



**KIMPACT  
DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE**

**COVID- 19 and Elections Survey Report**

# **Low Voter Turnout May Mar 2020 Edo and Ondo States Gubernatorial Elections because of COVID- 19**

**Yet, majority says they will vote if  
preventive measures are put in place**

**FOR INQUIRIES:**

+234 813 482 8527  
+234 810 394 7690

info@kimpact.org.ng  
www.kdi.org.ng

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# About us

Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) is a youth-focused nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that advances good governance, democratic rights, public policy, public engagement and sustainable economy. We do this by building informed and active citizens through capacity development, advancing public policies, data driven advocacy and reforms that gives a more supportive environment for citizen-led development. Since March 2014, KDI has worked hand-in-hand with both Local and International bodies to promote peaceful election, active citizen engagement in democratic processes, reforms and sustainable econ-

omy. We hinge our advocacy, reforms, policy advancement and democratic supports on the principle of social cohesion. KDI has administrative structures and partners in all the 36 states of Nigeria. Our Mission: To inspire citizen-led democratic and economic development that is fixed firmly on the principles of participation, data-driven advocacy, strong democratic institutions and public policies.

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# Preface

One of the major components of democracy is election. Elections not only drive democracy, it helps to deliver its dividend through the elected officials. Aside that, participation is key in election because it is one of the avenues that the voices of the people can be heard.

In recent times in Nigeria, voter turnout has been going on a downward trend in every election year despite the fact that the number of registered voters are increasing. The Total Voter Turnout of Presidential elections in Nigeria shows that Voter Turnout in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 has been 52%, 69%, 58%, 54%, 44% and 36% respectively. With these, you will agree with me that this calls for concern. The worrying aspect of it is that decrease in voter turnout has started trickling down to the state elections. In 2016 voter turnout for governorship election was 35% and 32% for Ondo and Edo State respectively.

The Voter turnout has been decreasing while elections were conducted under normal atmosphere. With the Covid-19 pandemic situation permeating all the countries of the world, and INEC has said they will not be postponing the Edo and Ondo states governorship elections. What will the voter turnout look like?

Kimpect Development Initiative in view of the above, conducted a survey across the Local Government Areas of the two states, what you are about reading is the outcome of the survey done through random sampling across all the LGAs. Recommendations were made and we hope this survey report will be a tool in the hand of the Election Management Bodies, Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations to deploy appropriate responses to ensuring an increase in voter turnout and other issues raised in this survey in the coming elections.



**Bukola Idowu**

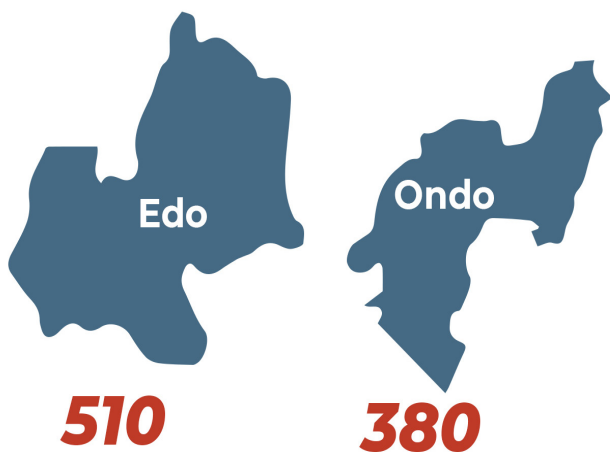
KDI, Executive Director

# How we did this

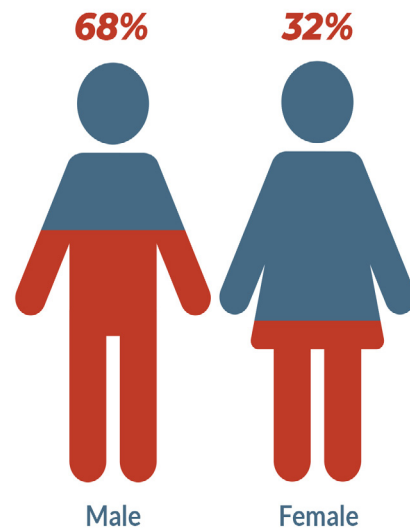
With the understanding that when it comes to elections, the number of people who comes out to vote is as important as how they vote. Kimpact Development Initiative carried out this study to assess the possible impact COVID-19 will have on the upcoming election in Edo and Ondo States of Nigeria and also to collect necessary data to evaluate the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the active participation of citizens in Edo and Ondo States Gubernatorial elections.

For this analysis, we surveyed 890 respondents in total. 510 and 380 indigenes from Edo State and Ondo States respectively in May 2020.

 **890**  
respondents



Of the total number of respondents (890) in the two states that was surveyed, 68% are male while 32% are female.



Kimpact COVID-19 and Elections Questionnaire (KCEQ) was developed by research experts as a data collection tool. KCEQ was administered online to limit physical contacts in line with COVID-19 prevention protocol through random sampling from every of the thirty-six (36) local government areas in Edo and Ondo States.

This way, the survey had representation from every of the senatorial districts of Edo and Ondo States. The data collected was weighted to be the representative of the adult and indigenous population by gender and age distribution to reduce non-response bias. The weights assigned were in proportion to the 2006 Nigerian population figures.

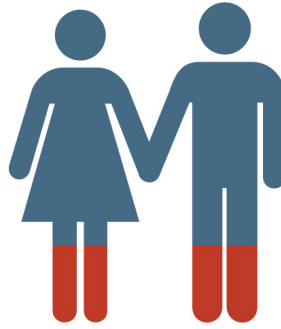
Key Informant Interviews (KII) with

**77.8%**



Youth  
(18-35yrs)

**16.9%**



Middle Aged  
(36-45yrs)

**5.4%**



Elderly  
(45yrs and above)

major stakeholders and experts from Edo and Ondo States who have real-time information were conducted to get their informed perspectives on the political realities of the states amid COVID-19.

***The margin of error for the survey is +/-3% with a confidence level of 95%.***

# Introduction

Fifty-eight (58) countries have postponed about 95 elections events due to COVID-19 as of May 15, 2020 according to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). This is the primary response to elections in disaster situations. However, some countries have seen beyond postponement they have been able to strike the balance between legitimate public health concerns and upholding the tenets of democratic even during global emergencies. Ten (10) countries as of May 1, 2020 have conducted election with mitigating measure in place.

Electoral Assessment of COVID-19 in Nigeria<sup>1</sup> shows that amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria is expected to conduct two off-cycle state governorship elections this year. Yet, no one can predict with certainty when COVID-19 pandemic will be over. Then “Do we keep postponing elections?<sup>2</sup>”.

Knowing fully well the implications of postponing elections<sup>3</sup>, there is a limit to election postponement in Nigeria. Section 178 (2) of the Constitution and section 25 (8) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) provides that

***“an election into office of the Governor of a state shall be held on a date***

***not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder of that office”.***

Since the present tenure of the state governors expires on November 11, 2020, and February 23, 2021, for Edo and Ondo respectively, it means the latest these elections can be postponed is October 13, 2020, and January 25, 2021, for Edo and Ondo states respectively.

To avoid any form of constitutional crises, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) stated clearly in its press release on the 21st of May, 2020 that they are committed to conducting all elections that are due within the extant legal framework, placing premium on public safety and mitigation of health risks from COVID-19.

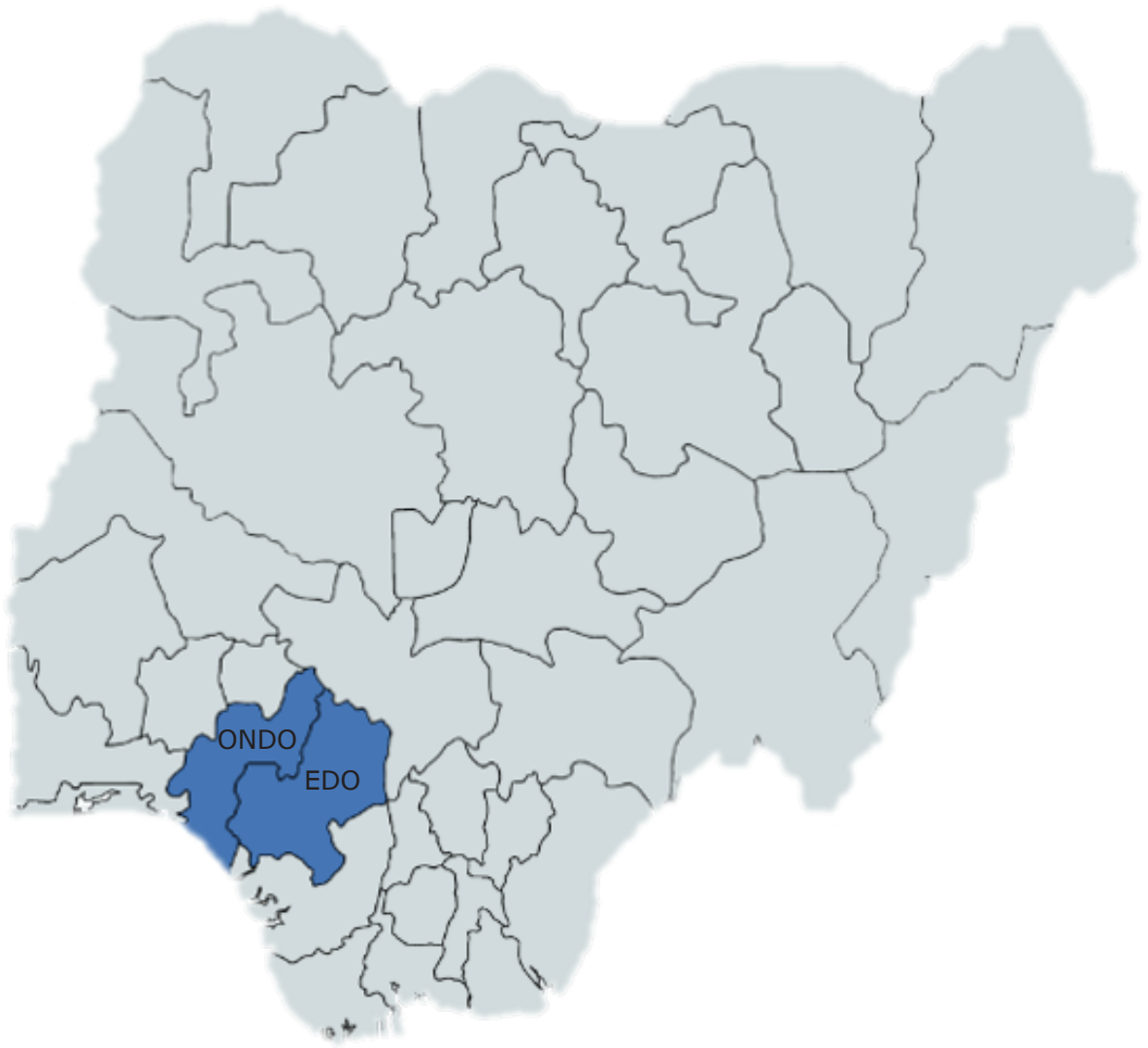


To gauge what citizens think of INEC conducting elections amid COVID-19 in terms of willingness to vote amid COVID-19, ways they think COVID-19 will affect the upcoming elections and what they think should be done concerning the upcoming elections.

KDI commissions Edo and Ondo Indigenous opinion survey to assess the possible impact COVID-19 will have on the

upcoming election in the two states. This will assist INEC, Civil Society Organization (CSOs), and other election stakeholders to answer the question of likely complications and or implications that may arise due to COVID-19, even averting the constitutional crisis. Also, to help them prepare ahead and deploy early responses to avert other forms of complications.

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1. <https://www.kdi.org.ng/electoral-assessment-of-covid-19-in-nigeria/>
  2. <https://www.kdi.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Do-we-need-to-keep-postponing-elections.pdf>
  3. <https://www.kdi.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Assessing-the-implications-of-postponing-elections.pdf>



# Key Findings



# Low Voter Turnout May Mar 2020 Edo and Ondo States Gubernatorial Elections because of COVID- 19

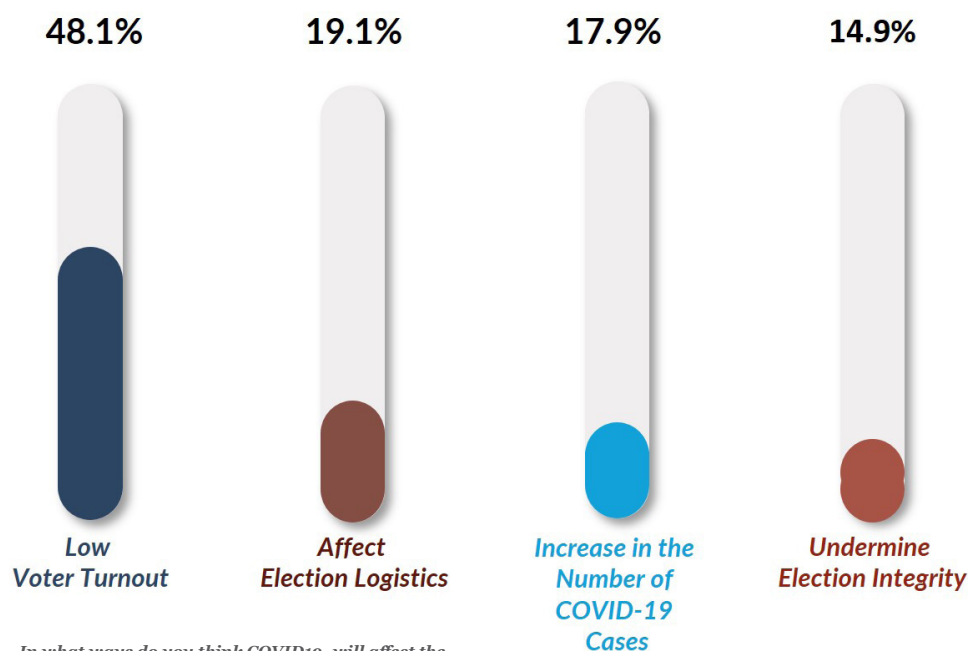
*Yet, majority says they will vote if preventive measures are in place*

Nigeria recorded its index case of the novel coronavirus disease on the 27 February 2020, COVID-19 has since then spread across 34 States and the Federal Capital Territory. According to Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC); Edo State as of May 28, 2020 have 172 active cases, discharged 58 persons and recorded 10 deaths. Ondo State has 3 active cases on admission, discharged 19 and recorded 2 deaths. COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on nearly all aspects of life in Edo and Ondo States.

And now, most indigenes (48.1%) of Edo and Ondo States' says it is likely Low Vot-

er Turnout mar the September 19, 2020 and October 10, 2020 gubernatorial elections in the states because of the fear of contracting COVID-19 disease and the uncertainties that came with COVID-19 such as lack of viable vaccines.

The best that could happen in a democratic election is a high turnout of voters and equal levels of participation across the segments of the society. However, the view of the Edo and Ondo state indigenes is not far from what has been seen in recent elections conducted amid COVID-19.



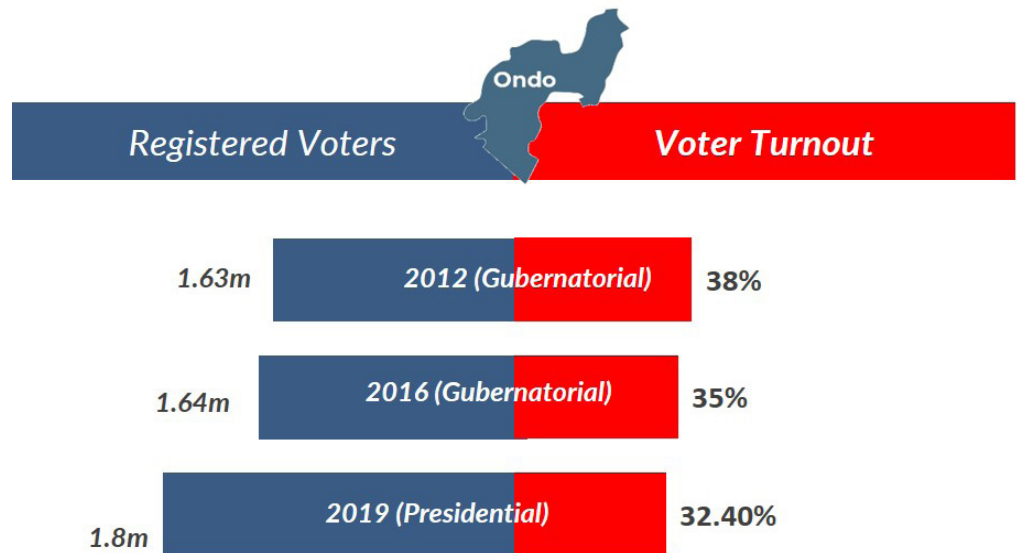
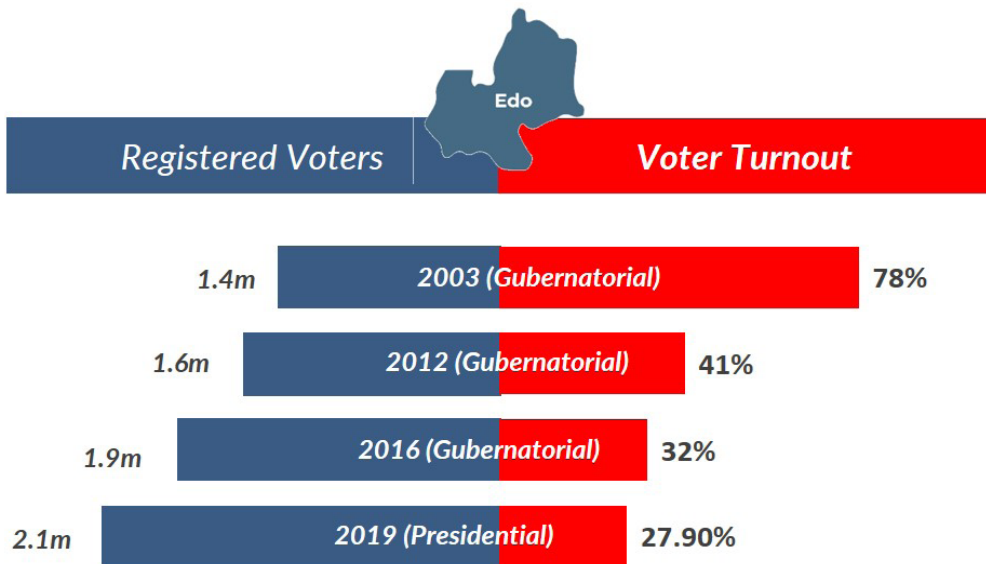
*In what ways do you think COVID19- will affect the upcoming Edo and Ondo States gubernatorial elections?*

Iran announced a 42% turnout in its parliamentary election, the lowest rate since the 1979 Islamic revolution<sup>4</sup>. In the United States as well, turnout in some Democratic primaries was arguably strongly affected. In Illinois, voter turnout decreased by 25 percent in comparison with the 2016 primary.

Going back to the data archive of election results in both Edo and Ondo state. The trend of Voter Turnout has been declining since 2003 in both Edo and Ondo states gubernatorial election despite the increase in the number of registered voters in both states. In Edo State, 2003 gubernatorial election witnessed a high voter turnout but reduced drastically to 41% in 2012 despite increase in the number of registered voters. 2016 gubernatorial election witness a decline in voter turnout. It no different in the turnout in the 2019 presiden-

tial election.

Ondo State has been witnessing a small increase in the number of registered voters and since 2003. However, there has been reduction in total voter turnout per election year.



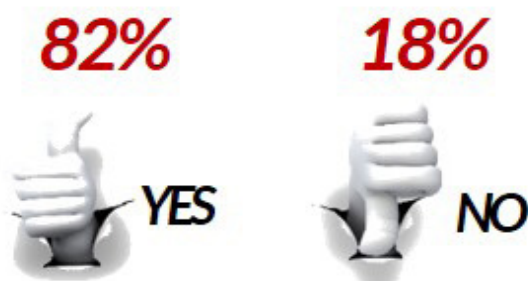
**Source**  
 2003 Data - All Africa  
 2016 & 2012 Ondo State Data - Sahara Reporter  
 2012 Edo Data - Channels TV  
 2016 Edo Data - Sahara Reporter  
 2019 Presidential Election Data - INEC

1. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-election-khamenei/iran-announces-low-poll-turnout-blames-coronavirus-propaganda-idUSKCN20H09Z>  
 2. <https://www.ifes.org/news/low-voter-turnouts-fear-disinformation-and-disrupted-supply-chains>

With just over 100 days until Edo state Election Day (September 19, 2020) and over 132 days until Ondo State Election Day (October 10, 2020). 17.9% of the respondents were concerned about the possibility of increase in the rate of community transmission. Up till the 2019 general elections, Nigerians still voted using the manual based system or the in-person voting structure. In-person voting could barely reduce human interaction because it is an act of voting that requires the physical presence of voters. With the likelihood of having multiple voters at the polling units the same period, this could aid the spread of COVID-19. 19.1% of respondents thinks COVID-19

could affect election logistics while 14.9% of respondents believes the integrity of the upcoming gubernatorial elections will be undermined because of COVID-19.

***“Total voter turnout dropped from 63.5 percent in 2014 to around 46 percent in the March 15, 2020 French Municipal Elections, the fear of infection arguably contributed to the historically low voter turnout in France<sup>5</sup>”***

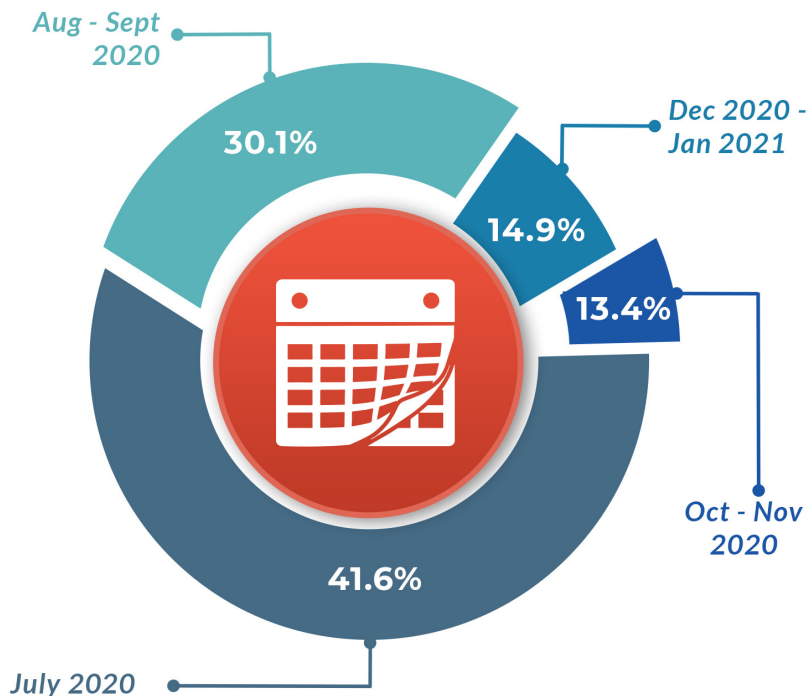
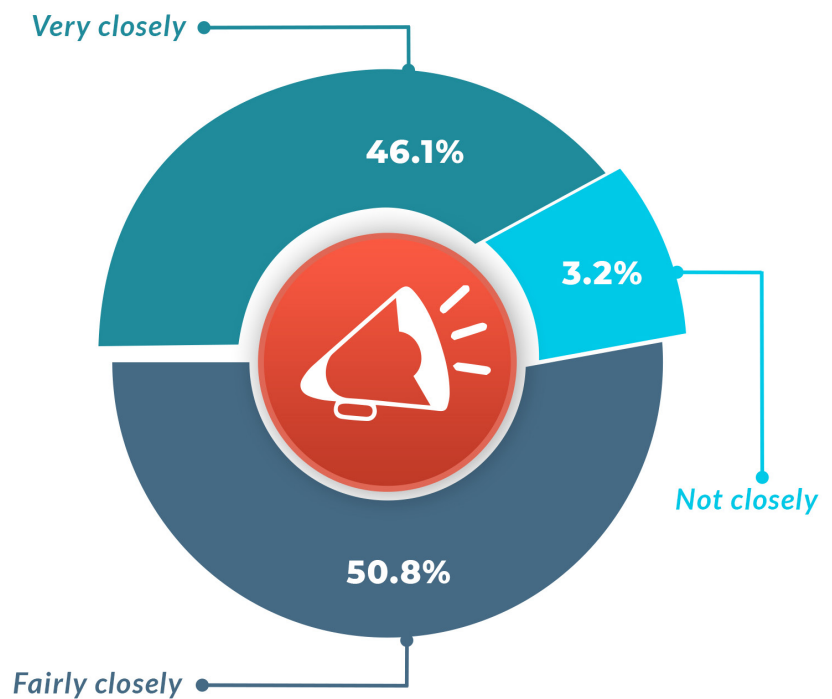


*If the Election Management Body provides preventive and mitigation guidelines: such as Physical Distancing, Personal Protective Equipment and Hand sanitizers. Will you turn out for voting?*

Despite all of these concerns shown by indigenes of both Edo and Ondo States surveyed. Yet, majority (82%) in Edo and Ondo State says they will vote if INEC in conjunction with public health experts provides preventive and mitigation guidelines and measures such as Physical Distancing, Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Sanitizers while 18% oppose this.

# The Survey Reveals Most Persons are Actively Following the News and Think COVID- 19 will Subside Before the Elections

Not more than 46.1% of the respondents in Edo State are active followers of news report, they get information from news report that keep them abreast of happenings in the country most especially in their state. 50.8% of the respondents says they follow the news fairly closely while just an infinitesimal percent (3.2%) do not follow news report closely.

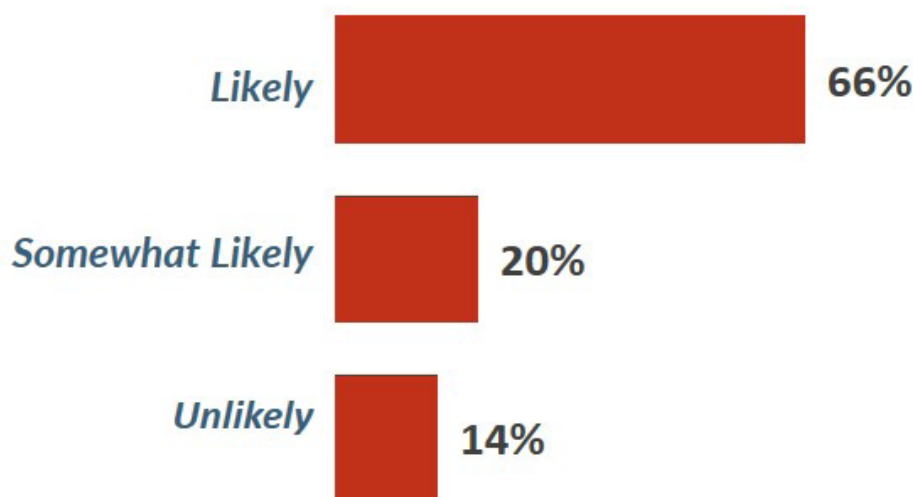


While high numbers follow news report very closely and fairly closely, a little bit below half (41.6%) of the respondents envisaged that with the effort of the Edo and Ondo State Governments and the current number of active cases coupled with the rate of recovery, COVID-19 will subside latest by July, 2020. 30.1% feels the curve will be on the decrease between August to September, 2020.

The view of 13.4% of the respondents was that the curve will be flattened between October to November, 2020 while 14.9% says COVID-19 will subside by January, 2021.

# Two-thirds of Edo and Ondo States Indigene Expects Governorship Election Will Be Disrupted by COVID- 19

*Nevertheless, sizable majority opposed postponement expect INEC to conduct elections under strict safety measures.*



*What is the likelihood of COVID19- disrupting citizens' willingness to vote in the coming Edo and Ondo States gubernatorial elections?*

Even when more than half of respondents believe COVID-19 pandemic will subside before the elections; With just over 100 days until Edo State Election Day (September 19, 2020) and over 132 days until Ondo State Election Day (October 10, 2020). Two-thirds (65.6%) of Edo and Ondo State natives say it is very likely and likely that the coronavirus outbreak will significantly disrupt people's confidence and willingness to vote in the gubernatorial elections. 20% say it's somewhat likely COVID-19 disrupt voter's confidence and willingness to vote in the gubernatorial elections. Just little fraction

(14.4%) think COVID-19 is unlikely going to affect voter's confidence and willingness to vote in the gubernatorial elections.

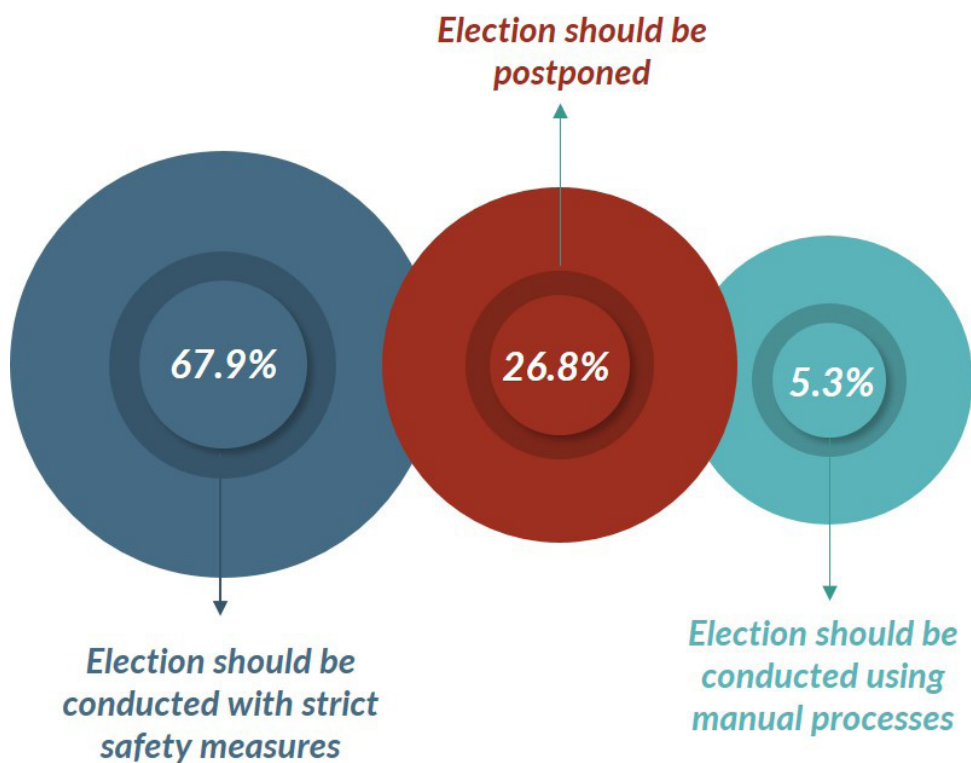
Even though, many feel the upcoming elections could be disrupted by COVID-19, Less than half of the respondents feel confident that the voters willing to defile all odds to vote in the upcoming elections will be able to do so in Edo and Ondo States. The chart below shows the confidence level of the respondents that the citizens who want to vote in the upcoming elections will be able to do so.



Amidst COVID-19, how confident are you that citizens who want to vote in the upcoming election will be able to do so?

Nevertheless, sizable majority (67.9%) opposed that the upcoming election should be postponed, they expect INEC to conduct the gubernatorial elections under strict safety guidelines and measures such as physical distancing, personal protective equipment for election official,

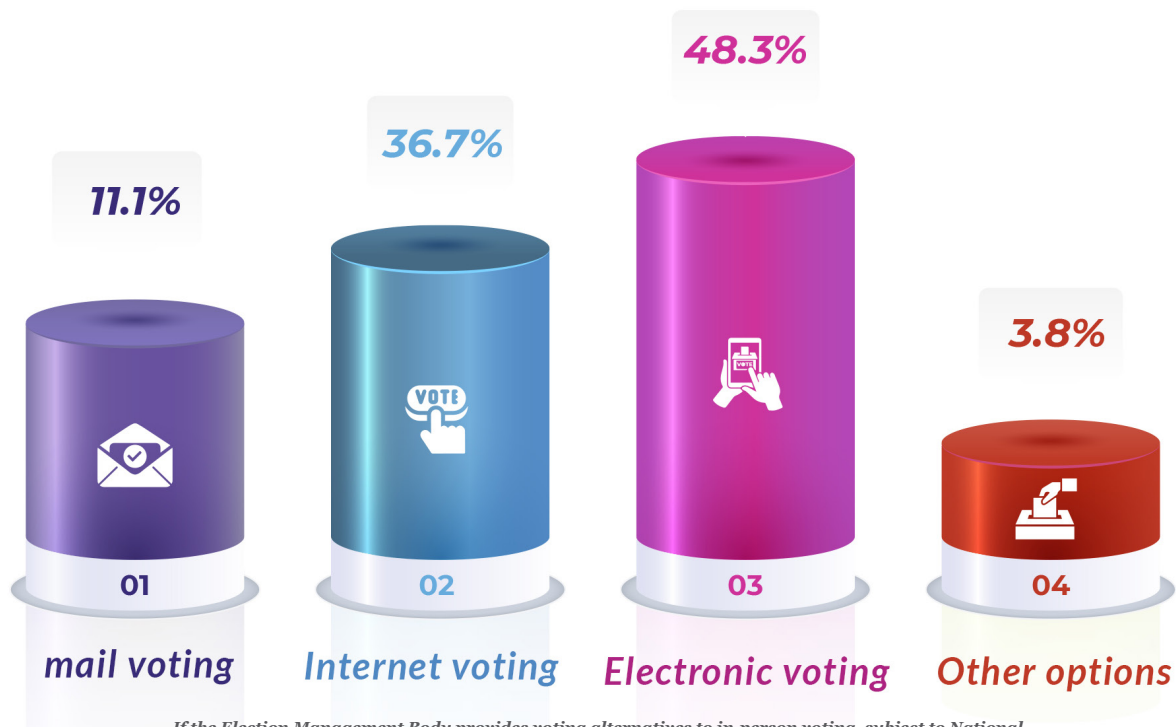
wearing of face mask and hand sanitizer etc. 26.8% say INEC should postpone the gubernatorial election till further notice. While 5.3% said INEC should just conduct the election using the usual processes and procedures.



Given the outbreak of COVID-19, what do you think should be done concerning the upcoming election?

# Broad Support for Electronic Voting Option As Most Indigenes Feel Uncomfortable with the Usual In-person Voting

As INEC begin weighing methodological options for conducting the Edo and Ondo States gubernatorial elections amid the coronavirus outbreak, there is broad support among the public for both electronic voting system and internet voting.

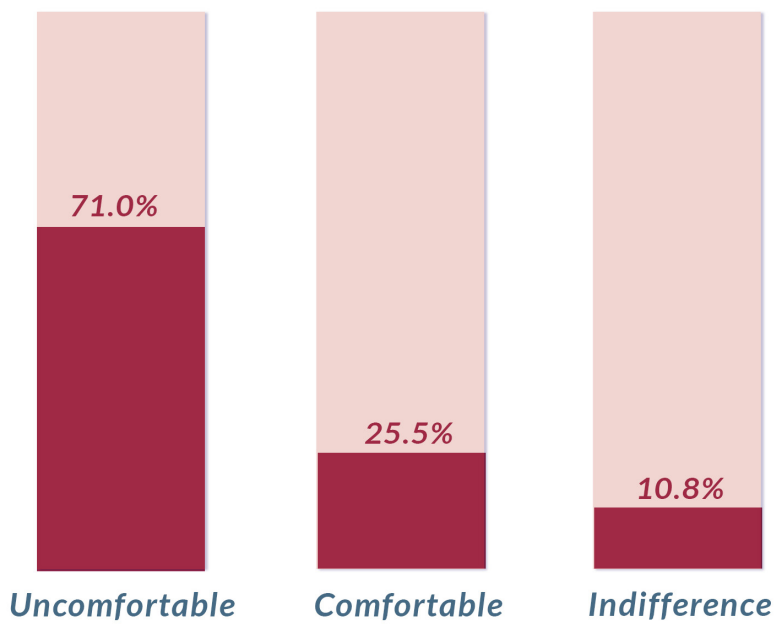


*If the Election Management Body provides voting alternatives to in-person voting, subject to National Assembly amendment to The Electoral Act, which of the following would you most likely prefer ?*

48.3% plurality of the public who were surveyed in Edo and Ondo State strongly favored the electronic voting system. 36.7% broadly support internet voting option. Mail voting option is supported by 11.1% of the respondents while 3.8% of the respondents feels other voting alternatives such as using Bank Verification Number, National Identity Management Database and in-person voting is better.

This overwhelming support for voting alternatives as against the in-person voting cannot be disassociated from disturbing factors, fear, complexities and uncertainties that came with COVID-19. The disturbing factors such as the lack of viable vaccines, the severity, mode, and the high rate of transmission are most likely responsible for two-thirds of the respondents that shown they will feel uncomfortable going to polling unit to cast their vote.

This overwhelming support for voting al-



Just 25.5% of the respondents in Edo and Ondo State feel comfortable going to polling unit to cast their vote, as compared with majority (71%) of the respondents that shown they will feel uncomfortable going to polling unit to cast their vote. 10.8% of the respondents feels indifferent about their comfortability level.

*Given the outbreak of COVID- 19 how will you feel going to a polling unit to cast your vote?*



# Less Than Half are Confident that Upcoming Gubernatorial Elections in Edo and Ondo State will be Conducted Credibly

Overall, the confidence of the respondent that the upcoming gubernatorial elections will be conducted credibly is dwindling. Less than half (40%) of the respondents are confident of credible elections. 27.2% of the respondents are somewhat confident of credible elections

while 32.8% of the respondents are not confident the upcoming gubernatorial elections will be conducted credibly. This shows that the confidence level and trust of the citizen in the conduct of election is becoming gradually less.

Not  
Confident



Somewhat  
Confident



Confident



*Thinking about Edo and Ondo States gubernatorial elections amid COVID - 19, how confident are you that election will be conducted credibly?*

# Recommendation

- INEC should ensure adequate implementation of all safety procedures as contained in the policy document the commission released on May 21, 2020 on conducting elections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- INEC should ensure adequate planning to avoid logistical challenges, such as Smart Card Reader malfunctioning among others, so as to avoid delay that will result into any form of undue queue on the voting line. Any form of congestion will negate social distancing principle.
- There is a need for INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to carry out innovative and aggressive Voter Education to sensitize the citizens on COVID-19 preventive measures and safety procedures during elections, using the media and local languages (dialect). This will reduce the fright that comes with COVID-19 pandemic and increase their confidence for safety and inturn increase Voter Turnout.
- As far as it is practicable, CSOs that will carrying out Voter Education and Sensitization should employ innovative methods of sensitizing voters to reduce physical meeting and large gatherings.
- Political parties and their candidates should engage their party members on how to ensure safety during elections and also on participating actively in the elections.
- Political parties should also employ innovative means of reaching out to voters instead of the usual large campaign gatherings.

# Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

## Research team

Oluwafemi Adebayo - *Head, Communications and Research*

Oluwakemi Akinyemi- *Research Assistant*

Titilayo Alabi - *Research Assistant*

Prince Israel Orekha - *Edo State Lead Researcher*

Peter O. Aguebor - *Edo State Lead Researcher*

Jonathan Obatola - *Ondo State Lead Researcher*

Akinrelere Sunday - *Ondo State Lead Researcher*

Emmanuel Kilaso - *Ondo State Lead Researcher*

Bukola Idowu - *Research Associate*

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## Communications and editorial

Oluwafemi Adebayo - *Head, Communications and Research*

Victor Adewunmi - *Information Graphics Designer*



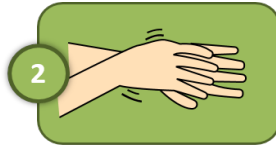
KDI appreciates the continued technical assistance of International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

# Appendix

## (COVID- 19) Prevention Tips Amid Elections



Apply the sanitizer on one of your palms and rub hands palm-to-palm



Rub back of each hand with opposite palm



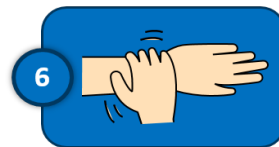
Rub fingertips in opposite palms to wash under nails



Rub between fingers



Rub each finger, thumb clasped in opposite hand



Scrub Wrists

**Come to the polling area with alcohol based sanitizer**

## Cover your Cough and Sneeze

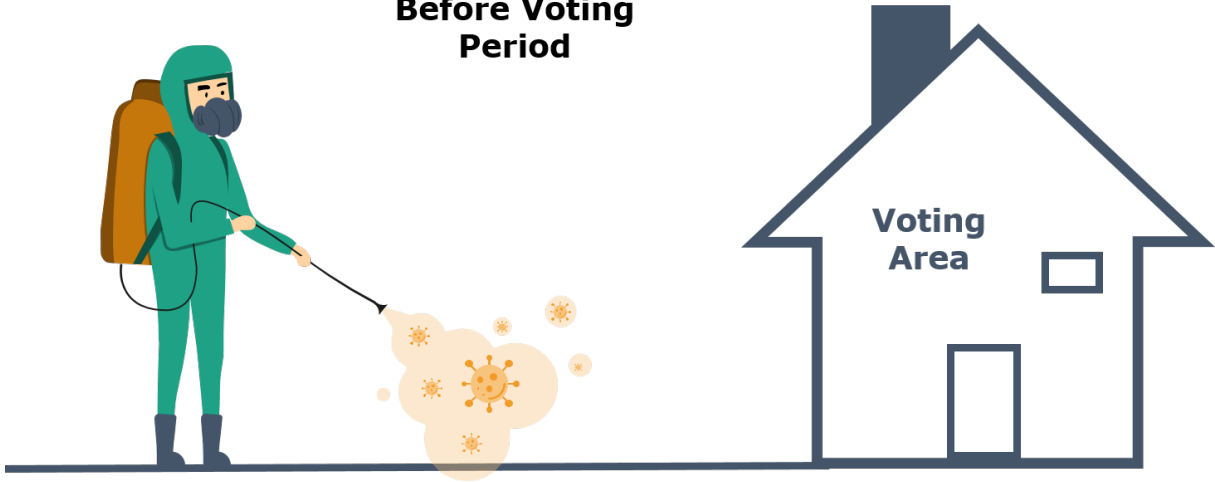


**with Napkin**

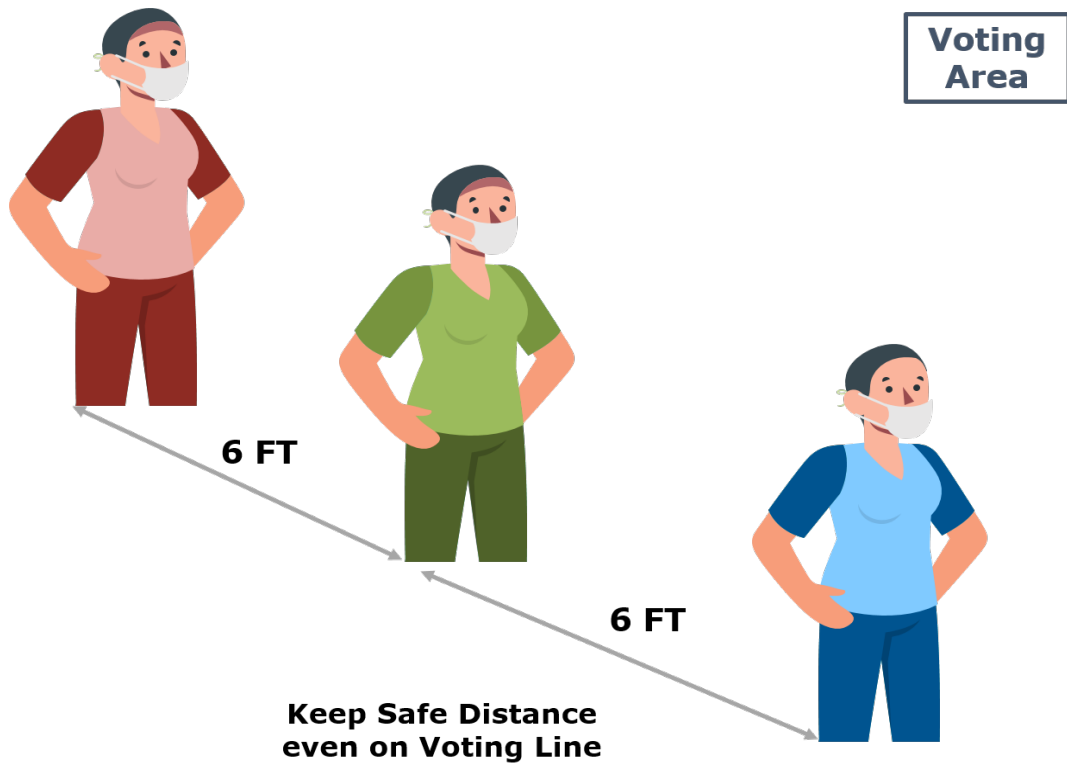


**by Elbow**

**Disinfect  
Polling Areas  
Before Voting  
Period**



**Avoid Congestion at Polling Areas at all times**



**INEC should provide Election Officials with Personal Protective Equipment**

**You can follow  
news report  
online after you  
have voted**



**Disinfect  
Polling Areas  
After Voting  
Period**





**KIMPACT  
DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE**

**Suite C13 & C14 | H&A Plaza | Olusegun  
Obasanjo Way | Wuse | Abuja.**

**1 | Aresa Close | Behind Union Bank Gbodofon  
Area | Aregbe | Osogbo, Osun.**

**+234 813 482 8527**

**+234 810 394 7690**

**info@kimpact.org.ng**

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