

# BATTLEFIELDS AND BALLOTS

NIGERIA IN 2023 AND FIRST QUARTER OF 2024



Nextier

Insights from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

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## DISCLAIMER:

Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database is culled from reported violent conflict incidents from major national dailies and primary sources.

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# List of Abbreviations

AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
COCIN	Church of Christ in Nations
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
ESN	Eastern Security Network
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
IED	Improved Explosive Device
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State's West Africa Province
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LGA	Local Government Area
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NAF	Nigerian Air Force
NAFDAC	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
POCACOV	Police Campaign Against Cultism and Other Vices
RSS	Recovery and Resilience
SIC	Security and Information Centre
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
TAPs	Territorial Action Plans
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# Executive Summary

Nigeria's security challenges persisted in 2023. All efforts to resolve the threats did not stop records of violent incidents, deaths, injuries and abductions nationwide. Violent incidents were reported across the nation, with states and regions witnessing distinct and, in some cases, similar forms of crisis. Regardless, they all ended in gruesome deaths, injuries and kidnapping. Terrorist groups in the North East remained resilient against the Nigerian forces and its Lake Chad Basin neighbours. Bandits maintained the tempo of violence in the North East and steadily spread its horror in the North West. The South-South had its fair share of gang violence, same with the South West, which also had episodes of gunmen attacks on hapless communities. Fierce secessionist agitations remained in the South East at an erratic level, with the scale of violent incidents distinct across the region's five states. Beyond these, Nigeria in 2023 was foreshadowed by the general elections, further intensifying the atmosphere and leading to electoral violence, stoking identity tensions and a polarised public opinion.

The Nigerian state maintained its efforts to keep the country safe while conducting a crucial general election and ensuring a smooth transition of power. Significant military operations were launched against non-state armed groups, with recorded successes, error bombing of communities, and unfortunate loss of combatants in the line of duty. Yet, the crowded conflict theatres and the predominantly guerrilla warfare of hit-and-run adopted by several non-state armed groups in the country lingered and a tremendous loss to the Nigerian residents. This is indicative that the measures against the country's security threats are far from solved.

The dynamics in the first quarter (Q1) of 2024, which this report also covers, are slightly different. There are more conversations about the economy. However, the economic situation is easily tied to criminality and an increase in violence as people get more frustrated about their situation. The government has also tried to cushion these realities with economic policies and social interventions, such as conditional cash transfers to the most vulnerable households. Nigeria's violent conflict profile indicates a reduction in violence, and

in some other areas, the scale remained unchanged.

This report extensively reflects fundamental violent conflicts recorded in Nigeria in 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. In this document, the trends and patterns of violence nationwide were examined and disaggregated at regional, state and local government levels. Furthermore, projections and recommendations were made based on solid analyses of the manifestation of the various conflict types in 2023 and how most locations in the country fared in the face of menacing terror. This report presents compelling evidence of Nigeria's violent conflict profile in 2023 and Q1 2024. While it is not predictive, the analyses in this report provide projections and tailor-made preventive measures to address the security challenges sustainably. This annual report is based on tracked data from the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database. The Database is a daily track of mainstream media-reported violent incidents, triangulated with primary data sources and intelligence reports. The Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database was used to develop this report to provide thorough information on how Nigeria fared in 2023 and Q1 2024 amidst the conflict theatres nationwide and keenly contested general elections.

Nextier is an international development consulting firm that uses evidence-based research and policy to develop and build knowledge and skills for governing and developing society. Nextier works with various government institutions, aid agencies, and international development partners. The firm works collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders to explore development problems, develop long-term solutions, engender economic prosperity in marginalised communities, and build resilience. Overall, Nextier supports aid-funded programmes that explore solutions to Nigeria's complex development challenges. Our projects are delivered with significant consideration, given their impacts on the people and society. We rely on our networks and expertise to provide suitable analysis, Programme project management, practical training and technical assistance to government and international development agencies.



**Ndubuisi N Nwokolo, PhD.**  
Partner, Nextier



# Methodology

Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database operates a three-staged data collection and triangulation process. First, secondary data sources are extrapolated from reliable foreign and local traditional and new media sources like Thisday, Punch, Vanguard, Daily Trust, Channels, and Council on Foreign Relations. Nextier triangulates these secondary data sources by leveraging our vast media and intelligence contacts across Nigeria. Our alliance and membership in several violent conflict reporting platforms enhance this triangulation.

Secondly, Nextier has data collectors in the pilot states (Kaduna and Plateau states) that collect primary data on violent incidences. The expansion of this project

is subject to funding. We may appraise secondary sources and capture undocumented cases using this primary data. Our data collectors have received training and are well-informed about ethical and data protection challenges. A typical gathering, processing, and submission framework has been established to eliminate errors.

Lastly, the firm has supervisors across the states who verify collected data to ensure that all information is authentic. The legitimacy of Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database is contingent on the accountable and scalable process of data gathering and triangulation offered by this three-stage method.





# Definition of Violent Conflicts

In this report, the definition of the conflict types is based on a review of violent conflict literature, Nigeria's mainstream media reports and a broad understanding of context-specific factors in the violent hotspots.

- i. **Banditry** refers to organised criminal activities committed by "bandit groups" in North West, North Central and parts of North East Nigeria. The Nigerian government officially declared two bandit groups (Yan Bindiga and Yan Ta'adda) operating in the North West region as terrorist organisations. However, reports indicate that there are about a hundred 100 bandit groups.
- ii. **Terrorism** refers to the violence caused by "terrorist groups" like Boko Haram and ISWAP members in the North East, North West and North Central.
- iii. **Farmer-Herder Conflict** is primarily resource-driven, leading to armed clashes between farmers and herders across Nigeria.
- iv. **Secessionism** refers to the violence associated with the calls to withdraw parts of Nigeria from the larger entity. This report captures violent activities

in South West and South East Nigeria, where the calls for secession are pronounced.

- v. **Cult Clashes** refers to violent clashes between gangs or cult groups. It could also involve security personnel and cult gangs.
- vi. **Kidnapping** refers to the abduction or taking away of a person or group and the confinement of a person in a controlled space for an illegal purpose. Different conflict types, like terrorism and banditry, have records of kidnapping. Note that kidnapping is a conflict type and a feature in other conflict types.
- vii. **Gunmen** refers to media-reported unknown gangs committing crimes. Although gunmen attacks happen across Nigeria's six regions, they are prevalent and frequently linked to separatist agitators in the South East, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).
- viii. **Group Violence** refers to violent acts committed by a group of people. Common examples include gang violence, riots, and lynching.



# 1.0. Overview of 2023



Casualties  
**4,377**



Kidnap Victims  
**1,878**



Incidents  
**1,257**

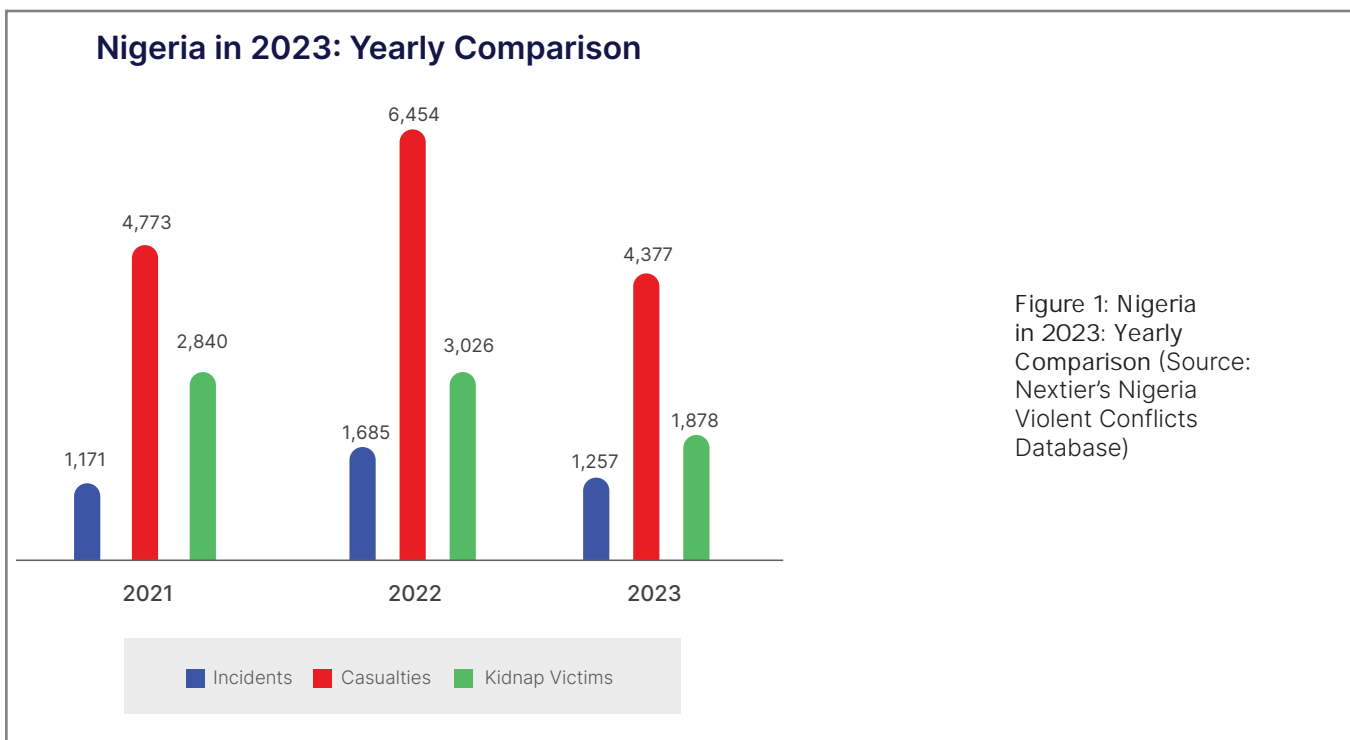
Nigeria grappled with a complex web of security threats throughout 2023. Across various regions, a spectrum of threats manifested, unravelling the fabric of stability and safety. In the North East, the persistent insurgency of Boko Haram and its splinter faction, ISWAP, persisted. Their activities extended beyond conventional strongholds, orchestrating attacks and expanding their influence. Concurrently, criminal elements operating in the North East, commonly known as bandits, sowed terror through rampant kidnappings, killings, and acts of violence, perpetuating a climate of fear within communities<sup>1</sup>. These groups are over a hundred, with an estimated<sup>2</sup> 30,000 militants, capitalised on the region's governance deficiencies, wielding sophisticated weaponry to assert dominance. Meanwhile, the South East region witnessed escalating separatist agitations, characterised by armed groups targeting both civilians and government officials<sup>3</sup>.

The death toll from the violence was staggering, with thousands of lives lost and millions displaced. The resultant humanitarian crisis was exacerbated by existing food shortages, particularly acute in states like Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. Here, millions teetered on the brink of starvation, grappling with the repercussions of conflict, climatic disruptions to agriculture, and soaring food prices. The aftermath of these crises reverberated throughout affected communities,

leaving indelible scars that impede long-term recovery efforts. Instances of violence, ranging from marauding attacks to conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, precipitated mass displacement, forcing thousands into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps characterised by precarious conditions.

Economically, the violence has wreaked havoc on agricultural and commercial activities, exacerbating poverty and perpetuating cycles of violence. Notably, the surge in ransom-driven abductions targeted various demographics, inflicting physical and psychological trauma. The resulting erosion of trust and unity complicates conflict resolution efforts. Moreover, the spread of banditry and smuggling networks amplifies the crisis, extending its impact beyond Nigeria's borders. This confluence of factors disrupts daily life and undermines public confidence in government institutions, fostering a sense of lawlessness that threatens regional stability.

In this report, Nextier delves into the intricate dynamics of Nigeria's security landscape in 2023, dissecting the root causes, assessing the immediate and long-term impacts, and proposing actionable strategies to mitigate the crisis and foster sustainable peace and prosperity.



<sup>1</sup> Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. (2024, February 29). Nigeria. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>

<sup>2</sup> Adeyemi, I. (n.d.). Unpunished crimes, poverty, others fuel banditry in Nigeria's northwest — Report. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/521768-unpunished-crimes-poverty-others-fuel-banditry-in-nigerias-northwest-report.html#:~:text=on%20the%20Prowl-,About%20a%20hundred%20groups%20of%20bandits%20with%20over%2030%2C000%20militants,other%20tribes%20in%20the%20region>

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2023). World Report 2023. Retrieved from [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2023/01/World\\_Report\\_2023\\_WEBSPREADS\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/01/World_Report_2023_WEBSPREADS_0.pdf)

## Nigeria in 2023: Quarterly Overview

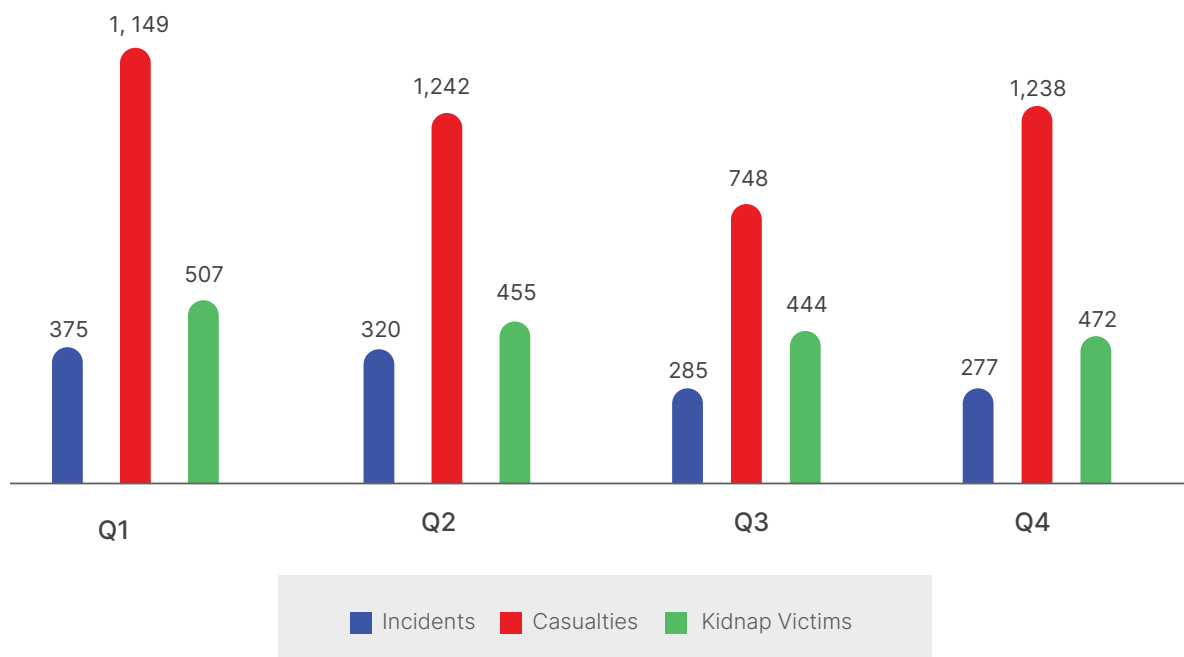


Figure 2: Nigeria in 2023: Quarterly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in 2023: Regional Overview

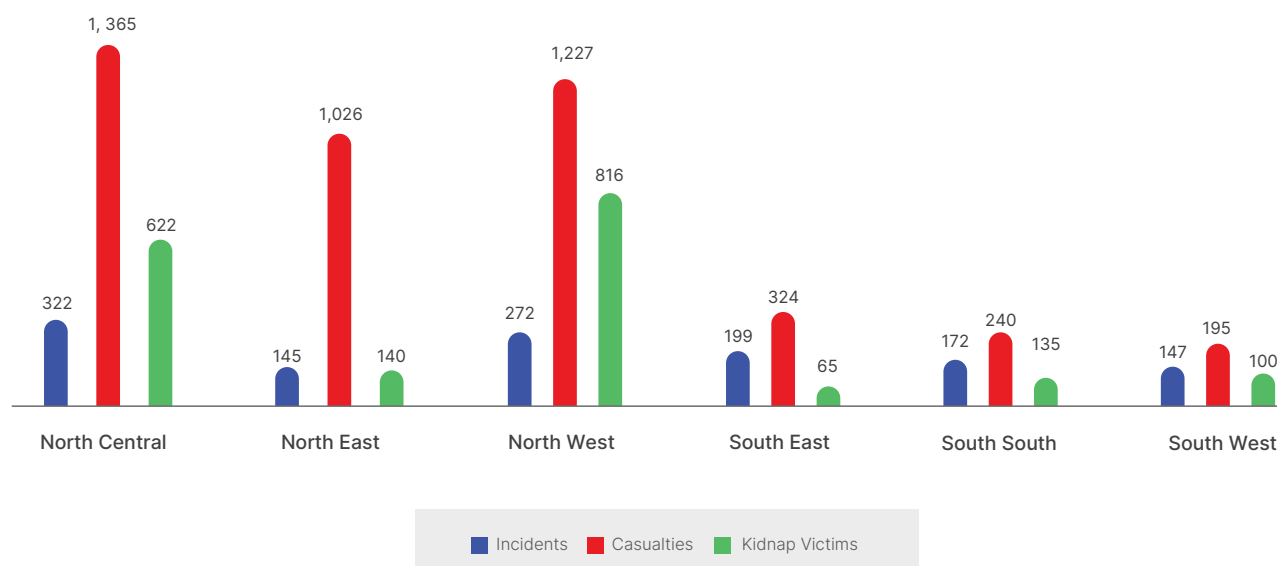


Figure 3: Nigeria in 2023: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in 2023: Monthly Overview

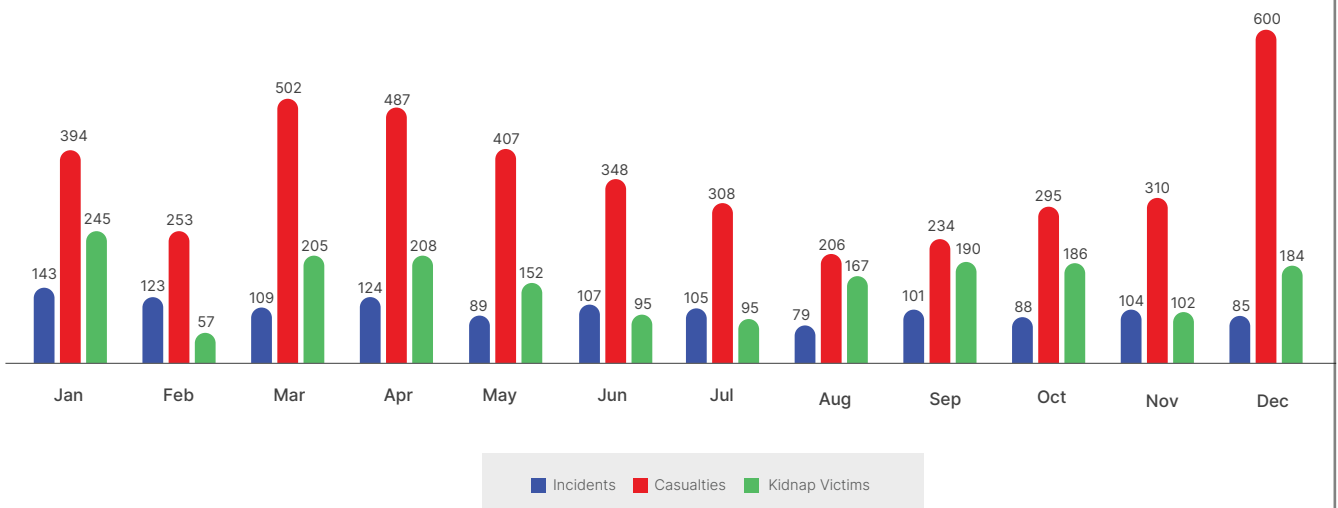


Figure 4: Nigeria in 2023: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in 2023: Prevalent Conflicts

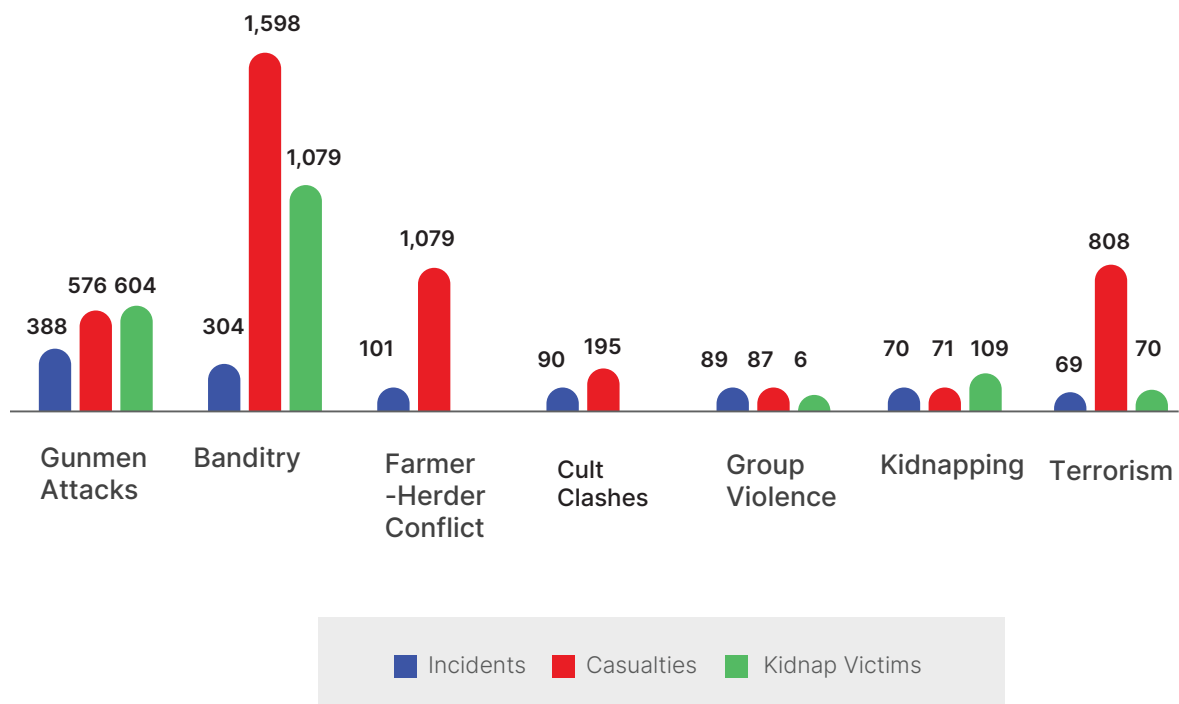


Figure 5: Nigeria in 2023: Prevalent Conflicts (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)



## 2.0. About the Database

Since 2020, Nextier has maintained a database of violent conflicts in Nigeria. It gathers primary and secondary data on violent deaths, injuries, and kidnapping victims from field sources and reliable traditional and new media sources in Nigeria, such as newspapers, television, and online sources.

The database records violent conflicts like banditry, terrorism, extra-judicial killings, farmer-herder incidents, armed robbery, cult clashes, group violence, secession agitation, and communal clashes. The database records violent incidents from the community

to regional levels in Nigeria. Nextier triangulates the data sources by leveraging our extensive media contacts across Nigeria.

The Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database generates weekly and bi-monthly reports that provide detailed insights into Nigeria's violent conflicts for research, policy advocacy, development, and security. As a result, the database is a goldmine for crucial sector players and decision-makers looking to implement evidence-based prevention and mitigation strategies in the face of Nigeria's rising violent conflicts.

# 3.0. Major Violent Incidents in 2023

## January

2

Nigerian troops kill 16 Zamfara bandits  
30 killed in clash between ISWAP and Boko Haram terrorist group in Borno

3

Bandits abduct 41 in Drumin community, Niger State

9

31 passengers missing as unknown gunmen attack train station in Edo State

15

Bandits invade church in Kankara, Katsina state, abduct 25 worshippers

26

Nigerian Air Force accidental strike kills 40 in Rukubi community, Nasarawa State

30

Nigerian troops eliminate terrorist commander and 32 others in Borno State

## February

5

Bandits ambush vigilantes in Yargoje community, Katsina state, killing 41

14

Bandits injure 3, kidnap 18 in Kagarko, Kaduna State

15

Unknown gunmen abduct 15 corp members in Ihiala, Anambra

15

10 killed as cultist clash in Upata, Ahoada East, Rivers State

## March

3

Bandits kidnap 23, kill one in Dogon-Daji community, Kaduna State

5

ISWAP kills over 200 Boko Haram terrorists, women, and children in Guzamala, Borno State

8

Five killed, 50 others kidnapped as gunmen attack Agwa community in Rafi LGA, Niger State

9

Suspected ISWAP fighters kill 26 fishermen in Borno State

17

Gunmen kill one, abduct 40 in Paikoro, Niger State

19

Soldiers kill 60 terrorists in Mafa, Borno State

19

Thugs attack polling units, injure 16 INEC officials in Onitsha, Anambra

29

Bandits kill one, abduct 10 in Birnin Gwari, Kaduna

## April

1

15 killed as bandits sack Garin Baka village in Taraba State

3

Bandits abduct 10 students in Kachia, Kaduna State

## April

- 7 Armed herders raid Benue community, kill policeman, 45 others
- 8 Bandits kidnap over 85 children in Tsafe, Zamfara
- 8 Armed herders attack Benue camps, kill 43, injure many
- 23 Army kills 35 terrorists, destroys 12 camps in Sambisa Forest
- 25 Bandits abduct 29 persons in FCT's Kwali Area
- 23 25 killed in farmer-herder crisis Crisis in Taraba State
- 30 Bandits kill six mobile police officers and 30 villagers in Dan Umaru, Zuru area, Kebbi State

## May

- 5 Gunmen abduct 12 persons in Owan East, Edo State
- 8 Bandits kidnap 40 Kaduna worshippers during church service in Chikun LGA
- 14 Bandits abduct 50 in In Rijau, Niger State
- 18 85 killed in farmer-herder crisis in Mangu, Plateau State
- 27 Bandits kill 20 farmers, injure others in Zamfara State

## June

- 3 Bandits kill 21 in Zamfara State
- 3 Unknown gunmen kill 25 in Benue communities
- 5 Bandits kill 28 in Janbako community, Zamfara State
- 5 Bandits kill 35 in Tangaza, Sokoto State
- 8 13 travellers abducted in Ondo State
- 17 14 killed in communal clash in Oju, Benue State

## July

- 8 Unknown gunmen raze market, kill 24 in Ukum, Benue State
- 26 Bandits kill 7 soldiers, 28 villagers in Maru, Zamfara State
- 27 ISWAP fighters Kill 25 farmers In Borno State
- 28 Bandits kidnap 23 Zamfara women, 10 construction workers in Maradun
- 28 Bandits kill 27 in ambush on police, soldiers and vigilantes in Zamfara State



## August

- 14 29 military officers killed in Niger State
- 22 Boko Haram kidnap 48 women from their farmlands in Borno State
- 24 41 killed in Boko Haram and ISWAP clash in Borno State

## September

- 5 Bandits kill seven, abduct 12 others in Sabuwa, Katsina State
- 8 19 kidnapped in Bwari Area Council, FCT
- 11 Suspected armed herders attacked Kulben Village, killing 11, injuring 17 and displacing 35 persons in Plateau State
- 18 Bandits kill seven, abduct 12 others in Sabuwa, Katsina State
- 8 24 students abducted in Bungudu, Zamfara State

## October

- 1 Unknown gunmen abduct 25 church members in Ondo State
- 8 Bandits raid Chikuri community in Kaduna State, kidnap 30 farmers
- 11 NAF kills 100 bandits in Maru, Zamfara State
- 18 Bandits kill 3, abduct 50 in Anka, Zamfara State

## November

- 1 Bandits kill one, abduct 25 in Kachia, Kaduna State  
Boko Haram insurgents kill 37 in Geidam, Yobe State
- 6 Bandits attack Maulud celebration venue, kill 18, abduct several in Katsina State

## December

- 1 Troops kill 52 terrorists, arrest ISWAP leader in Bauchi State
- 5 Nigerian Army erroneous bombing kills 85 in Igabi, Kaduna State
- 13 23 residents abducted in Dei Dei community, FCT, Abuja
- 24 260 killed in Plateau State
- 28 Bandits invade Kuduru community in FCT, abduct 18 persons
- 28 21 travellers abducted in Kogi State



## 4.0. Key Findings

### 4.1. Gunmen Attacks



Casualties  
**572**



Kidnap Victims  
**604**



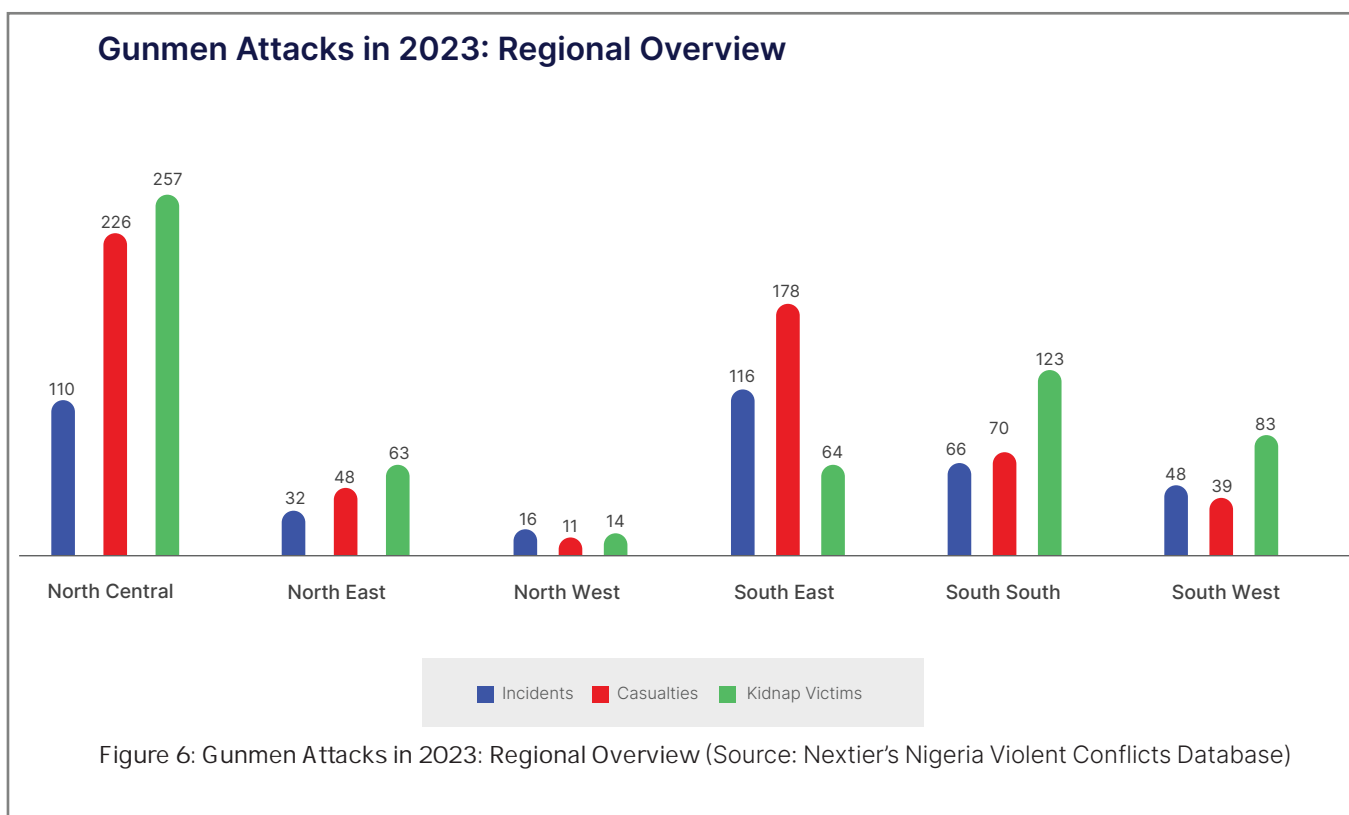
Incidents  
**388**

Throughout 2023, Nigeria grappled with a persistent challenge posed by a series of gunmen attacks spanning various regions and motivated by diverse factors. In the North Central region, the most devastating incident unfolded on Christmas Eve in Plateau state. Gunmen targeted remote villages, resulting in the tragic loss of over 140 lives and extensive property damage. This attack was linked to the ongoing conflict between herders and farmers in the region. Meanwhile, in the South East, violence erupted primarily due to separatist movements. Gunmen, often associated with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), targeted security facilities, government offices, and prominent political figures.

The motivations behind these attacks varied. Ethno-religious tensions were starkly evident in the North Central assault, underscoring the enduring conflicts between herders and farmers competing for limited

resources. In contrast, separatist aspirations fuelled the violence in the South East, with IPOB striving for an independent Biafra state, although they refute claims of direct involvement in attacks. Additionally, criminal elements exploited the volatile situation, engaging in kidnappings and other illicit activities across the country.

The repercussions of these attacks were profound. The loss of lives was staggering, leading to mass displacements and widespread fear among the populace. Moreover, the violence exacerbated political tensions, particularly in the South East, worsening the already strained relationship between the federal government and separatist factions. Internationally, the severity of the attacks drew significant scrutiny, shedding light on Nigeria's complex security challenges on the global stage.



Despite recording one incident and 17 casualties of gunmen attacks in 2022, according to Nextier's annual conflict review 2022, the North Central saw an increase in gunmen attacks in 2023, recording 110 incidents. The casualties also saw a significant increase from 2022, recording 226 casualties and 257 kidnap victims. Despite recording the highest number of incidents in 2022 and 2023, the South East recorded a significant drop in gunmen attack incidents in 2023, recording 116 incidents. The prevalence of gunmen in the South East is attributed to secessionist movements as well as non-state armed groups such as 'unknown gunmen'. On the other hand, the North Central has seen a rise in gunmen attacks due to

armed banditry, farmer-herder crisis and religious intolerance in the region.

January 2023 recorded the highest monthly incident, up from last place in 2022. As 2023 was an election year, this rise in violence can be attributed to the pre-election tensions. Additionally, February, which was the election month, equally saw high incidents of gunmen attacks across Nigeria. With 388 incidents, 2023 saw high incidents throughout the year. The dynamic nature of 2023, the concerted elections, economic downturns, cash crunch and growing ethnic sentiments all contributed to the steady trend of gunmen attacks year-round. January, March and December recorded

### Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

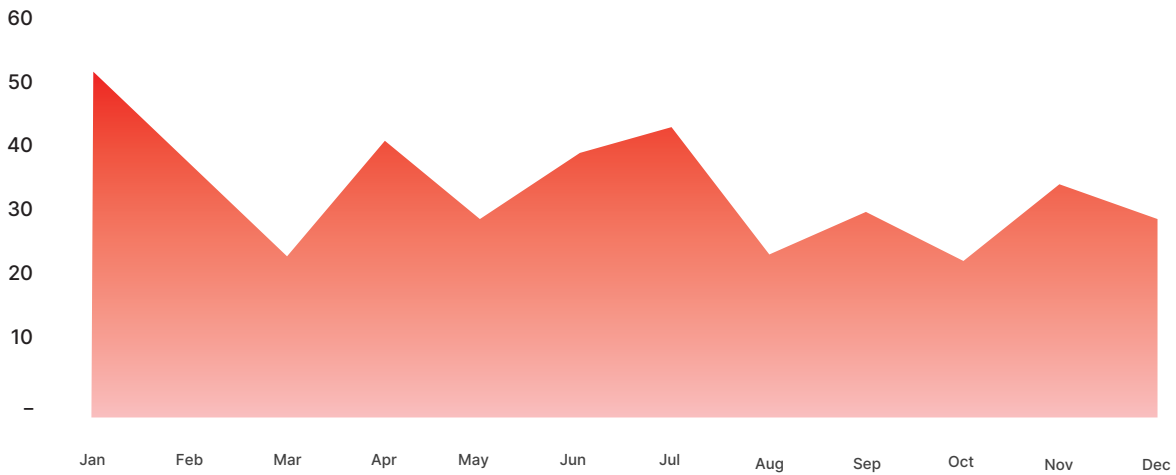


Figure 7: Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

the highest number of kidnap victims, while December, July and January recorded the highest casualties. On January 9, 2023, 31 train passengers were kidnapped<sup>4</sup> by gunmen in Edo State. According to eyewitness

accounts<sup>5</sup>, the gunmen selected seemingly wealthy victims, signalling economic motivations for the abductions. It should be noted that the cash crunch<sup>6</sup> was still in effect at this time and could have driven

### Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims

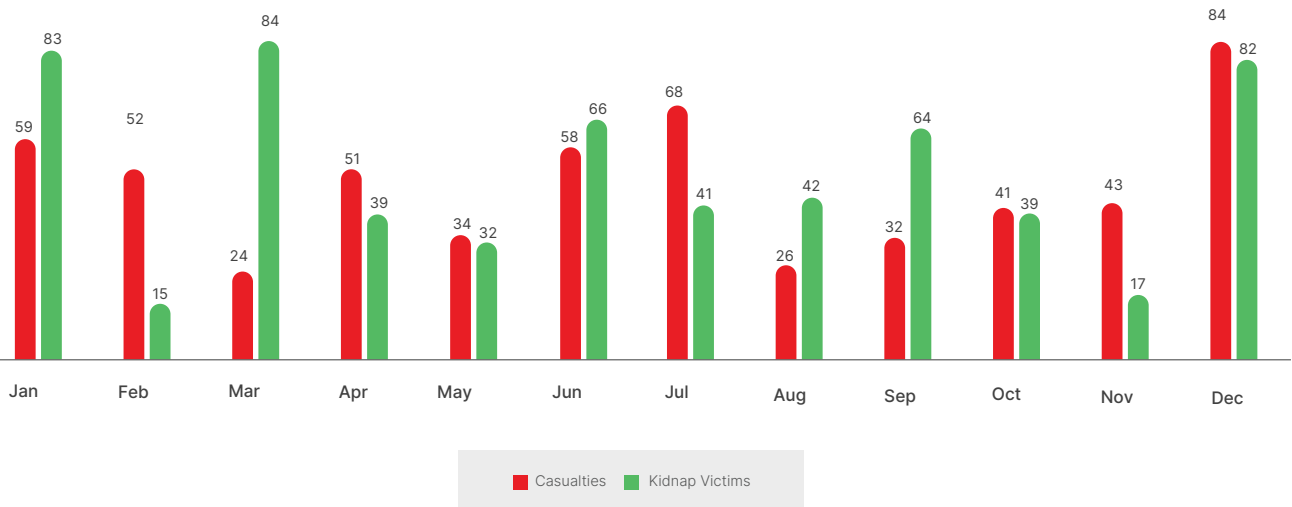


Figure 8: Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

the rate of kidnapping. The number of kidnap victims dropped significantly in February, and this could be attributed to the heavy presence of security personnel around the country owing to the elections. The spike

in kidnap victims in December can also be attributed to economic motivations.

<sup>4</sup> Adepegbass, A. (2023a, January 9). Edo train attack: Soldiers, police, vigilantes track abductors, 31 passengers missing. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/edo-train-attack-soldiers-police-vigilantes-track-abductors-31-passengers-missing/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Izuaka, M. (2023, February 15). Updated: Nigeria's inflation hits 21.82% amid cash crunch. Premium Times Nigeria. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/business-news/582090-breaking-nigerias-annual-inflation-hits-21-82-amid-cash-crunch.html>

## Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Most Affected States

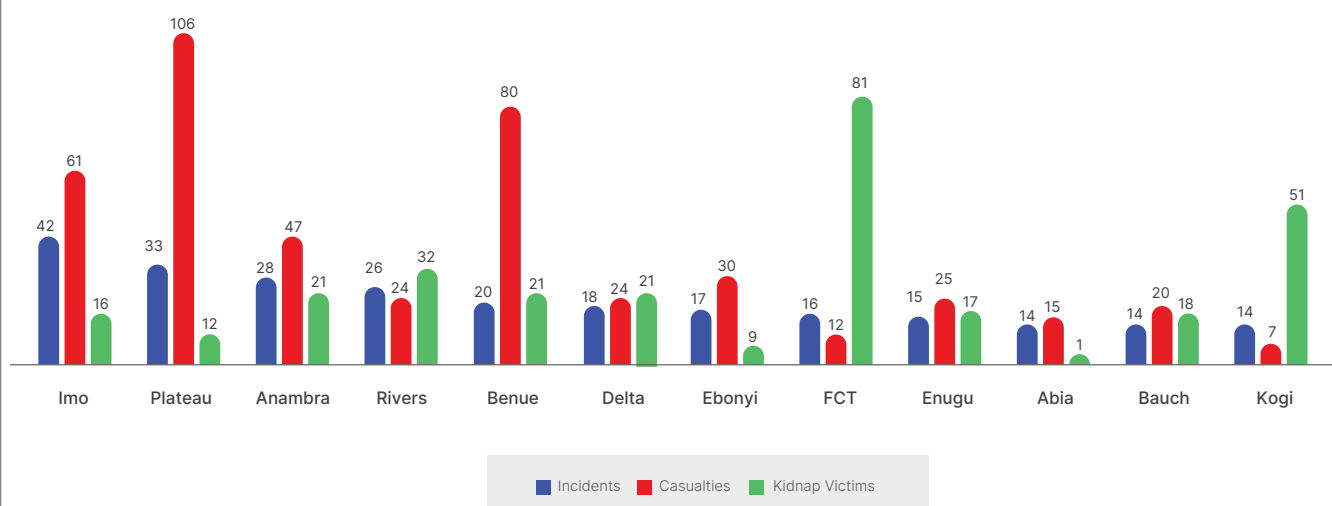


Figure 9: Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

Imo State recorded the highest number of gunmen incidents. Given the heavy presence of secession agitators in the South East as well as the activities of unknown gunmen. The high incidents in the state can be attributed to the actions of these groups. Plateau and Benue, both North Central states, recorded the highest number of casualties due to farmer-herder crisis and ethno-religious tensions. FCT and Kogi State recorded the highest numbers of kidnap victims. Kidnapping in Kogi occurs as a result of gunmen activities on the highway, while in the FCT, attacks happens

residential areas and border communities.

The worst hit LGA in terms of casualties is Mangu LGA in Plateau State, while the worst hit in terms of kidnap victims is Bwari in the FCT. The casualties from Mangu stemmed from the farmer-herder crisis and ethno-religious tensions plaguing the state. As Bwari is on the outskirts of the FCT, security is often not as heavy as would be seen within the city; as such, security response to acts of insecurity may be slower.

## Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

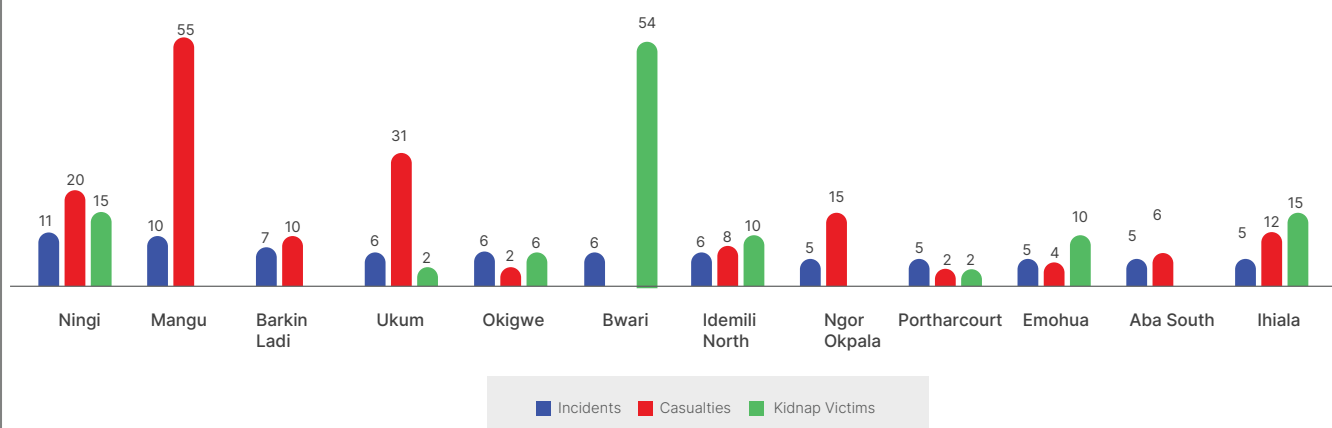


Figure 10: Gunmen Attacks in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## 4.1.1. Interventions

In 2023 military and police personnel were deployed to affected areas. Civil society organisations steadily demanded accountability and brought relief to the victims of gunmen attacks. In 2023 military and police personnel were deployed to affected areas. also provided aid and assistance to affected persons.

## 4.1.2. Recommendation

- i. The government should enhance socioeconomic development by involving strategic investments in education, job creation, and poverty reduction initiatives, especially in regions identified as high-risk. Such investments mitigate the underlying grievances that often drive individuals towards engaging with armed groups. Additionally, instituting deradicalisation programmes is essential to facilitate the reintegration of former militants into mainstream society. These programmes should not only focus on addressing the immediate needs of repentant gunmen but also tackle the root causes and ideologies that draw them towards extremist beliefs and actions.
- ii. The government should explore conflict resolution methodologies to facilitate dialogue between communities historically marred by tensions, such as those between herders and farmers. This initiative should prioritise the resolution of land disputes and resource allocation issues while delving into the underlying factors exacerbating these conflicts. Furthermore, it is imperative to investigate the funding sources and networks that support gunmen thoroughly and concurrently address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons within these communities.
- iii. Enhancing intelligence gathering is imperative for security agencies to identify and thwart planned attacks effectively. Concurrently, prioritising enhanced training and equipment for security forces is crucial to bolster their capacity to counter armed threats efficiently. Furthermore, fostering collaboration between security forces and local communities through community

policing initiatives is essential. These efforts promote information exchange and cultivate trust, strengthening the security landscape. Additionally, bolstering border security measures is vital to curtail the influx of weapons and combatants, thus fortifying national defence capabilities.

- iv. The collaboration between security agencies and the justice system is crucial for ensuring effective investigation and prosecution, thereby swiftly holding perpetrators of attacks accountable and ultimately serving as a deterrent against future violence. Transparency in security measures and investigative processes fosters public trust, emphasising the importance of maintaining open communication channels. Additionally, addressing issues such as prison overcrowding and corruption is imperative to prevent radicalisation and recruitment within the prison system, thus contributing to broader reform efforts.
- v. The government can collaborate with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups to advance peacebuilding efforts and mitigate community grievances. Additionally, assistance can be provided to media literacy programs aimed at combating the dissemination of misinformation and propaganda by armed groups. Furthermore, relevant authorities should prioritise the expansion of mental health services, particularly in areas affected by conflict, recognising the significant role trauma plays in perpetuating violence.

## 4.1.3. Projections

- i. Due to the worsening economic situation nationwide, 2024 may witness a resurgence of widespread criminality.
- ii. Gunmen attacks may likely continue in 2024 due to inadequate state efforts at tackling the menace.
- iii. Gunmen attacks in the South East may reduce in 2024 due to concerted government efforts to quell secessionist movements in the region.



## 4.2. Banditry



Casualties  
**1,598**



Kidnap Victims  
**1,079**



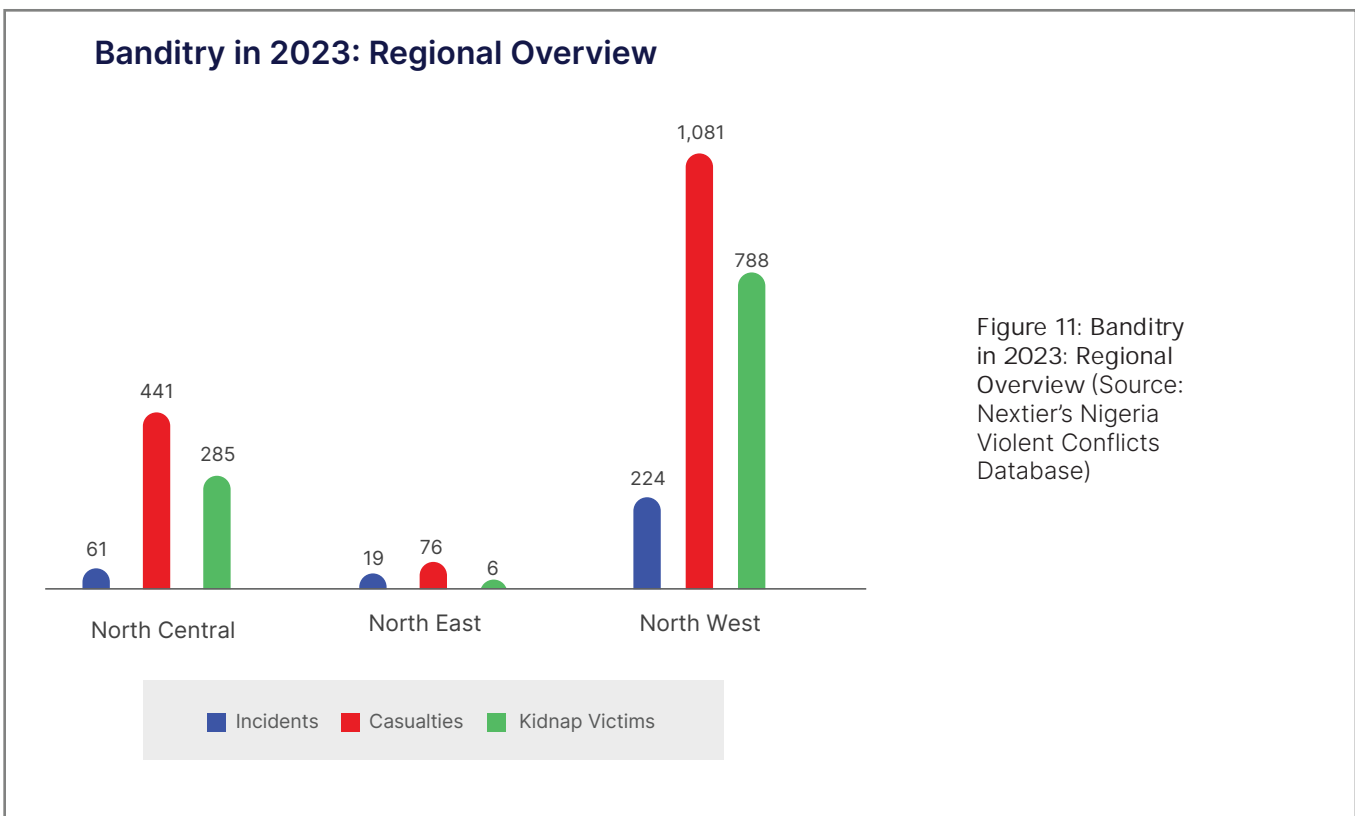
Incidents  
**304**

Banditry is among Nigeria’s most serious security threats. It is fuelling the country’s most significant humanitarian catastrophe in decades<sup>7</sup>. Banditry manifests as kidnap-for-ransom, armed robbery, cattle rustling, sexual violence and attacks on communities particularly in Nigeria’s North West region. It is committed by a loose collection of criminal groups. These groups operate independently; they do not have formalised structures and identities and are organised around personalities.

North West states like Kaduna, with a long history of ethno-religious conflict, have seen tension in the area coincide with acts of banditry by unscrupulous elements.<sup>8</sup> Socio-cultural, ethnic and economic factors are the most salient causes of the growing crisis. While banditry poses a repetitive occurrence in Nigeria’s conflict theatre, it can be said to be deeply rooted as a go-to option for economically marginalised especially unemployed youth in an increasingly challenging economic environment. For example, in North West, particularly in Zamfara State, the illegal mining areas have directly influenced the rise in criminal gangs.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout 2023, banditry has been commonplace in Nigeria. According to Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Bi-monthly Report, banditry was among the top three violent conflicts in six reports. The Database also reveals 1,598 casualties were recorded from 304 incidents throughout 2023. The devastating results of acts of banditry have seen casualties include bandits, civilians, informal and state security actors.

Ranking the most affected states, Kaduna State peaked with 113 incidents throughout 2023, followed by Zamfara and Niger States with 57 and 37 incidents, respectively. Birnin Gwari, Chikun and Kagarko Local Government Areas in Kaduna State were the worst-hit LGAs on the incident count. However, Maru LGA of Zamfara State peaked with the most casualties at 225. At the end of the year, on the eve of Christmas 2023, bandits in Plateau State’s Bokkos, Mangu, and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas carried out carnage in approximately 50 communities.<sup>10</sup> This onslaught lasted three days and claimed around 200 lives. This occurrence is not new, nor is the display of criminal bravado among such mass murderers in Nigeria novel.



<sup>7</sup> The question of definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria’s north-west in the context of international humanitarian law. International Review of the Red Cross. (2023). <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/the-question-of-definition-armed-banditry-in-nigeria-923>

<sup>8</sup> Uroko, F. C. (2018). Readdressing the ethno-religious conflicts in southern Kaduna, Nigeria in the light of Abraham-Lot Narrative (genesis 13:1-18). UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities, 19(2), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v19i2.2>

<sup>9</sup> The Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2022). Criminal gangs destabilizing Nigeria’s North West. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/criminal-gangs-destabilizing-nigerias-north-west/>

<sup>10</sup> Suleiman, Q. (2024, February 14). Investigation: Inside story of christmas eve killings in Plateau. Premium Times Nigeria. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/investigationspecial-reports/667922-investigation-inside-story-of-christmas-eve-killings-in-plateau.html>

<sup>10</sup> Ajibola, A. (2021). Ndelea arrests “bandits”, Heavy Weapons producer. Channels Television. <https://www.channelstv.com/2021/08/12/ndlea-arrests-bandits-heavy-weapon-producer/>



Plateau State has been seething with violence for the last thirty years.

Bandit violence has resulted in killings, displacements, and economic losses. The challenge has defied

amnesty efforts initiated by the affected state governments in the North West region. Illegal weapon smuggling has provided bandits with heavy weaponry, aiding their attacks and operations.<sup>11</sup>

### Banditry in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

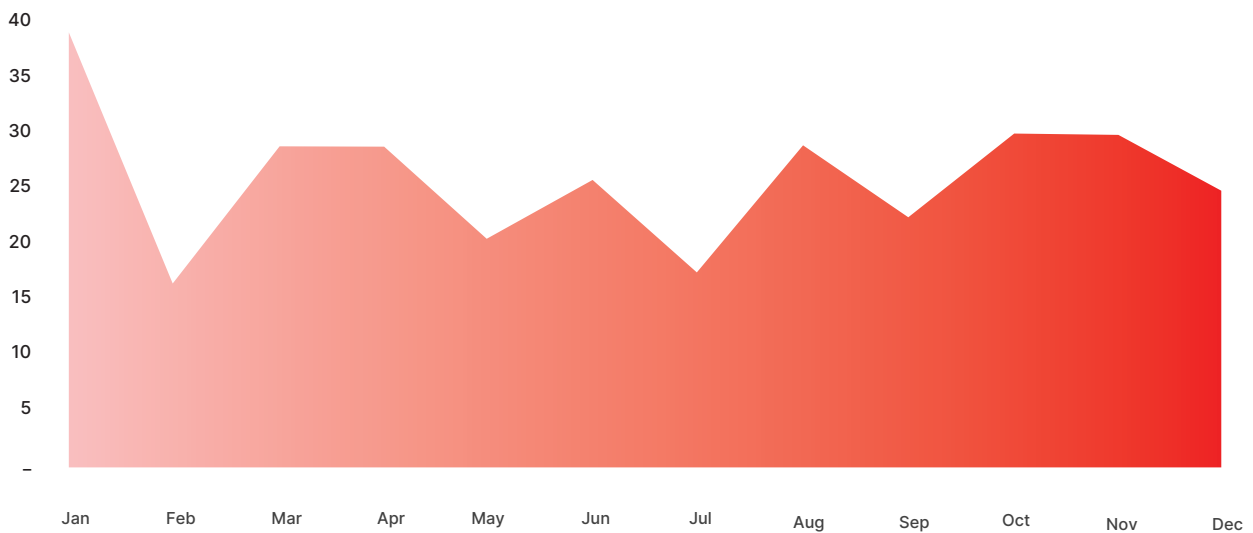


Figure 12: Banditry in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims

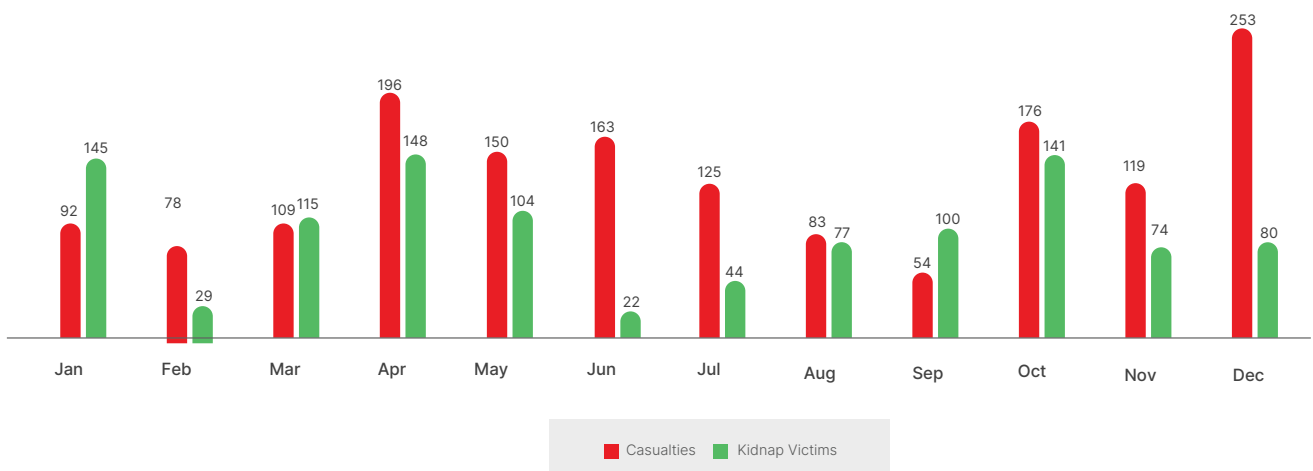


Figure 13: Banditry in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in 2023: Most Affected States

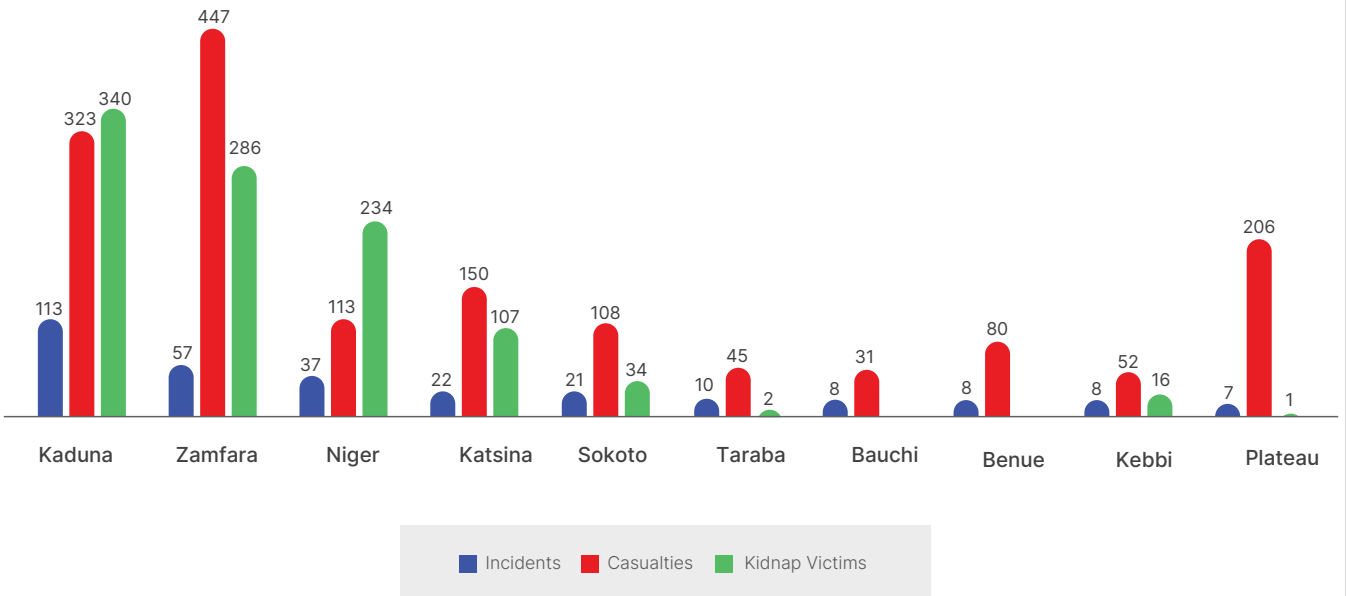


Figure 14: Banditry in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

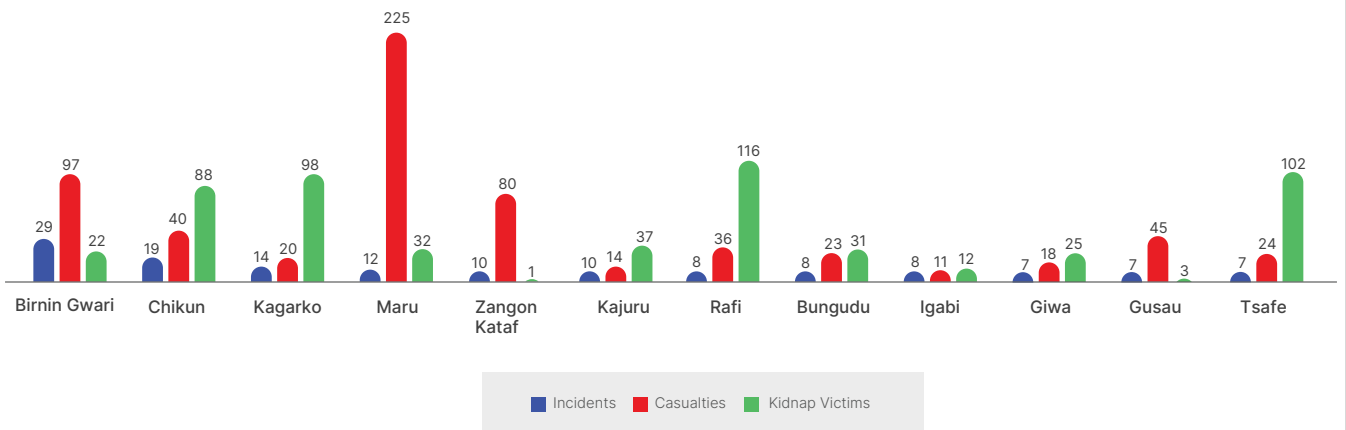


Figure 15: Banditry in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## 4.2.1. Interventions

The government has continued to raid bandit hideouts, but a lack of proper equipment for security troops and other challenges limit the government's efforts. 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 North West alone, yet the unrest has remained unresolved.

As a ploy, bandits camp in thinly populated forests provide a hideout and leeway for unchecked mobility and operations. 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 exclusion, 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 advised the government to improve international cooperation to address the phenomenon of banditry.

## 4.2.2. Recommendations

- i. There is a need for state and federal institutions to work together to create employment opportunities and solve other socio-economic issues that drive people to engage in violent conflict.
- ii. With most bandit activities occurring in areas with low policing and limited government presence, there is a need to increase policing in these areas.
- iii. Combative operations against bandits can be

improved by strengthening communication lines between local vigilantes and security forces. It is essential to increase efforts to mop up and seize illegal weapons to curtail the spread of weapons among bandit organisations.

## 4.2.3. Projections

While the trajectory of banditry in Nigeria in 2024 may be difficult to predict, it is expected to remain a major security concern with far-reaching consequences for the country's stability and development.

- i. Banditry will likely remain and spread to new places, mainly where underlying grievances such as poverty and unemployment are prevalent. If unaddressed, the current economic downturn could also exacerbate bandit activities and overall insecurity.
- ii. Bandits' techniques may evolve in reaction to government responses, such as the more significant military presence or community-based security activities. This could entail turning to more covert activities, targeting new industries for extortion or kidnapping, or working with other criminal organisations.
- iii. Banditry may become more entangled with different security concerns in Nigeria, including the North East insurgency, communal violence, and ethno-religious conflicts. This could lead to more complicated security dynamics, demanding government resources and reaction capacity.
- iv. The international community, especially regional organisations and foreign partners, may strengthen its assistance in Nigeria's anti-banditry operations through capacity-building, intelligence-sharing, and diplomatic activities. However, external interventions may confront problems in terms of sovereignty and local dynamics.



### 4.3.Farmer-Herder Conflict



Casualties  
**612**



Incidents  
**101**

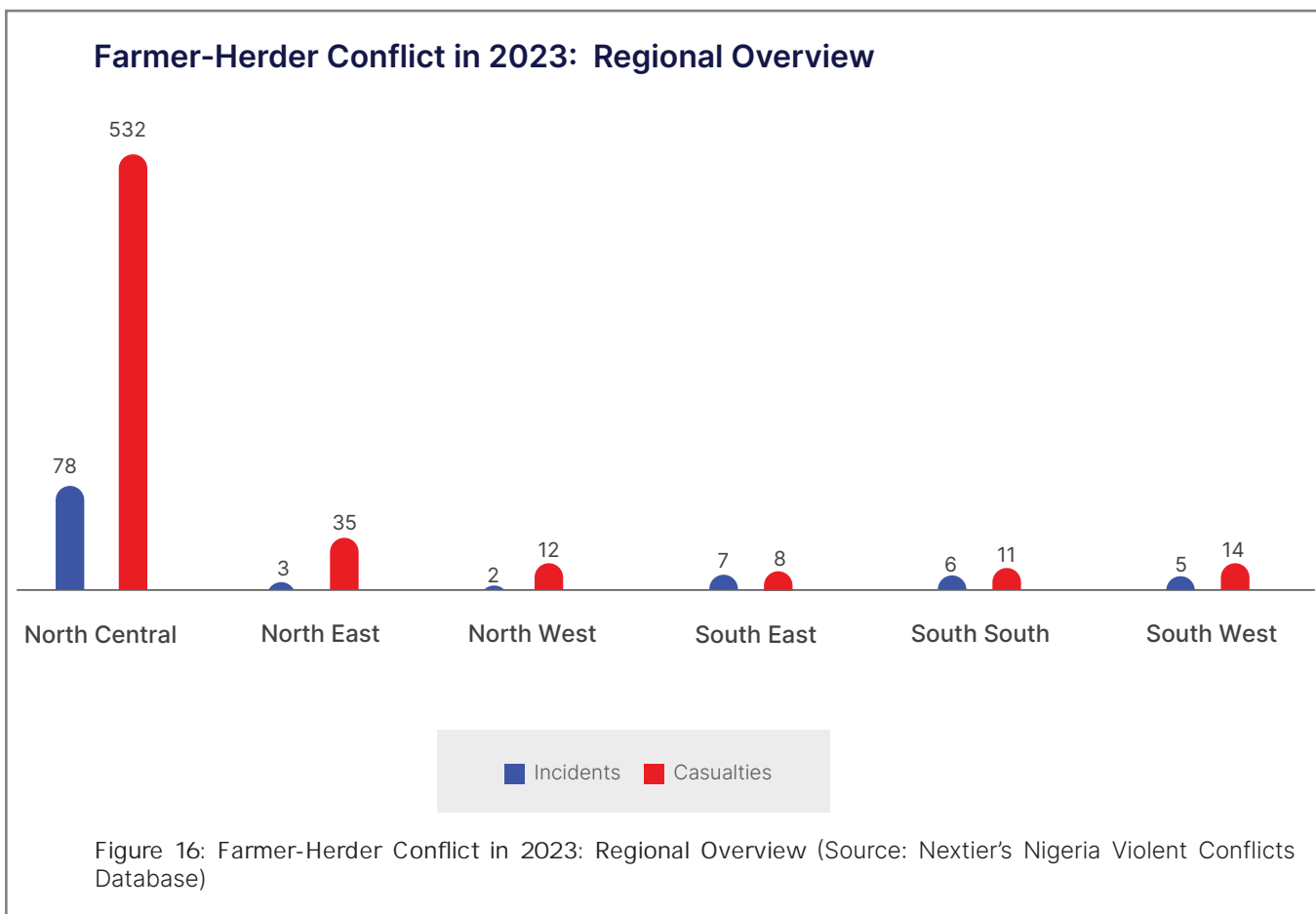
The farmer-herder conflict, predominantly in North Central Nigeria, remains one of the deadliest security threats after terrorism and banditry in the North East and North West, respectively. Although the conflict between farmers and herders initially emerged in Northern Nigeria, it has since become a nationwide crisis, described as a “national catastrophe.” While every state in Nigeria is affected to some extent, certain states stand out due to the frequency, severity, and extent of attacks within their borders.

Notably, in the North Central region, states such as Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, and Niger have experienced remarkably consistent and devastating levels of violence. Plateau State has been a hotbed for this conflict in 2023 with 360 casualties from 48 incidents. Of the 48 incidents, the three-day violence in May, which claimed the lives of 85 people, recorded the highest casualty count from the conflict all year. Like other similar attacks, the conflict was a continuation of tit-for-tat killings. The conflict, mostly between herders and farmers from the Berom and Irigwe ethnic groups, is frequently portrayed as ethno-religious.<sup>12</sup> However, researchers claim that climate change and

the paucity of pastoral land drive farmers and herders against one another, regardless of identity.

According to the Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Bi-monthly report, farmer-herder conflict were among the top three in four of the monthly issues. In the months of May and June, violent attacks in Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Mangu Local Government Areas of Plateau State led to 131 casualties. Militias from farming communities and nomadic herders are the main actors.

The conflict has led to significant loss of life, displacement of communities, and disruption of economic activities. Key findings from previous years suggest that the conflict is multidimensional, involving land access, resource scarcity, ethno-religious tensions, and weak law enforcement.



<sup>12</sup> Olufemi, A. (2021, November 28). Horrors on the plateau: Inside Nigeria’s Farmer-Herder conflict. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/11/28/horrors-on-the-plateau-inside-nigerias-farmer-herder-conflict>

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

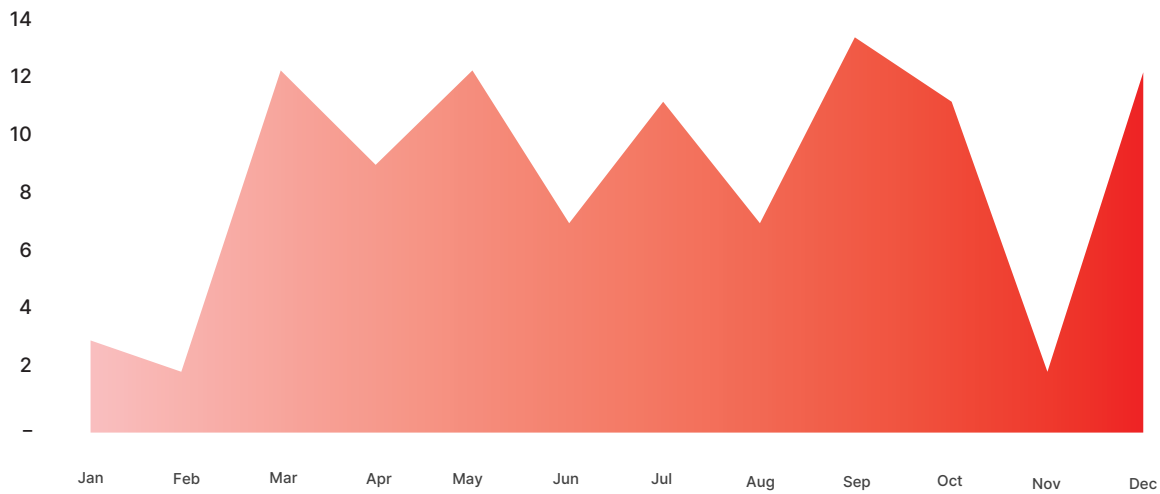


Figure 17: Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Monthly Casualties

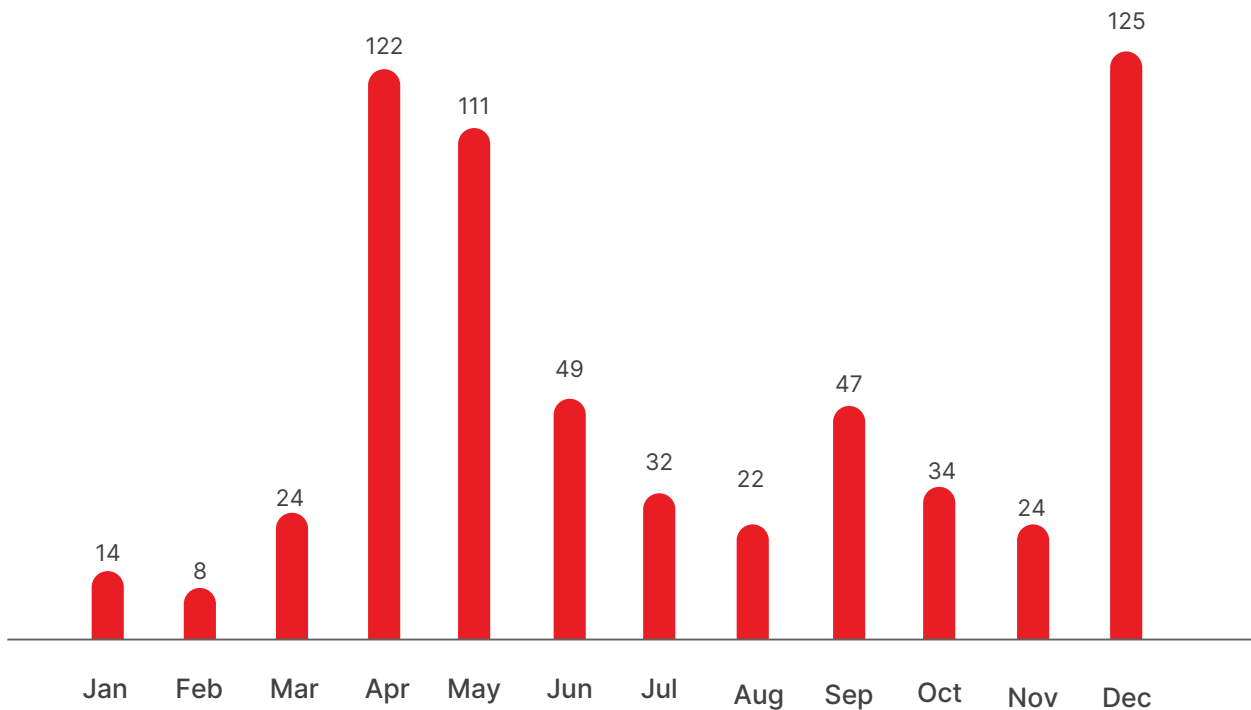


Figure 18: Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Monthly Casualties (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Most Affected States

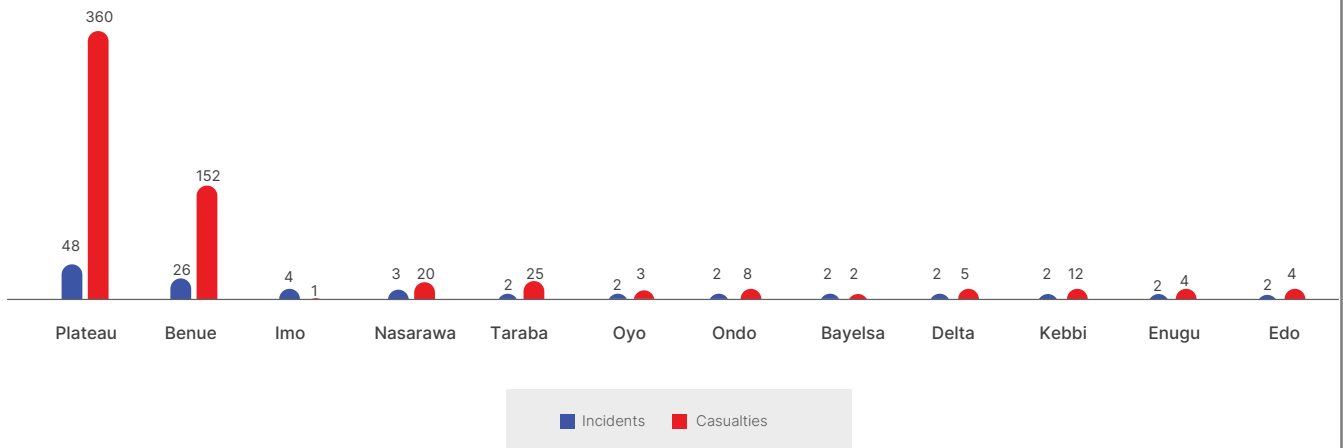


Figure 19: Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer - Herder Conflict in 2023: Worst-Hit LGAs

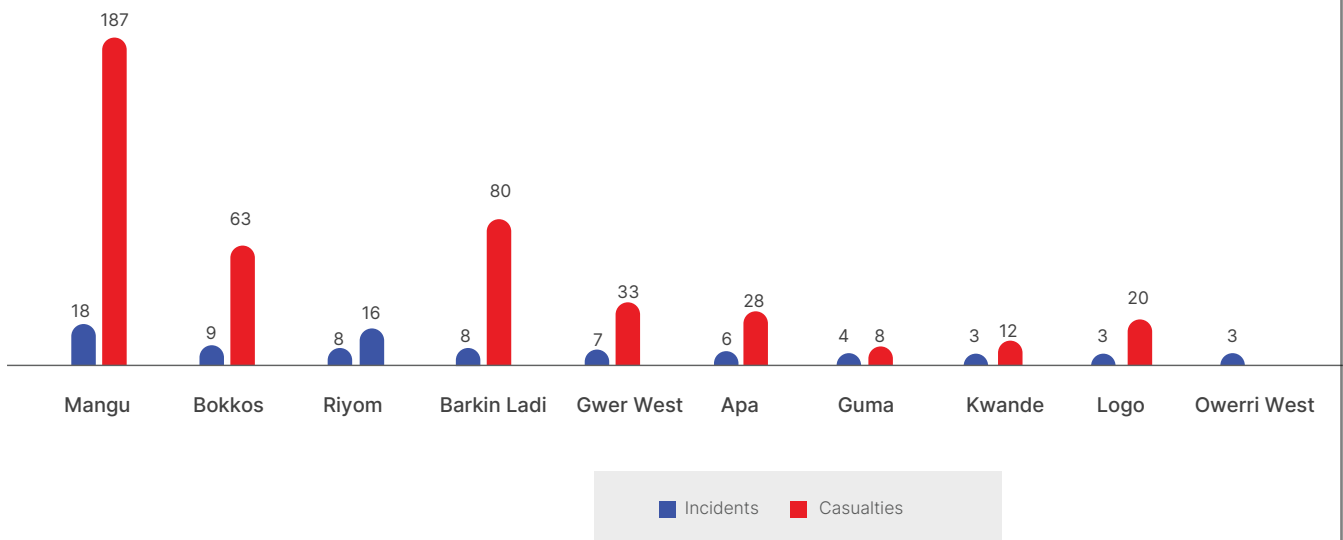


Figure 20: Farmer-Herder Conflict in 2023: Worst-Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

#### 4.3.1. Interventions

In response to the Christmas Eve attack, Vice President Kashim Shettima visited the victims of the attack. At the same time, President Bola Tinubu condemned the killings and ordered the provision of relief materials

to the survivors. The government has also deployed security forces to affected areas to quell violence and restore order. However, the effectiveness of these deployments has been questioned due to allegations of bias and inadequate resources.

Efforts have been made to facilitate dialogue and

mediation between farmers and herders, often involving traditional and community leaders. These initiatives aim to promote peaceful coexistence and resolve grievances through non-violent means. This includes initiatives to strengthen community policing, conflict resolution mechanisms, and economic development programmes. Several peace moves have been initiated to trace the root causes and broker peace between warring groups. For example, some stakeholders convened in Mangu and Riyom Local Government Areas of the State to discuss solutions to the crisis.

Various policy interventions have been proposed to address the underlying causes of the conflict, including land reforms, grazing reserves, and ranching programs. However, implementing these policies has been slow and often faced resistance from various interest groups. The farmer-herder attacks, especially in the worst-hit state of Plateau, have prompted responses such as the inauguration of the Security and Information Centre (SIC) by Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang.<sup>13</sup>

### 4.3.2. Recommendations

- i. The government should introduce and implement transparent land management policies that handle land disputes between farmers and herders. This could entail properly delineating and mapping grazing reserves, farmlands, and other land resources.
- ii. Both farmers and herders should be encouraged to diversify their livelihood sources. This can be accomplished by offering training, education, and skill development programmes.
- iii. Existing and new policies must target inclusive measures to overcome the mistrust between farmers and herdsmen.
- iv. Owing to the complexity of the conflict, a multi-stakeholder intervention is required to uncover the fundamental drivers and alternative approaches to resolving the farmer-herder dispute which has lingered across Nigeria.
- v. Law enforcement agencies should prioritise surveillance and monitoring in volatile areas. This may require the creation of specialised teams or new operations. Increased policing can be a step in the right direction due to the frequency

of farmer-herder clashes in rural areas. There is a great urgency to reinforce local community guards and vigilantes. However, the government should be tactical in such reinforcements as non-state groups may exacerbate the feud.

### 4.2.3. Projections

- i. If underlying grievances related to land access, resource scarcity, and ethnic tensions are not effectively addressed, the conflict may continue to escalate. This could result in further loss of life, displacement of communities, and economic disruption.
- ii. The effectiveness of government responses, including security deployments, dialogue initiatives, and policy interventions, will significantly influence the trajectory of the conflict. Improved coordination, resources, and political will may lead to better outcomes in managing and reducing violence.
- iii. Climate change-induced factors such as desertification, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and competition for dwindling resources could exacerbate tensions between farmers and herders. Mitigation strategies to address climate change impacts and promote sustainable resource management may help mitigate conflict risks.
- iv. Empowering local communities to resolve conflicts peacefully and build resilience against violence could mitigate the farmer-herder conflict. Supporting community policing, conflict resolution mechanisms and economic development programmes may foster better stability at the grassroots level.
- v. Regional and international actors may also play a role in efforts to address the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. Diplomatic initiatives, capacity-building support, and humanitarian assistance could complement domestic efforts to promote peace and stability.

<sup>13</sup> Plateau inaugurates information sharing centre to report attacks, killings. TheCable. (2023, August 10). <https://www.thecable.ng/plateau-inaugurates-information-sharing-centre-to-report-insecurity-killings>





## 4.4. Cult Clashes



Casualties  
**195**



Incidents  
**90**

Cult clashes, though overshadowed by more pressing security threats in mainstream discussions, are still an active issue in Nigeria. Over the years, cult gangs have taken deep roots in the areas they occupy, predominantly the Southern region. Cult members are mainly young persons of developmental and youthful ages<sup>14</sup>. As an equal result, this age group makes up a large percentage of the victims of cultism. The effects of cult clashes on Nigeria's security cannot be evaded, but more importantly, its impact on the country's posterity. With the considerable involvement of young persons, the country degrades its future labour force.

Cult groups are primarily involved in brutalities against rivalries, maiming, destruction of properties, street robberies and extortion. The Southern and North Central regions of Nigeria are particularly familiar with these brutalities. In April, 42 suspected cultists were arrested<sup>15</sup> in connection to a series of crimes in Lagos State. In July, 53 cultists were arrested<sup>16</sup> for cult-related activities in Edo, while 20 persons were killed in a cult clash in Ogun State<sup>17</sup>. The continued trend has become an avenue for corrupt politicians and people with means to wreak havoc<sup>18</sup>. This suggests that these cult groups may have organised sponsors and financial

backing.

The worst-hit regions in 2022 and 2023 are regions in South-South, South West, South East and North Central. Cult clashes in the country's North East and North West regions are minimal. Clashes are more frequent in Rivers, Delta and Edo States (South-South region) and Ogun and Lagos States South West states. Insights from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database indicate that cultism in these regions is beyond tertiary institutions, where it is mostly prevalent. Cult groups often enjoy expansion and control in rural communities, specifically in the states mentioned above.

In 2023, Nigeria saw no less than two cult-related incidents every month. All year round, the number of recorded cult incidents came up to 90. High incidents were recorded during the early months of 2023, Nigeria's electoral period. Eleven incidents were recorded in January, nine in February, a dip to five in March, and an increase to 13 in April.

February and September witnessed the highest number of casualties caused by cult activities in 2023. In February, nine persons were killed in a cult clash in

### Cult Clashes in 2023: Regional Overview

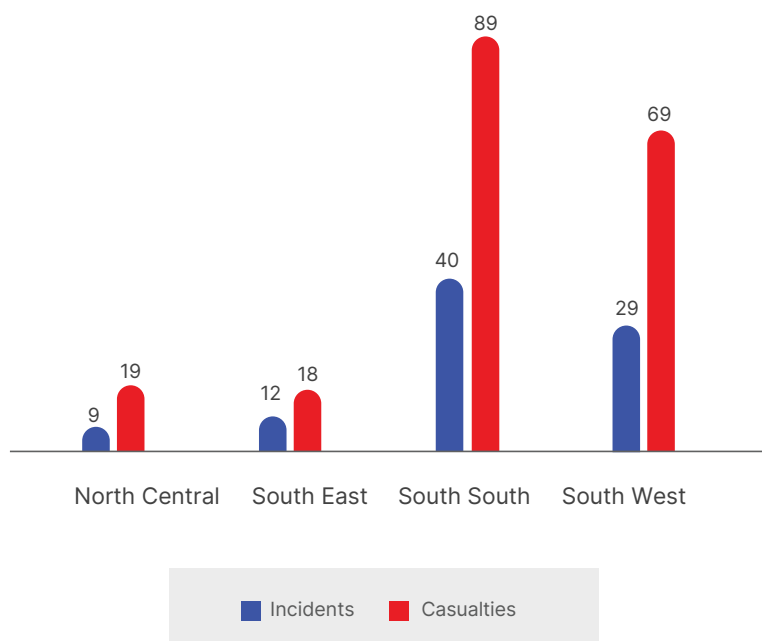


Figure 21: Cult Clashes in 2023: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

<sup>14</sup> Ezemenaka, K. E. (n.d.). Human security and the culture of youth ... theses.cz. <https://theses.cz/id/z2gw6g/STAG94242.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Lambo, D. (2023, April 19). 42 cultists arrested for terrorising Lagos neighbourhoods. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/42-cultists-arrested-for-terrorising-lagos-neighbourhoods/>

<sup>16</sup> Adedipe, A. (2023, July 21). Edo police arrest 53 suspected cultists. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/edo-police-arrest-53-suspected-cultists/>

<sup>17</sup> Olawin, O. (2023, September 18). 20 feared dead as cultists clash in Sagamu. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2023/09/18/20-feared-dead-as-cultists-clash-in-sagamu/>

<sup>18</sup> Political violence. Criminal Politics: Violence, "Godfathers" and Corruption in Nigeria: Political Violence. (n.d.). <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/nigeria1007/4.htm>

### Cult Clashes in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

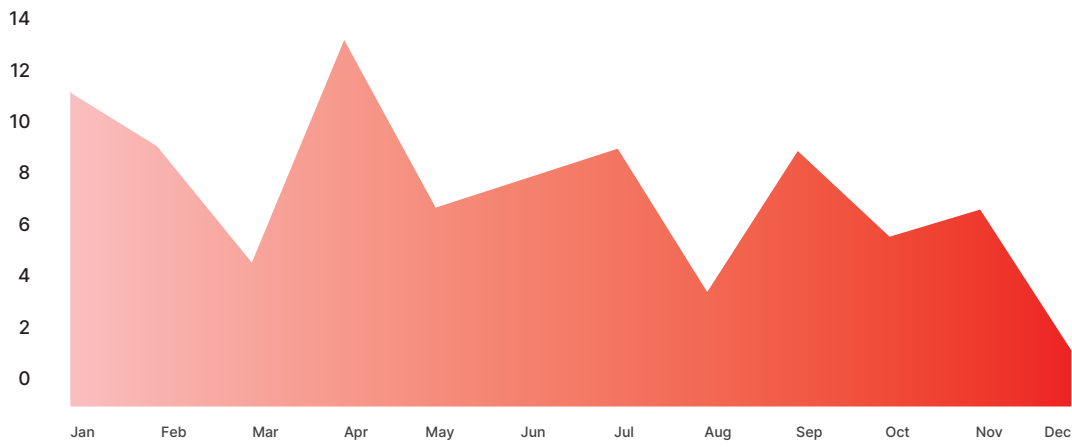


Figure 22: Cult Clashes in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Cult Clashes in 2023: Monthly Casualties

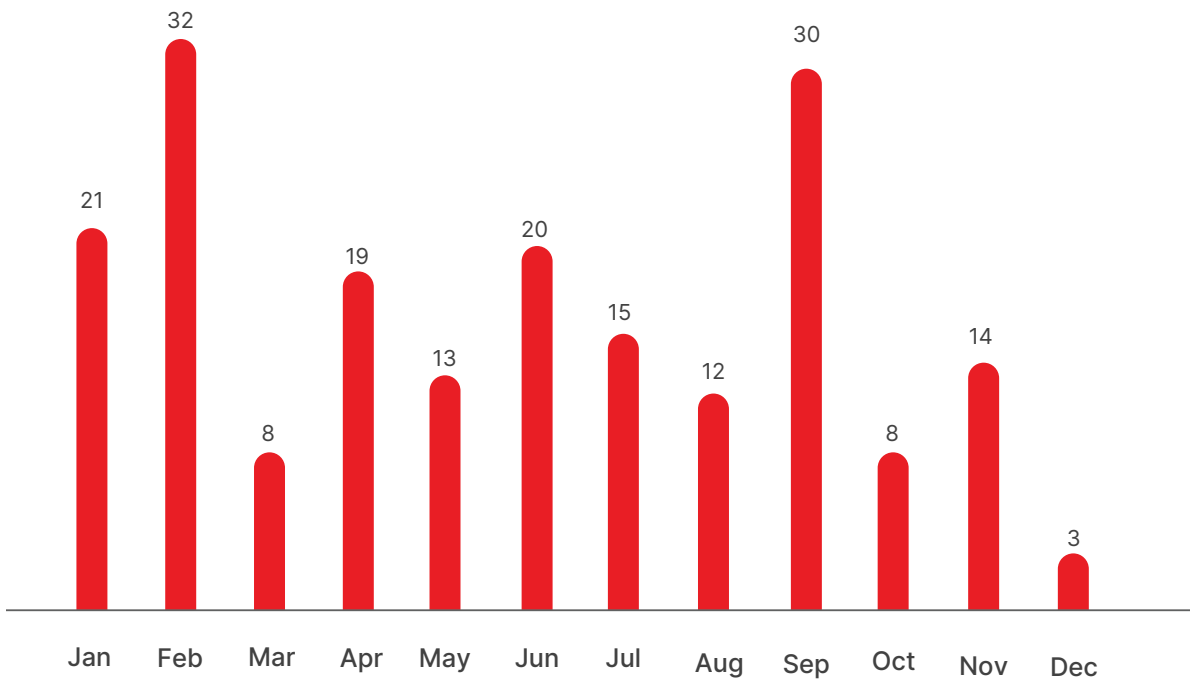


Figure 23: Cult Clashes in 2023: Monthly Casualties (Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database)

### Cult Clashes in 2023: Most Affected States

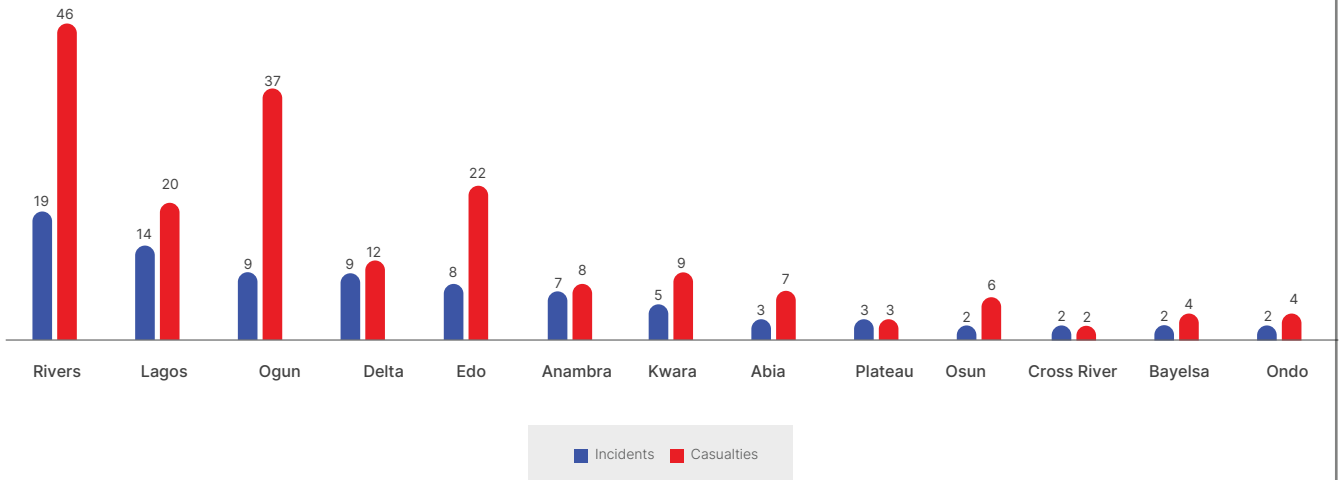


Figure 24: Cult Clashes in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Cult Clashes in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

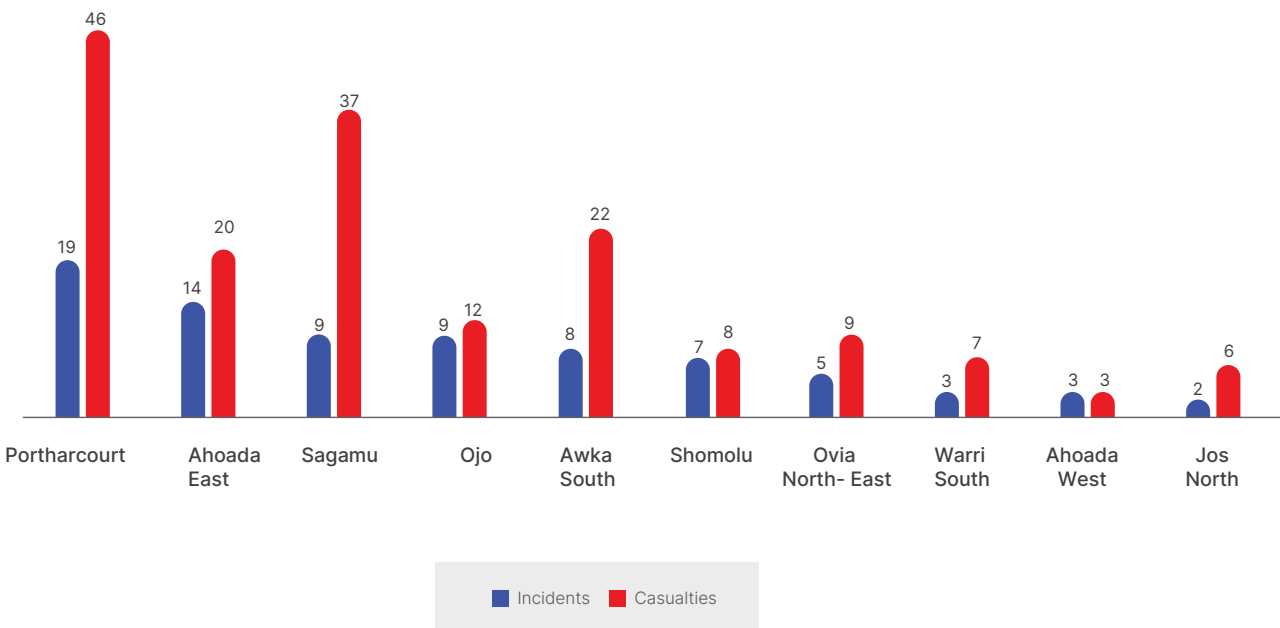


Figure 25: Cult Clashes in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

Rivers<sup>19</sup>. In September, three students and 17 persons were killed in a cult clash in Sagamu, Ogun State<sup>20</sup>. Rivers State had the highest number of incidents and casualties caused by cult clashes, with 19 incidents and 46 deaths. These numbers are followed closely by incidents in Ogun, Lagos, Delta and Edo States. According to a survey carried out in Rivers State, cult-related violence is highest in the state due to unemployment and unwillingness to work amongst the youth.<sup>21</sup>

The worst hit local government areas were Sagamu in Ogun State and Ahoada East and West in Rivers State. Reports of cult violence in these states are more frequent. In Ogun, the Aiye and Eiye confraternities have been in a long battle for supremacy, constantly resulting in the death of members and innocent persons as well. Supreme Vikings, Icelanders, and Greenlanders are some dominant cult groups in Rivers State, frequently engaging in clashes. Cult clashes and political violence in the state arguably reinforce each other since cultists are the tool of violence used.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.4.1. Interventions

2023 saw no federal government campaigns or legislative attempts to curb cultism. However, various state governments implemented legislation against cultism. Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun threatened death penalty as punishment for persons caught engaging in cult activities in the state.<sup>23</sup>

Enugu State Government arrested 53 persons and reiterated its stance in the fight against cultism. The state's police force declared that they have zero tolerance for cult groups and their activities. Ogun State Government resolved to set up a special court to try all cult-related issues within the state. Other state governments spoke up against terrorism and promised to fight against the vice. Anti-cultism campaigns sprang up in various parts of the country.

#### 4.4.2. Recommendations

- i. The government should strictly implement the existing laws and punishments for perpetrators of cult-related offences. State governments should fill legislative gaps, if any exist, by creating legal and institutional frameworks that fight against cultism.
- ii. The government should sponsor campaigns against cultism. Anti-cultism campaigns can be dispersed through symposiums, seminars, posters, handbills and public lectures. Youthful involvement in cultism raises questions about the kind of country Nigeria will become. Efforts to sensitise young persons on the dangers of cultism should be doubled.
- iii. The federal and state governments can create special courts for cult-related offences to disburse judgments and sanctions swiftly. These courts should be specifically charged with the jurisdiction to try matters of cultism and impose punishments on those found guilty.
- iv. The establishment and implementation of state services such as counselling, financial assistance and access to mental health resources to assist vulnerable persons who would otherwise be targets of cult groups. These services can be offered in schools, hospitals and other social service outlets to ensure accessibility to needy persons.

#### 4.4.3. Projections

- i. Poor economic conditions foster bad vices. Influenced by the state of Nigeria's economy, cult clashes may not decline in 2024. Greatly dependent on the country's economy, cult clashes trends may increase as the economy depreciates.
- ii. The North East and North West parts of Nigeria, though frequently exempt from cult violence, could begin to see trends of cultism as teen violence and protests become frequent in the regions.

<sup>19</sup> Blessing Ibunge and Hammed Shittu. (2023, February). Nine killed as cultists clash in Rivers. THISDAYLIVE. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/02/16/nine-killed-as-cultists-clash-in-rivers>

<sup>20</sup> James Ogunnaike. (2023, September 18). Three secondary school students, 17 others killed as cultists clash in Sagamu. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/09/three-secondary-school-students-17-others-killed-as-cultists-clash-in-sagamu/>

<sup>21</sup> Nche, G. C. (2019). Cultism in rivers state: Causes, faith-based organizations' role and the setbacks. Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, 37(1), 18-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378819878212>

<sup>22</sup> (see footnote 4)

<sup>23</sup> Bidemi Bello. (2023, September 20). Channels. Retrieved February 29, 2024, from <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/09/20/ogun-govt-to-enact-law-pronouncing-death-penalty-on-cultists/>.



## 4.5. Group Violence



Casualties

**87**



Kidnap Victims

**6**



Incidents

**89**

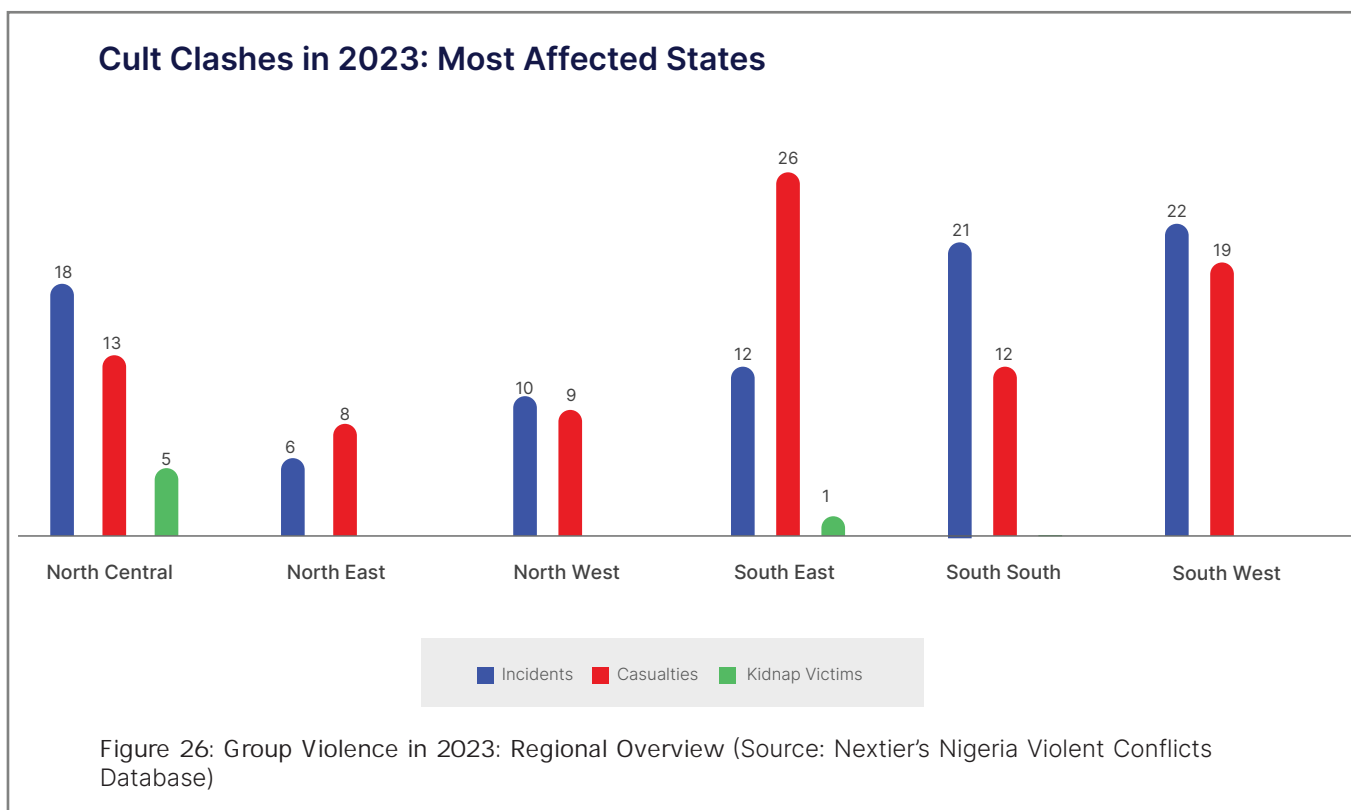
Amid Nigeria's complex social and economic challenges, 2023 witnessed a troubling surge in mob violence<sup>24</sup>, with incidents ranging from assaults to fatalities and property damage<sup>25</sup>. Reports from diverse sources highlighted a rise in vigilante actions targeting suspected criminals, individuals accused of witchcraft or blasphemy, and even clashes between religious groups or disputes over local matters. Root causes include ineffective law enforcement, corruption, economic hardship, cultural norms favouring retribution, and spreading misinformation through social media. Mob violence not only inflicts harm on innocent bystanders but also undermines the rule of law, erodes trust in institutions, and hampers economic development.

The South West recorded the highest incidents of group violence in 2023, with 22 incidents and 19 casualties. The South East leads the casualty chart with 26 casualties and 12 incidents and one kidnap victim, as shown in Figure 26 — the South-South trails in third place with 21 incidents and 12 casualties. The North Central recorded the highest number of kidnap victims as a result of group violence, with six kidnap victims, 18 incidents and 13 casualties. The North West recorded ten incidents and nine casualties. The North East recorded six incidents and eight casualties. The South West recorded ten incidents and nine casualties,

while the North East recorded the lowest casualties and incidents at eight and nine, respectively. The 2023 group violence trend was mainly dominated by electoral violence due to the 2023 general elections held in February and March 2023.

February and March recorded the highest monthly group violence incidents (36 and 19, respectively), with November trailing behind with 13 incidents, as shown in Figure 27 above. January recorded six incidents, while April and June recorded four, with September and July recording two and three monthly incidents each. August and October recorded the lowest monthly incidents, with one incident each.

February saw the highest number of group violence casualties, with 27 casualties and six kidnap victims. The 2023 general elections played a role in the kidnappings occurring as a result of group violence. March trailed in second place with 24 casualties. January recorded 14 casualties, while November recorded nine. April and June recorded four casualties each, with July and October recording one casualty each. August recorded the lowest number of incidents (Figure 27) and casualties (Figure 28).



<sup>24</sup> Ijaseun, D. (2023, June 3). Violence in Nigeria: 217 attacks, 1,872 deaths recorded in Q1 2023. Business Day. Retrieved from <https://businessday.ng/news/article/violence-in-nigeria-217-attacks-1872-deaths-recorded-in-q1-2023/>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

### Group Violence in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

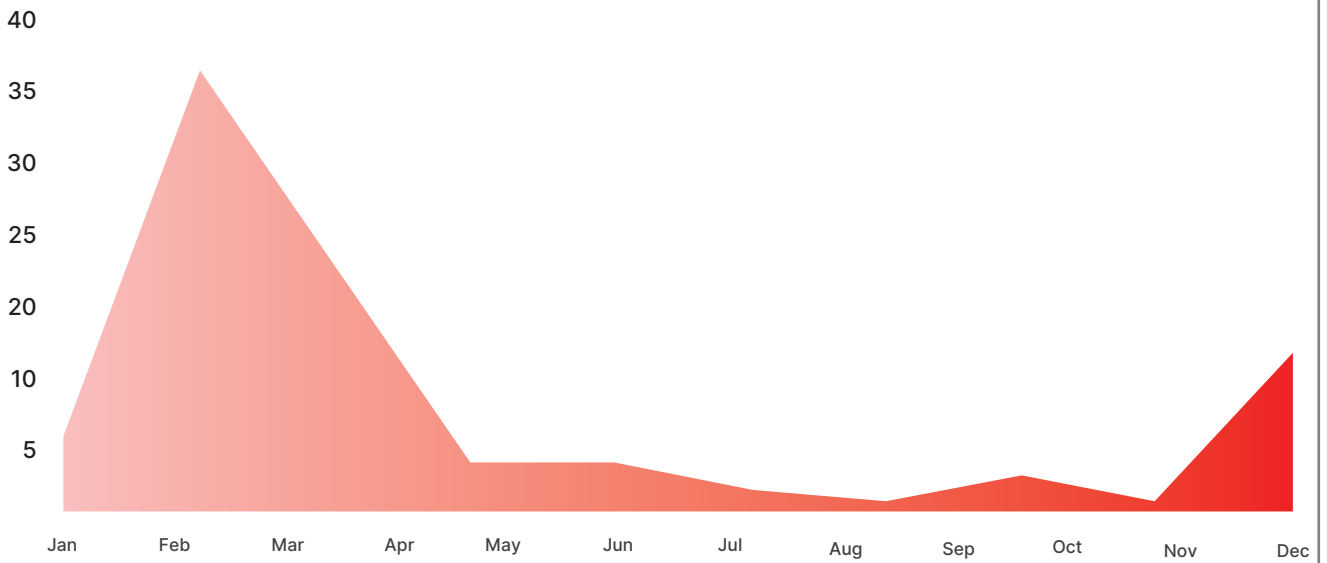


Figure 27: Group Violence in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Group Violence in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims

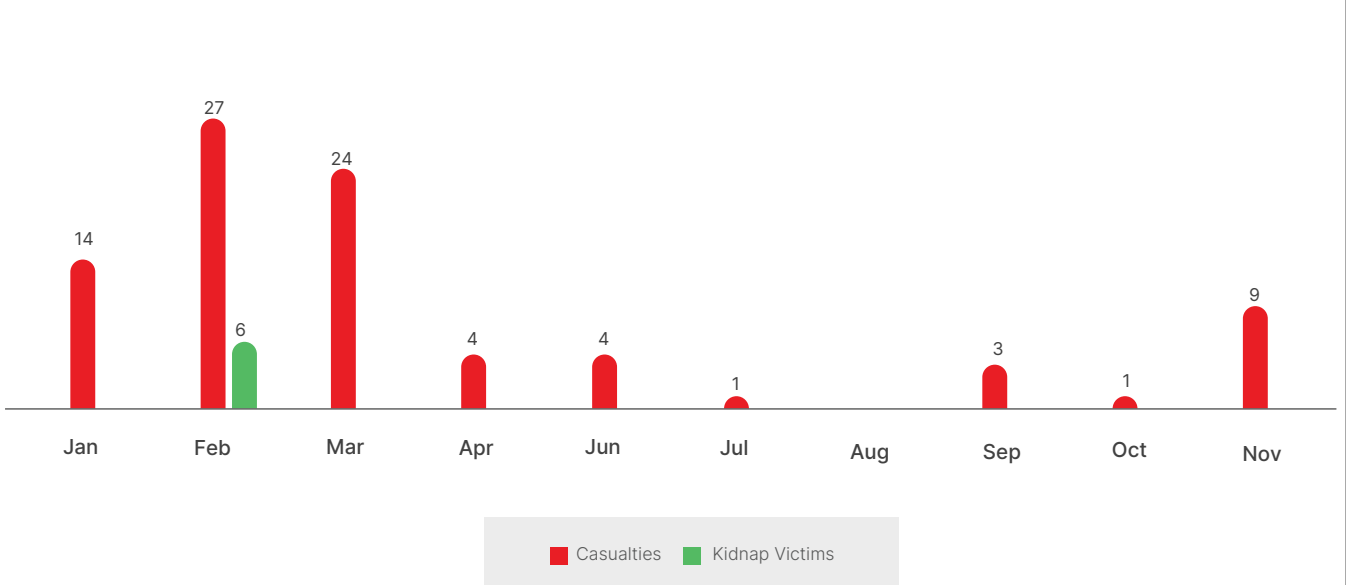


Figure 28: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)



### Group Violence in 2023: Most Affected States

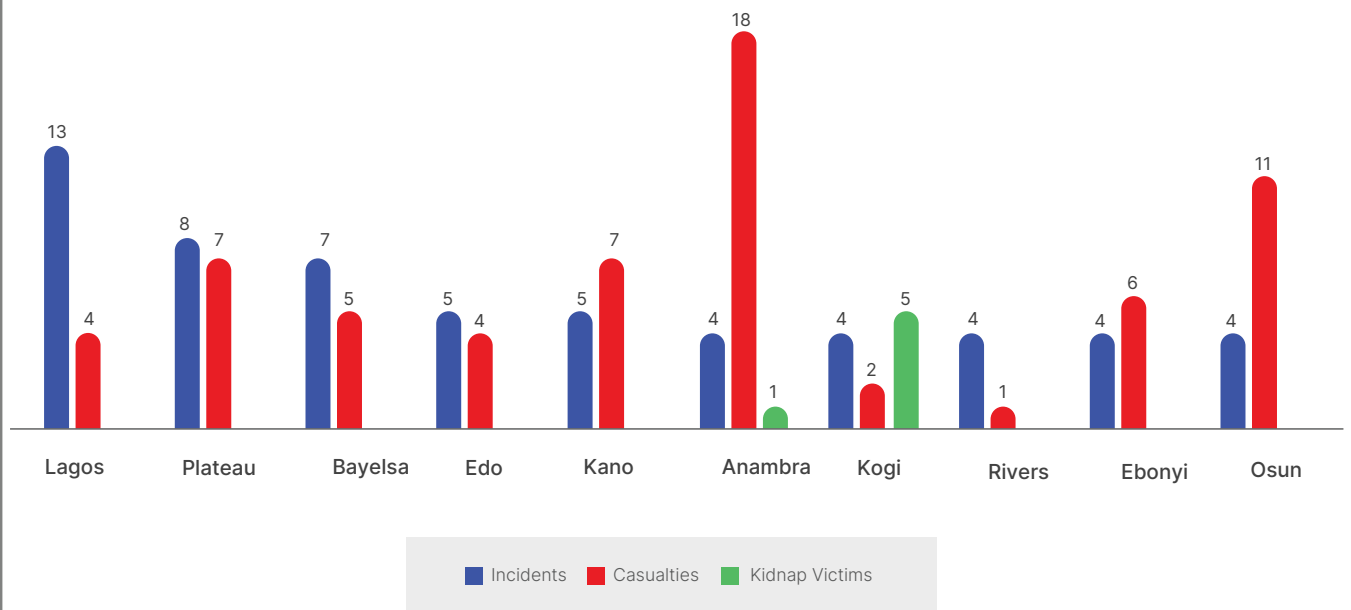


Figure 29: Group Violence in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Group Violence in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

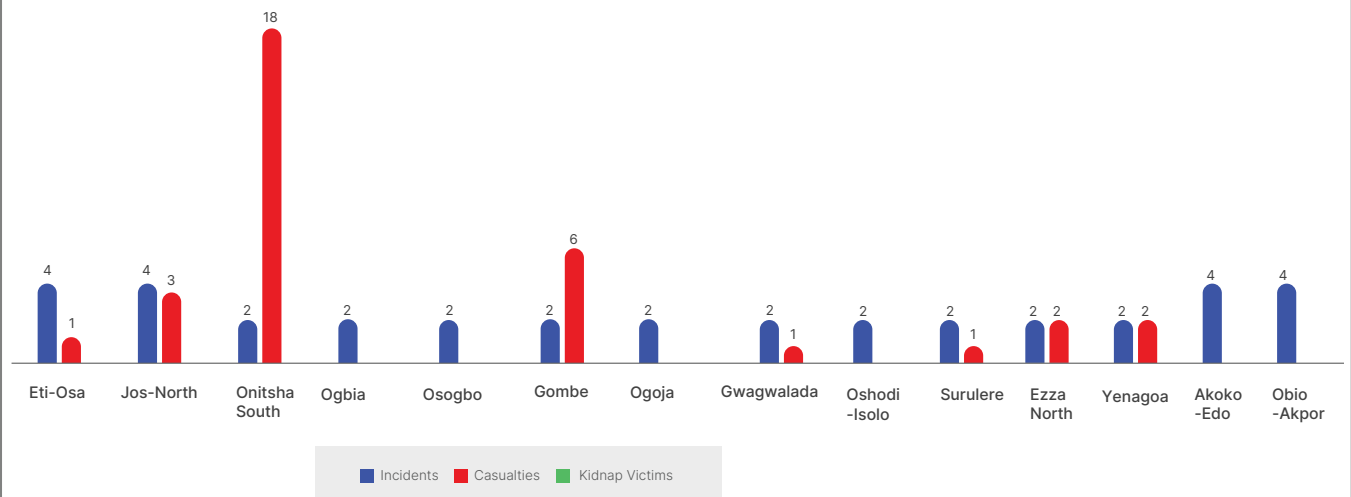


Figure 30: Group Violence in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

Despite having one of the lowest incidents, Anambra State recorded the highest number of casualties, making it the most affected in 2023. Kogi State recorded the highest number of kidnap victims due to group violence in 2023. Rivers and Edo States were the least affected on the chart. Onitsha South recorded two incidents but had the highest casualties (18), making it the worst-hit LGA in 2023 per Figure 30. Jos North LGA recorded four incidents and three casualties, while Gombe LGA recorded two incidents and six cases.

## 4.5.1. Interventions

The Nigerian government responded to outbreaks of violence by deploying military personnel and law enforcement officers<sup>26</sup>, resulting in different bags of outcomes. While some interventions were successful in quelling unrest<sup>27</sup>, instances of excessive force by security personnel were reported<sup>28</sup>. To prevent further violence, authorities implemented heightened surveillance measures like checkpoints and patrols<sup>29</sup>, yet resource constraints and logistical challenges hindered these efforts. Although arrests and prosecutions were made against individuals involved in mob violence, the slow pace of the justice system and concerns regarding due process limited the deterrent effect of these actions. Government and NGO officials also attempted to engage with community leaders to address underlying grievances and foster dialogue.<sup>30</sup> Still, the effectiveness of these initiatives varied depending on the level of trust between communities and authorities.

Resource limitations pose significant hurdles for the Nigerian government in effectively combating group violence, encompassing constraints in personnel, training, equipment, and resources for addressing socio-economic factors contributing to violence. Corruption and impunity within security forces and the justice system further undermine public trust and impede effective interventions. Given the complex social, economic, and political dynamics underlying

mob violence, addressing root causes requires a multifaceted approach beyond relying solely on security measures. Despite varying levels of success, it's crucial to recognise that government interventions must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each incident to maximise efficacy and address challenges effectively.

## 4.5.2. Recommendations

- i. To address the rise in mob violence, it is imperative to enhance police presence in high-risk regions, enhance training programmes focusing on crowd management and de-escalation techniques, and expedite investigations and legal proceedings against offenders. Furthermore, establishing autonomous oversight bodies is crucial to monitoring police behaviour and effectively addressing reported human rights violations.
- ii. To mitigate mob violence, it's essential to endorse community policing endeavours, providing training to community leaders in conflict resolution and mediation techniques while fostering mutual trust between communities and law enforcement agencies. It is imperative to establish transparent communication channels linking authorities, communities, and media outlets to counteract the dissemination of misinformation and rumours, which often exacerbate tensions and contribute to violent outbreaks.
- iii. The government should initiate comprehensive public awareness campaigns to highlight the perils of mob violence, elucidate its legal ramifications, and promote alternative conflict resolution strategies. Additionally, fostering interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding is pivotal for bridging societal divides and nurturing harmonious cohabitation among diverse groups.
- iv. The government must combat corruption, poverty, and social inequality, breeding grounds

<sup>26</sup> Report, A. (2023). Nigeria: Police restore normalcy in Lagos community. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/202303200096.html>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Onuoha, F. (2023). Nigeria's military mistakes cost the country its civilians: ISS Africa. Retrieved from <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-military-mistakes-cost-the-country-its-civilians>

<sup>29</sup> Nseyen, N. (2023). Our personnel are strategically positioned at Borders, checkpoints – police. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2023/07/18/our-personnel-are-strategically-positioned-at-borders-checkpoints-police/>

<sup>30</sup> Decentralized Community dialogue platforms. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://panorama.solutions/en/building-block/decentralized-community-dialogue-platforms>

for frustration and grievances that escalate into violence. By addressing systemic discrimination and upholding equal access to justice for every Nigerian, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status, fostering a fair and inclusive society, frustrations and grievances can be decreased.

- v. The government should prioritise initiatives aimed at offering quality education and fostering job prospects for youth, especially in marginalised areas, as a means to steer them away from resorting to violence. Furthermore, increased investment in mental health services is imperative to tackle underlying psychological factors that could potentially contribute to instances of violence.
- vi. Collaborating with civil society organisations engaged in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and community development endeavours offers an opportunity to evaluate and enhance existing laws on mob violence. Strengthening these laws will serve as a deterrent to prevent future incidents.

### 4.5.3. Projections

- i. The 2023 elections are over, but political tensions and resource competition could still fuel violence, particularly in the lead-up to local elections or within regions with longstanding grievances.
- ii. Banditry, insurgency, and other forms of armed group activity, particularly in the North West, North East, and South East, are likely to persist and potentially escalate.
- iii. Historical grievances and resource competition could lead to localised outbreaks of violence, especially in areas with a history of such conflicts.
- iv. Regional instability, global economic shocks, or other unforeseen events could exacerbate existing tensions and contribute to outbreaks of violence.
- v. Due to the worsening economic situation, mass protests may re-emerge nationwide.

Overall, the interplay of various factors, including the effectiveness of government responses, the actions of armed groups, and unforeseen events, will ultimately determine the level and nature of violence. However, Nigeria can be better prepared to anticipate and respond to potential outbreaks by understanding the key trends and potential drivers.



## 4.6. Kidnapping



Casualties  
**71**



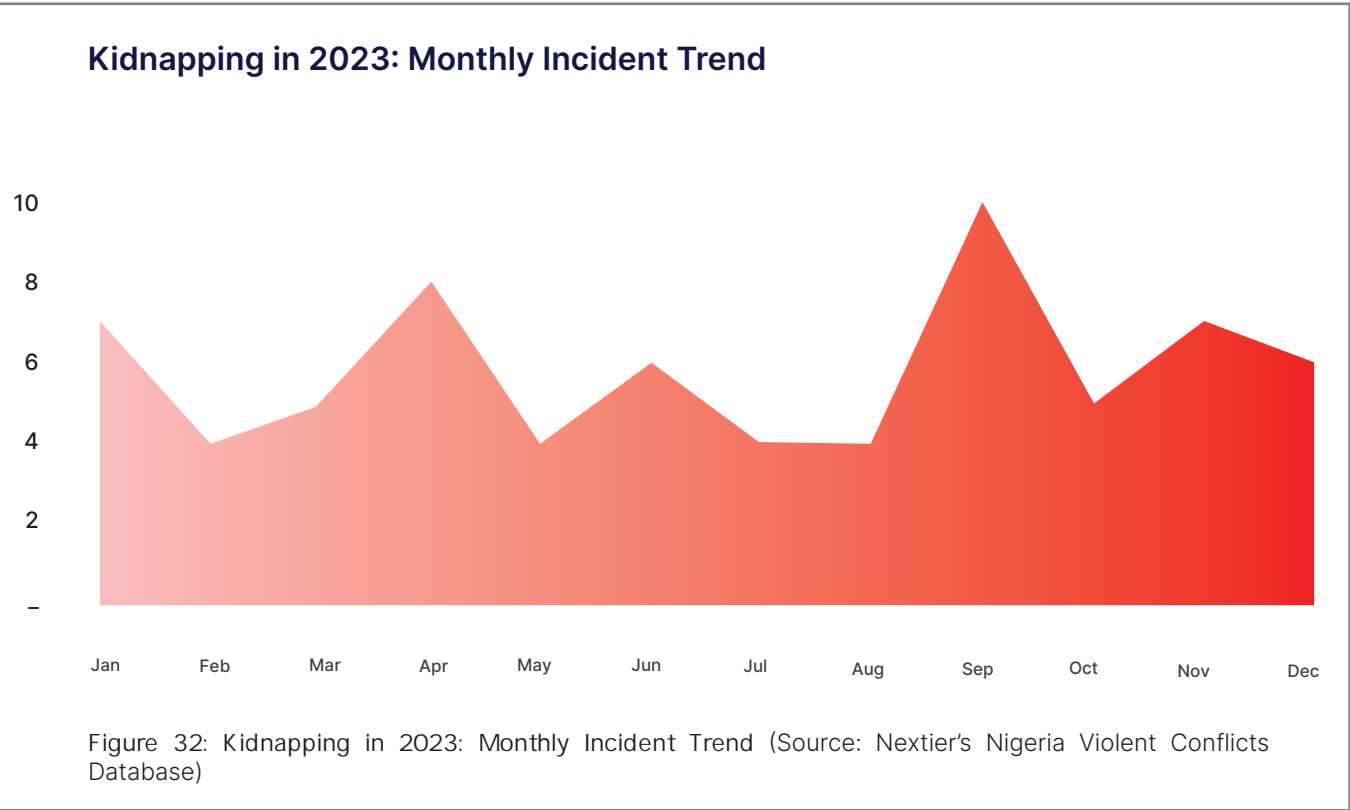
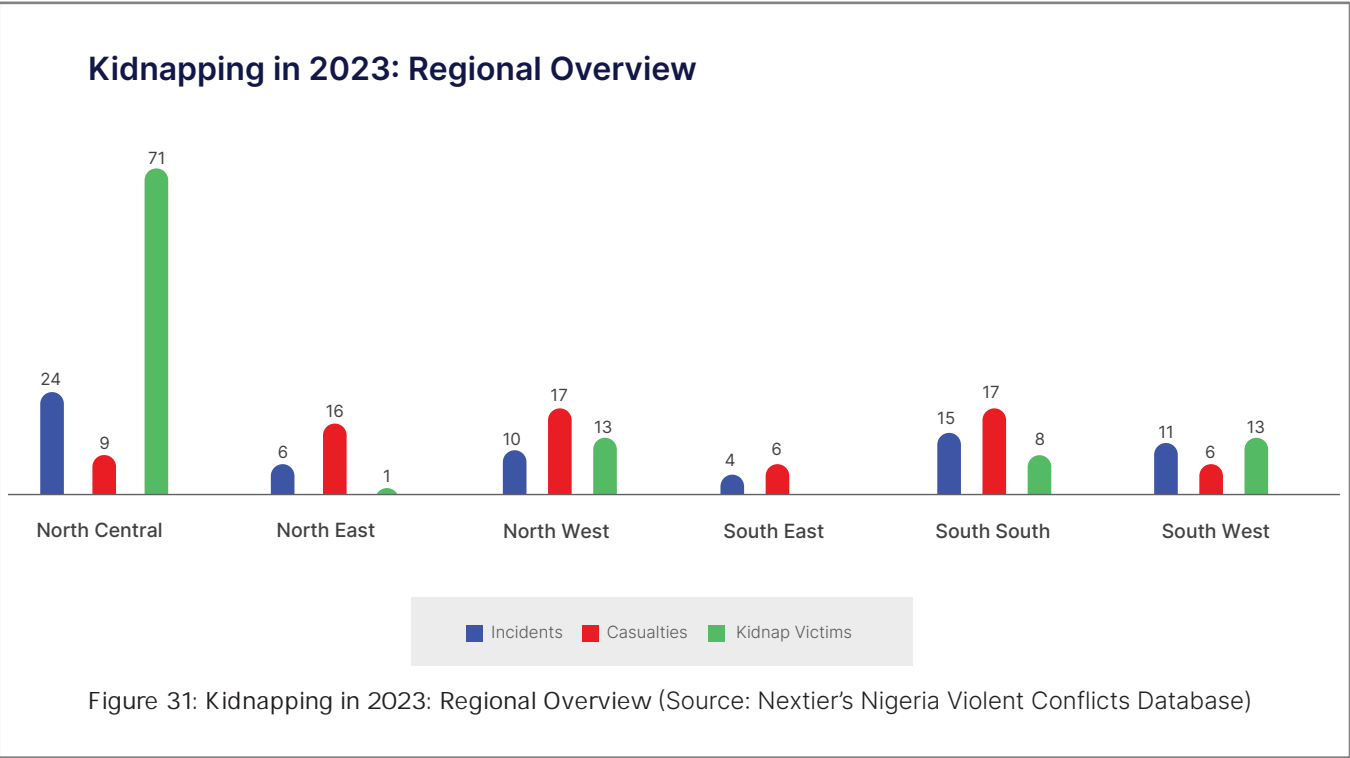
Kidnap Victims  
**109**



Incidents  
**70**

Kidnapping incidents are significantly underreported in Nigeria. Many of the victims' families are often warned by the assailants not to involve the police or the public in general. Also, resorting to ransom payment as the only hope for freeing the abductees is heralded in secrecy. Fewer kidnapping cases were recorded in 2023 compared to 2022, according to the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database. Seventy incidents

led to 109 kidnap victims and 71 casualties nationwide. This is more than a 100 per cent reduction from 2022. The reduction may be a combination of factors such as increased security clampdowns on kidnapping gangs, underreporting of incidents and gangs transitioning to other criminal actions. For some experts, kidnapping is a means criminal gangs, including terrorist groups, use to access funds for their activities. Huge ransoms



## Kidnapping in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims

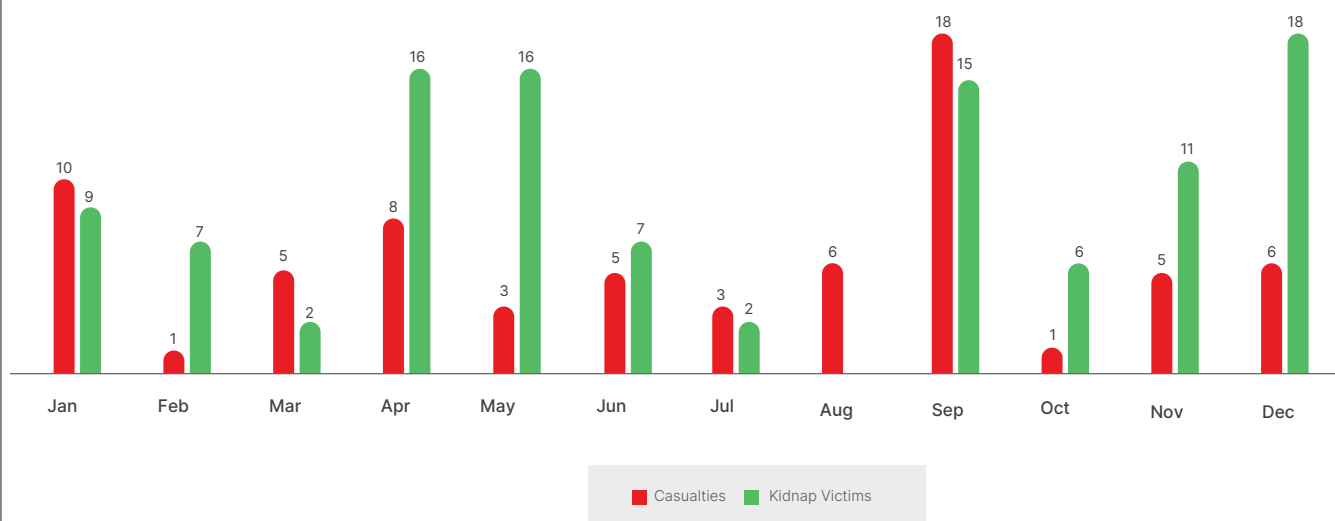


Figure 33: Kidnapping in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Kidnapping in 2023: Most Affected States

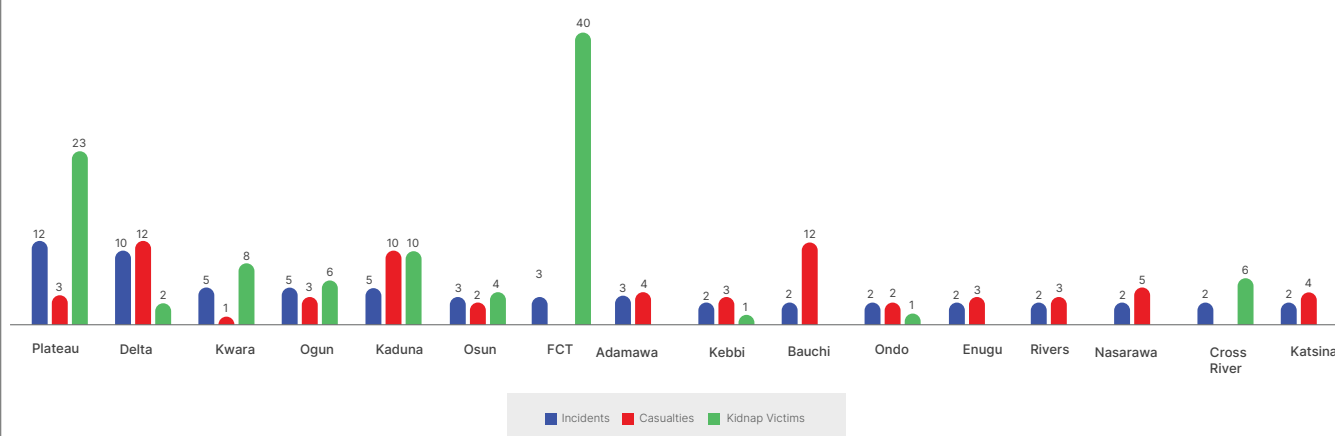


Figure 34: Kidnapping in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

are paid for the release of victims. Such money funds weapons purchases, logistics, and other needs that aid their nefarious activities. Kidnapping as an organised crime, largely for profit, has grown alongside the downward trend of Nigeria's economic indices.

Kidnapping in Nigeria has become quite fashionable and indiscriminate. Different groups and individuals use kidnapping to access funds, intimidate targets, or be part of organ harvesting or human trafficking endeavours. The scope of purposes is expanding,

as well as the victims' pool. Decades ago, kidnap victims were usually affluent, and children were used for rituals or trafficking. It has become indiscriminate in recent years, coupled with Nigeria's challenging security landscape. Many Nigerian residents are at risk of kidnap, regardless of political, social, cultural or economic status. No demographic is spared. From highways, schools, homes, farms, and places of work and worship, abductions indiscriminately happen. The numbers from 2023 were slightly different from the 2022 records, as observed from the Nextier's Nigeria

## Kidnapping in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

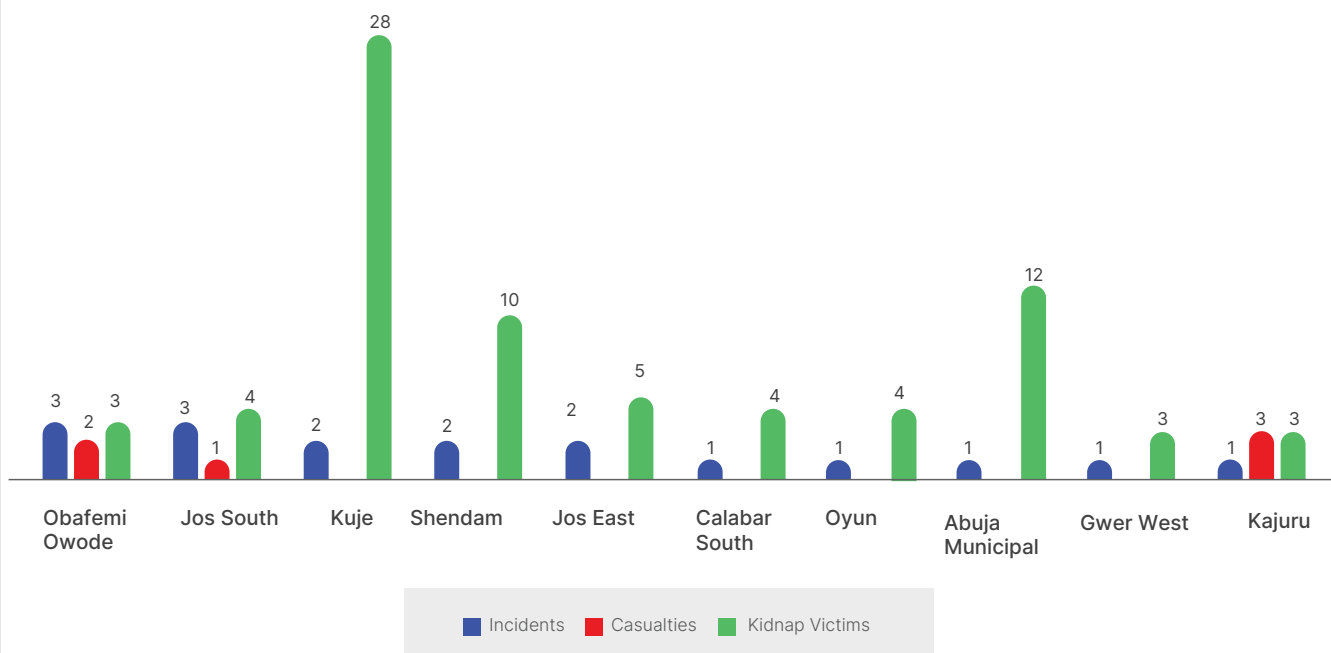


Figure 35: Kidnapping in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

Violent Conflicts Database. There is almost the exact tally of incidents and casualties, as many kidnap victims were killed. Also, chances are other people were caught up in the kidnapping attacks. Nigeria's capital and seat of power, the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, recorded most of the kidnapping cases and also boasts of the worst-hit Local Government Area (LGA).

The many security agencies headquartered in the FCT did not stop it from taking the lead in kidnapping, more than rural locations playing host to terrorist groups, bandits, and other criminal associations. It is indicative that the urban areas are no longer buffered by relative security but are also fallible, slowly like other hotspots in Nigeria. Also, wages are higher in urban areas. This is an attraction for criminals, such as ransom kidnapers. The FCT being the kidnapping scene for 2023 does not make other areas havens. Kidnapping as a tool for illegal funds is still viable across criminal organisations, including terrorists. As such, interstate highways recorded kidnapping incidents. These are the types of kidnapping that are mostly indiscriminate, as assailants scarcely have any inkling of their abductees' net worth or social capital until abductions are successfully conducted. However, this may not be the case in kidnapping in urban areas, where informants close to the potential victims are used to gain information and carry out the attacks.

Regionally, North Central Nigeria had the most cases,

with FCT contributing to most of the victims. Plateau State, a notorious spot for identity conflicts, had the most cases of kidnapping in 2023 and nearly double that in victims. Indeed, the state had more cases than other states in the region combined. It also had more than double each Nigerian state's incident tally, with the exception of Delta State. Delta State almost singlehandedly carried the South-South region at ten incidents of kidnapping. Surprisingly, there were only two kidnap victims and then 12 casualties. There are a few assumptions for this. First, kidnapping in the state is hardly for ransom purposes. Second, kidnapers in the state kidnap to kill after collecting ransom. Third, kidnapping in the state is for other purposes (ritual killing, organ harvesting, human trafficking, etc) other than for ransom. Nevertheless, it points to the multipurpose nature of kidnapping in Nigeria.

North East and South East Nigeria, troubled by terrorism and fierce secessionism, respectively, took the back seats in kidnapping statistics for 2023. Indeed, South East Nigeria had only four incidents, which was the greatest improvement. The North East, where large-scale kidnapping, such as the Chibok and Dapchi girls, also had significant improvements, owing to continued military operations and, perhaps, terrorists' less reliance on kidnapping as a means of terrorism financing. However, casualty figures for the region were as high as in other regions. January and December had the most cases in 2023.

Evidently, the yuletide rush and travels may have predisposed people to kidnap, especially on the highways and villages. FCT had the most cases for December 2023. There was increased discourse on the scale of kidnapping on social media platforms. Part of the manifestations is the infamous “one chance”, where unsuspecting passengers are held at gunpoint in transit while their personal items and monies in banks are taken away. In some instances, the victims are pushed off from moving vehicles or taken to neighbouring states where they are abandoned. FCT recorded such instances in December 2023. This is also the case with other states, but these events are more often than not unreported. The end-of-the-year rush and Nigeria’s socio-economic challenges may be a push factor for ransom kidnaps, leading to the increases recorded at the beginning and end of 2023.

### 4.6.1. Interventions

With many kidnapping incidents underreported, it limits security engagements. Kit and kin of victims are torn between seeking help from security agencies and offending the kidnappers. Therefore, such incidents are shredded in secrecy, leaving less room for interventions. However, the ones that make it into security agencies’ purview receive significant attention more than those that do not. The incidents that enjoy public attention, especially on social media, receive lingering attention and accountability, as security operatives jostle to keep the public posted or the victims’ families rely on the public to put pressure on law enforcement and crowdfund the ransom payment.

Security interventions in kidnapping have often been reactionary, with the law enforcement agents reportedly going after the assailants and rescuing victims. In some cases, ransom payments were indeed paid to secure the release of victims. The efficiency of rescue operations is inconsistent. In some cases, rescue teams meet early success, while in other cases, victims stay for extended periods. But FCT record of cases, despite supposed security presence, points to the ease of kidnapping in Nigeria and the helplessness of law enforcement. Therefore, interventions tend to react to successful kidnap attempts rather than prevent their occurrences.

### 4.6.2. Recommendations

1. Kidnapping in Nigeria is a multipurpose criminality, requiring broad-based combative and non-combative efforts.
2. Technology and identification systems should be used to track kidnapping gangs, especially when they contact the assailants’ families.
3. Kidnapping across states and regions manifests differently; therefore, different approaches are needed to curb them.
4. State-society collaborations on security will improve the likelihood of monitoring clandestine activities such as hideouts of kidnapping gangs.
5. Continued socio-economic pressure will lead to the emergence of more organised crimes such as kidnapping. Hence, more needs to be done to salvage the country from economic woes and poverty.

### 4.6.3. Projections

1. Kidnapping incidents will continue if economic woes prevail.
2. Criminal gangs and terrorist groups will continue to use ransom kidnap as a means to finance their operations.
3. Large-scale kidnapping in rural areas will continue if stability is not restored in those locations.
4. Reactionary security measures will not stop the losses, trauma and lucrative nature of kidnapping.
5. Stiffer rules on ransom payment may further reduce the attention kidnapping incidents receive, as victims’ families may keep mum so as not to attract prosecution for paying ransom.
6. New security strategies to curb kidnapping will achieve success, but sustainability is uncertain, especially if the operations end.





## 4.7. Terrorism



Casualties  
**808**



Kidnap Victims  
**70**



Incidents  
**69**

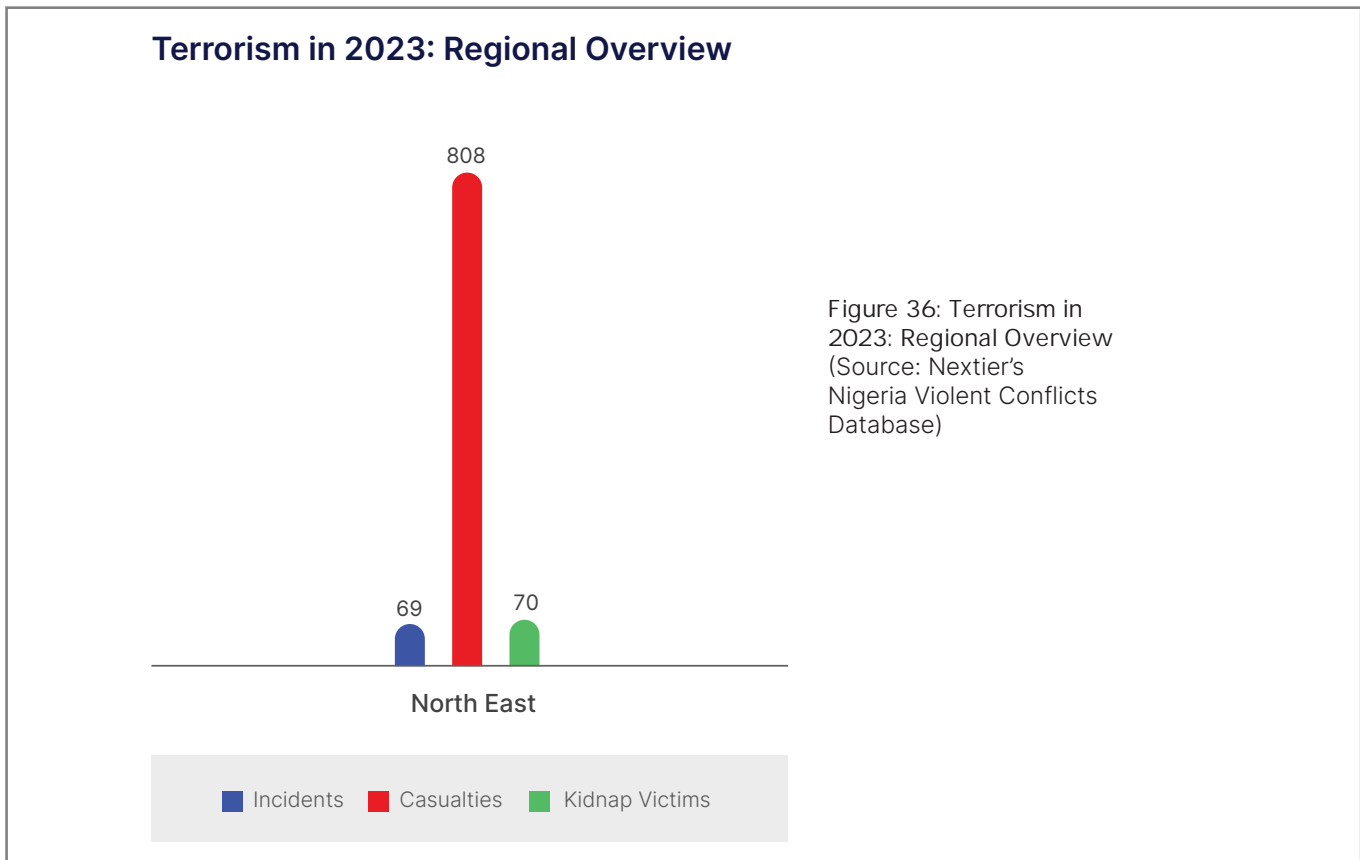
Terrorism poses a significant threat to stability and development in Nigeria, manifesting in various forms that undermine human rights, governance, and the economy. Multiple groups with distinct ideologies and tactics contribute to this menace. Notably, Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa Province (ISWAP) stand out as the most infamous factions, primarily active in the North East region. While Boko Haram aims for an Islamic state, ISWAP adheres to the global ISIS ideology. Both groups indiscriminately target civilians, government forces, and humanitarian workers through tactics such as bombings, kidnappings, and ambushes<sup>31</sup>.

The toll of terrorism in Nigeria is staggering, with thousands of lives lost and millions internally displaced. Insecurity pervades entire regions, hampering economic activity due to damaged infrastructure and pervasive fear among the populace. In 2023, violence by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) persisted in northern Nigeria,

employing guerrilla tactics, bombings, and abductions in carrying out their terrorist activities.

Ranking 144th in the Global Peace Index out of 163 countries, Nigeria dropped three spots from 2022, emerging 37th out of 44 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>32</sup>. Beyond the main terrorist groups, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, and religious tensions fuel insecurity as well. Security forces struggle with limited resources, human rights concerns, and corruption<sup>33</sup>. Communities continue to experience displacement, trauma, and limited access to necessities. Both civilians and security personnel bear the brunt of the violence, resulting in significant internal displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and regional security concerns.

North East Nigeria continues to dominate the terrorism charts, with 1,001 casualties, 96 incidents and 39 kidnap victims in 2022, according to Nextier's 2022 annual conflict review. Per Figure 36, the North East



<sup>31</sup> world, I. f. E. & P. M. p. i. a. c. (2023, June 29). Global Peace Index 2023. Visionofhumanity.org. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GPI-2023-Web.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Protect, G. C. f. t. R. t. (2023, November 30). NIGERIA, Populations at Risk. globalr2p. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>

<sup>33</sup> Four Nigerian soldiers injured after patrol vehicle drives over bomb planted by Boko Haram in Borno. Sahara Reporters. (2023, July 31). <https://saharareporters.com/2023/01/31/four-nigerian-soldiers-injured-after-patrol-vehicle-drives-over-bomb-planted-boko-haram>

### Terrorism in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

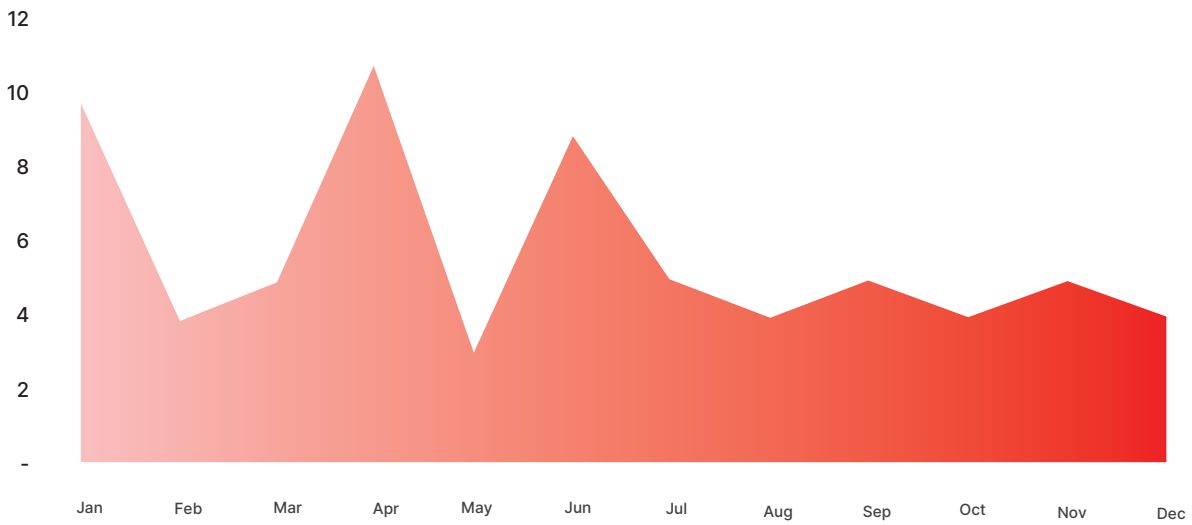


Figure 37: Terrorism in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims

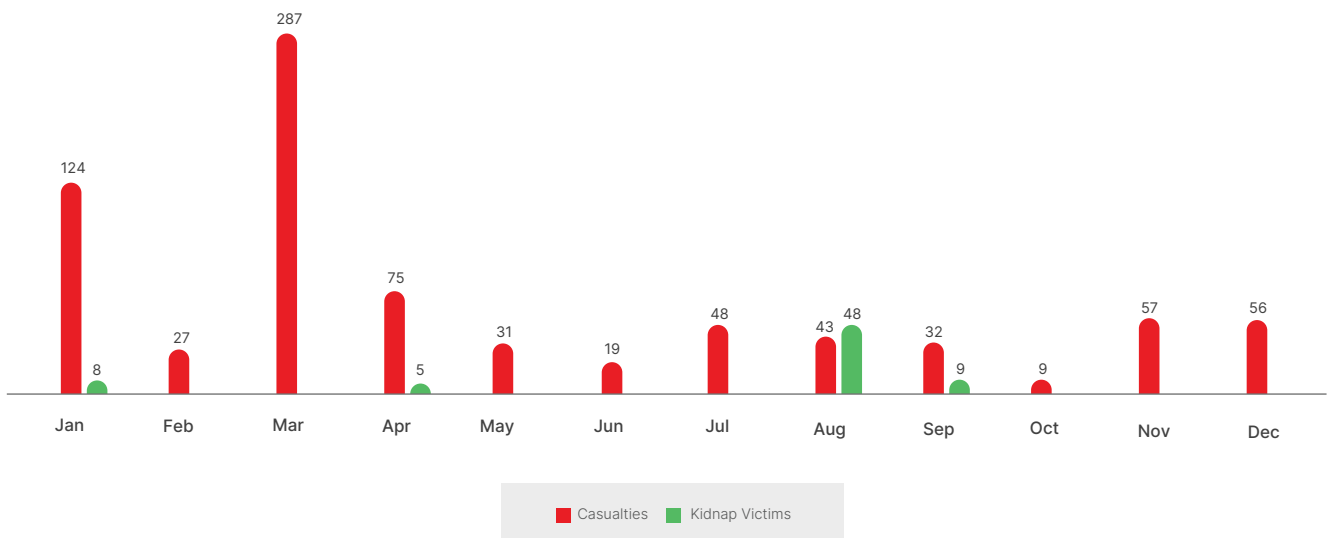


Figure 38: Terrorism in 2023: Monthly Casualties and Kidnap Victims (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in 2023: Most Affected States

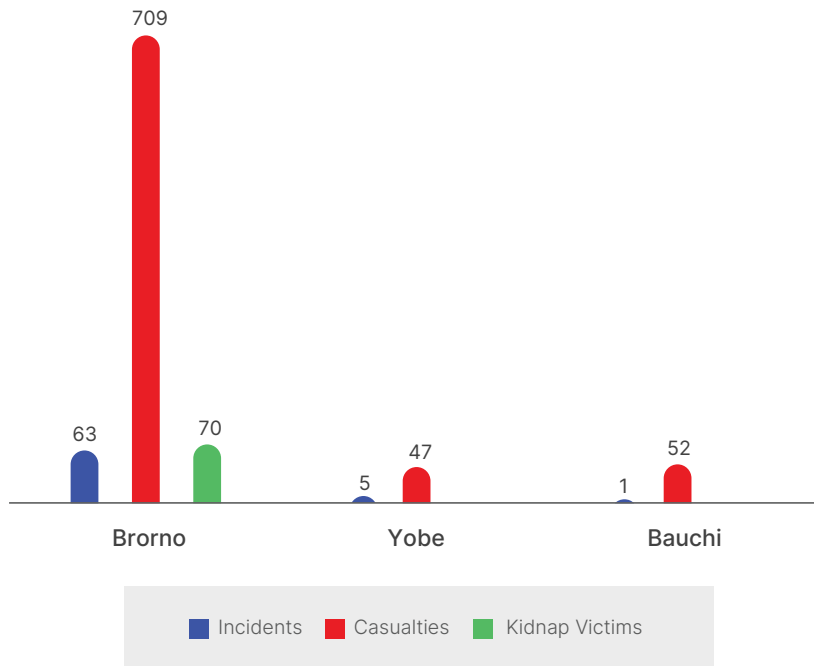


Figure 39: Terrorism in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

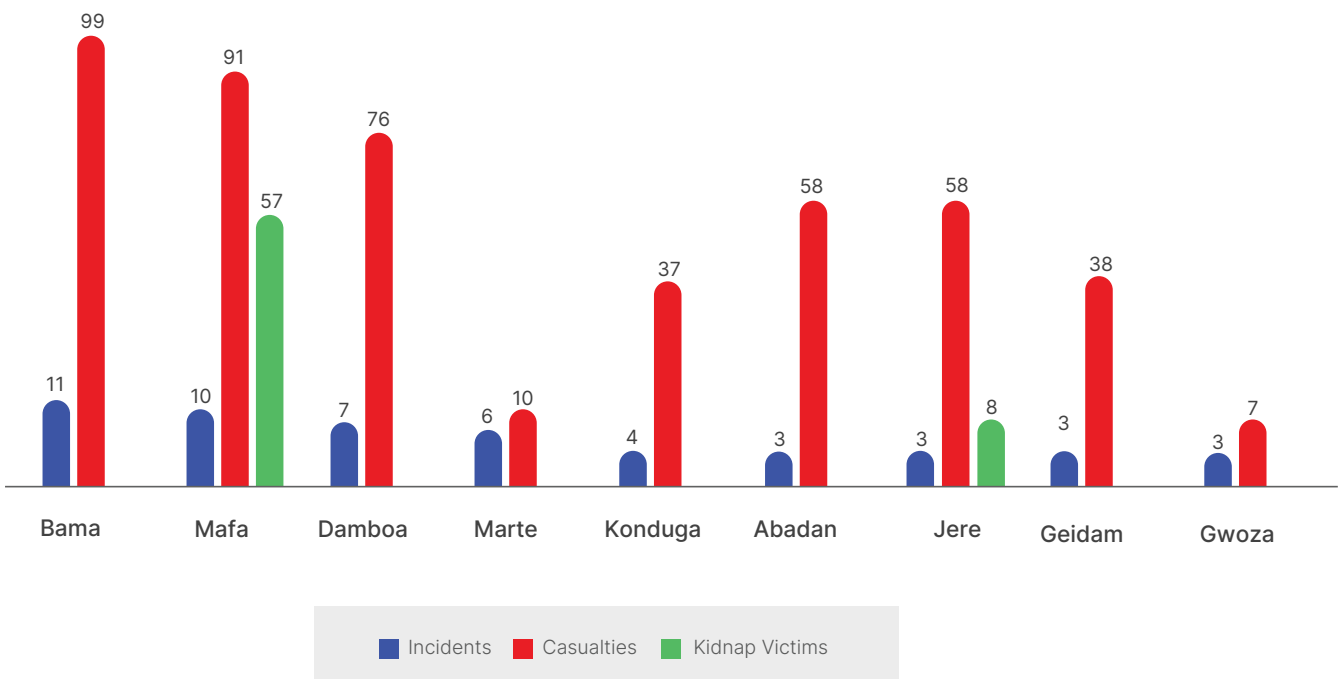


Figure 40: Terrorism in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

recorded 808 casualties, 69 incidents and 70 kidnap victims in 2024. Some of these attacks in the region feature the use of IED bombs<sup>34</sup>, wanton killings<sup>35</sup> and abductions. While the incidents and casualties have reduced from the previous year, the number of kidnap victims has increased, signalling a potential increase in the kidnap tactic for terrorism. Violent clashes between rival terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP were also recorded in the region, leaving scores of casualties in both camps<sup>36</sup>.

The highest monthly terrorism incidents in 2023 were recorded in April, with 11 incidents, a significant increase from 2022, where April recorded no terrorist incidents or victims. Followed closely by January, with ten incidents. June recorded nine incidents, with other months recording an average of three and five incidents each, as shown in Figure 37. It is important to note that the incidents in April also comprised counterattacks by the Nigerian army, with the insurgents making up the majority of the casualty numbers in April<sup>37</sup>. Figure 38 shows that March recorded the highest number of terrorism casualties (287) in 2023 but recorded no kidnap victims. This is mainly due to the violent clash between ISWAP and Boko Haram, claiming the lives of 200 Boko Haram terrorists and their families<sup>38</sup>. January recorded 124 casualties and eight kidnap victims. The highest record of casualties in January was as a result of counter-terrorism exercises by the Nigerian army, significantly the elimination of top Boko Haram commander Abu Illiya<sup>39</sup>. November, December and July recorded 57, 56 and 48 casualties, respectively, with no kidnap victims. August recorded 43 casualties and 48 kidnap victims. October recorded the lowest casualties at nine.

Borno State remains the most terrorism-affected in Nigeria, two years in a row, according to data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database. With 63 incidents, 70 kidnap victims and 709 casualties. Yobe State recorded five incidents and 47 casualties, while Bauchi State recorded one incident and 52 casualties, as shown in Figure 39 above. For the second year in a row, Bama LGA tops the charts with the highest number of terrorism incidents and casualties. In 2022,

Bama recorded 15 incidents and 266 casualties, and 11 incidents and 99 casualties were recorded in 2023, per Figure 40 above, a significant decrease in casualties. Mafa recorded an increase in their casualty figures from 55 in 2022 to 91 in 2023, an increase in the number of kidnap victims from six in 2022 to 57 in 2023, as well as an increased incident number from six in 2022 to ten in 2023. Damboa saw a decrease in terrorism incidents from ten in 2022 to seven in 2023 but recorded an increase in casualties, from less than 40 in 2022 to 76 in 2023.

## 4.7.1. Interventions

In 2023, the Nigerian government implemented various strategies to address terrorism, employing military and non-military measures. Military operations, in collaboration with regional partners like the Multinational Joint Task Force, targeted insurgent groups such as Boko Haram in the North East, utilising ground offensives, airstrikes, and intelligence gathering<sup>40</sup>. Efforts also focused on rehabilitating former insurgents<sup>41</sup>, countering extremist propaganda through media channels, and addressing socio-economic factors contributing to radicalisation. Additionally, UNICEF boosted their appeal to comply with Nigeria's 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan funding requirements to \$297.3 million due to rising needs in the North East and North West areas, combined with the impact of inflation<sup>42</sup>.

The most successful regional initiative in combating the threat posed by ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin area is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). By enhancing collaboration with neighbouring countries under the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the MNJTF has significantly improved its effectiveness in addressing Boko Haram and ISWAP. The LCBC's non-military stabilisation efforts, such as the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery, and Resilience (RSS) and the Territorial Action Plans (TAPs), aim to stabilise, rehabilitate, and bolster the resilience of communities affected by Boko Haram. Nigeria remains the primary contributor to MNJTF funding, reinforcing

<sup>34</sup> Nathaniel, S. (2023, July 27). ISWAP fighters kill 32 in borno. Channels. Retrieved March 4, 2024, from <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/07/27/iswap-fighters-kill-32-in-borno/>.

<sup>35</sup> Omonobi, K. (2023, March 5). ISWAP kills over 200 Boko Haram terrorists, women, children in Borno. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/iswap-kills-over-200-boko-haram-terrorists-women-children-in-borno/>

<sup>36</sup> Omonobi, K. (2023, March 5). ISWAP kills over 200 Boko Haram terrorists, women, children in Borno. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/iswap-kills-over-200-boko-haram-terrorists-women-children-in-borno/>

<sup>37</sup> Makama, Z. (2023, April 23). Army kills 35 terrorists, destroys 12 camps in Sambisa Forest. <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news-edit/army-kills-35-terrorists-destroys-12-camps-in-sambisa-forest>

<sup>38</sup> Omonobi, K. (2023, March 5). ISWAP kills over 200 Boko Haram terrorists, women, children in Borno. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/iswap-kills-over-200-boko-haram-terrorists-women-children-in-borno/>

<sup>39</sup> Marama, N. (2023, January 29). Troops eliminate terrorists' commander, Abu Illiya, 32 others in Borno. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/01/troops-eliminate-terrorists-commander-abu-illiya-32-others-in-borno/>

<sup>40</sup> Protect, G. C. f. t. R. t. (2023, November 30). NIGERIA, Populations at Risk. globalr2p. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>

<sup>41</sup> Board, P. E. (2023, April 4). Revisiting the faulty 'repentant terrorists' narrative. The Punch, <https://punchng.com/revisiting-the-faulty-repentant-terrorists-narrative/>.

<sup>42</sup> Unicef. (n.d.). NIGERIA. Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/media/144061/file/2023-HAC-Nigeria-revised-August.pdf>

its position as the key financier of the region's first joint counter-terrorism force.

However, these responses encountered criticism, particularly regarding civilian casualties in military operations, ongoing terrorist attacks, especially in the North West, and concerns over freedom of expression due to the suspension of media outlets critical of the government's handling of the crisis. Despite successes, such as regional and international collaboration on counter-terrorism, the government needs help refining its approach to mitigate security threats. In 2024, Nigeria must address these shortcomings and strive for more efficient solutions to combat terrorism effectively.

## 4.7.2. Recommendations

- i. Poverty, lack of opportunity, and marginalisation can contribute to radicalisation. Focusing on education, job creation, and infrastructure development in vulnerable areas can address these issues by providing alternative pathways for individuals at risk of radicalisation and offering education, rehabilitation, and reintegration opportunities.
- ii. Corruption and human rights abuses can erode trust in government and create fertile ground for extremism. Upholding the rule of law, ensuring transparency, and combating corruption are crucial in the fight against terrorism. The government should also challenge extremist narratives with positive alternatives that promote peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Community leaders, religious figures, and youth can be engaged in developing these narratives.
- iii. An independent team of experts is needed to be deployed periodically to review the implementation of counter-insurgency frameworks and the concept of operations of ad hoc coalitions fighting insurgency<sup>43</sup>.
- iv. Provide adequate training, equipment, and resources to security forces, ensuring they operate within the law and respect human rights. Porous borders should also be addressed to prevent the flow of weapons and fighters.
- v. The government must prioritise shared intelligence, best practices, resources and coordinated efforts

to address cross-border threats. They must also seek support and engagements with organisations like the UN, AU, and ECOWAS to access expertise and resources to trace, freeze, and seize terrorist assets.

## 4.7.3. Projections

- i. Reports indicate a decrease in Boko Haram activity and fatalities in 2022. This trend, if sustained, could lead to a further decline in the overall impact of terrorism in 2024. While Boko Haram shows signs of decline, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has become more prominent. Their activities, particularly in Borno State, pose a significant threat in 2024<sup>44</sup>.
- ii. Terrorist groups may adapt their tactics in response to counter-terrorism efforts. This could involve using drones, targeting new locations, or employing more sophisticated methods. Extremist groups could also exploit ongoing socio-economic issues, political tensions, and the upcoming 2027 elections to further their agenda.
- iii. Terrorist groups may also resort to kidnapping as a tactic to source funds owing to the recent popularity of crowdfunding for ransom payments on social media.
- iv. The current wave of coup d'états in the West African region could potentially worsen terrorism in Nigeria as a result of weakened state security interventions in the affected countries.

Reliable and comprehensive data on plans and capabilities of terrorist groups is often scarce, making specific projections even more challenging. Therefore, while there might be a potential decrease in overall impact due to Boko Haram's decline, the continued threat from ISWAP, evolving tactics, and underlying vulnerabilities suggest that terrorism remains a significant concern in Nigeria for 2024.

<sup>43</sup> Okoli, C., & Nwokolo, N. (2023, September 18). The G5 Sahel: Countering Insurgency or Countering Democracy? Nextier. March 4, 2024, [https://thenextier.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230921\\_SPD\\_Policy\\_Weekly\\_G5-Sahel\\_Countering-Insurgency-or-Countering-Democracy.pdf](https://thenextier.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230921_SPD_Policy_Weekly_G5-Sahel_Countering-Insurgency-or-Countering-Democracy.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/mnjtf-troops-repel-iswap-attack-in-monguno/>



## 4.8. Secessionism



Casualties

**75**



Incidents

**40**

Nigeria has faced repeated calls for secession, driven by a blend of historical, ethnic, religious, and economic factors. The merging of distinct groups in the north and south laid the foundation for tensions. Ethnic rivalries and political instability in the 1950s and 60s fuelled separatist sentiments, culminating in the fatal Nigeria-Biafran Civil War (1967-1970). Today, groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) seek independence in the South East, mirroring similar movements in the Niger Delta, Middle Belt, and the South West. Grievances around political representation, economic inequality, and resource distribution drive these calls. The agitations continued in 2023, with attacks on government institutions, state agents and sit-at-home enforcement, particularly in the South East<sup>45</sup>. The government has responded with force, while internal factions within secessionist groups add complexity<sup>46</sup>. Secession raises substantial economic and humanitarian concerns and fears of regional instability and violence<sup>47</sup>. As the regional overview in Figure 41 shows, the South East region recorded the highest number of secession-related incidents (37) and casualties (69) in 2023, with the South-South region recording just two incidents and five casualties. The high figures in the South East indicate the continued

agitation by the separatist IPOB group, especially as the leader is still in detention. Some sects of the IPOB group have advised the government to release their leader to restore peace in the South East<sup>48</sup>.

February and July recorded the highest number of incidents in 2023, with seven incidents each, while December and April recorded the lowest, with one incident each, as shown in Figure 42. Figure 43 puts February at the top of the casualty list with 23 casualties, 31 per cent of the total number of casualties (74). The second-highest monthly casualties were recorded in May, with 11 casualties making up 14 per cent of the total. December recorded the lowest number of casualties with one casualty.

Per Figure 44, Anambra State is most affected by secessionism in 2023, with 13 (33.3 per cent of the total) incidents and 37 casualties (50 per cent of the total), moving up from second place in 2022. Imo State, which recorded the highest casualties and incidents in 2022, dropped to second place in 2023 with ten incidents and eleven casualties. Delta state recorded the lowest casualties in 2023, with five; however, this increases from the two casualties

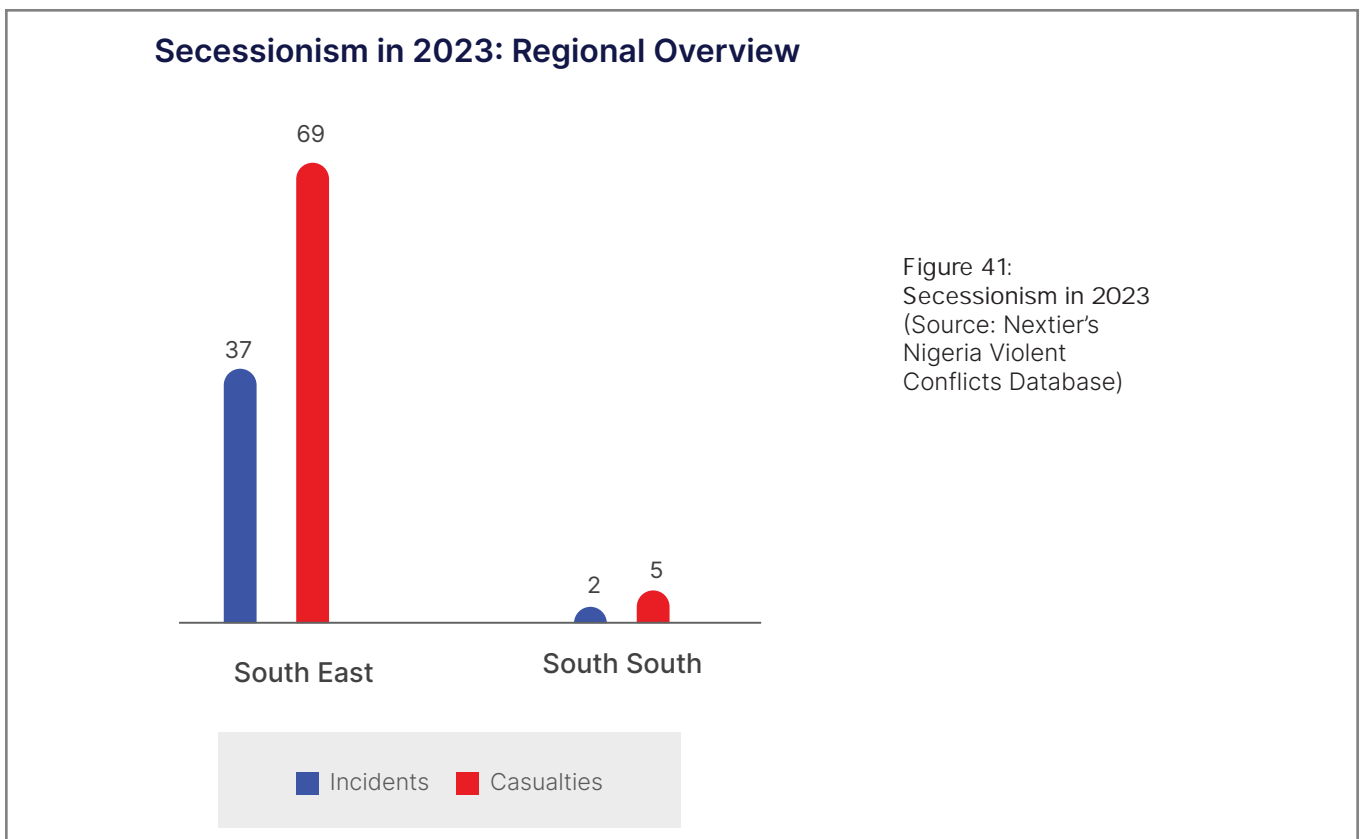


Figure 41:  
Secessionism in 2023  
(Source: Nextier's  
Nigeria Violent  
Conflicts Database)

<sup>45</sup> (2023, January 4). Gunmen burn Imo police station. Daily Trust. <https://dailytrust.com/gunmen-burn-imo-police-station/>

<sup>46</sup> Odeniyi, S. (2023, September 18). Troops, police battle IPOB fighters, kill Six. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/troops-police-battle-ipob-fighters-kill-six/>

<sup>47</sup> (2023, October 14). Sit-at-home: You're killing South-east, Kalu tells IPOB. Premium Times Nigeria. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/633647-sit-at-home-youre-killing-south-east-kalu-tells-ipob.html>

<sup>48</sup> Obianeri, I. (2023, July 14). Release Kanu to end insecurity in south-east, Ipob tells Fg. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/release-kanu-to-end-insecurity-in-south-east-ipob-tells-fg/>



### Secessionism in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend

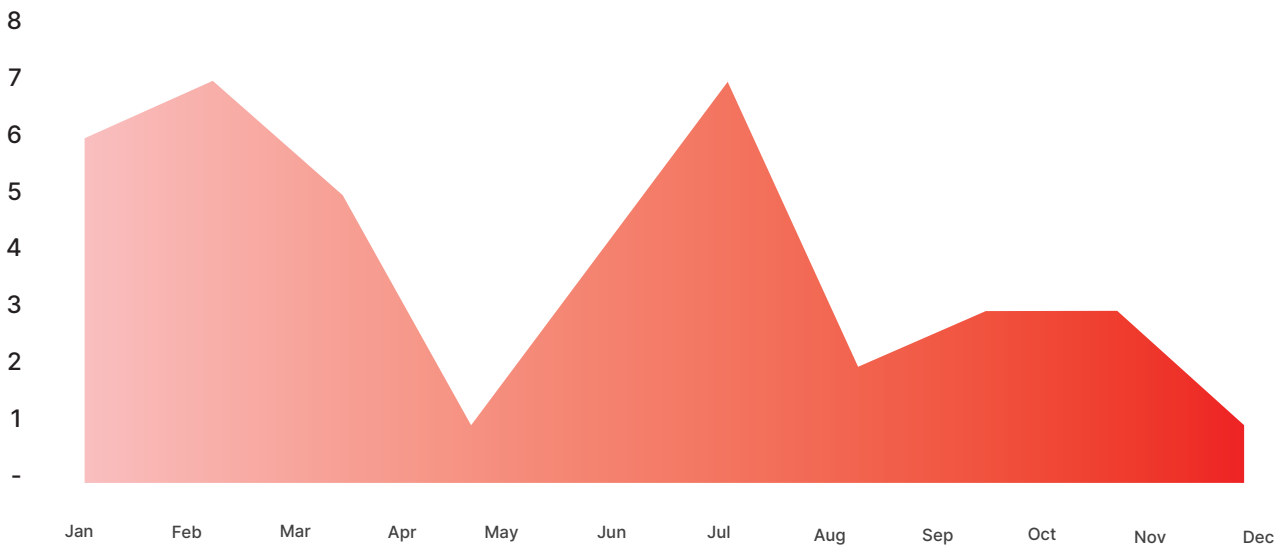


Figure 42: Secessionism in 2023: Monthly Incident Trend (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Secessionism in 2023: Monthly Casualties

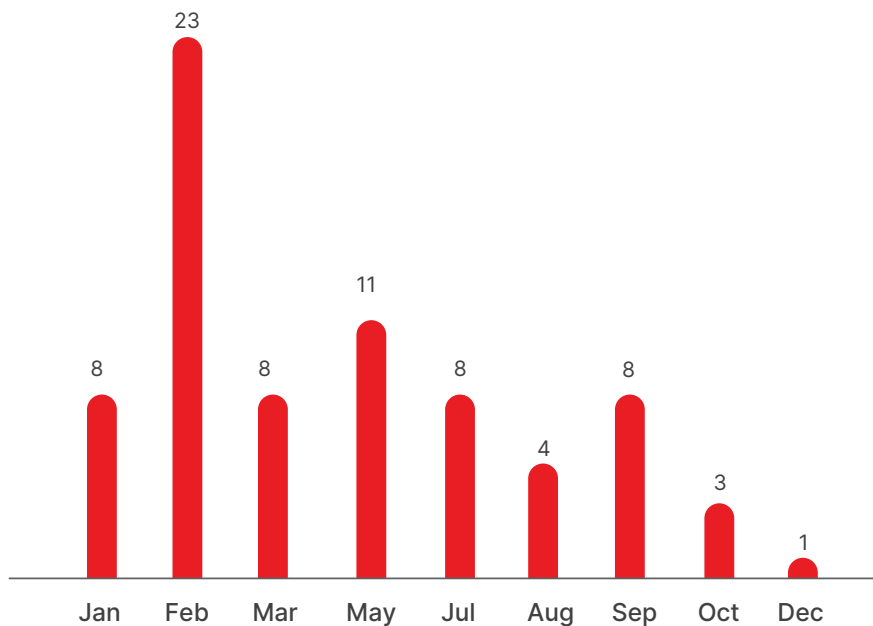


Figure 43: Secessionism in 2023: Monthly Casualties (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

recorded in 2022. Delta State also recorded the lowest number of incidents in 2023, with just two incidents. Idemili North, failing to make the top 10 worst-hit LGAs in 2022, made it to the top in 2023 with three incidents and 12 casualties, as shown in Figure 45. Ogun recorded more incidents than Idemili North but

fewer casualties. Onicha and Oshimilli North recorded two incidents and five deaths, respectively. Ohaukwu recorded two incidents but no casualties. Anambra dominated Figure 5 with three LGAs, followed by Imo and Ebonyi States with two LGAs each. Enugu and Delta States trailed with one LGA, respectively.

### Secessionism in 2023: Most Affected States

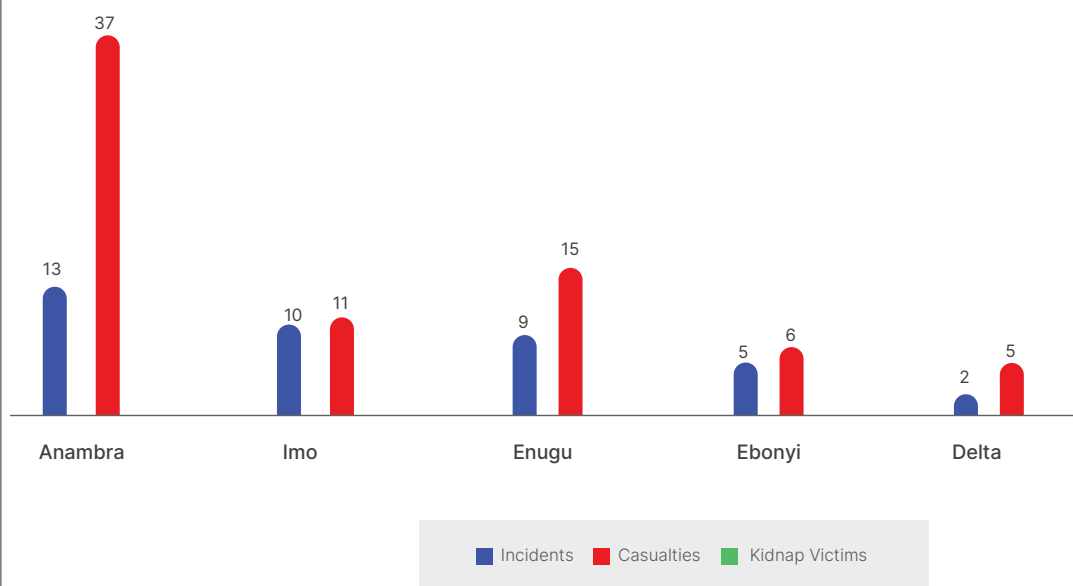


Figure 44: Secessionism in 2023: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Secessionism in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs

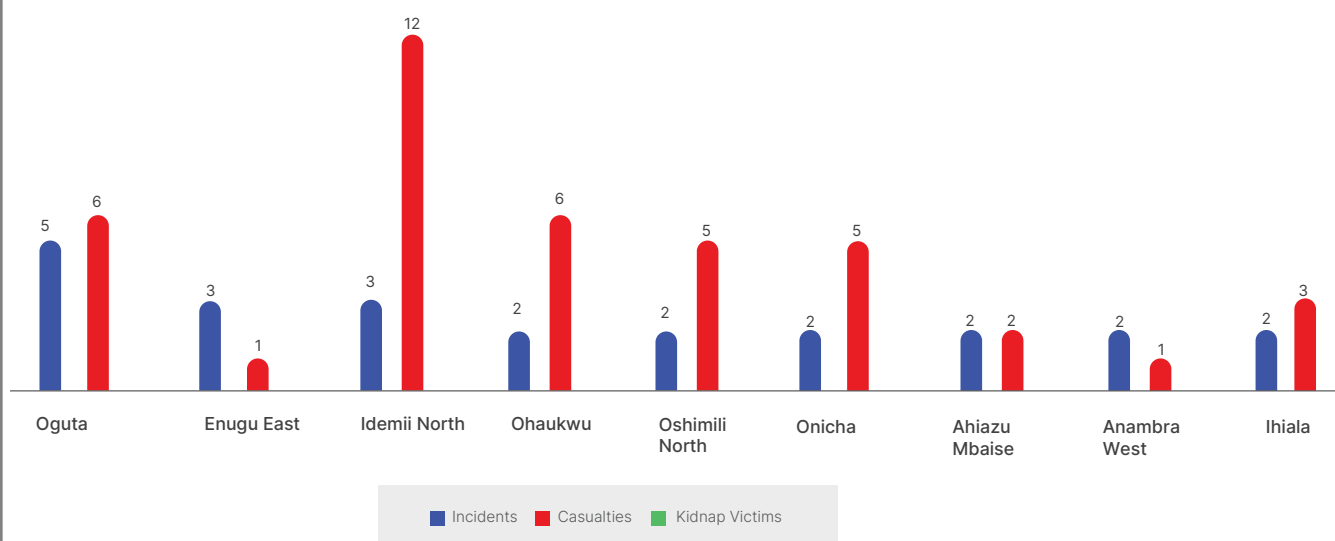


Figure 45: Secessionism in 2023: Worst Hit LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## 4.8.1. Interventions

In 2023, the Nigerian government adopted a comprehensive strategy to address secessionist movements, encompassing security measures such as Exercise Golden Dawn III<sup>49</sup>, economic interventions, and dialogue efforts. Additional troops were deployed to regions with strong secessionist sentiments, particularly the South East<sup>50</sup>, to deter violence and

safeguard territorial integrity. Simultaneously, the government intensified efforts to arrest<sup>51</sup> and prosecute individuals associated with such movements, though this approach raised concerns about potential human rights violations and escalation of tensions.

While there were limited attempts at dialogue with separatist groups, the effectiveness and extent of the efforts still need to be determined. The government's responses evoked mixed reactions, with supporters

endorsing them as crucial for national unity and security. At the same time, there are concerns<sup>52</sup> about heavy-handed security measures exacerbating alienation among secessionist groups. Human rights organisations also raised alarms about potential abuses associated with the crackdown on secessionist movements<sup>53</sup>. The complexity of the government's response and its ability to address the root causes of secessionism and foster lasting peace await further evaluation.

## 4.8.2. Recommendations

- i. The government should genuinely engage with secessionist groups and their representatives to understand their grievances and aspirations. This will help foster a climate of mutual respect and understanding, seeking compromise and win-win solutions. Employ mediation, facilitation, and other non-violent means to address differences and reach agreements.
- ii. The government must analyse and address historical injustices, economic inequalities, political marginalisation, and lack of trust in government institutions that fuel separatist sentiments. Additionally, the government must highlight shared values, history, and cultural diversity through education, public discourse, and community engagement to encourage nation-building.
- iii. The government should explore greater autonomy and decision-making power for regions within a united Nigeria, addressing concerns about self-determination. Furthermore, the government must strengthen federal institutions by enhancing their transparency, accountability, and effectiveness to regain public trust and legitimacy.
- iv. The government must equitably distribute resources and infrastructure across regions, fostering a sense of shared prosperity. The government should also promote fair treatment and equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation.

- v. The media landscape and the spread of information on social media can significantly impact public opinion and potentially exacerbate tensions. It is crucial to monitor the situation closely, stay informed from reliable sources, and avoid making generalisations or promoting harmful stereotypes about any group involved in the secessionist movements.

## 4.8.3. Projections

- i. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and other pro-Biafra groups are likely to continue their calls for secession, potentially leading to protests and demonstrations. The continued detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, could further fuel tensions. Secessionist movements in other regions, such as the Niger Delta and the Middle Belt, might also see continued activity, albeit potentially to a lesser extent than the Biafran movements.
- ii. The Nigerian government will likely maintain a strong security presence in restive regions, potentially leading to clashes with secessionist groups. The current ongoing agitation and government response might persist without significant changes, potentially leading to prolonged tension and instability.
- iii. The economic situation in Nigeria, particularly issues like poverty and unemployment, could significantly influence secessionist sentiments. A worsening economic situation could increase frustration and support for separatist movements. Protests and demonstrations could escalate, leading to occasional clashes with security forces without widespread violence or a full-blown secessionist conflict.
- iv. Political instability, such as violence during elections or government crackdowns on dissent, could create an environment conducive to further radicalisation and potentially lead to more extreme forms of secessionist activism. Unforeseen events, such as the emergence of charismatic voices amid significant economic shocks, could trigger a more radical escalation of secessionist movements.

<sup>49</sup> Insecurity: Army launches operation golden dawn 3 in Abia - Vanguard ... Vanguard. (2023, December 6). <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/insecurity-army-launches-operation-golden-dawn-3-in-abia/>

<sup>50</sup> (2023, September 3). <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/09/army-neutralises-3-members-of-biafra-national-guard-in-abia-recovers-weapons/>

<sup>51</sup> Ugwu, C. (2023, December 21). Police arrest IPOB commander, traditional ruler over insecurity in Imo. Premium Times Nigeria. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/653198-police-arrest-ipob-commander-traditional-ruler-over-insecurity-in-imo.html>

<sup>52</sup> Ede, R. (2023). Ohanaeze decries killing of Igbo youths in south-east. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/ohanaeze-decries-killing-of-igbo-youths-in-south-east/>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



## 5.0. First Quarter (Q1) of 2024 in Focus



Casualties  
**244**



Kidnap Victims  
**942**



Incidents  
**1,255**

The first quarter of 2024 was slightly different from the four quarters of 2023 in scale and frequency of violent incidents. Kidnapping cases were prevalent across the region as people concluded the end-of-the-year holidays. The Federal Capital Territory and Kaduna State were notorious for such incidents, which led to dozens of victims and demands for millions of naira. The pressure remained on the Nigerian government to provide protection, but informal security provisions thrived as the conflict theatres expanded and became more crowded.

Generally, the conflict hotspots across the country maintained their notoriety at different scales, like the consequential fatalities and displacements that followed them. Above all, Nigeria's security situation was worsened by economic challenges that manifested as inflation, hikes in food prices, a cost of living crisis, and angst against the government from different quarters. In some conflict types, Nigeria performed relatively well compared to previous quarters. However, these outcomes did not stop the record of deaths, injuries and kidnap victims, indicating that the same issues of 2023 and previous years have continued.

### Nigeria in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison



Figure 46: Nigeria in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Nigeria in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

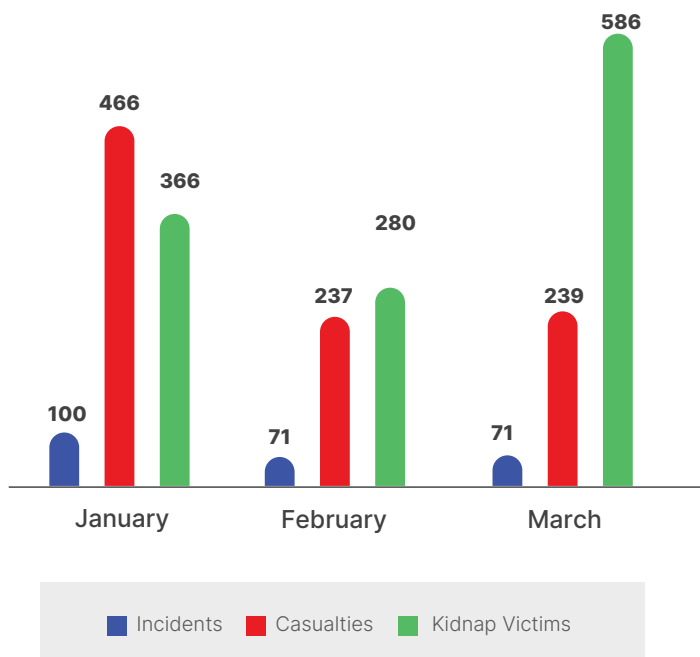


Figure 47: Nigeria in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

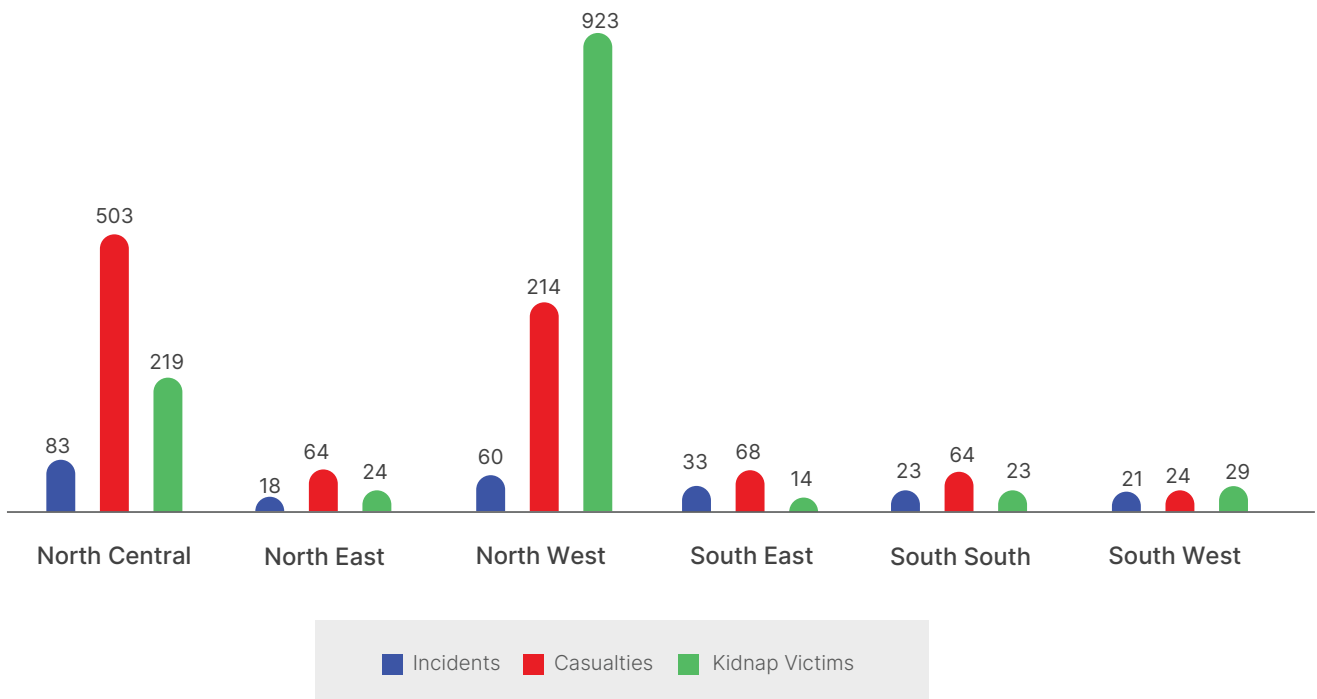


Figure 48: Nigeria in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in Q1 2024: Most Affected States

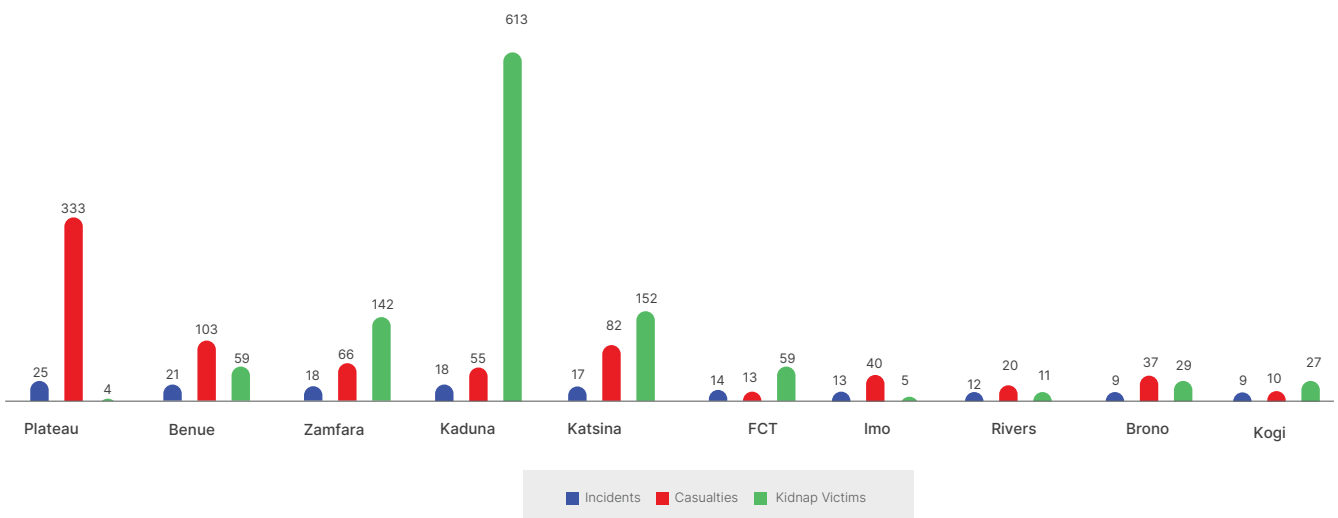


Figure 49: Nigeria in Q1 2024: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Nigeria in Q1 2024: Prevalent Conflicts

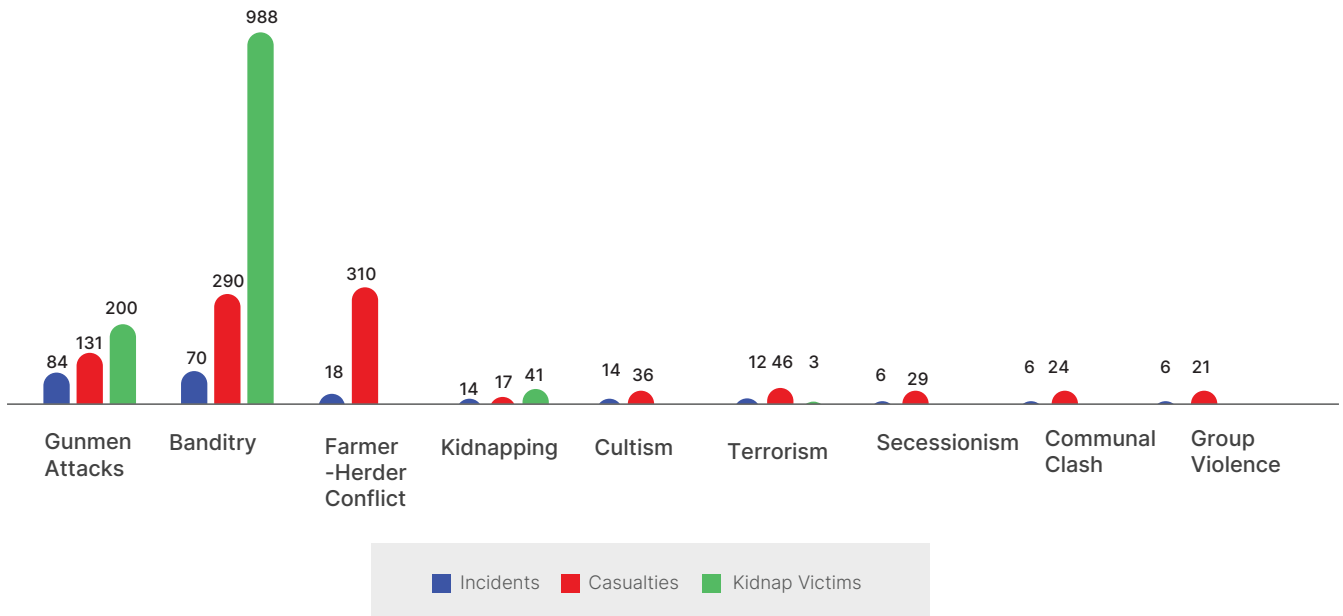


Figure 50: Nigeria in Q1 2024: Prevalent Conflict Types (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)



# 6.0. Major Violent Incidents in Q1 2024

## January

- 2 Unknown gunmen attacked communities in Wase LGA of Plateau State
- 3 Boko Haram attacks Borno's Chibok LGA, kill 12
- 7 22 killed as police engage bandits in gun battle in Katsina State
- 9 11 residents, hotel receptionist kidnapped in Abuja estate attack
- 10 Bandits abduct 85 along the Kaduna-Abuja expressway.
- 12 Bandits kidnap 23 in Abuja
- 15 Gunmen abduct 45 passengers along Otukpo-Enugu Road.
- 21 Bandits kill 1, abduct 16 in Niger community.
- 22 Bandits abduct 29 persons in Katsina State community.
- 23 249 died from farmer-herder clashes in Mangu LGA, Plateau State.
- 28 Bandits kill 1, abduct 31 in Niger State.

## February

- 3 55 kidnapped in Katsina State
- 6 Gunmen abduct 14 Abuja-bound travellers in Kogi State.
- 13 Bandits kill 4, abduct 40 in Zamfara State.

## March

- 1 Gunmen attack FCT community and abduct 23 persons.
- 7 Bandits storm Kaduna school, abducting over 200 pupils and teachers.
- 9 Gunmen kill 30 in Benue State.
- 10 Bandits abduct 15 students in Sokoto.
- 10 The military neutralised 20 IPOB/ESN members.
- 13 Bandits kill 5 and kidnap 60 residents in Kaduna State.
- 18 Bandits kidnap 87 in Kaduna State.
- 21 Gunmen kidnap 10 persons in Edo State.





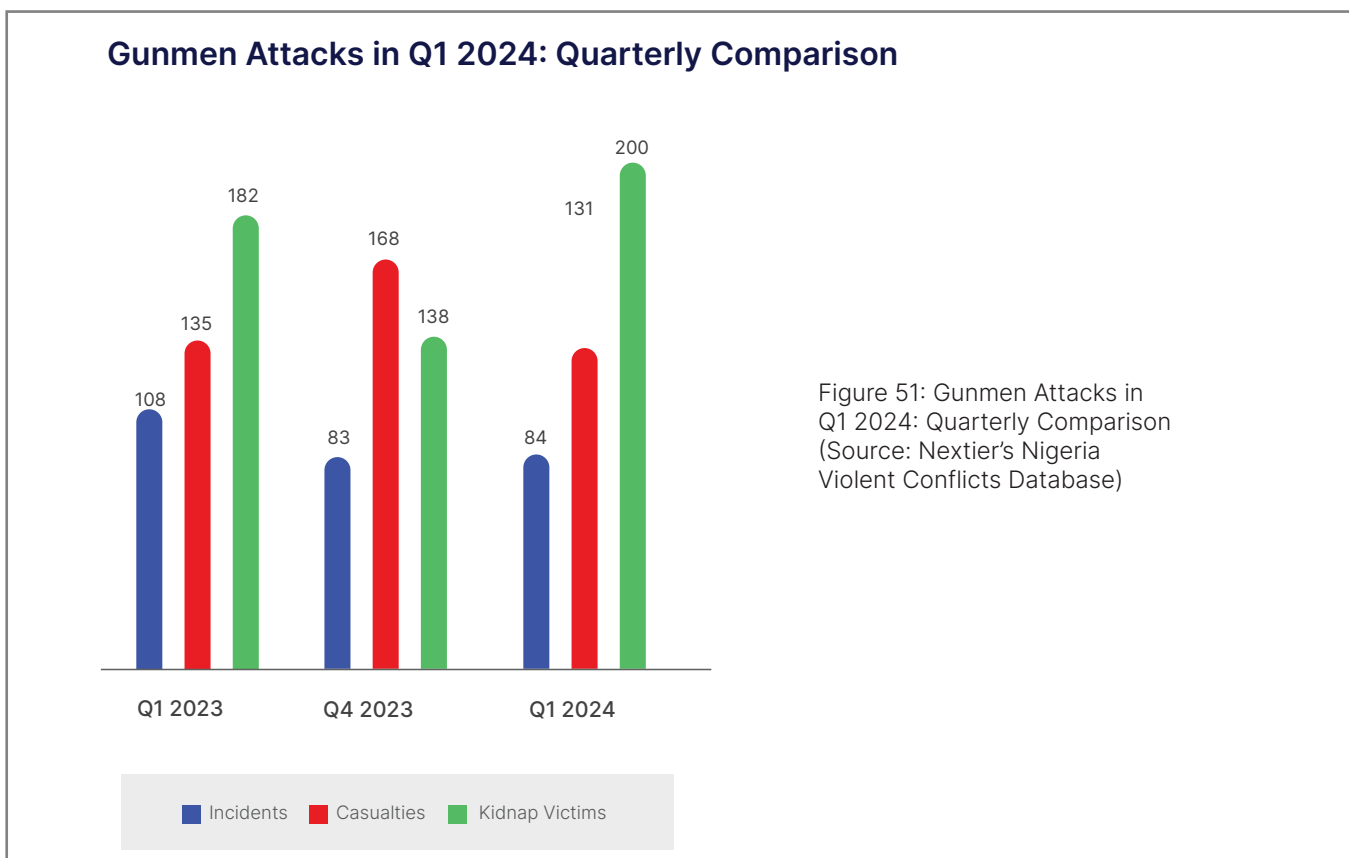
# 7.0. Key Findings in Q1 2024

## 7.1. Gunmen Attacks



Activities of the media labelled “gunmen or unknown gunmen” continued into 2024. Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database recorded 131 casualties and 200 kidnap victims from 85 gunmen-related incidents in the country in Q1 of 2024. Although Q1 2023 recorded more incidents than Q1 2024, which may have been arguably due to electoral tension. Despite fewer recorded incidents in Q1 2024, the number of kidnap victims increased by 9.89 per cent. Q1 2024 has witnessed oscillating numbers of gunmen-related incidents, casualties, and kidnap victims. However, January 2024 recorded the highest across all three indicators. One of the highlights of the month is the abduction of 45 passengers by gunmen along the Otukpo-Enugu road<sup>54</sup>.

South East Nigeria is primarily known to be the hotbed for this violence, often linked to secessionist agitation in the region. However, the North Central region of Nigeria has witnessed more incidents of gunmen-related attacks in Q1 2024. The gunmen in this area are also riding on existing regional crises. One major highlight is the abduction of 23 persons by gunmen from Bwari Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja<sup>55</sup>. Ohaukwu LGA of Ebonyi State and Bokkos of Plateau State both recorded the highest number of incidents, with four gunmen-related incidents each. Bwari, with two incidents, recorded the highest kidnap count within the same period.



### 7.1.1. Interventions

The federal government has prioritised counter-attacks on gunmen across Nigeria. The Nigerian security agencies have also focused on raiding criminal hideouts to alter their planning and coordination. Military operations across the regions in Nigeria are one of government’s ways of mitigating the distinct forms of gunmen violence in Nigeria.

### 7.1.2. Recommendations

- i. Addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to armed robbery, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to livelihood opportunities, would also help prevent individuals from resorting to crime.
- ii. Improved collaborations between security agencies and affected communities will help

<sup>54</sup> <https://dailypost.ng/2024/01/15/gunmen-reportedly-abduct-45-passengers-along-otukpo-enugu-road/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://punchng.com/gunmen-attack-fct-community-abduct-23-persons/>

### Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

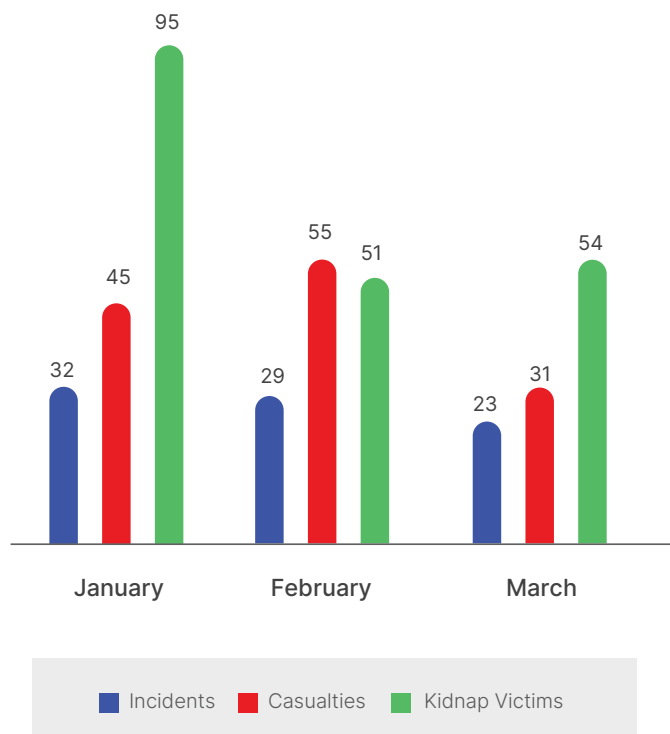


Figure 52: Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

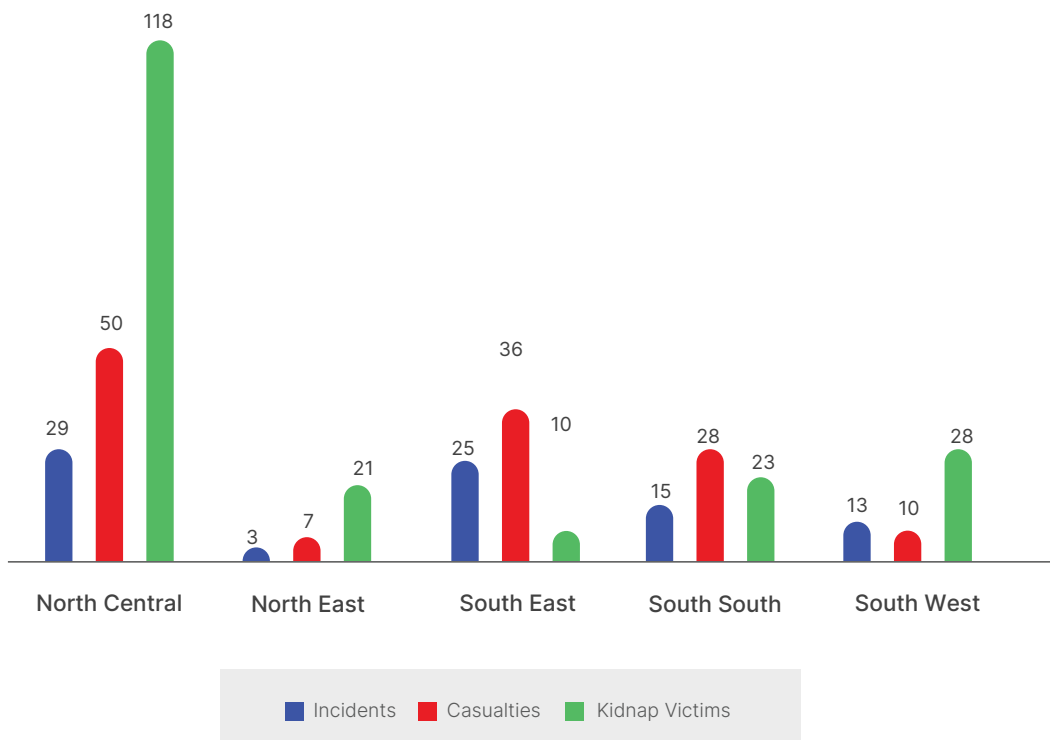


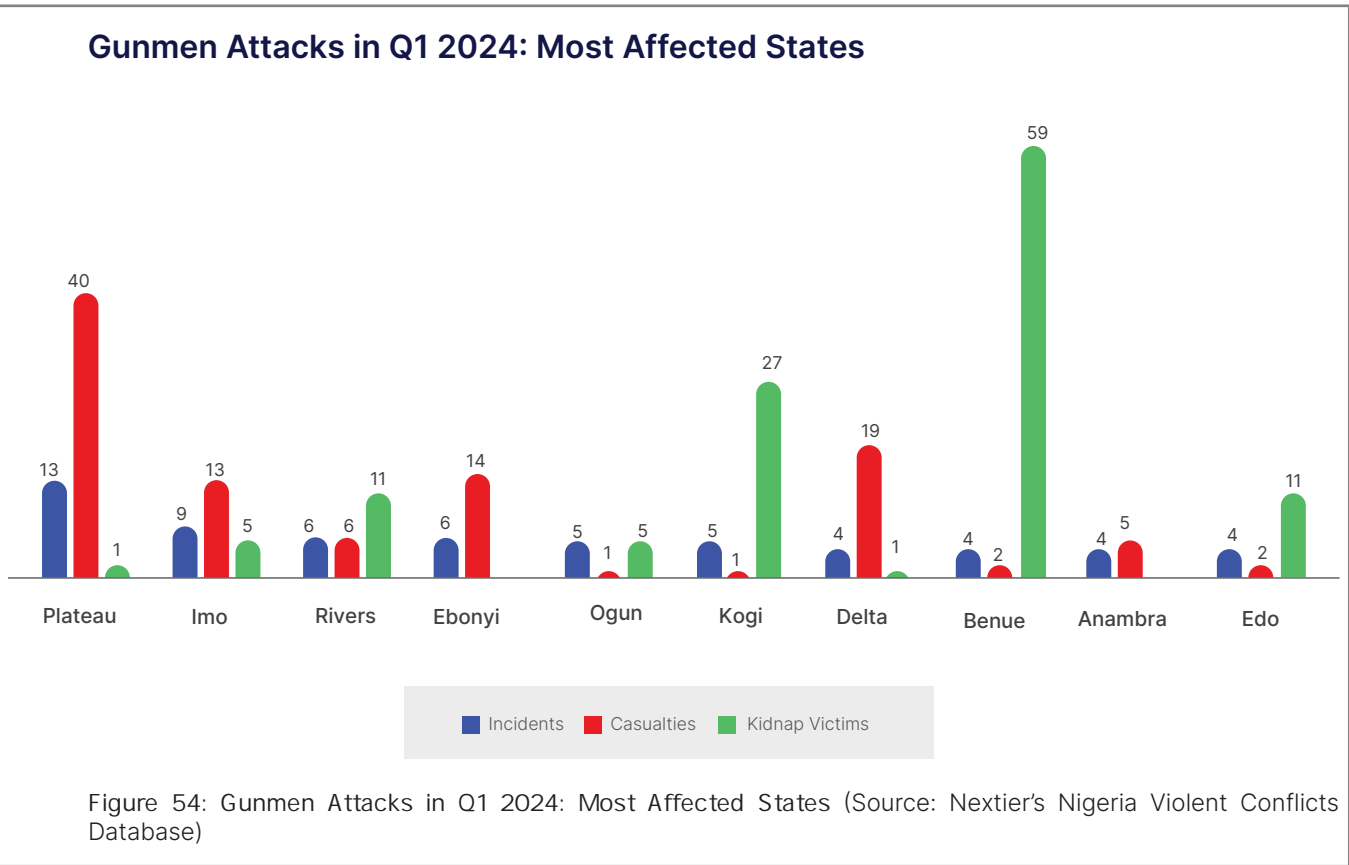
Figure 53: Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

improve local intelligence.

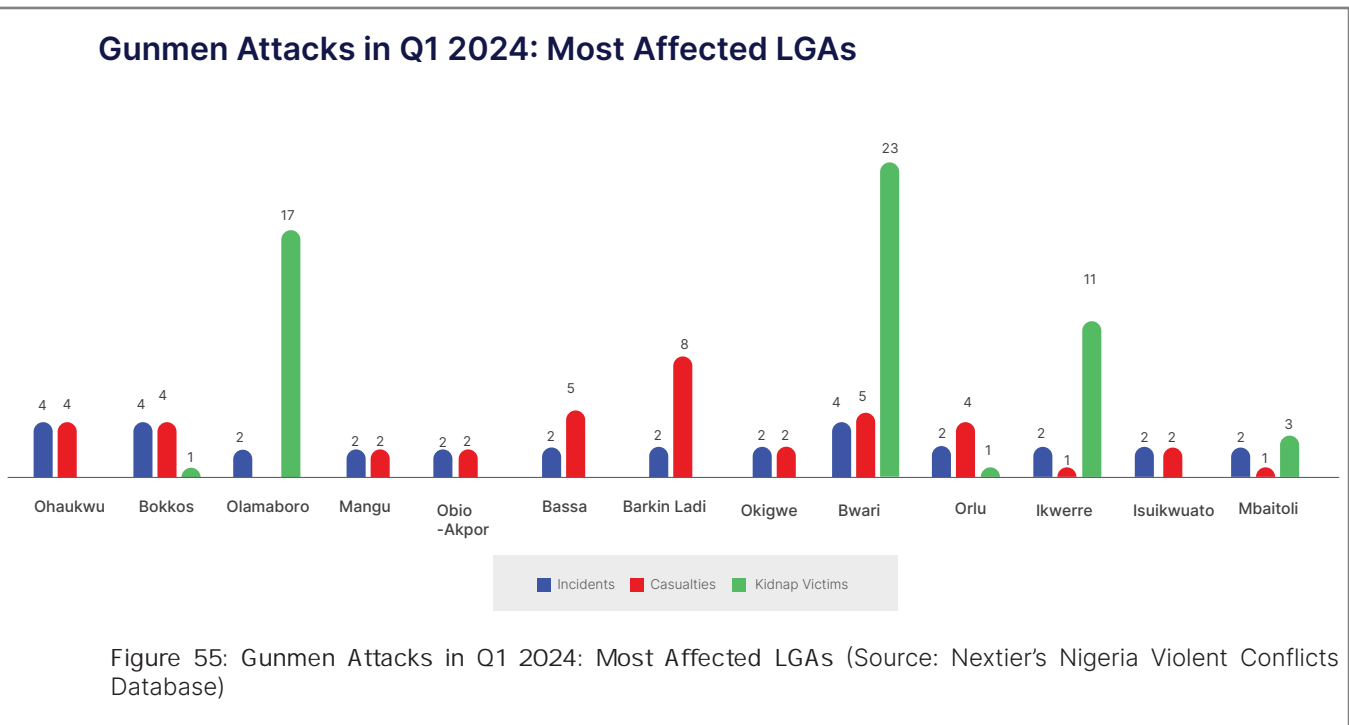
iii. Clampdown on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons will help reduce the spread of gunmen violence.

iv. Tighter border security is needed to address movement of criminal organisation and the smuggling of arms into the country

### Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Most Affected States



### Gunmen Attacks in Q1 2024: Most Affected LGAs





## 7.2. Banditry



Casualties  
**77**



Kidnap Victims  
**988**

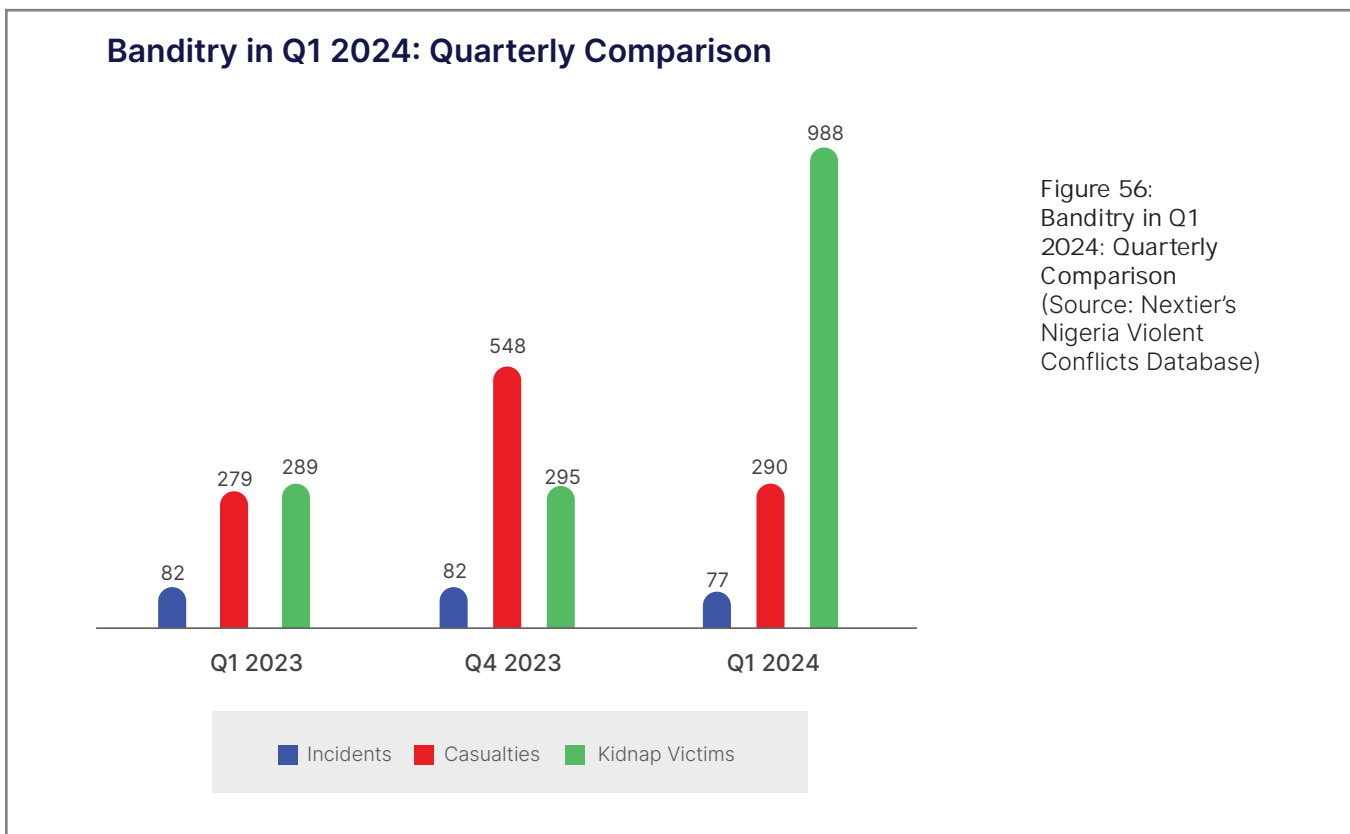


Incidents  
**77**

In the first quarter of 2024, banditry recorded 77 incidents across Nigeria. There has been a slight decrease compared to the first quarter of 2023, which recorded 82 incidents. Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database also revealed that the actors from both quarters have largely remained the same, with most actors being bandits and civilians. At the same time, security forces have also appeared in the conflict, albeit fewer times compared to the two actors mentioned above.<sup>56</sup>

The North West, North Central and North East regions have remained the most affected by banditry. The North West region recorded the highest number of incidents at 59, while the North Central and North East regions recorded 17 and one incident, respectively. Projections from the aggregated report of banditry in

2023 revealed a stronghold of banditry in the areas most affected. This has manifested in the North West and North Central areas, which are historically notorious for bandit activities, especially in states such as Kaduna, Zamfara, and Katsina. Batsari Local Government Area recorded the highest incident count, which was six. A stand-out incident was the attack which killed nine traders along the Jibia - Batsari road<sup>57</sup>. Kidnapping from bandit activities in Kajuru and Kachia LGAs has been the highest in the first quarter of 2024. Projections from the 2023 report revealed the likely influence of banditry on other conflicts was eminent, and the kidnap count, which stood at 169 and 101 victims from the most affected states, gives credence to the projections.



<sup>56</sup> Abubakar, A. (2024, January). Terrorists kill security operatives in North West Nigeria . HumAngle. <https://humanglemedia.com/terrorists-kill-security-operatives-in-north-west-nigeria/>

<sup>57</sup> Oyelude, O. (2024, February). Bandits kill nine in Katsina Market Attack. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/bandits-kill-nine-in-katsina-market-attack/#:~:text=Gunmen%20on%20Sunday%20evening%20reportedly,around%206%20p.m.%20on%20Sunday.>

### Banditry in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

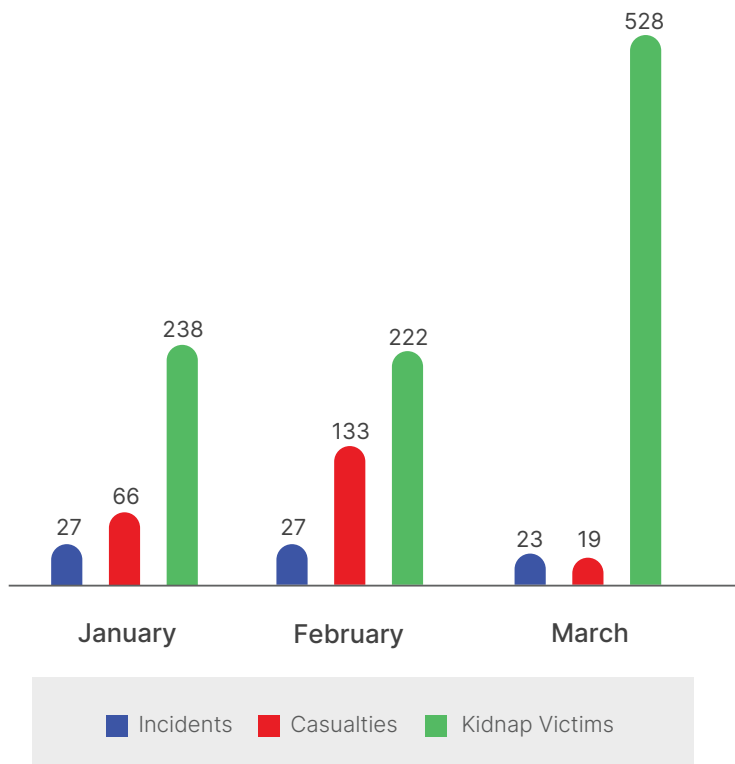


Figure 57: Banditry in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

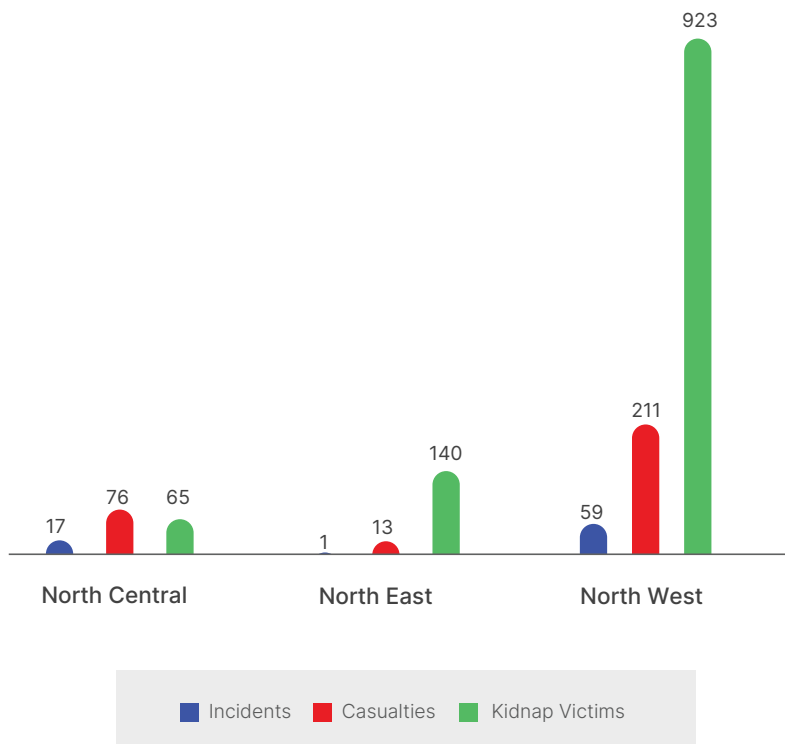


Figure 58: Banditry in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in Q1 2024: Most Affected States

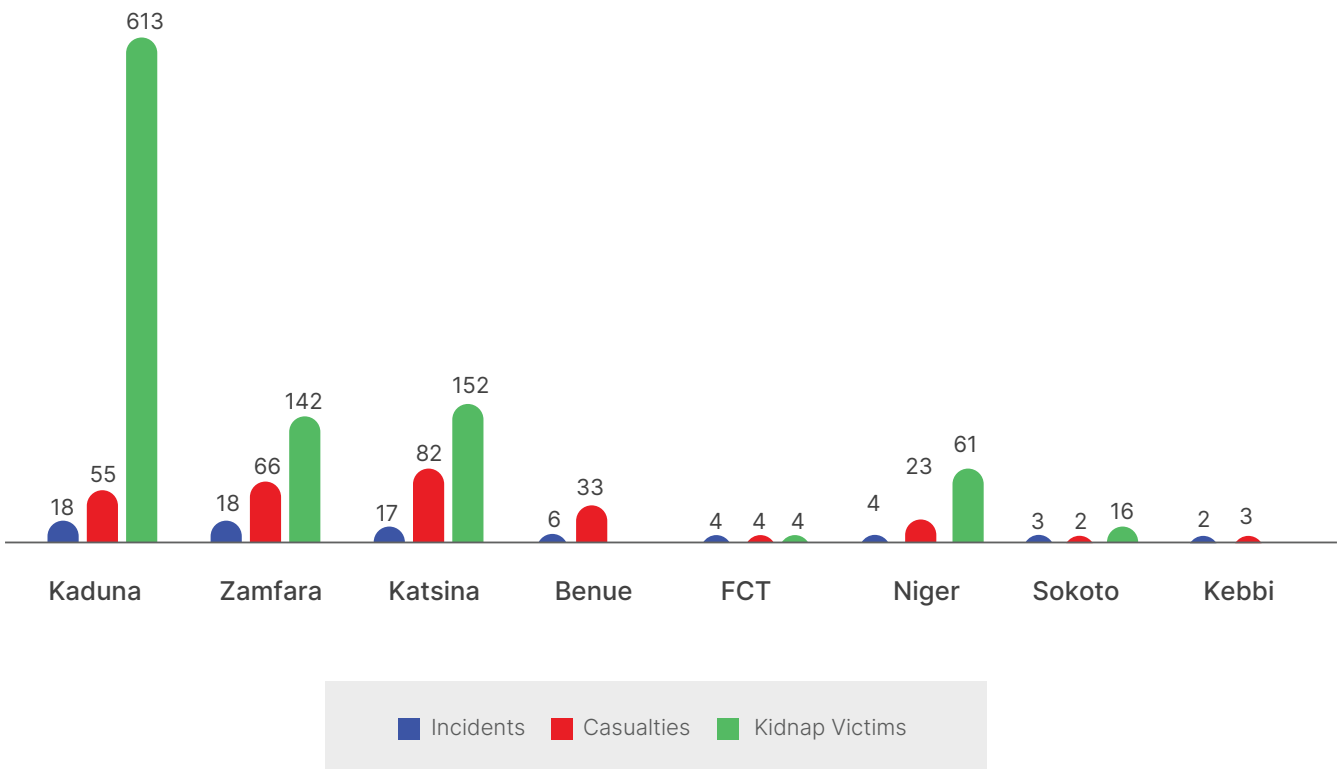


Figure 59: Banditry in Q1 2024: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Banditry in Q1 2024: Most Affected LGAs

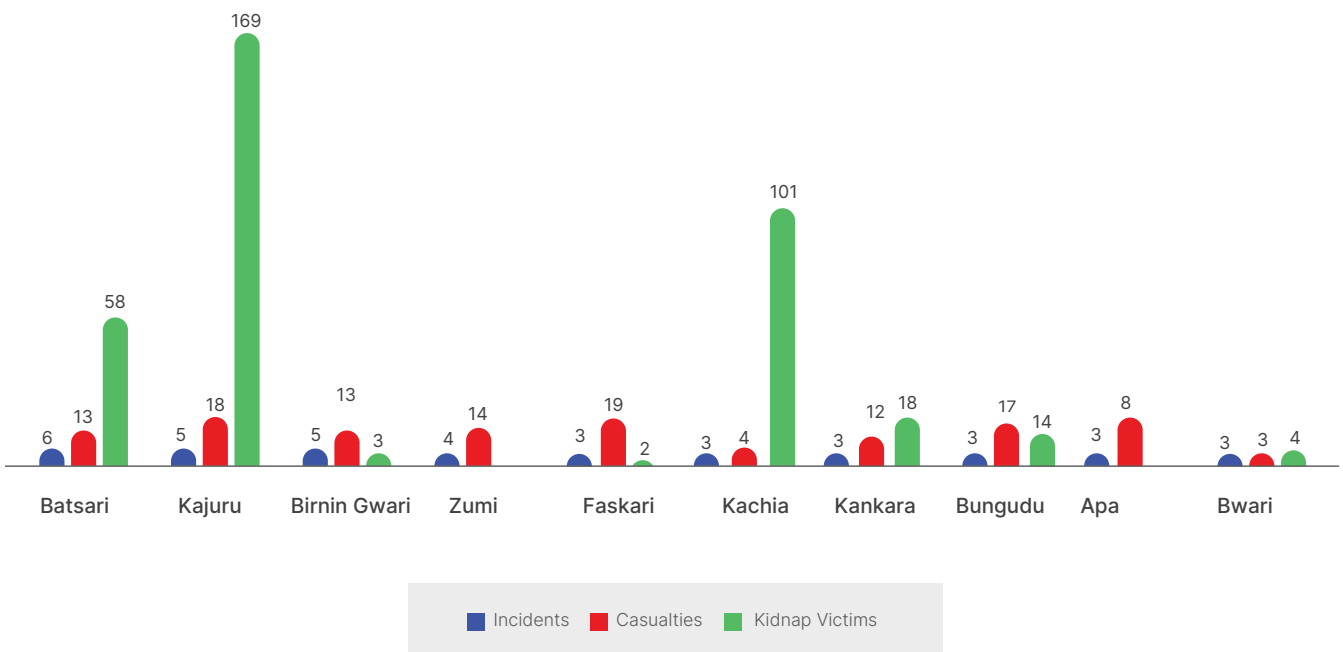


Figure 60: Banditry in Q1 2024: Most Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)





## 7.2.1. Interventions

The North West region has been the worst affected by banditry, and interventions have been predominant in the area. For instance, the Nigerian Army neutralised ten terrorists and arrested a bandit kingpin during operations in Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto and Katsina States<sup>58</sup>. With the slight drop in banditry, Governor Dikko Radda of Kaduna State has credited the Nigerian Army and other security agencies for their efforts in bringing relative peace to the state.<sup>59</sup>

## 7.2.2. Recommendations

i. Bandit activities have continued to occur in states with historical notoriety for such activities. There is a need to refocus attention on areas prone to

bandit attacks. This should encompass improved equipment, surveillance, and intelligence to address the dynamics of bandit activities.

- ii. Proactive and cooperative partnerships between the police and the community to aid intelligence gathering and apprehension of bandits are of utmost importance. There is a need for increased focus and resource allocation on strengthening past efforts such as Operation Puff Adder, which was created to dislodge bandits which are currently active in states that are bandit strongholds.
- iii. There is a need to address socio-economic factors that have continued to perpetuate the cycle of poverty that has subsequently fed into people's resort to acts of banditry. This can begin through good governance and the provision of dividends of democracy.

<sup>58</sup> Atungwu, M. (2024a, January 27). Troops neutralize 10, arrest bandit kingpin in N'West. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2024/01/27/troops-neutralize-10-arrest-bandit-kingpin-in-nwest/>

<sup>59</sup> Oyelude, O. (2024, February 13). Bandits kill nine in Katsina Market Attack. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/bandits-kill-nine-in-katsina-market-attack/>



### 7.3. Farmer-Herder Conflict



Casualties  
**18**



Incidents  
**310**

The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria has lingered for years at a great human and economic cost<sup>60</sup>. This conflict has continued into 2024. In the first quarter (January – March) of 2024, the conflict recorded 18 incidents, of which January peaked with 12 incidents, while February and March recorded four and two incidents, respectively. The incidents from the conflict within the period under review are a slight increase from the same period of 2023. However, comparing the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023 with the first quarter (Q1) of 2024, there has been a drop in incidents of farmer-herder conflict, with 25 incidents in Q4 2023 and 18 incidents in Q1 2024.

The region and state most affected by this have remained the North Central region and Plateau state. A stand-out incident occurred in Mangu Local

Government Area in Plateau State. Suspected armed herders attacked some communities and villages in the LGA, and burnt down several residential houses, business places and churches.<sup>61</sup> The incident recorded 249 casualties. Agatu Local Government Area in Benue State is the second most affected area, with four incidents. One of the incidents in Agatu LGA culminated in the death of four, including two soldiers who were stationed at the council area on a peacekeeping mission<sup>62</sup>. The actors in this conflict were mainly herders, farmers, and other civilians such as hoodlums. The projection from the 2023 analysis of farmer-herder clashes indicate that the conflict will continue in 2024, especially in the hotspots.

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison

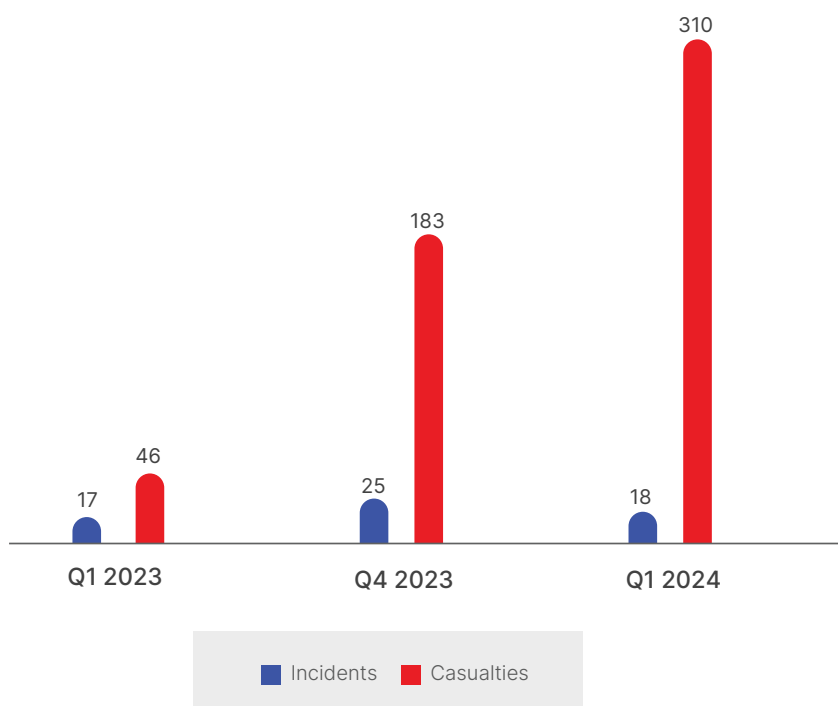


Figure 61: Farmer-Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

<sup>60</sup> Brottem, L. (2023, August). The growing complexity of farmer-herder conflict in west and Central Africa. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. <https://africacenter.org/publication/growing-complexity-farmer-herder-conflict-west-central-africa/>

<sup>62</sup> Abdullahi, M. (2024, January). "many killed, houses destroyed" in fresh attack on Plateau Community. The Cable. <https://www.thecable.ng/many-killed-houses-destroyed-in-fresh-attack-on-plateau-community/>

<sup>63</sup> Charles, J. (2024, January). Gunmen kill Four in Fresh Benue attack. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/gunmen-kill-four-in-fresh-benue-attack/>

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

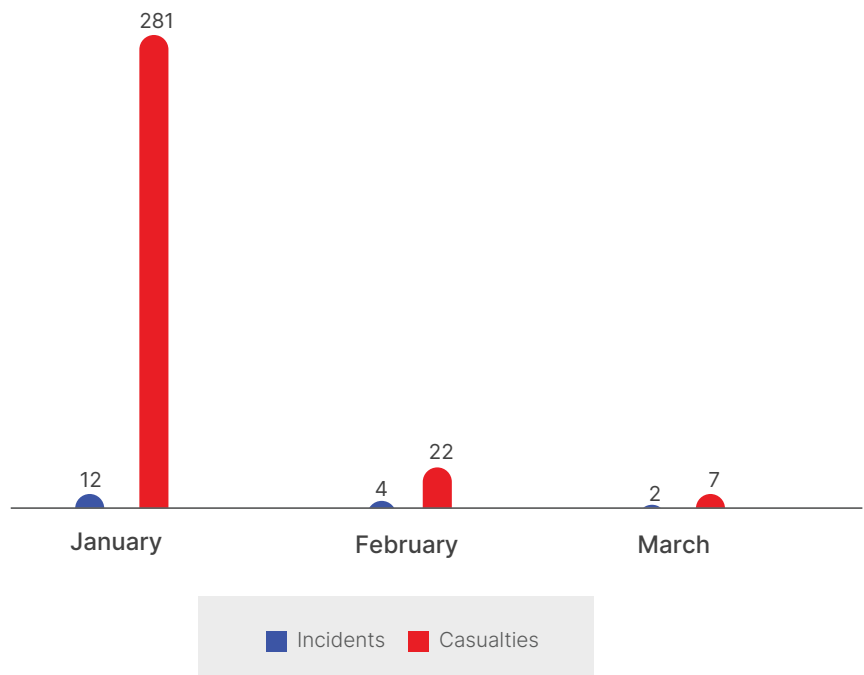


Figure 62: Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

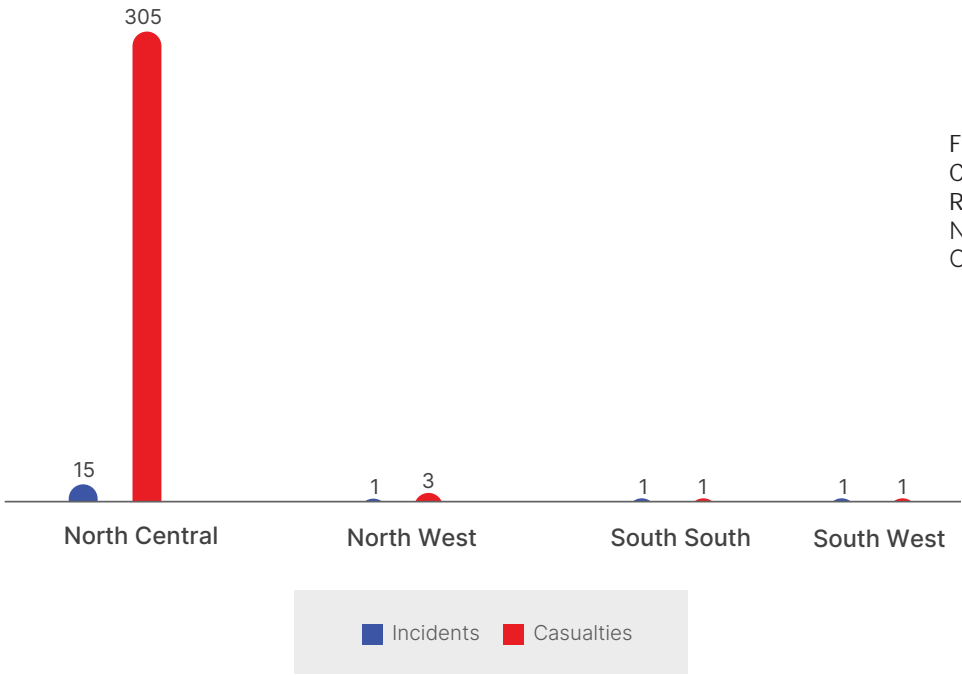


Figure 63: Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Affected States

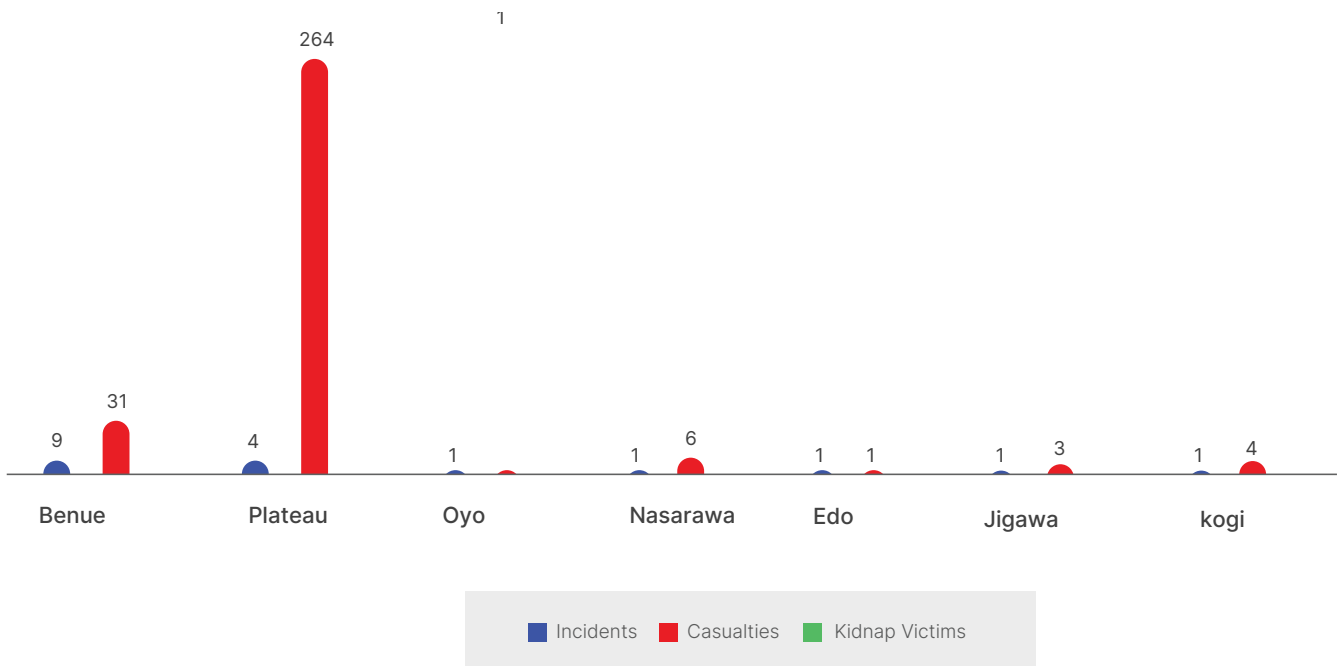


Figure 64: Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Farmer-Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

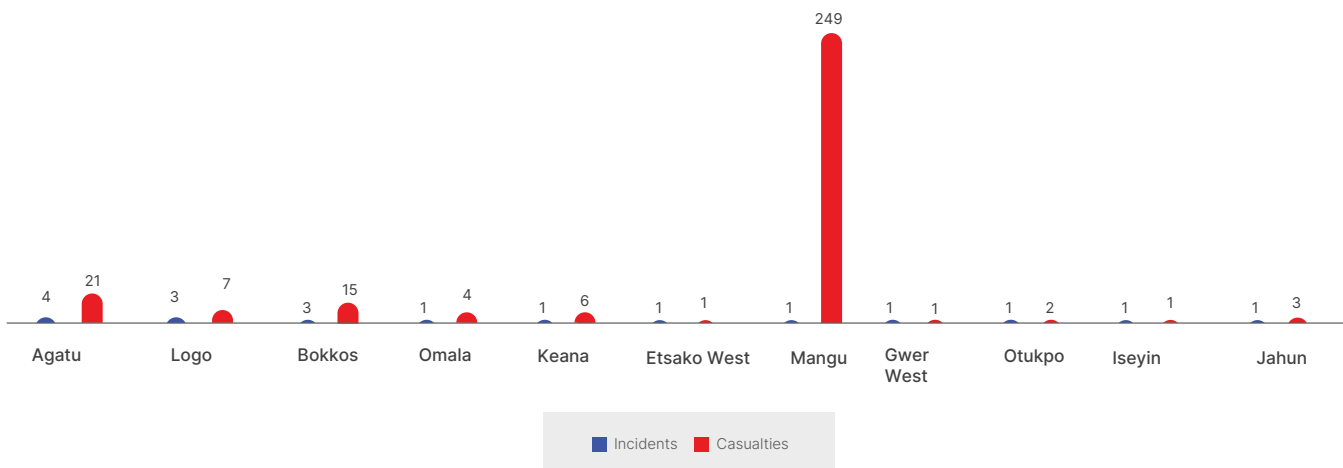


Figure 65: Farmer - Herder Conflict in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)



### 7.3.1. Interventions

The interventions to the farmer-herder conflict have largely been police response. However, community response has also been recorded. For instance, suspects involved in an attack in Oyo State were apprehended by villagers in the community and subsequently handed over to the police<sup>63</sup>. Also, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu expressed grave concern at the incessant loss of lives and farm produce from the conflict. In his address at an inauguration in Minna, Niger State, he identified the need to “reorient the herders and make provision for cattle rearing” while also issuing a two-week ultimatum to find a lasting solution to the conflict.<sup>64</sup>

### 7.3.2. Recommendations

- i. The federal government should increase the number of police officers deployed in impacted regions. There is also a need for advanced equipment and stronger local links to obtain better intelligence and rapid response.
- ii. The government should transform livestock agriculture in Nigeria to mitigate conflicts occasioned by the current practices that create tension between herders and communities.
- iii. The federal and state governments should promote discussion between herders and farmers by enhancing current state and local structures and supporting local peace efforts.

<sup>63</sup> Premium Times - Nigeria leading newspaper for News, investigations. (2024, January). <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/663665-663665herdsmen-invade-farm-in-oyo-kill-pastor.html>

<sup>64</sup> Angbulu, S. (2024a, March 12). Tinubu condemns farmer-herder clashes, unveils Niger Agric, airport projects. Punch Newspapers. <https://punchng.com/tinubu-condemns-farmer-herder-clashes-unveils-niger-agric-airport-projects/>



## 7.4. Kidnapping



Casualties

**17**



Kidnap Victims

**41**



Incidents

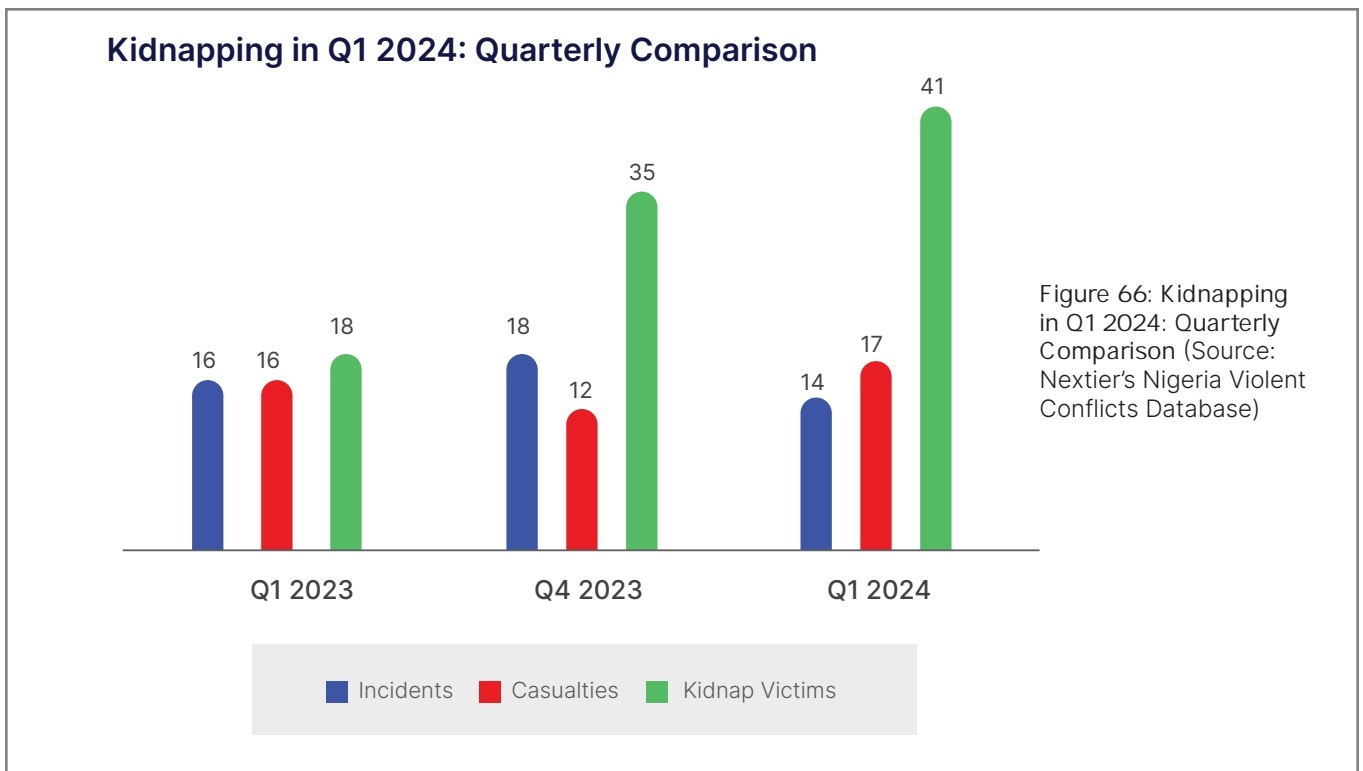
**14**

The first quarter of 2024 witnessed an increase in kidnap attacks compared to the first and last quarters of 2023. The economic and indiscriminate nature of kidnap attacks reveals that they may be tied directly to the state of the country's economy. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's inflation rate rose to 29.90 per cent in January from 28.92 per cent in December 2023<sup>65</sup>. These attacks were facilitated by the New Year's holiday in January. Travel routes were in use, providing ample opportunities for kidnappers. In January 2024, there were a total of 11 kidnap incidents, which led to 33 victims. With inter-state voyages grinding to a halt in February and March, these months witnessed significantly fewer incidents and casualties in kidnaps.

Nigeria's capital recorded the highest number of kidnap incidents and casualties, retaining its position from 2023. Since 2022, the FCT has been a kidnapping

hotspot. The reason is that victims from the FCT are more likely to afford to pay ransoms because of the disparity in income between them and victims in rural areas. In January, ten persons were abducted, and the kidnappers killed three of the victims and demanded a ransom of 700 million naira, 100 million for each of the victims left. Such high ransoms are not heard of in low-scale parts of the country<sup>66</sup>.

In 2023, Kuje, an area council in the Federal Capital Territory, had the highest number of kidnapping incidents. That seems to have changed in the first quarter of 2024, although the FCT retains its position. Bwari Area Council suffered a series of violent kidnapping attacks in the first quarter. Most of which involved hideous ransom demands and victim executions. Figure 70 shows the gap between the kidnap victims' count recorded in Bwari and other highlighted local government areas.



<sup>65</sup> National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). CPI and Inflation Report January 2024. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241453>

<sup>66</sup> Sunday, O. (2024, January 15). Tension in Abuja as kidnappers kill three of 10 victims, increase ransom to N700m. Daily Post Nigeria. <https://dailypost.ng/2024/01/15/tension-in-abuja-as-kidnappers-kill-three-of-10-victims-increase-ransom-to-n700m/>



### Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

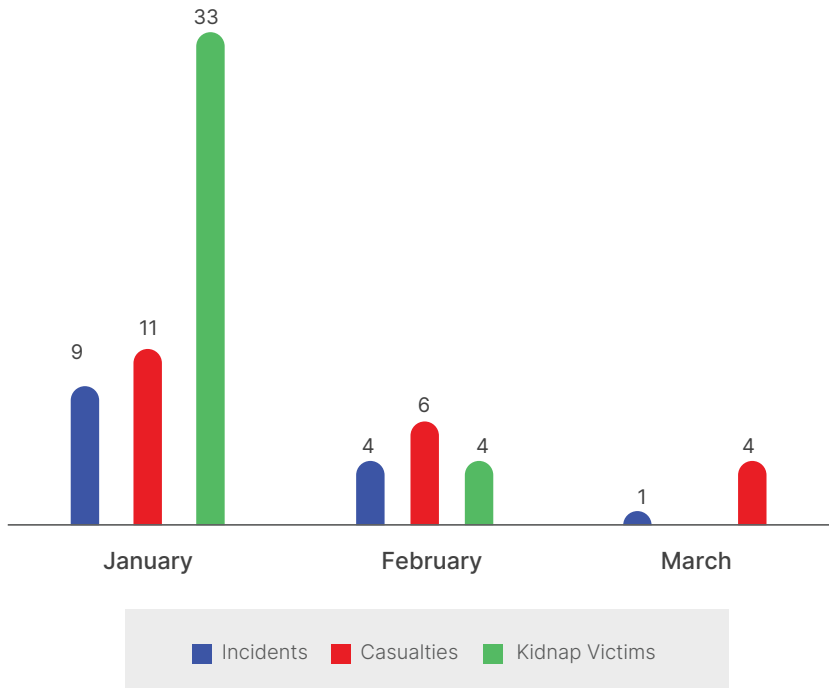


Figure 67: Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

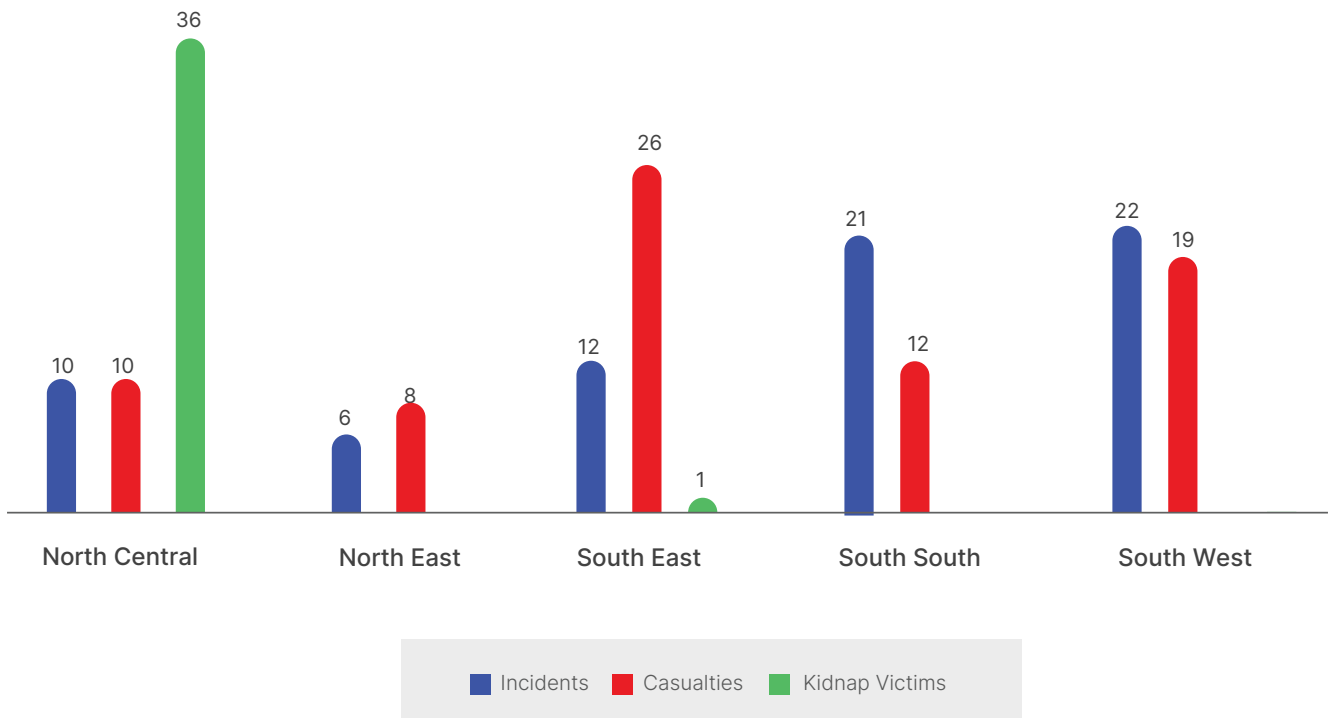


Figure 68: Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Affected States

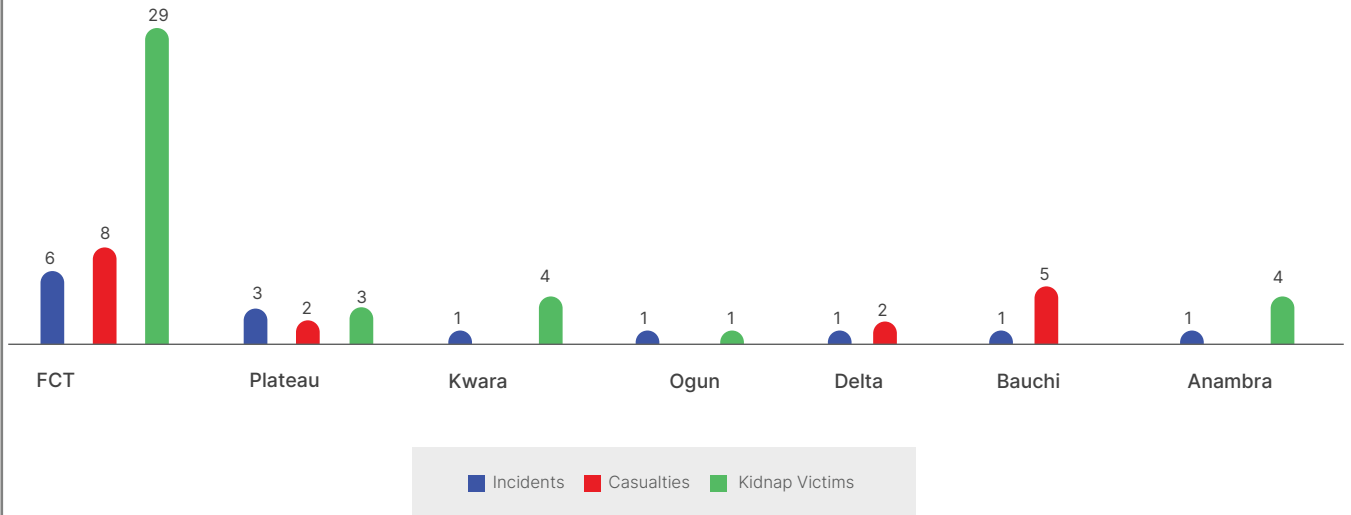


Figure 69: Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Most Affected States (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

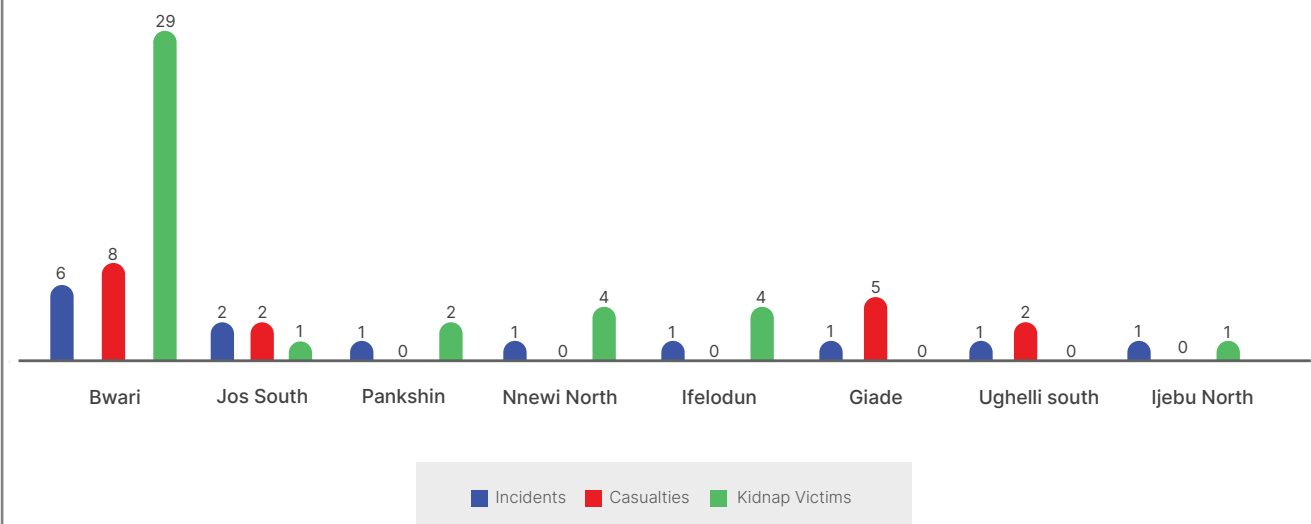


Figure 70: Kidnapping in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier’s Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)



### 7.4.1. Interventions:

Despite the peak in kidnap attacks in January 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu squarely emphasised that the government will not permit the payment of ransoms to kidnapers<sup>67</sup>. The consequence of this is that a large number of kidnap attacks are unreported because families of kidnap victims do not expect to receive much help from security. To set their loved ones free, they resort to crowdfunding mainly from social media, religious organisations and other persons willing to give.

Nigeria's ban on ransom payments<sup>68</sup>, mainly put in place to cut the funding flow of the perpetrators, has done little to resolve the kidnapping crisis. Such laws are bound to fail when there is an entanglement of familial sentiments. Military interventions were seen in the north in an attempt to recover school children from their captors.

### 7.4.2. Recommendations

- i. Technology and identification systems should be used in tracking and monitoring the operations of kidnapping gangs, especially when they contact the assailants' families. Such tracking information will prove helpful in eliminating kidnap gangs.
- ii. State-society collaborations on security will improve the likelihood of monitoring clandestine activities such as hideouts of kidnapping gangs. Collaborations between the state and society will also help improve communication between both affected sides, which can be directed towards ensuring safety.
- iii. Continued socio-economic pressure will lead to the emergence of more organised crimes such as kidnapping. Hence, more needs to be done to salvage the country from economic woes and poverty.

<sup>67</sup> Rukanga, B. (2024, March 14). Bola Tinubu: Nigeria won't pay a ransom to kaduna kidnapers. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68561870>

<sup>68</sup> Al Jazeera. (2022, April 27). Nigeria Outlaws Ransom Payments, Kidnap Now Punishable by Death. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/27/nigeria-outlaws-ransom-payments-abduction-punishable-by-death>



## 7.5. Cult Clashes



Casualties  
**36**



Incidents  
**14**

### Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison

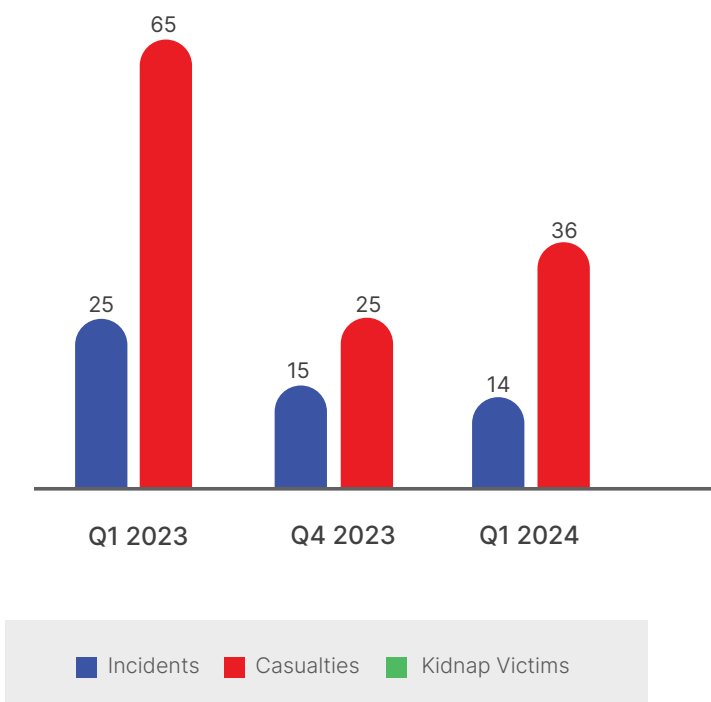


Figure 71: Cultism in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

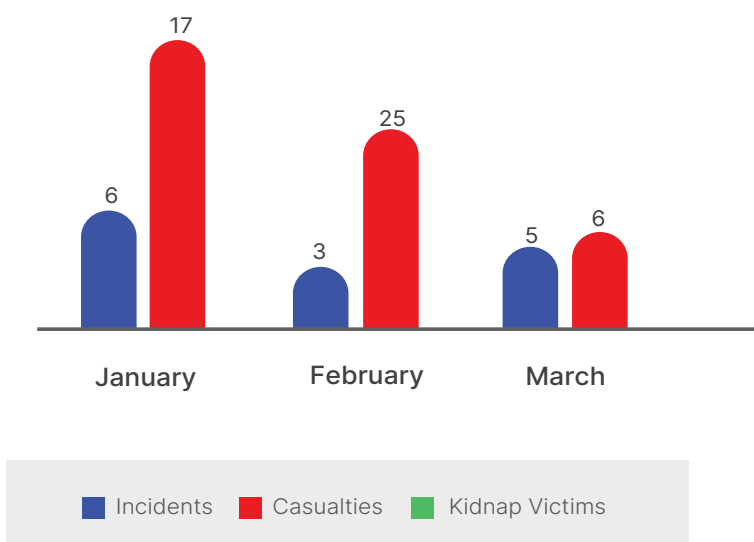


Figure 72: Cultism in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

According to the Nextier's Nigeria violent conflict database, the first quarter of 2023 is the highest in both cult incidents and casualties. The increase in early 2023 is mainly tied to the electoral tensions that permeated the country in that period. Aside from elections, no distinct trends depict how cult attacks may occur. Most cult attacks are reprisal attacks against opponent cult gangs. Because of this reason, cult attacks are unpredictable. Across multiple conflicts, January seems to be a heavy month. Holiday seasons provide open opportunities for conflict and violent incidents. According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database for 2023, the months with the highest number of conflict incidents were January, April, and September, famous for resting periods. South-South remains the region with the highest incidents and casualties of cult violence in Nigeria. A rating long held by the region. Cult groups permeate and run several communities in the region. In Edo and Delta States, cult clashes occur frequently.

Cult clashes in Rivers State extends beyond abrupt cult attacks. Cult-related conflicts are somewhat becoming a norm in the region, and this is a result of the vast network of cult groups that are resident in Rivers State. Benue State only falls behind Rivers state in the chart of affected states with one incident and seven casualties.

Ilesha in Osun, Etche in Rivers and Makurdi in Benue are the local government areas with the highest casualty rates from cult clashes. from cult clashes. Cult clashes at these levels can be communal<sup>69</sup> and sometimes translate into inter-communal crisis.

## 7.5.1. Interventions

The first quarter of 2024 witnessed several police interventions in the fight against cultism. There were violent clashes between the police and cultists and numerous arrests as well.

Within the first quarter of 2024, the federal government set up a special committee<sup>70</sup> to campaign against social vices in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in March. The committee is set to combat social vices such as cultism, cybercrimes, drugs, etc., through a comprehensive and collaborative approach.

In January, the Nigerian Police Force ordered the suspension of its community initiative<sup>71</sup>, the Police Campaign Against Cultism and Other Vices (POCACOV), to review the unit and enhance its functions. Since then, a new national coordinator has been appointed<sup>72</sup> as part of the unit's restructuring.

## 7.5.2. Recommendations

1. The Nigerian Police Force should be strengthened and enhanced to receive intel on cult activities. This will enable the force to combat cultism more effectively.
2. Existing laws and punishments should be implemented and strictly enforced on the perpetrators of cult-related offences. Federal and state governments should fill legislative gaps, if any exist, by creating legal and institutional frameworks that fight against cultism.
3. The state should to support anti-cult initiatives. Sensitisation campaigns should be used to spread the anti-cultism message. Such campaigns should mainly target young people to educate them on the dangers of joining cult gangs.
4. The federal and state governments should create courts purposefully for cult-related offences to avoid increasing the burden on the judiciary and ensure swift disbursement of judgments and sanctions. These courts should be specifically charged with the jurisdiction to try matters of cultism and impose punishments on those found guilty.
5. The establishment and implementation of state services such as counselling, financial assistance and access to mental health resources to assist vulnerable persons who would otherwise be targets of cult groups. These services can be offered in schools, hospitals and other social service outlets to ensure accessibility to persons in need.

<sup>69</sup> Cultists take over communities in Rivers - Vanguard News. (n.d.). <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/cultists-take-over-communities-in-rivers/>

<sup>70</sup> Erunke, J. (2024, March 14). FG sets up committee to end social vices in secondary, tertiary institutions. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/fg-sets-up-committee-to-end-social-vices-in-secondary-tertiary-institutions/>

<sup>71</sup> Ezeji, D. (2024, January 4). Police suspends anti-cult civilian body, pledges to revamp. The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News. <https://guardian.ng/news/police-suspends-anti-cult-civilian-body-pledges-to-revamp/#:~:text=The%20Nigeria%20Police%20Force%20has,of%20the%20Nigeria%20Police%20Force.>

<sup>72</sup> Olatunji, J. S. (2024, February 10). Insecurity: IGP approves CSP Okuwobi as New Pocacov National coordinator. Tribune Online. <https://tribuneonline.ng/insecurity-igp-approves-csp-okuwobi-as-new-pocacov-national-coordinator/>

### Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

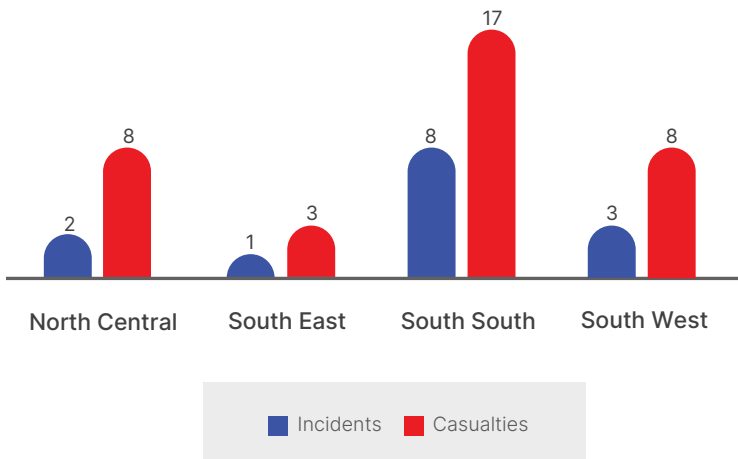


Figure 73: Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Affected States

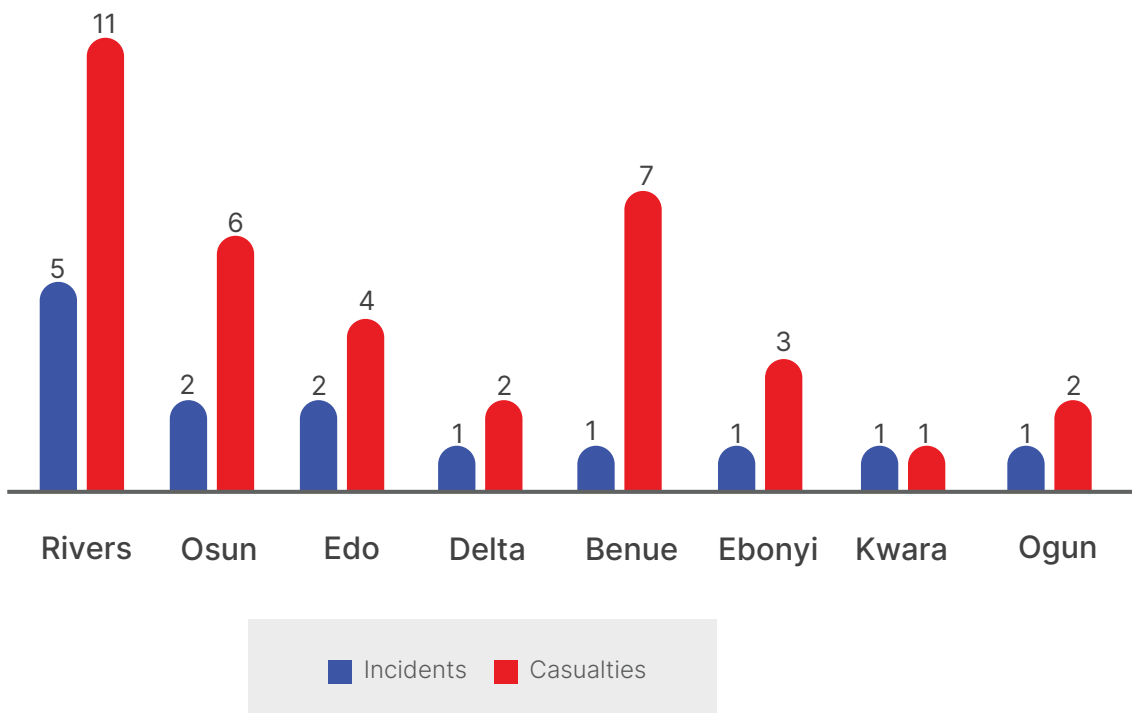


Figure 74: Cultism in Q1 2024: Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Cult Clashes in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

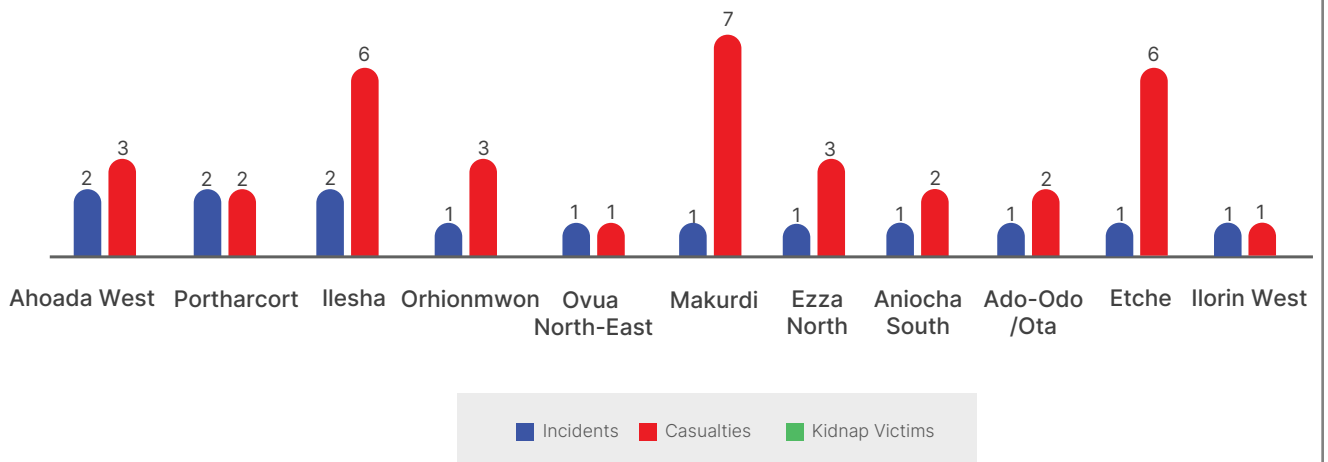


Figure 75: Cultism in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)







## 7.6. Terrorism



Casualties  
**46**



Kidnap Victims  
**3**



Incidents  
**12**

## Terrorism in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison

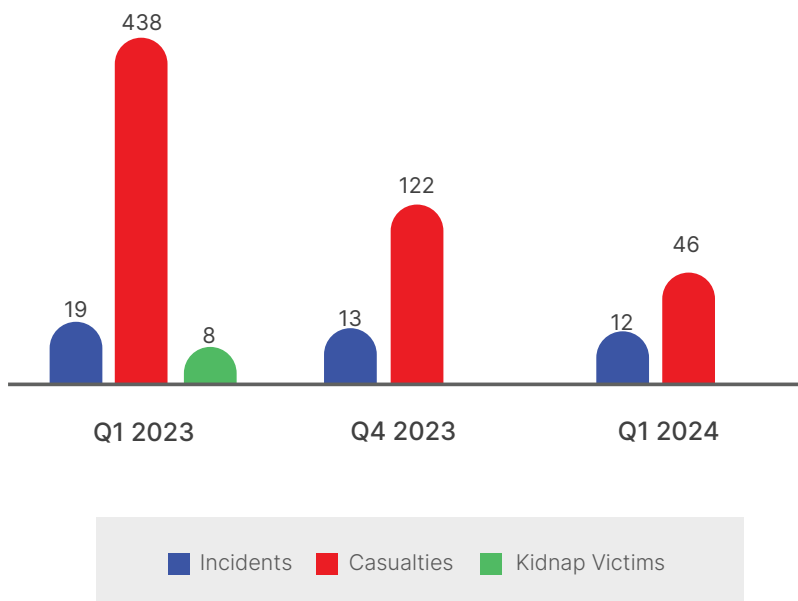


Figure 76: Terrorism in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

In Q1 2023, there were 19 terrorism-related incidents and 438 casualties. In contrast, 12 incidents and 46 casualties were recorded in Q1 2024, representing a significant reduction in the number of terrorism-related casualties. The most severe event in Q1 2024 occurred in January when Boko Haram terrorists attacked the Chibok Local Government Area in Borno State, resulting in 14 civilian casualties<sup>73</sup>. According to Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database, all terrorism-related incidents recorded in Q1 2024 took place in North East Nigeria, consistent with the data from Q1 2023. The significant decline in casualties from Q1 2023 to the same period in 2024 suggests that the security measures implemented in 2023 may have had a positive impact.

The majority of terrorism-related incidents and casualties in Q1 2024 occurred in January. Seven incidents resulting in 29 casualties were recorded in Borno State. In Yobe State, an attack<sup>74</sup> on the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Kwari, Geidam Local Government Area, caused the deaths of the pastor

and five church members. In February, there were two incidents, one each in Borno and Yobe States with a total of six casualties. The Borno incident involved an attack<sup>75</sup> on a police station in Gajiram, the administrative centre of Nganzai Local Government Area, where four police officers were killed. The Yobe incident saw two people murdered and three others abducted by Boko Haram insurgents in the Kukareta community<sup>76</sup>. In March, there were two recorded incidents, one in Borno, which involved counterattacks by the Nigerian military<sup>77</sup>, while the other incident in Yobe was an attack<sup>78</sup> on a military base, resulting in the death of one soldier.

The North East dominated the terrorism charts in Q1 2024, the same as Q1 2023 and Q4 2023. While the incidents and casualties recorded in Q1 2024 were a significant drop from figures recorded in Q1 2023, terrorism remains an issue in the North East. Efforts by the Nigerian army, comprising raids and direct combat, have aided in reducing terrorism incidents and casualties in the region.

<sup>73</sup> Igwe, I. (2024). Boko Haram attacks Borno's Chibok LG, kills 12. Retrieved from <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/01/03/boko-haram-attacks-bornos-chibok-ig-kills-12/>

<sup>74</sup> Egobiambu, E. (2024). Suspected Boko Haram insurgents kill pastor, five others in Yobe State. Retrieved from <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/01/05/suspected-boko-haram-insurgents-kill-pastor-five-others-in-yobe-state/>

<sup>75</sup> Abubakar, U. (2024). Terrorists invade Borno Police Station, kill Four. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/terrorists-invade-borno-police-station-kill-four/>

<sup>76</sup> (2024). Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/665676-boko-haram-insurgents-kill-two-civilians-abduct-three-others-in-yobe.html>

<sup>77</sup> Odeniyi, S. (2024b). Troops kill suicide bomber, two others in Sambisa Forest. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/troops-kill-suicide-bomber-two-others-in-sambisa-forest/>

<sup>78</sup> Abubakar, U. (2024b). Terrorists attack yobe military base, kill soldier. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/terrorists-attack-yobe-military-base-kill-soldier/>

### Terrorism in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

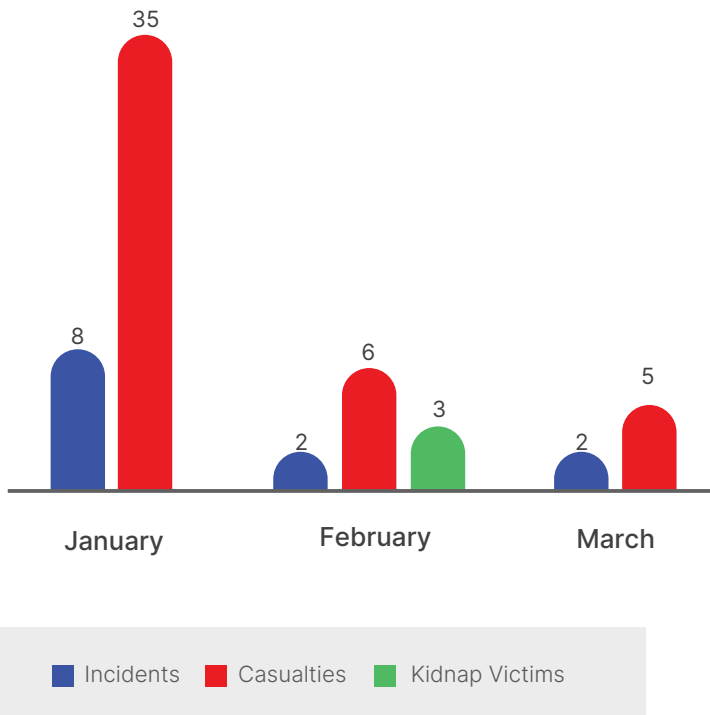


Figure 77: Terrorism in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

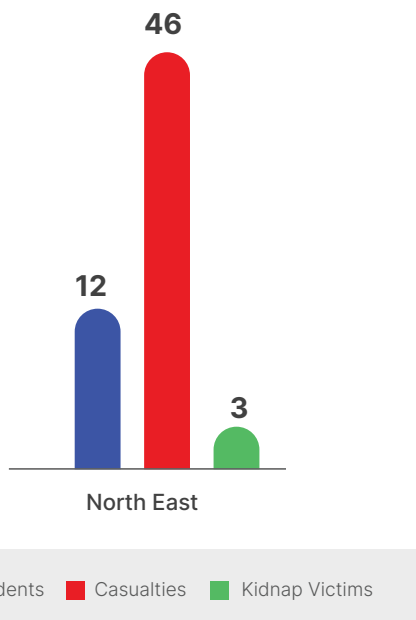


Figure 78: Terrorism in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in Q1 2024: Affected States

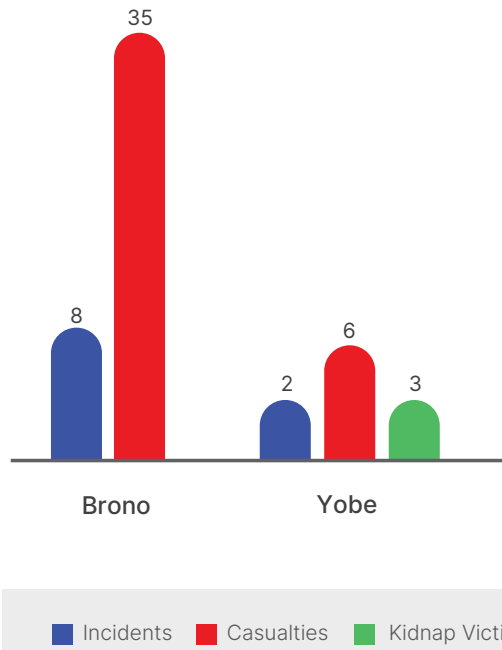


Figure 79: Terrorism in Q1 2024: Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Terrorism in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

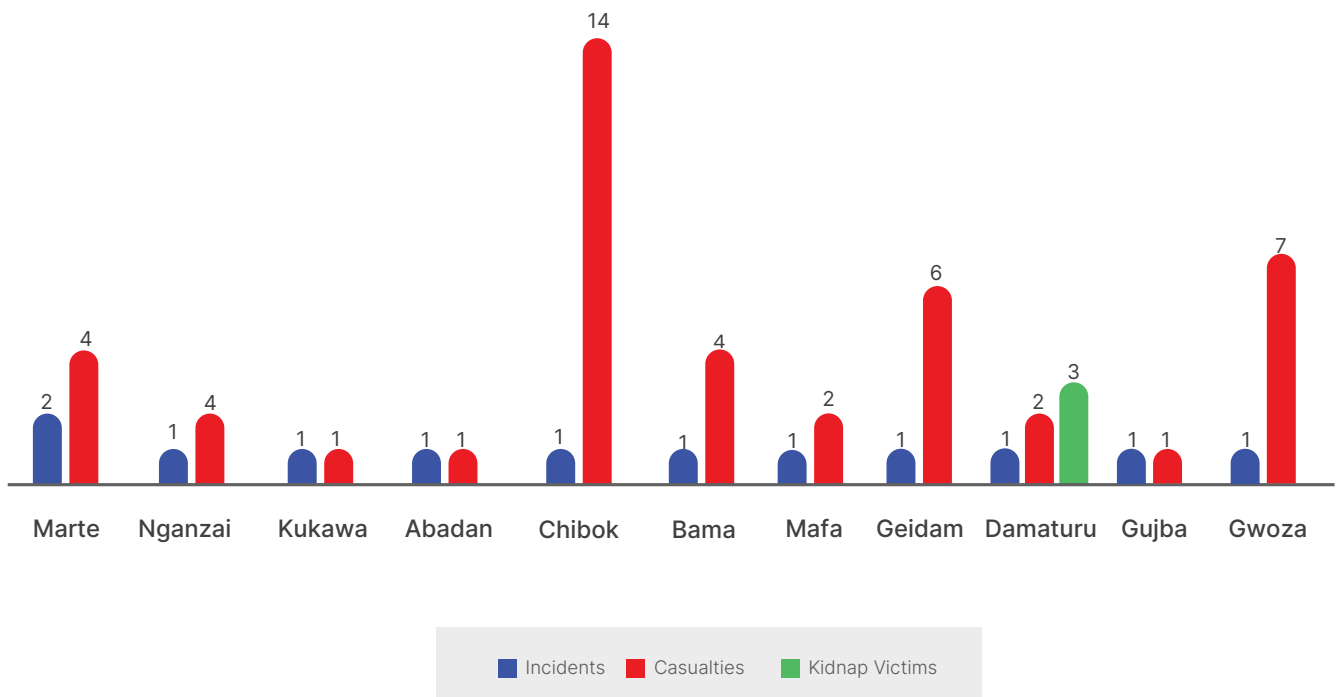


Figure 80: Terrorism in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

According to the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database, in Q1 2024, Borno and Yobe were the only states affected by terrorism. nine incidents and 37 casualties were recorded in Borno, three incidents and nine casualties with three kidnap victims were recorded in Yobe. Compared to Q1 2023, the affected states remain the same, signalling a need to intensify efforts and interventions in these two states.

### 7.6.1. Interventions

In Q1 2024, the Nigerian military achieved significant victories in its ongoing efforts to combat terrorism. One of the key operations was a series of offensive airstrikes, which effectively targeted and eliminated high-profile leaders of terrorist groups. The most notable success came when the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) carried out precise airstrikes that neutralised top leaders of the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), including its prominent leader, Ba'a Shuwa. The NAF Air Component of Operation Hadin Kai demonstrated its operational capability by targeting additional ISWAP commanders in other parts of Borno State. In Marte and Kukawa, three key ISWAP commanders Abou Maimuna, Abou Zahra, and 'Commander' Saleh were eliminated, alongside several other ISWAP fighters. These operations delivered a substantial blow to the terrorist group, disrupting its leadership structure and diminishing its capacity to conduct attacks.

The success of these interventions underscores the effectiveness of Nigeria's military strategy in addressing the persistent threat of terrorism. By focusing on intelligence-driven airstrikes and precision targeting, the Nigerian military has been able to weaken terrorist

networks and reduce their operational reach. These achievements are part of a broader effort to restore security and stability in regions afflicted by terrorism.

### 7.7.2. Recommendations

- i. The government must maintain and build upon its ongoing efforts to combat terrorism throughout 2024. This sustained focus is essential for ensuring national security and public safety.
- ii. Given that Borno and Yobe states have experienced high levels of terrorism-related activity, the government should allocate additional security resources to these areas. This should accompany a sustained commitment to eradicating terrorism, ensuring a comprehensive approach to restoring peace and stability in the region.
- iii. While intensifying efforts in recognised hotspots is important, the government must also implement preventive measures on a national scale. These measures will help reduce the risk of terrorism-related incidents in other regions and strengthen the country's overall resilience against terrorist threats.



## 7.7. Secessionism



Casualties  
**46**



Kidnap Victims  
**3**



Incidents  
**12**

In Q1 2024, six secession-related incidents resulted in 29 casualties, representing a 68.4 per cent decrease compared to Q1 2023. All secession-related incidents in Q1 2024 occurred in the South East, with the majority stemming from counter-military operations against secessionist activities. The Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database reports that the only secession-related incident in Q1 2024 happened in March, when armed hoodlums burnt a part of the Anaocha Local Government Headquarters in Neni, Anambra State, along with the Neni police station<sup>79</sup>. This shows a shift from Q1 2023, when most incidents were led by secession agitators, sustaining the Q4 2023 trend, where security forces were the main actors in the incidents<sup>80</sup>.

In Q1 2024, the highest number of secession-related incidents were recorded in March. The highest number of incidents and casualties in Q1 2023 were recorded in February, indicating that secession-related incidents do not follow a consistent trend. However, the reduction in the frequency of incidents from Q1 2023 to Q1 2024 and the increased actions of state actors point to an increased effort towards dismantling secessionist movements.

As recorded in Q1 2023, the South East remains the region with the highest number of secessionist agitations. This is due to the continued agitations of

the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), seeking a separate country (Biafra) and the continued detention of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Occasionally, their actions may be recorded in neighbouring South-south states<sup>81</sup>, but secessionist incidents undertaken by IPOB agitators are primarily recorded in the South East.

The most affected state in Q1 2024 is Imo State, recording four incidents and 27 casualties. The most notable of the incidents is the neutralisation<sup>82</sup> of 20 IPOB/ESN agitators and their command centre in Orsu LGA, Imo State. Additionally, the Nigerian Navy neutralised five IPOB agitators at Ejemekuru in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State, recovering three improvised explosive devices, one Toyota Highlander SUV, one Hilux vehicle, eight rounds of 7.62mm Special ammunition, among others, from their hideouts<sup>83</sup>. The incident in Anambra resulted from secessionist actors and no casualties were recorded, while the incident in Enugu resulted from security actors and two casualties were recorded<sup>84</sup>.

Orsu LGA recorded the highest number of incidents and casualties, all of which were a result of military and police interventions, neutralising violent secessionist agitators. The incident in Oguta was also a result of army interventions against separatist movements.

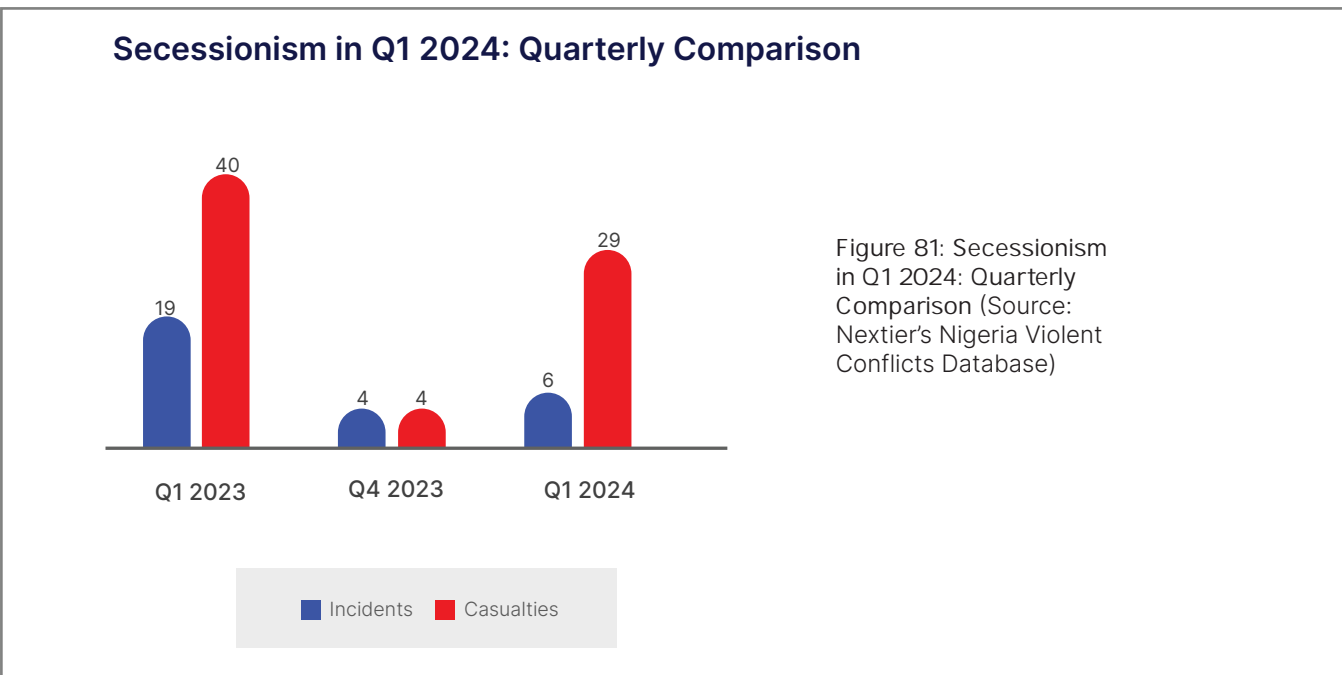


Figure 81: Secessionism in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

<sup>79</sup> Chukindi, J. (2024). Hoodlums attack Anambra LG secretariat, burn police station. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/28/hoodlums-attack-anambra-lg-secretariat-burn-police-station/>

<sup>80</sup> Iheaka, E. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/police-kill-esn-2nd-in-command-in-imo/>

<sup>81</sup> Osayande, M. (2023). Suspected IPOB members kill two Delta residents. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/suspected-ipob-members-kill-two-delta-residents/>

<sup>82</sup> Atungwu, M. (2024). Military neutralizes 20 IPOB/ESN terrorists. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/10/military-neutralizes-20-ipob-esn-terrorists/>

<sup>83</sup> Odeniyi, S. (2024a). Army, Navy kill Five Ipob fighters in Imo. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/army-navy-kill-five-ipob-fighters-in-imo/>

<sup>84</sup> Nseyen, N. (2024). Police raid IPOB/ESN hideout in Enugu, kill two. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/31/police-raid-ipob-esn-hideout-in-enugu-kill-two/>

### Secessionism in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

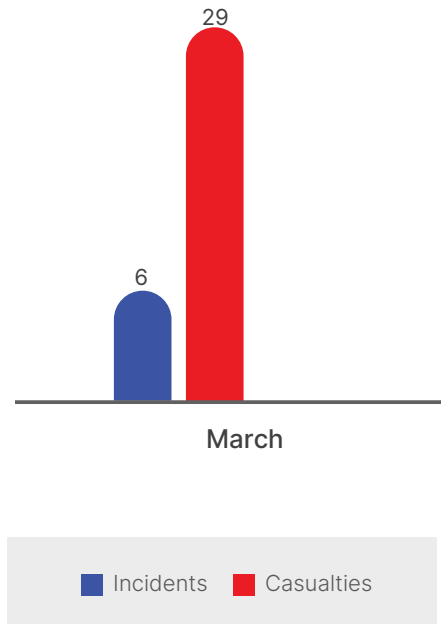


Figure 82: Secessionism in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Secessionism in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

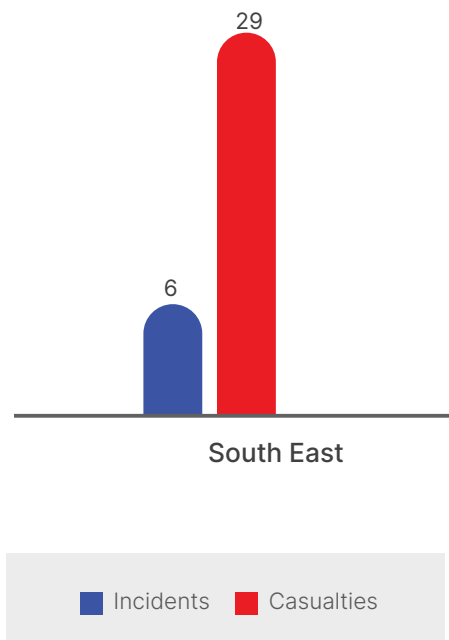


Figure 83: Secessionism in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## 7.7.1. Intervention

On March 2, 2024, the Nigerian Army conducted successful counter-terrorism operations against the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN). These operations, including neutralising militants in Imo and Abia States and disrupting a command centre, demonstrate the

Army's commitment to regional security. Collaboration with other security agencies highlights a coordinated approach to tackling violent secessionism, while intelligence-driven operations aim to diminish further the threat posed by IPOB/ESN.



### Secessionism in Q1 2024: Affected States

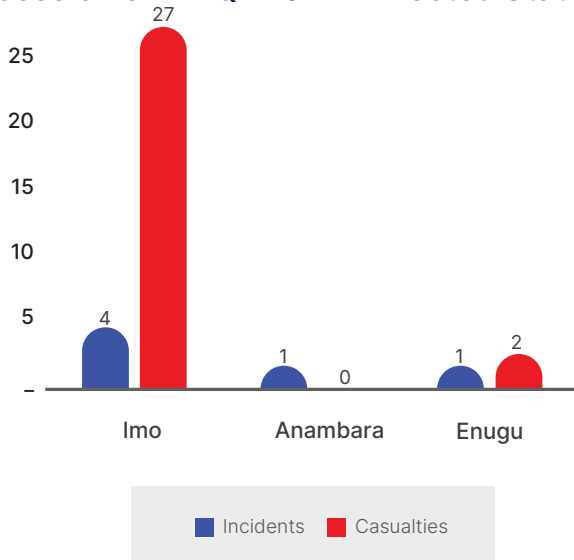


Figure 84: Secessionism in Q1 2024: Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Secessionism in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

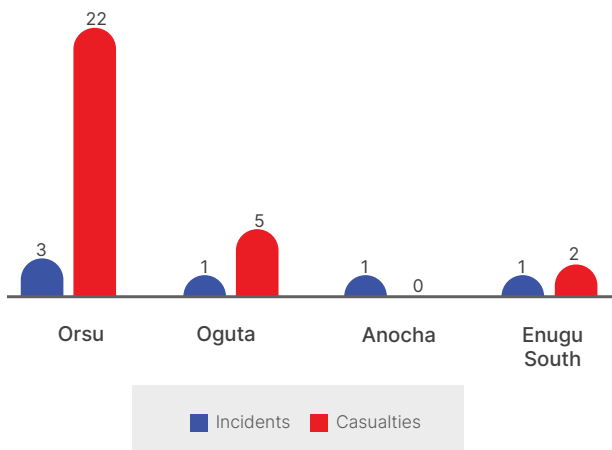


Figure 85: Secessionism in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## 7.7.2. Recommendations

- i. In Q1 2024, operations of the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Army significantly increased, indicating a more robust approach to maintaining national security and order. This trend must be sustained to ensure violent secessionist incidents remain low.
- ii. Security personnel should be professional in carrying out their duties to avoid human rights violations when apprehending individuals suspected of secessionist activities. The application of force must be proportional and in line with established legal frameworks. This approach is critical to upholding the rights and dignity of individuals and maintaining public trust in the country's security apparatus. Any deviation from lawful conduct during arrests or interrogations could have serious implications, including public outcry, legal repercussions, and damage to Nigeria's international reputation.
- iii. Security forces must strictly comply with legal guidelines and due process when carrying out their responsibilities. This is especially crucial in light of ongoing allegations of extrajudicial killings. Failure to adhere to lawful protocols not only undermines the rule of law but also risks escalating tensions and fostering resentment among the populace. To address these concerns, security agencies should conduct thorough investigations into misconduct claims and ensure transparency in their operations. This commitment to legal standards is essential to reinforcing public confidence and promoting a just and equitable society.



## 7.8. Group Violence



Casualties  
**46**



Kidnap Victims  
**3**



Incidents  
**12**

Compared to Q1 2023, group violence incidents and casualties dropped in Q1 2024. This 90.16 per cent decrease can be attributed to the driving forces of group violence in 2023. As 2023 was an election year, election violence heavily influenced group violence incidents across the country. According to primary data from the Nextier Nigerian Violent Conflict Database, in January 2024, one person was ambushed and killed by a mob who suspected him of providing firearms to “terrorists” in Ngurap community, Plateau State. He was targeted and killed on his way to deliver arms. Additionally, in March, a van loaded with arms belonging to the Fulani ethnic group in Bokkos LGA was intercepted and burned by a mob in a bypass encircling Batura Kampani village. Soldiers around that axis swiftly intervened and rescued two of the injured victims, and one other was killed. The most notable case of group violence in Q1 2024 occurred in Okuama community, Delta State, where 15 military personnel were killed during a communal clash.

Three incidents and five casualties were recorded in January 2024, an uptick from December Q4 2023, which recorded no incidents. The incidents mainly resulted from community members carrying out jungle justice on suspects. In Ado Ekiti, hoodlums destroyed<sup>85</sup> some facilities at the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, attacked some doctors, and stole a corpse. Fortunately, no lives were lost during the attack. March recorded two incidents but had the highest casualties in Q1 2024. This is largely due to the attack on soldiers in Okuama community, Delta State, which recorded 15

casualties. Additionally, during a raid at Area 1 motor park, Abuja, officials of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) were attacked by hoodlums, resulting in one death.

The highest number of group violence-related casualties in Q1 2024 was recorded in the South-South region, sustaining the trend from Q4 2023. However, against the one incident recorded in the South-South in Q4 2023, the one incident recorded indicates a decrease in incidents. Four incidents and five casualties were documented in the North Central, specifically in Plateau State and the Federal Capital Territory.

Despite one incident, Delta State was the most affected in Q1 2024. Anambra, the most affected state in Q4 2023, did not make it to the charts in Q1 2024. Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory were some of the most affected states in both Q4 2023 and Q1 2024, signalling a need for sustained efforts and interventions against group violence in the states.

Due to the attack on the soldiers of the Nigerian Army in the Okuama community, Ughelli South was the most affected local government area in Q1 2024. Bokkos and Langtang South in Plateau State were also affected mostly due to jungle justice. Notably, the most affected local government areas in Q1 2024 did not make the charts in Q4 2023. The continued change in affected areas signals a need to change the mindset toward group violence nationwide.

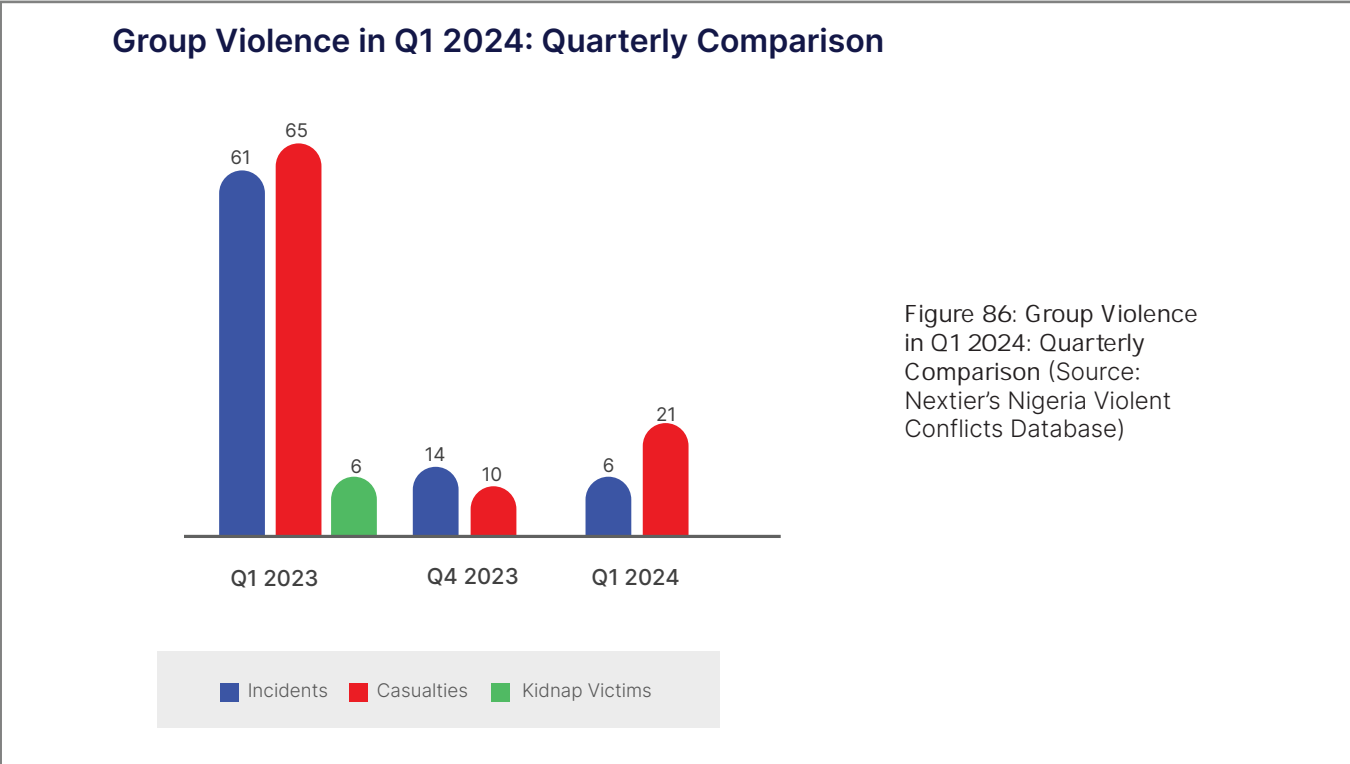


Figure 86: Group Violence in Q1 2024: Quarterly Comparison (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

<sup>85</sup> Ani, E. (2024). Hoodlums attack doctors at Eksuth, steal corpse. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2024/01/15/hoodlums-attack-doctors-at-eksuth-steal-corpse/>

### Group Violence in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview

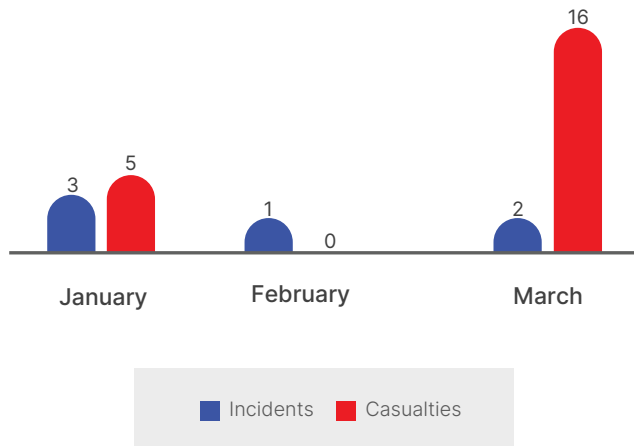


Figure 87: Group Violence in Q1 2024: Monthly Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Group Violence in Q1 2024: Regional Overview

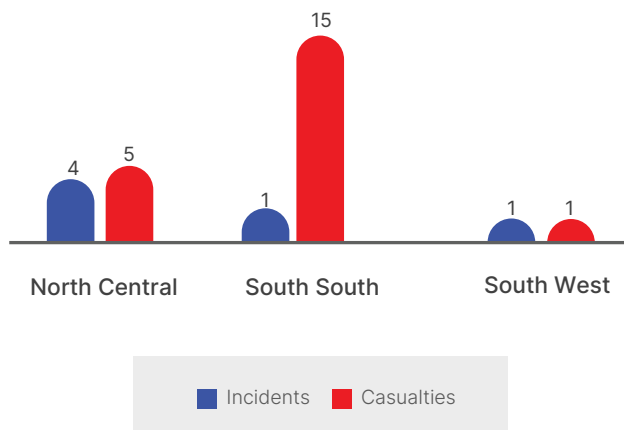


Figure 88: Group Violence in Q1 2024: Regional Overview (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### Group Violence in Q1 2024: Most Affected States

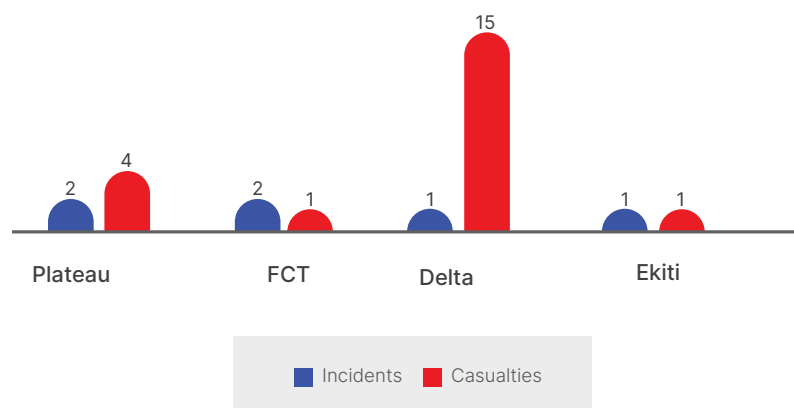


Figure 89: Group Violence in Q1 2024: Affected States (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

## Group Violence in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs

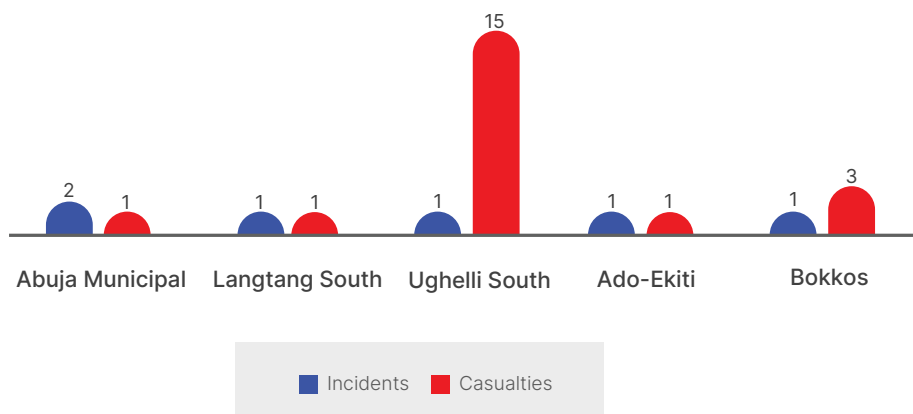


Figure 90: Group Violence in Q1 2024: Affected LGAs (Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database)

### 7.8.1. Interventions

In the past, government authorities have prioritised rapid response strategies to manage incidents of group violence, such as riots and unrest. This approach has historically included measures like imposing curfews in regions where violence has occurred to maintain public safety and restore order. In response to nationwide protests announced by the Nigeria Labour Congress due to economic pressures in Q1 2024, the Nigeria Police Force took proactive measures to deploy anti-riot operatives in strategic locations. These deployments were designed to maintain public safety and prevent potential violence during the demonstrations. By placing officers in key areas, authorities aimed to quickly address any signs of unrest and provide a visible presence that can deter disruptive behaviour.

Local law enforcement agencies implemented pre-emptive measures to ensure peace and order ahead of planned protests in specific regions. For example, the Oyo State Police Command warned against peace breaches during protests in Ibadan, the state's capital, emphasising that disruptive behaviour would not be tolerated. This pre-emptive communication aligns with broader efforts to manage protests in regions like Kano and Minna, where public discontent grew due to economic hardships, including fuel subsidy removal, rising food prices, and increased living costs in Q1 2024. These strategies and measures demonstrate a comprehensive approach to managing group violence and unrest. By combining rapid response, regulatory coordination, strategic police deployment, and pre-emptive communication, authorities ensure minimising the risk of violence.

### 7.8.2. Recommendations

i. It is crucial for government agencies like the

National Orientation Agency (NOA) to initiate a comprehensive, country-wide campaign focused on reducing mob violence and promoting peaceful conflict resolution. This campaign should aim to shift public perception and foster a nationwide mindset that rejects violence in all its forms. It can involve educational programs, community outreach, media partnerships, and collaboration with local leaders and influencers to disseminate the message effectively. By adopting a multi-faceted approach, the campaign can help instil values of tolerance, non-violence, and respect for the rule of law across diverse communities.

- ii. In light of the most significant instance of group violence in Q1 2024, the assault on security personnel, it is imperative to address the growing trend of civilian-led attacks on state security agents. This development underscores the need to examine and rectify underlying issues in civil-security relations. The government should initiate a thorough investigation into the causes of such violence and work toward institutionalising a systemic shift that fosters better communication and trust between civilians and security/legal repercussions, and damage to Nigeria's international reputation.
- iii. Security forces must strictly comply with legal guidelines and due process when carrying out their responsibilities. This is especially crucial in light of ongoing allegations of extrajudicial killings. Failure to adhere to lawful protocols not only undermines the rule of law but also risks escalating tensions and fostering resentment among the populace. To address these concerns, security agencies should conduct thorough investigations into misconduct claims and ensure transparency in their operations. This commitment to legal standards is essential to reinforcing public confidence and promoting a just and equitable society.

# 8.0. Implications

The implications of violent conflict in Nigeria have been profound and multifaceted. The impact extends beyond the immediate human tragedy, wreaking havoc on essential services and jeopardising the health, safety, and livelihoods of millions. The toll manifests in myriad ways, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, widening socio-economic disparities, and hindering the nation's development.

**Economic consequences:** Nigeria's ongoing violent conflicts have inflicted severe wounds on the nation's economy, impacting livelihoods, infrastructure, and overall development. Disruptions caused by violence – displacement, property destruction, and travel anxieties – have crippled various economic activities. The country is estimated to lose \$12 billion annually due to violent conflicts<sup>86</sup>. As farmers and herders clash, communities are forced out of their land and sources of livelihood, exacerbating food insecurity and overall economic activity.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, the uncertainty and instability created by conflict discourage domestic and foreign investors. Businesses are understandably hesitant to operate in volatile regions, fearing property damage, disruptions to operations, and even potential kidnappings. The lack of investment stifles economic growth and limits job creation. This is reflected in the rising unemployment rate reported by the National Bureau of Statistics in Q3 2023.<sup>88</sup> The rate soared to 5.0%, a significant increase from the previous quarter. This surge in unemployment, coupled with economic hardship, deepens existing inequalities, pushing marginalised communities further into deprivation. The economic turmoil itself can become a catalyst for further violence. Poverty, unemployment, and a lack of opportunities deepen existing grievances and also create fertile ground for radicalisation and social unrest. As poverty and unemployment rates soar, disenfranchised youth become susceptible to extremist ideologies, further destabilising and stalling economic recovery efforts.

The crisis is compounded by damage to public infrastructure, including bridges, schools, and hospitals. Beyond the immediate physical destruction, this disruption affects transportation, impedes market access, and compromises the delivery of essential

services, exacerbating the socio-economic strain on affected communities. The increasing insecurity in the country is causing a diversion of resources from critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and social welfare towards more spending on defence. For instance, in recent years, there has been a notable increase in the allocation of funds for defence. The defence budget has risen from ₦1.2 trillion in 2022 to ₦1.383 trillion in 2023 and ₦1.647 trillion in 2024.<sup>89</sup> However, despite these efforts, the situation continues deteriorating, underscoring the complex and entrenched nature of the nation's security challenges.

**Education under threat:** The greatest tragedy of violent conflict in Nigeria lies in the scars it inflicts on its most vulnerable citizens – children. The surge in student kidnappings has exacerbated concerns about the state of education in the country<sup>90</sup>. Over the past decade, these abductions have become too common. Often, large-scale and brazen are hindering access to education for a nation already home to one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children globally. Schools have been forced to close, jeopardising the education of millions of children. The North West region, encompassing states like Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna, has witnessed a surge in these abductions. Disrupting children's fundamental right to education can affect their chances for a brighter future. The trauma experienced by children exposed to violence can have long-lasting consequences, impacting their mental and emotional well-being and hindering their ability to learn and thrive. This jeopardises the child's future and casts a long shadow on the nation's future.

The consequences of these abductions transcend beyond mere security concerns. Educational enrolment and participation have reduced in the wake of these abductions. Seventy per cent of children in Nigeria cannot read with comprehension or solve basic math problems, according to Key data on early childhood education in Nigeria<sup>91</sup>. Only 49 per cent and 55 per cent of children achieve basic proficiency in literacy and numeracy, respectively. Monetary poverty is still widespread in the country, with half of the population living below the national poverty line being children (50%). The child Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)<sup>92</sup> indicates that poverty rates are higher

<sup>86</sup> Agesan, B. (2020, August 27). Nigeria loses \$12bn to conflict, violence yearly – USAID. Business Day.

<sup>87</sup> Anyanwu, N. (2024). Broken Links: Assessing the Drivers of Food Insecurity in Nigeria. Policy Weekly, Volume 9 Issue 12. Nextier.

<sup>88</sup> National Bureau of Statistics. (2024, February). Nigeria Labour Force Statistics Report Q3 2023.

<sup>89</sup> PLAC. (2004). Security Budget Rises, Yet Insecurity Worsens. <https://placng.org/Legist/security-budget-rises-yet-insecurity-worsens/>

<sup>90</sup> Anyanwu, N. (2024). Can Nigeria Protect its Most Vulnerable? Policy Weekly, Volume 9 Issue 20. Nextier.

<sup>91</sup> Fatunmole, M. (2023, April 20). Key data on early childhood education in Nigeria. International Centre for Investigative Reporting.

<sup>92</sup> National Bureau of Statistics. (2022, February). Nigeria Launches its Most Extensive National Measure of Multidimensional Poverty.

in the North East and North West areas, where 90% of children are poor, and lower in the South East and South West regions, with poverty rates of 74% and 65.1%, respectively. Girls, often the worst affected, already face unique challenges. Barriers such as child marriage, sexual violence, a patriarchal system, and acute poverty hinder female children from accessing quality education.

**Humanitarian Toll:** While fatalities have decreased in 2023, the overall toll remains significant. The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement of people. Many families have lost their homes, their primary source of income, and access to basic necessities like clean water, food, and sanitation. This can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and push families deeper into poverty. According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), an estimated 2.3 million persons are internally displaced as of June 2023<sup>93</sup>. This represents families seeking refuge in often overcrowded camps or unfamiliar places. The conflict has also had a devastating impact on essential services. Healthcare facilities have been damaged or destroyed, hindering access to critical medical care.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis placed a tremendous strain on the capacity of both humanitarian organisations and the host communities. Overstretched resources meant that basic needs such as shelter, sanitation, and education could not always be adequately met. Moreover, delivering aid in conflict-affected environments remained challenging due to access constraints and security risks. Movement restrictions imposed by authorities, fear of attacks by armed groups, and damaged infrastructure contributed to the access gap. The ultimate consequence of these challenges is borne by the most vulnerable populations caught in the crossfire of conflict. The humanitarian response's delays, disruptions, and limited capacity directly translate into increased suffering for conflict-affected populations.

**Women and Other Vulnerable Groups:** Conflict disproportionately affected women and other vulnerable groups, exacerbating gender-based violence, exploitation, and displacement. Limited access to essential services and livelihood opportunities further marginalised these groups, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability. The resulting gender disparities undermined efforts to promote gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights protection in conflict-affected contexts. "One of the everyday risks posed to womanhood

in Nigeria is the risk of being used as a weapon of violence by various non-state armed groups operating across Nigeria"<sup>94</sup>. In the period under review, the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database recorded approximately 20 incidents affecting women and children.

**Political Instability and Democracy:** The 2023 federal elections were a critical moment for Nigeria's democratic history. However, they occurred amidst overlapping security crises. Attacks on polling stations disrupted the voting process, leading to loss of lives and damage to infrastructure. The violence not only threatened individual safety but also eroded public trust in the electoral system, raising concerns about the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral outcomes. The security threats were exacerbated by a highly polarised political and media environment, fuelling public discourse along partisan lines. The traditional and social media became echo chambers, deepening existing ethnic, religious, and regional divisions and impeding national cohesion and unity efforts.

**Weakening Institutions:** Prolonged insecurity erodes trust in government institutions. When the state fails to protect citizens, it risks losing legitimacy. As a consequence, ethnic militias have emerged, operating in various regions. These armed groups, primarily operating along ethnic or regional lines, provide security for their communities in the face of perceived threats. However, their presence further fuels tensions and distrust between different groups. With increasing and prolonged recognition and without proper training and oversights, these vigilantes are undergoing a troubling transformation into cultlike gangs, exacerbating existing dangers rather than mitigating them<sup>95</sup>.

**Rural Push, Urban Pull:** Forced migration from rural to urban areas has become increasingly common as individuals flee violence and instability in search of safety and livelihood opportunities<sup>96</sup>. Many rural communities become ghost towns with residents leaving, and fields remain unplanted. The displaced residents, however, find little solace in the cities. Urban areas struggle to cope with this influx. Existing infrastructure – housing, sanitation, healthcare – is stretched thin, leading to overcrowding and declining living standards. These newly arrived migrants, often with limited resources and skills relevant to urban jobs, face an uphill battle to find a secure livelihood. This vicious cycle continues as long as rural violence persists.

<sup>93</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), Sep 19 2023. DTM Nigeria — North-east — Mobility Tracking Round 45 IDP and Returnee Atlas (June 2023). IOM, Nigeria.

<sup>94</sup> Okoli, C and Nwokolo, N. (2024). International Women's Day and the Risks of Womanhood in Nigeria. Policy Weekly, Volume 9 Issue 19. Nextier

<sup>95</sup> Biem, J. and Aniunoh, O. (2024). From Protectors to Predators: The Dark Side of Vigilantism in Nigeria. Policy Weekly, Volume 9 Issue 18. Nextier

<sup>96</sup> Maduagwu, K. (2024). Rural Push, Urban Pull: A Nightmare for Big Cities. Policy Weekly, Volume 9 Issue 14. Nextier.



## 9.0. Conclusions

Addressing violent conflicts in Nigeria requires tailor-made solutions to the distinct forms of the crises. It may also require holistic and multi-dimensional approaches that recognise the similarities of the various violent conflicts in the country. Such efforts should capture all levels of government, including security organisations, communities, and other relevant stakeholders. Priorities should be placed on addressing the root causes of the issues rather than band-aid or knee-jerk responses that are often reactionary, hence not contributing to preventing the losses or engendering durable peace and stability.

Over the years, Nigeria has struggled with the same insecurity problems within its borders. These violent conflicts have taken deep roots over time, proving more complex to resolve and escalating as the economy depreciates. Poverty, political tensions and constant

bouts of violence by non-state actors and insurgent groups in various parts of the nation heighten Nigeria's security challenges. The path to building the country we want to live in is thorny as it requires diverse solutions for Nigeria's myriad problems. Inclusive nationwide conversations, policy creation and implementation, and an extensive defence structure are a good starting point.

Furthermore, there is a need to pay attention to political and socio-economic factors that undergird Nigeria's security challenges. These challenges contribute to some of Nigeria's criminality, social injustice and grievance issues. They serve as reinforcing variables to complex security issues. Therefore, identifying and addressing these underlying factors will better position the government to resolve more obvious risks and problems residents face.





## 10.0. About Nextier

Nextier is an international development consulting firm based in Nigeria, the USA, Liberia, the United Kingdom, and Kenya. The firm uses evidence-based research and policy to develop and build knowledge and skills for governing society. Our work aims to solve complex development challenges, particularly in public service, energy, security, peace, governance, health and economic growth. Our engagement covers policy research, financial advisory, monitoring and evaluation, peacebuilding, violent conflict tracking, agribusiness, investment promotion, sustainable energy, energy efficiency, access, and market entry. Others include technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, political economy analysis, electricity market advisory, security and political risk advisory, resource conflict, security sector reforms, public discourse, and project and programme management.

In the last ten years, Nextier has worked with various clients and partners, including government institutions, local and international development partners, academia, and the broader policy community, providing tailored advisory and expertise to an avalanche of development concerns. Some of our clients include the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office,

UNICEF, IOM, Norwegian Refugee, European Union, USAID, USDOS, World Bank, British Council, MacArthur Foundation, Catholic Relief Services, African Climate Foundation, Central Bank of Nigeria, Global Rights, Facility for Oil Sector Reform, GIZ, CARE International, and many others.

In terms of organisational experience, Nextier has worked on several projects related to data collection, management, and use in the development sector in Africa. The team has monitored and tracked Nigeria's violent conflict trends for three years and managed the most robust violent conflict database. Nextier has also conducted evaluations of data systems and processes for various clients and provided technical assistance to help clients strengthen their data collection and analysis capabilities. We work closely with stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organisations, and government agencies, to identify ways to promote more inclusive data practices. As leaders in Nigeria's policy community, we have experience conducting stakeholder consultations, analysing data and information, and making evidence-based recommendations for improving networks and initiatives.

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