

**Research Article**

## **The 2019 Governorship Elections in Nigeria and Pathology of Voters' Apathy**

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**Received:** March 15, 2024

**Accepted:** April 05, 2024

**Published:** April 14, 2024

### **Abstract**

The question of how democratic African states are faring democratically has been raging since the years after imperialism and Nigeria is not excluded. For a state to be regarded as democratic it has to fulfill certain tenets such as regular elections where the people's choice will be put in power. However in cases where the people feels like their right are being repressed then loss of interest is sure which inevitably leads to voters apathy which if not curtailed will grow to cover large percentage of the population. The study determines why voter apathy is on the rise; specifically it investigates voters' apathy in the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria. Voters' apathy is defined as loss of interest in voting during election by citizens. And this study seeks to find out why. Content analysis was adopted through the use of journals, books, newspaper articles and other secondary sources data collection in other to adequately explain the issue of voters' apathy especially in the Fourth Republic. The study also adopts the elite theory in other to examine the Nigerian state in a broader perspective stating that the Nigerian state is controlled by a small minority call the elite rather the people which made up the vast majority of the country. The study prove that voter apathy have been persistent in the Nigerian governorship elections and had its highest percentage in the just concluded 2019 governorship elections due to high level of corruption and political bigotry which exist in the electoral process which do not allow for true democracy. The study recommends that the electoral management body INEC, should be independent from political control, that way they will be able to carry out their duties without fear or favour. The paper concluded by stating that election is very pivotal to democracy and for voters' apathy to be curbed, elections have to be free and fair.

**Keywords:** Voters Apathy, Democracy, Election, INEC, Elite Theory.

### **Introduction**

The issue of voters' apathy which refers to a lack of interest among voters in participating in an election have become a major concern. Globally, there has been a decline in voter turnout over the past few decades, despite an increase in the number of elections held. This trend is evident in both established democracies and newly formed ones (World Bank, 2017). In Nigeria, voters' apathy is a growing concern, despite the significance of elections in shaping government policies and representation (Molutsi and Singh, 2013). Factors contributing to this apathy include distrust in government, failure of elected officials to fulfill campaign promises, fear of intimidation or violence during elections, poor governance, and inadequate political education. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is criticized for its low level of voter education and insufficient efforts to mobilize voters, leading to a significant number of unclaimed voter's cards.

Historically, Nigeria has experienced a decline in political participation since gaining independence in 1960, which is attributed to an unfavorable political atmosphere and insecurity. This trend poses a challenge to Nigeria's democratic process and calls for concerted efforts from various stakeholders to address voter apathy and enhance political participation. This study reflects on Nigeria's general elections as it concern the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria which were pivotal in the nation's democratic journey. As the most populous country in Africa and often hailed as the giant of the continent, Nigeria's electoral processes are closely watched both domestically and internationally. However, despite the significance of these elections, they were marred by a pervasive issue: voters' apathy. This phenomenon, deeply entrenched in the fabric of Nigerian politics, poses a significant challenge to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the democratic process.

The situation is worrisome and should be a source of concern to all stakeholders including the electoral management body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society groups, political parties' leaders, intellectuals, political scientists, public affair analysts, politicians, and electorates, and among different levels of government in contemporary times. It is therefore the focus of this paper to dialectically analyze this growing trend in Nigeria's political history with respect to the 2019 governorship elections and proffer possible solutions. We will particularly highlight enablers of voters' apathy among the electorates in the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria; situate its implications on the development trajectory of Nigeria's democracy, as well as assess the role of INEC in reducing voting apathy among the electorates for democratic development in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study discusses the increasing decline in voter turnout during elections in Nigeria over the years, highlighting a significant drop from 52.3% in 1999 to 34.74% in 2019. This decline is seen as problematic for democracy, especially considering Nigeria's large population. Factors contributing to voters' apathy include poor electoral processes, psychological factors, historical and contemporary events, lack of trust in government, insecurity, and fear of intimidation, illiteracy, poverty, and government failure to provide basic needs. The study thus aims to examine the implications of voters' apathy in the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria, given the lack of sustained scholarly attention on this issue.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine voter apathy in the 2019 governorship elections held across states of the Nigeria federation. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Examine the causes of voter apathy in the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria.
- 2) Analyze the role of corruption and political bigotry on political apathy.
- 3) Evaluate the impact of electoral management on democratic development in Nigeria.
- 4) Examine the implications of voting apathy on the development of Nigeria's democracy.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Democracy**

Even though it is difficult to reach a consensus on the definition of democracy the main idea of democracy is widely believed to have originated from Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the hands of the people, either directly or through their elected representatives, and where decisions are made through majority rule while protecting the rights of minorities. It encompasses principles such as political equality, freedom of speech and assembly, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Dahl (1971) defines democracy as a political system characterized by "the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals." According to Dahl, democracy requires not only free and fair elections but also institutions that facilitate meaningful participation, deliberation, and accountability.

Similarly, Held (2006) emphasizes the importance of participation and deliberation in democracy. He argues that democracy is more than just a system of periodic elections; it involves active citizen's engagement, public debates, and the protection of civil liberties. Held stresses the value of pluralism and tolerance in democratic societies, where diverse perspectives are respected and accommodated. Invariably, democracy is a form of government that prioritizes the participation, equality, and freedom of its citizens, underpinned by principles of accountability, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

#### **Concept of Election**

In the article titled functions of election in a democratic system Azeen and Hossien (2008), stated that election is considered as an efficient mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power and stabilization of the rule of the people in the democratic system. An election refers to a formal process where citizens cast their votes to choose representatives or decide on specific issues, often within a democratic system. Elections serve as a mechanism for citizens to participate in governance and exercise their democratic rights. According to Norris (2004), elections are crucial components of democratic governance, providing citizens with opportunities to express their preferences, hold elected officials accountable, and peacefully transfer political power. He emphasized the role of elections in promoting political legitimacy and fostering social cohesion by allowing citizens to collectively determine the direction of their societies.

Furthermore, Keyssar (2009) discusses the historical evolution of elections in the United States, emphasizing their significance in shaping the country's political landscape. Keyssar highlights the expansion of suffrage

rights and the struggles for inclusion and equality in the electoral process, underscoring how elections have been instrumental in advancing democratic ideals and expanding political participation. In the final analysis elections are fundamental to democratic governance, serving as mechanisms for citizen participation, representation, and accountability.

### **Concept of Voters' Apathy**

Voter apathy refers to lack of interest, enthusiasm, or motivation among eligible voters to participate in elections or engage in the political process. It manifests as low voter turnout rates, disengagement from political discussions, and indifference towards civic duties such as voting.

### **Literature and Theoretical Review**

#### **Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Perspective Analysis**

Nigeria grapples with numerous governance challenges, particularly evident in the pre-and post-election crises that accompany its democratic processes. The 1999, 2003, and 2007 general elections in Nigeria exemplify these challenges (Ibrahim and Egwu, 2007; INEC and FES, 2011). These elections were marred by irregularities raising doubts about the country's ability to withstand ensuing crises (Ikenga, 2020). However, despite the volatile political climate, Nigeria has managed to endure. Yet, concerns persist about the erosion of democracy and recurring electoral brinkmanship (INEC and FES, 2011). The elections of 1999 and 2003 marked transitions from military to civilian rule, symbolizing a shift towards democracy (INEC and FES, 2011). Conversely, the 2007 elections appeared to redress democratic gains (INEC and FES, 2011). The 2011 elections, however, represented redemption, hinting at the potential for democratic consolidation. The 2015 elections were anticipated to solidify democracy after sixteen years of uninterrupted civil rule, a rarity in many developing nations (INEC and FES, 2011).

Scholars argue that the electoral processes and their aftermath significantly impact Nigeria's democracy, national stability, and development (INEC and FES, 2011). The poor conduct of elections results in unsuitable individuals assuming governance roles, undermining governance quality (Sari, 2023). Consequently, the quality of governance and service delivery hinges on the electoral process's integrity (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022). In examining Nigeria's electoral and governance issues, pertinent questions arise regarding the nature of elections since 1999, their contribution to stability and good governance, challenges in conducting credible elections, the link between elections and the state's character, and strategies to ensure transparent elections and good governance (Ikenga and Agah, 2020). Studies highlight various aspects of elections and governance in Nigeria, emphasizing issues such as second elections, human rights abuses, election quality, and lessons from past elections (INEC and FES, 2011; Ikenga and Obagbinoko, 2017). Additionally, elections and post-election conflicts serve as crucial instruments for peace-building, especially in countries emerging from social upheaval (Nwobashi, 2015). From a theoretical standpoint, liberal democracy's principles are scrutinized, with critiques challenging its practical implementation (Ake, 2000). Scholars advocate for a shift towards social democracy, emphasizing political inclusiveness and popular participation as core democratic tenets (Ake, 2000). Democracy, in its modern sense, necessitates representative governance, allowing the populace to select leaders transparently (Birch, 2007).

Governance, essential for political and economic realms, is defined neutrally by the World Bank as the management of a nation's affairs (Ikenga and Chima, 2021). Good governance, a subset, entails upholding the rule of law and providing basic necessities (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022). However, contextual influences shape governance frameworks, such as the emergence of 'good governance' amidst economic reforms (Olukoshi and Agbu, 2000). Elections, fundamental to democracy and governance, witness declining voter turnout due to political apathy. Apathy stems from dissatisfaction with politicians or the political process, necessitating electoral reforms to address these issues. Transparent leadership and political will are pivotal for fostering mature representative politics. In conclusion, elections serve as linchpins for democracy, democratization, and good governance, necessitating robust electoral management to enhance voter turnout and democratic outcomes (INEC and FES, 2011). By ensuring transparent and competitive processes, electoral bodies can bolster citizens' trust in the democratic process (Bailey, 2006).

#### **The Pathology of Voters' Apathy in Nigeria's General Elections**

One study by Blais *et al.*, (2004) found that voter apathy is often influenced by factors such as perceptions of political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and levels of political trust. These researchers conducted surveys and analyses in Canada to investigate the reasons behind declining voter turnout. They concluded that voter apathy stemmed from citizens feeling disconnected from the political system, perceiving their vote as insignificant and lacking faith in the effectiveness of political institutions. Another study by Plutzer and

Wattenberg (2001) explored the phenomenon of voter apathy among young Americans. They found that factors such as mobility, lack of political socialization, and distrust in government institutions contributed to low levels of political engagement among young voters. This study highlighted the importance of addressing structural and cultural barriers to civic participation to combat voter apathy. Does the Nigerian situation conform to this? Looking back at the voting patterns in Nigeria throughout its history reveals varying levels of voters' participation during general elections. The 1959 general elections hold significant importance in Nigeria's electoral narrative as they marked a crucial milestone in the country's journey towards political independence. Held on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1959, in anticipation of independence in October 1960, these elections saw a notable turnout. According to the Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (2006), out of the 9,043,404 registered voters, 7,189,797, or 75%, cast their votes. This turnout, considered impressive, was attributed to a combination of social and political pressures, along with administrative efforts by regional governments and local authorities, urging citizens to participate in the electoral process. However, despite concerted administrative actions across regions to encourage voter turnout, the outcomes varied. For example, Lagos, then the Federal Capital Territory, recorded a turnout of 76.2%.

However, since the 1959 general elections, voter turnout has been less impressive. For example, all stages of the 1979 elections were characterized by low voter's turnout, with 34% of voters voting in the presidential election, 28.8% in the senate and 30.7% in the House of Representatives elections. Although, there was a marginal increase in the 1983 elections, the turnout was still very low such that in the presidential elections, for example, only 25,430,096 out of the 65,304,818 registered voters cast their votes, which amounts to 38% (Yusufu, 2012). The turnout for the senate elections of 1992 was 39% and presidential election of 1993, it was 37%. The low turnout can be explained by the high level of inconsistency and apparently endless transition programme under the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration, which tended to reduce the level of public trust in the transition. Prior to the 1999 general elections, there were 57,938,945 registered voters by INEC, but it was only 30,280,052 that cast their votes, which represents 52.3% (Ibeogu and Nkwede, 2015). However, the voter turnout rose to 69.1% in 2003 elections. That year, INEC had 60,823,022 registered voters, out of which 42,018,735 turned out and cast their votes with 39,480,489 valid votes and 2,538,246 invalid votes. He further revealed that the turnout in 2003 represented an increase of 16.8%. In 2007, available records showed that there were 61,566,648 registered voters by INEC, out of which 35,419,262 voters representing 57.4% were said to have voted. This represented a drop in the voter turnout of 11.04%. The voter turnout again dropped further to 53.7% in the 2011 presidential election when INEC had 73,528,040 registered voters, but only 39,469,484 of them turnout for the poll, with 38,209,978 valid votes and 1,259,506 invalid votes. This represented a drop of 4.36%. The situation was same in 2015, when only 29,432,083 voters, which was 43.6% out of the 67,422,005 registered voters turned out and cast their votes. That year, there were 28,587,564 valid votes and 844,519 invalid votes, thereby dropping by 10.1%.

Finally, in the 2019 general elections, only 34.75% of voters voted, representing 28,614,190 electorates who cast their votes during the elections, out of the 82,344,107 registered voters (The News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). Most worrisome is that the 2019 Nigeria's general elections was riddled with fear because of intimidation, harassment, violence, arson, maiming, especially in some states like Rivers, Delta, Benue, Akwa-Ibom, Kano, Kaduna among others. Acrimonious politics has been part of the Nigeria's political culture with the use of political thugs and security personnel to harass and intimidate voters thereby creating fear in the hearts of the eligible voters (Ikenga and Obagbinoko, 2017). As a result, many lose interest in politics. Some people believe that since politics is violence prone, the involvement in the process may lead to loss of their lives or properties (Mikalú and Yaqub, 2003).

Scholars have explained that bad governance has manifested in all areas and spheres of life in Nigeria. Many Nigerian leaders are not accountable to the people, they are not truly representative of and responsive to the people's interests (Ikenga and Chima, 2021; Ikenga *et al.*, 2022). What borders them most is the welfare of their immediate ethnic or sectional origin, region, family or relatives and that of their few friends. Nigeria citizens and electorates are suffering; many people are being killed unjustly on a daily basis, properties are being destroyed, while billions of naira are siphoned from public treasury to private realms or stashed abroad (Ejumudo and Ikenga, 2015). This situation makes people less concerned about the political affairs. These have been demonstrated in the declining interests of Nigerians to register and vote from 1999 to 2019.

Nwabashi (2015) espoused that electoral fraud, such as rigging has been a permanent features of Nigerian politics in contemporary time. The electoral process in this democratic dispensation has often been associated with fraud, rigging and other forms of manipulation. Some people even believe that since the

election is hardly free and fair, as it is always rigged by the incumbent government, the powerful or affluent politicians there is no need of participating in such a process. The fact that elections are usually rigged in favour of certain candidates or ruling party, encourages political apathy because people see it as a mere waste of time even if they get involved in such activities.

The issues highlighted above, among others, such as bad leadership, imposition of candidates, intra and inter party crisis, insecurity (Ikenga and Agah, 2020), racial or tribal segregation, religious fanaticism, lack of infrastructural development, political instability, and arbitrariness of the ruling government constrains political participation thereby contributing to voting apathy among the Nigerian electorates as demonstrated in the 2019 general elections.

**Table 1.** Summary of voter turnout in Nigeria’s general elections, 1959–2019.

Elections		Registered voters	Turnout	Percent
1959	General election	9,043,404	7,189,797	75.50%
1979	Presidential election	48,633,782	16,846,633	34.00%
1979	Senate election	48,633,782	12,532,195	25.80%
1979	Reps election	48,633,782	14,941,782	30.70%
1983	Presidential election	65,304,818	25,430,096	38.00%
1983	Senate election	65,304,818	Not available	Not available
1983	Reps election	65,304,818	Not available	Not available
1992	Senate election	36,923,571	14,716,074	37.00%
1992	Reps election	36,923,571	15,329,670	41.00%
1993	Presidential election	37,826,460	14,321,963	37.00%
1999	Presidential election	57,838,945	30,280,052	52.30%
1999	Senate election	57,838,945	24,386,427	42.11%
1999	Reps election	57,838,945	23,573,407	40.70%
2003	Presidential election	60,823,022	42,018,738	69.10%
2003	Senate election	60,823,022	29,995,171	49.30%
2003	Reps election	60,823,022	30,386,270	50.00%
2007	General election	61,566,648	35,419,262	57.4%
2011	General election	75,528,040	39,469,484	53.7%
2015	General election	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.6%
2019	General election	82,344,107	28,614,190	34.75%
Source: Omotola and Aiyedogbon (2012); Sanni (2019); The News Agency of Nigeria (2019).				

**Theoretical Framework**

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, empirical studies of elite power, pioneered by theorists like Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto have supplemented normative elitism. Robert Michel’s “iron law of oligarchy” attributed elite dominance to organizational features of modern politics, influenced by Max Weber. Despite Michel’s own egalitarian sympathies, he concluded that democracy was the end but not the means. These scholars saw elite theory, as a perspective that sees societies as ruled by a small number of elites who hold power and make decisions that shape society. These elites may come from various backgrounds such as political, economic, or social spheres. Applying elite theory to the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria and the issue of voter apathy provides insight into how elite manipulation and disenchantment with the political process contribute to low voter turnout.

In the context of the 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria, elite theory suggests that political power is concentrated within a small group of political elites who vie for control over governmental institutions and resources. These elites often belong to political parties or influential families and wield considerable influence over the electoral process, including candidate selection, campaign financing, and media coverage. One aspect of elite theory relevant to understanding voter apathy is the concept of political alienation. When citizens feel disconnected from the political process or believe that their participation will not make a difference, they are less likely to engage in voting or other forms of political participation. In Nigeria, factors such as widespread corruption, political violence, and a lack of accountability have contributed to a sense of alienation among many citizens, leading to voter apathy. Elite manipulation also plays a significant role in exacerbating voter apathy. Political elites may engage in tactics such as voter suppression, electoral fraud, or misinformation campaigns to discourage participation among certain demographic groups or to manipulate election outcomes in their favor. For example, reports of violence and irregularities during the 2019

governorship elections in Nigeria may have contributed to disillusionment and disengagement among voters.

Furthermore, elite capture of the electoral process can undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions and erode public trust in the political system. When citizens perceive that elections are neither free nor fair, they may become disillusioned with the idea of democracy altogether, leading to increased apathy and disengagement from the political process. To this end to address voter apathy and strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria, it is essential to address the underlying issues of elite domination, political alienation, and electoral manipulation.

**Data Analysis**

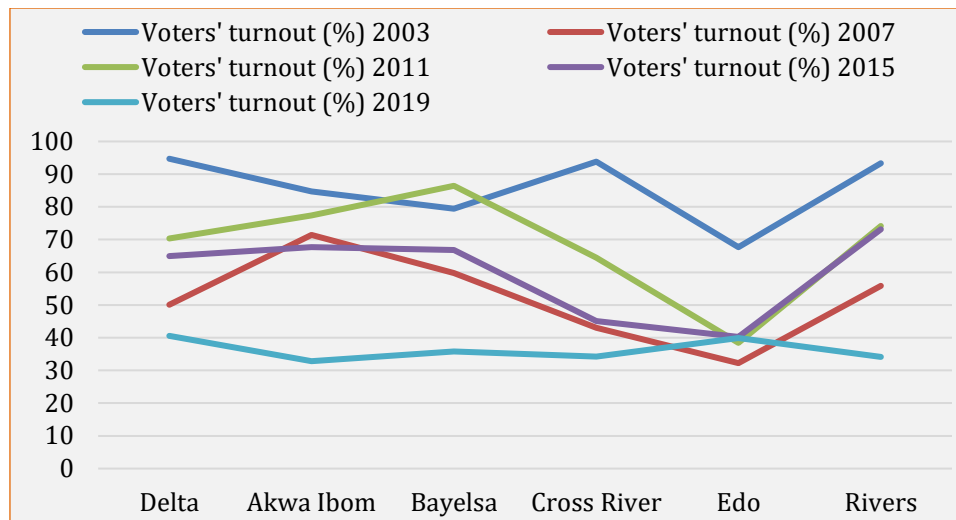
Data presentation was done based on secondary sources of data collected from journals, newspapers and other online sources for this study. The data reflected the six geopolitical zones, which are South-South, South-East, South-West, North Central, North East and North West.

**Table 2.** Voters register in 2019 governorship election in South-South.

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Delta	1,607,337	2,032,191	2,933,491	1,939,952	2,845,274
Akwa Ibom	1,624,495	1,616,873	1,676,973	1,587,566	2,119,727
Bayelsa	765,472	591,870	594,879	548,585	943,182
Cross River	1,289,192	1,148,486	1,198,496	983,968	1,527,289
Edo	1,432,891	1,655,776	1,635,776	1,230,566	2,210,537
Rivers	2,272,238	2,429,231	2,439,233	2,127,837	3,215,273
Voters turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Delta	94.72	50.11	70.37	64.97	40.57
Akwa Ibom	84.76	71.42	77.42	67.73	32.83
Bayelsa	79.4	59.76	86.44	66.79	35.8
Cross River	93.81	43.07	64.45	45.05	34.19
Edo	67.68	32.23	38.43	40.25	39.89
Rivers	93.36	55.81	74.20	73.14	34.16
Source: <a href="http://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en">www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria">www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria</a> <a href="http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2">www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2</a> <a href="http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng">www.nigeriastate.gov.ng</a>					

From the data in table 2 above on the various states in the South-South zone, it shows an indication of a continuous declining voters’ participation from the 2003 elections to the 2019 elections across the states. It shows that:

Delta State: 2003: 94.72% turnout with 1,607,337 registered voters; 2007: 50.11% turnout with 2,032,191 registered voters; 2011: 70.37% turnout with 2,933,491 registered voters; 2015: 64.97% turnout with 1,939,952 registered voters; 2019: 40.57% turnout with 2,845,274 registered voters. Akwa Ibom State: 2003: 84.76% turnout with 1,624,495 registered voters; 2007: 71.42% turnout with 1,616,873 registered voters; 2011: 77.42% turnout with 1,676,973 registered voters; 2015: 67.73% turnout with 1,587,566 registered voters; 2019: 32.83% turnout with 2,119,727 registered voters. Bayelsa State: 2003: 79.4% turnout with 765,472 registered voters; 2007: 59.76% turnout with 591,870 registered voters; 2011: 86.44% turnout with 594,879 registered voters; 2015: 66.79% turnout with 548,585 registered voters; 2019: 35.8% turnout with 943,182 registered voters. Cross River State: 2003: 93.81% turnout with 1,289,192 registered voters; 2007: 43.07% turnout with 1,148,486 registered voters; 2011: 64.45% turnout with 1,198,496 registered voters; 2015: 45.05% turnout with 983,968 registered voters; 2019: 34.19% turnout with 1,527,289 registered voters. Edo State: 2003: 67.68% turnout with 1,432,891 registered voters; 2007: 32.23% turnout with 1,655,776 registered voters; 2011: 38.43% turnout with 1,635,776 registered voters; 2015: 40.25% turnout with 1,230,566 registered voters; 2019: 39.89% turnout with 2,210,537 registered voters. Rivers State: 2003: 93.36% turnout with 2,272,238 registered voters; 2007: 55.81% turnout with 2,429,231 registered voters; 2011: 74.20% turnout with 2,439,233 registered voters; 2015: 73.14% turnout with 2,127,837 registered voters; 2019: 34.16% turnout with 3,215,273 registered voters.



**Figure 1.** Voters' turnout in previous governorship elections in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

The above graph shows that in 2003 election people were very interested in voting, it was the second voting season after the return to democracy in 1999, however there was a reduction in voter turnout in 2007, a little increase in 2011, but there was a decline in 2015 and worse of which was 2019 where the voting percentage did not even hit an average of fifty percent.

**Table 3.** Voters' register in 2019 governorship election in South-East.

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Abia	1,285,428	1,524,484	1,624,484	1,183,127	1,932,892
Anambra	1,859,795	2,011,746	2,911,745	1,658,967	3,447,996
Ebonyi	1,002,771	1,050,534	1,250,534	848,392	1,459,933
Enugu	1,479,542	1,303,155	1,303,465	1,223,606	1,944,015
Imo	1,630,474	1,687,293	1,597,273	1,707,449	2,272,493
Voters turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Abia	64.2	50.46	78.75	32.26	22.42
Anambra	78.72	2.45	56.36	40.91	32.42
Ebonyi	76.66	37.25	49.07	40.45	30.02
Enugu	76.46	38.56	63.49	46.35	36.75
Imo	96.25	41.93	84.54	40.55	31.43
Source: <a href="http://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en">www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria">www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria</a> <a href="http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2">www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2</a> <a href="http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng">www.nigeriastate.gov.ng</a>					

From the data in table 3 above on the various states in the South-East zone, it shows an indication of fluctuations of rate of voters' participation from the 2003 elections to the 2019 elections across the states. It shows that:

Abia State: 2003: 64.2% turnout with 1,285,428 registered voters; 2007: 50.46% turnout with 1,524,484 registered voters; 2011: 78.75% turnout with 1,624,484 registered voters; 2015: 32.26% turnout with 1,183,127 registered voters; 2019: 22.42% turnout with 1,932,892 registered voters. Anambra State: 2003: 78.72% turnout with 1,859,795 registered voters; 2007: 2.45% turnout with 2,011,746 registered voters; 2011: 56.36% turnout with 2,911,745 registered voters; 2015: 40.91% turnout with 1,658,967 registered voters; 2019: 32.42% turnout with 3,447,996 registered voters. Ebonyi State: 2003: 76.66% turnout with 1,002,771 registered voters; 2007: 37.25% turnout with 1,050,534 registered voters; 2011: 49.07% turnout with 1,250,534 registered voters; 2015: 40.45% turnout with 848,392 registered voters; 2019: 30.02% turnout with 1,459,933 registered voters. Enugu State: 2003: 76.46% turnout with 1,479,542 registered voters; 2007: 38.56% turnout with 1,303,155 registered voters; 2011: 63.49% turnout with 1,303,465 registered voters; 2015: 46.35% turnout with 1,223,606 registered voters; 2019: 36.75% turnout with 1,944,015 registered voters. Imo State: 2003: 96.25% turnout with 1,630,474 registered voters; 2007:

41.93% turnout with 1,687,293 registered voters; 2011: 84.54% turnout with 1,597,273 registered voters; 2015: 40.55% turnout with 1,707,449 registered voters; 2019: 31.43% turnout with 2,272,493 registered voters.

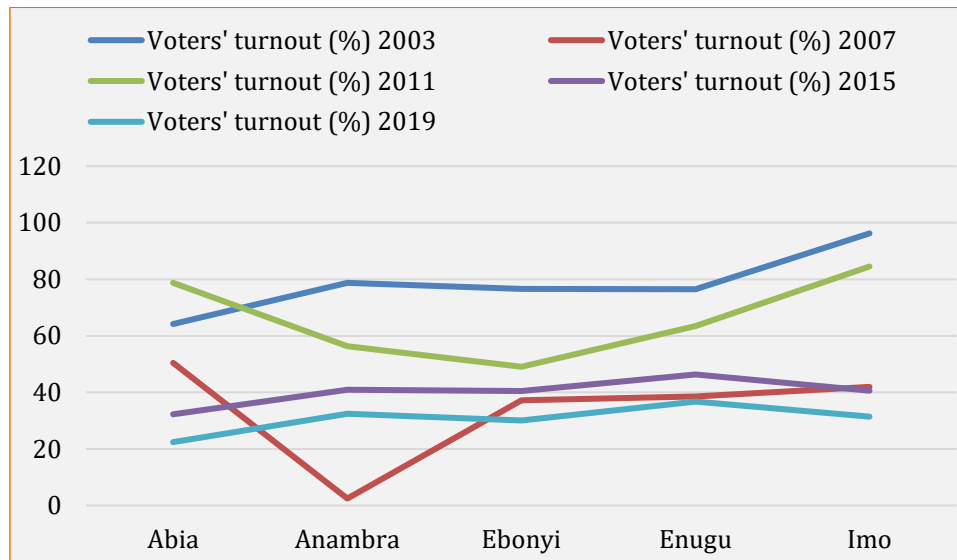


Figure 2. Voters' turnout in previous governorship elections in South-East geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

In 2007 as against 2003 voter outcome, there was a sharp decrease in the voter turnout, a little increase occur in 2011, but in 2015 there was yet another fall and 2019 experience a worse decline than 2015.

Table 4. Voters register in 2019 governorship election in South-West.

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Ekiti	981,753	764,726	674,672	522,107	909,957
Lagos	4,558,216	6,108,069	5,198,039	3,799,274	6,570,291
Ogun	1,576,876	1,941,170	1,741,370	1,125,657	2,375,003
Ondo	1,504,181	1,616,091	1,815,091	1,118,479	1,822,346
Osun	1,367,627	1,293,967	1,173,952	1,033,229	1,680,498
Oyo	2,209,953	2,573,140	2,352,541	1,639,967	2,934,107
Voters turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Ekiti	23.41	46.65	36.87	56.46	21.92
Lagos	72.88	0.77	33.06	37.50	14.88
Ogun	69.53	36.66	29.41	45.8	28.67
Ondo	53.98	32.44	30.89	49.29	32.36
Osun	58.60	43.58	51.80	61.32	32.9
Oyo	74.06	44.98	35.02	50.73	31.24
Source: <a href="https://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en">www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria">www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria</a> <a href="http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2">www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2</a> <a href="http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng">www.nigeriastate.gov.ng</a>					

From the data in table 4 above on the various states in the South-West zone, it shows a fluctuating outlook of 2003 with voters' turnout in the South West States not encouraging especially in Ekiti State. The 2019 turnout was more worrisome across the states. It shows that:

Ekiti State: 2003: 23.41% turnout with 981,753 registered voters; 2007: 46.65% turnout with 764,726 registered voters; 2011: 36.87% turnout with 674,672 registered voters; 2015: 56.46% turnout with 522,107 registered voters; 2019: 21.92% turnout with 909,957 registered voters. Lagos State: 2003: 72.88% turnout with 4,558,216 registered voters; 2007: 0.77% turnout with 6,108,069 registered voters; 2011: 33.06% turnout with 5,198,039 registered voters; 2015: 37.50% turnout with 3,799,274 registered voters; 2019: 14.88% turnout with 6,570,291 registered voters. Ogun State: 2003: 69.53% turnout with 1,576,876



registered voters; 2007: 36.66% turnout with 1,941,170 registered voters; 2011: 29.41% turnout with 1,741,370 registered voters; 2015: 45.8% turnout with 1,125,657 registered voters; 2019: 28.67% turnout with 2,375,003 registered voters. Ondo State: 2003: 53.98% turnout with 1,504,181 registered voters; 2007: 32.44% turnout with 1,616,091 registered voters; 2011: 30.89% turnout with 1,815,091 registered voters; 2015: 49.29% turnout with 1,118,479 registered voters; 2019: 32.36% turnout with 1,822,346 registered voters. Osun State: 2003: 58.60% turnout with 1,367,627 registered voters; 2007: 43.58% turnout with 1,293,967 registered voters; 2011: 51.80% turnout with 1,173,952 registered voters; 2015: 61.32% turnout with 1,033,229 registered voters; 2019: 32.9% turnout with 1,680,498 registered voters. Oyo State: 2003: 74.06% turnout with 2,209,953 registered voters; 2007: 44.98% turnout with 2,573,140 registered voters; 2011: 35.02% turnout with 2,352,541 registered voters; 2015: 50.73% turnout with 1,639,967 registered voters; 2019: 31.24% turnout with 2,934,107 registered voters.

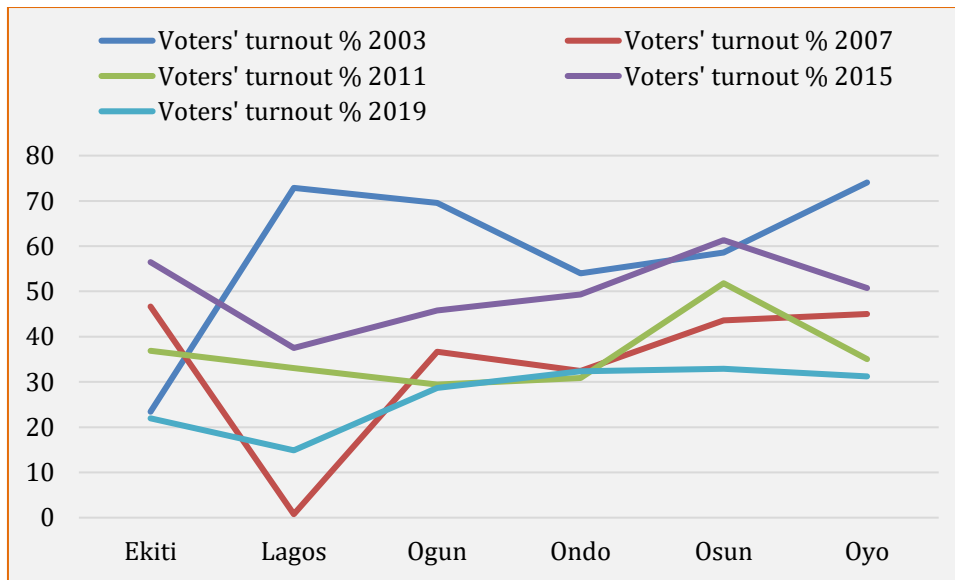


Figure 3. Voters' turnout in previous governorship elections in South-West geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

In 2003 the voters' turnout in the South West States were not commendable especially in Ekiti State which had only 23.41 percent of voter turnout, however Ekiti experience an increase in 2007 while other states had a sharp decline in voter turnout. 2011 was worst as all the state had a down turn in voter turnout although there was a little improvement in 2015 for the South West States. 2019 proved to be more pathetic as the states experience another down turn in voter turnout.

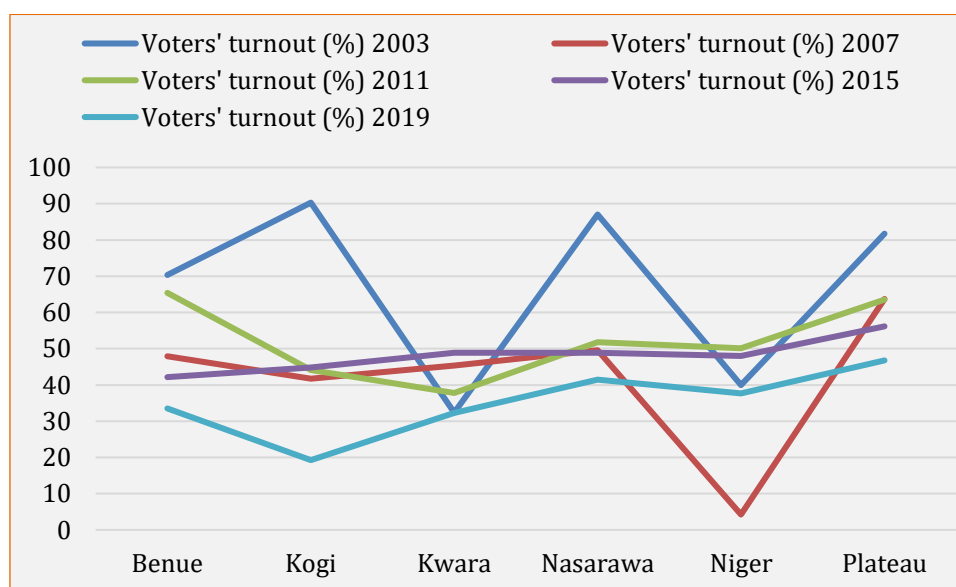
Table 5. Voters register in 2019 governorship election in North-Central.

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Benue	1,755,528	2,390,884	2,270,662	1,607,800	2,480,131
Kogi	1,158,383	1,316,849	1,316,849	926,013	1,646,350
Kwara	995,882	1,152,361	1,053,241	889,067	1,406,457
Nasarawa	852,626	1,389,308	1,264,298	1,048,053	1,617,786
Niger	1,607,730	2,175,421	2,169,002	1,682,058	2,390,035
Plateau	1,391,594	2,259,194	1,259,164	1,508,585	2,480,455
Voters' turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Benue	70.30	47.88	65.40	42.15	33.54
Kogi	90.29	41.68	44.15	44.80	19.25
Kwara	32.36	45.30	37.78	48.90	32.26
Nasarawa	87.01	49.57	51.80	48.90	41.47
Niger	39.95	4.24	50.13	47.97	37.69
Plateau	81.69	63.72	63.52	56.15	46.76

Source: [www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en](http://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en)  
[www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria](http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria)  
[www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2](http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2)  
[www.nigeriastate.gov.ng](http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng)

In table 5 above 2003 recorded a high turnout for the North Central States except for Kwara and Niger State which had 32.3 and 39.9 per cent respectively, the other states have high voters' turnout, and however the subsequent years marked a significant decline in turnout. It shows that:

Benue State: 2003: 70.30% turnout with 1,755,528 registered voters; 2007: 47.88% turnout with 2,390,884 registered voters; 2011: 65.40% turnout with 2,270,662 registered voters; 2015: 42.15% turnout with 1,607,800 registered voters; 2019: 33.54% turnout with 2,480,131 registered voters. Kogi State: 2003: 90.29% turnout with 1,158,383 registered voters; 2007: 41.68% turnout with 1,316,849 registered voters; 2011: 44.15% turnout with 1,316,849 registered voters; 2015: 44.80% turnout with 926,013 registered voters; 2019: 19.25% turnout with 1,646,350 registered voters. Kwara State: 2003: 32.36% turnout with 995,882 registered voters; 2007: 45.30% turnout with 1,152,361 registered voters; 2011: 37.78% turnout with 1,053,241 registered voters; 2015: 48.90% turnout with 889,067 registered voters; 2019: 32.26% turnout with 1,406,457 registered voters. Nasarawa State: 2003: 87.01% turnout with 852,626 registered voters; 2007: 49.57% turnout with 1,389,308 registered voters; 2011: 51.80% turnout with 1,264,298 registered voters; 2015: 48.90% turnout with 1,048,053 registered voters; 2019: 41.47% turnout with 1,617,786 registered voters. Niger State: 2003: 39.95% turnout with 1,607,730 registered voters; 2007: 4.24% turnout with 2,175,421 registered voters; 2011: 50.13% turnout with 2,169,002 registered voters; 2015: 47.97% turnout with 1,682,058 registered voters; 2019: 37.69% turnout with 2,390,035 registered voters. Plateau State: 2003: 81.69% turnout with 1,391,594 registered voters; 2007: 63.72% turnout with 2,259,194 registered voters; 2011: 63.52% turnout with 1,259,164 registered voters; 2015: 56.15% turnout with 1,508,585 registered voters; 2019: 46.76% turnout with 2,480,455 registered voters.



**Figure 4.** Voters' turnout in previous governorship elections in North-Central geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

2003 was a high turnout for the North Central States except for Kwara and Niger State which had 32.3 and 39.9 per cent respectively, the other states have high voters' turnout, and however in 2007 the states faced a sharp decline apart from Kwara which had a little improvement to 45.3 percent. In 2011 all the states experienced little improvement, in 2015 however they faced little decline but 2019 crowned it all with the States' sharp decline in voters' turnout.

In table 6 below the North East States experienced a high voter turnout in 2003, however in 2007 there was a sharp decline in the outcome. Although in 2011 there was a little rise, subsequently in 2015 there was yet another fall in voters' turnout with a further fluctuation in turnout 2019. Thus it shows that:

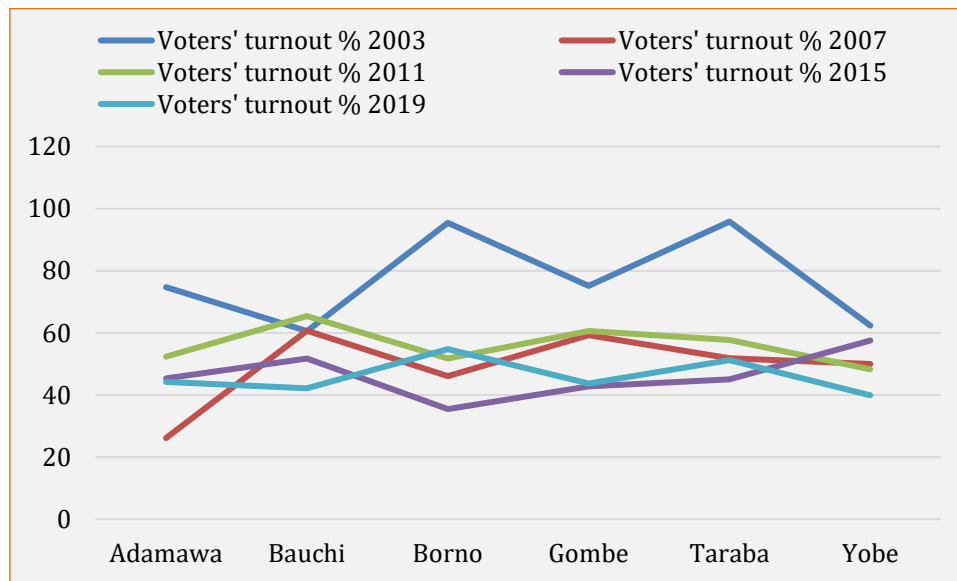
Adamawa State: 2003: 74.70% turnout with 1,280,204 registered voters; 2007: 26.14% turnout with 1,816,094 registered voters; 2011: 52.36% turnout with 1,716,490 registered voters; 2015: 45.34% turnout with 1,381,571 registered voters; 2019: 44.16% turnout with 1,973,083 registered voters. Bauchi State: 2003: 60.56% turnout with 2,130,557 registered voters; 2007: 60.70% turnout with 2,523,614 registered voters; 2011: 65.40% turnout with 2,532,112 registered voters; 2015: 51.74% turnout with 1,967,081 registered voters; 2019: 42.16% turnout 2,462,843 register voters. Borno State: 2003: 95.46% turnout with 2,156,019 registered voters; 2007: 46.02% turnout with 2,380,957 registered voters; 2011: 51.36% turnout

with 2,420,911 registered voters; 2015: 35.46% turnout with 1,407,777 registered voters; 2019: 54.76% turnout with 2,315,956 registered voters. Gombe State: 2003: 75.16% turnout with 1,263,287 registered voters; 2007: 59.25% turnout in with 1,318,377 registered voters; 2011: 60.58% turnout with 1,219,286 registered voters; 2015: 42.79% turnout with 1,070,725 registered voters; 2019: 43.66% turnout with 1,394,393 registered voters.

Taraba State: 2003: 95.82% turnout with 1,026,950 registered voters; 2007: 51.82% turnout with 1,336,221 registered voters; 2011: 57.68% turnout with 1,246,426 registered voters; 2015: 45.02% turnout in 2015 with 1,270,889 registered voters; 2019: 51.19% turnout with 1,777,105 registered voters. Yobe State: 2003: 62.30% turnout with 966,749 registered voters; 2007: 49.99% turnout with 1,373,796 registered voters; 2011: 48.25% turnout with 1,237,967 registered voters; 2015: 57.53% turnout with 824,401 registered voters; 2019: 39.90% turnout with 1,365,913 registered voters.

**Table 6.** Voters register in 2019 governorship election in North-East.

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Adamawa	1,280,204	1,816,094	1,716,490	1,381,571	1,973,083
Bauchi	2,130,557	2,523,614	2,532,112	1,967,081	2,462,843
Borno	2,156,019	2,380,957	2,420,911	1,407,777	2,315,956
Gombe	1,263,287	1,318,377	1,219,286	1,070,725	1,394,393
Taraba	1,026,950	1,336,221	1,246,426	1,270,889	1,777,105
Yobe	966,749	1,373,796	1,237,967	824,401	1,365,913
Voters' turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Adamawa	74.70	26.14	52.36	45.34	44.16
Bauchi	60.56	60.70	65.40	51.74	42.16
Borno	95.46	46.02	51.36	35.46	54.76
Gombe	75.16	59.25	60.58	42.79	43.66
Taraba	95.82	51.82	57.68	45.02	51.19
Yobe	62.30	49.99	48.25	57.53	39.90
Source: <a href="http://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en">www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria">www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria</a> <a href="http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2">www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2</a> <a href="http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng">www.nigeriastate.gov.ng</a>					



**Figure 5.** Voters' turnout in previous governorship elections in North–East geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

In 2003 the North East States experienced a high voter turnout, however in 2007 there was a sharp decline in the outcome. In 2011 there was a little rise, and in 2015 there was yet another fall in voters' turnout but 2019 represented a fluctuation in voter turnout for the North East States where Adamawa, Bauchi and Yobe had a decline while Borno, Gombe and Taraba experienced increase in voters' turnout.

In table 7 below apart from Jigawa that had 49.88 percent of voter turnout the other states in the North-West zone experienced high turnout in 2003 while in 2007 there was many fluctuations where some states experienced a little increase and the other a little decrease, in 2011 there was a general upward movement apart from Kano and Kastina in voter turnout. However subsequently there were decline in turnout in 2015 and 2019. Thus the data shows that:

Jigawa State: 2003: 49.88% turnout with 1,636,657 registered voters; 2007: 54.08% turnout with 2,013,974 registered voters; 2011: 60.32% turnout with 2,016,674 registered voters; 2015: 58.54% turnout with 1,757,658 registered voters; 2019: 53.96% turnout with 2,111,106 registered voters. Kaduna State: 2003: 83.81% turnout with 2,620,999 registered voters; 2007: 66.11% turnout with 3,905,387 registered voters; 2011: 67.46% turnout with 3,916,497 registered voters; 2015: 50.77% turnout with 3,174,519 registered voters; 2019: 48.05% turnout with 3,932,492 registered voters. Kano State: 2003: 77.05% turnout with 400,430 registered voters; 2007: 61.11% turnout with 5,027,297 registered voters; 2011: 54.61% turnout with 5,137,001 registered voters; 2015: 51.55% turnout with 4,112,039 registered voters; 2019: 40.19% turnout with 5,452,747 registered voters.

Kastina State: 2003: 67.01% turnout with 2,527,243 registered voters; 2007: 71.02% turnout with 3,126,898 registered voters; 2011: 54.61% turnout with 1,638,308 registered voters; 2015: 55.17% turnout with 2,620,096 registered voters; 2019: 51.16% turnout with 3,290,290 registered voters. Kebbi State: 2003: 89.70% turnout with 1,343,549 registered voters; 2007: 53.45% turnout with 16,538,308 registered voters; 2011: 60.62% turnout with 1,528,219 registered voters; 2015: 48.73% turnout with 1,372,630 registered voters; 2019: 43.93% turnout with 1,806,231 registered voters. Sokoto State: 2003: 69.97% turnout with 14,766,914 registered voters; 2007: 35.32% turnout with 2,267,509 registered voters; 2011: 42.94% turnout with 2,276,234 registered voters; 2015: 53.97% turnout 1,527,004 registered voters; 2019: 27.53% turnout with 1,903,166 registered voters. Zamfara State: 2003: 72.5% turnout with 1,515,622 registered voters; 2007: 52.81% turnout with 1,424,316 registered voters; 2011: 53.68% turnout with 1,243,796 registered voters; 2015: 52.74% turnout with 1,435,452 registered voters; 2019: 46.13% turnout with 1,717,128 registered voters.

**Table 7. Voters register in 2019 governorship election in North-West.**

State	Registered voters				
	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Jigawa	1,636,657	2,013,974	2,016,674	1,757,658	2,111,106
Kaduna	2,620,999	3,905,387	3,916,497	3,174,519	3,932,492
Kano	400,430	5,027,297	5,137,001	4,112,039	5,452,747
Kastina	2,527,243	3,126,898	1,638,308	2,620,096	3,290,290
Kebbi	1,343,549	16,538,308	1,528,219	1,372,630	1,806,231
Sokoto	14,766,914	2,267,509	2,276,234	1,527,004	1,903,166
Zamfara	1,515,622	1,424,316	1,243,796	1,435,452	1,717,128
Voters' turnout (%)					
State	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Jigawa	49.88	54.08	60.32	58.54	53.96
Kaduna	83.81	66.11	67.46	50.77	48.05
Kano	77.05	61.11	54.61	51.55	40.19
Kastina	67.01	71.02	54.61	55.17	51.16
Kebbi	89.70	53.45	60.62	48.73	43.93
Sokoto	69.97	35.32	42.94	53.97	27.53
Zamfara	72.5	52.81	53.68	52.74	46.13
Source: <a href="https://www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en">www.twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1098594371581165569?lang=en</a> <a href="http://www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria">www.africaupdate2003electionnigeria</a> <a href="http://www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2">www.proshareng.com/economyelection/2</a> <a href="http://www.nigeriastate.gov.ng">www.nigeriastate.gov.ng</a>					

In 2003 apart from Jigawa that had 49.88 percent of voter turnout the other states in the zone experienced high waters in voter turnout, in 2007 there was many fluctuations where some states experienced a little increase and the other a little decrease, in 2011 there was a general upward movement apart from Kano and Kastina in voter turnout, in 2015 there was a decline in voter turnout, in 2019 election there was a further downward flow of the voter turnout.

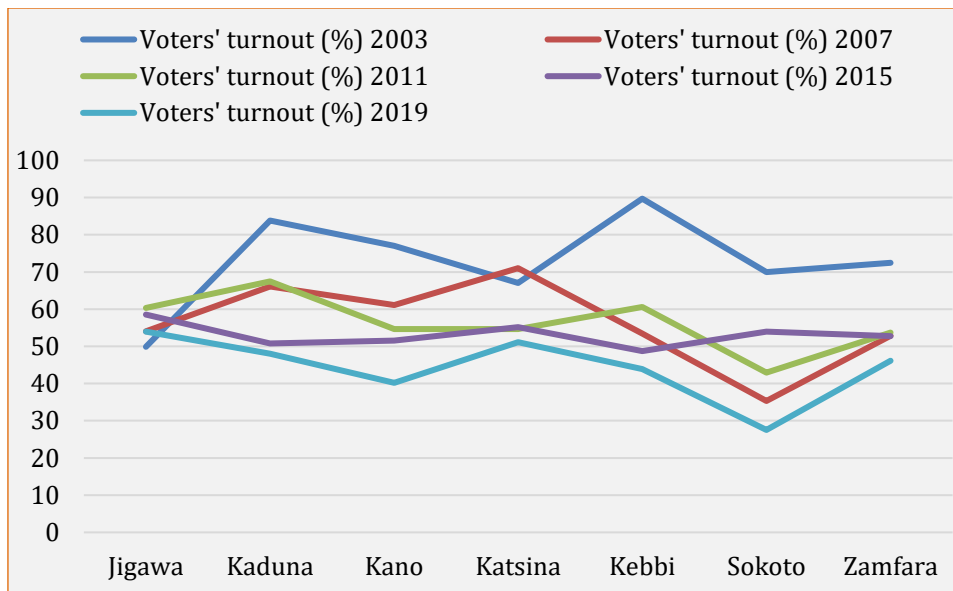


Figure 6. Voter turnout in previous governorship elections in North-West geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

**Discussion**

Several factors contribute to voter apathy in Nigeria. One key factor is the perceived lack of political efficacy among citizens. Many Nigerians feel disillusioned with the political system, viewing elections as mere rituals rather than opportunities for meaningful change (Adewale and Akanbi, 2021). Additionally, widespread electoral irregularities, including vote-buying, rigging, and violence, undermine trust in the electoral process, further discouraging voter participation (Oluwasegun, 2020). Moreover, socio-economic factors such as poverty, illiteracy, corruption and political bigotry as well as marginalization exacerbate voter apathy, as disenfranchised populations feel disconnected from the political process (Ibrahim, 2003). This also includes perceived lack of trust in the election management body, INEC accounts for voters’ apathy. Essentially the available data highlights the alarming increase in violence and thuggery during Nigerian elections, leading many citizens to fear for their safety and stay away from voting. Political actors, including politicians, are accused of sponsoring thugs to manipulate elections. For the purpose of clarity, electoral violence according to Umar (2003) is categorized into three as shown in the table below:

Table 8. Electoral violence.

S/N	Manifestations of physical electoral violence
1	Assault on individuals during campaigns, rallies and elections.
2	Assassination of political opponents or people perceived as threat to one’s political ambition.
3	Burning down of public buildings or cars.
4	Kidnapping and hostage-taking.
5	Illegal arrests and forceful dispersal of political gatherings.
6	Destruction of ballot boxes and ballot papers.
7	Armed raids on voting and collation centres.
8	Free-for-all-fights.
S/N	Manifestations of psychological electoral violence
1	Fear resulting from political assassinations which makes people scared to participate in politics or elections.
2	Publication or broadcast of abusive, insulting or intimidating material or advertorials.
3	Threat to life through intimidating phone calls or text messages.
4	Brainwashing of voters and influencing them to vote against their conscience.
5	Deliberate causing of panic at voting centres to intimidate voters.
S/N	Manifestations of structural electoral violence
1	Creation of unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates.
2	Partisan delimitation of electoral constituencies and location of polling booths.
3	Excessive or exorbitant fees for collection of party nomination forms to discourage the poor from contesting public elections.
4	Enacting of exclusionary acts and policies.
5	The use of the power of incumbency to influence the smooth conduct of elections.

**Corruption and Political Bigotry:** Corruption is reported to be deeply entrenched in Nigerian politics, with bribery being a prominent form. Political corruption undermines democracy, distorts representation, and erodes public trust in governance institutions. It affects various aspects of governance and service delivery, including elections. Also elections in Nigeria are marred by political bigotry, where parties resort to intimidation, manipulation, and vote-buying to gain power. The lack of distinct policy proposals further complicates the electoral process.

**Insecurity:** Nigeria grapples with insecurity exacerbated by factors like ethnic tensions, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. Political unrest, particularly in the North-East and South-South regions, is fueled by these issues, leading to violence and instability.

**Rigging of Elections:** Election rigging is widespread in Nigeria, involving various tactics such as voter intimidation, manipulation of electoral materials, and bribery. Rigging undermines the democratic process and fosters political apathy among citizens.

**Group Grievances:** Nigeria experiences group grievances stemming from ethnic, religious, and regional disparities. Marginalized groups feel excluded from the political process, leading to tensions and conflicts.

**Bad Governance:** Poor governance characterized by deceitful politicians and unfulfilled promises contributes to citizen disillusionment with the electoral process. Corruption and incompetence among elected officials further erode trust in governance institutions.

**Lack of Trust in INEC:** Citizens lack trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) due to perceptions of bias, manipulation, and collusion with political actors. This lack of confidence undermines the legitimacy of election outcomes. Overall, the available data portrays a complex web of challenges undermining democracy and governance in Nigeria, highlighting the need for comprehensive solutions to address the crisis.

**Implications of Voter's Apathy in Nigeria:** The consequences of voter apathy are profound and far-reaching, with implications for the consolidation of democracy and national development in Nigeria. Low voter turnout undermines the legitimacy of elected leaders and weakens the accountability mechanisms essential for democratic governance (Abubakar *et al.*, 2024). Apathy undermines the legitimacy of elected leaders and the electoral process itself. When voter turnout is low, elected officials may lack the mandate to govern effectively, leading to governance crises and political instability. Furthermore, when a significant portion of the population abstains from voting, it distorts electoral outcomes and perpetuates political marginalization, particularly of minority groups and marginalized communities (Oluwasegun, 2020). It disproportionately affects marginalized communities, exacerbating existing inequalities in political representation. Without active participation in the electoral process, these communities risk being sidelined in decision-making processes. Moreover, voter apathy contributes to political instability and social unrest, as disenchanting citizens may resort to alternative means of expressing dissent, including protests and civil disobedience (Adewale and Akanbi, 2021). Persistent voter apathy threatens to erode the gains made in Nigeria's democratic transition. Without robust citizen engagement, the democratic principles of accountability, transparency, and responsiveness are undermined, paving the way for authoritarian tendencies.

## **Conclusion**

Elections are very central to the principle and practice of democracy anywhere in the world and the management of elections by any election management body is significant to the electoral process and by implication, the consolidation of democracy in any country. This paper examined voting apathy in Nigeria's electoral system, with regards to promoting and encouraging voter's participation in the electoral system. The study pointed out some factors that discourage the people from taking active part in the electoral system this include INEC failure in carry out their duties efficiently, political violence, the behavior or bad attitude of politicians (leaders) towards their followers etc. This study therefore concluded by outlining some positive steps that will be taken by the state (government) and INEC so as to increase the peoples (electorates) willingness to participate in the electoral process in Nigeria.

## **Recommendations**

To overcome the pathology of voter apathy and strengthen Nigeria's democracy, concerted efforts are needed at various levels, and to this extent:

### **INEC Should be Truly Independence**

INEC being the body responsible for electoral management need to be free from political control. The INEC chairman is appointed by the president of Nigeria, hence it will be an act of biting the hands that fed you if the INEC chairman acts contrary to the directives of the president and the ruling party, thus INEC themselves are involved in the charm of vote manipulation of the electoral outcomes. For example never has it been heard that an INEC chairman served for double tenure, however the current chairman, Mahmood Yakubu is currently serving a double tenure which will inevitably lead to the double allegiance to President Muhammed Buhari who appointed him and also to the ruling party APC. Thus it is recommendable that the INEC chairman and other key position holders in INEC be appointed by direct election by the electorate that way they owe allegiance to the people and not to the president and his party.

### **Digital Voting System**

The voting system in Nigeria is very cumbersome and strenuous which discourage most voters from voting. The long queue under the sun scares a lot of people. In USA just concluded 2020 election, before the main election the state of California was said to have recorded 12 million votes due to the digital system of voting, this makes the voting system very easy and interesting as voters can vote from the comfort of their homes, which aids a mix representation of secret ballot system and convenience. If this system is adopted to the Nigeria electoral process then people will find it easy to cast their vote and also have interest in voting since it takes little or nothing.

### **Automated Vote Counting System**

The fact that votes are counted manually gives room for electoral irregularities and breeds rigging. If the votes casted are imputed into a computer or computerized system then the rate mistake in the counting process will be minimal and one is sure to have 99.9% correct election result.

### **Political Sensitization/Education**

Most Nigerian do not know the importance of voting and that it is also part of their fundamental human right (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The only weapon according to the Watch for the citizen at their disposal is their votes so that their preferred representative will be elected into position but due to the negligence of the voter they abstain from voting hence a proper educative program on the importance of voting need to be carried out especially by INEC in rural and urban town to ensure that the voter percentage increases adequately. That people begin to understand the importance of their votes. For the current political order to be charged and for Nigeria to be a better place all hands need to be on deck and what better way than to cast our vote during elections.

### **Curbing the Excess of the Judiciary**

Over the years the judiciary has played key role in the election process in Nigeria. The Judiciary always seems to complete the process the electorate and INEC started. Although their involvement in the electoral process is constitutional their action can be related to a menace rather than corrective. They have played solid part in the regressive nature of voter turnout due to their actions which are by are large repressive to the people. An apt example is the court ruling in the Rotimi Amaechi case in Rivers State.

The supreme court in this case affirmed the primary of political parties in the conduct and contest of elections and stated that "it is the political parties that the electorate do vote for at election times" however, it went ahead to declare Rotimi Amaechi who did not campaign during election, whose name was not on the ballot and who nobody voted for as the duly elected governor of Rivers State. It is issues like this that make recourse to the court to be hindrance to voter interest in election. Hence if the excess of the court is curtailed then the voter menace of voter apathy will be reduced.

### **Declarations**

**Acknowledgments:** I appreciate and thank the Delta State University, Abraka, some of my colleagues (Prof. A. Otite, Prof. F.A. Sanubi, Prof. E.V. Clark, Dr. A.E. Orhero, Dr. Nwandor Fidelis, Dr. V.E. Efebeh (My HOD) and many others from the Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, for their encouragements, and my friend (Mr and Mrs Jude Onori) for their prayers.

**Author Contribution:** The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Consent to Publish:** The author agrees to publish the paper in International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research.

**Data Availability Statement:** The datasets generated and/or analyzed during this study are not publicly available but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Research Content:** The research content of manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

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**Citation:** Francis. A. Ikenga. 2024. The 2019 Governorship Elections in Nigeria and Pathology of Voters' Apathy. *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research*, 8(4): 25-41.

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