



African
Democracy-
Meter Reports
Initiative
(ADRI)

Zimbabwe

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Accountability is essential to democracy

Democratic change
fosters progress

In a cautionary tone to those concerned about African democracy and to all democracy watchers, it is crucial that African democracy is at risk, and the time has come for us to take action. We must begin to shoulder our responsibility in holding leaders accountable for their actions and decisions.

Electoral processes must truly reflect the will of the people.

The pressing need to protect, uphold, and advance democracy has never been more critical for us all. Here at ReadyToLeadAfrica, we believe that our endeavors to advocate for the progress and enduring nature of African democracy cannot be stressed enough.

We are ready to do our best. Ours is to PLOUGH, Not to PLUNDER.



Godbless Otubure
Global President
ReadyToLeadAfrica

ABSTRACT

On August 23rd and 24th 2023 the citizens of Zimbabwe participated in the general election to elect the president. Zimbabwe's electoral commission confirmed that incumbent Emmerson Mnangagwa won the election with 52.6% of the votes.

Emmerson Mnangagwa is a member of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party which has been represented in office for 43 years. The opposition, Nelson Chamisa representing Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), claims the election to be flawed and opposition leaders reject the election outcome.

There were two major parties in this election being Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC). While the incumbent president is 81, his previous opponent, Nelson Chamisa, is 45. ZANU PF was founded in 1963 and has been in power since 1980. The Citizens Coalition for Change was founded on January 22, 2022. Nelson Chamisa has committed to boosting the economy, combating corruption, and ending his nation's international isolation ("How).



Natalia Fedosenko/Pool/Reuters

Emmerson Mnangagwa



KB Mpofu/ Reuters

Nelson Chamisa



ukanddicitizenscoalitionforchange.org

**“Join the party for
the people”**



ZANU PF
Afrosoft Corporation
**Unity, peace and
development**

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The political landscape of Zimbabwe has been marked by a tumultuous history of instability and transformation. Since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1980, the nation has experienced a series of significant political changes that have shaped its trajectory.

The last transition of power in Zimbabwe in 2017 was unconventional and was the result of, what many people consider, a military coup (“The”). The coup was publicly rejected as such by military officials. Robert Mugabe ruled as an authoritarian president of Zimbabwe from its independence in 1980 until 2017, serving a total of 37 years. In November of 2017 Robert Mugabe fired his first vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, in favor of his wife, Grace Mugabe, as his successor. This move led to a swift “military coup”, resulting in Mugabe’s removal from office within two weeks, and Mnangagwa’s inauguration as president.

To suppress social movements, regimes employ both state-controlled forces like the military and subtle tactics like media attacks and cooptation. While these regimes may claim to respect human rights, the actual achievement of these rights often results from collective efforts and activism of the population often referred to as “people power” (“The”).



Lawmakers celebrate as the Speaker of the house read out Mugabe’s letter of resignation (Mac)

Source (Mac) Photo: JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP Getty Images

Today, Zimbabwe stands as an unitary republic governed by a constitution, enacted in May 2013, which introduced notable alterations to the country’s political landscape. These changes encompassed crucial aspects such as presidential term limits, the removal of presidential immunity from prosecution after leaving office, and a devolution of power.

In June 2023, the Parliament approved the Criminal Law Code Amendment, legislation that criminalizes “wilfully damaging the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe” with penalties of up to 20 years in jail (“Zim). This bill has been widely referred to as the “Patriotic Bill.” The opposition party suspected the close proximity of the passage of this legislation to the presidential election was a deliberate tactic aimed at preparing for dissent during the election.

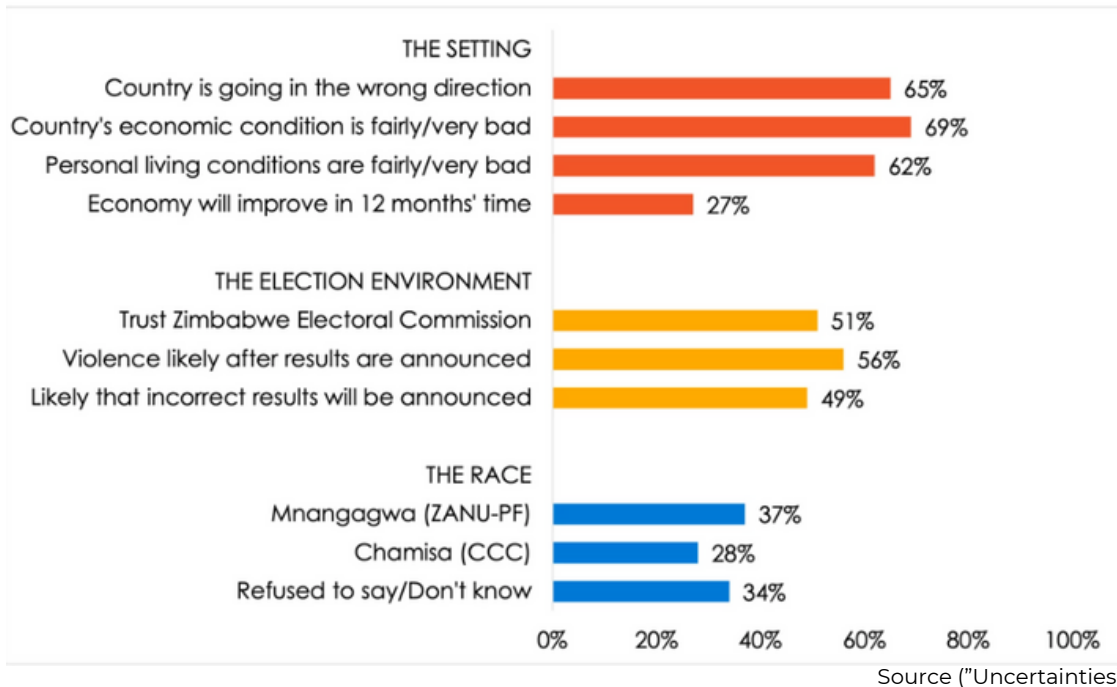
Fadzayi Mahere, a lawyer and spokesperson for the CCC, labeled the law as “dangerous.” Mahere told the news source Reuters that “ZANU-PF has reduced our great nation into an outpost of tyranny.” Through these words alone there is a clear divide and distaste between parties.



Philimon Bulawayo/Reuters

Pre-Presidential Election Reactions

Zimbabweans answers to questions by Afrobarometer.



The Afrobarometer, a non-partisan research network, created polls for Zimbabwe citizens before the recent election and found that 37 percent indicated they would vote for President Emmerson Mnangagwa, 28 percent for Nelson Chamisa, 6 percent said they would not vote, and 34 percent declined to reveal their voting intentions or expressed uncertainty.

Examples of questions asked by Afrobarometer

- *"In general how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions?"*
- *Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time? (% "better" or "much better")*
- *How much trust do you have in each of the following, or haven't you heard enough to say: Zimbabwe Electoral Commission? (% "somewhat" or "a lot")*
- *In your view, how likely is it that there will be violence after the announcement of election results? (% "somewhat likely" or "very likely")*
- *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which candidate's party would you vote for?*

MEDIA ELECTION NARRATIVES

Many news sources report on the reactions from opposition leaders' rejection of the election results. Around the world political views, results, etc are shared through various media and are often misconstrued. On August 27th the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, called on all parties to “peacefully settle any disputes through established legal and institutional channels” and address disputes “in a fair, expeditious, and transparent manner to ensure that the results are a true reflection of the will of the people” (Afr).

In Harare the CCC's deputy spokesman Ostallos Siziba told a press conference that “Zimbabwe needs a fresh and broad and proper election to exit the current crisis.” The opposition denied the results and even at points declared their own victory and said that they were going to “employ all the necessary measures at the right time” (Afr). In response to the criticism Emmerson Mnangagwa has said that the polling “demonstrated that we are a mature democracy” and that “those who feel the race was not run properly should know where to go to” insinuating those opposed should turn to the court with their concerns.

Leading up to the election there were various narratives containing coercive methods in order to maintain the power of the ruling party, Zanu-PF. These methods include tactics such as door-to-door voter contact and the use of organizations like Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) to influence voter registration and behavior (Dor). FAZ is presented as an amiable ‘associate’ of the ruling party, with the goal of generating public support for the ongoing rule of Zanu-PF. While this objective may appear commendable to its creators, it conveniently aligns with the president's repeated assertion that Zanu-PF will remain in power indefinitely.

In the lead-up to Zimbabwe’s presidential election in 2023, a significant and noteworthy trend has emerged – an unprecedented surge in youth voter registration. The percentage of young Zimbabweans who have registered to cast their ballots has risen substantially, from 44 percent in 2018 to an impressive 71 percent in 2023. This surge in youth engagement in the electoral process is a testament to the evolving dynamics of Zimbabwean politics.

Civic society organizations, political actors, and activists rally Zimbabwe’s youths through outreach and social media. Project 263 is a youth-led initiative aimed at encouraging youth engagement in democracy through providing voter education by partnering with artists, sports events, door-to-door campaigns, music concerts, and more. Project Vote 263 enlisted Zimdancehall artists and dance groups in their roadshows and concerts, which attracted large audiences numbering in the thousands. Zimdancehall music, a subgenre of reggae, is popular primarily among young people residing in Zimbabwe’s rural areas (Man). This is one unique way of advocating for a high voter turnout catered towards the youth population.

“Democracy is a team sport. We all have a role to play in making it work. Get engaged, stay informed, and hold your leaders accountable.”

ProjectVote263
Facebook post

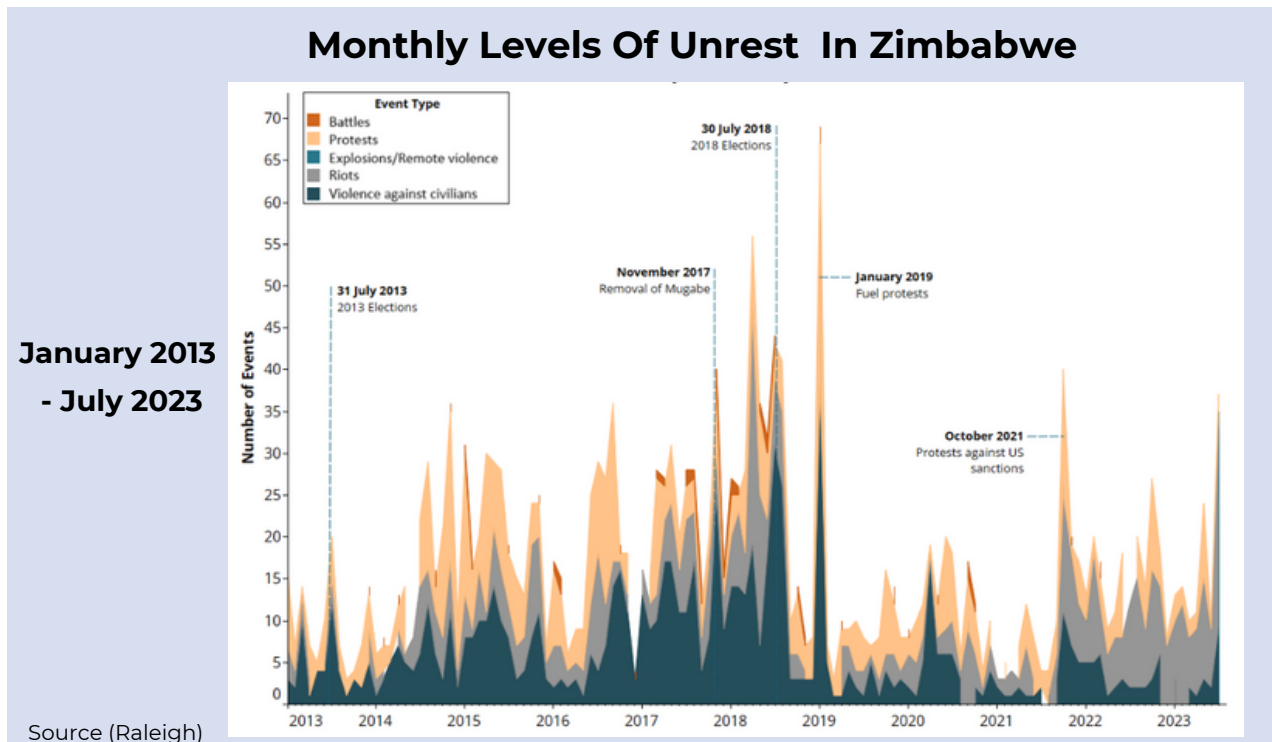


Source: ("Home - ProjectVote)

Violence typically surrounds elections leading to a spike of violence with sociopolitical changes or lack thereof.

Figure 2 shows a significant decrease in violent incidents after the 2018 election. The overall decrease in violence observed since the 2018 election in Zimbabwe offers hope for the country's future as it strives for greater stability and progress.

Figure 2.



The ACLED report discussed how the potential for election-related violence in Zimbabwe would be determined on whether or not there would be a runoff vote (Ra). If there was a runoff there would be subsequent changes for voters to face intimidation to change their support as witnessed through violence in the 2008 election.

Overall, political violence in Zimbabwe had been relatively low and consistent, occurring in specific regions repeatedly. The violence forms are sporadic related to corruption disputes within Zanu-PF and attacks by police or Zanu-PF groups on opposition members (Ra). Most victims are protesters and civilians. Recently, an opposition activist was fatally stoned by alleged Zanu-PF supporters during an opposition rally. Harassing the opposition is common in African competitive autocracies. Violence in Zimbabwe tends to escalate when Zanu-PF cannot secure its desired voting or corruption outcomes.

ANALYSIS

The rejection of election results and the resulting political unrest in Zimbabwe reflects the broader challenges associated with democratic processes in the country. Opposition leaders' rejection of election outcomes highlights the deep mistrust in the electoral system and a desire for more transparency and fairness. The need for democratic progress has been recognized on an international level.

Pre-Presidential Election Reactions

Zimbabwe's election fell short of international standards, raising concerns about the country's political stability and economic recovery. Despite numerous irregularities, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) released the election results faster than other elections. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission noted significant flaws in the electoral process, despite the ZEC's claims of readiness. These issues included a lack of transparency in the voter registration process, unequal access to state media, voter intimidation, and more systemic concerns such as the blending of party and state interests, problematic legislation, and the manipulation of the judiciary. Dissimilar to previous elections SADC reports, this particular election has increased concerns raised by the opposition and civil society.



Source (ISSAfrica.org)

Contrasting strategies emerge in mobilizing and shaping the Zimbabwean youth during the election season, coinciding with a notable surge in youth voter registration.

The use of coercive methods, such as door-to-door voter contact with intimidation, to influence voter behavior reflects the ruling party's efforts to maintain its grip on power. Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) is a partisan organization partial to the Zanu-PF party that employs intimidation tactics to uphold the ruling party's governance. On the other hand the initiatives in place by Project 263 are non-partisan and have proactive civic engagement efforts targeting the youth population. They work to increase transparency and democratic ideals by educating and expanding the voting population.

Statements from politicians and media sources showcase the stark divide within Zimbabwean politics and how they are viewed. CCC's deputy spokesman Ostallos Siziba's call for a fresh and fair election echoes the opposition's concerns, while Mnangagwa's assertion of a mature democracy and the suggestion to address disputes through legal measures highlights the Zanu-PF party's perspective.



Source (FARA) Photo: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

On May 30th 2023 supporters of Zimbabwe's primary opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, took to the streets during a voter registration and inspection process in Harare (Far).

The surge in youth voter registration, from 44 percent in 2018 to 71 percent in 2023, is a significant promising development. It signals increased youth engagement in Zimbabwean politics, facilitated by civic society organization, activists, initiatives, and ,most significantly, the youth themselves.

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