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OSUN STATE ELECTION CONTEXT ANALYSIS 2026



**Political Context Analysis of Elections
in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2026
Osun Gubernatorial Election**

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OSUN STATE ELECTIONS CONTEXT ANALYSIS



1.0 Introduction

On the 15th of August 2026, the people of Osun State will go to the polls to elect a governor^[1]. This election represents a pivotal democratic event in Nigeria's political calendar, occurring just months before the 2027 general elections and serving as a key barometer of the nation's political mood. As an important off-cycle election, it is a crucial test for the state's ruling party and a major opportunity for the opposition to reclaim power in a state with a deeply entrenched history of fiercely competitive politics, legal battles over mandates, and a discerning electorate known for voting based on performance^{[2] [3]}.

In Nigeria's political landscape, Osun State occupies a unique position. Known as the "State of the Living Spring," it is a land where the virtues of the Omoluabi character-integrity and intellectual depth-are considered the foundation of its social contract^[4]. Since its creation on August 27, 1991, and the return to democracy in 1999, Osun has held multiple gubernatorial elections, with the forthcoming August 2026 poll marking another critical chapter in its democratic journey^{[5] [6]}.

The state's political history since 1999 is defined by high competitiveness and a pattern of incumbents being held accountable. Of the five governors who have led the state in the Fourth Republic, only one-Rauf Aregbesola-has been re-elected to serve a second consecutive term. Chief Bisi Akande (1999-2003) was succeeded by Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola (2003-2010), who, after prolonged legal battles, lost his seat to Aregbesola (2010-2018). The pattern continued as Aregbesola's successor, Gboyega Oyetola (2018-2022), was defeated at the polls by the current Governor, Senator Ademola Adeleke, in a high-stakes 2022 rematch. This cycle demonstrates that Osun voters are not wedded to any single party and possess a consistent record of keeping both governors and parties accountable for their performance.

Following Governor Ademola Adeleke's first term, which has been marked by high-profile infrastructure projects, pledges of workers' welfare, and a distinct style of governance, the 2026 election takes place at a critical juncture^[7]. The political landscape has been dramatically reshaped by Adeleke's defection from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the Accord Party in December 2025, a move that has redrawn alliances and intensified the stakes of the contest. The purpose of this research is to methodically examine the factors influencing this election, where the path to victory requires navigating a transformed political terrain and achieving what only one governor has done before: securing a second consecutive term.

^[1] The Punch. (2026, March 6). Osun gov: Campaigns begin March 11 as INEC finalises candidates. <https://punchng.com/osun-gov-campaigns-begin-march-11-as-inec-finalises-candidates/>

^[2] TheCable. (2026, March 3). Osun 2026: Time for a new way? <https://www.thecable.ng/osun-2026-time-for-a-new-way/>

^[3] Daily Post. (2026, January 28). Osun 2026: Guber race reopens old rivalries, new alliances. <https://dailypost.ng/2026/01/28/osun-2026-guber-race-reopens-old-rivalries-new-alliances/>

^[4] This Day. (2026, March 8). Osun 2026: Beyond the dance, a return to Omoluabi essence. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2026/03/08/osun-2026-beyond-the-dance-a-return-to-omoluabi-essence/>

^[5] Vanguard. (2011, October 2). The Osun perspective at 20. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/10/the-osun-perspective-at-20/amp/?noamp=mobile>

^[6] Osun State Government. (n.d.). Past governors. <https://www.osunstate.gov.ng/past-governors-2/>

^[7] Osun State Government. (2026, March). People's votes must count in August 2026 - Governor Adeleke. <https://www.osunstate.gov.ng/2026/03/peoples-votes-must-count-in-august-2026-governor-adeleke/>

2.0 Purpose and Scope of the Analysis

2.1 Primary Purpose

The focal purpose of this report is to systematically examine the political, institutional, social, and power dynamics shaping the Osun State gubernatorial election, scheduled for August 15, 2026. This analysis focuses on evaluating factors that influence electoral integrity, political competition, citizen participation, and the risks of manipulation or violence. It aims to provide stakeholders—including the National Peace Committee (NPC), civil society organizations, security agencies, and development partners—with a robust evidence base for strategic engagement, conflict prevention, and programmatic intervention. To guide this assessment, the analysis is structured around four cross-cutting questions that account for Osun's unique political trajectory:



What is the historical background of the state, who holds political power, how is it exercised, and how is it contested during elections?

This question anchors the analysis in Osun's distinctive political evolution, including the 2022 Adeleke victory, the protracted legal battles that followed, and the recent realignment following Governor Adeleke's defection to the Accord Party.



What formal electoral rules exist, and how are they applied or bypassed in practice?

This examines the legal framework governing the 2026 election, including INEC's regulatory authority, the Electoral Act, and the practical challenges of enforcement in a deeply competitive environment where informal practices often supersede formal statutes.



Which informal norms, incentives, and patronage systems shape political behaviour?

This probes the underlying drivers of political action in Osun, including the role of godfatherism, factional loyalties (particularly the Aregbesola-Oyetola rift within the APC), the influence of traditional institutions, and the monetization of the electoral process.



What are the key risks, spoilers, and opportunities for reform or engagement?

This identifies potential flashpoints for violence, institutional failure, or legitimacy crises, while also mapping entry points for constructive intervention by peace architects and democratic stakeholders.

2.3 Scope of the analysis

To ensure focus and depth, the scope of this analysis is defined along the following parameters:

Scope Dimension	Parameters for Osun 2026 Analysis
Focus Election	Gubernatorial election
Geographic & Administrative Focus	The analysis covers all 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Osun State, with particular attention to historically volatile constituencies, areas with a history of electoral violence, and communities experiencing emerging security threats. Special focus will be given to LGAs with high voter density e.g., Oshogbo, Ife Central, Ilesa East, Ikirun, and Iragbiji) and border areas vulnerable to cross-border political thuggery.
Electoral Cycle Phase	The primary focus is on the pre-election period (1999 – February 2026), encompassing party primaries, candidate nomination processes, campaign activities, and preparatory logistics. However, the analysis also considers implications for the election-day and immediate post-election phases, recognizing that in Osun's litigious political culture, the post-election period is often as contested as the vote itself.
Key Actors	State institutions (INEC, Security Agencies under ICCES), the Osun State Government, Political Parties and their candidates (with particular attention to the Accord Party, All Progressives Congress (APC), and African Democratic Congress (ADC)), non-state actors (Media, Civil Society Organizations, Traditional and Religious Leaders), and the Electorate. The analysis will also examine the role of factional leaders within parties, notably the influence of former Governor Rauf Aregbesola and his faction now domiciled in the ADC, and its implications for the
Thematic Focus Areas	The analysis will delve into the: Political & Institutional Landscape (party dynamics, candidate selection, defection politics); Security Dynamics (criminality, political thuggery, cross-border violence); Socio-economic & Identity Factors (voter behaviour, demographic trends, economic grievances); the Media and Information Environment (disinformation, hate speech, partisan reporting); and the Political Economy of the election (campaign financing, vote-buying, state resource utilization).
Temporal Coverage	While focused on the 2026 cycle , the analysis will draw upon relevant precedents and trends from the 2018 and 2022 governorship elections to provide historical context, track evolution, and identify recurring patterns. Particular attention will be paid to the 2022 election, which produced the current administration, and the subsequent legal challenges and political realignments that have shaped the present landscape.

3.0 Methodology

This context analysis is based on the systematic study and synthesis of existing qualitative and quantitative sources, complemented by the political intelligence gathered from current reporting on the Osun 2026 electoral landscape. The methodology allows for rigorous analysis, triangulation, and validation of information drawn from a range of authoritative materials. The analysis employs the following methods:

Desk Review:

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

Electoral Legal Framework:

The 1999 Constitution (as amended), the **Electoral Act 2026** (as amended), and INEC regulations and guidelines for the 2026 off-cycle governorship election^[8] ^[9]

Historical Election Data:

Analysis of results and patterns from the **2018** and **2022** governorship elections, which provide critical context for understanding voter behaviour, swing patterns, and the state's competitive dynamics. The **2018** election produced a contentious rerun and prolonged legal battles, while the **2022** election saw Adeleke unseat incumbent Oyetola with **403,371** votes against **375,027**.

Political Realignment Documentation:

Review of media and institutional reports documenting Governor Adeleke's December **2025** defection from the PDP to the Accord Party, former Governor Aregbesola's position as National Secretary of the ADC, and the emergence of Bola Oyebamiji as APC consensus candidate^[10]^[11]

Party Primary and Candidate Selection Records:

Examination of the APC's consensus-building process, which saw eight aspirants step down for Oyebamiji, and the ADC's nomination of former Speaker Najeem Salaam as its flagbearer.

^[8] The Guardian (2026). Osun 2026: Why Adeleke's dancing steps may not win reelection. <https://guardian.ng/politics/osun-2026-why-adelekes-dancing-steps-may-not-win-reelection/>

^[9] The Punch (2026, January 26). Osun 2026: Beyond glamour, toward governance. <https://punchng.com/osun-2026-beyond-glamour-toward-governance/>

^[10] The Guardian (2026). Osun 2026: Between Adeleke's grassroot appeal and APC's federal might. <https://guardian.ng/politics/osun-2026-between-adelekes-grassroot-appeal-and-apcs-federal-might/>

^[11] Nigerian Panorama (2025, November 2). Embracing consensus: APC's strategy for regaining power in Osun State's 2026 election. <https://nigerianpanorama.com/news/embracing-consensus-apcs-strategy-for-regaining-power-in-osun-states-2026-election/>

Historical Trajectory:

Tracking the 1999-2026 evolution, with emphasis on the 2018-2022-2026 electoral cycle and the realignments following each outcome.

Institutional Analysis:

Examining the formal rules governing the election and the informal practices (defections, godfatherism, vote-buying) that shape actual outcomes.

Power Mapping:

Identifying key actors, factional loyalties (Aregbesola/Oyetola divisions within the progressive family), and patronage networks.

ii Primary Data Analysis:

Deployment of trained 40 roving Field Observers across all the 30 LGAs in the state to collect primary data on security and electoral offences incidents in the State pre, during, and post-election.

iii Secondary Data Analysis:

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

INEC Voter Registration Data:

Analysis of the approximately **2.33 million registered voters** in Osun State. Particular attention is paid to high-turnout hubs such as Osogbo, Ede, Ilesa, Ile-Ife, and Ijebu-Jesa.

Media Monitoring:

Systematic tracking of campaign narratives, including the framing of Adeleke's governance style ("dancing governor" versus "people's governor"), Oyebamiji's technocratic profile, and the ADC's positioning as a third force^[12].

^[12] BusinessDay. (2026, February 19). Osun governorship: Issues that will shape campaigns. <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/osun-governorship-issues-that-will-shape-campaigns/>

Local Government Fiscal Analysis:

Examination of the implications of local government financial autonomy rulings and their impact on grassroots mobilisation capacity for all parties.

iv Analytical Framework:

Risk Assessment:

Evaluating potential flashpoints for violence, institutional failure, or legitimacy crises across Osun's **30 LGAs**.

4.0 Political and Institutional Environment

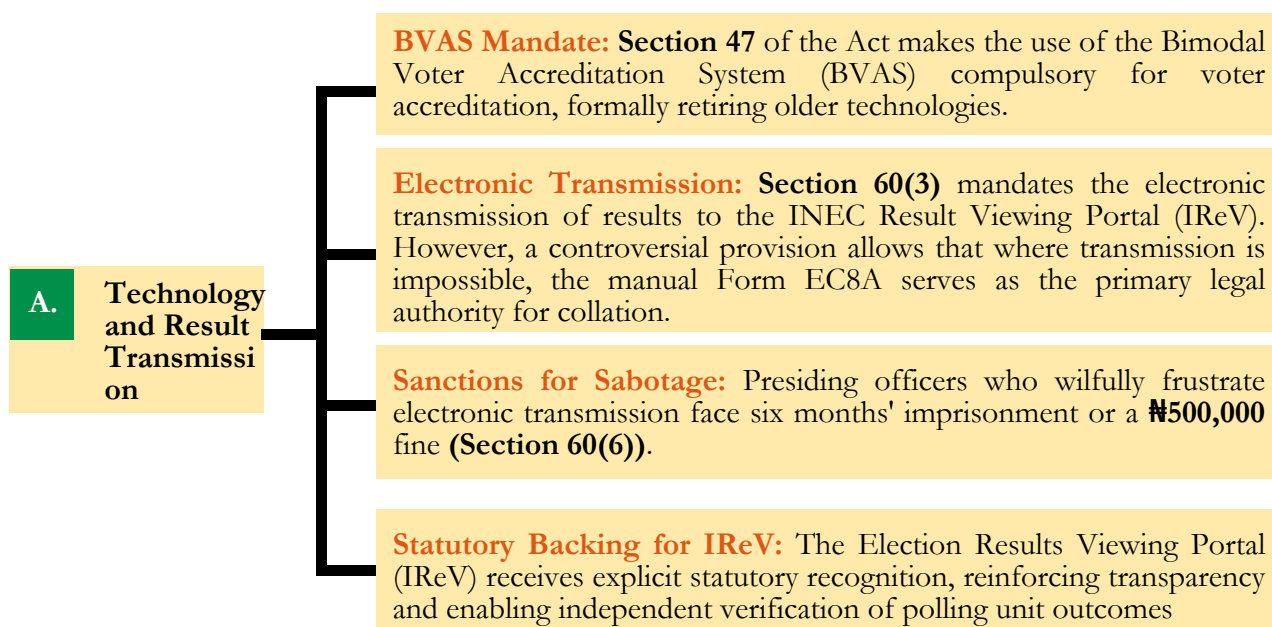
The 2026 Osun State gubernatorial election will be contested within a significantly transformed institutional framework, shaped by the newly enacted Electoral Act 2026, which repeals the 2022 legislation and introduces sweeping reforms to Nigeria's electoral architecture^[13]. This environment is defined by a competitive incumbent seeking re-election, a fragmented opposition landscape reshaped by high-profile defections, and a legal framework that seeks to address long-standing ambiguities while generating its own controversies regarding transparency and enforcement^{[14] [15]}.

4.1 Constitutional and Legal Framework

The 1999 Constitution (as amended) and the Electoral Act 2026 govern the election. The Act, signed into law by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on February 18, 2026, represents a comprehensive overhaul of the electoral system following two years of consultation with INEC, civil society, and development partners^{[16] [17]}.

Key Provisions of the Electoral Act 2026

The new Act introduces several landmark provisions that will directly shape the Osun 2026 gubernatorial contest:



^[13] National Assembly Legal Framework. (2026, March 11). House of Representatives passes Electoral Bill 2026 to strengthen Nigeria's electoral legal framework. <https://naltf.gov.ng/house-of-representatives-passes-electoral-bill-2026-to-strengthen-nigerias-electoral-legal-framework/>

^[14] Channels Television. (2026, February 24). The ₦17m shadow: Is Nigeria's 2026 Electoral Act a 'riggers' charter? <https://www.channelstv.com/2026/02/24/the-%e2%82%a617m-shadow-is-nigerias-2026-electoral-act-a-riggers-charter/>

^[15] The Sun. (2026, March 8). Road to 2027: Decoding new Electoral Act and its political implications. <https://thesun.ng/road-to-2027-decoding-new-electoral-act-and-its-political-implications/>

^[16] National Assembly Legal Framework. (2026, March 10). President Tinubu assents to Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2026, strengthening Nigeria's democracy. <https://naltf.gov.ng/president-tinubu-assents-to-electoral-act-amendment-bill-2026-strengthening-nigerias-democracy/>

^[17] National Assembly Legal Framework. (2026, March 10). Senate leader outlines landmark reforms as President Tinubu assents to Electoral Act 2026. <https://naltf.gov.ng/senate-leader-outlines-landmark-reforms-as-president-tinubu-assents-to-electoral-act-2026/>

B. Candidate Nomination and Party Processes

Streamlined Timeline: The deadline for submission of candidate lists is shortened from **180 to 120 days before election day (Section 29(1))**. This compresses the timeline for intra-party disputes and allows earlier resolution of pre-election litigation^[18].

Primary Methods: The Act restricts parties to only Direct and Consensus primaries, scrapping indirect primaries to reduce the influence of money and delegate manipulation^[19].

Digital Membership Registers: Political parties are required to maintain verifiable digital membership records, which must be submitted to INEC **21 days** before primaries. Failure to do so disqualifies the party from fielding candidates.

Dual Membership Prohibition: A newly introduced provision criminalizes dual membership of political parties, with offenders facing a **₦10 million fine** or up to **two years' imprisonment**. This targets the long-standing issue of "political nomadism" where politicians maintain multiple affiliations.

C. Campaign Finance

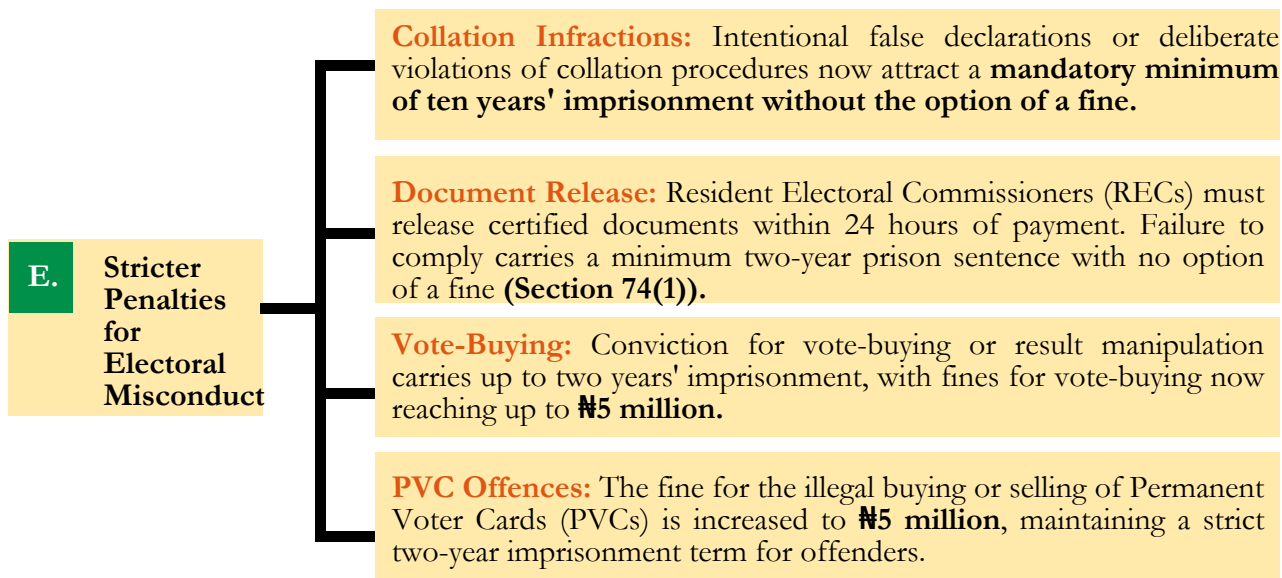
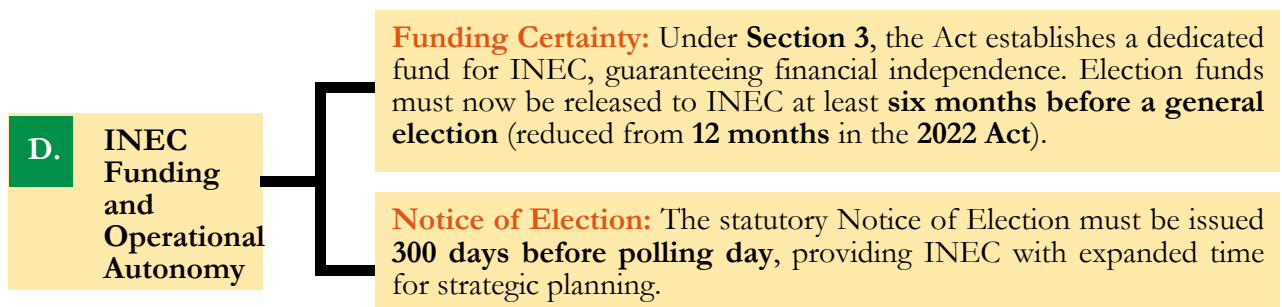
The Act significantly raises spending ceilings to reflect current economic realities:

Office	Spending Limit (Electoral Act 2026)
Governor	₦3 Billion (up from ₦1bn in 2022)
Senate	₦500 Million
House of Representatives	₦250 Million

These increased limits have sparked concerns about the monetization of Nigerian politics, potentially tilting the scales further in favour of wealthy incumbents and well-funded challengers.

^[18] The Eagle Online. (2026, March 12). Reps speak on passage of Electoral Bill, major highlights. <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/rep-speak-on-passage-of-electoral-bill-major-highlights/>

^[19] National Assembly Legal Framework. (2026, March 12). Reps amend Electoral Act, prescribe fine, jail term for dual party membership. <https://naltf.gov.ng/rep-amend-electoral-act-prescribe-fine-jail-term-for-dual-party-membership/>



F. The "25% Spread" Clause

The constitutional requirement remains: a candidate must receive the highest number of votes and at least **25% of the vote in two-thirds of Osun's 30 Local Government Areas** to win in the first round (Section 179(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution). Historically, this provision has encouraged statewide campaigning rather than reliance on regional strongholds.

G. Judicial Recourse and the Seven-Day Review

The Act clarifies INEC's authority to review results declared under duress. **Section 65** provides a **seven-day window** for INEC to review and overturn results where the Commission proves that the declaration was made under duress or circumstances that prevented the proper recording of results. This narrow administrative correction window precedes formal litigation.

4.2 Electoral Management and Administration

4.2.1 Core Operational Components



INEC's Capacity & Funding: While the Electoral Act 2026 grants INEC expanded financial independence, the practical reality of timely fund releases remains critical. For an off-cycle election like Osun 2026, the release of funds at least six months before the poll (as mandated) will determine the Commission's ability to conduct early procurement, training, and voter education.



Technology Deployment: The successful use of **BVAS for voter accreditation** and the **IREV portal for result viewing** will be the most scrutinized technical aspects of the Osun election. The FCT elections held shortly after the Act's passage served as a preview, revealing that only **45% of polling units opened by 8:30 AM**, and voter turnout plummeted to just **14%**. These figures underscore the challenges INEC faces in rebuilding public trust under the new framework.



Logistics and Staffing: Efficient movement of personnel and materials across Osun's 30 LGAs-including remote and semi-urban areas, remains a perennial challenge. The recruitment, training, and deployment of impartial ad-hoc staff (including NYSC members) are vulnerable to local political pressure and compromise. The compressed 120-day candidate nomination timeline also places pressure on INEC to verify and publish final candidate lists promptly.



Security Collaboration: INEC's relationship with security agencies under the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) is vital. The neutrality and professional conduct of police, NSCDC, and Amotekun personnel at polling units directly affect voter confidence and process integrity.

4.2.2 Key Electoral Data for Osun State

Based on available data and INEC projections for the 2026 governorship election:

Table 3: Key Activities

Key Activity	Status/Detail
Election Date	August 15, 2026
Seats Contested	Governor of Osun State
Registered Voters	Approximately 2.33 million

Total Number of LGAs	30
Total Number of Wards	332 (across 30 LGAs)
Total Number of Polling Units	3,763
Incumbent Status	Governor Senator Ademola Adeleke is eligible for re-election (contesting under Accord Party)
Number of Political Parties	14 (notable exclusions – PDP & LP)
Campaign Window	11 th March – 13 th August 2026

A significant constitutional dimension of the 2026 election is the unresolved legal question of the legitimacy of APC-controlled Local Government Councils, whose tenures have been extended through a combination of court orders and alleged federal financial instruments. The Federal Government's alleged practice of withholding statutory LGA funds unless disbursed through APC-controlled councils represents not only a financial dispute but a constitutional challenge to the principle of local government autonomy.^[20]

Table 4: Breakdown of Wards and Polling Units per LGA

S.No.	Local Government Area (LGA)	Number of Wards	Number of Polling Units
1	Atakumosa East	10	77
2	Atakumosa West	11	76
3	Ayedaade	11	150
4	Ayedire	10	67
5	Boluwaduro	10	74
6	Boripe	11	112

^[20] Vanguard (2026). "INEC moves 2027 presidential poll to January, shifts Osun guber." Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2026/02/breaking-inec-moves-2027-presidential-poll-to-january-shifts-osun-guber/>

6	Boripe	11	112
7	Ede North	11	139
8	Ede South	10	101
9	Egbedore	10	90
10	Ejigbo	11	133
11	Ife Central	11	215
12	Ife Dayo	10	63
13	Ife East	10	200
14	Ife North	10	111
15	Ife South	11	131
16	Ifelodun	12	145
17	Ila	11	124
18	Ilesa East	11	132
19	Ilesa West	10	121
20	Irepodun	11	133
21	Irewole	11	138
22	Isokan	11	95
23	Iwo	15	170
24	Obokun	10	100
25	Odo-Otin	15	121
26	Ola-Oluwa	10	62
27	Olorunda	11	193

28	Oriade	12	123
29	Orolu	10	85
30	Osogbo	15	282
Total	30 LGAs	332	3,763

5.0 Historical Background, Political Actors, and Power Dynamics of Osun State

This section analyses the formal and informal structures of power in Osun State, addressing the core question: **historical background of the state, who holds political power, how is it exercised, and how will it be contested in the 2026 election.** The analysis reveals a system characterised by a politically assertive electorate with a proven record of holding incumbents accountable, deep factional divisions within major parties, and a transformed political landscape following high-profile defections that have redrawn alliance structures^[21].

5.1 Historical Background of the State

Osun State was created on August 27, 1991, by the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, following its separation from the old Oyo State. The state was carved out of the existing Oyo State, with Osogbo designated as the capital^[22]. The state derives its name from the River Osun, a revered river goddess in Yoruba cosmology, and is popularly known as the **"State of the Living Spring"** - a reference to its cultural and spiritual significance as the home of the annual Osun-Osogbo Festival, a UNESCO-recognised cultural heritage event.

Geographically, Osun State is bounded by Kwara State to the north, Ekiti and Ondo States to the east, Ogun State to the south, and Oyo State to the west. It comprises **30 Local Government Areas (LGAs)** and one area office (Modakeke), organised into three senatorial districts: **Osun West, Osun Central, and Osun East**^[23].

The state is predominantly Yoruba, specifically the Osun subgroup, with a rich cultural heritage rooted in the traditions of the old Oyo Empire. Agriculture forms the backbone of Osun's economy, with the state being a major producer of yam, cassava, maize, and cocoa. The state also has significant mineral deposits, including granite, clay, and gold, though many remain underexploited. Education is a defining feature, with the state hosting several higher institutions, including Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife-one of Nigeria's most prestigious universities-and Osun State University with multiple campuses across the state.

5.2 The Fourth Republic Governorship Succession Pattern (1999-2022)

Under Chief Bisi Akande of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), who sERVED a single term from 1999 to 2003, Osun began the Fourth Republic with relative stability. Akande was known for his pro-poor policies and commitment to education, establishing a foundation for progressive governance in the state.^[24]

The 2003 election brought Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to power. Oyinlola, a lawyer and politician, was known for his infrastructural development projects and commitment to agriculture. He sERVED two terms until 2010, when a Court of Appeal ruling nullified his election and ordered a rerun, which was won by Rauf Aregbesola of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

Aregbesola's tenure (2010-2018) was marked by significant educational reforms and social welfare programs, including the introduction of the O'MEALS program (school feeding) and various infrastructure projects. His administration also emphasized the promotion of Yoruba culture and identity. However, his tenure was not without controversy, including disputes over the creation of new LCDAs and religious tensions.

^[21] <https://www.thecable.ng/osun-2026-time-for-a-new-way/>

^[22] <https://discoverngr.com/adeleke-vs-oyebanji-osuns-politics-of-accusations-name-calling-by-ayo-azeez/>

^[23] <https://punchng.com/osun-gov-inec-unveils-details-of-candidates-as-adeleke-retains-deputy/>

^[24] Osun State Government (2024). "Past Governors." Available at: <https://www.osunstate.gov.ng/past-governors-2/>

The 2018 governorship election was one of the most contentious in Osun's history. The initial election on September 22, 2018, was declared inconclusive by INEC because the margin between the top two candidates (PDP's Ademola Adeleke with 254,698 votes and APC's Gboyega Oyetola with 254,345 votes) was smaller than the number of cancelled votes in seven polling units. The supplementary election held on September 27, 2018, was marred by allegations of irregularities and voter intimidation, with Oyetola eventually declared the winner with 255,505 votes to Adeleke's 255,023.^[25]

The 2022 election saw a rematch between Adeleke and Oyetola. This time, Adeleke emerged victorious with 403,371 votes to Oyetola's 375,027 votes, winning in 17 of the 30 LGAs. The election was generally considered peaceful, though observers noted widespread vote-buying. The victory was challenged at the tribunal, which initially voided Adeleke's election in January 2023, but the Court of Appeal and subsequently the Supreme Court affirmed his victory in March and May 2023, respectively.^[26]

Table 5: Timeline of Major Osun State Governorship Election Court Cases (2007-2023)

Year	Candidates (Party)	Key Election Petition &	Outcome
2007	Olagunsoye Oyinlola (PDP) vs. Engr. Olusola Obada (AC)	Tribunal dismissed Obada's petition. Appeal Court nullified Oyinlola's election in 2010, ordered a rerun.	Rauf Aregbesola (ACN) won the rerun and was sworn in (November 2010).
2014	Rauf Aregbesola (APC) vs. Iyiola Omisore (PDP)	PDP petitioned, alleging irregularities. Tribunal dismissed the petition. Upheld by higher courts.	Rauf Aregbesola's election upheld.
2018	Gboyega Oyetola (APC) vs. Ademola Adeleke (PDP)	Election declared inconclusive; supplementary poll held. Oyetola declared the winner. Adeleke challenged at the tribunal.	Tribunal declared Adeleke the winner in 2019, but the Appeal Court overturned the ruling. Oyetola remained governor.
2022	Ademola Adeleke (PDP) vs. Gboyega Oyetola (APC)	Tribunal voided Adeleke's election in January 2023. The Court of Appeal reversed the tribunal decision in March 2023.	The Supreme Court affirmed Adeleke's election in May 2023.

^[25] Premium Times (2018). "BREAKING: INEC declares Osun governorship election inconclusive." Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/285916-breaking-its-official-inec-declares-osun-governorship-election-inconclusive.html>

^[26] Channels TV (2022). "Adeleke Defeats Incumbent Oyetola To Win Osun Governorship Election." Available at: <https://www.channelstv.com/2022/07/17/breaking-adeleke-defeats-incumbent-oyetola-to-win-osun-governorship-election/>

5.3 The 2018 and 2022 Elections: Forging the Present Contest

The 2026 election is a direct product of the political forces unleashed in the 2018 and 2022 governorship elections, which reshaped the state's political trajectory and entrenched deep divisions among major political actors.

The 2018 Election: Inconclusive Outcome and Legal Battles

In 2018, Senator Ademola Adeleke of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) narrowly lost to the All-Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, Adegboyega Oyetola, in an election that was declared **inconclusive** by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The rerun that followed produced Oyetola as governor, a process that sparked protests and prolonged legal battles, with the PDP insisting the outcome did not reflect the will of the electorate. This election entrenched a perception among Adeleke's supporters that they had been denied victory through institutional manipulation—a narrative that would fuel the 2022 rematch.

The 2022 Election: Adeleke's Victory and Political Realignment

Four years later, the political pendulum swung sharply in the opposite direction. In the 2022 rematch, Adeleke defeated incumbent Oyetola, unseating him and returning the PDP to the Osun State Government House in Osogbo^[27].

INEC figures from the 2022 poll showed a decisive margin in favour of Adeleke: **403,371 votes** against Oyetola's **375,027**—a margin of approximately 28,000 votes that PDP leaders described as "a clear verdict of the people". The result was particularly significant because it demonstrated that grassroots mobilisation and voter fatigue with the outgoing administration could overcome the advantages of incumbency and federal alignment.

However, the aftermath of that election marked the beginning of fresh scheming. Both the Adeleke and Oyetola camps began quiet but intense manoeuvring for relevance and control ahead of 2026. Sources within the APC indicated that the party never accepted the 2022 loss as final, instead viewing it as "a temporary setback that required strategic recalibration." Conversely, PDP insiders acknowledged that internal cohesion became fragile after the victory, with competing interests emerging within the ruling camp.

5.4 The Great Realignment: Defections Reshape the Political Map (2025-2026)

The period between 2025 and early 2026 witnessed a dramatic restructuring of Osun's political landscape, fundamentally altering the configuration of forces for the 2026 election.

Governor Adeleke's Defection to the Accord Party

On December 10, 2025, Governor Ademola Adeleke officially defected from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the Accord Party, citing persistent leadership crises within the PDP at the national level as the reason for his departure. The defection was not a solitary move; it triggered a cascade of realignments:

- The governor's entire state cabinet and several political appointees defected alongside him
- Key legislative allies, including Senate Deputy Minority Leader Senator Lere Oyewumi, followed suit, citing irreconcilable differences within the PDP
- Other PDP members remained behind to rebuild the party's structure, creating fragmentation within the former ruling party

^[27] <https://guardian.ng/politics/osun-2026-why-adelekes-dancing-steps-may-not-win-reelection/>

The Osun State Chairman of the Accord Party, Pastor Victor Akande, described the governor's entry as "a strategic partnership aimed at expanding democratic choices in Osun". INEC subsequently recognised Adeleke as Accord's authentic candidate, settling an initial legal dispute where another faction had produced a parallel candidate.

Former Governor Aregbesola's Move to ADC

Equally significant was the political repositioning of former Governor **Rauf Aregbesola**, who had long been a dominant force in Osun APC politics. Aregbesola, who served as governor from 2010 to 2018 and later as Minister of Interior, moved to the **African Democratic Congress (ADC)**, where he now serves as a key leader in the state.

This move represented the culmination of a long-simmering factional rift within the Osun APC between Aregbesola's loyalists and those aligned with his successor, Gboyega Oyetola. The ADC, under Aregbesola's influence, subsequently confirmed former Speaker **Najeem Salaam** as its governorship candidate for the 2026 election.

Salaam, speaking after his affirmation, positioned the ADC as an alternative force: "Osun voters deserve credible options beyond the dominant parties".

APC's Candidate Consolidation

Within the APC, the focus shifted to candidate consolidation following the defections and realignments. On December 13, 2025, the party affirmed Asiwaju Bola Oyebamiji as its governorship flag bearer through a consensus process.

Oyebamiji, a technocrat and banker, brings significant administrative experience to the contest:

- He served as Managing Director/CEO of Osun State Investment Company Limited (now Omoluabi Holdings Limited) under Governor Aregbesola
- Served as Commissioner for Finance in Osun State under both Aregbesola and Oyetola
- In 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu appointed him as the Managing Director/CEO of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA)

The Osun APC maintained that Oyebamiji's emergence reflected "a consensus rooted in experience, party loyalty and statewide acceptability".

5.5 Political Parties and the 2026 Electoral Configuration

The 2026 election presents a transformed party landscape, shaped by the defections and realignments of 2025-2026.

INEC's Final Candidate List

On March 6, 2026, INEC released the final list of candidates for the August 15 governorship election, confirming that 14 political parties completed their primaries and uploaded candidates' particulars within the stipulated deadline^[28] ^[29].

^[28] <https://guardian.ng/politics/osun-2026-why-adelekes-dancing-steps-may-not-win-reelection/>

^[29] <https://punchng.com/incc-releases-candidates-details-for-osun-gov-election/>

Table 6: Cleared Political Parties and Candidates for the Osun 2026 Governorship Election

Political Party	Governorship Candidate	Running Mate	Notes
Accord (A)	Senator Ademola Adeleke	Kola Adewusu (Prince)	The incumbent governor defected from the PDP
All Progressives Congress (APC)	Asiwaju Bola Oyebamiji	Benjamin Adereti	Former NIWA MD, consensus candidate
African Democratic Congress (ADC)	Najeem Salaam Folasayo	Agiri Temitope	Former Speaker, backed by Aregbesola
Action Alliance (AA)	Olanrewaju Farinloye	Fadahunsi Olaniyi	
African Action Congress (AAC)	Esan Olajide	Bello Yekeen	
Action Democratic Party (ADP)	Adeagbo Yemisi (Female candidate)	Atanda Babatunde	The only female gubernatorial candidate
All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)	Prince Adesina Olusanya Adeyemi-Doro	Duro-Oni Duro	
Allied Peoples Movement (APM)	Adewale Adebayo	Jimoh Naheem	
Action Peoples Party (APP)	Adesuyi Banji Clement	Odesola Oluseye	
Boot Party (BP)	Adesoji Masilo	Aresa Adenike	
New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)	Adeleke Adewale Taofeek	Adeyera Oluwabusola Adesola	
Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)	Saliu Oyelami	Adewale Alabi Solomon	
Young Progressive Party (YPP)	Ogunsakin Enoch	Oyetola Taye	
Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)	Mr Adesuyi Olufemi	Abdulsalam Olamide	

Notable Exclusions

Conspicuously absent from INEC's final list are the **Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)**, the **Labour Party (LP)**, and several others, including the **Social Democratic Party (SDP)** and **National Rescue Movement (NRM)**. These parties were excluded for failing to complete their primaries and upload candidates' particulars within the stipulated deadline. The exclusion of the PDP-the platform on which Adeleke won the 2022 election-represents a dramatic fall from grace for a party that once controlled the state government.

Analysis of the 2026 Party Configuration

The 2026 election presents what analysts describe as a potential "three-horse race" among the Accord Party (Adeleke), APC (Oyebamiji), and ADC (Salaam), though observers agree that the contest has narrowed into a high-stakes confrontation between personality-driven incumbency and a nationally coordinated opposition machine.

- **Accord Party:** Beneficiary of Adeleke's defection, combining incumbency advantages with the governor's personal popularity and grassroots appeal. However, internal fissures surfaced immediately after the defection, with a parallel primary producing another candidate before INEC's recognition of Adeleke settled the dispute.
- **APC:** Represents institutional consolidation, financial depth, coordinated support from 31 APC-controlled state governments, and perceived federal alignment under President Tinubu.
- **ADC:** Commands pockets of loyalty through Aregbesola's enduring influence and an energetic online presence.
- **Other Parties:** Fourteen parties are on the ballot, including the only female gubernatorial candidate (ADP's Adeagbo Yemisi).

5.6 Political Elites and Informal Power Brokers

The Osun political system is structured around an elite coalition anchored by the governor and the executive branch, former governors, factional leaders, traditional rulers, and business financiers.

Governors, Former Office Holders, and Factional Leaders

- **Governor Ademola Adeleke:** The incumbent, seeking re-election on the Accord platform. His political influence derives from personal popularity, the Adeleke family legacy (his late brother, Isiaka Adeleke, was Osun's first civilian governor), and grassroots mobilisation capacity.
- **Former Governor Rauf Aregbesola:** Now in ADC, Aregbesola remains a significant force with a loyal following from his eight-year tenure. His rift with successor Oyetola fractured the Osun APC, and his move to ADC creates a new power centre.
- **Minister Adegboyega Oyetola:** The immediate past governor and current Minister of Marine and Blue Economy retains substantial influence within the APC and is perceived as the political force behind Oyebamiji's candidacy.
- **Senator Lere Oyewumi:** Deputy Minority Leader of the Senate, who defected from PDP to Accord alongside Adeleke, representing Osun West Senatorial District-a key battleground.

Godfatherism and the Challenge of Reform

Osun politics exhibits moderate godfatherism, distinct from the more entrenched patron-client hierarchies seen in states like Lagos or Rivers. Rather than a single dominant godfather, influence is fragmented among former governors, party financiers, traditional rulers, and Abuja-based political brokers. The late Chief Bola Ige's progressive legacy continues to influence political discourse, though its practical impact has diminished over time.

Table 7: Geographic Voting Patterns in Osun State

Region	LGAs	Political Tendency
Osun West	Oshogbo, Ede, Irewole, Isokan, Iwo, Ayedaade, etc.	Adeleke's home base; historically strong for PDP/ Accord; high voter density in Oshogbo/Olorunda (approx. 300,000 voters)
Osun Central	Ife Central, Ife East, Ife North, Ife South, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, etc.	Competitive terrain; Ife Central has high voter density; traditional loyalties to both APC and PDP
Osun East	Ikirun, Iragbiji, Odo-Otin, Boluwaduro, Boripe, etc.	Aregbesola/Oyetola influence; Oyebamiji's home base (Ikire) is located here; mixed voting patterns

5.7 Incumbency, Factional Dynamics, and the 2026 Contest

Incumbency Advantages and Vulnerabilities

Governor Adeleke enters the 2026 contest fortified by two obvious advantages: personal popularity and the power of incumbency. His 2022 victory was powered by grassroots mobilisation and voter fatigue with the outgoing administration. Since assuming office, Adeleke has cultivated mass appeal through a populist style that, once dismissed by critics, has proved electorally effective. However, incumbency in Nigeria is both a shield and an exposure. It offers visibility, access to state structures, and agenda-setting power, but it also attracts coordinated opposition. In this cycle, Adeleke confronts a far more consolidated adversary than in 2022.

Key vulnerabilities include:

Party Unity Challenges: After leaving the PDP for Accord, internal fissures surfaced almost immediately. A parallel primary produced another candidate, and while INEC's recognition of Adeleke largely settled the legal dispute, political reconciliation remains incomplete.

Local Government Fund Constraints: The battle over local government funds represents a deeper structural issue. Recent judicial pronouncements emphasising local government financial autonomy have reportedly constrained the state government's latitude over council finances. If access to local government resources remains limited, the governor's ability to deploy traditional grassroots machinery could be significantly weakened.

Federal Alignment Asymmetry: Adeleke is not merely running against Oyebamiji but against President Tinubu's strategic interest. While Adeleke navigates fiscal constraints at the local level, the APC candidate can draw on pooled national resources and support from 31 APC-controlled state governments.

Factional Dynamics Within Parties

APC: The Aregbesola-Oyetola Rift: The APC's internal cohesion has been historically challenged by the rivalry between Aregbesola's loyalists and Oyetola's supporters. Aregbesola's departure to ADC represents a formalisation of this rift, though the extent to which his followers in APC will defect remains unclear. APC spokesperson Kola Olabisi dismissed concerns, pointing to defections as evidence of momentum: "If PDP and Accord combine, they can't withstand us".

Accord: Managing PDP Legacy Structures: Adeleke's camp maintains that former PDP structures will quietly align with the governor. Allies insist that the governor has been "maintaining Accord and PDP as vehicles for his re-election bid." Yet uncertainty persists, particularly as PDP Southwest spokesman Sanya Atofarati clarified that the party is not in any pact with any political party or candidate, pending court resolutions affecting its participation.

ADC: Translating Aregbesola's Influence into Votes: The ADC's eight per cent polling figure reflects residual loyalty to Aregbesola but also highlights the challenge of translating elite influence into mass votes. The party's most significant impact may be in shaping the distribution of votes in ways that affect the outcome between the two leading contenders.

5.8 The 2026 Gubernatorial Race: A Defining Contest

The August 15 2026, election presents a stark contrast between competing political models:

- **Adeleke (Accord)** represents grassroots charisma, incumbency, and emotional resonance, but confronts party fragility, fiscal constraints at the local level, and limited interstate backing.
- **Oyebamiji (APC)** represents institutional consolidation, financial depth, coordinated support from 31 governors, and perceived federal alignment.
- **Salaam (ADC)** represents a third-force alternative with Aregbesola's political machinery but faces structural limitations in translating elite influence into electoral victory.

This election is not merely about individual candidates. It is about whether personality-driven politics can withstand structural power; whether grassroots appeal can overcome concentrated institutional leverage; and whether Osun remains an outlier or returns to the ruling party's fold.

In 2022, Adeleke defied entrenched expectations. In 2026, the structures appear more unified, the stakes more symbolic, and the pressure more concentrated. Whether incumbency advantage can withstand the combined weight of council fund constraints, interstate mobilisation, and presidential interest will determine not just Osun's next governor but also the trajectory of political consolidation in the Southwest.

6.0 Security and Conflict Dynamics

This section presents an assessment of the security environment in Osun State ahead of the August 2026 gubernatorial election, based on two monitoring datasets maintained by the ESI Hub. The Electoral Related Violence (ERV) register records incidents of direct violence and criminality. The Electoral Offences Tracking System (EOTS) records electoral malpractice and related offences. The two datasets cover different reporting periods, as indicated in the relevant subsections below, and are presented separately to preserve the scope of each dataset.

6.1 Electoral Related Violence (ERV): Overview

The ERV dataset covers the thirteen-month period from June 2025 to June 2026, corresponding to the pre-election monitoring window ahead of the scheduled poll on August 15, 2026. Figure 1 summarises the total incident count recorded within this window and the associated human impact, disaggregated into deaths, injuries, and kidnappings, together with the geographic spread of recorded incidents across LGAs and communities.

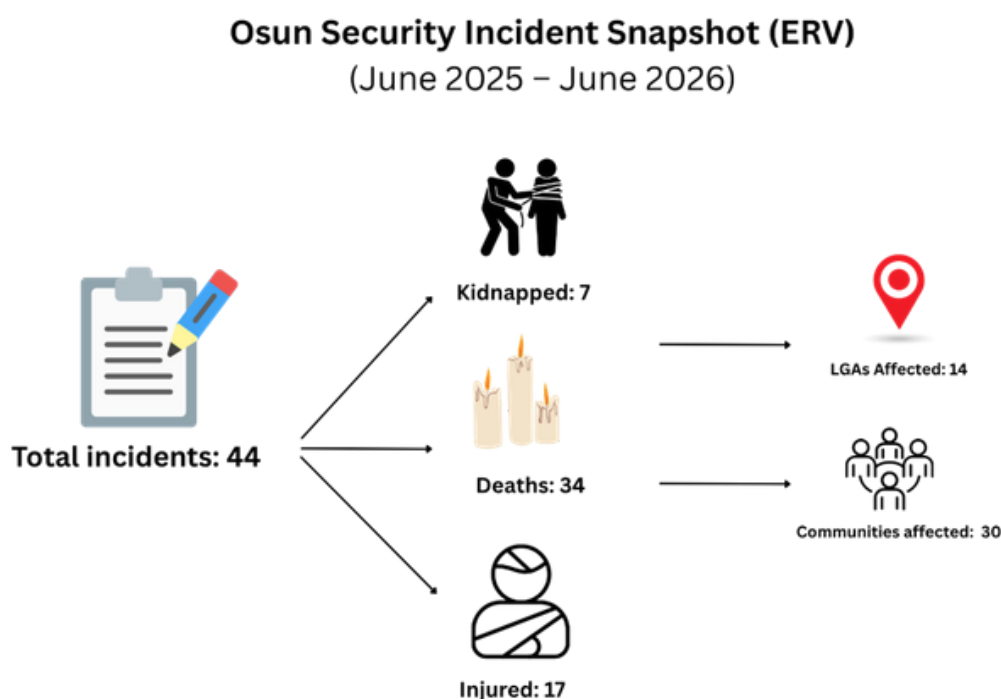


Figure 1: Osun Security Incident Snapshot (ERV), June 2025 – June 2026

As shown in Figure 1, the ERV dataset recorded 44 incidents during the reporting period, resulting in 34 deaths, 17 injuries, and 7 kidnappings. These incidents were distributed across 14 of the state's 30 LGAs (Osogbo, Ede North, Obokun, Ifedayo, Ife North, Ife Central, Irewole, Ilesa East, Egbedore, Irepodun, Oriade, Boriye, Ife East, and Ilesa West) and 30 communities. On this basis, the reporting period recorded an average of approximately 3.1 incidents per affected LGA and approximately 0.8 deaths per recorded incident. The 34 deaths, 17 injuries, and 7 kidnappings recorded in Figure 1 together represent 58 individuals directly affected by ERV incidents during the reporting period, a figure disaggregated further in Figure 2 below.

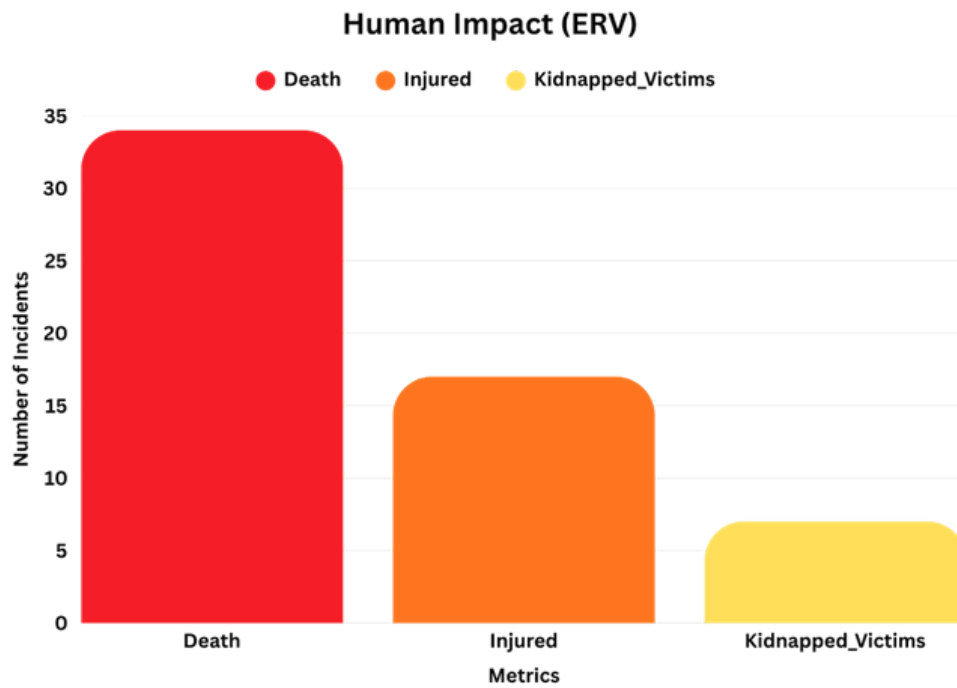
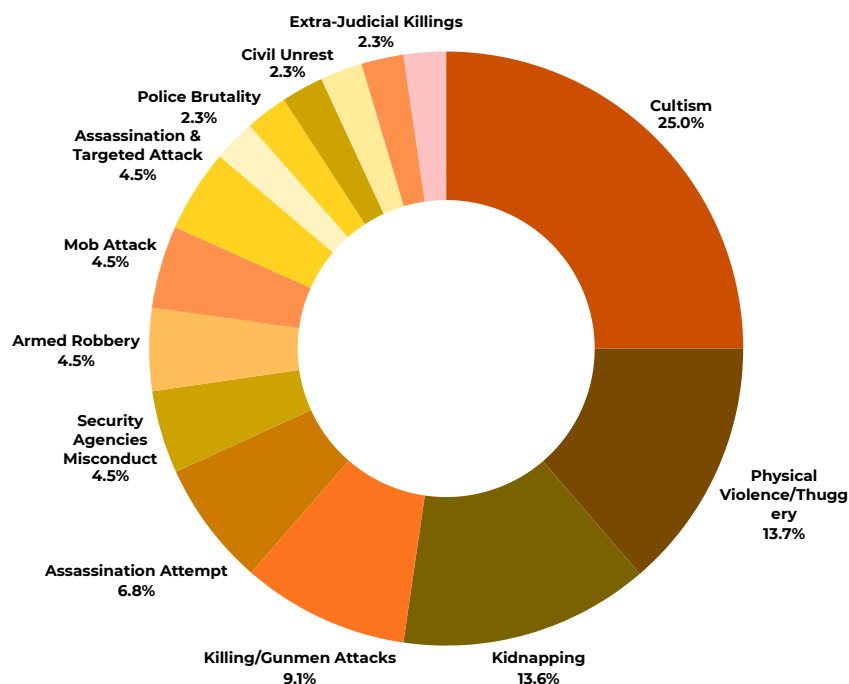


Figure 2: Human Impact (ERV), June 2025 – June 2026

The figures presented in Figure 2 are consistent with the summary in Figure 1: 34 deaths, 17 injuries, and 7 kidnappings were recorded across the reporting period. Of the 58 individuals recorded as directly affected, deaths account for approximately 58.6%, injuries for approximately 29.3%, and kidnappings for approximately 12.1%. Deaths, therefore, represent both the single largest and the most severe category of recorded human impact within the ERV dataset.

6.2 Predominant ERV Threat Categories

Each ERV incident was classified by threat category to identify the composition of recorded violence. Figure 3 presents the distribution of incidents by threat type.



Cult-related violence accounts for the single largest recorded category, with 12 incidents, or approximately 27.3% of the 44 incidents recorded in the dataset. Political violence and thuggery, recorded as a joint category, account for 5 incidents, or approximately 11.4%, with a further 2 incidents each recorded separately as political violence and as thuggery. Kidnapping accounts for 4 incidents, or approximately 9.1%, and mob attack for 3 incidents, or approximately 6.8%. Killing or gunmen attacks and armed robbery each account for 2 incidents. Eleven further categories, comprising security agency misconduct, banditry, police brutality, ritual killing, civil unrest, misuse of force, extra-judicial killings, physical assault, assassination attempt, political assassination and targeted attack, and political assassination attempt, are each recorded once, together accounting for approximately 25% of the total when combined.

6.3 Geographic Distribution of ERV Incidents

Figure 4 presents the distribution of ERV incidents across the 14 affected LGAs, ranked from the highest to the lowest recorded incident count.

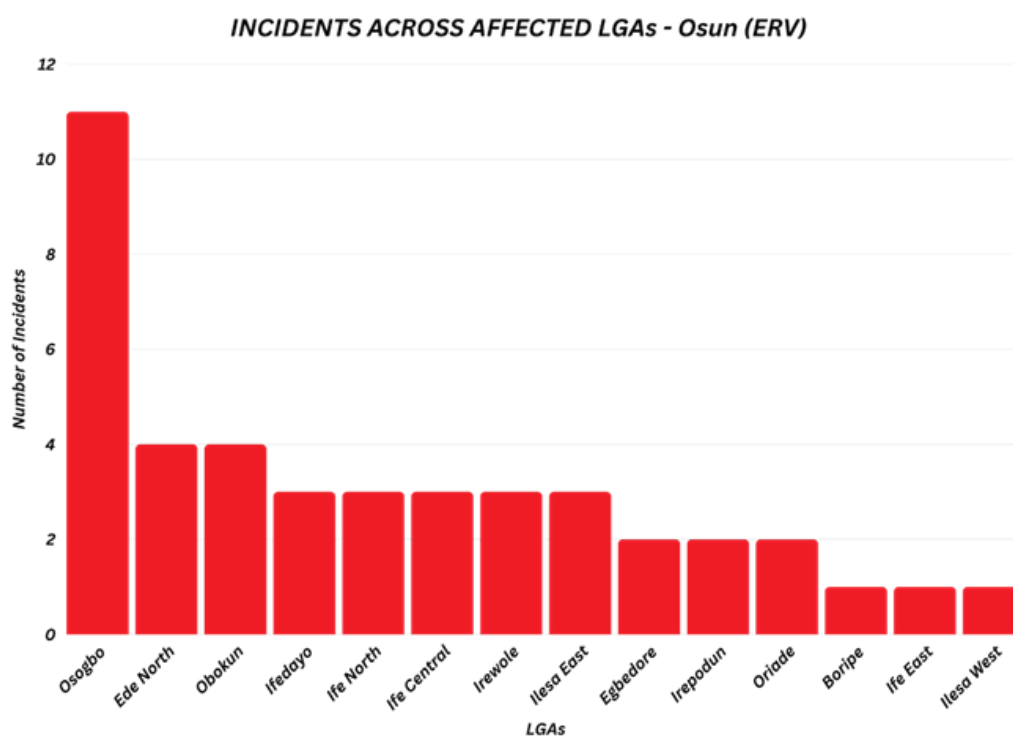


Figure 4: Incidents Across Affected LGAs (ERV), June 2025 – June 2026

As shown in Figure 4, Osogbo recorded the highest incident count at 11, followed by Ede North and Obokun with 4 incidents each. Ifedayo, Ife North, Ife Central, Irewole, and Ilesa East each recorded 3 incidents. Egbedore, Irepodun, and Oriade each recorded 2 incidents. Boripe, Ife East, and Ilesa West each recorded 1 incident. These fourteen LGA-level counts sum to 43 incidents against the stated dataset total of 44, consistent with the single unclassified or unassigned incident noted in Section 6.3. Osogbo alone accounts for approximately 25% of all recorded ERV incidents, and the three highest-ranked LGAs (Osogbo, Ede North, and Obokun) together account for 19 incidents, or approximately 43.2% of the total, despite representing 3 of the 14 affected LGAs and 10% of the state's 30 LGAs.

Figure 5 presents the same fourteen LGAs disaggregated by incident type, expressed as a proportional share within each LGA's own recorded total, rather than as a share of the statewide total presented in Figure 4 and Table 8.

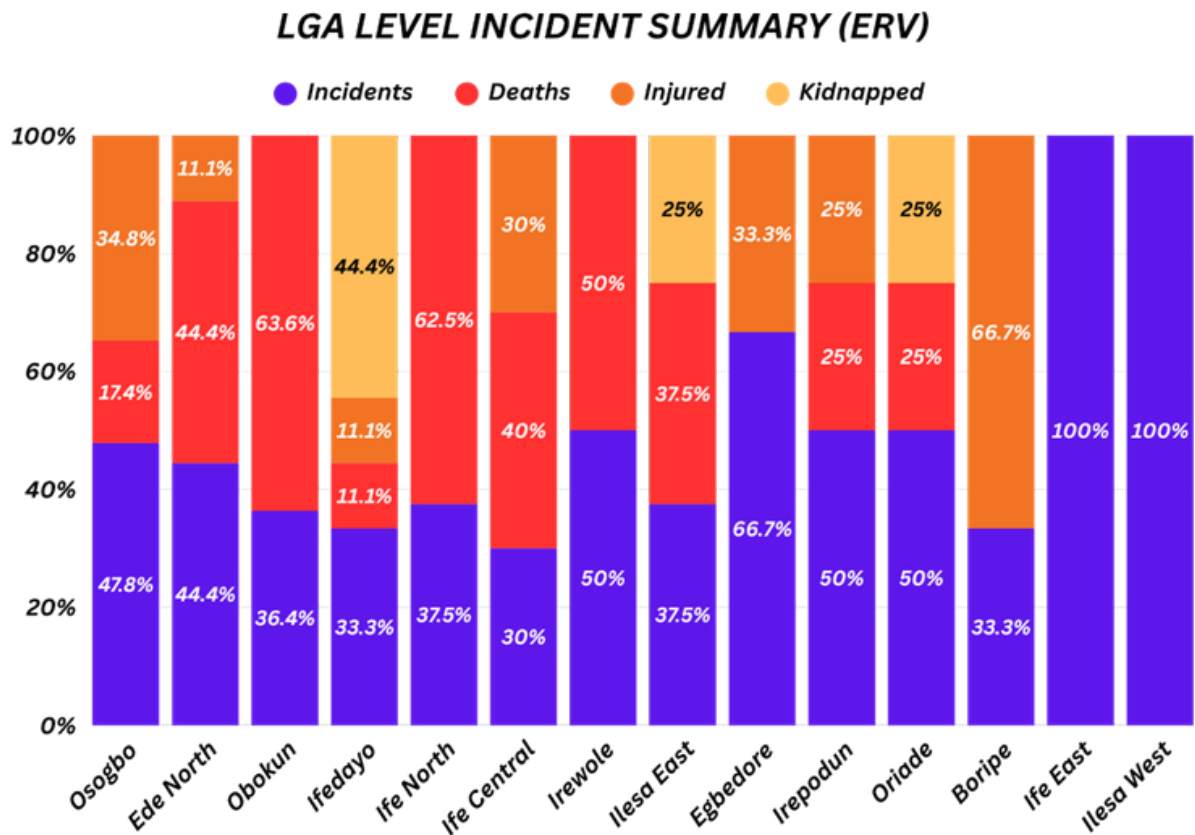


Figure 5: LGA-Level Incident Summary (ERV), June 2025 – June 2026

The composition presented in Figure 5 varies considerably by LGA. In Obokun, deaths account for 63.6% of the LGA's recorded incident composition, the highest proportion of deaths recorded for any affected LGA, followed by Ife North at 62.5%. In Ifedayo, kidnapping accounts for 44.4% of the LGA's composition, the highest recorded proportion of kidnapping among the affected LGAs. Boriye recorded the highest proportion of injuries at 66.7%. Ife East and Ilesha West are each recorded entirely as incidents, with no associated deaths, injuries, or kidnappings attributed to either LGA in the dataset. Table 9 presents the full set of proportions shown in Figure 5.

Table 8: Senatorial District Risk Summary

Senatorial District	Main Threat	Risk Level
Osun Central	Political violence, cultism, electoral offences	High
Osun East	Cultism, criminal violence	Medium
Osun West	Political competition and isolated criminal incidents	Medium

6.4 Monthly Trend of ERV Incidents

Figure 6 presents the monthly distribution of ERV incidents, deaths, injuries, and kidnappings across the reporting period.

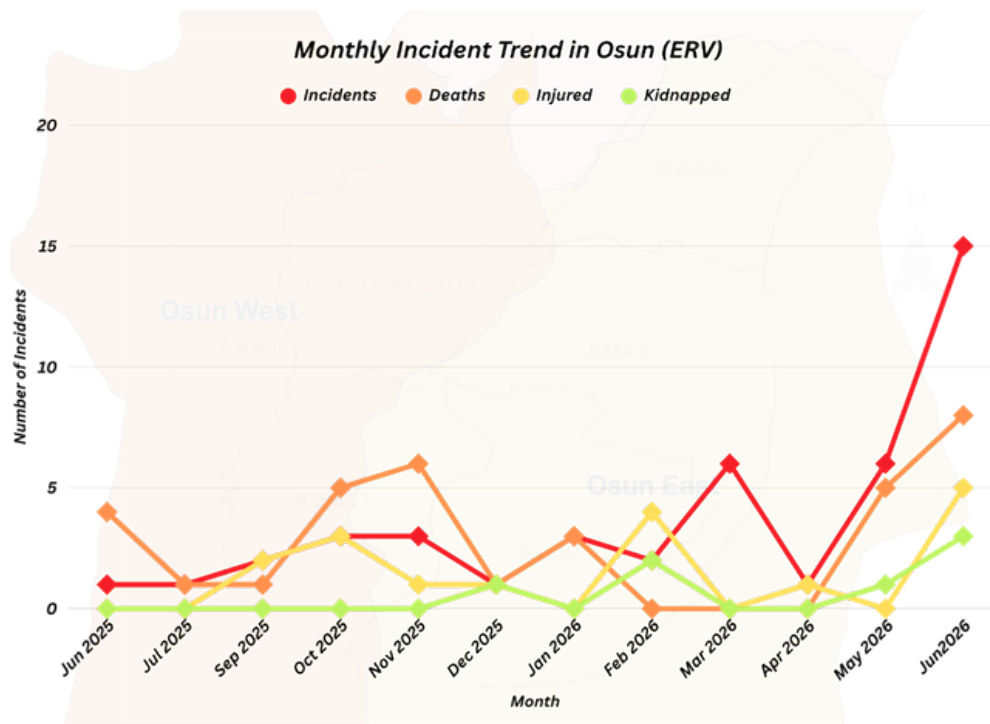


Figure 6: Monthly Incident Trend (ERV), June 2025 – June 2026

The monthly trend presented in Figure 6 shows recorded incident volumes remaining in single figures for most months between June 2025 and April 2026, with the count of monthly deaths at several points during this period exceeding the count of monthly incidents, indicating that individual incidents in those months were associated with multiple fatalities. The final two months of the reporting period, May and June 2026, show a marked increase relative to the preceding months, with June 2026 recording the highest monthly incident count in the series. This pattern indicates that recorded incident volume was not distributed evenly across the reporting period and that the most recent months before the scheduled election date carried a higher concentration of recorded incidents than the months preceding them.

6.5 Electoral Offences Tracking System (EOTS): Overview

The EOTS dataset applies a classification methodology distinct from the ERV register described above, focused on electoral-specific offences rather than direct violence. Figure 7 summarises the EOTS incident count and associated metrics for the period June 2025 to June 2026, the same reporting window applied to the ERV dataset in the preceding subsections.

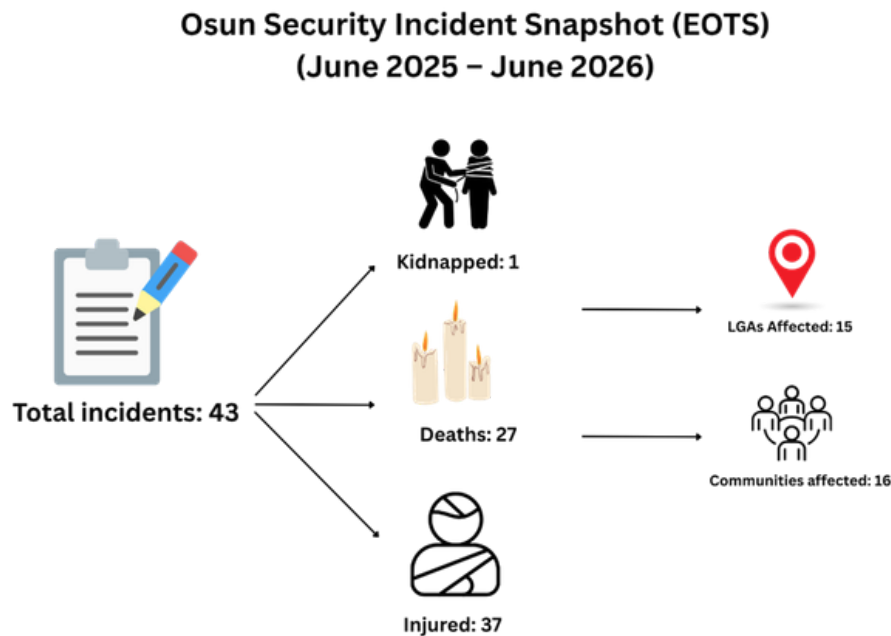


Figure 7: Osun Security Incident Snapshot (EOTS), June 2025 – June 2026

As shown in Figure 7, the EOTS dataset recorded 43 incidents during the reporting period, with 27 deaths, 37 injuries, and 1 kidnapping recorded across 15 LGAs and 16 communities.

6.6 Predominant Electoral Offences (EOTS)

Figure 8 presents the distribution of EOTS records by offence category for the period February 2025 to June 2026, a reporting window that begins four months earlier than the ERV dataset described in the preceding subsections.

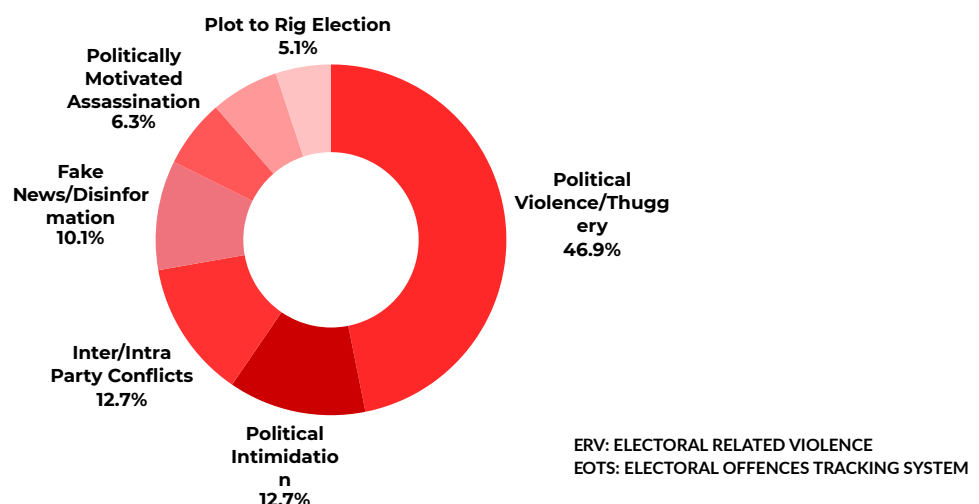


Figure 8: Predominant Electoral Offences (EOTS), February 2025 – June 2026

Political violence/thuggery accounts for the largest recorded share at 46.9%, followed by political intimidation and Inter/intra party conflicts at 12.7% each. Fake news accounts for 10.1%. INEC interference or undermining of the electoral body accounts for 6.3%. Political assassination and plots to rig elections each account for 5.1%.

6.7 Geographic Concentration of Risk

The Kukah Centre classifies all 30 of Osun's LGAs into four risk tiers. The table below lists the LGAs in each tier; the explanation that follows gives each tier's share of the state's 30 LGAs, from highest to lowest.

Table 9: Risk Assessment

Risk Level	LGAs
Critical	Osogbo, Irewole
High	Boripe, Obokun, Ilesa West, Ife Central, Ife North, Iwo, Ede North, Ifedayo, Ilesa East, Isokan, Irepodun
Moderate	Olaoluwa, Ife East, Ifelodun, Oriade, Egbedore, Ila
Low	Orolu, Atakumosa West, Atakumosa East, Ayedaade, Ayedire, Boluwaduro, Ede South, Ejigbo, Ife South, Odo-Otin, Olorunda

Two LGAs, Osogbo and Irewole, are rated critical. Osogbo is the state capital and the single most incident-dense LGA; Irewole recorded the highest LGA-level death toll, concentrated in the February 2025 secretariat attacks. Eleven LGAs are rated high risk, including Boripe, Obokun, and Ilesa West.

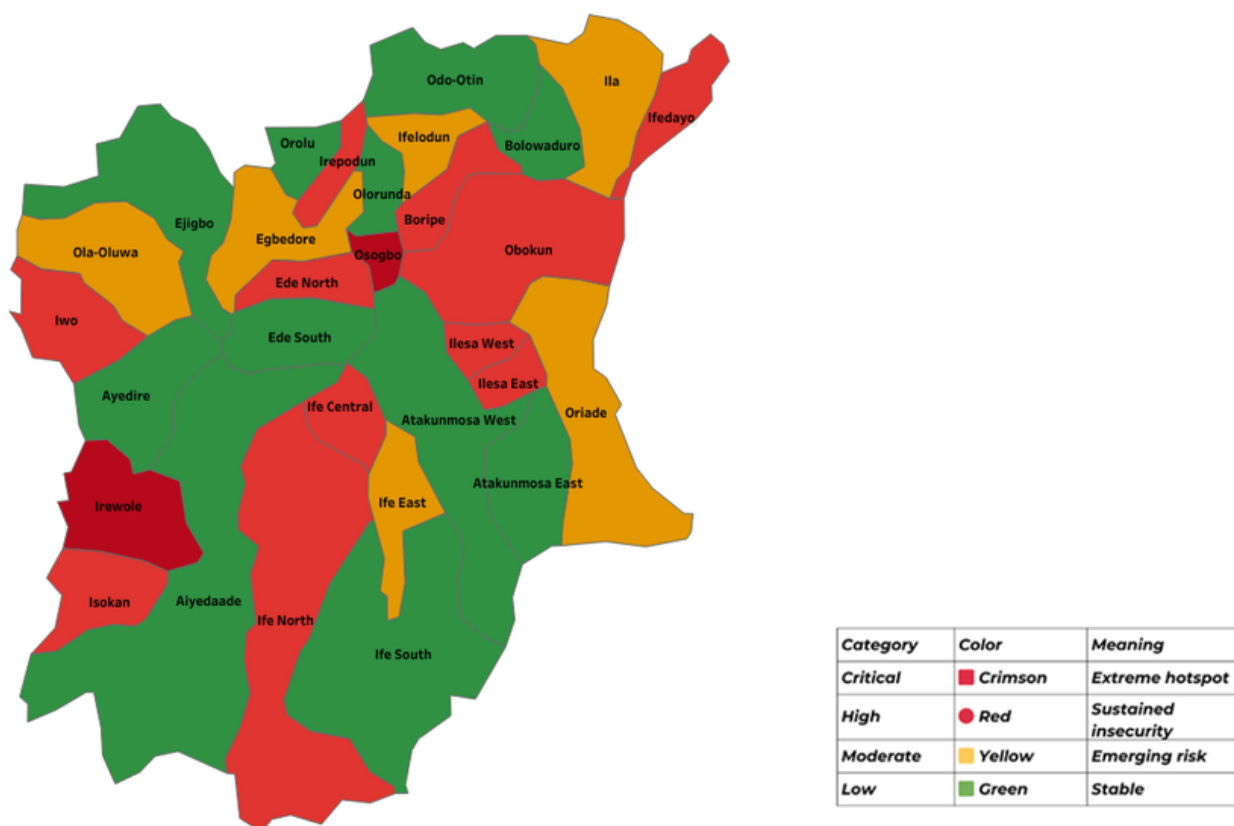


Figure 9: Electoral Risk Map of Osun State (June 2025 – June 2026)

6.8 Electoral Implications of the Security Environment

The recorded data carry several implications for the conduct of the election. Incidents concentrated in LGAs classified as Critical or High risk may affect voter turnout, particularly among women, the elderly, and those reliant on early morning or evening travel to polling units. The movement of election materials, INEC ad hoc staff, party agents, and observers may be affected in these areas. The offence categories recorded in the EOTS dataset, including pre-election violence, political intimidation, and fake news, indicate that risks to the electoral process extend beyond direct physical violence to include intimidation and misinformation.

Table 10: Key Issues

Issues	Context	Example
Organised Political Violence	Many recorded incidents show evidence of planning and coordination rather than spontaneous unrest, suggesting that violence is increasingly used as a strategic instrument to intimidate opponents and shape political outcomes. Targets have expanded beyond candidates and party officials to include transport union leaders, relatives of political actors, and uninvolved civilians.	On 24 November 2025, Adeboye Ademoroti, chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Unit 4 in Ilesa, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen; no arrest followed. On 12 January 2026, Kazeem Oyewole, a former NURTW unit chairman, was killed in Osogbo under similar circumstances. Independent investigations have linked more than 100 political killings in Osun State to the past two decades, with few resulting in conviction, a pattern of impunity that risks emboldening further violence.
The Local Government Secretariat Dispute	The February 2025 violence that followed the Court of Appeal reinstatement produced the deadliest episode of the cycle. In Ikire, Irewole LGA, the reinstated chairman Remi Abass was shot and killed while attempting to enter the secretariat. Coordinated attacks that day spanned Irewole, Boriye, Ola Oluwa, and Ilesa West; the merged incident dataset attributes at least 12 deaths and 80 injuries to this single episode. Four persons have been arraigned; none has been convicted.	Between 19 and 21 June 2026, rival political groups again attempted to resume duties at multiple secretariats. PDP- and Accord-aligned officials sought to assume office in Olorunda, Ifelodun, Ede North, Ede South, Iwo, Ila, and Ifedayo, while APC-aligned officials retained control in Boriye, Obokun, Oriade, and Ilesa East. Police intervention in Olorunda prevented violence, though residents noted the confrontation resembled conditions preceding the February 2025 violence. The underlying legal dispute remains before the Court of Appeal and constitutes an active structural fault line independent of campaign activity.

Security Sector Neutrality	Recurring allegations of political bias involving security agencies have become a source of tension, regardless of whether individual allegations are substantiated. Following the 22 June 2026 Ilobu shooting, Governor Adeleke publicly alleged that police failed to intervene and had protected reinstated APC officials; the victim's father made a similar allegation. The APC rejected these claims as premature, and no independent investigation had confirmed either account as of reporting.	Concerns also extend to the Osun Amotekun Corps, the state-funded regional security outfit. On 30 September 2025, a dispute over stolen farm produce and seized firearms led to a violent confrontation in Akinlalu, Ife North. Community accounts and a subsequent police investigation alleged that Amotekun operatives fired on unarmed residents, resulting in at least three deaths, with some community sources reporting four, and 9 to 14 injuries. More than 20 Amotekun personnel were arrested, and operational bases were temporarily sealed. Perceptions of bias, whether or not ultimately substantiated, may reduce public confidence in election security arrangements and increase the likelihood of confrontation.
Misinformation and Disinformation	False and manipulated narratives have disrupted public order independently of physical violence.	For instance, on 2 June 2026, a false rumour that armed bandits had abducted a schoolgirl in Faafe Village spread across six LGAs, prompting school closures in at least five before officials clarified that no abduction had occurred. On 6 February 2026, social media posts falsely alleged that underage students had been registered as voters at an INEC office in Ede North; prompt clarification by the Resident Electoral Commissioner prevented escalation. Five further disinformation incidents were recorded during the monitoring period, including a fabricated government staff audit report and fabricated WhatsApp “consensus lists” purporting to represent intra-party endorsements. These cases indicate that rapid, transparent institutional communication can substantially limit the disruptive effect of false information.

6.9 Role of Security Agencies and Stakeholder Responses

Security agencies operating under the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) are positioned to concentrate deployment in LGAs classified as Critical or High risk. Table 11 summarises the priority response associated with each stakeholder group.

Table 11: Stakeholder Priority Responses

Stakeholder	Priority Response
INEC	Ensure timely deployment and strengthen transparency and results management.
Security Agencies	Increase deployment in hotspot LGAs, secure campaign activities, and remain neutral.
Political Parties and Candidates	Reject political violence, intimidation, misinformation, and inflammatory rhetoric.
Media Organisations	Promote responsible reporting and actively counter misinformation.
Civil Society and Election Observers	Strengthen early warning, verification, and incident monitoring.
Citizens and Community Leaders	Reject violence, report incidents promptly, and encourage peaceful participation.

The data presented in this section indicate that recorded incidents are concentrated by threat category, with cult-related violence accounting for the largest share of ERV incidents, and by geography, with a limited number of LGAs accounting for a disproportionate share of recorded incidents and casualties. Electoral offences other than direct violence, including pre-election violence, political intimidation, and misinformation, account for a substantial share of EOTS records during the reporting period.

7.0 Citizens, Media, and Civic Space in Osun State

This section provides an in-depth analysis of citizen participation and the media landscape in Osun State, with a focus on the upcoming 2026 gubernatorial election. It builds on the previous analysis of political elites and electoral trends to examine the grassroots dynamics that shape electoral outcomes and democratic health in the "State of the Living Spring."

7.1 Citizen Participation

Citizen engagement in Osun is characterised by a paradox: a politically aware electorate with a strong sense of the Omoluabi ethos, yet one that has experienced fluctuating voter turnout and persistent challenges of electoral manipulation. The state's identity as a "fountain of knowledge" with high literacy rates does not automatically translate into robust democratic participation.

Voter turnout trends and voter apathy

The prospect of a three-way contest in 2026, complicated by a gubernatorial defection and active pre-election litigation, risks deepening voter disillusionment among segments of the population who perceive the process as predetermined by elite manoeuvring rather than genuine popular choice. This concern is amplified by the persistent, unresolved allegations of voter importation and voter registration fraud, which directly attack the foundational integrity of the electoral register.

Table 12: Stakeholder Priority Responses

Metrics	2014	2018	2022
Registered Voters	1,407,222	1,682,495	1,955,657
PVCs Collected	992,559	1,246,915	1,518,303
Accredited Voters	747,798	769,573	827,221
Valid Votes	696,329	696,007	778,398
Rejected Votes	51,469	73,566	17,232
Total Votes Cast	747,798	769,573	804,450
Percentage Turnout	53.14%	45.74%	42.37%

This apathy is driven by several interconnected factors:

Systemic Distrust: A pervasive lack of confidence in the electoral process and the integrity of its outcomes often deters citizen participation. Many voters express concerns regarding the accurate counting of their votes and the overall impact their participation have on governance.

Perceived Elite Disconnect: A significant number of citizens perceive that political elites are unresponsive to their needs. The cyclical exchange of power between the APC and PDP has not, in the eyes of many voters, resulted in meaningful improvements in public welfare. This disconnect has fostered a sense of cynicism among the electorate.

Socio-Economic Pressures: For a considerable portion of the population experiencing economic challenges, the demands of daily survival take precedence over electoral engagement. The time commitment and potential costs associated with voting are often viewed as burdensome, with uncertain benefits.

Normalisation of Electoral Malpractice: The widespread occurrence of vote-buying has commodified the electoral process, transforming the act of voting from a civic duty into a transactional event. This shift erodes the intrinsic value of voting for many individuals.

The decline in voter turnout carries significant implications, including diminished legitimacy of the electoral mandate and an increased influence of smaller, well-financed, and organised interest groups. These groups tend to mobilise voters through patronage rather than substantive policy engagement.

Barriers Faced by Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

The broader Nigerian context and Osun-specific initiatives reveal significant dynamics:

Women: Women face structural barriers in party politics, including a lack of financial backing, patriarchal cultural norms, and intimidation. However, the APC has introduced affirmative action in its fee structure: female aspirants are required to purchase only the Expression of Interest Form, while the Nomination Form (₦40 million) is free. This concession recognises the financial barriers women face and seeks to encourage greater female participation in the political process.

Youth: Youth constitute a significant demographic whose engagement is critical. Groups like the Osun East Youth for Good Governance (OEYGG) have demonstrated active youth political engagement, endorsed candidates, and called for "fresh, credible, and people-oriented" leadership. The APC has similarly provided a 50% discount on Nomination Forms for youth aspirants aged between 25 and 40 years, acknowledging the need to lower barriers for younger candidates. However, youth still face marginalisation due to political gatekeeping by older elites and the high costs of political participation beyond official fees.

Persons with Disabilities: Analysis of all the political parties shows that only the APC made the most significant concession for PWDs: they are required to purchase only the Expression of Interest Form, while the Nomination Form is completely free^[30]. This represents formal recognition of the need to remove financial barriers for PWD aspirants. However, beyond candidate fees, PWDs encounter physical accessibility challenges at polling units, a lack of tailored voter education, and societal stigma. INEC's provisions for assisted voting must be effectively implemented at the grassroots level.

Vote Buying and Clientelism

Vote-buying represents one of the most persistent threats to electoral integrity in Osun, and INEC has been unequivocal in its warnings against the practice.

a) Mechanism and Impact: Vote-buying typically involves the direct exchange of money, food items, or other material goods for votes on election day. Party agents and local "gatekeepers" facilitate these transactions at the polling unit level. This practice fundamentally distorts voter choice, undermines electoral integrity, and entrenches a cycle of patronage, making elected officials accountable to their financiers and brokers rather than to the general electorate.

b) Electoral Act 2026 Provisions: The newly enacted Electoral Act 2026 strengthens penalties for vote-buying. Conviction for vote-buying or result manipulation carries up to two years' imprisonment, with fines now reaching up to ₦5 million. The Act also increases penalties for PVC-related offences, maintaining a strict two-year imprisonment term for the illegal buying or selling of Permanent Voter Cards.

^[30]—Legit.ng. (2025, December 6). APC releases date for primary election in Osun State, fixes N50 million for governorship form. <https://www.legit.ng/politics/1677967-apc-releases-date-primary-election-osun-state-fixes-n50-million-governorship-form/>

c) INEC's Position: The Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr Mutiu Agboke, has repeatedly warned against vote-buying, describing it as a "cancerworm" that undermines democratic choice^{[31] [32]}. He stated: "We will continue to campaign against the cancerworm of trying to buy the minds of the people... even if you have the money, people still believe they can deploy violence to gain an advantage". Agboke has appealed directly to citizens' conscience, urging them to resist financial inducements: "When they bring money, tell them you don't need their money to vote. Your conscience should determine the direction of your vote". This appeal acknowledges the economic pressures that make citizens vulnerable to vote-buying while urging a normative commitment to democratic integrity.

7.2 Media and Information Environment

The media in Osun State plays a dual role: as a platform for political engagement and democratic accountability, and as a potential vector for misinformation and partisan propaganda. The regulatory environment and stakeholder commitments are being tested as the 2026 election approaches.

Traditional Media Ownership and Bias

The media ecosystem for the Osun governorship election operates within a dual-layered and high-risk environment. Traditional media, represented by major national newspapers including The Punch, Daily Post, and The Vanguard, have been the primary source for incident verification, collectively accounting for over 85% of the incidents recorded by EOTS. However, these outlets have periodically published official statements and political allegations without independent verification.

Social Media, Disinformation, and Hate Speech

Social media has served as both a tool for citizen journalism and a vector for coordinated disinformation in the monitoring period. The EOTS dataset recorded five formal disinformation incidents, including the spread of a fake staff audit report targeting the Osun State government, the circulation of WhatsApp "consensus lists" purporting to represent intra-APC endorsements, and the viral dissemination of fabricated content.

A critical vulnerability is the eroding boundary between traditional and social media. Unverified claims originating on social platforms are increasingly reported by mainstream outlets, granting harmful narratives a false cloak of legitimacy. This cycle, combined with the proliferation of untrained news bloggers and regional online portals, makes it increasingly difficult for voters to distinguish credible journalism from manipulation.

Regulatory Oversight and Enforcement

The regulatory framework involves multiple actors with mixed effectiveness. INEC, as the electoral umpire, has a mandate to ensure peaceful campaigns and has issued warnings against hate speech and misinformation. However, its enforcement powers during the campaign phase are often perceived as weak. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) regulates broadcast media, but enforcement can be inconsistent.

Provocative Broadcasting as a Violence Trigger

Stakeholder validation forums identified a specific information disorder mechanism - the production and broadcast of inflammatory radio jingles. Unlike social media disinformation, these jingles are professionally produced, paid for by political actors, and aired on licensed broadcast stations. Stakeholders noted that even when one station rejects a provocative jingle, another may accept it due to financial pressures. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has regulatory authority over broadcast content, but enforcement during election periods has historically been inconsistent. The absence of NBC representation in stakeholder engagement forums was identified as a critical gap requiring immediate remediation.

^[31]—[1] New National Star. (2025, August 3). Osun 2026: INEC reads riot against vote buying, violence. <https://newnationalstar.com/osun-2026-inec-reads-riot-against-vote-buying-violence/>

^[32]—CityMirrorNews. (2025, August 3). INEC warns against vote buying, violence ahead of 2026 Osun polls. <https://citymirrornews.com/news/2025/03/inec-warns-against-vote-buying-violence-ahead-of-2026-osun-polls/>

8.0 External Influences and International Actors

The 2026 Osun State governorship election is not just a local contest but a significant opportunity to assess Nigeria's democratic resilience and the impact of international support mechanisms. As the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) views the Osun election as a critical test ahead of the 2027 Nigerian general election, it raises an important question: Do external actors, including donor agencies and election observation missions, promote genuine democratic reform, or do they inadvertently legitimise flawed electoral processes?

8.1 Donor Priorities and Diplomatic Engagement

International donor engagement in Nigerian elections has traditionally focused on providing technical assistance and preventing conflicts. However, its impact on the inherently political aspects of contests, such as the Osun 2026 elections, is often limited and indirect. While specific donor agendas for this election cycle are not detailed in the available sources, the established trend includes funding for voter education, logistical support for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and initiatives aimed at fostering peace.

The current intergovernmental environment, marked by credible allegations of federal interference in state affairs, presents a serious political crisis that technical assistance alone cannot resolve. Donor-funded projects usually emphasise procedural correctness, ensuring functional polling units, timely result transmission, and peaceful conduct. However, these projects are often ill-equipped to address politically motivated manipulation of institutions.

8.2 Election Observation Missions: Between Access and Authority

Election Observation Missions (EOMs) represent the most visible form of international engagement, but their effectiveness is constrained by their mandate, timing, and the political environment they enter. As evidenced by ECOWAS's preparatory activities for other member states, observation missions involve extensive pre-election assessments, consultations with national institutions, and the deployment of short- and long-term observers.^[33]

Their work is grounded in regional protocols, such as the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. However, a mission's ability to affect core issues is limited if key problems are "locked in" before their deployment. For Osun 2026, the critical juncture may be the pre-election period, where allegations of voter importation and federal interference are already shaping the electoral field.

8.3 Regional and International Norms

Regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have established strong frameworks for democratic governance, including the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which emphasises the rule of law and transparent elections. However, applying these norms to specific cases like Osun 2026 highlights limitations. The crisis involves not a classic coup but rather a manipulation of the electoral process within the legal system. While ECOWAS and AU norms are effective against overt constitutional violations, they struggle to address democratic erosion occurring through legal means.

^[33] ECOWAS (2001). "Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance." Available at: <https://www.eisa.org/pdf/ecowas2001protocol.pdf>

9.0 Political Economy of Elections

This section examines the economic underpinnings of electoral politics in Osun State, analysing how financial power, state resources, and material incentives shape political competition and outcomes. This analysis is crucial for understanding the barriers to entry for new candidates, the persistence of elite networks, and the deeply embedded transactional nature of politics in the state.

9.1 The Prohibitive Cost of Running for Office

The financial barrier to becoming a gubernatorial candidate in Osun is extremely high, effectively restricting participation to the wealthy or those with access to substantial patronage networks. This begins with the official fees set by political parties. For the 2026 election cycle, major parties set substantial costs for the governorship Expression of Interest and Nomination forms. These official fees are only the beginning, candidates incur massive expenses for campaigning, media, logistics, security, and mobilising supporters across the state's 30 Local Government Areas.

9.2 Monetisation of Party and Government Structures

The high cost of politics is sustained by a deeply monetised political structure, where financial contributions are exchanged for influence and future access. Key strategies include building extensive patronage networks, the use of state apparatus by incumbents to bolster electoral appeal, and the alleged deployment of federal financial instruments as campaign tools.

The alleged withholding of statutory LGA allocations and their redirection through APC-controlled council structures represents a significant escalation of the monetisation of political competition beyond the conventional private-sector patronage model. This practice, if sustained, establishes a precedent in which control of federal fiscal levers can be weaponised as a direct campaign tool against an incumbent state government.

9.3 Vote Trading as a Livelihood Strategy

At the grassroots level, the election economy manifests as direct market exchange between candidates and an economically vulnerable electorate. The INEC conviction of vote-buying offenders from the 2023 Osun election cycle confirms that this practice is both systematic and documented. For many voters, the immediate, guaranteed material benefit of vote-trading outweighs the abstract future benefit of accountable governance, turning voting into a short-term survival strategy that decouples electoral choice from accountability.

9.4 Elections as Critical Access Points to State Resources

The preceding analysis of political, security, and social dynamics identifies four interconnected high-priority risk clusters for the 2026 Osun State gubernatorial election. Unlike the Ekiti context, where risks were primarily criminal and structural, Osun's threat environment is distinguished by organised political violence with documented perpetrator networks, a charged federal-state institutional conflict, and a history of impunity that risks emboldening further violence as the election approaches.

10.0 Risk, Scenario, and Stakeholder Mapping

The preceding analysis of political, security, and social dynamics identifies four interconnected high-priority risk clusters for the 2026 Osun State gubernatorial election. Unlike the Ekiti context, where risks were primarily criminal and structural, Osun's threat environment is distinguished by organised political violence with documented perpetrator networks, a charged federal-state institutional conflict, and a history of impunity that risks emboldening further violence as the election approaches.

10.1 Risk Analysis

Table 13: Risk Analysis

Risk Category	Primary Drivers & Evidence	Potential Impact on Electoral Process
Political Violence & Security Risk (HIGH)	1. Organised Political Violence: The February 17, 2025, coordinated attacks across Irewole, Boripe, Olaoluwa, and Ilesa West LGAs - plus a statewide mobilisation record - resulted in at least 12 confirmed deaths and 80 injured persons. The simultaneous, networked nature of the attacks across four LGAs in a single day confirms the existence of externally mobilised armed groups operating at the direction of political actors. 2. Unresolved Political Killings: Over 100 victims of political killings have been documented over two decades, with no successful prosecutions of principal perpetrators. Recent cases include the November 2025 assassination of NURTW Chairman Adeboye Ademoroti in Ilesa East and the January 2026 killing of former NURTW chairman Kazeem Oyewole in Osogbo.	Physical harm to citizens, candidates, and officials; targeted assassination of electoral stakeholders (party agents, INEC ad hoc staff, transport union leaders); disruption of voting and collation in affected LGAs; potential suspension of polls in high-risk areas; creation of "no-go" zones that suppress turnout; emboldening of perpetrators through demonstrated impunity.

	3. Imported Political Violence: Transport unions and commercial motorcycle operators remain vulnerable to exploitation as vectors for imported thugs, a risk exacerbated by the destabilisation of transport sector leadership through assassinations. 4. Ijeshaland Volatility: The concentration of the most lethal political violence in Ijeshaland (Ilesa West/East, Obokun, Oriade) suggests that this sub-region's unique political identity constitutes a distinct risk factor requiring targeted intervention.	
Institutional & Legitimacy Risk (HIGH)	1. Federal-State Institutional Conflict: Documented allegations of federal security agency weaponisation against the Osun state government, including: - Police deployed to harass PDP/Accord, appointees - Federal financial instruments allegedly used to extend illegal APC LGA tenures through fund withholding - Alleged pressure on INEC officials regarding voter registration and electoral administration 2. INEC Under Pressure: The Commission faces an unprecedented off-cycle election burden (FCT, Ekiti, and Osun in rapid succession). The controversial "primacy of manual forms" provision (Section 60(3) of the Electoral Act 2026) creates a potential avenue for result manipulation disputes.	Erosion of public trust in the impartiality of electoral administration; perception that the process is "rigged" before voting begins; withdrawal of opposition parties from constructive engagement; reduced voter turnout among supporters of excluded parties; post-election litigation focused on institutional bias rather than procedural irregularities; international observer criticism that delegitimises the outcome.

	3. Voter Registration Controversies: ADC allegations of irregular voter registration spikes in specific LGAs, if unaddressed, could undermine confidence in the electoral register. 4. PDP/LP Exclusion: The absence of the PDP and Labour Party from the ballot-parties that collectively commanded significant voter loyalty in 2022-creates a representation deficit that may suppress turnout among their supporters and fuel legitimacy challenges.	
Fragmentation & Elite Defection Risk (MEDIUM-HIGH)	1. Transformed Party Landscape: Governor Adeleke's December 2025 defection from PDP to Accord fractured the ruling coalition, leaving PDP structures in disarray while creating internal fissures within Accord (parallel primary disputes). 2. Aregbesola-Oyetola Rift: The long-simmering factional divide within Osun APC culminated in Aregbesola's move to ADC, formalising a split that could affect vote distribution in APC-leaning areas. 3. Unclear Loyalty of PDP Structures: PDP Southwest spokesman Sanya Atofarati's clarification that the party is "not in any pact" with Accord leaves the loyalty of grassroots PDP mobilisers uncertain-they may work for Adeleke, vote ADC, or abstain entirely.	Fragmented opposition vote that benefits the most organised party; voter confusion over which candidates represent their preferred political tradition; post-election disputes fueled by intra-party grievances spilling into the public domain; reduced mobilisation capacity if grassroots agents disengage due to elite realignments they do not understand or support.

	4. Pre-Election Litigation Risks: Ongoing legal challenges to candidate nominations and party primaries could disrupt campaign cohesion or, in extreme cases, alter the candidate field close to the election.	
Criminal Insecurity & Logistical Risk (MEDIUM)	1. Ambient Criminal Violence: Cultism, banditry, and kidnapping persist as structural threats independent of the electoral cycle. LGAs affected: Ife North (banditry, 5 deaths), Obokun (gunmen attacks, 6 deaths), Ife Central (cultism, 4 deaths, 3 injured), Ifedayo (kidnapping). 2. Transport Network Vulnerability: The assassination of transport union leaders has disrupted informal accountability structures within the sector, making it more difficult to ensure the secure movement of election materials and personnel. 3. Rural Corridor Exposure: LGAs with high kidnapping exposure (Ifedayo, Obokun, Atakumosa East) pose direct challenges to INEC's deployment and retrieval plans for ad hoc staff and materials.	Voter turnout suppression in high-crime LGAs, particularly among women and the elderly; logistical delays or cancellations in areas where security cannot be guaranteed; increased costs of election administration due to heightened security requirements; potential for criminal violence to be opportunistically branded as "political" to create maximum disruption.

10.2 Scenario Building

Based on the interaction of the risks identified above, three plausible scenarios are outlined for the electoral period and the immediate aftermath. These scenarios are anchored in the priority risks from the analysis, serving as practical tools for developing targeted mitigating interventions and early-warning checklists.

Table 14: Scenario Analysis

Scenario	Description & Key Characteristics	Triggers & Early Warning
Scenario A: Managed Instability with Contested Outcome (MOST LIKELY)	i. Elections proceed across all 30 LGAs, but with localised violence disruptions in high-risk areas: Ilesa West/East, Irewole, Boriye, and Obokun. Security forces contain the worst violence but cannot prevent isolated attacks, intimidation, or targeted assassinations. ii. Turnout is spatially uneven: suppressed in Ijeshaland (25-30% range) but approaches historical averages (40-45%) in Osun West and safer parts of Osun Central. Statewide turnout settles at 35-38%-below 2022 levels but sufficient to claim a mandate. iii. Federal-state institutional conflict persists but does not escalate to the point of election-day disruption. Security agencies maintain a visibly neutral posture on polling day, though opposition parties continue to allege pre-election bias. iv. Results are technically credible (BVAS accreditation works in most units; IReV uploads proceed) but heavily contested in courts by losers citing: (a) federal-level institutional interference, (b) unresolved voter registration irregularities, and (c) suppression of turnout through violence in their strongholds.	i. Political Violence Triggers: Fresh assassination of a high-profile political actor (candidate, party chair, transport union leader) in Ijeshaland within 60 days of the poll. Verified intelligence of imported thug deployment along Oyo/Ondo/Kwara border corridors. ii. Institutional Conflict Triggers: Public confirmation that federal LGA funds remain withheld through APC-controlled structures. Credible allegations of security agency partisanship documented by civil society observers. INEC reports of coordinated BVAS malfunction in opposition-leaning wards. iii. Voter Behaviour Indicators: ADC releases credible internal polling showing their vote share collapsing from 8% to below 5% as voters consolidate around the two leading contenders. PDP grassroots structures visibly disengaged from Accord campaign activities.

	v. Outcome: A legally valid but politically disputed result, deepening public cynicism and testing judicial legitimacy amid claims of an "institutionally assisted" victory. The two-decade pattern of unresolved political killings remains unbroken, emboldening perpetrators for future cycles.	
Scenario B: Institutional Unravelling & Legitimacy Crisis (HIGHER RISK)	i. Federal-state conflict escalates dramatically in the final weeks before the election. Actions may include: - Large-scale security force deployments are perceived as partisan - Formal federal directive on LGA fund disbursement that paralyses state government operations - INEC publicly acknowledges "irregularities" in the voter register but fails to resolve them before polling day ii. Voter apathy compounds with fear: Turnout collapses below 30% statewide, falling to 15-20% in Ijeshaland and parts of Osun Central where violence risk is highest. The election is widely perceived as a "hollow ritual" whose outcome was predetermined by institutional manipulation. iii. Key opposition party (ADC or Accord factions) withdraws from the process pre-election, declaring the environment "not conducive for free and fair elections" and urging supporters to boycott. This self-fulfilling prophecy suppresses turnout among their base and provides post-election justification for rejection.	i. Escalated Institutional Conflict: Formal statement from a federal agency (Police, AGF, or Finance Ministry) that directly challenges the Osun State government's authority over election security or logistics. Verified documentation of widespread INEC official partisanship. ii. Opposition Withdrawal Indicators: ADC or Accord faction publicly releases a "litany of grievances" cataloguing alleged institutional bias and signals a possible boycott. Key traditional rulers publicly distance themselves from the process, citing "irreconcilable differences" with INEC or security agencies. iii. Security Deterioration: A second high-profile political assassination within 30 days-particularly if targeted at a candidate or INEC official. Coordinated attacks on INEC facilities in multiple LGAs within 24 hours, replicating the February 17, 2025 pattern.

	iv. Ambient criminal violence intensifies as perpetrators perceive weakened state capacity and increased impunity. Kidnapping spikes along rural corridors, further disrupting INEC logistics. v. Outcome: A severe crisis of democratic legitimacy for the elected government. International observers issue highly critical statements questioning the foundational fairness of the process. Litigation focuses not on election-day irregularities but on the pre-election environment-a harder case to prove in court, increasing the risk of extrajudicial protests and instability.	
Scenario C: Violent Unravelling & Constitutional Crisis (WORST-CASE)	i. Coordinated political violence erupts in the pattern of February 17, 2025, but on a larger scale and closer to election day. Armed groups simultaneously attack: - INEC facilities in 3-5 LGAs, destroying materials - Campaign convoys of leading candidates - Collation centres in Ilesa West, Irewole, and Osogbo ii. A high-profile assassination occurs within 72 hours of the poll-targeting a governorship candidate, a resident electoral commissioner, or a senior security commander. The assassination triggers revenge attacks and widespread civil unrest.	i. Pre-Election Violence Escalation: Credible intelligence of large-scale arms importation into Ijeshaland and the Irewole corridor. Verified reports of "training camps" for political thugs operating across state borders. Public threats by political actors suggest they will not accept defeat. ii. Institutional Collapse Indicators: INEC publicly states it cannot guarantee safe elections in specific LGAs but proceeds without adequate mitigation. Security commanders openly contradict each other on operational command and control.

	iii. Security forces respond with lethal force, leading to civilian casualties and further escalating violence. The military is deployed to restore order, creating a heavily militarised election environment. iv. Voting is suspended or indefinitely postponed in multiple LGAs across two or more senatorial districts. INEC faces the impossible choice of proceeding with a partial election (constitutionally invalid) or declaring a national emergency. v. Outcome: A constitutional and security crisis requiring extraordinary federal intervention. The election is annulled, a caretaker arrangement is imposed, and Osun enters a protracted period of political instability. The precedent for future Nigerian elections is catastrophic demonstrating that organised political violence can successfully disrupt democratic processes.	iii. Assassination Trigger: Targeted killing of a first-tier political figure (governorship candidate, former governor, presiding INEC official) within 96 hours of the poll. The killing is video-recorded and circulated to maximise psychological impact. iv. Coordinated Infrastructure Attacks: Simultaneous attacks on INEC facilities in multiple LGAs, confirmed through intelligence to have been planned by a networked organisation with political backing-not spontaneous mob action.
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10.3 Stakeholder Mapping

The NPC is the anchor for electoral peace in Osun. Its mandate is to facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and uphold the moral commitments of the Peace Accord. Given Osun's unique risk profile-organised political violence, federal-state institutional conflict, and a two-decade history of impunity-the NPC's role as a neutral, respected convener with national moral authority is critical for fostering trust among parties and encouraging commitments to non-violence from elites and their supporters. The NPC's ability to engage simultaneously with federal actors (APC national leadership, security commanders) and state actors (Governor Adeleke, Accord Party leadership) positions it as the only institution capable of bridging the intergovernmental divide.

High Influence, High Interest

These stakeholders are central to the election's execution and outcome in Osun.

Table 15: High Influence, High Interest

Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Primary Role & Current Context
INEC (Osun State Office)	Very High	Very High	Election administration. Under intense pressure to deliver a credible off-cycle election while managing: (a) the legacy of the controversial "primacy of manual forms" provision, (b) unresolved voter registration allegations, and (c) the logistical challenge of deploying to high-risk LGAs (Irewole, Ilesa West, Obokun, Ife North) where violence and kidnapping threaten staff safety.
Security Agencies (Osun State Command)	Very High	Very High	Law and order enforcement. Must execute an intelligence-led, proactive deployment strategy focused on hotspot LGAs while navigating the charged federal-state environment. Any perception of partisan alignment-particularly the documented pattern of federal security agencies acting against state government interests-would critically undermine public trust and could directly trigger violent scenarios.
Political Parties & Candidates (Accord, APC, ADC)	Very High	Very High	Contesting elections. Their internal discipline, control over supporters, and resistance to leveraging organised violence for electoral advantage are the primary determinants of peace or conflict. Key dynamics: (a) APC's ability to distance itself from alleged federal-level manipulation, (b) Accord's management of PDP legacy structures and internal fissures, (c) ADC's capacity to control supporters' expectations in a likely third-place finish.
Osun State Government	High	Very High	Controlling state resources and security policy under Governor Adeleke. Its perceived neutrality in election administration is critical, though its status as a direct contestant (through the Accord Party) creates inherent tensions. Any documented use of state apparatus for partisan advantage would dramatically increase credibility and violence risks.

Federal Government of Nigeria	High	High	Federal oversight, security command, and fiscal policy. The alleged weaponisation of security agencies and financial instruments against the Osun State government constitutes the single most significant external threat to electoral integrity. The Federal Government's conduct-both actual and perceived-will shape opposition parties' willingness to accept outcomes.
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High Influence, Lower Direct Interest

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

Table 16: High Influence, Lower Direct Interest

Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Primary Role & Current Context
Judiciary (Election Petition Tribunals)	High	Medium	Electoral dispute resolution. Given the high likelihood of post-election litigation and Osun's history of prolonged legal battles (2007, 2018, 2022), the speed and perceived impartiality of judicial processes are critical for resolving conflicts and legitimising outcomes. The judiciary's ability to handle cases alleging pre-election institutional interference (beyond standard polling day irregularities) will be tested.
Traditional Rulers	High (locally)	High	Community mobilisation and conflict mediation. Hold significant moral sway within their domains. Can be powerful advocates for peace and turnout, or, if co-opted, can legitimise intimidation and endorse violence. In Ijeshaland, where political violence is most concentrated, traditional institutions will be critical for de-escalation and community reassurance.
Media Organisations (Local & National)	High	Medium	Information shaping. Must combat disinformation, verify reports of violence, and avoid becoming instruments for political incitement. The eroding boundary between traditional and social media-where unverified claims originating online are amplified by mainstream outlets-is a critical vulnerability requiring proactive media management.

Lower Influence, High Interest

These groups are the electorate and the most affected communities.

Table 17: Lower Influence, High Interest

Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Primary Role & Current Context
Voters (General Population)	Medium (Collectively)	Very High	Legitimising the outcome. Their participation confers a democratic mandate. Overcoming fear of violence (particularly in Ijeshaland and high-risk Osun Central LGAs), resisting vote-buying, and navigating disinformation are their primary challenges. The 360,794 uncollected PVCs represent a significant reservoir of potential voters if effectively mobilised.
Youth and Student Groups	Low-Medium	High	Mobilising peers. Can be a force for positive civic engagement or, if marginalised or weaponised, a primary source of election-day unrest and violence. The documented pattern of unemployed youth being recruited as political thugs requires targeted engagement and alternative livelihood messaging.
Transport Unions (NURTW, RTEAN)	Medium	High	Logistics and mobilisation. Control the transport networks essential for campaign movements and election-day logistics. The November 2025 assassination of the NURTW chairman and the destabilisation of transport sector leadership have disrupted informal accountability structures, making the sector more vulnerable to exploitation by political actors seeking to import thugs.
Civil Society Organisations & Election Observers	Medium	High	Independent monitoring and advocacy. Essential for public oversight, documenting incidents, and providing trusted alternative information. Their presence in high-risk LGAs is critical for deterring the worst abuses and building public confidence.
Business Community & Market Associations	Low-Medium	High	Economic stability. Their primary interest is uninterrupted commerce. They can be influential advocates for peace to prevent disruptions that would harm trade, particularly in Osogbo, Ife, and Ilesa, commercial hubs.

10.4 Risk Interaction and Escalation Pathways

A critical insight from the Osun analysis is that the four risk clusters are not isolated but mutually reinforcing. Understanding their interaction is essential for effective intervention:

11.0 Implications for Programming and Engagement

The analysis of this report reveals an electoral environment in Osun State characterised by a charged inter-governmental conflict, a monetised political economy, pervasive ambient insecurity, and a pre-election history of organised political violence. Effective programming must be pragmatic, targeted, and adaptive to these specific realities. The following recommendations offer strategic entry points for The Kukah Centre through the support from the EU-SDGN program and other stakeholders, grounded in a "Do-No-Harm" framework and human rights principles.

11.1 Strategic Entry Points and Programmatic Actions

To address the risks stemming from the Governor's defection-driven coalition fracture, active pre-election litigation, and potential post-election disputes, formal channels for dialogue among contestants are essential. A sustained Osun Inter-Party Dialogue Platform should be convened under the moral authority of the NPC, moving beyond a one-off peace accord signing to facilitate meetings where parties can agree on codes of conduct, address logistical grievances with INEC, and establish a joint incident reporting mechanism.

1.
**Inter-Party
Dialogue
Platform to
Prevent Elite-
Triggered
Crises**

2.
**Youth-Led
Peace
Campaigns
to Counter
Manipulation and**

To disrupt the documented cycle in which unemployed youth are weaponised as political thugs and targeted by disinformation, youth agency must be harnessed for peace. Youth-Led Peace Campaigns that leverage peer-to-peer influence should be supported, including training youth ambassadors in conflict-sensitive reporting and supporting them to create digital content (short videos, podcasts) that promotes issue-based voting.

To combat the documented disinformation campaigns and hate speech that inflame tensions, credible local information channels must be amplified. Strategic media partnerships for peace messaging should be forged, involving the curation of audio jingles, talk show scripts, and fact-check alerts for local radio stations, and the training of community journalists on conflict-sensitive election reporting.

3.
**Media
Partnerships
for Peace
Messaging**

4.
**Collaboration
with
Traditional
Institutions
to Resolve
Structural
Grievances**

To address the underlying drivers of conflict in hotspot areas, the enduring authority of traditional institutions must be engaged. Formal collaboration with traditional councils should be initiated to support mediation of latent political and land disputes in Ijesaland ahead of the election period, lead community dialogues on the dangers of political violence, and deploy the moral authority of traditional leaders through royal pronouncements against vote-buying and political thuggery.

11.2 Do-No-Harm Considerations

1. Securitising Dialogue:

Maintain the Inter-Party Platform as a civil society-convened space, not a state security briefing, to preserve its neutrality and encourage candid dialogue.

2. Unintended Exclusion:

In partnering with traditional institutions, consciously design parallel avenues for women and youth to voice concerns, ensuring these structures do not reinforce existing patriarchal power imbalances.

3. Federal-State Tensions:

Programmatic interventions must be perceived as genuinely neutral in the context of the documented federal-state conflict. All platforms must be equally accessible to APC federal actors and Accord/PDP state actors.

11.3 Adaptive Strategies for Shifting Conditions

1. Pre-Election Focus (Now – August 14, 2026):

Prioritise Inter-Party Dialogue and Traditional Institution collaboration to prevent violence and build trust. Monitor and respond to escalating non-physical threats (disinformation, institutional harassment).

2. Election Day &

Immediate Post-Election:

Activate all Media Partnerships and Youth Campaigns for real-time rumour management and peace messaging. Civil society observers and media partners shift to active monitoring and incident reporting. Monitor for coordinated violence consistent with the February 17, 2025, pattern.

3. Post-Election Litigation

Period: Sustain the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform to manage grievances and prevent protests from escalating, while Media Partnerships focus on accurate information regarding tribunal processes and court timelines.

11.4 Human Rights Considerations

1. Amplify Marginalised

Voices: Ensure youth campaigns and media content actively include and represent women, PWDs, and youth, particularly in the communities most exposed to political violence.

2. Protect Civic Space:

Monitor and document any intimidation of civil society members or media partners, framing such actions as violations of the fundamental right to participate in public affairs.

3. Promote Electoral Justice:

Use these platforms to advocate for the rights of voters to a free, fair, and safe process, positioning electoral integrity as a fundamental human rights issue and applying particular scrutiny to federal-level institutional interference.

11.5 Clear Implications for Programme Design

Table 18: Implications for Programme Design

Programme Area	Integrated Action
Election Security & Early Warning	A community-oriented early warning mechanism, coordinated through the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform and civil society observers, is intended to function in the most vulnerable LGAs. Validated, local incident reports are transmitted to a central hub, which can subsequently provide security agencies (ICCES) with targeted, actionable intelligence before polling day.
Civic Engagement Initiatives	Shift away from standard voter education. Initiatives led by youth and collaborations with media should spread specific messages and evaluate the performance of current officials, fostering strategic, issue-focused involvement to combat both vote buying and voter apathy.
Policy Dialogue & Advocacy	Utilise the evidence and connections developed through the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform and collaboration with Traditional Institutions to push for explicit policy reforms that tackle the fundamental causes of conflict, such as transparent CVR, disbursement of LGA funds, and impartiality of security agencies.
Party Reform Programmes	The Inter-Party Dialogue Platform acts as an accessible way to initiate party reform. Conversations about codes of conduct can lead to the establishment of technical working groups focused on transparent campaign financing, democratic primaries, and protocols for peaceful defection, fostering trust for more profound collaboration.

12.0 Strategic Recommendations for the National Peace Committee (NPC)

As the foremost moral authority on electoral conflict resolution in Nigeria, the National Peace Committee (NPC) occupies a unique position to shape the trajectory of the 2026 Osun gubernatorial election. Drawing on the security, political economy, and stakeholder analyses presented in this report, the following strategic recommendations are designed to guide NPC's engagement across the electoral cycle. These recommendations prioritise early intervention, elite management, and post-election stability, recognising that in Osun's volatile political environment, peace is not secured on election day alone but must be cultivated before and sustained after.

12.1 Pre-Election

- Convene pre-primary engagement with political parties and aspirants to secure commitments to violence-free primaries and acceptance of outcomes.
- Facilitate a sustained Inter-Party Dialogue Platform that meets regularly to address logistical grievances, agree on codes of conduct, and establish joint reporting mechanisms for intimidation.
- Convene dedicated sessions with traditional rulers and religious leaders to secure public commitments to neutrality and equip them with conflict-sensitive messaging.
- Deploy targeted peace-building interventions in high-risk senatorial districts: Osun East (community dialogues addressing violence history), Osun Central (urban peace messaging and youth de-escalation training), and Osun West (positive reinforcement messaging to maintain stability).

12.2 Election Period

- Maintain a visible moral presence through a high-level NPC delegation deployed 48 hours before the election to engage party leaders, security commanders, and INEC officials.
- Activate a dedicated rapid response mediation team positioned in Osogbo with direct communication lines to key stakeholders.
- Establish a real-time election security situation room at ESI-Hub to aggregate incident data from field observers and security agencies; deploy geospatial mapping to visualise flashpoints; verify and escalate critical incidents to NPC mediators and security commanders; issue situational awareness updates; and counter misinformation with verified reports.

12.3 Post-Election Phase

- Sustain the Inter-Party Dialogue Platform through results collation and announcement to manage grievances and prevent post-election violence.
- Convene a post-election stakeholders' reflection forum within two weeks, bringing together parties, INEC, security agencies, traditional leaders, and observers.
- Support peaceful judicial process engagement by securing public commitments to accept court outcomes and monitoring tribunal proceedings.
- Document lessons learned through a comprehensive post-election assessment to strengthen NPC's institutional memory and inform future engagements.