



# **Women and Active Citizenship in Zimbabwe: A preliminary investigation of changes over the period 2004 to 2014**

**Report produced by the Research and Advocacy Unit  
(RAU) & the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI)**

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## **Contents**

Executive Summary .....	3
Background .....	7
Methods .....	8
Results.....	10
All years (2004 to 2014): .....	10
Rural versus Urban .....	10
Age (Under 35 versus Over 35):.....	13
Cohort findings: .....	15
Conclusions.....	18
References:.....	20
Appendix 1.....	21

## Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

This preliminary report examines some of the changes that have taken place in Zimbabwean women's agency since 2004. It follows on from several analyses of the Afrobarometer data in recent years, all as part of the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) programme on active citizenship, which, with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), has looked at youth and violence, and women's agency. It is also part of an on-going examination of citizenship more generally being carried out by RAU and the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI). Citizenship can easily be described legally under the Constitution in Zimbabwe, but the underlying meaning is not so simple. Is the meaning of citizenship *republican*, *communitarian* or *liberal* in Zimbabwe? And how can women exert agency in a strongly patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe?

Agency has become an increasing focus for those concerned with development, with both *voice* and *participation* aspects of citizen agency that require strengthening. In Zimbabwe, both these aspects of agency can be highly problematic in the very polarised (and frequently violent) public arena. For women, exercising their agency could be even more problematic, but recent work on risk aversion interestingly found that Zimbabwean women were a little different in either risk aversion or risk taking than their male counterparts. This finding prompted the present study.

The study, using the data from Rounds 2 (2004), 3 (2005), 4 (2009), 5 (2012) and 6 (2014) of the Afrobarometer surveys, explored various aspects of "active citizenship" in women.<sup>2</sup> A number of indices of active citizenship were constructed from questions common to all the five Rounds:

- *Demography*
- *Voice*
- *Political Participation*
- *Community Participation*
- *Political trust*

These indices were then compared over time, from 2004 to 2014, by residence (rural or urban), by age (under 35 and over 35), and, finally, an attempt was made to examine a cohort of women as they might have changed over the 15 years. The cohort was, of course, not a proper cohort since Afrobarometer surveys are only cross-sectional, and thus we looked at an age band, those under 35 in 2004, as it might have changed over time.

### *All years (2004 to 2014)*

There were significant changes from year to year on virtually all the indices, seemingly in concert with the broad political climate, but there are some surprising findings. All measures dropped significantly from 2004 to 2005, and all increased in 2009. *Operation Murambatsvina* seemed to be the cause of the drop from 2004 to 2005, but all changed in a positive direction thereafter.

It is worth pointing out that none of the measures return by 2014 to the levels of 2004: *Political Participation* comes close to the 2004 level, but all the others are considerably below the previous levels. *Community Participation* – joining others to raise an issue, attending a community meeting, and attending a demonstration or protest – just declines and declines, which speaks volumes about the destruction of social capital. It is interesting to speculate why this

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<sup>1</sup> This report was written by Tony Reeler, Senior Researcher (RAU).

<sup>2</sup> We wish to express our grateful thanks to the Afrobarometer for making this data publicly available.

should be so when *Political Participation* - free to join any political party and free to vote for the party of your choice – seems to be less threatening, and yet all human rights reports would suggest that this is clearly much riskier.

### ***Rural versus urban residence***

The study on risk aversion showed a consistent trend from 2009 onwards for rural residents to be less averse than their urban counterparts, and this was also the case here. Rural women express significantly higher levels of *Voice*, *Community Participation* and *Political Trust*. However, the higher frequencies of rural women in community participation must be interpreted with some caution as this may be less voluntarism than the effects of traditional practice or political coercion.

Overall, the contrast between rural and urban women in Zimbabwe shows largely what might have been expected, but this may not have been wholly due to residence as age, for example, may have had an influence.

### ***Age (Under 35 versus Over 35)***

When age was considered as a variable a number of differences between the Younger (under 35) and the Older (over 35) groups emerged:

- There is a consistent trend for the Older group to report higher frequencies of *discussing politics* as well as higher frequencies of being *free to say what they think*;
- When it comes to *Political Participation*, there are again differences between the Younger and the Older. Older citizens report being *free to join any political party* and being *free to vote for the party of your choice* more frequently than the Younger citizens.
- The Older group expresses higher trust in the president than the Younger and fluctuating support for the ruling party, and, by 2014, has greater trust in parliament than the ruling party.

What does the drop in trust in parliament for the Younger group reflect? Is it a loss of faith in opposition political parties due to their demolition in the 2013 elections, the faction fighting in the MDC-T and the splits in the party into multiple parties, or what? Given the reliance of the MDC-T on the younger citizens this might not bode well for the future.

### ***Cohort findings***

Here we examined the changes in the group that was between 18 and 34 years in 2004, and tracked the age group through 2005, 2009, 2012 and 2014. There were a number of interesting changes over time.

- The first marked changes are in the increases in *discussing politics* and *being free to say what you think*, which suggests that the older the group began the more they were able to find voice. This may suggest a cultural variable as suggested earlier in the findings on age.
- As regards *Political Participation*, there are no major changes over time. *Voting Freedom* increased in 2009, probably a consequence of the setting up of the Inclusive Government.

There are marked differences in *Community Participation* over the 10 years.

- Firstly, *attending demonstrations or protests*, which was uncommon in 2004, is something that only a very tiny number of women are prepared to do by 2014. This is in line with the general trend, and not different to men, nor different according to age or residence.
- Secondly, all forms of *Community Participation* decline over the decade, but *attending community meetings* did increase from 2004 to 2009. This again may be an effect of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the establishment of the Inclusive Government.

### **Conclusions**

The findings that rural women were different and seem to have greater agency than urban women must be treated with caution. As pointed out, attending community meetings in rural areas may not represent voluntarism as much as the dual consequence of cultural practice and political coercion. It is also possible that the differences, as was the case with the research on risk aversion, implicate the agency afforded by political party affiliation.

Age does seem to be a factor to consider more carefully. Older women were more likely to report higher frequencies of both *Community* and *Political Participation*, and hence it is likely that the rural-urban differences are affected by the presence in the latter group of older women. Of course, it is probable that all these differences, between the rural and the urban, and the young and old, are also affected by political party support and the polarised political space in Zimbabwe: older, rural women are likely to support ZANU-PF, and hence their choices are less risky than those of young rural women. Additionally, as was the case for the contrast between urban and rural women, the role of culture and the constraints placed on young women cannot be excluded either. None of these findings seem remarkable or at variance with common knowledge about women.

The attempt to see changes in an age cohort are interesting. The data suggest that the older the women became the more they were able to find voice, but this was not found for any of the measures of participation: both *Community* and *Political Participation* declined over time, with the latter showing the stronger decline over the 15 years.

All measures were severely affected by Operation Murambatsvina, but, apart from *Community Participation*, recovered from 2005, but *Community Participation* is such an essential component of the social capital needed for strong community life and hence it is disturbing that this component is so minimal, at least as reported in these surveys.

So agency in Zimbabwean women does seem to be affected by both age and geographical residence, and both implicate culture (and likely patriarchy), but also probably political coercion. None of this seems remarkable in the light of common sense and the history of at least the past 20 years.

### **Recommendations**

Thus these findings suggest a number of recommendations, which follow very much the views of the feminist researchers mentioned at the outset:

- *work within the framework of women's groups –woman to woman seems the best approach to facilitating agency, and this was certainly the case in getting women to register and vote in 2013 (RAU & TWT. 2014);*
- *facilitate meetings at the community level – building social capital amongst women seems critical from the findings of this study;*
- *encourage women, and especially young women, to discuss their views and opinions in open but safe spaces. It seems crucial that strengthening women's voice must be a re-requisite for better participation;*
- *provide modelling in assertive behaviour for women – more practical training, using a social skills model, seems called for if women are to develop agency, and strengthening personal efficacy may be the way to increase political efficacy;*
- *and always be aware that older women may not be the best models for young women in the rural setting, given the power of patriarchy and the associated power of age within patriarchy.*

## Background

This preliminary report examines some of the changes that have taken place in Zimbabwean women's agency since 2004. It follows on from several analyses of the Afrobarometer data in recent years, all as part of RAU's programme on active citizenship, which, with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), has looked at youth and violence (Osteroom & Pswarayi. 2014; Osteroom et al. 2016), and women's agency (Reeler. 2014). Both youth and women form a specific focus for RAU's work on active citizenship since their voices are relatively muted in the Zimbabwean political landscape, despite the fact that youth, those under 35, constitute 76% of the overall Zimbabwean population, and women as a group are also a majority (51.9%) in the population (ZimStat.2012).

As we examine in a companion report, *Active Citizenship and Women in Zimbabwe*, citizenship can be easily defined in a legal sense through the Constitution, although it is evident that the enabling legislation to give effect to the constitution is lagging behind. However, the meaning of citizenship is not so easily evident in Zimbabwe, and particularly for women: is the underpinning of citizenship *liberal*, *civic republican*, or *communitarian*? Whilst all concepts may be evident within a nation, some would argue that the second, *civic republican*, has begun to occupy a dominant place, and some critics have claimed that this model has generally tended to privilege a dominant group, either males in Western states (Abowitz & Hamish 2006), or the dominant ethnic group in many non-western states. It might even be argued for Zimbabwe that both apply: males from a dominant ethnic group, or perhaps a sub-ethnic group. However, whichever of the three models is argued to be present, it might be argued that none bears the imprimatur of women, and that women, who throughout most of history have been excluded from the political domain, have only exceptionally been co-creators in defining what citizenship should mean.

This background is not meant to be polemical but to outline the deep and hidden discourse in any consideration of what citizenship might mean to women in Zimbabwe. Civic and political life is deeply complex for women: not only is there the ever-present fear of political violence, but this is also against the background of a strongly patriarchal culture. There is considerable attention given to the issue of women's representation as a method of re-defining the political space, but it is evident that, with few exceptions, women remain a marginal constituency in the corridors of power in most countries.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the task in increasing women's participation in civic and political life is not merely that of increasing women's representation, which is necessary (but not sufficient), it is rather to *democratize democracy* (Cornwall & Goertz. 2005). As they express the problem:

*For many women, available spaces for political learning are patriarchal and traditional institutions (family, community), often apolitical women's associations or informal associations that either assign women to the tea-making brigades (women's wings of parties) or make women's ascent to leadership positions contingent on patronage from a top male leader. In the first case, women receive little training for democratic participation. In the second, there is often too weak a foundation to back political interests with constituency support and resources for formal politics. In the third, women*

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth pointing out here that the global average proportion of women in parliaments worldwide, in 2000, was only 16%, and it was calculated that, at the current rate of improvement, parity of males and females in legislatures would only be achieved before the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Cornwall & Goertz. 2005).

*leaders are cut off from a constituency base that might enable them to question party leadership and bring women's interests on to party agendas.*  
(Cornwall & Goertz. p795)

In Zimbabwe, this perspective has particular resonance, and the issues around women exercising greater agency in socio-political life have been a continuing discourse since Independence in 1980. Representation has been a particular concern for obvious reasons, and, following the changes to the Constitution in 2013, there would be an apparent improvement in representation in parliament, but this is only on the basis of a proportional, allocation, and the actual number of women directly elected has in fact dropped (RAU. 2016 (d)). But, as Cornwall and Goertz point out, representation needs to be underpinned by agency if it has to have any more substance than mere window dressing.

Agency is the critical component of active citizenship, and can be argued to be composed of two sub-components, *Voice* and *Participation*. Some authorities see active citizenship as merely composed of Voice and Agency without necessarily articulating Participation as a separate variable, rather arguing that participation requires voice and agency. However, in Zimbabwe, and especially in the political domain, participation can be highly problematic, even in the relatively innocuous behaviour of just voting, and certainly expressing opinions can be risky, with more than 80% of Zimbabweans stating that they are careful about what they say in public according to the Afrobarometer (Masunungure et al. 2017). So both voice and participation are generally diminished aspects of citizen agency, although for some the use of social media is becoming an increasing method of finding voice (RAU. 2016. (b)).

A recent study suggested that agency, measured indirectly through risk taking, has fluctuated over the years since 1990 (Masunungure et al. 2017), starting from a high of 85% being risk takers in 1999, collapsing to a low of 13% in 2005, and has increased to more than half (56%) by 2014. In this study, women were no different to men, suggesting that women may be as active citizens as men, but, however, risk taking may not be as useful a measure of agency as more nuanced study of variables such as voice or participation.

This was the rationale behind the current study. Using the Afrobarometer data from 2004 onwards - 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012 and 2014 – we examined a number of indices to see whether women were in fact active citizens, how they have changed over the 15 years, and whether there were any differences between different groups of women, since women are not a wholly homogenous population: they vary by age, education, and residence at least.

## **Methods**

The data from Rounds 2 (2004), 3 (2005), 4 (2009), 5 (2012), and 6 (2014) were compiled in a single Excel data base.<sup>4</sup> A code book of all relevant Afrobarometer questions related to this study was created, and a new coding structure applied to reduce the results to a binary format. The questions were chosen for comparability between the five surveys (see Appendix 1), and included the following:

- **Demography** – age, gender, education, employment and place of residence (rural or urban);

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<sup>4</sup> There was an earlier Afrobarometer survey, Round 1 in 1999, but this data was not included as there some questions that were not present in this survey that were part of later surveys.

- **Voice** – questions related to talking in public about political matters: *discussing politics, free to say what you think, and careful about what you say in public;*
- **Political Participation** - questions related to participating in political activities: *free to join any political party and free to vote for the party of your choice;*
- **Community Participation** – questions related to participating in community activities: *attending community meetings, joining other to raise an issue, and attending a demonstration or protest;*
- **Political trust** – questions about how democratic is Zimbabwe: *trusting the President, trusting parliament, trusting the ruling party, trusting the police and trusting the courts.* These questions were chosen to examine whether women’s attitudes (trust) had changed over the years;<sup>5</sup>

A number of analyses were made with the sample. Firstly, the findings for the sample of women as a whole over the years is described in order to show the gross changes that may have taken place. Then two comparisons were made. A comparison was made between rural and urban women since the study on risk aversion had shown a consistent trend for rural Zimbabweans to have been less risk averse since 2010, but this had not been disaggregated according to gender and we wished to see whether the trend held for women. Additionally, the risk aversion study had shown that women were no different to men, but this contrast between males and females had not been further differentiated by residence.

A second analysis was the comparison according to age, and contrast made between younger (under 35 years) and older women (over 35 years). The rationale here is that, according to the 2012 census, nearly 70% (69.8%) of the population is under 30 years, and 76% is under the age of 35 years, a “youth bulge” of serious magnitude. The young may hold very different views than older women, given that they were all born post-independence in 1980, with nearly 30% (28.7%) having adult or near-adult experience of the political instability and violence since 2000. Furthermore, the risk aversion study demonstrated that older citizens, those over 45 years, were less risk averse than the younger, and did this trend also hold for a disaggregated sample of women.

Finally, we attempted a modified cohort analysis. Here we looked at the changes in the sample over 5 year slices, starting with the 18 to 35 year old group in 2004, the 23 to 40 year old group in 2009, and the 28 to 45 year old group in 2014. Of course, this is not an actual cohort as the sample was different in each of the years, but an inference can be made about the sample as potentially representative of the changes in an age group over time.

The questions were all converted into binary scores in order to compare years. The final data was exported to SPSS (SPSS20), and frequencies and cross-tabulations were calculated.

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<sup>5</sup> We did not examine *Political Affiliation* as this is generally a vexed variable with large percentages of respondents being unwilling to state their affiliation, and including this variable seems to generate more heat than light, especially where elections are concerned.

## Results

The results are reported for four different analyses. First the entire sample was examined, year by year. Then comparisons were made for each year according to residence (rural or urban), then age, and finally the cohort analysis.

### All years (2004 to 2014):

Using all four indices - *Voice*, *Political Participation*, *Community Participation* and *Political Trust* – test of means were carried out, comparing scores for each year with the successive year. There were significant changes from year to year on virtually all the indices, seemingly in concert with the broad political climate, but there are some surprising findings.

Table 1: All measures, 2004 to 2014	2004 v 2005		2005 v 2009		2009 v 2012		2012 v 2014	
	2004	2005	2005	2009	2009	2012	2012	2014
Voice	1.30**	0.4	0.4	0.83**	0.8**	0.7	0.7	0.9**
Political Participation	1.41**	0.4	0.4	1.14**	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.22**
Community Participation	1.11**	0.7	0.7	0.83**	0.8	0.8	0.8**	0.6
Political Trust	4.6**	1.9	1.9	2.2*	2.2	2.7**	2.7	2.9*

\*\* $p=0.001$ ; \* $p=0.01$

The first comment to make is that all measures dropped significantly from 2004 to 2005, and all increased in 2009. It would seem that, as was shown in the risk aversion study, *Operation Murambatsvina* was the cause of the drop from 2004 to 2005, but this recovered through the period of the Inclusive Government, and a period of some freedom and considerably less political violence.

*Voice* dropped in 2005, increased thereafter through 2009 and 2012, only to drop again in 2014. *Political Participation* shows a steep drop in 2005 from 2004, and thereafter slowly increases, but not so *Community Participation*, which steadily and continuously declines from 2004 to 2014. Finally, *Political Trust* drops precipitously from 2004 to 2005, and thereafter recovers but not to the level of 2004.

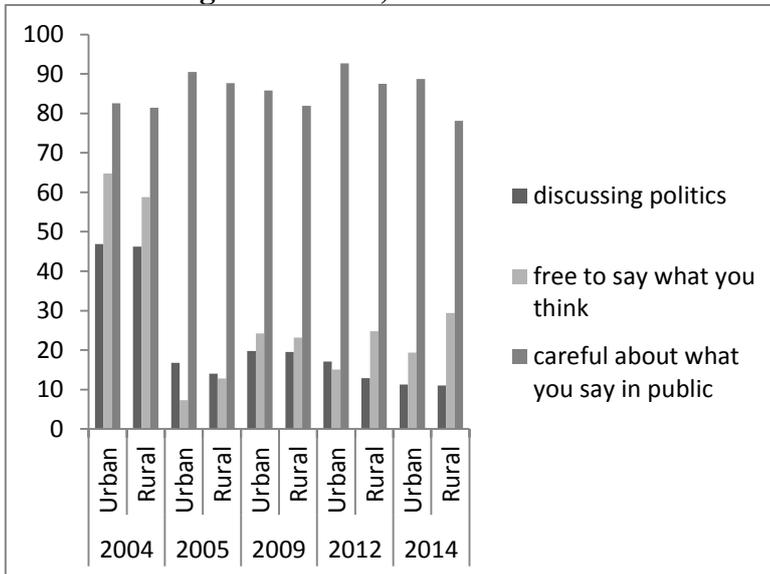
It is worth pointing out that none of the measures return by 2014 to the levels of 2004: *Political Participation* comes close to the 2004 level, but all the others are considerably below the previous levels. *Community Participation* – joining others to raise an issue, attending a community meeting, and attending a demonstration or protest – just declines and declines, which speaks volumes about the destruction of social capital. It is interesting to speculate why this should be so when *Political Participation* - free to join any political party and free to vote for the party of your choice – seems to be less threatening, and yet all human rights reports would suggest that this is clearly much riskier. Is it because these forms of participation are connected to voting only and do not imply much more active engagement in politics than this? We will return to this point later, but now wish to turn to the more nuanced picture, and the hypothesis that the gross findings mask some strong differences between women, particularly those of residence and age.

### Rural versus Urban

As pointed out earlier, the study on risk aversion showed a consistent trend from 2009 onwards for rural residents to be less averse than their urban counterparts. This was also the case here. On statistical analysis, rural women express significantly higher levels of *Voice*, *Community*

*Participation and Political Trust.*<sup>6</sup> But there were also subtle difference in the components of each of the four measures as seen below.

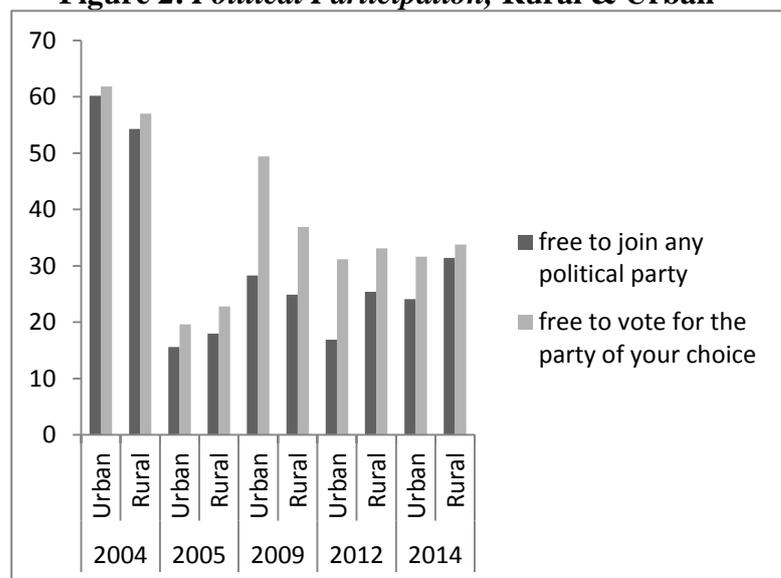
**Figure 1: Voice, Rural & Urban**



As seen in Figure 1, all three aspects of Voice decline over time, and *discussing politics* is the riskiest, and presumably being *free to say what to think* does not mean saying what you think politically. Everyone is *careful what they say in public* continuously since 2004. It would seem that there is a relationship between discussing politics and being careful what you say in public, and together these suggest that *Voice* is deeply muted in Zimbabwe. However, the huge increase in the use of social media also suggests that Zimbabweans are findings ways to have “safe” *Voice*. Not many differences between rural and urban women, but, by 2014, rural women are significantly more able to say what they think.

**Figure 2: Political Participation, Rural & Urban**

As is seen in Figure 2, *Political Participation* declines over time from the highs of 2004. Again there is the big drop from 2004 to 2005, but a rebound in 2009 which, given the 2009 survey took place against the formation of the Inclusive government, suggests an optimistic view of the future by Zimbabwean women. It is also clear that voting is “safer” than joining political parties, and more so after 2009 for rural women. Similarly, rural women feel freer to join the political party of their choice, but this could be the effect of large numbers of ZANU PF supporters in the rural areas.

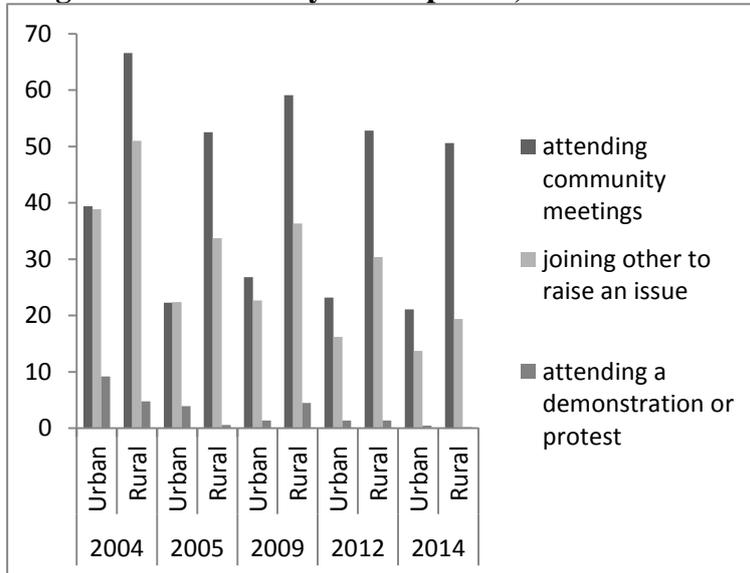


<sup>6</sup> **Voice:** Urban (0.7) v Rural (0.8);  $t = -4.2, p = 0.001$ . **Community Participation:** Urban (0.5) v Rural (0.9);  $t = -16.1, p = 0.001$ . **Political Trust:** Urban (2.3) v Rural (3.2);  $t = -13.2, p = 0.001$

The final point to make here is that *Political Participation* has declined over the 10 years since 2004, and, in 2014, is half of what it was in 2004.

Given that *Political Participation* would at face value seem considerably riskier in Zimbabwe than *Community Participation*, it would be expected that citizens would state that this was easier for them to do. However, as was noted earlier, this does not seem the case (see Table 1).

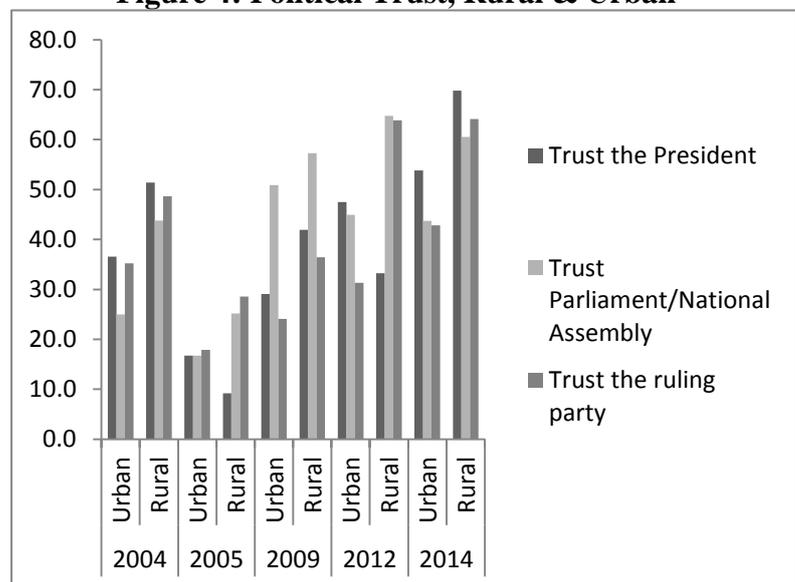
**Figure 3: Community Participation, Rural & Urban**



Certainly, attending a demonstration or protest has declined for both rural and urban women to non-existent levels from 2004 to 2014. This is obviously due to the repressive environment, but it is said that this would include even protest about poor service delivery, and demonstrates the implicit (and sometimes explicit) pollution of the political space by partisan party politics. No issue it would seem can be divorced from political contest, not even service delivery protest.

*Attending community meetings* is evidently more common than *joining others to raise an issue*, but it is also evident that both of these are markedly more common for rural women, and very significantly so for *attending community meetings*. However, this must be cautiously interpreted, and it must be borne in mind that attending meetings in rural areas may not represent voluntarism: many meetings are obligatory, either out of custom or coercion, and, quite apart from the frequently reported coercion to attend political meetings in rural areas, it is difficult for rural residents to refuse to attend meetings called by traditional authorities.

**Figure 4: Political Trust, Rural & Urban**



It is evident that *Community Participation* has declined significantly for urban women from 2004, rebounding slightly from 2005 to 2009, but only about a third of women in 2014, compared with 2004, attend community meetings, and less than half join other to raise an issue.

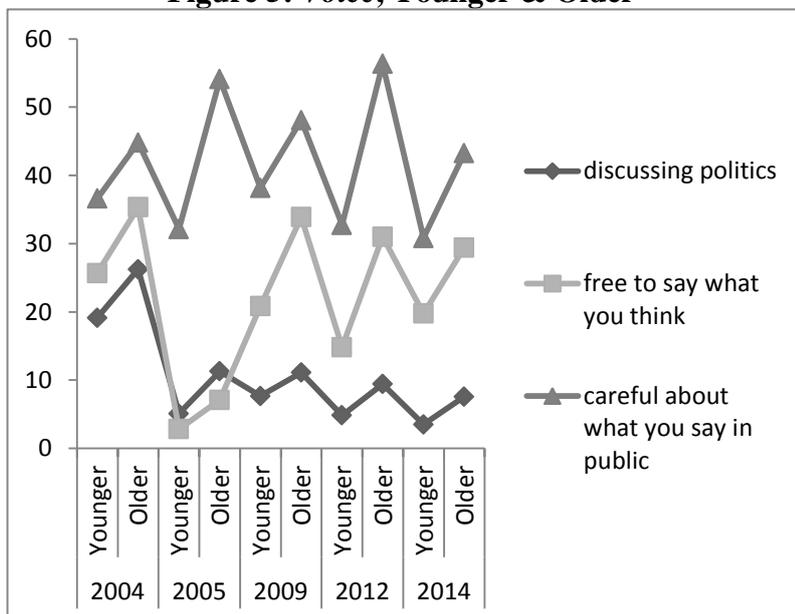
As seen in Figure 4 (above), where we compare only three variables in *Political Trust*, there is a general trend from 2004 to 2014 for women to increasingly express trust in the President, Parliament and the ruling party. There is also a general trend for rural women to have higher levels of trust than their urban counterparts. For both groups, the president receives the highest levels of trust in 2012 and 2014, but, prior to this, Parliament was more trusted. From 2009 onwards, the ruling party is the least trusted of the three, which seems corroborated by the report on *Operation Murambatsvina* which showed a dramatic swing towards MDC-T in 2009 from 2005 (RAU & MPOI. 2017).

Overall, the contrast between rural and urban women in Zimbabwe shows largely what might have been expected. However, it may be that there are other factors operating in these differences, one of these being age.

**Age (Under 35 versus Over 35):**

There are frequent assertions that ZANU PF draws its support from the older citizens, as well as having a strong rural base. Hence, age may be confounding variable in the findings reported above, and an analysis of the effects of age was carried out. It is worth repeating that youth (Younger) was defined as those women under the age of 35 years.

**Figure 5: Voice, Younger & Older**



As was the case with the contrast of residence, there were interesting differences.

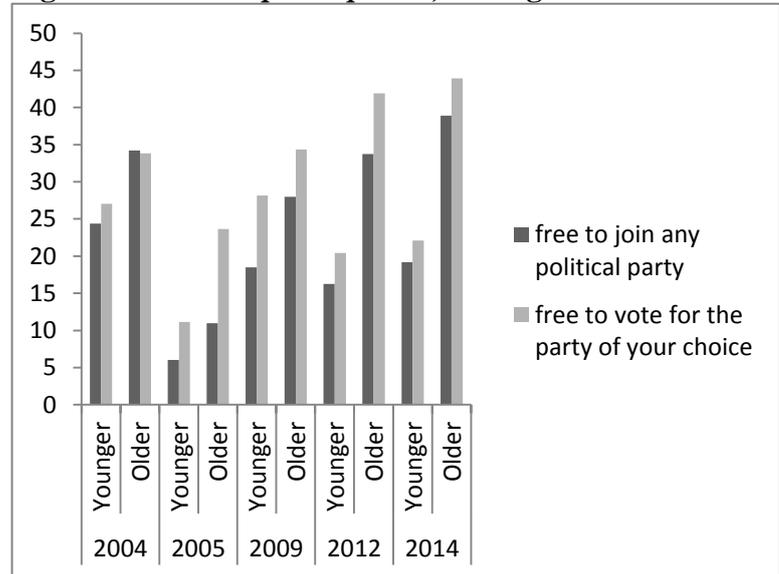
Firstly, the same trend in respect of Operation Murambatsvina is seen, with a drop in both *discussing politics* and *free to say what you think* from 2004 to 2005. *Discussing politics* remains a low level from 2004 to 2014 for both groups, and *being careful what you say in public* stays at a high level throughout. *Feeling free to say what you think* shows an increasing trend from 2005 onwards.

Secondly, there are differences. There is a consistent trend for the Older group to report higher frequencies of *discussing politics* as well as higher frequencies of being *free to say what they think*.

However, the Younger group, over the whole period from 2004 to 2014, is less *careful about they say in public*. Thus, it would appear that older citizens have greater *Voice* than younger ones, but, of course, age may well be confounded with the age-respect that a patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe enforces culturally.

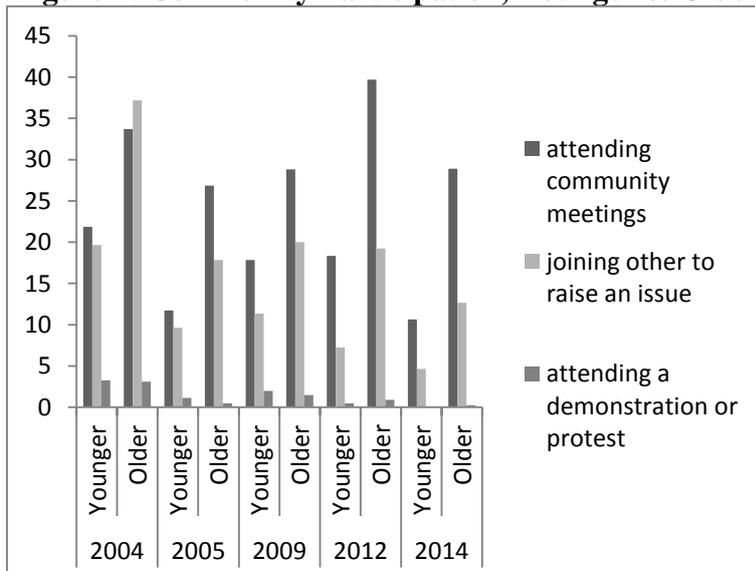
When it comes to *Political Participation*, there are again differences between the Younger and the Older. Older citizens report being *free to join any political party* and being *free to vote for the party of your choice* more frequently than the Younger citizens. There is the OM effect unsurprisingly, and the trend for both groups is to report increasing frequencies of both forms of political participation from 2005 to 2014.

**Figure 6: Political participation, Younger & Older**



When it comes to *Political Participation*, there are again differences between the Younger and the Older. Older citizens report being *free to join any political party* and being *free to vote for the party of your choice* more frequently than the Younger citizens. There is the OM effect unsurprisingly, and the trend for both groups is to report increasing frequencies of both forms of political participation from 2005 to 2014.

**Figure 7: Community Participation, Younger & Older**



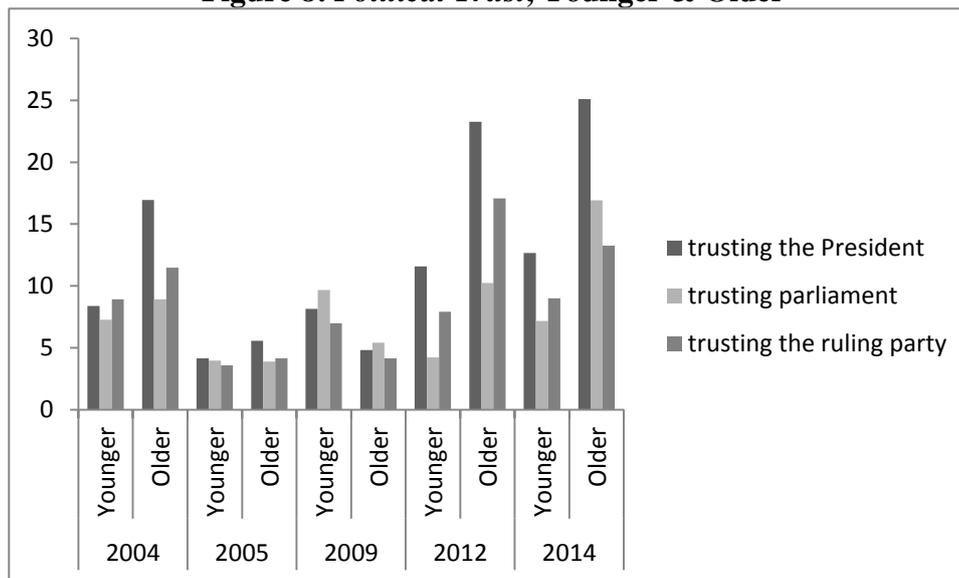
As regards *Community Participation*, it is evident, as was the case for the contrast on residence, that *attending demonstrations or protests* is uncommon for both the old and the young. There are significantly higher rates of all three forms of participation for the older in 2005, and here this might be confounded by the older rural group within the Older group as a whole.

Nonetheless, it is very evident from this data that the Older group is much more likely to *attend community meetings* and to *join others to raise and issue*.

The final comparison between the older and the younger was over their views about who they trusted. As can be seen from Figure 8 (over), the general trend seen in the previous comparisons does not hold in quite the same way.

Firstly, the trend over the years is similar to that seen for *Voice* and the two forms of participation: a drop from 2004 to 2005, and thereafter an increase in *Political Trust* from 2009 to 2014. This is very gradual for the Younger group, but marked for the Older group from 2012 onwards. The Older group expresses higher trust in the president than the Younger and fluctuating support for the ruling party, and, by 2014, has greater trust in parliament than the ruling party. The Younger group shows a similar pattern of fluctuating trust and, from 2012, greater trust in the ruling party than parliament.

**Figure 8: Political Trust, Younger & Older**



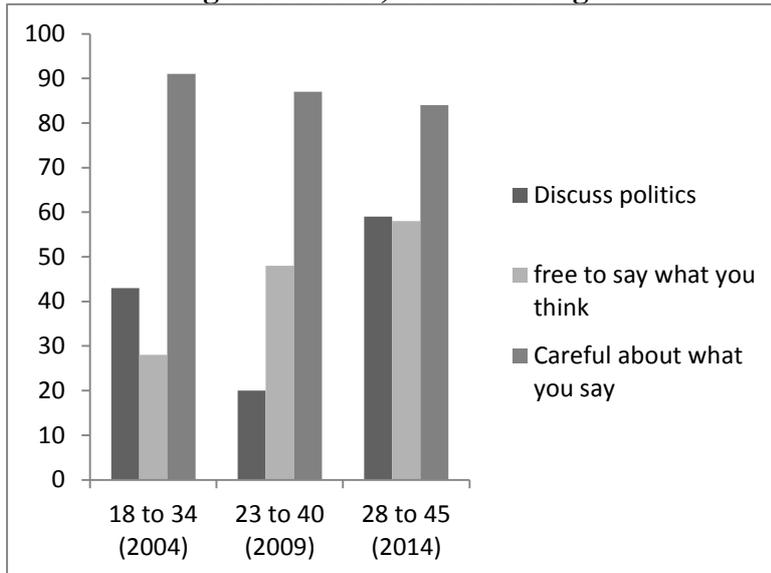
These fluctuations in trust deserve more attention. What does the drop in trust in parliament for the Younger group reflect? Is it a loss of faith in opposition political parties due to their demolition in the 2013 elections, the faction fighting in the MDC-T and the splits in the party into multiple parties, or what? Given the reliance of the MDC-T on the younger citizens this might not bode well for the future.

**Cohort findings:**

Given the changes seen in the Younger group, and as pointed out earlier, we attempted to see whether changes could be seen in a young cohort over the period, and here examined the changes in the group that was between 18 and 34 years in 2004. This is not a genuine cohort study, but rather an inference about whether the population representative of the 2004 group showed changes over time.

The first marked changes are in the increases in *discussing politics* and *being free to say what you think*, which suggests that the older the group began the more they were able to find voice. This may suggest a cultural variable as suggested earlier in the findings on age.

**Figure 9: Voice, Cohort changes**

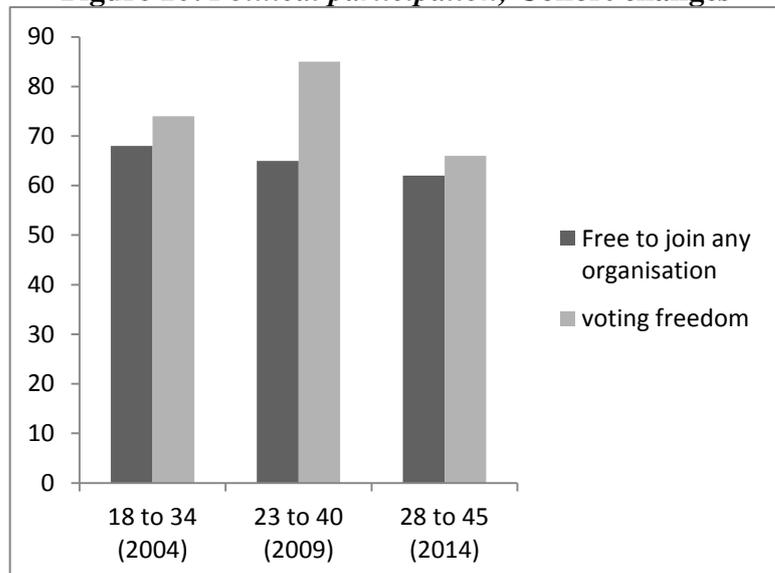


There are minimal changes over time in *being careful about you say*, but the drop is matched by the increase in the other two aspects of voice.

As regards *Political Participation*, there are no major changes over time. *Voting Freedom* increased in 2009, probably a consequence of the setting up of the Inclusive Government. The 2009 survey was carried out in May 2009, more than six months after the elections in 2008, and this may thus represent an optimistic view of the future.

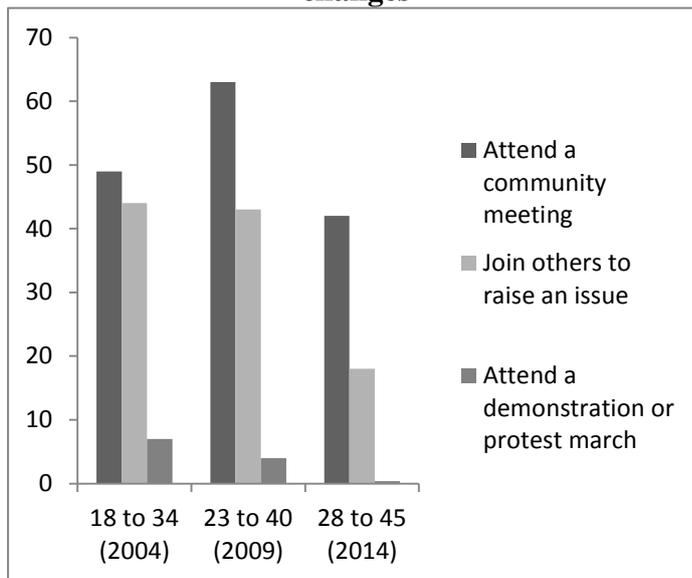
Otherwise, there is slight diminution in both measures in 2014 from 2004. Furthermore, it is evident that more than half of the respondents feel that they are able to indulge in *Political Participation* and this has changed very little over time. The same is not true about their views on *Community Participation*.

**Figure 10: Political participation, Cohort changes**



Furthermore, it is evident that more than half of the respondents feel that they are able to indulge in *Political Participation* and this has changed very little over time. The same is not true about their views on *Community Participation*.

**Figure 11: Community participation, Cohort changes**

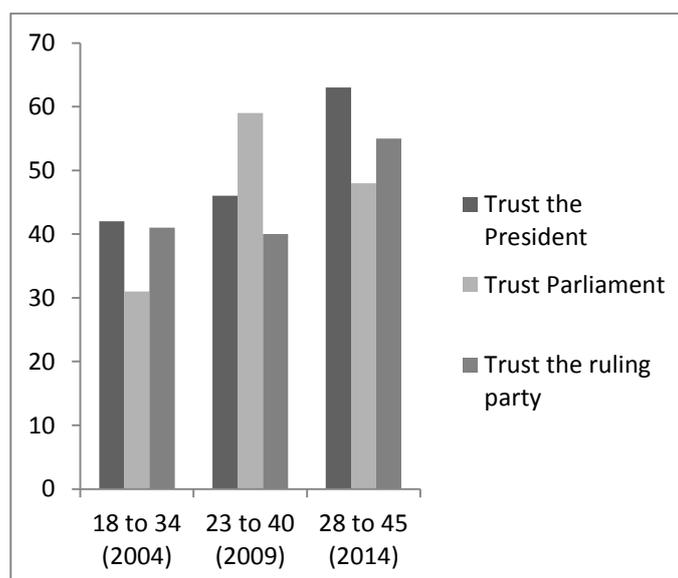


As can be seen from Figure 11, there are marked differences in *Community Participation* over the 10 years.

Firstly, *attending demonstrations or protests*, which was uncommon in 2004, is something that only a very tiny number of women are prepared to do by 2014. This is in line with the general trend, and not different to men, nor different according to age or residence. Secondly, all forms of *Community Participation* decline over the decade, but *attending community meetings* did increase from 2004 to 2009. This again may be an effect of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the establishment of the Inclusive Government.

However, it is interesting again to see the differences expressed between *Political* and *Community Participation*. Given the plentiful evidence about the polarised and violent political space around politics *qua* politics, it might be expected that the latter would be less problematic for citizens than the former, but-equally, this might reflect just how insidious the political polarisation became over time, affecting all aspects of social life.

**Figure 12: Political Trust, Cohort changes**



*Political Trust*, it can be seen from Figure 12 above, increases over the decade, especially trust in the president. *Trust in parliament* rises dramatically in 2009, presumably another consequence of the establishment of the Inclusive Government. However, this subsides significantly 5 years

later, and after the 2013 elections. It is also interesting that trust in the ruling party, which dropped in 2009, increases significantly in 2014, but, nevertheless, all measures of Political Trust had increased in 2014 from 2004.

A simple examination was carried out of whether there were differences in the cohort due to residence, given that this variable showed a range of differences between rural and urban women. There were no real statistically significant differences for the cohort over time save that in each time band *Political Trust* was higher for the rural as opposed to the urban cohort,<sup>7</sup> which is unsurprising given the general findings about the difference between the two groups reported earlier.

## Conclusions

The findings suggest a number of general conclusions about agency as *voice* and *participation* in women.

Both *voice* and *participation* show marked changes over the 15 years since 2004, and none of the measures return by 2014 to the levels of 2004. This suggests that the political environment has diminished both over time, most dramatically seen in the effects of *Operation Murambatsvina*. This is an expected finding.

One obviously incongruent finding is that *Community Participation* is less commonly reported than *Political* when the former should be less threatening, and yet all human rights reports would suggest that the latter is much riskier. This is not an expected finding, but consonant perhaps with the findings on risk aversion, and suggests that voting is the riskiest that women are prepared to be when it comes to politics.

But this overall finding is moderated by the contrast between rural and urban women, where the latter are much more likely to report greater *Community* and *Political Participation*, as well as having higher frequencies of *Political Trust*. However, for both rural and urban women *Voice* is largely muted. It must be pointed out that the suggestion that rural women have greater agency may be spurious; other variables such as cultural practice and political affiliation (and political coercion) may be more explanatory of the differences. This could be unraveled through analysis using a wide range of variables in the Afrobarometer data. For example, we did not include questions dealing with political fear, fear of violence during elections or trust in traditional leaders.

The differences between rural and urban women are extended again through examining the effects of age. Here it was found that older women were more likely to report higher frequencies of both *Community* and *Political Participation*, and hence it is likely that the rural-urban differences are affected by the presence in the latter group of older women. Of course, it is probable that all these differences, between the rural and the urban, and the young and old, are also affected by political party support and the polarised political space in Zimbabwe: older, rural women are likely to support ZANU-PF, and hence their choices are less risky than those of young rural women. Additionally, the role of culture and the constraints placed on young women cannot be excluded either. None of these findings seem remarkable or at variance with common knowledge about women.

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<sup>7</sup> **Political Trust** - 18 to 34 (2004): Urban (1.82) v Rural (2.65),  $p=0.001$ ; 23 to 40 (2009): Urban (1.81) v Rural (2.43),  $p=0.001$ ; 28 to 45 (2014): Urban (2.26) v Rural (3.21),  $p=0.001$ .

The attempt to see changes in an age cohort are interesting. The data suggest that the older the women became the more they were able to find voice, but this was not found for any of the measures of participation: both *Community* and *Political Participation* declined over time, with the latter showing the stronger decline over the 15 years. The only other finding of interest was that the rural women had significantly higher *Political Trust* than the urban women for each period.

Finally, and, as was found in the examination of risk aversion, all measures were severely affected by Operation Murambatsvina, but, apart from *Community Participation*, recovered from 2005, but *Community Participation* is such an essential component of the social capital needed for strong community life and hence it is disturbing that this component is so minimal, at least as reported in these surveys.

How can these findings help in increasing women's agency? The clue seems to be in understanding that any attempt should follow the prescription offered by so many feminist researchers:

- work within the framework of women's groups –woman to woman seems the best approach to facilitating agency, and this was certainly the case in getting women to register and vote in 2013 (RAU & TWT. 2014);
- facilitate meetings at the community level – building social capital amongst women seems critical from the findings of this study;
- encourage women, and especially young women, to discuss their views and opinions in open but safe spaces. It seems crucial that strengthening women's voice must be a re-requisite for better participation;
- provide modelling in assertive behaviour for women – more practical training, using a social skills model, seems called for if women are to develop agency, and strengthening *personal efficacy* may be the way to increase *political efficacy*;
- and always be aware that older women may not be the best models for young women in the rural setting, given the power of patriarchy and the associated power of age within patriarchy.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Afrobarometer Questions**

#### **Voice**

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: *Discussed politics with friends or neighbors?*

Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: *Freedom to say what you think?*

In this country, how often: *Do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?*

#### **Political Participation**

Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: *Freedom to join any political organization you want?*

Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: *Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?*

#### **Community Participation**

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: *Attended a community meeting?*

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: *Got together with others to raise an issue?*

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: *Attended a demonstration or protest march?*

#### **Political Trust**

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: *President Robert Mugabe?*

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: *The Parliament?*

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: *ZANU-PF after the inclusive government (the ruling party)?*

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: *The Police?*

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: *The Courts?*