

***SEVENTH REPORT
ON VIOLENCE
IN NIGERIA***

2017

NIGERIA WATCH

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FOREWORD

This Seventh Annual Report on lethal violence in Nigeria covers the period between 1 Jan. and 31 Dec. 2017. The study has been conducted by Dr. Timothy Adeola Adams with the help of Assistant Coordinator Vitus Nwankwo Ukoji and Information retrieval specialists Abiola Victoria Ayodokun and Victor Chinedu Eze at the University of Ibadan.¹

This report is a good opportunity to remind why Nigeria Watch event dataset is so unique. First, it is the most documented tracking service on fatal violence in Nigeria. It applies Every Casualty Worldwide's international standards for recording fatalities and it supplements the lack of data on lethal violence in a country where official crime statistics are deficient.² Since 1st June 2006, it thus keeps records of all the incidents indexed in the database. This helps tracing the history of violence at a very local level. For instance, terrorism specialists claim that Boko Haram perpetrated its first suicide attack on April 8, 2011.³ But Nigeria Watch has on records that the insurgents used motorcycles laden with explosives driven by a suicide bomber to attack the Potiskum police station as soon as July 29, 2009.

Secondly, Nigeria Watch is neutral and does not take sides. As a research group, it aims to address the general lack of data with regard to violence and its victims. It highlights the main findings but does not make recommendations, unlike human rights organizations. Moreover, it has no political agenda, unlike militants who often tend to inflate the number of victims in order to expose their case and advocate for a cause.⁴

Thirdly, Nigeria Watch mentions its sources to pass the test of crosschecking the quality of its findings. From a scientific point of view, this is a critical issue because different sources can be contradictory and biased. Yet many decision makers, aid agencies, advocacy groups and NGOs do not pay as much attention to the quality of the data, maybe because they do not have time to query methodologies. Just to give an example: the International Crisis Group (ICG) claims that Fulani Herder Violence killed over 2,000 people in Benue and Kaduna states in 2016 alone, a higher toll than that caused by the Boko Haram insurgency over the same period. To sustain this assertion, it quotes reports that do not give sources: a Swiss-based NGO, a private security firm, a think tank, and newspapers that quote 'guesstimates' or computed figures without any reference to a methodology⁵. Interestingly enough, ICG did not investigate either the period before 2016, yet it asserts that Fulani attacks expand and that, "historically, relations between herders and sedentary farming communities have been harmonious... and peaceful"⁶.

¹ The project benefited from the continuous support of the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria). Please visit www.ifra-nigeria.org for more information about IFRA.

² <http://www.everycasualty.org/newsandviews/casualty-standards-published>

³ Warner, Jason & Hilary Matfess [2017], *Exploding Stereotypes: Unexpected Operational and Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram's Suicide Bombers*, West Point (NY), Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, p.39.

⁴ See for example a pro-Biafra Igbo writer who alleges that the Nigerian civil war killed over two million people, without any scientific and demographic data to support his claim. Uzokwe, Alfred Obiora [2003], *Surviving in Biafra: the story of the Nigerian civil war - over two million died*, New York, Writers Advantage, 226p.

⁵ SB Morgen Intelligence reported 1,425 people killed in attacks involving herders in 2016, as against 1,240 killed by Boko Haram through that year. The Council on Foreign Relations' Nigeria Security Tracker also reported that communal violence, mainly involving herders and farmers in Kaduna state, had killed around 1,300 people in 2016, compared to about 850 killed by Boko Haram over the same period. Based on media-reports, finally, a tally by the Lagos-based Sun newspaper finally stated that 1,102 people were killed in herder-farmer violence from June 2016 to May 2017, compared to 474 killed by Boko Haram over the same period. See: ACAPS [21 March 2017], *Nigeria: Farmer-Fulani Herder Violence in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau States*, Geneva, Assessment Capacity Project, 6p.; A Look at Nigeria's Security Situation, SB Morgen, 13 February 2017; "Herdsman attacks; Deadlier than Boko Haram", Saturday Sun, 3 June 2017; "Nigerian govt says 204 killed in Southern Kaduna crisis", Premium Times, 13 January 2017; "808 killed in Southern Kaduna, Catholic Church alleges", The Nation, 30 December 2016.

⁶ ICG [2017], *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict*, Brussels, International Crisis Group, p.1.

Fourthly, Nigeria Watch compares what is comparable: fatalities caused by intentional (homicides, battle deaths) or unintentional violence (accidents, collateral damages). Some analysts mix lethal and non-lethal incidents to attempt to draw trends. To assess the effectiveness of counter-terrorism against Boko Haram, for instance, they use both the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS).⁷ With the Harvard University Library, the later works for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and Office of Naval Research (ONR) in the U.S. It automatically extracts event data from news reports from around the world and codes them thanks to a natural language analysis engine. Its scope ranges from public statements to assault and mass violence.⁸ But the questions remains: how to compare a radical preach and the massacre of 300 villagers? Such events clearly dot not have the same impact. Linking the two can also be dubious. Radical preaching, dangerous speech, and ethnic hatred, both by Islamic or Christian groups, do not always entail fatal violence, while murders can obviously occur without any statements. To draw trends, most scientific research centers that study conflicts actually focus on the body-count of the victims.⁹

Yet there is of course room for improvement. Nigeria Watch is not exhaustive. Complementary data, networking, and smart devices would help being more accurate. Supported by MacArthur Foundation, the non-governmental Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) thus tried in 2015 to set up a Cattle Rustling Information System (CATRIS). Thanks to solar-powered livestock tracking devices, the portal was supposed to provide documentation and real-time alerts on cattle rustling incidents with herders' associations subscribing to and regularly updating the data to recover stolen cattle. No data was online as of 2018 but such experiments could be developed and expanded elsewhere in Nigeria.

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⁷ Stevenson, John, Amy Pate & Elvis Asiamah [2017], « Effective Counter-Terrorism Against Boko Haram: Empirical Assessments of Coercion, Delegitimization, Incentivization and Denial Strategies in Nigeria (2009-2014) », in Hentz, James & Solomon, Hussein (ed.), *Understanding Boko Haram: Terrorism and Insurgency in Africa*, London, Routledge, pp.188-217.
See: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>
<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/icews>

⁸ <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/28075>

⁹ Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine, Elizabeth Minor & Samrat Sinha (ed.), *Violence, statistics, and the politics of accounting for the dead*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2016, 140p.
<http://www.springer.com/la/book/9783319120355>

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ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AI	Amnesty International
APC	All Progressive Party
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
GIS	Geographic Information System
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FRSC	Federal Road Safety Commission
HRW	Human Right Watch
IFRA	French Institute for Research in Africa
IPOB	Independent People of Biafra
IMN	Islamic Movement of Nigeria
LGA	Local Government Area
MACBAN	Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria
MASSOB	Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra
NA	Nigeria Army
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
NW	Nigeria Watch
PDP	People Democratic Party
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is a decline in the number of violent deaths in Nigeria; a drop from 11,557 cases in 2016 to 10,178 in 2017, accounting for 11.6% decrease.
- In 2016, the main causes of lethal violence in Nigeria in order of number of fatalities were political and religious issues, crime, accidents and land disputes.
- The Boko Haram conflict killed 2,829 people in 2017, less than in 2016.
- Violence related to cult societies accounted for 442 fatalities, while kidnapping recorded 290 victims.
- Security operatives were involved in 327 fatal incidents that caused 2,067 fatalities in 2017.
- Road accidents were most prevalent in Ogun.
- In 2017, Borno was the most dangerous state in Nigeria, followed by Taraba, Cross River, Plateau and Adamawa. In comparison, Lagos, Rivers State and Abuja were much safer. The most deadly Local Government Area (LGA) in the country was Konduga in Borno State, which recorded 557 victims because of Boko Haram suicide attack and a bombing by the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) on the village of Gudumbli.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria Watch's 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).¹⁰ It answers four critical questions:

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

¹⁰ 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 bit differently per causes or per incidents.

1 Major Trends of violence 2006-2017

There has been a reduction in the numbers of recorded fatalities in Nigeria since 2014, as indicated in **figure 1**. This decrease is largely owed to security improvements in the northeast, where Boko Haram insurgents had to retreat to border and rural areas despite recurrent suicide attacks around Maiduguri.

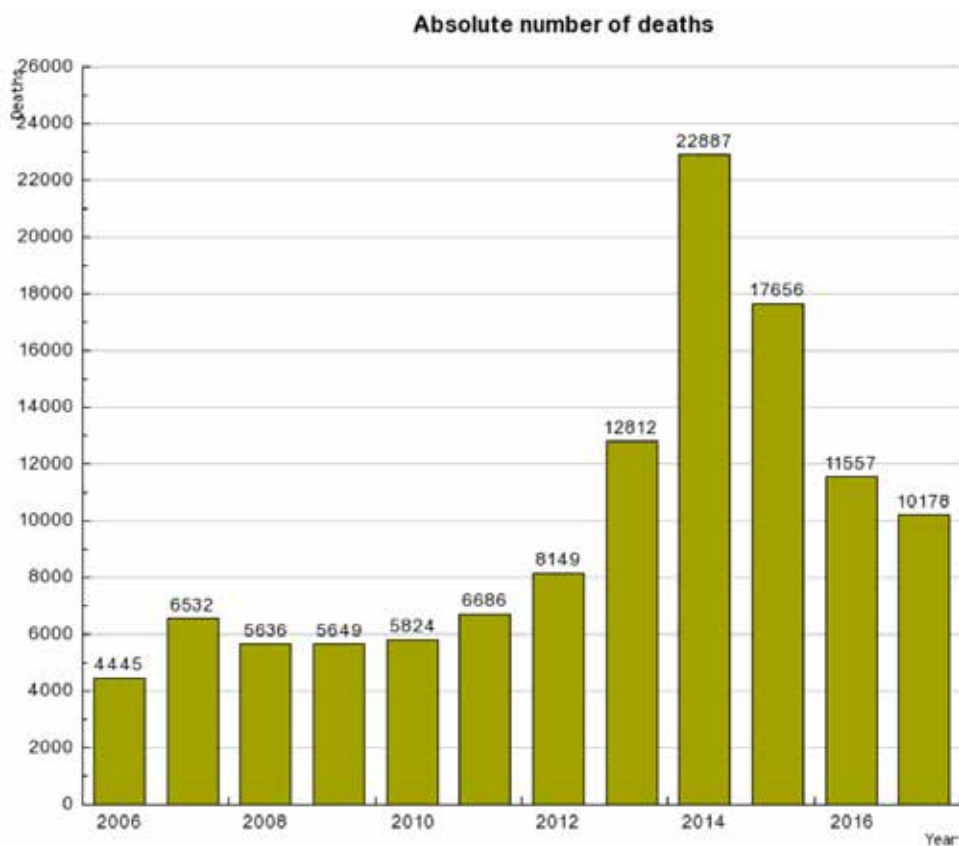


Figure 1: Main trend of violence 2006 – 2017

2 Main Causes of Violence in 2017

Identifying the causes of violence is complex because multiple factors combine to trigger fatal incidents. Some degree of simplification and categorization is necessary here to show that the main drivers of lethal violence in 2017 were related to political and religious conflicts, mainly because of the crisis in the northeast (see *figure 2*). Except for a few incidents in the southeast and the northwest, the Boko Haram conflict contributed 90% and 95% of the number of fatalities caused by political and religious issues respectively. Cases of land disputes, ritual killings and non-road accidents were the only ones to be on the rise in 2017. The increase was the highest for land conflicts, which provoked 961 fatalities in 2017 against 247 in 2016.

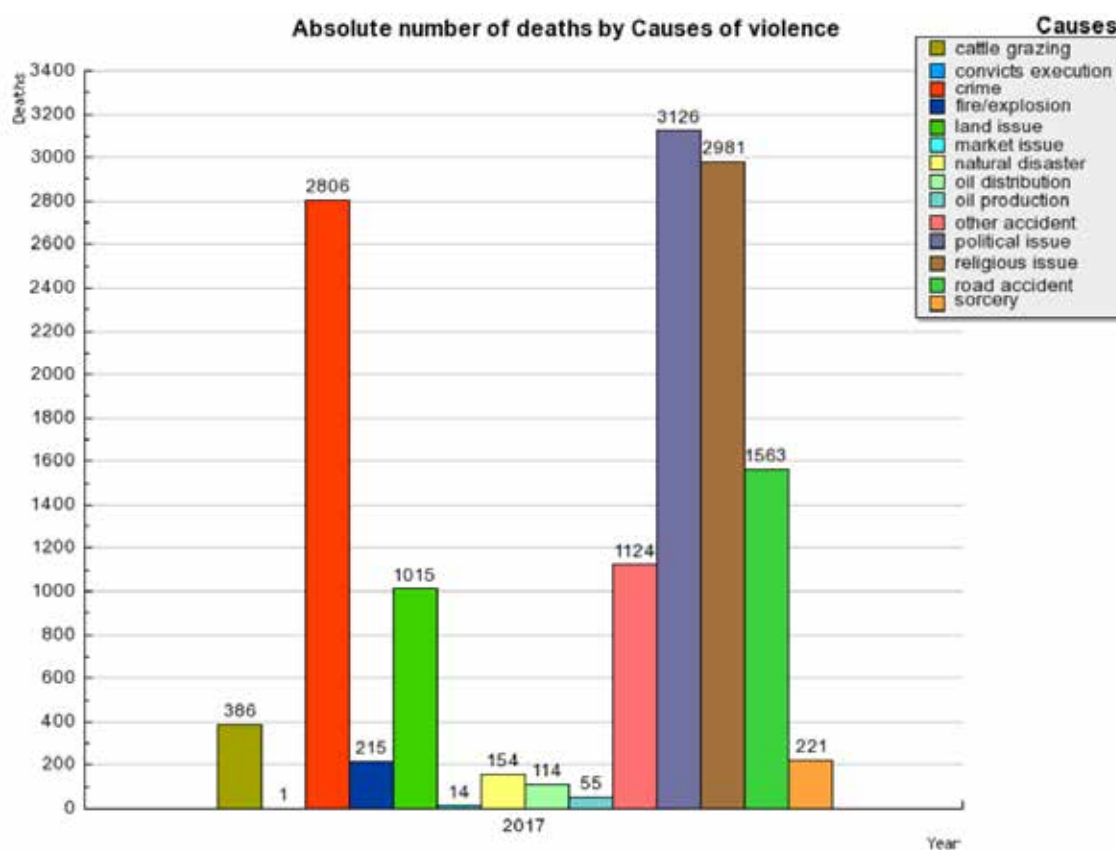


Figure 2: Number of fatalities resulting from different causes of violence in 2017

2.1 Crime

In 2017 as in 2016, criminal incidents included communal fighting, armed robbery, jail break, piracy, cattle rustling, extrajudicial killings by the security forces, cultist clashes, mob action, kidnapping, gang attacks, domestic violence and ritual killings. The main protagonists involved were armed gangs, security forces and cult societies (see *figure 3*). The security forces, especially the police, intervened in criminal incidents that resulted in 606 deaths because of crossfire with armed robbers, mob actions or extra-judicial actions. Despite a general decrease, Lagos was the state most affected by crime when it comes to the number of fatalities, especially because of the so-called Badoo cult group in Ikorodu, followed by Rivers, Benue, Kaduna, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Ondo and Ogun. Violent incidents related to cult societies were recorded in no fewer than 23 states nationwide, mainly in Lagos and Rivers, and they included kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, ritual killings and battles with security operatives or rival groups. Kidnappings for ransom were responsible for the death of 290 people in 100 incidents spread over 27 states across the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory. Several high profiled cases were recorded along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway. Kaduna State alone recorded the highest casualty related to kidnappings, followed by Delta (where some 34 victims also died in the custody of their abductors), Ondo, Rivers, Lagos and Imo.

Conflicts between farmers and herders in the search for grazing fields and water for their cattle also wrecked havoc in over 20 states across the country, especially Adamawa, Plateau and Taraba. The most horrific attack occurred in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, where hundreds of people were hacked to death when some Fulani communities were attacked by neighboring villages from Mambilla Plateau in June 2017. The crisis generated a lot of reactions from various quarters. Some of the affected states have enacted anti-grazing laws and created special task forces to tackle the problem.

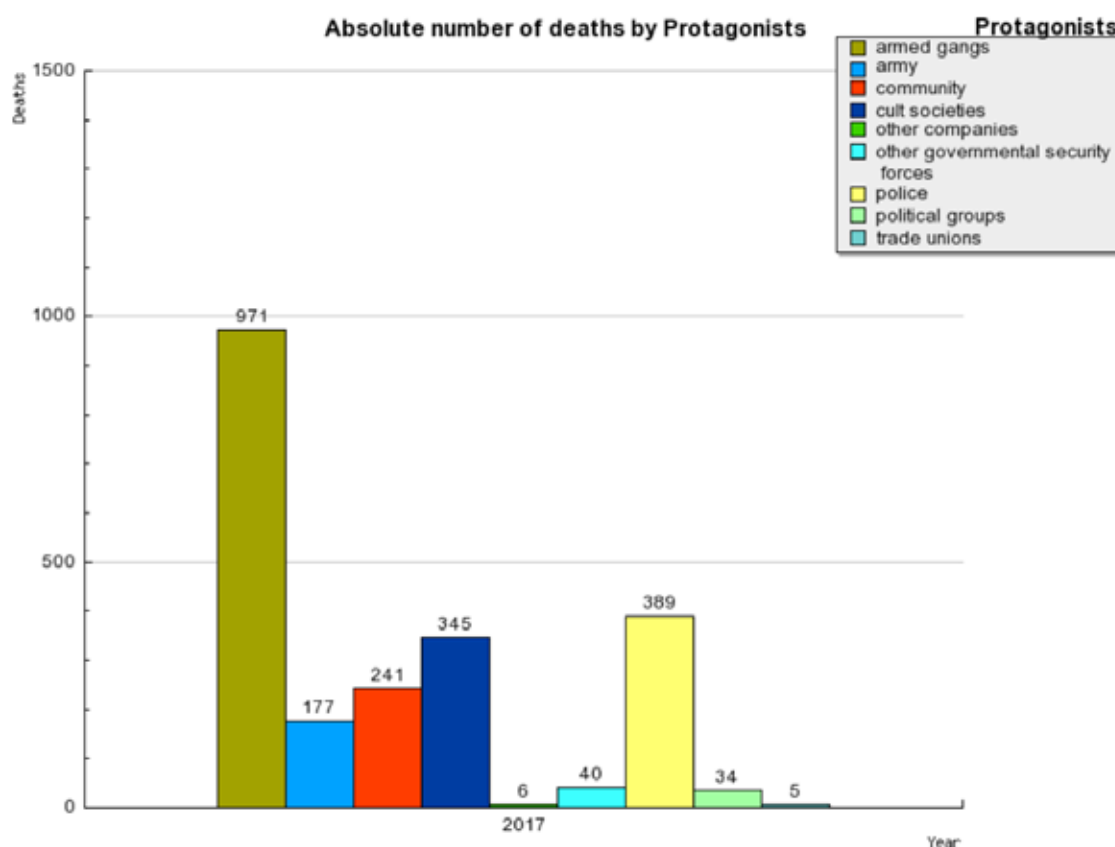


Figure 3: The main protagonists of violence in 2017, per number of fatalities

2.2 Political and religious violence

Boko Haram Insurgency

The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast is generally considered to be driven by both religious and political issues. While decreasing, it still accounted for the majority of fatalities caused by political and religious violence in Nigeria. The security forces fighting Boko Haram killed in 40% of incidents (90 out of 221) that resulted in 45% of the total number of casualties (1,282 out of 2,829). The crisis affected mainly Borno State (with 2,567 victims in 187 fatal incidents), followed by Adamawa (165 deaths in 19 incidents), Yobe (85 deaths in 10 incidents) and Kano (4 deaths in 1 incident). Within Borno State, the Nigerian military recovered territories from the insurgents but attacks were still rife and casualties were concentrated in Bama, Kala/Balge, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Jere, Konduga Kukawa, Mafa, Maiduguri and Ngala Local Government Areas. Ironically, the state capital, Maiduguri, witnessed more deadly attacks (46) than any other LGA in Borno, including Konduga, which recorded the highest number of fatalities (557 in 18 incidents). Meanwhile, LGAs like Bayo, Hawul, Kwaya Kusar, Nganzai and Shani did not record any fatal incident.

Other Forms of Political Violence

To a lesser degree, militant confrontations with security forces, Shiite protests and clashes during rallies also affected other regions in Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory. Occasional cases of political assassinations were recorded in Anambra, Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Bayelsa and Oyo States while parties' primaries, ward and local council elections triggered violence and sometimes involved cult societies in Bayelsa, Osun, and Anambra States. In the southeast, the dominant political violence was related to protests by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB, led by Nnamdi Kanu) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB, led by Ralph Uwazuruike). Abia State, the headquarters of IPOB, recorded the highest number of fatalities because of military operations and confrontations with the Army. The crisis spread to Anambra, Imo, Rivers and two states in the South-South geopolitical zone, Rivers and Delta. In addition, a spill-over effect of an attack on Hausa community by IPOB members in Abia State was recorded in Jos South, when a clash erupted between Igbo and Hausa residents, claiming 2 lives.

2.3 Road accident

Road accidents were the third main cause of violent deaths in 2017, yet with a consistent drop in fatalities across the country since 2013 (see *figure 4*). This decline could be attributed to improvements in government’s transport policy, the introduction of speed limiters or the deployment of more traffic personnel to curb the excesses of road users. Apart from the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), for instance, most states have now created traffic control units to manage movements on the major roads.

Yet Ogun was the most risky state in terms of road accidents. Indeed, it is located on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, which is the most plied route by motorists in the country and which has remained under reconstruction for more than 5 years. Ogun was followed by Kebbi and Katsina states (*figure 5*). The states that were least prone to casualty figures on the road included Cross River and Kwara.

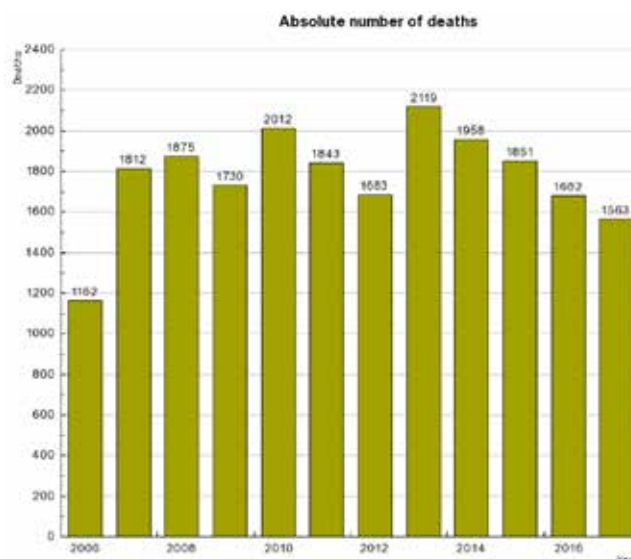


Figure 4: Number of fatalities resulting from road accidents per year from 2006 to 2017

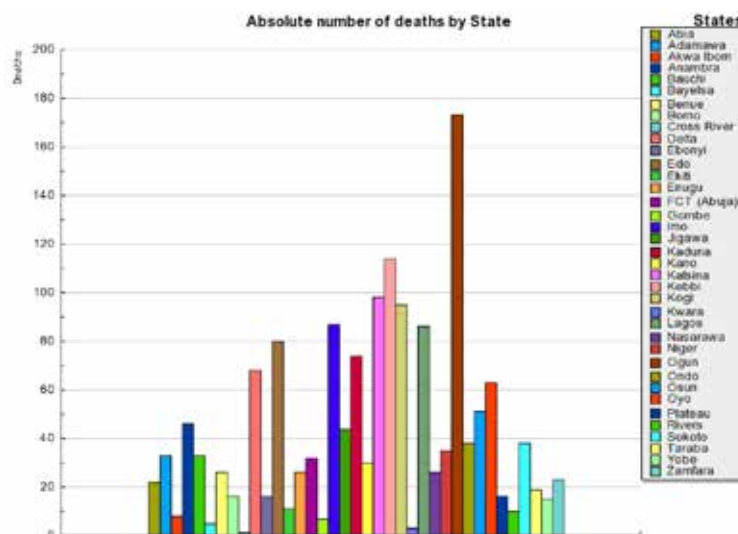


Figure 5: Road accident fatalities per state in 2017

2.4 Ethno-communal violence

Communal violence killed 1,149 people in 100 incidents across the country in 2017. Disputes were triggered by chieftaincy matters, cattle rustling, as well as land, market, or boundary related issues. Many of these conflicts were fuelled by herders' clashes with farmers. Apart from Taraba, which recorded 439 fatalities, mainly in Sardauna Local Government Area, Cross River State ranked two in terms of communal violence, with 166 victims reported, especially in Akamkpa, Obubra, Odukpani, and Yala LGAs (see [figure 6](#)). Other high risk states for communal violence included Benue (89 fatalities), Akwa Ibom (86), Adamawa (85), Ebonyi (58), Plateau (58) and Delta (52).

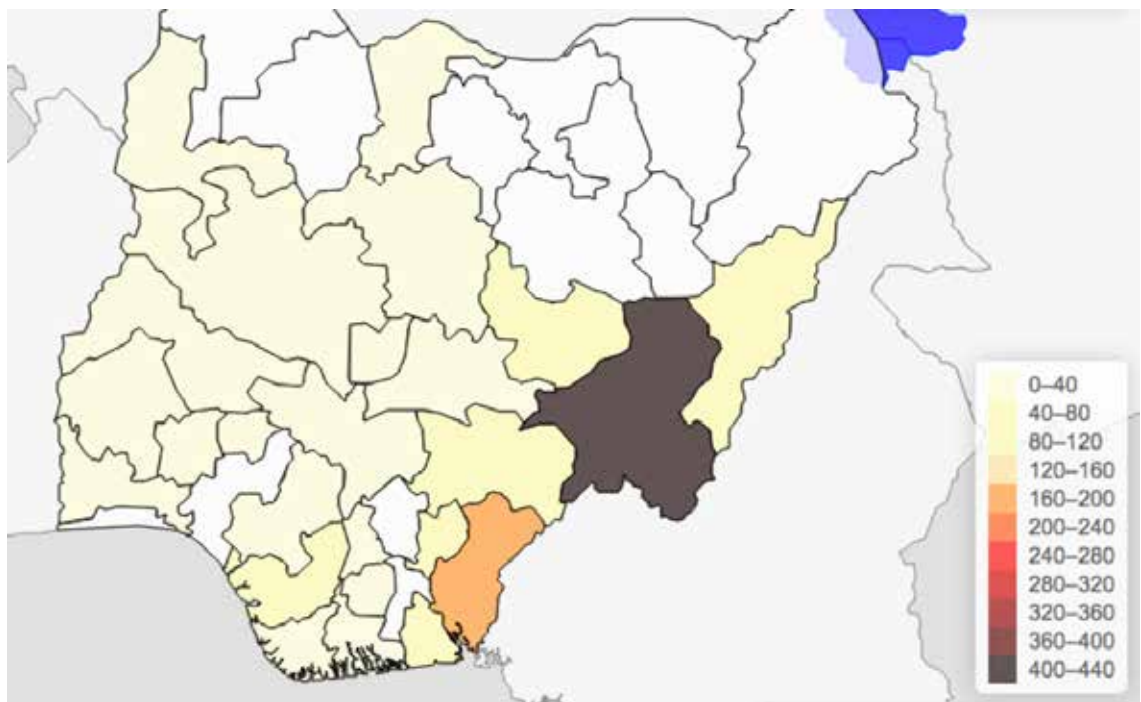


Figure 6: Map of the fatalities caused by communal violence per state in Nigeria, 2017

3 The most dangerous states

Risk is usually assessed with the number of fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants. **Figure 7** shows that in 2017, Borno was the most dangerous state in Nigeria, followed by Taraba, Cross River, Plateau and Adamawa. The drivers of violence in these locations varied a lot. The security risk in Borno was largely attributable to the prevailing insurgency of Boko Haram, while Taraba suffered from deadly inter-communal clashes. In comparison, Lagos and Rivers States were much safer, while the Federal Capital territory appeared as a haven.

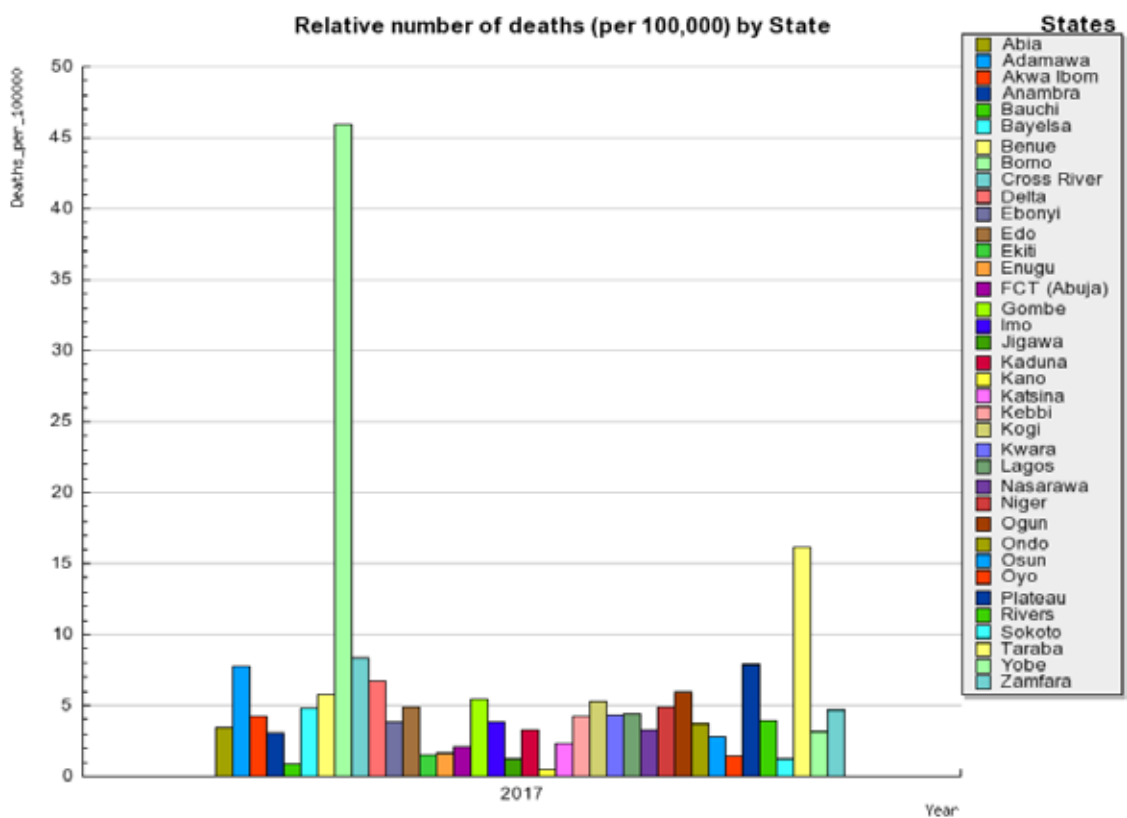


Figure 7: Number of fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants per state in Nigeria, 2017