Thematic Report on Youth

A Comprehensive Brief

Introduction

The profile summarises the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of youth, defined as individuals aged 10 to 35 in Zimbabwe based on the 2022 Population and Housing Census. It delineates trends in population distribution, educational attainment, employment rates, fertility patterns, and migration, among other key indicators. Detailed and more specific information can be obtained from the comprehensive thematic reports.



Population distribution

Youth share: **46%**

of Zimbabwe's total population are youth.

52% **females**

48% **males**

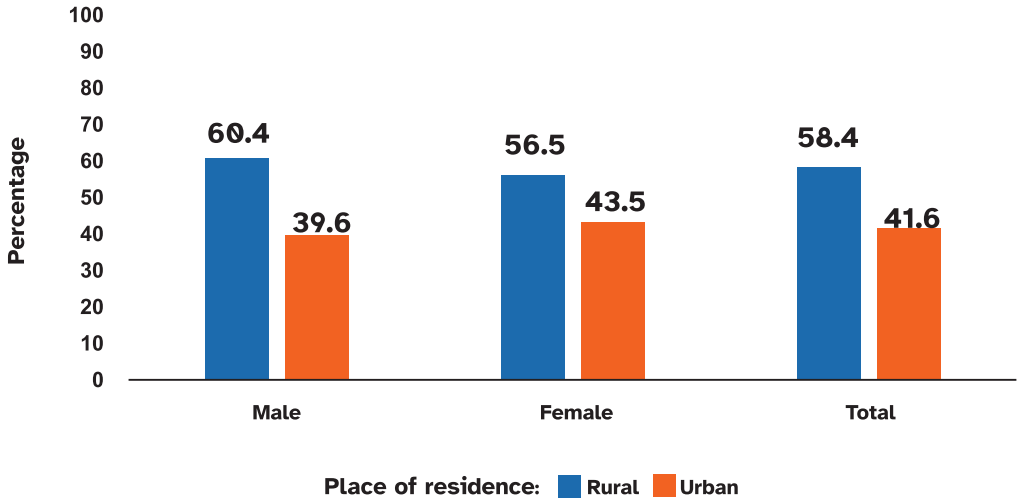
Provincial Distribution:

Harare hosts the highest youth population at **17.2 %** while Bulawayo has the least at **4.7%**

Residence:

58% of youth live in rural areas, **42%** in urban areas. Males are slightly more rural **(60%)** than females **(57%).**

Percentage distribution of youth by place of residence and sex



- **Age structure:** **51%** of youth are under 20 years. Adolescents (15–19) constitute **22%** of all youth, the majority are in Masvingo **(25%)** and Harare **(20%)**

- **Age & residence:** Rural areas are home to a higher proportion of younger youth (age 10-19). In contrast, urban areas have a higher concentration of youth in the older age brackets (20-35).

Distribution of youth by age group and place of residence

Age Group	Rural	Urban
10-14 years	32.6%	22.2%
15-19 years	23.6%	20.7%

Demographic characteristics

Marital status

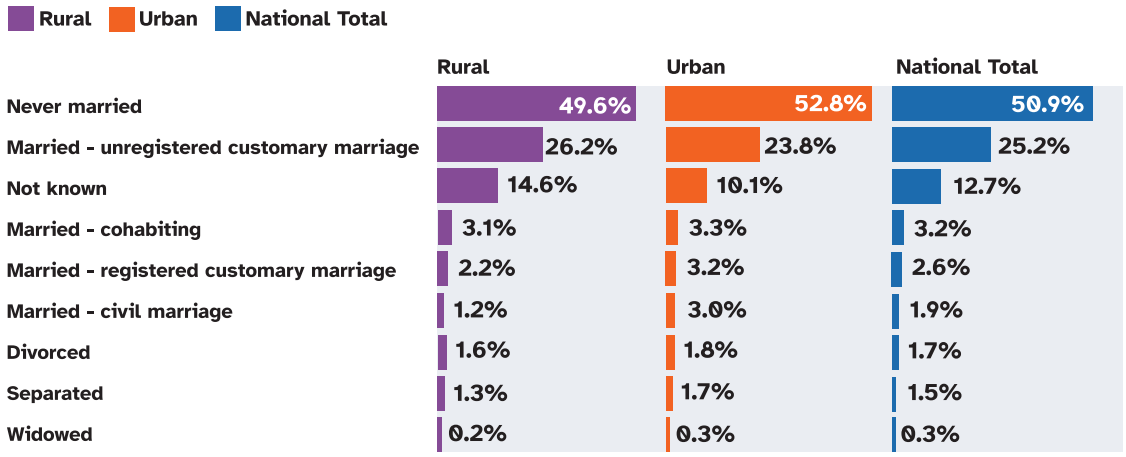
49% of youth have ever married:

Bulawayo (65%) has the highest proportion of never-married youth.

Child marriage: Among women age 15–34, **1.7%** married before 15 years, and **60%** before 20 years - highlighting persistence of early marriage, especially in rural areas.

25% of all married youth are in unregistered customary marriage making it the most common type of marriage.

Percentage distribution of youth marital status by sex



Orphanhood

The data on orphanhood was assessed for children age 10-17.

- **Paternal Orphans:** The majority of orphaned children **(68%)** have lost their fathers. Manicaland and Harare have the highest rates of paternal orphans **(69%)**.
- **Maternal Orphans:** About **16%** of orphaned children have lost their mothers. Bulawayo has the highest proportion of maternal orphans at **18.6%**.
- **Double Orphans:** **14%** of orphaned children have lost both parents. Matabeleland South has the highest prevalence of double orphans at **15.6%**.

Citizenship & language

99.8%
of youth are Zimbabwean citizens.

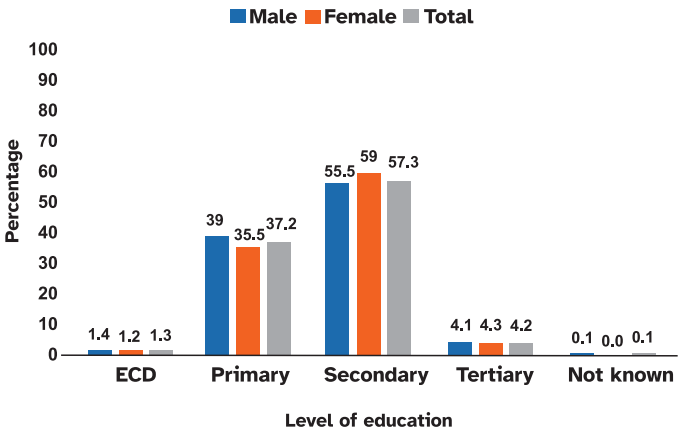
Mother tongue:
Shona **(81%)**, Ndebele **(12%)**, Ndau **(3%)**, Tonga **(2%)**, English **(0.2%)**.

Socio-economic characteristics

Education

- **Highest Level Completed:** Nationally, **57%** of youth have completed secondary education, **37%** have completed primary education, and only **4%** have attained tertiary education.
- Youth in urban areas are more likely to have completed secondary education **(67%)** compared to their rural counterparts **(50%)**.
- **Provincial Disparities:** Harare has the highest proportion of youth with a secondary education **(68%)**, while Matabeleland North has the least **(47%)**. Harare and Bulawayo have the highest proportions of youth with tertiary qualifications at **(9.4%)** and **(9.2%)** respectively.

Percentage distribution of the youth level of education by sex



Youth with Disability

- Only **1%** of youth reported a disability; of these **73%** live in rural areas.
- Communication challenges **(22%)** and cognitive challenges **(21%)** are the most commonly reported forms of disability.
- Highest prevalence in Matabeleland North **(1.6%)**, lowest in Harare **(0.1%)**.

Ownership of Household Goods among Youth

- **Cell phone ownership: 84%** (highest in Matabeleland South - **91%**; lowest in Harare – **69%**).
- **Computer ownership: 14%** overall, highest in Harare **(30%)** and Bulawayo **(28%)**.

Employment and economic activity

Labour force participation

Data for the labour force covers the working-age youth population of 15-35 years.

- **Participation Rate: 17.4%** of youth participate in economic activities. The participation rate for males is **21.8%**, while for females it is **13.4%**.
- **Provincial Rates:** Participation is highest in urban provinces, with Bulawayo at **31.7%** and Harare at **26.6%**. Masvingo reports one of the lowest rates at **9.6%**.
- **Gender Roles by Industry:**
  - Males dominate in construction **(95%)**, transport and storage **(92%)**, and mining **(92%)**.
  - Females are predominant in the production of goods for household use (70%), education **(68%)**, and health and social work **(68%)**.

Fertility among youth

- **Early Childbearing:** The data indicates that youth age 10-14 are giving birth. Average parities (children ever born) range from **0.01** for the 10-14 age group to **3.0** for women age 35.
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** The national TFR for female youth (10-35) is **3.6.**
- **Provincial TFR:** Mashonaland Central **(4.2)** and Manicaland **(4.1)** have the highest TFRs. Harare and Bulawayo have the lowest at **2.8** and **2.3** respectively.
- **Adolescent Fertility (10-19 years):** The highest adolescent fertility rate is in Mashonaland Central, with **127** live births per 1,000 adolescents.

Migration Patterns

- Youth internal migration shows rural-to-urban movement in search of opportunities.
- **Negative net migration:** Manicaland **(-18%)**, Masvingo **(-14%)**, Mashonaland Central **(-6%)**, Midlands **(-5%)**, Matabeleland North **(-1%)**.
- **Positive net migration:** Harare **(+26%)**, reflecting attraction to economic opportunities.

Policy implications & recommendations

- **Invest in youth skills and employment:** Address low labour participation and gender disparities.
- **Expand SRHR & adolescent programmes:** Combat early marriage and adolescent fertility.
- **Prioritize rural education access:** Bridge the urban-rural gap in secondary and tertiary attainment.
- **Enhance digital inclusion:** Scale up Information Communication Technology (ICT) access and digital literacy to match high cellphone penetration.
- **Support youth with disabilities:** Strengthen inclusion in education, health, and employment programmes.
- **Leverage migration trends:** Urban growth planning should integrate youth housing, jobs, and service