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# CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

# Nigeria

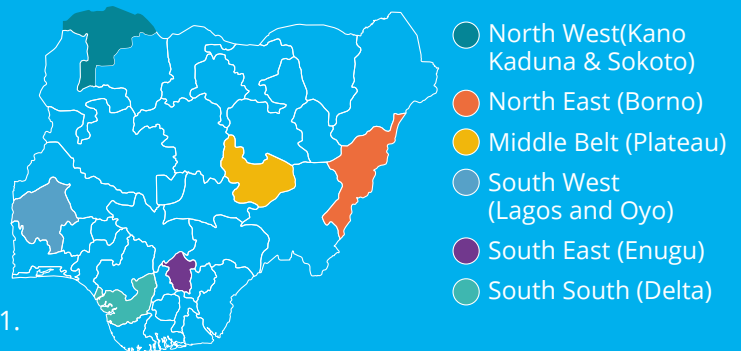
September 2021

## Introduction

Nigeria has a variety of complex conflict issues ranging from political, ethnic, religious, resource-based, and economic related issues. Moreover, the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in the North East has fuelled a large-scale humanitarian crisis and immense suffering, while conflict between farmers and herders, which spans the country, has cost hundreds of thousands of lives. These conflict issues cut across different states in Nigeria, however, four major regions have been identified as the most conflict prone areas, namely the North East, Middle Belt, North West, and the Niger Delta. Nigeria is also synonymous with deep divisions which cause major political issues, that is vigorously and violently contested along the lines of intricate ethnic, religious, and regional divisions.<sup>1</sup>

## Data collection and analysis

Data for the third conflict snapshot report for Nigeria was gathered from 6 April to 6 May 2021 in six target zones. 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](#). This report is part of a series of regular conflict snapshots aimed at providing quick and actionable answers to a set of specific questions. The previous reports for Nigeria can be found [here](#) & [here](#).



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\* This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Search for Common Ground and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

1. Haldun Çancı and Opeyemi Adedoyin Odukoya, "Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria", 2016.



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

The spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria increased significantly between January and June 2021, with a 30% increase in reported cases. On 11 June 2021, Nigeria had 167,027 confirmed cases, and 2,117 deaths across 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The vaccination process remains slow, with less than 1% of the overall population receiving at least one dose of the vaccine.<sup>2</sup> Since the start of the vaccination programme in March 2021, some Nigerians have voiced concerns about accessing the vaccine, while others expressed fear, doubt, or hesitancy about taking the vaccine despite assurances from authorities and experts.<sup>3</sup> In May, the Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on COVID-19 put restrictions in place including capacity limitations at restaurants, worship centers, and for mass gatherings in public places; banned nightclubs and event centers; and established safety protocols for schools and public institutions such as mask requirements and hand washing. The PSC also reinforced the COVID-19 Health Protection Regulations, to alleviate the consequences of COVID-19 on livelihoods.<sup>4</sup>

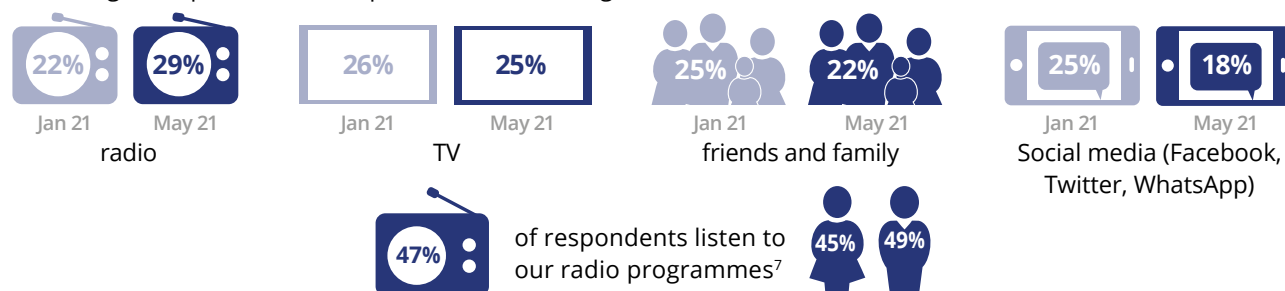
|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
|  | <b>Schools open</b>              |
|  | <b>Teleworking not mandatory</b> |
|  | <b>Borders/airports open</b>     |
|  | <b>All services/sectors open</b> |
|  | <b>Mask wearing mandatory</b>    |

As part of initiatives to increase Nigerians' adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures, the Federal Government launched a sensitization campaign tagged 'Powerful H.A.N.D.S'.<sup>5</sup> The Director-General of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) stated that the campaign is targeted at select states with high COVID-19 prevalence. The country continues to face dire socio-economic challenges and rising insecurity as the COVID-19 pandemic has placed Nigeria at a critical juncture. Across the country and amid armed conflicts, 9.2 million people face worsened levels of food insecurity between March and May this year and this figure is expected to rise to over 12.8 million.<sup>6</sup>

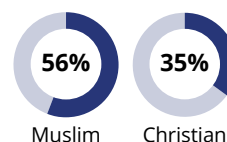
## COVID-19's Impact on Social Cohesion & Trust

### Trust in COVID-19 information on the radio remains consistent and informal information sharing widespread

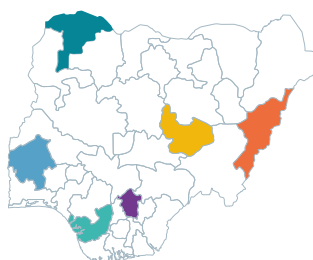
According to respondents the top trusted sources to get information about COVID-19 are:



On average, more Muslims listen to our radio programmes than Christians.



Listenership rates are highest in the North East and North West, predominately Muslim regions. In other regions, listenership rates are lower in the Middle Belt, South West, South East, and the lowest is the South South.<sup>8</sup>

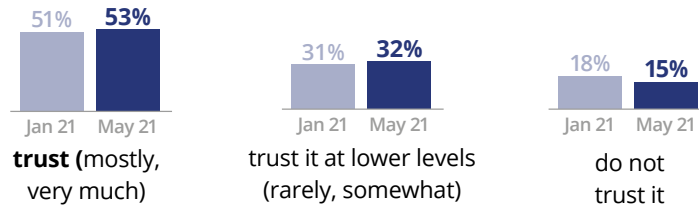


Radio formats:



2. Estimated based on statistics at WHO, "COVID-19 Dashboard", accessed on 11 June 2021.  
 3. Africa News, "Covid 19: Nigerians hesitant to get vaccinated", April 2021.  
 4. State House, "Implementation Guidelines for Phased Restriction of Movement (PHASE IV)", June 2021.  
 5. The H.A.N.D.S' acronym means: "H - Have your hands washed or sanitized frequently; A - Always cough or sneeze into your elbow; N - No going out without face mask; D - Distance of at least two arm's lengths should be maintained; S - Stay indoors and self-isolate if you feel sick."  
 6. FAO, "Response Overview", April 2021.  
 7. Search for Common Ground, together with its local radio partners, produces (i) "Working together against Corona" aired on our radio partners: Jay FM (Plateau), Vision FM (Sokoto), Freedom FM (Kano), Dream FM (Enugu) Kpoko FM (Delta), BRTV (Borno), Bond FM (Lagos), and (ii) "We are together" aired on our radio partners: Dream FM (Enugu) Kpoko FM (Delta), BRTV (Borno), Splash FM, Ibadan (Oyo), Bond FM (Lagos).  
 8. Our radio programme was aired in only one state in the south-south region with not enough coverage for the entire south-south. Also not much incident/information on COVID-19 was recorded from the region, hence there was less attention for the programme among the population.

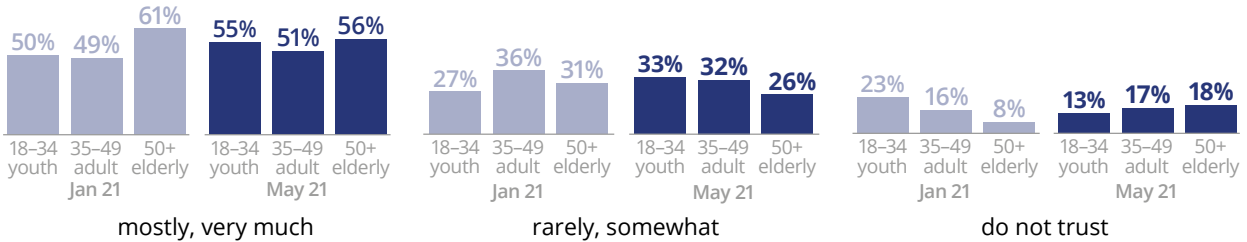
Out of those who listen to our programmes, **53% have high trust in the information shared about COVID-19**. Compared to the previous snapshot, trust levels have remained relatively the same.



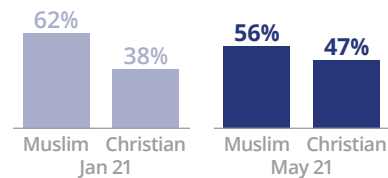
Trends to follow: Less women trust information on our programmes related to COVID-19 than men.



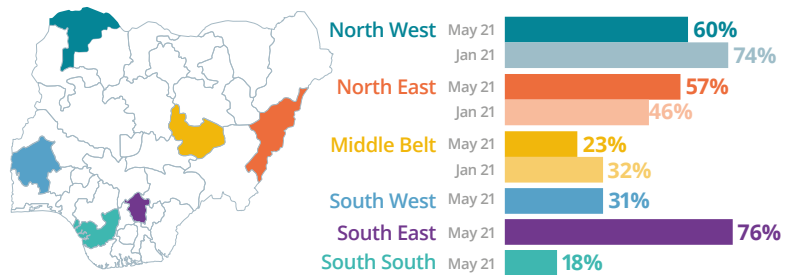
**Trust decreased among elderly respondents.** It is unclear why that is the case.



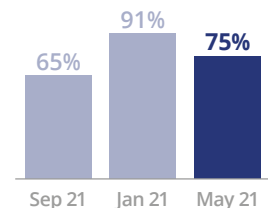
Overall, more Muslims respondents trust the information compared to Christians. Higher levels of trust among Muslim respondents might be linked to the higher listenership rates among Muslims in general. Additionally, the programme has been airing longer in the North East and North West compared to Southern regions.<sup>9</sup> However, while more Muslims than Christians trust the information, trust actually declined among Muslim respondents between this round and the previous and increased among Christian respondents.



**Respondents from the South East have the highest level of trust in COVID-19 related information shared through Search's radio partners.<sup>10</sup>** The ongoing insecurity challenges in the North may explain a shift in focus from the audience, no longer considering COVID-19 a main priority. Continuing power outages in those regions may have created an additional barrier for people to follow our programmes.



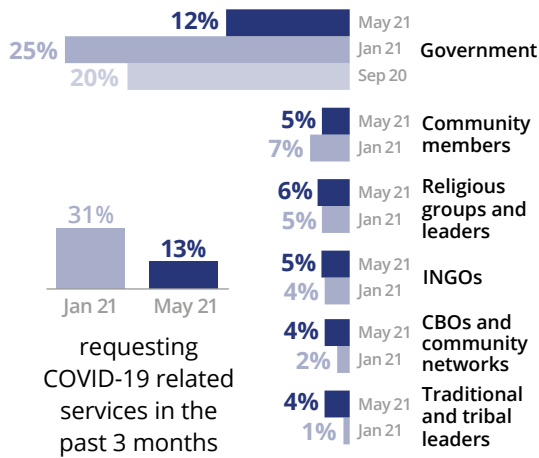
There was a change in the number of respondents who **share information about COVID-19 with family and friends**, rising from the first round to the second round to a significant drop to in the third round.



9. In the North East and North West, our radio programming has been on for over 6 months now, whereas it only started in the Southern regions at the end of Feb 2021.  
 10. The previous round of data collection was conducted only in the Middle Belt, North East and North West.

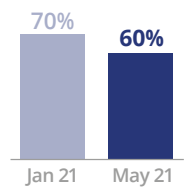
## Trust in the government's pandemic response and in non-governmental actors remains stable, but with noticeable differences by region and religious group

Since the start of the pandemic in Nigeria, the government has taken numerous health, social, and economic measures to cushion its impact. However, some of our respondents, particularly persons living with disabilities, report receiving little COVID-19 related support or services from the government, citing wider issues of inclusivity and access within government-supported initiatives.



Overall, the government remains the top most requested service provider, but requests to the government were notably down from the previous reports. It seems people have lost faith in the government providing any support and are turning more to locally present actors. Community interventions by religious groups or other community-level actors are seen to meet specific needs of community members and are generally perceived to be delivered in an effective way, as opposed to governmental services.

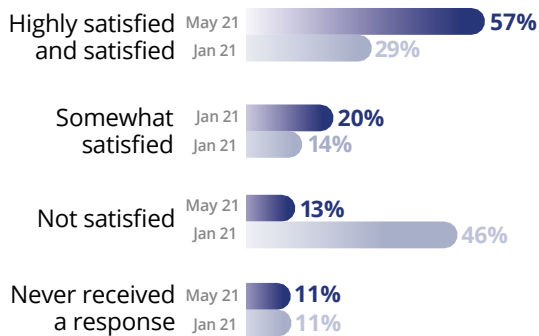
Although a decrease from the previous round, many respondents (or a member of their household) have fully or partially lost their main source of income during the pandemic, which remains an alarming figure, of which more than half are young people between 18-34 years.



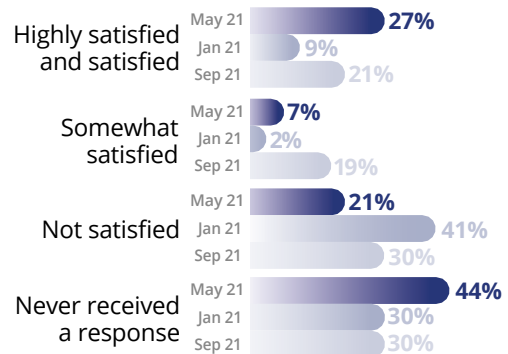
### Top requested services from the government

Employment and access to food remain the top requested services from the government, both figures increased since the previous report.

### Satisfaction with COVID-19 related services from any service provider

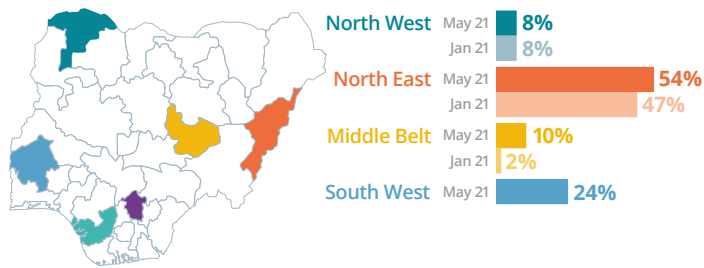


### Satisfaction with COVID-19 related services provided by the government

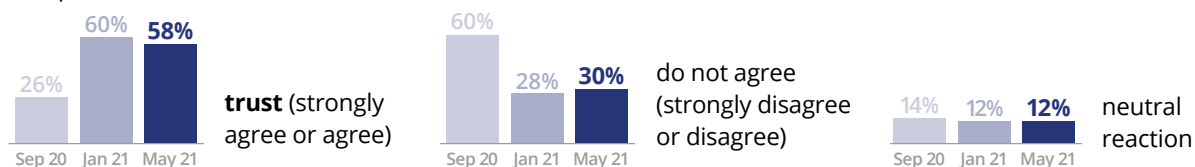


Despite being the top-requested service provider, satisfaction is much lower for services provided by the government, although notably increasing from the previous round. Over the past quarter, there was also a sharp increase in service requests that remain unanswered, potentially leading to more widespread frustration with the government's response. A majority of respondents have also expressed displeasure with the Government's announcement of the phase 4 restrictions in Nigeria, noting that the government should focus on other issues like insecurity, hike in prices of food commodities and high cost of living currently affecting citizen.

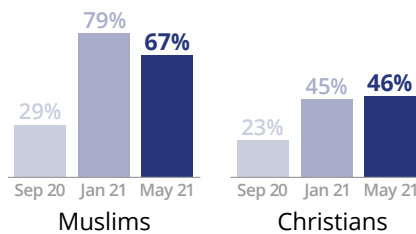
**The Middle Belt and North West recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction in government services<sup>11</sup>** (highly satisfied, satisfied), compared to the highest level in the North East. The Middle Belt continues to be one of the least satisfied regions; and while there is a notable increase in satisfaction since the previous report, satisfaction levels remain low. As mentioned in previous reports, the religious composition (i.e. greater mix of Christians and Muslims) and pre-existing conflict dynamics that strain relationships between citizens and authorities, might contribute to lower satisfaction in the region. The higher levels of satisfaction in the North East could largely be a result of the active presence and activities of humanitarian and aid organisations, which complement or might be seen as synonymous with the government's response.<sup>12</sup>



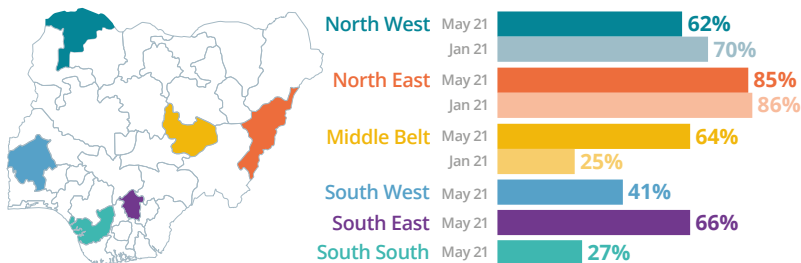
Overall, 58% of respondents agree (strongly agree or agree) that the **government is doing its best to consider the needs of everyone equally when making decisions about COVID-19 services**, with trust levels remaining stable over the past 6 months.



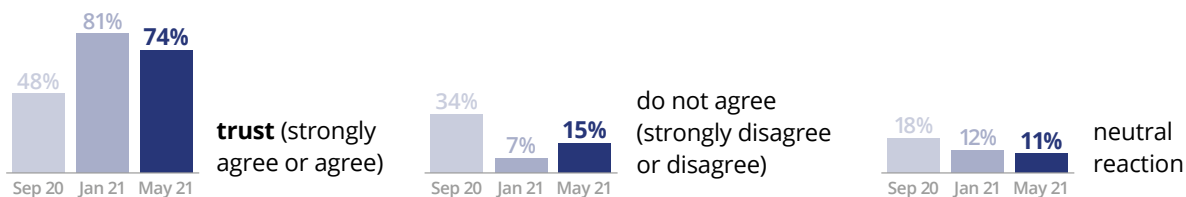
**The religious divide in trust in the government's pandemic response remains salient.** This might be explained by prevailing perceptions among Christians that the government prioritises Muslims for services.



**The South South region reported the lowest level of trust in authorities.** These trends might be explained by the religious composition of the population in these regions. There have been recent agitations in the South South in regard to the leadership structure of the country. Southern respondents feel marginalized by the current government when it comes to appointments and leadership positions, there is a perceived sense of bias from the government. All of this is attributing to the low level of trust in the leadership in the country.



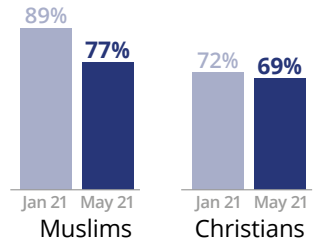
Overall, 74% of respondents trust (strongly agree or agree) that **non-governmental actors working on COVID-19 have their best interests in mind when doing their work**, there has been a slight drop from the previous quarter.



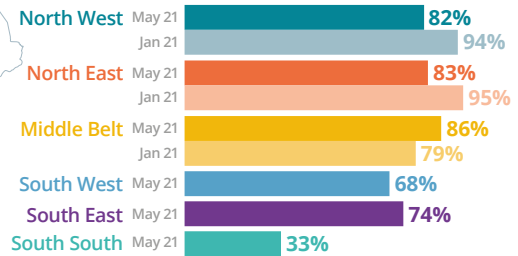
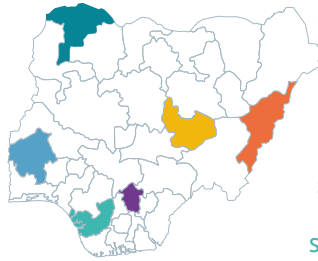
11. Very few respondents sought services from the government in the South East (only 2%, and none is satisfied) and none from South South. Therefore these regions were not included in the graph, as the results were not statistically significant.

12. As we have found in our previous round of multi-country research, there can be a positive correlation between citizens' positive experience with support provided by non-governmental actors and a more positive perception of their government, indicating that these actors can help reduce tensions between citizens and the government. See: Search for Common Ground, "Trust in Authorities - the golden ticket to successful COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in conflict settings", January 2021.

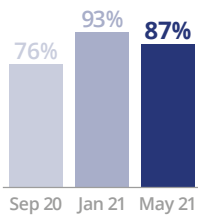
Consistent with the previous report, **Christians also have lower rates of trust in non-governmental COVID-19 responders compared to Muslims.**



**The Middle Belt reported the highest level of trust in non-governmental responders.**



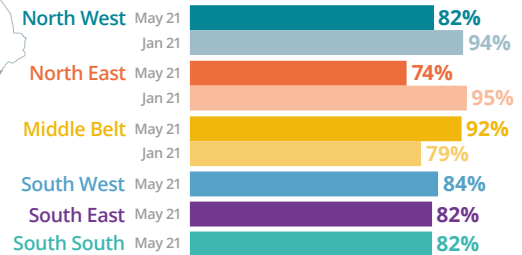
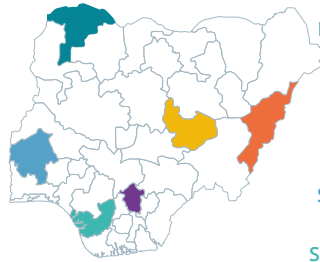
### Interactions between groups continue to increase, despite lockdown measures



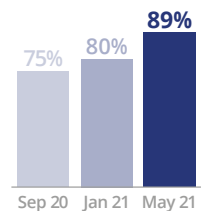
**value collaboration with people from other (religious and ethnic) groups to respond to a crisis like COVID-19 (strongly agree or agree)**



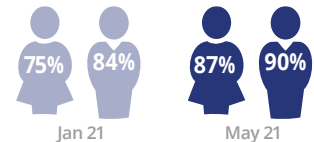
**Respondents in the North East value collaboration with people from other groups (Agree and strongly agree) the least compared to other regions:** Despite the ongoing religious and ethnic conflict in Enugu at the time of data collection, level of valuing collaboration remains relatively high.



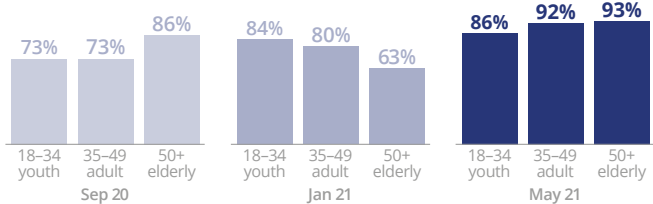
Actual interaction between groups continues to increase over time, **89% of respondents regularly interacted (remotely or in-person) over the past 3 months with someone from another group (religious or ethnic).**



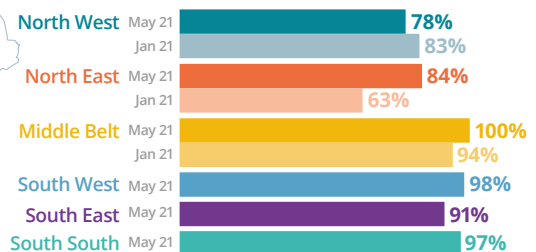
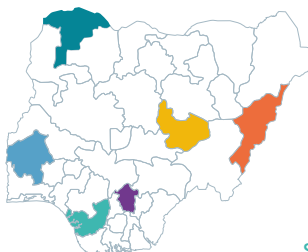
**Women continue to have less interaction with other groups than men but both sexes saw an increase in levels of interaction.** Due to cultural norms, men often have more opportunities to interact across religious and ethnic groups.

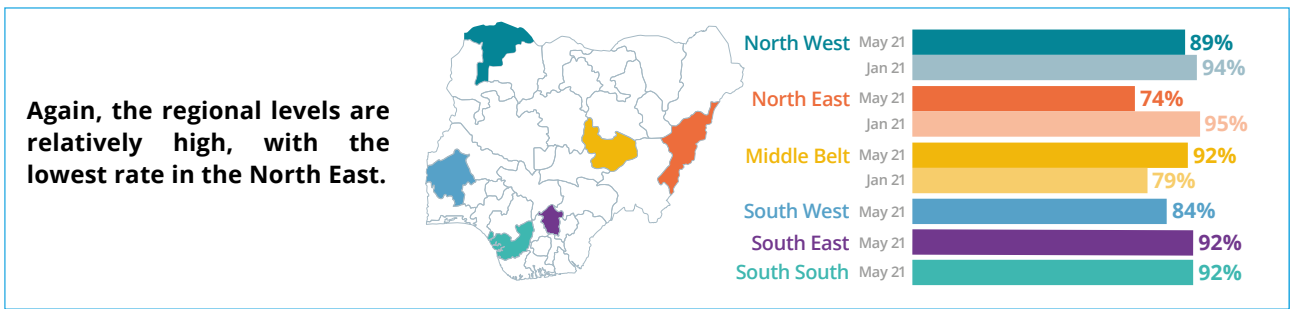
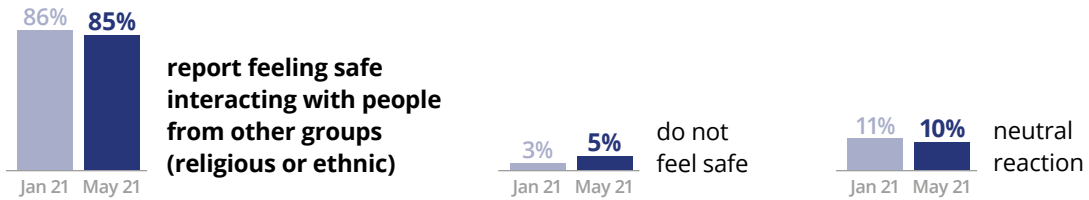


**There was a drastic increase in interaction across divides among elderly and adult respondents,** probably as a result of the continuous relaxation of restrictions. The elderly respect the protocol more because they are at higher risk, hence relaxation of restrictions opens them more to interactions.

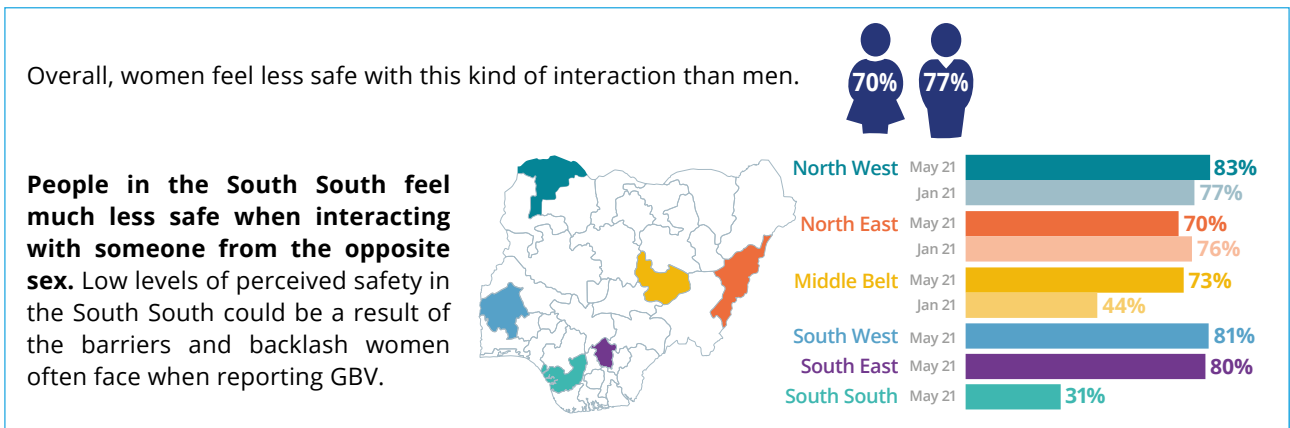
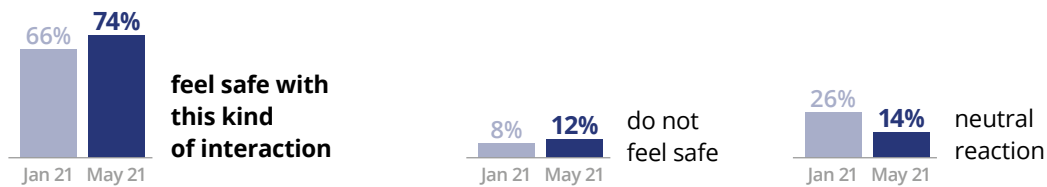


Though the regional levels are all relatively high, respondents in the **North West report the lowest level of interaction with other groups.**





When asked about feeling safe when interacting with someone from the opposite sex inside the household or private sphere, there has been a clear increase from the previous round:



## Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

Response efforts should continue to improve service provision as well as seek to address the growing secondary, longer-term effects of the pandemic

- The effect of COVID-19 in Nigeria has resulted in the loss of jobs, and 60% of our respondents report a full or partial loss of their main source of household income. Additionally, psycho-social impacts are also on the rise. Response providers should integrate holistic strategies that serve both immediate and longer term needs. Additionally, as many respondents report inclusivity challenges associated with service delivery, response providers should carefully map the needs of various groups, including the most marginalised (i.e. PWDs, women, youth, etc.) and tailor response efforts to varying needs. Our respondents also report that community-based interventions are better-suited for tailored responses that meet competing needs - the government, INGOs, and national entities should partner with and reinforce community-based interventions.
- Despite growing needs, only 13% of respondents requested COVID-19 related services in this round, which is a drastic decrease from relatively low rates last round (31%). While respondents are more satisfied with government services than last round, the figures remain relatively low overall (9% and 27%, respectively). Moreover, trust decreased marginally for governmental service providers and notably for non-governmental service providers between rounds. As needs continue to rise, service providers should ensure service delivery is inclusive, participatory, and transparent. As mentioned, creative partnerships between community based service providers, government, and larger INGOs can ensure community needs are being met as well as generate greater confidence in overall response efforts.

**Continue to reinforce the reach and resonance of information campaigns, particularly those in support of vaccine rollout. Information campaigns should also integrate opportunities for dialogue and collaboration**

- Our respondents report a lack of access to information about the vaccine more widely. Lack of access to information and increasing case numbers might contribute to rumours and misinformation about the vaccine. As communication campaigns integrate information about the vaccine, response providers should ensure they leverage communication channels that communities trust and have access to. Our data shows that majority of respondents rely on radio, TV, social media, and friends and family to receive information on COVID-19. Additionally, our data shows that women tend to trust COVID-19 information at lower rates – communication initiatives should engage women and the elderly to ensure their concerns and needs are adequately incorporated into communication strategies, particularly as they relate to vaccine dissemination.
- As citizens continue to struggle with the ongoing secondary effects of the pandemic and grapple with emerging questions, media platforms can go beyond providing information to actively creating platforms for connection, unity, and dialogue. This round saw a notable decline in the way citizens value collaboration across divides to respond to the pandemic. While there might be many reasons for this decline, dedicated media platforms for interaction might support a shift in the way citizens value interaction across divides.

**Streamline regular peacebuilding and conflict prevention measures into wider response efforts**

- As violence, conflict, and insecurity continue to rise in Nigeria, at times directly or indirectly related to the pandemic, peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies should be systematically integrated into wider pandemic response efforts – both as dedicated peacebuilding initiatives and as components of wider initiatives across sectors. These initiatives will be particularly important to help communities peacefully navigate ongoing socio-economic fallout of the pandemic, which is creating a heightened state of crisis, insecurity, and stress among already fragile communities. For instance, community dialogue can provide space for bridging divides between groups to discuss pandemic related issues as well identifying joint solutions to respond to peace and security challenges that emerge throughout the pandemic and can be integrated into wider response efforts.