

Special Report: **Dangerous Highways in Nigeria**

Background

For too long, highways in Nigeria have remained vulnerable to armed attacks. Across the country, commuters are exposed to violent onslaughts by gunmen. For instance, on 6th December 2021, bandits killed 23 passengers journeying from Sabon Birni in Sokoto State. According to the report, they were burnt beyond recognition. Similarly, a Kaduna State House of Assembly member was killed on the Zaria – Kaduna highway. The poor state of security across highways has negatively affected transportation and travel. In its latest move to limit the activities of criminals and make roads safer, the government has shut down telecoms services in some of the affected local governments in the Northwest. There are arguments for and against this ban; however, attacks have remained unabated. Making highways safer is critical to preserving and growing the economy and ensuring peaceful co-existence. In many places, highways are the only way to travel across states and for many who cannot afford air travel, they remain the only option.

As a security, peace and development consulting firm, Nextier SPD seeks to provide insights into the state of insecurity in Nigeria as its input to the continued efforts to impact security policy and programming in Nigeria. This study aims to understand the state of insecurity on Nigerian roads. Data on road security would provide insights into where and how security forces focus security efforts.

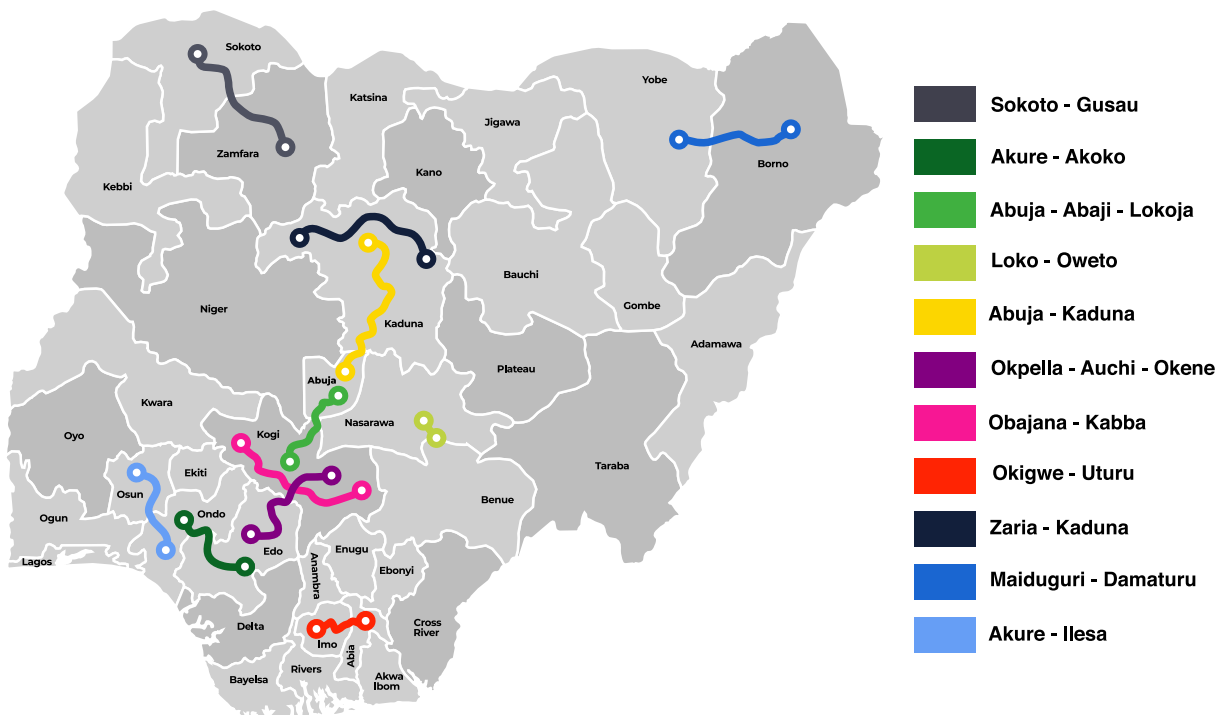
Our Survey Method

Nextier SPD currently maintains a robust database on violent conflicts in Nigeria. The database tracks local and international media-reported security incidents in Nigeria. The survey data consisted of extrapolated information on violent highway attacks from Nextier SPD's database and field survey of road users across the country. In addition, Nextier SPD collected data from commercial drivers at Abuja's major motor parks/bus terminals (Jabi, Utako, Zuba and Mararaba parks). Nextier SPD settled for these parks because vehicles plying almost every part of Nigeria can be found in the locations. The data collection process entailed administering a standard questionnaire via Nextier SPD's proprietary real-time data collection app. The team adhered to risk mitigation measures during the survey process, including Covid-19 precautions.

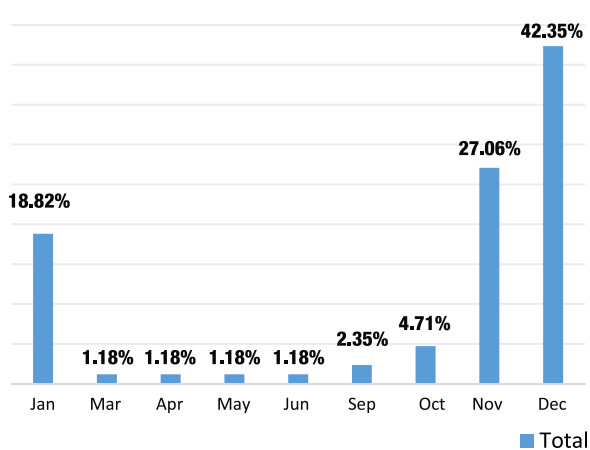
Major Findings

Based on the research questions, the following are the study’s major findings:

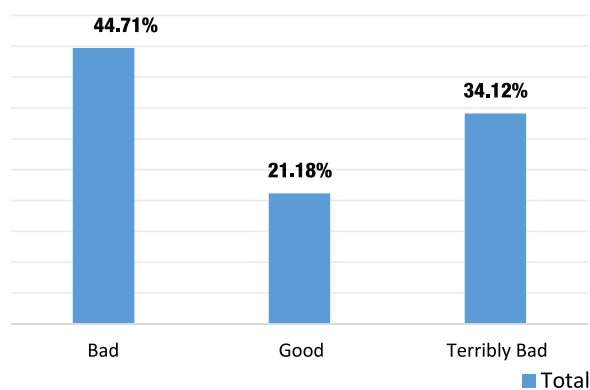
1. **Dark Months:** Findings from the study show that 42.35 per cent of drivers say that December has the highest record of attacks, while 27.06 per cent and 18.82 per cent of drivers believe that November and January are the second and third most unsafe months, respectively.
2. **Deplorable Highway Roads:** The deplorable state of the road has aided violent attacks on commuters that result in loss of lives, injuries, and kidnappings. Despite the massive allocation devoted to road construction and maintenance, Nigeria still faces inadequate road infrastructure. For example, in 2021, the Federal government allocated 460 billion Naira to construct and rehabilitate roads in the six geopolitical zones. Yet, with the largest road network in Africa, Nigeria has paved only about 60,000km out of its estimated 195,000km road network. Furthermore, the Nextier SPD survey shows that 78.83 per cent of respondents affirmed that most attacks on road users happened on bad roads against 21.18 per cent of responses on good roads.
3. **Forests of Succour:** Beyond failed roads, other studies have shown that forests possess a high risk for road users, as they provide hideouts for launching attacks in an ambush. According to the Nextier SPD study, 64.71 per cent of respondents affirm that most attacks are carried out in road locations surrounded by forests around Nigeria, while 35.29 per cent believe otherwise.
4. **Sundry Attacks:** 58.82 per cent of drivers say that the most prevalent threat on roads is armed robbery, while 41.18 per cent believe it is kidnapping. In the same vein, 55.29 per cent of drivers say they have been attacked, while 93 per cent know other drivers that have been attacked. 84.71 per cent think that both the drivers and passengers are equally the main victims of attacks, 12.94 per cent think that the passengers are the main victims, while the remainder of 2.35 per cent think the drivers are the main victim’s attacks.
5. **Consistent Surveillance:** The ‘back-to-state’ posting policy for rank and file officers to boost community policing has not resolved attacks on highways. 61.18 per cent of respondents affirm that attacks do not happen when there are security checkpoints, while 38.82 per cent agree that attacks occur even with checkpoints.



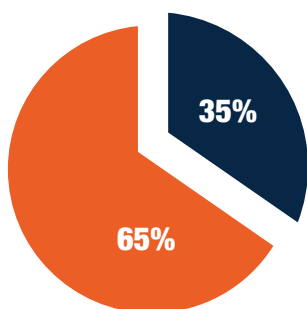
11 Most Dangerous Highways in Nigeria



(a) What are the months with the most attacks?

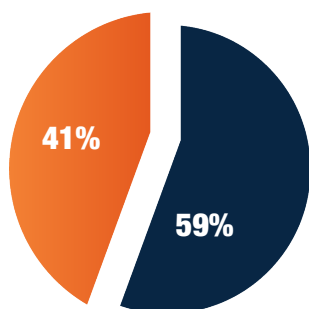


(b) What is the condition of highways with the most attacks?



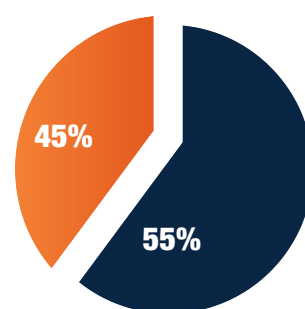
(c) Are roads where attacks occur surrounded by forests?

Yes - 64.79%
No - 35.21%



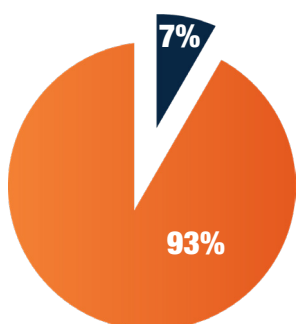
(d) What is the most prevalent threat on the highways?

Kidnapping - 41.18%
Armed Robbery - 58.82%



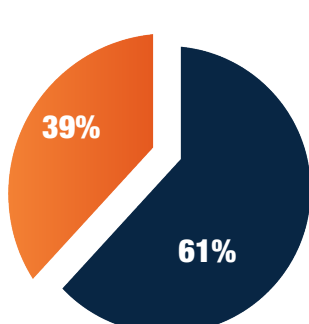
(e) Has the driver been attacked on the highway?

Yes - 44.71%
No - 55.29%



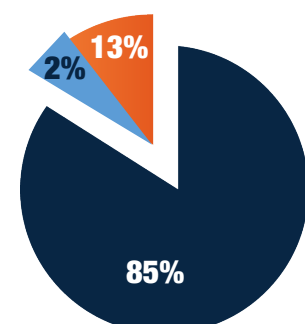
(f) Does the driver know another who has been attacked?

Yes - 92.94%
No - 7.06%



(g) Do attacks happen with checkpoints in place?

Yes - 38.82%
No - 61.18%



(h) Between drivers and passengers who are the most attacked?

Passengers - 12.94%
Both - 84.71%
Drivers - 2.35%

Moving Forward

Nextier SPD is positioned as the only source of data and analysis on the insecurity situation on Nigerian roads. The survey information will be available to Nigeria's security and intelligence agencies in real-time. Nextier SPD will work with these agencies and other stakeholders to ensure the insights are integrated into improving security on Nigerian roads. In addition, policymakers will utilize the data and insights to focus on priority areas when planning road construction and rehabilitation. This data will also inform Nextier SPD's travel advisory note for the public. This note will enable travellers to know safer travel routes.

Further iterations of the survey provide GPS coordinates that will help pinpoint the high-risk areas on Nigerian roads. In addition, Nextier SPD will analyse the data for attack patterns (if any), including days of the week, times of the day, and the modus operandi of criminals. Such insight will enable the security operatives to attack and regain control of the roads preemptively. Furthermore, Nextier SPD will explore deploying the app on the phones of all the commercial drivers on Nigerian roads and then linking the backend to the security and intelligence authorities.