

= plural of imba , " house " ; mabwe =

plural of bwe , " stone ") . The Karanga @-@ speaking Shona people are found around Great Zimbabwe in the modern @-@ day province of Masvingo . Archaeologist Peter Garlake claims that " Zimbabwe " is a contracted form of dzimba @-@ hwe which means " venerated houses " in the Zezuru dialect of Shona , and is usually applied to chiefs ' houses or graves .

Zimbabwe was formerly known as Southern Rhodesia (1898) , Rhodesia (1965) , and Zimbabwe Rhodesia (1979) . The first recorded use of " Zimbabwe " as a term of national reference was in 1960 , when it was coined by the black nationalist Michael Mawema , whose Zimbabwe National Party became the first to officially use the name in 1961 . The term Rhodesia ? derived from the surname of Cecil Rhodes , the primary instigator of British colonisation of the territory during the late 19th century ? was perceived as inappropriate because of its colonial origin and connotations .

According to Mawema , black nationalists held a meeting in 1960 to choose an alternative name for the country , and names including Machobana and Monomotapa were proposed before his suggestion , Zimbabwe , prevailed . A further alternative , put forward by nationalists in Matabeleland , had been " Matopos " , referring to the Matopos Hills to the south of Bulawayo .

It was initially unclear how the chosen term was to be used ? a letter written by Mawema in 1961 refers to " Zimbabweland " ? but " Zimbabwe " was sufficiently established by 1962 to become the generally preferred term of the black nationalist movement . In a 2001 interview , black nationalist Edson Zvobgo recalled that the name was mentioned by Mawema during a political rally , " and it caught hold , and that was that " . The name was subsequently used by the black nationalist factions during the Second Chimurenga campaigns against the Rhodesian government during the Rhodesian Bush War . The most major of these were the Zimbabwe African National Union (led by Robert Mugabe from 1975) , and the Zimbabwe African People 's Union , led by Joshua Nkomo from its founding in the early 1960s .

= = History = =

= = = Pre @-@ colonial era (1000 ? 1886) = = =

Proto @-@ Shona speaking societies first emerged in the middle Limpopo valley in the 9th century before moving on to the Zimbabwean highlands . The Zimbabwean plateau eventually became the centre of subsequent Shona states , beginning around the 10th century . Around the early 10th century , trade developed with Arab merchants on the Indian Ocean coast , helping to develop the Kingdom of Mapungubwe in the 11th century . This was the precursor to the more impressive Shona civilisations that would dominate the region during the 13th to 15th centuries , evidenced by ruins at Great Zimbabwe , near Masvingo , and other smaller sites . The main archaeological site uses a unique dry stone architecture .

The Kingdom of Mapungubwe was the first in a series of sophisticated trade states developed in Zimbabwe by the time of the first European explorers from Portugal . They traded in gold , ivory , and copper for cloth and glass .

From about 1300 until 1600 , Mapungubwe was eclipsed by the Kingdom of Zimbabwe . This Shona state further refined and expanded upon Mapungubwe 's stone architecture , which survives to this day at the ruins of the kingdom 's capital of Great Zimbabwe . From c . 1450 ? 1760 , Zimbabwe gave way to the Kingdom of Mutapa . This Shona state ruled much of the area that is known as Zimbabwe today , and parts of central Mozambique . It is known by many names including the Mutapa Empire , also known as Mwene Mutapa or Monomotapa as well as " Munhumutapa , " and was renowned for its strategic trade routes with the Arabs and Portugal . The Portuguese sought to monopolise this influence and began a series of wars which left the empire in near collapse in the early 17th century .

As a direct response to increased European presence in the interior , a new Shona state emerged , known as the Rozwi Empire . Relying on centuries of military , political and religious development , the Rozwi (meaning " destroyers ") expelled the Portuguese from the Zimbabwean plateau by force

of arms . They continued the stone building traditions of the Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe kingdoms while adding muskets to their arsenal and recruiting a professional army to defend recent conquests .

Around 1821 , the Zulu general Mzilikazi of the Khumalo clan successfully rebelled against King Shaka and created his own clan , the Ndebele . The Ndebele fought their way northwards into the Transvaal , leaving a trail of destruction in their wake and beginning an era of widespread devastation known as the Mfecane . When Dutch trekboers converged on the Transvaal in 1836 , they drove the tribe even further northward . By 1838 , the Rozwi Empire , along with the other smaller Shona states were conquered by the Ndebele and reduced to vassaldom .

After losing their remaining South African lands in 1840 , Mzilikazi and his tribe permanently settled in the southwest of present @-@ day Zimbabwe in what became known as Matabeleland , establishing Bulawayo as their capital . Mzilikazi then organised his society into a military system with regimental kraals , similar to those of Shaka , which was stable enough to repel further Boer incursions . Mzilikazi died in 1868 and , following a violent power struggle , was succeeded by his son , Lobengula .

= = = Colonial era (1888 ? 1965) = = =

In the 1880s , white colonists arrived with Cecil Rhodes 's British South Africa Company (BSAC) . In 1888 , Rhodes obtained a concession for mining rights from King Lobengula of the Ndebele peoples . He presented this concession to persuade the government of the United Kingdom to grant a royal charter to the company over Matabeleland , and its subject states such as Mashonaland as well .

Rhodes used this document in 1890 to justify sending the Pioneer Column , a group of Europeans protected by well @-@ armed British South Africa Police (BSAP) through Matabeleland and into Shona territory to establish Fort Salisbury (now Harare) , and thereby establish company rule over the area . In 1893 and 1894 , with the help of their new Maxim guns , the BSAP would go on to defeat the Ndebele in the First Matabele War . Rhodes additionally sought permission to negotiate similar concessions covering all territory between the Limpopo River and Lake Tanganyika , then known as " Zambesia " .

In accordance with the terms of aforementioned concessions and treaties , mass settlement was encouraged , with the British maintaining control over labour as well as precious metals and other mineral resources .

In 1895 , the BSAC adopted the name " Rhodesia " for the territory , in honour of Rhodes . In 1898 " Southern Rhodesia " became the official name for the region south of the Zambezi , which later became Zimbabwe . The region to the north was administered separately and later termed Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) . Shortly after Rhodes ' disastrous Jameson Raid on the South African Republic , the Ndebele rebelled against white rule , led by their charismatic religious leader , Mlimo . The Second Matabele War lasted in Matabeleland until 1896 , when Mlimo was assassinated . Shona agitators staged unsuccessful revolts (known as Chimurenga) against company rule during 1896 and 1897 .

Following these failed insurrections , the Ndebele and Shona groups were finally subdued by the Rhodes administration , which organised the land with a disproportionate bias favouring Europeans , thus displacing many indigenous peoples .

Southern Rhodesia was annexed by the United Kingdom on 12 September 1923 . Shortly after annexation , on 1 October 1923 , the first constitution for the new Colony of Southern Rhodesia came into force .

Under the new constitution , Southern Rhodesia became a self @-@ governing British colony , subsequent to a 1922 referendum . Rhodesians of all races served on behalf of the United Kingdom during the two World Wars . Proportional to the white population , Southern Rhodesia contributed more per capita to both the First and Second World Wars than any other part of the Empire , including Britain itself .

In 1953 , in the face of African opposition , Britain consolidated the two Rhodesias with Nyasaland (

Malawi) in the ill @-@ fated Central African Federation , which was essentially dominated by Southern Rhodesia . Growing African nationalism and general dissent , particularly in Nyasaland , persuaded Britain to dissolve the Union in 1963 , forming three separate divisions . While multiracial democracy was finally introduced to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland , however , Southern Rhodesians of European ancestry continued to enjoy minority rule .

With Zambian independence , Ian Smith 's Rhodesian Front (RF) dropped the designation " Southern " in 1964 and issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (commonly abbreviated to " UDI ") from the United Kingdom on 11 November 1965 , intent on effectively repudiating the recently adopted British policy of " no independence before majority rule " . It was the first such course taken by a British colony since the American declaration of 1776 , which Smith and others indeed claimed provided a suitable precedent to their own actions .

= = = UDI and civil war (1965 ? 1979) = = =

After the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) , the British government petitioned the United Nations for sanctions against Rhodesia pending unsuccessful talks with Smith 's administration in 1966 and 1968 . In December 1966 , the organisation complied , imposing the first mandatory trade embargo on an autonomous state . These sanctions were expanded again in 1968 .

The United Kingdom deemed the Rhodesian declaration an act of rebellion , but did not re @-@ establish control by force . A guerrilla war subsequently ensued when Joshua Nkomo 's Zimbabwe African People 's Union (ZAPU) and Robert Mugabe 's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) , supported actively by communist powers and neighbouring African nations , initiated guerilla operations against Rhodesia 's predominantly white government . ZAPU was supported by the Soviet Union , the Warsaw Pact and associated nations such as Cuba , and adopted a Marxist ? Leninist ideology ; ZANU meanwhile aligned itself with Maoism and the bloc headed by the People 's Republic of China . Smith declared Rhodesia a republic in 1970 , following the results of a referendum the previous year , but this went unrecognised internationally . Meanwhile , Rhodesia 's internal conflict intensified , eventually forcing him to open negotiations with the militant nationalists .

In March 1978 , Smith reached an accord with three African leaders , led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa , who offered to leave the white population comfortably entrenched in exchange for the establishment of a biracial democracy . As a result of the Internal Settlement , elections were held in April 1979 , concluding with the United African National Council (UANC) carrying a majority of parliamentary seats . On 1 June 1979 , Muzorewa , the UANC head , became prime minister and the country 's name was changed to Zimbabwe Rhodesia . The Internal Settlement left control of the Rhodesian Security Forces , civil service , judiciary , and a third of parliament seats to whites . On 12 June , the United States Senate voted to lift economic pressure on the former Rhodesia .

Following the fifth Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) , held in Lusaka , Zambia from 1 to 7 August in 1979 , the British government invited Muzorewa , Mugabe , and Nkomo to participate in a constitutional conference at Lancaster House . The purpose of the conference was to discuss and reach an agreement on the terms of an independence constitution , and provide for elections supervised under British authority allowing Zimbabwe Rhodesia to proceed to legal independence .

With Lord Carrington , Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom , in the chair , these discussions were mounted from 10 September to 15 December in 1979 , producing a total of 47 plenary sessions . On 21 December 1979 , delegations from every major interest represented reached the Lancaster House Agreement , effectively ending the guerrilla war .

On 11 December 1979 , the Rhodesian House of Assembly voted 90 to nil to revert to British colonial status (the ' aye ' votes included Ian Smith himself) . The bill then passed the Senate and was assented to by the President . With the arrival of Lord Christopher Soames , the new Governor , just after 2 p.m. on 12 December 1979 , Britain formally took control of Zimbabwe Rhodesia as the

Colony of Southern Rhodesia , although on 13 December Soames declared that during his mandate the name Rhodesia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia would continue to be used . Britain lifted sanctions on 12 December , and the United Nations on 16 December , before calling on its member states to do likewise on 21 December . Thus Zambia , Mozambique , Tanzania , Angola and Botswana lifted sanctions on 22 ? 23 December ; Australia partly pre @-@ emptied this , lifting all but trade sanctions on 18 December , and trade sanctions on 21 December .

= = = Independence era (1980 ? present) = = =

Zimbabwe 's first president after its independence was Canaan Banana in what was originally a mainly ceremonial role as Head of State . Robert Mugabe , leader of the ZANU party , was the country 's first Prime Minister and Head of Government . During the elections of February 1980 , Robert Mugabe and the ZANU party secured a landslide victory .

Opposition to what was perceived as a Shona takeover immediately erupted around Matabeleland . The Matabele unrest led to what has become known as Gukurahundi (Shona : " the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains ") .

The Fifth Brigade , a North Korean @-@ trained elite unit that reported directly to the Zimbabwean Prime Minister , entered Matabeleland and massacred thousands of civilians accused of supporting " dissidents " .

Estimates for the number of deaths during the five @-@ year Gukurahundi campaign ranged from 10 @,@ 000 to 30 @,@ 000 . Thousands of others were tortured in military internment camps .

The campaign officially ended in 1987 after Nkomo and Mugabe reached a unity agreement that merged their respective parties , creating the Zimbabwe African National Union ? Patriotic Front (ZANU ? PF) .

Elections in March 1990 resulted in another victory for Mugabe and the Zanu @-@ PF party , which claimed 117 of the 120 contested seats .

During the 1990s , students , trade unionists , and other workers often demonstrated to express their growing discontent with Mugabe and Zanu @-@ PF party policies . In 1996 , civil servants , nurses , and junior doctors went on strike over salary issues . The general health of the population also began to significantly decline ; by 1997 an estimated 25 % of the population had been infected by HIV in a pandemic that was affecting most of southern Africa .

Land redistribution re @-@ emerged as the main issue for the Zanu @-@ PF government around 1997 . Despite the existence of a " willing @-@ buyer @-@ willing @-@ seller " land reform programme since the 1980s , the minority white Zimbabwean population of around 0 @.@ 6 % continued to hold 70 % of the country 's most fertile agricultural land .

In 2000 , the government pressed ahead with its Fast Track Land Reform programme , a policy involving compulsory land acquisition aimed at redistributing land from the minority white population to the majority black population . Confiscations of white farmland (accompanied by brutality and corruption) , continuous droughts , and a serious drop in external finance and other supports led to a sharp decline in agricultural exports , which were traditionally the country 's leading export @-@ producing sector . Some 58 @,@ 000 independent black farmers have since experienced limited success in reviving the gutted cash crop sectors through efforts on a smaller scale .

Accused of committing numerous human rights abuses and grossly mismanaging the economy , Mugabe and the Zanu @-@ PF party leadership found themselves beset by a wide range of international sanctions . In 2002 , the nation was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations due to the reckless farm seizures and blatant election tampering . The following year , Zimbabwean officials voluntarily terminated its Commonwealth membership .

Following elections in 2005 , the government initiated " Operation Murambatsvina " , an effort to crack down on illegal markets and slums emerging in towns and cities , leaving a substantial section of urban poor homeless . The Zimbabwean government has described the operation as an attempt to provide decent housing to the population , although according to critics such as Amnesty International , authorities have yet to properly substantiate their claims .

On 29 March 2008 , Zimbabwe held a presidential election along with a parliamentary election . The

results of this election were withheld for two weeks , after which it was generally acknowledged that the Movement for Democratic Change ? Tsvangirai (MDC @-@ T) had achieved a majority of one seat in the lower house of parliament .

In a surprising moment of candour at the ZANU @-@ PF congress in December 2014 , President Robert Mugabe accidentally let slip that the opposition had in fact won the contentious 2008 polls by an astounding 73 % .

In late 2008 , problems in Zimbabwe reached crisis proportions in the areas of living standards , public health (with a major cholera outbreak in December) and various basic affairs .

In September 2008 , a power @-@ sharing agreement was reached between Tsvangirai and President Mugabe , permitting the former to hold the office of prime minister . Due to ministerial differences between their respective political parties , the agreement was not fully implemented until 13 February 2009 . By December 2010 , Mugabe was threatening to completely expropriate remaining privately owned companies in Zimbabwe unless " western sanctions " were lifted .

A 2011 survey by Freedom House suggests that living conditions have improved since the power @-@ sharing agreement . The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs states in its 2012 ? 2013 planning document that the " humanitarian situation has improved in Zimbabwe since 2009 , but conditions remain precarious for many people " .

On 17 January 2013 , Vice President John Nkomo died of cancer at St Anne 's Hospital , Harare at the age of 78 . A new constitution approved in the Zimbabwean constitutional referendum , 2013 curtails presidential powers .

Mugabe was re @-@ elected president in the July 2013 Zimbabwean general election which The Economist described as " rigged . ") . The Movement for Democratic Change alleged massive fraud and tried to seek relief through the courts . After winning the election , the Mugabe government doubled the civil service and , according to The Economist , embarked on " ... misrule and dazzling corruption . "

In July 2016 nationwide protests took place regarding the economic collapse in the country and the finance minister admitted " Right now we literally have nothing . "

= = Geography and environment = =

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa , lying between latitudes 15 ° and 23 ° S , and longitudes 25 ° and 34 ° E. Most of the country is elevated , consisting of a central plateau (high veld) stretching from the southwest northwards with altitudes between 1 @,@ 000 and 1 @,@ 600 m . The country 's extreme east is mountainous , this area being known as the Eastern Highlands , with Mount Nyangani as the highest point at 2 @,@ 592 m .

These highlands are renowned for their great natural beauty , with famous tourist destinations such as Nyanga , Troutbeck , Chimanimani , Vumba and Chirinda Forest at Mount Selinda . About 20 % of the country consists of low @-@ lying areas , (the low veld) under 900m . Victoria Falls , one of the world 's biggest and most spectacular waterfalls , is located in the country 's extreme northwest and is part of the Zambezi river .

= = = Climate = = =

Zimbabwe has a tropical climate with many local variations . The southern areas are known for their heat and aridity , parts of the central plateau receive frost in winter , the Zambezi valley is also known for its extreme heat and the Eastern Highlands usually experience cool temperatures and the highest rainfall in the country . The country 's rainy season generally runs from late October to March and the hot climate is moderated by increasing altitude . Zimbabwe is faced with recurring droughts , the latest one commencing early in 2015 and ongoing into 2016 . Severe storms are rare .

= = = Flora and fauna = = =

The country is mostly savannah , although the moist and mountainous eastern highlands support areas of tropical evergreen and hardwood forests . Trees found in these Eastern Highlands include teak , mahogany , enormous specimens of strangling fig , forest newtonia , big leaf , white stinkwood , chirinda stinkwood , knobthorn and many others .

In the low @-@ lying parts of the country fever trees , mopane , combretum and baobabs abound . Much of the country is covered by miombo woodland , dominated by brachystegia species and others . Among the numerous flowers and shrubs are hibiscus , flame lily , snake lily , spider lily , leonotus , cassia , tree wisteria and dombeya . There are around 350 species of mammals that can be found in Zimbabwe . There are also many snakes and lizards , over 500 bird species , and 131 fish species .

= = = Environmental issues = = =

Large parts of Zimbabwe were once covered by forests with abundant wildlife . Deforestation and poaching has reduced the amount of wildlife . Woodland degradation and deforestation , due to population growth , urban expansion and lack of fuel , are major concerns and have led to erosion and land degradation which diminish the amount of fertile soil . Local farmers have also been criticised by environmentalists for burning off vegetation to heat their tobacco barns .

At the current rate of deforestation , Zimbabwe 's natural woodland is expected to disappear by 2065 .

= = Government and politics = =

Zimbabwe is a republic with a presidential system of government . The semi @-@ presidential system was done away with the adoption of a new constitution after a referendum in March 2013 . Under the constitutional changes in 2005 , an upper chamber , the Senate , was reinstated . The House of Assembly is the lower chamber of Parliament . President Robert Mugabe 's Zimbabwe African National Union ? Patriotic Front (commonly abbreviated ZANU @-@ PF) has been the dominant political party in Zimbabwe since independence .

In 1987 then @-@ prime minister Mugabe revised the constitution , abolishing the ceremonial presidency and the prime ministerial posts to form an executive president , a Presidential system . His ZANU party has won every election since independence , in the 1990 election the second @-@ placed party , Edgar Tekere 's Zimbabwe Unity Movement , won only 20 % of the vote .

During the 1995 parliamentary elections most opposition parties , including the ZUM , boycotted the voting , resulting in a near @-@ sweep by the ruling party . When the opposition returned to the polls in 2000 , they won 57 seats , only five fewer than ZANU .

Presidential elections were again held in 2002 amid allegations of vote @-@ rigging , intimidation and fraud . The 2005 Zimbabwe parliamentary elections were held on 31 March and multiple claims of vote rigging , election fraud and intimidation were made by the MDC and Jonathan Moyo , calling for investigations into 32 of the 120 constituencies . Jonathan Moyo participated in the elections despite the allegations and won a seat as an independent member of Parliament .

General elections were again held in Zimbabwe on 30 March 2008 . The official results required a runoff between Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai , the opposition leader ; the MDC challenged these results , claiming widespread election fraud by the Mugabe government .

The run @-@ off was scheduled for 27 June 2008 . On 22 June , citing the continuing unfairness of the process and refusing to participate in a " violent , illegitimate sham of an election process " , Tsvangirai pulled out of the presidential run @-@ off , the ZEC held the run @-@ off and President Mugabe received a landslide majority .

The MDC @-@ T led by Morgan Tsvangirai is now the majority in the Lower chamber of Parliament . The MDC split into two factions . One faction (MDC @-@ M) , now led by Arthur Mutambara contested the elections to the Senate , while the other , led by Tsvangirai , opposed to contesting the elections , stating that participation in a rigged election is tantamount to endorsing Mugabe 's claim that past elections were free and fair . The opposition parties have resumed participation in

national and local elections as recently as 2006 . The two MDC camps had their congresses in 2006 with Tsvangirai being elected to lead MDC @-@ T , which has become more popular than the other group .

Mutambara , a robotics professor and former NASA robotics specialist has replaced Welshman Ncube who was the interim leader of MDC @-@ M after the split . Morgan Tsvangirai did not participate in the Senate elections , while the Mutambara faction participated and won five seats in the senate . The Mutambara formation has been weakened by defections from MPs and individuals who are disillusioned by their manifesto . As of 2008 , the Movement for Democratic Change has become the most popular , with crowds as large as 20 @,@ 000 attending their rallies as compared to between 500 ? 5 @,@ 000 for the other formation .

On 28 April 2008 , Tsvangirai and Mutambara announced at a joint news conference in Johannesburg that the two MDC formations were co @-@ operating , enabling the MDC to have a clear parliamentary majority . Tsvangirai said that Mugabe could not remain President without a parliamentary majority . On the same day , Silaigwana announced that the recounts for the final five constituencies had been completed , that the results were being collated and that they would be published on 29 April .

In mid @-@ September 2008 , after protracted negotiations overseen by the leaders of South Africa and Mozambique , Mugabe and Tsvangirai signed a power @-@ sharing deal which would see Mugabe retain control over the army . Donor nations have adopted a ' wait @-@ and @-@ see ' attitude , wanting to see real change being brought about by this merger before committing themselves to funding rebuilding efforts , which are estimated to take at least five years . On 11 February 2009 Tsvangirai was sworn in as Prime Minister by President Mugabe .

In November 2008 , the government of Zimbabwe spent US \$ 7 @.@ 3 million donated by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS , Tuberculosis and Malaria . A representative of the organisation declined to speculate on how the money was spent , except that it was not for the intended purpose , and the government has failed to honour requests to return the money .

In February 2013 , Zimbabwe 's election chief , Simpson Mtambanengwe , resigned due to ill health . His resignation came months before the country 's constitutional referendum and elections .

= = = Human rights = = =

There are widespread reports of systematic and escalating violations of human rights in Zimbabwe under the Mugabe administration and his party , the ZANU @-@ PF .

In 2011 , there were reports of 640 corpses having been recovered from the Monkey William Mine in Chibondo . They were allegedly authenticated by the Fallen Heroes Trust of Zimbabwe and the Department of National Museums and Monuments who are leading the exhumation process as victims of the Ian Smith regime during the liberation war . One body was identified as a ZANLA cadre , Cde Rauya , by the Fallen Heroes Trust Chief exhumers .

Government Minister Saviour Kasukuwere admitted the remains were discovered in 2008 , but claimed the remains were decades old despite clear evidence the exhumed skeletons still had hair and clothes . Solidarity Peace Trust said that the presence of soft tissues " is not necessarily an indicator that these bones entered the grave more recently , although it could be . "

Journalists found a body in the mine with ' what appeared to be blood and fluids dripping onto the skulls below ' . The opposition MDC called for research on all violence that included killings of its supporters during disputed elections in 2008 . Amnesty International (AI) expressed concern that " international best practice on exhumations is not being adhered to ... [M] is handling of these mass graves has serious implications on potential exhumations of other sites in Zimbabwe . Thousands of civilians were also killed in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in the mid 1980s and are allegedly buried in mine shafts and mass graves in these regions " , AI added .

According to human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch the government of Zimbabwe violates the rights to shelter , food , freedom of movement and residence , freedom of assembly and the protection of the law . There have been alleged assaults on the media , the political opposition , civil society activists , and human rights defenders .

Opposition gatherings are frequently the subject of brutal attacks by the police force , such as the crackdown on an 11 March 2007 Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) rally and several others during the 2008 election campaign .

In the attacks of 2007 , party leader Morgan Tsvangirai and 49 other opposition activists were arrested and severely beaten by the police . After his release , Morgan Tsvangirai told the BBC that he suffered head injuries and blows to the arms , knees and back , and that he lost a significant amount of blood .

Police action was strongly condemned by the UN Secretary @-@ General , Ban Ki @-@ moon , the European Union and the United States . While noting that the activists had suffered injuries , but not mentioning the cause of them , the Zimbabwean government @-@ controlled daily newspaper The Herald claimed the police had intervened after demonstrators " ran amok looting shops , destroying property , mugging civilians , and assaulting police officers and innocent members of the public " . The newspaper argued that the opposition had been " willfully violating the ban on political rallies " .

There are also abuses of media rights and access . The Zimbabwean government suppresses freedom of the press and freedom of speech . It has been repeatedly accused of using the public broadcaster , the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation , as a propaganda tool . Newspapers critical of the government , such as the Daily News , closed after bombs exploded at their offices and the government refused to renew their license . BBC News , Sky News , and CNN were banned from filming or reporting from Zimbabwe . In 2009 reporting restrictions on the BBC and CNN were lifted . Sky News continue to report on happenings within Zimbabwe from neighbouring countries like South Africa .

= = = Armed forces = = =

The Zimbabwe Defence Forces were set up by the integration of three belligerent forces ? the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) , the Zimbabwe People 's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) , and the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) ? after the Second Chimurenga and Zimbabwean independence in 1980 . The integration period saw the formation of The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) as separate entities under the command of Rtd General Solomon Mujuru and Air Marshal Norman Walsh who retired in 1982 , and was replaced by Air Marshal Azim Daudpota who handed over command to the late Rtd Air Chief Marshal Josiah Tungamirai in 1985 .

In December 2003 , General Constantine Chiwenga , was promoted and appointed Commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces . Lieutenant General P. V. Sibanda replaced him as Commander of the Army .

The ZNA currently has an active duty strength of 30 @,@ 000 . The Air Force has about 5 @,@ 139 men assigned . The Zimbabwe Republic Police (includes Police Support Unit , Paramilitary Police) is part of the defence force of Zimbabwe and numbers 25 @,@ 000 .

Following majority rule in early 1980 , British Army trainers oversaw the integration of guerrilla fighters into a battalion structure overlaid on the existing Rhodesian armed forces . For the first year , a system was followed where the top @-@ performing candidate became battalion commander . If he or she was from ZANLA , then his or her second @-@ in @-@ command was the top @-@ performing ZIPRA candidate , and vice versa . This ensured a balance between the two movements in the command structure . From early 1981 , this system was abandoned in favour of political appointments , and ZANLA and ZANU fighters consequently quickly formed the majority of battalion commanders in the ZNA .

The ZNA was originally formed into four brigades , composed of a total of 28 battalions . The brigade support units were composed almost entirely of specialists of the former Rhodesian Army , while unintegrated battalions of the Rhodesian African Rifles were assigned to the 1st , 3rd and 4th Brigades . The Fifth Brigade was formed in 1981 and disbanded in 1988 after the demonstration of mass brutality and murder during the brigade 's occupation of Matabeleland in what has become known as Gukurahundi (Shona : " the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring

rains ") , the campaign which finished off Mugabe 's liberation struggle . The Brigade had been reformed by 2006 , with its commander , Brigadier @-@ General John Mupande praising its " rich history " .

= = = Administrative divisions = = =

Zimbabwe has a centralised government and is divided into eight provinces and two cities with provincial status , for administrative purposes . Each province has a provincial capital from where official business is usually carried out .

The names of most of the provinces were generated from the Mashonaland and Matabeleland divide at the time of colonisation : Mashonaland was the territory occupied first by the British South Africa Company Pioneer Column and Matabeleland the territory conquered during the First Matabele War . This corresponds roughly to the precolonial territory of the Shona people and the Matabele people , although there are significant ethnic minorities in most provinces . Each province is headed by a Provincial Governor , appointed by the President .

The provincial government is run by a Provincial Administrator , appointed by the Public Service Commission . Other government functions at provincial level are carried out by provincial offices of national government departments .

The provinces are subdivided into 59 districts and 1 @, @ 200 wards (sometimes referred to as municipalities) . Each district is headed by a District Administrator , appointed by the Public Service Commission . There is also a Rural District Council , which appoints a chief executive officer . The Rural District Council is composed of elected ward councillors , the District Administrator and one representative of the chiefs (traditional leaders appointed under customary law) in the district . Other government functions at district level are carried out by district offices of national government departments .

At the ward level there is a Ward Development Committee , comprising the elected ward councillor , the kraalheads (traditional leaders subordinate to chiefs) and representatives of Village Development Committees . Wards are subdivided into villages , each of which has an elected Village Development Committee and a Headman (traditional leader subordinate to the kraalhead) .

= = Economy = =

Mineral exports , gold , agriculture , and tourism are the main foreign currency earners of Zimbabwe .

The mining sector remains very lucrative , with some of the world 's largest platinum reserves being mined by Anglo American plc and Impala Platinum . The Marange diamond fields , discovered in 2006 , are considered the biggest diamond find in over a century . They have the potential to improve the fiscal situation of the country considerably , but almost all revenues from the field have disappeared into the pockets of army officers and ZANU @-@ PF politicians .

In terms of carats produced , the Marange field is one of the largest diamond producing projects in the world , estimated to produce 12 million carats in 2014 worth over \$ 350 million . Zimbabwe is the biggest trading partner of South Africa on the continent .

Taxes and tariffs are high for private enterprises , while state enterprises are strongly subsidised . State regulation is costly to companies ; starting or closing a business is slow and costly . Government spending was predicted to reach 67 % of GDP in 2007 .

Tourism was an important industry for the country , but has been failing in recent years . The Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force released a report in June 2007 , estimating 60 % of Zimbabwe 's wildlife has died since 2000 due to poaching and deforestation . The report warns that the loss of life combined with widespread deforestation is potentially disastrous for the tourist industry .

The ICT sector of Zimbabwe has been growing at a fast pace . A report by the mobile internet browser company , Opera , in June / July 2011 has ranked Zimbabwe as Africa 's fastest growing market .

Since 1 January 2002 , the government of Zimbabwe has had its lines of credit at international

financial institutions frozen , through US legislation called the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (ZDERA) . Section 4C instructs the Secretary of the Treasury to direct directors at international financial institutions to veto the extension of loans and credit to the Zimbabwean government . According to the United States , these sanctions target only seven specific businesses owned or controlled by government officials and not ordinary citizens .

An independent study has shown that the sanctions have adversely affected the welfare of ordinary citizens .

Zimbabwe maintained positive economic growth throughout the 1980s (5 % GDP growth per year) and 1990s (4 @. @ 3 % GDP growth per year) . The economy declined from 2000 : 5 % decline in 2000 , 8 % in 2001 , 12 % in 2002 and 18 % in 2003 . Zimbabwe 's involvement from 1998 to 2002 in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo drained hundreds of millions of dollars from the economy .

The downward spiral of the economy has been attributed mainly to mismanagement and corruption by the government and the eviction of more than 4 @, @ 000 white farmers in the controversial land confiscations of 2000 . The Zimbabwean government and its supporters attest that it was Western policies to avenge the expulsion of their kin that sabotaged the economy .

By 2005 , the purchasing power of the average Zimbabwean had dropped to the same levels in real terms as 1953 . In 2005 , the government , led by central bank governor Gideon Gono , started making overtures that white farmers could come back . There were 400 to 500 still left in the country , but much of the land that had been confiscated was no longer productive .

In January 2007 , the government issued long term leases to some white farmers . At the same time , however , the government also continued to demand that all remaining white farmers , who were given eviction notices earlier , vacate the land or risk being arrested . Mugabe pointed to foreign governments and alleged " sabotage " as the cause of the fall of the Zimbabwean economy , as well as the country 's 80 % formal unemployment rate .

Inflation rose from an annual rate of 32 % in 1998 , to an official estimated high of 11 @, @ 200 @, @ 000 % in August 2008 according to the country 's Central Statistical Office . This represented a state of hyperinflation , and the central bank introduced a new 100 billion dollar note .

On 29 January 2009 , in an effort to counteract runaway inflation , acting Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa announced that Zimbabweans will be permitted to use other , more stable currencies to do business , alongside the Zimbabwe dollar . In an effort to combat inflation and foster economic growth the Zimbabwean Dollar was suspended indefinitely on 12 April 2009 . Zimbabwe now allows trade in the United States dollar and various other currencies such as the rand (South Africa) , the pula (Botswana) , the euro , and the Pound Sterling (UK) .

Since the formation of the Unity Government in 2009 , the Zimbabwean economy has been on the rebound . GDP grew by more than 5 % in the years 2009 and 2011 . In November 2010 , the IMF described the Zimbabwean economy as " completing its second year of buoyant economic growth " .

Zimplats , the nation 's largest platinum company , has proceeded with US \$ 500 million in expansions , and is also continuing a separate US \$ 2 billion project , despite threats by Mugabe to nationalise the company . The pan @- @ African investment bank IMARA released a favourable report in February 2011 on investment prospects in Zimbabwe , citing an improved revenue base and higher tax receipts .

In late January 2013 , the Zimbabwean finance ministry reported that they had only \$ 217 in their treasury and would apply for donations to finance the coming elections that is estimated to cost 107 million USD .

= = = Agriculture = = =

Zimbabwe 's commercial farming sector was traditionally a source of exports and foreign exchange , and provided 400 @, @ 000 jobs . However , the government 's land reform program badly damaged the sector , turning Zimbabwe into a net importer of food products .

For the past ten years , the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi @- @ Arid Tropics (

ICRISAT) has been assisting Zimbabwe 's farmers to adopt conservation agriculture techniques , a sustainable method of farming that can help increase yields . By applying the three principles of minimum soil disturbance , legume @-@ based cropping and the use of organic mulch , farmers can improve infiltration , reduce evaporation and soil erosion , and build up organic soil content .

Between 2005 @-@ 11 , the number of smallholders practising conservation agriculture in Zimbabwe increased from 5000 to more than 150000 . Cereal yields rose between 15 and 100 per cent across different regions .

= = = Tourism = = =

Since the land reform programme in 2000 , tourism in Zimbabwe has steadily declined . After rising during the 1990s , (1 @. @ 4 million tourists in 1999) industry figures described a 75 % fall in visitors to Zimbabwe in 2000 . By December , less than 20 % of hotel rooms had been occupied . This has had a huge impact on the Zimbabwean economy . Thousands of jobs have been lost in the industry due to companies closing down or simply being unable to pay staff wages due to the decreasing number of tourists .

Several airlines have also pulled out of Zimbabwe . Australia 's Qantas , Germany 's Lufthansa , and Austrian Airlines were among the first to pull out and most recently British Airways suspended all direct flights to Harare . The country 's flagship airline Air Zimbabwe , which operated flights throughout Africa and a few destinations in Europe and Asia , ceased operations in February 2012 .

Zimbabwe has several major tourist attractions . Victoria Falls on the Zambezi , which are shared with Zambia , are located in the north west of Zimbabwe . Before the economic changes , much of the tourism for these locations came to the Zimbabwe side but now Zambia is the main beneficiary . The Victoria Falls National Park is also in this area and is one of the eight main national parks in Zimbabwe , the largest of which is Hwange National Park .

The Eastern Highlands are a series of mountainous areas near the border with Mozambique . The highest peak in Zimbabwe , Mount Nyangani at 2 @, @ 593 m (8 @, @ 507 ft) is located here as well as the Bvumba Mountains and the Nyanga National Park . World 's View is in these mountains and it is from here that places as far away as 60 ? 70 km (37 ? 43 mi) are visible and , on clear days , the town of Rusape can be seen .

Zimbabwe is unusual in Africa in that there are a number of ancient ruined cities built in a unique dry stone style . The most famous of these are the Great Zimbabwe ruins in Masvingo . Other ruins include Khami Ruins , Zimbabwe , Dhlo @-@ Dhlo and Naletale , although none of these is as famous as Great Zimbabwe .

The Matobo Hills are an area of granite kopjes and wooded valleys commencing some 22 miles (35 km) south of Bulawayo in southern Zimbabwe . The Hills were formed over 2 @, @ 000 million years ago with granite being forced to the surface , then being eroded to produce smooth " whaleback dwalas " and broken kopjes , strewn with boulders and interspersed with thickets of vegetation . Mzilikazi , founder of the Ndebele nation , gave the area its name , meaning ' Bald Heads ' . They have become famous and a tourist attraction due to their ancient shapes and local wildlife . Cecil Rhodes and other early white pioneers like Leander Starr Jameson are buried in these hills at a site named World 's View .

= = = Water supply and sanitation = = =

Water supply and sanitation in Zimbabwe is defined by many small scale successful programs but also by a general lack of improved water and Sanitation systems for the majority of Zimbabwe . According to the World Health Organization in 2012 , 80 % of Zimbabweans had access to improved , i.e. clean , drinking @-@ water sources , and only 40 % of Zimbabweans had access to improved sanitation facilities . Access to improved water supply and sanitation is distinctly less in rural areas .

There are many factors which continue to determine the nature , for the foreseeable future , of water supply and sanitation in Zimbabwe . Three major factors are the severely depressed state of the Zimbabwean economy , the willingness of foreign aid organizations to build and finance

infrastructure projects , and the political stability of the Zimbabwean state .

== Demographics ==

Zimbabwe 's total population is 12 @. @ 97 million . According to the United Nations World Health Organisation , the life expectancy for men was 56 years and the life expectancy for women was 60 years of age (2012) . An association of doctors in Zimbabwe has made calls for President Mugabe to make moves to assist the ailing health service . The HIV infection rate in Zimbabwe was estimated to be 14 % for people aged 15 ? 49 in 2009 . UNESCO reported a decline in HIV prevalence among pregnant women from 26 % in 2002 to 21 % in 2004 .

Some 85 % of Zimbabweans are Christian ; 62 % of the population attends religious services regularly . The largest Christian churches are Anglican , Roman Catholic , Seventh @-@ day Adventist and Methodist .

As in other African countries , Christianity may be mixed with enduring traditional beliefs . Besides Christianity , ancestral worship is the most practised non @-@ Christian religion , involving spiritual intercession ; the Mbira Dza Vadzimu , which means " Voice of the Ancestors " , an instrument related to many lamellophones ubiquitous throughout Africa , is central to many ceremonial proceedings . Mwari simply means " God the Creator " (musika vanhu in Shona) . Around 1 % of the population is Muslim .

Bantu @-@ speaking ethnic groups make up 98 % of the population . The majority people , the Shona , comprise 70 % . The Ndebele are the second most populous with 20 % of the population .

The Ndebele descended from Zulu migrations in the 19th century and the other tribes with which they intermarried . Up to one million Ndebele may have left the country over the last five years , mainly for South Africa . Other Bantu ethnic groups make up the third largest with 2 to 5 % : these are Venda , Tonga , Shangaan , Kalanga , Sotho , Ndau , Nambya , Tswana , Xhosa and Lozi .

Minority ethnic groups include white Zimbabweans , who make up less than 1 % of the total population . White Zimbabweans are mostly of British origin , but there are also Afrikaner , Greek , Portuguese , French and Dutch communities . The white population dropped from a peak of around 278 @, @ 000 or 4 @. @ 3 % of the population in 1975 to possibly 120 @, @ 000 in 1999 , and was estimated to be no more than 50 @, @ 000 in 2002 , and possibly much less . The 2012 census lists the total white population at 28 @, @ 782 (roughly 0 @. @ 22 % of the population) , one @-@ tenth of its 1975 estimated size . Most emigration has been to the United Kingdom (between 200 @, @ 000 and 500 @, @ 000 Britons are of Rhodesian or Zimbabwean origin) , South Africa , Botswana , Zambia , Canada , Australia and New Zealand . Coloureds form 0 @. @ 5 % of the population , and various Asian ethnic groups , mostly of Indian and Chinese origin , are also 0 @. @ 5 % .

According to 2012 Census report , 99 @. @ 7 % of the population is of African origin . Official fertility rates over the last decade were 3 @. @ 6 (2002 Census) , 3 @. @ 8 (2006) and 3 @. @ 8 (2012 Census) .

== Largest cities ==

== Language ==

English is the main language used in the education and judiciary systems . The Bantu languages Shona and Sindebele are the principal indigenous languages of Zimbabwe . Shona is spoken by 70 % of the population , Sindebele by 20 % . Other minority Bantu languages include Venda , Tsonga , Shangaan , Kalanga , Sotho , Ndau and Nambya . Less than 2 @. @ 5 % , mainly the white and " coloured " (mixed race) minorities , consider English their native language . Shona has a rich oral tradition , which was incorporated into the first Shona novel , Feso by Solomon Mutswairo , published in 1956 . English is spoken primarily in the cities , but less so in rural areas . Radio and television news now broadcast in Shona , Sindebele and English .

Zimbabwe has 16 official languages and under the constitution , an Act of Parliament may prescribe

other languages as officially recognised languages .

== Refugee crisis ==

The economic meltdown and repressive political measures in Zimbabwe have led to a flood of refugees into neighbouring countries . An estimated 3 @. @ 4 million Zimbabweans , a quarter of the population , had fled abroad by mid @-@ 2007 . Some 3 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 of these left for South Africa and Botswana .

Apart from the people who fled into the neighbouring countries , there are approximately 36 @, @ 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) . There is no current comprehensive survey , although the following figures are available :

The above surveys do not include people displaced by Operation Chikorokoza Chapera or beneficiaries of the fast @-@ track land reform programme but who have since been evicted .

== Religion ==

An estimated 80 % of the country 's citizens identify themselves as Christians . Protestants (mostly followers of Pentecostal African Churches) are around 63 % of the population . Estimates from 2005 said there were 1 @, @ 145 @, @ 000 Roman Catholics in Zimbabwe . This is about 9 % of the total population . The followers of ethnic religions are around 11 % . Around 1 % are Muslims , mainly from Mozambique and Malawi , 0 @. @ 1 % are Hindus and 0 @. @ 3 % are Baha 'is . Approximately 7 % of citizens have no religious practice or are atheist .

== Culture ==

Zimbabwe has many different cultures which may include beliefs and ceremonies , one of them being Shona , Zimbabwe 's largest ethnic group . The Shona people have many sculptures and carvings which are made with the finest materials available .

Zimbabwe first celebrated its independence on 18 April 1980 . Celebrations are held at either the National Sports Stadium or Rufaro Stadium in Harare . The first independence celebrations were held in 1980 at the Zimbabwe Grounds . At these celebrations doves are released to symbolise peace and fighter jets fly over and the national anthem is sung . The flame of independence is lit by the president after parades by the presidential family and members of the armed forces of Zimbabwe . The president also gives a speech to the people of Zimbabwe which is televised for those unable to attend the stadium .

== Arts ==

Traditional arts in Zimbabwe include pottery , basketry , textiles , jewellery and carving . Among the distinctive qualities are symmetrically patterned woven baskets and stools carved out of a single piece of wood . Shona sculpture has become world famous in recent years having found popularity in the 1940s . Most subjects of carved figures of stylised birds and human figures among others are made with sedimentary rocks such as soapstone , as well as harder igneous rocks such as serpentine and the rare stone verdite . Zimbabwean artefacts can be found in countries like Singapore , China and Canada. i.e. Dominic Benhura 's statue in the Singapore botanic gardens .

Shona sculpture in has survived through the ages and the modern style is a fusion of African folklore with European influences . World @-@ renowned Zimbabwean sculptors include Nicholas , Nesbert and Anderson Mukomberanwa , Tapfuma Gutsa , Henry Munyaradzi and Locardia Ndandarika . Internationally , Zimbabwean sculptors have managed to influence a new generation of artists , particularly Black Americans , through lengthy apprenticeships with master sculptors in Zimbabwe . Contemporary artists like New York sculptor M. Scott Johnson and California sculptor Russel Albans have learned to fuse both African and Afro @-@ diasporic aesthetics in a way that travels beyond the simplistic mimicry of African Art by some Black artists of past generations in the

United States .

Several authors are well known within Zimbabwe and abroad . Charles Mungoshi is renowned in Zimbabwe for writing traditional stories in English and in Shona and his poems and books have sold well with both the black and white communities . Catherine Buckle has achieved international recognition with her two books African Tears and Beyond Tears which tell of the ordeal she went through under the 2000 Land Reform . The first Prime Minister of Rhodesia , Ian Smith , wrote two books ? The Great Betrayal and Bitter Harvest . The book The House of Hunger by Dambudzo Marechera won an award in the UK in 1979 and the Nobel Prize @-@ winning author Doris Lessing 's first novel The Grass Is Singing , the first four volumes of The Children of Violence sequence , as well as the collection of short stories African Stories are set in Rhodesia . In 2013 NoViolet Bulawayo 's novel We Need New Names was shortlisted for the Booker Prize . The novel tells the story of the devastation and emigration caused by the brutal suppression of Zimbabwean civilians during the Gukurahundi in the early 1980s .

Internationally famous artists include Henry Mudzengerere and Nicolas Mukomberanwa . A recurring theme in Zimbabwean art is the metamorphosis of man into beast . Zimbabwean musicians like Thomas Mapfumo , Oliver Mtukudzi , the Bhundu Boys ; Alick Macheso and Audius Mtawarira have achieved international recognition . Among members of the white minority community , Theatre has a large following , with numerous theatrical companies performing in Zimbabwe 's urban areas .

= = = Cuisine = = =

Like in many African countries , the majority of Zimbabweans depend on a few staple foods . " Mealie meal " , also known as cornmeal , is used to prepare sadza or isitshwala , as well as porridge known as bota or ilambazi . Sadza is made by mixing the cornmeal with water to produce a thick paste / porridge . After the paste has been cooking for several minutes , more cornmeal is added to thicken the paste .

This is usually eaten as lunch or dinner , usually with sides such as gravy , vegetables (spinach , chomolia , or spring greens / collard greens) , beans , and meat (stewed , grilled , roasted , or sundried) . Sadza is also commonly eaten with curdled milk (sour milk) , commonly known as " lacto " (mukaka wakakora) , or dried Tanganyika sardine , known locally as kapenta or matemba . Bota is a thinner porridge , cooked without the additional cornmeal and usually flavoured with peanut butter , milk , butter , or jam . Bota is usually eaten for breakfast .

Graduations , weddings , and any other family gatherings will usually be celebrated with the killing of a goat or cow , which will be barbecued or roasted by the family .

Even though the Afrikaners are a small group (10 %) within the white minority group , Afrikaner recipes are popular . Biltong , a type of jerky , is a popular snack , prepared by hanging bits of spiced raw meat to dry in the shade . Boerewors is served with sadza . It is a long sausage , often well @-@ spiced , composed of beef rather than pork , and barbecued . As Zimbabwe was a British colony , some people there have adopted some colonial @-@ era English eating habits . For example , most people will have porridge in the morning , as well as 10 o 'clock tea (midday tea) . They will have lunch , often leftovers from the night before , freshly cooked sadza , or sandwiches (which is more common in the cities) . After lunch , there is usually 4 o 'clock tea (afternoon tea) , which is served before dinner . It is not uncommon for tea to be had after dinner .

Rice , pasta , and potato @-@ based foods (french fries and mashed potato) also make up part of Zimbabwean cuisine . A local favourite is rice cooked with peanut butter , which is taken with thick gravy , mixed vegetables and meat . A potpourri of peanuts known as nzungu , boiled and sundried maize , black @-@ eyed peas known as nyemba , and bambara groundnuts known as nyimo makes a traditional dish called mutakura . Mutakura can also be the above ingredients cooked individually . One can also find local snacks , such as maputi (roasted / popped maize kernels similar to popcorn) , roasted and salted peanuts , sugar cane , sweet potato , pumpkin , and indigenous fruits , such as horned melon , gaka , adansonia , mawuyu , uapaca kirkiana , mazhanje (sugar plum) , and many others .

== Sports ==

Football is the most popular sport in Zimbabwe . The Warriors have qualified for the Africa Cup of Nations two times (2004 , 2006) . The Warriors are also 4 Time Cossafa cup Champions (2000 , 2003 , 2005 , 2009) and 3 Times Runners @-@ Up . , rugby union also has a very strong following and cricket also has a following , traditionally among the white minority . Zimbabwe has won eight Olympic medals , one in field hockey at the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow , and seven in swimming , three at the 2004 Summer Olympics and four at the 2008 Summer Olympics , all by Kirsty Coventry .

Rugby union is a significant sport in Zimbabwe . The national side have represented the country at 2 Rugby World Cup tournaments in 1987 and 1991 . The team are currently ranked 26 in the world by World Rugby .

Zimbabwe has also done well in the Commonwealth Games and All @-@ Africa Games in swimming with Kirsty Coventry obtaining 11 gold medals in the different competitions . Zimbabwe has also competed at Wimbledon and the Davis Cup in tennis , most notably with the Black family , which comprises Wayne Black , Byron Black and Cara Black . Zimbabwe has also done well in golf . The Zimbabwean Nick Price held the official World Number 1 status longer than any player from Africa has ever done in the 24 @-@ year history of the ranking .

Other sports played in Zimbabwe are basketball , volleyball , netball , and water polo , as well as squash , motorsport , martial arts , chess , cycling , polocrosse , kayaking and horse racing . However , most of these sports don 't have international representatives but instead stay at a junior or national level . Notable cricket players from Zimbabwe include Andy Flower , the former coach of the England Cricket Team .

== Media ==

The media of Zimbabwe is now once again diverse , having come under tight restriction between 2002 and 2008 by the government during the growing economic and political crisis in the country . The Zimbabwean constitution promises freedom of the media and expression . Since the appointment of a new media and information minister in 2013 the media is currently facing less political interference and the supreme court has ruled some sections of the strict media laws as unconstitutional . In July 2009 the BBC and CNN were able to resume operations and report legally and openly from Zimbabwe . CNN welcomed the move . The Zimbabwe Ministry of Media , Information and Publicity stated that , " the Zimbabwe government never banned the BBC from carrying out lawful activities inside Zimbabwe " . The BBC also welcomed the move saying , " we 're pleased at being able to operate openly in Zimbabwe once again " .

In 2010 the Zimbabwe Media Commission was established by the inclusive , power @-@ sharing government . In May 2010 the Commission licensed three new privately owned newspapers , including the previously banned Daily News , for publication . Reporters Without Borders described the decisions as a " major advance " . In June 2010 NewsDay became the first independent daily newspaper to be published in Zimbabwe in seven years .

ZBC 's monopoly in the broadcasting sector was ended with the licensing of two private radio stations in 2012 .

Since the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was passed , a number of privately owned news outlets were shut down by the government , including Daily News whose managing director Wilf Mbanga went on to form the influential The Zimbabwean . As a result , many press organisations have been set up in both neighbouring and Western countries by exiled Zimbabweans . Because the internet is currently unrestricted , many Zimbabweans are allowed to access online news sites set up by exiled journalists . Reporters Without Borders claims the media environment in Zimbabwe involves " surveillance , threats , imprisonment , censorship , blackmail , abuse of power and denial of justice are all brought to bear to keep firm control over the news . " The main published newspapers are The Herald and The Chronicle which are printed in Harare and

Bulawayo respectively . The heavy @-@ handedness on the media has progressively relaxed since 2009 .

In its 2008 report , Reporters Without Borders ranked the Zimbabwean media as 151st out of 173 . The government also bans many foreign broadcasting stations from Zimbabwe , including the CBC , Sky News , Channel 4 , American Broadcasting Company , Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) , and Fox News . News agencies and newspapers from other Western countries and South Africa have also been banned from the country .

= = = Scouting = = =

It was in the Matabeleland region in Zimbabwe that , during the Second Matabele War , Robert Baden @-@ Powell , the founder of Scouting , and Frederick Russell Burnham , the American born Chief of Scouts for the British Army , first met and began their lifelong friendship . In mid @-@ June 1896 , during a scouting patrol in the Matobo Hills , Burnham began teaching Baden @-@ Powell woodcraft . Baden @-@ Powell and Burnham discussed the concept of a broad training programme in woodcraft for young men , rich in exploration , tracking , fieldcraft , and self @-@ reliance . It was also during this time in the Matobo Hills that Baden @-@ Powell first started to wear his signature campaign hat like the one worn by Burnham .

Scouting in the former Rhodesia and Nyasaland started in 1909 when the first Boy Scout troop was registered . Scouting grew quickly and in 1924 Rhodesia and Nyasaland sent a large contingent to the second World Scout Jamboree in Ermelunden , Denmark . In 1959 , Rhodesia hosted the Central African Jamboree at Ruwa . In 2009 , Scouts celebrated 100 years of Scouting in Zimbabwe and hundreds of Scouts camped at Gordon Park , a Scout campground and training area , as part of these celebrations .

Besides scouting , there are also leadership , life skills and general knowledge courses and training experiences mainly for school children ranging from pre @-@ school to final year high school students and some times those beyond High school . These courses and outings , are held at places like Lasting Impressions (Lasting Impressions ~ Zimbabwe on YouTube) , Far and Wide Zimbabwe (Far and wide .) and Chimanimani Outward Bound (Outwardbound Zimbabwe at the Wayback Machine (archived 16 June 2007)) , Just to name a few .

= = = National symbols = = =

The stone @-@ carved Zimbabwe Bird appears on the national flags and the coats of arms of both Zimbabwe and Rhodesia , as well as on banknotes and coins (first on Rhodesian pound and then Rhodesian dollar) . It probably represents the bateleur eagle or the African fish eagle .

The famous soapstone bird carvings stood on walls and monoliths of the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe , built , it is believed , sometime between the 13th and 16th centuries by ancestors of the Shona . The ruins , which gave their name to modern Zimbabwe , cover some 1 @,@ 800 acres (7 @.@ 3 km2) and are the largest ancient stone construction in Zimbabwe .

Balancing Rocks are geological formations all over Zimbabwe . The rocks are perfectly balanced without other supports . They are created when ancient granite intrusions are exposed to weathering , as softer rocks surrounding them erode away . They are often remarked on and have been depicted on both the banknotes of Zimbabwe and the Rhodesian dollar banknotes . The ones found on the current notes of Zimbabwe , named the Banknote Rocks , are located in Epworth , approximately 9 miles (14 km) south east of Harare . There are many different formations of the rocks , incorporating single and paired columns of 3 or more rocks . These formations are a feature of south and east tropical Africa from northern South Africa northwards to Sudan . The most notable formations in Zimbabwe are located in the Matobo National Park in Matabeleland .

The National Anthem of Zimbabwe is " Blessed be the Land of Zimbabwe " (Shona : " Simudzai Mureza wedu WeZimbabwe " ; Zimbabwean Ndebele : " Kalibusiswe Ilizwe leZimbabwe ") . It was introduced in March 1994 after a nationwide competition to replace " Ishe Komborera Africa " as a distinctly Zimbabwean song . The winning entry was a song written by Professor Solomon

Mutswairo and composed by Fred Changundega . It has been translated into all three of the main languages of Zimbabwe .

= = Health = =

At independence , the policies of racial inequality were reflected in the disease patterns of the black majority . The first five years after independence saw rapid gains in areas such as immunisation coverage , access to health care , and contraceptive prevalence rate . Zimbabwe was thus considered internationally to have achieved a good record of health development .

Zimbabwe suffered occasional outbreaks of acute diseases (such as plague in 1994) . The gains on the national health were eroded by structural adjustment in the 1990s , the impact of the HIV / AIDS pandemic and the economic crisis since the year 2000 . In 2006 , Zimbabwe had one of the lowest life expectancies according to UN figure ? 44 for men and 43 for women , down from 60 in 1990 , but this has since recovered to 53 and 54 respectively . The rapid drop was ascribed mainly to the HIV / AIDS pandemic . Infant mortality rose from 6 % in the late 1990s to 12 @. @ 3 % by 2004 .

The health system has more or less collapsed . At the end of November 2008 , some operations at three of Zimbabwe 's four major referral hospitals had shut down , along with the Zimbabwe Medical School , and the fourth major hospital had two wards and no operating theatres working . Due to hyperinflation , those hospitals still open were not able to obtain basic drugs and medicines . The situation changed drastically after the Unity Government and the introduction of the multi @-@ currency system in February 2009 although the political and economic crisis also contributed to the emigration of the doctors and people with medical knowledge .

In August 2008 large areas of Zimbabwe were struck by the ongoing cholera epidemic . By December 2008 more than 10 @, @ 000 people had been infected in all but one of Zimbabwe 's provinces and the outbreak had spread to Botswana , Mozambique , South Africa and Zambia . On 4 December 2008 the Zimbabwe government declared the outbreak to be a national emergency and asked for international aid .

By 9 March 2009 The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 4 @, @ 011 people had succumbed to the waterborne disease since the outbreak began in August 2008 , and the total number of cases recorded had reached 89 @, @ 018 . In Harare , the city council offered free graves to cholera victims . There have been signs that the disease is abating , with cholera infections down by about 50 % to around 4 @, @ 000 cases a week .

The 2010 maternal mortality rate per 100 @, @ 000 births for Zimbabwe is 790 . This is compared with 624 @. @ 3 in 2008 and 231 @. @ 8 in 1990 . The under 5 mortality rate , per 1 @, @ 000 births is 93 and the neonatal mortality as a percentage of under 5 's mortality is 32 . In Zimbabwe the number of midwives per 1 @, @ 000 live births is unavailable and the lifetime risk of death for pregnant women 1 in 42 .

= = Education = =

Due to large investments in education since independence Zimbabwe has the highest adult literacy rate in Africa which in 2013 was 90 @. @ 70 % . This is lower than the 92 % recorded in 2010 by the United Nations Development Programme and the 97 @. @ 0 % recorded in the 2002 census , while still substantially higher than 80 @. @ 4 % recorded in the 1992 census .

The education department has stated that 20 @, @ 000 teachers have left Zimbabwe since 2007 and that half of Zimbabwe 's children have not progressed beyond primary school .

The wealthier portion of the population usually send their children to independent schools as opposed to the government @-@ run schools which are attended by the majority as these are subsidized by the government . School education was made free in 1980 , but since 1988 , the government has steadily increased the charges attached to school enrollment until they now greatly exceed the real value of fees in 1980 . The Ministry of Education of Zimbabwe maintains and operates the government schools but the fees charged by independent schools are regulated by the

cabinet of Zimbabwe .

Zimbabwe 's education system consists of 2 years of pre @-@ school , 7 years of primary and 6 years of secondary schooling before students can enter university in the country or abroad . The academic year in Zimbabwe runs from January to December , with three terms , broken up by one month holidays , with a total of 40 weeks of school per year . National examinations are written during the third term in November , with " O " level and " A " level subjects also offered in June .

There are seven public (Government) universities as well as four church @-@ related universities in Zimbabwe that are fully internationally accredited . The University of Zimbabwe , the first and largest , was built in 1952 and is located in the Harare suburb of Mount Pleasant . Notable alumni from Zimbabwean universities include Welshman Ncube ; Peter Moyo (of Amabhumbesi) ; Tendai Biti , Secretary @-@ General for the MDC ; Chenjerai Hove , Zimbabwean poet , novelist and essayist ; and Arthur Mutambara , President of one faction of the MDC . Many of the current politicians in the government of Zimbabwe have obtained degrees from universities in USA or other universities abroad .

National University of Science and Technology (NUST) is the second largest public research university in Zimbabwe located in Bulawayo . It was established in 1991 . The National University of Science and Technology strives to become a flourishing and reputable institution not only in Zimbabwe and in Southern Africa but also among the international fraternity of Universities . Its guidance , cultural values is the encouragement of all its members and society of those attitudes of fair mindedness , understanding , tolerance and respect for people and views which are essential for the attainment and maintenance of justice , peace and harmony at all times .

Africa University is a United Methodist related university institution located in Manicaland which attracts students from at least 36 African countries . The institution has been growing steadily and has steady study material and learning facilities . The highest professional board for accountants is the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Zimbabwe (ICAZ) with direct relationships with similar bodies in South Africa , Canada , the UK and Australia . A qualified Chartered Accountant from Zimbabwe is also a member of similar bodies in these countries after writing a conversion paper . In addition , Zimbabwean @-@ trained doctors only require one year of residence to be fully licensed doctors in the United States . The Zimbabwe Institution of Engineers (ZIE) is the highest professional board for engineers .

Education in Zimbabwe became under threat since the economic changes in 2000 with teachers going on strike because of low pay , students unable to concentrate because of hunger and the price of uniforms soaring making this standard a luxury . Teachers were also one of the main targets of Mugabe 's attacks because he thought they were not strong supporters .