

## 1.2.4. Violence linked to criminality, gangs/cults and separatism in the Niger Delta

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The main drivers of insecurity and lethal violence in the Niger Delta region included criminality, violence linked to gangs/cults, mob violence, separatist agitation, communal violence,<sup>235</sup> disputes over land and resources,<sup>236</sup> armed clashes between criminals and security forces.<sup>237</sup> According to the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), an Abuja-based non-profit organisation working on economic and conflict-related issues in the Niger Delta, in 2024, the region saw a 30 % decline in fatalities linked to violent incidents compared to 2023 (from 1 019 to 713 fatalities), with decreases recorded for fatalities linked to criminal violence (from 647 deaths to 475), communal violence (from 74 to 68) and cult/gang-related clashes (from 177 to 143). However, insecurity still persisted across the Niger Delta, as PIND recorded an 11 % rise in incidents of criminal violence (from 401 to 445 incidents).<sup>238</sup> For the first quarter of 2025, the same source reported a marginal 8.3 % decline in violent incidents compared to the last quarter of 2024, alongside a 27.7 % increase in overall conflict-related fatalities that was attributed to a rise in deaths from communal violence (from eight to 85), criminal violence (from 94 to 104) and mob violence (from 23 to 30).<sup>239</sup> The second quarter of 2025 saw a 24 % decline in overall conflict-related fatalities from the first quarter of 2025, attributed to a decrease in deaths from mob violence (30 to six), criminal violence (126 to 110) and communal conflicts (from 85 to 39).<sup>240</sup>

Nigeria Watch reported 328 fatalities arising from violence related to gangs/cults, with most fatalities recorded in Anambra, Lagos and Rivers states.<sup>241</sup> SBM Intelligence, a consultancy specialising in market and security research in West Africa,<sup>242</sup> stated that between January 2020 and March 2025, 1 686 individuals had been killed in at least 909 violent incidents linked to gangs/cults in Nigeria. Among these years under review, 2024 recorded by far the highest number of incidents (273), and the third-highest number of fatalities (333) (following 377 in 2021 and 350 in 2020).<sup>243</sup> The 'epicentres' of gang/cult-related violence were the South-South (accounting for more than 750 gang-related fatalities between January 2020 and March 2025) and the South-West (more than 491 fatalities). The South-East ranked third in terms of fatalities (more than 215 fatalities). By contrast, the North-East and the North-West together saw less than 30 fatalities linked to these traditional gangs,<sup>244</sup> which can all trace their origins to the south.<sup>245</sup> Meanwhile, the South-East also saw 379 deaths arising from violence related to pro-Biafran agitation in 2024.<sup>246</sup>

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PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2025, 5 June 2025, [url](#), p. 1;  
PIND, Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report, January – December 2024, 25 March 2025, [url](#), p. 1

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SBM Intelligence, Homepage, n.d., [url](#)

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SBM Intelligence, Gangster's Paradise: Nigeria's Restive Youth Gang Crisis, 2020-2025 [Graph], 1 July 2025, [url](#), p. 6

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