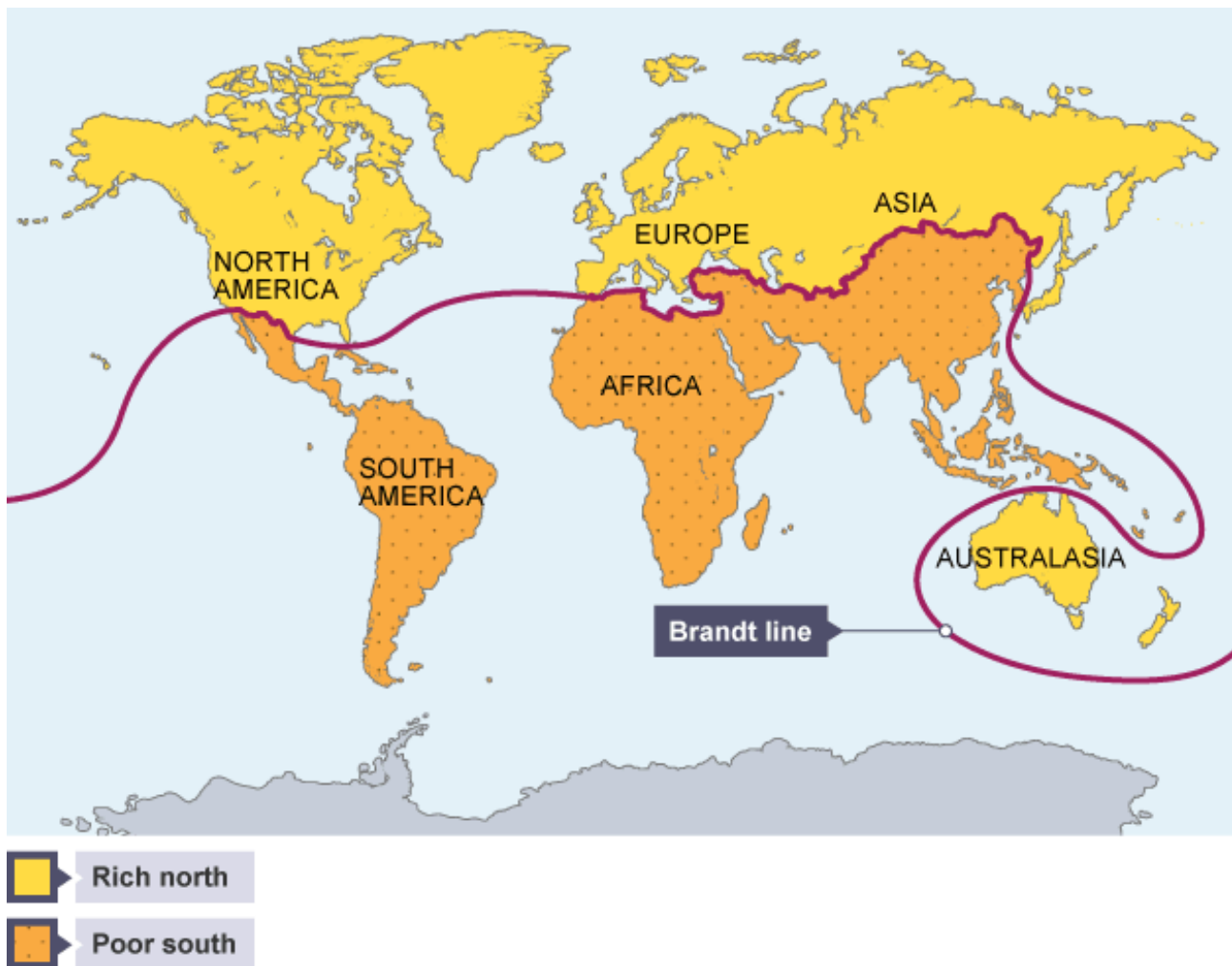# GLOBAL VARIATIONS IN LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT : QUALITY OF LIFE

The first definition of variations in levels of development divided the world into the developed north and the less developed or developing south.

The Global North is characterised by developed, industrialised nations with high levels of income and technological advancement, while the Global South encompasses developing countries often facing poverty, limited industrialisation, and dependency on agricultural or resource-based economies.

This allowed countries to be classified according to income
•high income countries (LIC's)
•low income countries (HIC's)
•middle income countries (including the NIC's, the newly industrialised countries, sometimes called NEE's, newly emerging economies.

Notice how the line dividing the north from the south does not follow the equator, and not all north is north or south is south!
Certainly today China would not be classified in economic terms as a LIC or LEDC, as it has one of the largest economies in the world

World Bank income groups, 2023

The World Bank's income classifications divide countries into four categories based on their gross national income (GNI) per capita. The GNI thresholds between income groups have changed over time.

■ Low-income   ■ Lower-middle-income   ■ Upper-middle-income   ■ High-income   ▨ No data
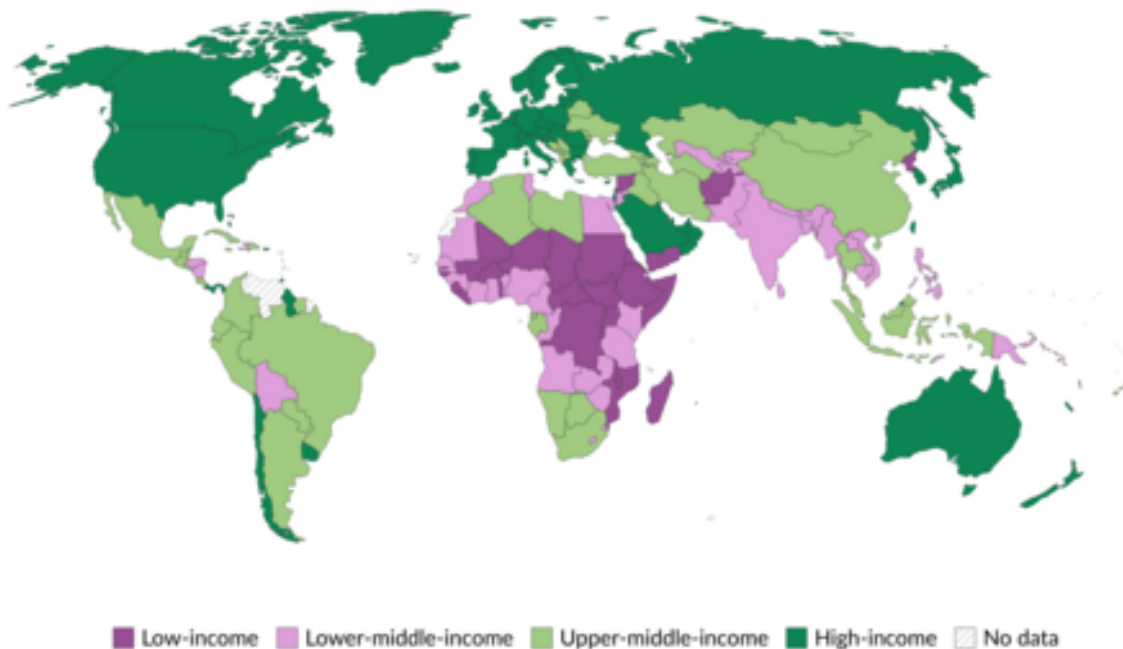
Data source: World Bank (2024)   OurWorldinData.org/economic-growth | CC BY

The economic measure usually used to define and measure levels of development across the world is the GNI per capita (per person).

GNI per capita, or Gross National Income per capita, is a measure of a country's total income, divided by its population. It's essentially the average income of a country's residents, providing a basic indicator of the country's economic development.

- **GNI (Gross National Income):** This represents the total value of all income earned by a country's residents, whether from domestic production or from investments and income received from abroad.
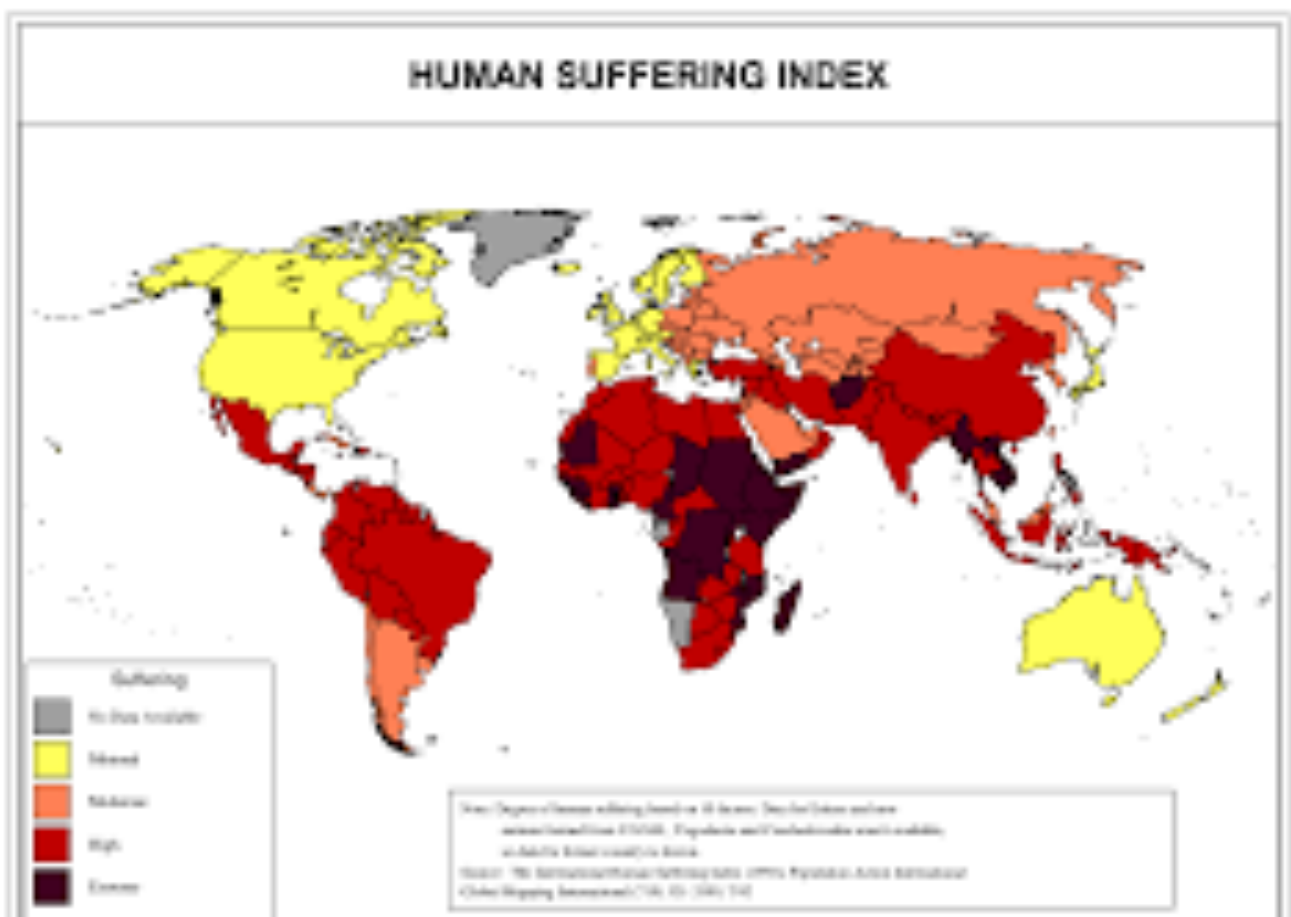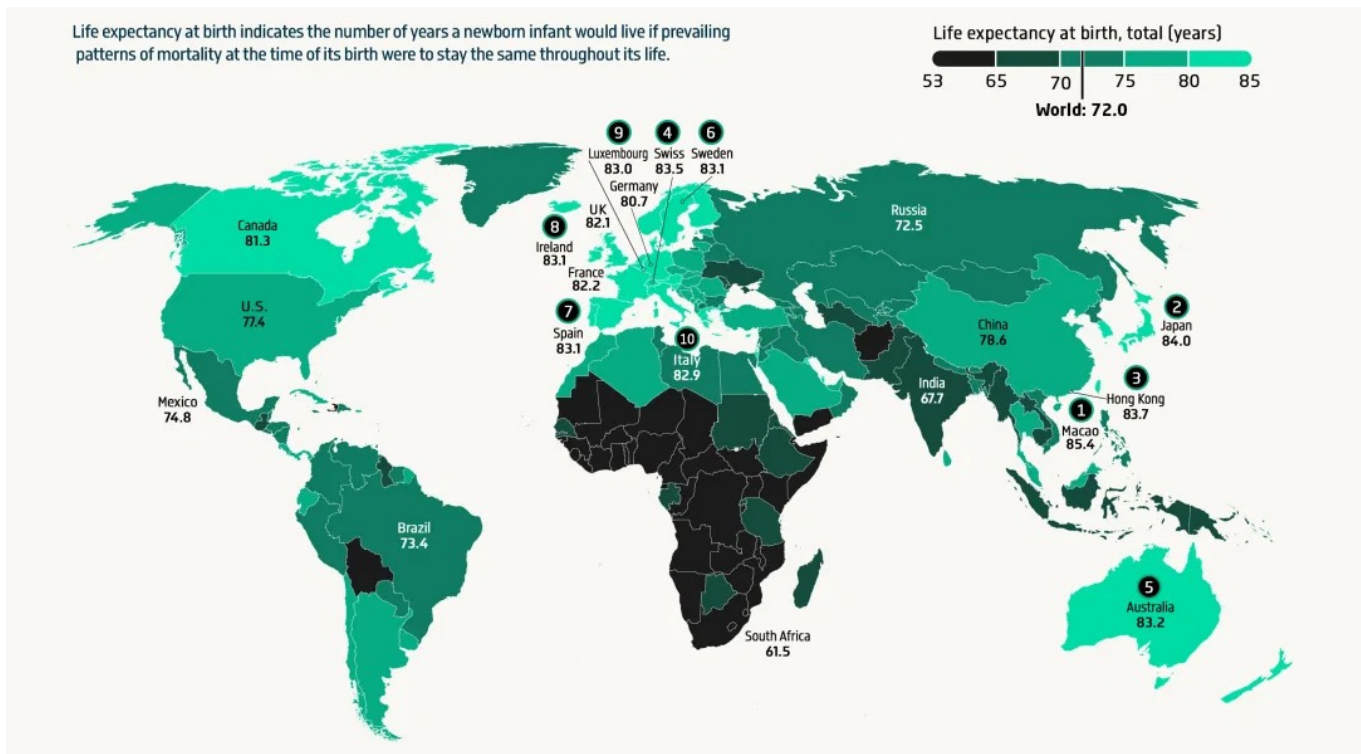
Problems / limitations with using economic measures such as GNI per capita to define levels of development.

1. It is only an average figure, it does not show how wealth is distributed across the country, the gap between rich and poor and regional inequalities.
2. It does not give a clear picture of the standard of living and quality of life of the inhabitants of a country, such as food supply, access to clean water, sanitation, education and healthcare.

This has led to an increase in the use of social measures to define the level of development of a country. These social measures of development are much better at showing the well being of people in any country, their quality of life and standard of living.

Typical measures used are :-

- access to clean water and sanitation as these have a marked impact on the health of the population.
- adult literacy rates (%) as this is an indication of education standards.
- life expectancy, as this indicates numbers of people per doctor, food supplies and health care programmes.

Life expectancy at birth indicates the number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life.

Life expectancy at birth, total (years)

53 65 70 | 75 80 85

World: 72.0

9 Luxembourg 83.0
4 Swiss 83.5
6 Sweden 83.1
Germany 80.7
UK 82.1
8 Ireland 83.1
France 82.2
7 Spain 83.1
10 Italy 82.9
Russia 72.5
China 78.6
India 67.7
1 Macao 85.4
3 Hong Kong 83.7
2 Japan 84.0
Canada 81.3
U.S. 77.4
Mexico 74.8
Brazil 73.4
South Africa 61.5
5 Australia 83.2

HUMAN SUFFERING INDEX

Suffering
- No Data Available
- Minimal
- Moderate
- High
- Extreme

Notice how the countries of Africa score poorly on social measures, it is clearly the least developed continent in the world.

The Human Suffering Index is a composite measure that includes :-
calorie intake per day
infant mortality rate   It is a good measure of quality of life
Adult literacy
personal freedom

Problems / limitations with social measures to assess level of development.
1. Some of the social indices of development are very hard to measure and the data can be hard to access. How is personal freedom measured.
2. The information far a country does not take into account variations across the country, particularly between rural and urban areas. Urban areas usually have better living standards and quality of life.

The most valuable and universally accepted measure of development is the Human Development Index (HDI). Set up by the UN the HDI uses 3 parameters to assess development and it covers both economic and social issues.
1. Life expectancy
2. Education based on adult literacy and average years of schooling
3. An economic measure based on wealth, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). this is real income per capita based on what wages can buy.
Values range from 0 to 1 (least to most developed).

Very high   High   Medium   Low   Data unavailable
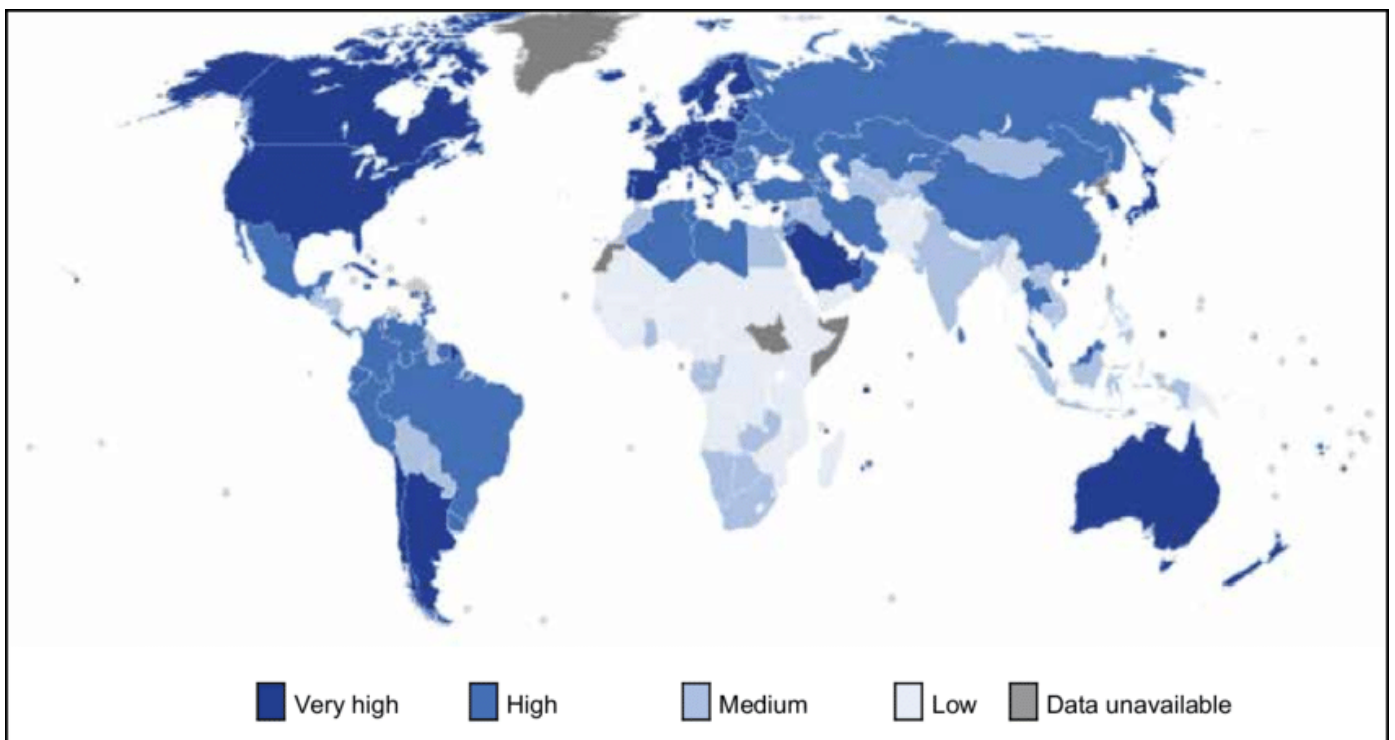
There are even problems with the HDI.
1. Some say it concentrates too much on health and education issues.
2. In some LIC's a lack of education and literacy makes it difficult to conduct a census to gather the information needed.
3. There still may be regional variations in the levels of development within a country.
4. The measure effectively ranks countries. A country may be developing but still rank in a low place.

A final way to measure the level of development of country is to look at Demographic measures (population).
The best way to look at this is the Demographic Transition Cycle which shows what happens to Birth Rates, Death Rates and Population Growth Rates as a country goes through stages of development.

Stage	1 High stationary	2 Early expanding	3 Late expanding	4 Low stationary	5 ? Declining?
Examples	A few remote groups	Egypt, Kenya, India	Brazil	USA, Japan France, UK	Germany
Birth rate	High	High	Falling	Low	Very low
Death rate	High	Falls rapidly	Falls more slowly	Low	Low
Natural increase	Stable or slow increase	Very rapid increase	Increase slows down	Stable or slow increase	Slow decrease
Reasons for changes in birth rate	Many children needed for farming. Many children die at an early age. Religious/social encouragement. No family planning.		Improved medical care and diet. Fewer children needed.	Family planning. Good health. Improving status of women. Later marriages.	
Reasons for changes in death rate	Disease, famine. Poor medical knowledge so many children die.	Improvements in medical care, water supply and sanitation. Fewer children die.		Good health care. Reliable food supply.	

(Graph within table labelled: Birth rate, Death rate, Natural increase, Natural decrease, Total population; y-axis "Birth and death rates (per 1000 people per year)" with values 0, 10, 20, 30, 40)

As you can see this has an impact on the total population of the country. It also affects the structure ofthe population as shown by the population pyramid.
The shape of the pyramid changes as a country develops through the 5 stages.
In the early stages (2) the country will have a youthful population caused by a high birthrate and falling death rate, resulting in rapid population growth.
During stages 3 and 4 the birth rate falls so that the population growth rate slows and the death rate is low giving a longer life expectancy. The population at this stage and during stage 5 is ageing with a higher % over 65.
A few of the most developed countries have entered stage 5 where birth rate has fallen below the death rate and the population of the country declines, but continues to age (greater % over 65)

a   b   c   d   e
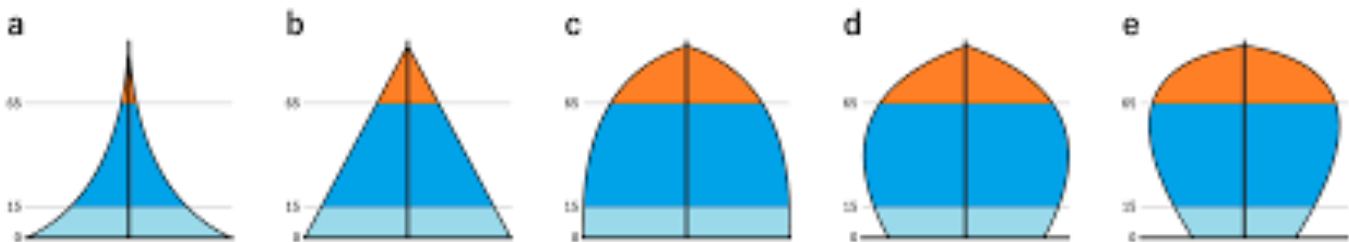
The following are excellent demographic measures of the level of development of a country. In each case the value will change as a country develops and the figure for a well developed country will be very different to that of a less developed country.

BIRTH RATE : Number of births per year per 1000 of the population
UK 10/1000   NIGERIA 34/1000
DEATH RATE : Number of deaths per year per 1000 of the population
UK   9/1000   NIGERIA 12.5/1000
GROWTH RATE : Difference between the death rate and the birth rate
UK   2/1000   NIGERIA   21.5/1000
INFANT MORTALITY RATE : Number of deaths of infants under 1 per 1000 live births
UK   4/1000   NIGERIA   69/1000
LIFE EXPECTANCY : The average number of years a person is expected to live
UK 82   NIGERIA   62

THINK OF THE REASONS FOR THESE DIFFERENCES.......

Chart 1: The changing age distribution of the UK's population

Percentage of total population by age group and sex

Nigeria 2023