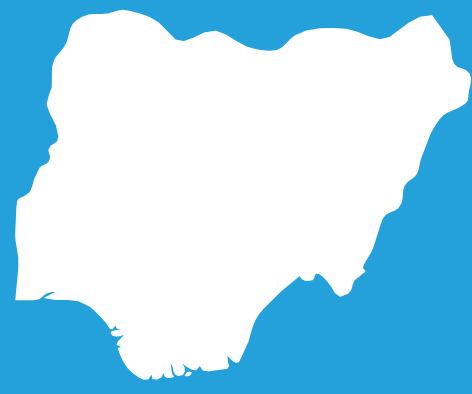


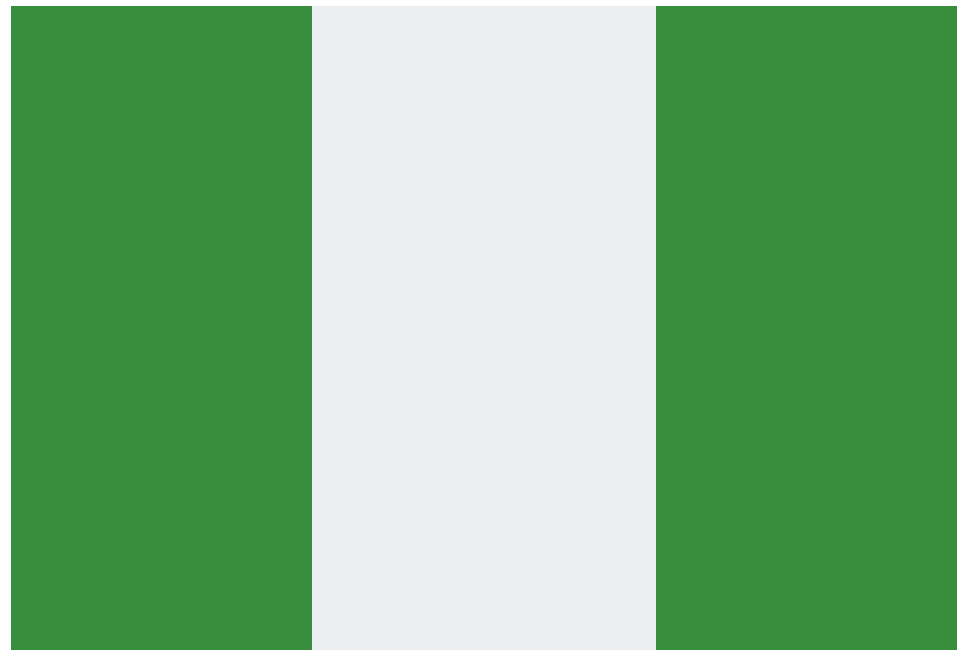
NIGERIA

Country Profiles



This profile is a part of our Leading Multiculturalism: Canada's Impact on Global Diversity Policies series

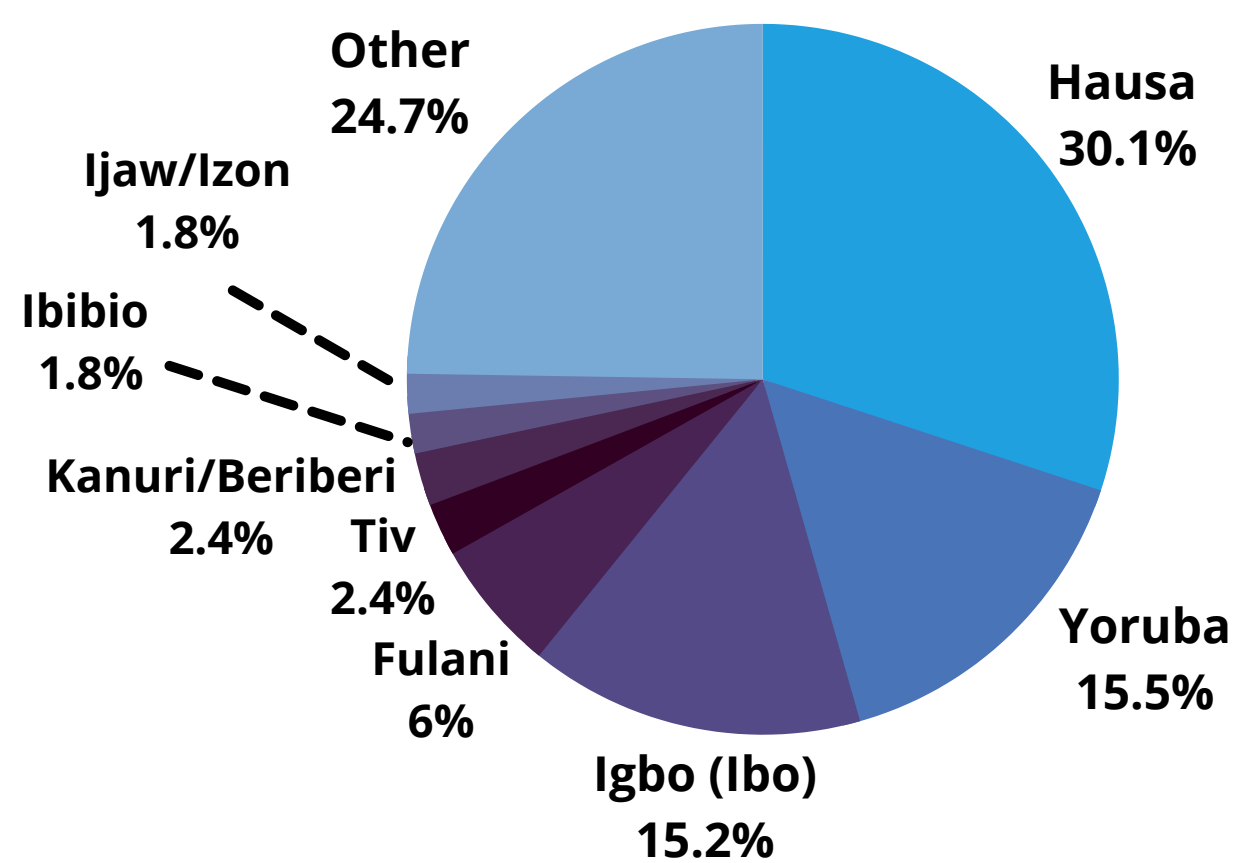
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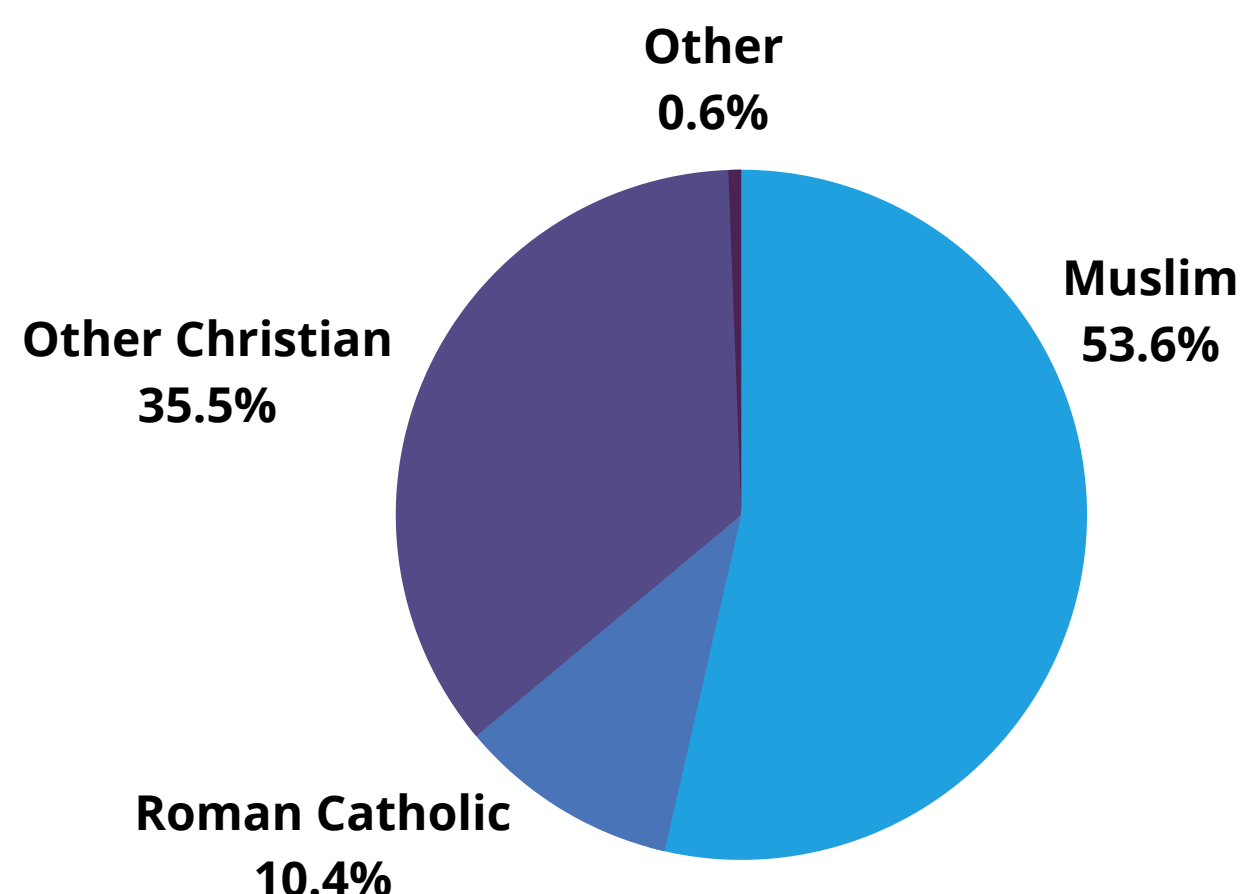
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Nigeria has a legacy of British colonialism and post-independence inter-ethnic violence. There are over 250 ethnic groups and over 500 lingo-ethnic communities in the country which has led to sectarian issues, ethnic militia and a civil war in the past.

DEMOGRAPHICS



RELIGION



MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** "unity within diversity", "Federal Character of Nigeria"
- **Approach:** Top-down (but ineffective) constitutional and legal protections for promoting.

DOMESTIC

- Constitutional and legal provisions exist for the protection of equal rights.
- The "Federal Character Principle" is the affirmative action program which oversees the quota system for the government, bureaucracy and universities.
- The constitution is the primary document making provisions for the creation and protection of national diversity.

INTERNATIONAL

Treaties

- ✓ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Promotion on international scale

- Yes

Nigeria

Backgroundⁱ

- Population: 214,028,302 (1st in Africa; 2020 est.)
- Demographics: Hausa 30%, Yoruba 15.5%, Igbo (Ibo) 15.2%, Fulani 6%, Tiv 2.4%, Kanuri/Berberi 2.4%, Ibibio 1.8%, Ijaw/Izon 1.8%, other 24.7% (more than 250 total).
- Languages: English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani, over 500 additional Indigenous languages.
- Religion: Muslim 53.3%, Roman Catholic 10.3%, other Christian 35.3%, Other 0.6%.
- Term: "Unity within Diversity"ⁱⁱ
- Top Down or Bottom Up: Top-Down (but ineffective)

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa by population and a developing regional power. With three dominant ethnic groups – the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (Ibo) – and over 250 smaller ones, with over 500 languages spoken within its borders, it is one of the world's most diverse states.ⁱⁱⁱ This has led to sectarian issues, ethnic militia and a civil war in the past.^{iv} It is also the only major state in the world with a population almost equally split between Muslims (53.3%) and Christians (45.6%).^v Nigeria has a legacy of British colonialism and post-independence inter-ethnic violence. There are over 300 ethnic groups and over 400 lingo-ethnic communities in the country which has led to sectarian issues, ethnic militia and a civil war in the past.

Yet Nigeria is also a society divided, owing to the legacy of colonialism and long periods of inter-ethnic violence since achieving independence in 1960. Thus, while Nigeria's diversity makes it an ideal case to contrast with Canada, it is within the context of colonialism, inter-ethnic violence, and a relatively weak state^{vi} that Nigeria's cultural diversity policies must be understood.

Nigeria's most recent constitution entered into force in 1999 and like Canada's, contains the trappings of a modern democratic constitution, including Articles 33-46 covering the fundamental freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, expression, and association. Article 15(2) additionally prohibits discrimination.^{vii} Fulfilling a role akin to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, the Constitution also vests in the government the role of fostering national belonging (Article 15[4]), promotes the creation of inter-ethnic associations (Article 15[3d]), and even encourages the promotion of interethnic marriage (Article 15[3c]). However, unlike Canada's focus is on the preservation of diversity within Canadian identity, Nigeria's policies are oriented towards building "unity within diversity" (a cohesive national identity while maintaining diversity) – in short, the two are opposites working towards the same end.

Education policies are a good example of such an approach. Whereas in Canada, the Multiculturalism Act seeks to preserve heritage languages while ensuring a place for English and French, education policies in Nigeria allow for the teaching of students in their native tongue in earlier grades, but place a strong stress in upper grades on teaching English and one of the three dominant Indigenous languages (Yoruba, Igbo [Ibo], and Hausa). This is done with the goal of national cohesion.

Similarly, anti-discrimination and affirmative policies, including the 'federal character principle' (which is enshrined in Article 14[3]) of the constitution, seek to achieve similar ends. A strict quota system, impacting all government agencies including education and the bureaucracy, has been designed to address historic inequalities between Southern and Northern regions and different ethnic groups. The Federal Character Commission has been set up to oversee this system and has often been used as a venue for airing grievances.^{viii} However, despite Nigeria's constitutional (i.e., top-down) commitments to managing ethnic diversity, the weakness of the Nigerian state, continuing ethnic conflicts, and low private sector buy-in, has made the country's rather ineffective thus far.

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

Approach

Government-led.

Nigeria's policies aim to build "unity in diversity." This top-down focus on cohesion has historically meant that the government has ignored ethnic differences in the name of unity;^{ix} at the same time, the diversity and ethnic competition within the country has meant that a focus on diversity has become an unavoidable part of Nigeria's system of government.

Constitutional Protections

Article 14(3) says that the composition of the government or any of its agencies must reflect the "Federal Character of Nigeria" and that there be no "predominance" of persons from one region or one ethnicity.

- The Federal Character Commission is charged with overseeing this and has been used by disadvantaged groups of a body to which complaints can be made.
- The Federal Character Commission Act of 2004 further empowered the FCC to ensure that all agencies and other bodies of government have clear guidelines to be fulfilled.
- Fines and even prison terms are penalties for those who willfully neglect the Federal Character Principle, although in practice, this has been difficult to enforce.^x

Article 15(2) of the Constitution encourages "national integration" and prohibits discrimination based on place of origin, sex, religion, status, and ethnic or linguistic association.

Article 15 (3c) encourages inter-marriage between those of different backgrounds and religions.

Article 15 (3d) promotes the "formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers."

Article 15 (4) vests in the state the responsibility to foster belonging.

Article 17 (2a) protects equality under the law.

Article 17 (3e) stipulates "equal pay for equal work," without discrimination.

Chapter IV (Articles 33-46) cover fundamental rights, including "freedom of thought, conscious, and religion" (Article 38[1]), freedom of expression (Article 39[1]), freedom of assembly and association (Article 40).

Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism

No, but recognition of the diversity of Nigerian society.

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration

The Nigerian National Education Policy views language as a means of promoting "social interaction, and national cohesion." Under it, every child is educated in the language of their "immediate environment." For national unity purposes, they later are enrolled in English classes as well as in at least one other national native language (Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa)^{xi} The effectiveness of the latter is falling short and the three Nigerian languages in practice remain regional languages.^{xii}

The government has established Federal Unity Colleges, university quotas, and a national youth service corps to foster unity.^{xiii}

Universities in Nigeria have ethnic quotas to try to redress historic inequalities between the more educated South and less educated North.^{xiv}

Affirmative Action Policies

The affirmative action program in Nigeria is called the “federal character principle,” stating that no group shall have a predominance in government or agencies (see: column 1). This is achieved through a quota system for the bureaucracy, with the “Federal Character Commission” charged with overseeing it. The FCC has also been used as a way for groups who perceive exclusion or discrimination to lodge complaints.^{xv}

In the private sector, policies supporting ethnic diversity are generally rare, outside of some foreign multinationals.^{xvi}

Comparative Analysis: International

International Treaties

Nigeria is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, having acceded on 29 July 1993.^{xvii}

Nigeria is also a signatory of the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, having acceded to the treaty very early on 16 October 1967.^{xviii}

International Promotion of Multiculturalism

Article 19(c) of the Constitution sets out the elimination of discrimination as one Nigeria’s foreign policy objectives.^{xix}

ⁱ “Nigeria,” The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed November 5, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

ⁱⁱ Patrick A. Edewor, Yetunde Aluko, and Sherif Folarin, “Managing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity for National Integration in Nigeria,” *Developing Country Studies* 4, no. 6 (January 2014): 70.

ⁱⁱⁱ Naomi A. Moland, “Can Multiculturalism Be Exported? Dilemmas of Diversity on Nigeria’s Sesame Square,” *Comparative Education Review* 59, no. 1 (February 2015): 7.

^{iv} Ilemobola Peter Olanrewaju, Ronald Ejiroghene Loromeke, and Raquel A. Adekoye, “Multiculturalism, Value Differences and Cross-Cultural Conflict in Nigeria: Surgery on a Centenarian,” *Journal of African Union Studies* 6, no. 1 (2017): 39-62, accessed April 14, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26885836>.

^v Naomi A. Moland, “Can Multiculturalism Be Exported?,” 7.

^{vi} Moland, “Can Multiculturalism Be Exported? Dilemmas of Diversity on Nigeria’s Sesame Square,” 7-9.

^{vii} “Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999,” World Intellectual Property Organization, Accessed November 5, 2020, <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ng/ng014en.pdf>

^{viii} Mustapha, Abdul Raufu. “Institutionalising Ethnic Representation: How Effective is Affirmative Action in Nigeria?” *Journal of International Development* 21 (2009), 574.

^{ix} Edewor, Aluka, and Folarin, “Managing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity for National Integration in Nigeria,” 74

^x Ifedapo Adeleye, Doyin Atewologun, and Olusegun Matanmi, “Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Nigeria: historical context and emerging issues,” in *International Handbook on Diversity Management at Work: Country Perspectives on Diversity and Equal Treatment*, ed. Alan Klarsfeld, Lize Booyesen, Eggy Ng, Eddy, Abu Tatli (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 201.

^{xi} Denise Merkle, Gillian Lane-Mercier, and Jane Koustas. *Minority Languages, National Languages, and Official Language Policies* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018), 238-240.

^{xii} Merkle, Lane-Mercier, and Koustas. *Minority Languages, National Languages, and Official Language Policies*, 241-243.

^{xiii} Moland, “Can Multiculturalism Be Exported? Dilemmas of Diversity on Nigeria’s Sesame Square,” 9.

^{xiv} Ukoha Ukiwo, “Education, horizontal inequalities, and ethnic relations in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 27 (2007): 274.

^{xv} Mustapha, “Institutionalising Ethnic Representation: How Effective is Affirmative Action in Nigeria?,” 561-576.

^{xvi} Adeleye, Atewologun, and Matanmi, “Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Nigeria: historical context and emerging issues,” 199.

^{xvii} "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed November 5, 2020, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en

^{xviii} "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed November 5, 2020, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en

^{xix} World Intellectual Property Organization, "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999."