Review of Nigeria's 2019 General Elections

About Us

The Election Network is a digital media company delivering creative, intelligent and data-driven journalism around global elections. We publish authentic news, analysis and social impact stories in the most illuminating and accessible ways possible.

Our focus is on original digital storytelling, and smart coverage of technology, data trends, special features and curated stories that provide great insight into elections around the world.
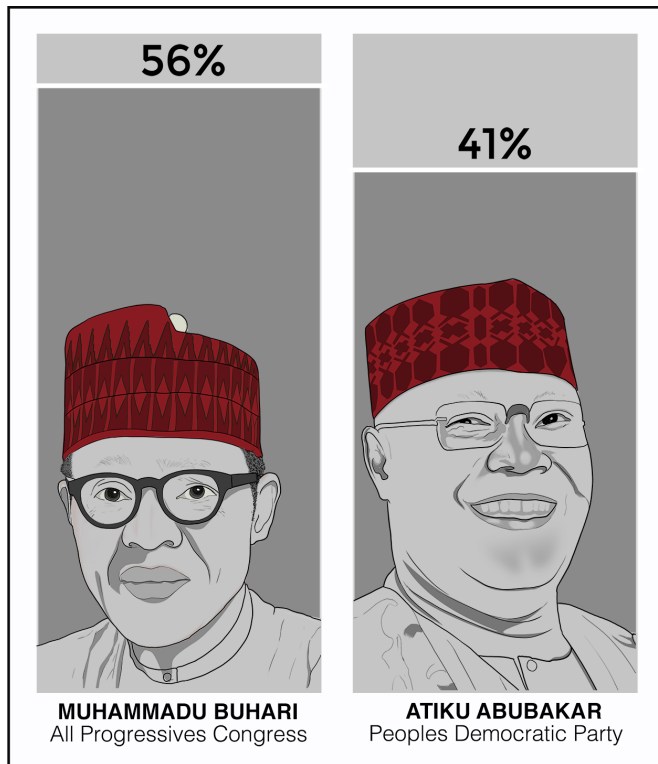
Content

Executive Summary

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All Progressives Congress

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Peoples Democratic Party

On February 23, 2019, presidential and parliamentary elections held in Nigeria where incumbent president Muhammadu Buhari won in a 56% to 41% score against his main opposition, former vice president Atiku Abubakar. Two weeks later, on 9 March, Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly had their elections.

The elections were generally marked by several irregularities and issues which include logistics and operational challenges, and the militirization of the polls across many centers. The unconstitutional removal of Chief Justice of the federation, Walter Onoghen a few weeks to the election also draws a lot of speculation about the credibility and transparency of the process.

This paper attempts to review the main issues that plagued the 2019 general elections and how they affected the outcomes of the general elections. It takes into record, the exact comments of Nigerians about their experiences during the polls, and suggests solutions for future elections.

Key Issues

1 Election Malpractice

Irregularities such as vote buying, militarization of polls, voter intimidation, lack of safe and conducive environments were reported by citizens via media platforms and by election observers.

The INEC collation process was heavily flawed as well as results were not electronically transmitted, this leaves room for errors in collation and may have affected results.

3 Cost of Elections

The 2019 general elections were the most expensive in the history of Nigeria. More worrying is the fact that there is no transparency in the use of funds

The most common term used to describe the elections was "rigged' and "wasteful", pointing to the lack of transparency in the way the polls were conducted, and the heavy costs of funding the elections.

2 Civic Engagement

Local communities were exempted from civic and voter education. General participation in partisan politics is low. There was absence of a third force to tip off the two major parties, so voting options were limited considering other choices did not have a potential to win the elections.

4 Low Voter Turnout

The 2019 general elections had the lowest voter turnout in Nigeria history. Voter turnout was abysmally low with a 36.7% score.

Pre-voting and voting were tedious as getting a voter's card was really difficult and elections did not start early on the day of elections.

5 Logistics and Disorganization

Elections were postponed few hours to opening the polls. When polls began, a lot of centers started voting late, others had incomplete materials or card readers that were not functional.

Key Issues

6 Electoral Reform Bill

A bill was proposed to review the current electoral system and introduce citizen friendly but the Electoral reform bill was not signed by the national assembly.

7 Gender Inequality

The election had very low female representation, while women who participated were harassed in their quest for political seats. Existing policies that make room for the participation of more women in the political space are not being implemented.

8 Poverty

With over 98 million people living in poverty, the rising poverty level in Nigeria constituted the major reason why vote buying was easy. For as little as 3 dollars, a potential vote's choice can be swayed or bought.
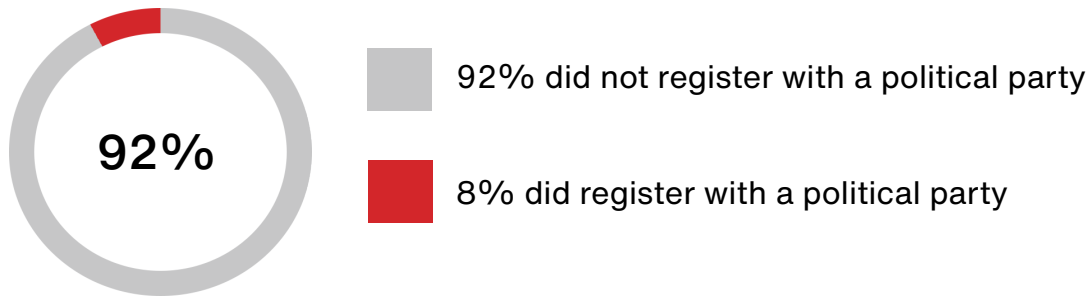
9 Fake News and Disinformation

This is a global problem that affects the outcomes of elections and was characteristic in the 2019 general elections. Whether it swayed the outcomes of the election is not known.
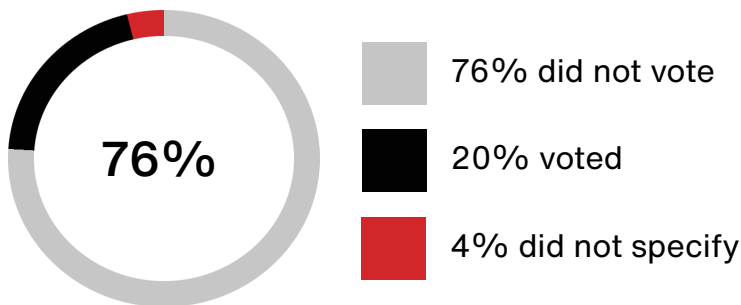
Post Election Survey

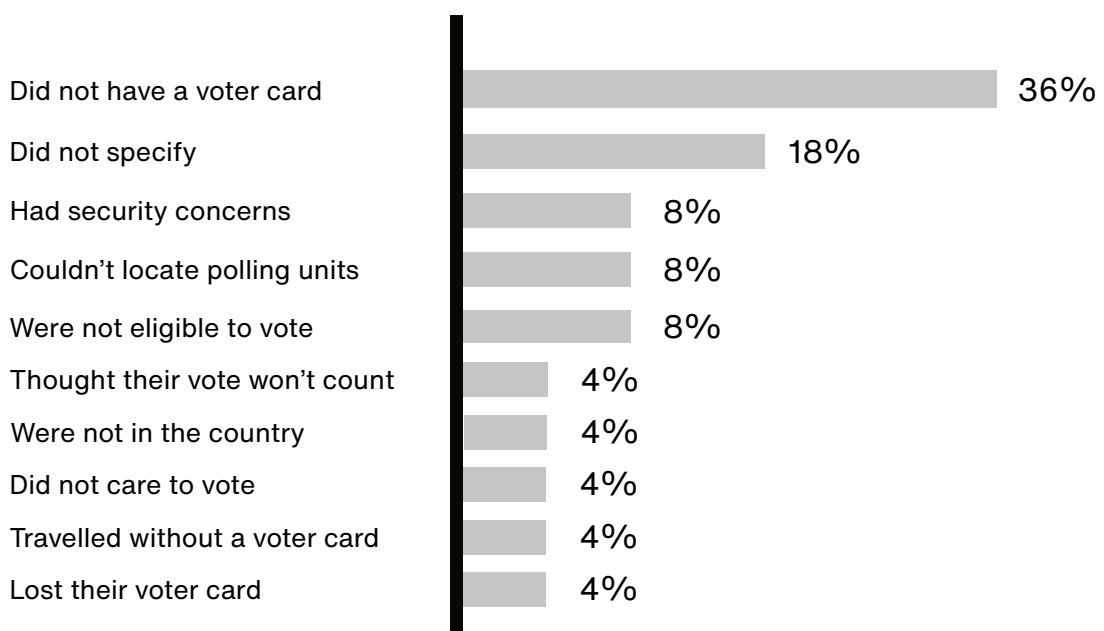The Election Network conducted a simple survey of a representative sample of Nigerians.

With regards to registering with a political party:

92%

92% did not register with a political party

8% did register with a political party

With regards to those who voted:

76%

76% did not vote

20% voted

4% did not specify

And of the 76% who did not vote, it was for the following reasons:

Reason	Percentage
Did not have a voter card	36%
Did not specify	18%
Had security concerns	8%
Couldn't locate polling units	8%
Were not eligible to vote	8%
Thought their vote won't count	4%
Were not in the country	4%
Did not care to vote	4%
Travelled without a voter card	4%
Lost their voter card	4%

Recommendations

1 Electoral Act

Signing the electoral act into law, and fully implementing it across electoral bodies is key to activating reforms. The Electoral Act will guide the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on how to operate and carry out elections.

It will also guide politicians in electoral spending in order to control cost. The 2019 general elections were the most expensive election in the history of the country, with a budget of over 189 billion naira which remains largely unaccounted for.

2 Buying Votes

Vote buying and political maneuvering remains characteristic in Nigerian elections, and particularly in poor areas. The problem of vote buying is heavily linked to poverty and lack of access to basic resources by citizens. This should be addressed as a social problem and not a security or electoral concern only. If citizens have access to basic infrastructure and finance, chances of them collecting money from politicians to give them votes will be low.

3 Female participation

Creating an enabling environment for women and funding structures that help their participation is key to political inclusion. Women should not only be encouraged to run for office but also participate in elections, as well as register in parties to help them understand the system better.
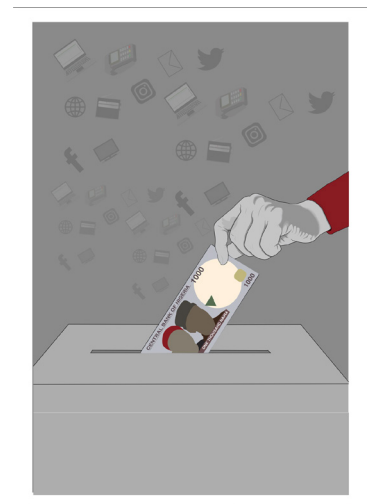
4 Basic Infrastructure

Finally, the government must address the issue of lack of basic infrastructure for development: passable roads, adequate and reliable power, water treatment plants (access to clean drinking water is a major problem for most communities), basic health care, affordable housing (especially in urban areas), police protection, and other services that can enhance the ability of citizens to live in peace.

5 Fake News

To slow the spread of fake news, locals should be thought how to identify and spot information that is not real. as locals are taught how to spot information that is not true.

Conclusion

The 2019 general elections fell short of the standards for a free and fair elections. Over 100 people were killed in electoral violence and citizens have lost confidence in public and electoral institutions. Next cycle of elections will be more effective if some of the highlighted issues are identified. One of the issues that featured in the report by civil: *Society was the cost of conducting*

However, this issue did not feature during the event as a lot of citizens are not aware of the financial costs of conducting elections to hold their leaders accountable. *Information sharing and awareness is critical to ensuring high levels of citizen participation and accountability.*

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