

Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI)  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
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## News release

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### Zimbabweans remain apprehensive about manipulation of the presidential election, new survey finds

Zimbabwe's presidential campaign has done little to allay popular apprehensions about the security of the vote, the counting of ballots, the announcement of election results, and the possibility of post-election violence, according to a new public-opinion survey.



Findings of the nationally representative survey, which the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) conducted in all 10 provinces of Zimbabwe between 25 June and 6 July 2018, show that while a majority of citizens were optimistic that the election will be free and fair, substantial minorities remained worried about manipulation in the final stages of the electoral process.

These findings largely confirm results of a pre-election baseline survey in April/May but show that as the election approached, citizen apprehensions about military intervention and the potentially violent aftermath of a disputed election were on the rise.

Other findings from the new survey, including a significant drop in President Emmerson Mnangagwa's lead over challenger Nelson Chamisa, are detailed in Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 223, at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

#### Key findings

- As of early July, substantial minorities of Zimbabweans said they expect election irregularities (Figure 1):
  - About three in 10 thought it "somewhat" or "very" likely that their ballots will not be secret (28%) and that biometric voter registration data will be used to find out how they voted (32%).
  - About one in four (26%) said it is somewhat/very likely that individuals' votes will not actually be counted.
  - Almost half (45%) of Zimbabweans saw it as likely that incorrect election results will be announced.
- About one-third (34%) of all respondents "agreed" or "agreed very strongly" that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is a biased rather than neutral body.
- Notwithstanding public concerns about election management, widespread optimism expressed in early May was reaffirmed in early July: 60% said they think the election will be largely free and fair, and more than three-fourths (77%) continued to believe that elections are more likely to "improve lives" rather than "change nothing" (Figure 2).



- Yet experience with political party primary elections conducted in May 2018 was hardly a cause for such optimism. Only minorities thought that the ZANU-PF (44%) and MDC-T (33%) primaries were either “completely free and fair” or suffered only “minor problems.”
- Six out of 10 Zimbabweans (62%) continued to feel that the presence of police at polling stations will improve the integrity of the elections. Even larger numbers welcomed the presence of independent election observers. But support for the presence of uniformed military personnel at the polls declined from 48% to 41% between May and July.
- More than four in 10 respondents (44%) said it was “somewhat” or “very” likely that security agencies will not respect the results of the 2018 presidential election, an increase from 41% in early May. And the proportion of Zimbabweans who said they expect post-election violence increased as well, from 40% in early May to 44% by early July (Figure 3).

### Pre-election surveys

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Afrobarometer's core partner for Southern Africa, commissioned two pre-election surveys in Zimbabwe. Fieldwork was conducted by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI), Afrobarometer's national partner in Zimbabwe.

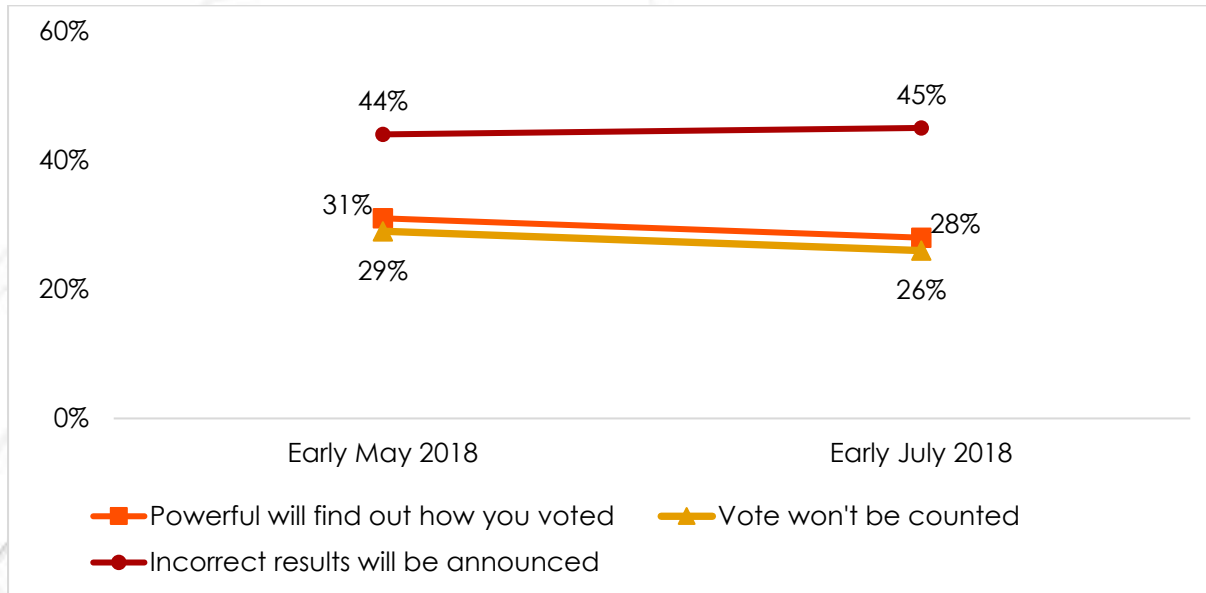
Technical support was provided by Afrobarometer, a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

Findings from the first survey, conducted 28 April-13 May 2018, are available at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

For the second survey, MPOI interviewed 2,400 adult citizens between 25 June and 6 July 2018. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

## Charts

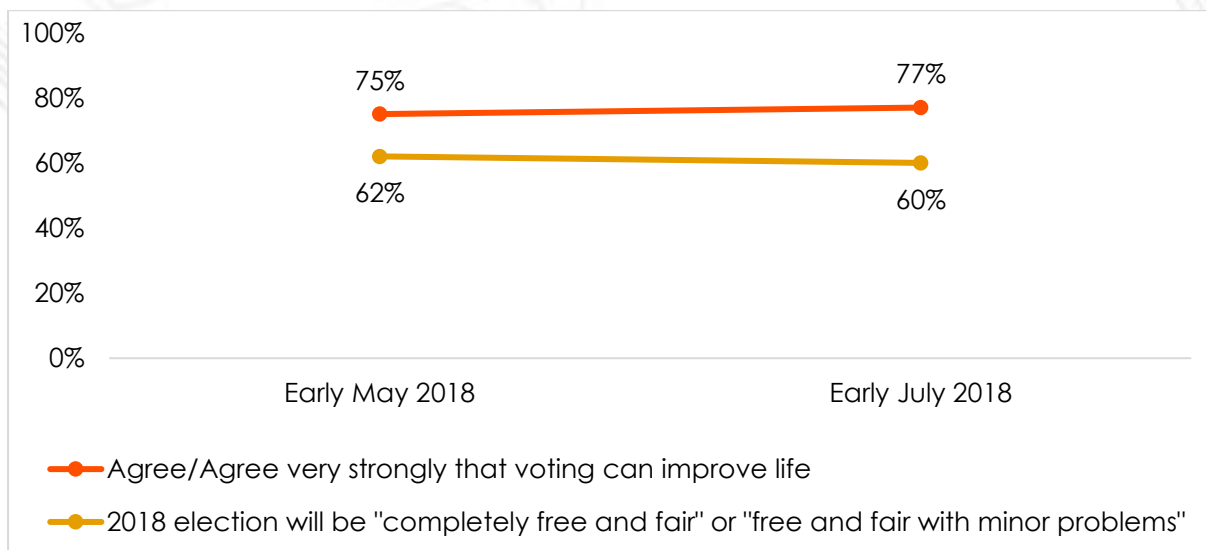
**Figure 1: Likelihood of election irregularities** | Zimbabwe | /May-July 2018



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how likely will the following things happen in the 2018 elections:

- Even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country, powerful people will find out how you have voted?
- Even though you will cast a ballot, your vote will not actually be counted?
- Even after all ballots are counted, an incorrect result will be announced?

**Figure 2: Popular expectations about elections** | Zimbabwe | May-July 2018



**Respondents were asked:**

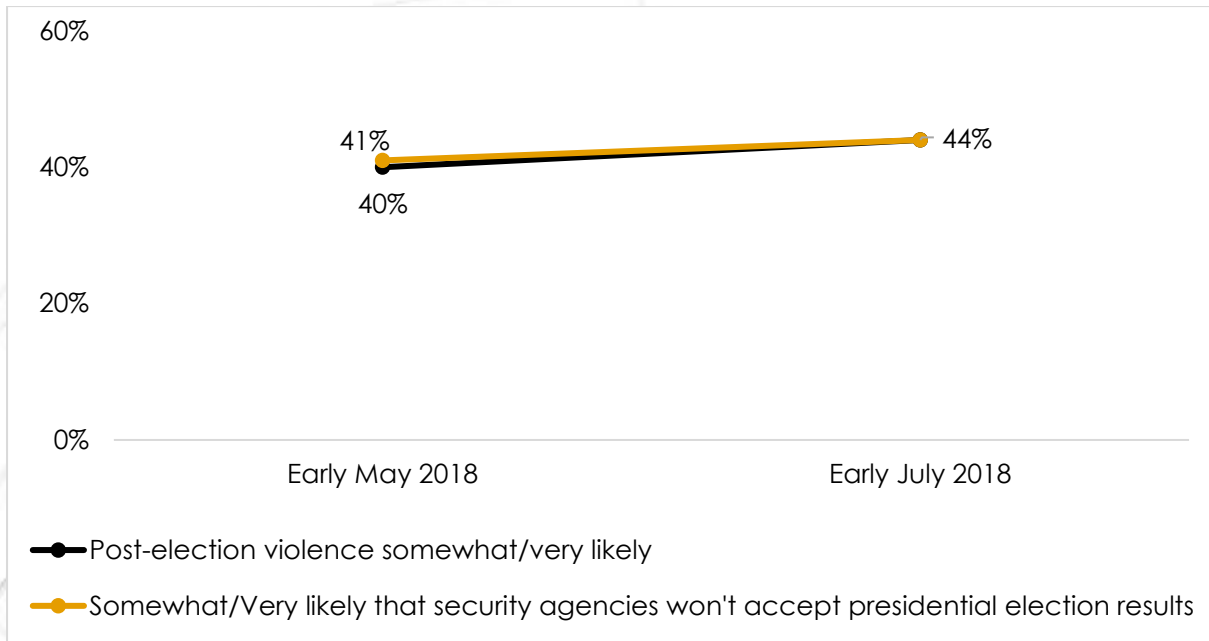
- Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: No matter whom we vote for, things will not get better in the future.

Statement 2: We can use our power as voters to choose leaders who will help us improve our lives.

- How free and fair do you expect the next elections of 2018 to be?

**Figure 3: Likelihood of post-election violence and non-acceptance of results by the military | Zimbabwe | May-July 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your view, how likely is it that:*

- *There will be violence after the announcement of election results?*
- *Security agencies will not accept the result of the presidential election?*

**For more information, please contact:**

Mass Public Opinion Institute  
Eldred. V. Masunungure  
Telephone: +263772100409  
Email: [director@mpoi.org.zw](mailto:director@mpoi.org.zw)

Afrobarometer  
Brian Howard  
Telephone: +1 713-624-0373  
Email: [bhoward@afrobarometer.org](mailto:bhoward@afrobarometer.org)

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