

ONE DEATH EVERY 45 MINUTES

Insecurity and Women's Economic Reality in Nigeria

Shape of Light
Gender & Policy Data Hub

Introduction

On the 30th of March 2026, news of another killing in Jos North began to circulate. At first, like many before it, people sighed and scrolled past. The constant stream of violence has, in many ways, numbed the nation. It was not until a video surfaced, a video of a mother cradling her lifeless son, that the weight of it settled again. Beyond the numbers we have grown used to, these are real Nigerians, living and breathing among us, whose lives are abruptly cut short.

What began as the Boko Haram insurgency has since evolved into multiple forms of violence: separatist movements, armed banditry, and farmer–herder conflicts. Regardless of the name or form it takes, the outcome remains the same, and that is, lives are lost. And while these losses are often presented as statistics, each number represents someone's child, partner, breadwinner, or friend. With every life lost, there is a ripple effect that extends beyond grief, taking a toll on households, communities, and ultimately, the economy.

Successive administrations, from Goodluck Jonathan to Muhammadu Buhari, and now Bola Ahmed Tinubu, have introduced various interventions aimed at addressing insecurity. Yet, the persistence of these attacks suggests that these efforts have not yielded the desired outcomes. In response, numerous organizations, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, ActionAid Nigeria, and Plan International, among others, have stepped in to provide support, addressing displacement, poverty, and the broader humanitarian consequences of insecurity.

This paper draws on data from both governmental and non-governmental sources to present a clearer picture of the scale of insecurity in Nigeria between 2021 and 2026. More importantly, it examines how this persistent violence extends beyond loss of life to shape economic realities, particularly for women and girls, whose economic empowerment is often most severely affected.

THE PICTURE AT A GLANCE

Nigeria's estimated population in 2026 is 242 million. Below is what insecurity looks like against that number.

218,016+
violent deaths recorded (2006–2025)

162,587
violent deaths (2014–2025 alone)

614,937
killed in 12 months (NBS, 2023–2024)

2.2M
kidnapped in 12 months (NBS)

3.3M
internally displaced

₦2.2T
ransom paid ($1.4 billion)

35.1M
children under 5 malnourished

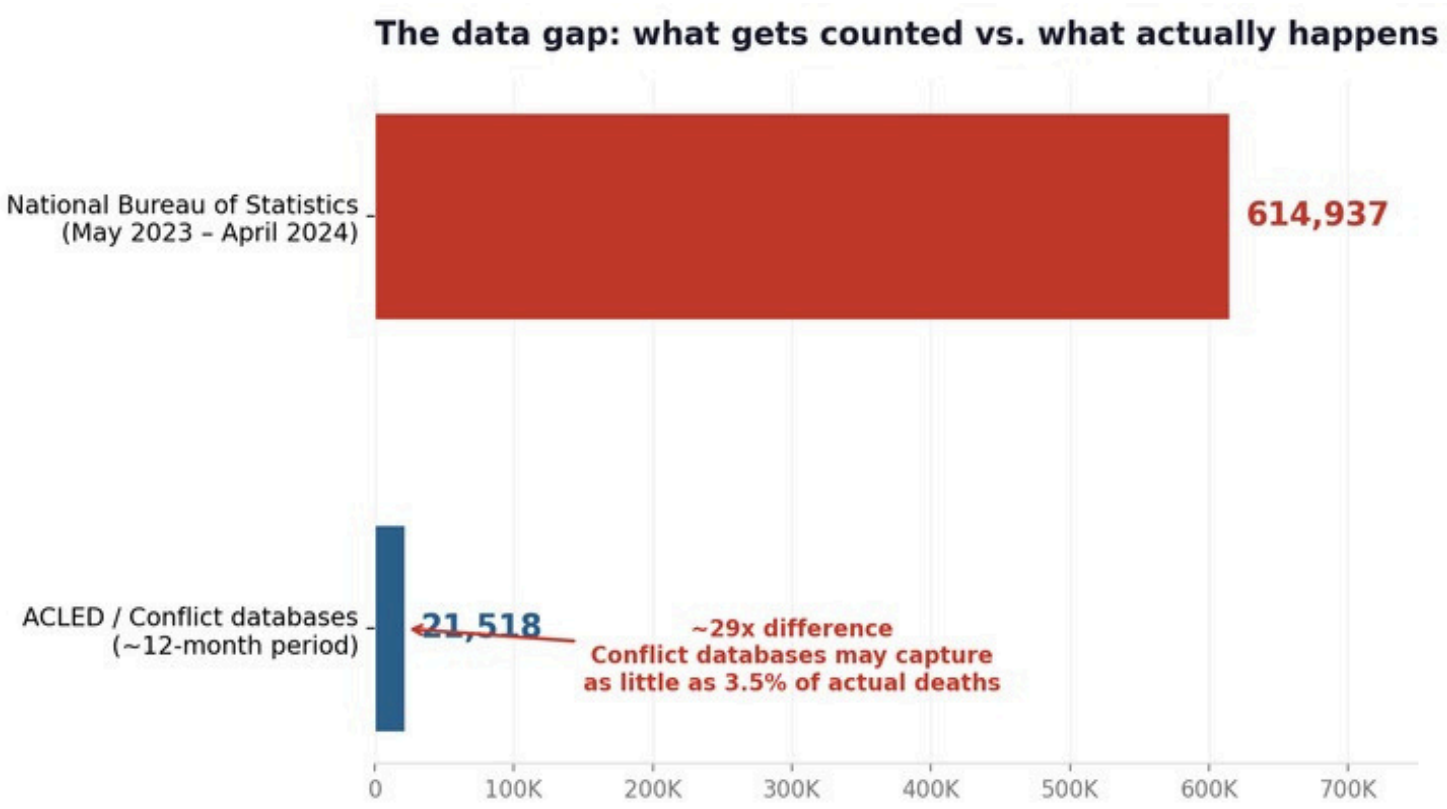
4.8M
food insecure (north-east)

2,450
child deaths per day

How the Totals Break Down

The figure of 218,016 violent deaths is derived as follows: 169,033 deaths were recorded between 2006 and 2021, as documented in the peer-reviewed study by Ukoji & Ukoji (BMJ Injury Prevention, 2023), which used the Nigeria Watch database. To this baseline, VerivAfrica data for 2022 (15,497) and 2023 (11,856), and ACLED data for 2024 (9,662) and 2025 (11,968) have been added. **This total does not yet include 2026, where documented killings are already mounting, at least 323 killed in 20 days of February alone (Amnesty International), over 160 killed in Kwara State on 3 February, 30+ killed in Jos on 30 March, and 13 killed in Kaduna the same day. The true 2026 figure, when compiled, will push the cumulative total higher.**

Separately, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recorded 614,937 victims killed from insecurity in a single 12- month period (May 2023–April 2024). The NBS figure is approximately 29 times higher than what conflict-tracking databases like ACLED recorded for a similar period (~21,518). This is because the NBS uses household surveys capturing a far broader range of insecurity-related deaths, while ACLED tracks documented conflict events reported in media and field sources. Both figures are presented here as reported by their respective sources. The discrepancy itself is significant: it suggests the vast majority of insecurity-related deaths in Nigeria go unrecorded in conflict databases.



Source: ACLED (2023+2024 combined) vs. NBS (May 2023–April 2024). Different methodologies, different totals.

The Daily Reality		
NBS kidnappings (same period)	**2,235,954**	6,126 per day. 255 per hour. 4 per minute.
Ransom paid (same period)	**₦2.2 trillion**	$1.4 billion. ~0.93% of Nigeria's GDP.
Internally displaced	**3.3 million**	1 in every 73 Nigerians. Over half are children.
Homicide rate (2023)	**15.75 per 100,000**	3 times the global average of 5.8 per 100,000.
Population (2026)	**~242 million**	1 in every 1,110 Nigerians killed by violence since 2006.
Total violent deaths (2006–2025)	**218,016+**	~30 people killed per day, every day, for 20 years.
Conflict deaths, 2025	**11,968**	33 people killed per day. 1 every 44 minutes.
Conflict deaths, 2014 (peak year)	**22,873**	63 people killed per day. 1 every 23 minutes.
NBS victims killed (May 2023–Apr 2024)	**614,937**	1,685 per day. 70 per hour. 1 every 51 seconds.

Source: ACLED, NBS, Nigeria Watch, The Lancet, World Bank, VerivAfrica, WFP, Worldometer / UN DESA

VIOLENT DEATHS: YEAR BY YEAR

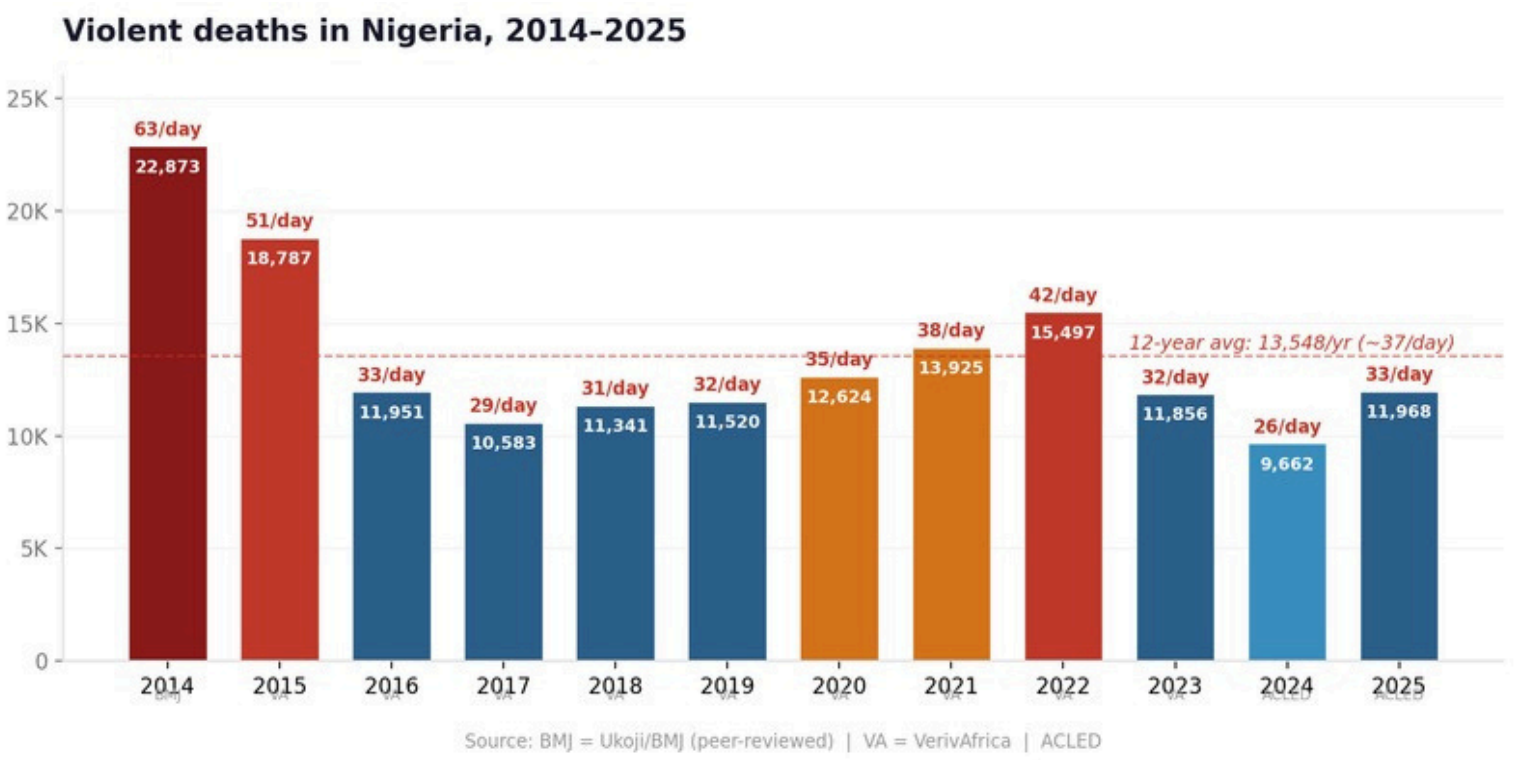
Annual violent death tolls compiled from multiple sources. The “per day” column divides the annual total by 365. The source column shows which dataset each figure is drawn from.

Annual Violent Deaths in Nigeria, 2014–2025

Year	Violent Deaths	Per Day	Source	Primary Drivers
2014	**22,873**	**~63**	**Ukoji/BMJ**	**Boko Haram insurgency peak**
2015	**18,787**	**~51**	VerivAfrica	Military offensive gains
2016	**11,951**	**~33**	VerivAfrica	Gradual security improvement
2017	**10,583**	**~29**	VerivAfrica	Continued decline
2018	**11,341**	**~31**	VerivAfrica	Minor resurgence
2019	**11,520**	**~32**	VerivAfrica	Banditry, cultism, armed robbery
2020	**12,624**	**~35**	VerivAfrica	Herder-farmer clashes escalate
2021	**13,925**	**~38**	VerivAfrica	Multi-dimensional violence
2022	**15,497**	**~42**	**VerivAfrica**	**Second peak in the decade**
2023	**11,856**	**~32**	VerivAfrica	Improved military operations
2024	**9,662**	**~26**	ACLED	Decline; kidnappings surge
2025	**11,968**	**~33**	ACLED	Renewed escalation
TOTAL (2014–2025)	**162,587**	**~37**	**—**	**12-year average**

(2006–2013)	**55,429**	—	Ukoji/BMJ	Implied from 2006–2021 total
CUMULATIVE (2006–2025)	**218,016+**	**~30**	—	**20-year total; 2026 ongoing**

Source: 2014: Ukoji & Ukoji, BMJ Injury Prevention (peer-reviewed). 2015–2023: VerivAfrica. 2024–2025: ACLED. 2006–2021 baseline: Ukoji/BMJ (169,033).



Between 2006 and 2021, the leading causes of violent death were: crime (51,425), insurgency (50,252), road crashes (27,645), political issues (8,324), and cattle grazing disputes (5,501).

2025: First Half

Security specialists reported at least 6,800 citizens killed by insurgency in the first six months of 2025, with over 5,400 abducted. The Nigeria Youth Forum documented 3,610 deaths from bandits and Boko Haram insurgents between January and March alone. Niger State recorded the highest toll (631), followed by Zamfara (585) and Borno (514).

2026: The Killing Continues

Amnesty International reported 323 Nigerians killed in just 20 days in February 2026, across Benue, Katsina, Kwara, Kebbi, Niger, and Zamfara states. On 3 February, an armed group attacked two villages in Kwara State, killing over 160 people and abducting dozens, one of the deadliest single incidents in recent months. Between 4 and 6 March, suspected Islamic militants attacked the town of Ngoshe in Borno State, abducting more than 300 civilians including women and children.

30 March 2026: Jos, Plateau State

On Palm Sunday evening, gunmen on motorcycles attacked the Angwan Rukuba community in Jos North, a university neighbourhood home to staff and students of the University of Jos. At least 30 people were killed, and scores were injured, according to Reuters and The Washington Post. Community leaders put the toll at 40 or higher. The Plateau State Government imposed a 48-hour curfew. The University of Jos suspended examinations. Residents defied the curfew to protest, demanding government action. In a separate incident the same day, gunmen killed at least 13 people in Kaduna State's Kagarko Local Government Area. Data compiled by International Christian Concern shows attacks have targeted Plateau communities during the Easter period in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024, 2025, and now 2026.

NIGERIA COMPARED TO OTHER CONFLICT ZONES

ACLED conflict fatality data for 2025. Nigeria's toll exceeds the combined total of the five other countries listed.

Conflict Fatalities by Country, 2025

Country	Conflict Fatalities	Population (approx.)
Nigeria	**11,968**	**242 million**
Syria	**7,918**	23 million
Yemen	**2,902**	34 million
Afghanistan	**927**	43 million
Iraq	**574**	45 million
Libya	**282**	7 million
Combined (excl. Nigeria)	**12,603**	—

Source: ACLED, Worldometer

WOMEN AND GIRLS: THE DATA

Between **2021 and 2025,** Nigeria recorded at least **62,908** conflict-related deaths, averaging **34 deaths per day, or approximately one death every 45 minutes. (ACLED and VerivAfrica datasets)** These fatalities, largely concentrated in the North, have significant economic consequences at the household and community levels, with women and girls disproportionately affected.

Insecurity has displaced between **2.1 million and 3.3 million people**, the majority of whom are women and children (SOS Children's Villages, Nigeria). Displacement results in the loss of productive assets, including farmland, businesses, and market networks. In conflict-affected areas such as Borno State, over **70% of women have lost their primary sources of income**, while **62.2% have lost farmland and 49.8% have lost livestock, indicating a near-total collapse of women's economic base.**

The loss of lives translates directly into loss of income. With an average of over 12,000 deaths annually, thousands of households are economically destabilized each year, forcing women into primary provider roles without corresponding access to credit, land ownership, or formal employment opportunities. Nationally, women already face structural disadvantages, with **26.1% excluded from the labour force compared to 18.3% of men**, a gap that widens in conflict zones. **(Women in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPs): Nurturing Growth and Strength (WINGS)**

Insecurity also restricts mobility and market participation. With over 2.2 million kidnappings recorded within a 12-month period (National Bureau of Statistics), movement for trade and agricultural activities has become increasingly unsafe, particularly for women who dominate informal market systems. This reduces income-generating opportunities and limits access to supply chains and customers.

Education disruption further compounds long-term economic effects. Since 2009, over 4,000 women and girls have been abducted, contributing to increased school withdrawals among girls in high-risk areas. This has direct implications for future earnings, as reduced educational attainment is strongly linked to lower lifetime income.

Food insecurity and health challenges also undermine women's economic productivity. Approximately 4.8 million people in North-East Nigeria are food insecure, while 1 in 16 women of reproductive age suffers from acute malnutrition. Additionally, 35.1 million children under five are affected by malnutrition, increasing caregiving burdens on women and limiting their participation in economic activities **(Nigeria mission at the Alliance for International Medical Action (Alima).**

Malnutrition and Health

Indicator	Figure	Source
Children under 5 affected by malnutrition	**35.1 million**	The Lancet / WFP
Child deaths per day	**2,450**	The Lancet
Women of reproductive age with acute malnutrition	**1 in 16**	The Lancet / WFP
People food insecure (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe)	**4.8 million**	WFP

Source: The Lancet (Vol. 405, June 2025), World Food Programme

ORGANISATIONS OPERATING IN THE CRISIS

The following organisations are active in Nigeria's insecurity response, as referenced in the data sources compiled for this publication:

Organisation	Area	Key Data Point
CARE International	North East	Active since 2017; responding to north-east conflict
Street Child	North East	Reaching 11,000+ people with disabilities; focus on women and girls
International Rescue Committee	North East	Assisted 1.3 million people (2019); target 1.5 million/year
Tearfund	National	Essential services and sustainable recovery
Amnesty International	National	Documenting killings, abductions, mob violence
ACLED	National	Conflict fatality tracking and data
National Bureau of Statistics	National	Crime and security surveys
Nigeria Watch	National	Violence monitoring since 2006
CEDAW / United Nations	National	Systematic violations finding (September 2025)

Other organisations referenced: Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, T.Y. Danjuma Foundation, REACH International, ADRA International, Boko Haram Victims Relief, Chris Oyakhilome Foundation, Aliko Dangote Foundation, Muslim Public Affairs Centre, and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

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