

Promoting Citizens' Participation in Elections Through Data, Advocacy and Civic Education

State of the State, Election Data, Trends and Citizens' Participation in 2024 Off-Cycle Ondo State Governorship Election



#OndoDecides2024 #ElectionAnalytics

Supported by

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**Wole Soyinka
Centre for
Investigative
Journalism**

About PROMAD

PROMAD Infotech Foundation is a non-profit organisation combining evidence-based strategies with civic technology to bridge the gaps between citizens at grassroots communities and the government to strengthen accountability, and participatory governance for efficient implementation of projects, programmes, and policies for sustainable development. PROMAD, founded in 2022, is fully registered in Nigeria by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). We aim to empower state and non-state actors through evidence-based strategies and advocacy for accountability, participatory democracy, and development.

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Notice of Disclaimer

PROMAD has produced this publication to provide useful insights into civic and election participation in Ondo State using data from the last three governorship election cycles. PROMAD hereby certifies that all the views expressed herein simply reflect our contextual and analytical views, which we believe are reliable and evidence-based. Reasonable efforts have been made during the preparation of this document to ensure accuracy. Therefore, PROMAD assumes no responsibility or liability for any error, omission, or view expressed herein or for actions taken by individuals or groups as a result of the information provided. Each part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means by properly citing and referencing PROMAD. If you wish to write to us for any reason, all inquiries can be directed to:

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PROMAD would like to acknowledge the efforts of its staffers who participated in this research. Their efforts have in no small way contributed to the fulfilment of our mission as a nonprofit and nonpartisan organisation deploying evidence-based advocacy and civic technology to empower state and non-state actors in strengthening Nigeria's democracy, accountability, and participation in governance.

We are deeply grateful to the MacArthur Foundation's management and the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ) for their support and for providing the funds to implement our Election Analytics Project (EAP) and the Civic Matters radio programme in Ondo State.



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List of Abbreviations

APC — All Progressives Congress
BVAS — Bimodal Voter Accreditation System
CJID — Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development
CPI — Consumer Price Index
CSOs — Civil Society Organisations
CVR — Continuous Voter Registration
EAP — Election Analytics Project
EEI — Economy, Education and Infrastructure
EiE — Enough is Enough
FAAC — Federation Account Allocation Committee
FFCA — Free, Fair, Credible And Acceptable
FRN — Federal Republic of Nigeria
INEC — Independent National Electoral Commission
IREv — INEC Result Viewing Portal
LGAs — Local Government Areas
LP — Labour Party
MSI — Mega School Initiative
NBS — National Bureau of Statistics
NGOs — Non-Governmental Organisations
OOSC—Out-of-School Children
ODSG — Ondo State Government
PDP — Peoples Democratic Party
SUBEB — State Universal Basic Education Board
WSCIJ — Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism

Foreword

The 2024 off-cycle Ondo State governorship election scheduled for Saturday, 16th November 2024 to elect a new governor remains a strategic and history-making affair. It is strategic because it will serve as a lens that will provide a view into the future of the state and determine whether the new leadership would be able to lead and provide the much-needed vision to move the Sunshine State forward. On the other hand, it remains a history-making because it will become part of the State's history towards redemption and sustainable development.

To make this happen, the electorates in Ondo State must do their part; the civic responsibilities bestowed on them by the Electoral Act and Registration of Voters Act which is in tandem with the fundamental rights provided for in Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended. The electoral umpire INEC had published that 2,053,061 voters have been registered and validated to vote in the election. This figure appears huge but the state has a history of low participation and turnout during elections, at least in the last three governorship election cycles. Mobilising the electorates registered to vote according to INEC, remains a huge task that needs to be done by stakeholders.

As a contribution to the effort of mobilising eligible voters for the Ondo State governorship election, PROMAD through its Election Analytics Project (EAP) and the Civic Matters, supported by the MacArthur Foundation and Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ) has embarked on this research publication and hosting a radio programme as well public events and implement strategic advocacies and communications to drive citizens' participation in the governorship election. We encourage CSOs, media organisations, political parties and INEC to use the content in the document to educate the electorates.

As the State goes to the poll on Saturday, 16th November 2024 with seventeen candidates of political parties, PROMAD looks forward to a large turnout of electorates as a result of this effort of ours and credible efforts by other stakeholders in the electoral process towards a hitch-free, fair and credible election.

Daisi M. Omokungbe, FLMI, MNIM, CPLP

Founder & Executive Director

PROMAD Infotech Foundation

Abuja, Nigeria

October, 2024

Executive Summary

We embarked on this research as part of our efforts aimed at promoting citizens' participation in the 2024 off-cycle Ondo State governorship election scheduled for Saturday, 16th November 2024. PROMAD invested its resources to produce this publication to provide useful insights into civic and election participation in Ondo State using the official data from the last three governorship election cycles. The views expressed in this document were purely from the standpoint of analysis and observations of the electoral process. The 2024 off-cycle Ondo State governorship election remains a history-making because it will become part of the State's history towards entrenching quality leadership for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and saving the citizens from hardship in the country.

To make this happen, the electorates in Ondo State from the standpoint of informed minds must do their parts; exercising the civic responsibilities bestowed on them by the Electoral Act 2022 and Registration of Voters Act which is in tandem with the fundamental rights provided for in Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended.

As our contribution to the effort of informing, empowering and mobilising eligible voters for the Ondo State governorship election, PROMAD through its **Election Analytics Project (EAP)** and **#TheCivicMatters**, supported by the MacArthur Foundation and Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ) has embarked on a research publication for which we will be unveiling today.

Earlier this month, we commenced a radio programme on Glow 99.1 FM Akure. The radio programme has proven to be a very good platform for reaching the grassroots, targeting audiences and electorates who are in their mid-ages and elderly voters in the state. According to INEC data, these age groups account for 64.59% representing 1,326,117 out of 2,053,061 voters.

We are also implementing strategic advocacies and communications on digital platforms to drive citizens' participation in the governorship election key in targeting Ondo State electorates, especially the youth, students and digital enthusiasts—representing 726,944 (35.41%) of the registered voters in the State.

Key Indices and Highlights

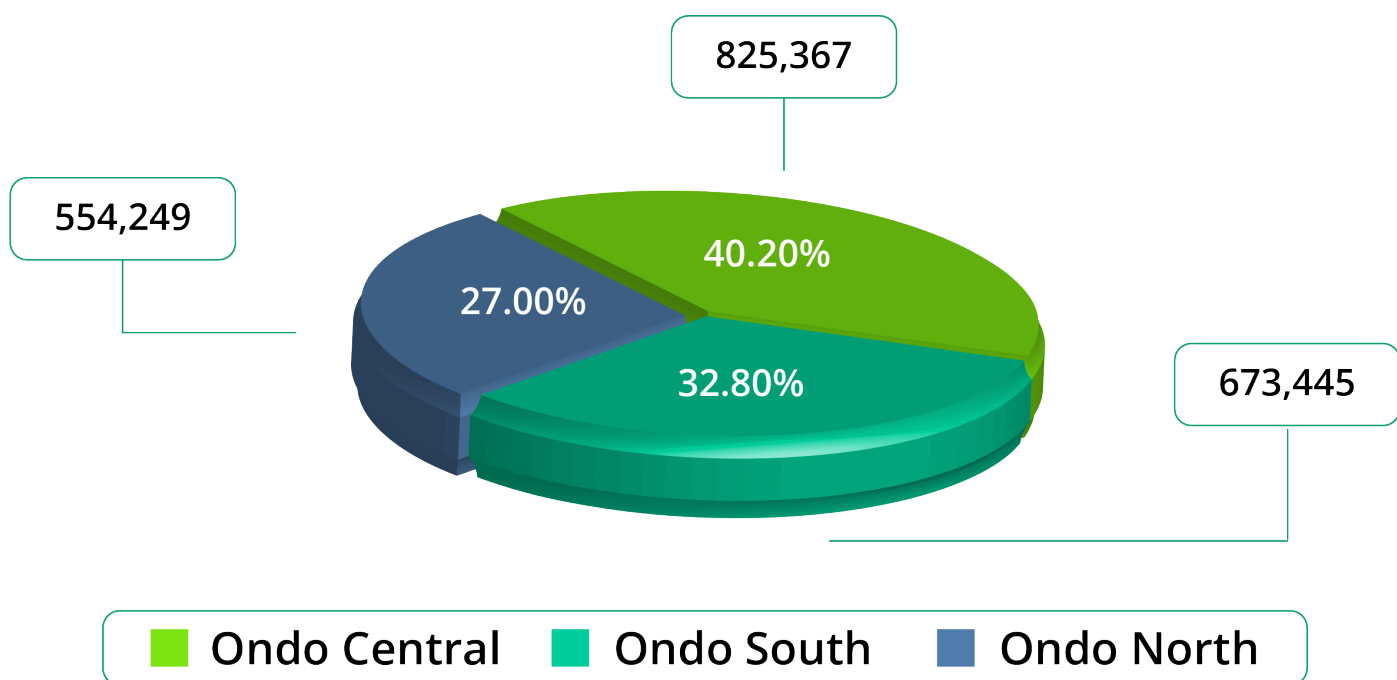
Increase in population & Voter Registration

In 3 election cycles analysed, just as the State's population, the number of registered voters has moved from **1,638,950** in **2012** to **2,053,061** in **2024**.

Declining Participation & Voting

Our analysis indicates that while voter registration had increased in each election cycle, it didn't translate into more turnouts and votes on election days as accredited voters kept reducing in each election cycle.

Analysis of 2024 Voting Strength by Senatorial District



Food Inflation in Ondo

37.20%

As of September 2024

Source: NBS

Out-of-School Children in Ondo

240,000

As of September 2024

Source: Ondo UBEC

Key Indices and Highlights cont'd

Occupation of Registered Voters in the 2024 Governorship Election

Occupation	Voters	Percentage
Students	694,938	33.85%
Traders	324,006	15.78%
Farmer & Fishermen	277,144	13.50%
Business Executives	218,598	10.56%
Artisans	212,608	10.36%
Public & Civil Servants	44,978	2.19%
Full Housewives	16,240	0.79%
Others	138,453	6.74%

Six LGAs to Watch in the 2024 Ondo Governorship Election

Local Government	Voters
Akure South	314,710
Ondo West	190,666
Odigbo	154,382
Ilaje	147,208
Owo	143,751
Okitipupa	126,021

Source: INEC

Key Call to Actions

To stem the tide against the decline in participation and voting trends:

- Citizens and electorates must rise to the challenge and reactivate their collective interest in the electoral process.
- Active participation and voting on election day will ensure that the governor of the State will no longer be elected by minority voters who come out on election day.
- Stakeholders must do their part to hold INEC, security agencies and the government accountable for delivering a credible, free, fair election on 16th November 2024.

1.0

Introduction

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), **2,053,061 voters** will be voting in the off-cycle Ondo State Governorship Election on Saturday, 16th November 2024 to elect a new governor for the State. This figure appears huge but the state has a long history of low participation and turnout during elections. Mobilising the figure of electorates registered to vote according to INEC, remains a huge task that needs to be done by stakeholders.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 1999 as amended guarantees the right of citizens to participate in elections and governance. These rights of participation include from the stage of picking a candidate to political discourse during campaigns, registering to vote, becoming a member of a political party, leading community organising, and standing to be voted for. Others are voting on election days and holding leaders accountable after they have been elected into office.

As a contribution to the effort of mobilising eligible voters for the Ondo State governorship election, PROMAD through its Election Analytics Project, supported by the MacArthur Foundation and Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ) will be hosting a radio programme, and public event and implement strategic advocacies and communications to drive citizens' participation in the governorship election.

The election will take place with seventeen candidates on Saturday, 16th November 2024 across the two hundred and nine (209) wards in the State.

2.0

Methodology

As a non-partisan, nonprofit and evidence-based organisation working to provide insights and civic education to improve citizens' understanding and participation in the electoral process, the clarity and availability of information on candidates and issues to drive their inclusion and engagement of the entire process. We aim to use the findings in this document to inform strategies that enhance voter education, improve simplified data for information dissemination, to instigate public discourse and stakeholder engagement for improved voter turnout in the electoral process.

We employed a secondary source of data gathering from public data and information published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), reputable civil society organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and media organisations including BudgIT, the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID); Enough is Enough (EiE Nigeria), Dataphyte amongst others. All the analyses in the document were done based on data available as of the time this research was conducted.

The data and documents collected were subjected to desk reviews by the team to identify trends and patterns to inform, shape and drive stakeholder engagement and citizens' participation in the November 16th, 2024 off-cycle Ondo State Governorship election.

3.0

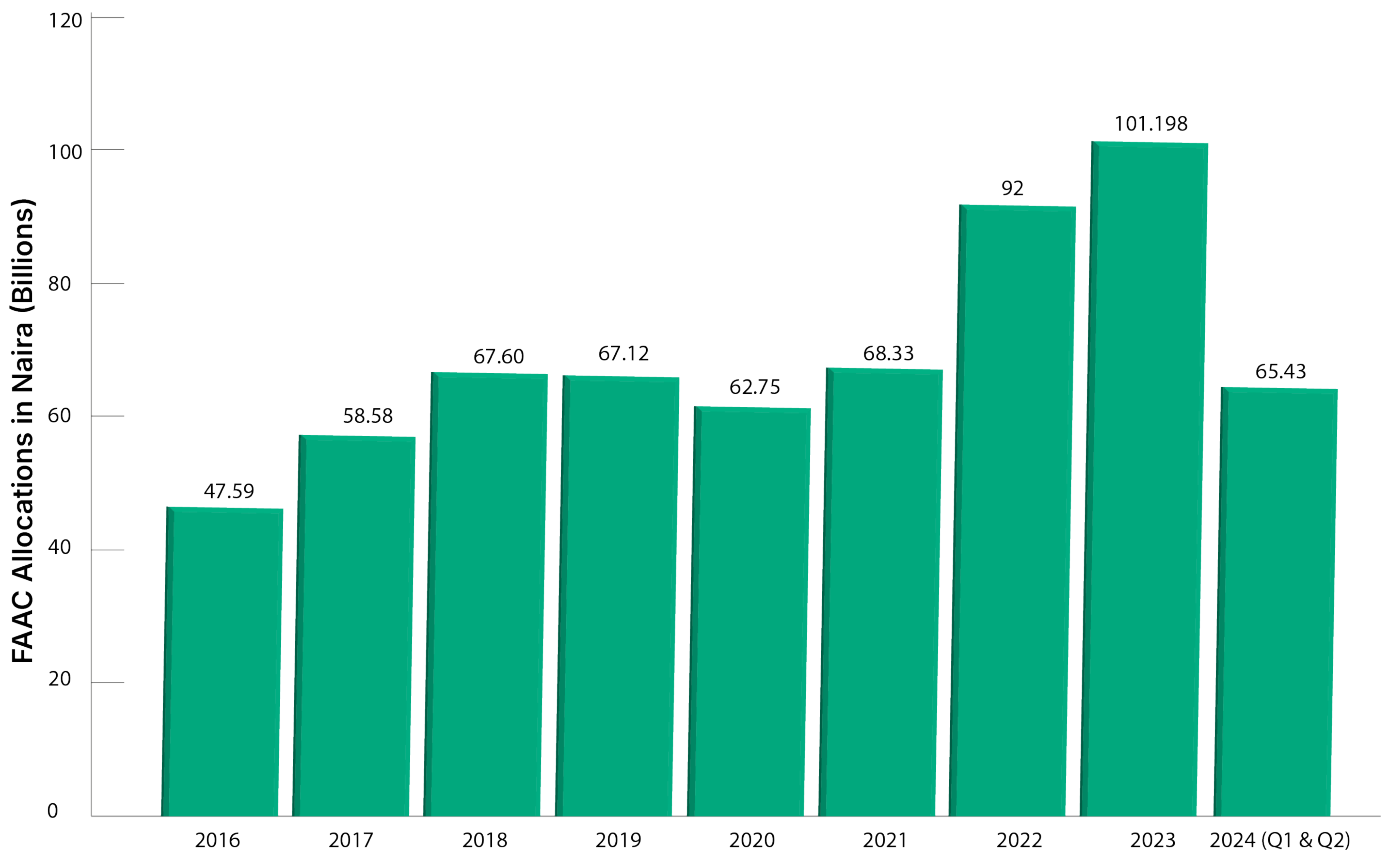
The Contextual Issues

The contextual issues of growth and development revolve around three major indices including the economy, education and infrastructure (EEI) that drive other sectors to perform. The state of the state was viewed through the EEI. The goal is to intimate the citizens and residents of the state with information which they need to make an informed decision in the forthcoming 2024 off-cycle governorship election in Ondo State.

3.1 The State of the State—Economy, Education and Infrastructure

3.1.1 Economy

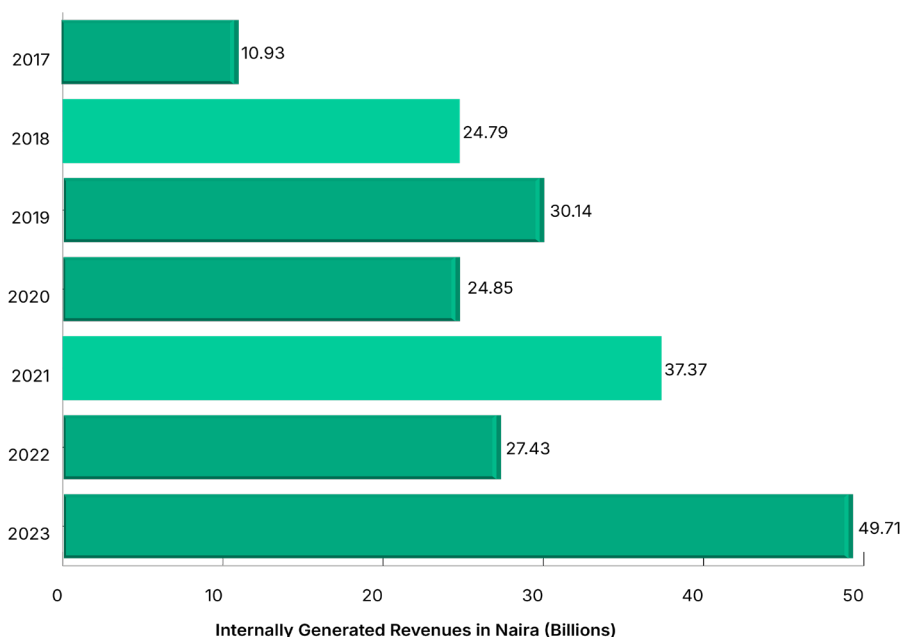
Gross FAAC Allocations



Source: FAAC & NBS

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

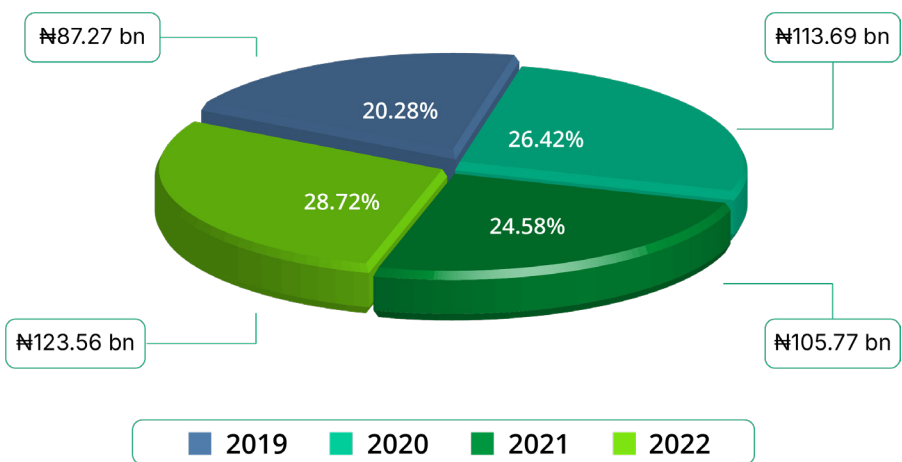
Internally Generated Revenues



Source: FAAC, NBS & BudgIT

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

Recurrent Expenditures



Source: FAAC, NBS & BudgIT

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

3.1.2 Inflation and Unemployment

¹According to the NBS Consumer Price Index (CPI) September 2024 report, food inflation stood at 37.20%. This level of food inflation in an agrarian state like Ondo signals the need for massive, accountable and participatory investments in agribusiness to create jobs for the teeming

youth, make life easier for farmers and reduce the cost of food for ordinary citizens and residents of the State. ²According to NBS data analysed by Dataphyte, Ondo State occupies the 13th position with 5.7% unemployment, exceeding the national average. The implication is that the State Government needs to invest in job creation and provide the enabling environment for business and entrepreneurship to strive.

3.1.3 Education

Education plays a vital role in the growth and development of any society and its economy. The quality of education is often linked to the availability of a sustainable teaching and learning environment coupled with the high-level manpower needed for the effective delivery of services in the education sector of any state. The Ondo State education sector has been boosted by different efforts of government from one administration to the other; renovating schools to the Mega School Initiative (MSI). ³As of February 2024, the

¹ <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241570>

² <https://x.com/Dataphyte/status/1839313701146603812/photo/1>

³ <https://businessday.ng/news/article/ondo-moves-to-boost-enrollment-tackle-out-of-school-children-syndrome/>

<https://punchng.com/subeb-records-240000-children-out-of-school-in-ondo/>

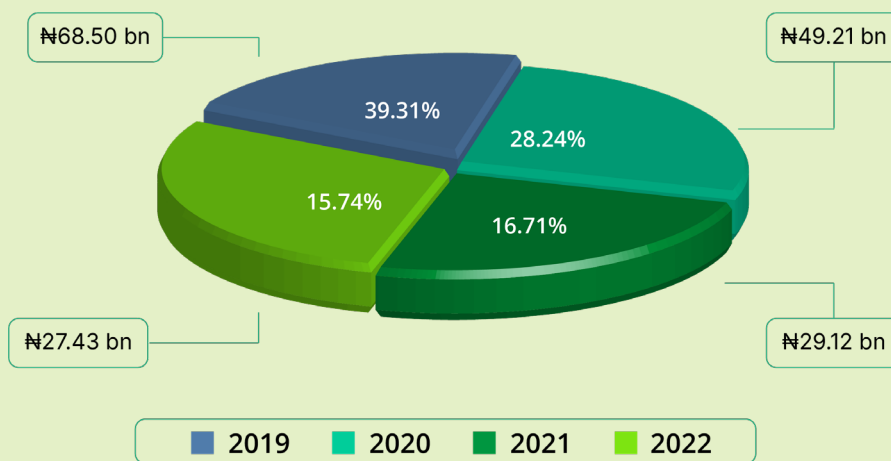
⁴ <https://punchng.com/subeb-records-240000-children-out-of-school-in-ondo/>

State has 1,277 public primary schools across the 18 LGAs with a total enrolment of 296,722 Pupils. ⁴The Ondo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) said the state has 240,000 out-of-school children. The current administration recently announced the approval of N3.5 billion for school construction and renovations, an effort the administration says demonstrates its commitment to providing quality education for all in the State. The development had caused a war of words between the ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC) and one of the opposition parties, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), describing the move as an attempt to play to the gallery ahead of the governorship election in the State. Not minding the politics between the two parties and beyond the November 16th governorship election, the citizens and residents of the State must **#FollowTheProjects** to ensure the funds are utilised to improve the quality of education in Ondo State.

3.1.4 Infrastructure

In five years under the leadership of the late Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, the Ondo State Government (ODSG) spent N223.97 billion as capital expenditures in sectors like education, health, infrastructure, security and agriculture. The election should be an opportunity for citizens, residents and stakeholders to assess the level of infrastructure in their communities and take strong positions on reinforcing their participation in the pursuit of accountability, transparency and good governance to enhance the delivery of sustainable infrastructure that powers the productivity capacity of the people of the State.

Capital Expenditures



Source: FAAC, NBS & BudgIT

⁴ <https://punchng.com/subeb-records-240000-children-out-of-school-in-ondo/>

3.2 What INEC Election Data is Saying

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 2,053,061 voters will be voting in the off-cycle Ondo State Governorship Election on Saturday, 16th November 2024 to elect a new governor for the State. This figure appears huge but the state has a long history of low participation and turnout during elections. Mobilising the figure of electorates registered to vote according to INEC, remains a huge task that needs to be done by stakeholders.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 1999 as amended implicitly through the Electoral Act 2022 as amended guarantees the right of citizens to participate in elections and governance. These rights of participation include from the stage of picking a candidate to political discourse during campaigns, registering to vote, becoming a member of a political party, leading community organising, and standing to be voted for. Others are voting on election days and holding leaders accountable after they have been elected into office.

The election will take place with seventeen candidates on Saturday, 16th November 2024 across the two hundred and nine (209) wards in the State. The voter register indicates middle-aged and elderly voters in the state. The age groups account for 64.59% representing 1,326,117 out of 2,053,061 voters. The other 35.41 % of Ondo State electorates representing the youth and students account for 726,944 who are voting in the election on November 16th, 2024.

3.3 The Candidates

Name of Candidate	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification
Accord Party (A)			
Falaiye Abraham Ajibola	Male	64	BSc
Ikuyajolu Femi Samuel (Running Mate)	Male	36	BA
Action Alliance (AA)			
Akinuli Fred Omolere	Male	63	Modern School Diploma
Adeyemi Adetunji Oluwatoyin (Running mate)	Male	67	WAEC
African Action Congress (AAC)			
Ajayi Adekunle Oluwaseyi	Male	37	Bachelor's Degree
Dada Olusanya David (Running mate)	Male	38	HND
African Democratic Congress (ADC)			
Nejo Adeyemi	Male	42	LLB
Ibrahim Rasheed Olaide (Running mate)	Male	56	NECO/WAEC

Name of Candidate	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification
Action Democratic Party (ADP)			
Akinnodi Ayodeji Emmanuel	Male	39	SSCE
Moyosola Elizabeth Olorunmonu (Running mate)	Female	49	Diploma
All Progressives Congress (APC)			
Aiyedatiwa Lucky Orimisan	Male	59	NCE
Adelami Olayide Owolabi (Running mate)	Male	66	BSc
All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)			
Popoola Olatunji Tunde	Male	66	GCE
Adedeji Taiwo Ayorinde (Running mate)	Male	40	Diploma
Alliance Peoples Movement (APM)			
Ogunfeyimi Isaac Kolawole	Male	75	Diploma
Afolabi Arowolow Folorunsho (Running mate)	Male	63	WASC
Action Peoples Party (APP)			
Fadoju Amos Babatunde	Male	56	WASC/GCE
Ajaguna Olarewaju Abimbola (Running mate)	Male	36	NECO
Labour Party (LP)			
Ebiseni Olusola Nehemiah	Male	64	LLB
Awude Adedayo Ezekiel (Running mate)	Male	51	Masters
New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP)			
Olugbenga Omogbemi Edema	Male	57	BSc
Rotimi Emmanuel Adeyemi (Running mate)	Male	59	BSc
Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)			
Ajayi Alfred Agboola	Male	55	WASSCE
Akingbaso Festus Olarewaju (Running mate)	Male	53	BSc
Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)			
Alli Babatunde Francis	Male	50	BSc

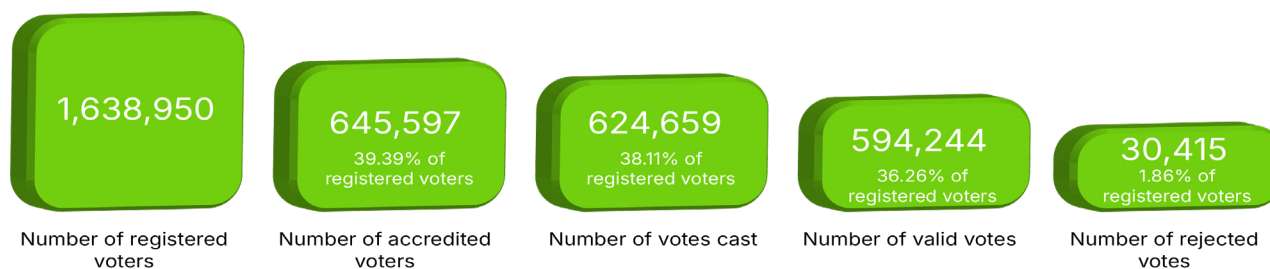
Name of Candidate	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification
Adewole Olarewaju Olaide (Running mate)	Male	37	HND
Social Democratic Party (SDP)			
Akingboye Benson Bamidele	Male	59	WAEC
Shekoni Susan Gbemisola (Running mate)	Female	55	WAEC
Young Progressive Party (YPP)			
Akinmurele John Otitojulo	Male	43	BSc
Obe Ayodele John (Running mate)	Male	38	M.Eng
Youth Party (YP)			
Adegoke Kehinde Paul	Male	35	BSc
Olupitan Otioleke Frank (Running mate)	Male	35	WASSCE
Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)			
Mimiko Olubansile Abbas	Male	60	MBBS
Afolabi Sunday Gabriel (Running mate)	Male	41	NCE

Source: INEC, Election Analytics Lab

3.4 Trends in Ondo Governorship Elections

2012 Ondo Governorship Election

⁵In 2012, Dr Olusegun Mimiko of the Labour Party (LP) won the contest to clinch a second term in office. ⁶According to the figure by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the official voter register of the State was 1,638,950. The following turnout was recorded in the election.



Source: INEC, EIE

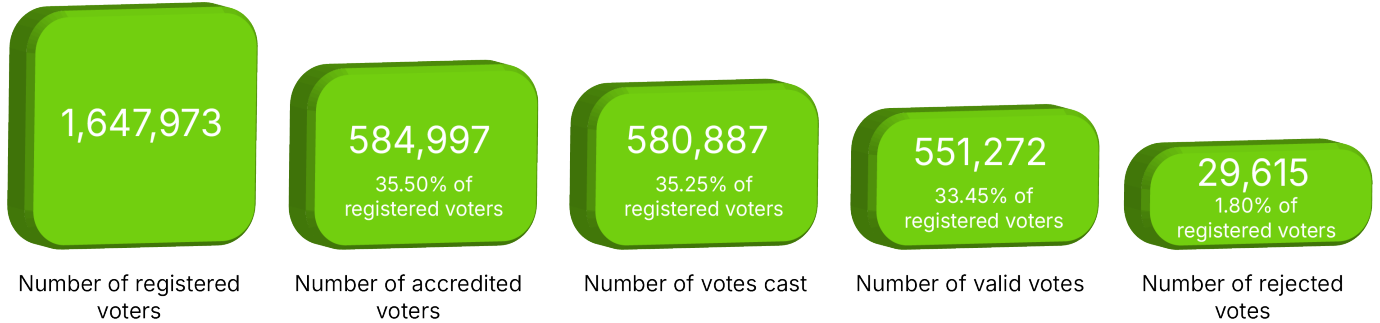
Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Ondo_State_gubernatorial_election

⁶ <https://eie.ng/ondodecides-2012-results-summary/>

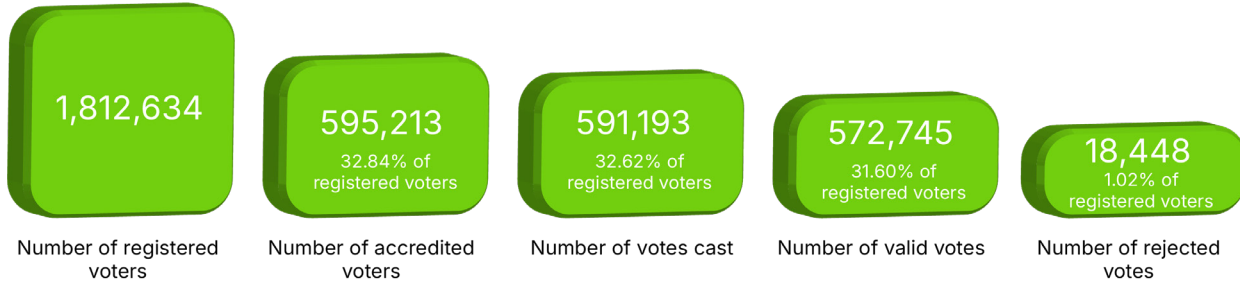
2016 Ondo Governorship Election

⁷In the 2016 governorship election, the late Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, the then candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), won the majority of votes cast and was declared the winner by INEC's returning officer for the election, Professor Abdul Ganiyu Ambali. The official vote register as of the time was a total of 1,647,973.



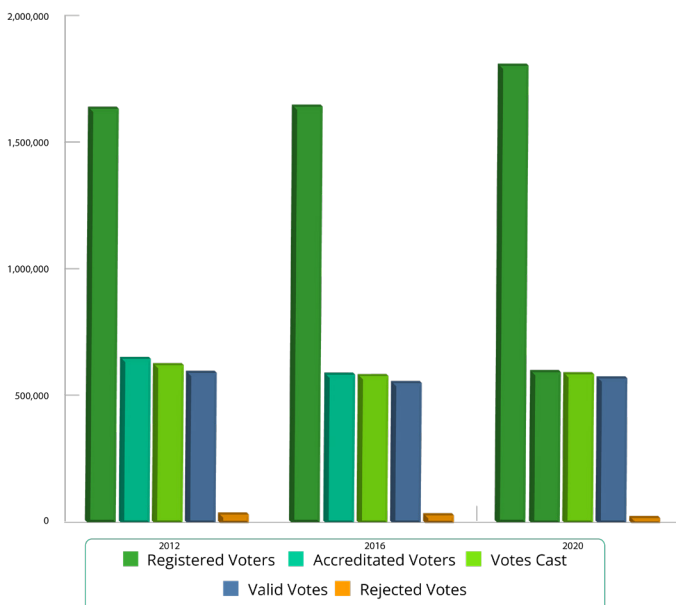
2020 Ondo Governorship Election

Again, the late Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, the then candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), secured a second term in office as the governor of Ondo State after winning the majority of votes cast and was declared the winner by INEC⁸. The official vote register as of the time was a total of 1,812,634.



Source: INEC, EiE

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab



Source: INEC, EiE

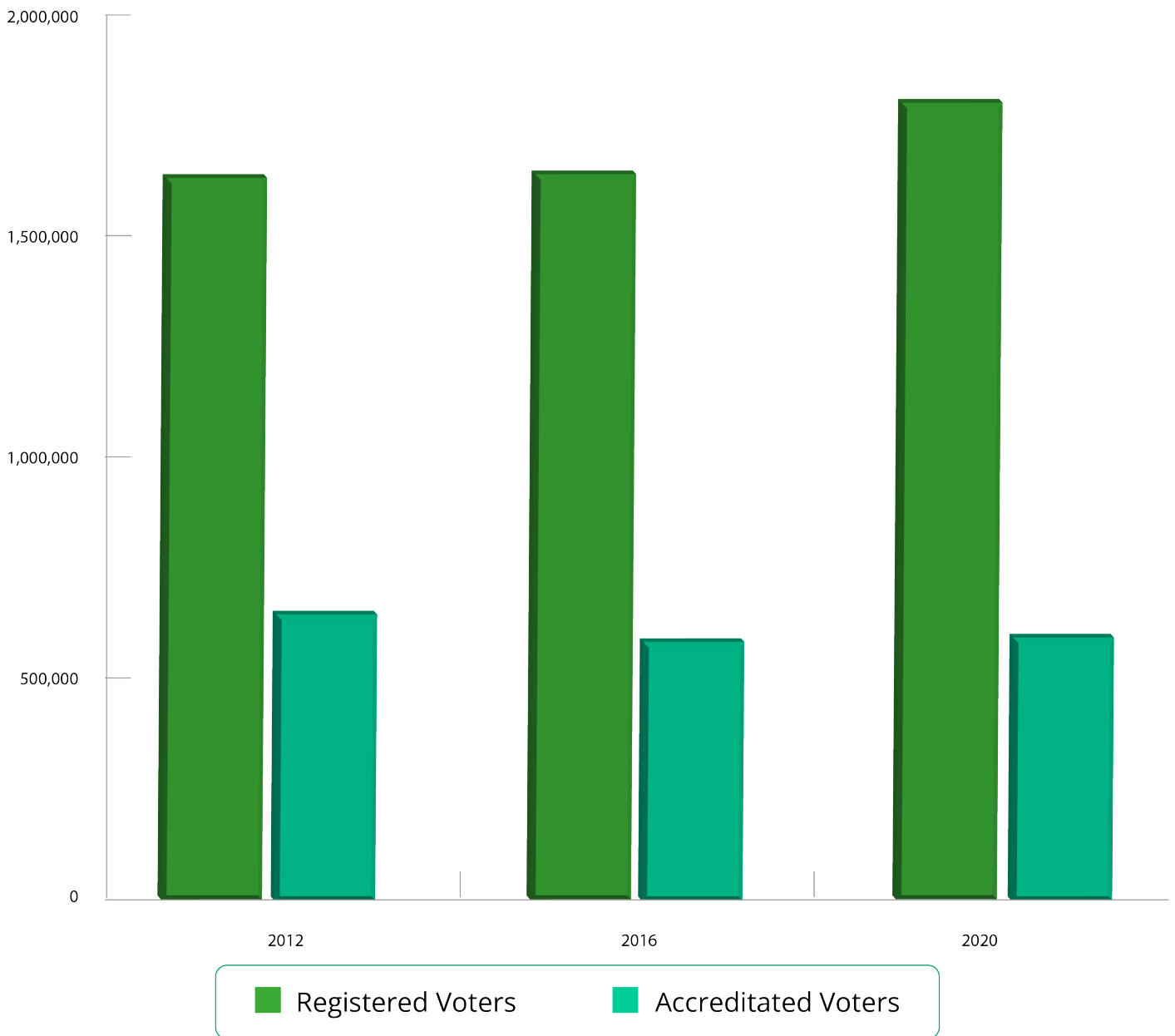
Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

⁷<https://inecnigeria.org/?news=apc-candidate-rotimi-akeredolu-declared-winner-of-ondo-governorship-election>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Ondo_State_gubernatorial_election

3.5 Analysis of Citizens' Participation

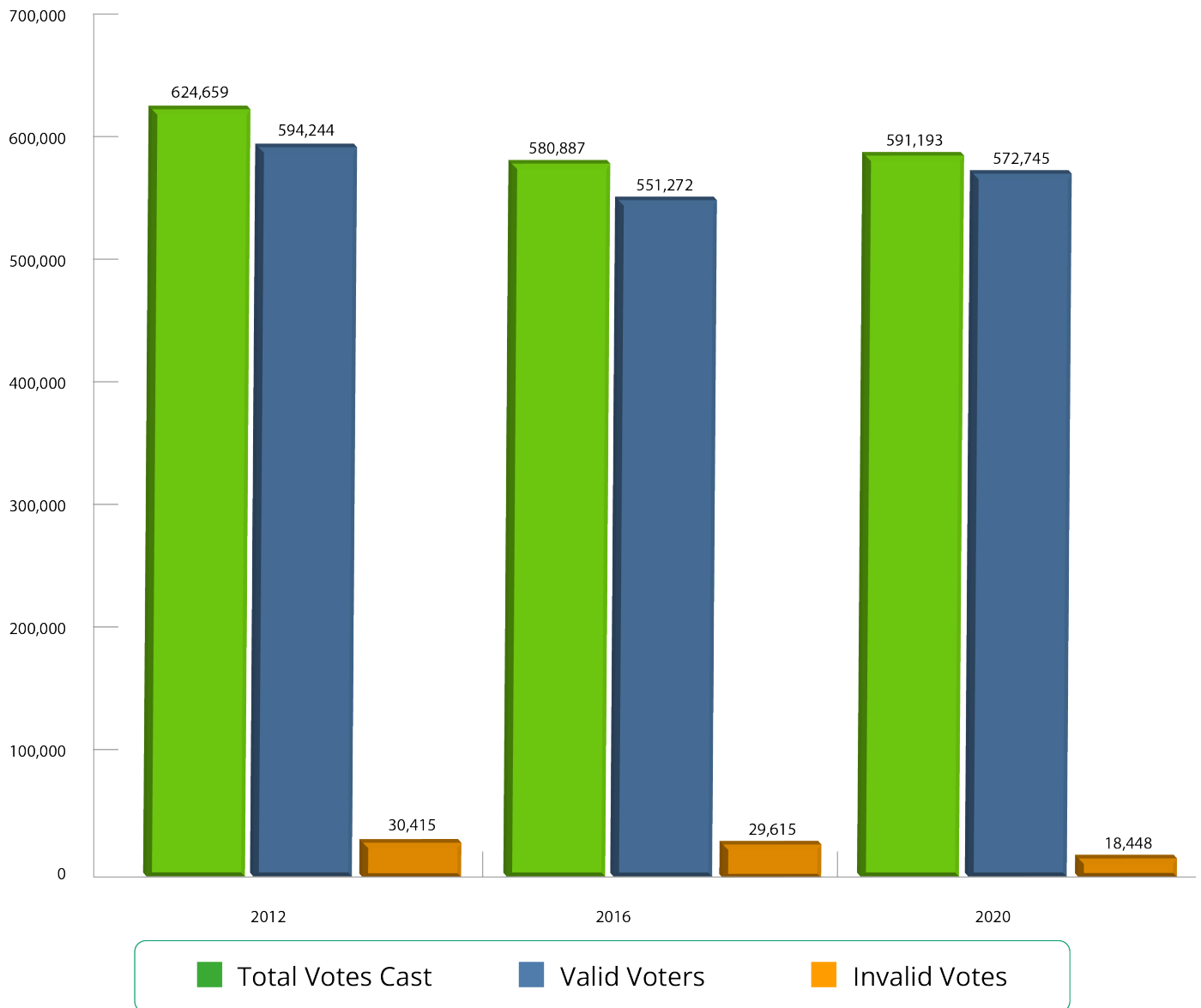
a. Chart of Actual Voter Turnouts Against the Registered Voters in Three Election Cycles



Source: INEC **Analysis:** Election Analytics Lab

The above data showed that while voter registration was increasing in each election cycle, it didn't translate into more turnouts and votes on election day as accredited voters kept reducing in each election cycle.

b. Chart of Votes Actual Cast in the Three Election Cycles



Source: INEC **Analysis:** Election Analytics Lab

The above data showed that while voter registration was increasing in each election cycle, it didn't translate into more turnouts and votes on election day as accredited voters kept reducing in each election cycle.

c. Key Data on 2024 Ondo Governorship Election

Analysis of New Registered Voters

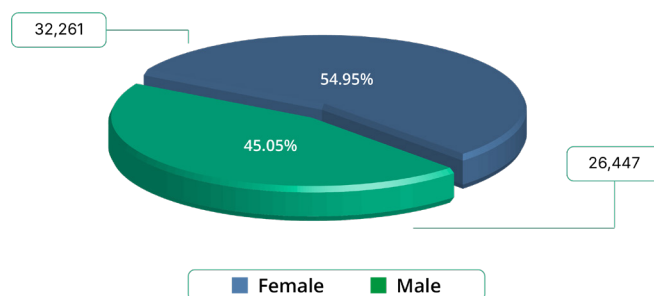
Local Government Area	Number of Voters	Percentage
Akoko North-East	3,685	6.28%
Akoko North-West	2,778	4.73%
Akoko South-East	1,335	2.27%
Akoko South-West	4,426	7.54%
Akure North	2,703	4.60%
Akure South	4,446	7.61%
Ese-Odo	2,811	4.79%
Idanre	1,686	2.87%
Ifedore	2,440	4.61%
Ilaje	4,037	6.88%
Ile Oluji/Okeigbo	2,440	4.16%
Irele	2,875	4.90%
Odigbo	4,086	6.96%
Okitipupa	4,689	7.99%
Ondo East	1,340	2.28%
Ondo West	3,624	6.17%
Ose	3,183	5.42%
Owo	6,104	10.40%

Source: INEC Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

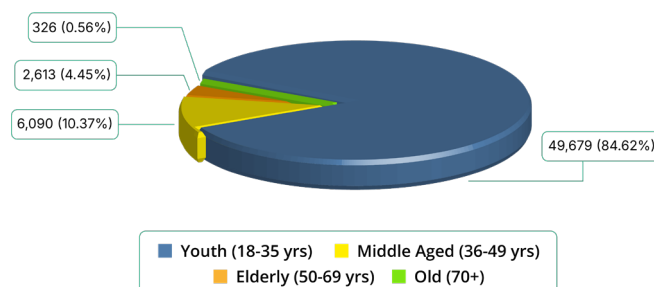
⁹A total of **58,708 new voters** were officially added to the official voter register in Ondo State by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) through the 2024 **Continuous Voter Registration (CVR)** exercise between 27th May - 9th June 2024 in the State.

⁹ <https://inecnews.com/inec-announces-119206-new-voters-for-edo-58708-emerge-in-ondo/>

Gender



Age Group



Disability

All PWDs registered

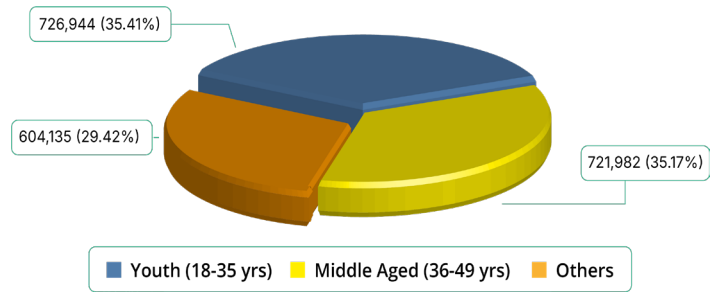


Analysis of Registered Voters

Local Government Area	Number of Voters	Percentage
Akoko North-East	93,285	4.54%
Akoko North-West	84,901	4.14%
Akoko South-East	41,978	2.04%
Akoko South-West	112,027	5.46%
Akure North	87,593	4.27%

Akure South	314,710	15.33%
Ese-Odo	84,888	4.13%
Idanre	91,392	4.45%
Ifedore	83,831	4.08%
Ilaje	147,208	7.17%
Ile Oluji/ Okeigbo	81,964	4.08%
Irele	78,982	3.85%
Odigbo	154,382	7.52%
Okitipupa	126,021	6.14%
Ondo East	57,175	2.78%
Ondo West	190,666	9.29%
Ose	78,307	3.81%
Owo	143,751	7.00%

Age Group

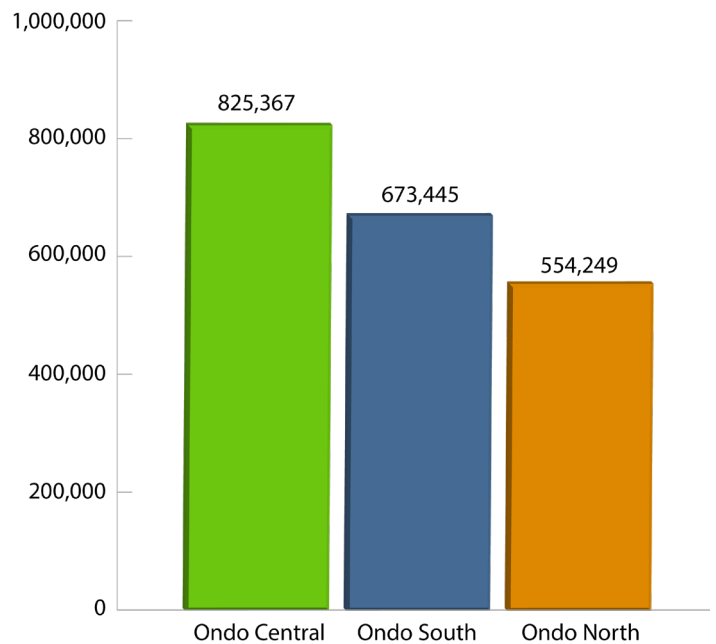


Disability

All PWDs registered

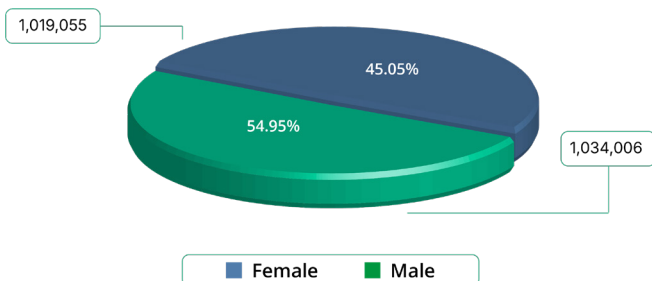


Analysis of Voting Strength by Senatorial District



¹⁰According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a total of **2,053,061** will be voting in the **Ondo State Governorship Election on Saturday, 16th November 2024** to elect a new governor for the State.

Gender



Source: INEC

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

¹⁰ <https://inecnews.com/edo-ondo-states-get-new-register-of-voters/>

Six Local Government Areas (LGAs) to Watch

Local Government Area	Number of Voters
Akure South	314,710
Ondo West	190,666
Odigbo	154,382
Ilaje	147,208
Owo	143,751
Okitipupa	126,021

Occupation of Registered Voters in 2024 Ondo Governorship Election

Occupation	Voters	Percentage
Students	694,938	33.85%
Traders	324,006	15.78%
Farming & Fishermen	277,144	13.50%
Business Executives	218,598	10.56%
Artisans	212,608	10.36%
Public & Civil Servants	44,978	2.19%
Full Housewives	16,240	0.79%
Others	138,453	6.74%

Source: INEC

Analysis: Election Analytics Lab

3.6 Barriers and Challenges to Participation in Elections

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said ¹¹“Participation in the Nigerian elections is far more important and potent than cynicism”. Our analyses of three election cycles showed that participation in governorship elections in the State by electorates has plummeted drastically. In 2012, it was 39.39%; in 2016, it was 35.49%, and in 2020, it was 32.84%. This represents a disturbing trend to participatory democracy and enthroning good leadership and governance in Ondo State.

1. Voter Apathy

¹²Ibeogu Aloysius S1, Edeh Cyril Edeh1, Abah Emma O1, Onwe, S. Onwe1, Ejem, Ernest N. 2019 (pg. 69) submitted that the majority of the citizens are illiterates. As such, they may feel there is no need for them to get involved in the electoral process since they do not understand the intricacies of politics. Many eligible voters are simply not interested in the electoral process because of the complexities involved in elections and the inadequacy of awareness around civic education, responsibility and participation. The work of media houses, INEC, political parties, NGOs and CSOs is needed more than ever before to upscale civic education

¹¹ <https://www.undp.org/nigeria/blog/participation-nigerian-elections-far-more-important-and-potent-cynicism>

¹² Ibeogu Aloysius S1, Edeh Cyril Edeh1, Abah Emma O1, Onwe, S.

Onwe1, Ejem, Ernest N. 2019 (pg. 69). Voting Apathy among the Nigerian Electorates in 2019 General Elections: The Role of INEC, Issues and the Way Forward [https://ijbmi.org/papers/Vol\(8\)12/Series-1/K0812016474.pdf](https://ijbmi.org/papers/Vol(8)12/Series-1/K0812016474.pdf)

and awareness, especially in the rural areas and hard-to-reach underserved and underrepresented communities.

2. Inefficient Voter Registration and Voting Process

Nigeria's voter registration and voting processes laid by INEC are often riddled with time-consuming factors, delays, logistic failure, mistakes and inconsistencies in operations by INEC's ad-hoc staffers. All of these mostly contribute to and lead to inefficient electoral processes that push electorates or prevent them from active participation.

3. Electoral Fraud and Rigging

Electoral fraud and rigging are the biggest stigma that causes apathy in the heart of the majority of voters because—subconsciously, they believe votes do not count following their sad experiences about the electoral process. Only a few Nigerians believe that the vote counts, INEC and stakeholders must work together to elections that are free of fraud and rigging.

4. Intimidation of Voters by Security Operatives

The overzealousness of security agents during elections often leads to intimidation of the electorates whom they are ordinarily supposed to be protecting before, during and after the elections. ¹³According to the INEC's Guidelines for Security Personnel on Election Duty stipulates that security officials on election duty ensure efficiency, prevent abuse of human rights and misuse of power, and mitigate criminal and administrative liabilities in their conduct. The general conduct required of security agents includes but is not limited to receiving instructions from designated INEC officials and sharing information with authorised ICCES members, as well as being duty-bound to assist those in need, particularly vulnerable persons. Security agents are also prohibited from using mobile phones while on duty or soliciting food or other items. They are expected to remain at their duty posts until the completion of their duty or when they are properly relieved. Ad-hoc shifts are prohibited to prevent impersonation.

5. Bad Governance and Violence During Elections

Five weeks into running our radio programme, The Civic Matters on Glow 99.1 FM Akure, voters believed that politicians and elected government officials are unaccountable to the people. Most government policies, projects and programmes after elections are not people-oriented and do not represent the citizens' interest, with favouritism shown to allied ethnic groups, regions, families, and friends. All of these create voter apathy. Politicians and political parties unleash violence on electorates before, during and even after elections—one of the greatest challenges that prevent electorates from active participation.

¹³ <https://placng.org/Legist/inec-releases-guidelines-for-security-personnel-on-election-duty/>

4.0

Conclusion

The 2024 off-cycle governorship election in Ondo State calls for a renewed resilience in participation in elections and governance to put civic advocacy and deliberate engagement on the political class to demand good governance, accountability, inclusion and transparency to fast-track infrastructural development. This is not only important for the survival of the people but also to sustain the State's ranking on top of the States with ¹⁴the lowest multidimensional poverty index according to NBS. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto. The place to start the journey of good governance for the next four years for the citizens and residents of Ondo State is the November 16th, 2024 off-cycle governorship election. The decision and outcome of the election will determine and shape to a large extent the development the State will witness in critical sectors like agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, security, technology and economy amongst others.

¹⁴ <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/78#:~:text=Poverty%20levels%20across%20States%20vary,high%20of%2091%25%20in%20Sokoto.>

5.0

Recommendations

1. Civic Participation and Engagement

Going by the implications of the turnout of electorates and the trends in the three election cycles analysed, there is a need for citizens, stakeholders and residents to renew their commitment to civic participation and engagement. They should be strong and be counted for active participation in electoral and governance processes. The power of citizens lies in their ability to participate, and shape policies, and processes of democracy. Ondo State citizens and residents need to show the power which democracy and the 1999 Consitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as altered have bestowed on them.

2. Civic Awareness and Voter Education

Becoming an active citizen is not automatic. The benefits of civic awareness and voter education cannot be overemphasised. Trends from election history in the Ondo State show that election participation is declining, especially from 2012 till the last governorship election in 2020. There is a dire need for continuous civic and voter education to enlighten and reawaken stakeholders' and citizens' interest in elections and democratic governance in the State. INEC, political parties, media houses and CSOs should incorporate civic awareness and voter education in the core components of their programmes and activities. Special attention should be paid to the participation of youth, women and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Participating from the standpoint of

knowledge and capacity is crucial to a formidable democracy.

3. Electoral Integrity and Accountability

The electoral umpire, INEC has all the responsibilities accorded to it by the Act of National Assembly which established it to ensure free, fair, credible and acceptable (FFCA) elections. Only INEC is ready to conduct an election that meets the FFCA benchmark and will encourage active participation of the citizens and residents. Some Nigerians have the popular saying—"Votes do not count". Unfortunately, some of them speak as a result of their experiences participating in elections over the years. INEC should once again demonstrate that the votes of ordinary electorates actually count in the 2024 off-cycle Ondo State governorship election. The Commission should provide adequate training for the ad-hoc staff that will participate in the conduct of the election, particularly, the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), computation of results and uploading of results to the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) portal. The use of technology by INEC in the Ondo election should be thoroughly tested and demonstrated to stakeholders before the day of the election. Electoral integrity and accountability must be upheld.

4. Community Organising and Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders at the grassroots and community levels should organise

themselves and agonise no further as a platform and opportunity to engage, interact and question party candidates on their plans to provide sustainable solutions to various challenges facing their communities to enjoy the dividends of democracy. They should use the opportunities to articulate their challenges in poor healthcare delivery, unsafe communities, schools without facilities and teachers, bad roads and inadequate farm inputs and support for farmers amongst others. This would lay the foundation for effective advocacy, engagement and participation in governance post-election.

5. Independent Monitoring and Engagement

Civil Society Organisations, international observers and media organisations should be strengthened to carry out independent and non-partisan monitoring and engagement before, during and after the November 16th Ondo governorship election. Their role as independent and non-partisan observers is strategic to reinforcing electorates' confidence in the electoral process that sharp practices and election malpractices would be unveiled to enhance the integrity and accountability of the election.

6. Security Authorities Should Do Their Job without Political Interference

The crucial role of security agents in an election cannot be over-emphasised. Security agencies should play their role in line with the provisions of the Constitution, guidelines issued by INEC and the Acts which established their different institutions. Protection of electorates, communities, and sensitive election materials should be the focus of security agencies in the Ondo governorship election. The allegations of security agencies conniving with politicians and political parties to create fear in the hearts of electorates should be discouraged. The presence of security agents during an election should reinforce the confidence of electorates, not the otherwise.

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