THE ELECTORAL HUB

GENDER AND INCLUSION DIMENSION OF IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

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GENDER AND INCLUSION DIMENSION OF IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

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With Support from
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The Electoral Hub says thank you!

Princess Hamman-Obels
Director, IRIAD – The Electoral Hub

Acronyms

APC	All Progressives Congress
BVAS	Bimodal Voter Accreditation System
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EMBs	Election Management Bodies
EMOs	Election Management Officials
ESA	Election Security Architecture l
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
HANDS	Health and Development Support Programme
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
LGA	Local Government Area
LP	Labour Party
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
Pus	Polling Units
PVCs	Permanent Voter Cards
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

Executive Summary

Contextual Background

The 2022 Electoral Act, signed by President Mohammadu Buhari, aims to enhance transparency and integrity in Nigeria's electoral process, with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) making commendable efforts to bolster its preparations and public trust. However, the pervasive issue of insecurity, involving non-state armed groups and criminal activities across various regions, threatens to disenfranchise citizens, particularly women, and people with disabilities. Violence and abductions have surged, raising concerns for election personnel, voters, and materials. Moreover, Nigeria's substantial population of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), predominantly women and children, necessitates measures to ensure their participation. The country's economic challenges, including high poverty levels, inflation, and unemployment, coupled with social unrest risks, create a complex backdrop. Issues like petroleum scarcity and the introduction of a new currency contribute to a tense environment, potentially undermining the forthcoming general election and depriving eligible voters, especially women, people with disabilities, and unemployed youth, of their electoral rights.

More so, existing literature on election security shows enormous impacts on participation of women, girls, and PWDs. Election security is vital for inclusive and participatory elections, yet previous elections in Nigeria have seen security threats, including violence, intimidation, and manipulation favoring men. Violence against women in politics is a global issue, with women facing harassment, abuse, and intimidation. Similarly, Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), especially women, are at risk of political violence, facing harassment, physical and emotional abuse, and disenfranchisement. Such exclusion violates the rights of a significant portion of the population. This violence impedes women's participation, and it extends beyond physical harm, encompassing threats and discrimination. Recognizing non-physical acts of resistance that hinder women, girls, and PWDs from engaging effectively in politics is crucial and should be addressed in the context of general elections.
This research, therefore, focuses on evaluating the security and safety needs of the public during elections, with a specific emphasis on inclusivity and gender-related concerns, particularly regarding women, youth, and PWDs.

Study Objectives

Objectives of the research include:

a. Analyzing the overall security situation in the country and understanding how it affects the ability of women, youth, and PWDs to participate in general elections.
b. Mapping out the various security challenges in the country and their anticipated impact on the preparations of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the safety of the public before and after the upcoming election.
c. Providing practical recommendations to INEC and other stakeholders in the electoral process to guide their actions in ensuring the protection and safety of women, youth, and people with disabilities during the election.
d. Creating a platform for stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experiences related to election security and safety.

Methodology

Data for this report was collected using a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data was gathered through a rapid online survey involving various groups, while qualitative data came from in-depth interviews with female politicians, youth from civil society organizations, PWDs organizations, and experienced security personnel. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of insecurity on elections, combining the breadth of survey data with the depth of qualitative insights.

Findings

The findings reveal the following:

¾ The smooth conduct of elections is hampered by electoral disinformation. Misinformation about elections also violates the right to free and fair elections. The majority of people rely on social and electronic media for election information, thus INEC should prioritize and target these platforms in order to combat misinformation and provide pertinent information on the safety and security of the polls.

¾ Despite the fact that there is evidence that election sanitation is declining globally. With their authoritarian stances and use of political thugs against rivals and vulnerable groups, political parties and government officials in Nigeria corrupt the election process. Even if these oppositions are remedial, these government officials purposefully silence and intimidate anyone who disagrees with them. This approach has a negative impact on the electoral procedure as well as renders it challenging to provide holistic safety and security at the polls. There is a need therefore to checkmate the actions of these categories of political actors to improve the sanitation and safety of the electoral process.

¾ Fear and pre-existing insecurity are likely to be an issue in some states across the country, which could dissuade women and PWDs from voting if they are concerned about their safety. Prior insecurity has disproportionately affected the vulnerable, including women, people with disabilities, and other opposing parties/groups and this may heighten during the elections. Procedures for tracking and prioritizing the inclusion and safety needs of women, people with disabilities, and opposition parties should be clearly defined and prioritized.

¾ Election materials arriving late may result in disenfranchisement and election-related violence at several PUs. Similarly, election officials' attitudes and behaviours during voting can spark conflict, especially in already vulnerable communities. It is critical that materials arrive on time and those elected officials are on their best behaviour.

¾ Research reveals that logistical issues were prevalent in prior elections. These difficulties are the consequence of deliberate sabotage and compromise in the distribution of election materials to various PUs. This disenfranchises many people in places believed to be strongholds of opposition parties.

¾ There is a need to ensure that electoral materials are distributed smoothly and that no one is denied the right to vote.

¾ On election day, mobility constraints without an alternative result in exclusion for PWDs, Pregnant women and the elderly. Furthermore, the unavailability of or inability to obtain hearing aids and spectacles for albinos in all Polling Units (PUs) across the country may discourage their participation. Ramps, sign language interpreters, guide canes, and those who specialize in assisting the visually impaired and other types of disabilities should all be available. Also, an appeal should be made to ensure that people with disabilities, pregnant women, and the elderly are given priority at the polls and where there are long lines, accommodations such as chairs should be made accessible for women and girls with disabilities.

¾ There is a perception that EMBs, particularly security officers, are responsible for the safety and security of the voting process. Electoral players such as vigilantes, traditional leaders, youths, and the media must be engaged in order to ensure voter safety. As part of citizens' participation in election process management, these stakeholders should be educated about how best to support

PWDs at polling units, as this will encourage PWDs to vote.

- To reduce violence and ensure that traditional leaders and qualified security personnel work together, laws should be reinforced. This should be backed up by the use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) in all PUs, as well as electronic drones to immediately monitor violence and mobile courts, which are critical for capturing and convicting criminals.

- Voter education and community mobilization to promote responsible behaviour during and after elections should be encouraged. With the help of the communities, create a Tracking Database to record the nature, location, and perpetrators of violence against women and people with disabilities. It is also essential that community leaders educate their followers about the necessity of voting peacefully, by orienting party candidates and electorates on election day and post-election peace. Equally, significant indoctrination is essential to ensure that youths refuse to participate in thuggery.
- The public, particularly party agents, should be warned strongly against violence and the use of abusive language. They should be taught not to use violence and to be tolerant of the opposition. Politicians and their supporters should be prevented from making hate speeches and should recognize that offensive remarks and insinuations are a violation of human rights and have consequences.
- There is still a lack of understanding about how the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machine works. Many people may be alienated owing to a lack of understanding of how the BVAS operates, and in circumstances of failure without a replacement midway, crises may emerge. People must be assured that trust in the electronic verification process is here to stay since it will improve the process against vote buying; however, election timeframes must be extended to guarantee that all eligible voters are authenticated and given the opportunity to vote.
- Security threats and cross-cutting issues affecting Women, PWDs and other groups who may be vulnerable to election violence were identified- see table 1 and figure 20.

Recommendations

i. The government should assist INEC in expanding the existing Election Security Architecture (ESA) and framework to include local communities and groupings.
ii. INEC should ensure that voter education programs are centred on people with disabilities, women, and youth in order to boost overall participation.
iii. INEC should enlist the assistance of neighbourhood and community vigilantes, who will be supported and supervised by relevant security authorities in mapping and monitoring election security concerns, as well as assist communities in policing the election and voting process by encouraging peaceful election conduct and the protection of materials, personnel, and voters.
iv. Political parties should take steps to limit the use of foul language by party agents. They should remove any barriers that may have prevented women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups from running for office or working.
v. Political leaders should develop methods that foster respect and responsible engagement with oppositions, as well as the full participation of women and people with disabilities, while also assuring the implementation of the INEC Nation Gender Policy.
vi. INEC should use women-centred and PWD-centered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as volunteer election monitors to work with security and communities by providing early warning whistleblowing, ensuring women and PWDs mobilization for the upcoming elections; and supporting these CSOs in being proactive in providing the necessary assistance to women and PWDs.

vii. INEC should provide additional information on how to utilize the BVAS, including material in local languages; INEC public orientation and campaign to discourage the targeting of women, PWDs and election personnel should be topmost on the agenda;

viii. INEC should ensure sex-disaggregated data for the general election specifically the level of women and PWDs participation as voters, electoral officers, observers and candidates;

ix. Communities and CSOs should partner with INEC to put in place mechanisms to monitor and document VAW and PWD, and clearly record the nature of incidences of attacks, violence and abuse during the elections;

x. INEC should ensure prompt start of the election and that equipment which may cause delay on election day is working optimally and that adequate provisions are being put in place to resolve BVAS battery problems, and connectivity issues by ensuring election officials are proactive and quick to address incidences of BVAS failure;

xi. INEC and the Media should work together to counter fake and false information, that may create fear and disrupt the peaceful conduct of the elections. They should strive to ensure responsible reporting of incidences;

xii. INEC should ensure that the Election Security Architecture (ESA) encompass the provision of standard training and making available assistive devices, robust (cordial) police-public relations, and civility orientation to members of the public on the need to see security as a collective endeavour;

xiii. Government and INEC should reassure the people of Imo, Anambra, Abia, Zamfara and Maiduguri that despite threats, elections will hold and that their security and safety are guaranteed. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure protection from unarmed militias and bandits waiting to disrupt the process of the election;

xiv. INEC should work towards a policy that ensures persons on election duty are not disenfranchised but are able to cast their votes on election day.

Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

President Mohammadu Buhari's signing of the Electoral Act of 2022 into law is intended to strengthen the electoral process by increasing openness and electoral integrity. In addition, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has beefed up its preparations and kept Nigerians informed in an effort to regain public faith. This was evident in the manner in which the off-cycle elections in Osun and Ekiti were held.[1] However, insecurity remains a serious issue that may disenfranchise many people [especially women and people with disabilities] and jeopardize INEC's ability to conduct transparent, free, and fair elections. Okoli[2] asserted that there are a "number of other non-state armed groups spreading violence throughout Nigeria." Okoli further stated that insecurity is pervasive across the country, with the south-eastern region engulfed by separatist violence and criminal opportunism crippling businesses in major trading centres like Onitsha, Anambra State, allowing criminals disguised as Biafra separatists to perpetrate gang violence, particularly kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery; in the north-west and north-east, kidnappings, mass abductions, enforced disappearances, cattle rustling, and isolated raids have plagued the region; Bandits and Islamist rebels have displaced communities in the region, and others are effectively kept captive in their own houses; the north-central region is dealing with a farmer-herder issue, as well as unknown gunmen attacks that have displaced thousands of people. For example, over 1250 shelters were burned in a seven-day attack in Bassa Local Government Area (LGA) in 2021.[3] The southwest, including places like Lagos, has seen an increase in gang, cult, and ritual violence. This is in addition to piracy and oil theft in the Niger Delta region.

Because of the complexities of insecurity around the country, registered voters may be discouraged from participating in the upcoming general elections. For instance, between January and July 2022, at least 7,222 Nigerians were slain and 3,823 were abducted as a result of 2,840 violent occurrences. Similarly, the Centre for Democracy and Development CDD[4] expressed worries regarding the safety of election personnel, voters, and materials in the face of kidnapping, violence, banditry, insurgency, and communal confrontations in a SWOT analysis.[5] Also, in their Pre-2023 Election Security Threat Assessment, Ogbonnaya and Okenyodo (2023) point to the notion that insecurity is a threat to women in particular as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials, and election security personnel. They underlined further that "the wider insecurity across the country and the potential for causative social forces to exploit political procedures in pursuit of their objectives, will continue to negatively damage the electoral process.

Furthermore, Nigeria had about 3 million IDPs as of 2022 with "Borno state alone housing approximately 1.5 million IDPs, with women and children accounting for 80% of the IDPs".[6] Borno's IDP population exceeds the number of registered voters in Yobe, Ekiti, and almost that of Bayelsa, FCT, and Ebonyi. These IDP estimates may be higher at the time of writing, necessitating INEC's active efforts to ensure that these eligible voting groups are not disenfranchised. Additionally, women constitute 80% of internally displaced people (IDPs),[7] 47.5% of registered voters [see appendix A], and because the upcoming elections are projected to be hotly contested, election safety and security must be prioritized. Inflammatory rhetoric and violent clashes between supporters of existing hegemonic parties to intimidate opposing parties perceived as challenging their equation are likely to be directed at women, PWDs, and Election Management Officials (EMOs). Similarly, young unemployed people may be easily recruited to perpetrate violence which is extremely detrimental to countries' electoral successes.[8]

With four out of every ten Nigerians living below the poverty line of $1.9 per day, widespread deprivation of economic and social rights, insecurity, discrimination, marginalization, and a sense of helplessness, Nigeria has been dubbed the "poverty capital of the world".[9] As of 2022, Nigeria's inflation rate was 21.34%, driving more citizens below the poverty level. In the fourth quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate is close to 33%, up 0.5 percentage points from 32.5% in the previous quarter. With an estimated 23.2 million unemployed

people in the labor market, 12.7 million of them are deemed to be young adults [15–34 years old].[10] The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) declaration of "Monday's sit-at-home in the southeastern part of the country has affected businesses and their revenue. These activities negatively impact household income and could push more Nigerians into poverty".[11] The insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria has displaced thousands of households who are primarily farmers their means thereby affecting agricultural activities, food production and livelihood. In addition, the incessant cases of attacks by unknown gunmen in the south easterner part of Nigeria have rendered many jobless.[12]

Additionally, with the persistent petroleum scarcity, the introduction of the new naira and its associated crisis, the polity is tense, and we may be sitting on a ticking time bomb that will erupt if this election is not effectively managed. Lessons from the Endsars and Covid-19 palliative protests, in which adolescent youths across the federation spontaneously and simultaneously mobilized and outnumbered the security personnel may repeat themselves. The preceding discussion presents practical challenges that strongly suggest that preexisting challenges may mar the general election making it extremely difficult for INEC to conduct elections in all parts of the country and in all constituencies, thereby depriving eligible voters particularly women, PWDs and unemployed youths of their right to vote.

1.2 Empirical Review- Violence Against Women and Girls and PWDs

Election security is an important factor while designing the electoral process and ensuring seamless and inclusive public participation. Electoral security is a sine-quo-non for gender-inclusive and participatory elections. In the run-up to and during the 2019 elections, many security threats and insecurity were witnessed, including killing, maiming, intimidation, molestation, hijacking of electoral materials, interferences by security agents, and systematic manipulation of the party's structure in favour of men.[13] Violence against women in politics is a global phenomenon. In recent years, elected women, journalists, judges, professors, activists, and professionals have started to shed light on how women have been subjected to harassment, abuse, and intimidation at all levels of the democratic process.[14] PWD, especially women with disabilities, are therefore much more susceptible to the general risks brought on by political violence. Even though PWD make up a sizeable portion of the population in Nigeria, little thought has been given to their safety amid the rising political violence. They have been repeatedly stripped of their civic and political rights and disenfranchised as a result of a variety of violent acts committed before, during, and after the elections, including harassment, physical assault, mental and emotional abuse, kidnapping, and sexual assault.[15]

When women and those with disabilities are singled out for political exclusion, the rights of half the world's population are violated. Similar to this, is the weakening of the campaigns of female candidates or blocking female public officials from performing their civic duties, which jeopardizes the credibility of elections, violates the right to vote, and prohibits the respect of democratic decisions.[16] PWDs and women are as much a target of political violence and coercive methods as are men. Women have been reduced to being cheerleaders and mobilizers in comparison to their male colleagues, with their female counterparts being denied nominations to top positions even within the parties.[17]

Many female politicians and supporters have been threatened with death, forced from their homes, kidnapped, attacked, raped, and even murdered. Women have struggled within political parties to run for office and have often been blocked.[18] For instance, Mrs Salome Abuh, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) woman leader, was burnt alive on November 18th, 2019 in Ochadamu, Kogi State; Mrs Victoria Chintex, the Labour Party (LP) woman leader of Kaura LGA in Kaduna State, was killed by unknown gunmen on November 28th, 2022; and on the 14th of October 2022, a federal high court in Yola nullified the candidacy of Sen Aisha Binani the All Progressives Congress (APC) gubernatorial Candidate of Adamawa State, which she has to reclaim such in court; Hon. Na'anyil Magdalene Dakogol the APC female aspirant aspiring

to represent Qua'an Pan South State Constituency of Plateau was kidnapped on the day of party primaries May 26th 2022 and released immediately after the results were announced.

From the foregoing, it is evident that violence against women in politics is common in Nigeria, as it is in many other nations throughout the world and has been a major impediment to women's active engagement in the democratic process. Gender-related electoral violence is frequently primarily directed against women [and PWDs] as a result of their desire to run for political office, their involvement in political activities, or simply their determination to vote.[19] WAWG and violence against PWDs is not limited to physical abuse, but include threats such as harassment, intimidation, verbal and emotional abuse, and discrimination, which may be used in conjunction with physical violence at times. It is consequently critical to raise attention to nonphysical acts of resistance [violence] that limit the ability of women, girls, and PWDs to engage effectively in politics.[20] and should form part of the threats to map out in the general elections.

1.3 Objectives

This research assesses the public's security and safety needs during the elections, with a particular emphasis on issues of inclusion and gender - women, youth, and People With Disabilities (PWDs). The specific objectives are based on the following;

a. Analyses of the country's security condition and its implications for women, youth, and people with disabilities voting in general elections.
b. Map the country's security challenges and how they are expected to affect INEC preparations and public safety before and after the upcoming election.
c. Make concrete recommendations to INEC and electoral stakeholders to direct their operations for the protection and safety of women, youths, and people with disabilities during the election.
d. Establish a platform for stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences about election security and safety.

1.4 Approach and Methodology

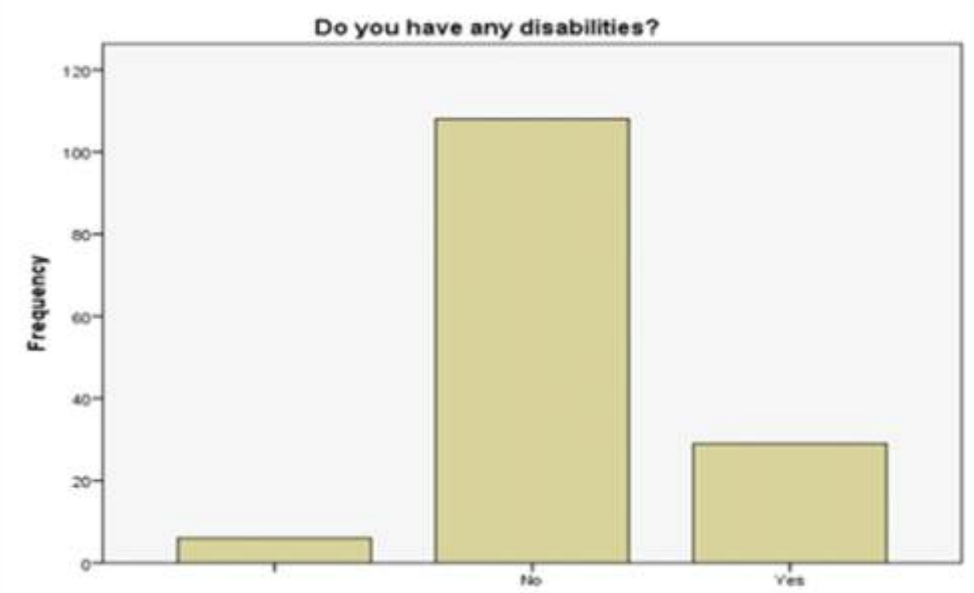
The data for this report was gathered using a mixed-method technique. The mixed method enabled the triangulation of information across respondents in order to comprehend the context of the effects of insecurity on elections, which a single method cannot provide. To begin, quantitative data was gathered through a rapid online survey of respondents from women's rights coalition platforms, disability CSOs, youth groups, and women-only civil-military groups in order to identify general security issues and protection need ahead of the 2023 general elections. Following that, primary data was gathered through qualitative interviews with female politicians, active youths in the CSO sector, PWDs CSO, and security personnel who had been on election assignment and were chosen using purposive and snowballing sampling approaches. Data from the interviews supplemented the rapid quantitative surveys by allowing the researcher to obtain information that clarified the survey results.

Findings

2.1 Survey Data Presentation

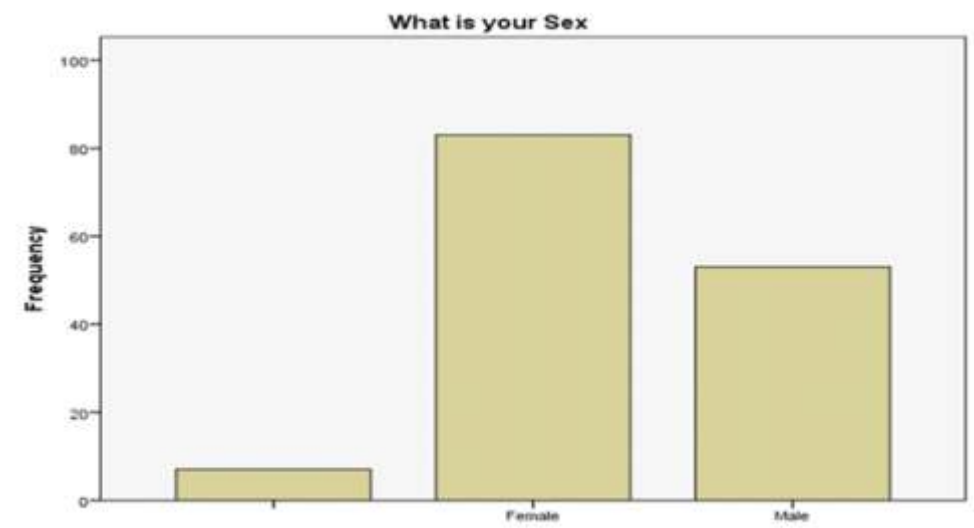
The findings presented in this section are based on data collected from the rapid online survey.

Figure 1: Respondents with Disabilities



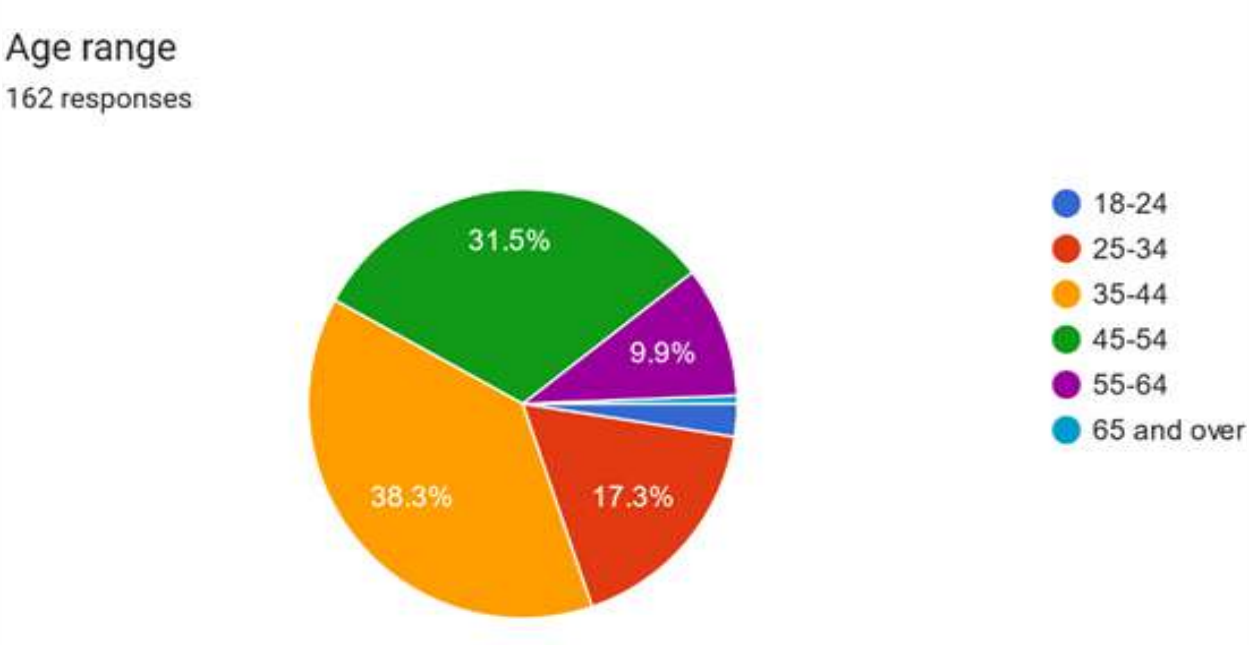
PWDs account for 20.4% of rapid survey respondents. Out of about 164 respondents, about 34 of them are PWDs. This approach gives voice to PWDs ensuring their safety and security concerns are fully taken into consideration.

Figure 2: Respondents' Sex



63.4% of our respondents are female while about 36% are male with just 0.6% of respondents prefer not to disclose their identity.

Figure 3: Age Range



About 60.2% of our respondents are between the ages of 18 and 44

Figure 4: Voter Registration Status

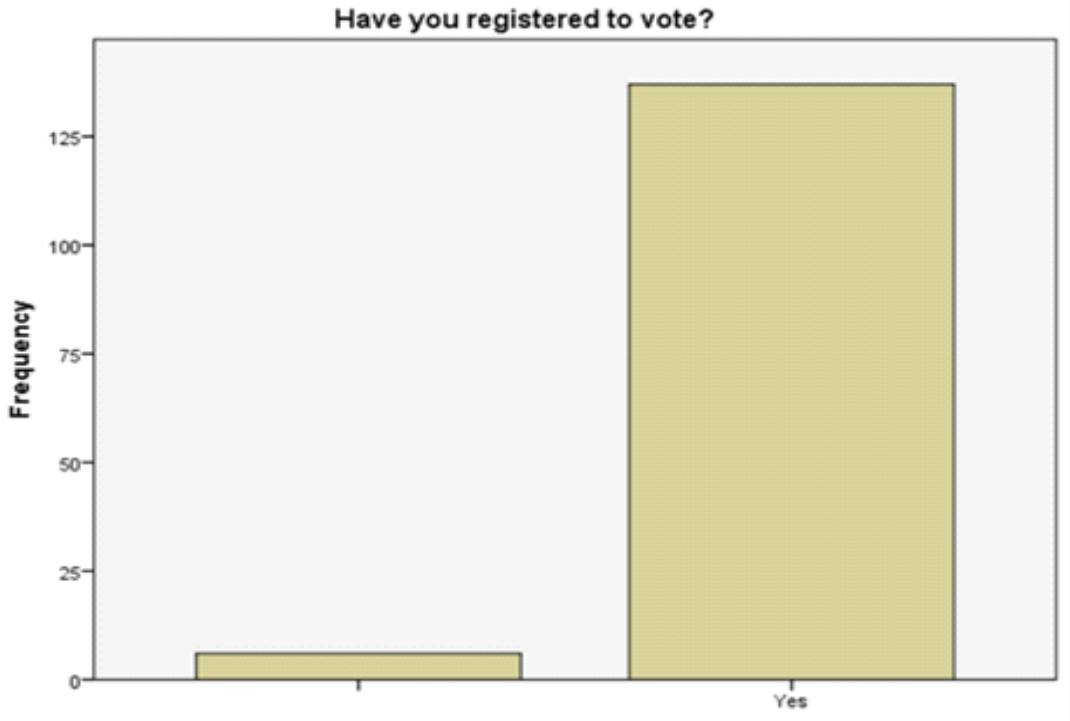
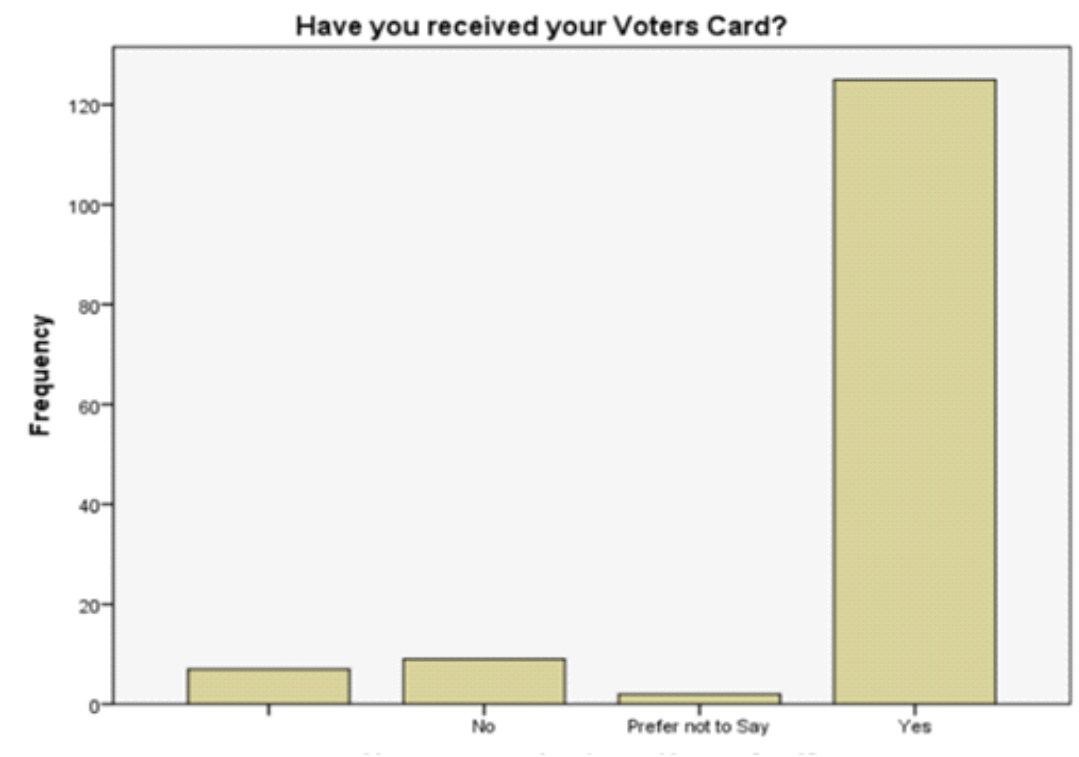
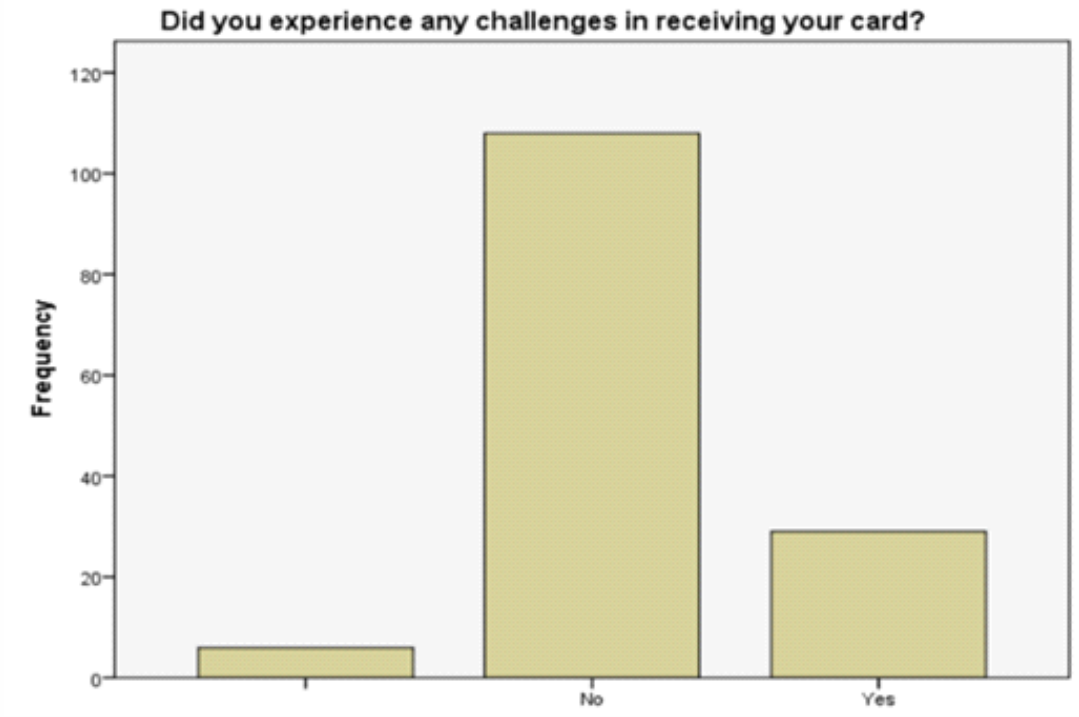


Figure 5: PVC Collection



100% of our respondents have registered to vote. 91% out of the 100% of our respondents who have registered to vote have collected their PVCs.

Figure 6: PVC Collection Experience



79% of the 91% who have collected their PVCs did not experience any challenges while collecting their PVC. 21% of the respondents experience some challenges while collecting their PVCs. These challenges are presented in the table below and seen in **figure 7**

Table 1: Challenges Faced While Trying to Access PVC

S/N	Challenges
1	Going to the collection centre several times and being told the PVC was not ready
2	Difficulty in locating the collection centre and unnecessary delays in getting the PVC
3	Attitudes of the INEC officials at the collection centres - some were impatient to check and some spoke in harsh tones, intentional delay by the officials
4	Long ques at the collection centres and had to wait for hours under the scorching sun
5	"The process of collection was not conducted strategically whereby i had to struggle to get into the building before I c ould collect it, in the process I was injured. The whole process of collection was very hectic and discouraging but I eventually found mine"
6	Was told to check in a different location
7	Not able to get PVC due to correction of name and was told to come after the elections
8	"I wanted to do a transfer of polling unit but could not. As a nursing mother, I was so put off by the ques and cumbersome process. By November my son was much bigger so I put him in creche one day and went to INEC office only t o be told the process is over and the deadline has passed"
9	PU transfer and inability to locate where the pick-up point is.
10	PVC not found after several visits
11	Going to the collection centre several times before PVC was found
12	Being told by INEC officials that card was not printed
13	Going about without legs to collect PVC and had to go several times
14	INEC officials are not available in the collection centres at the ward most of the times

Figure 7: Challenges Experienced While Collecting PVC

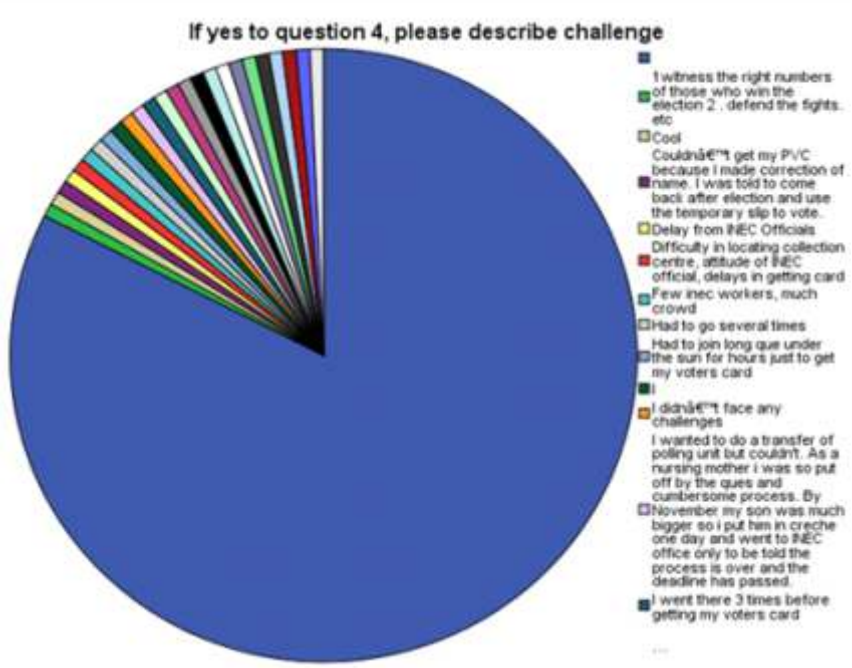


Figure 8: Likelihood of Voting

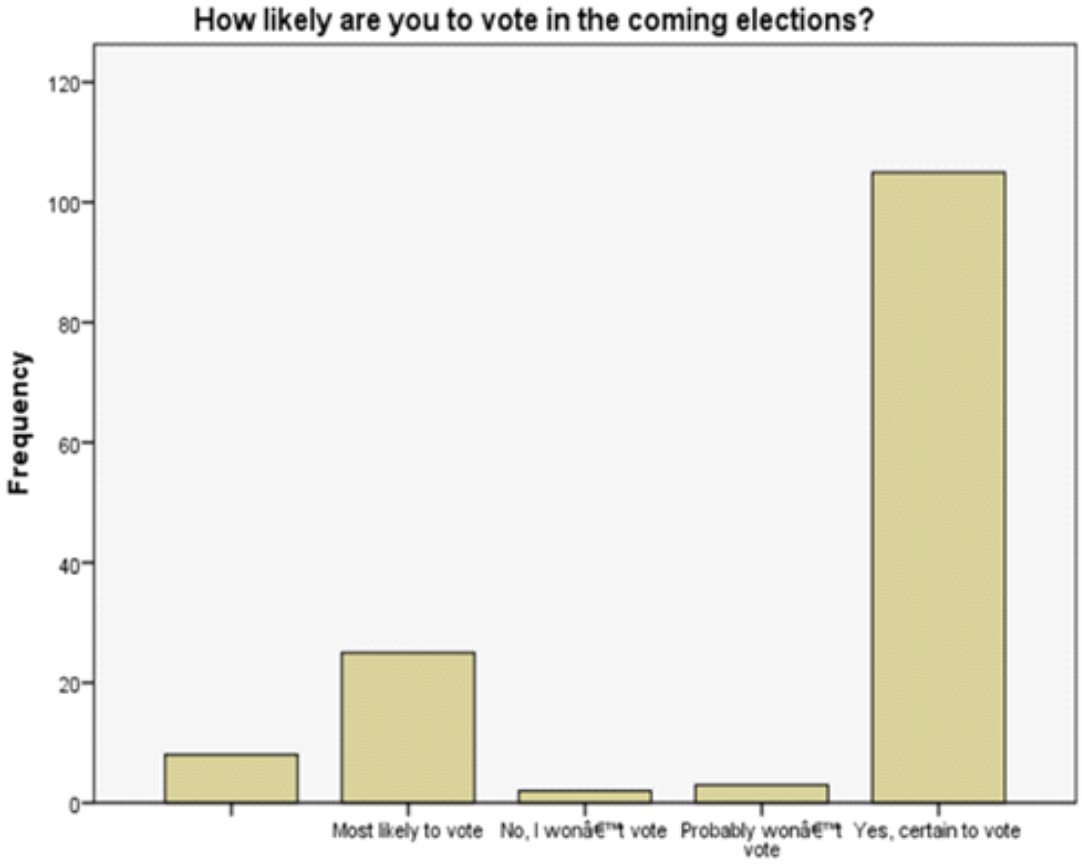
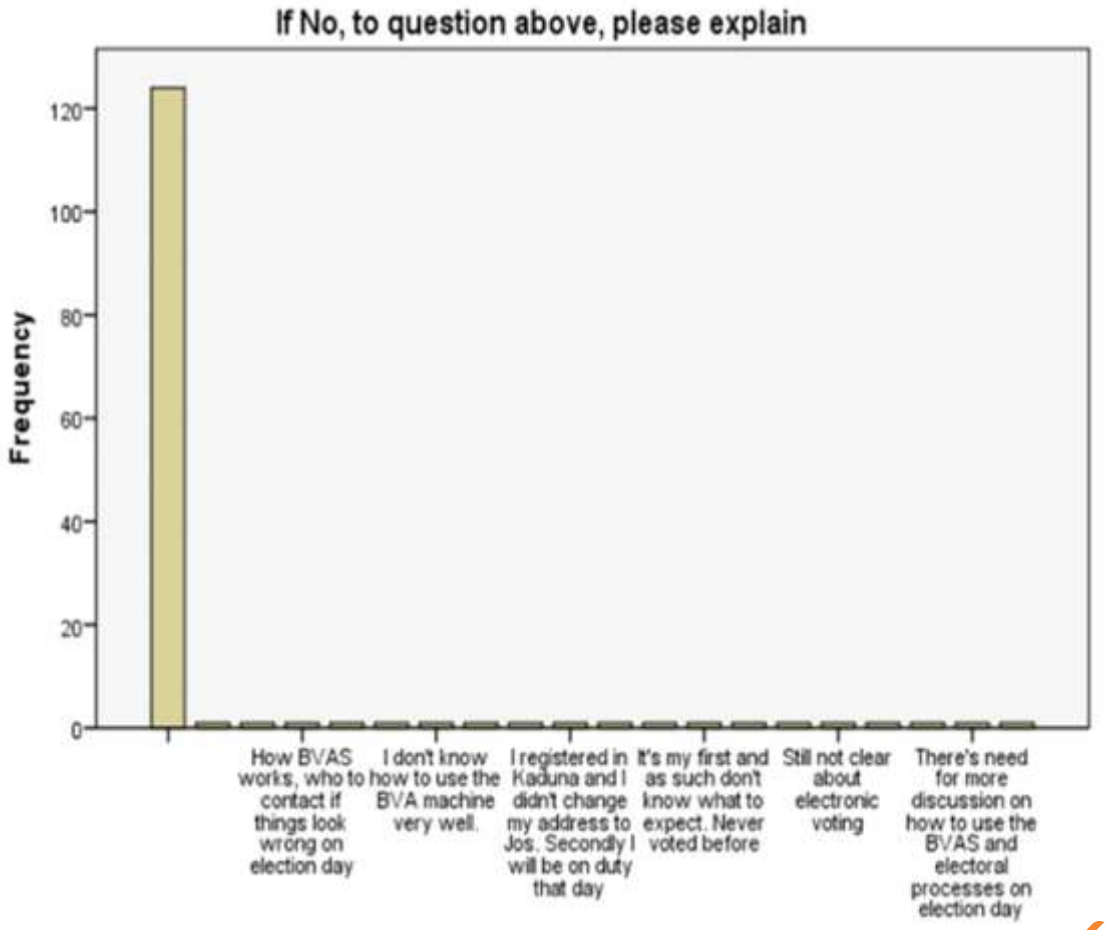


Figure 9: Reason for Not Voting



77.5% of our respondents were assertive and definite they are going to go out to vote, and only 18.1% are most likely going out to vote, while the remaining 4.6% are not sure they will be going out to vote. This means that voter turn-out is likely going to be high despite the fear of election violence and security concerns.

Figure 10: General Safety and Security Concerns

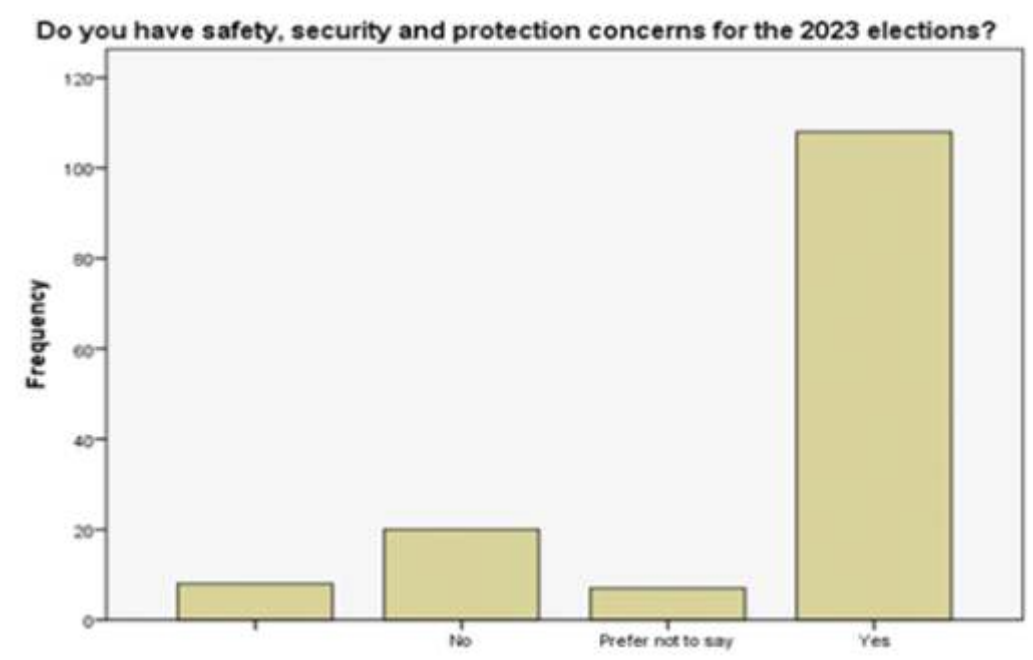


Table 2: Most Pressing Safety and Security Concerns

S/N	Security Concerns	Percentage (%)
1	Fear of violence and attacks	56.4%
2	Verbal Assault, bullying and intimidation	5.4%
3	The overbearing presence of security personnel	1.4%
4	Disenfranchisement and uneven contest	14.9%
5	Political Thugs and Militias	14.3%
6	Conduct of EMBs	7.5

Fear of violence and attack on election day ranked highest in our survey with 56.4%. Most of these fears relate: to the emergence of a third force and its youths' full followership who hold the opinion that their candidate must win; the existing fragile security situation of the country, activities of IPOD, Boko Haram and political thugs.

Figure 11: Most Pressing Safety and Security Concerns

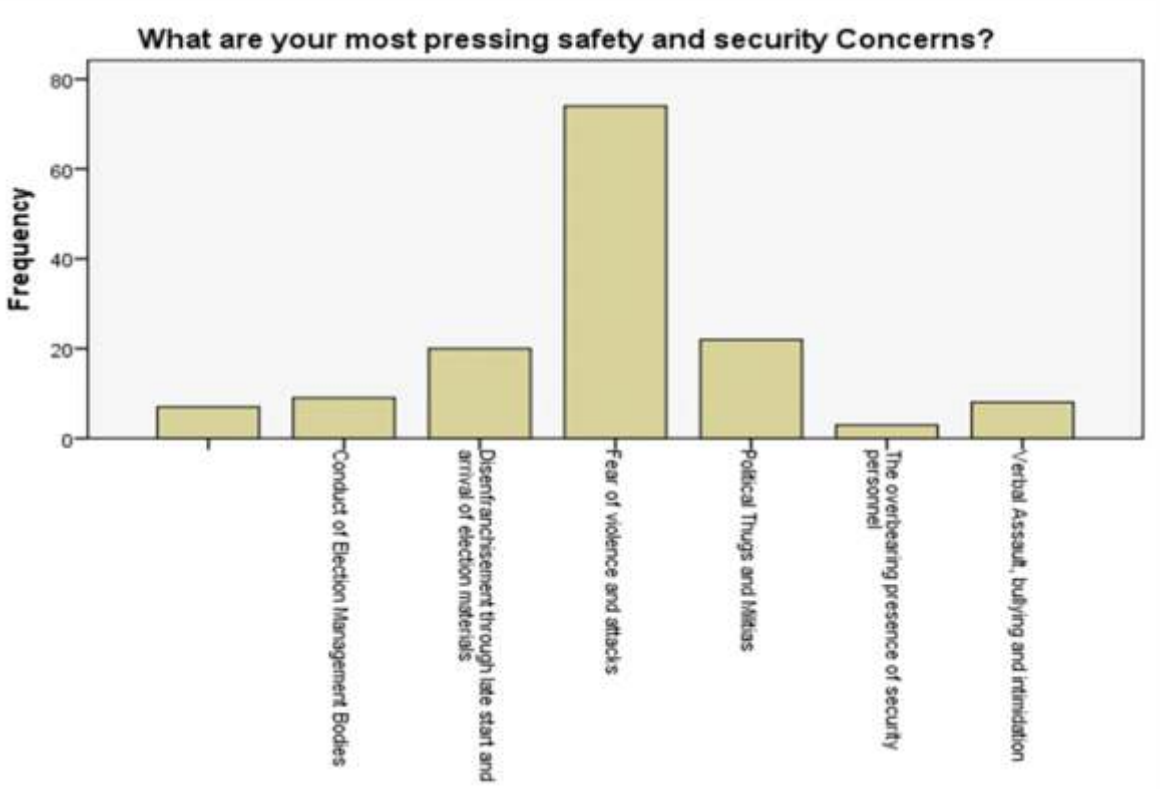
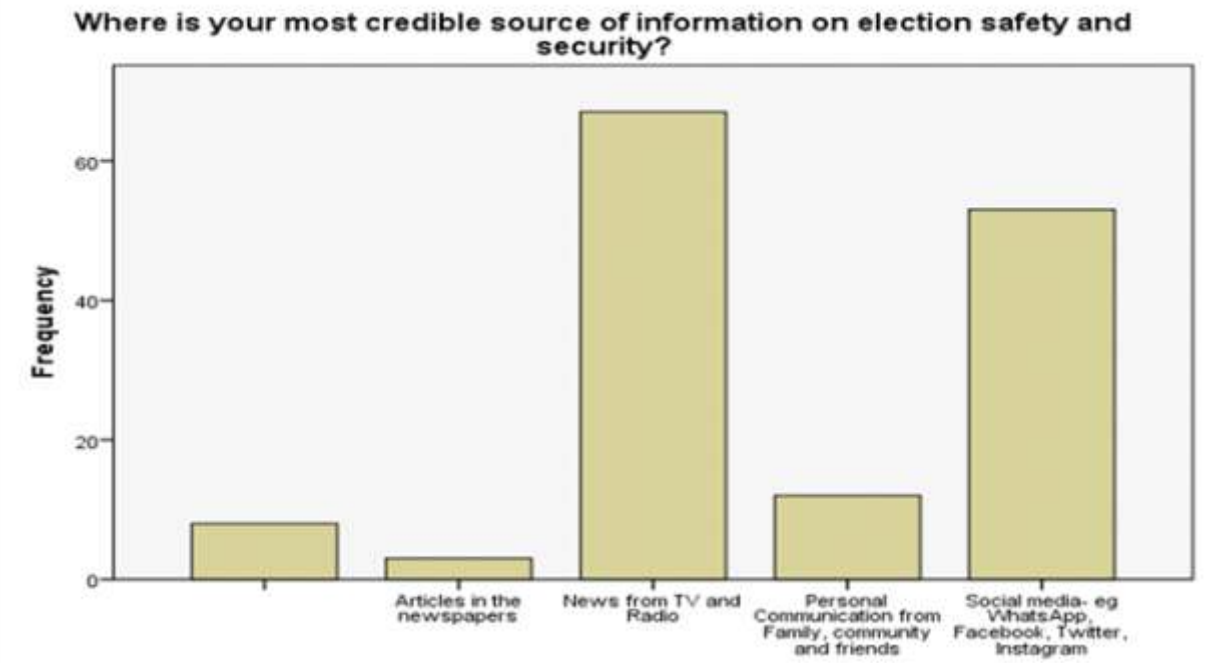
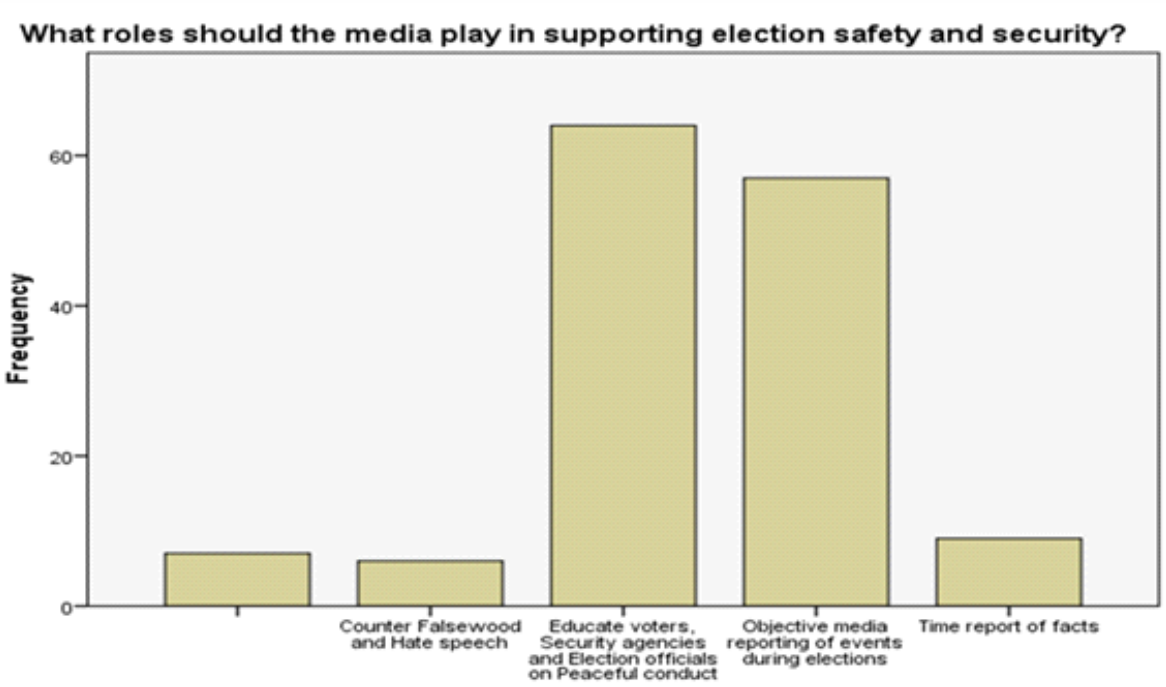


Figure 11: Most Credible Source of Information on Election Safety and Security



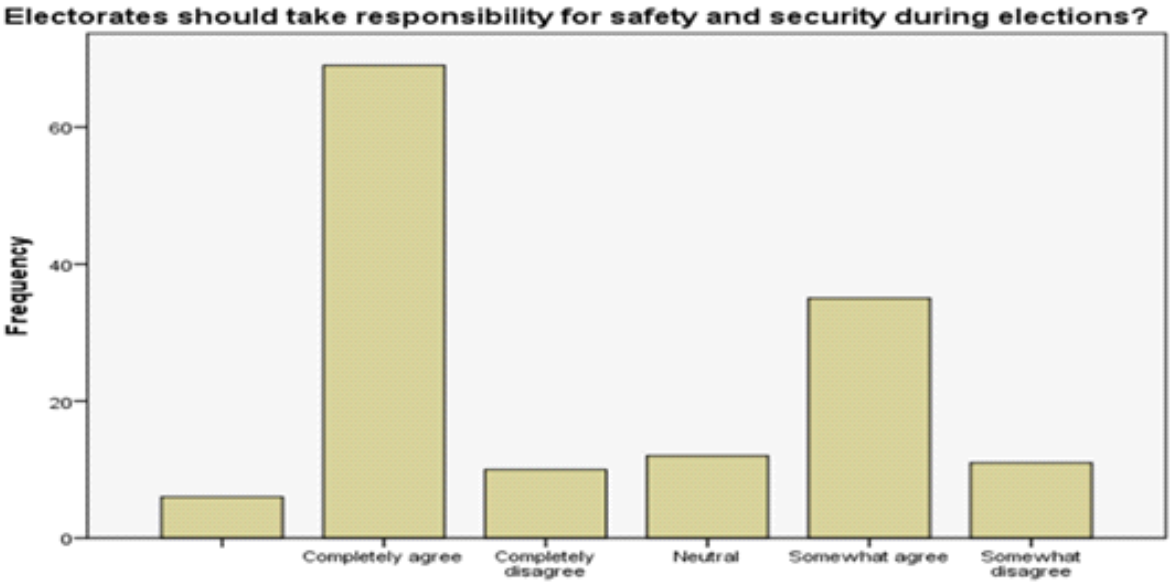
For information on election security, 49.4% of our respondents rely on electronic media (TV and radio), while 40% rely on social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). This means that information about election safety and security should be disseminated via electronic and social media in order to reach a larger audience as quickly as feasible.

Figure 12: Who should be responsible for Election Security?



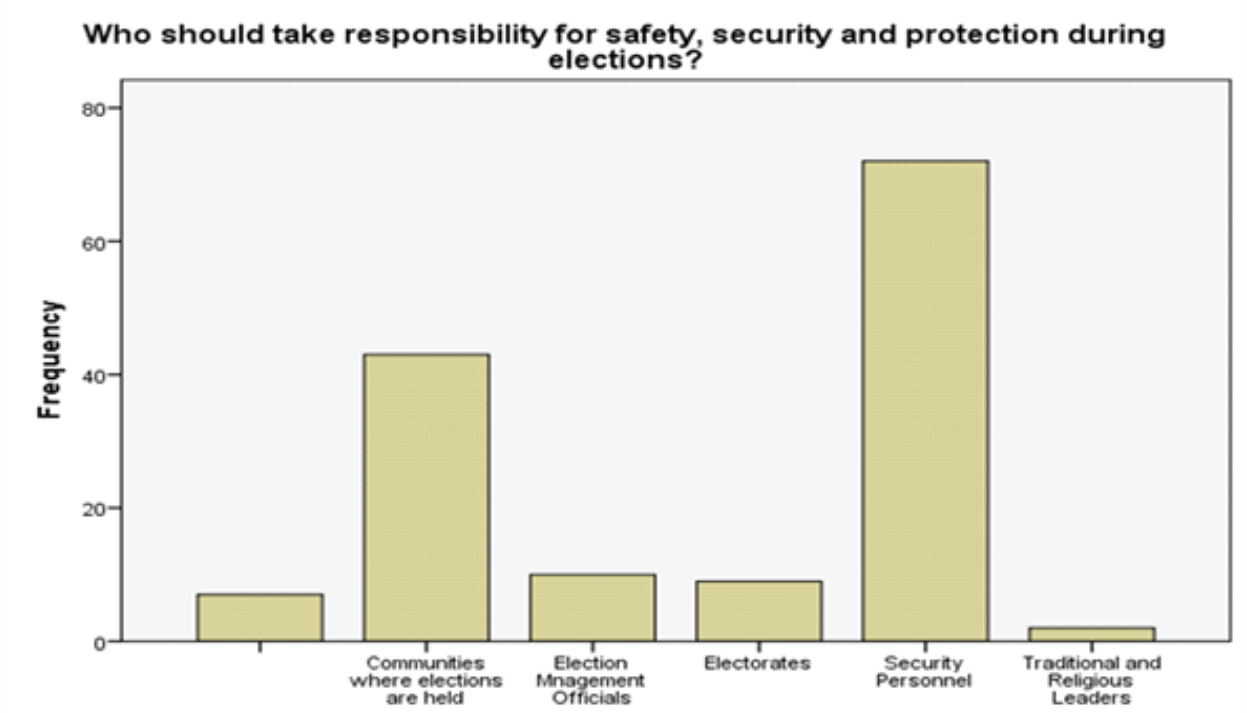
48.4% of our respondents believe that the media should play a key role in election safety and security. The media should be able to educate and sensitize voters, security forces, and election officials on the importance of conducting elections in a peaceful manner. This means the media should be encouraged and supported to provide timely and factual reports. They should also counter fake news.

Figure 13: Should Electorates take Responsibility for Security and Safety During Elections



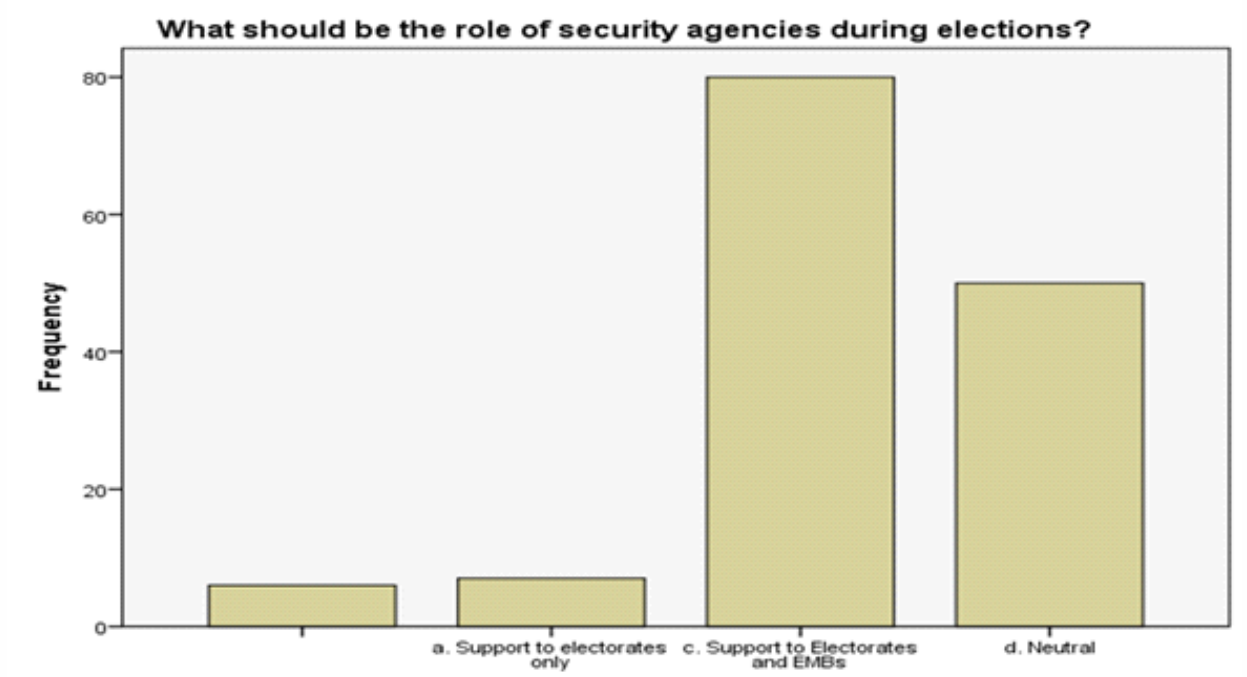
51.2% of respondents believe that electorates should take responsibility for election safety and security.

Figure 14: Who Should Take Responsibility for Security and Safety During Elections



Security officers, according to 52.2% of our respondents, should be in charge of election safety and security. While Figure 14 demonstrates that the electorate should be in charge of election security and safety, there is a need to ensure a synergy between the electorates and security personnel in order for elections to run smoothly and peacefully.

Figure 15: What should be the role of Security Agencies during Elections



61.1% of our respondents believe that security personnel should ensure the safety of electorates and EMBs.

Table 3: Ways in which insecurity may impact the participation of women and PWDs

S/N	Security Issues that may impact the participation of women and PWDs
1	Women and PWDs are vulnerable and if they are not sure of their security, they may decide not to come out and vote
2	The inability of women and PWDs to defend themselves from any attack may deter them from coming out to vote
3	Electoral violence or intimidation and verbal attacks will make it difficult for women and PWDs to participate freely in elections
4	Targeting of female candidates for attacks and assault
5	Existing violent attacks and unrest in various communities already created fear in the minds of electorates especially women and PWDs
6	Disrespect for PWDs, women and female candidates' supporters
7	Difficulty in accessing PUs in some locations where the voting point is located on an elevated surface and where the topography is bad
8	Persistent insecurity in some communities and fear that elections may not hold
9	Late arrival of election materials(sensitive) and intimidation by government officials (security)
10	Outright prevention of people from voting due to threats by government officials
11	Intentional delay in the distribution of election materials with the aim of disenfranchisement and reducing opposition party votes
12	Poor enlightenment about mobility support arrangements for PWDs, women and other socially excluded groups
13	Lack of adequate personnel at the PUs, particularly those with the required knowledge to support PWDs
14	Partisan nature of security agencies especially those attached to government officials and political thugs who may be used to disrupt the elections in areas where government candidates are loosing
15	Lack of assurance on how safety and security will be ensured during and after elections at the venue
16	Creation of an atmosphere of fear to discourage women and PWDs from coming out to vote

Figure 16: In what way may insecurity Impact the Participation of women, PWDs and youths in the 2023 Election?

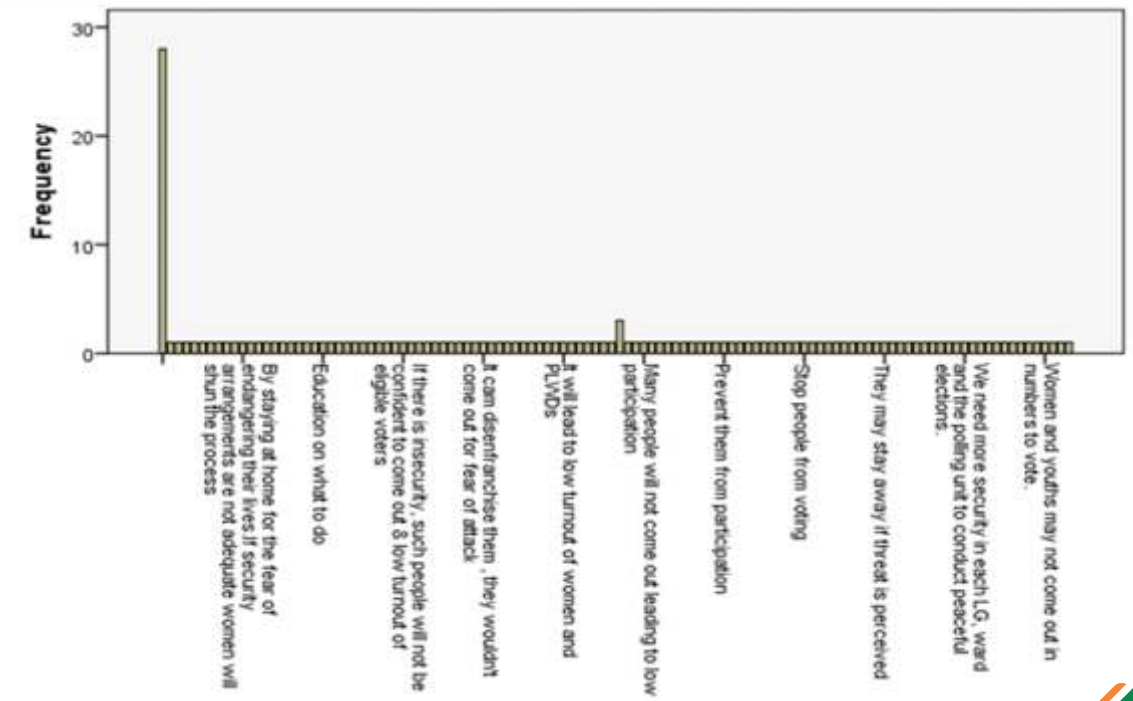


Figure 17: Specific Safety and Security Concerns to be addressed during the Election

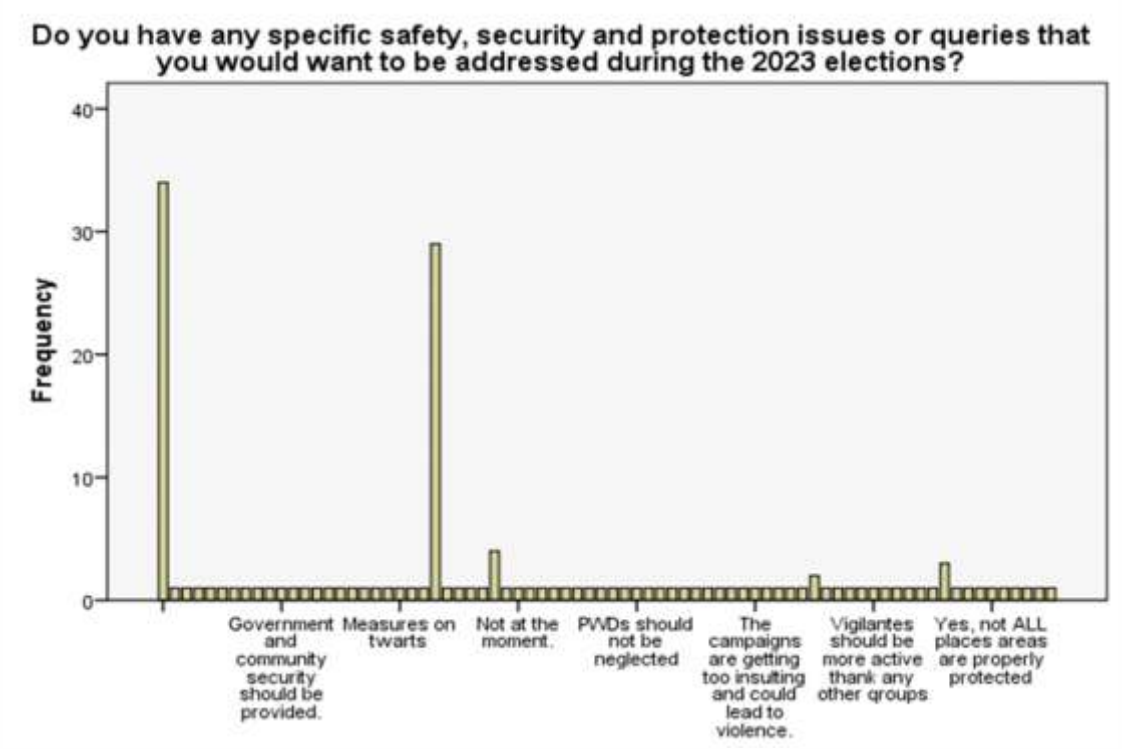


Table 4: Specific Safety and Security Concerns that should be addressed during the elections

S/N	Security Concerns to be addressed during the 2023 elections
1	Thuggery and intimidation of voters at PUs
2	Provision of vehicles to convey PWDs to PUs
3	Armed security personnel at strategic distance to control any outbreak of violence during voting
4	Vigilance and watching out for suspicious behaviors
5	Training of security agencies and other electoral stakeholders on how to protect women and PWDS from violence and intimidation
6	Ensuring that voters follow the guiding rules and regulations by the INEC on the conduct of elections and voting
7	Intimidation of security personnel in some communities and the need to train security personnel on how to ensure restrain
8	Discourage hate speeches by politicians and their supporters
9	Ensure the party in power does not use security agencies to promote and protect only their interest
10	Map out and prosecute security personnel aiding snatching election-sensitive materials
11	Fear that votes may not be counted, as ballots may be seized and destroyed
12	The blatant disregard for human rights during elections
13	Some politicians have sponsored thugs
14	Give adequate attention to ensure security concerns in the southeast and northeast properly addressed
15	Post-election violence from political supporters and candidates who feel dissatisfied with election outcomes
16	Inadequacies of security personnel nonchalant attitude of security personnel on election duty
17	Vote buying by sharing of items and manipulation
18	Behaviour of INEC adhoc staff

19	Targeted gender-based violence against women pre, during and post elections
20	Insufficient Manpower especially in remote areas with bad terrain
21	Safety of election personnel especially National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members
22	The clamp down on political thugs and other unscrupulous elements
23	Arrest and prosecute, especially those preaching religious and ethnic discrimination or hatred
24	Movement restrictions should be enforced more sternly
25	Underage voting and fake news that stirs violence

2.2 Specific Concerns relating to PWDs, Gender and Youth Involvement

Table 5 and figure 18 list specific safety concerns relating to PWDs, Gender and youth involvement in the 2023 election

Table 5: Specific Safety Concerns of PWDs, Women and Youths

S/N	Safety Concerns of PWDs, Women and Youths
1	Distance from PUs for PWDs as the majority of them require mobility assistance
2	Not adequate provisions and safety measures
3	Discrimination, stigma and exclusion directed at PWDs
4	No specific plans to accommodate PWD and their inability to collect Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs)
5	Start voting on time to avoid rushing and prioritise PWDs
6	Access to election points for PWDs and Facilities and the environment is not friendly and accommodating
7	Violence Against Women Political Candidates and intimidation of female voters by thugs
8	How to prioritize protection for PWDs
9	PWDs, the elderly, pregnant women and nursing mothers should be considered first to cast their votes
10	Personal insecurity and safety concerns
11	Failure to consider the peculiarities PWDs and women
12	Domination of political party structures by males who are elderly
13	Youth used as political thugs
14	Fear of the possible repeat of ENDSARS
15	Bullying of female candidates
16	Availability of ramps, sign language interpreters, guide canes and those who specialized in guiding the visual impaired and other forms of disabilities at PUs
17	Lack of understanding on how to use the BVAS
18	Congestion and lack of orderliness at PUs
19	Fear of manipulation and control
20	Inadequate security

Figure 18: Specific Concerns relating to PWDs, Gender and Youth Involvement

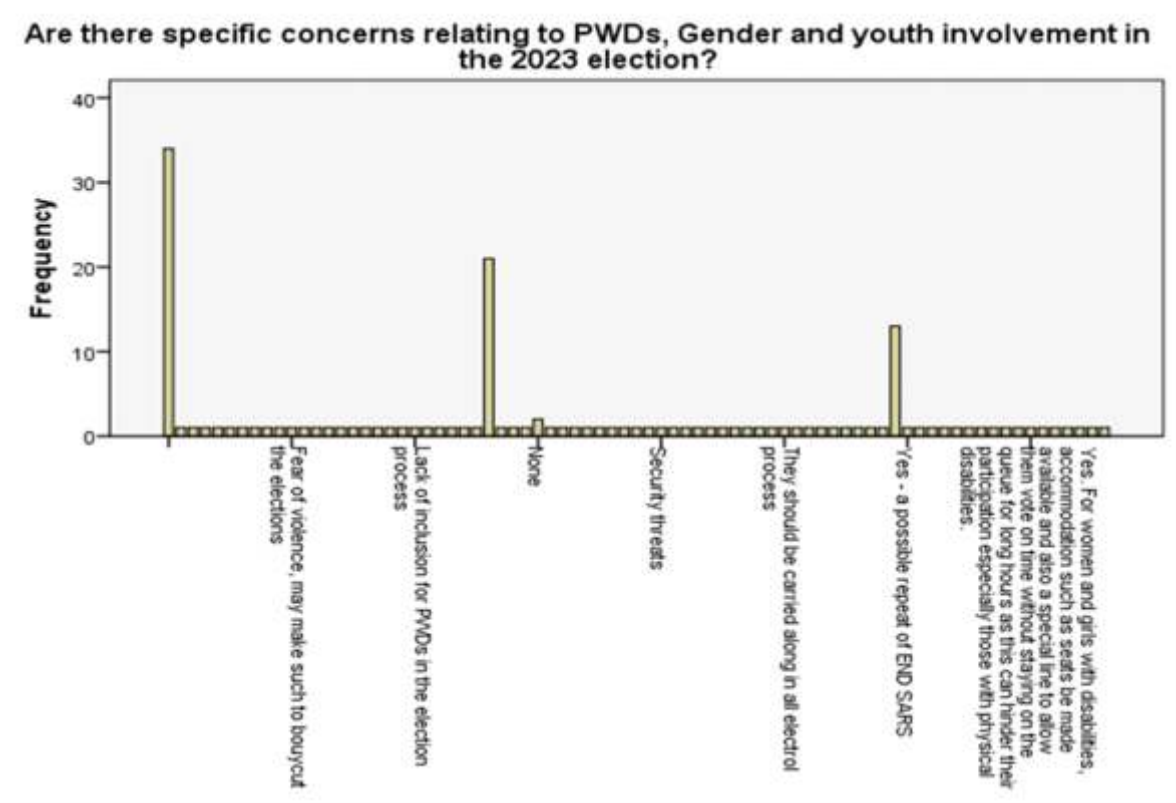
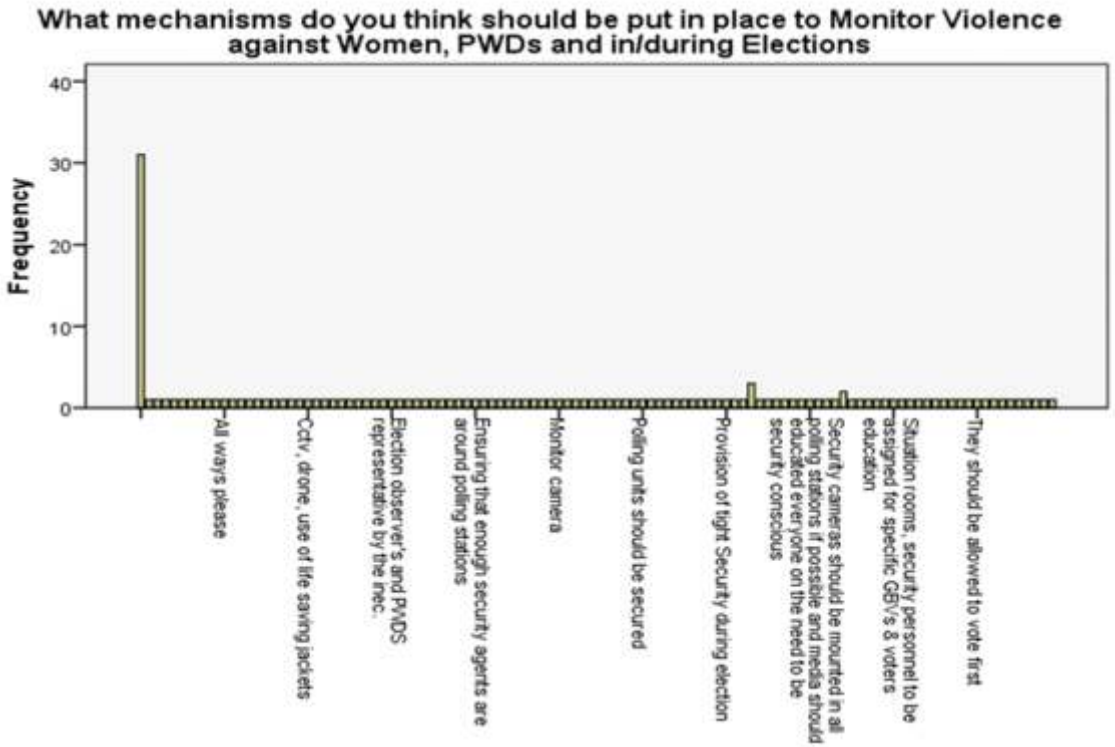


Figure 19: Mechanisms to be put in place to monitor VAW, PWDs During Elections



2.3 The mechanism to be put in place to monitor Violence Against Women and PWDs

The mechanism to monitor VAW and PWDs during elections is presented in figure 19 above and table 6 below:

Table 6: Mechanism to monitor VAW and PWDs during Elections

S/N	Mechanism for Monitoring VAW and PWDs during Elections
1	Trained security personnel who understand safety and protection needs of women and PWDs
2	Adequate security personnel and CCTV cameras at PUs
3	Campaign and sensitization to assure voters of safety during the elections
4	Community security arrangements to take care of PWDs and women
5	Trained security personnel, traditional leaders and community vigilantes should work hand in hand to ensure safety and security at the PUs
6	The use of Electronic Drones
7	The use of mobile courts for instant arrest and prosecution of perpetrators of election violence
8	Community sensitization and voter education for responsible conduct during and after the elections
9	Call centres and real time election day violence reporting centres
10	Develop a Tracking Database to list the nature, location and perpetrators of violence against women and PWDs
11	Use well-trained and God-fearing officials, both electoral and security officials
12	Engagement of women and PWDs in election security
13	Partisan security agencies should be warned and prosecuted if found guilty
14	PUs should be secured
15	Hearing aids and glasses for albinos
16	Separate ques for women and PWDs
17	Active Monitoring Groups in rural and remote areas where elections are most likely to be rigged

2.4 Discussion of Findings

In keeping with the aforementioned rapid survey results, the following discussion encapsulates the KII conducted to gain a better understanding of the security and safety needs that may hinder women, youths, and PWDs' participation in the 2023 general elections. Nigeria has seen an increase in the use of social media for election-related information, as well as the targeting of vulnerable groups, particularly women and people with disabilities, during elections. Election misinformation is a breach of the right to free and fair elections because irresponsible reporting and news can cause fear and panic, lead to attacks elsewhere, and deter people from voting, thereby disenfranchising them. With the majority of our respondents relying on social and electronic media for electoral information, INEC must maximize its use of these channels.

There is evidence that the sanitation of elections is deteriorating globally. Yet, this is related to the worsening democratic climate in which elections take place rather than how elections are structured (International IDEA 2019a, V-Dem 2021 in Alihodi, 2022). Political parties and government officials' attitudes that corrupt electoral processes abound in Nigeria have long been left unchecked. To fight and suppress opposition parties, incumbents frequently resort to violence and all sorts of manipulations. Moreover, their authoritarian

attitudes and deployment of political thugs against vulnerable groups have a negative impact on inclusive electoral processes. Despite the fact that more than 90% of our respondents indicated that they want to vote in the upcoming elections, institutionalized negative activities of the government and their thugs, as well as widespread insecurity, may have a detrimental impact on the process.

Furthermore, our data demonstrate that women and PWDs are vulnerable, and if they are unsure of their safety, they may choose not to vote, resulting in disenfranchisement and low participation. Furthermore, owing of their nature, PWDs and women may be unable to defend themselves from attacks by political thugs, particularly when there is physical violence and intimidation, which may limit their involvement. Another concern is the dread of going to vote, as well as rudeness, intimidation, and a lack of accessibility to polling places. With constant risk of lives and property, female candidates and people with disabilities may be discouraged from sustaining their campaigns. Similarly, poor enlightenment, lack of mobility and lack of adequate personnel with knowledge about PWDs at polling units discourage PWDs to come out and elect the right person.

With the danger of violence, many PWDs and women may be afraid to vote in case violence breaks out and they are unable to flee as quickly as others. Furthermore, commercial buses and motorcycles are normally not permitted to operate on election days, thus many PWDs who require assistance to move will be unable to vote. Inability to exercise civic rights owing to lack of mobility equates to denial of their humanity and right to participate in governance. Exclusion through movement restrictions create a perilous atmosphere and a feeling of being excluded. It is important to provide hearing aids and spectacles for albinos to encourage participation. There should be ramps, sign language interpreters, guide canes and those who specialized on guiding the visual impaired and other forms of disabilities. For women and girls with disabilities, accommodation such as seats be made available.

Our findings also suggest that procedures for monitoring women's and people with disabilities' inclusion and safety needs should be implemented. The training of security personnel to recognize the special needs of individuals with disabilities and women, as well as allowing PWDs, pregnant women, and the elderly to vote as soon as they arrive so that they can return home. Also, additional electoral players such as vigilantes, traditional leaders, youths, and the media should be supported to ensure voter safety and support measures for women and people with disabilities. The employment of CCTV in all centers, as well as electronic drones to quickly monitor violence and mobile courts, is essential for the capture and conviction of criminals.
Laws should be strengthened to reduce violence and ensure that traditional leaders and qualified security professionals work together. Community mobilization and voter education to promote responsible behavior during and after elections. Create a Tracking Database to record the nature, location, and perpetrators of violence against women and people with disabilities. Adequate emphasis is placed on community leaders to educate their constituents about the importance of voting peacefully. Orient party and candidates on election-day and post-election peace. Sufficient sensitization is required to guarantee that youths reject to participate in thuggery.

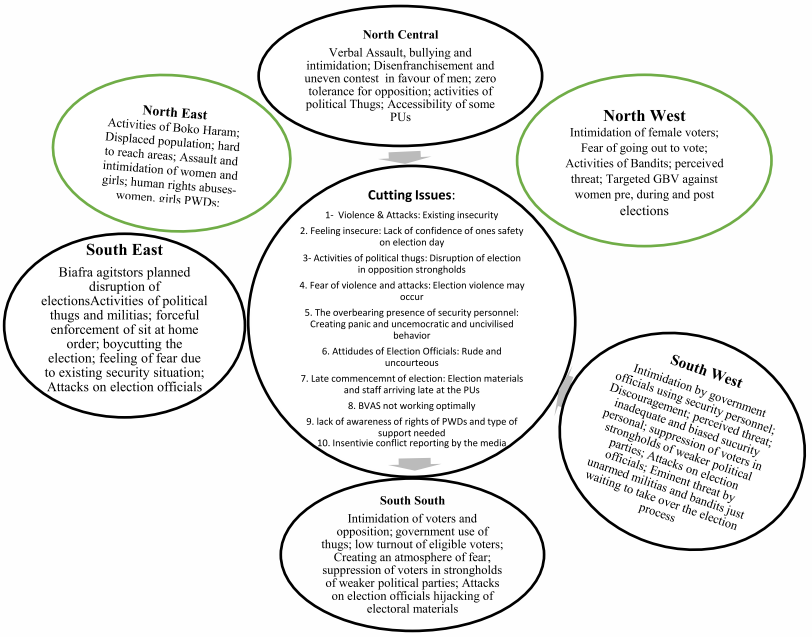
Party agents should be educated against the use of violence and intolerance to opposition. The rate of hate speeches by politicians and their supporters should be discourage, political thuggery and intimidation of voters, vote buying and convincing on election day. Stern warnings should be issue to the public against violence and use of insulative words. Election security rooms should be functional where abuses are promptly reported. This should involve an active gender desk where all reports from polling units are receive any information or report of infractions. A proper response team should be put in place.

Table 7: Issues and Threats

S/N	Issues & Threats	Details
1	PWDs	Accessibility of polling units; Social Restrictions; Vulnerability to attacks; Human Right Abuse and intimidation; Poor enlightenment about election security; Fear of not being able to escape threats and violence, thus staying at home for fear of endangering their lives; Lack of mobility on election day; non-prioritization of PWDs concerns- ramps, sign language interpreters, guide canes and those Who specialized on guiding the visually impaired and other forms of disabilities; Outright discrimination, stigma and exclusion; Lack of inclusion of PWDs in the electoral process; Stampede;
2	Women	Violence against women by political parties/leaders; Targeted harassment of women pre, during and after elections; Violence Against Women Political Candidates and intimidation of female voters by thugs; Bullying of women; fighting to get the opportunity to vote; Stampede;
3	Youths	Safety of election personnel especially NYSC members; Security personnel profiling youths and attacking them; Youths used as political thugs breach peace and disrupt elections; fear of a possible repeat of END SARS;
4	Security Personnel	Violent Attacks on security personnel by supporters/thugs of desperate politicians; Security personnel disarmed, maimed and killed and patrol vehicles and offices are burnt; Perception of security personnel as agents of the government making them vulnerable to attacks; government officials at Pus with heavily armed security personnel; overburdened INEC provisions of 3 unarmed personnel per PU; Official vehicles enough transport security personnel to their various PUs on election day leading to late start; Security personnel on election duty are not given adequate training and mandated to master the standard operating procedure guide for elections and digest the content of the manual; Planning and logistics issues- security personnel not able to locate PUs a day before the election, bad terrain causing delays in arrival; Security personnel required to 'fall in' for deployment for election duties with not adequate provision made for their feeding and accommodation; lack or inadequate protective gear- ballistic helmets and bulletproof vest for the security personnel on election duties, exposing them to great danger in the event of an attack;

5	Election Officials; EMBs	Intimidation of election officials, In already fragile locations and regions like North East and South Eastern of the country, election officials are attacked unprovoked when a little misunderstanding occurs; INEC staff also make it difficult for a free and fair election due to late arrival of materials or intentional/deliberate diversion/swapping of election materials- wrongly rooted materials may take time to return to base; Failure of some of the equipment may cause a crisis on election day, Battery problems, Connectivity Issues and co, may agitate electorates.
6	Others	Fake news that creates panic and stores up violence; Politicians using security personnel to intimidate voters and opposition; Inadequacies of security personnel and their late arrival PUs; Fear of votes being invalidated; blatant disregard for human rights of voters; partisan security personnel and election officials; Hate speeches by politicians and their supporters; political thuggery and intimidation of voters, vote buying; Activities of political thugs and militias; Terrorists and bandits; Kidnapping; Conduct of election personnel and party agents; Disenfranchisement through the late start and the arrival of election materials; Fear of violence and attacks; Verbal assault, bullying and intimidation; Poor enlightenment on safety and security arrangement for election day; security personnel and other election officials deployed on election duty do not have the opportunity to vote, including other support staff like the NYSC leading to disenfranchisement of thousands of them; Government has not done enough to convince the people in states like Imo, Anambra, Abia that despite ongoing threats.

Figure 20: Cross-Cutting and Regional-Specific Threats and Issues from Survey



Conclusion: Towards Gender Inclusive Elections

3.1 Conclusion

Citizens have the civic responsibility of selecting their leaders irrespective of their status, gender, age, and region. Sadly, Nigeria's current security situation may have a negative impact on electorates' ability to go out and vote. local levels of insecurity may hinder election administration in practically every part of the country. According to this analysis, the degree of participation of electorates, notably women and girls, people with disabilities, and youths, will be influenced by safety and security concerns and attitudes of government officials who corrupt the electoral process. Our findings indicate the need to combine responsible media reporting of incidences voter and electoral civic education with security education throughout the election process. Security personnel and election officials equally need to be trained on how to respond to safety and security needs of PWDs and women. This is critical to increasing all-inclusive participation in elections. Election safety and security should be a continuous activity and citizens/community stakeholders should be encouraged to own and police the process. Election security sensitization should begin far before the voting period and carried throughout the election process.

3.2 Recommendations

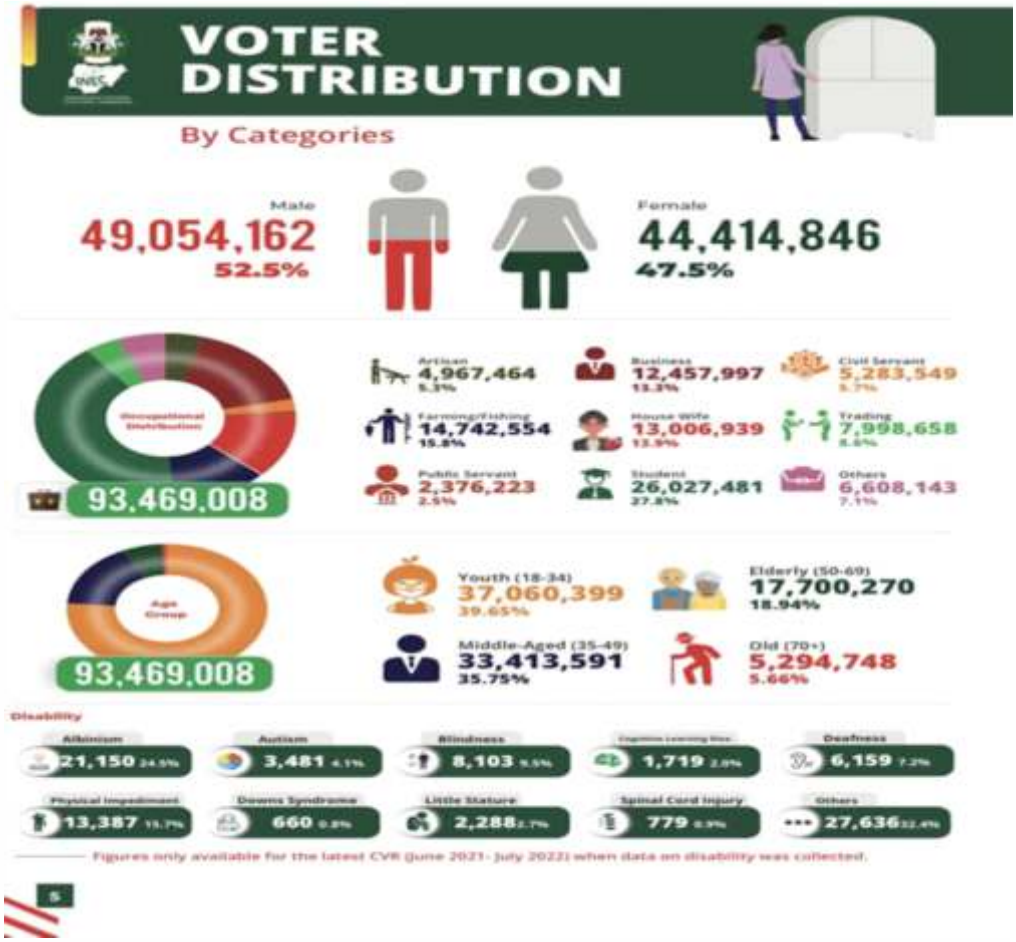
Further recommendations to improve Security and Safety for Women, PWDs and Aged during the 2023 Elections addressed specifically to the security agencies, poll officials and the wider public include:

- ¾ Government should support INEC in strengthening the existing Election Security Architecture (ESA) and framework encompassing local communities and groups;
- ¾ INEC should ensure voter education campaigns are PWD, women, people with and youth centered to increase participation of all;
- ¾ INEC should enlist the help of neighborhood and community vigilantes, who will be backed and supervised by relevant security authorities in mapping and monitoring election security concerns and also support communities to police the election and voting process by promoting peaceful election conduct and the protection of materials, personnel, and voters.
- ¾ Political Parties should ensure that they remove all obstacles that may have limited the participation of women, PWDs and other vulnerable groups as candidates and not just workers. Political should put in place strategies that promote the full involvement of women and PWDs and particularly ensure the implementation of the INEC Nation Gender Policy.
- ¾ INEC should utilize women-centered and PWDs centered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as volunteer election monitors and early warning whistleblowers, so as to ensure women and PWDs mobilization for the forthcoming elections; Also, support these CSOs to be proactive in providing the required assistance to women and PWDs.
- ¾ INEC should provide additional information on how to utilize the BVAS, including material in local languages; INEC public orientation and campaign to discourage the targeting of women, PWDs and election personnel should be topmost on the agenda;
- ¾ INEC should ensure sex-disaggregated data for the general election specifically the level of women and PWDs participation as voters, electoral officers, observers and candidates.
- ¾ INEC should put in place mechanisms to monitor and document VAWG and PWD, and clearly record nature of incidences of attacks, violence and abuse during the elections
- ¾ INEC should ensure prompt start of the election and that equipment which may cause delay on election day is working optimally and that adequate provisions are being put in place to resolve BVAS battery problems, and connectivity issues by ensuring election officials are proactive and quick to address incidences of BVAS failure.

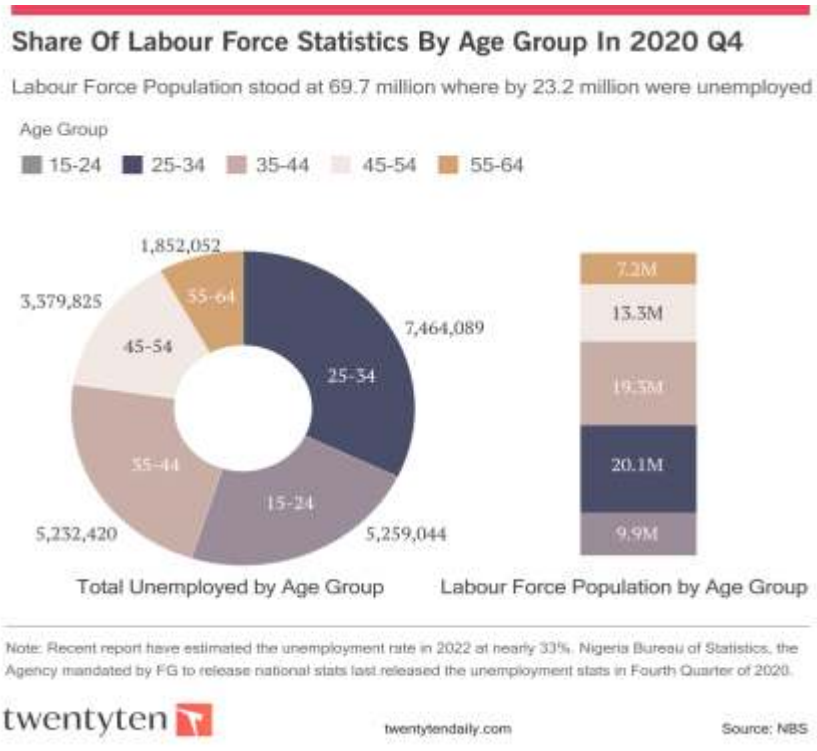
- INEC and the Media should work together to counter fake and false information, that may create fear and disrupt peaceful conduct of the elections. They should strive to ensure responsible reporting of incidences.
- INEC should ensure that the Election Security Architecture (ESA) encompass the provision of standard training and making available assistive devices, robust (cordial) police-public relations, and civility orientation to members of the public on the need to see security as a collective endeavor.
- Government and INEC should reassure the people of Imo, Anambra, Abia, Zanfara and Maiduguri that despite threats, elections will hold and that their security and safety are guaranteed. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure protection from unarmed militias and bandits waiting to disrupt the process of the election.
- INEC should work towards a policy that ensures persons on election duty are not disenfranchised but are able to cast their votes on election day.

Appendices

Appendix A: Voter Distribution by Categories



Appendix B: Nigeria's Unemployment Rate Q4 2022 [Study Age Range]



Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Which Part of the Country do you live in?
   i. North Central
   ii. North East
   iii. North West
   iv. South East
   v. South South
   vi. South West

2. Have you registered to vote?
   i. Yes
   ii. No

3. Have you received your Voters Card?
   i. Yes
   ii. No

4. Did you experience any challenges in receiving your card?
   i. Yes
   ii. No
   If yes to question 4 please describe _____

5. How likely are you to vote in the coming elections?
   i. Certain to vote
   ii. Most likely to vote
   iii. Probably won't vote
   iv. Skip the primary elections
   v. Don't know
   vi. I won't vote

6. Do you think the existing government is well prepared for the 2023 elections?
   i. Yes
   ii. No
   If No, explain _____

7. How important is election safety to you?
   i. Very important
   ii. Important
   iii. Somewhat Important
   iv. Neutral

8. Do you have safety, security and protection concerns for the 2023 elections?
   i. Yes
   ii. No
   iii. c. Prefer not to say

9. What are your most pressing safety and security Concerns?
   i. Fear of violence and attacks
   ii. Verbal Assault, bullying and intimidation
   iii. The overbearing presence of security personnel
   iv. Disenfranchisement and uneven contest
   v. Political Thugs and Militias
   vi. Election Management Bodies

10. Where is your most credible source of information on elections?
   i. News on TV
   i. Articles in the newspapers
   ii. Attend events where the candidate is addressing the people

iii. Family, community and friends
iv. Social media- WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc
Others: Please specify_____

11. There should be more emphasis on objective media reporting during elections
    i. Completely agree
    ii. Somewhat agree
    iii. Neutral
    iv. Somewhat disagree
    v. Completely disagree

12. Electorates should take responsibility for safety and security during elections?
    i. Completely agree
    ii. Somewhat agree
    iii. Neutral
    iv. Somewhat disagree
    v. Completely disagree

13. Communities should take responsibility for safety and security during elections?
    i. Completely agree
    ii. Somewhat agree
    iii. Neutral
    iv. Somewhat disagree
    v. Completely disagree

14. Election Security should be the responsibility of the government, EMBs and Security Agencies?
    i. Completely agree
    ii. Somewhat agree
    iii. Neutral
    iv. Somewhat disagree
    v. Completely disagree

15. What do you think should be the role of security agencies during elections?
    i. Support to electorates only
    ii. Support to EMBs only
    iii. Support to Electorates and EMBs
    iv. Neutral

16. Do you have any specific safety, security and protection issues or queries that you would want to be addressed during the 2023 elections?

I. Please specify_____

Appendix D: KII Guide

1. What are your safety and Security concerns for the 2023 General Elections
2. In what ways may insecurity impact the participation of women, youths and PLWDs in the 2023 elections?
3. What mechanisms should be put in place to Monitor Violence against Women in/during Elections?
4. How can we increase gender-inclusive electoral processes?
5. What are the barriers to effective participation of women/PWDs/Youths in the upcoming general elections?

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ABOUT THE ELECTORAL HUB

The Electoral Hub, an affiliate of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a knowledge and advocacy hub which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of critical and contextualised analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency, and accountability.

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