



Women's Institute *for*  
Leadership Development



**An investigation on  
the factors  
contributing to low  
voter turn out**

**A case of Bulawayo  
Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 8**



**2017 Survey  
Report**



**A survey conducted by Women's Institute for leadership  
Development.**

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## List of Acronyms

BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
WILD	Women’s Institute for Leadership Development
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

## Foreword by WILD TRUST's Executive Director

Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) has been monitoring the unfolding of the Biometric Voter Registration process led by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) since the start of the registration blitz on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. The monitoring has been done to arm stakeholders in electoral processes with valuable information which they can use to come up with appropriate interventions and craft relevant messages to encourage the participation of Zimbabweans, especially women and youths, in the registration process.

With the assistance of a network of our Ward Advocacy Committees and volunteers across Matabeleland, we have been able to identify a number of challenges in the voter registration process. Some of these have included lack of commissioners of oath in registration centers, poor visibility of the centers as well as general lack of awareness of the process.

These challenges have generally been identified as contributing to low voter-registration turn out in Matabeleland. With discussions on the reasons why a significant number of residents in Bulawayo have shunned to register to vote being based mostly on broad generalizations, WILD embarked on a scientific study to understand the real reasons for the apathy. A survey was conducted on the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 targeting citizens in wards covered by Phase One of the Biometric Voter Registration process in Bulawayo. The survey sought to understand the real reasons behind low citizen turnout in the registration process.

As civil society organizations and ZEC formulate strategies to encourage citizens to register to vote, I believe these findings will assist in giving baseline information which can be used to inform various interventions. I also believe the findings are not only unique to the geographical confines of the study but can be used to inform interventions in other areas across Matabeleland. They will also help assess the magnitude of voter apathy and substantiate the already given reasons.

As the registration process continues, I hope these findings and recommendations will be useful to the work of various stakeholders as they work to promote and protect the inalienable citizen right to vote.

*S. Khumalo*

## Background

The credibility of Zimbabwean elections has always been tainted by objections and complaints on the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's failure to maintain an updated voter's roll. In the 2013 harmonized elections, citizens went to the election with a shambolic voter's roll that needed cleaning and updating. This cast more doubt on the subsequent results with some voters expressing disappointments by some political parties who went into an election without a new voters' roll as a pre-requisite agreeing to go into an election without a voter's roll. Previous voters' rolls were alleged to have contained names of dead people and at times with non-existent residential addresses.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) process was officially launched. The new computerized method of capturing citizens' unique features like faces and finger prints is believed to be one of the ways electoral fraud can be curbed. ZEC has indicated that the process will assist in coming up with a new voter's roll free from 'ghost voters.' After the launch, civil society organizations highlighted that the image of ZEC could only be salvaged through the delivery of a new voters' roll free from manipulation and duplication.

After the rolling out of Phase One of the Biometric Voter Registration process, civil society and other stakeholders in the electoral process noted the apathetic nature in which citizens took part in the registration process. This survey, therefore, was informed by the need to understand the reasons behind citizen apathy.

# Introduction

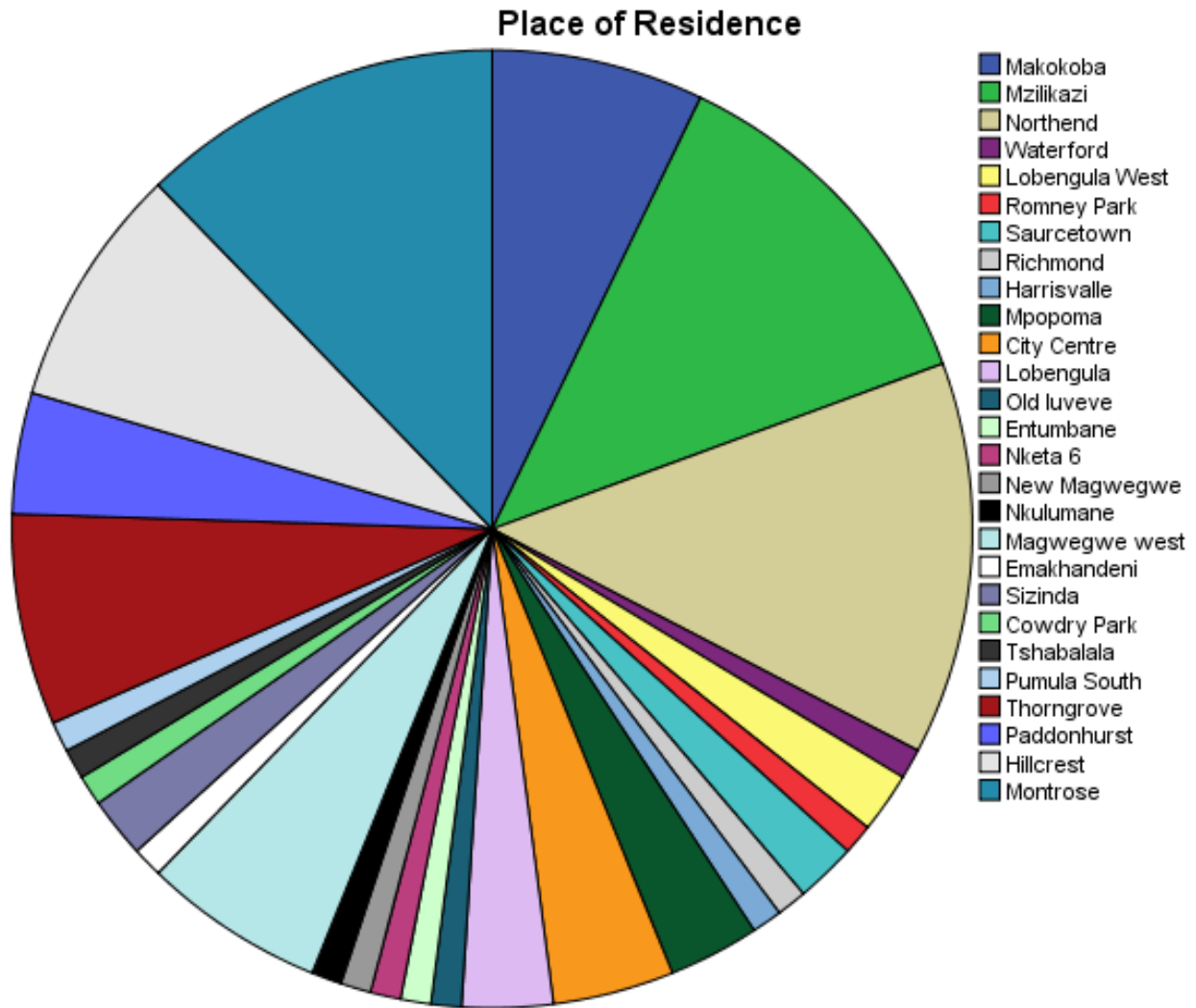
This survey was conducted in Ward 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. These wards were covered under Phase One of the Biometric Voter Registration process. The decision to conduct the survey was reached after ZEC released cumulative voter registration figures showing low citizen turnout in the registration process in Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North provinces. As part of efforts to influence the implementation of relevant interventions, Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) supported the survey which was mainly conducted by WILD staff members and volunteers.

## Methodology

This section provides a brief on how the survey was conducted. Particular attention is placed on the data analysis and the presentation of the research findings. This study was informed by the realization of low voter turnout on registration. The survey was conducted in two days in Bulawayo with special emphasis on wards that had registration centers under Phase 1 of the voter registration process.



**Figure 1: Bulawayo Suburbs Surveyed**



## Sampling Framework

The survey used individuals that is to say people who have not registered to vote as the unit. Respondents were randomly selected from different wards in which Phase 1 of Voter Registration occurred. Purposive sampling was used in the study. The study adopted a maximum variation

purposive sample because it sought to gain rich information on individuals who have not registered under Phase 1 of the Voter Registration Process and gain a robust understanding why they have not done so. The survey had a target sample of 100 respondents, however, 98 were able to be realized. Data was collected through open ended questionnaires.

## Data Entry and Cleaning

The data entry process took two days and was done by the Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and the Programs Assistant. Data entered was 48 questionnaires per day. The Communications Monitoring and Evaluation Officer ensured data was entered properly and maintained the quality of the data entered. Some questionnaires had to be forfeited as part of the information contributing to the data entry process was missing.

## Data Analysis

Data collected through questionnaires especially from the survey was coded, entered and analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics.

## Limitations

The key challenge that was faced during the survey was that lot of people did not want to be interviewed because of the fear associated with words “Elections” and “Voter Registration”.

People felt that partaking in the survey would put them under scrutiny, hence they feared to be politically victimised as they had not registered to vote.

## Ethical Considerations

The researchers as a means of maintaining sound ethical practice in the study, fully explained the purposes of the study. Strict assurances of confidentiality were also given with consent sought from respondents before any interviews commenced, including giving the leeway for respondents to choose to abort the interview whenever they felt they could not proceed any further (for whatever reason) without any questions asked or repercussion.

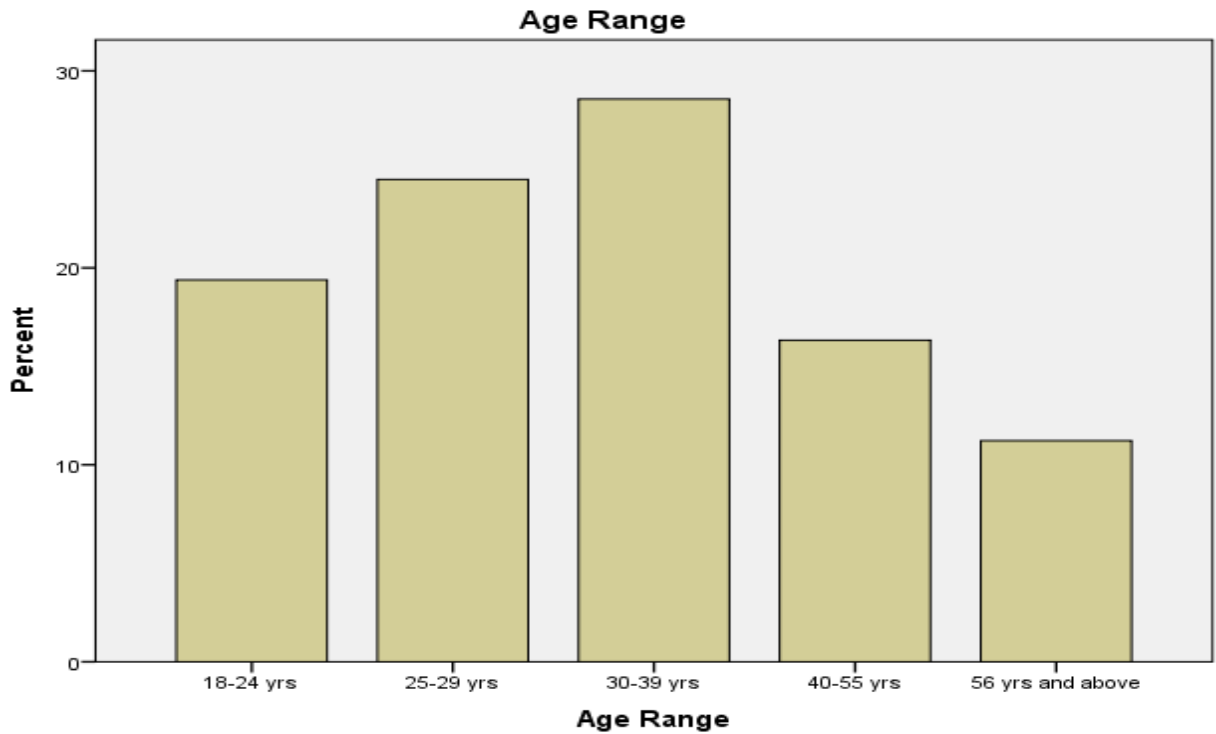
## Key Findings

**Figure: 2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Issue	Frequency	Valid Percent
female	50	51.0
Male	48	49.0
<b>Total</b>	98	100.0

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the Table above. 98 survey questionnaires were analyzed for this study. The majority of respondents are females (50) while

males were 48. Comparison on gender shows that the survey involved 51% of female and 49 % of male respondents.



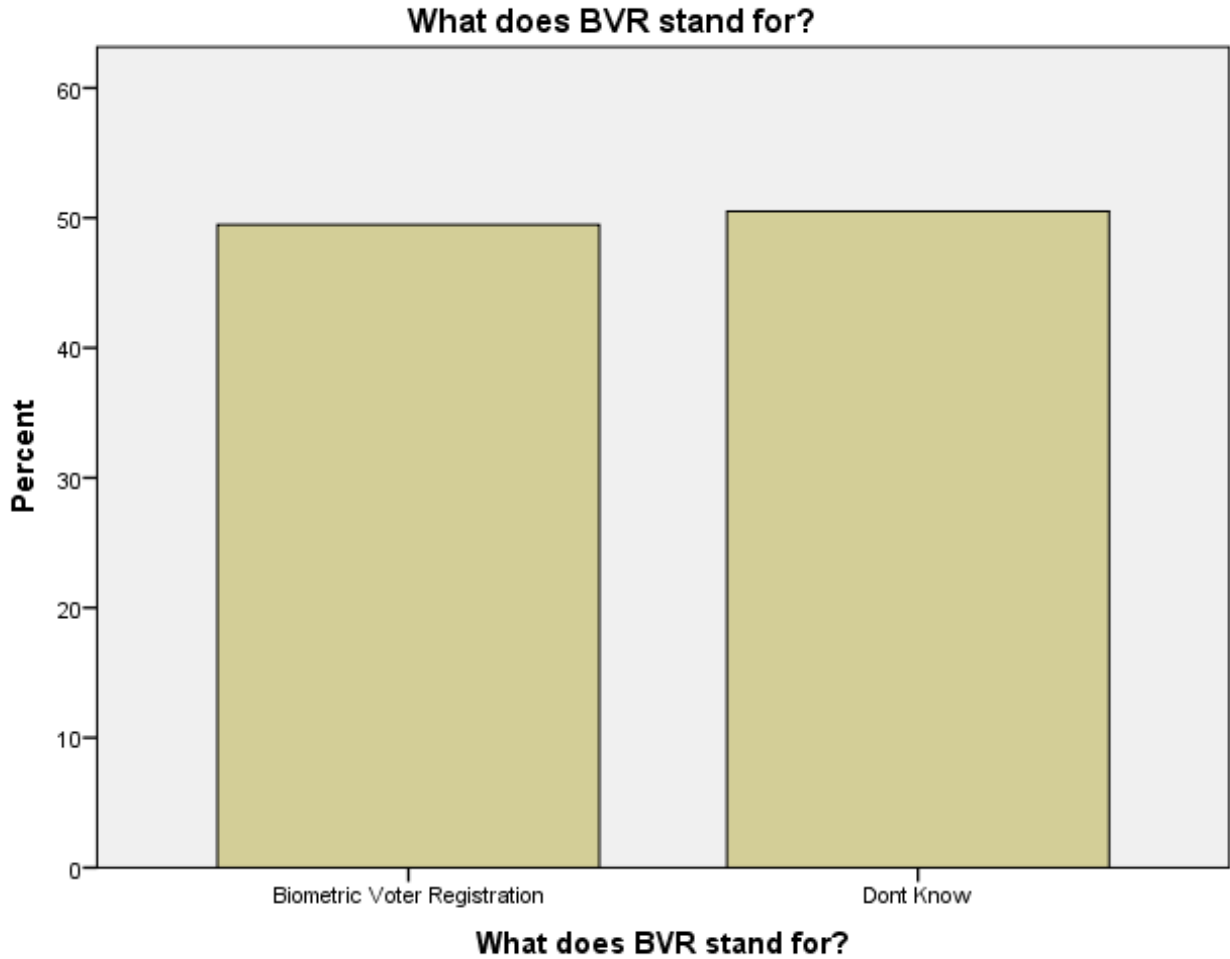
**Figure 3: Summary of survey respondents by Age**

The survey showed that 19, 4% of the respondents were in the age range 18 to 24 years of age. The survey also indicated that 24, 5% of the respondents were in the age range 25 to 29 years age. 28, 6 % of the respondents were in the age range 30 to 39 years of age, whilst 16, 3% were in the age range 40 to 55 years of age. 11, 2 % were 56 years and above. Figure 3 depicts an illustration of the respondents Age Range.

Issue	Frequency	Valid Percent
Primary	6	6.3
Secondary	68	71.6
Tertiary	18	18.9
Vocational	3	3.2
<b>Total</b>	95	100.0

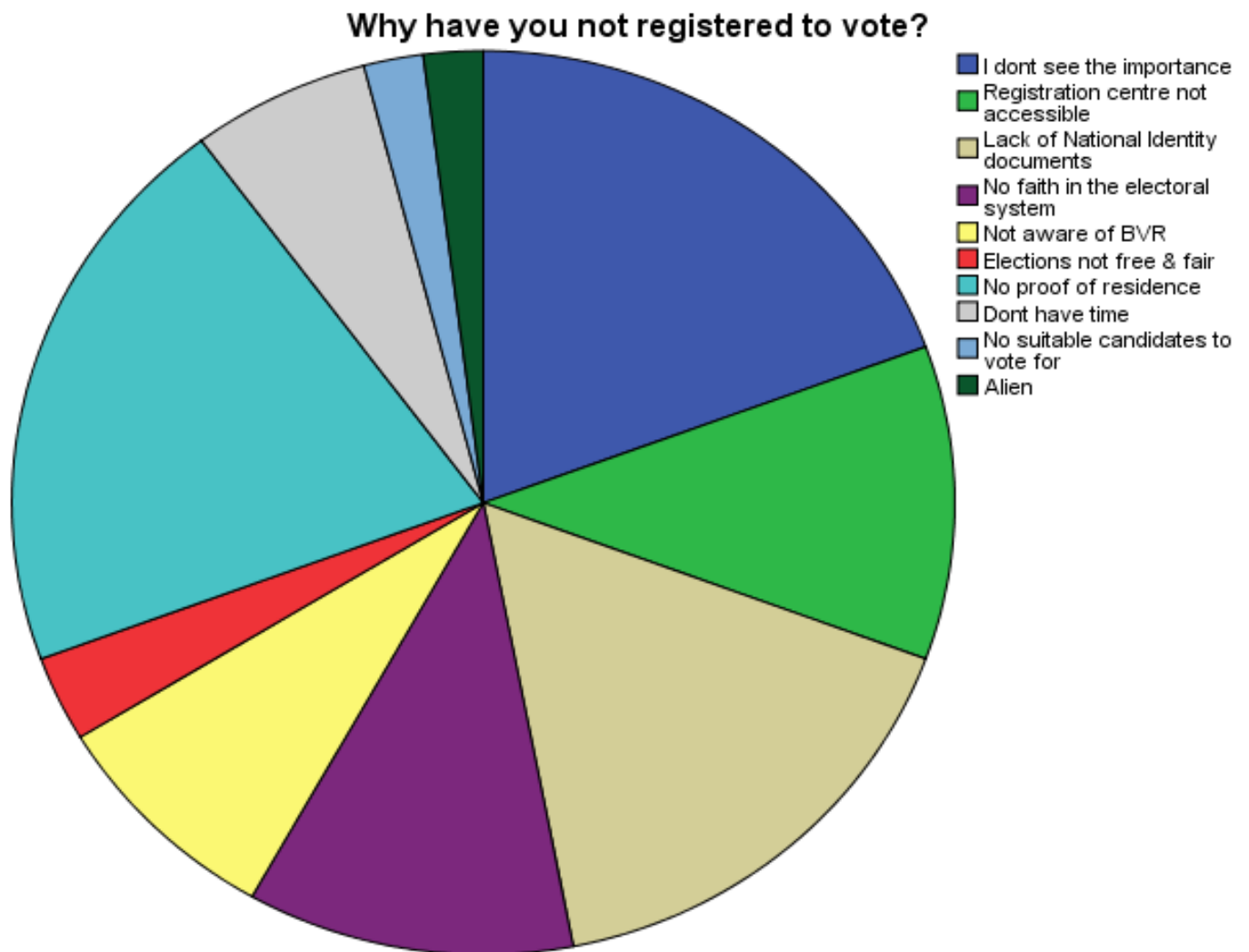
**Figure 4: Summary of the survey respondents by their Highest Level of Education**

**Figure 5: Knowledge of Respondents on Biometric Voter Registration (BVR)**



From the survey, it is clear that 50% of the respondents were not aware what Biometric Voter Registration was. Respondents not ware of BVR reiterated that they had never heard of it. 49% of the respondents however noted that they knew what Biometric Voter Registration was evidenced by the fact that they were able to define what BVR stood for.

# Voter Apathy or Citizen Protest?



The main purpose and focus of this survey was to investigate why there has been a low voter turnout on registration. This survey is borne from the rationale that people who registered to vote under phase one were very few when compared to the population of the wards in which phase one was incepted. This survey was deliberately targeted at individuals who had not registered to vote,

even though they resided in areas where there was a registration center. A close analysis of the data collected depicts that there are myriad of reasons that can explain voter apathy. 20% of the respondents noted that they have failed to register because of the complexities associated with producing Proof of Residence. It was noted during the survey that respondents complained that the need to produce proof of residence deterred them from voting. Respondent posited that upon being handed a VR9 form, they were then made to search for a commissioner of oaths to certify their form. This they described as a taxing process because they failed to access commissioner of oaths because they would have to travel longer distances or they did not have US\$1 that some commissioners of oaths charged to have them certify their VR9 form.

19, 4%, of respondents advanced that they did not see the importance of voting. They contend that voting was useless for it had failed to bring about any positive change: development in their lives, hence after so many years of voting they still don't have jobs and houses. They further revealed that voting was a formality to legitimize candidates who don't deliver on their promises.

16, 3% of the survey respondents noted they had failed to register because they did not possess National Identity documents such as National Identity Cards and Valid passports. 11, 2 % of respondents contended that they had failed to register because they did not have faith in the Electoral system. They gave reasons that the electoral system did not have the capacity to keep their personal information safe in the BVR system hence they could be victimized after polls are held and be accused to have voted for certain parties and individuals over others. Similarly, 11, 2% noted that they had failed to register because registration centers were not accessible in terms of distance.



8, 2% of respondents highlighted that they have not registered because they were not aware of the Registration Process all together. 3, 1 % of respondents noted that they had not registered to vote because elections in Zimbabwe were not free and fair. 6, 1 % advanced they did not have the time to register to vote. A key note finding in this survey was 2% of respondent who had failed to register because according to the laws of Zimbabwe they are 'Alien'.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Indeed, the survey noted a number of critical issues regarding citizen's desire or lack therefore to register as voters. The survey deduced and depicted that the requirement to produce a proof of residence is a calamity that is hindering Bulawayo citizens to register to vote. The survey also unearthed voter fatigue or apathy for it revealed that citizens not only don't have the faith in the electoral system but experience economic hardships hence they do not see the importance and centrality of registering to vote. In light of the above findings, this survey has the following recommendations:

- ZEC and responsible government ministries should quickly facilitate the ease of registration to citizens by expediting the conferring of Commissioner of Oath status on ZEC officials at all registration centers to address citizen frustration over difficulties associated with certifying proof of residence documents.
- Alternatively, the proof of residence requirement can be scrapped off altogether to allow for maximum citizen participation. Citizens should be able to register by simply producing their National Identity card or valid passport.

- ZEC should scale up voter education and awareness programs in Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South provinces by speedily processing accreditation applications of civil society organizations willing to complement its efforts.
- Conditions allowing for the participation of people living with disabilities should be improved. There should be sign language interpreters, braille facilities as well as ramps to allow access for wheelchairs in some registration centers.
- The registration process for acquiring National Identity Documents should scrap the pre-requisites documents that are required when one wants to acquire an ID or Birth. This is because some people have never had a birth certificate or a National ID.



(ii) Registration centers are further from my residential area

(iii) I do not have a National Identity Card

(iv) No faith in the electoral system

(v) Because I have not had about registration

(vii)Other.....

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**WILD Elections Survey**