

# Zimbabwe

## Country Overview

### Politics

Zimbabwe is a semi-presidential republic in Southern Africa.<sup>1</sup> President Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have been in power since independence in 1980.<sup>2</sup> The 2008 general election process was condemned internationally due to irregularities and widespread violence against members of the opposition, which led to the withdrawal of the opposition candidate during an election run-off.<sup>3</sup> A referendum in 2013 enacted a constitutional change which gave Mugabe the agency to remain as Head of Government until the end of 2023.<sup>4</sup> In 2016, the country saw protests and revolts against the government to demand electoral reform due to persistently low economic growth and employment.<sup>5</sup>

In March 2022, the opposition party to ZANU-PF, The Citizens' Coalition for Change, won 19 out of 28 national assembly seats, signaling the potential for the dislodgment of ZANU-PF's majority since the country's independence in 1980.<sup>6</sup> However, the opposition's party leader, Nelson Chamisa, claimed the by-election as a prelude to the 2023 election was rigged, citing "errors in the voter register."<sup>7</sup>

Challenges facing Zimbabwe include low economic growth and hyperinflation, in addition to unresolved political and post-election violence, right to water and sanitation, urban and rural forced evictions by the government and environmental threats such as droughts and contaminated water.<sup>8</sup>

### Economy

Zimbabwe is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy and faces high economic instability.<sup>9</sup> Political and economic crises between 2000 and 2008 seriously impacted the economy, decreasing the GDP by 50 percent.<sup>10</sup> As of April 2009, the Zimbabwean dollar is no longer in circulation, and various other currencies such as the United States dollar or the Botswana pula are accepted as legal tender.

In 2010-2013, the economy saw a record 10% growth, before falling by 3% in 2014-2017.<sup>11</sup> After a 6.3% contraction in 2020, Zimbabwe has recovered economically thanks to the recovery of the agricultural sector and stabilization of currency and prices in 2021. Higher remittances



especially acted as a catalyst for growth in domestic demand following the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Disinflation policies brought inflation down to 60.7% from 838% in 2021, along with tighter fiscal policies to help reduce the cash deficit by 1.5%. However, public debt has only worsened, reaching \$14.5 billion USD.<sup>13</sup>

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) brought back the Zimbabwe dollar quasi-currency in 2019, though instability brought the country back to the auction system. A ban on certain electronic transfer services is also a source of currency devaluation.<sup>14</sup> The poverty level in Zimbabwe recently decreased, due to in part by the bumper maize harvest in 2021,<sup>15</sup> signaling an increase in food security.<sup>16</sup>

Agriculture, forestry, and fishing represent a 7.6% value-added towards GDP,<sup>17</sup> whereas mining and minerals represent a best prospect industry sector, accounting for 12% of the GDP, with a potential to generate \$12 billion USD by 2023.<sup>18</sup> Power and foreign currency shortages presented the key challenges to economic growth, and combating the COVID-19 pandemic caused the government to consider amending the Mines and Minerals Act to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).<sup>19</sup>

## Social/Human Development

In 2015, Zimbabwe improved in Human Development Index ranking, rising to 155 in part due to a reduction in HIV prevalence,<sup>20</sup> although maternal health outcomes have stagnated. Zimbabwe's HDI was reported to be 0.571 in 2020, compared to the world average 0.723.<sup>21</sup> The World Bank reports that the GINI index was at 50.3 in 2019, signaling high income and wealth inequality between demographics.<sup>22</sup>

The largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe is the Shona, with the Manyika, Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore and Ndau subgroups making up 76% of the population.<sup>23</sup> The second largest ethnic group is the Ndebele, with the e Ndebele and Kalanga sub-groups, making up 18% of the population.<sup>24</sup> 15% of the population consists of migrants from the neighboring countries of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.

## U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2021)

### U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2 Watchlist

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report, trafficking risk may be found among Zimbabwean men and women in export supply chains. Traffickers are prevalent in sex trafficking, and forced labor for cattle herding, domestic service, as well as mining for gold and diamonds.<sup>25</sup>



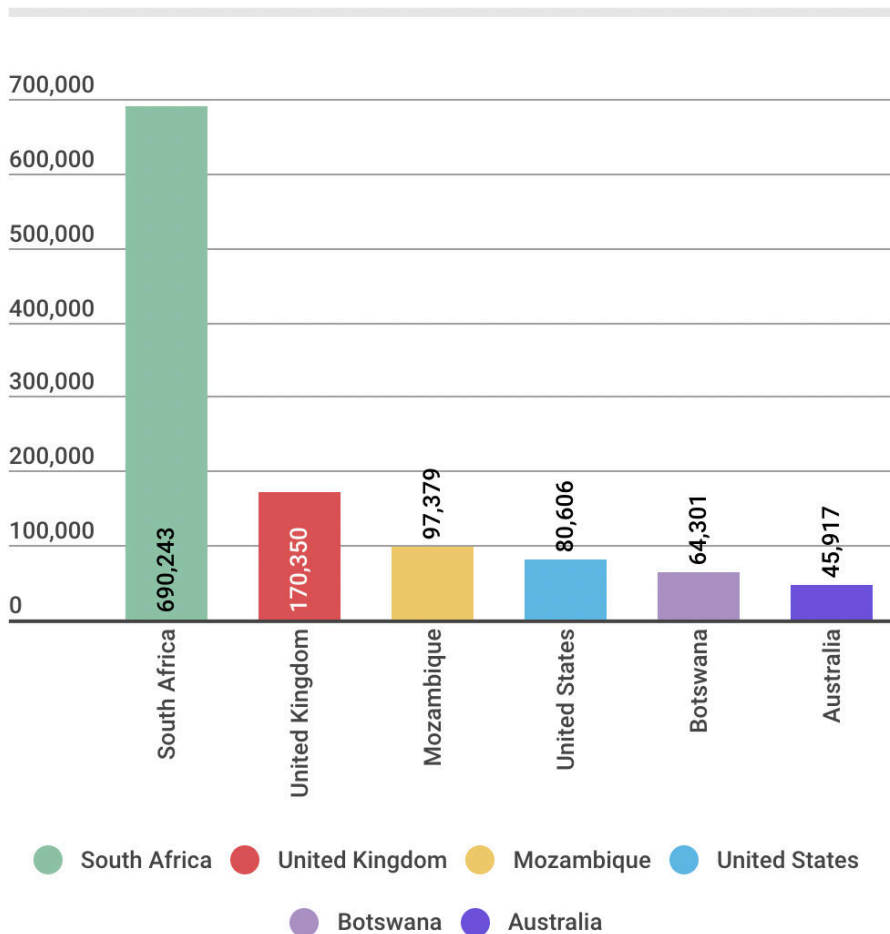
Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/zimbabwe/>

## Migrants and Other Vulnerable Populations

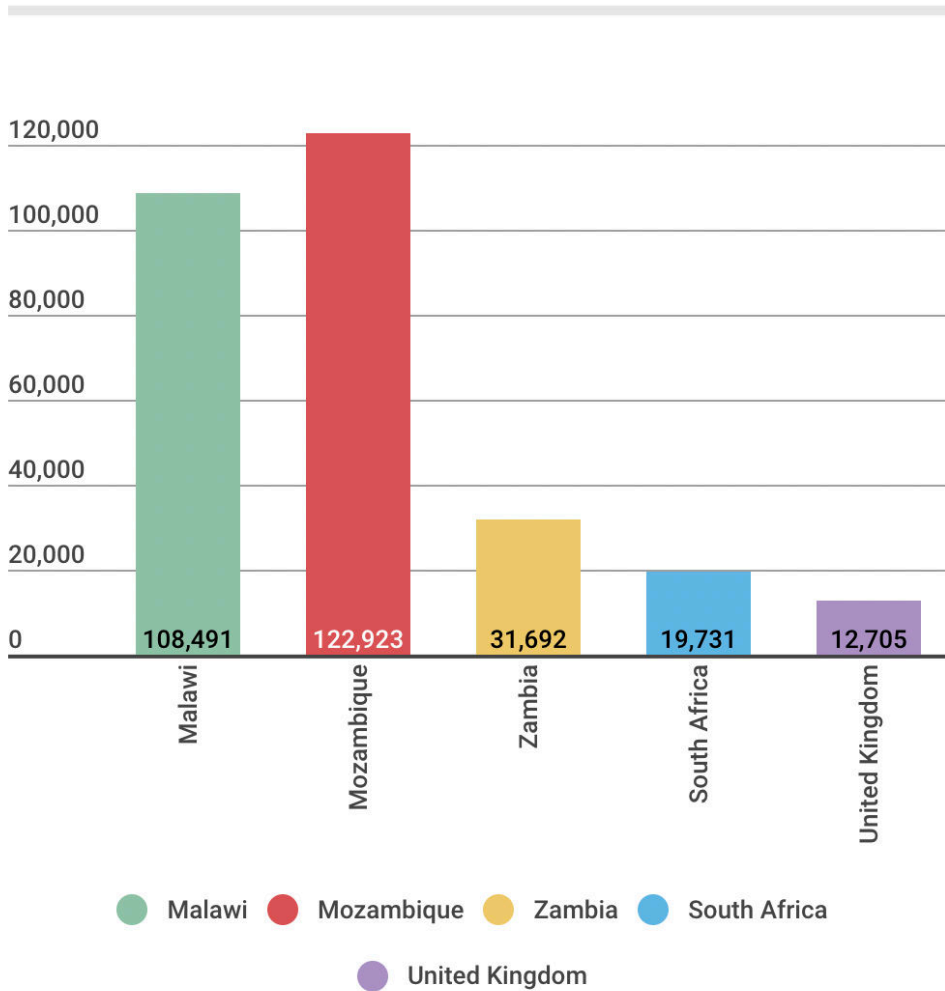
The UN Population Division reported that Zimbabwe was the largest origin country for South Africa’s immigrants, accounting for 24% of all migration.<sup>26</sup> In 2020, 32.4% of the population live in urban areas, with border towns seeing 7 million people come through yearly, signaling a strong rural-urban migration trend. The IOM reports 571,970 Zimbabweans migrated abroad, though mirror data from the Afro Barometer suggests between 3 to 4 million in 2020. Brain drains and emigration in 2021 remain challenges to development.<sup>27</sup>

The UNHCR reported around 22,400 refugees/asylum seekers in Zimbabwe, with 74% from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while 11% are from Mozambique, 6% from Burundi, and 5% from Rwanda.<sup>28</sup>

### Migrants from Zimbabwe



## Migrants to Zimbabwe



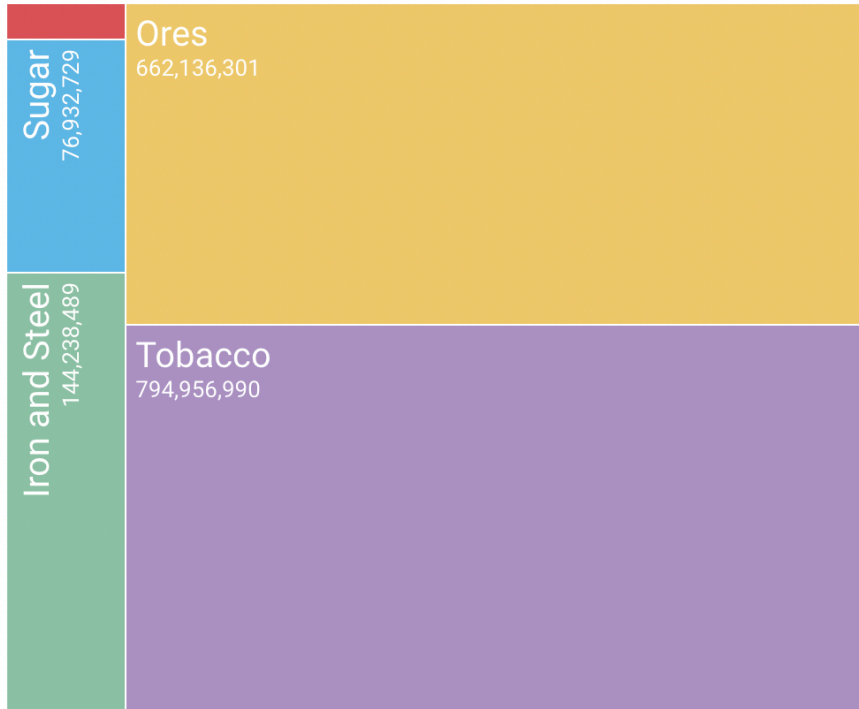
## Exports and Trade

Zimbabwe's top exports include gold, diamonds, platinum, tobacco, nickel, and iron, along with tobacco and sugar.<sup>29</sup>



### Top Commodity Exports (USD)

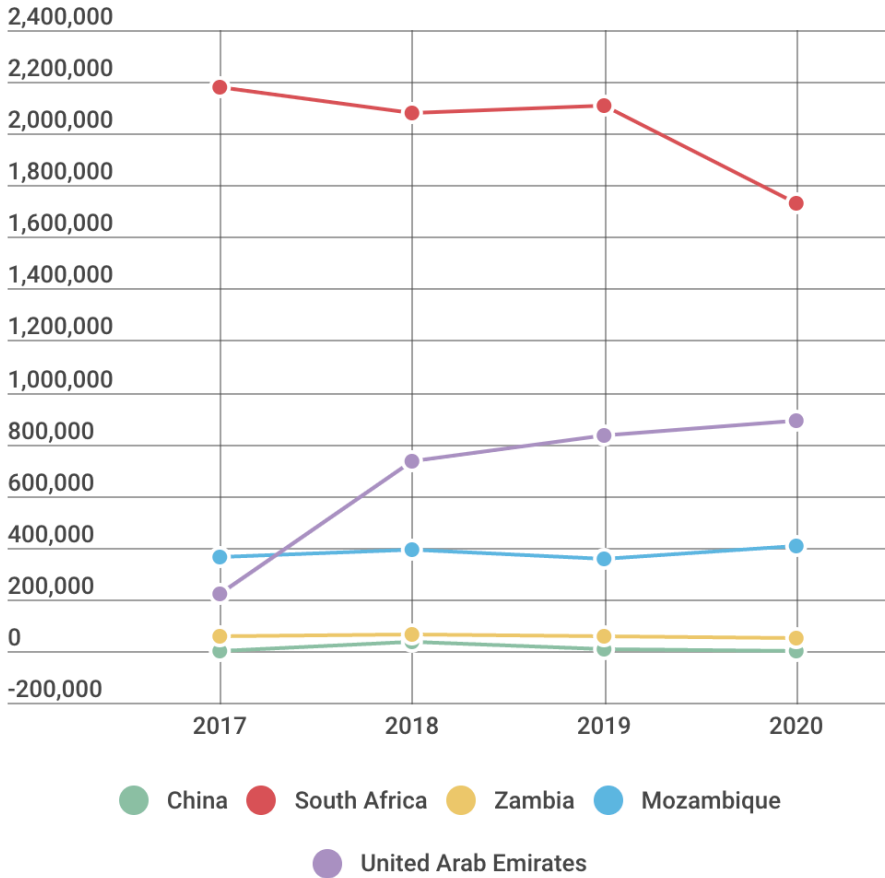
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South Africa is the largest importer of goods from Zimbabwe, followed by the United Arab Emirates.<sup>30</sup> The bulk of Zimbabwe's exports to China are diamonds and gold.<sup>31</sup>



### Zimbabwe Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



## Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

### Legal/Policy Risk Factors

#### Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

##### Freedom of Association

The law provides for the right of private-sector workers to form and join unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, but public sector workers are excluded.<sup>32</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, the government has a history of not respecting workers' rights to form or



join unions, strike, and bargain collectively, with violence, arrests, threats, and intimidation against participating workers.<sup>33</sup>

The majority of workers in a workplace must agree to strike. There are no laws that prohibit employers from hiring replacement workers in the event of a strike and the law allows employers to sue workers for liability if they choose to participate in an unlawful strike.<sup>34</sup> According to the International Trade Union Confederation, employers have frequently abused institutional weaknesses in their favor to hinder the bargaining process. Agricultural workers have reportedly experienced verbal and physical attacks by employers during negotiations.<sup>35</sup>

## Working Conditions

In Zimbabwe, the National Employment Councils (NECs) set the minimum wage for all industrial sectors through a bipartite agreement between employers and labor unions.<sup>36</sup> The Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare is responsible for enforcing the minimum wage and work hour laws in each sector, but the standards have not been effectively enforced due to a lack of adequate resources.<sup>37</sup> Per the National Social Security Authority (NSSA) in 2020, there was a drop in work-related deaths by 8.16% and a 30.57% drop in injuries, with 45 deaths and 3,528 injuries. The most common cause of workplace death was road traffic accidents, with other sources including collapses of mines and overall poor working conditions.<sup>38</sup>

## Discrimination

The law does not explicitly prohibit employment discrimination regarding age, language, citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or non-HIV related communicable diseases.<sup>39</sup> In the new Constitution, it is stipulated that women and men receive equal remuneration for equal work.<sup>40</sup> However, women's salaries continue to be lower than those of men in most sectors.<sup>41</sup>

## Forced Labor

In Zimbabwe, the law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, but does not include forced labor in prisons.<sup>42</sup> Although the government has not effectively enforced the law, the Labor Amendment Act of 2016 provided the first legal definition of forced labor in the country.<sup>43</sup> The ILO reported that Zimbabwe's ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention by a majority showcases steps being made to reaffirm dedication to eradicating forced labor.<sup>44</sup> However, the BBC reports that Zimbabwe dismissed allegations of forced labor in diamond mines in 2019 when the US placed a trade ban on diamonds from the country.<sup>45</sup>

## Child Labor

The law in Zimbabwe provides that no person under the age of 18 shall perform any work that could be potentially harmful to their health, safety, or morals.<sup>46</sup> However, children can perform general labor at the age of 16 through the Labor Amendment Act which increased the minimum age from 13.<sup>47</sup>



Other actions to eradicate child labor in 2020 included the Education Amendment Act by raising the compulsory education age to 16, and by expanding the Basic Education Assistance Module to aid vulnerable children. However, law enforcement lacks the agency and resources to enforce child labor laws, particularly in the agricultural and sugar sectors.<sup>48</sup>

### **Civil Society Organizations**

NGOs are active in the country but have some legal restrictions under Public Order and Security Act (POSA) – a law which limits freedom of expression by journalists by requiring registration with the state, and other laws.<sup>49</sup> The US Department of State has reported that the Zimbabwean government harassed NGOs it believed would expose abuse perpetrated by government personnel or those that opposed government policies. Government-controlled media has been used as a tool to ridicule human rights groups.<sup>50</sup>

Civil Society Organizations in Zimbabwe have increased activity considering the COVID-19 pandemic. The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights, The Zimbabwe Elections Support Network, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development are among the few who seek to monitor social accountability of the government and private sector commitments.<sup>51</sup> However, as of July 19, 2020, 105,000 were reported to have been arrested for COVID-19 lock-down related crimes, resulting in a shrinking civic space and increased stringent surveillance by the government.<sup>52</sup>

### **Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movements of Migrants**

Zimbabwe's laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, but the government maintains a formal encampment policy that requires refugees to live at the Tongogara refugee camp. In 2021, The National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) for Zimbabwe was launched to help migrant workers overcome challenges to keep employment regardless of their irregular migration status. The NLMP also recognizes the economic contributions of migrants.<sup>53</sup>





## Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

Conventions	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

### Political Risk Factors

#### Political Instability or Conflict

Zimbabwe is scored 99.1 in the 2021 Fragile States Index, ranking 10th out of 179 countries, making it a "High Alert" state.<sup>54</sup> One of the major human rights issues in Zimbabwe is the discrimination and targeting of people not belonging to the ZANU-PF political party, who are subject to abduction, arrest, torture, and abuse.<sup>55</sup> The most significant instability stems from anxieties surrounding the anticipated 2023 election and shifts of power between the African National Union (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). ZANU-PF members and loyalists to Mugabe's government refuse to implement policies, act on farm seizures, and preserve executive privileges that undermine the Global Political Agreement (GPA) between Mugabe and MDC leaders.<sup>56</sup>

#### Level of Crime and Violence

The potential for civil unrest is reportedly growing due to "economic hardships, drought and political instability."<sup>57</sup> The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) reported that Zimbabwe, and Harare in particular, remain a high-threat destination for crime and politically motivated violence, thereby dissuading FDI.<sup>58</sup> Drug syndicates frequently use Zimbabwe as a transit country for cocaine and cannabis.<sup>59</sup> Zimbabwe's porous borders and status as a transit country



see a rise in drug trade and usage.<sup>60</sup> Porous borders also see a rise in the trafficking of women, vehicles, and gold.<sup>61</sup>

### **Level of Corruption**

As of 2021, Zimbabwe has a Corruption Perceptions Index score of 23 out of 100, and is ranked 15 out of 180 compared to other countries.<sup>62</sup> The U.S. Department of State reports that accusations of corruption are used as “a political tool but seldom result in formal charges and convictions.”<sup>63</sup> Government corruption is particularly noted in association with the diamond sector.<sup>64</sup> Diamond mining displaces families to build mines, forcing them to relocate to a remote government farm to work.<sup>65</sup> The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) represents a third-party opportunity for diamond companies to comply with higher standards, however, Zimbabwe's government shows low action to increase accountability and trust to guarantee that industrially mined diamonds will benefit local populations and uphold human rights standards.<sup>66</sup> Formal diamond mining companies made promises of issuing title deeds and compensation that were never realized, and families who relocated are left with poorly built homes and not enough farmland to sustain food for their families.

### **State Persecution**

Human rights issues and persecutions in Zimbabwe extend to unlawful civilian killings by police/security, torture, poor prison conditions, privacy violations, censorship, freedom of movement, and violence against women and same-sex partners.<sup>67</sup> Though the constitution prohibits torture and degrading treatment, impunity for politically motivated violence remains unresolved, as there are no investigative measures or policies to identify officials who committed human rights violations.<sup>68</sup> The Zimbabwe Prison and Correctional Services (ZPCS) is unable to provide basic medical care to prisoners, have outdated facilities, and are frequently overcrowded, with women often sharing rations with their incarcerated children rather than receiving their own food allocation.<sup>69</sup> Victims of Operation Murambatsvina, fast-track land reform and resettlement, and Operation "No Illegal Pannings" see the government obstruct humanitarian aid provided to the invisibly displaced, farmers, and families.<sup>70</sup>

## **Socio-Economic Risk Factors**

### **Level of National Economic Development**

Zimbabwe's HDI was reported to be 0.571 in 2020, compared to the world average 0.723.<sup>71</sup> The World Bank reports that the GINI index was at 50.3 in 2019, signaling high income and wealth inequality between demographics.<sup>72</sup>

### **Level and Extent of Poverty**

In 2019, 38.3% of the population was at the national poverty line,<sup>73</sup> and 25.8% of the population was estimated to be in multidimensional poverty.<sup>74</sup> As of 2020, approximately 76.3% of Zimbabwean children lived in rural areas, and 74% of the population lived on less than \$5.50 per day, with 13.5 million people living below the food poverty line.<sup>75</sup>



### **Degree of Gender Inequality**

The Global Gender Gap Index 2021 reported Zimbabwe's score at 0.732.<sup>76</sup> The constitution of Zimbabwe provides women the same legal status and rights for women, but women remain disadvantaged.<sup>77</sup> Labor law prohibits the sexual harassment within the workplace, but it reportedly remains frequent in universities, the workplace, and in parliament, particularly because no law currently criminalizes sexual harassment.<sup>78</sup>

There are significant barriers on women's ability to own land in Zimbabwe, such as customary practices of patriarchal inheritance.<sup>79</sup> According to the UK's 2011 Gender and Social Exclusion Analysis Report, more than six out of 10 women did not own a home or land.<sup>80</sup> This discrimination due to customary law persists despite the fact that the government set aside a 20% quota for women under the Fast Track Land Reform Program.<sup>81</sup> It is reported that women in rural areas own, individually or jointly, more land and property than those in urban areas.<sup>82</sup> Women's lack of access to property means that they often lack enough collateral to obtain loans.<sup>83</sup> In 2020, Zimbabwe's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and called to bridge the gaps between the 2013 Constitutional provisions on anti-discrimination, and actual practice.<sup>84</sup> By June 2020, the Marriage Law prohibited all types of child marriage by raising the marriage age to 18.<sup>85</sup> Between 2016 and 2020, The National Programme on Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response established One-Stop Centers and shelters based in communities for victims of gender-based violence.<sup>86</sup>

### **Landlessness and Dispossession**

There are weak protections for property rights, most notably regarding agricultural land. According to the Global Competitiveness Report in 2019, Zimbabwe ranks 127 out of 141 countries in respect of property rights.<sup>87</sup> Women and children are especially impacted by the government's forced evictions, demolition of homes and businesses, and takeover of commercial farms as there are legal restrictions in place that limit their ability to independently own land. In 2020, as compensation for 800 seized farms under its land acquisition policy in 2020, Zimbabwe will offer land to farmers, setting aside approximately \$21 million USD.<sup>88</sup>

### **Environmental Factors**

While emissions from Zimbabwe are mostly low/small compared to the rest of the world, the largest concern is the impact of political instability and its impact on the sustainability of rain-fed agriculture and mining. Frequent droughts, mine collapses, and the absence of lakes make Zimbabwe's growing population vulnerable to severe climate change, particularly with food security and low economic development.<sup>89</sup> Zimbabwe is particularly vulnerable to droughts, floods, and other natural disasters, with riverine floods affecting over 300,000 people between 1900 and 2017.<sup>90</sup>



In 2021, the World Bank's Climate Risk Country Profile on Zimbabwe reported that rain-fed crop production is predicted to decline by 12% by 2080, the 8,000+ dams are more likely to lose water supplies due to evapotranspiration, and the median precipitation is projected to decrease by 4.4% in 2040-2059.<sup>91</sup>

The Coping with Drought and Climate change (CwDCC) project in Zimbabwe has demonstrated a successful adaptation to climate change in rural agricultural communities, resulting in an increased awareness of climate change adaptation and a 20% increase in households using adapted management practices.<sup>92</sup> Another Green Climate Fund financed project supports the Government of Zimbabwe's goals listed in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and climate change plans to strengthen the management of water supplies and irrigation, increase conservation agriculture, and strengthen meteorological and hydrological services to provide more updated climate data to increase to benefit an estimate 2.3 million vulnerable individuals in southern Zimbabwe.<sup>93</sup>

## Documented Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

### Gold

#### Gold Overview

Gold is mined via both large-scale commercial miners and small-scale artisanal miners. After legalizing small-scale mining activities, the government set up gold buying centers across the country.<sup>94</sup>

Factors contributing to the unstable gold mining sector include an unstable centralized gold buying scheme that depresses government revenues, smuggling is necessary, or even encouraged, and a lack of funding and support from a legal system, which is consistently impeded by political interference and corruption.<sup>95</sup>

Zimbabwe's patronage economy, in which companies and individuals are rewarded for supporting certain politicians, causes instability in the artisanal mining sector, particularly in the gold sector. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an 8% contraction of the gold sector, while at the same time the Minister of Mines in Zimbabwe announced plans to expand gold revenue to \$4 billion annually by 2023.<sup>96</sup> In 2019, 63% of gold production was reported to have come from small-scale and artisanal mining, where there is little to no mechanization.<sup>97</sup> 1.5 million individuals were reported to have turned to artisanal mining as a safety net to supplement their low income, showcasing mining as another contributor to migration from urban to rural areas.<sup>98</sup> Through artisanal miners' present competition to larger industrial mining operations, with mass arrest campaigns for those without a license, it was reported that ZANU-PF politicians frequently act as patrons of illegally encroaching artisanal miners and even fund machete gangs to deter rivals.<sup>99</sup> Death in the gold mining sector includes not only deaths from mine collapses, but also casualties from competing machete gang violence, with some sites and towns having as many as six gangs.<sup>100</sup>



### **Documented TIP Risk in Gold**

Although gold is not specified, the U.S. Department of State notes the use of forced child labor in the mining sector in Zimbabwe.<sup>101</sup> Artisanal gold mining was a criminal offense until 2014, which led to extremely high rates of smuggling.<sup>102</sup>

The Government of Zimbabwe did not identify any trafficking victims, whereas NGOs identified over 400. Despite the government launching the Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (ATIMC), the committee and provincial taskforces did not meet during the reporting periods in 2019-2021.<sup>103</sup>

## **Tobacco**

### **Tobacco Overview**

Zimbabwe's tobacco exports account for \$1.2 billion of the economy.<sup>104</sup> The Tobacco Industry Marketing Board reported that Zimbabwe exported over 200 million kilograms of tobacco in 2021, with expected crop output in 2022 being about 15% smaller due to climate change and unfavorable weather. Much of the crop is produced by 100,000 smaller scale Black farmers, producing 133 million kilograms of the total crop output in 2021.<sup>105</sup>

While there has been a shift away from large-scale commercial farming, this has made children vulnerable to child labor on family-owned operations.<sup>106</sup> These smaller-scale farms cannot afford electricity, or coal to cure the tobacco leaves, which leads farmers to cut down nearby forests for fuel, further contributing to increasing deforestation by 15% to 20% annually. Exposure to nicotine and toxic pesticides from processing tobacco leaves is the largest health risk to the farmers, leading to increased health problems.<sup>107</sup>

### **Documented TIP Risk in Tobacco**

While tobacco is not specified, the U.S. Department of State notes that men, women, and children in Zimbabwe are subjected to forced labor in agriculture.<sup>108</sup> Despite claims of child labor in the tobacco industry, after 1,860 labor investigations, the government did not identify any instances of child labor. 71% of child labor occurs in agriculture, which includes tobacco, sugarcane, and cotton.<sup>109</sup>



## Endnotes

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