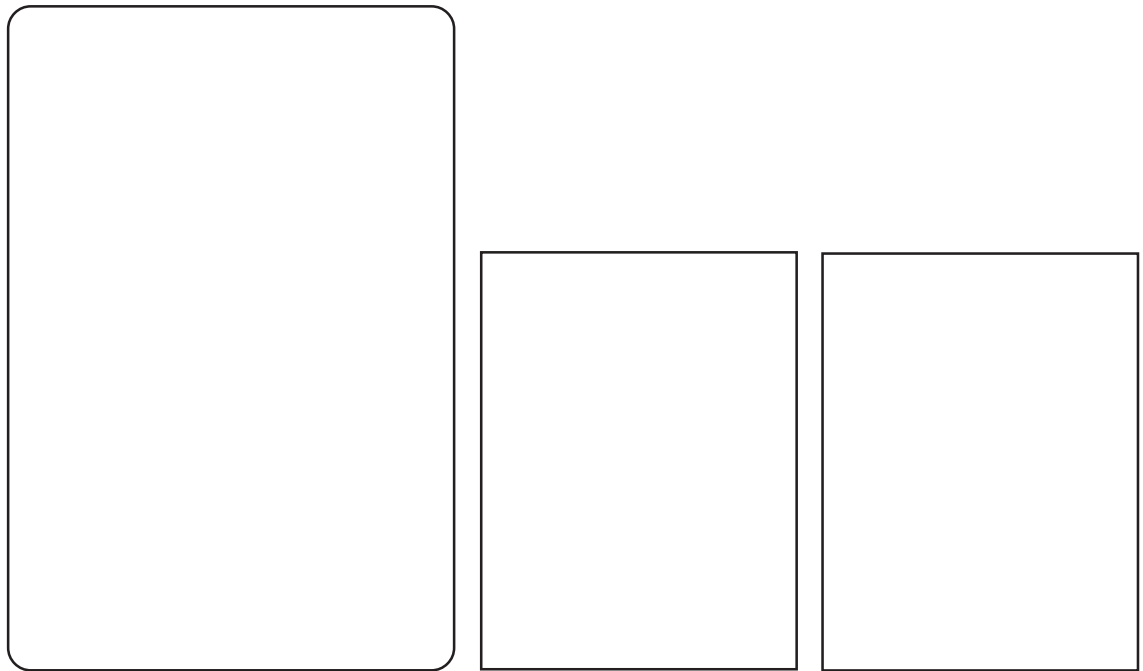


EXECUTIVE WATCH

A Public Assessment Of President Olusegun Obasanjo's
Government Policy Statements And Actions

Nigerians Suspect President Obasanjo's Motive For The Recent Cabinet Reshuffle



July 2001

...promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression

Executive Watch

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Government Policy Statements And Actions**

July 2001



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Cover photographs:

President Olusegun Obasanjo,
Alhaji Mukhtari Shagari (Minister of Water Resources) and
Alhaji Danjuma Goje (former Minister of Power and Steel)

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- * *Unlocking Nigeria's Closet of Secrecy*, August 2000 (A Report on the Campaign for a Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria)
- * *Broadcasting In Nigeria: Unlocking The Airwaves*, February 2001 (A Report on the Framework for Broadcasting and Telecommunications in Nigeria - In collaboration with ARTICLE 19)

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Mercy Epete Jones, Secretary/Receptionist at MRA, provided the secretarial support for the report.

The report was edited by **Edetaen Ojo**, MRA's Executive Director, who supervised the project.

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INTRODUCTION

The return of civil rule in Nigeria after more than 15 years of military rule came with promises of civil liberties, freedom, respect for rule of law as well as constitutional and participatory democracy. By its nature, democracy as a system of governance requires active participation and regular intervention through commentaries, questions, suggestions and debates by every section of the society.

But the constant interruption of the democratic process in Nigeria by successive military regimes eroded the culture of effective participation in governance in the country. Elected officers at the Federal, States and Local Government levels show, by their utterances, attitudes, and actions, the tendencies of military officers holding public office. With government's seeming disregard for interaction, there are fears of alienation by government, which portend grave danger for the new experiment at democratization.

Majority of the civil populace who are not consulted and are barely included in the scheme of governance are those mainly affected by the discrepancy between government policy plans and implementation. A common reaction is a feeling by the governed that there is no difference between military dictatorship and democracy as practised in Nigeria. Experiments on democracy have seen three unsuccessful models, all of which failed largely due to the lack of communication between the leaders and the governed.

However, for the current experiment to yield dividend, there has to be a way of measuring reactions from civil society. There need to be an established forum through which the people can effectively participate in the daily events that shape the present and define the future or, at the very least, be given an opportunity to have a say on such matters. The culture has to be developed as a way of giving assurance to civil society that democracy is indeed, a government of the people by the people and for the people, not merely by proclamation.

The Executive Watch is designed to open a communication line for civil society to effectively participate in the growth and sustenance of democracy. Through the Executive Watch project, Media Rights Agenda monitors the activities and policies of the Executive arm of Government, particularly the Presidency, to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians, the overall objectives being to ensure greater public participation in governance and create a feedback mechanism for the government to enable it gauge its popularity and the acceptance of its policies.

The specific objectives of the Executive Watch project are:

- * To regularly monitor and document the discrepancies in government's policies and actions and thereby provide a primary source of information on these for the local and international communities on public reactions and responses to them.
- * To provide a framework for the Nigerian government, its departments and agencies to assess their performance in relation to their policies and their implementation, and understand the public attitude to such policies and governmental action.
- * To provide the citizens a forum to respond to and highlight areas of distortions in government policies and their implementation and contribute to the effective management of these distortions and thereby participate in the governance process.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TOPIC

Cabinet Reshuffle

When President Olusegun Obasanjo appointed his cabinet of ministers and advisers at the inception of his administration two years ago, political observers were quick to note that the appointees were largely composed of constant faces that had been in and out of political offices for decades. They wondered what fresh ideas after years of being recycled, that the appointees would have to inject into governance?

As criticisms continued to trail the performance of most of the ministers and advisers, the president in a cabinet reshuffle consequently dropped 10 ministers on January 10, 2001.

This did not appear to have solved the problem. For instance, assessment of the first two years of the government, scored the cabinet low.

In another cabinet reshuffle on June 12, 2001, the president dropped four ministers as well as four presidential advisers. Not only that, the president explained that "the wave of change in his cabinet would be a continuous exercise, based on the continuous monitoring of the ministers and other advisers to see how far they have performed".

The questionnaire sought to determine whether respondents consider as sufficiently far-reaching, the recent cabinet reshuffle by President Obasanjo, and whether it is simply poor performances of the ministers and the presidential advisers or government's lack of focus and direction that accounts for the widely alleged poor performance of the government.

Further, the questionnaire sought to determine whether respondents think the government could perform better if it brings in younger and more energetic people into the cabinet and whether they believe the president is serious about sacking any of his ministers or adviser who does not perform as he had warned.

The questionnaire also sought to determine whether respondents support the view that has been expressed in some quarters that the cabinet reshuffle exercise was politically motivated to secure President Obasanjo's success in the 2003 election rather than improve efficiency in governance.

And finally, the questionnaire also sought from respondents ways they think the president's cabinet could perform better.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Nigerians Suspect President Obasanjo's Motive For The Recent Cabinet Reshuffle

Nigerians have expressed hope that the recent cabinet reshuffle will energise the government, although opinions were divided on whether the exercise was politically motivated, as is being suggested in some quarters, or meant to drop dead woods for fresh ideas, as the government has assured.

The government was, however, warned that except it takes into account the character of men and women it appoints into ministerial and other top political offices, in terms of openness, accountability, humility and dedication to duty, as well as drop and publicly prosecute those found fraudulent to serve as deterrent to others, the country will never get out of the woods.

These were the opinion of most Nigerians in a public opinion poll recently conducted by Media Rights Agenda under its Executive Watch project.

In addition to the above, the dominant view of respondents was that the government must ensure that ministerial nominations should be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration, and that government should learn to set goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while routinely evaluating their performance.

When President Obasanjo appointed his ministers and advisers at the inception of his administration two years ago, political observers were quick to note that the appointees were largely of faces that had been in and out of political offices for decades. They wondered what fresh ideas, after years of being recycled, the appointees would have to inject into governance.

As criticisms continued to trail the performance of most of the ministers and advisers, the president in a cabinet reshuffle on January 10, 2001, dropped 10 ministers. This did not appear to have solved the problem. For instance, assessment of the first two years of the government, scored the cabinet low.

In another cabinet reshuffle on June 12, 2001, the president dropped four more ministers as well as four presidential advisers. Not only that, the president explained that "the wave of change in his cabinet would be a continuous exercise, based on the continuous monitoring of the ministers and other advisers to see how far they have performed".

Yet, some commentators have insisted that the reshuffling was not far reaching and had left virtually all the faces they considered lacking in ideas behind.

Out of the 8,000 questionnaires issued, 7,163 were filled and returned. This shows a return rate of 89.5 per cent and a mortality rate of 10.5 per cent.

Regarding the question which asked: "Do you consider the recent cabinet reshuffle by President Olusegun Obasanjo a solution to the poor performance of the cabinet?", the response pattern shows that 4,242 (59.2 %) respondents out of the total respondents, indicated 'Yes', while 2,401 (35.5 %) answered 'No'. The 520 others (7.3 %) were undecided.

In the question which asked thus: "In your own opinion, which of the two views below would you say accounts for the poor performance of the present government?", respondents were given two options to choose from. These are: A: "Poor performance of the ministers and the presidential advisers", and B: "The government lacks focus and direction".

Out of the total respondents, 3,728 (46.6 %) chose option A, while 2,873 (35.9 %), chose option B. Five hundred and fifty-two others (seven percent), were undecided.

Given the closeness of the percentages of the respondents who chose either option A or B, it seems safe to conclude that the alleged poor performance of the government was attributed to lack of focus on the part of the government and the failure of the ministers and special advisers.

In response to the question: "Do you think if President Obasanjo brings in younger and more energetic people into his cabinet, his government would perform better?", majority of the respondents, precisely 4,459 (52.1 %), said 'Yes', while 2,068 (40.1 %), said 'No'. Six hundred and thirty-six others (7.8 %), were undecided.

In response to a question which asked: 'Do you support the view that the cabinet reshuffle exercise was politically motivated to secure President Obasanjo's success in the 2003 election rather than improve efficiency in governance?', 3,268 (45.6 %) respondents, answered 'Yes', while 3172 (44.3 %), respondents answered 'No'. The remaining 723 (10.1 %) respondents were undecided.

Some commentators have suggested that the desire to secure a second term of office for President Obasanjo in the 2003 elections was the real reason behind the reshuffle.

The outcome of the survey on this issue show that there is a fifty-fifty per cent chance that the average Nigerian does not believe that the cabinet reshuffle was predicated on the need to actually deliver the dividends of democracy, which was the reason the government offered for the exercise.

Asked to suggest ways by which the cabinet could be made to perform better, respondents had a list of eight discernible options.

Top on the list of options is the suggestion by 2,241 respondents that Ministers or Advisers should be composed of men and women of transparent character, accountable, humble, and dedication; while suggestions that Ministers or Advisers found wanting should be dropped and tried publicly to serve as deterrent to others, was made by 1,177 respondents. The need for ministerial nominations to be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration, was suggested by 1,010 respondents; and setting of goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while evaluating their performances to see that they are accomplishing their targets within time limits no matter the distraction, was suggested by 798 respondents.

Other options are the suggestion by 222 respondents that ministers and advisers need to be re-orientated to see their positions as that of protectors of people's rights and interests; creating ways and media through which the president can have direct contact with the masses and listen to them was suggested by 184 respondents; the government should initiate better policies and implement them to the letters, suggested by 118 respondents; and continuous reshuffling of ministers and advisers was suggested by 84 other respondents.

However, 1,331 other respondents were undecided or their responses defective.

OUTLINE OF FINDINGS

The first question asked thus: "Do you consider the recent cabinet reshuffle by President Olusegun Obasanjo a solution to the poor performance of the cabinet?" The aggregate response pattern shows that 4,242 (59.2 %) respondents out of the total respondents, indicated 'Yes', while 2,401 (35.5 %) answered 'No'. The 520 others (7.3 %) were undecided.

On a city-by-city basis, the response pattern indicates that from Abuja, 849 respondents (88.2 per cent) answered 'Yes', 103 (1.6 per cent) answered 'No', while 11 were undecided. In Benin City, 485 respondents (62.5 per cent) answered 'Yes', 233 (30.1 per cent) answered 'No', while 57 (7.4 per cent) were undecided.

In Enugu, 497 respondents (49.7 per cent) answered 'Yes', 372 (37.2 per cent) answered 'No', while 131 (13.1 per cent) were undecided.

In Ibadan, 516 respondents (61.4 per cent) answered 'Yes', 233 (30.1 per cent) answered 'No', while 57 (7.4 per cent) were undecided.

In Kaduna, 467 respondents (48.5 per cent) answered 'Yes', 425 (44.1 per cent) answered 'No', while 71 (8.8 per cent) were undecided.

In Kano, 661 respondents (68.2 per cent) answered 'Yes', 260 (26.8 per cent) answered 'No', while 48 (5 per cent) were undecided.

In Lagos, 339 respondents (46.9 per cent) answered 'Yes', 317 (43.8 per cent) answered 'No', while 67 (9.3 per cent) were undecided.

In Port Harcourt, 428 respondents (46.1 per cent) answered 'Yes', 440 (47.3 per cent) answered 'No', while 61 (6.6 per cent) were undecided.

In the second question, respondents were asked thus: "In your own opinion, which of the two views below would you say accounts for the poor performance of the present government?" They were given two options to choose from. These are: A: "Poor performance of the ministers and the presidential advisers", and B: "The government lacks focus and direction".

Out of the total respondents, 3,728 (46.6 %) chose option A, while 2,873 (35.9 %), chose option B. Five hundred and fifty-two others (seven percent), were undecided.

On a city-by-city basis, the response pattern shows that in Abuja, 695 respondents (72.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 248 respondents (25.7 per cent) chose option 'B', while 20 (2 per cent) were undecided.

In Benin-City, 413 respondents (53.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 305 respondents (39.3 per cent) chose option 'B', while 57 (7.5 per cent) were undecided.

In Enugu, 542 695 respondents (54.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 111 respondents (11.1 per cent) chose option 'B'.

In Kaduna, 560 respondents (58.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 329 respondents (34.2 per cent) chose option 'B'.

In Kano, 467 respondents (48.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 422 respondents (43.6 per cent) chose option 'B', while 80 (8.2 per cent) were undecided.

In Lagos, 344 respondents (47.6 per cent) chose option 'A', 298 respondents (41.2 per cent) chose option 'B', while 81 (11.2 per cent) were undecided.

In Port Harcourt, 392 respondents (42.2 per cent) chose option 'A', 466 respondents (50.2 per cent) chose option 'B', while 71 (9.6 per cent) were undecided.

In response to the question: "Do you think if President Obasanjo brings in younger and more energetic people into his cabinet, his government would perform better?", majority of the respondents, precisely 4,459 (52.1 %), said 'Yes', while 2,068 (40.1 %), said 'No'. Six hundred and thirty-six others (7.8 %) were undecided.

On a city-by-city basis, the response shows that in Abuja, 817 respondents (84.8 per cent) answered 'Yes', 136 respondents (14.1 per cent) answered 'No', while 10 (1.1 per cent) were undecided.

In Benin City, 419 respondents (54.1 per cent) answered 'Yes', 204 respondents (26.3 per cent) answered 'No', while 152 (19.2 per cent) were undecided.

In Enugu, 595 respondents (59.5 per cent) answered 'Yes', 304 respondents (30.4 per cent) answered 'No', while 110 (10.1 per cent) were undecided.

In Ibadan, 559 respondents (66.4 per cent) answered 'Yes', 168 respondents (20 per cent) answered 'No', while 114 (13 per cent) were undecided.

In Kaduna, respondents (84.8 per cent) answered 'Yes', 136 respondents (14.1 per cent) answered 'No', while 10 (1.1 per cent) were undecided.

In Kano, 585 respondents (60.4 per cent) answered 'Yes', 287 respondents (29.6 per cent) answered 'No', while 97 (10 per cent) were undecided.

In Lagos, 344 respondents (47.8 per cent) answered 'Yes', 368 respondents (50.9 per cent) answered 'No', while 11 (1.5 per cent) were undecided.

In Port Harcourt, 577 respondents (62.1 per cent) answered 'Yes', 260 respondents (28 per cent) answered 'No', while 92 (9.9 per cent) were undecided.

In response to a question which asked: 'Do you support the view that the cabinet reshuffle exercise was politically motivated to secure President Obasanjo's success in the 2003 election rather than improve efficiency in governance?' 3,268 (45.6 %) respondents, answered 'Yes', while 3172 (44.3 %), respondents answered 'No'. The remaining 723 (10.1 %) respondents were undecided.

On a city-by-city basis, the pattern shows that in Abuja, 406 respondents (42.2 per cent) answered 'Yes', 546 respondents (56.7 per cent) answered 'No', while 11 (1.1 per cent) were undecided.

In Benin City, 287 respondents (37 per cent) answered 'Yes', 290 respondents (37.4 per cent) answered 'No', while 198 (25.6 per cent) were undecided.

In Enugu, 566 respondents (56.6 per cent) answered 'Yes', 336 respondents (33.6 per cent) answered 'No', while 98 (9.8 per cent) were undecided.

In Ibadan, 372 respondents (44.2 per cent) answered 'Yes', 346 respondents (41.2 per cent) answered 'No', while 123 (14.6 per cent) were undecided.

In Kaduna, 303 respondents (31.5 per cent) answered 'Yes', 594 respondents (61.7 per cent) answered 'No', while 66 (6.8 per cent) were undecided.

In Kano, 382 respondents (39.4 per cent) answered 'Yes', 469 respondents (48.4 per cent) answered 'No', while 118 (12.2 per cent) were undecided.

In Lagos, 484 respondents (66.9 per cent) answered 'Yes', 232 respondents (43.8 per cent) answered 'No', while 7 (1 per cent) were undecided.

In Port Harcourt, 468 respondents (50.4 per cent) answered 'Yes', 359 respondents (38.6 per cent) answered 'No', while 102 (11 per cent) were undecided.

Asked to suggest ways by which the cabinet could be made to perform better, respondents had a list of eight discernable options.

Top on the list of options is the suggestion by 2,241 respondents that Ministers or Advisers should be composed of men and women of transparent character, accountable, humble, and dedicated; Ministers or Advisers found wanting should be dropped and tried publicly to serve as deterrent to others, suggested by 1,177 respondents; Ministerial nominations should be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration, suggested by 1,010 respondents; and setting goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while evaluating their performances to see that they are accomplishing their targets within time limits no matter the distraction, suggested by 798 respondents.

Other options are the suggestion by 222 respondents that ministers and advisers need to be re-orientated to see their positions as that of protectors of people's rights and interests; creating ways and media through which the president can have direct contact with the masses and listen to them, suggested by 184 respondents; the government should initiate better policies and implement them to the letters, suggested by 118 respondents; and continuous reshuffling of ministers and advisers, suggested by 84 other respondents.

However, 1,331 other respondents were undecided or their responses were defective.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this survey, 8,000 questionnaires were produced and administered out of which 6,629 were returned. This number represents 82.9 per cent.

One thousand questionnaires were administered in each of the eight cities covered under this exercise. These include Benin City, Enugu, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Port Harcourt and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The survey was conducted between June 5 and 16, 2001. The questionnaires for this survey contained five structured questions, four of which were close-ended, requiring respondents to tick either 'Yes' or 'No' or 'A' or 'B', whichever applied.

However, one of the questions was open-ended, requiring respondents to state the answers in their own words.

The questionnaires were distributed among Nigerians of 18 years and above, both male and female. It also deliberately attempted to capture, in significant ratio, people of three broad educational background, i.e. No formal education to primary school education level; post primary education level, and post secondary education level.

Respondents who are not sufficiently literate were assisted by MRA's researchers to read and interpret the questions and elect appropriate options according to the preferences of the respondents concerned.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The exercise shows that 4,197 out of the total respondents numbering 7,163, representing 58.3 per cent, are male and the remaining 2,938 respondents, representing 41.1 per cent, are female. Forty-six other respondents did not indicate their sex.

The data also shows that 3,248 of the respondents are single, 3,425 are married, 273 are widowed and 154 are separated. Sixty-three of the respondents did not indicate their marital status.

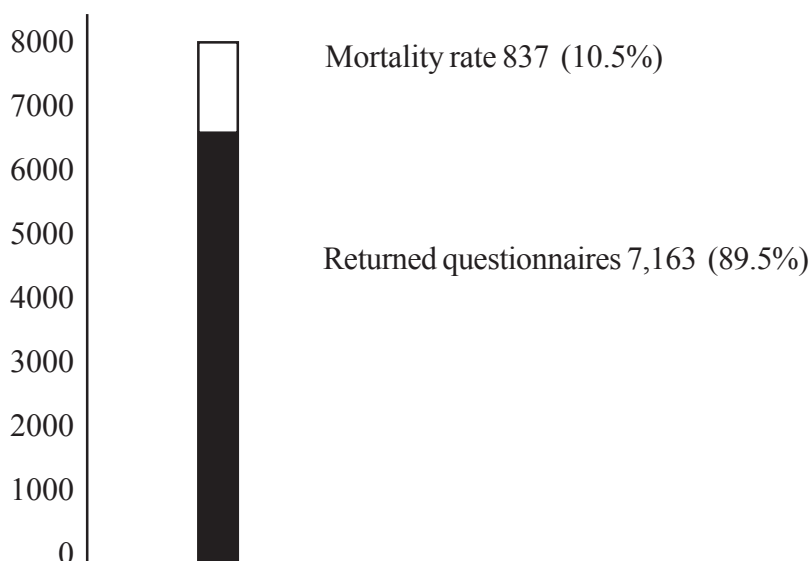
The statistics show that 3,049 of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 30 years, 3,211 are in the range of 31 to 50 years old and 605 are between the bracket of 51 to 60 years old. Two hundreds and forty other respondents are over 60 years old. Fifty-eight respondents failed to indicate their age.

The occupation of the respondents ranges from civil servants, professionals, artisans, traders, housewives, unemployed persons and faith ministers.

QUESTIONNAIRE RATE OF RETURN / MORTALITY

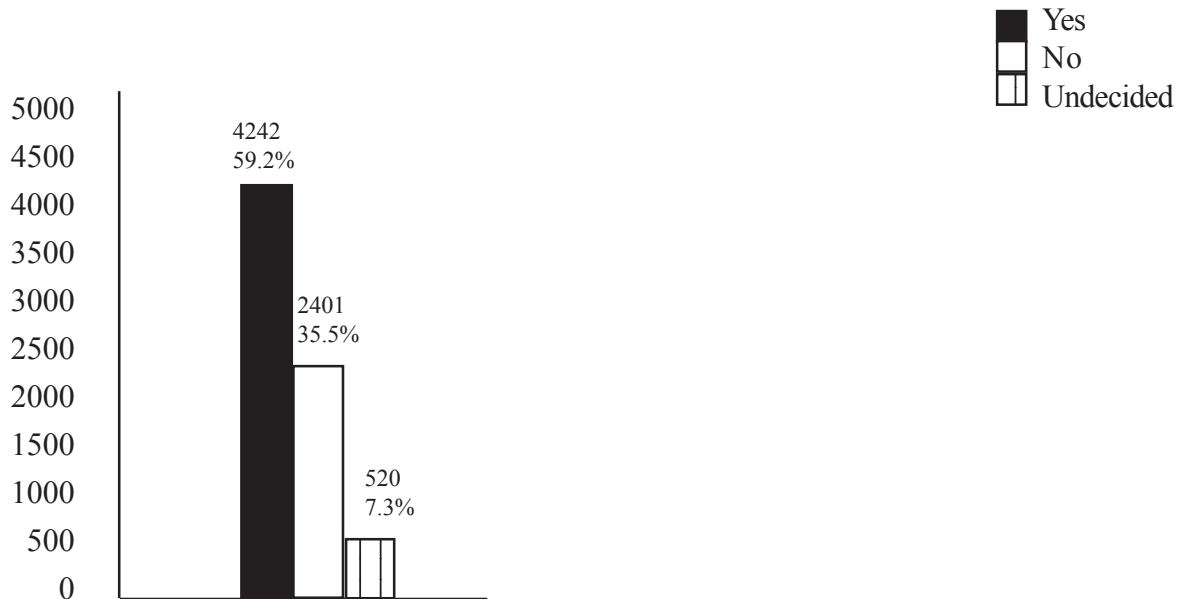
ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Sample sizes Sample points	Nos of questionnaires administered	Nos of questionnaires received and %	Nos of questionnaires not received and %
Abuja	1,000	963 96.3%	37 3.7%
Benin City	1,000	775 77.5%	225 22.5%
Enugu	1,000	1,000 100%	- -
Ibadan	1,000	841 84.1%	159 15.9%
Kaduna	1,000	963 96.3%	37 3.7%
Kano	1,000	969 96.9%	31 3.1%
Lagos	1,000	723 72.3%	277 27.7%
Port Harcourt	1,000	929 92.9%	71 7.1%
Grand Total	Cummulative 8,000	Cummulative % 7,163 89.5%	Cummulative % 837 10.5%

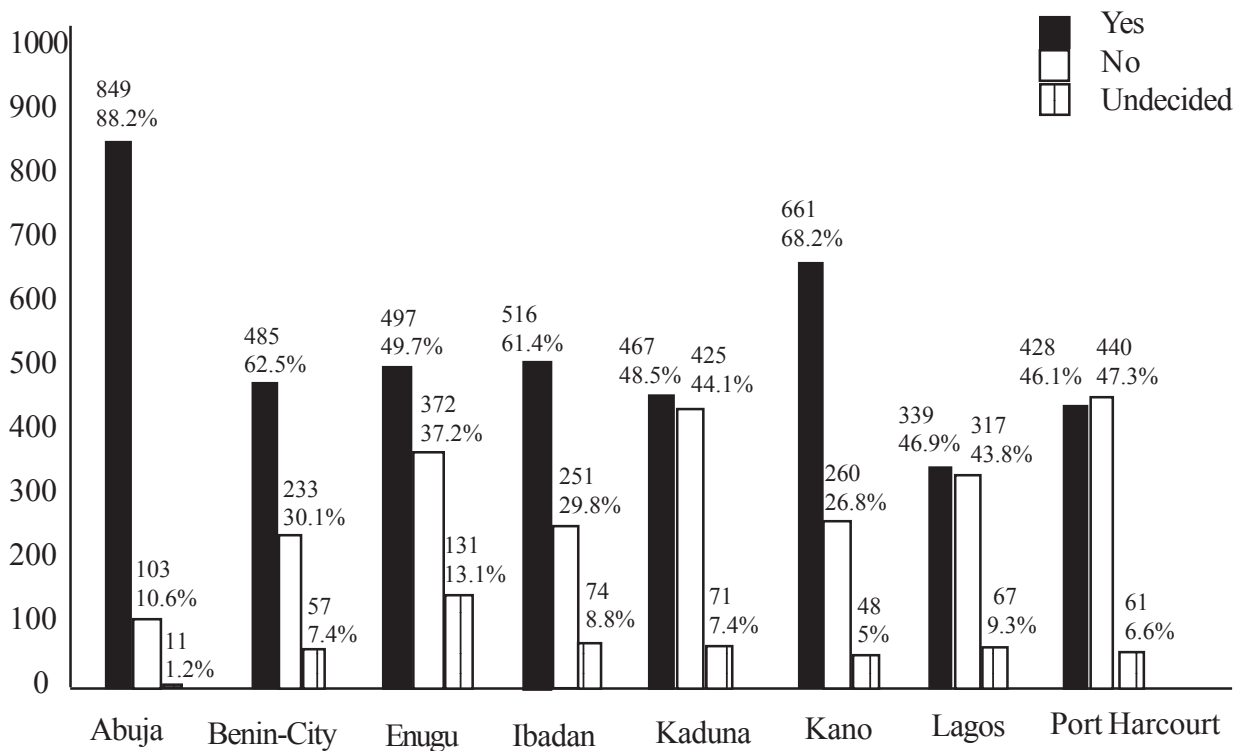


Question 1. Do you consider the recent cabinet reshuffle by President Olusegun Obasanjo a solution to the poor performance of the cabinet? Yes No

AGGREGATE RESPONSES



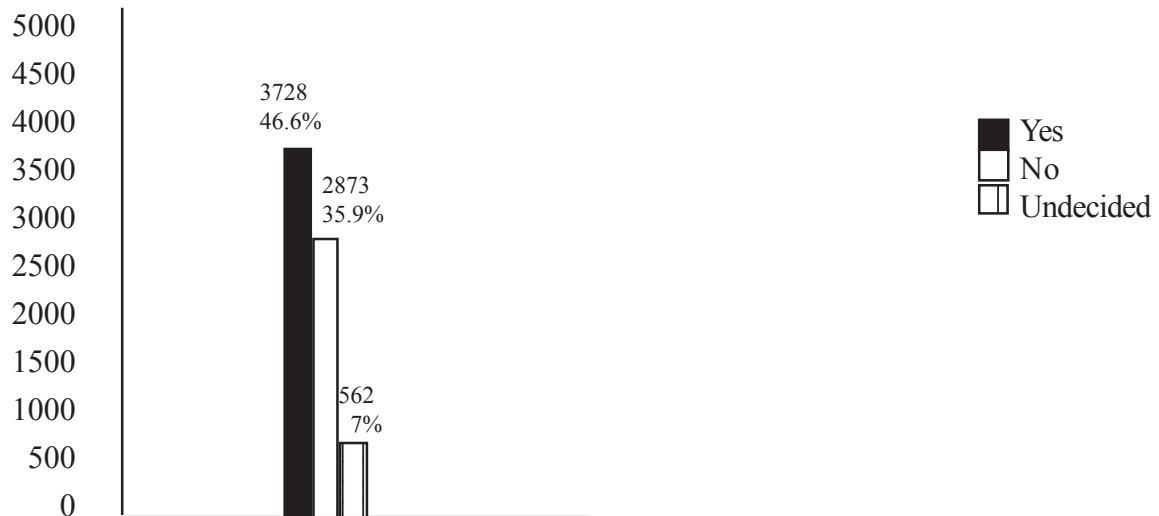
CITY-BY-CITY RESPONSES



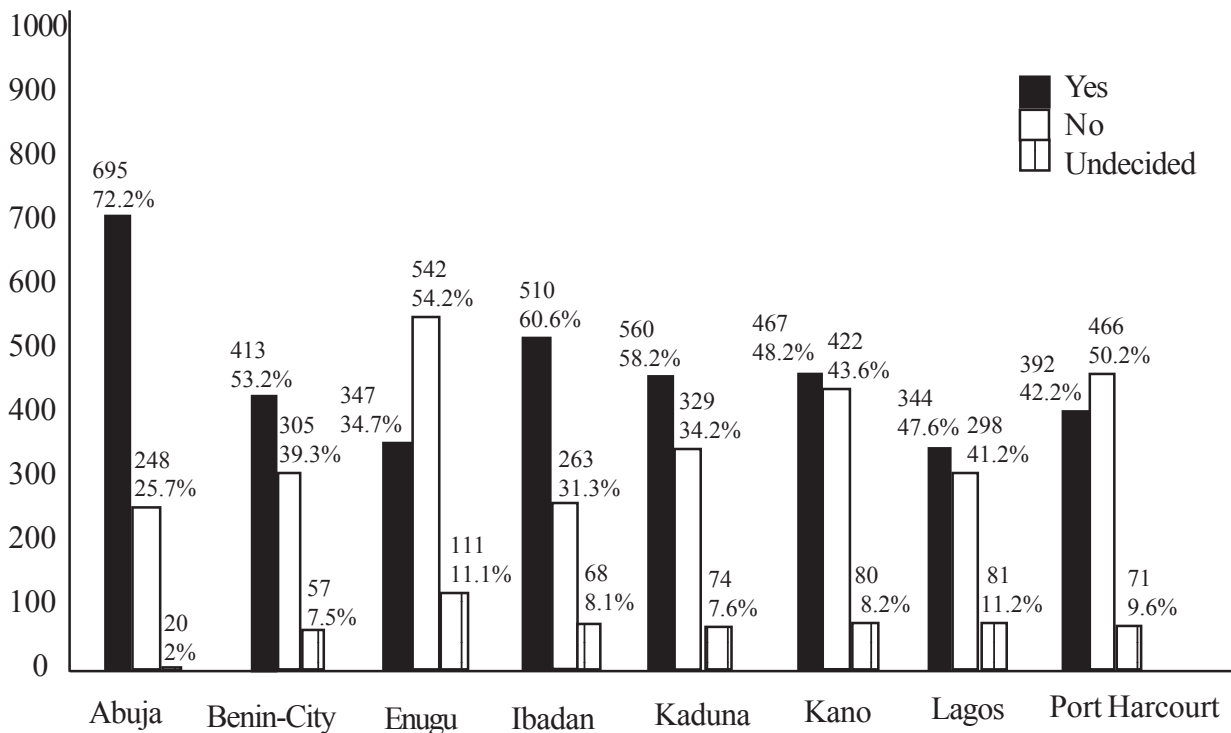
Q2. In your own opinion, which of the two views below would you say accounts for the poor performance of the present government ?

- A Poor performance of the ministers and the presidential advisers
- B The government lacks focus and direction

AGGREGATE RESPONSES

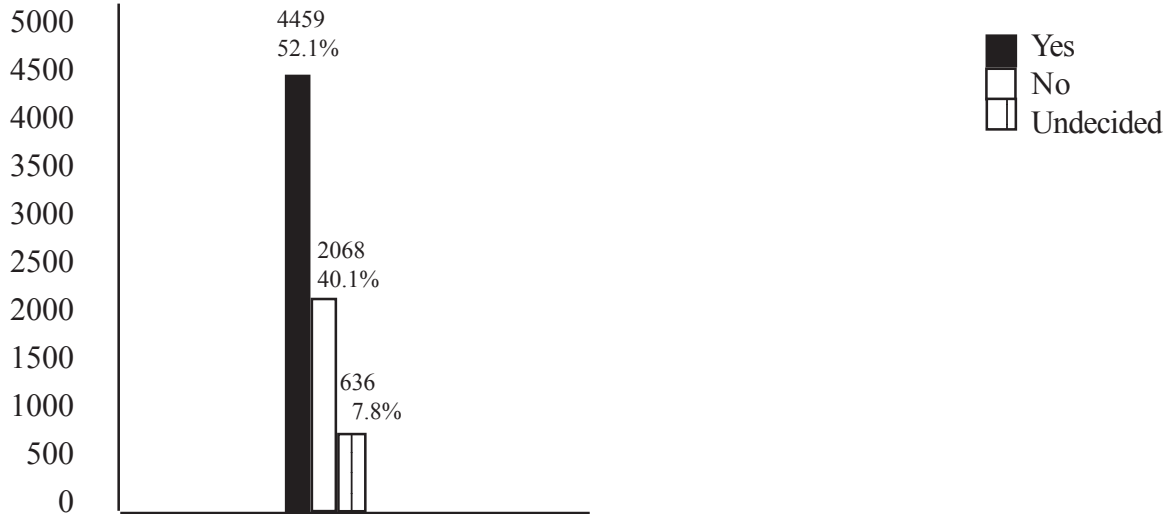


CITY-BY-CITY RESPONSES

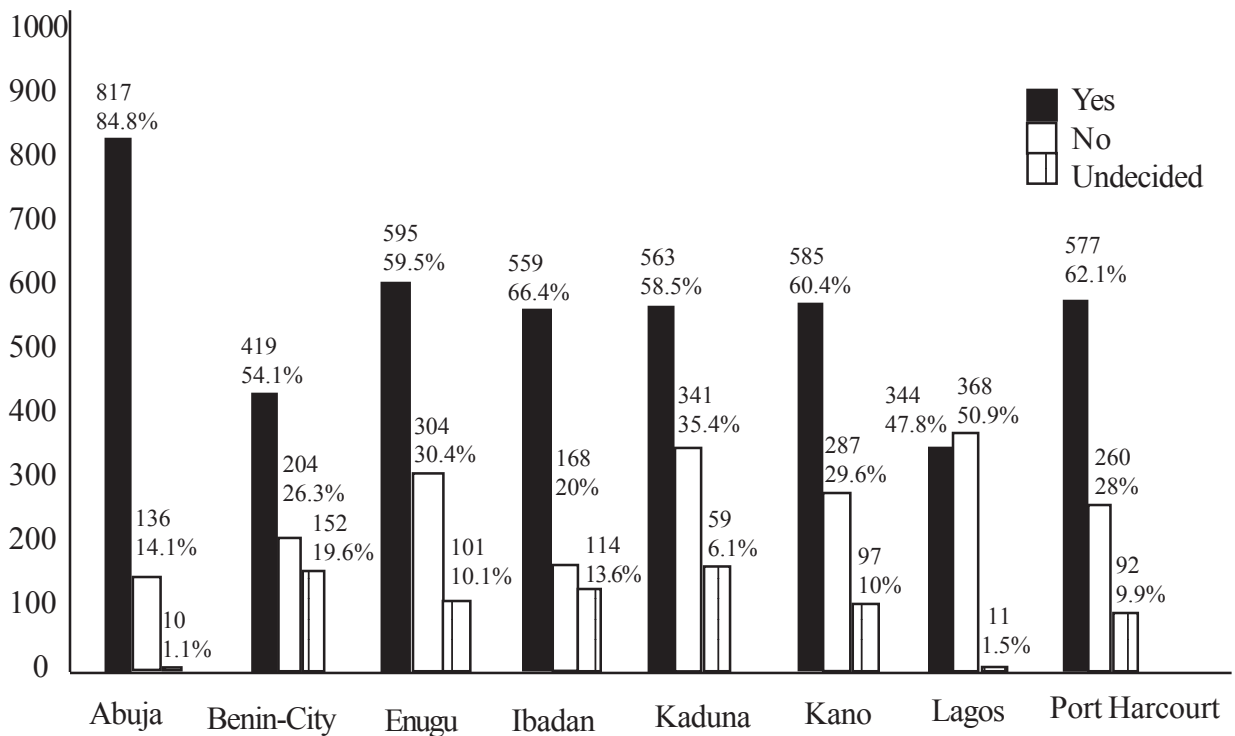


Q3. Do you think if President Obasanjo brings in younger and more energetic people into his cabinet, his government would perform better? Yes No

AGGREGATE RESPONSES

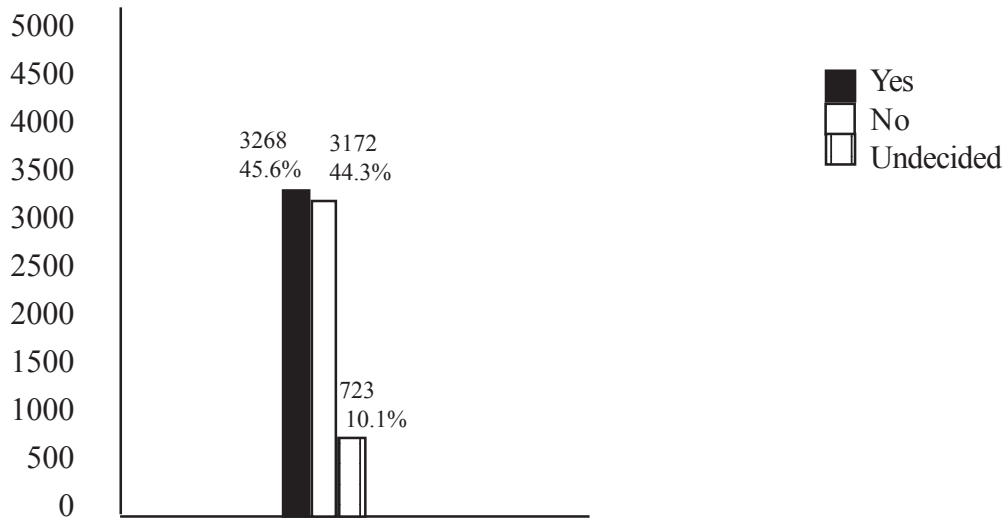


CITY-BY-CITY RESPONSES

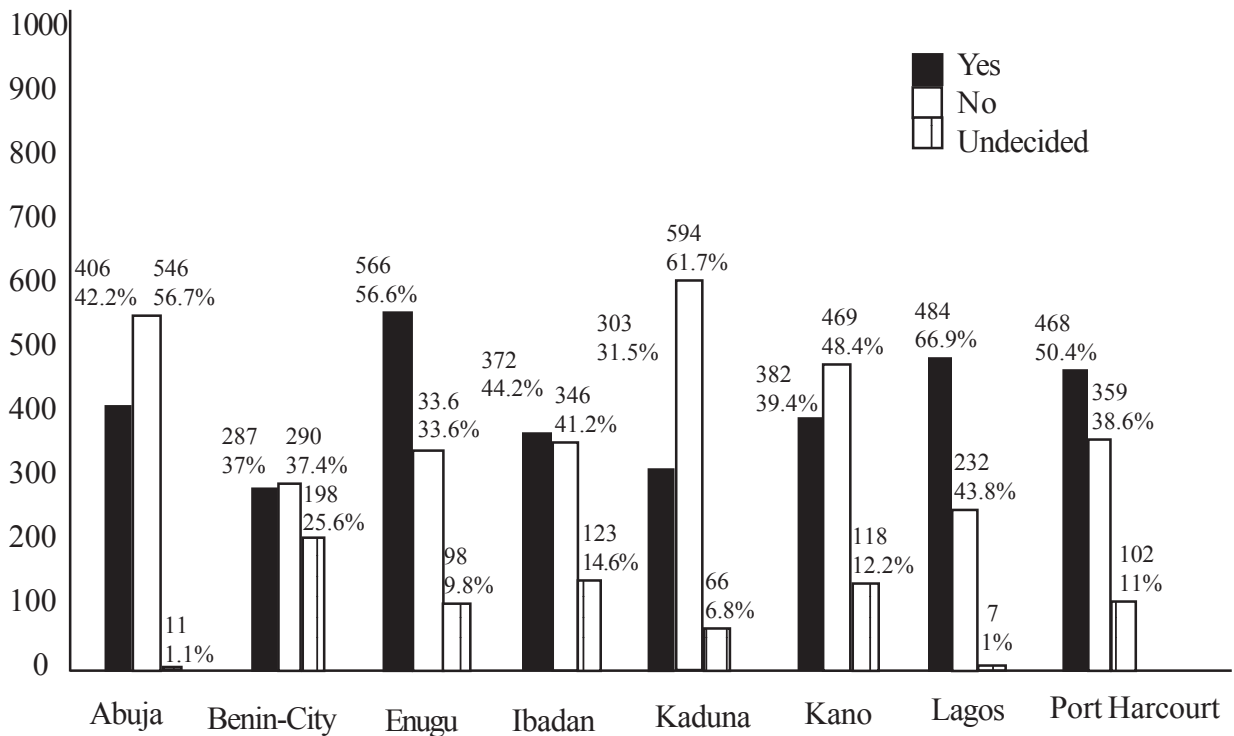


Q4. Do you support the view that the cabinet reshuffle was political motivated to secure President Obasanjo's success in the 2003 election rather than improve efficiency in governance? Yes No

AGGREGATE RESPONSES



CITY-BY-CITY RESPONSES



Q5. What ways do you think the president's cabinet could perform better?

AGGREGATE RESPONSES

	Options for better performance	Frequency
1.	Ministers or Advisers should be composed of men of transparent character , accountability, humility, and dedication	2,241
2.	Ministers or Advisers found wanting should be dropped and tried publicly to serve as deterrent to others	1,177
3.	Ministerial nominations should be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration	1,010
4.	Setting goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while evaluating their performances to see that they are accomplishing their targets within time limits no matter the distraction.	798
5.	Re-orientation of the ministers and advisers to rediscover their roles as that of the protectors of people's rights and interests.	222
6.	Creating ways and means through which the president can have direct contact with the masses and listen to them.	184
7.	The government should initiate better policies and implement them to the letter.	118
8.	Continous reshuffle of ministers and advisers.	84
9.	Undecided and unusable responses.	1,331
	Total	7,163



Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established in August 1993 for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. MRA is registered in Nigeria, and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, The Gambia.

The Aims and Objectives of Media Rights Agenda are:

- to promote respect and recognition for press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- to promote the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and
- to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalist's right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information.

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Executive Watch

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