1. Nigeria: Political, social and security overview

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: Country Focus 2025, 1.1., 1.2., 1.3.; COI Update 2026, 1., 2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and experienced a civil war between 1967 (declaration of independence by the secessionist state of Biafra in the South-East Nigeria) and 1970 (Biafra's surrender); in the years that followed, Nigeria underwent a series of military regimes before transitioning to a more stable democratic system.

Nigeria is a federal republic composed of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. It operates across three tiers of government: federal, state and local. The states and the FCT are grouped into six geopolitical regions.

Figure 1: Nigeria's geopolitical regions

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The bicameral National Assembly comprises the Senate and the House of Representatives. The President of the country is elected through national general elections. While the local government system is constitutionally recognised, it remains largely under the administrative control of state governments. Each state has its own legislation. Key challenges at local level include limited autonomy, irregular revenue allocation, corruption and political interference. Although progress has been made in combating corruption, the phenomenon has remained a major barrier to the country's development, undermining democracy, governance, and public trust.

Nigeria's political landscape is partly dominated by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party, which has held control of the executive branch since 2015. It maintains a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and governs most of the country's states. In February 2023, Bola Tinubu won the presidential election; however, the electoral process was marked by widespread irregularities. Several sources suggested that the arrests of 40 military officers in October 2025 could be linked to an attempted coup, a claim dismissed by the Nigerian government.

Northern Nigeria operates under a dual justice system in which the secular provisions of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution coexist with *sharia* law in 12 states (Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara), whose application cover personal status, civil law, and criminal justice.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with an estimated population of 237 million. The country is a culturally diverse and multi-ethnic federal state comprising over 250 ethnic groups. The predominant ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the South-West and the Igbo in the South-East. 56.1 % of the population identifies as Muslim, while 43.4 % identifies as Christian. Other religious minorities include individuals practising African traditional religions, individuals with no religious affiliation, small communities of Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews. In general, Muslims predominantly reside in the northern regions of the country, whereas Christians are primarily concentrated in the South. While religious and cultural diversity is a defining feature of Nigeria’s social landscape, it has also been a source of longstanding tension.

Nigeria has continued to experience an unprecedented wave of overlapping crises, marked by widespread insecurity and significant social and economic challenges. At a general level, in the North-West and the North Central, persistent banditry and kidnappings as well as increasing incidents of farmer-herder violence and intercommunal tensions drive instability, while the North-East experiences insurgent activities carried out by armed groups like Boko Haram. The South-East faces ongoing separatist agitation. In November 2025, a nationwide security emergency was declared.

These dynamics have contributed to a protracted humanitarian crisis. Rising living costs combined with human-made and natural disasters, have impacted millions of Nigerians. Overall, more than 133 million Nigerians are estimated to live in multidimensional poverty, representing the highest figure recorded globally.

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