2.5.3. Cross River

2.5.3. Cross River

Cross River state is comprised of the following 18 LGAs: Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwarra, Biase, Boki, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obubra, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr, and Yala.1576 The capital city is Calabar.1577

The main ethnic groups include the Efik, Ejagham and Bekwarra.1578

UNFPA and the US Census Bureau projected the population at 4 406 204 in 2022, based on figures from the 2006 census.1579

a) Conflict dynamics and main actors

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

Communal conflicts over land were ‘prevalent’ in Cross River state in 2024,1580 and a major driver of violence and insecurity during the reference period.1581 Another source of insecurity was cult/gang-related violence,1582 involving abductions,1583 and killings.1584 Sea pirates were also involved in abductions for ransom, targeting passengers travelling by boat between Cross River and Akwa Ibom states.1585

b) Security incidents and impact on the population

In the period between 1 January 2024 and 31 August 2025, ACLED recorded 45 security incidents in Cross River state, resulting in 56 fatalities. Of these security incidents, 17 were coded as battles, 11 as riots, and 17 as violence against civilians.1586

Imported image pandoc_image_31.png

Figure 17: Evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence, riots, and violence against civilians in Cross River state, 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2025, based on ACLED data.1587

Security incidents were recorded by ACLED in 10 LGAs of the state, with the highest number documented in Calabar Municipality LGA (13), followed by Biase (7), and Akamkpa and Odukpani (6 each) LGAs. No security incidents were recorded in 8 LGAs. According to ACLED, unidentified armed groups, communal militias and pirates (coded as either ‘Actor 1’ or ‘Actor 2’) were involved in the majority of incidents coded as violence against civilians.1588

In the period from January to March 2025, the number of reported conflict incidents reportedly halved compared to 2024. However, the number of fatalities remained unchanged, according to PIND. These fatalities resulted mainly from inter- and intracommunal violence, particularly in Akamkpa and Odukpani LGAs, as well as from cult/gang-related violence.1589 In October 2024, Ambazonia Freedom Fighters from Cameroon reportedly attacked communities in Akamkpa LGA; 1590 six fighters were later detained by the Cross River police command.1591

Lethal clashes were recorded between communities in Obubra and Ikom LGAs in 2024,1592 as well as within or between communities in Akamkpa,1593 Odukpani1594 and Biase1595 LGAs in the first half of 2025. Moreover, inter-communal violence in the context of a land and boundary dispute between the Ukwa community (Odukpani LGA, Cross River) and the Isu community (Arochuckwu LGA, Abia) resulted in fatalities in May 2024,1596 and January 2025.1597

Conflict-related infrastructure damage - No information could be found during the reference period.

Road/waterway security - Punch noted in May 2025 that due to ‘rampant’ sea piracy and insecurity, travelling along the Oron-Calabar waterway between Akwa Ibom and Cross River states had become increasingly dangerous.1598

Displacement, movement and return - According to UNHCR, there were 45 978 refugees from abroad residing in Cross River state as of 1 June 2025.1599 As of the end of June 2025, Cross River state hosted more than 50 000 refugees, particularly from Cameroon, according to the State Governor quoted by Cross River State News.1600 No information could be found on conflict-induced displacement or returns in Cross River state during the reference period.

c) State response in maintaining law and order

Punch noted in May 2025 that pirates seemed to have taken full control of the Calabar-Oron waterway. Boat drivers reportedly complained about ongoing attacks and kidnappings despite paying for security agencies.1601 In the context of deadly clashes between Biakpan and Etono communities in Biase LGA, the state’s police command announced a major disarmament operation in both communities as earlier interventions by security agencies had been ignored and local leaders refused to cooperate in restoring peace.1602

- 1576

  Nigeria, Cross River State Government, Local Government, n.d., url

- 1577

  Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria, States, Cross River, n.d., url

- 1578

  Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria, States, Cross River, n.d., url

- 1579

UNFPA and US Census Bureau, Nigeria – Subnational Population Statistics, 2022, modified 11 September 2024, url

- 1580

Nigeria Watch, Fourteenth report on violence in Nigeria 2024, 2025, url, p. 15

- 1581

PIND, Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report, January to December 2024, 25 March 2025, url, p. 10; PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trend: April – June 2025, 11 September 2025, url , p. 6

- 1582

PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2025, 5 June 2025, url, p. 6; PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trend: April – June 2025, 11 September 2025, url, p. 6

- 1583

CrossRiverWatch, Pregnant Woman Abducted By Suspected Kidnappers In Cross River, 5 October 2024, url; Premium Times, Police confirm abduction of 3 UNICAL students, 31 March 2024, url

- 1584

Daily Post, Rivalry cult clash leaves 5 dead in Cross River farming community, 29 April 2025, url; Vanguard, Kidnap lord who abducted Akwa Ibom Judge, others killed in Cross River, 29 August 2024, url

- 1585

FIJ, More Sea Pirate Attacks Shape Deadly Trend in the Niger Delta, 7 May 2025, url; Sun (The) Nigeria, Cross River: Police confirm abduction of twelve passengers by sea pirates, 25 April 2025, url; Premium Times, Gunmen abduct 20 passengers travelling on Nigerian waterways, 25 April 2025, url

- 1586

EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Africa, data covering 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2025, as of 10 September 2025, url

- 1587

EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Africa, data covering 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2025, as of 10 September 2025, url

- 1588

EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Africa, data covering 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2025, as of 10 September 2025, url

- 1589

PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2025, 5 June 2025, url, p. 6

- 1590

CrossRiverWatch, Cross River Assembly Fears As Gunmen Invaded Akamkpa, Kill 4, 25 October 2024, url

- 1591

Peoples Gazette, Police nab six suspected Ambazonian separatists in Cross River, 19 October 2025, url

- 1592

PIND, Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report, January to December 2024, 25 March 2025, url, p. 10

- 1593

PIND, Niger Delta Weekly Update, Preventing a Resurgence of Communal Violence in Cross River State June 08-14, 2025, 14 June 2025, url; Guardian (The) Nigeria, Akamkpa communal crisis deepens as aide, council chairman trade accusations, 3 March 2025, url

- 1594

PIND, Niger Delta Weekly Update, Preventing a Resurgence of Communal Violence in Cross River State June 08-14, 2025, 14 June 2025, url; Sun (The) Nigeria, Communal clash claims two lives in Cross River, 13 March 2025, url

- 1595

PIND, Niger Delta Weekly Update, Preventing a Resurgence of Communal Violence in Cross River State June 08-14, 2025, 14 June 2025, url; Vanguard, Police threatens disarmament operation in Cross River's warring communities, 23 May 2025, url

- 1596

PIND, Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report, January to December 2024, 25 March 2025, url, p. 10; Daily Post, Abia, Cross River communal clashes: Youths ask for military barrack in disputed area, 14 May 2024, url

- 1597

PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2025, 5 June 2025, url, p. 6

- 1598

Punch, Cross River communities demand action as Oron-Calabar waterway turns deadly, 16 May 2025, url

- 1599

  UNHCR, Nigeria: Forcibly Displaced Populations Dashboard – 1 June 2025, 19 June 2025, url

- 1600

  Cross River State News, Gov. Otu Decries Refugee Burden on Cross River, Seeks Stronger Int'l Support, 24 June 2025, url

- 1601

  Punch, Cross River communities demand action as Oron-Calabar waterway turns deadly, 16 May 2025, url

- 1602

  Guardian (The) Nigeria, Police to begin disarmament in Cross Rivers communities over killings, 23 May 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu