



THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN MIGRATION PROGRAMME

HEADING NORTH: THE  
ZIMBABWEAN DIASPORA  
IN CANADA

MIGRATION POLICY SERIES NO. 62

HEADING NORTH:  
THE ZIMBABWEAN DIASPORA  
IN CANADA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Studies of the Zimbabwean diaspora tend to focus on migrants in South Africa and the United Kingdom. This is the first major study of Zimbabwean migration to Canada. The report presents and discusses the findings of a SAMP survey conducted across Canada in 2010. It first discusses the recent history of migration from Zimbabwe to Canada and then provides a demographic and socio-economic profile of the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada. The report also examines the linkages that Zimbabweans in Canada maintain with Zimbabwe, and the potential for return migration.

According to the 2006 Canadian Census, there were 8,040 Zimbabwe-born people in Canada, comprising 6,525 immigrants (permanent residents and naturalized citizens) and 1,515 non-permanent residents (students and temporary workers). Immediately after independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, there was an increase in migration to Canada. The numbers rose briefly again in the late 1980s and then remained relatively low and stable for most of the 1990s. In other words, although emigration from Zimbabwe increased in the 1990s as economic prospects deteriorated, only a small number moved to Canada. This changed dramatically after 2000.

Between 2003 and 2009, at least 400 Zimbabweans per annum were granted permanent residence in Canada. The peak year was 2004, when 1,456 Zimbabweans became permanent residents. Prior to 2000, most Zimbabwean migrants to Canada entered in the economic immigration class. After 2002, refugees came to dominate the inflow.

Ontario is by far the most popular destination for Zimbabweans. Between 1980 and 2009, for example, nearly 60% of all immigrants settled first in that province. Other significant populations of Zimbabweans are found in the provinces of Alberta (13% of the total), British Columbia (12%) and Quebec (10%). The Zimbabwean population in Canada generally settles in major urban centres: over 80% live in cities with populations of more than 350,000. Toronto is the most popular destination with 41% of all immigrants.

Although immigration from Zimbabwe to Canada is dominated by refugees, the survey showed that most possessed good professional qualifications upon entry. For instance, at least 30% had a university degree before leaving Zimbabwe. However, 40% were asked to re-certify or re-train in Canada in order to work in a field for which they were already trained. This highlights the more general problem of recognition of qualifications that foreign-trained professionals face in Canada. After moving to Canada, 70% continued with their formal education. Immigrants to Canada frequently discover that their credentials are less desirable on the job market or they have to settle for significantly less skilled occupations than in their countries of origin. This certainly seems to be the case with Zimbabweans,

with 35% of respondents noting that they are working in a job that does not make full use of their professional qualifications and experience.

Once they have gained entry to Canada, many Zimbabweans acquire more secure status that enables them to stay permanently. Nearly 50% of the respondents indicated that they are now Canadian citizens, while 33% are landed immigrants (permanent residents). The survey presented the respondents with 15 quality-of-life indicators and asked them to consider which country they rated more highly on each indicator. On virtually all of the indicators, Canada was ranked better than Zimbabwe by a significant margin. These included medical services, personal or family safety, future of children, prospects for professional advancement, availability of employment and job security, and level of income. Zimbabwe ranked more highly than Canada on only one indicator: the quality of social life.

Most of the respondents have a significant number of family members still in Zimbabwe: 68% have siblings, 59% have parents and 55% have grandparents in the country. A smaller number have children (16%) and spouses (5%) in Zimbabwe. Despite these family ties, just over half of the respondents (52%) said they had not visited Zimbabwe since moving to Canada. One in five respondents visit Zimbabwe at least once every 2-3 years and a further 27% at least once every 5–10 years. Among those who have visited Zimbabwe at least once since arriving in Canada, the main purpose was for family issues and events. While Zimbabweans in Canada are not frequent visitors to Zimbabwe, this does not mean that they do not maintain links there. For example, 29% have bank accounts, 24% own a house, 19% own land and 8% have investments in Zimbabwe.

Two-thirds of the respondents remit money to Zimbabwe. The average annual amount sent is CAD2,703, similar to that sent by Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom. Nearly one-third send money to Zimbabwe at least once a month. A further 28% remit a few times a year. Over 60% of those remitting send money to close family members while another 20% send money to their extended family. Only 4% said they deposit funds into a bank account for their own future use. Formal channels such as money transfer agencies and banks are the main mechanism for sending money to Zimbabwe. Informal transfer channels are used by only 17%.

Consumption dominates the use of remittances. Over 80% of respondents said that the recipients purchase food with the funds, while other significant uses of remittances include paying for medical expenses, school fees and meeting other household day-to-day expenses. Investment of remittances was not very common: in the previous year only 8% had sent remittances to start or run a business, 7% for savings and 4% to buy property in Zimbabwe.

Diaspora engagement has the potential to address some of the challenges facing Zimbabwe, providing a potential avenue for Zimbabweans in

Canada to contribute to the country's reconstruction. More than half of the survey respondents (55%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they have an important role to play in the development of Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans in Canada clearly maintain strong social, religious and cultural links with each other. There is a strong sense of community among Zimbabweans, especially those in smaller cities, and it is not uncommon to find a large Zimbabwean presence at family events such as birthday celebrations, weddings and funerals. Many also belong to organizations and associations in Canada with Zimbabwean identities or linkages.

The survey found that, given the opportunity, the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada is primed to engage directly in development-related activities. At present, only a minority are involved with development organizations that have links and programmes in Zimbabwe, but there are high levels of interest in activities such as skills transfer through training, educational exchanges, working in Zimbabwe and providing distance teaching via the internet. Financial support would take the form of fundraising for projects in Zimbabwe, investment in business, sending remittances for development projects, and making charitable donations. Economic activities of interest include investment in infrastructure and import and export of goods between Canada and Zimbabwe.

Studies among Zimbabweans in the diaspora elsewhere have shown that two-thirds of those based in the United Kingdom and South Africa are likely to return to Zimbabwe. What is the likelihood of return among Zimbabwean migrants in Canada? The survey respondents were almost equally divided, with 52% indicating that they have given some thought to return and at least 45% saying that they had given no or hardly any thought to the possibility. However, only 8% indicated that it was likely or very likely that they would return to Zimbabwe within two years. The likelihood of return rises to 20% within five years and to 49% at some point in the future. Clearly, Zimbabweans in Canada are worried about the state of Zimbabwe's economy and political environment, and expect things to improve, which would set a platform for their return to the country. The survey suggests that there is unlikely to be a large-scale return movement of the Zimbabwean diaspora in the immediate future. Most Zimbabweans in Canada want to see positive signs of real economic and political change before they would seriously consider returning.

## INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has become a major global migrant-sending country over the past two decades. Although the country began to lose skilled workers and professionals in the 1980s, the magnitude of the post-2000 movement has been unprecedented in scope and volume.<sup>1</sup> Runaway inflation, deepening poverty and political oppression are the main push factors for most Zimbabweans. Migrants from the country now include the skilled and unskilled, men and women, young and old. Migration has become a way of life for many Zimbabweans who play a major role in the survival of their families still in Zimbabwe. As the scale of migration from Zimbabwe continues to rise, concerns have been raised about the long-term impacts on Zimbabwe's chances of economic recovery.<sup>2</sup>

The precise number of people who have left Zimbabwe is not known. Some "guesstimates" put the figure at between 1.5 and 3 million.<sup>3</sup> What is certain is that the Zimbabwean diaspora has grown rapidly and become global in its distribution. In 2001, 192 of the 222 countries reported in the UN Migration Stock database had at least one Zimbabwean migrant. The most common destinations within Africa are South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, while major overseas destinations include Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. Recent migration literature suggests that countries in the South can reap substantial benefits from their citizens abroad through remitting, investment, knowledge and skills transfer, and return migration.<sup>4</sup> Zimbabwe therefore represents an interesting test case for examining emerging ideas about the role of diasporas in the development of their countries of origin.

## LEAVING ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia and once a British colony, was established as an independent republic in 1980 following a protracted war of liberation. Before independence, international population movements consisted largely of whites either leaving or entering the country.<sup>5</sup> The inflow of white immigrants was drastically reduced from the mid-1970s onwards as the independence war escalated. A growing number of white and black Zimbabweans left the country as a direct result of the war. Whites relocated abroad or to apartheid South Africa, while most black Zimbabweans sought refuge in neighbouring states. While the majority of black Zimbabweans in exile returned at independence, the emigration of whites did not cease. Some 50,000 to 60,000 left Zimbabwe in the immediate post-independence period (1980-1984).<sup>6</sup>

Overall, the net migration loss from 1976 to 1987 was 94,357, made up mostly of whites.<sup>7</sup> By 2002, only 46,743 whites (or 0.4% of the national population) were still living in Zimbabwe, down from a peak of 293,000

in 1974. The departure of white professionals in the late 1970s and early 1980s marked the start of Zimbabwe's skills drain, although some of the losses were offset by returning black residents who had acquired training and skills in other countries. The most affected sectors were engineering and its allied fields, medical and related professions, and secondary school education.

A second large-scale movement of skilled Zimbabweans out of the country was triggered by the adverse effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) introduced in 1991.<sup>8</sup> Rising inflation led to an increase in the cost of living while remuneration for workers remained stagnant. For many professionals, emigration was the only solution to maintaining a decent standard of living. The health and education sectors, in particular, experienced a significant loss of skilled professionals.<sup>9</sup> The emigration of skills from Zimbabwe intensified after the constitutional referendum and controversial general election of 2000.<sup>10</sup> In 2001, the Zimbabwean government abolished dual citizenship. Holders of dual citizenship (mainly white) were forced to renounce one or other of their citizenships. The legislation was meant to disenfranchise an estimated 30,000 white Zimbabweans, but it also affected more than two million Zimbabweans who were descendants of Mozambican, Zambian, Malawian or South African parents or grandparents.<sup>11</sup>

Zimbabwe's economy had been on a sharp downward trend since the 1990s and opponents of the ruling party, who mostly belonged to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, became targets of state-sponsored violence. Political violence, coupled with large-scale land expropriation from white commercial farmers, resulted in economic meltdown, hyperinflation and intensified pressures to emigrate.<sup>12</sup> Deteriorating economic and political conditions led to the departure of many skilled and unskilled workers from the country. Most departures were for destinations within Southern Africa and the United Kingdom, but there was a marked growth in migration to the United States, Canada and Australia as well.

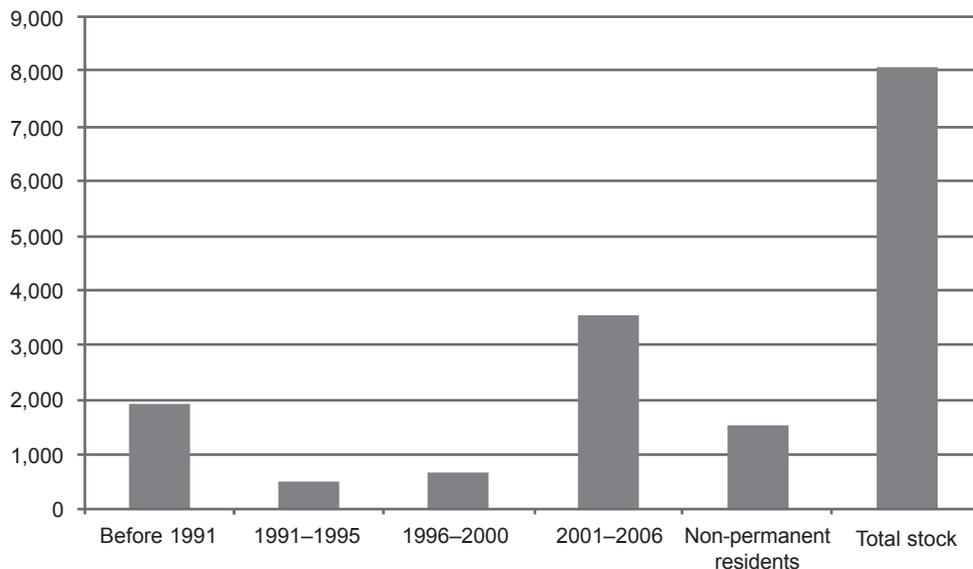
While the political and economic environment is largely responsible for the recent surge in skilled migration from Zimbabwe, demand-side factors have also played an important role. Zimbabweans possess desirable skills and were first in line to take advantage of the de-racialization of the South African labour market after apartheid ended in 1994. An aggressive hunt for developing-country skills by recruitment agencies in Europe and North America has also provided avenues and incentives for skilled Zimbabweans to leave.

## ZIMBABWEAN MIGRATION TO CANADA

Tracking Zimbabwean migration to Canada is complicated by the fact that Canadian immigration data are only available from 1980 onwards and therefore exclude the first wave of (white) emigration before independence. Post-1980 data may also under-count the number of Zimbabweans in Canada. Step-migration is relatively common among Zimbabwean professionals who first move to South Africa or the United Kingdom before relocating to North America.<sup>13</sup> Some individuals may spend long periods of time in the intermediate destination and acquire permanent residence or even citizenship there before they move on. As a result, they may not necessarily be classified as Zimbabweans when they move to Canada.

Despite these data limitations, it is still possible to map the contours of the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, there were 8,040 Zimbabweans in Canada, comprising 6,525 immigrants (permanent residents and naturalized citizens) and 1,515 non-permanent residents (students and temporary workers) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Zimbabwean Immigrants in Canada, 2006**

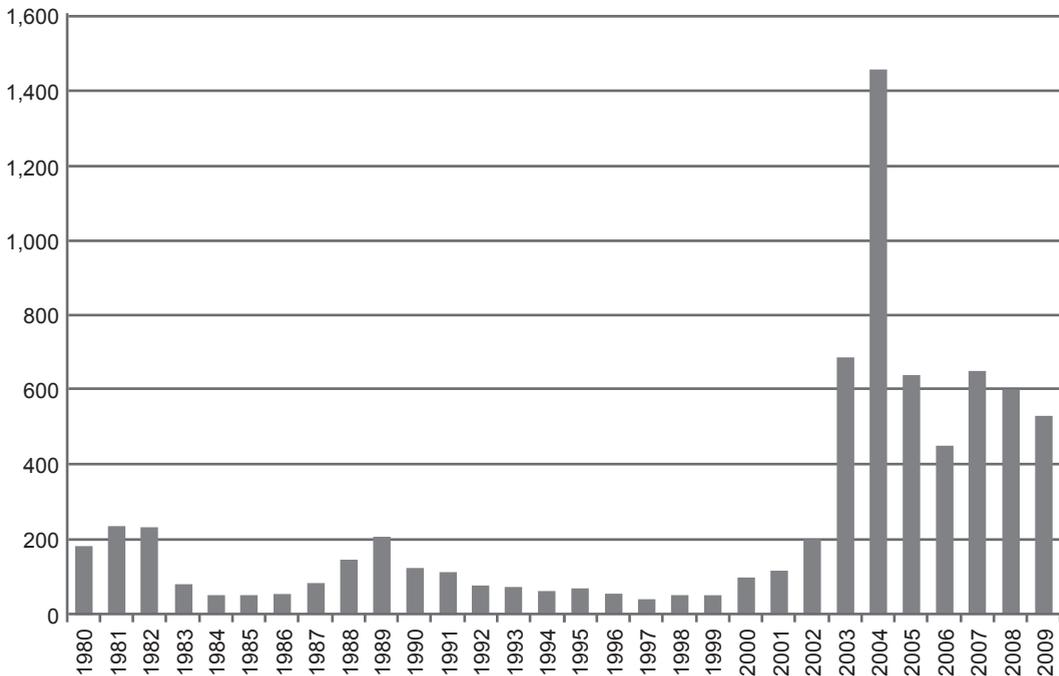


Source: Statistics Canada

Data for intercensal migration shows a significant increase over the past decade. While 1,880 Zimbabwean immigrants arrived in Canada before 1991, fewer than 700 immigrated between 1991 and 2000. However, between 2001 and 2006, the number rose to 3,490 and has continued to increase since 2006 (Figure 2). Citizenship and Immigration Canada

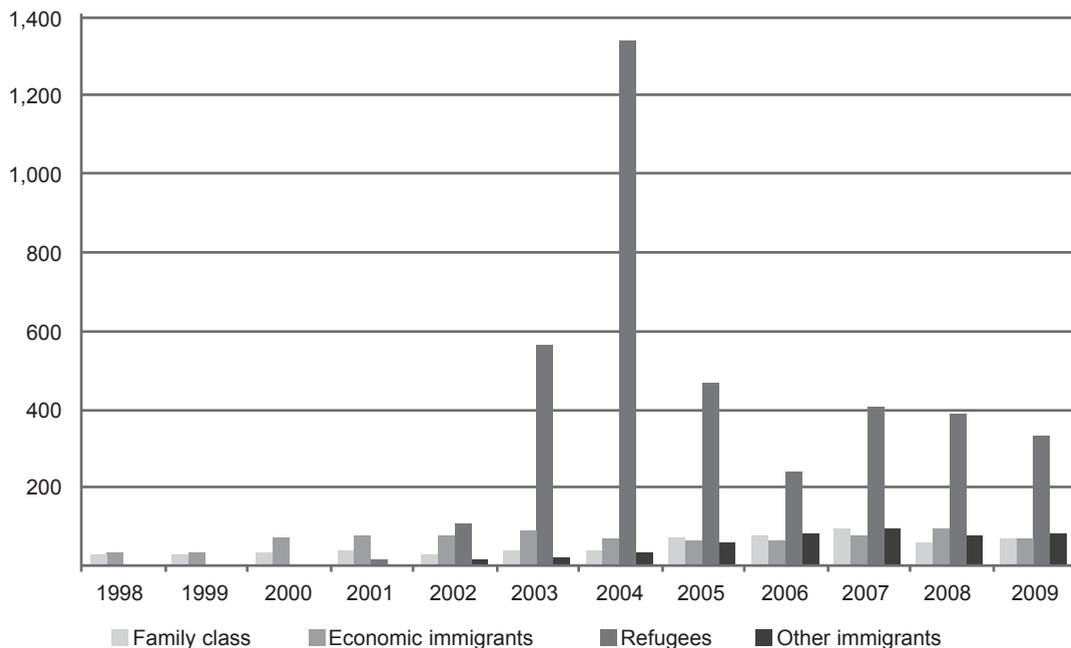
(CIC) data provide additional insights into Zimbabwean migration flows to Canada. Immediately after independence in Zimbabwe, there was an increase in migration to Canada for three years (Figure 2). The numbers rose briefly again in the late 1980s and then remained relatively low and stable for most of the 1990s. In other words, although emigration from Zimbabwe increased in the 1990s as economic prospects deteriorated, only a small number moved to Canada. This changed dramatically after 2000.

**Figure 2: Zimbabwean Immigration to Canada, 1980-2009**



Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada

Every year from 2003 to 2009 at least 400 Zimbabweans were granted permanent residence in Canada. The peak year was 2004 when 1,456 individuals became permanent residents. Before 2000, most Zimbabwean migrants to Canada entered in the economic immigration class. After 2002, refugees came to dominate the inflow (Figure 3). The number of Zimbabweans immigrating to Canada in the family class was fairly small up to 2004, rarely exceeding 30 individuals in any one year. However, since 2005 there has been a significant increase in the number immigrating in this category.

**Figure 3: Zimbabwean Immigration to Canada by Category of Entry, 1980–2009**

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada

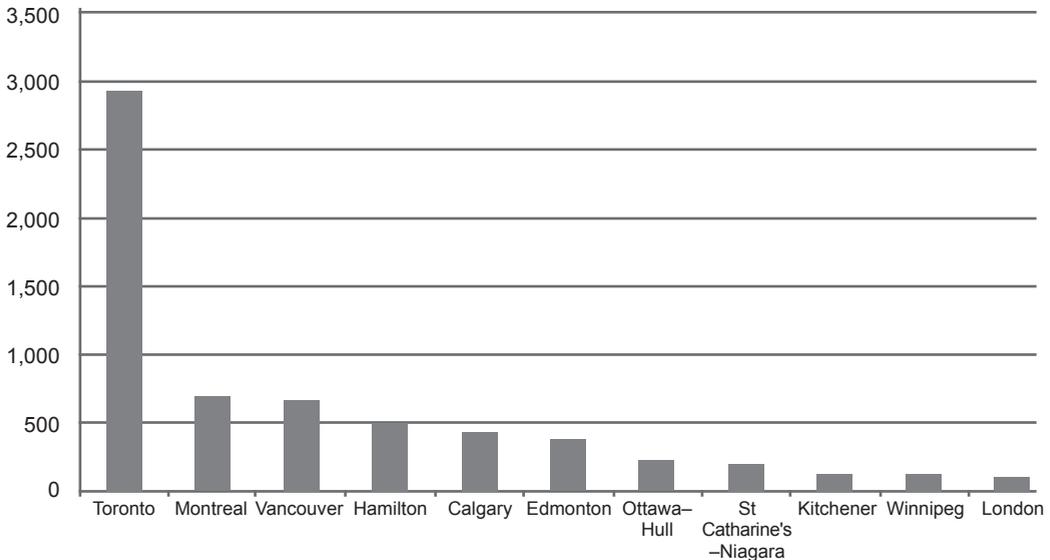
In Canada, Ontario is by far the most popular destination for Zimbabweans. Between 1980 and 2009, for example, nearly 60% of all immigrants settled first in Ontario (Table 1). Other significant populations of Zimbabweans in Canada are found in the provinces of Alberta (13% of the total),

	No.	%
Ontario	4,425	59.7
Alberta	957	12.9
British Columbia	867	11.7
Quebec	753	10.2
Manitoba	166	2.2
Saskatchewan	79	1.1
Nova Scotia	63	0.8
New Brunswick	46	0.6
Northwest Territories	27	0.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	19	0.3
Prince Edward Island	7	0.1
Yukon Territory	6	0.1
N=	7,415	

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada

British Columbia (12%) and Quebec (10%). The Zimbabwean population in Canada generally settles in the main urban centres. About 85% of Zimbabweans who have moved to Canada since 1980 are to be found in big cities with populations of over 350,000 (Figure 4). Toronto is the most popular destination (41%), followed by Montreal (9%), Vancouver (8%), Hamilton (7%), Calgary (6%) and Edmonton (5%).

**Figure 4: Major Cities of Settlement of Zimbabweans in Canada**



Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada

## METHODOLOGY

The survey instrument used to collect the data for this study was collaboratively developed by the SAMP research team in Canada and Southern Africa.<sup>14</sup> The questionnaire consisted of more than 50 closed questions and an open-ended section at the end where respondents were encouraged to write at greater length about their experiences, perceptions and aspirations. The survey was hosted by StudentVoice© Canada and accessed through a link on SAMP's website ([www.queensu.ca/samp](http://www.queensu.ca/samp)). Various web-based strategies were employed to contact potential respondents through social networking sites such as Facebook. Eleven Facebook groups for Zimbabweans (with 477 members) were identified and their members invited to complete the survey. Zimbabweans in their friends lists were also messaged if it was clear that they were Canada-based. In total, 1,046 Zimbabweans were invited to complete the survey online and 220 responded (a response rate of 21%). Additional face-to-face interviews

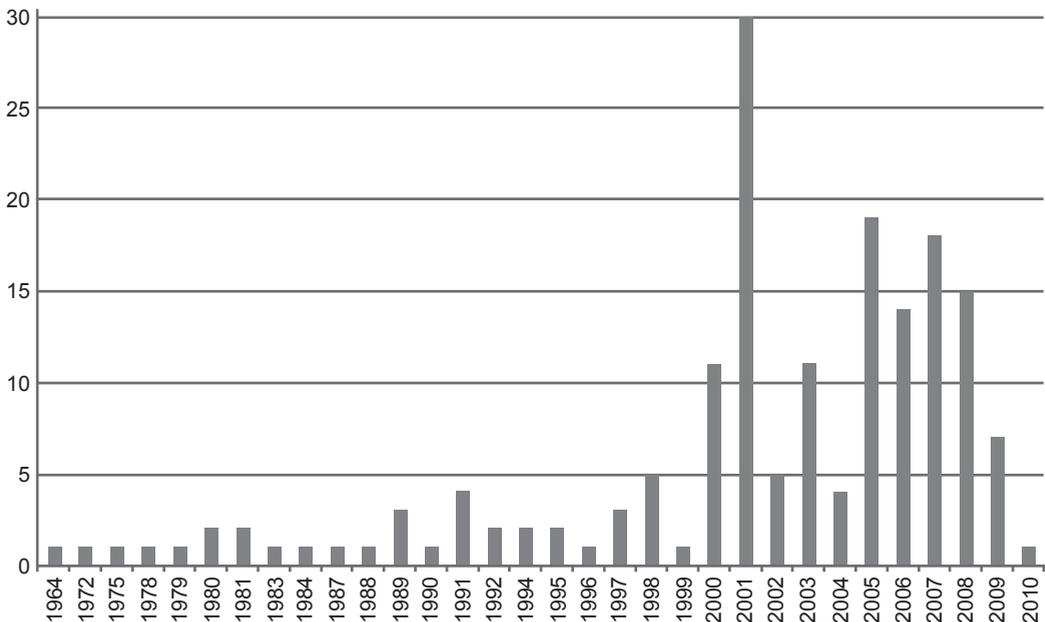
were conducted to boost the numbers closer to the target of 300. These 60 interviews brought the total in the sample to 280.

Because it was impossible to construct a sample population from aggregated CIC and Census data (which do not identify individuals by name and location), there is no guarantee that the sample population is completely representative of all Zimbabweans in Canada. It is therefore important to see how the sample profile compares with the general CIC profile for Zimbabweans in the country. First, in relation to physical location, it is clear that the sample was drawn from across the country and in a roughly similar distribution by province (Table 2). Zimbabweans in Manitoba were under-sampled and those in Ontario over-sampled. With regard to the urban concentration of the sample, Zimbabweans in large cities with populations above 1 million in the 2006 Census (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) were under-sampled, while those in medium-sized cities were over-sampled. Generally, it was easier to reach Zimbabweans in the smaller cities, where they are more closely networked and seemed more willing to participate in the survey.

	CIC data	SAMP sample
<b>Province</b>		
Ontario	59.7	66.4
Alberta	12.9	13.6
British Columbia	11.7	12.9
Manitoba	10.2	1.8
Saskatchewan	2.2	1.4
Quebec	1.1	1.4
Nova Scotia	0.8	1.1
New Brunswick	0.6	0.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.4	0.7
Prince Edward Island	0.3	0.0
N	7,415	280
<b>Size of Urban Area</b>		
>1,000,000	63.7	46.8
500,000–1,000,000	23.9	16.2
250,000–500,000	7.2	4.3
100,000–250,000	1.0	8.3
50,000–100,000	1.2	5.8
10,000–50,000	1.2	2.2
1,000–10,000	0.1	1.1
Other (please specify)	1.6	15.5
N	6,677	278

Second, with regard to the chronology of immigration to Canada, the general profile of respondents resembles that of official Zimbabwean immigration to Canada (Figures 2 and 5). The oldest survey respondent had come to Canada as long ago as 1964. While most years from 1978 onwards had at least one respondent, the numbers dramatically increased after 2000. Although there were annual variations (for example, 2004 was the peak year for migration to Canada whereas 2001 had the most survey respondents), in general the proportion of post-2000 migrants was very similar in both groups.

**Figure 5: Year of Migration to Canada of Respondents**



Third, the sample's class of entry to Canada is roughly similar to that of all Zimbabwean migrants who entered the country between 1980 and 2009 (Table 3). Refugee and humanitarian migrants were the largest category in both groups (37% of the sample and 43% of the total). The sample had proportionally greater numbers of economic immigrants (22% versus 13%) and fewer family class immigrants (17% versus 6%). Similar proportions entered as students.

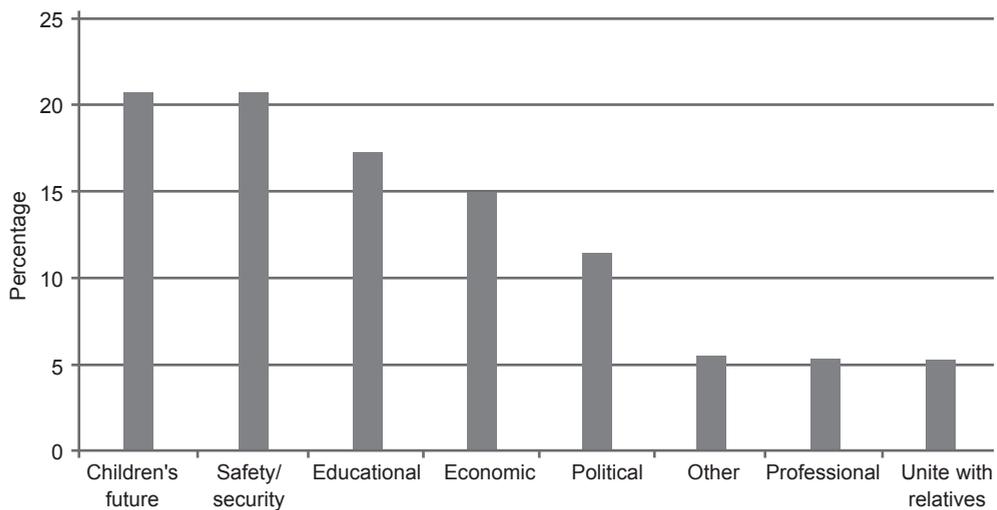
Class of entry	All Zimbabweans (%)	Respondents (%)
Asylum seeker/refugee	53.4	37.5
Skilled worker or professional	13.0	21.7
Family sponsorship/assisted relative class	6.0	16.6
Student	11.5	11.9
Canadian experience class	–	0.8
Temporary worker	4.8	0.8
Government-sponsored (investor, entrepreneur or self-employed)	–	0.4
Provincial nominee (investor, entrepreneur or self-employed)	–	0.4
Other/not specified	11.3	9.9
N	16,180	253

## ZIMBABWEANS IN CANADA: A PROFILE

The survey sample has more female (57%) than male (43%) respondents (Table 4). Racially, the sample is dominated by black respondents, who comprise 63% of the total. White respondents make up 24% of the sample. Other groups represented in the survey include Zimbabweans of mixed race (4%) and those of Indian/Asian origin (2%). The sample is generally youthful with at least 65% below 40 years. Those older than 53 years comprise only 9.5% of the sample. Slightly more than half (55%) were married while a substantial proportion (35%) had never been married, which is consistent with the sample's age profile. Over a third were under the age of 30 (36.5%) and less than 10% were over the age of 53.

The reasons given by the respondents for coming to Canada varied substantially, but were generally consistent with the class-of-entry findings (Figure 6). For example, 21% mentioned safety and security and 11% gave political reasons, amounting to 32% (compared with the 38% who came as asylum seekers). Again, while 17% gave education as their major reason for coming to Canada, 12% entered on student permits.

<b>Table 4: Demographic Profile of Respondents</b>		
	No.	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	158	56.8
Male	120	43.2
Total	278	100.0
<b>Race</b>		
Black	176	63.3
White	66	23.7
Other	19	6.8
Coloured	11	4.0
Indian/Asian	6	2.2
Total	278	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
17–30	96	36.5
31–39	75	28.5
40–46	38	14.4
47–52	29	11.0
53–90	25	9.5
Total	263	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married/common law	155	55.4
Never married	97	34.6
Divorced/separated	22	7.9
Widowed	6	2.1
Total	280	100.0

**Figure 6: Most Important Reason for Coming to Canada**

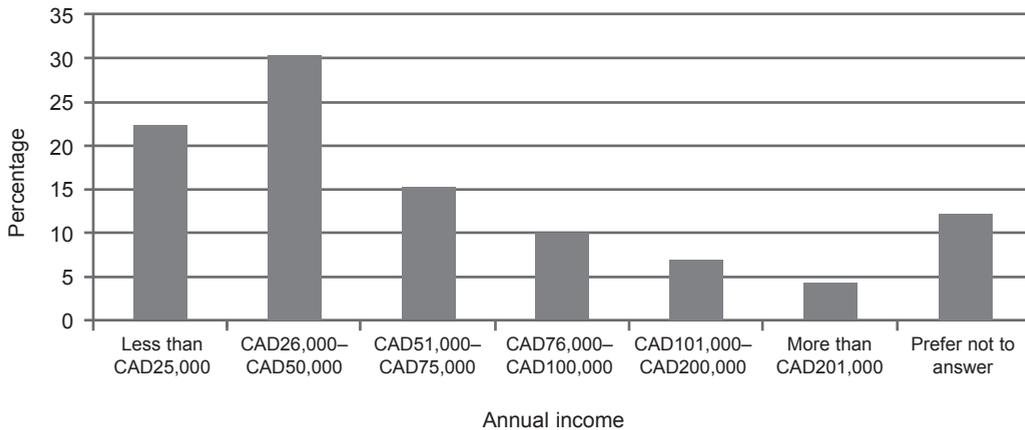
Even though immigration from Zimbabwe to Canada is dominated by refugees, the survey showed that most possessed good professional qualifications upon entry. For instance, at least 30% had a university degree before migrating from Zimbabwe (Table 5). However, 42% were asked to re-certify or re-train in Canada to enable them to work in a field for which they were already trained. This highlights the more general problem of recognition of qualifications that foreign-trained professionals face in Canada.<sup>15</sup> After moving to Canada, 72% continued to study, including technical or vocational diplomas or certificates (29%), bachelor's degrees (29%), master's degrees (8%) and professional degrees (6%).

	No.	%
<b>Highest level of education acquired in Zimbabwe</b>		
Less than secondary school	20	7.4
Secondary school	84	31.0
Technical/vocational diploma/certificate	75	27.7
Bachelor's/honour's degree	48	17.7
Master's degree	18	6.6
Professional degree	18	6.6
Ph.D. degree	3	1.1
Other	5	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Highest level of education achieved/in progress outside Zimbabwe</b>		
Less than secondary school	1	0.5
Secondary school	21	11.0
Technical/vocational diploma/certificate	55	28.8
Bachelor's/honour's degree	56	29.3
Master's degree	16	8.4
Professional degree	11	5.8
Ph.D. degree	8	4.2
Other	23	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Students made up 15% of the sample, while other common occupational categories include finance, business and banking (13%), sales and service (11%), health (10%), social services (8%) and technical and trades (7%). Immigrants to Canada frequently discover that their foreign credentials are less desirable on the job market and they have to settle for significantly less skilled jobs than they had in their countries of origin. Thirty-five percent of Zimbabwean respondents noted that they were working in a job that did not make full use of their professional qualifications and experi-

ence. In terms of income, just over half (52%) of the sample earned less than CAD50,000 annually (Figure 7). Slightly more than 10% earned more than CAD100,000 a year.

**Figure 7: Income Profile of Respondents**



## COMPARING ZIMBABWE AND CANADA

Once they have gained entry to Canada, many Zimbabweans acquire more secure status that enables them to stay permanently. While 37% of the respondents entered Canada as refugees, only 5% indicated that they still hold asylum seeker or refugee status. Nearly 50% indicated that they are now Canadian citizens while 33% have landed immigrant status.

	%
Citizen	48.5
Permanent resident/landed immigrant	33.1
Non-permanent resident – work permit	6.5
Asylum seeker/refugee	5.0
Non-permanent resident – student	5.0
Not specified	2.0
N	260

This would suggest that Zimbabweans in Canada do not see their stay as temporary. The obvious question then is whether they have a high or low opinion of their adopted country. The survey presented the respondents with 15 quality-of-life indicators and asked them to consider which country they rated more highly on each indicator. On almost all of the indicators, Canada was ranked better by a significant margin (Table 7).

These included medical services (95% better in Canada), personal or family safety (88% better in Canada), future of children (82% better in Canada), prospects for professional advancement (73% better in Canada), availability of employment and job security (72% better in Canada) and level of income (71% better in Canada). Given Zimbabwe's recent economic circumstances, none of these answers is surprising. Zimbabwe ranked more highly than Canada on only one indicator: social life (49% better in Zimbabwe, 38% better in Canada).

**Table 7: Comparison between Canada and Zimbabwe**

	Better in Canada (%)	Better in Zimbabwe (%)	No difference (%)	Don't know (%)
Medical services/treatment	94.6	1.2	0.8	3.3
Upkeep of public amenities	89.6	2.1	2.1	6.3
My personal/my family's safety	88.3	1.7	6.3	3.8
Future of my children	82.5	4.2	3.8	9.6
Honesty/integrity of politicians	74.6	1.3	14.6	9.6
Environmental protection	73.6	10.3	5.8	10.3
Prospects for professional/job advancement	73.3	15.6	4.9	6.2
Availability of a suitable job/job security	71.8	14.1	8.3	5.8
My level of income	70.5	14.1	5.8	9.5
Cost of living	61.3	25.5	4.5	8.6
Attitudes to foreigners/immigration/ treatment of refugees	59.9	16.9	11.6	11.6
Racial/ethnic/cultural tolerance	50.0	23.1	16.5	10.3
Affordable housing	42.1	39.7	5.0	13.2
Social life	38.1	48.8	8.2	4.9
Level of taxation	37.0	32.8	9.2	21.0
N=241				

Many qualitative responses confirmed that Canada is perceived to be a better place to live:

Zimbabwe is still a possibility for me to go back but I presently worry about the health care system and what I would do if my kids got sick. Here, I can dash to a walk-in-clinic whereas back home it may not necessarily be the case (Respondent No. 3).

We immigrated to Canada mainly because my mother had been victimized for political reasons. She was a principal at a school in Zimbabwe and had received threats because she

refused to participate in the ruling party's rally (Respondent No. 47).

I fear very much for my life and my family's lives, Mugabe and his followers will kill us (Respondent No. 49).

I came to Canada to obtain a university degree that I could use anywhere in the world. I chose to study in Canada because it was cheaper than in the United States or the United Kingdom (Respondent No. 35).

I chose Canada because of their welcoming immigration policy. Other countries like the USA claim to accept immigrants but they do not offer the same support that Canada does, for example, in social welfare, health care, legal aid etc. (Respondent No. 35).

## ZIMBABWEAN IDENTITY

Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of the respondents are either Canadian citizens or permanent residents, most (87%) agreed with the statement that "being from Zimbabwean is an important part of how I view myself". And 79% agreed with the statement that "I feel strong ties with people from Zimbabwe". The qualitative responses confirmed that Zimbabwean identity is still strong among the diaspora in Canada. For most, Zimbabwe will always be their primary "home". However, some admitted that it is difficult for them to maintain their native language due to non-use, especially for those who left the country long ago:

I still maintain a keen interest in Zimbabwean music and, as a musician myself, I incorporate Shona lyrics into the songs I write, although my vocabulary is quickly diminishing over the years due to lack of consistent dialogue and practice. My ties will never ever be fully severed from Zimbabwe. I still feel, after 10 years and a Canadian passport earned, that home is there (Respondent No. 39).

Identification with Zimbabwe translates into widespread participation in Zimbabwean cultural activities. The majority of the respondents want their children to know about Zimbabwean culture (82%) and 61% want their children to learn a Zimbabwean language. Nearly three-quarters make or buy traditional foods from Zimbabwe (73%) and listen to Zimbabwean music (74%) (Table 8). Some 59% regularly consult Zimbabwean newspapers online. Nearly half (45%) say that their best friends in Canada are Zimbabweans.

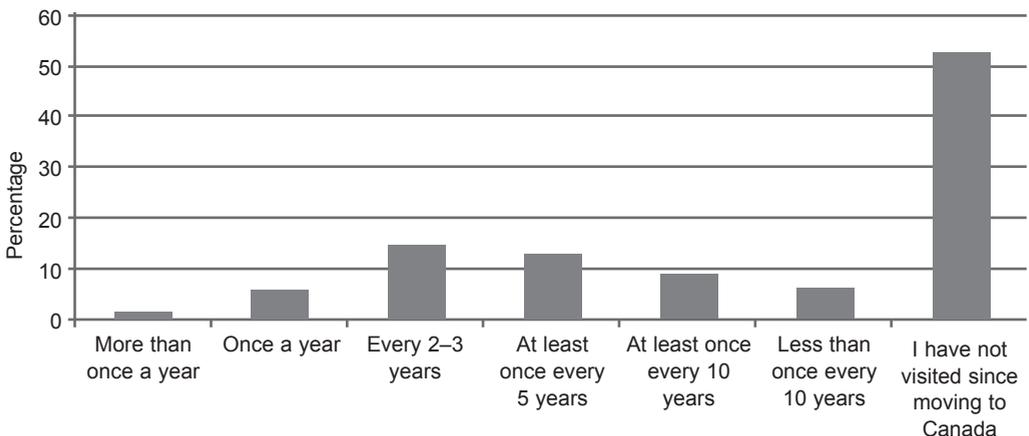
Table 8: Attitudes to Zimbabwean Culture		
Do you:	No.	%
Want your children to know about the culture of Zimbabwe?	203	82.5
Listen to music from Zimbabwe?	182	74.0
Make or buy traditional foods from Zimbabwe?	180	73.2
Want your children to learn the language(s) of Zimbabwe?	150	61.0
Read a newspaper from Zimbabwe online?	146	59.3
Find that most of your best friends in Canada are from Zimbabwe?	112	45.5
N=246		

### FREQUENCY OF VISITS

Family ties and frequency of visits are generally good indicators of the maintenance of transnational linkages by migrants. Most of the survey respondents have a significant number of family members still in Zimbabwe: 68% have siblings, 59% have parents and 55% have grandparents in the country. A smaller number have children (16%) and spouses (5%) in Zimbabwe. Despite these family ties, just over half of the respondents (52%) said they had not visited Zimbabwe since moving to Canada. This relatively high figure is probably attributable to the cost and distance of return (compared, say, with Zimbabweans in South Africa or even the United Kingdom). It might also be attributed to the large number of relatively recent migrants to Canada and the fact that, as refugees, there is a genuine fear of what they might encounter if they were to return.

A fifth of the respondents (21%) visit Zimbabwe at least once every 2-3 years and a further 27% at least once every 5-10 years (Figure 8.) Family issues and events were the main reason for visiting (71%) among those

Figure 8: Frequency of Return Visits to Zimbabwe

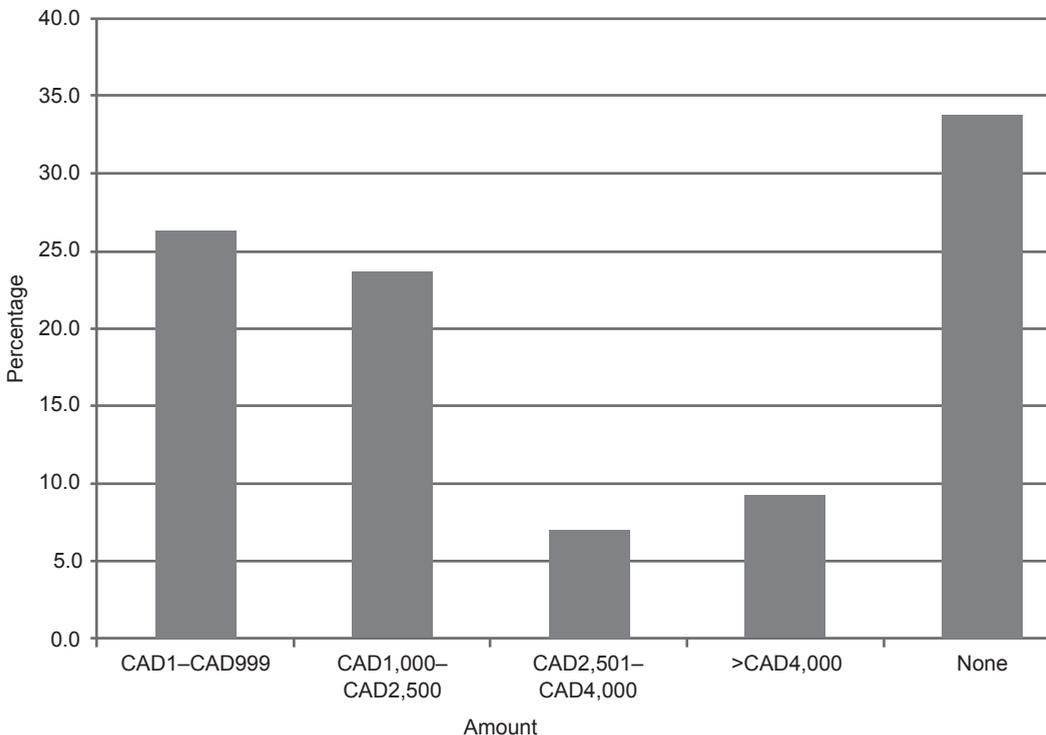


who have gone back at least once since arriving in Canada. Only a few visited for business activities (4%) or tourism (3%). While Zimbabweans in Canada are not frequent visitors to Zimbabwe, this does not mean that they do not maintain links there. For example, 29% have active bank accounts in Zimbabwe, while 24% own a house, 19% own land and 8% have investments.

## REMITTING BEHAVIOUR

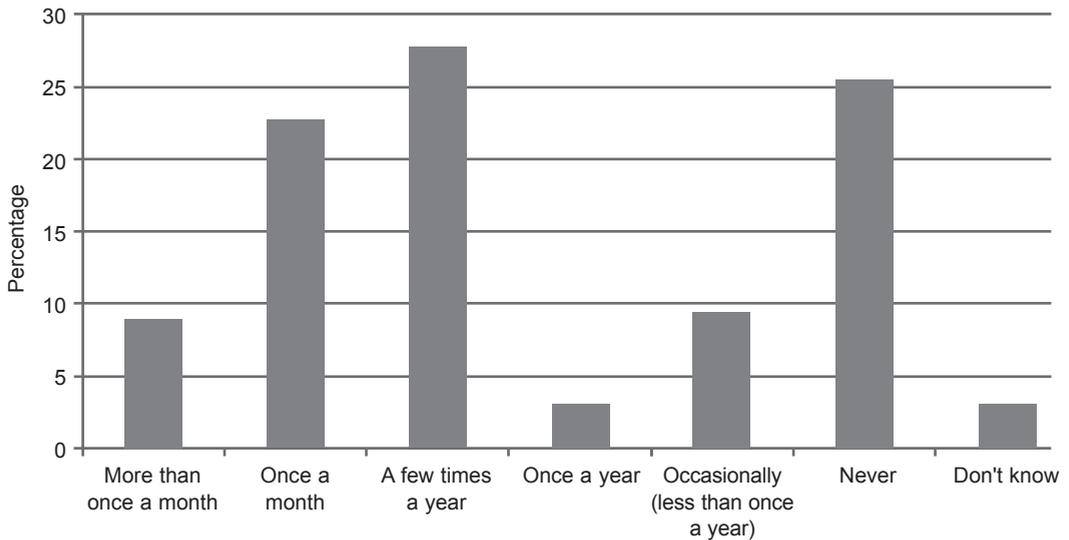
In Zimbabwe, economic and social collapse has meant that migrants have become the mainstay of household survival and significant drivers of national development. Remittances have been credited with averting the total collapse of Zimbabwe's economy and alleviating acute poverty at household level.<sup>16</sup> Sixty-six percent of the survey respondents send money to Zimbabwe (Figure 9). The average amount of money sent annually is CAD2,703, similar to the amounts sent by Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> However, there is great variability in the amounts sent by the survey respondents, ranging from only CAD50 to a maximum of CAD70,000 per annum.

**Figure 9: Volume of Remittances Sent to Zimbabwe Annually**



Nearly one-third of the respondents send money to Zimbabwe at least once a month. A further 28% said they send cash remittances home at few times a year (Figure 10). Over 60% of those sending money to Zimbabwe remit to close family members while another 20% send money to members of their extended family. Only 4% said they deposit funds into a bank account for their own future use. Formal channels such as money transfer agencies (69%) and banks (12%) are the main mechanism for sending money to Zimbabwe. Informal transfer channels are used by only 7% and hand-to-hand transfer by 12%. The use of formal transfer mechanisms contrasts markedly with the Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa, where informal channels predominate.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 10: Frequency of Remitting to Zimbabwe**



Consumption clearly dominates the use of remittances sent by the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada (Table 9). For instance, 80% of respondents said that the recipients purchase food with the remittances. Other significant uses of remittances include paying for medical expenses (63%), paying school fees (58%) and meeting other household day-to-day expenses (52%). Investment of remittances was not very common: 8% sent remittances to start or run a business, 7% for savings and only 4% to buy property.

	No.	%
Buy food	132	79.5
Pay medical expenses	104	62.7
Pay educational/school fees	96	57.8
Meet day-to-day household expenses	86	51.8
Buy clothes	70	42.2
Pay transportation costs	57	34.3
For special events	52	31.3
Build, maintain, renovate their dwelling	32	19.3
For agricultural inputs/equipment	29	17.5
Start or run a business	13	7.8
For savings	12	7.2
Purchase livestock	8	4.8
Buy property	7	4.2
N	166	100.0

*Note: Question allowed multiple responses*

More than half of the respondents also send goods to Zimbabwe. About 30% do so at least once a year. The most common type of goods sent are household goods and appliances (32%), books and educational material (30%) and food (20%). The average value of goods sent was CAD1,528 per remitter over the previous year.

## DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

Diaspora engagement has the potential to address some of the challenges facing Zimbabwe, providing an avenue for Zimbabweans in Canada to contribute to the reconstruction of the country.<sup>19</sup> However, emerging research shows that the interest of diasporas in participating in the development of their home country is influenced by several factors. The Zimbabwean diaspora, for example, has been characterized as “fractured”, which highlights the differences among members of the diaspora who left Zimbabwe for different reasons.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom, interest in promoting development at home is closely connected with the desire for formal political rights.<sup>21</sup>

More than half of the survey respondents (55%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they have an important role to play in the development of Zimbabwe. While this figure may seem low, it is considerably higher than the equivalent figure for South Africans in Canada (less than 20%). Mohan’s threefold classification of diasporas and development provides a useful way of thinking about diaspora engagement.<sup>22</sup> First, the

concept of *development in the diaspora* describes the social and economic networks that form among migrants in the country of destination and facilitate their integration and economic progress there (Figure 11). Second, *development through the diaspora* describes the social and economic progress within a geographically-separated space precisely because of the networks that they maintain with one another. Third, *development by the diaspora* describes the role of migrants as development actors in their country of origin. To some extent, the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada exhibits features of all three categories (Table 10). Although slightly more than half of the respondents (54%) reported that they do not participate in any home-country-focused activities in Canada, there is significant participation in activities that link them to other Zimbabweans in Canada and in Zimbabwe.

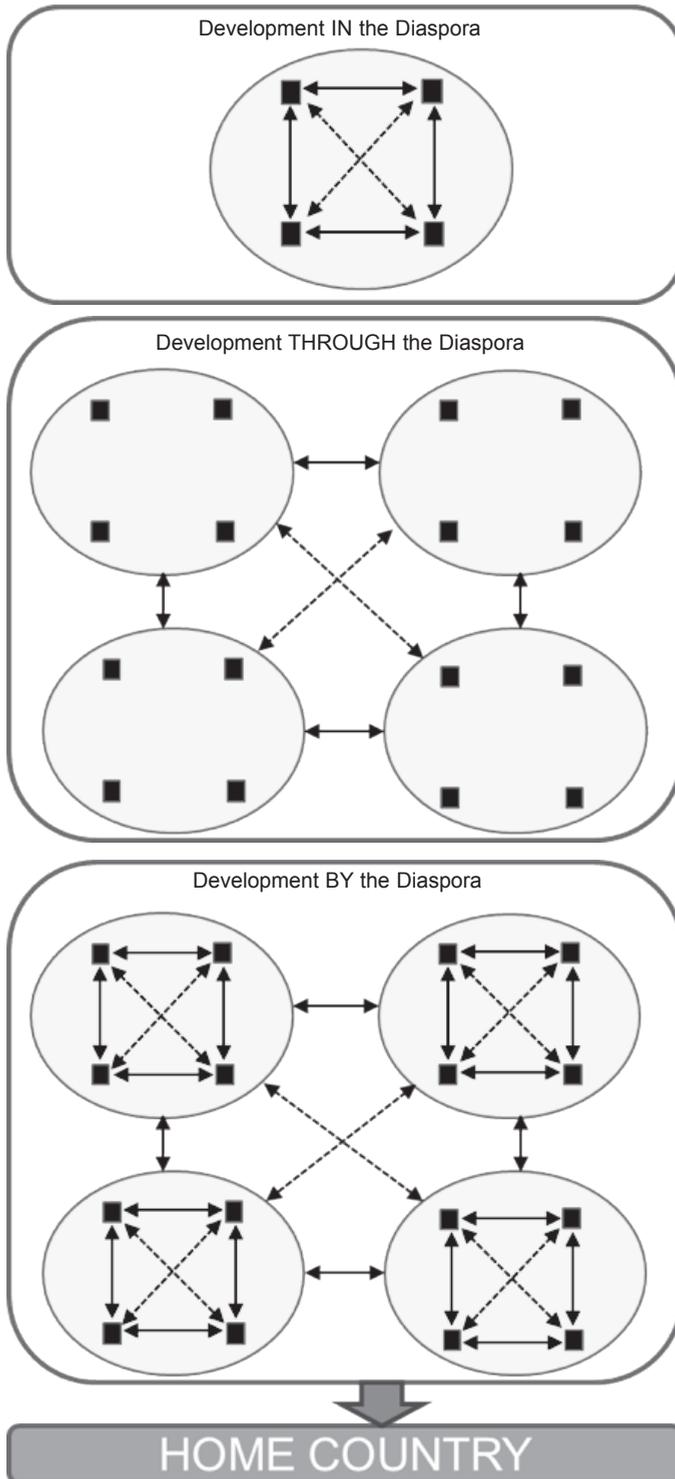
First, with regard to development in the diaspora, Zimbabweans in Canada maintain strong social, religious and cultural links amongst themselves. A good example is the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) church, also known as the Forward in Faith Ministries International (FIFMI), which has established branches internationally, including in Toronto. Zimbabweans in major cities in Canada, such as Toronto and Calgary, have set up their own soccer teams, which compete in the local leagues. There is a strong sense of community among Zimbabweans, especially those in smaller cities, and it is not uncommon to find a large Zimbabwean presence at family events such as weddings, funerals and birthday celebrations. Nearly half (45%) of the survey respondents indicated that their best friends in Canada are other Zimbabweans in the country.

Many also belong to organizations and associations in Canada with Zimbabwean identities or linkages. For example, 20% reported participating in charitable organizations and 19% in religious organizations in Canada with direct links to Zimbabwe (see Table 10). A further 11% participate in Zimbabwean ethnic/cultural or hometown associations in Canada, while 11% support non-governmental organizations in Canada with programmes in Zimbabwe.

Second, with regard to development through the diaspora, many respondents indicated that they have family members outside Zimbabwe and Canada. As many as 87%, for example, said they have family members in other African countries (mainly South Africa and Botswana).<sup>23</sup> In addition, 65% have family in the United Kingdom, 48% in the United States, 37% in Australia and New Zealand and 20% in Europe excluding the United Kingdom. Zimbabweans in Canada maintain regular contact with these family members as well as friends who have migrated to other countries. This presents opportunities for co-operation between the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada and Zimbabweans in other geographical locations.

Third, with regard to development *by* the diaspora, the main focus

Figure 11: Diasporas and Development



of this paper, the survey findings suggest that the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada is primed to engage directly in development-related activities, given the right opportunity. At present, only a few are involved with development organizations that have links and programmes in Zimbabwe: 20% belong to charitable organizations with links to Zimbabwe, 19% with religious associations and 11% with NGOs (Table 10). Looking ahead, however, there are high levels of interest in becoming involved (Table 11). Capacity-building projects likely to be supported include skills transfer through training (49%), educational exchanges (44%), working in Zimbabwe (40%), and providing distance teaching via the internet (30%). Financial support would take the form of fundraising for projects in Zimbabwe (51%), investment in business (45%), sending remittances for development projects (39%) and making charitable donations (38%). Economic activities of interest include investment in infrastructure (32%), exporting Canadian goods to Zimbabwe (31%) and importing goods to Canada from Zimbabwe (29%). Only 11% said they had no interest in any of these activities.

	No.	%
Charitable organization in Canada with links to Zimbabwe	47	20.3
Religious association/organization in Canada with links to Zimbabwe	45	19.4
Zimbabwe ethnic/cultural or hometown association in Canada	26	11.2
NGO in Canada with programmes in Zimbabwe	25	10.8
African diaspora association	15	6.5
Alumni association of a Zimbabwean university	12	5.2
Professional association in Zimbabwe	11	4.7
African students association in Canada	9	3.9
I do not participate in any such organizations	126	54.3
<i>Note: Multiple responses permitted</i>		

Many of the qualitative responses confirmed that Zimbabweans in Canada are interested in the future reconstruction and development of Zimbabwe:

I feel every Zimbabwean living in diaspora has an obligation to use the skills and knowledge which they have acquired abroad to contribute to the development of our beautiful country. I hope to play a major role in Zimbabwe's recovery; this once vibrant and thriving tourist country which boasted the best education in all of Africa just over a decade ago, and whose economy in less than a decade has completely crumbled, exacerbated by a large efflux of its citizen's brain power

and subsequent loss of development potential (Respondent No. 39).

I am currently involved in charity work to help obtain sustainable livelihoods in Africa (Zimbabwe) because of first-hand experiences I have witnessed as well as having an opportunity to share how much some people are suffering due to dysfunctional education systems, poverty, sickness, mainly HIV and AIDS. Many of these people's cries for help are left unheard for one reason or the other and it is my hope and prayer to make a change (Respondent No. 25).

I am doing everything I can to help children in poor families with school supplies. This is all my charitable organization can offer at the present moment (Respondent No. 30).

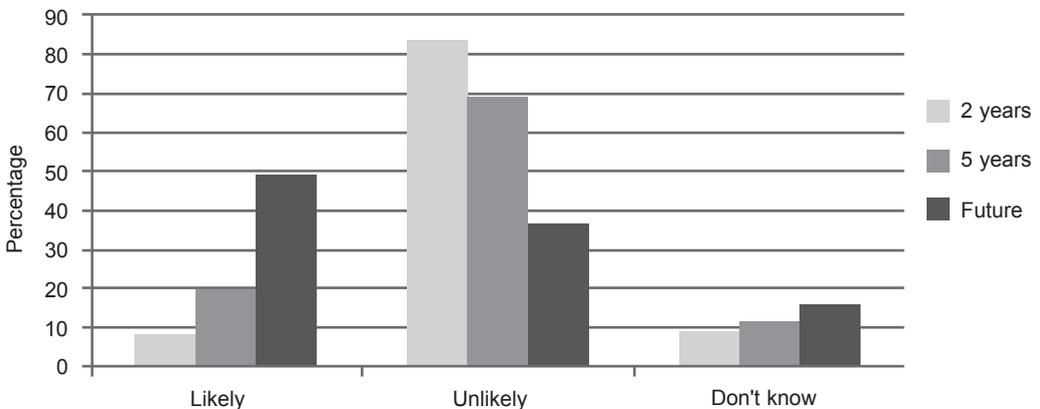
However, a significant change in the current economic and political climate in Zimbabwe was seen by many as a prerequisite for their participation in diaspora-driven initiatives. Others described the country's law prohibiting dual citizenship as punitive and retrogressive. Some who had lost their Zimbabwean citizenship by default argued that the country needs to repeal the law and recognize them as citizens before they will take part in the development of Zimbabwe.

If you had the opportunity, in which of the following ways would you like to contribute to development in Zimbabwe?	No.	%
Fundraising for projects	115	50.7
Transfer skills through training people	112	49.3
Participating in development projects	105	46.3
Investment in business	103	45.4
Educational exchanges	100	44.1
Transfer skills through working in Zimbabwe	91	40.1
Sending remittances (money)	88	38.8
Making charitable donations	86	37.9
Volunteer work in Zimbabwe	83	36.6
Investment in infrastructure	72	31.7
Exporting goods to Zimbabwe	70	30.8
Providing distance teaching (via internet)	69	30.4
Importing goods from Zimbabwe	66	29.1
Sending non-monetary gifts	60	26.4
Other	5	2.2
I prefer not to contribute	24	10.6
N=227		

## RETURN MIGRATION

Crisis-driven migration from countries such as Zimbabwe has the potential to generate a counter-flow of migrants once the crisis conditions are resolved. Studies among Zimbabweans in the diaspora elsewhere have shown that 67% of those based in the United Kingdom and 65% of those in South Africa are likely to return at some time in the future.<sup>24</sup> What, then, is the likelihood of return of Zimbabwean migrants in Canada? The survey respondents were almost equally divided, with 52% indicating that they have given some thought to return and at least 45% saying that they had given no or hardly any thought to the possibility. The survey then asked the respondents about the actual likelihood of their returning to Zimbabwe in the immediate future (within two years), the near future (within five years) or the distant future (Figure 12). Only 8% indicated that it is likely or very likely that they will return to Zimbabwe within two years. The likelihood of return rises to 20% within five years and to 49% at some point in the future. It is clear that Zimbabweans in Canada are worried by the current state of Zimbabwe's economy and political environment and that they expect things to improve, which will set a platform for their return.

Figure 12: Likelihood of Returning to Zimbabwe



The literature on return migration emphasizes individual cost-benefit models that focus on success and failure in the destination country, job markets and life-cycle plans. The evidence suggests that the least successful migrants are the most likely to return.<sup>25</sup> However, many of these studies do not account for the fact that success is subjective and depends on expectations prior to migration, as well as perceptions about quality of life upon return. Generally, the respondents agree that positive change in Zimbabwe might influence their desire to return. In order of importance,

the conditions that might influence return include changes in economic conditions (cited by 76%), improved safety and security (73%), change in the political system (69%) and improved job opportunities (68%).

Qualitative responses from the survey show that, while there is significant interest in return migration, most adopt a “wait and see” attitude. Some believe that Canada does not offer them the opportunity to achieve their professional goals and that a return to Zimbabwe is the only solution:

I strongly believe that there is still a cultural glass ceiling in corporate Canada (i.e. very few people from Africa can get positions as very senior executives no matter their experience and education even if that education was primarily obtained in Canada) and I don't believe I can progress to reach my full potential beyond a certain level. I can only do that if I go back home so I maintain these links as a way to keep in touch in case I want to progress in my career beyond what I can get in Canada (Respondent No. 53).

Others believe that they can become agents of change in Zimbabwe. They see themselves as able to introduce positive change in the country because of the knowledge and expertise they have gained through migration:

I plan on investing and retiring to live out the rest of my life in what I still consider home. Rather than waiting for a change to happen in this country that I love so much, I intend to be that change. I can safely say that I am proud to be Zimbabwean. Our people are some of the hardest working and most resilient people anywhere in the world. In spite of how desperate the situation got, people banded together to help each other. So even though people from the outside see a broken and defeated people, I see the potential and no other way to go but up (Respondent No. 11).

I have very strong ties with Zimbabwe and I am definitely going to live there at some point in the future after I graduate. Zimbabwe is facing some economic and political problems but I feel that those of us who have had the opportunity to study abroad and have investments in countries outside Zimbabwe could reverse all the negative effects of the political system and economy if we all worked together and didn't forget our home. This is why I am returning to invest in Zimbabwe and move our country to the next level (Respondent No. 35).

On the other hand, age and increasing integration in Canada were mentioned as factors hindering return migration:

I am over 50 and I would not be able to get a job in my profession in Zimbabwe. My children are here and I have grandchildren born in Canada. My children have no intention of going back to Zimbabwe. I want to be close to my children and grandchildren (Respondent No. 31).

I would never go back to live in Zimbabwe because my children have grown up in Canada and would have a hard time adjusting, and I have become accustomed to the way of life in Canada. I will maintain links with relatives, organizations and will visit as often as I can (Respondent No. 36).

Although some respondents cited age as a factor hindering return to Zimbabwe, others anticipated returning in their old age:

I will go back home at some time in the future because I believe the elderly are better catered for in Africa than here in Canada. In Canada it is more expensive to live once one is old (Respondent No. 83).

For many, current conditions in Zimbabwe are a major barrier to return migration. For instance, the lack of good governance and democracy was cited as a hindrance:

I would rather stay here and help Zimbabwe develop from here until there is real democracy there (a government with checks and balances), no decisions made with a pistol in your back or through intimidation. Africans should stop blaming colonialists for all problems we are having, we should blame ourselves (Respondent No. 60).

Others mentioned the expense involved:

I hope to go back one day and help rebuild the nation/use my skills to improve education/health care but it is too expensive to return, especially when I don't have any family or friends to visit since they have all emigrated as well (Respondent No. 82).

Although there is considerable latent interest in return to Zimbabwe, very few respondents have taken concrete steps in that direction. Less than 2% had worked in Zimbabwe in the previous year and only 2% had applied for a job there. Fewer than one in ten (7%) had been offered a job in Zimbabwe in the previous year.

## CONCLUSION

Zimbabwean migration to Canada has occurred steadily since the founding of the post-colonial state in 1980. The recent economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe has resulted in an accelerated movement of people from the country. Canada has become an increasingly important destination for Zimbabwean migrants. Furthermore, human rights violations in Zimbabwe have made it easier for asylum seekers to gain entry into Canada.

There are distinct patterns of settlement among the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada with evidence of spatial clustering around certain geographical localities. Ontario is by far the most popular destination for Zimbabwean migrants to Canada (the home of at least 60% of the Zimbabwean diaspora in 2006). Urban clustering is another feature: big cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver have the largest population of Zimbabweans in Canada. Toronto alone is home to at least 40% of all Zimbabweans in Canada. Even though the majority of Zimbabweans came to Canada as refugees, they have high levels of education and on average possess better educational qualifications than Canadians. However, many of these qualifications are not recognized in Canada and more than 70% have had to obtain Canadian qualifications to secure a decent job.

There is a fairly high rate of participation by the Zimbabwean diaspora in Canada in transnational activities. More than two-thirds of the sample reported sending money to Zimbabwe, which is used to meet household and other day-to-day needs. These remittances have played a crucial role in the survival of their families in Zimbabwe. In addition, more than half of the respondents indicated an intention to return to Zimbabwe. However, this is contingent on the course of political events in the country. Current indications are that there is unlikely to be any large-scale movement of the Zimbabwean diaspora back to the country in the immediate future. Given the obstacles to return migration, diaspora engagement may be the only way for Zimbabwe to benefit further from its Canadian diaspora. This could turn the brain drain that the country has suffered over the past decade into a brain gain, but most Zimbabweans in Canada would need to see positive signs of real change first.

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