

2.3. Women and girls

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2.3.1. Legal and social status

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria²⁹³ prohibits gender-based discrimination, and several laws have been enacted to promote the rights and improve the status of women.²⁹⁴ Nigeria is a signatory to several international and regional treaties on gender equality and women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)²⁹⁵ and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).²⁹⁶ However, as of 2025, Nigeria has not yet incorporated the CEDAW into national law.²⁹⁷

Despite legal commitments, Nigerian women have continued to face widespread discrimination in both law and practice.²⁹⁸ Many existing legal frameworks either condone or fail to adequately address critical issues such as domestic violence and gender inequality. Discriminatory elements can be found in various legal sources, including the Labour Act, customary law, sharia law, and even within the Constitution.²⁹⁹ Some of these legal provisions discriminate women with regards to nationality, citizenship, health, education, marital and parental rights, employment,³⁰⁰ inheritance and property rights.³⁰¹

Gender equality has remained a challenge in the country, with reports of widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including child marriage and prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).³⁰² Lack of effective implementation of legal provisions, insufficient public awareness, and cultural traditions are among the key obstacles for achieving progress.³⁰³ Religion, tradition, and culture are frequently used to justify violations of women's rights, particularly in areas such as education, marriage, inheritance, property ownership, and protection from gender-based violence and harmful practices.³⁰⁴

Nigerian women face widespread discrimination also in areas such as access to education, employment and political representation.³⁰⁵ Levels of female participation in the labour force as well as in political and economic decision-making roles have remained low.³⁰⁶ In 2024, only four women secured seats in the Senate and 14 in the House of Representatives. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported that women made up just 8 % of all candidates in the 2023 elections.³⁰⁷ Women's representation in ministerial roles dropped from 17.6 % in 2024 to 8.8 % in 2025.³⁰⁸

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that, as of February 2025, about 8 million people in Nigeria, including 1.95 million women of reproductive age, were in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict, food insecurity, lack of sexual and reproductive health services, limited education.³⁰⁹ Abortion is only legally permitted when the woman's life is at risk, leading many to seek unsafe, illegal procedures that often result in medical complications. Those who suffer such complications frequently lack access to adequate follow-up care.³¹⁰ Women and girls with disabilities face discrimination in accessing health, including sexual, reproductive health and maternal health.³¹¹ For more information see [Healthcare](#).

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For instance, Chapter III, Section 26 of the Constitution limits a Nigerian woman's ability to confer citizenship on her foreign spouse. See Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Alterations (2010), 4th Alteration (2017) and 5th Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#), Chapter III, Section 26; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

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