

PRESS RELEASE

Understanding Increase in Registration Centres

Since the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announced the figures of the 1st phase of voter registration, which figures have shown that some provinces have recorded high number of first time voters, there have been various arguments put forward to explain the likely meaning of the figures in relation to specific provinces and what it means.

The dominant line that has been peddled hitherto is that there were more people registering in the three Mashonaland Provinces – fact!

However the ERC observes that there is primarily nothing unusual about such occurrences because the provinces that were allocated the highest number of mobile registration centres recorded the highest turnout of first time voters. For instance Mashonaland East which had the highest number of registration centres (100) recorded the highest number of first time voters (35 266) whilst Bulawayo, which had the least registration centres, recorded the lowest turnout of first time registrants (5 068).

Table 1: Analysis of 1st Phase mobile voter registration.

PROVINCE	CONSTITUENCIES	1 st phase CENTRES	Total Census Population	Total Voter Population (2010)	Total Registered in 1 st phase
Harare	29	18	2 098 199 (16.2%)	770 080	11525
Manicaland	26	49	1 755 000 (13.5%)	769 621	24024
Mash Central	18	76	1 139 940 (8.8%)	552 211	29635
Mash West	22	77	1 449 938 (11%)	610 703	31570
Masvingo	26	43	1 486 604 (11%)	745 124	20610
Mash East	22	100	1 337 059 (10.3%)	618 653	35266
Bulawayo	12	12	655 675 (5%)	314 508	5068
Mat North	13	89	743 871 (5.7%)	359 606	13 563
Mat South	13	85	685 046 (5.3%)	350 897	11 525
Midlands	28	74	1 622 476 (13.5%)	780646	23 404

Table 2 below also shows that even in the second phase of the mobile voter registration process, the trend has remained the same, albeit the centres for each province have increased. However, the provinces that had the largest number of registration centres in the first phase have also received an even bigger outlay of registration centres in the second phase. It is also evident that swing provinces (those provinces in which two or more political parties) enjoy near equal strength, were also allocated a significant increase in the number of mobile registration centres.

However, the public still expect further explanation as to why areas like Harare, with the largest voting population and highest population per density would still be getting a lower number of registration centres. In the first phase it had 18 centres, and in this second phase it has 44 centres. The same applies Bulawayo with 12 in the first phase and 36 in the second phase.

Table 2: Analysis of the Second Phase of voter registration

Province	1st Phase Centres	2nd Phase Centres	Increase	% Increase
Mash West	77	439	362	470 %
Mash East	100	362	262	262 %
Mash Central	76	382	306	403 %
Masvingo	43	259	216	502 %
Manicaland	49	298	249	508 %
Mat North	89	434	345	388 %
Mat South	85	340	255	300 %
Midlands	74	358	284	384 %
Harare	18	44	26	145 %
Bulawayo	12	36	24	200 %
TOTALS	623	2,952	2,329	339.2 % (average)

It is highly likely that those provinces which have been allocated a higher number of registration centres are more likely to yield a higher number of first time voters. Such registration figures might not necessarily be indicative of any voting pattern or voter preferences for the provinces in question. The fact remains that, the more the centres, the less likely that the centres will be congested. In that regard, a higher number of potential voters are likely to be encouraged to visit the centres to apply for registration since it is possible that such voters will take a relatively shorter time to have their registration processed. Given the foregoing analysis the ERC maintains the following pre-conditions;

- Merely increasing voter registration centres without adequate preceding voter education will limit the effectiveness of the mobile voter registration exercise.
- An adequately trained, non-partisan and professional registration personnel is required to ensure the efficiency of the process.

As the process of registering new voters continues, the ERC reiterates that the ongoing voter registration exercise must be premised on the internationally recognized benchmarks and principles recognizing the need to make the process more accessible, comprehensive and inclusive. The integrity of such a process is guaranteed if all interested stakeholders are involved with citizens being well informed about requirements for registration as a voter and the places they can apply for such registration thereof.

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