



## Zimbabweans strongly favour free cross-border movement but hold mixed views of SADC

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 113 | Stephen Ndoma**

### Summary

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) counts among its 15 member states<sup>1</sup> the region's richest country (South Africa) as well as some of its poorest; landlocked as well as island states; and states with some of the largest populations in Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) as well as some of the smallest (Seychelles).

As a SADC member, Zimbabwe would expect to benefit from stronger socio-economic and political ties in the region, including free movement of people and goods across international borders and regional assistance in times of need. But regionalization can also create dilemmas for member states, as when issues touch on questions of national sovereignty.

This dispatch uses Afrobarometer Round 6 data from 11 SADC countries to explore Zimbabweans' views on some aspects of regionalization. Findings show that Zimbabwe leads the region in support for free cross-border movement. Yet almost half of Zimbabweans say they encounter difficulties in crossing international borders. Zimbabweans also express above-average support for states' role in protecting democracy and human rights in neighbouring countries, although half of citizens still emphasize national sovereignty over such a regional responsibility. Despite relatively strong support for regional integration, only one in 10 Zimbabweans think that the SADC helps their country "a lot."

### Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. After five rounds of surveys between 1999 and 2013, results of Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being published. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200 or 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Zimbabwe, led by Mass Public Opinion Institute, interviewed 2,400 adult Zimbabweans in November 2014. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Zimbabwe in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, and 2012.

<sup>1</sup> SADC member states are Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Afrobarometer has conducted surveys in all these countries except Angola, DRC, and Seychelles. For analysis purposes, Afrobarometer includes Tanzania in East Africa rather than Southern Africa.

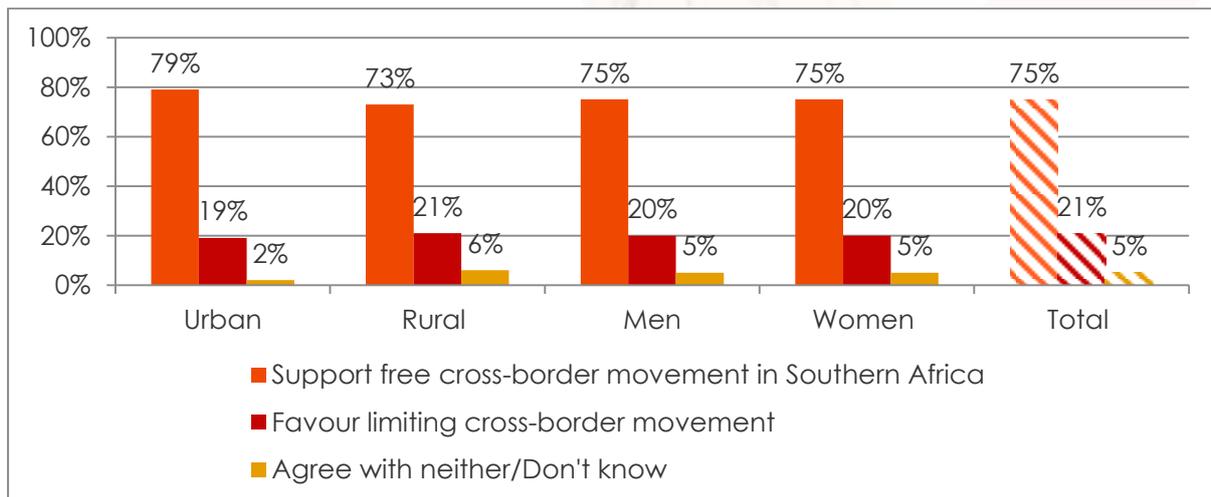
## Key findings

- Three-fourths (75%) of Zimbabweans think that people living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries. This is the highest level of support for free movement in the SADC – twice as high as in Namibia and Botswana.
- Almost half (48%) of Zimbabweans say it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries. Regionally, Lesotho has the highest proportion of citizens (71%) who report difficulties in crossing borders.
- Zimbabwe has the highest proportion of advocates for regional intervention in domestic affairs of SADC member states (45%), while majorities in nine SADC countries instead emphasize respect for national sovereignty.
- Only one in 10 Zimbabweans say the SADC helps their country “a lot” (9%), while twice as many say the SADC “does nothing” (18%). Almost three in 10 (29%) say they don’t know enough about the SADC to evaluate its helpfulness.

## Support for free movement across borders

Free cross-border movement of people and goods within the region is a core goal of the SADC. Three-fourths (75%) of Zimbabweans “agree” or “agree very strongly” with this goal, while one-fifth (21%) think governments should be able to protect their citizens by limiting cross-border movement of people and goods. More urbanites (79%) than rural residents (73%) favour free movement (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Free movement across borders in Southern Africa | by urban-rural residence and sex | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: People living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.

Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.

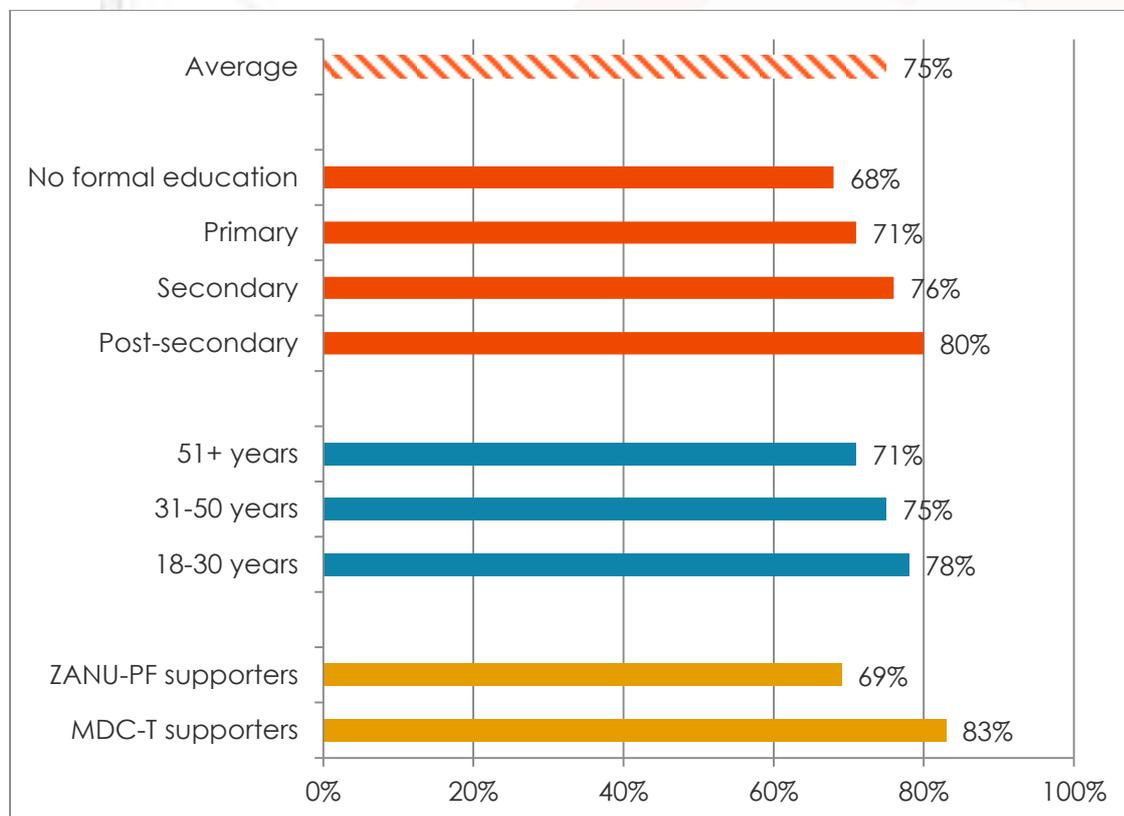
(% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Support for free international movement of people and goods across international borders increases with respondents' education level, 68% of those with no formal education to 80% of those with post-secondary education. It is also the majority view across all age groups, favoured most strongly by the youngest respondents (78%) (Figure 2).

A majority of supporters of both major political parties<sup>2</sup> subscribe to the notion of free movement across international borders, although the view is more widespread among supporters of the MDC-T (83%) than the ZANU-PF (69%).

Regionally, Zimbabwe leads the field in advocates for free international movement, followed by Swaziland (68%), while Namibia boasts the highest proportion of citizens (60%) in favour of limiting free international movement of people and goods (Figure 3). In South Africa, Lesotho, and Zambia, public opinion is almost evenly split on the issue.

**Figure 2: Free movement across borders in Southern Africa | by education level, age, and political party affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

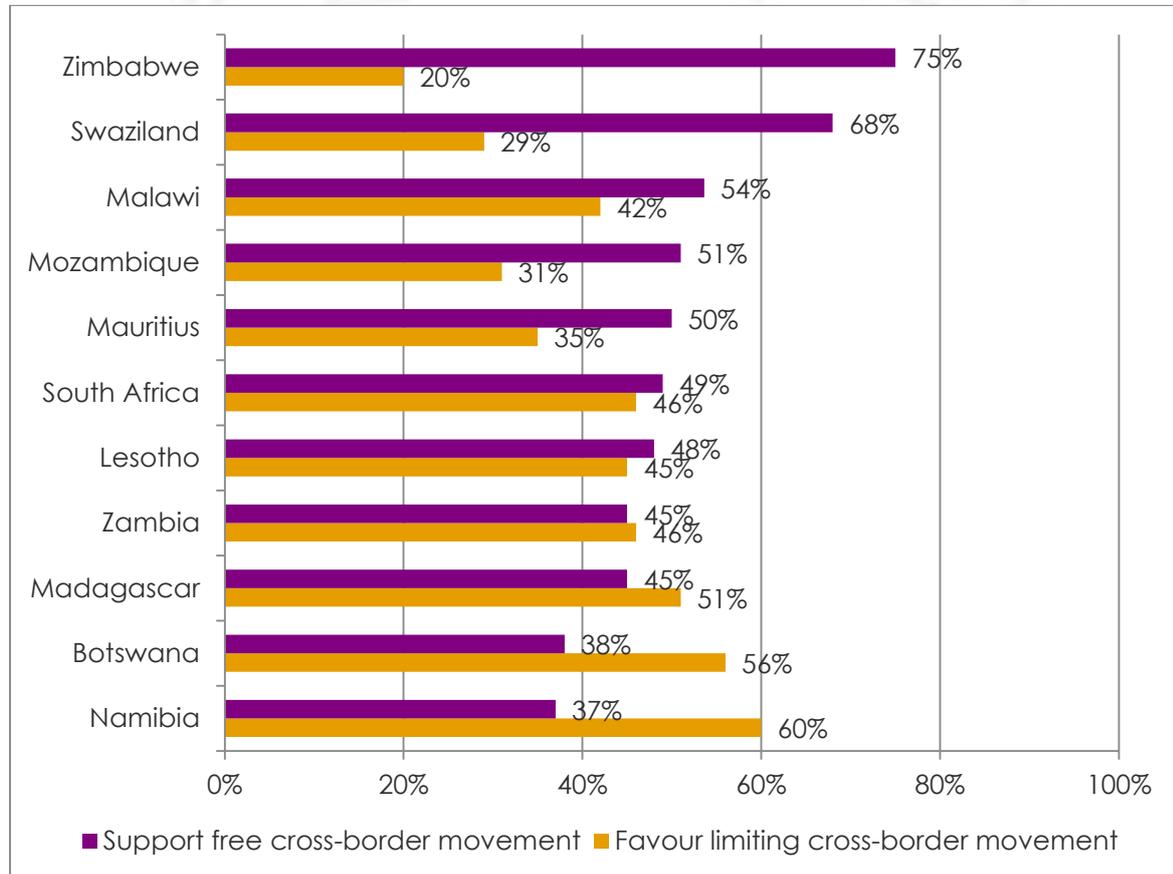
Statement 1: People living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.

Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that people should be able to move freely)

<sup>2</sup> Party affiliation is determined by responses to the questions, "Do you feel close to any particular political party?" and, if yes, "Which party is that?"

**Figure 3: Free movement across borders in Southern Africa | 11 SADC member states | 2014/2015**



(% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

### Difficulty of crossing borders in Southern Africa

Asked how easy or difficult it is for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, almost half of Zimbabweans (48%) say it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to do so. This view is fairly consistent regardless of gender and urban vs. rural residence (Figure 4).

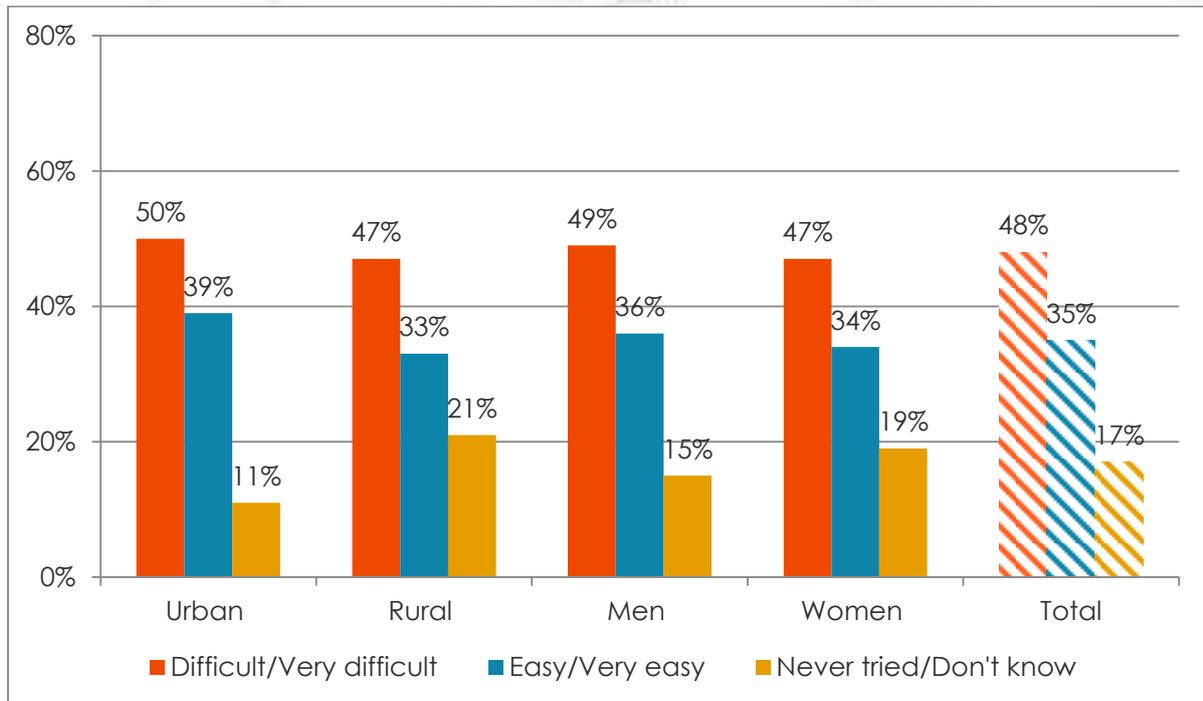
The sentiment that it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to cross international borders increases with respondents’ level of education, ranging from 37% of those with no formal education to 54% of post-secondary graduates. It is also more common among citizens in the middle age range (31-50 years) than among younger and older citizens (Figure 5).

A provincial breakdown shows that Matabeleland South province has the highest proportion of citizens (61%) who say they find it difficult to cross international borders in the region, compared to only 36% and 38% in Mashonaland West and East, respectively (Table 1).

For the region, three of 11 countries have majorities saying it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to cross international borders: Lesotho (71%), Malawi (57%), and Swaziland (55%) (Table 2). On the other hand, pluralities in Botswana (41%), South Africa (40%), and Namibia (39%) say they find it “easy” or “very easy” to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other

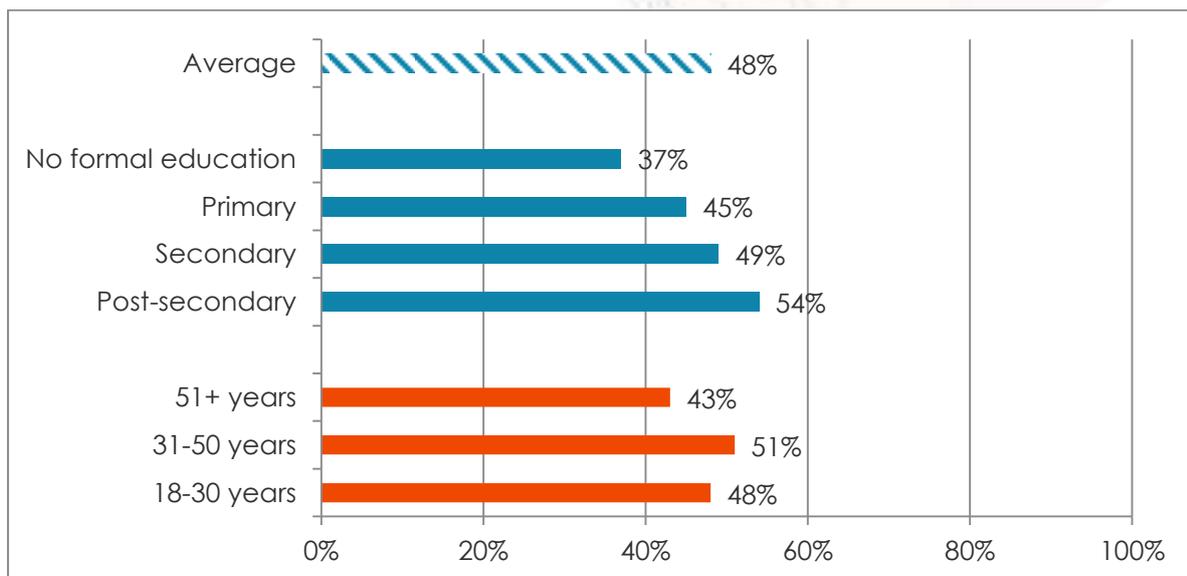
countries. Substantial proportions of the population – up to 38% in Mozambique – say they “don’t know” or have never tried to cross an international border.

**Figure 4: Difficulty of crossing international borders in SADC | by urban- rural residence and sex | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?

**Figure 5: Difficulty of crossing borders | by education level and age | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "difficult" or "very difficult")

**Table 1: Difficulty of crossing borders | by province | Zimbabwe | 2014**

	Difficult/ Very difficult	Easy/ Very easy	Never tried/ Don't know
Matabeleland South	61%	25%	14%
Harare	55%	35%	9%
Midlands	52%	24%	24%
Mashonaland Central	52%	41%	20%
Bulawayo	50%	48%	8%
Masvingo	50%	30%	2%
Matabeleland North	46%	39%	17%
Manicaland	43%	33%	15%
Mashonaland East	38%	28%	24%
Mashonaland West	36%	51%	34%

**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

**Table 2: Difficulty of crossing borders | 11 SADC member states | 2014/2015**

	Difficult/ Very difficult	Easy/ Very easy	Never tried/ Don't know
Lesotho	71%	18%	11%
Malawi	57%	25%	18%
Swaziland	55%	32%	13%
Zimbabwe	48%	35%	17%
Mauritius	46%	23%	31%
Madagascar	45%	40%	15%
Zambia	41%	36%	24%
Mozambique	39%	22%	38%
Botswana	35%	41%	24%
South Africa	33%	40%	27%
Namibia	31%	39%	30%

**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

### Regional intervention in domestic affairs of member states

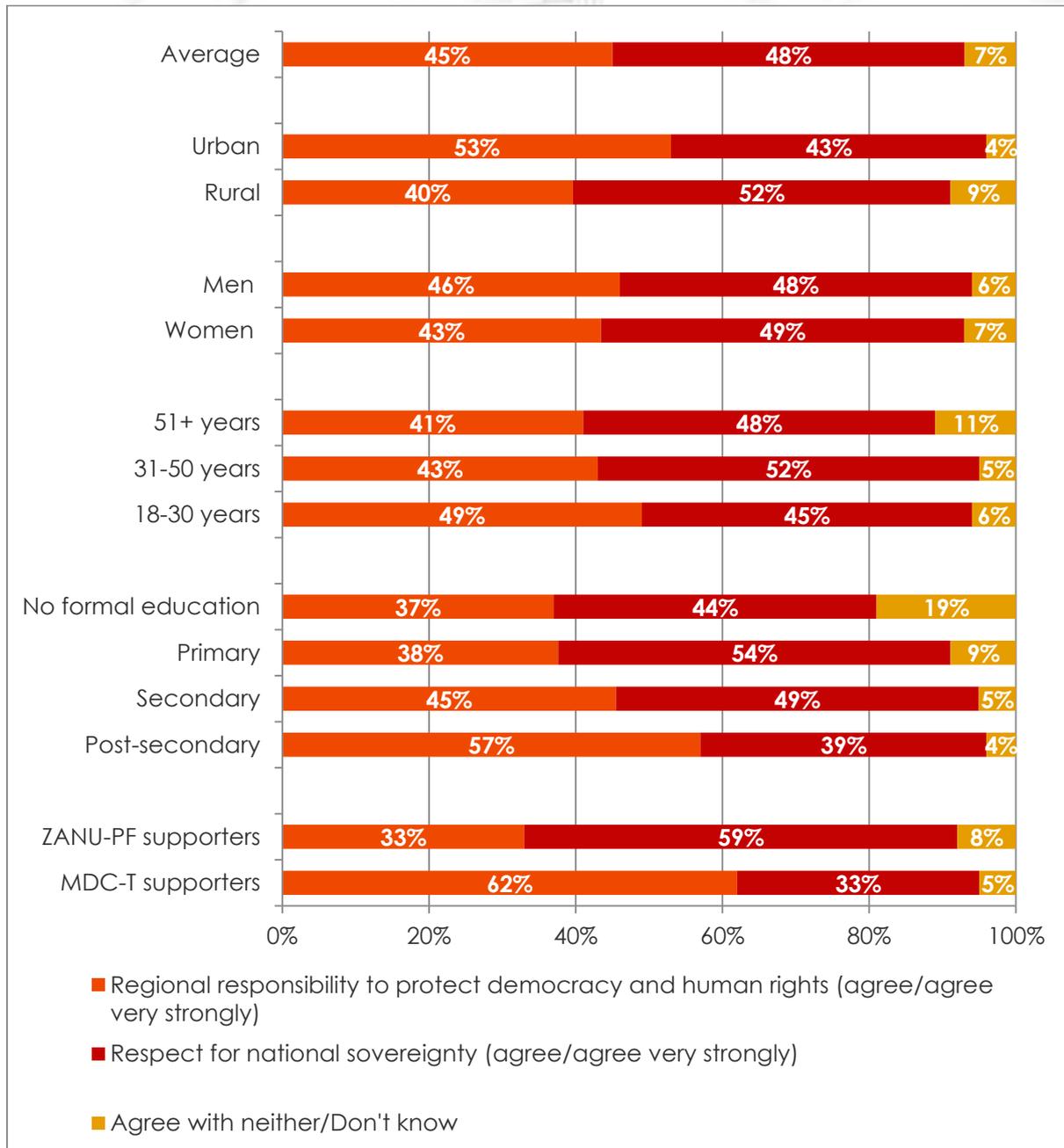
To gauge attitudes regarding regional political interdependence, Afrobarometer asked citizens to choose between two scenarios:

1. *The governments of each country in Southern Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions, or military force.*
2. *Each country in this region should respect the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.*

As Figure 6 shows, Zimbabweans are divided in their views: 45% "agree" or "agree very strongly" with a regional responsibility to protect democracy and human rights, while 48% emphasize respect of national sovereignty. Regional intervention finds greater support

among urban residents (53%) than rural residents (40%). Men and women hold similar views on this issue.

**Figure 6: Regional responsibility vs. national sovereignty** | by urban-rural residence, sex, age, education level, and political party affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: The governments of each country in Southern Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions, or military force.

Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of the other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

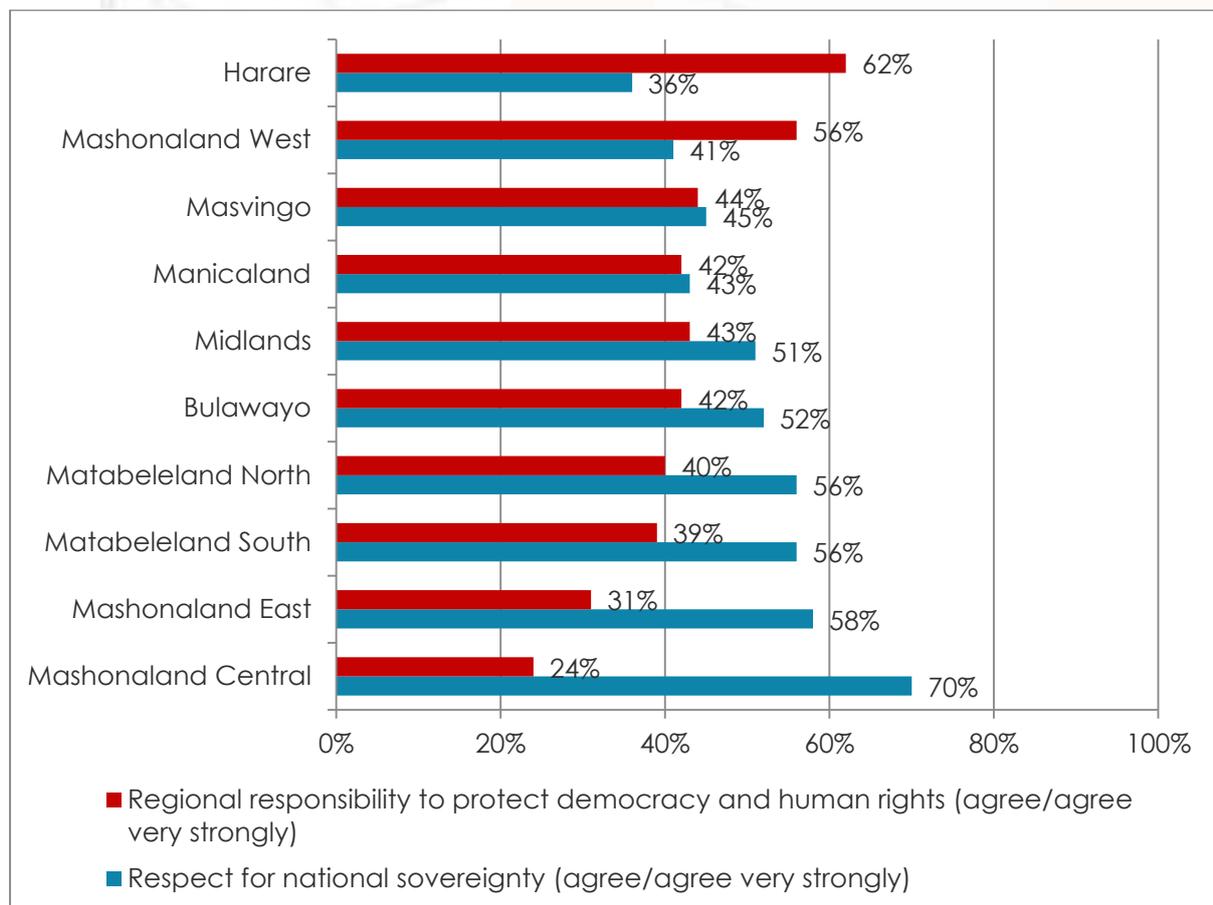
Support for regional intervention is stronger among better-educated citizens, ranging from 37% among those with no formal education to 57% of post-secondary graduates, and among youth compared to older citizens.

By political party affiliation, MDC-T supporters (62%) are almost twice as likely as ZANU-PF supporters (33%) to share the view that other countries have a responsibility to prevent abuses.

Support for regional intervention is the majority view in Harare (62%) and Mashonaland West (56%) provinces, while emphasis on respect for national sovereignty is strongest in Mashonaland Central (70%) (Figure 7).

Zimbabwe leads SADC countries in support for states' regional role in protecting democracy and human rights, followed closely by Malawi and Swaziland (each 43%). At the other extreme, more than three-fourths of Malagasy (78%) and Namibians (76%) emphasize respect for national sovereignty (Table 3).

**Figure 7: Regional responsibility vs. national sovereignty | by province | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: The governments of each country in Southern Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions, or military force.

Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of the other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

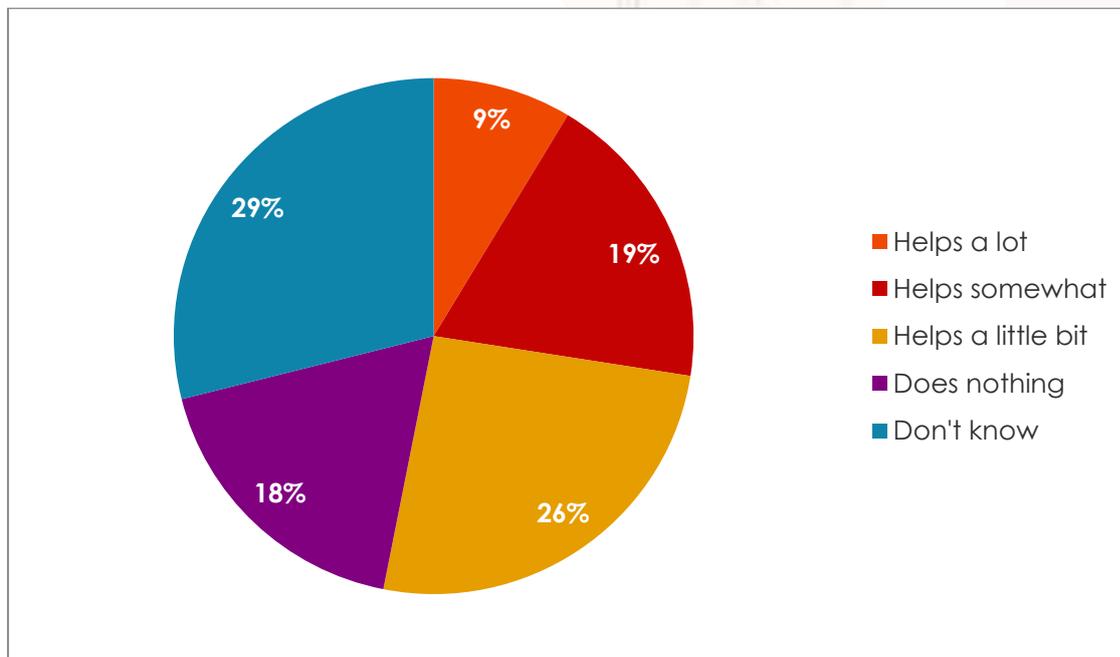
**Table 3: Regional responsibility vs. national sovereignty** | 11 SADC member states  
 | 2014/2015

	Support regional responsibility	Emphasize national sovereignty	Agree with neither/Don't know
Zimbabwe	45%	48%	7%
Malawi	43%	50%	7%
Swaziland	43%	50%	7%
Lesotho	34%	54%	12%
Botswana	34%	59%	7%
Mozambique	33%	49%	18%
Zambia	30%	61%	9%
South Africa	30%	65%	5%
Mauritius	30%	56%	15%
Namibia	22%	76%	1%
Madagascar	19%	78%	3%

### Perceived helpfulness of SADC to Zimbabwe

Given Zimbabweans' relatively strong support for regional integration, how do citizens view the contributions that the SADC makes to their country's development? Only one in 10 respondents (9%) say that the SADC helps their country "a lot," while two in 10 (19%) say it helps "somewhat" (Figure 8). Almost two in 10 (18%) say the SADC "does nothing." Almost three in 10 (29%) say they don't know enough about the SADC to evaluate its helpfulness.

**Figure 8: Perceived helpfulness of SADC** | Zimbabwe | 2014



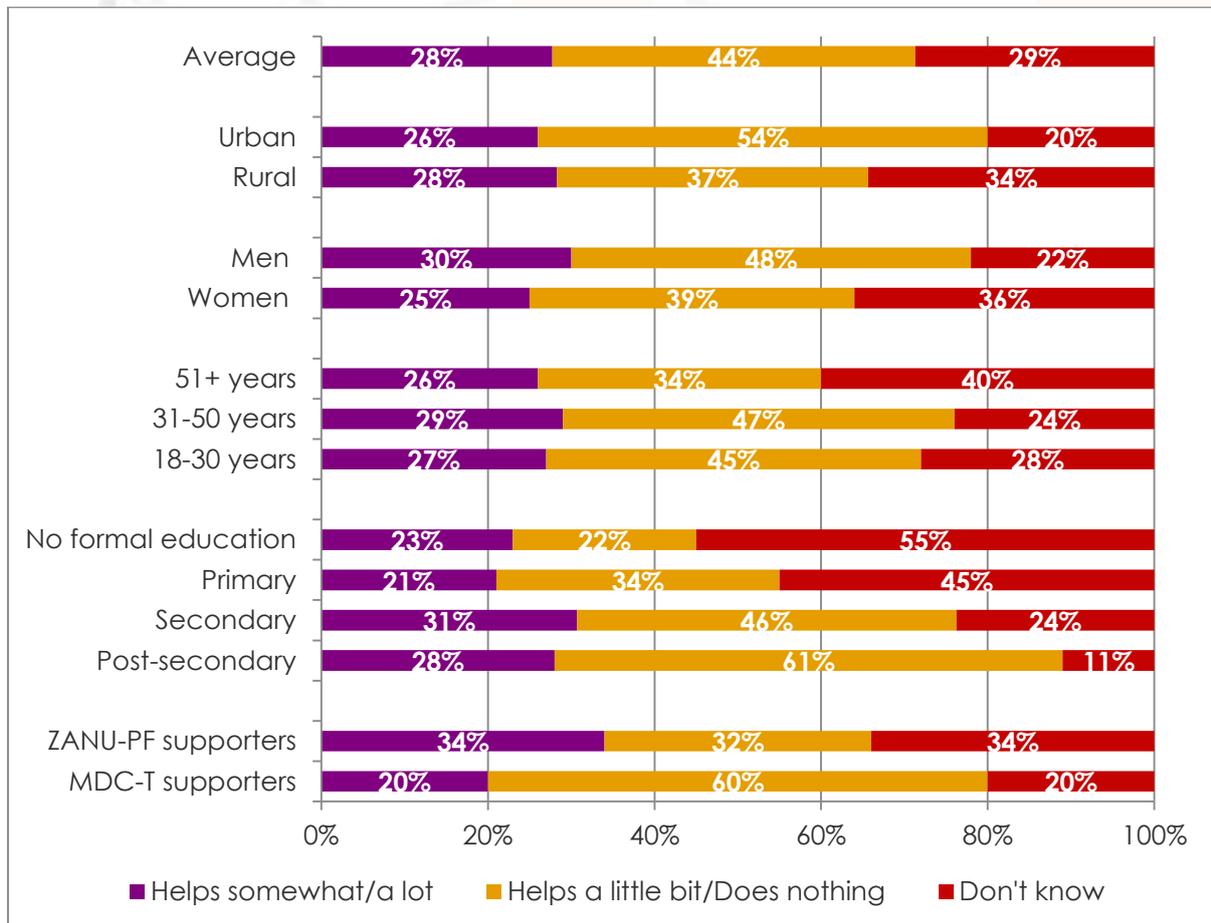
**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: The Southern African Development Community, SADC?*

As shown in Figure 9, urban residents are more likely than rural residents to say that the regional economic community “does nothing” or provides just “a little bit” of assistance to Zimbabwe (54% vs. 37%). Men are more likely than women to hold this view (48% vs. 39%). Rural residents and women are more likely to profess ignorance on this question than urbanites and men.

More than six in 10 post-secondary graduates (61%) feel that the regional bloc does “nothing” or only “a little bit” in terms of helping the country, compared to 22% of those with no formal education (more than half of whom say they don’t know).

MDC-T supporters are harsher than ZANU-PF supporters in their assessment of SADC assistance: 60% of MDC-T adherents say the regional organisation does nothing or just a little to help the country, compared to 32% of ZANU-PF supporters. One can speculate that allegations of biased mediation by SADC at the height of Zimbabwe’s political crisis in 2008 might have shaped perceptions of the supporters of the two main political parties.

**Figure 9: Perceived helpfulness of SADC** | by urban-rural residence, sex, age, education level, and political party affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: Southern Africa Development Community, SADC?*

Mashonaland Central province (a ZANU-PF stronghold) recorded the highest proportion of respondents (35%) who say the regional bloc helps the country somewhat or a lot (Table 4). The view that the SADC does nothing or just a little is highest in Harare metropolitan province

(60%), while Matabeleland North province has the highest percentage of citizens (69%) who profess ignorance on the matter.

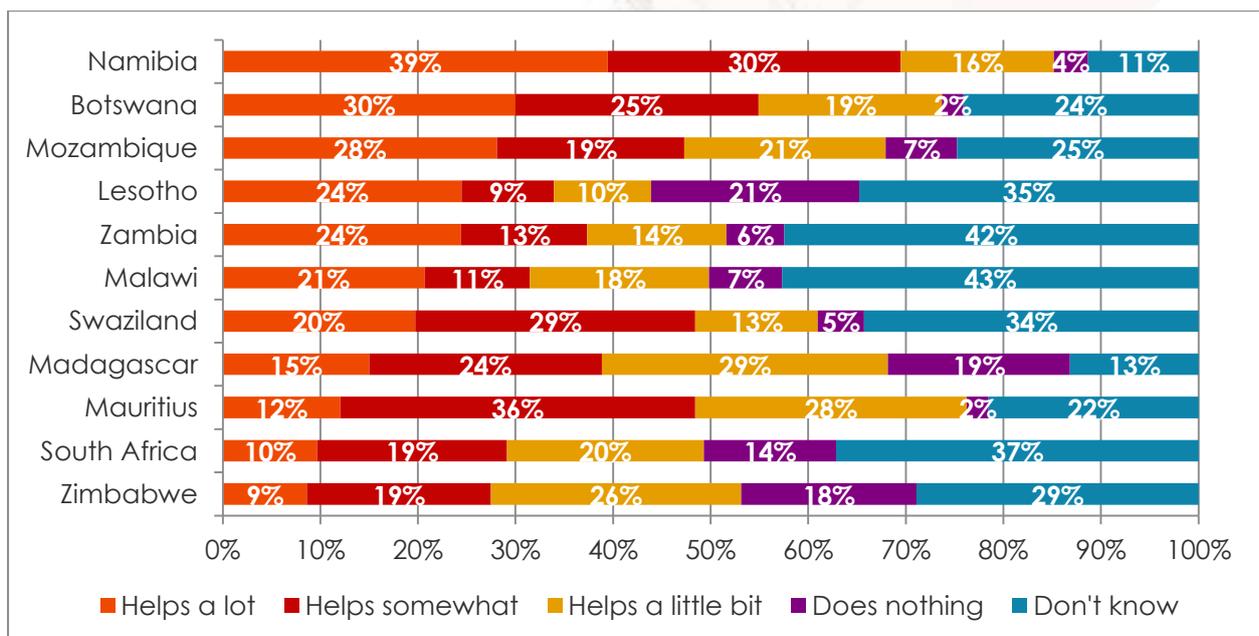
Among SADC countries that were surveyed, Zimbabwe has the smallest proportion of citizens who see the regional organisation as helping “a lot” (9%) (Figure 10). Of note, three of the most unfavourable assessments of SADC assistance come from countries that have experienced internal crises that led the regional bloc to intervene: Madagascar (where 48% say the SADC “does nothing” or helps just “a little bit”), Zimbabwe (44%), and Lesotho (31%).

Only two countries have majorities saying that the SADC helps “somewhat” or “a lot”: Namibia (69%) and Botswana (55%). More than four in 10 respondents say they “don’t know” in Malawi (43%) and Zambia (42%).

**Table 4: Perceived helpfulness of SADC | by province | Zimbabwe | 2014**

	Helps somewhat/ a lot	Does nothing/ Helps a little bit	Don't know
Mashonaland Central	35%	44%	22%
Manicaland	33%	47%	20%
Midlands	32%	32%	36%
Bulawayo	29%	40%	30%
Masvingo	27%	42%	30%
Harare	25%	60%	15%
Mashonaland West	26%	39%	35%
Mashonaland East	22%	49%	29%
Matabeleland South	21%	40%	40%
Matabeleland North	19%	12%	69%

**Figure 10: Perceived helpfulness of SADC | 11 SADC member states | 2014/2015**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: Southern Africa Development Community, SADC?

## Conclusion

Public-opinion data show that Zimbabweans overwhelmingly favour free international movement but often encounter difficulties in trying to cross borders in the region. Opinions are divided as to whether states should assume regional responsibilities for protecting democracy and human rights in neighbouring countries. Despite relatively strong support for regional integration, only one in 10 Zimbabweans think that the SADC helps their country “a lot.”

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To further explore this data, please visit Afrobarometer's online data analysis facility at [www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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