

Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI)
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News release

Fear, self-censorship decline but still high as Zimbabwe approaches election, new survey finds

Fear of electoral violence and of openly expressing their views declined but were still at above-average levels as Zimbabwe approached its July 30 presidential election, a new survey shows.



Findings of the nationally representative survey conducted between 25 June and 6 July 2018 by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) also show that a growing majority approved of the government's performance in preventing electoral violence.

Compared to results of a pre-election baseline survey conducted in April/May, the latest survey found fewer Zimbabweans who thought, mistakenly, that voters will be required to show a biometric voter registration (BVR) slip at the polling station, as well as fewer who had been asked to show their BVR numbers during the campaign.

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.

Key findings

- More than four in 10 Zimbabweans (43%) said they personally fear becoming a victim of electoral intimidation or violence. Though high compared to an average of 30% across 24 African countries, this reflects an 8-percentage-point drop from the slim majority (51%) who expressed such fear in early May (Figure 1).
- This shift is reinforced by a growing majority (68%) who said the current government is performing "fairly well" or "very well" at preventing electoral violence (up from 63% in May).
- The proportion of respondents who said that "people must be careful of what they say about politics" dipped by 6 percentage points between early May (82%) and early July (76%) (Figure 2). But a tendency to self-censorship remained strong (e.g. higher than a 24-country average of 70%).
- Over the past two months, there has been a slight improvement in the popular misperception that voters will be required to show a BVR slip at the polling station: 64% still held this mistaken belief in July, down from 72% in May. And fewer people reported having been asked to show their BVR serial numbers (25% in July vs. 31% in May) (Figure 3).
- Popular awareness of electoral alliances increased over the course of the election campaign. Between early May and early July, the proportion of survey respondents



who said they had heard of the MDC Alliance rose from 57% to 75%. The comparable rise for the Coalition of Democrats was 17% to 22% and for the People's Rainbow Coalition 16% to 25%.

- As for political parties, the ruling party appeared to have a stronger organizational presence on the ground than its challenger. Despite a recent countrywide campaign blitz by newcomer Nelson Chamisa, a large gap in campaign event attendance remained between the parties in July (34% for the ZANU-PF vs. 18% for the MDC-T Chamisa/Alliance).

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 in the country's 10 provinces by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI), Afrobarometer's national partner in Zimbabwe.

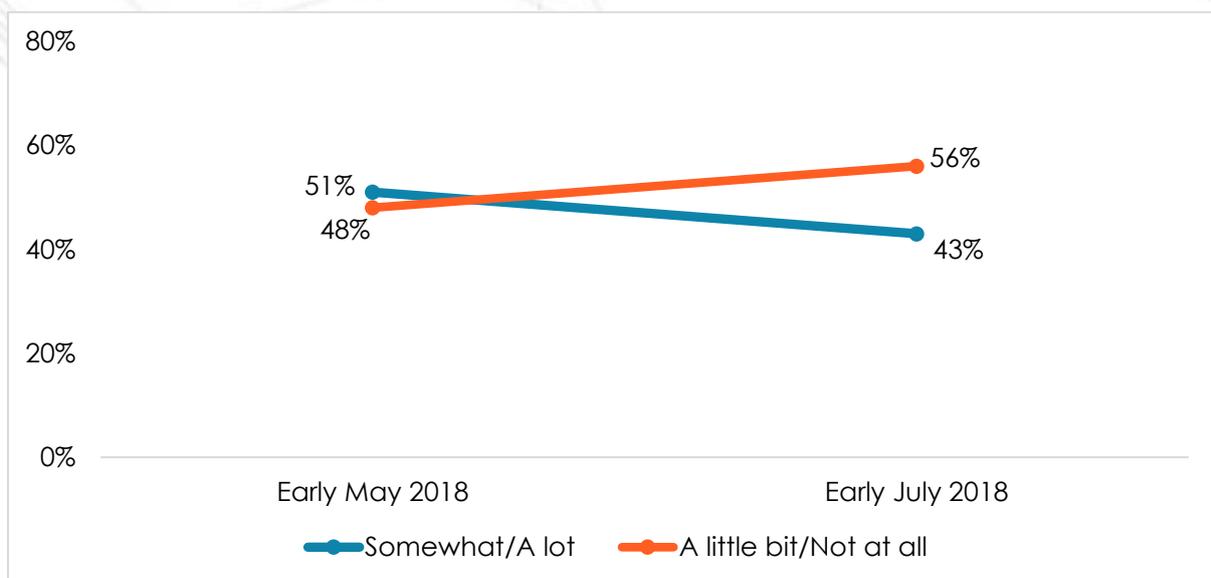
Technical support was provided by Afrobarometer, a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's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

Findings from the first survey, conducted 28 April-13 May 2018, are available at www.afrobarometer.org.

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.

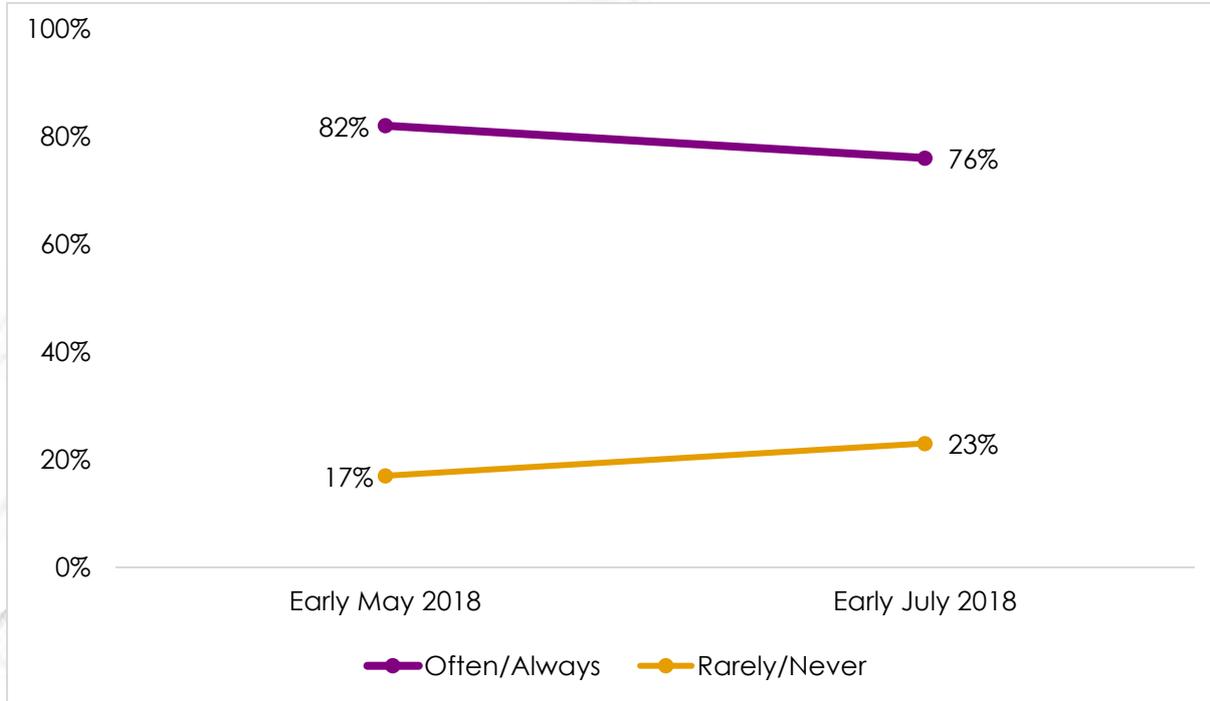
Charts

Figure 1: Fear of electoral intimidation or violence | Zimbabwe | May-July 2018



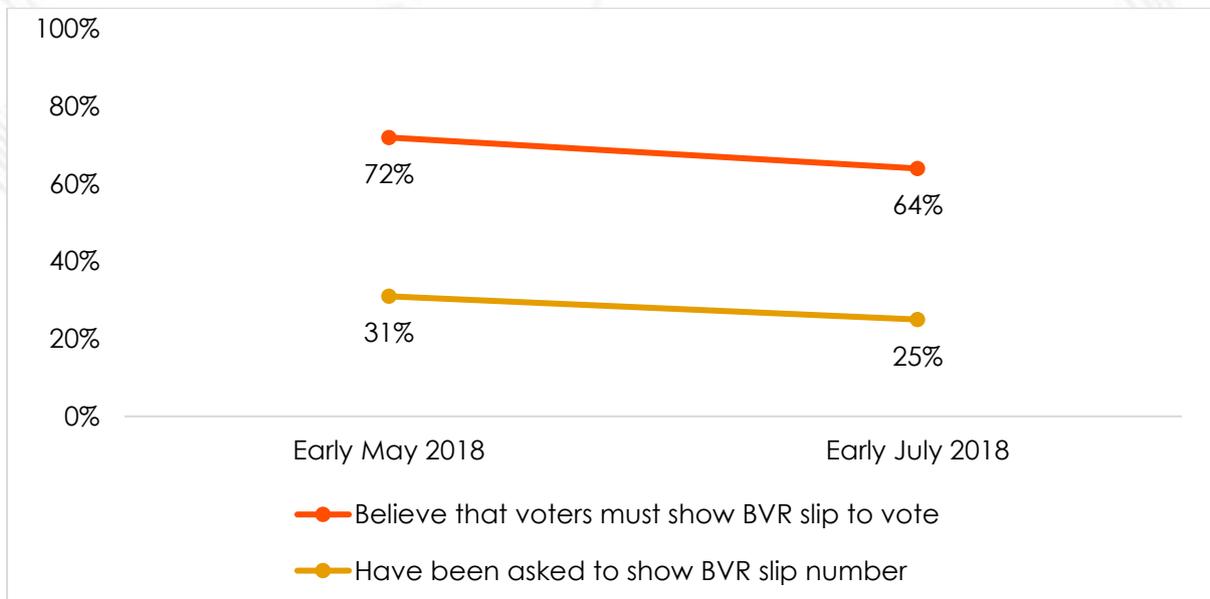
Respondents were asked: During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?

Figure 2: Careful about what one says about politics | Zimbabwe | May-July 2018



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often, in this country, do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?*

Figure 3: Misuse of BVR slips | Zimbabwe | May-July 2018



Respondents were asked:

- To your knowledge, will a citizen have to show a biometric voter registration (BVR) slip in order to vote? (Analysis includes all respondents.)
- Has anyone demanded to see the serial number of your voter registration slip? (Analysis includes only registered voters.)



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