

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) DISEASE SURVEY REPORT



MARCH 2020



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84%

of Nigerians say they are aware of the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19)

NW=78% SW=87%
NE=93% SE=73%
NC=89% SS=86%



26%

of Nigerians say they are immune to COVID-19

REASONS

I am a child of God	40%
I have strong genes	30%
The hot weather	17%
I drink strong herbs	8%
Its not for Africans	5%



63%

of Nigerians say they are concerned they might get COVID-19

SOME KNOWN SYMPTOMS

Cough	47%
Fever	33%
Sneezing	25%
Bleeding	13%
Body Weakness	13%

HOW NIGERIANS SAY COVID-19 SPREADS

40%	22%	13%	11%	5%	5%
Contact with infected person	Coughing in public	Infected droplet from sneezes	Through handshake	Exchange of body fluid	Poor hygiene



50%

of Nigerians say they have information on how to protect themselves against COVID-19

SOME KNOWN MEASURES

Regular handwash	45%
social distancing	22%
use hand sanitizer	21%
Drink enough water	16%
Eat Garlic & Ginger	15%



56%

of Nigerians say they are confident that the Ministry of health and its agencies can provide needed care and manage COVID-19 in Nigeria



71%

of Nigerians say the government is doing enough to protect Nigerians from the impact of COVID-19

Source: NOIPolls - March 2020

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1.0 Executive Summary

Daily, new cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) emerge around world. What is certain from China to Italy to Iran etc. is that nations and continents are being affected by the rate at which the virus spreads. People are being quarantined in hospitals and aboard ships in distant ports, and the movement of labour and vital supplies has been significantly distorted.

Nigeria recorded its first case of COVID-19 on the 25th of February 2020 with the index case being an Italian man who works in Nigeria and flew into the commercial city of Lagos from Milan. Since then Nigeria has recorded an additional 2 cases – a contact of the index case and an independent woman who arrived from the United Kingdom on the 13th of March, 2020. Given this backdrop, NOIPolls conducted a public opinion poll to gauge the perception of Nigerians regarding the awareness, mode of transmission, symptoms and to ascertain their awareness on possible preventive measures of COVID-19. This poll was conducted as at the time Nigeria had only 2 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The poll result revealed that a vast proportion of Nigerians (84 percent) are aware of the COVID-19 virus disease and this cuts across gender, geographical location and age-group with at least 73 percent representation. The awareness level is not surprising given that the health authorities have through various media platforms informed Nigerians of the illness and have assured Nigerians that they can manage the spread of the virus, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the country in February, 2020. Also, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) issued a public health advisory to inform Nigerians about symptoms and preventive measures, and has provided a toll-free number for guidance.

With the incorrect news of immunity being spread it is alarming to note that the poll revealed that 26 percent of Nigerians nationwide held the perception that they are immune to the virus. Further probing showed that Nigerians who held this belief have based it on their faith and religious beliefs (40 percent) and the perception that they have a strong genetic make-up (30 percent) that is resistant to the virus. Additionally, other opinions on immunity to the virus includes, that the Nigerian weather is too hot for the virus to survive in (17 percent), and that their personal herbal remedy will protect them from the virus (8 percent), while others have the idea that the COVID-19 is not an African disease rather a western disease (5 percent).

On panic level, with reference to being infected by the virus, 63 percent of Nigerians disclosed that they are concerned that they may contract the virus. With regards to knowledge of the symptoms of infection, cough (45 percent), fever (33 percent) and sneezing (25 percent) were identified as the top three symptoms of the virus while body contact with infected person was mostly mentioned as one of the primary ways of spreading the virus.

Furthermore, the poll revealed that 50 percent of Nigerians do not have information on preventive measure against the coronavirus disease. This implies that about hundred million Nigerians are at risk of being infected with the disease. Nevertheless, it is heartwarming to note that 45 percent stated that regularly washing of hands is one of the measures they would take to prevent the spread of the disease. Interestingly, it is very important to note also that a vast majority of Nigerians disclosed that they would be willing to report (97 percent) and be tested (97 percent) if they show any sign of COVID-19 as well as willing to be quarantined (97 percent) if they are at risk of spreading the virus disease.

Currently, COVID-19 has been considered a pandemic as a result of its speed and scale of transmission. It is pertinent that the Federal Ministry of Health and all stakeholders, continue and ramp up their efforts in ensuring that the cases of the virus infection can be reduced in Nigeria, and ultimately contain the virus. Also, more needs to be done in terms of nationwide campaign to sensitize more Nigerians on the preventive measures against the virus disease as 50 percent disclosed that they do not have information on preventive measures against the virus.

2.0 Survey Background and Objectives

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious viral disease which got its name from the outbreak that began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may experience symptoms such as aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin after 5 days. A lot is not known about the Corona virus but several estimates have suggested that incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1 – 14 days; although some people become infected but don't show any symptoms and don't feel unwell¹. About 1 in every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty in breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness².

When someone with COVID-19 coughs or exhales, the virus spreads from person to person through small droplets discharged from the nose or mouth. Also, COVID-19 is contracted by touching objects or surfaces infected by the virus, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth³.

As at 16th March, 2020, global infection numbers were 185,067 confirmed cases with most confirmed cases in China and Italy. Also, 7,330 deaths have been confirmed; however, about 80,236 cases have recovered from the disease⁴. A total number of 155 countries have been infected so far with a high probability that more countries will be infected except drastic precautionary measures are enforced to prevent the spread and manage confirmed cases⁵.

In Africa, 28 out of 54 countries have confirmed cases of COVID-19. The current infection rate is 417 confirmed cases and 7 deaths since it was confirmed in February 2020⁶. In Nigeria, a total of 48 people has been screened for COVID-19 in 8 States namely; Edo, Enugu, F.C.T, Kano, Lagos, Ogun, Rivers and Yobe out of which 47 tested negative and have been ruled out, while one (a contact of the index) was confirmed positive⁷. Against this background, NOIPolls conducted a public opinion poll to gauge the perception of Nigerians regarding the awareness, mode of transmission, symptoms and to ascertain their awareness on possible preventive measures of COVID-19.

¹ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

² <https://www.cityofarcata.org/891/Coronavirus-Information>

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

⁴ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

⁵ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

⁶ <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>

⁷ <https://www.ncdc.gov.ng/diseases/sitreps/?cat=14&name=An%20update%20of%20COVID-19%20outbreak%20in%20Nigeria>

3.0 Methodology

The survey was conducted through telephone interviews in the week of **March 3rd, 2020**. A proportionate random nationwide selected sample of 1,000 phone-owning Nigerians, 18 years and above, were interviewed across the six geopolitical zones in the country using a well-structured questionnaire. This sample size provides a 95 percent confidence interval that the results obtained are within a range of plus or minus 4.65 percent of the opinions of population. The interviews were conducted in English, Pidgin, Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba. The use of several Nigerian languages reduces the likelihood of a non-response bias.

4.0 Demographic Distribution

The demographic distribution of the respondents was analysed by the following groups: gender, age-group, geo-political zones, and occupation as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The gender and the geo-political zone demographic distribution of the respondents were in the same proportion with the 2016 National Population Census.

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 in the survey was 36-60 (53 percent) and the lowest age-group represented was 60+ (5 percent).

Geo-Political Zone: All geo-political zones were adequately represented in the survey, the highest represented zone being the North-West zone (24 percent) and the lowest being the South-East zone (12 percent).

Occupation: The highest proportion of respondents surveyed were self-employed traders (37 percent) followed by government worker/civil servant (18 percent). The lowest represented occupation in the survey are religious leaders/missionary and youth corpsers each with 1 percent.

**Summary of Demographic Variables for the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Snap Poll
 (N = 1,000) March, 2020**

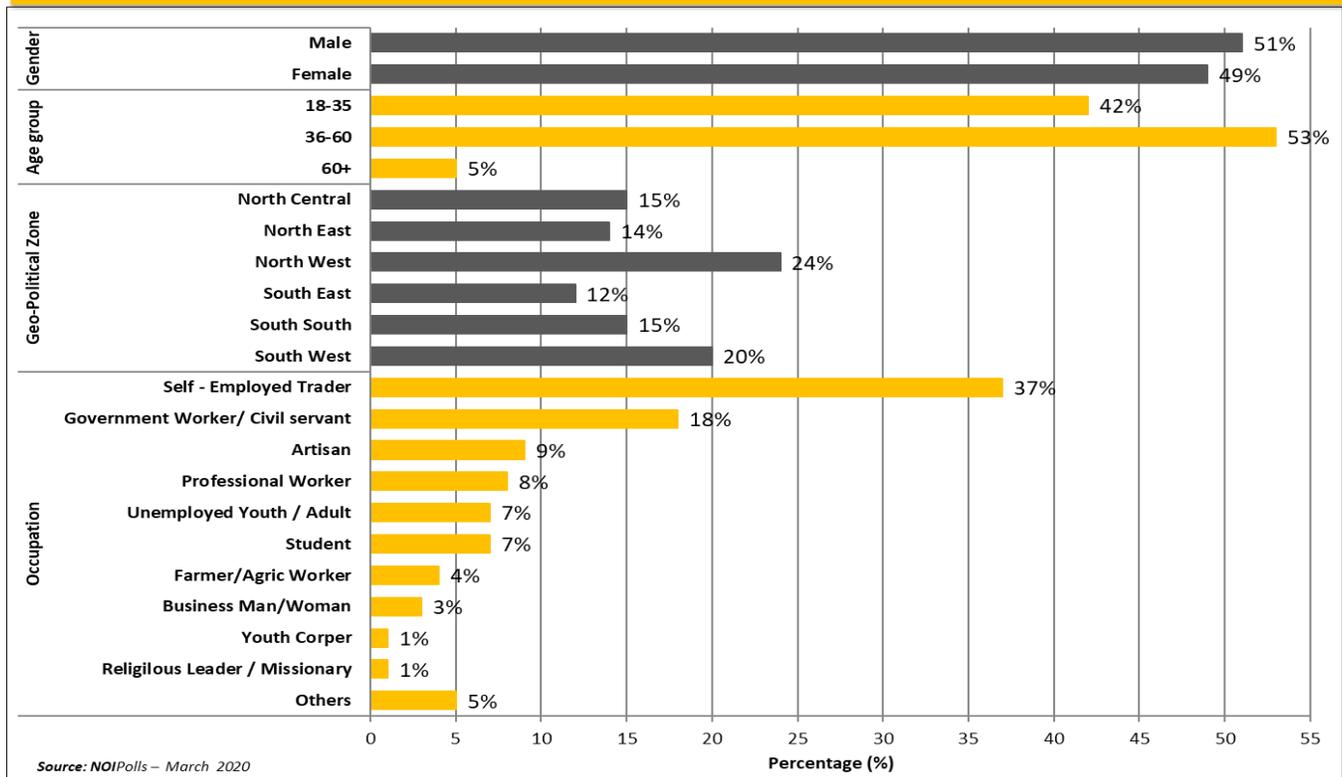


Figure 1: Demographic distribution

5.0 Survey Results

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

5.1 Awareness Of The Outbreak Of Covid-19 Virus Disease

The first question gauged awareness of Nigerians on the outbreak of COVID-19 virus disease and findings revealed that majority of Nigerians (84 percent) are mindful of the outbreak of the virus disease. However, 16 percent claimed that they are not aware of the outbreak of the disease. It is worth to note that the global coronavirus outbreak has been declared an pandemic by the World Health Organisation given increasing concern about the spread of the disease.

Analysis by geographical location indicated that the North-East zone had the most respondents (93 percent) who said that they are of the outbreak of the virus whereas the South-East zone had the most respondents (27 percent) who are not aware of the outbreak. Respondents in the age group 60+ are the most aware with 92%, while respondents in the age group 18-35 are the least aware with 82%. More males (88%) are aware than females (80%).

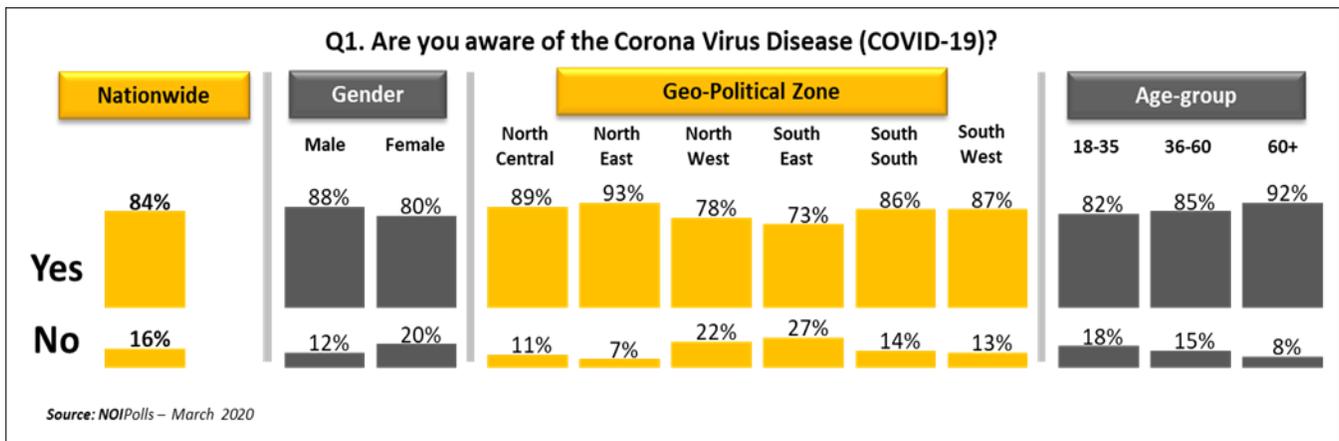


Figure 2: The level of awareness on the outbreak of COVID-19 virus disease

5.2 Perception On Being Immune To COVID-19

There has been a spread of false information on being immune to the disease⁸. With regards to perceptions on being immune to the virus, it is astonishing to know that 26 percent of the population claimed that they are immune to the coronavirus disease given that there is no scientific evidence to back this belief. An astonishing 55 percent of respondents from the South-East zone and 31 percent from the South-West believe they are immune to COVID-19 virus disease.

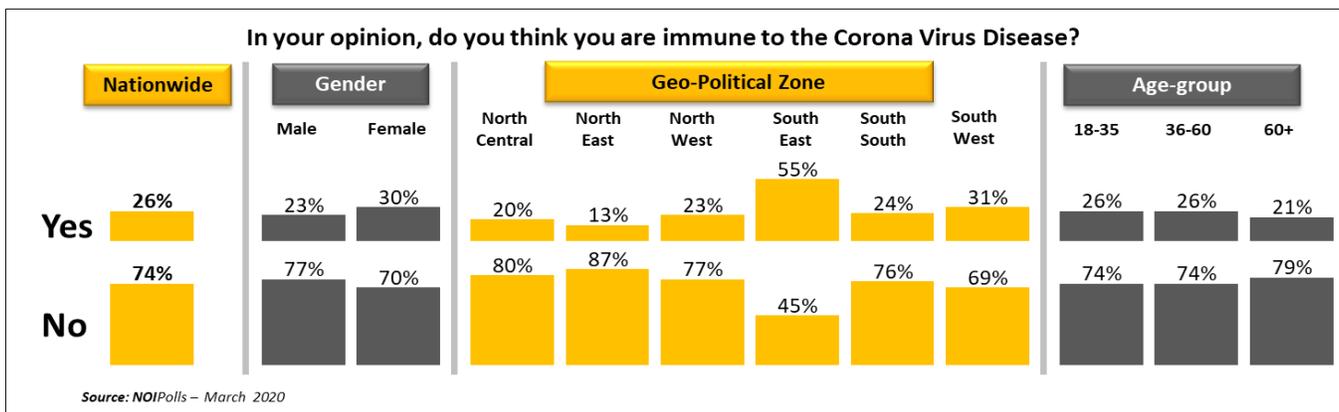


Figure 3: Perception on immunity

5.3 Reasons For Being Immune

Out of the 26 percent who mentioned that they are immune to the virus disease, 4 in 10 (40 percent) of them said that they are immune because they are children of God. Also, while 30 percent disclosed that they have a strong gene that can repel the virus, 17 percent stated that the weather is too hot for the virus to thrive in amongst other reasons mentioned and 5 percent believe it can't infect Africans.

⁸ <https://www.theafricareport.com/24698/top-10-coronavirus-fake-news-items/>

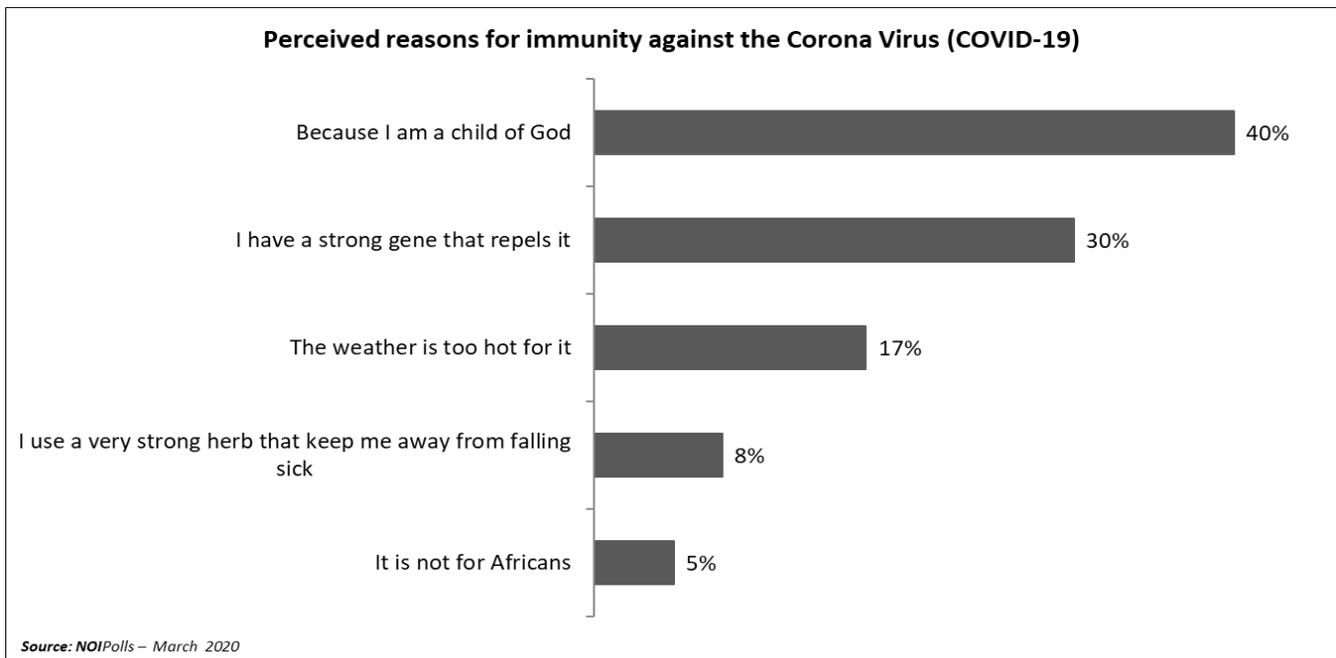


Figure 4: Trend on the mode of transmission

5.4 Level Of Panic

Subsequently, when asked: how concerned are you that you might get the coronavirus disease? The result revealed that 63 percent of Nigerians are concerned that they might be infected by the virus. It is worthy of note that respondents from the South-West (63 percent) and South-East (46 percent) zones accounted for the highest number of respondents who stated that they are not concerned about contracting the virus. Interestingly, more younger respondents within the age group 18-35 (65%) have very high concern compared to older people within the 60+ age group.

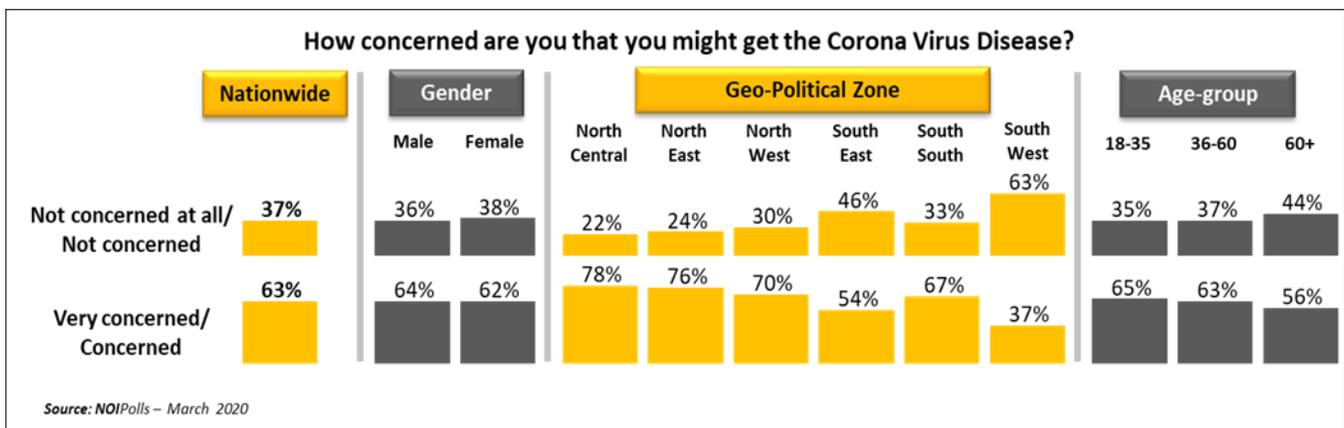


Figure 5: Level of Panic

5.5 The Symptoms Of The Disease

The top three symptoms of the coronavirus disease cited by Nigerians are cough (47 percent), fever (33 percent) and sneezing (25 percent). Other symptoms mentioned by Nigerians including bleeding (13 percent), body weakness (13 percent), sore throat (12 percent), headache (12 percent) and difficulty in breathing (8 percent) amongst other symptoms.

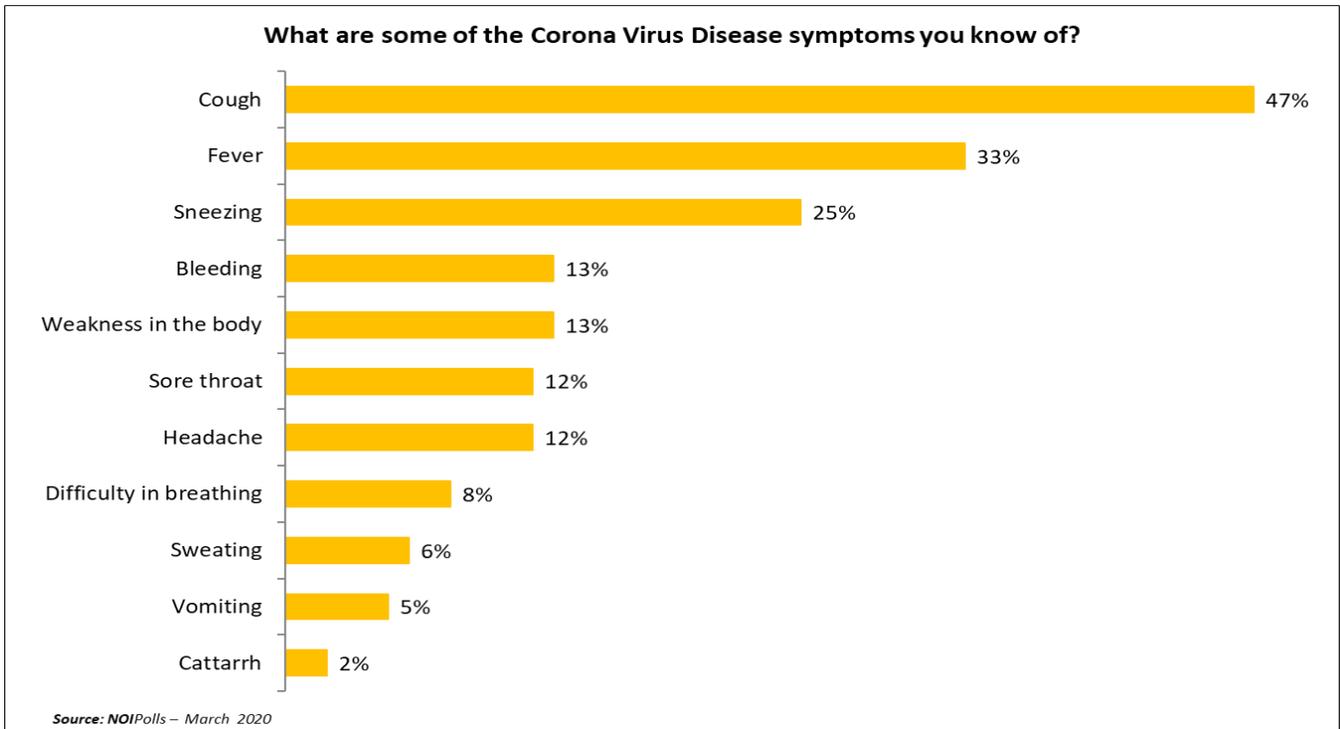


Figure 6: Symptoms of the disease

5.6 Mode of Transmission

With respect to mode of transmission, 47 percent of the Nigerians stated that it is by coming in contact with someone who has been infected with the virus. This is followed by respondents who mentioned that the virus is contracted when an infected person coughs (25 percent) or sneezes (17 percent) in public.

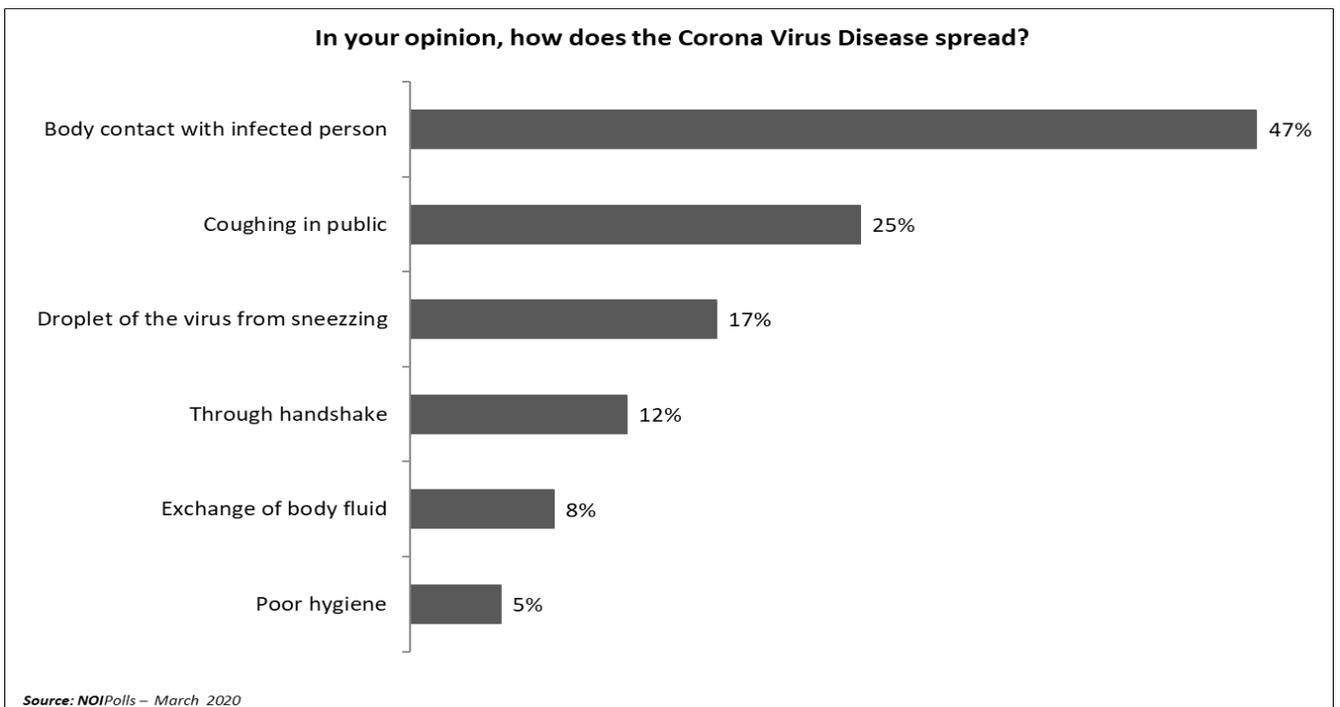


Figure 7: Mode of transmission

5.7 Proportions Who Have Information On Preventive Measures

There is no difference about the percentage of respondents who have information about how to protect themselves from COVID-19 (50%) and those who don't (50%). The gender disparity is also not much (51% male said know and 49% females know). However, a higher percentage of respondents (66%) from South-East said they don't have information compared to 54% of respondents from North-Central who said they have information. In terms of age group, the disparity is not much as well. 51% of age group 60+ said they have information on how to protect themselves from COVID-19 compared to 51% for 18-35 and 50% for 36-60. All in all, there seem to be not acceptable level of information among the citizens on how to protect themselves against COVID-19.

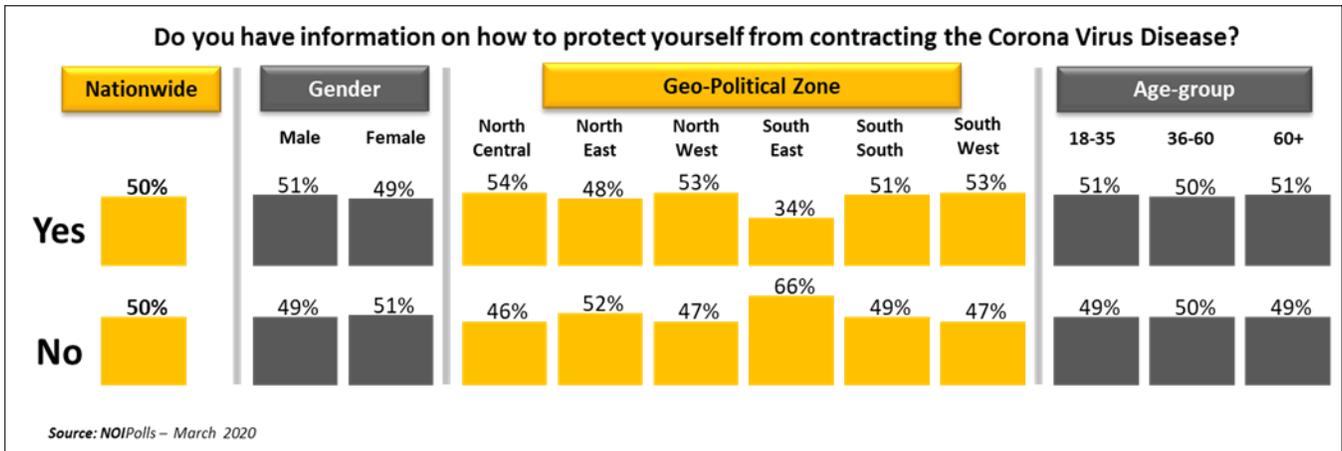


Figure 8: Information on preventive measures

5.8 Measures Taken To Prevent The Spread Of The Virus

The messages on hand washing seems to be getting into the minds of the people as 45% of respondents said they would practice regular hand washing as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. 21% said they would stay away from infected individual, 21% said they would use hand sanitizer while 16% said they would drink enough water. 15% said they would eat garlic and ginger while those who will avoid eating bush meat constitute 15%. In terms of avoiding crowded places, only 8% said they would take that measure while same 8% said they will pray and hope in God. 7% of respondent said they will keep their environment clean as a measure of prevention.

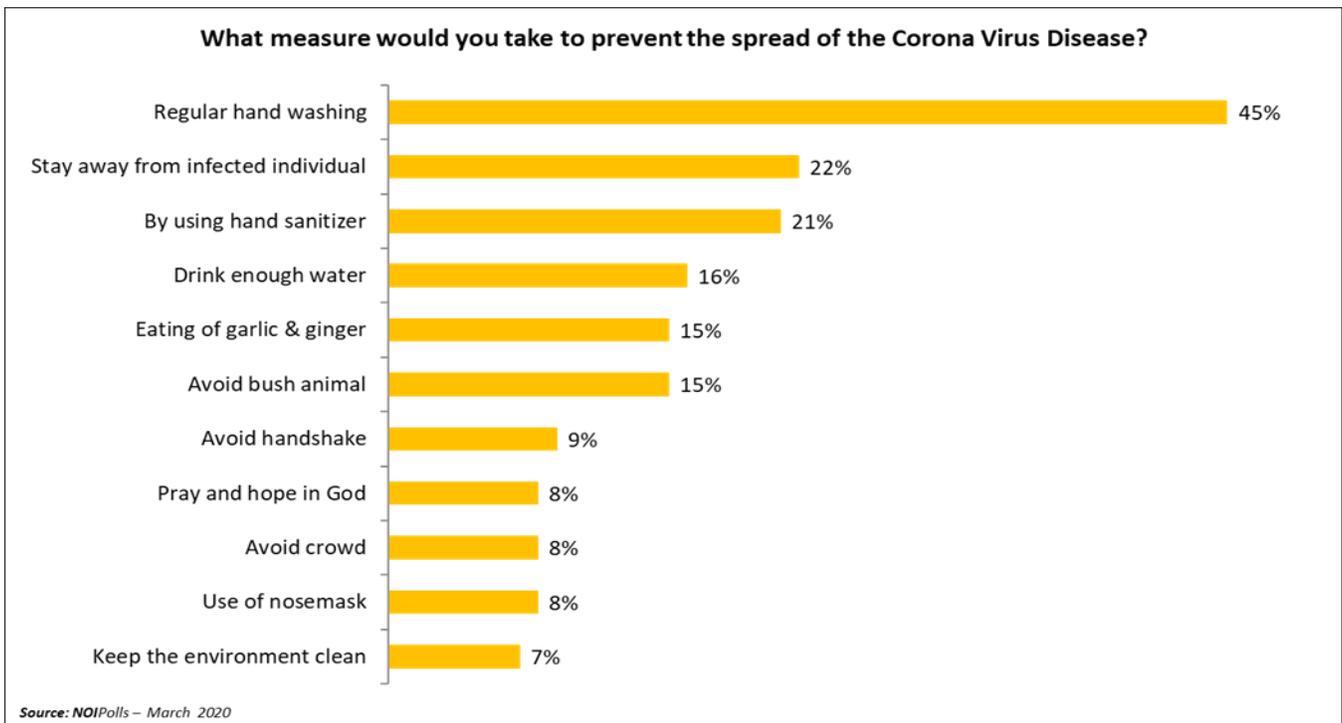


Figure 9: Measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19

5.9 Willingness To Report, Test and Be Quarantined

Interestingly, it is gratifying to know that almost all respondents disclosed that they would be willing to report (97 percent) and be tested (97 percent) if they show any sign of COVID-19 as well as willing to be quarantined (97 percent) if they are at risk of spreading the virus disease.

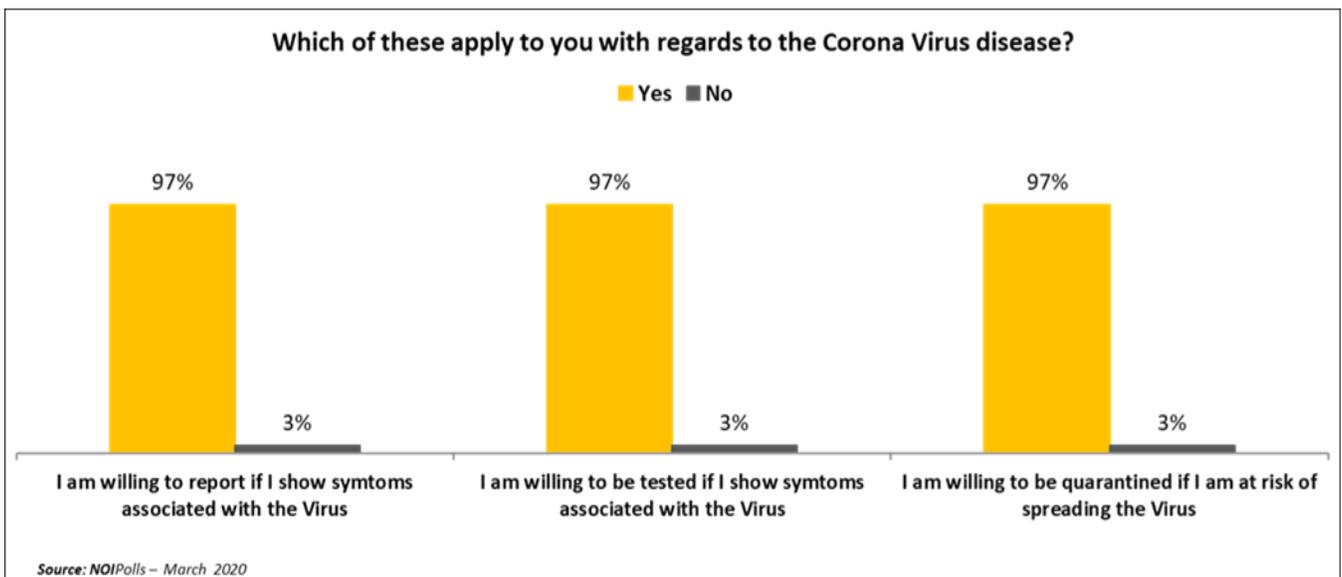


Figure 10: Willingness to report, test and be quarantined

5.10 Level Of Confidence In The Ministry of Health

The poll result revealed that almost 6 in 10 Nigerians (56 percent) are confident that the Ministry of Health and its agencies can provide the needed care and manage cases of the COVID-19 virus disease and this assertion is highest in the South-South zone (68 percent). On the contrary, 44 percent of Nigerians said that they are not confident that the Ministry of Health and its agencies can either provide the needed care nor manage cases of the virus. In terms of age, 77% of 60+ age group said they are confident compared to 56% each of 18-35 and 36-60 who said they are confident. 68% of respondents from south-south (highest) said they are confident compared to 53% from south-east who said they are not confident. There seem to be parallel confidence levels in the northern regions as 54% of respondents each from north-east and north-west said they are confident while 55% of respondents from north-central said they are confident.

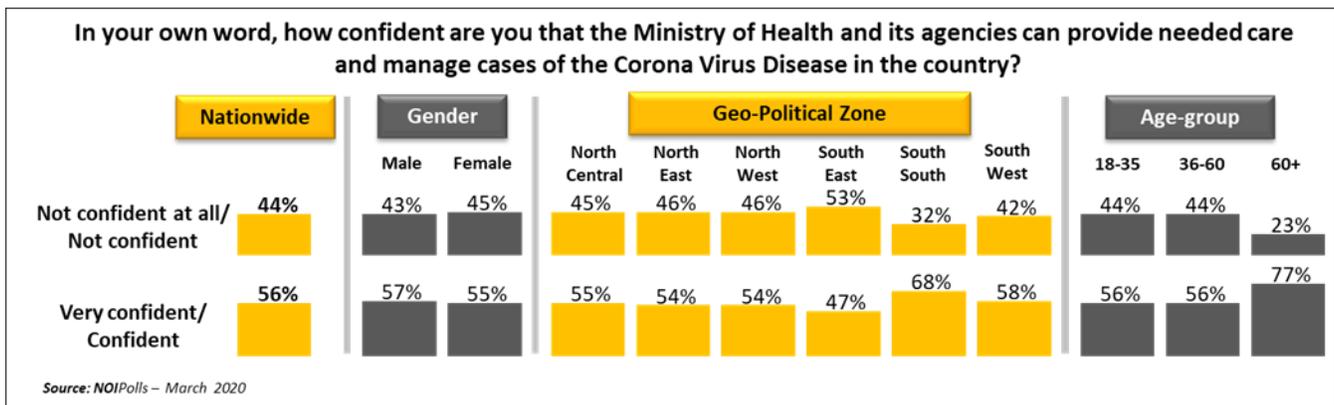


Figure 11: Level of confidence in the Ministry of Health

5.11 Is the government doing enough?

Lastly, the poll assessed government’s effort towards protecting Nigerians from the impact of Corona Virus. The poll findings showed that the larger proportion of Nigerians (71 percent) believe that the government is doing enough to protect Nigerians from the impact of the coronavirus disease.

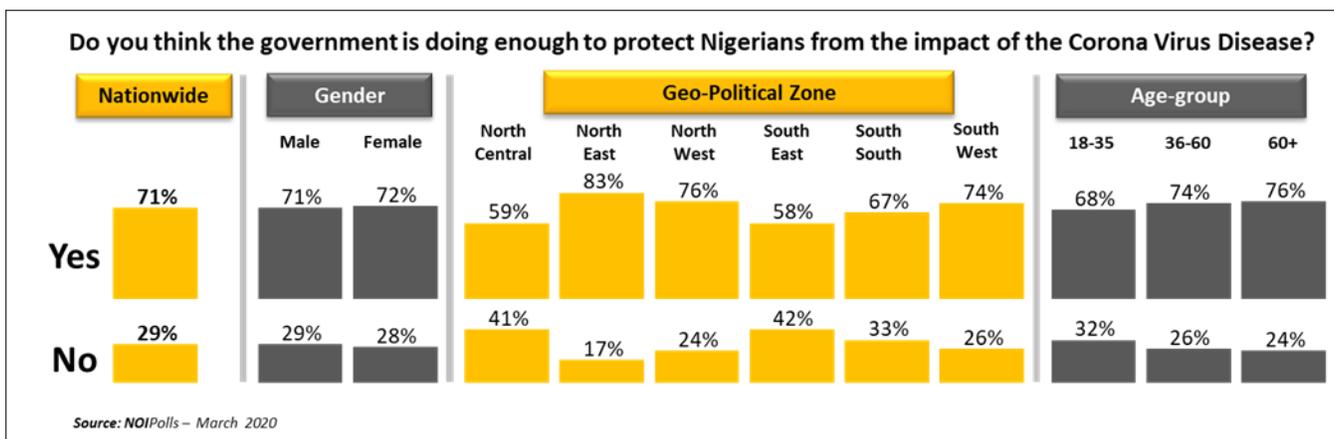


Figure 12: Effort towards protecting Nigerians from COVID-19 virus

6.0 Conclusion

The survey took into account various demographics including age group, gender and geographical location. The results show discrepancies in perception across these demographics. The percentage of respondents who are aware of COVID-19 is considerably high, showing impact of various awareness messaging created by government agencies, organisations and individuals. The spread of awareness is equally high among all the geo-political zones as each zone has higher than 70% awareness. All the age groups also have awareness of 80% or higher. More awareness is however needed in this regard to more citizens in the know. The fact that a considerably higher percentage of respondents think they are not immune to COVID-19 is a strong indicator that citizens will strive to prevent themselves from getting infected with the disease. There is also a need for more targeted messaging to do away with some myths about immunity against COVID-19. The fact that 40% of respondents think they are immune to COVID-19 because they are children of God validates the need for the messaging. There seems to be concern around the land about possibly getting infected with COVID-19 by the citizens with 63% showing their concern. However, despite older people being more likely to have higher fatality from the disease, young people in the age group 18-35 have higher concern than the older age group 60+. There is a need to do more on enlightening the citizens on how to protect themselves from getting infected with COVID-19 as just 50% admitted to knowing. No zone has an awareness rate higher than 55%. Cough seems to be the major symptom of COVID-19 identified by citizens. However, other symptoms such as fever, sneezing, body weakness and sore throat are also identified. Knowledge of the major modes of transmission is also spread among respondents with body contact with infected person being the most perceived mode. These need to be emphasized more in awareness messaging. Respondents also showed appreciable knowledge of measures to take to prevent themselves with regular hand washing perceived to be the most effective. There is also a need to emphasize on these however in awareness messaging by government and organisations. The willingness of respondents to report when they start having symptoms and get tested and quarantined if need be is very encouraging and goes to show that citizens are well aware of the effect of the disease on themselves and others. However, government and her agencies need to do more to improve the confidence of the citizens in their ability to provide the needed care and manage cases of COVID-19. The majority of respondents already think the government is doing enough and building more confidence that the government can handle the COVID-19 cases effectively is paramount to sustain the thought.

This survey will serve as reference for government at all levels, organisations and individuals working in the health space for effective planning and implementation of activities to successfully prevent Nigerians from COVID-19. It will provide opportunity to prioritize actions and messaging to build and sustain trust between government and citizens, as well as fully take measures to further restrict the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, good hygienic practices like hand washing remain the most effective ways in protecting oneself from the virus. Detection, containment and contact tracing should be a high priority of the approach adopted and must be backed with high commitment by the different health agencies of the government and the general public.