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To free or to flee? The dilemma of Zimbabweans 45 years post-independence

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Abstract

This survey desires to investigate the profound uncertainty and precarious existence confronting Zimbabwean citizens in the post-2017 era. Drawing upon the nation's complex history, the survey explores how the enduring legacy of Robert Mugabe's governance and the socio-political upheaval following the land redistribution program have shaped the current environment. A central focus is the impact of these events, which have driven widespread emigration concerns since 2000. The survey specifically examines the weighty dilemma faced by those who have remained: the choice between joining the diaspora in search of stability or persevering domestically in the struggle for fundamental governance change. By analyzing these perspectives, the survey aims to illuminate the deep-seated challenges that continue to define this complex and transformative period in Zimbabwe's history. The survey explored a mixed methodology reaching out to Zimbabweans in and out of Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Free or flee, Zimbabwe, diaspora, 2030 mantra, war veterans, Geza revolution

Introduction

Zimbabwe's significant migration has been driven by a confluence of political, economic, and social factors. Research indicates that political repression and persecution have been major catalysts, fostering an environment of instability and uncertainty for citizens. This political climate was exacerbated by the profound economic collapse that began in the early 2000s, which was widely attributed to alleged government corruption, international sanctions, and mismanagement. Consequently, the rampant corruption and failing economy led to widespread social disharmony, most notably due to a severe lack of employment opportunities across the country. The subsequent economic downturn was so severe that it precipitated the untamed corruption, fundamentally disrupting daily life and forcing many to seek livelihoods elsewhere. This economic and social distress, in turn, fuelled the rising opposition political voices that sought to challenge the existing power structures. Ultimately, Zimbabwe's migration crisis is a complex outcome, originating from a deeply intertwined web of political repression, economic decline, and the resulting social hardships that have compelled its people to leave.

International migration is a defining and complex feature of the modern world, producing significant effects for both origin and destination countries. Its primary catalysts are 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors are adverse conditions such as conflict, persecution, and economic hardship, exemplified by the exodus from Syria and migration from India and the Philippines. Environmental issues like drought in sub-Saharan Africa are also emerging drivers. Conversely, pull factors attract people to new countries, including political stability, stronger economies, and higher living standards. The United Kingdom attracts migrants through its economy and universities, while nations like Canada use points-based systems to draw skilled labour. The effects of this movement are multifaceted. For host nations, migrants fill essential workforce roles, as seen with the Windrush generation in Britain, and contribute significantly to taxes and cultural diversity. However, rapid immigration can strain public services and provoke social tensions.

For countries of origin, the departure of skilled workers, or 'brain drain', can hinder development, as observed in Ghana. Positively, remittances sent home, such as the over \$100 billion to India, provide a vital economic lifeline.

Diaspora networks also foster valuable investment and knowledge transfer. In conclusion, international migration is a powerful, transformative force with distinct benefits and challenges for all societies involved.

Zimbabwe 1980-1999

Crush J & Tevera D (2010 p.1) ^[10] asserts that, “when a modern state go into terminal decline or fail altogether, the predictable response of ordinary people is to get out, as soon as they can, to wherever they can go “In this case Zimbabwe is a case study. Madebwe C & Madebwe V (2017 p.1) ^[23] describes Zimbabwe as one of the Sub-Saharan’s top ten countries among them is Mali, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Ghana, Eritrea, Nigeria, Mozambique, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo that has high rate of people leaving their countries to other countries. The year 1980 represents a pivotal historical juncture for the majority of Zimbabweans, marking their hard-won independence from British colonial rule following a protracted liberation struggle against the white settler government. The preceding Lancaster House Conference, convened in Britain in 1979, served as the crucial platform for negotiating a ceasefire agreement, establishing a new constitutional framework, and ultimately paving the way for democratic elections in 1980. These landmark elections resulted in a resounding victory for Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-pf party, ushering in a new era of majority rule. Raftopoulos & Mlambo A. S (2023 p. 208) ^[37], the dawn of independence elicited a spectrum of reactions across Zimbabwean society. Those who had served alongside the white Rhodesian government's armed forces found a measure of relief and even optimism in Mugabe's pronouncements of forgiveness and promises of integration into the newly formed government. This offered a pathway towards reconciliation after years of conflict. However, a significant segment of the population, predominantly white farmers and those perceived as collaborators with the former regime, harbored profound anxieties. Torn between concerns for their personal safety outside the country and a deep-seated resentment towards a black majority government they viewed with suspicion, they faced a difficult and uncertain future. The scholarship on Zimbabwe's historical challenges presents nuanced perspectives on their origins. Raftopoulos B & Phimister I (2004) ^[39], as highlighted by Chiumbu S & Musemwa M (2012 p.11) ^[9], contend that the nation's difficulties are not a recent phenomenon dating back to the year 2000. Instead, they argue that the roots of these problems lie much deeper, extending back to the colonial era. Mavengano E & Mhute I (2023 p.28) ^[25] emphasized that the majority government led by Mugabe in 1980 inherited a state infrastructure characterized by violence and repression, a direct legacy of the preceding Rhodesian regime while the land issue remained an unsolved issue as also alluded by Mlambo A.S (2006 p.2) ^[28] In contrast, Moyo S and Yeros P (2007a, 2007b, 2009), also cited by Chiumbu & Musemwa M (2012 p.12) ^[9], identify two primary historical crises that have profoundly shaped Zimbabwe's trajectory: the national crisis and the agrarian crisis. This perspective underscores specific critical periods and ongoing systemic issues as the major historical determinants of the country's challenges. Ultimately, both viewpoints offer valuable insights into the complex history of Zimbabwe. However Ndebvudzemene K (2020 p.14), Sachikonye L. M (2002 p.2) ^[41] attributes the failure of the IMF policy by Zimbabwean government

initiated Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) to the economic decline of Zimbabwe in the late 1997.

Consequently, the immediate aftermath of independence witnessed a substantial exodus of individuals who lacked faith in the new political dispensation led by Robert Mugabe. Chiumbu S & Musemwa M (2012 p.14) ^[9] views Zimbabwean migration as historical and in the year 2000 the rate increased due to challenges the people faced in Zimbabwe over the years of political and economic turmoil. Many chose to emigrate to neighbouring South Africa, while others sought new lives further afield in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Bloch A (2006 p.3) ^[3] asserts that in the period between 1980-4 at least 50,000 and 60,000 whites left Zimbabwe. Those who elected to remain within Zimbabwe found themselves navigating a complex reality. While striving to establish a working relationship with the new government and adapt to the changed political landscape, they simultaneously grappled with underlying resentments and contemplated their long-term options within a nation undergoing fundamental transformation.

The year 1980, therefore, stands as a complex and multifaceted moment in Zimbabwean history, characterized by both the jubilant achievement of self-determination and the anxieties and uncertainties that accompanied the transition to a new political order. According to data from Population.net, the nation's total population stood at 7,289,000 in that year. However, this overall figure masked significant demographic shifts occurring simultaneously. Notably, the period leading up to independence, specifically between 1976 and 1980, saw a substantial decline in Zimbabwe's white population. This demographic group dwindled from approximately 260,000 individuals to around 100,000, representing a considerable outflow of people. Interestingly, this period also saw the return of a significant number of Zimbabwean refugees, estimated to be between 150,000 and 200,000, who had sought refuge elsewhere during the preceding years of conflict and political uncertainty. Despite this considerable influx of returning citizens, the net migration rate for Zimbabwe in 1980 registered at -1.694 per 1,000 population. This negative rate unequivocally indicates that, overall, more individuals emigrated from Zimbabwe than immigrated into the country during that specific year.

The primary characteristic of this outward migration in 1980 was the departure of a significant portion of the white population. This emigration was largely driven by their apprehension and unease regarding the newly formed majority-black government and the fundamental changes brought about by the nation's independence. This segment of the population, having historically held a privileged position, often viewed the transition with distrust and a preference for the previous political order. Consequently, despite the return of numerous Zimbabwean refugees celebrating the nation's newfound sovereignty, the year 1980 was defined by a net loss of population due to the emigration of those who were disinclined to live under the new political dispensation. This period underscores the profound impact that political transitions can have on population movements, even amidst the return of displaced citizens.

Zimbabwe 2000-2008: The year 2000 was marred by the rise of MDC an opposition party led by the late Morgan Tsvangirai and Mugabe’s change of policy from pro-west to

pro-east when he was faced by the hugely supported opposition party which had the backing of the white farmers and the west to bring a change to ZANU pf government. Besada H & Moyo N (2009 p.1) ^[2] asserts that because of the slow progress of the redistribution of the land after independence the land issue became a tool to bolster political support by ZANU pf party and government. Robert G. Mugabe retaliated by seizing most of white owned farms across the country and replaced them with the native blacks who were deprived of their land during the colonial time.

However Hlatywayo L & Mukono A (2012 p.2) ^[18] believes that Mugabe's reaction against the white farmers was driven by the defeat of ZANU pf constitution in the 2000 referendum. The west led by Britain the former colonial master and the US mobilized western sanctions against Mugabe's government. The sanctions did not only hurt the few targeted members, private and public entities and supporters of Mugabe's government but the rest of the country started feeling the impact of the western imposed sanctions which saw the collapse of the Zimbabwean currency, hospitals, road infrastructure, public services, exports and the general survival of the citizens. As alluded by Kabonga I (2020 p.3) ^[22] the period between 2000 and 2008 witnessed a significant shift in the livelihoods of many Zimbabweans. As also Moyo P(2009) noted, and as further elaborated by Chagonda T (2016 p.2) ^[5], Hammar A *et al.* (2010 p.2) ^[15] the severe economic downturn in Zimbabwe compelled a large number of its citizens to engage in cross-border trading activities, particularly with neighboring

South Africa and Botswana. This migration for economic sustenance was a direct response to the escalating food insecurity that gripped the nation following its economic collapse. Chikanda A (2004 p.5) ^[8] from a research survey the results shows that 86% of the surveyed population opt to migrate because of no immediate signs of a positive change in Zimbabwe and that the migration rate is constantly increasing by day. Chagonda T (2016 p.8) ^[5] underscores that the hyperinflation experienced in Zimbabwe during this era rendered basic commodities unaffordable for a substantial portion of the population living in poverty. Consequently, many individuals adopted a dual national identity, effectively becoming "natisens" of both their home country and the neighboring nation. This dual residency served a practical purpose, enabling them to navigate the complexities of cross-border trade and provide essential goods and services that were increasingly scarce within Zimbabwe. The abandonment of the United States Dollar as the primary reserve currency further exacerbated this situation, triggering a rapid surge in the prices of commodities when transacted using the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system. This economic climate fundamentally altered patterns of trade and migration within the Southern African region, highlighting the profound impact of economic instability on the daily lives and coping mechanisms of ordinary citizens, Munro L.T (2012 p.9). According to the United Nations data Zimbabwe's population in 2000 was between 11, 8 million to 12.6 million.

Table 1: United Nations data on Zimbabwe's population in 2000

Year	Emmigration	Per 1,000 Population
2000	10.066	1000
2001	10.595	1000
2002	11.123	1000
2003	11.651	1000
2004	10.976	1000
2005	10.302	1000

The net migration rate data in table 1 above has been taken from United Nations data on Zimbabwe's population provided by (worldmeter) as shown in the references. The data is basically calculated by checking the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants per 1,000 population shows that there has been a negative throughout this same period in Zimbabwe. Many people were leaving the country on various reasons among them are Economic Instability, Political Crisis and Violence, Social Welfare and Deterioration and Brain Drain Ncube S (2008 p.9) ^[34]. The major destinations by proximity were South Africa, Botswana

,Zambia and by skill were the United Kingdom, The United States, Canada, Australia, France, German and New Zealand to name but a few.However others chose to stay behind either because they had no choice while others chose to fight for their freedom.

Zimbabwe 2009-2018: Raftopoulos B & Phimister I (2004 p.11) ^[39], Rufu R (2009 p.22) ^[40] shows how Mugabe's political policies were repressive. The period following the disputed elections in Zimbabwe, culminating in the tumultuous year of 2008, stands as a stark illustration of the devastating consequences of political contestation and state-sponsored violence. Contrary to initial expectations that might have seen a transition of power, President Robert

Mugabe, despite internal pressures within his ZANU-pf party to relinquish his long-held office, was persuaded to contest the presidential election once more against the opposition. This decision ushered in a deeply troubling campaign, infamously dubbed the "long and short sleeve" campaign by ZANU-pf. This ominous terminology served as a veiled threat, effectively signaling a strategy of intimidation and brutality that would be unleashed upon perceived opponent's. In the wake of this campaign rhetoric, ZANU-pf youth groups engaged in widespread and systematic violence and atrocities across the nation, specifically targeting members and supporters of the opposition party. According to Refworld. org (2008), "the climate of fear and insecurity that permeated Zimbabwe during this time compelled a significant portion of the population to seek refuge beyond its borders, driven by a desperate need to escape the escalating political violence. Simultaneously, a parallel crisis unfolded on the economic front. Years of mismanagement and instability reached a critical point in 2008, as Zimbabwe's inflation spiraled out of control, reaching levels 8,000% that would become recognized as some of the highest ever recorded globally.

Mavengano E & Chirongoma S (2023 p.3) ^[27], this confluence of brutal political oppression and economic collapse created a period of immense suffering and hardship for the Zimbabwean people, leaving a lasting scar on the

nation's history. Unemployment rate in 2007 was estimated at 80%."The multitude of hardships endured by many Zimbabweans found a particularly devastating manifestation in "Murambatsvina," a Shona term adopted to label a government-led operation responsible for the demolition of over 82,460 residences. These dwellings were officially condemned as having been constructed in unauthorized locations. However, the interpretation of this operation by human rights organizations diverged significantly from the government's stated rationale. These organizations largely perceived "Murambatsvina" not as an urban cleanup initiative, but rather as a calculated strategy to forcibly displace supporters of the opposition party from areas where the opposition held considerable political sway. This interpretation cast the operation as a politically motivated act, exacerbating the already considerable suffering of the affected population.

Zimbabwe 2018-2024

Gukurume S (2017 p.12) ^[14], Ngwenya B (2024 p.1) ^[35], posits that the political landscape of Zimbabwe, characterized by the ZANU-pf entrenched dominance, serves as a primary catalyst for political protests. This monopolization, according to Gukurume's analysis, often triggers indiscriminate arrests of political activists, fostering an environment of insecurity that compels many individuals to seek refuge and safety beyond the nation's borders. Mapuva J (2013 p.6) ^[24] describes the GNU as a way of disenfranchising the people from majority rule. The period following the dissolution of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2013, a coalition formed between the ZANU-pf party and the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai (MDC-T) after the 2009 agreement, marked a significant shift in Zimbabwe's political landscape. The decisive victory of ZANU-PF in the harmonized elections of that year effectively ended the power-sharing arrangement, ushering in a return to conditions reminiscent of the era preceding the GNU. This earlier period had been notably challenging for the populace. According to Bekker S *et al.* (2021 pp.98) ^[1], Munro L. T (2015 p.2) ^[32] Zimbabwe's economic situation became worse following the collapse of the GNU. Retrenchment of workers also brought the situation even more worse. In stark contrast, the GNU years had brought considerable relief, largely attributed to the government's adoption of the United States dollar as the primary currency, a cessation of widespread political violence, and the drafting of a new constitution. These factors collectively contributed to a tangible improvement in the daily lives of many Zimbabweans. However, this relative stability and progress proved to be short-lived. Chagonda T (2019, p. 4) ^[6] posits a compelling divergence in the explanation for Zimbabwe's economic woes. The ZANU-PF party and government have consistently framed the nation's economic plight as a direct consequence of Western sanctions.

This official narrative often underscores the detrimental effects of these external pressures on crucial aspects of the economy, such as international trade and foreign investment, thereby hindering overall stability and growth Ploch L (2010 p.5) ^[36] In stark contrast to this state-sanctioned interpretation, a prevalent public narrative attributes the economic crisis to a confluence of internal factors such as the manipulation of Zimbabwe's currency Munangagwa C.L (2009 p.7) ^[31] This perspective

predominantly emphasizes the roles of both public and private sector economic mismanagement and pervasive corruption as the primary catalysts for the nation's economic decline. Critics often point to unsustainable fiscal policies, ill-conceived development projects, and a general lack of sound economic governance as significant contributors. Furthermore, widespread allegations of corruption within various levels of society are seen as a substantial drain on national resources and a major impediment to attracting both domestic and international investment. The perspective offered by Harmill J (2008 p.5) ^[16], as cited by Chigora P & Guzura T (2011 p.5) ^[7], presents a critical analysis of the Government of National Unity (GNU), characterizing it as an alluring but ultimately unproductive detour towards stability. This viewpoint suggests that such power-sharing arrangements create a deceptive appearance of progressive change while simultaneously undermining the impetus for more substantive and transformative processes.

Harmil J (2008 p.5) ^[16] concludes his view on GNU as not favoring consensus politics. Chigora P & Guzura T (2011 p.4) ^[7] agrees to Harmil J (2008)'s ^[16] negative view of a GNU citing it as only serving the will of the state and not the will of the majority. However, this assessment stands in contrast to the experiences and perceptions of many Zimbabweans, who generally held a more favorable view of the 2009 GNU. Masaka D (2011, p.4) Indeed, the formation of the GNU in Zimbabwe demonstrably ushered in a period of economic improvement, even if the more profound and long-term objectives ultimately remained unrealized. Mukuhlanani T, (2014 p.5) ^[30] describes the two parties in the GNU as water and oil. The political climate deteriorated significantly after the collapse of the GNU, culminating in a dramatic intervention by the military against the long-standing rule of President Robert Gabriel Mugabe. This intervention, occurring in late 2017, was met with widespread support from ordinary citizens who harbored aspirations for a more inclusive government. Ultimately, facing immense pressure, President Mugabe was compelled to resign after a brief period of military action. Despite the public's evident desire for a collaborative political future, the ZANU-PF party adopted a different stance. They proclaimed Mugabe's removal as an internal party affair, encapsulated by the Shona phrase "Chinhu chedu," meaning (our thing) asserting their prerogative to unilaterally form a government of their choosing. This assertion deeply disappointed many Zimbabweans who had anticipated a broad-based government incorporating all political parties and civil society organizations. Instead, the previously dismissed Vice President Emmerson Dambudzo Munangagwa, who had sought refuge in South Africa, was brought back to assume the presidency, paving the way for subsequent elections. Hlatywayo G.K & Mangongera C (2020 p.2) ^[19] describes the Zimbabwe's November 2017 coup on Mugabe as a "flawed transition" because it did not bring the most desired opportunities the masses of Zimbabweans were expecting politically and economically as also noted by Mude T (2018 p.3) ^[29].

The victory of President Munangagwa in these elections was met with significant international criticism due to widespread allegations of electoral irregularities. Faced with continued political instability and a struggling economy, many Zimbabweans felt compelled to seek better opportunities abroad, primarily in neighboring and developed nations. By 2012, Zimbabwe's population stood

at approximately 16.3 million. However, by the time of these political upheavals, it is estimated that around a quarter of this population had emigrated, driven by a combination of political and economic hardships. This mass

exodus underscores the profound impact of the post-GNU political trajectory on the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Zimbabweans.

Table 2: Zimbabweans in the diaspora by 2012

South Africa	1,000,000- 3,000,000
United Kingdom	128,000
Australia	65,000
Botswana	50,000
United States	30,000-50,000 (estimate)
Canada	31,225
Zambia	10,000
France	8,372
New Zealand	5,600
Ireland	5,348
Germany	3,715
Portugal	1,312
Namibia	1,160
Singapore	1,103
Hong Kong	859
Brazil	321

The data in table 2 above was taken from (Knomad) sourced from the World Bank data of year (2012) as shown in the references. The provided data, sourced from KNOMAD a reliable migration database illustrates the distribution of emigrants from a single country across various global destinations. The most striking finding is the immense concentration of the diaspora in South Africa, which hosts an estimated 1,000,000 to 3,000,000 individuals. This massive regional migration corridor vastly exceeds all other destinations. The United Kingdom follows as the second-largest destination with 128,000 emigrants. Other significant destinations include Australia, Botswana, and the United States. The dataset highlights a highly concentrated regional migration flow combined with a smaller, but notable, presence in major global economies. For the complete dataset, refer to the source link: <https://www.knomad.org/data/migration/emigration?page=26>.

Zimbabwe 2025

Geza Revolution

The aftermath of the August 2023 elections in Zimbabwe, wherein the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) declared President Emmerson D. Munangagwa the victor, ushered in yet another period of instability for the nation. This followed widespread condemnation from regional and international election observer missions, which deemed the electoral process to have fallen short of being free and fair Mwonzora G (2024 p.7) ^[33]. Consequently, the ZANU-PF government, under a leadership that had branded itself as the "new dispensation" or the "Second Republic," returned to power. Since Zimbabwe's independence, the aspiration for a shift in the dominant political forces away from the ZANU-PF party and government had remained a persistent hope within the populace, yet it had never materialized in practice. Shayamunda R & Mashamaite P.K (2024 p.5) ^[42], the trust for elections in Zimbabwe is now a nightmare for many Zimbabweans. President Munangagwa's pronouncements regarding a potential extension of his term until 2030 have fundamentally altered the political landscape for both the Zimbabwean citizenry and within the ZANU-PF party itself. Ndebvudzemene K (2020 p.22) is

very skeptical about whether president Munangagwa 's goal to achieve the United Nations 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for an Upper-Middle-Income economy by 2030 is applicable. Many Zimbabweans now find themselves in a precarious position, contemplating either emigration as a means of escape or actively engaging in the struggle for freedom from the ZANU-PF government led by President Munangagwa. The internal rifts within ZANU-PF, evidenced by factions of war veterans aligning themselves with either the president or his vice-president, underscore the deep divisions within the party concerning this "2030 mantra." The assertion by Mlambo A.S (2017), as cited in Bvirindi J (2021, p. 2) ^[4], underscores a significant and unfortunate economic transformation in Zimbabwe. According to the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI)'s assessment in 2015, the nation held a position as one of the most industrialized countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, second only to the economic powerhouse of South Africa. However, this period of relative industrial strength proved to be unsustainable.

The subsequent years have been marked by considerable economic and political instability, which has precipitated a process of de-industrialisation. This decline has fundamentally altered the economic landscape of Zimbabwe, leading to a situation where a substantial portion of the population has resorted to informal vending as a means of livelihood. The protracted period of economic hardship and political uncertainty within Zimbabwe has had a profound social consequence, compelling many citizens to seek opportunities and stability beyond its borders. As Bvirindi J (2021, p.14) ^[4] further elucidates, these individuals, in their pursuit of a better future abroad, often encounter significant challenges. Where they are frequently perceived as being of lower status and are subjected to considerable mistreatment and prejudice, both at immigration checkpoints and in the course of engaging in commercial activities. This paints a sobering picture of the vulnerabilities faced by Zimbabwean migrants as a direct consequence of the nation's internal struggles. In essence, the once promising industrial base of Zimbabwe has been eroded by instability, leading to a shift towards informal economies and the unfortunate marginalization of its

citizens who have sought refuge and opportunity elsewhere. President Mnangagwa's current tenure is set to conclude in 2028, at which point the country is scheduled to hold harmonized elections to elect a new president, members of parliament, and local council representatives. Despite this constitutional timeline, slogans advocating for the extension of President Mnangagwa's term until 2030 are being voiced at ZANU-PF rallies across the nation, notably without any public reprimand from the president himself. In some instances, President Mnangagwa has even been observed publicly encouraging his ministers to chant these slogans, while simultaneously issuing denials of any intention to seek an extension of his time in office. Irrespective of the numerous development projects initiated by the Second Republic, a significant portion of the Zimbabwean population continues to perceive a shortfall in the government's efforts to bring about tangible improvements in their quality of life.

The prevailing sentiment is one of unmet expectations, casting a shadow over the initiatives undertaken and contributing to the ongoing uncertainty that defines the post-election landscape. Regardless of President Mnangagwa's efforts to keep the country's economy afloat Helliker K & Murisa T (2020 p.2) ^[17], Hove M & Chenzi V (2020 p.7) ^[21] the widespread perception of high-level corruption in both the private and public sectors has generated significant anxiety among Zimbabweans regarding their future prospects. This research endeavors to explore the sentiments of Zimbabwean citizens who find themselves at a crossroads, contemplating whether to seek better opportunities abroad or to participate in the "Geza revolution" aimed at challenging President Mnangagwa's administration and demanding a change in power. The political landscape of Zimbabwe is currently fraught with tension and marked by significant internal divisions within the ruling ZANU-PF party. A prominent figure in this dynamic is Blessed Geza, a war veteran who is allegedly assumed to be aligning himself with Vice President Constantine Chiwenga. Demonstrating his opposition to the incumbent government led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa, Cde. Geza orchestrated a mobilization of Zimbabwean citizens on March 31st, urging them to take to the streets in protest. However, this demonstration did not yield the desired outcomes, leaving the populace in a state of anticipation for Geza's next course of action. The nation continues to grapple with substantial economic hardships and persistent political challenges, creating an environment of uncertainty and anticipation for potential shifts in the country's trajectory.

Materials and Method

Within this investigation, a multifaceted research design was implemented, integrating telephone interviews, online questionnaires, and a review of existing literature to comprehensively address the research objectives. Drawing upon Frey's (1983, as cited in Carr & Worth, 2001, p. 3) ^[12], ^[11] characterization of telephone conversations as "an interaction sequence without visual cue," this method proved particularly valuable in eliciting information from individuals who might find face-to-face interactions less comfortable due to personal reticence. The adoption of telephone interviews was further substantiated by Carr and Worth's (2001, p. 3) ^[11] assertion of its reliability,

particularly with the advent of "computer-assisted data dialing and data collection techniques." To mitigate potential biases arising from homogenous perspectives, participant selection for the telephone interviews adhered to a random sampling protocol. Furthermore, to manage the financial implications of international communication, the sample was strategically distributed, encompassing three Zimbabweans residing in America, three in Europe, three in Asia, three in Africa including those within Zimbabwe itself.

The questionnaire methodology specifically targeted Zimbabweans with connections to Asia, whether through residency, education, or employment. These questionnaires were disseminated via We Chat, a prevalent social media platform in Asia, reaching numerous Zimbabweans within relevant social media groups. In alignment with Gangrade's (1982, p. 1) ^[13] definition of a questionnaire as a tool designed to "collect data from a group of people coming under the purview of a study," this approach facilitated the gathering of insights from a geographically dispersed population. The selection of China, South Africa, the United States, and the United Kingdom as key target locations was predicated on their significance as primary destinations for Zimbabweans seeking opportunities abroad. The inclusion of Zimbabwe as a target country acknowledged the perspectives of those who remain within its borders and hold diverse viewpoints. It is important to acknowledge, however, the limitations inherent in interview methodologies, as highlighted by Hofisi *et al.* (2014, p. 62) ^[20], including the potential for interviewer oversight of certain responses. Finally, a substantial body of both published and unpublished scholarly works was consulted to provide context and incorporate the perspectives of researchers who have previously explored similar themes. This approach aligns with Steen's (1991, p. 1) ^[43] conceptualization of literature review as a means of investigating divergences within textual sources, thereby enriching the analysis with existing scholarly discourse.

Results

This research presents an analysis of the perspectives and experiences of Zimbabweans living in both their home country and the diaspora. The study's participants, totaling twenty individuals, were selected from various locations across the globe, including three from the United States, three from the United Kingdom, three from China, two from Australia, three from Canada, three from Zimbabwe and three from South Africa.

Data was systematically collected through a series of structured telephone interviews. To ensure objectivity, participants were chosen through a random selection process, and interviews were conducted at various intervals. While the interviewees were granted anonymity in the reporting of their responses, their geographical locations and the timings of their interviews were meticulously recorded to uphold the research's credibility. The interview itself comprised a set of ten questions, with the first question dedicated to collecting the participant's demographic data. The remaining nine questions were designed to directly elicit their views regarding the recent increase in migration from Zimbabwe. Data was taken from the questionnaire in Appendix 1 which shows the questions and answers used during the phone call interview.

Table 3: Data collected through telephone interviews

Interviewee	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12	Q.13
US	B	E	D	A	B	A	B	D
US	B	E	D	B	B	B	B	A
US	B	E	D	C	B	D	B	A
UK	B	E	D	D	B	A	B	A
UK	B	E	D	B	B	A	B	A
UK	B	E	D	A	B	B	B	B
China	B	E	D	B	A	C	D	D
China	B	E	D	B	A	C	D	D
China	B	E	D	A	A	C	D	D
Zimbabwe	A	A	B	E	E	E	A	B
Zimbabwe	A	A	C	E	E	E	A	B
Zimbabwe	A	A	B	E	E	E	A	B
Sout Africa	B	E	D	A	C	A	A	A
South Africa	B	E	D	B	C	D	A	A
South Africa	B	E	D	B	C	B	A	A
Canada	B	E	D	A	B	A	B	A
Canada	B	E	D	B	B	B	B	A
Canada	B	E	D	C	B	A	B	A
Australia	B	E	D	B	B	D	B	A
Australia	B	E	D	B	C	B	B	A

The data presented in Table 3 was gathered from interviews conducted in July 2025 with Zimbabwean citizens residing both within the Southern African region and internationally. The study's aim was to capture their perspectives on the underlying causes and subsequent effects of Zimbabwean migration to other countries. The interview format was highly structured, requiring participants to select from a predetermined set of multiple-choice options (A, B, C, D, E

or F) for each question. This methodology was deliberately employed to distil the broad and diverse views on the subject into a more focused and analytically critical framework, allowing for a detailed examination of the factors influencing emigration.

See appendix 1 Question number 6 to 13.

Table 4: Interviews held on WhatsApp

Interviewee	Main Causes of Zimbabwe's migration
Former farmer from Marondera now living in the UK 2025.08.11	Hi XX, it's XXX from XXX Farm, Marondera, Zim. You know what happened the day when Mugabe forced my family off XXX Estate. I had the opportunity to visit our home in Marondera, Zim last February. We were forced off our home by crowds of aggressive Zimbabwean natives. Our family had developed the farm for 3 generations. (Dairy, Beef, Maize Tobacco.) I had the opportunity to visit our old farm with my Dad earlier this year and was heartbroken to see the totally dilapidated state of affairs with everything was uncared for and dilapidated. To date, we have not been offered any compensation. So sad to see the results of bush encroachment around our home and what were productive fields, buildings and pastures. Yours sincerely XX. XX tells me that we are expecting some compensation.
Zimbabwean citizen living and working in South Africa 2025.08.12	Chief among the reasons Zimbabwe finds itself in this economic morass is cadre deployment, nepotism and corruption and failure by our leadership to build strong state institutions that plays an oversight role both in government and private sectors. Limited Democratic space to engage robustly, lack of a clear and practical national development plan, we can go on and on the list is endless, misplaced priorities, (nekukara simba) greed for power.
Zimbabwean PhD student in China 2025.08.20	1. Economic: Policy missteps under the influence of economic liberalization, particularly ESAP in the 1990s; followed by partially successful land reform. 2. Political: Fragmented elites with little or no development intent. A state with high rent-seeking behaviors, poor institutions and weak state capacity. In summary, we got wrong and weak institutions, that's producing inefficient elites who are setting up policies that serve not the poor but their own political and economic survival.
Zimbabwean pastor living in the US 2025.08.20	Politicians. Lack of political will for Zimbabwean politicians both in the ruling party and in the opposition party to serve the country's interests.
Zimbabwean citizen living and working in China 2025.08.20	Economic mismanagement resulting in hyperinflation and currency collapse, political instability, corruption, and international sanctions that have hindered economic growth and investment
Zimbabwean citizen working in the UK 2025.08.20	Corruption and poor governance policies in Zimbabwe
A secondary school teacher in Zimbabwe 2025.08.20	It is caused by Zimbabwe's poverty which is mainly attributed to bad policies, improperly executed land reform being an example, linked to longer political stay than serving the nation. Deep rooted corruption is also a major factor since politicians are using political positions for selfish personal gain
Zimbabwean citizen working in Australia 2025.08.21	The main reasons behind Zimbabwe's migration crisis is poverty since the land reforms that broke down the farming sector, along with poor economic management and corruption. On top of that, hyperinflation, sanctions, and political turmoil pushed industries to collapse, scared away investment, and left many people without jobs.

The data shown in the table 4 above is driven from interviews held with some Zimbabweans across the world from 11 to 21 August 2025. A comparative analysis of these interviews reveals a striking consensus regarding the primary catalysts for Zimbabwe's protracted migration crisis. The overarching narrative identifies a triad of interconnected failures: economic collapse, political misrule, and profound institutional decay. The firsthand account of the former farmer poignantly illustrates the human cost of the controversial land reform programme, which dismantled a multi-generational agricultural legacy and left productive infrastructure in a state of ruin. This specific policy failure is frequently cited by other interviewees, including the teacher and the citizen in Australia, who directly link the breakdown of the farming sector to widespread poverty. This economic devastation is further attributed to chronic mismanagement, with multiple respondents, notably the citizen in China, highlighting hyperinflation and currency collapse as critical push factors. Underpinning this economic morass is a near-unanimous condemnation of systemic corruption and poor governance. The respondent in South Africa provides a detailed critique, citing cadre deployment, nepotism, and a catastrophic failure to build robust state institutions capable of oversight. This sentiment is universally echoed, from the PhD student's analysis of "high rent-seeking behaviours" to the pastor's blunt accusation of a wholesale "lack of political will" among the elite.

Consequently, a clear causal chain emerges from the collective testimony. Weak, self-serving institutions, as the PhD student argues, produce inefficient elites who enact policies for their own survival rather than national development. This fosters an environment of economic desperation and limited democratic space, compelling skilled citizens to seek stability and opportunity abroad. The interviews collectively posit that migration is not a choice but a necessary response to a state perceived as having failed its people.

Discussion

The emigration of Zimbabweans, while beneficial in some respects, inflicts severe negative consequences upon the nation. The most detrimental effect is the profound brain drain, as the exodus of highly skilled professionals such as doctors, engineers, and teachers cripples essential public services. This depletion of human capital severely undermines the country's capacity for development and economic recovery. Consequently, the healthcare and education sectors face critical staff shortages, drastically reducing the quality and accessibility of care and instruction for those who remain. Furthermore, the migration pattern is often selective, stripping communities of their most productive and young members, which leads to an ageing population and a diminished tax base. This results in a loss of innovation and entrepreneurial talent, stifling domestic business growth and investment. Families are frequently fractured, creating emotionally strained households and leaving children in the care of elderly relatives. The nation's investment in educating these individuals is effectively lost, with the benefits of their skills accruing to host countries. Ultimately, this out migration threatens to create a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, where the very people needed to rebuild Zimbabwe are absent.

The migration of Zimbabweans, both regionally and further abroad, yields significant positive effects for the nation. Primarily, it raises the country's GDP through substantial financial remittances sent home by the diaspora. These vital funds provide a stable source of foreign currency, bolstering the national treasury and supporting the balance of payments. Beyond macroeconomic gains, remittances directly alleviate poverty at a household level, financing essential needs such as education, healthcare, and housing. This migration also mitigates domestic unemployment pressures by allowing skilled and unskilled labour to access opportunities in stronger economies. Furthermore, these citizens often acquire new expertise and technical knowledge in their host countries. This diaspora network can subsequently facilitate valuable knowledge transfer and foreign investment back into Zimbabwe. The reduction in the number of people dependent on strained local resources and social services provides a form of indirect relief. Consequently, migration acts as a crucial safety valve and a development tool, creating a tangible, albeit external, economic lifeline for many families and the state. Ultimately, these financial and social benefits underscore the profoundly positive impact of this global movement.

Consensus View on Zimbabwe's migration

According to the survey the primary catalyst for Zimbabwean migration since independence has been a profound economic collapse, catalysed by disastrous land reforms that crippled the agricultural sector and precipitated hyperinflation. This economic turmoil is universally attributed to systemic corruption and chronic political misrule, which fostered weak institutions and rampant rent-seeking behaviour.

A conspicuous lack of democratic space and a failure of political will across the spectrum further eroded opportunities and stability. Consequently, this interconnected triad of economic, political, and institutional failure compelled skilled and ordinary citizens alike to seek livelihoods abroad, making migration a necessary response to state failure rather than a mere choice.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe stands at a critical juncture, its socio-political landscape a tapestry woven with threads of complexity and uncertainty. A recent survey illuminates the profound dilemma facing its populace: whether to seek refuge beyond its borders or to remain and actively strive for liberation from the current governmental structures. This pivotal decision, deeply personal in nature, underscores the weight of individual circumstances against a backdrop of national turmoil. While both options present themselves as viable paths, they are fraught with considerable risks. The exodus driven by political repression and persecution is a stark reality. Yet, within this movement, the survey suggests a nuanced layer where some individuals may exploit the guise of political grievances to seek asylum in developed nations, potentially benefiting from preferential treatment afforded to those genuinely fleeing persecution. Simultaneously, economic hardship serves as another significant impetus for emigration. The survey reveals that despite the struggles of professionals across both private and public sectors to secure adequate remuneration, the nation grapples with the debilitating effects of brain drain. The departure of numerous skilled and professional workers has left

Zimbabwe with a critical shortage of specialized expertise. This void has precipitated a crisis within the public sector, where the resignation of experienced personnel has led the government to implement contentious measures, such as revoking the licenses of skilled individuals seeking better opportunities abroad. Ironically, this pursuit of "greener pastures" now unfolds against a backdrop of precarious job security for foreign workers in prominent destinations like the UK and the US. Furthermore, the survey highlights the persistent allegations of human rights abuses leveled against the government by civil society organizations as a significant factor compelling Zimbabweans to leave their homeland. Indeed, the period since 2000 has been marked by considerable risks for those remaining in Zimbabwe, navigating the intertwined challenges of political instability, economic fragility, and human rights concerns. Now, with the emergence of the Geza Revolution, a movement aspiring to fundamental governmental change, the people of Zimbabwe find themselves in an ambiguous and precarious position. Caught between the desire for a better future within their own nation and the immediate pressures of a challenging present, their path forward remains uncertain, contingent on individual courage and the unfolding trajectory of the nation's complex struggle defines the life in Zimbabwe in the year 2025.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire 1.(Zimbabwean Migration Survey)

Dear Zimbabweans

The proposed survey is a comprehensive and insightful study of Zimbabwe's enduring migration crisis. By framing the issue within the context of the 2000 land reforms, and by focusing on its far-reaching causes and effects, it offers a framework for understanding a complex human tragedy. The findings of such a study would not only be of academic interest but would also hold significant practical value for policymakers in Zimbabwe and the international community alike, as they seek to address the lingering consequences of a crisis that continues to shape the lives of millions. All data will be used strictly for statistical analysis, and there are no incorrect answers, so please feel free to respond openly. We appreciate your cooperation and support.

Part 1: Demographics

(Please tick one box for each question)

1. Gender

- A. Male
- B. Female

2. Age Group

- A. Under 18
- B. 18-29
- C. 30-49
- D. 50 and Over

3. Current Location

- A. Zimbabwe
- B. Elsewhere in Africa
- C. Europe
- D. The Americas
- E. Asia
- F. Australia/Oceania

4. Highest Level of Education

- A. Primary or Secondary School
- B. Vocational or Technical College
- C. Bachelor's Degree

- D. Master's Degree
- E. Doctorate or equivalent

5. Current Status

- A. Student
- B. Professional/Employed
- C. Unemployed
- D. Retired
- E. Other (please specify): _____

Part 2: Migration and Perceptions

(Please tick one box for each question unless otherwise specified)

6. Are you currently living in Zimbabwe?

- A. Yes
- B. No

7. (If you answered 'Yes' to Question 6) why have you chosen to remain in Zimbabwe?

- A. Economic and personal ties
- B. Political reasons
- C. Educational opportunities
- D. I have not yet had the opportunity to leave
- E. Not applicable (I am not in Zimbabwe)

8. Do you wish to leave Zimbabwe?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I am currently making plans to leave
- D. Not applicable (I have already left)

9. (If you have already left Zimbabwe) when do you wish to return to Zimbabwe?

- A. In the next 2-5 years
- B. In more than 5 years
- C. When there is a significant political or economic change
- D. I do not wish to return
- E. Not applicable (I have not left Zimbabwe)

10. What is your main reason for wanting to return to Zimbabwe?

- A. Economic opportunities
- B. Political change
- C. Family and personal reasons
- D. Educational or professional opportunities
- E. Not applicable

11. What is your main reason for not wanting to return to Zimbabwe?

- A. Lack of economic opportunities
- B. Political instability
- C. Personal reasons
- D. I have a better life elsewhere
- E. Not applicable

12. In your opinion, what is the primary negative effect of migration on Zimbabwe?

- A. Brain drain (loss of skilled professionals)
- B. Breakdown of family structures (e.g., divorces, separation)
- C. Loss of cultural traditions
- D. Loss of a potential workforce

13. In your opinion, what is the primary positive effect of migration for a Zimbabwean?

- A. Improved financial and living conditions
- B. Better access to education and technology
- C. Exposure to a different political environment
- D. Opportunities for personal and professional growth

Thank you so much for your contribution to this survey