Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	**881**
Land:	Nigeria
Kilde:	Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Titel:	DFAT Country information report
Udgivet:	9. juni 2026
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	26. juni 2026

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT NIGERIA

9 JUNE 2026

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ACRONYMS

APC	All Progressives Congress (political party)
AUD	Australian Dollar
BLA	Biafran Liberation Army (secessionist group)
BRGIE	Biafran Republic Government in Exile (secessionist group)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESN	Eastern Security Network (secessionist group)
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMN	Islamic Movement in Nigeria (Shi'a religious movement)
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra (secessionist group)
ISWAP	Islamic State of West African Province (Islamic militant group)
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex or Asexual
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (secessionist group)
NAF	Nigerian Armed Forces
NGN	Nigerian Naira (currency)
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NIMC	National Identity Management Commission
NIN	National Identification Numbers
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
PDP	People's Democratic Party (political party)
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

GLOSSARY

Hisbah	Islamic religious police
Hudud	Punishments prescribed in the Qur'an for serious criminal offences
Kito	Extorting money or valuables from gay men by threatening to expose or 'out' them
Makarantar allo	Qur'anic school
Nwaboi	Apprenticeship system practiced by Igbo businesspeople
Sharia	Islamic religious law

Terms used in this report

Almost certain	This treatment is expected to occur in nearly all circumstances.
Likely	This treatment is expected to occur in most circumstances.
Possibly	This treatment may occur in some circumstances.
Unlikely	This treatment is not expected to occur in most circumstances.
Rare	This treatment is only expected to occur in exceptional circumstances.

Official discrimination

1. legal or regulatory measures applying to a particular group that impede access to state protection or services that are available to other sections of the population (examples might include but are not limited to difficulties in obtaining personal registrations or identity papers, difficulties in having papers recognised, arbitrary arrest and detention)
2. behaviour by state employees towards a particular group that impedes access to state protection or services otherwise available, including by failure to implement legislative or administrative measures

Societal discrimination

1. behaviour by members of society (including family members, employers or service providers) that impedes access by a particular group to goods or services normally available to other sections of society (examples could include but are not limited to refusal to let property, refusal to sell goods or services, or employment discrimination)
2. ostracism or exclusion by members of society (including family, acquaintances, employers, colleagues or service providers).

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 This report was prepared for protection status decision makers by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It provides a factual overview distinct from Australian Government policy and does not contain policy guidance for decision makers.

1.2 According to Ministerial Direction 113 of 17 March 2026, issued under the *Migration Act 1958* 'a decision maker must take into account relevant country information made available by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the purposes of protection obligations assessments.' Ministerial Direction 113 'does not prevent a decision maker from considering other relevant information about the country.'

1.3 This report was prepared with regard to the current protection visa caseload without reference to individual applications. It provides DFAT's best assessment at the time of writing.

1.4 This report draws on in-country knowledge and discussions. It takes into account reporting from a range of credible sources including: other governments, United Nations agencies, human rights and civil society organisations, local and international media and academia. Source details may be omitted to protect sources.

1.5 This Country Information Report replaces the DFAT report on Nigeria published on 3 December 2020.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

2.1 Following independence on 1 October 1960, Nigeria adopted a parliamentary democratic system. A series of coups and counter-coups led the South East Region to declare independence as the 'Republic of Biafra' in May 1967. This sparked a civil war that ended in January 1970 with Biafra's defeat. Up to 3 million civilians died as a result of the conflict (most from starvation). Nigeria spent much of the rest of the 20th century under military rule. It transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, under a new Constitution that established a federal system of government and provided for the concurrent application of religious, customary and civil law.

2.2 Nigeria faced persistent domestic unrest and insecurity throughout the 21st century. Tension over the adoption of *sharia* law (Islamic religious law) by several northern states in 2000 led to clashes between Christians and Muslims resulting in hundreds of deaths. In 2006, protests against petroleum companies operating in the Niger Delta turned to coordinated militant action, including kidnapping company employees and damaging refineries and pipelines. The most active militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, declared a unilateral ceasefire following a government amnesty program in 2009. A mass kidnapping of girls from a boarding school in Borno State in April 2014 by Sunni Islamic extremist group, Boko Haram (*Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna li al-Da'wa wa al-Jihad* or JAS), garnered significant international attention.

2.3 Nigeria's 2023 elections were focused primarily on growing insecurity and worsening economic indicators. The victorious All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, Bola Tinubu, was sworn in as President on 29 May 2023. Regular attacks on military targets by the Islamic State West Africa Province (*Wilayat Garb Ifriqiya* or ISWAP) and remnants of Boko Haram have continued in the North East Region. At the time of writing, killings, kidnappings and raids carried out by bandit gangs were occurring in Nigeria's North West Region. Violence between predominantly Muslim herders and Christian farming communities persisted in the North Central Region (see Security situation).

2.4 Nigeria is highly vulnerable to climate change, especially in the northern regions. Nigeria's farming sector is mainly rain-fed (not irrigated), making it highly vulnerable to extreme weather events such as prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, flooding and rising temperatures. In August 2024, intense rainfall in the North East Region led to severe flooding. The city of Maiduguri in Borno State was particularly affected. Over one million Nigerians were impacted by the Alau Dam collapse. Many lost their homes and were forced to relocate. Flooding occurred in 2025 in Niger and Kwara States due to a combination of intense rainfall and water management issues.

DEMOGRAPHY

2.5 Nigeria last conducted a census in 2006 but its population was estimated to be 240.3 million in 2026. The country is composed of over 250 ethnic groups. The Hausa make up 30 per cent of the population, Yoruba 15 per cent, Igbo 15 per cent and Fulani 6 per cent. Nigeria's national language is English, although the Constitution provides for the use of other languages in official settings. For religious demography, see Religion.

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

2.6 Nigeria is classed as a lower middle-income country according to the World Bank, despite facing significant development challenges. It has well-established agricultural, service and oil and gas sectors. Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was NGN1,602,300 (AUD1,644) in 2024. It implemented significant macroeconomic reforms in 2023 aimed at restoring stability and growth, including removal of petrol subsidies, unification of the exchange rate market and a shift towards market-reflective pricing. The Central Bank also tightened monetary policy. The World Bank recorded Nigeria's GDP grew by 3.9 per cent in 2025.

2.7 Cost of living pressures lessened in 2025 but were still an issue for Nigerians according to in-country sources. Food inflation remained disproportionately high, affecting poor households who spent more than 70 per cent of their income on food. The cost of a basic food basket had risen fivefold between 2019 and 2025. Over 46 per cent of Nigerians lived below the poverty line.

Employment

2.8 The Constitution tasks the Nigerian Government with ensuring all citizens, without discrimination, have the opportunity to secure 'adequate means of livelihood' and the opportunity to secure suitable employment with 'just and humane' conditions. The *Labour Act 2004* applies to employees who perform manual labour, clerical work, as well as administrative, executive, technical and professional functions. Employees are protected against discrimination on the basis of their community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, political opinion or the circumstances of their birth. In addition, the *HIV and AIDS (Anti-Discrimination) Act 2014* prohibits employers from discriminating directly or indirectly against employees on the basis of their HIV status. The *Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018* prohibits discrimination against people with disability. Employers who infringe provisions of these acts can face fines or imprisonment.

2.9 Nigeria's *National Minimum Wage Amendment Act 2024* prescribes a statutory minimum wage and a legal framework for its review. The minimum wage is set by the Nigerian Government following consultation with labour unions. The minimum wage was NGN70,000 (AUD72) per month in January 2026. The *Tax Act 2025* generally increased the take home pay of low-income earners all Nigerians earning less than NGN800,000 (AUD818) annually paid no income tax.

2.10 Nigeria's unemployment rate was 4.9 per cent in 2024 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (most recent data available). In-country sources said the actual unemployment rate was likely higher. The informal sector is large and comprises economic activities not fully regulated by government and other public authorities. The youth unemployment rate (for those aged 15 to 24 years) was 6.5 per cent in 2024. Many university-educated youth leave Nigeria in search of better economic opportunities abroad. In-country sources said there was a community perception the 'Nigerian Dream' hinged on migration. This was seen as the only way to secure a better life and escape the country's economic volatility, insecurity and poor governance.

2.11 DFAT assesses it is rare for Nigerians to be excluded from the economy or from accessing state resources on the basis of their religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. DFAT assesses low rates of pay, weak economic opportunities and cost of living pressures likely act as push factors for emigration from Nigeria, particularly for youth.

Welfare

2.12 Nigeria's limited formal social safety net includes the Household Uplifting Programme Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP-CCT) and periodic poverty alleviation and humanitarian supports. In-country sources said Nigerians were able to access government-run programs without discrimination but the country's societal safety nets were generally ineffective in alleviating poverty. Nigerians also accessed services provided by civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based groups and political organisations. Some Nigerians relied on financial support from family members living abroad.

2.13 The National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO) coordinates social protection at the federal, state and local levels. This coordination involves establishing delivery mechanisms, reducing duplication and ensuring coordination between key ministries and agencies. States have autonomy and responsibility to develop their own social protection and assistance programs but generally lack the resources to do so. The World Bank reported coordination between social protection and other sectors at local, state and federal government levels was fragmented. CSOs reported social assistance provision in Nigeria was highly politicised, rates of coverage were low and there was limited delineation between social assistance and humanitarian aid.

2.14 The Household Uplifting Programme Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP-CCT) focuses on poor and vulnerable households identified by states. Households below the absolute poverty line (those living below NGN2,690 (AUD2.82) a day) are eligible for enrolment in the HUP-CCT. The HUP-CCT provides households cash transfers of NGN5,000 (AUD5.15) a month. According to the National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO), the HUP-CCT had benefited more than 9 million households and reached more than 40 million people since its establishment in 2016.

2.15 Religious charities, non-governmental organisations and UN agencies provide financial aid, shelter and food to those in need throughout Nigeria. In-country sources said cuts to donor funding had resulted in operational instability and sometimes limits on services provided.

Health

2.16 Average life expectancy in Nigeria was 54 years in 2023 according to the World Bank (most recent data available). Mortality rates were highest for communicable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, tuberculosis and lower respiratory infections according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

2.17 The Constitution commits the Nigerian Government to ensure adequate medical and health systems for all. The country's health systems are governed by the *Nigeria Health Act 2014*, with the provision of health services shared between federal, state and local governments. The federal government is responsible for disease surveillance, drug regulation, vaccine management and training of health professionals. Responsibility for the management of public health facilities and programs sits with state ministries of health, state hospital management boards and local government areas. The *National Health Promotion Policy* sets standards and provides national guidance on best practices and actions for decision makers, managers and service providers of health promotion at various levels. The federal government coordinates state-level implementation of the *National Health Promotion Policy*.

2.18 According to the Federal Ministry of Health there were more than 40,000 public and private hospitals and clinics spread throughout Nigeria. The country had 0.9 hospital beds per 1,000 people, as well as 0.4 doctors and 1.6 nurses per 1,000 people according to recent World Bank data. According to local media, over 60 per cent of Nigeria's rural population lacked access to functional primary healthcare centres, as many of these facilities were understaffed or lacked basic amenities like electricity, clean water or essential medicines.

2.19 The WHO reported the health sector in Nigeria persistently underperformed. This was due to weak governance and accountability mechanisms, misalignment between health priorities and budgetary allocations and poor distribution of human resources. The WHO also identified apathy on the part of health care workers because of non-payment or delayed payment of salaries, weak community ownership as well as ongoing insecurity and violence as challenges to the delivery of health services.

2.20 Public healthcare expenditure is low, with 75 per cent of total health expenditure borne by patients as out-of-pocket costs. In-country sources said out-of-pocket costs were high, especially for surgeries that could cost the equivalent of hundreds of Australian dollars. About 55 per cent of Nigerians exceed 10 per cent of overall household expenditure on healthcare, while 35 per cent of Nigerians exceed 25 per cent of household expenditure, making access to healthcare services unaffordable to many according to the WHO. In-country sources said basic medicines were domestically available but prices had increased in recent years due to the devaluation of the naira and high production costs.

2.21 The private sector supplements Nigeria's public health facilities. Private hospitals and clinics offer a much higher standard of health care than public facilities. Costs at private hospitals are generally high. With limited health insurance services available, private healthcare costs are primarily borne out-of-pocket.

2.22 The *National Health Insurance Act 2022* aims to secure mandatory health insurance for all Nigerians and establish a fund for vulnerable groups. According to the National Health Insurance Authority, coverage under the National Health Insurance Scheme rose from 16.2 million Nigerians in December 2023 to about 21 million in 2025 (currently less than 9 per cent of the population). Local academics reported the low enrolment rate was partly due to the inefficiency of the healthcare system and the poor quality of services offered. A significant portion of Nigerians employed in the informal sector are unable to access the scheme.

2.23 DFAT assesses Nigerians are almost certain to be able to access healthcare services without discrimination where they exist, however out-of-pocket costs are generally high and availability of services varies widely. Factors such as distance and cultural norms present barriers for poor and remote populations.

Mental Health

2.24 The *Nigerian National Mental Health Act 2021* regulates the legal protection and treatment of mental health patients. Nigeria had nine federal psychiatric hospitals and five state psychiatric hospitals at the time of writing. The country had less than 300 psychiatrists, most of whom were based in major urban areas. Mental health specialists are generally located within teaching hospitals, federal medical centres and in state specialist hospitals. More than

90 per cent of federal mental healthcare funding is allocated to psychiatric hospitals, resulting in few public primary care options.

2.25 Around 11 per cent of Nigeria's population is affected by mental health conditions, including an estimated 7 million people with anxiety disorders and 4.9 million with depressive disorders. In a 2020 study Nigerians identified 'possession by an evil spirit' as one among three major causes of mental disorders, along with drug abuse and 'sickness of the mind'. A 2024 academic study found approximately 80 per cent of Nigerians with severe mental health needs did not access mental healthcare services due to negative social attitudes toward mental health issues, as well as a general absence of facilities, resources and mental health professionals. A 2025 study found Nigerians with mental and neurological difficulties were often hesitant to use mental healthcare institutions and preferred alternative sources of care such as spiritualists or herbalists. Some traditional healers reportedly used treatment methods including exorcisms involving beating and physical restraints.

2.26 CSOs and NGOs supplement public mental healthcare services nationwide. For example, Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI), an NGO, is focused on raising mental health awareness and connecting service users to mental health professionals. Since its creation in 2015, MANI has established a national suicide hotline, counselling services (both in-person and online) and legal support for people arrested or prosecuted for attempting suicide. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Nigerian Red Cross are active in the North East Region, particularly around Maiduguri in Borno State. They visit homes and shelters to raise awareness about mental health issues and conduct three-month long counselling programs for victims of violence and displacement.

2.27 DFAT assesses Nigerians are almost certain to be able to access public mental health care services without discrimination where they exist, however availability varies widely and can be inadequate. Factors such as distance and cultural norms present barriers for poor and remote populations.

People with Disability

2.28 Around 9 per cent of Nigerians aged 5 years and older lived with disability according to the 2024 *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey* (most recent available), with 2 per cent experiencing 'a lot of difficulties'. The most prevalent types of disability recorded were visual at 7 per cent of the Nigerian population. Nigeria signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and ratified it in September 2010. Nigeria ratified the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa in October 2023, aligning the country with regional standards for inclusion.

2.29 The *Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018* addresses the rights of people with disability and provides for their full integration into society. The Act establishes the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, responsible for access to education and healthcare as well as promotion of social, economic and civil rights. While the Act aligns with the CRPD, local disability CSOs said it suffered from weak implementation, low compliance and limited adoption by state governments.

2.30 Disability-focused provisions in the *Electoral Act 2022* promote the participation of people with disability in electoral processes. A post-election study on the 2023 presidential elections conducted by a local think tank found provisions of the Act were not implemented as they were 'suggestive in nature' and 'lacked enforceability'. Only 22 per cent of respondents reported assistive aids such as Braille ballot guides, large embossed print, infographics, posters and sign language interpreters were available at their voting centre.

2.31 People with disability in Nigeria face significant barriers. Lack of accessibility to public spaces and buildings limits their ability to access essential services and participate in public life. Scarcity of Braille materials, sign language interpreters and accessible digital platforms restrict opportunities for people with disability to engage in society. Many schools and universities do not have resources to support students with disability. In-country sources said only 2 per cent of people with disability in Nigeria had access to education. Many employers were unwilling to hire people with disability. Few people with disability were employed in the formal sector, reportedly due to discriminatory hiring practices and inaccessible workplaces.

2.32 Cultural perceptions in Nigeria often result in discrimination against people with disability who can be perceived as cursed, affected by witchcraft or suffering divine punishment. Societal attitudes portraying people with disability as dependent or incapable further undermine their agency and potential. A 2023 study assessing

compliance with the *Disability Act 2022* found 73 per cent of people with disability had experienced workplace discrimination. In-country sources said women with disability faced higher levels of discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion than men with disability and women without disability. Women and girls with disability also face greater exposure to violence including gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation, coercion and abuse than those without disability (see Women).

2.33 DFAT assesses people with disability are likely to face official discrimination in the form of inequitable access to education and appropriate social services. DFAT assesses people with disability are likely to face societal discrimination in terms of access to employment. DFAT assesses people with disability are unlikely to face societal violence in the form of physical or sexual abuse solely on the basis of their disability.

Substance Abuse

2.34 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates 14.3 million people in Nigeria between 15 to 64 years of age have used psychoactive substances. The most abused substances include cannabis, tramadol, codeine and heroin, with emerging trends in the abuse of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine. Regional disparities exist, with northern states reporting higher cannabis use, while southern urban centres report more synthetic drug use. Men are three times more likely than women to use drugs. Local academics reported drug abuse in Nigeria was linked to a combination of social, economic and political factors including high rates of poverty, unemployment and lack of access to education.

2.35 The Nigerian Government has implemented a range of actions on drug abuse aimed at prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The *National Drug Control Master Plan* (NDCMP) provides a framework for addressing drug abuse, focusing on four key areas: drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction, access to controlled medicines and governance and coordination. Inadequate funding, poor coordination and weak enforcement of laws have undermined the effectiveness of many initiatives. According to CSOs, implementation of the NDCMP has been hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption.

2.36 Government-run multi-specialist hospitals offer free or low-cost psychiatric services for those seeking treatment for drug abuse. These are primarily focused on mental health with addiction as a subset. Treatment for substance abuse disorders in private rehabilitation centres is available in major cities and costs between NGN600,000 (AUD610) to NGN1 million (AUD1,017) per month. Free or low-cost community-based interventions addressing drug abuse fill some gaps, especially in rural areas. CSOs and faith-based organisations have implemented a range of programs aimed at raising awareness of drug abuse, as well as providing counselling and rehabilitation services. For example, YouthRISE Nigeria provided peer-led outreach, reducing opioid overdoses by 25 per cent in Benue State through naloxone distribution in 2022.

2.37 DFAT assesses Nigerians are almost certain to be able to access drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation services without discrimination where they exist, however availability varies widely and can be inadequate.

Education

2.38 The Constitution commits the Nigerian Government to ensure there are 'equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels', eradicating illiteracy and where practicable, providing free, compulsory and universal primary education, free secondary education, free university education and free adult literacy programs. Nigeria had an adult (15 years and over) literacy rate of 70 per cent in 2024.

2.39 Education is a shared responsibility of federal, state and local governments. The federal government is responsible for tertiary education, states for secondary education and local governments for education at the primary level. Primary education is free and compulsory. The education system encompasses basic education (nine years of compulsory schooling, consisting of six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education), post-basic education (three years of senior secondary education) and tertiary education. Instruction at junior primary levels is often in local languages, most commonly Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba. English is often the language of instruction for the last three years of primary school and beyond.

2.40 In addition to public schools, there are over 28,000 private schools, which are generally expensive and located in urban areas. Private schools operate independently of government control and are often favoured for their significantly higher quality of education.

2.41 Islamic educational institutions in the northern regions of Nigeria operate independently of the government and are generally divided into classical Qur'anic schools (*makarantar allo*) and 'modern' Islamic schools. Practices, timetables, curricula and degrees of formalisation vary. Approximately 35 per cent of Muslim children in the North West Region receive a Qur'anic education, along with 29 per cent of Muslim children in the North East Region. The Nigerian Government considers children attending Qur'anic schools and 'modern' Islamic schools not to be in school.

2.42 Nigeria's public education system suffers from a lack of infrastructure and teacher shortages. Teachers' wages often go unpaid due to inadequate funding by state governments and high levels of corruption. Overcrowding in schools is a significant issue. Nigerian schools generally lack trained teachers and adaptive materials to provide inclusive, tailored learning for neurodiverse students and students with disability (see People with disability).

2.43 Approximately 10.5 million children aged 5 to 14 years in Nigeria were not in school according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). States in the North West and North East Regions have particularly low levels of school attendance, with rates for girls of less than 50 per cent. In-country sources said reduced school attendance in northern Nigeria was driven by various factors, including attendance at Qur'anic and Islamic schools, economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices. Another significant factor contributing to school absenteeism in the North West Region is the prohibitive distances to schools and insecurity, with those living 20 minutes away or more from schools being 52 per cent less likely to attend.

2.44 DFAT assesses Nigerians are almost certain to be able to access education without discrimination or payment of tuition fees, although factors such as distance and cultural norms present barriers for poor and remote populations. Schools and universities are almost certain to lack resources to support students with disability.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

2.45 Nigeria is a federal presidential republic comprising 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The 36 states are grouped into six geopolitical regions: North West, North Central, North East, South West, South South and South East. Chapters 1 and 2 of the Constitution sets out the division of powers between levels of government. States and local government areas have jurisdictional and revenue autonomy, permitting them to formulate, implement and finance policies free from supervision or interference by the federal government.

2.46 Nigeria's president is directly elected for a four-year term and is the head of state, head of government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president appoints the Federal Executive Council, constitutionally required to include at least one member from each of the 36 states. The current President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC, was elected in February 2023. Presidential elections are next scheduled to be held in 2027.

2.47 Federal legislative power is vested in the National Assembly, composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives has 360 members representing single-member constituencies. The Senate has 109 members, comprising three members for each of the 36 states and one member representing the FCT. Both chambers are elected for four-year terms. The APC holds 242 of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 75 of the 109 seats in the Senate. The opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) holds 72 seats in the House of Representatives and 26 seats in the Senate. Parliamentary elections are next scheduled to be held in 2027.

2.48 Under the Constitution, the 36 states are equal but subservient to the federal government. Each state has a unicameral legislature and an elected governor. State house assemblies have between 24 and 40 seats depending on the state's population. Both assemblies and governors serve four-year terms. At the time of writing the APC held 31 of the country's 36 governorships, the PDP two.

Corruption

2.49 Nigeria is a State Party to the UN Convention Against Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. The Constitution commits the Nigerian Government to abolish all corrupt

practices and abuses of power, as well as specifying requirements for asset disclosure and regulations governing the offering and receiving of gifts for members of the executive, parliament and legislature.

2.50 The *Criminal Code 1990* criminalises corruption and the abuse of office. The *Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000* criminalises active and passive bribery, as well as attempted corruption, fraud, extortion and money laundering. Penalties apply to both individuals and companies, including fines and/or terms of imprisonment of up to seven years. Other anti-corruption legislation includes the *Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2011*, which regulates making and accepting cash payments.

2.51 Despite a strong official framework, corruption regularly occurs throughout Nigeria. Transparency International ranked Nigeria 142 out of 182 countries in its 2025 *Corruption Perceptions Index*. The World Justice Project's 2025 *Rule of Law Index* ranked Nigeria 120 out of 143 countries, with data showing the majority of Nigerians were concerned officials in the executive and legislative branches of government used public office for private gain. The US Department of State's 2025 *Investment Climate Statement on Nigeria* reported 'corruption remains a serious obstacle to Nigeria's economic growth and is often cited by domestic and foreign investors as a significant barrier to doing business'. Nigeria was added to the Financial Action Task Force's 'Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring' (grey list) in February 2023 for lapses in anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing controls. Nigeria was removed from the 'grey list' in October 2025 after demonstrating progress in addressing shortcomings.

2.52 Diversion of public funds was common and a system of patronage and nepotism existed in public institutions according to in-country sources. Businesses and private citizens expected to pay bribes or facilitation payments to receive government services such as water and electricity. Over half of businesses paid for their own security rather than rely on the police, widely regarded as the most corrupt institution in the country. Bribery was common among customs and port authorities, which regularly facilitated the smuggling of goods through seaports and across borders.

2.53 The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) holds broad authority to prosecute most forms of corruption, while the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is authorised to investigate and prosecute financial and economic crimes. In-country sources said both institutions had proven largely ineffective in curbing corruption due to insufficient funding, capacity shortages and a lack of political support. Historically, when law enforcement bodies acted, cases were often pursued selectively or politicised. High-profile corruption cases rarely resulted in substantial penalties, creating a perception of impunity.

2.54 Poorly paid judges and court officials were susceptible to bribery and there was a community perception the judicial system was corrupt according to in-country sources. Judges had substantial discretion to withdraw charges against defendants in criminal and civil corruption cases if deemed 'in the public interest', a term not defined in law. Judicial authorities could also conclude 'out-of-court settlements' with defendants in corruption cases if stolen funds or property were recovered, which often resulted in the withdrawal of charges without explanation (see Judiciary).

HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

2.55 Nigeria is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and its Optional Protocol. Nigeria has acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

SECURITY SITUATION

2.56 Security challenges differ significantly between the northern and southern regions of Nigeria due to major disparities in geography, climate, socioeconomic development and political dynamics. Nigeria's security situation was volatile at the time of writing due to worsening banditry in the North West Region, a resilient Islamist insurgency in the North East and violence between herders and farming communities spreading from the central belt southward. In-country sources said the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) had proven effective in controlling activities of Biafran

secessionists in the South East Region but were unable to stop banditry in the North West and attacks from Islamist militant groups in the North East. The South West (including Lagos) and South South regions (including Port Harcourt), as well as the FCT (including Abuja) remained largely unaffected by violent conflict at the time of writing. Rates of serious and violent crime were high throughout the country in both urban and rural areas, including incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping and homicide.

2.57 Nigeria ranked 4 out of 163 countries in the *2026 Global Terrorism Index*, where one is perceived as suffering the highest measurable impacts of terrorism. The country recorded 171 terrorist incidents in 2025, resulting in 750 fatalities and 444 hostages taken. Listed terrorist organisations including Boko Haram, ISWAP and *Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin* (JNIM) have established presences in Nigeria. *Lakurawa* (*Lukarawa*), an Islamist militant group reportedly affiliated with Islamic State and splinter groups of Boko Haram, is active in Kebbi, Niger and Sokoto states. The Office of the National Security Advisor, through the Counter Terrorism Centre, monitors militant groups and coordinates responses with the NAF, security and law enforcement agencies.

2.58 Nigeria's 'Middle Belt' stretches longitudinally between Northern and Southern Nigeria. It mainly covers the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, and the FCT. For further information on the security situation in these states see Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria.

Northern Regions

2.59 Poverty and a lack of governance in the North West Region led to increasing banditry-related violence in 2025, particularly across Katsina and Zamfara states. Armed bandit groups riding on motorbikes (*okadas*) operated throughout the region with impunity, raiding villages and kidnapping people. In-country sources said non-state armed groups in the North West Region generally refrained from attacking security services. Many highways in the North West were too dangerous for travel due to the high threat of criminality and kidnapping according to in-country sources. Bandit groups in the North West were primarily economically driven and kidnappings and mass abductions had become a lucrative business. A local monitoring organisation reported 1,452 fatalities arising from rural banditry, cattle rustling and related military operations in 2024, an increase from 892 deaths in 2023.

2.60 Comprising Islamic militants from the Sahel, armed herders and local actors, *Lakurawa* extended its control into ungoverned areas of the North West in 2025. Initially set up as a protective force against banditry, the group evolved to collecting taxes from the local community and enforcing a strict, literalist and heterodox form of Islam. It was designated a terrorist organization by the Nigerian Government in January 2025. *Lakurawa* launched several armed attacks on local villages in the North East Region in 2024 and early 2025, killing dozens. The NAF responded with air and ground operations, as well as arrests of *Lakurawa* militants. According to local monitoring groups, *Lakurawa's* raids on local communities and government operations against the group resulted in 48 fatalities in Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states in 2024. Despite being targeted by US airstrikes in December 2025, *Lakurawa* remained active in Sokoto State at the time of writing.

2.61 Conflicts between farmers and herders were prevalent in the North Central Region, stretching from the central belt southward. These conflicts were primarily driven by the effects of climate change, competition over ever-dwindling resources and, at times, organised criminality led by armed groups. Although farmer-herder conflicts often took place between Fulani Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities, disputes were almost always related to land use, not sectarian tensions. In-country sources said there were no coherent government policies at the national, state or local levels to address this challenge. Infighting between the federal and state governments was common and land use policies regarding agriculture and grazing at the subnational level were not regularly enforced.

2.62 Local monitoring groups recorded 567 fatalities from farmer-herder conflict in 2024 in the North Central Region, with the largest numbers recorded in Kaduna State and the FCT. Benue and Plateau states saw a series of mass-casualty attacks by herders on farming villages across Benue in 2025, resulting in over 150 deaths. North Central Region also recorded the highest prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria according to a 2024 study by a local polling agency. JNIM launched its first known attack in Nigeria in Kwara State in October 2025, killing a soldier. Government efforts to enhance security in the region were reportedly hindered by a lack of police and military personnel, as well as shortages of equipment.

2.63 In the North East Region, ISWAP and splinter groups of Boko Haram launched daily attacks on security forces in 2025, particularly in Yobe and Borno states. Their tactics often included abductions, torture, rape and forced marriages of civilians. These insurgent conflicts left 2.3 million Nigerians internally displaced, including 1.7 million in Borno State alone. Due to insecurity, in-country sources said all farming needed to take place close to fortified garrison towns and rates of malnutrition had soared. As a result, there were limited economic opportunities in the North West Region at the time of writing beyond the 'aid economy' funded through UN agencies and international non-government organisations (INGOs). In-country sources said Nigeria's overstretched armed forces had been unable to stop ISWAP and splinter groups of Boko Haram from expanding their areas of operation in the region.

2.64 At the time of writing, ISWAP governed territory on the fringes of Lake Chad, parts of Borno, southern Yobe and areas of northern Adamawa State. It also had a wide reach into Cameroon. In-country sources said it operated as a quasi-state, characterised by structured governance, taxation systems and administrative controls. ISWAP ensured security at markets and actively fostered business development in its territories. It also led evacuations when flooding occurred and provided rebuilding materials. ISWAP provided security in exchange for taxes, in addition to requiring fishing permits for Lake Chad and charging an annual livestock tax on cattle. ISWAP generally allowed people to enter and leave its territories. In-country sources said ISWAP did not target Muslims with violence unless they were accused of being government informers. ISWAP had a trained, professional army capable of carrying out targeted attacks. Throughout 2025 ISWAP carried out attacks on military installations, towns and roads, as it seized control of several strategic sites in Borno State. The United States carried out air strikes against ISWAP in coordination with the Nigerian Government in May 2026.

2.65 Boko Haram experienced major splintering following the death of its founder Mohammed Yusuf in 2009 and again in 2015, which led to the creation of distinct groups. According to in-country sources, these splinter groups controlled several separate enclaves, including on islands in Lake Chad and in the Gwoza Hills near the Nigeria-Cameroon border, as well as one enclave located in Kaduna State. In-country sources said splinter groups of Boko Haram were much less bureaucratic and centralised than ISWAP and their military leaders had more independence. Attacks from splinter groups of Boko Haram primarily targeted civilians, although it sometimes attacked replenish weapons arsenals. Boko Haram had previously used child soldiers. To gather resources, the group often plundered settlements and kidnapped residents for ransom, including Muslims. In-country sources said those deemed as 'infidels' or 'apostates' had been enslaved and killed by splinter groups of Boko Haram.

Southern Regions

2.66 In-country sources said the South West was the safest, most stable region in Nigeria due in large part to its economic prosperity. The region had recorded few incidents of sectarian violence, terrorism or farmer-herder conflicts in recent years. A 2024 study by a local polling agency found the South West Region had the second highest recorded rate of kidnapping, mostly for ransom or for use in cult rituals. Reported gang violence in Lagos State was high, accounting for over 279 fatalities between January 2020 and March 2025.

2.67 The South South Region had not witnessed violence by Niger Delta militants in recent years according to in-country sources. The region was relatively stable in 2025 because it continued to receive significant federal attention, with security measures in place primarily to protect oil industry infrastructure. Local monitoring organisations reported a 30 per cent decline in fatalities linked to violent incidents in the South South Region in 2024 compared with 2023 (from 1,019 down to 713 fatalities). The overall number of conflict-related fatalities declined again in 2025, primarily due to a reduction in mob violence, criminal violence and communal conflicts. The South South Region recorded regular oil thefts and instances of maritime piracy but little in the way of sectarian violence, terrorism or farmer-herder conflicts. Rivers State had a high rate of gang violence, resulting in more than 750 fatalities between January 2020 and March 2025 (see also Members of confraternities/cults and criminal gangs).

2.68 The South East Region faced security challenges from non-state armed groups in 2025, although in-country sources said the deployment of the military and legal action against leaders had significantly affected the activities of Biafran secessionist movements. Secessionist groups including the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing Eastern Security Network (ESN), as well as the Biafran Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE) and the Biafran Liberation Army (BLA), operated in the region. Local monitoring groups recorded 379 deaths in the South East Region from violence related to pro-Biafran agitation in 2024. In-country sources said IPOB was generally

viewed as less combative than in the past and less likely to be involved in attacks on federal security personnel. Most attacks in the region appeared to be carried out by BRGIE or criminal organisations using Biafran symbols and flags.

2.69 Following the arrest of IPOB's leader Nnamdi Kanu in 2021, the group implemented a sit-at-home order across the South East Region designed as a weekly protest calling for his release. In February 2026, IPOB announced a 'total cancellation' of the sit-at-home order. At the time of writing, the security situation had improved in the South East Region, but commercial transportation companies continued to avoid travel on Mondays. The ESN launched a campaign targeting 'enemies in the forests' of the South East Region in 2024, reportedly dislodging more than 70 Fulani herders and some criminal settlements. ESN also conducted limited guerrilla-style attacks against NAF and military installations, although both the frequency of attacks and the number of fatalities had declined since late 2024 (see also Members of Biafran secessionist movements).

2.70 Imo State was most affected by fatalities related to vigilante and mob violence in the South East Region in 2024, as gunmen turned parts of the Oguta local government area into 'ungoverned spaces'. In Oguta and Orsu local government areas, IPOB exercised 'fragmented shadow governance' with the ESN operating checkpoints and enforcing lockdowns. The NAF was near-absent and courts remained closed. Anambra State faced security challenges in 2025, including cultism, armed robbery and kidnappings, although it recorded one of Nigeria's lowest rates of deaths linked to ethnic and communal violence. Unidentified gunmen carried out multiple deadly attacks across Anambra targeting security forces and vigilantes, resulting in 114 fatalities in 2024. Ebonyi State recorded seven fatalities linked to pro-Biafran activities in 2024, the lowest figure among the five states of the South East Region. Security forces In Enugu State arrested dozens of suspected IPOB/ESN members and killed members of BRGIE in 2025. Abia remained one of Nigeria's safest states at the time of writing.

3. REFUGEE CONVENTION CLAIMS

RACE/NATIONALITY

3.1 Nigeria is composed of 250 ethnic groups, with the term 'Nigerian' referring exclusively to citizenship-based civic nationality. The Constitution guarantees all Nigerians equality before the law, under which they enjoy civil and political rights and are bound by public obligations and duties without distinction.

3.2 Non-indigenous communities in Nigeria residing outside their 'traditional homelands' sometimes experience localised discrimination contradicting constitutional rights of equality. This localised discrimination generally targets all members of minority groups seen as settlers, migrants or recent arrivals. Discrimination often takes the form of minorities facing challenges accessing housing, higher education at state institutions and employment opportunities at the state government level (see Internal relocation).

Igbo

3.3 Igbo-speaking peoples' traditional homeland of 'Igboland' straddles the Niger River in today's South East Region of Nigeria. The Igbo are predominantly Christian and developed a unified ethnic identity in the context of decolonisation and Nigeria's civil war. The emergence of neo-Biafran movements in 2000, following Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule, rekindled a sense of ethnic solidarity among the Igbo based on narratives of injustice and self-determination. In-country sources said the Igbo were considered economically prosperous and were recognised for their strong entrepreneurial culture, high rate of small business ownership and significant contribution to the country's trade and manufacturing sectors. The Igbo are diverse in terms of socio-economic status and have attained a range of education levels and hold varied professions.

3.4 In the South East Region, the Igbo form a majority and dominate social, political and economic life. The governors of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states are all of Igbo ethnicity. Throughout the South East Region, the Igbo did not face official or societal discrimination and relations with other ethnic groups are generally amicable according to in-country sources. Many Igbo in the South East Region harbour feelings of historical grievance against the Nigerian Government and feel a strong sense of marginalisation and scepticism toward the idea of a unified national 'Nigerian' identity. The Igbo had been politically marginalised at the federal level. In-country sources said Igbo representatives had never held major national political office in the post-Biafra War period.

3.5 Igbo have migrated in significant numbers to other states in Nigeria and make up a substantial portion of the population of Lagos, Delta and Rivers states. Igbo often practice the *nwaboi* apprenticeship system in these states, under which successful Igbo businesspeople take in apprentices from the South East Region. Trainees are expected to serve for a period of years before being given resources to begin their own businesses.

3.6 A 2024 study on national belonging found 47 per cent of Igbo reported experiencing discrimination based on their ethnicity at least once in the past year. This perceived discrimination was not limited to interpersonal interactions but was also with police, military and the political system. There were reports of APC supporters intimidating and suppressing voters in Igbo-dominated areas during the March 2023 Lagos State gubernatorial election. In-country sources said Igbo outside of the South East Region were often excluded from state government employment and denied places in post-secondary education at the state level along with other minority groups. In-country sources said Igbo were able to access public education, health and social services where they existed at the federal, state and local levels (see Internal relocation).

3.7 DFAT assesses it is rare for Igbo in the South East Region to face official or societal discrimination based on their ethnicity. DFAT assesses it is rare for Igbo in the South East Region to face societal violence. DFAT assesses Igbo residing outside the South East Region possibly face official discrimination based on their ethnicity in the form of access to post-secondary education and state government employment opportunities. DFAT assesses Igbo outside of the South East Region are unlikely to face societal discrimination based on their ethnicity in the form of access to accommodation and through voter suppression around elections. DFAT assesses it is unlikely Igbo outside of the South East Region face societal violence.

3.8 For additional information on neo-Biafran movements, see Biafran secessionist movements.

RELIGION

3.9 Nigeria does not collect statistics on the size of its religious communities. Unofficial estimates vary but generally agree the population is almost evenly divided between Christians and Muslims, with around 2 per cent of Nigerians belonging to other or no religious groups. Many Nigerians syncretise indigenous animism with Christianity or Islam. The traditional divide between the 'Muslim North' and 'Christian South' remains, although there are Christian communities in the northern regions and Muslim communities in the southern regions of the country. A mix of Christians and Muslims of various ethnicities comprise the 'Middle Belt'. Ethnicity is not necessarily a determinant of religious identity, as many ethnic groups include both Christians and Muslims.

3.10 Nigeria's Constitution prohibits the federal and state governments from adopting any religion as a 'State Religion' and 'religious tolerance' is defined as a national ethic. However, *sharia* law has governed personal and family matters, as well as criminal and statutory laws in 12 Muslim-majority states and the FCT since 1999. Chapter 4 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion, freedom to change religion or belief and freedom to manifest and propagate religion or belief through worship, teaching, practice and observance. The Constitution also stipulates it is the duty of the state to encourage interfaith marriages and promote associations that cut across religious barriers to promote national integration. Political parties are prohibited from limiting their membership based on religion.

3.11 Both federal and state governments have the authority to regulate religious instruction in public schools. Article 38(2) of the Constitution prohibits schools requiring students to receive religious instruction and participate in or attend any religious ceremony or observance pertaining to any religion other than their own. State and religious officials have confirmed students have the right to request a teacher of their own religious belief to provide an alternative to any instruction offered in a religion other than their own. Article 38 of the Constitution states no religious community will be prevented from providing religious instruction to students of that community in any place that community wholly maintains.

3.12 Bauchi, Borno, Katsina and Yobe states maintain state-level Christian and Muslim religious affairs ministries or bureaus with varying mandates and authorities. Other state governors have appointed interfaith special advisers on religious affairs. Kano and Zamfara states have state-sanctioned *Hisbah Boards* that regulate Islamic religious affairs and preaching, license imams and attempt to resolve religious disputes between Muslims. Several states also have laws requiring licenses for preachers, places of worship and religious schools for registered religious groups. For example, Katsina State has a board with the authority to regulate Islamic schools, preachers and mosques, including by issuing permits, suspending operations and imprisoning or fining violators.

Atheists

3.13 There are no official statistics on the number of atheists in Nigeria but estimates range from more than 2.4 million strict non-believers. Findings of a 2025 study on contemporary atheism in Nigeria showed the percentage of Nigerians identifying as 'unreligious' had steadily increased since the early 2000s, particularly among males under 30 years of age.

3.14 There are no laws preventing disbelief in or lack of belief in the existence of god or gods in Nigeria, however in-country sources said the centrality of religion was rarely questioned. Nigeria's parallel court systems (customary and *sharia*) enforce laws against public insults to and renunciation of religion that have sometimes been used against atheists. Under the customary system (applicable nationwide) insulting religion is prohibited under Section 204 of the *Criminal Code 1990*, which penalises intentional public insults to religion with up to two years' imprisonment. *Sharia* penal codes operating at the state-level are applicable to Muslims and include 'apostasy' (the abandonment or renunciation of Islam by a Muslim) in the list of crimes punishable by death or banishment. DFAT was unaware at the time of writing of any executions being carried out in recent years for apostasy.

3.15 International media have reported on threats made against well-known atheists, usually on social media, in the northern regions of Nigeria. For example, social media users frequently posted messages trolling or threatening atheists on a Facebook group named 'Anti-Atheist' using the Hausa language common in the northern regions of Nigeria. Information regarding violence against atheists in the northern regions of Nigeria was limited at the time of writing. In terms of legal action, the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, Mubarak Bala, was arrested

on 28 April 2020 by Kaduna State police because of a Facebook post allegedly insulting the Prophet Muhammad. Bala was reportedly held over for a year before being charged with 10 counts of causing a public disturbance in 2021. Bala was sentenced to 24 years in prison in 2022 after being convicted on 18 counts under Sections 210 and 114 of the *Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law 2000*. In May 2024, the Kano State Court of Appeal ruled Bala's punishment was 'excessive' and reduced his prison sentence to five years. Bala was released from prison in January 2025 and subsequently left the country.

3.16 Nigerians residing in southern regions of the country who publicly profess not to follow any religion or who were perceived as being against religion were unlikely to face official discrimination or legal action by state authorities according to in-country sources. Atheists in the southern regions sometimes faced ostracism from their families and dismissal from employment if they publicly advocated for their atheist beliefs.

3.17 DFAT assesses it is rare for atheists in the southern regions of Nigeria to face official discrimination based on their lack of religion unless they publicly insult religious figures. DFAT assesses it is unlikely atheists in the northern regions of Nigeria face official discrimination based on their lack of religion unless they publicly insult religious figures or abandon or renounce the Islamic faith. DFAT assesses it is possible atheists face societal discrimination in the form of ostracism from their families and dismissal from employment. DFAT assesses atheists in Nigeria are unlikely to face societal violence.

Christians

3.18 Approximately three-quarters of Christians in Nigeria are Protestant, with significant numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics and Presbyterians. Nigeria's Christians are primarily concentrated in the southern regions of the country and in the 'Middle Belt'. The Nigerian Government recognises the right of Christians to practice their religion publicly. Christians have the legal right to own houses of worship, hold bank accounts and publish religious literature.

3.19 Christians in Nigeria, including in the northern regions of the country, have not been specifically targeted with violence more than other religious groups. The UN's top humanitarian official in Nigeria stated in 2026 attributing violence to the targeted persecution of a religious group was not accurate and the 'vast majority of the more than 40,000 people killed in the insurgency are Muslims'. The UN warned oversimplified narratives of a 'Christian genocide' occurring in Nigeria risked deepening social fractures rather than addressing their actual causes (see Security situation). In-country sources said a number of groups in the South East and South South Regions had actively sought to amplify claims of a so-called 'Christian Genocide' to increase international support for their secessionist activities (see Biafran secessionist movements).

3.20 A 2023 report by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (InterSociety) stated jihadist groups in Nigeria had killed over 100,000 Christians in the 16 years since 2009. The report did not provide an itemised list of sources or sufficient information to verify these figures. In-country sources said InterSociety's 2023 report was not academically rigorous and its researchers had no way of determining whether someone killed in the northern regions was Christian or Muslim so they generally inferred victims were Christian without solid evidence. The more reputable monitoring group, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) provided verifiable figures showing under 53,000 Nigerian civilians (both Christians and Muslims) had been killed in targeted political violence between 2009 and 2025. ACLED identified a total of 384 incidents where Christians were specifically targeted in Nigeria from 2020 to September 2025, in which a total of 317 people were killed.

3.21 Christians in the northern regions of Nigeria sometimes experience localised discrimination contradicting constitutional rights of equality. In-country sources said this included difficulties accessing housing, higher education at state institutions and state government employment. Christians were able to access public education, health and social services where they existed at the federal, state and local levels (see Internal relocation).

3.22 DFAT assesses it is rare for Christians in the southern regions of Nigeria to face official or societal discrimination based on their religion. DFAT assesses it is possible Christians in the northern regions of Nigeria face official and societal discrimination based on religion in the form of access to housing, higher education at state institutions and state government employment. DFAT assesses Christians are unlikely to face sectarian violence.

Muslims

3.23 The vast majority of Nigerian Muslims are Sunni, with estimates suggesting 5 to 17 per cent of Muslims are Shi'a. Nigeria's Muslims are primarily concentrated in the northern regions of the country and in the 'Middle Belt'. The Nigerian Government recognises the right of Muslims to practice their religion publicly. Muslims have the legal right to own houses of worship, hold bank accounts and publish religious literature.

3.24 Muslims in the southern regions of Nigeria outside of the South West (including Lagos State) sometimes experience localised discrimination contradicting constitutional rights of equality. In-country sources said this included difficulties accessing housing, higher education at state institutions and state government employment. Muslims were able to access public education, health and social services where they existed at the federal, state and local levels (see Internal relocation).

3.25 DFAT assesses it is rare for Muslims in the northern regions of Nigeria to face official or societal discrimination based on their religion. DFAT assesses it is possible Muslims in the South South and South East Regions of Nigeria face official and societal discrimination based on religion in the form of housing allocation, access to higher education at state institutions and state government employment opportunities. DFAT assesses it is rare for Muslims to face sectarian violence.

POLITICAL OPINION (ACTUAL OR IMPUTED)

3.26 Article 39(1) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference. Article 40 guarantees the right to assemble freely and to associate with other persons and to form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association. The *Electoral Act 2022* provides the legal framework for elections.

3.27 Since transitioning from military rule in 1999, Nigeria has held seven regular democratic elections at the national level. Freedom House reported the 2023 presidential election featured significant irregularities, including violence at polling locations, allegations of vote rigging, voter suppression, and technological and procedural errors that delayed the opening of the polls and the pronouncement of results. Domestic and international observers expressed concern about the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC's) management of the election, which was characterised by low public trust and low voter turnout. In legislative elections held in 2023 and 2024, election observers reported numerous irregularities, including violence at polling stations, intimidation of voters and officials and vote buying. Although the APC holds most elected offices in Nigeria at the federal and state levels, Freedom House stated the country's multiparty system provided an opportunity for opposition parties to gain power through elections.

3.28 In-country sources said Nigerians were generally able to engage in discussions on politics and other topics, however critical views expressed publicly about political leaders or other sensitive topics like the military, religion and ethnicity were often seen as 'red lines'. The *Cybercrimes Act 2015*, amended in 2024, was sometimes used by authorities to arrest and detain human rights activists, although successful prosecutions were rare.

3.29 Rallies, protests or other assemblies do not require police permits or permission by authorities. However, federal and state governments often ban public events they deem threats to national security on grounds they could incite political, ethnic or religious tensions. In-country sources said authorities sometimes responded to peaceful protests in a heavy-handed manner, including through widespread arrests of protesters and the use of live ammunition to disperse crowds. For example, in-country sources said at least 24 people were killed by police for taking part in the #EndBadGovernance demonstrations in 2024. More than 1,000 protesters were detained during the #EndBadGovernance demonstrations and dozens charged with treason, although most charges were dropped and suspects released by the end of 2024.

3.30 DFAT assesses human rights activists who publicly criticise the president, other politicians or the military possibly face official discrimination in the form of harassment by security forces and periods of detention. DFAT assesses it is rare for human rights activists to face societal discrimination or violence. DFAT assesses people who participate in protests possibly face official discrimination and violence. DFAT assesses it is rare for protesters to face societal discrimination.

Biafran Secessionist Movements

3.31 There are several active Biafran secessionist movements in Nigeria, with BRGIE, IPOB and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) being most prominent. The goals of these organisations have changed over time but their focus remains on efforts to protect the Igbo and secure political independence for eastern Nigeria. Biafran secessionist movements draw their support predominantly from the Igbo speaking states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Most public Biafran activism takes place online. Biafran activists operate openly overseas, using social media as platforms for political advocacy. In-country sources said the Igbo diaspora provided the bulk of funding for Biafran secessionist organisations. According to in-country sources, at the time of writing, these secessionist movements had limited links with the Igbo diaspora in Australia.

3.32 MASSOB was established by Ralph Uwazuruike in 2000 as a non-violent campaign built on civil resistance, symbolic marches and community mobilisation to advocate for an independent Biafran state. For over 25 years, MASSOB sought to raise consciousness by organising peaceful rallies and enforcing boycotts, without establishing an armed wing. Federal authorities have threatened to proscribe MASSOB on several occasions but have never done so. Uwazuruike was summoned to appear before Imo State Police Command's Anti-Kidnapping Unit on 20 October 2025 to answer questions regarding alleged criminal invasion, forgery and wilful damage. Uwazuruike said the summons was an attempt to prevent him from participating in peaceful protests planned at the same time. MASSOB continued to conduct public activities at the time of writing.

3.33 IPOB was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu and enjoyed significant support both domestically and in the diaspora. Kanu introduced the idea of armed struggle in 2014 and founded the armed wing of ESN by 2020, reportedly in response to rising security threats from Fulani herdsmen. ESN members included former Nigerian army soldiers, as well as civilians trained in basic combat skills. The Nigerian Government and South East Region governors proscribed IPOB as a terrorist organisation in 2017. Kanu was charged with terrorism offences in 2021. The Enugu High Court ruled in 2023 the designation of IPOB as a terrorist group was unconstitutional. This was subsequently overturned by Nigeria's Supreme Court. Kanu was sentenced to life imprisonment for terrorism offences by the Federal High Court on 20 November 2025. At the time of writing, IPOB had shifted towards a non-violent approach, calling for the realisation of Biafra through peaceful means including a referendum.

3.34 BRGIE was established by Simon Ekpa primarily as a diaspora-led secessionist group. BRGIE has been considered the most violent secessionist movement in the South East Region since 2023. Ekpa was arrested in November 2024 in Finland for inciting terrorism and spreading violent separatist propaganda online. Nigeria's Sanctions Committee designated Ekpa and his affiliated businesses terrorism financiers in March 2025. In September 2025 a Finnish court sentenced Ekpa to six years in prison after convicting him of terrorism-related offences. In-country sources said attacks by BRGIE and BLA were rare in 2025.

3.35 Sources within the Nigerian security services told the European Union Agency for Asylum in 2025 prominent individuals supporting the Biafran cause were often monitored online and offline. Real or suspected supporters of pro-Biafran agitation were often arrested and detained, with some held in military facilities. In-country sources said young people in the South East Region had been stopped at checkpoints and arrested if they had anything linked to Biafra, including content on their phones. The NAF had been involved in enforced and involuntary disappearances of ESN members with no repercussions according to in-country sources.

3.36 DFAT assesses high-ranking members of BRGIE and IPOB are likely to face official discrimination in the form of harassment by security forces, arrest, imprisonment and enforced disappearances. DFAT assesses lower profile members and supporters of BRGIE and IPOB who do not engage in violence or lead protests are unlikely to face official discrimination in the form of harassment and arrest. IPOB is a declared terrorist organisation under the *Nigerian Terrorism Act 2022* and members of BRGIE have been designated as terrorist financiers by the Nigeria Sanctions Committee. DFAT assesses MASSOB members, regardless of level of seniority, are unlikely to face official discrimination in the form of harassment by security forces and detention. DFAT assesses it is rare for members of Biafran secessionist movements to face societal discrimination. DFAT assesses BRGIE and IPOB members possibly face violence from security forces, while MASSOB members are unlikely to face violence.

Civil Society

3.37 CSOs in Nigeria are governed by laws at the federal, state and local government levels. Nigeria does not have a centralised federal law guiding the operation of CSOs but relies on the *Company and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020* for the registration of non-profit organisations. CSOs must abide by the *Money Laundering Act and Combating the Financing of Terrorism Act 2004*. A diverse set of laws at the state and local government levels govern the registration and operation of CSOs.

3.38 Nigeria had a strong and independent civil society according to in-country sources. There were no onerous restrictions on the establishment of CSOs and NGOs, which were generally able to engage in work on human rights and governance issues according to Freedom House. Humanitarian aid workers operating in the northern regions of Nigeria were sometimes impeded by restrictions imposed by civilian and military officials, as well as by the activities of armed groups (see Security situation).

3.39 DFAT assesses it is rare for civil society actors to face official or societal discrimination. DFAT assesses it is rare for civil society actors to face violence.

Islamic Movement in Nigeria

3.40 The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) is a Shi'a Muslim political organisation advocating for the creation of an Iranian-style Islamic state in Nigeria. It was founded in Kaduna State following the 1979 Iranian Revolution and does not recognise the authority of the Nigerian Government. A Nigerian court ruled in July 2019 the IMN's activities amounted to 'acts of terrorism and illegality'. The organisation was subsequently banned. Violence, arrests and deaths of protesters and security forces have occurred at IMN-led demonstrations, including in 2022 and 2025. The IMN held peaceful demonstrations on 2 March 2026 in Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Niger and Sokoto states and the FCT following the death of Iran's leader Ali Khamenei during US-Israeli airstrikes.

3.41 DFAT assesses high-ranking members of IMN are likely to face official discrimination in the form of harassment by security forces, arrest and imprisonment. DFAT assesses lower profile members and supporters of IMN who do not engage in violence or lead protests are unlikely to face official discrimination in the form of harassment and arrest. DFAT assesses it is rare for members of IMN to face societal discrimination or violence.

Media and Journalists

3.42 Chapter 4 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and of the press. Specific obligations of the 'mass media' are outlined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, under which the press, radio and television must 'uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people'. The *Official Secrets Act 1966*, focused on protecting sensitive information and documents to ensure security and defence, is sometimes evoked and limits journalists' ability to hold the Nigerian Government accountable. On 28 February 2024, the Nigerian Government amended the *Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015* to remove provisions that had been used against journalists and dissenting voices in contravention of its original purpose. A variety of federal and state laws deal with the issues of freedom of expression, access to information and press freedom.

3.43 Nigeria's media scene is well developed, lively and diverse. The country has over 100 print media publications, of which *Punch*, *The Nation*, *Vanguard*, *Guardian* and *Premium Times* are the most well-known. The majority of the 36 states also have a state-owned daily newspaper. There are several hundred radio stations and television channels alongside international media. Nigeria ranked 112 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2026 *World Press Freedom Index*. There were no reports of journalists or media workers being killed in Nigeria in 2025.

3.44 Civil and criminal cases have been filed against journalists critical of senior political figures, political parties, well-connected individuals and security forces according to in-country sources. Most criminal cases against journalists and media workers were ultimately dropped, with those detained generally released within a few days or weeks. In-country sources said state governors were more active using police powers to harass and detain journalists reporting on sensitive issues, rather than politicians and officials at the federal level.

3.45 Freedom House stated government officials had restricted press freedom by publicly criticising, harassing and arresting journalists, especially those covering corruption, human rights violations, separatist and communal violence or other politically sensitive topics. Reporters Without Borders stated the level of government interference in the news media was significant and often involved pressure, harassment of journalists and even censorship. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, more than 50 journalists were assaulted or harassed by security forces while covering #EndBadGovernance demonstrations in 2024.

3.46 Recent high-profile arrests include Daniel Ojukwu, a journalist with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism, who was detained on 1 May 2024 over an investigative report revealing corruption practices implicating senior police officers. Ojukwu was held in police custody for over a week without charges for violating the *Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015* and subsequently released after public outcry. In another instance, Segun Olatunji, an editor with FirstNews Online Newspaper, was arrested in Lagos on 15 March 2024 by officers from the Defence Intelligence Agency over a report exposing corrupt activities of government officials. During the arrest, Olatunji was handcuffed, blindfolded, stripped naked and reportedly treated in an inhumane and degrading manner while he was unlawfully detained for two weeks.

3.47 Freedom House ranked Nigeria as 'Partly Free' in its *Freedom on the Net 2025* report due to restrictions on protesters, online activists and journalists who published content negatively portraying powerful individuals. For example, a TikTok user was arrested in December 2024 for reportedly spreading false information aimed at provoking the public against the police. The TikTok user was charged with cyberbullying and cyberstalking under the *Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015*. The outcome of the case was not available at the time of writing. In-country sources said most social media users charged under the *Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015* apologised and removed offending posts. The charges against them were then dropped. Federal and state governments sometimes petitioned social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and LinkedIn to deactivate profiles of activists.

3.48 DFAT assesses journalists covering topics deemed sensitive by political figures, political parties, well-connected individuals and security forces possibly face official discrimination in the form of harassment by security forces, questioning and lawsuits. DFAT assesses it is rare for journalists to face societal discrimination or violence. DFAT assesses the majority of social media users in Nigeria can use platforms without incident.

GROUPS OF INTEREST

Women

3.49 Nigeria has acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex under Article 15 and guarantees the equality of citizens regardless of sex under Article 42. Article 17 commits the Nigerian Government to progress policies ensuring equal pay for equal work without discrimination on the grounds of sex. The Nigerian Government's *National Gender Policy 2021-2026* aims to advance gender equality, empowerment of women and ensure social inclusion in the public and private sectors. It focuses on enhancing women's participation in political and public life, ensuring equal economic opportunities and combating all forms of violence and discrimination against women through promoting legal and social reforms. Several states also have laws mandating equal opportunities for women.

3.50 The 2025 World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* ranked Nigeria 124 out of 148 economies for women's economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. The report noted labour force participation rates and healthy life expectancy had risen for women in Nigeria in recent years. However, political empowerment had regressed due to diminished representation of women in ministerial positions.

3.51 Discriminatory laws and regulations based on gender exist at the state level. For example, provisions of *sharia* law in the northern regions do not consider domestic violence ('wife beating') a crime if it does not 'inflict serious injury or grievous' harm. Under *sharia* law, a daughter is only entitled to inherit a half share of family assets in comparison to a son's full share. In the southern regions, women married under customary law have little or no right to their spouse's property upon separation, in contrast with women married under the *Marriage Act 1914* who are entitled to a share of matrimonial property.

3.52 GBV against women and girls takes many forms. It can be physical, emotional, psychological or sexual in nature and may encompass threats of violence and coercion. GBV (including domestic, intimate partner and family violence) is a significant problem in Nigeria according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with 27,698 cases reported between 2020 and 2023. According to the 2024 *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey* (most recent), the percentage of women who had experienced physical violence committed by a husband, intimate partner or anyone else since the age of 15 years had decreased from 31 per cent in 2018 to 19 per cent in 2024. The percentage of women who had experienced physical violence since age 15 varied by region, from a high of 32 per cent in South South to a low of 11 per cent in North West. In-country sources said the reduction in rates of GBV in recent years in Nigeria was due in part to the success of government and CSO-run awareness raising campaigns.

3.53 A common form of gender-based violence is intimate partner violence, which refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm and includes acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour. In Nigeria, the definition of intimate partner violence covers all women who had ever had a husband or other intimate partner but excludes 'boyfriends'. The 2024 *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey* reported 23 per cent of Nigerian women had suffered intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Among women who had ever been married or had an intimate partner and who had experienced physical violence since age 15, approximately 55 per cent reported their current husband or intimate partner was the perpetrator of the violence and 22 per cent reported their former husband or intimate partner was the perpetrator. Twelve percent of never-married women who had ever had an intimate partner and 11 per cent of divorced, separated, or widowed women had experienced sexual violence, as compared with 5 per cent of women who were currently married or who currently had an intimate partner and 2 per cent of never-married women who have never had an intimate partner. Sexual violence was generally committed by people with whom women had a close personal relationships, primarily their current husband or intimate partner. By region, the prevalence of sexual violence by any perpetrator ranged from a high of 7 per cent in South South to a low of 4 per cent in North East. Across the states, the prevalence of sexual violence by any perpetrator was highest in Bayelsa (20 per cent) and lowest in Kebbi (less than 1 per cent).

3.54 The *Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015* addresses multiple forms of GBV, including sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, harmful traditional practices and socioeconomic violence. At the time of writing, 35 of Nigeria's 36 states had passed or adopted the *VAPP Act*, leaving only Kano State yet to adopt it. The *VAPP Act* created offences for: spousal battery, forceful ejection from the home, forced financial dependence or economic abuse, harmful widowhood practices, female genital mutilation/cutting, other harmful traditional practices, substance attacks (such as acid attacks), political violence and violence by state actors (especially government security forces). It provides for a public register of convicted sex offenders and mandates penalties for conviction of rape and/or sexual assault ranging from 12 years' to life imprisonment for offenders older than 14 and a maximum of 14 years' imprisonment for all others. The *VAPP Act* includes instructions for appointing protection officers to coordinate with courts and provide victim survivors with medical, psychosocial, legal, rehabilitative and reintegration assistance. The *VAPP Act* also authorises courts to issue protection orders upon application by a victim survivor, including protections for the identities of victim survivors and provisions for courts to award them appropriate compensation.

3.55 State protection available to women in Nigeria reporting GBV in all of its forms is generally not refused based on a person's ethnicity, religious denomination or if they are single or divorced. In-country sources said the Nigerian Government was focused on strengthening its response to GBV by enforcing legal frameworks and finalising criminal cases more quickly, generally within a year. The Minister of Women Affairs, Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, said in November 2025 efforts were underway to raise the national GBV conviction rate from 5 per cent to 25 per cent by 2026, alongside plans to establish comprehensive support centres in every senatorial district. In 2025, 50 sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) operated across 24 states and the FCT. SARCs provided confidential, generally free of charge, client-focused services, including emergency medical treatment, forensic medical examination, counselling support and on-going support throughout investigations and prosecutions. Protection orders are available to victim survivors of all forms of GBV, which in-country sources said were issued at judges' discretion and frequently granted.

3.56 Barriers to women and girls reporting GBV included the limited availability and capacity of SARCs, as well as religious and cultural norms. In-country sources said most SARCs were located in state capitals and did not operate 24 hours a day. Despite being nominally free of charge, services sometimes required upfront payment, including for medical consultations, medications and transport, although GBV survivors often used funds available under the *VAPP Act* to pay for these services. In-country sources said there was a culture of silence around GBV, with victim survivors often suffering stigma or shame. All states have shelters to accommodate victim survivors of GBV, run primarily by CSOs and faith-based organisations. Most shelters are located in capital cities, with fewer in rural areas.

3.57 Police effectiveness in investigating and charging offenders in GBV cases varied by state, with in-country sources identifying Lagos and Kaduna states as being particularly effective jurisdictions. According to the UNDP, prosecution rates for GBV were low due to gaps in investigative expertise and legal knowledge among law enforcement practitioners. The cultural and religious beliefs of individual police officers in the northern regions were often identified as factors limiting the implementation of the *VAPP Act* and prosecution of offenders in some jurisdictions. Some state governments have not provided adequate resourcing for investigating and prosecuting GBV offences effectively.

3.58 Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons, is illegal in Nigeria under the *VAPP Act*. FGM/C was mostly carried out on girls under 16 years of age and involved 'nicking' of the clitoris and/or removing some flesh. Other forms of FGM/C included 'infibulation' (narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal), '*angurya* cuts' (scraping of tissue surrounding the opening of the vagina) and '*gishiri* cuts' (cutting of the vagina). The majority of FGM/C was carried out by 'traditional midwives'.

3.59 Girls and women of all faiths were subject to FGM/C. Nigeria has seen a consistent decrease in the prevalence of FGM/C with rates of girls and women between 15 to 49 years having undergone the practices decreasing from 25 per cent in 2013 to 20 per cent in 2018 and down to 14 per cent in 2024. The prevalence of FGM/C was highest in the South East and South West Regions of the country, while it was the lowest in the North East. The 2024 *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey* (most recent) reported FGM/C prevalence was highest among Yoruba and Igbo women at more than 20 per cent. FGM/C prevalence varied but was slightly higher in urban than rural areas. Police were reportedly willing to provide protection to girls or women in fear of FGM/C but capacity and resourcing varied across states.

3.60 Nigerian women and girls have been trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation by organised crime networks. Between 2017 and the first quarter of 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) facilitated the voluntary return of 4,877 Nigerian victim survivors of trafficking. Women and girls accounted for 88 per cent of returnees. Of the 4,877 returned individuals, 86 per cent were from the southern regions, mainly Lagos, Edo and Delta states. Young women victim survivors of trafficking in Nigeria are often recruited through forced abduction, pressure from their parents and deceptive agreements between their parents and traffickers. Poverty, conflict, poor education, social pressure and cultural norms make Nigerian women and girls vulnerable to trafficking.

3.61 Historically it was socially taboo for women in some areas of Nigeria to live alone without a male relative or guardian. In-country sources said women were able to live alone in the southern regions of Nigeria but were often viewed with disapproval or shame in the northern regions. Divorce now carried less stigma than in the past and courts generally ensured child support payments were made. Divorced women were free to remarry in most areas. According to in-country sources, there were no official barriers for single, divorced and widowed women accessing education and employment. Unofficial barriers for single mothers accessing education and employment included childcare responsibilities and a lack of social support. Labour laws do not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value or non-discrimination based on sex in hiring. Female-headed households reportedly often found it harder to secure accommodation.

3.62 Women are severely underrepresented in politics, with low participation rates in both elective and appointive positions at all levels of government. In the 2023 legislative elections, 15 women were elected to the House of Representatives (out of 360 members) and 3 elected to the Senate (out of 109 members). Only one woman has occupied one of the top four positions in the Nigerian Government since the country's independence. Despite campaign promises by President Tinubu women would constitute 35 per cent of all government appointments, his

48-member federal Cabinet comprised only eight women (17 per cent female representation). In-country sources said strongly established societal and cultural barriers accounted for women's low representation in politics.

3.63 DFAT assesses women possibly face official discrimination based on gender in the form of discriminatory laws at the state level and underrepresentation in politics and government positions. DFAT assesses women possibly face societal discrimination based on gender in the form of biases in hiring and pay equality. DFAT assesses women possibly face violence in the form of GBV and FGM/C.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

3.64 Same-sex sexual activity is criminalised federally in Nigeria under the *Criminal Code 1990*, which prohibits 'carnal knowledge against the order of nature' under Section 214 and 'gross indecency' under Section 214. Sentences include a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment. Section 5 of the *Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013* prohibits same-sex marriages or civil unions with sentences of up to 14 years' imprisonment. At the state level, same-sex sexual activities are criminalised under various interpretations of *sharia* law in the northern regions, with the maximum sentence being death by stoning. Trans people may also face prosecution under state-level *sharia* laws. At the time of writing, there was limited information on the number of arrests and prosecutions under anti-LGBTQIA+ laws in Nigeria. In-country sources said authorities primarily targeted gay men and trans women. Lesbians, trans men and bisexual men and women were not a focus for authorities and were largely ignored, in part due to their lower profile.

3.65 LGBTQIA+ people face official discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identities, including harassment, assault and arrest by police officers. NGOs in Nigeria have documented tens of cases per year in which LGBTQIA+ people were arrested on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs stated actual figures may have been higher due to underreporting. For example, 13 people were arrested in Lagos in April 2024 for attending a 'gay party' after a video of them dancing was sent to local police. They were later released after paying fines of over NGN135,000 (AUD142).

3.66 The Islamic religious police (*Hisbah*) in the northern regions often harassed the LGBTQIA+ community, sometimes subjecting them to beatings, blackmail, extortion, sexual assault and torture. For example, local media reported 25 people were arrested in Kano State by Islamic religious police for attending a 'gay wedding'. In-country sources said Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission received and investigated complaints of official discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people. The National Human Rights Commission had successfully appealed several convictions under federal and state laws, including overturning a *sharia* court death by stoning sentence in 2023.

3.67 Societal discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people, especially gay men and trans women, was common according to in-country sources. Family members were often not accepting of LGBTQIA+ people, who could be evicted from their homes, disowned or subjected to family violence. A 2024 study on the challenges facing men who have sex with men in Nigeria found 83 per cent had experienced stigmatisation or discrimination based on cultural and religious beliefs, mostly from family members, the community and church. Sixty-two per cent of study participants reported being denied housing and 77 per cent stated people had 'changed their attitudes' toward them after discovering their sexual identity. The 2024 study found stigmatisation and discrimination often resulted in a fear of going out into the community, to schools, churches and hospitals. In-country sources said workplace discrimination was common towards LGBTQIA+ people, who had been refused jobs based on profiling or fired when their sexual orientation or gender identity became known.

3.68 Societal discrimination had reportedly prevented some LGBTQIA+ people from accessing government services. In-country sources said LGBTQIA+ people were sometimes 'profiled' by government employees, some of whom refused to provide services based on their individual prejudices or 'faith' rather than official policy. Failure to provide services to LGBTQIA+ people was against constitutional human rights guarantees. The Nigerian Government introduced revised regulations under the *Harmonised Armed Forces Terms and Conditions of Services* in 2024, prohibiting military personnel from engaging in 'homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality' or 'belonging to or engaging in activities of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Agender, Two-Spirit group and cross-dressing, amongst others'. Outright International stated Nigerian Government officials had previously made comments in public denigrating LGBTQIA+ people. In-country sources said they were unaware of negative public political commentary on LGBTQIA+ people or issues during 2025.

3.69 Societal violence perpetrated against LGBTQIA+ people occurred on occasion according to in-country sources. A 2024 study on the challenges facing men who have sex with men in Nigeria found 60 per cent reported being physically abused and 89 per cent had experienced GBV. For example, a man was murdered in a mob attack in Benin City in December 2025 after allegedly being caught having sex with another man. In-country sources said 'kito' attacks were on the rise, in which LGBTQIA+ people were trapped using online dating applications to kidnap, beat and extort them. Some kito gangs were well-organised, basing themselves in serviced apartments and using point-of-sale machines to extort money. For example, local media reported the murder of a young gay man in Port Harcourt in October 2025 after he was lured under false pretences, beaten badly and then thrown from a two-storey building. According to data collected by the Initiative for Equal Rights, 70 per cent of the 996 human rights violations recorded against LGBTQIA+ people in 2023 were likely kito cases. Kito attacks on lesbians were rare at the time of writing.

3.70 Nigerian law does not recognise transgender identities. In-country sources said trans women often experienced societal discrimination and found it difficult to secure formal employment. In-country sources said some trans women turned to prostitution, leaving them vulnerable to sexual abuse, harassment or arrest. Societal violence perpetrated against trans women occurred according to in-country sources. For example, a well-known transgender TikToker known as 'Abuja Area Mama' was murdered near Abuja, with her bruised and beaten body found along a highway. Eight people referred to as 'men' but who may have been trans women, were publicly flogged for cross-dressing in Kano State in 2023.

3.71 The *Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013* imposes a 10-year prison sentence on anyone who 'registers, operates, or participates in gay clubs, societies, and organisations'. LGBTQIA+ CSOs successfully contested this provision in the High Court, which ruled it violated constitutional rights of assembly and association. Nigeria has a support network for LGBTQIA+ people in major cities despite the challenges imposed by the *Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013*. In-country sources said CSOs in Lagos, Kaduna and Kano were well established and funded. CSOs focused primarily on providing legal advice, mental health services, safe spaces for the community and human rights advocacy. High-profile attacks on local LGBTQIA+ organisations have occurred, including in April 2024 when a mob attacked the home of a suspected leader of a LGBTQIA+ group in Abuja.

3.72 In-country sources said LGBTQIA+ people often relocated to larger cities, primary Lagos, voluntarily or involuntarily. Outside of more tolerant communities in Lagos (especially Victoria Island), Kaduna and Kano, most LGBTQIA+ people were not publicly open about their sexual orientation and needed to be 'incredibly discreet not to attract public attention' according to in-country sources (see Internal relocation).

3.73 DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people are likely to face official discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity in the form of harassment, assault and arrest by authorities. Same-sex sexual activity is criminalised federally in Nigeria and under various interpretations of *sharia* law in the northern regions. DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people are likely to face societal discrimination in the form of access to employment and housing. DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people are likely to experience societal violence. DFAT assesses trans women are almost certain to face official and societal discrimination and experience societal violence.

Children

3.74 Nigeria is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 17 of the Constitution commits the Nigerian Government to protect children and young persons against all forms of exploitation and against moral and material neglect. Those under 18 years of age number 105 million, comprising almost half Nigeria's population. Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics *2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index Survey* measuring income and non-monetary deprivations, such as lack of access to education, health and basic infrastructure (water, electricity and sanitation), found the incidence of multidimensional poverty among children was above 50 per cent in all states. Multidimensional poverty for children was greater than 95 per cent in Bayelsa, Gombe, Kebbi and Sokoto states. Around 90 per cent of children in the North East Region were living in multidimensional poverty, while rates were lower in the South East at 74 per cent and South West at 65 per cent.

3.75 According to UNICEF, Nigeria has made significant advances in several areas of child well-being since 2015, particularly in antenatal care attendance, reducing rates of stunting and child marriages, as well as increasing childhood vaccinations, birth registrations and primary school completion. UNICEF also reported poverty and food

insecurity had risen sharply in recent years as federal and state governments reduced spending on health, education and social protection. For example, 16 per cent of Nigeria's 2024 federal budget was allocated to education, health and social protection combined, after being reduced consistently from 22 per cent spent in 2021.

3.76 Nigeria has laws protecting children against sexual abuse and exploitation. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is criminalised under the *Child Rights Act 2003*, which prohibits child commercial sexual exploitation and sexual intercourse with a child, providing penalties of seven years' to life imprisonment. The *VAPP Act* (see Women) criminalises incest and provides prison sentences of up to 10 years. The *Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015* criminalises the production, procurement, distribution and possession of child pornography with prison terms of up to 10 years. Despite these laws, international observers reported sexual abuse and exploitation of children remained a problem. For example, UNICEF reported 25 per cent of Nigerian girls and 10 per cent of boys had been victims of sexual violence.

3.77 The *Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2015* criminalises child sex trafficking and prescribes a minimum penalty of seven years' imprisonment. Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons stated the rate of child trafficking, abduction and forced labour had increased in recent years with 15 the average age of trafficked children. Trafficking groups often targeted vulnerable families and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, sometimes operating under the pretext of offering support or charitable assistance. Those being trafficked may believe they are migrating for high-paying overseas employment. At the time of writing there was no reliable data on how many children were trafficked from Nigeria.

3.78 Corporal punishment is criminalised under the *Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015* but public awareness and institutional accountability is limited. In-country sources said physical punishment was widely accepted by parents and teachers as an effective disciplinary tool. A 2025 study on corporal punishment in Nigeria found the practice was widely used in schools as a disciplinary method, with prevalence rates varying from 85 per cent in the northern regions to 70 per cent in the southern regions. Common forms of corporal punishment included caning, slapping and flogging.

3.79 The minimum age of marriage in Nigeria is 18 as outlined in the *Child Rights Act 2003*. In-country sources said many states with *sharia* law had not adopted the Act. Some states in the northern regions had not confirmed 18 as the minimum age of marriage and instead used an ill-defined 'age of maturity'. The Nigerian Government has committed to eradicating child marriage by 2030. UNICEF has stated the rate of girls being married before the age of 18 years has declined in recent years to 30 per cent but progress in states has been uneven. The North West and North East Regions report more than 50 per cent of women are married before the age of 18. Bauchi State has the highest rate of child marriage, with 74 per cent of women married before the age of 18. Child marriage is particularly common among Nigeria's poorest, rural households and the Hausa ethnic group. At the time of writing Nigeria ranked third globally in terms of the prevalence of child brides.

3.80 Nigeria has signed and ratified the ILO's Convention on the Minimum Age for Employment and the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Under federal law, 12 is the minimum age of employment. People between 12 and 14 years of age may only be employed for a day at a time, must receive the day's wages at the end of each workday and be able to return each night to their parents' or guardian's residence. These regulations do not apply to domestic service, light work in agriculture and employment by family members. The law states children must not be employed in agricultural or domestic work for more than eight hours per day. No one younger than 18 can be employed in a job that is injurious to health, dangerous or immoral. The National Bureau of Statistics' 2022 *Child Labour and Forced Labour Survey* found 11 per cent of 5- to 14-year-olds were working and not in school, while the number rose to 22 per cent among the 15 to 17 age group. The Nigerian Government does not release data on the number of children exposed to the worst forms of child labour, such as drug trafficking, forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. Armed groups, including splinter groups of Boko Haram, have subjected children to forced labour. DFAT was not aware of reports of the NAF using child soldiers but was aware of isolated incidences of recruitment of children by local paramilitary groups, Boko Haram and ISWAP occurring in 2025.

3.81 DFAT assesses it is rare for children to face official or societal discrimination based on their juvenile status alone. DFAT assesses children are likely to face societal violence in the form of corporal punishment and are unlikely

to face sexual abuse and child marriages. Children who are poor, geographically isolated, living with disability or orphaned may face elevated risks.

Members of Confraternities/Cults and Criminal Gangs

3.82 Confraternities/cults are concentrated in the southern regions of Nigeria, particularly Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers states. Initially introduced by Nigerian scholars returning from the United States in the 1950s as a variation of student confraternities, many confraternities/cults have become criminal gangs such as Black Axe, Eiye Confraternity, and Vikings, among others. Their activities often include extortion, drug trafficking, cybercrime and politically motivated violence. In-country sources said few states outside of the South West and South South Regions had issues with confraternities/cults and reported instances of gang-related deaths were rare.

3.83 According to local CSOs, young people motivated by the opportunity to earn money and gain power voluntarily joined confraternities/cults but some reportedly joined through peer pressure, under threat of reprisal or to gain protection. Cult and gang violence was primarily directed at rival gang members with an unwritten rule to refrain from killing non-combatants. Local monitoring organisations reported civilian fatalities represented less than 5 per cent of total gang-related deaths between January 2020 and March 2025. Civilian deaths resulting from confraternity/cult and gang violence were mostly based on proximity, mistaken identity or ties to intended targets. Cult and gang members who have attempted to leave groups have sometimes been assaulted.

3.84 Several states have enacted strict anti-cultism laws that include the death penalty for activities leading to the death of others. At the time of writing, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti Enugu, Kwara, Lagos and Rivers states had enacted anti-cultism laws to combat the rise of secret societies and gang-related violence. DFAT was not aware of any members of confraternities/cults or criminal gangs being executed under anti-cultism laws.

3.85 In states where they are proscribed, members of confraternities/cults and criminal gangs are likely to face arrest and imprisonment, especially when engaging in illegal activities. DFAT assesses it is rare for members of confraternities/cults and criminal gangs to face societal discrimination. DFAT assesses members of confraternities/cults and criminal gangs are likely to face violence from rival gang members and security forces.

People Accused of Witchcraft

3.86 Witchcraft-related acts, including self-identification as a witch, accusations of witchcraft and use of charms or *juju* are prohibited under Sections 210 to 213 of the *Criminal Code 1990* and Sections 207 to 209 of the *Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act 1960*. There are also laws prohibiting accusing someone of witchcraft but prosecutions and convictions in these cases are rare.

3.87 There is a strong belief throughout Nigeria in the power of the supernatural, in particular the ability of witches and sorcerers to use magic. In-country sources said this belief was prevalent in rural and urban areas and was typically shared by all segments of society, including elites. Every ethnic group reportedly had a name for females and males believed to openly or secretly collaborate with supernatural forces to invoke harm among others. Alleged witches and sorcerers were often blamed for a variety of afflictions occurring in communities, including disease, infertility, poverty and business failure. Religious organisations, particularly Pentecostal churches in the Niger Delta, offered exorcism services to deliver people from witchcraft and possession.

3.88 People accused of witchcraft are often subject to harassment and sometimes violence. For example, a 33-year-old man was beaten by a mob in Benue State in August 2024 after being accused of being a sorcerer. Video of the beating was circulated widely on social media and the man subsequently lost his job due to stigma. In another instance, a 75-year-old widow in Edo State was publicly assaulted by a traditional leader over witchcraft allegations in July 2024. The attack caused her serious facial injuries. Nigerian authorities have reportedly failed to carry out effective investigations or implement safeguards, especially in rural areas where women are often targeted to settle personal or family disputes.

3.89 Amnesty International reported people living with mental health conditions or psychosocial disability were most often accused of witchcraft or labelled as sorcerers. Their behavioural symptoms, such as confusion or silence, were frequently misinterpreted as signs of guilt, making them easier targets for attacks. For example, a 2024 protection of civilians in armed conflict Secretary-General report to the UN Security Council detailed cases of women

with intellectual and psychosocial disability, in particular older women, being killed in the North East Region based on accusations of witchcraft. Local media reported widows experiencing mental health challenges following the loss of their spouses were also particularly vulnerable to witchcraft accusations.

3.90 DFAT assesses people accused of witchcraft are likely to face official discrimination in the form of inadequate state protection, reflective of individual prejudices of police rather than official policy. DFAT assesses people accused of witchcraft are likely to face societal discrimination in the form of being illegally detained and assaulted. DFAT assesses people accused of witchcraft are likely to face violence from members of the community.

4. COMPLEMENTARY PROTECTION CLAIMS

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

Extrajudicial Killings

4.1 Article 33 of the Constitution allows for the broad use of lethal force, including to effect a lawful arrest, prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained and for the purpose of suppressing a riot, insurrection or mutiny. The *Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015* authorises the use of force by authorities without imposing restrictions on the nature of force or setting out principles of necessity or proportionality.

4.2 Extrajudicial killings occur when individuals are deliberately killed outside of any legal framework. In-country sources said extrajudicial killings linked to security officials sometimes occurred, especially during protests. For example, Amnesty International reported the use of force by police in response to the nationwide #EndBadGovernance demonstrations in August 2024, resulted in at least 24 deaths. Most of these protesters were shot by police at close range in the head or torso (see Political opinion).

4.3 In-country sources said extrajudicial killings occurred primarily at the state level and were met by a high degree of impunity by state authorities. Amnesty International reported during military operations in the South East Region, the military and police had committed extrajudicial killings. The state-backed *Ebube Agu* paramilitary force, established by the South East Region governors in April 2021, was responsible for a number of extrajudicial killings (see Biafran Secessionist Movements). The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect stated Nigerian authorities often issued apologies and acknowledged responsibility for civilian deaths but only took 'minimal steps' to seek justice, accountability and ensure military operations minimised civilian harm.

Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

4.4 Nigeria has acceded to the ICCPR and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Chapter 4 of the Constitution guarantees the right to dignity and personal liberty. Section 365 of the *Criminal Code 1990* and Section 255 of the *Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act 1960* criminalise the unlawful confinement or detention of people against their will. Abduction, kidnapping and trafficking in persons are criminalised under the *Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act 2015*, *VAPP Act* and various state laws.

4.5 Most disappearances in Nigeria relate to abductions carried out by bandits and insurgent groups. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported there were 23,659 missing persons recorded in Nigeria as of 2025, with 67 per cent of these historical documented cases occurring in Borno State (mostly linked to Boko Haram). Between 2019 and the first quarter of 2024, there were 9,527 people kidnapped in the North West Region representing 62 per cent of Nigeria's overall abduction cases (mostly linked to bandits). High profile student kidnappings for ransom have occurred throughout the northern regions. For example, Nigeria experienced its worst mass abduction since 2020 when bandits kidnapped over 300 students and staff from St Mary's School in Niger State on 21 November 2025 (see Security situation).

4.6 Amnesty International reported security agencies carried out enforced disappearances in response to IPOB and ESN activities in the South East Region. In-country sources said there were rarely legal repercussions when the military and police forcibly disappeared IPOB and ESN members. For example, a 34-year-old man disappeared on 6 February 2022 after being arrested by police in Imo State for suspected links to IPOB. When family inquired into the man's arrest, they were warned by police 'not to come near their offices' (see Biafran secessionist movements).

4.7 Forced disappearances were rarely investigated according to in-country sources, with perpetrators often acting with impunity and shielded by state governors. Amnesty International filed a case in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in December 2024 on behalf of Nigerian victims of enforced and involuntary disappearances, requesting a formal investigation into the actions of the military. A request from the ICC Prosecutor to pre-trial judges to open the investigation into this case had not occurred at the time of writing.

Deaths in Custody

4.8 Nigeria's legal framework requires investigation and reporting of custodial deaths to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for post-mortem examination. The Nigerian Government does not provide statistics or details in relation to deaths in custody. Most data regarding custodial deaths come from CSOs and INGOs.

4.9 Deaths in police or military custody are more commonly linked to overcrowded conditions rather than direct violence, with most cases attributable to health issues both pre-existing and as a result of conditions or treatment within prisons and detention centres. Inadequate medical care sometimes results in prisoners dying from otherwise treatable illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis according to human rights organisations (see Detention and prisons).

4.10 A 2026 Amnesty International report into the activities of the Imo State Police Anti-Kidnapping Unit, popularly known as Tiger Base, documented 200 deaths in custody between 2021 and 2025 at so-called 'black sites'. For example, Japhet Njoku was arrested in March 2025 and then tortured for nearly two months before he died in custody. When a Coroner's Court ordered an autopsy and summoned the implicated officers to testify, they allegedly refused to appear on three separate occasions, which prevented the autopsy being conducted. No officer was suspended or faced legal consequences due to this incident. In another case, Magnus Ejiogu was arrested on 23 September 2025 and died in custody on 27 October 2025. The police attributed his death to 'sudden illness' but no independent autopsy or investigation occurred. The Imo State Police Command denied the findings of the 2026 Amnesty International report but stated it was looking into the allegations.

DEATH PENALTY

4.11 There is no formal moratorium in place and Nigeria retains the death penalty under statutory, customary and *sharia* legal systems. Article 33(1) of the Constitution provides for the death penalty but does not mandate the death penalty for specific crimes. Nigeria's last execution took place in December 2016 and at the time of writing Nigeria was approaching ten years without execution, a milestone regarded internationally as 'de facto' abolition. The Nigerian Government has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at the abolition of the death penalty.

4.12 The death penalty can be imposed by judges in state high courts, federal high courts and *sharia* courts. Cases involving death sentences can be appealed to the Court of Appeal and ultimately the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Nigerian courts sentenced at least 186 people to death in 2024, down from at least 246 in 2023. At the end of 2024, more than 3,484 people in total had received death sentences in Nigeria according to Amnesty International.

4.13 Nigerian law does not limit the death penalty to the most serious crimes within the meaning of Article 6(2) of the ICCPR. For example, several crimes, including witchcraft, carry mandatory death sentences. Amnesty International reported 26 states retained the death penalty for crimes including cattle rustling and kidnapping. The death penalty applies to juveniles considered to have reached puberty under *sharia* law in the northern regions and to people 17 years or older elsewhere in Nigeria. The FCT prohibits sentencing anyone under 18 years to death.

CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

Torture

4.14 Nigeria is a State Party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Other Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The *Anti-Torture Act 2017* prohibits acts of torture without exceptions for government or military officials, including during emergencies and war. Those found guilty of carrying out torture face up to 25 years' imprisonment. Local academics reported Nigeria's Attorney-General had yet to provide additional regulations to ensure the practical application of the *Anti-Torture Act 2017*. DFAT was not aware of any prosecutions under the *Anti-Torture Act 2017* at the time of writing.

4.15 Despite legal protections, in-country sources said police and security authorities sometimes used beatings as a means of obtaining confessions. There was no systematic record-keeping of arrests and detentions or consistent documentation of physical injuries sustained by those detained in Nigeria. According to the World Organisation Against Torture, detainees were often held incommunicado or confined in facilities where visits from oversight

bodies or monitoring mechanisms were rarely permitted. For example, local media reported in February 2025 that Abdulmujid Oduga was tortured to death while in custody at the Ikota Police Post in Lagos state. Police did not dispute the death but denied it happened while Oduga was in their custody. Investigations into the incident were ongoing at the time of writing.

4.16 International human rights organisations report a culture of impunity for torture exists in Nigeria. Most complaints of torture and other forms of ill-treatment were not investigated according to in-country sources. A National Committee Against Torture (NCAT) operated within the Ministry of Justice but lacked legal and operational independence. Under Section 174 of the Constitution, the Attorney General has discretionary power to approve or stop prosecutions, including for torture. Prosecutors are not legally obliged to undertake investigations into torture in the absence of a formal complaint, which must be lodged in person. The burden of proof for allegations of torture frequently lies with victims, creating a high evidentiary threshold that results in cases rarely being referred for trial.

4.17 The UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture stated in September 2024, 'Nigeria must urgently take measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment, and to improve conditions of detention, especially in police stations and other similar facilities'. The Subcommittee further stated, 'legal safeguards must be immediately implemented, and the current impunity of perpetrators for acts of torture must end'. The World Organisation Against Torture recorded at least 2,791 petitions from victims of alleged police brutality in Nigeria between 2020 and 2025, which had not been investigated and remained unresolved.

Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

4.18 Article 35 of the Constitution states any person who is arrested or detained must be informed in writing within 24 hours of the grounds for their arrest or detention and be brought before a court of law within a reasonable time, defined as two to three months from the date of arrest or detention. Those unlawfully arrested or detained are entitled to compensation and a public apology from the appropriate authorities.

4.19 Under the *Federal Criminal Procedure Act 1990*, police and other security services have the authority to arrest individuals without first obtaining warrants if they have reasonable suspicion the person has committed an offence. The arresting officer is required to inform the accused of their charges at the time of arrest, transport the accused to a police station for processing within a reasonable time and allow the accused to obtain counsel and post bail. Detainees must have access to lawyers and must legally be brought before a magistrate within 48 hours. In-country sources said despite constitutional and legal protections, suspects were rarely charged in a timely manner.

4.20 Lengthy pretrial detention was common, with detainees often waiting years for their cases to be heard in court according to in-country sources. Some detainees were held in pretrial detention for periods equal to or exceeding the maximum sentence for their accused crime. Shortages of trial judges, court backlogs and corruption were often responsible for delays in judicial processes. Some detainees had their cases delayed because police lacked vehicles to transport them to court. Freedom House stated federal and state authorities disregarded due process, with prolonged pretrial detention of suspects sometimes continuing even after courts had ordered their release on bail (see Legal system).

4.21 Arbitrary arrests of young people in the southern regions of Nigeria occurred according to local media. Young people were sometimes stopped at checkpoints, forced to unlock their phones and made to pay bribes or face detention. In-country sources said young men in the South East Region were sometimes detained for long periods of time as alleged Biafran secessionists without ever being charged (see Biafran secessionist movements).

Corporal Punishment

4.22 Corporal punishment is criminalised under the *VAPP Act* but is widely accepted as an effective disciplinary tool. Common forms of corporal punishment inflicted on children include caning, slapping and flogging (see Children).

4.23 *Sharia* law provides for the use of physical punishment including caning or lashing for certain offences relating to alcohol, drugs, sex, theft and murder. *Sharia* courts generally carry out caning sentences immediately following verdicts, although in some cases convicted individuals have paid fines or gone to prison instead. Publicised incidents of caning and lashing have been rare since the early 2000s. DFAT was not aware at the time of writing of recent cases in which sentences of caning or lashing had been carried out.

4.24 Amputation is a potential punishment under *sharia* law for theft, kidnapping of a child, embezzlement and robbery. S*haria* appellate courts have consistently overturned sentences of amputation on procedural or evidentiary grounds. The last reported case of amputation following conviction by a *sharia* court occurred in 2001 in Zamfara State. DFAT was not aware at the time of writing of recent cases in which sentences of amputation were carried out.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

STATE PROTECTION

5.1 Responsibility for security and law enforcement at the federal level rests with the Department of State Services (DSS), with operational implementation carried out by the NAF and NPF. State governments sometimes use paramilitary forces and auxiliaries for specific purposes, including the Civilian Joint Task Force, *Ebube Agu* and the Western Nigeria Security Network. For information on the security situation throughout Nigeria, see Security situation.

Military

5.2 The NAF is comprised of the Army, Navy and Air Force. It had 230,000 active personnel in 2026. The NAF is responsible for territorial defence, maintaining internal security and suppressing insurrections. Article 130 of the Constitution states the president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The age for voluntary military service is 18 years. There is no conscription.

5.3 The NAF is one of the largest and better-funded militaries in Africa but was struggling to suppress banditry in the North West and the activities of Islamic militants in the North East Region at the time of writing. Military experts reported the NAF suffered from inadequate mobility, poor night-fighting capability and an inability to reinforce or hold positions, reflecting failures in its operational doctrine and training. The majority of military units lacked the offensive training and equipment needed to be effective in combat. Troops often conducted patrols in unserviceable vehicles and suffered fatigue from enduring harsh, isolated conditions with few rotations. In-country sources said the NAF was stretched thin due to the multitude of security challenges it faced in 2025 (see Security situation).

5.4 Military operations against bandits, Islamic militants and criminal groups sometimes result in civilian deaths. For example, air strikes in Maru district of Zamfara State in June 2025 killed at least 20 civilians who were mistakenly identified as bandits. Amnesty International reported the Nigerian Air Force conducted air strikes on Jika da Kolo village in Kaduna State on 30 September 2024, killing 23 civilians. Military air strikes also killed at least 10 civilians from the Gidan Sama and Rumtuwa communities in Sokoto State on 25 December 2024. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported Nigerian airstrikes on a market in the northeastern Zamfara State killed at least 100 civilians on 10 May 2026.

5.5 The *Armed Forces Act 2004* states disciplinary action within the NAF is determined by a soldier's commanding officer, with decisions subject to review by the chain of command. The NAF has a human rights desk to investigate civilian complaints of human rights violations and a standing general court martial in Maiduguri in Borno State. The court martial in Maiduguri has convicted soldiers for offences including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and rape. The human rights desk coordinates with the NHRC and Nigerian Bar Association to investigate complaints. The Nigerian Government often investigates security force members and states it holds them accountable for crimes committed on duty but results are rarely made public. For example, the NAF announced two officers would face a court martial for a December 2023 airstrike in Tundun Biri Community in Kaduna State that killed 85 civilians but failed to provide further details into the investigation or indictments related to the strike.

5.6 Transparency International reported corruption in the defence sector resulted in billions of dollars of public funds being wasted through corrupt procurement practices and the abuse of opaque security funding systems. Skimming of soldiers' salaries and the procurement of faulty and outdated weaponry within the NAF was common and significantly affected operational effectiveness. In-country sources said some NAF officers were complicit in perpetuating insecurity in certain areas to create financially lucrative situations they could profit from personally. There were also reported links between military officers and bandits/insurgents, with documented instances of the military selling weapons to these groups. Bribes were often required for those wishing to enter the military, with high-ranking officials involved in bribery schemes according to in-country sources (see Corruption).

Police

5.7 The NPF is Nigeria's police and security body. It is tasked with maintaining law and order in each state as well as engaging in border security, maritime and counter-terrorism operations. The NPF is commanded by the inspector general of police, who is appointed by and reports directly to the president. The Nigeria Police Council, Police Service Commission and Ministry of Police Affairs oversee the NPF. The *Police Act 2020* regulates conduct for officers, including for offences of mutiny, sedition and desertion. Local media reported the NPF had around 370,000 officers in 2023 (most recent data available), with a ratio of one police officer to over 600 Nigerians. In some areas of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states, as few as 32 NPF officers provided coverage for populations numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

5.8 The NPF was consistently under resourced according to in-country sources. The police budget of around NGN124 billion (AUD128 million) in 2024 was regarded as low for a country facing multiple law enforcement challenges. Inadequate funding resulted in police stations across the country lacking basic resources such as paper, computers and internet access. Some stations were unable to fuel their patrol vehicles without financial assistance from the public. Specialised equipment like bulletproof vests, tracking devices and functional armoured vehicles were often unavailable or outdated. Police salaries were low, leaving officers susceptible to corruption to supplement their income. For example, junior NPF officers earned as little as NGN75,000 (AUD66) per month in 2024. NPF officers were required to buy their own uniforms, pay for basic medical needs and often lived in barracks lacking water, toilets and electricity. In-country sources said NPF officers often paid bribes to superiors to secure employment, promotions and postings.

5.9 In-country sources said the NPF's effectiveness and ability to respond to crime was limited. A 2024 study on public perceptions of the NPF found most Nigerians distrusted the police and did not think they were capable of preventing or investigating crime and ensuring offenders were punished. Respondents often described officers as underequipped, undertrained, underpaid and only interested in investigating crimes when they could benefit personally. Respondents stated they often avoided interactions with the NPF because officers had reportedly levelled 'false charges' against witnesses if they were unable to arrest main suspects, especially when under pressure from authorities to deliver arrests.

5.10 There are recorded instances of NPF officers arbitrarily arresting and detaining individuals and using violence to extract confessions from criminal suspects and insurgents. The NHRC stated it regularly received complaints regarding police brutality, especially during arrests and while in detention. For example, a number of complaints were filed against the NPF for excessive force used against participants in the #EndBadGovernance demonstrations in August and September 2024. In-country sources said the NPF lacked effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to appropriately handle complaints of police misconduct.

5.11 Corruption within the NPF was systematic according to in-country sources. Allegations of extortion and bribe taking were common and numerous according to Freedom House. Criminal suspects often bribed officers to avoid arrest or secure release after arrest. Criminals sometimes bribed NPF officers to fabricate criminal cases against people for NGN10,000 (AUD10) or less according to in-country sources. Bribes often needed to be paid to obtain services, including issuing police reports. Officers could also be bribed to illegally alter police clearance records (see Documentation). A 2024 study on public perception of the NPF reported Nigerians assumed most criminals used bribery or contacts to avoid arrest, with those in prison usually petty criminals or innocent people who lacked money to bribe their way out. Survey respondents stated unjustified arrests were sometimes used as pretexts to extort money (see Corruption).

Paramilitary and Auxiliaries

5.12 Nigeria has a number of community-based policing initiatives, neighbourhood watches, militias and vigilante groups supported by state governments. Islamic religious policing groups operate in the northern regions of the country as part of efforts to enforce *sharia* law for Muslims. Local media reported 23 of the 36 states had established some form of local security body by 2026.

5.13 The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is a pro-government militia formed in 2013 in Borno State to assist the NAF in fighting Boko Haram. The Borno Government formalised its operations in 2015 and provided its members

with a monthly stipend, identification cards, uniforms, vehicles and training. With the splintering of Boko Haram, CJTF now serves as a structured community watch under the supervision of the Borno State Ministry of Justice. Human rights organisations reported members of the CJTF had been involved in the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls.

5.14 *Ebube Agu* is a security organisation established in 2021 by the five governors of the South East Region to work with security agencies in curbing insecurity. Based in Enugu, *Ebube Agu* coordinates operations across the South East Region, including supporting NAF operations against Biafran secessionists and enforcing a ban on open grazing of livestock. Regional governors committed to providing legal backing for *Ebube Agu* in their respective states but details were vague at the time of writing. Amnesty International reported *Ebube Agu* had committed human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, extortion and destruction of homes. Amnesty International research also showed *Ebube Agu* was used by the Ebonyi and Imo state governments to harass and intimidate perceived opponents and critics.

5.15 The Islamic religious police, known locally as *Hisbah*, was established in 2000 in Kano State to enforce *sharia* law for Muslims. Its additional duties include arbitrating disputes and maintaining order at Islamic celebrations. Islamic religious police in Kano are highly decentralised, with local units supervised by committees composed of officials and citizens in the communities where it operates. The Islamic religious police do not have authority to execute arrests and instead must report violations of *sharia* law to the NPF. Islamic religious police are armed only with non-lethal weapons for self-defence. Media reported Islamic religious police had used intimidation tactics, gender-based enforcement and often operated beyond constitutional limits when enforcing *sharia* law.

5.16 The Western Nigeria Security Network (*Amotekun*) is a security outfit created in 2019 by the six governors of the South West Region to curb insecurity, especially kidnapping and banditry. The Western Nigeria Security Network assists the NPF in identified hotspots using resources provided by state governments. Its members are largely drawn from local hunters, vigilante groups and local security and civil defence corps. Local media reported the Western Nigeria Security Network engaged in ethnic profiling, excessive use of force against civilians, operated outside established legal frameworks and failed to coordinate adequately with the NPF.

Legal System

5.17 Nigeria's legal system is a hybrid of English common and statutory, customary and *sharia* laws. Chapter 7 of the Constitution outlines the legal powers of Nigerian courts. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority and consists of the chief justice and 15 justices. Decisions of the Supreme Court are final. Each state has conventional courts following statutory and common law, as well as customary courts and/or *sharia* courts. Subordinate courts include the 72 courts of appeal located throughout the country, federal and state high courts in each state, as well as the *Sharia* Court of Appeal and the Customary Court of Appeal located in the FCT.

5.18 English is the official language of all Nigerian courts, with interpretation services available as required. Defendants have legal rights to the presumption of innocence, to receive a fair trial without undue delay, communicate with defence counsel and seek legal aid. The Nigerian Legal Aid Council, a body under the Federal Ministry of Justice, is responsible for providing legal consultation, advice and representation. It is headquartered in Abuja and has branches in all 36 states. In-country sources said the Council did not have sufficient resources to deal with the number of people in need of legal advice.

5.19 In-country sources said while the judiciary aimed to operate professionally and independently, it was highly susceptible to outside pressure and corruption. The executive and legislative branches of government and other political leaders at the state and local levels often pressured or threatened judges to influence their decisions. Allegations of bribe taking were common according to in-country sources. Criminal defendants bribed judges to obtain acquittals and ensure trials did not go ahead. Local media reported only privileged defendants with 'connections to power and deep pockets to hire the most influential lawyers' had opportunities to withdraw criminal cases after the prosecution's evidence had been judged credible. Criminals sometimes bribed judges to fabricate criminal cases against people, even when evidence was weak or non-existent. There was widespread public perception judges were easily bribed and litigants could not rely on courts to render impartial verdicts.

5.20 The effectiveness of Nigerian courts is often hampered by a lack of equipment and training for staff and low levels of staff remuneration. The court system had a significant backlog of cases at the time of writing, resulting in defendants spending long periods of time on remand before proceeding to trial. In some cases, authorities held defendants in prison awaiting trial for periods well in excess of terms allowed by law. The Nigeria Correctional Service reported in February 2026 those on remand awaiting trial accounted for 64 per cent of the total prison population.

Sharia Courts

5.21 Article 275 of the Constitution allows states to establish courts based on *sharia* law. These courts function in 12 states in the northern regions and the FCT. *Sharia* courts primarily handle matters of Islamic personal law, including marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. They can also hear criminal cases (generally theft and moral conduct) when both the complainant and defendant are Muslims and agree to the court's jurisdiction. In Zamfara State, *sharia* courts are required by law to hear all criminal cases involving Muslims despite constitutional prohibitions against involuntary participation. Non-Muslims are not required to have their civil or criminal cases heard by *sharia* courts but may choose to if the dispute involves a Muslim. Some non-Muslims have opted to have their cases heard in *sharia* courts because they are viewed as less expensive and quicker than civil courts.

5.22 *Sharia* courts pass sentences based on the *sharia* penal codes, including for *hudud* offences (serious criminal offences with punishments prescribed in the Qur'an). Punishments can include caning and lashing, amputation and death by stoning. DFAT was not aware at the time of writing of recent cases in which sentences of caning, lashing, amputation or death by stoning had been carried out (see Corporal punishment and Death penalty).

5.23 Defendants in *sharia* courts have the right to challenge the constitutionality of *sharia* criminal statutes through common law appellate courts. The highest appellate court for *sharia*-based decisions is the Supreme Court, staffed by common-law judges who are advised by experts in *sharia* law. In-country sources said appealing *sharia* criminal statues was time consuming and expensive, meaning few defendants pursued appeals.

Double Jeopardy

5.24 Section 36 of the Constitution states 'no person who shows they have been tried or pardoned for a criminal offence shall again be tried for that offence'. The *Extradition (Amendment) Act 2018* gives effect to the rule against double jeopardy as recognised under the Constitution. Nigeria's legal system respected the principle of double jeopardy according to in-country sources.

5.25 Section 22 of the *National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act 2004* criminalises the exportation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, regardless of whether an offender has already been tried or convicted abroad. Nigerians convicted overseas of drug-related offences seen to have brought 'Nigeria into disrepute' are guilty of committing an offence under Section 22 carrying a mandatory five-year prison sentence. Nigerian courts have upheld the constitutionality of the *National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act 2004*. DFAT was not aware at the time of writing of recent instances where Nigerians tried for crimes overseas have been tried again on return to Nigeria, including under Section 22 of the *National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act 2004*.

National Human Rights Institution

5.26 The NHRC was established by the *National Human Rights Commission Act 1995* with a mission to investigate and monitor human rights violations, make recommendations and to seek remedies for victims. An amendment to the Act in 2010 granted the NHRC operational and financial independence and enhanced its investigative and enforcement powers. The High Court has the power to enforce NHRC decisions. Refusal to comply with NHRC enquiries, summons, directives, recommendations or awards is a punishable offence.

5.27 The Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions in 2023 last accredited the NHRC in 2023 as being fully compliant with the UN Paris Principles for protecting and promoting human rights.

5.28 The NHRC has offices in all 36 states and recorded over 3.7 million complaints in 2025. At the time of writing the NHRC faced funding issues affecting its operations.

Detention and Prison

5.29 Prisons and detention centres in Nigeria are administered by the Correctional Service and supervised by the Ministry of Internal Affairs under the *Correctional Service Act 2019*. There are 256 prison facilities located throughout the country, of which three are reserved for women. Women and juveniles are strictly segregated from the adult male prison population. Those on remand are housed in separate cells from inmates who have already been convicted. There were a total of 82,000 incarcerated people in Nigeria in 2025. The Legal Aid Council monitors prison conditions and the NHRC conducts prison audits.

5.30 In-country sources said prisons were often overcrowded and lacked proper sanitation and ventilation. Prisons in urban areas operated significantly above capacity with more than 118 people sharing a single cell in some cases. Cells in urban prisons were often so crowded inmates had to sleep in shifts to have sufficient floor space to lay down. In contrast, prisons in rural areas often operated well below capacity. Inmates received three meals a day but the quality, quantity and consistency of these meals were affected by corruption and budget constraints according to in-country sources. Food, soft drinks and toiletries were often available for inmates to purchase.

5.31 Inmates were generally allowed out of their cells on a daily basis for fresh air and exercise. Medical facilities varied by prison but inmates had some access to nurses and doctors. Inmates could generally obtain medications through prison pharmacies. Prison officials made limited efforts to provide mental health services to those who needed them. Some prisons allowed CSOs to run training programs for inmates and a few facilities had agreements with universities to offer courses. In-country sources said inmates' freedom to practice religion was respected by authorities and they were entitled to take part in religious services.

5.32 Conditions in military prisons and police stations were reportedly worse than those in regular prisons according to in-country sources. These included the Giwa Barracks Facility in Maiduguri, Borno State that houses former militants from ISWAP and splinter groups of Boko Haram. The number of detainees in military facilities was unclear at the time of writing.

INTERNAL RELOCATION

5.33 Article 41 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of movement and residence in Nigeria. The Nigerian Government does not impose limitations on the freedom of movement of its citizens and all Nigerians can legally relocate to, and resettle in, any part of the country. Nigerians can and do relocate for a variety of reasons, including to major cities like Abuja, Enugu, Ibadan, Kano and Lagos that offer greater opportunities for employment. In-country sources said internal migration within states from rural to urban areas was common.

5.34 Approximately 2.3 million Nigerians were internally displaced due to conflict at the time of writing, including 1.7 million in Borno State alone. Nigerians often chose to move away from areas affected by insecurity, including around Lake Chad and northern Borno State to safer, more fortified urban centres like Maiduguri. In-country sources said the majority of internally displaced people in Nigeria had settled freely in host communities where they had familial connections or in state-run camps.

5.35 Non-indigenous communities in Nigeria residing outside of their 'traditional homelands' sometimes experience localised discrimination when accessing housing, higher education at state institutions and employment opportunities at the state government level. In-country sources said this localised discrimination rarely occurred in larger urban centres like Abuja and Lagos that had large multiethnic populations.

5.36 DFAT assesses migrating to large urban areas is likely to mitigate against potential risks posed by conflict, GBV and accusations of witchcraft. However, vulnerable groups such as single and divorced women from poorer and more rural areas leaving family violence situations are likely to face additional barriers to relocation including accessing employment and housing.

TREATMENT OF RETURNEES

Exit and Entry Procedures

5.37 The *Immigration Act 2015* provides the legal and regulatory framework for entry into and exit from Nigeria. The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), an agency under the Federal Ministry of Interior, is responsible for granting visas and entry permits and conducting checks at ports of entry and exit. When entering the country, Nigerians must present a passport and complete an electronic landing card. When departing, Nigerians must present a passport and complete an electronic exit card. Under Section 31 of the *Immigration Act 2015*, the Minister of Interior has the power to prohibit the departure of any person on public interest grounds, which can include insufficient funds, invalid visas or passports, no return airfare or a 'doubtful mission'.

5.38 Nigeria has over ten international airports, with Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja the main points of entry. Authorities regularly perform biometric checks (photographing and fingerprinting) on arriving passengers at the airport. Nigeria's land border extends approximately 4,477 kilometres and is monitored by 84 manned border posts. Media reported frontline officers exercised significant discretion in implementing entry and exit procedures, including at times making arbitrary decisions on whom to stop, what to inspect and which violations to overlook (see Corruption). Most border posts lacked scanners, biometric systems and digital monitoring to verify travellers' identities, flag security threats or create audit trails of border transactions. In-country sources said Nigeria's borders were porous and largely unmonitored, enabling human trafficking networks to operate with relative freedom.

Conditions for Returnees

5.39 It is not a crime for Nigerians to seek asylum abroad. Returnees, both voluntary and involuntary, are processed at Nigeria's ports of entry like other returning citizens. In-country sources said some failed asylum seekers had been questioned by DSS officers upon return to identify if they had links to organised crime or were members of banned militant groups. Officers of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons sometimes interviewed returnees to determine if they were victim survivors of human trafficking.

5.40 Nigeria's diplomatic missions issue passports and emergency travel documents to citizens overseas, including those who have previously sought asylum. In-country sources said the IOM ran an assisted return and reintegration program for Nigerian voluntary returnees. This program provided accommodation in a transit centre, assistance obtaining or reobtaining Nigerian documentation, reintegration counselling, transportation allowance to return home, upwards of 12 months of reintegration financial assistance and support establishing a business with skills training. Over 56,000 Nigerians had received repatriation packages organised by the IOM since 2017. Nigerians returned involuntarily were eligible to apply for limited IOM assistance. In-country sources said the majority of Nigerian returnees were able to reintegrate into their communities without any difficulties, although some chose to relocate to larger urban areas to seek better economic opportunities (see Internal relocation).

5.41 DFAT assesses people who return to Nigeria, even after several years' absence, are unlikely to face adverse attention by authorities on their return due to their absence. DFAT assesses failed asylum seekers are unlikely to face adverse attention from authorities because of their failed application for asylum when they return to Nigeria.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

5.42 ECOWAS is a regional grouping of 12 West African nations focused on economic integration (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger withdrew on 29 January 2025). The *ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement 1979* established the right of citizens of member states to enter, reside and establish economic activities within any ECOWAS member state. At the time of writing a visa-free regime existed between all members but states retained the right to refuse admission based on domestic regulations.

5.43 In-country sources said individual ECOWAS member states set their own border policies including conditions of entry, duration of stay and eligibility for residence based on applicants' individual circumstances. ECOWAS member states often refused entry to those without a clear purpose, economic migrants and asylum seekers. Access to social service and health care were at the sole discretion of ECOWAS member states. Allegations border officials took bribes were common according to in-country sources.

DOCUMENTATION

National Identity Cards (e-ID cards)

5.44 The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) manages the National Identity Database. The NIMC is responsible for assigning Nigerians unique National Identification Numbers (NIN) and issuing National Electronic Identification Cards (e-ID cards). The e-ID card is a primary identification document and contains a unique 11-digit NIN that ties together all records about an individual. It allows Nigerians to access a range of government services, including health, pension, voting registration, taxation, drivers licence, transport, mobile SIM card and insurance. To obtain a NIN and e-ID card, Nigerians must attend a NIMC Enrolment Centre in their state and provide their photograph, fingerprints, iris scan and signature. Enrolment for the NIN is mandatory for all citizens, who are eligible to apply from birth. Failure to obtain a NIN does not usually result in prosecution.

Passports

5.45 The NIS issues Nigerian passports in Nigeria and the country's diplomatic missions issue passports abroad. Applicants must first apply for a passport online, then attend a biometric appointment at an NIS office or diplomatic mission. Requirements include providing a NIN, birth certificate and local government certificate. Nigerians without passports can re-enter the country on an Emergency Travel Certificate issued by diplomatic missions abroad.

Certificate of State of Origin

5.46 The Certificate of State of Origin is *prima facie* evidence of a person's claimed state of origin in Nigeria. According to the Guiding Principles of the Federal Character Commission, an 'indigene' of a state is anyone accepted as such by local authorities, leaving issuing authorities significant discretionary powers. The issuing authority for the Certificate of State of Origin is the state governor, although certificates are generally issued by either the State Liaison Office or the Local Government Secretariat within the issuing state. A Certificate of State of Origin is often required when applying for admission into educational institutions, employment and political appointments. A Certificate of State of Origin may be required as evidence of proof of identity when obtaining a NIN.

5.47 The process of obtaining a Certificate of State of Origin is not standardised across states but normally involves a visit to the relevant State Liaison Office, completion of an application form, presentation of photographs and payment of a fee. Application forms generally request the names and place of birth of the applicant and their ancestors (parents, grandparents and great-grandparents), whether the applicant speaks the local language and period of residency in the state in question. The applicant may also be required to provide support letters from the traditional ruler of the location. In some cases, applicants may be required to communicate in the local dialect or be able to explain why they are unable to do so. Local governments can also issue 'Certificates of Local Government of Origin', although little information was available on the process or requirements for obtaining this certificate.

Prevalence of Fraud

5.48 Identity fraud and fraudulently obtained genuine documents are very common in Nigeria. Fraudulent documents include but are not limited to: academic degrees and transcripts, birth certificates, Certificates of State of Origin, employment documents, NINs and passports. In-country sources said unemployment, cost-of-living pressures and a perceived lack of legal migration pathways encouraged some Nigerians to provide false information and fraudulent documents in their attempts to migrate. Fraud also targeted manipulation of online visa application systems, with copies of genuine documents doctored and then uploaded.

5.49 Section 465 of the *Criminal Code 1990* defines forgery as making a false document with intent it may be used or acted upon as genuine, to the prejudice of any person. Section 467 of the *Criminal Code 1990* states 'any person who forges any document, writing, or seal is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years'. In cases of forgery related to public documents or government seals the punishment extends to 14 years' imprisonment. In-country sources said rates of document fraud in Nigeria, especially when migration was involved, were extremely high. Few individuals involved in forging documents and related fraudulent activities had been prosecuted.

5.50 Official corruption in the issuance of government documents in Nigeria is systemic. Integrity concerns with birth certificates related to high rates of unregistered births, reliance on affidavit-based documentation, corruption

at the National Population Commission and widespread forgeries in circulation. In-country sources said there had been numerous reported cases of corruption in issuing Certificates of State Origin, where certificates were often issued for a fee without proper verification of true community origin. Data breaches at the NIMC were purportedly common, with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism reporting in 2025 many Nigerians' NINs were available for purchase on the dark web for approximately NGN560 (less than AUD1). Local media reported in 2025 the NIS was pursuing multiple cases of disciplinary action against officers who had fraudulently issued genuine passports to non-Nigerians for the purposes of criminal activity and/or illegal migration. A 2022 House of Representatives investigation found at least 7,000 suspected cases of fraudulently issued genuine passports, some of which were sold to members of criminal networks who resold the passports to human-trafficking rings in Europe and the Gulf.

5.51 Corruption is systematic in the issuance of educational and employment certificates, with bribery, nepotism and illicit manipulation commonly used to circumvent official procedures. For example, the Nigerian Government's Inter-Ministerial Investigative Committee on Fake Degree Certificate Milling discovered in 2024 more than 21,600 so-called Nigerian graduates held 'fake' degrees. In a high-profile example, an investigative panel determined former minister of innovation, science and technology, Uche Nnaji, had forged his University of Nigeria Nsukka degree certificate, which led to his resignation from office in 2025. Fraudulent employment documents are easily obtained, as well as forged or falsified testing certificates required for professional registration. For example, international media reported in 2024 more than 700 Nigerians had paid proxies to impersonate them during exams in order to obtain credentials as registered nurses.