

Zimbabwe



Zimbabwean women join the information superhighway.

GENDER & MEDIA AUDIENCE STUDY

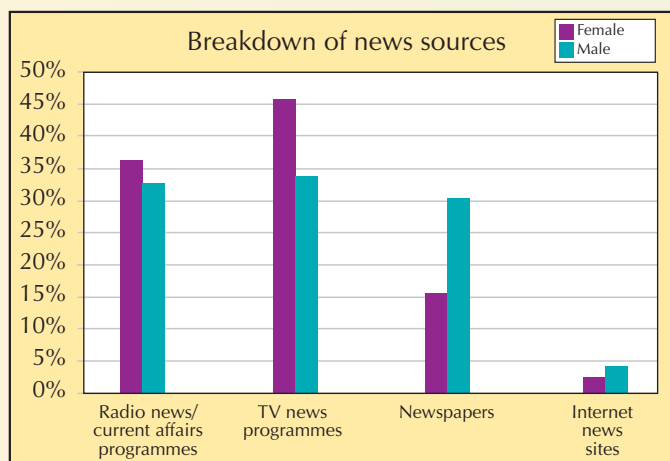


The Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) was conducted by Gender Links (GL) in partnership with the Gender and Media Zimbabwe (GEMZi) chapter of the Gender and Media Southern African (GEMSA) network. While there have been demographic surveys in Zimbabwe on women's and men's access to media, this is the first study on audience news consumption patterns and preferences in the country generally.

The findings are based on the responses of 92 women and 87 men, a total sample of 179 from Harare, Bulawayo and Rusape. The theoretical framework for the research and the methodology are described in the overview to this report.

Key findings

Television is the most important source of news: Zimbabwe, like Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Mozambique, deviates from the regional pattern of radio as the main source of news, with most women (46%) and men (34%) stating that television is their main source of news. Radio is the second most important source of news for women (36%) and men (33%).



Zimbabwean men are the biggest consumers of newspapers in the whole study, but there is as big gender gap in readership: With 30% men citing newspapers as their main source of news, Zimbabwean men are the highest consumers of newspapers in the study; a finding that reflects the high levels of literacy and political awareness in the country. However, as in most other countries in the region, there is a big gender gap in newspaper readership, with only half this proportion of women citing newspapers as their main source of news.

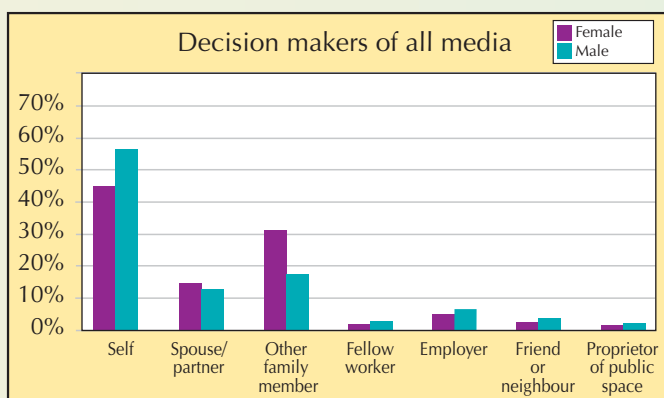
The Internet is still gaining ground: With 3% men and 2% women citing the Internet as their main source of news Zimbabwe comes in slightly higher than the regional average of 2% men and 1% women. However, there are clearly still challenges ahead in increasing access to the Internet, and closing the gender gap.

Women and men prefer short news reports: Consistent with the regional findings, women (53%) and men (51%) interviewed in Zimbabwe prefer short news reports to any other genre. This is followed by in-depth features and documentaries, because of the high literacy levels in the country.

Interactive news is popular in Zimbabwe, especially among women: A relatively high proportion of women (21%) and men (17%) cited news that asks for feedback like letters to the editors and talk shows as among their favourite genre. These findings are higher than the regional figures of women (12%) and men (10%). This may be explained by the growing civic activism among women and men in Zimbabwe during the past five years as the country grapples with political and economic challenges.

Opinion and commentary still lag behind, but more women in Zimbabwe preferred this genre than men: As in the rest of the region, women and men did not identify opinion and commentary as their most important news genre. However, slightly more women (7% compared to the region's 5% women) than men (5%, same as the region) chose this genre. This is a positive indication of women engaging with this medium as they become more educated, both as readers and as writers of opinion and commentary pieces.

There are gender gaps in who decides on the news medium: In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in the region, the majority of women and men make their own choices about which medium to access the news from, although more men (56%) than women (46%) exercise this choice.



There are high levels of gender awareness among women media consumers in Zimbabwe: More women interviewed in Zimbabwe (59%) compared to the region (42%) stated that the news *does not* reflect the concerns of men and women equally. Only 26% of the women (compared to 42% men) said that the news reflects women and men equally. Some 53% of the Zimbabwean female respondents (compared to 42% in the region) said that the media's sources are not diverse. The high level of gender and media awareness among women

in Zimbabwe, as compared to many other countries in the region, reflects the advocacy work of organisations such as MISA and GEMZi. More work needs to be done, however, with men in the country.

What women said:

- “How many times do women feature on news stories? It is not because there is nothing to talk about, but because they are considered as not important. Moreover, if it is about men they are in depth, but women are referred to in passing.”
- “This looks like a men’s world.”
- Long ago there was no interest in women but nowadays they are also represented in a number of ways more than before.

What men said:

- “I think it is balanced although political news is dominated by men, but some health issues, like home-based care programmes, are dominated by women.”
- “We are living in Zimbabwe, a patriarchal society. Women are only given space and time when dancing and singing for the ruling party.”
- “The advocating of equal rights by women has enabled them to be heard in the news.”

And strong perceptions about gender biases in portrayal:

Zimbabwean audiences (both women and men) had clear views on the portrayal of men and women. Reflecting the findings of the GMBS, they said that women are more likely to feature in the news in roles such as victims, health workers, model/beauty contestants, homemakers and sex-workers, while Zimbabwean men appear more frequently in the news as politicians, civil servants/government officials, business persons, criminals and members of the police and military.

And especially strong views on the use of images that

portray women as mere sex objects: As in all the 12 other countries in the study, high proportions of both women and men, but especially women, found sexual images of women in the news “uncomfortable” and “insulting”. Women in Zimbabwe, as well as the region, identified sexual images and pornography as the kind of news they would most like to see less of.

Degrading all women

What women said:

- “It is not a true reflection of women’s values.”
- “This promotes disrespect towards women and goes to the extent of justifying abuses against women.”
- “The images degrade not only the person but every woman.”

Men added:

- “It is just inappropriate and promotes social evils like rape.”

- “This is a very inappropriate way of representing women, our fellow sisters and mothers.”
- “The pictures of nude women degrade our women. They wash away the dignity of women; they will be viewed as sexual objects rather than as important and participating members of the society.”

Men are viewed as the dominant makers and shapers of news, but there is strong support for gender equality in the newsroom:

More Zimbabwean men interviewed stated that female journalists report on different news stories to their male counterpart. Both women and men believe that it is mostly men who report the news. However, a high proportion of both women (74%) and men (62%) believe it is important to have equal numbers of female and male journalists. This is an important message to media decision-makers about the need for gender policies in newsrooms, as well as gender training for male and female journalists.

Women and men want to see more positive stories; and women more stories about their concerns:

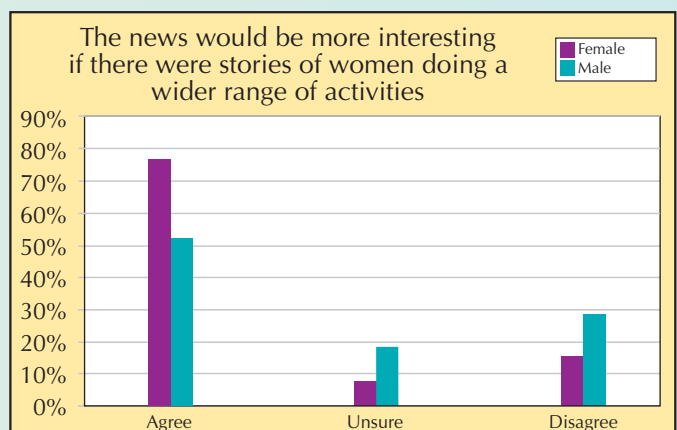
Zimbabwean women and men would like to see more positive stories in the news. In addition, women want more stories on women’s rights/concerns and human interest. Men want more stories on human interest, accessing services and resources and local/community news.

Women and men, but especially women, would find the news more interesting if the ideas and views of women were reported more often:

A high proportion of women (64%) said the news would be more interesting if the ideas and views of women were reported more often. Equal proportions of men (37% in each case) said the news would be more interesting and “no different” if the ideas and views of women were reported more often.

It’s not just about more women’s voices, but about women in diverse roles:

The vast majority of women (85%) and the majority of men (62%) agreed that the news would be more interesting if there were stories about women doing a wider range of things. Women and men also want to see men in non-traditional roles: such as parents, care-givers and home-makers.



Summary of key data from the findings of the GMAS in Zimbabwe

KEY DATA	Zimbabwe		CONSOLIDATED	
	% women	% men	% women	% men
Most important source of news				
Radio	36	33	51	51
Television	46	34	37	31
Newspapers	15	30	11	16
Internet	2	3	1	2
Who selects the news medium?				
Self	46	56	49	55
Spouse/partner	15	13	14	12
Other family member	30	18	28	23
Fellow worker	1	2	2	2
Employer	5	6	2	2
Friend or neighbour	2	3	4	4
Proprietor of a public space	1	1	0	2
News preferences (genres)				
Short news reports	53	51	55	53
In depth features	19	28	28	32
News that asks for feedback (e.g. Letters to the editor)	21	17	12	10
Opinion and Commentary	7	3	5	5
How women and men are represented and portrayed <i>New stories reflect the interests of both men and women equally.</i>				
Agree	26	42	40	43
Unsure	16	19	17	16
Disagree	59	40	42	41
How often are women used as sources in news stories?				
Very often	8	19	18	21
Often	37	43	36	37
Seldom	53	37	42	39
Never	2	1	3	3
The news sometimes shows very sexual images of women. When you see something like this in the news how do you respond?				
I find these stories and images entertaining and/or interesting	1	8	4	12
I don't really notice them	6	14	8	10
I feel uncomfortable when I see them	45	38	43	36
I feel they are insulting to women	48	36	42	34
They encourage me to buy the newspaper or watch the news	1	4	3	8
What audiences would like to see more of <i>If the ideas and views of women were reported more often, the news would be</i>				
More interesting	64	37	68	47
No different	18	37	22	36
Less interesting	18	26	10	18
<i>The news would be more interesting if there were stories about women doing a wider range of things.</i>				
Agree	77	51	78	59
Unsure	8	20	10	19
Disagree	15	29	12	22