ZimStat
Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

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2022 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON FERTILITY

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of information on fertility from the 2022 Population and Housing Census (PHC). Fertility is one of the three components of population change, the other two being mortality and migration. The measurement of fertility can be viewed as a period event or as a cohort event. There is a clear distinction between these two approaches, conceptually and in terms of data required to fulfil the measurements. This report focuses on the measurement of period fertility as it is the most commonly used approach in studies of population. Period fertility measures the level of fertility during a specified period of time, usually a year.

The 2022 PHC collected information on live births in the last 12 months from all women age 15 to 49 years, irrespective of their marital status. Based on this information on births in the last 12 months and the total population, the crude birth rate was calculated. To avoid bias from misreporting, this information was collected in three parts: those children currently living with the biological mother, those living elsewhere, and those who had died. Crude Birth Rate (CBR), General Fertility Rate (GFR), Age-Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR) and Total Fertility Rate (TFR) will be discussed in this report. The reference period for these estimates was May 2021 to April 2022.

Definitions of Key Concepts and Terms

Age at First Birth refers to the age of the mother in completed years at the time of the birth of her first child/children alive.

Age-Specific Fertility Rate is the average number of live births in the last 12 months per 5-year age groups of women in the reproductive age range 15 to 49 years. It is obtained by dividing the number of births to women in a specific period, usually a year, in a particular age group by the total number of women in the same age group, multiplied by 1,000.

Crude Birth Rate refers to the number of births per 1,000 population in a given period, which is usually a year. It is obtained by dividing the number of births occurring in the year by the total population, multiplied by 1,000.

Fertility refers to the ability to conceive a child.

General Fertility Rate is defined as the number of births in a year per 1 000 women in childbearing ages, usually 15 to 49 years.

Live Birth is one which results in a child that shows any sign of life irrespective of the time or the period within which these signs are manifested e.g. crying, movement of limbs.

Total Fertility Rate represents the average number of children a group of women would have by the end of their reproductive years if they had children according to a set of age specific fertility rates pertaining to a particular period.

Crude Birth Rate by Province

The CBR for Zimbabwe estimated using the direct method, was 28.7 births per one thousand populations *(Table 1).* Fertility levels at national level mask some important spatial, and at times, temporal variations in fertility within the country itself or among provinces. The level of fertility displayed at the national level was not uniform at lower levels as shown in Table 1. The CBRs ranged from 21.6 for Bulawayo province to 32.7 for Mashonaland Central province.

Table 1: Crude Birth Rate by Province

	Population	Live births in the Last 12 months	Crude Birth Rate
Bulawayo	665,952	14,387	21.6
Manicaland	2,037,703	59,978	29.4
Mashonaland Central	1,384,891	45,240	32.7
Mashonaland East	1,731,173	51,218	29.6
Mashonaland West	1,893,584	60,528	32.0
Matabeleland North	827,645	21,011	25.4
Matabeleland South	760,345	19,611	25.8
Midlands	1,811,905	53,954	29.8
Masvingo	1,638,528	43,206	26.4
Harare	2,427,231	66,602	27.4
Total	**15,178,957**	**435,735**	**28.7**

The CBR is affected by the sex and age structure of the population. For example, it is not every member of the population who is at the risk of child bearing. As a result, direct comparisons between populations with different sex-age structures can lead to wrong

conclusions. Therefore, to overcome this limitation of lack of comparability, it is necessary to look beyond the crude measures of fertility to more specific measures.

General Fertility Rate by Province

The General Fertility Rate (GFR) is the simplest fertility measure that tries to relate the births to the population, which is at risk of giving birth. Figure 1 shows that the GFR for Zimbabwe was 114 births per 1 000 women of reproductive ages. The GFR ranged from 73 in Bulawayo province to 137 in Mashonaland Central province *(Figure 1)*.

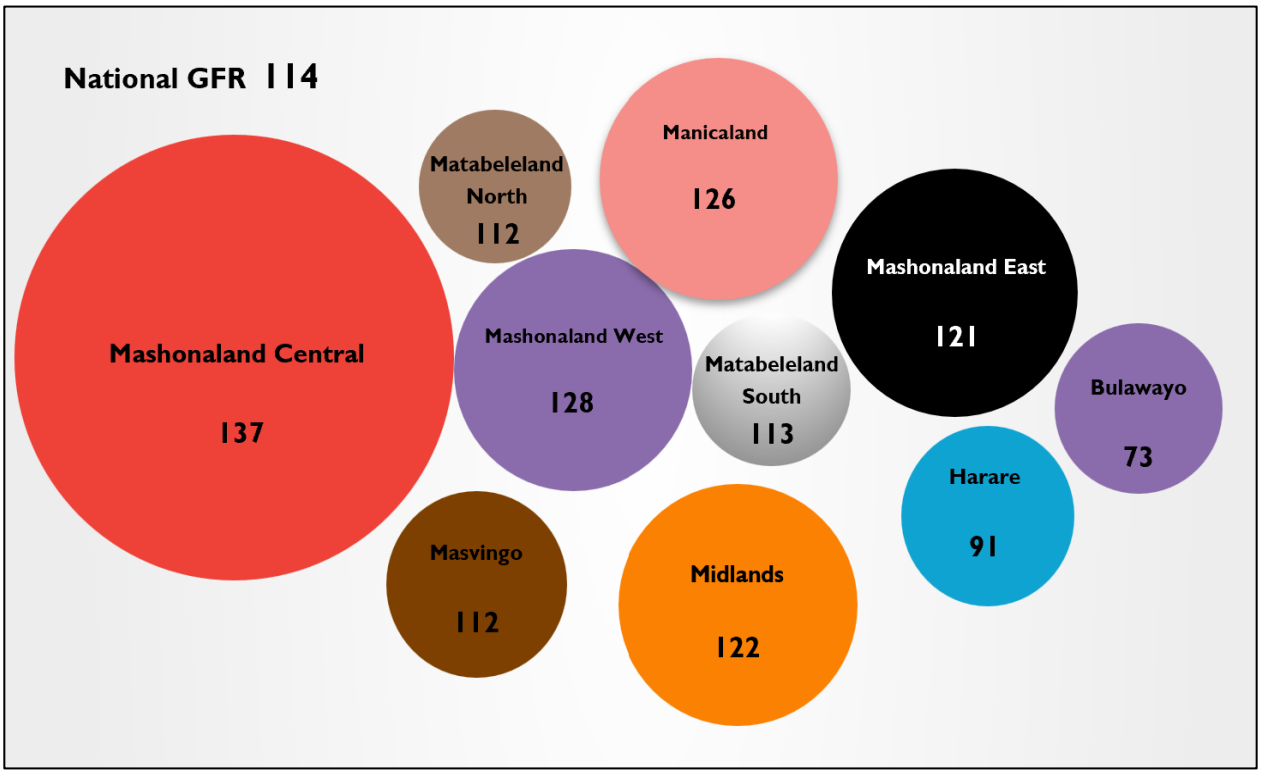

Figure 1: General Fertility Rate by Province

GFR also has its limitations because the control for the age structure is only partial as there may be substantial differences in the age structure between populations within the reproductive age ranges.

Age Specific Fertility Rate by Rural/Urban Areas

Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR) provides the age pattern of fertility for the women in their childbearing ages. Figure 2 shows that childbearing peaked in the age group 20-24

years. There is an indication that women were having children at relatively younger ages, in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The early and last reproductive age group (15-19 and 45-49 years) exhibited the least contribution as expected because there were relatively fewer births at the extreme ends of the reproductive age ranges. ASFRs were generally higher in rural areas than in urban areas *(Figure 2).*

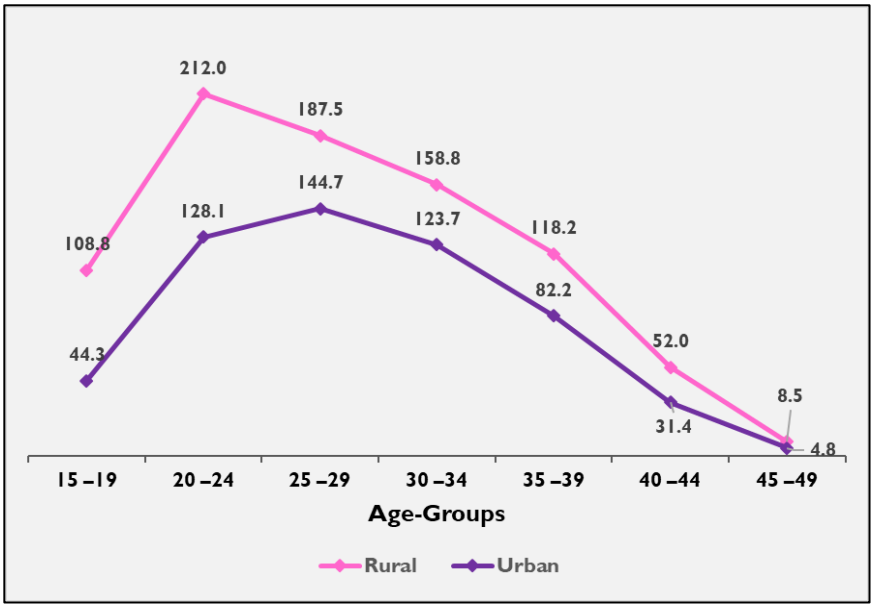

Figure 2: Age Specific Fertility Rates by Rural/Urban Areas

Although the ASFRs provide the best indicators of fertility, they are difficult to comprehend, as they have to be presented in a set of seven, i.e. one for each age group, from 15-19 to 45-49 years. Comparisons of ASFRs between or among population groups are even more difficult. Therefore, a single indicator summarising the fertility experience for a particular population is necessary. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the most appropriate indicator.

Total Fertility Rate by Rural/Urban Areas

The TFR is totally free of age and sex biases and therefore of great use in comparative analysis. The analysis of fertility by urban/rural residence is crucial for a better understanding of contemporary demographic change in the country. The TFR was 3.7 at national level. It was higher in rural areas at 4.2 as compared to urban areas where it stood at 2.8 (*Figure 3*).

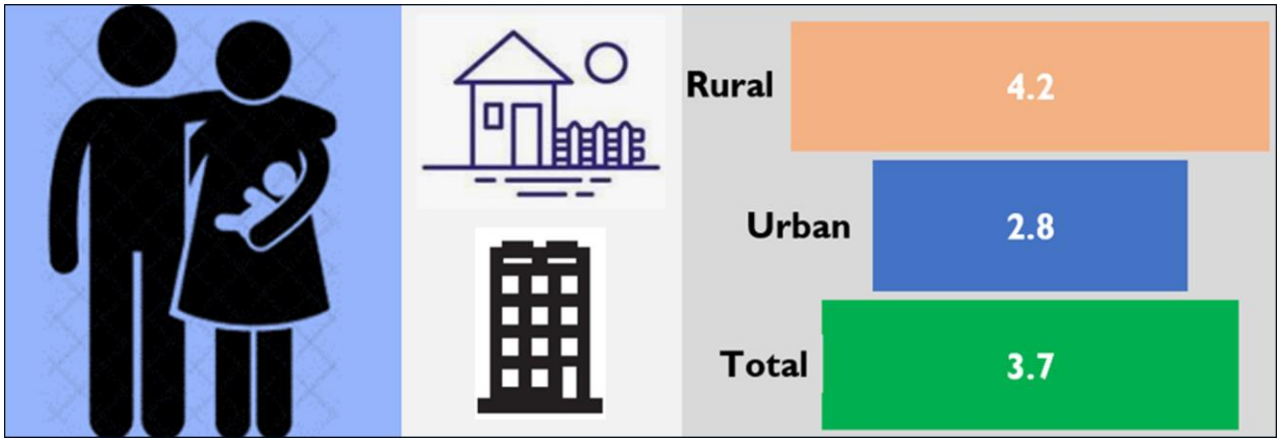

Figure 3: Total Fertility Rate by Rural/Urban Areas

Total Fertility Rate by Province

TFR for Mashonaland Central province was 4.4 and 2.4 for Bulawayo province (*Figure 4*).

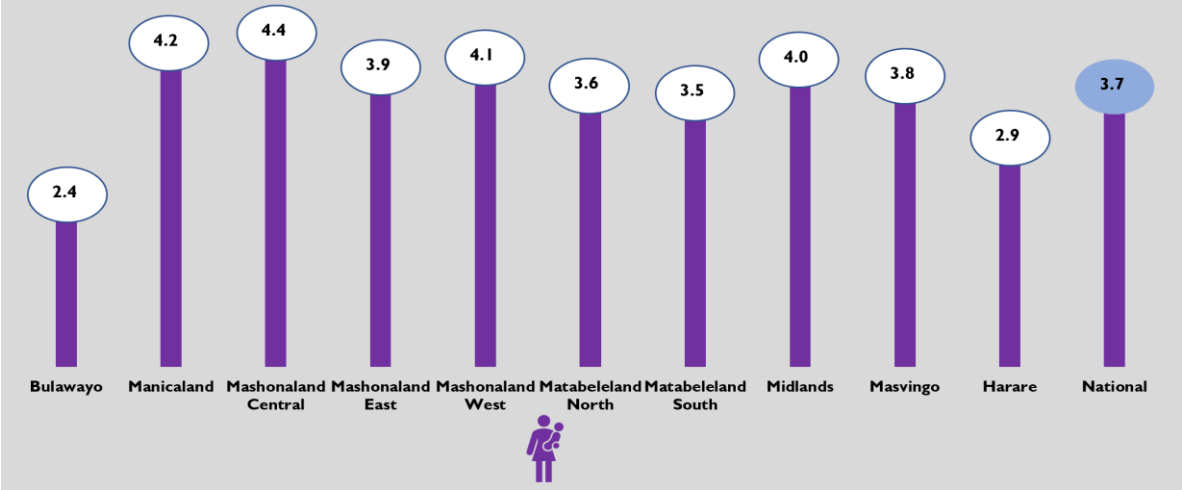

Figure 4: Total Fertility Rate by Province

Median Age at First Live Birth by Rural/Urban Areas

At national level, the median age at first live birth was 20 years. The median age at first live birth for rural women was higher, at 21 years as compared to 19 years for urban women (*Figure 5*).

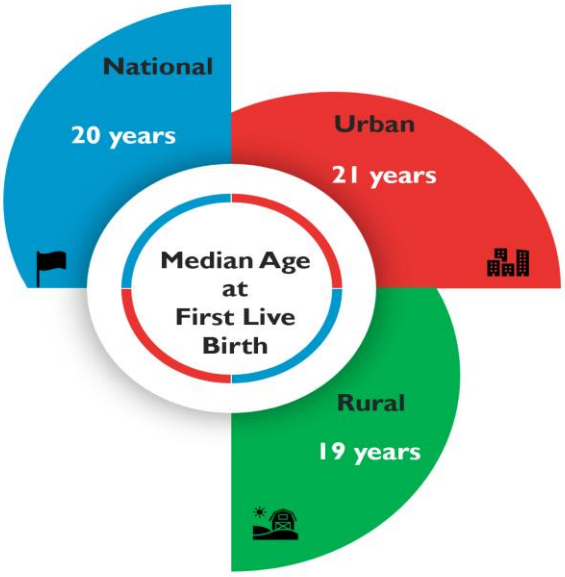

Figure 5: Median Age at First Live Birth by Rural/Urban Areas

Median Age at First Live Birth by Province

The median age at first live birth ranged from 19 years in four provinces (Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Mashonaland West, and Mashonaland Central) to 21 years in Harare and Bulawayo provinces *(Figure 6).*

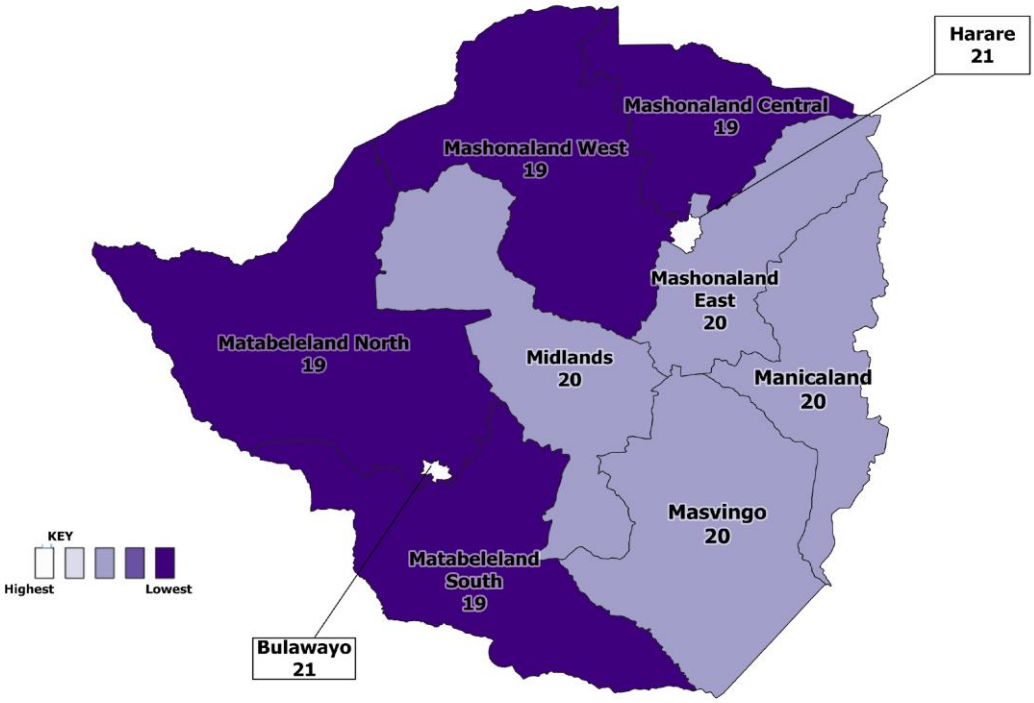

Figure 6: Median Age at First Live Birth by Province

Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 18 years by Rural/Urban Areas

Child marriage is widely recognised as a violation of children's rights and is also a direct form of discrimination against the girl child. Figure 7 shows that 133,455 women aged 20 – 24 years, representing 16.2 percent of the total, were in union before attaining the age of 18 years. The proportion was higher, at 22.7 percent in rural areas as compared to 7.2 percent in urban areas.

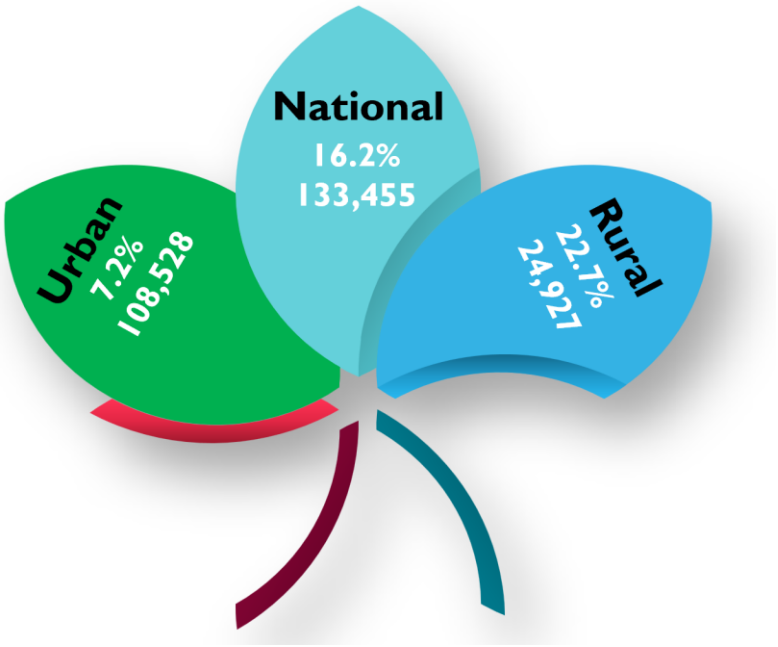

Figure 7: Proportion of Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 18 years by Rural/Urban Areas

Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 18 years by Province

Figure 8 shows the proportion of women age 20-24 years who were married before the age of 18 years by province. The proportion was highest, standing at 28.9 percent and 22.8 percent in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West provinces respectively. It was comparatively lower, standing at 2.6 percent and 7.7 percent in Bulawayo and Harare metropolitan provinces.

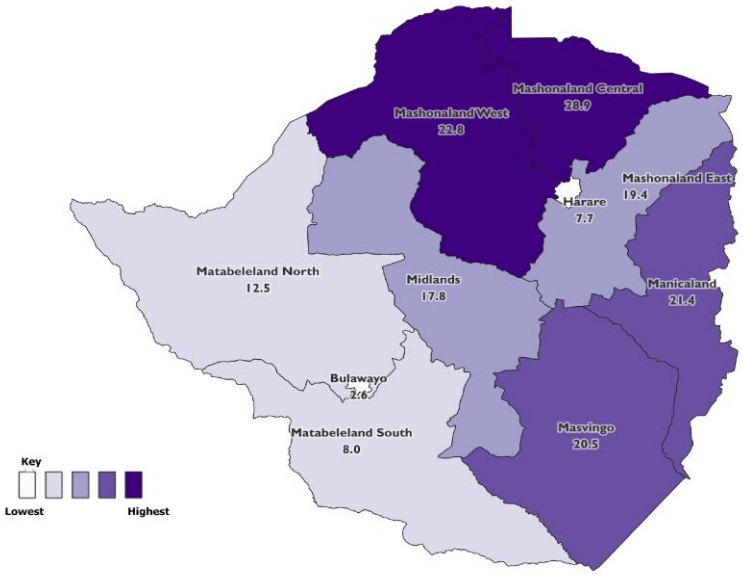

Figure 8: Proportion of Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 18 years by Province

Women Age 20-24 Years Married Before Age 15 years by Rural/Urban Areas

Figure 9 shows that one percent of women age 20-24 years were in union before the age of 15 years. The proportion was higher, at 1.6 percent in rural areas as compared to 0.3 percent in urban areas.

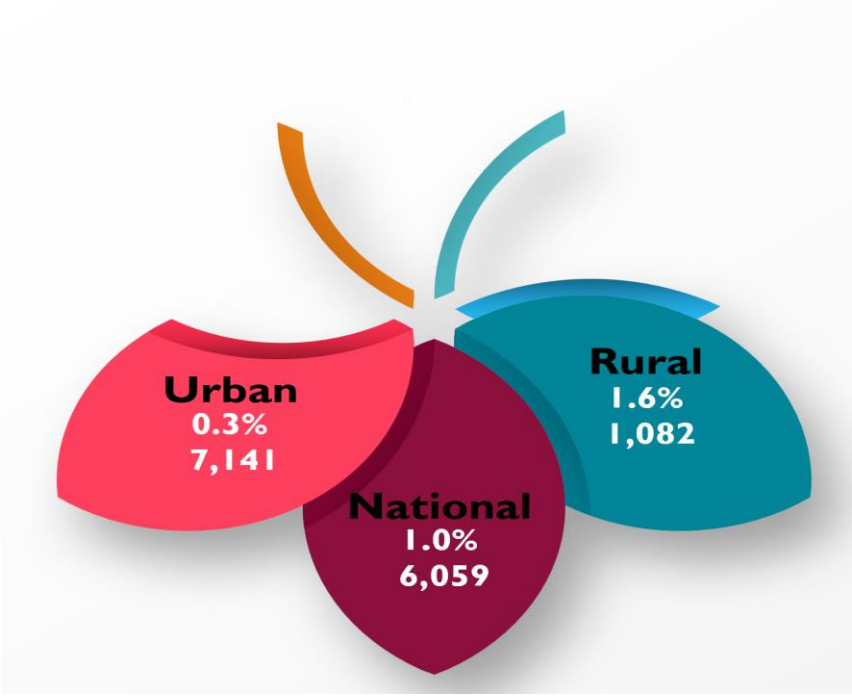

Figure 9: Proportion of Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 15 years by Rural/Urban Areas

Women Age 20-24 Years Married Before Age 15 years by Province

Figure 10 shows the proportion of women age 20-24 years who were married before the age of 15 years by province. The proportion was 2.2 percent for Mashonaland Central province, 1.7 percent for Manicaland province and 0.3 percent for Matabeleland South province.

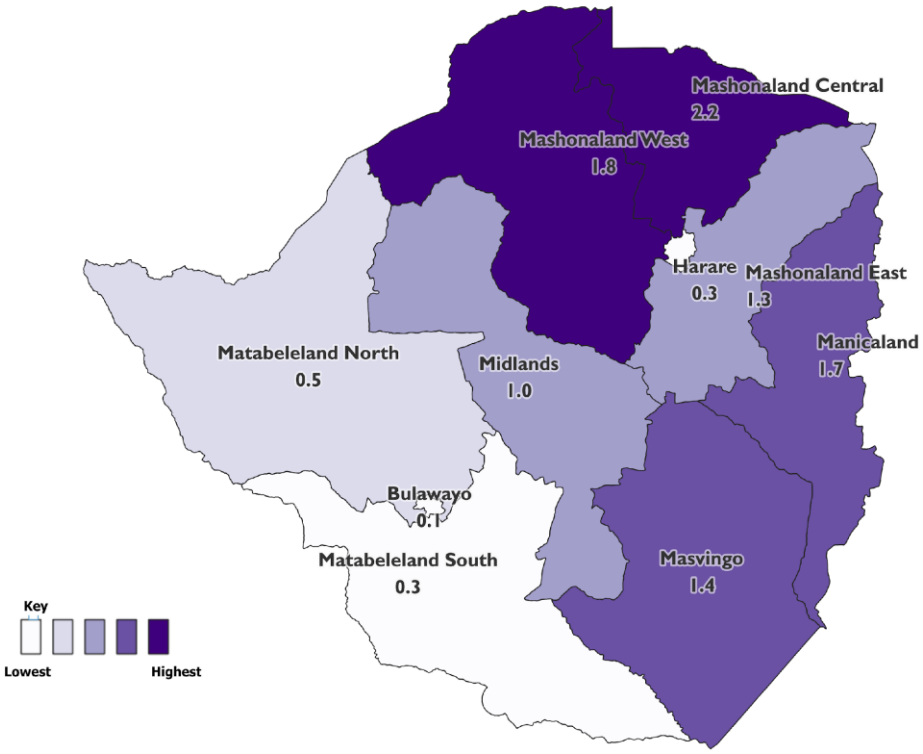

Figure 10: Proportion of Women Age 20-24 years Married Before Age 15 years by Province

Birth Registration by Rural/Urban Areas

Birth registration is required for a child as it forms his or her first legal proof of identity. A birth is said to be registered if a child is issued with a birth certificate from the Registrar General's Department. Figure 11 shows the proportion of infant registered births by rural and urban areas. At national level, the proportion of registered births was 19.1 percent. The proportion was 28.3 percent for urban areas and 13.7 percent for rural areas.

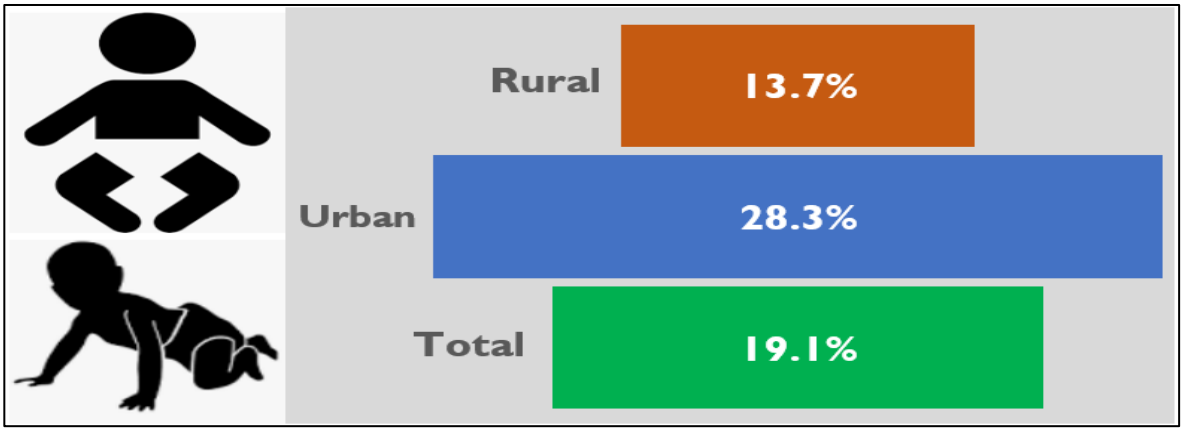

Figure 11: Proportion of Registered Births by Rural/Urban Areas

Birth Registration by Province

Proportion of infant registered births ranged from 14.7 percent in Mashonaland Central province to 35.1 percent in Masvingo province *(Figure 12)*.

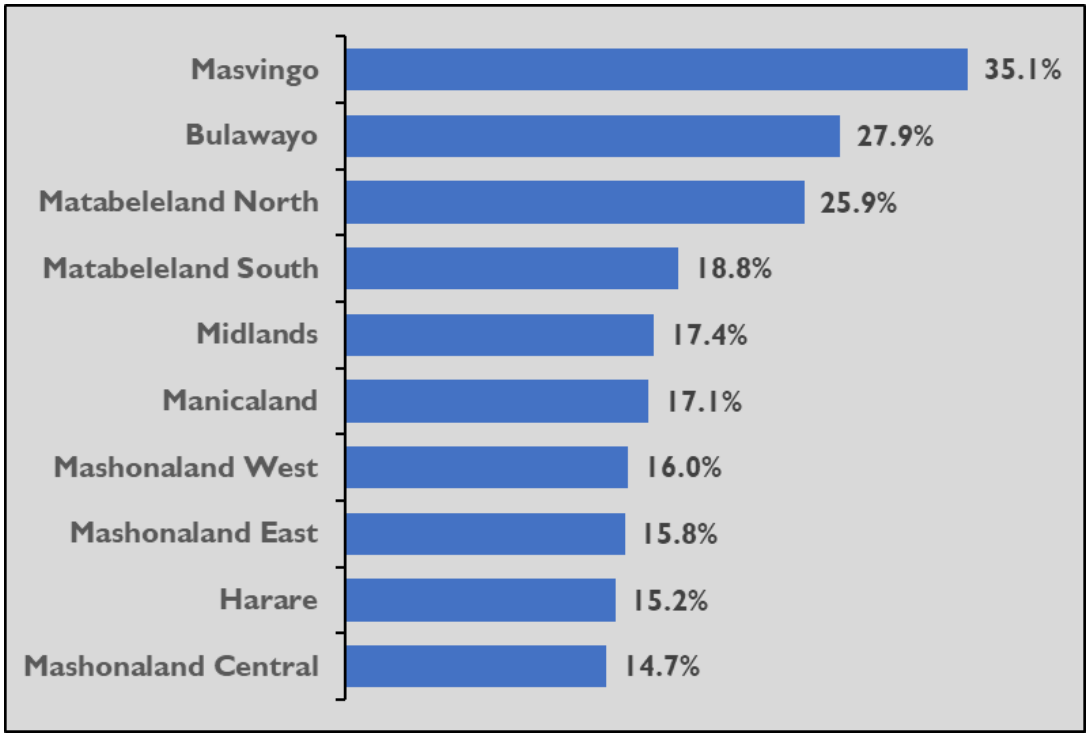

Figure 12: Proportion of Registered Births by Province