

# ACCESS TO WATER

## POLL REPORT



MARCH 2018

## 1.0 Executive Summary

In commemoration of World Water Day, which holds on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March every year, NOIPolls in partnership with WaterAid conducted an opinion poll on access to clean water. The poll explored the accessibility of water to Nigerians, the quality and treatment of drinking water and the types of challenges faced in accessing clean water. Water is life and its significance in the lives of people, animals and plants cannot be overemphasized. However, the task of meeting domestic water needs in rural and urban areas in Nigeria is enormous and falls mainly on women and children. Households spend considerable time and effort fetching water from sources such as rivers, streams, ponds, wells and boreholes. In most cases, these sources of water may be one or two kilometres away from home, and may also be polluted.

The poll revealed that borehole is the primary source of water for a larger proportion of Nigerians both for domestic use (50 percent) and drinking (37 percent). According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), this source of water supply is mainly classified as an improved source of water supply.<sup>1</sup> While it falls under the purview of government at all levels through the Ministry of Water resources to provide water, the reverse is the case as Nigerians provide their own water through the construction of boreholes. This alternative source of water appears to constitute a looming danger for Nigerians as most of these boreholes are exposed to underground pathogens and pollutants especially E-coli which cause diarrhoeal diseases, which are also contributing factors to malnutrition and child mortality.

Findings from the opinion poll revealed that 66 percent of Nigerians do not treat their water in any form before drinking regardless of the source, mainly because they perceive that the water is good enough to drink (16 percent). On the other hand, 34 percent who claimed to treat their water before drinking it mostly adopt boiling (49 percent) the water as a method of purification.

On access to clean water, 37 percent of Nigerians lamented over the challenges they face in accessing clean water in their households and the negative impacts this has on their spending and health. According to the World Bank, accessing clean water has a major factor in reducing child mortality. In Nigeria alone, around 60, 000 children under the age of five die each year from diseases caused by the nation's poor levels of access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Also, according to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), Nigeria has 67% water coverage. However, accessibility, availability and quality vary widely, with national averages masking significant inequalities between subnational regions. For instance, in Nigeria, only 30% of the poorest people have clean water compared to the 89% of the richest people with access to clean water.

Lastly, it is imperative that the three tiers of government, stakeholders and international support agencies synergize their plans and strategies to ensure that all Nigerians have access to clean potable water in their homes by reviving all water boards across all states in the country and resuscitating dormant water work plants.

## 2.0 Survey Background and Objectives

Safe and readily available water is important for public health, whether it is used for drinking, domestic use, food production or recreational purposes. Improved water supply and sanitation, and better management of water resources, can boost countries' economic growth and can contribute greatly to poverty reduction. In 2010, the UN

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<sup>1</sup> <https://washdata.org/monitoring/drinking-water>

General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation. Everyone has the right to sufficient, continuous, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use<sup>2</sup>.

Earlier definitions of access to clean water required only that a person would be deemed to have clean water if they had access to a water source that was built to protect the water from contamination, such as a pump or a covered well. However, the new set of definitions set by the United Nations has set the vision higher - for every household to have its own water source available when needed, and which is regularly tested to make sure it is safe.

According to figures from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) – a body set up by UNICEF and the World Health Organization to collate data on water and sanitation coverage – Nigeria has 67% water coverage. However, accessibility, availability and quality vary widely in countries such as Nigeria, with national averages masking significant inequalities between subnational regions. For instance, in Nigeria, only 30% of the poorest people have clean water compared to the 89% of the richest people with access to clean water. New data that links water access to household wealth also shows that, even in countries making progress, there are still vast discrepancies between richest and poorest<sup>3</sup>. Nigeria features third in the list of top ten countries with lowest access – by population – to clean water close to home. However, the country is also fourth on the list of the top ten countries most improved in providing water access – by number, since 2000 and eight on the list of the top ten countries most improved in access to water – by percentage points<sup>4</sup>.

WaterAid is fully behind the vision and ambition of the United Nations to ensure that everyone achieves the human right to safe water and toilets. In view of this background, NOIPolls in partnership with WaterAid conducted this survey in commemoration of World Water Day to gauge the perception of Nigerians regarding their access to water.

### 3.0 Methodology

The poll was conducted in the week commencing **March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018**. It involved telephone interviews of a random nationwide sample. 1,000 randomly selected phone-owning Nigerians aged 18 years and above, representing the six geopolitical zones in the country, were interviewed. With a sample of this size, we can say with 95% confidence that the results obtained are statistically precise - within a range of plus or minus 3%.

### 4.0 Demographic Distribution

A total of 1000 respondents were interviewed in the survey. The demographic distribution of the respondents is divided into the following groups: Gender, age-group, and geo-political zones as illustrated below. The demographic distribution remains the same as 2016.

- Gender: The proportion of male and female respondents was almost equal with 51 percent and 49 percent respectively.
- Age-Group: The age-group with the highest frequency was 36-60 with 52 percent, followed by the 18-35 age-group with 44 percent. The lowest age-group represented was 60+ with 4 percent.
- Geo-Political Zones: All geo-political zones were represented in the survey. The zone with the highest representation was the North-West with 24 percent and the South-East zone had the lowest representation with 12 percent.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs391/en/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unwater.org/new-publication-whounicef-joint-monitoring-programme-2017-report/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/launch-version-report-jmp-water-sanitation-hygiene.pdf>

- Occupation: The majority of the respondents surveyed were self-employed traders (36 percent); followed by Government workers/Civil servants (21 percent). The lowest represented occupation in the survey was Youth Corpers (1 percent).

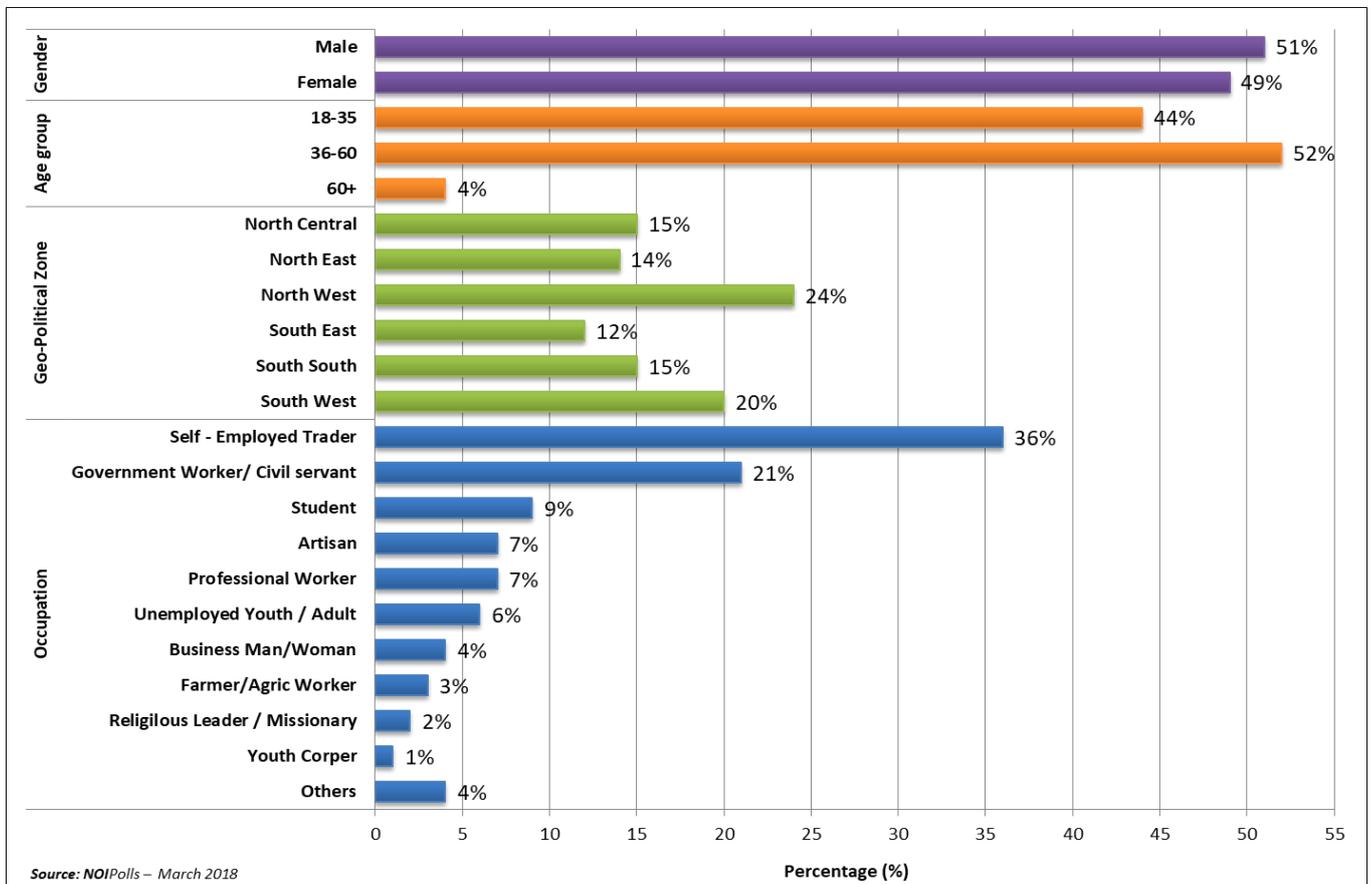


Figure 1: Demographic distribution

## 5.0 Survey Results

Respondents to the poll were asked ten specific questions. This section of the report presents findings from each question.

### 5.1 Primary Source of Water for Household Usage

Water is an irreplaceable substance that has many physical properties distinct from those possessed by other liquid, gaseous, or solid materials existing on the earth’s surface. Water as a desirable resource is greatly needed by humanity for virtually all its activities, and the importance of its quality for domestic consumption cannot be overemphasized. Domestic water should be water of the highest quality, while water meant for other forms of uses can be of good quality. It is a vital need, apart from the air that man breathes, water is the most important element to humankind.

Based on the above, respondents were asked of their primary source of water supply and 50 percent of those interviewed disclosed that their main source of water supply for household use is borehole and residents from the South-South accounted for the largest proportion of Nigerians who asserted to this. Other primary sources of water mentioned include; protected dug well, piped water and tanker-trucks/ water vendors amongst other sources.

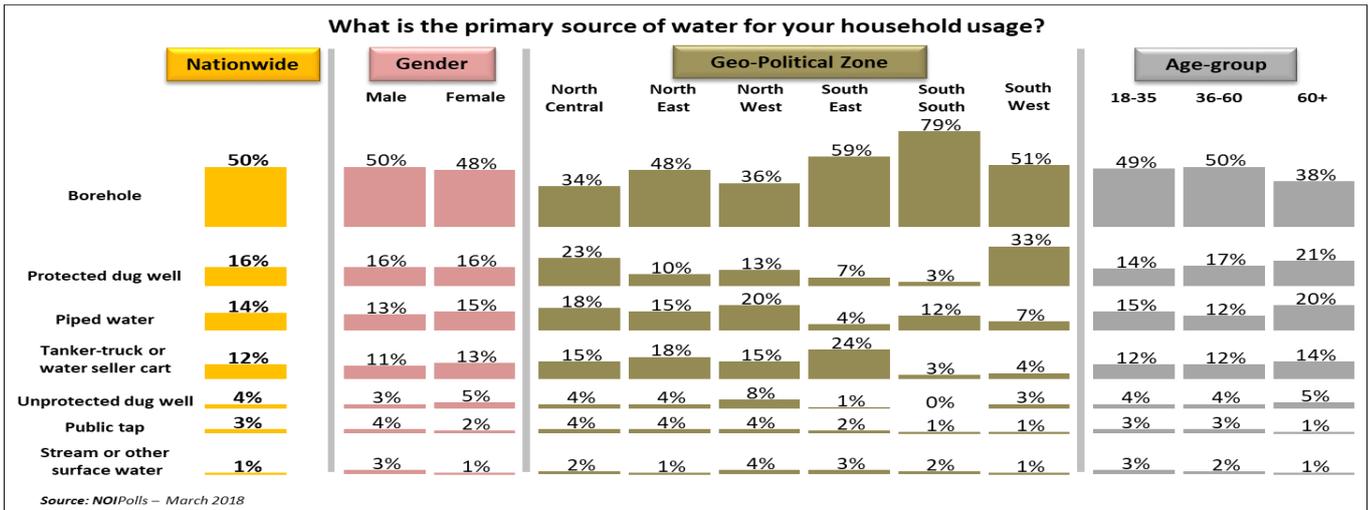


Figure 2: Primary source of water for household usage

### 5.2 Round Trip Time in Getting Water

On the duration of collecting water, the poll revealed that majority (56 percent) of the respondents have their main source of water supply within their living premises and respondents from the South-South (67 percent) and South-West (65 percent) had the greater proportion of Nigerians who made this statement. This is agreeably considering the proportion that use borehole as their primary source of water supply and more often than none, boreholes are dug within living premises. Also, 33 percent indicated that it takes them less than 30 minutes round trip to collect water.

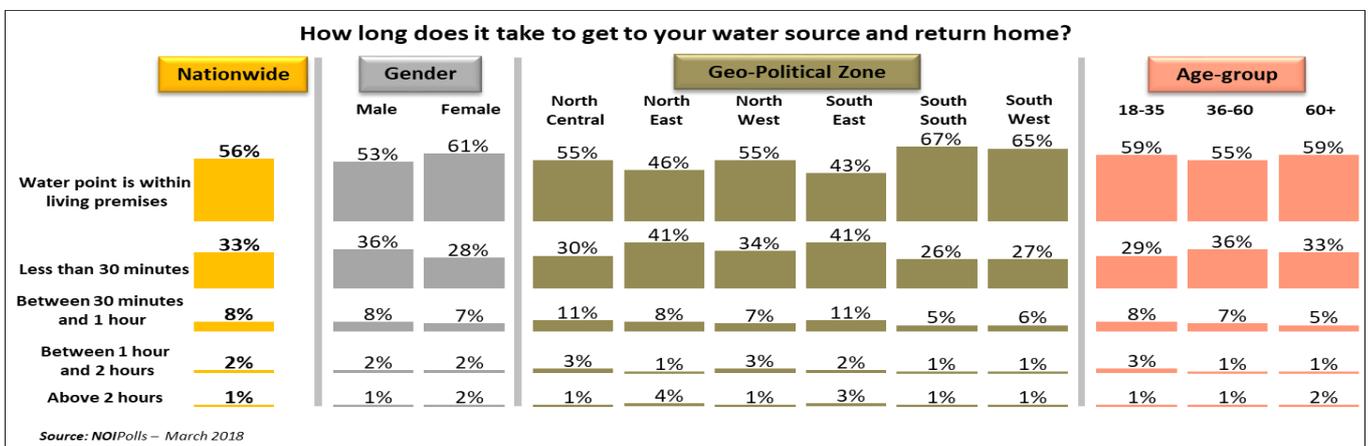


Figure 3: Round Trip Duration

### 5.3 The Quality of Drinking Water

On the quality of drinking water, respondents were further asked if the quality of the water they get from their main drinking-water source was safe enough to drink and 72 percent acknowledged in the affirmative. On the other hand, 28 percent of the respondents believe their water is unsafe for drinking.

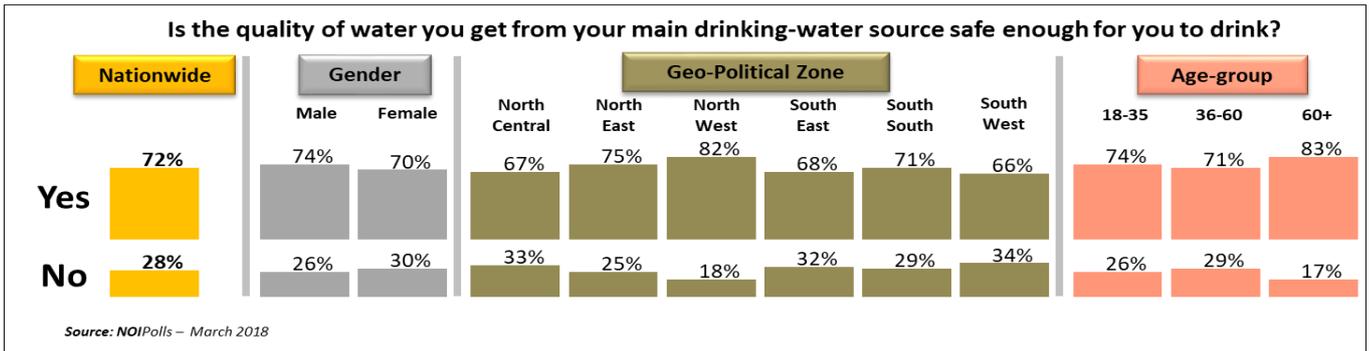


Figure 4: The quality of drinking water

### 5.4 Water Treatment

Subsequently, although the water we drink might appear clean, it most likely contains some harmful micro organism. Findings from this report revealed that majority (66 percent) of Nigerians do not treat the water they drink. This cuts across both genders, age-groups and a further analysis by geo-political zones showed that the North-East zone had the highest (73 percent) proportion of Nigerians who do not treat their water prior to drinking. On the other hand, 34 percent of respondents claimed that they treat their water to make it suitable for drinking. The South-West zone had the largest (48 percent) percentage of respondents who stated this.

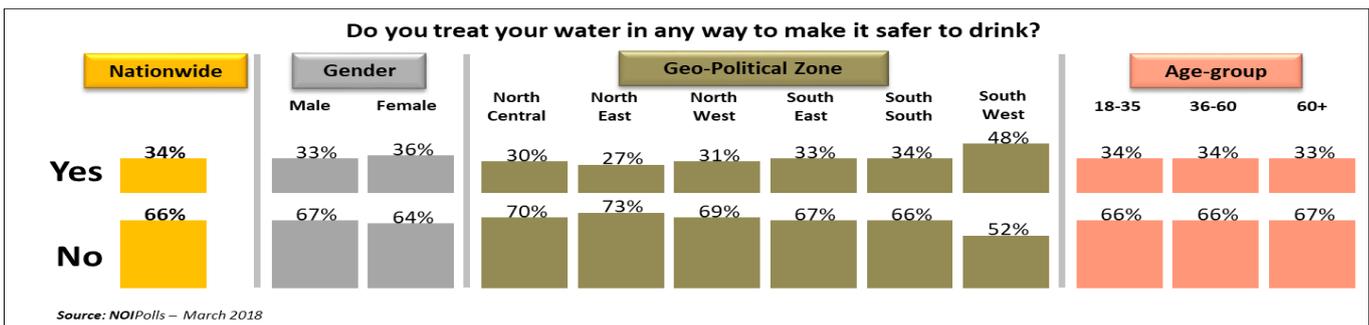


Figure 5: Water Treatment

### 5.5 Mode of Treating Water

Furthermore, the 34 percent who considered their water unsafe to drink mentioned several ways or methods they employ in treating their water. The majority (49 percent) disclosed they boil before drinking. This method is particularly perceived by many as the most efficient method of purification because a lot of organisms cannot survive when water reaches its boiling point of 212° Fahrenheit or 100° C. Although, some experts have suggested that boiling might not necessarily make the water safe to drink, because some microbes still survive high temperatures. However, the time taken to heat the water to boiling is usually sufficient to reduce pathogens to safe levels<sup>5</sup>. The South-East zone accounted for the largest (74 percent) proportion of respondents who boil their water to make it safe.

In the same manner, 19 percent stated that they add chlorine or bleach to make their drinking water safe. This method is another effective way if boiling is not possible but it has been advised that the end result might not be attained if the right amount of the bleaching agent is not used or if the bleach contains soaps, perfumes, or dyes. The South-West (33 percent) and the South-South (29 percent) zones have the largest percentage of respondents who add chlorine or bleach to their drinking water to make it safe. Other methods of treatment employed by the

<sup>5</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/data/drinking-water-sanitation-hygiene-database/>

proportion of respondents who treat their drinking water is 'using water filters' (10 percent), 'letting it stand and settle' (9 percent) amongst others.

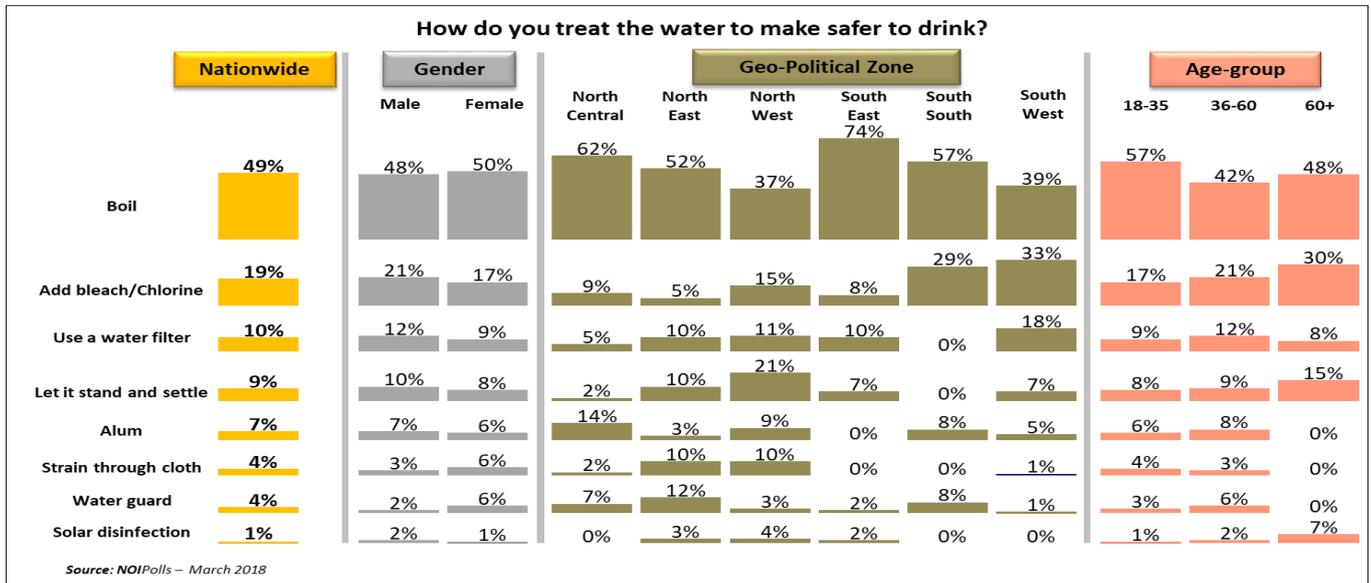


Figure 6: Mode of Treating Water

### 5.6 Perceived Reasons for not Treating Water

It is surprising that half (50 percent) of the respondents who do not treat their water before drinking disclosed that they believe the water, regardless of its source, is safe enough to drink and majority (80 percent) of the respondents in this category are from residents in the North-East zone. This simply infers that they might have been consuming water that is harmful to their health, hence, prone to water borne diseases. Also, 16 percent, who claimed not to treat the water they drink, asserted that drinking unsafe water does not harm their health and the South-West zone had the highest (43 percent) share of respondents here. In the same manner, while 15 percent affirmed that they deemed it unnecessary for them to treat the water they drink, 9 percent mentioned that they buy sachet water for drinking' (9 percent). These reasons stated above call for the undertaking of a majorly grassroots sensitization and awareness campaign by the stakeholders involved for a general enlightenment of citizens on the dangers inherent in the consumption of unsafe water as a safe and healthy society directly translates to a healthy economy.

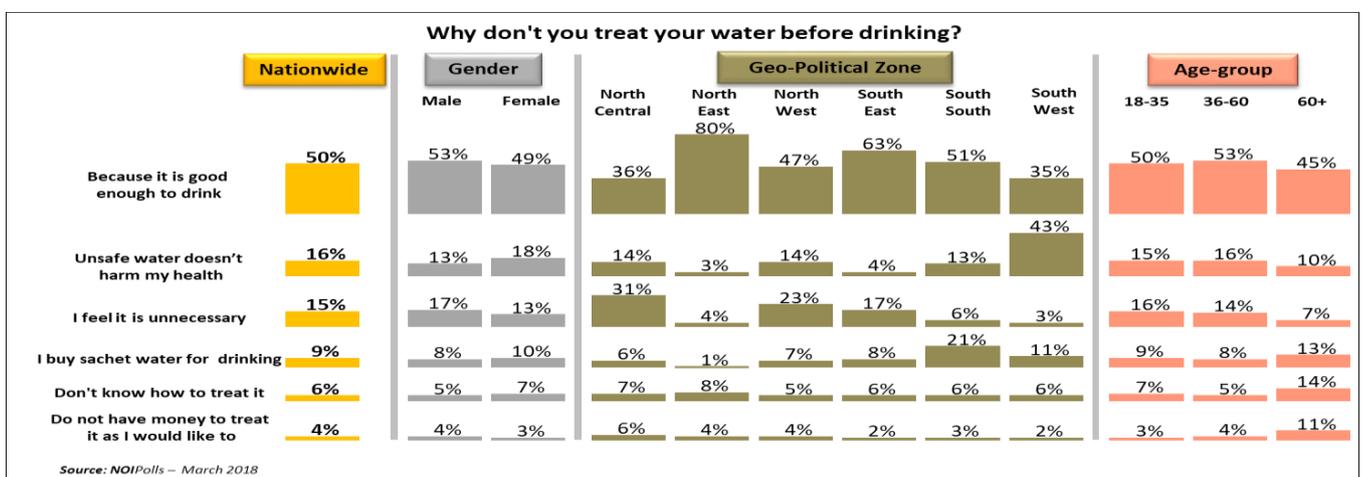


Figure 7: Perceived Reason for not treating water

### 5.7 Access to Drinking Water

On current sources of drinking water, the survey revealed that 37 percent of Nigerian households at present get their drinking water from boreholes and this assertion is mostly from residents in the North-East zone. This implies that almost 4 in 10 Nigerian households have their source of drinking water as boreholes. More analysis revealed that 34 percent of Nigerians keep-up with their daily drinking water needs from bottled or sachet water sources. In addition, 10 percent revealed that they currently get their drinking water from piped water amongst other sources.

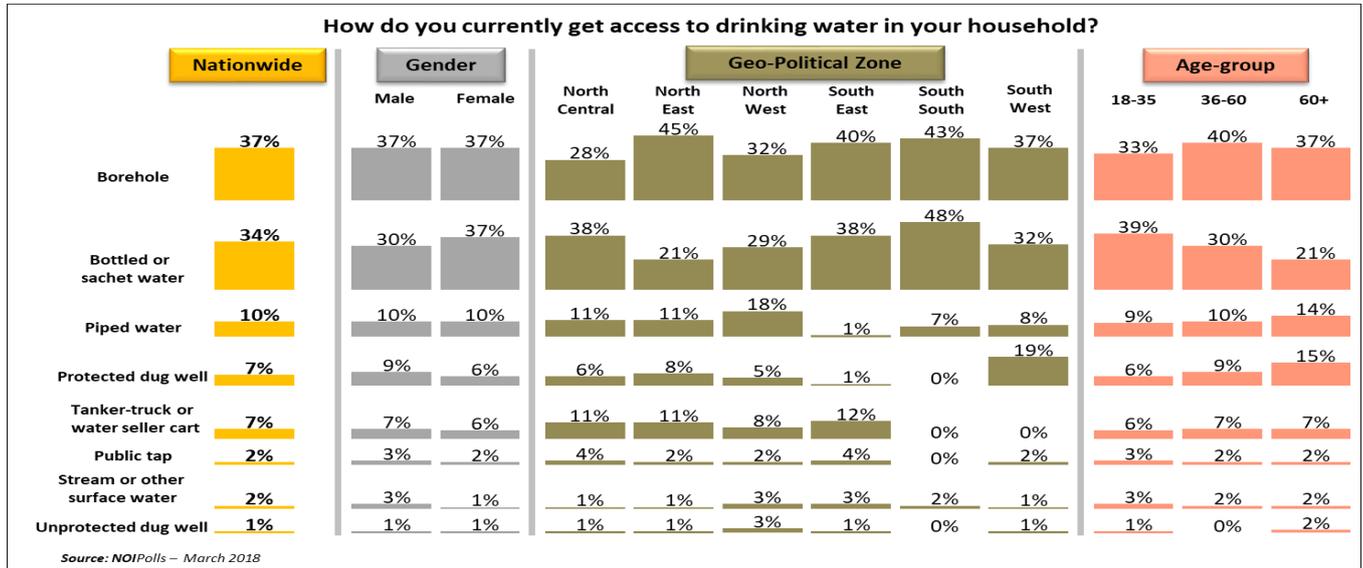


Figure 8: Access to Drinking Water

### 5.8 Challenges in Accessing Clean Water

On challenges in accessing clean water, analysis revealed that 37 percent of Nigerian households currently have challenges accessing clean water and this is mostly prevalent in the northern region; North-West and North-Central to be specific. On the contrary, 63 percent of Nigerians do not see access to clean water as a challenge to their households.

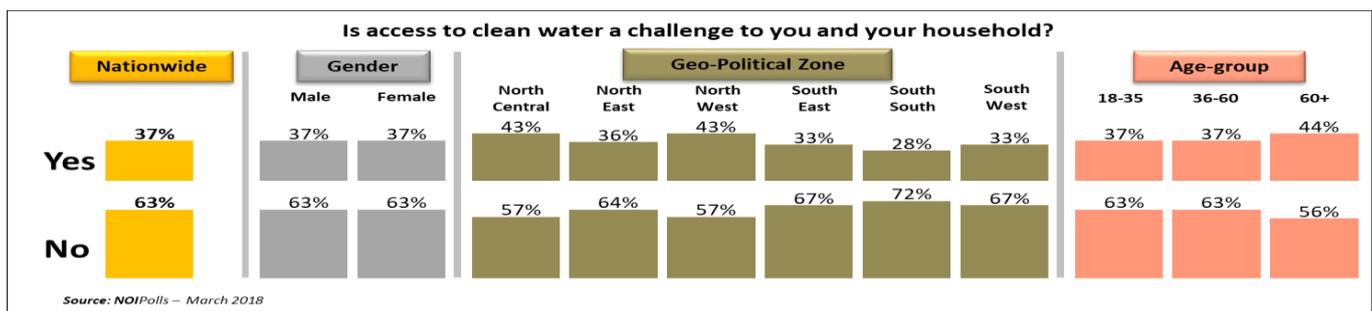


Figure 9: challenge in accessing clean water

### 5.9 Impact of Lack of Access to Water

On the impact of lack of access to water, 31 percent, which formed the majority, mentioned an increase in their spending as the main impact of access to water as they are forced to buy water daily with their rather scarce resources. Additionally, 30 percent of the respondents stated that it has affected their health and it can be inferred that this category of respondents are more likely to face unsafe water related ailments such as typhoid fever, diarrhoea, cholera etc. due to the consumption of unsafe water. Also, the poll revealed that 18 percent of the

respondents stated that they have to travel far distances to source for water amongst other related impacts of lack of access to water.

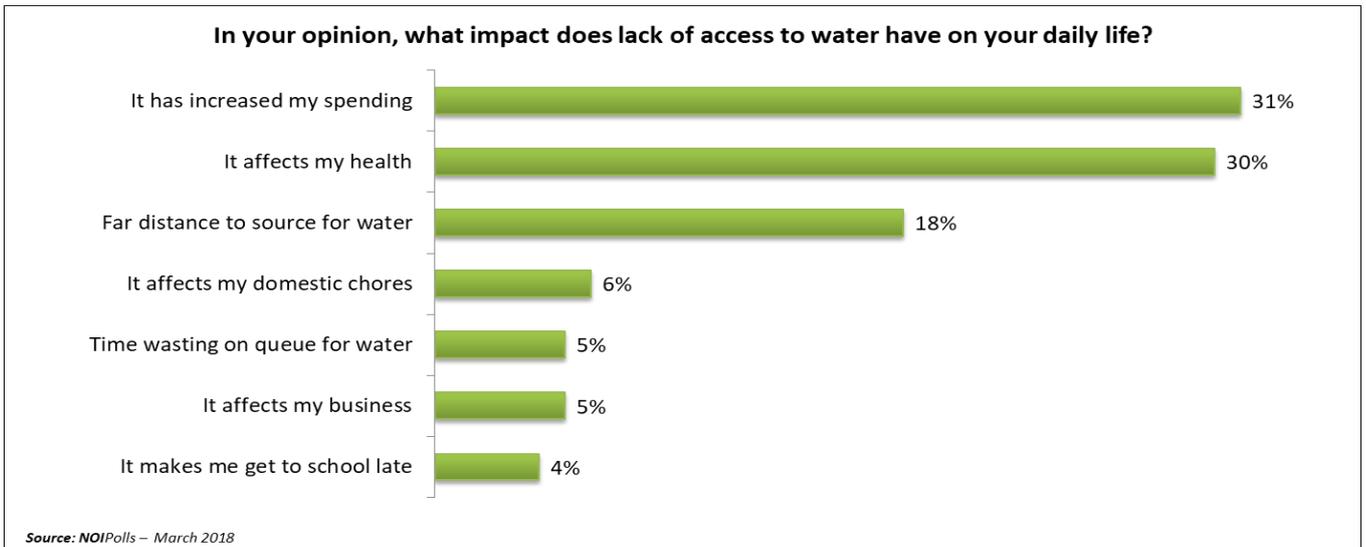


Figure 10: impact of lack of access to water

### 6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the poll has shown that access to safe and clean water for both domestic use and for drinking is still a challenge to most Nigerian households as borehole is widely used as the primary source of water supply despite some of its long-term effects. Health experts have affirmed that unsafe water has a lot of health implications and 30 percent of those who have challenges in accessing clean water have decried the impact of unsafe water on their health. Poor water supply is a major route for transmission of typhoid fever, cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis A, and other water-borne diseases. Therefore, in order to meet the 6<sup>th</sup> Goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which is to ‘**Ensure Access to Water and Sanitation for all**’, government at all levels needs to urgently provide funds for the provision of improved quality of water and water sources to the citizenry.

Finally, though the provision of water supply is capital intensive, it is still a basic necessity for the well-being of Nigerians. Therefore, Public-Private-Partnership programs should be encouraged to attract investors in order to ensure adequate production, distribution and sale of potable water to all. Above all, the Federal Government should fully implement the provisions of the approved 2000 Nigeria’s National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy.

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WaterAid is working to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. The international not-for-profit organisation works in 34 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 25.8 million people with clean water and 25.1 million people with decent toilets.

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