

**Nigeria's Security Recruitment:**  
**Ethnic Supremacy**  
**or Competence?**

APRIL 2022



## DISCLAIMER

The data contained in this report is only up-to-date as at Thursday, 31 March 2022. 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 and desk research 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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## SETTING THE AGENDA

**I**n September 2020, local news organisations<sup>1</sup> revealed that the State Security Service (also known as the Department of State Services) secretly engaged in a recruitment exercise that directly contravened Nigeria's federal character principle. It was reported that the North had a massive share of the roughly 1,300 Nigerians who underwent cadet training at two different camps of the domestic intelligence agency in Lagos and Bauchi.

*The principle of "federal character" was put in Nigeria's 1979 Constitution in order to ensure fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructure among the various federating units of Nigeria and thus avoid the kind of ethnic competition that led to the fall of the country's First Republic (1963-66). Ethnic rivalries between the "big three" ethnic groups in those years culminated in two coups in 1966 and eventually in pogroms which led to the country's Civil War (1967-70). The Federal Character Commission was established in 1996 to implement and enforce the federal character principle.*

Of the total 628 cadet trainees who had resumed at the Bauchi facility as of 23 September 2020, 535 identified themselves as trainees joining the service from either the North-East or the North-West. Only 93 were from either the South-East, South-South, South-West or North-Central. The most damning of the revelations showed that at least 71 of those who underwent cadet training hailed from Bichi Local Government Area, Kano, the same local government area where the current director general of the agency, Yusuf Magaji Bichi, hails from.

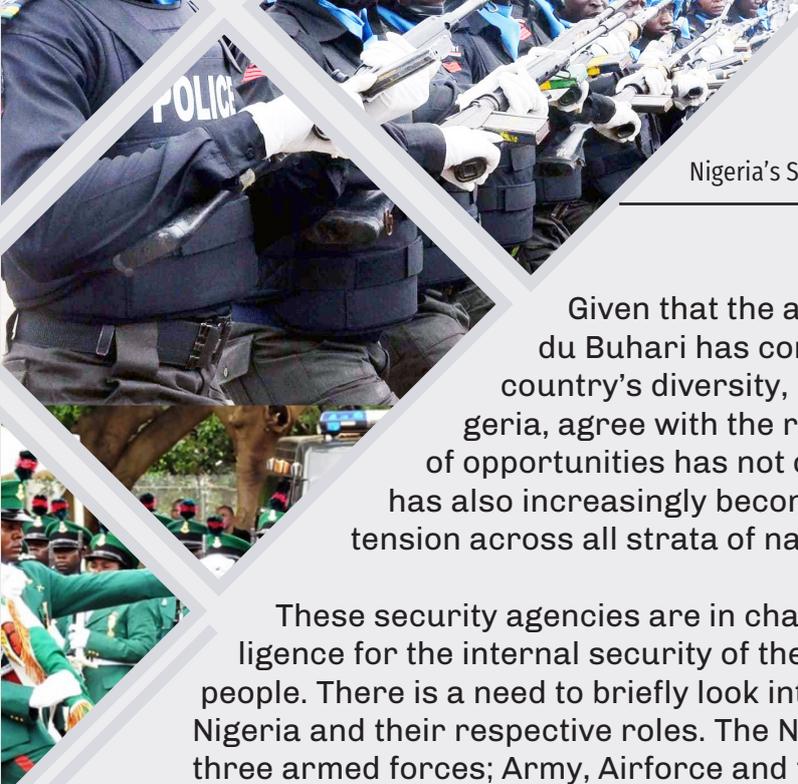
The 2020 scandal was the second of such since the Buhari administration came to power. A similar case happened in 2017<sup>2</sup>. In an unsigned statement<sup>3</sup> released by an unnamed source at the federal government to select news media, the government rationalised its actions in 2017 by claiming that it deliberately employed fewer southerners to correct previous 'inequity' against the northern part of the country. It never gave any evidence to corroborate these claims, and thus set the stage for more ethnic suspicion.

These reports of the lopsided recruitment exercise in the country's armed security outfits which include the Police, Department of State Service (DSS), and the armed forces (Army, Navy, Airforce) have left many Nigerians scandalised.

<sup>1</sup>DSS Director-General, Bichi, Conducts Secret, Uneven Recruitment Into Agency With North Getting 535 Slots, South 93 | Sahara Reporters

<sup>2</sup>SSS in recruitment scandal - Katsina 51, Akwa Ibom 5; Kano 25, Lagos 7 | Premium Times Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Presidency speaks on recruitment scandal in SSS | Premium Times Nigeria



Given that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has consistently shown little regard for the country's diversity, many people, especially in Southern Nigeria, agree with the reports of lopsidedness. The distribution of opportunities has not only been abused in several sectors, it has also increasingly become a tool of controversy, division and tension across all strata of national life.

These security agencies are in charge of activities that border on intelligence for the internal security of the country and the protection of the people. There is a need to briefly look into the various security agencies in Nigeria and their respective roles. The Nigerian military, which includes the three armed forces; Army, Airforce and the Navy, for instance, have the role of defending the country from external aggression and maintaining the territorial integrity of Nigeria. They are expected to secure the borders of the country from violation on land, sea or air, and also handle firearms. They take action in suppressing insurrection and helping other civil authorities to restore order upon orders from the president. This role and order, however, are subject to conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.

Narrowing the roles, the Army is the land division and the largest branch of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The Nigerian Navy is the sea division of the armed forces while the Nigerian Airforce is the air unit of the armed forces.

The State Security Service (SSS), also known as the Department of State Services (DSS), on the other hand, functions basically as a domestic intelligence agency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Its primary role is to gather information and intelligence within the country, particularly for the [protection of senior government officials such as the president and governors of the states. The DSS, under the control of the National Security Adviser, operates as a department within the presidency.

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF), being an executive organ of the government, is closer to the citizens (civilians) compared to other sister security agencies. Among many roles, the NPF is charged with conducting all prosecutions before any court. The force is the only public office assigned with the legal duty of maintaining law and order in the country, which includes making an arrest when necessary.

While the country fights to end diverse security challenges across all six geopolitical zones, the different security outfits have always denied the alleged lopsidedness in their recruitment exercises. One thing is clear, too much attention to the diversity in the country is one reason Nigeria is yet to win the war against insecurity including Boko Haram which has been in existence for over a decade.

Agency	Establishment Act and Year	Summary of Duty
FRSC	Commissioned on Decree No 45 of 1988 as amended by Decree 35 of 1992 referred to as the FRSC Act cap 141 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN). Passed by the National Assembly as FRSC (establishment) Act 2007	Maintenance of traffic laws and offences
NSCDC	Statutorily empowered by lay Act No 2 of 2003 and amended by Act 6 of 4th June 2007	Commissioned to provide measures against threat and any form of attack or disaster against the nation and its citizenry
NDLEA	Established by the promulgation of Decree No. 48 of 1989, now Act of Parliament	Aimed at exterminating illicit drug trafficking and consumption in the country
NAPTIP	Created on July 14, 2003, by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2003. Created to supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC)	To fight against corruption; receive complaints, investigate and prosecute offenders in the form of a holistic approach encompassing enforcement, prevention and educational measures
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Establishment Act (2004) and responsible for enforcing: The Money Laundering Act 1995, the Money Laundering (Prohibition Act 2004, the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 1995, the Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994 and other Financial Institutions Act 1991; and Miscellaneous Offences Act	Empowered to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalise economic and financial crimes and is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of other laws and regulators relating to economic and financial crimes
NCS (Prison Service)	Established under the Nigeria Correctional Service Act 2019 that repeals and makes up issues not covered in the Prison Act Cap. P29, LF 2004	To take into lawful custody all those duly certified to be so kept by courts of competent jurisdiction, produce suspects and other prisoners in courts as and when due, identify the causes of their anti-social disposition, train (in Prison Farms and industries) and reform prisoners to return to society at discharge and in the process generate revenue for the government
NCS (Customs Service)	The Customs & Excise Management Act (CEMA) Cap 45, LFN, 2004 vests Legal Authority in the Nigeria Customs Service to act on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria in all Customs matters. This is supported by various supplementary legislation	Revenue collection, prevention and suppression of smuggling, combat illegal trade activities, money laundering, traffic of illicit drugs
NIS	Extracted from the NPF, formerly, its immigration Department in 1958. On August 1, 1963, the department was formally established by an Act of Parliament, Cap 171, LFN as a civil service outfit in 1992, it was granted a paramilitary status.	To control persons entering or leaving the country, issue travel documents to bona fide Nigerians in and outside the country, issue residence permits to foreigners in the country, carry out border surveillance and patrol and enforce laws and regulations with which they have been directly discharged

Table showing some of Nigeria's paramilitary agencies and their functions.

Source: Brig Gen Bala Saleh, *White Ink Consult*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Nigeria's Security Architecture for the Future

The charts below show the recruitment pattern in the five security outfits in Nigeria. The charts capture data from 2016 exercises, the year after Muhammadu Buhari was inaugurated as the country's president, to 2021.

### Police recruitment



According to the data from the Police Service Commission, in 2016, the force shortlisted a total of 628 candidates for its specialist ASP and Inspector ranks. The breakdown shows that 62 of these ranks were from North Central, 123 from North East, 116 from North West, 102 from South East, while 155 and 110 shortlisted were from South South and South West respectively.

In the same year, the NPF shortlisted 611 candidates for its ASPs (General duty). Out of the number, 108 candidates were from North Central, 101 from North East, 116 from North West, 84 from South East, 102 from South South and 100 from the South Western part of the country.

For the ranks of Cadet Inspectors, 2016, the NPF shortlisted 608 candidates, out of which 108 were from the North Central, 100 from North East, 117 from North West, 83 from South East, 100 were from South South while the other 100 were from South West.

Considering the rank of Constable in 2016, the force shortlisted 4,379 candidates, according to reports. While 560 were from NC, NE had 1041, NW 347,



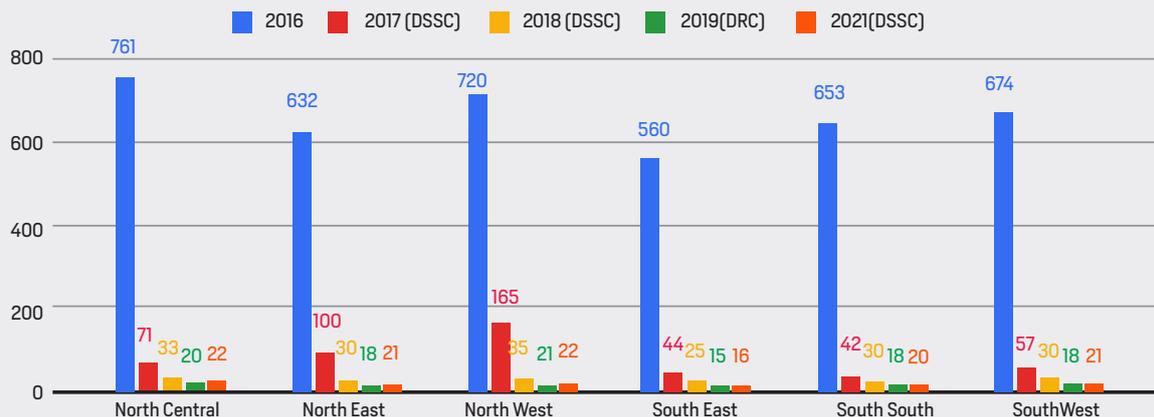
830 for SE, SS being the highest figure for this category in the year captured had 1290 while SW got 311 candidates.

In 2017, according to the data captured, the force shortlisted 5253 persons into various base ranks. Among the persons shortlisted, NW had the highest figure at 1300. NC had 823, NE with 759, SE had the lowest figure in the period with 651 while SS and SW had 799 and 921 respectively.

In 2018, the PSC released the list of shortlisted candidates for recruitment as police constables. Out of 315,032 candidates shortlisted, 155 applications were inconclusive while 314,877 were confirmed. Out of the confirmed shortlisted candidates, 78,700 were from NC, 68,077 from NE, NW got 85,563 shortlisted, 16,774 were from SE, 32,404 were from SS, while SW got 33,359 on the short-listed list.

The figure from 2021 data showed that 124,485 persons were shortlisted for Police recruitment out of which 28,290 were from NC, NE with the highest number of shortlisted candidates had 37,522, NW 35,585, SE had the lowest with 2,932, 10,778 from SS while SW had 9,378 being the second lowest.

## Nigerian Airforce recruitment





The Nigerian Airforce, according to data available, recruited in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021. From the data collected, 4000 candidates were shortlisted for the force in 2016. While 761 of the candidates were from NC with the highest number for the year, NE had 632, NW 720, SE 560 while SS and SW had 653 and 674 candidates respectively.

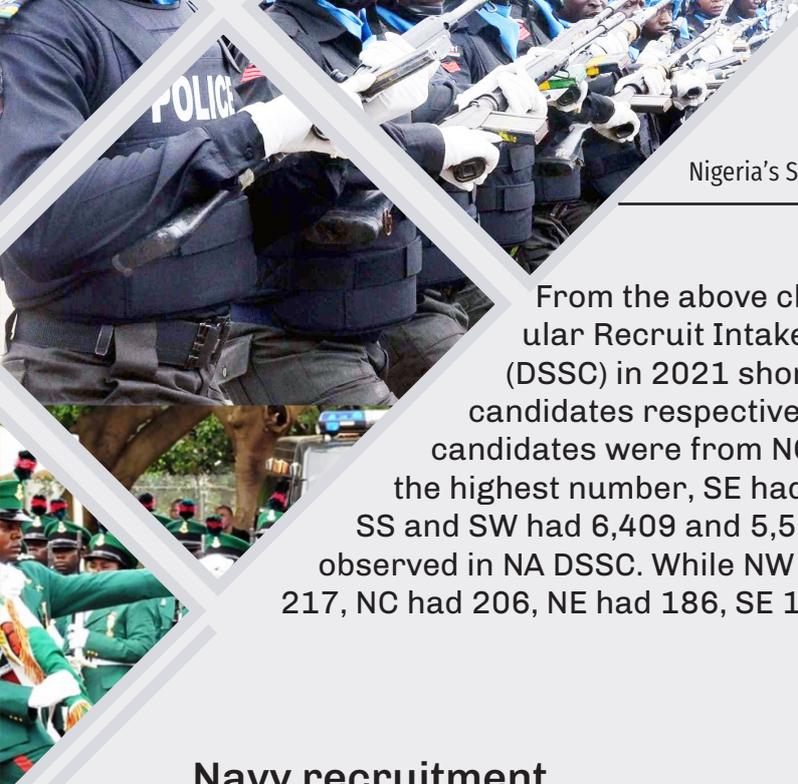
In its 2017 recruitment through Direct Short Service Course (DSSC), the Airforce shortlisted a total of 479 candidates. The breakdown showed that 71 were from NC, 100 from NE, NW had 165 depicting the highest number of candidates, SE, SS and SW had 44, 42 and 57 candidates respectively.

The Airforce recruited a total of 183 candidates through its DSSC in 2018. The following figures were from different regions of the country: NW 35, NC 33, NE 30, SE 25, SS and SW 30 each. In 2019, it recruited through the Direct Regular Commission (DRC) with the breakdown as follows: NC 20, NE 18, NW 21, SE 15, SS and SW 18 each.

Last year, according to reports, the Airforce recruited 122 candidates from the six geopolitical regions of the country via the DSSC. Among the numbers, 22 were from NC, 21 from NE, 22 from NW, 16 from SE, 20 and 21 were from SS and SW respectively.

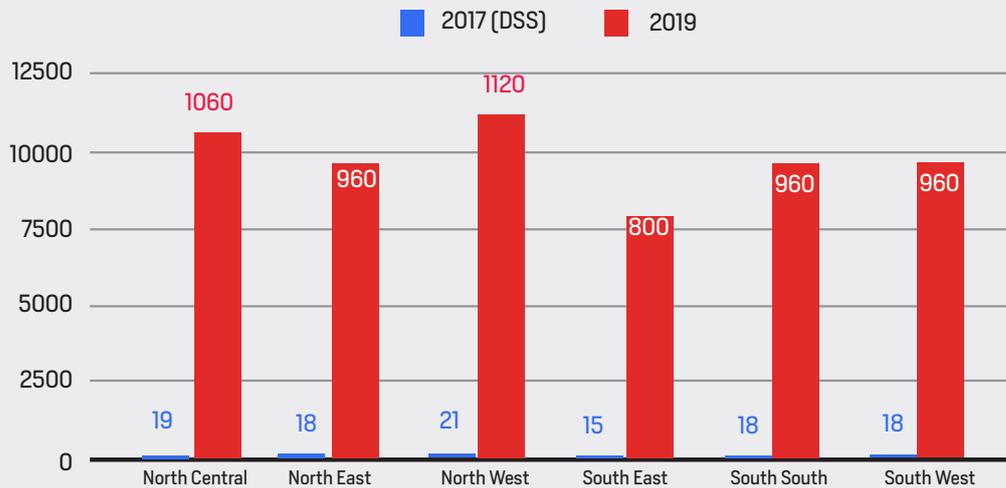
## Army recruitment





From the above chart, the Nigerian Army through its Regular Recruit Intake (RRI) and Direct Short Service Course (DSSC) in 2021 shortlisted a total of 44,054 and 1,136 candidates respectively. Out of the number, in the RRI, 10,424 candidates were from NC, 9,000 from NE, NW with 10,500 had the highest number, SE had the lowest with 2,142 candidates while SS and SW had 6,409 and 5,579 respectively. The same pattern is observed in NA DSSC. While NW had the highest number of candidates, 217, NC had 206, NE had 186, SE 155, SS 186 while SW had 186.

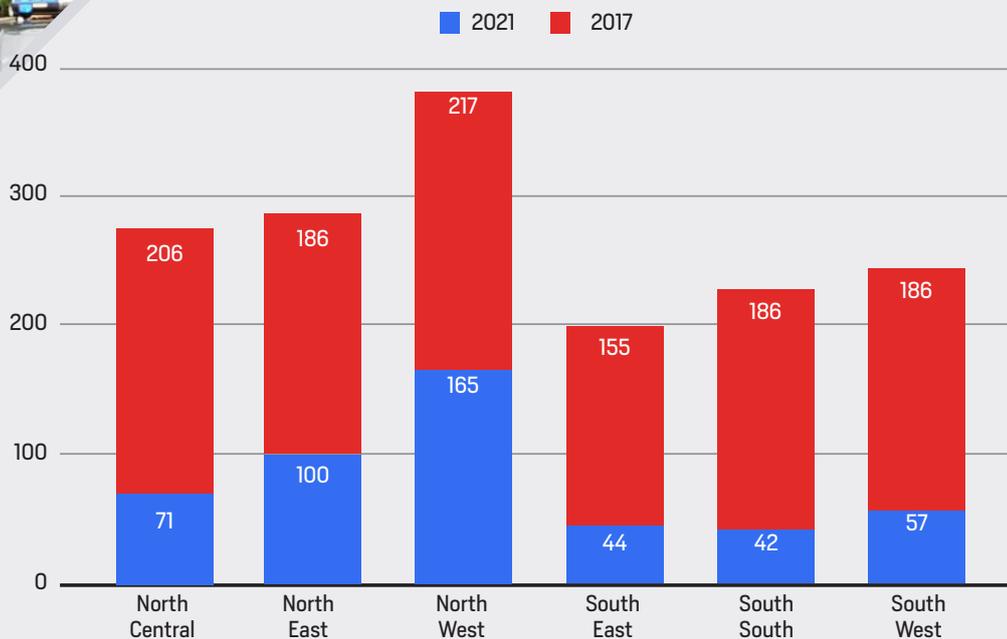
### Navy recruitment



The Navy, according to the data available, shortlisted 109 persons for the force via the Direct Short Service in 2017.. 19 of the candidates were from NC, 18 from NE, NW had 21 making it the region with the highest figure while SE, SS and SW had 15, 18 and 18 respectively.

In its general recruitment process in 2019, the Navy shortlisted 5,860 candidates for the force. NW had the highest number of candidates with 1,120 persons from the region. 1,060 were from NC, 960 from NE, 800 from SE, 960 from SS while SW had 960.

## DSS recruitment



The lopsidedness in the DSS, among all the security outfits, appears to be the most obvious. While in 2017, the agency shortlisted 479 candidates; 71 were from NC, 100 from NE and NW got the highest number with 165, leaving 44 to the SE, 42 to SS and 57 to SW. The same pattern was observed last year, 2021. While the agency shortlisted 1,136 candidates from all six geopolitical regions in the country, 206 came from NC, 186 from NE, NW, as usual, was with the highest number of candidates at 217, while SE, SS and SW produced 155, 186 and 186 respectively.

A critical look at the DSS' recruitment process showed that while only the minimum of five cadets stipulated per state finally entered the Service from Akwa Ibom, Nigeria's largest oil producing state; more than times that number, 51, found their way in from Katsina State, the home state of both President Muhammadu Buhari and the then Director-General of the SSS, Mr. Daura.

The anomaly in the exercise was further evident in the disparity between intakes from the two most populous states in Nigeria, Kano and Lagos, which had 25 and 7 respectively, indicating that the size of the pool of applicants from each state was not a factor in the recruitment. The pattern appeared to have been corrected in 2021 as all states in the country had 31 cadets each except for FCT, which had 20, but the damage had already been done earlier, and there are no public sources to corroborate the 2017 statement by the FG which claimed that in earlier years, more people from the South had been recruited into the service.

## CONCLUSION

The geopolitical make-up of Nigeria makes the actions of the DSS and other security agencies dangerous and antithetical to national cohesion. The federal character principle Section 14 (3&4) of the 1999 Constitution clearly states that recruitment into the public service must reflect federal character. For a country deeply divided across ethnicity and religion, conducting recruitment into government departments especially in a sensitive sector such as security, with bias, does a good job of fuelling distrust and fears of domination by one ethnic group.

Nigeria is currently faced with a threat from militant pastoralists who are largely from the Fulani ethnic group, the same ethnicity as President Muhammadu Buhari. Clashes between the herders and farmers have not only severely threatened food security in Nigeria, they have also fuelled animosities and distrust between the Fulanis and other groups. A lopsided security service recruitment which overwhelmingly favours the North where the Fulanis are mostly found has, and will continue to be viewed with mistrust. This mistrust is further not helped by the many intelligence and security failures that have manifested in worsening insecurity in the northern part of the country, while comparable groups in the southern part of the country are dealt with heavy handedly. For example, not a few eyebrows were raised when a leaked DSS memo blamed a bomb threat in Abuja, which never manifested, on the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra, a group which has not operated outside its Igbo heartland. This memo was leaked in the days after the intelligence services had multiple public failures that showed in the terrorist attacks on airport and rail infrastructure in Kaduna State.

Such lopsided, and sectional behaviours severely reduce the incentive for best performance within the services. Recruitment done with clannish sentiments and not with the aim of getting the best possible candidates pose a grave danger to national security because they emphasise ethnic supremacy over competence.

As such, new recruits who do not have the skills they are supposedly recruited for, nor the passion or knowledge to do the job, end up becoming a danger to the country on account of their inability to effectively carry out their job. The direct fallout of such is poor national security and a reduced, if not non-existent ability to respond to security threats. Basically, it makes the country unsafe, with the cost of personal and business security borne by the average taxpayer despite paying taxes to the government for the provision of security.



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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■