



# Voices of Zimbabwe



Report of Findings | **Series 4.1 – 4.3**

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## Profile of Respondents

These three series were conducted over a period of two months concerning three separate respondent groups. The total number of respondents across the three series was 58. 24.1% of these were from the diaspora, 13.8% were vendors based in Zimbabwe, and the balance, 62% were members of the Voices of Zimbabwe respondent pool.

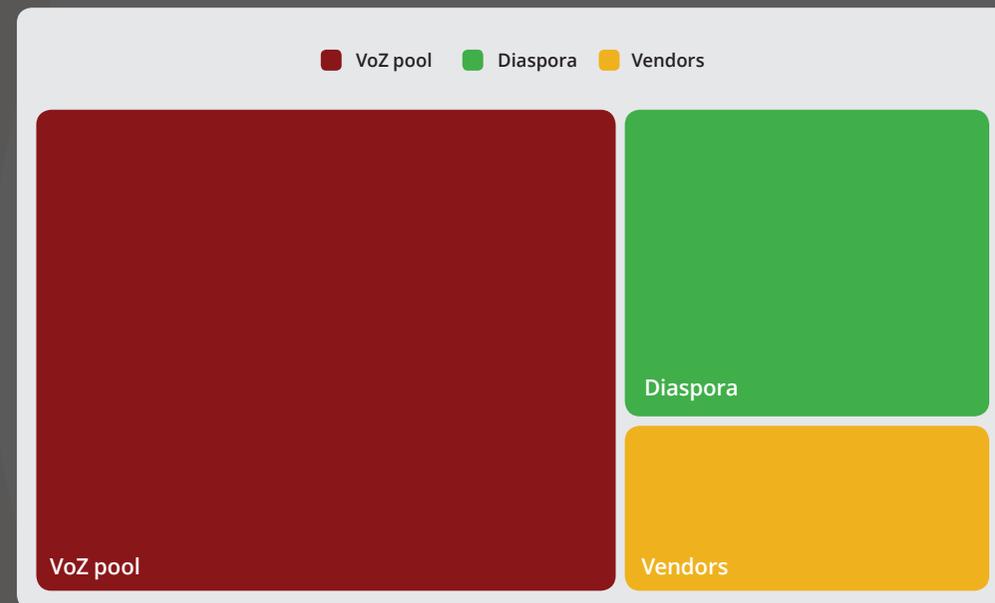


Figure 1: Proportion of respondent groups relative to each other

## Gender

44.8% of the total respondents were female and 55.2% were male. In terms of relative proportions, the vendor respondent group constituted 75% female representation, while the diaspora group constituted 69.2%. In contrast the Voices of Zimbabwe respondent pool remained consistent with previous findings, with 30.6% of respondents to the poll being female.

## Age

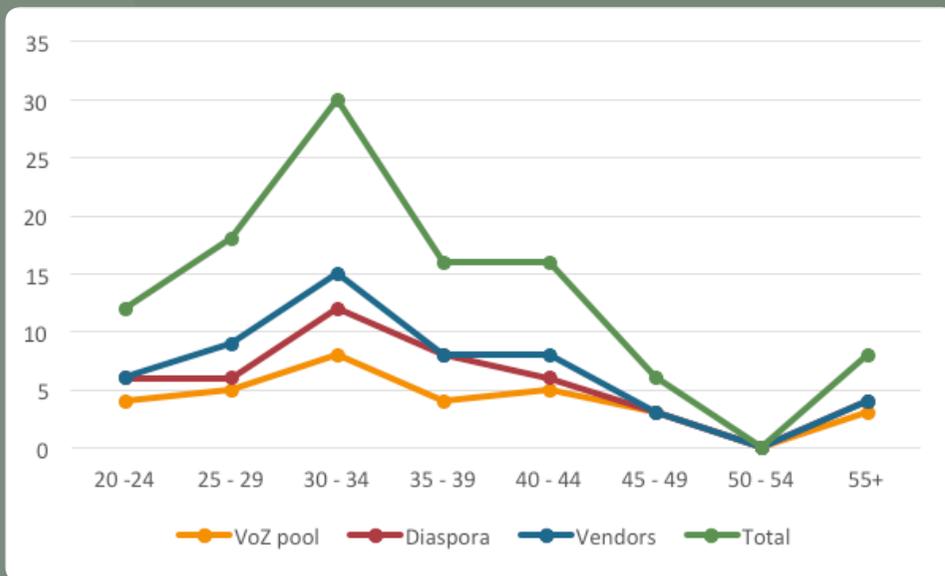


Figure 2: Total age range distribution, and ranges for respondent groups

The age distribution across all three respondent groups shows a bell curve peaking in the 30-34 age range. Interestingly, there were no respondents in the 50-54 age range.

## Location

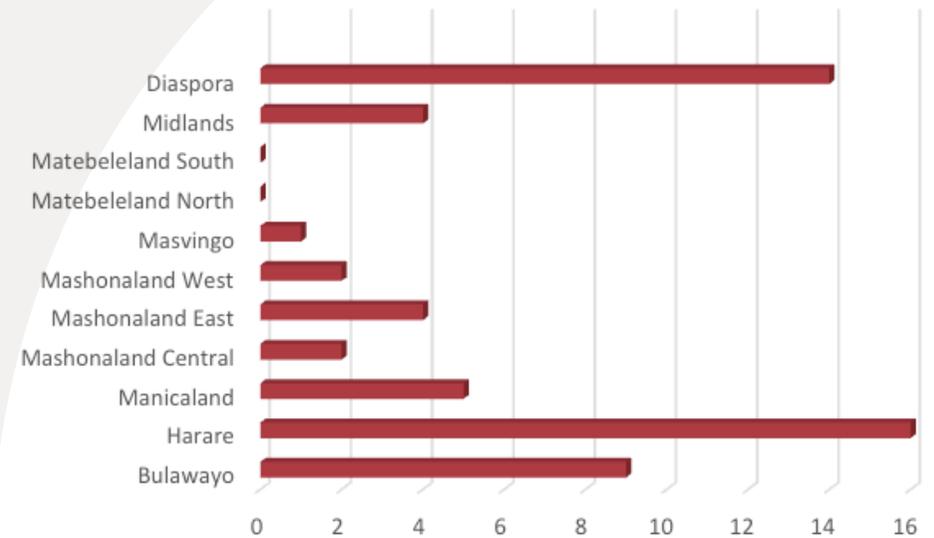


Figure 3: Location of respondents

## Location

Most respondents within Zimbabwe were from the major urban centres of Harare and Bulawayo. Respondents from the diaspora may be disaggregated in the chart below:

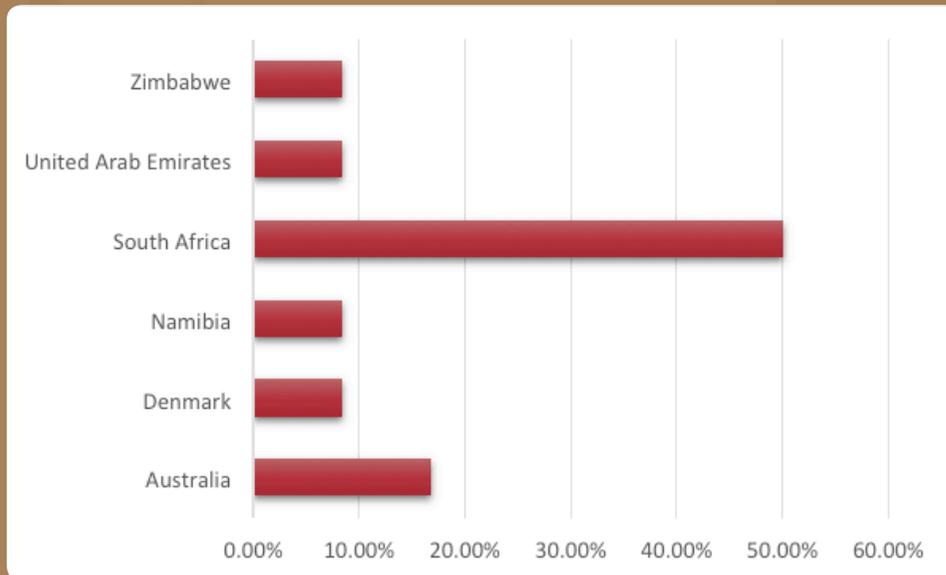


Figure 4: Distribution of Diaspora respondents

## Interactions with the informal economy

At Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a relatively small informal economy which accounted for less than 10% of the labour force. The gender disparities reflected in the demographic data above, was a feature of the informal economy even then, with women being concentrated in the informal economy and the communal sector, both of which received little attention in the form of government policy or assistance.

### Who are vendors and what are they selling?

Series 4.2 concentrated on vendors as actors in the informal sector. The respondent pool was predominantly female, with women constitution 75% of the respondent group. This figure resonates with several studies that have been conducted on Zimbabwe's informal sector, most notably one conducted in 2015 by the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations, which found that three quarters of urban vendors were women, and in total women constituted 67% of the informal sector. When asked why they had chosen vending as a way to make a living, all of the respondents indicated a lack of formal jobs as their reason.

*“was left with two siblings to take care of at the age of 16, I had no choice”*

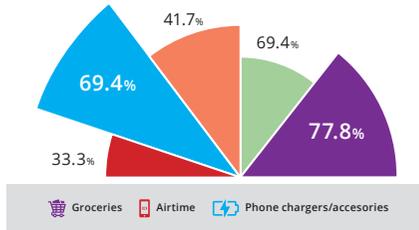
*“akulamsebenz eZim an I lost ma husband when I was 27 and left me with two kids I tried to find job bt uumm abantwana kwakumele badle bayeskolo, so I had no choice except ukuthi ngiyemgwaqwen, that's how I became a vendor”*

## Local consumers

THE MOST COMMONLY USED FORM OF PAYMENT ARE **ECOCASH AND ZIMSWITCH**



- 1) 77.8% of respondents buy most groceries or household items from vendors.
- 2) 69.4% believe vendors are cheaper than shops.
- 3) 41.7% buy food.
- 4) 69.4% buy airtime
- 5) 33.3% buy phone chargers and accessories.



## Vendors

WHEN VENDORS WERE ASKED TO ESTIMATE THEIR **AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS**, RESPONSES VARIED WITH ONE ESTIMATE AS HIGH AS **\$500**, WHILE ANOTHER WAS LOW AT **\$15**.

THE AVERAGE RESPONDENT ESTIMATE FOR WEEKLY EARNINGS WAS **\$113.75**

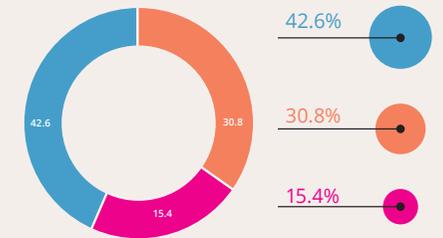
### Money chart



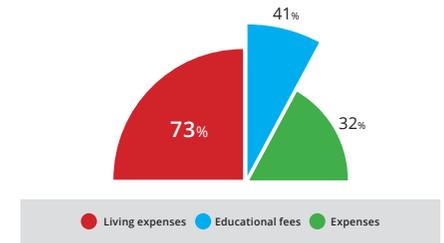
Good sold varied, and included **handmade crafts, electrical items, grocery items and snacks such as chips, drinks and vegetables**, to personal items such as **weaves, lotion and cosmetics**.

## Diasporans

**46.2% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED SENDING HOME LESS THAN \$250 PER MONTH, 30.8% SENT BACK BETWEEN \$251 AND \$500 AND 15.4% REMITTED \$1000 OR MORE.**



**(73%)** of remittances were used for living expenses such as groceries and bills **(41%)** and educational fees and expenses **(32%)**



One respondent showed frustration with hiring practices:

*“There is no jobs again if there is an advert for a job they need over 5 years experience, I sell things which are on demand that time, different stuff”*

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education estimates that approximately 300,000 students graduate annually with a post-secondary qualification. Conversely, according to ZimStat, the unemployment rate is 11.3 percent, however this figure is disputed by independent analysts who posit that the correct figure is over 80%. **The Afrobarometer in 2017 reported that only 26% of youth between 18 and 35 described themselves as in full-time employment.** Even with the correct qualifications new graduates are unable to acquire the experience necessary to secure beneficial employment opportunities.

Another response indicated the possibility of a generational aspect to the informal sector, with multiple generations of families engaging in informal activities as a source of livelihood:

*“I was brought up from a vending family”*

When vendors were asked to estimate their average weekly earnings, responses varied with one estimate as high as \$500, while another was low at \$15. The average respondent estimate for weekly earnings was \$113.75. A previous report by RAU in 2015 indicated that the daily average was between \$9 and \$12 dollars a day, with a weekly average of \$172. Goods sold also varied, and included handmade crafts, electrical items, grocery items and snacks such as chips, drinks and vegetables, to personal items such as weaves, lotion and cosmetics.

## How are consumers interacting with the informal sector?

Series 4.1 was administered to the Voices of Zimbabwe respondent pool and addressed general economic habits. The series revealed that 77.8% of respondents purchased groceries and or household consumables from informal traders. Items purchased included airtime (69.4%), food (41.7%) and phone chargers and accessories (33.3%). Clothes were another item predominantly purchased from informal traders. 63.9% of respondents reported that they bought these from flea markets, 25% stated they had friends who purchased their clothing items for them in South Africa. In contrast 27.8% of respondents said they bought their clothes from formal retailers. In general, this group perceived informal traders to be cheaper than formal retailers.

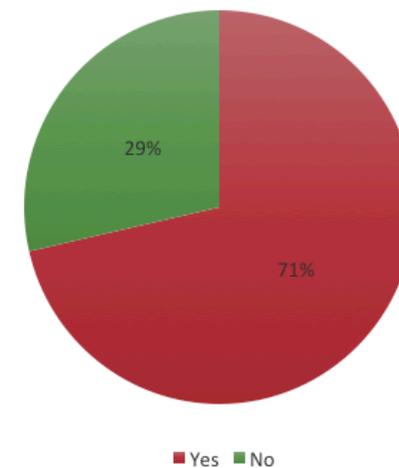


Figure 5: Are vendors cheaper than shops?

Findings from both series 4.1 and 4.2 found that Ecocash dominated as form of payment. 41.7% of the Voices of Zimbabwe respondent pool reported that they used the payment platform most often when paying for goods, and 87.5% of the vendor group responded that they accepted this as a form of payment. Use of cash was relatively low, none of the VoZ respondent group reported using US dollar cash, although all the vendors reported finding this an acceptable form of payment. In addition, only 5.6% of the VoZ responded reported using Bond currency.

## Zimbabwe diaspora remittances

Series 4.3 addressed remittances to Zimbabwe from citizens living abroad. Most respondents (50%) reported living and working in South Africa. Since 2000, as the national economic situation has deteriorated emigration across Zimbabwe's borders increased dramatically compared to the previous period after independence. Among the groups that have been found to migrate are highly skilled nationals, informal cross-border traders and poor and impoverished persons migrating to survive. In a 2008 report, the Centre for Development Enterprise noted that South Africa appeared to be the principle destination country for Zimbabwean emigration. Unverified sources estimate the number of Zimbabweans in South Africa to be between two and three million.

84.6% stated that they sent money to relatives in Zimbabwe regularly. 46.2% of respondents reported sending home less than \$250 per month, 30.8% sent back between 251 and 500 and 15.4% remitted \$1000 or more. The current estimate of the value of remittances is large, in excess of \$1 billion, with ZimStat estimating that about 52% of emigrants send remittances back to Zimbabwe. However, the respondents in the Afrobarometer survey in 2017 indicated that 74% of citizens do not depend on remittances from relatives and friends in the diaspora.

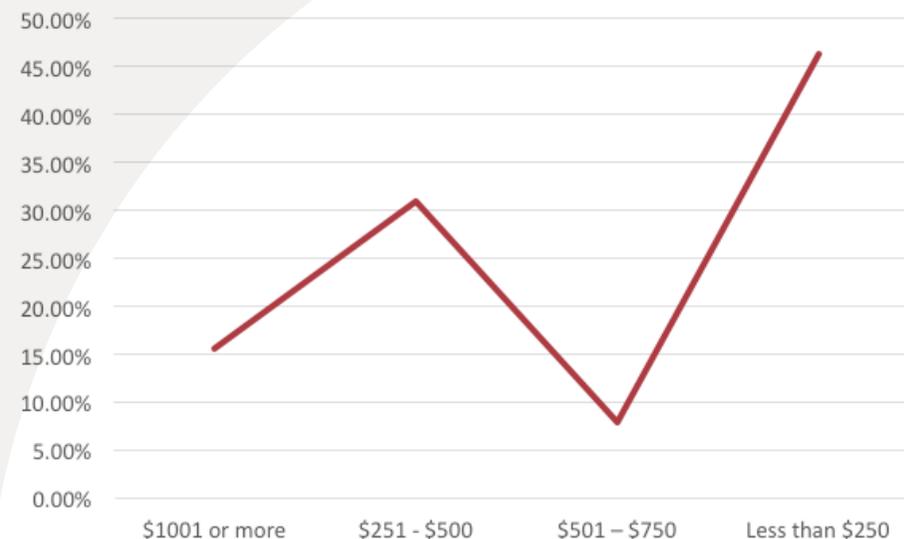


Figure 6: Size of remittances from Zimbabwean Diaspora

When asked how the money was used in Zimbabwe, most respondents said that it was used to meet living expenses such as groceries and bills.

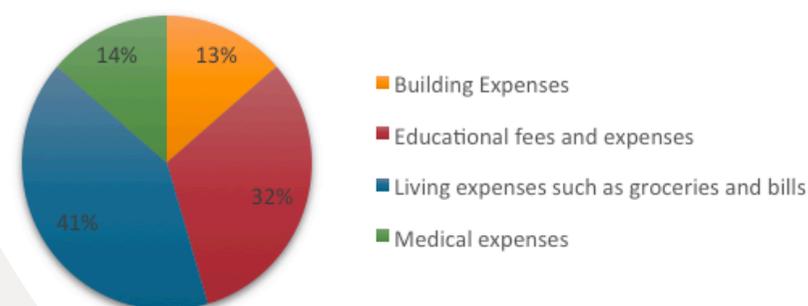


Figure 7: How remittances are spent

The diaspora respondent group was also polled on their future plans regarding returning to Zimbabwe, and were exactly split 50:50. Reasons for this included:

*“it’s not yet an attractive invest opportunity and I began already investing in my future abroad!”*

*“For my family once we move back to Zimbabwe”*

*“I want to settle home”*

*“Holding tight til after elections and see if the economic situation improves”*

However, 36% of the respondents in the Afrobarometer 2017 survey were thinking about emigrating, 42% had lived outside in the past three years, 14% were currently making plans to move, and 30% were planning to move in the future.

## Conclusion

- The findings of Series 4 reveal interactions with the informal economy at multiple levels: consumer, vendors and Diaspora. .
- This informalization raises important questions around the dissonance between the aspirations of citizens as articulated in the level of efforts made to participate in formal education and economic processes and actual integration into formal systems.
- Any political process which seeks to be relevant to the citizens will have to innovate with this framework of informality of economic and employment opportunities for citizens to come up with substantive plans for inclusive growth and economic participation.
- Unemployment remains a major driver for citizens seeking livelihoods in the informal sector within Zimbabwe and outside of its borders. While the ‘Zimbabwe is open for business’ rhetoric indicates the need for foreign investment in industries exploiting natural resources such as minerals and land, this narrative excludes human resource and local content as an area for investment and economic benefit to the country.

**Stay tuned for our next two series which look at the growing labour unrest & employment. Don’t forget to participate in the polling process by joining the respondent pool & actively inputting & consuming poll data.**

**Send your gender, age & province to 0782 784 640 & make your voice heard today!**