

Insights on Prevention and Testing



General lack of Research on Testing for COVID-19

- Not much research on testing for COVID-19, globally or in Nigeria.
- In October 2020, a working paper entitled “A Theory of Voluntary Testing and Self-Isolation in an Ongoing Pandemic” was published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.
- This paper focused on the diagnostic problem and the new paradigm in some countries of self-testing by private individuals.
- The paper found that making home-based testing cheaper and easier to use increases self-isolation, thereby reducing the risk of infected individuals transmitting to others.
- The key takeaway seems to be ease of access is important.

Desk Research also highlights Ease of Access

Desk research on COVID-19 testing in Nigeria and other West African countries also showed that ease of accessing COVID-19 testing centers made testing more acceptable.

Uncertainty about who is eligible for testing, where to go, or how to access COVID-19 tests were important barriers.

Could familiarity with public sector help?

Findings from another study showed that people who earned less than ₦30,000 (U.S.\$79) per month were more willing to take the COVID-19 test.

These people are certainly not visiting the private labs. Could they being more comfortable and familiar with the public health system where COVID-19 tests are available for free?

The length of time to get a result from a PCR test made some people believe that getting tested was futile, along with uncertainty about whether they should self-isolate while waiting for their results.

Both the desk research and the working paper tell a similar story:

Testing increases when it is affordable and convenient, and testing may result in self-isolation.

Stigma prevents people from getting tested

People harbored stigma towards affected people, even following recovery from the disease.

People also think about others potential costs of a positive result, including concerns about losing one's job, friends, or standing in society.

What other factors may influence testing?

We often hear complaints about confidence in the testing, such as getting different results in different testing sites.

What else may be important?

SBC Objectives for COVID-19 Testing & Prevention

- Increase the belief that testing for COVID-19 in the public sector is free, reliable, and confidential.
- Increase the belief that people suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 could also infect their friends and family
- Increase the belief that people suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 should practice COVID-19 prevention behaviors (hand washing, wearing a face mask, and one should practice social distancing).

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