



STATE OF THE NIGERIAN YOUTH

2025



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CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Nigeria has a population of over 200 million people [1], and remarkably, more than 60% of this population are young people below the age of 30[2]. This vast number is not just a statistic; it represents a powerful force with immense potential to redefine the nation's future. The sheer size of this youthful population positions Nigeria as one of the most youthful countries in the world, and if properly harnessed, this demographic dividend could translate into unprecedented social, economic, and political transformation.

Despite Nigeria's vast youth population and their immense potential, many are yet to fully maximise these opportunities due to persistent cultural, structural, and legal barriers. The statistics paint a troubling picture. In the first quarter of 2024, the National Bureau of Statistics reported a 5.3% increase in the number of unemployed youths aged 15 to 34 years. By the second quarter, this figure had declined, from 8.0% to 6.0% [3]. Every year, about 1.7 million young people graduate from tertiary institutions [4], yet unemployment continues to rise. Today, nearly 80 million youths remain unemployed, representing 53% of Nigeria's total youth population [5].

While unemployment persists, insecurity continues to rise, with young people bearing the greatest impact. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, over 600,000 people have been killed and 2.2 million kidnapped in recent years [6]. Among those abducted, cases of forced and early marriages remain alarming. In 2024, The Guardian reported a disturbing instance where girls orphaned by insurgency were to be given in marriage by a state government [7].

The education sector has also been hit hard. Reports indicate that more than 1,500 schools have been shut down, leaving about 1 million children out of school due to safety concerns [8]. From January 2022 to December 2023 alone, 2,519 grave violations were committed against 1,250 children, mostly by armed groups [9].

The insecurity has crippled farming communities as well. In the past five years, an estimated 77,000 lives have been lost to tribal conflicts, while 2.6 million people have

[1] [Nigeria Population \(2025\) - Worldometer](#)

[2] [Nigeria's Youth Majority: 60% Of Population Under Age 30 – NPC](#)

[3] [Youth unemployment in Nigeria: Trends, challenges, and pathways to economic growth - Businessday NG](#)

[4] [What Percent Of Students Graduate High School In Nigeria](#)

[5] [53% Youth Unemployment Makes Nigeria World's Second Worst](#)

[6] [Insecurity: Over 600,000 killed, 2.2 million kidnapped in Nigeria – NBS report | Afripost Newspaper](#)

[7] [Nigeria: Human rights activists condemn 'forced marriages' of 100 young girls and women · Serving Persecuted Christians Worldwide](#)

[8] [How banditry and insecurity are shutting down Northern Nigeria's education system - National Daily Newspaper](#)

[9] [Nigeria: High level of insecurity in the North-East Region dramatically affecting children, despite concrete measures adopted by the Government – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)

been displaced, primarily from farming areas [1]. This has worsened Nigeria's food crisis. UNICEF warns that at least 25 million Nigerians are at risk of falling into hunger, with farmers increasingly unable to access their farmlands [2].

Beyond insecurity, poverty, corruption, and poor infrastructure remain deeply entrenched challenges confronting Nigerian youths. Poverty continues to limit opportunities for millions, with young people disproportionately, with 40.1% of total population living in poverty on average 4 out of 10 people has real per capita expenditure 137,430 per year. Translating into over 82.9 million Nigerians who considered poor by national standard, it is important to know that this number exclude the state of Borno[3]. Corruption further compounds this reality, draining resources meant for youth development and eroding trust in governance.

Poor infrastructure, ranging from inadequate roads and electricity to the digital divide, creates additional barriers to innovation, enterprise, and meaningful participation in the economy. For many young Nigerians, these systemic failures not only stifle ambition but also push them into cycles of vulnerability, exclusion, and disillusionment.

Yet, it is in the face of this that young Nigerians are already demonstrating resilience, creativity, and innovation across multiple sectors, from driving technological solutions and digital entrepreneurship, to shaping culture, entertainment, advocacy, and civic engagement. With their energy, ideas, and boldness, they hold the key to unlocking new opportunities for inclusive growth and development. The strength of youth lies not only in their numbers but also in their adaptability, their hunger for change, and their ability to organise and lead movements that push for accountability, justice, and a better society. If given the right investments in education, skills, healthcare, and meaningful participation in governance, the youth population can power Nigeria into becoming a global hub for innovation, enterprise, and leadership.

Far from being a burden, Nigeria's young people are its greatest asset, a living proof that the future is not a distant dream, but a vibrant force already present and waiting to be fully engaged.

The WE LISTEN Survey and the State of the Nigerian Youth Report

In order to better understand the realities facing young people in Nigeria, the We Listen Survey was conducted as part of an inclusive process to capture the voices, aspirations, and concerns of youth across the country. The survey provided a platform

[1] cjeas.ng

[2] [Harvests in havoc: How insecurity is contributing to Nigeria's food inflation - Businessday NG](#)

[3] [Reports | National Bureau of Statistics](#)

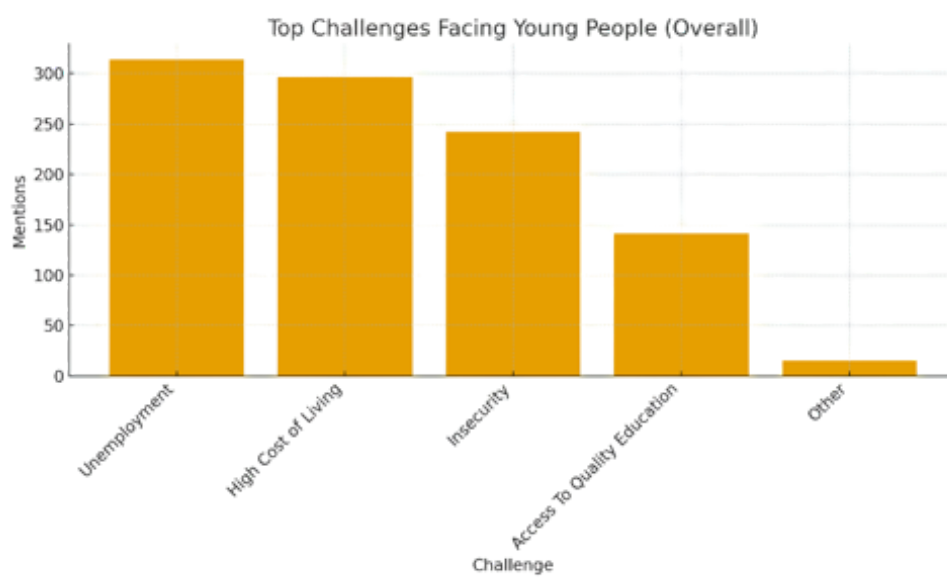
for young Nigerians to share their lived experiences, particularly around unemployment, insecurity, poverty, education, and participation in governance.

The findings from the We Listen Survey have been consolidated into the State of the Nigerian Youth Report, a comprehensive document that highlights not only the challenges but also the opportunities that exist for transforming the lives of Nigerian youths. This report serves as both a mirror and a call-to-action, reflecting the lived realities of millions of young people while urging government, development partners, and the private sector to respond with urgency and innovation.

Findings from the We Listen Survey and The State of the Nigerian Youth Report

1. National Priorities

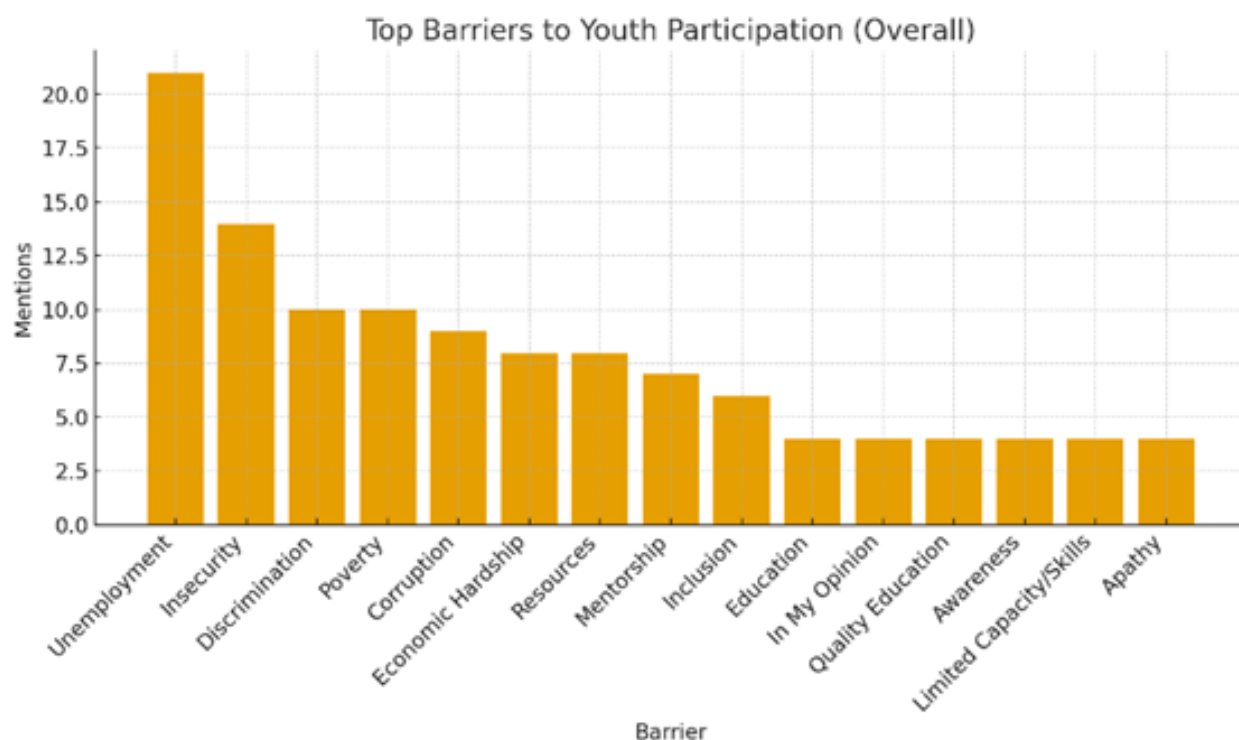
The voices of Nigerian youth, as captured in the We Listen Survey, paint a vivid picture of their most pressing concerns. At the national level, unemployment emerged as the leading issue, cited by 314 respondents, followed by the high cost of living (296) and insecurity (242). Concerns around access to quality education (141) were also strongly emphasized.



These priorities underscore the difficult trade-offs young people face daily: the struggle for jobs, the rising cost of survival, and the growing threat of insecurity.

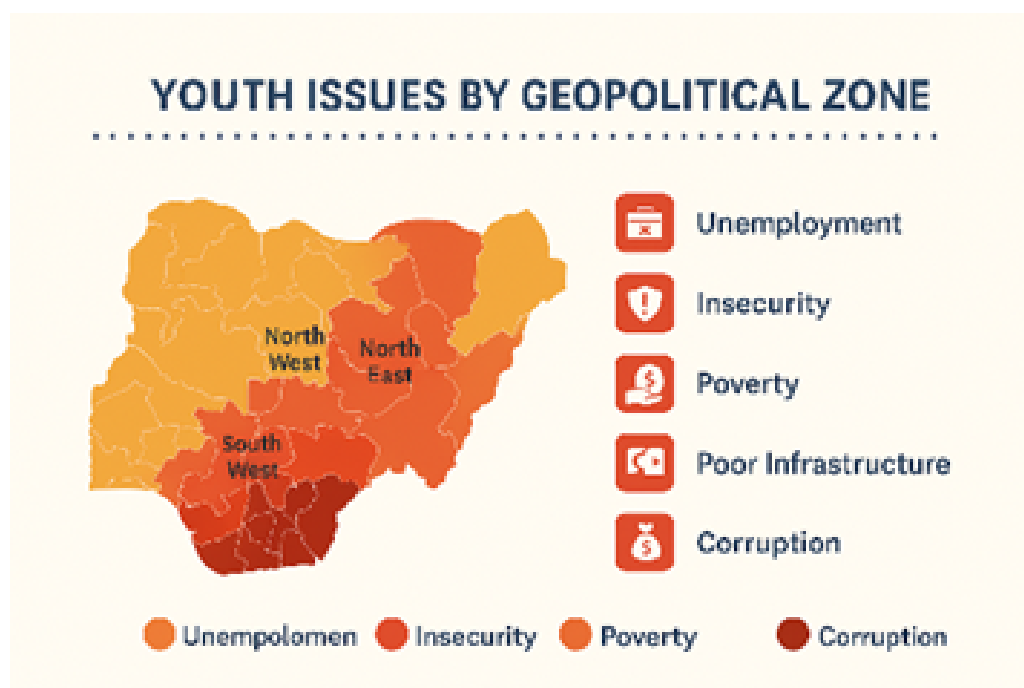
2. Barriers to Progress

The barriers preventing young people from reaching their full potential were clear and systemic. Unemployment again topped the, followed by insecurity, discrimination, poverty, and corruption. These barriers demonstrate not just individual struggles but deep structural gaps that perpetuate cycles of exclusion.



3. Regional Perspectives

When disaggregated by zone, the findings reveal how context shapes the lived realities of young Nigerians.

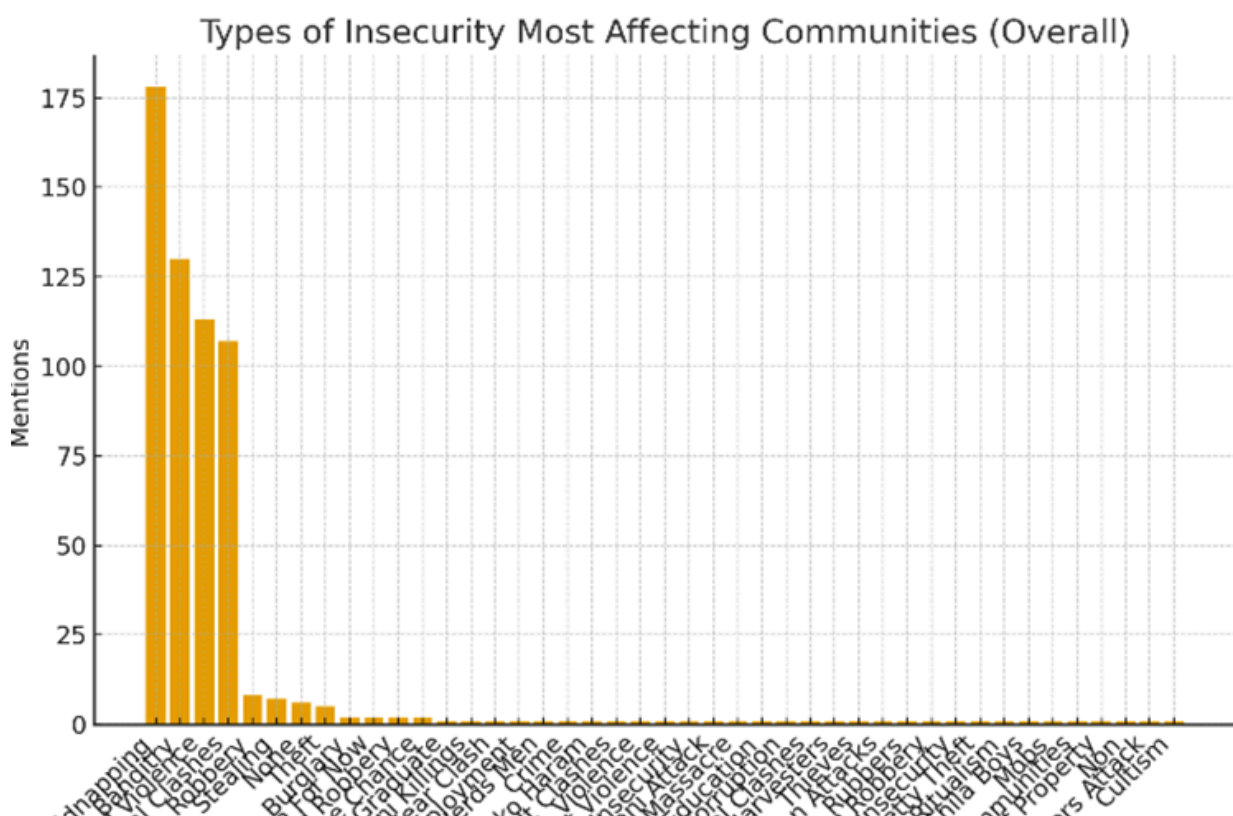


- North Central: Youth cited unemployment (92), high cost of living (88), and insecurity (80) as their main concerns.
- Northwest & Northeast: Insecurity dominated concerns, with kidnapping and banditry emerging as top threats.
- Southwest & Southeast: Economic pressures such as rising cost of living and unemployment ranked highest, reflecting the burden of inflation and underemployment.
- South-south: Youth highlighted access to education alongside poverty and unemployment, pointing to a regional need for both learning opportunities and economic empowerment.

This regional variation underscores the importance of context-sensitive policies that respond to local realities.

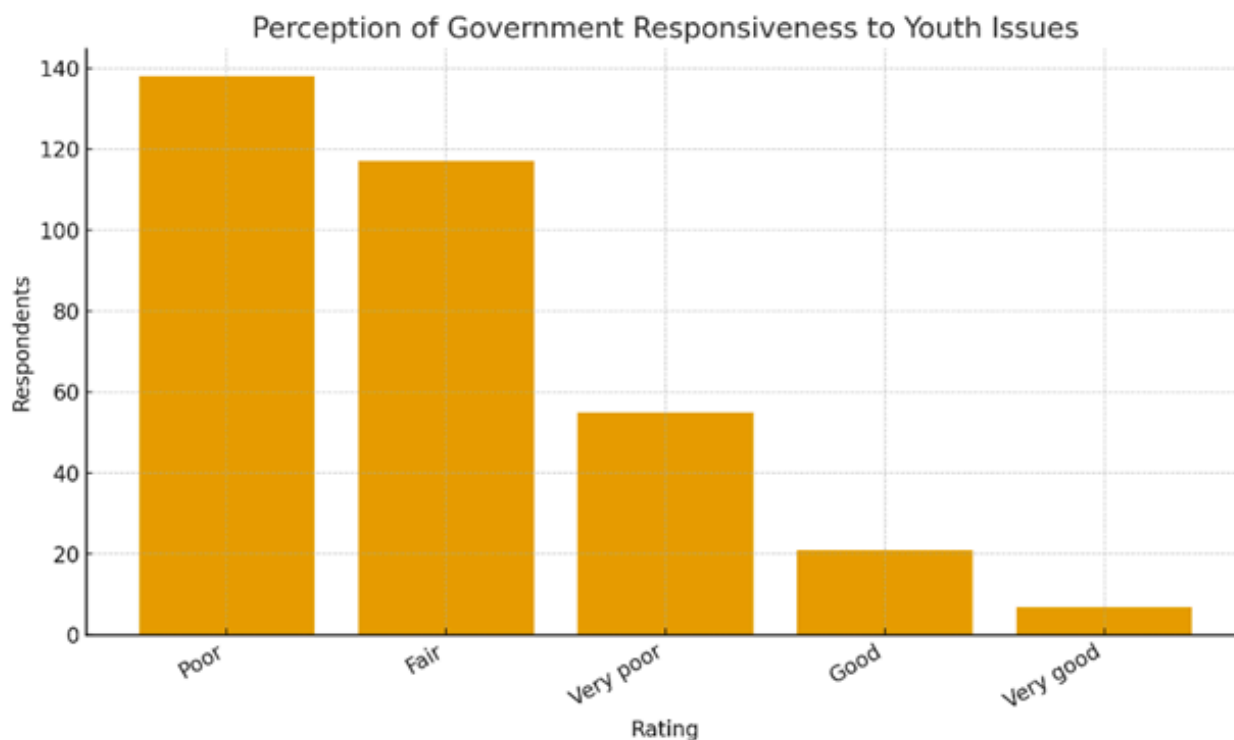
4. Insecurity and its Implications

Young people identified multiple forms of insecurity affecting their lives. Kidnapping (178 mentions) and banditry (130) were the most cited, followed closely by political violence (113) and communal clashes (107). These insecurities cut across regions, affecting education, mobility, and economic activities.



5. Governance and Responsiveness

When asked about government responsiveness, the overwhelming sentiment was negative. A majority of respondents rated responsiveness as either “poor” or “very poor”, with only a handful rating it as “good” or “very good”. This reflects a deep trust deficit between young people and governance structures.



6. Policy Changes Priorities

Despite these challenges, youth articulated clear ideas for solutions. Among the most cited policy priorities were:

- Vocational training
- Entrepreneurship opportunities
- Job creation schemes
- Employment pathways
- Institutional reforms and new rules

These recommendations highlight the desire of young people not only to be included but also to be equipped with the tools to thrive in today’s economy.

Recommendations and Way forward

The We Listen Survey and the State of the Nigerian Youth Report do not just highlight challenges; they chart a path forward. The voices of young people are clear, they do not ask for charity, they demand justice, opportunity, and dignity.



1. Prioritizing Employment and Economic Empowerment

Unemployment is the greatest weight on the shoulders of Nigerian youth. Government, private sector, and development partners must urgently expand job creation schemes, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Beyond announcements, implementation must be deliberate, linking skills to industries, ensuring access to credit, and creating sustainable pathways into decent work.

2. Addressing Insecurity

The crisis of insecurity has robbed many young people of their right to education, safety, and livelihood. Responses must go beyond military actions to include community-based peacebuilding, early warning systems, and rehabilitation for victims of conflict. Schools must be made safe, and young people engaged as active agents of peace, not sidelined as victims of war.

3. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Exclusion

With poverty and discrimination ranking as major barriers, social protection programs must be strengthened and expanded to reach marginalized youth, including girls, persons with disabilities, and those in rural communities. Policies must be designed to lift barriers, not reinforce them, ensuring that no young person is left behind.

4. Tackling Corruption and Building Trust

Corruption remains a recurring obstacle. Youth are demanding transparency, accountability, and good governance. Strengthening anti-corruption institutions, ensuring open budgeting, and promoting civic participation will rebuild trust. The future cannot be built on broken promises; it must be anchored on integrity.

5. Investing in Infrastructure for the Future

Poor infrastructure continues to cripple youth innovation and enterprise. Investment in roads, electricity, digital infrastructure, and education facilities is not a luxury, it is the foundation of development. Without these, talent remains locked away. With them, youth potential can be unleashed to drive Nigeria's transformation.

6. A New Social Contract

Finally, the way forward demands a new deal, a social contract between the Nigerian state and its young people. Youth are not the leaders of tomorrow; they are the partners of today. Their ideas, energy, and resilience must be recognized, institutionalized, and woven into decision-making at every level.

7. Universal Basic Education as a Fundamental Rights

Education is not a privilege; it is a right. For Nigeria to truly unlock its youth potential, Universal Basic Education must be elevated to a fundamental right through constitutional amendment. This step will enshrine access to education in law, guaranteeing that no child is denied learning because of insecurity, poverty, or geography. A generation cannot be empowered if it is left uneducated.

Conclusion

Nigeria stands at a crossroads. The voices captured in the We Listen Survey and the State of the Nigerian Youth Report are not whispers; they are a resounding call for change. Young people have spoken clearly, they face unemployment, insecurity, poverty, exclusion, and poor infrastructure. Yet, alongside the challenges, they carry boundless energy, creativity, and resilience that can power Nigeria's transformation.

The findings reveal both the weight of neglect and the promise of opportunity. They remind us that failing to act is not an option. If Nigeria is to harness its greatest asset, its youth, then reforms must be bold, inclusive, and immediate. Elevating education as a fundamental right, creating decent jobs, making schools and communities safe, fighting corruption, and investing in infrastructure are not just policy options; they are survival imperatives.

This report is a mirror held up to the nation. What we see is a generation ready to lead, if only given the space, the tools, and the trust. The time for rhetoric is over. The time for responsive leadership and accountable governance is now.