3.3. Poverty

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Even though Nigeria is one of the top oil producers in Africa, the country remains one of the poorest in the world.1011 By the end of 2024, about 50 % of Nigerians were living under the poverty line of 2.15 US dollars per day.1012 Over 133 million Nigerians feel the impact of multidimensional poverty, the highest number recorded globally,1013 with the number of people living below the poverty line expected to rise by about 13 million by the end of 2025.1014 According to Germany's BMZ, if poverty is measured by additional factors such as health, education, employment and standard of living, more than 60 % of people in Nigeria are considered 'poor'.1015

Data from 2022 show that most deprivations included cooking fuel (50.6 % of people), sanitation (46.5 %), healthcare (38.7 %), food insecurity (38.6 %), housing materials (38.6 %), and water (29.3 %).1016 According to Nigeria's NBS household survey, wood is the most common cooking fuel in Nigeria (used by 70.2 % of households), followed by liquefied petroleum gas (23.2 %).1017 In 2022, Nigeria's NBS indicated that about half of the population who were multidimensionally poor cooked with dung, wood or charcoal, and that high deprivations were also present in sanitation, healthcare, food insecurity, and housing.1018

Nigeria's economic growth is hindered by low state capacity, poor service delivery, corruption, infrastructure gaps, trade protectionism, extreme weather events, widespread insecurity and violence,1019 gender inequality, 'adverse social norms', and economic non-diversification.1020 Inadequate urban planning policies, combined with other contributing factors, have resulted in rising levels of urban poverty in Nigeria.1021 Insecurity is another factor that exacerbates poverty levels due to the impact on investor confidence, business operations, and agricultural productivity, particularly in Northern producing states, leading to higher food prices, increase in food imports, and higher unemployment and poverty levels.1022

In response to high poverty rates, the government implemented a temporary cash transfer program for 15 million households, considered the 'poorest and most economically at-risk'.1023 The implementation process, however, has encountered delays, resulting in only 5.6 million households benefitting due to issues with the digital identification verification mechanism.1024

Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that only 4 % of households received assistance from the government, mostly comprising cash (54 % of households) and food (49.3 %).1025 Assistance is more prevalent in the South-South (6.7 % of households) and North-West (5.6 %), and less common in North-Central (2.6 %) and South East (1.5 %).1026 A report on poverty dynamics in Nigeria by Better Assistance in Crises Research (BASIC Research), a UK Foreign Office-funded program that produces research on poverty and development assistance, indicated that social assistance was frequently viewed in southern areas as 'politicised' given that it reportedly reaches more often politically-connected people.1027 The same source also indicated that, according to locals, the distribution of government assistance is 'unreliable' and 'unfair' as benefits are reportedly paid to non-eligible individuals, including local leaders and intermediaries.1028 Punch reported in June 2025 that, according to the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Nigeria is 'reaching stability' after the removal of the fuel subsidy and parallel foreign exchange rate.1029

Nigeria is also one of Africa's 'worst performers' in tackling inequality, being surpassed only by war-torn countries such as South Sudan and Somalia.1030 The World Inequality Database for 2023 indicated that, for Nigeria, the total national income consisted of 42.1 % earned by the top 10 % of earners, 11.4 % by the top 1 %, while the bottom 50 % of the population earned 16.7 % of the total income.1031 Regarding wealth, the same source indicated that the top 10 % owned 60.4 % of the wealth, the top 1 % owned 26.9 %, while the bottom 50 %, 3.9 %.1032 Similar to the causes of poverty in Nigeria above, drivers of inequality in the country include inadequate access to social services, corruption, insecurity, gender disparities, and the high operational costs of governance in Nigeria.1033

In response to living conditions in Nigeria, anti-government protests took place in August 2024.1034 Protests were mostly led by young people,1035 and state response left over 20 protesters dead and hundreds arrested. 1036 For more information see 2.7. Protesters.

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