



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

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ANAMBRA

**A Barometer of Party Fortunes, Federal Might
and Personalities**

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CDD-West Africa Briefing Paper

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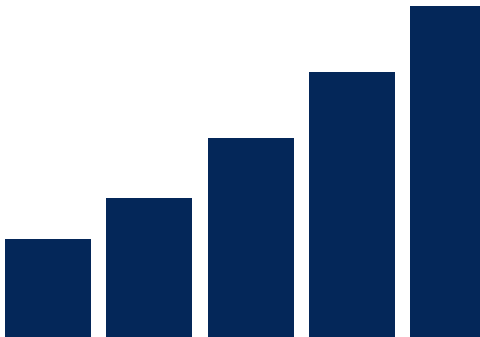
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OCTOBER 2025



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Map of Anambra State



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Anambra governorship election stands as one of Nigeria's most significant subnational contests, not only for its implications on the state but also for what it reveals about the current state of Nigeria's democracy. It is a crucial test of the current strength of political parties and the credibility of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under its new leadership.

Institutions

INEC has declared itself ready for the election and has promised to improve on the poor logistics that marred the 2021 Anambra governorship poll. The Commission has matched its words with visible action, including early release of the final list of candidates, increased engagement with transport unions for material distribution, and the training of ad-hoc staff ahead of schedule. It has also concluded the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).

However, observations from the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise and the August 2025 bye-election raise serious concerns. Many registration centres were overcrowded, with reports of malfunctioning BVAS machines and shortages of registration materials. These logistical lapses suggest that institutional weaknesses persist and may likely play out in the November 8 election. INEC also faces a deep trust deficit in the Southeast, where the region's botched 2023 presidential aspirations have left lingering resentment. Many voters continue to associate that failure with the breakdown of INEC's Result Viewing (IReV) portal, which they perceive as evidence of institutional bias. This perception, if unaddressed, could depress turnout and heighten post-election tensions.

The judiciary remains critical to electoral credibility, both before and after polling. While fewer pre-election disputes have occurred in 2025 bye-elections compared to 2021, the Labour Party's leadership crisis between Julius Abure and Lamidi Apapa produced parallel primaries and pending litigation. Swift, transparent rulings will be essential to prevent ballot uncertainty and ensure post-election legitimacy.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has partnered with INEC to promote voter education and peaceful participation, but outreach remains minimal, especially in rural areas and hotspots of insecurity. Field findings show widespread apathy and distrust; many citizens still believe their votes do not count. We are not satisfied with the current level of voter education, which, if unaddressed, could significantly reduce turnout to less than 20% in the November 8 off-cycle governorship election.

Regulatory bodies, such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), have failed to act on campaign



restrictions and the controversial ₦50 million billboard levy, which disadvantages opposition candidates.

Insecurity

The security situation remains fragile with potential flashpoints in areas such as Ihiala, Nnewi South, Orumba South, Ogbaru, and border communities, including Azia and Amorka. Despite ongoing efforts like 'Operation Udo Ka' and 'Udo Gachi', reports of sporadic violence and activities by criminal groups exploiting separatist sentiments continue.

Security personnel often avoid full uniform deployment in volatile regions, highlighting persistent vulnerabilities. Concerns are also rising about vigilante groups such as Agunchemba and the Special Anti-Tout Squad (SASA), locally called 'Ndi Aka Odo', which may incite violence or intimidation during elections. The attack on PDP candidate Dr Jude Ezenwafor in July 2025 has heightened concerns about candidate safety. These conditions risk lowering voter turnout, which was just 10 per cent in 2021, the lowest nationwide. Security agencies, through the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security, must ensure neutrality in hotspots like Ihiala, Nnewi South, and Orumba South.

Incumbency - State and Federal Influence

Governor Charles Soludo benefits from incumbency advantages, including control of local institutions, access to state media, and a loyal bureaucratic structure. Interlocutors raised concerns about restrictions such as the ₦50 million billboard levy imposed by the Anambra State Signage and Advertisement Agency, which is widely viewed as punitive and beyond its legal authority. Opposition candidates report limited access to state media and public spaces, alongside alleged intimidation by the Agunchemba vigilante group, which has been used to control campaign activity.

At the local level, traditional rulers and town unions have come under subtle pressure to align with the ruling All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), reinforcing a long-standing culture of political patronage. Local administrative elites, especially in rural areas, have become instruments of mobilisation for incumbents, often blurring the line between community governance and partisan politics. These actions collectively undermine electoral competitiveness and heighten fears of institutional bias ahead of the 2025 polls.

At the federal level, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's strategy appears pragmatic rather than partisan. Rather than directly backing the APC candidate, Nicholas Ukachukwu, Tinubu seems to be co-opting APGA and its structures in Anambra,



possibly to consolidate influence ahead of the 2027 general elections. This dynamic highlights a broader pattern in Nigerian politics, where individual ambition and strategic alliance-building often supersede party loyalty.

Intra- and Inter-Party Contestation

This election is a practical test of the health of Nigeria's political parties. It exposes a worrying crisis within the opposition and the broader weakening of internal democracy across party lines. The PDP, once the dominant force in Anambra, has lost significant influence after years of internal division and elite defections. The Labour Party, buoyed by Peter Obi's 2023 momentum, remains fractured by leadership disputes and lacks a robust grassroots structure. Even opposition parties increasingly seek accommodation with the ruling APC at the centre as a means of survival, further blurring ideological distinctions and reducing the competitiveness of the political field.

Meanwhile, the APC itself faces internal contradictions. Despite being the ruling party nationally, the Anambra campaign has suffered from limited federal support, reflecting how the 2027 presidential ambition of Ahmed Bola Tinubu is reshaping tactical alliances and the APC's subnational election strategies.

Overall, the 2025 race demonstrates how Nigeria's party system continues to revolve around personalities rather than platforms, with minimal investment in institutional strengthening or voter engagement.

Influence of Personalities

Anambra politics remains personality-driven. Governor Soludo projects a technocratic image, while Nicholas Ukachukwu relies on philanthropic and religious networks. Peter Obi's moral authority continues to energise the Labour Party's base, though it has not translated into a strong party organisation. Endorsements from traditional, religious, and federal figures rather than party manifestos continue to shape perceptions of credibility and electability.

Identity and Zoning

The longstanding Catholic-Anglican divide continues to influence political endorsement patterns, with many Anglican leaders perceiving the state as disproportionately controlled by Catholics, given Soludo's background and the dominance of Catholic networks in public life. Such perceptions subtly shape campaign rhetoric, clerical endorsements, and voter alignment across communities.

Zoning remains a stabilising informal institution. Since 2003, the governorship of



Anambra has rotated among its three senatorial districts: Central, North, and South. With the South currently in power, all major 2025 contenders also hail from the South, effectively neutralising zoning as a divisive issue. However, intra-zonal rivalries are pronounced, especially between the Aguata bloc (Soludo's base) and the Nnewi axis, home to both Ukachukwu (APC) and Moghalu (Labour Party). Nnewi's historical lack of a governor fuels strong local sentiment, but having two candidates from the same zone risks splitting its vote.

Information Disorder and Voter Apathy

The information environment is deeply polluted. False stories about BVAS pre-loading, collusion between INEC staff, and candidate disqualifications are circulating widely on WhatsApp and Facebook. Without active counter-messaging by INEC, such misinformation reinforces voter cynicism.

Inclusivity

Women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) remain largely excluded from the 2025 Anambra governorship race. Of the sixteen registered candidates, only two are women, both from minor parties, and three are under the age of 40, highlighting a persistent dominance of older male elites in the political space. The CVR exercise and the August 2025 bye-election have demonstrated that INEC has not improved polling accessibility for PWDs. Many registration platforms and polling units remain physically inaccessible, with inadequate ramps, signage, and assistance for registrants and voters with mobility or visual impairments. This failure undermines INEC's inclusivity commitments under the Electoral Act and its own framework on access for PWDs.

To support a credible and peaceful Anambra governorship election on 8th November 2025, stakeholders must prioritise early deployment of logistics, robust grassroots voter education, real-time misinformation control, and transparent result transmission. Equally important is the proactive management of election security—identifying flashpoints, deploying rapid response teams, and ensuring the safety of voters, INEC staff, and materials. INEC, security agencies, political actors, the media, and community leaders must each fulfil their roles with professionalism and neutrality to build public trust and guarantee inclusive, violence-free participation.

INTRODUCTION

Anambra State is located in southeastern Nigeria, with 21 local government areas, 326 wards, and 5,270 polling units. As of September 6, 2025, the state has 2,802,790 registered voters.¹ Delta State borders it to the west (across the Niger River), Kogi State to the northwest, Enugu State to the east, and Imo State to the south. It has a land mass of 4887 km².² There are conflicting figures on Anambra's population, but as of 2019, it is densely populated with an estimated 5,599,910 residents.³ The state's economy is among the most vibrant in the region, anchored by commerce and light industry. Onitsha, a riverport city on the Niger, hosts the continent's largest open-air market by size and trade volume, making Anambra a central commercial hub that attracts traders from across West Africa.⁴ Nnewi, another key city, is nicknamed the "Taiwan of Nigeria" for its concentration of indigenous manufacturing firms (notably automotive parts and consumer goods). Rural sectors contribute to agriculture (palm oil, cassava, rice) in the Anambra River basin, though the economy is primarily driven by trade and entrepreneurship.⁵ It is the homeland of notable Igbo leaders (such as the late Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu) and has been at the forefront of Igbo socio-political movements. Politically, the state holds significance as the stronghold of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the only state where this regional party has continuously held the governorship since 2006.⁶

The Anambra off-cycle governorship election occurs at a time when there is debate over whether Nigeria is moving towards a one-party state, amid early campaigns for the 2027 general elections and shifting coalitions at both the state and federal levels. This makes it a barometer of Nigeria's evolving political landscape. It provides valuable insights into the early stages of the strength, appeal, and strategy of major political players ahead of the 2027 general election, especially concerning the presidency.

[1] Independent National Electoral Commission. 2.8 Million Voters Cleared for Anambra Governorship Election, 171 Groups Seek Party Registration. INEC Nigeria, September 5, 2025. <https://www.inecnigeria.org/news-letters/2-8-million-voters-cleared-for-anambra-governorship-election-171-groups-seek-party-registration/>

[2] National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria. Statistical Year Book 2010. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010. PDF file. Accessed October 4, 2025. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/Statistical%20Year%20Book%202010.pdf>

[3] National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria. Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2020. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics, 2020. PDF file. Accessed October 4, 2025. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1241121>

[4] Echezona Okafor, "Onitsha: A City Blessed In Commerce, New Telegraph, June 7, 2023, <https://newtelegraphng.com/onitsha-a-city-blessed-in-commerce/>

[5] Awachie, J.E.B., and G.M.H. Ezenwaji. "Seminar on River Basin Management and Fisheries: The Anambra Basin. Hydrobiology/Fisheries Research Unit, Department of Zoology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Accessed October 4, 2025. <https://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/CDrom/aquaculture/a0844t/docrep/008/AD793B/AD793B07.htm>.

[6] Anambra State in Nigerian Politics. ThisDayLive, November 11, 2021. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2021/11/11/anambra-state-in-nigerian-politics/>



At the forefront is the Labour Party (LP), riding on the national popularity of its leading figure, Peter Obi. The LP performed impressively in the 2023 general elections, signalling a significant disruption of the status quo, especially in the southeast. However, its record in the five post-2023 off-cycle governorship elections has not matched its earlier successes. Anambra, however, presents a unique opportunity, being Obi's home state and part of a region where the All Progressives Congress (APC) did not even secure 25 per cent of the vote in the 2023 presidential election.⁷

Meanwhile, the APC, led nationally by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, regards Anambra as a strategic foothold in its broader effort to expand into the Southeast, where it has long struggled to establish a presence. Its performance in Anambra will be assessed within the context of President Tinubu's wider strategy for 2027, particularly in securing Southern support in what promises to be a high-stakes North-South political contest,⁸ assuming a strong northern candidate emerges from another political party to challenge the APC. The current economic challenges, inflation, and widespread discontent stemming from the 2023 elections will influence voters' views of the APC and its candidate in the November 8 Anambra governorship election.

The presidency announced the appointment of Professor Joash Ojo Amupitan, a Kogi-born lawyer, as the new substantive Chairman. This brief transitional phase comes at a sensitive moment for the Commission, ahead of the November 8, 2025, Anambra governorship election. The leadership change places INEC's credibility and independence under fresh public scrutiny, particularly amid concerns that recent appointments may tilt the institution's perceived neutrality. How the new leadership navigates this election will play a crucial role in shaping public confidence in Nigeria's electoral process and in reaffirming INEC's commitment to transparency and impartiality.

This analysis draws on key informant interviews and stakeholder dialogue sessions conducted across Anambra's three geopolitical zones. It also incorporates official party statements, findings from observer groups, past and present election reports, and comprehensive media tracking.

^[7] Anambra State 2023 Presidential Election Results: APC Receives 5,111 Votes. ThisDayLive, February 28, 2023. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2023/02/28/inec-declares-obi-winner-of-presidential-election-in-anambra/>

^[8] Ajayi, Omeiza. Tinubu Approves Blueprint for S'East's 'Political Emancipation' Vanguard, December 7, 2023. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/tinubu-approves-blueprint-for-seasts-political-emancipation/>

HISTORY OF ANAMBRA ELECTIONS IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Anambra State's governorship elections from 1999 to 2021 reflect a volatile mix of political clientelism (godfatherism), judicial interventions, and the rise of regional party dominance.⁹ The 1999 election marked Nigeria's return to civilian rule. Chinwoke Mbadinuju of the PDP won, but unpaid salaries, strikes, and growing insecurity plagued his term. The influence of political godfathers, especially Emeka Ofor, overshadowed his governance.¹⁰ By 2003, Mbadinuju lost PDP's backing, reflecting early signs of elite patronage and instability in the state's politics.¹¹

The 2003 election saw Chris Ngige (PDP) declared the winner over Peter Obi (APGA), but the vote was marred by rigging. Ngige's fallout with his godfather, Chris Uba, led to his abduction in a high-profile power tussle.¹² Despite governance achievements, his legitimacy was challenged in court. After years of legal battles, the Court of Appeal ruled in 2006 that Peter Obi had rightfully won, unseating Ngige and shifting Anambra's elections off the national cycle.¹³ Obi's tenure emphasised fiscal discipline and reform, but political instability persisted. He was impeached in late 2006, and Virginia Etiaba, his deputy, became Nigeria's first female governor.¹⁴ Her symbolic leadership ended when the court nullified Obi's impeachment in early 2007, and she handed back power honourably.

In 2007, Andy Uba (PDP) was elected, but the Supreme Court invalidated his 17-day tenure because Obi's original term had not expired. The court reinstated Obi, exposing flaws in Nigeria's electoral management and reinforcing the judiciary's central role in Anambra politics.¹⁵ The 2010 election was the first full off-cycle poll. Obi (APGA) defeated Charles Soludo (PDP), securing a second term and stabilising APGA as a dominant regional force. His re-election broke the cycle of interrupted tenures, demonstrating voter support for continuity of leadership.¹⁶ In 2014, Willie Obiano (APGA) won, defeating Tony Nwoye (PDP) and Chris Ngige (APC). His win upheld the informal zoning arrangement by bringing power to Anambra North and

^[9] Centre for Democracy and Development. CDD Decry Godfatherism in Governance of Anambra." The Guardian Nigeria, November 18, 2017. <https://guardian.ng/news/cdd-decry-godfatherism-in-governance-of-anambra/>

^[10] Onyekwelu, Ebuka. "How Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju Exemplified the Vanity of Power." West African Pilot News, December 1, 2023. <https://www.westafricanpilotnews.com/2023/12/01/chinwoke-mbadinuju/>

^[11] Leena Hoffmann, Fairy Godfathers and Magical Elections: Understanding the 2003 Electoral Crisis in Anambra State, Nigeria," Journal of Modern African Studies 48, no. 2 (2010): 285–310. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X1000025X>

^[12] Human Rights Watch, Criminal Politics: Violence, "Godfathers" and Corruption in Nigeria: Case Study B: Anambra State, October 2007, sec. "Godfatherism in Anambra State. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/nigeria1007/8.htm>

^[13] Nwankwo, A. E. "Electoral Justice and Political Stability in Nigeria: A Case Study of Anambra State." Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence 7, no. 1 (2016): 45–59. <https://nigerialii.org/akn/ng/judgment/ngsc/2007/23/eng@2007-07-12>

^[14] BBC. "First Female Governor in Nigeria." BBC News, 3 November 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6112950.stm>

^[15] Peter Obi v Independent National Electoral Commission & Others. Supreme Court of Nigeria. NigeriaLII. June 13, 2007. <https://nigerialii.org/akn/ng/judgment/ngsc/2007/42/eng@2007-06-13>

^[16] Ujumadu, Vincent. "INEC Declares Obi Winner." Vanguard, February 8, 2010. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/02/inec-declares-obi-winner/>



confirmed APGA's dominance beyond Peter Obi's personal influence.¹⁷

Obiano was re-elected in 2017, defeating Obaze (PDP) and Nwoye (APC). His incumbency advantage and APGA's grassroots strength ensured another term. The election reaffirmed that national party structures struggled to unseat APGA in Anambra. In the 2021 election, Charles Soludo, former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor, ran under APGA against Andy Uba (APC) and Valentine Ozigbo (PDP). Amid pre-election tensions and insecurity, Soludo won convincingly. His victory reflected APGA's enduring appeal, upheld the zoning balance (this time favouring Anambra South), and introduced a technocratic approach to governance.¹⁸

^[17] Ujumadu, Vincent; Tony Edike; and Enyim Enyim. "Anambra Governorship Election: Obiano Declared Winner." Vanguard, December 1, 2013. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/anambra-obiano-declared-winner-today/>

^[18] Ibid

Table 1: History of Governors of Anambra State in the Fourth Republic

Governor	Party	Years in Office	Zone	Mode of Entry
Chinwoke Mbadinuju		1999 – 2003	South ▾	Election
Chris Ngige		2003 – March 2006	Central ▾	Election
Peter Obi		March 2006 – Nov. 2006	Central ▾	Court Ruling
Dame Virginia Etiaba		Nov. 2006 – Feb. 2007	North ▾	Succession (Deputy)
Peter Obi (reinstated)		Feb. 2007 – May 2007	Central ▾	Court Ruling
Andy Uba		May – June 2007 (17 days)	South ▾	Election (Annulled)
Peter Obi (restored)		June 2007 – March 2014	Central ▾	Court Ruling
Willie Obiano		March 2014 – March 2022	North ▾	Election
Charles C. Soludo		March 2022 – Present	South ▾	Election

THE EIGHT (8) “I”s FRAMEWORK

To provide structured analysis, we adopt the “8 I’s” framework, a multidimensional lens for evaluating elections across eight critical domains. This approach ensures that various facets from institutional readiness to identity politics are examined in turn, while acknowledging their interconnections. The eight “I”s applied here are: Institutions, Insecurity, Incumbency, Intra-party contestation and Inter-party contestation, Identity, Information disorder, and the Influence of personalities, as well as Inclusivity, which encompasses the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Institutions: Electoral & Governance Bodies’ Preparedness

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has publicly affirmed its preparedness for the Anambra off-cycle election. The Commission published the final list of 16 candidates (from 16 parties) by the legal deadline and opened the official campaign period on 11 June 2025.¹⁹ INEC also scheduled a brief Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise in Anambra’s 326 wards from 8 to 17 July 2025, but later extended to 20th July to register new voters, transfer existing registrations, and replace lost or damaged voter cards ahead of the poll.²⁰ According to the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Anambra, Dr Elizabeth Agwu, INEC has configured about 300 Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) devices and concluded training of ad-hoc staff (including NYSC youth corps members) for deployment.²¹ The Commission is emphasising early and robust logistics: it has refreshed Memoranda of Understanding with transport unions to ensure election materials and personnel are moved securely and on time.²² This is critical given past issues with the late delivery of materials. Indeed, observers of the 2021 Anambra election noted that delayed poll openings due to logistical challenges and prevailing insecurity contributed to low voter confidence.²³ INEC appears intent on not repeating that scenario in 2025; the REC has personally “verified” BVAS machine functionality and asserted that “we want this election to be better than the last one”.²⁴ Steps like stakeholder forums and voter education drives are also underway to enhance public trust. For example, INEC’s chairman met with the National

^[19] Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC SETS THE DATE FOR 2025 ANAMBRA CVR AND OTHER ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES. INEC Nigeria, July 14, 2025. <https://www.inecnigeria.org/cvr-centres/>.

^[20] Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD West Africa). CDD-West Africa Commends Peaceful Conduct of CVR Ahead of November Governorship Elections in Anambra State. Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD West Africa), July 21, 2025. <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/press-releases/cdd-west-africa-commends-peaceful-conduct-of-cvr-ahead-of-november-governorship-elections-in-anambra-state/>

^[21] Chinwe Onuigbo Anambra 2025: INEC Begins Voter Registration on July 8. von.gov.ng, July 3, 2025. <https://von.gov.ng/anambra-2025-inec-begins-voter-registration-on-july-8/>

^[22] Ibid

^[23] Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room. Final Statement by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room on the Anambra State Governorship Election, 2021. November 2021. <https://situationroomng.org/final-statement-by-the-nigeria-civil-society-situation-room-on-the-anambra-state-governorship-election-2021/>

^[24] Vincent Ujumadu. We’re Ready for Anambra Elections Police, INEC. Vanguard, July 2025. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/07/were-ready-for-anambra-elections-police-inec/>



Orientation Agency to plan intensified voter sensitisation across the state, with a special focus on youth, women, and PWD participation.²⁵ These efforts align with recommendations from election observers that INEC invest in stakeholder engagement and confidence-building, which can improve the legitimacy of the process.

Despite these measures, from our key informant interviews, the members of the commission still expressed some concern as follows;

Elections in Anambra bring some sad memories that are hard to overlook. INEC facilities and its officials have been major targets of unknown gunmen. Although it is not as tense as the 2021 elections, one must still exercise caution. Another challenge is that it can be difficult to recruit ad hoc staff to go to conflict-prone areas. Some will attend the training, but on election day, they will not turn up. The same applies to the drivers who should transport the logistics (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared its readiness for the November 8 off-cycle governorship election, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), which observed the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR), identified several significant shortcomings.²⁶ The 13-day window was inadequate, especially given that this was the first CVR exercise since 2022. Furthermore, the process was characterised by weak operational planning in overcrowded registration centres, long queues, extended wait times, a shortage of personnel and registration equipment, and poor crowd control and logistics. Such inefficiencies restricted access for many eligible voters and contributed to a growing public perception of INEC's inability to manage electoral processes effectively.

Also, public trust in INEC remains a concern. The 2023 general elections saw technical glitches (notably in result transmission for the presidential race) that dented Nigerians' faith in the electoral umpire.²⁷ In the Southeast, many feel their votes were sometimes misrepresented or nullified due to national political manoeuvres.²⁸ INEC will thus be operating under high scrutiny in Anambra. Encouragingly, Anambra's 2021 gubernatorial poll was one of the first to utilise

[25] Ibid

[26] Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa). CDD-West Africa Commends Peaceful Conduct of CVR Ahead of November Governorship Elections in Anambra State. Press release, July 24, 2025. <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/press-releases/cdd-west-africa-commends-peaceful-conduct-of-cvr-ahead-of-november-governorship-elections-in-anambra-state/>

[27] European Union Election Observation Mission. Nigeria 2023 General Elections: Final Report. Abuja: European Union, July 2023. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/european-union-election-observation-mission-nigeria-2023-final-report_en

[28] Omolola, A. A., N. C. Abah, and K. K. Osayi. 2024. "Election Administration in Nigeria: A Focus on the Challenges of the Anambra 2021 Gubernatorial Elections." *West African Journal on Sustainable Development* 1 (2): 241–57. <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/wajsd/article/view/4092>



BVAS devices for accreditation and electronic result upload, and observers, including the Centre for Democracy and Development and foreign missions, confirmed the integrity of those results. INEC hopes to replicate or exceed that performance.²⁹ A potential institutional challenge is the handling of last-minute court orders affecting candidates. This problem plagued the 2021 election when multiple court injunctions forced INEC to revise the list of party nominees up to a few weeks before the vote. In 2025, the final candidate list was released on June 4, and INEC stated that no further changes would be allowed, except in cases of candidate death.³⁰ However, as discussed later, some internal party litigations (e.g. within the Labour Party and NRM) could still pose complications.

Importantly, INEC will conduct the Anambra election during a period of leadership transition. May Agbamuche-Mbu briefly served as Acting Chairperson for just two days following the expiration of Mahmood Yakubu's tenure as substantive Chairman, becoming the second woman to occupy the position after Amina Bala Zakari, who also served in an acting capacity from July to November 2015. Shortly afterwards, the presidency appointed Professor Joash Ojo Amupitan, a Kogi-born lawyer, as the substantive Chairman. The forthcoming Anambra election will therefore serve as a critical test of leadership continuity and institutional impartiality. INEC is currently under intense public scrutiny, amid widespread suspicions that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's appointment of Amupitan was politically motivated to strengthen the APC's prospects ahead of the 2027 elections.³¹ While Agbamuche-Mbu, whom Amupitan is taking over from is INEC's longest-serving national commissioner and had most probably been involved in the preparations for the November 8 poll, a new Chairman from outside the Commission - made less than a month before the election - obviously leaves the latter with minimal time to familiarise himself with the Commission's internal processes and the specific logistical demands of the election.

Beyond INEC, the judiciary in Anambra and at the federal level plays a pivotal role both before and after the election. Before an election, courts arbitrate disputes over party primaries and issues related to candidate eligibility. Notably, in the 2021 cycle, conflicting court orders from various states led to confusion about who the legitimate PDP and APGA candidates were, until higher courts resolved the issues

[29] A. A. Omolola, N. C. Abah, and K. K. Osayi. Election Administration in Nigeria: A Focus on the Challenges of the Anambra 2021 Gubernatorial Elections. *West African Journal on Sustainable Development* 1, no. 2 (2024): 241–5. <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/wajsd/article/view/4092>

[30] Anambra 2025: INEC releases final list of candidates, sets campaign date. *Premium Times*, June 4, 2025. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-east/798964-anambra-2025-inec-releases-final-list-of-candidates-sets-campaign-date.html>

[31] Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA). HURIWA Qu, theestions Tinubu's Motive in Appointing Amupitan as INEC Chair." *The Guardian (Nigeria)*, October 8, 2024. <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/national/huriwa-questions-tinubus-motive-in-appointing-amupitan-as-inec-chair/>



close to the election.³² For 2025, far fewer such disputes have been publicly reported, a sign that party primaries were less acrimonious this time. One area of contention involved the Labour Party's national leadership tussle (between the Abure and Apapa factions), which resulted in parallel primaries. A faction allied to Lamidi Apapa even claimed a Supreme Court ruling in May 2025 had sacked the Abure-led executive and thus "nullified" the candidacy of LP's flag-bearer (George Moghalu) chosen by Abure's camp.³³ However, INEC implicitly recognised the Abure faction by publishing Moghalu's name, and the opposing faction has threatened court action.³⁴ It will be incumbent on the judiciary to adjudicate any such claims swiftly and transparently, to avoid uncertainty on the ballot. Following the election, the Election Petitions Tribunal and, potentially, the courts up to the Supreme Court will hear any challenges to the results. The impartiality and efficiency of these processes will affect the perceived legitimacy of the eventual winner.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA), though often overlooked, has been mobilised to partner with INEC on voter education in Anambra. NOA's grassroots structure (with offices down to local government areas) is being utilised to disseminate messages about peaceful participation, the importance of voting, and rejection of vote-buying and hate speech. INEC has included NOA in its Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security and in the National Inter-Agency Committee on Voter Education, recognising that NOA's on-ground presence can help counter misinformation and encourage turnout.³⁵ This is especially important in communities where mistrust is high and where separatist agitators previously enforced boycotts (as IPOB attempted in 2021). However, key informant interviews revealed that NOA is facing significant challenges due to intense political apathy and distrust in the electoral process.

We are doing a lot to ensure voter education across the state, but it has not been easy. On one occasion at Onitsha market, some traders drove us away, while others refused to listen to us. Only a few gave us a chance. Many believed their votes did not count in the 2023 election, so they saw no point in voting again. This perception appears widespread and requires significant effort to change (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

^[32] Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room. 2021. Final Statement by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room on the Anambra State Governorship Election 2021. November 8, 2021. <https://situationroomng.org/final-statement-by-the-nigeria-civil-society-situation-room-on-the-anambra-state-governorship-election-2021>

^[33] Bayo Wahab. Lamidi Apapa Takes Over LP Following Supreme Court Judgment Against Abure. Vanguard, April 9, 2025. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/04/lamidi-apapa-takes-over-lp-after-supreme-court-judgement-against-abure/>

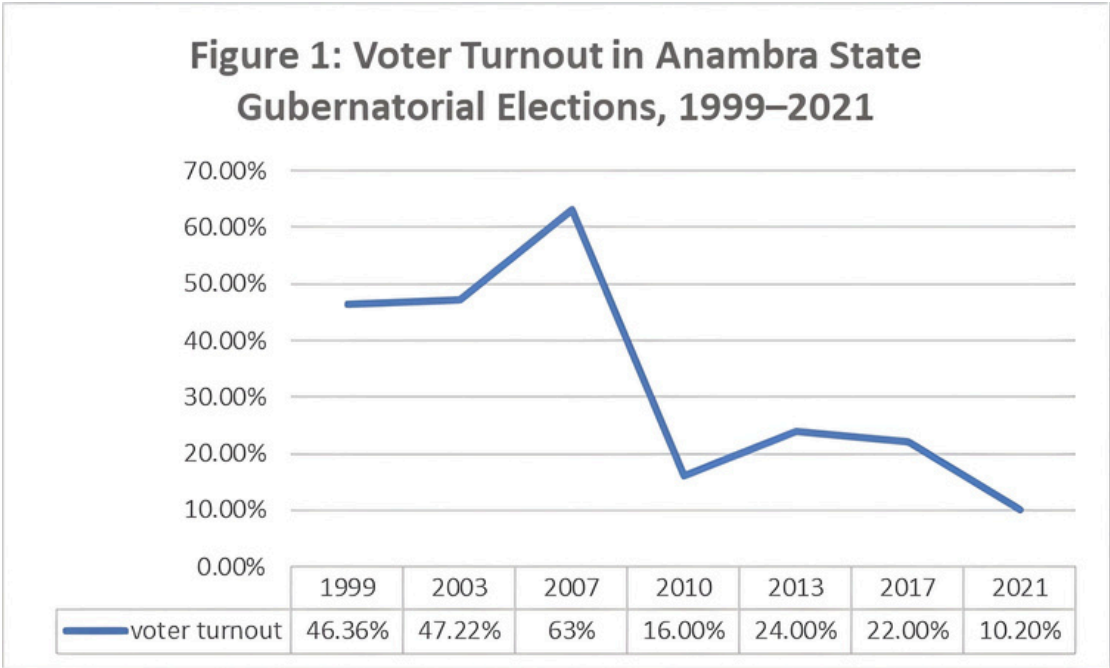
^[34] THISDAY. Labour Party Crisis Worsens as Court Okays Factional Leader's Fresh Suit. April 5, 2025. <https://download.thisdaylive.com/editions/2025/04/05.pdf?>

^[35] Okwuchi, Confidence. INEC to Partner with NOA on Voter Education. Vanguard, July 30, 2025. <https://von.gov.ng/inec-to-partner-noa-on-voter-education/>

Moreover, some respondents noted that voter education is not widespread and is mainly concentrated in urban areas.

Nobody has come to my area for any voter sensitisation campaign. The election is approaching, and political parties are holding their meetings, but I have not seen any voter sensitisation by INEC or NOA here. The only mobilisation I observed was when different political parties were trying to ensure that their supporters complete the voters' register (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

The INEC, NOA, political parties and civil society organisations need to do more voter education, especially targeting marginalised groups (women, youth, PWDs), as it remains minimal or non-existent in some LGAs. The voter turnout in Anambra has been declining, and we predict that although it may improve, it may still be less than 20%. See below the trajectory of voter turnout.



Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Other institutions, such as security agencies, the National Broadcasting Commission, and the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), will also play significant roles. The role they will play is elaborated upon in the sections below.

Insecurity: Threats, Hotspots and Impact on Turnout

Security challenges in Anambra and the Southeast threaten the November 2025 election, with violence linked to secessionist groups like IPOB, cult gangs, and especially ‘Umuoma’ (unknown gunmen). Attacks on police, INEC offices, political figures, and the enforcement of illegal sit-at-home orders are common. The southern LGAs, especially Anambra South, are particularly volatile, with towns like Ihiala, Nnewi South, and Orumba South experiencing repeated armed incursions.³⁶ In 2021, gunmen laid siege during the extended Ihiala gubernatorial vote, causing residents to flee after abductions and killings.³⁷ Border communities such as Azia, Ubuluisiuzo, Amorka, and Lilu are notorious hotspots.³⁸ This contributed to the drop in turnout to a historic low of 10 per cent, despite approximately 34,000 police personnel reportedly being deployed for the election.³⁹ In 2022, assailants burned down the home of Paschal Agbodike in Orsumoghu, the then Deputy Speaker of the Anambra House of Assembly.⁴⁰ Targeted killings and kidnappings persist, like the September 2023 attack on U.S. officials in Ogbaru and the July 2025 ambush of PDP candidate Jude Ezenwafor in Abuja, which the PDP called an “assassination attempt.”⁴¹ It is important to note that despite the heavy deployment of security to Anambra since the 2021 governorship elections and subsequent elections that have been held in the state to date, including the recent Senatorial Bye elections, INEC have not been able to hold elections in all the 20 wards in Ihiala because of security challenges. The Resident Electoral Commissioner noted that despite the improved security situation and INEC being able to conduct elections in more wards than they did in Ihiala in 2021, there are still about six wards that are still very difficult and risky to conduct elections in the 2021 Anambra elections.⁴²

^[36] CLEEN Foundation. Proliferation of Arms, Armed Groups May Jeopardize Anambra Governorship Election. Arise News, October 2, 2025. <https://www.arise.tv/proliferation-of-arms-armed-groups-may-jeopardise-anambra-governorship-election-report-says/>

^[37] Anambra 2021: Six Feared Killed as Gunmen Attack APGA Campaign Rally, The Nation, October 12, 2021 <https://thenationonlineng.net/anambra-2021-six-feared-killed-as-gunmen-attack-apga-campaign-rally/>

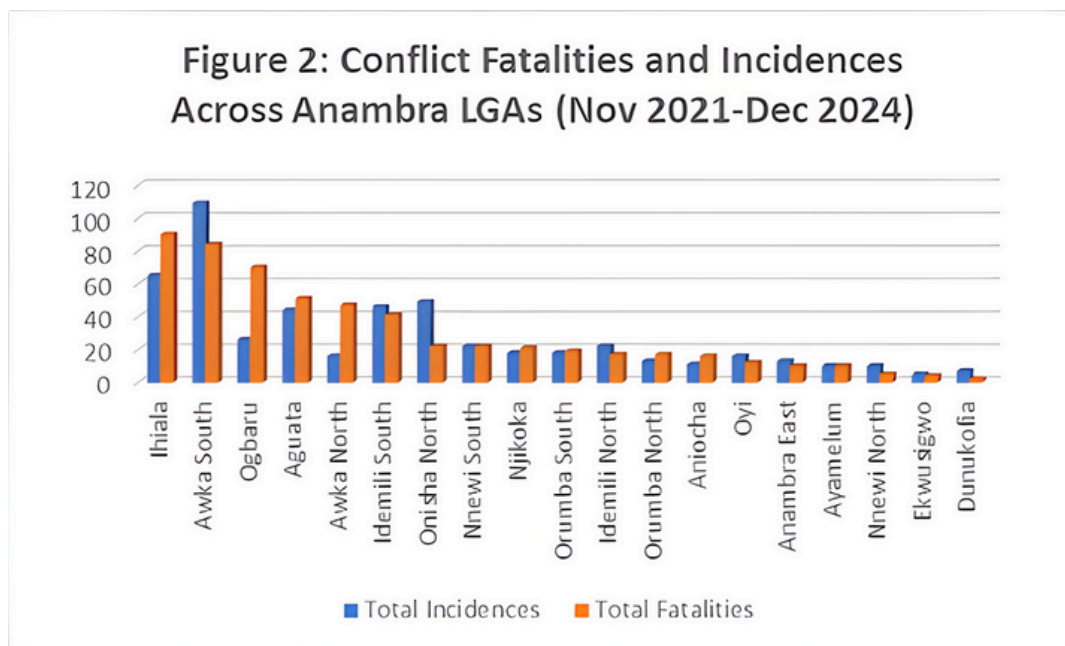
^[38] CLEEN Foundation. Proliferation of Arms, Armed Groups May Jeopardize Anambra Governorship Election. Arise News, October 2, 2025. <https://www.arise.tv/proliferation-of-arms-armed-groups-may-jeopardise-anambra-governorship-election-report-says/>

^[39] Anambra 2021 Governorship Election Records Historic Low Voter Turnout. Premium Times, November 10, 2021. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/494588-analysis-anambra-2021-governorship-election-records-historic-low-voter-turnout.html?tztc=1>

^[40] Vanguard. Gunmen Set Ablaze Deputy Speaker, Monarch, PG's Houses in Anambra. Vanguard Newspaper December 8, 2022. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/12/gunmen-set-ablaze-deputy-speaker-monarch-pgs-houses-in-anambra/>

^[41] Josephine Adeh. Police Probe Attack on Anambra PDP Gov Candidate, Seek Public Help. Punch, July 20, 2025. <https://punchng.com/police-probe-attack-on-anambra-pdp-gov-candidate-seek-public-help/>

^[42] Situation Room Dialogue session with Anambra Resident Electoral Commissioner held October 14, 2025, Abuja, Nigeria



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)

One respondent noted:

The tension this time is not as stark as it was during the 2021 governorship election. Perhaps it is because the level of competition among the candidates is a bit lower, but there are still places in Anambra where I cannot openly say, 'I am voting' - the risk of attack is always there. (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

Despite the challenges in Anambra State, security operatives have assured the public that there is no need for alarm. Some interlocutors from our key informant interviews believe Simon Ekpa's arrest has helped reduce conflict in the southeast. However, there is a growing challenge with a renewed surge in the #FreeNnamdiKanuNow protests. With Anambra acting as a major hotspot for calls to free Nnamdi Kanu, how security agencies handle these protests will significantly influence the stability of the southeast region and the Anambra elections. Recall that in 2021, it was for the same cause that an order, allegedly given by the Indigenous People of Biafra, instructed people not to come out to vote in the 2021 Anambra governorship election.

Furthermore, the military has recorded notable success with its "Operation Udo Ka". The state itself has established its own "Agunechemba" state security outfit and launched operation 'Udo Gachi', neutralising militants and recovering weapons.⁴³ While these successes are commendable, the deeper challenge lies in the citizens' distrust of formal security officials and how these officials are seen not only as victims of attacks by the unknown gunmen but also as despised by some community members as agents of the federal government aimed at oppressing them. A security official revealed as follows;

^[43] Vincent Ujumadu. Soludo Launches Anambra Security System Operation Udo ga-Achi. Vanguard, January 20, 2025. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/01/soludo-launches-anambra-security-system-operation-udo-ga-achi/>



Many security officials do not wear their uniforms here. It is very risky to move around in uniform. If we are attending a public function, especially when an armed team does not accompany me, I simply wear plain clothes, arrive at the venue, and then change into something more formal. As a female security official, for several years while living in a community, nobody knew I was in the service because I had to disguise myself as a teacher. I only wear my uniform at my duty post or station. (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

This relates to the observation made by staffers from the Centre for Democracy and Development, who visited Nnewi. They noted that, beyond seeing formal security officials at the Anambra airport, likely there to escort a VIP, they did not observe any additional formal security personnel until they arrived in Nnewi. The state's vigilante security group, called 'Agunechemba', operated numerous checkpoints along its route. While state policing is encouraged, the Agunechemba group has been implicated in accusations of human rights abuses and extortion.⁴⁴ In fact, there is another state security group called The Special Anti-Tout Squad of Anambra (SASA), locally called 'Ndi Aka Odo', that wield pestles and other dangerous weapons of torture, have gained notoriety for maiming people with their pestles while carrying out their duties.⁴⁵ The killings by Operation Clean and Healthy Anambra Brigade (OCHA Brigade) operatives, including a pregnant woman and four traders in Onitsha on 10th September 2025, highlight the dangers of unchecked enforcement activities of Anambra state-backed security formations.⁴⁶

The activities of these groups are especially worrying because the August 16, 2025, bye-election revealed the unchecked use of state security assets, with reports of politicians moving across polling units with armed escorts and vigilante groups accused of intimidating voters.⁴⁷

These experiences demonstrate that, without sustained and credible efforts to ensure safety, insecurity could again suppress turnout and undermine the credibility of the 2025 election. Security risks are particularly prevalent in remote border regions, where militant activity could disrupt logistics or deter voters, potentially leading to last-minute drop-offs of INEC staff, including ad hoc staff members. Despite these issues, security officials must balance the use of force where necessary with professionalism, in line with the 2022 Electoral Act.

^[44] Anambra Security and Agunechemba Factor. The Sun, January 20, 2025. <https://thesun.ng/anambra-security-and-agunechemba-factor/>

^[45] Chiedu Uche Okoye and Uruowulu-Obosi, "Anambra's Pestle-Wielding Security Outfit," ThisDay, July 11, 2025, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2025/07/11/anambra-pestle-wielding-security-outfit/>

^[46] Ikenna Obianeri, "Anambra Brigade Operatives Arrested over Pregnant Woman, Four Traders' Killing," Punch Newspapers, September 10, 2025, <https://punchng.com/anambra-brigade-operatives-arrested-over-pregnant-woman-four-traders-killing/>

^[47] Onu, Nwanosike. "Violence Mars Anambra South Senatorial By-Election." The Nation Newspaper, August 16, 2025. <https://thenationonlineng.net/just-in-violence-mars-anambra-south-senatorial-by-election/>



The Nigeria Police Force coordinates election security under the auspices of INEC's security committee (ICCES). The Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), military units, and the Department of State Services (DSS) will also be involved in joint operations to secure polling units, collation centres, and general peace. Still, election security also involves other key agencies, such as the EFCC and ICPC, that should ensure that vote buying does not occur. It appears that vote trading has become the most complex challenge in contemporary elections. A key informant noted this challenge:

Vote trading is a serious issue, and we are working to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their actions. In previous elections, we made landmark arrests, and many individuals were prosecuted. However, this remains a tricky matter. Sometimes, when arrests are made, citizens accuse us of working for one political party against another. In other cases, we are even accused of intimidating voters. Vote trading usually involves collusion between the buyer and the seller, and neither party is willing to report the other. Moreover, proving vote buying requires careful observation, because the mere exchange of money or items does not automatically qualify as vote buying. It must be proven that the funds or item was given in direct exchange for votes. (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

The Anambra State Police Command has repeatedly assured that it is “ready to provide a safe environment for free and fair elections,” with regular multi-agency meetings to analyse threats and plan deployments.⁴⁸ The current Commissioner of Police in Anambra State, CP Aderemi Adeoye, chairs the State Security Coordination Forum, a role previously held by CP Echeng Echeng during the 2021 governorship election.⁴⁹ By protocol, a Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) will be assigned from Force Headquarters to oversee security operations for the governorship election. It is expected that thousands of police officers (drawn from both within the state and other commands) will be on duty.

^[48] INEC, “Police Re-state Readiness for Anambra Election,” The Punch (Nigeria), November 7, 2025. <https://punchng.com/inec-police-restate-readiness-for-anambra-election/>

^[49] Ikenna Obianeri. Just in: Anambra Gets New Police Commissioner. Punch, June 30, 2023. <https://punchng.com/just-in-anambra-gets-new-police-commissioner/>



Incumbency: Power of the Incumbent and Fairness of the Contest

The influence of incumbency looms large in Anambra's 2025 election, as the sitting governor, Professor Chukwuma Charles Soludo, is seeking a second term. Incumbency can confer advantages of control over state resources, visibility, and authority over local structures, but also attracts scrutiny regarding whether those advantages are used within legal bounds. Governor Soludo of APGA is widely perceived as the frontrunner due to these factors. However, Nigeria's Electoral Act 2022 explicitly outlaws the misuse of state administrative resources for campaign benefit; Section 95(2) forbids incumbents from using state apparatus or funds to the advantage or disadvantage of any candidate or party. Thus, a key question is whether Soludo's administration is playing fair.

A frequent complaint in Nigerian elections is that incumbents deny opposition use of state-owned broadcast stations, public buildings for meetings, and open spaces for rallies. In some cases, even when access is granted, "prohibitive amounts are charged for outdoor advertising" on state-controlled billboards. In Anambra State, the Anambra State Signage and Advertisement Agency (ANSAA) announced, during a press briefing held in Awka on June 11, 2025, that it had set a permit fee of N50 million for political parties wishing to use billboards and conduct other outdoor campaign activities. This limits access for different political parties and unnecessarily increases the cost of campaigns, which have a benchmark. Also, the Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), a state-run radio/TV network, has been accused of providing minimal coverage to opposition candidates while offering extensive, favourable coverage of Governor Soludo's activities. Similarly, local government chairmen (who are appointed caretakers in Anambra, since the state hasn't held council elections in years) allegedly often refuse opposition requests to use community halls, citing "security concerns" or other pretexts. INEC needs to collaborate with oversight bodies, such as the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), to consider legal action if there is evidence of such violations.

Political patronage and intimidation at the local level are rife. Incumbents often leverage local power brokers to sway voters. Anambra has 179 communities, each with a traditional ruler and community leadership. The state government influences these authorities; for example, the governor can withdraw recognition of a traditional ruler. Before the 2023 general election, Soludo made a controversial demand that Anambra traditional rulers support APGA and its allies, or risk losing their staff of office, a statement that drew criticism. Our sources revealed that the government is working through such networks to bolster support. Reports have emerged of local government transition committee chairpersons (appointed by the governor) allegedly instructing town unions to ensure their towns "deliver" votes for



APGA. These are subtle forms of intimidation that can create an uneven playing field. This is essentially the politicisation of traditional authorities.

While incumbency in a gubernatorial election is often viewed at the state level, the influence of the federal government can still significantly impact the outcome. “Federal might” in the Nigerian context refers to the deployment of federal resources such as security agencies, coercive institutions, or funds to favour one side. In 2021, concerns arose that the APC-led federal government might interfere improperly, for example, by arresting opposition figures on dubious grounds or deploying security forces across the state to intimidate voters. Ultimately, these concerns did not materialise in a way that changed the outcome; APGA won decisively. For 2025, under the new APC administration of President Bola Tinubu, the party aims to make gains in the Southeast, and winning Anambra would be a symbolic victory. Tinubu appears to prefer co-opting APGA rather than pushing for a confrontation. APGA appears so co-opted that it is making it difficult to clearly see its support for the APC governorship candidate in the state. An example of co-optation is Tinubu’s open endorsement of APGA’s Soludo and the appointment of Ambassador Bianca Ojukwu, a member of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and a Board of Trustees member of APC, as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs by President Tinubu. The APGA leadership has confirmed she has not resigned her party membership and was granted permission to take up the ministerial role within Tinubu’s cabinet.⁵⁰ A stakeholder stated thus;

The key difference between this election and the 2023 election is that the APC is uncertain about the level of federal support it will receive. While it is true that the APC wants to make inroads into the Southeast, I do not believe the current President of Nigeria is willing to risk intensifying pressure to take over the state, as this could create tension and undermine his own political ambitions. For now, he is acting cautiously, preferring to maintain cordial relations with both APGA and APC. It is also worth noting that some APGA members currently hold positions at the federal level within the APC government. Therefore, although the APC may still hope to rely on federal might, this does not seem likely to play a decisive role, especially as Governor Soludo himself maintains a very cordial relationship with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Stakeholder Dialogue, Anambra, August 2025).

Still, opposition parties in Anambra remain vigilant. Meanwhile, APC’s candidate (Ukachukwu) has said the party will “deliver Anambra to APC”, a phrase interpreted by opponents as implying the use of central muscle.⁵¹ It will be crucial to monitor

^[50] Anichukwueze, Donatus. Bianca Ojukwu Still APGA Member Despite Ministerial Appointment Ezeokenwa. Channels Television, November 26, 2024.

^[51] We’ll Deliver Anambra to APC, Vows Guber Candidate Ukachukwu. Vanguard, May 27, 2025.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/05/we-will-deliver-anambra-to-apc-vows-guber-candidate-ukachukwu/>



the neutrality of federal institutions, such as the police and army (which report to the APC-led government in Abuja), and any perceived bias in their operations, including the selective enforcement of election laws. The provision of extra privileges to the APC would certainly raise concerns.

Intra-party and Inter-party Contestation

Off-cycle election serves as a key test for the strength of political parties in Nigeria. Already, observers feel that the 2025 Anambra governorship election has been less competitive because the PDP and Labour Party are facing severe crises at the national level. The process by which parties select their flag-bearers for the 2025 election reveals much about their unity and strength as they approach the November election. The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the ruling party, had a remarkably smooth primary. Governor Chukwuma Soludo was unopposed for the nomination and was affirmatively “adopted” by delegates as the APGA candidate. The primary election, held at the Alex Ekwueme Square, Awka, under heavy security and INEC observation, essentially functioned as a straightforward ratification, as no other aspirant challenged Soludo. He received 3,171 “Yes” votes out of 3,175 delegates, an almost unanimous endorsement. This outcome indicates a high level of internal cohesion within APGA, at least publicly. The party avoided the factional infighting that had troubled it in 2021, when multiple parallel primaries occurred due to leadership disputes. Those earlier disputes (between Victor Oye’s faction and Jude Okeke’s faction) were resolved in Oye’s favour by court rulings just before the 2021 poll. By 2025, APGA appears united behind Soludo, with party leaders (like former Governor Willie Obiano and national chairman Oye) working collaboratively. Any discontent within APGA ranks, such as the ambitions of younger politicians, has been tempered by the understanding that Soludo, as the incumbent, has the best chance of victory. No notable defections from APGA occurred after the primary; even those who might harbour future governorship ambitions (e.g. certain commissioners or legislators) have united for the time being. A seeming advantage to the party is its cordial relationship with the APC-led federal government, with Soludo openly endorsing Tinubu even though the 2027 election is almost 15 months away.⁵²

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), once dominant in Anambra State, began to lose control of state-level politics with the emergence of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Nevertheless, the PDP continued to win national elections in the state, including presidential, Senate, and House of Representatives contests, until the 2023 general elections, when the Labour Party achieved sweeping victories across all levels of government.

^[52] Adejoro, Lara. Why I'm Supporting Tinubu. Punch, August 11, 2025. <https://punchng.com/why-im-supporting-tinubu-soludo/>



Since 2023, the PDP has faced escalating structural and political challenges that have weakened its position ahead of the 2025 Anambra governorship election. Internal divisions, poor coordination, and declining morale have eroded its organisational effectiveness. These problems have been exacerbated by the departure or loss of influence of key figures. Former Senator Uche Ekwunife, once central to the party's strength in Anambra Central, opted out of the 2025 race after losing her Senate seat in 2023 to the Labour Party's Victor Umeh. Additionally, prominent figures such as Obiora Okonkwo and Tony Nwoye defected to the APC and the Labour Party, respectively, creating a leadership vacuum that the PDP has yet to fill.

By 2025, only one aspirant, Jude Ezenwafor, an Abuja-based estate developer with limited political visibility, emerged to seek the PDP ticket. His uncontested nomination, affirmed by the party, reflects growing disengagement among party elites and declining internal confidence. During a stakeholder dialogue session, a participant stated as follows;

I do not believe the People's Democratic Party (PDP) is a strong contender in this election. At the same time, Anambra has historically voted for the PDP in presidential elections, which changed in 2023. Moreover, the PDP appears weak at the national level and has not demonstrated the clout to support its candidate in this election (Stakeholder Dialogue, Anambra, August 2025).

The PDP state chairman, Chidi Chidebe, acknowledged that the party faced serious challenges and was in “rebuilding” mode.⁵³ He has been trying to woo back aggrieved members, but ahead of 2025, the PDP is essentially a shadow of its past.

APC (All Progressives Congress), the national ruling party, had a competitive primary in Anambra, reflecting its ambition to capture the state. Unlike in 2021, when the APC controversially handed the ticket to Andy Uba via what many saw as a sham primary, the 2025 APC primary was more accepted, thanks to INEC's monitoring, which lent it credibility. The primary was held on April 5, 2025, and Nicholas Ukachukwu, a former member of the House of Representatives and veteran politician, clinched the ticket. He defeated a notable rival, Valentine Ozigbo (the 2021 PDP candidate who had since defected to APC), by a large margin: Ukachukwu polled 1,455 votes to Ozigbo's 67.⁵⁴ The lopsided result suggests that party establishment in the state coalesced around Ukachukwu, and Ozigbo, relatively new to APC, could not sway the primarily APC-loyal delegate base. Other

^[53] Eleke, David-Chyddy. Chidebe: We're Building a Stronger PDP Ahead of Anambra Guber Poll. THISDAYLIVE, March 28, 2025. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2025/03/28/chidebe-were-building-a-stronger-pdp-ahead-of-anambra-guber-poll/>

^[54] Anambra 2025: Ukachukwu defeats Ozigbo, others to emerge APC candidate. The Hope Newspaper, April 6, 2025. <https://www.thehopenewspaper.com/anambra-2025-ukachukwu-defeats-ozigbo-others-to-emerge-apc-candidate/>



aspirants, such as Chuma Umeoji (a former APGA stalwart) and Obiora Okonkwo, were also in the race, according to media reports, but they too fell short. The party held post-primary meetings where Ukachukwu and rivals posed together, indicating attempts at unity. However, one cannot ignore that APC in Anambra has long been factionalised (there were Abuja vs. state faction fights in the past). Ukachukwu's emergence might not fully satisfy the faction led by Andy Uba or others. Notably, Tony Nwoye, an APC notable who defected to Labour in 2022, is now a Labour senator; his departure weakened APC's youth wing. However, the APC gained Ozigbo and Okonkwo from the PDP, partly compensating for the loss. Internally, APC must integrate these cross-carpeting bigwigs with its existing old guard. So far, no significant defections from the APC have occurred since the primary, a positive sign for party coherence.

Labour Party (LP) is a new major player in 2025, buoyed by Peter Obi's coattails. LP's primary was held the same day as APGA and APC (April 5, 2025). The exercise saw Chief George Moghalu emerged as the candidate.⁵⁵ Moghalu's candidacy is interesting on multiple counts. He was initially an APC member (indeed, a prominent one, having served as the former National Auditor of APC and ex-Managing Director of the National Inland Waterways Authority). Still, he switched to LP likely for this race, sensing an opportunity. However, intra-party contestation in Labour was colored by national leadership tussles. As mentioned, LP had parallel primaries due to the Abure vs. Apapa feud. Julius Abure's faction organised the primary, where Moghalu won, whereas Lamidi Apapa's faction reportedly held its own exercise, naming Ebuka Okoroifo.⁵⁶ The duel went to the courts: Apapa's camp cited a Supreme Court interim decision that seemed to recognise an acting LP leadership (not specifically about Anambra, but about LP's national chairmanship). In June, INEC's final list included Moghalu, effectively siding with Abure's camp. The Apapa group cried foul, saying INEC "imposed" a candidate and they would seek legal redress. This is a serious intra-party schism; if unresolved, the LP risks having its candidate's legitimacy questioned in court, even if they win. For other parties (Accord, YPP, SDP, etc.), intra-party contestation is minimal, as many simply appoint candidates or hold token primaries.

^[55] Labour Party. Dr. George Moghalu Emerges Anambra Labour Party Governorship Candidate. Labour Party (Nigeria), April 5, 2025. <https://labourparty.com.ng/dr-george-moghalu-emerges-anambra-labour-party-governorship-candidate/>

^[56] Vanguard News. Apapa Appeals Judgement Reinstating Abure as LP Chairman. Vanguard, March 10, 2024. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/apapa-appeals-judgement-reinstating-abure-as-lp-chairman/>



Influence of Personalities

Individual political figures have become pivotal in Anambra's 2025 gubernatorial contest, often transcending formal party lines. Foremost among them is Peter Obi, a former two-term governor and 2023 Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate. Obi commands a near-cult following especially among youths and professionals built on his reputation for integrity. In the February 2023 presidential poll, he won Anambra by a landslide (over 90% of votes, underscoring his massive popularity.⁵⁷ Obi has personally endorsed the LP's candidate, Dr Chukwuka Moghalu, and has mobilised supporters at campaign events.⁵⁸ His backing effectively rallies voters towards the LP, also referred to as Labour. Two Anambra senators (Victor Umeh and Tony Nwoye) have publicly vowed to deliver votes for Moghalu. This "Obident" momentum means that where Obi campaigns, LP often gains in former APGA or PDP strongholds. Stakeholders interviewed acknowledged Obi's fame but noted that the challenges LP has faced at the national level have created doubts about voting for the party. A stakeholder highlighted as follows;

The Labour Party performed very well in the 2023 elections in Anambra State due to the Peter Obi factor. However, the internal challenges within the party following the election have led to a decline in its popularity in the state. It appears increasingly that the electorate is now separating Peter Obi's personality and fame from that of the Labour Party. Furthermore, examine the voting pattern in Anambra, where voters often support one party at the presidential level but mostly choose APGA at the state level. You will see that the electorate in the state is highly discerning. They know which political party is serious and well-organised in the state. (Stakeholder Dialogue, Anambra, August 2025).

Furthermore, incumbent Governor Charles Soludo (APGA) has made neutralising Obi's appeal a key strategy. Obi has featured heavily in his campaign speech as if Peter Obi is also a contender in the election. Soludo presents himself as a technocratic insider defending Anambra against "outside" influences and has publicly clashed with Obi in the media. Their feud, including Soludo's derogatory comments about Obi's policies, has polarised some voters into pro- or anti-Obi camps, effectively turning the election into a referendum on Obi's influence legacy.⁵⁹

At the federal level, legislative endorsements and by-elections have shifted the dynamic. LP's Senators Umeh (Anambra Central) and Nwoye (Anambra North) are

^[57] Ugwu, Chinagorom. Peter Obi Overwhelms Atiku, Tinubu in Anambra; Wins Big. Premium Times, July 9, 2025.

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-east/585Dr333-peter-obi-overwhelms-atiku-tinubu-in-anambra-wins-big.html>

^[58] Nwaiwu, Chimaobi. Anambra 2025: Obi Presents Moghalu as LP Guber Candidate. Vanguard, July 10, 2025. [that Obi's grip in the north and regions for the https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/07/anambra-2025-obi-presents-moghalu-as-lp-guber-candidate/](https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/07/anambra-2025-obi-presents-moghalu-as-lp-guber-candidate/)

^[59] Okonoboh, Rita. Breaking: Peter Obi Knows That He Can't and Won't Win, Says Soludo. TheCable, November 14, 2022.

<https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-peter-obi-knows-that-he-cant-and-wont-win-says-soludo/>



actively campaigning for Moghalu, leveraging their rural networks to support the campaign. By contrast, the August 2025 senatorial by-election in Anambra South (after the death of Senator Ifeanyi Ubah) resulted in a clear victory for APGA. APGA's Emmanuel Nwachukwu won 90,408 votes to defeat APC's Azuka Okwuosa (19,812 votes).⁶⁰ This win (filling Ubah's seat) not only adds a second APGA senator but also boosts Soludo's narrative of strength and continuity. It suggests that APGA retains grassroots support in the southern zone, counterbalancing Obi's grip in the north and central regions. In the state House of Assembly and federal House of Representatives, incumbents are expected to campaign for their parties: LP's Afam Ogene and others will mobilise for LP in their districts, while APGA lawmakers highlight Soludo's projects locally.

Federal appointees and endorsements also play symbolic roles. Notably, President Bola Tinubu (APC) publicly praised Governor Soludo as "my friend and ally" during a May 2025 visit.⁶¹ Such praise, despite Soludo being from an opposition party, signals to APC loyalists that a vote for APGA is not a breach of loyalty to the federal government. It may lull some APC voters into supporting the incumbent. Meanwhile, Anambra-born appointees in Tinubu's cabinet have had limited visible campaign roles. For example, Women Affairs Minister Uju Ohanenye (APC) and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Bianca Ojukwu (APC) have not made major public endorsements. Bianca Ojukwu's federal appointment, however, is symbolically used by APC to suggest that even the Odumegwu-Ojukwu legacy is not anti-APC, thus forcing APGA to tread carefully around that legacy.

Former governors and power brokers also play a role. Chris Ngige (APC) chairs the APC campaign council but is seen as ambivalent; his lack of enthusiasm on the trail suggests he may quietly prefer Soludo's re-election over a third-party upset. Willie Obiano (APGA) has maintained a low profile amid legal troubles, but his remaining allies generally support the continuity of APGA. Wealthy kingmaker Chief Arthur Eze has stayed publicly neutral, likely awaiting the victor. The APC candidate, Prince Nicholas Ukachukwu, is a notable personality in his own right, a philanthropist known as "God's Project" for his sponsorship of churches and schools. His personal networks among clergy and market leaders give him some grassroots appeal. However, many of his erstwhile supporters (including former LP voters) worry he may not muster Obi-level enthusiasm.

Traditional and religious figures often provide more subtle signals. The Obi of Onitsha (Igwe Alfred Achebe) and other chiefs, while not openly partisan, are

^[60] Ujumadu, Vincent. APGA Wins Senatorial, House of Asseits contributionmbly Bye-Elections in Anambra. Vanguard, August 16, 2025. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/08/apga-wins-senatorial-house-of-assembly-bye-elections-in-anambra/>

^[61] Ogunjuyigbe, Oluwatosin. Tinubu Endorses Governor Soludo for Re-Election in Anambra. Businessday, July 15, 2025. <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/tinubu-endorses-soludo-for-re-election-in-anambra/>



generally regarded as sympathetic to Soludo's law-and-order message.⁶² Prominent clergy, such as the Catholic and Anglican bishops of Awka, have broad followings and may give indirect nods (for example, emphasising prudence or authority) that voters interpret as leaning toward specific candidates. Youth influencers (activists, musicians, Nollywood actors) have primarily stayed out of open endorsements, though social media sentiment often skews pro-Obi against Soludo's rhetoric.

Identity: Zoning, Ethnicity, and Regional Dynamics

Identity politics in Anambra mainly centres on religion and sub-state regional zoning, with a lesser focus on communal affiliations. Unlike some Nigerian states where ethnic and religious diversity pose challenges, Anambra is an ethnically homogeneous Christian Igbo state. Despite this religious uniformity, there is a significant intra-Christian identity conflict, primarily between Catholics and Anglicans, which has influenced politics.⁶³ In past elections, there were subtle appeals to church identity; for example, Obiano's administration was accused of favouring the Catholic Church (he and Soludo are Catholics). In 2017, some Anglican groups supported another candidate (Tony Nwoye, who is Anglican) to ensure balance. An interviewee noted as follows;

In the Anambra elections, one issue to watch is the contention between Catholics and Anglicans. In Nnewi, some Anglicans feel that Governor Soludo's demolition exercises have disproportionately targeted Anglicans, while being less directed at Catholics. There is also a perception among some people that he has not given his Deputy Governor, who is Anglican, sufficient visibility or privileges (Key Informant Interview, Anambra, August 2025).

On zoning, Anambra State is divided into three senatorial districts: North, Central, and South, between which political power has informally rotated since 2003.⁶⁴ After Peter Obi from Anambra Central governed from 2006 to 2014, elite consensus favoured Anambra North, leading to the election of Willie Obiano (2014–2022). In 2021, the governorship shifted to Anambra South, where all major parties fielded southern candidates, and APGA's Charles Soludo emerged victorious. His win was viewed as restoring the balance of the rotation pattern.

As the 2025 election approaches, the zoning arrangement remains influential but less contentious. The South's turn is expected to last until 2030, giving Soludo a

^[62] Nzeagwu, Uzoma. Obi of Onitsha, Others Reaffirm Support for Soludo's Administration. The Guardian (Nigeria), January 25, 2024. [Ogunjuyigbe, Oluwatosin. Tinubu Endorses Governor Soludo for Re-Election in Anambra. Businessday, July 15, 2025.](https://businessday.ng/politics/article/tinubu-endorses-soludo-for-re-election-in-anambra/)

^[63] Irekamba, Chris; Chuks Nwanne; and Uzoma Nzeagwu. Religious Harmony In Anambra: Stemming Age-long Division By Politics. The Guardian (Nigeria), June 21, 2015. <https://guardian.ng/politics/religious-harmony-in-anambra-stemming-age-long-division-by-politics/>

^[64] Ndukuba, Emmanuel. Soludo Raises Alarm over Zoning Agreement Distortion in Anambra. BusinessDay (Nigeria), June 23, 2025. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/soludo-raises-alarm-over-zoning-agreement-distortion-in-anambra/> its contribution



legitimate claim to re-election, which APGA frames as completing the South's tenure. Notably, all leading 2025 contenders also hail from Anambra South, reflecting broad acceptance of the zoning norm and effectively removing senatorial origin as a distinguishing factor. Consequently, voters in the Central and Northern districts are likely to base their preferences on party platforms and candidate credibility rather than regional affiliation.

Within the South, however, sub-zonal dynamics persist. Soludo represents the Aguata bloc, while APC's Nicholas Ukachukwu and LP's Kingsley Moghalu are from Nnewi. Vote splitting in Nnewi could advantage Soludo, whose strong base in the Aguata–Orumba axis remains decisive.

Information Disorder: Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech

In the digital age, the election information environment is as crucial as physical security. In Anambra, misinformation and disinformation have already shaped recent elections, and 2025 is no different. Voters are bombarded with content across various platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and the radio. Falsehoods can spread quickly and influence voter confidence and turnout. Deepfakes and conspiracy theories add to the toxic atmosphere.

In July 2025, false reports claimed PDP candidate Jude Ezenwafor had died after a shooting. Although debunked within hours, the rumour gained traction online, potentially demoralising supporters and fueling fear. Social media influencers and partisan pages amplify such content. Relatedly, the rhetoric of key political actors has largely lacked issue-based politics and has been characterised by petty personality attacks, name-calling, and hate speech.

On May 22, 2025, INEC established an artificial intelligence (AI) division tasked with harnessing the positive impacts of artificial intelligence and mitigating its adverse effects, including combating disinformation and misinformation. The INEC missed the opportunity to highlight how this division was deployed in the concluded bye-election; however, the Anambra election presents an opportunity to demonstrate the strength of this innovation and how it contributes to a credible election.

Inclusivity: Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities in the Election

Only 2 of the 16 candidates cleared by INEC for the 2025 Anambra governorship election are women (12.5 per cent), both representing smaller parties: Chioma Ifemeludike of the AAC and Ginika Anyaegbunam of the NRM.⁶⁵ Their participation is symbolically significant, demonstrating that women are taking on positions traditionally held by men. However, the major parties, including APC, PDP, Labour, and APGA, all selected male candidates, underscoring the persistent gender gap in mainstream politics.

Six parties, including APC and Labour, selected female deputy governorship candidates.⁶⁶ While this suggests progress toward inclusion, it often lacks substance if the women are not given meaningful roles in campaigns or governance. Barring Dame Virgina Etiaba, who served as the Deputy governor and shortly as governor when Peter Obi was ousted, Anambra has never elected a female governor or deputy governor. In the 2023 state assembly elections, no woman won any of the 11 available seats, highlighting the deep-seated structural barriers that include limited access to funding, weak party backing, and cultural biases.⁶⁷

Despite these challenges, candidates like Ifemeludike are bringing attention to key issues such as corruption, gender-based violence, and youth marginalisation. Women play a significant role in mobilisation, especially at the grassroots level, but remain vastly underrepresented in decision-making positions within parties. Labour is the only major party believed to have a female state chair.

Anambra has a young population, with a median age of about 24. Youth political engagement surged during the 2023 “Obedient” movement. INEC’s July 2025 voter registration saw strong participation from voters aged 18 to 35.⁶⁸ Candidates are trying to appeal to young voters with promises related to jobs and innovation. Still, no candidate from the major parties is under 40 years old. The youngest, at 36, comes from a minor party.⁶⁹

People with disabilities have no representation among candidates.⁷⁰ Despite INEC’s accessibility initiatives, no party nominated a PWD. Advocacy continues, but actual inclusion remains minimal.

^[65] Godfrey Akon. Anambra Guber: INEC Publishes Final List of Candidates, Flags Off Campaigns. The Abuja Inquirer, June 4, 2025. <https://theabujainquirer.com/2025/06/04/anambra-guber-inec-publishes-final-list-of-candidates-flags-off-campaigns/>

^[66] Godfrey Akon. Anambra Guber: INEC Publishes Final List of Candidates, Flags Off Campaigns. The Abuja Inquirer, June 4, 2025. <https://theabujainquirer.com/2025/06/04/anambra-guber-inec-publishes-final-list-of-candidates-flags-off-campaigns/>

^[67] Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). 2023 State House of Assembly Election Results: Anambra State. INEC Nigeria, 2023. https://www.inecelectionresults.ng/elections/types/5f129a04df41d910dc1d54?state_id=4

^[68] Musa Luka. Women, youths top as new registrants rise to 168,187 in Anambra – INEC. Daily Trust, July 25, 2025. <https://dailytrust.com/women-youths-top-as-new-registrants-rise-to-168187-in-anambra-inec/>

^[69] Telegraph Nigeria. Anambra Gov Poll: INEC Clears 16 Candidates, Campaigns Begin June 11. Telegraph Nigeria, June 5, 2025. <https://telegraph.ng/news/2025/06/05/anambra-gov-poll-inec-clears-16-candidates-campaigns-begin-june-11/>

^[70] Ibid



CONCLUSION

The 2025 Anambra governorship election is poised to be a defining contest that will test the state's political maturity and the strength of its democratic institutions. Voters are being educated and encouraged to participate despite past apathy. If security remains stable and INEC delivers a credible process, Anambra's electorate could set new trends – perhaps a resurgence in turnout or an unprecedented upset victory. All signs point to a three- or four-way race: the ruling APGA banking on its legacy and performance, APC pushing for alignment with the centre, the Labour Party riding a wave of reformist enthusiasm, and the PDP striving to remain relevant.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should improve logistics by ensuring early deployment of materials, providing backup BVAS devices, and implementing clear voter access plans. INEC must also publicise relocated or newly established polling units well in advance and provide regular updates throughout election day.

INEC, in partnership with the National Orientation Agency (NOA), civil society organisations (CSOs), and community-based organisations (CBOs), should intensify grassroots voter education, especially in rural and marginalised communities. This includes using local languages and engaging voters directly in markets, churches, and youth centres. Political parties must educate their supporters on proper voting procedures and promote tolerance. INEC, traditional rulers, and community leaders should collaborate to deliver non-partisan voter education. Meanwhile, fact-checking organisations such as Dubawa, Africa Check, and Civic Media Lab, along with media houses, should monitor and debunk misinformation in real time. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the Civil Defence Corps, under the coordination of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), should identify hotspots and deploy rapid response teams to handle disturbances and technical issues.

INEC's Artificial Intelligence Division, supported by media organisations, CSOs, and technology partners, must lead efforts to counter misinformation, complemented by daily press briefings and collaborations with fact-checking bodies. INEC should ensure real-time, glitch-free uploads of results to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV). Political parties must focus on issue-based campaigns, avoiding hate speech and incitement, while the NPF and security agencies should handle peaceful protests and post-election tensions with restraint. Media regulators like the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and press outlets should promote responsible, non-sensationalist reporting, especially on election day.

Political parties should sign the National Peace Accord, facilitated by the National Peace Committee (NPC), and commit to accepting credible results or using legal channels such as the election tribunals for dispute resolution. Voter education should be ramped up by INEC, NOA, and CSOs using radio, TV, social media, and town halls, with messaging in both Igbo and English to improve understanding and turnout. Traditional and religious leaders should help spread peace messaging. The NPF, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and other security agencies must deploy neutrally and professionally, prioritising the safety of voters, INEC staff, and election materials. Finally, INEC must enforce strict neutrality and ensure inclusion for all voters and political parties throughout the electoral process.

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