

Report on National Survey on

**SCHOOL
CLOSURE:** due to

**COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October, 2020



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Supported by:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This national perception survey presents independent research that was commissioned by the Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (EiEWGN) in collaboration with Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The survey was conducted with the approval of the Federal Ministry of Education. We acknowledge funding from UNICEF to conduct a survey of this scale, and express our gratitude to the respondents who voluntarily participated in the telephone interviews for their time and candidness in answering the questions. The instrument for data collection was designed by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (EiEWGN), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The data collection, coordination and data analysis was led by SBM Intelligence.

BACKGROUND

This report covers findings from the National Survey on the Perception of School Closures Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria. A total of 7,403 interviews were conducted with all stakeholders in the education sector: parents and guardians, students, teachers/facilitators as well as education managers. The survey included questions designed to shed light on perceptions covering a range of topics concerning the initial closure of schools, as well as readiness to reopen.

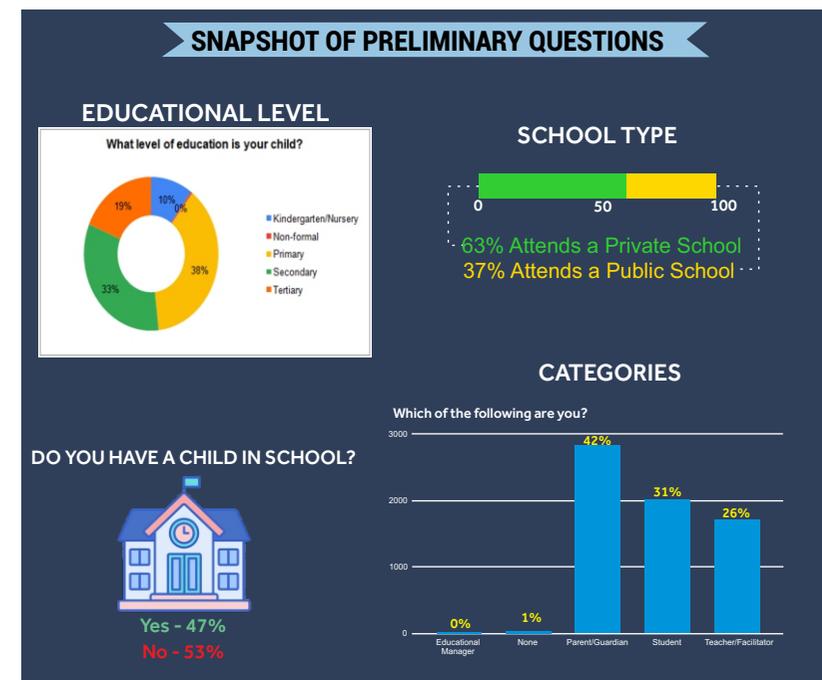
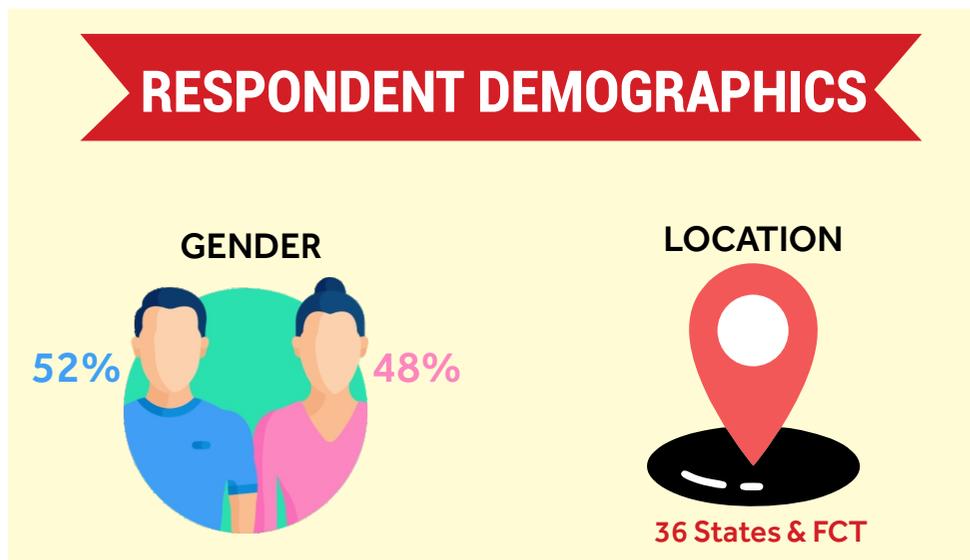
COVID-19 presents the most significant challenge to educating children in human history and could have lasting effects on many of them, especially on those from disadvantaged and underserved communities. For Nigeria which already has 10.5 million children out of school, this challenge is doubly difficult.

The Government of Nigeria rolled out several precautionary measures at the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. Social distancing, the compulsory use of facemasks, lockdowns, a ban on social activities and gatherings, and the closure of public institutions were some of these measures. Nigeria has eased the lockdowns and bans on some activities because of the accompanying issues of poverty, job losses and its huge cost on the economy. With the significant drop in COVID-19 infection numbers in recent weeks, the government has extended the easing to religious and social gatherings, with emphasis on strict adherence to social distancing and face masking protocols, provision of public water and sanitation facilities and temperature checks.

However, schools have remained closed with the exception of students who are writing their final exams. Several states including Lagos (with the highest COVID-19 numbers) rolled out plans for schools to reopen in September as the rate of new cases started to decline, but there are still widespread concerns as to the readiness of schools to meet the precautionary standards considering the deplorable state of some institutions of learning. Parents, school owners, teachers and other stakeholders have divided opinions on the reopening, considering the diversity of their interests. The level of preparedness differs by states, within states and types of schools. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess stakeholders' perceptions on the initial school closure, readiness to open schools, prolonged closure of schools and the perceived effect of the closure on academic development across socio-demographic groups

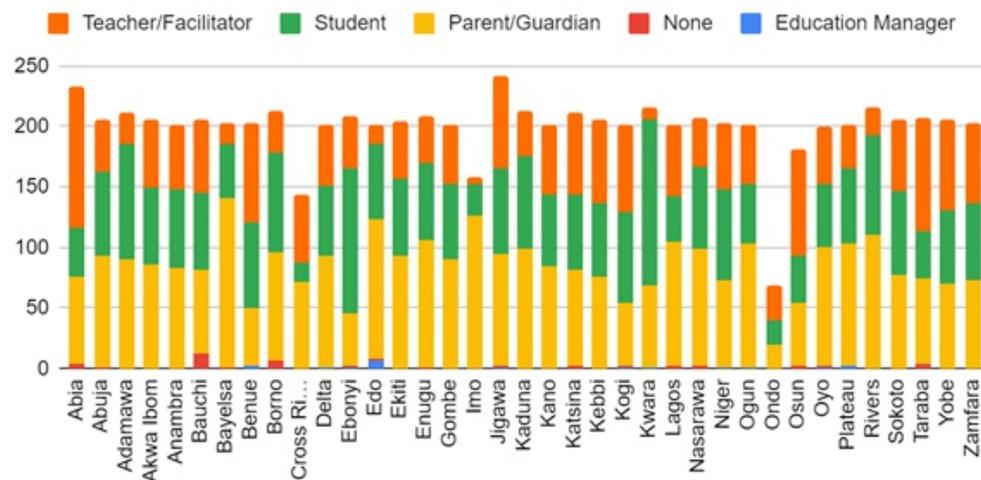
SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A total of 7,403 respondents took part in the study. These study participants constitute the key stakeholders in the educational sector, these are educational managers (18), parents and guardians (3,105), students (2,322), teachers (1,908) and those who belonged to neither of those categories (48) but have their businesses and means of livelihood organised around school communities, including food vendors, students transporters, books and stationery sellers and a host of others. Some of those surveyed identified themselves as belonging to two or more of the categories. Of the categories sampled, educational managers constitute the smallest proportion of stakeholders because the typical organisational hierarchy allows for few persons to attain this status. A fair distribution of male (52%) and female (48%) drawn all 36 states participated in the study including the FCT in order to get a detailed assessment of their readiness to reopen schools and a proper understanding of their unique concerns. An average of 200 respondents were polled from each state except for Imo, Cross River and Ondo where a lower number of respondents were polled as well as Jigawa and Kaduna which saw higher numbers.

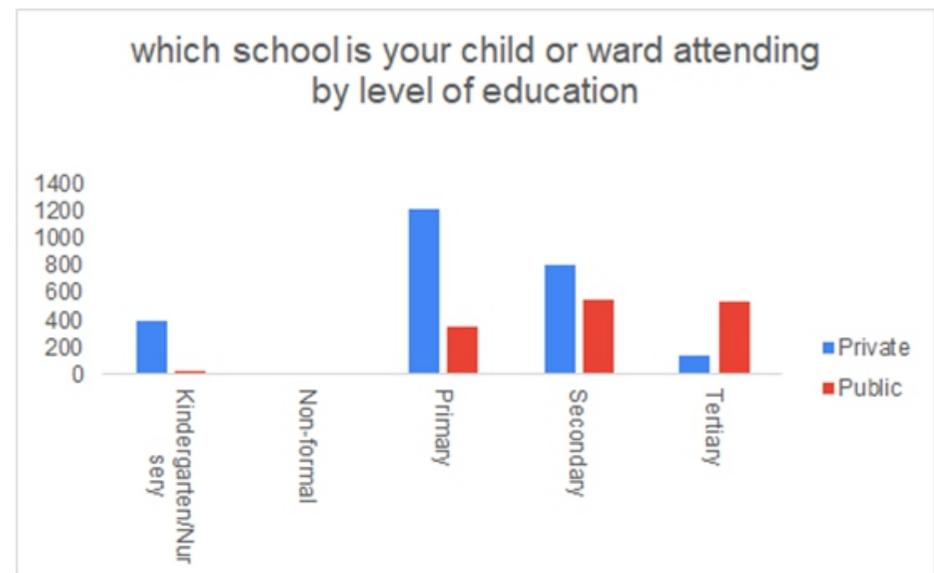


Study participants were selected from all the states (36) in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory for a detailed assessment of their readiness to re-open schools and a proper understanding of their unique challenges. Ondo had the lowest number (69) of respondents across all categories while Jigawa had the highest number (242) of respondents. 47% of the respondents had their children/wards in school at different levels of primary (38%), secondary (33%), tertiary (19%), kindergarten/nursery schools (10%). No informal education participated in the survey. A majority of the respondents had their wards in private schools (63%) as against public schools (37%). Those in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools were mostly in private schools while the majority of those in tertiary institutions attend public schools.

Category of Respondents by where they live



which school is your child or ward attending by level of education

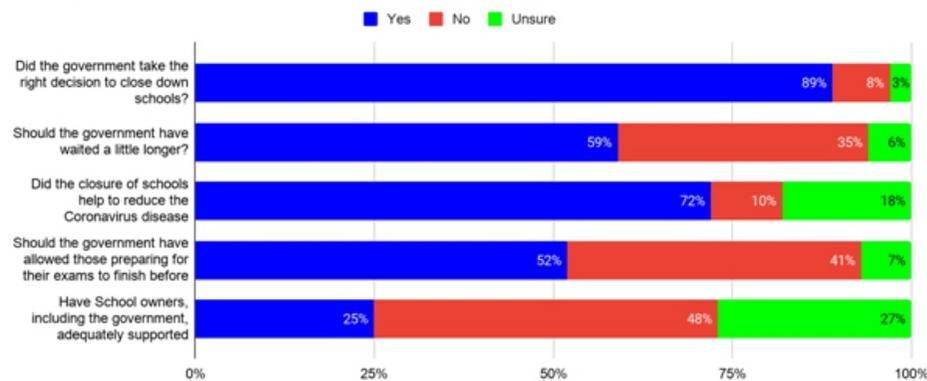


KEY FINDINGS

Initial Closure

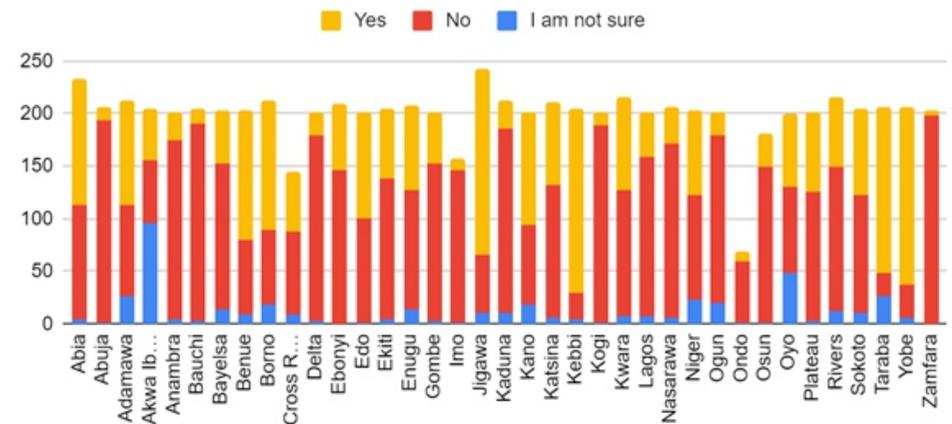
March 2020 saw the closure of schools across the country as part of steps to combat the spread of the coronavirus. 89% of respondents supported the decision to close schools at the start of the pandemic.

Perception on school closure at the outbreak of the pandemic



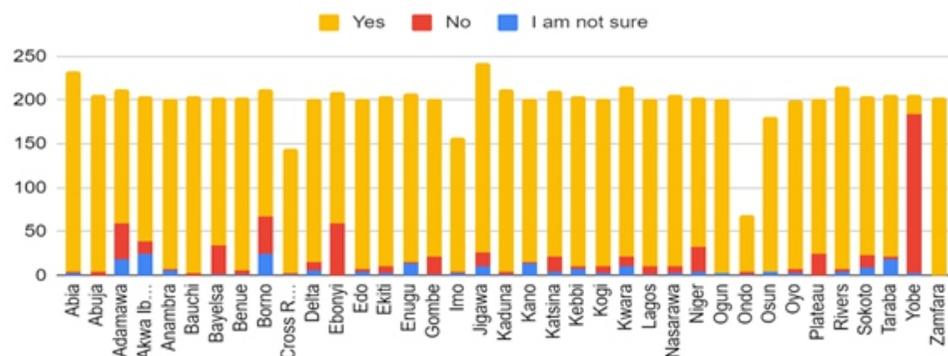
A significant minority (35%) of respondents felt the decision to close was taken too early, believing that the government should have waited longer. 59% were in favour of the decision, however, 52% said those preparing for milestone exams should have been allowed to finish. 72% agreed that the closures helped to reduce the spread of the virus.

Should the government have waited a little longer before closing down schools?



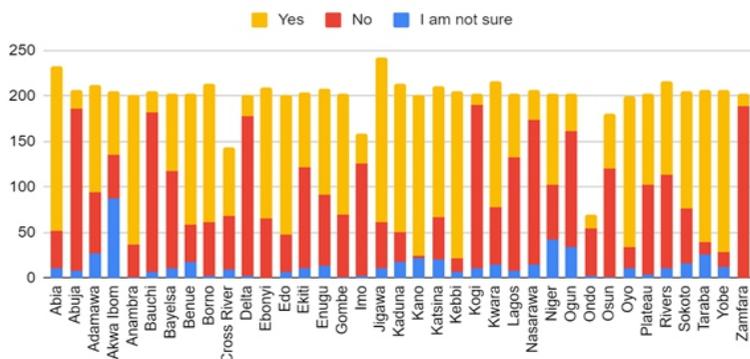
On the question of how they perceived the decision of the Federal Government to close down schools, a majority of respondents in all the states agreed that the government took the right decision at the time. The only exception was in Yobe State. The lag in that state's coronavirus infection profile - Yobe reported its first case on 29 April 2020 (at the time, Lagos had 933 cases and the FCT had 174) - in part accounts for this perception. Furthermore, Yobe has the second lowest number of coronavirus cases after Kogi with a total caseload of 76 as at 12pm on 3 October 2020. This figure is way below the 19,604 cases recorded in Lagos, and as a result affects the way the decision of the government is perceived. Other states with significant numbers of people who did not agree with the closure were Adamawa, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Gombe, Niger and Plateau.

Did the Government take the right decision to close down schools by state

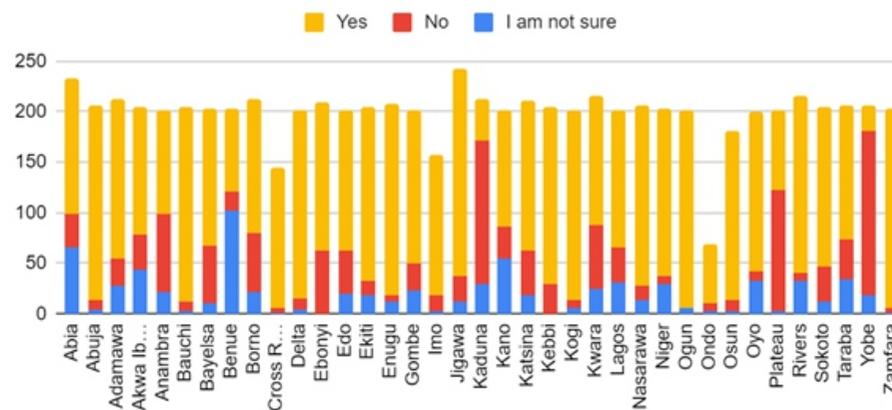


A clear majority of respondents across all states think the government should have allowed those preparing for exams to finish before the closure of schools and learning centres. However, Bauchi, Ebonyi, the Federal Capital Territory, Imo, Ondo and Zamfara had significant numbers of respondents who believed that the government's actions were justified.

Should the government have allowed those preparing for exams to finish before the closure of schools and learning ce...



Did the closure of schools help to reduce the spread of Corona-Virus in Nigeria?

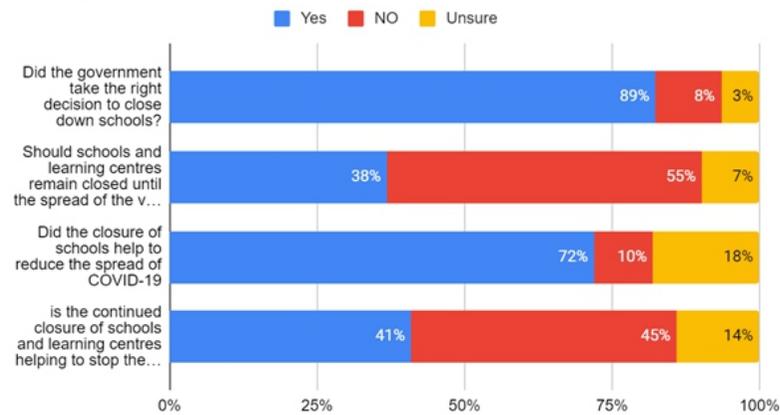


A majority of respondents in Kaduna, Plateau and Yobe had a different view from other states about the effectiveness of school closure in reducing the spread of the coronavirus in the country. Kaduna and Plateau have the seventh and third highest incidents of coronavirus respectively despite the school closure and that may be feeding into the perception of the efficacy of the national school closure strategy.

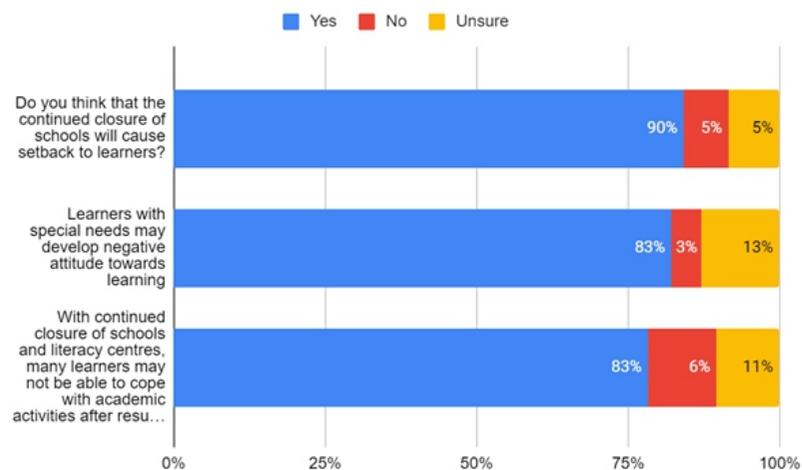
Ongoing Closure

As time has gone on, support for closures has waned. 55% of respondents across the country now feel that schools should reopen. However, a majority of Nigerians in 12 states hold the view that schools should remain closed until the virus declines. In contrast to the 72% who agreed the closures helped to reduce the spread of the virus, only 41% still hold the same view, with 45% saying it did not help. 62% also think that reopening schools will not increase the spread of the virus in Nigeria.

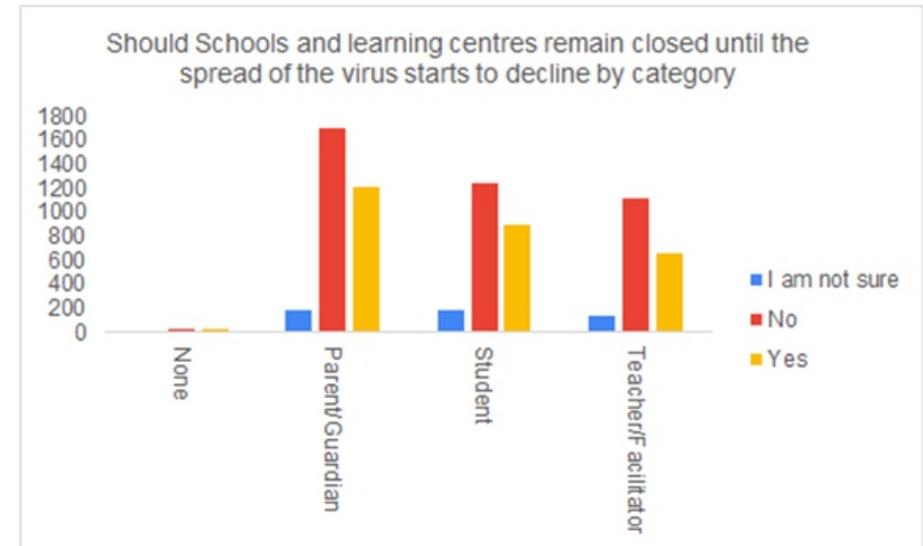
Perception on continued closure of schools



There is broad agreement over the impact of the closures on students. 90% agree that the closure will cause setbacks to students, especially those children with special needs. 83% of respondents agree that students could find it difficult to resume academic activities.

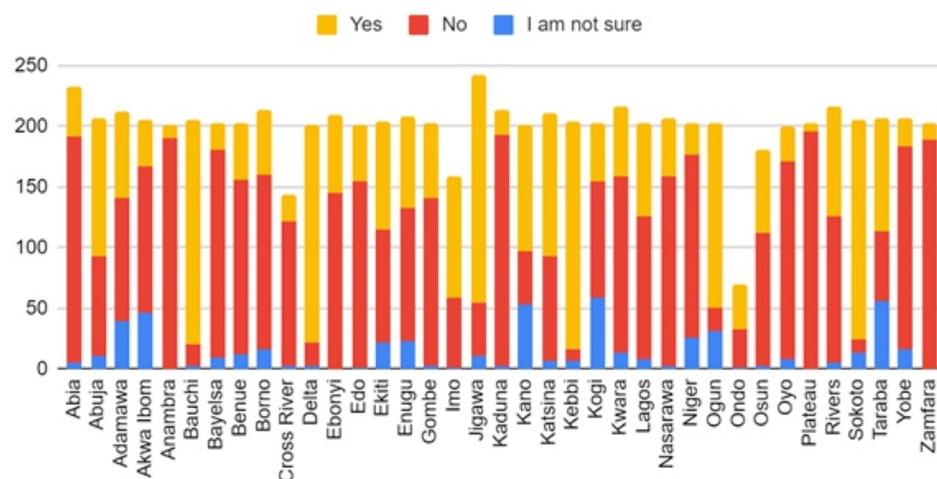


A majority of parents/guardians, students as well as teachers/facilitators are opposed to the continued closure of schools and would prefer if school resumes at the earliest possible time.

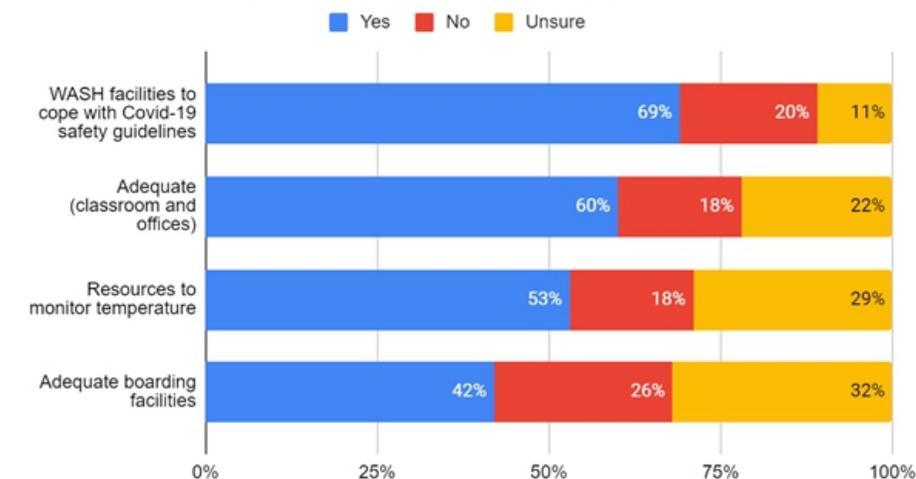


A handful of states aside, a majority of respondents across the country are ready for schools to reopen. Respondents in these states, which include Bauchi, Delta, the Federal Capital Territory Imo, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Ogun, Ondo, Sokoto and Taraba, want schools to remain closed until the decline of the COVID-19 cases.

Should schools remain closed until the spread of the virus starts to decline by States



Readiness to reopen in terms of health, hygiene, and facilities.

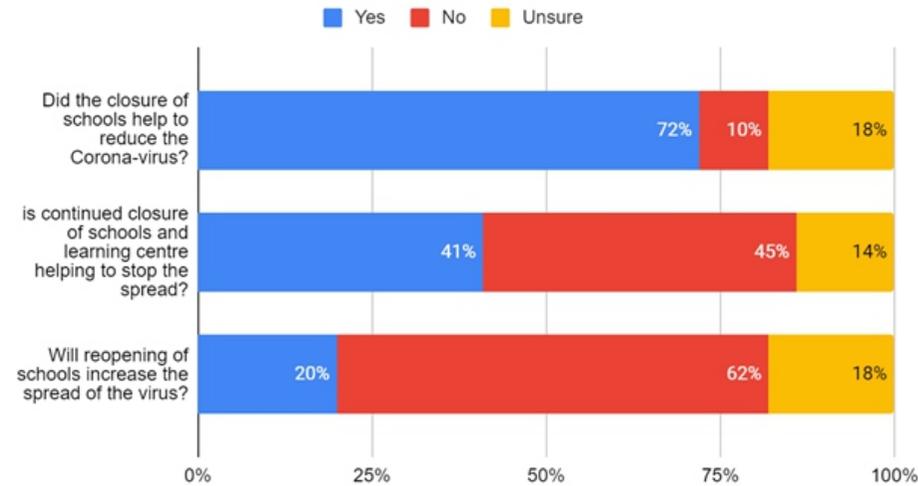


Readiness to reopen

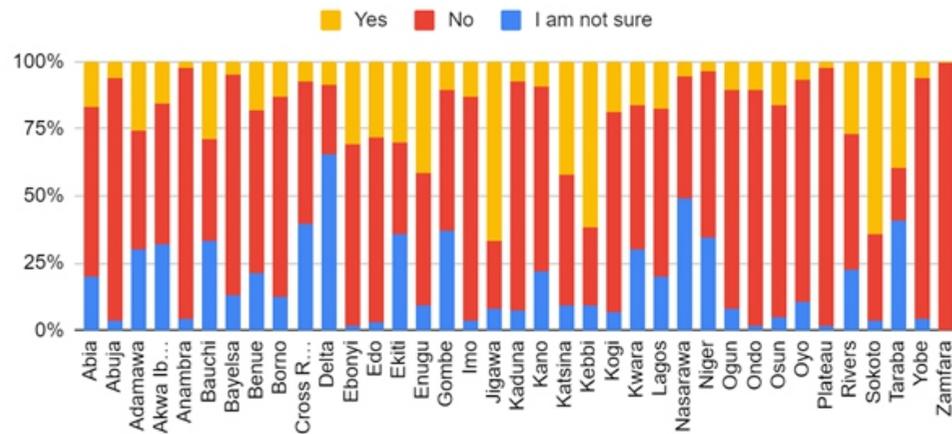
89% of respondents believe that students are ready to resume academic activities. 91% of teachers surveyed indicated a readiness to resume face-to-face instruction. A slim majority (51%) also hold the view that extra time to prepare is not needed before schools can reopen. There were no variations in the responses across the levels of education on any of the indices measured. A majority of schools were reported to have water, sanitation and hygiene facilities as well as adequate classrooms and offices that permit social distancing. A lower majority reported having the resources to monitor temperature and a smaller proportion of respondents held the opinion that boarding facilities are adequate.

Respondents were asked if reopening schools would increase the spread of the virus and a majority of them (62%) did not think so. Furthermore, a comparison was made between the responses on school closure and its implications for speeding up the spread of the coronavirus. While many (72%) considered closures as an effective method of halting the spread at the onset of the pandemic, that perception has changed, with two-fifths of respondents (41%) now saying that continuing the closures will have no effect on curbing the spread and a clear majority (62%) saying the risks of reopening schools in the midst of a pandemic is a worthwhile one. Most respondents across most states say reopening will not increase the spread of the virus. Jigawa, Kebbi and Sokoto are the outliers.

Closure of School and increased Coronavirus spread



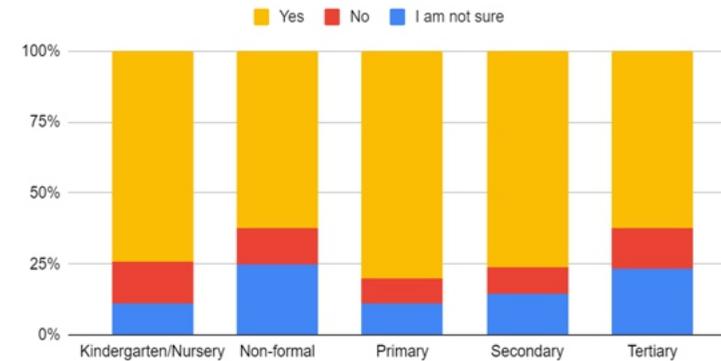
Do you think reopening schools and learning centres now will increase the spread of the virus in Nigeria?



Hygiene

The presence of WASH facilities is seen as a critical component of promoting overall hygiene in schools. A majority (69%) said those facilities were present across the country with 20% unsure. Of those who did not have those facilities, a greater share were public schools (54%) compared to private schools (46%).

Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have water, hygiene and sanitation facilities to cope with the...

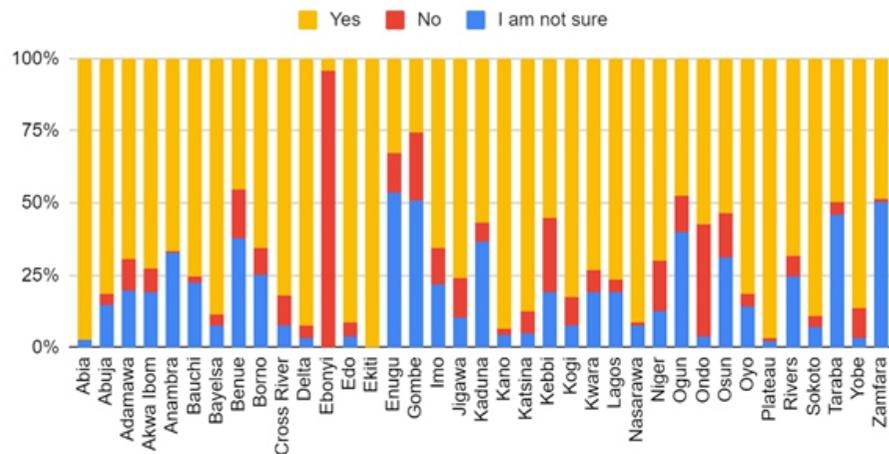


Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have water, hygiene and sanitation facilities to cope with the COVID-19 safety guidelines?



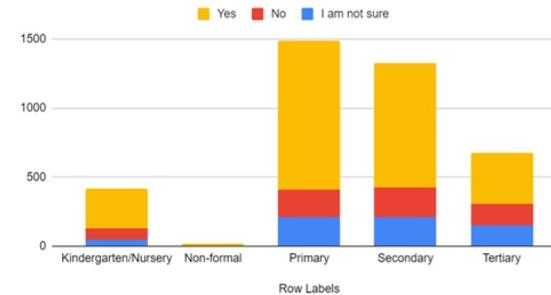
The disaggregated data shows that unlike the other states, a majority of schools in Ebonyi do not have WASH facilities and this will affect their ability to comply with the precautionary measures needed to resume school. Benue, Gombe Kebbi and Niger also recorded significant numbers of respondents who attend or teach in schools where these facilities are not present. Furthermore, Enugu, Gombe and Zamfara have higher numbers of people who are unsure of the availability of these facilities in their school.

Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have water, hygiene and sanitation facilities to cope with the...



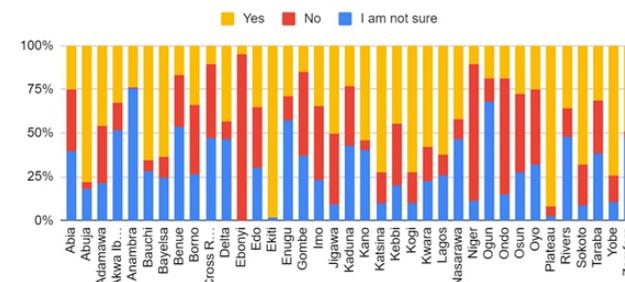
Social distancing

Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have adequate facilities (classroom and offices) to support p...

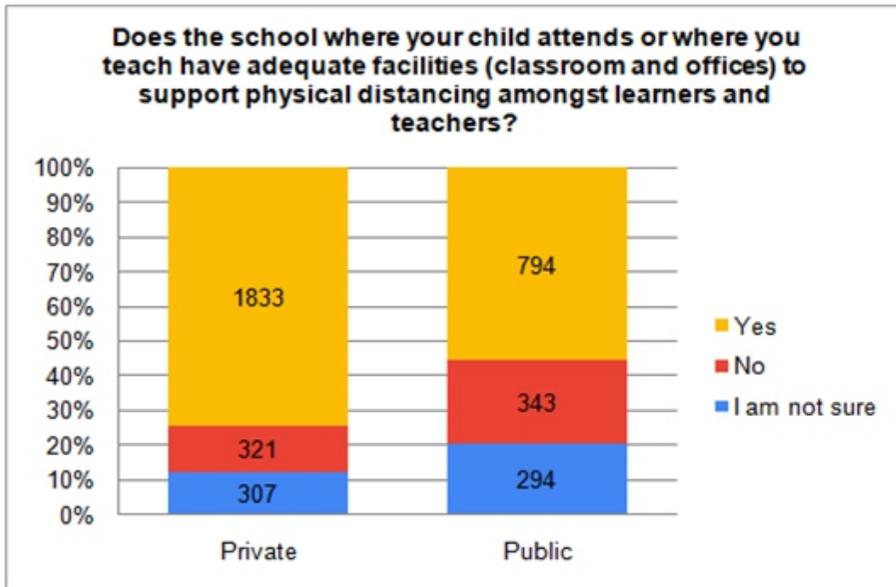
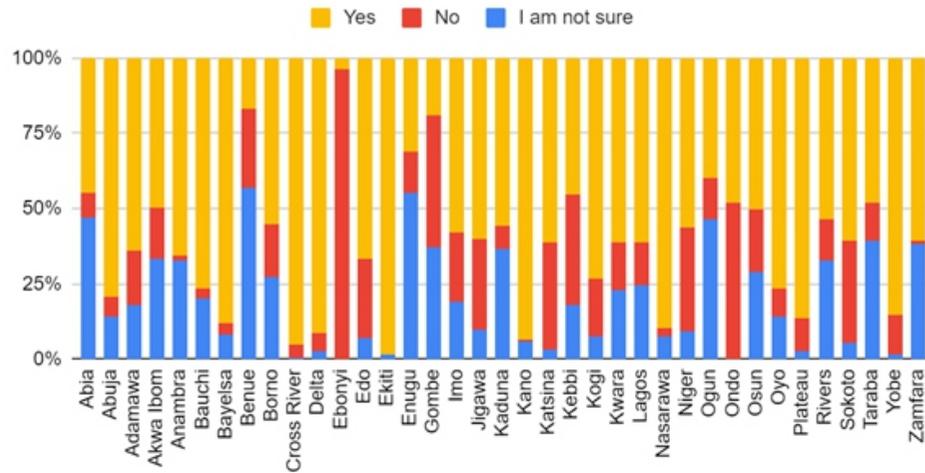


60% of respondents say their schools can support physical distancing, with 22% unsure. Of the 18% who said 'no', 52% were from public schools. Some schools may require support to get those facilities. Schools with boarding facilities, however, may be unable to implement social distancing at the level required. More parents/guardians, teachers and education managers of private institutions (75%) said their schools had adequate physical distancing requirements than those of public institutions (55%), with a further 21% of public institution stakeholders saying they were unsure.

Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have adequate boarding facilities to enable all learners to co...



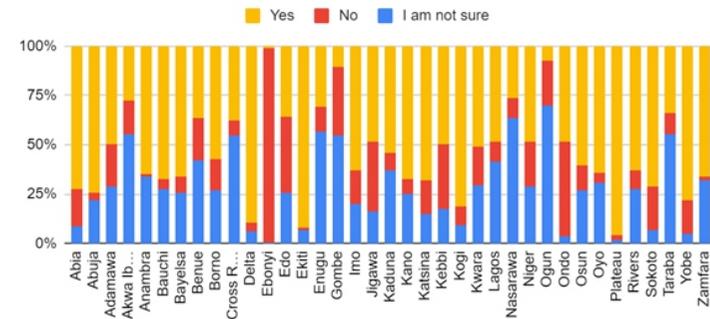
Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have adequate facilities (classroom and offices) to support p...



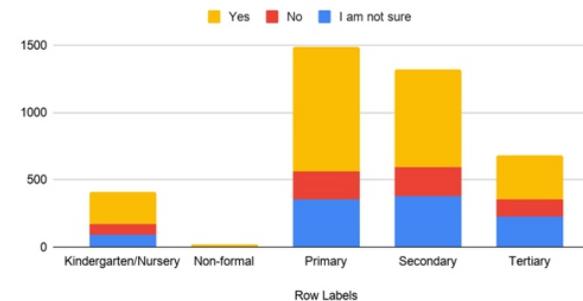
Temperature checks

53% of respondents say that resources are available to monitor temperature, while 29% were unsure and 18% said they did not have the resources. A much higher proportion of parents/guardians, teachers and education managers of private institutions (64%) said their schools had adequate resources to take the temperature readings of their wards than those of public institutions (45%). 34% of public institutional stakeholders and 22% of their private counterparts were unsure.

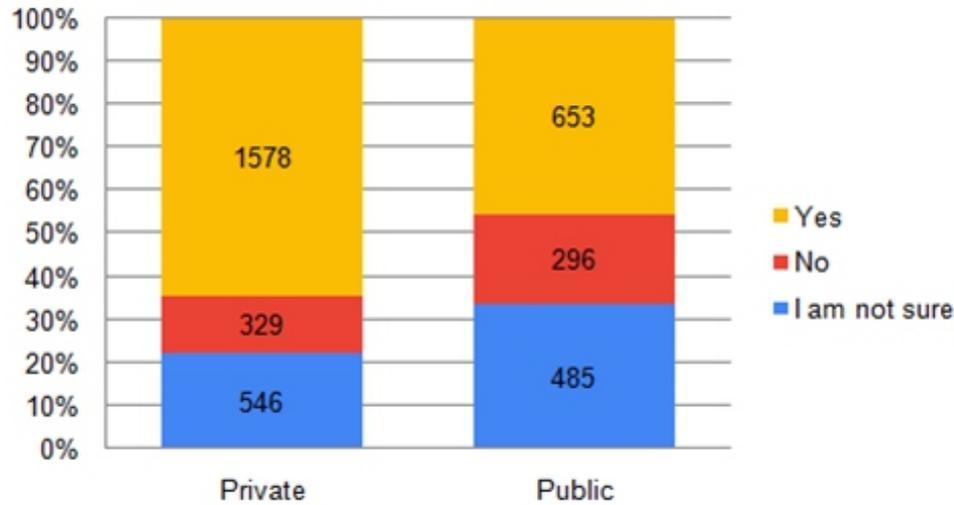
Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have the resources to monitor the temperature of learners, te...



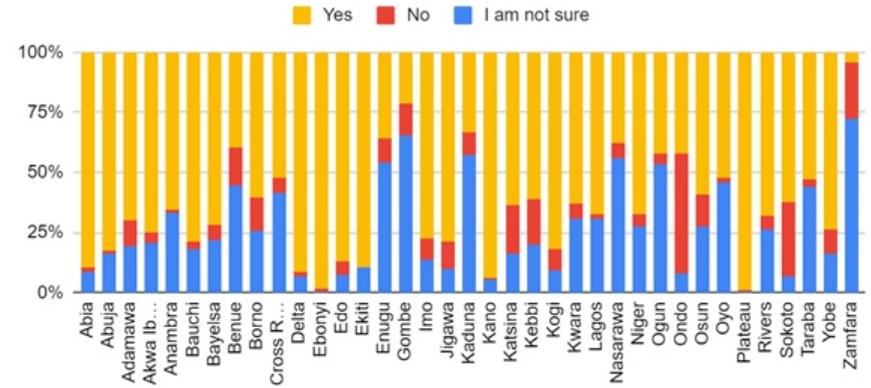
Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have the resources to monitor the temperature of learners,



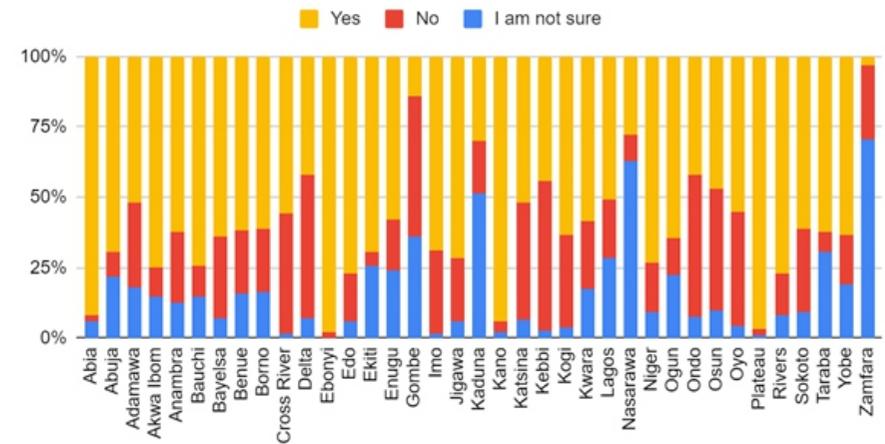
Does the school where your child attends or where you teach have the resources to monitor the temperature of learners, teachers and visitors daily upon entry?



Does the school where your child attends or where you teach knows the actions to take in the event of an outbreak of COV...

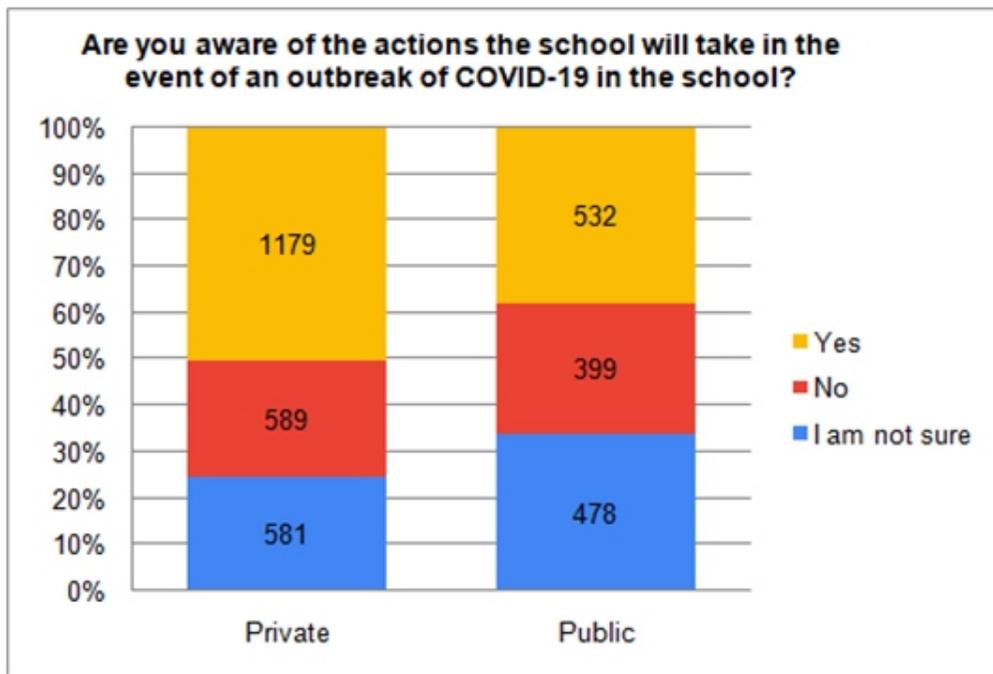


Are you aware of the actions the school will take in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in the school?



Awareness

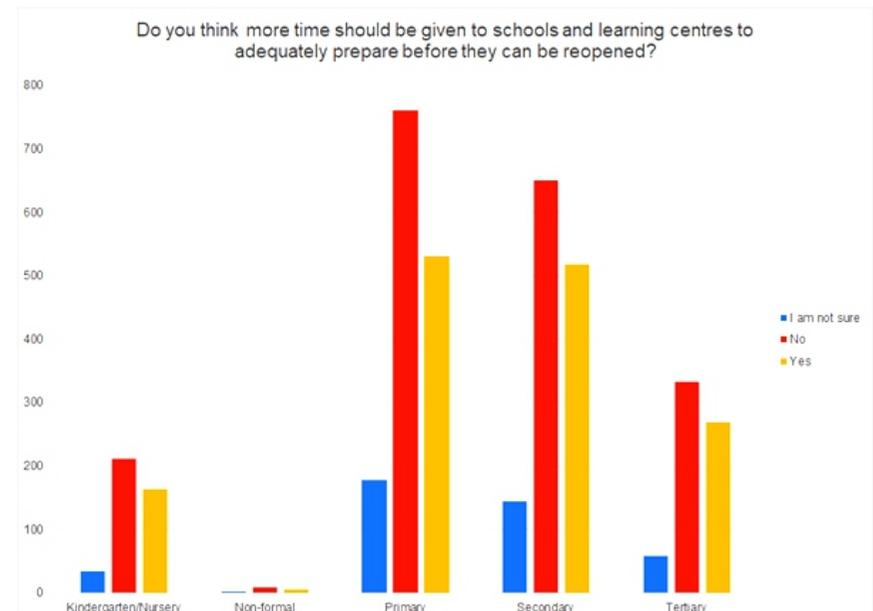
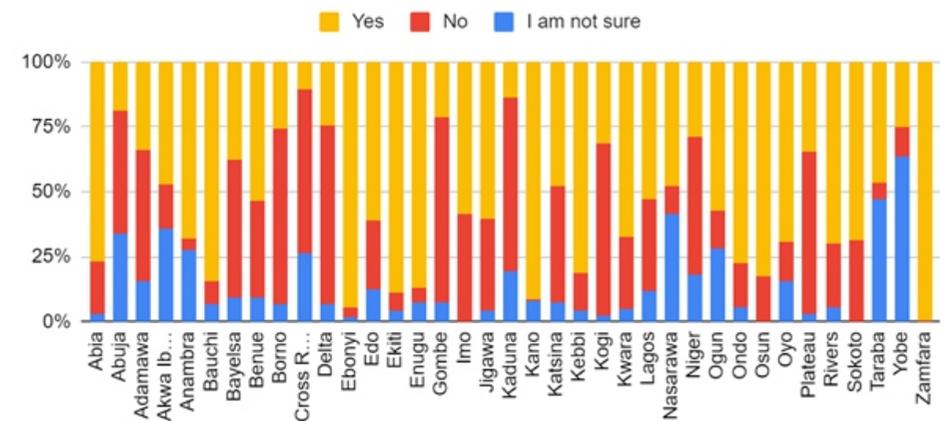
Most respondents (64%) displayed awareness concerning the steps to take in the event of an outbreak, an endorsement of the public education campaign undertaken to inform citizens of the coronavirus. 28% remained unsure, however. 82% are also aware of the risk of poor compliance with NCDC recommendations. A significantly higher number of parents/guardians, teachers and education managers of private institutions (73%) reported being more aware of school COVID-19 management protocols than those of public institutions (57%). Notably, a quarter of private school stakeholders and a third of public school stakeholders were not sure of their school protocols.

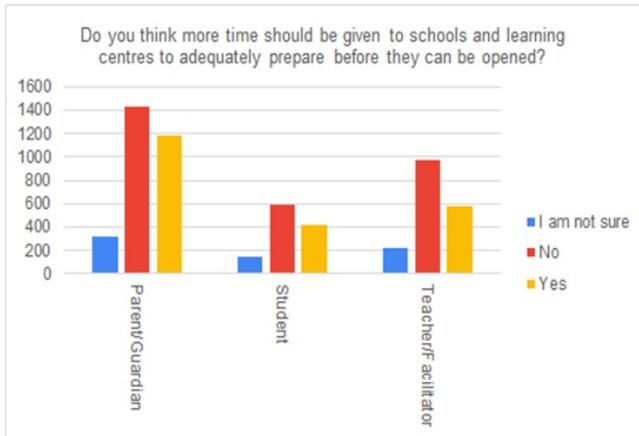


Mode of opening

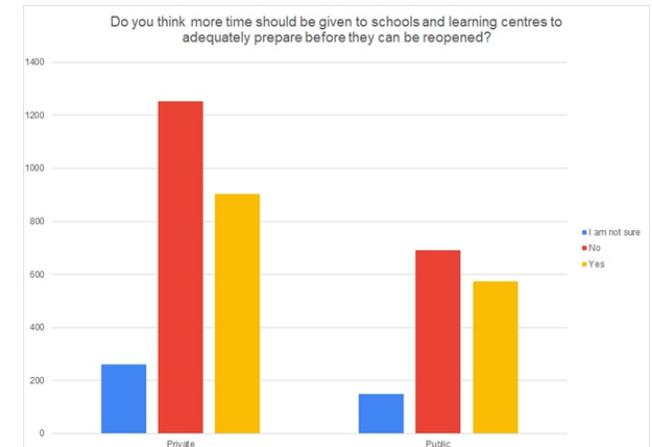
A majority of respondents across the country (55%) would prefer a staggered reopening of schools despite most respondents insisting that schools don't need more time to reopen. Only Borno, Bayelsa, Delta, Gombe, Kaduna, Kogi and Plateau had a majority of their respondents who wanted their schools to open at once.

Do you think reopening of schools and learning centres should be staggered to ensure that physical distancing is observed?





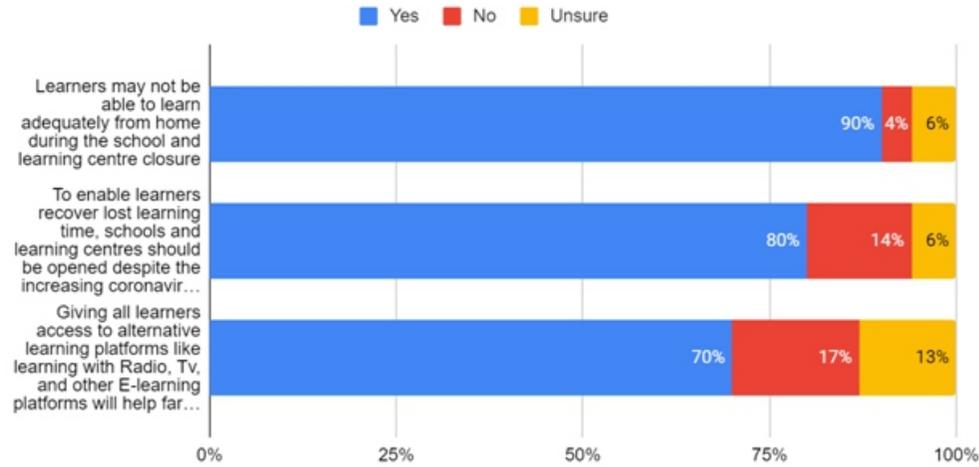
In both types of schools (public and private), there is a clear consensus that schools should open immediately as there is no need for more time to adequately prepare. More private school respondents agreed with the proposition than public school respondents.



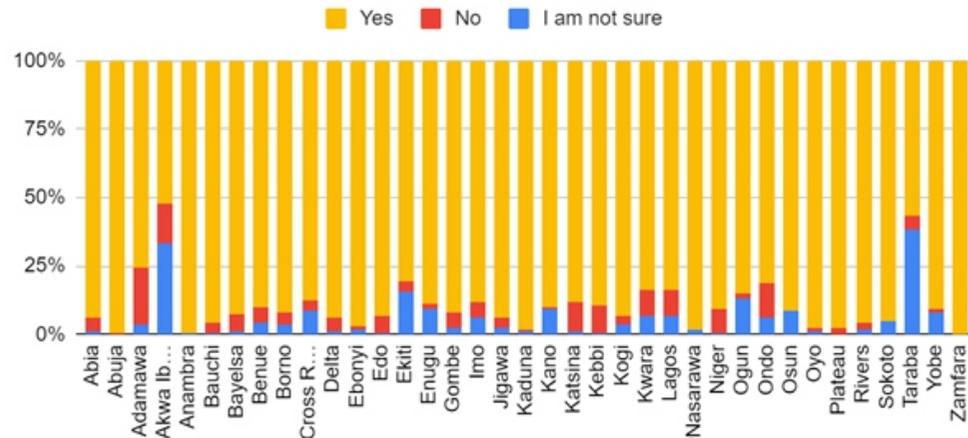
Learning from home

An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) believe that learning from home is inefficient and inadequate. Apart from some of the unsystematic methods of learning from home, issues of exclusion, concentration, focus and interactiveness may have formed some of the reasons why respondents believe that it is inadequate to learn from home. Despite rising coronavirus figures, a majority of the respondents (80%) think that reopening schools and learning centres is important to help learners recover lost learning time. Additionally, 70% of the respondents agree that blended learning that allows access to alternative learning platforms will help learners recover lost learning time. Parents/guardians, teachers and education managers of public institutions (91%) were as likely as those of private institutions (90%) to agree with the premise that remote learning is adding little value to learning outcomes. Less than a tenth of both private and public sector stakeholders were unsure.

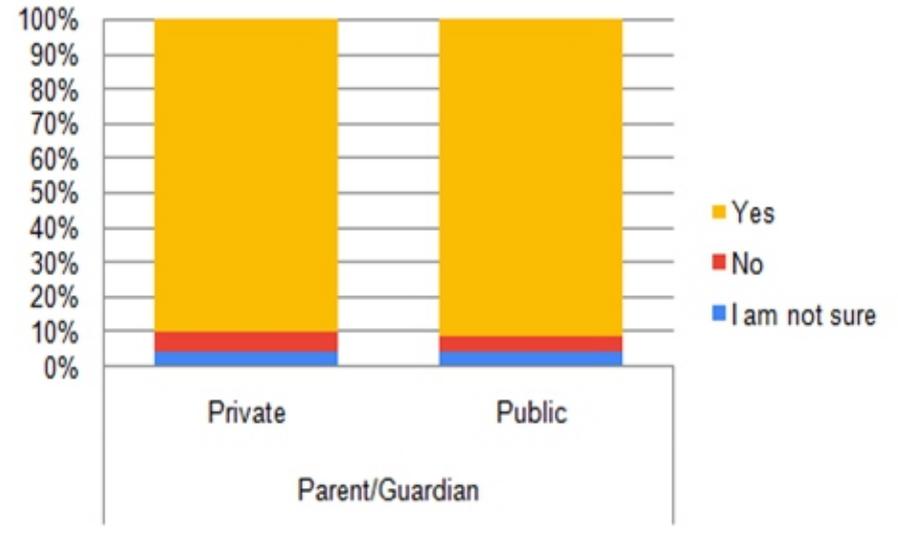
Effectiveness of learning from home



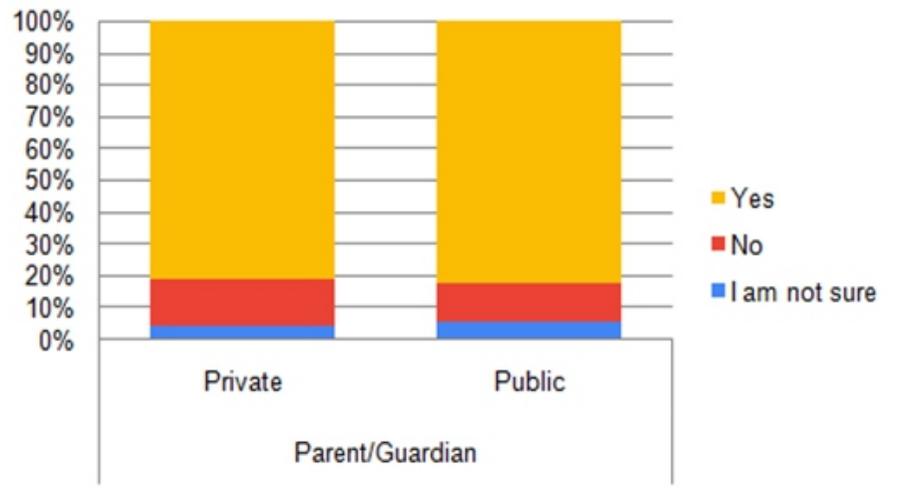
Learners may not have been able to learn adequately from home during the school and learning centres closure?



Learners may not have been able to learn adequately from home during the school and learning centres closure?



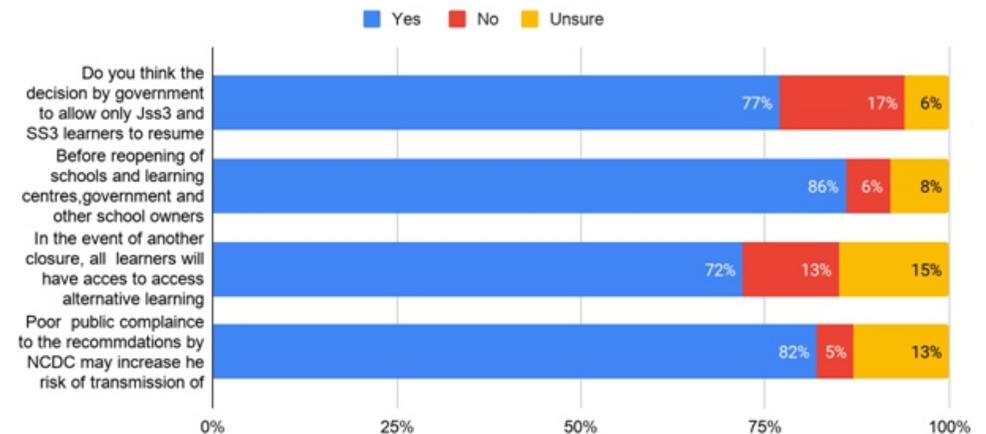
To enable learners recover lost learning time, schools and learning centres should be opened despite the increasing coronavirus cases in Nigeria.



Alternative learning platforms

70% of respondents agree that the use of alternative learning platforms like radio and television could help students recover lost learning time. 72% also agree that in the event of another closure, alternative learning platforms can be leveraged to maximise learning.

Access to alternative learning platforms



CONCLUSION

After displaying broad agreement with the initial decision to close schools in order to control the spread of the coronavirus, stakeholders in Nigeria's education sector appear ready to resume learning activities.

There is strong awareness among education stakeholders about safety protocols to be implemented for the protection of learners and other stakeholders, steps to be taken in the event of an outbreak, as well as the risks of poor compliance with the NCDC's recommendations.

However, a comprehensive audit of schools and learning institutions by state ministries of education to assess readiness levels and compliance with national/subnational COVID-19 guidelines is vital if a successfully reopening policy is to be executed. This audit must, among other things, prioritise the mandatory installation and maintenance of WASH facilities as well as ample boarding and learning space to ensure adherence to social distancing protocols.