

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONDUCT AND PROVISIONAL RESULTS OF THE NIGERIAN POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS OF 2006

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Abstract

The article appraises the conduct and provisional figures of the 2006 Nigerian population and housing census. The most basic summary is as follows: Nigeria has a population of about 140 million, of which 51.2% are males and 48.8% are females. The figures are already being challenged. Controversies over census figures are not new in Nigeria. Unfortunately, reactions to the provisional figures seem to indicate that current figures are treading the path of predecessor census figures.

KEY WORDS: Nigerian Population (140million), Male/Female (%) of population is 51.2/48.8, Nigerian census of 2006

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this article are two fold. Firstly, we critically appraise the conduct and provisional figures of the Nigerian census of 2006. In addition, it is hoped that this report will stimulate deeper discussion of the broad issues that have cropped up since the release of the said figures by the National Population Commission (NPC or the commission for short). Summary of the results achieved is as follows: the population of Nigeria is about 140 million, of which 71.7 million are males and 68.3 million are females.

At this juncture, we pause to briefly review past Nigerian censuses which date back to 1866. A good account of these can be perused in Makinwa (1965) and Ekanem (1972). See Ugokwe (1997), Okolo (1999),

Odukomaiya(2002) and Okafor (2004) for their reviews of the 1991 census.

It is a truism that Nigerian censuses have had a chequered history. Nearly all post-independence censuses in Nigeria had been mired in controversies resulting in at least two cancellations. Prior to 2006, there had been four post-independence national censuses: 1962, 1963, 1973 and 1991. both 1962 and 1973 censuses were out-rightly cancelled because of controversies. Although the census figures of 1963 and 1991 were officially approved, yet there were complaints of undercount and over count, and even manipulation of figures. With the torrents of complaints and even rejections that trailed the current figures we are concerned that history could be repeating itself.

The outline of the remainder of this article is as follows: in Section 2, we present the geographical, political and ethnic maps of Nigeria so as to situate subsequent discussions in their correct context. Preparation for and conduct of the 2006 census are described in Section 3, whilst the provisional results are presented in Section 4. Reactions and major complaints against the conduct and results of the census are the focus of Section 5. The article is concluded in Section 6 with comments and a few recommendations.

2. An Overview of the Geographic, Ethnic, Political and Economic Features of Nigeria

It is instructive to present in a paper of this nature an overview of the geographical, ethnic, political and economic features of the country so as to situate the ensuing report in its proper context.

Nigeria is located in western Africa with total area of 923,669km². Its size is about twice that of the US state of California. Nigeria shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad in the north east and Cameroon in the east, Niger in the north and borders the Gulf of Guinea in the south. The country has a varied landscape: from the rainforest in the south through the savannah in the middle of the country to the Sahel and the encroaching Sahara in the extreme north, (Vide Figure 1 showing the geographical features of Nigeria as well as the constituent states and zones).

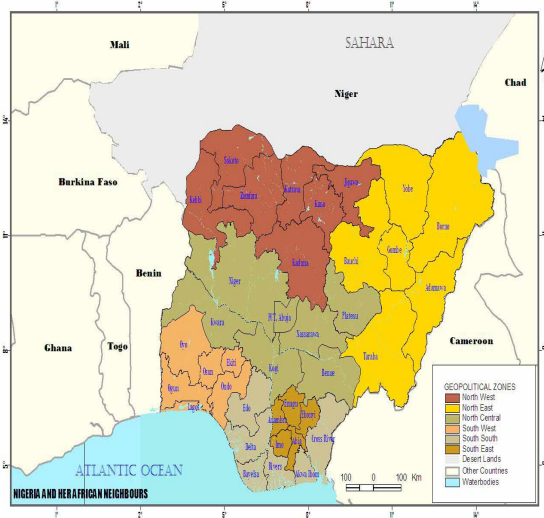


Figure 1: The map of Nigeria showing the states and geopolitical zones

There are more than 250 ethnic groups, the largest groups being the Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa and Igbo. These account for 68% of the population. Others are Idoma, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Nupe and Tiv. These account for 27% while others

make up the remaining 5%; Figure 2 is a map of Nigeria showing the spatial distribution of her ethnic groups.

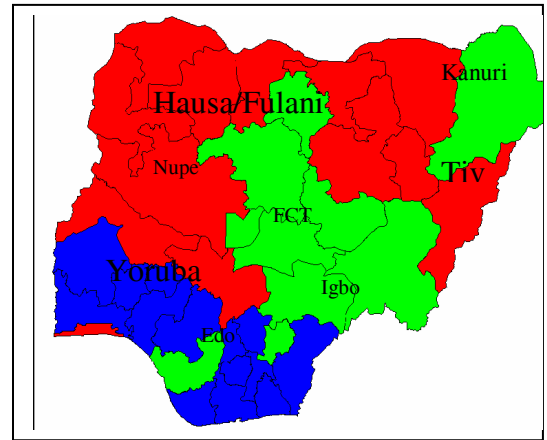


Figure 2: A map of Nigeria showing spatial distribution of her ethnic groups.

Politically speaking, Nigeria is administered as federation of thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. There is a further grouping of the thirty-six states into geo-political zones. Altogether there are six zones, of which the north and south of Nigeria have these apiece. The zones are a basis for the sharing of certain political offices and federal appointments. A zone's share of federation's resources and appointments is in direct proportion to its population size. This has often occasioned intensive struggles for numerical supremacy among zonal groups.

3. PLANNING AND CONDUCT OF CENSUS of 2006

3.1 Early Preparations and Pre-Census Activities

To flag off the preparations for the census exercise, the federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) took a number of first important steps, including formulation of the legal frame work that was to guide the conduct of the census. In addition, the FGN mobilized support from

international organizations and several countries. In this regard, we mention specially that UN, EU, Britain and USA responded quite early, offering logistics, funding and personnel supports.

With the stage set by the FGN in these ground-breaking accomplishments, the NPC, with offices and staff across the thirty six states and Abuja, took over complete control of the census project. The commission's first line of attack, as it were, was to carry out underlisted standard pre-census activities as first-stage efforts to achieve total coverage of all persons and buildings in Nigeria during the period of the census.

Pre-Census Activities

- Consulting and advisory programs (on policy formulation and technical issues)
- Training programs of different types
- Workshops and seminars
- Demarcation into enumeration areas (EAs)
- House numbering and house listing
- Public enlightenment
- Design of census questionnaire and other control forms.
- Logistics (procurement, transportation, communication, accommodation, storage, and security)
- Pre-tests and trial census.

In addition to these, the NPC introduced a few new measures that impacted the census in one way or another. For example, the introduction of satellite technology was novel in the history of census-taking in Nigeria. This technology facilitated the tracking of hitherto hard-to-spot settlements and habitations especially in mountainous, riverine and creek regions. Also, contrary to what obtained in past censuses, the NPC made a decision,

albeit controversial and severely criticized, not to include questions on ethnic and religious affiliation of individual Nigerians in the main census questionnaire.

3.2 Enumeration Exercise of census

The enumeration exercise was initially planned to run for a period of five days (March 21-25, 2006). However, the exercise was extended to March 27, following complaints by not an insignificant number of Nigerians that they were not counted when enumeration ended on March 25, 2006. The exercise was conducted on a de-facto basis, which meant that members and visitors actually seen in a household were counted by a pair of enumerators. By design, each of the more than 200,000 enumeration areas, spread over an area that could be canvassed by the pair of enumerators within the period of the census.

We dare say that the enumeration exercise was far from being a complete success. There were all kinds of complaints emanating from diverse quarters. Enumerators complained of shortages of vital census materials. At some point in time during enumeration, there were reports of some enumerators downing tools, alleging that their remunerations were not paid. A militant group tried to disrupt the exercise in the entire southeast zone. By far, the most troubling incident occurred in Lagos State where the state government conducted a parallel population and housing census.

3.3 Post Enumeration Survey (PES)

The PES was conducted a few weeks after the main census. It was designed to serve as a means of cross-checking the accuracy or otherwise of the data collected during the census. It was meant

to provide additional information on fertility, mortality and migration variables that were not covered in the main census. Analysis of the PES data is still on-going as we write. It is hoped that the major weakness of the PES of the 1991 census is not repeated. The weakness was the failure to implement a matching exercise which should have helped to identify missed and duplicated persons

4. PROVISIONAL RESULTS AND REACTIONS

4.1 Results

Table 1 presents major highlights whilst Table 2 shows the figures and growth rates of the 36 states, and FCT (Abuja). The latter table also shows the figures and rates of growth of the six zones. Corresponding results of the 1991 census are juxtaposed for comparison. We note that the rate of growth r is given

$$\text{as } r = \exp \left(\frac{\ln \left[\frac{P_{2006}}{P_{1991}} \right]}{15} \right) - 1$$

where P_{2006} and P_{1991} are provisional population figures in 2006 and 1991 censuses, respectively.

Table 1 shows that there are more males than females in the 2006 population, thus repeating the trend seen in 1991.

Next, we turn to Table 2 wherein we observe that the southeast zone with 2.83% rate of growth had the smallest growth rate of the six zones. Contrasting this is the southwest (rate=3.16%) which achieved the highest rate of growth during the period under review. The southeast is inhabited by the Ibos who are known to be the most migrant group in Nigeria. The relatively small growth rate in the zone has been attributed in part to the fact that a large proportion of Ibos lives and works outside the

Southeast. The southwest zone is inhabited by the Yorubas who without questions are the most educationally advanced group in Nigeria. It is expected that such a well-informed group would strive to regulate fertility more than most other groups in Nigeria. However, it can be argued that polygamous marriages are common among the Yorubas because of cultural-cum-traditional belief and the fact that many Yorubas practice the Islamic faith. But polygamous marriages are quite common in other parts of Nigeria, especially northern Nigeria where the Islamic faith is the dominant religion.

The 3.2% growth rate seems high when compared with (a) 2.1% recorded in 1991 and (b) figures in Table 3 below, which are estimates of growth rates in the West African Sub region in 2006.

Table 1: Major Highlights of Provisional Figures of 2006 (and 1991) Nigerian Censuses

Population Statistics	1991	2006
Total Population (in millions)	140	88.5
Male/Female Population (in millions)	71.71/68.29	44.52/43.98
Male/Female (%)	51.22/48.78	50.30/49.70
Annual Growth Rate (%)	3.20	2.10
Population Density (per square kilometre)	152	96

Table 2: Nigerian Census Statistics: 2006 (and 1991) Population Figures and Growth Rates of States, FCT and zones.

STATES IN NORTH WEST (NW) ZONE	Population Figures in millions		Growth rate (%)
	1991	2006	
SOKOTO	2.4	3.69	2.91
KEBBI	2.07	3.23	3.01
ZAMFARA	2.07	3.25	3.05
KATSINA	3.75	5.79	2.94
JIGAWA	2.88	4.34	2.77
KANO	5.81	9.38	3.24
KADUNA	3.94	6.06	2.91
Zonal Statistics	22.92	35.74	3.01

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STATES IN NORTH EAST (NE) ZONE			
BORNO	2.54	4.15	3.33
YOBE	1.4	2.32	3.42
BAUCHI	2.86	4.67	3.32
GOMBE	1.49	2.35	3.08
ADAMAWA	2.1	3.16	2.76
TARABA	1.51	2.3	2.85
Zonal Statistics	11.9	18.95	3.15

STATES IN NORTH CENTRAL (NC) ZONE			
NIGER	2.42	3.95	3.32
KWARA	1.55	2.37	2.87
NASARAWA	1.21	1.86	2.91
KOGI	2.15	3.28	2.86
BENUE	2.75	4.21	2.88
PLATEAU	2.1	3.17	2.78
Zonal Statistics	12.18	18.84	2.95

STATES IN SOUTH WEST (SW)ZONE			
OGUN	2.33	3.72	3.17
OYO	3.45	5.59	3.27
ONDO	2.25	3.72	3.41
OSUN	2.16	3.42	3.11
EKITI	1.54	2.38	2.94
LAGOS	5.73	9.01	3.06
Zonal Statistics	17.46	27.84	3.16

STATES IN SOUTH EAST (SE) ZONE		Population Figures in millions		Growth rate (%)
ENUGU	2.13	3.25	2.86	
EBONYI	1.45	2.17	2.72	
ANAMBRA	2.80	4.18	2.71	
IMO	2.49	3.93	3.09	
ABIA	1.91	2.83	2.66	
Zonal Statistics	10.78	16.36	2.82	

STATES IN SOUTH SOUTH (SS) ZONE			
EDO	2.17	3.21	2.64
DELTA	2.59	4.09	3.09

BAYELSA	1.12	1.70	2.82
RIVERS	3.19	5.18	3.28
AKWA IBOM	2.41	3.92	3.30
CROSS RIVER	1.91	2.88	2.78

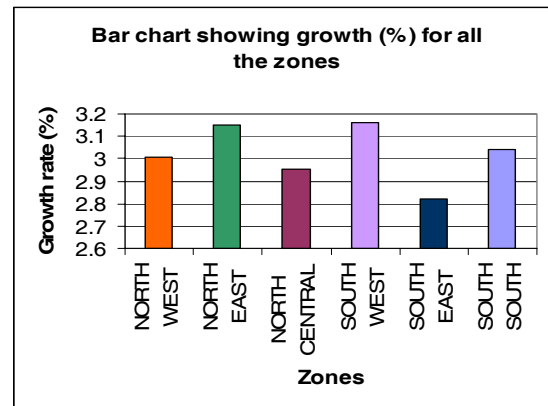
Zonal Statistics	13.39	20.98	3.04
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FCT	0.37	1.40	9.28
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Table 3: Estimates of Growth Rates in Africa in 2006.

Country or Region	Growth Rates (%)
West Africa	2.6
Benin	2.9
Ghana	2.3
Nigeria	2.4
Togo	2.6

Source: Population Reference Bureau (from 2006 World Population Data Sheet 5)



4.2 Reactions

4.3

Reactions to the provisional results were mixed, but most reactions were negative. Positive reactions came from officialdom. For example, the federal government has not only accepted the results but has sent them to the national assembly for necessary legislative action.

As for the negative reactions, there were diverse categories of Nigerians who complained against various aspects of the provisional figures: (i) There were large numbers of individual Nigerians who claimed that enumerators did not visit their households for enumeration. (ii) Many state governments outrightly rejected the figures released for their states, alleging that the said figures did not come from valid enumeration of peoples of their states but figures were contrived by the NPC. Perhaps, the most serious rejection came from Lagos States Government (LSG). The LSG averred that the NPC's figure (9.01M) for LS was a far cry from (a) the figure (17.6M) yielded by the parallel census it conducted and (b) UN estimate (13.4M) for LS in mid 2006.

(iii) Even before the census was conducted, representatives of ethnic and religious groups had criticized the exclusion of questions on ethnic and religious affiliation of individual Nigerians from the census questionnaire. It was on the basis of this that the Igbo ethnic group rejected the figure for the southeast zone, arguing that the said figure could not represent the true population of Igbos since millions living outside the southeast were not taken into account.

(iv) The provisional figures of northern/southern Nigeria and those of the nation's two largest states, namely, Kano and Lagos have been subjected to critical analysis by sections of the Nigerian media, public commentators and analysts. The north/south figures are 75.03M/64.98M (in the same order) representing 53.7%/46.3% of the population. Commentators, mostly of southern extraction, have argued that the north, being semi-arid, could not support a larger population than the south which has more favourable vegetation and

weather. Northerners have countered this by reminding that the north has a larger land mass and northerners marry early and are predominantly moslem and therefore more polygamous.

In the same vein, the figures for Kano/Lagos which are 9.38M/9.01M have been compared in the perspective of north/south divide. In addition to the averments of the LSG in (iii) above, southerners and Lagosians in particular have claimed that Lagos should be more populous than Kano because Lagos has more critical factors that draw migrant population to it than Kano. Lagos, Lagosians claim, has more than half of industries in Nigeria and consumes 40% of electric power generated in the country.

5. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Comment

Census-taking in Nigeria is seen by many Nigerians as something other than what it really is. Simply put, a national census is a complete enumeration survey whereby certain personal data from every citizen alive at the time of the survey are collected. Such critical personal data are required for planning purposes by government, for allocation of legislative representation in our nascent democracy and for research. The conduct and results of a census should not be allowed to lead to accusations that census figures were contrived or made-up.

In assessing the 2006 census, it seems to us that the planning and execution of the 2006 Nigerian census could have been done better. In our view, avoidable

policy and implementation errors were committed. For example, there was no strong justification to exclude the two important variables, namely, ethnic and religious affiliation from the census questionnaire. In our analysis in this article, we have seen the profound negative effect that this exclusion had on some of the results of the census. There were accusations of marginalization by affected groups and this could have been avoided. In some instances, there was lack of national cohesion in the conduct of the census. In Lagos State, two independent censuses, namely, the national census and Lagos State census were going on at the same time. Expectedly this brought conflict when the results of the national census were released.

5.2 Recommendations

We make the following recommendations some of which are in Okafor (2004)

1. Nigerian governments should endeavour to conduct national censuses decennially as required by convention.
2. Experts knowledgeable in the planning and conduct of a census should be engaged. Appointment of non-experts to sensitive and commanding positions should be avoided.
3. There is a need for transparency and strict adherence to demographic and related principles by all concerned in the conduct of our national censuses.
4. All complaints made against the provisional results of the 2006 census should be addressed

before the final results are released. For example, the exclusion of ethnic affiliation from the census questionnaire can be redressed since there was a question on the state of origin of individual Nigerians in the census questionnaire.

5. Data from the post enumeration survey should be statistically analyzed and used to provide estimates for census undercounts.

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