



Diaspora engagement mapping ZIMBABWE

Facts & figures

Terminology: Zimbabwe uses the term diaspora or 'Zimbabweans abroad'. The diaspora are colloquially referred to in Zimbabwe as 'Harare North' or 'Zimbabwe North', a reference to the large diaspora in the UK, even though the largest diaspora community is based in South Africa.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **11.61%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **3,301**

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

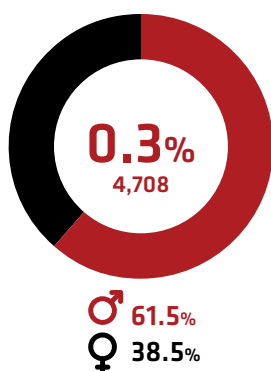
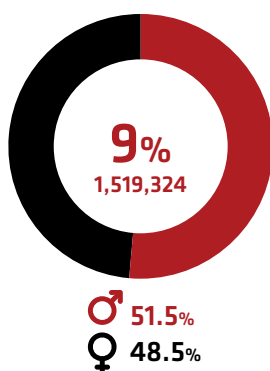
Emigration



% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



Top countries of destination



South Africa	1,072,620
United Kingdom	132,869
Mozambique	101,486
Botswana	67,878
Australia	47,195

¹ The Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act of 1984 strictly prohibited dual citizenship. However, the [Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment \(No. 20\) Act, 2013](#) allows dual citizenship for citizens at birth.

² The amended constitution of 2013 allows for diaspora voting, but only within Zimbabwe; only government staff abroad on official business are allowed to submit postal votes from abroad. However, the [government announced in 2019](#) that an international study on the feasibility of external voting will be conducted in 2020.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



2013
2018

Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset 2013-2018) includes a target to develop measures to enhance remittance flows to the country.

2016

National Diaspora Policy. Zimbabwe's National Diaspora Policy provides a framework to formally mainstream the diaspora into national development processes. It aims to develop measures to enhance protection of Zimbabweans abroad, and establish mechanisms for the transfer and repatriation of terminal, pension, and social security benefits for retired returnees through conclusion of bilateral labour agreements with host countries. In 2023, the diaspora policy was being reviewed by the government, as part of enacting the National Development Strategy 1 (see below) and with a view to enhancing diaspora participation in the country's economic and development agenda. The concept note on the revision included facilitating diaspora voting and dual citizenship.⁴ The Zimbabwe Embassy to Canada launched a survey to gather inputs from the diaspora as part of the review process.⁵

2017
2022

National Diaspora Policy Implementation Action Plan was published in 2016. The action plan is structured to serve as a framework for engaging with the Zimbabwean diaspora worldwide. The action plan focuses on eight priority areas that deal with policies and legislation, the intra-governmental-diaspora relationship, institutional engagement, diaspora investment, remittances, national socio-economic development, knowing the diaspora and diaspora rights.

2021
2025

National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) is launched by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The NDS1 has the theme "Towards a Prosperous & Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030", the ambition set out in Vision 2030.⁶ The diaspora has been identified as necessary contributors to the success of the strategy with a focus on diaspora investment, promotion of tourism and in providing specialised skills needed for training people in Zimbabwe, and to contribute to the workforce. The strategy also plans to review the diaspora policy and enact enabling legislation, increase diaspora engagement and establish diaspora trade and investment frameworks. The strategy also has a focus on maintaining the welfare of Zimbabwean diaspora who migrate for labour purposes through developing standard operating procedures for recruitment of Zimbabweans in the diaspora.

>> Trends

The government of Zimbabwe recognizes migration as a powerful tool to enhance potential investment and development opportunities. It acknowledges the key benefits of migration for countries of origin, including their financial and skills contributions. The Zimbabwean diaspora worldwide is estimated to be between 3m and 5m, far higher than official figures indicate, as many have taken citizenship in countries of residence.⁷

The Zimbabwean diaspora plays an important role in the country's economy through remittances and investment to the country.⁸ The diaspora also play a role in international advocacy and image building for Zimbabwe.⁹

4 <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/zim-diaspora-a-vital-force-in-driving-national-development>

5 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfcp4ugpIY3_GxSFgtIWc-7h7JBHFNwowSgN5EFOEai3egT4Q/viewform

6 <https://www.zim.gov.zw/index.php/en/government-documents/category/1-vision-2030>

7 Chikanda, Abel & Crush, Jonathan. (2018). *Global Zimbabweans: Diaspora Engagement and Disengagement*. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*.

8 Chitiyo, Knox et al (2016), 'The Domestic and External Implications of Zimbabwe's Economic Reform and Re-engagement Agenda'. Chatham House.

9 Chivanga, J.T (2015) "Self-Serving or Self-Effacing?" An Analysis of The Zimbabwe-United Kingdom Diaspora's Role In Human Rights Advocacy. Canon Collins Trust.

Since 2018, political instability in Zimbabwe has further polarized the diaspora, making it harder for the government to move forward with diaspora engagement efforts.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the government has expressed an ongoing commitment to strengthen diaspora engagement at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly Migration in Marrakesh in 2018, and is seeking to learn from the experiences of other African states in this regard.¹¹

In the 2020s, attracting diaspora investment is a growing interest for Zimbabwe as it seeks to encourage Foreign Direct Investment more broadly. As well as streamlining investment services under ZIDA in 2020 (see annex), embassies have organised events on investment, including in Canada and the UK¹² and the government is promoting diaspora investments to diasporans in the USA investing in a “biotech city”.¹³



Achievements

The Government of Zimbabwe has shown its commitment to creating institutional structures that promote diaspora engagement as part of the national development agenda. The adoption of the National Diaspora Policy, and the establishment and launch of the Diaspora Directorate in September 2016 are proof of this commitment. In addition, with support from IOM and the EC, the Government of Zimbabwe conducted Zimbabwean Diaspora Engagement meetings in October 2016 in the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa to improve the relationship and build confidence.¹⁴

A 2019 joint needs assessment conducted by the African Development Bank, the World Bank Group, and United Nations in close coordination with Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Finance and Economic Development made diaspora engagement a key component under the strategic pillar ‘inclusion and cohesion’. Key immediate actions proposed include adequately resourcing the Diaspora Directorate, operationalizing the diaspora policy implementation action plan, and improving knowledge of the diaspora’s size, profile, and geographic distribution.

There is significant interest in the diaspora in participating in electoral processes in the country; in the 2013 elections, observers from SADC and a diaspora delegation from South Africa and the UK were allowed to observe the vote.¹⁵

Obstacles¹⁶



- **Lack of trust:** There remains a legacy of deep mistrust between Zimbabwe and its diaspora. The government has sought to manage political opposition in the diaspora, with mixed results. There is a need for active and cordial engagement and confidence-building between officials in diplomatic missions and the diaspora.
- **Coordination challenges:** There is a lack of formal mechanisms for communication and coordination between the government and the diaspora. This results in the absence of cohesive synergies between the country and the diaspora.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Statement delivered by the Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Welfare at the Intergovernmental Conference on Adoption of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly Migration, Marrakesh, December 2018.

¹² <https://www.zimembassyottawa.com/zimbabwe-diaspora-trade-investment-forum>

¹³ <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/multi-billion-dollar-biotech-city-for-zim>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Chitiyo, Knox and Kibble, Steve (2014), *op. cit.* ; See also <http://kubatana.net/2019/10/08/zimbabwe-election-support-network-position-paper-number-7/>

¹⁶ Zimbabwe’s National Diaspora Policy sets out the common obstacles that hinder the government from having a smooth relationship with the diaspora.

- **Barriers to diaspora investment:** There is a lack of enabling financial and legal instruments focused on diaspora investments. The high costs of transmitting money through existing money transfer routes also present a barrier to increased diaspora investment.
- **Lack of a diaspora database:** The Diaspora Directorate maintains a limited database on the size and spatial distribution of the diaspora, but this is not updated regularly.¹⁷ There is a need to build a self-reporting skills data bank in order to harness diaspora skills and expertise.
- **Economic instability:** Severe economic problems and a lack of economic opportunities in Zimbabwe, combined with dissatisfaction with the government, have been drivers for emigration of Zimbabweans from the country, and there are significant skills shortages in sectors such as health, education, science and technology.¹⁸

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



SKILLS TRANSFER

Temporary Return of Health Workers and Academics 2007

In 2007/08, in collaboration with IOM the Government of Zimbabwe implemented a programme that facilitated the temporary return of qualified professionals who returned on a short-term basis to offer their expertise at the University Teaching Hospital and other tertiary training and learning institutions.

DIASPORA BONDS & INVESTMENT

Diaspora Financial Products 2011/2019

In 2011, the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ) initiated the floating of a US\$50 million Diaspora Bond. The proceeds of the Diaspora Bond were to be used to fund infrastructure projects in electricity, coal, manufacturing, and other sectors. However, uptake was disappointing, and the bond failed to achieve scale.¹⁹ In 2019, CBZ started offering diaspora mortgages in the form of a CBZ foreign denominated loan that allows diaspora investors to invest in property in Zimbabwe.²⁰

INVESTMENT

Enaleni Community investment platform 2018

Enaleni Community is a local diaspora investment platform set up by a group of female diaspora investors based in the UK, Global Native, in Enaleni, in rural Zimbabwe, in 2018. The platform, involving over 50 diaspora investors was used to set up and finance a local agricultural cooperative in Zimbabwe. Within a few years, it managed to attract almost £150,000 of blended finance (diaspora investment and grants), created 25 full-time decent jobs, provided income to thousands of farmers and their families with the associated social impact and stimulated local economic development. The platform has directly benefitted 10,000 farmers and indirectly over 40,000 local community members.

INVESTMENT ; NETWORKING

Celebration & Business Summit 2023

The Zimbabweans In Diaspora Organization (ZIDO) organised its first Diaspora Celebration & Summit in Harare. The event's theme was "Attracting Diaspora Investment to Zimbabwe" and included information on investment opportunities, a business exhibition, awards, entertainment and networking.

¹⁷ DMA/AU/GIZ (2019), 'Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment Report'

¹⁸ Sapes Trust (2020), Policy Dialogue Forum Online Series Number 2 of 2020: Harnessing Zimbabwe's Diaspora Towards the National Settlement

¹⁹ Faal, Gibril (2019), 'Strategic, Business and Operational Framework for an African Diaspora Finance Corporation: African Union Legacy Project on Diaspora Investment, Innovative Finance and Social Enterprise in Africa', GK Partners/ African Union Commission. Abridged version

²⁰ <https://www.cbz.co.zw/diaspora-foreign-denominated-individual-and-or-joint-mortgages/>

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2001

AU-CIDO is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Zimbabwe nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU-CIDO Continental Meetings.

Southern African Development Community (SADC) 1992

Zimbabwe is a founding member of SADC, an inter-governmental organization whose goal is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development among fifteen Southern African Member States. In addition, SADC Member States adopted the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework, which implores all SADC member states to develop rights-based national labour migration policies by 2019.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade 1980

This Ministry is responsible for Zimbabwe's foreign policy and its missions abroad. It is the lead ministry for diaspora engagement and is responsible for diaspora registration, initiating dialogue with host countries to enter into bilateral agreements to ensure the promotion and protection of Zimbabwean citizens abroad, and communication with the diaspora.

Office of the President and Cabinet 1980

The Office of the President and Cabinet is responsible for the providing oversight of the Zimbabwe Diaspora Policy. It also leads on monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Zimbabwe Diaspora Policy.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 1980

The Ministry is responsible for creating an enabling environment for diaspora participation in national budgeting processes; investor education and public awareness on fiscal procedures, incentives and regulations; mainstreaming the diaspora into the budgeting process; and harnessing financial resources from the diaspora for development.

- Sub-ministerial level institutions

Diaspora Directorate 2016

The Zimbabwe Diaspora Directorate forms part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The roles of the directorate include coordinating and facilitating the contributions of the Zimbabwean diaspora, including remittances, transferable skills and the networks which are integral to the development of a modern, knowledge-based economy.

Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) 2020

ZIDA is a Statutory Body that was created by an act of parliament in 2020 to promote and protect investments in Zimbabwe. It serves as a one-stop-shop for local and foreign investors, bringing relevant existing agencies (Zimbabwe Investment Authority, Joint Ventures Unit Act, Zimbabwe Special Economic Zones Authority and One Stop Investment Services Centre) under one roof.

Zimbabwe Diaspora Advisory Council 2016

As of September 2020, the status of the Advisory Council is unclear. Nevertheless, it is responsible for advising the government on diaspora issues; researching ways and means of improving diaspora policies, programmes, and institutional arrangements; as well as convening annual diaspora home-coming conferences, and organizing annual award schemes for recognizing outstanding Diaspora groups and individuals.

Diaspora organizations in Europe

Britain Zimbabwe Society, (BZS) 1981 UK

☑ Integration activities

The BZS maintains an active network of contacts. It works in co-operation with organizations that work with the Zimbabwean community in the UK and concerned with Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. It supports Zimbabwean asylum seekers by providing expert advice on the local situation in Zimbabwe. The society has established a panel of academic experts on Zimbabwe who between them have been able to assess hundreds of asylum appeals.

Enaleni Community Limited

☑ Development activities

Enaleni Community is a local diaspora investment platform set up by a group of Zimbabwean female diaspora investors based in Leeds. Since 2018, members of the Enaleni Community invest their remittances towards the development of rural agriculture in Zimbabwe. Investments made so far have resulted in farmers having reliable transport to market for their produce, young people getting jobs, and our investors in the diaspora earning a good return on their remittances.

Transvaal Zimbabwe And Botswana Association (TZABA) 1967 UK

☑ Development activities

☑ Integration activities

TZABA works to provide education and training, promote health and livelihoods, mobilize famine relief, conduct religious activities, and undertake economic, community development, and employment programmes in Zimbabwe.

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora
organisation](#)"



Zimbabwe Achievers Awards International (ZAA) 2010 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

The Zimbabwe Achievers Awards is a global-leading, independent organization, founded in 2010 by Conrad Mwanza. The organization recognizes, rewards and celebrates the successes and achievements of Zimbabweans living abroad, in industries or sectors that include business, art, sport, entertainment and music.

Zimbabwean Diaspora Health Alliance (ZDHA) 2018 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Zimbabweans in the diaspora formed ZDHA to strengthen diaspora participation in Zimbabwe's health system. ZDHA serves as a Single Point of Access (SPA) to the Ministry of Health in Zimbabwe for the diaspora. [f]

Zimbabwe Diaspora Network (ZDN) 2015 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

ZDN is a voluntary coordinating body of all registered organizations concerned with social, economic, political development of the people of Zimbabwe, Social Welfare institutions and other development-oriented institutions and individuals working with the Zimbabwean Diaspora.

ZDN is a non-party political, non-denominational, non-profit making organization and cannot be used by its members for the promotion of party political, denomination or profit-making purposes.

Zimbabweans in Diaspora Organization (ZIDO) 2015 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

ZIDO brings together Zimbabweans in the diaspora to engage in cultural, social & economic advancement activities as to improve livelihoods in country of residence and origin. It works to promote Zimbabwe, to organize and provide investment opportunities to Zimbabweans that improve their economic needs & aspirations, and to improve the social and cultural welfare of Zimbabweans living abroad through organization of cultural, social events and activities. [f]

Zimbabwe Educational Trust (ZET) 1987 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

A diaspora group that aims to work around the areas of children's rights, girls' empowerment, health and nutrition, resource mobilization and infrastructure. [f]

Zimbabwe Human Rights Organization (ZHRO) 2016 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

ZHRO was formed in response to a desperate need to aid Zimbabwe and to promote human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent United Nations conventions and declarations throughout the world, but specifically in Zimbabwe and its immediate neighbors. Additionally ZHRO supports those in the UK going through an asylum process.

Zimbabwe Network for Health (Zim Health) 2008 Switzerland

- ✓ **Development activities**

Zim Health was established to inform, educate, and communicate the status and needs of the Zimbabwe public health delivery system to all Zimbabweans in Switzerland and the rest of Europe, as well as to the European public. The organization also focuses on distributing funds and materials equitably to health services in all provinces and districts of Zimbabwe, and works in partnership with the Zimbabwean Diaspora Directorate.

Zimbabwe Diaspora Nation Building Initiative

- ✓ **Development activities**

Zimbabwe Diaspora Nation Building Initiative (ZDNBI) is a global Zimbabwean Diaspora Apex Association and the principal conduit through which Zimbabwe's diaspora can be engaged. ZDNBI aims to stimulate the global Zimbabwean diaspora to support and participate in the nation-building process of Zimbabwe. The organisation facilitates an enabling environment where principal stakeholders in Zimbabwe can work together to achieve progressive socio-economic and political outcomes.

ZIM Scotland (ZIMSCOT) 2021 UK

Is a social enterprise created by a member of the Zimbabwean diaspora in Scotland to facilitate access to consular services, Zimbabwean products and bring the Zimbabwean community in Scotland together, ZIMSCOT was involved in COP 26 in Glasgow and aspires to raise and earn funds to invest in climate action projects.

Written by: **AFFORD**
Edited by: **EUDiF**
September 2020
Updated August 2025



Funded by
the European Union

