



Youth Candidacy in the 2023 Elections in Nigeria

Preliminary Report

(Accurate as at October 5, 2022)

Introduction

In the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will conduct elections in 176,846 polling units for elections into the office of the President, Governors, National Assembly and State House of Assembly seats. Eighteen political parties nominated a total of 15,336 candidates for the one Presidential, 28 governorship elections, 469 legislative seats in the National Assembly and 993 legislative seats in the State Houses of Assembly.

According to the African Youth Charter, youths are classified as persons between the ages of 18 – 35 years. The National Youth Policy defines 15 – 29 as the youth age bracket for Nigeria. However, institutions like INEC maintain 18 – 35 years as the youth age classification for election engagement. While this age category represents 60% of Nigeria's population, the level of youth representation is low. Youth representation in elective positions at the state level is relatively high compared to the national level positions. Following the 2019 elections, 0.6 of seats in the National Assembly were occupied by youth. Available data shows 6% youth representation in thirty-four State Houses of Assembly and 29.7% at the local government level.

According to the Constitution, there are four basic constitutional qualifications for contesting elections into the various elective offices recognized by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as altered), which are: **citizenship qualification, age qualification, educational qualification and sponsorship by a political party**. Prior to the signing into law of the age reduction amendment, popularly known as the Not Too Young To Run Bill, the Constitution stipulated that for a person to be qualified for election, s/he must be a Nigerian citizen, educated up to at least School Certificate level or its equivalent and must be sponsored by a political party of which s/he is a member. With the signing of the Not Too Young To Run bill, the age requirements for some offices were reduced to promote youth inclusion in politics. Presently, the Constitution in Sections 131(b), provides that aspirants for the office of President must have attained the age of 35 years, while, by Section 65 (1)(a) an aspirant to the Senate must have attained the age of 35 years. Similarly, Sections 65(1)(b) and 106(b) provide that those aspiring to the House of Representatives and a House of Assembly must have attained the age of 25 years. Similarly, by Sections 177(b), aspirants for the office of Governor must have attained the age of 35 years. As a result of the reduction

of the age of limitation, there was a massive increase in the interest of youth who ran for various positions across board in the 2019 General Elections.

Key Findings from the Analysis of the 2023 Candidates

- 1. 43.2% of youth candidates in the 2023 election are direct beneficiaries of the Not Too Young To Run Act.** Of the **15,336** candidates on the ballot in the 2023 elections, 4,398 are youth candidates. 1,899 of these figures are between 25 – 30 years.
- 2. Youth candidacy records decline from 34% in the 2019 election to 28.6% in the 2023 elections.** For instance, youth candidacy for House of Representatives plunges from 27.4% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2023. Similarly, the State House of Assembly also dropped from 41.8% in 2019 to 35.6% in 2023.
- 3. Political parties nominated more youth candidates for legislative elections at the state level than executive or national assembly seats.** For instance, State Assembly elections and House of Representatives election recorded the high level of youth candidacy. 35.6% of candidates of State Assembly are youth, 21.6% for House of Reps and only 3.7% of candidates in the Senatorial elections are youth.
- 4. The North-west geo-political zone maintains its reputation as the zone with the highest number of youth candidates.** The geographical distribution of candidates shows that the level of youth candidates in the North West is 28%, North central, 18.1%, North east, 16%, South West, 14.1%, South south 12.6% and lastly South East with 10.4% youth candidacy.
- 5. Ranking of youth friendly parties:** Based on the ranking of political parties on youth candidacy, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) ranks 1st for nominating the highest number of youth candidates. Labour party ranks 6th, New Nigerian People's Party ranks 3rd, People's Democratic Party (PDP) ranks 13th, All Progressive Congress (APC) ranks 15th.
- 6. Poor representation of young female candidates on the list of candidates.** 11% of youth candidates are female.
7. With respect to the young female candidates, the ADC (62), AA (58), APM (54) have the highest number of young female candidates. While, the APC (9) and PDP (5) has the lowest number of young female candidates.
8. Among the young candidates, 7 individuals representing 0.2% belong to persons living with disabilities in the 2023 election.

Critical analysis of emerging trends on youth candidacy

1. From a Yiaga Africa perspective, the decline in youth candidacy is attributed to a range of factors. Principal amongst them is the excessive cost of nomination forms, highly commercialized party primaries, substitution of candidates, and the deregistration of political parties. The highly monetized party primaries shrunk on the political space and limited fair competition. Most young aspirants declined to pursue their political aspirations due to non-affordability of the forms and lack of resources to procure delegates. Some youth candidates were substituted after the party primaries to pacify entrenched political interests in political parties. In addition, the deregistration of political parties by INEC directly affected the number of political parties which reduced the number of candidates on the ballot. This reinforces the direct relationship between the number of parties and youth candidacy.
2. While the decline in youth candidacy is evident, the level of young female candidacy is even worse. The party primaries failed to meet the test of fairness and equity and in cases where parties granted concessions to women, there were not backed by concrete steps to secure the emergence of young female candidates. This reinforces the urgency of political reforms in addition to legal and constitutional provisions to safeguard the participation of women in politics.
3. The current funding model of political financing creates unfair competition and shrinks the political space to the detriment of competent leaders, youth, and women. Political finance reform is an urgent necessity to ensure the political space is accessible to all persons regardless of age, economic class, tribe, and creed. Any meaningful reform of party funding or campaign funding should deliver the following four key outcomes; first, limit the influx of unregulated money in the political process; secondly, enhance the capacity of political parties on resource mobilization and maintenance of proper account of financial transactions and assets register; thirdly, strengthen INEC's capacity to monitor and ensure compliance with political finance regulations and; fourth explore new pathways of candidate selection that de-emphasizes the place of money and economic power over competence, capacity and character. The net effect of these outcomes will be improved safeguards for the political space, party supremacy, and candidate recruitment.
4. Public perception of youth leadership affects the emergence of youth candidates in elections. Young people are perceived as inexperienced and ill-prepared for public leadership hence the limits placed on youth participation in politics.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. To secure electoral victory for youth candidates, political parties should provide technical, financial and logistics support to young male and female candidates during the campaigns.
2. Youth candidates will require technical support to hone political organizing skills, and improve knowledge election day operations, and legal framework for elections

3. The general public are encouraged to support youth candidates by making financial donations to youth candidates with competence, character and capacity.
4. Media organize should prioritize coverage of youth candidates. Adequate airtime should be provided to young male and female candidates to provide visibility for youth candidates and improve public perception of youth candidates.
5. To advance political inclusion and accountability in election, Nigeria requires comprehensive political finance reform and reforms of the delegate recruitment and management process.

Data Analysis of list of candidates for the 2023 elections

1. Overall distribution of candidates in the 2023 elections

Position	Total Number of Candidates
Presidential	18
Vice-Presidential	18
Governorship & Deputies	837
Senate	1,101
House of Rep	3,122
State House of Assembly	10,240
Total	15,336

2. Distribution of Young Candidates

Position	Number of Young Candidates	Total Number of Candidates	Percent
Governorship & Deputies	51	837	12.2
Senate	41	1,101	3.7
House of Rep	674	3,122	21.6
State House of Assembly	3,632	10,240	35.6
Total	4,398	15,336	28.6

Youth Candidacy in the House of Representatives Election

Although there are 3,122 candidates vying seats in the House of Representatives, only 3,115 candidates have complete information provided. Of this number, 674 representing 22% are young candidates. Two young candidates are people living with disabilities (albinism – 1, others – 1).

The geographical classification of the young candidates by gender reveals that the North West (37%) has the largest representation of male candidates and South East (8%) has the lowest. In contrast, the South West (28%) has the largest representation of female young candidates, North Central (13%) and North East (13%) have the least. In general, there is higher representation of female candidates in the South than in the North.

a. Age distribution

The age distribution of candidates for the HoR election are almost equally distributed bar the extreme age groups. Nonetheless, majority of the candidates vying for position into the House of Representatives are in the age groups 36 – 40 and 41 – 45 (17% each). The '*Not too Young to Run*' and the elderly (61 & above) constitutes the lowest proportion of candidates (7% each).

Table 1: Age distribution of candidates

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
25-30	229	7.4
31-35	445	14.3
36-40	536	17.2
41-45	541	17.4
46-50	424	13.6
51-55	375	12.0
56-60	331	10.6
61 & above	234	7.5
Total	3,115	100.0

b. Geographical distribution

Across the geographical zones, the North West (23%) and South West (18%) dominate other zones with respect to the number of the candidates. However, the North East (38) has more '*Not too Young to Run*' candidates after North West (85) compare to other regions. The South East (20) has the fewest number of candidates in the '*Not too Young to Run*' category (see Table 2).

Table 2: Geographical distribution youth candidates

Geopolitical Zone	Age Group								Total
	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61 & above	
North Central	32	68	91	88	69	61	42	27	478 15.3%
North East	38	74	68	60	44	40	44	22	390 12.5%
North West	85	145	130	86	68	72	64	63	713 22.9%
South East	20	35	59	101	74	56	42	39	426

									13.7%
South South	26	63	97	102	93	64	53	39	537 17.2%
South West	28	60	91	104	76	82	86	44	571 18.3%

c. Political parties' distribution

Table 3: Party distribution of Youth Candidates for House of Representatives

Party	Number of Youth Candidates for House of Representatives	Percent
ADC	132	19.6
ADP	44	6.5
NNPP	56	8.3
SDP	73	10.8
AA	30	4.5
LP	43	6.4
NRM	34	5.0
PRP	42	6.2
APM	42	6.2
ZLP	35	5.2
YPP	29	4.3
APP	29	4.3
APGA	24	3.6
PDP	18	2.7
A	16	2.4
APC	12	1.8
BP	11	1.6
AAC	4	0.6
TOTAL	674	100.0

Youth candidacy in the State House of Assembly Election

The 3,632 young candidates for the State House of Assembly accounts for 36% of all candidates for the election. This proportion (36%) however is lower than the proportion in the same election (42%) in 2019. The young candidates include five (5) persons with disabilities (albinism – 4, others – 1).

a. Age distribution

Fewer than half (46%) of the young candidates belong to the group '25 – 30'. Across zones, the North West has the highest number of candidates in the age group '25 – 30' and '31 – 35'. Over all, there are more candidates in the age group '31 -35' than '20 – 25' (see Table 3).

Table 3: Age distribution of candidates

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
25 – 30	1,670	46.0
31 – 35	1,962	54.0
Total	3,632	100.0

b. Geographical distribution

Across the zones, the North West (28%) has the highest youth representation, followed by North Central (19%). The South East at 11% has the lowest representation of youth in the election. Whereas there is significant increase in the proportion of youth candidates in the northern zones compared to 2019, the southern zone witnesses a decrease. Notwithstanding a higher number of young female candidates in the South (South East – 78, South South – 84, South West – 88) compared to the North (North Central – 70, North East – 30, North West – 50), generally, there are more male than female candidates in all zones.

Table 4: Age distribution across Zones

Geopolitical Zone	Age Group		Total
	25 – 30	31 – 35	
North Central	309	365	674 (18.6%)
North East	298	272	570 (15.7%)
North West	546	473	1,019 (28.0%)
South East	146	249	395 (10.9%)
South South	170	280	447 (12.4%)
South West	201	323	524 (14.4%)

c. Political Parties

Party distribution of Candidates Across Zones

In general, the 'ADC' has the highest number of young candidates in the 2023 State House of Assembly election. Table 5 gives the ranking of young candidates for all the political parties.

Table 5: Age group spread across

Party	Age Group		Total	Rank
	25-30	31-35		
ADC	273	238	511	1st

ADP	172	178	350	2nd
NNPP	145	189	334	3rd
AA	176	140	316	4th
SDP	145	158	303	5th
LP	105	145	253	6th
NRM	104	144	248	7th
PRP	102	81	183	8th
APM	67	98	165	9th
ZLP	67	81	148	10th
YPP	62	83	145	11th
APP	45	95	140	12th
PDP	30	83	113	13 th
APGA	40	66	106	14th
APC	21	63	84	15th
A	45	37	82	16th
BP	31	47	78	17th
AAC	37	36	73	18th
Total	1,670	1,962		

RANKING OF POLITICAL PARTIES BASED ON YOUTH CANDIDATES (HoR and SHA Election)

The distribution of young candidates across the different political parties shows that the ADC (654) has the highest number of young candidates in all election, followed by ADP (402), and NNPP (393). The APC (96), BP (93), and AAC (84) have the lowest number of young candidates (see Table 6).

Table 6: Ranking of political parties

Party	Number of Youth Candidates for House of Representatives	Number of Youth Candidates for State House of Assembly	Total Number of Youth Candidates	% of Youth Candidates	Rank
ADC	132	511	643	14.9	1st
ADP	44	350	394	9.2	2nd
NNPP	56	334	390	9.1	3rd
SDP	73	303	376	8.7	5th
AA	30	316	346	8.0	4th
LP	43	250	293	6.8	6th
NRM	34	251	285	6.6	7th
PRP	42	183	225	5.2	8th
APM	42	165	207	4.8	9th
ZLP	35	148	183	4.2	10th
YPP	29	145	174	4.0	11th
APP	29	140	169	3.9	12th

APGA	24	106	130	3.0	14th
PDP	18	113	131	3.0	13th
A	16	82	98	2.3	16th
APC	12	84	96	2.2	15th
BP	11	78	89	2.1	17th
AAC	4	73	77	1.8	18th
TOTAL	674	3632	4306	100.0	