Ondo State's separated timeline began following the 2007 gubernatorial election. Olusegun Agagu won that election to secure a second term in power, but Olusegun Mimiko was declared the winner by the Court of Appeal and the Election Tribunal in 2009. Off-cycle elections were held in Ondo State in 2012, 2016, and 2020. The state's next governorship, scheduled for 2024, presents an interesting dynamic. The death of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu in 2023 led to the swearing of his Deputy Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa as the Governor of the State in December 2023. With the outcome of the APC primary election, the 2024 governorship election will also be contested by an incumbent governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, who emerged as the party's candidate. The Primary election for the APC was contentious, with reports of incidents of violence.

In the last electoral cycle, the lead-up to the 2020 governorship elections in


³ https://citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/NGA029__ondo/

Edo and Ondo States brought the two states into the spotlight with noteworthy dynamics and intense political tensions. Both states experienced unprecedented levels of pre-election violence and politically motivated conflicts within and between parties, starting from the party primaries through the campaign period. This created a highly charged election environment, with a potential for further escalation during the elections. According to Yiaga Africa's pre-election findings in 2020, two-thirds of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the states were classified as hotspots and flashpoints

of violence due to frequent violence, arms proliferation, and increased activities of cult groups. The use of violent rhetoric and strong-arm tactics by political parties during campaigns generated fear and tension, significantly impacting participants in the election.⁴ This trend is beginning to emerge in the pre-election phase in both states.

While the APC currently governs Ondo State, the PDP governs Edo State. Both states are of significant political importance, and winning them would increase each party's chances in the 2027 general elections.

⁴ *Yiaga Africa, 2020 Edo Election; An election-defined-by-strongarm-tactics and violence, 2020, PDF*



Echos from the Past - Trends in the 2020 Governorship Pre-Elections Environment in Edo and Ondo States.

During the 2020 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, logistical, security, and technical issues with the smart card reader affected the election day process. Several areas experienced logistical problems, such as the late arrival of electoral materials and inadequate polling staff, leading to delays in the commencement of elections. Moreover, heavy rains and flooding in areas like Etsako Central, Etsako East, and Etsako West LGAs of Edo state impacted voter turnout. They caused delays in delivering election materials to some polling stations. Additionally, malfunctioning smart card readers in the 2020 Edo and Ondo governorship elections resulted in voting delays in areas like Egor, Oredo, Esan LGA of Edo state, and Owo, Ilaje, Okitipupa LGA of Ondo state.

For context, the 2020 Edo and Ondo elections were the first statewide elections conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The commission grappled with public perception about its ability to conduct elections under not-too-conducive conditions and ensure the safety of its staff and the public.

The build-up to the 2020 governorship elections was engulfed with many issues, including insecurity in both Edo and Ondo states. Yiaga Africa's findings in the pre-election indicate a grim atmosphere laced with different shades of problems whilst noting that INEC commenced early electoral preparatory activities. The activities included voter education campaigns on voting Amidst COVID-19, meeting with stakeholders, distribution of voter registers to political parties, monitoring of political party primaries, recruitment and training of polling officials staff, accreditation of party agents and observers, distribution of election observation kits and the early distribution of sensitive and non-sensitive materials. However, Yiaga Africa also observed a violence-stricken pre-election context. In Edo, all forms of brigandage and violence defined the context of pre-election. Yiaga Africa reports showed that the incidents of violence were prevalent in thirteen (13) of the 18 LGAs. The LGAs considered hotspots included Etsako West, Etsako East, Etsako Central, Owan West, Akoko-Edo, Oredo, Orhionmwon, Egor, Ovia North East, and Ikpoba-Okha, Esan Central,

Esan North East, and Esan West LGAs. Also, across all the pre-election reporting periods, WTV observers reported worrying trends of arms and light weapons stockpiling by individuals and groups in Edo; these were more prevalent in Igueben, Oredo and Ikpoba/Okha LGAs. In the run-up to the election, voters' inducement took centre stage at the expense of issue-based politics. Since the pre-election observation commenced in July 2020, voter inducement has been a recurring decimal. Political parties, especially the APC and PDP, invested in distributing money and gift items as a strategy to swing voters. Yiaga Africa, WTV LTOs reported incidences of voter inducement in Igueben, Oredo, Ikpoba/Okha, Etsako Central, Owan West, Ovia South West, Egor, Ovia North East, Esan West, and Esan South East LGA. These incidents mostly occurred during campaign rallies.⁵

In Ondo, in the build-up to the 2020 elections, Yiaga Africa's pre-election observation findings revealed a consistent trend of violence and arms stockpiling across some local government areas in the state. More problematic was the attack on some female party supporters in Oba-Akoko who were allegedly beaten and stripped naked for wearing politically branded t-shirts and fez caps of one of the candidates. Notable LGAs where violence and arms-gathering incidents were observed included Akoko South West, Akure South, Akure North, Akoko

South-East, Akoko North-West, Irele, Idanre, Ese-Odo, Okitipupa, Ilaje, and Owo. Yiaga Africa's findings showed increased acts of violence and heightened risks of politically motivated violence triggered by verbal and physical attacks during rallies, vandalism or the destruction of properties belonging to candidates and their supporters, attacks intimidation of candidates/party supporters and attacks on women. The pre-election environment was signposted by violent campaign rhetoric and hate speech, excessive use of force by political parties, and unhealthy electoral competition. In clear violation of the Electoral Act, political parties engaged in the distribution of money and gift items in a bid to curry the support of voters. The campaigns were a contest of the highest spender instead of debates on policies and manifestoes. In most cases, the parties negotiated with the voters on the amounts to pay on election day for their votes. Voter inducement was prevalent in 12 LGAs, namely Akoko South West, Akoko South-East, Akure North, Akoko North West, Okitipupa, Akure South, Odigbo, Ese-Odo, Irele, Ifedore, Ondo East, and Ilaje LGAs.

The observations from the 2020 elections in Edo and Ondo states should serve as both an indication of the expected political climate in the state and a baseline for INEC preparation for the 2024 governorship elections.

⁵ *When-Votes-Count-Yiaga-Africa-Report-for-the-Edo-and-Ondo-Governorship-Elections.pdf*

Electoral Landscape in Edo and Ondo States 2024

EDO STATE

Number of Polling Units

4,519

Number of Registered Voter

2.5 million

Number of PVCs Collected as of May 13, 2024

1.9 million

Number of Candidates for the Election

17

ONDO STATE

Number of Polling Units

3,933

Number of Registered Voter

1,991,344

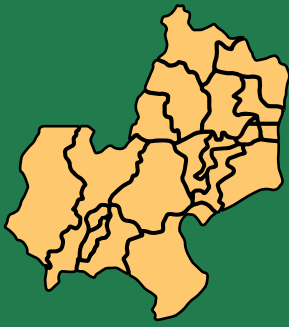
Number of PVCs Collected as of May 13, 2024

1,729,641

Number of Candidates for the Election

17





EDO STATE 2024 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION CANDIDATE ANALYSIS



17

GOVERNORSHIP
CANDIDATES



1

FEMALE
GOVERNORSHIP
CANDIDATE



6

FEMALE
DEPUTIES

Governorship Candidate Age Group

Under 40

3

Candidates

41 and Above

14

Candidates

Summary


The buildup to the 2024 Edo State Off-Cycle Governorship Election has presented a plethora of intrigues between the major political parties. Three (3) top candidates are vying to occupy the Governorship seat from November 12th, 2024. The top three candidates are Hon. Okpebholo Monday (APC), Akpata Olumide Anthony (LP), and Ighodalo Asuerinme (PDP).


For the Governorship position, there are 16 males and one female, with PRP being the only political party with a female governorship candidate, Key Patience Ndidì. For the Deputy Governorship position, there are 11 males and six females, with political parties such as ADP, APP, BP, LP, NNPP, and ZLP fielding a female deputy governorship candidate. Among the Governorship candidates, only three out of the 17 are 40 years or younger, representing about 17.65%. Only one out of 17 deputy governorship candidates is 40 years or younger, representing 5.88%. Additionally, only one female candidate, Obaeze Ramatu of ADP, is under 40 years old for both the governorship and deputy governorship positions.



ONDO STATE 2024 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION CANDIDATE ANALYSIS

 **17**
GOVERNORSHIP
CANDIDATES

 **0**
FEMALE
GOVERNORSHIP
CANDIDATE

 **3**
FEMALE
DEPUTIES

Governorship Candidate Age Group

Under 40
3
Candidates

41 and Above
14
Candidates

Summary

The 2024 Ondo State Off-Cycle Governorship Election will be contested by major political parties, with three top candidates—Lucky Aiyedatiwa (APC), Ayodele Olorunfemi (LP), and Agboola Ajayi (PDP)—vying to occupy the Governorship seat from November 12th, 2024. For the Governorship position, there are 17 male candidates and no female candidates. For the Deputy Governorship position, there are 15 males and three females, with political parties such as ADP, LP, and SDP fielding a female deputy governorship candidate. Among the Governorship candidates, only three out of the 17 are below 40 years old, representing about 17.65% and coming from political parties such as AAC, ADP, and YP. Meanwhile, out of the 17 deputy governorship candidates, only seven are 40 years old and below, representing 41.18%.

Front Runners in the Edo 2024 Election:

Sen. Okpebholo Monday

Senator Monday Okpebholo, is currently representing the Edo Central Senatorial District. Born on August 29, 1970, he hails from Udomi Community in Uwesan-Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area.

Okpebholo's business acumen is demonstrated through his founding of Chapman Computers Limited and Interweb Satcom Limited, and he holds a degree in Business Administration from the University of Abuja.

In February 2024, Okpebholo was declared the winner of the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship primary in Edo State, polling 12,433 votes to secure the party's candidacy for the upcoming Edo State governorship election. The primary election process was marked by an initial inconclusive result, leading to a rescheduled election where Okpebholo emerged victorious.

Source:

<https://mondayokpebholo.org/>



Front Runners in the Edo 2024 Election:

Akpata Olumide Anthony

Olumide Akpata, born on October 7, 1972, in Edo State, Nigeria, is a prominent lawyer and politician. He earned his bachelor's degree in law from the University of Benin in 1992 and was called to the bar in 1993. Akpata started his legal career under Dr. Mudiaga Odje, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, in Delta State before relocating to Lagos in 1996, where he joined the law firm Templars, founded by his cousin Oghogho Akpata. Under his leadership, Templars has grown to become one of the largest law firms in Nigeria.

Akpata has held significant positions within the legal community, including serving as the chairman of the Nigeria Bar Association Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL). On July 30, 2020, he was elected President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).



Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olumide_Akpata



Front Runners in the Edo 2024 Election:

Asue Ighodalo

Asue Ighodalo is a prominent Nigerian lawyer and entrepreneur. He co-founded Banwo & Ighodalo, a leading law firm in Nigeria specializing in capital markets, securities, mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance, and energy law.

His educational background includes a BSc in Economics from the University of Ibadan, an LLB from the London School of Economics, and a BL from the Nigerian Law School. He also holds an honorary Doctorate Degree of Economics from Edo University, Uzairue.

He resigned from his corporate positions to pursue a political career and emerged as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for the 2024 Edo State governorship election, although the primary election faced legal challenges.

Source:

<https://independent.ng/asue-ighodalo-profile-of-a-nigerian-corporate-giant-edo-needs-in-2024/>



Front Runners in the Ondo 2024 Election:

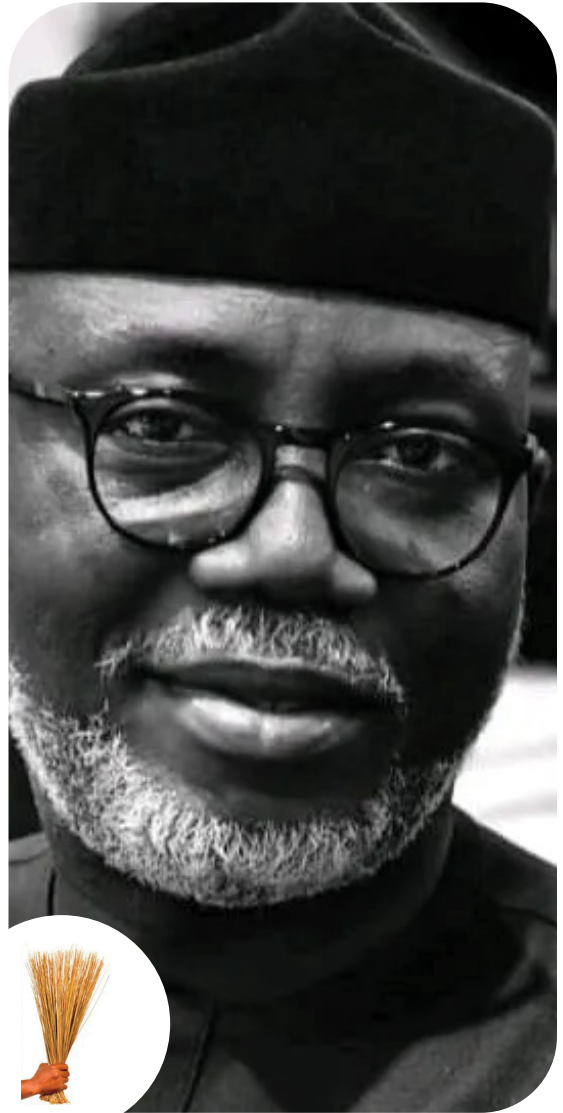
Gov Lucky Aiyedotiwa

Lucky Aiyedatiwa is the current Governor of Ondo State, Nigeria. He assumed office following the death of his predecessor, Rotimi Akeredolu. Aiyedatiwa was sworn in as the seventh civilian governor of Ondo State on December 27, 2023.

Before becoming governor, Aiyedatiwa served as the Deputy Governor of Ondo State. He has a diverse background, having been a federal commissioner at the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) from 2018 to 2019. He is also an entrepreneur, the Managing Director, and CEO of Blue Wall Group of Companies. Academically, Aiyedatiwa holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Liverpool.

Source:

<https://www.legit.ng/politics/1570739-lucky-aiyedatiwa-8-ondo-governor/>



Front Runners in the Ondo 2024 Election:

Ayodele Olorunfemi

Dr. Ayodele Festus Olorunfemi emerged as the Labour Party's governorship candidate for the November 16, 2024, Ondo State Governorship Election. He secured his position unopposed during the party's primary election held at the Labour Party's secretariat in Akure, Ondo State. Out of three aspirants who initially showed interest, only Dr. Olorunfemi obtained the nomination form, priced at 25 million, while the other two aspirants did not proceed with the form acquisition.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Olorunfemi emphasized his commitment to welfarist programs, aligning with the Labour Party's socialist orientation. His proposed four-point agenda focuses on health, education, employment creation, and massive infrastructural development, utilizing local resources and the direct labor system to ensure prudent fund utilization and equitable resource distribution.



<https://www.pulse.ng/news/politics/olorunfemi-wins-ondo-lp-guber-ticket-as-other-aspirants-fail-to-buy-form/l9vrqte>



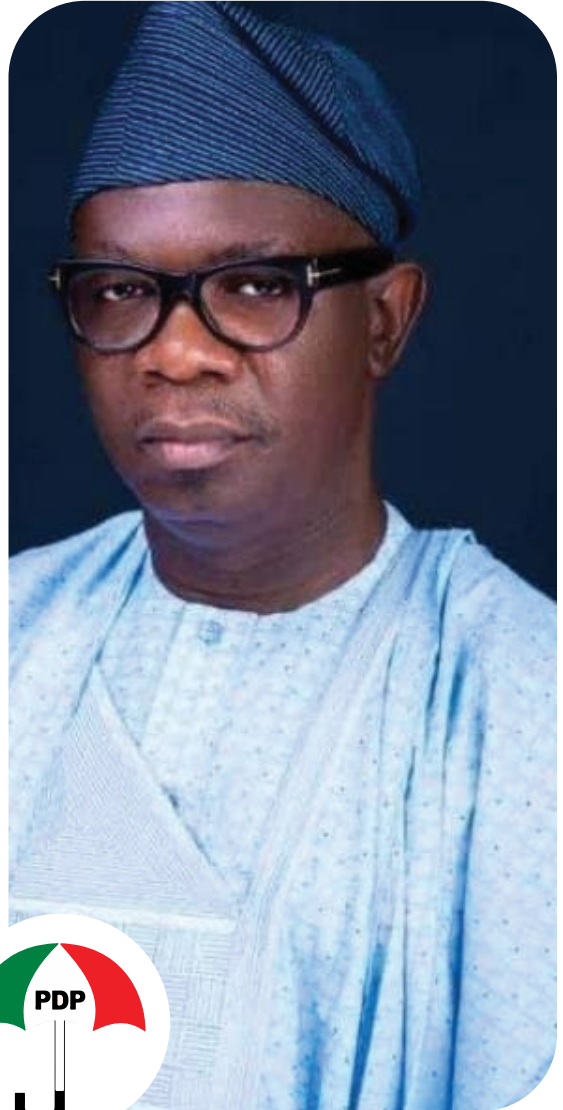
Front Runners in the Ondo 2024 Election:

Alfred Agboola Ajayi

Alfred Agboola Ajayi, born on September 24, 1968, in Ondo State, Nigeria, is a prominent politician and lawyer. He obtained his Bachelor of Law (LL.B) from Igbinedion University, Edo State, and was called to the bar in 2010 after completing his studies at the Nigerian Law School in Abuja.

In 2007, Ajayi was elected to the Federal House of Representatives, representing Ilaje/Ese-Odo Federal Constituency. He served as the Chairman of the House Committee on NDDC and was a member of various other committees, including those on Gas, Habitat, Justice, and Industry.

Ajayi became the Deputy Governor of Ondo State in February 2017 under the All Progressives Congress (APC), serving until 2020. He switched to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and later to the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), where he ran as the gubernatorial candidate in the 2020 Ondo State governorship election.



<https://www.infoguideafrica.com/2020/07/agboola-ajayi.html>



Election Preparatory Activities

- **INEC's Preparatory Activities:** The commission has made noticeable progress in implementing the electoral calendar to prepare for the September 2024 and November 2024 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States. The commission met with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on May 14, 2024, at its headquarters in Abuja. During the meeting, the commission unveiled plans to conduct a Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) Exercise in the two states. The commission's chair and principal officers also met with stakeholders in Edo and Ondo State, where it provided updates on its preparatory activities for the elections.

The commission conducted CVR simultaneously in the two states from Monday, May 27, to Saturday, June 9, 2024, between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. daily, including weekends. According to INEC, the CVR was for new registrants and those who seek to transfer their registration. Furthermore, permanent voter cards were distributed during the CVR period.

Following the conclusion of the CVR exercise, the commission released statistics from the CVR as of Sunday, 9th June 2024. The statistics indicate 269,992 new voters have been added to the register in the two states. Of this figure, 129,246 (47.87% are male, while 140,756 (52.13%) are female. Most registered voters (182,541) are youths (18-34 years). In addition, the commission received 24,454 requests for the replacement of PVCs, 74,493 applications for voter transfer and 8,314 for information updates were received⁶. In the last week of June, for the Edo election, the Commission also deployed a team of officials from both the headquarters and the state to assess the RACs suitability and accessibility ahead of the election. This is particularly important with the recent flood challenges disrupting INECs operations in the State.

However, there are concerns about INEC's level of preparation and its commitment to timely communication with the public in both states. This is a major challenge, especially given the

⁶ <https://x.com/inecnigeria/status/1800582552886931888>

previous logistics-related challenges witnessed in the 2020 governorship elections. There are worries about INEC's unwillingness to provide relevant information on its activities and respective challenges ahead of the elections. The commission is encouraged to replicate the consultation meetings in Edo and Ondo States and explore functional communication channels to keep stakeholders informed about its preparations.

- **Political Party Primaries and Outcome:** Ahead of the 2024 Edo and Ondo off-cycle governorship elections, all participating political parties successfully conducted party primaries in line with INEC's election timetable. However, there were concerns about the process and outcome of some of the primaries conducted in Edo State. The three front-line political parties, the All Progressive Party (APC), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP), held primaries that produced parallel candidates, leading to litigation and mediation.

PDP's primaries resulted in parallel candidates, with Asue Ighodalo and former Deputy Governor Philip Shaibu emerging as candidates from different factions. This led to internal disputes and concerns about the fairness and transparency of the primary process, especially regarding the handling of delegates and potential disenfranchisement. APC experienced chaotic primaries, with three candidates—Senator Monday Okpebholo, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, and Anamero Sunday Dekeri—declared winners by

different factions. This fragmentation has resulted in considerable confusion and ongoing litigation within the party.

Similar issues of parallel primaries and internal disputes were said to have affected the Labour Party, although specific details about their candidates are unavailable. The disputes were less prominent than those in the PDP and APC primaries.

In Ondo state, the party primaries were much calmer than in Edo state, but there were still some notable issues. The APC primaries were marred with controversies and allegations of irregularities, such as violence and disruption in Ifedore LGA and the abduction of an electoral officer and commissioner by hoodlums in Ilaje LGA. Several aspirants, including Olusola Oke, Wale Akinterinwa, and others, claimed that no proper election had occurred in many parts of the state and called for the cancellation and rerun of the primaries. The primary election, however, resulted in the emergence of Lucky Aiyedatiwa as the party's candidate. The PDP primaries resulted in the emergence of Ajayi Agboola. The process was reportedly free and fair, with other aspirants pledging to support the candidate.

- **Political Party Campaign Activities:** The commission lifted the embargo on party campaigns in Edo and Ondo State, with campaigns commencing in both states from 24 April and 19 June, respectively. Yiaga Africa received reports from Edo that campaigns have started. So far, only

the PDP and LP have been visibly engaging with citizens. Campaign posters and billboards of both party candidates are visible around town. There have been high-level stakeholder campaigns/meetings with religious and traditional leaders. However, campaign rallies are yet to commence.

In Ondo, political parties officially commenced their public campaign on June 19, 2024. Yiaga Africa received reports of intense political consultations underway. These consultations involve the 17 candidates and their respective parties engaging key stakeholders within and outside the state to prepare for the upcoming elections.

- **High Profile Defections:** Over 20 prominent politicians from the PDP and ZLP were said to have defected to the APC in Ondo State. Some notable names include Dare Aliu, a former candidate for the House of Representatives. Dr. Felder Olatunji Adeoye, a senatorial aspirant; Hon. Prince Olu Falolu; Hon. Tony Ala,

deputy leader of the PDP leaders forum; and several former legislators. These defections are seen as a boost to the APC's electoral prospects to further strengthen its grassroots support system and undermine the opposition's chances.

In Edo, there is growing tension within the APC, LP, and PDP due to internal party conflicts. There have been instances of high-profile individuals switching between parties in the state. While it is uncertain whether the former deputy governor of Edo State, Philip Shuiabu, has left the PDP, he has been openly supporting the APC candidate. He recently donated his campaign office and 12 trucks to the APC candidate. On June 19, the Edo State working committee of the PDP expelled Philip Shuaibu, accusing him of engaging in 'anti-party' activities.



Emerging Concerns

- **Flooding in INEC Office Benin:** Reports of a flood submerging INEC's office in Benin, Edo State, remain a major concern for its potential impact on INEC's preparation and citizens' participation. Yiaga Africa received reports that the flood destroyed some equipment, such as Bimodal Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS), office furniture, appliances, and operational vehicles. We commend the commission for initiating alternative plans to continue its preparatory activities. However, as the rains continue and looking at previous trends, INEC needs an effective contingency plans on responding to the issue with a long-term strategy to better prevent such incidents.
- **Distrust in Government Institutions/Weak Institutions:** Since the 2023 general elections, there has been a significant decrease in public trust in governmental institutions and interest in elections in Edo, which may gravely impact voter turnout. There seems to be a sense of despondency due to various logistical challenges that have affected the conduct of the CVR exercise in some LGAs in Edo. Reports from Etsako West and Esan West LGAs indicated that INEC officials only deployed to some, NOT ALL, of the registration centres on the days assigned for the exercise, which technically disenfranchised some potential voters.
- **Security and Electoral Integrity:** Multiple reports have been made that campaign billboards and posters belonging to the Labour Party candidate in Edo have been destroyed. Additionally, the PDP has been reported to have used hate speech against the APC candidate. In recent months, there have been more than 34 recorded deaths, with an increase in violence, including sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. Cultism has become a daily occurrence, and it's difficult to distinguish between the unknown gunmen and the political tension as both are closely linked. Yiaga Africa has also received reports of communal clashes over land disputes in the Eubomoma community in Ikpoba/Okha LGA. There have been reports of kidnapping and other crimes, such as attacks on bike riders, in Esan

West, Esan South East, Owan West, and Igueben LGAs. Yiaga Africa also received reports of herders attacks in Etsako East and Orhiomwon LGAs. We commend the Edo State government for taking intentional steps to address cultism and increase security and hope these efforts will continue through the electioneering period. The security landscape in Ondo State has taken a grim turn ahead of the upcoming 2024 governorship election, marked by a series of violent incidents that are causing widespread concern. The assassination of Alaba Abbey, a key figure within the Lucky Aiyedatiwa Campaign Organisation, has sent shockwaves through the state. Abbey was brutally shot dead at his residence in Supare-Akoko, Akoko South West Local Government Area, underscoring the dangerous volatility that pervades the state. Additionally, the untimely demise of gubernatorial aspirant Paul Akintelure, who had raised alarms about threats to his life, further highlights the pervasive insecurity

that now plagues the political landscape. These tragic events occurring close to crucial political milestones raise questions about the safety of individuals involved in the electoral process.⁷

- Poverty/Economic Crisis: The fact that many Nigerians suffer from hunger, poverty, and economic hardship may jeopardise the legitimacy of the off-cycle elections in 2024. According to data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2022), 133 million Nigerians, or 63% of the country's population, are multidimensionally poor, while 84 million people struggle with extreme poverty, making less than \$1.9 a day. Nigeria's youth population is particularly heavily hit by unemployment, with 33.3% of the workforce unable to find employment.⁸ The growing economic inequalities and poverty could gravely influence citizens' participation in the coming Edo elections, and politicians may have a field day engaging in voter inducements.

⁷ <https://www.icirnigeria.org/ondo-2024-threat-of-electoral-violence-raises-concerns-after-two-chieftains-death/>

⁸ <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/poverty-hunger-and-hardship-threaten-the-credibility-of-nigerias-2023-elections>

Recommendations

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

The commission should take cues from some of the recently conducted elections and commence early recruitment and training of personnel ahead of the polls.

Security Agencies

Employ preventive measures to neutralise existing security threats in Edo state to enable the voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote in a peaceful and secure environment.

Improve inter-agency collaboration and cooperation to forestall rivalry and unhealthy competition in election security management.

Security agencies are encouraged to develop strong early warning systems to track actions, words, and innuendos that can potentially instigate or trigger electoral violence.

Political Parties

As the political campaigns intensify, political parties and candidates should conduct issue-based campaigns in compliance with the Electoral Act, INEC Rules, and Regulations campaigns to promote a positive culture that supports a credible process.

Political parties should conduct their campaigns within the law and ensure candidates and party supporters act responsibly and peacefully to reduce the threat of electoral violence.

CSOs

Should engage in expansive voter education campaigns to inform the electorates about the importance of exercising their rights and properly participating in the electoral process.

Citizens

Should work with security agencies by reporting incidents or threats of violence or perpetrators of violence.

Appendices

Edo State: Seventeen Approved Candidates for the 2024 Off-Cycle Election

S/N	Position	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party	Age	Qualification(s)
1	Governor	Iyere Kennedy	M	A	50	SSCE
	Deputy Governor	Enabulele Bright	M	A	49	MSc
2	Governor	Iseghohi Tom	M	AA	60	WAEC
	Deputy Governor	Onaiwu Mabel Osemwonye Nmwen	M	AA	60	WAEC
3	Governor	Udoh Oberaifo David	M	AA	37	FSLC, SSCE
	Deputy Governor	Osunde Lord Osas	M	AA	45	FSLC, SSCE, LLB
4	Governor	Izedonmwen Osarenren Derek	M	ADC	47	FSLC, WAEC, B.Eng.
	Deputy Governor	Osagie Philip	M	ADC	61	FSLC, WAEC/SSCE, MSc
5	Governor	Akhimie Kingson	M	ADP	37	FSLC
	Deputy Governor	Obaeze Ramatu	F	ADP	35	BSc
6	Governor	Okpebholo Monday	M	APC	53	FSLC, WAEC, NECO, BSc
	Deputy Governor	Idahosa Dennis	M	APC	43	FSLC, WAEC, Masters of Leg Studies
7	Governor	Osifo Isaiah	M	APGA	64	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
	Deputy Governor	Bello Aneru	M	APGA	60	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
8	Governor	Ugiagbe Odaro Sylvester	M	APM	45	FSLC, SSCE, N. Diploma
	Deputy Governor	Ezomo Timothy Ede	M	APM	44	FSLC, NABTEB, BSc
9	Governor	Areloegbe Amos Osalumese	M	APP	56	BSc
	Deputy Governor	Oyarenu Paul	F	APP	57	BA
10	Governor	Osiriame Edeipo	M	BP	47	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
	Deputy Governor	Omorogbe Kingsley	F	BP	52	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
11	Governor	Akpata Olumide Anthony	M	LP	51	FSLC, WAEC, LLB.BL
	Deputy Governor	Yusuf Kadiri Asamah	M	LP	M	
12	Governor	Azena Azemhe Friday	M	NNPP	44	FSLC, SSCE, HND

S/N	Position	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party	Age	Qualification(s)
	Deputy Governor	Isokpan Ihueghian	F	NNPP	48	Pri.Sch Testimonial, Waec
13	Governor	Ighodalo Asuerinme	M	PDP	64	BA Law
	Deputy Governor	Ogie Osarodion	M	PDP	63	FSLC, WAEC, LLB. BL
14	Governor	Key Patience Ndidi	F	PRP	50	WASSCE
	Deputy Governor	Ojo Abuomwande Advice	M	PRP	60	FSLC, WASSCE
15	Governor	Anerua Abdulai Aliu	M	SDP	53	WAEC
	Deputy Governor	Amedu Paul	M	SDP	40	WAEC
16	Governor	Okungbowa Paul Ovbokhan	M	YPP	40	FSLC, WAEC, BSc
	Deputy Governor	Mustapha Ahmed Tijjani	M	YPP	39	FSLC, NECO, BSc
17	Governor	Akhalamhe Amiemenoghena	M	ZLP	43	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
	Deputy Governor	Idubor Joyce Olamilayp	F	ZLP	50	FSLC, SSCE

17 political parties and candidates will participate in the Edo state 2024 off-cycle elections. The breakdowns of the candidates are as follows -

- Governorship Position- 16 males and 1 female (PRP is the only political party with a female governorship candidate – Key Patience Ndidi)
- For Deputy Governorship Position – 11 males and 6 females (political parties such as ADP, APP, BP, LP, NNPP, and ZLP fielded a female deputy governorship candidate).
- For Governorship Candidates, only three out of the 17 are 40 years or younger, representing about 17.65%.
- Only one out of 17 deputy governorship candidates is 40 years or younger, representing 5.88%.
- For the Female candidates for both the Governorship and Deputy Governorship, only 1 candidate (Obaeze Ramatu of ADP) is below the age of 40 years.



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