



CLEEN
FOUNDATION

Justice Sector Reform

SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT

OF THE

2026

EKITI

GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION



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1 | Executive Summary

CLEEN Foundation Security Threat Assessment examines the potential risks of election-related violence ahead of the 2026 Ekiti State Governorship Election. The assessment combines the publication draft based on stakeholder perception data with the expanded analytical draft containing media-based risk analysis, LGA risk profiles, and operational recommendations.

The perception survey involved 105 respondents drawn from across Ekiti State. Participants rated 48 possible drivers of electoral violence grouped under seven thematic areas and shared their overall expectations about the conduct of the election. The expanded analytical draft also draws on a systematic content analysis of 149 news reports from twelve national and regional platforms published between 21 January and 22 May 2026.

The findings present a largely encouraging picture. More than nine in every ten respondents (91.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that voting in their communities would take place peacefully. Similarly, 88.6% of respondents (93 out of 105) described the overall outlook for the election as either “Peaceful” or “Very Peaceful.” The remaining 11.4% were uncertain, while no respondent predicted that the election would be violent. Despite this positive outlook, the assessment identifies important warning signs. Across all 48 risk indicators assessed, at least seven out of every ten respondents agreed that each factor had the potential to contribute to electoral violence. The strongest concerns were concentrated around the information environment, the conduct of security agencies, and confidence in democratic institutions.

The five risk factors that generated the highest levels of concern were misinformation and fake news (94.3%), hate speech and inflammatory language (94.3%), perceived partiality of security personnel (93.3%), the broadcast and publication of hate speech (92.4%), and aggressive or excessive use of force by security agents (91.4%).

Taken together, these findings suggest that while Ekiti State is not currently perceived as facing a high risk of widespread electoral violence, the prospects for a peaceful election will depend significantly on how key stakeholders respond to emerging threats. The greatest risks are associated with false information, inflammatory rhetoric, concerns about institutional neutrality, and actions that could erode public confidence in the electoral process.



2

Background and Context

The CLEEN Foundation produces Election Security Threat Assessments (ESTAs) as part of its long-standing commitment to promoting peaceful, credible, and secure elections in Nigeria. Drawing on the Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool (EVMAT) framework, which has been applied in previous electoral cycles including the 2024 Ondo State and 2025 Anambra State governorship elections, this assessment examines the evolving security environment ahead of the 2026 Ekiti State Governorship Election.

The objective of the ESTA is not to predict violence but to identify and assess factors that could increase the risk of electoral conflict if left unaddressed. By highlighting areas of concern and stakeholder perceptions of potential threats, the assessment provides evidence that can help electoral management bodies, security agencies, political parties, the judiciary, the media, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders take preventive action before tensions escalate.

The 2026 Ekiti State Governorship Election is scheduled to take place on 20 June 2026 as an off-cycle election, outside Nigeria's regular four-year electoral timetable. Off-cycle elections present specific security management challenges: electoral activities are concentrated in fewer locations, voter turnout may be lower, and the absence of concurrent nationwide elections can reduce the scale of security deployments that typically accompany general elections.

Political developments in the lead-up to the election have already generated pockets of tension. The campaign period officially commenced on 21 January 2026 amid disputes surrounding party primaries. At the time INEC released its provisional list of candidates, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were absent due to unresolved internal disputes. The situation fuelled speculation, misinformation, and public debate before active campaigning had fully begun.

Subsequently, the political landscape experienced significant realignments, including reports of large-scale defections from opposition parties to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). These movements can reshape local power dynamics, heighten competition, and create grievances among displaced political actors and supporters.

Ekiti State is made up of sixteen Local Government Areas (LGAs), with Ado-Ekiti serving as the state's political, administrative, and commercial hub. While the capital remains the focal point of political activity, several rural and border communities present distinct security considerations. LGAs such as Ikole, Moba, and Ilejemeje, which share boundaries with neighbouring states, face challenges associated with difficult terrain, limited road infrastructure, and relatively weak security presence in some remote communities.

Drawing on previous election observations, stakeholder consultations, and historical patterns of electoral tension, particular attention has often been directed toward Ado-Ekiti, Oye-Ekiti, Efon Alaaye, and Ido/Osi. These locations have experienced varying degrees of election-related disputes, political tensions, or security incidents in previous electoral cycles.

Beyond election-specific concerns, broader security challenges continue to shape the operating environment. Incidents of kidnapping, violent crime, and insecurity in parts of the state and neighbouring areas could affect the movement of election personnel, transportation and distribution of sensitive materials, voter participation in rural communities, and the safety of election observers, journalists, and other stakeholders.



3

Methodology & Respondent Profile

The assessment adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines primary survey data with secondary media-based evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the electoral security environment in Ekiti State. The integration of these sources allows the assessment to capture both institutional perspectives reflected in public reporting and community-level perceptions of electoral risks.

3.1 Media Analysis

The secondary data component consisted of a systematic content analysis of 149 news reports published between 21 January and 22 May 2026. The reports were drawn from twelve national and regional media platforms and reviewed for references to factors that could contribute to election-related violence. Each reference was coded as a separate unit of analysis, enabling the assessment to measure the prominence of specific risk issues in public discourse, track emerging trends over time, and identify geographical patterns of concern across LGAs.

A composite risk score was developed for each LGA by combining three indicators: the frequency with which an LGA appeared in media reports, the extent to which it was flagged by INEC, the Nigeria Police Force, or civil society organisations, and its documented history of electoral violence in previous election cycles.

3.2 Community Survey

The primary data component was generated through the Election Violence Monitoring and Analysis Tool (EVMAT), a structured perception survey administered to residents across fifteen LGAs of Ekiti State between April and May 2026. A total of 105 valid responses were analysed in the publication draft. The expanded analytical draft also refers to 104 respondents for some community-survey analysis; where figures differ, this merged report retains the specific base noted in each original section.

Respondents assessed 48 potential risk factors grouped into seven thematic categories: Conflict and Social Factors, Political Party Factors, Electoral Administration (INEC) Factors, Security Agency Factors, Judiciary Factors, Media and Information Factors, and Civil Society Factors. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale. Throughout this report, agreement refers to the combined percentage of respondents who selected either Agree or Strongly Agree.

3.3 Respondent Demographics and Geographic Spread

The sample skews female (70 respondents, 66.7%) and toward younger adults, with the 2030 age band the single largest group. This youth and gender weighting is analytically useful, since young people and women are central both to electoral participation and to several of the risk dynamics assessed below.



Methodology & Respondent Profile

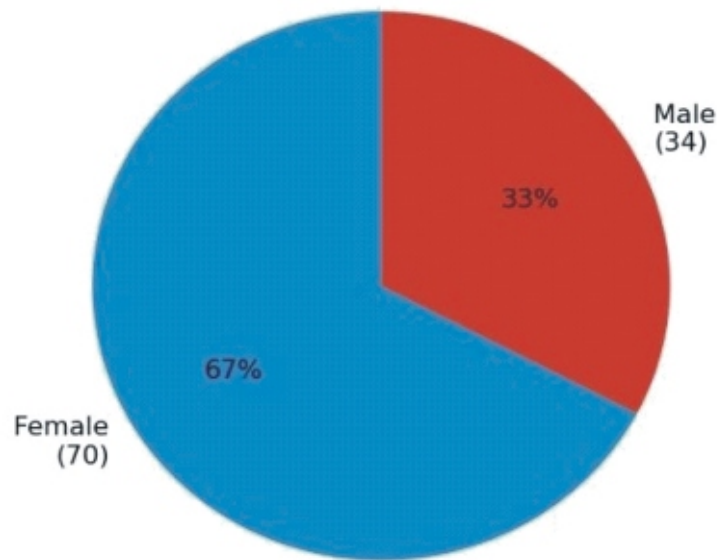
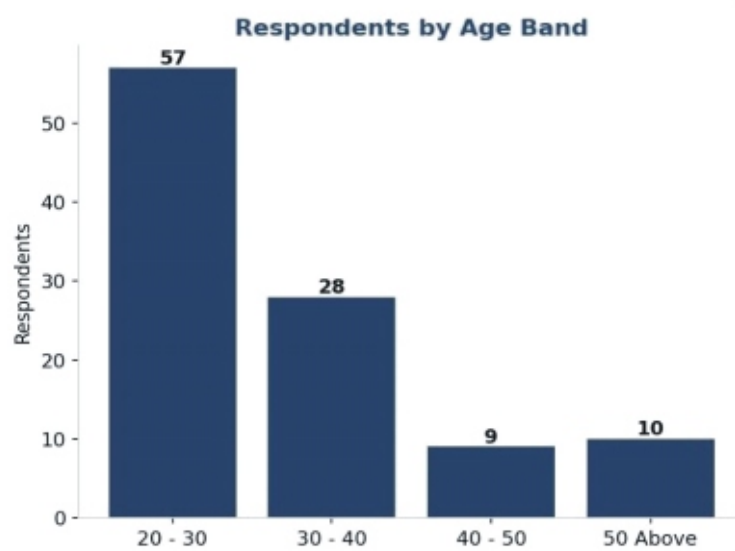


Figure 1a: Respondent profile by sex. Base: 105 respondents.



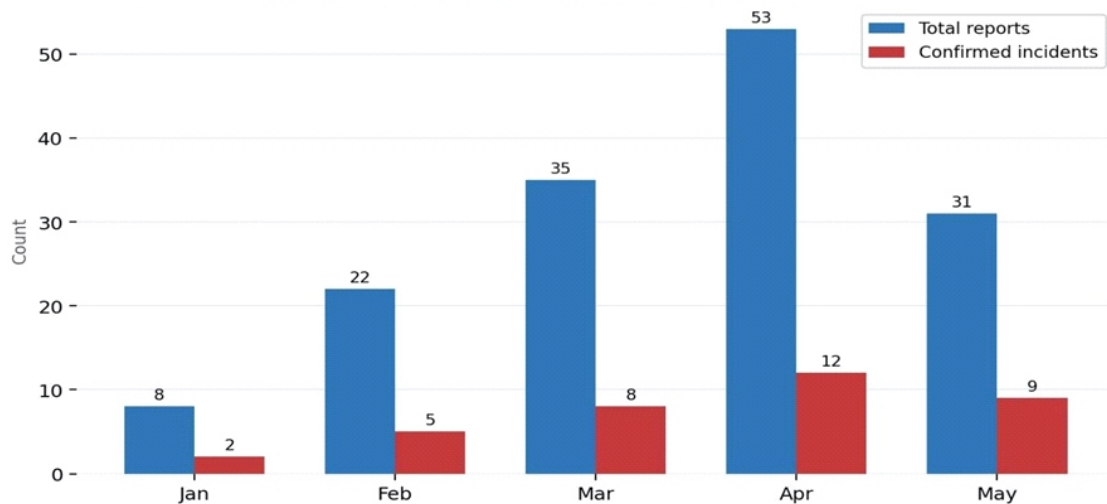
Survey responses were drawn from 15 LGAs across Ekiti State, ensuring coverage of both urban and rural settings, although with varying levels of representation across locations. The publication draft lists Ado-Ekiti as the largest respondent location, followed by Aiyekire (Gbonyin), Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ekiti East, Oye, Ekiti South-West, Emure, Ikole, Ikere, Moba, Ilejemeje, Ekiti West, and Ise/Orun



4 Media-Based Threat Environment

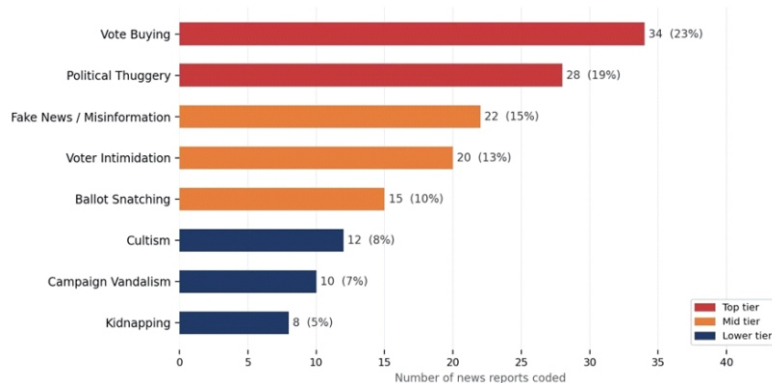
The volume of security-related reports grew consistently throughout the pre-election period from 8 reports and 2 confirmed incidents in January to 31 reports and 9 confirmed incidents by May. This four-fold increase was driven by the cumulative activation of multiple risk factors: candidate listing disputes in January, early warning alerts in February, mass political defections and campaign material destruction in March, INEC preparedness concerns in April, and the first confirmed physical incident in May.

Figure 2 — Monthly escalation: reports vs confirmed incidents (Jan–May 2026)



4.1 Violence Triggers in Media Reporting

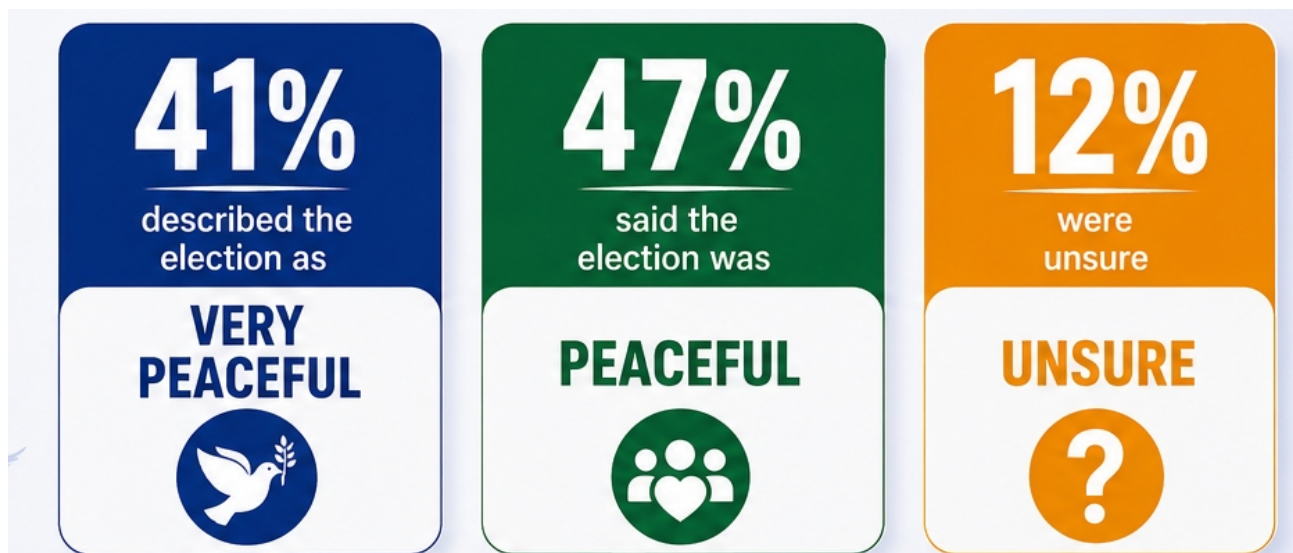
Vote buying is the single most reported threat, appearing in nearly a quarter of all coded reports. It is followed by political thuggery, misinformation, voter intimidation, and ballot snatching. These five triggers together account for more than four in five of all documented concerns.



These triggers do not operate independently. Vote buying is routinely protected by the threat of physical violence, meaning anti-vote-buying enforcement must be designed with thuggery as a simultaneous operational risk. Misinformation can generate community tensions that make physical confrontations more likely, while ballot snatching is itself a direct provocation for violence at polling units.

5 | Security Outlook

Stakeholder sentiment regarding the 2026 Ekiti gubernatorial election is overwhelmingly positive. Out of 105 individuals surveyed, approximately 88.6% (93 respondents) anticipate a non-violent outcome, with 49 projecting a "Peaceful" election and 44 characterizing it as "Very Peaceful." The remaining 11.4% (12 respondents) expressed uncertainty ("Not Sure"), while notably, no respondents anticipated an outright violent election..



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5.1 How Peaceful Do Residents Expect the Election to Be

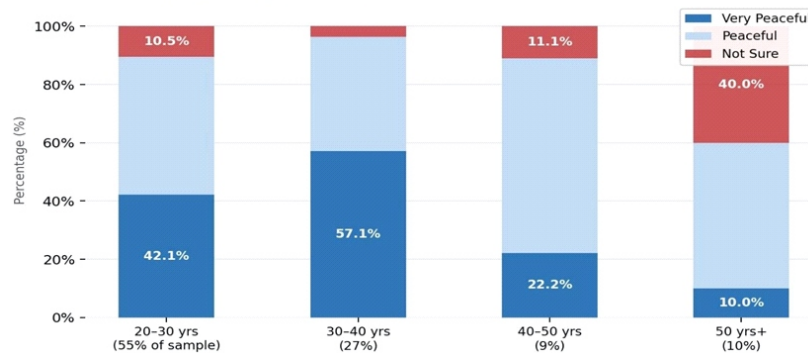
Survey findings indicate a largely positive outlook regarding the conduct of the election, with 44 respondents describing the election environment as very peaceful, 49 as peaceful, and 12 indicating they were not sure. This reflects a strong level of public confidence in the prospects for a peaceful electoral process. The respondents who expressed uncertainty were predominantly from Ado-Ekiti and among individuals aged 50 years and above. The analysis further shows no significant variation in perceptions between male and female respondents. Although women constituted a larger proportion of the sample, both genders demonstrated comparable levels of optimism regarding the peaceful conduct of the election.



5

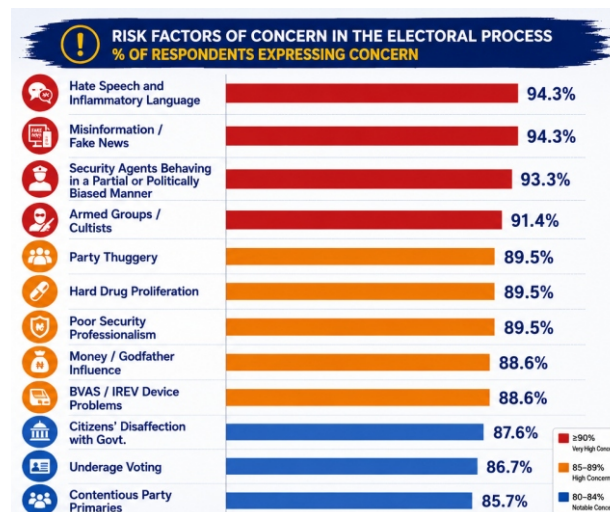
Security Outlook

Figure 5 — Overall election outlook by age group
(Statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 14.60$, $p = 0.024$)



5.2 What risks do residents see?

22 risk factors identified as a concern by more than seven in ten respondents. The four factors that generated the highest levels of concern were hate speech and inflammatory language, misinformation and fake news, security agents behaving in a partial or politically biased manner, and the activities of armed groups, cultists, and extremists.



The prominence of information-related risks hate speech, fake news, and social media abuse at the very top of the citizen risk hierarchy is one of the most significant findings of this report. It aligns directly with what the Ekiti State Commissioner of Police said at the ICCES readiness meeting, where he identified misinformation as the pre-eminent public safety concern ahead of most physical threats. Citizens and senior security officials are reading the information environment in the same way.

Also notable is the third-highest item: security agent partiality. More than nine in ten respondents identified this as a risk factor. The way security forces conduct themselves on and before Election Day is not just a professional standard question it is a direct determinant of how safe citizens feel and, as the analysis below shows, of whether peace optimism holds.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to the agencies and institutions with operational responsibility for the June 20 election. They are presented in order of urgency and grounded directly in the evidence across both analytical streams.

Counter information disorder before it triggers physical violence

- The National Orientation Agency, INEC, and the Nigeria Police Force should activate a rapid-response counter-disinformation operation by June 6. This means establishing monitoring of Ekiti-specific electoral content on X (Twitter), WhatsApp groups, and Facebook, with a protocol for issuing verified corrections within six hours of a false or inflammatory story going viral.
- The media-based analysis shows misinformation appearing in 15% of all coded reports and rated by the Commissioner of Police as the pre-eminent public safety concern. The community survey independently confirms this, with misinformation and hate speech rated as concerns by 94% of respondents the highest of all 22 risk items. This is the one threat domain where both evidence streams converge at the highest intensity.

Deploy security forces with explicit neutrality standards and enforce them

- The Nigeria Police Force should issue written conduct guidelines to all field commanders on political neutrality, proportionate use of force, and community engagement before Operation Order 08/2026 is fully activated. These guidelines should be distributed by June 12.
- The evidence demands this directly: security agent partiality is the third-highest concern in the community survey at 93%, and it is one of the few items statistically linked to whether residents feel optimistic about the election's outcome. Civil society organisations have publicly cautioned against politicization of the 9,780-officer deployment. A biased deployment does not just fail to provide security it actively undermines the peace confidence it is meant to protect.
- An inter-agency complaints mechanism should be operational for the 72 hours before Election Day, allowing any confirmed report of politically biased security conduct to be escalated immediately to ICCES.

Pre-deploy anti-vote-buying enforcement with physical security built in

- EFCC and ICPC units should be pre-deployed to the perimeters of polling units in Ado-Ekiti, Ikole, and Moba with specific operational orders for evidence collection and prosecutable arrest. The emphasis on prosecutable arrest is deliberate: 84% of survey respondents identified the failure to prosecute electoral offenders as a risk factor, which



Recommendations

tells us that accountability not just detection is what citizens are looking for.

- Vote buying in Ekiti operates through established networks with covert locations. It requires a proactive, intelligence-informed operation, not reactive response. And because vote-buying operations are routinely protected by the threat of physical violence, every EFCC/ICPC deployment should be designed with NPF support as an operational standard, not an afterthought.

Close the INEC preparedness gap before materials reach the field

- INEC must complete the deployment of all electoral materials, BVAS devices, and trained personnel to all 16 LGA offices by June 14. The 34% preparedness figure recorded as recently as April 14 is the most significant structural risk factor in this assessment not because it is dramatic, but because under-resourced polling units create the conditions in which every other threat becomes more likely to escalate.
- BVAS/IREV device reliability is specifically on citizens' minds: device problems were endorsed as a concern by 87% of respondents, and concerns about the voter register are among the strongest statistical predictors of whether residents feel optimistic about the election. When systems fail visibly at polling units, it erodes confidence and creates flashpoints. Redundancy protocols for device failures should be in place and communicated to all presiding officers before polling day.

Political parties must enforce their peace accord obligations

- Each of the parties that signed the NPC peace accord should require their polling unit agents to undergo comply to the signed Accord. Intraparty tension is rated at 7/10 on the risk radar, and the APC ward primary violence in May 2026 is a direct illustration of what unmanaged internal party dynamics look like in practice. The peace accord is a commitment; this recommendation is its implementation mechanism.

Prosecute electoral offenders after the election

- EFCC, ICPC, and the NPF should initiate formal proceedings against documented electoral offenders within 30 days of the election. Public announcement of prosecution outcomes is essential not only as accountability, but as deterrence for the 2027 general election cycle.
- This recommendation is directly grounded in citizen evidence: 84% of survey respondents identified the failure to prosecute past electoral offenders as a current risk factor for violence. Impunity is not just a justice failure it is an operational security problem for future elections.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are addressed to the agencies and institutions with operational responsibility for the June 20 election. They are presented in order of urgency and grounded directly in the evidence across both analytical streams.

1



COUNTER INFORMATION DISORDER BEFORE IT TRIGGERS PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

- National Orientation Agency, INEC, and NPF should activate a rapid-response counter-disinformation operation by June 6.
- Monitor Ekiti-specific electoral content on X, WhatsApp groups, and Facebook, with protocol for issuing verified corrections within six hours of a false or inflammatory story going viral.

EVIDENCE



Misinformation in 15% of coded reports and rated by CP as the pre-eminent public safety concern.



94% of respondents rate misinformation and hate speech as a concern (highest of 22 risks).

2



DEPLOY SECURITY FORCES WITH EXPLICIT NEUTRALITY STANDARDS AND ENFORCE THEM

- NPF should issue written conduct guidelines to all field commanders by June 12 on neutrality, proportionate use of force, and community engagement.
- Security agent partiality is the 3rd-highest concern (93%) and linked to optimism about election outcome.
- Inter-agency complaints mechanism operational for the 72 hours before Election Day; escalate verified reports of biased conduct to ICCES.

EVIDENCE



93% of respondents rate security agent partiality as a concern.



Civil society cautions against politicization of 9,780-officer deployment.

3



PRE-DEPLOY ANTI-VOTE-BUYING ENFORCEMENT WITH PHYSICAL SECURITY BUILT IN

- EFCC and ICPC units should be pre-deployed to polling unit perimeters in Ado-Ekiti, Ikole, and Moba for evidence collection and prosecutable arrest.
- 84% of respondents cite failure to prosecute offenders as a risk—accountability is what citizens demand.
- Deployments must include NPF support—vote buying is protected by the threat of physical violence.

EVIDENCE



84% of respondents identify failure to prosecute offenders as a risk factor.

4



CLOSE THE INEC PREPAREDNESS GAP BEFORE MATERIALS REACH THE FIELD

- INEC must complete deployment of all materials, BVAS devices, and trained personnel to all 16 LGAs by June 14.
- 34% preparedness (as of April 14) is the most significant structural risk—under-resourced units amplify all threats.
- Device problems (87%) and voter register concerns strongly influence optimism. Redundancy protocols for device failures must be in place and communicated.

EVIDENCE



34% INEC preparedness (as of April 14).



87% of respondents concerned about BVAS/IREV device problems.

5



POLITICAL PARTIES MUST ENFORCE THEIR PEACE ACCORD OBLIGATIONS

- Parties that signed the NPC peace accord should require polling unit agents to comply with the accord.
- Intraparty tension is rated at 7/10 on the risk radar.
- APC ward primary violence in May 2026 illustrates the risk of unmanaged internal party dynamics.

EVIDENCE



Intraparty tension rated at 7/10.

6



PROSECUTE ELECTORAL OFFENDERS AFTER THE ELECTION

- EFCC, ICPC, and NPF should initiate formal proceedings against documented offenders within 30 days.
- Public announcement of prosecution outcomes is essential for accountability and deterrence in 2027.
- 84% of respondents cite failure to prosecute past offenders as a current risk factor for violence—impunity fuels conflict.

EVIDENCE



84% of respondents identify failure to prosecute offenders as a risk factor.