



A-Z about elections in your country and the world.

Edo and Ondo State Elections: What Happened

October 2020
Review

Introduction

Nigerians voted in general elections in 2019 that saw President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress return to power for a second term. Gubernatorial and parliamentary elections were held at the time too with the ruling party winning most of the seats in parliament and over half of the states where elections were conducted. However, some states and regions within the country still have elections pending. This problem was created largely due to the contestation of results of previous elections in court, hence creating a different timeline for when these individuals come into power. A series of local elections were scheduled to be held in Nigeria in 2020 but many were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic including the very much anticipated elections in Edo and Ondo state which eventually held in September and October respectively.



The Numbers From Edo State

On September 19, 2020 voters in Edo state voted in elections in which the incumbent Governor, Godwin Obaseki won with a landslide 307,955 votes over Ize-Iyamu who scored only 223,619 votes. Mr. Obaseki won in 13 out of the 18 local governments in the state. 14 candidates contested for the gubernatorial seat with only 2 female candidates in the run. The elections were widely described as free, fair and peaceful, however, voter turnout was considerably low. Edo state has up to 2,210,534 registered voters but only 557,443 voters were accredited and even fewer (537,407) voted.



Godwin Obaseki



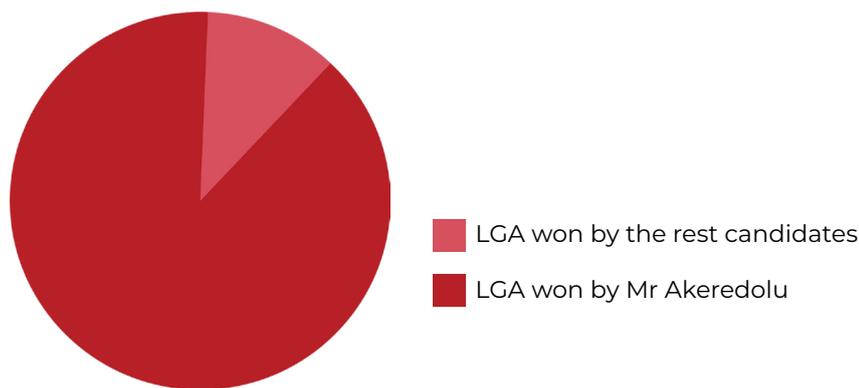
Ize-Iyamu



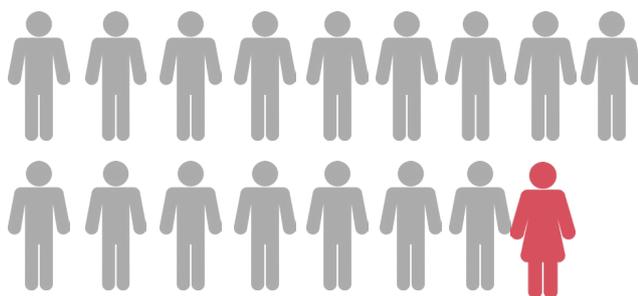
2,210,534 registered voters

How Did Ondo State Vote?

On the 10th of October, the people of Ondo State arrived at the polling units to vote in a new governor. The election had a total of 17 candidates, including one female candidate. However top contenders were, Rotimi Akeredolu, the incumbent APC Governor, and PDP's Eyitayo Jegede. Mr Akeredolu, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), won in 15 of the state's 18 local government areas, based on the results announced by the electoral commission, with a total of 292,830 votes. While the state has 1,822,346 registered voters, only 591,193 votes were cast.



Local Government areas in Ondo



17
candidates

1
Female
candidate



Issues to Consider

Voter Turnout:

Both elections witnessed low voter turnout. In Edo state, only about one third of registered voters were accredited to vote. This situation was not significantly improved upon during the Ondo state elections. It was noted that heavy rains occurred in some parts of Ondo state on the day of the elections, resulting in the relocation of sensitive electoral materials, and preventing voters from exercising their rights.

Election Security:

Political tension and threats of violence preceded the elections in Edo state but the elections were generally peaceful, free and fair. This calm was replicated in Ondo state as well. However, isolated cases of violence were reported in which security operatives intervened.

COVID-19 Helth Protocol:

It was observed in both elections that a moderate amount of COVID-19 compliant measures were taken into consideration but were largely not followed strictly. While materials such as sanitizers and cotton wool for card readers and infrared thermometers were provided in most polling units across both states, strict adherence to protocols like social distancing and use of face masks were not employed.

Logistics:

The early arrival of election materials in Ondo state were much of an improvement from that of Edo state. It was noted that late commencement of voting in some polling units owing to late arrival of officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) especially in Edo state. A boat mishap was reported during the transportation of sensitive materials to a polling unit in Ondo state but electoral authorities reported none of the sensitive materials were affected.

Use of Technology:

Smart Card Readers were widely used to accredit voters in both states and in instances of card reader failure, there was technical support available to rectify the issues. On completion of the voting process, results were uploaded to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) after about eight hours of close of polls. This is the first time that this technology is been deployed in major elections, and technical improvements on the platform are expected to take place.

Conclusion

The Edo and Ondo states elections may not have provided the perfect template for how elections should be held in Nigeria, but they have been a marked improvement and upgrade from what is popularly a flawed and tensed process. It was noted that in the run up to the elections, statements were made by the United States Mission in Nigeria, to place travel bans on individuals who undermine the process. What followed were elections that were generally free and fair even though isolated cases of vote buying were witnessed. This shows the relevance of the support of international actors towards strengthening democratic processes and institutions in Nigeria. While most of the efforts around election security have been focused around curbing violence and ensuring political tensions are reduced, there is an urgent need to address the issue of vote buying as it sways voter choices, hence undermining the electoral process.