

Case Study Journal

Comparison 1: Nigeria and Iran

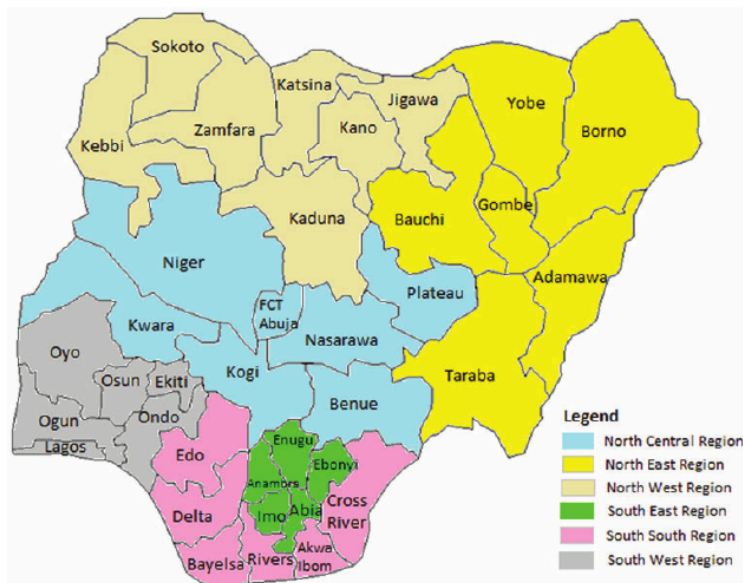
Nigeria

Nigeria is a country in Sub-Saharan Africa bordered by Benin, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and has a coastline to the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. Its unique geographic location makes Nigeria a center for trade, migration, and cultural activities, and has affected the country's diverse socio-economic development (Central Intelligence Agency, 2025). Nigeria has more than 500 indigenous languages which includes the most spoken languages that are Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Even though English is the official language, Nigeria is multilingual due to the country being a former British colony and the country's ethnic relations which sometimes can be problematic (Translators without Borders, 2025).

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and accounts for over 15% of Africa's population in 2024, with a population of 232.68 million (United Nations, 2025). The large youth population puts a burden on the country's infrastructure and services. In terms of economy, Nigeria was the largest economy in Africa, with a GDP of \$187.76 billion in 2024, primarily from oil and services (World Bank, 2025a). However, the GDP per capita is only \$806.9 which indicates that there is uneven distribution of wealth in the country which is primarily due to the urban informal economy (World Bank, 2025a). The Gini coefficient of 35.1, which is the most recent on record for 2018, suggests that there is a moderate degree of inequality in the country, which is most pronounced in urbanized areas like Lagos in comparison to rural northern regions (World Bank, 2025b).

There are challenges captured in development indicators. For instance, in 2023/2024, Nigeria had an HDI of 0.548, ranking 163 in the world and being placed in the "low human development" category due to shortcomings in health, education, and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2024a). Out of the many health indicators we have, we verify the infant mortality rate, which currently stands at 60 per 1000 live births (2022) and one of the highest, which stems from inadequate prenatal care and maternal health diseases (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025a). The life expectancy in Nigeria is 56.05 years as of 2024 and is considered low largely due to the prevalence of malaria and the HIV/AIDS (World Health Organization, 2025).

Education, particularly, is the most unevenly distributed, as the adult literacy rate for 2024 stands at 59.57% and in the northern region, the women's literacy level is under 40% for cultural and socioeconomic reasons (Veriv Africa, 2024). The primary school gross enrollment ration as of 2021 stands at 86.72% whereas for net enrollment, we have a shocking 61% turnout and among the many reasons for dropouts, poverty and insecurity are the dominant ones (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025b). In 2024, the unemployment rate is 3.4% which is the case for 4 out of every 10 individuals within the population (approximately 87 million), living in multidimensional poverty which greatly seems to be deeply ingrained, (World Bank, 2025a) These indicators portray a lively nation stifled by systemic obstacles to equitable prosperity.



Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is at the nexus of the Western Asia region. The country is bordered by the Caspian Sea to the North and the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman to the South. Its borders share neighbors like Iraq, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. Its placement on the maps plays a key role of importance in the interactions of Eurasian energy and security (Central Intelligence Agency, 2025). There are four branch of the services and the official language is Persian (Farsi). The primary taught language in educational institutions is Persian, however, other languages are taught such as Azerbaijani and Kurdish, which are specially representative of Iranian ethnic plurality (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025).

As of 2024, Iran is an upper-middle income country whose GDP as of 2024 is estimated to be 436.91 billion, attributed to the Oil, services and manufacturing sector. However, the country is still under heavy sanctions which restrict the country from fulfilling its economic, financial and trading capabilities (World Bank, 2025b). As is stands, its population is estimated to be 91.57 million and represents the second most highly populated country of the Middle east as of 2024. The region is also witnessing increased urbanization which brings down the average fertility rates (World Bank, 2025a; United Nations Population Division, 2024).

Despite facing inflation and currency challenges, the improved living standards as compared to some other countries in the region are illustrated by the country's GDP per capita, which stands at \$4,771 (World Bank, 2025b). With the Gini coefficient being at 34.8 (2022), the income inequality indicates some moderation in urban-rural and subsidyFor administrative sanction inequities, which are driven by urban aids and subsidies (World Bank, 2025c). For the period 2023/2024, the HDI for Iran's Republic stands at 0.779 and the 75th in the world, with such metrics placing Iran in the category of high human development as the result of improvement in health, education, and income (United Nations, 2024b).

Public expenditure on health is reflected on health metrics such as IMR, which is 10.7 per 1,000 live births in 2023 and which has declined by 50 percent compared to 2000 with considerable progress on immunization and maternal health (World Health Organization, 2025; United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, 2024). Global Health Organization (2025) also reported that

rural health services, in combination with disease control, has contributed to the average life expectancy of the country, which is 77.51 years (2024), rising above the global average.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024a), the education of the country is quite strong with an adult literacy rate of 88.96% as of 2022. The gap is nearly resolved on the whole (85.5% female; 92.4% male) by the time of compulsory schooling. The primary net enrollment rate is 99.1% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024b), with a 97.53% completion rate, which seeks to remedy the issue of marginal dropouts. Poverty is a condition which affects approximately 30.1% of the population (2023, ~26 million) due to the impact of inflation, and the rate of unemployment is 7.6% with youth unemployment at 20.1% (2024) which indicates the level of the sanctions' impact on job creation (World Bank, 2025d; Statistical Centre of Iran, 2025). The soft metrics of these people suggest that they are a fairly resilient country which uses the obtained capacities to manage external pressures as they possess health and education systems. Nevertheless, they do have equity and employment issues.



Comparison

A Most Different Systems design can be utilized to differentiate the socio-economic outcomes, and, as a result, the demographics, as human development of Iran and Nigeria – two resource-rich Global South oil economies – are quite different. The 2024 population of Nigeria is 232.68 million, while that of Iran is 91.57 million, which adds significant strain to the infrastructure and services of the country (World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b).

The sharp difference in youthful median age of 18.6 for Nigeria compared to 34 for Iran demonstrates the difference in Nigeria's high birth rates and Iran's declining birth rates as well as advanced demographic transition (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025a; United Nations Population Division, 2024). This difference in demographic structure determines the type of resources allocated to each country: Iran has to deal with the burden of overly old workforce and pensions, while Nigeria has yet to meet the youth's needs. Iran's economy is more advanced than Nigeria's with a GDP of 436.91 billion dollars in comparison to Nigeria's 187.76 billion dollars as of the year 2024. The difference in GDP per capita, however, is a stark comparison with Nigeria's 806.9 dollars more than 5 times less than Iran's 4,771 dollars. This shows that wealth distribution in Nigeria is heavily skewed while the per capita income in Iran suggests that wealth is fairly distributed. The living standards in the country have also been raised, although there is inflation due to the sanctions that the country is subjected to (World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b; World Bank, 2025c).

The distribution of income is in this case Gini Coefficients, that displays a level of income inequality. Like, in this case the Coefficients of 35.1 for Nigeria as reported in the year 2018 and 34.8 for Iran as declared in the year 2022 is relatively the same. The difference, however, is that Iran's inequality is the result of urban bias and sanctions, while the inequality in Nigeria comes from spatial disparity and the divide between rural and urban.

Human development metrics show stark discrepancies where Nigeria's HDI of 0.548 (163rd position globally, low category) lags significantly behind Iran's 0.779 (75th position, high category) due to Iran's dominance in health, education, and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2024a; United Nations Development Programme, 2024b). Nigeria's infant mortality rate is 60 per 1,000 live births (2022) compared to Iran's 10.7 (2023) which is an indicator of a country's infant mortality of a developed country, and is only a fraction of Nigeria's. This disparity reflects Nigeria's worse healthcare access and higher disease burden versus Iran's robust rural health and vaccination programs (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025a; World Health Organization, 2025). Nigeria's 56.05 years (2024) life expectancy, as compared to Iran's 77.51 years, is an indicator of poor healthcare infrastructure (World Health Organization, 2025).

The starkest disparity, however, is education. Nigeria's literacy rate is 59.57% (2024) with northern females as low as 40% contrasting with Iran's 88.96% (2022) with almost equal. (Veriv Africa, 2024; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024a). The percentage of primary gross enrollment in Nigeria was recorded at 86.72% in 2021, net attendance being 61% with dropout rates primarily caused by poverty and insecurity, while in Iran 99.1% net enrollment with 97.53% completion shows ample access (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025b; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024b). The poverty rate in Nigeria as at 2023 was 38.9% which translates to 87 million people living in poverty, in addition to which 3.4% unemployment rate which is accompanied by high underemployment. In comparison, Iran's 30.1% poverty (26 million people) with 7.6% unemployment and 20.1% youth unemployment is a reflection of the impact of sanctions (World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025d; Statistical Centre of Iran, 2025). In geostrategic terms, Nigeria is the leading country of Africa while Iran is a pivot of the Middle East. Both countries have issues with governance: Nigeria is corrupt while Iran is

authoritarian. From this comparison, it is clear that having wealth in resources is not sufficient, and that progress is stifled by lack of sufficient social investment as well as poor governance.

Research Process & Reflection

The meticulous approach in collecting relevant and up-to-date information from authoritative global repositories regarding the comparative case study of Nigeria and Iran was tailored in accordance with the requirements of POL 52 assignment. As preliminary sources, I relied on the World Bank for economic indicators such as GDP (\$ 187.76 billion for Nigeria, \$ 436.91 billion for Iran in 2024) and Gini coefficients (35.1 for Nigeria, 34.8 for Iran) (World Bank, 2025a; 2025b; 2025c). For 2023/2024, the United Nations Development Programme (2024a) indicated the HDI values for Nigeria and Iran as 0.548 and 0.779, respectively, alongside their global rankings at 163rd and 75th (2024b). Health indicators with Nigeria's infant mortality rate (IMR) of 60 per 1,000 live births and Iran's 10.7 per 1,000 as well as life expectancies of 56.05 and 77.51 years, respectively, are sourced from the World Health Organization and UNICEF (2025; 2025a). Data for health and education such as literacy rates constituting 59.57% for Nigeria and 88.96% for Iran as well as enrollments are sourced from UNESCO and Veriv Africa (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024a; 2024b; Veriv Africa, 2024).

To avoid projected numbers, I cross-referenced sources determining the most recent actuals, for instance using 2024 for population figures and 2022–2023 for the health data. Additionally, I utilized data from the Statistical Centre of Iran for the unemployment rate (7.6% in 2024) (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2025). Problems arose from the years of data collection where the Gini coefficients appeared to lag (2018 for Nigeria and 2022 for Iran) and from the differential population estimates which I resolved using the consensus figures from the UN and the World Bank (Nigeria 232.68 million, Iran 91.57 million) (World Bank, 2025a; United Nations Population Division, 2024). This chapter illustrated to me the importance of reliable data in the field of comparative politics. Checking figures from different sources often surfaced particularities, as in the case of Nigeria and Iran where the former had a lower GDP per capita (\$806.9) due to population pressure and the latter relatively high at \$4,771 due to effective resource allocation, albeit with sanctions (World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b). The health and education gaps were stark; Nigeria had 60% primary attendance as opposed to the 99.1% in Iran which illustrates how governance shapes outcomes regardless of the level of resources available (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025b; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024b).

Corruption and geopolitical isolation—or systemic elements of any kind—became a prism for me in deep context of any statistics, developing further my capacity for understanding the structural determinants of development of any system. The Most Different Systems framework explained the impact of different systems on policy outcomes, enhancing my understanding of policy Change. In this case, I self-classified as a grade of 3.5 out of 4. I answered all required parts of the prompt with precise 2024 data, tempered maps (using Wikipedia's orthographic projection maps), and a thorough comparison with reputable citations. I could have incorporated a sophisticated assessment of governance, but this entry demonstrates the rigor and clarity as necessary to the assignment.

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