

# The State of Women's Leadership Report 2025



## Report Highlights

### 21 seats

are held by women in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. *(pg 11)*

### 28 women

out of 75 justices in the Court of Appeal *(pg 63)*

### 99%

Male leadership at NMA *(pg 58)*

### 38 women

out of 720 individuals have held the position of Vice Chancellor *(pg 60)*

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## Disclaimer

At the time of writing this report, it is acknowledged that some changes may have occurred across appointments and leadership structures. What this report presents is a snapshot of women's representation within key public offices, professional associations, and the top 50 companies listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

Data collection for this report was carried out between June and September 2025. The information gathered from across states underwent both internal validation and external verification with the Monitoring and Evaluation Office of the Nigeria Governors' Forum. Based on this process, a 70 percent accuracy rate was observed, and we are confident that the findings presented here closely reflect the current state of women's leadership in Nigeria.

It is important to note that the data is time-bound, and appointments and elections evolve. However, the insights provided remain relevant in highlighting patterns of women's representation, identifying gaps, and informing policy, advocacy, and institutional reforms. The value of this report lies not only in the data but also in the conversations and actions it seeks to drive towards inclusive leadership.

# Preface



A few weeks ago, Nigeria celebrated another Independence anniversary. It was a moment of reflection on how far we have come and how far we must go. Across politics, business, education, and health, women continue to drive progress and strengthen communities, yet many remain excluded from the spaces where key decisions are made. This report captures that balance of progress and limitation. Representation is improving in some sectors, but leadership remains uneven. The State of Women's Leadership in Nigeria Report presents data, insights, and experiences that reveal both the promise and the gaps. It highlights state governments that are advancing inclusion and others that must do more.

The report features a ranking of women's participation across states, created to encourage accountability and motivate action. This ranking is more than a comparison; it is a call to action for both state and national leaders to take women's leadership seriously as a driver of development.

Leadership takes many forms. It exists in classrooms shaping minds, in enterprises creating jobs, and in communities rebuilding trust. The evidence is clear: when women lead, governance becomes more accountable, economies grow more inclusive, and societies prosper.

Imagine a Nigeria where women and men lead side by side, where leadership reflects the strength and diversity of its people, and where women's leadership changes everything, everywhere. Advancing women's leadership is a development priority. Nigeria's Gender Policy (2021), Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals provide the framework, but progress requires action through policies that remove barriers, mentorship that nurtures growth, and accountability that ensures results.

At WILAN, our mission is to inspire a shift to gender-balanced leadership across all levels of political, economic, and public life. As we present this work, we honor every woman who continues to lead, often unseen yet unwavering. Their strength fuels our mission at WILAN and reminds us that the future depends on what we build together today.

We extend gratitude to all who contributed their insights and commitment. Their work reinforces a simple truth: when women thrive, nations rise.

**Abosede George-Ogan**

Founder & Executive Director,  
WILAN Global

## List of Abbreviations

Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics	ASUP
Academic Staff Union of Universities	ASUU
Central Bank of Nigeria	CBN
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Chief Justice of Nigeria	CJN
Commonwealth Local Government Forum	CLGF
Coronavirus Disease 2019	COVID-19
Federal Capital Territory	FCT
Federal Character Commission	FCC
Grade Level	GL
Head of Service	HoS
Information and Communication Technology	ICT
Independent National Electoral Commission	INEC
Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry	LCCI
Local Government Area	LGA
Ministry, Department, and Agency	MDA
Ministries, Departments, and Agencies	MDAs
Monetary Policy Committee	MPC
National Business and Technical Examinations Board	NABTEB
Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture	NACCIMA
National Association of Academic Technologists	NAAT
National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives	NANNM
National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools	NAPPS
Nigerian Bar Association	NBA
National Bureau of Statistics	NBS
National Biosafety Management Agency	NBMA
Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance	NCCG
National Economic Council	NEC
Nigerian Economic Society	NES
Nigerian Exchange Group	NGX
Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited	NIGCOMS
Nigerian Postal Service	NIPOST
National Judicial Council	NJC
Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited	NNPC Ltd.
Nigerian Medical Association	NMA
Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund	NSITF
Nigeria Union of Teachers	NUT
Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation	OHCSF
Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria	PSN
Senior Advocate of Nigeria	SAN
Securities and Exchange Commission	SEC
State House of Assembly	SHA
Standard and Poor's	S&P
Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities	SSANU
Women in Leadership Advancement Network	WILAN

# Introduction

Gender parity is a foundational requirement for any thriving, just, and inclusive society. In Nigeria, women continue to face steep barriers in leadership, both in formal and informal spaces. Whether in politics or corporate boardrooms, power structures are still overwhelmingly male-dominated.

Many women across formal and informal sectors continue to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and commitment to public good. However, their pathways to leadership remain marked by barriers that slow progress. In governance, politics, and private sector, the share of women in leadership roles remains significantly lower than that of men.

Over the past six years, WILAN has advocated gender balanced leadership across sectors. This year, we chose to take a bolder step by commissioning a nationwide report that provides a reliable, data-driven outlook of women's leadership in both public and private spaces.

This first edition examines representation across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as well as leadership patterns in the 50 most capitalised companies on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) and some public institutional data. By publishing this report annually, our goal is to create a benchmark for accountability and keep gender inclusion firmly on the agenda of governance and business in Nigeria.

The state-level data presented here was gathered through an independent data collection team working across the states, while information on companies was obtained from the NGX website, company websites, and other credible secondary sources. To strengthen reliability, state-level data points were validated against records from the Nigeria Governors' Forum across 20 states. Although the timing of data collection varied slightly by about a month across different states, the dataset retains an optimal accuracy level providing a solid foundation for meaningful analysis and insights.



While some sections of this report focus on the outcome of the 2023 general election cycle and subsequent by-elections within the period, comparisons with earlier cycles remain limited. Detailed archival data on women's representation in states across successive election years is not publicly available, underscoring persistent gaps in Nigeria's electoral records. This challenge extends beyond politics to other spheres of leadership, where data on women's participation in institutional decision-making is often fragmented or inconsistent. By assembling and validating data from multiple sources, this report helps to fill an important gap, providing a clear snapshot of women's participation in public and private leadership at this moment in Nigeria's history.

# Executive Summary

**N**igeria's leadership story is one of contrasts: with significant contributions by women across key sectors on the one hand, and persistent underrepresentation at decision-making tables on the other. Women sustain families and communities and play active roles in entrepreneurship and frontline services. However, their presence thins out in politics, corporate boardrooms, and senior government positions. This report highlights those patterns across governance in the public and private sectors, drawing out both areas of progress and the barriers that continue to hold women back.

## Key Findings

At the federal level, women occupy only a fraction of political leadership positions. In the 10th National Assembly, 21 of 469 seats are held by women, representing just 4.5 percent. This includes four senators and seventeen members of the House of Representatives, one of the lowest rates in Africa and far below the global average of 27.2%<sup>1</sup>. The federal cabinet reflects a similar imbalance: 8 of 48 ministers are women, alongside 10 of 34 presidential advisers. These appointments are important but still

fall short of the 35 percent benchmark set by Nigeria's National Gender Policy.

The data across the states shows the same pattern. Women hold just 49 of 988 seats in the Houses of Assembly nationwide, less than five percent overall. Notably, six women currently serve as Deputy Speakers, signaling that opportunities exist where political will aligns. State cabinets provide another important avenue for women's leadership. Here, Kwara stands out, with women making up 46 percent of cabinet positions, surpassing the national quota. Ekiti, Oyo, Taraba, Anambra, and Kaduna record more balanced cabinets, though most states still hover in the single digits, with many barely appointing one or two women.

In contrast, the judiciary stands out as one of the more inclusive arms of government. Fifteen of Nigeria's 36 states currently have women serving as Chief Judges, and the Chief Justice of Nigeria is a woman. At the Supreme and Court of Appeal, women occupy close to one-third of the seats. This is a reminder that where transparent career progression and tenure-based promotion exist, women are more likely to rise into senior roles.

<sup>1</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2025, September). Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments. IPU Parline Data. [https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date\\_month=09&date\\_year=2025](https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=09&date_year=2025)

<sup>2</sup> 37 LCDAs from Lagos and the former LGA chairpersons in Edo state inclusive

At the grassroots, where governance is closest to the citizens, women remain almost entirely absent from leadership. Out of 811 Local Government Chairperson positions<sup>2</sup> nationwide, only 41 are occupied by women, just five percent. Councillorship seats tell a similar story: of 8,773 Councillors profiled, only 604 are women, representing less than seven percent. Regional disparities are stark. Southern states perform better, with Akwa Ibom leading at 34 percent female councillors, followed by Cross River (24 percent), Ekiti (22 percent), and Lagos (20 percent). Many northern states, by contrast, record no women at all. This gap at the local level weakens service delivery but also cuts off the pipeline of women leaders who would otherwise rise to higher positions.

In the private sector, progress is evident, though significant gaps remain. Across the fifty most capitalised firms on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX), women hold 31 percent of board seats. This represents gradual improvement, however, only five of the 50 companies have a woman as board chair. The financial sector has taken the lead, driven by the Central Bank of Nigeria's Sustainable Banking Principles and governance codes that promote diversity. By contrast, sectors like oil and gas, technology, and utilities show far slower progress, with women holding barely a quarter of leadership positions or even less.

In the education and health sectors, women dominate at the frontline but are few at the top. Women account for more than half of the teachers at secondary level and are majority of the nurses, midwives, and community health workers. But only 12 of 270 Vice Chancellors in Nigerian universities are women, and professional associations across health and education remain overwhelmingly led by men. This reflects the "XX paradox"<sup>3</sup>: where women deliver most of the services yet rarely shape the decisions.

Finally, cultural norms continue to shape outcomes. Leadership is still widely coded as male in Nigeria. Research shows women leaders are often penalised for being either too soft or too tough, creating a double bind that limits their progression. This outcome goes beyond equity concerns, undermining institutional performance and limiting national development.

21 of 469

seats are held by women in the National Assembly representing just 4.5%. This includes 4 senators and 17 members of the House of Representatives

## What must shift now!

There are clear examples of progress to build on. The judiciary demonstrates that structured systems of promotion make a difference. The banking sector shows that policy plus accountability can change boardrooms. The task ahead is to extend these lessons to politics, state governance, and other sectors showing weak inclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Women in Global Health. (2022). The state of women and leadership in health: Women in Global Health series – Gender equity and the health and care workforce. Women in Global Health. <https://womeningh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-State-of-Women-and-Leadership-in-Global-Health.pdf>

Political parties need to reform their primaries, lower the cost of nomination, and adopt stronger safeguards against harassment and violence. Without these, elective politics will remain Nigeria's weakest link. Governors must also be more deliberate with appointments, setting transparent cabinet targets and reporting publicly on progress.

The private sector requires stronger disclosure and accountability. While banks and insurers have improved under regulatory pressure, the oil and gas, technology, and utilities sectors need similar nudges. Investors and regulators can play a central role here by demanding gender diversity data and compliance.

Equally important is the leadership pipeline. Women entrepreneurs dominate Nigeria's microbusiness sector, but access to capital, childcare responsibilities, and limited mentorship keep most from scaling. Investing in women-led enterprises through credit, procurement opportunities, and structured mentorship is essential for expanding the pool of future entrepreneurial leaders.

#### Priority Actions

- Reform political pathways to make elective offices more accessible and safer for women.
- Set clear cabinet and board targets, with transparent reporting at state and public institutions.
- Broaden regulatory pressure to lagging sectors by enforcing disclosure of gender data and compliance frameworks.
- Expand access to finance, mentorship, and procurement for women-led enterprises to strengthen the pipeline.

Nigeria has capable women across every sector, yet the systems needed to make their leadership the norm rather than an exception have not been established. When rules are clear, data is transparent, and incentives align, women advance into leadership. The task ahead is to scale what works, safeguard existing gains, and strengthen the weakest links in politics and local governance. Achieving this will advance equity, improve governance, enhance service delivery, and support more resilient national growth.

# Women's Leadership Landscape in Nigeria

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## 1.0 Women's Leadership Landscape in Nigeria

This section of the State of Women's Leadership Report in Nigeria provides a historical and contemporary overview of women's leadership, highlighting progress and setbacks across politics, business, education, and health, supported with current data to highlight patterns of underrepresentation.

From precolonial times, women have been strategic contributors to Nigeria's growth and development. Women have held prominent roles as influential traders, community leaders, and in some ethnic groups, even warriors. Across many Nigerian societies, women were respected as custodians of tradition, wielding considerable influence in family and community decision-making.

The colonial era, however, brought systemic exclusion. Women were significantly sidelined from political and economic participation, eroding their traditional sources of power and visibility in governance.

The post-colonial period marked the beginning of a more organized demand for women's rights and representation. After independence in 1960, women across Nigeria mobilized for equal opportunities in education, employment, and politics. While these early efforts created awareness and set the foundation for inclusion, progress in women's leadership has remained slow and uneven.

This section also explores relevant context, offering both a theoretical, local, and global perspective to situate women's leadership within broader socio-political and economic realities.

## 1.1 Nigerian Women in Politics and Governance

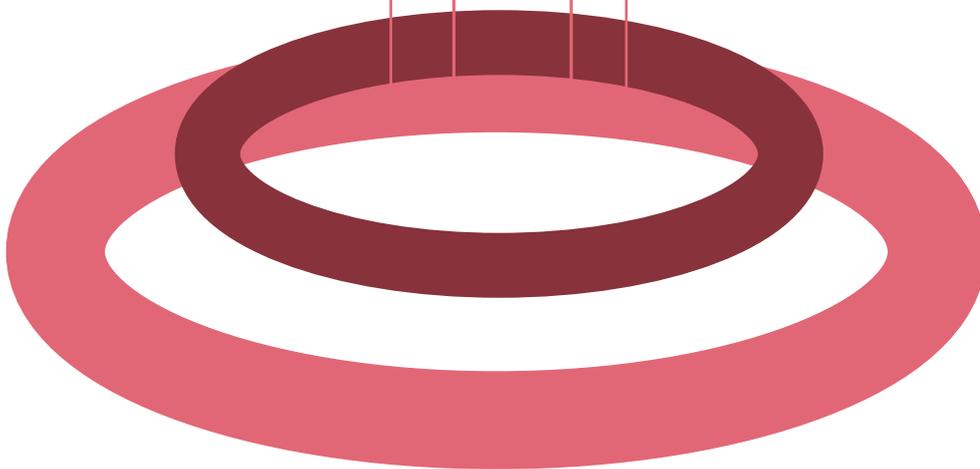
Trailblazers have shaped this landscape from pre-colonial to the post-military era and to date. A few are highlighted below:

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti led protests against unfair taxation and became a strategic leader in the independence struggle.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a globally renowned economist, served two terms as Nigeria's Finance Minister and is now the Director-General of the World Trade Organization.

Hajia Gambo Sawaba was a fearless activist and politician, famously known as the "Lioness of the North." From the 1950s, she boldly championed women's suffrage, education, and social justice at a time when northern women were discouraged from public life.

Margaret Ekpo mobilized women into national politics and was the first female member of the Eastern House of Assembly in 1961.



Despite such pioneers, women remain severely underrepresented in politics. In the current 10th National Assembly (2023–2027), out of 469 seats, only 21 are held by women: 4 senators and 17 members of the House of Representatives (4.5% overall). This is among the lowest in Africa and far below the global average of 26.7% female parliamentarians<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> National Assembly of Nigeria. (n.d.). Official website. <https://nass.gov.ng/>

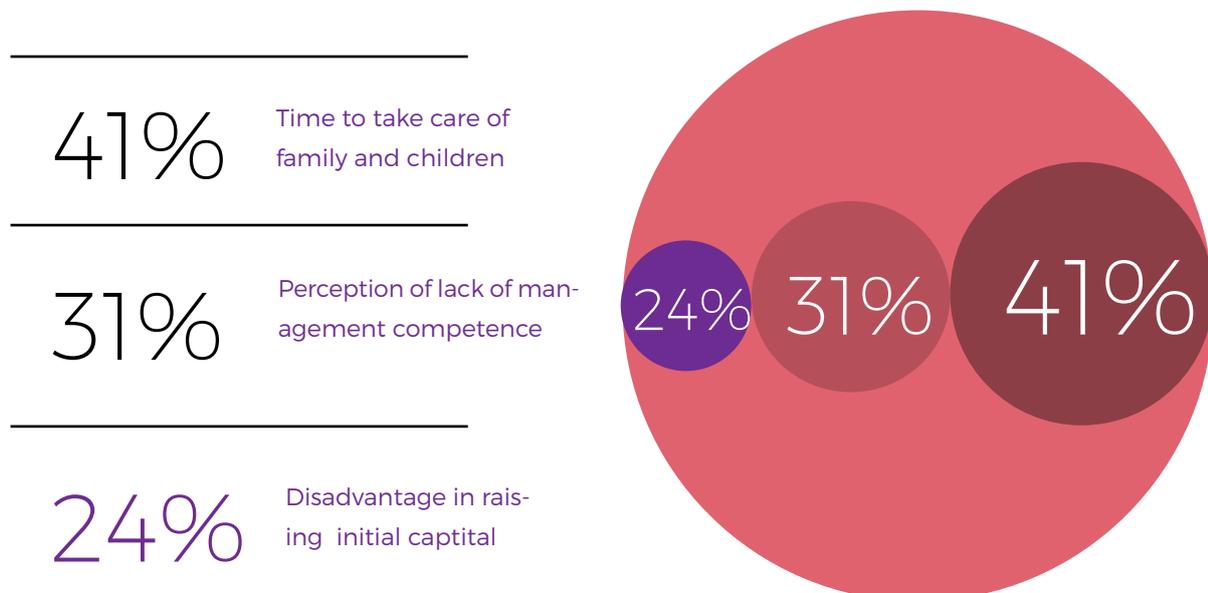
At state level, the picture is similar: in most Houses of Assembly, women rarely make up more than 5-10% of members. Women also remain marginal in political party leadership, where key decisions about candidate selection and funding are made. Those who do enter politics must navigate financial barriers, cultural bias, and, in some cases, political violence. These structural challenges are not unique to politics. They are echoed in business, where women are present in large numbers as entrepreneurs but remain limited in corporate leadership.

## 1.2 Nigerian Women in Business and Entrepreneurship

Women-led businesses are increasingly driving change in Nigeria, addressing social issues, creating jobs, and contributing to economic growth. According to recent research<sup>5</sup>, 8 out of 10 Nigerian women identify as entrepreneurs, compared to the regional average of 5 out of 10 across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

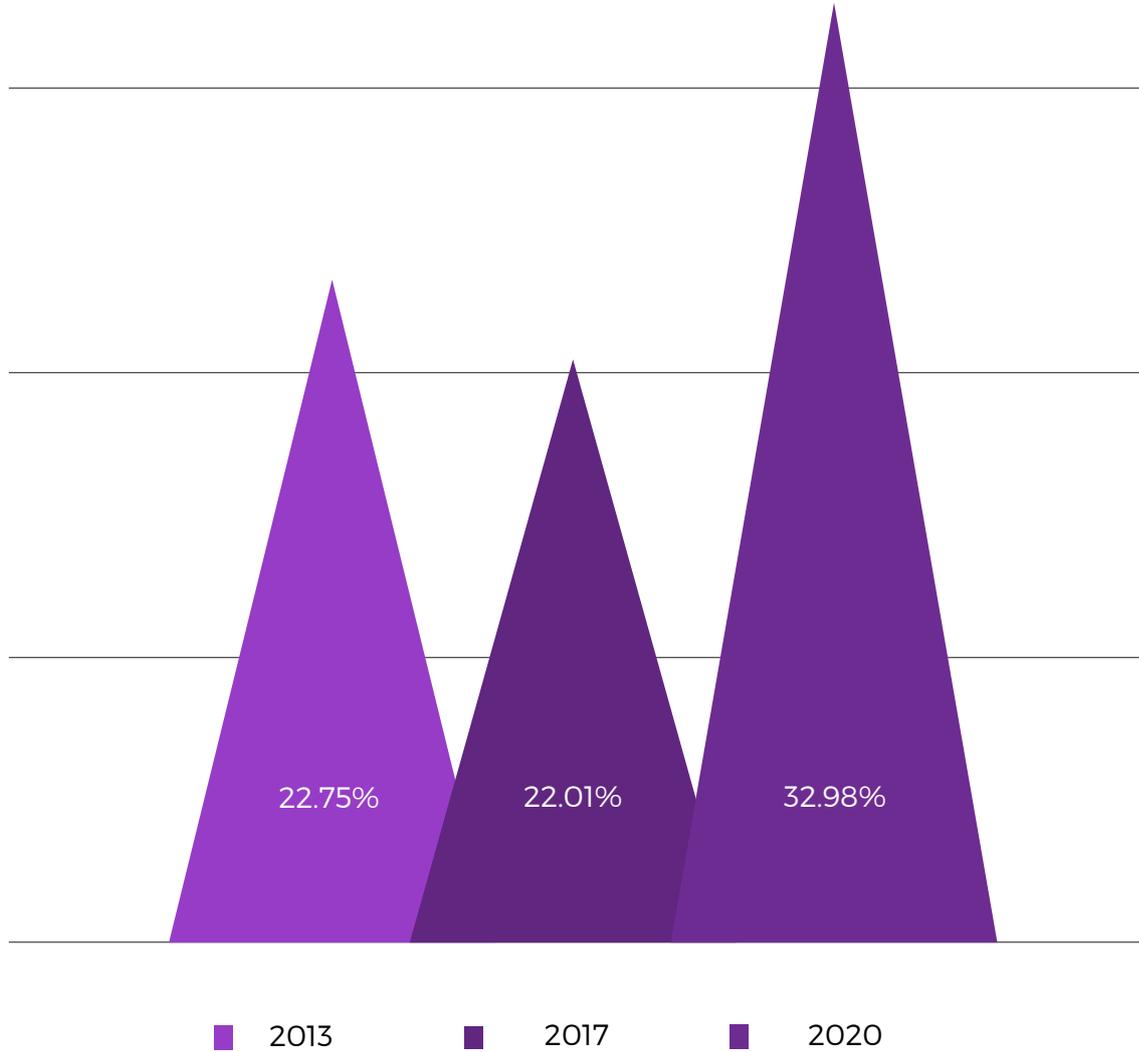
This entrepreneurial spirit is a silver lining, but most women-owned businesses remain at the sole proprietorship stage and rarely scale into larger enterprises. Access to capital, weak digital infrastructure, childcare responsibilities, and limited mentorship networks continue to constrain growth. A reality also underscored by the Moniepoint Informal Economy Report 2024, which highlights how these structural gaps limit women's ability to scale their businesses.

### Key challenges faced by women starting a business include



In business, there are 38.4 million nano- and micro-businesses in Nigeria<sup>6</sup>, women account for 32.9% of business ownership. 'Ogun, Lagos, Oyo, Kaduna and Rivers had the highest number of women-led businesses, accounting for 8.1%, 7.0%, 6.0%, 5.7% and 5.5% of total women-led businesses in the country, respectively'.

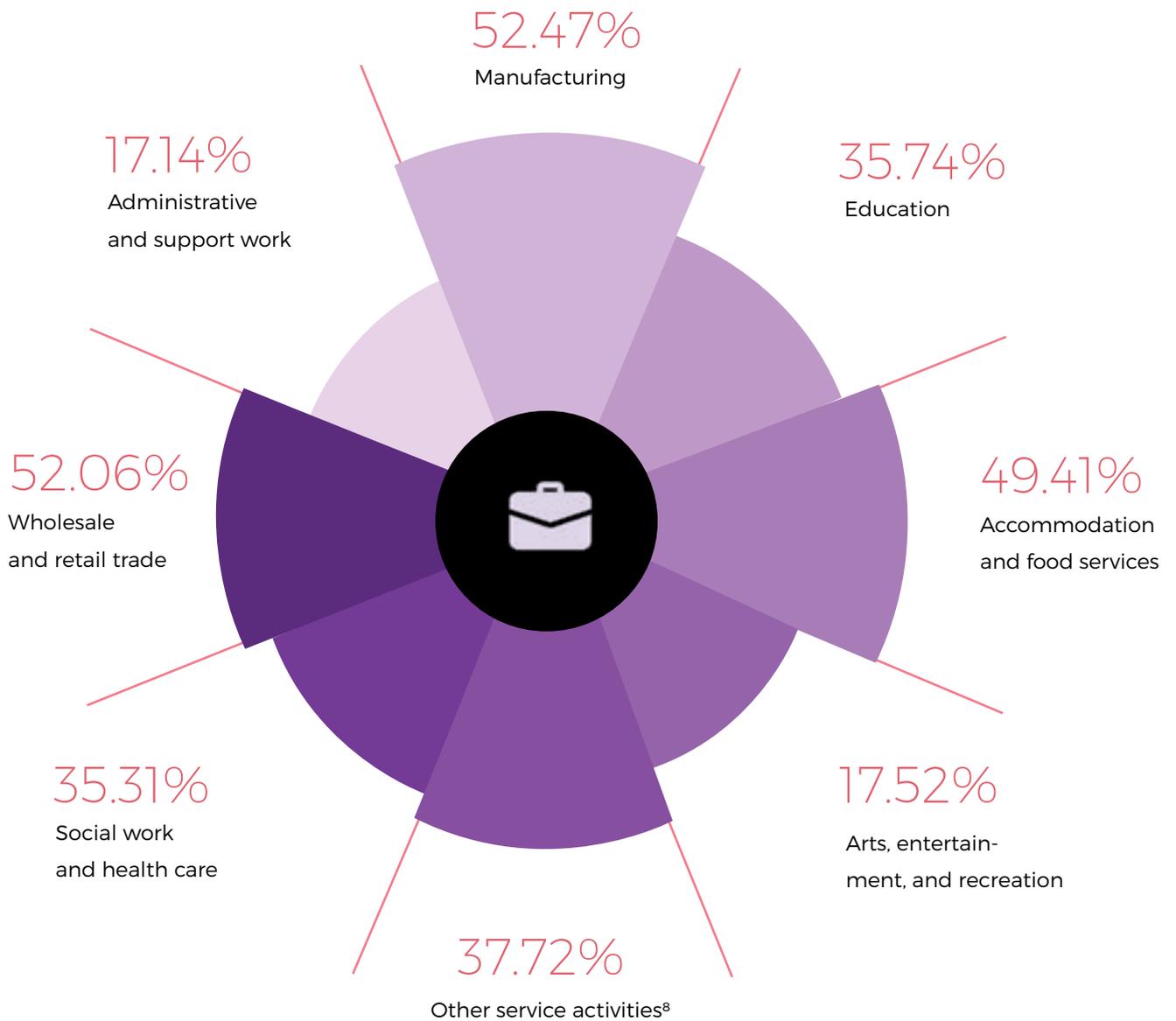
## Percentage of Women-Owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria



5 Mastercard. (2025, March 5). 83% of Nigerian women consider themselves an entrepreneur. Empowerment for All. Mastercard Newsroom. <https://www.mastercard.com/news/eemea/en/newsroom/press-releases/en/2025-1/march/83-nigerian-women-consider-themselves-an-entrepreneur/>

6 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), & Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). (2021)

Nigeria is home to about 38.4 million nano- and micro-businesses, with women accounting for 32.9 percent of ownership<sup>7</sup>. Most women work in micro, small, and medium enterprises that provide services such as: Out of 100% in each sector, women make up;



7 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), & Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). (2021).

8 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), & Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). (2021).

## 1.3 Nigerian Women in Education and Healthcare

In healthcare, most nurses, midwives, and community health workers are women, anchoring essential health services across the country. Over the years, Nigerian women have also shaped critical milestones in both sectors. Dr. Stella Adadevoh's decisive intervention during the 2014 Ebola outbreak prevented a national health crisis and safeguarded lives. In academia, Professor Grace Alele-Williams, the first female vice-chancellor of a Nigerian university, broke barriers and paved the way for women in higher education leadership.

## 1.4 Leadership as a Gendered Construct

Leadership is widely seen as a gendered construct, both globally and in Nigeria, where the image of a leader is often unconsciously equated with that of a man. In classrooms, offices, and in the media, the portrait of a male figure is what typically represents "the leader." This subtle but persistent imagery reinforces deep-seated assumptions about who is fit to lead, further widening the existing gap for women in leadership.

Eagly and Karau's<sup>9</sup> Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders explains this dynamic: when societal expectations of leadership, strength, assertiveness, and authority are coded as masculine, women who aspire to such roles face a double bind. They are either perceived as too soft to lead or penalized for being "too tough." Recent research in Nigeria confirms this pattern. A study of women professionals in male-dominated occupations found that cultural expectations and gender stereotypes remain strong barriers, often forcing women to adopt extra strategies just to be recognized as competent leaders<sup>10</sup>.

Some verbatim response from the Gender Work and organisation research about cultural and gender stereotypes at work<sup>11</sup>

*"Leadership positions are always occupied by men. Men dominate, and they would always be considered before women. For example, last year, the head of operations position became vacant, and three of us were shortlisted. After the process of interview, the only man among us got the job even though the managing director acknowledged that the other lady was outstanding in the interview ... "a man has to be appointed" that was his response when asked why the lady did not get the job. You may call it discrimination, but that is how the system works here".*

**- Remo**

*“The system places and favors men over women in terms of choosing leaders in organizations with little consideration for merit and women’s intellectual capacity. I have experienced it like three times in my various places of work. Male colleagues are always preferred and chosen over me and other ladies. Unless a woman owns an organization, she may struggle to get to the top of the organization. It is the system, the Nigerian patriarchal system”.*

**- Christina**

What this reveals is that leadership is not simply about skills or merit; it is shaped by cultural scripts and social expectations. Unless these unconscious constructs are challenged by changing imagery, narratives, and opportunities, the cycle will persist. Understanding leadership as gendered, highlights why representation is more than a fairness issue; it directly shapes outcomes in business, health, and society.

9 Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573–598. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F0033-295X.109.3.573>

10 Adisa, T. A., Mordi, C., Simpson, R., & Iwowo, V. (2020). Social dominance, hypermasculinity, and career barriers in Nigeria. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(6), 1140–1156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12537>

11 Adisa, T. A., Mordi, C., Simpson, R., & Iwowo, V. (2020). Social dominance, hypermasculinity, and career barriers in Nigeria. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(6), 1140–1156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12537>

# 1.5 Why Women's Leadership Matters

## 1.5.1 Business Performance and Outlook

The business case for women's leadership is compelling. Multiple studies demonstrate a positive correlation between women in leadership and stronger financial performance:



- Macquarie University study (2000–2015): Peer-reviewed research on Standard & Poor's (S&P)-listed firms showed that companies with female CEOs consistently outperformed those with male CEOs, and firms with substantial female representation on boards also delivered stronger outcomes (Dezso & Ross, 2012; Post & Byron, 2015).

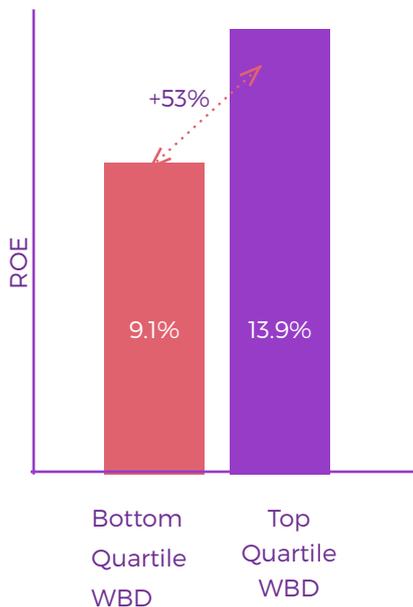
- Fortune 500 analysis: Companies with higher female board representation reported a 42% stronger return on sales and a 53% higher return on equity compared to those with fewer women<sup>12</sup>(Catalyst, 2011).



## Women Board Directors (WBD) Align with Strong performance at 500 Companies<sup>1</sup> Financial measures excel where women serve<sup>2</sup>

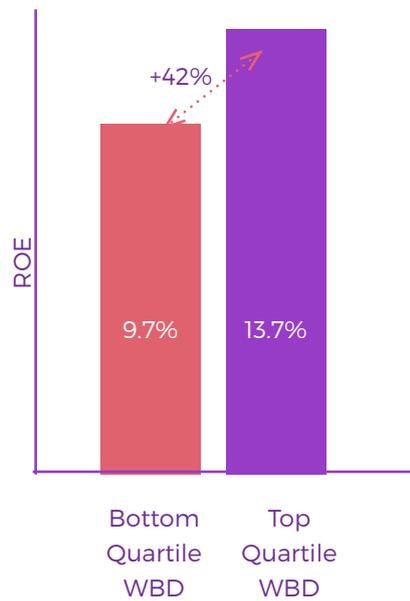
Return on Equity<sup>3</sup> by Women's Representation on the Board

Companies with more WBD outperform those with the least by 53%



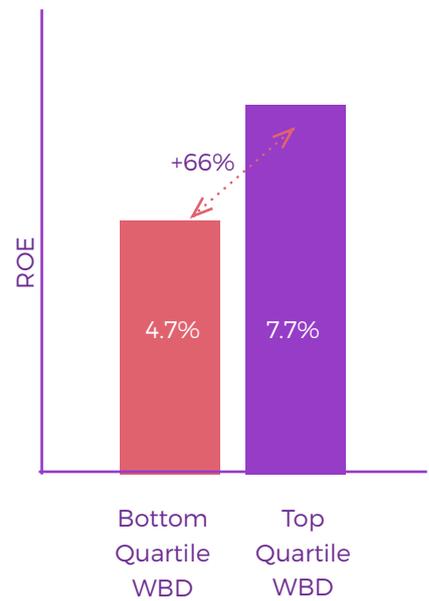
Return on Sales<sup>4</sup> by Women's Representation on the Board

Companies with more WBD outperform those with the least by 42%



Return on Invested Capital<sup>5</sup> by Women's Representation on the Board

Companies with more WBD outperform those with the least by 66%



Deloitte study (2022): Firms led by female Board Chairs or CEOs were found to be more diverse, inclusive, and gender-balanced than those with male leaders, showing women at the top drive broader organizational change<sup>13</sup>.

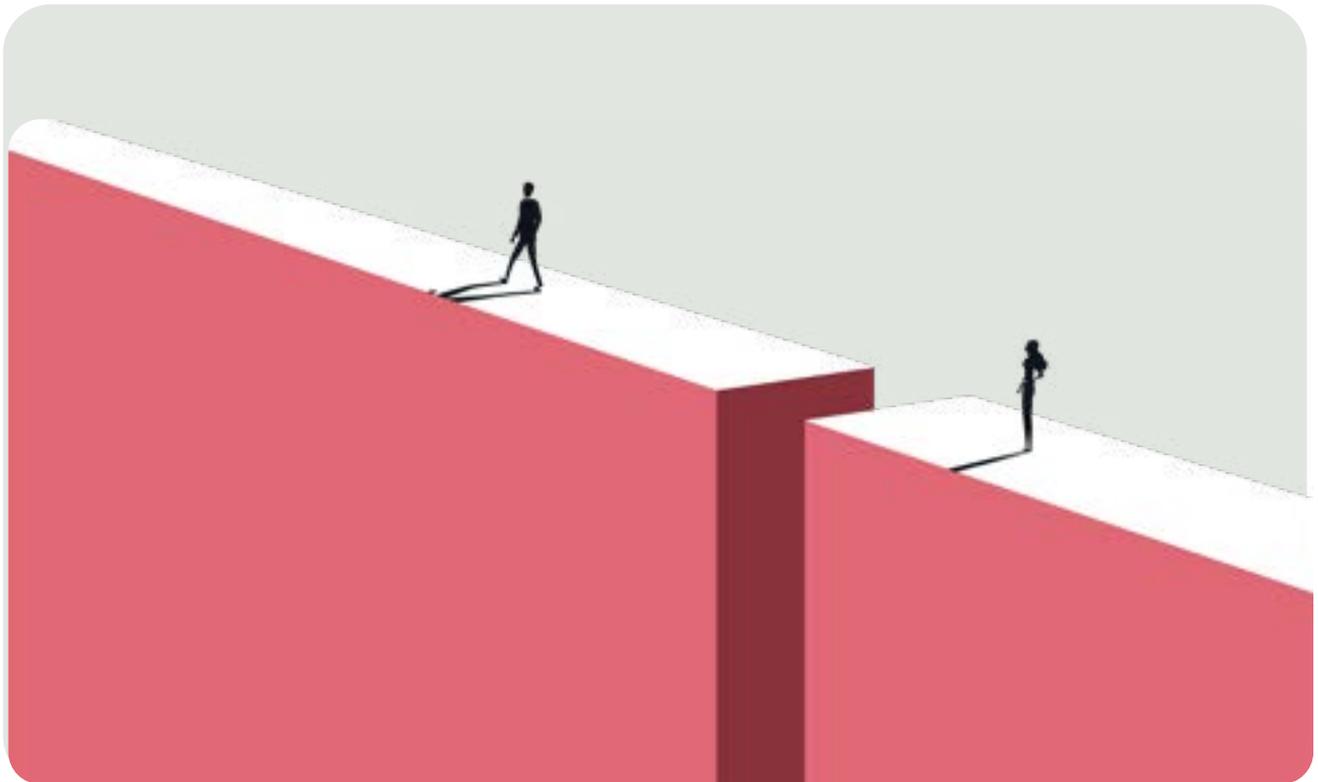
<sup>13</sup> Deloitte. (2022). Women in the boardroom: A global perspective (7th ed.). Deloitte. <http://deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-shared/docs/services/risk-advisory/2022/gx-women-in-the-boardroom-seventh-edition.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Garikipati, S., & Kambhampati, U. (2021). Leading the Fight Against the Pandemic: Does Gender Really Matter? *Feminist Economics*, 27(1-2), 401-418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2021.1874614>

<sup>15</sup> Garikipati, S., & Kambhampati, U. (2021). Leading the fight against the pandemic: Does gender 'really' matter? *Feminist Economics*, 27(1-2), 401-418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2021.1874614>

## 1.5.2 Improved Health Outcome

An analysis of how COVID-19 was managed in 194 countries found that nations led by women recorded systematically and significantly better outcomes compared to those led by men<sup>14</sup>. Leaders such as Germany's Angela Merkel, New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, Denmark's Mette Frederiksen, Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen, and Finland's Sanna Marin implemented earlier lockdowns, resulting in roughly half as many deaths on average. The study attributes these differences to the more proactive and coordinated policy responses of female leaders<sup>15</sup>



## 1.6 Global perspective of the leadership gap in Nigeria

Across the world, perceptions of who is fit to lead remain deeply gendered. The Reykjavik Index for Leadership<sup>16</sup> provides a useful lens. It measures the extent to which men and women are viewed equally in terms of their suitability for leadership roles across sectors. A perfect score of 100 indicates universal agreement that leadership has no gender, while anything lower reflects bias. In

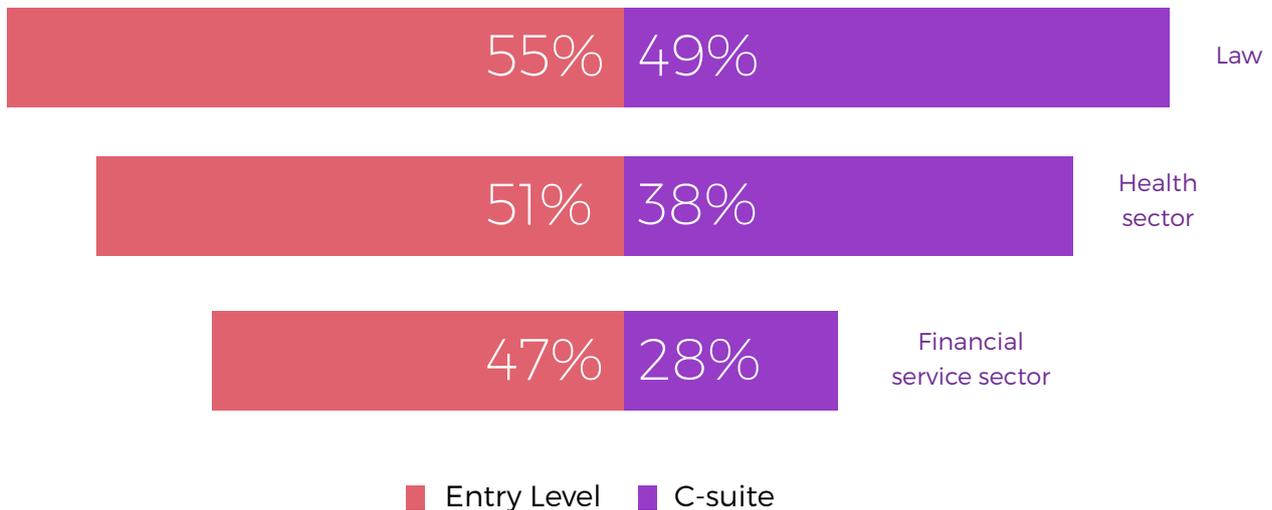
the 2024 edition, Nigeria scored just 57. This means only a little more than half of Nigerians believe men and women are equally suited to lead. Women surveyed gave a score of 61 marginally higher than men who gave a score of 57, which shows that bias is also internalized by women. Younger Nigerians show more promise, especially young women, who hold more progressive views. This suggests that the country's future decision-makers may be more open to having gender-balanced leadership.

The Index also reveals sectoral and social dynamics. Nigerians who believe gender

equality is important for society scored 59, much higher than people who do not believe gender equality is important scoring 48. Religion shows a complex effect. Those for whom faith is central to daily life scored slightly higher, 57 compared to 51 for those who do not consider it central. Surprisingly, the level of education of surveyed respondents' and institutional trust- which refers to confidence in systems like government, schools, and workplaces to act fairly and uphold equality had little effect on attitudes. Sector-specific findings reinforce stereotypes of leadership in education, medical research, and banking and finance, being seen as more inclusive. While engineering, architecture, and childcare remain heavily gender coded.

These perceptions mirror realities in the workplace. The McKinsey Women in the Workplace 2025 report<sup>17</sup> across Nigeria, Kenya, and India shows Nigerian women occupy only one in three entry-level roles. Progression stalls as they move up the ladder, with only 29 percent advancing from manager into senior executive. In financial services, women begin relatively strong with 47 percent at entry-level but drop sharply to 28 percent in senior positions. Healthcare achieves near parity at the base, but attrition is steep at the top. The legal sector is a rare exception, with women holding 55 percent of entry-level positions and maintaining 49 percent at senior leadership. Women in this sector often attribute their progression to mentorship, sponsorship, and strong institutional support.

Nigeria: Representation of Women across financial, health and law sectors from Entry Level to C-suite



Overall, these findings reveal that Nigeria's leadership gap is shaped by cultural norms, perception gaps, and systemic barriers across the leadership pipeline. Without intentional policy interventions, targeted mentorship, and structural reforms, women will remain underrepresented in decision-making even in sectors where they begin with strong numbers. Closing this gap is about promoting equity and unlocking the full potential of Nigeria's future leaders.

17 McKinsey & Company. (2025). Women in the Workplace: Insights from Nigeria, Kenya, and India. McKinsey & Company. [www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/women-in-the-workplace-2025-india-nigeria-and-kenya](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/women-in-the-workplace-2025-india-nigeria-and-kenya)

# The Status of Women's Leadership at the State level

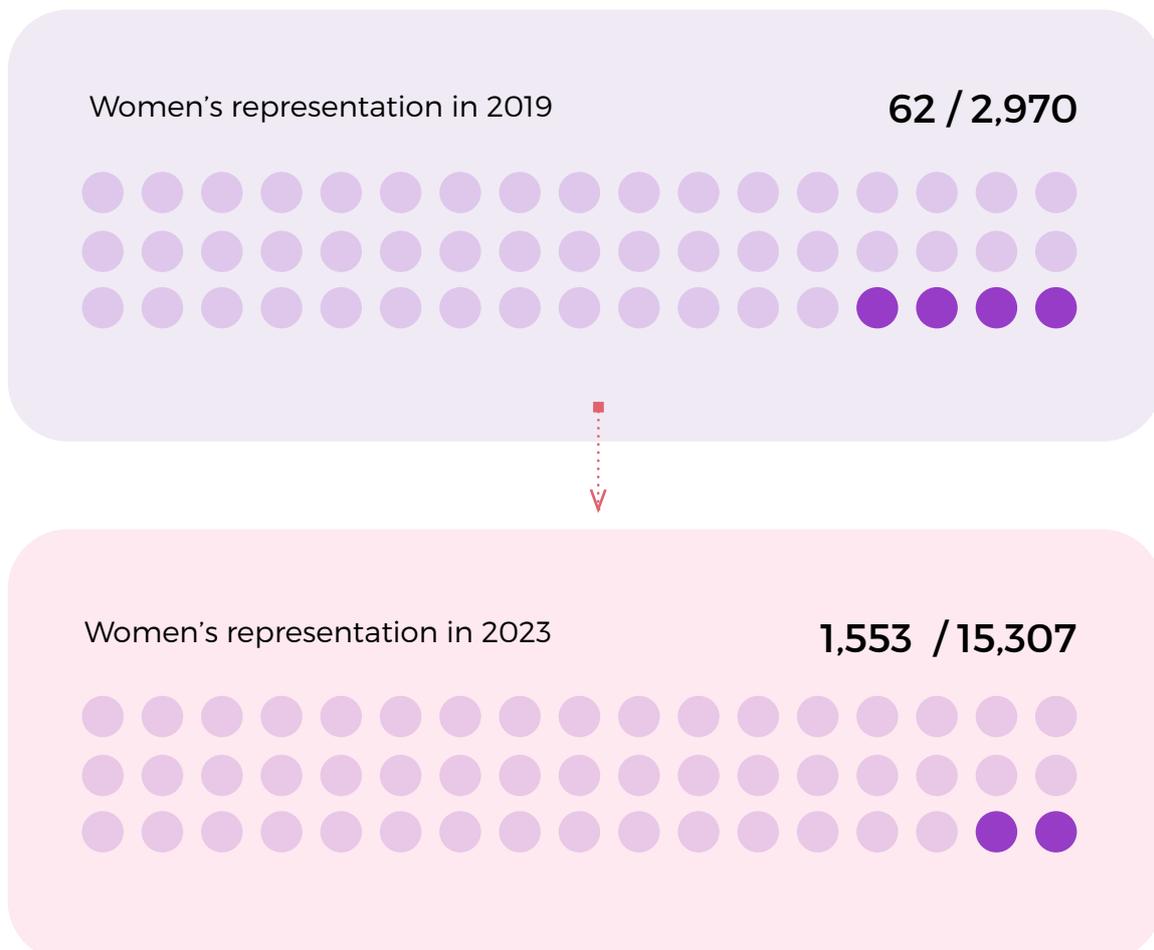
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## 2.0 The Status of Women's Leadership at the State level

This section reviews women's leadership across Nigeria's 36 states, focusing on their representation in state cabinets, state parliaments, the judiciary, and local government structures including chairpersons and councillors. It also highlights women's presence in key state portfolios such as education, finance, and health, and presents a ranking of states based on the composition of their cabinets.

### 2.1 Women's Leadership in State Cabinet

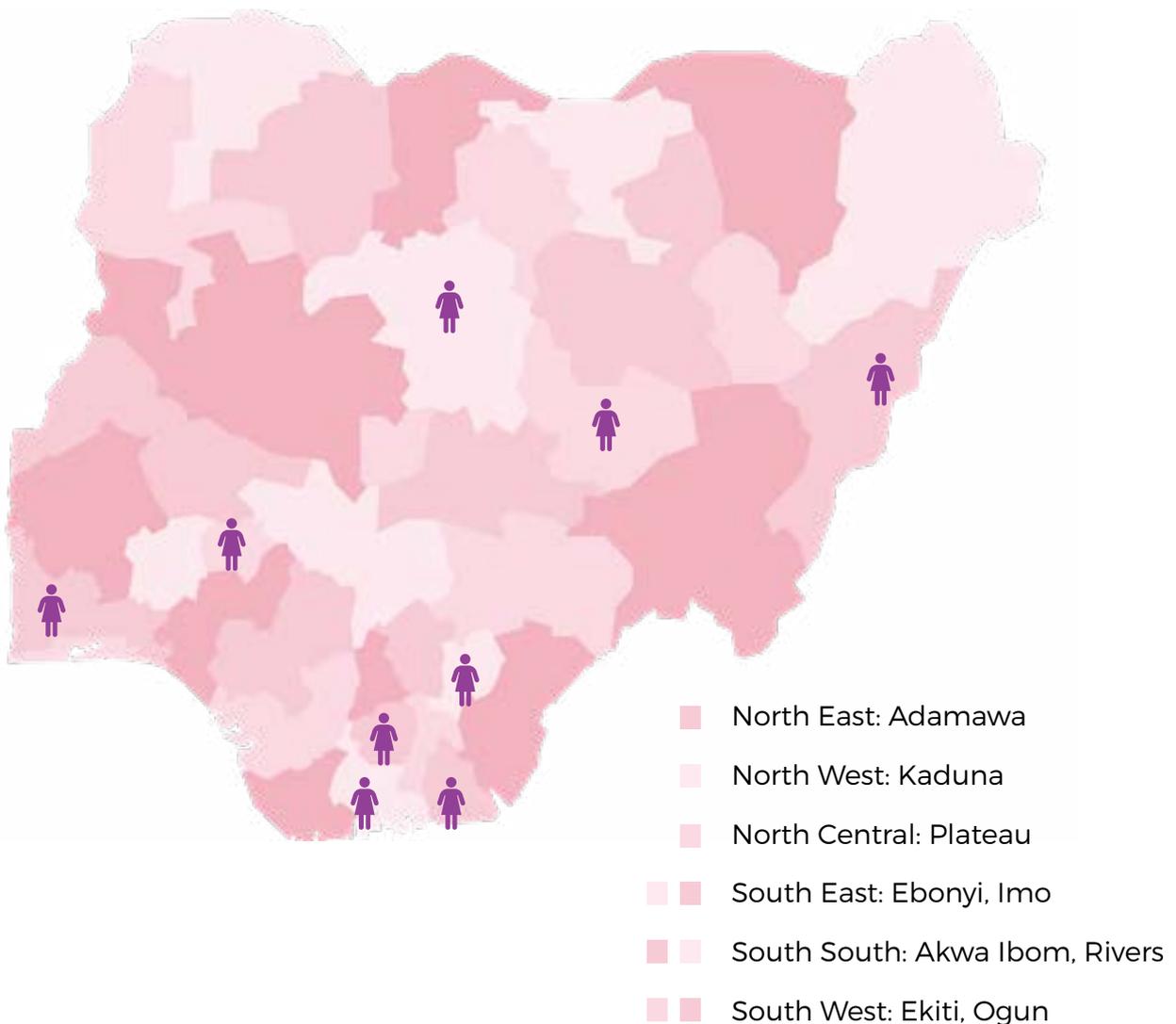
Women's representation in Nigeria's political leadership remains limited, both in elective and appointive positions. In the 2019 general elections, only 62 of the 2,970 women candidates were elected, representing 4.17 percent, down from 5.65 percent in 2015. The situation worsened in 2023, when out of 15,307 total candidates, women accounted for only 1,553 (10.1 percent). Of these, just 72 women were elected at federal and state levels—an abysmal 0.47 percent of all candidates who contested. This further illustrates the steep barriers women face in securing elective positions.



Against this backdrop, state cabinets offer one of the few avenues for inclusion through appointments. For the purposes of this report, state cabinet composition was computed to include the Governor, Deputy Governor, Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Head of Service (HoS), Chief of Staff, and Commissioners across the 36 states. This provides the basis for calculating the percentage of women represented in state-level executive leadership.

Data from the field shows that only Kwara State achieved the 35 percent quota for women's representation across the federation, with 46 percent of its cabinet seats held by women. A handful of states come close; Ekiti (27 percent), Oyo and Taraba (26 percent each), Anambra and Kaduna (24 percent each), but majority lag far behind. Twenty-one states record less than 10 percent female representation in their cabinets, equivalent to just one woman in ten appointments.

It is no longer news that Nigeria still awaits its first elected female governor, as all governors remain men. On the flip side, there are currently nine female deputy governors, spread across the geopolitical zones as follows:

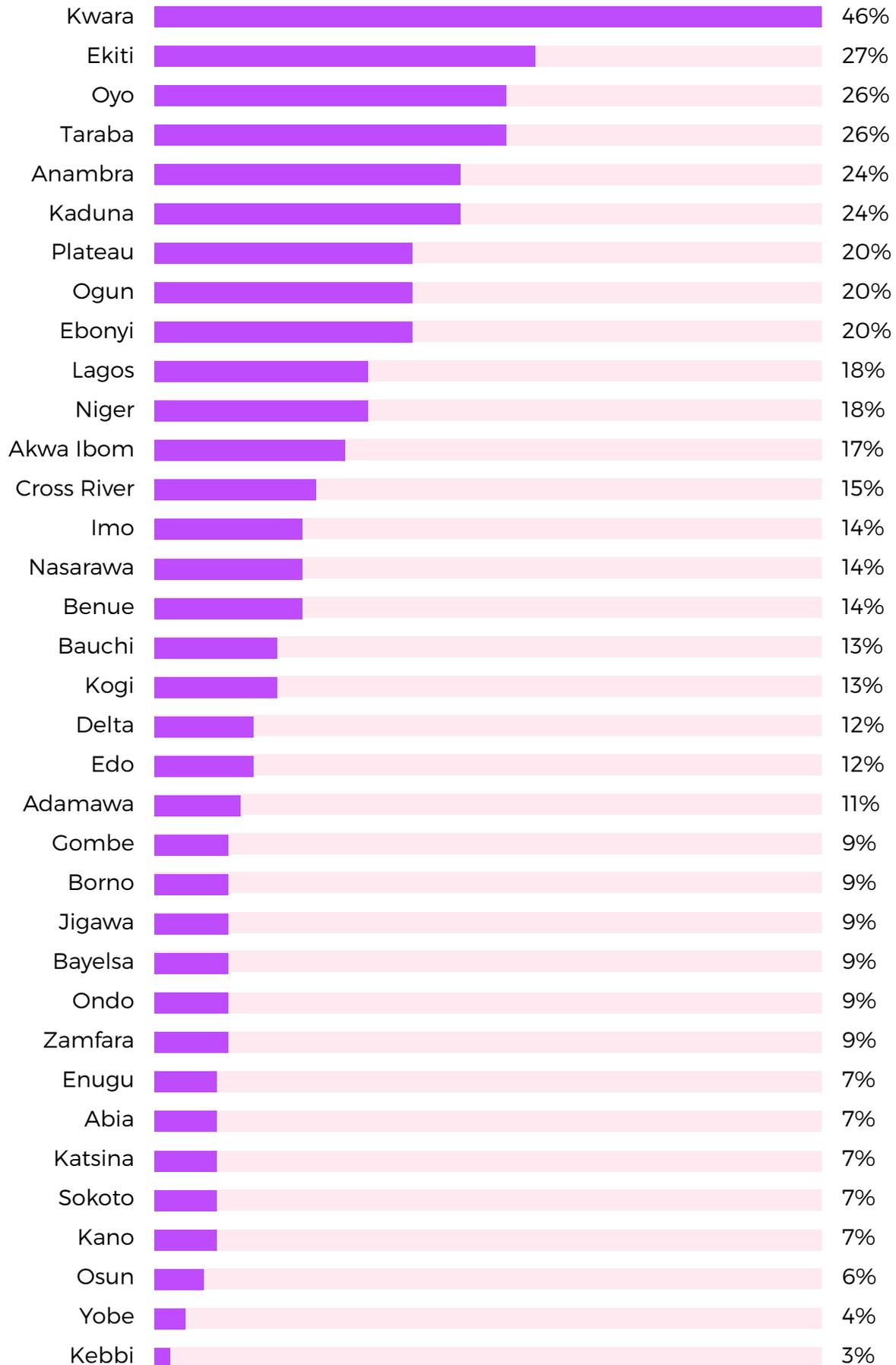


Women also hold senior administrative positions in some states. There are six female Secretaries to the State Government (SSGs) in Benue, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Kogi, Lagos, and Oyo State; and nine female Heads of Service (HoS) in Anambra, Delta, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Imo, Kaduna, Kwara, Nasarawa, and Oyo. However, it is important to note that no state has a female Chief of Staff, a position that requires close proximity to and daily engagement with the executive arm of government. This choice is typically informed by political trust and networks, often involving late-night appointments that can be difficult for women to navigate.



The pattern is clear at sub-national levels. Elective politics remains the weakest link, with women struggling to break through as governors or legislators. Appointments at the state level provide some openings, but these are uneven and heavily dependent on the political will of individual governors. Without systemic reforms, women's leadership risks remaining concentrated in a few symbolic roles rather than becoming a consistent feature of Nigeria's governance landscape.

### % of Women Cabinet Members



## 2.2 Women in State Parliament

### 2.2.1 Historical Context

Since the return of democratic government in 1999, the data shows no sustained upward trajectory. Gains have been temporary with women's representation in state legislatures consistently below the 10 percent threshold.

In 1999, only 12 women were elected across all state assemblies, just 1.2 percent of the 990 seats. By 2011, the number had risen to 62 women (6.3 percent), the highest level recorded to date. Since then, the trend has reversed. In 2015, women held 55 seats (5.6 percent); in 2019, the number dropped further to 40 seats (4.0 percent). The 2023 election cycle brought a modest recovery to 49 women (4.9 percent), but this remains well below the 2011 peak.

### 2.2.2 Current State

Women's representation in the State Houses of Assembly is low and unevenly distributed across the geopolitical zones. Out of 988 seats, only 49 are held by women, meaning that women account for less than five percent of state legislators nationwide.

A further breakdown shows that the Southwest leads, producing 17 women lawmakers across five of its six states. Ekiti recorded the highest number with six women, followed by Lagos with four, Ondo with three, and Ogun and Oyo with two each. Osun stands out as the only state in the region with no woman legislator.

In the South-South, a total of 10 women were elected. Akwa Ibom contributed the largest share with four women, while

Bayelsa and Delta each had two, and Cross River and Edo have one each.

The North Central zone produced 13 women lawmakers, the second highest of any region. Kwara stood out with five women, followed by Benue, Kogi, and Plateau with two each, and Nasarawa and Niger with one each.

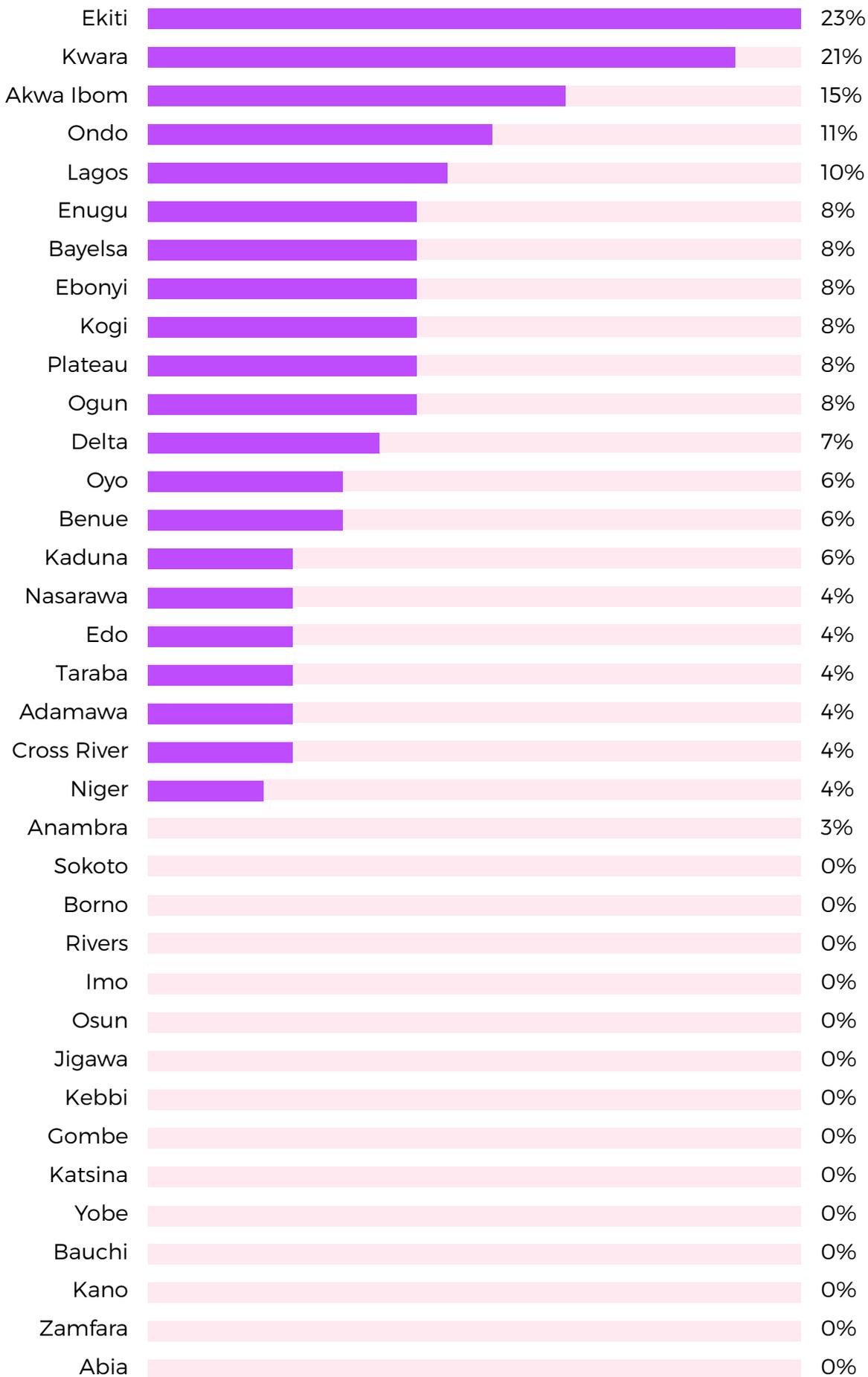
The Southeast delivered five women lawmakers, with Ebonyi and Enugu having two each, and Anambra one.

The North East and Northwest recorded the lowest levels of representation. The North East produced just two women (Adamawa and Taraba with one each), while the North West produced only two women from Kaduna. In the remaining states across the North - Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Yobe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara. , women hold no seats at all.

Across the 36 states, 14 states have no woman legislator in their Houses of Assembly, including Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Abia, Osun, Rivers, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.

A notable development from the 2023 election cycle is that six women were elected as Deputy Speakers: in Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Benue, and Ekiti. This is an important breakthrough in legislative leadership at the state level, though it remains the exception rather than the norm.

### % of Women - State House of Assembly



## 2.3 Women in State Judiciary Leadership

The judiciary is an important arm of government and an important pathway for advancing gender representation. Unlike elective political positions, the appointment of Chief Judges of State High Courts is determined largely by seniority and judicial service, making these roles a strong indicator of how institutional structures can promote inclusion.

Our findings reveal that 15 of Nigeria's 36 states are headed by female Chief Judges. This represents just over 40 percent of the states, and marks a significant presence of women in one of the most senior positions in the judiciary. A breakdown by geopolitical zones indicates that: South South (4 states): Women serve as Chief Judges in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, and Delta, making the zone the strongest performer nationally.

This distribution highlights the South South and South West zones as leaders in appointing women as Chief Judges, while the North West lags significantly, with just one state represented.

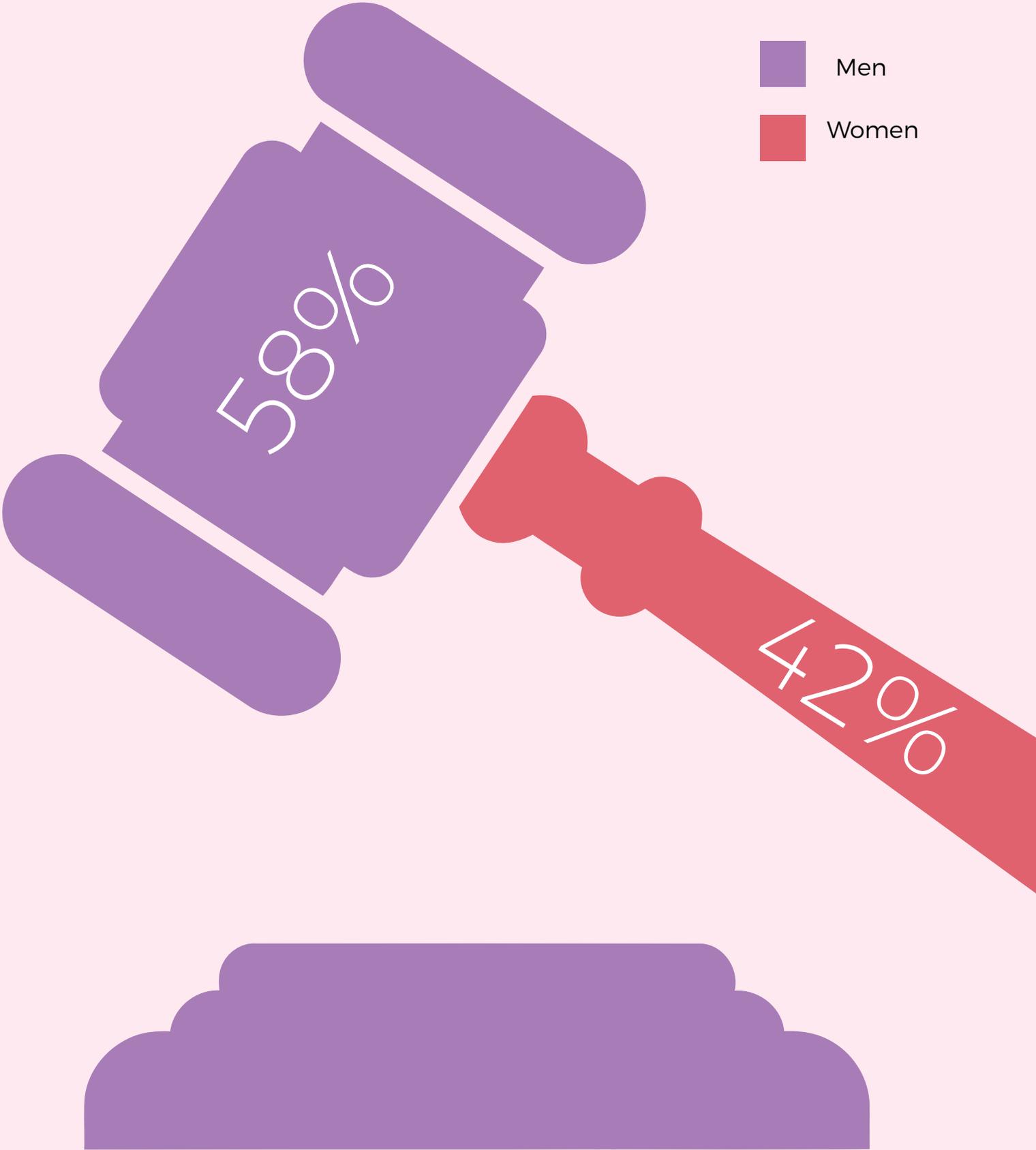
It is important to note that the position of Chief Judge is subject to change, as appointments depend on seniority, retirements, and elevations. Even with this fluidity, the fact that women currently hold the office in 15 states demonstrates that where structured career pathways exist, women can rise to senior leadership roles.

The state judiciary therefore stands out as one of the most inclusive arms of government, offering a more consistent route to leadership for women compared to elective political offices or other appointive cabinet positions.



<p><i>South South (4 states): Women serve as Chief Judges in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, and Delta.</i></p>	<p><i>South West (3 states): Ogun, Osun, and Oyo each have women leading their state judiciary.</i></p>	<p><i>North East (3 states): Adamawa, Bauchi, and Gombe are the only states in the North East with women in this role.</i></p>	<p><i>South East (2 states): Abia and Imo have women Chief Judges.</i></p>	<p><i>North Central (2 states): Nasarawa and Niger.</i></p>	<p><i>North West (1 state): Kano is the only state in the zone with a woman Chief Judge.</i></p>
<p><b>1st</b></p>	<p><b>2nd</b></p>	<p><b>2nd</b></p>	<p><b>3rd</b></p>	<p><b>3rd</b></p>	<p><b>4th</b></p>

# Chief Judge



## 2.4 Women in Leadership across Local Government Areas/Councils

At the local governance level, women remain largely excluded from leadership. Out of 811 LGA chair<sup>18</sup> positions profiled, only 41 are held by women, which is just about 5 percent nationwide.

States such as Katsina, Kebbi, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Borno, Niger, Ekiti, Ondo, Jigawa, Oyo, Benue, Plateau, Enugu, Sokoto, Delta, Yobe, Zamfara, and Abuja recorded no female LGA chairpersons.

A few northern states made marginal progress from the last election cycle, including Kano with 2 percent and Kaduna with 4 percent. The strongest representation is clustered in the South, where Cross River (17 percent), Lagos (18 percent), Ebonyi and Imo (15 percent each), Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom (13 percent each) stand out with Gombe (18 percent) as the outlier from the North.

At the councillorship level, where governance is closest to citizens, women are still underrepresented. Out of 8,773 councillorship seats profiled, only 604 are occupied by women, accounting for less than seven percent overall.

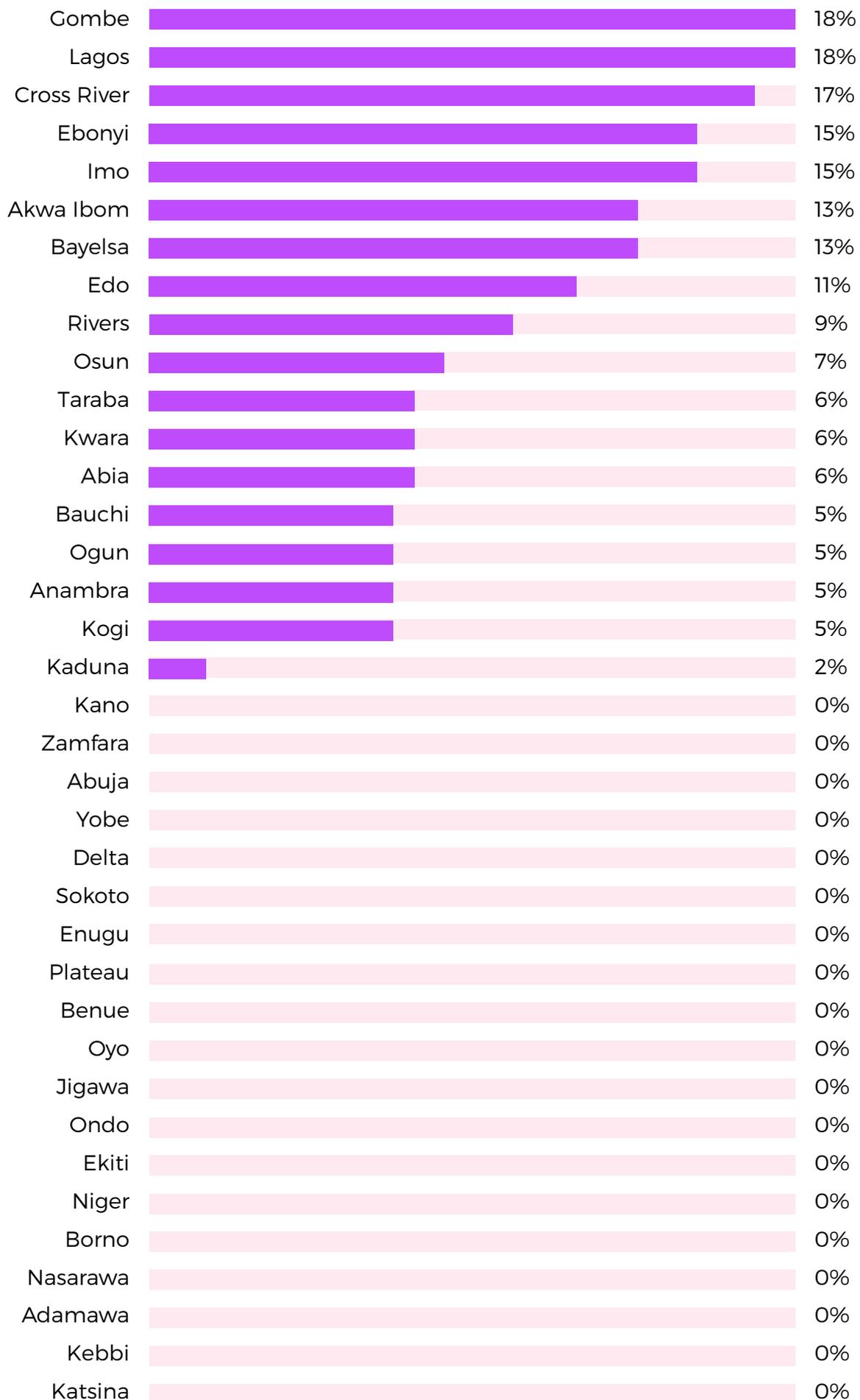
In Katsina, Nasarawa, Taraba, Yobe, and Abuja, no woman was elected as councillor.

Several northern states, including Kano, Kebbi, Bauchi, Plateau, Kaduna, and Jigawa, had only between one and three percent women councillors.

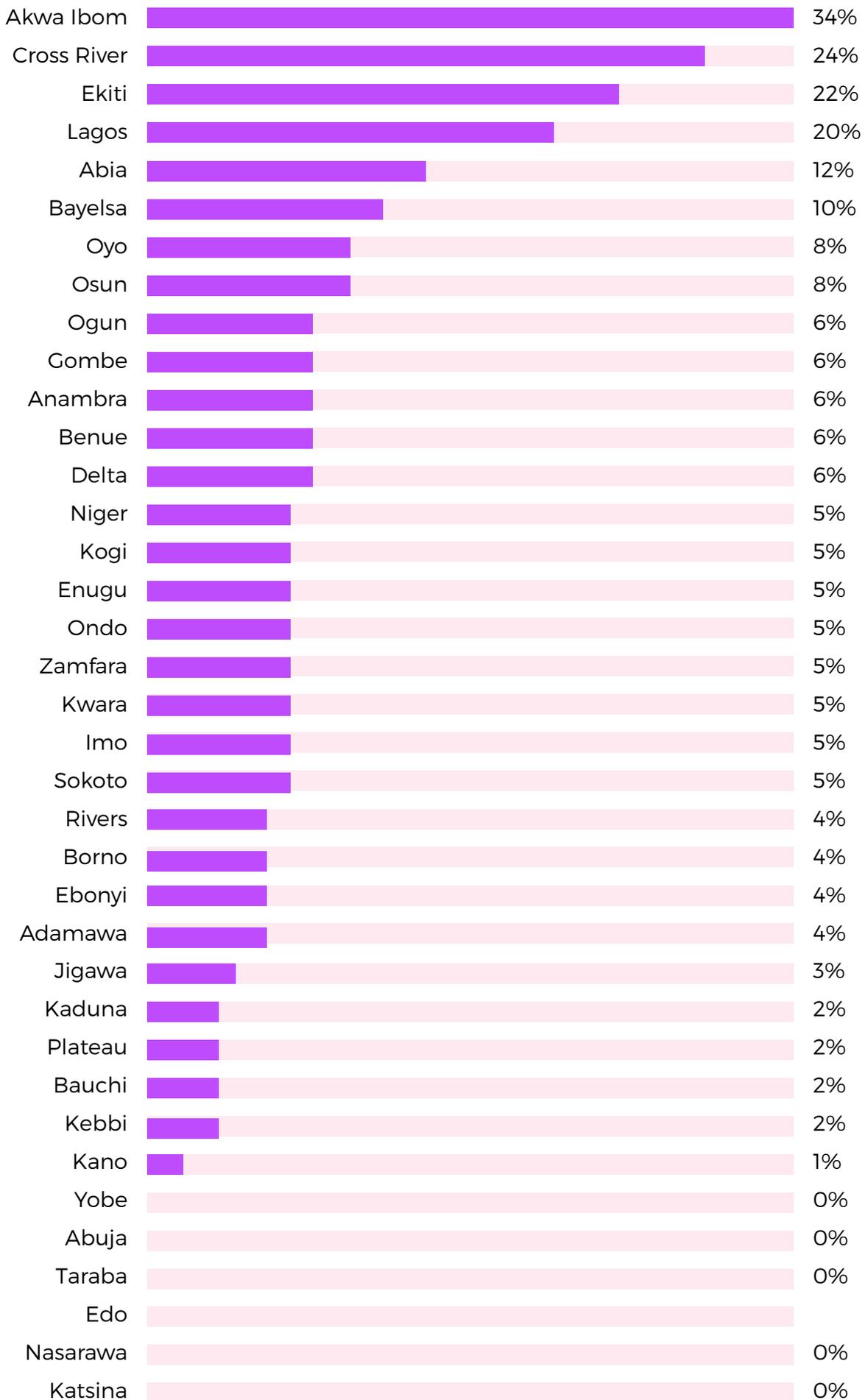
The South recorded better outcomes, with Lagos (20 percent), Ekiti (22 percent), Cross River (24 percent), and Akwa Ibom (34 percent) leading the way.

These figures underscore two realities: women are still missing from most local government leadership roles, and progress is uneven, with a handful of states in the South standing out as exceptions. The exclusion of women at this tier undermines both the quality of local governance and the pipeline for future female leaders.

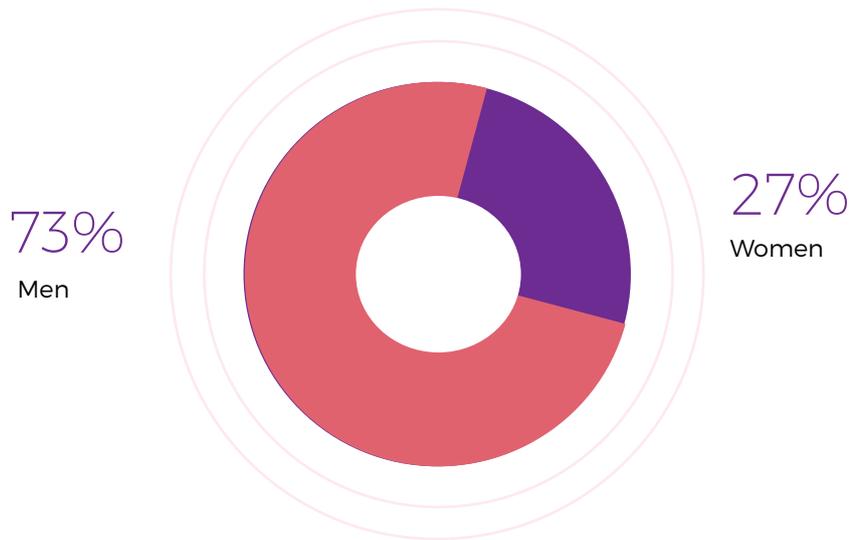
## % of Women - LGA Chairperson



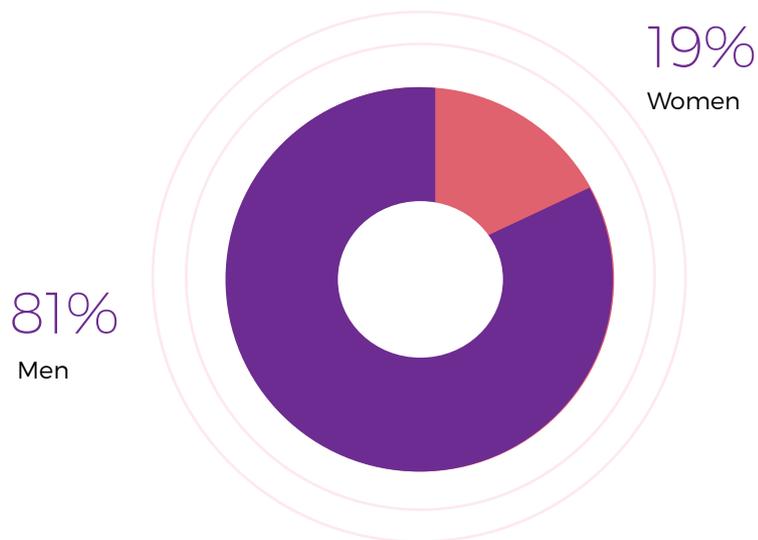
## % of Women - LGA Councillor



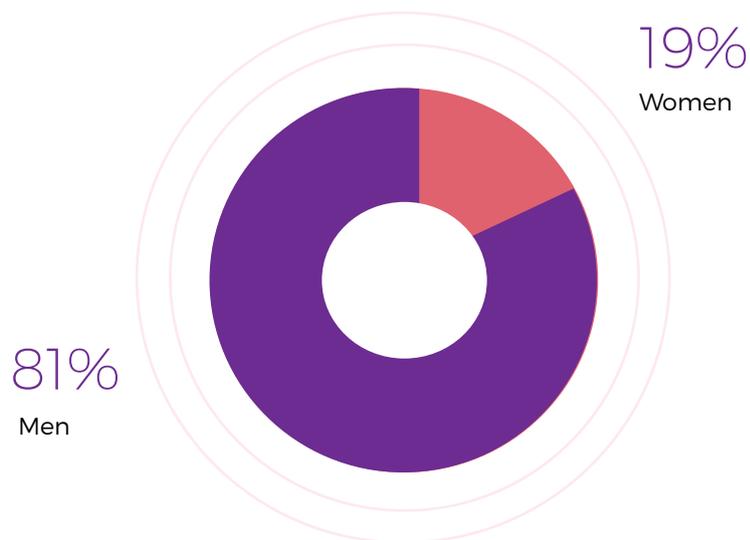
### 2.5 Women in Education Leadership (Commissioners for Education)



### 2.6 Women's Leadership in State Economic Portfolios (Commissioners for Finance)



### 2.7 Women's Leadership in State Health (Commissioners for Health)



# The Status of Women's Leadership in the public sector at the Federal Level

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## 3.0 The Status of Women's Leadership in the public sector at the Federal Level

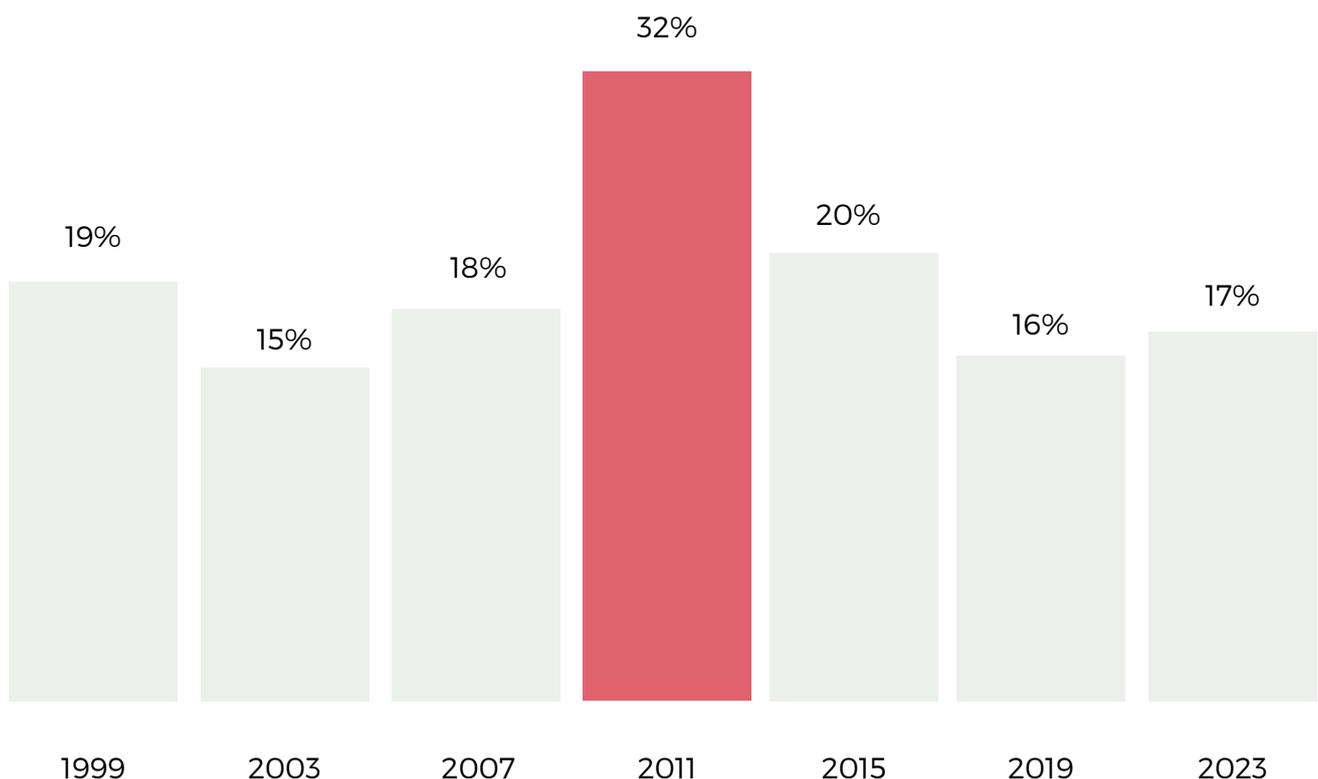
This section examines women's representation at the federal level and public institutions. It reviews their presence in the federal cabinet, legislature, judiciary, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), as well as their participation in strategic decision-making bodies such as the National Economic Council (NEC).

### 3.1 Women in the Federal Cabinet

In the current administration, 8 out of 48 cabinet positions (16.7 percent) are held by women, a level almost unchanged from the last administration. Some of the appointees occupy ministerial roles in portfolios such as;

- Industry, Trade and Investment,
- Finance,
- Education,
- Labour and Employment,
- Women Affairs,
- Art, Culture, Tourism & Creative Economy, and
- Foreign affairs

Percentage of Women in the Federal Cabinet from 1999 - 2023



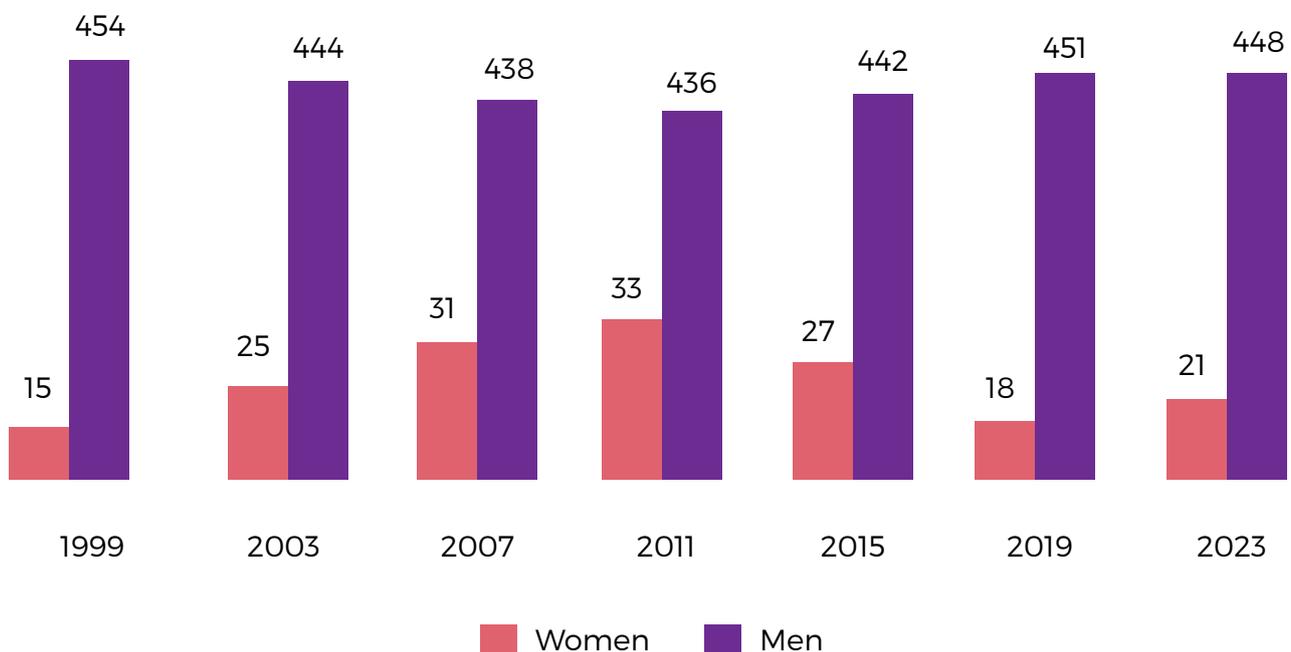
In addition, 10 of 34 presidential Special Advisers are women (29 percent). These appointments demonstrate that women are represented in both cabinet and advisory roles, including portfolios in trade, finance, and education, although still below the 35 percent benchmark earlier set in the National Gender Policy (2006) and falls even further short of the 50 percent target outlined in the revised National Gender Policy (2021–2026)<sup>19</sup>.

## 3.2 Women in the Federal Legislature

The 2023 elections produced four women senators (3.7 percent of 109 seats) and 16 women in the House of Representatives (4.7 percent of 360 seats). A by-election in 2025 added one more female member to the House, increasing the number to 17.

This continues the pattern of limited representation rather than sustained growth. In 2011, women held 26 House seats (7.2 percent), the highest to date, but this dropped to 19 in 2015, 11 in 2019, and only partially recovered in 2023. The Senate has never had more than 8 women (2007 and 2015 cycles).

Percentage of Women in the Federal Cabinet from 1999 - 2023



*Notes: For each year, the count shown reflects the highest number of women recorded during that parliamentary cycle (some changes may occur due to replacements or court rulings).*

*Each year's data assumes a complete parliament (all 469 seats filled: 109 Senators, 360 Representatives).*

<sup>19</sup> Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. (2021). National Gender Policy: 2021–2026 (p. 34). Abuja, Nigeria: Federal Republic of Nigeria. Excerpt referenced: "Advocate for the application of the 50:50 affirmative action in both appointive and elective positions in Nigeria" (p. 34)

Despite repeated advocacy, the numbers remain low. Proposals such as the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, which recommends an additional 37 Senate and 37 House seats for women, reflect recognition that without structural reform, parity will remain out of reach.

### “Reserved Seats for Women Bill (2025): A Path to Gender Equity in Politics”

The problem: As this report has shown, women remain severely underrepresented in Nigeria's executive and legislative positions.

One of the solutions: The Reserved Seats for Women Bill represents a groundbreaking step towards ensuring gender equity in political representation. With women making up nearly half of Nigeria's population, the underrepresentation in decision-making roles is a glaring anomaly that this bill seeks to address. **The Reserved Seats for Women Bill proposes;**

- 37 Senate seats (1 per state + FCT)
- 37 House of Reps seats
- 108 State Assembly seats (3 per state)

*All reserved exclusively for women.*

### The Impact : Projected Representation if Bill is passed

Legislative body	Current% (2025)	Projected %
Nationwide	4.6%	~20%
Senate	4%	25%
House of Reps	5%	9%
State Assemblies	5%	10%

**\*\*\* Projected percentages assume woman win only the reserved seats. Actual representation could be higher if women also contest and win open seats.”**

### Summary

Women's legislative representative would rise from an average of ~4.6% to about 20% nationwide, a historic leap though still below the African average and the UN-recommended 35% benchmark.



### 3.3 Women in the Judiciary

Among the three arms of government, the judiciary has seen the most inclusive representation. Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun currently serves as the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), the second woman in history to occupy this role after Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar (2012–2014). Recent data obtained from official judicial websites shows progress:

# 24%

The National Judicial Council (NJC) includes 6 women among its 25 members<sup>20</sup> (24 percent) and is chaired by the CJN, a woman.

The Court of Appeal has 28 women out of 75 justices<sup>21</sup> (37.3 percent) and is led by a female President of the Court of Appeal.

# 37.3%

# 30%

At the Supreme Court, women account for 6 of 20 justices<sup>22</sup> (30 percent).

These figures indicate that women can rise to the apex of the judiciary through institutional promotion systems, even though the overall numbers remain uneven across the bench.

<sup>20</sup> National Judicial Council. (2025). List of council members. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from <https://www.njc.gov.ng/>

<sup>21</sup> Court of Appeal of Nigeria. (2025). Justices of the Court of Appeal. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from <https://www.court-of-appeal.gov.ng/>

<sup>22</sup> Supreme Court of Nigeria. (2025). Justices of the Supreme Court. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from <https://www.supremecourt.gov.ng/>

### 3.4 Women in Federal MDA's (Ministries, Departments, and Agencies)

A review of 93 Federal MDAs shows that women currently head only 12 (approx. 13 percent). These include agencies such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIG-COMSAT), Nigerian Postal Service, (NIPOST) the Federal Character Commission (FCC), the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), and the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA).

From 2023 to date, several women have made history through appointments to key leadership positions for the first time across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), marking notable progress in gender representation. However, many of these positions are now occupied by new officeholders. For instance, leadership transitions occurred within the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), and the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB), where female officeholders were replaced by men. These developments highlight the fragile nature of women's leadership across MDAs, where changes in tenure or administrative restructuring can quickly reduce the number of women in top decision-making roles.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) reported that historically, women have constituted about 32 percent of officers at Grade Levels 15-17<sup>23</sup>, the cadre that feeds into permanent secretary and director-level appointments. With this pipeline already limited, women's underrepresentation in MDA leadership reflects both structural and appointment-related barriers

### 3.5 Women at the National Economic Council (NEC)

The National Economic Council (NEC) is composed of the Vice President and the 36 state governors, alongside co-opted members such as the Ministers of Finance and Budget, the Accountant-General of the Federation, the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Group Chief Executive of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd).

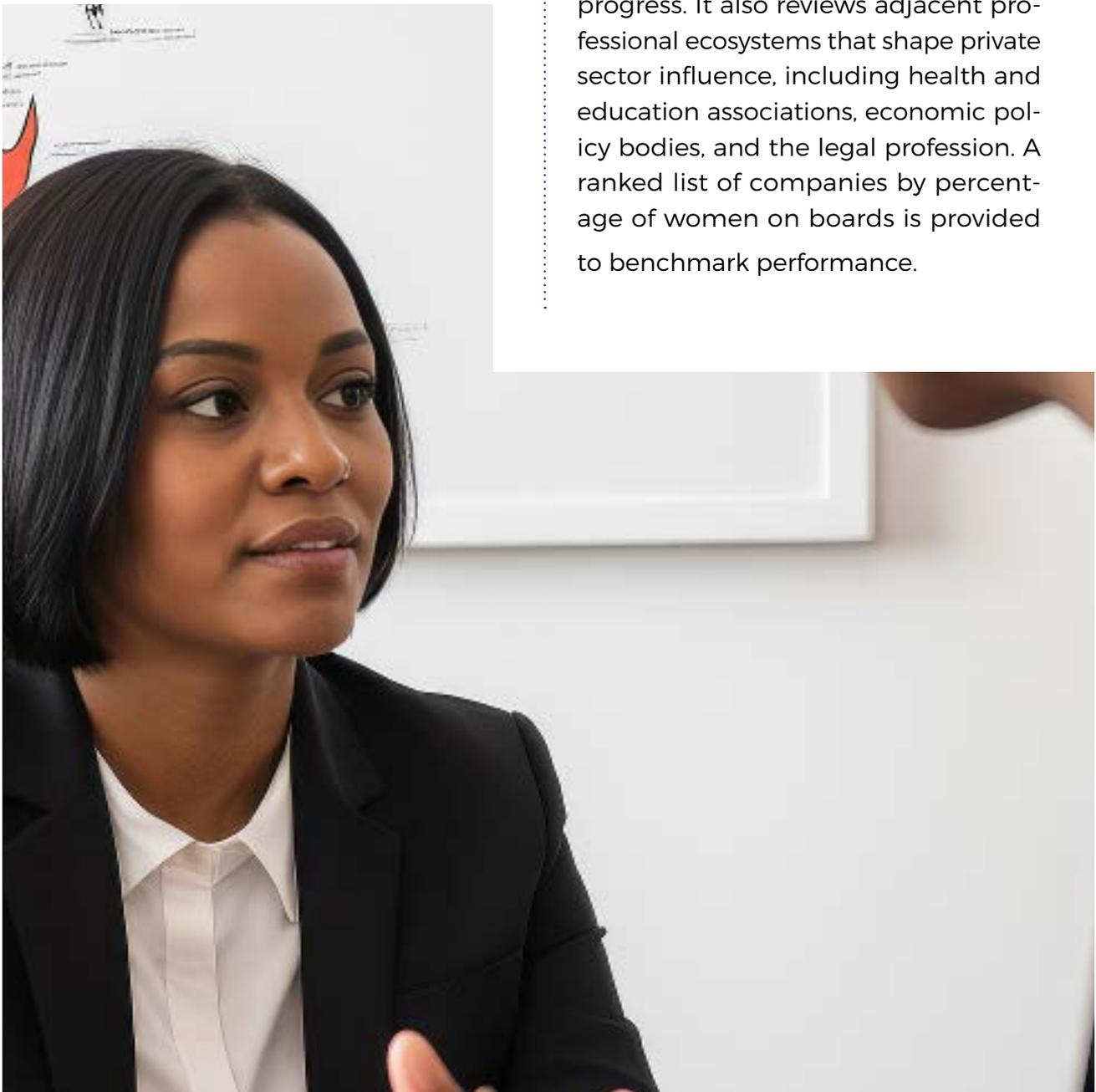
Nigeria has no elected female governor, therefore, the NEC has remained entirely composed of mostly men. At present, there are no female statutory members of the NEC. A review of the co-opted roles indicates that there are no women currently occupying those seats. Co-opted roles are non-statutory officials invited to participate based on their roles or expertise, such as heads of critical agencies and departments.

# The Status of Women's Leadership in the Private sector in Nigeria

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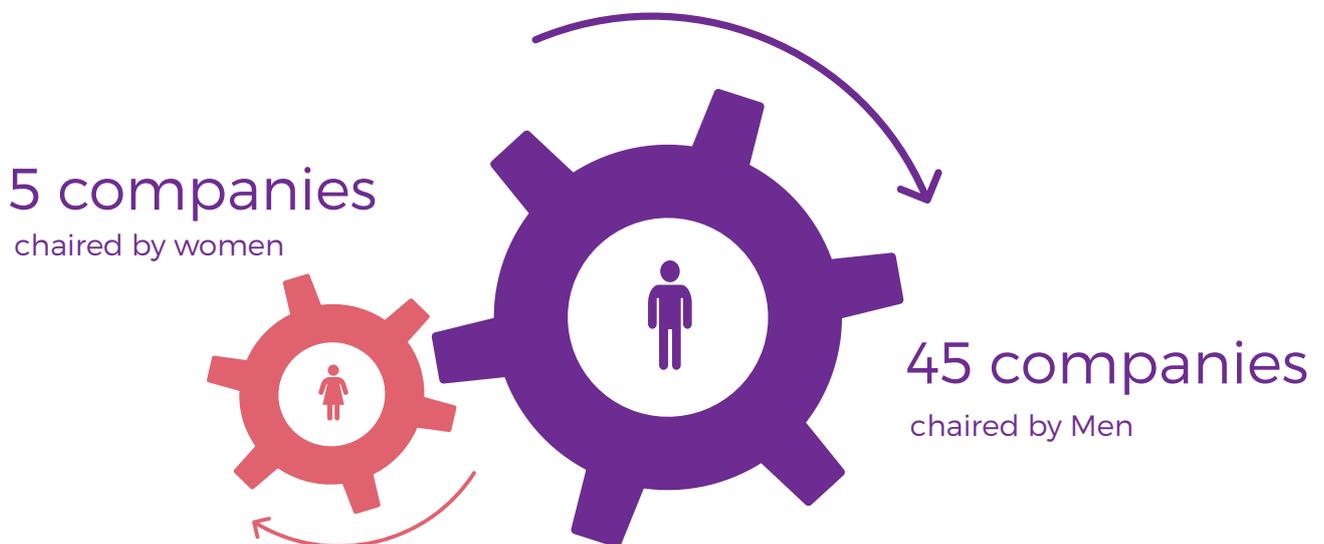
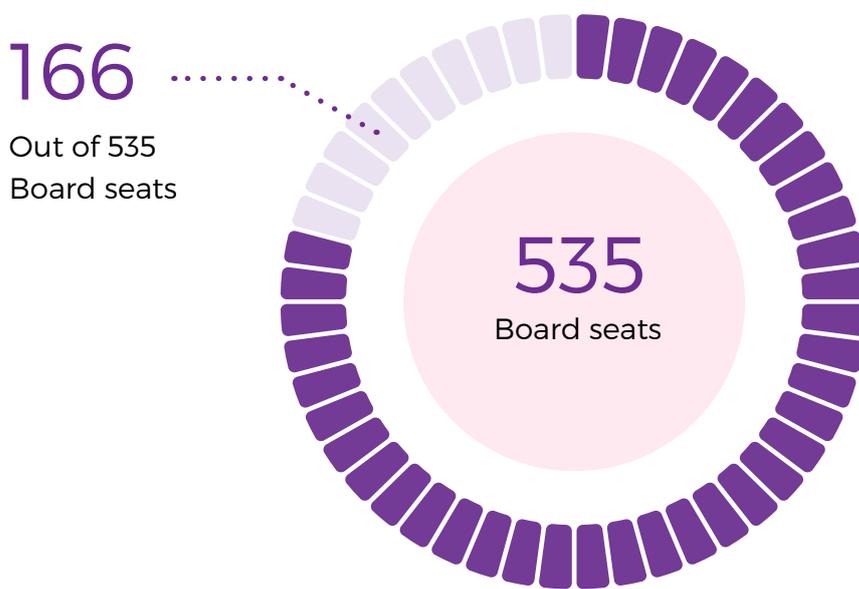
## 4.0 The Status of Women's Leadership in the Private sector in Nigeria

This chapter examines women's representation across corporate Nigeria, focusing on board and senior leadership in the Top 50 firms on the NGX, sector-by-sector patterns, and the policy and governance drivers behind progress. It also reviews adjacent professional ecosystems that shape private sector influence, including health and education associations, economic policy bodies, and the legal profession. A ranked list of companies by percentage of women on boards is provided to benchmark performance.



## 4.1 Women on Boards (Top 50 companies on NGX)

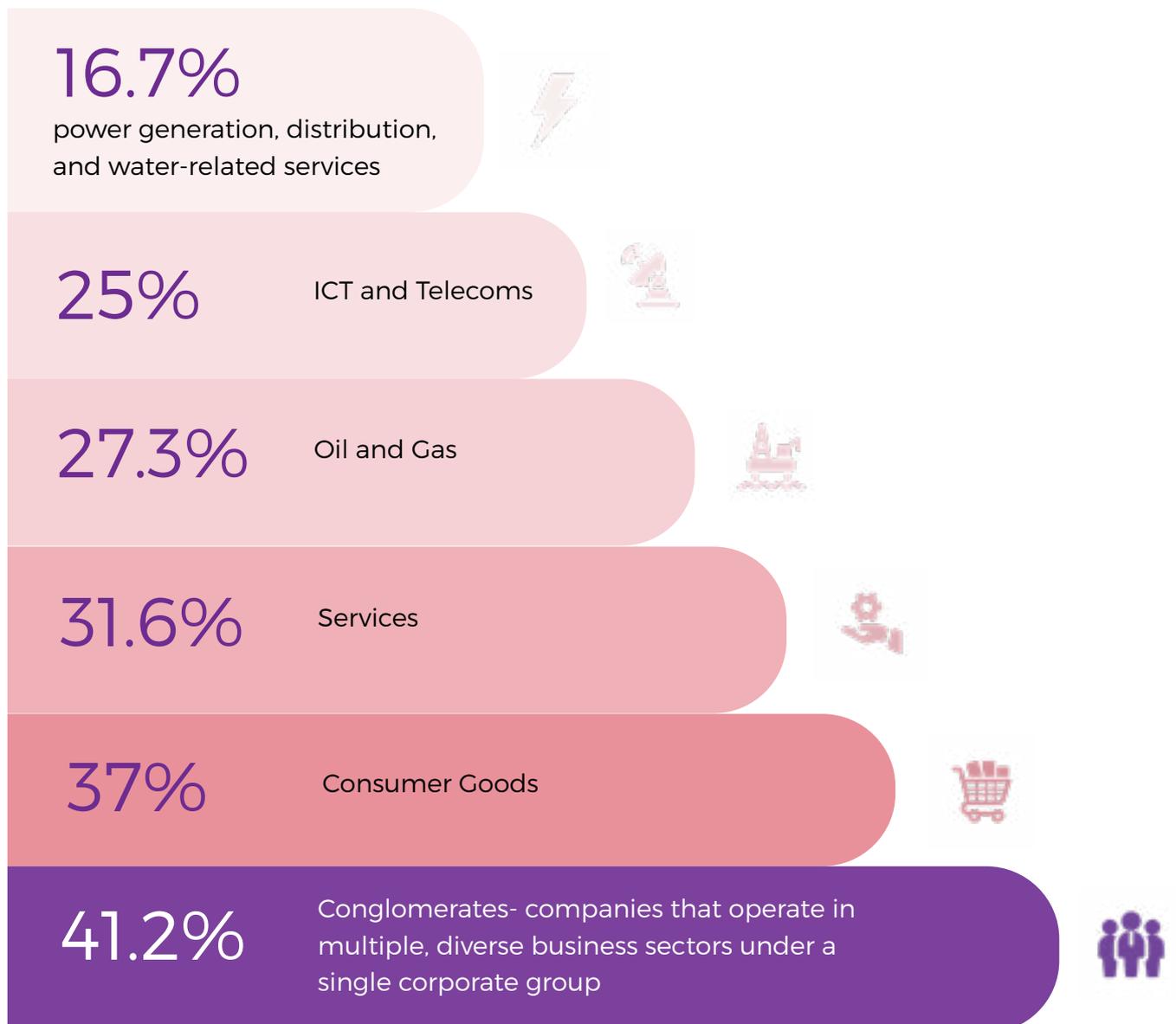
Boardrooms are the command centres of corporate Nigeria. They decide how companies grow, where capital flows, and how organisations respond to the demands of society. Yet women still hold far fewer seats than men. In 2025, across the fifty most capitalised firms on the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX), women occupied 166 out of 535 board seats. That is 31 percent, while men held 69 percent. At the highest level of authority, the board chair, the gap widens. Only 5 companies (10 percent) are chaired by women, compared to 45 chaired by men (90 percent).



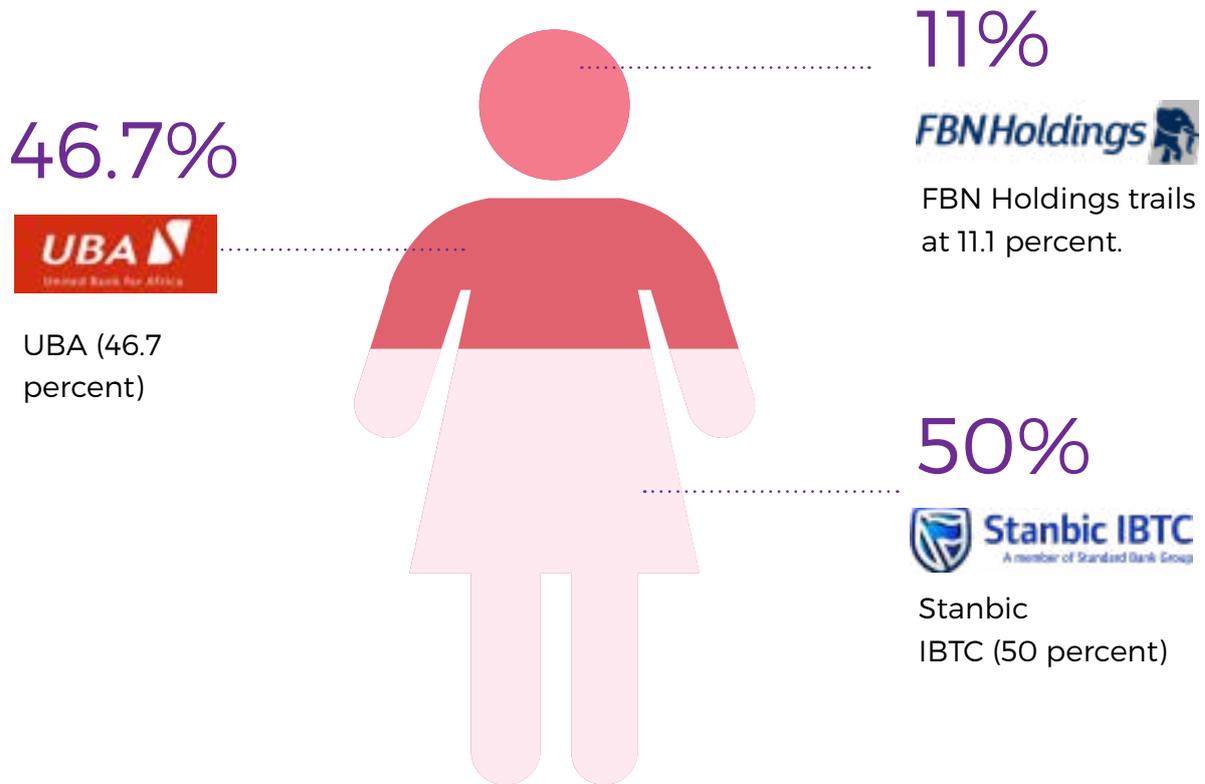
## Sectors that Lead and Lag

From the analysed data for NGX 2025, Women's representation on company boards varies across industries. Conglomerates- companies that operate in multiple, diverse business sectors under a single corporate group (41.2 percent), Consumer Goods (37 percent), and Services (31.6 percent) are moving closer to parity, with some companies surpassing parity. By contrast, Utilities- companies involved in power generation, distribution, and water-related services (16.7 percent), ICT and Telecoms (25 percent), and Oil and Gas (27.3 percent) show how deeply entrenched barriers remain. Financial services, the backbone of the NGX, sits at 31.9 percent, but the sector contains both leaders and laggards. Stanbic IBTC (50 percent) and UBA (46.7 percent) are among the strongest performers, while FBN Holdings trails at 11.1 percent.

### Women's representation on company boards varies across industries



## Leaders and Laggards with Women's representation in Financial Service



### Why Financial Services are Ahead

Much of the progress can be traced to the Nigerian Sustainable Banking Principles developed by the bankers committee and the CBN. Principle 4 requires banks to adopt policies on women's economic empowerment, including a 40 percent target for female representation at management and board levels. These requirements, alongside the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Code and the 2018 Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance, have created clear incentives for financial institutions to act. Section 4.3 of the SEC Code encourages boards to ensure a "balance of executive and non-executive directors with diverse backgrounds, including gender." Though it does not set a numeric quota, it establishes gender diversity as a good governance benchmark, urging listed companies to include women in board appointments. In the same vein, The Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance, Principle 9- explicitly calls for gender, age, and cultural diversity in board composition. It states that "Board membership should be diverse in skills, experience, and gender to promote better decision-making and effective governance."

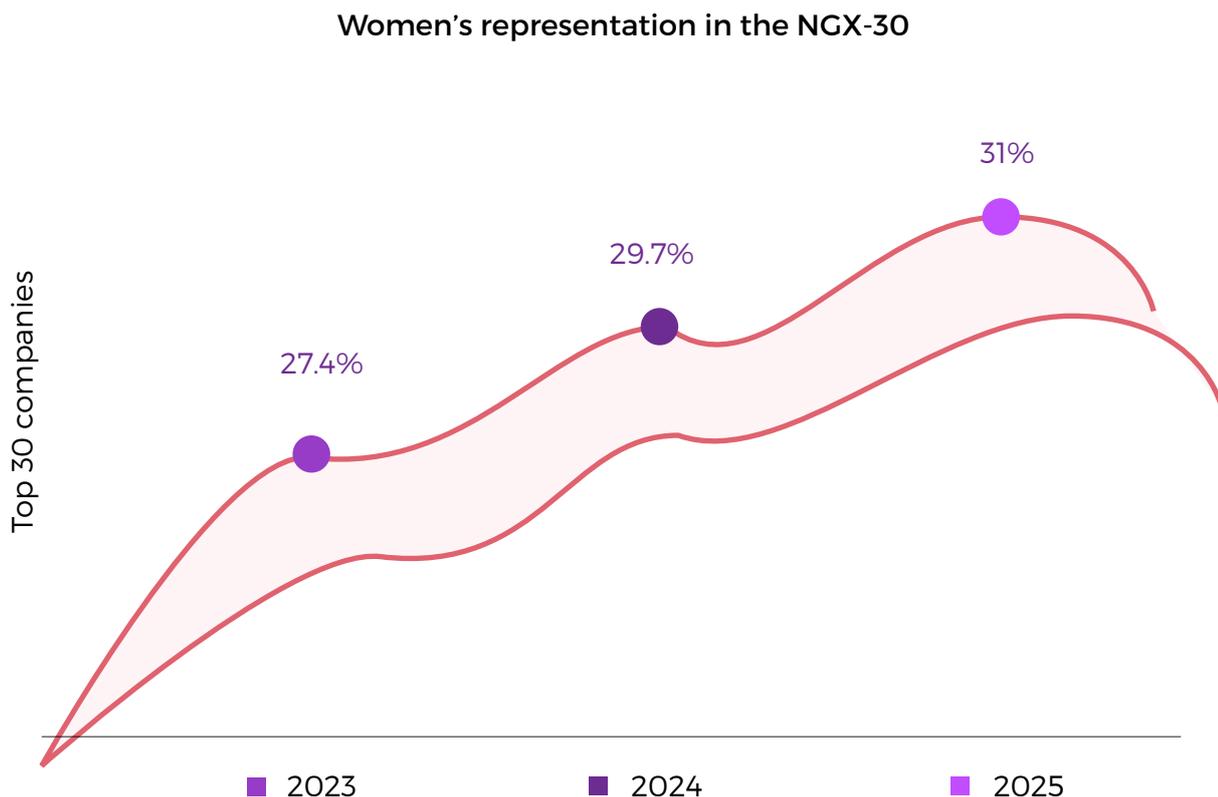
The result is evident in the data: banks are well represented among the companies closest to parity, while sectors without regulatory push, such as ICT and utilities, continue to lag.

## Why Representation Matters

Companies with more women in decision-making roles tend to perform better as stated in the catalyst report<sup>24</sup> referenced in Chapter 1. Women directors also bring different perspectives, often prioritising sustainability, long-term value, and inclusive growth. Beyond numbers, visible female leadership signals to employees that advancement is possible for all, challenging stereotypes and helping companies attract and retain top talent.

## Trends Over Time

There is evidence of steady, if slow, progress. Women's representation in the NGX-30 rose from 27.4 percent in 2023<sup>25</sup> to 29.7 percent in 2024 and now stands at 31 percent in the broader Top 50 from our analysis of the Top 50 companies. The increase reflects the addition of more companies in sectors such as consumer goods, services, and conglomerates, which tend to have higher female participation. However, the number of women serving as board chairpersons has remained low.



<sup>24</sup> Catalyst. (2007). The bottom line: Corporate performance and women's representation on boards. Catalyst. <https://edge.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Corporate-Performance-And-Womens-Representation-On-Boards-Catalyst-2007.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> PWR Advisory. (2024, October). The 2024 PWR Advisory NGX-30 Board Gender Diversity Scorecard. PWR Advisory. <https://pwradvisory.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/The-2024-PWRA-NGX-30-Board-Gender-Diversity-Scorecard-1.pdf>

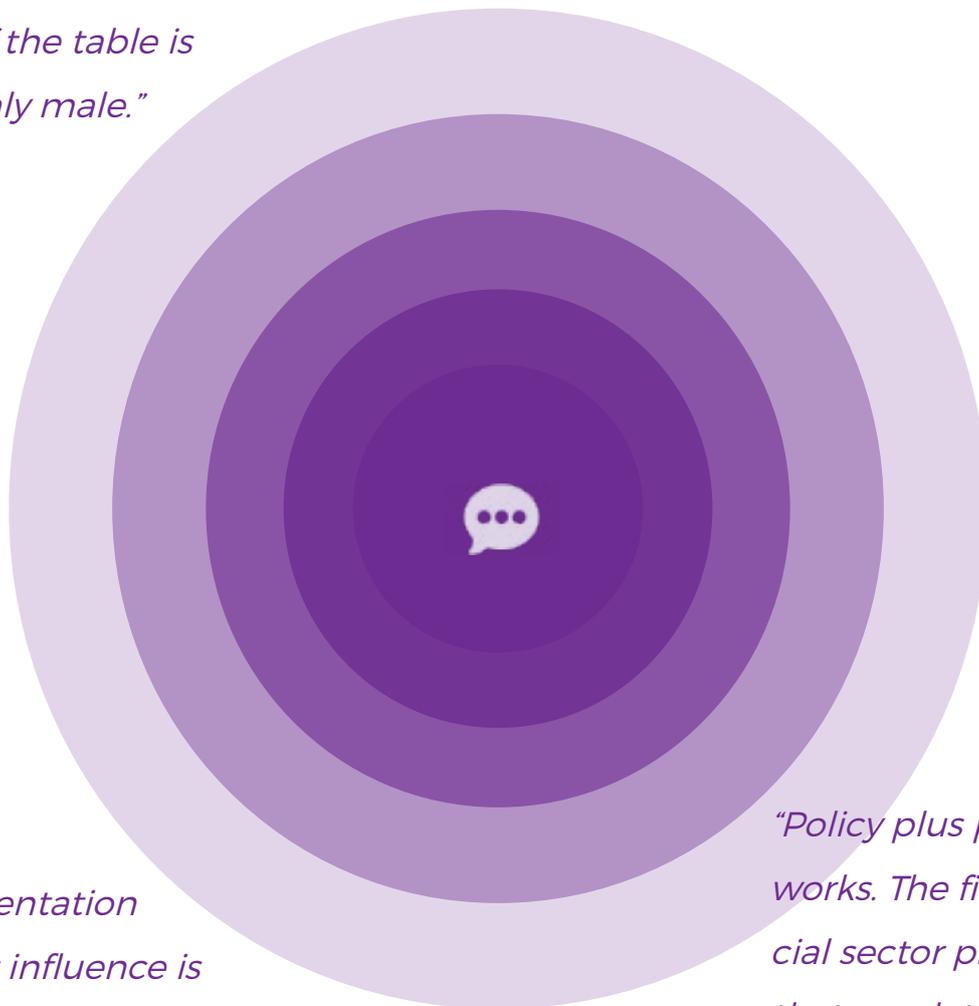
## The Path Forward

The task ahead is to translate representation into real influence. Companies should set explicit targets for women not only as directors but as board chairs and committee leads. Regulators may need to strengthen codes to hold lagging sectors accountable. Investors and civil society can play their part by demanding full transparency, with companies disclosing annual gender diversity data at board level.

The experience of financial institutions proves that policy combined with accountability delivers change. Nigeria's challenge is to make this the rule rather than the exception.

### Power at the Table

*"Only five of fifty board chairs are women. The head of the table is still firmly male."*



*"Representation without influence is unfinished progress."*

*"Policy plus pressure works. The financial sector proves that regulation can drive inclusion."*

# Sectoral Spotlight



41.2%

Conglomerates: edging closer to parity at 41.2 percent.



16.7%

Utilities: the weakest performer at 16.7 percent, almost no female presence at the top.

37% 

Consumer Goods: steady progress with 37 percent women.

25% 

ICT and Telecoms: stuck at 25 percent, women rarely in top positions.

31.6% 

Services: moving upward at 31.6 percent, boosted by Transcorp Hotels.

27.3% 

Oil and Gas: slow progress with 27.3 percent, major room for improvement.

30% 

Agriculture: holding at 30 percent, progress but uneven.

31.9%



Financial Services: mixed picture at 31.9 percent; some banks near parity, others far behind.

30.5%



Industrial Goods: still unbalanced at 30.5 percent but showing potential.

## Ranking of Top 50 NGX Companies by % of Women on Boards (2025)

S/N	Company	Sector	% Women on Board	Chairman
1	Cadbury Nigeria Plc	Consumer Goods	62.50%	● Male
2	NASCON Allied Industries Plc	Consumer Goods	60.00%	● Male
3	Transcorp Hotel Plc	Hospitality & Services	57.14%	● Male
4	Stanbic IBTC Holdings Plc	Financials (Banking)	50.00%	● Female
5	UAC of Nigeria Plc	Conglomerates	50.00%	● Male
6	United Bank for Africa Plc	Financials (Banking)	46.67%	● Male
7	AXA Mansard Insurance Plc	Financials (Insurance)	44.44%	● Male
7	Nestle Nigeria Plc	Consumer Goods	44.44%	● Male
7	Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc	Consumer Goods	44.44%	● Male
7	Presco Plc	Agriculture	44.44%	● Male
11	Seplat Energy Plc	Oil & Gas	41.67%	● Male
11	Lafarge Cement WAPCO Plc	Industrial Goods	41.67%	● Male
13	Guinness Nigeria Plc	Consumer Goods	40.00%	● Male
14	Wema Bank Plc	Financials (Banking)	38.46%	● Female
15	Nigerian Breweries Plc	Consumer Goods	36.36%	● Female
16	Access Holdings Plc	Financials (Banking)	36.36%	● Male
16	FCMB Group Plc	Financials (Banking)	36.36%	● Male
16	Beta Glass Plc	Industrial Goods	36.36%	● Male
19	Zenith Bank Plc	Financials (Banking)	35.71%	● Male
20	Custodian Investment Plc	Financials (Insurance)	33.33%	● Female
20	PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc	Consumer Goods	33.33%	● Female
22	Airtel Africa Plc	Telecommunications	33.33%	● Male
22	International Breweries Plc	Consumer Goods	33.33%	● Male
22	Honeywell Flour Mill Plc	Consumer Goods	33.33%	● Male
22	Fidelity Bank Plc	Financials (Banking)	33.33%	● Male

22	Transnational Corporation Plc	Conglomerates	33.33%	● Male
27	Unilever	Consumer Goods	30.00%	● Male
28	NEM Insurance Plc	Financials (Insurance)	27.27%	● Male
28	Aradel Plc	Financials (Insurance)	27.20%	● Male
30	Ecobank Transnational Inc	Financials (Banking)	26.67%	● Male
31	Sterling Financial Holdings	Financials (Banking)	25.00%	● Male
31	Transcorp Power Plc	Utilities (Power)	25.00%	● Male
31	Oando Plc	Oil & Gas	25.00%	● Male
34	MTN Nigeria Plc	Telecommunications	23.53%	● Male
35	Dangote Cement Plc	Industrial Goods	22.22%	● Male
35	BUA Cement Plc	Industrial Goods	22.22%	● Male
37	Total Energies Marketing Plc	Oil & Gas	22.22%	● Male
37	BUA Foods Plc	Consumer Goods	22.22%	● Male
39	Jaiz Bank Plc	Financials (Banking)	21.43%	● Male
40	Aiico Insurance Plc	Financials (Insurance)	20.00%	● Male
41	Okomu Oil Palm Co Plc	Agriculture	18.18%	● Male
41	eTranzact International Plc	ICT / Tech	18.18%	● Male
43	Julius Berger Nigeria Plc	Industrial Goods	16.67%	● Male
43	GTCO	Financials (Banking)	16.67%	● Male
43	Nigerian Aviation Handling Co	Hospitality & Services	16.67%	● Male
46	Champion Breweries Plc	Consumer Goods	15.38%	● Male
47	First HoldCo Plc	Financials (Banking)	11.11%	● Male
48	Conoil Plc	Oil & Gas	10.00%	● Male
49	Geregu Power Plc	Utilities (Power)	10.00%	● Male
50	United Capital Plc	Financials (Insurance)	8.33%	● Male

● Female      ● Male

50%

UAC of  
Nigeria Plc

62.50%

Cadbury  
Nigeria Plc

50%

Stanbic IBTC  
Holdings Plc

46.6%

United Bank  
for Africa Plc

44.44%

AXA Mansard  
Insurance Plc

60%

NASCON Allied  
Industries Plc

57.14%

Transcorp  
Hotel Plc

44.44%

Dangote Sugar  
Refinery Plc

44.44%

Nestle Nigeria  
Plc

44.44%

Presco Plc



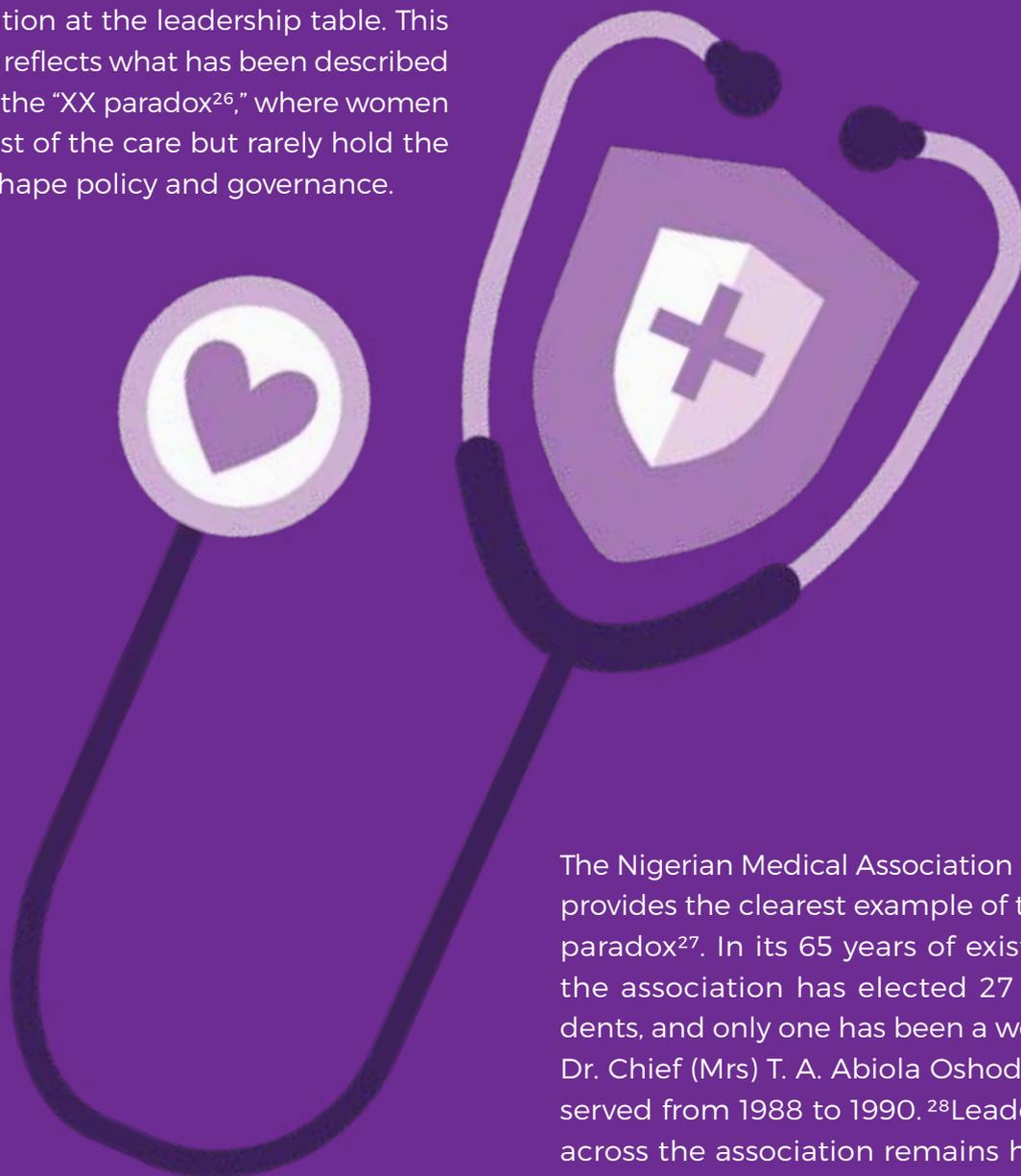
# Top 10 NGX Companies by % of Women on Boards (2025)

## Notes on Ranking Methodology

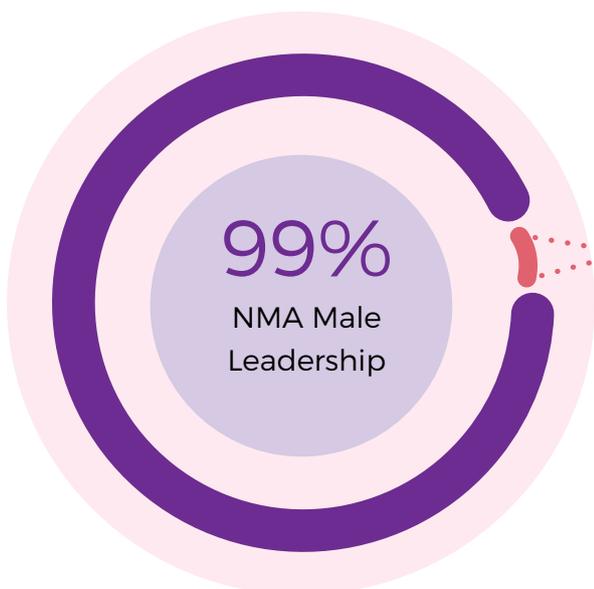
- The TOP 50 most capitalised companies on NGX are ranked by percentage of women on boards (descending order).
- In cases of a tie in percentages, the company with a female chairman is ranked higher.
- If tied companies have the same chairman gender, they share the same rank, and the next rank is skipped accordingly.

## 4.2 Women's Representation in Health Leadership and Associations

Women are the backbone of Nigeria's health workforce, providing essential services across health institutions. However, this dominance on the frontlines has not translated into representation at the leadership table. This imbalance reflects what has been described globally as the "XX paradox<sup>26</sup>," where women deliver most of the care but rarely hold the power to shape policy and governance.

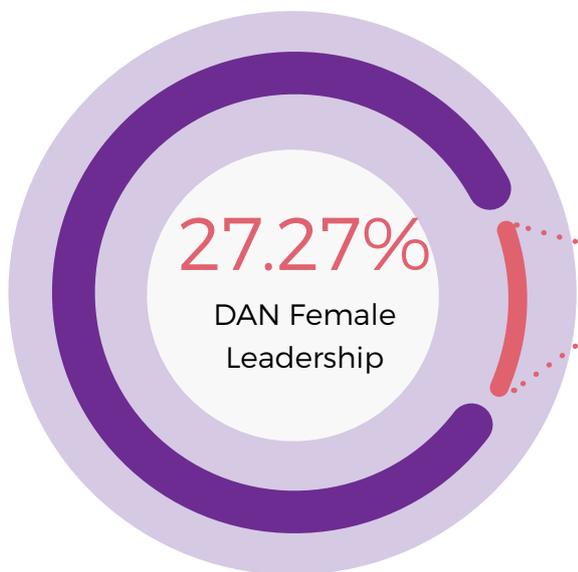


The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) provides the clearest example of the XX paradox<sup>27</sup>. In its 65 years of existence, the association has elected 27 presidents, and only one has been a woman: Dr. Chief (Mrs) T. A. Abiola Oshodi, who served from 1988 to 1990.<sup>28</sup> Leadership across the association remains heavily male-dominated. At the national level, all eleven executive positions are currently held by men. At the state level, out of 37 state chairmen listed on the NMA website, only one is a woman.



The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) association has elected 27 presidents, and only one has been a woman: **Dr. Chief (Mrs) T. A. Abiola Oshodi, who served from 1988 to 1990.**

Other health associations reflect similar patterns, although with slightly higher female representation. The Dental Association of Nigeria has three women among 11 leaders (27.27 percent), under a male presidency. The Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) has three women and nine men in leadership (25 percent), also led by a man. The National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), despite representing a workforce that is overwhelmingly female, has only two women in its 10-member leadership team (20 percent), also with a male president.



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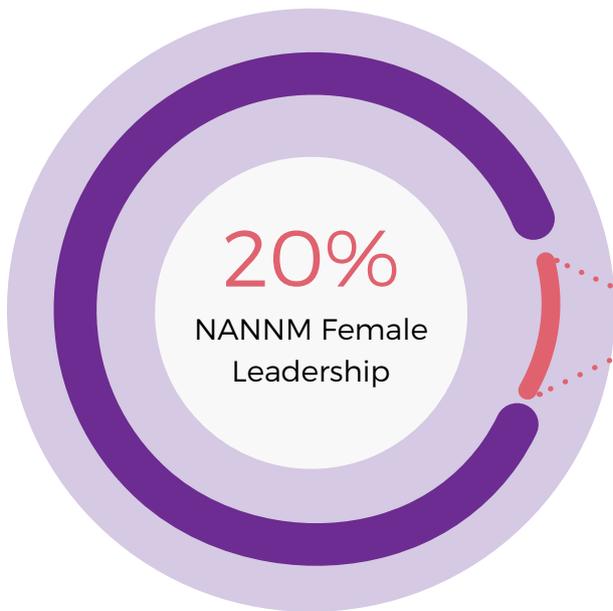
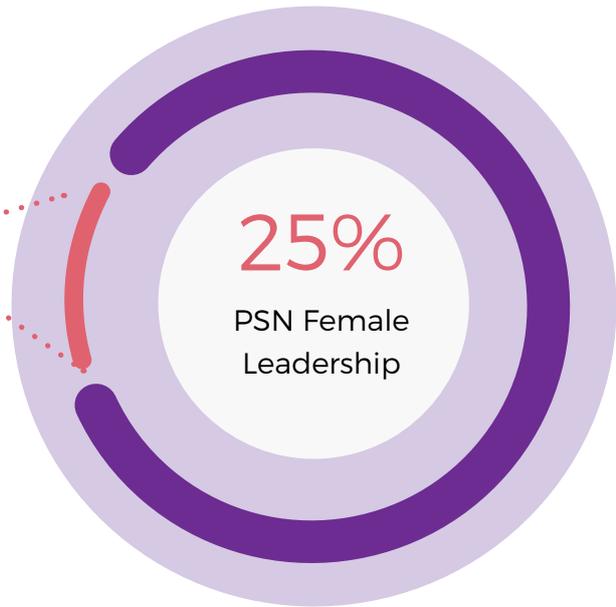
26 Women in Global Health. (2022). The state of women and leadership in health: Women in Global Health series – Gender equity and the health and care workforce. Women in Global Health. <https://womensingh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-State-of-Women-and-Leadership-in-Global-Health.pdf>

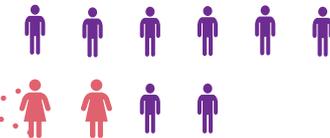
27 Women in Global Health. (2022). The state of women and leadership in health: Women in Global Health series – Gender equity and the health and care workforce. Women in Global Health. <https://womensingh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-State-of-Women-and-Leadership-in-Global-Health.pdf>

28 <https://thenma.ng/about/history/>

29 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2024). Women's leadership in global health: Going beyond barriers and shining a light on impact. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu>


  
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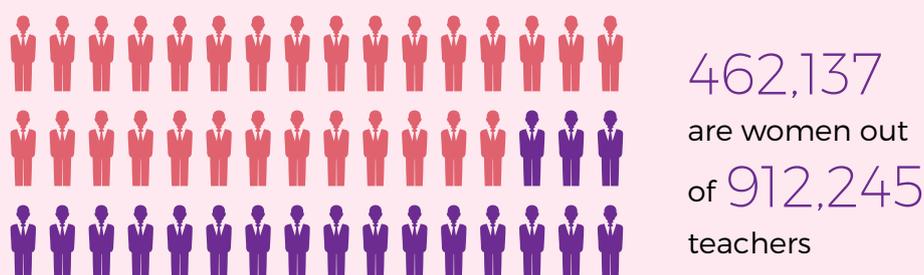
The same imbalance is seen at the ministerial level. Since independence in 1960, only one woman has ever been appointed as Nigeria's Minister of Health. Professor Adenike Grange was appointed in 2007, becoming Nigeria's first female Minister of Health.

This health leadership gap reflects global patterns. Worldwide, women account for about 25 percent of leadership positions in the sector<sup>29</sup>. This analysis provides deeper insight into the factors behind women's low representation in health sector leadership.

## 4.3 Women's Representation in the Educational sector

Women are key players in Nigeria's educational system. At the secondary level, the most recent World Bank data shows that of 912,245 teachers, 462,137 are women<sup>30</sup>, slightly more than half of the workforce. However, women's representation decreases sharply in higher education. A study on Gender Equality and the Educational System in Nigeria reported that in the 2016/2017 academic session, 33.8 percent of lecturers in federal colleges of education were women, while only 15.43 percent of professors in Nigerian universities were female<sup>31</sup>.

Leadership within universities remains especially male-dominated. Out of Nigeria's 270 universities, only 12 currently have female Vice Chancellors. Since independence in 1960, more than 720 individuals have held the position of Vice Chancellor, but only 38 have been women<sup>32</sup>. This imbalance shows how women's presence in the education workforce has not translated into leadership at the highest levels.



30 World Bank. (n.d.). Secondary education, teachers, female - Nigeria. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.TCHR.FE?locations=NG>

31 Enyioko, N. (2021). Gender equality and educational system in Nigeria. Medonice Consulting and Research Institute. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3825028>

32 Premium Times. (2022, March 8). Only 38 women have been vice-chancellors in Nigeria's history - Report. Premium Times. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/516306-only-38-women-have-been-vice-chancellors-in-nigerias-history-report.html>

33 <https://www.channelstv.com/2025/05/12/asuu-elects-new-president-chris-piwuna> : data showing transition of the National Executive leadership of ASUU and the new Executive members is however, yet to reflect on the official ASUU website as at July 29th 2025

34 <https://asupng.org/cno> : These are the names, offices, and gender designations for profiles without pictures: Precious Nwakodo, Financial Secretary (M); Hussaini James, Internal Auditor (M); Itoro Ekanamesang, Publicity Secretary (M); Awwal Darki, Assistant Secretary (M); Abdulazeez Badaru, Zone A Coordinator (M); Masopa Nurudeen, Zone C Coordinator (M); Richard Iloma, Zone D Coordinator (M).

35 [https://naatnational.org.ng/new\\_sites/meet-our-team/](https://naatnational.org.ng/new_sites/meet-our-team/)

36 [https://web.facebook.com/100063943668964/posts/the-senior-staff-association-of-nigerian-universities-ssanu-regret-to-announce-t/475659264456296/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/100063943668964/posts/the-senior-staff-association-of-nigerian-universities-ssanu-regret-to-announce-t/475659264456296/?_rdc=1&_rdr) : SSANU's National Administrative Committee (NAC) has 14 offices excluding the vacant office of the National Vice President North-West that became vacant as a result of office holder's demise.

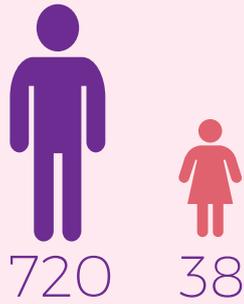
37 Nigeria Union of Teachers. (2024). NUT 2024 almanac. Nigeria Union of Teachers

38 <https://www.nappsng.org/executives> : These are the names, offices, and gender designations for profiles without pictures: Hajia Ashe Abbe Wakilbe, Treasurer (F); Pastor Peter Harrison, Financial Secretary (M); Comrade Jude Idakpo, Auditor (M); Pastor Gabriel Igbinjesu, Welfare Officer I (M); Hon. Michael Sanni, Legal Adviser (M); Alhaji Abdurrahman Marafa, Assistant Secretary-General (M); Barr Mrs. Theresa Igweani, Welfare Officer II (F).



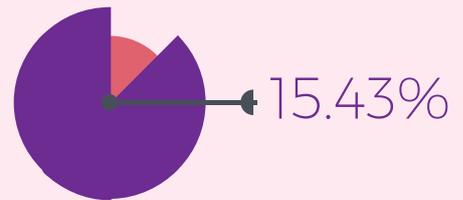


Nigeria's 270 universities, only 12 currently have female Vice Chancellors.



Since independence in 1960, more than 720 individuals have held the position of Vice Chancellor, but only 38 have been women.

Only 15.43 percent of professors in Nigerian universities are female.



Professional associations reflect the same trend. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has two women among nine leaders (22 percent), led by a male president<sup>33</sup>. The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) records no female representation in its 13-member leadership<sup>34</sup>. The National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) includes two women among 14 leaders<sup>35</sup>, while the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) has one woman in a 14-member<sup>36</sup> leadership structure (7.14 percent). All these associations are led by a man.

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), which represents over half a million members nationwide, presents a similar picture. Within its standing committee, only one of 12 members is female, and among its nine national officers, just one is a woman<sup>37,38</sup>.

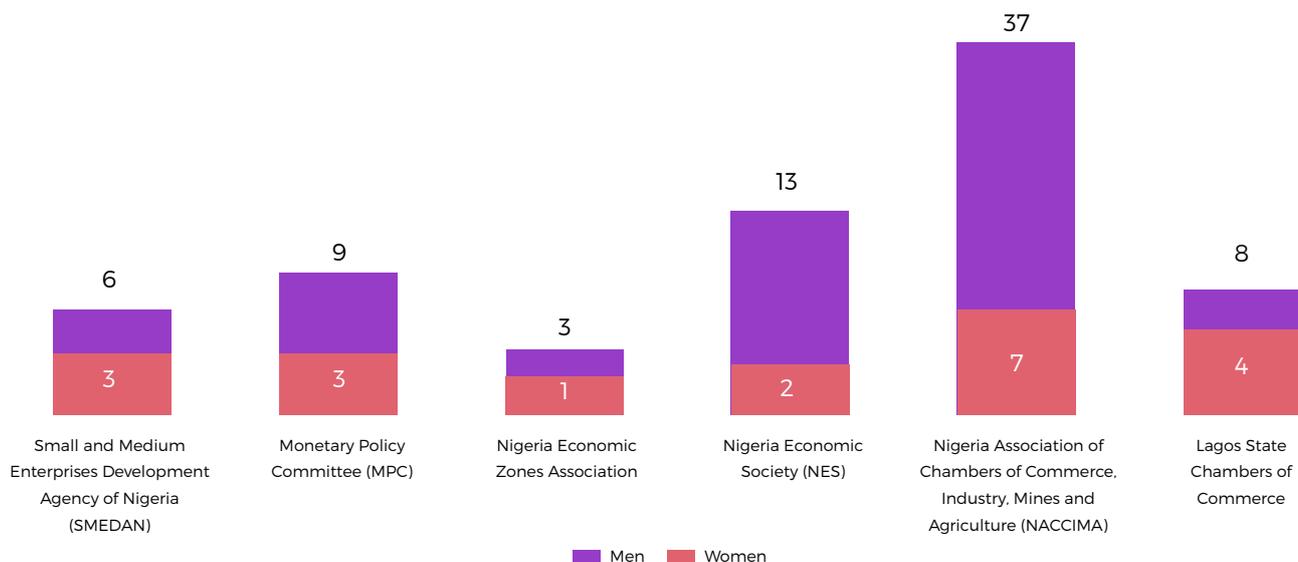
Overall, the data demonstrates that while women contribute substantially to Nigeria's education sector, their participation in governance and decision-making positions across associations and institutions remains limited.

## 4.4 Women's Representation in Economic Agencies, Associations and Committees

Women are important stakeholders in the economic development and revenue generation of Nigeria. However, leadership within the institutions that set economic policy and shape private sector governance remains dominated by men. The National Economic Council (NEC), established by the 1999 Constitution, is a key advisory body on the economic affairs of the country. Its membership is made up of the Vice President (as Chair) and the 36 state governors, which has meant that the Council has historically been entirely male. Other major policies and business platforms reflect the same imbalance.

Data compiled from official websites and credible sources shows that across selected institutions and associations including the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)<sup>39</sup>, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)<sup>40</sup> of the Central Bank, <sup>41</sup>has only seven<sup>42</sup> women among 44 leaders (15.91 percent), while the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) has two women out of 15 leaders (13.33 percent).

Number of Women in Economic Groups / Parastatal



Even where female representation is slightly higher, such as At the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the CEO and 33 percent of the officers of the chamber are women. It is worthy to note that the chamber inaugurated the LCCI women group in 2010 as an additional impetus for developing & growing women entrepreneurs and building the right network

39 <https://smedan.gov.ng/about-us>

40 <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/MonetaryPolicy/Committees.html#:~:text=The%20Monetary%20Policy%20Committee%20is,the%20event%20of%20an%20emergency.> : These are the names, offices, and gender designations for the committee composition : Olayemi Cardoso, Governor and Chairman (M); Bala Moh'd Bello, DG Operations (M); Muhammad Sani Abdullahi, DG Economic Policy (M); Philip Ikeazor, DG Financial System Stability (M); Emem Usoro, DG Corporate Services (F); Murtala Sabo Sagagi, Member (M); Yuguda Lamido Abubakar Member (M); Aloysius Uche Ordu, Member (M); Aku Pauline Odinkemelu, Member (F); Mustapha Akinkunmi, Member (M); Bandele A.C. Amoo, Member (M); Jafiya Lydia Shehu, Member (F)

41 <https://naccima.com/presidency>

42 <https://www.nigerianeconomicsociety.org.ng/governing-council>

## 4.5 Women's Representation in Law

Over the last decade, women have become increasingly visible within the Nigeria's legal profession. They now make up about half of all law school graduates, and most times female students record the highest number of first-class results and secure many academic excellence awards<sup>43</sup>. This implies there is a healthy pipeline of women who possess the skills, qualifications, and ambition required to thrive in the legal profession.

However, progression from law school success to leadership and recognition at the highest levels of the profession has been slow. As of 2021, only 29 women had attained the prestigious rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) out of 690 appointees, representing just 4.2 percent<sup>44</sup>, further highlighting the underrepresentation of women.

Broader sectoral data indicates a more nuanced picture. Women account for 40 percent of lawyers overall and 46 percent of lawyers in senior positions. Disaggregated by sector, women make up 61 percent of senior public sector lawyers, 55 percent in the corporate sector, 43 percent in law firms, and 33 percent in the judiciary<sup>46</sup>.



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These figures suggest that women are making progress in several segments of the profession, but it also reveals the bottlenecks at the very top of the system. The evidence is clearest in political and institutional leadership. As of August 2025, only four of Nigeria's 37 state Attorneys-General are women. Within the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), gender inclusion at the branch level also remains limited. In 2023, just five of the 128 NBA branches were led by women.

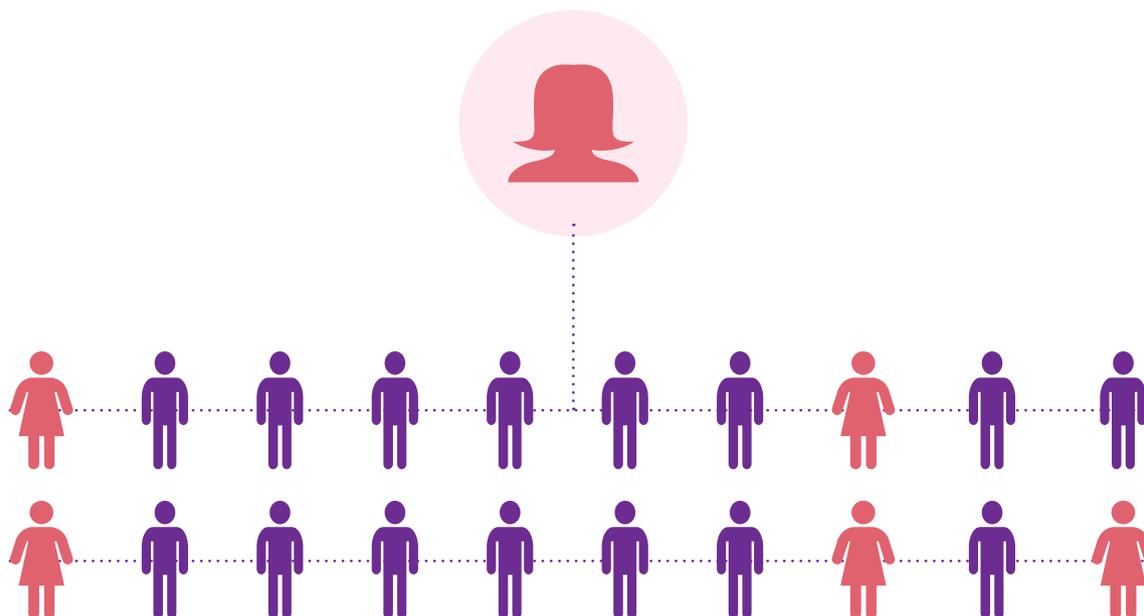
<sup>43</sup> Awomolo, V. O. (2021, November 11). The 21st century female legal practitioner: Prospects and challenges. Paper presented at the FIDA Kogi Law Week, Kogi State, Nigeria.

<sup>44</sup> Awomolo, V. O. (2021, November 11). The 21st century female legal practitioner: Prospects and challenges. Paper presented at the FIDA Kogi Law Week, Kogi State, Nigeria.

<sup>45</sup> International Bar Association & LexisNexis. (2024, December). 50:50 by 2030: A longitudinal study into gender disparity in law (Gender Progress Report). International Bar Association. <https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA-Gender-Progress-Report-December-2024>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.courtsofappeal.gov.ng/current-justices>

National Judicial Council (NJC) is chaired by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, a woman



At the association's national level, the NBA records gender balance in its executive committee (5 women and 5 men). The Nigerian Law Society (NLS) and the International Law Association (Nigerian Branch) have 33.3 percent and 40 percent women respectively, both with male presidents.

However, there are patterns of progress in judicial institutions like the National Judicial Council (NJC), which oversees the appointment, promotion, and discipline of judges. which The council includes six women among its 25 members (24 percent) and is currently chaired by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, a woman. On the website of the Court of Appeal, 28 of 75 justices (37.3 percent) are women, and the Court is headed by a female President of the Court of Appeal<sup>47</sup>. At the Supreme Court, women hold 6 of 20 seats (30 percent).

Nigeria has witnessed historic milestones in advancing women's representation within the judiciary and legal profession. Chief Folake Solanke became the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria in 1981. In 2012, Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar became the first female Chief Justice of Nigeria. In 2024, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun was appointed as the second female Chief Justice. The Court of Appeal has also seen two female Presidents in its history.

The legal sector emerges as the most progressive of the three sectors reviewed in this report. Women now sit on key judicial councils, lead the nation's highest courts, and are shaping the future of the profession in ways that were once unimaginable. The task ahead is to build on this momentum by ensuring that progress at entry and mid-levels is matched by consistent presence and influence at the very top.

## Conclusion

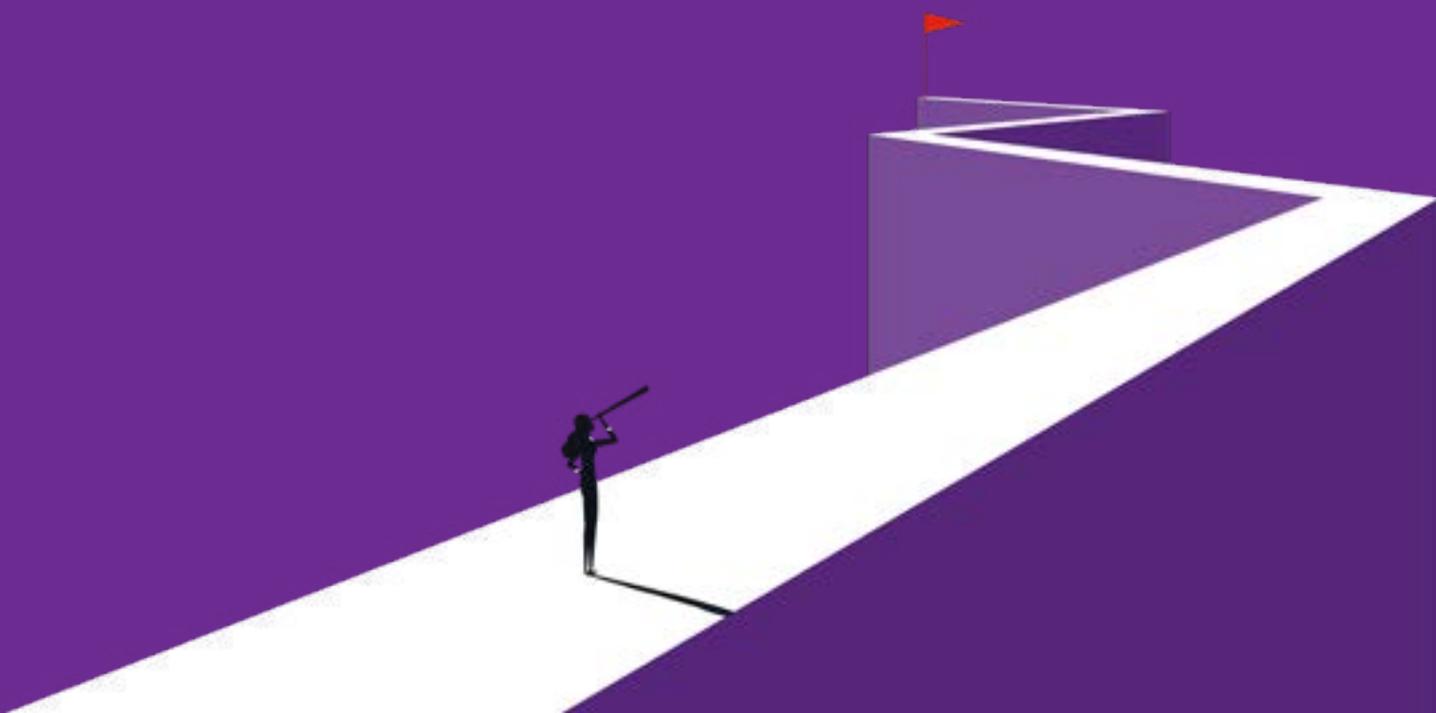
Across this report, one truth stands out clearly: progress is happening, but it remains fragile. Nigeria's leadership landscape shows that when systems are fair and transparent, women rise. The judiciary and financial sectors prove that inclusion is possible when institutions uphold a merit-based approach and are held accountable for results.

A merit-based system gives everyone a fair chance, but women still face higher barriers to leadership. As the 2021–2026 National Gender Policy draws to a close, women hold only 6.7 percent of elective and appointive positions. This figure reflects the gap between policy and practice and highlights how much more must be done to make equality in leadership a national reality.

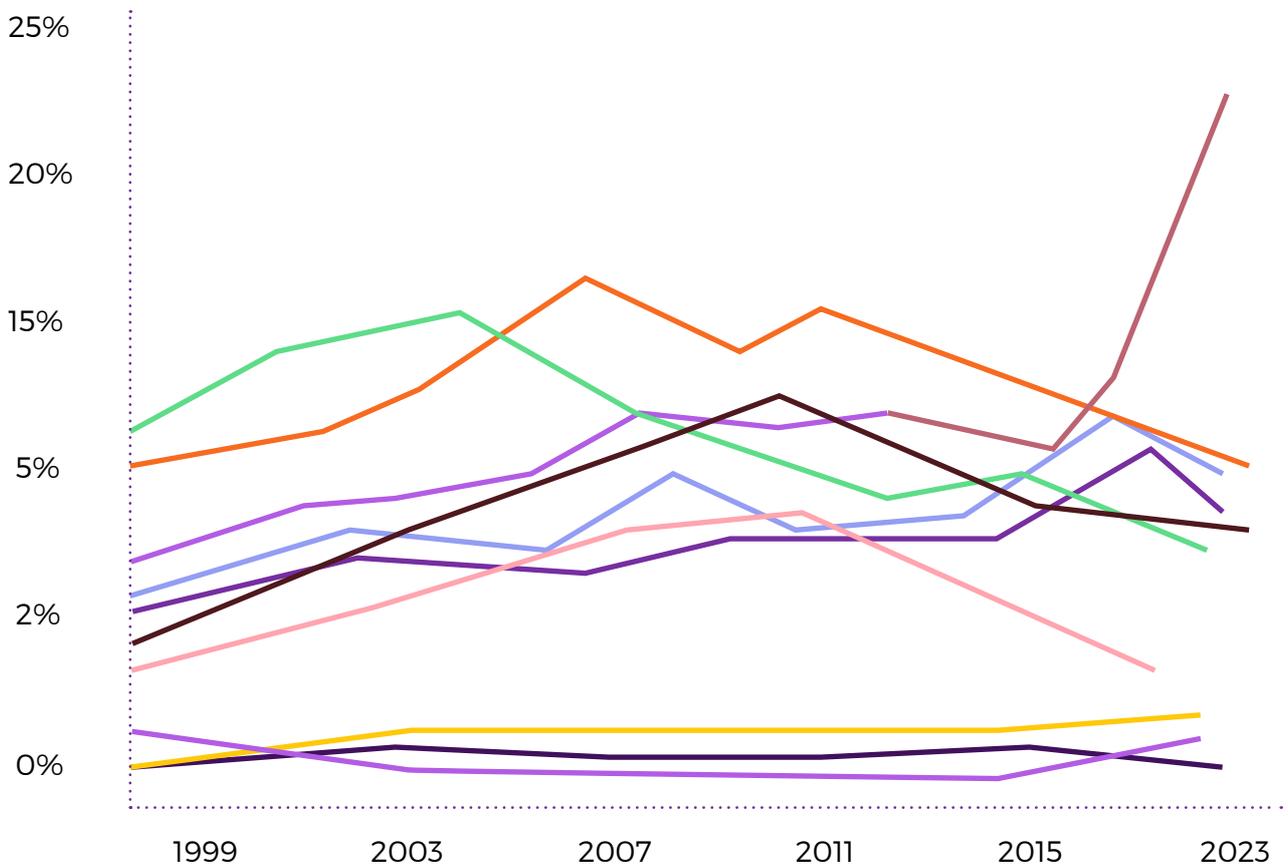
This first edition also acknowledges its limitations. Some data remain incomplete or time-bound, especially at the state and institutional levels. However, the ranking presented in this report offers a clear starting point for action. State governors can use it as a yardstick to evaluate progress in women's inclusion, while organisations and companies can reflect on their standing in the NGX Women in Leadership ranking to strengthen internal accountability and set new diversity goals.

WILAN will continue to publish The State of Women's Leadership in Nigeria Report every year, improving the quality of data, expanding its scope, and deepening analysis across sectors. Each edition will raise the standard for evidence-based advocacy and provide a credible tool for policy and institutional reform.

As Nigeria moves forward, the message is clear: it is her turn. The country cannot reach its full potential without the perspectives, skills, and leadership of its women.



## Women in Elective Positions, 1999-2025



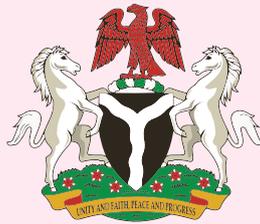
**Source:** Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women (2013); Akpan, Nse Etim, "Men without Women: An Analysis of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria"; CLGF; INEC reports; WILAN field data 2025.

## Women in Elective Positions, 1999–2025 *cont'd*

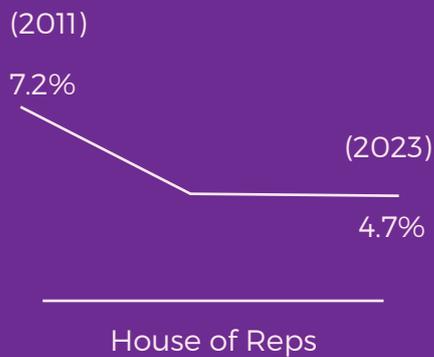
In 24 years, never had a Woman

- President (0)
- Vice President (0)
- Governor (0)

↑ Biggest Win



Biggest Loss ↓



Peak Year: (2007)

Highest % in 3/7 Offices

- Senate
- SHA Committee Chairpersons
- Local Government Chairpersons



The revised 2021–2026 National Gender Policy set a target to achieve the legislation of the implementation of 50 per cent affirmative action in both appointive and elective positions, but a year before the expiration of the revised policy, the national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained at 6.7 per cent average in elective and appointive positions.

# Women's Leadership Can Change Everything, Everywhere