



Youth Candidacy in Nigeria's 2023 Elections

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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



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



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.



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.



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.

The North-west geopolitical 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.



Poor representation of young female candidates on the list of candidates. 11% of youth candidates are female.

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.

Among the young candidates, 7 individuals representing 0.2% belong to persons living with disabilities in the 2023 election.

Critical analysis of 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 reduction in the number of political parties due to INEC's 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.

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.

Youth candidates will require technical support to hone political organizing skills, and improve knowledge election day operations, and legal framework for elections

2



3

The general public are encouraged to support youth candidates by making financial donations to youth candidates with competence, character and capacity.

Media organizations 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.

4



5

To advance political inclusion and accountability in elections, Nigeria requires comprehensive political finance reform and reforms of the delegate recruitment and management process.

Analysis of the list of candidates for the 2023 elections

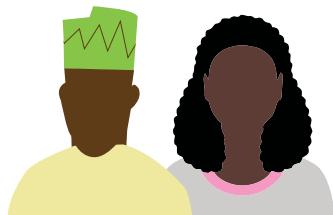
Overall distribution of candidates in the 2023 elections



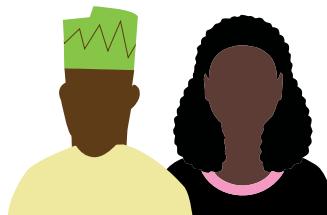
18 Presidential



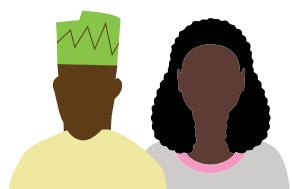
18 Vice-Presidential



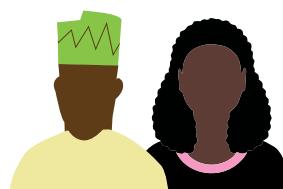
837
Governorship &
Deputies



1,101
Senate



3,122
House of Rep

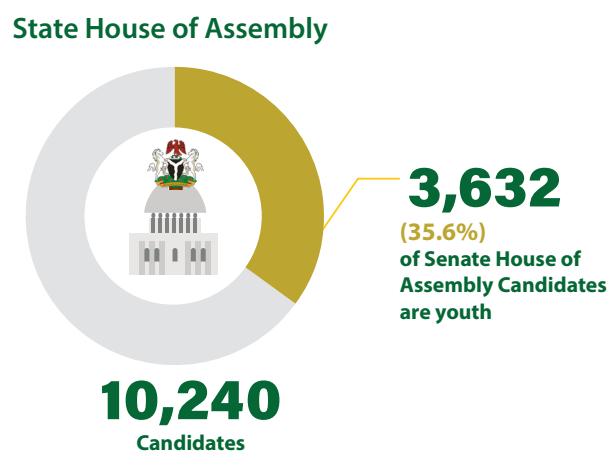
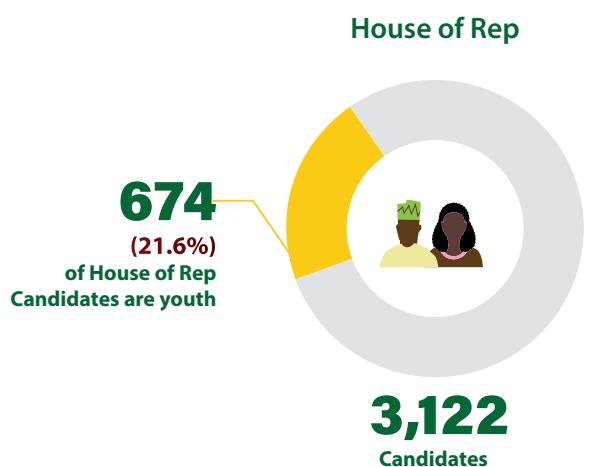
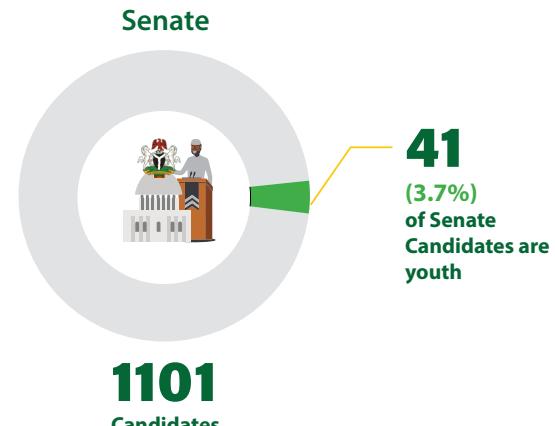
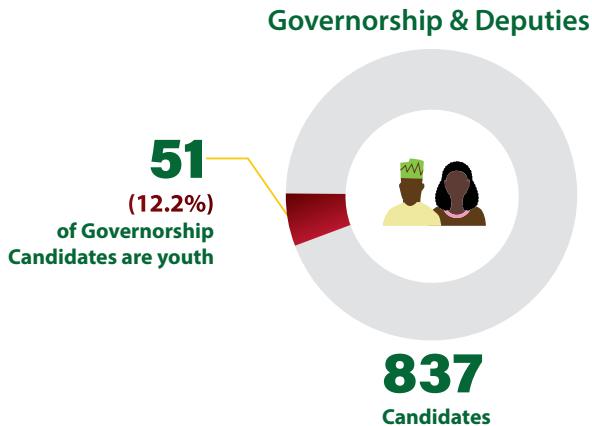


10,240
State House of
Assembly

A map of Nigeria in green, with the number **15,336** overlaid in large black digits. Below the map, the word **Candidates** is written in green.

Distribution of Youth Candidates

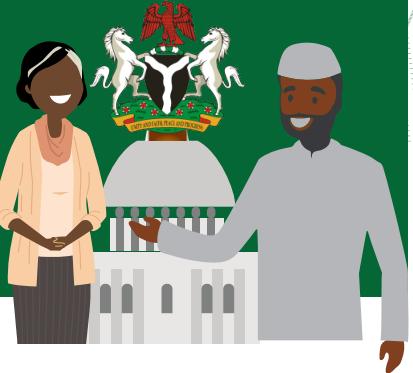
Governorship & Deputies



4,398 (28.8%)
Youth Candidates

15,336 Candidates

Youth Candidacy in the House of Representatives Elections



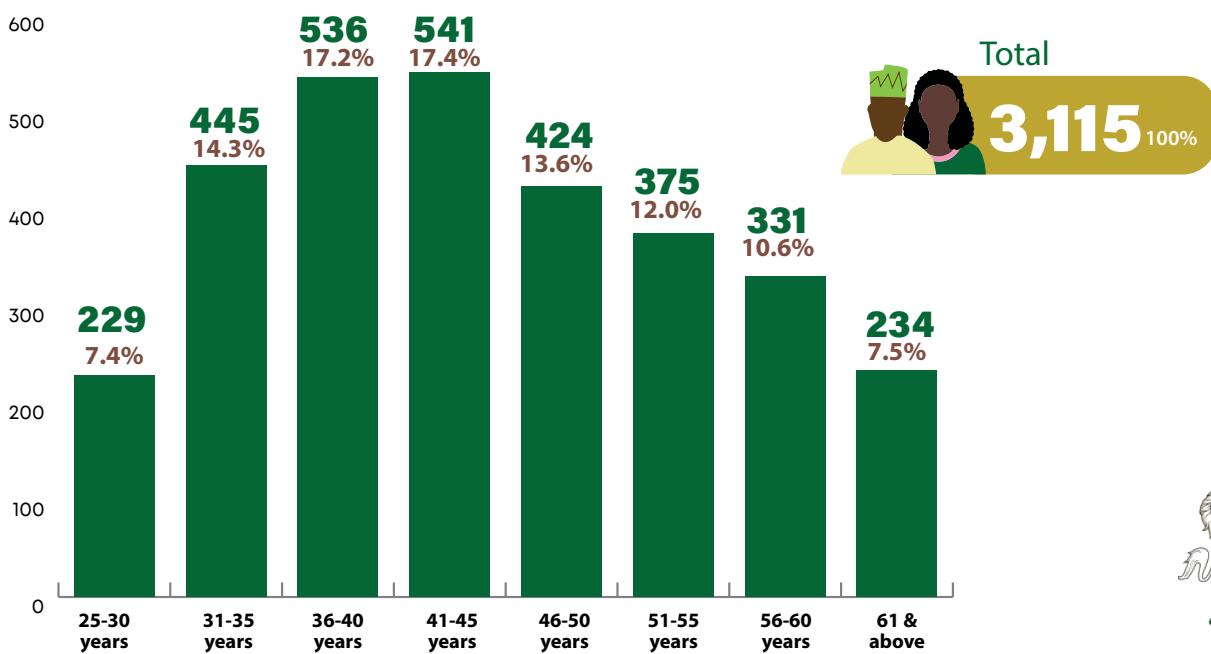
Of the 3,122 candidates vying seats in the House of Representatives, only 3,115 candidates have complete information on the list of candidates. Of this number, 674 representing 22% are young candidates. Two young candidates are people living with disabilities (albinism – 1, others – 1).

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.

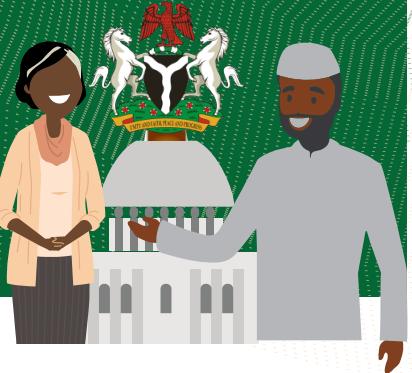
a. Age distribution

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).

Age distribution of candidates

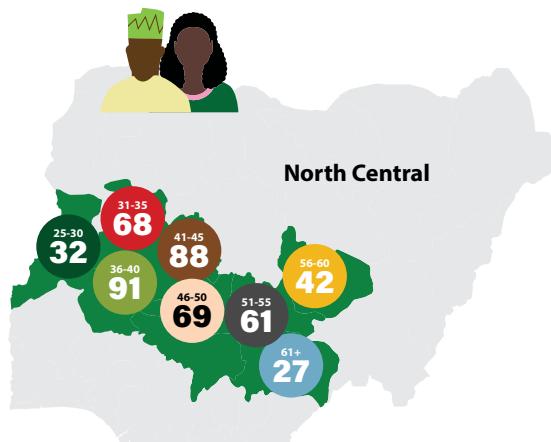


Youth Candidacy in the House of Representatives Election

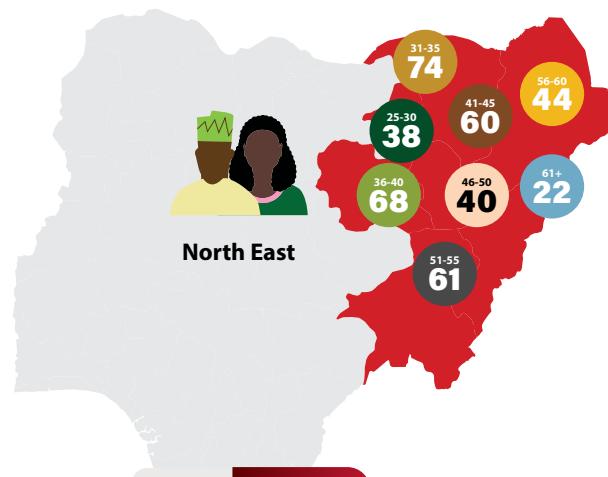


b. Geographical distribution

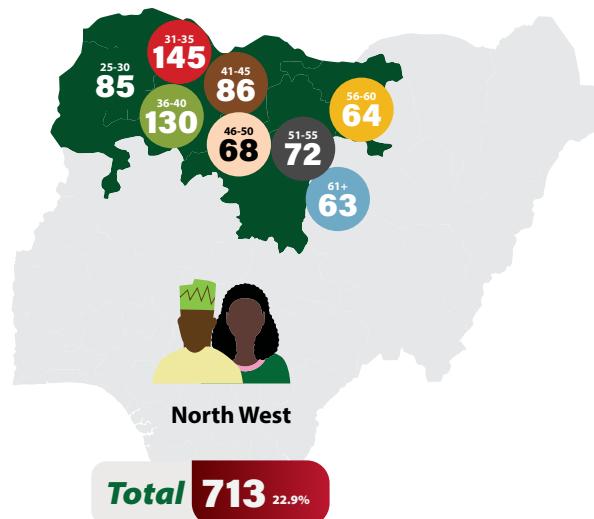
Across the geographical zones, the North West (23%) and South West (18%) dominate other zones with respect to the number of the candidates. However, the North East (38) has more 'Not too Young to Run' candidates after North West (85) compare to other regions. The South East (20) has the fewest number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



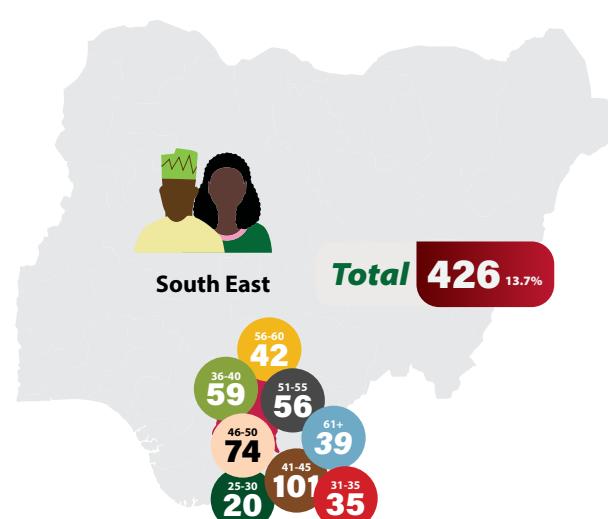
Total 478 15.3%



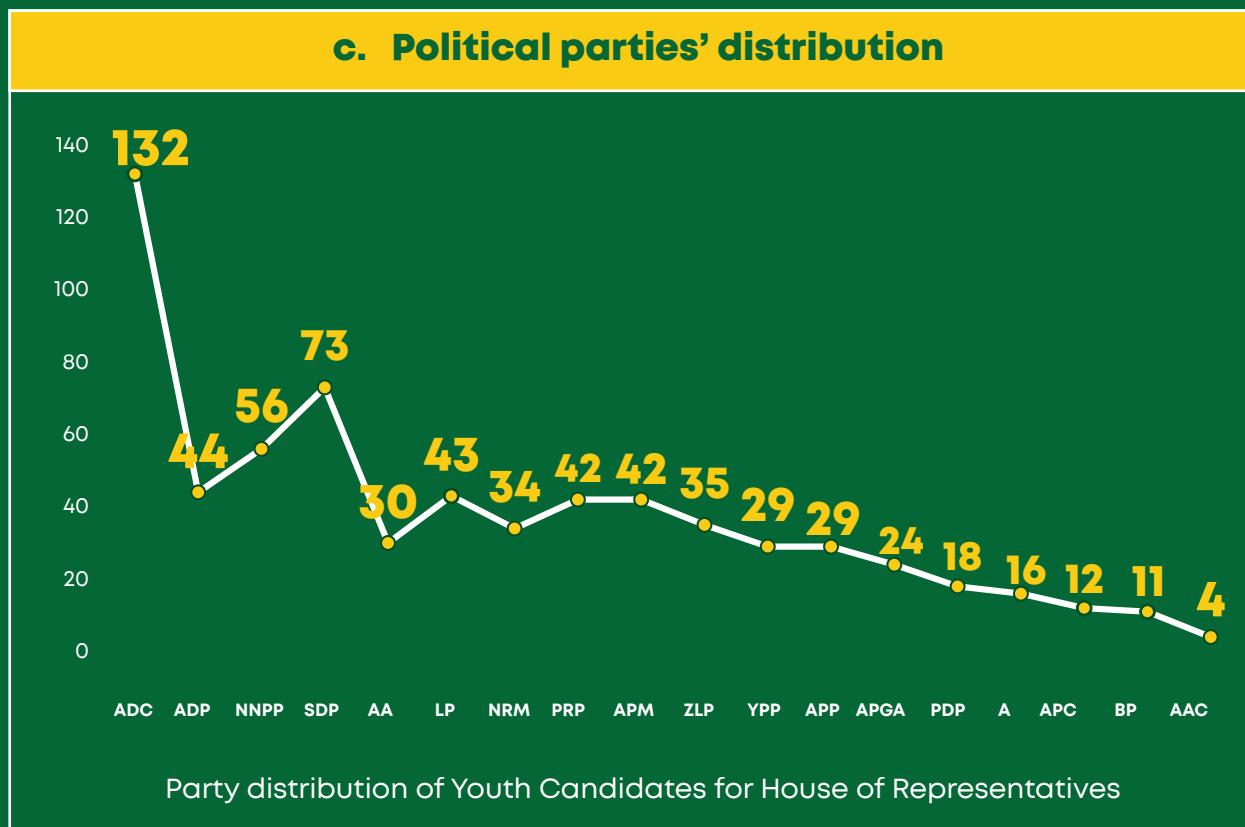
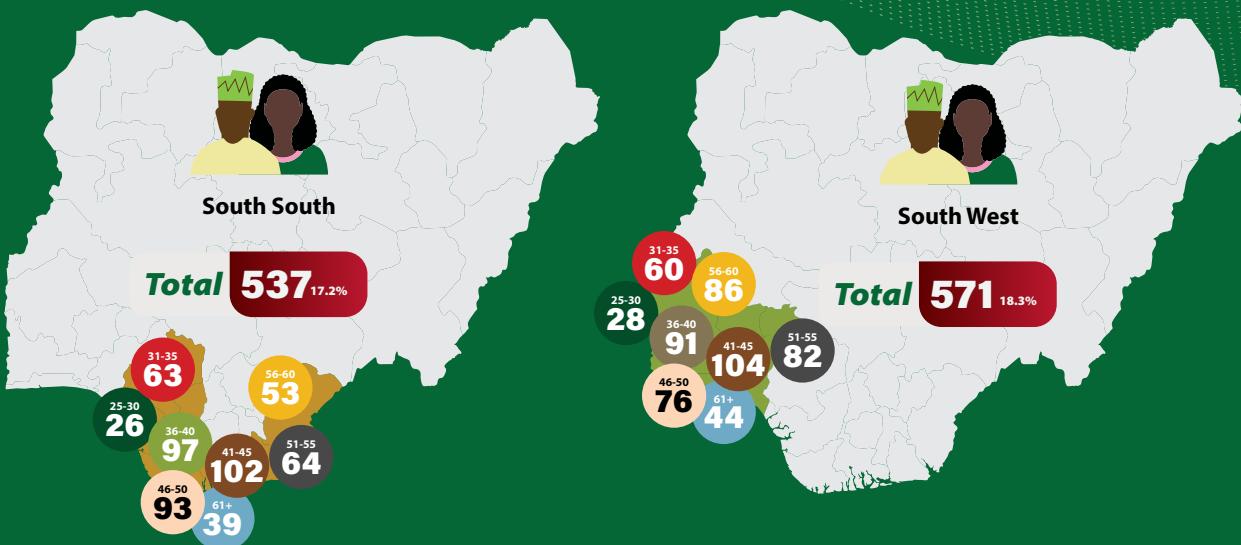
Total 390 12.5%



Total 713 22.9%



Total 426 13.7%



Total 674 100%
Youth Candidates

Youth candidacy in the State House of Assembly Election

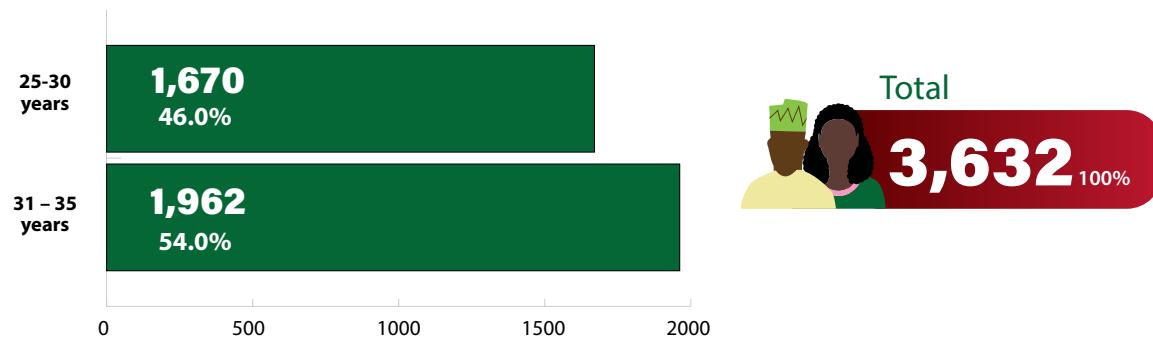


The 3,632 young candidates for the State House of Assembly accounts for 36% of all candidates for the election. This proportion (36%) however is lower than the proportion in the same election (42%) in 2019. The young candidates include five (5) persons with disabilities (albinism – 4, others – 1).

a. Age distribution

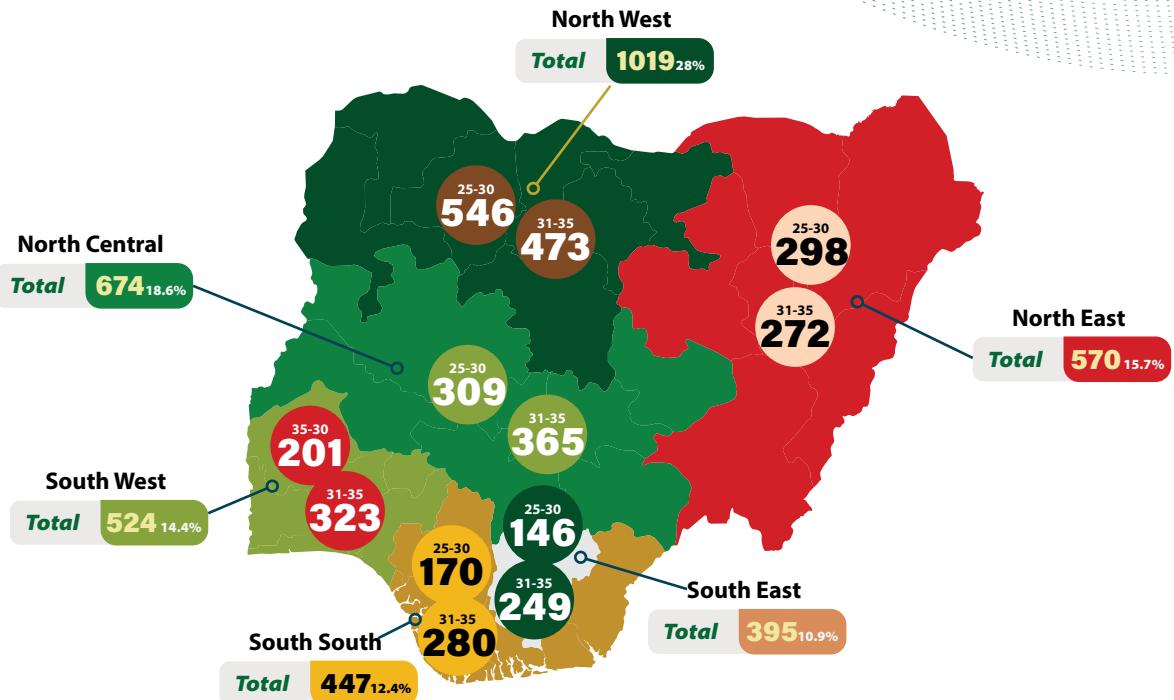
Fewer than half (46%) of the young candidates belong to the group '25 – 30'. Across zones, the North West has the highest number of candidates in the age group '25 – 30' and '31 – 35'. Over all, there are more candidates in the age group '31 – 35' than '20 – 25' (see Table 3).

Age distribution of candidates



b. Geographical distribution

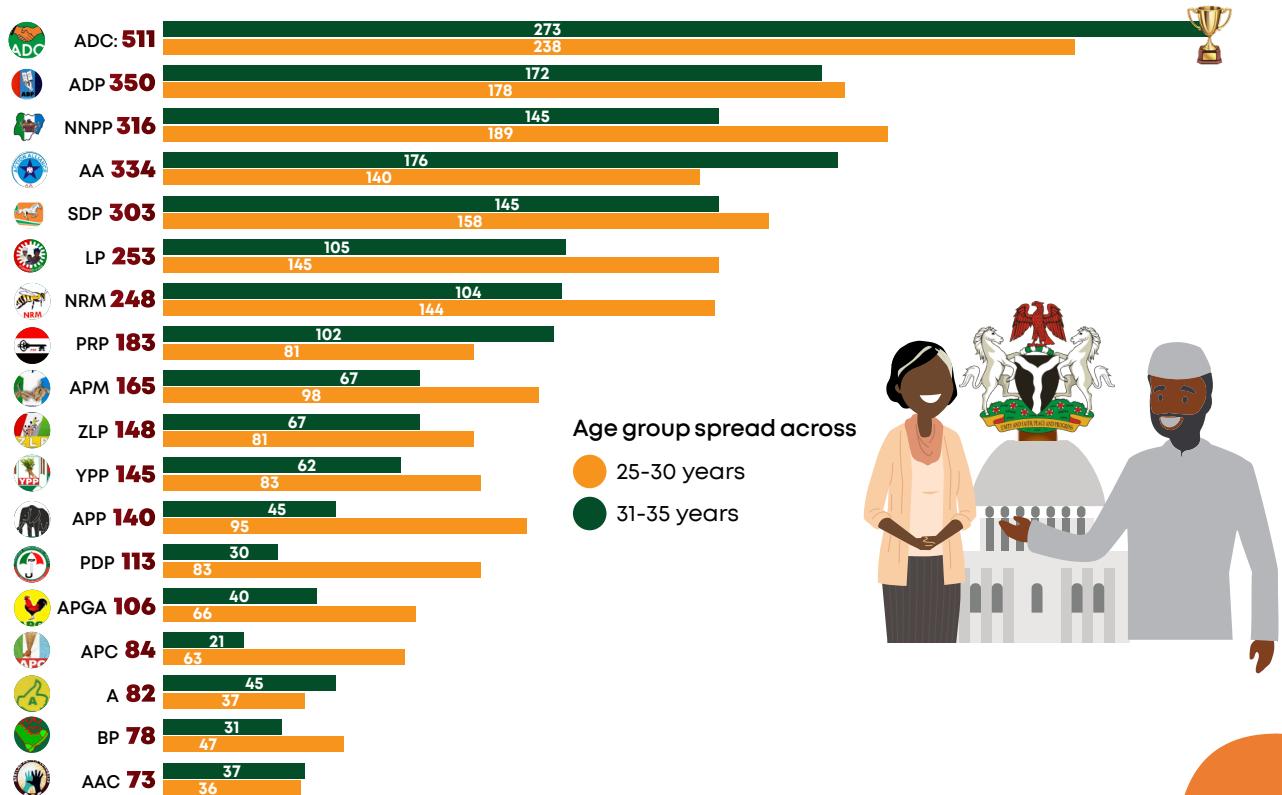
Across the zones, the North West (28%) has the highest youth representation, followed by North Central (19%). The South East at 11% has the lowest representation of youth in the election. Whereas there is significant increase in the proportion of youth candidates in the northern zones compared to 2019, 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.



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.

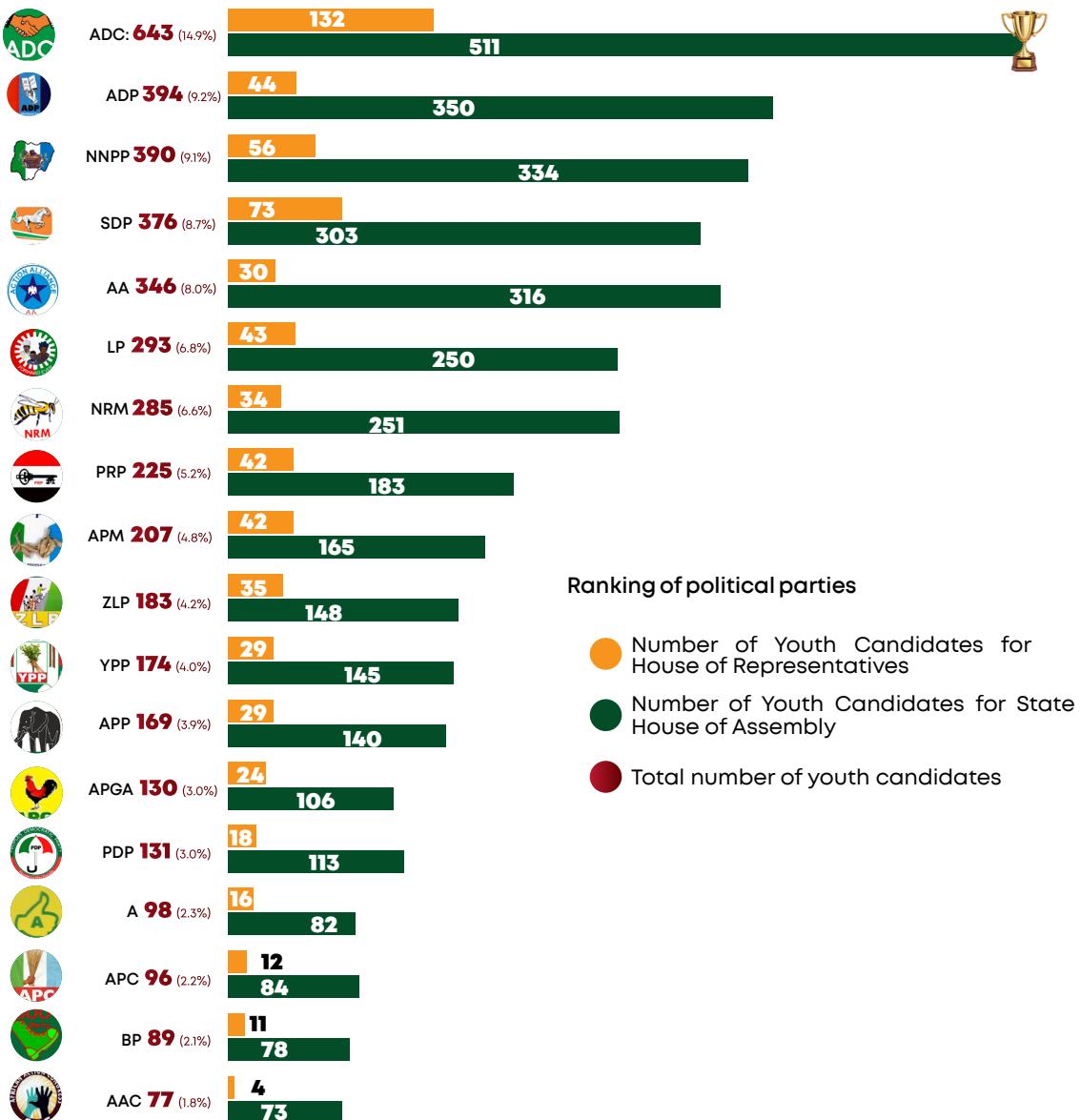


Ranking of Political Parties based on Youth Candidates (HOR And SHA Election)



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.

Ranking of political parties



Party logo and names

Party Logo	Party Name	Party Abbreviation
	Accord	A
	Action Alliance	AA
	African Action Congress	AAC
	African Democratic Congress	ADC
	Action Democratic Party	ADP
	All Progressives Congress	APC
	All Progressives Grand Alliance	APGA
	Allied Peoples Movement	APM
	Action Peoples Party	APP
	Boot Party	BP
	Labour Party	LP
	New Nigeria Peoples Party	NNPP
	National Rescue Movement	NRM
	Peoples Democratic Party	PDP
	Peoples Redemption Party	PRP
	Social Democratic Party	SDP
	Young Progressive Party	YPP
	Zenith Labour Party	ZLP



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