



European Union
Election Observation Mission

ZIMBABWE 2023

Final Report



Harmonised Elections

23 August 2023



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The Election Observation Missions are independent from the institutions of the European Union. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy and position of the European Union.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AU	African Union
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
CCC	Citizens Coalition for Change
CDPA	Cyber and Data Protection Act
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EOM	Election Observation Mission
ERC	Election Resource Centre
EU	European Union
FAZ	Forever Associates Zimbabwe
GNDEM	Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors
ICCPR	United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	United Nations International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
MDC-A	Movement for Democratic Change Alliance
MPOA	Maintenance of Peace and Order Act
NA	National Assembly
NASCOH	National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
PS	Polling Stations
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisations
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TCC	The Carter Center
UN	United Nations
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZGC	Zimbabwe Gender Commission

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 23 August 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe were marked by a curtailment of rights and freedoms and the lack of a level playing field, which limited voters' ability to make their choices in a genuinely free and pluralistic environment. A palpable fear of violence underlay the electoral process throughout, and a climate of retribution developed after the elections. In this context, comprehensive and meaningful reforms, and the political will to engage in them are necessary on the part of the Zimbabwean authorities to lay the ground for genuine and credible elections in the future.

The EU EOM was invited by the government of Zimbabwe to observe the harmonised elections and the EU signed an Administrative Arrangement that should have granted the mission access to all relevant interlocutors. Yet, the mission faced significant challenges to meet with any official bodies at the national level, despite repeated requests. This included the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which the EU EOM was only able to meet once, and which was equally unavailable for meetings with the Chief Observer and the European Parliament delegation. This lack of meaningful access was coupled with an extensive, coordinated, and continued disinformation campaign against the EU EOM and other international observation efforts on the part of some national media.

Citizen observers faced severe restrictions due to a shrinking space for civic activities, administrative barriers, pressure, consistent intimidation, and even mass arrests on election day. A raid took place on election night where some 40 members of key reputable citizen observer organisations such as Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) and Electoral Resource Centre (ERC), part of the internationally recognised Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), were arrested for "coordinating the alleged release of election results". They were held without legal counsel for some 12 hours and, although released on bail, still face upcoming court proceedings.

The legal framework could have provided an adequate basis for the conduct of credible elections, if implemented properly. Recent legal changes, including the passage of the so-called 'patriotic provisions' to the criminal code, legislative work on the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) bill, and selective implementation of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MPOA) underlined the closing space for the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly, and expression.

Constitutional amendments in 2017 and 2021 have eroded elements of the separation of powers, undermining the independence of the judiciary. The judiciary played a key role in the process, but the right to legal redress was compromised by a lack of judicial impartiality and the absence of adequate timeframes to resolve electoral disputes. Such flaws also underscore the need for meaningful electoral legal reform.

Until election day, the technical implementation of the electoral process was largely conducted in line with the electoral calendar. However, a lack of guarantees for independence, transparency, and significant delays in the opening of a considerable number of polling stations on election day reduced public trust in ZEC and the efficiency of the electoral preparations. Throughout the electoral period, ZEC's activities were characterised by a lack of transparency and insufficient communication.

The integrity of voter registration was contentious due to delays in sharing of the voters' roll with stakeholders and widespread allegations of inaccuracies in the database. In addition, the

changes made close to election day were not communicated by ZEC to the public, further decreasing public confidence.

Voters were offered political alternatives, but the overall inclusivity of the candidate registration process was reduced because of undue requirements and inconsistent application of the rules by ZEC and nomination courts. The high fees and inconsistent application of procedures meant that more than one-fifth of aspiring presidential and parliamentary candidates were not admitted to the contest. This meant that administrative measures were used to limit citizens' fundamental right to stand and that voters had a narrowed choice.

The campaign environment was subdued but marked by tensions and instances of violence and intimidation, with undue limitations placed on the freedom of assembly, as well as a playing field that was tilted in favour of the incumbent and the ruling party. Most EU EOM observers received reports of Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) actively intimidating voters throughout the campaign, especially in rural areas. The lack of an adequate campaign finance framework meant that campaign incomes and expenditure went unregulated, were not transparent, and that significant state resources were used on behalf of one party's campaign.

The media was characterised by polarisation, government dominance in ownership, legal and material challenges faced by journalists, and significant bias in favour of the ruling party in state-owned media. This emphasised the need for reform and impartiality of state media outlets. The EU EOM's media monitoring found that state-media gave the majority of coverage to the ruling side in a way that skewed the information field.

The social media environment was polarized, and information manipulation distorted the online political debate. The constitution provides for the rights of freedom of expression, access to information and privacy. However, subsequent laws have unduly restricted these rights, resulting in fear and self-censorship by online users.

With the inclusiveness of the process already negatively affected during candidate registration, the constitutional quota provisions for women and youth, lacking specific provisions for their participation in single-member constituencies, may have hindered their equitable competition for these seats. While the constitution recognises human dignity and fundamental rights for all, minorities still struggle to participate in elections due to marginalisation and, in some cases, lack of documentation. The Disabled Persons Act is not in line with international commitments and no significant efforts were undertaken to further their participation.

The election day, which took place under a calm atmosphere, did not see major violence outbreaks. Thus, the proceedings were largely peaceful. However, the late opening of hundreds of polling stations, extending into the next day, seriously impeded some citizens' right to vote. The delays, most pronounced in Bulawayo, Harare, and Manicaland, appear to have disproportionately affected some opposition strongholds. Moreover, stands set up by activists affiliated with the ruling party near polling stations to track voters exerted undue pressure on them.

The procedures during voting were largely followed, as noted by EU EOM observers, but some important processes, such as the public posting of polling station result protocols were not consistently implemented, especially during the counting. Overall, results management was efficiently organized; however, certain reporting mechanisms lacked transparency.

The election results could not be independently verified due to the absence of publicly available data, disaggregated by polling station, which is a key good practice, and the undermining of the sample-based projection of results that was to be conducted by citizen observer groups. Despite public rejections of the presidential outcomes by some opposition representatives, no contestant lodged a formal appeal against the election results. The post-electoral environment saw a further deterioration in the human rights situation, due to crackdowns on civil society, with certain human rights defenders and opposition figures targeted.

Priority Recommendations

The EU EOM has made 21 recommendations for improving the way elections are organised, managed, and conducted in Zimbabwe. They include seven priority recommendations:

1. Comprehensive and meaningful electoral reform is needed to bring legislation in line with regional and international standards espoused by Zimbabwe. It is recommended that such reform is informed by the principles of transparency and inclusivity.
2. Ensure that ZEC and its staff are able to operate without political influence at all levels, including in their appointment mechanisms and by removing governmental approval of its regulations.
3. ZEC to provide timely and comprehensive information on all aspects of electoral preparations to the public, including its decisions and regulations.
4. To safeguard the right of assembly, amend MPOA to limit discretionary application and ensure that its implementation never unduly limits the right to assemble, with any restrictions being clearly prescribed by law, necessary in a democratic society and proportionate to the interests they aim to protect.
5. Establish and implement effective mechanisms to prevent undue restrictions on observation activities, and to prevent pressure and intimidation of both citizen and international observers.
6. To safeguard the independence of the judiciary, the appointment procedures of judges to be reviewed to guarantee the division powers and prevent that the executive interference in the selection of high court judges, in line with international standards.
7. ZEC to publish timely electoral results, disaggregated by polling station.

II. INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the 23 August 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe following an invitation from the Zimbabwean authorities. The EOM was present from 8 July to 11 September 2023.

The EU EOM was led by the Chief Observer, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Member of the European Parliament from Italy. The EU EOM comprised a core team of 11 experts based in Harare and 46 long-term observers who arrived on 22 July and deployed to all 10 regions of the country. 43 short-term observers were present from 17 to 27 August and deployed throughout the country.

For the election day, the EU EOM was reinforced with 13 locally recruited observers from diplomatic representations of all EU Member States present in Zimbabwe. In total, the EU EOM deployed some 150 observers from 27 EU Member States, as well as from the partner countries of Canada, Norway, and Switzerland. In addition, a delegation of seven Members of the European Parliament was led by Andreas Schieder from Austria.

The mission's mandate was to observe all aspects of the electoral process and assess the extent to which the elections complied with regional and international commitments for elections, as well as with national legislation. The EU EOM is independent in its findings and conclusions. The mission followed an established methodology and adhered to the "Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation", endorsed under United Nations auspices in October 2005 and now espoused by over 50 organisations.

III. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 23 August harmonised elections for president, parliament and local authorities were the second after the November 2017 events that led to President Robert Mugabe's resignation after 37 years in power. Emmerson Mnangagwa emerged the winner of the July 2018 presidential election, and the Zimbabwe African National Congress-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) obtained a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly (NA) and marginally lower results in the Senate.

The opposition Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-A) won all but three of the remaining seats. The opposition's rejection of official results escalated into protests that were violently quashed by the military. The MDC-A subsequently recalled 21 of its parliamentarians after the courts ruled in March 2020 that Nelson Chamisa was not its legitimate leader. His newly formed Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) won 19 of the 28 seats contested in the March 2022 by-elections.

The adoption of the 'patriotic provisions' of the Criminal Code in July 2023, legislative work on the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) bill and selective implementation of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MPOA) underlined the closing space for the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly, and expression. Convictions and detentions of opposition politicians since the last elections fuelled accusations of political prosecution and capture of the judiciary by the ruling party. Close to two-thirds of the respondents to one survey claimed fearing becoming victims of political intimidation or violence first hand.¹

Zimbabwe stated its commitment to an ongoing, holistic "Arrears Clearance and Debt Resolution" process encompassing governance, land, and economic reforms with its foreign creditors. Many interlocutors described the elections as a litmus test for its international reengagement.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVIOUS EU EOM RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU EOM 2018 Final Report offered 23 recommendations for the consideration of the parliament, ZEC, political parties, and other stakeholders. Priority recommendations focused on revising the electoral legal framework, enhancing the independence and transparency of the election administration, increasing the voter registration rate in underrepresented areas, instituting legislative measures to prevent the misuse of administrative resources and incumbency, improving the electoral results management process, and ensuring the impartiality of the media.

Areas where recommendations have been addressed include the liberalisation of the electronic media sector, the alignment of media regulations with the constitution, and, in part, the repeal of provisions of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). Furthermore, certain elements of the EU EOM recommendations on constituency boundary delimitation and voter registration

¹ According to an Afrobarometer survey, some 59 percent said they fear 'a lot/somewhat' becoming victims personally, while another 14 percent feared it 'a little bit'. See Afrobarometer (2023) *Findings from a pre-election survey in Zimbabwe: April/May 2023*, Mass Public Opinion Institute MPOI (10 July).

were partially addressed. Nevertheless, the majority of the previous recommendations in the domains of the legal framework, election administration, campaign environment, and political finance remain unaddressed. These have been reiterated, where appropriate, in the context of these elections in the recommendations table at the end of the report.²

V. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Shortcomings in the legal framework point to the need for comprehensive and meaningful electoral legal reform, even more so after recent legislation curtailed the rights and freedoms of association, assembly and speech enshrined in the constitution.

International Principles and Standards

Zimbabwe has acceded to most of the relevant international and regional human rights instruments for democratic elections. These include the United Nations (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but not its optional protocol, the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

As a member of the African Union (AU) and the South African Development Community (SADC), Zimbabwe has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to the Charter, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and is signatory to the SADC updated Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, and the SADC Parliamentary Forum Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC Region. Zimbabwe is not signatory to the 2014 African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection and has not ratified the protocol on the establishment of the African Court of Human Rights and People's Rights. Thus, there is no further legal instance available for appeal over human rights violations outside the Zimbabwean legal system.

Electoral System

Per the constitution, the presidential election must take place concurrently with every general election of members of parliament, provincial councils, and local authorities; thus, 'harmonised elections' are held every five years. The president is head of state, head of the government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The legislature comprises the parliament and the president who, as head of state, must assent to bills passed by parliament before they become law. A bi-cameral parliament is composed of 80 Senators and 280 members of the NA. Judicial authority is vested in the courts.

Administratively, Zimbabwe is divided into 10 provinces, two of which are cities with provincial status: Harare and Bulawayo. For electoral purposes, there are 210 constituencies (not reflecting administrative boundaries) and 1,970 wards. The constitution provides that electoral boundaries are to be redrawn every 10 years, the last time in February 2023. Delimitation should be completed no later than six months before polling day and constituencies should have equal numbers of voters.³ However, according to voter registration

² Recommendations 13, 14 and 19 from the 2018 Harmonised Elections (2018 [final report](#)) are assessed as fully implemented. Recommendations 2 and 7 are assessed as partially implemented.

³ Constitution, section 161(3) "the boundaries of constituencies must be such that, so far as possible, at the time of delimitation equal numbers of voters are registered in each constituency ..."

data from February 2023, 56 of the 210 constituencies showed a discrepancy higher than 20 percent from the average; among these, 8 showed a discrepancy higher than 30 percent and 3 higher than 40 percent. There are also 97 of 210 where the deviation was higher than 15 per cent,⁴ which not only undermines the constitutional principle of equality of the vote but also is at odds with international standards and good practices.⁵

Recommendation: Constitutional provisions to be duly enforced regarding how to draw new boundaries for electoral districts.

To be elected president, a candidate must receive more than 50 percent of the national vote. If no candidate receives the required share, a second round is held between the two candidates with the highest percentage of votes from the first round. The constitution sets a maximum of two presidential terms that can be served by any one individual; 210 members of the NA are elected in single-member constituencies through a first-past-the-post system; 60 senators, 60 women MPs, 10 youth MPs, and 10 provincial councillors per province are elected through party list proportional representation on the basis of provincial returns for parties fielding candidates in the NA elections. In addition, there are 18 senatorial seats reserved for traditional chiefs and 2 for people with disabilities elected through a designated college.

Legal Framework

Elections were governed by the 2013 Constitution, last amended in 2021 and corrected in 2023, and the 2004 Electoral Act, last amended in 2023. Pertinent provisions of other laws were also applicable, including the 2001 Political Parties (Finance) Act, the 2004 Criminal Code, last amended in 2023, and an array of media-related legislation. The legal framework was supplemented by regulations and decisions issued by ZEC.

Overall, the legal framework could provide for an adequate basis to conduct democratic elections, if implemented properly. The constitution provides for fundamental rights and freedoms and the electoral act operationalises the right to vote and covers all key aspects of the process. However, there is need for comprehensive and meaningful electoral legal reform; provisions pertaining to the electoral system, electoral administration, voter and candidate registration, election observation, campaign finance, and complaints and appeals should be reviewed to bring the legal framework fully in line with international standards espoused by Zimbabwe. In addition, recent legal changes curtailed the freedoms of assembly, association, and speech.

The constitution, at promulgation, was characterised as a progressive instrument and constitutes a basis for the conduct of democratic elections; it provides for regular elections under the principles of peace, freedom and fairness, the right to vote and to be elected, an independent judiciary; and guarantees fundamental rights and the freedoms of opinion and expression, the media, association, assembly, and movement. It also contains an extensive catalogue of human rights and goes further to underscore the need for the participation of special groups such as people with disabilities, youth, women, and the elderly.

These provisions have not, however, been consistently interpreted or implemented within a human rights-based approach. Moreover, constitutional amendments in 2017 and 2021 have

⁴ The lowest number of registered voters appears in Bulawayo Ektumbane constituency (22,150), while the highest in Harare Mbare (45,872). The number of registered voters in the latter is double that of the former.

⁵ ICCPR article 25, UNHRC, General Comment No. 25, paragraph 21

eroded elements of the separation of powers, undermining the independence of the judiciary by increasing presidential powers of appointment of the judiciary and their extension of tenure.

Furthermore, subsequent legislation curtailed constitutional rights and freedoms. The criminal code sanctions “any statement about or concerning the President that it may—(ii) cause hatred, contempt or ridicule of the President” or “(b) makes any abusive, indecent or obscene statement about or concerning the President” and “publishing or communicating a false statement prejudicial to the state”, undermining the freedom of speech. In addition, recent restrictive laws limited civic space. The so called ‘patriotic provisions’ added to the criminal code on 14 July 2023 criminalise statements that might “wilfully injure the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe” with up to 10 years imprisonment.

The 2022 Cyber and Data Protection Act in combination with the Interception of Communications Act, opens the path towards wiretapping and internet blocking without minimum basic guarantees. The 2019 MPOA contains penalties of up to one-year imprisonment for unsanctioned gatherings and gives police extensive powers to limit public assembly; it is also implemented in practice in an inconsistent and biased manner. The PVO bill, passed by the legislature and although ultimately not signed by the president, resulted in chilling effect on CSO activities because of the stiff penalties and possible registration cancellation envisaged.

Constitution amendments in 2021 incorporated some changes to the electoral system, with women and youth quotas, and the removal of the vice-presidential ticket. These changes were incorporated into the electoral act on 19 July 2023, after elections were called for on 31 May. Thus, they only apply to future elections. In the absence of law, ZEC decided to apply constitutional provisions directly. However, the regulatory framework was insufficient, and it lacked important procedural details.

Moreover, ZEC’s decisions and regulations were not consistently published or uploaded to ZEC’s website, compromising the principles of transparency, accessibility, and legal certainty. Legislative clarity was also precluded by the lack of availability of updated legal texts. Consolidated versions of laws containing the latest changes were not readily available to citizens.

Priority recommendation: Comprehensive and meaningful electoral reform is needed to bring legislation in line with regional and international standards espoused by Zimbabwe. It is recommended that such reform is informed by the principles of transparency and inclusivity.

VI. ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

A lack of independence, deficient transparency, and severe delays in the opening of polling stations on election day reduced public trust in ZEC.

Structure and Composition of the Election Administration

Elections were administered by ZEC, headed by nine commissioners, including a chairperson. By law, commissioners are appointed by the president for six-year terms, based on proposals from the Parliamentary Committee on Standing Rules and Orders.⁶ In line with the constitution, four of the current commissioners, including the chairperson, were women. According to EU EOM observations on election day, 63 percent of the polling officers and 38 percent of the chairpersons were women. ZEC did not release gender-specific data for its lower-level bodies.

The organisational structure of ZEC comprised 10 provincial and 68 district offices, reflecting the administrative and electoral divisions of the country. For these elections, ZEC seconded some 150,000 personnel, mainly from the civil service, to establish temporary offices in the 210 NA constituencies, 1,970 wards, and 12,370 polling stations. The legislation designates ZEC as an independent body. However, there were no specific legal or administrative measures in place to ensure the impartiality of election officers. Moreover, ZEC did not disclose the selection criteria for its seconded staff, missing an opportunity to increase public trust in election administration.⁷

Administration of the Elections

ZEC has a broad mandate that includes conducting and supervising elections, managing voter registration, delimiting electoral constituencies, procuring electoral material, providing voter education, accrediting observers and party agents, and participating in conflict mitigation via Multiparty Liaison Committees (MPLC). While the election administration may adopt regulations to specify provisions of the Electoral Act, these require prior approval from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).⁸ This dependency on the MoJ, together with some ZEC decisions that were perceived to favour the ruling party, as well as connections between some ZEC commissioners and ruling party officials called into question the election administration's ability to operate as a fully independent body.⁹

Priority recommendation: Ensure that ZEC and its staff are able to operate without political influence at all levels, including in their appointment mechanisms and by removing governmental approval of its regulations.

⁶ Upon completion of the prior commissioners' terms, six new commissioners commenced their tenure in July 2022. The chairperson, required to be a judge by law, is appointed by the president after consultation with the same parliamentary committee. The present chairperson assumed her duties in February 2018.

⁷ On 7 July, CCC requested ZEC to clarify the "mechanisms to enable civil servants contracted as polling officers". However, ZEC did not formally respond to the request.

⁸ Several EU EOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the Minister of Justice's role in the elections, given his position as the president's chief election agent. The Minister informed the EU EOM that the approval of ZEC regulations is an "administrative procedure", dismissing potential conflicts of interest.

⁹ While the law prohibits interference by any organisations and political parties, there were consistent allegations about undue ties between some commissioners and the ruling party. Moreover, several ZEC decisions were widely seen as controversial. Allegations of gerrymandering affected the public acceptance of the new constituency boundaries; the high fees for candidate registration set by ZEC were seen as undue barriers of participation; and ZEC's arrangement of the presidential ballot into two columns, with the incumbent president atop the second, was viewed as arbitrary. An Afrobarometer [poll](#) from May 2023 revealed that nearly a third of Zimbabweans doubted that their votes would be accurately counted, and almost half questioned the election results ZEC would announce.

The election administration received sufficient funding and was equipped with the necessary technical expertise.¹⁰ Prior to election day, there was a broad public consensus about ZEC's capability to effectively manage the process. Pre-election preparations largely followed the established timeline. However, delays were noted in the printing of ballot papers for electoral constituencies affected by court disputes over candidate registration, which also affected the timeline for postal voting.¹¹ In addition, on election day, the late delivery of ballot papers led to delayed opening of several hundred polling stations, severely impacting the voting rights of a high number of voters (see *Polling, Counting, and Tabulation of Results*).

Throughout the electoral period, ZEC's activities were characterised by a lack of transparency and insufficient communication. Decisions and regulations of ZEC were not consistently published. The election administration disclosed only the information minimally required by law to stakeholders, and the published data was often incomplete or released in formats difficult to analyse.¹² In general, ZEC did not adequately address public concerns, such as those related to voter registration, candidate registration, printing and delivery of ballot papers, and election results management. Despite good access to lower-level offices, the EU EOM had difficulties receiving information from ZEC at the national level.

Priority recommendation: ZEC to provide timely and comprehensive information on all aspects of electoral preparations to the public, including its decisions and regulations.

Citizens on state duty outside their residence on election day were eligible for postal voting. ZEC approved 17,606 applications from police, military personnel, election officials, and diplomats stationed abroad. Due to delays in ballot printing, ZEC extended the deadline for receiving postal ballots up to three days prior to election day. In general, postal votes were transferred to voters on 15 and 16 August. Based on credible information received from affected voters, voting in some police stations was overseen and potentially influenced by commanders, which might have compromised the secrecy of the vote.¹³

ZEC provided mandatory cascade training for lower-level election bodies, including polling officers, between 8 and 19 August. Training sessions observed by the EU EOM were comprehensive, but the format often lacked interactivity and written training material, which may have contributed to inconsistent implementation of election day procedures (see *Polling, Counting, and Tabulation of Results*). Positively, party agents were given the opportunity to participate in the training, enhancing their knowledge of the voting and counting processes.

¹⁰ In its activities, ZEC was supported by a secretariat and a National Logistics Committee comprising state actors.

¹¹ As per the ZEC roadmap, ballot printing was scheduled to conclude by 14 July. However, ZEC only [confirmed](#) the start of ballot printing for all constituencies on 13 August. A ZEC [regulation](#) issued on 3 August adjusted the deadline for returning postal votes from 14 to 3 days before the elections. The numbers of printed ballots, initially set for release on 16 August, were disclosed by ZEC two days after the deadline.

¹² ZEC did not consistently post its press releases and statements on its website. Information on its lower-level offices, citizen observers, registered candidates and voter registration data was not regularly updated or was not fully accurate. Despite stakeholders' requests, ZEC did not provide detailed information about changes in the voters' roll, postal voting, a list of polling stations with late openings on election day, and, after the elections, it did not release the V.11 PS results protocols.

¹³ The police informed the EU EOM that there are no provisions for postal voting to be conducted in an organised manner. However, the EU EOM received credible information on at least two occasions about postal voting in a police barrack occurring under the supervision of commanders. On 7 July, CCC requested ZEC to clarify the eligibility criteria for postal voting and demanded guarantees that such voting would be conducted free from undue influence. ZEC did not formally respond to this request.

Constituency Boundary Delimitation

ZEC is mandated to review electoral constituency boundaries after each population census, no later than six months before the next elections, to ensure the equality of voting power. The latest delimitation, preceded by a mobile registration drive and legally required consultations with stakeholders, was carried out in 2022. A preliminary report, proposing the redrawing of several NA constituencies and an increase in the number of wards from 1,958 to 1,970 was presented by ZEC to the parliament on 26 December. The report drew criticism from a wide range of stakeholders, including ruling party and opposition representatives and some ZEC commissioners. An *ad hoc* parliamentary committee found that the formula applied by ZEC to determine voter population per constituency did not align with the respective constitutional provisions.¹⁴

Moreover, civil society analyses revealed additional shortcomings in ZEC's report, including constituencies that surpassed or fell short of the permitted voter population and other arithmetic inconsistencies.¹⁵ Some cases of realignment of constituency boundaries raised concerns of potential gerrymandering in favour of the ruling party.¹⁶ ZEC dismissed the criticism, and after some corrections, which did not impact the formula to determine the voter population, the president enacted the final delimitation report on 20 February 2023.¹⁷ Overall, public trust in the delimitation process was low and the lack of information on the realignment of polling stations resulted in widespread uncertainty among voters about voting locations on election day.

Voter Education

By law, ZEC is responsible for conducting voter education. While CSOs can engage in such activities upon special accreditation from ZEC, the election administration did not process the submitted requests promptly, effectively preventing the applicant organisations from providing voter education (see *Citizen and International Election Observation*). From 27 July to 16 August, ZEC launched a nationwide voter education campaign through in-person meetings, leaflets, and social media. The campaign focused on voting steps and specifically targeted women and youth in English, Shona, and Ndebele. The information provided on voting procedures was comprehensive, overall. However, the campaign did not fully clarify the complex nature of the electoral system, especially how voters' choices translate into actual seats.

To assist voters in identifying their polling stations, ZEC conducted a door-to-door information campaign, established an SMS service and instructed polling stations to display the lists of registered voters two days before election day. However, many polling stations did not post these lists until the day of the election. The EU EOM also observed a significant number of voters having difficulty finding their designated polling stations on election day, suggesting that ZEC's voter education efforts were not fully effective in this regard.

¹⁴ The [parliamentary committee report](#), among other concerns, found that ZEC's interpretation of permitting a deviation of 20 per cent from the average number of registered voters "defeats the spirit" of the constitution. Article 161 of the Constitution stipulates that "no constituency or ward of the local authority concerned may have more than twenty per cent more or fewer registered voters than the other such constituencies or wards".

¹⁵ See ZESN's [Preliminary Report](#) on delimitation and Team Pachedu's [audit](#) of ZEC's preliminary report.

¹⁶ Claims of gerrymandering in favour of ZANU-PF were raised by [CCC](#) representatives, as well as reports by [Team Pachedu](#) and [Zimbabwe Democracy Institute](#).

¹⁷ Two legal challenges to annul the [report](#) for unconstitutionality were rejected by the Constitutional Court in March and May 2023, respectively, opening the way to the application of the newly delineated constituencies in the current electoral process.

ZEC required special accreditation for CSOs to conduct voter education.¹⁸ After submitting their application in May, ZESN received accreditation only two weeks before election day, and ERC did not receive such accreditation. The late processing of the accreditation requests effectively curtailed voter education initiatives by CSOs, depriving citizens of critical information about their rights as voters and the electoral process, as a whole.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Contentious voter registration process further challenged by lack of communication by ZEC and the very late sharing of the voters' roll with stakeholders.

The constitution provides the right to vote to citizens over 18 years of age, except for those convicted of certain offences or those declared mentally incapacitated by a court.¹⁹ The electoral act specifies that only those residing in Zimbabwe may register as voters. While the law does not explicitly exclude prisoners from voting, there were no mechanisms in place to facilitate their participation.²⁰ The restrictions on the voting rights of prisoners and persons with intellectual disabilities challenge international commitments providing for universal suffrage.²¹

ZEC is responsible for maintaining and updating the permanent biometric voter register. To vote, citizens must actively register at ZEC offices or with mobile teams within designated periods. During the latest mobile voter registration drive from 12 to 26 March, ZEC registered 451,811 new voters. As of 8 July, ZEC announced the final number of registered voters as 6,619,690, corresponding to some 80.8 percent of the adult population. In recent years, ZEC's registration efforts have mitigated the previous 'under-registration' of major urban centres; however, the registration rate in some provinces, including those traditionally associated with supporting the opposition, still lags behind other provinces.²²

The integrity of the voters' roll was a significant point of contention throughout the electoral period. Registration figures provided by ZEC were often partial or inconsistent, and the format of the published data was not conducive to comprehensive analysis.²³ In some instances, ZEC

¹⁸ Article 40C of the Electoral Act states that civil society organisations can only provide voter education “in accordance with a course or programme of instruction furnished or approved by the Commission”, with violators risking fines or up to six months' imprisonment.

¹⁹ The Electoral Act suspends voting rights of individuals convicted of certain electoral offences. In addition, July amendments to the criminal code stipulate that those participating in meetings advocating for sanctions against Zimbabwe may have their voting rights withdrawn for a period of 5 to 15 years.

²⁰ An October 2022 [High Court decision](#) upheld the current position, asserting that prisoners do not have residency, which is a necessary precondition for voter registration. According to [government](#) data, Zimbabwe's prison population is approximately 19,000.

²¹ Article 4 of the [African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#) requires State parties to recognise “universal suffrage as the inalienable right of the people”. Article 29 of the 2006 UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) requires states to “guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others”.

²² Based on data from [ZEC](#) and the [National Statistics Agency](#), the registration rates in Bulawayo (71.1 percent), Harare (73.8 percent), Mashonaland West (75.43 percent) and Matabelaland South (74.73 percent) remain more than 10 percent below the average registration rate of the other provinces (85.8 percent). In 2018, the registration rate in Bulawayo was 19.56 percent lower and in Harare 15.79 percent lower than the average of the other provinces.

²³ Before election day, no population and voter registration data was made available for units smaller than provinces. The preliminary list of polling stations (PS) published on 2 August lacked PS codes and the number of registered voters, at odds with previous practice. On 18 August, the number of ballots per PS and the final PS list appeared only in major newspapers, not in electronic formats.

modified already published data without explanation or justification.²⁴ There was limited public information about measures undertaken by ZEC to verify the accuracy of the voters' roll, remove potential duplicates or erroneous entries from the database, and ensure the protection of voters' personal information.²⁵ Despite an obligation to initiate the deregistration of voters residing abroad for over 18 months, this provision was applied only upon third-party requests and not *ex officio*.²⁶

The law makes the voters' roll a public document and mandates ZEC to provide electronic or hard copies "within a reasonable period of time" to those who request it. However, in the months preceding the elections, ZEC withheld the electronic copy from stakeholders, citing concerns over data privacy.²⁷ After repeated requests and legal challenges by CCC against ZEC, the 'final' electronic voters' roll was provided to parties as late as on 10 July. In addition, it set a USD 187,000 fee (USD 1/page) for each printed copy, contrary to legal provisions that require 'reasonable cost'.

An analysis of this voters' roll by a civic group revealed numerous shortcomings, potentially affecting the voting rights of several thousand voters.²⁸ These included voters listed in incorrect constituencies, the use of invalid ID numbers, and high numbers of voters registered at certain addresses. Furthermore, there were indications that ZEC made changes to the 'final' voters' roll after releasing it to political parties, in some cases to rectify inaccuracies, including those highlighted by the civic analysis.²⁹ The lack of official information about these changes further decreased public trust in the voter registration process.

Recommendation: ZEC to undertake a comprehensive audit of the voters' roll and proactively disclose all relevant information regarding voter registration, including its efforts to ensure the accuracy of the database. All stakeholders to be granted meaningful and timely access to the final voters' roll in analysable formats before election day.

VIII. REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

Voters had political alternatives, but the overall inclusivity of the process was limited because of undue registration requirements and ZEC's inconsistent application of the rules.

To stand for office, candidates must be registered voters in their contesting constituency. Presidential candidates must be citizens by birth or descent and over 40 years of age. The same

²⁴ The number of registered voters [published](#) after election day (6,623,511) exceeded the July [figure](#) by 3,821, although the voters' roll was closed for registrations during this period (by law, only voters who registered by 2 June were eligible to vote). After elections, ZEC changed the voter registration figures published together with the presidential results for 40 NA constituencies without any justification.

²⁵ From 27 to 31 May, ZEC allowed voters to verify their registration data and request corrections through dedicated mobile scrutiny teams, via SMS, or online. Additionally, ZEC periodically removed deceased voters using data from the Registrar General's Department and published the lists [online](#).

²⁶ Authorities informed the EU EOM that no comprehensive data was available on voters living abroad.

²⁷ CCC informed the EU EOM that it sought electronic copies of the register prior to the nomination court sittings to verify if their candidates met residency requirements; however, ZEC [rejected](#) the request.

²⁸ The findings were shared on the [social media](#) by the activist group 'Team Pachedu'.

²⁹ The EU EOM observed that some voters' polling stations were altered in the database in various provinces just days before the elections. This was partially corroborated by lower-level election officers who informed the EU EOM that identified errors in the voters' roll were being "rectified". On 11 August, the CCC requested the latest version of the voters' roll from the electoral court, which was rejected on 22 August on technical grounds.

age requirement applies to Senate candidates. NA and provincial council candidates must be over 21.

Candidates can be sponsored by a political party or run independently. There are no formal requirements for party registration, nor for parties to compete in elections. However, a party can recall a member of parliament by declaring that s/he has ceased to belong to the party.³⁰ This contravenes principles of democratic elections where the seat is considered to belong to the elected official and not to the political party under which the candidate runs.

Pursuant to the 2022 electoral regulation, registration requirements included supporting signatures from registered voters³¹ and a financial fee of USD 20,000 for presidential candidates and USD 1,000 for all parliamentary candidates. Nomination papers for candidacies had to be filed by 16:00 on 21 June before nomination courts established by the presidential decree announcing the elections.

A total of 11 presidential candidates, and 657 NA candidates registered to run for the 210 NA constituencies, with ZANU-PF and CCC being the only parties fielding candidates in all 210 constituencies. Fourteen parties sponsored 590 NA candidates, and 67 ran as independents. Five parties filed lists for the Senate, 4 for the NA women quota and 3 for the youth quota. They contained 144 senatorial candidates, 138 women to fill the quota and 42 youths. Some 5,000 candidates registered to contest the 1,970 local ward seats; only ZANU-PF nominated candidates in all wards. In 91 wards and in Bulawayo provincial council, ZANU-PF candidates stood unopposed, thus rendering them winners without an election. Women made up less than 15 per cent of all candidates registered.

Although voters were offered a choice of political alternatives, with an average of three candidates per seat, the overall inclusivity of the candidate registration remained limited. The unduly high registration fee increased by 2,000 percent for presidential and parliamentary candidates. ZEC arbitrarily demanded USD cash payments in most cases.³² These elements constituted obstacles to inclusivity and an unreasonable hurdle to registration, at odds with international standards.³³

Recommendation: *A review of candidate registration requirements should be made to see they are in line with international commitments and their implementation consistently applied by ZEC.*

As per the electoral act, nomination rejections could be appealed within four days of the decision. However, courts were not bound by any deadlines to render a decision. Moreover, there were no legal time limits to challenge registration and many court cases remained outstanding until after election day, affecting candidates' abilities to stand.

At least one-fifth of all aspiring presidential and parliamentary candidates were rejected from the start. These included the disqualification of Linda Mazarine, the Labour Economist and

³⁰ Constitution, section 129K.

³¹ Presidential candidates needed to be nominated by 10 voters per province. Candidates competing for the NA had to submit signatures of five voters registered in the constituency they sought to run for. Senators, and candidates running for the NA seats reserved to women and youths were nominated by political parties that sponsored constituency NA candidates.

³² Banking system problems to transfer the funds on the day of nomination, and the methods of payment allowed by the ZEC -cash and swipe –prevented some candidates from registering, and triggered several court cases.

³³ ICCPR article 25, UNHRC, General Comment No. 25, paragraph 16.

African Democrats Party presidential candidate, and 87 MCD-T candidates whose registration was rejected due to late or non-payment of fees, prompting their legal action. Following court decisions on 27 and 28 July, these candidates remained unregistered. Elisabeth Valerio, the United Zimbabwe Alliance's presidential candidate, was also denied registration for paying the nomination fee in local currency. Ms. Valerio won her appeal against ZEC's rejection and was added to the list of registered candidates on 19 July.

Other appeals were lodged against both the registration and rejection of candidates. Noteworthy appeals included a challenge from a ZANU-PF activist against independent presidential candidate, Saviour Kasukuwere, on the grounds that he had not resided in country for the preceding 18 months, a prerequisite for voting and thus, candidacy. The Supreme Court confirmed his disqualification on 28 July. An appeal before the constitutional court remains outstanding.

CCC also went to court alleging that multiple 'impostor' candidates, not put forward by the party, were nonetheless able to register in the CCC name with the aim of splitting the vote. This was claimed in some constituencies in Harare (15), Bulawayo (3), Mashonaland East (1) and Mashonaland West (1). These were dismissed on the grounds that the nomination papers submitted 'seemed genuine at the time'. CCC's appeal before the Supreme Court remained unanswered and the alleged 'impostor' double CCC candidates remained on the ballot. In Bulawayo, all 12 CCC parliamentary candidate registrations and 6 other opposition candidates were disputed on the grounds of late submission, but the decision was overturned by the Supreme Court on 3 August, constituting the only case won in the courts by the CCC in the whole process.

CCC remained without nominated candidates in Bulawayo's metropolitan council (a CCC stronghold) following the 27 July court ruling, which dismissed the CCC's case on technicalities; the CCC claimed that ZEC had deprived them of the opportunity to submit their party list nomination papers as their registration had been rejected when CCC attempted to make changes to the lists.

IX. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The campaign environment was subdued but marked by tensions and some violence, a skewed playing field, with undue limitations selectively placed on the freedom of assembly.

Election Campaign

The campaign presented voters with alternative viewpoints, but the playing field was tilted decisively in favour of the incumbent president and ruling party in terms of resources, the security environment and access to fundamental freedoms. The visibility of the campaign was uneven but increased closer to election day. Candidate posters were widely displayed on trees, lampposts, and walls. Billboards were limited and mainly portrayed the incumbent president. Defacement of contestant materials was commonplace and the subject of many court cases.³⁴ ZANU-PF candidates ran the most lavish campaigns: they held the highest number of rallies

³⁴ EU EOM observed this in Harare (city and in Chitungwiza South), Mashonaland West (Chinhoyi, Murombedzi, Makonde, Zvimba North), Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East (Marondera), Masvingo (Chiredzi), Midlands, Manicaland (Nyanga, Mutasa North, Mutasa Central, Mutasa South), Midlands (Gokwe Town, Kwekwe Town), Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South.

with the largest audiences, with a robust bussing effort by the para-public Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) noted countrywide.³⁵

The environment was not always conducive to the making of a free choice. The atmosphere was subdued overall, but also tense and marked by fear. Cases of violence, including battery and assaults, kidnappings, arson, and vandalism were recorded by EU EOM, with their number increasing as election day neared.³⁶ The victims were by and large opposition party supporters and activists, but also some candidates. ZANU-PF strongholds were described in public discourse as ‘no-go areas’ for the opposition. A CCC supporter was killed whilst trying to escape a mob of ruling party supporters in one such neighbourhood outside Harare on 4 August; 15 people were arrested and charged with public violence.³⁷

The EU EOM noted the disciplining role of the Forever Associates of Zimbabwe (FAZ) in the campaign. Registered as a trust dedicated to preserving the “continuity of governance of the country by ZANU-PF”, FAZ was believed by many stakeholders to be linked to the country’s security apparatus. Its members, drawn from communities across the country, stood accused of tracking attendance at campaign events of both the ruling party and opposition.³⁸ Most EU EOM observers received reports of FAZ actively intimidating voters throughout the campaign, especially in rural areas.³⁹ Several also heard first-hand of coerced attendance at ZANU-PF events.⁴⁰ Several cases of ZANU-PF supporters disturbing other contestants’ rallies – including by holding their own events in parallel and in close proximity to CCC meetings that received police clearance – were also observed.⁴¹

³⁵ Financing of ZUPCO bussing remained unclear. In some instances, school buses were also used. Amongst places observed by EU EOM, bussing occurred in Harare; Mashonaland West; Midlands; Matabeleland South; Mashonaland Central (Bindura and others), Mashonaland East (Mutawatawa), Bulawayo, Manicaland (Buhera, Makoni Rusape), Masvingo (Gutu and others), Matabeleland North (Hwange).

³⁶ EU EOM observers noted such instances in Bulawayo; Midlands; Harare (Harare South and Chitungwiza); Mashonaland West (Zvimba East and others); Mashonaland Central; Mashonaland East (Marondera and others); Manicaland (Burma Valley); and Masvingo (Chivi and Gutu).

³⁷ Some stakeholders dismissed the charges as disproportionate to the alleged crime.

³⁸ EU EOM observed this in Mashonaland West (Hurungwe, Kariba, Sanyati and Chegutu), Mashonaland Central (Mount Darwin, Muzarabani, Bindura and others), Mashonaland East (Marondera, Goromonzi, Mutoko, Mutawatawa and others), Manicaland (Makoni and others), Midlands (Chirumanzu, Gweru), Masvingo (Chiredzi, Zaka, Gutu and others) and Matabeleland North (Bubi, Hwange).

³⁹ According to FAZ [website](#), the organisation was actively seeking to influence stakeholders such as “Traditional Chief” and other “influencers” and “opinion leaders” as a way of “authoritatively gaining, through them, the support of their followers for the Party and Candidate.” The organisation makes no secret of its aim to foster “intimate voter contact [...] to help the Party to dominate and saturate the environment while denying the same to opponents.” (As viewed on 5 September 2023.)

⁴⁰ For instance, in Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Matabeleland North. In some cases, military personnel or FAZ were observed ensuring that attendees do not leave events early.

⁴¹ EU EOM observers saw this in Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Masvingo and Manicaland.

Freedom of assembly was unduly restricted by selective implementation of MPOA provisions, contravening Article 11 of the ACHPR.⁴² Although formally a notification procedure, the law has been used by police authorities to routinely deny permission.⁴³ While the CCC claimed that over 100 of its notifications were rejected since January, the police held that 14 percent of CCC, 33 percent of MDC-T and 10 percent of ZANU-PF's meetings were denied.

As a result, the CCC turned to meeting voters door-to-door or at night, but police also sanctioned many of these activities.⁴⁴ Police also used force to disperse some opposition gatherings that extended past the timeframes specified in assembly notifications.⁴⁵ The EU EOM observed that opposition politicians were not always free to move to campaign locations because of physical attacks and roadblocks, not in line with Article 12 of the ACHPR.⁴⁶ Access to freedom of expression was also curtailed in some instances. The roads authority in Mashonaland Central requested that billboard content be submitted for pre-approval, which led some agencies to refuse political advertising from the opposition.

Priority recommendation: To safeguard the right of assembly, amend MPOA to limit discretionary application and ensure that its implementation never unduly limits the right to assemble, with any restrictions being clearly prescribed by law, necessary in a democratic society and proportionate to the interests they aim to protect.

Campaign rhetoric was often negative and derisive speech was not uncommon.⁴⁷ ZANU-PF heralded its national liberation pedigree, but also stressed its modernisation plans, while the CCC made election integrity, defence of democracy and later also modernisation, central to its campaign.⁴⁸ Alleging manipulation of many key aspects of process, on 7 August the MDC-T leader Douglas Mwonozora announced his unilateral withdrawal from the presidential race.

Instances of the blurring of the line between party and state, misuse of state resources and abuse of office were observed throughout the campaign.⁴⁹ Fiscal measures, salary increases, and other support for groups such as civil servants and the security sector were announced by the government during the election period. Despite the newly elected head of the Council of

⁴² Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights states that "every individual shall have the right to assemble freely with others. The exercise of this right shall be subject only to necessary restrictions provided for by law in particular those enacted in the interest of national security, the safety, health, ethics and rights and freedoms of others."

⁴³ Among others, police denied assembly on the basis of missed or erroneously applied application deadlines; absence of assent from venue proprietor; as well as community consultations, whereby objections voiced by neighbours or local businesses were in many cases sufficient to disallow meetings.

⁴⁴ In Mashonaland West (Hurungwe), Matabeleland South (Mangwe and others) and Midlands. The ZRP has announced that it would not tolerate nightly assemblies.

⁴⁵ As noted in Masvingo (Mawungawa and Masvingo urban), Midlands, Mashonaland East (Marondera).

⁴⁶ In Mashonaland East (Marondera), Mashonaland Central, Masvingo and Manicaland. Article 12 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights states that "every individual shall have the right to freedom of movement [...] within the borders of the State provided he abides by the law."

⁴⁷ In several instances, speakers affiliated with ZANU-PF accused the opposition leader and his party of treasonous behaviour – for instance by appealing to foreign powers for sanctions – which under the newly adopted Criminal Act Amendments carries the capital penalty. The ruling ZANU-PF has also accused the CCC and its leader of aiming to overturn the country's land reform process – in some cases speakers at campaign rallies argued that Mr. Chamisa would reinstate 'white' farm ownership.

⁴⁸ The CCC initially refrained from campaigning on programmatic issues and furthered its 'strategic ambiguity' so as to shield itself from undue interference from the ruling party's operatives. It followed what it called 'mango strategy', inviting voters to avoid intimidation by staying 'yellow' on the inside whilst remaining 'green' on the outside (references to CCC and ZANU-PF's colours respectively).

⁴⁹ For instance, some ZANU-PF candidates used the official Heroes and Defence Forces days' celebrations to advance their campaigns and the party's liberation struggle credentials shortly before election day.

Chief's pledge to ensure the impartiality of traditional leaders, these were present at most rallies observed by the EU EOM and, according to interlocutors, many engaged in securing votes for ZANU-PF candidates.

Handouts from the ruling party and some other candidates included regularisation of property deeds, borehole drilling and donation of electricity transformers.⁵⁰ State and government officials travelled widely to inaugurate projects in events that resembled campaign meetings. At virtually all ZANU-PF and some opposition rallies, the EU EOM witnessed first-hand the distribution of food, grain, and branded goods.⁵¹ Several interlocutors remarked that the ruling party's largesse was unprecedented during the 2023 campaign.

Recommendation: *To level the playing field, introduce legislative measures, including effective and dissuasive sanctions, to mitigate the advantages of incumbency and guard against the misuse of state resources. Also introduce mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning partisanship of traditional leaders and civil servants.*

Campaign Finance

The 2001 Political Parties (Finance) Act provides for state funding for parties that received no less than five percent of the vote in the last general elections. In July 2023, a second tranche of annual funding was dispensed to ZANU-PF (ZWL 700 million) and MDC-T (ZWL 300 million). Financing of election campaigns is unregulated, with no income or expenditure limits, reporting requirements or oversight, thus not ensuring transparency and a level playing field.⁵² The international community's initiative to support party agent training was rejected shortly before elections as 'foreign financing', which is prohibited.⁵³

The ZANU-PF campaign was well resourced, with the party directly bearing the expenses. The CCC did not enjoy access to significant resources and its contestants generally paid for their own campaigns. The overwhelming disparity in resources had further exacerbated the skewed playing field.

Widely observed in these elections, campaigning by 'third parties' is also unregulated. The First Lady Auxillia Mnangagwa and her Angel of Hope Foundation organised joint events with ZANU-PF in communities across Zimbabwe. The President's '-4ED' brand of professional and social unions – where ED stands for both the incumbent's initials, Emmerson Dambudzo, and 'economic development' – were championing his candidacy countrywide.

Recommendation: *To promote transparency and accountability, ensure that campaign financing is subject to disclosure and reporting requirements, as well as oversight by an independent authority, given the right and capacity to audit accounts and sanction violators. Make political issue advertising and third-party campaigning subject to similar regulation.*

⁵⁰ For instance, in Harare (Kuwadzana West and Chitungwiza), Mashonaland West (Zvimba West), Mashonaland Central (Mount Darwin) and Manicaland.

⁵¹ Very large quantities of garments with ZANU-PF symbols were distributed at campaign events during the election period. In contrast, the CCC often sold items such as party t-shirts at campaign rallies to raise funds.

⁵² While Electoral Act foresees the possibility for the ZEC to set expenditure limits, this has never occurred. It specifies, however, that during election periods contestants may incur expenditures such as personal living costs, advertising, hire of meeting venues and employing of election agents.

⁵³ After the elections, the state-owned print media manipulated the information to claim that the EU and opposition colluded to fund regime change in Zimbabwe.

X. MEDIA

State-owned media displayed significant bias in favour of the ruling party, whilst independent outlets were largely critical of the government, exemplifying the polarisation of the media landscape, which is further impacted by legal and material challenges faced by journalists.

Media Environment

The media landscape is strongly polarised, with government dominance in ownership and clear political positions in the editorial lines of both state-owned and independent media. Radio serves as the primary news source, particularly in rural areas with limited internet access and newspaper circulation. There are 36 radio stations, with ownership dominated by government or quasi-governmental entities and individuals affiliated with ZANU-PF. State-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) plays a significant role, operating the national television channel, ZTV, and six radio stations,⁵⁴ including provincial ones. Liberalisation of broadcasting laws in 2020 led to an expansion of the media landscape with the licensing of 14 community radio stations and 7 university owned radios.

The government holds 51 percent of the shares of prominent media group Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Ltd (Zimpapers), which publishes seven print publications, owns four radio stations,⁵⁵ and the ZTN television channel. The most notable private media holdings are Alpha Media Group (AMH)⁵⁶ and Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ),⁵⁷ with smaller players like AB Communications, Fairtalk Communications, and Ray of Hope⁵⁸ focusing on radio ownership.

Journalists face numerous challenges, including vague or restrictive legislation,⁵⁹ financial constraints, and a polarised media environment. This hinders their ability to operate independently and without bias. Interlocutors from the media and CSO sectors, as well as political candidates, indicated distrust in state-owned media outlets, most notably ZBC, perceived as exhibiting overt bias in favour of the ruling party. CCC interlocutors stated that considering the history of ZBC persistently portraying them in a negative light, they preferred limited interactions with them.

Recent work by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and other CSOs in sensitising police on the journalists' work has been fruitful, with no cases of harassment of journalists by the security forces reported during the EU EOM's presence. Journalist interlocutors stated, however, that trauma from negative experiences in previous electoral processes led to a pervasive atmosphere of fear and self-censorship, stifling political discourse and investigative reporting.

The double accreditation requirement for both international and national journalists in these elections, both from the Zimbabwe Media Commission and ZEC, raised concerns about its

⁵⁴ ZBC owns Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263, National FM, Khulumani FM and Central Radio
⁵⁵ Zimpapers are publishers of The Herald, The Chronicle, The Manica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News, H-Metro and B-Metro and own radio stations Diamond FM, Star FM, Nyaminyami FM and Capital K
⁵⁶ AMH publishes NewsDay, The Standard and The Independent, and owns online streaming channel HSTV.
⁵⁷ ANZ publishes the Daily News, Daily News on Sunday, The Financial Gazette and own the 3KTV channel.
⁵⁸ AB Communications own of ZiFM and Hevoi FM; Fairtalk Communications are partially owned by the Zimbabwe National Army and own Skyz Metro FM, Breeze FM, and Keyona TV; Ray of Hope own YaFM.

⁵⁹ Such as the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Act, 2023, known as the 'patriotic provisions', and the Cyber and Data Protection Act.

impact on media independence and election reporting. This duplication imposed administrative and financial burdens and is potentially detrimental to the coverage of election-related events. It also fostered perceptions of government interference and opacity.

Recommendation: ZEC and ZMC to simplify and make transparent journalist accreditation, as it promotes media freedom, allows for diverse election coverage, and facilitates journalists in carrying out their role effectively during elections.

Legal Framework for the Media

There have been a series of legal developments that have had a profound impact on freedom of expression and media's role in the democratic process. Freedoms of speech and association are enshrined in Section 61 of the constitution. In a notable shift towards reform in 2019, the highly restrictive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act was repealed and the Freedom of Information Act was signed into law. Through amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) in 2020, the Broadcast Authority of Zimbabwe was mandated to issue licences on an annual basis, resulting in the licensing of 3 private television channels and 14 community radio stations.

This positive development is in line with the EU EOM Zimbabwe's 2018 recommendations. The BSA was further amended in 2023 to allow for commercial advertising on community radios, improving their sustainability. Nonetheless, community radios are prohibited from broadcasting political content or advertising,⁶⁰ which impedes them from fulfilling duties in the BSA itself.⁶¹

Despite this, recent laws had a detrimental impact on freedom of expression. The 'patriotic provisions', which came into force in July 2023 is seemingly designed to protect national interests and sovereignty, but Section 22A places severe restrictions and penalties on interactions with foreign governments or their agents, significantly hindering journalists' ability to engage with sources perceived as anti-government. Multiple media interlocutors stated that the vagueness of the law had a chilling effect on freedom of expression and will increase self-censorship in the media.

Zimbabwe has ratified the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance⁶² and bound to the SADC Principles and Guidelines on the Conduct of Democratic Elections.⁶³ In the context of elections, media regulation is governed by the Electoral Act,⁶⁴ which sets parameters for election coverage, including provisions for public broadcasters to afford all political parties and independent candidates' free access to their broadcasting services. Specific regulations are set for the fair allocation of airtime, equitable treatment, accuracy, and fairness in media reports.

ZEC is required⁶⁵ to form a media monitoring committee, ensuring that legal provisions are respected. The committee might have been formed, but the EU EOM's request for a meeting

⁶⁰ Section 2(c) of the Broadcasting Services (Community and Campus Radios) Regulations, 2020

⁶¹ Section 4 of the same act states as a requirement that community broadcasting stations shall— (a) empower the community through sharing of knowledge and information relevant to that community; and (d) ensure that its programming is reflective of all key interests within that community.

⁶² Article 17 (3) mandates equitable access by contesting parties and candidates to state controlled media during elections.

⁶³ Section 4.1.6 requires equal opportunities for all candidates and political parties to use the state media.

⁶⁴ Section 160G-K.

⁶⁵ Section 160K of the Electoral Act.

went unanswered. ZEC did not disclose the list of the media monitoring committee members, nor did they publish a schedule of their activities, creating doubts about transparency and accountability. This, together with an opaque journalist accreditation process marred by delays and unexplained refusals, led to the filing of a case before the High Court by the Young Journalists Association of Zimbabwe, seeking the release of information on both issues by ZEC.⁶⁶

Media Monitoring Findings

The EU EOM monitored 3 TV channels,⁶⁷ 6 radio stations⁶⁸ and 10 newspapers⁶⁹ from 23 July until 3 September and analysed all political and election-related content on these media. During the monitoring, ZBC TV devoted 67 percent of its political coverage to ZANU-PF, President Mnangagwa, and the current government, whilst the monitored ZBC owned radio stations⁷⁰ afforded the incumbent and his party 92 percent of their elections related airtime.

Coverage of the president, government and ruling party by the state broadcaster was overwhelmingly positive, with several neutral and no negative stories. Conversely, 79 percent of the negligible amount of coverage given by ZBC TV to Nelson Chamisa was negative in tone. ZBC interlocutors stated that the president has the advantage of incumbency and received coverage as head of state and candidate. Nonetheless, the excessive share of voice and uncritical treatment of President Mnangagwa, ZANU-PF and the current government indicate that the election coverage by the state broadcaster is at odds with the SADC Principles and Guidelines on the Conduct of Democratic Elections and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.⁷¹ There has been no progress made on previous EU EOM priority recommendations for a genuine reform of ZBC.

Recommendation: ZBC to be reformed into a truly independent public service broadcaster and state-owned media must abide by their legal obligation to be impartial and provide equitable treatment to all political parties and candidates.

Government-controlled Zimpapers provided more diverse coverage on TV and radio. ZTN afforded ZANU-PF and the government 27 percent of election related airtime, versus 20 percent for CCC, whilst the monitored Zimpapers radio stations⁷² gave 32 percent of coverage to the incumbent, and 16 percent to CCC and Mr. Chamisa.

The vast majority of ZTN TV coverage was neutral in tone. Zimpapers radios were more positive towards the ruling party and president but remained largely neutral on Mr. Chamisa and the CCC. Zimpapers newspapers demonstrated a different approach, devoting 64 percent of their space to the incumbency, 58 percent of which was positive in tone, with no negative mentions. CCC and Mr. Chamisa got 11 percent of print space. This coverage was negative in 64 percent of articles about CCC and 78 percent on Mr. Chamisa.

⁶⁶ The Young Journalists Association of Zimbabwe filed an urgent chamber application with the High Court, compelling the ZEC to release crucial statistics about the accreditation of local and international journalists, but the application was referred to the ordinary court roll, thus it was not resolved prior to the elections.

⁶⁷ ZBC TV, ZTN and 3KTV in their primetime from 17:00 to 00:00

⁶⁸ Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263, Star FM, Capitalk and ZiFM from 06:00 to 09:00 and 18:00 to 21:30.

⁶⁹ The Herald, The Chronicle, the Maica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News, NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent, The Daily News and The Daily News on Sunday.

⁷⁰ Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263.

⁷¹ Section 4.1.6 and Article 17 (3) respectively.

⁷² Star FM and Capitalk.

Private media groups AMH and ANZ provided a more egalitarian spread of coverage between the main contestants in their print publications, although ZANU-PF and the incumbent were given more space by both. AMH publications⁷³ covered CCC and Mr. Chamisa in a positive light in 67 and 63 percent of articles, respectively. Some 77 percent of their coverage of the incumbency was negative in tone. ANZ publications provided more praise than criticism to most actors in the elections, with the exceptions of Mr. Kasukuwere and the CCC. ANZ-owned 3KTV devoted relatively little time to political coverage. They were neutral towards most political actors, but coverage of the president and ZANU-PF was overwhelmingly positive.

XI. SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

Information manipulation distorted the online political debate and digital rights were curtailed.

Digital and Social Media Environment

Internet access is limited due to high costs and lack of infrastructure, especially in rural and marginalised communities. The quality and accessibility of connections is poor, with users regularly experiencing slow connectivity. Zimbabwe falls short of regional and international principles that call for “universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the internet”,⁷⁴ limiting citizen’s right to freedom of expression and access to information online.⁷⁵ Mobile internet is the primary means for people to get online. WhatsApp-only affordable bundles make the use of this instant messaging application widespread, while less than 10 percent of the total population uses other social media networks.⁷⁶

WhatsApp was the dominant social media platform for campaigning, followed by X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. X stood out as the most relevant space for political debate, campaign narratives, and the exchange of information. Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube were also used, but were less relevant, although Tik Tok videos often migrated to other platforms. Political parties relied highly on WhatsApp groups to mobilise supporters and reach rural voters.⁷⁷ ZEC lacked a proactive disclosure of information online to appropriately inform voters and address election-related disinformation. ZEC’s top social media content focused mainly on reminders of electoral law offences.⁷⁸

The social media environment was vibrant, but polarised. Hundreds of troll accounts engaged online to support one of the two main parties on X. Paid or volunteering youth were reportedly behind many of these accounts with a mandate to defeat their opponents online. Interlocutors expressed being more cautious about what they posted online due to restrictive laws and the impact of past arrests and convictions of prominent journalists and influencers. Conversely, anonymous and troll accounts, and diaspora users were the most critical on platforms against

⁷³ NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent.

⁷⁴ 2019 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. Principle 37 Access to the internet: “States shall recognise that universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the internet is necessary for the realisation of freedom of expression, access to information and the exercise of other human rights.”

⁷⁵ [Freedom of the Net report 2022](#) ranks internet freedom in Zimbabwe as partly free.

⁷⁶ DataReportal report. [Digital Zimbabwe 2023](#).

⁷⁷ The EU EOM did not monitor messaging apps such as WhatsApp for data privacy protection reasons. The opposition CCC party confirmed that they used between 300-400 WhatsApp groups to address party officials and supporters. The ruling party ZANU PF said that they do not use official WhatsApp groups.

⁷⁸ See Annex Social Media Monitoring.

the ruling party and ZEC.⁷⁹ Recently, there was a growth in independent online content creators, many of them are based abroad and contributing to the circulation of unverified claims and rumours.

Despite three independent local fact-checking initiatives tried to counter election-related disinformation, they lacked resources to verify the large number of falsehoods online.⁸⁰ Voters were limited when forming opinions independently, free from manipulative interference.

Recommendation: Support independent fact-checking initiatives, digital and media literacy though public educational and advocacy measures to help tackle online information manipulation during elections, while avoiding criminalising disinformation.

Legal Framework for Digital Rights

The constitution provides for the rights of freedom of expression, access to information and privacy.⁸¹ However, subsequent laws have unduly restricted those rights, resulting in fear and self-censorship by online users. The criminal code⁸² imposes prison sentences for spreading falsehoods prejudicial to the State, undermining the authority of or insulting the president and criminal insults, falling short of regional and international standards for freedom of expression.⁸³ Human rights activists, journalists and opposition members have been convicted in the past for their online activities.⁸⁴ The Cyber and Data Protection Act (CDPA) amends the criminal code to define cybercrime offences. Some of these provisions have raised concerns among civil society groups. The wording and wide scope can be misused to target dissenting voices. After the elections, police silenced a social media movement calling for “fresh elections” and peaceful protests as “acts of violence”.⁸⁵ The CDPA also criminalises the transmission of false data concerning a person with intend to cause phycological or economic harm, reintroducing defamation in contravention to regional and international principles.⁸⁶

Moreover, the rights to freedom of expression, privacy and access to information are restricted by the 2007 Interception of Communications Act which provides for internet shutdowns, surveillance, and interception of communications by the state without judicial oversight.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ See Annex Social Media Monitoring.

⁸⁰ ZIMFACT, FactCheckZW and FactCheckCITE. ZIMFACT expressed that they could not fact-check all messages.

⁸¹ Art.61, 62 and 57.

⁸² Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. Articles 31, 33 and 95.

⁸³ ACHPR. 2019 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. Principle 22: “States shall repeal laws that criminalise sedition, insult and publication of false news.” ACHPR Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, Principle XII: “laws relating to defamation conform to the following standards: public figures shall be required to tolerate a greater degree of criticism; sanctions shall never be so severe as to inhibit the right to freedom of expression. 2023 UN, OSCE, OAS, ACHPR Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy: “Criminal defamation and laws criminalising the criticism of State institutions and officials should be repealed.”

⁸⁴ In June 2023, former opposition CCC spokesperson Fadzayi Mahere was convicted of posting on X a falsehood prejudicial to the state.

⁸⁵ On 29 August 2023, Zimbabwe police posted on X a warning on the [circulation of messages agitating for violence and unlawful gathering on social media](#).

⁸⁶ ACHPR. 2019 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. Principle 22: “The imposition of custodial sentences for the offences of defamation and libel are a violation of the right to freedom of expression.”

⁸⁷ ACHPR. Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. Principle 41: “States shall not engage in or condone acts of indiscriminate and untargeted collection, storage, analysis or sharing of a person’s communications (...) States shall ensure that any law authorising targeted communication surveillance provides adequate safeguards for the right to privacy, including the prior authorisation of an independent and impartial judicial authority”.

Interlocutors expressed concern over digital technology surveillance and the invasion of citizen's privacy.

While the CDPA contains positive developments for the protection of personal data, it creates a Cybersecurity and Monitoring of Interception of Communications Centre that operates within the Office of the President, posing risks of abuse of power. The CDPA also establishes The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) as the Data Protection Authority. But POTRAZ's independence is questionable, which is not in line with the SADC Model on Data Protection. The authority has diverse powers as the telecommunications regulator and an advisory member within the Cybersecurity and Monitoring of Interception of Communications, while its general director is a former intelligence official.

Ahead of elections, citizens received unsolicited SMS messages canvassing for their votes for ZANU PF, raising concerns over undue access by the party to registered voters' personal data. At the time of writing, POTRAZ was yet to respond to the possible breach of privacy.

On the election's eve, throttling of the internet was reported by NetBlocks, a global internet monitor. MISA Zimbabwe called "to respect the freedom of expression and access to information" since "throttling the internet is an affront to digital rights and democracy."⁸⁸

Recommendation: To amend the 2007 Interception of Communications Act and the Cyber and Data Protection Act to fully comply with fundamental rights of freedom of expression, access to information and privacy.

Social Media Monitoring Findings

Election-related information manipulation circulated widely on social media, especially on WhatsApp, as reported by interlocutors. The EU EOM identified several falsehoods and rumours being disseminated online by political actors, official media, and online content creators. The use of manipulated content was a common technique, notably videos and images taken out of context, including of injured people to denounce political violence. Doctored images circulated of rallies making small crowds seem large and of CCC campaign posters of rallies that contained wrong locations to mislead voters.

The EU EOM observed hundreds of anonymous and troll accounts on X in support of the two main parties actively engaging in an online battle to discredit each other. While troll accounts were active in commenting and sharing disinformation and counter-narratives on X, they had low influence.⁸⁹ The EU EOM was targeted by disinformation campaigns on the platforms before and after elections. As they neared, the sharing of falsehoods on X and Facebook increased substantially. Manipulated videos of the president and of Mr. Chamisa asking to vote for the opponent circulated as did fake posters of him calling supporters to stay at home.

Building counternarratives and cyber-propaganda was one strategy effectively used by the ruling party and the opposition to delegitimize opponents and create disinformation, negatively impacting voter's right to make well informed choices. Ahead of elections, several

⁸⁸ MISA Zimbabwe [statement](#).

⁸⁹ The mission monitored 290 supporter, influencer, anonymous and troll accounts on X with Sentione.

allegations of corruption and political violence, and derogatory and harsh language online were observed.⁹⁰

ZANU-PF had a well-coordinated online communications strategy with a group of accounts amplifying their narratives ranging from government institutions and officials, party officials, supporter accounts, troll accounts and state-owned media. While official ZANU-PF accounts had a positive tone, criticism and negative campaigning towards opposition parties emanated from party officials and other accounts. An alleged troll account by Presidential Spokesmen George Charamba was suspended by X after insulting the SADC head of mission upon releasing their Preliminary Statement. The mission also observed a cohesive network of accounts amplifying CCC's narratives on X.⁹¹ On election day, these accounts displayed a higher degree of coordination using the hashtags #rigging and #stoptherig to actively denounce alleged irregularities and voters' suppression.⁹² Also, after the elections, a well-coordinated social media mobilisation calling for protests and fresh elections (#FreshelectionsZw) emanated from CCC official profiles and pro CCC accounts.⁹³

The EU EOM monitoring unit analysed 3,313 posts of 976 electoral contestants and non-electoral contestants on Facebook and X. The CCC party, its presidential and NA candidates were the most active using the platforms, followed by ZANU-PF. Around 40 percent of CCC's posts focused on denouncing flaws in the electoral process, state abuse and political violence, as well as criticising the government and ZANU-PF. Most CCC's posts denouncing political violence accused ZANU-PF and its supporters, while others cited police intimidation and harassment. Conversely, ZANU-PF content focused on promoting official propaganda at government events and the success of their campaign rallies. The ruling party also portrayed the CCC as disorganised and divided.

Women candidates reported to the EU EOM to be targets of online harassment, including on WhatsApp. The mission noted comments to posts containing name calling, sexualisation and body shaming. After elections, ZEC's chairperson and UZA's presidential candidate Ms. Valerio became top targets of demeaning comments on X. The mission observed several derogatory comments against Valerio in one single post where she called the CCC "a ZANU-PF faction".⁹⁴

XII. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

The constitution ensures seats to women and youth in the NA but without single-mandate constituencies assigned, which has the effect of limiting their equitable participation for directly elected seats.

Zimbabwe has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), but not the CEDAW

⁹⁰ The CCC was referred to as "Western or Imperialists puppets" and "Sell outs", while ZANU-PF was referred to as "criminals", "terrorist party", "corrupts" and "Ediots". See Annex Social Media Monitoring.

⁹¹ Party officials, supporters, trolls, non-state-owned media and online content creators such as ChangeRadio or ZimLive.

⁹² Such as delays in opening polling stations, missing names on the voters' roll and the run out of ballot papers. Also, images and videos denouncing FAZ exit polls near polling stations were shared.

⁹³ On 30 August 2023, the CCC and supporter accounts jointly disseminated [a call for fresh elections on social media](#).

⁹⁴ On 25 August, Elisabeth Valerio [posted on X](#), receiving several demeaning comments and criticism.

Additional Protocol that offers international individual redress. Gender equality is entrenched in articles 3, 17, 56 and 80 of the constitution. The constitution, as amended, guarantees the representation of at least 60 women (6 per province) in the NA for the first 4 parliaments, a 30 percent women's quota (without ward representation), for local councils and 31 women seats for the Senate.

The 60 temporary NA women quota seats do not represent any conventional constituencies and consequently lack financial and reputational parity. Moreover, since they are not directly elected but taken from the party list, this perpetuates party elites rather than ensuring effective women representation. Since women have these 60 temporary quota-guaranteed seats, male party members reportedly discouraged women from contesting in constituency contests. Hence, according to the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), only 70 women out of 636 candidates contesting in the directly elected NA seats (11 percent) and, finally, just 22 women (10.5 percent of the NA seats) were elected (12 ZANU-PF and 10 CCC), while 187 were taken by men. This is 1.9 percent less than in the previous NA. For Senate, party lists must be headed by a woman, and then the sexes listed alternately (zebra list). One of the two candidates representing PwD must also be a woman, and the other a man. This guarantees 31 seats for women (17 CCC and 16 ZANU-PF) and 31 for men. The remaining 18 Senate seats are for traditional chiefs, all of which remain men.

In the absence of specific provisions in the electoral act regarding the constitutionally prescribed 30 percent women's quota for local elections, ZEC exercised its discretion in a manner that did not consistently guarantee 30 percent representation for women across all local authorities when rounding down the number of seats reserved for women to the nearest whole number. This approach at times resulted in an overall share below the constitutional threshold.⁹⁵ Further, subsequent electoral act amendments in July 2023 adopted the same interpretation of the women's quota as ZEC.

Ultimately, although quotas in general increase women's participation, in its current state it does little to advance meaningful women's representation. The patriarchal nature of society, a violent campaigning environment, and highly expensive nomination fees are also reported by women aspirants as being a barrier. Finally, there was only one woman among the 11 presidential candidates.

Participation of Youth

Zimbabwe is a signatory of the African Youth Charter. Accordingly, the constitution defines youths as people between 15 and 35 years old and article 20 grants fundamental and political rights to youths comprehensively including through affirmative action. The constitution, as amended, also reserves 10 seats for youth, one per province, without a conventional constituency as with the women's quota. It also establishes that 10 of the 60 quota seats for women should be for young candidates. Finally, in these elections, the NA members under the age of 35 were 35 (37 percent female and 63 percent male). The 10 youth quota members had 3 women and 7 men. Under the 60 women's quota, 8 members were under the age of 35 (not of the 10). Directly elected NA youth seats (without the quota) were 17. In this case, only two went to women.⁹⁶ Further, youth candidates under the quota seats are not elected directly but by the party, often ruled by senior elites. Considering that youth constitute around 70 percent

⁹⁵ This means that, for instance, in a local authority with 8 wards, the method allocated only 2 additional seats for women, constituting 20 percent of the total 10 seats.

⁹⁶ Source: Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust.

of the population,⁹⁷ as pointed by organisations such as Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust, this measure is ineffective since having to be elected within a political party list leaves them without genuine youth agendas.⁹⁸

In 2023, youth constituted about 44 percent of the voters' roll. Despite actions such as the Parliamentary Youth Caucus or the Zimbabwe National Youth Police, many young people are still politically disengaged. The lack of political spaces, physical and verbal intimidation, unemployment (18.7 percent), unaffordable education, absence of opportunities and the closing of civic and political spaces⁹⁹ together with candidate registration exorbitant fees also act as obstacles and help to explain why there were just 2 young MPs in the last NA and just 3 running now as directly NA elected candidates. No young person ran for senate or president because the minimum age is 40. EU EOM LTOs noted that the situation in rural areas is even worse, especially for young women, where tradition and social control affect their decisions also as voters.

Recommendation: Amend the current provisions on women and youth quotas to grant effective gender equality and fair youth representation in line with the constitution.

XIII. PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PwD)

No significant efforts were undertaken to grant PwD's participation.

Zimbabwe acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in September 2013, without having thus far signed the Optional Protocol that allows for individual complaints for violations of the CRPD by state parties. It has also yet to sign the 2018 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes further disabilities such as albinism.¹⁰⁰ CRPD has not been incorporated into domestic law.

The 1992 Disabled Persons Act reflects welfare rather than a rights-based perspective. The constitution recognises sign language as one of the 16 official languages. Accordingly, voter education in sign language was offered on the national broadcaster ZBC TV. Other PwD-friendly electoral information was shared through WhatsApp. The constitution also prohibits unfair discrimination against PwD, creating two senator seats one man and one woman that were elected on 26 August by an electoral college of 119 PwD organisations. Some of the interlocutors told the

⁹⁷ ZIMSAT, 2022 Zimbabwe Population and Housing Report (2023). https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/publications/Population/population/phc2022/2022_PHC_Report_27012023_Final.pdf

⁹⁸ OHCHR Study on Youth and Human Rights: Youth in Zimbabwe Submitted by: Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Youth/ZimbabweHRCommission.pdf>

⁹⁹ ZESN, Youth Participation in Elections and Governance Processes in Zimbabwe (2019). <https://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ZESN-Position-Paper-on-Youth-Participation-in-Elections-and-Governance-Processes-in-Zimbabwe.pdf> and https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZXGM.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Zimsat 2022 census documented that the number of persons with albinism was 9,747. According to the Zimbabwe national disability policy, a person with disability "include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Persons with epilepsy and albinism are included in this group." The African Disability Protocol deals with community-based rehabilitation and minority groups within the African disability community, including people with albinism. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of this century, it does not address the unique challenges like the African Disability Protocol does. <https://www.sightsavers.org/blogs/2021/08/the-importance-of-the-african-disability-protocol/>

EU EOM that they would have preferred to have these seats directly elected by PwD individuals. The burden of representation is high with only two senators representing a huge constituency. The consensus within the sector is to have at least 10 percent representation.

PwD remain marginalised and the National Disability Policy of 2021 estimated that 15 percent of the population have some disability, more than half of whom are women.¹⁰¹

Recommendation: Amend the Disabled Persons Act to effectively incorporate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into domestic law.

According to the National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH), there were three PwD candidates contesting local elections, four on the quota lists, and one contesting as an MP. ZEC has one commissioner with a disability.

XIV. PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES AND OTHER MARGINALISED GROUPS

The Constitution recognises human dignity and fundamental rights for all, but minorities still struggle to participate in elections due to marginalisation and in some cases lack of documentation.

While almost all minorities live in underdeveloped and remote areas, a substantial number are also considered stateless. According to a 2016 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as referred to by Amnesty International report, there were then approximately 300,000 at risk of being stateless people.¹⁰² EU EOM interlocutors noted that the number today is probably higher, but this cannot be confirmed since no data is publicly available. Some of the citizens living in these remote areas are unable to obtain documentation such as birth certificates; they do not have living survivors to help with the process of identifying them to get such documents, making their access to electoral rights even more difficult. Not having an identity document not only prevents them from registering as voters but also blocks them from, studying, getting jobs, or opening bank accounts.¹⁰³

Minority groups are identified based on culture, language, territory, and tribe. The constitution recognizes 16 official languages. However, the languages most used in public life, by the media and by officials during the elections are Shona, Ndebele, and English. This limits the access to information for minorities, who are often only fluent in their respective language. Notable minorities include the Doma, a tribe comprising some 600 individuals in the Kanyemba region. The Shangaan or Tsonga are concentrated in the Chiredzi district, with some others scattered in parts of Mwenezi district. The Venda live in the south; they are the only minority who encourage their women to occupy senior positions in society, including for conflict resolution through the so-called *Vhomakadzi*. The San live in the Tsholotsho area.

¹⁰¹ <https://veritaswomen.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/National-Disability-Policy-June-202111.pdf> and https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/media/4591/file/LRFP_ZIM_2021_9168387_Independent_assessment_study-Disability_inclusion.pdf

¹⁰² Amnesty International, We are like “stray animals”. Thousands living on the margins due to statelessness in Zimbabwe (2021). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr46/3932/2021/en/> and <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Zimbabwe%20Factsheet%20-%20APR16.pdf>

¹⁰³ ZHRC, Report on National Inquiry on access to documentation in Zimbabwe (2020). https://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/Report%20on%20National%20Inquiry%20on%20Access%20to%20Documentation%20in%20Zimbabwe.pdf

Recommendation: To conduct a comprehensive programme to enhance measures of inclusion of all minorities into the electoral process, including affirmative action measures to facilitate obtaining IDs.

LGBTIQ+ phobic insults were documented during the campaign period. There was no openly LGBTIQ+ candidate or public official. According to CSOs, community members are harassed. The pending PVO Bill had an important impact on their activities. CSOs also reported that on election day, some transgender voters were not allowed to vote when their image did not match their documentation.

XV. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

Citizen observers faced severe restrictions due to a shrinking space for civic activities, restrictive administrative measures, pressure, consistent intimidation, and arrests on election day.

Numerous civil society and church-based organisations observed the electoral process. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), the Election Resource Centre (ERC), the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, deployed over 10,000 observers. Despite the active engagement of CSOs as citizen observers, most organisations expressed concerns about the diminishing space for civil society activities due to recent legal amendments and restrictive administrative measures.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the observer accreditation process lacked transparency, with ZEC denying accreditation to many citizen and international observers without providing a clear justification.¹⁰⁵

Various international organisations, including the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Commonwealth, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and The Carter Center (TCC), also deployed election observation missions. ZEC imposed a USD 400 fee per person for the accreditation of each observer from certain international organisations. This fee was excessively high, potentially limiting observation activities, and resulting in diminished transparency.

On election night, four raids conducted in Harare led to the arrest of 39 civil society members, including those from ZESN and ERC, on charges of “coordinating the alleged release of election results”. This action appeared disproportionate and impeded civic verification of election results through observation data. Following condemnations from the EU EOM and other international organisations, the detained activists were granted bail and released on 25 August. After election day, orchestrated media and social media attacks targeted some international observation missions, primarily the EU EOM and SADC. These measures targeting impartial election observation are at odds with Zimbabwe’s international commitments.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ CSOs expressed concern over the July amendments to the criminal code, which they perceived as criminalising criticism of the government. They also described the requirements for observer accreditation as overly bureaucratic and highlighted the USD 10 accreditation fee per observer as a significant barrier of participation.

¹⁰⁵ ERC, ZESN and TCC informed to the EU EOM that some of their observers were denied accreditation by the Observers Accreditation Committee, which includes representatives from ZEC, ministries, and the Office of the President. The law does not provide clear criteria for rejections, and the committee’s decision-making policy was not shared. In some instances, ZEC denied accreditations citing “security reasons”.

¹⁰⁶ The [African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#) considers election observation as an “important contributory factor to ensuring the regularity, transparency and credibility of elections”, while

Priority recommendation: Establish and implement effective mechanisms to prevent undue restrictions on observation activities, and to prevent pressure and intimidation of both citizen and international observers.

XVI. ELECTORAL DISPUTES

The judiciary played a central role in the process. The right to legal redress was undermined by the lack of impartiality of the judiciary and the absence of timeframes to resolve electoral disputes.

Complaints and Appeals

The complaints and appeal process complies with the principles of judicial review and second instance. The right to legal remedy is provided for in the constitution, which empowers ZEC to receive and act on citizens' complaints. ZEC decisions can be appealed to the electoral court, whose decisions can be further challenged to the supreme court. The electoral court was established on 1 June with the appointment of 35 high court judges to serve until 31 December. It has jurisdiction over all election-related matters except for petitions challenging the validity of the presidential election, which are heard before the constitutional court.

The pre-election process was characterised by an unprecedented level of litigation, with ZEC being respondent in some 140 cases. Before election day, close to 100 cases had been filed before the electoral court, and 8 questioned the validity of the process before the constitutional court. Not all of cases had been resolved before election day, including on candidate registration, limiting the right to effective redress.

In addition, all key phases of the process were subject to court challenges, from the delimitation of boundaries to the access to the voters' roll and list of polling stations, to the applicable legislation on key aspects of the election, including ZEC's regulatory framework and constitutional provisions on the electoral system and on eligibility criteria, which remain unresolved.

While the electoral act mandates trials to be "completed as expeditiously as possible", the absence of deadlines for adjudicating pre-electoral complaints hampered the right to timely and effective remedy¹⁰⁷ and affected the preparatory work for elections, with ZEC compelled to extend some deadlines such as ballot printing and distribution and postal voting. Moreover, elected candidates took their oath before the deadline for petitions expired.

Recommendation: Legal deadlines for the adjudication of complaints need to guarantee a timely and effective remedy. The legal timeframe for the resolution of electoral disputes should be introduced to provide expeditious decisions in line with the electoral calendar.

The role of the judiciary in elections was limited to the resolution of electoral disputes, however, given the high number of cases, the courts played a key role in the process. The acute lack of confidence expressed by many interlocutors in the judiciary raised concerns about the role of courts in settling electoral disputes and on public confidence in its rulings. The

Article 19 requires State parties to "guarantee conditions of security, free access to information, non-interference, freedom of movement and full cooperation" for election observers.

¹⁰⁷ ACHPR article 7, paragraph 1 provides that "every individual shall have the right to have his cause heard. This comprises: (e) the right to be tried within a reasonable time by an impartial court or tribunal", and ICCPR, article 2.3 obliges states to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy.

impartiality of the judiciary was put into question due to the extensive powers that the president enjoys in appointing judges further extended by the constitutional amendment of 2021 that allowed for the president to extend the tenure of the chief justice, head of the constitutional court and the supreme court; and USD 400,000 loans to purchase property granted by the government to judges three months prior to election day, perceived as an inducement.

The right to access to justice was undermined by the excessive high costs of seeking redress in the courts and questionable court decisions such as the ones that ruled as non-urgent the case on the candidacy of presidential hopeful Mr. Kasukuwere¹⁰⁸ or CCC's demand that ZEC release the final voters' roll and list of polling stations before election day.¹⁰⁹ In both instances, the courts did not hand down any ruling leaving the matter overtaken by events and the judgment irrelevant.

Recommendation: *To safeguard the independence of the judiciary, the appointment procedures of judges to be reviewed to guarantee the division powers and prevent executive interference in the selection of high court judges, in line with international standards.*

Electoral Offences

The electoral act and the criminal code enumerate an extensive number of electoral related offences and malpractices and their subsequent sanctions that range from administrative fines to the deregistration as a voter, removal of citizenship, and imprisonment. Illegal practices and electoral offences include intimidation, fraud, misrepresentation, theft or destruction of electoral material, interference with voters, breaches of the secrecy of the vote, and obstruction to voting, threats, bribery, and personation. Electoral offences and cases of politically motivated violence or intimidation were dealt with by magistrate courts, which included 76 magistrates in all 10 provinces. They received some 80 cases before election day. However, despite numerous reports of alleged intimidation during the campaign, courts were approached with minor cases that dealt almost exclusively with destruction of campaign material such as posters and billboards. Moreover, the mission became aware of cases of intimidation that were reported to the police, but no charges were pressed.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism

The electoral act also provides for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to mitigate conflict; multi-party liaison committees (MPLCs) were established at national, constituency and local authority level. MPLCs were chaired by ZEC, and parties and candidates participated. MPLCs were launched throughout all 10 provinces; most of them dealt with breaches of the code of conduct and the damage to campaign materials. Many assessed MPLCs as a positive mechanism where ZEC kept candidates informed of the process. However, the effectiveness of MPLCs to prevent conflict was questioned by most EU EOM interlocutors given the highly polarised context in which elections took place given that MPLCs decisions were to be reached by consensus. Some cited the lack of enforcement mechanisms and the consideration of MPLCs as extensions of the ruling party due to ZEC involvement as problematic.

XVII. VOTING, COUNTING AND TABULATION OF RESULTS

Despite a calm election day, the late opening of hundreds of polling stations, extending into the next day, seriously impeded citizens' right to vote.

¹⁰⁸ CCZ 40/23 Saviour Kasukuwere v Lovedale Mangwana and Others.

¹⁰⁹ EC21/23 CCC and Anor1 vs ZEC & Anor Urgent Chamber Application for voters' roll matter deemed not urgent.

On election day, EU EOM observers visited more than 500 PS in 148 of the 210 NA constituencies, in all 10 provinces of the country. Overall, election day was peaceful, although marked by evident voter frustration, occasionally long queues, and overcrowding due to delayed openings in the affected areas. EU EOM observers also reported flyers in Bulawayo and Harare, which falsely claimed that CCC was boycotting the elections.

Overview of Voting

The EU EOM observed that out of 55 polling stations (PS) visited, 18 opened late, often due to non-delivery of ballot papers. Some did not open until late evening or the next day, severely impacting citizens' ability to vote.¹¹⁰ ZEC stated that the delay was caused by the late printing of ballot papers. However, in most cases, local authority ballots were missing, which were reportedly printed earlier. Additionally, most affected areas had no court challenges related to candidate registration to cause any delays in ballot printing. The delays, most pronounced in Bulawayo, Harare, and Manicaland, appear to have disproportionately affected some opposition strongholds.¹¹¹

Recommendation: ZEC to examine the reasons for the late delivery of electoral material on election day and seek guarantees to ensure timely execution of all electoral preparations in future processes, ensuring that all voters have equal opportunities to vote.

Voting was generally assessed positively across the 488 PS observed by the EU EOM. Polling officers showed a good understanding of the process. Procedures, such as voter identification and inking of voters' fingers, were mostly implemented in line with the respective provisions, and secrecy of the vote was generally respected. Nevertheless, in 19 percent of the observations, voters' fingers were not consistently checked for ink upon entering the PS. Almost all observed PS abided by the regulations regarding assisted voting, although in some instances, EU EOM observers found the number of assisted voters to be unrealistically high.

Political party agents, predominantly from CCC and ZANU-PF, were present at nearly all PS. Citizen observers, largely from ZESN and faith-based groups, were present in more than half of the observations, enhancing transparency. In 19 percent of the observations, individuals associated with FAZ set up 'ZANU-PF exit poll survey' stands in the vicinity of polling stations to track voters both before and after voting (also see *Campaign Environment*). This, combined with the presence of police inside 18 percent of observed PS, might have led to intimidating voters by exerting undue pressure to favour ruling party candidates.

The EU EOM observed numerous voters having difficulty identifying their PSs, underscoring the need for better voter information. In one out of four observations, some voters were turned away because they were not on the voters' roll of the respective PS. Contrary to ZEC guidelines, in 6 percent of the observations, the voters' roll was not displayed outside the PS. In certain cases, ZEC's SMS service for verifying voting locations was not operational, creating further challenges for voters to identify their PS. Contrary to legal provisions, approximately 21 percent of the PS lacked independent access for wheelchair users.

¹¹⁰ ZEC did not publish comprehensive information about the PSs affected by late openings. A presidential decree issued in the evening of election day extended voting to the next day in 27 wards in Manicaland, 11 in Harare, and 2 in Mashonaland Central. In these areas, voting in some cases took place during night-time hours, under inadequate conditions.

¹¹¹ These claims were partly corroborated by the EU EOM's analysis that identified a correlation between late opening and decreased turnout in several constituencies of Bulawayo and Harare.

Counting

The EU EOM observed counting in 51 PS. Due to the late opening, the vote count started with a significant delay in numerous places. While the counting process was in general assessed positively, there were 5 instances with negative evaluations. In addition, some procedural shortcomings were observed: ballot papers were not always shown to all present in 12 cases, and in 15 cases, unused, spoiled ballots, and the counterfoils of used ballots were not packed and sealed properly. Counting staff experienced difficulties completing the results protocols in one third of the observations. In 11 cases, the results were not posted outside the PS; in 5 instances, party agents did not receive a copy of the results, and in 3 cases, they did not sign the results protocol.

Tabulation of Results

The EU EOM observed 45 results collation in ward and 49 constituency collation centres. Overall, results management was efficiently organised. However, at some levels, the five-tiered results collation system had overlapping roles, and in certain instances, the reporting mechanisms lacked transparency.¹¹² While procedures were generally respected, a few shortcomings were noted. In five cases, the PS material received at the ward level was not intact, and in six cases, the delivered PS material was not complete. In two wards, unauthorised persons were seen interfering in the process. In 10 instances at the ward and 16 instances at the constituency level, EU EOM observers could not see the figures that were entered. In 13 cases, the ward collation protocol was not provided to all party agents, and in 14 cases, the protocol was not posted outside. At constituencies, these discrepancies occurred in 5 and 10 instances, respectively.

While the law mandates ZEC to verify and correct the data tabulated by previous levels throughout all stages of results management, the opposition and CSOs have made numerous claims that this verification process included unauthorized ballot recounts.¹¹³ The final collation of the presidential results occurred at the National Command Centre on 26 August. Political party agents and observers had the ability to monitor data entry, broken down by constituency, on display screens, which enhanced transparency. However, data broken down by individual polling stations was not accessible.

XVIII. RESULTS AND POST-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

The post-electoral environment was marked by a deterioration of the human rights situation and public rejections of the results by some contestants.

Announcement of Results

Parliamentary results were announced by constituency electoral offices following the results collation and subsequently published by ZEC online. In the NA, ZANU-PF won 176, and CCC 103 seats. In the Senate, the two parties obtained 33 and 27 seats, respectively. No other political party secured seats in the legislature. The ZEC chairperson announced the presidential

¹¹² Before election day, ZEC revised its procedural guidelines to account for legislative updates in result collation, such as the inclusion of the newly introduced women and youth quotas. However, the revised instructions did not fully clarify certain key procedures in results management, such as the responsibilities of ZEC district and provincial command centres in tabulating and transmitting presidential results and the use of electronic devices in results management and data transmission. Moreover, the EU EOM received conflicting information from ZEC offices on whether presidential results from the constituency level were transmitted to the district, province or national level, or a combination of these.

¹¹³ On 26 August, both ZESN and ERC issued statements condemning the alleged coercion and intimidation of their observers and party agents by the police, pressuring them into signing corrected polling station results protocols. In a [statement](#), ZEC denied the allegations.

results on 26 August, declaring Mr. Mnangagwa elected with 52.6 percent of the valid votes, followed by Mr. Chamisa with 44 percent.¹¹⁴ Despite requests from opposition and civil society and the practice in previous elections, ZEC did not publish election results per polling station.¹¹⁵ The lack of public access to disaggregated results, combined with police actions against CSOs conducting result projections, prevented stakeholders from verifying the final results and impacted the public acceptance of the electoral process and diminished ZEC's accountability.

Priority recommendation: ZEC to publish timely electoral results, disaggregated by polling station.

Post-Election Developments

In the days following the elections, CCC publicly rejected the official results, citing a process that lacked integrity, including voter suppression tactics on election day. On 29 August, the party called for fresh elections to be held under the auspices of international and regional bodies such as the AU and SADC. Despite expectations that CCC might challenge the election outcomes, no contestant submitted formal objections against the electoral process or the results.¹¹⁶ As reasons, the opposition cited the judiciary's lack of impartiality, the absence of sufficient evidence, and the prohibitive cost of filing a complaint, which stood at USD 200,000.

There was a widespread perception that, after election day, the human rights situation continued to deteriorate. In what appeared to be a general crackdown on civil society, several citizen observers, human rights defenders, polling officers, and party agents alleged threats, attacks, abductions, and torture after election day. Some CSO activists and party agents decided to hide and temporarily shut down their offices.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ The presidential results were announced based on valid votes cast, a departure from the 2018 harmonised elections, where results were declared on all votes cast on the basis of the same legal provision. By this latter measure, the incumbent's vote share would be approximately 51.5 percent. Art. 110 of the Electoral Act requires presidential candidates to get "more than ½ the number of votes" in the first round to win.

¹¹⁵ Although not required by law, ZEC published polling station-disaggregated results in the 2018 harmonised elections. In a press release, ZEC justified its decision of not releasing the polling station results protocols in the current process by stating that these were handed over to party agents after the vote count. Together with the presidential results, ZEC released the number of registered voters per constituency; yet, a few days later, changed registration figures for 40 constituencies without explanation.

¹¹⁶ Petitions challenging the presidential results can be filed before the Constitutional Court within 7 days of the announcement of the official results; the court has 14 days to render a decision. Petitions for NA and local elections could be filed before the electoral court within 14 days of the announcement of the official results; the court has to deliver a judgment within 6 months. Electoral court decisions can be further appealed to the Supreme Court, whose decisions need to be issued within three months.

¹¹⁷ A CSO reported to the EU EOM that approximately 74 party agents, mainly from Mashonaland Central, had to go into hiding due to pressure to sign corrected V.11 forms. Three CCC affiliates, namely Nelson Mukwehnha, Womberaishe Nhende, and Sanele Mkhulane, were abducted and subjected to torture on 26 August and 2 September. Their lawyers were later arrested on 4 September.

XIX. RECOMMENDATIONS

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
LEGAL FRAMEWORK						
1	9	56 of the 210 constituencies showed a discrepancy higher than 20 percent from the average, among these, 8 showed a discrepancy higher than 30 percent, and 3 higher than 40 percent; there are 97 of 210 where the deviation was higher than 15 percent	Constitutional provisions to be duly enforced regarding how to draw new boundaries for electoral districts.	ZEC regulatory framework	ZEC	The right to equal suffrage, equality of the vote <i>UDHR - Article 21, (3):</i> “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections...by universal and equal suffrage...” <i>IUNHRC, General Comment No. 25, para. 21:</i> “The drawing of electoral boundaries and method of allocating votes should not distort the distribution of voters.”
2	10	<i>Provisions pertaining to the electoral system, electoral administration, voter and candidate registration, election observation, campaign finance, and complaints and appeals should be reviewed to bring the legal framework fully in line with international standards. Moreover, laws recently passed eroded the separation of powers and curtailed the rights of assembly, association, and expression, limiting the civic and political space. The regulatory framework is insufficient and lacks important procedural details. ZEC’s inconsistent publication of its regulations compromised principles of transparency, accessibility, and legal certainty.</i>	<i>Comprehensive and meaningful electoral reform is needed to bring legislation in line with regional and international standards espoused by Zimbabwe. It is recommended that such reform is informed by the principles of transparency and inclusivity.</i>	<i>Constitution</i> <i>Electoral Act</i> <i>ZEC Regulations</i> <i>Criminal Code</i> <i>MPOA</i> <i>Interception of Communications Act</i>	<i>Parliament</i> <i>ZEC</i>	Independence of election admin. <i>ICCPR, Gen. Comment 25, Art. 20</i> Independence of the judiciary <i>ICCPR, Article 14, para. 1</i> Freedom of assembly <i>ICCPR Article 21</i> Equality of the vote <i>UDHR, Article 21, (3)</i> Right to stand <i>ICCPR, Art. 25, UNHRC, Gen. Comment No. 25, para. 16</i> Right to informed choice <i>ICCPR, Art. 19.2, ICCPR, Gen. Comment 34</i> Timely and effective remedy <i>ICCPR Article 2(3) (a) and (c)</i>

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION						
3	11	<i>While the legislative framework establishes ZEC as an independent body, guarantees for its independent operation are not fully sufficient. This is corroborated by the appointment method of ZEC commissioners, the role of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in approving ZEC regulations, and the lack of clear criteria to ensure impartiality of lower-level election administration officers.</i>	<i>Ensure that ZEC and its staff are able to operate without political influence at all levels, including in their appointment mechanisms and by removing governmental approval of its regulations.</i>	<i>Electoral Act</i>	<i>Parliament</i>	ICCPR), Gen. Comment 25, Art. 20 “An independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially...” African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Art. 17.1 “Establish and strengthen independent and impartial national electoral bodies for the management of elections.” SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Election, Art. 5.1.3 “Establish impartial, professional, independent, all inclusive, competent, and accountable EMBs, staffed by eminent, non-partisan and capable commissioners...”
4	12	<i>ZEC only published the information minimally required by the law, did not proactively share key information and data about the electoral process with stakeholders, and in general, its activities were characterised by a lack of transparency.</i>	<i>ZEC to provide timely and comprehensive information on all aspects of electoral preparations to the public, including its decisions and regulations</i>	<i>Electoral Act</i>	<i>Parliament</i>	UDHR, Art. 19 “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information...” African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Art. 12 State parties shall “Promote good governance by ensuring transparent and accountable administration.”

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
VOTER REGISTRATION						
5	14	Information shared by ZEC on the voter registration process and the voters' roll itself was not comprehensive nor timely. Stakeholders were not provided with a meaningful access to the voters' roll in time before election day. ZEC did not inform the public about its efforts to amend and correct the voter registration data.	ZEC to undertake a comprehensive audit of the voters' roll and proactively disclose all relevant information regarding voter registration, including its efforts to ensure the accuracy of the database. All stakeholders to be granted meaningful and timely access to the final voters' roll in analysable formats before election day.	No legal change needed.	Parliament	<i>UDHR, Art. 19</i> "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds..." <i>African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Art. 12</i> "Promote good governance by ensuring transparent and accountable administration."
REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES						
6	16	Registration fees were increased by 2,000 percent, unduly high, preventing many parties to file for candidates and aspiring candidates to register. ZEC applied the rules in an inconsistent manner. On nomination day many were requested to make the cash payment of the fee in USD.	A review of candidate registration requirements should be made to see they are in line with international commitments and their implementation consistently applied by ZEC.	ZEC regulation	ZEC	The right to stand <i>ICCPR, Art. 25, Gen. Comment 25, para. 16:</i> "Conditions relating to nomination dates, fees or deposits should be reasonable and not discriminatory."
CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT						
7	19	<i>According to EO EOM observer reports, a large proportion of the opposition's application for assemblies (rallies and other meetings with voters) were denied by police authorities across the country. Police used the wide remit granted by the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MPOA) to deny permission.</i>	<i>To safeguard the right of assembly, amend MPOA to limit discretionary application and ensure that its implementation never unduly limits the right to assemble, with any restrictions being clearly prescribed by law, necessary in a democratic society and proportionate to the interests they aim to protect.</i>	<i>MPOA</i>	<i>Parliament</i> <i>Police</i>	Freedom of Assembly <i>ICCPR, Art. 21</i> "The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognised. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society..." <i>African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Art. 11</i> "Every individual shall have the right to assemble freely with others..."

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
8	20	The playing field was decisively tilted in favour of the incumbent with a view to misuse of state resources and abuses of office (e.g., fiscal and support measures for specific social and professional groups introduced ahead of the elections, use of state company buses for campaign purposes, initiation of infrastructure and other projects). There are no adequate measures in place to foster a level playing field. EU EOM observers reported many cases of advantages of incumbency from across the country. Section 281(2) of the Constitution provides that traditional leaders must act in a politically neutral way. EU EOM observers reported that traditional leaders were actively involved in the campaign, including through measures that constituted intimidation.	To level the playing field, introduce legislative measures, including effective and dissuasive sanctions, to mitigate the advantages of incumbency and guard against the misuse of state resources. Also introduce mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning partisanship of traditional leaders and civil servants.	Electoral Act Criminal Code	Parliament	Level Playing Field and Equality <i>ICCPR, Gen. Comment 25, para. 19</i> <i>UNCAC, Art. 17</i> <i>ACHPR, Art. 13(2)&(3)</i> <i>SADC PF, Norms and Standards for Elections, Part 3 (6)</i>

CAMPAIGN FINANCE					
9	20	The Political Parties (Finance) Act does not include disclosure and reporting requirements, resulting in a lack of transparency and accountability in the area of campaign financing. There is no independent institution in place to oversee campaign financing. Third-parties actively campaigned for the ruling party, without any disclosure or reporting requirement.	To promote transparency and accountability, ensure that campaign financing is subject to disclosure and reporting requirements, as well as oversight by an independent authority, given the right and capacity to audit accounts and sanction violators. Make political issue advertising and third-party campaigning subject to similar regulation.	Political Parties (Finance) Act	Parliament Level playing field and transparency <i>ICCPR, Gen. Comment 25, para. 1</i> “Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified...” <i>UNCAC) Art. 7.3</i> “Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate measures...to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office...” <i>SADC PF), Norms and Standards for Elections, Part 3 (6)</i> “The Electoral Commission should therefore be legally empowered to prohibit certain types of expenditures so as to limit the undue impact of money on the democratic process and the outcome of an election....”
MEDIA					
10	22	The double accreditation process for journalists, both by ZEC and the ZMC imposed administrative and financial burdens and is potentially detrimental to the coverage of election-related events. Delays in accreditation and unexplained refusals, particularly to foreign media, fostered perceptions of government interference and opacity.	ZEC and ZMC to simplify and make transparent journalist accreditation, as it promotes media freedom, allows for diverse election coverage, and facilitates journalists in carrying out their role effectively during elections.	Internal regulations	ZEC ZMC Right to Receive Information <i>UDHR, Article 19</i> “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” <i>ACHPR, Art. 9</i> “1. Every individual shall have the right to receive information. 2. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.”
11	23	The excessive share of voice and uncritical treatment of President Mnangagwa, ZANU-PF and the current government indicate that the state broadcaster is at odds with the SADC Principles and Guidelines on the Conduct of Democratic Elections and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.	ZBC to be reformed into a truly independent public service broadcaster and state-owned media must abide by their legal obligation to be impartial and provide	No legal change needed	ZBC Right to Freedom of Expression UDHR. Art.19: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and

			equitable treatment to all political parties and candidates.			regardless of frontiers.” <i>African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Art. 17 (3)</i> , “Ensure fair and equitable access by contesting parties and candidates to state controlled media ...”
SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS						
12	25	The social media environment was vibrant, but polarised. Hundreds of troll accounts engaged in an online battle to support the two main parties on X. (...) Election-related information manipulation circulated widely on social media, especially on WhatsApp, as reported by interlocutors. The EU EOM identified several falsehoods and rumours being disseminated online by political actors, official media, and online content creators (...) Despite three independent local fact-checking initiatives that tried to counter election-related disinformation, they lacked resources to verify the large number of falsehoods online. Voters were limited when forming opinions independently, free from manipulative interference.	Support independent fact-checking initiatives, digital and media literacy through public educational and advocacy measures to help tackle online information manipulation during elections, while avoiding criminalising disinformation.	No change to the legal framework required.	Government, ZEC, political parties, media, online media, social media platforms, civil society, fact checkers, international development partners and other election stakeholders.	Transparency and access to information. Prevention of corruption/Fairness in the election campaign <i>UDHR. Art. 19</i> <i>UN, OSCE, OAS, ACHPR Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and ‘Fake News’</i> , <i>Disinformation and Propaganda</i> : “States should take measures to promote media and digital literacy, including by covering these topics as part of the regular school curriculum and by engaging with civil society and other stakeholders to raise awareness about these issues.”
13	26	The rights to freedom of expression, privacy and access to information are restricted by the 2007 Interception of Communications Act which provides for internet shutdowns, surveillance, and interception of communications without judicial oversight. Interlocutors expressed concern over digital technology surveillance and the invasion of citizen’s privacy. The Cyber and Data Protection Act’s (CDPA) wording and wide scope can be misused to target dissenting voices. The CDPA criminalises the transmission of false data concerning a person, reintroducing defamation in contravention to regional and international principles.	To amend the 2007 Interception of Communications Act and the Cyber and Data Protection Act to fully comply with fundamental rights of freedom of expression, access to information and privacy.	Interception of Communications Act Cyber and Data Protection Act	Parliament Data Protection Authority	Right to Freedom of Expression/Right to privacy. <i>ICCPR, art. 17</i> : “1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy...nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.” <i>ACHPR. Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. Principle 40, 41, 22</i> : “Everyone has the right to privacy...protection of their personal information.” <i>SADC Model Law HIPSSA –Data Protection. Chapter III (1)</i>
WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION						
14	29	The constitution ensures seats to women and youth in the NA but without constituencies assigned. This has the effect of limiting their equitable participation for directly elected seats.	Amend the current provisions on women and youth quotas to grant effective gender equality and fair youth representation in line with the constitution.	Constitution Electoral Act	Parliament Political Parties	<i>ICCPR, Art. 3</i> <i>CEDAW. Art 4.1 and 7 (a)</i> <i>Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, Art.9(a)(b)</i>

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CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION					
17	32	<i>Observer activities were hindered by a cumbersome implementation of the accreditation procedures by ZEC, and coordinated media and social media campaigns against citizen and international observer groups. Undue police actions prevented the civic monitoring of election results and also unduly pressured and intimidated CSOs conducting sample-based result projections.</i>	<i>Establish and implement effective mechanisms to prevent undue restrictions on observation activities, and to prevent pressure and intimidation of both citizen and international observers.</i>	<i>No legal change needed.</i>	<i>Parliament</i> <i>African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Art. 19</i> “Each State Party shall guarantee conditions of security, free access to information, non-interference, freedom of movement and full cooperation with the electoral observer mission.”
ELECTORAL DISPUTES					
18	33	While the electoral act mandates trials to be “completed as expeditiously as possible”, the absence of deadlines for adjudicating pre-electoral complaints hampered the right to timely and effective remedy and affected the preparatory work for elections, with cases pertaining to the registration of candidates outstanding on e-day, and ZEC compelled to extend some deadlines such as ballot printing and distribution and postal voting. Elected candidates took office before the deadline to submit petitions expired.	Legal deadlines for the adjudication of complaints need to guarantee a timely and effective remedy. The legal timeframe for the resolution of electoral disputes should be introduced to provide expeditious decisions in line with the electoral calendar.	Electoral act	Parliament The right to an effective and timely remedy <i>ICCPR, article 2.3</i> obliges states to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy. <i>ACHPR article 7, paragraph 1</i> provides that “every individual shall have the right to have his cause heard. This comprises: (e) the right to be tried within a reasonable time by an impartial court or tribunal.”
19	33	<i>The judiciary played a key role in the process. All legal instruments regulating the election and all key phases of the process were challenged before the court. The acute lack of confidence expressed by many interlocutors in the judiciary raised concerns about the role of courts in settling electoral disputes and on public confidence in its rulings.</i>	<i>To safeguard the independence of the judiciary, the appointment procedures of judges to be reviewed to guarantee the division powers and prevent executive interference in the selection of high court judges, in line with international</i>	<i>Constitution</i>	<i>Parliament</i> The right to judicial review by an independent court <i>UDHR, Art. 19</i> <i>ICCPR, Art. 14, para. 1 and Art. 2.3</i> <i>ACHPR, Art. 26</i>
VOTING, COUNTING AND TABULATION					
20	34	While most pre-electoral preparations were conducted on time, with the exception of ballot printing, on election day, a high number of polling stations opened with significant delay, impacting the voting rights of many voters.	ZEC to examine the reasons for the late delivery of electoral material on election day and seek guarantees to ensure timely execution of all electoral preparations in future processes, ensuring that all voters have equal opportunities to vote.	No legal change needed.	ZEC <i>UDHR, Art. 21</i> <i>ICCPR, Art. 25</i>

RESULTS AND POST-ELECTORAL DEVELOPMENTS					
21	36	<i>Despite requests, ZEC did not comprehensively publish its regulations on results management; some procedures were overlapping and not sufficiently clarified. Importantly, ZEC did not publish election results disaggregated by polling station.</i>	<i>ZEC to publish timely electoral results, disaggregated by polling station.</i>	<i>Electoral Act</i>	<i>Parliament</i>
					ICCPR, GC 34

ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS¹¹⁸

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Total number of registered voters	6,623,511
Total number of votes cast	4,561,221
Voters' turnout	68.9%
Total number of valid votes	4,468,668
Total number of invalid votes	92,553

Candidate (in order of appearance on the ballot)	Votes won	Percentage of valid votes cast	Total number of vote cast & percentage
Busha Joseph Makamba – (Freezim Congress)	18,816	0.4%	0,4%
Chamisa Nelson – Citizen Coalition for Change (CCC)	1,967,343	44%	43.1%
Chikohora Trust Tapiwa – Zimbabwe Coalition For Peace and Development (ZCPD)	10,230	0.2%	0.2%
Kasiyamhuru Blessing – Zimbabwe Partnership for Prosperity (ZIPP)	13,060	0.3%	0.3%
Madhuku Lovemore – National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)	5,323	0.1%	0.1%
Mnangagwa Emmerson Dambudzo – Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU- PF)	2,350,711	52.6%	51.5%
Mubaiwa Wilbert Archbald – National People's Congress (NPC)	53,517	1.2%	1.2%
Muzorewa Gwinyai Henry – United African National Council (UANC)	7,053	0.2%	0.2%
Mwonzora Douglas Togarasei – Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)	28,883	0.6%	0,6%
Valerio Elisabeth-Isabel – United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA)	6,989	0.2%	0.2%

¹¹⁸ Data according to the final results [published](#) by ZEC.

Wilson Harry Peter – Democratic Opposition Party (DOP)	6,743	0.2%	0.2%
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PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

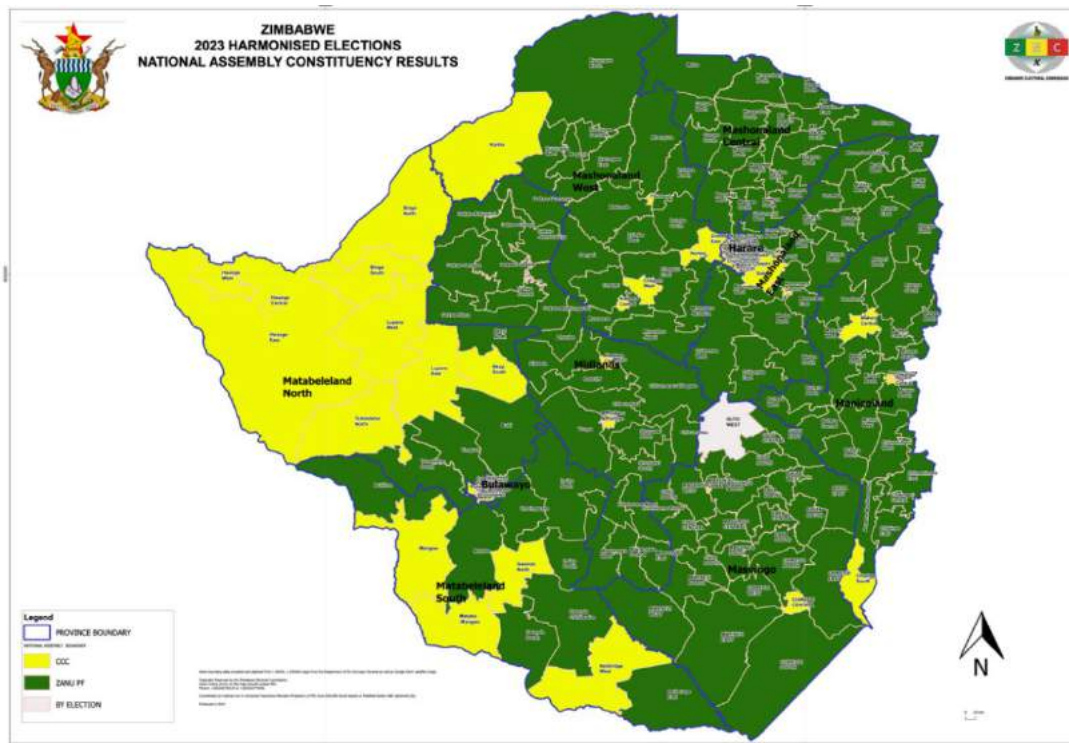
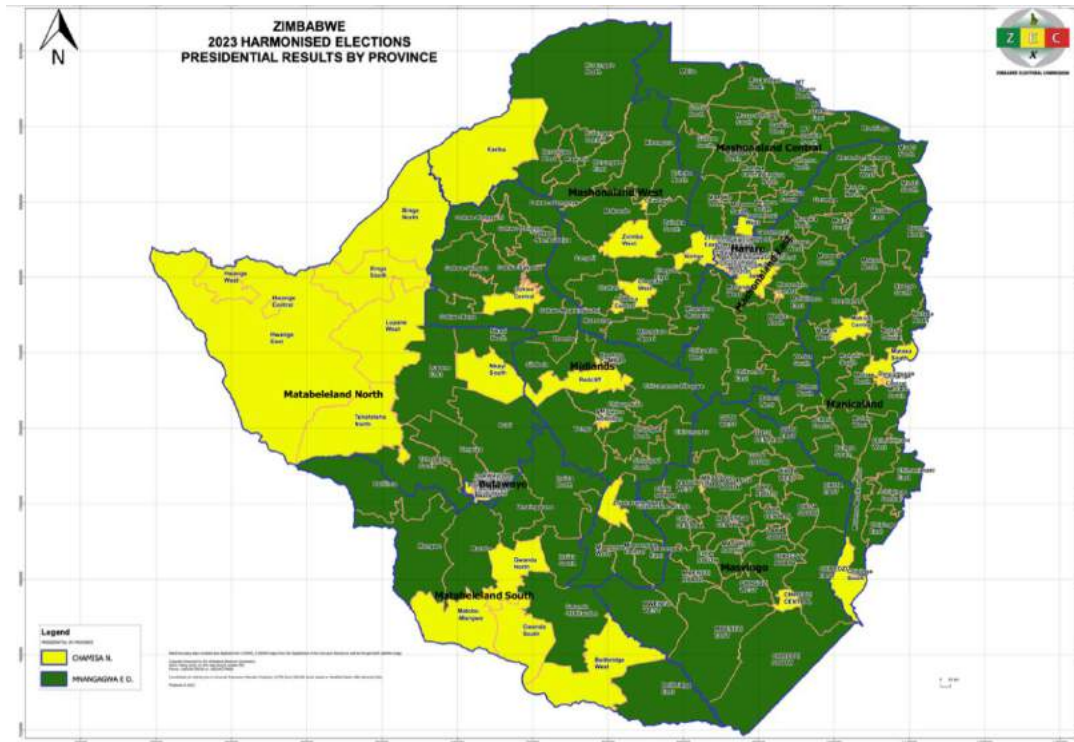
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Political party	Majoritarian mandates won (among them women)	Women quota mandates won	Youth quota mandates won (among them women)	Total
Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)	136 (12)	33	7 (1)	176
Citizen Coalition for Change (CCC)	73 (11)	27	3 (2)	103

SENATE

Political party	Mandates won (among them women)
ZANU-PF	33 (19)
Citizen Coalition for change (CCC)	27 (16)
<i>Senators to represent persons with disabilities</i>	2 (1)
<i>Traditional Chiefs in the Senate</i>	18

ANNEX II: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS MAP¹¹⁹



¹¹⁹ Maps [published](#) by ZEC.

ANNEX III – MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS

From 23 July until 3 September 2023, EU EOM Zimbabwe monitored the following media outlets:

3 TV channels:

State owned **ZBC TV**, Zimpapers¹²⁰ owned **ZTN**, and private **3KTV** - in their primetime from 17:00 to 00:00,

6 radio stations:

ZBC owned **Radio Zimbabwe**, **Power FM**, and **Classic 263**; Zimpapers owned **Star FM** and **Capitalk**; and privately owned **ZiFM** - from 06:00 to 09:00 and 18:00 to 21:30

10 newspapers:

Zimpapers publications **The Herald**, **The Chronicle**, **The Manica Post**, **The Sunday Mail**, **The Sunday News**; and privately owned **NewsDay**, **The Standard**, **The Independent**, **The Daily News**, and **The Daily News on Sunday**.

The media monitoring findings are based on the analysis of 1141 television and 1585 radio items, and 1732 newspaper articles related to political actors or the elections, all of which were manually coded for topic, tone, size, and prominence.

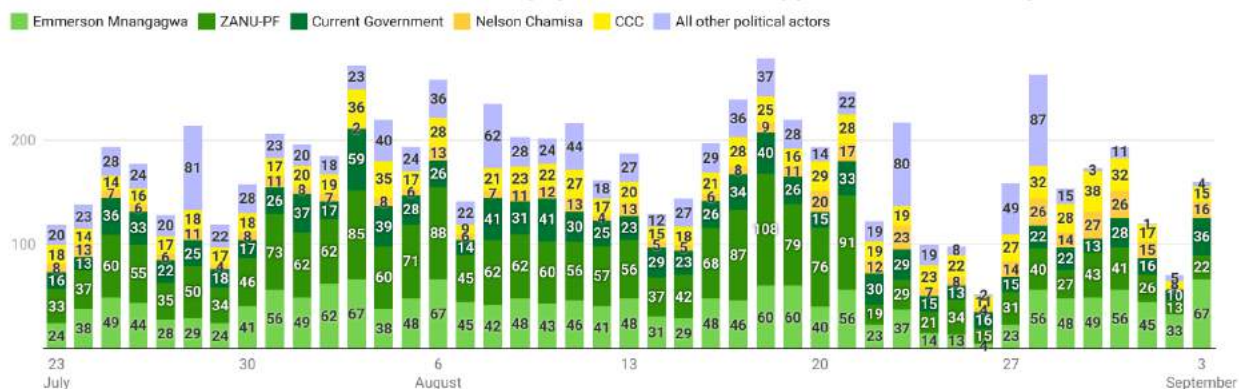
HOW TO READ THE CHARTS

- The doughnut charts show the distribution of airtime or space (in percentage) allotted to political parties by each media outlet;
- The bar charts show the tone of the coverage (negative, neutral, positive) and share of voice, both in total and per category.
- The time is monitored in seconds for the electronic media and space is measured in cm² for print media.

¹²⁰ The government owns 51 percent of the shares of the Zimpapers Group

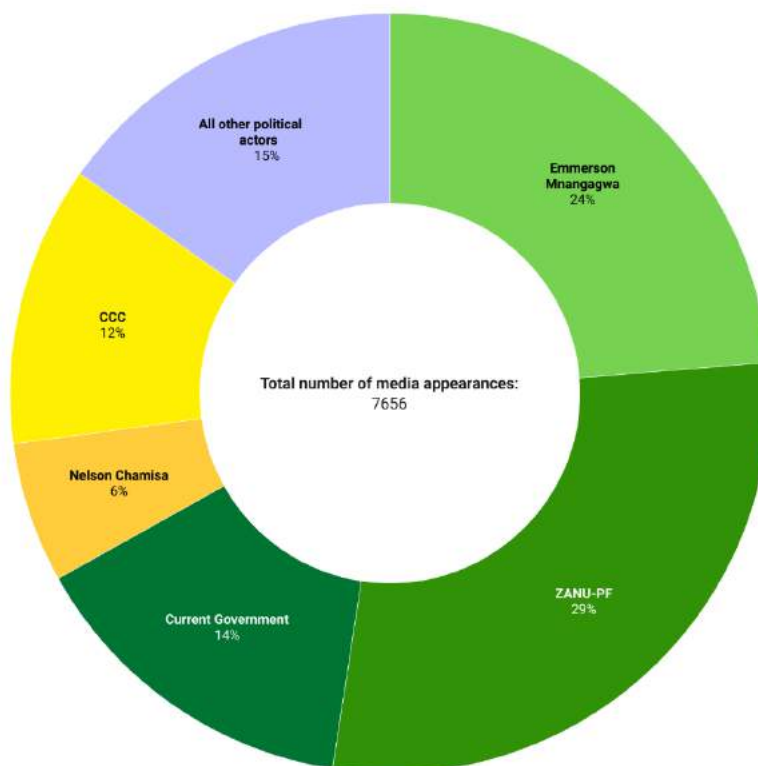
OVERVIEW

Chart 01: All monitored TV, radio and newspapers - number of appearances of main political actors



President Mnangagwa, ZANU-PF and the current government received the lion's share of coverage, featuring in 67 percent of analysed media items, in large part due to extensive favourable reporting by ZBC broadcast media and Zimpapers newspapers. CCC and Nelson Chamisa received a quarter of the airtime and print space given to the incumbency, featuring primarily in private media. Coverage of the largest opposition party in state-owned or controlled media outlets has been limited and predominantly negative in tone.

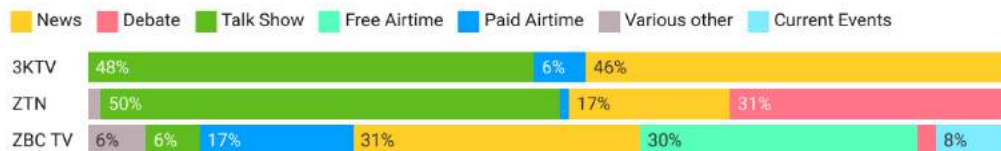
Chart 02: All monitored TV, radio and newspapers - share of voice of main political actors



Time range: 23 July - 3 September 2023
Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 - Media Monitoring - Created with Datawrapper

ZBC TV was most prolific in terms of political and electoral coverage, accounting for 58 percent of the relevant monitored sample. Radio Zimbabwe aired the largest amount of election related material and was the biggest seller of political advertising. Over 97 percent of political ads on Radio Zimbabwe were by ZANU-PF or President Mnangagwa, who also provided 65 percent of political ads in ZBC TV. The Herald was the most advertised in paper, with full page spreads of success stories of the government featuring in all monitored issues.

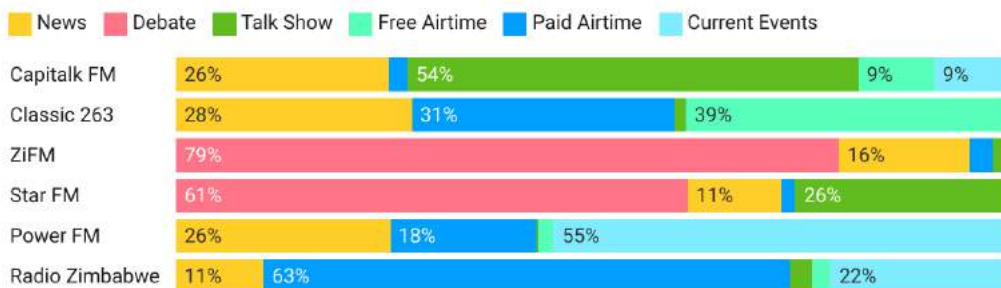
Chart 03: Type of TV coverage of electoral topics



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

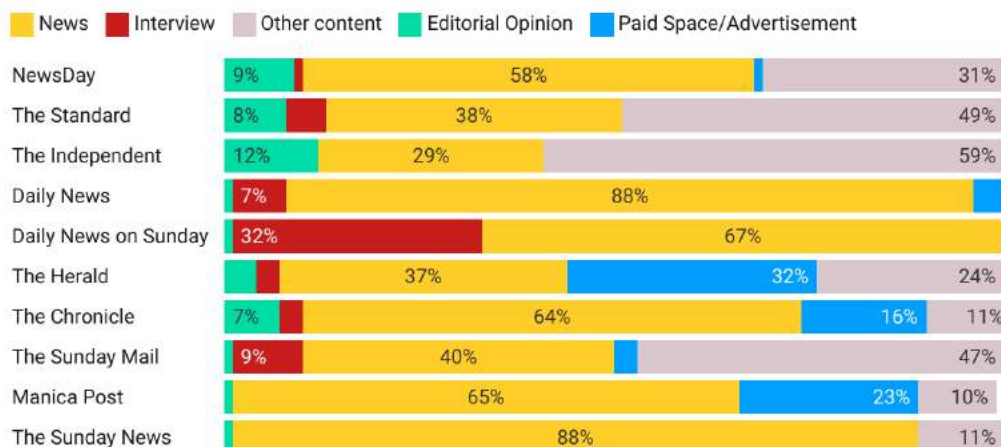
Chart 04: Type of radio coverage of electoral topics



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 05: Type of newspaper coverage of electoral topics

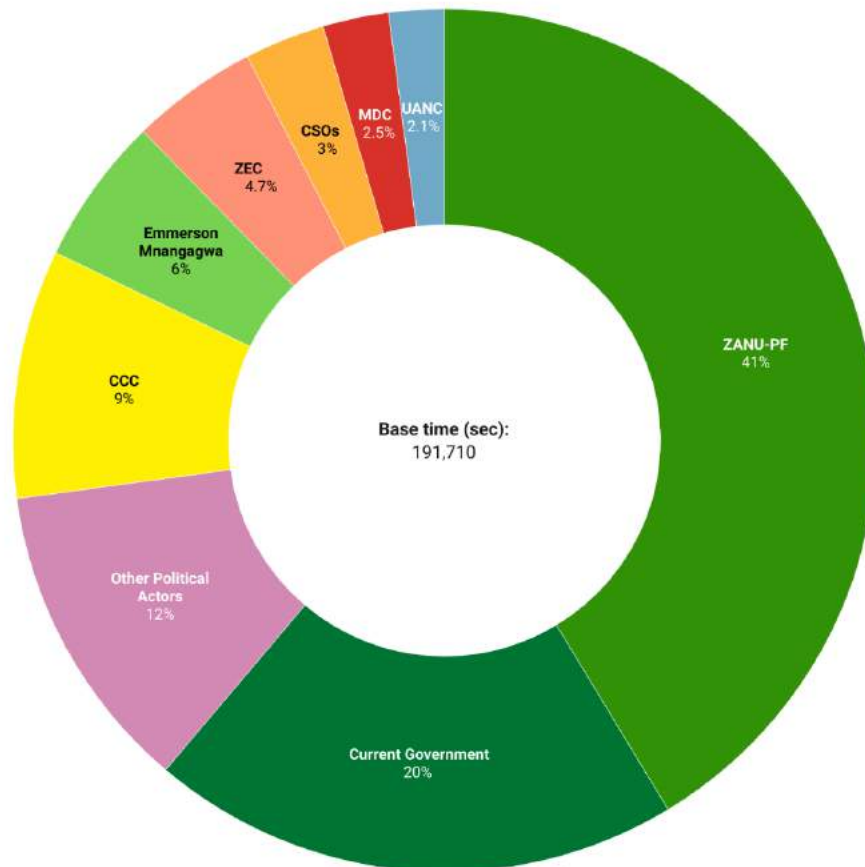


Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

STATE MEDIA / NATIONAL BROADCASTER

Chart 06: ZBC TV - share of airtime of main political actors

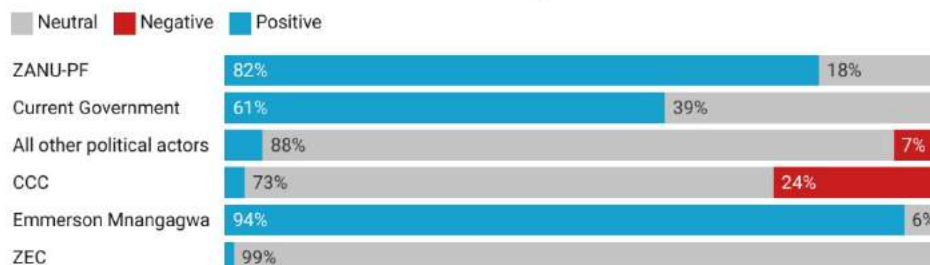


Time range: 23 July - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

The ZBC main TV channel afforded two thirds of its news and current affairs programming to the current government, ZANU-PF, and President Mnangagwa. Mentions of the president were positive 94 percent of the time, ZANU-PF enjoyed 83 percent positive coverage, whilst the government was praised in 61 percent of their mentions, with the remainder being neutral, and no negative stories. Only 3 percent of CCC coverage had a positive connotation, with negative

Chart 07: ZBC TV - tone of coverage



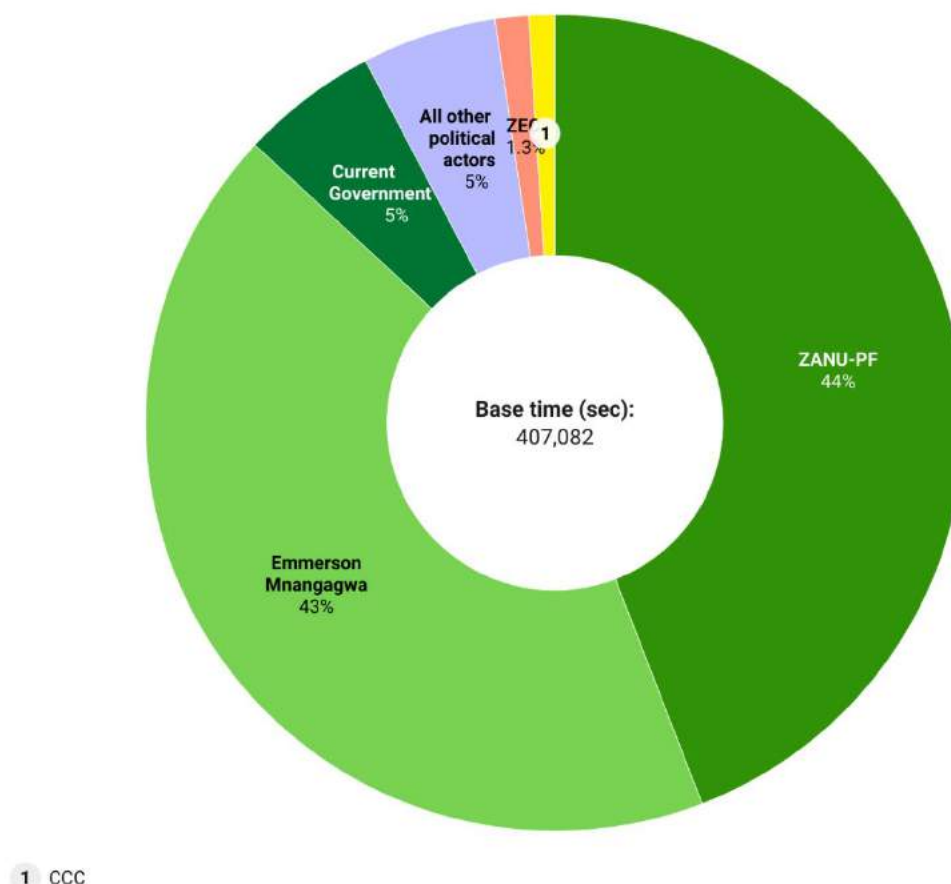
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

coverage accounting for 24 percent of the limited appearances of the main opposition party on national television.

Chart 08: ZBC radios - share of airtime of main political actors

Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263



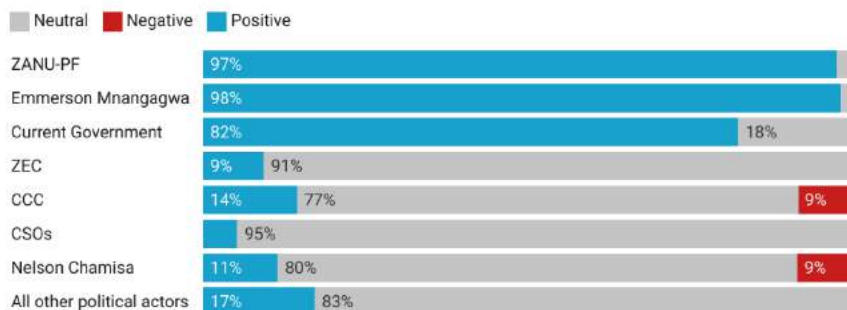
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

The bias of the state broadcaster towards the incumbency is even more evident though the content aired on ZBC owned radio stations, 92 percent of which was devoted to the current government,

Chart 09: ZBC radios - tone of coverage

Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

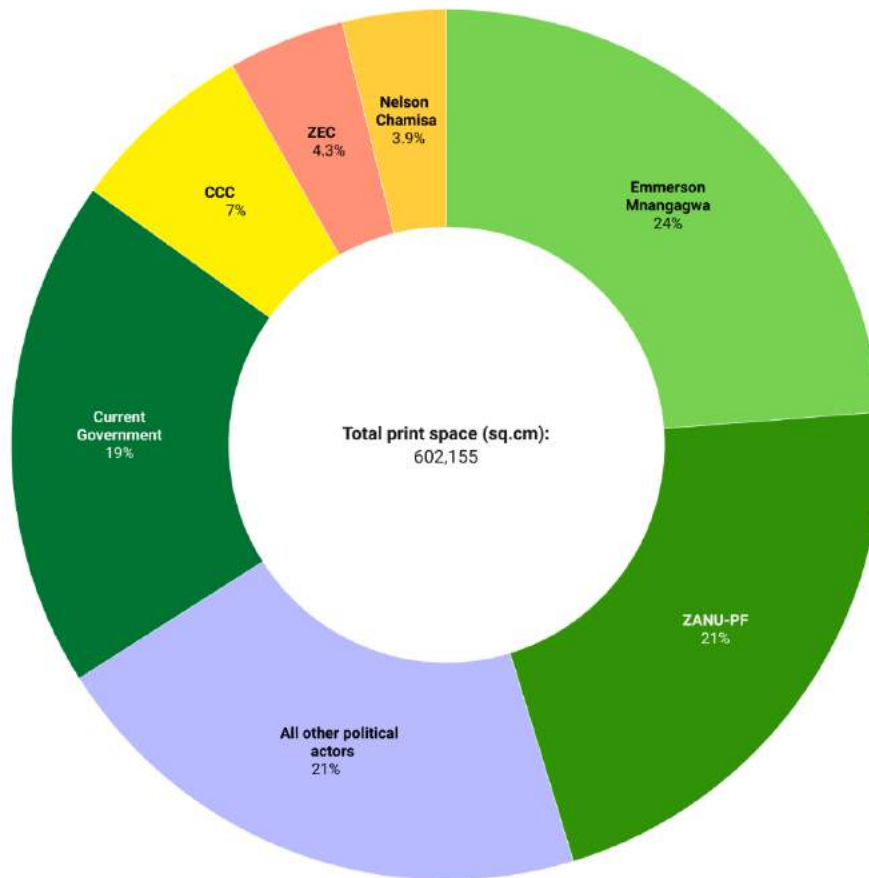
Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

the ruling party, and the president. The tone was positive in 97 percent of the time given to ZANU-PF, and 98 percent for President Mnangagwa. The government enjoyed 82 percent of positive coverage, Other political actors were scarcely, but mostly neutrally mentioned on the national broadcaster radios.

GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA

Chart 10: Zimpapers publications - share of print space of main political actors

The Herald, The Chronicle, The Manica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News



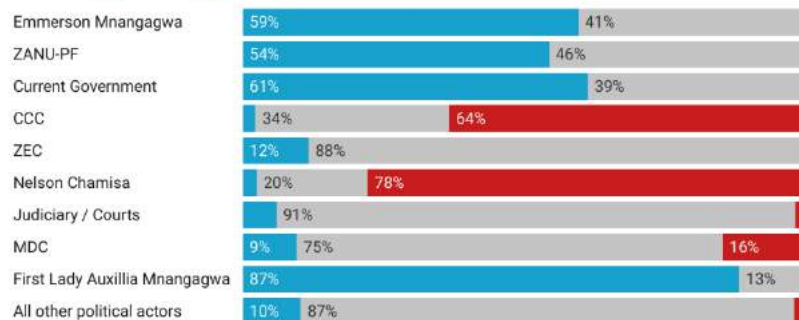
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 11: Zimpapers publications - tone of coverage

The Herald, The Chronicle, The Manica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News

■ Neutral ■ Negative ■ Positive

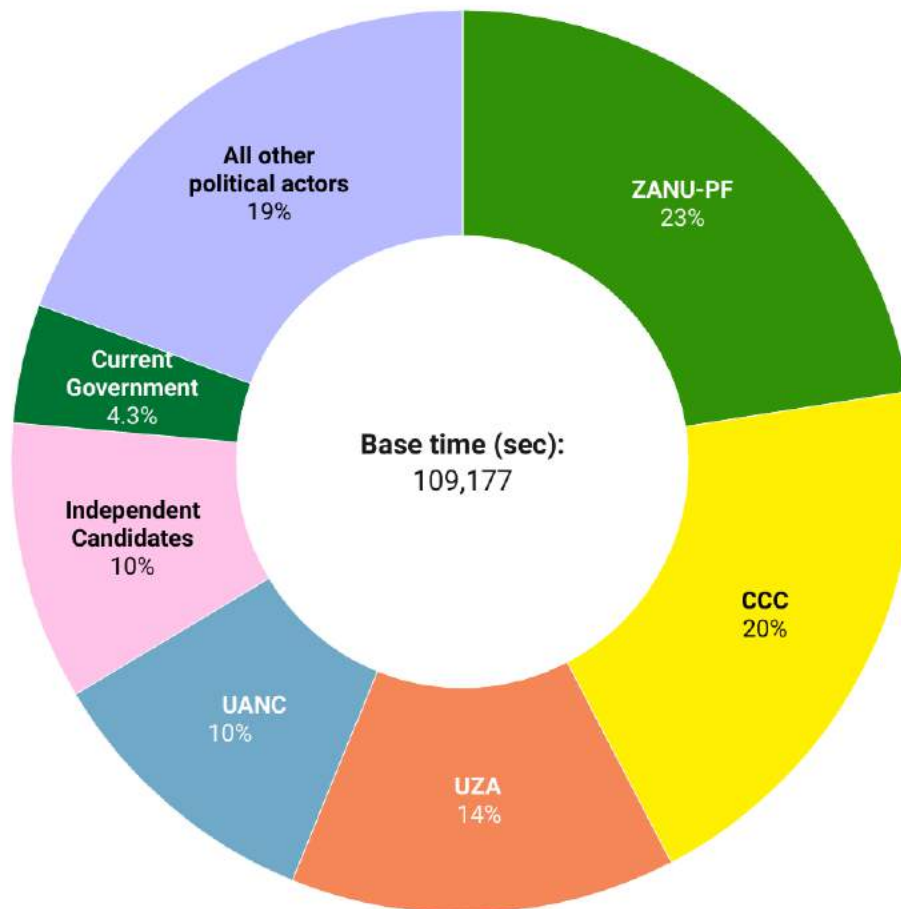


Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

Similarly, newspapers of the Zimpapers group, where the government owns 51 percent of shares, devoted ample positive coverage to the president, government, and ruling party. The CCC and Nelson Chamisa received 11 percent of the print space, with most articles about them being negative. Stories were often replicated across the publications, limiting the variety of content published by the group.

Chart 12: ZTN TV - share of airtime of main political actors

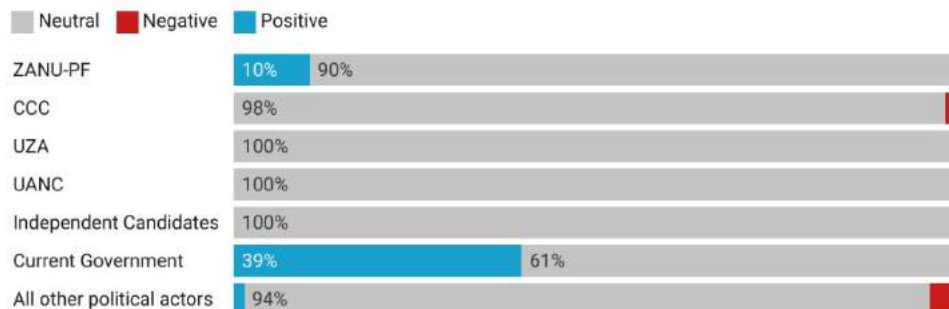


Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Zimpapers owned television channel ZTN devoted approximately half the airtime, compared with the state broadcaster, to political and electoral content. The channel provided equitable coverage,

Chart 13: ZTN TV - tone of coverage



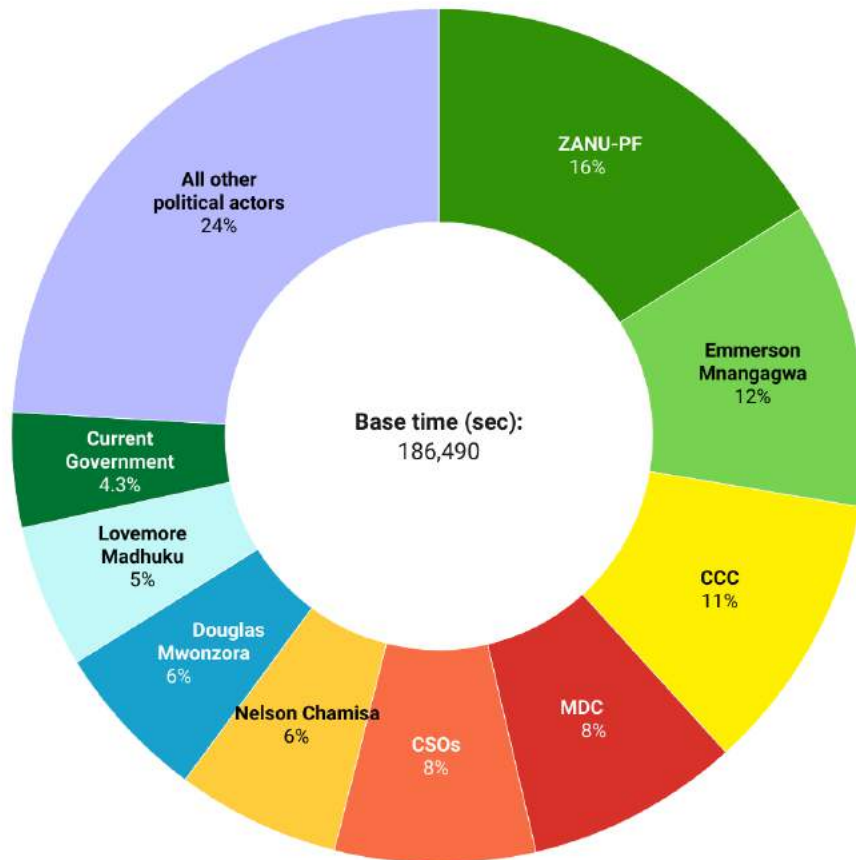
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

allotting nearly equal time to the two leading political parties, but also covering smaller political groupings and independent candidates. ZTN maintained a neutral tone in most of its coverage.

Chart 14: Zimpapers radios - share of airtime of main political actors

Star FM, Capitalk



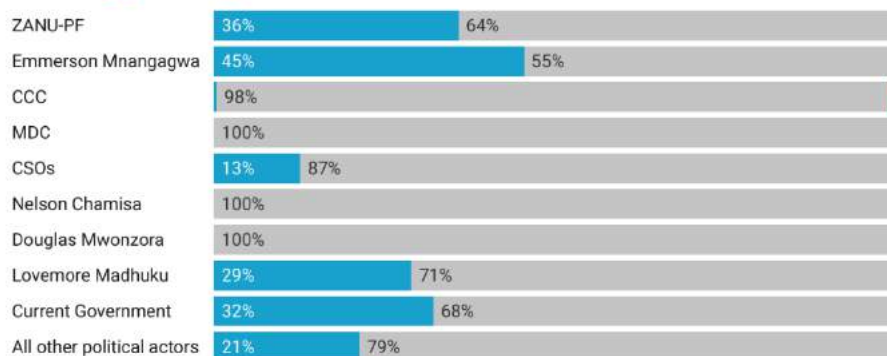
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 15: Zimpapers radios - tone of coverage

Star FM, Capitalk

Neutral Negative Positive



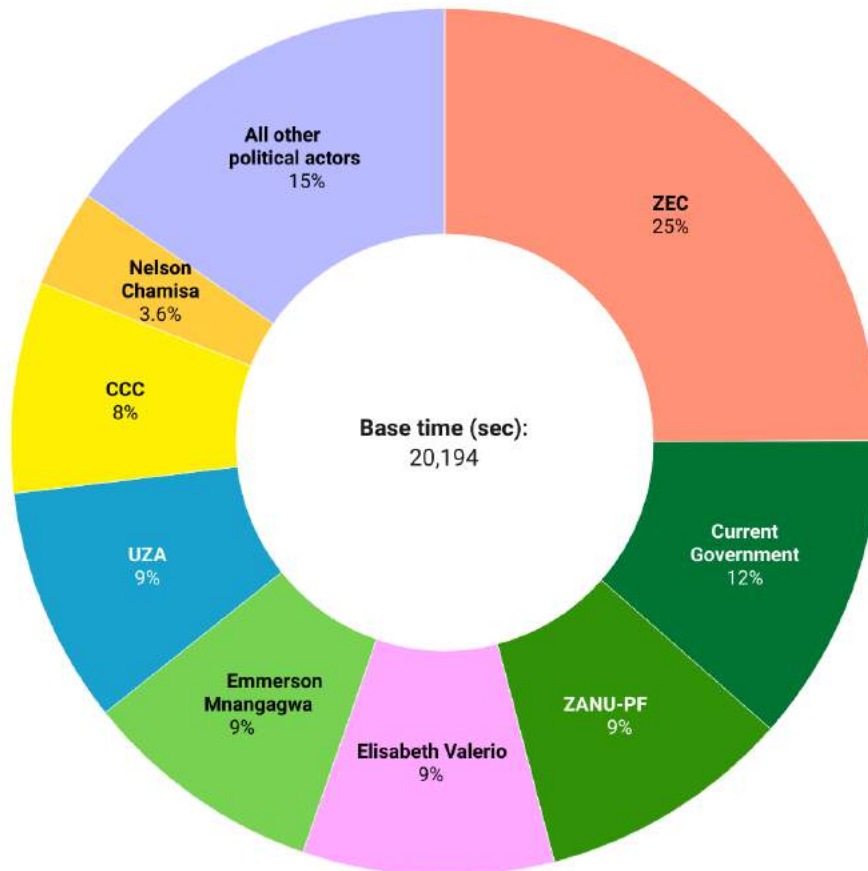
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

The editorial line in Zimpapers broadcasters is similar, as the group's radios provided various political actors time on their airwaves. The incumbency enjoyed a greater share of voice and more positive coverage than others, nonetheless Zimpapers radios provided relatively balanced coverage of most remaining contestants in the electoral race.

PRIVATELY OWNED MEDIA

Chart 16: 3KTV - share of airtime of main political actors

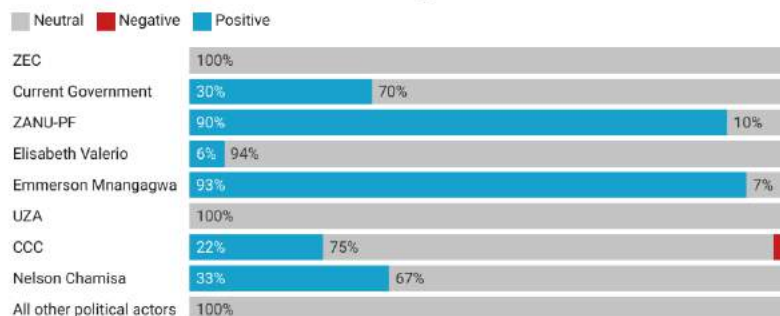


Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

ANZ owned 3KTV channel devoted limited airtime to political and electoral topics, accounting for 6 percent of the relevant television broadcasts analysed by the mission. Coverage of ZANU-PF and President Mnangagwa was predominantly positive, whilst other political actors were covered more neutrally. CCC received more praise than criticism on 3KTV, but most of the coverage of the main opposition party was neutral. The channel provided airtime to civil society organisations and independent analysts, expanding the views and opinions available to the electorate.

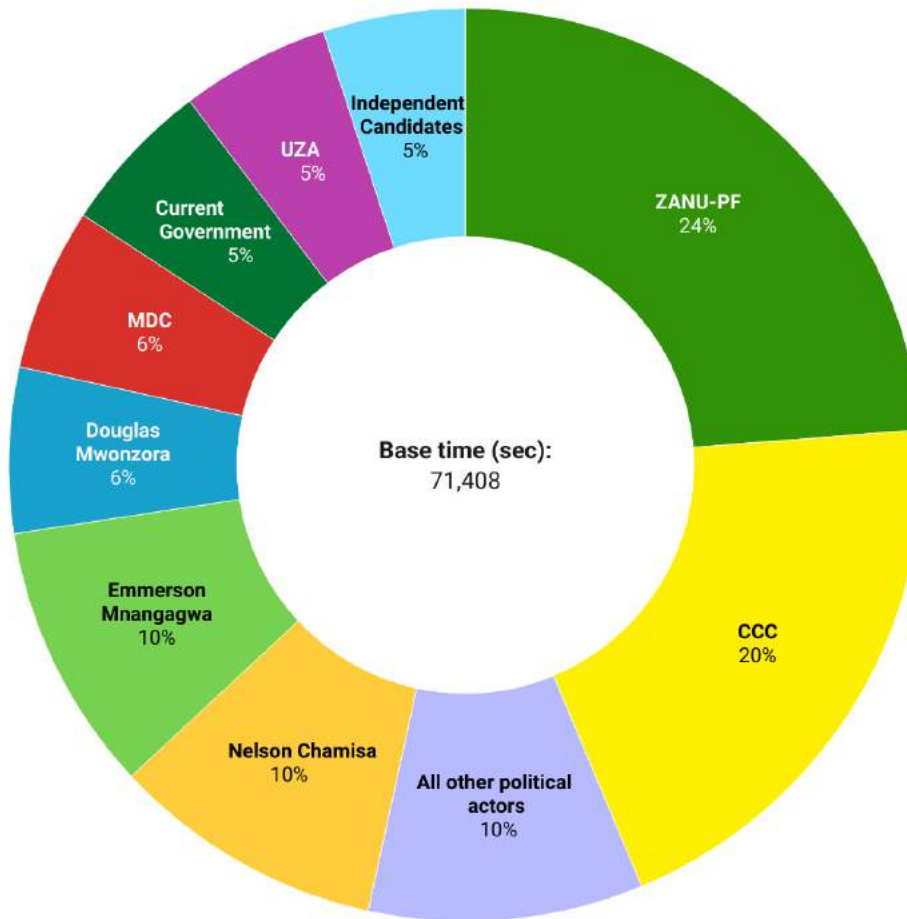
Chart 17: 3KTV - tone of coverage



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

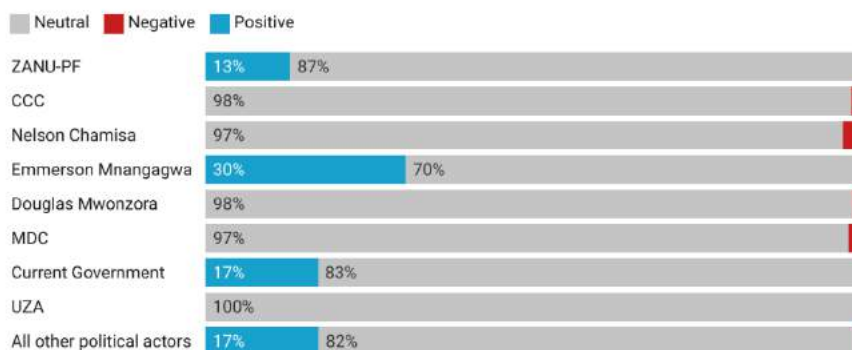
Chart 18: ZiFM radio - share of airtime of main political actors



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 19: ZiFM - tone of coverage



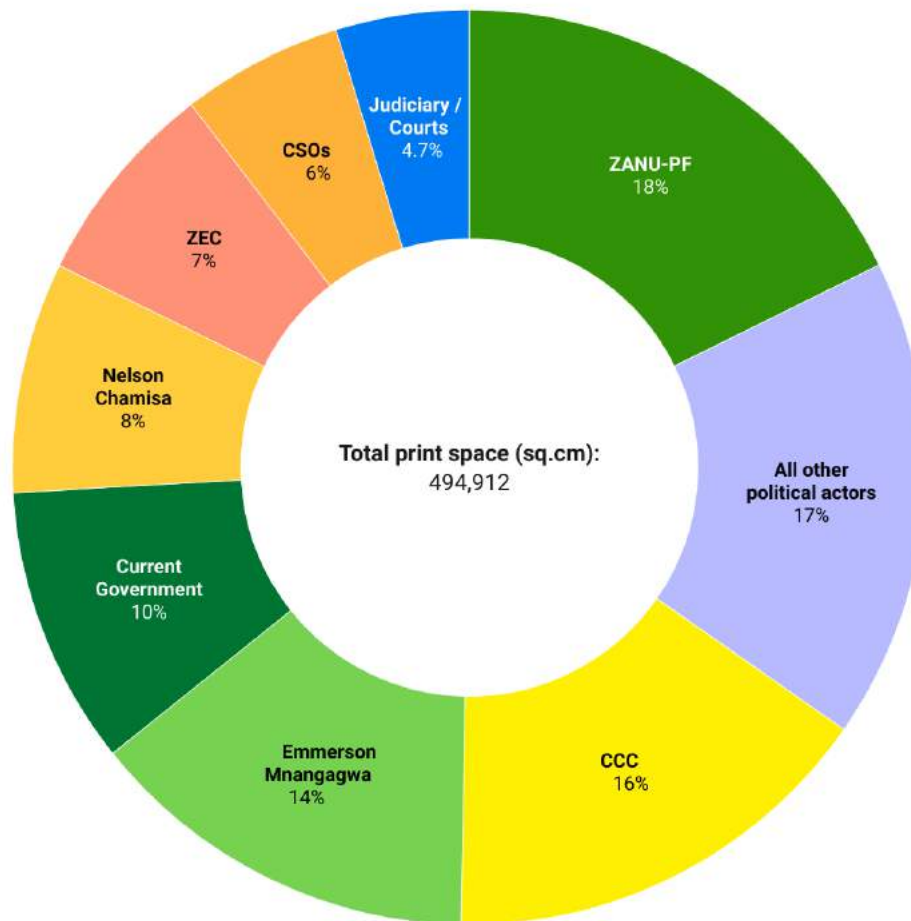
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Private radio station ZiFM, owned by AB Communications, attributed similar amounts of airtime to the main contestants in the elections and maintained a largely neutral tone throughout. Nonetheless, 13 percent of ZANU-PF coverage on the radio was positive, whilst CCC was mentioned negatively 2 percent of the time.

Chart 20: AMH publications - share of print space of main political actors

NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent

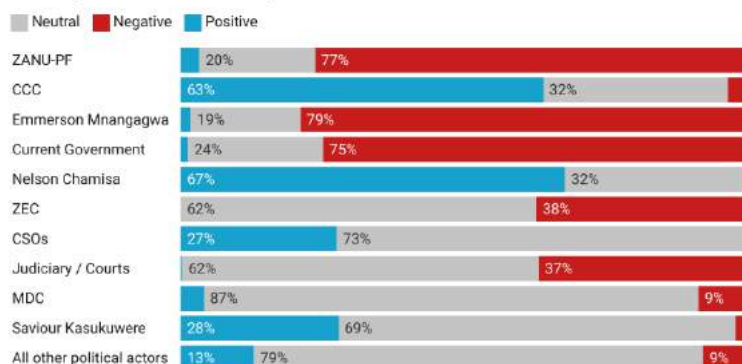


Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 21: AMH publications - tone of coverage

NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent



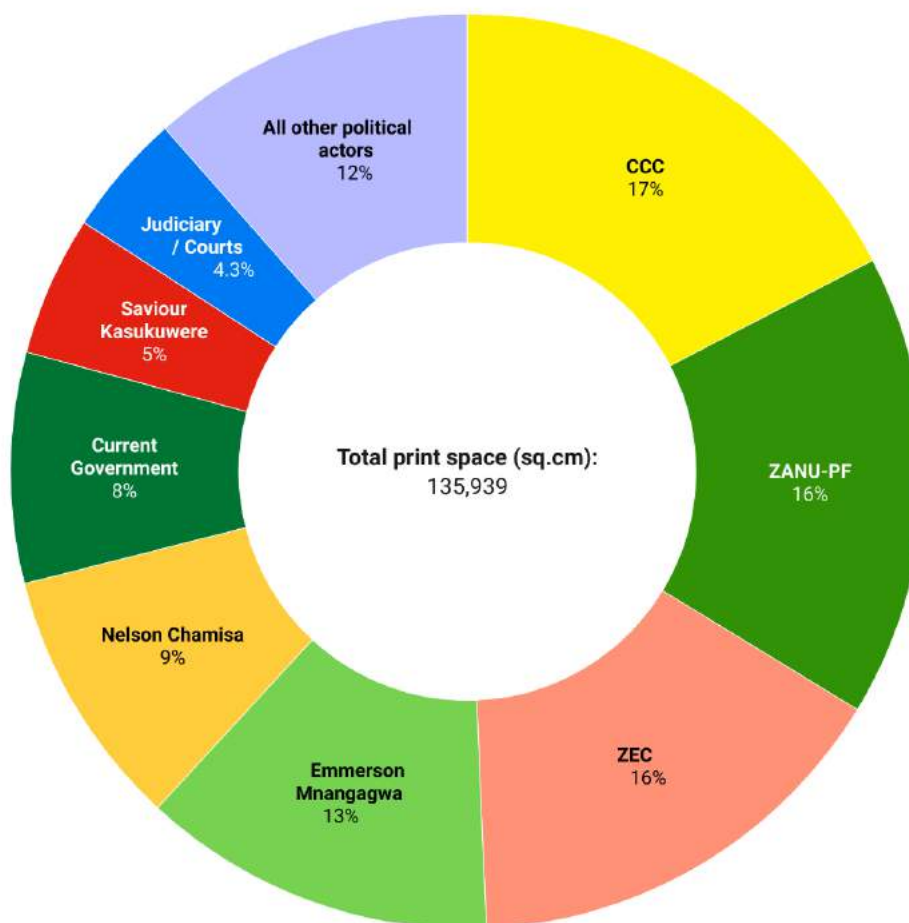
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Publications of Alpha Media Holding were largely critical of the government, ruling party and the president, whilst maintaining an overall positive tone towards the opposition, especially CCC and Nelson Chamisa. AMH publications counterbalanced the overwhelmingly positive coverage of the incumbency by Zimpapers, affording newspaper readers in the country a different point of view, thus expanding pluralism in the media sector.

Chart 22: ANZ publications - share of print space of main political actors

Daily News, Daily News on Sunday



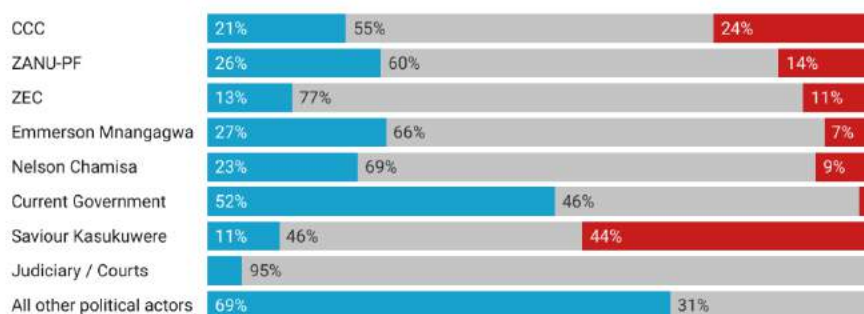
Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ★ Media Monitoring ★ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 23: ANZ publications - tone of coverage

NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent

Neutral Negative Positive



Time range: 23 July - 22 August 2023

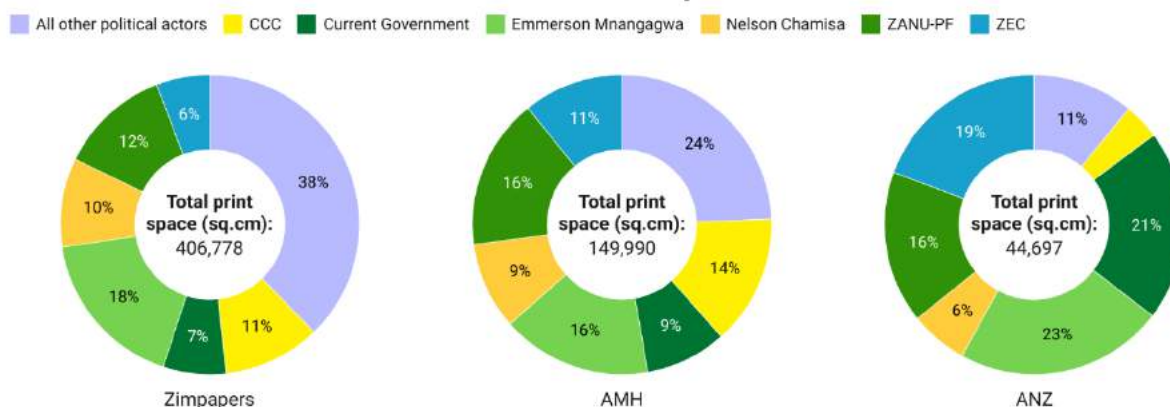
Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ★ Media Monitoring ★ Created with Datawrapper

ANZ group owned Daily News and Daily News on Sunday were balanced in their political and election related coverage. They gave nearly equal space to the leading contestants and coverage included both praise and criticism across the board, facilitating readers access to varied views about the political realities of the country.

POST-ELECTORAL PERIOD

The post-electoral period did not see changes in the editorial lines of any media. State-owned or controlled media outlets continued praising the president, ruling party, and government, as did ANZ owned print publications, whilst AMH newspapers outlets remained more critical of the incumbency. Full page ads containing congratulatory messages appeared in most print media, contributing to the share of voice received by the president-elect and the ruling party.

Chart 24: Post-Electoral Period - share of voice in print media



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 25: Post-Electoral Period - Zimpapers newspapers - tone of coverage

The Herald, The Chronicle, The Manica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News

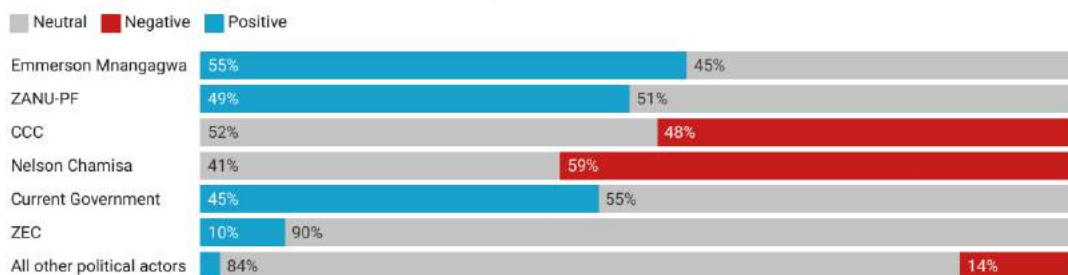
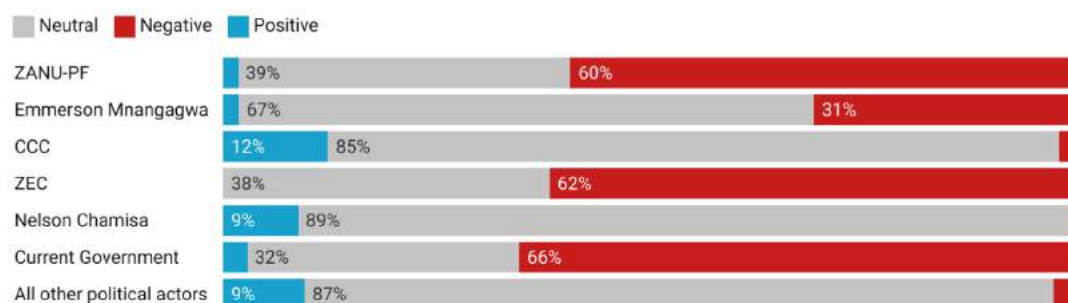


Chart 26: Post-Electoral Period - AMH newspapers - tone of coverage

NewsDay, The Independent, The Standard

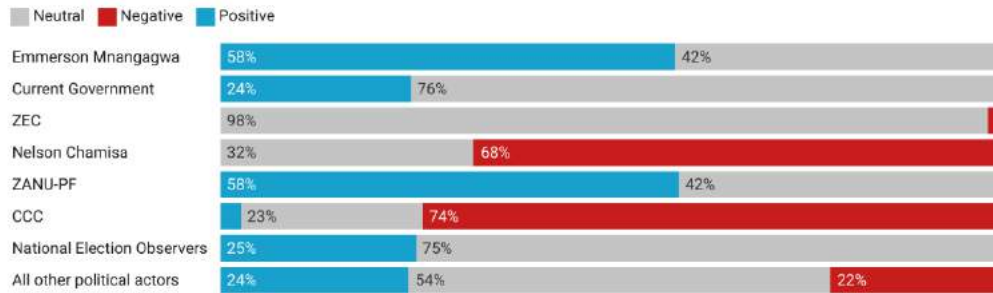


Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Media Monitoring • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 27: Post-Electoral Period - ANZ newspapers - tone of coverage

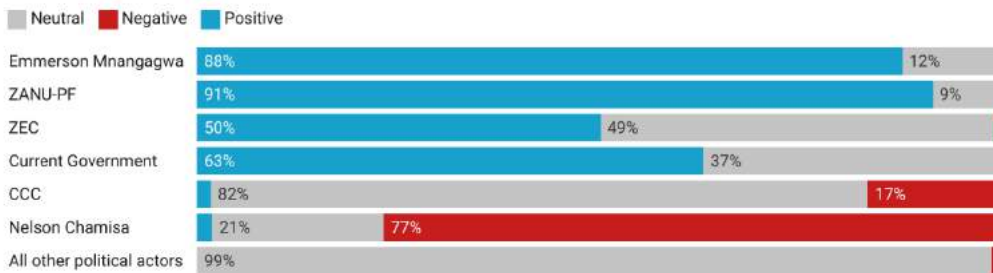
Daily News, Daily News on Sunday



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart 28: Post-Electoral Period - all monitored radios - tone of coverage

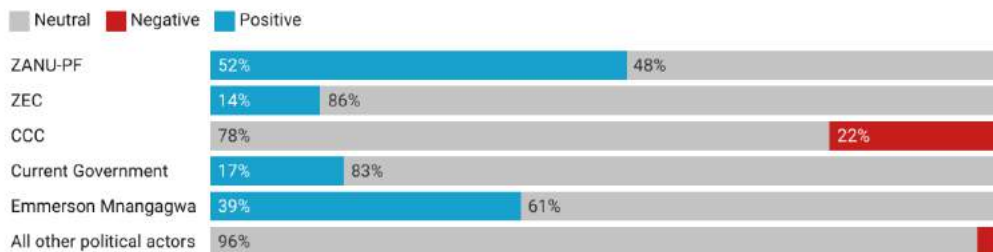
Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263, Star FM, Capitalk, ZiFM



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart 29: Post-Electoral Period - all monitored TV - tone of coverage

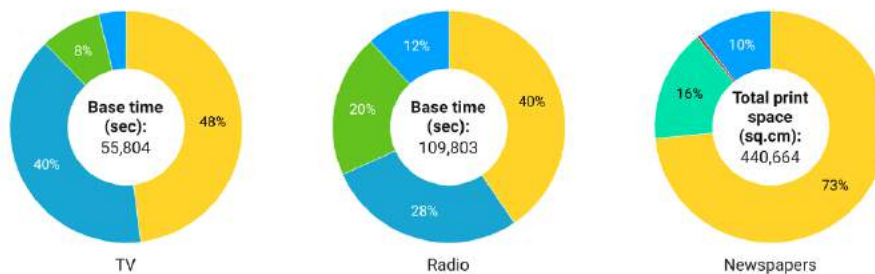
ZBC TV, ZTN, 3KTV



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart 30: Post-Electoral Period - type of coverage

News, Editorial Opinion, Current Affairs Shows, Interview, Talk Show, Paid Content



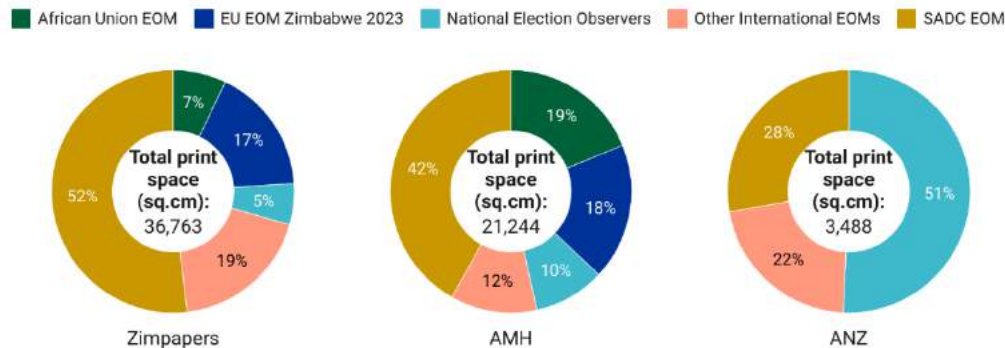
Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 - Media Monitoring - Created with Datawrapper

POST-ELECTORAL COVERAGE OF ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS

The post-electoral period saw a sustained attack in the media against international election observation missions, as a response to their preliminary statements. ZBC and Zimpapers owned TV and radio stations, who were at the forefront of attacks against international EOMs, specifically targeted the SADC EOM, and to a lesser extent the EU EOM. Attempts to discredit individual mission members, as well as missions at large, were made employing disinformation tactics, with fictitious stories about international EOMs appearing in state media throughout the monitored period.

Chart 31: Post-Electoral Period - share of newspaper coverage of EOMs



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 * Media Monitoring * Created with Datawrapper

Chart 32: Post-Electoral Period - Zimpapers newspapers - coverage of Election Observation Missions

The Herald, The Chronicle, The Manica Post, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News

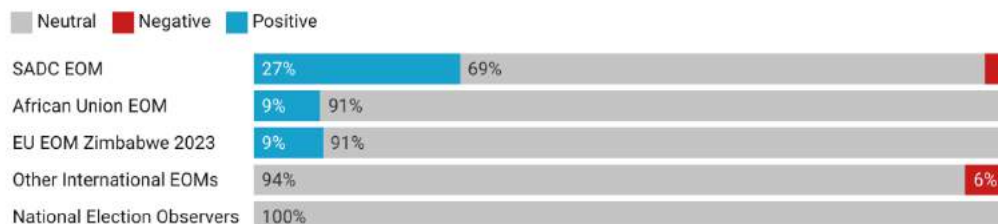


Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 * Media Monitoring * Created with Datawrapper

Chart 33: Post-Electoral Period - AMH newspapers - coverage of Election Observation Missions

NewsDay, The Standard, The Independent



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 * Media Monitoring * Created with Datawrapper

Chart 34: Post-Electoral Period - ANZ newspapers - coverage of Election Observation Missions

Daily News, Daily News on Sunday

Neutral Negative Positive

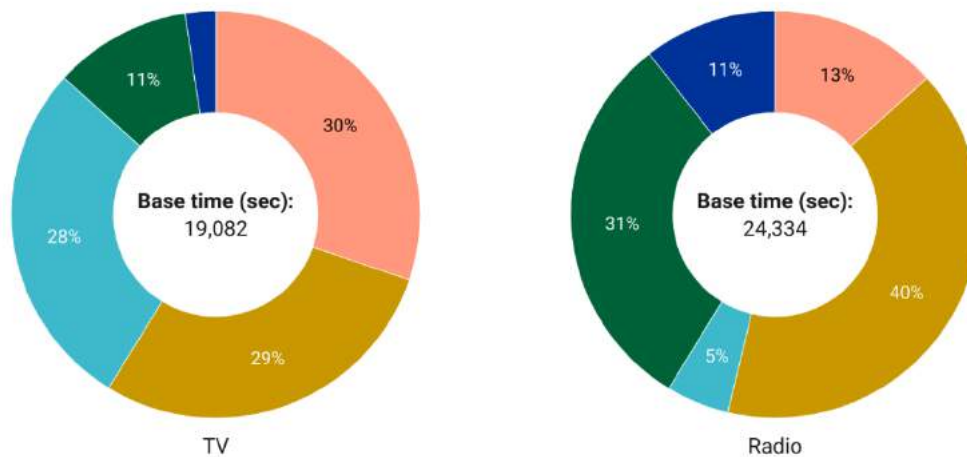


Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 35: Post-Electoral Period - share of broadcast coverage of EOMs

Other International EOMs SADC EOM National Election Observers African Union EOM EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023



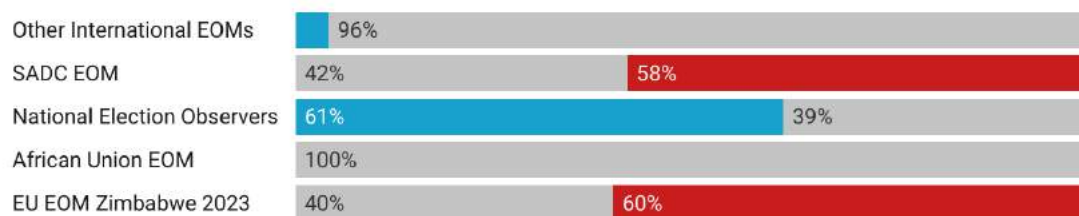
Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 36: Post-Electoral Period - tone of TV coverage of Election Observation Missions

ZBC TV, ZTN

Neutral Negative Positive



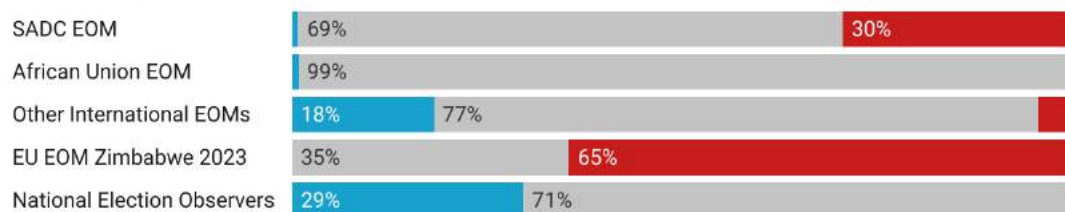
Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

Chart 37: Post-Electoral Period - tone of radio coverage of Election Observation Missions

Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, Classic 263, Star FM, Capitalk, ZiFM

Neutral Negative Positive



Time range: 23 August - 3 September 2023

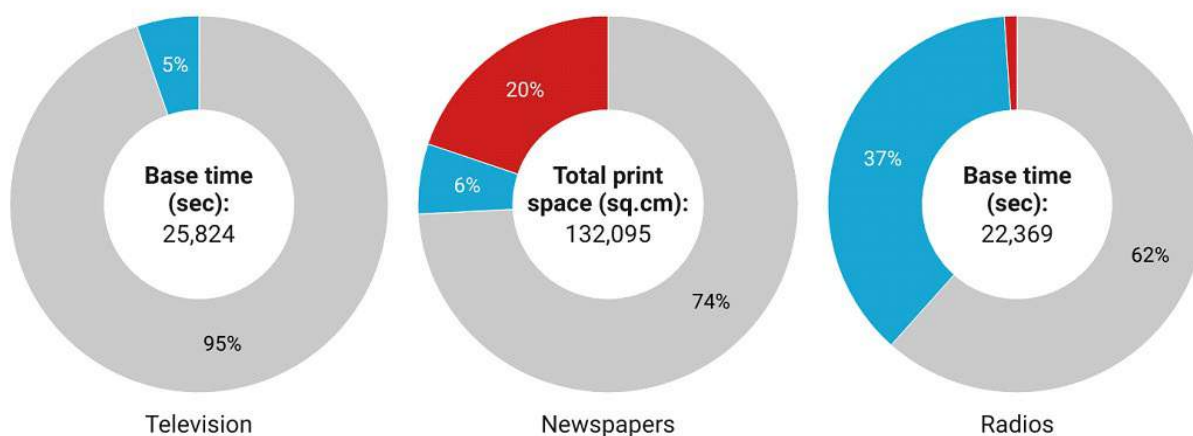
Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ZEC

The media presence of the ZEC was minimal, accounting for 4 percent of election-related television coverage, largely limited to voter education videos. ZBC and Zimpapers-owned radios leapt to the defence of ZEC in the aftermath of the delays of the elections, accounting for the large share of positive coverage in that medium. Negative newspaper coverage of the ZEC stems entirely from private media, whilst Zimpapers publications maintained a positive or neutral tone towards the electoral administration.

Chart 38: Media coverage of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

Neutral Positive Negative



Time range: 23 July - 3 September 2023

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 ☆ Media Monitoring ☆ Created with Datawrapper

ANNEX IV – SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS

1. SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT ZIMBABWE

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

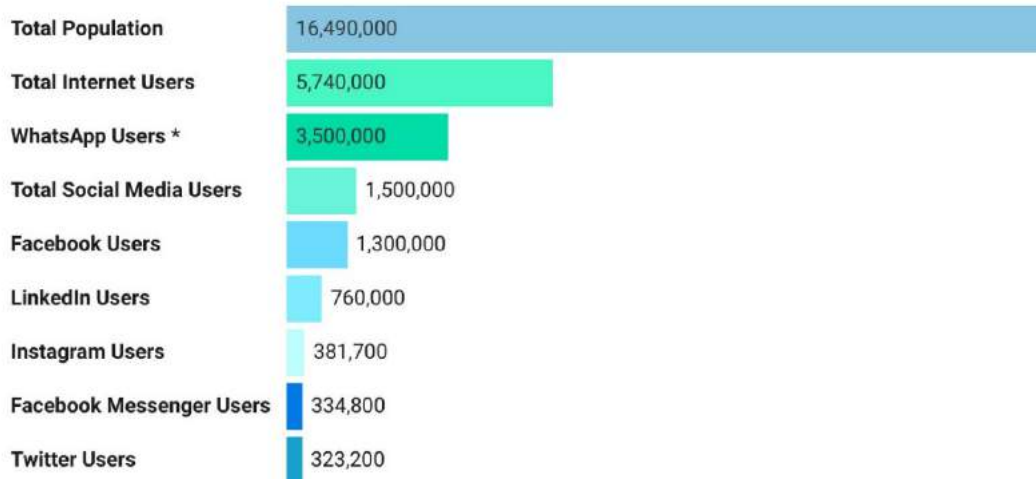


Chart: DataReportal Zimbabwe 2023 - (*) 2020 ZimStat report - Created with Datawrapper

Most recent figures on internet penetration in Zimbabwe are inconclusive.¹²¹ Similarly, recent data on social media users in the country differs.¹²²

2. EU EOM ZIMBABWE 2023 METHODOLOGY

The EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 applied different and complementary approaches and techniques to analyse online platforms and to gather information on online election-related content.¹²³ These methods include quantitative and qualitative data analysis, legal analysis and meetings with relevant stakeholders. From 9 July until 29 August 2023, the EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 systematically monitored 976 social media accounts of a selected sample of election-contestants and non-election contestants accounts to capture key campaign trends across the main social media platforms (See Table 1. Social Media Accounts Monitored). The sample was selected considering:

- The relevance and influence on the platform on the political discourse (metrics of interactions on Facebook, reach and influence score on X, number of followers, frequency of posts).
- The content published by the account (covering political and electoral issues).
- Political affiliation of the account, relevant groups, organisations and institutions.

¹²¹ While DataReportal [Digital Zimbabwe2023](#) reports an internet penetration rate of 34.8 percent based on 5.74 million internet users as of January 2023, the [Zimbabwean government](#) reports an internet penetration rate of 65.2 percent for the second quarter of 2023 based on 9.9 million active internet and data subscriptions.

¹²² [Statcounter](#)'s percentages of users per platform as of August 2023 is 39.9 percent Facebook, 24 percent X, 9.15 percent Instagram, 7.4 percent YouTube and 1.24 percent LinkedIn.

¹²³ Monitoring messaging networks, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber or Messenger are not included in the scope of the EU EOMs/EEM methodology due to data protection and privacy matters. However, EOMs may include relevant information coming from national and international credible organisations that specialise in monitoring online platforms and networks.

Table 1. Social Media Accounts Monitored (976)

Lists of Social Media Accounts	Facebook Pages	X (formerly Twitter)	Tik Tok	Instagram	YouTube
Political Parties (Official Accounts)	9	5	1	5	1
Presidential Candidates (Official Accounts)	4	9	1	6	
National Assembly Candidates (Official Accounts)	11	25			
EMB (ZEC)		1			
Supporter, Influencer, Anonymous and Troll accounts	137	290	37	54	12
Media (Official)	33	20		10	13
Online Content Creators	34	26	3	8	24
State Institutions, Public Officials and Party Officials	27	50		10	8
CSO's, NGO's and International Organisations	52	51			2
Total: 976	304	477	42	93	60

Table: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Created with Datawrapper

The social media monitoring and data collection tools used were CrowdTangle for Facebook and Instagram, and SentiOne for Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Tik Tok and YouTube. A subscription to premium level access to Twitter API v2 to collect data from their APIs was purchased. Additional tools used for X were Tweetdeck, Twitonomy, Hoaxy, and Botsight. The EU EOM also employed a variety of tools to verify images and videos, such as InVid WeVerify, Metadata2go and FotoForensics. These tools allowed the mission to perform reverse image searches on various search engines, fragment videos into keyframes, check video and image metadata, as well as video copyrights. For data visualisation, the EU EOM used Datawrapper and Canva.

From 9 July and until 29 August, the EU EOM analysed a sample of 3,313 posts on Facebook and X published by election-contestants and non-election contestant pages and accounts, both in English and in Shona (See Table 2. Social Media Posts Analysed). Posts were selected by the highest number of interactions on Facebook and the highest influence score on X¹²⁴, from the different monitored lists in CrowdTangle and in Sentione on a weekly basis. The posts were manually coded by type of content, tone (positive towards the subject matter, neutral, negative towards the subject matter), topic and target of the content. Negative posts were then manually coded by type of content (negative campaigning -derogatory language – inflammatory language – hate speech), topic and target of the post.

The EU EOM also carried out different keyword searches to assess the level of hate speech, derogatory or hateful content in the platforms.

¹²⁴ Sentione calculates a score from 1 to 10 based on how likely it is for the mention to be seen, and how many times a mention has been viewed, shared, or retweeted.

Table 2. Social Media Posts Analysed

The EU EOM analysed 3,313 posts from 9 July to 29 August 2023.

	X (formerly Twitter)	Facebook
Political Parties	360	414
Presidential Candidates	141	67
NA Candidates	494	225
Supporters and Online Influencers	498	
Troll accounts	153	
EMB (ZEC)	47	
EU EOM discrediting campaign	42	
Keyword Searches derogatory language against ED	239	217
keyword Searches derogatory language against Chamisa	313	103
Total: 3,313	2,287	1,026

Table: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023. • Created with Datawrapper

3. ELECTION-CONTESTANTS CAMPAIGN ONLINE

3.1 POLITICAL PARTIES (OFFICIAL ACCOUNTS)

Political Parties - Total number of posts

From 9 July to 31 August, political parties published a total of 558 posts on X and 561 posts on Facebook.

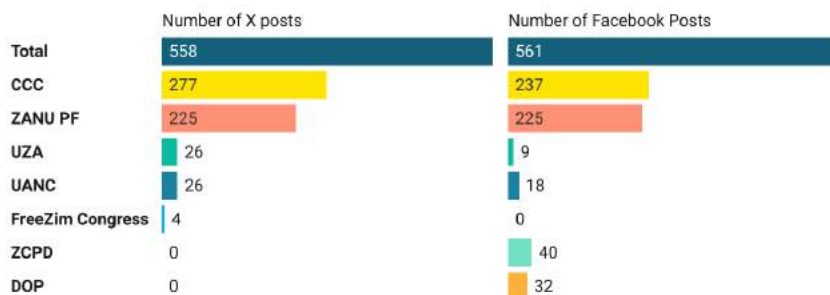


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: Facebook and X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

Political Parties on Facebook - Total interactions

From 9 July to 31 August, political parties received 240,000 total interactions altogether.

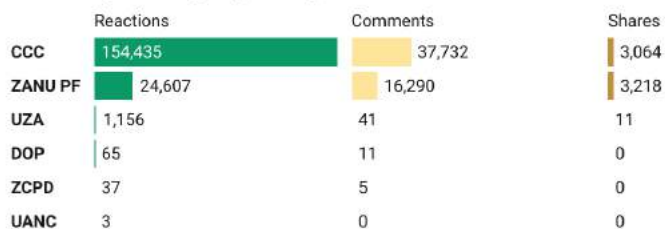


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: Facebook CrowdTangle • Created with Datawrapper

Over the monitoring period, the **CCC party** received the **highest number of total interactions** on their Facebook page (196,500), followed by ZANU-PF (44,200). On X, the CCC also obtained the highest level of engagement.

Overall, political parties used a positive tone in their posts on X (71%) and Facebook (72%), with references to their own victory, their candidates, and the success of their rallies. Conversely, nearly 40% of the opposition CCC posts featured a negative tone, notably towards the ruling party, the president and ZEC.

Political Parties - Tone of Posts

The EU EOM analysed 360 X posts and 414 Facebook posts from 9 July to 23 August 2023.



Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) and Facebook • Created with Datawrapper

Political Parties on X - Tone breakdown per party

The EU EOM analysed 360 posts from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

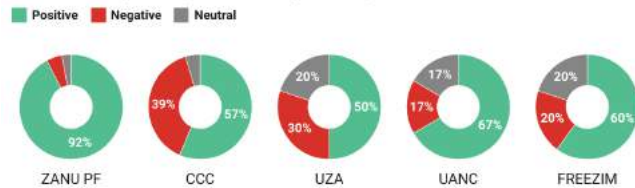


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

Political Parties on Facebook - Tone breakdown per party

The EU EOM analysed 414 posts from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

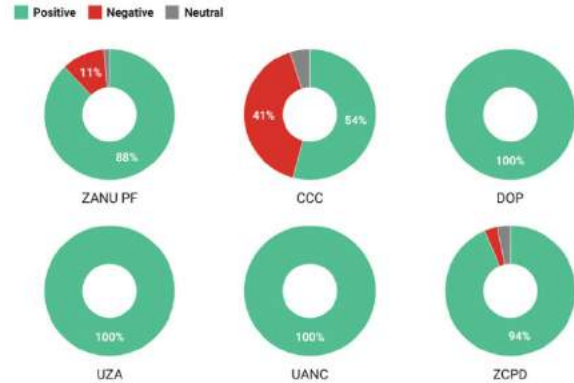


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: Facebook • Created with Datawrapper

ZANU-PF's main social media content was government propaganda at events that resembled campaign meetings (54%), and at campaign rallies (26%). The CCC's main positive and neutral content was promoting the success of their campaign rallies (46%) and their manifesto (23%).

Political Parties on X - Main Topics (Positive/Neutral tone)

The EU EOM analysed 271 posts with a positive and neutral tone from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

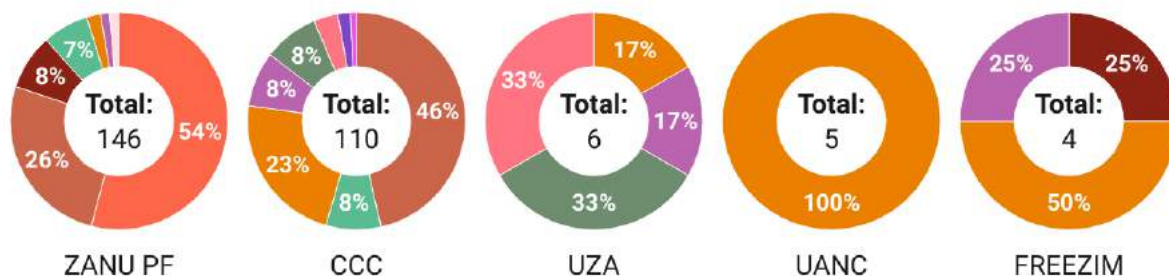


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

Political Manifesto on X - Main Topics

The EU EOM analysed 36 posts on political manifestos from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

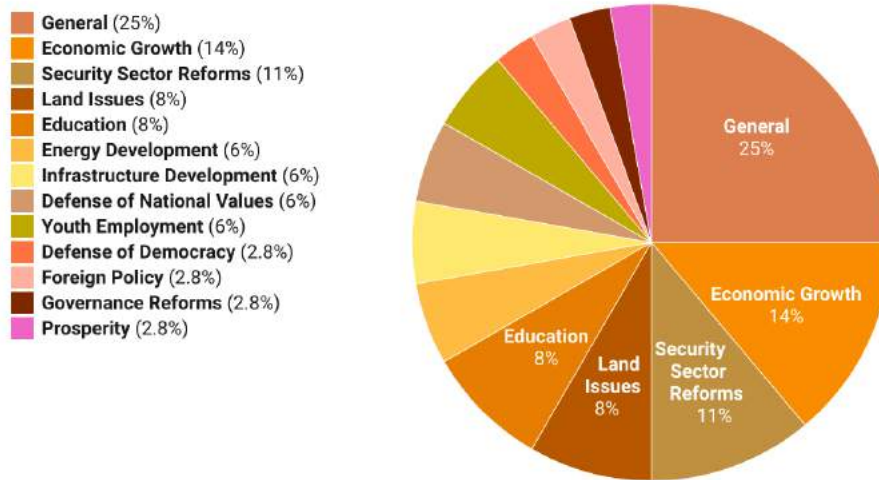


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

The CCC was the most active political party in denouncing state abuse (27%), criticizing the ruling party and the president's policies (25%), denouncing flaws in the electoral process (25%), and political violence (23%). In doing so, the CCC referred to ZANU-PF and its followers as “criminal party” and “ZANU-PF thugs”. ZANU-PF's criticism was directed towards the CCC, describing them as divided and disorganized.

Political Parties on X - Main Topics (Negative tone)

The EU EOM analysed 89 negative posts from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

Denounce state abuse Criticism Denounce flaws in electoral process Denounce political violence

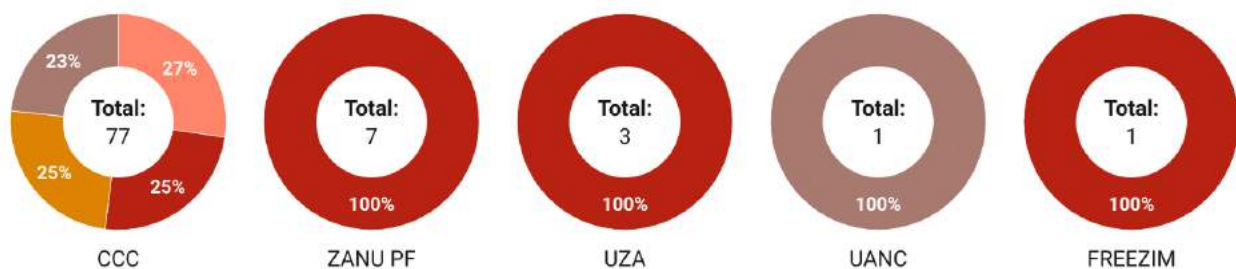


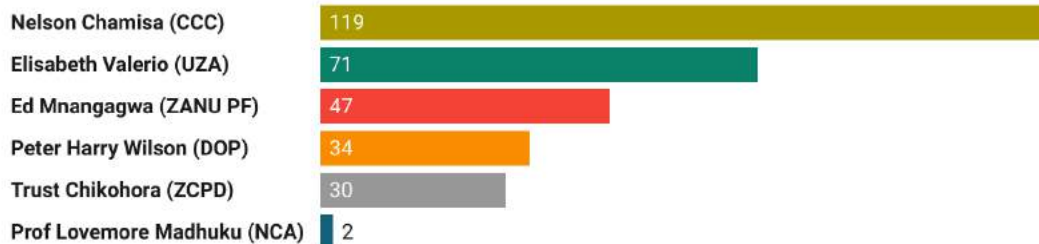
Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

3.2 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON X (OFFICIAL ACCOUNTS)

The CCC presidential candidate, Nelson Chamisa, was the most active one on X and on Facebook, followed on X by UZA's presidential candidate Elisabeth Valerio.

Presidential Candidates on X - Number of posts

From 9 July to 31 August, a total of 303 posts were published.



Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

Nelson Chamisa (CCC) focused its social media strategy in promoting the success of their campaign rallies (51%), his candidature (19%) and in criticizing the ruling party, the government and the president (12%). Emmerson Mnangagwa (ZANU-PF) used the platforms to promote his political agenda as president of Zimbabwe (48%), and the success of their campaign rallies (26%).

Presidential Candidates on X - Main Topics

The EU EOM analysed 141 posts from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

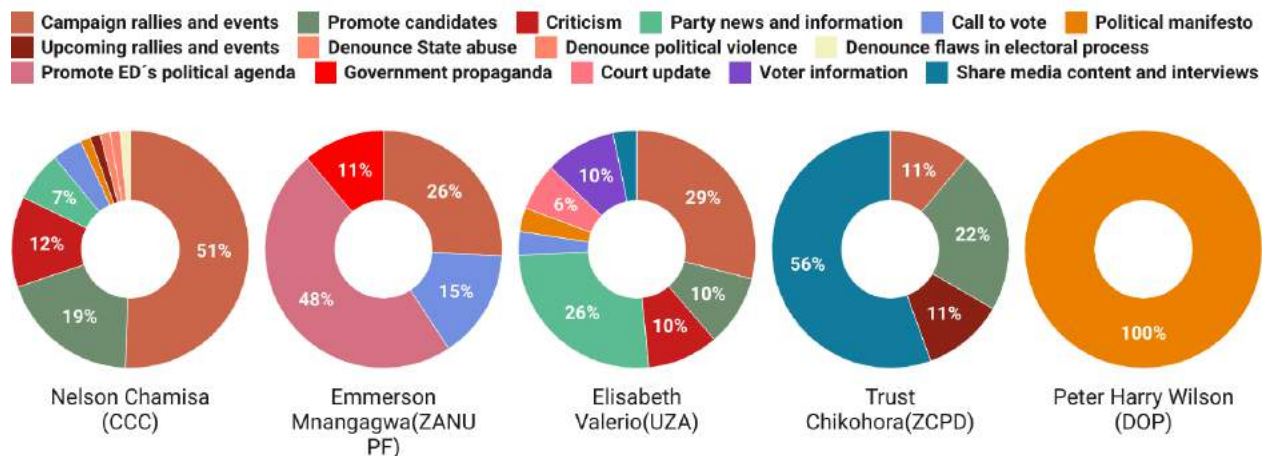


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

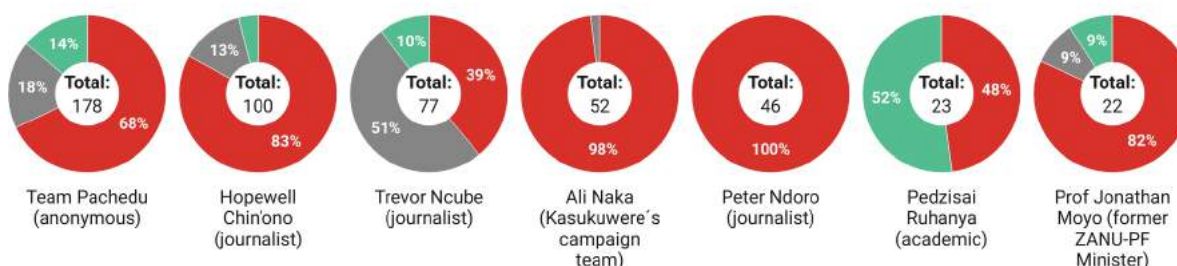
4. ELECTION-RELATED INFORMATION SHARED BY NON-CONTESTANTS

The EU EOM monitored 290 accounts of supporters, influencers, and trolls¹²⁵ who were actively pushing narratives for and against the two main political parties on X. The image below shows the accounts that scored the highest in influence in the platform. These accounts were from **anonymous** and **diaspora users** -except for journalist Hopewell Chin'ono who lived in Zimbabwe-, and were the most critical of the Government, the president and ZEC with 72 % of their posts having a negative tone.

Top Influencer Accounts on X - Tone of Posts

The EU EOM analysed 498 posts with the highest influence score on X (*) from 9 July to 23 August 2023.

■ Negative 72.29% ■ Neutral 17.47% ■ Positive 10.24%



(*) Sentione calculates a score from 1 to 10 based on how likely it is for the mention to be seen, and how many times a mention has been viewed, shared, or retweeted. Posts analysed scored 9 and 10.

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: Sentione X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

The main content of top influencers on X was to **criticise the government and the ruling party** (53%), and to **denounce flaws in the electoral process** (28%), **political violence** (10%), and **state abuse** (10%). **Team Pachedu** was the most active in **denouncing flaws in the electoral process** (61%).

Top influencer Accounts on X- Topics of Negative Posts

The EU EOM analysed 360 negative posts by top influencer accounts on X from 9 July till 23 August 2023.

■ Criticism ■ Denounce flaws in electoral process ■ Denounce political violence ■ Denounce State abuse

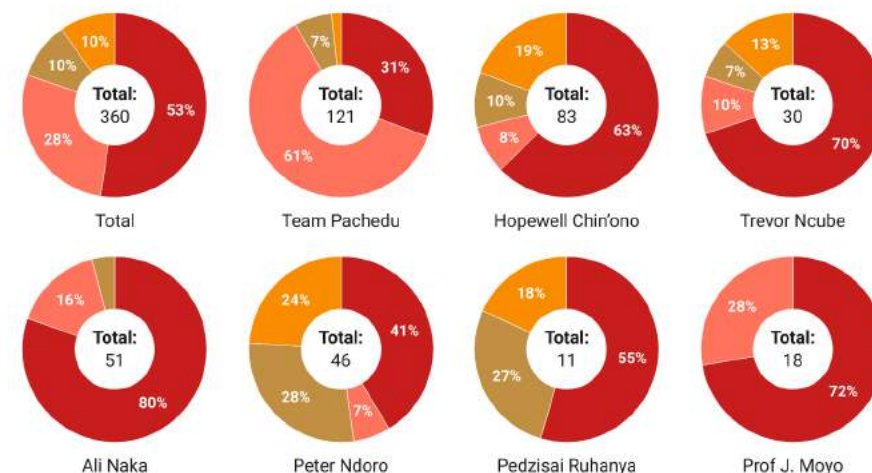


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (formerly Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

¹²⁵ The EU EOM observed hundreds of accounts using pseudonyms attempting to disrupt the online conversation, posting offensive content and disinformation online.

5. ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODY: ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION (ZEC)

Over the monitoring period, the main content published by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) on social media were **announcements (57%)**, most of which contained reminders of **electoral law offences** ahead of the elections. ZEC lacked a proactive disclosure of information online to appropriately inform voters and address rumours and election-related disinformation. On election day, ZEC became more active in giving **updates on polling stations** as delays were taking place. After the elections, ZEC published only one post announcing the presidential results. A second post was published asking people to look at the results better. All of ZEC's posts were in the English language.

ZEC on X - Type of Content

The EU EOM analysed 47 posts on X from 9 July till 29 August 2023.



Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Formerly Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

ZEC on X - Main Topics

The EU EOM analysed 47 posts on X from 9 July till 29 August.

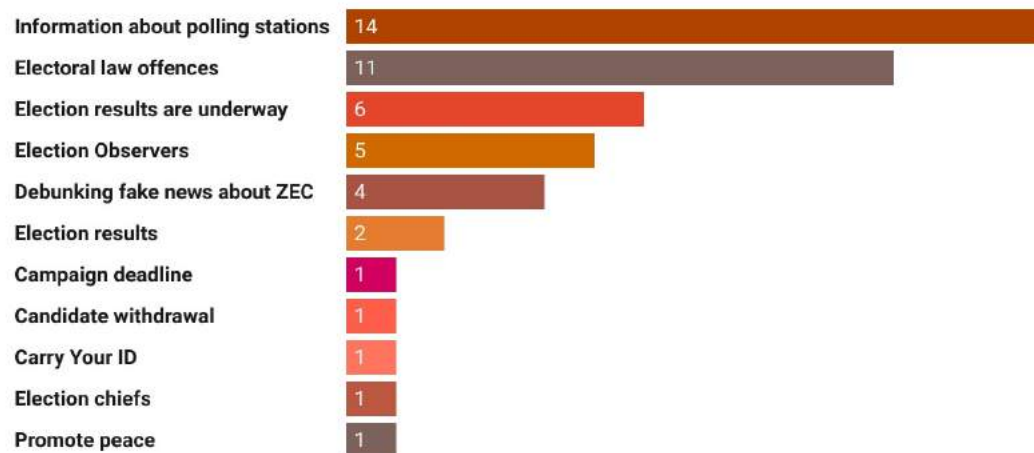


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

ZEC on X and Facebook – Followers Growth



Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X and Facebook • Created with Datawrapper

6. INFORMATION MANIPULATION

Election-related information manipulation circulated widely on social media. The EU EOM observed several falsehoods and rumours being disseminated online by political actors, official media, and online content creators. The use of manipulated media content was a common technique, notably edited images and videos, and images and videos taken out of context.



Manipulated images of CCC campaign posters

On August 13, doctored images of CCC posters advertising their rallies circulated on WhatsApp and on social media. The images showed the wrong locations to mislead voters.



Manipulated images of CCC campaign posters

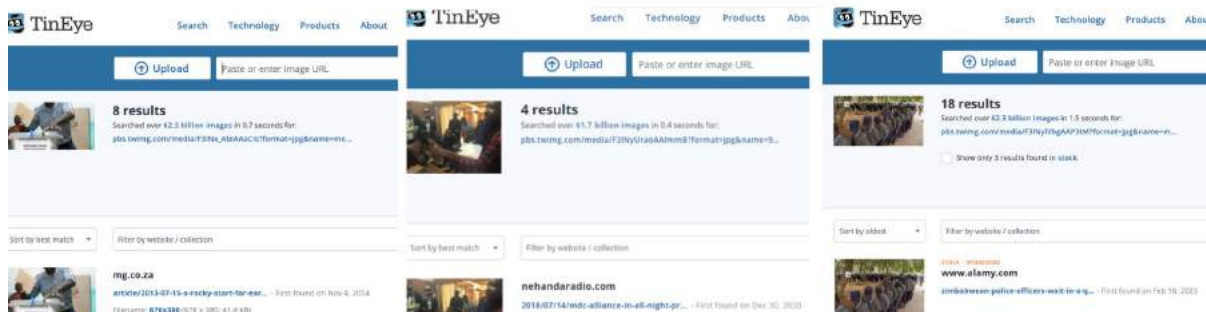
On election day, fake CCC posters asking supporters not to vote and to stay at home circulated online.



Manipulated media content

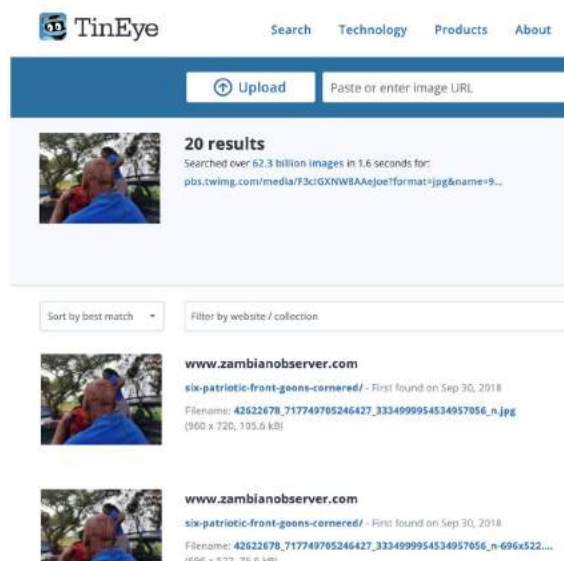
The EU EOM noted that recontextualized media was widely used on social media. Old images were deceptively used with current captions to mislead voters.

In this example from 15 August, fake news about police officers being forced to vote for Zanu PF circulated on the platforms. The EU EOM conducted reverse image searches and the results confirmed that the photographs were old and belonged to other events.



Manipulated media content

In this other example from 13 August, rumors about a violent attack in Chitungwiza ward 19 circulated on the platforms. The EU EOM conducted a reverse image search and the results confirmed that the images did not show a current attack, as they were originally published in 2018.



Troll Accounts on X - Main Narratives

The EU EOM analysed 153 posts scoring highest on influence on X from 1 August till 23 August 2023.

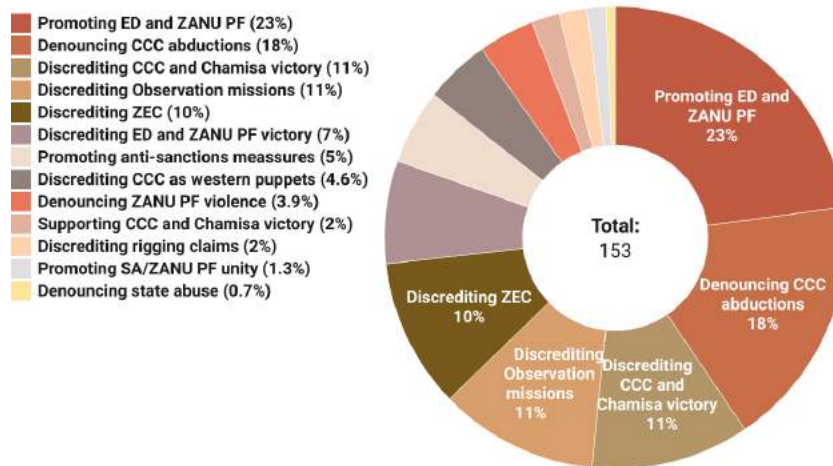


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: Sentione X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper

The EU EOM observed groups of troll accounts actively manufacturing and disseminating narratives for and against the two main parties.

The EU EOM analyzed 153 posts published by these accounts. Of these, 115 promoted pro-ZANU-PF and anti-CCC narratives, while 38 promoted pro-CCC and anti-ZANU-PF narratives.

The EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 was targeted by a defamatory and discrediting campaign on social media, before and after the elections. Some main narratives observed accused the EU EOM of being **biased towards the CCC** (36%) and of **writing Nelson Chamisa's speech notes** (14%). **False comments and actions** allegedly carried out by EU observers (26%) were also spread on X.

The mission received derogatory remarks online. Some of them portrayed EU observers as “western puppets”, “regime change fanatics”, “thugs in suits”, “Chamisa’s handlers planning violence” and “sponsors of human rights violators”. The EU EOM noted a group of pro-ZANU-PF troll accounts systematically discrediting the mission on X.

Discrediting Campaign against the EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023

The EU EOM analysed 42 posts on X by pro-ZANU-PF troll and supporter accounts from 1 to 29 August 2023.

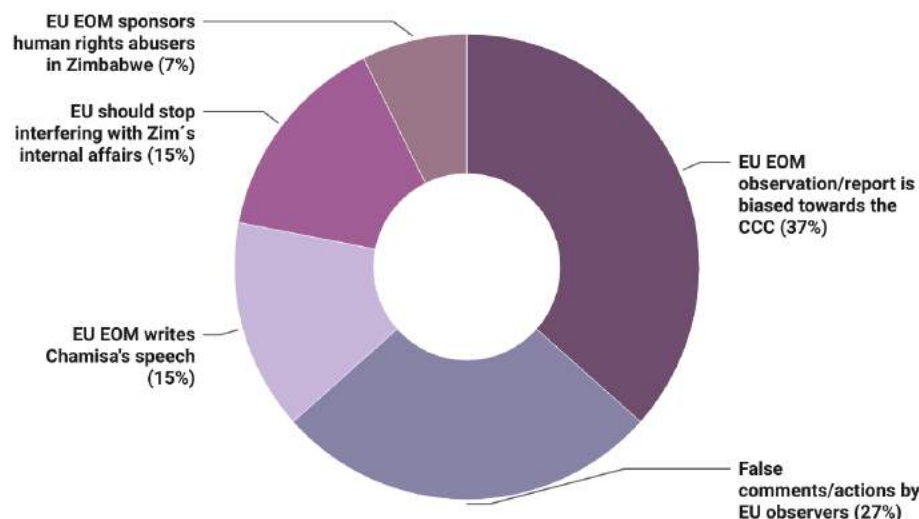
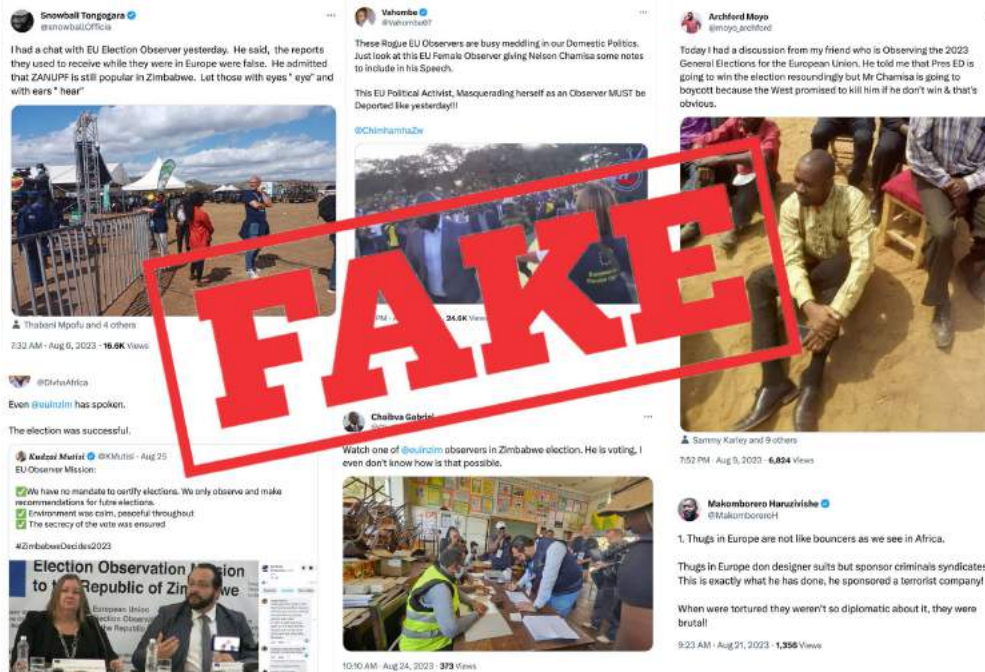


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: X (Twitter) • Created with Datawrapper



Derogatory and Hateful Content Online

The EU EOM conducted keyword searches to assess the level of derogatory language and hateful content online against the two main presidential candidates (see below graphs). The mission used the Sentione tool to search for content published online on X, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, websites, forums and blogs. The mission found that most of the accounts that spread derogatory content against the two main candidates were based abroad or their origin was unspecified.

Derogatory Language against ED Mnangagwa (ZANU-PF)

The EU EOM carried out a keyword search using the below keywords from 9 July til 31 August 2023. The search showed 2,034 results.

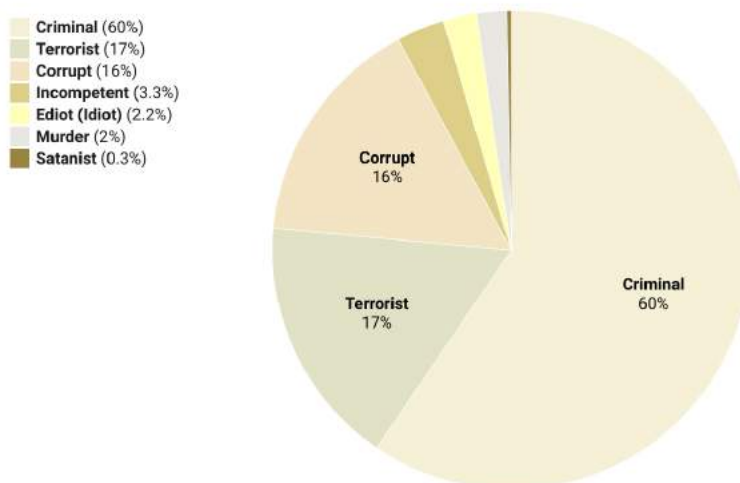


Chart: EU EOM ZIMBABWE 2023 • Source: Sentione • Created with Datawrapper

The EU EOM carried out a **keyword search** to assess the level of **derogatory language online against the president**, using the words [Mnangagwa] and [criminal], [terrorist], [incompetent], [corrupt], [Ediot], [murder] and [satanist], observed on social media.

The search resulted in 2,034 comments, of which 1,297 referred to the president as a **criminal**, 369 as a **terrorist** and 342 as **corrupt**.

Breakdown per country

Only 2.8% of the online accounts publishing derogatory language against the ED were based in Zimbabwe.

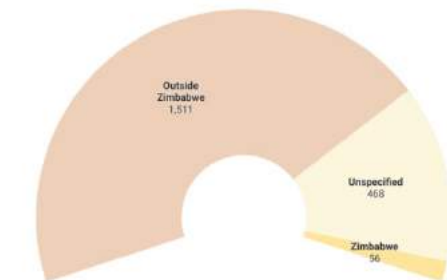


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: SentiOne • Created with Datawrapper

Only 2.8% of the accounts publishing derogatory remarks against the president were based in Zimbabwe, while **74% were based in foreign countries.**

Most of the results obtained were user **comments on international websites.**

Breakdown per platform

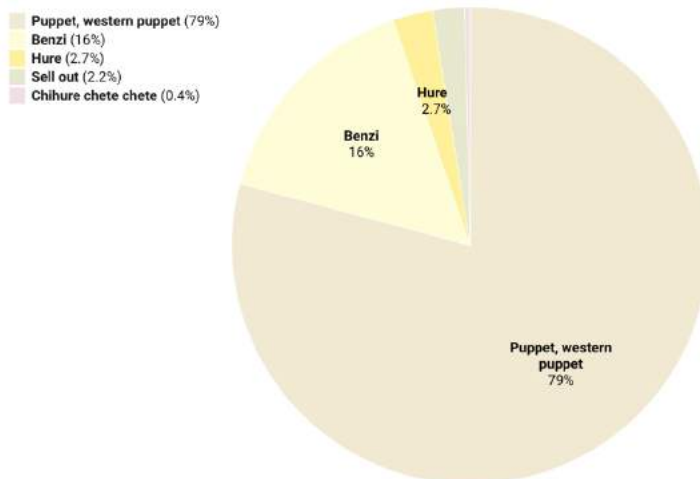
Most of the derogatory language against the ED was published on websites.



Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: SentiOne • Created with Datawrapper

Derogatory Language against Mr Chamisa (CCC)

The EU EOM carried out a keyword search using the below keywords from 9 July til 31 August 2023. The search showed 552 results.



552 results: 437 western puppet, puppet, 86 benzi, 15 hure, 12 Sell out, 2 Chihure chete chete.

Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: SentiOne • Created with Datawrapper

The EU EOM carried out a **keyword search** to assess the level of **derogatory language against Nelson Chamisa (CCC)**, using the words [Chamisa] and [puppet], [sell out], [benzi] (fool), [hure] and [chihure chete chete] (both Shona terms that can be translated as “prostitute”), observed on social media.

The search resulted in 552 comments, of which **437** referred to him as **puppet, Western puppet and imperialist puppet, 86 as benzi and 15 as hure.**

Only 15% of the accounts publishing derogatory remarks against Chamisa were based in Zimbabwe, while 51% were unspecified.

Most of the results obtained were user **comments on X.**

The EU EOM noted that among the Zimbabwean accounts were identified pro-ZANU-PF troll accounts.

Breakdown per country

Only 15% of online accounts containing derogatory language against Mr Chamisa were from Zimbabwe.

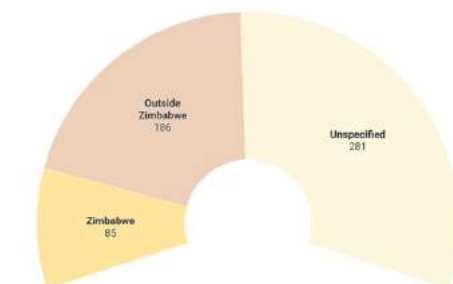


Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: SentiOne • Created with Datawrapper

Breakdown per platform

Most of the derogatory language against Chamisa was published on X (Twitter).



Chart: EU EOM Zimbabwe 2023 • Source: SentiOne • Created with Datawrapper

