

GANGS OF LAGOS

How Badoo affects Ikorodu's economy



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Our researchers employed methods such as one-on-one interviews, and desk research to collate the available data. Our editors sifted through the data and prepared the report, using various proprietary tools to fact-check and copy edit the information gathered.

Our publicly released reports are formatted for easy and quick reading, and may not necessarily contain all the data that SB Morgen gathered during a given survey. Complete datasets can be made available on request.

The cover image is of a Badoo gang suspect who was arrested by the residents of Ayegbami community in Igbogbo, Ikorodu, on June 21, 2017. The picture appeared in the Guardian newspaper on June 22.

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Background

Over the last half decade, there has been a rise in gang violence in Lagos, Nigeria's economic and commercial capital. From the Somolu and Bariga districts which have been the stronghold of the Eiyé and Aiye confraternities, to the Mushin and Fadeyi axis, Ijora and Badia; and Festac and Amuwo areas, street gangs, generally known to Nigerians as cults, have constituted an increasingly dangerous but seemingly ever present menace to 17 million people who, according to the Lagos State Government, call Lagos home. In Amuwo Odofin, the gang known as 'One Million' boys became particularly notorious for robbing commuting workers at bus stops in the early mornings back in 2015. However, for a majority of these petty robbery incidents, most of the fatalities attributed to these gangs were from inter-gang wars or wars of supremacy within the gangs. Most of those killed were also gang members.

While many Lagosians have suffered loss of life, health or property few were direct targets of the violence. With the rise of the Badoo gang in Ikorodu, this time-honoured pattern of criminality has been upended.



A suspected Badoo gang member just before he was burned to death by an angry mob in Magbo, Ogijo, Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. 5 July, 2017.

Picture credit - Punch

Enter Badoo

The Ikorodu local government area of Lagos has been the hotbed of violence in recent times. The unique geography of the area, with scattered communities, mangrove swamps, creeks, and relative distance from metropolitan Lagos means that a lot can happen in the relative isolation of the district, from which most of Lagos is insulated. With the rise of oil bunkering as a cottage industry in the area, the accompanying violence that marks the increased competition for resources, supply routes and a foothold outside of the reach of law enforcement authorities has significantly escalated. According to local accounts, residents provided information to law enforcement in a bid to checkmate the illegal operations in the area but after a flurry of activity and arrests, the law enforcement agents left and many of the bunkering kingpins lived freely, unleashing a campaign of retribution on the residents.

Last year, SBM Intelligence published a report detailing such retribution in the area. Many communities in Ikorodu resorted to self-help due to this failure of law enforcement and the justice system. It was in this atmosphere of violence targeted at residents and where residents responded with their own variant of jungle justice that a new gang, Badoo, emerged.

The gang, known to be operating in Ikorodu at least since 2015, has been reported to have carried out its activities in Owode-Ajgunle, Olopomeji, Odogunyan, the Idiro area of Ogijo, Itamaga, Radio Area of Erunwen in Ikorodu, Lagos state and the Ogijo area of neighbouring Ogun State. **The group's observed mode of operation includes attacking families in their homes, raping women, smashing the heads of men with clubs, and then leaving, without taking any valuables.**

This has raised the possibility that they are not mere thieves, and in some cases may have been motivated by feelings of revenge. Some of their attacks have displayed classic marks of retribution, such as the murder of entire families.

Recent events

Three fatalities occurred on the morning of 4 July, 2017, following attacks by men suspected to be members of the Badoo gang in Ikorodu Town. The gang members attacked the Celestial Church of Christ (C&S) Aladura at Victor Anibaba Street, Owode Weighbridge, along Ikorodu Road. This attack prompted a violent backlash as residents protested on the streets, burning car tyres at major streets within the neighbourhood.

The fourth of July incident was the second major incident to shock Ikorodu in just over a month. On 30 May, 46-year old Israel Olusanya, his 37-year old wife Rukayat, and two of their children, 11-year old Wale and 6-year old Semilore, were found dead in their apartment. The only surviving member of the family, 15-year old Tolu, was hospitalised. The late Rukayat Olusanya was a teacher, and her absence from her place of employment on the day, had raised some concern, prompting a visit to her home from a colleague who found the family dead. Their assailants, believed to be members of the Badoo gang, had entered the house through one of the windows, and smashed the heads of their victims with a club.

On account of the costly toll the group's activities was having on these communities, the relatively anaemic response of the security services and traditional rulers, members of some of these communities decided to take laws into their hands by mobilising their youth to apprehend and lynch those suspected of being members of, or having any connection with the Badoo gang. This action came with deadly and unintended consequences in a few memorable cases.

Community reaction leads to jungle justice

In one such incident, a popular local comedian, Paul Chinedu, also known as MC Think Twice, a graduate of the Lagos State Polytechnic Ikorodu, was killed by a vigilante group in Ikorodu. The vigilantes had accused him of being a Badoo member. Chinedu was one of three men set ablaze on the morning of Sunday, 1st July, at Odogunyan, Ikorodu after they were apprehended by the vigilante group along Oju-Emuren Street. Chinedu, who, according to the media, was returning from a show, had a flat tyre and sought help from the other two victims. According to residents, the suspects, who were caught around one in the morning, told the local vigilante that they were going to tow a broken down vehicle, an argument that did not convince their accusers. On their part, the vigilantes claimed to have found machetes, and a grinding stone in the car, enough to condemn the three men to death. The three men were lynched and burned alive, while Chinedu's SUV was set ablaze.

In another incident, local vigilantes arrested a suspected member of the group at Ogijo area in Ogun State. The suspect was caught at Escobar Street, a boundary community with Lagos, while attempting to enter some houses in the neighbourhood. The vigilantes took the suspect to the local ruler, the Baale of the community. The timely intervention of police officers from Ogijo Division

prevented angry residents from lynching the suspect, who was subsequently arrested by the authorities.

In a sign of the far reaching effect of the group's activities and the residents' distrust in the efforts of the authorities in addressing the worsening security situation, the Ayangbure of Ikorodu, Oba Kabir Adewale Shotobi summoned native doctors and his subordinates in the area to the Ayangbure Palace on 28 June and declared war on the gang.



Budding comedian, Paul Chinedu, lynched on 1 July, 2017, by a mob who accused him and two friends of being gang members. Picture credit: Yaba Left.

The police reaction

On 4 July, the Lagos State Police announced that it would require residents of Ikorodu and its environs, to move around with a valid means of identification as a security counter-measure. Police spokesman, Olarinde Famous-Cole said the authorities were planning a series of security operations in the area.

According to the police, about 138 suspected members of the group had been arrested as at that point. The effect of the Badoo gang on life and business in Ikorodu has not been properly analysed. Although Ikorodu is far from the commercial centre of Lagos State, it is still important to assess how life in the area is adjusting to the insecurity caused by the gang.

Fleshing out Ikorodu's Badoo story

In the week of 17 July, SBM Intelligence sent its field staff into Ikorodu and conducted a survey, randomly sampling 100 people who work, live or run businesses in Ikorodu. It is important to note that we encountered the following challenges when administering the survey:

There was a general paucity of knowledge about the group, to some residents in the area, the idea of Badoo is a fiction, a convenient media creation. Many respondents told SBM field staff that they were mostly unaware about Badoo until this year. What this suggests is that the group has, possibly intentionally, developed quietly, without any of its members attempting to throw their weight or presence around. **The implication of this is the possibility that the gang could grow even bigger, and still remain under the radar in relative terms.**

We also observed that a significant portion of the respondents are unclear about where the gang originated from, why it formed, when the formation happened, and what the inner workings of the gang are like. **What was clear however, was the sense of helplessness and fear that their activities, which appear to have surged in recent months, have resulted in.** This has important consequences for the security authorities charged with getting a grip on the situation before it spirals out of control. It is widely recognised that a detailed and proper understanding of your enemy from a security standpoint is vital to the success of any counter measures to be deployed in addressing them.

The depth of the knowledge bank of the police concerning the Badoo scourge is unclear.

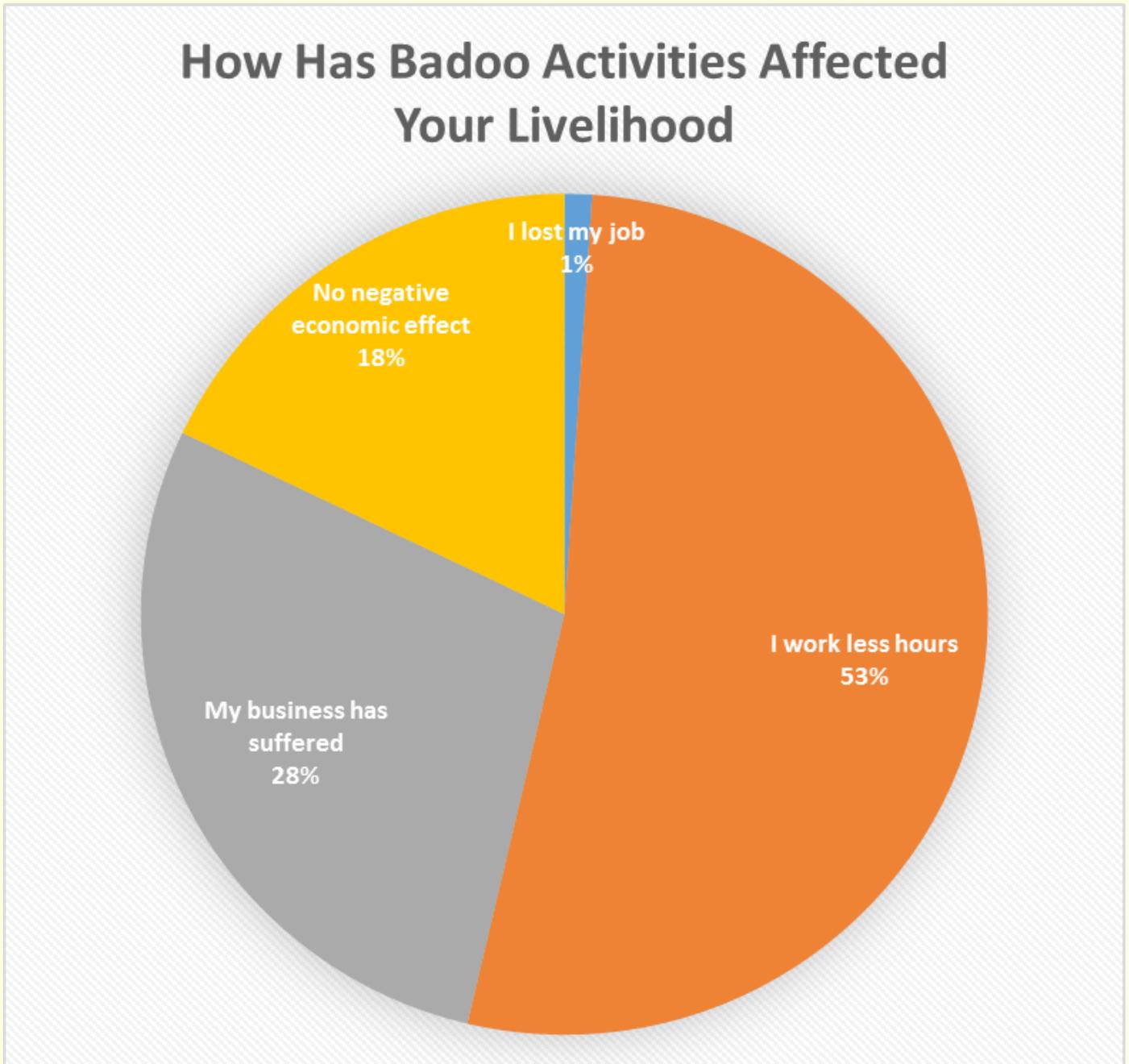
Media reports have also been mostly unhelpful in this regard, with rumours, hunches and uneducated guesses published almost unfiltered.

Conclusively, the many grey areas in what has been ascertained or is ascertainable about what is an elusive gang that clearly prides itself in being as mysterious as it is deadly was a significant impediment to definitively making any inferences about the Badoo gang.

Despite the near breathless news coverage that the gang has attracted in the last four months, the fact that many Ikorodu residents have not heard about them means that **there needs to be a targeted media campaign**, if for any reason, for the public safety education needs of the local population.

Key findings of the Ikorodu study

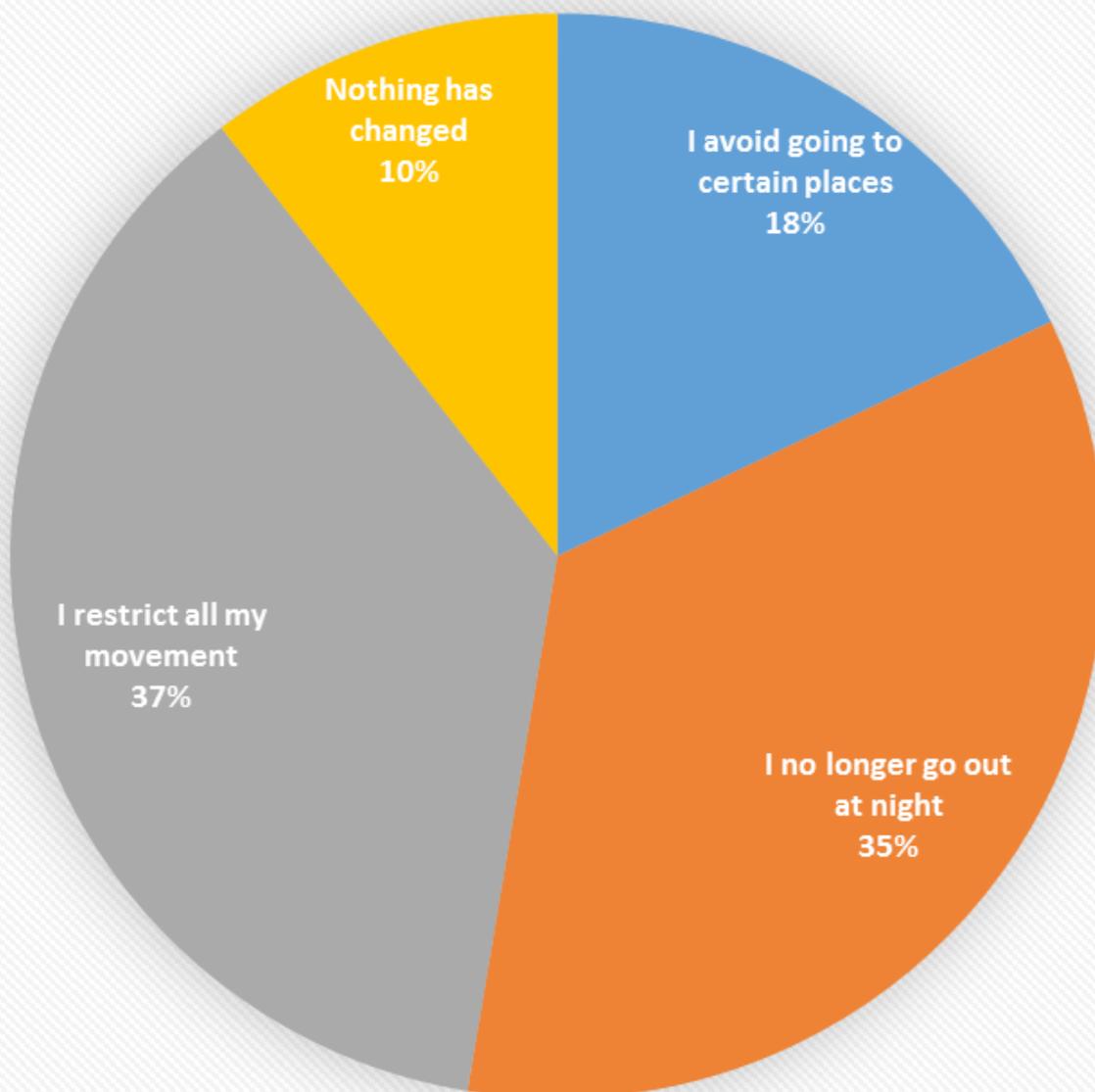
When asked if the activities of the Badoo gang had affected their livelihood, we received the following responses:



Only 18 percent of respondents reported not being affected negatively due to the activities of the group. 28 percent reported that their business had suffered lower patronage as people have opted to retire indoors much earlier than they would ordinarily do, and many of the artisans SBM spoke to constituted a majority of the 53 percent who stated that they now work less hours in order to close early enough to avoid being on the road late.

This also cascades into their non-business activities. The next chart shows the distribution of responses to how the respondents have changed their personal and family-related activities since the violent Badoo surge came to a head:

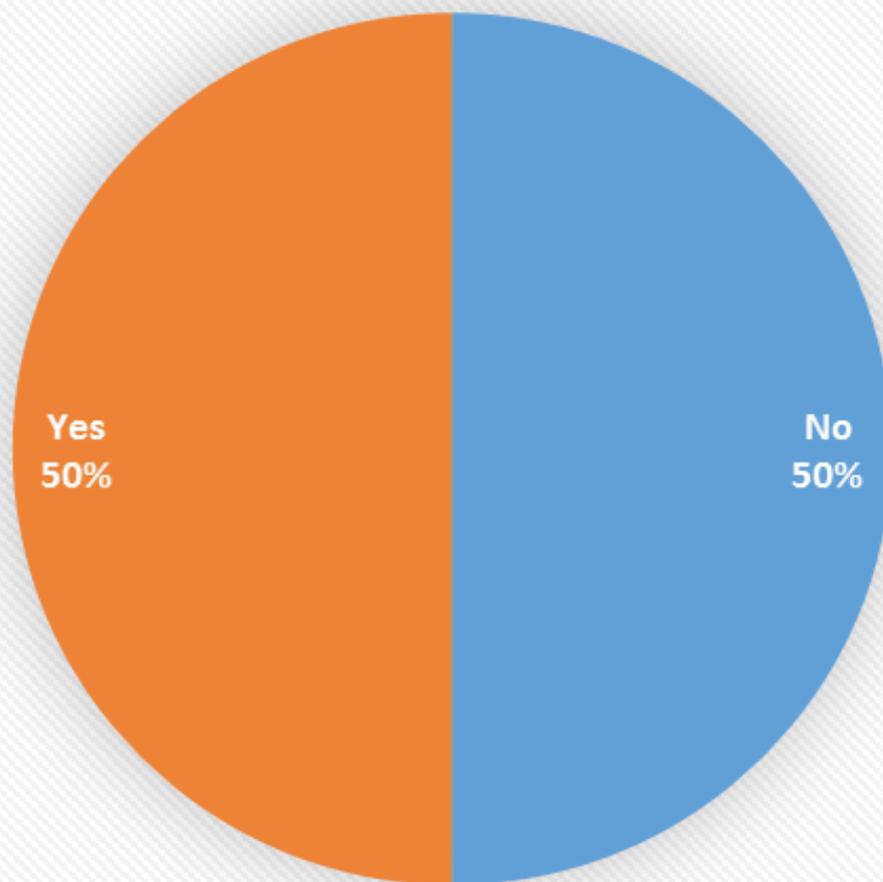
How Has The Activities of Badoo Affected Your Daily Activities



72 percent of respondents either no longer go out at night or restrict all movements since the Badoo surge began at the beginning of March. Only 10 percent have left their routine unchanged since the security situation worsened. While the activities of the Badoo gang has undoubtedly had an effect on the lives of residents, we observed an almost equal negative important effect of the activities of vigilante groups which have cropped up in response to the insecurity.

This is in order to avoid harassment by the vigilante groups who have filled the void left by security operatives and mounted road blocks at which encounters can quickly devolve to jungle justice if a person is suspected to be a Badoo member.

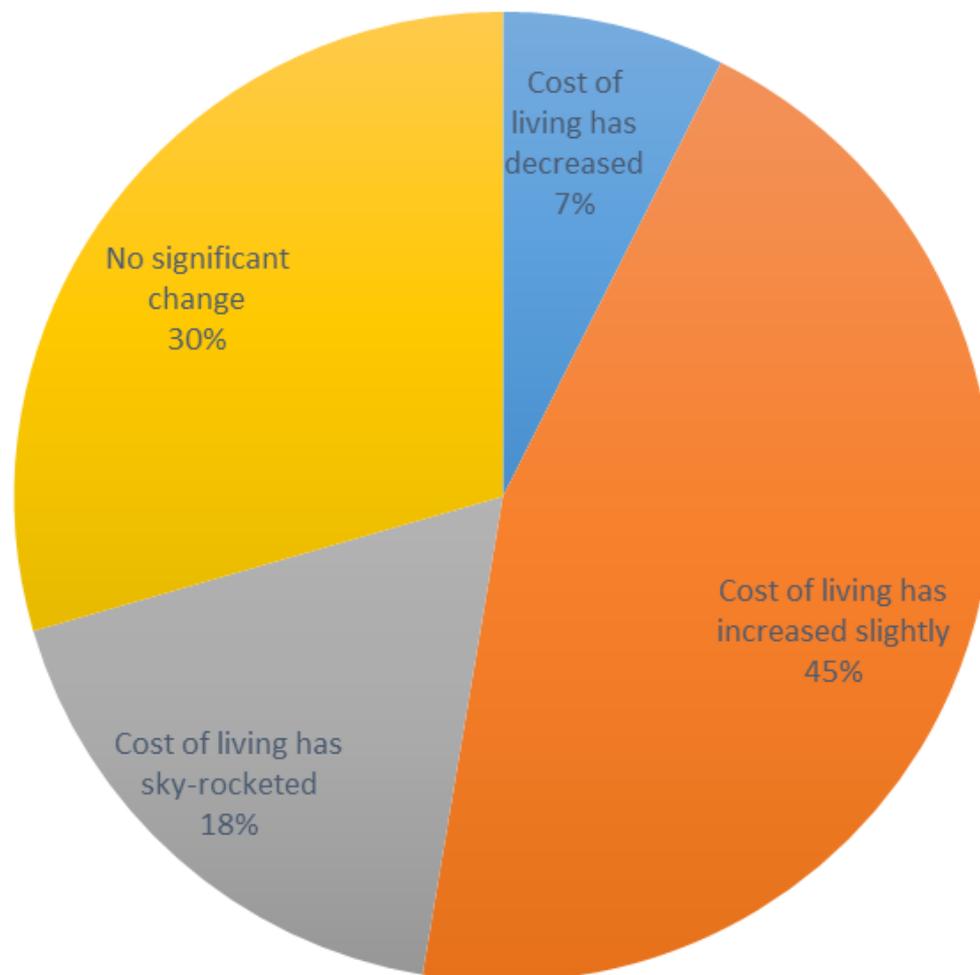
Have You Encountered Issues With Your Business From The Vigilante



Half of our respondents who manage or run businesses say they have had a encounters, in which they were harassed by vigilante groups.

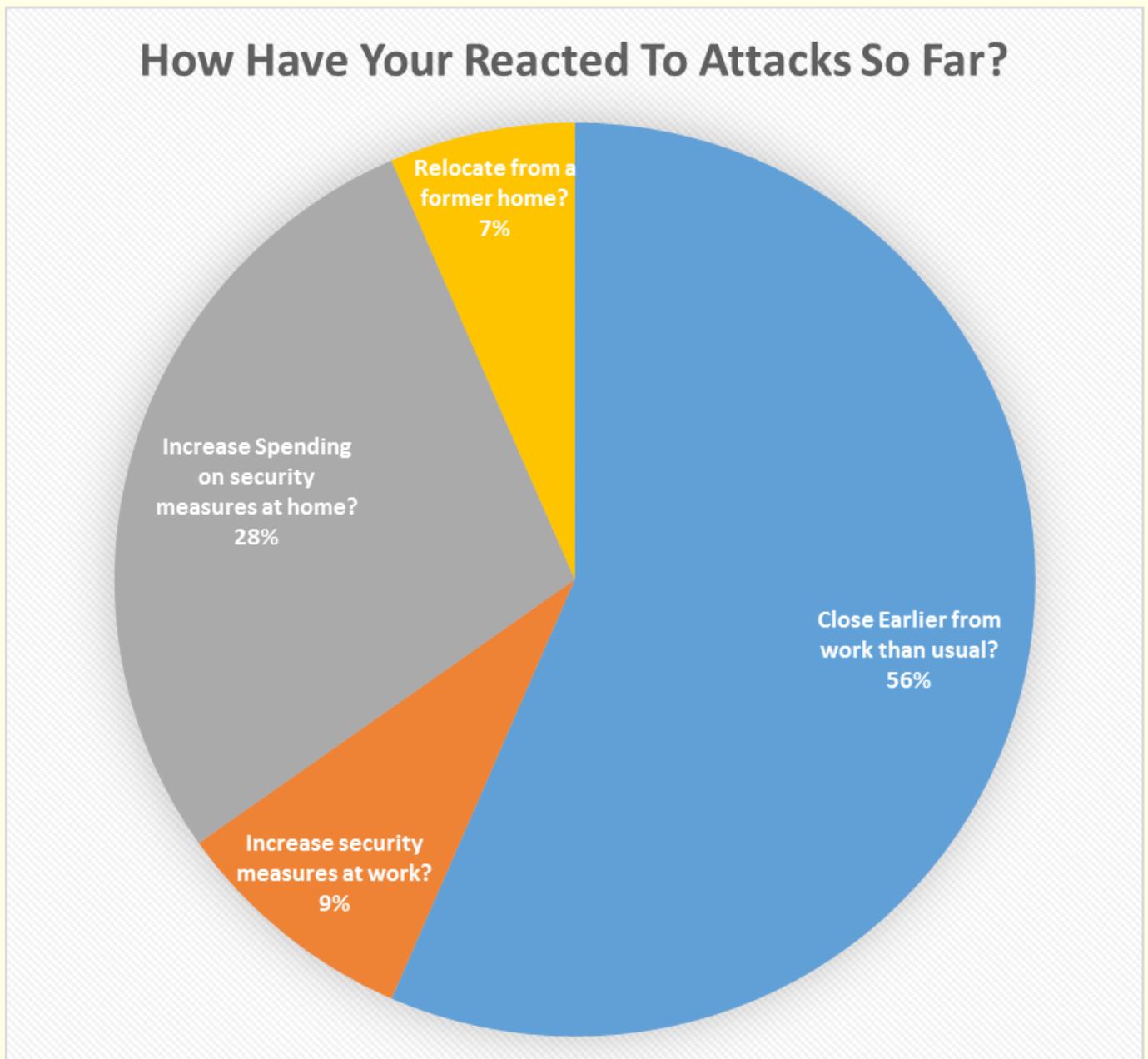
Badoo's activities have also percolated into living costs in Ikorodu. While 7 percent believed it had cost their cost of living to decrease, 18 percent believed it had caused their cost of living to sky-rocket above normal.

How Has Badoo Activities Affected Cost Of Living In Ikorodu



In all, more than 60 percent have seen a slight or above normal alteration to their living standards due to the increased insecurity, an unwelcome addition to the pains that the town and its surrounding areas are going through as part of the wider Nigerian economic slowdown.

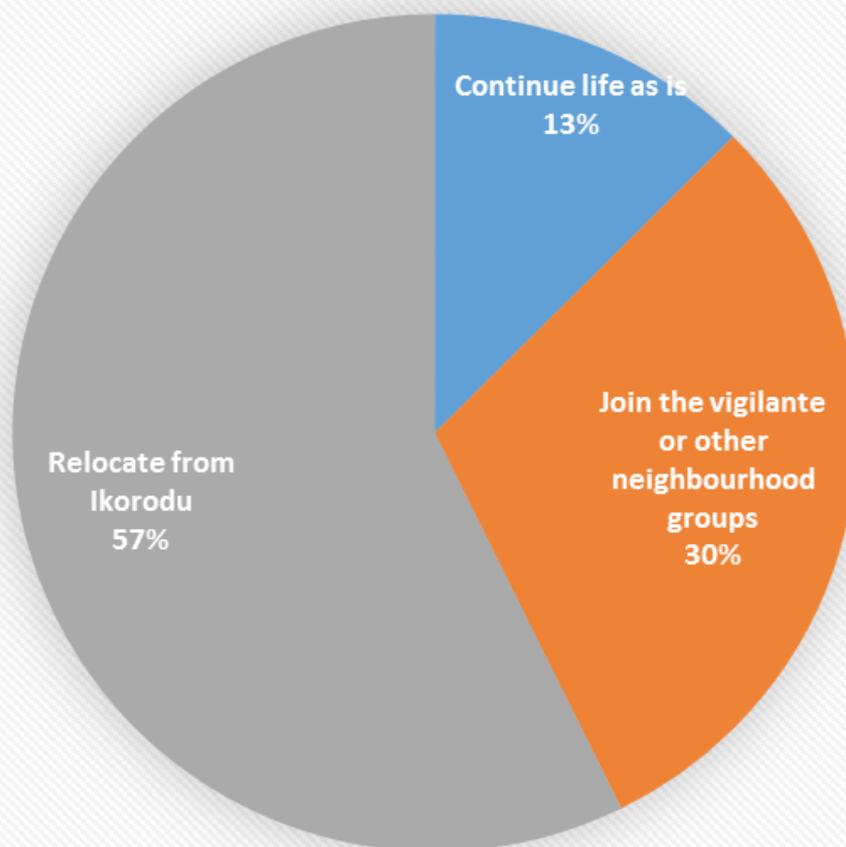
What are the things that Ikorodu's residents have increased their spending on?



28 percent say they have increased the spending on security measures in their homes, another 9 percent have done something similar for security measures where they work while 7 percent have already changed an apartment or residence due to the Badoo violence.

Finally, we asked what the respondents would do if the attacks continued along with the current vigilante approach of dealing with the matter, and the picture it paints of the overall perception of the security picture and its possible effects on the city – the second largest city in Lagos state after Lagos Metro with a population of 535,619 according to the 2006 Census – is chilling.

What Do You Plan To Do if Attacks Continue?



57 percent of respondents indicated that they would relocate their businesses and homes from Ikorodu if the violence persisted. Of those whose business as well as homes are in Ikorodu, 30 percent indicated that they had nowhere else to go and would rather join one of the vigilante groups battling to curtail the Badoo scourge. If this goes unchecked, an epidemic of jungle justice will increase insecurity in the area, and affect economic activities even further. This, combined with the exit or diversion of the workforce to unproductive activities such as active membership of vigilante groups are bound to negatively impact on economic activities and productivity in the Ikorodu area.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, here is a need for more studies to be done on the effects of gangs (cults) on urban life in Nigeria. We believe that more studies will identify the root cause of our persistent urban security challenges, how they form and what effective preventive mechanisms can be designed and implemented to forestall their creation and development.

The Daily SBM Security Tracker reports have recorded elevated levels of violence in different parts of Nigeria, and this is in part driven by membership of these local, often cultist groups.

Many young Nigerians are disillusioned and cynical about politics, and are desperately searching for a better life today, not tomorrow. For such young people, the dividends of democracy have thus far proven to be illusions. Cults, offering a warped sense of identity, purpose and mission are one price we pay for the failure, thus far, of our national experiment.

Cults are created, and grow, largely because of a combination of economic and socio-political factors, and the rising rate of unemployment. Nigeria has ignored the study of these groups for too long, and they now present a real danger to society. We ignore these groups at our peril.

As has been shown in the Niger Delta and in parts of Lagos, as gangs grow in stature, organisation and sophistication, they will often seek political influence. Access to political interests will give them access to patronage networks and reservoirs of cash, with which they can buy even more influence, and recruit more members. If these cults become institutionalised, then they will be unlikely to fade away and become harder to eradicate.

While it is not clear if Badoo will walk down that time-honoured path of evolutionary growth associated with such groups of its kind in Nigeria, the possibility of yet another well-oiled group armed with money, arms and a political goal on the fringe of the country's economic nerve centre should alarm observers, policy makers, investors and everyday citizens. At that point, it will be more pragmatic for them to become partners.

This is the future unfortunately, if the growing number of cult groups, and their root causes, are not studied, understood, and addressed. Badoo is presenting Nigeria with yet another opportunity to learn how to properly learn and manage a potential insecurity outbreak. It must not be squandered.

ABOUT SBM INTEL

SBM Intel is an Africa-focused market intelligence and communications consulting firm focused on addressing the critical need for market data and big data analytics. We employ various methods of data collection. Our Data Collection Methodology team advises on data collection methods for all ONS social and business surveys. With clients both within the business and the wider government community, we aim to provide expert advice on data collection procedures and carry out research leading to improvements in survey quality.

Since 2013, we have provided data analytics and strategic communication solutions to clients across various sectors in Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, the UK and France. In 2015 we became a partner to Stratfor, an American geopolitical intelligence firm that provides strategic analysis and forecasting to individuals and organisations around the world, including the various US departments and agencies like the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Since the partnership came into effect, several SBM Intel generated reports have been published on Stratfor's website.