

COVID-19



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH



NIGERIA CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL



Guidelines for Conducting Elections During the COVID-19 Outbreak in Nigeria



NCDC Toll-free Number: **0800 9700 0010** SMS: **0809 955 5577** WhatsApp: **0708 711 0839**



[@NCDCGOV](https://twitter.com/NCDCGOV)



www.COVID19.NCDC.GOV.NG



INFO@NCDC.GOV.NG

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

Background

In response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Nigeria has introduced several public health and social measures (PHSM). These include the restriction of mass gatherings, closure of schools, inter-state movement restrictions, mandating the wearing of face masks and requirements for physical distancing. However, as the pandemic continues, countries have eased lockdowns and relaxed restrictions in phases. This is to enable the continuation of economic activities and provide people with a means of maintaining their livelihood.

Despite the pandemic, there is a continuity of essential processes, such as elections, in some countries. In some settings where elections have been conducted without due consideration for public health measures particularly physical distancing, there has been an upsurge in COVID-19 cases.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has developed this guideline for election processes in Nigeria, in the context of COVID-19. This is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 cases during elections.

Purpose

In Nigeria, some states will hold gubernatorial and local government elections in 2020. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to provide key public health guidance to be considered while conducting elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document provides recommendations and actions that should be taken to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for all voters, electoral officers, candidates and other participants. It is critical to take this into consideration especially with ongoing community transmission of COVID-19.

Audience

1. Political parties
2. Electorate
3. Election monitors
4. INEC and her adhoc staff

Key terms

1. **Mass gatherings** are events characterised by the concentration of people at a specific location for a specific purpose over a set period of time. In the context of COVID-19, mass gatherings are events with

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

a high density of individuals present in a venue for a defined period of time, which can amplify transmission of COVID-19, and place additional strain on a country's healthcare system.

2. **Pre-campaign period** refers to the time before the official campaign begins.
3. **Campaign period** is the period covering three months before the election day and it is characterised by multiple activities such as mass gatherings and sharing of campaign materials.
4. **Election period** occurs over a period of 24 hours from when sensitive election material arrives at the polling booth and voting commences, till collation and announcement of results.

Public Health Considerations

Mass gatherings during elections will likely occur during campaigns and election days. The only way to conduct elections without putting any one at risk of contracting COVID-19 is to comply with all protective measures at all times. These include limiting mass gatherings, ensuring physical distancing of at least **two metres**, promoting hand hygiene by providing handwashing facilities and a mandatory use of face masks. **Wearing your face mask incorrectly is as good as NOT wearing a mask at all.**

It is possible that someone in the rally or polling stations during the election can actually have the virus but show no symptoms. Therefore, it is important that there is a very high level of adherence to all preventive measures. Anyone feeling unwell should not be out for campaigns or to cast their vote.

PRE-CAMPAIGN PERIOD: Sensitisation of Communities and All Politicians

The pre-campaign period should be used to prepare for safe election processes, share messages about how campaigns will run and how people can vote on the day, while adhering to the COVID-19 protective measures.

Posters, videos and jingles can be used to inform the electorate of the processes put in place to ensure that they are adequately protected. INEC and political parties with guide of health authorities are expected to engage with communities and share information widely on what to

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

expect at rallies and how people can vote safely. This period should also be used to share messages that promote behaviors such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, practicing physical distancing to enhance the protection of healthy individuals, families and communities. Hence the following actions are advised:

For INEC

- a. Develop and publicise voters' code of conduct including what is expected of voters to adequately protect themselves from COVID-19 at polling stations.
- b. Educate all election staff and volunteers on voting process and measures put in place to protect them.
- c. Develop and publicise code of conduct for political parties including COVID-19 public health and social measures to be adhered to during campaigns and elections.

For State Ministries of Health (Health Educators)

- a. Create awareness and understanding of the spread of COVID-19 in the country:
 - Provide information to ensure that people in states where election will take place, are aware of the risks of contracting COVID-19 and that due to community transmission, the numbers are more likely to rise.
 - Notify the general public about what is being done to protect them including the preventive measures put in place.
 - Notify the general public of the importance of preventing and controlling the spread of the virus.
 - Emphasise that everyone has a role and responsibility in protecting themselves and their loved ones from COVID-19.
- b. Educate the general public on how to recognise the symptoms of COVID-19;
 - Provide information on the symptoms of COVID-19; including rare symptoms.
 - Encourage the public to self-isolate if they experience any of the symptoms or have had history of contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

- Provide information on the state helplines and advice on how to seek medical care if there is a suspect case of COVID-19.

For Politicians

- a. Publicise and adhere to codes of conduct developed by INEC, including public health and social measures expected at rallies and election locations. This should be done through relevant communication channels - posters, TV and radio jingles.

CAMPAIGN PERIOD

Based on the current risk level in Nigeria and the ongoing community transmission, the number of people gathering together should be limited to one-third of the actual capacity of the venue (minimum of 2metres should be observed among people at the gathering).

For Politicians

- Avoid utilising campaign venue to full capacity; we recommend one-third of venue capacity (minimum of 2metres should be observed among people at the gathering).
- If essential, multiple rallies should be conducted with appropriate numbers of people to enable adequate physical distancing in each gathering per time.
- Hand hygiene facilities including soap and water/ hand sanitisers should be made available for people before gaining access to campaign ground.
- The use of face masks must be mandatory for everyone attending the campaign rally.

Where applicable, virtual campaigns and rallies are encouraged. This can be done using televised or radio campaigns, and mobile vans.

For INEC

- In addition to the preventive measures contained in the [INEC Policy on Conducting Elections](#) in the context of COVID, the commission should engage all political parties to agree on the size of campaign and duration of same in line with the guideline of NCDC on mass gathering.
- Venues for voter's registration and collection of voter's cards should be organised, have markings to keep people 2metres away from each

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

other, well ventilated and hand washing facilities made available.

- The use of face masks must be mandatory for everyone attending the campaign rally.
- Temperature checks should be carried out at the entrance/gate before any individual enters the campaign ground. Anyone with a temperature above 37.5°C should not be allowed into the campaign ground.

ELECTION PERIOD

To limit crowds and encourage physical distancing during elections, there should be a limited number of people to vote at a time. This should be based on the population for each polling station. Where necessary, the duration of elections should be increased or more polling stations or booths added to ensure physical distancing can be maintained. The following should be put in place:

- Temperature checks should be carried out at the entrance/gate before any individual enters the polling stations. Any individual with a temperature above 37.5°C should not be allowed into the polling station.
- Multiple hand washing points and/or alcohol-based hand sanitisers should be provided, based on the estimated number of voters in that polling station.
- There should be clearly marked floors and demarcation to enforce 2 metres spacing on queues.
- All voters must wear face masks correctly at the polling station. There should be no entry without face masks.
- Polling stations should have adequate ventilation and be well lit. The surfaces (tables) must be regularly cleaned with soapy water or disinfectants.
- Ambulances should be stationed and readily available in case of health emergencies.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

Polling station staff

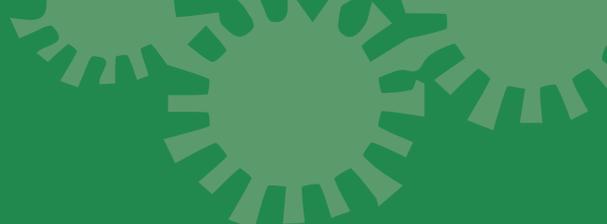
- Staff should be on the lookout and stay at home if they have a fever, respiratory symptoms, or feel generally unwell.
- Provide a temperature control point at the entrance of the polling station to check voter's temperature, and people with a high temperature should be asked to go home.
- All staff at the polling unit should practice hand hygiene frequently: wash hands often with soap and water for at least 40 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Practice routine cleaning of equipment and minimise use of shared materials unless they are adequately cleaned before reuse.
- After thumb printing the ballot paper, voters should be advised to not touch their faces until they wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- After counting ballot papers, polling staff should not touch their faces until they wash their hands with soap and water or clean with alcohol based hand sanitisers.

Ensuring compliance

- State Governments and INEC must ensure the availability of hand washing stations and or sanitisers and adequate space for physical distancing in and outside all polling centers.
- Temperature checks should be carried out at the entrance/gate before any individual enters the polling station.

Collation centres

- State Governments and INEC must ensure the availability of hand washing stations and or sanitisers and adequate space for physical distancing in the collation centers.
- All individuals at the collation centres must wear a face mask appropriately at all times.
- Temperature checks should be carried out at the entrance/gate before any individual enters the collation centre.



NIGERIA CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ELECTIONS
DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA

NIGERIA CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL

 Plot 801 Ebitu Ukiwe Street, Jabi Abuja, Nigeria

 0800 970 0010 (Toll-Free Call Number)

 0809 955 5577  0708 711 0839

 info@ncdc.gov.ng

   [@ncdcgov](https://www.instagram.com/ncdcgov)

 ncdc.gov.ng / covid19.ncdc.gov.ng