

Nigeria

Country name	Nigeria
State title	Federal Republic of Nigeria
Name of citizen	Nigerian
Official language	English (<i>eng</i>) ¹
Script	Roman script
Romanization System	Not required
ISO-3166 codes (alpha-2/alpha-3)	NG/NGA
Capital	Abuja ²
Population / Area	230.8 million ³ / 923,768km ²

Introduction

Nigeria is in west Africa and gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. It shares land borders with Benin in the west; Chad and Cameroon in the east; and Niger in the north. Nigeria's south coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea, where the River Niger flows into the Atlantic Ocean. It is the most populous country in Africa and the sixth in the world.⁴ The population is roughly split half and half between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south.

Geographical names policy

Geographical names in Nigeria are found in Roman script and where possible should be taken as found on official Nigerian sources produced until 1980s by the Nigeria Federal Survey Department. Recent maps of Nigeria, produced by Nigeria's Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation (OSGOF), the successor to the Federal Survey Department, are an unsuitable source for geographical names. Geographical names on sources may not always be consistent⁵, and where inconsistencies arise, use of additional online sources such as Nigeria Health Facility Registry <http://hfr.health.gov.ng/> is advised.

Languages

Exact figures for the number of languages spoken in Nigeria are difficult to ascertain with most estimates being in the region of 500. The official language and *lingua franca* is English, which is used for official written purposes, although spoken by most Nigerians as a second language. Knowledge of English is lower in rural areas.

The recognised national languages⁶ are Hausa (*hau*), Igbo⁷ (*ibo*) and Yoruba (*yor*). Igbo and Yoruba belong to the Niger-Congo family of languages; each is spoken by approximately 13-14% of the population as a first language and is written in Roman script. Hausa is an Afro-Asiatic

¹ ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this factfile.

² Lagos was the capital until December 1991 and is the most populous city in Nigeria.

³ CIA World Factbook 2023 estimate.

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/population/country-comparison/>

⁵ There may be spelling discrepancies between official sources, both between the names shown on different products and between different sheets in the same series.

⁶ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Ch.V, Pt.1, B, 55.

⁷ Sometimes spelt Ibo.

language, which is spoken by around 13% of the population as a first language and also has a significant presence as a second language. Hausa was previously written in a modified Arabic script (*Ajami*) but is now written in Roman script.

Yoruba is spoken predominantly in the south west of Nigeria and its influence can be seen in geographical names in this area, which is sometimes known as Yorubaland. It is a tonal language and is written in Roman script. Its alphabet contains three letter-diacritic combinations /ẹ/, /ọ/, and /ş/ (which are sometimes seen with underbars or vertical sub-stalks instead of sub-dots), although these marks are often omitted. These three characters are considered separate letters: the first two are modified vowels and the last represents the sound /sh/. An example of the use of /ş/ is found in the name of the state of Osun, which should properly be written Oşun, but is also sometimes seen as Oshun, reflecting its pronunciation. Usage of the Yoruba characters by the Nigerian Government is rare and representation of the Yoruba phoneme /sh/ is inconsistent. The state name is given as Osun in the Constitution (no diacritics used), but in the administrative structure below that, some of the names in the Yoruba area which include this letter are shown with /sh/ and some with /s/. This inconsistent approach makes it difficult to ascertain official Nigerian Government practice with regards to Yoruba names.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings)⁸

The following are characters that may appear in names of Yoruba origin:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ẹ	1EB8	ẹ	1EB9
Ọ	1ECC	ọ	1ECD
Ş	1E62	ş	1E63

Territorial and toponymic issues

1. Bakassi Peninsula (04°37'00"N 008°35'00"E)

The Bakassi Peninsula is an area of Cameroon, consisting, predominantly, of mangrove, stretching into the Gulf of Guinea neighbouring part of the Nigerian border. Nigeria and Cameroon disputed ownership of the area for many years. The issue was taken to the International Court of Justice in 1994. Their verdict, reached in 2002⁹, awarded sovereignty to Cameroon but maintained that the existing population could retain residence and Nigerian nationality. The boundary has now been largely demarcated, though pockets of resistance remain.

The peninsula should be recognised as territory of Cameroon on UK Government products. Since it falls into an English-speaking province of [Cameroon](#), it should be labelled in English as Bakassi Peninsula.

2. Biafra

Between May 1967 and January 1970, a secessionist state existed in the south east of Nigeria. In Nigeria's first constitution post-independence in 1960, the country was divided into three regions, roughly delineated by the tribal boundaries: Hausa and Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the south west and Igbo¹⁰ to the south east. On the 30th May 1967, after a coup and counter-coup and the resultant increase in ethnic tension and inter-tribal conflict, the head of the Eastern Region unilaterally declared the secession of the independent Republic of Biafra,

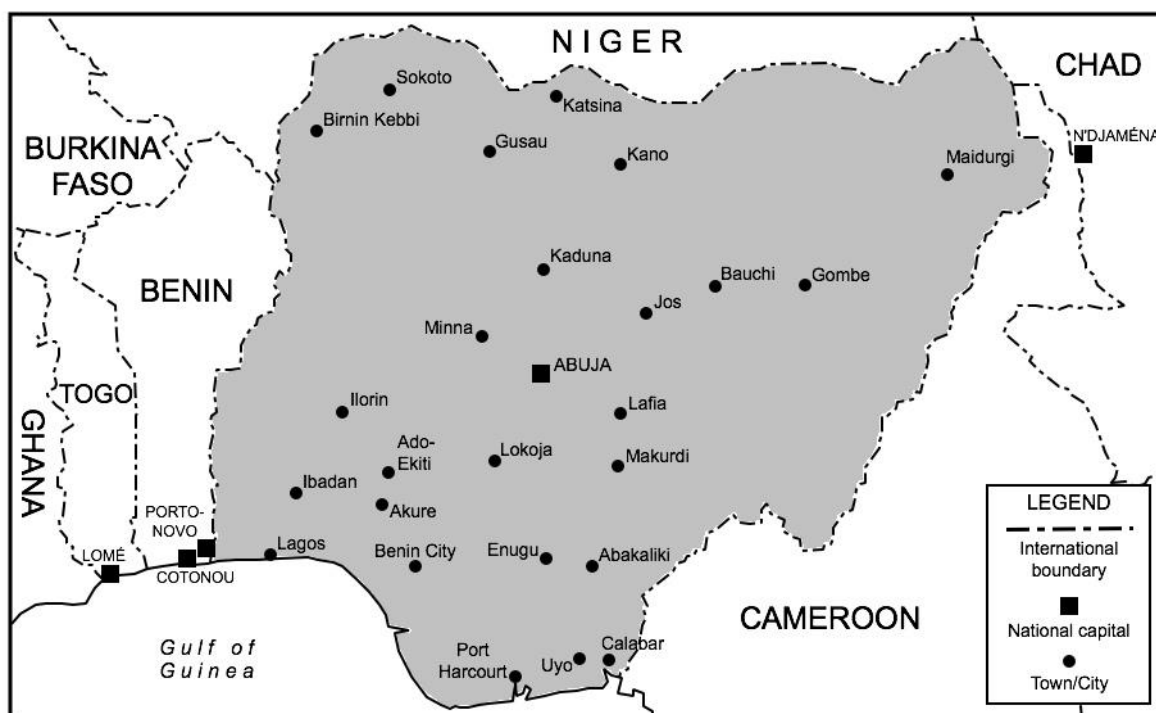
⁸ See www.unicode.org

⁹ <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/94>

¹⁰ Like the language, this is also seen as Ibo.

comprising approximately the area now covered by the states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Cross River. By 1970, following a civil war, the leaders of Biafra agreed to reincorporate into Nigeria, although there remains today a minority who call for the reestablishment of an independent Biafra.

Map of Nigeria



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

At first-order administrative level (ADM1) Nigeria comprises 36 states and one Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The states are sub-divided into Local Government Areas (LGAs) and area councils (in Abuja) at second-order level. The LGA names are given in the 1999 Constitution¹¹.

ADM1 name	ADM1 long form	ADM1 location (centre point)	ISO 3166-2 code	Centre	Centre location
Abia	Abia State	05° 25'N 07° 30'E	NG-AB	Umuahia	05° 32'N 07° 29'E
Adamawa	Adamawa State	09° 20'N 12° 30'E	NG-AD	Yola	09° 12'N 12° 29'E
Akwa Ibom	Akwa Ibom State	05° 00'N 07° 50'E	NG-AK	Uyo	05° 03'N 07° 56'E
Anambra	Anambra State	06° 20'N 07° 00'E	NG-AN	Awka	06° 13'N 07° 05'E
Bauchi	Bauchi State	10° 30'N 10° 00'E	NG-BA	Bauchi	10° 18'N 09° 50'E
Bayelsa	Bayelsa State	04° 45'N 06° 05'E	NG-BY	Yenagoa	04° 55'N 06° 15'E
Benue	Benue State	07° 20'N 08° 45'E	NG-BE	Makurdi	07° 44'N 08° 32'E
Borno	Borno State	11° 30'N 13° 00'E	NG-BO	Maiduguri	11° 50'N 13° 09'E
Cross River	Cross River State	05° 45'N 08° 30'E	NG-CR	Calabar	04° 57'N 08° 19'E

¹¹ <http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>

ADM1 name	ADM1 long form	ADM1 location (centre point)	ISO 3166-2 code	Centre	Centre location
Delta	Delta State	05° 30'N 06° 00'E	NG-DE	Asaba	06° 11'N 06° 45'E
Ebonyi	Ebonyi State	06° 15'N 08° 05'E	NG-EB	Abakaliki	06° 20'N 08° 06'E
Edo	Edo State	06° 30'N 06° 00'E	NG-ED	Benin City	06° 20'N 05° 38'E
Ekiti	Ekiti State	07° 40'N 05° 15'E	NG-EK	Ado-Ekiti	07° 38'N 05° 13'E
Enugu	Enugu State	06° 30'N 07° 30'E	NG-EN	Enugu	06° 26'N 07° 29'E
Gombe	Gombe State	10° 15'N 11° 10'E	NG-GO	Gombe	10° 17'N 11° 10'E
Imo	Imo State	05° 30'N 07° 10'E	NG-IM	Owerri	05° 29'N 07° 02'E
Jigawa	Jigawa State	12° 00'N 09° 45'E	NG-JI	Dutse	11° 46'N 09° 20'E
Kaduna	Kaduna State	10° 20'N 07° 45'E	NG-KD	Kaduna	10° 31'N 07° 26'E
Kano	Kano State	11° 30'N 08° 30'E	NG-KN	Kano	11° 59'N 08° 31'E
Katsina	Katsina State	12° 15'N 07° 30'E	NG-KT	Katsina	12° 59'N 07° 35'E
Kebbi	Kebbi State	11° 30'N 04° 00'E	NG-KE	Birnin Kebbi	12° 27'N 04° 11'E
Kogi	Kogi State	07° 45'N 06° 45'E	NG-KO	Lokoja	07° 48'N 06° 44'E
Kwara	Kwara State	08° 30'N 05° 00'E	NG-KW	Ilorin	08° 30'N 04° 33'E
Lagos	Lagos State	10° 30'N 10° 00'E	NG-LA	Ikeja	06° 35'N 03° 20'E
Nasarawa	Nasarawa State	08° 30'N 08° 15'E	NG-NA	Lafia	08° 29'N 08° 31'E
Niger	Niger State	10° 00'N 06° 00'E	NG-NI	Minna	09° 36'N 06° 33'E
Ogun	Ogun State	07° 00'N 03° 35'E	NG-OG	Abeokuta	07° 09'N 03° 21'E
Ondo	Ondo State	07° 10'N 05° 05'E	NG-ON	Akure	07° 15'N 05° 12'E
Osun	Osun State	07° 30'N 04° 30'E	NG-OS	Osogbo	07° 46'N 04° 34'E
Oyo	Oyo State	08° 00'N 04° 00'E	NG-OY	Ibadan	07° 23'N 03° 53'E
Plateau	Plateau State	10° 30'N 10° 00'E	NG-PL	Jos	09° 55'N 08° 54'E
Rivers	Rivers State	04° 45'N 06° 50'E	NG-RI	Port Harcourt	04° 47'N 06° 59'E
Sokoto	Sokoto State	13° 05'N 05° 15'E	NG-SO	Sokoto	13° 03'N 05° 13'E
Taraba	Taraba State	08° 00'N 10° 30'E	NG-TA	Jalingo	08° 53'N 11° 22'E
Yobe	Yobe State	12° 00'N 11° 30'E	NG-YO	Damaturu	11° 44'N 11° 57'E
Zamfara	Zamfara State	12° 10'N 06° 15'E	NG-ZA	Gusau	12° 09'N 06° 40'E
Federal Capital Territory	Abuja Federal Capital Territory	08° 50'N 07° 10'E	NG-FC	Abuja	09° 05'N 07° 32'E

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Benue River or Benue	Benue [short form]	7° 47' 10" N 6° 45' 47" E	River
Bight of Benin		5° 30' 00" N 4° 00' 00" E	Bight
Burutu		5° 21' 03" N 5° 30' 27" E	Populated place/port
Chappal Waddi	Tchabal Ouadé [CM]	7° 02' 00" N 11° 43' 00" E	Mountain
Chibok	Chibuk	10° 52' 10" N 012° 50' 48" E	Populated place
Gulf of Guinea		2° 00' 00" N 2° 30' 00" E	Gulf
Ilesa	Ilesha	7° 37' 00" N 4° 44' 00" E	Populated place
Jos Plateau		10° 00' 00" N 9° 30' 00" E	Plateau
Koko	Koko Town	6° 00' 04" N 5° 28' 03" E	Populated place/port
Lagos	Eko [Yoruba]	6° 27' 11" N 3° 23' 45" E	Populated place/port
Lake Chad	Lac Tchad [NG, CD, CM]	13° 19' 43" N 14° 07' 18" E	Lake
Ogbomoso	Ogbomosho	8° 08' 00" N 4° 16' 00" E	Populated place
Niger River or Niger	Niger [short form]	5° 18' 06" N 6° 25' 00" E	River
Saki	Shaki	8° 40' 00" N 3° 23' 00" E	Populated place
Sapele		5° 53' 39" N 5° 40' 36" E	Populated place/port
Warri		5° 31' 00" N 5° 45' 00" E	Populated place/port

Useful references

- BBC country profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13949550>
- Nigeria Bureau of Statistics: <http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/>
- Ethnologue: <https://www.ethnologue.com/>
- FCDO Geographical Names Index: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information>
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui>
- Nigeria Data Portal: <https://nigeria.opendataforafrica.org>
- Nigerian National Assembly: <http://www.nass.gov.ng/page/about-the-house>

- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: [GNS Search & Download WebApp \(nga.mil\)](https://gns.geog.name/)

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