Zimbabwe Election Support Network

ZESN'S COMMENT ON THE ZEC BVR PROVISIONAL STATISTICS

23 March 2018 - Following several requests by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network ZESN and other stakeholders for Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to release data, on the numbers of voters registered disaggregated by province and gender, the ZEC published the Biometric Voter Registration BVR data on its website in March 2018. Analysis of the data indicates that registration was generally high across all provinces. The BVR exercise resulted in higher numbers of youth and women registering as voters.

Below is a preliminary comparative analysis of the registration statistics using ZESN Population Projections released in May 2017, based on the 2012 Population Census data. ZESN will release a more detailed comparative analysis based on the 2013 voter turnout in due course.

Table 1: ZESN 2017 Projections and BVR Statistics –Overall Picture

Province	ZESN 2017 Projections			ZEC provisional BVR statistics			
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	% registered
Mat North	177596	211996	**389592**	140898	182689	**323587**	83.1%
Midlands	397689	467496	**865185**	328247	389263	**717510**	82.9%
Mash East	341616	394173	**735790**	263840	321358	**585198**	79.5%
Mash Central	296783	323496	**620279**	230406	260332	**490738**	79.1%
Masvingo	321247	433067	**754314**	242715	340884	**583599**	77.4%
Mash West	411007	423407	**834414**	299849	311902	**611751**	73.3%
Manicaland	405871	506891	**912762**	284962	381981	**666943**	73.1%
Mat South	160059	196527	**356586**	104578	141972	**246550**	69.1%
Harare	651540	694278	**1345818**	366467	381453	**747920**	55.6%
Bulawayo	186055	223334	**409389**	99168	112108	**211276**	51.6%
Total	**3349462**	**3874665**	**7224128**	**2361130**	**2823942**	**5185072**	**71.8%**

Percentage	46.36%	53.63%		45.53%	54.46%		

Table 1 shows an overall picture of both ZESN 2018 population projections and ZEC provisional BVR statistics. ZESN 2018 projections for the voting age population indicated that Harare has the highest number of people aged 18+ (134 818), followed by Manicaland (912 762), Midlands (865 185) and in fourth place is Mash West (834 414). The Province with the least number of projected population aged 18+ is Matabeleland South (356 586).

ZEC provisional BVR statistics (in the last column) shows that a substantial proportion of adult Zimbabweans (2 039 056) did not register in the BVR Blitz and mop up exercise or are yet to register. For example, Harare has a projected adult population of 1,3million (1 345 818) fewer than 800 thousand (747 920) have registered to vote. Thus the registered population of Harare, in light of the projected figure is 55.6%. The province with the highest proportion of registered voters is Matabeleland North (83.1%), followed closely by Midlands (82.9%). Bulawayo (**51.6%**) and Harare (**55.6%**) are at the bottom of the ladder of residents registered to vote.

Table 2: Statistics by gender

Province	ZESN 2017 Projections		ZEC provisional BVR statistics		% of registered women by Population Projection	% of registered men by Population Projection
	Men	Women	Men	Women		
Mat North	177596	211996	140898	182689	86.2%	79.3%
Midlands	397689	467496	328247	389263	83.3%	82.5%
Mash East	341616	394173	263840	321358	81.5%	77.2%
Mash Central	296783	323496	230406	260332	80.5%	77.6%
Masvingo	321247	433067	242715	340884	78.7%	75.6%
Mash West	411007	423407	299849	311902	73.7%	73.0%
Manicaland	405871	506891	284962	381981	75.4%	70.2%
Mat South	160059	196527	104578	141972	72.2%	65.3%
Harare	651540	694278	366467	381453	54.9%	56.2%
Bulawayo	186055	223334	99168	112108	50.2%	53.3%
Total	**3349462**	**3874665**	**2361130**	**2823942**	**72.9%**	**70.5%**

Table 2 above compares ZESN projected voting population and ZEC provisional statistics. When the data is viewed by gender, the general trend is than more women than men across most provinces have registered to vote. Using the population projection, the gender divide is more apparent in provinces such as Matabeleland North (women = 86.2%; men = 79.3%) and South (women = 72.2%; men = 65.3%) and Manicaland (women = 75.4%; men = 70.2%).

BVR Statistics by Age

The figure below shows an overall picture of ZEC BVR statistics of Zimbabweans aged 18 years and above registered to vote in the 2018 elections.

Results indicate that the majority of those registered to vote (70% or 3 612 039 out of the total 5 185 072) are aged between 20 years and 44 years. Only 13.9% are in the 45-60 age categories. Of the 70%, the highest population is 35-39 years (667 555, 13.20%), followed by the 20-24 years (666 467, 13.18%), then 25-24 years (652 726, 12.9%) and in fourth place the 30-34 age category (609942). The figure below shows the age distribution.
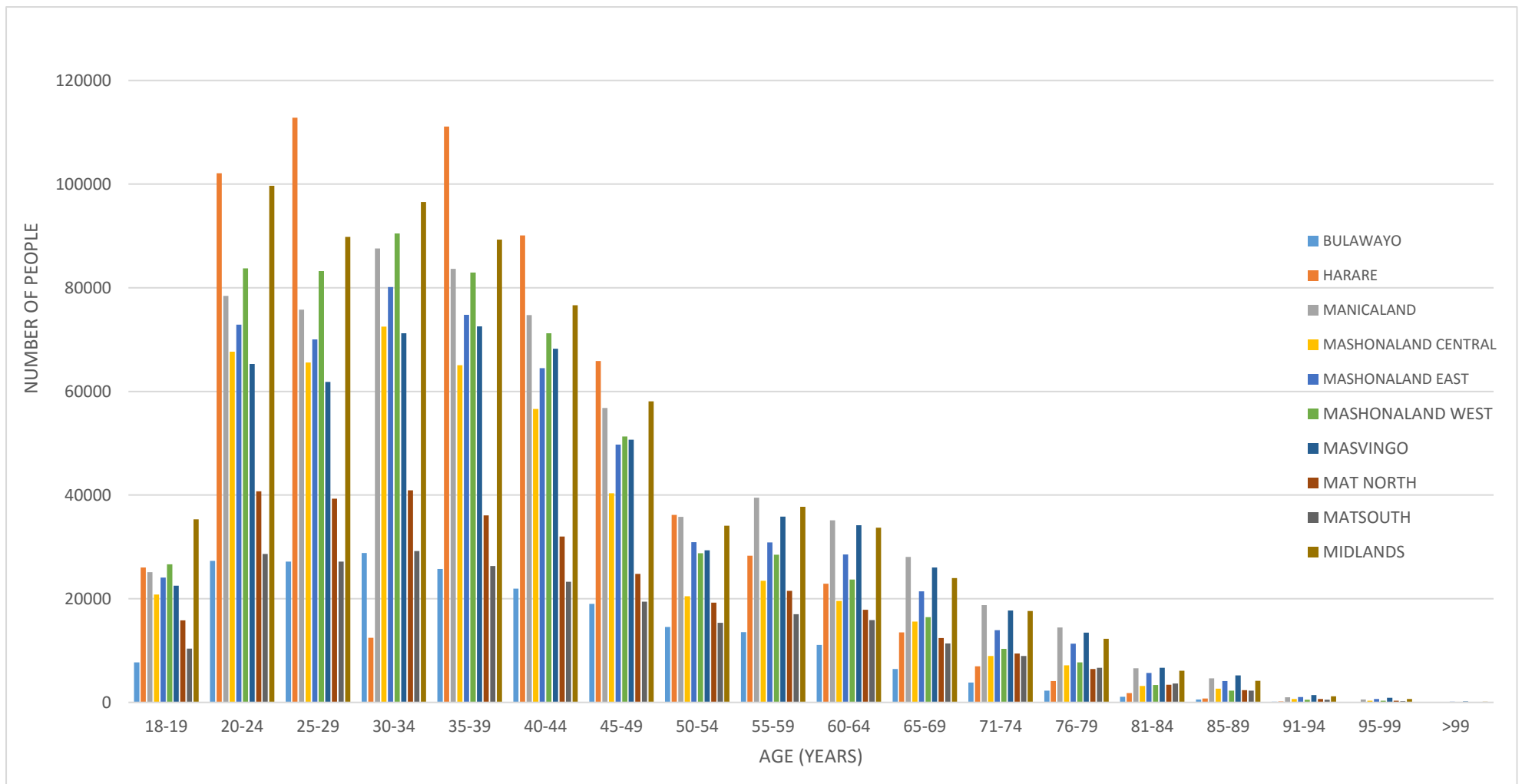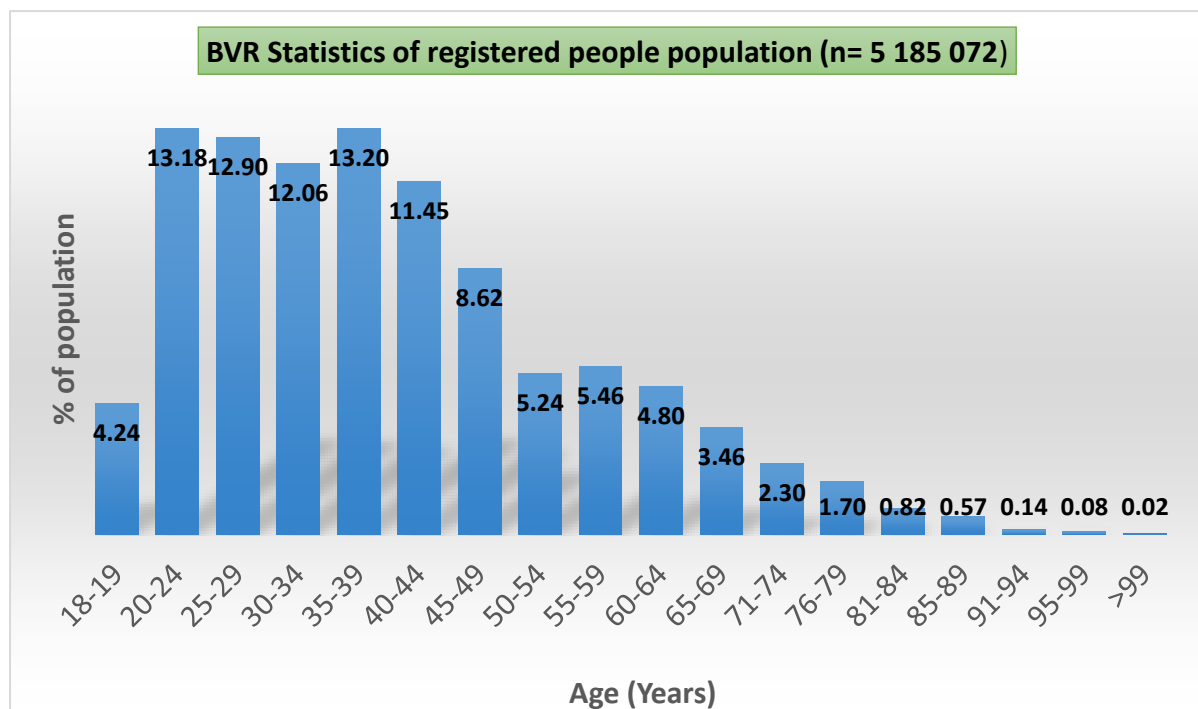
Figure2: Age distribution of the population of registered voters

BVR Statistics of registered people population (n= 5 185 072)

The graph above shows that the population registered voters is positively skewed, suggesting that the majority of registered voters, so far, fall into the younger generation category (20 to 44 years old). This could be attributed to the fact that Zimbabwe's population is largely youthful. However, uptake of BVR has been considerably lower among the older generation and those aged 18 to 19.

Of concern to ZESN are the higher numbers of registered voters' in Goromonzi South (65, 539), Epworth (63 961), Dangamvura – Chikanga (58 000) and Harare South (60 270) constituencies. This points out to the need for more polling stations in the respective constituencies and the need for a delimitation exercise post 2018 elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the statistics indicate a generally heightened interest in voter registration, with all provinces recording more than half of the projected population having registered, and more youth and women participation, there is still a need for concerted efforts to mobilise prospective voters to take part in the continuous registration exercise and to also turn out in the 2018 harmonised elections.

- ZEC should provide statistics further disaggregated by ward, polling stations and special interest groups, for example People with Disabilities (PWDs)
- The ZEC should continuously provide updated, disaggregated data on the voter registrants on its website, in a timely manner.

- ZEC must consider establishing more registration centres in Harare and Bulawayo for the continuous registration exercise to increase the numbers of registered voters as the data indicates the lowest registration turnouts in these provinces.
- There is need for the ZEC and CSOs to amplify its voter education efforts particularly in Harare and Bulawayo since these provinces have the lowest proportions of registered voters.
- There is need to increase mobilisation efforts targeting groups that have, so far, recorded low voter registration. These include the newly turned 18 (18-19), men and those aged 50 and above.
- Civil Society must complement ZECs efforts in the mobilisation of potential registrants in the continuous BVR exercises ongoing at ZEC district offices.
- ZEC must increase polling stations in constituencies with higher numbers of registered voters' to ensure that voters' are not disenfranchised on Election Day.
- The Government must avail adequate resources to the ZEC for the completion of other voter registration processes such as deduplication, inspection, final cleaning of the voters roll as well as its certification among other essential electoral processes.
- The ZEC should ensure transparency of these processes by putting in place regulations and procedures for the de-duplication exercise and inspection of the voters roll.