* **Population Sex Disaggregation: 49% male; 51% female**
* **Population Age Disaggregation: <5yrs 17.1%; 5-19yrs 37.4%; 20-64yrs 41.4%; >65yrs 4%**
* **Average household size: 4.6**
* **Female headed households: 18.5%**
* **Youth Literacy Rates 15-24 yrs: male 80.2%; female 62.8%**
* **Infant Mortality rates: 69 per 1000 live births**
* **Maternal Mortality rate: 814 per 100,000 live births (2015)[[1]](#endnote-1)**
* **Rate of Domestic Violence: 28% (women age 15-49 who have experienced physical violence since age 15)[[2]](#endnote-2)**

# Gender in Brief

Nigeria is Africa’s most populated nation, home to a culturally diverse set of peoples – with over 250 ethnic groups, and speaking over 520 different languages. Spanning across these differences, Nigeria is largely a culturally and religiously conservative nation, with a very young population - 46% of the population is under 15.[[3]](#endnote-3) Whist Nigeria has taken steps to eliminate gender-based discrimination and empower women; significant gender gaps persist, maintained by a traditional patriarchal view of gender roles. This is particularly evident in the northern States, in which a conservative version of Shari’a law is followed, often reinforcing discriminatory practices against women such as the right to inheritance, and freedom of movement. The armed Islamist group, Boko Haram, have been carrying out increasingly sophisticated acts of violence since 2009; and serious concerns also exist in regards to human rights violations by the Nigeria security force in response to this violence.

**Gender roles and responsibilities:** Women’s lives in Nigeria remain governed and bound by the widely varying customary traditions of their ethnicity and region, with important differences seen across geographical regions, urban and rural areas, and levels of wealth. Largely however, the cultural and religious conservatism of the country is expressed in patriarchal societal structures that enforce strict and stereotypical ideas of the roles of women, men, boys, and girls. The social roles of women in Nigeria remain tied to the idea of women as homemakers and they are therefore responsible for child bearing and their upbringing. Nigerian women have restricted access to land, productive resources, and inheritance; and male relatives often tightly control their daily life and movements. In northern regions, many women are restricted by *purdah*, or female seclusion, and therefore both permission from, and accompaniment by, a male relative is required to be in public. Women’s freedom to dress is also highly regulated in these areas. Whilst polygamy is forbidden in civil marriage, it is sanctioned under Islamic and customary law, and high levels of polygamous marriage is evident, with 34% of women aged 15-49 in a polygamous union.[[4]](#endnote-4)

**Education and Economic Empowerment:**Girls and women are still lagging behind men and boys in all educational statistics including attendance and attainment. A striking variation in educational attainment is linked to wealth – with only 8% of females and 5% of males in the wealthiest households having no education, compared to 81% for females and 71% for males in the poorest households. Higher literacy rates in Nigeria is strongly linked to youth, urban living, and higher wealth. Overall, men (75%) are more likely to be literate than women (53%). Women’s literacy rates differ significantly both between urban/rural: 77% of urban women are literate, as compared to 36% of rural women; and regionally: 84% of women literate in the South East, and only 26% in the North West.[[5]](#endnote-5)

The sexual division of labour is particularly evident in employment statistics - 62% of women are currently unemployed, whereas 76% of men are employed. The likelihood of a Nigerian woman working increases with education, wealth, and their relationship status: 81% of women who are separated, divorced, or widowed are employed.[[6]](#endnote-6) Women produce approximately 75% of Nigeria‘s food for local consumption and export, however, they are in the lowest income levels and are predominantly in the informal sector of the economy with little access to financial resources or services, often requiring a husband’s consent to access finance.[[7]](#endnote-7) In Northern Nigeria, for example, a study showed that two thirds of 15-to-19-year-old girls participated in income-generating activities, but less than one tenth had a formal bank account.[[8]](#endnote-8)

**Participation and Policy:** Nigeria has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The National Gender Policy of Nigeria aims to empower women, and eliminate discriminatory practices. However, the federal governing structure of Nigeria is a complicated plural legal system in which harmonization and removal of discriminatory legal measures is particularly difficult. For example, whilst the minimum age of marriage was set at 18 by the Child Rights Act of 2003, only 24 States have adopted it, and in northern regions, the legal age still ranges from 12 to 15 years. A recent gender equality opportunities bill was rejected, seen as an infringement on religious belief.[[9]](#endnote-9) Domestic violence is not criminalized under national law, and Nigeria’s Penal Code protects the right for husbands to beat their wives if it does not result in serious injury; however some States have instituted their own laws against domestic violence.[[10]](#endnote-10) A Gender Unit has recently been created within the police, specializing in domestic violence. Whilst women have equal rights to stand for election, only 8% of the total national parliament is made up of women.[[11]](#endnote-11) The national strategy for promoting gender equality and women‘s empowerment, has, among other goals, adopted an increase in the targeted proportion of women in executive positions to 35% by 2015.

**Gender Based Violence and Protection:**  The gendered power dynamics and inequalities in the society are highly evident in the particular risk of gender based violence Nigerian women and girls face. Widespread harmful traditional practices exist (such as widowhood abuse, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)). 27% of women aged 15-49 have undergone some form of FGM/C, with the highest percentage of this evident in the South-West (48%) and the lowest in the North-East (3%).[[12]](#endnote-12) Domestic and sexual violence is of particular concern, with particular regional characteristics; 30% of Nigerian women and girls (age 15-49) have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence, with higher rates in the south-south zone (52%). Single women (divorced, separated or widowed) experience higher risk across all zones (44%).[[13]](#endnote-13) 46% of Nigerian women believe that a husband has a right to hit or beat them for at least one reason.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Men and, in particular boys, are at particular risk of violence in the Boko Haram conflict, including from the forced abduction of combatants, physical violence, and arbitrary detention by the government.[[15]](#endnote-15) Girls are particularly vulnerable to abduction by Boko Haram, drafted as suicide bombers, sex slaves, or domestic servants.

**Gender in Emergencies:** The Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in the death of over 20,000 people, the abduction of over 4000 women and girls, high levels of displacement, and acute food insecurity. There are an estimated 1.8 million people internally displaced, and a further 187,000 seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Of the 14 million people estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance, 8.1 million are boys and girls.[[16]](#endnote-16) The protection concerns facing the internally displaced population are large. Human Rights Watch has documented rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls by camp officials, policemen, soldiers, and leaders in camps; and the impunity of their actions, with little to no government response.[[17]](#endnote-17) Within the context of Nigeria, the intra-house power dynamics between the male head of household and the wives and amongst co-wives is particularly relevant to consider within any humanitarian response

1. UNFPA, The State of World Population, 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Statistics here and above taken from: Nigeria DHS 2013, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR293/FR293.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Nigeria DHS 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Nigeria MICS, UNICEF, 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Nigeria DHS 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Nigeria DHS 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. SIGI Country Profile, Nigeria, http://www.genderindex.org/country/nigeria [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Mercy Corps. 2013. Adolescent Girls in Northern Nigeria: Financial Inclusion and Opportunities Profile. Portland, Oregon: Mercy Corps [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Nigerian senate votes down gender equality bill due to ‘religious beliefs’,* The Independent, March 17 2016 *http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nigerian-senate-votes-down-gender-equality-bill-due-to-religious-beliefs-a6936021.html* [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. SIGI Country Profile, Nigeria, http://www.genderindex.org/country/nigeria [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. SIGI Country Profile, Nigeria, <http://www.genderindex.org/country/nigeria> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Nigeria MICS, UNICEF, 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. USAID Gender analysis for Strategic planning, July, 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Nigeria MICS, UNICEF, 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Amnesty International*, Nigeria: Trapped in the cycle of violence,* 2012 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017: Nigeria,* November 2016, OCHA, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha\_nga\_2017\_hno\_13012017.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Human Rights Watch News,Nigeria*: Officials Abusing Displaced Women, Girls Displaced by Boko Haram and Victims Twice Over,* October 31, 2016  [↑](#endnote-ref-17)