

DECIDED BEFORE THE VOTE



Who Nigeria's political parties put on the 2027 ballot, and who they left off

In exactly 100 days, on Saturday, 16 January 2027, Nigerians will elect a President, 109 Senators and 360 members of the House of Representatives (HoR).

Imagine you are a voter in Adamawa Central Senatorial District. When you collect your ballot, you will see 16 Senate candidates. Not one of them is a woman. Voters in Imo East (16 candidates), Kano South and Abia North (15 each) will see the same thing. Whatever these voters want, they cannot elect a woman senator in January. That decision was made months ago, during party primaries.

This is the first part of Invictus Africa's 2027 general election series. We analysed every name on the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) final list of candidates for the Presidential and National Assembly elections, compared it with the 2023 list, and set it against what voters told us in our Voters' Preference Survey (VPS). Part 2 will cover governorship and State House of Assembly candidates once INEC's certified lists are complete.

Table 1. At a glance: 2023 and 2027 national elections compared

Indicator	2023	2027
Candidates (President, Senate, HoR)	4,225	4,881
Political parties fielding candidates	18	22
Women candidates	379 (9.0%)	471 (9.6%)
Women presidential candidates	1 of 18	2 of 18
Senate districts with no woman candidate	48 of 109 (44%)	36 of 109 (33%)
HoR constituencies with no woman candidate	181 of 360 (50%)	160 of 360 (44%)
Youth candidates (aged 25 to 35)	708 (16.8%)	637 (13.1%)
Candidates with disabilities	13	7

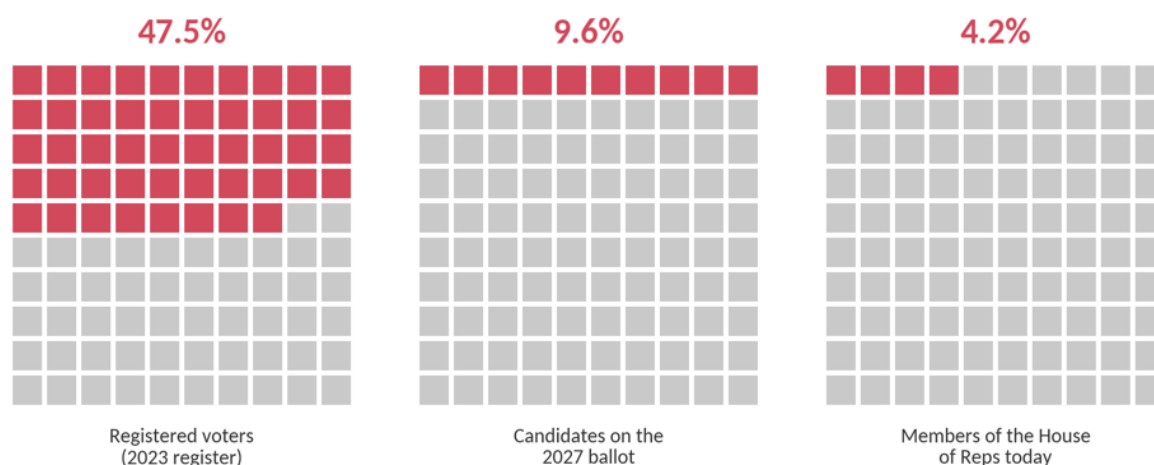
Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2023 and 2027; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

1. 1 in 10 on the ballot, 1 in 25 in parliament

Women are almost half of Nigeria's voters: 44.4 million of the 93.5 million people on the 2023 voter register. Yet only 471 of the 4,881 candidates for 2027 are women. That is 9.6%, or about one in every ten names on the ballot. Today, women hold just 4.2% of seats in the House of Representatives, about one in twenty-five.

From voters to lawmakers, women disappear at every step

Out of every 100 people at each stage, how many are women?



Sources: INEC voter register 2023; INEC Final List of Candidates 2027; IPU Parline (House of Representatives, 2026).

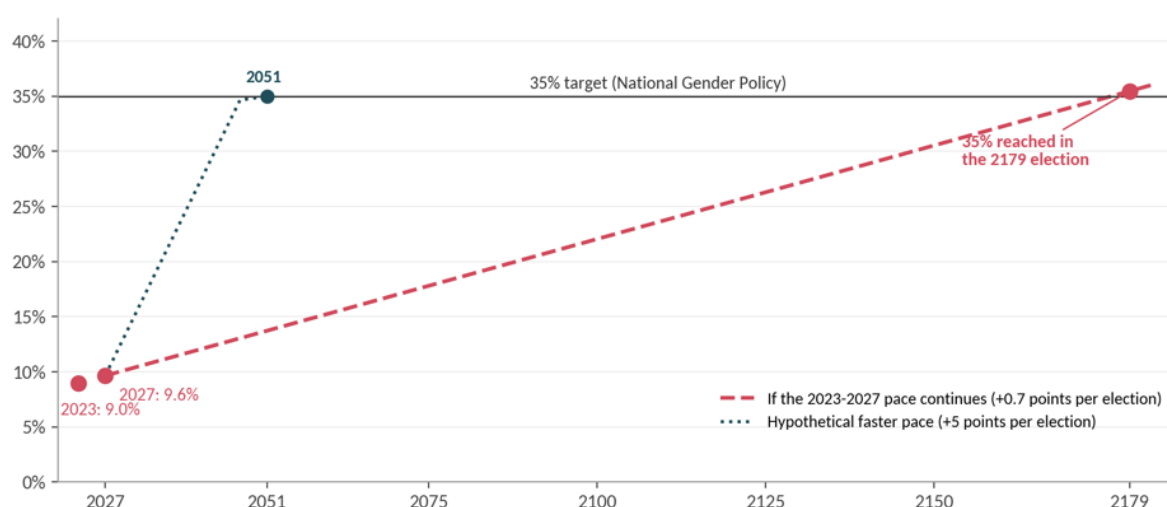
Figure 1. Women at each stage, from voter register to parliament.

There is some progress. Women's share of candidates rose from 9.0% in 2023 to 9.6% in 2027, and their number rose from 379 to 471. But the share grew by less than one percentage point in a full election cycle.

This suggests that if every future election adds the same 0.7 points, women will reach 35% of candidates, the target in Nigeria's Revised National Gender Policy, only at the 2179 general election: about 150 years and 38 elections from now. Almost no one alive today would see it, and that is a share of candidates, not of seats won. To reach 35% by 2051 instead, the share would need to grow about seven times faster, by roughly 5 points every election. Goodwill alone has not produced that kind of jump.

At the current pace, women would reach 35% of candidates in about 150 years

Women as % of Presidential and National Assembly candidates: actual (2023, 2027) and projected at the 2023-2027 pace



Sources: INEC Final List of Candidates 2023 and 2027; Revised National Gender Policy 2021-2026 (35% target). Projection is illustrative: it assumes the 2023-2027 gain (+0.7 percentage points per election) repeats every four years. WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 2. Women's share of candidates: actual and projected at the 2023 to 2027 pace (illustrative).

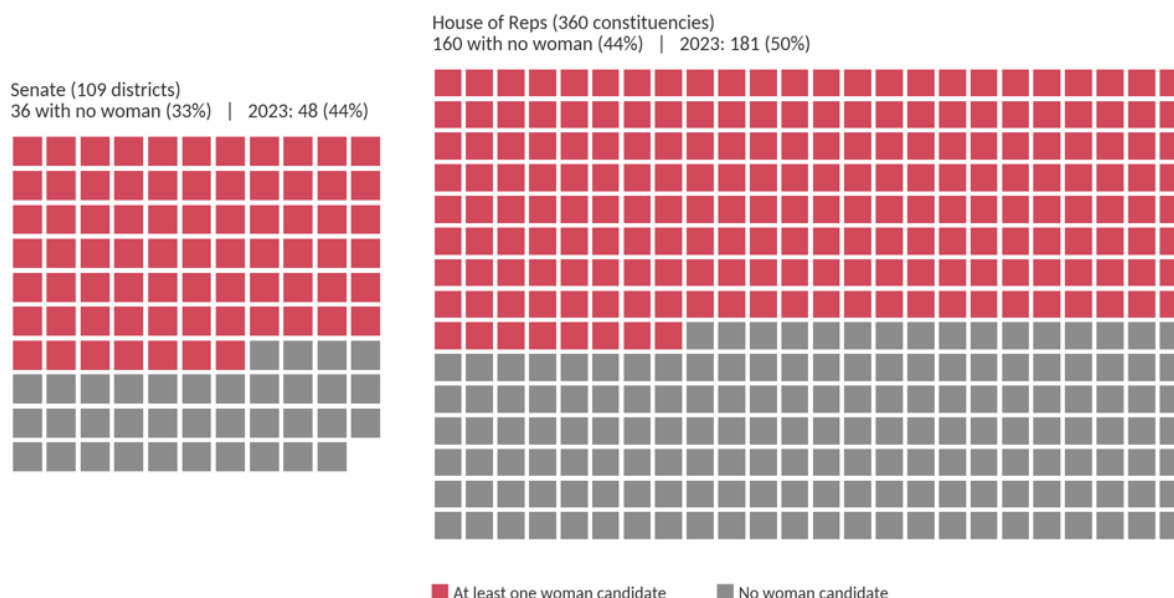
At the top of the ticket, 2 of the 18 presidential candidates are women: Ada Okwori of the NDP and Nkem Okereke of the NRM. In 2023, there was one.

2. For millions of voters, the choice was removed before the campaign

The most important number in this analysis is not how many women are running. It is how many races have no woman at all.

In many races, voters cannot choose a woman at all

Each square is one seat in 2027. Grey seats have no woman among the candidates.



Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2027 and 2023; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 3. Seats with and without a woman candidate, 2027.

In 2027, 36 of the 109 Senate districts (33%) and 160 of the 360 federal constituencies (44%) have no woman candidate. In Yola North/Yola South/Girei, Adamawa, voters will choose among 15 HoR candidates, all men. In Kano Municipal, there are 14, all men.

This has improved since 2023, when 48 Senate districts (44%) and 181 constituencies (50%) had no woman. And some places show what is possible: in Akwa Ibom North-West, 5 of the 13 Senate candidates are women; in Otukpo/Ohimini (Benue) and Alimosho (Lagos), 5 women are contesting each seat.

The question is not only whether Nigerians will vote for women. In a third of Senate districts and nearly half of HoR seats, parties did not give voters that option.

3. Voters are ready; the ballot is not

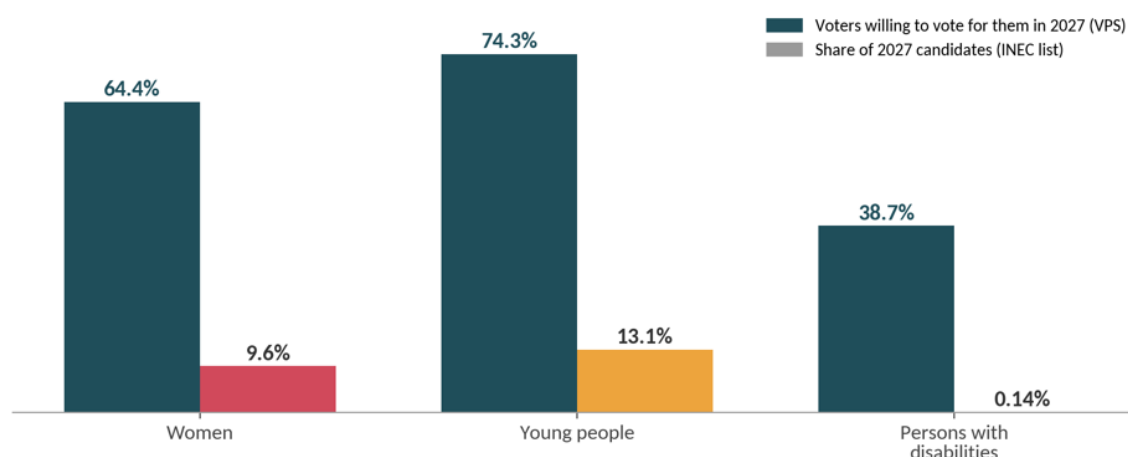
It is often said that women, young people and persons with disabilities are missing from parliament because voters will not elect them. Invictus Africa's Voters' Preference Survey (VPS), a nationally

representative survey of 11,196 eligible voters across the 36 states and the FCT, published in August 2026, points the other way.

In the VPS, 64.4% of voters said they would vote for a woman in 2027, and 74.3% for a young person. Yet women are only 9.6%, and young people 13.1%, of the candidates those voters will find on the ballot.

Voters are ready. The ballot is not.

% of voters who say they would vote for each group in 2027 (VPS), compared with each group's share of 2027 candidates (INEC)



Sources: Invictus Africa, Voters' Preference Survey (VPS) Series, Pre-Election 2026 (11,196 eligible voters, 36 states and FCT); INEC Final List of Candidates 2027; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 4. Voter willingness (VPS) compared with share of 2027 candidates (INEC).

The VPS also asked people who had never voted for these groups why. Half of those who had never voted for a woman (51.1%) said they had never seen one on their ballot. For young candidates, the figure was 79.9%, and for candidates with disabilities, 61.3%. Put simply, a voter in Kano Municipal who wants to elect a woman to the House of Representatives cannot do so in January. The barrier is the nomination, not the voter.

Many voters have never seen these candidates on their ballot

Among voters who had never voted for a candidate from each group: % who said it was because none was on their ballot



Sources: Invictus Africa, Voters' Preference Survey (VPS) Series, Pre-Election 2026 (11,196 eligible voters, 36 states and FCT); INEC Final List of Candidates 2027; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

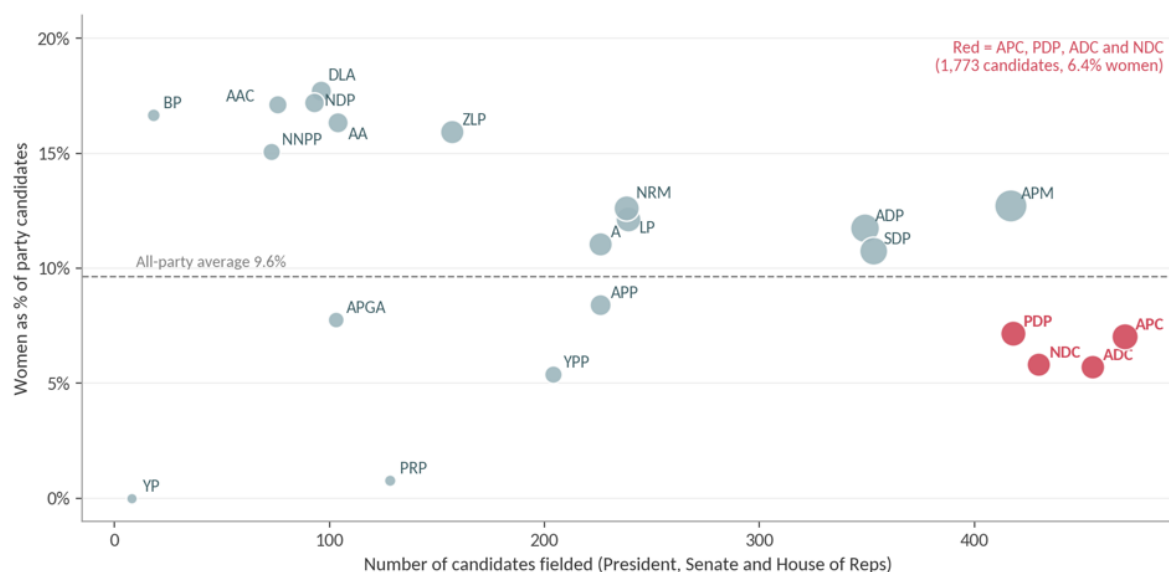
Figure 5. Why voters had never voted for these groups: no such candidate on their ballot (VPS).

4. The parties most likely to win field a smaller share of women

Four parties draw the most attention in this race: the APC and PDP, which won the most National Assembly seats in 2023, and the ADC and NDC, whose presidential candidates, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, finished second and third in the 2023 presidential election. Together they field 1,773 candidates, 36% of the ballot. Only 6.4% of them are women. The other 18 parties average 11.5%.

The four leading parties all fall below average on women

Each dot is a party. Further right = more candidates; higher = larger share of women (2027).



Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2027 and 2023; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

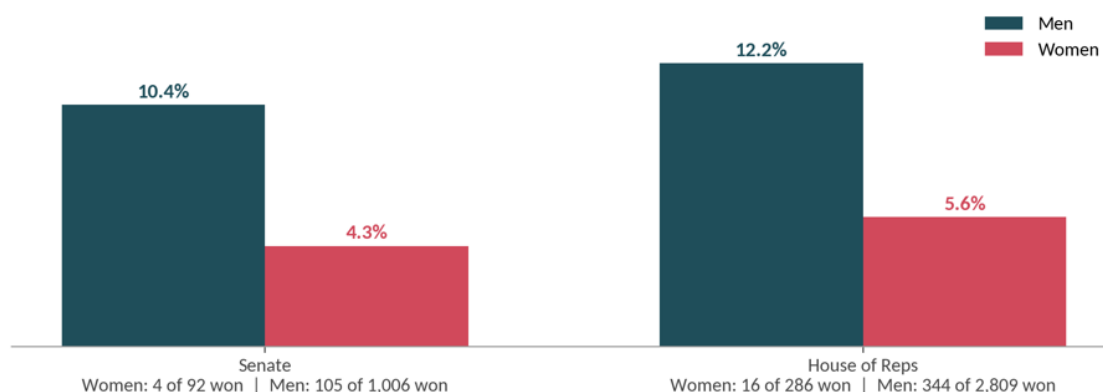
Figure 6. Party size and share of women candidates, 2027.

This matters because winning in Nigeria usually requires the backing of a large party. When women are placed mainly in parties that rarely win, a 10% share of candidates becomes a 4% share of lawmakers.

In 2023, of the 92 women who ran for the Senate, 4 won (4.3%). Of the 1,006 men, 105 won (10.4%). In the HoR, 5.6% of women candidates won, against 12.2% of men. A man on the 2023 ballot was about twice as likely to win as a woman.

In 2023, a man on the ballot was about twice as likely to win

Share of 2023 candidates who won a seat, by gender



Sources: INEC Final List of Candidates 2023 (candidates); seats won at the start of the 10th National Assembly (4 women senators, 16 women Reps), as reported by Daily Trust and IPU.

Figure 7. Share of 2023 candidates who won, by gender.

The party scorecard below ranks all 22 parties by their number of women candidates. A high number is not the same as a high share: APM leads with 53 women, but DLA, NDP and AAC have a larger share of women among their own candidates.

Table 2. WRAPs 2027 party scorecard (President, Senate and HoR candidates combined), ranked by number of women candidates

Rank	Party	Candidates	Women	% women	Youth (25 to 35)	% youth	PWD
1	APM	417	53	12.7%	82	19.7%	0
2	ADP	349	41	11.7%	51	14.6%	0
3	SDP	353	38	10.8%	55	15.6%	0
4	APC	470	33	7.0%	10	2.1%	1
5	NRM	238	30	12.6%	40	16.8%	0
5	PDP	418	30	7.2%	27	6.5%	1
7	LP	239	29	12.1%	32	13.4%	0
8	ADC	455	26	5.7%	46	10.1%	0
9	ZLP	157	25	15.9%	29	18.5%	0
9	A	226	25	11.1%	37	16.4%	0
9	NDC	430	25	5.8%	45	10.5%	1
12	APP	226	19	8.4%	42	18.6%	0
13	DLA	96	17	17.7%	15	15.6%	0

13	AA	104	17	16.3%	14	13.5%	2
15	NDP	93	16	17.2%	7	7.5%	0
16	AAC	76	13	17.1%	14	18.4%	2
17	NNPP	73	11	15.1%	12	16.4%	0
17	YPP	204	11	5.4%	52	25.5%	0
19	APGA	103	8	7.8%	6	5.8%	0
20	BP	18	3	16.7%	2	11.1%	0
21	PRP	128	1	0.8%	17	13.3%	0
22	YP	8	0	0.0%	2	25.0%	0
All parties		4,881	471	9.6%	637	13.1%	7

Parties with the same number of women share a rank. PWD = candidates listed as persons with disabilities. Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2027; WRAPs analysis.

5. Party commitment rises and falls with party fortunes

Between 2023 and 2027, some parties changed sharply. The ADC went from 51 women candidates to 26, and the NNPP from 34 to 11. The ADP went from 13 to 41, and the APM from 30 to 53.

Party gains and losses swing widely from one election to the next

Number of women candidates per party, 2023 (grey) and 2027 (red). Parties that contested both elections.
New parties in 2027 (not shown): NDC 25, DLA 17, NDP 16, YP 0 women candidates.

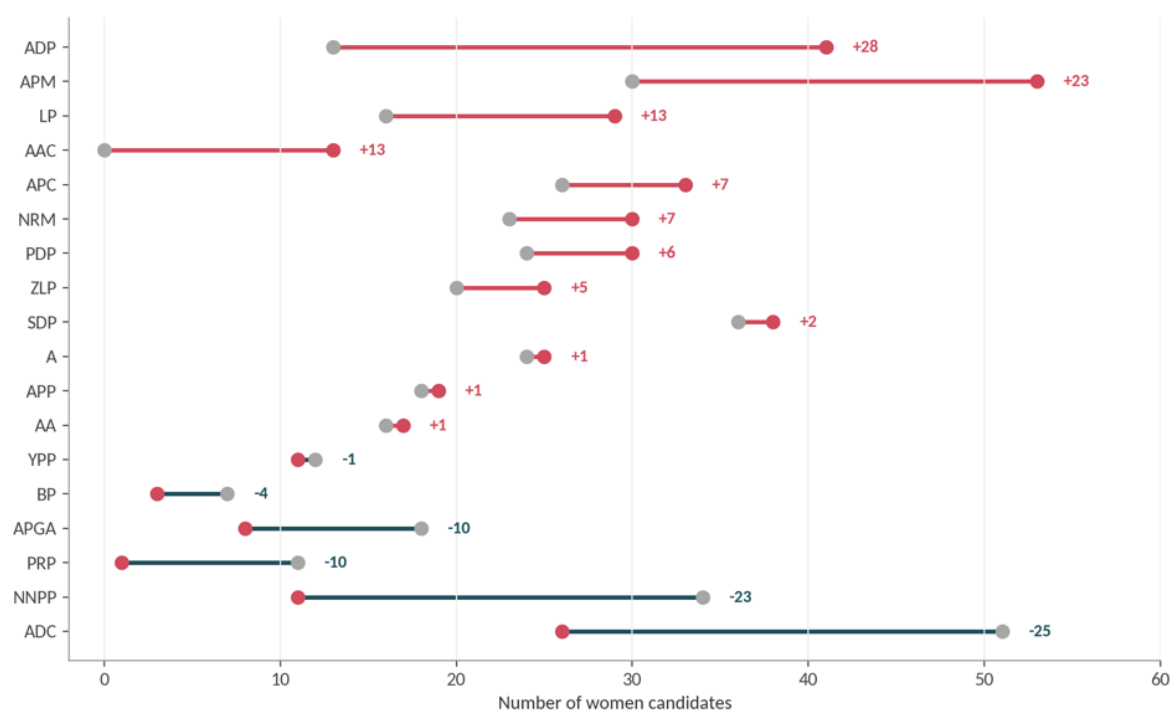


Figure 8. Women candidates per party, 2023 and 2027.

These swings follow coalition-building and defections more than any change in party rules. When a party's record on women depends on who joins or leaves it, inclusion is not a policy; it is luck.

6. Where you live shapes your choices

National averages hide a deep regional divide. Women are 3.9% of National Assembly candidates in the North West and 4.0% in the North East, but 15.7% in the South South. In Kano, 5 of 299 candidates are women. In Nasarawa, it is 1 of 97. In Kwara, it is 23 of 100.

Where you live shapes whether women are on your ballot

Women as % of Senate and House of Reps candidates by state, 2027 (approximate map layout)



Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2027 and 2023; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 9. Women as a share of Senate and HoR candidates by state and zone, 2027.

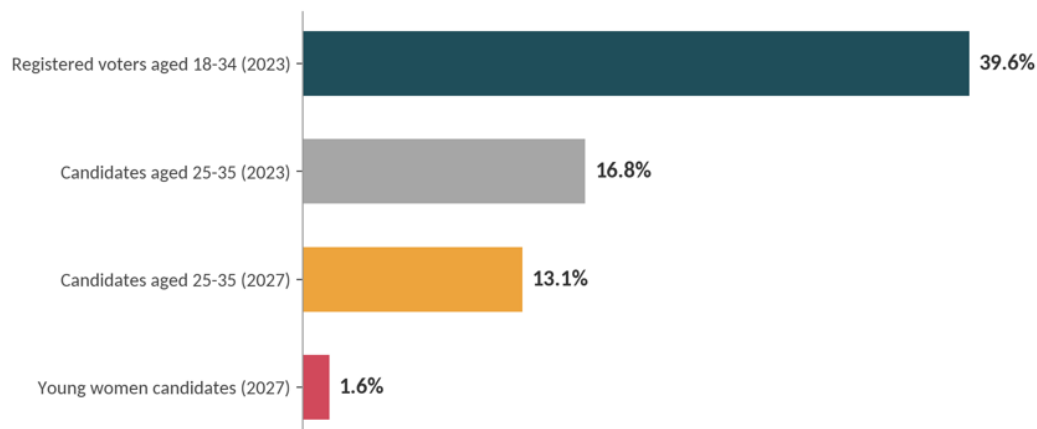
The gap shows up in the seats too. In the North-West, 69 of 92 federal constituencies (75%) have no woman candidate. In the South-South, every Senate district has at least one. The North-East has gone backwards, from 7.3% women candidates in 2023 to 4.0% in 2027.

7. Young people: 4 in 10 voters, about 1 in 8 candidates

The Not Too Young to Run Act of 2018 lowered the minimum age to contest for the House of Representatives to 25 and for President to 35. Eight years later, the gains are slipping. Candidates aged 25 to 35 fell from 708 (16.8%) in 2023 to 637 (13.1%) in 2027, even though there are 656 more candidates overall. Over the same period, candidates aged 56 and above rose from 22.3% to 24.4%.

Young people are 4 in 10 voters but only about 1 in 8 candidates

Share of young people on the voter register and on the ballot



Sources: INEC voter register 2023 (youth = 18-34); INEC Final List of Candidates 2023 and 2027 (youth = 25-35); WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 10. Young people on the voter register and on the ballot.

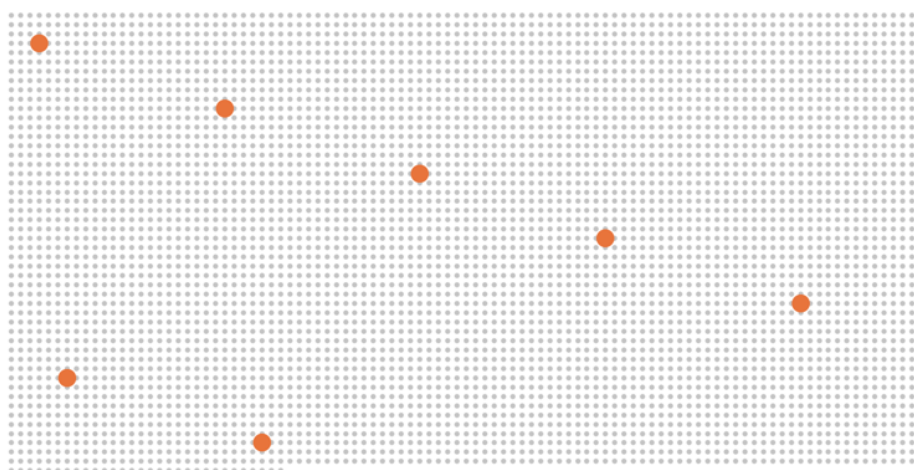
Young people aged 18 to 34 made up 39.65% of registered voters in 2023. On the ballot, they are a small minority. The APC fields 10 youth candidates out of 470 (2.1%). The ADC's youth candidates fell from 139 in 2023 to 46. Young women face a double barrier: only 77 of the 4,881 candidates (1.6%) are women aged 25 to 35. This is not because voters reject youth: in the VPS, middle-aged voters (77.2%) were even slightly more willing than young voters (74.5%) to back a young candidate.

8. Candidates with disabilities: almost invisible

Only 7 of the 4,881 candidates (0.14%) are listed as persons with disabilities, down from 13 in 2023. Seventeen of the 22 parties have none. Nigeria has an estimated 25 to 30 million persons with disabilities, and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 guarantees their right to take part in politics.

Candidates with disabilities are almost invisible

Each dot is one of the 4,881 candidates in 2027. The 7 orange dots are candidates listed as persons with disabilities.



Source: INEC Final List of Candidates, 2027 and 2023; WRAPs analysis by Invictus Africa.

Figure 11. Candidates with disabilities among all 2027 candidates.

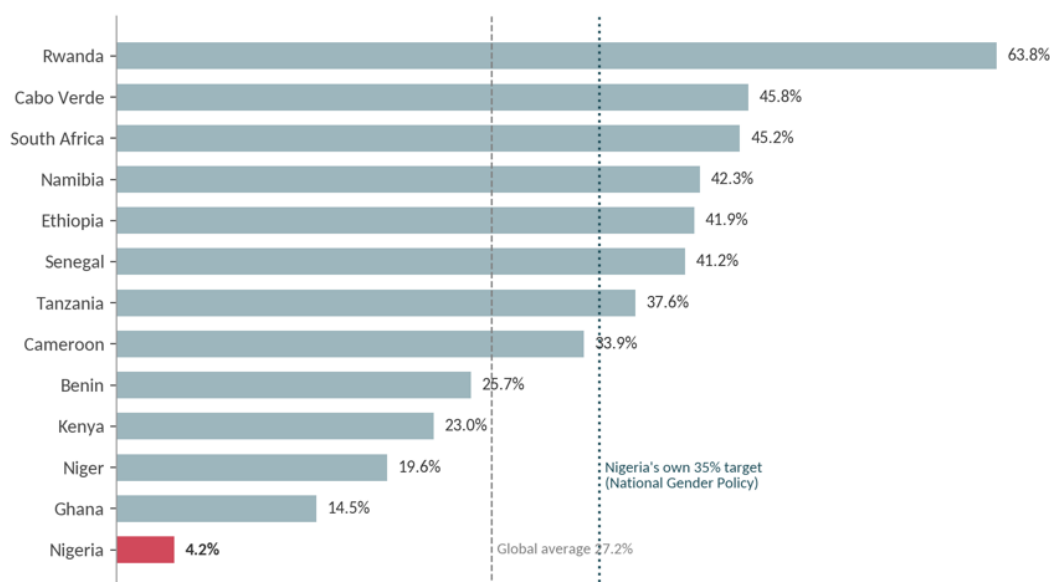
Here, the barriers go beyond visibility. In the VPS, 38.7% of voters said they would back a candidate with a disability, and support fell from 71.3% for councillor to 48.9% for president. In a 2025 Westminster Foundation for Democracy survey, 80% of candidates with disabilities reported discrimination during campaigns. Disability is self-declared on INEC forms, so the true number may be slightly higher, but no reading suggests meaningful inclusion.

9. Nigeria and the rest of Africa

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Nigeria's 4.2% is the lowest share of women in parliament among African countries with reporting parliaments in its 2026 ranking, far below the sub-Saharan average of 27.1%. Rwanda (63.8%), South Africa (45.2%) and Senegal (41.2%) did not get there by waiting. Constitutional quotas and party reforms helped drive their progress.

Nigeria sits at the bottom of Africa for women in parliament

Women as % of members of the lower or single house of parliament, selected African countries (IPU, April 2026)



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) women in parliament ranking, April 2026 (as compiled by the Israel Democracy Institute); global average from IPU 2025.

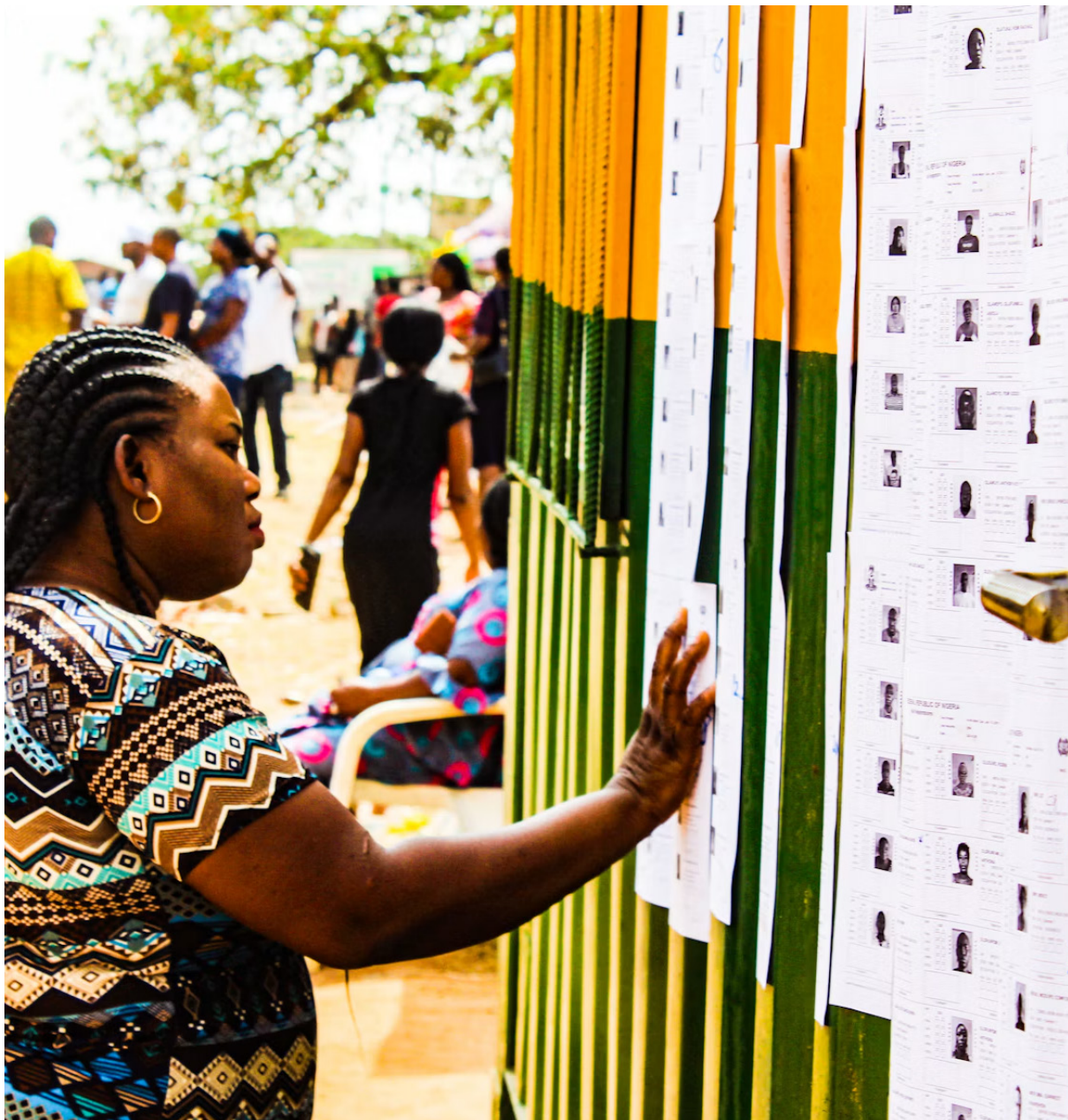
Figure 12. Women in parliament, selected African countries.

Nigeria has a reform on the table. The Reserved Seats for Women Bill would add seats for women in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. It has been before the National Assembly since 2024, and planned votes on it have been repeatedly postponed; in June 2026, women's groups were still rallying in Abuja for its passage. INEC's final list contains only the existing 109 Senate and 360 HoR seats, so no reserved seats will be contested in January. The 2027 elections will be another test of the voluntary system.

10. What should happen in the next 100 days and after

- Political parties: Fund, protect, and campaign for the women, young people and persons with disabilities they have already nominated. Before the next primaries, adopt binding targets for tickets and cut the nomination fees and delegate barriers the VPS identifies.

- Media and debate organisers: Give women candidates, including the two women presidential candidates, fair airtime and debate slots.
- National Assembly: Conclude the vote on the Reserved Seats for Women Bill so that it can apply from the next election cycle.
- Civil society and donors: Focus support on the North-West and North-East, where the gap is widest, and on young women candidates.
- Voters: In the 273 Senate and HoR races where women are on the ballot, find out who they are and what they stand for. Ask every party why it fielded so few.



What Comes Next

Part 2 of this series will examine governorship and State House of Assembly candidates once INEC's certified lists are complete. It will show whether the patterns in this report hold or grow sharper at the state level. After the elections, a post-election VPS will compare what voters said with how they voted, and WRAPs will compare who ran with who won.

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