

**Ohio University**  
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**Country Profile: Nigeria**

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## Country Profile: Nigeria

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### Geography:

Nigeria, popularly referred to as 'Giant of Africa' is located on the West Coast of Africa. As the pseudonym 'Giant of Africa' implies, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of about 136million. It is located in Western Africa. Nigeria is bounded by Benin Republic and Cameroun in the East and West and by Niger in the North. It bordered by the Gulf of Guinea in the South.

The majority of Nigeria is plateau and is cut through by rivers notably the Niger and Benue Rivers which cuts through the countries from the West and East and joins together at the center dividing the county into three major regions the North, the East and the West. Nigeria operates a Federal system of Government divided into 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) located in Abuja. In 1991 the capital was moved from Lagos the biggest city in

the country to Abuja where no particular ethnic group is dominant. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Ibos, the Hausas and the Yoruba. The majority of the Ibo population resides in the East, the Hausas in the North and the Yorubas in the West.

### **Climate:**

The climate of Nigeria varies by region. The climate is equatorial in the south, tropical in the center and arid in the north. The temperature in general is hot all year. There are two main seasons; rainy season which runs from April to October and the dry season which runs from November through March. The annual rainfall is about 130 inches and the dry season is characterized by dust. People frequently have sore throats and allergies during that period and are advised to take a lot of liquid.

### **Agriculture:**

Before the discovery of oil in Nigeria in the late 50s, the Nigerian agricultural sector was very vibrant and contributed to most of the country GNI. With the

groundnut pyramids in the North, groundnut constituted a major proportion of the export. The Eastern part of Nigeria was known for the production of Palm oil and at time were the world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil. The West specialized in the production and exportation of Cocoa and cotton.

Since the world oil crisis and the oil boom of the 70s Nigeria's GNI and exports are solely based on Petroleum. The disregard of the agricultural sector since then has diminished the agricultural sector of the country. Agriculture now is no more on large scale. Individuals practice subsistent agriculture. Agricultural produce in Nigeria are divided into two major categories: cash crops and food crops. The cash crops are mainly produced for the purposes of export and the food crops are produced for domestic consumption. The major food produce in the south is yam and cassava and the major food produce in the north is millet. Other agricultural produce in Nigeria include: corn, rice, sorghum, cattle sheep goat timber rubber, and fish.

**Culture:**

The major religions practiced in Nigeria are Christianity (40%), Islam (50%) and traditional religion (10%). Nigeria has an extremely rich culture which constitutes the major aspect of the social aspect of the country. Its art history dates back to the Igbo Ukwu Bronze of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC (ca). Their art are made up of Sculpture, wooden masks bronze terracotta and painting amongst others. Some popular Nigerian art works include the symbol of FESTAC '77 (Festival of Arts and Culture) which was stolen by the British, the Ife and Benin Bronze heads, to mention but a few. Some of the popular Nigerian artists of the 70s include Olu Oguibe, Chike Aniakor, Uche Okeke and Obiora Udechuwku.

Nigerian music is also a popular aspect of the culture. Artists like Fela and Femi who have international acclaim constitute the voices of the Nigerian Afro beat. Percussion instruments like drums and gongs are widely used. Traditional instruments like flutes are also widely played. Tales by moonlight is an important part of traditional Nigerian nightlife. As electricity is not always available, children and adults alike in the rural areas spend their night gathered around under the moonlit night sharing folktales and telling stories of the past. Oral tradition is a very important aspect of the culture and during the

moonlight nights the elders orally tell the stories of their times. Nigerian literary gurus like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and most recently Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, have published the stories of this great Nation on various levels and have received international awards and acclaim.

One cannot talk about Nigerian culture without discussing the food. Feeding in Nigerian is a process of its own. Not only are foods meticulously prepared from the scratch, the actual sharing brings together the family. Food not only serves to nourish the body it binds together. Every guest is served food and sometimes it is impolite to refuse food as a guest. The staple food of the south is yam and cassava (fufu). The preparation process of cassava takes days as it has to be peeled, soaked and left to soften before it is processed. The cassava is eaten with egusi (melon seed) soup melon soup ogbono/okra (drag/okra) soup olugbu (bitter leaf) soup to mention but a few. It is simply a delicacy and the actual eating process is an art.

### **History:**

The history of Nigeria has been one plagued with the British who colonized the country until 1960 when it gained its Independence. The system under which it was ruled was indirect rule. With the coming of British rule and the division of the country into the northern and southern protectorate, the country was torn into a major confusion and catastrophe from which it is yet to recover. The existing religion of the people was cast away as evil and their culture was discarded as inferior.

October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained its independence from the British headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe . The first Prime Minister was Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who took orders from the crown from 1960-1963. The first Republic was declared in 1963 and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first President of the country. Series of coups and country coup d'états characterized the political structure for following years until in 1999 when the country transitioned into a democracy with the 1999 constitution. Prior to that in 1966, a group of leftists overthrew the government of Tafawa Balewa and many of the generals involved were Ibos. As a result, a group of Army officers from the North carried out a counter coup. These series of coup led to ethnic tension and rivalry during which a lot Ibos were killed.

In 1967, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu an Ibo officer proclaimed the secession of the south east Nigeria which was to be called the Republic of Biafra. The 1958 discovery of oil in Eastern Nigeria made the secession unacceptable by the federal government. The Nigerian troops therefore invaded and Besiege Biafra in a bloody war that lasted 3years resulting in about 500,000 to 2 million deaths from starvation.

In May 2007, President Olusegun Obasanjo, who was a former Nigerian President during the military regime, became the first Nigerian President to successfully hand over to another democratic President after serving two consecutive tenures from May 1999-May 2007.

### **Language:**

The Official Language of Nigeria remained English Language after independence. It is therefore the language of instruction in schools an also used to conduct official business. However, there exist over 250 languages in

Nigeria. The three major languages that are spoken by a majority of Nigerians are Ibo Yoruba and Hausa.

The other languages include Ibibio, Isoko, Igala, Ijaw etc.

### **Customs:**

The beauty of the Nigerian culture lies in the customs and practices. Most of them were passed down from the ancestors and because the stories were told orally they are still remembered and practiced today. One of the oldest customs that still exists in Nigeria is greetings. Ways of greeting an elder varies across the nation. Amongst the Yorubas a younger male prostrates before an elder as a sign of respect when he greets them. A younger female kneels before an elder. Siblings are also expected to respect their older siblings. The Older Sibling is usually accountable for the younger one and is responsible for their well being when the parents are not around.

There are certain practices and festival that are customary all year round.

Amongst the Ibos is what is known as "Iri Ji" (New Yam Festival). The New yam festival is held annually in August to celebrate the importance of yam as a

staple food amongst the Ibos. It commemorates the end of the planting season and yet the beginning of yet a new planting season. Homage is paid to "Ahajioku" (the god of yam) for a bountiful harvest. During the Festival, only the freshly harvested tubers of yam are eaten. The Iri Ji Festival is one of the most important celebrations amongst the Ibos.

Women in Nigeria traditionally dress very conservatively. It is disrespectful to dress scantily especially when you are before an elder. How one behaves is usually attributed to the family. Therefore an ill mannered child must be a product of ill mannered parents. Traditionally at the age of 18, a woman is ripe for marriage. Women usually get married between the ages of 18-25. When a woman approaches the age of twenty five and is not married, family members and relatives begin to show concern.

Marriage is a process in Nigeria. The most important parties in a marriage arrangement are the family members of the groom to be and the family members of the bride to be. Unlike in Western culture, before a man proposes to a woman, he would express his interest to the parents of the girl who will carry out a background check on the man to see that he comes from a reputable family. After that is done, the woman's parents will inform the

umunna (extended family members) of the man's intentions and then wedding preparations would begin. The first stage of this process is the introductory visit known as "iku aka n'uzo" (knock on the door). There are numerous other processes that lead to the Wedding day. There are typically two weddings the traditional wedding (igba nkwu) and the white wedding. In the traditional wedding, the couples and the guests are dressed in the native attire.

### **Lifestyle:**

There is nothing extraordinary about a typical week in the life of a Nigerian. Monday through Friday people are busy at work and in their various businesses. Saturdays are reserved for house cleaning. The children are usually heavily involved in making sure that the compound is dazzling. On Sunday mornings the whole family attends church services together. Sundays are also family visitation days.

During the holidays when school is not in session, children prefer to spend their holidays with relatives and cousins. It is common practice to have relatives spend of their holiday weeks with each other or at their grandparents'. Some of the National Holidays include the Nigerian Independence day which is

celebrated Nationwide every October 1. It is commemorated with a march past event at designated locations nationwide and numerous other activities.

Other important National Holiday are Children's day held every May 27, Christmas, New Year, Easter for Christians and idel Kabir, idel-Fitri and idel-Malude for Muslims. Nigerians usually spend their winter break in the village because it leads into the Christmas and New Year holiday. It is a period where families in the rural areas reunite with their relatives in the urban areas and the cities.

### **What kids do?**

Urban kids in Nigeria spend most of their time in schools. In the weekends, they either hang out with their friends or play video games with their siblings because most times their friends do not live close by. For the most part, kids play with their siblings and because of that, the bond between families is strong. Unlike in some developing countries Nigerian kids generally do not work because there are hardly opportunities for kids to work. They are always provided for by their parents.

Kinds that reside in the rural areas on the other hand participate in a variety of moonlight games. The villages are located close to each other so there are usually a lot more people on the play ground and lots of stories to tell. They also swim in the Village Rivers or streams in the day time. Most times, the kids usually help out their parents in the farm or in the markets. Life in the rural areas for kids is more exciting because they have more fun activities and more leisure times together.

**Relevant websites:**

<http://nigeriaworld.com/>

[www.onlinenigeria.com](http://www.onlinenigeria.com)

<http://www.abujacity.com/>

<http://www.abuja.net/>

<http://www.arewa-online.com/nigerian%20leaders.html>