A person wearing a red hooded garment and a black mask is holding a white sign with black text that reads "END POLICE BRUTALITY" and "NOW!". The person is also holding a yellow object, possibly a microphone or a small flag. The background is a bright, hazy sky. The image has a stylized, high-contrast appearance.

END POLICE  
BRUTALITY  
NOW!

**FIFTEENTH  
REPORT ON  
VIOLENCE IN  
NIGERIA  
2025**

**NIGERIA  
WATCH**

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# ACRONYMS

AFRICOM	African Command
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police
CAC	Christ Apostolic Church
ECC	Every Casualty Counts
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRA	French Institute for Research in Africa
IRD	Institut de recherche pour le développement, Paris
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State West African Province
JAS	Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihad
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
LGA	Local Government Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NW	Nigeria Watch
US	United States

# FOREWORD

This fifteenth Annual Report on lethal violence in Nigeria covers the period between 1 January and 31 December 2025. The study was conducted by Dr. Vitus Nwankwo Ukoji, with the help of Dr. Abiola Victoria Ayodokun of Nigeria Watch.

The Nigeria Watch project is hosted by the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria) at the University of Ibadan's Institute of African Studies<sup>1</sup>. It is supported by the IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement, Paris). The Nigeria Watch project also follows the Standards for Casualty Recording of an international network of body-count practitioners under the aegis of a London-based NGO, ECC (Every Casualty Counts)<sup>2</sup>. Our methodology and sources are online<sup>3</sup>. They have been discussed in various books and occasions, especially during an international conference organized by IFRA at the University of Ibadan in October 2016<sup>4</sup>. The data are updated daily by a team of Nigerian researchers.

**Dr. Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos**

*Senior Researcher,*

*Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD)*

1 Please visit <https://ifra-nigeria.org> for more information about IFRA.

2 <https://everycasualty.org>

3 <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?html=4>

4 Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine, Elizabeth Minor & Samrat Sinha (ed.), *Violence, statistics, and the politics of accounting for the dead*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2016, 140p.; Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (ed.), *Violence in Nigeria: A qualitative and quantitative analysis*, Ibadan, IFRA-Nigeria, Leiden, African Studies Centre, Waposos Series n°3, 2016, 217p.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**222,137** People have died in violent incidents in Nigeria between 2006 and 2025

**12,954** Deaths occurred from the lethal incidents in 2025

**47%** Of deaths in 2025 were crime-related

**Core Drivers**  
Rural Banditry  
Cult violence  
Kidnapping

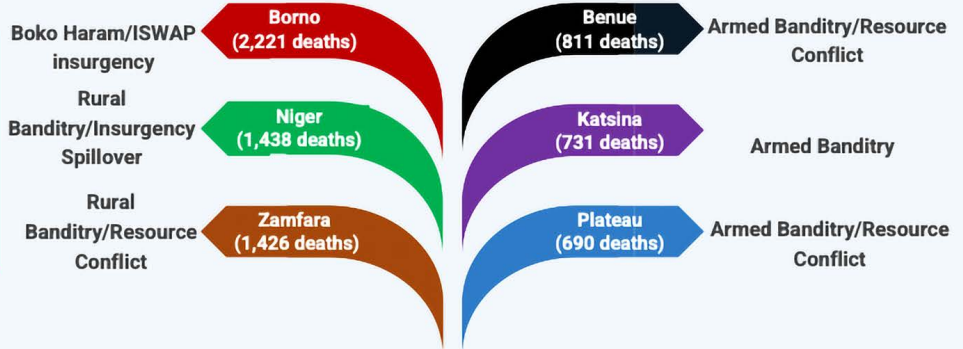
**27%** were linked to political/religious issues

**Core Drivers**  
Extremism  
Sectarian Crisis  
Political violence

**13%** resulted from road accidents

**Core Drivers**  
Speed violations  
Poor safety standards  
Oil distribution (Tankers)

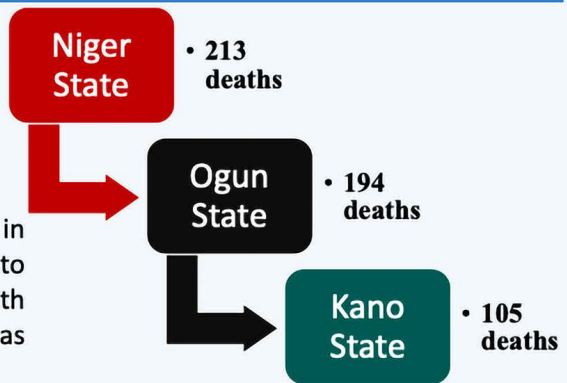
States with the highest number of deaths in 2025 and key indicators



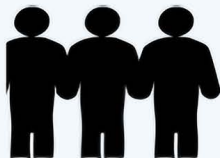
## ROAD ACCIDENT FATALITIES



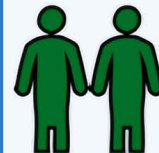
In 2025, road accidents claimed at least 1,614 deaths in Nigeria. Petrol tanker explosions significantly contributed to the problem, especially in Niger and Ogun states. Both states recorded the highest number of deaths. Kano was third on the list.



CRIMINAL GANGS



In 2025, more deaths (47%) were linked to criminal groups than government security forces (41%).



GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES

**MOST DANGEROUS STATES IN NIGERIA IN 2025**

Borno State was the most dangerous state in Nigeria, primarily due to Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency and counter operations, while Ekiti was the most peaceful state with 0.5 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Borno State**

• 28.3 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Zamfara State**

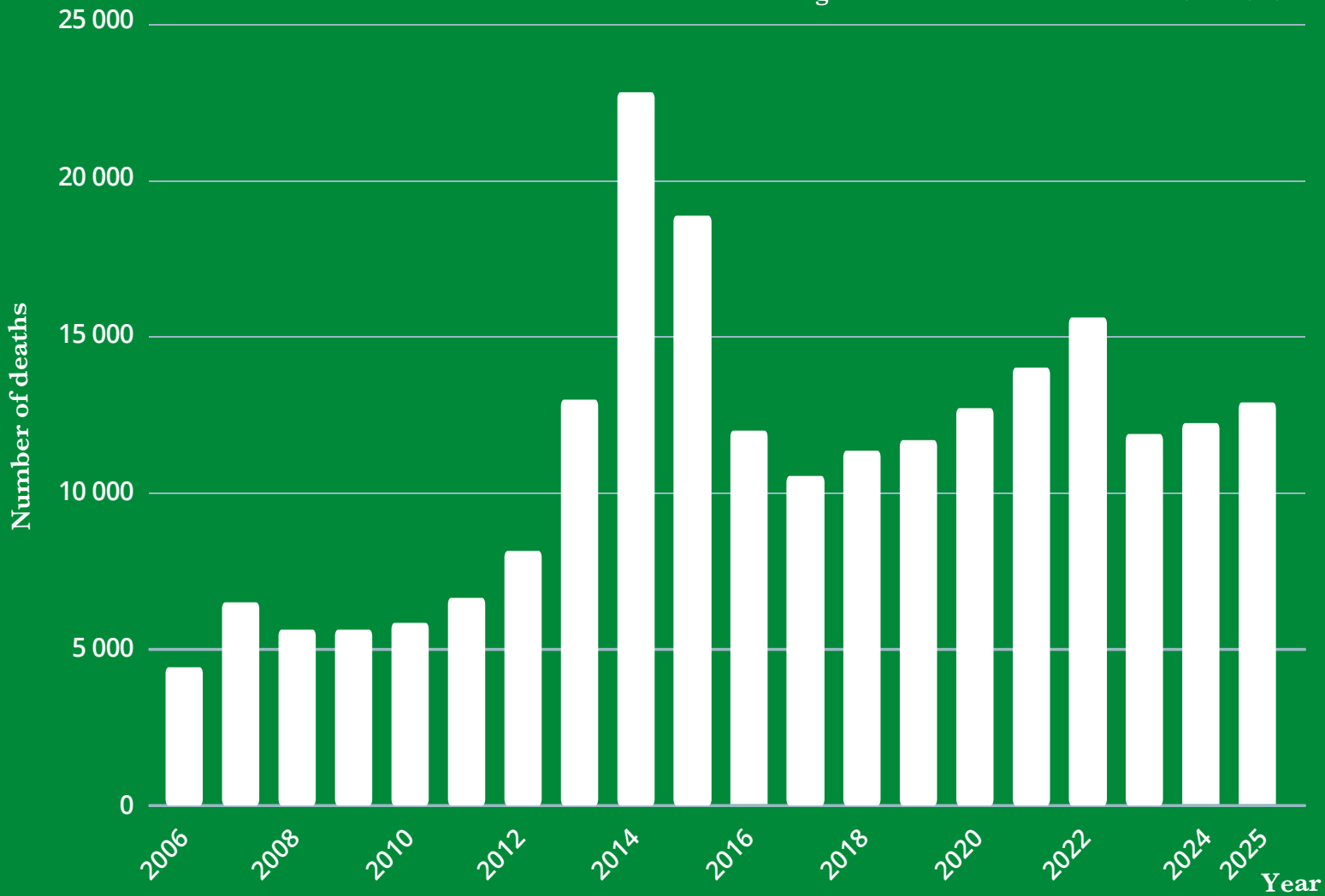
• 24 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Niger State**

• 20 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants.

# INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: Main trend of violence 2006-2025<sup>6</sup>



Nigeria Watch methodology is online. The database relies on open sources to offer a systematic and credible means of analyzing trends of violence with a Geographic Information System (GIS)<sup>5</sup>. It answers four critical questions:

- Where and when is fatal violence taking place?
- What are the main causes of fatal violence?
- Is fatal violence increasing or decreasing?
- What is the security risk?

## 1. GENERAL TRENDS OF VIOLENCE (2006-2025)

Between 2006 and 2025, Nigeria lost about 222,137 people in 46,182 lethal incidents across the 36 states and the FCT. The number of deaths as shown in Figure 1 increased to 12,954 in 2025 from 12,162 in 2024. Borno State recorded the highest number of deaths (2,221), followed by Niger (1,438), Zamfara (1,426), Benue (811), and Katsina (731). Insurgency, banditry and counter-operations by government security forces accounted for the highest number of deaths in the most affected states. By contrast, Ekiti State recorded the least number of deaths (23), followed by Bayelsa (44), Akwa Ibom (50), Cross River (62) and Abia (71).

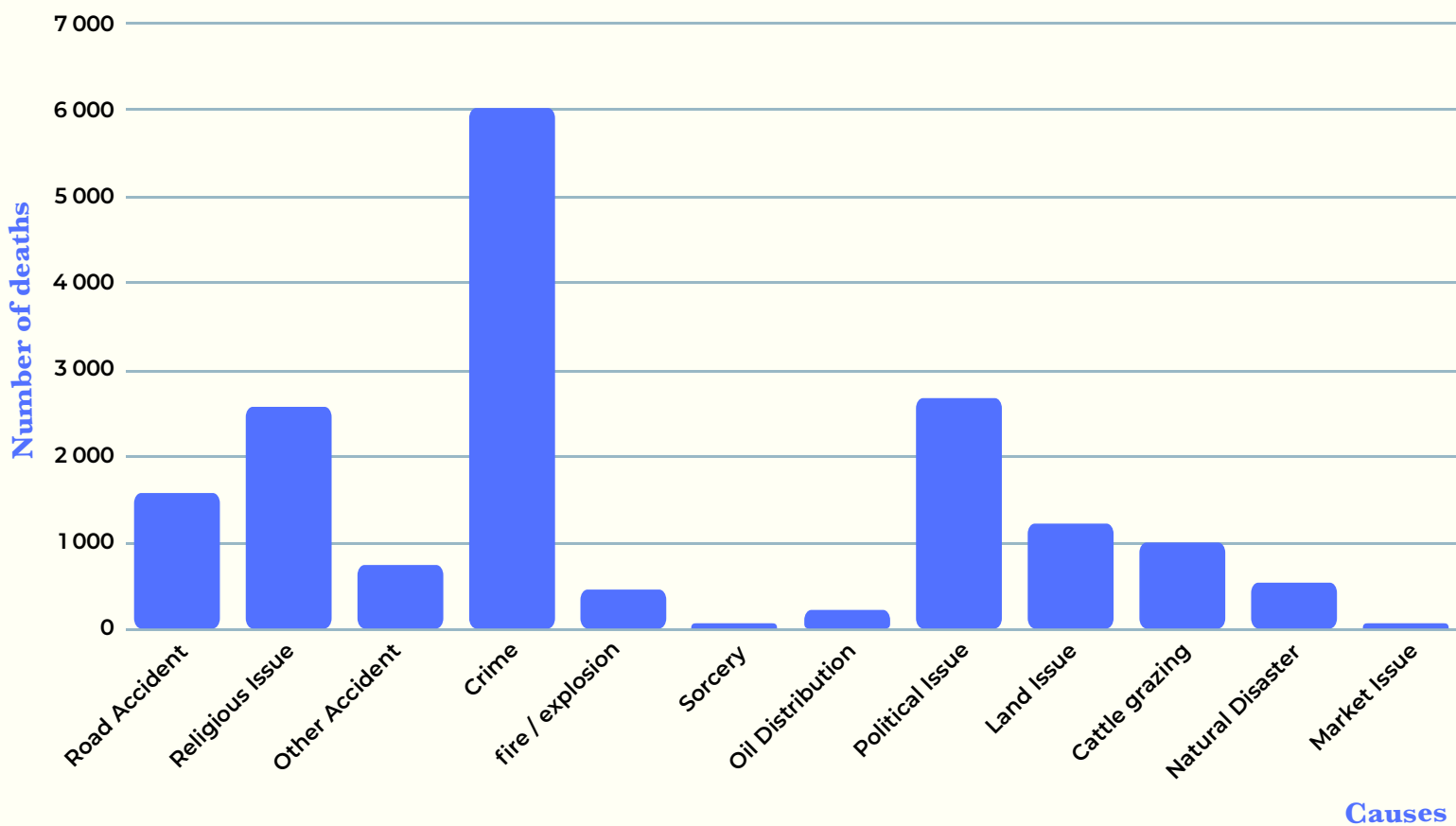
In 2025, about 81% of fatalities resulting from violence in Nigeria occurred in the North, leaving the South with 19%.

<sup>5</sup> In the online system, figures are updated whenever a new source provides a different report, which explains why trends may change slightly according to the current state of data when they are accessed. The algorithm used also rounds up figures a little differently per cause or incident.

<sup>6</sup> Data for 2006 only cover the period from June to December.

# 2. MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

Figure 2: Number of fatalities resulting from different causes of violence in 2025



## 2. Main Causes of Violence in 2025

### 2.1. Crime

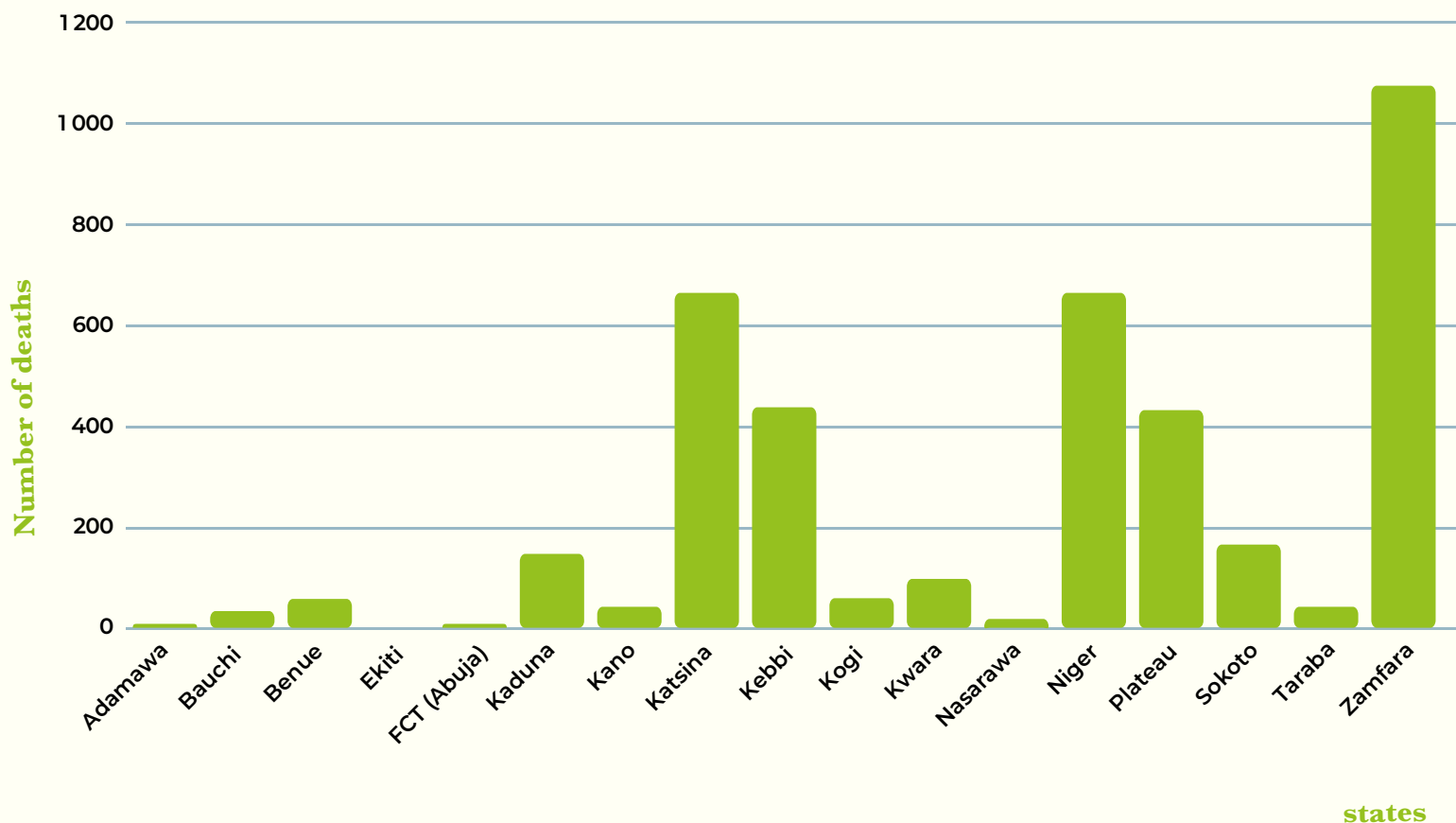
Crime-related deaths in Nigeria marginally increased to 6,019 in 2025 from 6,018 in 2024. Zamfara State recorded the highest death toll (1,312), followed by Niger (700), Katsina (681), Kebbi (508) and Plateau (482). Many fatalities in the most affected states resulted from rural banditry and counter operations by government security forces.

### 2.1.1 Cultism

In 2025, cultism claimed 239 lives in Nigeria, a decrease from the 328 deaths reported in 2024. Lagos State recorded the highest number of deaths (48), followed by Rivers (44) and Bayelsa (23). Clashes between rival cult groups were widespread in the three states, especially in Eti-Osa, Ibeju-Lekki, Ikorodu, Kosofe, Lagos Mainland, Mushin and Ojo LGAs of Lagos State, Ahoada, Andoni, Eleme, Obio-Akpor, Port Harcourt and Emuoha LGAs of Rivers State, and Ogbia, Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa LGAs of Bayelsa State. The most deadly cult activities involved Eiyé and Aiye confraternities in Lagos State, Degbam and Icelanders in Rivers State, and Bobos, Greenlanders and Icelanders in Bayelsa State. On September 2, 2025, for instance, about 19 people died during a clash between Degbam and Icelanders in Obelle community of Emuhoha LGA, Rivers State.

# 2.MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

Figure 3: Number of fatalities by states resulting from rural banditry in 2025



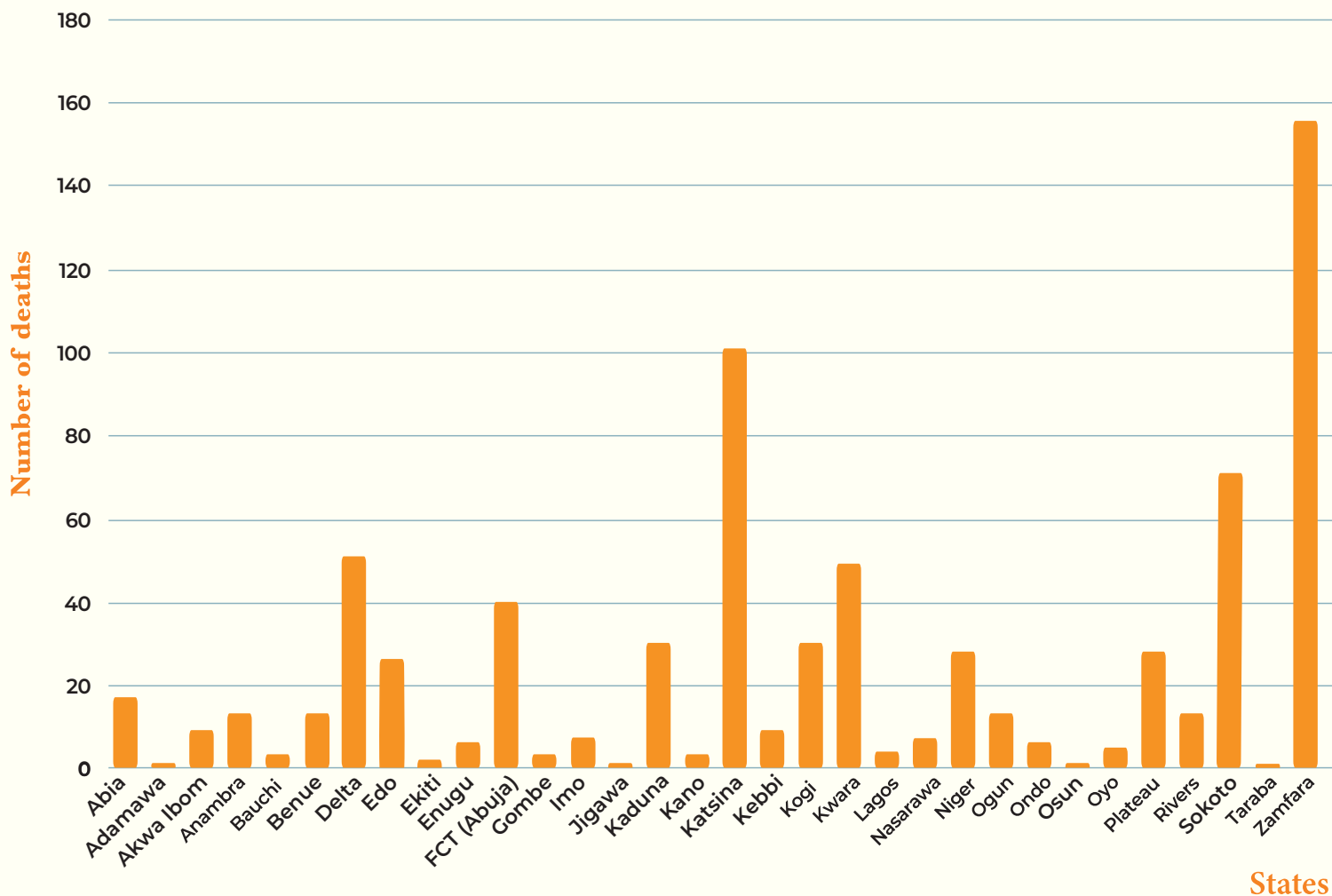
### 2.1.2 Rural Banditry

In 2025, rural banditry and government counter-operations claimed 3,974 lives, more than double the 1,452 deaths recorded in 2024. The number of affected states also increased to 16, from 9 in 2024. As shown in Figure 3, Zamfara State recorded the highest number of fatalities, followed by Katsina, Niger, Kebbi and Plateau while Ekiti, Adamawa and FCT (Abuja) recorded the lowest. Kwara State witnessed an upsurge in lethal incidents related to banditry, especially in Edu, Ekiti, Moro, Ifelodun and Pategi LGAs where community leaders, vigilante members and residents were targeted by bandits. On November 18, 2025, for instance, gangsters killed 3 worshippers and abducted 30 others from Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Oke Isegun in Eruku, Ekiti LGA. The victims were released after 5 days in captivity.

Power struggle within and between armed groups also contributed to fatalities related to rural gangsterism. On 22 January, 2025, a clash between a notorious bandit, Dogo Gide, and a Boko Haram leader thus claimed 20 lives in Kwatankoro, Shiroro LGA of Niger State. On September 8, 2025, again, another bandit leader, Ado Aleru, reportedly killed 7 of his own fighters in Takulawa, Turba, Bamamu and the Yamma forest of Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State, over allegations of betrayal and threat to his control.

# 2.MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

Figure 4: Number of fatalities by states resulting from kidnapping in 2025



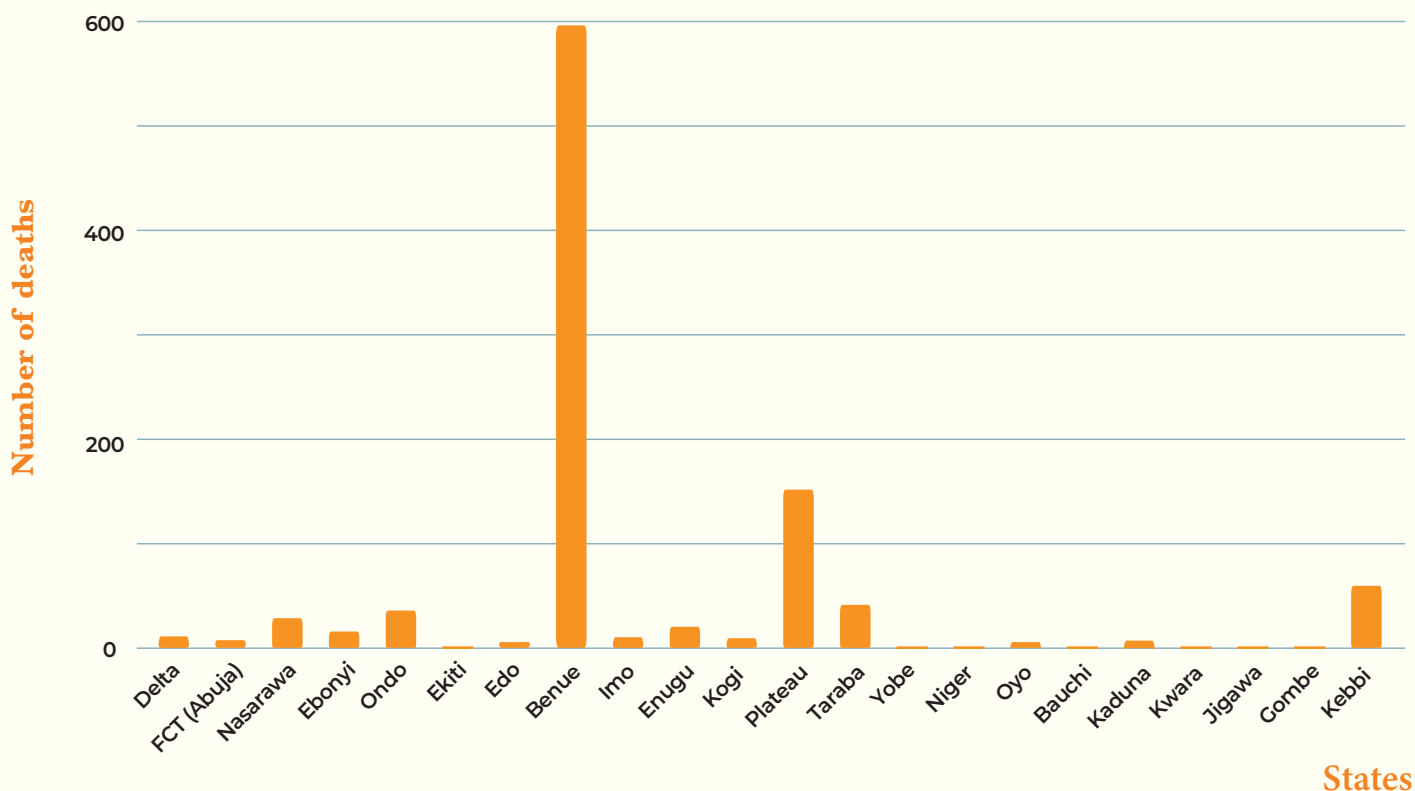
### 2.1.3 Kidnapping

In 2025, fatalities linked to kidnapping in Nigeria increased to 747 from 425 in 2024. Figure 4 shows that Zamfara State recorded the highest death toll, followed by Katsina and Sokoto. Mass abductions in the three states culminated in the killing of residents, suggesting a shift from ransom-motivated kidnapping to razzia and racketeering. Kidnap victims included civilians (57%), abductors (26%), foreigners (1%) and government security forces (16%). Civilians, particularly commuters and rural farmers, constituted a greater percentage of the victims in Zamfara, Katsina,

Sokoto, Niger, and Kaduna states while kidnapers and gunmen recorded more fatalities in Katsina, Delta, Plateau, Rivers and FCT (Abuja). Foreigners fell victims in Abia and Anambra states. On April 4, 2025, two Chinese expatriates and their police escort were thus killed in Uturu, Isuikwuato LGA, Abia State. On June 4th, 2026, two police escorts, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Haruna Watsai and Inspector Tukur Ogah, were also killed while providing security for a Chinese expatriate at a mining site in Oreke-Okeigbo community of Ifelodun LGA, Kwara State.

# 2.MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

Figure 5: Number of fatalities by states resulting from pastoral violence in 2025



### 2.1.4 Farmers/Herdsman Clashes

In 2025, violence involving farmers and herders in Nigeria resulted in about 1,015 deaths, a significant increase from the 567 in 2024. As shown in Figure 5, Benue State recorded the highest number of deaths, followed by Plateau and Kebbi. On the contrary, Ekiti, Yobe and Kwara states recorded the lowest number of deaths.

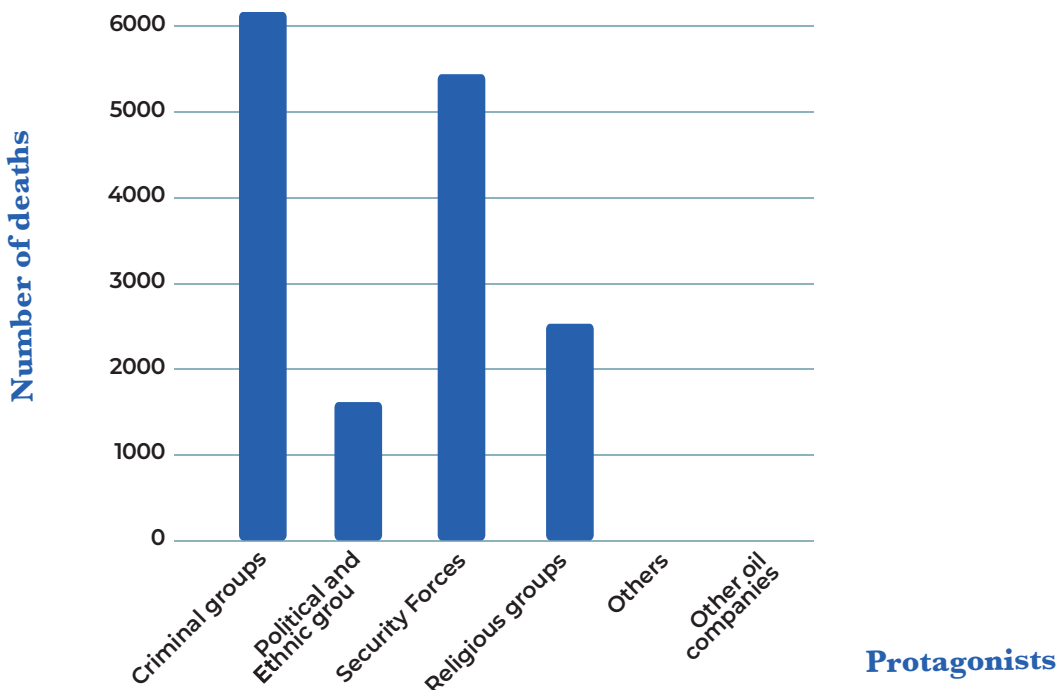
In Benue State, Guma LGA accounted for 39% of the deaths, followed by Ukom (9.3%) and Logo (7.2%). Yelwata was by far the most affected community in the state, with herdsman raids on farmers claiming over 200 lives between June 8 and 14, 2025.

In Plateau State, Bokkos was the deadliest LGA (45%), before Riyom (19%), and Mangu (17%). Many of the fatalities were reported during raids and reprisal attacks on farming communities and Fulani settlements.

In 2025, Kebbi recorded a spike in the number of lethal incidents involving farmers and herders, marking a shift from 2024 when it was among the most peaceful states. Raids on rural communities in Argungu, Arewa and Bunza LGAs also became more lethal with the incursion of the Lakurawa armed group.

# 2. MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

**Figure 6: Main protagonists of violence per number of fatalities in 2025**



## 2.2 Major protagonists to lethal violence in Nigeria

In 2025, the number of fatalities linked to criminal gangs and government security forces in Nigeria increased. Criminal gangs were involved in incidents resulting in 6,166 deaths, against 5,636 in 2024; government security forces, in incidents resulting in 5,438 deaths, a rise from 3,808 in 2024.

## 2.3 Political and religious violence

### 2.3.1 Christmas Day Bombing of ISIS Targets

The United States bombed jihadists’ strongholds in Bauni forest in Tangaza LGA of Sokoto State, allegedly killing about 100 militants of the Lakuwara group on December 25, 2025. This military intervention followed months of intelligence gathering through U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and the Nigerian government, due to increasing banditry and ethno-religious tension. President Donald Trump framed the strike as a ‘powerful and deadly Christmas message to extremists’<sup>7</sup> as it occurred on Christmas Day. Some Nigerians saw the strike as a respite for banditry, insurgency and kidnapping while others interpreted it as a threat to the nation’s sovereignty.

### 2.3.2 Boko Haram Insurgency

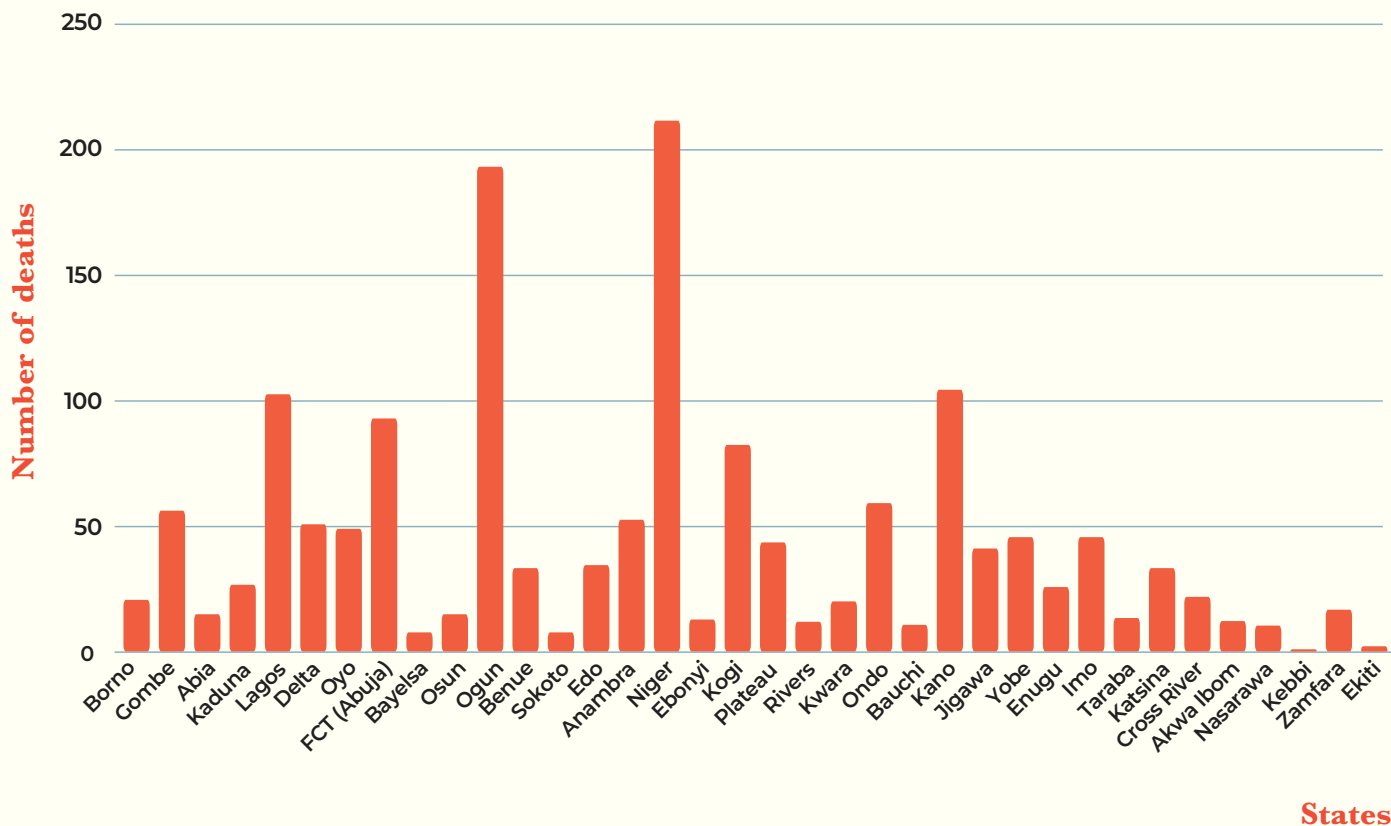
In 2025, Boko Haram insurgency and counter operations in Nigeria claimed 2,454 lives during attacks on civilian populations and military formations. Power struggle and clashes between Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) also contributed to the conflict: both factions lost about 177 fighters in Toumbun Gini and Dogon Chiku in Abadam LGA of Borno State.

Borno State recorded the highest number of deaths (2,197), followed by Adamawa (118) and Yobe (21). In Borno, 23 LGAs recorded fatalities, with Gwoza LGA accounting for the highest number of deaths (508), followed by Bama (360), Abadam (333), Damboa (253) and Kukawa (163). Suicide missions, raids on military formations, use of landmines, and attacks on public places, including schools and churches, were common. On February 25, 2025, Boko Haram insurgents killed scores of people in Kwapre and Yadul districts of Hong LGA, Adamawa State. During the attack, insurgents looted businesses and burnt buildings such as schools and churches.

7 U.S. Africa Command. (2025, December 25). U.S. Africa Command conducts strike against ISIS in Nigeria (Press release No. 36158). <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/36158/us-africa-command-conducts-strike-against-isis-in-nigeria>

# 2. MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

Figure 7: Fatalities resulting from road accidents by states in 2025



### 2.3.3 Mahmuda Incursion into the North Central

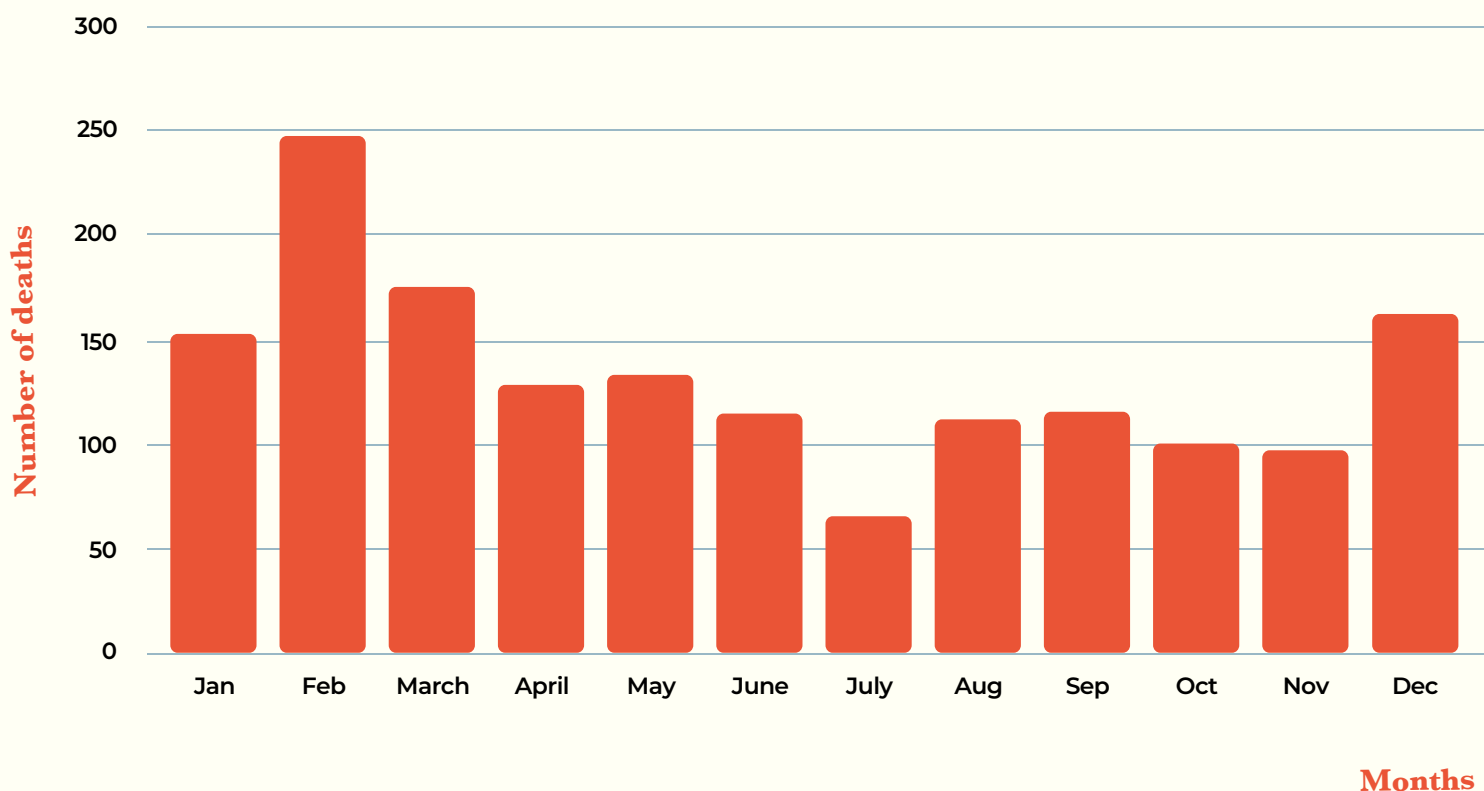
Mahmuda, a splinter group from Boko Haram with reported affiliation with Ansaru, expanded its operations in Kwara and Niger states, especially in the Kainji Lake National Park. Militants tried to introduce their model of radical Islam to attract residents and the youth. On April 16, 2025, they killed 15 vigilantes in Kemanji, Baruten LGA, Kwara State. On July 3, 2025, they executed four people in Duruma community of the same LGA. Mahmuda remains one of Nigeria’s deadliest armed groups in the North Central geopolitical zone.

### 2.4 Road Accidents

Since 2006, Nigeria has lost 34,435 lives in road accidents. About 1,614 of these deaths were recorded in 2025, a decrease from the 1,672 recorded in 2024. As shown in Figure 7, Niger State recorded the highest number of fatal road accidents, followed by Ogun and Kano. On the contrary, Kebbi, Ekiti and Bayelsa states reported the lowest. Petrol tanker explosions were accountable for the high number of fatalities in Niger State. On January 18, 2025, for instance, about 98 people died while scooping fuel from a fallen petrol tanker in Diko Junction, Suleja LGA. A similar incident along the Agaie-Bida road in Katcha LGA of the state also claimed 38 lives on October 21, 2025.

# 2.MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2025

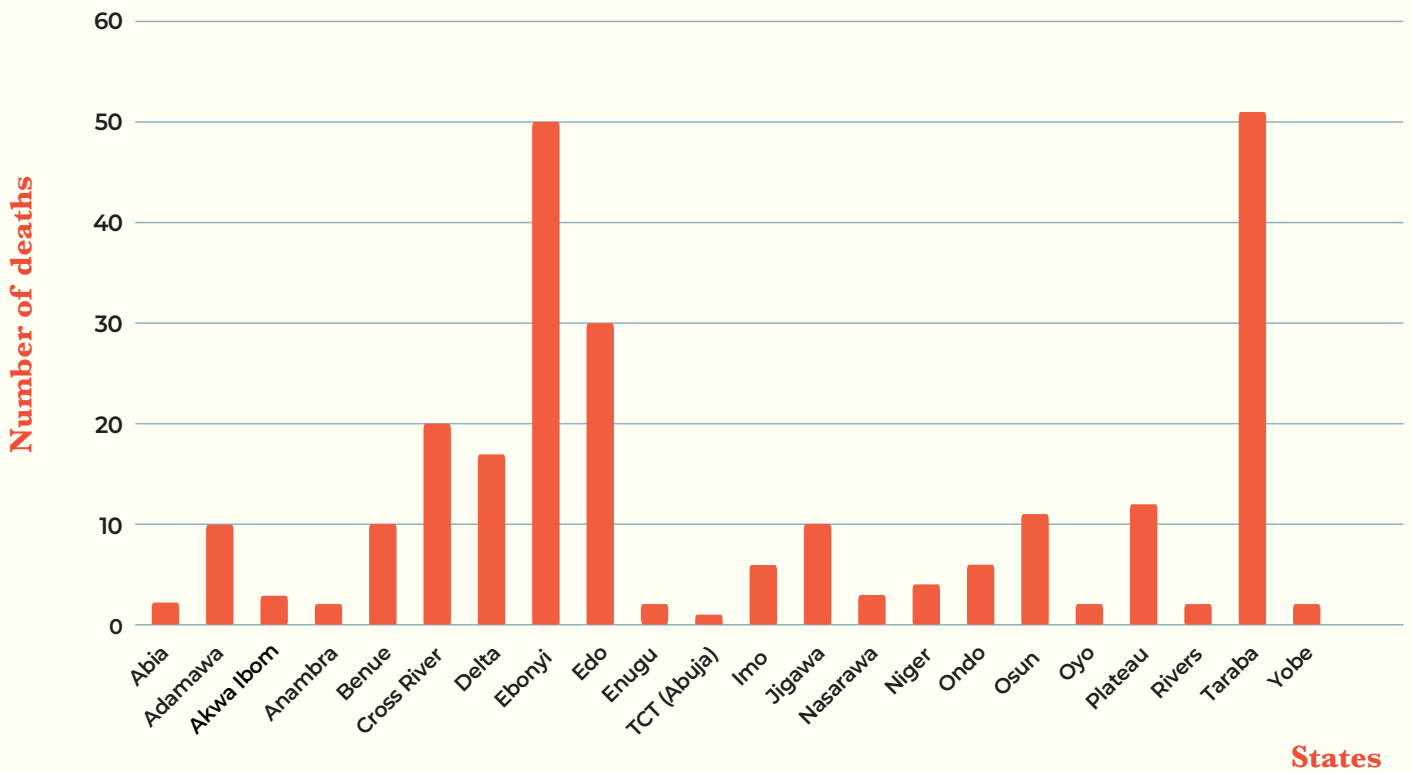
Figure 8: Fatalities resulting from road accidents by months in 2025



In 2025, February recorded the highest number of deaths related to road accidents (see Figure 8). On February 1, 2025, for instance, two buses collided and burst into flames, killing 30 people along the Benin-Ore-Ijebu Ode expressway in Odigbo LGA, Ondo State.

# 3. ETHNO-COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Figure 9: Fatalities caused by communal violence by states in 2025

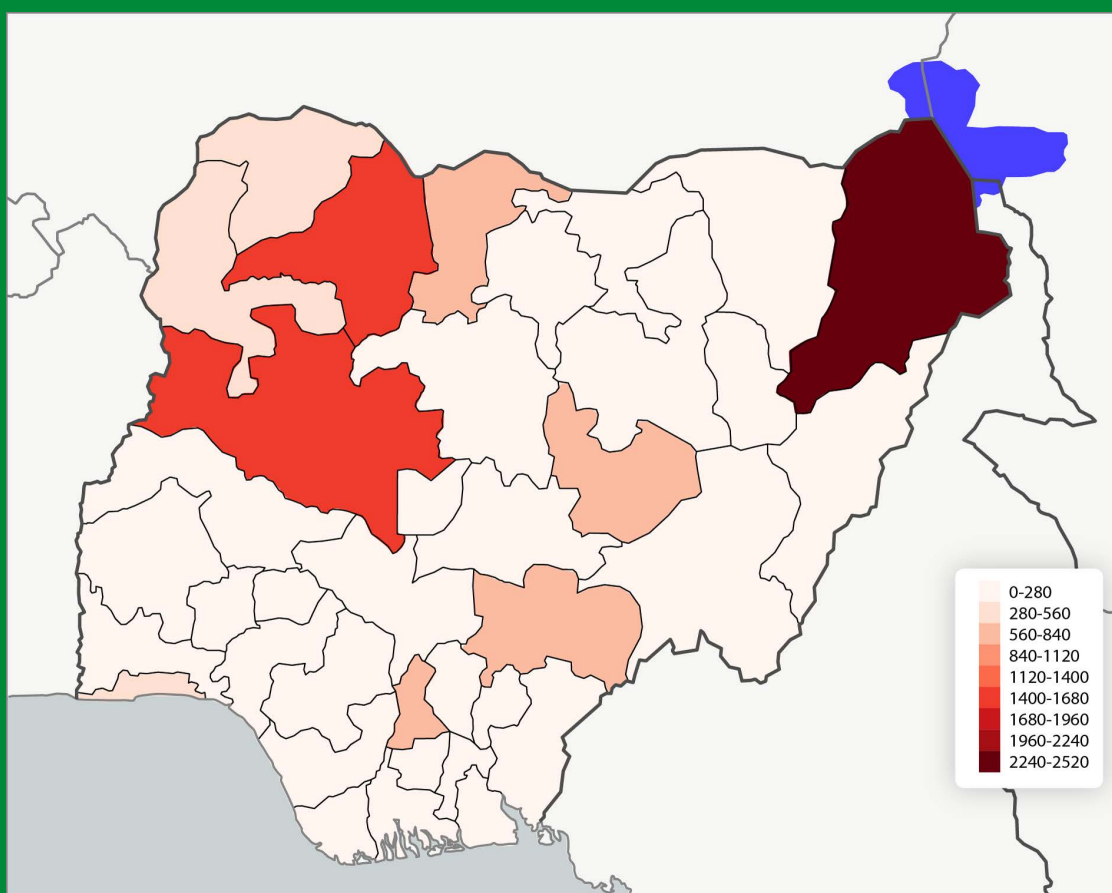


### 3 Ethno-communal violence

Ethno-communal violence across 21 states in Nigeria and the FCT (Abuja) claimed 256 lives in 2025. Taraba State recorded the highest number of deaths, followed by Ebonyi and Edo (see Figure 9). On the contrary, FCT (Abuja), Enugu, Anambra, Rivers and Yobe recorded the lowest number. About 80% (198) of these incidents were related to land conflicts, with Ebonyi and Taraba states recording the highest number of fatalities (see Figure 9). The Ezza and Ishiagu land dispute in Ivo LGA thus claimed 10 lives on August 8, 2025, in Ebonyi State. In Taraba State, about 30 people also died when Shomo and Wurkun communities clashed over land issues in Karim-Lamido LGA on December 6, 2025.

# 4. THE MOST DANGEROUS STATES

Figure 10: Map of fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants by states in 2025



## 4 The most dangerous states

Borno State was the most dangerous state in Nigeria in 2025, registering 28.3 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, primarily due to the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency. Zamfara State, which was the most dangerous in 2024, dropped to the second position. Other dangerous states in 2025 included Niger (19.9), Plateau (13.1) and Benue (11). In stark contrast, Ekiti State was the most peaceful with 0.5 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Akwa Ibom (0.7), Bauchi (0.9), Cross River (1.2) and Osun (1.2).