

1.3. Demographics

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Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa[35] with an estimated population of 237 million.[36] The country is a culturally diverse and multi-ethnic federal state,[37] with a population comprising over 250 ethnic groups, each with distinct languages, cultures, religions, and beliefs. The main three ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the South-West, and the Igbo in the South-East. The Hausa and Fulani have largely integrated, with most members practising Islam; the urban Fulani intermarry and hold administrative roles in Hausa regions, while rural Fulani remain distinct and speak Fula. The Yoruba, predominantly farmers living in urban areas, maintain a structured chieftaincy system led by influential figures. The Igbo live in decentralised, democratic communities governed by councils of elders, with limited centralised authority. Other notable groups include the Ibibio and Edo in the South, and the Tiv and Nupe in the ethnically diverse Middle Belt (North-Central zone[38]).[39]

56.1 % of Nigeria’s population identifies as Muslim, while 43.4 % identifies as Christian.[40] Other religious minorities include individuals practicing African traditional religions (8 %),[41] 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.[42] While religious and cultural diversity is a defining feature of Nigeria’s social landscape, it has also been a source of longstanding tension, especially in areas where religious groups coexist or overlap.[43]

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