

# Nigeria Violent Conflict Bi-monthly Report (January - February 2023)

Insights from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database





# Nigeria Violent Conflict Report January - February 2023

Insights from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Banditry .....	5
Trend of Violent Conflict .....	5
Key Findings .....	6
Key Responses .....	6
Recommendations .....	7
Gunmen Attacks .....	7
Trend of Violent Conflict .....	8
Key Findings .....	9
Key Responses .....	9
Recommendations .....	9
Thuggery .....	9
Trend of Violent Conflict .....	10
Key Findings .....	11
Key Responses .....	11
Recommendations .....	11
Conclusion .....	11



# Introduction

Nigeria is facing extreme security challenges. Insurgents in the Northeast, armed bandits in the Northwest, secessionists in the Southeast, violent gangs in the Southwest, and militancy in the South-south [threaten national stability](#). The year 2023 has seen a [continuation of the insecurity](#) plaguing Nigeria. This wave of insecurity [posed a threat](#) to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Several election stakeholders predicted a breakdown of law and order with no clear path for peace across the country. For instance, a Nextier report titled [“How Violence Could Affect Nigeria’s 2023 Elections”](#) examined the existing conditions and actors that may propel electoral violence across Nigeria. The report suggested an outbreak of violence using context-specific information and data on current violent trends. Notably, the electoral outcome proved this prediction as thuggery, threats, killings, destructions, and electoral malpractice were [recorded](#) during the review period. This situation culminated in grievances that [questioned the legitimacy](#) of the entire electoral process.

Beyond the elections, the Nextier Violent Conflict Database recorded three major violent conflict types between January and February 2023. They include thuggery, banditry and gunmen attacks. While the Northwest and Northcentral recorded bandit attacks, gunmen attacks were common in the Southeast and South-South. Southwest recorded heightened incidents of thuggery, mainly linked to the 2023 general elections. Efforts by the government to curtail the menacing insecurity seem not to [yield the desired results](#). Sadly, the problem of insecurity coexists with the baggage of unsolved social, economic and political [challenges](#) facing Nigeria.



# Banditry

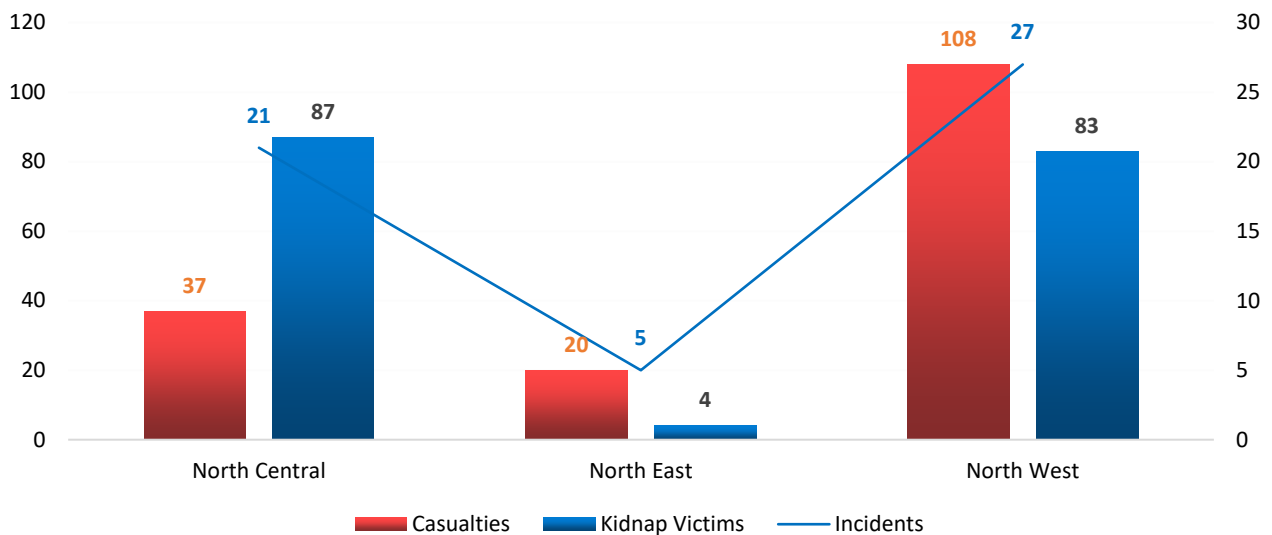


Banditry is a metaphor for organised crime by clandestine, armed non-state actors who pursue economic objectives and other sectional interests by engaging in various forms of [criminal activities](#) such as kidnapping for ransom, raiding/ looting of communities, and other illicit financial activities from which they make illegal gains. This conflict issue is dominant in [Northwest and Northcentral Nigeria](#). Social and economic factors are the most salient causes of the growing crisis. For example, in Northwest Nigeria, particularly in Zamfara state, the illegal mining areas have directly [influenced](#) the rise in criminal gangs. At the same time, high unemployment has made banditry a [lucrative venture](#) for young people.

## Trend of Violent Conflict

### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Banditry

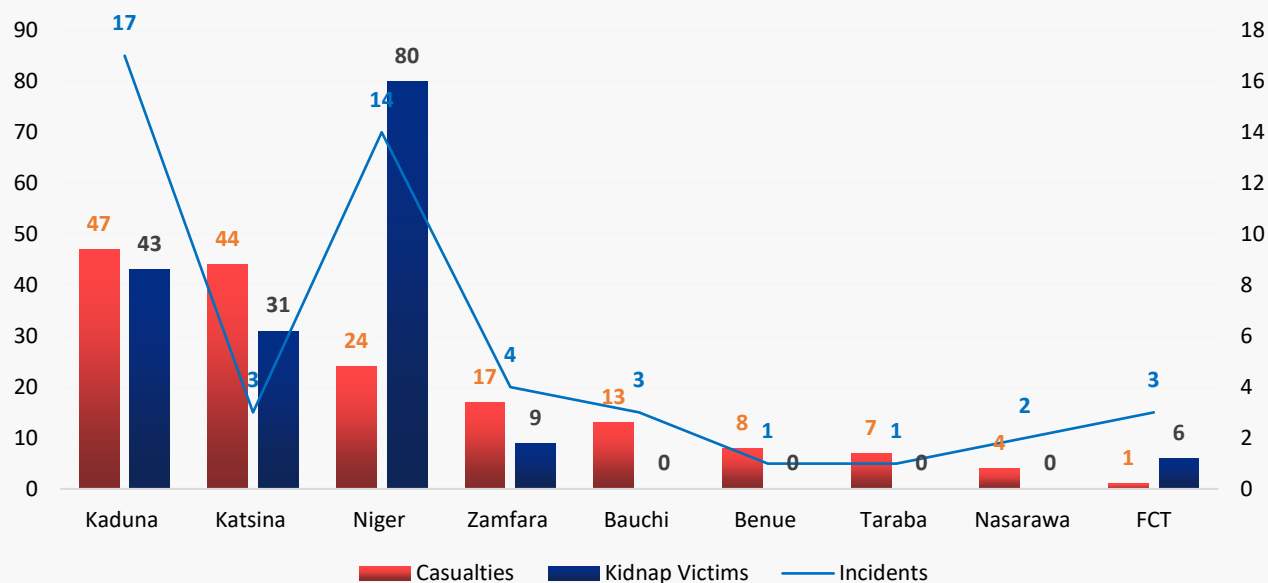
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

## Violent Conflict Data by State: Banditry

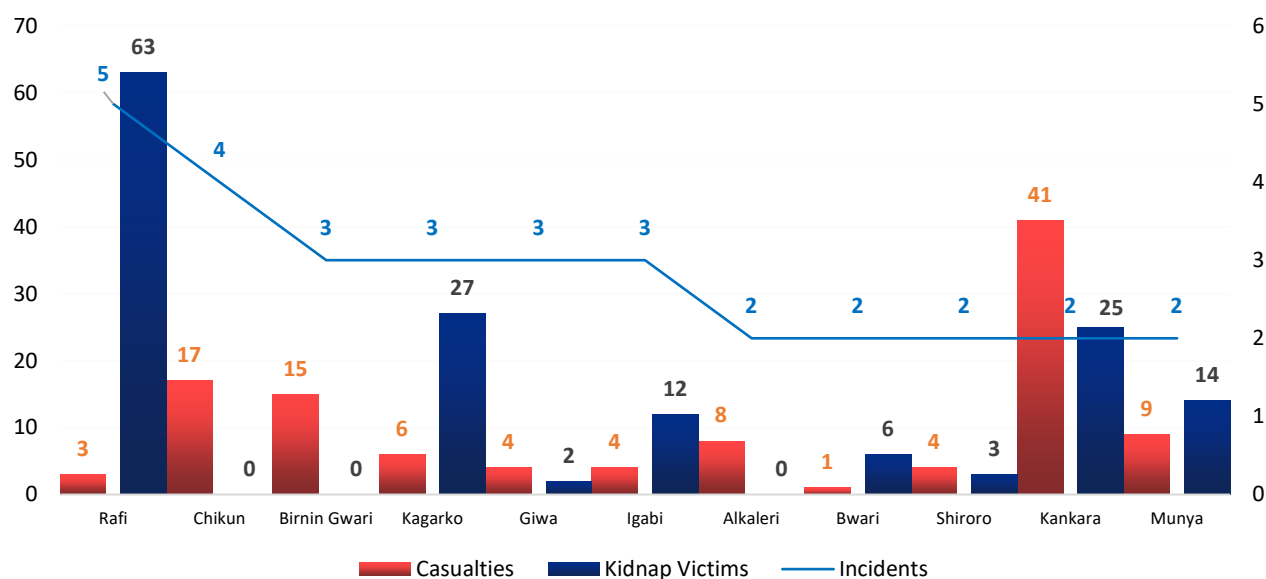
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

## Violent Conflict Data by Local Government Area: Banditry

Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Key Findings

According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, the Northwest region was the epicentre for banditry in the first two months of 2023. The incidents were widespread in Sokoto, Kaduna and Zamfara. Overwhelmingly, the casualty figure stood at 108 for deaths and 83 kidnap victims in 27 incidents. Although this conflict type was dominant in the Northwest, other regions like the Northcentral and Northeast also recorded bandit attacks. The [abduction](#) of 63 people in five incidents at Rafi Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger state shows it was the most attacked local government area. The motives of these attacks have often been [ransom](#) collections and looting of properties. With the Northwest and Northcentral regions gradually becoming [a haven for Boko Haram insurgents](#), an [unholy alliance](#) arguably exists between bandits and terrorist groups.

### Key Responses

Traditionally, the government's response to banditry has consisted of [raids, killings, and the capture of bandits](#). While this approach has yielded some results, like the killing and capturing of prominent bandit leaders and strongholds, the groups have continued to [cause mayhem and prevail in criminal activities](#). About [ten military](#)

[operations](#) have been launched to combat banditry in the Northwest alone, yet the unrest has remained unresolved. As a ploy, bandits camp in [thinly populated forests that provide a hideout and leeway](#) for unchecked mobility and operations. Also, when security personnel discover and [demolish a hideout](#), they quickly disperse to establish [new camps in the forest](#). Some key stakeholders view the menace of banditry as one that has been [politicised](#). Thus, there have been [calls](#) for the government to be accountable and address underlying problems like unemployment and poverty. Also, some stakeholders have suggested increased collaboration between the government and relevant partners to reduce criminal activities. For example, the International Crisis Group recently [advised](#) the government to improve international cooperation to address the phenomenon of banditry.

### Recommendations

- With most bandit activities occurring in regions with low policing and limited government presence, there is a need to increase policing in areas with recurring incidents of bandit attacks.
- Attacks against bandits can be improved by strengthening the liaison between local vigilantes and security forces for practical actions and results.
- There is a need to intensify efforts to search and mop-up arms in circulation to reduce the circulation of weapons among bandit groups.
- Government and development agencies should increase non-combative efforts in banditry-prone communities.
- There is a need to improve humanitarian assistance to communities impacted by the violence.

## Gunmen Attacks

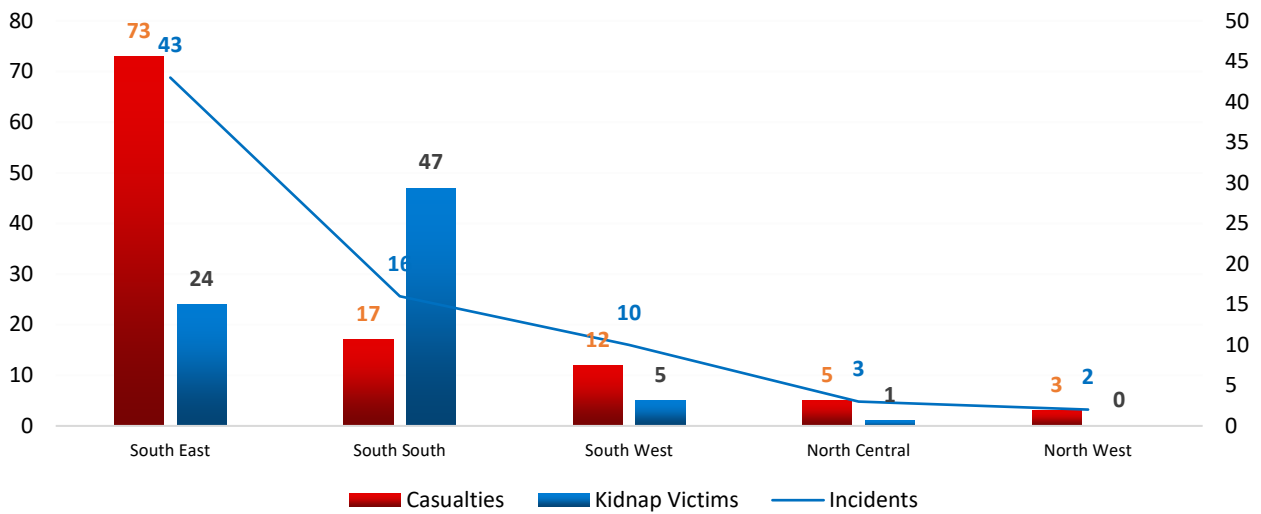


Gunmen attacks were recurrent in Nigeria between January to February 2023. The media portrays [gunmen](#) as gangs who commit heinous atrocities but are not immediately identified or apprehended by security agents at the time of reporting. Although gunmen attacks were recorded across six regions of Nigeria, their activities are prevalent in the Southeast and are usually linked to [secessionist](#) agitators like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). They are known for viciously attacking civilians, political actors, rival groups, and security personnel. These attacks have negatively impacted people's productivity and [academic activities](#) and limited the [region's investment](#) potential.

## Trend of Violent Conflict

### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Gunmen Attacks

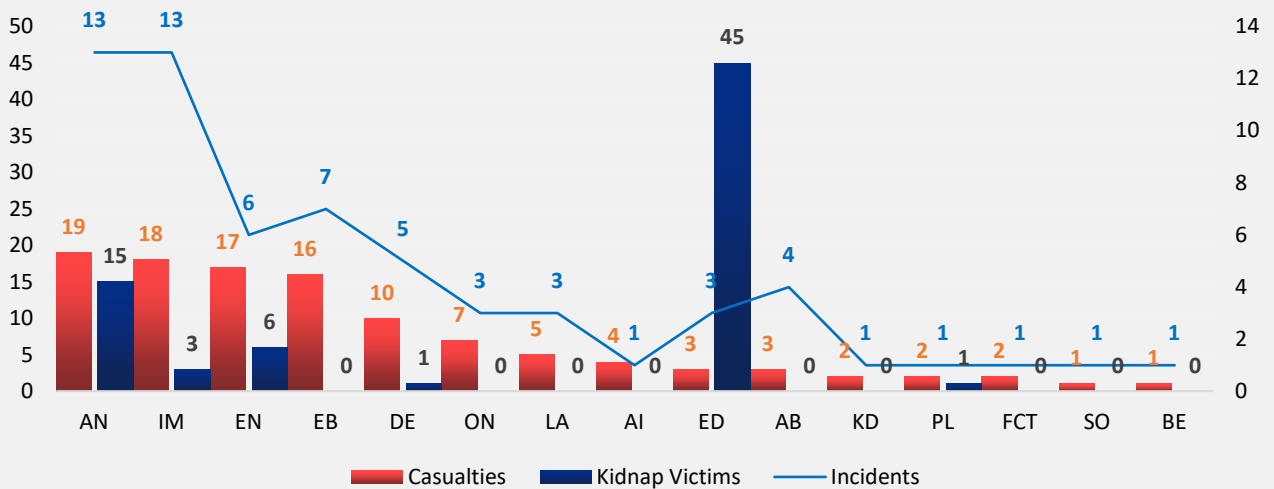
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Violent Conflict Data by State: Gunmen Attacks

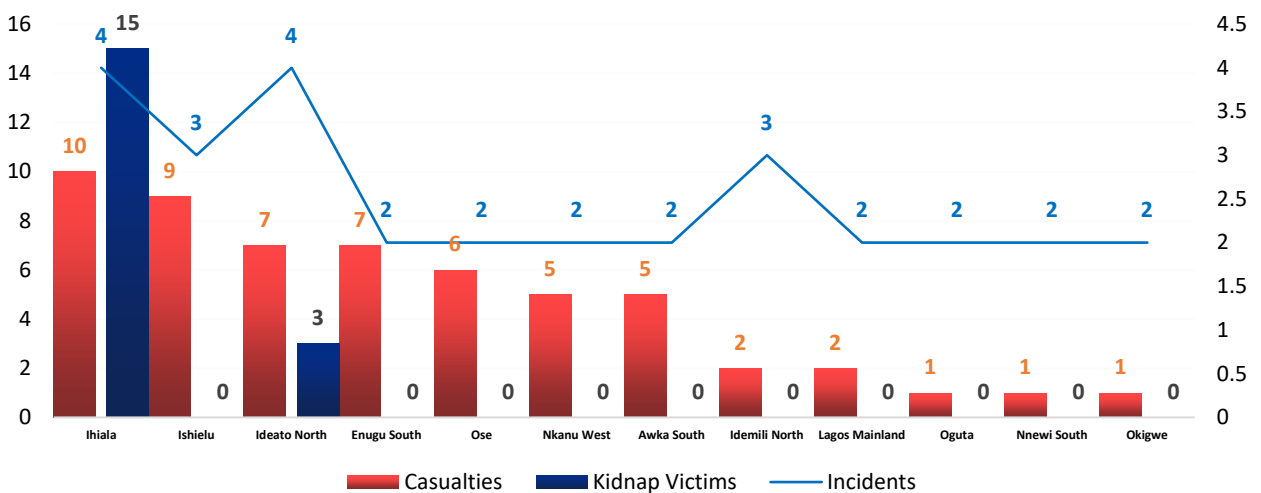
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Violent Conflict Data by Local Government Area: Gunmen Attacks

Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database



## Key Findings

According to the Nextier Violent Conflict database, Southeast Nigeria has the highest number of incidents of gunmen attacks. Gunmen attacks peaked at 43 incidents with 73 casualties. In recent times, Anambra state has borne the brunt of these attacks. The [attack](#) on a police station in Idemili North LGA, among numerous others, resonates with the argument. Notably, security agents are the worst hit by gunmen. While the motives of such attacks are unknown, the attacks have expanded to the [abduction](#) of electoral officers and corps members in the state and region. Data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database shows that, after the Southeast, the South-south region was most impacted by the attacks of gunmen. Sixteen gunmen attacks in the review period led to 17 deaths and 47 kidnap victims in the South-south region.

## Key Responses

Responses to gunmen attacks have more often been in the form of [condemnation by the government](#). Security force [mobilisation and deployment](#) have also been the preferred course of action. Security agents respond to these 'yet-to-be-identified' groups as they react to established and recognisable criminal organisations. Therefore, no specialised approach is made to unmask and demystify them.

## Recommendations

- Necessary amendments are desperately needed to enshrine local government autonomy and the devolution of policing power to the sub-national governments for more effective policing.
- A dedicated surveillance team can be established with devices and cameras posted in public spaces to monitor activity and identify offenders in the face of a stretched-thin staff and general insecurity. This approach can be achieved through the use of telecommunications technology.
- Identifying hotspots of criminal gunman attacks and prioritising policing in such areas.

# Thuggery



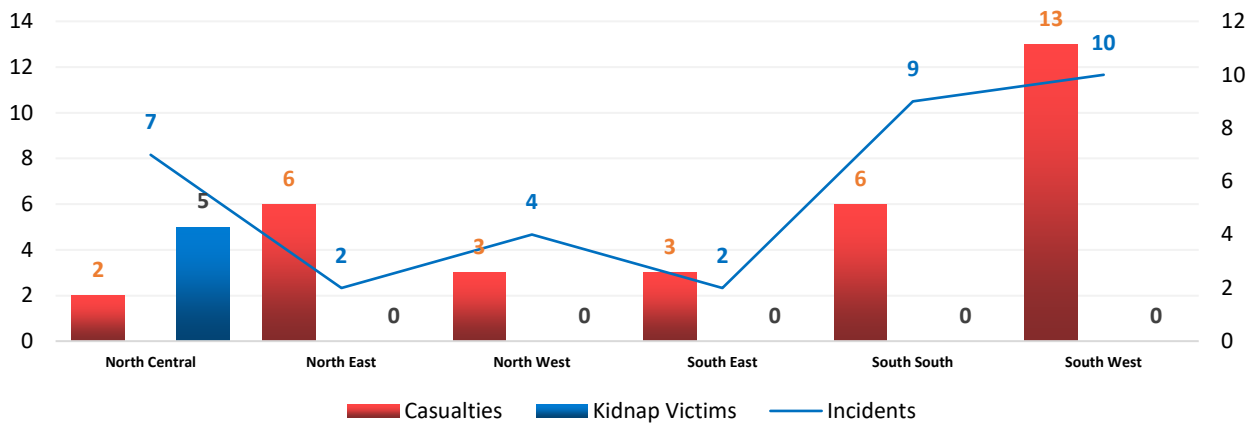
Image by Washington Post

Thuggery is a violent activity perpetrated by thugs who specialise in victimising, terrorising, intimidating, and harming civilians and opposing groups. Thuggery is also a [common feature in every electoral](#) cycle in Nigeria, which clogs its democracy. The records of violence by thugs in Nigeria's 2023 general elections are a case in point. Before the elections, several observers and stakeholders [envisaged better management](#) of this reoccurring violence and the entire process. But, records show that the [violence permeated parts of the country](#). Thugs remained a tool for politicians to advance their aspirations.

### Trend of Violent Conflict

#### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Thuggery

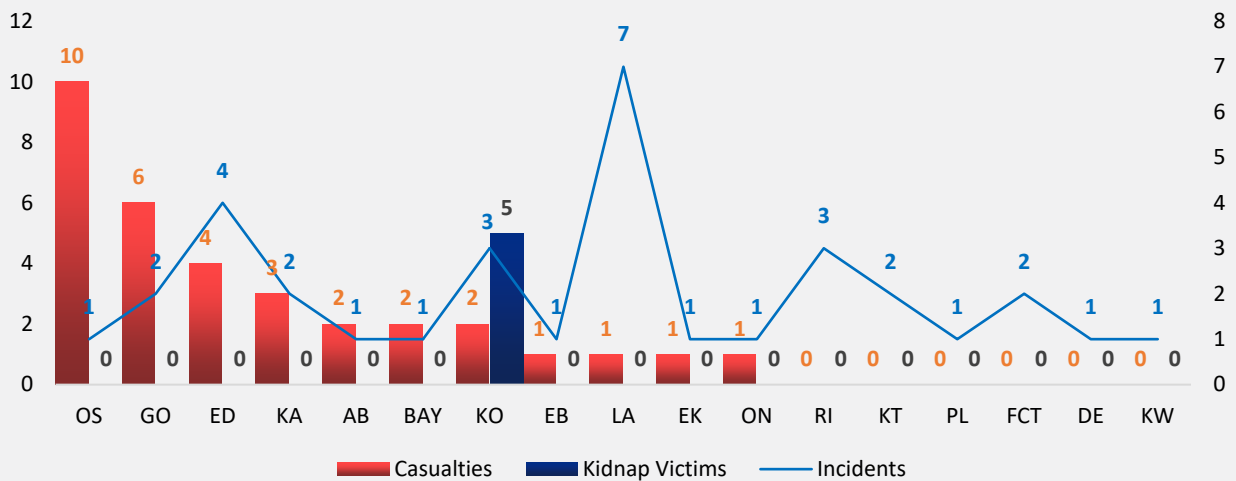
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

#### Violent Conflict Data by State: Thuggery

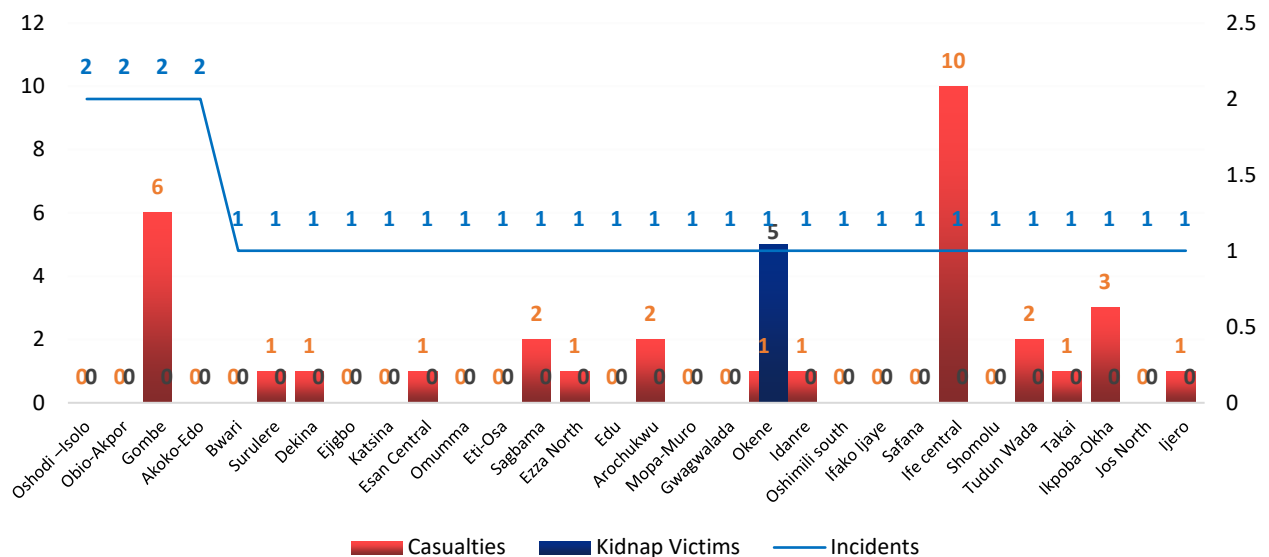
Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

#### Violent Conflict Data by Local Government Area: Thuggery

Period: January 1st - February 28th, 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

## Key Findings

According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, incidents of thuggery were connected to the elections. The Southwest recorded the highest violent occurrences, with ten incidents and 13 casualties. These politically motivated attacks mainly occurred in Lagos, a city described as the “Centre of Excellence”. A key driver of this crisis is the [recruitment of thugs](#) by politicians and political parties. The modus operandi was to [intimidate](#) and harass voters, leading to voter suppression and apathy. Osun state recorded the highest number of casualties from one violent incident, followed by Gombe state.

## Key Responses

Some thuggery incidents, especially during the elections, were met with police action. For instance, operatives of the Nigerian Army gunned down a ballot box snatcher in Dekina, Kogi State. Officials were also accused of conniving with politicians to [rig the elections](#).

## Recommendations

- There is a pressing need for the government to act on unemployment rates, as most individuals engaged in thuggery are not gainfully employed.
- Increased security presence in hotspot areas could limit and curb the occurrences of thuggery.
- Deterrence through strict punishment of perpetrators could reduce acts of thuggery.

# Conclusion

Acts of thuggery, gunmen attacks and banditry continue to characterise various regions in Nigeria. They have played out simultaneously with the build-up to the 2023 elections. The threats have not been solved successfully despite combative efforts by Nigeria’s security agencies. Certain political, economic and social factors expose individuals to radicalisation and fuel war. Remedying the fast-growing problem requires thoughtful policy mapping and execution. One overarching strategy may include improving security collaboration with civilians to ensure communities feel safe providing important information on existing and emerging threats to security agencies. Nigeria may be overrun by insecurity if the government does not act swiftly and tactfully to resolve the rising insurgency and bandit activities, fuelled by ailing social, security, political and economic conditions.



**Nextier**

**Contact**

[info@thenextier.com](mailto:info@thenextier.com)

+2349131303903

[thenextier.com](http://thenextier.com)