

# Youth in Nigeria's Urban Informal Food Sector

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# Why urban informal food trade?

- Major concern about lack of high productivity jobs for the youth in Africa
- Youth are 40% more likely to migrate to urban areas, especially due to life cycle effects  
(WB 2006)
- Informal economy constitutes approximately 70% of non-ag employment in urban Africa  
(ILO 2018)
- Informal food retail is one of the largest segments of the informal economy

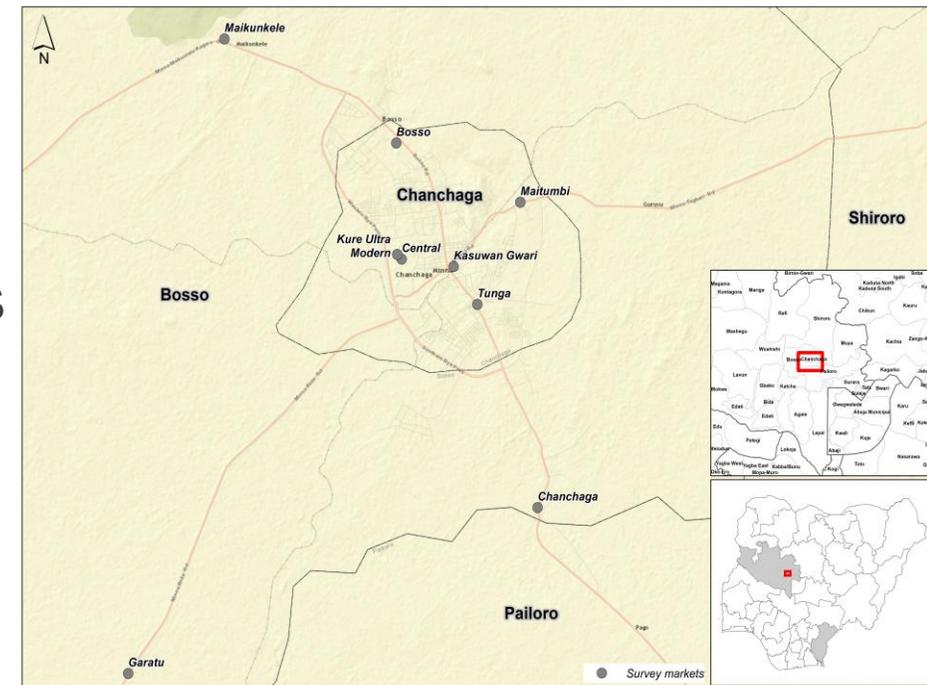
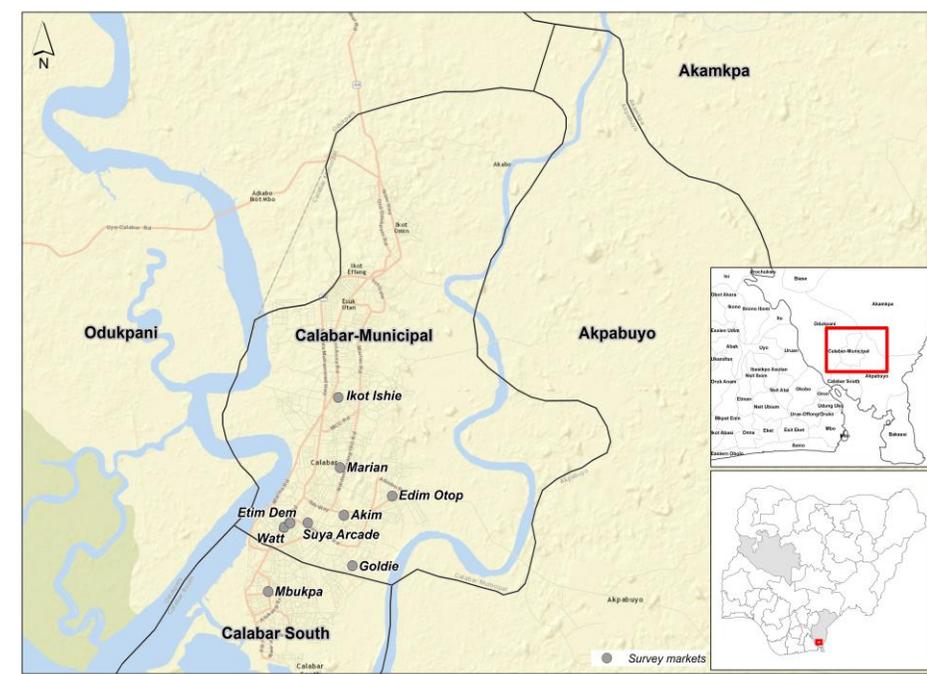


# Why Nigeria?

- Urban youth employment massive challenge given growing population levels
- Of those in informal sector, 41 percent in retail trade (LFS 2016)
- Supermarkets constitute only one-third of Nigeria's food retail sales while informal food markets are the major source (Nzeka 2011)
- State governments often have a volatile relationship with vendors
  - *Abuja, Enugu, Lagos, and Kaduna have harsh policies on street trading*
  - *Repeated demolitions of stalls in markets of Niger state*
  - *But, Hawkers' Rights Bill in Cross River State*

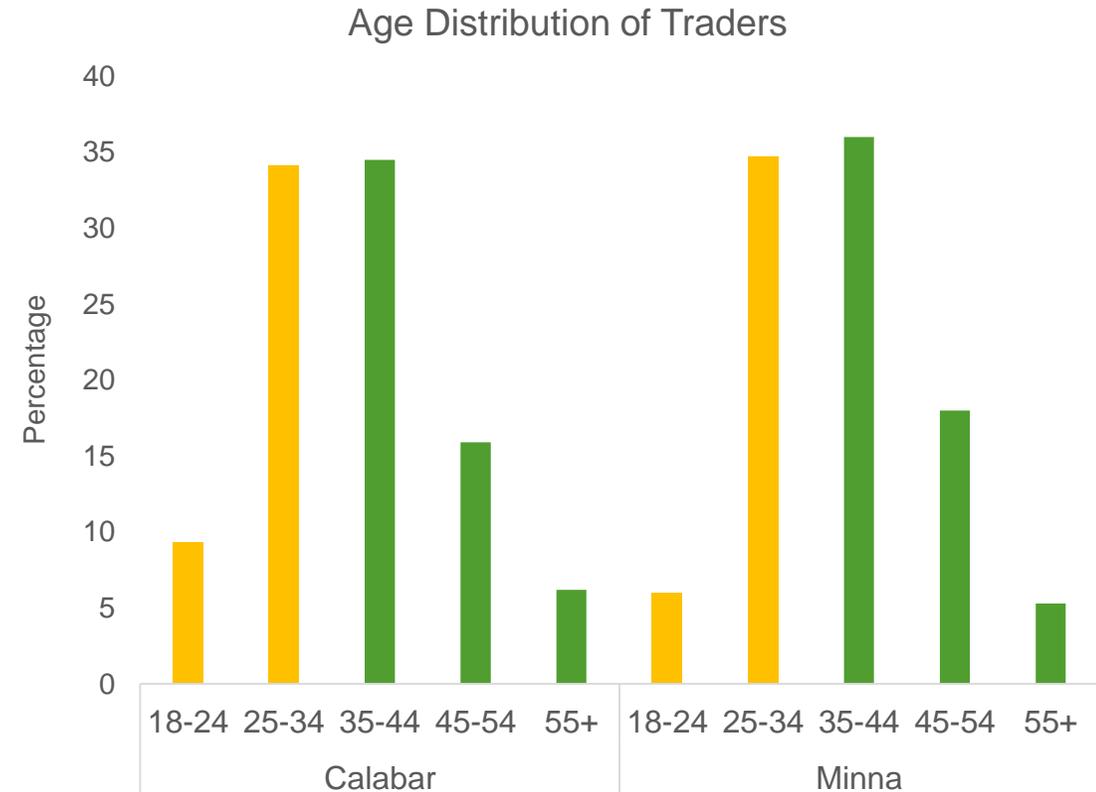
# Methodology

- Surveyed 1,100 traders in two of Nigeria's “secondary” cities (Calabar and Minna)
  - *Variation in terms of social/ethnic composition, political strongholds, and regulatory setting for traders*
- Stratified between those located in markets and those trading on pavements/streets
- Focused on traders of three types of goods: fresh foods, prepared foods, and packaged foods



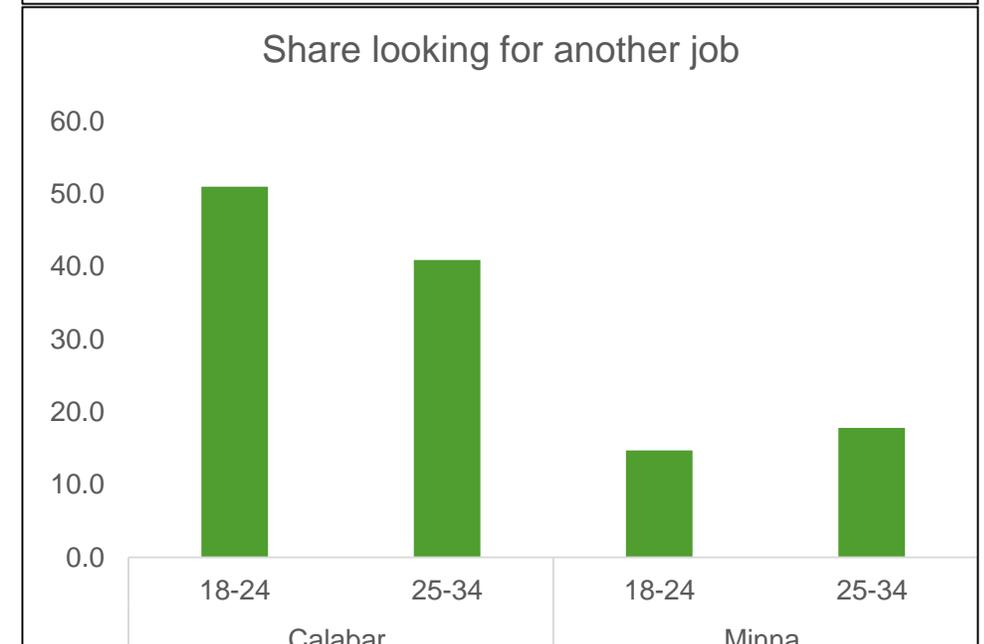
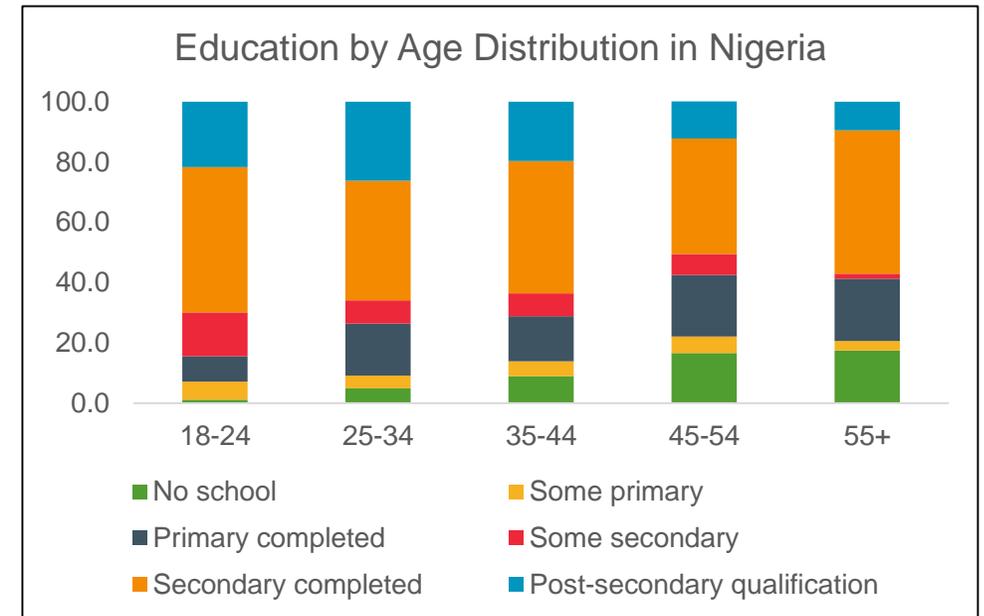
# Are traders disproportionately young?

- One-third of 25-34 year olds are traders
- 70% of young traders are women in Calabar but only 23% in Minna
- Approximately half are migrants in Calabar, with most coming from a neighboring state
- Less than a quarter of youth are migrants in Minna



# Is trading a stepping stone or the status quo?

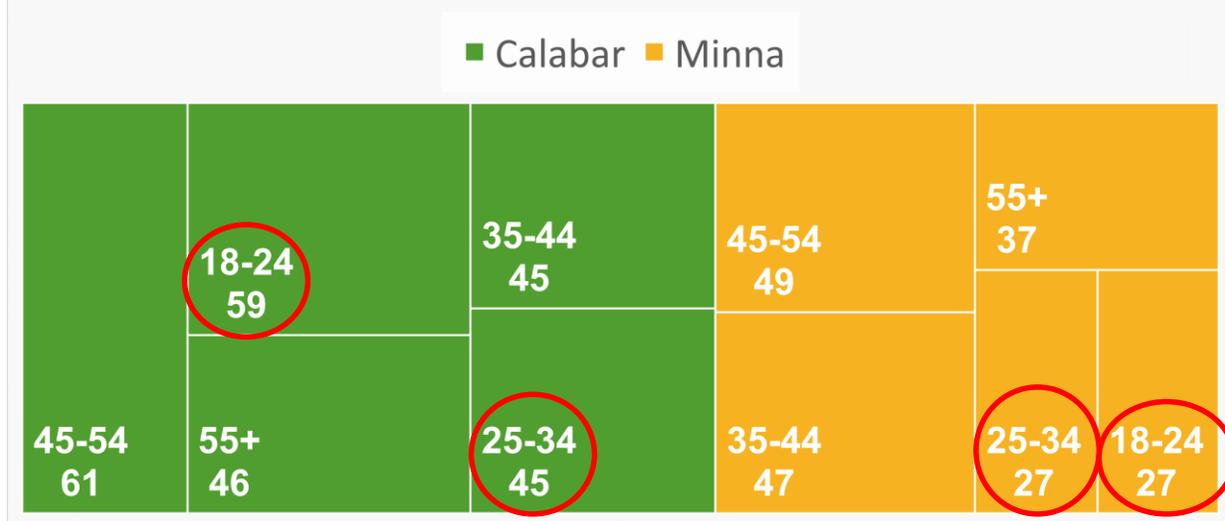
- Almost 80 percent of youth had at least one parent who also was a trader
- Relatively well educated compared to older counterparts, especially in Calabar
- Most have been trading between 1 to 5 years, with about 30 percent between 6 to 10 years in Calabar



# Are young traders disproportionately vulnerable?

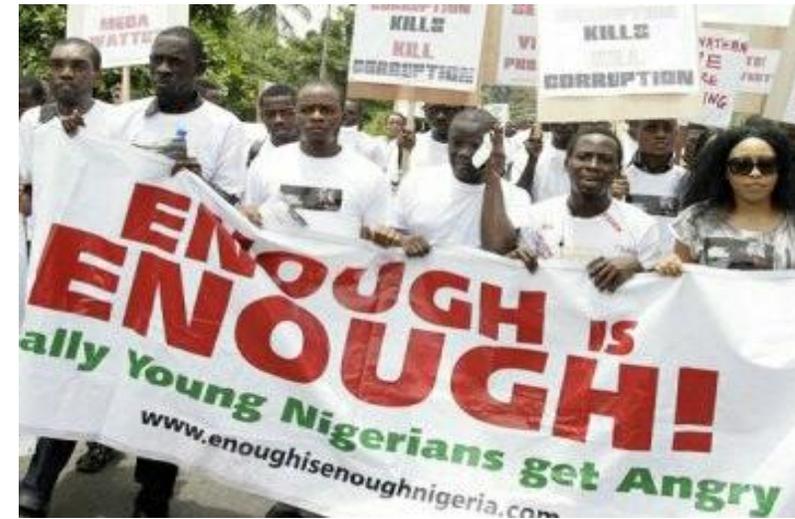
- Youth are significantly more likely than older traders to operate as itinerant hawkers in Calabar than in Minna
- In both cities, youth significantly less likely to own their market stall
- No significant difference in terms of earnings per day or customers, compared with older traders
- Youth in Calabar experience higher levels of government harassment than counterparts in Minna

Share trading on pavement/streets by age group (%)



# Are young traders disproportionately mobilized?

- Youth in Minna significantly more likely to participate in protest or attend political rally than older counterparts
- Levels of participation are similar with youth in Calabar but no age specific differentiation
- Relatively low levels of associational engagement in informal sector unions



# Conclusions

- From looking at informal traders, employment in Nigeria appears to be more of a structural change issue than a youth challenge
- Many young traders are following a family tradition, rather than switching from agriculture to trade
  - *True even among those who migrated*
- Variation emphasizes need for nuanced policy responses, not just across different youth groups but even sub-nationally
- Governments rhetorically committed to supporting youth but draconian policies towards the informal economy are detrimental to the youth, with important gender implications