



Nigeria 2015 elections: Security of Observers and the Electorate

Key Findings:

- Majority of the electorate intend to vote and do not think security will be an issue;
- The number of those who fear that security will be an issue is close to the number uncertain that they will vote;
- Polling units and collation centres are perceived as most prone to violence;
- Politicians are mostly perceived to be likely cause violence, followed by their supporters, thugs and other voters;
- Increased security presence and their professional conduct will help mitigate likelihood of violence

Recommendations:

- Security officials should facilitate, and not hinder or harass, observers from moving around and observing the process;
- Security personnel should be adequately deployed to identified hotspots and flash point areas, and ready response should be available in case of incidents outbreak;
- Security personnel on election duty should wear identifiable tags (No masks);
- Security agencies should make available to the public readily reachable contact numbers in case of emergency;
- Use of force on civilians should be lawful, appropriate and only as a last resort.

Introduction

The build up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria has been characterized by high expectations on the part of citizens eager to participate in free and fair elections, intense campaigning by the major political parties and efforts by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that registered voters get their Permanent Voters Card (PVC). However, it has also been attended by many challenges. The campaign process has featured hate speech and pockets of violence, security challenges are still looming in parts of the country, and distribution of the PVCs and the effectiveness of the Card readers. Though the rescheduling of the elections, on security grounds, from 14 February to 28 March and 11 April, arguably helped douse some of the tension by creating a window of opportunity to address some of these issues, there is still some apprehension and tension going into the elections.

CLEEN Foundation, in collaboration with the NOI Polls, and with funding support from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) conducted the 2015 Election Perception Survey to assess the perception of Nigerians on election security as well as preparedness for the elections. The project surveyed 5000 Nigerians across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory as well as representing the 109 Senatorial Districts in Nigeria. This brief presents the findings of the survey and recommendations relating to security of observers and the electorate.

Findings

1. Perception of security and willingness to vote

- An overwhelming majority of Nigerians (**89%**), across gender, age groups and geopolitical zones, hope to vote in the 2015 elections.
- Majority of Nigerians (**76%**) do not think intimidation and violence would be an issue in the 2015 elections. This perception is highest amongst the older persons. 80% of those 60 years and above, while 72% of those 18-21)
- The proportion of Nigerians who feel violence would be an issue in the 2015 elections (**15%**) is close to the proportion who stated that they were uncertain they would vote (**11%**).

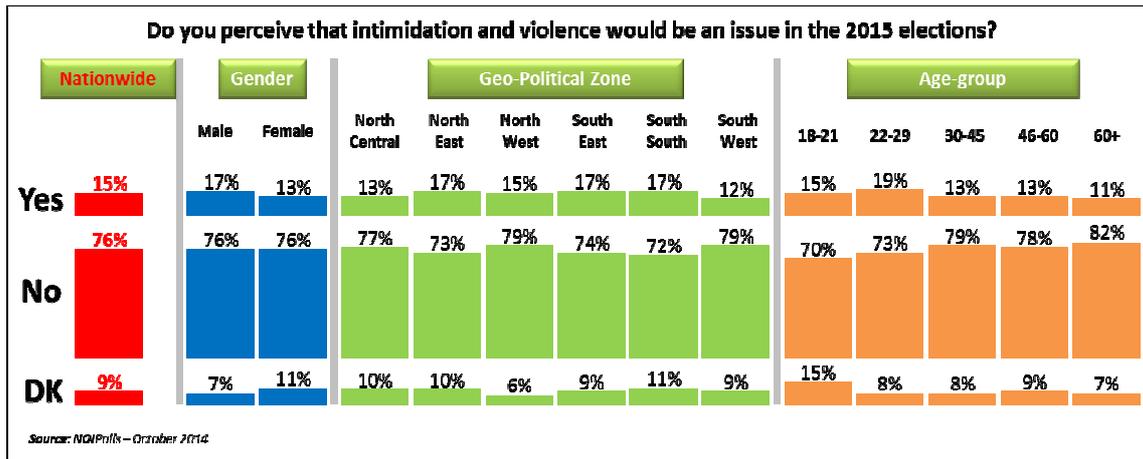


Figure 1: Perception of Violence in the 2015 elections

2. Perception about likely location of violence

- Most of the electorate think violence is likely occur at the Polling units (66%) and Collation centres (52%). The fear of violence at polling units is highest in the North-Central 78% and South-South zones, 78%.
- This implies that those who feel polling units are more prone to violence, may decide to avoid polling units altogether; thus waiving their right to vote.
- This also raises worries about the security of observers who will be stationed at polling stations and collation centres. In 2007, they were some of the first victims of electoral violence.

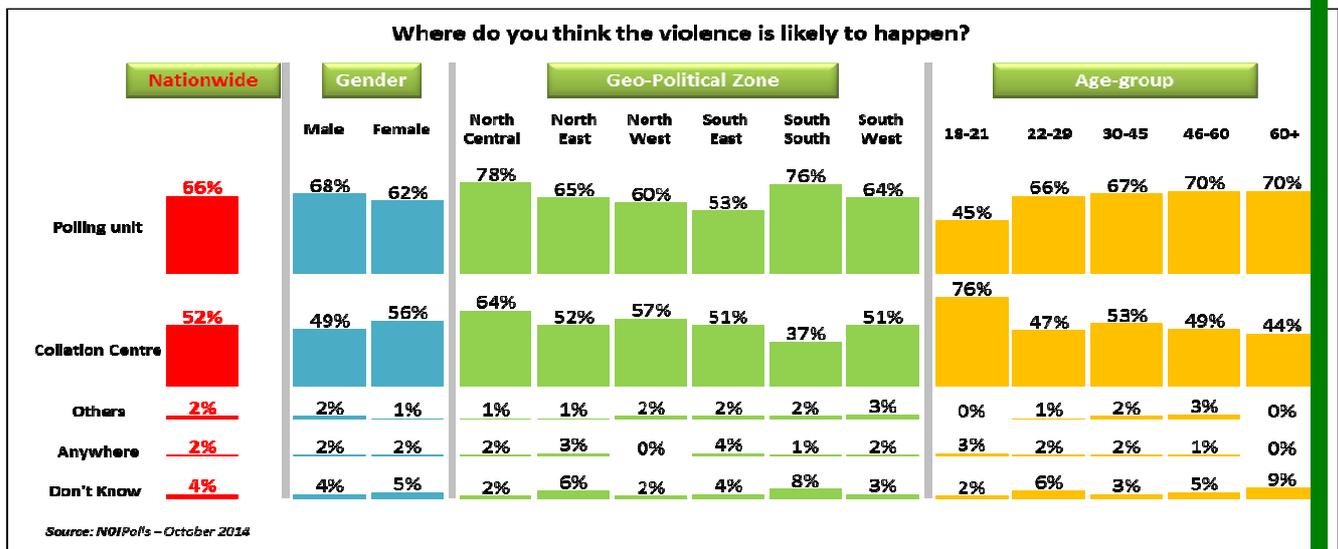


Figure 2: Likely Locations of Electoral Violence

3. Perceived Perpetrators of Electoral Violence in 2015

- Most of the electorate (46%) believe politicians to be the likely cause of violence during the elections (46%) indicated politicians were most likely to cause violence in the 2015 elections.

- Others perceived likely causes of violence are by their supporters (22%), thugs (19%) and voters (8%) among others.

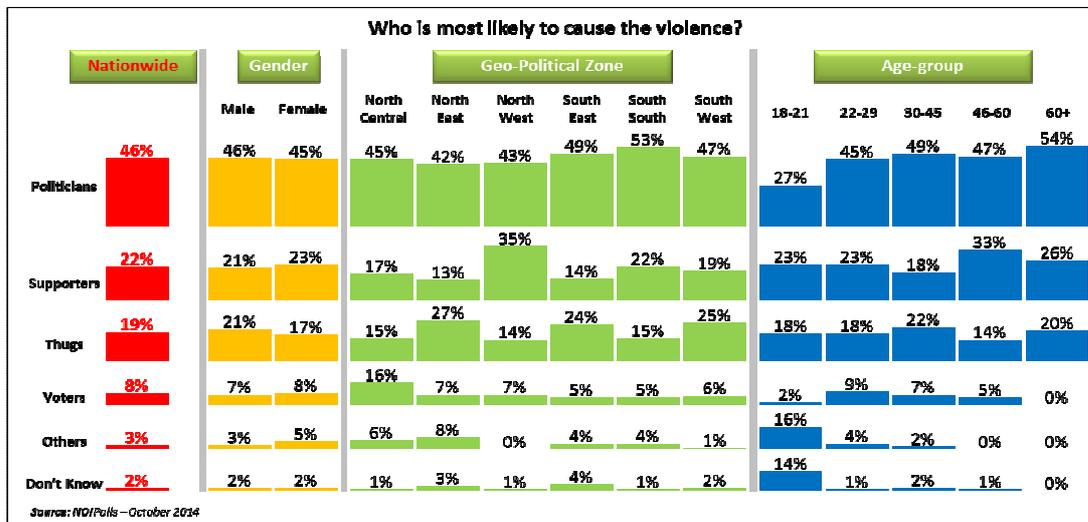


Figure 3: Perceived perpetrators of electoral violence in 2015

4. Prevention of Electoral Violence

- Most of the electorate (68%) believe that an 'Increase in presence of security agencies on electoral duty' would help forestall electoral violence.
- The presence of security agencies will particularly be need around identified hotspots and flashpoint areas.
- Others believe that 'Civic enlightenment/awareness' (29%) and 'Professional conduct of electoral officials' (25%) among others would mitigate electoral violence.

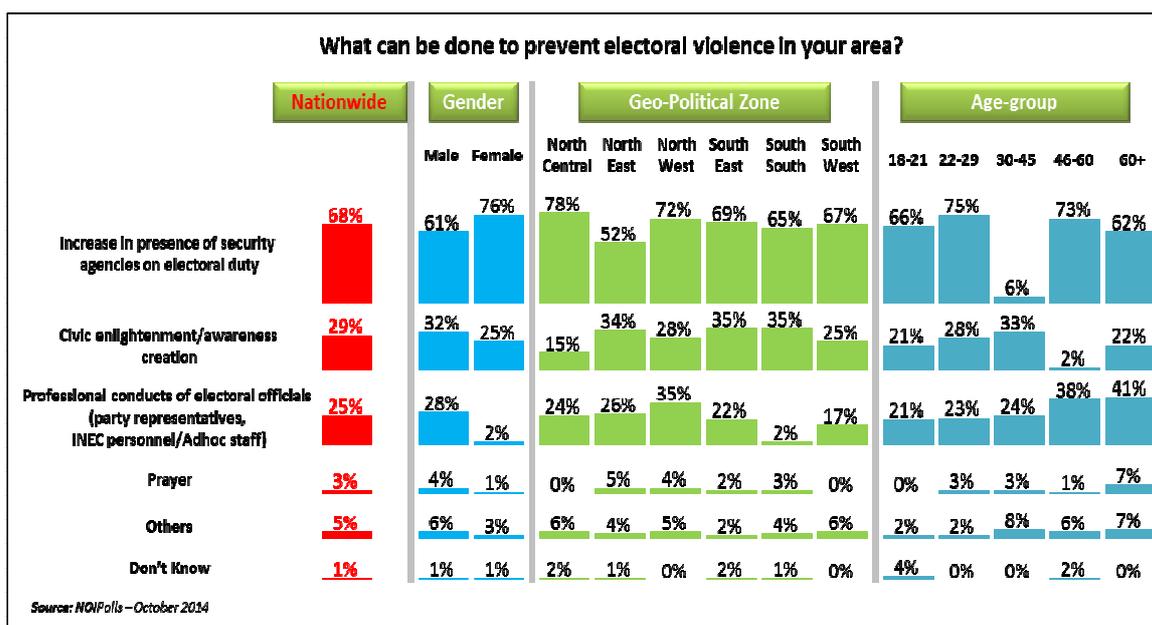


Figure 4: Prevention of Electoral Violence

Recommendations

- Security officials should facilitate, and not hinder or harass, observers from moving around and observing the process;
- Security personnel should be adequately deployed to identified hotspots and flash point areas, and ready response should be available in case of incidents outbreak;
- Security personnel on election duty should wear identifiable tags. No security official on election duty should wear masks;
- Security agencies should make available to the public readily reachable contact numbers in case of emergency;
- Use of force on civilians should be lawful, appropriate and only as a last resort;
- The Police Service Commission, Office of the National Security Adviser, the National Human Rights Commission and relevant agencies should monitor the conduct of security agencies and ensure that they perform their electoral duties professionally. Misconduct should be sanctioned.