



UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

# Nigeria

Adolescents Population: Selected Socio-Demographic  
Variables

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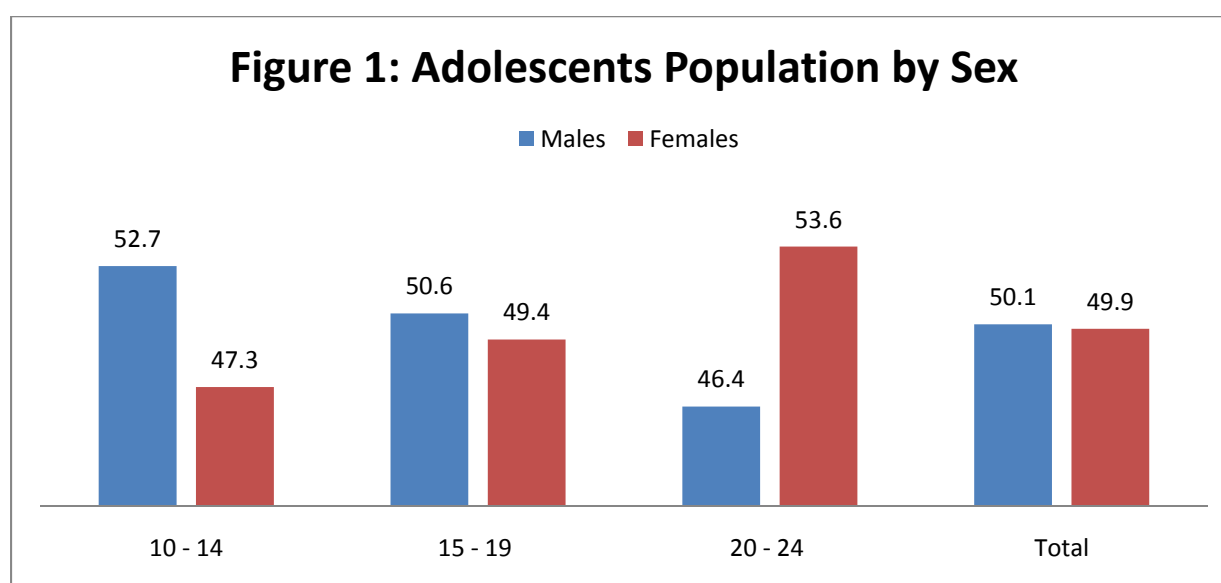
2010

## Introduction

This analysis<sup>1</sup> provides insights into selected socio- demographic variables of adolescents aged 10 to 24 years in Nigeria. Data for the analysis are drawn from the priority tables of the 2006 national population and housing census as published by the National population commission. Analysis of the socio-demographic variables provides necessary information for programming in adolescents' health including sexual and reproductive health and other youth empowerment programmes and projects.

## Population

According to the 2006 population and housing census, adolescents aged 10- 24 constitute 31.7% of the total population of the country, with nearly equal proportion of males and females (50.1% males versus 49.9% females). The population of males tends to be higher in the younger age groups.



Whereas the population of males is 52.7% in the 10-14 age group, in the 20-24 age group the female population is 53.6% while the male population is 46.4% (Figure 1).

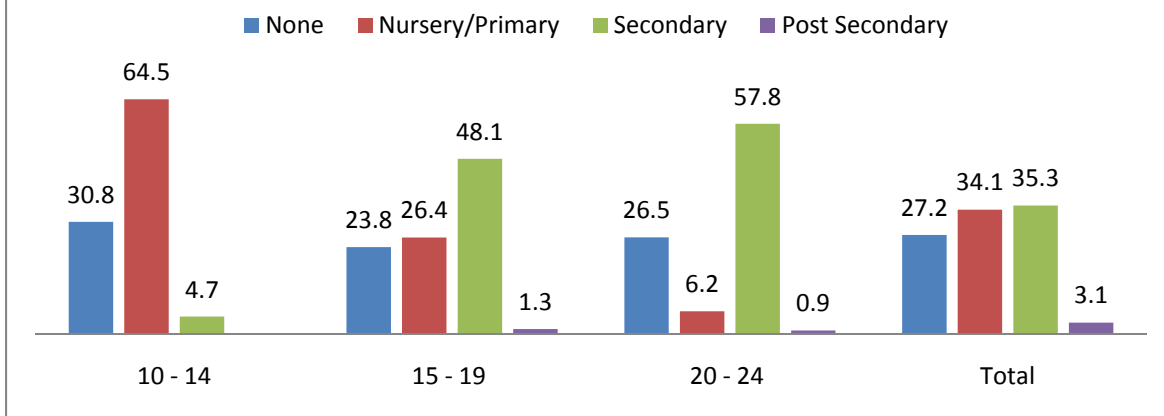
## Educational Attainment

Nearly one in three (27.2%) adolescents did not have any formal education in 2006. 34.1% have primary and/or nursery education while 35.3% had either junior or senior secondary school education. The proportion of adolescent with post secondary education is only about 3.1%. Expectedly, adolescents in the higher age groups tend to have higher level of education than those in the lower age groups. 57.8% of the population of adolescents with secondary education in the 20-24 age group is higher than 48.1% in the 15-20 age group (Figure 2).

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<sup>1</sup> The main source of data for the analysis is National Population Commission Abuja: *2006 Population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Priority Tables (Volume 1)* 2009.

**Figure 2: Adolescents' Population by Educational Attainment**

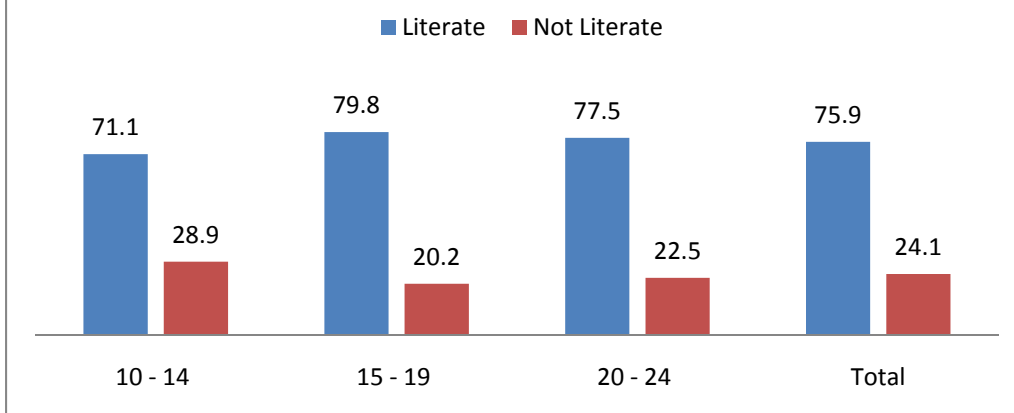


The level of educational attainment has implication for programming especially in the choice of media for information, education and communication.

**Literacy**

Literacy is defined as the ability to read simple sentences in any language. Knowledge of literacy levels is crucial for exploring social and economic opportunities and thus very important for programming especially for adolescents’ empowerment. Figure 3 shows percentage distribution of adolescents by literacy levels. Although literacy level among adolescents can be said to be high (75.9%), but nearly one in four (24.1%) adolescents are not literate.

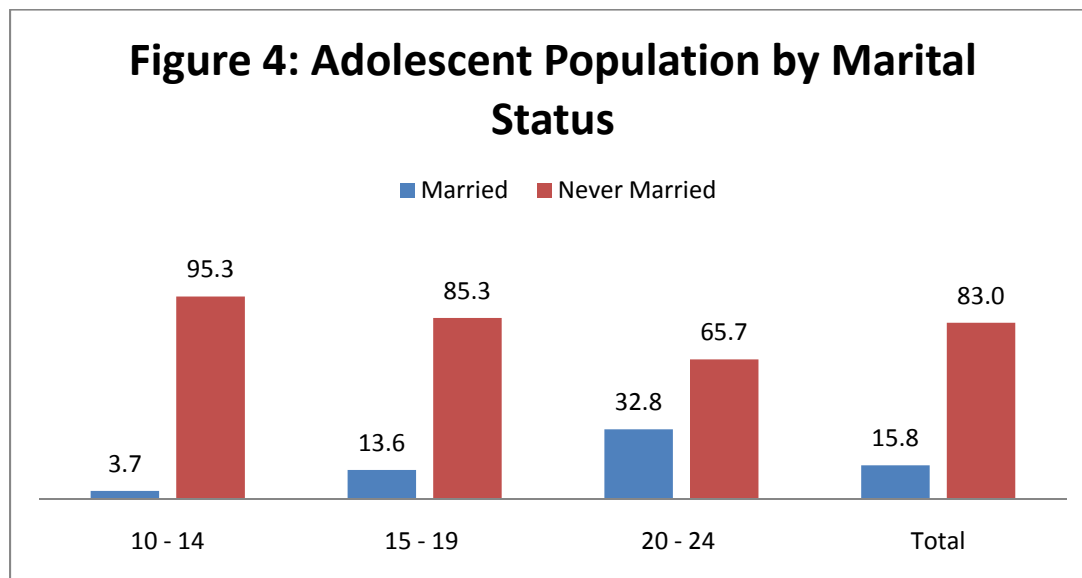
**Figure 3: Adolescents Population by Literacy**



Adolescents in the 15-19 age group tend to be more literate on the average than those in the other age groups. Compared to the proportion of adolescents with formal education, it is noted that across the age groups, some proportions of adolescents with no formal education tend to be literate. This is expected as literacy, defined as, can be acquired outside the formal school environment.

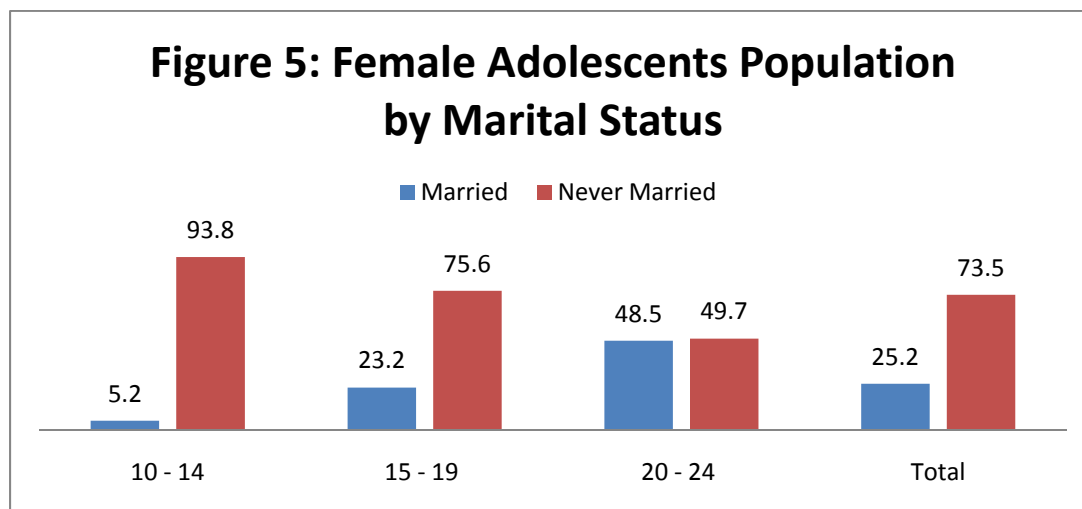
## Marital Status

Analysis of adolescent marital status gives some indication of exposure to sex and the risk of child bearing. Information on adolescent marital status is therefore important for understanding sexual activities and fertility and assist in programming for sexual and reproductive health.



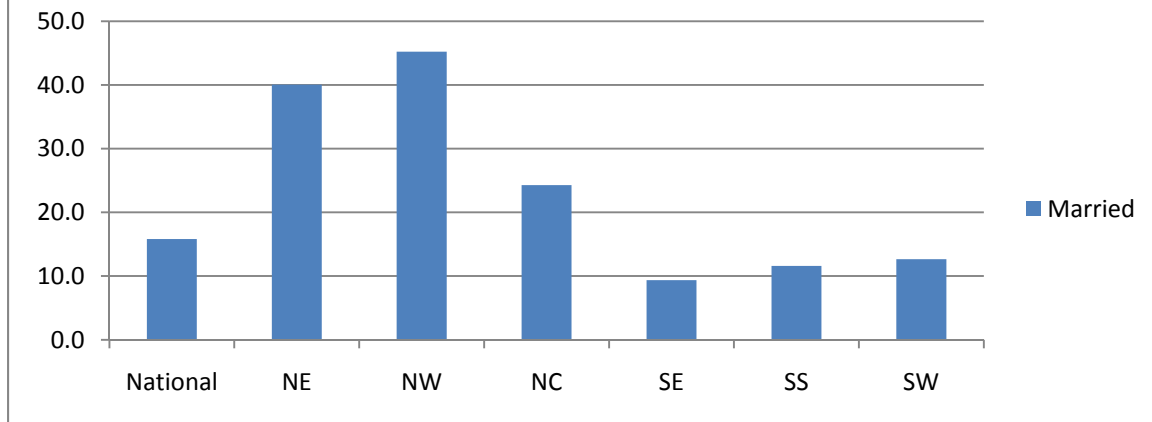
The 2006 population and housing census collected information on five variables of marital status including “married”, “never married”, “separated”, “divorced” and “widowed”. Figure 4 presents only two variables (married and never married) for this analysis.

In Nigeria about 16% of adolescents are married. In the age categories, more than one in ten (13.6%) of the population in the 15-19 age group are married while more than one in three (32.8%) are married in the 20-24 age group.



More female adolescents tend to be married. In total, 25.2% of female adolescents (Figure 5) compared to 15.8% for both sexes (figure 4) are married. The same trend is observed throughout the age categories. At age group 20-24, nearly half (48.5%) the population of female adolescents are married.

**Figure 6: Married Female Adolescents according to zones**



When the proportion of married female adolescents is analyzed according to the six geopolitical zones of the country, it is observed that the proportion of married female adolescents in the three Northern zones is not only higher than those in the southern zones, they also tend to be higher than the national average.

### **Conclusion**

A substantial proportion of the population of Nigeria are adolescents within the 10-24 years age category. The literacy level is relatively high with more than 75% of adolescent with ability to read simple sentences in any language, however nearly the one in four (24.1%) non literates is significant and should be taken into consideration in programming. The more than one in four married female adolescents has implications for sexual and reproductive health. Marital status also varies from region to region as more female adolescents are likely to be married in the three northern zones than in the southern zones. Programming for adolescents in the country would therefore require a thorough understanding of these characteristic, emphasizing the need for more in-depth analysis of adolescents socio-economic and demographic data from all sources including censuses and other socio-demographic and health surveys.