

# EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE **FIELD GUIDE**

**Nigeria**



# About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of two parts:

Part 1 introduces “Culture General,” the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2 presents “Culture Specific” Nigeria, focusing on unique cultural features of Nigerian society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at [www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/) or contact AFCLC’s Region Team at [AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil](mailto:AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil).

**Disclaimer:** All text is the property of the AFCLC and may not be modified by a change in title, content, or labeling. It may be reproduced in its current format with the expressed permission of the AFCLC. All photography is provided as a courtesy of the US government, Wikimedia, and other sources as indicated.

[Please scroll over images to view captions.](#)



# PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

## What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.



Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual

symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

## Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and

economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

### **Cultural Domains**

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as “cultural domains” – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

### **Social Behaviors Across Cultures**

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.



Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated market economies, producing foodstuffs for

universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

## Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.



As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or

"people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

## 12 Domains of Culture



This collective perspective forms our worldview – how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

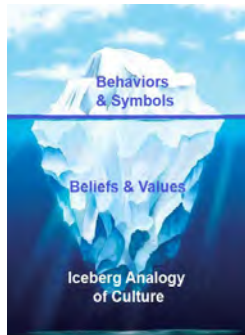
### **Cultural Belief System**

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.

### **Core Beliefs**

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the



deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

## CULTURAL DOMAINS

### 1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.



Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and



wisdom were preserved across generations and ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles.

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it





did not end the European presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

## 2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social

relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and



continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.



Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective “national” identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as “tribalism.”

This “class versus descent” scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 55-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote “greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples” by building partnerships in all segments of “civil society.”

### 3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures,



marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and

Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity.

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,



death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

#### 4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin"). The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.



First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

## 5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered



over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of single parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

## 6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is



defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury

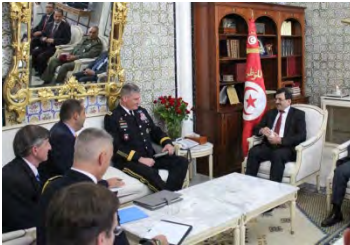
rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to

adopt multilingual practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional “indigenous” languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their “release” from colonial rule and to

preserve a sense of indigenous identity.



While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid

confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,



particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

## 7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.



The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also

hamper progress. According to 2023 statistics, about 100 million African children and youth were out of school, of which 35 million were of primary school age.

## 8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships



and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as

a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

## 9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and

style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa, recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.



Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly “white” game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture “Invictus,” exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.



Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world’s dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World

Championships, and there is also a growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

## 10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.



Despite having only 18% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 68% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 95% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 65% of the Sub-



Saharan African population having access to basic drinking water, water-borne bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

## 11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world.

Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa



currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

## 12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.



International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Nigerian society.

# PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

## 1. HISTORY AND MYTH

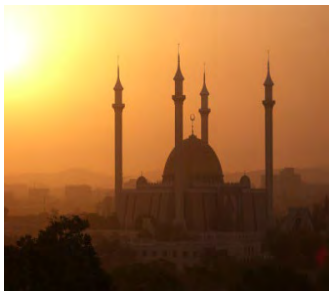
### Historical Overview

Archeological evidence indicates humankind first occupied the area encompassing modern-day Nigeria beginning in the Late Stone Age (10000 to 2000 BC). With the introduction of stone tools and pottery between 4000 BC and 1000 BC, these early inhabitants began to transition from transitory hunter-gatherer societies to more permanent and decentralized agriculturally-based village civilizations.

From 500 BC to 200 AD, the Nok society emerged as Nigeria's first advanced civilization, occupying an area which today comprises the country's central region. Known for their stylish ceramic figurines, the Nok were among the first in Sub-Saharan Africa to adopt iron technology, which they used to develop basic agricultural tools. The group mysteriously vanished around 500 AD.

### Spread of Islam

By 700 AD, Arab traders from North Africa began to penetrate the Sahara Desert carrying pottery, glass, and salt to exchange for ivory, ebony, gold, and slaves. These traders also introduced Islam to Nigeria in the 11th century. While some inhabitants continued to adhere to traditional indigenous faiths, many northerners converted to Islam (see p.1-4 of *Religion & Spirituality*). The spread of Islam contributed to the sustained growth of centralized ethnic states through their partnerships with the powerful Islamic Kingdoms of Mali and Songhai (along with Ghana comprised the first three successive West African Kingdoms).





## Advancement of Civilization

The people of Northern Nigeria began to prosper by around 1000 AD and by 1200 a number of ethnically diverse cultures evolved into a succession of powerful city-states and kingdoms. The most prominent of these societies consisted of what became the predominant Hausa people, along with other minority groups (see p.7-9 of *Political & Social Relations*). The Hausa built commercial hubs such as Kano which became a renowned Islamic educational center.

To the Southwest the Yoruba established the city of Ife, which is known for its bronze sculptures and served as a center for a variety of indigenous religions. By the 1400s, the Benin Kingdom to the east flourished into a prominent political and commercial center. Other ethnic groups such as the Igbo also emerged in Southeast Nigeria as decentralized tribal societies.

## African Slave Trade

Concurrent with the development of city-states and spread of Islam, Arab merchants established the African slave trade which lasted from the 7th to 19th centuries. During this time, Arabs enslaved and shipped approximately 12 million Africans throughout the Arab world.

In the late 15th century, Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans to enter the African slave trade and introduced Christianity to the continent (see p.4-5 of *Religion & Spirituality*).



Originally travelling to West Africa in search of gold, they instead found Africans in greater supply and soon began selling them to Muslim and Christian merchants. In some cases, the Portuguese would purchase slaves for \$4 each from local chiefs and Christian missionaries and auction them for up to \$130 each in the Americas.

Joining the slave trade in the 1600s, the British eventually established ports for trafficking enslaved Africans destined for the Americas. The British dominated the African slave trade for the next 200 years until eliminating it in

1807. While abolition may have dissolved slavery as an institution, it did not end European presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their disparaging attitudes towards Africans.

## Colonization

In the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, the British expanded trade throughout Nigeria, ultimately declaring the area around the port city of Lagos a royal colony, and likewise, claiming a sphere of influence within the Nigerian interior. The British maintained these territories until the current national boundaries were established by the Berlin Conference in 1884. As a result of shifting boundaries, the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, established in 1914, became an assortment of numerous ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures. The name “Nigeria” stems from the country’s great river, the Niger, considered the nation’s lifeblood.

The northern and southern regions were administered separately, as was the distinct Lagos



colony along Nigeria’s western coast. While Northern leaders retained a religious-based “indirect rule” arrangement with British colonial authorities, Western influence took hold in the south, thereby providing a firm cultural foundation that lingers today. However, with colonization came domestic instability as Nigerians resisted this forced cohabitation under a European national identity.

## Independence & Civil War

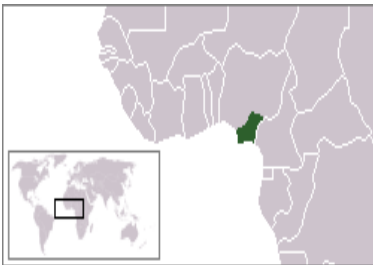
Declaring its independence from Britain in October 1960, liberated Nigeria experienced difficulties as preexisting ethnic rivalries stimulated competition for political supremacy, consequentially leading to intense violence. The situation was intensified by an unbalanced constitution that failed to establish ethnic equality. These tensions exploded in January 1966, when a group of Eastern army officers, known as “The Young Majors,” staged a coup against the civilian government in an attempt to end the corruption of the old guard and assassinated the country’s top political leaders.

While some Northern Muslims welcomed a regime change, others feared the majority Igbo coup plotters would attempt to gain control of the country. In defense, a group of Northern officers staged a counter coup in July 1966, establishing Lt Col Yakubu Gowon (a Christian from a minority northern tribe) as head of the military government.

The counter coup resulted in the massacre of thousands of Igbo, and ultimately, an Igbo secessionist movement emerged.

The Igbo collectively established a self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra, resulting in a 2 1/2 -year civil war (1967-1970) that claimed over one million lives.

Eventually, the Igbo surrendered in January 1970 and rejoined the republic, with Biafran rebels absorbed into the Nigerian Army.



### **Post-Civil War**

Following the civil war, Nigeria was politically reconciled and economically stabilized with expanded oil production in the Niger Delta (see p.2 of *Economics & Resources*). However, for nearly 30 years Nigeria would experience corrupt military dictatorship despite numerous attempts to establish civilian rule.

### **Transition to Civilian Rule**

Between December 1998 and February 1999, the last military ruler, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, held a series of political elections, with former General Olusegun Obasanjo, winning the presidential election as leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Obasanjo returned to the presidency after 20 years (he previously had been appointed interim president, 1976-79, upon the assassination of military dictator, General Murtala Muhammed), thus ending Nigeria's era of military rule, under which most of its citizenry suffered at the hands of dictators who generally suppressed political opposition with violence. These

autocrats devastated the economy through systemic corruption, pilfering, and economic stagnation.

### **Obasanjo's Rule**

Obasanjo addressed some of Nigeria's ills by retiring military officers who held political positions, instituting a free press, launching an investigation into human rights abuses, releasing political prisoners, and recovering millions of dollars previous regimes had deposited overseas.



Obasanjo was reelected in 2003, although he was unable to amend a constitutional ruling that barred him from seeking a third term in 2007.

Agreeing to leave office, Obasanjo appointed Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as his successor to lead the PDP. While Yar'Adua was later elected, there were serious allegations of voting fraud.

### **Yar'Adua and Jonathan's Rule**

There also was concern about President Yar'Adua's physical ability to retain office. In November 23, 2009, he flew to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, and after a prolonged and mysterious absence, his presidential power was transferred to PDP Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, who served as acting president until Yar'Adua passed away in May 2010 and thereafter succeeding as President. Jonathan was reelected to a second term in May 2011 then defeated by All



Progressives Congress party member Muhammadu Buhari in the March 2015 general election – the first time a Nigerian incumbent President was defeated by an opposition leader.

## Folklore

All Nigeria ethnicities developed oral literature prior to the emergence of written languages and even prior to the arrival of Islam, Christianity, and Western influence. Some narrated as history and others as fiction, many of these verbal traditions remain today and have even been integrated with other media to preserve their cultural significance. Oral folklore is expressed in a variety of genre – from proverbs, songs, and oral narratives to poetry and folk tales. While oftentimes used to entertain, oral literature also is used to reinforce values and perpetuate traditions.

Poetry, legends, myth, and epic tales are the more common forms of oral literature used to honor heads of state, clan leaders, nobility, and heroes. For example, the Igbo ethnic group uses *ojebe* poems to praise holders of noble titles, while the Hausa *kirari* serves to honor kings and entertain at weddings and other important ceremonies. Among the Yoruba tribe, the *oriki* forms a group of praises and descriptive titles to eulogize great people and places, while the Ijaw clansmen use *Ozidi* legends to celebrate heroes.

Oral sagas are also used to depict abstract ideas, inanimate objects, and animals – different occupations are known to have songs celebrating their impact on society. For example, the *ijala* among the Yoruba is a song recited among hunters.

Ritual poetry is designed to manipulate spiritual beings, prepare charms, harm enemies, or attract good luck – it generally is designed to enhance the effects of medical science.

## 2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS



### Official Name

Federal Republic of Nigeria

### Political Borders

Niger: 930mi  
Benin: 480mi  
Chad: 54mi  
Cameroon: 1050mi  
Coastline: 530mi

### Capital

Abuja

### Features

- Located in West Africa, covers about 356,700 sq miles and about the size of California, Nevada, and Arizona combined – Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation.
- Holds two main rivers, the Niger and the Benue, which empty into the Niger Delta – the world's largest river delta.
- Serves as West Africa's largest source of petroleum and the 7th-largest source of oil for the US.
- Terrain ranges from southern coastal swamps to tropical forests, open woodlands, grasslands, and semi-desert in the far north.
- The highest regions, ranging from 3,900 to 7,900 feet above sea level, are the Jos Plateau located in the country's central region and the mountains along the border with Cameroon.
- Has a tropical climate and annual rainfall ranging from over 12 feet along the coast to 2 feet or less in the North (see p.4 of *Economics & Resources*).

## Flag

It consists of three equal vertical bands of green, white, and green. The color green represents the forests and abundant natural wealth of the country, with white symbolizing peace and unity.



## Political Power

Nigeria is a Federal Republic containing 3 branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial), 36 states, (all of which have their own local governmental bodies), and a Federal Capital Territory at Abuja. Its legal system is based on a combination of English common law, Islamic (shari'a) law (popular in most northern states), and traditional law. Shari'a is an Islamic code of law derived from the Qur'an (Islamic "Holy Book") and administered by trained clerics. As part of the 1999 constitution, any Nigerian state has the option of establishing shari'a courts, and many states have them for civil cases such as divorce or property matters. Only 12 northern states also impose the shari'a criminal code. The states have interpreted the 1999 legislation to mean shari'a can govern most local matters, a policy opposed by both Muslims and Christians who oppose state-sponsored religion.

## Executive Branch

- *Chief of State*: The President serves as both chief of state and head of government and is elected by popular vote for a 4-year term and eligible for a second term. Current President Bola Tinubu defeated incumbent Muhammadu Buhari in February 2023 and assumed office in May of that year.
- *Cabinet*: The Federal Executive Council consists of 36 appointed members.

## Legislative Branch

Consists of a 2-chamber Parliament (National Assembly) whose members are elected by popular vote to 4-year terms.

- *Senate*: 109 elected seats, 3 from each state, plus 1 from the national capital city, Abuja.
- *House of Representatives*: 360 elected seats.



## Judicial Branch

The National Judicial Council recommends Supreme Court judges to the President for appointment. Federal Court of Appeal judges are appointed by the federal government from a pool of judges recommended by the National Judicial Council.

## Regional Dynamics

Nigeria is a federation originally organized into four regions (northern, western, eastern, and mid-western), with each region retaining a degree of autonomy, although the federal government holds exclusive powers in national defense, internal security, foreign affairs, and economics. As of 1966, it was reorganized into 6 informal zones.

## Defense

While currently under the purview of civilian leadership, the Nigerian military ruled the nation for all but 4 years during the period 1966 – 99. The largest and best-equipped in West Africa, Nigeria's military consists of army, navy, and air forces and is primarily used in international peacekeeping operations. Active duty personnel total approximately 143,000; with the largest



service, the Nigerian Army, consisting of 100,000 personnel, the Air Force 18,000, and the Navy 25,000.

Deployed in two mechanized infantry divisions, a composite division (airborne and amphibious), and a division-size garrison command; the Army has demonstrated its capability to mobilize, deploy, and sustain battalions in support of peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Sudan/Darfur.

The Air Force flies transport, trainer, helicopter, and fighter aircraft, although most are currently non-operational. The Navy is equipped with frigates, fast attack, and coastal patrol boats. Nigeria also has a paramilitary force of about 80,000 personnel to include port security and civil defense corps.

## Nigerian Air Force Rank Insignia



Marshal of the  
Air Force



Air Chief  
Marshal



Air Marshal



Air  
Vice-Marshal



Air  
Commodore



Group  
Captain



Wing  
Commander



Squadron  
Leader



Flight  
Lieutenant



Flying  
Officer



Pilot  
Officer

## Multilateral Armed Forces

Over the past decade, Nigeria has played a pivotal role in executing African peace operations, providing a majority of forces for UN peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and Liberia (UNMIL), along with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Additionally, Nigeria regularly deploys peacekeepers to support UN missions worldwide.

Likewise, Nigeria is major contributor to a multilateral armed force established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS consists of 13 West African countries organized in 1975 to promote economic integration.

## Security Issues

**Opposition Groups:** The Niger Delta has long been a site of conflict among local opposition groups, the federal government, and multinational oil corporations. The best established and trained militant group in the region is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which is basically an insurgent group seeking to localize control of the Niger Delta's oil wealth. While MEND activities have been directed mostly at Nigeria's oil exporting capacity, a number of criminal gangs motivated solely by financial interests have emerged.



Boko Haram (also known as the Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad) is an Islamist militant group based in Maiduguri, the northeast capital of the Borno state. The aim of this extremist group is to overthrow the government and create an Islamist state. Its fundamentalist interpretation of Islam forbids Muslims from participating in cultural activities linked to the West. Boko Haram's radical activities have included deadly bombings, assassinations, and abductions. Since 2009, Boko Haram has killed over 40,000 people and displaced over 3.01 million others across the Lake Chad region.

**Ethnic & Religious Tensions:** Perhaps Nigeria's gravest social problem is the internal violence among ethnic and religious

groups, resulting in more than 10,000 deaths since 1999. Nigerian state and local governments have tended to afford preferential treatment to groups having historical claims to their



respective homelands, often leading to discrimination against those residents with ethnic roots in other parts of the federation. The Nigerian government has administered tentative

power-sharing arrangements to help ensure that its many ethnic groups have a voice on how the country's natural resource wealth is spent; however, questions about ethnicity and how to balance the many competing interests remain a concern.

**Poverty & Crime:** Urban unemployment and poverty have led to major crime, with Lagos having one of West Africa's highest crime rates. Similarly, inadequate police response has oftentimes led to vigilante justice, and while illegal, these vigilante groups continue to act with impunity.

**Border Disputes:** Nigeria engaged in a long-running border dispute with Cameroon over the mineral-rich Bakassi Peninsula, with the two nations engaging in cross-border skirmishes. This argument was settled in 2008 at the International Court of Justice, with the territory transferred to Cameroon.

Likewise, Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad have a long-running shared border dispute over territory in the Lake Chad region, also resulting in cross-border fighting.

### Illicit Drug Trafficking

Nigeria is also a transit point for heroin and cocaine destined for European, East Asian, and North American markets. A consumer for amphetamines and safe haven for worldwide narco-traffickers,



Nigeria is also party to major money-laundering, corruption, and criminal activities. Of note, Nigeria has made headway in establishing anti-money-laundering controls.

## Relations with the US

Since Nigeria's transition to a civilian-ruled democracy in 1999 (see p.4-5 of *History & Myth*), ties between Washington and Nigeria have strengthened, with Nigeria becoming a strategic partner. Bilateral relations have brought cooperative foreign



policy goals, particularly regional peacekeeping initiatives and support for the US global war on terrorism.

Of note, Nigeria has officially condemned the 9/11 terrorist attacks and supported military action against

the Taliban and Al Qaida, taking the lead in fostering anti-terrorism consensus throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

## US Security Assistance

The US has had significant involvement in helping Nigeria secure its growing reliance on oil imports from the Niger Delta. The US has provided arms, military training, and other security assistance to the Nigerian government to keep the oil flowing.

## Ethnicity

Comprised of more than 250 ethnic groups, each with its own unique language and culture, Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, and the world's 6th, having over 236.7 million residents. Its 4 largest ethnic groups are regionally located and include the Hausa-Fulani (36%), Yoruba (16%), Igbo (15%), and the Ijaw (2%). Other notable groups include the Kanuri (2%), Ibibio (2%), and Tiv (2%).



## Hausa and Fulani

Northern Nigeria is the country's largest region, occupying nearly 75% of the total national land and more than 50% of its population. It primarily consists of Hausa-speaking Sunni Muslims (see p.1-2 of *Religion & Spirituality*) to include Fulani herdsmen who migrated from the Senegal River valley in the 13th century (the Hausa and Fulani tribes generally have been grouped together as a result of the early 19th-century Fulani War, whereby the Fulani established a permanent base in the northern Hausa Kingdom). Originating as wandering nomads, the Fulani transit the countryside seeking abundant pasturelands, although many have established permanent residencies in urban areas.



Occupying rural areas where they thrive from simple farming practices, the Hausa-Fulani have politically dominated Nigeria since independence from Britain in 1960. They traditionally have been accomplished traders, with the largest Hausa city, Kano, a renowned commercial center.

Some Hausa-Fulani consider southern Nigerians inferior for their Christian and indigenous religious beliefs, although in actuality, the South has the superior education system.

## Yoruba

Embracing both Islam and Christianity, alongside their indigenous beliefs, the Yoruba comprise Nigeria's second largest group, who speak their native Yoruba language and primarily occupy urban areas in the southwestern region. The Yoruba collectively believe they descended from the same ancestor (see p.5-6 of *Religion & Spirituality*) with the city of Ile-Ife their ancestral homeland. Although they claim to



share a bloodline, many Yoruba identify with smaller Yoruba-speaking communities rather than the larger ethnic group.

Their extensive contact with Europeans and urbanization during the 19th-century colonial period facilitated Yoruban advancement in education, commerce, and administration; consequently affording them higher positions in the British colonial government.

### **Igbo/Ibo**

The predominantly Christian Igbo are the largest ethnic group in the Southeast – the most densely populated region – with smaller groups such as the Ibibio and Ijaw sharing a substantial segment of the population. The colonial British favored the Igbo because of their belief in merit-based achievement as opposed to hereditary advancement. Like the Yoruba, the Igbo were among Nigeria's most



highly educated and professionally advanced people, who traditionally became the backbone of Nigeria's bureaucracy and economy. Of note, British favoritism towards the Igbo from other ethnic groups, particularly from the Hausa, incited some resentment

### **Ijaw**

The country's fourth largest ethnic group, the Ijaw occupies traditional areas to the south along the Niger River. While this territory is among the country's most oil-rich real estate, oil exploration has subjected the group to devastating ecological hazards. Of note, former Nigerian former President Goodluck Jonathan is Ijawan.





## Social Relations

Interpersonal relations are characterized by a code of behavior that emphasizes respect for the other person, particularly the elderly and those of status. In many ethnic groups, seniority demands deference from subordinates be it senior siblings, spouses, and officers. Similarly, high admiration is granted to those of wealth and power.

### Attitude

Northerners tend to be reserved when dealing with others, unlike southerners who are generally more open and outgoing. While a northerner generally views loud verbalism an expression of

anger, conversely a southerner may be more articulate when making a point or attracting attention.



### Status

Wealth symbolizes the pinnacle of social stratification in modern Nigeria, especially in

urban areas where the professional elite constitutes a small, yet powerful, segment of the population. Traditionally, ethnic lineage determined social status and wealth, although today they are based more on monetary resources than heritage. Members of the wealthy elite are easily distinguished by their Western-style possessions and command of the English language, which reflects their literacy.

Both the Igbo and Yoruba regard their lowest social group as outcasts (pariah) undeserving of merit, with the criteria for distinguishing this lowest caste varying by region and ethnicity.



The Igbo refer to this group as *Osu*, with community members avoiding all contact with them, regardless of their personal

qualities or potential. *Osu* generally are denied political representation and educational and professional opportunities.

**Age** is greatly respected in Nigeria. In a part of the world where the average life expectancy is not very high, those who live into their senior years are honored as having achieved special rights and admiration.

### **Favoritism**

Favoritism in the workplace is a common practice in Nigeria, where people from the same ethnic background generally promote each other over outsiders. Failing to prove productive, favoritism has resulted in animosity and marginalization when hiring is based on personal preference rather than proven qualifications. While the legal system has outlawed this practice, it remains widespread.

## **Social Etiquette**

**Visiting:** In most collective societies, visiting is fundamental to maintaining social harmony within the family unit and the community at large. Nigerians visit each other regularly and oftentimes unannounced, particularly in many rural areas where telephones are not widely available. Sociable and generous,



rural Nigerians delight in an opportunity to entertain friends in their homes and will attempt to make guests feel welcome with friendly conversation and refreshments.

Invited guests are not expected to bring gifts, although small, inexpensive presents are appreciated. Although an arrival time usually is established, guests are not expected to be on time, and if the event has started, late arrivals are anticipated and welcome. Upon arrival, it is appropriate for the guest to remove his shoes and wait for the host to invite him to sit. In urban areas, only close acquaintances are invited to a Nigerian home, as most professional socializing is conducted in restaurants and night clubs.

**Greetings:** Socially, greetings express genuine respect for the other person. A handshake and warm wishes for the health and wellbeing of a counterpart and his family are common when meeting someone (see p.3-5 of *Language & Communication* and p.1-3 of *Time & Space*).

### Presenting Appropriate Gifts

- When invited to a Nigerian's home, it is appropriate to bring an inexpensive gift such as fruit, nuts, or chocolate to the host.
- Since Nigeria is a poor country, an expensive gift is not appropriate and may be viewed negatively.
  - For example, it may be seen as an attempt to gain influence or may embarrass a recipient who would be unable to match in kind.
- A small gift for the children is always appreciated.
- At Ramadan it is customary for Muslims to offer gifts of food and fruit.
- It is best to avoid giving alcohol, particularly to conservative Muslims whose religious practices forbid its consumption.
- It is proper to present the gift with the right hand, or both hands, as the left hand is sometimes considered unsanitary.
- Gifts from a man to a woman should be presented on behalf of a female relative and not from the man himself (see p.6 of *Language & Communication*).
- Gifts should be wrapped, although there are no cultural taboos concerning paper color.
- Gifts are not always opened immediately upon receipt.

### 3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Nigeria's population is divided between Muslims (51%) and Christians (47%), with the 2% consisting of indigenous religions and Judaism (found in the Igbo tribe). Islam is found primarily in the Northern region among the Hausa and Fulani tribes, with Christianity seen mostly in the Southeast, predominantly among Catholic Igbo and Protestant Yoruba. The Southwest is equally divided between Muslims and Christians, with indigenous practices spread throughout the country.

#### Islamic Faith

In the 11th century, Muslim migrants from the Arabian Peninsula introduced Islam to the northern Hausa states, and while Islam established a dominant presence in the North, it was unable to surpass the grasslands into the southern forest region.

#### Origins of Islam

Islam dates to the 6th century when God's final Prophet, Muhammad, was

born in Mecca in the current country of Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was meditating in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him over a 23-year period, revealing the Qur'an, or the "Holy Book," to guide their everyday life. The Qur'an represents a core belief that helps shape Muslims' lifelong values.

#### Meaning of Islam

Islam means "submission to the will of God" and acceptance of His wisdom. Its adherents consider it more than a religion – it is a way of life.

***An Arabic Qur'an should not be handled by a non-Muslim unless a Muslim gives it as a gift.***



## Muslim Sects

Islam is divided into two sects: Sunni and Shi'a. Nigerian Muslims are predominantly Sunni and are distinguished by their belief that the leader (*Caliph*) of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) should be elected. Conversely, the Shi'a, who constitutes a significant Nigerian minority, believes the Muslim leader should be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

**Sufi Tradition:** Characterized by mysticism and ritualistic prayer, the Sufi tradition of Islam is common in West Africa. Many Sufis belong to religious brotherhoods (*tariga*) whose members adhere to teachings from their spiritual leaders. Adhering to Sunni tradition, Sufis are not fundamentalists.

## Five Pillars of Islam

There are five basic principles of the Islamic faith that all Muslims accept and follow.

- **Profession of Faith (*Shahada*):** "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger."
- **Prayer (*Salat*):** Pray five times a day facing toward the Ka'aba in Mecca. The Ka'aba is considered the center of the Muslim world and a unifying focal point for Islamic worship.
- **Charity (*Zakat*):** Involves an obligatory tithe or donation to the poor.
- **Fasting (*Sawm*):** Involves abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan (30 days).
- **Pilgrimage to Mecca (*The Hajj*):** Every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able is expected to perform at least one in his or her lifetime.



## Shared Perspectives

Many Islamic tenets parallel the other two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims consider Christians

and Jews “people of the Book,” referring to biblical scriptures, because they share their monotheistic belief in one God.

**Abraham:** All three faiths trace their lineage back to Abraham, known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, Christians and Jews trace their line back to Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac; while Muslims believe that they descend from Abraham and his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, and their son Ismail.

**Scriptures:** Much of the content of the Qur’an is similar to teachings and stories found in the Christian Bible’s Old and New Testaments, and Muslims view Islam as a completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets. However, Muslims believe the Christians distorted God’s word and that Muhammad received the true revelation of God.



**Jesus:** The three religions differ significantly over the role of Jesus. While Christians consider Him the divine Messiah who fulfills the Jewish Scriptures, Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Muslims recognize Jesus as having been a prophet, but do not

acknowledge the Christian view of His divinity. They do not believe in the Christian Trinity.

**View of Death:** Muslims believe that the time of death, like birth, is determined by Allah. Thus old age, illness, or accidents are not considered the real causes of death. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event, as Muslims believe that a person who lived a good life goes on to live in Heaven.

### **Concept of Jihad**

The concept of Jihad, or inner striving, is a fundamental element within Islam. Traditionally, it is the principled and moral pursuit of God’s will to lead a virtuous life. It should not be confused with the publicized violence often associated with Jihad. Most Muslims are strongly opposed to terrorism, considering it contrary to Islamic beliefs.

## Ramadan

Ramadan is a month-long time for inner reflection, self-control, and focus on God. During this time, Muslims who are physically able are required to fast from dawn to sunset. Many Muslims believe that denying their hunger tempers them to learn self-control, appreciate the difficulties of the poor, and gain spiritual renewal – by fasting, one learns to appreciate the good in life. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light meal of dates followed by prayer and then dinner.

Ramadan is observed during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar (see p.3 of *Time & Space*) and includes three Islamic holy days.

- **Lailat ul-Qadr:** Known as “The Night of Power,” it commemorates Muhammad receiving the first verses of the Qur’an.
- **Eid-al-Adha:** It is the “Festival of Sacrifice” and commemorates Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael (Isaac according to the Christian faith), as proof of his loyalty to God. It is celebrated the same day the Hajj ends.
- **Eid-al-Fitr:** It is a 3-day “Festival of Fast-Breaking” celebrated at Ramadan’s end.

## Christianity

In the 15th century, Portuguese explorers brought Christianity to Sub-Saharan Africa, where in Nigeria, it spread to cities along the coastal regions and in the south and middle belt of the country. In many instances, those inhabitants who did not convert to Christianity were captured and sold as slaves (see p.2 of *History & Myth*).



During the colonial period, missionaries converted large number of Africans to Christianity allegedly to spread the gospel and rescue them from deprivation. While converts were permitted to retain many of their traditional African rituals, some Christian communities formed their own independent churches to avoid European racism and safeguard African religious traditions.

Consequently, some external Christian communities tend to view African Christianity as tainted, resulting in bias against its decentralized structure.

### **Christian Churches**

Religious independence and innovation define Nigerian Christianity, consisting of a variety of old mission and Orthodox churches to include Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist. Other evangelical, Pentecostal, African-American, and revivalist movements emphasize the central role of prayer and the Holy Spirit and tend to adhere to various indigenous customs. Promoting a puritanical approach, their worship practices tend to be emotional and inspired by faith healing, prophecy, and the Holy Spirit's intervention.

## **Indigenous Religions**

Many Nigerians blend indigenous African religious beliefs with fundamental Islamic or Christian customs, resulting in what commonly is referred to as "Africanized" practices. For example a combination of traditional and Christian methods has produced the Aladura Church among Yoruba Christians, whereby Aladura priests follow basic Christian doctrine but also use prophecy, healing, and charms to ward off evil spirits. Likewise, some Hausa Muslims, such as the Bori cult, believe that traditional priests and priestesses receive prophetic and healing powers when possessed by spirits.

### **A Supreme Being**

As with Islam and Christianity, the fundamental objective of indigenous worship is a common belief in the power of a supreme being who created the earth and its people, although the various ethnic groups view their God from differing perspectives.



predominant influence on people's daily lives. The Yoruba God



(*Olodumare*) created the world through his agent (*Oduduwa*), who founded the Yoruba people. The secondary gods and goddesses (*orisa*) actually govern the natural world order. For example, *Ogun* is the god of iron; *Sango* the god of thunder; and *Osun* and *Oya* are river goddesses. Of note, Yoruban slaves transported to the Caribbean and the Americas in the 16th century brought this religion with them, where it commonly is known as voodoo.



Likewise, the Igbo God, *Chineke* or *Chukwa*, is believed to have various messengers in the form of the sun, sky, and earth. As with other Nigerian ethnic groups, the Igbo believe in spirits of earth and fertility and in patron gods of major occupations such as metal working.

### **Ancestor Worship**

Most indigenous religions include ancestor worship or the belief that deceased family members exist in a spirit world that empowers them to influence the living. This custom has a pronounced influence on how Nigerians and Africans at large view the world and further serves to reinforce ancestral affiliations. These ancestor spirits grant rewards or punishment in accordance with human behavior. They likewise are believed to be reincarnated as newly born infants to further enhance their presence, recreate a behavior, or correct errors from their previous life.

### **Witchcraft**

In many rural elements of society, it is not uncommon for elderly women to be accused of witchcraft, persecuted, and even executed. Blaming their problems and shortcomings on these alleged witches and evil spirits, these communities rely on specialized “witch doctors” to provide religious intercession.

Likewise, some Nigerian youth have fallen prey to influential practitioners of witchcraft, who entice their victims to commit certain crimes that are believed to bestow great power. This violence was prominently featured in a 2009 motion picture, “District 9.”

## 4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

### Family Organization

Across all tribal and ethnic boundaries, the family remains the singularly most important institution in Nigeria. An informal welfare system that ensures all its members are sustained, the Nigerian extended family unit generally is comprised of two or more nuclear families to include parents and offspring plus their families and close friends.

Family units of 10 or more persons are common, with family members usually living near each other in single-family dwellings. Large families are a premium in agrarian societies, serving as the foundation for building cohesive communities and providing a dependable work force.



### Male Authority

Throughout Nigeria, authority resides with male elders, and inheritance normally occurs through the male bloodline. Likewise, it is common for two or more lineages to share a common ancestor to collectively form a clan.

### Motherhood Reverence

Motherhood is revered, with women extolled for child-bearing, especially sons. A married couple void of children will likely pursue legitimate means to acquire an offspring to include seeking religious and medical assistance.

### Child Socialization

By maturing in large extended families, Nigerian children are socialized to accept cultural values and practices of their kinship group rather than the personal designs of the individual. Both traditional and contemporary social groups continue to nurture their youth with this communal ethos. While



group interests have eroded somewhat due to modern Westernized influences, the basic notion of socialization continues to promote group identity over individualism. Of note, the evolution of this commitment to group identity differs remarkably from that of more capitalistic societies, where individual achievement is rewarded with success and status.

### Dating

Courtship is uncommon in rural areas, where arranged marriages remain customary, although Western-style dating is popular among many urban youth. In the south it is common practice and socially acceptable for couples to live together without a formal marriage contract, primarily because many of them find a wedding unaffordable. In Muslim communities, this form of cohabitation is considered immoral and a violation of *shari'a* law (see p.2 of *Political & Social Relations*).

### Marriage

**Traditional:** Found primarily in rural areas, traditional marriage customs vary by ethnic group, although many customs are trans-ethnic. As in most collective cultures, traditional marriage in



Nigeria is more of a social contract to ensure the continuation of family heritage rather than a union based on love and romance. It represents the alliance of two families, and individual choice of spouse is limited. The bride usually takes her husband's two family names, although it is not uncommon for a husband and wife to live in separate homes, independent of one another.

Teenage marriages, often to older men, traditionally have been common, with arranged marriages the norm – this practice is becoming less common, especially in urban areas where Western-style dating and choosing one's spouse are more popular practices.

**Bridewealth:** The payment of a bridewealth is common throughout the country. Unlike a dowry, in which the woman would bring material value to the marriage, a bride price is compensation from the prospective groom to the bride's family.

He is expected to donate money, property, or service, which some cultures consider a payment for loss of her labor. Others consider bridewealth a symbol of allegiance and a means to socially cement the marriage contract rather than an obligatory



payment for services. Because it is reimbursable in a divorce, bridewealth tends to discourage dissolution.

**Polygyny:** Some Muslim cultures practice polygyny, whereby a man may have up to four wives, with shari'a law requiring him to equally provide for them all. Once a common practice, polygyny is becoming less popular primarily due to cost of sustaining multiple households and because many contemporary urban women refute the status of secondary spouse.

## Divorce

Found primarily in urban areas, divorce is common in Nigeria, although the rate is low among traditional marriages and well below that seen in Western societies. Many couples experiencing marital difficulty tend to separate short of formal divorce, with the expectation of later reuniting.

In Islamic societies, grounds for divorce are based primarily on adultery, mutual incompatibility, and the husband's failure to meet the wife's basic needs. Christian divorce follows the British legal system and may be granted for a variety of reasons from infertility and infidelity to antisocial behavior and in-law meddling.

In most ethnic groups the man retains most of the property and the children. Infants will remain with the mother until weaned, at which time they go to the father if he makes claim.

## Housing

Nigerians build their homes to adapt to the environment, and while rural dwellings share the same basic configuration, there are distinguishing features across ethnic groups. For example, in the arid northern region, Hausa mud houses provide protection from the intense heat, while the Igbo occupying the southeastern region construct their homes from bamboo sealed with mud to repel the rain.

City dwellers typically occupy single-story cement homes having wood and metal roofs and consisting of a small kitchen, living room, and one or two bedrooms. Many urban homes have indoor plumbing and electricity, although some do not have running water and rely on outdoor pit latrines, same as in rural dwellings.

### Social Change

Western modernization has altered traditional Nigerian society, particularly in rural areas where kinship bonds have weakened as young adults migrate to the cities to become wage workers in crowded living conditions. This geographic relocation has caused a decline in the extended family network in favor of nuclear arrangements that are more sustainable in urban living conditions.

Similarly, urbanization and education have stimulated a rise in monogamous marriage patterns, particularly among youth and the elite who view status as professional achievement rather than family size. There also is a trend towards choosing marriage partners based on love and affections rather than parental blessings (see p.2-3 of *Sex & Gender*).

### Passage Rites

Ceremonies recognizing life's transitions differ widely by region.

**Birth:** Newborns in Nigerian society represent the family's future and are usually the primary interest in a marriage. Following a birth, the mother usually stays at home with the baby for several weeks, with family members caring for the new mother and child.



A traditional naming ceremony is common in rural areas, which includes a large feast among family and friends. Each ethnic group conducts this event based on its own tradition.

**Adulthood:** Generally age 18 marks adulthood, with family and friends celebrating this transition with commemorative celebrations. Traditional practices remain common in rural areas, with the transition into maturity acknowledged by ethnic group. For the Igbo tribe, circumcision serves as male initiation into manhood, while the Hausa and Yoruba people use marriage

to recognize transition to adulthood for both men and women. Likewise, some Hausa and other groups use female circumcision to recognize womanhood (see *Sex & Gender*).

**Death:** Muslims customarily bury their dead within 24 hours, and Christians within 24-48 hours, with memorial rites and festivities occurring the weeks that follow. In the south, a body may be embalmed and retained for a festive burial ceremony known to occur as late as a month following the death.

### Child-Naming Ceremony

For many Nigerians, a traditional child-naming ceremony is equally or even more significant than baptism, with the various ethnic groups conducting this event with their own unique approach.

In the Igbo tribe, family and friends gather a few days following the child's birth to dine on kola nuts and palm wine and thereafter name the child. Common Igbo names include *Adachi* (daughter of God), *Akachukwu* (God's hand), *Nwanyioma* (beautiful lady), and *Niddikanma* (patience is best).

The Yoruba tribesmen hold their ceremony on the 9th day following the birth of a boy and the 7th day for a girl, with twins named on the 8th day. As with the Igbo people, Yoruba family and friends gather to celebrate, with an elder performing the ceremony using kola nuts, water, a variety of spices, and liquor, each of these ingredients represents an aspect of living. Popular Yoruba names include *Jumoke* (loved by all), *Amonke* (to know her is to pet her), *Modupe* (thanks), *Foluke* (in the hands of God), and *Ajayi* (born face down).

Hausa names are usually of Muslim origin and followed by the father's name. Typical names include *Tanko* (a boy born after successive girls), *Labaran* (a boy born in the month of Ramadan), *Gagare* (unconquerable) and *Afere* (a girl born tiny).

## 5. SEX AND GENDER

### Sexual Relations

Largely as a result of Western influence, sexual perspectives are changing in Nigerian society. In this traditionally male-dominated society, sexual relations served exclusively to produce offspring, although gradually as gender roles have altered, so has the perspective regarding romance and its integral role in a marital relationship (see p.1-4 of *Family & Kinship*). Similarly, urbanization and education have stimulated a rise in monogamous marriage patterns, with status measured by professional achievement rather than family size.

### Gender Roles

In traditional Nigerian families, labor generally is divided along gender lines, with women having a significant role in sustaining the economy. While they tend to dominate crafts and local trade



industries, only a few women are active in political and professional occupations. Many women are known to earn significant portions of the family income, particularly in polygynous households where each wife provides for her children (see p.3 of *Family & Kinship*).

Among the Hausa and Yoruba tribes, men cultivate crops, while women assist with harvesting. Similarly, Yoruban women are known to be shrewd traders, with many of them participating in trade associations called **egbe**, through which Yoruban women are able to control the market economy.

In Igbo society, both genders are involved in crop cultivation, although there is a division of labor by crop. For example, yams are considered men's crops, while beans and cassava (starchy tropical plant used in bread) belong to women.

### Female Segregation

As in most Islamic cultures, the sexes are separated at puberty in Nigeria, with males and females sustaining separate social

relations both publicly and at home. A minority of Muslim women conform to the traditional practice of spending their lives in *purdah* or seclusion, which serves to reinforce their need for protection. This practice exists only in households where male labor is sufficient to provide for the entire family.

Conversely, most non-Muslim Nigerian women enjoy a great degree of freedom, both in influencing family decisions and in openly conducting business in the marketplace. As they age, women gain greater respect and authority, both at home and within the community.



### Gender Issues

While the Nigerian Constitution theoretically guarantees rights to women, in practice, a variety of social prejudices work to undermine enforcement of those privileges.

**Subordination:** The subordination of women in Nigerian society occurs within all segments, and despite some progress in advancing their rights, some women continue to face discrimination and oppression. While in many societies, wealth and education serve to improve conditions for women, in Nigeria there are fewer boundaries for protection.

**Family Violence:** According to Nigeria's Penal Code, men are granted the right to physically strike their wives as long as the contact does not cause permanent injury. This male "freedom to rule" has at times turned violent, which publicly is perceived as a private matter within the household and generally tolerated.

**Childhood marriages:** While many African countries have enacted laws to limit marriage to a minimum age of 16-to-18 (depending on jurisdiction), traditional customs allowing children to marry at a premature age remain widespread.

In many African tribal systems, particularly in Muslim societies, a man pays a bride price (see p.2-3 of *Family & Kinship*) to the girl's family in order to marry her, oftentimes before the girl reaches puberty. Many of these forced marriages involve polygynous relationships and are poverty-related, with parents



needing the bride price to help support the extended family. Unfortunately, these practices commonly lead to serious medical and social issues, most notably complicated pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS among others. Despite the gravity of this situation, many African governments tend to ignore the implications.

**Female circumcision:** Although banned in 2021, female genital mutilation (FGM) is widespread throughout Nigerian society, affecting 15% of the total female population. Regarded as a rite-of-passage initiation into adulthood, FGM is considered necessary for rendering a young woman an attractive candidate for marriage – which for many women, is their only means of securing a viable future. Unfortunately, traditional FGM practitioners generally lack medical training, often resulting in severe complications or death.

**Polygyny:** (see p.3 of *Family & Kinship*).

### **Inheritance Laws**

Among many ethnic groups, particularly the Hausa and the Igbo, inheritance traditionally has been a privilege reserved for men. While Nigerian women have a legal right to inheritance, they usually receive little or nothing – a reflection of their forced economic independence, particularly in polygynous households. Property and wealth are usually passed to the sons who are of age or to other male relatives.

### **Social Change**

In spite of women's traditional lower status in Nigerian society, there has been considerable progress made to create a more equitable society.

Through the influence of Western modernization, the traditional division of labor is succumbing to a more democratic household, whereby working mothers spend as much time as their husbands pursuing professional occupations, with both members sharing domestic family responsibilities.



## 6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

### Official Language

When Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960 (see p.3 of *History & Myth*), it faced the difficult challenge of establishing a national identity complete with an official language from its more than 250 spoken dialects. Although the British had introduced English during colonial rule as the medium to conduct official business, the English language had no roots in traditional Nigerian culture; therefore, many Nigerians deemed it of limited value in the post-colonial era.

However, the federal government declared English the Nigerian official language in 1960, primarily as a means to downplay regionalism and ease ethnic tensions. To select an indigenous



tongue as the official language would have promoted that language over all others and likely encouraged continued ethnic unrest. Similarly, French has been a second official language since 1997.

Despite this selection, today, hardly half of the population can actually speak English, with many Nigerians viewing it as a foreign language. In some rural areas, English is not spoken at all. However, the more educated people, even of different language backgrounds, most commonly use English to communicate, while it is also a first language exclusively to a small minority of urban elite. Similarly, Muslims are taught classical Arabic for use in prayer.

Some Nigerians resort to Pidgin English – a combination of English and the respective local dialect – to bridge communication among the different ethnic regions, although many Nigerians consider it a language form of the uneducated and avoid its use.

While English is the official language used in government, corporations, mass media, and education beyond primary school; local native languages are used for primary education.

### Native Languages

Most Nigerians are proficient in at least two native languages, one of which is their ethnic dialect and the second the regional dialect of the largest ethnic group. For example, Hausa is the common language in the North, Igbo in the Southeast, and Yoruba in the Southwest. While these three languages are the most widely spoken native tongues, they also serve to represent the unique ethnicity of each particular group.

The country's native languages represent three major families of African languages, with the majority belonging to the Niger-Congo language family from which Yoruba and Igbo derive. The Hausa language is Afro-Asiatic, with Kanuri, spoken primarily in the northeastern Borno State, a member of the Nilo-Saharan family.

### Communication Style

While Nigerians generally are outgoing and friendly, their communication styles may vary by ethnicity. For the most part, their approach tends to be indirect, and based largely on non-verbal gesturing, although southern Nigerians are generally more direct and outspoken communicators. Nigerians generally



prefer indirect eye contact as a sign of respect when meeting new acquaintances, thereby reserving direct eye contact for longstanding personal relationships.

During conversation they usually begin by discussing general concepts, slowly evolving into specific details, thereby establishing a contextual framework for discussion. Nigerians tend to examine behavior in its full context rather than solely by what is observable, thereby seeking to understand the rationale for a particular behavior pattern.

## Greetings

Nigerians value greetings and neglecting or rushing the welcoming process is considered disrespectful. To them salutations communicate warmth, and Nigerians commonly shake hands and embrace others upon meeting. Men usually



place the left hand on the other person's shoulder while shaking hands, with close friends and family members also kissing when they hug.

However, a Nigerian man normally will shake hands with a woman only if she first offers her hand, although in Muslim cultures, members of the opposite sex do not normally shake hands.

Because Nigerians acknowledge a distinguishable hierarchy of status, (see *Political & Social Relations*), a greeting of respect for the elderly or those of authority is shown by the younger approaching his elder or superior first and bowing. Similarly, it is proper to lower your gaze when someone older or more senior is talking to you and address them in the "third person ("they" or "he") rather than the second person ("you").

Since there are several Nigerian dialects, English greetings are standard throughout the country, with "Hello" an acceptable salutation, although "Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening" are more common gestures. Prior to any conversation, there are standard greetings, such as "Hello" or "How are you?" The phrase "You are welcome" is often used to mean "Hello." A more formal greeting would be "Good afternoon, Madam." Nigerians often sit or stand close when conversing with others (see p.1-3 of *Time & Space*) and speak in a more animated and lively manner than Americans may be accustomed to. For example, they consider it acceptable to speak loudly in public.

After the initial greeting, Nigerians will often inquire about each other's health, job, or family; thereby spending a few minutes in

"small talk." The appropriate response is usually "*Fine*," and unlike many Westerners, Nigerians usually listen sincerely to the response before proceeding with the conversation.

**Titles:** Nigerians revere titles and commonly use them when addressing people of status or those having a particular occupation. For example, it is appropriate to use the occupational title (Engineer Dolapo Falola) rather than gender title (Mr. Falola). Likewise, there are many honorable title such as chief, high chief, doctor, professor, madam, etc. A person having many titles and awards will acknowledge them all, particularly on stationery or signage.



New acquaintances are greeted using title and surname (last or family name), although established friends address each other in a variety of ways: the title and first name, first name alone, surname alone, or a nickname. When introducing yourself as an Airman to a host-nation counterpart for the first time, it is appropriate to use rank along with first and last name, for example, Major Shawn Smith. Thereafter, use rank and last name. Similarly, when establishing a social relationship with the local people, it is best to wait until invited before using only their first name.

### **Gestures**

While Nigerians share a variety of common gestures, each ethnic group is known to have some of its own unique methods. It is common practice to summon someone by waving the hand, palm down, with all fingers together, while it is considered insulting to thrust the palm of the hand forward with the fingers spread. Among the Hausa people, as well as the Muslim world at large, it sometimes is considered disrespectful to expose the shoe soles to others because the soles are unclean and, therefore, represent impurity. Some Muslims similarly consider the left hand unsanitary and use the right or both hands together to pass objects (see p.12 of *Political & Social Relations*). Yoruba adults traditionally wink at their children as a signal to depart the area.

## Discussion Topics

Sports, music, culture, sightseeing and travel are preferred topics to discuss. It is best to avoid discussing potentially sensitive topics such as politics, religion, family, ethnicity, status, and sex-related themes. It is difficult to gauge in advance people's views about these subjects.

### Greeting Etiquette

- The handshake is the most common form of greeting.
- It is proper to bow when greeting the elderly or persons of status and to avoid direct eye contact.
- Greetings should include inquiries about the health and wellbeing of the person and his family.
- Avoid admiring a person's belongings, as he may feel obligated to give you the item.
- Conversely, it is appropriate to compliment a meal prepared by your Nigerian host.
- Avoid using the left hand to eat or pass items, as it sometimes is considered unsanitary.
- In formal situations, using an academic or professional title is expected.
- Nigerians usually only use their first names among family and close friends.
- They usually greet new acquaintances by using title and surname.
- It is proper to wait for an invitation from your host-nation counterparts before using only their first name.

## Criticism and Humiliation

The concept of constructive criticism is not viewed positively in Nigerian culture. It is therefore best to avoid giving public criticism – if you need to approach an issue critically, it is best to do so privately. Individual criticism in the presence of a person's peers could result in a loss of face – one of the gravest insults to a Nigerian.



**Visiting** (see p.11 of *Political & Social Relations*).

## Friendship

It is important for Airmen to understand that forging relationships is a complex and refined process, and it may require several visits to gain mutual understanding and trust.



Nigerians value friendships and traditionally honor guests with warm hospitality. In most cases, men and women converse freely and enjoy a

relaxed visit. In some Muslim homes, men and women do not socialize together.

**Giving Gifts** (see p.12 of *Political & Social Relations*).

**Conducting Business & Negotiations** (see p.2-3 of *Time & Space*).

## Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at [www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/) and click on “Resources” for access to language training and other resources.

## Useful Translations

English	Hausa	Yoruba
Do you speak English?	Kana jin Ingilishi?	Ṣé o lè s'òyinbò?
Hello	Barka	Báwo ni
Good morning	Barka da asuba	Káà'rò
Good afternoon	Ina wuni	Ekaasan
Good night	Sai da safe	Ódà'rò
Thank You	An gode	O ṣé
Welcome	Maraba	Ká àbò
Yes	Eh	Bèṅni
No	A'a	Ótì
OK	Yayi	Bé è ní
Maybe	Watakila	Bóyá
What is your name?	Mine ne sunanka?	Kí l'orúkọ rẹ?
My name is__	Sunana shine __	Orúkọ mi ni __
I am pleased to meet you	Nayi murnan haɗuwa da kai	Inú mi dùn lá ti rí ẹ
How are you?	Kana lafiya?	Se daadaa ni?
I am fine	Lafiya lau	Adupe
Do you need help?	Kuna bukatar taimako?	Ṣé o fé iràn l'òwó?
Excuse me / I am sorry	Yi hakuri / Ban ji daɗi ba	Má b'inú
Good-bye	Sai an jima	Ódàbò
Please	Don Allah	Jò ọ
Who?	Wane ne?	Tani?
What?	Mine ne?	Kíni?
When?	Yaushe ne?	Nígbáwo?
Where?	A Ina ne?	Níbo?
Why?	Don me?	Kí ló dé?
How?	Ta yaya?	
Calm down	Ka natsu	F'ara ba'lẹ
Help me	Taimaka min	Ràn mí l'òwó
Stop!	Tsayal!	Dúró!
Where is the toilet?	Ina bayin ku?	Nibo ni ile igbe yin wa?
What time is it?	Karfe nawa ne?	Kinni asiko so?



## 7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

**Literacy:** Age 15 and over who can read and write

- Total population: 62%
- Male: 71%
- Female: 53% (2018 estimate)

### Historical Development

Christian missionaries introduced western education into Nigeria during the 19th-century colonial period, whereby it continued to develop through the World War II era. In 1934, the colonial government introduced higher education by launching the Yaba Higher College. By 1990, there were three fundamentally distinct education systems in Nigeria to include the indigenous system, Muslim Qur'anic schools, and formal European-style educational institutions.

The 1979 constitution assigned responsibility for education to the state and local councils, making mandatory the first 6 years of primary education. Since then, educational facilities have been upgraded, with the adult literacy rate improving notably.

### Traditional Education

Prior to the introduction of formal school systems, children were educated at home where they learned a variety of occupational skills devoted to supporting the family unit. Children would become apprentices to their parents, older siblings, and elderly family members. Even today in rural areas, some children remain at home to learn family-related skills and help support the family. In cases where children are interested in occupations not practiced at home, they on occasion are sent to apprentice with craft masters.



**Qur'anic Schools:** Traditional Muslim schools continue to exist, whereby students study the Qur'an and become familiar with shari'a law (see p.2 of *Political & Social Relations*). A religious

teacher (*mallami*) instructs reading and writing in Arabic, which is the language in which the Qur'an is written. While Qur'anic schools remain, Islamic education has been incorporated into many of the secular schools from primary through university levels. Many Nigerian Muslims attend Western-style schools and train in a variety of modern occupations.

### **Folklore**

Nigerian folk legends traditionally have been used as supplemental media to reinforce moral values and perpetuate traditions (see p.6 of *History & Myth*).

#### **Nigerian Folklore (see p.6 of *History & Myth*)**

While many Nigerians know and can recount parts of their genealogy and local history, they likewise enjoy listening to oral artists skilled in chanting lengthy oral literature. Heralded as "keepers of the people's ancient wisdoms and beliefs," these oral strategists entertain their audiences with dramatic legends, providing entertainment and relaxation as they teach moral lessons. For example, in Yorubaland, farmers gather their children and sit in the moon's twilight to listen to stories of instruction to the youth about their rich heritage and social customs. These stories form a large body of moral wisdom anchored in societal values and norms that the Yoruba people have orally preserved for generations.

### **Education System**

Nigeria's education system provides for primary and secondary instruction, with some states offering higher education. Education is free but not compulsory beyond primary school. Secondary school consists of 3 years each of junior secondary and senior secondary school, followed by 4 years of university education. Public schools largely are understaffed due to low state budgets, lack of teacher incentives, and irregularities in paying staff salaries.

About 67% of children are enrolled in primary school, although less than 35% are enrolled in upper secondary school. This lower secondary attendance rate is likely because until recently, school instruction was in English, and with less than 50% of the population speaking English, there was little incentive to learn a new language. In response to this shortfall, many primary schools are now teaching basic skills in the dominant native tongue, with English introduced the 3rd year.



### Primary Curriculum

Subjects taught at the primary level include mathematics, science, Islamic and Biblical knowledge studies, English language, and one

of the three main indigenous ethnic languages (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, or Igbo). Currently, there is an emphasis on applied science and technology, with a goal to introduce more Nigerians into the skilled workforce. Private schools also offer computer science, French, and art. Primary school students are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into Federal and State Government schools and a pass prescribed National Entrance Examination to enter secondary school.

### Private Education

While private schools are expensive (annual fees average \$1000 to \$6000), they do offer smaller classes (20-30 students) with modern equipment and a more productive learning environment. Teachers in these institutions normally possess college degrees in the specific course areas they teach and receive professional development training on a regular basis.

### Higher Education

While Nigeria's system of higher education is the largest and one of the most advanced in Africa, the demand for advanced degrees far exceeds facility capacity, influencing many of its most talented students to attend universities abroad, particularly in the US and Europe. Similarly, many of these students often stay abroad, where there are also more employment opportunities.

## 8. TIME AND SPACE

### Concept of Time and Space

Nigerians have a relaxed view of time compared to Westerners, whereby they have little regard for time management and punctuality. Conversely, they are more concerned about human interactions and relationship-building and can be infinitely patient and tolerant.

**Flexibility:** Similarly, Nigerians are very flexible when unforeseen circumstances such as lack of transportation or family illness arise that would cause a delay or absence. This attitude doesn't suggest lack of regret when missing a meeting – it just signifies that in Nigerian society, most personal issues take precedence over all other commitments.



Likewise, the length of time required to complete a task is of little significance to a Nigerian, who is primarily concerned with seeing that the task is accomplished right.

**Personal Space & Eye Contact:** Nigerians typically maintain arm's distance when speaking with a casual acquaintance and tend to avoid direct eye contact (see p.2 & 5 of *Language & Communication*). Southern Nigerians generally are comfortable with considerably less personal space than most Americans are accustomed to, although in northern Nigeria, personal space is greater than in the south.

Touching primarily depends on the familiarity between the two people communicating, while the use of gestures depends on ethnicity (see p.4 of *Language & Communication*).

**Space between Friends:** Typically, friends, particularly of the same sex, are considerably more affectionate with one another and have closer spatial relations than you may be accustomed to in America. It is normal for same-sex companions to hold

hands, have their arms around each other while walking, or kiss each other on the cheeks when greeting. These gestures signal friendship and to back away would likely cause offense. However, publicly holding the opposite sex with intimacy is not proper behavior. They value friendship, and close friends have great influence on situational outcomes, more-so than in American culture. The close friend in essence becomes part of the family and is considered trustworthy.

**Taking Photos:** Nigerians generally value their privacy and expect outsiders to respect that privilege. It is therefore wise to ask permission to photograph local citizens.

**Don't Forget Prayer Time:** Muslims take time during the working day for prayers, so it is important that you plan your business appointments accordingly.

### Negotiations

- It is best not to expect immediate decisions, as reaching agreement usually requires follow-on discussions and negotiating for mutual benefits.
- Disagreements should be handled in a calm, diplomatic manner and should never involve raised voices and anger.
- It is helpful to find ways to compromise, even if it results in delays, and seek “win-win” outcomes.
- It is good to remember that Nigerians are extremely patient and tend to consider time on their side.
- If the negotiation involves cost for an item, you may have to bargain, so it is advisable to initially ask a lower price than you are willing to pay.

### Conducting Business

Individuals wishing to conduct business in Nigeria should confirm their appointments and arrive on time. Though Nigerians tend to be late to meetings, they expect visitors to be on time.

Meetings are usually held in the morning following breakfast; with initial engagements often involving lengthy greetings and small talk to establish relationships (see p.2-6 of *Language & Communication*).

Meetings start with extended social pleasantries. For example, you can anticipate being offered tea or coffee and asked



questions about yourself and your family. You will likewise be expected to inquire about the other person.

Patience is necessary to building effective cross-cultural relations.

Reaching consensus or agreement generally takes longer than Americans are accustomed to, and it may require several meetings to accomplish what you would generally handle via a routine phone call.

### **Nigerian Work Week**

As in Western cultures, the Nigerian work week begins on Monday and ends on Friday. It is not uncommon for some businesses to close on Thursday. Business hours vary in the summer and during the holy month of Ramadan.

### **Social Engagements**

Nigerians spend a large amount of time with coworkers and friends. Social engagements often include dinners, cocktail parties, and dances. Most social events start late in the evening and last throughout the night.

### **The Islamic Calendar**

The Islamic calendar is used to determine the proper day to celebrate religious holidays and festivals. It is a lunar calendar and contains 12 months, although it is 11 days shorter than the Western calendar. As a result, from one year to the next, Islamic holidays fall 11 days earlier on the Western calendar than the previous year.

## 9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

### Attire

While attire varies by region, dressing properly is important in Nigerian culture because it conveys status and respect. Hausa Muslims generally dress conservatively, while Igbo Christians



are known to wear both traditional and Western attire. Rural people usually prefer traditional African clothing, while Western-style T-shirts and pants more commonly are worn in urban areas. Similarly, wealthier Nigerians commonly wear Western clothing to work and

later change to traditional clothing in more informal environments. Known for their bright colors and unique patterns, Nigerian fashions are popular throughout Africa.

### Traditional Dress

**Men:** Traditional men's clothing is loose and comfortable, with shirts (*bubas*) typically extending to mid-thigh. Most Nigerian men wear a multi-layered traditional robe, called the *boubou*, with matching trousers (*sokoto*) and a colorfully embroidered hat. The Fulani call the *boubou* an *adashiki*, while the Yoruba refer to it as an *aabuba* and the Hausa an *ababban-riga*.

Muslim men traditionally wear a type of headscarf (*Kuffiyeh*) or skullcap (*Kufi*), while other groups wear a hat (*Fila*) that is bent at the top. The Yoruba wear a variation of the *fila*, the *abeti-aja*, with flaps that cover the ears. Many Nigerians also wear Western baseball hats.

**Women:** Women and young girls normally wear a version of the *boubou* as a long wraparound skirt with a short-sleeved top and a scarf. More liberal Nigerian women also wear Western dresses and pants.



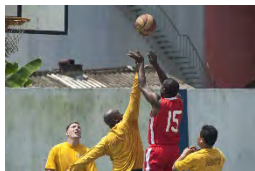
Contemporary and “elite” women wear Western hats, while Muslim women may wear variations of the traditional headscarf (*hijab*) or veil (*niqab*). Most Yoruba women wear a headtie (*gele*), a six-foot long cloth wrapped around the head twice and tucked at the side. Many Nigerian women also braid their hair into intricate designs.

### Appropriate Attire for Airmen

- It is generally appropriate for Airmen to wear typical Western clothing in Nigeria.
- When among Muslims, you should honor their more conservative traditions to avoid offense.
  - Shorts should not be worn by either sex.
  - Women should always wear clothing that is at or below the elbow and at or below the knee.
  - Hats are appropriate outdoors, but as a courtesy, you should remove your hat when inside a Muslim facility.

## Recreation

**Soccer:** Nigerians primarily enjoy soccer, which they call football, although the wealthy relish other sports to include wrestling, polo, cricket, and swimming. The Nigerian national soccer team, the “Super Eagles,” often competes successfully in the international arena, having won the Olympic gold in 1996 and the African Nations Cup twice. Distinguished players include as Jay Jay Ocoa, Nwankwo Kanu, and Taribo West.



**Basketball:** Nigerians are also popular in the National Basketball Association (NBA), with Houston Rockets All-Star Hakeem Olajuwon the most notable Nigerian player in the NBA. Affectionately known as “Hakeem the Dream” for his grace on and off the court, Olajuwon led the



Rockets to two NBA championships in 1994 and 1995 and was named one of the NBA Top 50 players in 1996. He also is remembered for his strict adherence to Muslim fasting traditions while playing basketball and for his humanitarian work in Nigeria.

**Boxing:** Nigerian boxers have also fared well in international competition, likely because boxing is similar to a popular Nigerian martial art known as **dambe** – a Hausa sport described as a combination of wrestling and kick boxing.

### The Arts

Nigerian art traditionally served a social or religious purpose. For example, dance was used to teach or fulfill a specific ritualistic goal, while sculpture was used to extend blessings or healings and to prevent bad luck. However, with increased modernization, Nigerian art is becoming less oriented to a particular purpose.

### Music

Primarily using drums and percussion instruments, Nigerian music and dance are likely the two most vibrant forms of Nigerian art and have evolved into a variety of hybrid styles.

- **Highlife:** Influenced by Western culture, Nigerian *highlife* resembles an Africanized version of American big band or ballroom music. Actually predating big band and ballroom music, highlife originated in Ghana, with Nigeria popularizing its own version.
- **Afro-beat:** A combination of African rhythms with jazz and soul, *Afro-beat* was heavily influenced by American artists such as James Brown in the 1960s and 70s. One of Nigeria's best-known *Afro-beat* artists was Fela Kuti, who used his music to criticize Nigeria's governmental corruption and violence.

In 2009, actor Will Smith and his wife, Jada, produced a Broadway musical titled "FELA!" which subsequently won three Tony Awards. Signed to Motown records in 1994, Fela's son, Femi, has continued his father's political activism through music, blending *Afro-beat* with American R&B and jazz.



- **Juju:** Popularized in the 1970s and 80s, Nigeria's most popular music form is *juju*, which incorporates guitars with “talking drums” (*dundun*) whose tones sound like words. Popular *juju* artists include King Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, and Shina Peters.
- **Fuji:** Originating from traditional music played during Ramadan, *fuji* was developed by Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and played exclusively with drums.
- **Bata:** A collaborative form of dance and music in Yoruba culture, *bata* traditionally was performed in honor of Sango, a legendary Yoruba king honored as the god of thunder and lightning. The dance consists of jerky movements intended to mimic lightning strikes, while the corresponding drumming approximates the sound of thunder.

## Literature

Much of Nigeria's pre-colonial history has been preserved in oral tradition handed down through the generations (see p.6 of *History & Myth* and p.2 of *Learning & Knowledge*). With colonization and the introduction of the English language, Nigerian storytellers opened their oral treasures to audiences worldwide.



One of Nigeria's most famous writers is Wole Soyinka, who in 1986 became the first African to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. His most famous works include *A Dance of the Forests*, *The Swamp Dwellers*, and *The Lion and the Jewel*. Similarly, Chinua Achebe is another famous Nigerian author, whose *Things Fall Apart* is a Western favorite for its

depiction of the problems inflicted on African societies during colonization.

## Traditional Celebrations

Traditional ceremonies often coincide with seasonal changes and harvests, with festivities occurring predominantly during the June to February harvest period, known as the “season of plenty.” It is traditionally a time of feasting, whereby participants usually consume large quantities of food and beverage.

Conversely, feasting is reduced during the barren period between March and May, a timeframe popularly known as the “hungry season.”

**Egungun:** A popular Yoruba event occurring near the end of April, the *Egungun* (ancestor spirit) is a ritualistic invitation for legendary members of the community to appear in physical form. Collectively known as *Ara Orun* (“Dwellers of Heaven”), these ancestors are believed to have supernatural powers over the community, as conveyed through dancers masquerading in costumes (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

**New Yam Festival:** Typically held in August, the *New Yam Festival* is a major celebration among the Igbo people recognizing the transition from one agricultural cycle to the next. The primary Igbo staple crop, the yam, is used to mark the occasion. According to tradition, the Igbo offer the year’s first yam harvest to God and their ancestors prior to distributing it throughout the community. Traditionally, the public enjoys a variety of yam dishes during the festivities.

### National Holidays

- Secular
  - New Year's Day (1 January)
  - Labor Day (1 May)
  - Democracy Day (29 May)
  - National Day (1 October)
- Christian
  - Christmas (25 December)
  - Boxing Day (26 December) Day of Visiting
  - Easter (Friday – Monday)
- Muslim
  - Ramadan (see p.6 of *Religion & Spirituality*).
  - Maulid an-Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday)

(Easter and Muslim holidays fall on different dates each year).

## 10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

### Dining Customs

Mealtime is a ritualistic tradition throughout Nigeria, whereby family members congregate to enjoy social time and fellowship. Similarly, special ceremonies would not be complete without participants sharing in a meal, and it is unprecedented not to invite guests to share mealtimes and festive occasions.

**Rural Areas:** Typical Nigerian cuisine consists of a one-course meal with large servings. In rural areas, people generally eat their main meal in the early evening to allow time for digestion, while earlier in the day they generally consume a light meal of porridge or fruits.



Meals normally are consumed with the right hand (the left hand sometimes is considered unsanitary and should not be used to eat or pass objects) while sitting on the floor, as it is a traditional belief that a formal setting with a dining table and utensils devalues the pleasure of communal eating.

**Urban Areas:** Western influences, especially in urban centers, have transformed Nigerian eating habits, whereby city dwellers are familiar with prepackaged foods found in most Western-style supermarkets. Similarly, foreign restaurants also are common in larger cities, with most urban Nigerians finding it suitable to their busy lifestyles to combine traditional and Western-style cuisine.

Likewise, urbanites have acquired the customary Western practice of consuming three daily meals using dining tables and utensils. The more elite families have electric and gas ranges in kitchens connected to the house.

### Dining Etiquette

Traditional social customs exist throughout the country. For example, it is customary to prepare additional food, as it is usual practice to have guests arrive without advance notice.

Accordingly, the ability to provide the visitor a generous meal is a sign of respect.

Since age and status are revered, the elders and household head are served first, with the youth served afterwards. In Muslim societies, it is customary for guests to leave food on their plates, indicating that their host has provided more than ample food – the host will feel honored. Conversely, an empty plate indicates the guest is still hungry.

### Diet

While traditional ingredients vary by ethnic group and region, Nigerian cuisine tends to include a variety of staple foods accompanied by a stew. Popular Nigerian dishes include fried yam chips, plantains (starchy hybrid banana used for cooking), rice, vegetable soup (*efo*), and goat-head pepper soup (*isi-ewu*). Originating with the Hausa, a form of barbecued meat (*suya*) is also popular throughout the country, with palm oil used as a basic cooking ingredient throughout the country.



It is noteworthy that enslaved Africans were able to retain aspects of their regional cultures when brought to the New World (see *History & Myth*), with many of their traditionally African recipes eventually becoming staples of Southern cuisine. Dishes such as okra, gumbo, and black-eyed peas among others can be traced to Nigeria.



**Cassava:** The world's top producer of cassava (starchy root used to make bread), Nigeria has a popular dish (*gari*) consisting of toasted cassava flour granules served with a variety of sauces.

*Gari* has grown in popularity in Nigeria's densely populated urban centers, thereby promoting its cultivation.

**Southern Cuisine:** In the South ground grain from corn or yams is typically used to make dough served with a peppery stew

consisting of meat (chicken, beef, or goat) and vegetables (a variety of tomatoes, okra, onions, and bitter leaves). A popular dish among the Igbo is yam porridge (*awai*). Fruits such as papaya, pineapples, coconuts, oranges, mangoes, and bananas also are very common in the tropical south.

**Northern Cuisine:** In the North grains such as millet, sorghum, and corn are boiled into a porridge-like dish (*tuwo*) served with an oil-based soup flavored with onions, okra, and tomatoes. Meat may be included, although among the Hausa, it is often reserved for special occasions. Islamic religious restrictions, referred to as *haram*, forbid Muslims from consuming pork and alcohol.

**Beverages:** Most Nigerians drink water with their meals, although carbonated and alcoholic beverages have gained popularity in urban areas. Alcohol is widespread in the South, although rare in the Islamic North, with the most popular alcoholic beverage a tart palm wine often further distilled into liquor. Nigerian breweries also produce a variety of beers.

### Health Issues

As with many developing countries, Nigeria suffers from widespread disease and a poor health care system. Malaria, HIV/AIDS, parasitic infections, and childhood diseases are



rampant throughout the country, with widespread poverty (nearly 50% of the total population) contributing to the poor level of health care – many people are unable to afford modern treatment.

**Inadequate Funding:** Similarly, governmental corruption hampers healthcare funding, whereby many clinics and hospitals are in poor physical condition and void of modern equipment and treatment. Because of a shortage of qualified medical personnel, only 85% of the population has access to healthcare, with public hospitals understaffed and poorly

supplied. Patients seeking cheap remedies often turn to black-market vendors, who often sell expired or counterfeit drugs.

**Traditional Practices:** Likewise, many rural people prefer traditional methods (known as *juju*) to Western-style medicine, with *juju* practitioners using a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Most families also have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, there are traditional practices have proven inadequate in treating most serious conditions.

**Infectious Diseases:** Because of poor sanitation and an insufficient potable water supply, infectious and parasitic diseases are common. These include meningitis, bacterial and protozoa diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever.



**HIV/AIDS:** About 1.3% of the population is HIV positive, and while much lower in Nigeria than in other African countries (such as South Africa and Zambia), by 2021, approximately 2.8 million people (from a population of 213.4 million) had contracted HIV. Approximately 180,000 Nigerians are diagnosed with HIV each year.

**Life Expectancy:** Poor health and living conditions collectively have caused a minor decline in the life expectancy rate. For example, in 1991 the average life expectancy was 47 years for women and 45 years for men, these figures were 64 and 60, respectively, in 2024.

**Mortality Rate:** Similarly, the infant mortality rate is 54 deaths per 1,000 live births, and while the fertility rate is about 4.5 children per woman, infant and maternal mortality rates are high primarily because only 43% of births are attended by skilled health personnel. About 11% of all children die before they reach age 5, and nearly 2.3 million children under one year were completely unvaccinated against deadly diseases.

## 11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

### Economic Overview

Nigeria has one of the largest economies in Africa, with its gross domestic product divided among three sectors: industry (31%), agriculture (24%), and services (44%).

Despite its vast oil wealth, Nigeria lacks adequate refineries, and as a result, continues to face fuel shortages. With over 40% of the population living in extreme poverty, Nigeria ranks among the poorest nations in the world. However, unemployment has decreased in recent years (5% in 2023).



Additionally, Nigeria's economy has long suffered from corruption, as its former political and military leaders often embezzled revenue from the national treasury and deposited large sums into overseas banks. Therefore, financial mismanagement, world oil price fluctuations, and political unrest – along with inflation and unemployment – have led to increased crime and a thriving black market designed to avoid high tariffs on import goods.

### Industry

Industry employs about 13% of the labor force, and in addition to oil-related industries, Nigeria also has textile, cement, steel, and chemical industries.

### Natural Resources

Nigeria's natural resources include oil, natural gas, tin, columbite (used in cell phones), iron ore, coal, limestone, and zinc; with oil and gas sectors accounting for 90% of Nigeria's export revenues.

Natural gas reserves constitute the 8<sup>th</sup> largest reserves in the world and the largest in Africa, while recoverable coal reserves



suffer from extremely low productivity and high transportation costs.

### Oil

Oil was discovered in the Niger Delta region in 1956, with commercial drilling instituted in 1958. A member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria ranked as the world's 9th-largest oil exporter in 2022, exporting roughly \$52.1 billion in crude petroleum.



Oil production dramatically boosted Nigeria's economy during the 1970's and 80's, although oil abundance ultimately led to overdependence on oil security, thereby influencing Nigeria to marginalize other economic sectors. Consequently, more recent fluctuations in oil prices have had radical impact on the economy.

### Agriculture

Suffering from mismanagement and lack of basic infrastructure, Nigeria's agricultural sector (to include farming, herding, hunting, forestry, and fishing) began to decline as oil production increased, although it employs about 35% of the country's



population. Nigeria's key crops include peanuts, cotton, cocoa, yams, cassava, sorghum, corn and rice.

Nigeria's agricultural industry is limited to low crop yields and a reliance on imported foodstuffs. A majority of Nigeria's farmers rely

on traditional farming methods, with the average farmer cultivating a small plot nourished by rainwater rather than irrigation. Most of them produce only what they consume themselves or sell locally.

Similarly, farm production suffers from land degradation and drought in the north and heavy rain, flooding, and oil pollution in the south (see p.4 of *Technology & Material*).

## Services

With banking and finance its principal services branch, Nigeria has the second largest financial services sector in Sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa. In 2006, Nigeria consolidated its banking sector due to weak oversight into the Central



Bank of Nigeria, which has regulatory authority over the entire financial sector. From a total of 89 deposit banks, 25 emerged as financially sound, along with several community banks and a few specialized development and mortgage banks. Contrary to modern practices, however, many Nigerian financial transactions continue to be conducted in cash.

**Tourism:** While Nigeria nature reserves and museums are well maintained and potential tourist attractions, the government has invested little in promoting the tourism industry, and as a result, tourist revenues are not a major contributor to the economy.

## Reform Efforts

Progressing toward a market-based economy, in 2007, former President Yar'Adua's administration embraced Vision 2020, a program to transform Nigeria into one of the world's top-20 economies by 2020. Vision 2020 embodied a "Seven Point Agenda" consisting of the power and energy infrastructure, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security (including bringing stability to the Niger Delta), and education. A prerequisite for achieving this ambitious plan was curtailing the widespread corruption that stifles Nigeria's business environment. As of January 2021, Vision 2020 had not been met and then-President Buhari inaugurated the National Steering Committee to oversee development of the Nigeria Agenda 2050 as successor to the Vision 2020 plan.

## Currency

Nigeria's unit of currency is the *Naira* (NGN), which had a USD exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 775.61 NGN in 2023. The NGN is divided further into 100 Kobo. Although the US dollar is not an official



currency in Nigeria, it is widely accepted unless it is old, torn, or damaged. Money can be changed at any *bureau de change* (money exchange offices), which display current exchange rates. Although an illegal practice, English-speaking street vendors also frequently exchange for dollars.

**Geography** (see p.1 of *Political & Social Relations*).

## Climate

Nigeria has a tropical climate with regional variations according to latitude. The rainy season begins in the south around February or March and gradually moves northward into the central river valleys in April or May. By June or July, it extends into the northern areas, where it peaks around August.



Throughout Nigeria, temperatures are generally high, although during the rainy season they are moderated by a southwest monsoon. The city of Lagos, located on the southwestern coast, experiences average highs of 88°F during the late dry season and average lows of 73°F near the end of the rainy season. Inland areas experience greater extremes than

the coast, with temperatures in the northeast rising to over 110°F before the rains reach the area, and falling to 43°F from December to February.

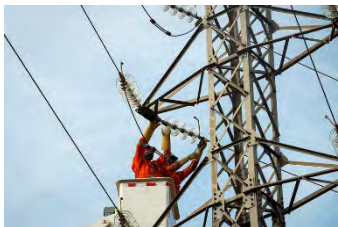
## 12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

### Technology

Nigeria is technologically underdeveloped, and its existing infrastructure is in disrepair. Like most developing countries, Nigeria has expressed interest in modernization, although it remains tied to preserving tradition at the expense of promoting innovation (see p.4 of *Family & Kinship*).

### Energy Sources

Despite its status as one of the world's major sources for petroleum, Nigeria has been unable to produce sufficient energy to meet its domestic demand. Having a stagnant power supply



for over 30 years, the country has invested little in its energy program since the 1990s despite surging demand. Similarly, its monopoly supplier, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria, has done little to improve service. Although

electrical generation capacity has risen by half, distribution remains dysfunctional and supply levels flat, with only 60% of Nigeria's population having access to electricity.

### Transportation

A major obstacle to increased commerce, Nigeria's decaying transportation infrastructure was a primary concern identified in its Vision 2020 policy (see p.3 of *Economics & Resources*).

**Vehicles:** Most rural villages have narrow passageways and depend on bicycles, motorcycles, and scooters for transportation. People occupying the urban North also use



bicycles for transportation, while elsewhere motorized rickshaws typically transport people through city streets – smaller than an automobile taxi; these bi-wheeled carriages easily navigate narrow urban market areas. Automobiles are common on the open highways.

**Roadways:** Nigeria's more than 121,167 miles of surfaced roadway are poorly maintained, contributing to high automobile accident and fatality rates. Consequently, in 2004, Nigeria's Federal Roads Maintenance Agency began a substantial federal network rehabilitation program that has repaired 100 of 500 targeted highways.

**Railroads:** The country has two major rail lines which connect Lagos to Nguru in the northern state of Yobe and Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta to Maiduguri in the northeastern state of Borno. In 2006, Nigeria launched a 20-year strategic railway upgrade plan to triple the existing 2,360 miles of railway.



**Ports:** Connected by rail to points inland, Lagos Port is Nigeria's principal container port, while the main petroleum outlets are Delta Port Complex and Port Harcourt transshipment harbors in the Niger Delta region. The Nigerian Port Authority is pursuing partial port privatization to enhance operational efficiency.



**Civil Aviation and Airports:** With a total of 47 airports, 10 of which are international and 11 are regional airports, the country's principal air terminals are Murtala Muhammad

Airport in Lagos and Mallam Aminu International in the northern state of Kano. There are also three additional international

airports located in Abuja, Kaduna, and Port Harcourt. As with its other infrastructures, Nigeria's air transport suffers from disrepair and poor operational efficiency.

**Pipelines:** Nigeria has well over 7,900 miles of petroleum pipelines, with expansion projects planned for both domestic and intra-continental distribution. While oil pipeline transport is safe,



efficient, and reliable; it also is highly susceptible to sabotage and theft. Of note, frequent oil thefts often result in large numbers of casualties when robbers drill into the pipelines, setting off an explosion. Officials suspect

that some of the theft is planned to finance militant groups such as MEND (see p.5 of *Political & Social Relations*).

## Telecommunications

**Radio & Television:** The government controls and regulates most broadcast media through the National Broadcasting Commission and the National Television Authority, although there are some state-controlled and privately-owned stations. Radio is the primary media for reaching general audiences, with Voice of Nigeria broadcasting in a variety of languages.

**Telephone:** Network quality is problematic, with fixed-line network expansion and modernization needed. Mobile-cellular service is growing rapidly in response to issues with fixed-line network with 102 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants.



**Print Media:** In contrast to broadcast media, print media largely consists of private publications to include 14 major daily newspapers, with one government-owned newspaper, the *New Nigerian*. The country also has 6 news weeklies and various tabloids.

**Internet:** Internet access is widely available at cybercafés and is not subject to government restriction. Roughly 55% of the population used the internet in 2021.



**Fraudulent Activities:** Nigeria's reputation has been tainted by the stigma of internet and mail financial scams in which victims are deceived into depositing fraudulent cashier's checks into their accounts and

wiring excess payments back to Nigeria or by providing their bank account information to Nigerian con artists. Named after the Nigerian 419 penal code for fraud, its purveyors are known as "419 Boys" and "Yahoo-Yahoo Boys."

### Environmental Issues

Urbanized industrialization has led to widespread air, water, and soil pollution. Oil spills, natural gas flaring, automobile emissions, the open burning and dumping of waste, and improperly constructed landfills all contribute to serious environmental damage. Similarly, deforestation from logging, burning, and livestock overgrazing has resulted in loss of arable land by about 50% since 1990.

### Natural Hazards

Nigeria is plagued by recurrent droughts that have decimated what was once the 6th largest lake in the world, Lake Chad, and resulted in the loss of numerous livestock and farm yields. Similarly, flooding further serves to erode available farmland.





For more information on  
the Air Force Culture and Language Center visit:  
[airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC](http://airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC)

For more information on  
United States Air Forces Europe & Africa visit:  
<http://www.usafe.af.mil>



## CULTURE GUIDE

Access all of the AFCLC's expeditionary culture field  
guides in our mobile app!



GET IT ON  
**Google Play**



Available on the iPhone  
**App Store**



DoD Enterprise Mobility  
**Personal Use  
Mobile Apps**