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PEACE AND HUMAN SECURITY

OUTLOOK 2026



Key Trends, Risks and Forward-Looking Signals



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Abbreviation and Acronym

- BH** – Boko Haram
- CEWS** – Conflict Early Warning System
- ECOWAS** – Economic Community of West African States
- GPS** – Gender, Peace and Security
- IMN** – Islamic Movement of Nigeria
- ISWAP** – Islamic State West Africa Province
- NEWS** – National Early Warning System
- SGBV** – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- UNSCR 1325** – United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- WANEP** – West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
- YPS** – Youth, Peace and Security

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Nigeria: Overview of Key Trends, Risks and Outlook

Nigeria's security landscape between 2024 and 2025 reflects a trajectory of **intensifying impact with widening pressure zones**, rather than a simple increase in the number of incidents. While insecurity did not escalate uniformly across all locations or threat types, the human cost of violence, environmental shocks, and protection risks rose sharply, signalling growing vulnerability and reduced resilience in several parts of the country.

Three broad national patterns stand out. First, **violence has become more lethal**, with fatalities and injuries increasing faster than incident counts across multiple threat categories. Second, **insecurity is increasingly diffuse**, extending beyond long-established hotspots into new or previously lower-risk states. Third, **risk drivers are interacting**, with organised crime, environmental stress, governance pressures, and displacement reinforcing one another rather than operating in isolation.

Together, these dynamics point to a security environment where shocks are less predictable, impacts are more severe, and delayed response carries higher costs.

Dominant Forms of Insecurity

Violent extremism and organised crime remain the most significant drivers of physical harm nationwide. Abductions, armed attacks, banditry, and insurgency-related violence continued to account for substantial loss of life, injuries, and displacement. Notably, abductions emerged as a particularly persistent and adaptive threat, reflecting both criminal incentives and broader economic stress.

Alongside direct violence, environmental insecurity became a major contributor to human suffering. Flooding, windstorms, and erosion incidents increased moderately, but deaths and injuries rose disproportionately, underscoring heightened exposure and structural vulnerability. Environmental shocks increasingly functioned as threat multipliers, triggering displacement, livelihood disruption, and secondary conflict risks.

Governance-related pressures also shaped the national outlook. Rising peaceful demonstrations and strike actions reflected sustained civic mobilisation around economic hardship, service delivery, and political accountability. Although violent protests declined, the volume and spread of civic action point to latent tensions that could escalate during politically sensitive periods.

Finally, gendered and protection-related harms, including sexual and gender-based violence and human trafficking, showed worsening severity. These trends signal heightened risks for women, children, and youth, particularly in contexts affected by displacement, poverty, and insecurity.

Most Affected Geographies

Geographically, insecurity remained **concentrated but increasingly expansive**.

The **Northwest and North Central zones** continued to experience the highest intensity of harm, driven by abductions, banditry, farmer–herder violence, and environmental stress. Several states in these zones consistently appeared across indicators for deaths, injuries, and displacement, marking them as persistent high-risk environments.

The **Northeast** remained under pressure from insurgency-related dynamics, with continued human impact and spillover risks, particularly where displacement and environmental shocks intersected.

At the same time, **southern states** recorded notable increases in organised crime, trafficking, and civic mobilisation, signalling diffusion beyond traditional conflict epicentres. While impact levels were generally lower than in northern hotspots, the upward trend is significant from an early warning perspective.

Outlook for 2026: Key National Risk Signals

Looking ahead to 2026, the national outlook suggests a risk environment defined by **intensification rather than transformation**. Existing threats are likely to persist and adapt, with several forward-looking signals standing out:

- **Sustained abduction risk**, particularly in economically stressed and weakly governed areas, with potential for further geographic spread.
- **Higher-impact environmental shocks**, especially flooding, producing disproportionate displacement and humanitarian pressure.
- **Election-linked governance stress**, with increased civic mobilisation that could escalate if trust in institutions weakens or response dynamics become coercive.
- **Deepening gendered vulnerability**, as displacement, poverty, and insecurity heighten risks of SGBV and trafficking.
- **Greater interaction between risk drivers**, increasing the likelihood that shocks in one domain trigger instability in others.

Overall, the national picture points to a 2026 outlook where early warning effectiveness will depend on detecting severity, clustering, and interaction of risks, not simply tracking incident frequency. Preventive action will be most effective where it is anticipatory, integrated, and focused on areas showing rapid escalation or cross-cutting vulnerability.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria continues to face complex peace, security and human security challenges driven by violent extremism, organised crime, governance pressures, environmental stress, and persistent gendered vulnerabilities¹. These challenges manifest unevenly across states and geopolitical zones, varying in intensity, form, and impact. Understanding how these patterns evolve, and what risks they signal, is essential for effective prevention, preparedness, and response.

This *Nigeria Peace, Security and Human Security Outlook* is produced by **WANEP-Nigeria** to provide a forward-looking synthesis of conflict and security trends based on systematic early warning data. The Outlook moves beyond descriptive reporting to examine trajectories, emerging risks, and conditions that may shape Nigeria's peace and security environment in the period ahead.

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of this Outlook is to support evidence-informed decision-making by presenting a consolidated national picture of trends, risks, and outlook signals drawn from early warning data. It is intended for policymakers, security actors, development partners, civil society organisations, researchers, and practitioners engaged in peacebuilding, prevention, and response.

Specifically, the Outlook seeks to:

- Identify dominant and emerging patterns of insecurity
- Highlight geographic concentration and diffusion of risks
- Examine how insecurity intersects with governance, environmental stress, and gendered vulnerabilities
- Provide forward-looking signals to inform planning, prioritisation, and early response

The document is not an incident-by-incident record, nor an evaluation of interventions. It offers a strategic synthesis of observed trends and their implications for peace and security.

Scope and Timeframe

The analysis covers the period **January 2024 to December 2025**. This timeframe enables the identification of trend direction and emerging patterns, rather than isolated fluctuations. Where relevant, comparisons between 2024 and 2025 are used to indicate escalation, stabilisation, or diffusion of risks.

The Outlook adopts a national lens while recognising significant sub-national variation. State-level patterns are used to illustrate persistent hotspots, emerging areas of concern, and geographic shifts in insecurity.

Overview of the National Early Warning System (NEWS)

The Outlook draws on data generated through the National Early Warning System (NEWS) coordinated by WANEP-Nigeria. NEWS is a structured conflict and human

¹ Jones, M. and Kotarska, G. (2025). *Crime, Terror and Insecurity in Nigeria: A Bottom-Up Analysis of Local Perceptions*. [online] Whitehall Report. Available at: <https://static.rusi.org/crime-terror->

[and-insecurity-in-nigeria.pdf](#) [Accessed 2 Jan. 2026].

security monitoring mechanism that tracks incident-level information across Nigeria.

Data collected through NEWS is organised around **four thematic areas**, which also structure the analysis in this Outlook:

- **Violent Extremism and Organised Crime**, covering terrorism, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, armed attacks, and other forms of organised violence;
- **Democracy and Governance**, capturing violence affecting civic and political spaces, protest-related incidents, and response signals such as arrests and security agency engagement;
- **Environmental Security**, tracking conflict linked to land, natural resources, livelihoods, and environmentally induced displacement;
- **Gender, Peace and Security**, capturing the gendered impacts of insecurity, with a focus on women's and children's casualties and displacement.

Across these thematic areas, NEWS captures indicators on civilian and security casualties, fatalities and injuries, displacement, and response-related actions. Data is generated through trained field monitors, open-source reporting, and verification processes to support consistency and reliability. This thematic structure enables tracking of patterns over time and across locations, providing an empirical basis for early warning analysis, risk assessment, and preventive action.

Interpreting Trends and Outlook Signals

Trends are interpreted by examining changes in the frequency, intensity, geographic spread, and impact of incidents over time. Emphasis is placed on pattern recognition rather than absolute numbers alone. Variations in reported incidents are assessed in relation to context, location, and type of insecurity.

Outlook signals are derived from persistent or accelerating trends across indicators, geographic diffusion into previously low-incidence areas, shifts in the nature or targets of violence, and recurrent stressors linked to governance, environmental conditions, or social cohesion. The Outlook does not predict specific events; rather, it highlights risk trajectories and conditions that may increase or reduce the likelihood of instability.

Limitations and Cautions in Data Use

While NEWS provides a robust platform for early warning analysis, some limitations should be noted. Reporting intensity may vary due to access constraints, security conditions, or information availability. Certain incidents, particularly in remote or highly insecure areas, may be under-reported or reported with delays.

Early warning data captures observable incidents and impacts but does not fully reflect latent tensions or unreported grievances. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of broader patterns rather than exhaustive accounts. Conclusions are drawn with these limitations in mind, and recommendations are framed to support adaptive and context-sensitive responses.

2.0 Violent Extremism and Organised Crime

Violent extremism and organised crime remain central drivers of insecurity in Nigeria, accounting for significant loss of life, injuries, abductions, and broader human security pressures. Notably, the 2025 Global Terrorism Index ranked Nigeria 6th, up from 8th in the previous year (2024)². This section examines how patterns of impact and risk evolved between 2024 and 2025 using data from the National Early Warning System (NEWS). The analysis focuses on changes in lethality, scale of harm, and response signals, providing insight into shifting threat dynamics and implications for early warning and preventive action.

This section examines trends in violent extremism and organised crime in Nigeria between 2024 and 2025, focusing on changes in human impact and risk patterns. Drawing on data from the National Early Warning System (NEWS), the analysis highlights shift in fatalities and injuries across major violence types. Emphasis is placed on scale, intensity, and

what these trends signal for early warning and preventive response. **Inci**

Incident Patterns Across Violent Types

Recorded violent incidents increased significantly between 2024 and 2025, rising from **1,059 to 1,768 incidents**, representing a **66.9 per cent increase** (see Figure 1). This sharp expansion reflects an intensification in the frequency of violent events across all six tracked violence types.

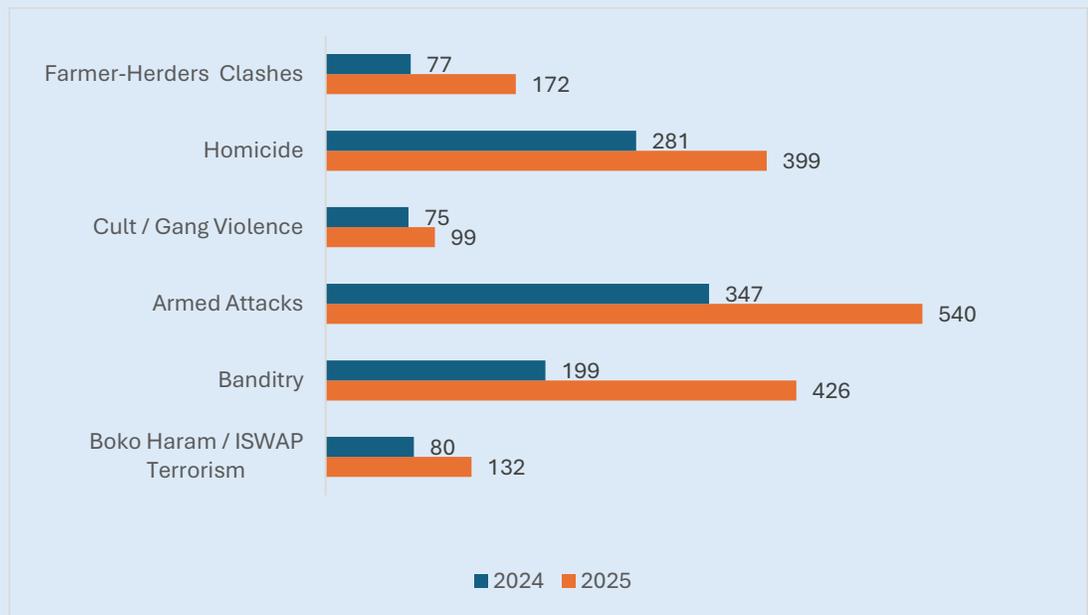


Figure 1 Total Incidents by Violence Type, 2024 vs 2025

Armed attacks remained the most frequent category in both years. However, the most notable proportional increases occurred in **farmer–herder clashes and banditry**, both of which more than doubled year-on-year. This indicates escalating pressure in agrarian and rural corridors, where communal

² Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2025: Measuring The Impact of Terrorism,

Sydney, March 2025. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed 3 Jan 2026).

violence and organised criminal activity are increasingly intersecting.

Homicide incidents also rose substantially, suggesting insecurity is widening beyond conventional conflict theatres. The continued increase in Boko Haram/ISWAP activity further demonstrates that insurgency pressures remain active rather than contained. Although cult and gang violence recorded more moderate growth, its persistence reflects sustained instability in urban and peri-urban environments.

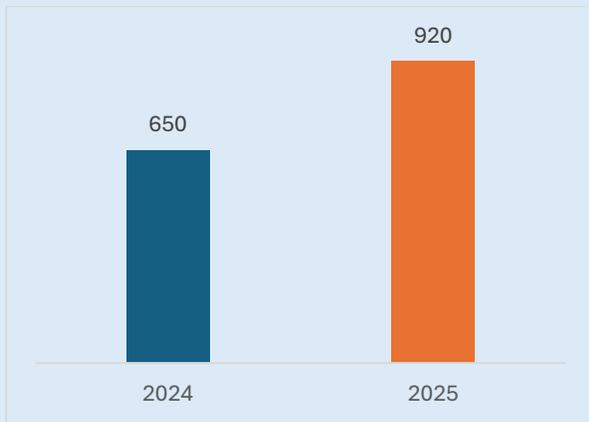


Figure 3 Abduction Incidents, 2024 vs 2025

Abduction trends reinforce this broader pattern of expansion. Incidents increased from 650 in 2024 to 920 in 2025, representing a 41.5 per cent rise (see Figure 2). Unlike other categories, abduction reflects organised criminal control and financial extraction capacity. Its growth signals strengthened operational networks and sustained civilian vulnerability. The expansion of kidnapping activity not only widens exposure but also fuels revenue streams

that can sustain further violent operations.

Taken together, the 2025 landscape reflects simultaneous growth across insurgent, criminal, and communal violence categories, rather than substitution between them. The pattern is one of layered escalation, where multiple violence drivers expand concurrently, increasing both frequency and complexity of insecurity dynamics.

Escalating Fatalities Across Violence Types

Fatalities linked to violent extremism and organised crime increased sharply between 2024 and 2025. Total recorded deaths rose from 1,578 in 2024 to 4,498 in 2025, representing an *increase of approximately 185 percent*. This escalation points to a significant rise in the lethality of violence nationwide.(See figure 3)

Banditry and farmer–herder violence emerged as the deadliest drivers of insecurity in 2025, accounting for 1,201 and 1,197 deaths, respectively. Together, these two violence types contributed more than half of

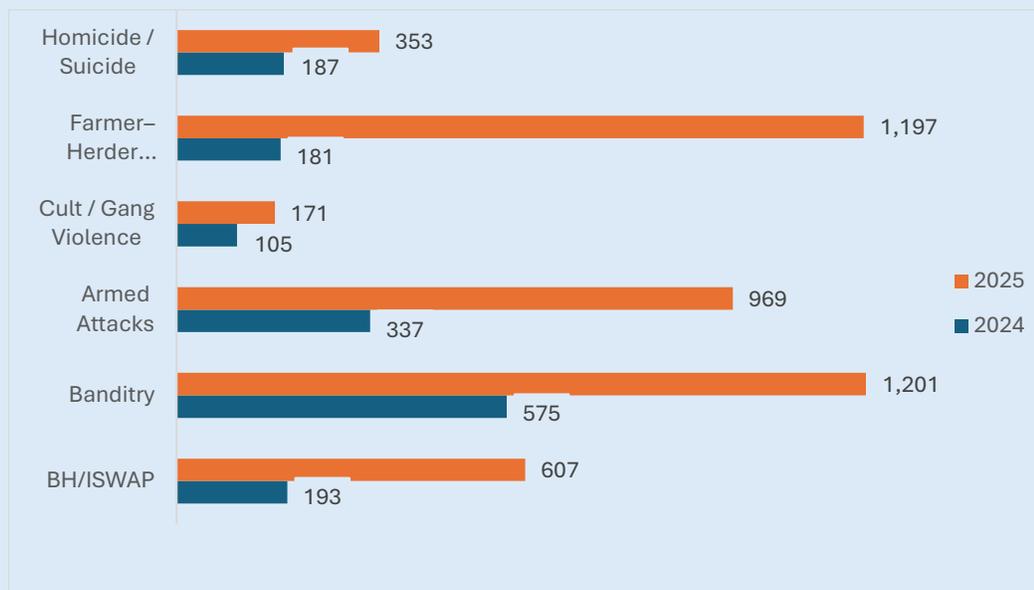


Figure 2 Total Fatalities by Violence Type, 2024–2025

all recorded fatalities, underscoring their central role in shaping the national security risk environment. The sharp increase in farmer–herder fatalities is particularly striking, suggesting intensifying resource-related and livelihood conflicts with increasingly severe human consequences.

Rising Injury Burden and Exposure to Harm

Injury data further reinforces the pattern of escalating violence intensity. Total recorded injuries increased from 559 in 2024 to 1,555 in 2025, **an increase of approximately 178 percent**. This rise indicates not only greater

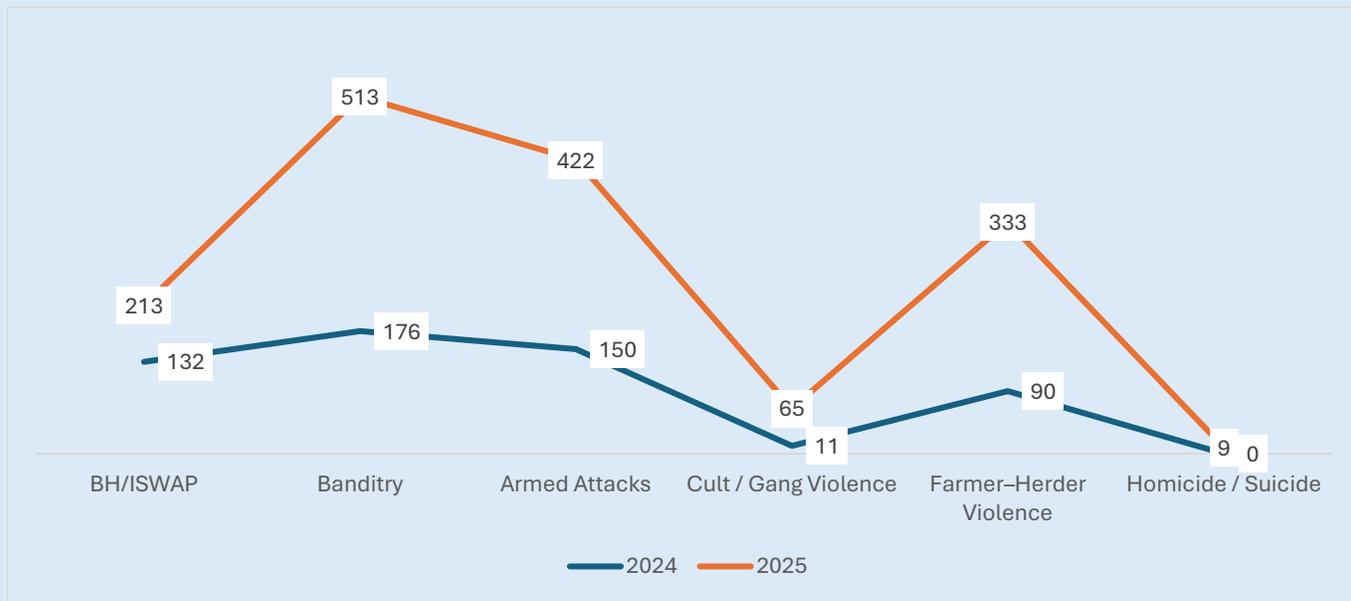


Figure 4 Total Injuries by Violence Type, 2024–2025

Fatalities resulting from armed attacks also rose markedly, increasing from 337 deaths in 2024 to 969 deaths in 2025. This trend indicates the growing impact of armed criminal activity beyond traditional conflict theatres. Similarly, BH/ISWAP-related fatalities more than tripled, rising from 193 to 607 deaths, signalling heightened lethality even where incident frequency cannot be reliably compared.

Deaths linked to cult and gang violence and homicide or suicide increased at lower absolute levels but remain significant. These trends point to expanding security pressures in urban and peri-urban areas and rising indicators of social stress that contribute to broader insecurity.

lethality but also wider exposure of populations to harm(see figure 4)

Banditry accounted for the highest number of injuries in 2025, with 513 recorded cases, followed by armed attacks (422 injuries) and farmer–herder violence (333 injuries). These patterns closely mirror fatality trends, reinforcing the assessment that these violence types are driving the most severe human security impacts. Injuries associated with BH/ISWAP activity increased from 132 to 213, signalling intensified insurgent-related harm. While cult and gang violence contributed fewer injuries overall, the increase from 11 to 65 injuries suggests growing risks in contexts often associated

with organised criminal networks and youth violence.

Overall, rising injury levels across violence types suggest increasing intensity of violence and broader civilian exposure, with implications for humanitarian needs, health systems, and community recovery. From an early warning perspective, these trends signal heightened risks of prolonged instability if not addressed through timely preventive and response measures.

Nigeria’s Most Fragile States (2025): Composite Stress Profile

States are assessed using three independent but reinforcing indicators of human insecurity in 2025:

- Abductions (proxy for organised criminal control and civilian vulnerability)
- Fatalities (proxy for lethality and conflict intensity across six violence types)
- Injuries (proxy for breadth and persistence of violence exposure)

Together, these indicators capture frequency, severity, and spread of insecurity.

A. Abductions hotspot states (2025):

Abductions rose sharply in 2025, with 5,567 cases recorded, marking a 163.2 per cent increase from 2,115 in 2024. This scale of growth signals a structural escalation rather than a short-term fluctuation. The rise in abductions is closely linked to their role as a financing stream for armed groups. SBM Intelligence estimates that ransom payments

generated up to ₦2.56 billion between July 2024 and June 2025³, highlighting the scale of resources extracted from civilians. These funds sustain recruitment, weapons acquisition, and operational expansion, reinforcing a cycle in which abductions both reflect and fuel organised violence.

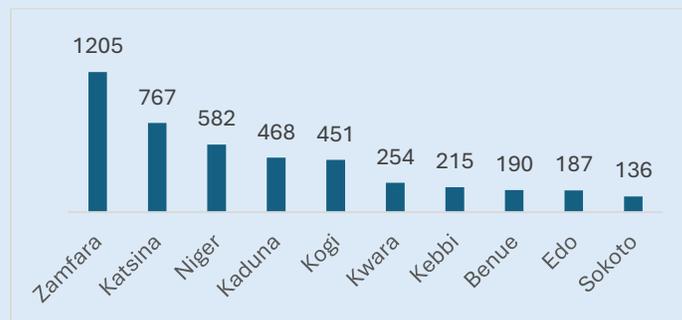


Figure 5 Top 10 states by abductions, 2025

B. Fatality hotspot states (six violence types, 2025)

Fatalities across BH/ISWAP, banditry, armed attacks, cult/gang violence, farmer–herder violence, and homicide/suicide show high lethality concentrated in fewer states.

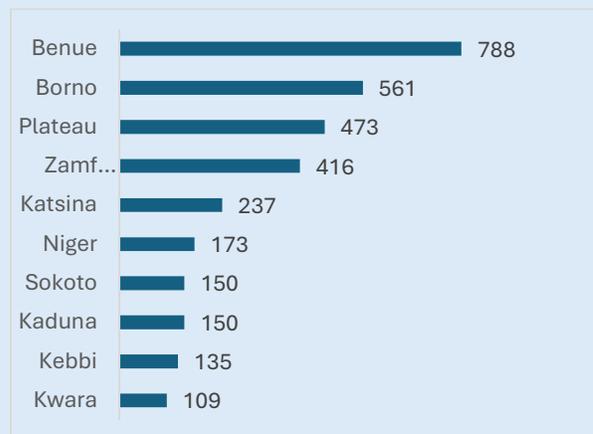


Figure 6 Top 10 states by total fatalities, 2025

³ Obinna Emelike. (2025, August 31). *Dark economy: “Kidnap-for-ransom swells to N2.56bn”* - *Businessday NG*. Businessday NG.

<https://businessday.ng/news/article/dark-economy-kidnap-for-ransom-swells-to-n2-56bn/>

C. Injury hotspot states (six violence types, 2025)

Injuries reveal where violence is widespread and persistent, even where fatalities may be lower.



Figure 7 Top ten states by total Injuries recorded, 2025

D. Composite Fragility and Regional Concentration of Insecurity

An assessment of abductions, fatalities, and injuries in 2025 reveals differentiated patterns of state-level fragility rather than a uniform severity profile. While a core group of states consistently ranks high across all three indicators, others exhibit elevated stress across two indicators or acute pressure in a single dimension. Together, these patterns capture not only the intensity of insecurity but also its breadth, persistence, and evolving geography.

States ranking high in abductions, fatalities, and injuries simultaneously face overlapping pressures from organised criminal activity, lethal violence, and widespread civilian harm. In these contexts, insecurity is structural rather than episodic, reflecting entrenched violence dynamics and sustained exposure of civilian populations. The

convergence of high abduction volumes with elevated deaths and injuries signals strained response capacity and an elevated risk of further escalation in the absence of coordinated preventive action.

A second group of states displays high stress across two indicators, typically combining high fatalities and injuries, or abductions and fatalities. These states remain highly fragile, even where one indicator falls below the national top tier. Their profiles suggest concentrated violence or persistent exposure that, if left unaddressed, could escalate into full-spectrum fragility.

Other states show acute pressure in a single indicator, most commonly abductions or fatalities. While these contexts may appear less severe overall, they represent important early-warning signals of diffusion, particularly where criminal or violent dynamics are expanding into areas previously considered secondary or peripheral.

Regionally, fragility remains concentrated but increasingly diffuse. The Northwest continues to experience the most acute pressure, driven by mass abductions and high lethality. The North Central zone remains a critical insecurity corridor, shaped by farmer–herder violence, kidnappings, and armed attacks. In the Northeast, insurgency-related pressures persist, with injuries indicating continued civilian exposure even where fatalities fluctuate. Emerging spillovers into parts of the South reinforce an Outlook characterised by concentrated fragility with widening geographic reach.

Overall, the composite analysis underscores the need for differentiated early warning and response strategies that address both deeply entrenched hotspots and states showing early signs of escalation.

Table 1 Composite Insecurity–Based Fragility Classification of Nigerian States (2025)

State	Abductions	Deaths	Injuries	Fragility Classification
Benue	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Kaduna	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Katsina	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Kwara	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Niger	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Sokoto	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Zamfara	✓	✓	✓	● Severe
Borno	—	✓	✓	● High
Plateau	—	✓	✓	● High
Kogi	✓	—	—	● Elevated
Edo	✓	—	—	● Elevated
Kebbi	✓	✓	—	● High
Yobe	—	—	✓	● Emerging

Note: Classification is based on state presence among the top 10 states for each indicator in 2025.

Rating:

- **Severe** – State ranks among the top 10 in all three indicators (abductions, deaths, injuries), indicating entrenched multi-dimensional insecurity.
- **High** – State ranks among the top 10 in two indicators, reflecting concentrated and sustained violence pressure.
- **Elevated** – State ranks among the top 10 in one major indicator, signalling significant but more contained insecurity stress.
- **Emerging** – State appears in one indicator with lower intensity or recent upward trend, indicating early warning risk.

3.0 Democracy and Governance

Democracy and governance dynamics shape how insecurity is expressed, managed, and contested within civic and political spaces. This section examines patterns of protest-related activity in Nigeria between 2024 and 2025, focusing on how civic expression, collective action, and governance-related incidents evolved over the period. Drawing on data from the National Early Warning System (NEWS), the analysis assesses shifts in peaceful and violent demonstrations, as well as strike actions, as indicators of civic pressure and state–society interaction.

The section highlights change in the scale and nature of protest activity, emphasising what these trends suggest about civic space, political stability, and governance stress. Attention is given to year-on-year variation and proportional change, providing insight into how democratic engagement and contestation responded to wider insecurity and socio-economic pressures during the review period.

Trends in Civic Expression and Protest Activity

Table 2 Protest-Related Incidents: Peaceful and Violent Demonstrations, 2024 -2025

<i>Indicator</i>	2024	2025	% Change
<i>Demonstrations (Peaceful) – Incidents</i>	139	198	+42.4%
<i>Demonstrations (Violent) – Incidents</i>	29	13	-55.2%
<i>Strike Actions – Incidents</i>	19	21	+10.5%

The comparative protest data point to a reconfiguration in patterns of civic expression between 2024 and 2025. Peaceful demonstrations increased by 42.4 per cent, rising from 139 incidents in 2024 to 198 in 2025, while violent demonstrations declined by 55.2 per cent, from 29 to 13 incidents. Strike actions showed only marginal change, increasing by 10.5 per cent, indicating the continued presence of socio-economic grievances within civic mobilisation.

Taken together, these trends suggest an expansion of peaceful civic engagement alongside a contraction of confrontational protest activity. This divergence points to a shift in how grievances are articulated in the public sphere, potentially reflecting greater organisational discipline among protest actors, evolving tactical preferences, or increased sensitivity to security risks within a broader context of criminal and communal violence.

At the same time, the combination of rising peaceful demonstrations and declining violent protest raises important questions about governance and response dynamics. While this pattern may indicate improved protest management or restraint within civic spaces, the reduced visibility of response-related signals limits definitive interpretation. From an early warning perspective, this introduces analytical uncertainty regarding whether state responses have softened, shifted toward non-coercive engagement, or become less observable within available data.

These patterns warrant close monitoring, particularly around politically sensitive periods. Sustained levels of protest and strike activity indicate that underlying grievances remain unresolved, and changes in response modalities may shape how quickly civic

pressure escalates into instability if triggered by political, economic, or security shocks.

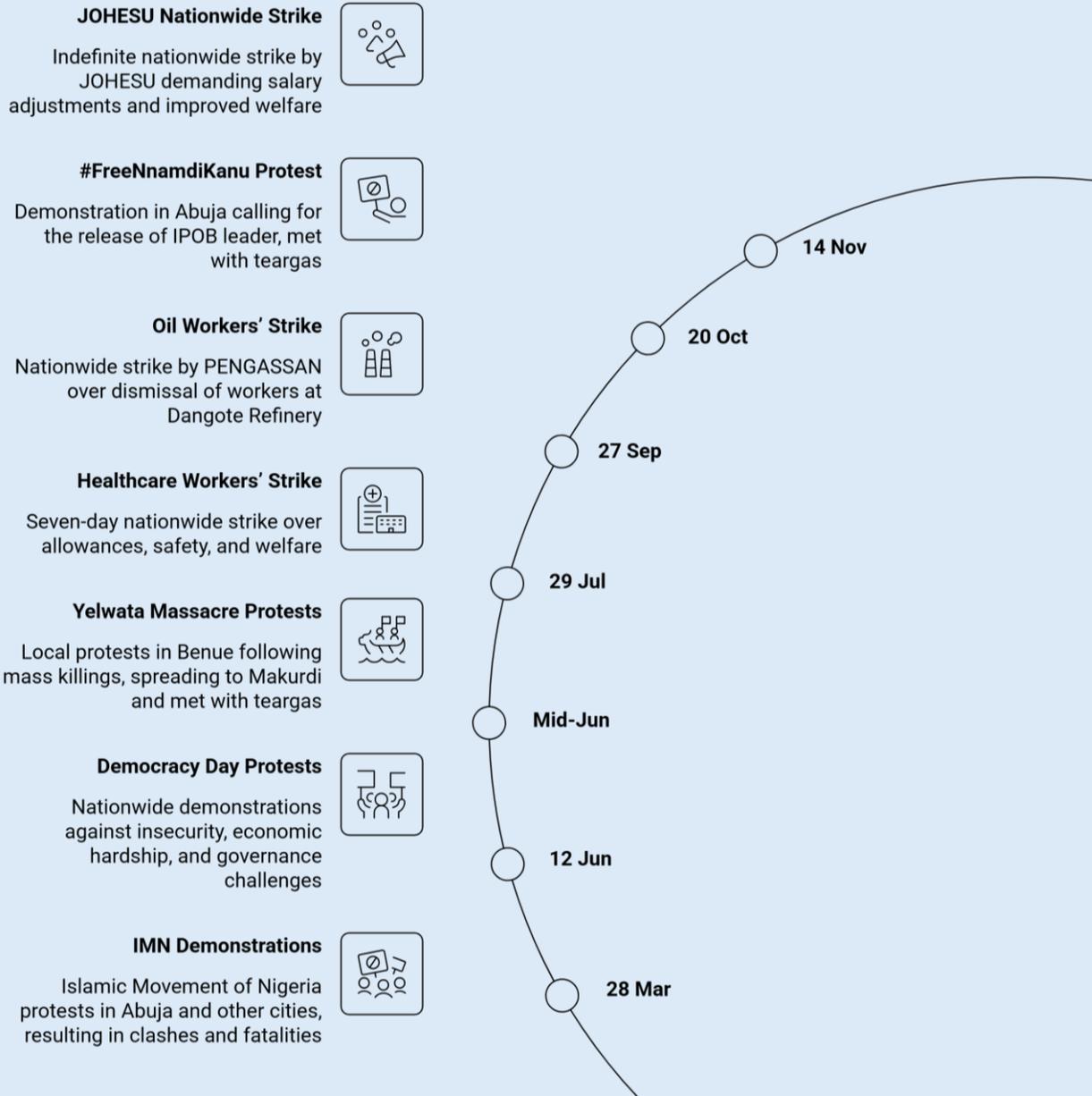


Figure 8 Key Civic and Governance-Related Protest in Nigeria, 2025

4.0 Environmental Security

Environmental stress shapes patterns of vulnerability, displacement, and conflict, acting as both a direct driver and a multiplier of insecurity. This section examines environmental security dynamics in Nigeria between 2024 and 2025, focusing on climate-related hazards, resource pressure, and their interaction with livelihoods and human security.

Drawing on data from the National Early Warning System (NEWS), the analysis assesses changes in the scale and impact of environmental incidents, including flooding, erosion, and windstorms.

The section highlights year-on-year variation in incidents, fatalities, and injuries, emphasising what these trends suggest about exposure, displacement risk, and the role of environmental stress in amplifying insecurity during the review period.

Environmental Stress, Displacement, and Conflict Dynamics

Environmental insecurity in 2025 was shaped less by how often climate-related incidents occurred and more by how severe their human impact became. While recorded flood, windstorm, and erosion incidents increased

from 54 in 2024 to 70 in 2025 (+29.6%), fatalities rose sharply from 66 to 223 (+237.9%), and injuries increased from 25 to 146 (+484.0%). This gap shows that rising harm was driven mainly by greater exposure and vulnerability, rather than by a large increase in hazard events themselves.

The higher impact reflects the combined effect of extreme weather and long-standing structural risks. Heavier rainfall and more severe flooding increased the speed and

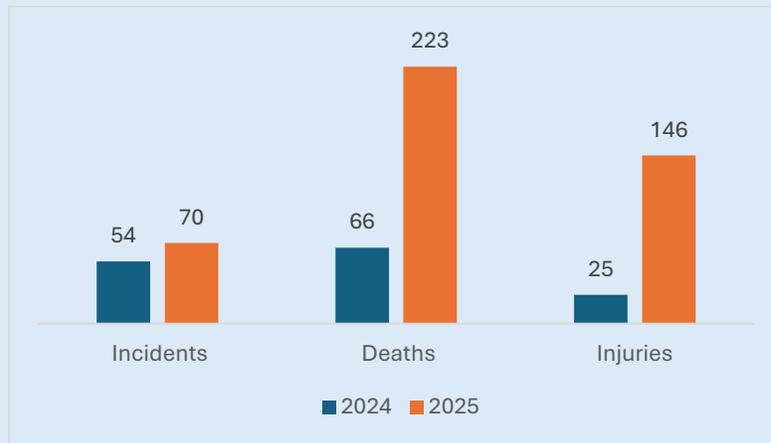


Figure 9 Environmental Incidents versus Fatalities and Injuries, 2024-2025

destructiveness of events, while settlement growth in flood-prone and erosion-affected areas placed more people at risk. Weak drainage systems, poor infrastructure, and limited early warning coverage further reduced community preparedness and response capacity. At the same time, strong reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods, particularly farming and river-based activities, increased losses during seasonal shocks.

Environmental shocks in 2025 were also closely linked to displacement and follow-on security pressures. Flooding destroyed homes and farmlands, disrupting access to food, water, and shelter, especially in riverine and agrarian communities. In Niger State, heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding and displacement. Situation tracking by

WANEP-Nigeria showed rising humanitarian needs and growing pressure on host communities, including increased strain on land, water, and basic services.⁴

Displacement linked to environmental shocks often overlapped with existing conflict dynamics. As displaced households sought land, water, and livelihoods in receiving areas, environmental stress increased the risk of local tensions and violence. This pattern was most visible in agrarian and pastoral zones, where land loss, erosion, and disrupted seasonal cycles intensified competition over already limited resources.

Overall, the 2025 pattern shows that environmental insecurity is not only a humanitarian concern but a key driver of wider human security risks. The sharp rise in deaths and injuries points to increasing fragility, where climate shocks shorten response time, accelerate displacement, and heighten the risk of conflict in already vulnerable settings.

⁴ WANEP-Nigeria(2025). NEWS Situation Tracking: Flood Disaster Update in Niger State. Available at : <https://wanepnigeria.org/situation-tracking-on->

[flood-disaster-update-in-niger-state/](#) (accessed 4 Jan 2026)

5.0 Gender, Peace and Security

Gender dynamics shape how insecurity is experienced, absorbed, and reproduced within communities. This section examines gender-related security trends in Nigeria between 2024 and 2025, focusing on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking as key indicators of differential and disproportionate harm. Drawing on data from the National Early Warning System (NEWS), the analysis highlights shifts in scale, severity, and response signals. It considers their implications for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) commitments, including UNSCR 1325.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Trends

Reported sexual and gender-based violence incidents increased from 55 in 2024 to 79 in 2025, representing a 43.6 per cent rise. Over the same period, reported SGBV-related deaths tripled from 3 to 9 (+200.0 per cent), while injuries increased from 55 to 64 (+16.4 per cent). This pattern indicates not only a rise in reported incidents, but a shift towards greater severity and harm.

The sharper increase in fatalities relative to injuries suggests heightened exposure and reduced protection for women and girls in insecure environments. Rather than reflecting isolated incidents, this trend signals a broader early warning of deteriorating safety conditions, in which insecurity, displacement pressures, and weakened social protection mechanisms increase the risk of extreme outcomes.

In early warning terms, the escalation in SGBV-related deaths is particularly significant. Fatal outcomes often indicate delayed response, limited access to protection services, or breakdowns in community-level prevention mechanisms. The data therefore suggests growing strain on protection systems in 2025, especially in contexts affected by broader violence and humanitarian stress.

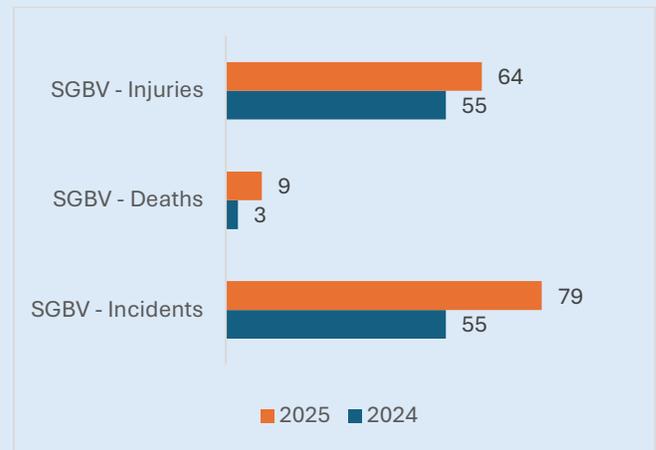


Figure 10 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Trends, 2024–2025

These trends underscore persistent gaps in the protection pillar of the WPS agenda. Rising SGBV severity highlights the need for early detection of gender-specific risk signals within conflict and crisis monitoring, alongside stronger integration of protection considerations into preventive response frameworks.

Human Trafficking as a Gendered Insecurity Indicator

Human trafficking indicators recorded a marked increase in 2025. Victims rescued rose from 102 in 2024 to 447 in 2025, an increase of 338.2 per cent. Over the same period, suspects arrested increased from 30 to 137 (+356.7 per cent). While these figures

may partly reflect intensified enforcement or improved detection, they also signal expanded trafficking activity and heightened vulnerability.



Figure 11 Human Trafficking Response Trends, 2024–2025

From an early warning perspective, sharp increases in rescues and arrests often correspond with wider socio-economic stressors. Insecurity, displacement, and livelihood disruption can increase susceptibility to trafficking, particularly for women and young people facing limited coping options. The scale of the increase in 2025 suggests a broader expansion of trafficking risks rather than a marginal enforcement effect alone.

Importantly, trafficking indicators should be interpreted as response signals rather than measures of resolution. Rising rescues and arrests indicate increased visibility of the problem, but also point to deeper structural drivers, including economic pressure, weakened community safety nets, and prolonged insecurity. These conditions align with known risk environments where trafficking networks exploit instability and population movement.

For WPS and YPS commitments, the data highlights trafficking as a critical but often under-recognised dimension of gendered insecurity. The scale of change observed in

2025 reinforces the need to treat trafficking not only as a criminal justice issue, but as a protection and prevention concern within broader peace and security strategies.

Gendered Early Warning Implications

Taken together, SGBV and human trafficking trends point to widening gendered vulnerability within Nigeria’s insecurity landscape. Rising incident severity, coupled with expanding trafficking indicators, suggests increasing pressure on protection systems and growing exposure for women and young people in fragile contexts.

For early warning and preventive action, these patterns underline the importance of tracking gender-sensitive indicators alongside conflict and displacement signals. The data reinforces the need for integrated responses that link protection, prevention, and accountability, in line with UNSCR 1325 and related commitments. Without sustained attention to gendered risk signals, insecurity is likely to continue producing disproportionate harm among women and children, further entrenching vulnerability and undermining long-term peacebuilding outcomes.

6.0 Outlook for 2026: Key Risk Trajectories

This section translates observed trends from 2024–2025 into forward-looking risk insights for 2026. Drawing on patterns captured through the National Early Warning System (NEWS), it identifies likely escalation pathways, emerging pressure points, and stabilising signals across WANEP-Nigeria’s four thematic focus areas. The analysis highlights what is most likely to shift, intensify, or diffuse, and outlines priority signals to monitor for early warning and preventive response.

Violent Extremism and Organised Crime

Violent extremism and organised crime are likely to remain the most immediate drivers of physical insecurity in 2026, with risks shaped less by the emergence of new threats and more by the persistence and adaptation of existing ones. Trends observed between 2024 and 2025 point to a security environment where violence becomes more lethal, geographically diffuse, and economically motivated.

A central risk trajectory for 2026 is the continued prominence of abductions as a financing and coercion strategy. The sharp increase in recorded abductions between 2024 and 2025 suggests that kidnapping has consolidated as a low-cost, high-yield criminal activity, particularly in the Northwest and parts of the North Central zone. Unless disrupted, this pattern is likely to persist, with episodic spikes linked to economic stress, agricultural cycles, and security operations that displace armed groups rather than dismantle them.

A second risk lies in rising lethality relative to incident frequency. In several violence categories, fatalities increased faster than the number of incidents, signalling greater harm per event. This trend raises the likelihood that violence in 2026 will be defined by intensity rather than volume, driven by heavier weapon use, retaliatory cycles, and delayed response in contested areas.

Organised criminal actors are also likely to continue adapting tactically to state pressure. Where enforcement intensifies, displacement of activity across state boundaries, shifts in targets, and changes in attack modalities are more probable than sustained de-escalation. This raises the risk of new or secondary hotspots emerging along transit corridors and previously less-affected states.

What to monitor closely: abduction trends, armed attack fatalities, changes in lethality ratios, and the appearance of new states among the highest-impact locations.

Democracy and Governance

Democracy and governance dynamics are expected to exert heightened influence on Nigeria’s security landscape in 2026, particularly in an election-linked environment. Patterns from 2024–2025 suggest increasing civic mobilisation alongside shifting state–society interaction, creating both stabilising and destabilising possibilities.

One likely trajectory is an increase in protest activity driven by political contestation, electoral expectations, and perceived governance deficits, particularly in relation to fair and transparent electoral processes. The rise in peaceful demonstrations between 2024 and 2025, alongside a decline in violent protests, indicates strong civic engagement

channelled largely through non-violent means. In 2026, this mobilisation is likely to intensify as citizens, civil society, and political actors press demands around electoral credibility, accountability, and inclusion.

However, a parallel risk is protest volatility. In politically sensitive periods, peaceful demonstrations may escalate if trust in institutions erodes, security responses are perceived as coercive, or protests are infiltrated by opportunistic actors. Elite defections and political realignments, especially where they are interpreted as signalling inevitability or constrained political competition, may further heighten grievance and mobilisation intensity at sub-national levels.

What to monitor closely: peaceful versus violent protest ratios, strike actions in strategic sectors, protest clustering around electoral milestones, and any re-emergence of governance-linked response indicators.

Environmental Security

Environmental security is projected to act as a major threat multiplier in 2026, with climate-related hazards translating into disproportionate human and security impacts. Evidence from 2024–2025 shows that while the frequency of environmental incidents rose moderately, deaths and injuries increased sharply, signalling growing exposure and vulnerability rather than more frequent hazards alone.

The primary risk trajectory for 2026 is the recurrence of high-impact flooding and erosion events with elevated human costs. Intensifying rainfall patterns, combined with settlement expansion into flood-prone areas, weak drainage systems, and limited early

warning reach, increase the likelihood that future events will produce large-scale displacement and loss of life.

A second trajectory concerns displacement-driven insecurity. Environmental shocks are likely to continue forcing households from riverine and agrarian zones into host communities, placing pressure on land, water, housing, and livelihoods. In areas already experiencing farmer–herder stress, such displacement may accelerate communal tensions and localised violence.

Environmental degradation is also expected to deepen resource competition in pastoral and farming zones. Damage to farmlands, grazing routes, and seasonal calendars increases the probability that environmental stress will intersect with existing conflict dynamics, particularly during peak agricultural and migration periods.

What to monitor closely: severity of environmental incidents, displacement signals, overlaps between flood-affected areas and farmer–herder violence, and seasonal clustering of incidents.

Gender, Peace and Security

Gendered impacts of insecurity are likely to intensify in 2026, particularly where violence, displacement, and economic stress intersect. Trends from 2024–2025 indicate rising severity in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and a sharp increase in human trafficking response indicators, pointing to heightened protection risks for women, children, and young people.

A key risk trajectory is the escalation of SGBV in crisis-affected contexts. Increases in incidents, injuries, and deaths suggest that SGBV is not only more frequently reported but may also be occurring under more severe

conditions, particularly in displacement settings, insecure communities, and areas with weakened protection systems.

Human trafficking is also likely to remain a significant risk in 2026. The sharp rise in victims rescued and suspects arrested points to increased visibility and enforcement, but also reflects broader vulnerability driven by poverty, displacement, and limited livelihood options. Election-year pressures, environmental shocks, and insecurity may further expand trafficking risk environments.

These trends have direct implications for Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security commitments. Without

targeted prevention and protection measures, gendered harms risk being amplified by broader insecurity dynamics rather than mitigated by them.

What to monitor closely: SGBV incident severity, trafficking response indicators, overlap between displacement and gendered harm, and changes in reporting patterns

Table 3 Risk Matrix: Key Trajectories for 2026

Thematic Area	Key Risk Trajectory	Likelihood	Impact	Priority Signals to Monitor
Violent Extremism & Organised Crime	Persistent abductions and rising lethality	High	Severe	Abduction trends, fatalities per incident, spread into new states
	Geographic diffusion of organised crime	Medium–High	High	New hotspot states, corridor-based clustering
Democracy & Governance	Increased protest activity linked to electoral pressure	High	Medium–High	Peaceful vs violent protest ratios, strike actions
	Protest escalation due to response dynamics	Medium	High	Sudden shifts to violent demonstrations
Environmental Security	High-impact flooding and displacement	High	Severe	Flood-related deaths/injuries, displacement signals
	Environmental stress fuelling resource conflict	Medium–High	Medium–High	Overlap with farmer–herder incidents
Gender, Peace & Security	Rising severity of SGBV in crisis contexts	Medium–High	High	SGBV incident severity trends
	Expanded trafficking risks linked to vulnerability	Medium	Medium–High	Victims rescued, arrests, geographic spread

7.0 Strategic Implications and Priority Actions

The risk patterns observed between 2024 and 2025 point to a security environment in 2026 where prevention will depend on acting earlier, targeting more precisely, and addressing how different threats interact. Rising lethality, expanding pressure zones, and compounding risks across governance, climate, and protection contexts highlight the need for more anticipatory and integrated responses.

Implications for Early Warning and Early Response

The 2024–2025 trends underscore the need to recalibrate early warning systems towards severity, interaction, and diffusion, rather than incident frequency alone. Across thematic areas, risk escalation is increasingly driven by higher lethality per incident, compounding impacts, and the interaction between insecurity drivers such as climate shocks, governance pressure, and organised crime.

For early warning, this implies a stronger emphasis on:

- Monitoring impact indicators (fatalities, injuries, displacement) alongside incident counts.
- Tracking cross-sectoral overlap, particularly where environmental stress, displacement, and violence converge.
- Identifying emerging hotspots early, especially in states transitioning from low to moderate risk profiles.

For early response, the findings highlight the importance of anticipatory and non-reactive interventions. Response mechanisms need to prioritise de-escalation, protection, and resilience-building before crises consolidate, particularly in election-sensitive, flood-prone, and high-abduction environments.

Priority Thematic Areas for Intervention

- **Violent Extremism and Organised Crime:** The persistence of abductions and rising lethality indicate the need for targeted prevention and response strategies that go beyond containment. Priority actions include strengthening community-based early warning, enhancing coordination between security and civilian actors, and supporting non-kinetic responses that disrupt criminal economies without displacing violence geographically.
- **Democracy and Governance:** Rising peaceful civic mobilisation presents both an opportunity and a risk. Preventive engagement should focus on safeguarding civic space, promoting dialogue mechanisms during politically sensitive periods, and supporting non-coercive response approaches that reduce the likelihood of protest escalation. Early warning systems should be closely aligned with electoral calendars and governance milestones.
- **Environmental Security:** The disproportionate human impact of environmental incidents highlights the urgency of integrating climate risk into peace and security planning. Priority actions include improving early warning coverage for floods, strengthening local preparedness and

response capacity, and linking environmental monitoring with displacement and conflict early warning to prevent secondary insecurity.

- **Gender, Peace and Security:** Trends in sexual and gender-based violence and human trafficking underscore the need to strengthen protection-focused early warning and response. Priority actions include integrating gender-sensitive indicators into early warning analysis, supporting survivor-centred response mechanisms, and ensuring that prevention efforts are embedded in displacement, livelihood, and peacebuilding interventions, in line with UNSCR 1325 and related commitments.

Geographic Focus Areas

The Outlook points to concentrated fragility with expanding pressure zones, particularly across:

- The Northwest and North Central, where abductions, farmer–herder violence, and environmental stress intersect.
- Parts of the Northeast, where insurgency-related pressures persist alongside displacement risks.
- Selected southern states, where spillover effects of organised crime, trafficking, and civic mobilisation indicate emerging vulnerabilities.

Strategic focus should prioritise areas that consistently appear across multiple risk indicators, while maintaining surveillance of states showing rapid upward shifts in impact severity.

Policy and Programme Relevance

The findings reinforce the importance of integrated, preventive, and locally grounded approaches to peace and security. For policymakers, the Outlook provides evidence to support anticipatory action, climate-informed security planning, and governance reforms that strengthen trust and inclusion.

For programme actors, the analysis highlights the value of:

- Linking early warning to early action financing and response mechanisms.
- Designing interventions that address risk interaction, not single threats in isolation.
- Aligning peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development responses around shared risk signals.

Overall, the Outlook underscores that effective prevention in 2026 will depend on timely information, coordinated response, and sustained investment in resilience across Nigeria’s most vulnerable contexts

About WANEP-Nigeria

The West About WANEP-Nigeria

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding – Nigeria (WANEP-Nigeria) is a leading civil society network working to promote sustainable peace, human security, and conflict prevention across Nigeria. The network brings together over 270 member organisations operating at national and sub-national levels, including civil society groups, research institutions, media actors, and community-based organisations.

As part of the wider West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), WANEP-Nigeria supports evidence-based peacebuilding, policy engagement, and preventive action through research, dialogue, early warning, and early response initiatives.

WANEP-Nigeria coordinates the National Early Warning System (NEWS), a structured conflict and human security monitoring mechanism that systematically tracks incident-level information across Nigeria. NEWS supports the generation of analytical insight on trends, risks, and emerging threats related to violent extremism and organised crime, democracy and governance, environmental security, and gender, peace and security.

This Outlook is grounded in analysis generated through NEWS and reflects WANEP-Nigeria's commitment to strengthening early warning practice, supporting preventive responses, and contributing knowledge to national and sub-national peace and security processes.

Contact Us

 **Website:** www.wanepnigeria.org

 **Email:** wanep-nigeria@wanep.org

 **Phone:**

+234-704-189-5020

+234-904-305-6676