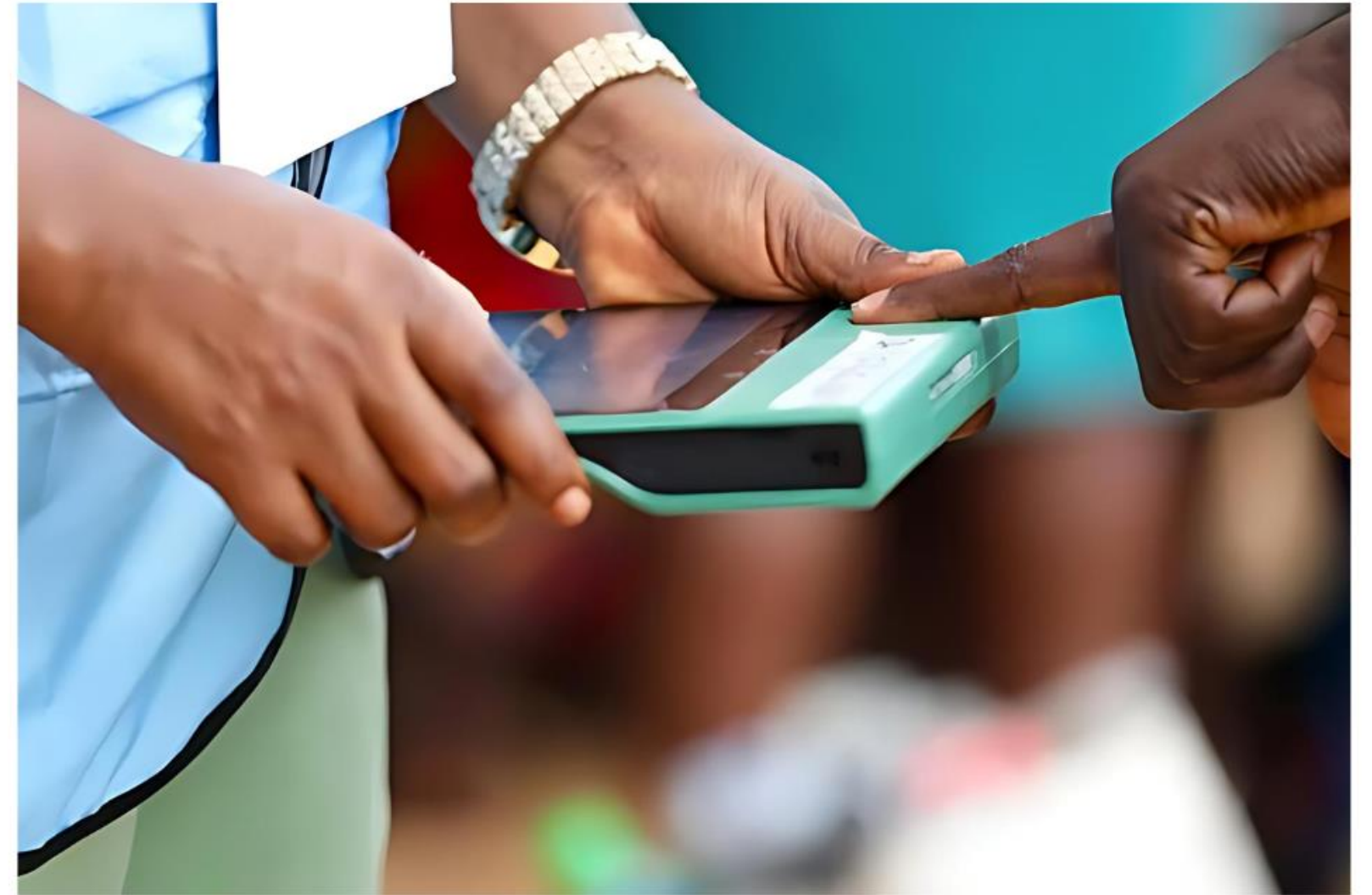




DO VOTES COUNT?



IMO 2023 ELECTION: ATHENA REVIEW REVEALS TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS HIGH COMPLIANCE WITH ELECTORAL RULES AND EXPOSES CORRUPT PRACTICES



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ABOUT ATHENA CENTRE

Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership is a non-partisan, not-for-profit research Centre (Think Tank) operating at the junction of theory and practice in public policy and leadership.



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Athena Centre operates as an independent, non-partisan think tank in compliance with Nigerian laws and regulations, committed to promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability. Our mission is to conduct rigorous research and provide evidence-based recommendations that contribute to the development of a prosperous and forward-looking society in Nigeria.

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KEY TERMINOLOGIES



POLLING UNIT

A polling unit is a place, enclosure, booth, shade or house at which voting takes place.



WARD (REGISTRATION AREA)

A Ward is an administrative unit within a local government that serves as sub-division for electoral purposes. It is composed of several polling units.



LGA

Local Government Areas



BVAS

Bimodal Voter Accreditation System



FORM EC8A

Form used by INEC to record results at the polling unit level.



FORM EC8B

Form used by INEC to collate polling unit results at the ward level.



FORM EC8C

Form used to collate ward results at the LGA level.



FORM EC40G

Form used to report cancelled results

KEY TERMINOLOGIES CONT...



INEC COMPLIANT PUS

Polling Units where the total votes cast equals BVAS Machine accredited voters



OVER-VOTING

Occurs when total votes cast exceed BVAS Machine accreditation.



COLLATED RESULTS

Results from Polling units collated in form EC8B



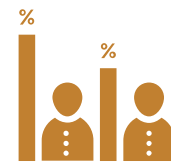
TRANSFER OF OVERVOTING

Refers to cases where results with overvoting in EC8A were not cancelled by the collation officer and transferred to EC8B



EXCLUDED PUS

polling units that were not recorded in the form EC8B either due to no election or cancelled election.



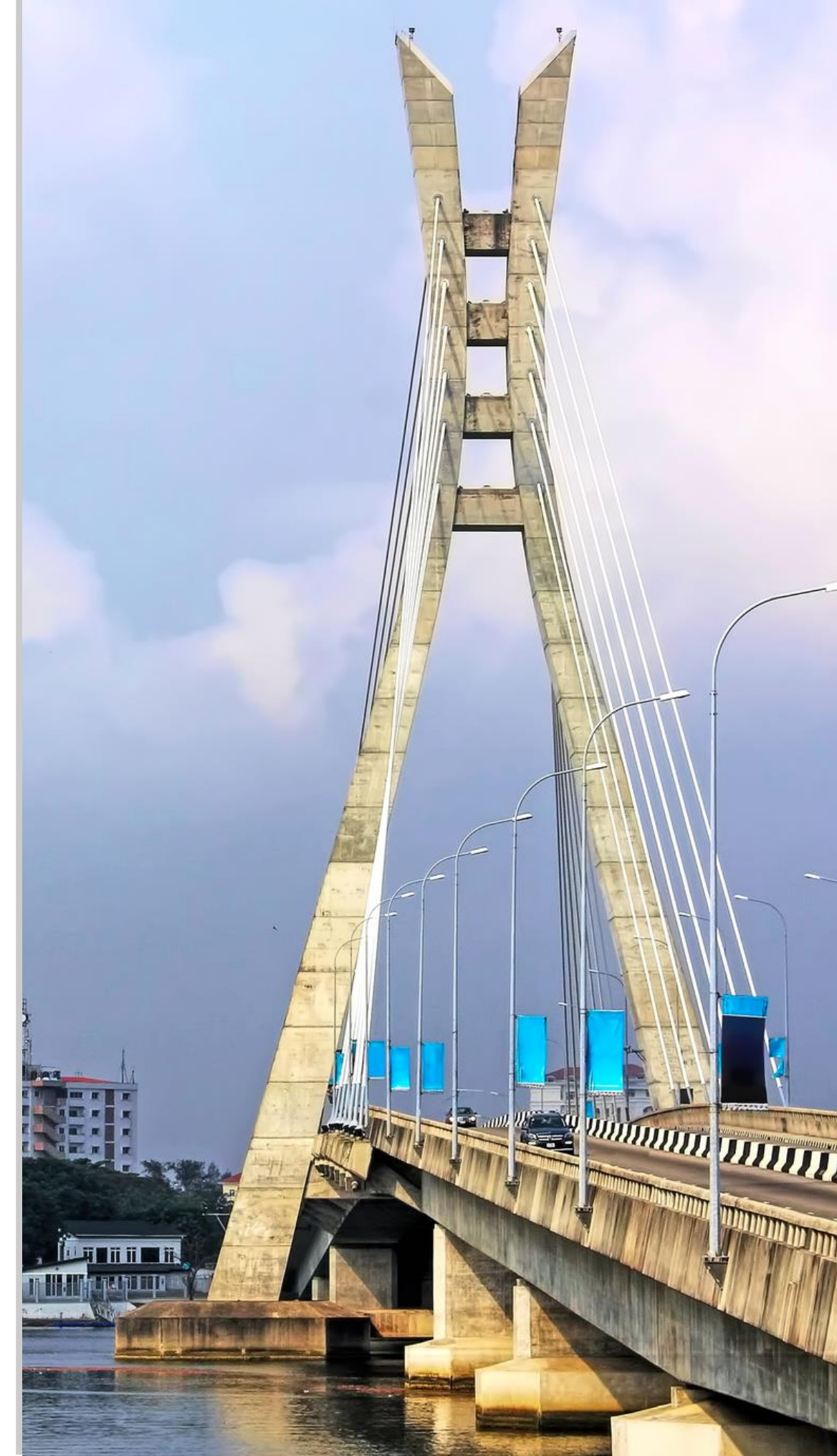
INFLATED VOTES

When an electoral officer increases the total vote cast recorded in form EC8A

SUMMARY

Athena Centre through a proprietary data analytical framework uncovered the following insights:

- ▶▶ The use of technology (BVAS Machine, IReV website) improved electoral visibility and integrity.
- ▶▶ Compliance with INEC guidelines observed in significant number of polling units
- ▶▶ Possible corrupt practices by Presiding Officers and sustained by Collation Officers.
- ▶▶ INEC non-compliance in about 23% of the total polling units altered the final result.
- ▶▶ High number of collation officers violated the electoral laws and guidelines in announcing false results



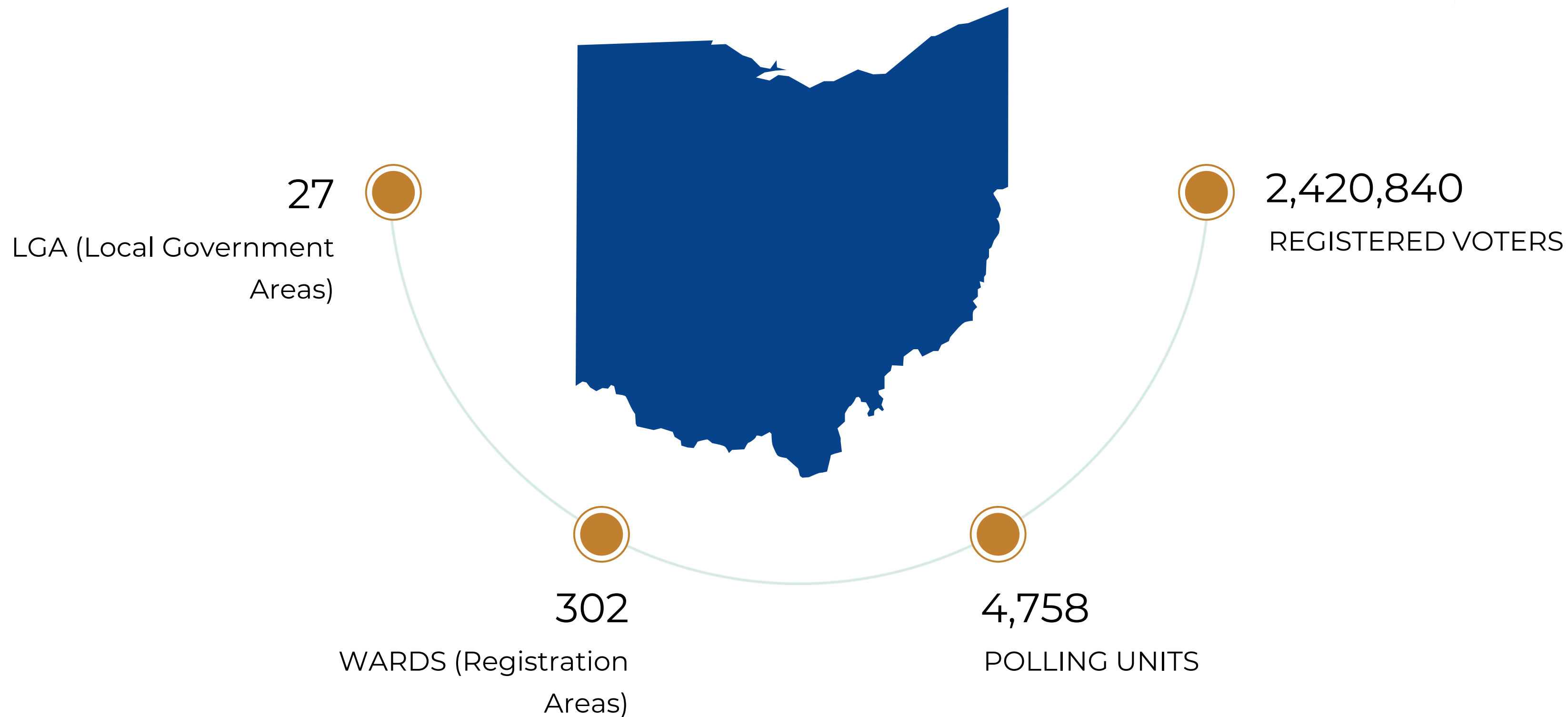
METHODOLOGY

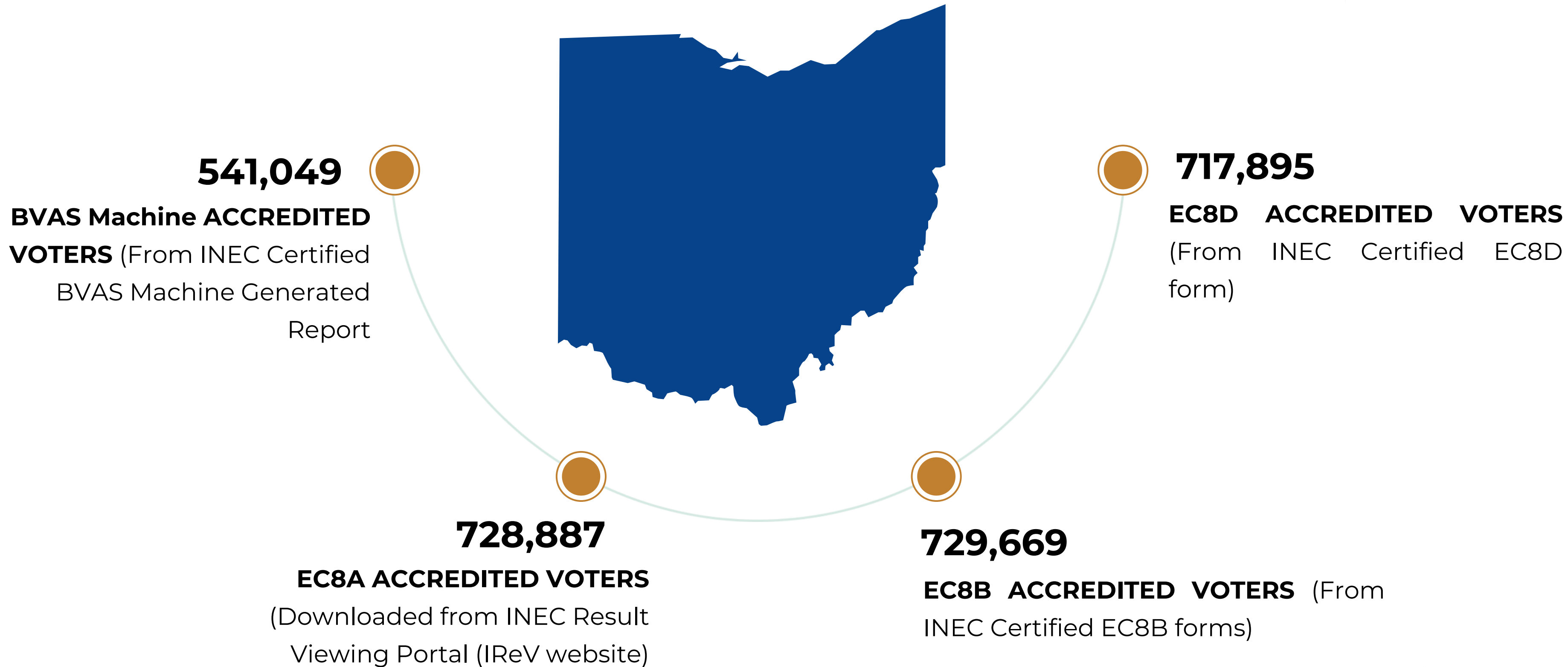
DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

- ▶▶▶ We downloaded results from IReV website and analysed with a proprietary tool.
- ▶▶▶ We made a Freedom of information (FOI) request to INEC on November 13, 2023 and was supplied with BVAS generated report.
- ▶▶▶ We made another freedom of information request on January 30th 2024 and we were supplied with form EC8B, EC8C, EC8D, EC8E and EC40G.
- ▶▶▶ Result from each of the forms above was transferred to the data analysis tool for further review.
- ▶▶▶ In collecting data, we used a 2-step verification process, and a quality assurance team performed further checks to ensure data integrity.



IMO STATE AT A **GLANCE**

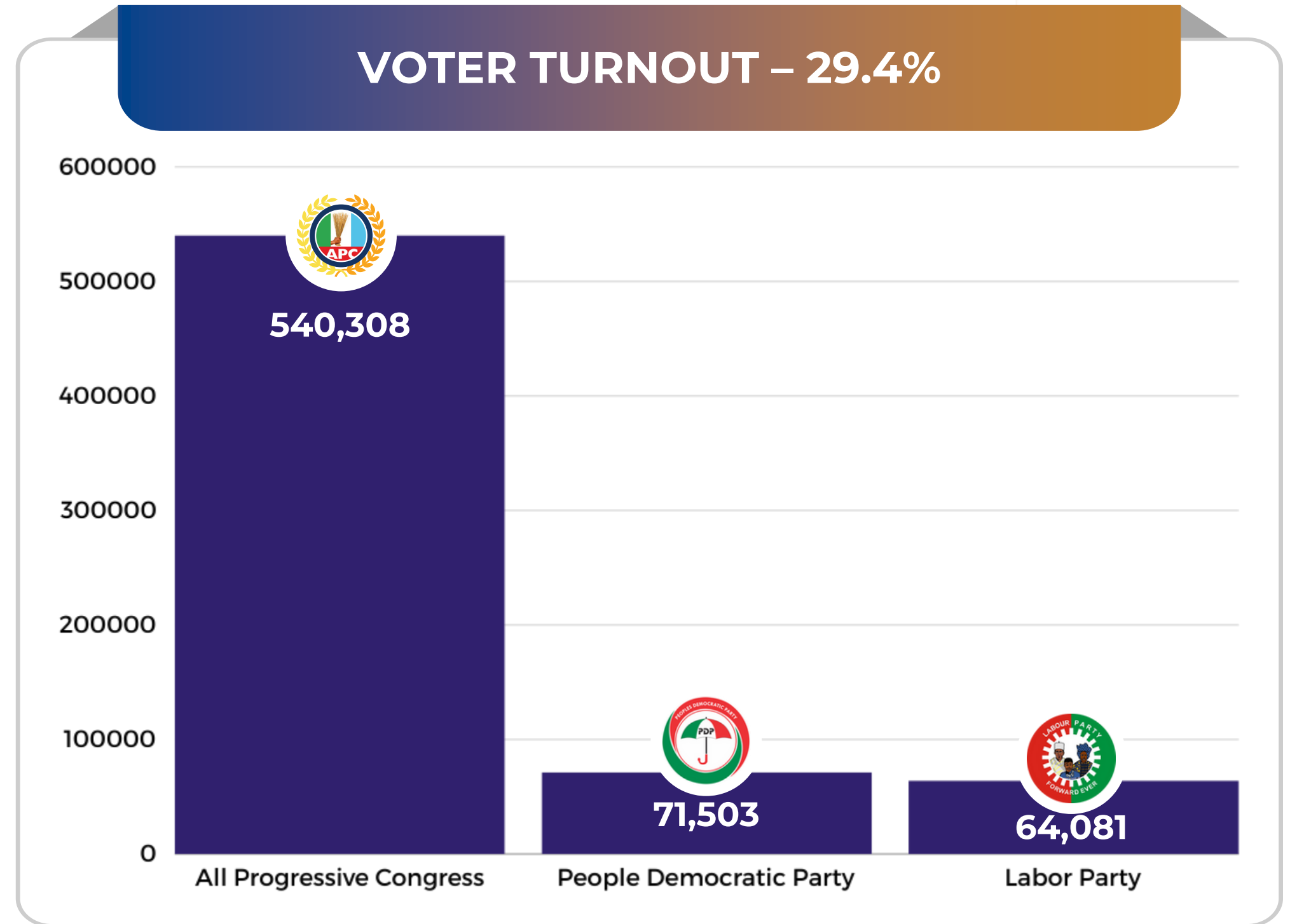




IMO 2023 ELECTON RESULT BY INEC



HOPE UZODIMMA
DECLARED WINNER



HIGH COMPLIANCE BY INEC PRESIDING OFFICERS WITH IReV website UPLOADS ENHANCED RESULT VISIBILITY. (95.7% RESULTS UPLOADED TO INEC RESULT VIEWING PORTAL)



4,556 polling units were downloaded from IReV website.



4,392 (94.6%) polling units were legible 164.



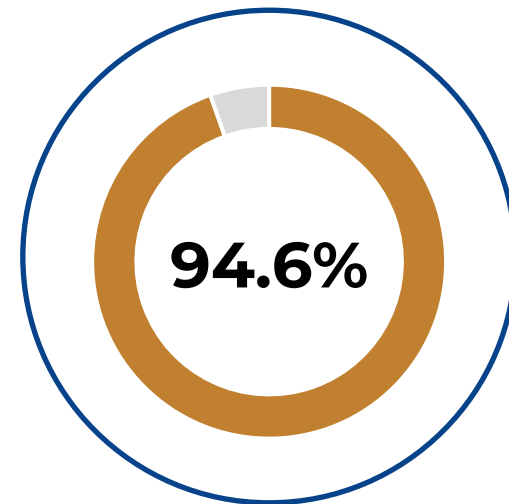
51 (1.1%) polling units were illegible



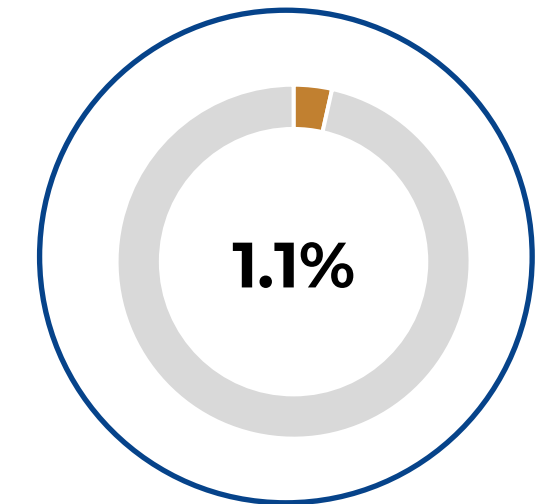
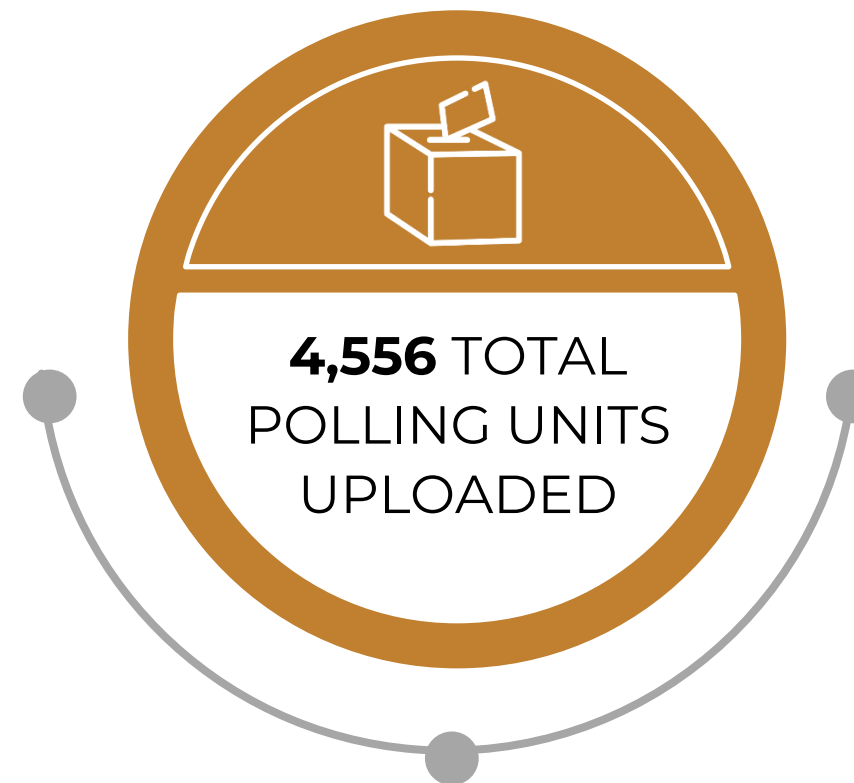
However, It did not eliminate:

High incidences of human errors

- critical issues of overvoting
- Incidence of wrong calculations
- Incomplete filling of forms
- Illegible data capture
- Uploading wrong Polling Unit results



LEGIBLE



ILLEGIBLE

SIGNIFICANT COMPLIANCE WITH INEC ELECTORAL GUIDELINES IN 73% OF THE POLLING UNITS SUGGEST SUCCESSFUL USE OF TECHNOLOGY LEADING TO IMPROVED ELECTORAL INTEGRITY



4,758 POLLING UNITS

3,478
INEC COMPLIANT



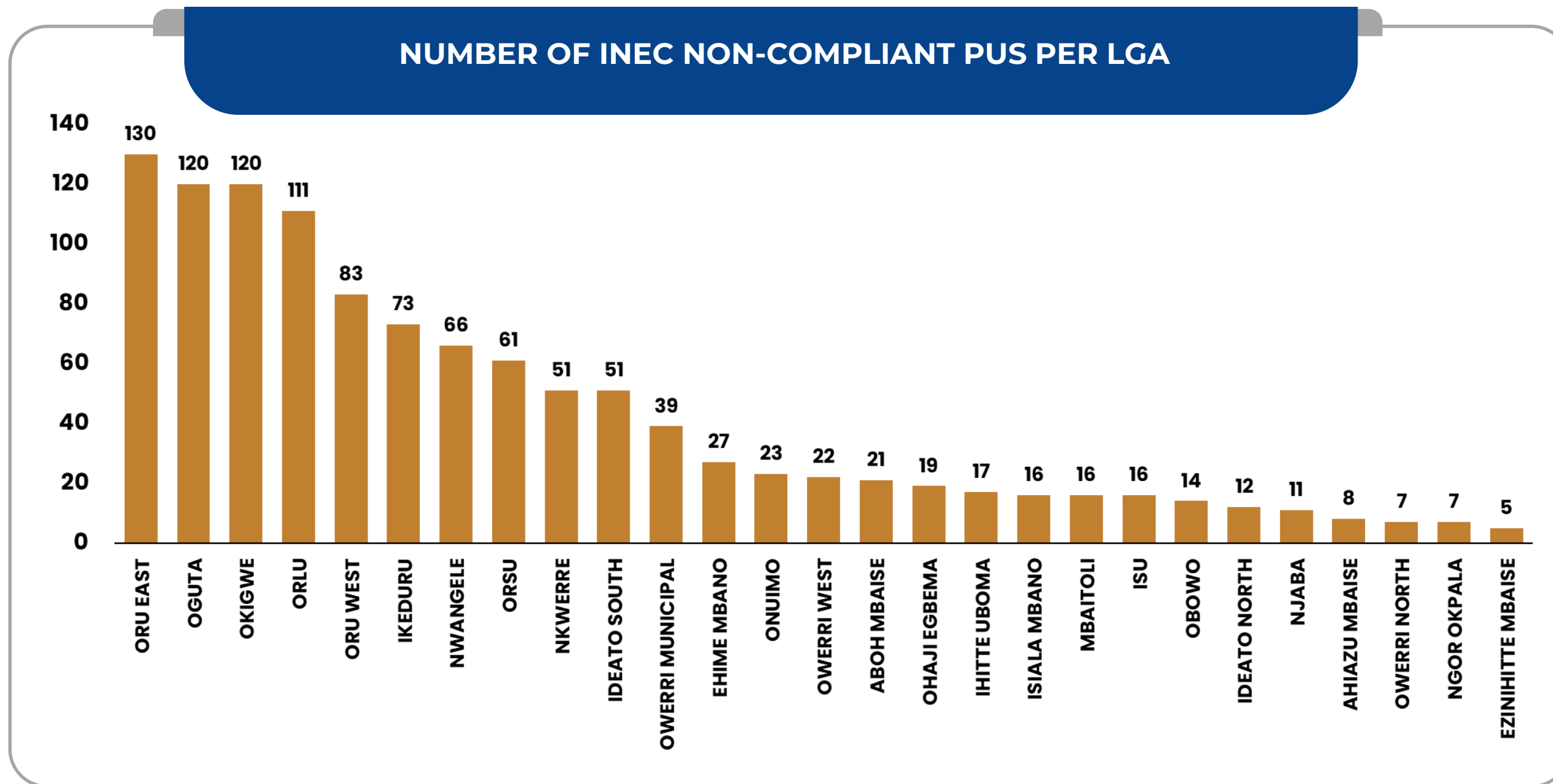
- **3,478*** polling units were INEC compliant.
- These are polling units where total votes equals to BVAS Machine accreditation.



*In arriving at this number of polling units, we have allowed tolerance of 5 votes or less to account for human computational error.

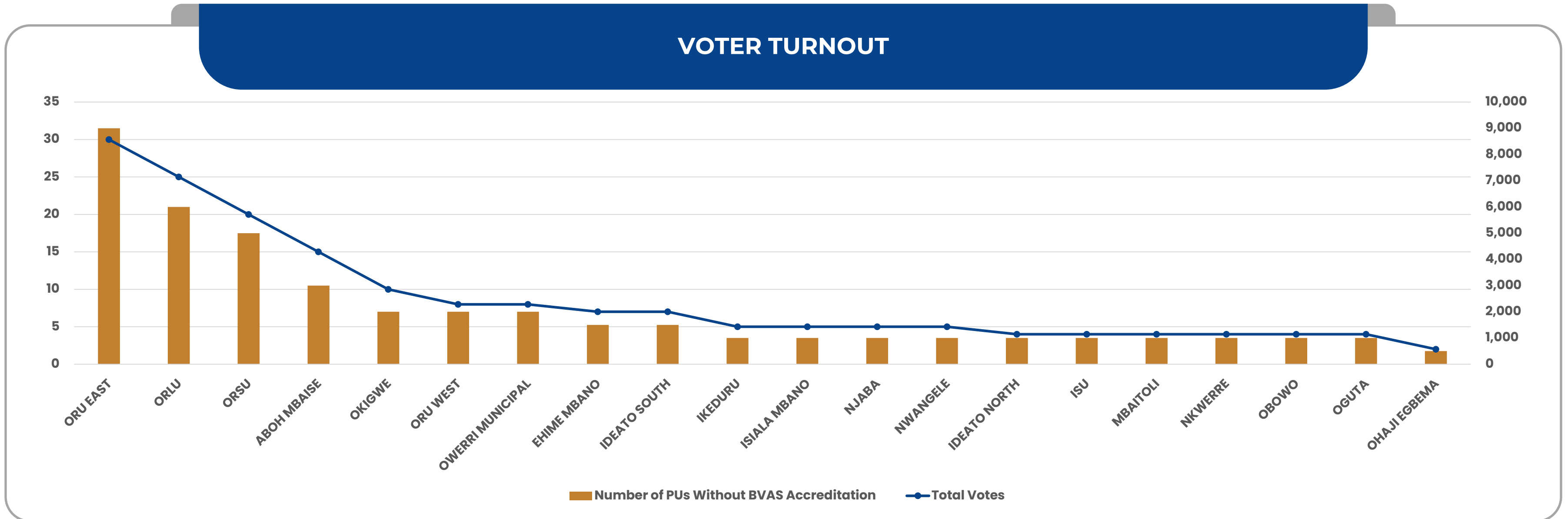
*In arriving at this number of polling units, we have allowed tolerance of 5 votes or less to account for human computational error.

SIGNIFICANT NON-COMPLIANCE WITH INEC ELECTORAL GUIDELINES IN 1,101 POLLING UNITS (23.1%) ALTERED ELECTION RESULTS. TOTAL VOTES CAST WERE EITHER HIGHER OR LOWER THAN BVAS Machine ACCREDITATION.



51.2% of the polling units where total votes cast did not match with BVAS Machine accredited voters are in five LGAS

REFUSAL TO USE BVAS Machine IN 101 (2.1%) POLLING UNITS. THESE 101 POLLING UNITS WITHOUT BVAS Machine ACCREDITATION CONTRIBUTED 23,557 VOTES.

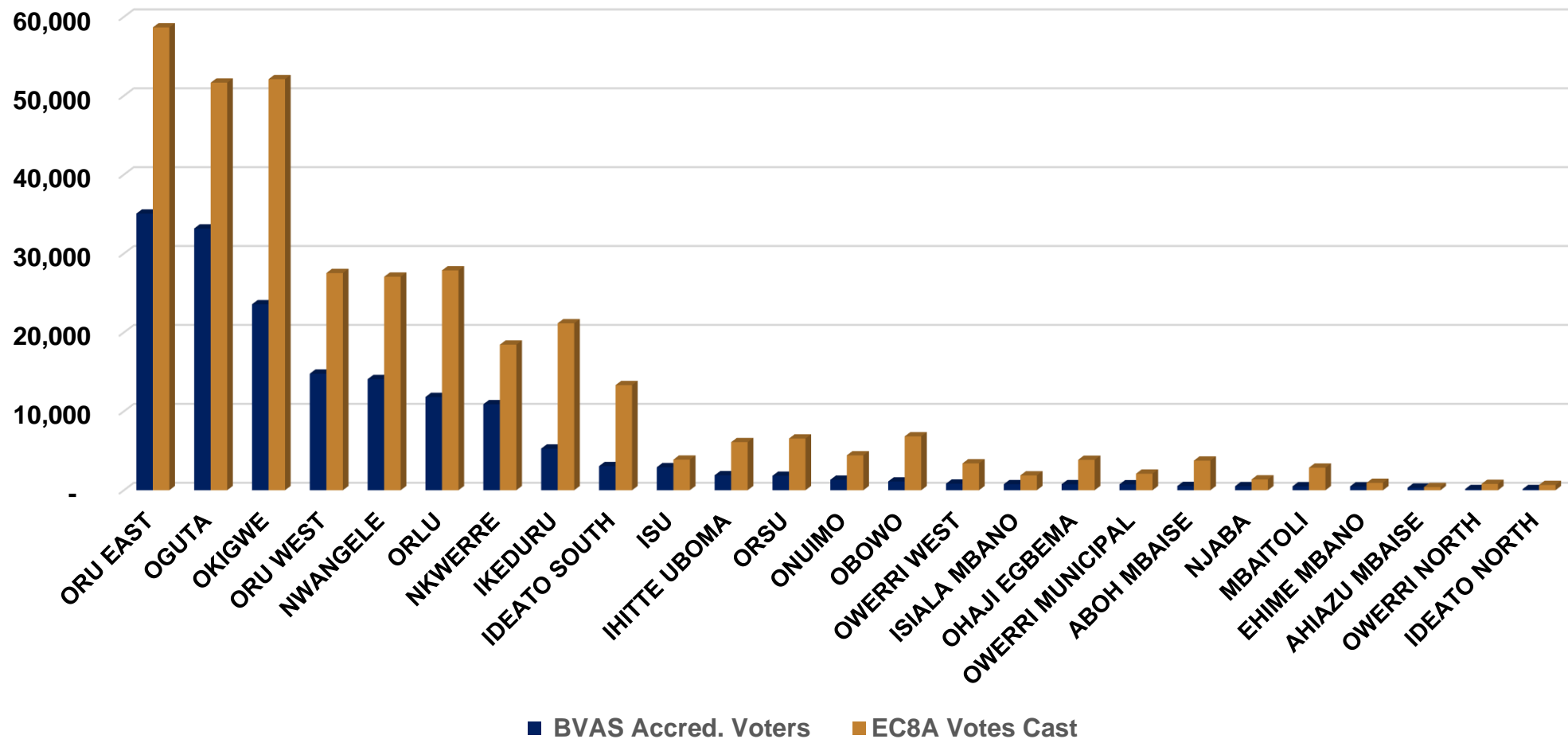


66.3% of the polling units where there was voting BVAS Machine accreditation are in Three Local Government Areas

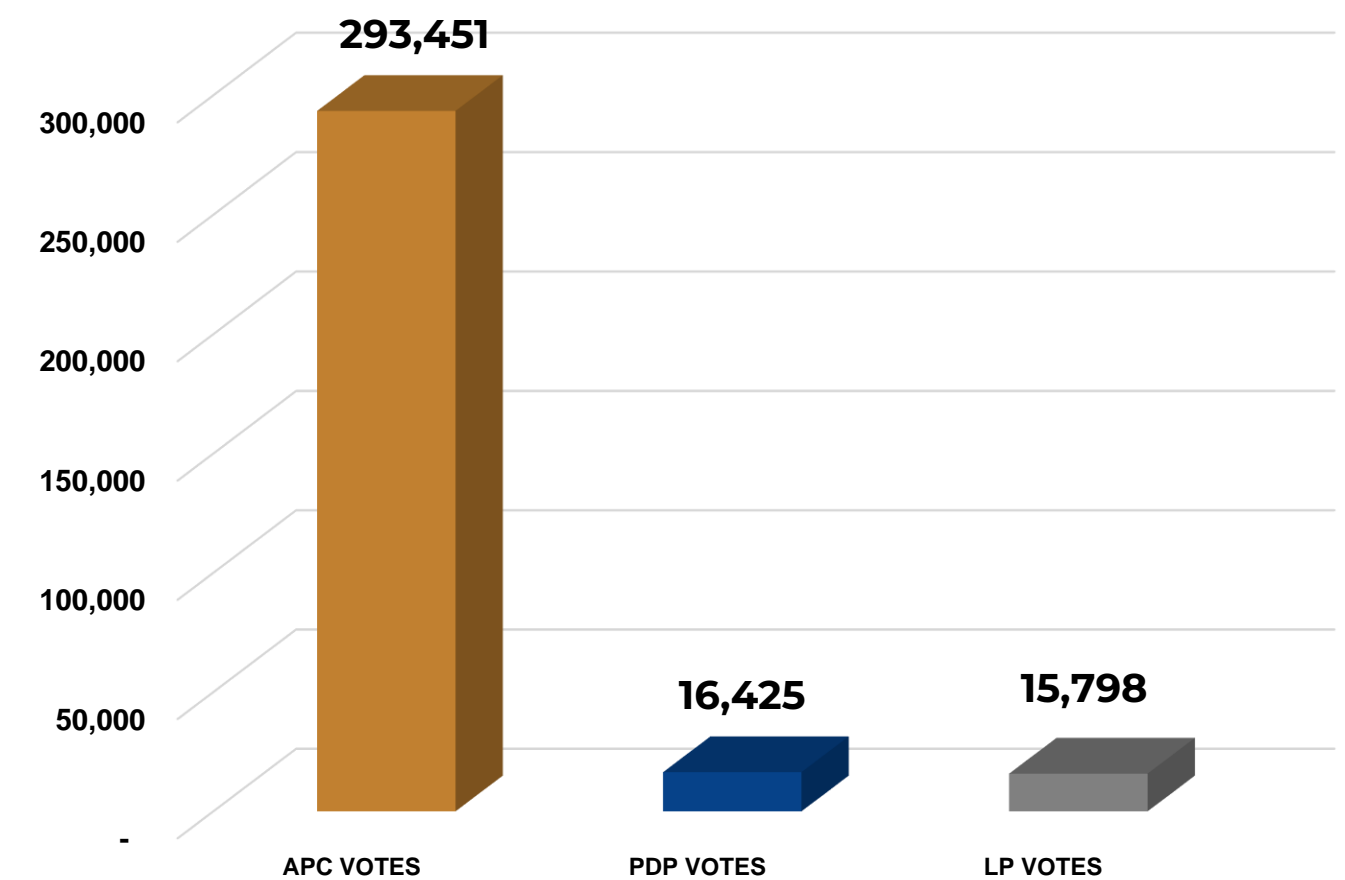
OVERVOTING IN 875 PUS (18.3%) ACCOUNTED FOR 347,560 VOTES SUBSTANTIALLY IMPACTING FINAL RESULT

54.7% of the polling units with overvoting are in five Local Government Areas

TOTAL VOTES CAST VS BVAS Machine ACCREDITATION



DISTRIBUTION OF OVERVOTING BY PARTY

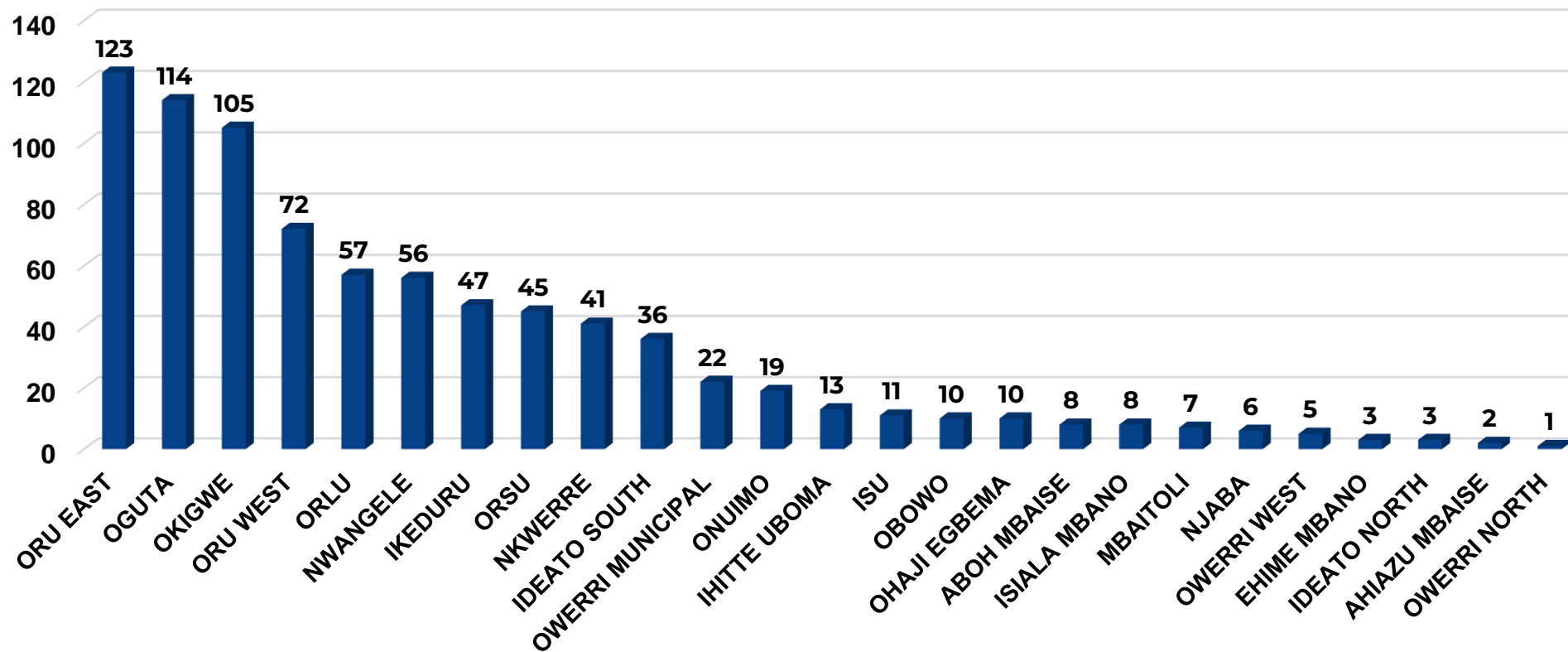


*In arriving at this number of polling units, we have allowed tolerance of 5 votes to account for human error. According to the Electoral Act, 2022, section 51 (2), “where the number of votes cast at an election in any polling unit exceeds the number of accredited voters in that polling unit, the Presiding officer shall cancel the result of the election in that polling unit.”

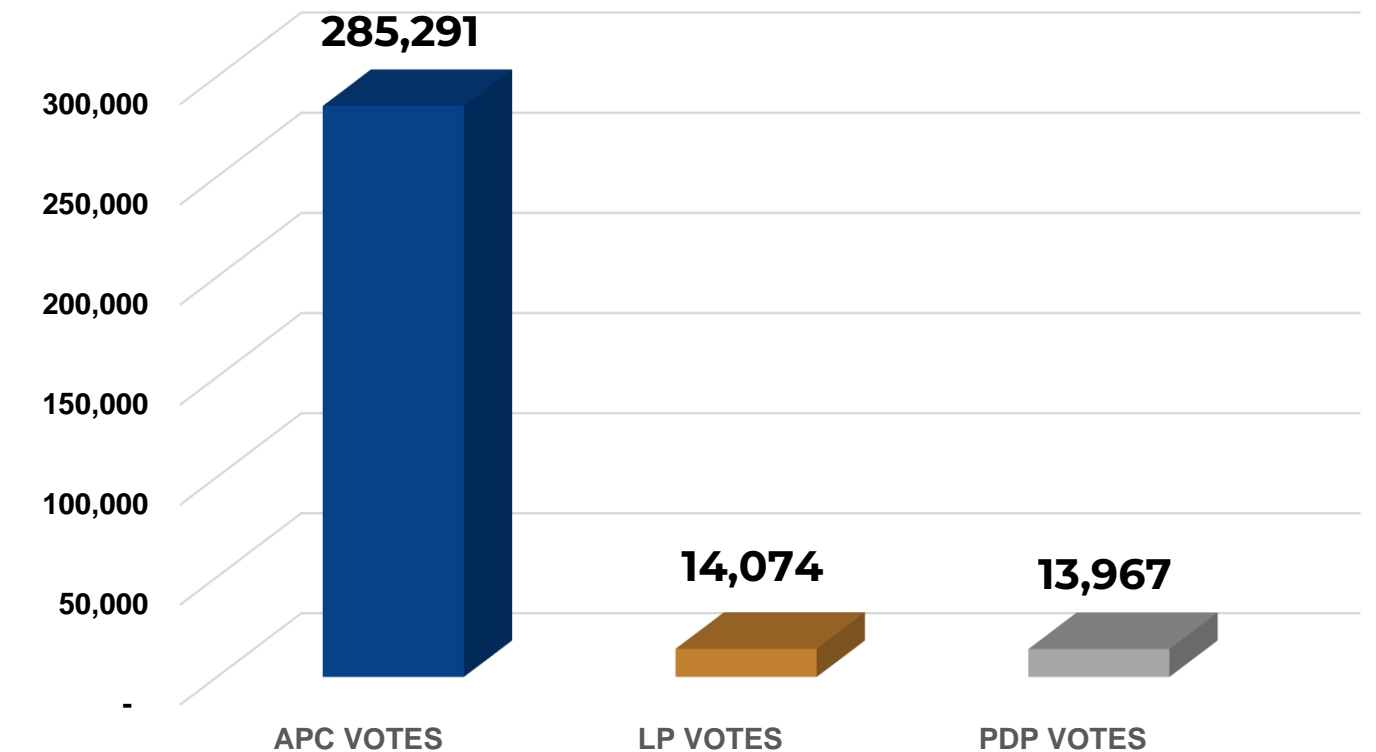
RESULTS FROM 94.1% OF THE 875 PUS WITH OVERVOTING WERE TRANSFERRED TO FORM EC8B

Collation officers cancelled result in 51 polling units. 825 polling units with overvoting contributed 344,907 votes; **highlighting possible corrupt practices impacting electoral integrity.**

NUMBER OF POLLING UNITS WITH OVERVOTING THAT WAS TRANSFERRED PER LGA



DISTRIBUTION OF TRANSFERRED VOTES BY PARTY VOTES

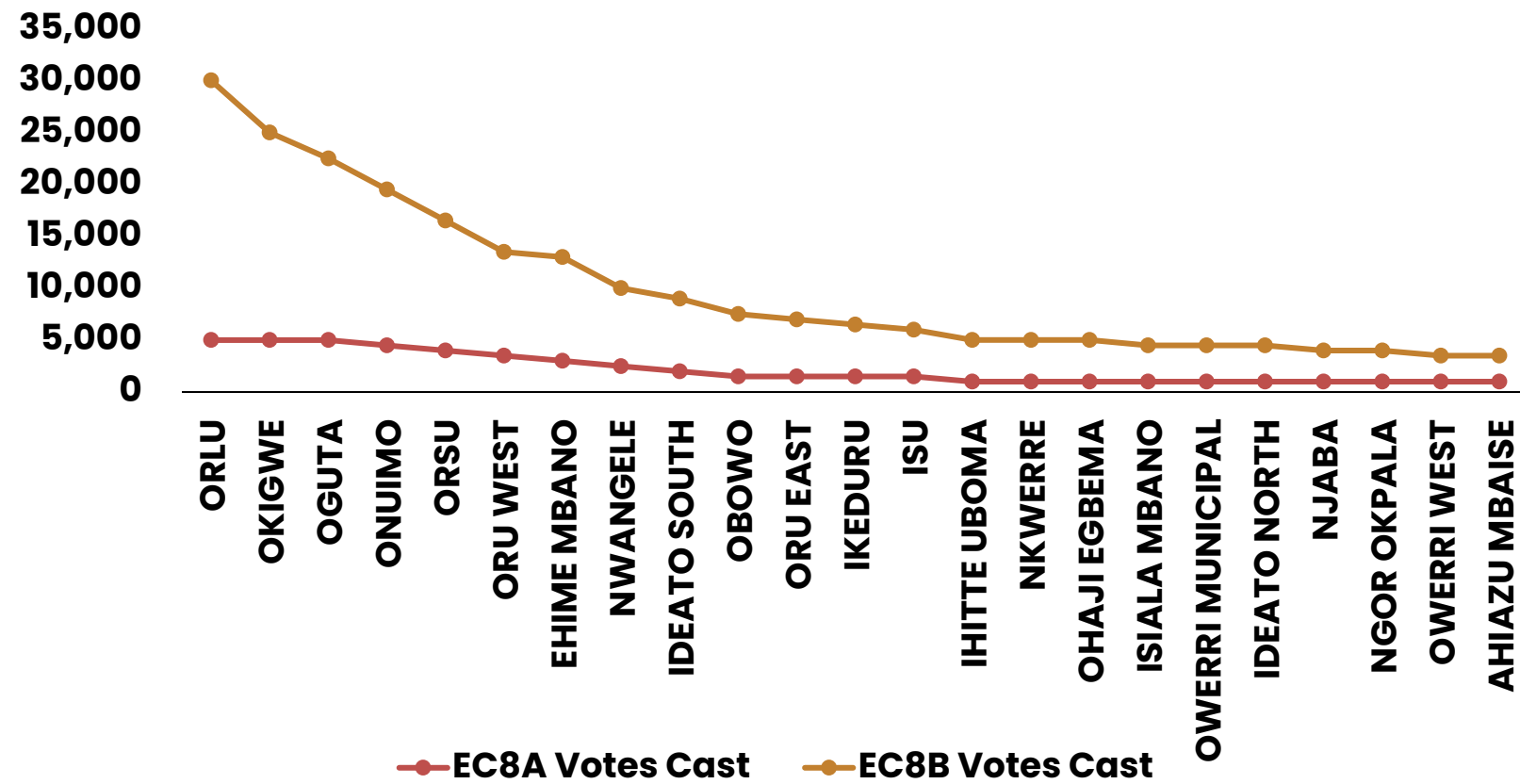


52.2% of the polling units with overvoting that were transferred to form EC8B are in six LGAs.

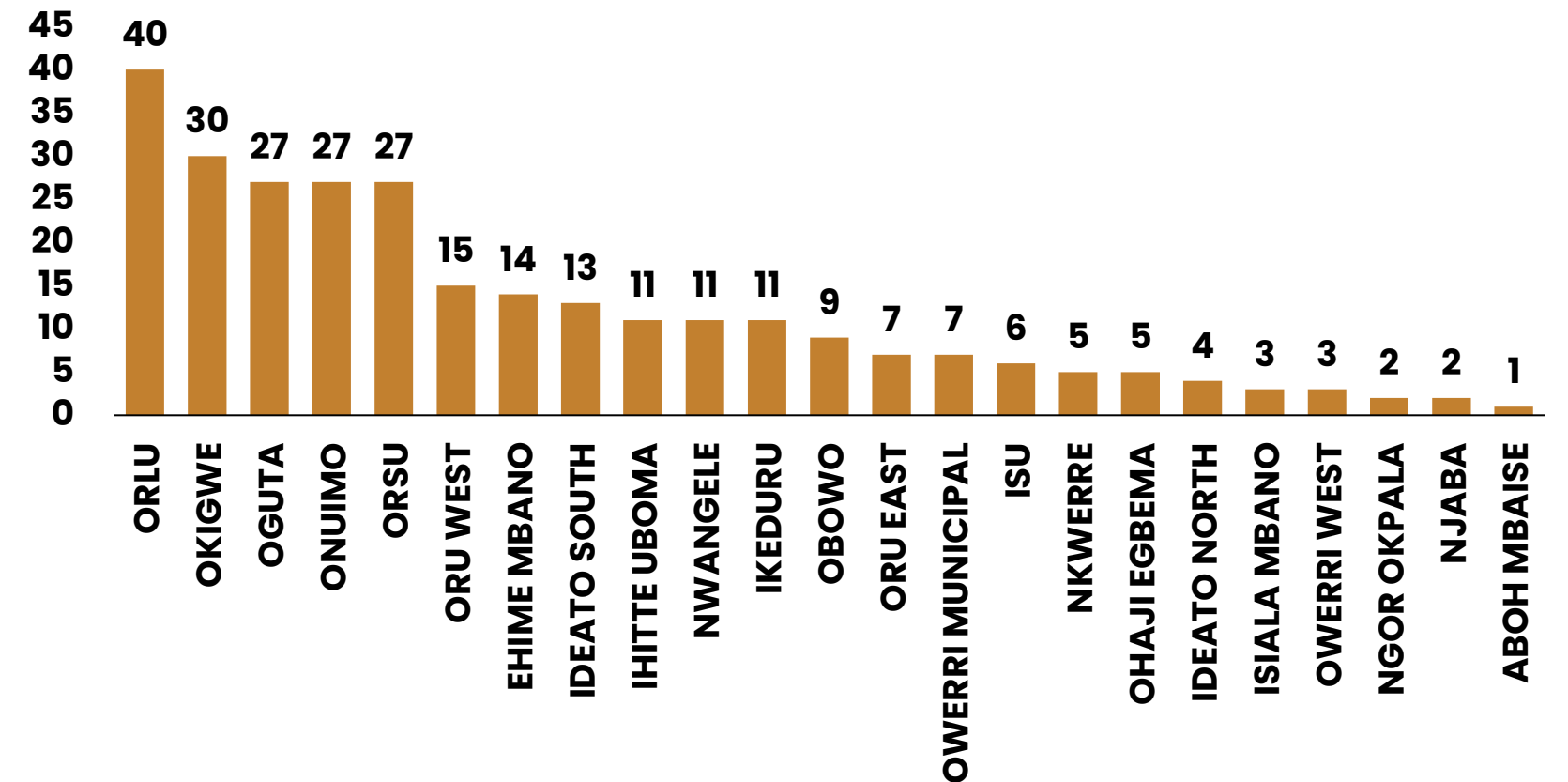
AT THE COLLATION LEVEL, RESULTS OF 276 POLLING UNITS WERE INFLATED

We observed the addition of **54,142 votes** over what was recorded in form EC8A in **276 polling units**, across twenty four Local Government Areas.

COMPARISON OF EC8A TOTAL VOTE CAST AND EC8B TOTAL VOTES CAST PER LGA

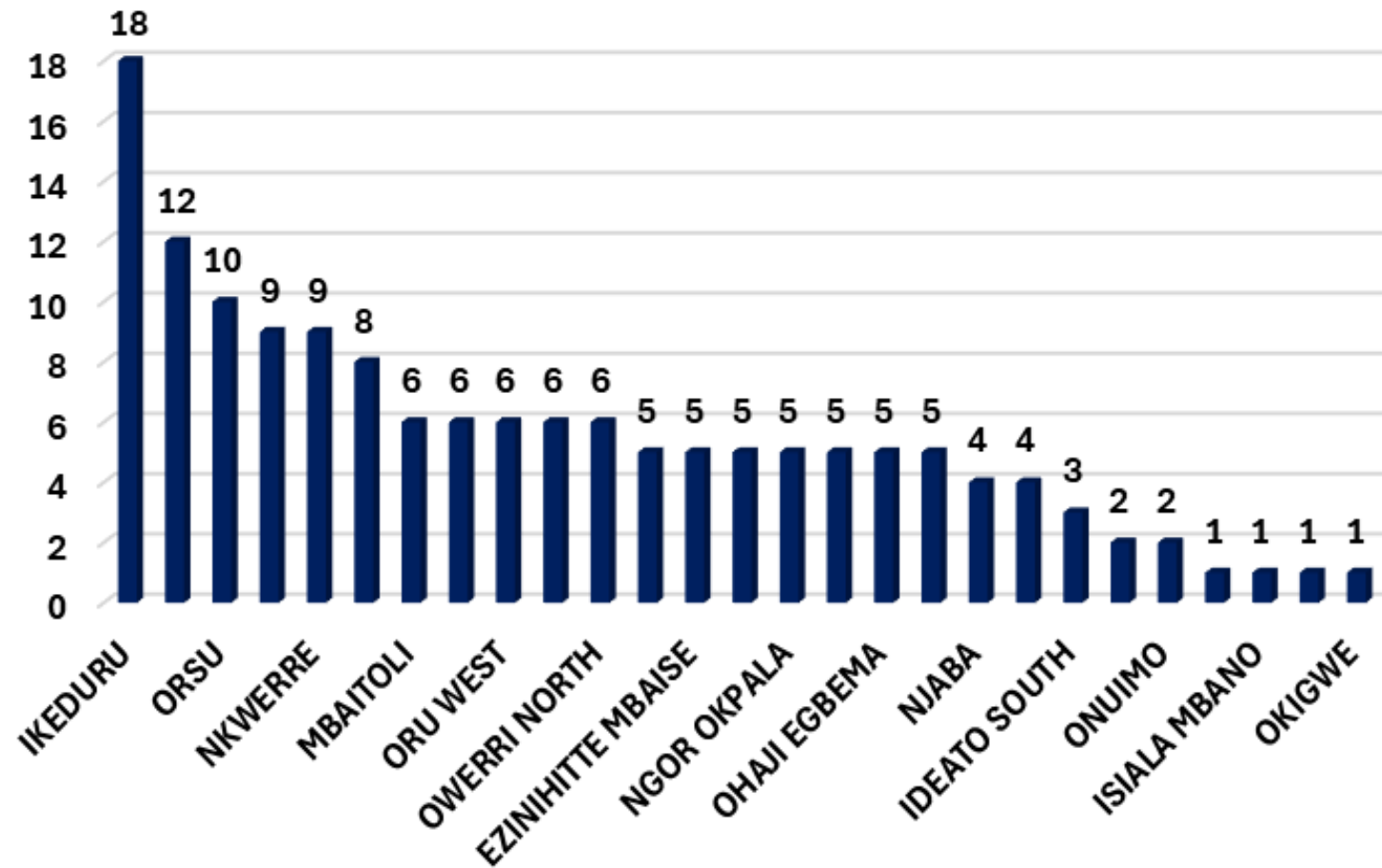


NUMBER OF PUS WITH INFLATION OF RESULTS PER LGA

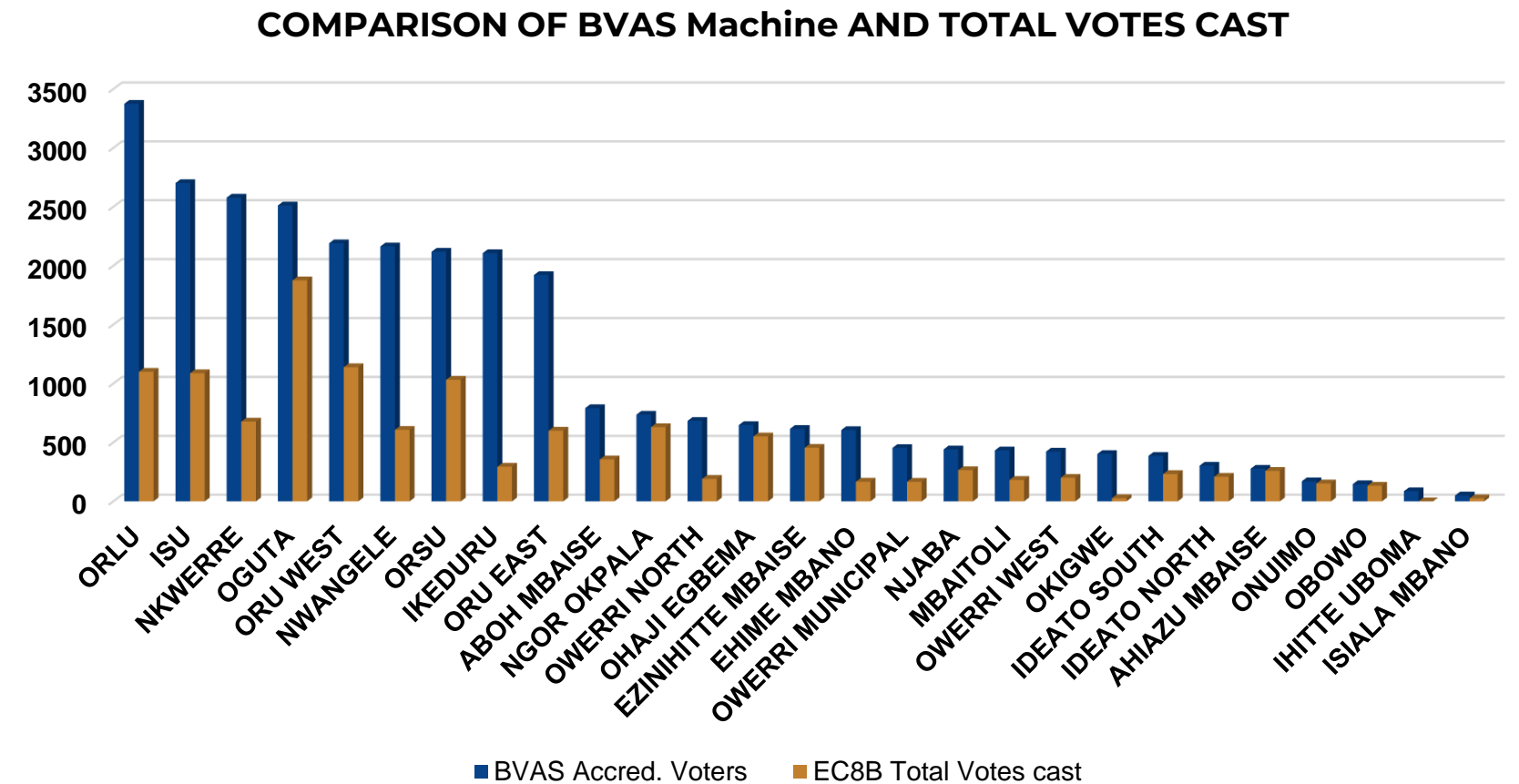


150 PUs (3.1%) WITH UNDERVOTING IN 27 LGAs (TOTAL VOTES CAST IS LOWER THAN BVAS Machine ACCREDITATION) SUGGEST POSSIBLE VOTE SUPPRESSION

NUMBER OF PUS WITH UNDERVOTING PER LGA



COMPARISON OF BVAS Machine AND TOTAL VOTES CAST



74.1% of the polling units with under voting are in three Local Government Areas

BASED ON THE ELECTORAL LAWS AND INEC GUIDELINES, 1,408 PUs COMPRISING INEC NON-COMPLIANT PUs AND EXCLUDED PUs SHOULD HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE FINAL RESULT



INEC NON-COMPLIANT PUS

Based on our analysis, **1,101** polling units across the 27 LGAs were INEC non-compliant, meaning BVAS Machine accreditation did not match with total votes cast in **23.1%** of polling units.

*In arriving at this number of polling units, we have allowed tolerance of 5 votes to account for human error.



EXCLUDED PUS

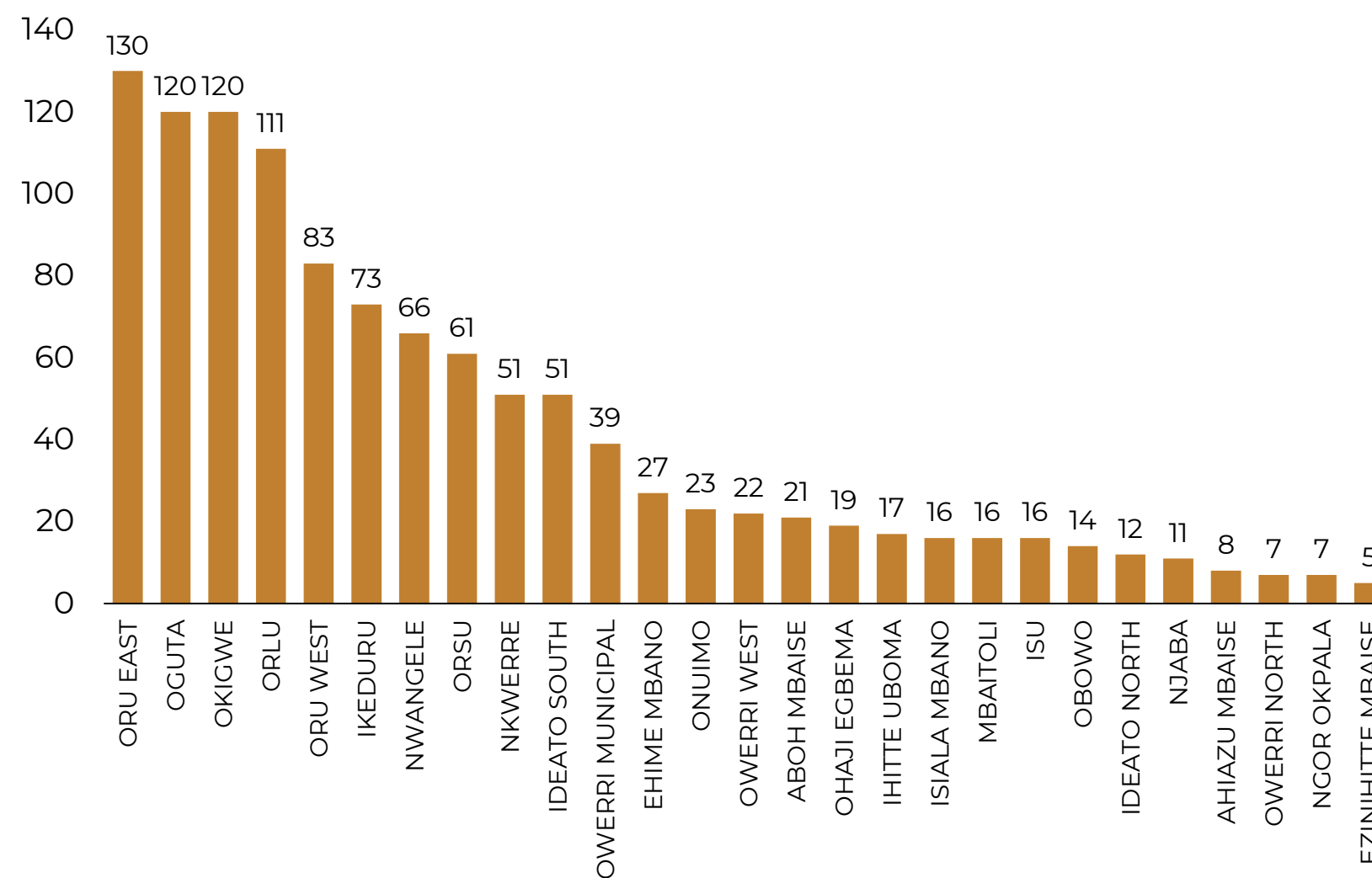
307 PUs representing 6.4% of the total PUs were excluded from the results by the electoral officers.

- Cancelled - 125 PUs as reported in the EC 40 G
- No election – 16 PUs as reported in EC40G

*We excluded

- Illegible – 2 PUs
- No record in EC8B - 139 PUs
- 25 PUs were there were no record for valid, invalid and votes cast (Amaifeke Ward, Orlu)

NUMBER OF INEC NON-COMPLIANT PUS



51.2% of the polling units where total votes cast did not match with BVAS Machine accredited voters are in 5 LGAS

OUR ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT APC POLLED THE HIGHEST VOTES USING THE RESULTS FROM THE 3,478 (73%) INEC COMPLIANT POLLING UNITS

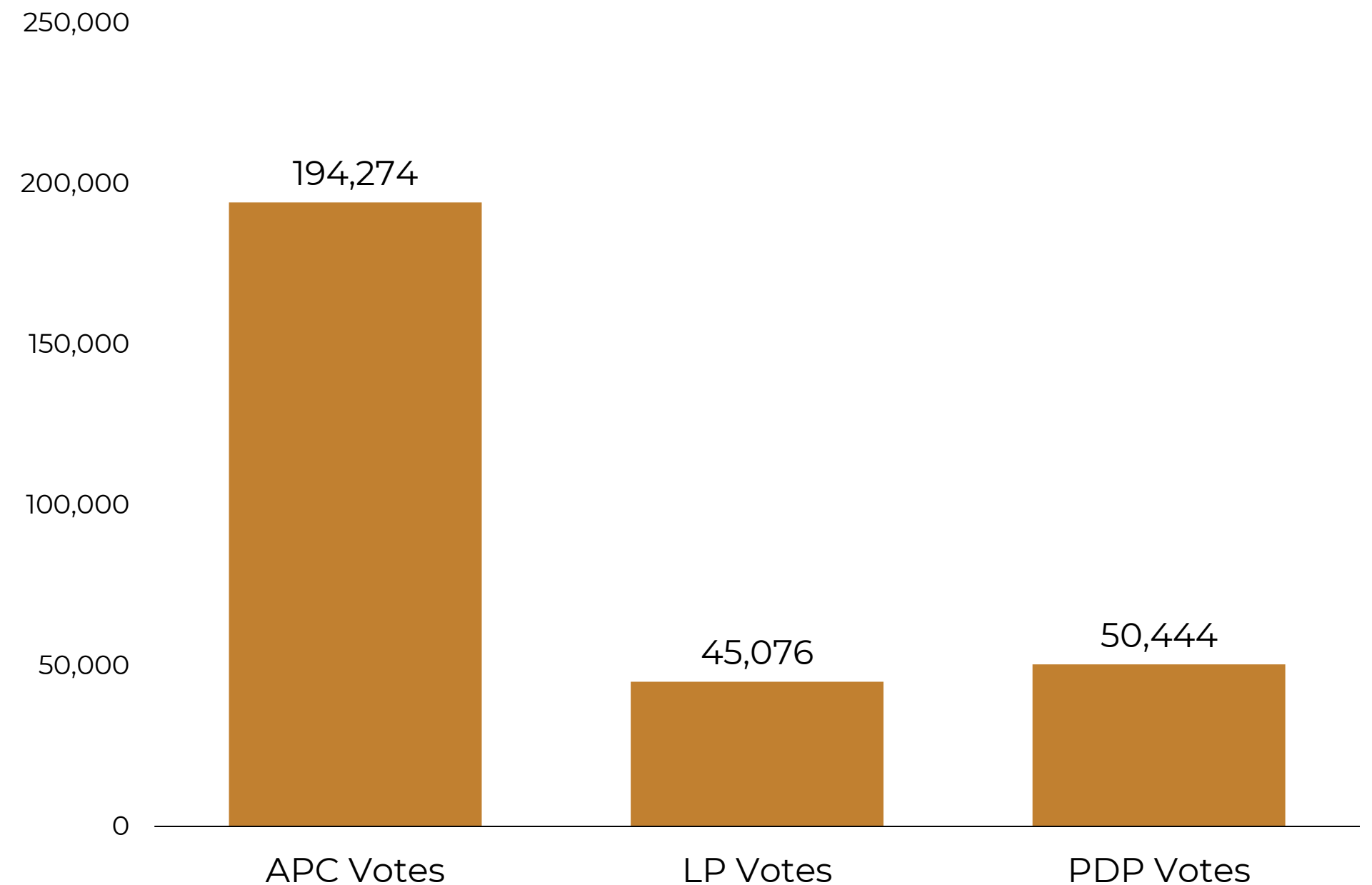
A tabulation of the results from these 3,478 polling units resulted in the following:

- Total votes – **308,930**
- APC Votes – **194,274**
- PDP Votes – **50,444**
- LP Votes – **45,076**












APC got the highest votes and 25% and above in all the 27 LGAs

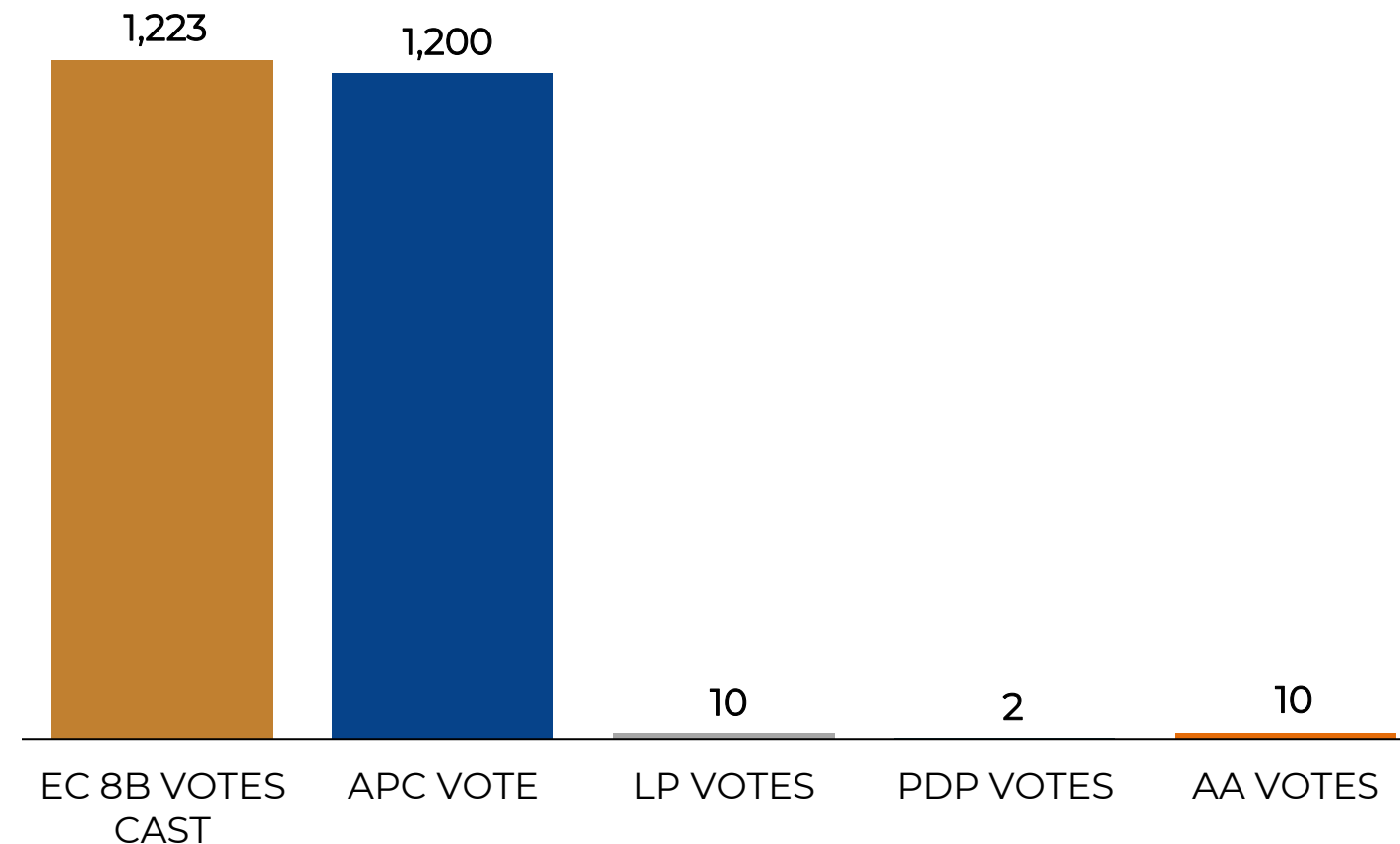
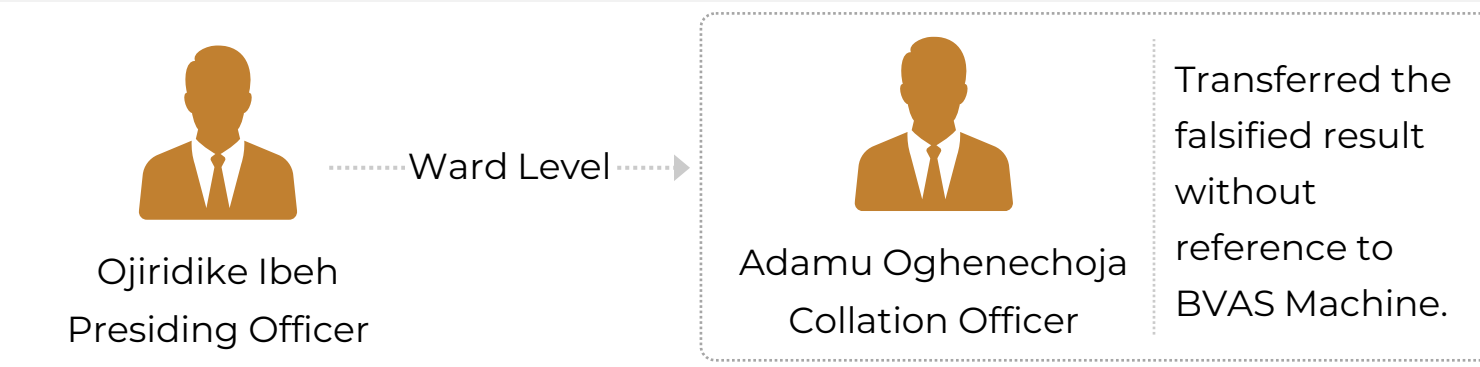
APC won majority of the votes in the INEC Non-Compliant PUs

DISTRIBUTION OF INEC COMPLIANT PUs VOTES BY PARTY



POLLING UNIT WITH OVER-VOTING RECORDED IN FORM EC8A BY THE PRESIDING OFFICER

 LGA	OKIGWE
 Ward	OKIGWE I
 Polling Unit	UMUCHIMA PRI. SCHOOL
 Delimitation Number	16-19-01-001
 BVAS Machine ACCRED	510
 EC 8A VOTES CAST	1228
 APC VOTES	1200
 LP VOTES	10
 PDP VOTES	2
 SDP VOTES	10
 Overvoting	718



THREE LGAs (TWO IN IMO WEST AND ONE IN IMO NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT RECORDED THE HIGHEST INCIDENCES OF OVERVOTING AND CONTRIBUTED 201,889 VOTES

OKIGWE LGA

- BVAS Machine Accredited Voters – **34,482**
- Total Votes Casts in EC 8B – **63,666**
- Winning Party – **APC**



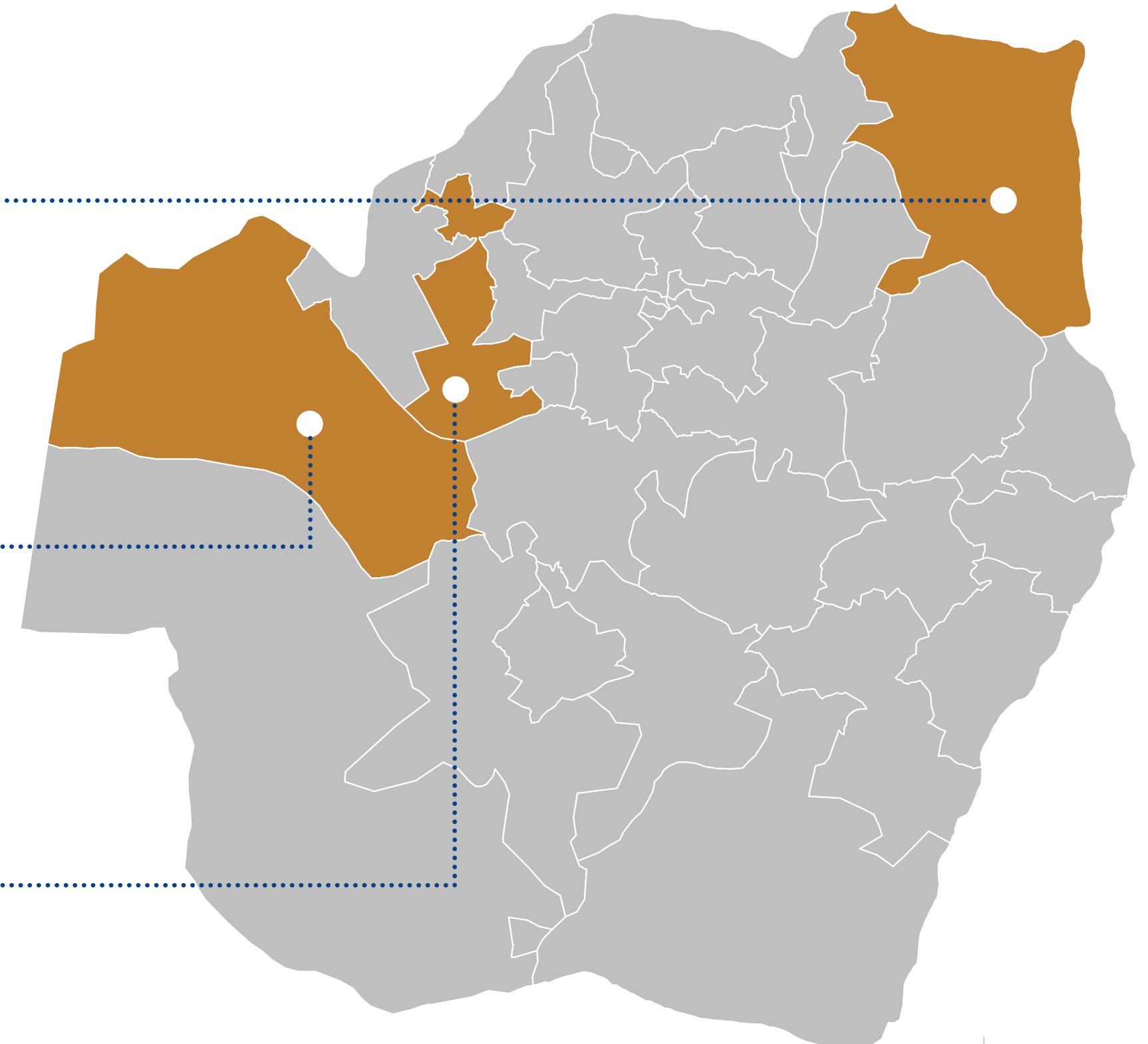
OGUTA LGA

- BVAS Machine Accredited Voters - **44,277**
- Total Votes Casts in EC 8B – **63,937**
- Winning Party - **APC**



ORU EAST LGA

- BVAS Machine accredited Voters - **50,719**
- Total Votes Cast in EC8B – **74,286**
- Winning Party – **APC**



RECOMMENDATIONS

POLLING UNIT

1 | Deepen the Use of Technology

The high level of compliance in BVAS Machine usage and consistency in total votes compared to BVAS Machine accreditation is commendable progress and presents an opportunity and roadmap to credible elections in Nigeria

2 | Improve Visibility and Accountability of Presiding Officers

- The role and activities of Presiding officers need more visibility and mechanisms for accountability. INEC should commend the presiding officers in the polling units with results compliant with BVAS Machine accreditation and uploaded from the polling units.
- INEC and the political parties or candidates should initiate the prosecution of the Presiding officers who recorded votes that did not match BVAS Machine accreditation in

3 | Activate The E-Collation System on the BVAS Machine

- INEC should deploy and activate the electronic collation software for the BVAS Machine to improve credibility, reduce human error, improve compliance and reduce the incidence of corrupt practices by Presiding officers.
- The recording of the results in the E-Collation system should precede the manual recording in the paper form EC8A.
- The E-collated copy and BVAS Machine auto-generated accreditation data should be uploaded to the IReV website.



RECOMMENDATIONS CONT...

COLLATION CENTRE

4 | Improve Visibility of Result Collation at Ward, LGA, State and National Centre

- Uploading the ward collation Form EC8B to the IReV website would improve the credibility of the electoral process and reduce the incidence of corrupt practices and human errors.
- Collation officers must review the BVAS Machine devices to confirm accreditation data before collation. Failure to review the BVAS Machine devices against INEC rules provided opportunities for collating non-compliant polling units
- The role and activities of Collation Officers need more visibility and enhanced mechanisms for accountability.
- INEC should commend the Collation Officers that collated only polling unit results that matched BVAS Machine accreditation
- INEC and the Political parties or candidates should initiate the prosecution of the Collation Officers that recorded unlawful votes without reference to BVAS Machine



RECOMMENDATIONS CONT...

BROADER ISSUES

5 | INEC'S Power to Review Results

Political parties should improve the quality, training and capacity of their polling unit and collation Agents to document infractions and report to INEC for review within the 7 days window provided by section 65 (1) Electoral Act (2022)

6 | Digital Scanning of Ballot Papers

- INEC should introduce Ballot Paper Scanners at the Local Government Offices for scanning all used ballot papers to ensure that votes recorded against each party is correct.
 - Scanning of ballot papers will enhance transparency and form part of the digital documents candidates can inspect. The scanners should be able to read digital security codes on each ballot paper to ensure authenticity.
-

7 | Appointment of Election Auditors

- The law should be amended to allow for appointment of Election Auditors to supervise the distribution and return of election materials, scanning of ballot papers to ensure the vote tally is correct beyond consistency between total votes and BVAS Machine accreditation. The vote scanning and certification by the third-party auditors must be completed within the 7 days review period.



RECOMMENDATIONS CONT...

8 | Statutory Declaration by Electoral Officers on relevant Forms

- INEC should include a statutory declaration of the correctness of information entered by electoral officers on all the electoral forms upon which violation makes the electoral officers and party agents that signed the forms liable for prosecution.
- The Electoral Act (2022) should reflect this proposal.

9 | Introduction of Civil Action against Electoral Officers

- The Electoral Act (2022) should be amended to include the right of political parties and candidates to bring civil action against electoral officers and party agents who willfully falsify election results. This will serve as a deterrence and also provide parties and candidates with remedies if INEC refuse to prosecute the officers

10 | Revisit and Implement Key Recommendations of the Justice Uwais Report on Electoral Reforms, namely:

- Electoral Offences Commission: Create an Electoral Offences Commission to handle the prosecution of electoral offenders independently, ensuring accountability and reducing impunity in the electoral process.
- Proportional Representation: Introduce a modified form of proportional representation to make the electoral process more competitive and reflective of the proportion of votes won by political parties, thereby reducing post-election tension.
- Adjudication of Election Disputes: Ensure that all election disputes, particularly presidential and gubernatorial, are resolved before the swearing-in of elected officials. This involves amending relevant sections of the Constitution and the Electoral Act.



ADDENDUM

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE ELECTORAL ACT 2022

We propose an amendment to section 26 of the Electoral Act (2022) to deter electoral officers and party agents from falsifying election results or any information related to the election process. The proposed amendment allows political parties and candidates to bring civil action against electoral officers, ensuring an additional layer of accountability and recourse beyond criminal prosecution.

By incorporating these changes into Section 26 of the Electoral Act 2022, the Act will be strengthened to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and integrity in the electoral process, increasing trust and credibility in Nigeria's elections.

SECTION 26: OATH OF NEUTRALITY BY ELECTION OFFICIALS

1 | Oath of Neutrality

All staff, electoral officers, presiding officers, returning officers, and security officials taking part in the conduct of an election shall affirm or swear to an oath of loyalty and neutrality as in the Second Schedule, indicating that they will not accept bribe or gratification from any person, and shall perform their functions and discharge their duties impartially and in the interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria without fear or favour.

Any person who violates subsection (1), commits an offence and is punishable under section 120 (dereliction of duty).

ADDENDUM CONT..

2 | Statutory Declaration of Electoral Forms

- All electoral officers, including presiding officers and collation officers, must make a statutory declaration confirming the correctness and accuracy of the information entered on all electoral forms, including but not limited to Forms EC8A, EC8B, EC8C, EC8D, and EC8E.
- Party agents who sign any electoral form must also make a statutory declaration confirming the correctness and accuracy of the information contained in the forms they sign.

3 | Penalties for False Declaration

- Any electoral officer or party agent who knowingly makes a false declaration on any electoral form shall be liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to:
 - A fine of not less than N1,000,000.
 - Imprisonment for a term of not less than three years.
 - Both such fine and imprisonment.

4 | Civil Action Against False Declaration

- Political parties or candidates may bring a civil action against any electoral officer or party agent who knowingly makes a false declaration on any electoral form. Such civil actions shall be filed in a court of competent jurisdiction, and the court may award damages or other appropriate remedies if the plaintiff prevails.

5 | Enforcement and Prosecution

- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) shall be responsible for enforcing this section. Legal officers of the Commission or any legal practitioner appointed by it shall undertake prosecutions under this section.