

STATART INTELLIGENCE SERIES · WHITE PAPER

# Why Most Survey Data in Nigeria Cannot Be Trusted

And how to fix it, in 7 checks

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# Executive summary

**The question.** Why do so many surveys about Nigeria mislead the people who pay for them, and what should a buyer of research demand before a survey number goes in front of a board, a donor or an investment committee?

**What we mean by "cannot be trusted".** Not that the numbers are invented, but that they cannot be taken at face value: a survey weighted to population figures built on a 2006 count, checked against benchmarks that have since been rebuilt, and collected by a mode that shifts answers, needs to be tested before it is used. That is a claim about the shared foundations every national survey stands on, not a count of good and bad surveys; we did not grade a sample of commercial surveys (chapter 3).

**The short answer.** Most bad survey numbers in Nigeria are not lies. They are honest answers to the wrong arithmetic. Every survey that claims to speak for "Nigerian consumers" or "Lagos households" has to multiply a small sample up to a big population, and in Nigeria the big population is the least certain number in the economy. The last census counted 140,431,790 people in 2006 ([IOL, reporting the National Population Commission, 2009](#); [CityPost, 2025](#)). The census planned for 2023 was postponed and, 20 years on, no new date has been proclaimed ([Vanguard, 29 June 2026](#)). Since then the official yardsticks that surveys are checked against have been rebuilt: the CPI was rebased in 2025, GDP was rebased in 2025, and the unemployment definition changed in 2023. Phone surveys, the cheap fix, carry their own measured, question-dependent bias: in a World Bank experiment among rural Nigerian households, phone answers differed from in-person answers by 17% to 18% at the median across 20 questions ([World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 11302, February 2026](#)).

## What we found, in 5 numbers.

| Number       | What it means                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Source                                                                                       |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20 years     | Time since the last census (2006); no date proclaimed for the next                                                                                                                                                           | <a href="#">Vanguard, June 2026</a>                                                          |
| 25.6m people | Gap between the base the NCC still divides by in 2026 (the NPC's 2022 projection, 216.8m) and the UN's 2026 projection (242.4m): two denominators in official use, 10.6% apart and 4 years apart in reference date           | <a href="#">STATART arithmetic on ThisDay/NCC, Sept 2026 and UN WPP 2024 via Worldometer</a> |
| 10.32 points | Drop in headline inflation between December 2024 (34.80%, old base) and January 2025 (24.48%, new base) as originally published, most plausibly from the rebasing rather than from prices; the 2025 series was later revised | <a href="#">NAN, Feb 2025</a> ; <a href="#">ICIR, Feb 2025</a>                               |
| 17% to 18%   | Median gap between phone and in-person answers from the same rural households                                                                                                                                                | <a href="#">World Bank WP 11302</a>                                                          |
| About 7%     | Share of a large, well-run South African panel that fieldworkers fabricated before it was caught; there is no published equivalent study for Nigeria                                                                         | <a href="#">Finn and Ranchhod, World Bank Economic Review, 2017</a>                          |

**Our main call.** We put the odds that Nigeria conducts its population census enumeration before 31 December 2027 at **10%**. The odds that a date is proclaimed in that window but the count itself falls in 2028 or later are 25%, and the odds that no date is proclaimed at all by the end of 2027 are 65%. Buyers of research should plan on at least 2 more years of weighting surveys to projections built on a 2006 count.

**The decision.** Do not ban survey data. Grade it. Before a number reaches the board, run the 7 checks in chapter 8: frame, weights, mode, field verification, benchmark, precision and disclosure. Two checks are must-pass: a survey that fails the frame (it cannot reach the population it claims to describe) or field verification (it cannot show the interviews happened) should not be used at all, whatever its other scores. Of the rest, a survey that fails 2 or more should be treated as directional only, and its numbers should not be multiplied into market sizes, budgets or targets. Chapter 9 gives the templates.

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## 1. The question, stated plainly

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Every week someone in Lagos presents a slide that begins "X% of Nigerians". The number came from a survey. The audience nods, because a percentage with a decimal point looks like a measurement.

This paper asks whether that nod is earned. Specifically:

1. Why do surveys in Nigeria carry more hidden error than the margin of error printed in the footnote?
2. Which of those errors can a buyer detect from the outside, before paying, and which can only be caught in the field?
3. What should a buyer of research (a brand team, a bank, a development partner, an investor, a state government) demand from any supplier, including STATART?

We are not arguing that Nigerian survey research is uniquely dishonest. We found no study that measures fabrication rates in Nigerian commercial surveys, and we will not invent one. The case here is narrower and, we think, harder to dismiss: the foundations every survey stands on (the population count, the official benchmarks, the coverage of phones) are weaker in Nigeria than in most comparable markets, and most survey reports do not tell the reader how much that matters.

A note on the base rate. The printed margin of error on a survey only covers one kind of error: the luck of the draw when you pick a random sample from a perfect list. It does not cover a wrong list, wrong population totals, questions that people answer differently by phone, interviewers who fill in forms at home, or a benchmark that changed definition halfway through the series. In a market with a recent census and stable statistics, those other errors are usually small next to sampling error. In Nigeria in 2026, they are often bigger. That is the whole argument, and the rest of the paper is the evidence.

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## 2. The evidence

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### 2.1 The sampling frame problem: a 2006 census in a 2026 market

A survey sample is only as good as the list it is drawn from. National household surveys in Nigeria draw from enumeration areas (EAs) mapped by the National Population Commission (NPC), and they weight their results to population totals that ultimately trace back to the 2006 census.

That census counted **140,431,790** people ([IOL, 3 September 2009](#); confirmed by [CityPost, 16 April 2025](#)). It was contested from the start. Lagos State's count was 9.0 million; the state's own parallel exercise put it above 17.5 million ([Population Reference Bureau, April 2007](#)). In 2013 the National Census Tribunal nullified the 2006 results in 14 Lagos local government areas and ordered a recount; the official Lagos figure under challenge was 9,113,605, against a state estimate of at least 17.6 million ([Channels TV,](#)

[August 2013](#)). On those numbers the state's estimate was about **1.9x** the official count (STATART arithmetic: 17.6m divided by 9.11m). No recount result has been published that we could find.

History offers little comfort. The 1962 census results were withdrawn, the reliability of the 1963 census has long been questioned, the 1973 census was discredited and never published, and no census was held in 1981 ([PRB, 2007](#)). The last 2 accepted counts, 1991 and 2006, were 15 years apart. The country is now 20 years past the last one.

The next count was due in 2016, slipped repeatedly, was set for May 2023 and was then postponed ([Gazette, November 2023](#); [Guardian](#)). The NPC told the House of Representatives in 2023 that it had spent N200bn of an N800bn census budget ([Gazette, 1 November 2023](#)); in June 2026 the figure reported was still "nearly N200bn" spent, including more than 760,000 digital devices, against about N800bn approved ([Vanguard, 29 June 2026](#)). A presidential committee was set up in April 2025 to review the budget and propose a "realistic date", and the NPC's own site put the proposed cost of a biometric census at N949bn ([NPC, 22 April 2025](#)). As of late June 2026, no date had been proclaimed; only the President can proclaim one ([Vanguard, June 2026](#)). All naira figures are nominal.

**Why this matters to a survey buyer.** Two things go stale when a census ages. The first is the map: new estates, new informal settlements and whole new suburbs around Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Kano did not exist as listed dwellings in 2006. If a sample is drawn from old EA lists without fresh listing, those households have zero chance of selection. The second is the totals: every weighting scheme needs to know how many people live in each state, in urban and rural areas, by age and sex. Those numbers are now projections stacked 20 years high on a contested base.

There is real progress to acknowledge. The 2023 to 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey drew its sample from "the updated cartographical frame prepared for the planned first fully digital Population and Housing Census" ([DHS Program, NDHS 2023-24 Key Indicators Report](#)). In other words, the NPC's new mapping work is already being used even though the count has not happened. That is a better frame than 2006. It is still a frame without a fresh headcount behind it.

## 2.2 How far apart are the official denominators?

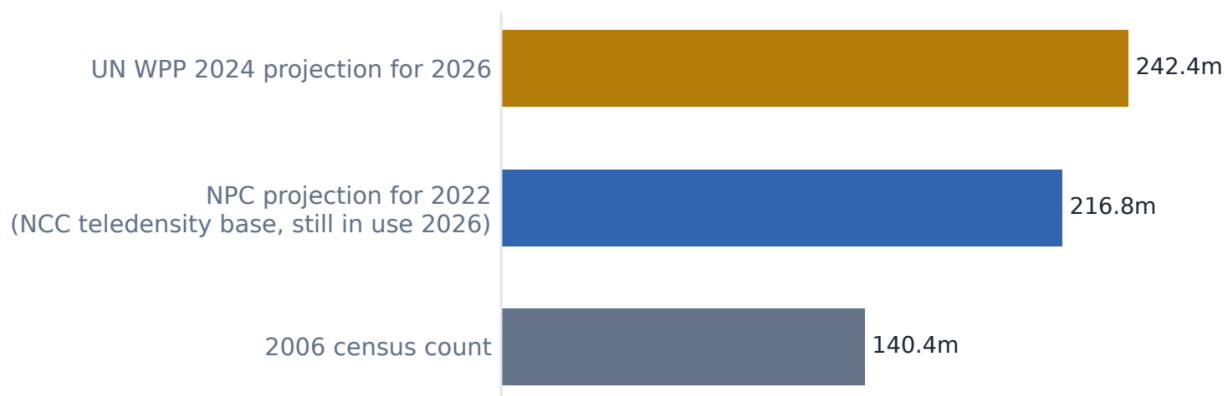
Here is a quick test anyone can run. Nigeria's population is a number that 3 respectable institutions publish, in effect, and they do not agree.

- **The 2006 census:** 140.4m ([IOL](#)).
- **The UN World Population Prospects 2024:** 237.5m in 2025 ([UNFPA World Population Dashboard](#)) and 242.4m projected for mid 2026 ([UN WPP 2024 via Worldometer](#)).
- **The base the telecoms regulator divides by, the NPC's 2022 projection:** NCC data reported 192,232,120 active telephony subscriptions in June 2026 with teledensity of 88.67% ([ThisDay, 3 September 2026](#)). Teledensity is subscriptions per 100 people, so the implied population is 192.23m divided by 0.8867, or about **216.8m** (STATART arithmetic). The August 2026 figures in the NCC's own statistics (197.42m subscriptions, 91.07% teledensity) imply the same 216.8m ([NCC industry statistics](#)). That is not a coincidence or a fresh estimate: from its September 2023 reports the NCC adopted the National Population Commission's projection of 216,783,381 for 2022 as its teledensity base, replacing a 2017 projection of 190m ([Guardian, January 2024](#); [Marketing Edge](#)).

So in mid 2026 the UN's denominator is about **25.6m people, or 10.6%, larger** than the base the NCC still uses (STATART arithmetic: 242.4m minus 216.8m). Part of that gap is simply time: the NCC's base is

a projection for 2022, the UN's is for 2026. The point is not that 2 estimates of the same year disagree by 10%. It is that public bodies in 2026 are dividing by bases that differ by 10%, one of them 4 years stale, and that both rest on projections from a 2006 count. We do not know which is closer to the truth. Nobody does; that is what a census is for. The UN's figure implies the population grew 69% from 2006 to 2025, or about 2.8% a year compounded (STATART arithmetic on 140.43m and 237.5m over 19 years).

**Figure 1.** Three population figures in public use (different reference years)



Sources: NPC 2006 census via IOL; NPC 2022 projection adopted by the NCC (Guardian, Marketing Edge; matches 192.23m / 0.8867); UN WPP 2024 via Worldometer. The bars are not 3 estimates of the same year.

Now think about what a 10% denominator gap does downstream. Suppose a survey finds that 30% of adults use a product, and the supplier multiplies by "the adult population" to produce a market size. Pick the UN base and you get one number; pick a base 10% smaller and the market shrinks by 10%, with no change in the survey at all. Most market sizing decks do not say which base they used. Many do not know.

Note what this error does and does not touch. A wrong population total changes the *number* of buyers: 30% of 100m adults is 30m, of 110m it is 33m. It does not, by itself, change a properly weighted *share*. The share is damaged by a different error, a wrong *distribution* of the population by state, age, sex or urban and rural, which skews the weights. Projections from an old census can carry both errors, and the 7 checks in chapter 8 test for each separately.

## 2.3 Moving benchmarks: CPI, GDP and the labour force

The second foundation is the set of official numbers that survey results are checked against. If a consumer survey says household spending on food is rising, the natural cross-check is food inflation. If a jobs survey says 30% of young people are out of work, the natural cross-check is the official unemployment rate. In Nigeria, all 3 of the main yardsticks changed definition in the last 4 years.

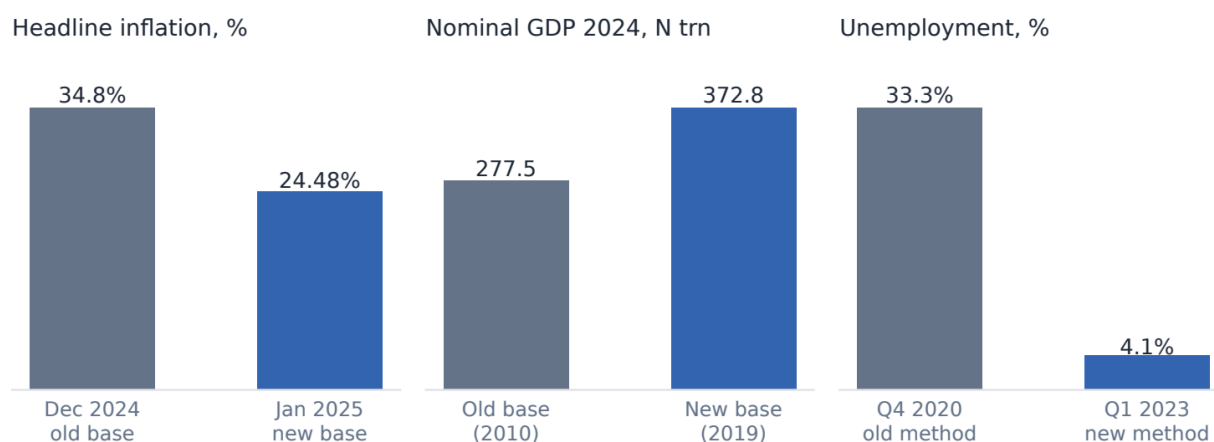
**Inflation.** In February 2025 the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) rebased the CPI from 2009 to 2024, with 2023 as the weight reference year, moved to the COICOP 2018 classification (12 divisions to 13) and expanded the basket from 740 to 934 product varieties (NAN, 26 February 2025; Guardian). Headline inflation printed 24.48% for January 2025, against 34.80% for December 2024 on the old series (NAN, 18 February 2025; ICIR, 18 February 2025). Food inflation went from 39.84% to 26.08% between those 2 months (ICIR). These are the figures as originally published; the 2025 series was later revised. The 2 readings differ in both month and method, so we cannot split the 10.32 points exactly between them, but no plausible 1-month change in prices comes close to 10 points: most of the fall was a change of ruler, not a change of prices. Any survey that tracks "perceived price pressure" across late 2024 and early 2025 and

validates itself against official inflation will appear to show a collapse that never happened in shoppers' purses.

**Output.** In July 2025 the NBS rebased GDP from 2010 to 2019. Nominal GDP for 2024 rose to N372.8trn from an earlier estimate of N277.5trn ([Africa Check, August 2025](#); [Ecofin Agency, July 2025](#)). That is a 34.3% increase on our arithmetic (Africa Check rounds it to 34.4%). Note how easily the headline mutates: Ecofin reported the same rebasing as a 41.7% jump because it compared the new dollar figure with an IMF forecast, not with the old NBS estimate ([Ecofin](#)). Both numbers are "correct". They answer different questions. That is the benchmark problem in miniature.

**Jobs.** In August 2023 the NBS moved its labour force survey to the 19th ICLS framework. Under the old method, unemployment was 33.3% in Q4 2020; under the new one it was 4.1% in Q1 2023 ([Nairametrics, 25 August 2023](#); [Proshare, 28 August 2023](#)). The old method counted people as employed if they worked at least 20 hours a week; the new one counts anyone working at least 1 hour, and the working-age range widened from 15 to 64 to 15 and above ([Proshare](#); [Nairametrics](#)). The 2 headline numbers differ by a factor of about 8x. Then the series went quiet: the latest headline we can find is 4.3% for Q2 2024, released in November 2024 ([Guardian, 25 November 2024](#)), and a September 2025 report was still citing Q2 2024 as the latest NBS figure ([AllAfrica, September 2025](#)). A buyer of a jobs survey in late 2026 has no current official benchmark at all.

**Figure 2.** Same economy, new yardstick: 3 official series before and after a method change



Sources: NBS via NAN (CPI), Africa Check (GDP), Nairametrics (unemployment). The changes are mostly method, not economy.

None of these changes is a scandal. Rebasing is what good statistics offices do, and the new definitions follow international standards. The problem is for the survey buyer who does not notice that the yardstick moved. The rule is simple: **never compare a survey result with an official series across a rebasing date without saying so.**

## 2.4 Mode effects: the phone is not a neutral instrument

The cheapest way around an old frame and insecure fieldwork is to call people. Nigeria has the subscriptions for it. But a phone interview is a different measuring instrument from a face-to-face one, and in Nigeria that difference has now been measured with unusual rigour.

The World Bank's Development Data Group embedded an experiment in the fifth wave of the General Household Survey Panel (2023 to 2024) in rural, mostly agricultural EAs ([World Bank WP 11302, February 2026](#)). It gave 937 households phones and SIM cards across 105 EAs, then randomly assigned

them to be interviewed by phone first or in person first, and asked the same 20 questions both ways. The findings:

- Phone answers differed from in-person answers by **18% at the median** comparing different respondents, and **17%** comparing the same respondents.
- 55% of respondents gave inconsistent answers across the 2 modes. On averages, positive and negative differences partly cancel, which hides how unstable individual answers are.
- By phone, people were more likely to agree with statements (+34.7 percentage points on locus-of-control items), to say "yes" to yes/no questions (+19.4 points), to pick extreme values on wellbeing scales (+16.7 points) and to round numbers (+11.8 points).
- Inconsistency rose with the number of answer options: from 36% on binary questions to 82% on 10-point wellbeing scales.
- Some topics were nearly mode-proof (dietary diversity differed by only 2% to 4%). Others were badly affected: COVID-19 vaccination (about 62% to 63%), running a household enterprise (50% to 61%), contact with health workers (42% to 56%). Health spending differences were outliers at about 199% to 255%.
- Respondents with more education were less prone to mode effects.
- Coverage bias from who owns a phone was real but smaller: about 21% of the size of the mode effect at the median. For 8 of the 20 outcomes, coverage and mode effects pushed in opposite directions, so they can mask each other in the totals.

The authors are careful about what they cannot say. Without an objective benchmark they cannot tell which mode is closer to the truth; enumerators differed between modes; the in-person interview sat inside a survey averaging 238 minutes; phone respondents got airtime ([World Bank WP 11302](#)). We share the caution. But the direction of the lesson is unambiguous: **a phone survey and a face-to-face survey on the same topic are not the same series, and agreement scales and spending questions are the worst offenders**. That is exactly the kind of question brand trackers and customer satisfaction studies lean on.

There is also a quieter phone-survey problem: attrition. The NBS and World Bank COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey sampled 3,000 households from the GHS-Panel, reached 69% and fully interviewed 94% of those, yielding 1,950 households; by round 11 the full panel was down to 1,472 ([NBS microdata catalogue](#)). That is 75% of the baseline retained (STATART arithmetic). The team corrected for this with a 7-step weighting process, calibrating to the face-to-face panel and including household phone ownership as a balancing variable ([NBS](#)). That is what good practice looks like. Most commercial phone panels in Nigeria do not publish anything comparable.

## 2.5 Field quality: fabrication, and what we do not know

This is the section where we have to be most honest about the evidence. **We did not find a published study measuring the rate of interview fabrication in Nigerian surveys**. Anyone who quotes you a precise Nigerian fabrication rate should be asked for the source. What we have is international evidence and an argument from incentives.

The best-documented case comes from South Africa. In the National Income Dynamics Study, a large and well-funded longitudinal survey, fieldworker fabrication "affected about 7% of the sample" before it was detected during fieldwork and the interviews were redone ([Finn and Ranchhod, World Bank Economic Review, 2017](#)). The authors found 2 things that every buyer should remember. First, the fake interviews

would not have badly distorted simple averages, which is why fabrication can survive a casual review. Second, they would have substantially changed conclusions from panel estimates, the kind used to track change over time. They estimated the quality investigation returned at least 24x its cost.

Detection is harder than it sounds. In 2015 researchers proposed flagging datasets where respondents matched each other on more than 85% of answers, and concluded that about 1 in 5 international survey datasets likely contained falsified data. Pew Research Center tested the method and found the claim "not well supported": the threshold flags honest data too, depending on questionnaire length, answer options and how similar the population is. A Pew survey of 2,002 Americans with 52 questions had 13% "high matches" with no suspected falsification ([Pew Research Center, February 2016](#)). Pew's advice is to combine methods (paradata, back-checks, vendor engagement) rather than trust a single statistic.

Why might Nigeria be at higher risk than South Africa? We cannot measure it, but the incentives point one way. Enumerators are typically paid per completed interview; travel to remote or insecure EAs is costly and sometimes dangerous; supervision is thin when budgets are squeezed; and buyers rarely ask for back-check logs. Insecurity is not hypothetical: the NDHS 2023-24 could not complete 20 of its 1,400 selected clusters because of insecurity, across Zamfara, Katsina, Borno, Kaduna, Niger, Benue and Imo ([DHS Program](#)). That is 1.4% of clusters for one of the best-resourced surveys in the country (STATART arithmetic). A commercial survey working to a tighter budget faces the same roads with less money and less oversight. The pressure to "complete" an interview without visiting is real.

Our position, stated as odds: we think it is more likely than not that some fabrication exists in a typical commercial face-to-face survey in Nigeria that has no independent back-checks, but we cannot put a credible number on the share, and we will not.

## 2.6 What good looks like: it exists, in Nigeria

It would be wrong to leave the impression that reliable survey data cannot be produced here. It is produced, regularly, by teams that pay for the controls.

- **The NDHS 2023-24** used a stratified 2-stage design across 74 strata (every state and the FCT, split urban and rural), selected 1,400 clusters of 30 households, and interviewed 40,047 households with a 99.3% household response rate, 39,050 women (98.7%) and 12,204 men (98.2%) ([DHS Program, NDHS 2023-24 Key Indicators Report; NDHS Summary Report](#)). It publishes its design, its exclusions and its response rates.
- **Afrobarometer Round 10 in Nigeria** interviewed 1,600 adults face to face in June and July 2024 on a "nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample", and reports a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points at 95% confidence ([Afrobarometer](#)). That margin is exactly what simple random sampling gives for 1,600 interviews (1.96 times the square root of 0.25 divided by 1,600, or 2.45 points, STATART arithmetic), so read it as a floor, not the full error.
- **The COVID-19 phone panel** published its contact rates, response rates and every weighting step ([NBS](#)).

The international standards are also clear and free to read. The American Association for Public Opinion Research requires immediate disclosure of 11 items whenever results are released: data collection method; sponsor and conductor; exact question wording; population studied; how the sample was generated, including the frame and its coverage gaps; mode and languages; dates; sample sizes and precision, including design effects; how weights were built and from what population sources; data processing and quality checks; and a limitations statement ([AAPOR Code, Disclosure Standards](#)). ISO

20252, the international standard for market, opinion and social research service requirements, was published in its third edition in February 2019 to encourage "consistency and transparency" from first contact to reporting (ISO, February 2019); ISO's page now lists that edition as withdrawn, so buyers should ask suppliers which current edition they follow.

The gap, in other words, is not knowledge. It is that most buyers do not ask.

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### 3. Method, in the open

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**What we did.** This paper is desk research. We started from the STATART private research log, then opened every original or secondary source cited here between 24 and 26 October 2026, and kept a figure only when a primary source or 2 independent outlets confirmed it. The primary sources are the World Bank working paper, the DHS reports, the NBS microdata documentation, the AAPOR code, the Afrobarometer summary, the ISO page and the peer-reviewed Finn and Ranchhod article. NBS headline statistics come via 2 outlets each, because the NBS website was unreliable during the research window. Every naira figure is nominal and in the year stated.

**What we did not do.** STATART did not run a survey, a field audit or a fabrication test for this paper. Nothing here rests on unpublished STATART fieldwork. Where we say "STATART arithmetic", we mean our own calculation on the published figures cited beside it, which a reader can repeat.

**What the data cannot tell you.**

- **The true population.** We show that denominators in official use differ by about 10%, partly because they refer to different years. We cannot say which is right.
- **The fabrication rate in Nigeria.** No published Nigerian study exists that we could find. The 7% figure is South African, from 1 survey, and should be read as proof that fabrication happens in well-run projects, not as a Nigerian estimate.
- **Which mode is "true".** The World Bank experiment measured differences between phone and in-person answers, not which one is closer to reality.
- **Commercial survey quality in general.** We have no sample of commercial Nigerian surveys to grade. Our argument is that the foundations are weak and the controls are often missing, not that any particular supplier's data is wrong.

**Figures we did not use.** The World Bank Statistical Performance Indicator overall score for Nigeria, because published sources give different values. GSMA's 2024 mobile gender gap figures for Nigeria and a reported 2026 NPC budget allocation, because neither could be confirmed in a second source. We did not use any pack-size or brand-switching survey figures.

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### 4. Analysis: how the errors stack

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The printed margin of error measures 1 thing. Here is the full stack, in the order the errors enter a typical Nigerian consumer survey, with what each does to the number on the slide.

**Layer 1: frame error.** If the list misses new settlements, those households cannot be sampled. Growth areas on the edge of big cities tend to be younger, more mobile and more likely to be new to a category,

so a stale frame understates exactly the consumers most brands want to find. Size: unknown, and growing every year without a census.

**Layer 2: weighting error.** The sample is weighted to population totals by state, urban and rural, age and sex. If those totals are projections from 2006, the weights inherit the error. And because the choice of total is often silent, 2 suppliers can produce different national figures from similar samples. Size: at the national level, the gap between plausible denominators is about 10% (chapter 2.2); at state level it can be far larger, as the Lagos dispute showed (official count about half of the state's own estimate).

**Layer 3: mode error.** A phone survey of the same people would give different answers by 17% to 18% at the median, and more on agreement scales and spending (chapter 2.4). Size: large, and it does not shrink with sample size.

**Layer 4: field error.** Fabrication, interviewer effects, skipped questions, rushed interviews. Size in Nigeria: unmeasured. Internationally, 7% fabrication was found in 1 well-run panel (chapter 2.5).

**Layer 5: sampling error.** The bit in the footnote. For a simple random sample of 1,000, plus or minus 3.1 points on a 50% result at 95% confidence; with a typical design effect of 1.5 from clustering, about 3.8 points (STATART arithmetic). For a state subgroup of 200, plus or minus 6.9 points before design effects and about 8.5 after.

**Layer 6: benchmark error.** When the survey is "validated" against official data that changed definition (chapter 2.3), a correct survey can look wrong and a wrong one can look right.

Two things follow. First, **errors in layers 1 to 4 and 6 do not shrink as you add interviews.** Doubling the sample halves nothing but layer 5. A buyer who pays for 4,000 interviews instead of 1,000 to "get more accuracy" may be buying precision around the wrong number. Second, **the errors do not reliably cancel.** In the World Bank experiment, coverage and mode effects pushed in opposite directions on 8 of 20 outcomes. Sometimes they offset; sometimes they add. You cannot know which without measuring.

**A worked illustration (hypothetical, for the arithmetic only).** A brand commissions a phone survey of 1,000 adults and finds 40% "regularly buy" its category. The supplier quotes plus or minus 3.1 points. Now apply the layers. If phone respondents over-report "yes" answers in the way the World Bank experiment found for binary questions, the true rate could be several points lower. If the weights use a population base 10% larger than the truth, the market size built on that 40% is 10% too big even if the percentage is right. If 5% of interviews were fabricated by enumerators who default to "yes", the rate moves again. None of these shifts appears in the plus or minus 3.1. The honest statement is not "40%, plus or minus 3". It is "probably somewhere in the 30s or low 40s, and we have not measured the biggest risks". That is less satisfying. It is also less likely to sink a business plan.

**Signal versus noise.** What survives all of this? Relative comparisons inside the same survey (brand A versus brand B, this region versus that one, measured the same way at the same time) are far sturdier than absolute levels, because most of the stacked errors hit both sides of the comparison. Changes over time are sturdy only if the frame, mode, questionnaire and weighting scheme stayed the same, and Finn and Ranchhod's finding about panel estimates is a reminder that fabrication can hit trends harder than levels. Absolute market sizes that multiply a survey percentage by a population total are the weakest product of all, because they carry every layer at once.

## 5. Scenarios and odds: will Nigeria count itself before 2028?

The single biggest fix for layers 1 and 2 would be a credible census. So the main call of this paper is about whether one happens soon.

**The base rate.** Since independence, Nigeria has produced 2 broadly accepted censuses, in 1991 and 2006, 15 years apart; 1962 was withdrawn, 1963 questioned and 1973 discredited ([PRB](#)). The 2016 and 2023 targets were both missed. A presidential committee set up in April 2025 was given 3 weeks for interim recommendations ([CityPost](#)); 14 months later, no date had been proclaimed ([Vanguard, June 2026](#)).

**The calendar.** INEC's revised timetable puts the presidential and National Assembly elections on 16 January 2027 and governorship and state assembly elections on 6 February 2027 ([Voice of Nigeria, 27 February 2026](#); [AllAfrica, February 2026](#)). A census is politically sensitive because population drives revenue sharing and representation; holding one in the run-up to a national vote has been questioned publicly ([Guardian](#)). Realistically, a proclamation is more likely after the new administration is in place from mid 2027, and a count needs months of mobilisation after proclamation.

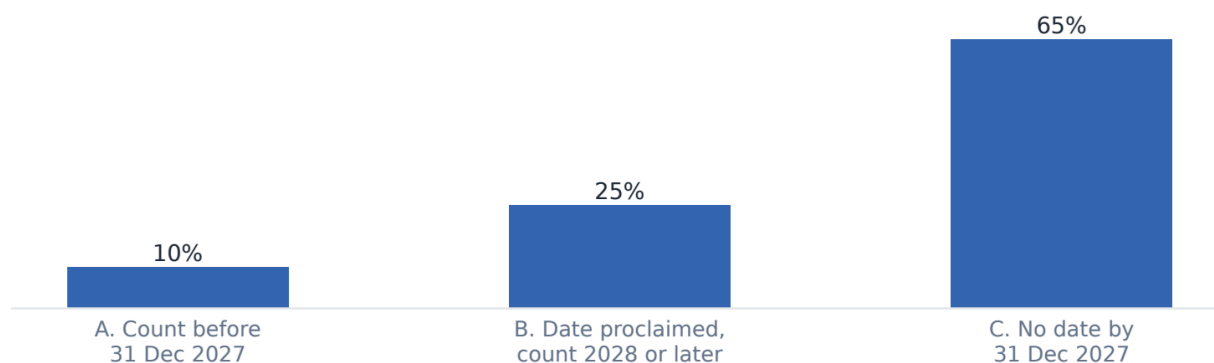
**The money and the field.** The proposed cost of a biometric census was put at N949bn in April 2025 ([NPC](#)); about N200bn had been spent by 2023, and the devices bought for it age every year ([Gazette](#); [Vanguard](#)). Insecurity still keeps survey teams out of some clusters ([DHS Program](#)).

**The case for it happening.** The NPC says preparations for a digital census are "largely completed" and that it is ready once a date is announced; the presidency calls population data "the greatest asset of the nation" ([Vanguard, June 2026](#)). The cartographic frame is already good enough that the NDHS used it ([DHS Program](#)). A new administration might want an early, visible reform.

**Our odds (by 31 December 2027):**

| Scenario                                                                                  | Probability |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| A. Census enumeration takes place before 31 December 2027                                 | 10%         |
| B. A date is proclaimed by 31 December 2027, but the enumeration is set for 2028 or later | 25%         |
| C. No census date is proclaimed by 31 December 2027                                       | 65%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                              | <b>100%</b> |

**Figure 3.** Odds on a Nigerian census by the end of 2027



STATART judgements, scored publicly against outcomes.

Why so low for A? Three hurdles have to be cleared in sequence inside 14 months: a national election cycle, a proclamation and funding of most of a N949bn budget, then field mobilisation. Each has failed before. Even a quick proclamation after the elections would leave little time to count in 2027. We would not go below 10%, because the preparatory work and devices exist, and a determined government could move fast.

**A second call.** We put the odds that the NBS publishes a labour force survey headline for any quarter after Q2 2024 by 30 June 2027 at **50%**. The series has been silent for about 2 years on the evidence we can find, but the NBS has delivered major methodology work recently (CPI and GDP rebasing), and a resumed labour survey would be the natural next step.

**What this means for buyers.** On our odds, there is a 90% chance that every Nigerian survey commissioned in 2027 will still be weighted to projections from the 2006 count, or to modelled estimates such as the UN's. Plan accordingly: ask which projection, and ask for sensitivity to a different one.

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## 6. Implications by audience

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**Brand and insight teams.** Your tracker's trend lines are more fragile than they look if the supplier has changed mode (face to face to phone or online), frame or weighting scheme. Ask for a written "series break" log. Prefer relative measures (share, rank, preference between options) to absolute claims ("40% of Nigerians"). Never let a survey percentage be multiplied into a market size without a stated population source and a range.

**Banks, investors and lenders.** Market sizes in business plans and information memoranda often stack a survey percentage on a population total on an average spend figure. Each is uncertain; multiplied together, the uncertainty compounds. Ask for the population base used and for the result recomputed on a second base. A plan that only works on the largest plausible denominator is a plan with a hidden assumption.

**Development partners and NGOs.** Programme baselines and endlines are panel comparisons, which is exactly where Finn and Ranchhod found fabrication does most damage. Budget for independent back-checks and audio audits, and keep the mode constant between baseline and endline. If the mode must change, budget for a parallel subsample in both modes.

**Federal and state governments.** State-level figures inherit the full weight of the 2006 disputes. Where state population matters for allocation or planning, use ranges and say which projection you used. Supporting the NBS to resume regular labour statistics and the NPC to complete the census is the highest-return data investment on the table.

**Research suppliers, including STATART.** The 7 checks below are the bar we expect to be held to. Suppliers who cannot answer them should not be surprised when buyers walk away.

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## 7. The four tests this paper applies to itself

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A white paper should pass its own test. Ours are: 1 question stated up front (page 1: why survey numbers mislead, and what to demand); evidence you can check (every figure linked to its source, with retrieval dates in the appendix); method in the open (chapter 3, including what we cannot tell you and what we cut); and a decision at the end (chapter 8). If you find a figure here that fails, tell us at [support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com](mailto:support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com) and we will correct it publicly.

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## 8. What should you do: the 7-check commissioning playbook

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Use these checks before you commission a survey, and again before you put any survey number in front of decision makers. Score each check Pass, Partial or Fail.

**Decision rule.** First, the must-pass checks: a Fail on Check 1 (frame) or Check 4 (field verification) means the survey should not be used for any number, whatever else it scores, because no weighting can repair a sample that cannot reach the population or interviews that cannot be shown to have happened. Then count the Fails on the other 5 checks. 0 to 1 Fails: usable as evidence, with the caveats noted. 2 to 3 Fails: directional only; use for ranking and comparison, never for market sizing, targets or budgets. 4 or more Fails: do not present the numbers.

### Check 1 (must pass): The frame. What list was the sample drawn from, and how old is it?

Ask for the sampling frame by name (NPC enumeration areas, an updated listing, a phone list, an online panel), its date and its known coverage gaps. For face-to-face work, ask whether EAs were re-listed before selection. For phone work, ask how numbers were generated and who is excluded (people without phones, people who share phones). For online panels, ask how members were recruited. *Pass*: named frame, dated, coverage gaps stated, fresh listing or documented update. *Fail*: "nationally representative" with no frame described.

### Check 2: The weights. Which population totals, from which source, and what happens if they are wrong?

Ask for the weighting variables and the exact population source (for example, UN World Population Prospects 2024, an NPC projection, or another model) and its year. Ask for the headline result recomputed on a second plausible base. *Pass*: source named, weighting variables listed, sensitivity shown. *Fail*: "weighted to be representative" with no source.

### **Check 3: The mode. How were people interviewed, and does the mode suit the question?**

Phone, online and face to face give different answers to the same question (chapter 2.4). Ask for the mode by question block. Avoid long agreement scales and detailed spending questions by phone. If a tracker changes mode, demand a parallel run in both modes for at least 1 wave. *Pass*: mode stated, questionnaire adapted to mode, series breaks logged. *Fail*: mode switched without a bridge, or not stated.

### **Check 4 (must pass): Field verification. How do you know the interviews happened?**

Ask for the back-check rate (independent re-contact of a share of respondents), GPS and timestamp checks on tablets, audio audit coverage (computer-assisted recorded interviewing, where respondents consent), interviewer-level productivity reports, and the number of interviews rejected and replaced. Do not rely on a single statistical test for duplicates; Pew showed why ([Pew](#)). *Pass*: written QA protocol, back-check log and rejection counts supplied. *Fail*: "our supervisors check quality" with no log.

### **Check 5: The benchmark. Does the survey agree with a trusted source on something both measure?**

Pick 2 or 3 questions that also appear in a high-quality survey such as the NDHS 2023-24 (household size, urban and rural split, phone ownership, education) and compare. Watch for rebasing dates: never compare across the CPI break of January 2025, the GDP rebasing of July 2025 or the labour force method change of 2023 without saying so. *Pass*: benchmark comparison shown, gaps explained. *Fail*: no benchmark, or a benchmark across a definitional break.

### **Check 6: Precision, honestly stated. How big is the sample where it matters?**

Ask for unweighted sample sizes for every subgroup reported, the design effect, and margins of error that include it. A national sample of 1,000 gives about plus or minus 3.1 points before design effects; a state subgroup of 100 gives about plus or minus 9.8 (STATART arithmetic). Refuse subgroup results below an agreed minimum base (many buyers use 100). *Pass*: unweighted bases, design effects and adjusted margins shown. *Fail*: only the national margin quoted.

### **Check 7: Disclosure. Will the supplier show you everything AAPOR requires?**

Use the 11 AAPOR disclosure items as a checklist ([AAPOR](#)): method, sponsor and conductor, question wording, population, sample generation and frame, mode and languages, dates, sample sizes and precision, weighting, data processing and quality checks, limitations. Add 1 Nigerian item: the population projection used. Ask, in the contract, for the anonymised respondent-level data and the full questionnaire. *Pass*: all items supplied. *Fail*: 3 or more items missing or "proprietary".

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## **9. Templates: the sample audit kit**

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These templates are practical tools for buyers. They are not based on any STATART survey; the thresholds are suggestions to adapt, not measured standards.

## Template A: Commissioning checklist (attach to every request for proposal)

| # | Question to the supplier                                 | Answer required in the proposal                  | Score (Pass / Partial / Fail) |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Name and date of the sampling frame; coverage gaps       | Frame name, year, list of exclusions             |                               |
| 2 | Population source for weights; weighting variables       | Source, year, variables; second-base sensitivity |                               |
| 3 | Mode by question block; plan for series breaks           | Mode table; bridge plan                          |                               |
| 4 | Field QA: back-check rate, GPS, timestamps, audio audits | Written protocol; log format                     |                               |
| 5 | Benchmark questions and source                           | 2 to 3 named items and benchmark                 |                               |
| 6 | Unweighted bases, design effect, minimum base            | Table by subgroup                                |                               |
| 7 | AAPOR 11 items plus population projection; data delivery | Commitment in contract                           |                               |

## Template B: Sample audit sheet (complete when the data arrives)

| Variable        | Category      | Unweighted n | Unweighted % | Weighted % | Benchmark % | Benchmark source and year | Gap (points) | Flag if gap above 5 points |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Sector          | Urban         |              |              |            |             | NDHS 2023-24              |              |                            |
| Sector          | Rural         |              |              |            |             | NDHS 2023-24              |              |                            |
| Sex             | Female        |              |              |            |             | Projection used           |              |                            |
| Age             | 18 to 24      |              |              |            |             | Projection used           |              |                            |
| Zone            | North West    |              |              |            |             | Projection used           |              |                            |
| Zone            | South West    |              |              |            |             | Projection used           |              |                            |
| Education       | None          |              |              |            |             | NDHS 2023-24              |              |                            |
| Phone ownership | Owens a phone |              |              |            |             | NDHS 2023-24              |              |                            |

How to read it: large gaps between unweighted and weighted shares mean heavy weights, which inflate the real margin of error. Large gaps between weighted shares and the benchmark mean the weights or the frame are off.

## Template C: Field QA log, by interviewer

| Interviewer ID | Interviews completed | Interviews per day | Median duration (minutes) | Share under half the median duration | Share of "don't know" answers | Back-checks done | Back-checks failed | Interviews rejected | Action |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------|
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------|

Red flags to discuss with the supplier: an interviewer far above the team on interviews per day; many interviews far shorter than the median; unusually low "don't know" rates (perfect answers can be invented answers); repeated GPS points; interviews timestamped at night; any failed back-check. Ask that every interview by an interviewer with a failed back-check be re-verified, which is how the South African team caught its problem ([Finn and Ranchhod](#)).

## Template D: Disclosure scorecard

Score each item 0 (missing), 1 (partial) or 2 (complete). Maximum 24.

| #  | Item                                                     | Score |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1  | Data collection method                                   |       |
| 2  | Sponsor, conductor and funder                            |       |
| 3  | Exact question wording and order                         |       |
| 4  | Population definition                                    |       |
| 5  | Sample generation, frame and coverage gaps               |       |
| 6  | Mode and languages                                       |       |
| 7  | Fieldwork dates                                          |       |
| 8  | Sample sizes, precision and design effects               |       |
| 9  | Weighting method and population sources                  |       |
| 10 | Data processing and quality checks                       |       |
| 11 | Limitations statement                                    |       |
| 12 | Nigerian addition: population projection named and dated |       |

Suggested reading: 20 or more, publishable; 14 to 19, usable with caveats; below 14, directional only.

## 10. What would change our view

We would raise the odds of a census in 2027 (scenario A) if: a presidential proclamation sets a date in 2027; the 2027 budget funds most of the proposed cost; or the NPC publishes a dated field plan with listing complete in most states.

We would lower our concern about frame and weighting error if: the NPC publishes official state-level population estimates with a stated method; or a post-enumeration survey from a new census reports

coverage.

We would change our view on mode effects if: a second Nigerian experiment, especially in urban areas or for consumer and media questions, found much smaller phone versus in-person gaps. The World Bank study was rural and mostly agricultural, and urban respondents with more education may show smaller effects, as the study's education finding hints.

We would change our view on fabrication if: a Nigerian study measured fabrication rates in commercial or public surveys. If it found low rates under standard controls, we would say so in our next edition. If it found high rates, Check 4 would move from good practice to a requirement.

We would reassess the labour statistics call if: the NBS publishes a release calendar that includes the labour force survey.

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## 11. Closing: commissioning data you can defend

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The cheapest survey is the one you do not have to explain away later. If you need Nigerian data that will survive a board, a credit committee or a donor audit, STATART's **Commission Field Data** service builds the 7 checks into the contract: a named and dated frame, stated population sources with sensitivity, mode chosen to fit the questions, back-checks and audit logs delivered with the data, and full disclosure.

**STATART Survey** applies the same standards to multi-client studies, and **Mystery Shopping** gives you observed behaviour, not reported behaviour, where reported behaviour is least reliable. Every STATART proposal will answer Template A before you sign.

To discuss a project, or to request the audit templates as editable files, write to [support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com](mailto:support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com).

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## Appendix A: Sources

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All sources were retrieved between 24 and 26 October 2026 (retrieval date 26 October 2026 unless stated). Currency: Nigerian naira (N), nominal, in the year stated.

| #   | Publisher and title                                                                                          | Reference period                        | Used for                                                                         | Link                                                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | IOL, reporting the National Population Commission: "Nigeria's population 140 million: census body"           | 2006 census; published 3 September 2009 | 2006 census total (140,431,790)                                                  | <a href="http://iol.co.za">iol.co.za</a>                                 |
| 2   | CityPost: "Tinubu inaugurates National Census Committee"                                                     | 16 April 2025                           | Census total confirmation; committee and 3-week deadline                         | <a href="http://citypost.ng">citypost.ng</a>                             |
| 3   | Vanguard: "Nigeria hits 20 years without census" (also syndicated by AllAfrica)                              | 29 June 2026                            | No date proclaimed; about N800bn approved, nearly N200bn spent, 760,000+ devices | <a href="http://vanguardngr.com">vanguardngr.com</a>                     |
| 4   | Gazette: "Reps to investigate N200 billion spent on postponed 2023 census"                                   | 1 November 2023                         | N200bn of N800bn spent; May 2023 postponement                                    | <a href="http://gazettengr.com">gazettengr.com</a>                       |
| 5   | National Population Commission: "Sen. Bagudu clarifies role of presidential committee on national census"    | 22 April 2025                           | Committee remit; proposed N949bn budget                                          | <a href="http://nationalpopulation.gov.ng">nationalpopulation.gov.ng</a> |
| 6   | Guardian (Nigeria): "National headcount: insecurity, economic concerns trail Tinubu's push for fresh census" | 2025                                    | 2016 target missed; 2023 postponement; election-timing concerns                  | <a href="http://guardian.ng">guardian.ng</a>                             |
| 7   | Population Reference Bureau: "Objections surface over Nigerian census results"                               | April 2007                              | Lagos 9.0m vs 17.5m+; census history 1962 to 1981                                | <a href="http://prb.org">prb.org</a>                                     |
| 8   | Channels TV: "Court cancels 2006 census results of 14 councils in Lagos"                                     | August 2013                             | Tribunal ruling; 9,113,605 vs 17.6m                                              | <a href="http://channelstv.com">channelstv.com</a>                       |
| 9   | UNFPA World Population Dashboard, Nigeria (UN WPP 2024)                                                      | 2025                                    | 237.5m population                                                                | <a href="http://unfpa.org">unfpa.org</a>                                 |
| 10  | Worldometer, Nigeria population (UN WPP 2024, medium variant)                                                | 2024 to 2026                            | 237.5m (2025), 242.4m (2026 projection)                                          | <a href="http://worldometers.info">worldometers.info</a>                 |
| 11  | ThisDay, reporting NCC data: "Telecoms subscriptions hit 192m"                                               | June 2026; published 3 September 2026   | 192,232,120 subscriptions; 88.67% teledensity                                    | <a href="http://thisdaylive.com">thisdaylive.com</a>                     |
| 12a | Guardian (Nigeria): "Teledensity drops to 102% as NCC updates telecoms indicator"                            | January 2024                            | NCC adopts NPC 2022 projection 216,783,381                                       | <a href="http://guardian.ng">guardian.ng</a>                             |
| 12b | Marketing Edge: "NCC reports steady growth in telecom subscriptions amid adjusted metrics"                   | January 2024                            | Same, second source                                                              | <a href="http://marketingedge.com.ng">marketingedge.com.ng</a>           |

| #  | Publisher and title                                                                                                             | Reference period                                | Used for                                         | Link                                                                   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 | NCC industry statistics                                                                                                         | August 2026                                     | 197.42m subscriptions; 91.07% teledensity        | <a href="http://ncc.gov.ng">ncc.gov.ng</a>                             |
| 13 | NAN: "Nigeria's inflation rate declines to 24.48% in January"                                                                   | January 2025; published 18 February 2025        | Rebased CPI headline; December 2024 34.80%       | <a href="http://nannews.ng">nannews.ng</a>                             |
| 14 | ICIR: "Nigeria inflation drops to 24.48% in January following rebasing"                                                         | January 2025                                    | Headline, food inflation old and new             | <a href="http://icirigeria.org">icirigeria.org</a>                     |
| 15 | NAN: "Rebased CPI: new era for Nigeria's inflation tracking"                                                                    | 26 February 2025                                | Base years, 740 to 934 varieties, COICOP 2018    | <a href="http://nannews.ng">nannews.ng</a>                             |
| 16 | Guardian (Nigeria): rebased CPI explainer                                                                                       | February 2025                                   | 740 to 934 varieties; 2023 weight year           | <a href="http://guardian.ng">guardian.ng</a>                           |
| 17 | Africa Check: "Factsheet: Nigeria rebases its economy again"                                                                    | July to August 2025                             | GDP base 2010 to 2019; N277.5trn to N372.8trn    | <a href="http://africacheck.org">africacheck.org</a>                   |
| 18 | Ecofin Agency: "Nigeria boosts GDP estimate after rebasing"                                                                     | 24 July 2025                                    | N372.8trn; 41.7% vs IMF forecast                 | <a href="http://ecofinagency.com">ecofinagency.com</a>                 |
| 19 | Nairametrics: "Nigeria's unemployment rate fell from 33.3% to 4.1%"                                                             | Q4 2020, Q1 2023; published 25 August 2023      | Labour method change                             | <a href="http://nairametrics.com">nairametrics.com</a>                 |
| 20 | Proshare: "Nigeria's new unemployment data in numbers"                                                                          | 28 August 2023                                  | 1-hour vs 20-hour threshold; 19th ICLS           | <a href="http://proshare.co">proshare.co</a>                           |
| 21 | Guardian (Nigeria): "Unemployment rate drops to 4.3% in Q2 2024"                                                                | Q2 2024; published 25 November 2024             | Latest labour force headline found               | <a href="http://guardian.ng">guardian.ng</a>                           |
| 22 | AllAfrica: "80m Nigerian youth unemployed: report"                                                                              | September 2025                                  | Q2 2024 still cited as latest NBS figure         | <a href="http://allafrica.com">allafrica.com</a>                       |
| 23 | World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 11302: "The Effect of Survey Mode on Data Quality: Experimental Evidence from Nigeria" | Fieldwork 2023 to 2024; published February 2026 | Mode effects, coverage effects                   | <a href="http://documents1.worldbank.org">documents1.worldbank.org</a> |
| 24 | NBS microdata catalogue: COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey, sampling                                                  | 2020 to 2021                                    | Contact, response, attrition, weighting          | <a href="http://nigerianstat.gov.ng">nigerianstat.gov.ng</a>           |
| 25 | Finn and Ranchhod, "Genuine Fakes", World Bank Economic Review 31(1)                                                            | 2017                                            | About 7% fabrication; benefit-cost at least 24x  | <a href="http://ideas.repec.org">ideas.repec.org</a>                   |
| 26 | Pew Research Center: "Evaluating a new proposal for detecting data falsification in surveys"                                    | February 2016                                   | 85% match test; 13% high matches in valid data   | <a href="http://pewresearch.org">pewresearch.org</a>                   |
| 27 | DHS Program: 2023-24 NDHS Key Indicators Report                                                                                 | Fieldwork December 2023                         | Frame, sample design, response rates, insecurity | <a href="http://dhsprogram.com">dhsprogram.com</a>                     |

| #  | Publisher and title                                                         | Reference period  | Used for                                         | Link                                                      |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|    |                                                                             | to May 2024       | exclusions                                       |                                                           |
| 28 | DHS Program: 2024 NDHS Summary Report                                       | 2023 to 2024      | Interview counts and response rates confirmation | <a href="https://dhsprogram.com">dhsprogram.com</a>       |
| 29 | Afrobarometer: Nigeria Round 10 summary of results                          | June to July 2024 | n=1,600; plus or minus 2.5 points                | <a href="https://afrobarometer.org">afrobarometer.org</a> |
| 30 | AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices: disclosure standards       | Current           | 11 disclosure items                              | <a href="https://aapor.org">aapor.org</a>                 |
| 31 | ISO: "ISO 20252 tackles market research with confidence"                    | February 2019     | Standard scope; edition now listed as withdrawn  | <a href="https://iso.org">iso.org</a>                     |
| 32 | Voice of Nigeria: "INEC issues revised timetable for 2027 general election" | 27 February 2026  | Election dates 16 January and 6 February 2027    | <a href="https://von.gov.ng">von.gov.ng</a>               |
| 33 | AllAfrica: "INEC reschedules 2027 general election"                         | February 2026     | Election dates confirmation                      | <a href="https://allafrica.com">allafrica.com</a>         |

## Appendix B: STATART arithmetic

| Calculation                                                                          | Inputs                                  | Result                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Lagos state estimate vs official 2006 count                                          | 17.6m divided by 9,113,605              | 1.9x                                      |
| Population growth 2006 to 2025 (UN base)                                             | 237.5m divided by 140.43m               | +69.1%; 2.8% a year over 19 years         |
| Base implied by NCC teledensity, June 2026 (equals NPC 2022 projection, 216,783,381) | 192,232,120 divided by 0.8867           | 216.8m                                    |
| Same, August 2026                                                                    | 197.42m divided by 0.9107               | 216.8m                                    |
| UN 2026 projection minus NCC base (NPC 2022 projection)                              | 242.4m minus 216.8m                     | 25.6m, or 10.6% of the UN figure          |
| CPI break, December 2024 to January 2025                                             | 34.80% minus 24.48%                     | 10.32 points                              |
| GDP rebasing                                                                         | N372.8trn divided by N277.5trn          | +34.3%                                    |
| Unemployment method change                                                           | 33.3% divided by 4.1%                   | 8.1x                                      |
| NLPS baseline yield                                                                  | 3,000 x 69% contacted x 94% interviewed | about 1,946 (reported 1,950)              |
| NLPS panel retention by round 11                                                     | 1,472 divided by 1,950                  | 75%                                       |
| NDHS clusters lost to insecurity                                                     | 20 divided by 1,400                     | 1.4%                                      |
| Margin of error, n=1,600, 50% result, 95%                                            | 1.96 x square root of (0.25 / 1,600)    | plus or minus 2.45 points                 |
| Margin of error, n=1,000                                                             | same formula; design effect 1.5         | plus or minus 3.1; 3.8 with design effect |
| Margin of error, n=200                                                               | same formula; design effect 1.5         | plus or minus 6.9; 8.5 with design effect |
| Margin of error, n=100                                                               | same formula                            | plus or minus 9.8                         |

## Appendix C: Forecast register

| Claim                                                                                      | Probability | Resolve by       | How to check                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nigeria conducts its census enumeration before 31 December 2027                            | 10%         | 31 December 2027 | NPC announcements; presidential proclamation; national press |
| A census date is proclaimed by 31 December 2027 but enumeration falls in 2028 or later     | 25%         | 31 December 2027 | As above                                                     |
| No census date is proclaimed by 31 December 2027                                           | 65%         | 31 December 2027 | As above                                                     |
| NBS publishes a labour force survey headline for any quarter after Q2 2024 by 30 June 2027 | 50%         | 30 June 2027     | NBS website and release calendar; 2 national outlets         |

## Corrections and version history

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**Version 1.2, 27 October 2026.** Editorial revision: notes on figures not used condensed. No figure, forecast or probability changed.

**Version 1.1, 26 October 2026.** (1) The 216.8m figure is now identified as the National Population Commission's 2022 projection, which the NCC adopted as its teledensity base in 2023; version 1.0 presented it as a population implied by 2026 telecoms data. The 10% gap stands, but part of it reflects the 4-year difference in reference dates, and Figure 1 is relabelled. (2) Added the distinction between errors in population totals (which change market sizes) and errors in population distributions (which change weighted shares). (3) The CPI comparison is marked as originally published and the method-versus-month caveat added. (4) Check 1 (frame) and Check 4 (field verification) are now must-pass checks in the decision rule. (5) The phone-mode evidence is described as question-dependent and from rural households. (6) Added a definition of "cannot be trusted". No forecast or probability changed.

**Suggested citation.** STATART Insights and Analytics (2026). *Why Most Survey Data in Nigeria Cannot Be Trusted, and How to Fix It*. STATART Intelligence Series, White Paper, October 2026, version 1.2. Lagos: STATART.

**Corrections policy.** We correct errors of fact or method in a new version, list every change here and keep the forecast register unchanged unless a forecast itself was wrongly stated. Report errors to [support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com](mailto:support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com).

*STATART Insights and Analytics, Lagos. This paper is independent research. It does not rely on any STATART survey or fieldwork. Corrections: [support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com](mailto:support@statartinsightsandanalytics.com).*