2.5.1. Akwa Ibom

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Akwa Ibom state is comprised of the following 31 LGAs: Abak, Eastern Obolo, Eket, Esit Eket, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Etinan, Ibeno, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono Ibom, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene, Ini, Itu, Mbo, Mkpat Enin, Nsit Atai, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium, Obot Akara, Okobo, Onna, Oron, Oruk Anam, Udung Uko, Ukanafun, Uruan, Urue Offong Oruko, Uyo. The capital city is Uyo.[1499]

The main ethnic groups are Ibibio, Anang, and Eket.[1500] Other groups include the Oron (also Oro), Ibeno, Itu Mbonuso and Andonis.[1501]

UNFPA and the US Census Bureau projected the population at 4 979 418 in 2022, based on figures from the 2006 census.[1502] The population is predominantly of Christian faith.[1503]

a) Conflict dynamics and main actors

For a general overview on actors in Nigeria, please see section 1.1 Main Actors.

According to PIND, during the reporting period, the main sources of insecurity in Akwa Ibom state were clashes between rival cult gangs and kidnappings for ransom.[1504] In 2024, Akwa Ibom was among the Niger Delta states most affected by kidnappings for ransom, with more than 18 such incidents documented by PIND, resulting in more than 16 fatalities.[1505] Kidnappings reportedly also occurred for the purpose of child trafficking.[1506]

In May 2024, the PIND noted that abductions for ransom had become ‘increasingly prevalent and intense’ in Akwa Ibom state and that the ‘trends and patterns of kidnapping’ could potentially intensify and negatively influence the state’s political, socio-economic and security situation.[1507] A few months later, the organisation described the ongoing abductions as ‘a prevailing security threat’ in the state and particularly mentioned the targeted abduction of travellers.[1508] Victims of abductions included for example 18 passengers and the driver of a bus travelling from Uyo to Port Harcourt in Rivers state in July 2024,[1509] and a lawyer and his niece travelling along the Abak-Ikot Abasi road in December 2024. Both were rescued the following day.[1510] In April 2025, in the context of the kidnapping of passengers from a ship travelling from Akwa Ibom to Cross River state (please see section 2.5.3 Cross River), the Nigerian news site noted that the so-called ‘Oron axis’ including Oron, Mbo, Okobo, Udung Uko and Urue Offong/Uruko LGAs in Akwa Ibom state had become a ‘hotbed for kidnappers in the recent past’.[1511] In its report on conflict trends in the Niger Delta region covering the period April to June 2025, PIND pointed out that conflict risks and lethal violence had declined

compared to the first quarter of 2025. However, kidnapping for ransom and sea robbery remained major drivers of insecurity.1512

Sources reported of clashes over supremacy between rival cult groups, including between Vikings/Bagger1513 and Red Skin in Mbo LGA in March 2024,1514 and between Black Axe (also Aye1515) and Vikings/Bagger in Oron LGA in October 2024.1516 Sources also reported of activities of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) confraternity in Uyo LGA in June 2025,1517 and along the Calabar-Itu Road, where suspected members were involved in robbery, abductions and other criminal activities.1518 PIND described cult-related violence as 'a major source of insecurity and fatalities' in the second quarter of 2025.1519

Communal violence was another source of insecurity and occurred mostly in the context of disputes between herders and farmers, or over land, involving communities in the Eket, Esit Eket and Ibeno LGAs.1520 While intra-communal land disputes were 'prevalent' in Akwa Ibom state in 2024,1521 PIND and Nigeria Watch also recorded lethal inter-communal violence over inter-state boundaries between communities in Akwa Ibom and Abia states.1522

b) Security incidents and impact on the population

In the period between 1 January 2024 and 31 August 2025, ACLED recorded 59 security incidents in Akwa Ibom state, which resulted in 65 fatalities. Of these security incidents, 26 were coded as battles, 12 as riots and 21 as incidents of violence against civilians.1523

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Figure 30: Evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence, riots, and violence against civilians in Akwa Ibom state, 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2025, based on ACLED data.1524

Security incidents were recorded by ACLED in 18 LGAs of the state, with the highest number documented in Uyo (12), Abak and Itu (6 incidents each), Oron (5 incidents). No incidents were recorded in 13 LGAs. According to ACLED, unidentified armed groups and unidentified cult militia (coded as either 'Actor 1' or 'Actor 2') were involved in the majority of incidents coded as violence against civilians.1525

In a report covering the period from January to March 2025, PIND described Akwa Ibom state as 'one of the least violent' in the Niger Delta region in terms of reported fatalities.1526 Similarly, in 2024, Akwa Ibom was among the five most peaceful states, according to Nigeria Watch.1527

Cult-related violence, resulting in casualties, including among civilians and others, was reported during the reference period, for example in Eket LGA in April 2024,1528 in Uyo LGA in July 2024, 1529 in Oron LGA in October 2024,1530 in Ikot Ekpene LGA in January 2025,1531 and in Etim Ekpo LGA in May 2025.1532 Several people were killed in an escalation of violence between Vikings and Black Axe cults in October 2024. A school principal was beheaded by members of the Viking confraternity,1533 while two other suspected members of the Black Axe and Viking cults had been beheaded earlier in Mbo LGA.1534

Sources reported of incidents of mob violence during the reference period, targeting for example suspected cult members,1535 suspected thieves,1536 members of the security forces,1537 and others.1538

Two people were reportedly killed, several injured in an attack on Iwuochang community in Ibeno LGA in the context of a long-standing land dispute between Ibeno, Eket and Esit Eket LGAs over the oil-rich Stubbs Creek in February 2024.1539 Tensions reportedly flared up again in early 2025.1540

Conflict-related infrastructure damage - More than 20 houses, including a church, were destroyed in the aforementioned attack on Iwuochang community in Ibeno LGA in February 2024.1541 In the same context, houses, schools and medical facilities were damaged in an attack on Inua Eyet Ikot community in November 2024.1542

Road security - No information could be found during the reference period.

Displacement, movement and return - As of 1 June 2025, UNHCR estimated the numbers of refugees from abroad living in Akwa Ibom state at 1 762, and noted that it had areas with 'high concentrations of refugees'.1543 No information could be found on conflict-induced displacement or returns in Akwa Ibom state during the reference period.

c) State response in maintaining law and order

In June 2025, the Nigerian Centre for Human Rights and Accountability Network (CHRAN) mentioned that the Department of State Services (DSS) prevented the allegedly planned abduction of politicians expected to attend a political ceremony on an upcoming holiday. In a security operation in Oron LGA, the DSS detained four suspected members of a group of sea pirates reportedly known for kidnappings across the South-South geopolitical zone targeting high-profile victims.1544 In December 2024, two kidnap victims, a lawyer and his niece, were freed in a police operation that resulted in the killing of three suspected kidnappers.1545 Punch reported in January 2025 of the state government's announcement – in view of increase in acts of vandalism of public facilities – to have at least one member of the state-funded Ibom Community Watch agency in every village of the state who should 'act as an eye' for the police. 1546 Meanwhile, in May 2025, the state's parliament demanded the recruitment of more than 1 000 youths for the Ibom Community Watch to ensure that not only Uyo but all senatorial districts of the state were covered.1547

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