

THE COUNT



Introduction



The Federal Republic of Nigeria has gone through a myriad of political shifts and change since its formation in 1914 and independence on 1st October, 1960. Her citizens have been subject to multiple forms of governance, as well as the socio-economic instability that these shifts can bring. It's most enduring period of political stability has been the Fourth Republic (1999 - Present). This has been under democratic rule, with a cycle of national elections every 4 years.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has three distinct branches: executive (Presidency), legislative (House of Representatives and House of Senate), and judicial (court systems). It also has states governors and state houses of assembly. Apart from the judiciary, all other government positions are decided by citizen elections.

The election of political officers in Nigeria has been dogged by

insecurity, unrest, voter apathy, election malpractice, lack integrity of the electoral body, weak judiciary systems for election petitions and so much more

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to things organise elections into various political offices in the country.

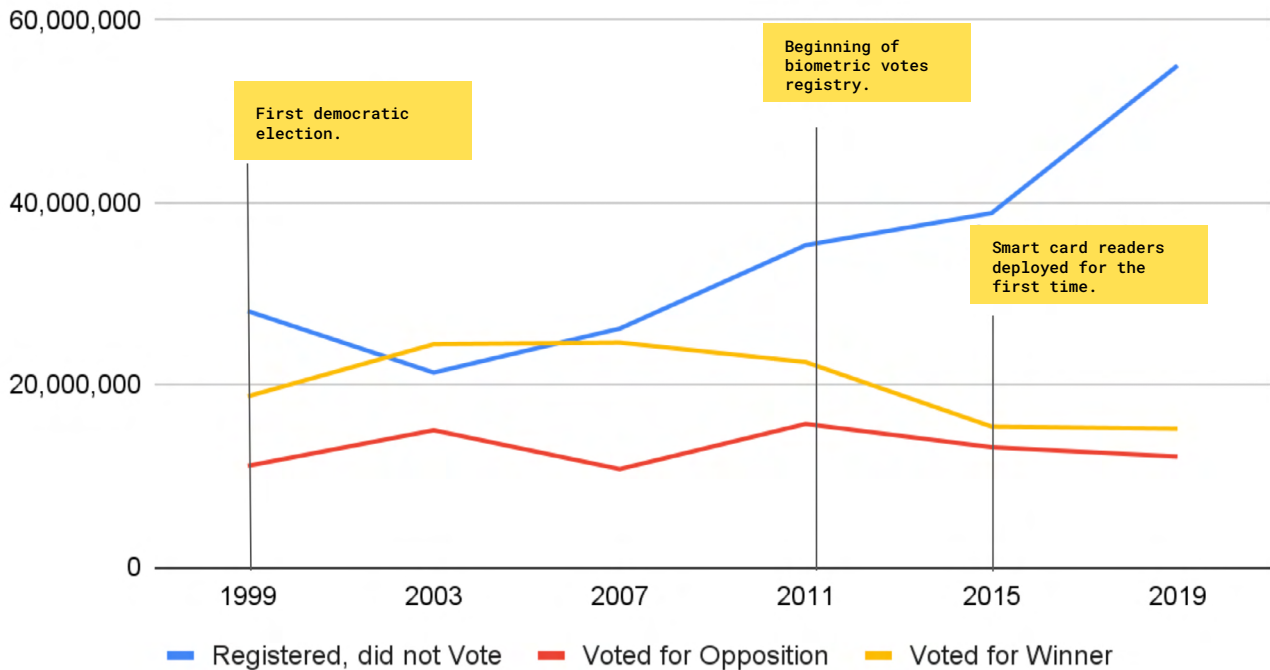
Through series of legislative actions, culminating in the Electoral Act of 2015, biometric voting registers and electronic voting via smart card readers were implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission in time for the 2015 elections

There are many different ways to view Nigerian elections. However, the use of electronic voting has led to increased access to election data. This project looks at the available data to see what insight and historical trends can be inferred.

Has the use of technology changed the political landscape on Nigeria? How competitive are the elections? Which demographics or geo-political zones are more engaged in their elections. Do we only pay attention to Presidential elections, while ignoring the smaller, less glamorous political seats?

Should the average Nigerian citizens be encouraged by the data, or inspired to run for political office? These are some of the discussions we believe the wider public should be having.

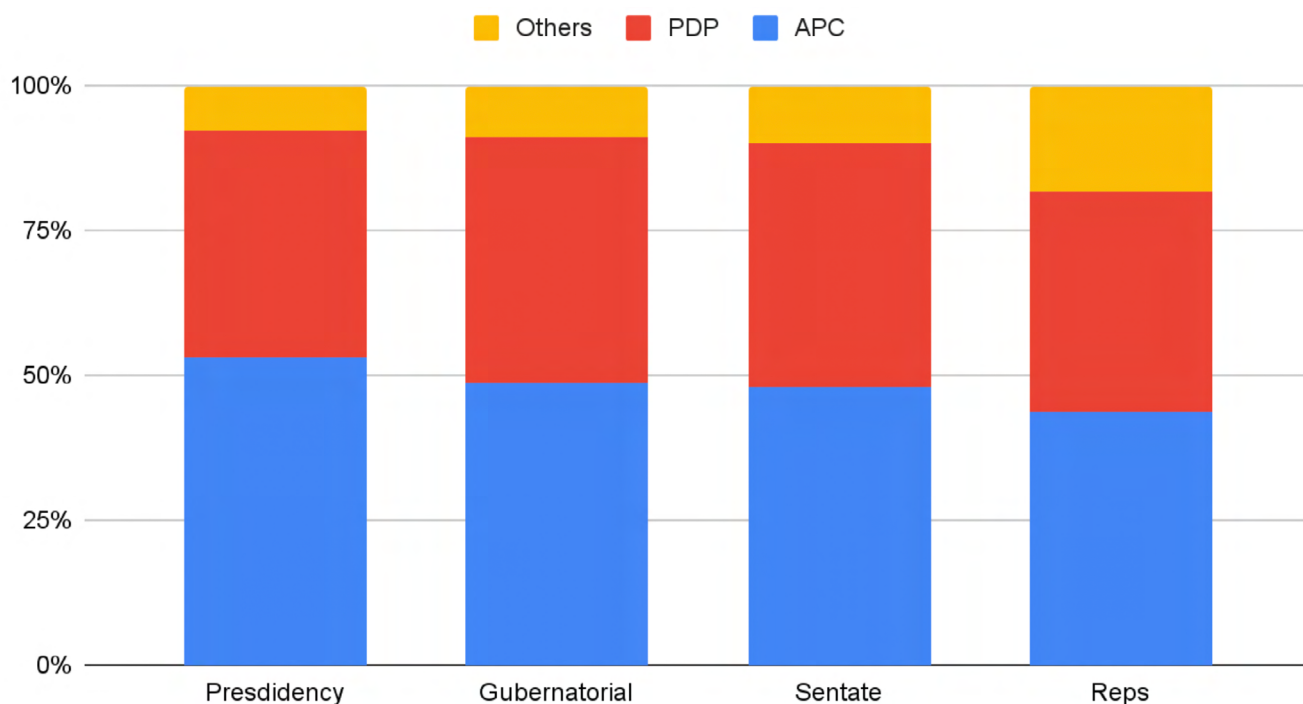
VOTER ACTIVITY ACROSS ELECTION CYCLES



Findings

- We plotted a line chart of the following values:
 - the registered voters who did not vote
 - those who voted for the opposition candidates
 - those who voted for the winner.
- The overall trend is that there is an increasing number of people who are registered to vote in the Federal and State elections, but for three election cycles (2011, 2015 and 2019), there has been decreased voter activity. This could be attributed to a myriad of reasons - previous election malpractice, compromised INEC officials, weak constitutional laws, voter apathy, and more.
- There is also a shrinking gap between the winning margins between the contestants of the major parties. This is important to note because we have 2 major parties. In 2019, while 73 people contested the Presidential elections, over 90% of the valid votes went to the candidates of the major parties.
- In the context of decreased voter participation, it indicates that if more people were motivated to vote, it is possible to swing the election results.

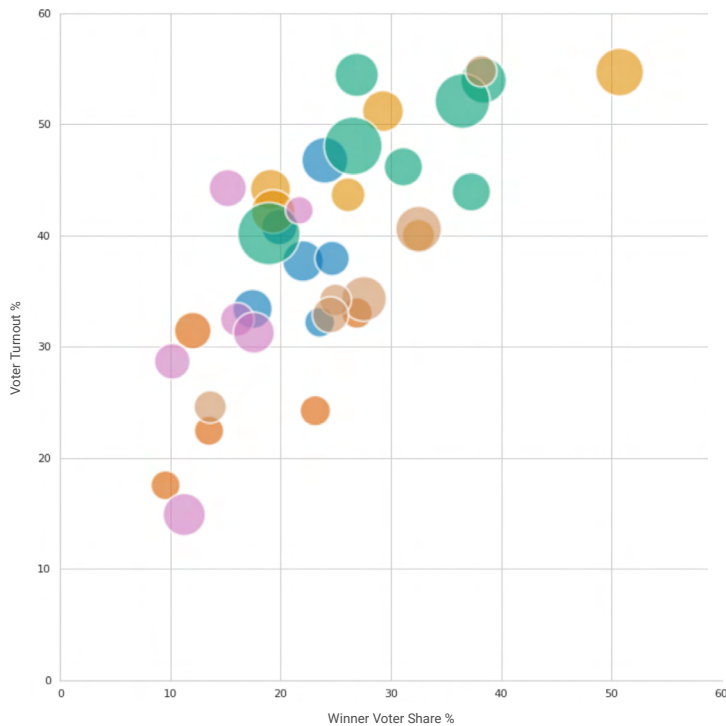
POLITICAL PARTY VOTE SHARE ACROSS ELECTORAL POSITIONS



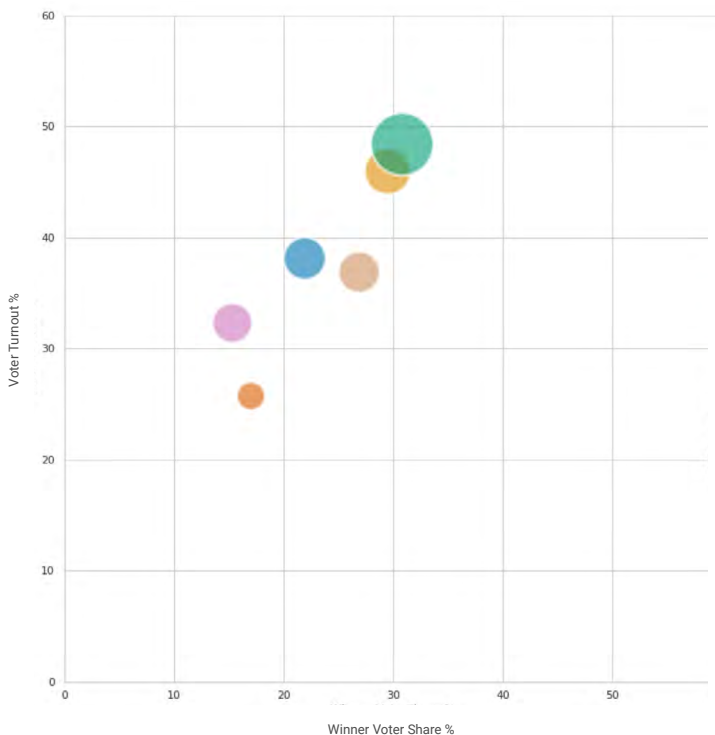
Findings

- Currently, Nigeria has 2 dominant political parties - the All People's Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). There are smaller parties with political strongholds in various regions, but none with the national reach of the APC & PDP. We wanted to see, across all the Federal and State elections, how competitive other parties were. To do this, we calculated all the votes for APC and PDP. We then grouped all remaining parties as 'Others'. We then used this to plot a 100% stacked bar chart.
- For the Presidential, Gubernatorial and Senate races, less than 10% of the vote share went to the smaller parties, which a slight increase from Presidency to Senate. However, for the House of Representatives, the increase of votes shares for the smaller parties to about 18%. This could be indicative of more competition in smaller elections. It will have been interesting to note if this trend held in the States House of Assembly elections, but only half of the results (of about 1,100 seats) were available.
- Should smaller parties focus their resources and efforts to smaller, more winnable seats? The data seems to support this thinking.

STATE ELECTION TURN OUT



STATE ELECTION REGIONAL TURN OUT



Findings

We also wanted to discern any patterns in the way different regions vote. To do this, we looked at the gubernatorial election results and created a bubble plot of Voter Turnout (How many people voted in the elections; y-axis) against Winner Vote Share of Registered Voters (What share of votes did the winner receive from the total registered voters available; x-axis). The total number of votes the winner received was plotted as the z-axis (circle size). We did this for each state and for the 6 geopolitical zones. This was done to make easier to identify trends/patterns on a macro level across various zones.

We can see that the Northern states typically have a higher voter population and turnout, as well as a higher winner share, when compared to the southern regions. The South-East especially, shows relatively poor turnout on election day. The different habits of different political regions has also been a topic of discussion in Nigeria politics and it is something we would love to explore a bit more in the future.

Future work

Due to the amount of time spent trying to gather the data, we believe we can make recommendations and improvements to INEC, and advise them on best practices for the future. Election data is a great source of information and can be the foundation for academic work, case studies and more. By making the data more accessible, INEC will be encouraging academia, civil society and much more and help usher a new era of data gathering and reporting in the Nigerian civil space.

We also hope to eventually spin this project off into a website that will go through some summary statistics and provide clarity (e.g. How many votes will it take to become a Senator in your district) and provide more information about the elections. We also want to explore more charts that can show the information in more engaging, interactive ways. We hope that it can be a reliable resource for people interested in Nigerian elections.

Even though a lot of time was spent on data collation and cleaning, it was a great learning experience.

We hope to continue this journey and tell more stories of the Nigerian elections with data.



