



WILL THEY VOTE?

A look at potential apathy in
the 2021 Anambra Election



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Disclaimer

The data contained in this report is only up-to-date as at Saturday, 30 October 2021. Some of it is subject to change during the natural course of events. SB Morgen cannot accept liability in respect of any errors or omissions that may follow such events that may invalidate data contained herein.

Our researchers employed methods such as one-on-one interviews, desk research and polling to collate the available data. Our editors sifted through the data and prepared the report, using various proprietary tools to fact-check and copy edit the information gathered.

Our publicly released reports are formatted for easy and quick reading, and may not necessarily contain all the data that SB Morgen gathered during a given survey. Complete datasets can be made available on request.

All forecasts were built using data from a variety of sources. A baseline of accurate and comprehensive historic data is collected from respondents and publicly-available information, including from regulators, trade associations, research partners, newspapers and government agencies.



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THEY
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**A look at potential
apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**

Introduction

On Saturday, 6 November 2021, an election will be held to elect the Governor of Anambra State, a state in South-East Nigeria. The current governor, Willie Obiano, is term-limited and cannot seek re-election to a third term.

On 5 June 2021, Nigeria's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that party primaries would hold between 10 June and 1 July 2021 but weeks of litigation and conflicting court rulings over primary results led INEC¹ to ask the Nigerian Bar Association to intervene on 4 August 2021. Compared to previous election campaigns, this campaign season has been very low-key. For most observers, the overwhelming cause of this has been insecurity given the activities of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), a separatist group seeking to remove the South-East and parts of the South-South geopolitical zones from Nigeria. However, Anambra has in particular suffered from voter apathy in repeated elections, turnout in the previous governorship elections being 22% in 2017², down from 32% in 2013³. Parties

and candidates have, however, continued to trade jabs and accusations of plots to rig the elections.

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¹Okafor, T. (2021) Anambra poll: INEC laments serial judgments, seeks NBA's intervention. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BwHaGk> [Accessed 31/10/21].

²Owoseye, A. (2017) Only 22 per cent voters partook in Anambra election – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3vZRLJ1> [Accessed 31/10/21].

³Ujumu, V., Edike, T., Enyim, E. Anambra Governorship Election: Obiano declared winner. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BvA7xQ> [Accessed 31/10/21].



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THEY
VOTE ?**

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apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**

The Leading Candidates

The election looks to be a three-horse race with former CBN governor, Chukwuma Soludo flying the flag of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), which has governed the state since 2006, facing strong challenges from Andy Uba of the All Progressives Congress (APC) who is running on a platform of "aligning Anambra with the centre", and the business-friendly Valentine Ozigbo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who is a former CEO of the Transnational Corporation of Nigeria, and a former banker like the incumbent governor and his predecessor. There are two dark horses in the race, Ifeanyi Ubah of the Young Progressives Party (YPP) who is the serving senator representing Anambra South in the National Assembly, and Chidozie Nwankwo, the CEO of Wichtech Industries, an importer and distributor of roofing and plumbing products. Mr Nwankwo joined the African Action Congress (AAC) in September after he failed to gain the nomination of the APC. In all, there are 18 candidates running for governorship on Saturday, and the three leading candidates had issues on the way to picking up their nominations, opening the possibility of legal challenges even after the elections are done.

Andy Uba, APC

The APC, which held its primary on 27 June, declared that Andy Uba got 230,201 votes, while his closest rival in the primary, Johnbosco Onunkwo, received 28,746 votes, out of the 348,490 total votes cast.





WILL THEY VOTE ?

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However, these figures are to be looked askance. In 2017, outgoing governor Willie Obiano, won in all the 21 local government areas of the state with a total of about 234,071 votes. He was followed by the candidate of All Progressives Congress, APC, Tony Nwoye who scored 98,752 votes. Oseloka Obaze of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, emerged third while Osita Chidoka of United Progressives Party, UPP, came a distant fourth. This calls into question the APC's claim that Andy Uba got 230,000 votes.

Chukwuma Soludo, APGA



The 23 June primaries of the ruling party in the state were not hitch free. A faction of the party led by Jude Okeke had issued a statement ahead of the APGA primary, saying that Chukwuma Soludo, a professor of econometrics and one time governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, was disqualified because of "anti-party activities". On 29 June, another faction of the party selected Edozie Njoku as the party's candidate. Njoku claimed that APGA national chairman, Victor Oye, had conducted primaries without delegates. On 14 October, the Supreme Court affirmed Mr Soludo⁴ as the party's flag bearer. The five-member panel of justices led by Mary Odili also affirmed Victor Oye as the national chairman of the party.

⁴Premium Times. (2021) Supreme Court affirms Soludo as APGA's governorship candidate. Oye as party's national chair. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2YOMNiu>. [Accessed 31/10/21].



**WILL
THEY
VOTE ?**

**A look at potential
apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**

Valentine Ozigbo, PDP



On 25 June, following two court judgments, the PDP dissolved all its executives in the Anambra State chapter a day before the party's primary election was due to be held.

The party directed its South-east Zonal Caretaker Committee to oversee and manage its affairs pending when new executives would be elected for the chapter. The election was still conducted and Valentine Ozigbo. The 50-year-old Mr Ozigbo polled 62 out of 218 votes to beat 13 others, including Senator Uche Ekwunife, and billionaire businessman, Obiora Okonkwo. However, a parallel primary election called by a factional chairman of the party, Chukwudi Umeaba, was held elsewhere in Awka which produced Ugochukwu Uba as winner. Mr Uba polled a total of 275 votes from the total of 665 votes cast, beating his closest challenger Godwin Ezeemo who polled 114 votes to emerge PDP flag bearer of that faction. Other aspirants who scored votes were, Godwin Maduka 22, Jonny Maduafokwa 27, Chris Azubogu 2 votes, Valentine Ozigbo, Ifedi Okwenna, two votes each, while Walter Okeke had 42 votes. On 21 October, the Supreme Court declared Mr Ozigbo to be the PDP candidate⁵.

Security Concerns

The election comes against the backdrop of soaring unrest and insecurity in Nigeria's South East geopolitical zone. The region is the centre of

⁵Ojonugwa, A. (2021) Anambra Guber: Supreme Court Declares Valentine Ozigbo Authentic PDP Candidate. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3SjILD> [Accessed 31/10/21].



**WILL
THEY
VOTE ?**

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

secessionist agitations from Biafran separatists, while Anambra specifically has lingering communal strife between various communities. An example is a long running feud that transcends Anambra East, Ayamelum and Ogbaru local government areas. On 6 June, a clash started over the encroachment on Ogboachala farmland at Amikwe Omor by youths suspected to be from the neighbouring Anaku over an unresolved land dispute. More than 20 armed youths attacked the farmland around 0820 hours and opened fire on rice farmers in the area. A similar attack took place in the area which left three people dead⁶ and property worth over 1 billion destroyed in Anaku and Omor. But the communal strife takes a back seat compared with the most immediate threat: the “no-election” campaign by the now armed Indigeneous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB).

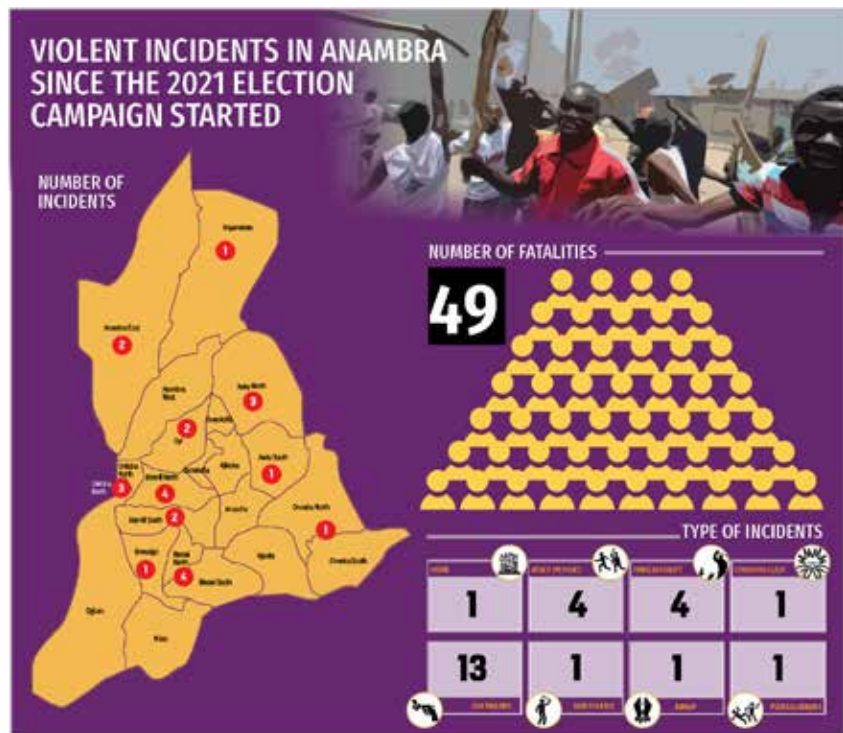
IPOB is a secessionist movement agitating for the break up of Nigeria, and the secession of the 1960's enclave of Biafra. Initially peaceful in action, if not rhetoric, the group has taken to violence since the end of 2020, and following the arrest of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu earlier this year, declared and has violently enforced a sit-at-home in a bid to force Mr Kanu's release.

⁶News Agency of Nigeria. (2021) Police confirm 3 dead in Anambra inter-communal clash. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3CA07HV> [Accessed 31/10/21].



**WILL
THEY
VOTE ?**

**A look at potential
apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**



October has been a violent month in the state, with attacks on police stations and other shootouts said to be perpetrated by IPOB, the most recent incidents being in Ekwulobia which have led to six deaths⁷. Eyewitness reports stated that two officers of the State Security Service (SSS) were shot dead after their patrol van was riddled with bullets by gunmen. A day after, the Nigerian Army reported having killed four of the gunmen. In line with what is now established electoral tradition, the Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba, announced⁸ that 34,587 operatives, including special forces and three helicopters, would be deployed in Anambra for the election.

INEC's Preparedness

This election would be a test run for the 2023 general election for a variety of reasons. On 28 June, INEC opened the portal for the continuous voter registration exercise for people yet to register to vote, as well as to enable registered voters to track the status and location of their permanent voters' card. The electoral umpire would also

⁷Eleke, D.C. (2021) Army Eliminates Four IPOB Fighters Who Killed DSS Officers in Anambra. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3bpl0LV> [Accessed 31/10/21].
⁸Adepegba, A. (2021) Anambra election: Police deploy three helicopters, 34,587 personnel. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3msvGQ8> [Accessed 31/10/21].



WILL
THEY
VOTE ?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

be looking to create 56,872 new polling units around the country, which will include former voting points and voting point settlements, which should increase access to voting for voters. This is because the current 119,947 polling units were created to serve about 58 million voters in 1999 and have remained unchanged despite a 42% increase in registered voters over the last two decades.

“
The Anambra election is a test-run for the 2023 elections as INEC is looking to create 56,872 new polling units around the country, the first expansion of PUs since 1999
”

In one of its reports⁹, INEC said that a total of 138,802 Nigerians completed the registration in Anambra State. It was later discovered that the number of multiple registrants was 62,698. Consequently, the number of valid registrants dropped to 76,104. During the same period, there were 5,674 requests for transfers, update of voter information and replacement of lost or damaged cards, giving a cumulative total of 81,778 PVCs. On Tuesday, 28 October 2021, after some protest over delayed card pick ups¹⁰, the electoral body reported that 81,778 newly printed Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) were ready for collection¹¹ in the state.

As always in Anambra, voter apathy looks set to be a major challenge in the election¹². INEC's chairman said that out of the 5,720 polling units in the state, 86, or 1.5 percent, have no voters¹³. For that reason, the commission will not be deploying personnel and

⁹Premium Times. (2021) Anambra: 81,778 newly printed PVCs ready for collection – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3bsuh5M> [Accessed 31/10/21]

¹⁰Igwe, U. (2021) INEC yet to commence issuance of PVCs to eligible Anambra electorate two weeks to election. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BqVXSZ> [Accessed 31/10/21]

¹¹Premium Times. (2021) Anambra: 81,778 newly printed PVCs ready for collection – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3bsuh5M> [Accessed 31/10/21]

¹²Okafor, T. (2021) Anambra has the worst record of election apathy, says Yiaga. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3EAe9LQ> Available online: <https://bit.ly/3EAe9LQ> [Accessed 31/10/21]

¹³Olokor, F. (2021) Anambra election: 86 polling units don't have voters – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BA0m6e> [Accessed 31/10/21]

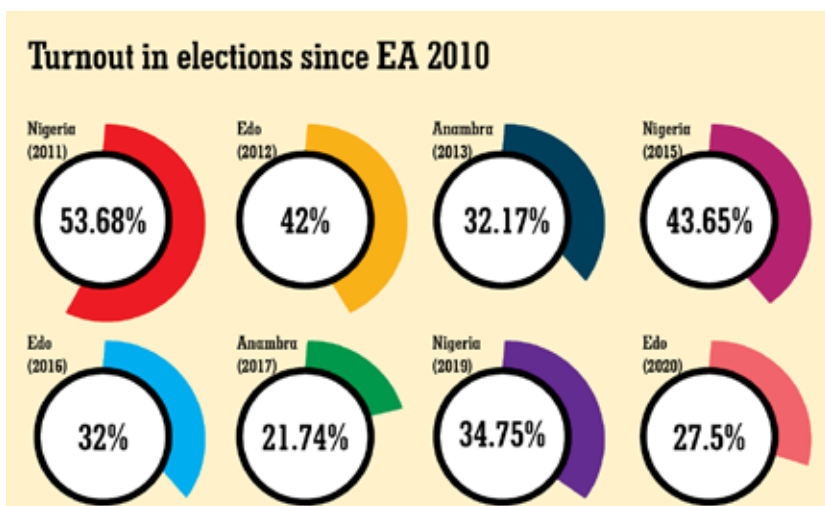


WILL THEY VOTE?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

materials to these polling units. Furthermore, 894 units, representing 15.6 percent of the polling units in the state have between 1 and 49 voters. The election will be held in these polling units.

The Anambra governorship election will also be an opportunity for INEC to test the electronic transmission of results on a state-wide basis. Although the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill is yet to be signed into law, the Senate has given the Commission the greenlight to use electronic means for results collation¹⁴.



Voter apathy in Anambra is a subset of the larger picture in the region as well as the country. In the legislative election that was held in Aba North/Aba South federal constituency of Abia State in March, only about three in 100¹⁵ registered voters showed up to vote in the election, which, according to Yiaga Africa, is among the worst three in recent elections in the country. Generally, although voter turnout has been on the decline over the last three national elections, falling from 53.68% in 2011 to 43.65% in 2015 and 34.75% in 2019, it is still important

¹⁴Elumoye, D., Okonji, E., Alekuogio, N. (2021). Senate: INEC Free to Transmit Anambra Governorship Election Results Electronically. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2ZJsiYw> [Accessed 31/10/21].

¹⁵Akinpelu, Y. (2021) Voter Apathy: Nigerian legislative election witnesses 3% turnout. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3bo8yMm> [Accessed 31/10/21].

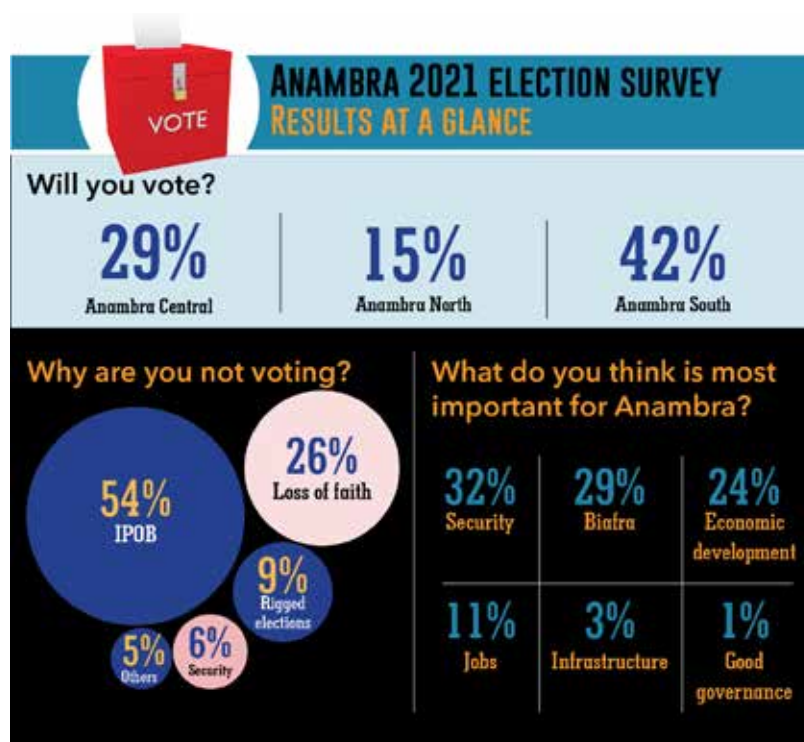


WILL THEY VOTE?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

for INEC to plan for the possibility of high voter turnout, but not for Anambra.

SBM conducted a survey for residents in Anambra as regards the election. A total of 663 randomly selected respondents from the three senatorial districts in Anambra responded to the study. 52% of respondents were from Anambra South, 31% were from Anambra North and 17% were from Anambra Central, each of the senatorial districts were sufficiently represented. The survey was aimed at gauging respondents' reactions to the upcoming elections. Our very first question was to ascertain if the randomly selected potential respondents were registered voters. Our researchers were instructed to move on the moment a person approached said that s/he was not a registered voter. Four unregistered persons, two each in Anambra North and South senatorial districts, insisted on being polled, and their responses were included in the results.





WILL THEY VOTE?

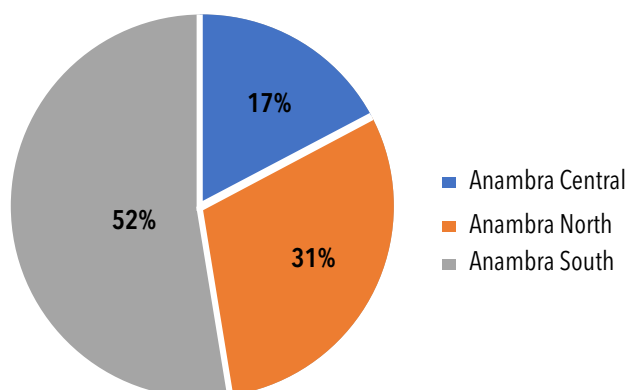
A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

For many of the respondents, the PVC is seen as an alternative means of identification in banks and other formal institutions, hence many participated in the registration drive. Of all the respondents interviewed, 68% said they were unlikely to vote in

the upcoming elections. This implies a low turnout rate in Saturday's elections. Drilling down into the senatorial districts, a larger percentage of respondents (42%) indicated a willingness to vote in Anambra South than in the other districts. This is probably because all four leading candidates are from that zone. Willingness to vote is next highest in Anambra Central (29%), while Anambra North has the least proportion of respondents who are willing to vote on election day.

“0.6% of our survey respondents are not registered voters, however of the 99.4% who are, 68% said that they would not vote in the 6 November 2021 election. Anambra South at 42% had the highest proportion of respondents who said they are going to vote”

Anambra Senatorial Districts



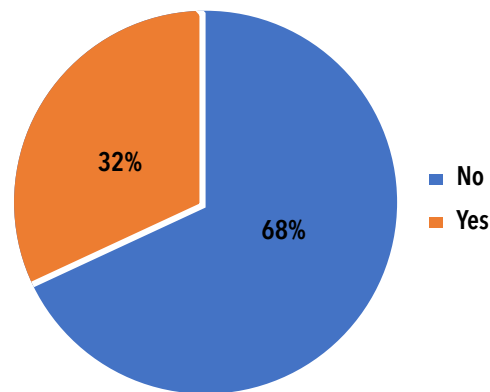
¹Okafor, T. (2021) Anambra poll: INEC laments serial judgments, seeks NBA's intervention. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BwHaGk> [Accessed 31/10/21].
²Owoseye, A. (2017) Only 22 per cent voters partook in Anambra election – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3vZRLJ1> [Accessed 31/10/21].
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WILL THEY VOTE?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

Will you vote in the November 6 Election?



Interestingly, and probably because it is home to the state capital Awka, Anambra Central has been the primary campaign ground as candidates are seen as likely to garner greater support there than in the other districts. In general, more respondents are unwilling to vote in all the districts than those who are willing to vote, an indication of low voter turnout.

Reasons for not voting ranged from loss of faith in the system, security issues, voter card issues, IPOB to religious stipulations. Of all the reasons for not wanting to vote, IPOB was cited by 54% of respondents. Our qualitative interviews showed that IPOB has become a byword for disorderliness, crises and aggression. Indeed, our

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WILL THEY VOTE ?

**A look at potential
apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**

researchers were consistently warned about conducting the survey because in the words of an older respondent in Onitsha in Anambra North, “if IPOB gets you, you are in trouble.”

26% of respondents said they would not vote because they had lost faith in the electoral process. Many of them said they were not sure if their votes would count or whether they would be allowed to vote at all. One of the respondents pointed out that he was unable to vote in the previous elections because electoral materials did not arrive on time at his polling unit, among other issues. Delays in the arrival of electoral materials has been a recurring problem with elections in Nigeria.

9% of respondents believe that the elections have already been rigged and so their votes would not count, while 6% are unwilling to vote because of unnamed security issues not necessarily related to IPOB. This is in addition to the expectations of violence from IPOB and other state and non-state actors means that 60% of those who have opted not to vote on Saturday will be doing so because of safety concerns.

Other concerns raised were voter card issues such as the loss of PVCs, non-collection, and the inability to transfer from one unit to the other. A few respondents would not vote for faith-based reasons. Some church doctrines discourage their members from voting and Nigeria’s secular nature does not permit the supremacy of a particular sect. Asked why they’d registered to vote, such respondents talked about the need for an ID card, which is what some of them see as the utility of the Permanent Voter Cards.



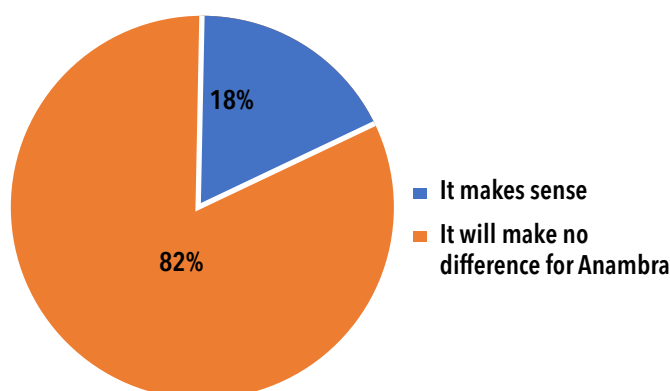
**WILL
THEY
VOTE ?**

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

Asked what is most important for Anambra, respondents chose security (32%) as the most important need, indicating that the breakdown in security was of great concern to people in what is one of Nigeria's most economically active states. Indeed during our fieldwork in August 2021 to gauge the impact of IPOB's sit-at-home campaign, our researchers received the most threats in Anambra State¹⁶. 55% of Anambra respondents in that survey admitted that the sit-at-home campaign had adversely affected them in economic terms¹⁷.

Still on the same question, 29% of our respondents believe that creating a new country called Biafra would solve most of the problems that they have. Other needs highlighted by respondents are economic development (24%), jobs (11%), infrastructural development (3%) and good governance (1%). It is interesting to note that if "jobs" and "economics development" were taken together, they'd be at 35%, top of the list for most of our respondents. This is not surprising considering that the unemployment rate in the state stands at 44.22%¹⁸, with 951,059 people out of work according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

What is your view on alignment with the centre?



¹⁶SBM Intelligence. (2021) Impact of IPOB-ordered sit-at-home protests. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3brGpUM> [Accessed 31/10/21].

¹⁷ibid

¹⁸National Bureau of Statistics. (2021) Labour force statistics, unemployment and underemployment by state.

¹⁹Q4 2020. Labor Force Statistics: Unemployment and Underemployment Report (Q4 2020). 49, 84.

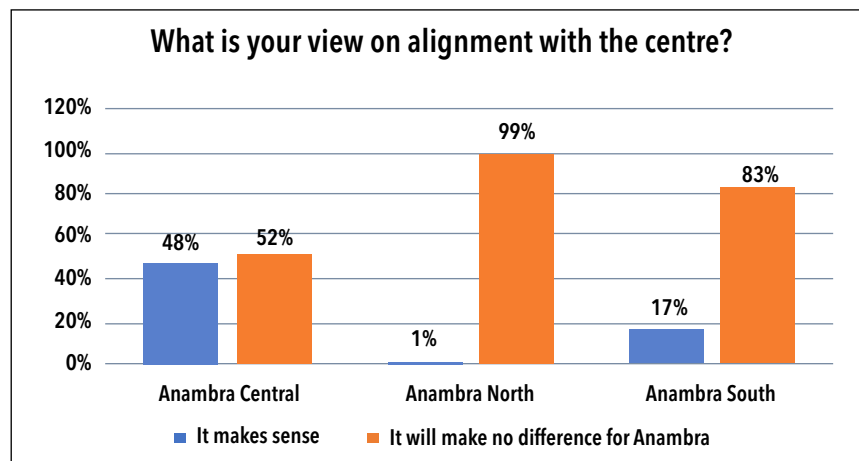


WILL THEY VOTE?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

One of the key campaign issues pushed by the APC candidate is the need for Anambra State to “align with the centre”, a euphemism for the state being governed by the same party as the President. This has not been the case since March 2006 when Peter Obi (APGA) replaced Chris Ngige (PDP) as governor. However, a strong majority of our respondents (82%) do not think that alignment with Abuja will make any difference to events in the state. There are varied opinions on this issue across the senatorial districts.

While a majority in all districts believe that alignment with the central government’s party will make no difference, those who think it will make sense were more in Anambra Central (48%), followed by those in Anambra South (17%). Only 1% of respondents in Anambra North believe that alignment with the central government’s party will make a difference.



¹Okafor, T. (2021) Anambra poll: INEC laments serial judgments, seeks NBA's intervention. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BwHaGk> [Accessed 31/10/21].

²Owoseye, A. (2017) Only 22 per cent voters partook in Anambra election – INEC. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3vZRLJ1> [Accessed 31/10/21].

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**WILL
THEY
VOTE ?**

**A look at potential
apathy in the 2021
Anambra Election**

Conclusion

We think that the 6 November governorship elections in Anambra will set a new low in voter turnout in not only the state but in governorship elections nationwide. High voter apathy has been worsened by insecurity and escalating violence in the state, especially as the Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) is opposed to conducting elections in the region until the release of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu. While the security agencies have shown their intent to ensure that the elections are held, it is unlikely that this would be enough to reverse the voter apathy.

There is a need for intensified measures to restore peace and security in the state, as well as efforts to look into the genuine grievances that are seized upon by separatist groups such as IPOB.

It is vital that the eventual winner of the elections forms a government that meets the desires of the people, particularly in terms of economic development and job creation.

It is evident, however, that there is declining faith in elections specifically and democracy as a whole among the electorate due to a lack of free and fair electoral

⁴Premium Times. (2021) Supreme Court affirms Soludo as APGA's governorship candidate. Oye as party's national chair. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2Y0MNiu>. [Accessed 31/10/21].



WILL THEY VOTE ?

A look at potential apathy in the 2021 Anambra Election

process and the inability of successive administrations to deliver on the expectations of the people.

Rather, what we have are worsening economic conditions, high unemployment and rising poverty. The most damning statistic to come out of Anambra in recent times is the 44% unemployment rate. Given that Nigeria's democracy appears to be failing to provide good governance and security, and the much-promised 'dividends of democracy' have failed to materialise, citizens are turning away in ever greater numbers, and looking to non-state actors. Growing voter apathy is not only a concern for Anambra, but for Nigeria as a whole, and if INEC fails to conduct an election that is seen as credible despite the challenges, we could see more people switch off especially as Nigeria hurtles towards the 2023 General Elections.

No matter who wins an election, where less than one in three voters routinely show up to the polls to elect their leaders raises fundamental questions about the legitimacy of such leaders and how much the people care about the outcomes of elections. Equally important, it paints a picture of a growing disconnect between the governors and the governed, paving the way for a vicious cycle of even more anarchy.

Thus, the onus is on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that the results of the elections are reflective of the votes of the people, and that it is seen to be credible, free and fair.

¹Okafor, T. (2021) Anambra poll: INEC laments serial judgments, seeks NBA's intervention. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3BwHaGk> [Accessed 31/10/21].

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ABOUT SBM

SBM Intel is an Africa focused geopolitical research and strategic communications consulting firm focused on addressing the critical need for political, social, economic and market data, and big data analytics. We employ various methods of data collection. Our Data Collection Methodology team advises on data collection methods for all ONS social and business surveys. With clients both within the business and the wider government community, we aim to provide expert advice on data collection procedures and carry out research leading to improvements in survey quality.

Since 2013, we have provided data analytics and strategic communication solutions to clients across various sectors in Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, South Africa, the UK, France and the United States ■