# The rural-urban divide between Zimbabwean voters

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# Abstract

Sub-Saharan African voters have long been regarded to be predominantly influenced by ethnicity when casting their ballots. New research in the field of African voting behaviour has established, to the contrary, that rural and urban contexts play a pivotal role in influencing voters. This research investigates the case of Zimbabwe. It researches the differences between contextual factors in rural and urban areas, also referred to as the *neighbourhood effect,* and how these factors affect electoral outcomes. It finds that local authorities loyal to the ruling party are highly trusted by rural dwellers, enabling them to exert influence over rural dwellers' votes. Trusting traditional leaders is found to have a statistically significant correlation with voting for the ruling party. Furthermore, it finds that rural dwellers live in areas in which access to news is limited, making voting based on the performance of politicians nearly impossible. Across both rural and urban spaces, political campaign strategies are found to include intimidation, threats and violence. The general political climate is found to be repressive and limiting independent choice for both rural and urban citizens. The findings of this work reflect that – in Zimbabwe – contextual factors have a strong bearing on voting behaviour.

Key words: voting behaviour, Zimbabwe, electoral malpractice, rural-urban divide, contextual factors

# Contents

# 1 Introduction

One of the most fundamental rules of any democratic election is that contenders must be prepared to lose (Mueller 2011). Sadly, this is far from the case in several sub-Saharan African countries, where incumbents are characterised by a tendency to hold on to power at any cost (Mueller 2011; Masunungure 2011; Bratton and Masunungure 2008). Multiparty elections have, in such environments, come at a heavy price. Political intimidation, violence and vote-buying have become commonplace in the time leading up to elections (Bratton 2008; LeBas 2006). Some of the most violent elections include the Kenyan general election of 2007, the Zimbabwean general election of 2008 and the presidential election of 2010 in Cote d'Ivoire (Daxecker and Jung 2018; Masunungure 2011). The era of democracy has seen an increase in levels of state violence as ruling parties have perceived strong oppositions as threats (LeBas 2006). Masunungure (2011) explains that authoritarian regimes have found a way to mutate so that, instead of suppressing democratic aspects, they manipulate them. Electoral authoritarianist regimes thus legitimise their rule through the conduct of multiparty elections in which the most basic democratic standards are violated.

Bratton and Masunungure (2008: 42) explain that Zimbabwe has a "militarized form of electoral authoritarianism" and that the ruling party clings on to power at any cost. Once celebrated as the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe now has a majority of its population struggling to meet daily needs. Poverty is prevalent in both rural and urban areas, and the ruling party has failed to improve living standards for either segment of the population. It is interesting, then, why voters continue to support a leadership that has not been able to steer the country forward.

In the field of electoral geography, it is now widely acknowledged that not only compositional factors, but also contextual factors shape voting behaviour (Weaver 2014; Forest 2017). New research establishes that rural dwellers in sub-Saharan African countries are significantly more likely to vote for the incumbent than their urban counterparts (Koter 2013; Harding 2010; Wahman and Boone 2018).

## 1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The objective of this research is to explore the divide between rural and urban voters in Zimbabwe and to find reasons for why urban and rural spaces have produced different electoral outcomes during the period 1999-2017. More specifically, this research investigates the differences in party affiliations, voter intentions and evaluations of the president to explore the political divide between rural and urban dwellers. In terms of reasons for why this gap exists, the research investigates how social structures, access to information and political strategies and environments differ between rural and urban areas. Two overall research questions guide the research and each of these have operational sub-questions:

- **To what extent do political opinions differ across rural and urban spaces in Zimbabwe?**
  - How do party affiliations and voter intentions differ between rural and urban dwellers during the time period 1999 to 2017?
  - How do evaluations of the president's performance differ between rural and urban dwellers during the time period 1999 to 2017?
- **Which contextual factors play a role in shaping voting behaviour across rural and urban spaces in Zimbabwe?**
  - How do social power structures differ across rural and urban areas and how does that affect voting behaviour?
  - How does access to information differ between rural and urban dwellers and how might that influence voting behaviour?

       o   Do political campaign strategies and political environments differ across rural and urban areas and what effect might that have on voting behaviour?

The first question asks for the nature of the political divide between rural and urban dwellers. The second question investigates how rural and urban spaces differ, and how contextual factors may affect voting behaviour in Zimbabwe. In other words, the research investigates what the rural-urban divide between voters looks like and why it is there.

## 1.2 Delimitations

This research is limited, geographically, to studying Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe was deemed a country of interest because it is a sub-Saharan African country in which one can expect, based on Harding's (2010), Koter's (2013) and Wahman and Boone's (2018) findings, that a rural-urban divide between voters exists. It is also a country in which political polarisation is not based on ethnicity (LeBas 2006) which makes it an interesting case for studying the effect of rural and urban contextual factors. The research is limited in terms of topic to focusing solely on the significance of contextual factors for voting behaviour. Compositional factors were omitted from this study both because of the limited time available for the study, but also because, I would argue that in a Zimbabwean context it does not make sense to think of education, occupation and income level as purely individual attributes. The context one lives in determines, to a large extent, one's opportunities in terms of education and occupation. The research is limited temporally to studying the time period 1999 to 2017, from when the opposition party was formed in 1999 to the most recent available survey of 2017. Due to the breadth of the study, this research only investigates a few contextual factors, namely the influence of access to information and the influence of social power structures, more specifically, the role of traditional leaders. The research also investigates how political campaign strategies and political environments vary across rural and urban space. Many other factors, both contextual and compositional, will also play a role in shaping voting behaviour, but it is outside of the scope of this research to delve into those. Hence, this is a study of some contextual factors and how these affect voting behaviour in Zimbabwe during the time period 1999 to 2017.

## 1.3 Positionality

I acknowledge that, as the wife of a Zimbabwean man, I have a biased relationship to Zimbabwe. My family-in-law live in Zimbabwe and experience the political and economic crisis first-hand. I am conscious of this bias and will reflect upon this throughout the research process. I am not conscious of having a bias towards either rural or urban areas as both my husband and my family-in-law have ties to both rural and urban contexts. Since I use secondary data, the data collection process has not been influenced by me. However, my way of structuring the research, and the research papers I choose to make use of are a product of the knowledge I have of Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, I believe that most of the knowledge that I have could have been obtained by anyone in the informed international community through international and independent Zimbabwean newspapers, and especially through interactions with Zimbabwean citizens.

## 1.4 Significance

This study contributes to broadening the knowledge about how contexts affect voters in Zimbabwean elections. Lindberg and Morrison (2005) state that African voting behaviour is an under-researched topic and call for more attention on it. Wenghorst and Lindberg (2013: 720) argue that it is necessary to challenge the view of African elections as "'ethnic censuses' or simply opportunities for voters to extract rents from politicians" and this research does so by exploring how contexts matter for voting

behaviour. It thus contributes to a new and growing field that studies how rural and urban dwellers are influenced differently by the areas they reside in when making choices about who governs them.

## 1.5 Disposition

This study proceeds in the following steps. The first part of the research includes a literature review of previous research within the field of sub-Saharan African voting behaviour, background information on Zimbabwean politics, a theoretical framework discussing voting theories and contextual factors, and a section discussing the methods and data used for the study. The second part of the research consists of the empirical analysis, a discussion of the findings and lastly, a conclusion.

# 2 Literature Review

This section discusses previous literature in the field of sub-Saharan African elections and voting behaviour. Sub-Saharan African voters have long been thought to vote primarily based on ethnicity, but new research disproves that (Lindberg and Morrison 2008; Wahman and Boone 2018; Koter 2013; Harding 2010; LeBas 2006).

## 2.1 Voting behaviour and election campaigns in sub-Saharan Africa

Lindberg and Morrison (2008) investigate Ghanaian voting behaviour. They find that, despite the generally held view, most Ghanaians vote based on the performance of politicians. In a different study, Lindberg (2003) finds that Ghanaian democracy is compromised by neo-patrimonial structures – that members of parliament make use of patronage in order to maintain political power. Wenghorst and Lindberg (2013) study Ghanaian voters and find that voters are affected both by policy and by clientelism in their votes. Clientelist practices, they explain, consist of handing out "small chops" (p. 721) to individuals that could include a bag of rice, cements, roofing, cash, foodstuffs or a job contract. Clientelism, they explain, "…subverts the logic of democratic accountability" (p. 721). Lindberg and Morrison (2005) find that voters are influenced by structural factors such as rural or urban livelihoods, educational levels, income levels and occupation. They argue that the two-party alignment of voters can be explained by these structural factors. They also discuss that there are different levels of modernisation between rural and urban voters, and they speculate about whether the different contexts lead rural and urban dwellers to have different conceptions of power.

In a study of 16 African countries, Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011) find that African voters base their voting choices both on ethnic and economic factors. They find that voters consider the ruling party's performance when they cast their votes, and that voters try to align themselves with prospective winners in order to gain from patronage benefits or avoid retribution. They pose the question of why, if Africans vote based on economic factors, ruling parties are reelected when they have failed to develop the countries. They explain that African elections are like struggles over life and death, that elites "do not hesitate to manipulate electoral rules and openly offer patronage inducements" and that voters "commonly feel exposed to surveillance, monitoring and intimidation" (p. 4). They argue that among the incumbent voters there are *sincere* voters and *strategic* voters. Those that vote sincerely are loyal to the ruling party. Those that vote strategically for the incumbent party do so either because there is something for them to gain, in terms of patronage politics, or because of fear of retribution for voting for their sincere choice. They explain that the neo-patrimonial regimes of most African states incentivise people to vote strategically rather than sincerely. They refer to African politics as "winner take all" (p. 3) and explain that the ruling party has access to state funds and is thus more likely than opposition parties to make "credible patronage commitments" (p. 3).

Bratton (2008) studies vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns. He notes that bribery and political intimidation are characteristic of African election campaigns and that African elections often resemble bitter struggles over state funds more than they resemble ideal democratic elections (p. 621). He explains that in election campaigns, politicians often "engage in mass mobilization and the manipulation of electoral rules" (p. 621). Such practices deny citizens their political freedom. In Nigeria, electoral malpractices include opposition candidates being harassed and arrested; voters being turned away from polling stations and army and police instilling fear in the electorate (p. 622). Studying Kenya, Mueller (2011) explains how the rule of law and public institutions have been weakened deliberately, in order to give the president free rule, and how violence has been used to win elections. She states that when political elites are not held accountable, they use their *de facto* power to undermine the rules and regulations (p. 100).

## 2.2 Rural and urban voters and how geographical context matters

Koter (2013) establishes that a "persistent pro-incumbent bias in the countryside is one of the most widespread electoral trends on the [African] continent" (p. 675). This trend, she argues, cannot be explained by ethnic demographics, as many scholars claim, instead the differences are accounted for by the social environments of rural and urban spaces. She investigates the rural-urban divide between voters in Senegal. In Senegal, rural dwellers are heavily influenced by religious and traditional leaders. By bribing these local leaders with cash, diplomatic passports and expensive cars, incumbents in turn get blocks of rural voters. This clientelist patronage strategy works better in rural areas, she argues, because of the tight social structures and relatively more easily manipulated population. It is also easier to monitor voting behaviour in a rural area because of the polling stations usually representing a village. She explains that clientelist electoral strategies are not the only factors influencing voting behaviour, but that it can account for why rural areas are more likely to vote for the incumbent than urban areas. Comparing rural and urban populations, she explains that urban voters are hard to please, even when they receive more public spending than rural voters. Urbanites tend to be more individualistic whereas rural dwellers tend to vote the same as the rest of the village or family. The tight social structures of rural areas allow clientelist networks to flourish whereas the cities create more competitive political environments in which voting behaviour is based on evaluating the performance of the incumbent party.

In a statistical analysis of 18 sub-Saharan African countries, Harding (2010) finds that urban dwellers are significantly less likely to vote for the incumbent party compared to the rural dwellers. This, he argues, is due to the demographic realities of most African countries (there being a larger rural population) which incentivises the incumbent parties to create pro-rural policies and mobilise support in rural areas. He outlines four reasons for why rural residents are more likely to vote for the incumbent parties: They have suffered less in the Structural Adjustment Programmes that many African countries carried out, they are less exposed to opposition campaigns, they are more easily persuaded with a clientelist campaign strategy such as "distribution of minor consumption goods during election campaigns" (p. 5) and lastly, they are less autonomous and less demanding in their voting.

Wahman and Boone (2018) compare seven African countries in a longitudinal cross-section study. African voters, they argue, vote more based on performance when they have the autonomy to do so. However, in many constituencies, monitoring and surveillance means that the populations are not politically autonomous. They test three hypotheses: The first one states that urban areas are in a better position to apply performance-related criteria when deciding who to vote for. Urban areas are more accessible to opposition parties and thus urban voters have more choice. They believe that the same is true for rural areas with higher populations and better economy. Thus, they believe that the

electorate that is wealthier, better connected and better informed will look at government's performance when voting. This they call *Performance Criteria Voting.* Their second hypothesis is that the rural areas that are more remote, where people are poorer and poorly educated, marginalised and isolated will have a less autonomous electorate. Weak presence of opposition parties means that the rural population has little knowledge of alternatives to the incumbent. Strongmen, in the form of religious leaders, traditional leaders or village chiefs dominate the political landscape which means that the electorate is under socio-political control. This they refer to as *Captive Constituency Effects.* Their third hypothesis is that the rural people that live in the areas of the president's hometown will benefit more from the promises by the incumbent. Thus, they are more likely to vote for the president if they come from the same area. This they call *Instrumental ethnicity and electoral clientelism effects.* Based on their statistical analysis, they find their hypotheses to hold true, and thus establish that geographical attributes to a large extent affect electoral dynamics.

This section has discussed previous research in the field of African voting behaviour. It is evident that the democratisation process in Africa, in many instances, faces major challenges. Incumbent parties have been reluctant to play fair, and this has significantly decreased the political autonomy that voters need, in order to have independent choice in who governs them. It is also evident from previous research that rural and urban dwellers live in environments that affect their voting behaviour differently.

# 3 Background

## 3.1 Geographical context

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country bordering Namibia and Botswana to the East, South Africa to the South, Mozambique to the West and Zambia to the North. The population of Zimbabwe, 16.5 million, is predominantly rural (67.5 %) (World Bank 2019a). Zimbabwe had a GDP per capita of 1333.4 USD in 2017 which is slightly higher than the United Nations classified least developed countries (1071.4) but slightly lower than the average of sub-Saharan Africa (1573.6) (World Bank 2019b). Zimbabwe made significant progress in its infrastructure in the beginning of the 1980s and 1990s and was regarded to have an impressive infrastructure by African standards. Rural areas were, however, not included and thus "rural connectivity hardly exists" (Pushak and Briceno-Garmendia 2011: v). Political turmoil since the 1990s meant that investment in all sectors of infrastructure has been minimal. Roads, water treatment and electricity provision have therefore severely deteriorated due to lack of maintenance (Pushak and Briceno-Garmendia 2011). Zimbabwe's economy declined drastically during the 2000s when commercial farms were seized without compensation by war veterans (Laurie 2016). Inflation had by 2008, reached 89.7 sextillion ($10^{21}$) percent (Laurie 2016). Once hailed as the breadbasket of Africa, the majority of Zimbabwe's population today struggles to make ends meet.

## 3.2 Political polarisation

In Zimbabwe, the same regime has been in power since independence in 1980. Throughout the decades, the regime has violently suppressed any opposition to maintain its grip on power (Bratton and Masunungure 2008). Any political rival has been labeled a national security threat and an enemy of the state and has been dealt with accordingly (Magaisa 2019). As in many sub-Saharan African countries, Zimbabwe's political landscape was in the 1980s divided along ethnic lines with Shona people voting for the Shona liberation party *Zimbabwe African National Union* (ZANU) and the Ndebele people voting for the Ndebele liberation party *Zimbabwe African People's Union* (ZAPU). After ZANU, with its leader Robert Mugabe, came to power at independence, state sponsored agents carried out brutal massacres against the Ndebele people and ZAPU members, in what has come to be known as the 'Gukurahundi atrocities' that took place between 1983 and 1987. Between 10,000 and

20,000 people were killed, and many more tortured, raped and assaulted (Killander and Nyathi 2015). In 1987, ZAPU was 'swallowed' by the ZANU party, to create the unified *Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front* (ZANU-PF) (LeBas 2006).

After the disappearance of ZAPU, there was no major threat to ZANU-PF's grip on power until the creation of the opposition party *Movement for Democratic Change* (MDC) in 1999. MDC was the first substantial opposition to a regime that had now been in power for nearly twenty years (Pottie 2002). The party was founded by civil society organisations, student unions, trade unions and church groups and "effectively incorporated all actors outside of the state realm" (LeBas 2006: 426). The political polarisation present in Zimbabwe today, is therefore not based on ethnicities as in the past. Rather, political identities have been crafted by political elites since MDC "largely transcended the regional and ethnic identities that had previously structured party politics in Zimbabwe" (LeBas 2006: 423). In response to the newly built strong opposition and the successes it had had (among them, making a majority of the population vote against a new referendum concerning land redistribution in the election of 2000), the government increased levels of state violence and surveillance. By 2001, political acivitists, teachers and other perceived MDC supporters were systematically sought out and violently punished. By 2002, the government established traning bases for a ZANU-PF youth militia. State violence became more formally organised and began to follow elections. The presence of the youth militia created a climate of fear among the electorate and enabled the incumbent party to conduct organisated surveillance (LeBas 2006).

Confrontational strategies adopted by both parties, MDC and ZANU-PF, have divided the electorate into opposing camps. The boundaries between parties have been strenghtened by political entrepreneurs that have manipulated history to make the boundaries seem natural (LeBas 2006; Mazango 2005). For instance, Mugabe of ZANU-PF would talk about MDC as though they were the new colonisers and puppets of the West (Mazango 2005; Mpondi 2018; Magaisa 2019). Polarisation has made the playing field only about the two groups, meaning that the complex interactions between multiple political actors are gone. With this polarisation in politics there was a collapse of the rule of law, and the government restricted public assembly, freedom of speech and civic activity (LeBas 2006; Magaisa 2019).

## 3.3 The militarisation of politics

The prime reason that ZANU-PF has been able to maintain its grip on power, is the "symbiosis between the party and the security apparatus" (Masunungure 2011: 60). During the liberation struggle, ZANU was both a political and a guerilla group and was in control of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (Maringira and Masiya 2017). This has not changed. Zimbabwe's military regards ZANU-PF as its own party and a reciprocal relationship exists between the two, in which the regime offers the military material benefits in exchange for military protection (*ibid.*). The regime justifies its use of military by labelling anything that goes against ZANU-PF as a security threat and an enemy of the state. As discussed above, the military has been deployed against political rivals, firstly ZAPU and then MDC. War veterans of the liberation struggle have been given patronage in order for them to be loyal to ZANU-PF. Laurie (2016) argues that the farm invasions of the white owned farms in the early 2000s, were a strategy of ZANU-PF allowing war veterans to seize land in order to keep them loyal and committed to the party. Youth militia, as discussed above, has been used to control whole constituencies (Chitukutuku 2013; McGregor 2013).

## 3.4 The politicisation of public institutions and social structures

Zimbabwean politics is a "co-existence of a strange duality of constitutionalism and legality alongside a complex combination of paralegal, supralegal and brutal political action" (Mazango 2005: 39). Not

only is the military partisan, also public institutions are biased to favour the ruling party (Mapuva 2010). The Electoral Supervisory Commission, charged with running elections, consists of several former military personnel and people known to be loyal to ZANU-PF. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is headed by former intelligence military personnel. The courts are staffed with ruling party functionaries and military personnel, a move Mugabe made in 2001 when he wanted to legalise land invasions (Magaisa 2019). The partisan loyalty of public institutions, courts and electoral commissions compromises them, and makes them unable to function in an unbiased way which is necessary in a democracy. The ruling party has politicised even social structures. In rural areas, traditional leaders exert great control, and these are known to act as electoral agents for the ruling party and have done so throughout the decades ZANU-PF has been in power (Bratton and Masunungure 2018b; Dube 2018). Because of local power structures and youth militias, certain areas have become a "no go area for advocates of democracy and human rights activists who have confined themselves to the comforts of urban areas" (Chitukutuku 2013: 100). This means that in such areas there are no one other than ZANU-PF visible in the political landscape (Raftapolous 2002).

## 3.5 Media

Media is very important for facilitating political debate and it is crucial for educating people about political candidates. Media is also important in the sense that it can act as a watchdog to expose malpractices by the government. It is vital for a democracy that there is a space where people can participate openly in sharing ideas, and debate on issues. Public communication has been manipulated and regulated by the ruling party in order to limit space for the opposition (Mazango 2005). Making use of its majority in parliament, ZANU-PF has passed laws curtailing the rights of Zimbabweans. Harsh media laws restrict international journalists and private press and the state-owned press has been made to serve the ruling party. ZANU-PF has used the public media to "mastermind a complex narrative of patriotic and collective memory" on radio, in newspapers and even included in the school curriculums in order to influence people's political views (Mazango 2005: 42). The opposition has been depicted as enemies of the state and have not been given space to air their views in state-controlled media. The ruling party has closed down private and external sources of information, banned several independent newspapers and banned foreign journalists. Journalists must register with a government appointed Media and Information Commission, giving the ruling party an opportunity to control even independent and foreign journalists. Laws have become so strict that it makes the "practice of journalism in the country today to be likened to walking a minefield" (Mazango 2005: 44).

## 3.6 The diaspora

Bratton and Masunungure (2018a) find, in their 2018 survey, that the voter base for MDC is an educated base, and the voting base for ZANU PF is a rural base. Millions of Zimbabweans live outside of Zimbabwe, because the country has, for decades, been politically and economically unstable. Those that move out of Zimbabwe are most likely to be opposition voters. Masunungure (2011: 60) refers to them as "Zimbabwe's best and brightest". They are the educated urban middle class, the typical support base of MDC. Since the rural population of Zimbabwe constitutes 63 % of the total population, and since Zimbabwe has experienced a massive brain drain with the well-educated citizens moving abroad into the diaspora where they are not allowed to vote, it is difficult for MDC to win an election (Bratton and Masunungure 2018a) . Had the diaspora been allowed to vote that would significantly change the electoral dynamics of Zimbabwe. But, conveniently for the ruling party, the Zimbabwean electoral act discriminates against Zimbabweans of the diaspora. Postal voting is limited to uniformed forces, electoral officers and people in the service of the government of Zimbabwe. This excludes the large number of emigrants who are not associated with the regime and would likely vote for the

opposition (Mapuva 2010). It is a sad reality that the fact that citizens move away from Zimbabwe because of the economic and political crisis only enables the regime to remain in control (*ibid.*).

## 3.7 Official election results 2000-2018

This section displays official election results for ZANU-PF and MDC in parliamentary and presidential elections during the time period under study. Official election results have been heavily manipulated throughout the decades and are likely not a clear representation of the will of the people (Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure 2016; Masunungure 2011; Bratton and Masunungure 2008; Mapuva 2010). Nevertheless, I thought it was important to display the official results.
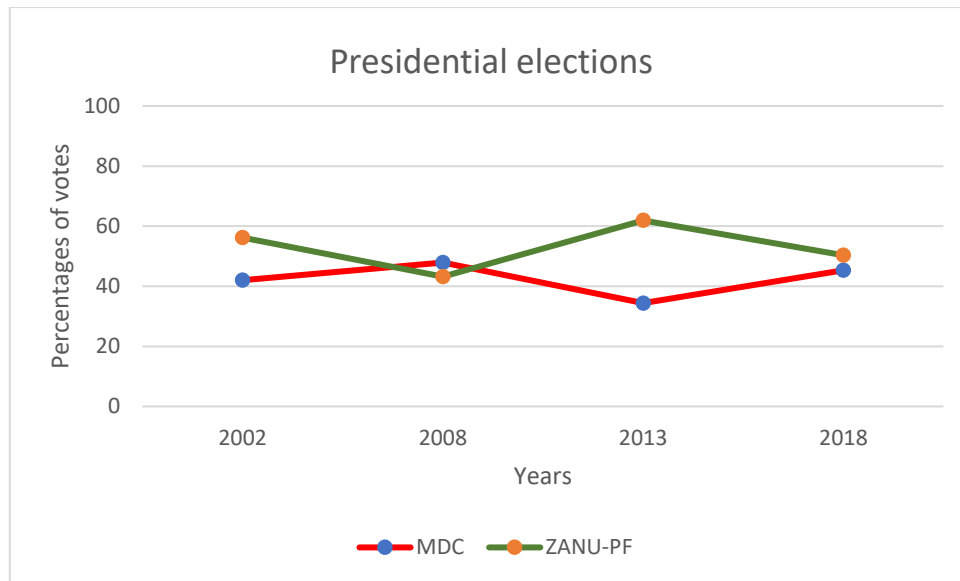


*Figure is based on data from Carr (2019)*

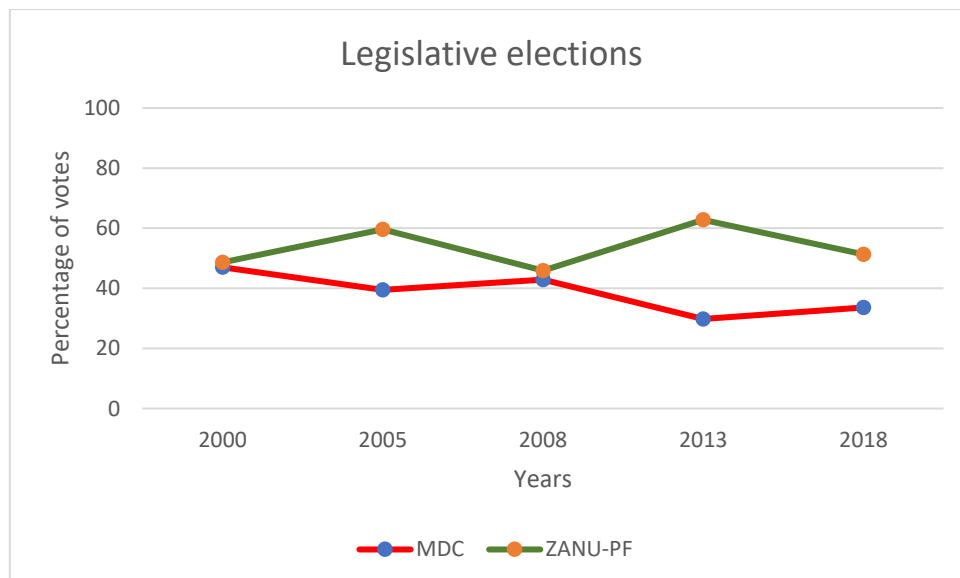**Figure 3.1: Percentages of votes in presidential elections 2002-2018**



*Figure is based on data from Carr (2019)*

**Figure 3.2: Percentages of votes in legislative elections 2000-2018**

## 3.8 Elections

Throughout the decades the ruling ZANU-PF has been in power, they have made use of methods to manipulate electoral outcomes. As discussed above the media is heavily biased toward the ruling party (Mazango 2005; Hamill and Hoffman 2008; Mpondi 2018), public institutions such as courts and the electoral commission are stuffed with people loyal to ZANU-PF (Mapuva 2010), and use of intimidation and violence whenever necessary, have been used to control the electorate (Bratton and Masunungure 2008).

Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure (2016) find that several other tactics have also been used to manipulate elections. Among them: concentrating polling stations in rural areas as rural dwellers tend to support ZANU-PF and decreasing the number of polling stations in urban areas where people are more often opposition voters, in order to get as few as possible to vote for the opposition. For instance, in 2002, polling stations in urban areas had been reduced to less than half of what they were in 2000, while at the same time the number of polling stations in rural areas increased (Raftapolous 2002). This resulted in that less than half of the urbanites that had registered to vote actually got to vote (*ibid.*). Village headmen and traditional rulers have been used as electoral agents, feeding the rural population propaganda and even marching rural voters to the polling stations in order to control their votes (Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure 2016; Bratton and Masunungure 2018b). Bratton and Masunungure (2006: 26) recount that during the 2005 parliamentary election:

*"…the electoral roll was allegedly inflated with ghost voters, rights of free association and expression were compromised by restrictive legislation, the state-controlled media systematically favoured the incumbents, and impartial international election observers were denied entry into the country… polling stations were disproportionately concentrated in rural areas and at least one in ten voters was turned away from the polls for want of correct documentation…."*

Hamill and Hoffman (2008: 285) explain that the 2008 election was characterised by a "familiar blend of state intimidation, the sub-contracting of violence to party 'militias' and wholesale electoral fraud". It is one of the most violent elections in the world to date (Daxecker and Jung 2018). People were warned that if they did not vote for Mugabe it would mean war. The MDC won in their usual strongholds, the cities, but also areas that had previously been ZANU-PF strongholds (Hamill and Hoffman 2008). ZANU-PF suffered heavy electoral defeat. Election results were delayed for five weeks, and are suspected to have been manipulated so that the election would necessitate a run-off. A new rule had been implemented that meant that each polling station had to publish its results. This allowed MDC to have an independent tally, but also meant that the ruling party was able to determine exactly where it had lost support and target those areas. During the months between the March and the June election, the military, informal militia and war veterans waged "war against the opposition and its support base" (*ibid.*: 288). Beatings, rape, murder and forcible removal were codenamed 'Operation Mavhoterapapi' (mavhoterapapi is a ChiShona word meaning 'who did you vote for'). Hundreds were killed, two hundreds had disappeared and 200,000 people fled their homes (*ibid.*). MDC members were arrested with treason. Mugabe stated: "we are not going to give up our country for a mere X on a ballot… how can a ball point pen fight with a gun?" (*ibid.:* 290). Because of the brutal political violence carried out against the opposition, the MDC candidate Tsvangirai withdrew from the election.

After negotiations following the 2008 election, ZANU-PF and MDC entered a power sharing agreement that lasted between 2009 and 2013. There was, however, little actual power-sharing during those years. ZANU-PF made sure that MDC was unable to bring about any significant change, and at the same time MDC was depicted in the media as failing, having become corrupt and uninterested in the population (McGregor 2013). The MDC lost the 2013 general election and ZANU-PF again became the

only party in power. The 2018 election is not discussed here as the survey data only goes as far as to 2017. It is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this paper to delve into the most recent events in Zimbabwean politics. A timeline of the main political events from 1999 to 2017 can be found in figure 3.3.

**1999**

Formation of MDC

**2000**

February:
Zimbabweans vote
no to new
constitution

Farm invasions

**2002**

March:
Presidential elections

**2005**

March:
Parliamentary
elections

May:
Operation
Murambatsvina

**2008**

March:
Presidential and
parliamentary
elections

March-June:
Operation
Mavhoterapapi

June:
Run-off elections

September:
A power-sharing
agreement is
reached

**2009**

Government of
national unity

**2013**

March:
New constitution
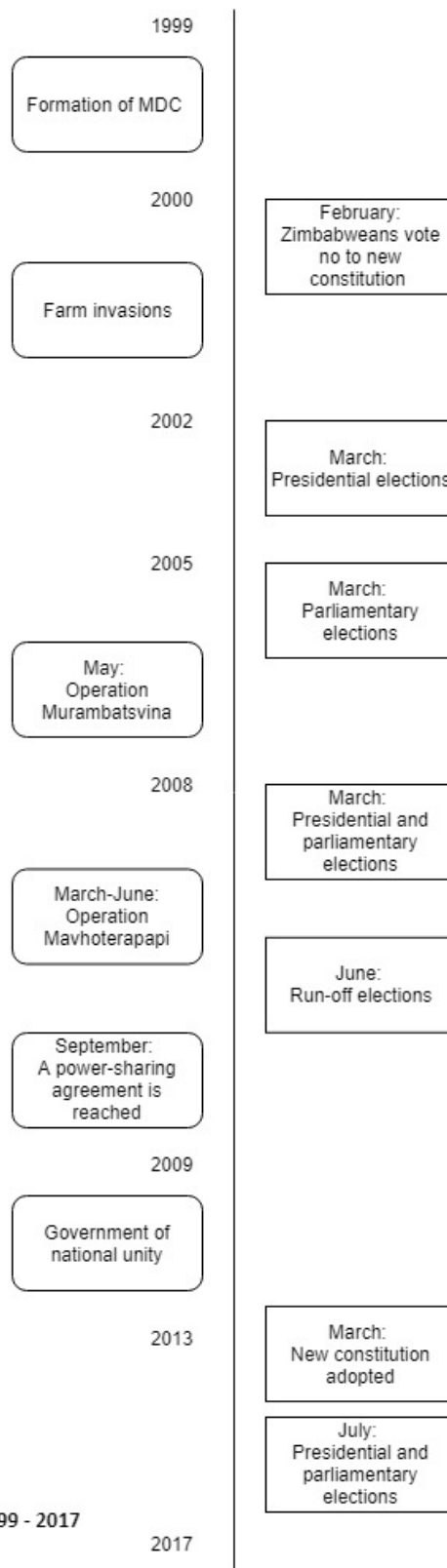adopted

July:
Presidential and
parliamentary
elections

Figure 3.3: Timeline 1999 - 2017

**2017**

# 4 Theoretical Framework

Theories and concepts, used in this research, are presented in this section. It starts off with a more general discussion of electoral geography and the so-called "neighbourhood effect" (Weaver 2014: 874), and then delves into the contextual factors that this thesis investigates. It ends by discussing theories of voting behaviour and typologies of voters.

## 4.1 Geography and voting behaviour

Koter (2013), Wahman and Boone (2018) and Harding (2010) argue that factors determined by geography have a significant effect on electoral outcomes in Africa. This research investigates whether the same is true in Zimbabwe. As discussed in the background section, ZANU-PF has been known to use similar strategies to what Koter (2013), Harding (2010) and Wahman and Boone (2018) explain, such as clientelist networks and political intimidation, and it is therefore a plausible hypothesis that geographical contexts also affect voters in Zimbabwe.

Within electoral geography, spatial patterns of voting are attributed to two factors: compositional and contextual (Forest 2017). Compositional factors refer to characteristics of an individual such as age, gender, ethnicity, income and education levels. Contextual factors are also referred to as the "neighbourhood effect" (Weaver 2014: 874). It is theorised to be produced by five mechanisms: "social interaction, neighbourhood selection, neighbourhood emulation, environmental observation and political mobilisation" (Weaver 2014: 876). This research based its understanding of how context or neighbourhoods influence voters on those five mechanisms. It was, however, necessary to modify them to better fit the study. In a context were the majority is poor and struggles to make ends meet daily, choice is a luxury. Thus, in a Zimbabwean context, the variable *neighbourhood selection* is problematic, because there is little choice involved in where one lives, at least among the poorer part of the population. Rural neighbourhoods are built on ancestral heritage or lineage. The people living in the urban areas usually move there to find jobs, thus, selection is based on economic opportunity rather than political preference. One could perhaps argue that the diaspora, the mass-exit of Zimbabwe's middle class, discussed in the background section, are those that have chosen to move to a different 'neighbourhood' (i.e. abroad) and that this influences voting behaviour in the sense that it means that they cannot vote. The other four variables *neighbourhood emulation*, *social interaction*, *environmental observation* and *political mobilisation* are in focus for the analysis.

## 4.2 The neighbourhood effect

For the purpose of this study, social structures (*neighbourhood emulation* and *social interaction*), access to information (*environmental observation*) and political strategies and political environments (*political mobilisation*) were chosen as the focus. There are of course also many other aspects of *environmental observation* but for the purpose of this study, only access to information was chosen. Geographical context affects social context and political strategies as explained further below. My understanding of how these interlink with each other and with party affiliation is depicted in figure 4.1 below.
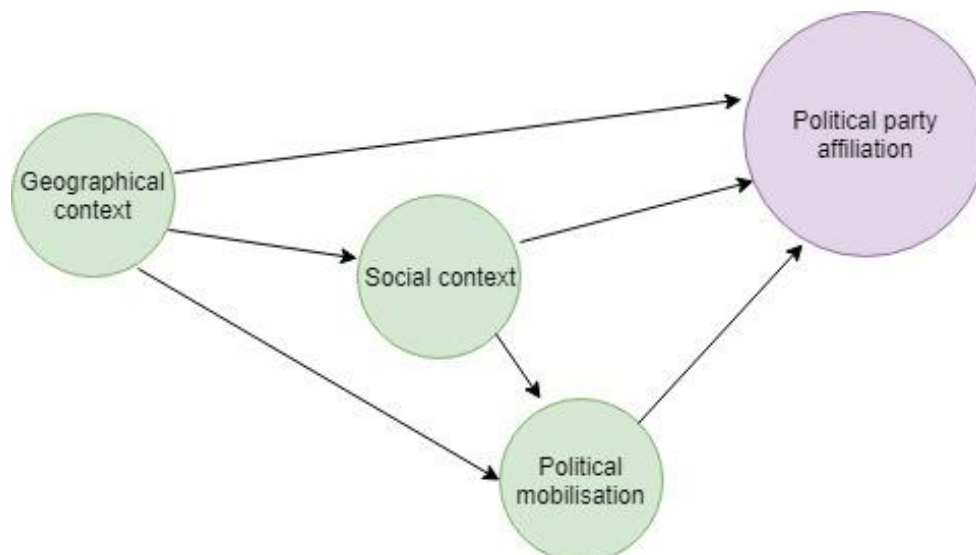
**Figure 4.1: How contexts affect political party affiliation**

### 4.2.1 Geographical context

Geographical contexts differ across rural and urban spaces and affect voters in several ways (Wahman and Boone 2018). Rural dwellers, that have less access to information about politics, have fewer political options because they, to a large extent, are unaware of the performance of politicians (Wahman and Boone 2018; Harding 2010). They do not receive news about politics and are not as affected by a deteriorating economy, when they live as subsistence farmers. Geographical context also influences the social structures of the area. In more remote areas with a more vulnerable population, it is easier for strongmen to dominate the landscape (Wahman and Boone 2018; Koter 2013). The geographical context also affects political parties' campaign strategies in the sense that the inaccessibility of certain areas means that opposition parties rarely go there and thus the voters have little knowledge of alternative political leaders (Raftapolous 2002). Opposition campaigns tend to be organised in urban areas as rural areas 'belong to' the ruling party (LeBas 2006).

### 4.2.2 Social context

Koter (2013) finds that rural areas have a tighter social structure, which makes the electorate less autonomous. It also affects voting behaviour indirectly through how it shapes the campaign strategies of political parties. Incumbent parties often have a strong clientelist network built up, in which local elites are bribed or promised compensation in return for getting their 'subjects' to vote for the incumbent party. Koter (2013) finds that there is a well-established structure of this kind of vote buying in Senegal. Wahman and Boone (2018: 189) argue that many rural constituencies are what they call "captive constituencies". In these constituencies the voters do not have freedom to choose how to vote because of the strong influence of social power structures. Living in a small community in which everyone knows everyone, it is easier to control a population through threats of violence, surveillance and withholding necessary resources (Chitukutuku 2013; McGregor 2013; Boone 2011; Koter 2013; Wahman and Boone 2018).

### 4.2.3 Political strategies and political environments

As discussed above, political parties use different campaign strategies in different contexts (Wahman and Boone 2018; Koter 2013; Boone 2011; Bratton and Masunungure 2018b). Being the allocators of governmental services and land rights, incumbent parties have a strong grip on the population. The incumbent party can allocate or withhold government services and land rights in order to mobilise support or punish opposition voters (Boone 2011; Chitukutuku 2013). Having control over police and

military enables the incumbent party to instill fear in the electorate and punish opposition voters (Boone 2011; Chitukutuku 2013, Masunungure 2011; Maringira and Masiya 2017; Bratton 2008). Instilling fear in the electorate creates an "atmospheric condition" of violence (Bratton 2008: 624). The ruling party being in charge of military and police can also limit opposition parties' access to certain areas that the ruling party considers a stronghold. In Zimbabwe during the 2002 election, Raftopoulos (2002) explains how many rural areas were 'no go' areas for the political opposition that would be harassed by police and military when attempting to go there.

## 4.3 Theories of voting behaviour

As mentioned in the literature review, Wahman and Boone (2018) outline three types of voting behaviour. This research makes use of the two first ones to explain the trends seen in the statistical analysis. The *Performance Criteria Voting* that states that urbanites are in a better position to vote based on their evaluations of the performance of politicians because they have better access to information and are more exposed to opposition party campaigns. Hence, the urban electorate is more well-informed both of the ruling party's performance and of the alternatives to the ruling party. The *Captive Constituency Effects* states that rural areas are more likely to have a less politically autonomous electorate. Having little access to information makes performance voting difficult. A weak presence of opposition parties means that the electorate is not aware of a viable alternative to the ruling party. And local authorities such as traditional leaders dominate the area, meaning that the electorate is not autonomous.

## 4.4 Typologies of voters

Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011) distinguish between two types of ruling party voters: the *sincere* ones and the *strategic* ones. They explain that *sincere* voters are those that feel a deep attachment to the party, and that these vote for the party regardless of the party's performance. They refer to these as *uncritical citizens* and explain that these are particularly found in countries in which there has long been a one-party regime, such as Zimbabwe. *Strategic* ruling party voters associate themselves with the ruling party because they believe that doing so will either give them reward in the form of patronage or will mean that they will not be punished after the election.

In a study of Zimbabwean elections, Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure (2016) distinguishes between three types of Zimbabwean voters that, in their surveys, would not disclose who they intended to vote for: *uncritical voters, rational voters* and *sophisticated voters*. They explain that the *uncritical voters* are those that vote for the incumbent party either because they are uninformed of the incumbent party's performance or are loyal to the party for various reasons, similar to Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen's (2011) description of the *uncritical, sincere* voters. *Rational voters* are those that vote for the incumbent party because of knowing the consequences of not voting for them. Opposition supporters have been targets of brutal beatings and are consistently intimidated. They thus vote insincerely in order to be safe, similar to Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen's (2011) description of *strategic voters*, only in this case it seems to have more to do with fear rather than an opportunistic choice. The *sophisticated voters* are those that are aware of the political polarisation of the country and therefore choose to hide their intentions to vote for the opposition. This typology is useful for in this study because there are a large percentage of respondents in the surveys that do not want to disclose who they intend to vote for or claim they do not affiliate with any party.

To summarise, electoral geography is a study of how factors relating to the context or neighbourhood people live in shape people's voting behaviour. New research has established that in sub-Saharan Africa there is a clear pattern of rural dwellers being more likely to vote for the incumbent ruling party

than urbanites. This section discussed how different types of voting are likely to be found in different contexts and which aspects of the contexts that seem to affect voters.

# 5 Methods and Data

## 5.1 Research design

This research is designed as a quantitative repeated cross-sectional study (Bryman 2008: 68-73). It makes use of panel date covering the time period 1999-2017. The research is also classified as an ex post facto correlational study that investigates naturally occurring variations in independent variables to understand their relationship with dependent variables (Punch 2014: 223). Because of the aim of this research, a research design that allows for establishing national trends and seeing how they vary over time, was determined to be apt. The research focuses on the dependent variable 'political affiliation' and studies how it varies across rural and urban spaces during the chosen time period. It then focuses on rural and urban spaces and investigates how these differ in terms of social structures, access to information, political campaign strategies and political environments, in order to detect how these contextual differences might influence party affiliation.

## 5.2 Data sources

The datasets used in this study are eight cross-sectional panel datasets covering the period 1999 to 2017 (1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2017) obtained through Afrobarometer. Afrobarometer is a well-established, non-partisan research network that collects data through face-to-face interviews following specific questionnaires on issues of democracy and governance in more than 30 countries in Africa. The datasets are designed to, through their size and sampling, be a representative cross-section of all citizens of voting age, the sampling design being a "clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample" (Afrobarometer 2019). Each dataset contains answers of 1200 respondents, and in some, 2400 respondents. The number of respondents and the way they have been sampled, makes it possible to make inferences to the Zimbabwean population as a whole with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.8 % at a 95 % confidence level for datasets with 1200 respondents and +/- 2 % at a 95 % confidence level for datasets with 2400 respondents (Afrobarometer 2019). Thus, the research findings can be generalised from the sample to the larger population of Zimbabwe (Punch 2014: 244). The data collection method is well-tested in the sense that the research organisation knows how the questions are interpreted by the respondents and that the questions posed give the answers desired. The advantage of making use of these already existing and well-established datasets is that the data is reliable and valid (Bryman 2008: 259-261). It also allows the research to be based on a very large sample, one that the I would not have been able to collect myself.

## 5.3 Data analysis

The survey panel data is analysed statistically using the programme *IBM SPSS Statistics 25*. This research makes use of bivariate analysis to analyse correlations between variables by making contingency tables and clustered bar charts (Punch 2014: 253-254; Bryman 2008: 322-326). In order to operationalise the concepts that this thesis makes use of: rural and urban, voting behaviour, social structures, access to information, political campaign strategies and political environments; indicators were selected that provide "empirical representations of the concept" (Punch 2014: 230; Bryman 2008: 150-153). Koter (2013), Harding (2010), Bratton (2008), Bratton and Masunungure (2006) and Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011) use Afrobarometer data to study voting behaviour. Because they study similar concepts, this research makes use of the same indicators that they do wherever possible. Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011) argue that party affiliation has often been used as a proxy for

voting behavior. Party affiliation is what this research makes use of. It also investigates voter intentions which is a concept that Harding (2010) makes use of. Harding (2010) and Koter (2013) make use of the variable created by the Afrobarometer data collectors that classifies respondents as either rural or urban dwellers. Koter (2013) makes use of a question in the dataset that asks about how often respondents turn to local leaders for help, as a proxy for the level of dependence on local leaders that the respondents have, and a measure of how tight the social structure of a place is. Bratton (2008) and Harding (2010) use the question that asks if respondents were offered something in return for their vote to see how politicians use vote buying in election campaigns. This research makes use of their indicators wherever possible, but it has been necessary to make some indicators of my own. Below is a list of the variables that this research makes use of to answer the two research questions. The exact questions asked in the survey can be found in appendix A.

To answer the first question, the following variables are correlated with rural or urban residency:

1) Party affiliations
2) Voter intentions
3) Evaluations of the president

For the second question, the following variables are correlated with rural or urban residency:

1) How often people contact traditional leaders
2) How much people trust traditional leaders
3) How often people access news from radio and newspaper
4) How often people use the Internet
5) Campaign strategies of the 2005 and the 2008 elections
6) How often people feel they must be careful speaking about politics
7) How much people fear political violence

Furthermore, for the first and second question, the following variables are correlated with party affiliation:

1) Evaluations of the president
2) How much rural dwellers trust traditional leaders
3) How often rural dwellers access news from radio
4) How often urbanites access news from newspapers
5) How often urbanites use the Internet

The percentages obtained through the correlation analysis, for all survey data years, are displayed on graphs and in tables. This is done to show how correlations have varied over time. To determine whether these trends are statistically significant, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed. This is discussed further below.

### 5.3.1 Testing for significance

Given that the data cannot be assumed to be normally distributed, a non-parametric significance test, such as the Mann-Whitney U test was determined to be suitable (Hauben 2018). The test for significance is done to disprove that there was no statistically significant difference between rural and urban residents and between MDC and ZANU-PF affiliates. The exact null hypotheses tested for can be found in appendix B. If the null hypotheses can be disproved, the research will be able to show that the findings of the analysis are statistically significant. The significance level is set to be 0.05 at the 95 % confidence level and the research thus tests whether the $p$-value is below 0.05. In the cases where it is, the null hypotheses are rejected. In cases where the null hypothesis cannot be disproven, it does

not mean that the null hypothesis is proven, but instead that it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the observations are caused by chance.

## 5.4 Limitations of the study

An important limitation of this study is that it is not possible to exclude the influence of factors that were not controlled for or considered in this study. The dynamics of the political environment or climate have varied over time, caused, for instance, by the land reforms, election violence, Operation Murambatsvina and the period of the unity government between MDC and ZANU-PF. These dynamics are instead discussed as explanations for the observed trends. Another limitation is that compositional factors were not controlled for. Thus, the variations seen across rural and urban spaces might, to some extent, be explained by the types of people that live in rural and urban areas. This point was also discussed earlier, in the delimitations section, in which it was argued that location, to a large extent, determines one's opportunities in life. A third limitation is that, because this research investigates a time period of nearly twenty years, the researcher was compelled to sum the data into just rural and urban areas, instead of looking into different samples from rural and urban settings. Had the research only looked into one year, it would have been possible to look at different samples of rural and urban dwellers. This would have allowed the Mann-Whitney U test to test the significance of location independent of time-dependent variations (political dynamics). However, the objective of the study was not merely to establish that location mattered for one year, but instead that location matters throughout the time period. The test does not compare data for rural and urban dwellers or party affiliates year by year, but instead treats data from the different years as different measurements from the same population. It does a ranking of the data, from the least to the largest (so there is no longer any correlation between the years). Thus, when statistical significance cannot be established, one must take into account the fact that there have been variations in the political environment over time. These dynamics of the political landscapes could not be controlled for when the datasets cover a period of nearly two decades. When statistical significance is established, it is a strong argument that despite the variations caused by the passing of time, location matters throughout the time period.

### 5.4.1 Voters that do not want to disclose their affiliation

A major limitation to note about the data this study makes use of is that it is based on which party respondents answered that they affiliate with and, in Zimbabwe, many respondents are not prepared to disclose which party they affiliate with (Bratton and Masunungure 2018a). Using some of the same datasets as this research does, Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure (2016) classify respondents that do not want to disclose their voter intentions into three categories: the *uncritical* voters, those that believe the propaganda of the ruling party and vote for the ruling party because of being loyal to them; the *rational* voters, those that vote for the ruling party for strategic reasons, to avoid persecution; and the *sophisticated* voters, those that intend to vote for the opposition but do not want to disclose their intended voting behaviour. The respondents that did want to disclose their affiliations were then those people that strongly felt that they affiliated with one party or the other, and that were ready and willing to say so to an interviewer they did not know. Those that did disclose their party affiliations, are those that this paper builds its analysis on. It is important to keep that in mind throughout this paper, that there may be many more opposition voters, the *sophisticated* ones, that they did not feel safe enough to disclose that to the interviewer. Likewise, there would have been ruling party voters, perhaps the *rational* voters, that did not feel particularly affiliated with the party, but that still vote for the party for strategic reasons. For the years 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2017 the survey also included a question about which party respondents intended to vote for. Many more people answered about their voter intentions, since even if they did not feel particularly affiliated with the party, they would still vote for either in a coming election. However, a large section of the sampled population

still did not want to disclose their intended voting behaviour. It would have been good to have been able to base the study on voter intentions instead of party affiliation, since more people responded to this question. However, because voter intentions were not asked for throughout the time period studied, for the purpose of keeping the analysis similar across the years, party affiliation instead of voter intentions was used and is the one presented in the data. For the years that voter intention was asked for, I correlated both voter intentions and party affiliations with the factors mentioned above and found that the trends were very similar. Thus, using party affiliation instead of voter intentions did not change the results much.

# 6 Analysis

This section presents and discusses the findings from the data analysis. The first research question, concerned with the nature of the rural-urban divide, is presented in section 6.1 and 6.2 to give the reader an overview of the divide between Zimbabwean voters and of how political dynamics have varied over time. The second research question, investigating reasons for why there is a rural-urban divide between voters, is dealt with in sections 6.3 to 6.6. It looks into social power structures and access to news media as well as election campaign strategies and political environments and how they vary across rural and urban spaces and throughout the time period 1999 to 2017. All figures are based on data from the Afrobarometer surveys round 1 to 7. All questions that the variables are based on can be found in appendix A.

## 6.1 Party affiliation and voter intentions across rural and urban spaces

In the Afrobarometer surveys, respondents were asked which party, if any, they felt close to. In all surveys, a majority answered that they did not feel close to any party. As discussed in the limitations section, many people choose to not disclose their party affiliations due to fear (Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure 2016). Thus, the percentages presented in the figures and tables below must be seen in the light of a fearful political climate in which respondents might have a tendency to downplay their support for the opposition. Figure 6.1 shows party affiliation amongst rural and urban dwellers.
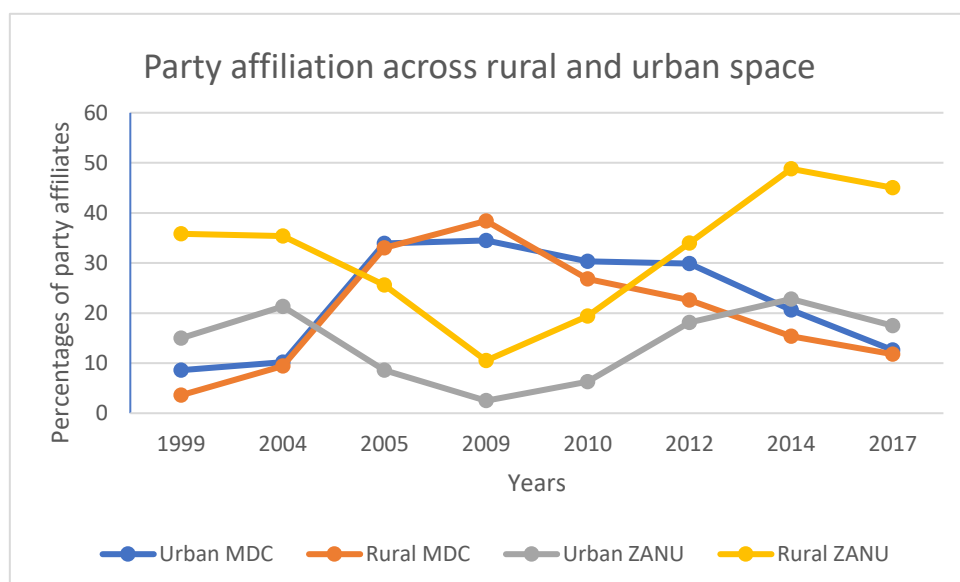


**Figure 6.1: Rural and urban party affiliations 1999-2017**

Figure 6.1 shows that rural dwellers have, throughout the decades, been more likely to affiliate with ZANU-PF than urbanites have (the yellow line is invariably above the grey line in the figure). For MDC, their support seems to have been more or less equal between rural and urban dwellers (the blue and

the orange line in figure 6.1), although the figure suggests that urbanites have been slightly more likely to affiliate with MDC than rural dwellers in all years except 2009. When testing for significance it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between rural and urban ZANU-PF affiliates ($p = 0.007$) but no statistically significant difference between rural and urban MDC affiliates ($p = 0.721$).

Two interesting observations can be noted about the figure. One is that, between 2004 and 2005, there was a drastic change in the political landscape, with MDC support sharply increasing. In 2005, the ruling party carried out a campaign termed 'Operation Murambatsvina' that saw the destruction of livelihoods of more than 700,000 urbanites (some estimate as high a number as 2.1 million people affected) (Bratton and Masunungure 2006; Potts 2006). During this year, MDC experienced a significant increase in popularity, as is evident from figure 6.1 – a stark difference from the two previous survey years. Bratton and Masunungure (2006) argue that these political changes were consequences of Operation Murambatsvina – that it made people want to more openly affiliate with MDC. Another noteworthy observation from figure 6.1 is that, in 2009, MDC was in fact more popular in the rural areas than in the urban areas. In 2009, the MDC entered a government of national unity with ZANU-PF following negotiation talks after the violent 2008 election (Masunungure 2011). MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai became the prime minister and ZANU-PF's Robert Mugabe continued to be president. Although MDC had little influence in the unity government (McGregor 2013), they were part of the incumbent government from February 2009 until the general election in July 2013. This survey was carried out in May 2009 and was thus three months after the parties had entered the unity government. The fact that the MDC was an incumbent party between 2009 and 2013 could perhaps explain their popularity among rural dwellers. This would be in line with the argument that Harding (2010) and Koter (2013) make, that rural dwellers are always significantly more likely to vote for the incumbent.

It is evident from figure 6.1 that MDC was popular in both rural and urban areas in 2005, that their peak popularity point was 2009 and that they then lost support after 2009. This seems to follow the government of national unity between 2009 and 2013, and one could assume that MDC supporters were disappointed that, although MDC had been in power, it had not managed to bring about change (McGregor 2013). It is evident that after 2012, ZANU-PF again became significantly more popular among rural dwellers, as they had been before 2005.

To give the reader an appreciation of how much more likely rural dwellers have been to affiliate with the ruling party, figure 6.2 shows a ratio-based comparison between rural and urban areas for each party. The figure was generated by dividing the percentages of rural dwellers that felt affiliated with ZANU-PF with the percentages of urbanites that felt affiliated with ZANU-PF, the same was done with MDC affiliates[1]. This gives a clear indication of how much more likely rural dwellers have been to affiliate with the incumbent ZANU-PF. From figure 6.2, it is evident that rural dwellers have ranged from being around twice as likely to four times as likely to affiliate with the ruling party than have urbanites (the green line). In terms of MDC affiliations, the figure suggests that in most years, rural dwellers have been less likely than urbanites to affiliate with the opposition. This ranges from half as likely to, between 2005 and 2010, as likely as urbanites to affiliate with MDC (the red line).

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[1] A ratio was used here instead of percentage because it was obtained by dividing one percentage with another. Displaying that as a percentage instead of a ratio would thus have been confusing.
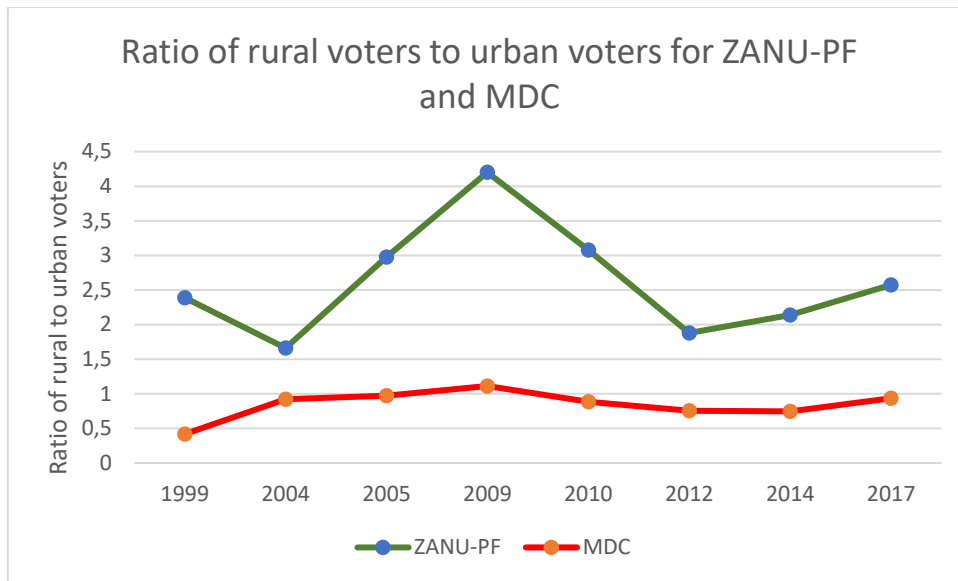
**Figure 6.2: Ratio of rural voters to urban voters for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates between 1999 and 2017**

Figure 6.3 below displays voter intentions across rural and urban space from 2005 (when the question was first asked in the surveys) to 2017. It suggests that rural dwellers have, between the years 2005 to 2017, been more likely to vote for ZANU-PF than have the urbanites (the yellow line is invariably above the grey line). It also suggests that urbanites have, throughout the years, been more likely to vote for MDC than have rural dwellers (the blue line is higher than the orange line). It is evident that between 2005 and 2010, MDC was much more popular than ZANU-PF in both rural and urban areas. Before 2004 and after 2012, rural dwellers favoured ZANU-PF over MDC. The trends observed in figure 6.2 are similar to those of figure 6.1 as one would expect. However, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between rural and urban ZANU-PF voters ($p = 0.065$). This was an interesting find given that there was a clear statistically significant difference between rural and urban ZANU-PF affiliates from figure 6.1. A histogram of the data was plotted to see if the data followed a fairly normal distribution to enable performing a t-test. It did and so a t-test was performed. The t-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between rural and urban ZANU-PF intended voters ($p = 0.042$). Thus, while the Mann-Whitney U test did not find a statistically significant difference between rural and urban ZANU-PF intended voters, the t-test did.
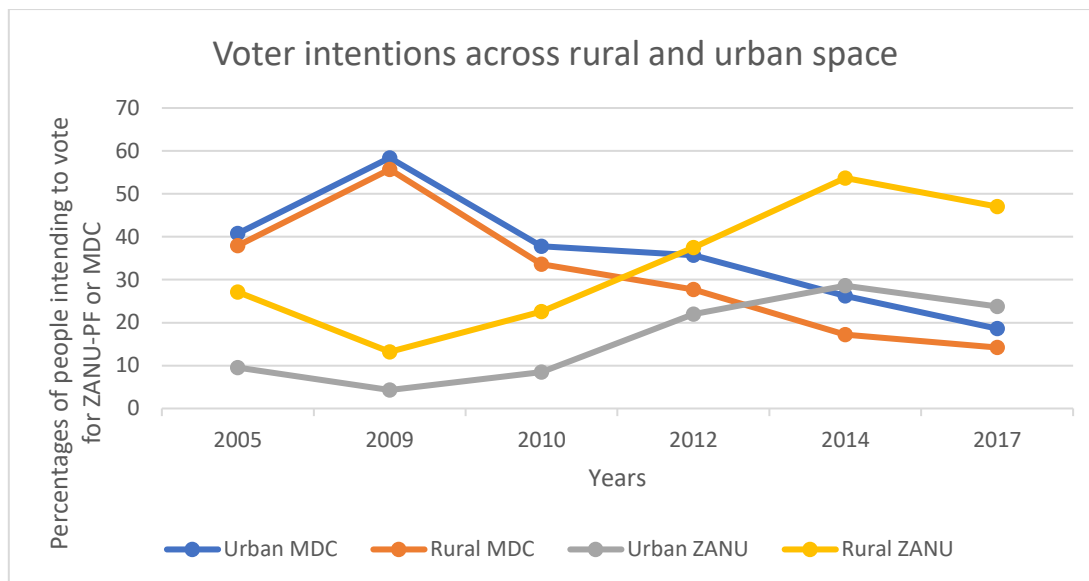
**Figure 6.3: Rural and urban voter intention 2009-2017**

This first part of the analysis has accounted for how rural and urban party affiliations and voter intentions have varied over time. From the variations in the graphs, it is evident that party affiliations and voter intentions have changed in response to the political dynamics of the country. It was found that, throughout the time period under study, although party popularity has varied, rural dwellers have been more likely to vote for the incumbent than the urbanites following the trend that Koter (2013) and Harding (2010) established – ranging from twice as likely to four times as likely to affiliate with the incumbent. This trend of rural dwellers being more likely to affiliate with ZANU-PF was found to be statistically significant. Seeing that this trend does exist, the investigation into differences between rural and urban spaces continues.

## 6.2 Evaluation of the president across rural and urban spaces

Having established that a gap between rural and urban dwellers in terms of party affiliation and voter intentions exists, this research investigates whether or not there also exists a gap between evaluations of the president's performance among rural and urban dwellers. The research investigates whether rural dwellers on average are less disapproving of the performance of the president than urbanites, since they are more ready to affiliate with and vote for the ruling party. Figure 6.4 shows that a large section of both rural and urban dwellers have disapproved of the president's performance throughout the time period studied. The figure suggests that urbanites have, throughout the years, been more disapproving of the president than have their rural counterparts. However, when testing for significance using the Mann-Whitney U test, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between rural and urban dwellers in terms of their disapproval of the president ($p$ = 0.130).
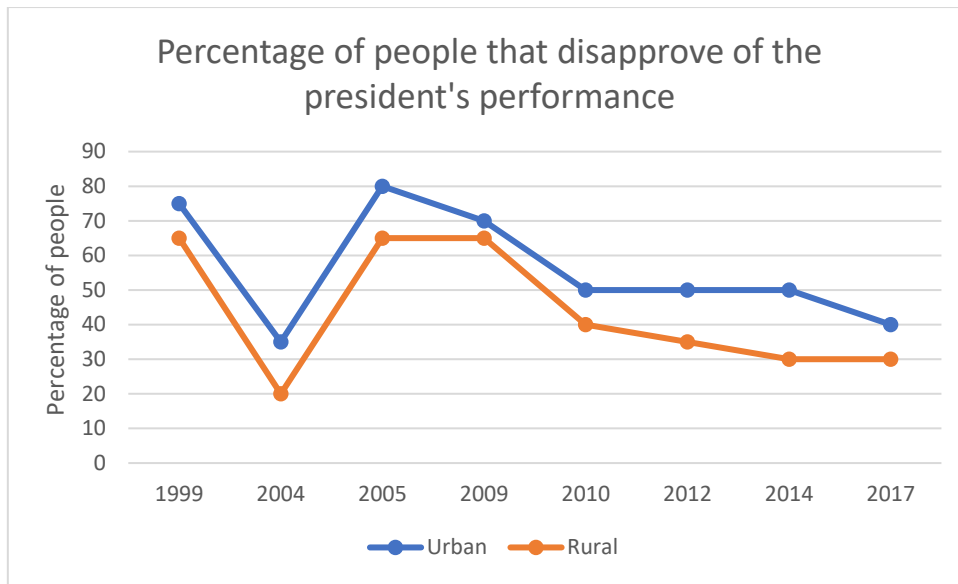
**Figure 6.4: Percentages of rural and urban dwellers that disapprove of the president's performance between 1999 and 2017**

It is interesting to note that in 1999 a large portion of rural dwellers disapproved of the president's performance. In 1999, when MDC was formed, it in fact drew a large section of its support from white farmers and from those that worked on the white owned farms, both of which were rural dwellers (Laurie 2016). After the farm invasions in the early 2000s, white farmers and tens of thousands of employees were displaced. This possibly accounts for some of the difference observed in disapproval of the president among rural dwellers between 1999 and 2004. After the farm invasions, MDC instead drew most of its support from the cities (McGregor 2013). However, the disapproval also decreased in urban areas between 1999 and 2004, so the trend could perhaps be explained by an increase in how much people feared speaking negatively of the president. LeBas (2006) argues that the polarisation of politics sharply increased in the early 2000s along with an increase in state violence. One can assume that in 1999, when the MDC had just been formed and had not yet been targeted by the ruling party as a threat, people were less scared of speaking negatively of the president. But with the increase in political polarisation, the electorate grew more fearful. As discussed above, Bratton and Masunungure (2006) argue that, after Operation Murambatsvina, people were more ready to affiliate with MDC and it is likely that they were thus also more ready to be critical of the president. This could account for the changes observed in figure 6.4.

When looking into only rural areas, controlling for location, it becomes evident that those rural dwellers that do support MDC are those that lift the percentages of disapproval in the rural areas. Figure 6.5 below shows that of the rural dwellers, those that affiliate with MDC are much more disapproving of the performance of the president than are those that affiliate with ZANU-PF. This was determined to be statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). It makes sense that those that disapprove of the performance of the president are more likely to be opposition supporters.
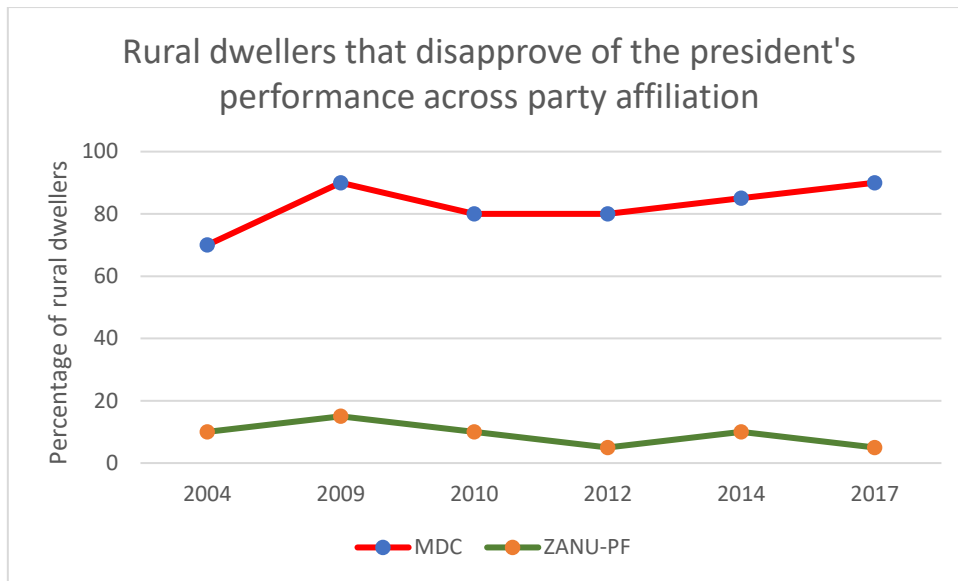
**Figure 6.5: Percentage of rural dwellers that disapprove of the performance of the president across party affiliations 1999 to 2017**

## 6.3 The social power structures of rural and urban spaces

Koter (2013) argues that rural dwellers are more likely to vote for the incumbent because the tight social structures that they live under allow clientelism to flourish. Bratton and Masunungure (2018b) argue that in Zimbabwe, traditional leaders are known to act as electoral agents for the ruling party. This section investigates how rural and urban dwellers are affected by traditional leaders. It investigates whether rural or urban dwellers contact and trust traditional leaders more, and whether those that place greater trust in traditional leaders, are more likely to be ZANU-PF supporters.

In 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2017, respondents were asked how often they contact traditional leaders. Figure 6.6 displays the percentages of people across rural and urban spaces that said that they 'often' turn to traditional leaders. The figure shows that rural dwellers much more often than urbanites contact traditional leaders. One can assume, then, that that means that traditional leaders play a more significant role in the lives of rural dwellers than they do in the lives of urbanites. When testing for significance, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between how often rural and urban dwellers contacted traditional leaders ($p$ = 0.029).
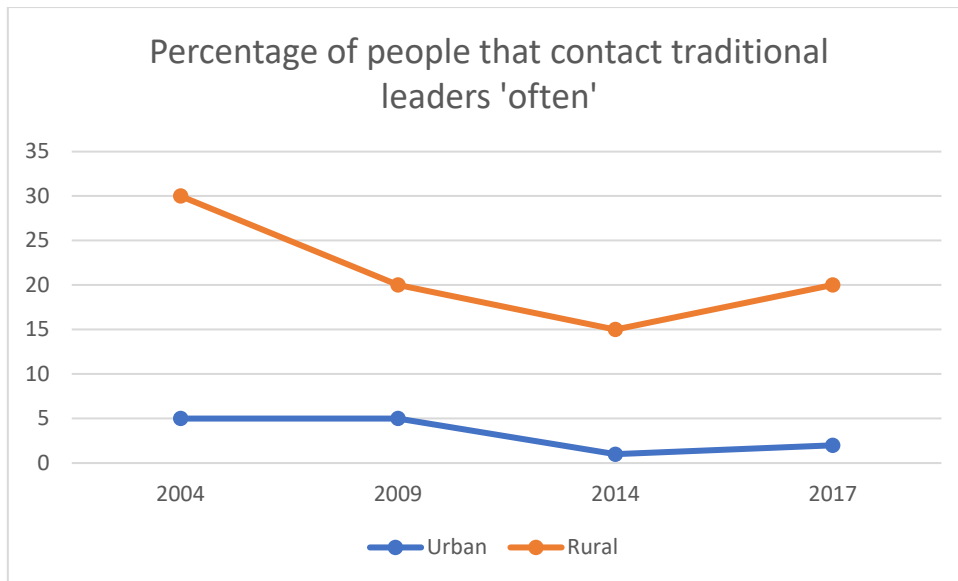
**Figure 6.6: Percentage of people that 'often' contact traditional leaders**

When looking into how much rural and urban dwellers trust traditional leaders, figure 6.7 below shows that rural dwellers place greater trust in traditional leaders. The figure displays the percentage of people that responded that they trust traditional leaders 'a lot'. The significance test showed that the difference between how much rural and urban dwellers trust traditional leaders was significant ($p$ = 0.008).
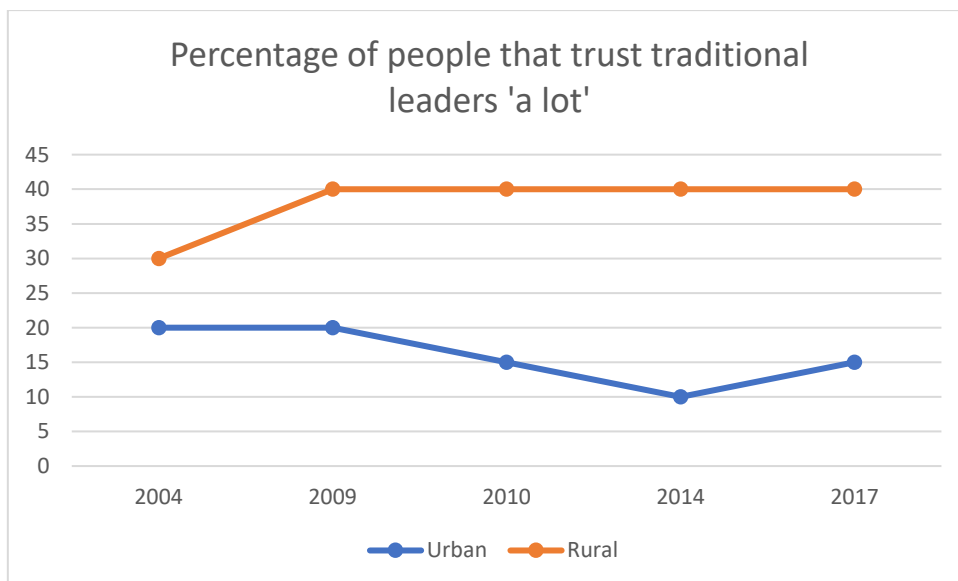


**Figure 6.7: Percentages of people that trust traditional leaders 'a lot' between 2004 and 2017**

When looking into how this varies across party affiliation in rural areas, it becomes evident that of the rural dwellers, those that place greater trust in traditional leaders, are more likely to be ZANU-PF supporters. This is evident from figure 6.8 below. The difference between how much rural ZANU-PF affiliates and rural MDC affiliates trust traditional leaders was significant ($p$ = 0.008). This means that those that trust traditional leaders 'a lot' are most likely ZANU-PF affiliates.
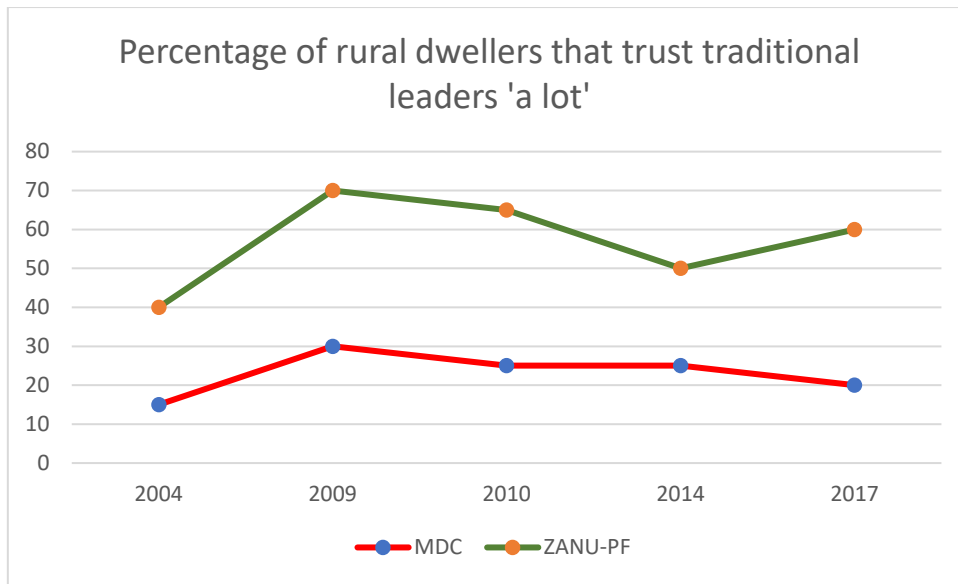
**Figure 6.8: Percentage of rural dwellers that trust traditional leaders 'a lot' across party affiliation**

As Bratton and Masunungure (2018b) explain, traditional leaders often act as representatives of the ruling party in Zimbabwe. This implies that rural dwellers are more exposed to ruling party control. It is evident from the figures 6.6 and 6.7 that local authorities have more influence in the everyday lives of rural dwellers, both because rural dwellers contact traditional leaders more often but also because they trust them to a larger extent. The figures and the significance tests show that a key difference between rural and urban space is the level of control and influence the ruling party indirectly has over its inhabitants. By controlling for the location variable and correlating trust in traditional leaders with party affiliation, it becomes clear that those that affiliate with ZANU-PF are more likely to place great trust in traditional leaders (see figure 6.8). Having established that these findings are statistically significant, it would seem safe to assume that traditional leaders indeed play an important role for the ruling party in keeping the rural population close to ZANU-PF. Thus, in line with Koter's (2013) findings, tight social structures play an important role in shaping rural voters' voting behaviour.

## 6.4 Different access to information in rural and urban spaces

Another aspect of rural and urban contexts where one can expect to find a stark divide, is in their access to information regarding politics. One aspect of lack of information is in how much rural and urban dwellers are affected by the actions of the ruling party. It is easier for urbanites to observe the failures of the ruling party as they live in areas that depend more on the ruling party's actions. Urbanites need jobs and are more likely dependent on the government for services such as water and electricity provision (Wahman and Boone 2018). This kind of lack of information about how the actions of the ruling party affect citizens, was hard to measure. What was measurable were the respondents' access to news sources: radio, newspaper and Internet. Not much of rural space has any connectivity in Zimbabwe (Pushak and Briceno-Garmendia 2011), and thus, access to radio and TV is limited. As rural dwellers tend to be subsistence farmers, for whom cash is in short supply, and newspaper stands are not likely accessible, access to information through newspapers is also likely an unrealistic source of information. The Internet, which has become an increasingly important source of information, is also hard to access in many rural areas that lack signal. News can thus be assumed to be hard to obtain through news media.

Respondents were asked, in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2012, 2014 and 2017 how often they received news from radio or newspaper. Figures 6.9 and 6.10 suggest that rural dwellers on average have much less

access to both radio news and especially newspaper news. It was found that there is a statistically significant difference between rural and urban dwellers' access to radio ($p$ = 0.026) and newspaper news ($p$ = 0.001).
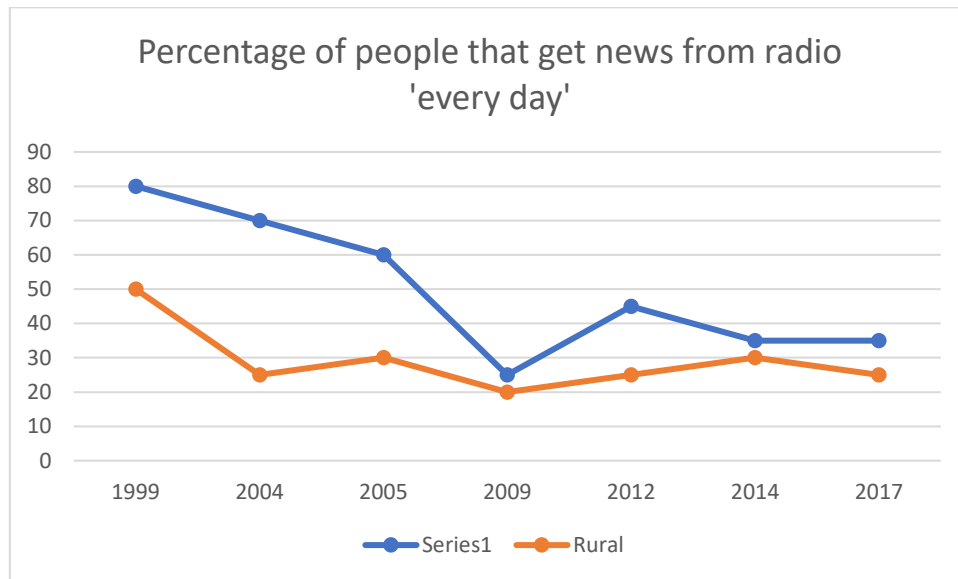


**Figure 6.9: Percentage of people that get news from radio 'every day'**
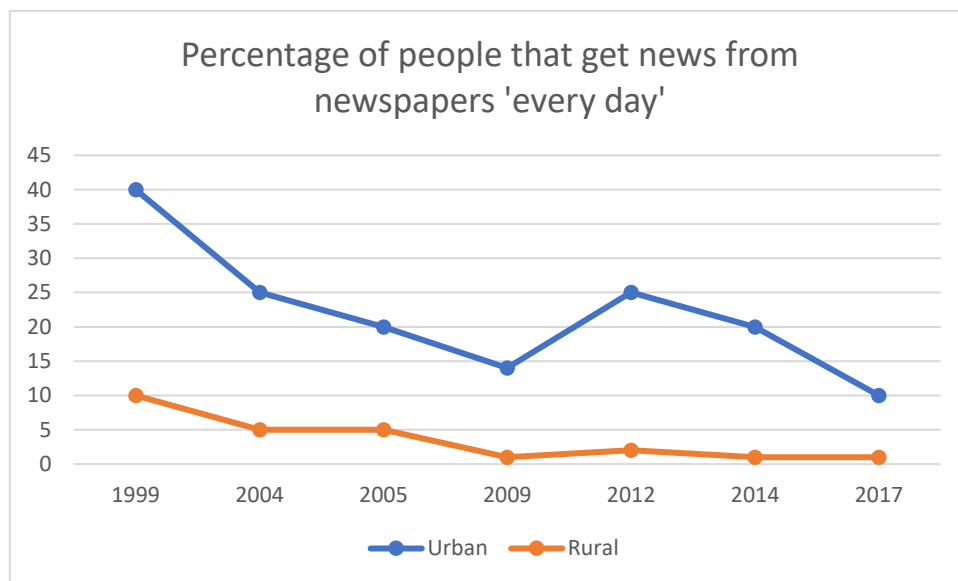


**Figure 6.10: Percentage of people that get news from newspapers 'every day'**

It is interesting to note the relatively high number of rural dwellers who had access to information in 1999, and then by 2004, the percentage has decreased to half. This is likely again explained by the commercial farms that contributed to a well-functioning economy before the farm invasions of the early 2000s (Laurie 2016). When looking into rural areas, figure 6.11 below suggests that rural ZANU-PF supporters have less access to radio than rural MDC supporters. In all years except for 2004 and 2014, rural MDC supporters had better access to radio news. However, this was found to not be statistically significant ($p$ = 0.456).

**Figure 6.11: Percentage of rural dwellers that get news from radio 'every day' across party affiliation between 1999 and 2017**
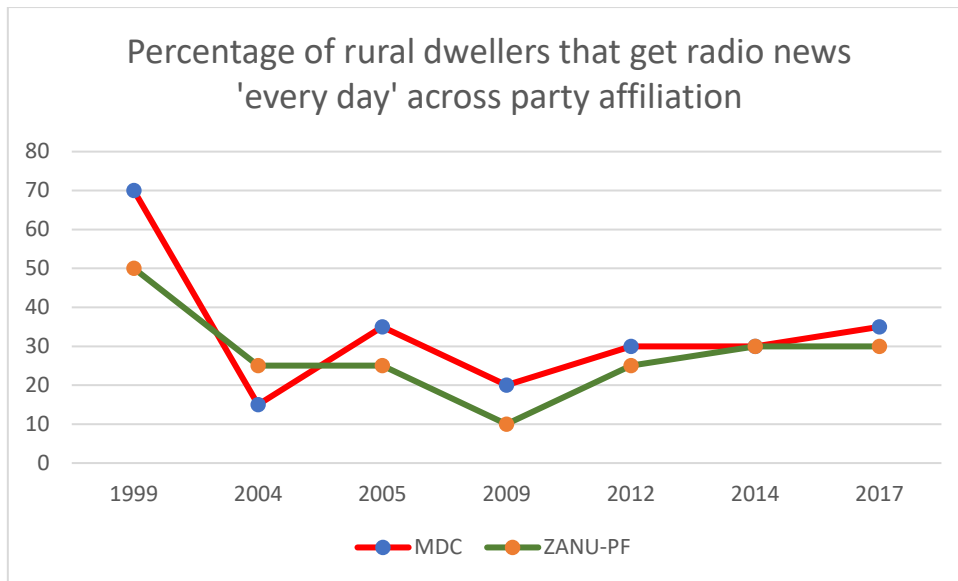
Correlating party affiliation with newspaper news, urbanites were instead chosen. This was because the number of rural dwellers that had access to newspapers was very low. Figure 6.12 suggests that in almost all years, urban MDC affiliates have had better access to information from newspapers than urban ZANU-PF supporters had. The surveys do not make distinctions between whether the news was obtained from independent newspapers or not. This finding was, however, established to not be statistically significant ($p$ = 0.259).
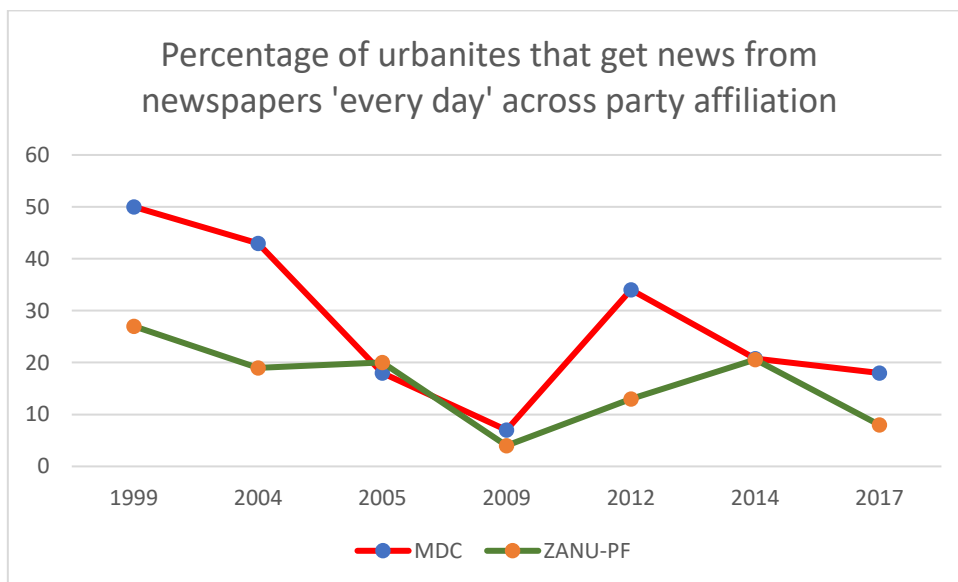


**Figure 6.12: Percentage of urban dwellers that get news from newspapers 'every day' across party affiliation between 1999 and 2017**

As discussed in the background section, media in Zimbabwe is extremely partisan, and especially the government-owned radio, is full of ruling party propaganda (Mazango 2005; Mpondi 2018). Some newspapers have been independent, but these have been targeted by the ruling party in order for them to control communication spaces (Mazango 2005). With the ruling party having been able to control both radio and most newspapers, the place one can be most sure to get unpartisan

information would then be the Internet. From 2009, respondents were asked how often they use the Internet. Figure 6.13 displays the percentages of rural and urban dwellers that 'never' use the Internet.
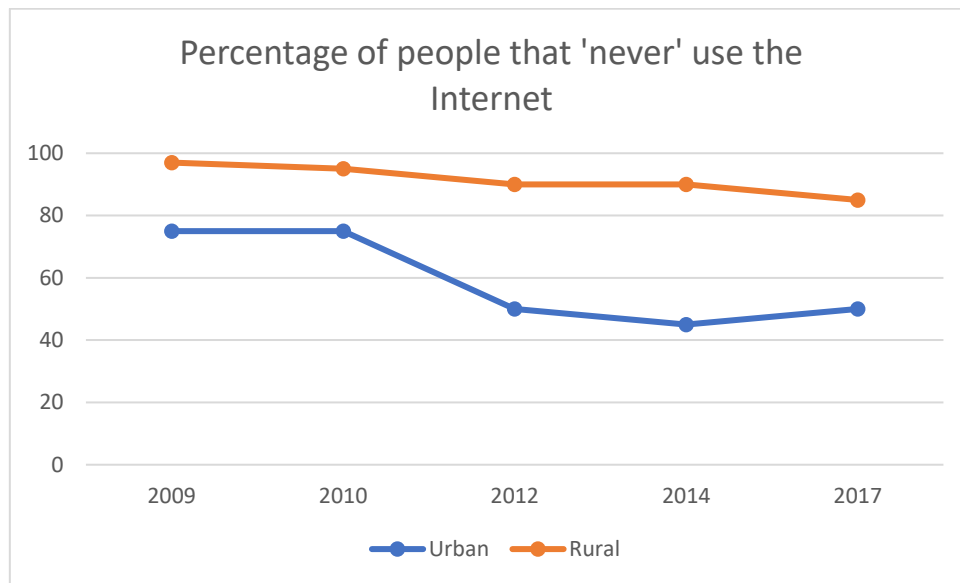


**Figure 6.13: Percentage of people that 'never' use the Internet**

Figure 6.13 suggests that urbanites have more access to the Internet than do rural dwellers, since more rural dwellers responded that they 'never' use the Internet. Rural dwellers have close to no access whereas a quarter of urbanites, in 2009 and 2010, and after 2012 approximately half of urbanites had some access to the Internet. This was determined to be statistically significant ($p$ = 0.008). When looking into only urban dwellers, figure 6.14 suggests that urban MDC supporters more often have access to the Internet than urban ZANU-PF supporters. However, this finding is not statistically significant ($p$ = 0.222).



**Figure 6.14: Percentage of urbanites that 'never' use Internet across party affiliation**

This section has established that access to information both from radio, newspaper and Internet significantly differs between rural and urban dwellers. The figures 6.11, 6.12 and 6.14 suggest that access to information is a factor in determining party affiliation, that the better access to news sources

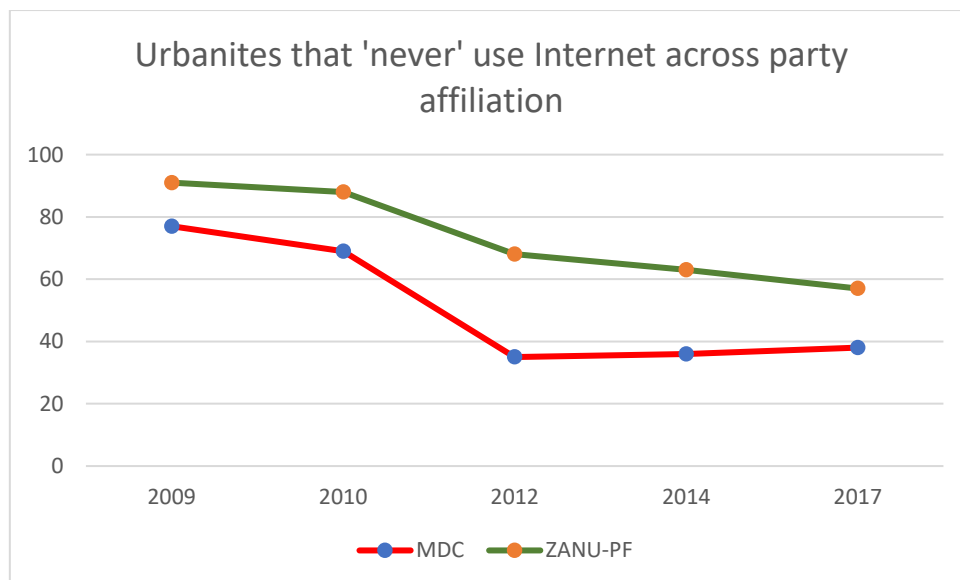people have, the more likely they are to support the opposition. However, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that these finding were not statistically significant and thus it could not be disproven that the variations could have been caused by chance. From the figures above, it is clear that rural dwellers have less access to both radio, newspaper and Internet. The opposition party is also less present in the rural areas and thus, information about them and their activities, is limited. Hence, rural dwellers have less access to information about politics than do urbanites. While this section could not establish that there was a significant correlation between lack of access to information and affiliating with the ruling party, it was able to establish that there is a statistically significant difference between rural and urban dwellers' access to news media.

## 6.5 Political campaign strategies across rural and urban spaces

This section of the analysis investigates how political strategies have varied across rural and urban spaces during the time period studied. It covers two of the Zimbabwean elections that were held during the time period this study covers – the 2005 parliamentary election and the 2008 general election. The 2002 presidential election, the 2000 parliamentary election and the 2013 general election were excluded because of lack of data. Significance was not tested for in this section because there were only two data points per factor, meaning that the Mann-Whitney U test was not apt.

**Table 6.1: Percentages of people that experienced the following during the election campaign 2005**

|  | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|
| **Forced to vote for a candidate not of their own choosing** | 24 | 21 |
| **Denied access to goods** | 25 | 27 |
| **Election incentives offered** | 19 | 15 |
| **Believe that politicians 'always' give gifts in campaigns** | 50 | 51 |

Table 6.1 above shows that about a fifth of both rural and urban dwellers (close to a fourth of urbanites) were themselves or had experienced a family member being forced to vote for a candidate not of their own choosing in the 2005 parliamentary election. A quarter of both rural and urban dwellers were denied access to goods and services that they were otherwise entitled to, during the year 2005. Mapuva (2010) and Chitukutuku (2013) explain how the ruling party uses food aid and government services to sway the vote in their favour, by withholding resources that people are entitled to, if they are suspected of supporting the opposition. A little less than one in five in both rural and urban areas had experienced some form of election incentives offered (offers to buy their votes). And half of both rural and urban dwellers believed that politicians always give gifts (to sway the vote) in election campaigns. As Bratton (2008) argues, people are not fond of reporting themselves having done something wrong. It is likely that vote buying happens more often than respondents report, since so many people have that idea that politicians 'always' give gifts in campaigns. It is thus evident that during the 2005 election campaign, people were forced to vote for candidates they did not themselves choose, they were denied access to entitled goods and services, and they were offered gifts during election campaigns. The election campaign strategies from 2005 studied in this research do not seem to have differed much between rural and urban spaces.

In the 2010 survey, respondents were asked several questions about the 2008 election campaign. Firstly, it is evident from the data in table 6.2 that more rural dwellers than urbanites voted willingly in the election. During the first round, in March 2008, half of urbanites and more than two thirds of

rural dwellers voted willingly. Three months later, after the most violent campaign in Zimbabwe to date (Masunungure 2011), only one in five urbanites voted willingly. One in five urbanites stated that they voted in the June 2008 election because they were afraid not to vote. Bratton, Dulani and Masunungure (2016) establish in their research of the 2013 election that the ruling party made use of strategies to mobilise support in rural areas and dissuade urban voters from voting, because of most urbanites being opposition voters. This strategy seems likely to have caused the difference observed in percentages in table 6.2, that is, fewer urbanites than rural dwellers voted willingly in the two rounds of the 2008 election and the numbers drastically decreased between March and June 2008.

**Table 6.2: Percentages of people that voted willingly in the election 2008**

|  | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|
| **Voted willingly in the election March 2008** | 51 | 63 |
| **Voted willingly in the election June 2008** | 23 | 41 |
| **Voted in the June 2008 election because they were afraid not to vote** | 18 | 15 |

As is seen from table 6.3 below, close to half of urbanites experienced intimidation, threats or harassment during the election campaign. For rural dwellers, the numbers were lower but still more than a third of rural dwellers experienced the same.

**Table 6.3: Percentages of people that had experienced the following during the election campaign 2008**

|  | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|
| **Election incentives offered in March 2008** | 13 | 22 |
| **Experienced intimidation, threat or harassment** | 47 | 37 |
| **Forced removal or land confiscation** | 13 | 5 |
| **Denial of food/starvation** | 16 | 11 |
| **Arrest, kidnap or abduction** | 10 | 4 |
| **Personal injury** | 16 | 8 |
| **Witnessed injury or killing of others** | 46 | 41 |

It is evident from table 6.3 that urbanites were more affected by the brutalities of the campaign than were rural dwellers. More urbanites had experienced being forced from their land or having their land confiscated, and more had experienced threats, harassment and intimidation. Rural dwellers were offered incentives to vote in a certain way more often than urbanites. Both rural and urban dwellers were affected, to the same extent, by being denied access to food or left to starve. More urbanites than rural dwellers were abducted, kidnapped or arrested or sustained a personal injury. This question included having been raped or tortured. Close to half of both rural and urban dwellers witnessed others being injured or killed. Similar to the 2005 election campaign, it would appear that the ruling party made use of withholding material inducements to punish opposition voters, by distributing

services and goods in a partisan manner. It is clear also, that they made use of violence, intimidation and threats, to the extent that half of urbanites and more than a third of rural dwellers were affected by it.

## 6.6 The political environment of rural and urban spaces

One aspect of political strategies is the campaign strategies conducted close to elections as was presented in the previous section. Another aspect is the general political climate or political environment. This section investigates whether there are any signs that rural and urban spaces have different political environments. Figure 6.15 below shows that, both rural and urban dwellers feel severely restricted in talking about their political opinions. More than half of all people feel that they must 'always' be careful what they say with regards to politics. The figure suggests that urbanites feel that they must be more careful than do rural dwellers, although the difference is small. The significance test showed that the difference between rural and urban areas was not statistically significant ($p$ = 0.130). This would point to that both rural and urban dwellers live in areas where political freedom is severely restricted.
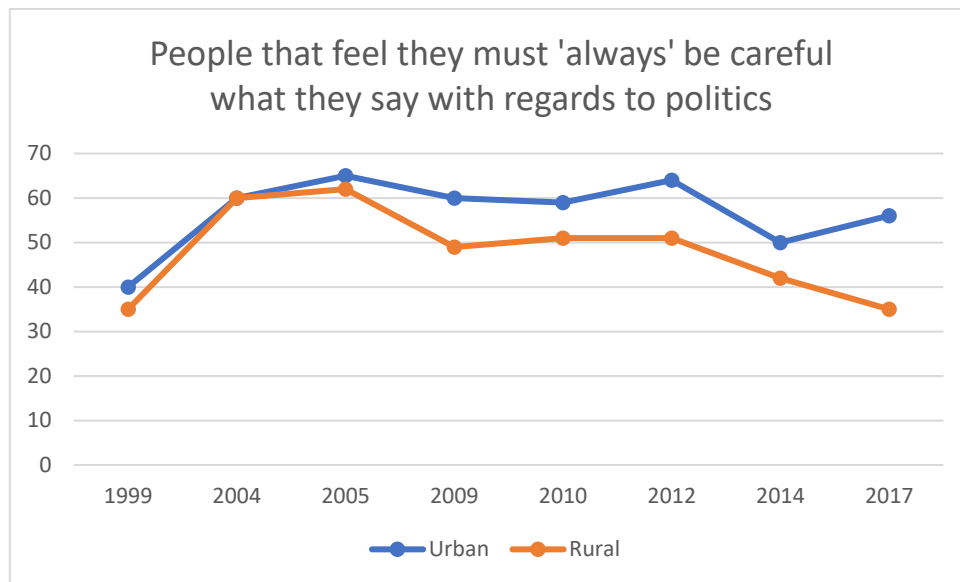


**Figure 6.15: Percentage of people that feel they must always be careful what they say with regards to politics**

From figure 6.16 below it is evident that a large section of the population fears political intimidation or violence 'a lot'. In 2009, there were no clear differences between rural and urban spaces in terms of fear of political violence or intimidation. More than two thirds of both populations feared political intimidation. 2009 was the year after the most violent election Zimbabwe has seen to date, and it is thus not strange that people were fearful. Section 6.5 above highlighted the high numbers of threats, intimidation and violence that occurred during the 2008 election. After 2010, figure 6.16 suggests that there was a division between responses in rural and urban areas with more urbanites than rural dwellers answering that they feared political intimidation or violence 'a lot'. The numbers were, however, very high in both rural and urban spaces. The Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between rural and urban areas in terms of fear of political intimidation or violence over the years ($p$ = 0.421).
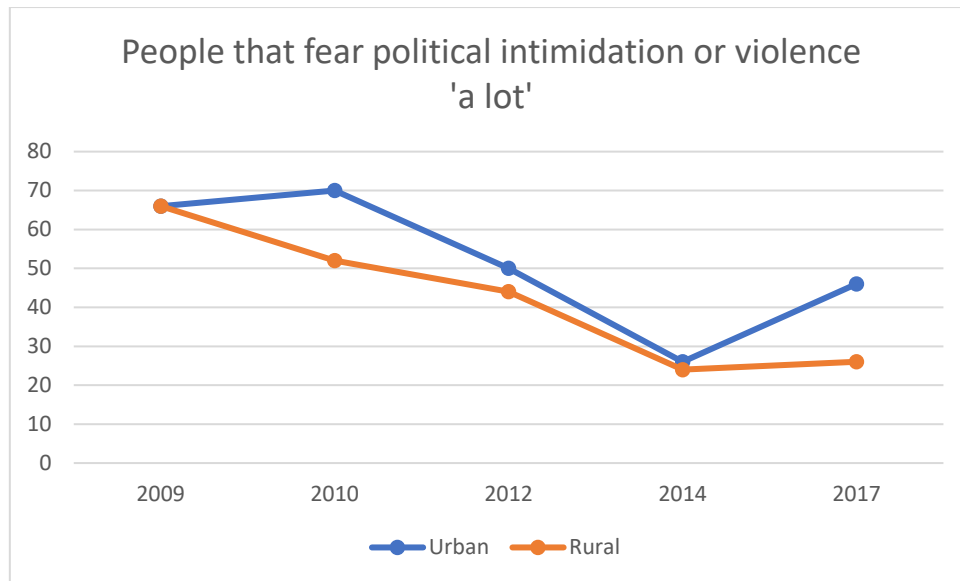
People that fear political intimidation or violence
'a lot'

**Figure 6.16: Percentage of people that fear political intimidation or violence a lot**

It is evident both from this section and the previous section, that threats and political violence are strategies used by politicians in order to gain support or dissuade people from voting. It is also evident that both rural and urban dwellers are severely affected by political campaign strategies and the general political climate.

# 7 Discussion

This section presents how the analysis answers the research questions. The first section deals with the first question, about the nature of the rural-urban divide. The second section deals with the second research question, about how contextual factors, or the *neighbourhood effect*, shape voting behaviour. Both sections discuss the findings of this research and link them to theories and previous literature.

## 7.1 The nature of the rural-urban divide between Zimbabwean voters

As the first question pointed to, party affiliations, voter intentions and evaluations of the president and how these differed between rural and urban dwellers during the time period under study, were explored. Koter (2013), Wahman and Boone (2018) and Harding (2010) argue that geographical factors affect election outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on this analysis, it is found that rural and urban spaces indeed differ in terms of which party, incumbent or opposition, rural and urban dwellers affiliate with. As Koter (2013) and Harding (2010) find, a general trend is also present in Zimbabwe, of rural dwellers being more likely to affiliate with and intend to vote for the incumbent party than the urbanites, even though the ruling party's popularity has varied over the time period studied. It was found to range between rural dwellers being twice to four times as likely to affiliate with the ruling party. This trend of rural dwellers being more likely to affiliate with ZANU-PF was found to be statistically significant despite variations over time. Having established that rural dwellers were more likely both to affiliate with and intend to vote for the ruling party, the research investigated whether rural dwellers were also more approving of the president's performance. It found that urbanites disapproved more of the president than did rural dwellers, although it was established that there was no statistically significant difference when considering all time periods. As discussed in the limitations section, that does not mean that there was no statistically significant difference each year. The test only tested for whether there was a statistically significant difference across all time periods, despite

variations in the political climate. When disapproval was correlated with party affiliation, it was clear that those rural dwellers that disapproved of the president were those that supported the opposition MDC. This finding was statistically significant.

## 7.2 Contextual factors that shape voting behaviour

Seeing that there is a stark divide between rural and urban voters, the research delved into the different realities of rural and urban spaces to see if these could explain the gap between voters. Within electoral geography, contextual factors include *neighbourhood emulation, political mobilisation, social interaction* and *environmental observation*. Based on these factors, and for the purpose of this study, the following aspects of rural and urban areas were investigated: social structures, access to information from news sources, political campaign strategies and political environments.

### 7.2.1 Social power structures

As discussed by Koter (2013) rural dwellers live in social contexts that are tighter than urban dwellers do. This allows local strongmen to dominate, as Wahman and Boone (2018) also point out. Bratton and Masunungure (2018b) discuss how, in the Zimbabwean context, traditional leaders are known to be agents of the ruling party. The analysis found that rural dwellers more often rely on traditional leaders for help and that a great deal of them (close to half) trust traditional leaders to a large extent. The difference between how much rural and urban dwellers contact and trust traditional leaders was found to be statistically significant. The findings of the analysis are that the areas in which traditional leaders exert most influence, the rural areas, are also the areas in which the ruling party is most popular. When controlling for location and studying only how party affiliations among rural dwellers correlate with trusting traditional leaders, it was found that ZANU-PF supporters trusted traditional leaders a lot more than MDC supporters – a clear indication of Bratton and Masunungure's (2018b) argument that traditional leaders represent the ruling party. This difference was found to be statistically significant across all years. Thus, throughout the time period, social power structures played a pivotal role in shaping voting behaviour. This finding was in line with Wahman and Boone's (2018: 189) theory of rural dwellers living in "captive constituencies" and in line with Koter's (2013) arguments. Based on the analysis and the test for significance, this research can thus establish that those that trust traditional leaders are also more likely to support ZANU-PF.

### 7.2.2 Lack of access to information

Wahman and Boone (2018) and Harding (2010) explain how lack of access to information about the performance of politicians, as well as the remoteness of rural areas, implying their inaccessibility to opposition parties, makes rural dwellers have fewer political options than their urban counterparts. They propose that urbanites, having better access to information, are more likely to base their votes on the performance of politicians. The data suggest that urbanites are more likely to vote for the opposition, that they are more critical of the president's performance and that they do have better access to information. This supports Wahman and Boone's (2018) theory that urbanites are better able to base their voting behaviour on the performance of politicians. When controlling for location, the data suggested that MDC supporters, both in the cities and in the countryside, had better access to information than did ZANU-PF supporters. This was, however, found to not be statistically significant across all time periods. Media is heavily biased in Zimbabwe and it would thus also have been difficult to explain how better access to biased information correlated to voting for the opposition. This research could at least establish that urbanites had significantly better access to radio, newspaper and Internet than did rural dwellers throughout the time period studied.

### 7.2.3 Political campaign strategies

Boone (2011), Chitukutuku (2013) and Mapuva (2010) discuss how ruling parties make use of government services and food aid, to reward their own supporters and punish opposition supporters. The data showed that both in 2005 and 2008 rural and urban dwellers were denied access to goods and services to which they were entitled. Political campaign strategies did not only involve depriving people of means of livelihoods, but also included forced voting, political intimidation, threat and harassment, as well as arrests, injuries and even killing. From the analysis, it is clear that both rural and urban dwellers are severely affected by election campaign strategies. In 2008, the data suggests that there was a division between the strategies used in rural and urban areas. Urbanites experienced more intimidation and violence, although the percentages were very high in both areas. Urbanites also more often experienced having their land confiscated, being arrested, abducted or kidnapped. More urbanites had also witnessed the injury or killing of others, although the percentages were high among both rural and urban dwellers. Thus, in terms of campaign strategies, the tables suggest that urbanites are more targeted than rural dwellers. This does not, however, prevent them from supporting the opposition party.

### 7.2.4 Political environments

In terms of political environments, it is clear from the analysis that both rural and urban dwellers live in areas with high levels of fear. A large section of both rural and urban dwellers feel that they must 'always' be careful what they say regarding politics. Similarly, a large section of both rural and urban dwellers fears political intimidation and violence 'a lot'. Bratton (2008: 624) explains how politicians make use of this "atmospheric condition" of fear and violence to affect everyone in the election campaign. As the ruling party is in control of the military and has not been slow to make use of this power whenever threatened (for instance the Gukuharundi of 1980s and the Operation Mavhoterapapi in 2008) it is understandable that the Zimbabwean electorate is fearful.

## 8 Conclusion

This study has found that there indeed exists a gap between rural and urban voters in Zimbabwe, and that rural dwellers have been twice to four times as likely to affiliate with the incumbent than their urban counterparts between 1999 and 2017. It is, however, evident that party affiliations have varied greatly over the period studied and that the opposition has been more popular than the ruling party in both rural and urban areas in some years. Rural dwellers were found to place greater trust in traditional leaders, and it was found that, between rural MDC supporters and rural ZANU-PF supporters, there was a statistically significant difference in terms of how much they trusted traditional leaders. Thus, the influence of traditional leaders in rural settings was found to be a key contextual factor shaping voting behaviour. Another interesting finding that had a statistically significant difference between rural and urban dwellers was in their access to news from radio, newspapers and Internet. From the analysis, it would seem safe to assume that rural areas are more likely to be *captive constituencies* as they have been established to be under significant influence from traditional leaders loyal to the ruling party. They are also unlikely to receive much information about politics through news media. Thus, rural dwellers are most likely either *uncritical citizens,* the term Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011) use for the *sincere* ruling party voters, or *strategic* voters of the ruling party, due to either personal patronage gain or fear. In some years, many rural dwellers have also been *sincere* voters of MDC. Based on the fact that many rural dwellers affiliated with the opposition during the period 2005 to 2010, it would seem that although many rural constituencies may be 'captured', there is still an awareness among the rural population of evaluating the party based on performance. Urbanites are more likely to be able to vote based on *performance criteria voting* as they do not have tight social structures that restrict their knowledge and choices. They also have

better access to information, both in terms of news media but also because of the fact that the opposition is more present in the urban areas. Thus, urbanites are more likely classified as *sincere* opposition voters. From the data analysis it is clear that, although Zimbabwe calls itself a democracy, the political and social contexts that rural and urban dwellers live in do not allow them to make independent choices about who governs them. An "atmospheric condition" (Bratton 2008: 624) of political fear looms large over the population, and campaign strategies of both 2005 and 2008 included forced voting, violence, threats and harassment. While urbanites seemed to be more targeted in terms of intimidation and violence, rural dwellers were found to be controlled more in the sense of having a dominant local authority loyal to the ruling party exerting influence over their daily lives. Furthermore, rural dwellers were found to have significantly less access to news media. Thus, the findings of this work reflect that – in Zimbabwe – contextual factors have a strong bearing on voting behaviour.

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# Appendix A

**Table 1: Party affiliations and voter intentions**

| 1999 | "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party? Which party is that? |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2004 | "Do you feel close to any political party or political organization? If so, which party or organization is that?" |
| 2005 | "Do you feel close to any particular political party? Which party is that?" |
| 2009 | |
| 2010 | "If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?" |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |

**Table 2: Evaluations of the president**

| 1999 | "What about the way the President has performed his job over the past twelve months? Do you:"<br>Answers used: "Strongly disapprove", "disapprove" |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2004 | "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: President Mugabe?"<br>Answers used: "Strongly disapprove", "disapprove" |
| 2005 | |
| 2009 | |
| 2010 | |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |

**Table 3: Social structures**

| 2004 | "During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or give them your view: A traditional ruler?"<br>Answer used: "Often"<br><br>"How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Traditional leaders/chiefs/elders?"<br>Answer used: "A very great deal" |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2009 | "During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A traditional ruler?" |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |
| 2009 | "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Traditional leaders"<br>Answer used: "A lot" |
| 2010 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |

**Table 4: Access to information**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1999 | "How often do you get news from the following sources: A. Radio, C. Newspaper?" |
| 2004 | Answer used: "Everyday" |
| 2005 | |
| 2009 | |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |
| 2009 | "How often you do use the Internet?" |
| 2010 | Answer used: "Never" |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |

**Table 5: Political campaign strategies of 2005**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2005 | "Please tell me if you agree/disagree to each one of the following statements. During the campaign for the 2005 March parliamentary election were you or any immediate member of your family forced to vote for a candidate not of your choice?"<br><br>"Please tell me if you agree/disagree to each one of the following statements. During the past year, has anyone denied you access to goods and services, for example food aid, to which you were entitled?"<br><br>"And during the 2005 election, how often (if ever) did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?"<br>Answers used: "Once or twice", "A few times", "Often"<br><br>"In your opinion, how often do politicians do each of the following: Offer gifts to voters during election campaigns?"<br>Answer used: "Always" |

**Table 6: Political campaign strategies of 2008**

| 2008 | "Now let's turn to elections. With regard to the march 2008 national elections, which statement is true for you: You were not registered or you were too young to vote, you voted in the elections willingly, you decided not to vote, you could not find the polling station, you were prevented from voting, you did not have time to vote, you did not vote for some other reason, you were afraid to vote, you voted because you were afraid not to vote, you voted for some other reason?"<br>Answers used: "Voted in the elections willingly"<br><br>"With regard to the June 2008 Presidential run-off elections, which statement is true for you: You were not registered or you were too young to vote, you voted in the elections willingly, you decided not to vote, you could not find the polling station, you were prevented from voting, you did not have time to vote, you did not vote for some other reason, you were afraid to vote, you voted because you were afraid not to vote, you voted for some other reason?"<br>Answers used: "Voted in the elections willingly", "Voted because of being afraid not to vote"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, were you personally affected by the following: intimidation, threat or harassment?"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, wee you personally affected by the following: denial of food or starvation?"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, wee you personally affected by the following: Forced removal from your home or confiscation of land?"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, wee you personally affected by the following: Arrest, kidnap or abduction?"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, wee you personally affected by the following: Personal injury, including physical assault, sexual assault or torture?"<br><br>"During election campaigns in 2008, wee you personally affected by the following: Witnessing someone else being injured or killed?"<br><br>"And during the last national election in March 2008, how often, if ever did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for you vote?"<br>Answers used: "Once or twice", "A few times", "Often" |
|------|---|

**Table 7: Political environments**

| 1999 | "Do you agree, neither agree or disagree, or disagree with the following statement: In this country, you must be very careful of what you say and do with regard to politics?" Answer used: "Strongly agree" |
|---|---|
| 2004 | "In this country, how often: Do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?" Answer used: "Always" |
| 2005 | |
| 2009 | |
| 2010 | |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |
| 2009 | "During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?" Answer used: "A lot" |
| 2010 | |
| 2012 | |
| 2014 | |
| 2017 | |

# Appendix B

**The null hypothesis tested for:**

1) The distributions of MDC and ZANU-PF affiliates across rural and urban areas are the same
2) The distributions of MDC and ZANU-PF intended voters across rural and urban areas are the same
3) The distributions of people disapproving of the president are the same in rural and urban areas
4) The distributions of rural dwellers disapproving of the president are the same for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates
5) The distributions of people contacting traditional leaders are the same in rural and urban areas
6) The distributions of people trusting traditional leaders are the same in rural and urban areas
7) The distributions of rural dwellers trusting traditional leaders are the same for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates
8) The distributions of people having access to radio news every day are the same in rural and urban areas
9) The distributions of rural dwellers having access to radio news every day are the same for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates
10) The distributions of people having access to newspaper news every day are the same in rural and urban areas
11) The distributions of urban dwellers having access to newspaper news every day are the same for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates
12) The distributions of people never using the Internet are the same in rural and urban areas
13) The distributions of urban dwellers never using the Internet are the same for ZANU-PF and MDC affiliates
14) The distributions of people feeling that they must always be careful what they say with regards to politics are the same in rural and urban areas
15) The distributions of people fearing political violence are the same in rural and urban areas