

Out-migration of Nigerians to the Diaspora: theoretical perspectives

The global phenomenon of migration has gained significant attention in recent times, with many immigrants leaving their home countries in pursuit of better opportunities in foreign lands. This movement involves a substantial transnational migration of Africans, particularly Nigerians, to various parts of the world, whether through illegal routes, porous land borders, the Sahara Desert, or across the Mediterranean into Europe, or via legal channels with the necessary documentation. However, the irregular migration culture, which has persisted over the years, has resulted in the tragic loss of lives among Nigerians and fellow migrants on the perilous journey through the Sahara Desert, the Maghreb region, and the Mediterranean (Awosusi et al., 2021; Ikuteyijo, 2020; Okunade, 2021a).

While migration, both regular and irregular, has been a part of Africa's story since the early years of independence (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023), the post-Covid-19 trend of Nigerian outmigration to the UK and other parts of the world, commonly referred to as 'japa,' presents multifaceted implications (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). What's particularly alarming is the recent surge in outmigration among Nigerian youths, which has led to the popularization of the term 'Japa' to describe this mass exodus (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). 'Japa,' a Yoruba term meaning 'to flee,' has become the emblematic phrase for Nigerians leaving their homeland for better prospects abroad. It not only characterizes the exodus through international air borders but also encapsulates the age-old practice of irregular migration, which has often been overlooked by both the populace and local stakeholders. Furthermore, available statistics shed light on the 'Japa' phenomenon. For example, in 2018, Schengen countries like Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and Spain, popular destinations for Nigerians, saw a surge in visa applications from Nigeria, with nearly 50% of applications being rejected, underscoring the demand for international mobility (The Guardian, 2019; Sahara Reporters, 2018). Recent data from the UK government also reveals a significant increase in study visas granted, with Nigeria ranking third in the number of students migrating to the UK (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023).

This recent surge in outmigration has been attributed to several factors, including the EndSars national youth protests in October 2021 (see Fig 1, Fig 2 and Fig3) , which were a response to longstanding police brutality and were brutally suppressed by the Nigerian government (U.S. News, 2020). The aftermath of these protests appears to have fueled an increase in Nigerian outmigration (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). The idea of exodus, where individuals leave their familiar surroundings to seek refuge or relief in a new land, has gained traction among immigrants. However, the reality of this experience often diverges from idealistic expectations, leading to feelings of loneliness, sadness, and disillusionment (Psychology & Immigrating, 2018). Whether voluntary or not, migration involves a change in lifestyle that can affect one's quality of life, depending on how it is conducted and the level of divergence between the former and current location (Impact of Relocation on Quality of Life, 2015).

Disadvantages of moving to a new place include the stress of adapting to a different environment, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and homesickness, not only for the migrant but also for their family members (Suttle, 2013). Moreover, migration can disrupt social relationships, potentially weakening extended kinship bonds and friendships. Research has consistently shown that residential moves can erode existing social ties, which can impact mental health and well-being, especially for those who move in late childhood or adolescence (Liu Jing Jing, 2023; Oishi, 2010; Oishi et al., 2013; Wadsworth, 1997). The stress of relocating to a new place can also lead to emotional challenges, including symptoms of depression, which may affect one's appetite, sleep patterns, and ability to concentrate (Relocation Depression: What It Is and Ways to Cope, 2023). The acculturation process, including culture shock and its stages, is a crucial aspect of migration, with contemporary research focusing on strategies to ease the process and its impact on individuals (Worthy, Lavigne, and Romero, 2020).



Fig 1: A protester with a Nigerian flag at Oct, 2020 demonstrations against police brutality and Sars (special anti-robbery squad).

(Akinwotu, 2021)



Fig 2: One of the days of protest at toll gate, Lekki, Lagos.

(Review, 2020)



Fig 3: This is Aisha Yesufu's iconic Twitter leading the protest against police brutality at toll gate, Lekki, Lagos.

(Premiuntimesng, 2023)

Context

Neoliberalism

Migration, especially in the context of Africa and other parts of the world, has been studied using different paradigms such as Neoliberalism, Globalization, and the Political Economy of Migration (Massey et al., 1994; Adeyanju et al., 2011; Kotz, 2015; Jua, 2003; Beneria, 2012). Neoliberalism, as elucidated by David Kotz, involves creating an economic structure that weakens public systems and institutions, allowing private businesses to operate more freely and maximize profits. This has consequences for labor-employer relationships, the negotiation of wages, and working conditions (Kotz, 2015). In the context of the UK, government funding for educational institutions has been a subject of debate, affecting the quality and accessibility of education (Brazzill, 2021).

To cushion the effects of declining public funding for education, most UK tertiary institutions have increased the enrollment of international students, who can afford the higher fees, at the expense of local students (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). However, this trend has also led to the migration of young people from African states, including Nigeria, to pursue higher education in the UK (University UK, 2017). The economic disparities between developed and developing countries drive this migration, with the promise of better opportunities abroad (Li, 2003). This massive outmigration from Nigeria and elsewhere also ties into the political economy of international migration, which revolves around the relationships between the capitalist economy, migration, and exploitation or oppression (Adeyanju and Oriola, 2011). This perspective argues that developed countries exploit the human capital of developing countries, causing individuals to migrate from economically disadvantaged areas to wealthier, more stable ones (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). The migration phenomenon, with its various trends, has far-reaching consequences across all sectors of the Nigerian state, leading to brain drain as professionals, including university lecturers, high school teachers, medical doctors, and bankers, resign from their positions in frustration to seek opportunities abroad (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023)

In the UK, the neo-liberal system impacts student migrants in the health sector, where they often work as temporary or casual employees, receiving lower wages and fewer benefits (Samuel Kehinde Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). Despite migrants' expectations, their lived experiences can be quite different, marked by exploitation, racism, and unemployment (Adeyanju and Oriola, 2011). Moreover, the UK's policies, particularly those restricting the entry of dependents of migrants, may have severe implications for migrants and the Nigerian state, leading to an increase in vulnerable populations and potential exploitation (NeilWalker, 2019). Children and adolescents, especially those traveling alone or separated from their families, are particularly vulnerable, facing discrimination and racism (NeilWalker, 2019). Undocumented migrants are at a higher risk of modern slavery and exploitation (NeilWalker, 2019). While some migrants may be poorly informed about the risks, others are compelled into risky situations by circumstances beyond their control (NeilWalker, 2019).

In summary, the current trend of migration from Nigeria to various parts of the world, especially the UK, has complex social, economic, and political dimensions. It reflects a response to the economic disparities between countries, the consequences of neoliberal policies, and the impact of international migration on individuals, families, and nations. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing policies and interventions that can address the challenges and opportunities presented by this migration trend.

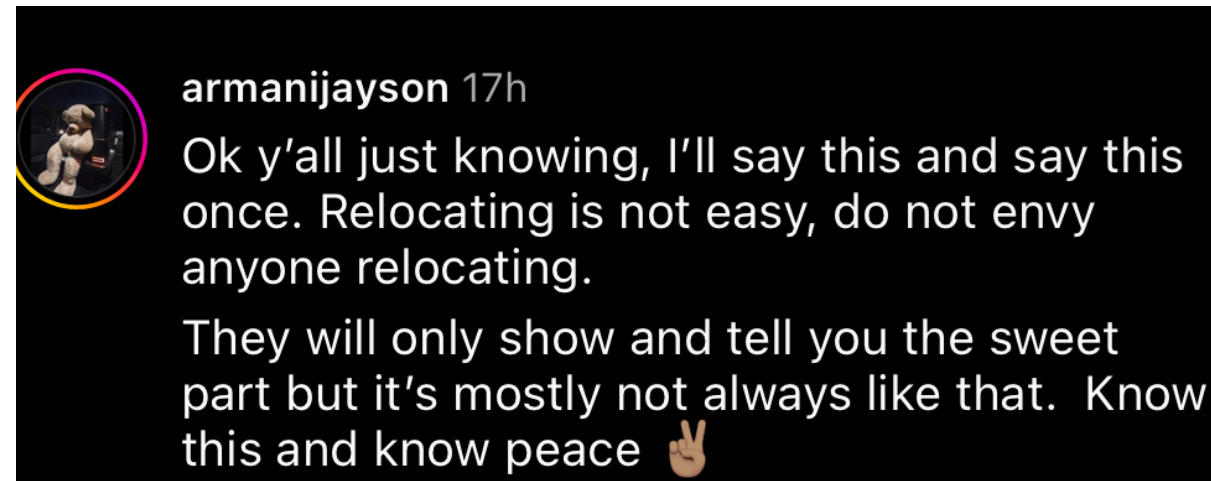


Fig 4: A screenshot of someone sharing their migration opinion on "X" formerly twitter



Fig 5: A screenshot of someone expressing their migration opinion



Fig 6: A screenshot of someone else sharing their migration opinion on "X" formerly twitter

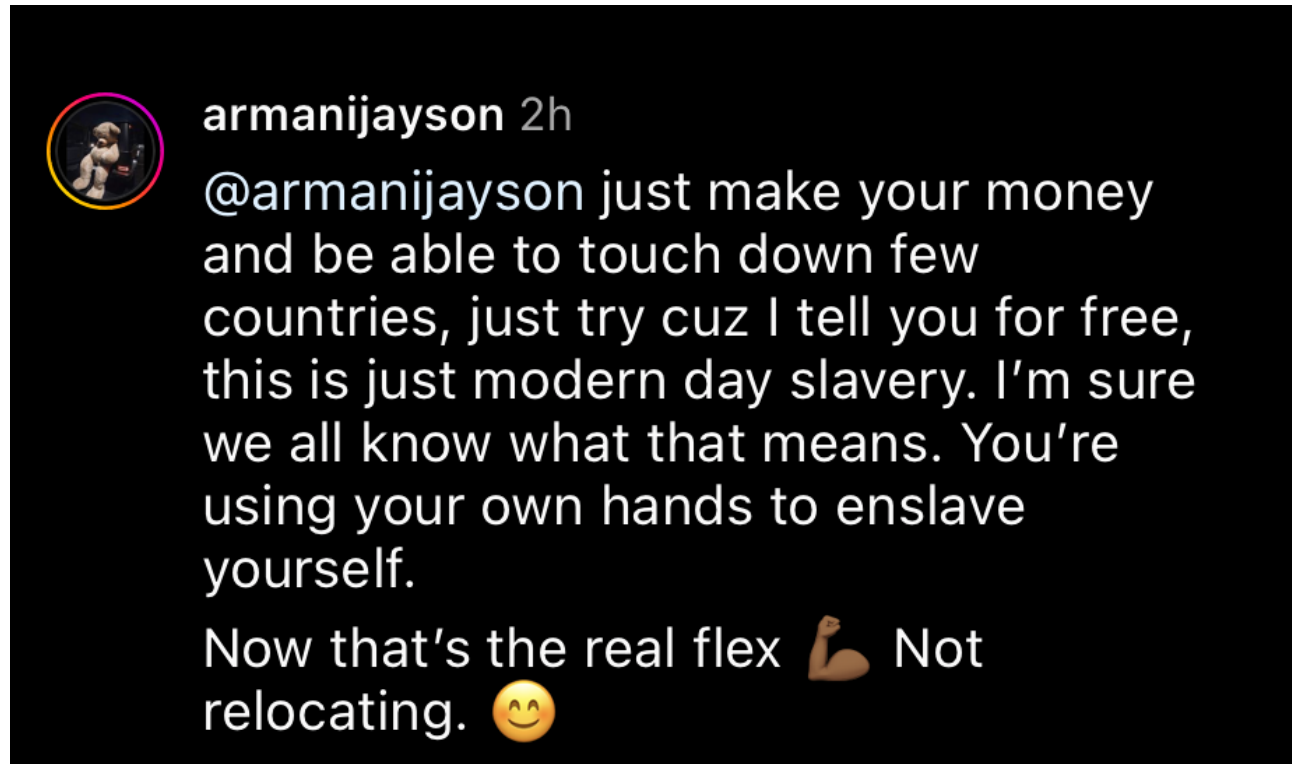


Fig 7: A screenshot of someone sharing their migration opinion on "X" formerly twitter

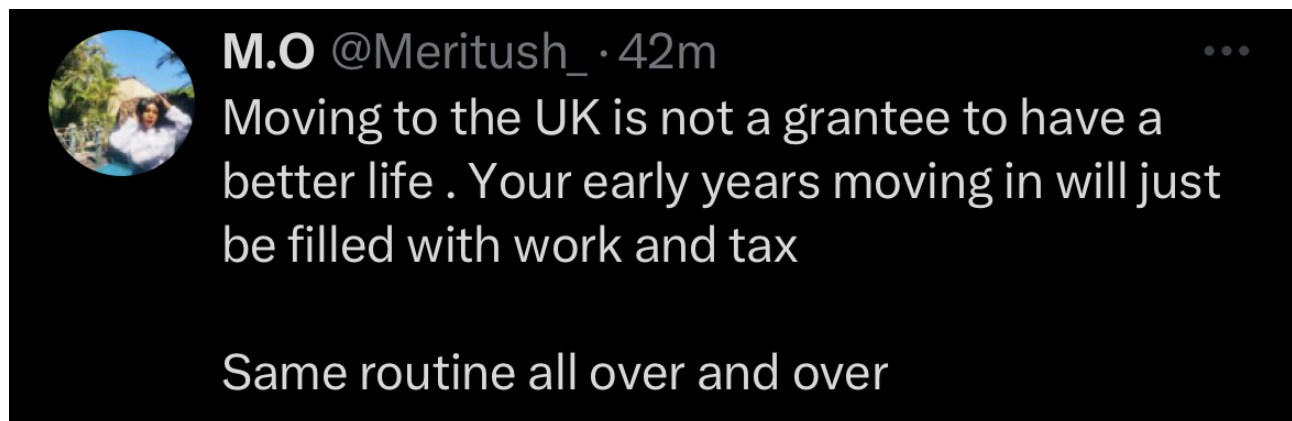


Fig 8: A screenshot of someone sharing their migration opinion on "X" formerly twitter



Fig 9: A screenshot of someone sharing their migration opinion on "X" formerly twitter

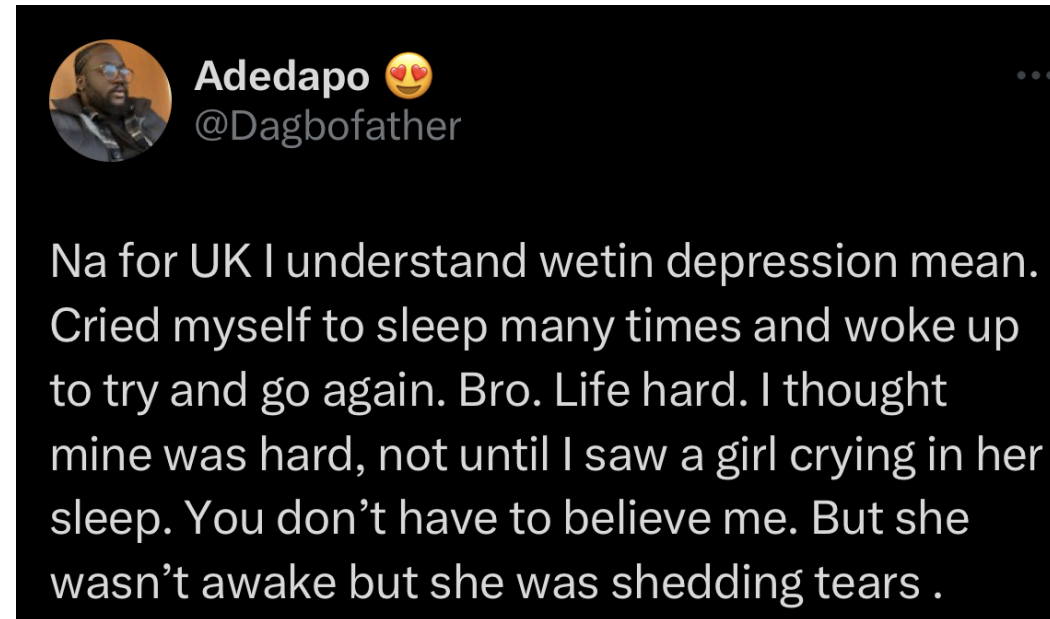


Fig 10: A screenshot of someone sharing their migration opinion

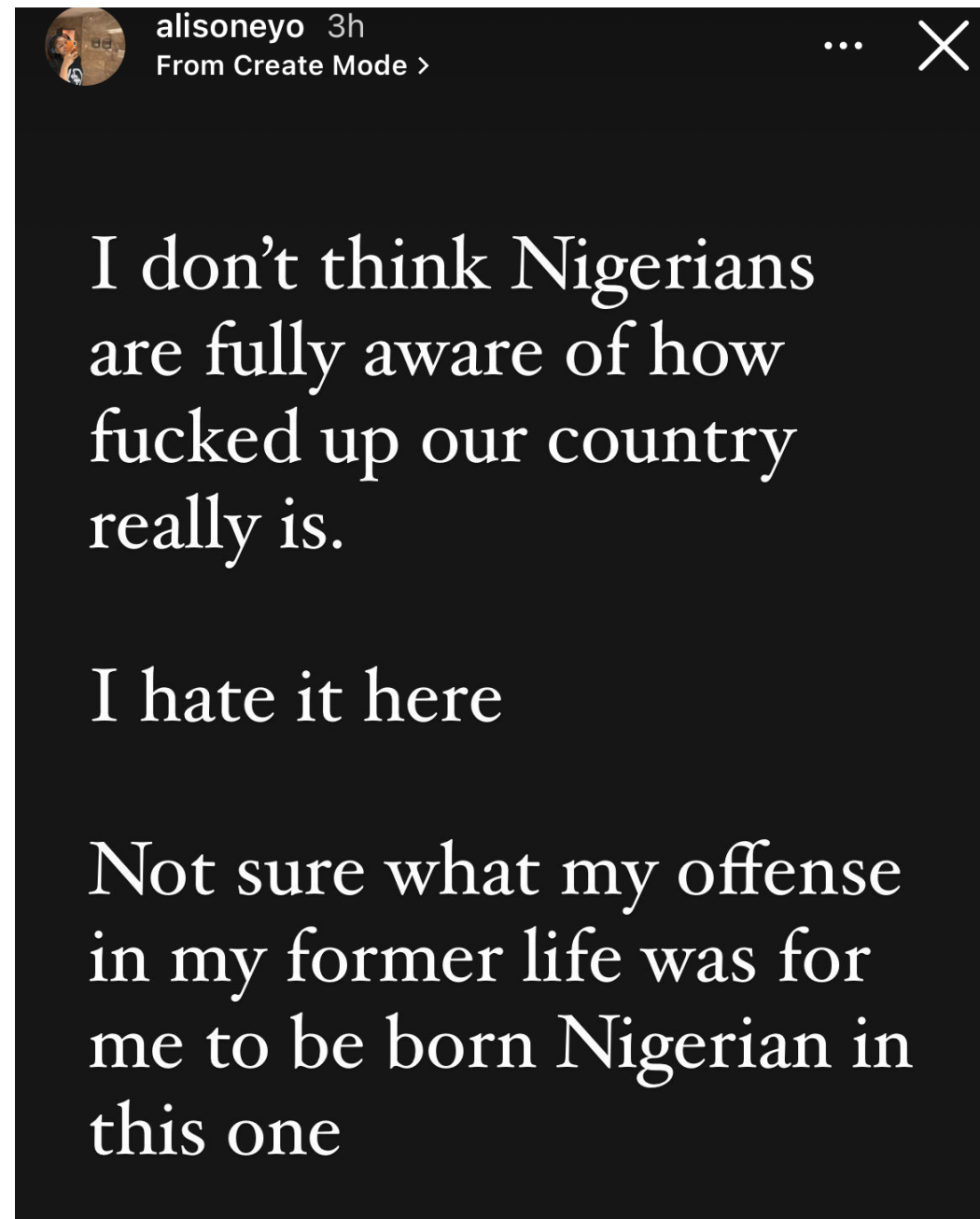


Fig 11: A screenshot of someone sharing their frustration about Nigeria



This memoir aims to document my unfiltered personal experience and my migration story from Nigeria to the UK using the Autoethnography research method. Autoethnography is a research method that involves analyzing and describing personal experiences to gain insights into cultural experiences and how personal experiences can shape research. This method acknowledges the subjectivity, emotionality, and influence of the researcher and can be a useful tool for documenting and understanding the emotional journey of migration.

Autoethnography uses both the tenets of autobiography and ethnography to document and analyze personal experiences, and it can be both a process and a product. To supplement my own experiences, I incorporated the experiences of other Nigerians who have migrated to other countries in search of better opportunities. This was achieved through qualitative research, which focuses on obtaining information through open-ended and conversational communication. It is imperative to identify what it exactly is, and why I am choosing it. Strauss and Corbin stated that “By the term ‘qualitative research’, we mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.

It can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations.” (Rahman, 2017). This method allows for a deeper understanding of the struggles, emotions, and uplifting experiences of migrants, particularly Nigerians. The qualitative approach enables detailed descriptions of participants’ feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interprets the meanings of their actions (Denzin, 1989). While qualitative research is advantageous in collecting personal and subjective data, Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008), too, argued that qualitative approaches are employed to achieve deeper insights into issues related to designing, administering, and interpreting language assessment. One of the biggest challenges of this project was maximizing participation from different age groups, experiences, and social backgrounds. The focus was on Nigerians aged between 20 to 40, in diaspora countries such as the United Kingdom, USA, Australia, Canada, and Spain among others.

To encourage participation, I created an open, conversation that allow participants to engage with the project in a vulnerable and truthful manner. Although those that gave their record of their experiences were few because being vulnerable isn’t exactly easy to do, although this poses as one of the constraints I experienced even though I agreed to record them anonymously but they did help with being honest while answering their interview questions.

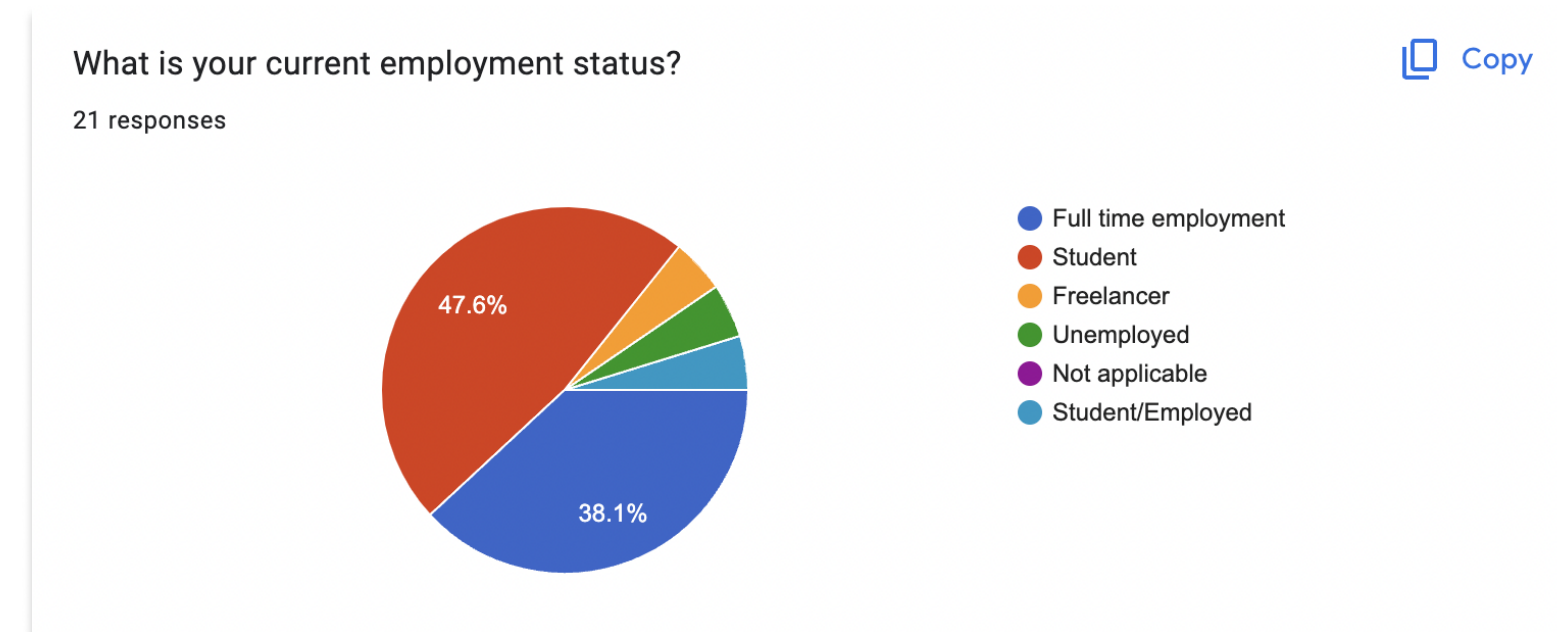


Fig 12: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 1

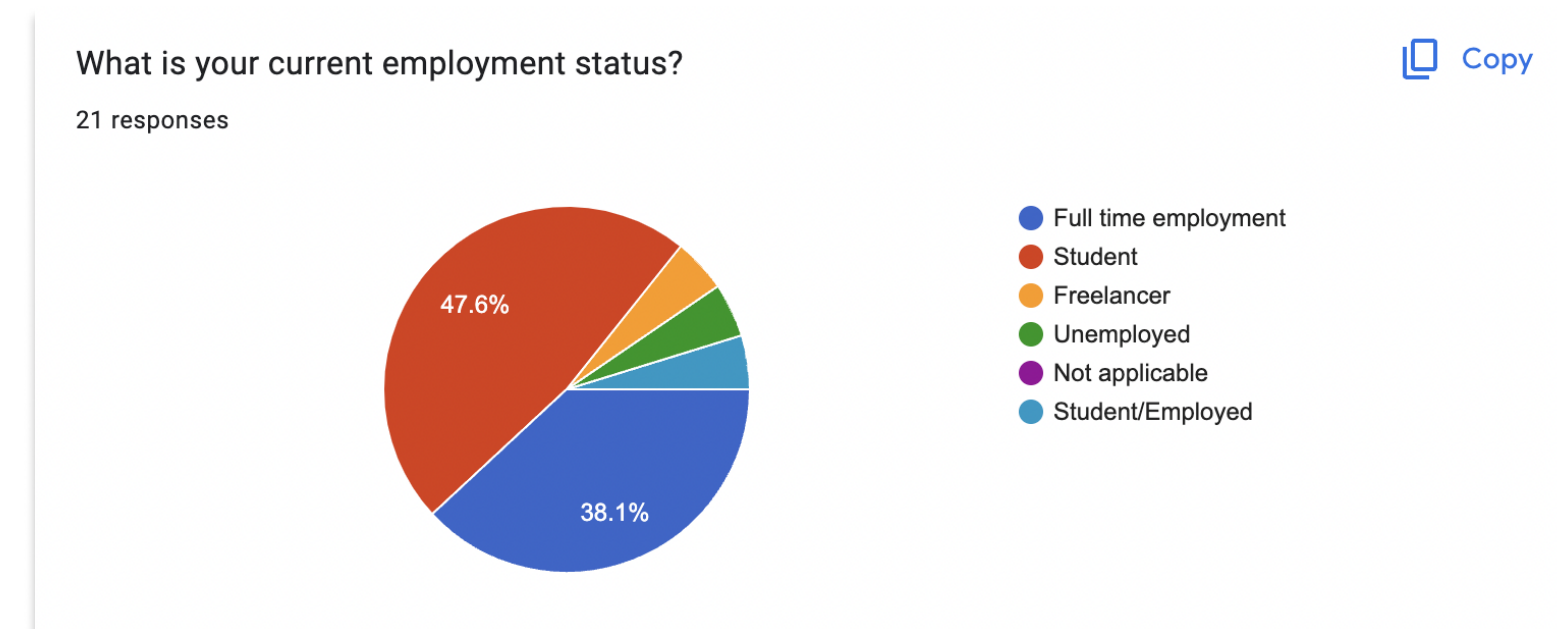


Fig 13: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 2

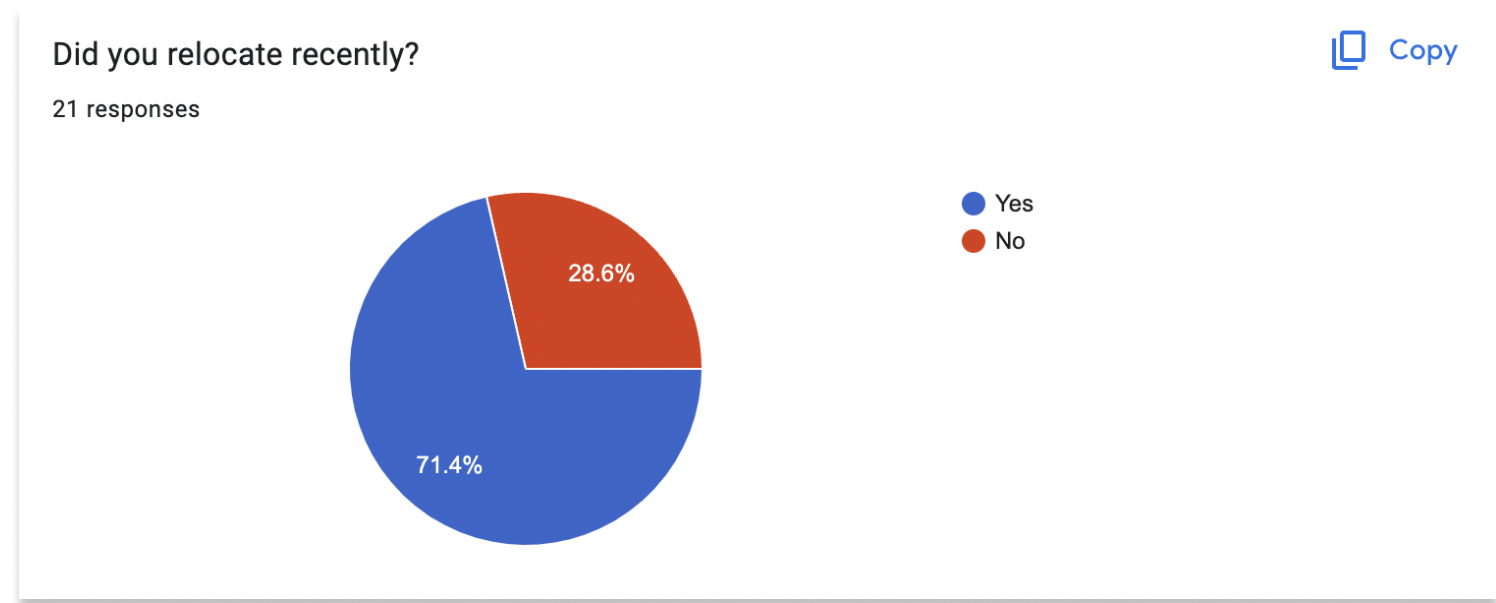


Fig 14: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 3

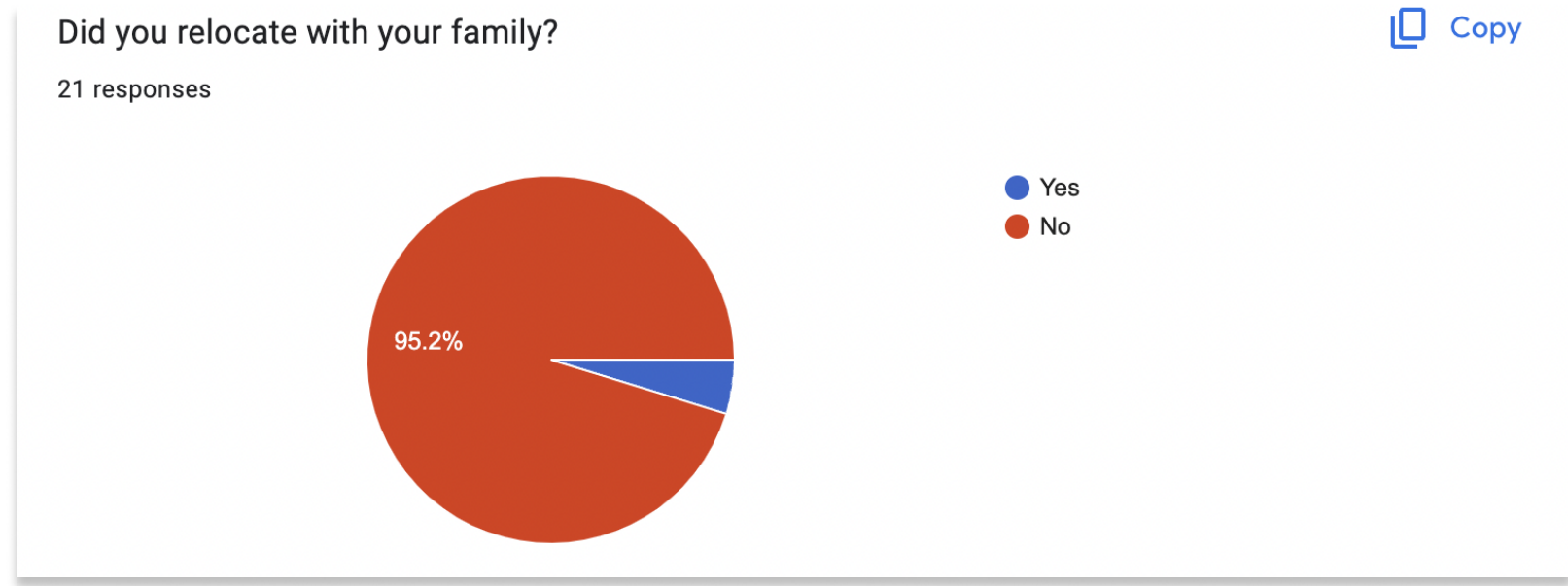


Fig 17: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 6

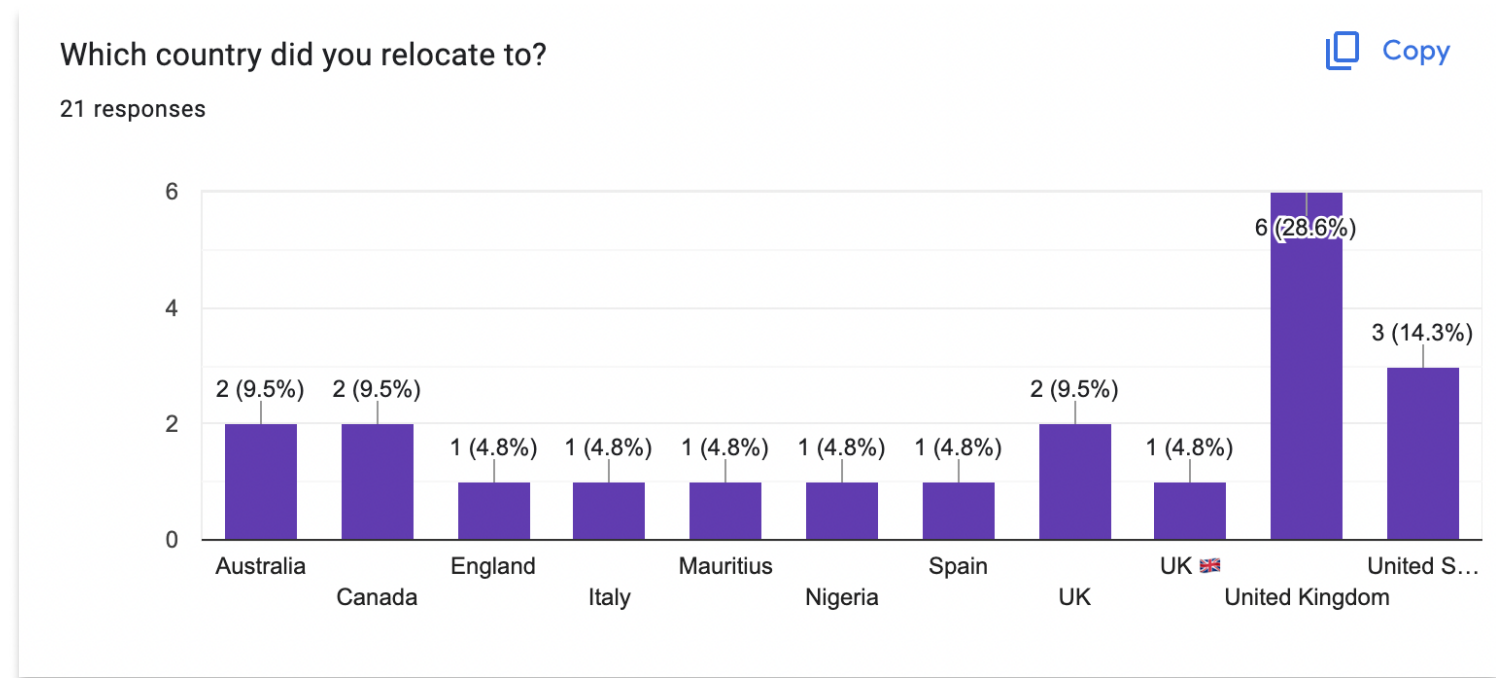


Fig 15: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 4

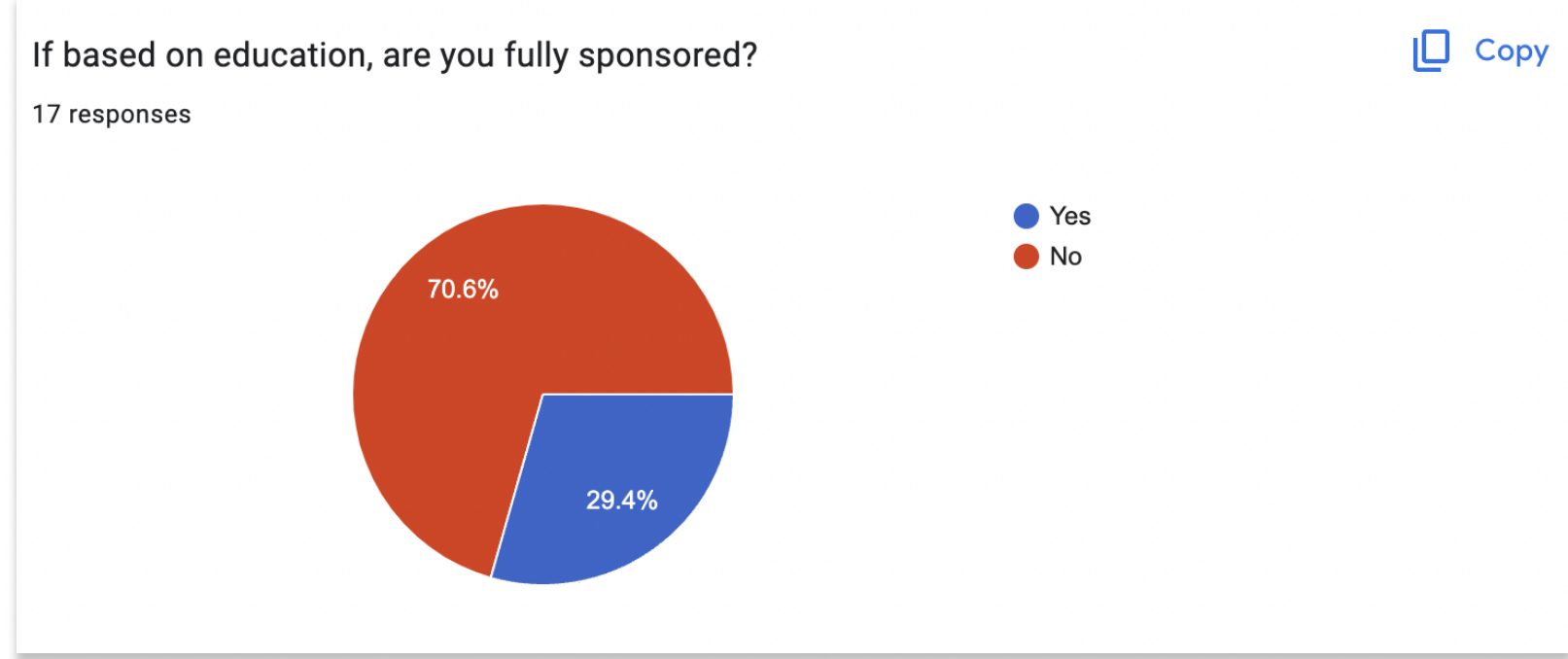


Fig 18: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 7

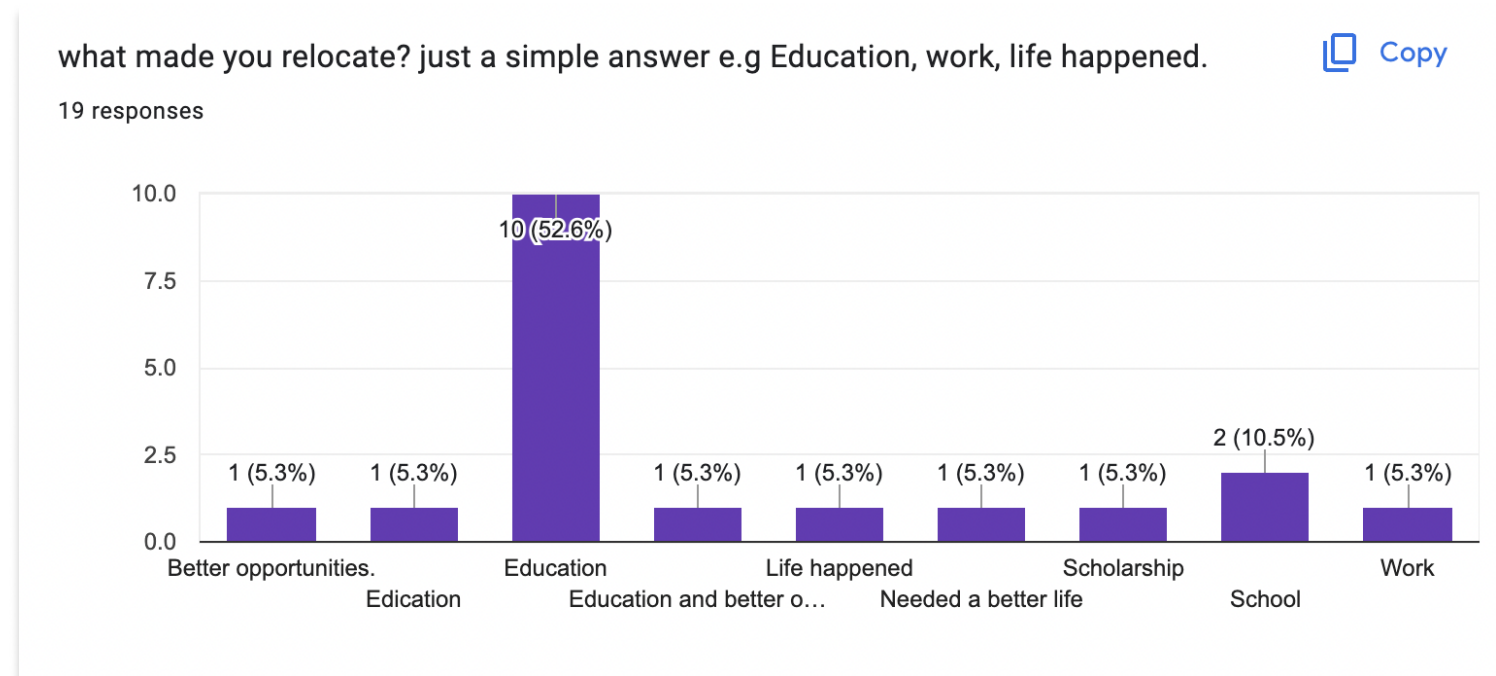


Fig 16: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 5

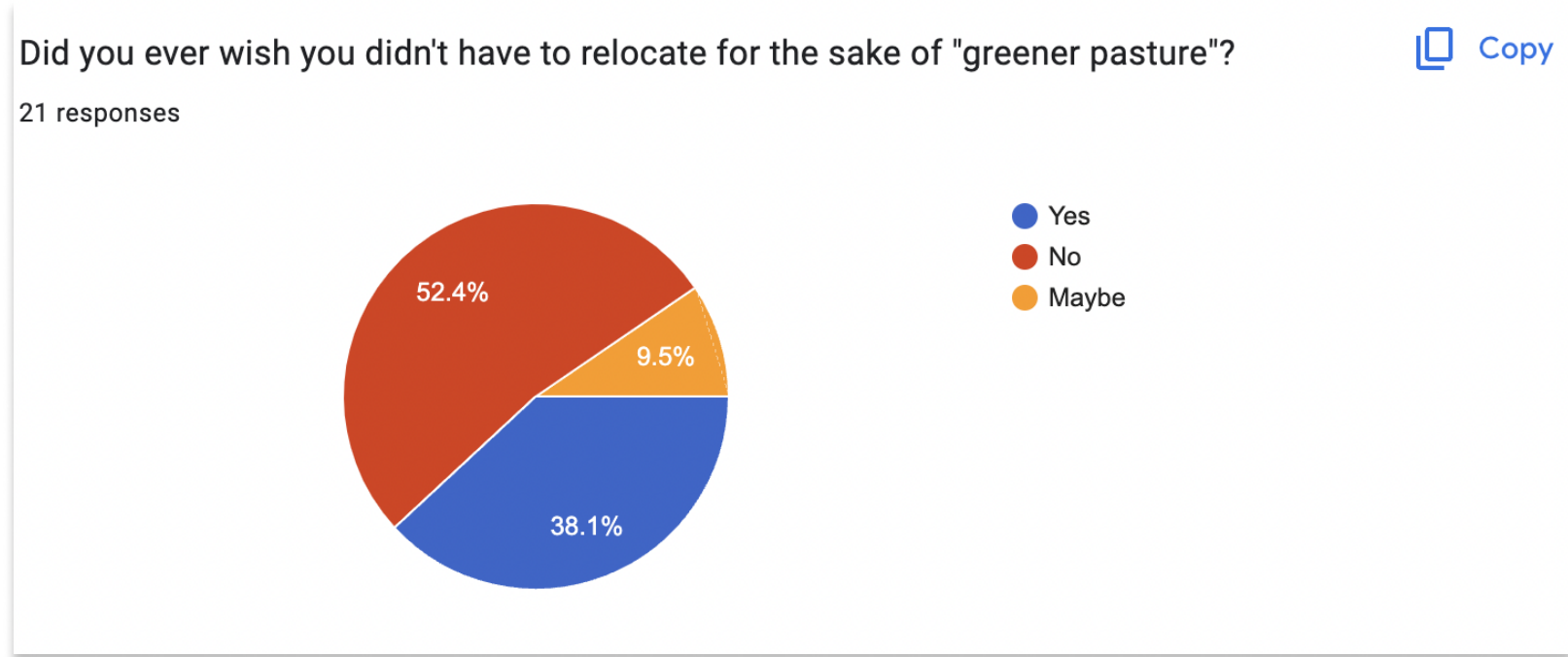


Fig 19: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 8

Fig 12-Fig 19 shows data for the interview questions around how people relocated and the surrounding reason for migrating to another country and also if they relocated alone or with their families.

Also another question asked was if they wished they never relocated. with the summary of the data it showed that most people relocated via education route which is one of the major route used in migrating from Nigeria and it's also showed that most people travelled alone and wished they never had to relocate.

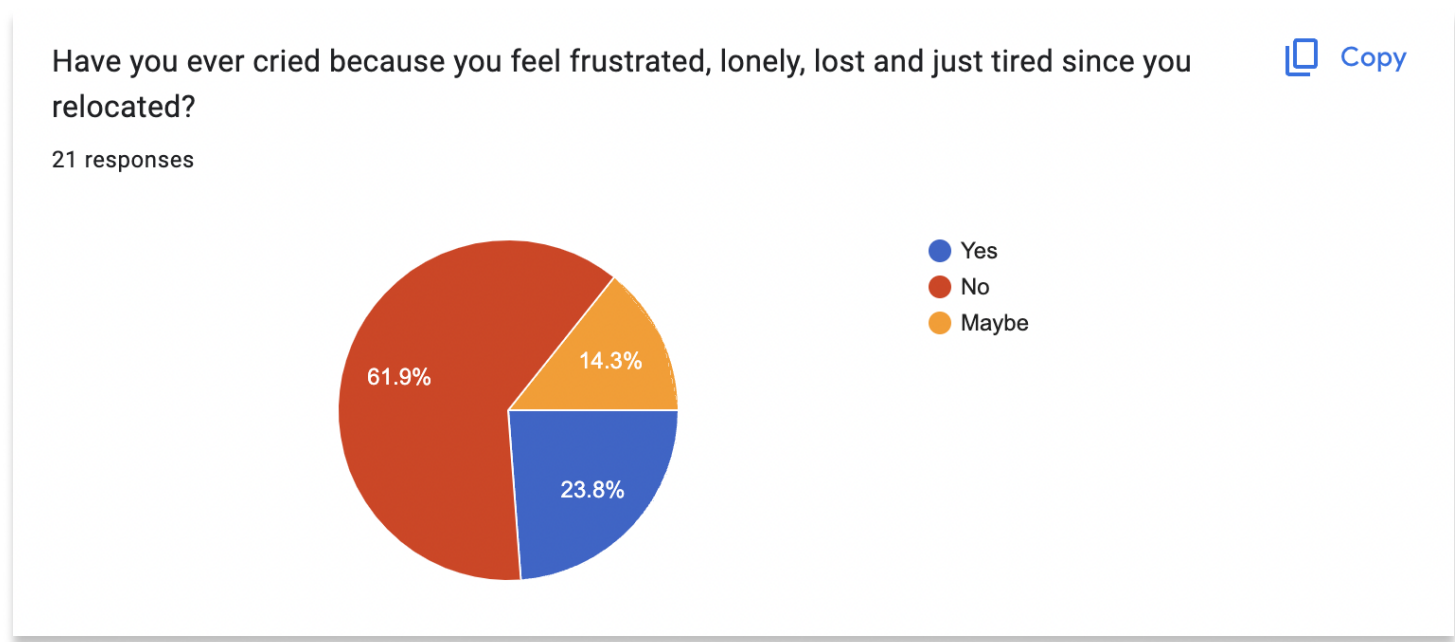


Fig 20: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 9

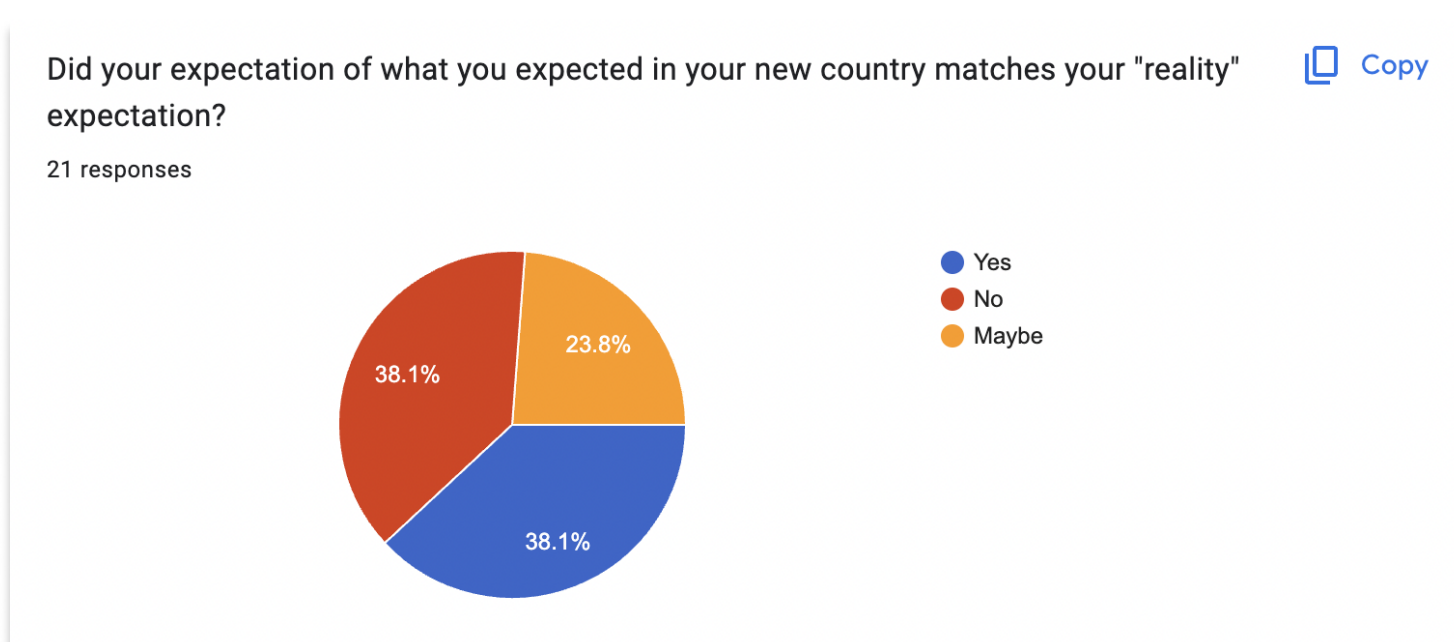


Fig 24: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 12

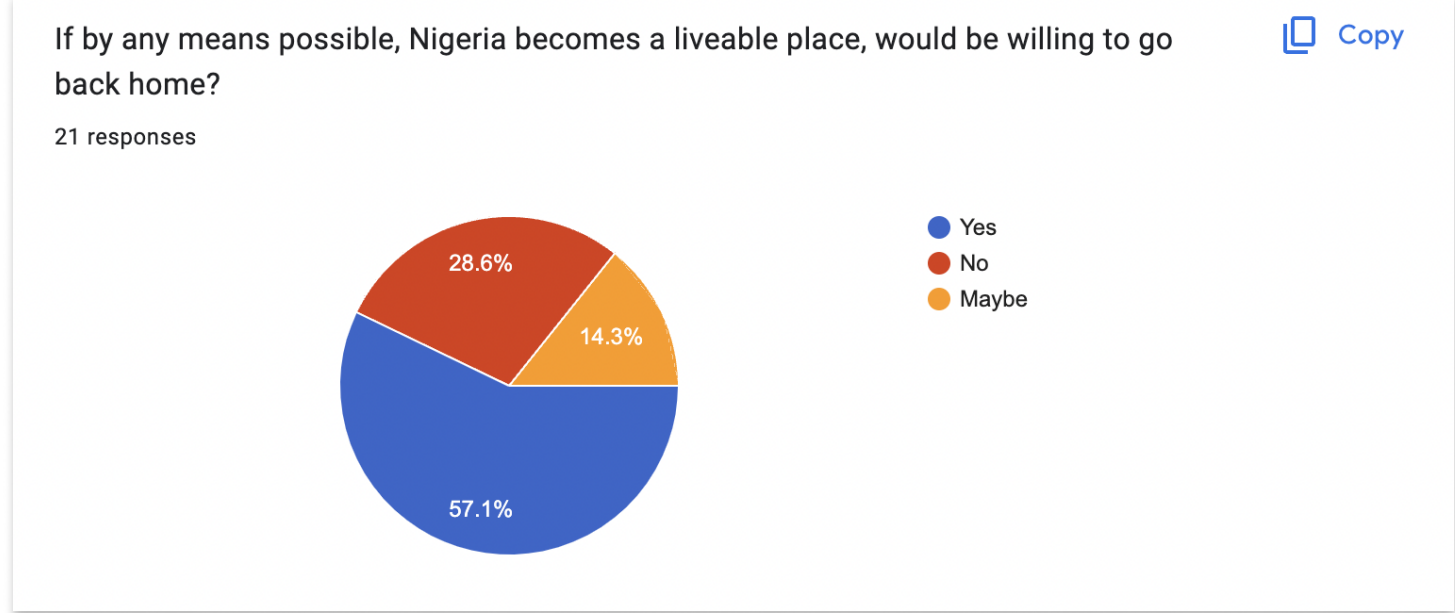


Fig 21: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 10

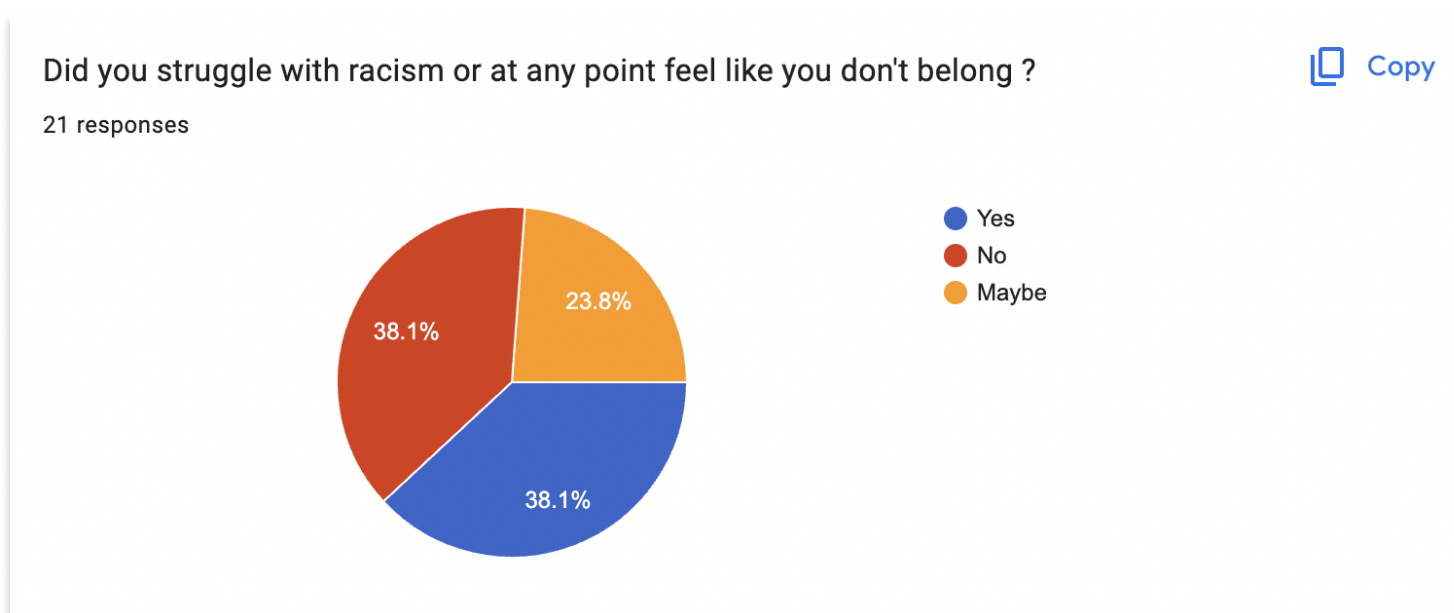


Fig 25: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 13

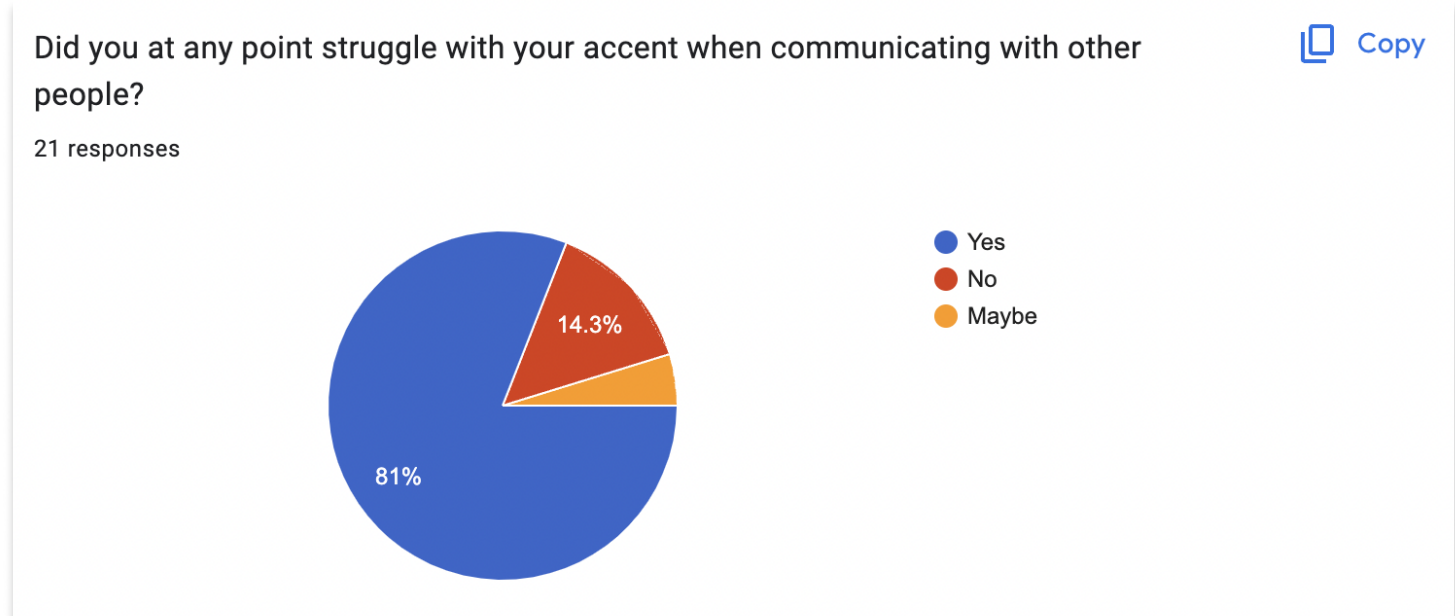


Fig 23: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 11

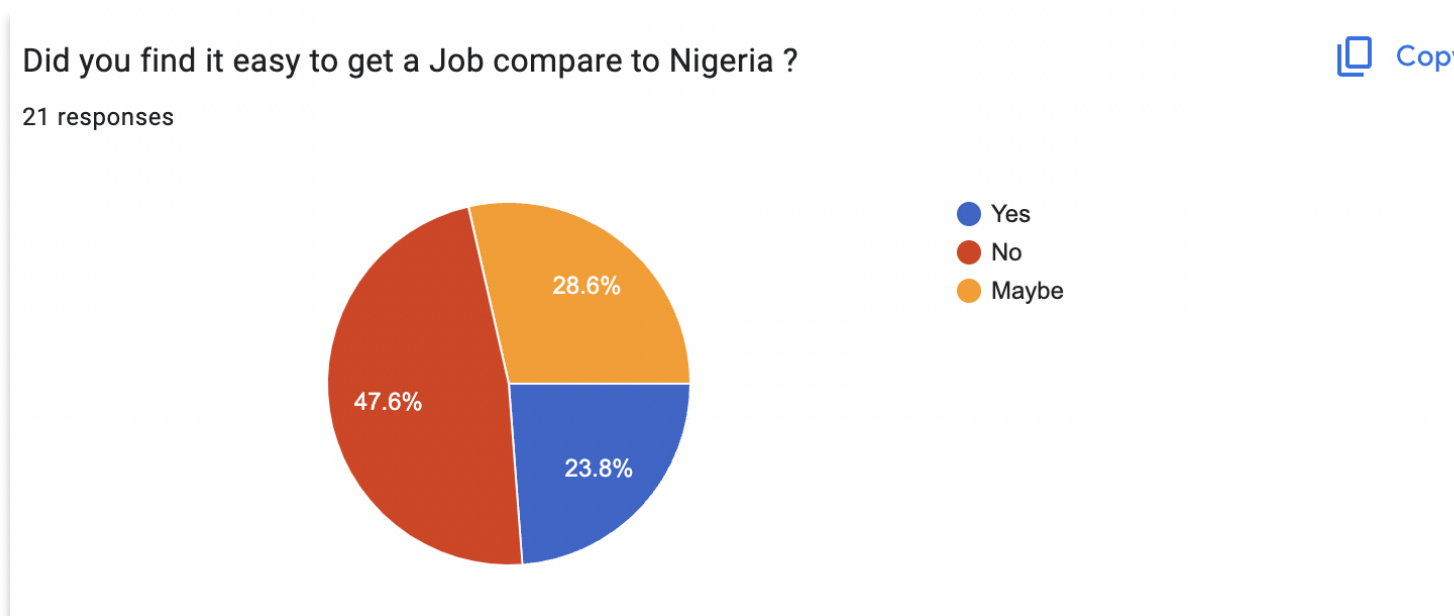


Fig 26: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 14

Fig 20-Fig 26 shows data about the mental state of most immigrants, from the data it showed that most people feel lonely, frustrated at some point and it also showed that most people struggled with communication hence had to code-switch. Fig 10 shows migrants are willing to go back to Nigeria if it becomes at least liveable which indicate most migrant didn't relocate out of choice for survival and necessity.

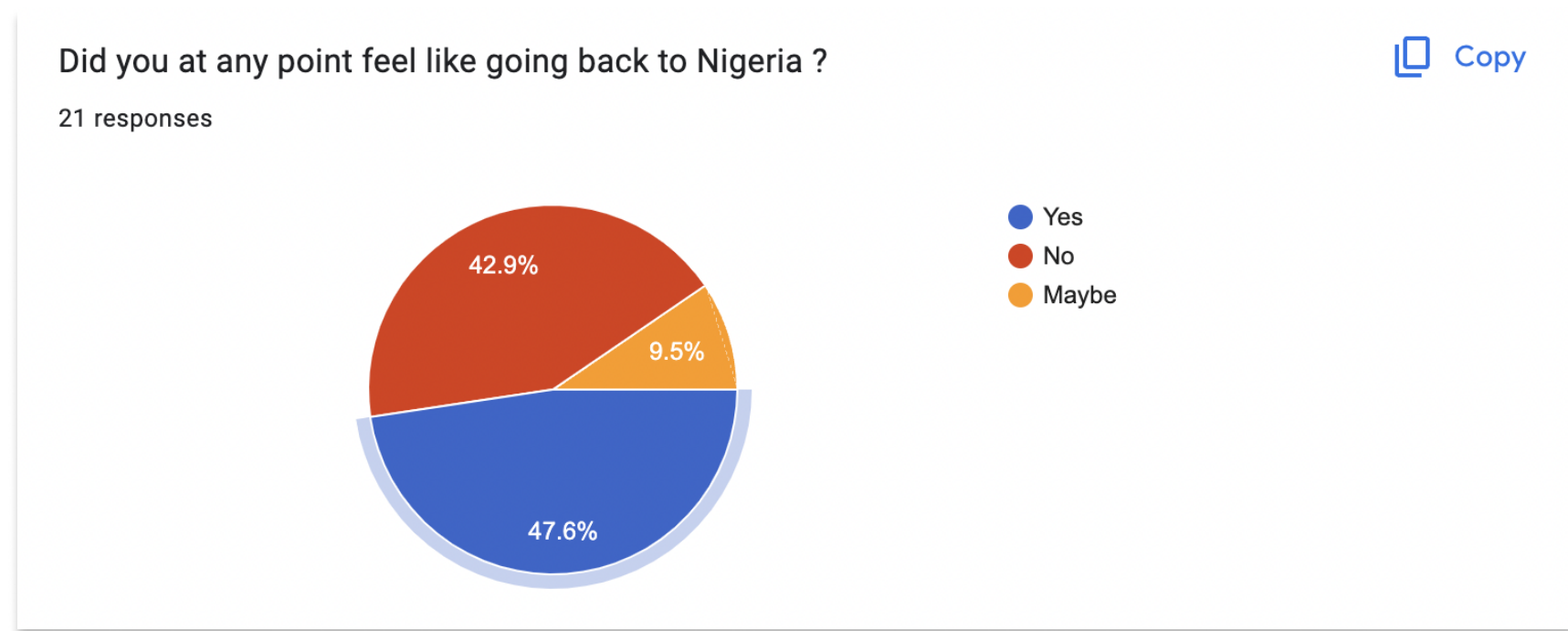


Fig 27: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 15

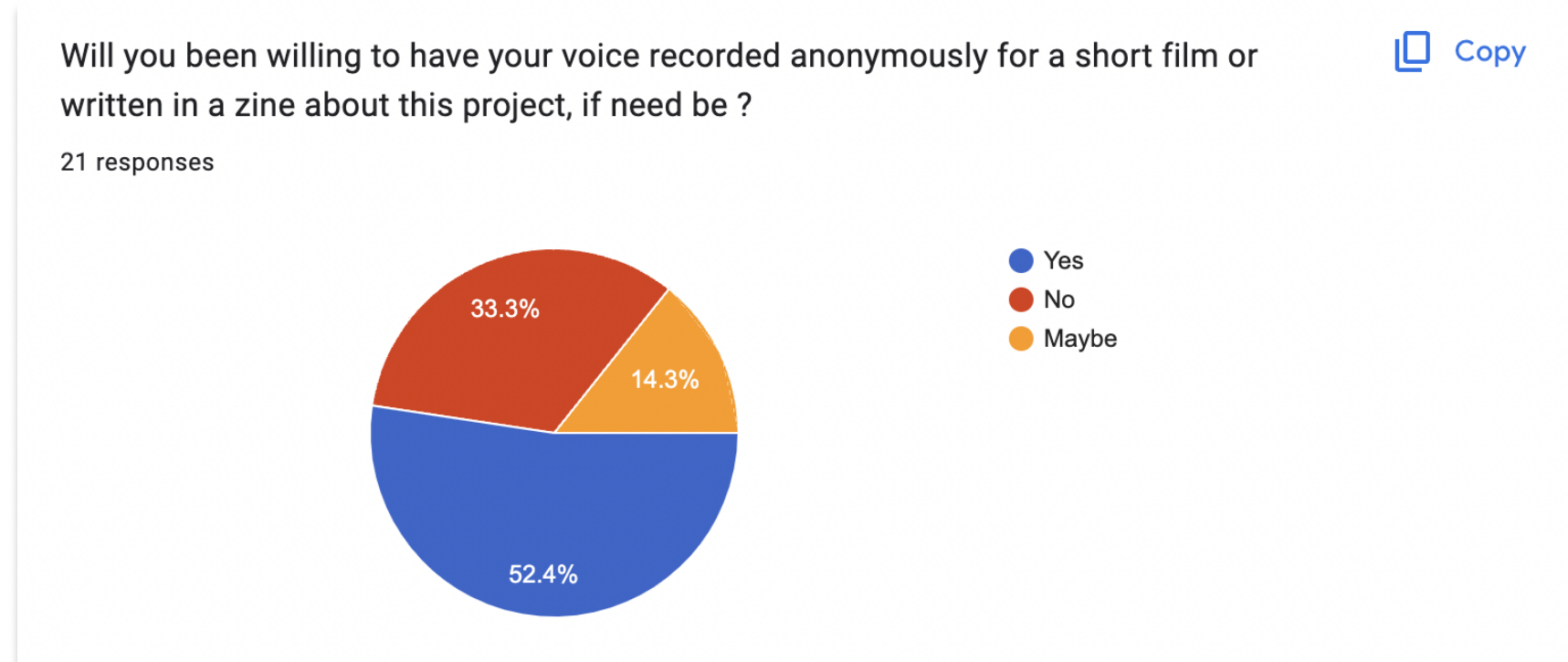


Fig 28: Overall percentage of feedback received for question 16

Fig 21-Fig 28 creates emphasis on the data showed that migrants really moved because of situation not by absolute willingness but for the search of greener pasture.

[Here's the link the overall data](#)



Fig 28: A short break

Giphy, 2023