

ZIMBABWE LABOUR MIGRATION TRENDS BRIEF

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► Acknowledgements

The preparation of this *Zimbabwe Labour Migration Trends Brief* was made possible through the support and collaboration of various individuals and organizations.

Data analysis and drafting was carried out by Richard Horne, whose efforts and commitment laid the foundation for this publication. We extend our deepest gratitude to Jesse Mertens, whose supervision and guidance provided invaluable direction throughout this project.

Special thanks are due to Theo Sparreboom, Maria Payet, and Nancy Achieng-Odhiambo for their insightful reviews and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this report.

We are grateful to Lucia Rodrigues and Sheila Ngoveni for their indispensable administrative assistance throughout the process. Thanks also go to Makungu Baloyi, whose editing, formatting, and publishing support ensured the professional presentation of this report.

We acknowledge Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency for generously providing the microdata that informed the analysis in this report. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the European Union, whose funding of the Southern African Migration Project (SAMM) made this work possible.

► Executive summary

This Zimbabwe Labour Migration Trends Report has been prepared under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project. The report presents an overview of international labour migration statistics (ILMS) in Zimbabwe. It assesses the strengths and limitations of the available data sources for Zimbabwe that could be used for understanding ILMS in the country.

From the assessment it is clear that there are noticeable challenges in relying mainly on administrative data, survey data and census data. Thus, to improve data availability on ILMS in Zimbabwe, the following are a summary of potential steps for Zimbabwe to improve its labour migration statistics:

- Use SADC and ILO standards for labour market statistics as a benchmark for coverage and attempt to fill data gaps, including for previous years.
- Identify new and alternative sources of data, particularly administrative data from other ministries and stakeholders.
- Encourage the use of labour migration statistics, including from the ILMS database, to help raise awareness of its value and importance for policymaking.
- Identify capacity gaps for data compilation and analysis of international labour migration statistics, and seek support, including from the ILO.

Based on the available data for Zimbabwe, the report analyses and presents the following findings on labour migration trends in Zimbabwe;

- Migrants and non-migrants in Zimbabwe are mostly in self-employment.
- The Zimbabwean working age population tends to have higher education levels than the migrant working age population.
- Migrants in Zimbabwe are most often employed in the agricultural sector or in the services sector.
- Zambians compared to other migrants in Zimbabwe have the highest EPRs.

1. Introduction and Methodology

Zimbabwe has a long history of labour migration and has served as origin, transit and destination for migrants. However, this has come with numerous challenges, including brain drain, irregular migration, limited mechanisms for social protection of migrant workers and lack of up-to-date statistics on labour migration. Additionally, most Zimbabweans migrant workers are in jobs with poor employment contracts and social protection, have exploitative wages, long working hours and often lack union representation.¹ Therefore, to protect Zimbabwean migrant population, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) developed a National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) as a means of ensuring decent working conditions of migrant workers, including social protection.

Notably, the country has also faced several challenges over the years which affected labour market conditions and the country's economic growth, in particular the quality and quantity of employment.

In this context this report contributes to knowledge and understanding of labour migration and its trends in Zimbabwe. It was prepared under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project. The SAMM project is an inter-agency project with an overall objective to improve migration management in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region.

The methodological framework used in the report is primarily desk research and involved;

- ▶ Mapping of available and potential International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) data sources which involved manual extraction of indicator dialogue using R and excel add ins, and
- ▶ Analysis of available data on ILMS

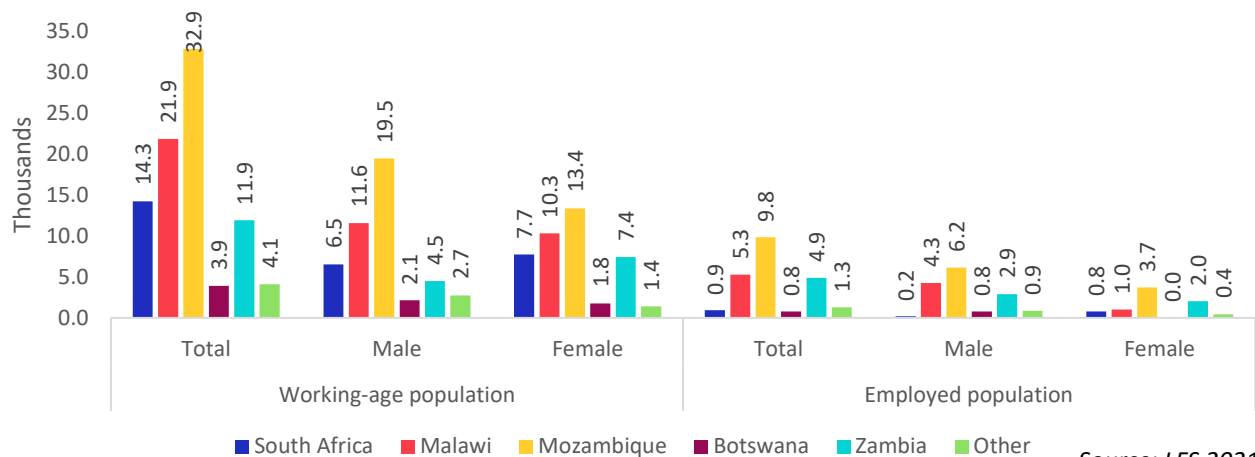
2. Analysis of Labour Migration Trends in Zimbabwe

There are different data sources available for analysing and understanding labour migration trends in Zimbabwe. In this summary report, the data sources used were population censuses, administrative records, household surveys (i.e., labour force surveys and establishment surveys) and the ILO ILMS database.

¹ National Labour Migration Policy for Zimbabwe. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/national-labour-migration-policy-for-zimbabwe.pdf>

2.1. Labour Migration Trends

Figure 1: Total migrant working-age population (WAP) and employed population, by country of origin and sex (thousands)

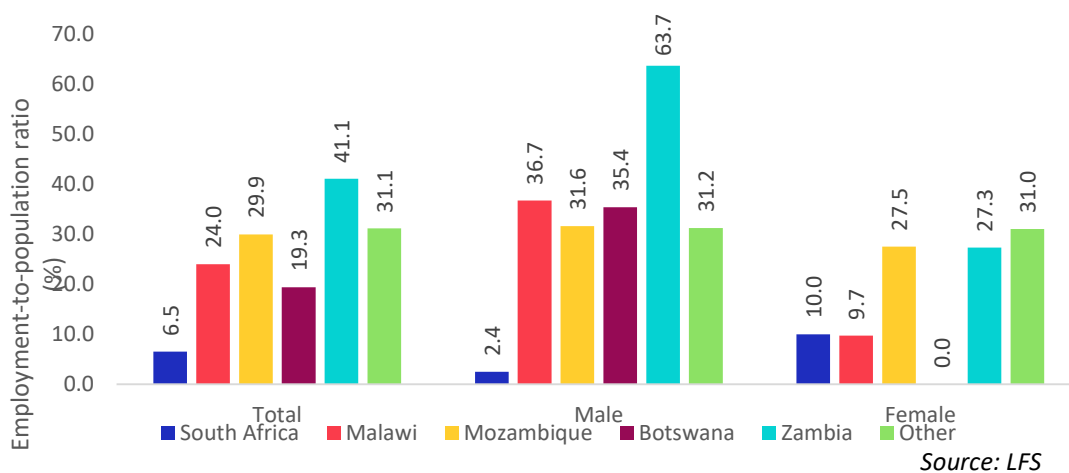


Source: LFS 2021

Figure 1 shows that in Zimbabwe, Mozambicans have the largest working-age population (WAP, 32.9 thousand) followed by Malawians (21.9 thousand), whereas the Batswana's have the smallest WAP (3.9 thousand). There are more working-age South African and Zambian women in Zimbabwe than men. The reverse is true for Malawians, Mozambicans and Batswana.

Additionally, there are more migrant men in employment than women in Zimbabwe, with Mozambique representing the largest country of origin among all employed migrants.

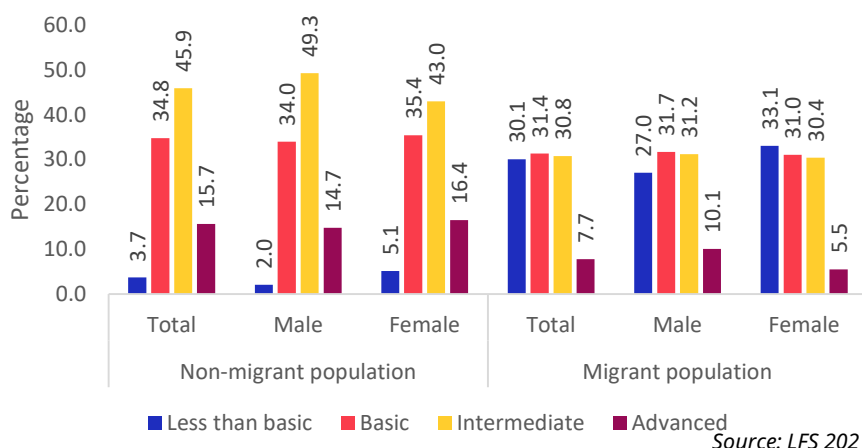
Figure 2: Employment-to-population ratios (EPR), by country of origin and sex



Source: LFS

In terms of Employment-to-Population Ratio (EPR, Figure 2), Zambians have the highest EPR (41,1 per cent), while South Africans have the lowest EPR (6,5 per cent). Given the high number of working-age South Africans in Zimbabwe and their low EPR, there is a considerable population of South Africans in Zimbabwe outside the labour force or unemployed. Migrant men are more likely to be employed than migrant women.

Figure 3: Composition of total working-age population (15+) by educational attainment and sex



There are considerable differences in educational composition between the migrant and non-migrant populations (Figure 3). The non-migrant WAP has only a small share (3.7 per cent) of people with less than basic education, in comparison to the migrant WAP. Most have a basic (34.8 per cent) or intermediate (45.9 per cent) level, especially among men, while a higher share of women have attained an advanced level of education. Almost one-third of the migrant WAP has less than a basic level of education, suggesting that low educated workers from countries that neighbour Zimbabwe likely find informal employment as cross-border traders or casual workers.

In terms of sectoral employment composition (Figure 4), there are more people employed in the agricultural sector both for migrants (53.6 per cent) and non-migrants (55.6 per cent) compared to the other sectors. However, migrant workers are less prevalent in industrial sectors, suggesting there is a bimodal distribution of low skilled migrant workers in the agricultural sector, and highly educated, skilled migrant workers in the service sector. A similar distribution is seen among non-migrant women.

In terms of status in employment, regardless of migrant status (migrants and non-migrants alike) are mainly in self-employment (Figure 6), with more women compared to men in self-employment. However, more migrant women are in wage employment than non-migrant women, suggesting that migrant women are more likely to have sufficient skills to find more secure, formal jobs than non-migrant women.

Figure 4: Composition of employed population, by broad sector group and sex

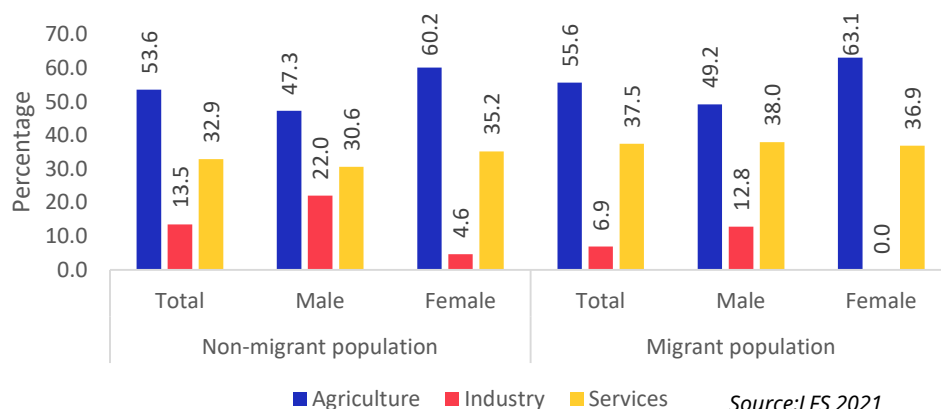
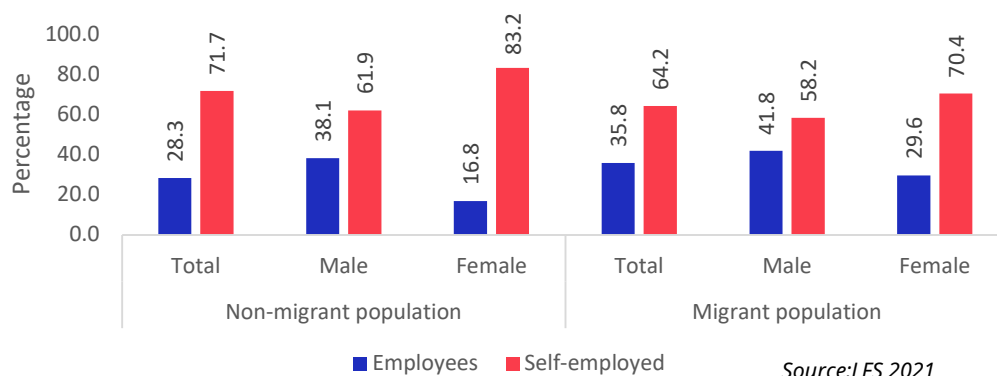


Figure 5: Composition of employed population, by status in employment and sex



3. Conclusions

Zimbabwe is usually seen as a country of emigration. Many Zimbabweans work in neighbouring countries, especially in South Africa, often informally, to support families back home, or to evade a challenging economic context. However, workers also migrate to Zimbabwe, and from the limited statistical information available on labour migration, it is possible to conclude that these represent a typically bimodal distribution of low-wage, low-skill, vulnerable self-employment on one side and highly skilled, more secure employment on the other. By observing the differences in trends of employment between migrant and non-migrant workers, politicians, policymakers, academics, and workers can gain a better understanding of gaps in the labour market, where demand for employment is being met by migrant workers, or where conditions are not attractive enough to non-migrant workers to seek employment.

Compiling labour migration statistics is essential to understand labour migration dynamics in Zimbabwe. However, the process is characterized by certain challenges such as data availability and frequency. Policymakers can address these shortcomings by including more detailed labour migration indicators in their statistical data collection and reporting, using the tools and standards

provided by, for example, SADC as well as ILO. SADC has endorsed a labour migration module to be included in labour force surveys, to standardize available statistics on labour migration in the SADC region. At the same time, SADC is working together with ILO and the SAMM Project to implement a regional Labour Market Observatory, where labour market statistics and indicators (conforming to ILO statistical standards), including labour migration statistics, are collated and made publicly available.



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