

3.8.1. Women and children

3.8.1. Women and children

Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that 22.3 % of households are headed by females – a 3.7 % increase from the previous survey of 2019.1220 The region with most households headed by females is the South-East (34.4 % of households), followed by South-South (30.8 %), and South-West (29.7 %).1221

Despite legal commitments, Nigerian women have continued to face widespread discrimination in both law and practice.1222 Discriminatory elements can be found in various legal sources, including the Labour Act, customary law, sharia law, and even within the Constitution.1223 Some of these legal provisions discriminate women with regards to nationality, citizenship, health, education, marital and parental rights, employment,1224 inheritance and property rights.1225 For more information see 2.3. Women and girls. The 2025 Global Gender Gap Report indicated that women in Nigeria have 'near equal-rights' as men in terms of access to financial services, and land and no-land assets, but they have 'unequal rights' compared to men in terms of inheritance rights for widows and daughters.1226 The USDOS country report indicated that while there are no laws that prohibit women from owning land, 'customary land tenure systems allowed only men to own land, with women gaining access to land only via marriage or family. Many customary practices did not recognise a woman's right to inherit property, and many widows became destitute when their in-laws claimed the deceased husband's property'.1227

Information on support services for females' heads of households relevant for the reference period of this report, could not be found among all sources consulted within the time constraints of this report. A 2021 report by Canada's IRB on female heads of households indicated that, according to academics who have researched social issues in Nigeria, there are no social support services or programmes for females heads of households.1228 When asked about the availability of public services, including health, education, public transportation, childcare services and social assistance for females heads of households in Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt or Abuja, sources consulted by the IRB indicated that there is no public subsidy to cover these costs and that these services are not free.1229 For more information see 2.3.2. Situation of unmarried, widowed, divorced women and women without support network.

Sources indicated that there are about 17.5 million orphans and vulnerable children nationwide, 1230 the world's second highest after India, with 30 million orphans.1231 Christianity Today indicated that Nigeria has about 278 listed orphanages, and that the main causes of orphanhood are Nigeria's high mortality rate, violence and armed conflicts, teenage pregnancies, and the 'broken system' of adoption in Nigeria which, despite the low cost for Nigerian citizens (932 US dollars), it is underutilised and marred with cultural and bureaucratic barriers.1232 See also 2.4

Children .

- 1220

  Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, url, p. 5

- 1221

  Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, url, p. 7

- 1222

  Njila, M. M., An analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Women Against Discriminatory Practices in Nigeria, 8 September 2024, url, p. 82; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, url

- 1223

  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

- 1224

  Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, url

- 1225

  Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, url; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, url

- 1226

  WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, url, pp. 287-288

- 1227

  USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, url. See also: NAN, Girls have equal rights to inheritance as boys, 12 August 2025, url

- 1228

Canada, IRB, NGA200797.E - Nigeria: Situation and treatment of single women and of women who head their own households, including their ability to live on their own and access housing, income, education, health care, and support services, particularly in Port Harcourt, Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos; impact of COVID-19 (2019–October 2021), 10 November 2021, url

- 1229

  Canada, IRB, NGA200797.E - Nigeria: Situation and treatment of single women and of women who head their own households, including their ability to live on their own and access housing, income, education, health care, and support services, particularly in Port Harcourt, Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos; impact of COVID-19 (2019–October 2021), 10 November 2021, url

- 1230

  Nairametrics, Nigerian Orphanages to consider supporting this Christmas season, 22 December 2024, url; Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, url

- 1231

  Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, url

- 1232

  Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu