



PIVOTAL ELECTIONS IN AFRICA

Why Women Haven't Been Successful in Nigerian Elections

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Introduction

Women's representation in Nigerian politics has been on a downward slide since 2011, and the 2023 elections in Africa's largest economy confirmed the expectations of poor outcomes for women. The number of women in Nigeria's National Assembly has fallen by 19 percent compared to the last assembly, with women now occupying 3 percent of seats in the Senate and 4 percent in the House of Representatives.¹

To understand why Nigerian women performed so poorly in the recent elections, the 2022 primary elections provided insight into the challenges and barriers faced by women aspirants and candidates. The results of the various parties' primary elections highlight enduring limitations to women's representation in competitive politics in Nigeria. The country ranks in the bottom ten globally in women's representation in national parliaments, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).² This challenge of representation persists in spite of the near parity of voter registration between men and women in past election cycles.³

Across all national and subnational categories, women represented just over 10 percent of more than 15,000 candidates who ran in the 2023 elections for president, the National Assembly, governorships, and state assemblies.⁴ Furthermore, 90 percent of women candidates ran on the platforms of small parties. Barring a rare upset by a relatively small party—for example, the Labour Party—candidates from smaller parties have historically had limited chances of being elected into office.

Yet, the 2023 elections took place against the backdrop of a social media-sparked citizen movement,⁵ mostly made up of young people who appeared determined to upturn the political system, which has typically favored traditional candidates, especially men from the major parties. The effect of this renewed youth involvement on Nigeria's growing voter apathy and the potential effect on women's candidacy are key points of interest. Indeed, in the 2023 elections, heightened youth involvement—and support for the disruptor Labour Party—hurt outcomes for women candidates, especially those representing Nigeria's main political



parties. The Labour Party's upset, paradoxically, had negative consequences for women in parliament who were standing for reelection as candidates of Nigeria's dominant parties but lost their seats to male candidates running on the platform of the Labour Party.⁶

This paper reviews women's representation in national and subnational elections in Nigeria. In particular, it focuses on attrition in political parties' primary elections, which concluded in September 2022, and seeks to identify factors that contributed to poor outcomes for women aspirants and candidates. It explores women's candidacies across regions, positions, and parties. It finds that four main factors contributed to high attrition rates for women during party primaries: political party gatekeeping; conservative norms and culture; the variation of competitiveness in executive versus legislative offices; and the combined effect of novice candidature (large number of political newcomers) and low persistence (staying power) of women candidates who lose elections. The paper therefore highlights how macro-level and institutional, or systemic, factors interact with individual factors to limit women's access to elected offices in Nigeria.

The paper draws on both descriptive quantitative methods and individual interviews. The quantitative analysis uses the official candidate lists for state and national elections published by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). All descriptive data analyses are based on the entire population of candidates. For the 2023 election cycle, there were 13,725 men candidates and 1,544 women candidates.⁷ In addition, the paper is based on twenty-one semistructured interviews with representatives of INEC and of six political parties across six states, as well as with individual women aspirants, candidates, and elected officials.

To review party performance, the paper focuses on six political parties, categorized here as small, medium, and large based on the party's representation in federal and state electoral offices as well as their relative longevity

in Nigerian politics. The paper ranks the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) as large parties; All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP) as medium; and African Democratic Congress (ADC) and Action Democratic Party (ADP) as small.

This paper would have benefited from access to primary elections data, including the number of aspirants and the gender distribution of aspirants and party delegates, but political parties do not collate accessible data of this type. This highlights a larger issue of Nigerian electoral analysis, which is impeded by the lack of reliable data, particularly in the primary phase. Measuring the exact attrition rate for women aspirants—that is, measuring the failure rate for women who stand for primary elections—is difficult due to poor data preservation by political parties. For popular offices, such as president, news reports allow for such calculations. For executive positions, including president, vice president, and governor, Nigerian women have had a nearly 100 percent attrition rate since the country returned to democracy in 1999. The next best option is to analyze candidates' attrition rates after elections have concluded. Yet, it is important to understand why Africa's largest economy proves to be such a difficult space for women's political participation.

Comparing Nigeria's Democracy to Others in Africa

Like other African countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal, Nigeria's young democracy faces multiple domestic challenges but remains resilient. Despite recent democratic reversals, including military coups, in neighboring states, the outlook for Nigeria's democracy remains positive. Having successfully passed the so-called two-turnover test of democratic consolidation in 2015, Nigeria's democracy has been further enhanced by the competitiveness of the 2023 elections, bolstered by heightened youth participation.

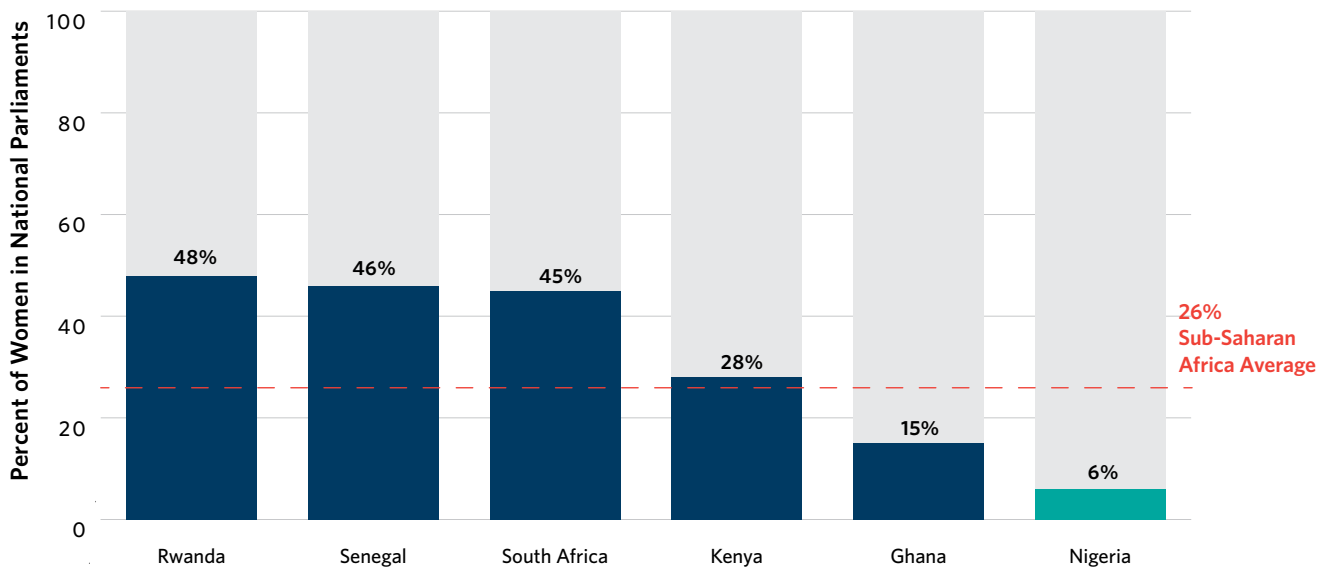
Nigeria has a presidential system with a bicameral parliament, and it is a federal state, meaning its electoral politics are significantly decentralized. It is divided into thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, which together make up the six geopolitical zones. According to INEC, roughly half of the country’s estimated 200 million people are registered to vote. The voter distribution shows a slightly higher representation for men (52.5 percent) than women (47.5 percent). Furthermore, about 40 percent of registered voters are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. The densely populated states of Kano and Lagos play a pivotal role in electoral outcomes, with 5.9 million and 7.1 million registered voters, respectively.

Despite this vibrant democracy and the relative parity in voter distribution by gender, women’s representation in electoral politics is remarkably low. According to

2023 data from IPU, Nigeria lags behind many other similarly positioned states in sub-Saharan Africa, falling far short of the 26 percent regional average of women in national parliaments.

Figure 1 depicts women’s representation in upper and lower chambers across several African states. All high-performing countries—Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Kenya—have a quota system, either voluntary at the party level or legislated. Most have a combination of both. For example, in South Africa, the electoral law mandates that parties ensure that women candidates make up 50 percent of the party list in subnational elections. South Africa’s largest political party, the African National Congress, extends this 50 percent quota to its national list. Although Ghana and Nigeria do not have a quota system to reserve seats for women, there is an ongoing push for this in Nigeria.

Figure 1. Women’s Representation in National Parliaments in Select African Countries



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2023.

Note: Data for Nigeria is based on the 2019 elections results.



The Underperformance of Women in Nigeria's Elections Occurs in Phases

Election into office in Nigeria is a three-step process. First, aspirants indicate interest in their local party chapters and nominate themselves. Second, aspirants stand for local or national party primary elections. The method of election into candidacy is decided by individual parties. Most parties use party delegates for primary elections for federal positions. Aspirants who win their parties' primaries become the parties' official candidates. Finally, candidates stand for office in the general elections, typically held between February and March every four years.⁸ Winners of the general elections are sworn into office in May.

In Nigeria, women suffer high attrition rates throughout the electoral cycle and face significant and distinct challenges in each phase. In general, analyses of electoral outcomes for women candidates often focus on the end of the cycle. Yet, for women candidates, the different phases of the electoral cycle portend specific challenges. Therefore, the challenges identified at the end of the cycle often conflate phase-specific issues, making intervention opportunities difficult to identify.

Some challenges spread throughout the cycle, such as election financing. Many women candidates lack access to the financial resources required to sustain a political campaign.⁹ Other factors, such as navigating political party barriers, tend to be more relevant before and during party primaries. Women who successfully navigate party politics and are selected as candidates do not necessarily have to contend with those party-specific challenges once they become their parties' official flagbearers. The factors leading to high attrition rates for women in politics change significantly during the general election and postelection phases of the cycle. In the general elections, the key contributing factor to high attrition rates for women is predicated on their access to the major political parties and whether they emerge as flagbearers in these parties. Access to dominant parties has traditionally predicted the potential for success

for candidates.¹⁰ Finances also play a significant role in postelection contestations where cases end up at the election tribunal. Many women, having sustained a full political campaign, cannot afford lengthy court cases. Throughout the electoral cycle, women also face significant intimidation, sometimes bordering on physical violence.

This paper focuses on women's attrition in the preelection phase and identifies four main factors that impede women's participation: political party gatekeeping; conservative norms and culture; the variation of competitiveness in executive versus legislative offices; and the combined effect of women's novice candidature and low advancement persistence, that is, the persistence of women candidates who lose elections.¹¹ In particular, the outcomes of the primary elections that concluded in September 2022 highlight party-level barriers that work in tandem with candidate-focused factors to limit women's access to elected office.

Expanding the focus to subnational primary elections outcomes across Nigeria's thirty-six states yields important insights into the trends and variations among Nigeria's geopolitical regions. For instance, data from state primary elections show significant variation in political access for women candidates in the South East versus the North West. This holds true across parties. State elections also highlight significant differences between executive offices and legislative offices, where women candidates appear to be more favored for the largely decorative deputy governor positions than for legislative positions.

Barriers for Women Candidates in the Party Primaries Phase

Nigeria's political space has seen some recent overhauls. In the 2019 elections, seventy-six political parties were represented, making the voting process unnecessarily tedious. In the 2023 cycle, INEC pruned the number

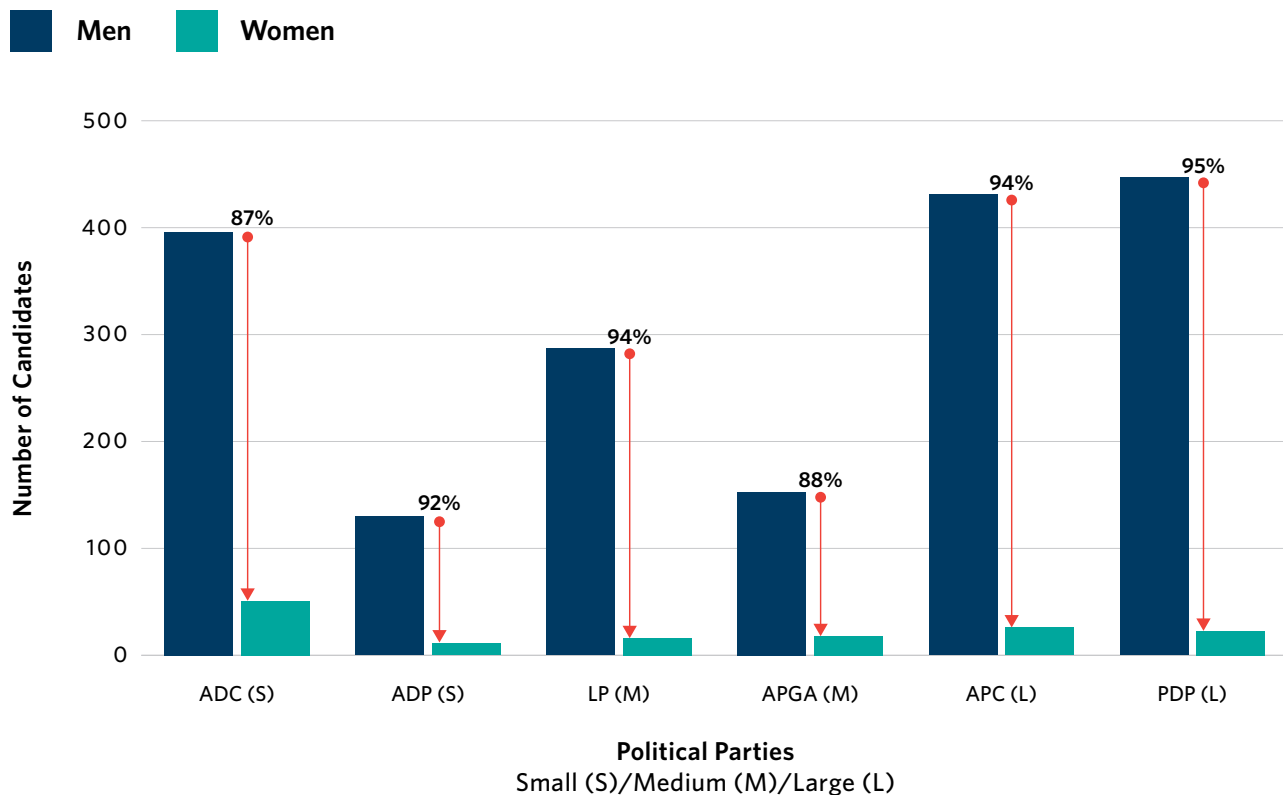
down to eighteen parties, unregistering parties that lacked representation in elected offices.¹²

Women made up only 10 percent of over 15,000 candidates in the 2023 election cycle, representing eighteen political parties. At the federal level, women made up 9 percent of all candidates. This includes the races for president, House of Representatives, and Senate. At the state level, women constituted 11 percent of all candidates running for governor and state houses of assembly. This section examines the various party-level factors that impede women’s access to competitive politics.

The Problem Within the Parties: Smaller Political Parties Are More Favorable for Women Candidates

In general, smaller political parties appear to have lower entry barriers for women. In the 2019 elections, 96 percent of women candidates for federal seats emerged from small parties, according to the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID).¹³ In the 2023 cycle, women represented 11 percent, on average, of candidates from small parties, with many small parties doing significantly better in women’s representation than others (see figure 2). The gender gap was significantly higher in dominant parties (APC

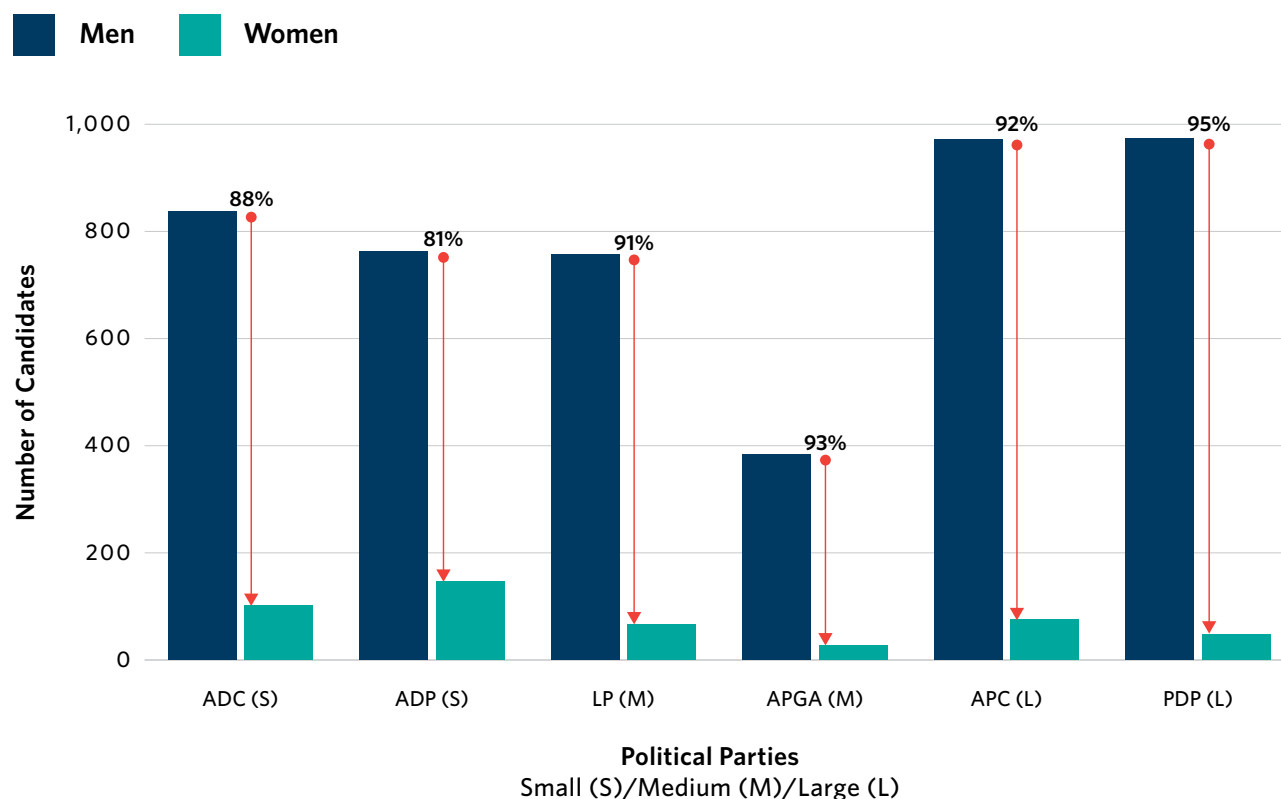
Figure 2. Percentage Difference in Gender Representation of Candidates in the 2023 National Elections by Party



Source: Author’s calculations from the Independent National Electoral Commission’s final list of candidates for the 2023 national elections (president, Senate, and House of Representatives).

Note: This piece ranks the ruling All Progressives Party (APC) and the main opposition People’s Democratic Party (PDP) as large parties; All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP) as medium; and African Democratic Congress (ADC) and Action Democratic Party (ADP) as small.

Figure 3. Percentage Difference in Gender Representation of Candidates in the 2023 Subnational Elections by Party



Source: Author's calculations from the Independent National Electoral Commission's final list of candidates for the 2023 subnational elections (governor and state houses of assembly).

and PDP) than in newer or smaller parties for national offices, including president, Senate, and House of Representatives. Comparatively, the gender gap was lower in subnational elections than for national offices, especially for small parties.

In subnational elections, the smaller ADP party appeared the most favorable to women (see figure 3). Women made up 19 percent of all candidates, the highest representation across all eighteen parties. The two leading parties in Nigeria, the ruling APC and the main opposition PDP, presented some of the highest gender gaps in both national and subnational positions. In the ruling APC, women made up only 6 percent

of candidates for national positions and 8 percent for subnational positions. For the main opposition PDP, this number was 5 percent across the board.

One major barrier that women face is the steep cost of obtaining nomination forms for various positions. This is especially true for larger parties. As incentives for inclusion, many political parties purport to ease women's entry into the first rounds by lowering entry requirements through nomination fee reduction or cancellation.¹⁴ These party-level fee waivers and concessions lend a bit of ease to women candidates but do not appear to make any significant difference in the gender composition of candidates. Larger parties set

prohibitively high fees for aspirants through the self-nomination and expression of interest (EOI) forms.¹⁵ A concession on the nomination fee usually means that candidates must purchase the EOI forms. In the 2023 election cycle, the ruling APC set the cost for EOI for presidential aspirants at 30 million naira (about \$67,269). Consequently, only one woman candidate stood for the presidential primary elections in the ruling party. Yet, the APC's waiver also significantly reduced the entrance costs for women aspirants, cutting the overall fee for legislative aspirants by 90 percent. Similarly, the main opposition PDP also waived the nomination fee for women candidates but set the EOI at 5 million naira (\$11,042) for presidential candidates. Smaller parties had much lower fees for both forms, with many parties waiving them altogether for women aspirants.

Yet, women candidates have argued that political parties only take them seriously when they demonstrate their financial capacity to support their campaigns. In reality, women who benefit from gender-based concessions will not get the party's support if they do not demonstrate this requisite financial capacity. Women have also alleged that party officials often demand money in bribes during the pre-primary period to secure the support of prospective party delegates, who nominate the candidates during the primary elections.

Many women aspirants who do not succeed in larger parties' primary elections fall back on smaller parties. Many have alleged that the barriers in the dominant parties are so prohibitive that they are compelled to move to smaller parties just to get an opportunity for a fair process. Although the lack of primary-level data from political parties limits the quantitative analyses of women's attrition rates at this level, many women politicians have indicated that smaller parties' primary elections processes are less competitive and significantly less cost prohibitive.

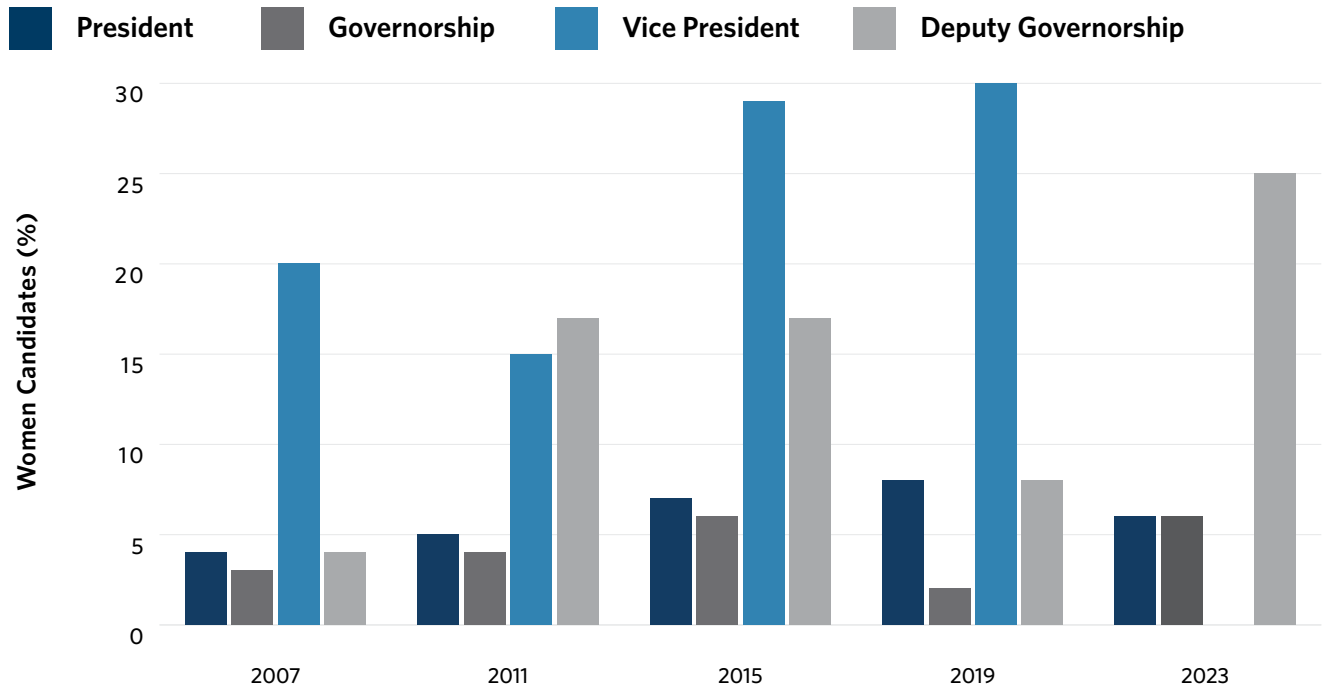
On the whole, a lower entry bar expands the political space for women aspirants, allowing them to participate in competitive politics. Questions surrounding the utility of standing for office in these small parties persist, given the low chances of success. Yet, for many women, participation enables them to gain much-needed experience in politics, which many women lack.

Opportunities for Women Candidates Vary Between Executive and Legislative Positions: Women Are Often Delegated to Decorative Offices

Women's performance in the 2022 primary elections was also driven by how competitive the position was, with significant variation between executive and legislative positions. In the past five election cycles, more women have run for executive positions that are widely seen as wielding little power, especially in deputizing roles such as vice president and deputy governor. In the 2023 cycle, at the subnational level, women polled better in the largely nominal or symbolic executive position of deputy governor. Congruently, fewer women ran in the more competitive governorship primaries. Out of 417 total candidates for fifty-six positions, women made up 25 percent of candidates running for deputy governor whereas they only made up 6 percent of those running for the more powerful and substantive governorships (see figure 4). At the national level, only one woman ran for president across all political parties. Women were more competitive at the subnational level. Their candidacy for subnational legislative positions stood at about 10 percent, compared to 9 and 8 percent representation at the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively (see figure 4).

When compared to the unusually high number of women candidates standing for deputy governorship positions, women legislative candidates appeared less

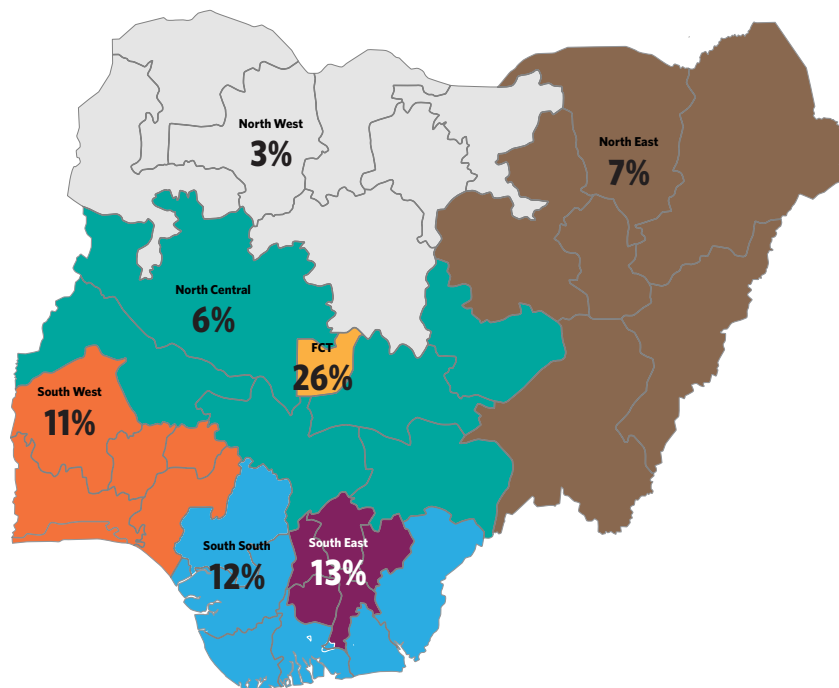
Figure 4. There Are More Women Candidates for Nominal and Deputy Executive Positions



Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Independent National Electoral Commission and YIAGA Africa.

Note: Percentage calculations are based on the overall number of women candidates across all political parties in each electoral cycle.

Figure 5. Women Who Ran for Federal Legislative Positions Across Nigeria's Six Geopolitical Zones in 2023



Source: Author's calculations based on the Independent National Electoral Commission's data.

competitive. However, it must be noted that deputy governors do not hold substantive power or political autonomy. This is somewhat comparable with the role of vice president, which has historically been favorable to women candidates, even though the position holds some constitutionally assigned powers. (No woman vice presidential candidate has emerged from the two dominant parties since 1999.)

These factors intersect with party dynamics, further limiting women's competitiveness. For instance, in the 2023 election cycle, only two women gubernatorial candidates emerged from the two dominant parties (an APC candidate for governor in Adamawa and a PDP candidate for deputy governorship in Lagos). The single woman presidential candidate was also from a small party. This means that across the country, 92 percent of all women gubernatorial candidates were from smaller parties.

Regional Dynamics: Women's Representation Differs Significantly by Geopolitical Zones

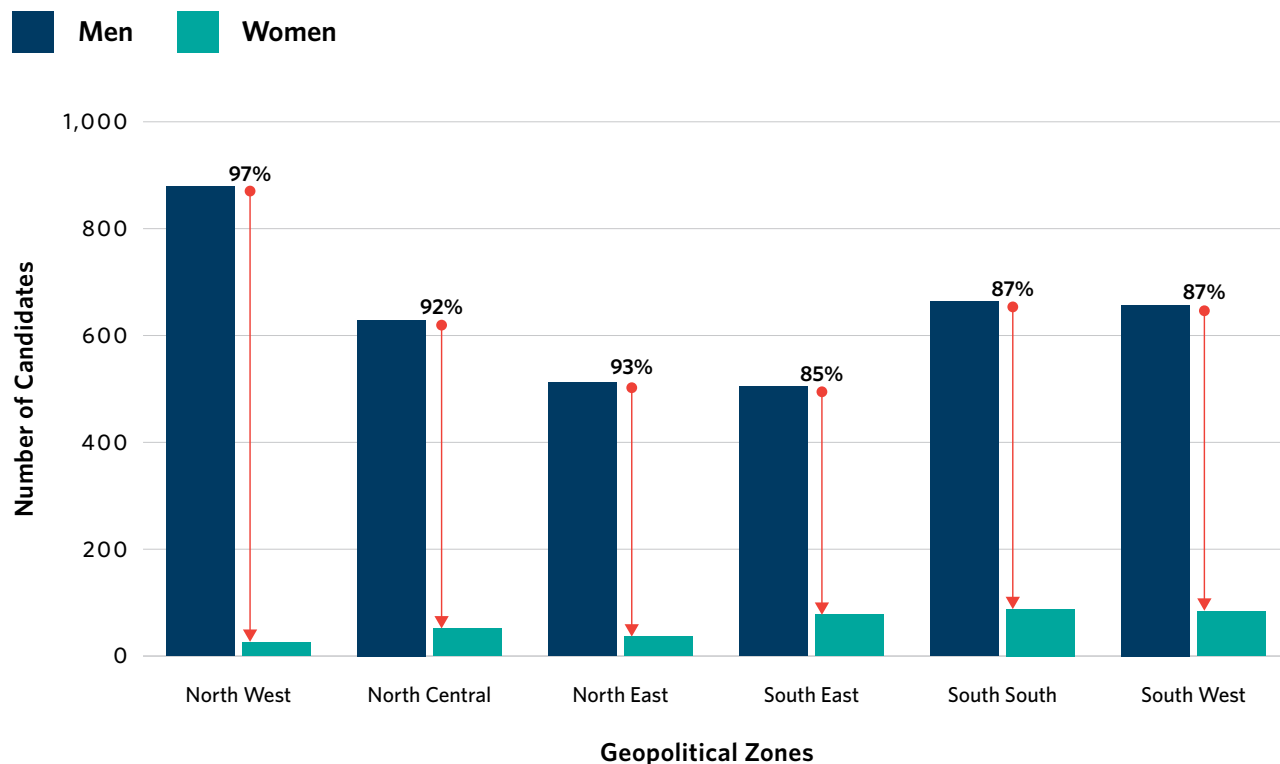
Women's representation across Nigeria's six regions, or geopolitical zones, varies, with southern states performing significantly better than northern states. The overall representation of women candidates who ran for federal legislative offices in 2023 was 9 percent of about 4,200 candidates representing all eighteen parties. This percentage of representation varied by region and by type of election. The poorest-performing region for women's candidacy was the North West, with women candidates representing just 3 percent of all candidates running for seats in the National Assembly. The South East represented the highest proportion of women candidates, at 13 percent for federal legislative positions. In general, southern states appeared more accessible to women candidates, with an average of 12 percent representation, compared to the average 5 percent representation in northern states (see figure 5).

Within the regions, there was significant variation among the states' primary elections (see figure 6). In one of the low performing regions, the North East, Gombe State had a much higher representation of women candidates. The state saw more women candidates—16 percent—run for federal legislative offices than any other state. This notable outcome for women in Gombe perhaps substantiates theories of the effects of women's numerical representation in political office. In recent years, the state has put forward prominent women at the national level, including a currently serving member of the House of Representatives. In the National Assembly, Aishatu Dukku was a member of the federal cabinet and is now in her second term as a federal legislator. The state has also produced a prominent and influential woman member of the federal cabinet, Amina Mohammed, who is now the deputy secretary-general of the United Nations. Women's prominence in federal offices may have paved the way for more women to participate in Gombe politics.

In the highest-performing region, the South East, Anambra State ranked higher than all the other states, and Enugu State was the lowest-performing with 10 percent representation. In the South West, Oyo State fared the worst, performing at less than half of the capacity of neighboring Lagos State.

One of the most significant state dynamics emerged from the contrast between women's representation in Nigeria's most-populous states, Kano and Lagos. Both states have millions of registered voters and can therefore have significant implications for national election outcomes. According to INEC, 3.3 million people were registered to vote in Kano and 3.8 million were registered in Lagos for the 2023 elections. In 2015, Kano helped seal President Muhammadu Buhari's election victory.¹⁶ Kano had a paltry 2 percent women's candidacy, compared to Lagos's 16 percent representation. Kano had no women running for Senate. This staggering disparity further highlights the significant differences for women candidates across regions.

Figure 6. Percentage Difference in Gender Representation of Candidates for the 2023 National Elections by Region



Source: Author's calculations from the Independent National Electoral Commission's final list of candidates for the 2023 national elections (president, Senate, and House of Representatives).

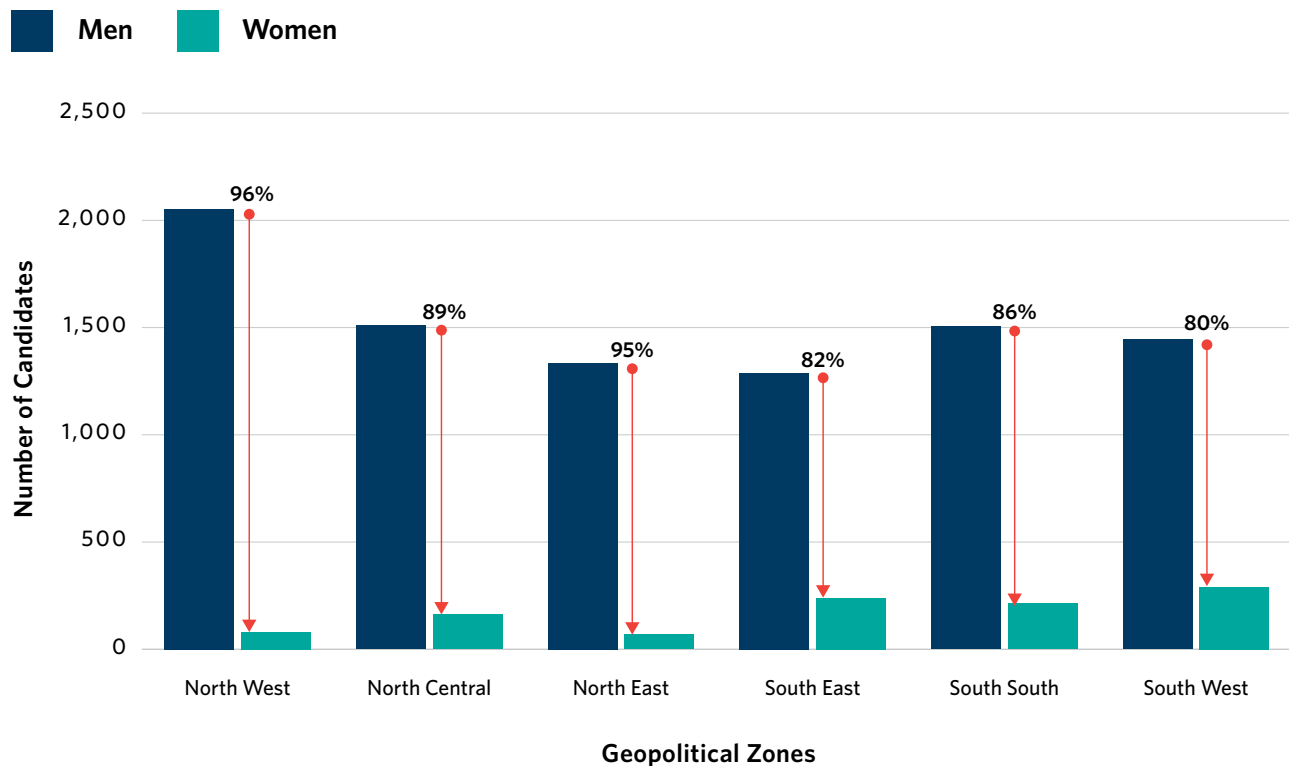
The regional candidacy for subnational offices followed a similar pattern with the national trend, with women's candidacy representation ranking lowest in the North West (see figure 7). In this zone, states with greater religious diversity, such as Plateau, Taraba, and Gombe, performed better than the rest. Interestingly, Muslim women were more likely to be elected into office in the three northern regions than in the rest of the country. Since Nigeria's 1999 return to democracy, the only two women to run for governor on one of the major political parties' platforms were Muslims from the North: Aisha Alhassan in Taraba State in 2015 and Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed in Adamawa State in 2023. Like representation in the national legislature, women's representation in state governments in the southern regions was higher than in northern regions. Subnational outcomes,

however, had women performing better in the South West than in the South East.

Women Candidates: The Twin Problem of Novice Candidature and Low Advancement Persistence

Perhaps the most significant issue historically with women's performance in Nigerian politics centers on individual factors. Novice candidature and a significant advancement persistence problem come together to diminish opportunities for women aspirants and candidates. Many women aspirants are political newcomers. Additionally, these newcomers tend to exit competitive politics once they lose their first rounds of elections, whether primary or main elections.

Figure 7. Percentage Difference in Gender Representation of Candidates for the 2023 Subnational Elections by Region



Source: Author's calculations from the Independent National Electoral Commission's final list of candidates for the 2023 subnational elections (governor and state houses of assembly).

Women find themselves playing uncompetitively in Nigeria's high-stakes politics, especially at the national level. Women aspirants and candidates may have higher attrition rates because many of them are novice politicians who seek to hold high-level positions. In the cutthroat, zero-sum game of Nigerian politics, novice aspirants lack political capital and a competitive advantage in more competitive parties and positions. For instance, all seven women aspirants for president in the 2022 primary elections were novice candidates; none of them had previously held any elected office.¹⁷ Of these seven, only one candidate was on the presidential ballot in 2023, representing the fringe APM party. This relatively new party was registered shortly before the 2019 elections and had no representation in state or federal elected offices.

This high number of novice women contestants also correlates with the significantly low advancement persistence in women candidates. According to Melanie Wasserman, who studies gender differences in career trajectories, advancement persistence measures the rate at which politicians persist in politics after losing an election.¹⁸ Men vying for high office are more likely to stay in politics than women, contesting multiple times or biding their time while being heavily involved in their respective political parties. Many women candidates, on the other hand, drop out after losing and are usually unable to sustain such commitment to politics.

Interestingly, a review of women elected into federal legislative offices in the last two election cycles indicates that, in general, most women who displayed a high



level of advancement persistence eventually get elected into office. National and subnational outcomes show that women who have won political office are usually not novices. The few women who remain in politics after suffering defeat at the polls, whether by their own political power or by support of allies, tend to find eventual victory. For instance, Uche Ekunife, a senator representing Anambra in the South East, finally got elected to the House of Representatives in 2007 after twice failing in her gubernatorial bid. More than half of the women senators elected in 2019 were on their second or third campaigns. Others stepped up from the lower legislative chambers. None were novice politicians.

Some women candidates who have yet to win an election said in interviews with the author that novice women are sometimes unfairly selected by a party to be flagbearers, especially if they have financial capacity to influence party officials. These novice women do not necessarily run for office to win but run for other strategic interests and publicity. Some women candidates interviewed for this paper argued that party structures that grant unfair advantages to preferred but novice candidates discourage more competent but less influential women aspirants from persisting in politics, especially given Nigeria's highly unregulated party financing structure that places a huge financial burden on candidates and aspirants. They also pointed out that novice men are as likely to run for ambitious offices as women, but women do not necessarily get noticed because of the larger percentage of men candidates, both novice and experienced.

Additionally, questionable party-level power-sharing arrangements, especially in the federal and state legislatures, have created term limitations that prevent new politicians from persisting in politics. These arrangements create a rotation of elected offices among subregional groups and ethnicities, resulting in new legislative representation for each election cycle. In the National Assembly, a 70 percent turnover rate means

that a majority of legislators are only able to serve for one term and are unable to gain valuable lawmaking experience.¹⁹ For women politicians, this further limits their capacity to remain in politics.

Conclusion

In the preelection phase, individual and systemic factors converge to heighten the entry bar for women politicians. Well-noted systemic factors, such as gatekeeping by political parties, limit women's access to high offices. Similarly, cultural and religious factors create significant variety in women's representation across the country. There is a wide gap between women's representation across the religiously conservative north and the south, especially for legislative offices. Nigeria's north has produced popular women executive candidates at the state level, including one who ran for governor on the platform of a dominant party in Adamawa State. Importantly, individual states within the northern and southern regions also display notable deviations, making cogent the necessity of subnational outcomes. Finally, at the individual level, the high attrition rate for women aspirants and candidates is attributable to the high number of novice candidates seeking office and, relatedly, the low level of persistence of women politicians who lose elections. Across the board, the women who thrive in Nigerian politics have significant staying power, whether due to their own political clout, their networks, or their participation in their local political parties. More research should be done on the combined effect of novice candidature and women's low advancement persistence.

By focusing on preelection factors that explain the poor outcomes for women in the 2022 primary elections, this paper contributes to improving the understanding of specific barriers that women face. Such analysis can help development partners, political parties, and other stakeholders design more effective interventions aimed at supporting women candidates.

The outcomes of the 2022 primary elections show that women suffer disadvantages at the individual, institutional, and systemic levels. Some of these barriers can be addressed through legislative reform; several reforms have been proposed in the National Assembly but have not yet been translated to substantive policies or laws. Other solutions lie in recognizing and elevating women as viable and competitive candidates who are capable of harnessing the support of millions of voters. Such endeavors would require significant resources, training and marketing, and media support for women candidates.

This portends an opportunity for development partners, which typically refrain from direct party-level interventions. Yet, in the preelection cycle, party-level barriers constitute some of the most significant hinderances to women candidates. Advocacy that targets party administration, including committee appointments, can significantly shape outcomes for women candidates. Gender-sensitive party leadership is key to party reforms. As noted in this paper, many African countries have not only adopted legislated affirmative action policies but have also established voluntary, party-directed quota systems to stopgap legislative lapses.

In addition, development partners can support local civil society efforts to enhance women's candidature and build resilience among women aspirants. Such partnerships should be robust with long-term outlooks.

About the Author

Elor Nkereuwem is completing a PhD in international studies at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, where she also teaches the Women Lead Practicum. Her research focuses on gender, discourse, and political violence.

Notes

- 1 As of March 11, 2023, elas remained inconclusive in some districts. These numbers represent current data based on official results released by INEC.
- 2 "Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments," Inter Parliamentary Union, February 2023, <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=2&year=2023>.
- 3 According to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), about 44 million women, making up 48 percent of voter distribution, were registered to vote in the 2023 elections.
- 4 Based on the author's calculation of initial data published by the INEC, the total number of men candidates was 13,725 and the total number of women candidates was 1,544.
- 5 Flourish Chukwurah, "Peter Obi's 'Obidient' Movement Ignites Nigeria's Youth," Deutsche Welle, December 10, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/peter-obis-obidient-movement-ignites-nigerias-youth/a-63375362>.
- 6 There is an exception here. In the Federal Capital Territory, a woman candidate running on the platform of the Labour Party dislodged a male senator from a major party, who was running for reelection.
- 7 Total numbers were calculated by the author and are based on initial data published by INEC.
- 8 A few off-cycle elections are held outside of these periods.
- 9 Emily van der Merwe, "Nigeria's Presidential Elections: Are Six Female Candidates Better Than One?" Africa at LSE, November 26, 2018, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/11/26/nigerias-presidential-elections-are-six-female-candidates-better-than-one/>.
- 10 Other intervening factors in the 2023 elections, such as heightened youth involvement and the entrance of a charismatic and relatively young candidate from a fringe party, have upset this structure.
- 11 The two main political parties, the ruling All Progressives Party (APC) and the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), have no records of the number of political aspirants that self-nominated themselves for office. Consequently, the author was unable to ascertain the attrition rates at the candidacy stage.
- 12 Kunle Sanni, "UPDATED: INEC Deregisters 74 Political Parties," *Premium Times*, February 6, 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/376095-updated-inec-deregisters-74-political-parties.html>.
- 13 Chiedo Nwankwor and Elor Nkereuwem, "Gendered Contests: Women in Competitive Elections: An Analysis of Women's Participation in the 2019 Nigeria General Elections," Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism, 2019, <https://ptcij.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Gendered-Contests-Women-in-Competitive-Elections.pdf>.

- 14 Ijeoma Opara, “2023: APC Exempts Female Aspirants From Paying for Nomination Forms,” International Centre for Investigative Reporting, April 8, 2022, <https://www.icirnigeria.org/2023-apc-exempts-female-aspirants-from-paying-for-nomination-forms/>.
- 15 Abubakar Ahmadu Maishanu, “Why We Are Charging N100m for Presidential Nomination Form – APC National Chairman,” *Premium Times*, April 28, 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/526573-why-we-are-charging-n100m-for-presidential-nomination-form-apc-national-chairman.html>.
- 16 Aaron Ross, “Buhari’s Stronghold Becomes Key Battleground in Tight Nigeria Election,” Reuters, February 23, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-election-kano/buharis-stronghold-becomes-key-battleground-in-tight-nigeria-election-idUSL5N20I0CU>.
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