

# Nigeria



18.4%<sup>1</sup>

## Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15–49 is 18.4%.

20 million women and girls in Nigeria have undergone FGM. This represents 10% of the global total.<sup>2</sup>

### **Geography:**

The highest prevalences are in South East and South West Zones<sup>3</sup>

### **Age:**

82% of women aged 15–49 who have undergone FGM were cut before the age of 5<sup>4</sup>

### **Type:**

'Had flesh removed' is the most common type of FGM practised<sup>5</sup>

### **Agent:**

Around three-quarters of FGM is carried out by 'traditional circumcisers'<sup>6</sup>

## Development Indicators

**HDI Rank:** 161 out of 189 countries (2020)<sup>7</sup>

**SDG Gender Index Rating:** 122 out of 129 countries (2019)<sup>8</sup>

**Population:** 209,420,646 (as at 28 January 2021), with a 2.53% growth rate (2021 est.)<sup>9</sup>

**Under-Five Mortality Rate:** 117 deaths per 1,000 live births (2019)<sup>10</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Ratio:** 917 deaths per 100,000 live births (2017)<sup>11</sup>

**Literacy:** 62% of the total population aged 15 and over can read/write<sup>12</sup>

*'Youths in Africa . . . We must take our destiny in our own hands.  
The future belongs to us. FGM must end in our time.'  
~ Miss Emelda Ojelo, SIRP Youth Coordinator, Nigeria*

## Prevalence

The Zones in Nigeria with the highest FGM prevalence are South East (32.5% of women aged 15–49) and South West (41.1%). The highest state prevalence is in Osun State, at 67.8%. The states Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto and Yobe each have a prevalence below 1%.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that the data for some regions is based on relatively small numbers of women.

The majority of Nigeria's population (57%) lives in rural areas. The most densely populated Zone, with 30% of Nigeria's population, is North West, where the FGM prevalence is 19.3%. It is often assumed that FGM is more likely to occur in rural areas, but in Nigeria 23.4% of women aged 15–49 and living in urban areas have undergone FGM, compared with 15.6% living in rural areas.<sup>14</sup> However, in recent years this appears to be changing: 20.5% of daughters aged 0–14 living in urban areas have experienced FGM, compared to 28.8% of those living in rural areas.<sup>15</sup>

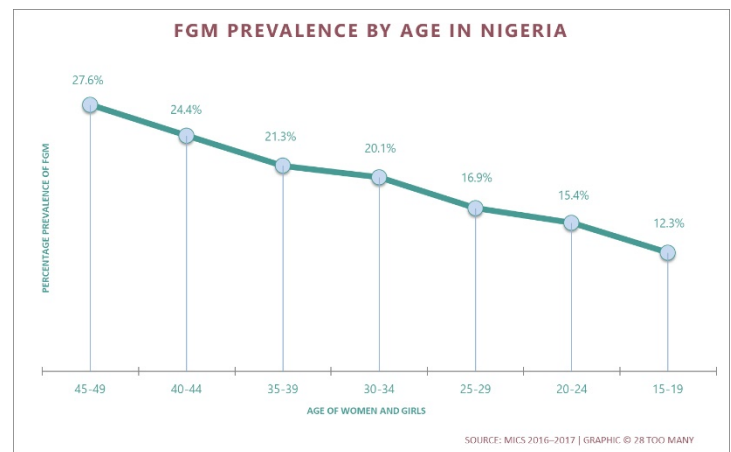
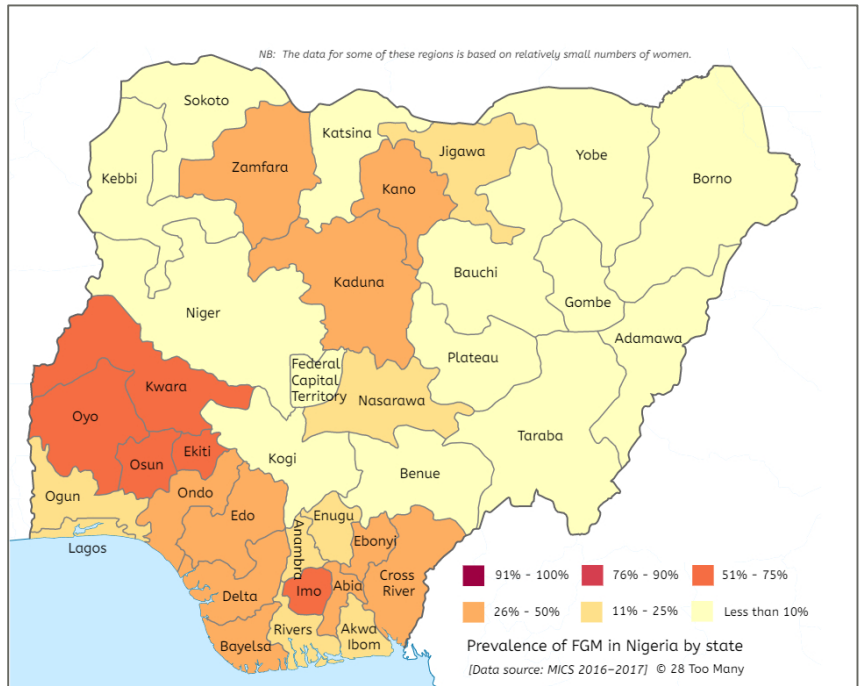
All ethnic groups practise FGM, although it is almost unheard of among the Tiv. The group with the highest prevalence is the Yoruba (54.5% of women aged 15–49).<sup>16</sup>

FGM prevalence is highest among women practising traditionalist religions (34.8% of women aged 15–49) and lowest among Muslim women (20.1%).<sup>17</sup>

In most African countries, a mother's level of education is a determining factor in whether her daughters will be cut. The usual expectation is that a higher level of education is linked to a lower likelihood of FGM. However, Nigerian women aged 15–49 with 'no education' are the least likely to have undergone FGM (11.6%). Prevalence is highest (24.3%) among women with a primary-level education, and reduces among those with secondary or higher levels of education.<sup>18</sup>

A similar situation is noted in relation to women's economic statuses. 23.3% of women in Nigeria (aged 15–49) in the highest wealth quintile have undergone FGM, compared with 9.9% in the lowest quintile. Conversely, 14.4% of girls aged 0–14 and born to mothers in the wealthiest quintile have undergone FGM, compared with 43% in the lowest quintile. This indicates that, whereas wealthier, better-educated women aged 15–49 are more likely to have undergone FGM than poorer, less-educated women in the same age-range, girls born to wealthier and better-educated women in Nigeria today are less likely to be cut than girls born to poorer, less-educated women.<sup>19</sup>

Between 2008 and 2016/2017, the overall prevalence for women aged 15–49 fell from 29.6% to 18.4%. Due to the large age-range of women included, however, the overall prevalence alone may not fully reflect the progress that has been made in recent years. Breaking down the most recent data by age group shows that the prevalence for women aged 45–49 is 27.6%, while for the youngest age group this has fallen to 12.3%. Despite the fact that a small proportion of women may be cut after the age of 15, the data demonstrates a clear trend towards lower prevalences among younger women.<sup>20</sup>



# Nigerian Law

In May 2015, a federal law was passed in Nigeria banning FGM and other harmful practices, but this Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act only applies to the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. It is up to each of the 36 states to pass similar legislation in its territory. 13 states already have similar laws in place; however, there remains an inconsistency between the passing and enforcement of laws.

- 1 (**'MICS'**): National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2017) *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016–2017, Survey Findings Report*, p.237. Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund.
- 2 - MICS, p.237.  
- UNICEF (2013) *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change*. Available at [http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_69875.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_69875.html) (accessed June 2016).
- 3 MICS, p.236.
- 4 (**'DHS'**): National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria] and ICF International (2014) *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013*, pp.352–353. Abuja, Nigeria, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NPC and ICF International. Available at <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR293/FR293.pdf> (accessed 30 May 2017).
- 5 MICS, p.237.
- 6 DHS, p.357.
- 7 United Nations Development Programme (2020) *Latest Human Development Index Ranking*. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking> (accessed 28 January 2021).
- 8 Equal Measures 2030 (2019) *Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index*, pp.12–13. Available at [www.data.em2030.org/2019-global-report](http://www.data.em2030.org/2019-global-report) (accessed 12 June 2019).
- 9 - Country Meters (2017) *Nigeria*, 28 January 2021. Available at <http://countrymeters.info/en/Nigeria> (accessed 28 January 2021).  
- Central Intelligence Agency (2021) *World Factbook: Nigeria*, 25 January. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/> (accessed 28 January 2021).
- 10 Countdown to 2030 (2021) *Nigeria*. Available at <https://profiles.countdown2030.org/#/cp/NGA> (accessed 28 January 2021).
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*
- 13 MICS, pp.236–237.
- 14 MICS, p.236.
- 15 MICS, p.238.
- 16 DHS, pp.349–350.
- 17 DHS, pp.349–350.
- 18 MICS, p.236.
- 19 MICS, pp.236–239.
- 20 - MICS, p.236.  
- National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ICF Macro (2009) *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008*. Abuja: National Population Commission and ICF Macro, p.300. Available at [http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng\\_publications\\_Nigeria\\_DHS\\_2008\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng_publications_Nigeria_DHS_2008_Final_Report.pdf).

## **UNICEF Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:**

UNICEF (2014) *Nigeria: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Nigeria/FGMC\\_NGA.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Nigeria/FGMC_NGA.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

## **Images on website:**

- 1 ariyo olasunkanmi (2016) *AFRICAN, NIGERIA – 15 AUGUST 2016: Young vibrant African children come out for a portrait session on 15 AUGUST 2016*. Shutterstock ID: 469352558.
- 2 Mark Fischer (2015) *Abuja Street Portrait*. Available at <https://flic.kr/p/BBY3EC>. CLL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>.
- 3 Joachim Huber (2006) *Girls selling smoked fish on the banks of the Niger river*. Available at <https://flic.kr/p/3bNjr3>. CCL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>.