

ELECTION UPDATE

Vol. 4 No. 2

ANALYSIS OF VOTER'S TURNOUT
IN THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Robust voter turnout and civic participation is fundamental to a healthy democracy. Voter turnout is one measure of citizen participation in politics. It is usually expressed as the percentage of voters who cast a vote (i.e., "turnout") at an election. This total number of voters includes those who cast blank or invalid votes, as they still participate. As low turnout is usually attributed to political disengagement and the belief that voting for one candidate/party or another will do much to alter public policy. Thus, voter turnout impacts on the electoral process and its outcome. Voter turnout in the Nigeria fluctuates during the different elections (whether presidential,

stakeholders undertook various programmes to educate and encourage eligible voters to participate in the 2015 elections especially voting on the Election Day. This publication presents an analysis of the voter turnout during the 2015 General Election, which was adjudged to be one of the most competitive in the history of Nigeria. The scope of the analysis would be limited to the data and figures from the Presidential Elections due to the fact that this is the most prominent election in the Nigerian election cycle.

VOTERS' DATA FOR THE 2015
ELECTIONS

In its bid to improve the conduct of the 2015 Elections, INEC embarked on three systematic activities to increase the credibility of Voters' Data and Register in Nigeria, which include: (1) Cleaning and De-duplication of the Register; (2) Production of Permanent Voter Card (PVC); and (3) Roll-out of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR)¹. Voter registration is the first step to voting. It confirms a voter's eligibility and determines which part of the country the voter would be able to cast his vote. According to the official information released by INEC before the March 28, 2015 elections, the figures for the registered number of voters and PVCs collected where as follows²:



gubernatorial or legislative elections), but has never risen to levels of most other well-established democracies. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as other

S/N	States	State Population	Number of Reg. Voters	Number of Cards Collected by Voters
1.	Abia	2,833,999	1,396,162	1,185,887
2.	Adamawa	3,168,101	1,559,012	1,381,571
3.	Akwa-Ibom	3,920,208	1,680,759	1,587,566
4.	Anambra	4,182,032	1,963,173	1,658,967
5.	Bauchi	4,676,465	2,054,125	1,967,081
6.	Bayelsa	1,703,358	610,373	548,585
7.	Benue	4,219,244	2,015,452	1,607,800
8.	Borno	4,151,193	1,934,079	1,407,777
9.	Cross River	2,888,966	1,175,623	983,968
10.	Delta	4,098,391	2,275,264	1,939,952
11.	Ebonyi	2,173,501	1,074,273	848,392
12.	Edo	3,218,332	1,779,738	1,246,191
13.	Ekiti	2,384,212	732,021	522,107
14.	Enugu	3,257,298	1,429,221	1,223,606
15.	FCT	1,405,201	881,472	569,109
16.	Gombe	2,353,879	1,120,023	1,070,725
17.	Imo	3,934,899	1,803,030	1,707,449
18.	Jigawa	4,348,649	1,831,276	1,757,658
19.	Kaduna	6,066,562	3,407,222	3,174,519
20.	Kano	9,383,682	4,975,701	4,112,039
21.	Katsina	5,792,578	2,827,943	2,620,096
22.	Kebbi	3,238,628	1,470,648	1,372,630
23.	Kogi	3,278,487	1,350,883	926,013
24.	Kwara	2,371,089	1,142,267	889,067
25.	Lagos	9,013,534	5,822,207	3,799,274
26.	Nasarawa	1,863,275	1,242,667	1,048,053
27.	Niger	3,950,249	2,014,317	1,682,058
28.	Ogun	3,728,098	1,829,534	1,136,003
29.	Ondo	3,441,024	1,524,655	1,118,479
30.	Osun	3,423,535	1,407,107	1,034,211
31.	Oyo	5,591,589	2,415,566	1,639,967
32.	Plateau	3,178,712	2,001,825	1,508,585
33.	Rivers	5,185,400	2,537,590	2,127,837
34.	Sokoto	3,696,999	1,611,929	1,527,004
35.	Taraba	2,300,736	1,340,652	1,270,889
36.	Yobe	2,321,591	1,099,970	824,401
37.	Zamfara	3,259,846	1,495,717	1,435,452
	Total	140,003,542	68,833,476	56,460,968

From the table above, the registered voting population of Nigeria is about 49%. This number represented a 6.4% reduction from the 2011 figures of 73,528,040. It can also be seen that only 82% of eligible voters were able to collect their PVCs before the deadline given by INEC³. The Figure 1 below shows the percentage of the registered voters that had obtained and could participate in the March 28, 2015 Presidential Elections. Registered Voters in the North West Region had the highest percentage PVC collection, while the South West⁴ had the lowest percentage of the registered voters that had collected their PVCs for the elections.

Region	Total No. of Registered Voters	% of Total No. of Voters with PVC	% of Total No. of Voters with PVC
South South	7,665,859	6,624,301	86.4
South East	10,059,347	8,434,099	83.8
South West	13,731,090	9,250,041	67.4
North Central	9,767,411	7,661,576	78.4
North West	17,620,436	15,999,398	90.8
North East	9,107,861	7,922,444	87.0
FCT	881,472	569,109	64.6
Total	68,833,476	56,460,968	82.03

Figure 1: Percentage of No. of Registered Voters according to Geo-political zones and PVC collected



Table 1: Registered No. Voters and PVC Collection before March 28, 2015

% OF TOTAL NO. OF VOTERS WITH PVC

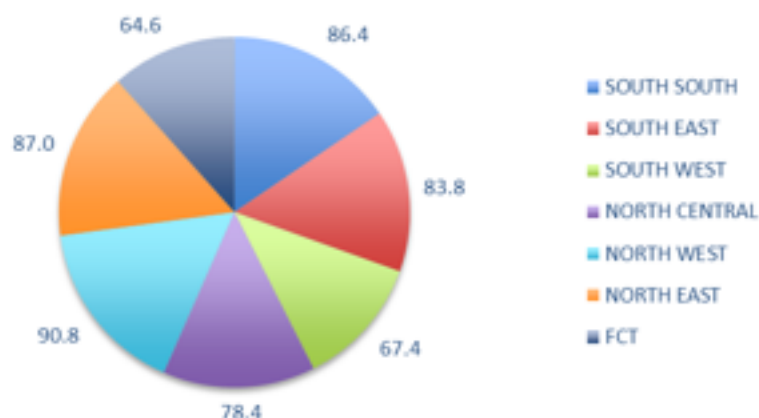


Figure 1: Percentage of No. of Registered Voters according to Geopolitical zones and PVC collected

Various factors were attributed for the not too impressive PVC collection which ranged from stolen cards, late printing of cards, some INEC personnel allegedly requesting for payment before releasing the PVCs, inability of some voters to find their cards and accusations of collection by proxy in some parts of the country, which INEC tried to resolve before the deadline day for PVC collection⁵. Nevertheless, sufficient number of Nigerians had gotten their PVCs and were prepared to head to the polls during the Presidential Elections of March 28, 2015.

ANALYSIS OF VOTERS' TURNOUT DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Table 2 above shows the Voters Turnout during the Presidential elections by geopolitical zone. The 2015 presidential election and its outcome was in many ways different from other elections, especially 2011. Of the 68,833,476 registered voters in Nigeria, only 31,711,128 (46.07%) were accredited for the 2015 presidential election of 29,405,649 (42.72%) of votes was cast. The results showed that more

voters participated in the South-South Region (55.2%) than any other part of the country. Figure 2 gives a fuller picture of voters' turnout per region during the presidential election. Correspondingly, most of the people in the region that had collected their PVCs participated in the election (65.8%), compared to the low numbers in the South East (39.9%). A sad commentary

from the Table showed that 2,305,479 accredited voters did not return to vote⁶.

Region	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Difference
South East	7,665,859	3,060,093	2,815,348	244,745
South South	10,059,347	5,552,925	5,258,597	294,328
South West	13,731,090	4,937,164	4,513,011	424,153
North Central	9,767,411	4,294,232	3,970,835	323,397
North West	17,620,436	9,499,304	8,747,923	751,381
North East	9,107,861	4,023,354	3,783,920	239,434
FCT	881,472	344,056	316,015	28,041
Total	68,833,476	31,711,128	29,405,649	2,305,479

Table 2: Presidential Elections: Voters' Turnout – Geopolitical Regions



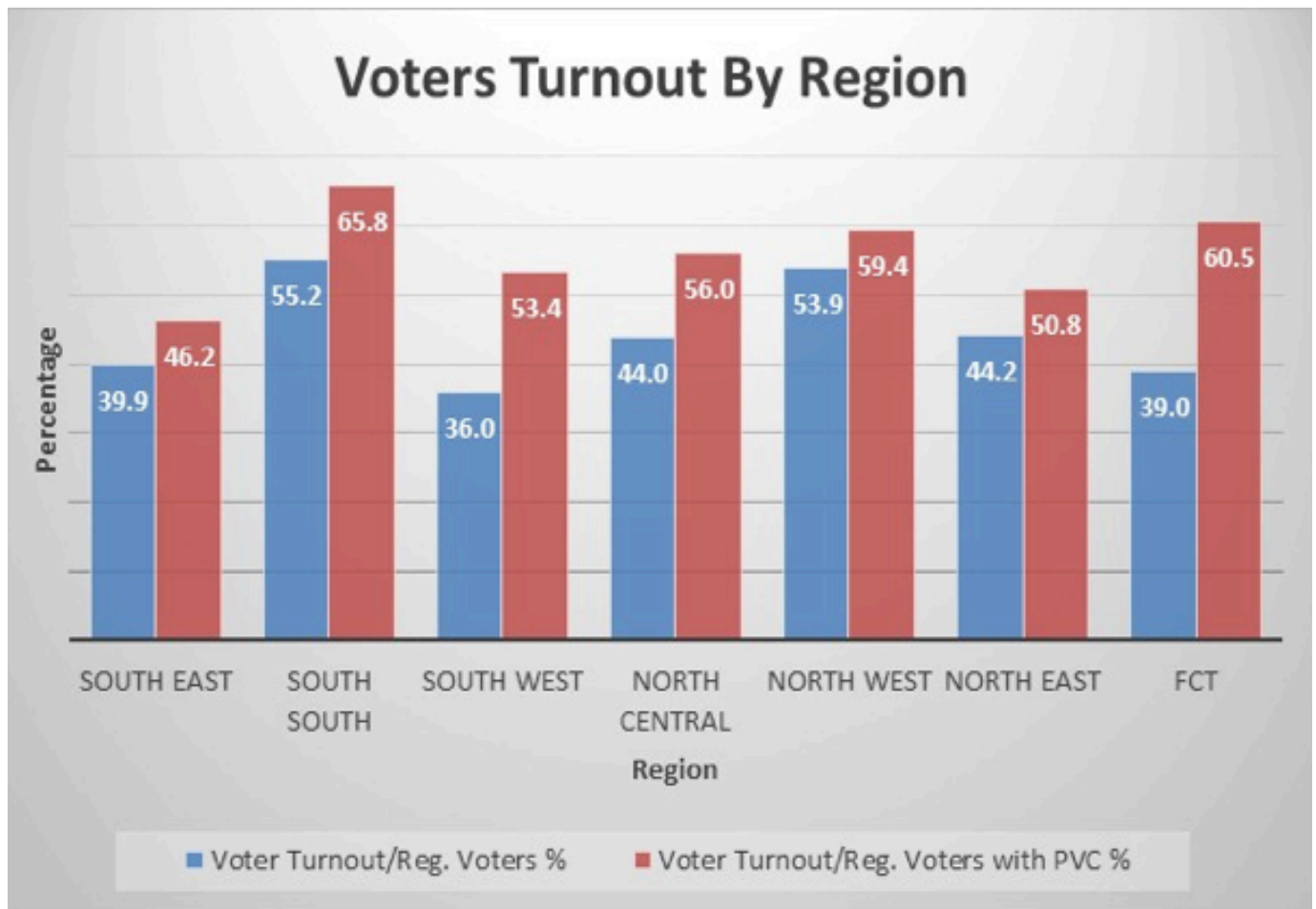


Figure 2: Voters' Turnout by the Different Geopolitical Zones

A more interesting and analytical material of the voters' participation in the Presidential Elections can be seen in Table 3 below. The Table showed the participation level of registered voters in every state of the federation. A noteworthy observation is that Rivers State (77.23%) and Plateau State (71.4%) had the highest number of voters' with PVCs that participated in the elections. On the other side, Abia and Borno State had few number of persons who had collected their PVCs that turned up for the elections with 37.32% and 38.7% respectively. However, in terms of the general turnout of registered voters, Borno (28.1%) and Lagos State (28.8%) had the lowest turnout, while Akwa Ibom (63.9%) and Bayelsa State (63.04%) had the highest turnout.

Table 3: Presidential Elections: Voters' Turnout – States by States

SOUTH-EAST	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
ABIA	1,396,162	1,185,887	442,538	401,049	31.70	37.32
ANAMBRA	1,963,173	1,658,967	774,430	703,409	39.45	46.68
EBONYI	1,074,273	848,392	425,301	393,337	39.59	50.13
ENUGU	1,429,221	1,223,606	616,112	585,632	43.11	50.35
IMO	1,803,030	1,707,449	801,712	731,921	44.46	46.95
TOTAL	7,665,859	6,624,301	3,060,093	2,815,348	39.92	46.19

SOUTH SOUTH	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
AKWA-IBOM	1,680,759	1,587,566	1,074,070	1,028,551	63.90	67.66
BAYELSA	610,373	548,585	384,789	371,739	63.04	70.14
CROSS RIVER	1,175,623	983,968	500,577	465,906	42.58	50.87
DELTA	2,275,264	1,939,952	1,350,914	1,284,848	59.37	69.64
EDO	1,779,738	1,246,191	599,166	522,785	33.67	48.08
RIVERS	2,537,590	2,127,837	1,643,409	1,584,768	64.76	77.23
TOTAL	10,059,347	8,434,099	5,552,925	5,258,597	55.20	65.84

SOUTH WEST	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
EKITI	732,021	522,107	323,739	309,450	44.2	62.0
LAGOS	5,822,207	3,799,274	1,678,754	1,495,975	28.8	44.2
OGUN	1,829,534	1,136,003	559,613	533,172	30.6	49.3
ONDO	1,524,655	1,118,479	618,040	582,435	40.5	55.3
OSUN	1,407,107	1,034,211	683,169	663,373	48.6	66.1
OYO	2,415,566	1,639,967	1,073,849	928,606	44.5	65.5
TOTAL	13,731,090	9,250,041	4,937,164	4,513,011	36.0	53.4

NORTH WEST	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
JIGAWA	1,831,276	1,757,658	1,153,428	1,071,889	62.98	65.62
KADUNA	3,407,222	3,174,519	1,746,031	1,650,201	51.25	55.00
KANO	4,975,701	4,112,039	2,364,434	2,172,447	47.52	57.50
KATSINA	2,827,943	2,620,096	1,578,646	1,481,714	55.82	60.25
KEBBI	1,470,648	1,372,630	792,817	715,122	53.91	57.76
SOKOTO	1,611,929	1,527,004	988,899	876,369	61.35	64.76
ZAMFARA	1,495,717	1,435,452	875,049	780,181	58.50	60.96
TOTAL	17,620,436	15,999,398	9,499,304	8,747,923	53.91	59.37

NORTH EAST	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
ADAMAWA	1,559,012	1,381,571	709,993	661,210	45.5	51.4
BAUCHI	2,054,125	1,967,081	1,094,069	1,039,775	53.3	55.6
BORNO	1,934,079	1,407,777	544,759	515,008	28.2	38.7
GOMBE	1,120,023	1,070,725	515,828	473,444	46.1	48.2
TARABA	1,340,652	1,270,889	638,578	602,716	47.6	50.2
YOBE	1,099,970	824,401	520,127	491,767	47.3	63.1
TOTAL	9,107,861	7,922,444	4,023,354	3,783,920	44.2	50.8

FCT	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
TOTAL	881,472	569,109	344,056	316,015	39.03	60.46

NORTH CENTRAL	Reg. Voters	Voters with PVC	Accredited Voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters %	Voter Turnout/Reg. Voters with PVC %
BENUE	2,015,452	1,607,800	754,634	703,131	37.4	46.9
KOGI	1,350,883	926,013	476,839	439,287	35.3	51.5
KWARA	1,142,267	889,067	489,360	461,401	42.8	55.0
NASARAWA	1,242,667	1,048,053	562,959	521,641	45.3	53.7
NIGER	2,014,317	1,682,058	933,607	844,683	46.3	55.5
PLATEAU	2,001,825	1,508,585	1,076,833	1,000,692	53.8	71.4
TOTAL	9,767,411	7,661,576	4,294,232	3,970,835	44.0	56.0

Compared to the 2011 elections, Voter turnout for the 2015 presidential election (compared to the 2011 outcome) declined in all the geopolitical zones, except in the South-West where it appreciated by approximately 8%⁷. This decline indicates a progressive political apathy in other regions of the federation.

It must be noted that at 46.07%, the turnout for the 2015 Presidential elections was the lowest since 1979⁸. The average turnout in the previous Presidential elections since 1999 has been about 58%. The reasons for this low voter turnout are still unclear and may require further examination/analysis.

There have been suggestions that many voters might have registered in places that they were not able to access on Election Day. For instance, those who registered near their places of work would not have been able to get to

their voting stations because of restrictions to movement. While this is a plausible argument, it will be surprising if it was the major cause of low voter turnout. This was also condition stated by INEC in the 2011 electoral cycle and elections were similarly restricted to the venues where people registered to vote. Thus, this was not a new requirement.

Furthermore, it has been argued that despite the high emotional intensity generated by the electioneering campaign and the significant ambivalence towards both candidates, there was a pervasive fear of violence that kept people



away from the polls. Another explanation might be that the turnout in this electoral cycle is actually more reflective of the real level of voter participation in Nigerian elections, and that previous elections were characterized by fraud in a way that was not possible in the 2015 polls due to the use of the personal

CONCLUSION

It has been said that without voters or without a sufficient turnout, there can be no true elections that would reflect people's preferences. The number of voters who turn out to vote and elect a government is important in understanding people's political participation. The general election in Nigeria has therefore always been an



voter card (PVC) readers – which set an upper bound on voter counts, limiting the ability for wholesale voter fraud by restricting rigging to an upper bound constrained by the number of people who were actually accredited to vote on election day, and not on the entire population of registered voters. In summation, the voters participation in the Presidential election was not very encouraging and falls below the international benchmark. This is clearly an area of responsibility of the electoral body to go after all eligible voters and make sure that a high proportion of them register to vote. In the absence of compulsory voting in Nigeria, INEC should use all resources for this purpose.

opportunity for its citizen to participate in its political process through the electoral system. The 2015 General Elections improved on a host of practices that barred or discouraged many from the polls. Voter registration campaigns were organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) across the nation as well as other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), civic community groups, and others across the nation to encourage citizens to register and participate in the electoral process. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done in the aspect of voter registration. Continuous voter education should be encouraged even after elections to mobilize citizens to register.

The turnout for the 2015 Presidential elections has been the lowest level of voter turnout

since the return of democracy in Nigeria. This should be a wake up call for policy makers and stakeholders in the electoral system to examine the causes and consequences of low voter turnout, and begin charting a course for greater voter participation in our elections and for the health of the country's democracy.

NOTES

¹ CVR was undertaken by INEC in three phases across the country between May and December 2014 and a total of 11,464,690 new voters were registered during the exercise. Cf. INEC. *Publication of the Register of Voters for the 2015 General Elections*. <http://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/National-Publication-of-Register-of-Voters.pdf>

² Information contained in this Factsheet had been sourced from INEC's website and official documents relating to the 2015 General Elections.

³ Concerns of the implausibly high collection rates of between 92.65% and 95.98% by 11 States was raised by different stakeholders especially the EU-EOM.

⁴ Excluding the FCT

⁵ Regrettably, not less than 100,000 PVCs remained unproduced before the 28 March election day.

⁶ This represents not less than 7.2% of the total accredited voters

⁷ Voters' Turnout in the 2011 Presidential Elections for the South-West Region was 32%. <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/20110419040622zg/sections/general-articles/details-of-2011-presidential-election-results-in-nigeria/>

⁸ 52% in 1999, 69% in 2003, 57% in 2007 and 54% in 2011



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