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# CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

# Nigeria

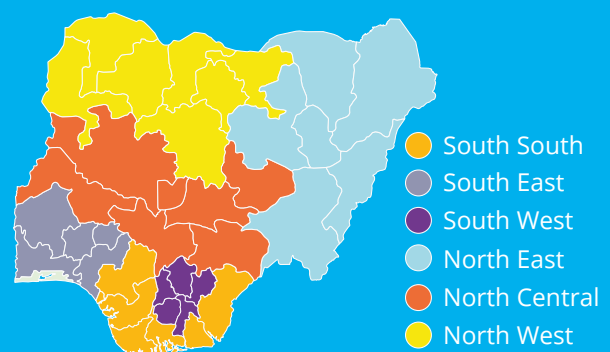
December 2020

## Introduction

**Nigeria** is the most populous country in Africa (206 million inhabitants) and is facing conflict dynamics and security challenges on several fronts. In the North East, insurgency has left tens of thousands dead, millions displaced, and created a protracted humanitarian crisis. In the North West, conflict between pastoralists and farmers have deteriorated in recent years and violence in this region is characterised by banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping, massacres, and emergent violent extremist activity. Farmer-herder conflict in the Middle Belt is compounded by ethno-religious cleavages between Christian and Muslim communities, while criminality and militancy in the Niger Delta have contributed to insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea for decades.

## Data collection and analysis

Data for this first conflict snapshot report for Nigeria was gathered from 28 September to 15 October 2020 in the following target zones: South South, South East, South West, North East, North Central and North West. This report was prepared by the Search for Common Ground (Search) Nigeria team, with support from Search's COVID-19 Response Programming Team and Institutional Learning Team. For more information on the data collection methodology and tools used by Search for Common Ground for this research, [click here](#).



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## Update: COVID-19 Measures and Impact on Conflict

By end October 2020, Nigeria confirmed more than 62,900 cases of COVID-19, with 1,146 deaths.<sup>1</sup> After the country recorded its first known case in late February 2020, the Buhari administration imposed a lockdown in three zones – the Federal Capital Territory encompassing the capital Abuja, as well as Lagos and Ogun states – prohibiting public gatherings and closing schools, places of worship, and most businesses. Authorities in other states introduced full or partial lockdowns, and in mid-March, the Government of Nigeria (GoN) imposed a nationwide curfew and restrictions on non-essential travel into the country and between states. Since early May, despite a mounting COVID-19 caseload, national and state authorities have gradually eased measures, which were imposing a heavy economic burden on an economy already facing a contraction.<sup>2</sup>

Nigeria lags behind some other African countries in testing for the virus. As of September 17, Nigerian authorities tested roughly 480,000 samples, compared to nearly 4 million tests conducted in fellow economic powerhouse South Africa, which has a population one-quarter the size of Nigeria's.<sup>3</sup> Low testing rates have raised fears that Nigeria's official caseload may considerably understate the extent of the pandemic. Notably, in April, the northern city of Kano experienced a spike in deaths due to unknown causes; a government inquiry based on interviews with those in contact with the deceased estimated that some 60% of those deaths may have been due to COVID-19. Other cities have also reportedly seen spikes in unexplained deaths due to respiratory illness.<sup>4</sup>

The restrictions rendered most businesses inoperative, resulting in job losses, pay cuts, and increased hardship.<sup>5</sup> Regulated markets and a ban on inter-state travel acutely impacted the agricultural sector, as farmers who harvested their produce during the lockdown period could not take their products out to sell. A lot of the farms' production spoiled and a hike in food prices and other commodities ensued.<sup>6</sup> Restrictions not only limited commercial and livelihood activities, but also social, cultural, and recreational activities. For instance, some buses carrying Almajiri<sup>7</sup> were required to halt travel and return home (e.g. a case in Enugu).<sup>8</sup>

In the wake of economic hardship, criminality is on the rise, including armed robberies, cattle rustling, cultism, and rape. There were recorded cases of human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings, with the National Human Rights Commission reporting that security forces killed nearly 30 people and unlawfully detained, extorted, or tortured dozens more over the first five weeks of lockdown.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, security agents extorted money from people who violated lockdown measures, leading to further disagreements, conflict, and even outright violence and shooting.<sup>10</sup> COVID-19 has thus aggravated pre-existing tensions between citizens – especially young people – and security forces, and the past months saw increased protest movements against the Nigerian security forces.<sup>11</sup>

	<b>Schools closed</b>
	<b>Teleworking not mandatory</b>
	<b>Borders/airports open</b>
	<b>All services/sectors open</b>
	<b>Mask wearing mandatory</b>

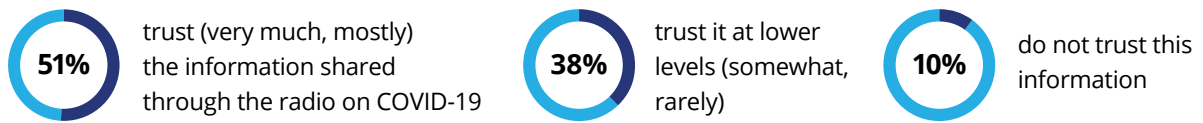
### Increased reports of GBV across all states

The COVID-19 lockdown led to a deterioration of gender-based violence (GBV) across the country; all locations in this study attested to a rise in GBV.<sup>12</sup> When the states of Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory-Abuja were placed under full lockdown, the number of reported GBV cases dramatically increased there, quadrupling from 60 in March to 238 in April. During the same period, Benue, Ebonyi, and Cross River states, which were placed under less stringent lockdowns, still experienced a 53% increase in reported GBV cases.<sup>13</sup> In July, the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development reported that more than 3,600 rape cases were recorded across Nigeria during the lockdown,<sup>14</sup> sparking a number of protests around the country. Civil society protested to the national assembly, the Inspector General of Police, and state houses of assembly, demanding that lawmakers, the justice system, and authorities prioritise finding solutions to the rise in GBV.

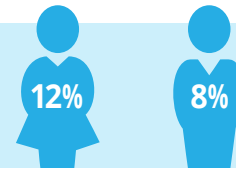
1. Johns Hopkins University, [COVID-19 Map](#), September 2020.
2. The number of total confirmed cases doubled over a six-week period in mid-2020, from roughly 25,000 in late June to over 50,000 in mid-August.
3. [Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, COVID-19 Nigeria dashboard](#); [South Africa National Department of Health, COVID-19 dashboard](#), both accessed September 18, 2020.
4. New York Times, Ruth Maclean, News article "[Covid-19 Outbreak in Nigeria Is Just One of Africa's Alarming Hot Spots](#)", May 2020.
5. Adiyoh, Imanche Sunday, Tian Ze, Tasinda Odette Tougem, and Salisu Gidado Dalibi. "[Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Small and Medium Scale Businesses in Nigeria](#)." 56, no. 1 (2020): 8-8.
6. PWC, [Responding to the impact of COVID-19 impact on Food Security and Agriculture in Nigeria](#), June 2020.
7. Almajiri is an informal Islamic education system where pupils leave their parents to live and learn under a Mallam (Islamic Scholar) either within the same state or in a different state from their state of origin.
8. The Guardian website, [News article, 2020](#).
9. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), [Press Release](#), April 15, 2020.
10. Reuters, [News article](#) "Nigerian security forces killed 18 people during lockdowns - rights panel", April 2020.
11. Human Rights Watch, [Crackdown Police Brutality Protests](#), October 2020.
12. Pulitzer Centre, [Amidst COVID-19 Lockdown, Nigeria Sees Increased Sexual and Gender Violence](#), June 2020
13. UN Women with UNFPA, UNODC and UNICEF, [Gender Based Violence During The Covid-19 Crisis: Shadow Pandemic](#), May 2020.
14. Premium Times, News article "[At least 3,600 rape cases recorded during lockdown – Minister](#)", June 2020.

# COVID-19's Impact on Social Cohesion & Trust

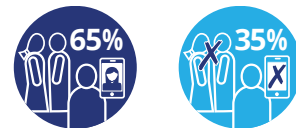
Half of respondents trust COVID-19 messages heard on the radio, while information sharing is higher



**Gender difference:** 12% of women vs 8% of men **do not trust information** shared through the radio. This may be an indicator of women's more limited access to radio programmes or other social and cultural barriers.

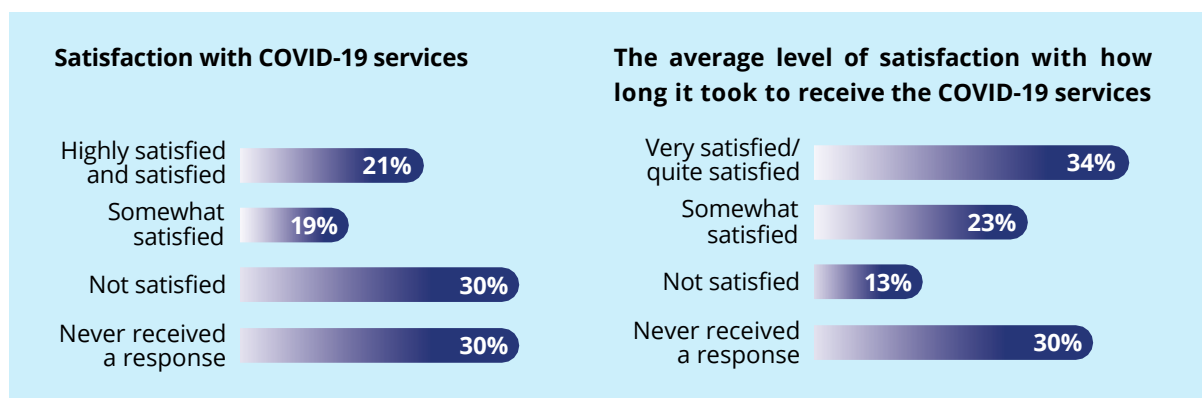
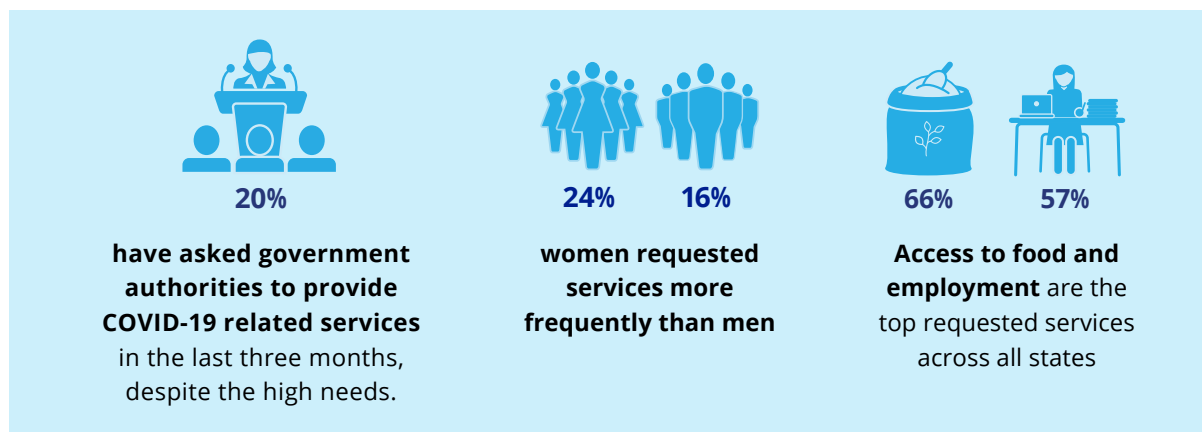


The survey found that **more than half (65%) of respondents share information about COVID-19** with family and friends, while 35% of respondents are not sharing information.

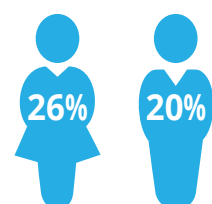


## Vertical Cohesion and the Legitimacy of Institutions Have Suffered, Especially among Young People

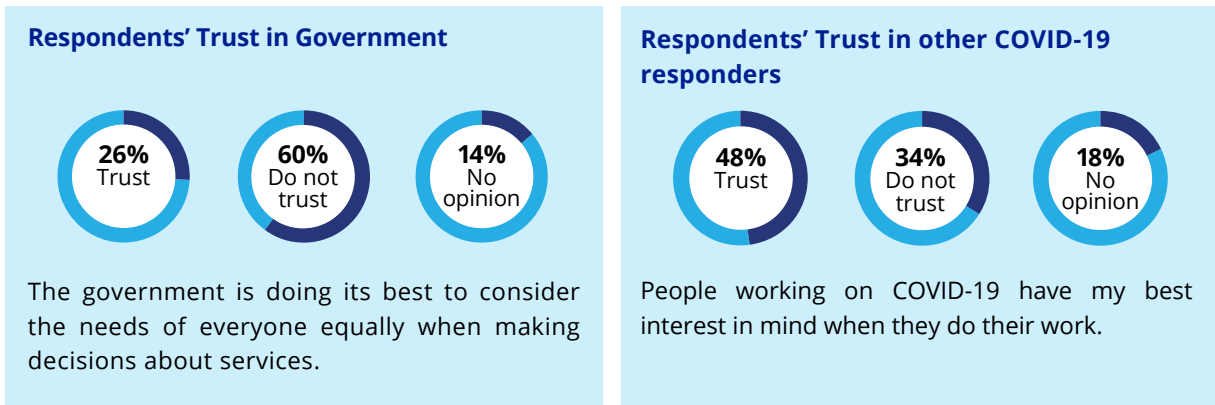
Analysis shows low levels of satisfaction with provided services and low trust in authorities.



**Women recorded a higher level of satisfaction** with services received than men. Like in other **countries, we found that feelings of marginalisation could lead to generally lower expectations towards authorities** and therefore any small-scale support may result in higher satisfaction levels.



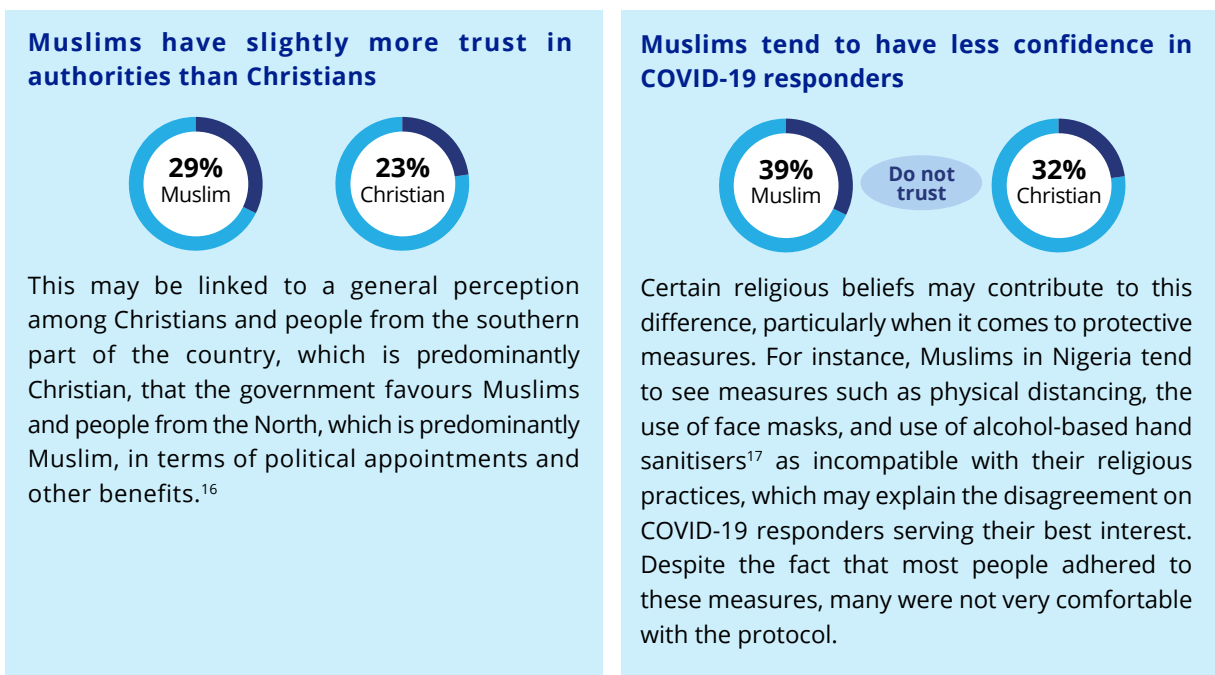
**COVID-19 responders enjoy higher levels of trust than government authorities in Nigeria.**



**Young people (18-34 years) reported lower levels of trust in authorities.** This may be attributed to **feelings of youth marginalisation and fewer opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making.** Youth have also been particularly hard-hit by rising unemployment as a consequence of COVID-19, **and youth often face additional barriers to employment.** For instance, youth are rarely considered for employment within government agencies without recommendations from politicians.<sup>15</sup>



**Differences across religious groups in the trust they have in authorities and COVID-19 responders, is impacting pandemic response efforts**



15. Ynaija, *Opinion: Youths marginalisation as Nigeria's major development trap*, July 2016.

16. Currently, Muslims head the Executive, Judiciary and Legislative arms of government in Nigeria and dominate the leadership of security agencies in the country.

17. There is a belief that the hand sanitizers contain more alcohol than the amount agreed for non-consumable alcoholic content for Muslims.

## Horizontal Cohesion Remains High yet Fragile as Groups Interact Less

General trends about collaboration and interaction across groups send important signals for conflict. However, when examining horizontal cohesion, the most important trends to pay attention to are the outliers: who values this type of collaboration, who does not, and what influences willingness to collaborate across different dividing lines. In the current context in Nigeria:



the majority **value collaboration with people from other groups to respond to a crisis like COVID-19** (strongly agree or agree)

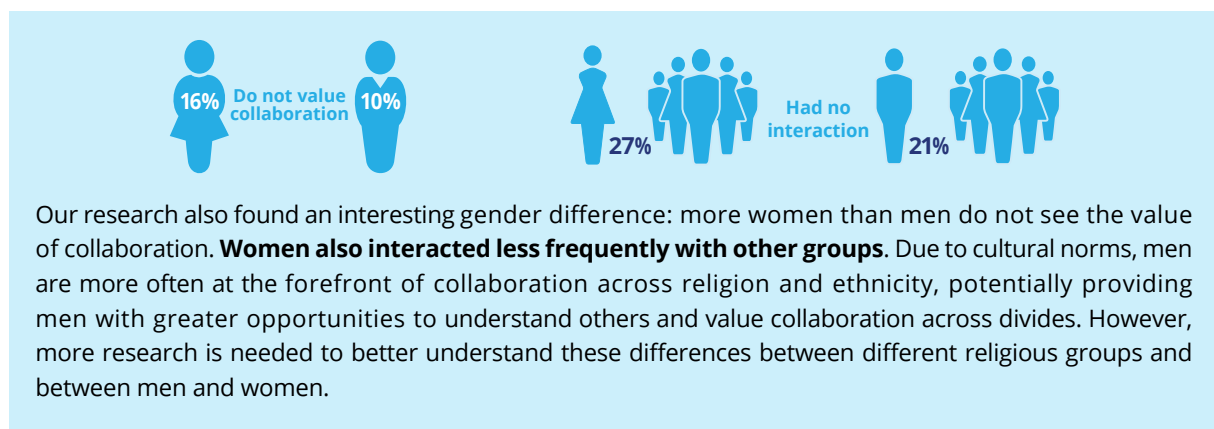
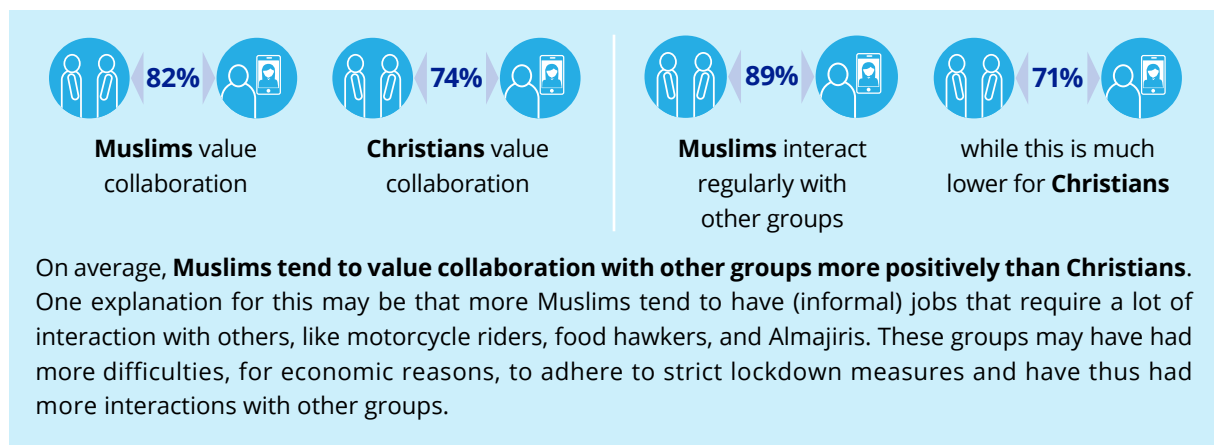


strongly disagree or disagree,



have neutral reactions.

Regarding instances of actual interaction between groups over the past 3 months, **75% of respondents regularly interacted (remotely or in-person) with someone from another religion.**



## Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

### Reducing tensions and incidents of violence between security forces and citizens

- Security actors and communities should be supported with platforms for dialogue, trust building, and collaboration, ensuring citizen-informed and citizen-centered approaches to COVID-19 enforcement. Building trust and collaboration between security forces and citizens can promote information-sharing for improved pandemic response and win-win solutions to the emerging challenges of the pandemic. Existing engagement platforms should be strengthened and repurposed for collaboration around COVID-19, such as Search's community security architectures. Moreover, radio programming and online digital communication initiatives should be leveraged to promote communication, mitigate tensions and misinformation, and resolve conflicts triggered by COVID-19.
- Examples of positive collaboration between citizens, especially young people, and security forces around COVID-19 response efforts should be showcased in innovative ways, e.g. through radio programming, social media messaging, and/or virtual gatherings. Moreover, security forces and citizens need opportunities to regularly meet, discuss, and collaborate in a safe space.

### **Addressing the gendered impact of COVID-19**

- Efforts to raise awareness and promote dialogue on the gendered considerations and impact of the pandemic should be prioritised. Particularly, safe platforms for dialogue on sensitive topics such as GBV and other risks that women and girls face, as well as information on available support services, are important. (Social) media programming should be leveraged to create these safe spaces and dialogue opportunities as well as for information dissemination and wider awareness raising. A diverse cross-section of actors should be engaged and targeted, in conflict-sensitive ways, including women and girls but also men, boys, community members, authorities, local leaders, and others.
- Women and girls often face additional barriers and limitations in accessing information and interacting with others. Women may access different communication channels compared to men, have less access to information, and cultural norms often require them to stay home more often than men. Information campaigns, social cohesion interventions, and other pandemic response efforts should be designed to incorporate these considerations and tailored to meet women's needs.
- To reach women and other marginalised and vulnerable groups, there should be more COVID-19 awareness raising efforts in rural areas. In compliance with safety protocols, the use of town criers, town hall meetings, and other materials (i.e. flyers, billboards, leaflets, etc.) are important for engaging people who have limited access to radio, television, and social media platforms.

### **Incorporating Religious Considerations for Improved COVID-19 Response**

- The data shows that there are differences between religious groups regarding trust in authorities and COVID-19 responders as well as the value of collaboration with other groups for pandemic response. These considerations should be taken into account for COVID-19 response, so that different groups' needs and concerns are reflected. For instance, communication and messaging for Muslim audiences should acknowledge the religious concerns related to safety protocols, provide spaces to discuss these concerns and engage trusted communication providers to deliver messaging.
- Decisionmakers and public health practitioners should seek collaboration with leaders of religious communities for COVID-19 response. Engaging religious leaders can improve overall trust in response measures and ensure the needs and sensitivities of different religious groups are better incorporated into response strategies.
- Opportunities for people of different faith groups in Nigeria to meet (online or in-person) should be supported. Providing regular interaction between and among groups can promote social cohesion, help mitigate any rising tensions or conflict between groups, and reduce feelings of polarisation and isolation during the pandemic.