



*Only your mother can vote! The under representation of
young women on the voter's roll*

Gender Audit of the June 2013 Voters' Roll

Research & Advocacy Unit

And

The Women's Trust

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Introduction

There is growing international recognition that women's participation in elections is critical if a country is aiming to achieve a democratic and representative society. The United Nations has recognized that achieving sustainable and durable peace requires the full involvement and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and subsequent peace-building¹. In its Resolution 1325², the UN stresses the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the formulation and application of agreements aimed at establishing the foundations for a stable peace. In Zimbabwe, women make up 52% of the population, but they are not as visible as their male counterparts in political and economic spaces. Ever since the first democratic elections in 1980 women have made up the majority of the voters, but have yet to see the influence that this might be expected to bring in their representation in Parliament and government. Even the number of women voting has not had an impact on the thematic areas discussed in parliament or government either. This is not peculiar to Zimbabwe only, but is true all over the world: a 130-country survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)³ in 2004 indicates that women hold an average of only 15.4 per cent of the elected seats. Rwanda has the highest number of women in Parliament (56%) and this is making a difference for the women there⁴.

After the 2008 elections Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) conducted a survey⁵ of over 2000 women to ascertain women's views on politics, elections, violence and peace. This was the first of its kind in Zimbabwe. The findings of this survey showed that women believe that they should participate in politics as much as men and an increasing numbers of women are voting, although in less numbers than are actually eligible to vote; they are often deterred from this by administrative issues such as failure to register, long queues, not having identity documents as well as by violence and intimidation. Most women believe that violence is unacceptable during elections but 9% agreed that violence is acceptable showing that there is a perception that violence and elections are inseparable. This was a view given across the political divide. Sixty two percent reported that they have experienced violence during elections particularly the pre run off period in 2008.

¹ www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/.../WomenAndElections.pdf

² UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000

³ www.ipu.org

⁴ Powley (E) (2011) Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament

⁵ RAU (2010), *Women, Politics and the Zimbabwe Crisis*, Report produced by Idasa (An African Democracy Institute), the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), and the Womens' Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ). May 2010. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT;

RAU in partnership with the Women’s Trust carried out an audit of the June 2013 voters’ roll and this analysis touched a little on gender. This report is an analysis purely of the gender data as a way to understand the registration of men versus women, the registration of young women under 30 compared with the over 30s as well as to establish the gender specific irregularities.

Registration by Gender

The voters roll shows no gender bias when considered as a whole and superficially. Table 1 shows that the gender distribution of voters almost exactly matches the divide according to the census, with women outnumbering men on both by almost identical percentages, roughly 52%:48%.

Table 1: Gender comparison – June Voters’ Roll and 2012 Census

	Census		Roll	
Male	6234931	48.06%	2824458	48.08%
Female	6738877	51.94%	3050651	51.93%
Totals	12973808	100%	5874114	100%

The roll numbers in regard are so precise a match (within 0.02% with the census) as to create the impression that they are neither chance nor driven by demographics. They are also misleading. One must keep in mind that the 52:48 ratio on both is the ratio of females to males as per the 2012 Census and the ratio of women to men on the roll. It does not reflect the comparative registration rates, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Table 2: Men and Women by Age Band⁶

Age Bands	Registration Rate of men	Registration Rate of women
18 - 19	8%	8%
20 - 24	23%	18%
25 - 29	62%	47%
30 - 34	118%	98%
34 - 39	142%	124%
40 - 44	166%	153%
45 - 49	149%	118%
50 - 54	137%	132%
55 - 59	125%	123%
60 -64	116%	121%
65+	150%	158%
Totals	94%	85%

Although there is a ratio of 52:48 for *all* females to males nationally, the ratio of females to males in the *adult* population is somewhat higher 54:46.⁷ Accordingly, the percentage of adult women registered as voters (85%) is lower than that of men (94%).⁸

⁶ Using the total of 6 234 931 men and 6 738 877 women as per the 2012 Census.

⁷54.25:45.75, without rounding off.

⁸The age band percentages used in Table 2, which is a summary of the tables in Appendix 4, differ from Table 1. It was necessary to use the age band percentages from the later Zimstat report, as the gender breakdown across age bands

However, a somewhat different picture emerges when the same parameters are considered by province. Table 3 shows the registration rates by gender in the ten provinces. There is a marked difference between the two metropolitan provinces and non-metropolitan provinces where the registration rate⁹ of women in the latter is *higher* than that of men. The exception is Mashonaland West,¹⁰ possibly on account of the large number of urban constituencies in that province.

Table 3: Gender Comparison – June Voters’ Roll and 2012 Census (By Numbers)

PROVINCE	POPULATION [2012 CENSUS]			VOTERS [2013 JUNE ROLL]		
	Adult Males	Adult Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Bulawayo	158,312	182,639	340,951	159,241	141,502	300,743
Harare	526,152	564,911	1,091,063	435,473	353,486	788,959
Manicaland	367,232	409,873	777,105	341,963	412,019	753,982
Mashonaland Central	291,045	301,724	592,769	261,082	276,626	537,708
Mashonaland East	337,068	358,203	695,271	304,419	359,722	664,141
Mashonaland West	375,033	378,935	753,968	310,149	299,583	609,732
Masvingo	359,502	413,532	773,034	317,534	410,163	727,697
Matabeleland North	186,770	200,043	386,813	166,806	195,344	362,150
Matabeleland South	170,565	185,659	356,224	156,641	195,313	351,954
Midlands	405,201	438,487	843,688	369,895	407,153	777,048
TOTAL	3,176,880	3,434,005	6,610,885	2,823,203	3,050,911	5,874,114

was provided there. This data has not been used throughout as the age bands in that report stop at 65+. The earlier report stops at 85+ and is more useful for current purposes.

⁹Note this is the registration rate, and the difference is thus not due to the greater number of women than men in these provinces – which is the case in the metropolitan provinces also.

¹⁰Mashonaland West is frequently out of kilter, statistically, with the other two Mashonaland Provinces.

The higher registration rate of women than that of men in the rural provinces, suggests that the lower registration rate of women overall is on account of severe under-registration of women in the metropolitan provinces.

This is confirmed when comparing Harare Province with Mashonaland Central, as examples.¹¹ In Harare Province, the registration rate of women is only 63%, against 83% for men. In all instances, when considering the registration rate, the general problem of over-registration for both genders must be borne in mind. Urban registration rates for women thus appear to be extremely low. By contrast, in Mashonaland Central the rate is 92% for women and 90% for men.

Unevenness also emerges when individual constituencies are examined, and when considering the registration rate of each gender in particular age bands. For example, Beitbridge East (a constituency selected at random) not only shows considerable bias in registration in favour of women, and much higher than the 54:46 ratio of the voters roll as a whole, but also reveals a marked (and sudden) increase in favour of women in the number of people registered as voters in the over 50 age bands. It is not possible to include this data for all 210 constituencies here. However, it will be noted there is high registration in favour of women in the same age bands as in the non-metropolitan provinces. This may be on account of the fact that a disproportionate number of women in the rural areas fall within the 50+ age bands.¹²

Table 4: Gender Distribution by Province and Age

Province	Female			Male			Total
	18-29	+30	Total	18-29	+30	Total	
Bulawayo	8,444	132,755	141,199	11,066	148,475	159,541	300,740
Harare	43,285	310,193	353,478	52,904	382,564	435,468	788,946
Manicaland	55,634	356,383	412,017	58,730	283,230	341,960	753,977
Mashonaland Central							

¹¹It is not possible to include tables of all the provinces here. This data can be received on request from RAU.

¹²The age demographic by gender for the national population in the rural areas is not known.

	44,484	232,134	276,618	48,448	212,623	261,071	537,689
Mashonaland East	53,013	306,691	359,704	54,575	249,825	304,400	664,104
Mashonaland West	38,709	260,865	299,574	48,912	261,225	310,137	609,711
Masvingo	52,613	357,586	410,199	47,598	269,887	317,485	727,684
Matabeleland North	26,955	168,386	195,341	25,606	141,197	166,803	362,144
Matabeleland South	23,430	171,882	195,312	21,978	134,660	156,638	351,950
Midlands	57,493	349,653	407,146	63,143	306,740	369,883	777,029
Totals:	404,060	2,646,528	3,050,588	432,960	2,390,426	2,823,386	5,873,974

When the data is disaggregated according to the provincial composition, urban, rural, and mixed(referring to provinces that are considered to have both rural and urban constituencies, such as Bindura North)Table 5 shows that there are more people registered in the rural provinces than the urban and this is the same across the gender divide.

**Table 5: Gender Distribution by Provincial composition
(Mixed, Rural, & Urban)**

		Female		Female Total		Male		Male Total
Province	Mixed	Rural	Urban		Mixed	Rural	Urban	
Bulawayo			141,199	141,199			159,541	159,541
Harare			353,478	353,478			435,468	435,468
Manicaland	25,996	361,249	24,772	412,017	24,837	285,352	31,771	341,960

Mashonaland Central	17,155	259,463		276,618	20,230	240,841		261,071
Mashonaland East	17,222	328,650	13,832	359,704	19,566	271,779	13,055	304,400
Mashonaland West	66,553	207,103	25,918	299,574	76,911	205,794	27,432	310,137
Masvingo	13,284	381,000	15,915	410,199	20,290	277,902	19,293	317,485
Matabeleland North	21,168	174,173		195,341	26,610	140,193		166,803
Matabeleland South	49,843	145,469		195,312	42,514	114,124		156,638
Midlands	59,896	296,910	50,340	407,146	56,346	256,304	57,233	369,883
Total	271,117	2,154,017	625,454	3,050,588	287,304	1,792,289	743,793	2,823,386

When looking at the roll as a whole, the youth, i.e. those under 30, are under registered in comparison with their older counterparts, and this is evident when looking at women only. There is massive under registration in the urban areas of young women, 69 190 versus 556 264 in the over 30 group. The same becomes even more visible when looking at the rural women; 293 408 under 30s years versus 1 860 609 over 30 years. This tallies with other reports stating that there is marked over registration in the rural areas. The mixed constituencies follow the same trend, 41 462 under 30 years and 229 655 over 30 years.

According to the voters' roll, there are over 116000 people over the age of 100, 12 920 of these are women. This raises doubt as Zimbabwe's life expectancy is less than 40 for both men and women. Table 6 below shows the breakdown of the elderly women according to the provinces. It is evident that there is a bias to rural as opposed to urban Provinces.

Table 6: Female Voters over 100 by Province

Province	Voters
Bulawayo	436
Harare	309
Manicaland	1,601
Mashonaland Central	968
Mashonaland East	2,000
Mashonaland West	1,095
Masvingo	2,536
Matabeleland North	904
Matabeleland South	1,232
Midlands	1,839
Total	12,920

Conclusion

When the voters' roll is disaggregated according to gender, it is reflecting the same irregularities as those found when taking a bird's eye view of roll. There is under-registration of young women under 30, there is over-registration in rural areas in comparison to urban areas, and there is a large number of elderly women, predominately in the rural provinces. Previous studies have shown that women are interested in participating in elections, both as candidates and as voters, but this is not showing in the voters roll. There are serious impediments for women to register as was seen in the mobile registration exercise that ended on the 9th of July 2013, with the administrative chaos, the request for proof of residence, and changes in marital status, just to name a few. There is need for the women's movement and civil society organisations at large to engage in more activities to encourage women to register to vote, as this is a constant exercise and can be done at any time, not just before an election.