

Zimbabwe

Ethnicity in Zimbabwe

Group selection

In Zimbabwe, there are 3 main ethnic groups that have prevailed across history: Shona, Ndebele and the White Zimbabweans. The largest group of the three are the Shona, which have composed around 75% of the population for most of Zimbabwe's history. In addition to this, there has been ethnic difference between the Ndebele and the Shona for a very long time as well, starting after independence of Zimbabwe from the British colonies in 1965. These nested groups are crucial in Zimbabwe. The Shona-Ndebele conflict or competition and that among Shona sub-groups (especially after independence) have both gone on constantly, but the latter resulted in discrimination at certain times. The independence in 1965 was due to a man named Ian Smith, who became the first prime minister of Zimbabwe after convincing the British to grant independence. This led to the white minority rule of the country; however, not for long since the black population of the country did not want to continue with the oppression that it had endured for the past 90 years. Thus, independence was the moment in which they felt it was time to regain power, which led to the aftermath of Whites fleeing the country. This was due to the fact that soon after independence the Shona and the Ndebele joined forces to rid the whites of their power. In 1972, the Guerrilla war against white rule intensifies, with rivals Zanu and Zapu operating out of Zambia and Mozambique.

In 1980, under British-supervised independence elections, veteran pro-independence leader Robert Mugabe and his Zanu party win the elections. At this point, Mugabe is named prime minister and includes Zapu leader Joshua Nkomo (a Ndebele) in his cabinet. Independence was internationally recognized on 18 April. In 1982, Mugabe rids Nkomo by stating that he wants to overthrow the government. This leads to a massive massacre of Ndebele people by the North-Korean trained Fifth Brigade. The end of the violence was in 1987, in which Mugabe and Nkomo merge their political parties to form the Zanu-PF. This was also the year in which Mugabe changed the constitution of the country and made himself the executive president.

Power relations

During the period up to 2000, access to power by the **Ndebele** and **White Zimbabweans** has varied over time. Repression has increased since the rise of a strong opposition based in the trade unions, urban populations and some ethnopolitical groups in 2000. Opposition leaders from all groups have been repressed, but both sides perceive that opposition and repression have an ethnic component.

In 2000, Mugabe drafts the constitution in favor of giving farms back to the Black people of the country and riding them of the White. This referendum was not passed by the parliament of the country; however, Mugabe persisted that the police force follow his orders, which they did. Thus, during this year squatters seized hundreds of white-owned farms in an ongoing and violent campaign to reclaim what they say was stolen by settlers. In addition to this, election were held in this year. The main competitor was the MDC. However, they lose and Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party remain in power; however, they lose the right to change the constitution.

One year later (2001), the finance minister of the country states that the country is moving into a deep crisis due to food shortages. In addition to this, most international organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF have cut donations towards the country. This leaves many people starving and migrating into neighboring countries. In addition to this, White farmers fled the country due to the fear for their lives. Black settlers were roaming the land, in search for white farmers who were raped, tortured and killed if not yet gone.

In 2002, the state of food shortage grew even worse, thousands of people were starving. In addition, election were held again, with Mugabe and his party winning again. This time, however, violence broke out due to the election results. Many believe that the ballots were manipulated. This situation continues well up until 2006.

In 2006, hyperinflation commenced and rose to over 1000%, new bank notes had to be printed. In addition to this, the Zanu-PF party has approved a plan to extend the election from 2008 to 2010, allowing Mugabe to stay in control for an extra two years; however, this does not go through. Elections are held in 2008 and MDC is declared a winner. It then had to face a run-off against Mugabe, which MDC lost. Declaring Mugabe once again president of Zimbabwe. In this year, more sanctions are imposed on the country by the US and the EU. Furthermore, the parties (MDC & Zanu-PF) agree on a power-sharing agreement; however, the implementation of this agreement is stopped as the decision had to be made of who gets the top ministerial positions.

From the period 2008 to 2009, it is important to note that the status of the ndebele changed. Through the enactment of the unity government, the ndebele have moved from an official position of discriminated to one of junior partner. However, unofficially, there is still a lot of discrimination against this sub-group of the African

Population.

In 2009, a coalition was formed between the ZANU-PF party and the two factions of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In fact, Tsvangirai (Face of MDC) is sworn in as prime minister. The inclusion of opposition into the government is a landmark development, and broad segments of the population are optimistic for the first time in years that a decade of repression and decline can be reversed. Thus, the classification of both the shona and the ndebele into Senior and Junior Partner. However, it is to note that the Shona are a dominant group, which still suppress other minorities in the population including the Ndebele. They are part of the coalition government with the ruling ZANU party. However, many still feel alienated from politics. There are approximately six conventional organizations representing Ndebele interests currently, which include a regime change and the backing for any party that has a strategy to remove Mugabe from power. While others want Matabeleland to be an independent state. The general name for these is the Mthwakazi political organizations, which represent the face of genocide, to be free of the political oppression and persecution at the hands of the present Zimbabwe State. In addition to this, the ZAPU, PF-ZAPU and the MDC are ndebele based organizations, however they do not believe in the Matabeleland independence. Efforts are being made by these two groups to work together with the Mthwakazi political organizations in order to include the voice of the Ndebele people in political decisions.

However, even though they are part of the government, the authority of the Ndebele politicians is very limited. The Matabeleland telegraph stated the following: “perhaps the biggest casualty of the dictatorship has been the Matabeleland polity. To date it is proving difficult for Matabeleland politicians to adapt Zimbabwean politics to the needs of the region or alter the political narrative of the region from one whose only destiny is the perpetual dependence on Harare for guidance to one advancing local empowerment, one that seeks local solutions for local challenges.” Thus, Senior Partner for the Shona was specified due to the fact that an official agreement was reached in 2009 to allow opposition into the government. Furthermore, since the Shona are a wide spread tribe and constitute 82% of the population, there is evidence that they dominate the country as well as the minorities. However, regional autonomy cannot be identified due to the lack of power given to the citizens. As the Matabeleland telegraph states, “neither ZANU PF nor the MDC-T has shown any interest in devolving power to the people; if anything, both parties have resorted to immoral political practices just to retain authority for the hierarchy”. A few articles mentioned that the Ndebele do not even want to speak their language to each other in their own regions due to the fact of the discrimination and hatred against them by the Shona in the area. This structure has not changed over the recent years.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe allows the use of foreign currencies in

the country in an attempt to stall the hyperinflation. In addition to this, Additionally, retail prices fall for the first time in years. Due to the imposition of this unity government, a new constitution review begins.

2010 was the second year of the unity government and despite everything, they were doing well: schools and hospitals re-opened; civil servants were paid and returned to work; the Zimbabwe dollar was shelved; goods returned to store shelves; and a cholera epidemic was controlled. However, some challenges do still exists such as “se-curocrats” using their positions and symbiotic relationship with Mugabe to exercise veto power over the transition. Thus, the Shona are still the dominant group, in particular the zezuru-shona. Specific evidence still lacks on this topic. However it was stated in a news article in Zimbabwe that the new constitution of 2013 is curtailing the dominant power of the zezuru. In July 2013, the next election will be held. It is already certain that conditions for a free and fair vote do not exist. Furthermore, confidence in the process and institutions is low. The voters roll is a shambles, security forces unreformed and the media grossly imbalanced. The electoral commission is underfunded and lacked time to prepare. Thus, credible results are not expected. In fact, premier Tsvangirai alleges ruling party instigating violence at public consultations on new constitution.

One year after the elections, the EU eases sanctions on Zimbabwe by removing the names of 35 of President Mugabe’s supporters from a list of people whose assets had been frozen. However, Tsvangirai states the impotency of the unity government in that the Zanu-PF’s violence and disregard for power-sharing deal. In addition, Mugabe states that he will run for president in the next elections and views the creation of the unity government as a monster.

In 2012, the Constitutional Select Committee completes the draft of new constitution, but the ZANU-PF and the MDC continue to quarrel about the details, allowing political violence to be on the rise. The violence became so strong, that Tsvangirai threatened to leave the unit government due to violence against the members of his party. However, this was settled in early 2013, when Mugabe and Tsvangirai agreed to reach an agreement over the new drafted constitution. This constitution was later approved by a majority referendum in which it was stated that future presidents would be limited to two five-year terms. In July of the year, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in which Mugabe gained a 7th term in office and his Zanu-PF party three-quarters of the seats in parliament. The opposition (MDC) dismissed the polls as a fraud.

In addition, the status of the White Zimbabweans has not improved over the years. Their share of the population is relatively low and they have no power to address the issues arising in the country. They are a discriminated group that have not been tolerated much over the past 12 years. In fact an agricultural law passed in 2000 forced many whites to leave the country. Additionally, in 2010, the government passed a controversial indigenisation law as part of

its policy to force foreign firms to cede economic control to black Zimbabweans. Indigenisation is one of the key campaign issues for the upcoming elections in 2013, which Mugabe vowed to pursue if re-elected for president in 2013. Thus, the White sector of the population is discriminated against heavily. Thus, these laws as well as the violent attacks on white farmers and the freezing of assets during the crisis from 2001 onwards, lead to an outflow of White Zimbabweans. They emigrated to neighboring countries or moved to the Commonwealth member nations. Thus, when characterizing the outflow of White Zimbabweans, the change should be notable from 2000 onwards.

Furthermore, there has been a rise in the population of the Shona and a slight decline in that of the Ndebele. The source for the numbers is the same as has been used for the previous years (⁴⁷⁹¹). The changes in the demographic sizes of each minority are believed to be the result of emigration due to the terrible labor market situation in Zimbabwe during the crisis years. In addition there has been a high rate of HIV/AIDS which may have contributed to the decline as well. The increase in the Shona ethnic group may be due to the fact that since a few years the situation has been improving and the black Zimbabweans' are actually returning home to their families (Source: informal interviews). This was first hand information received by the author visiting Zimbabwe and South Africa in the end of 2008. The author's family and the author asked many Zimbabweans that they met how the situation is, and they responded that it is improving; that most are returning home due to the fact that work opportunities have risen again.

⁴⁷⁹¹ [CIA, 2013]

The period from February 2013 to 31 January 2016 is characterized by the consolidation of President Mugabe's and ZANU-PF's political dominance (⁴⁷⁹², 2016). The new constitution, approved in March 2013, may be seen as relatively liberal and progressive as it expanded Zimbabwe's Declaration of Rights, however, many of its provisions remain to be implemented. De facto, it has not reduced the president's excessive powers nor has it strengthened the separation of powers (⁴⁷⁹³, 2016: 3). The general election in July 2013 further strengthened Mugabe, who won a seventh term as president with 61.09% of the votes, and his Shona-dominated ZANU-PF. The election outcome also meant the end of the power-sharing government (Government of National Unity, GNU) between ZANU-PF and the two main faction of the MDC (MDC-T and MDC-M/MDC-N) and consolidated President Mugabe's full control over government, cabinet, and relevant appointments in the public sector. According to BTI (⁴⁷⁹⁴, 2016: 8), the heads of the defense forces, police, air force, prisons, and the Central Intelligence Agency all have very close links to ZANU-PF. Other senior positions within the public administration are also heavily dominated by ZANU-PF members. Although the link between political affiliation and ethnicity is weak or even absent, ZANU-PF remains dominated by ethnic Shona (⁴⁷⁹⁵).

⁴⁷⁹² [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2014]

⁴⁷⁹³ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2014]

⁴⁷⁹⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2014]

⁴⁷⁹⁵ [U.S. State Department, 2016]

The leadership of the different MDC factions is also Shona, but

unlike in the case of ZANU-PF, “there has always been a strong contingent of Ndebele in the senior ranks of the MDC” (4796). Hence, with the end of the power-sharing government, the influence of the Ndebele in the central executive likely decreased. Welshman Ncube, for example, president of the MDC-N and a prominent Ndebele minister in the Government of National Unity, lost his position as Minister for Commerce and Industry. However, due to an implicit agreement that one of the two Vice Presidencies goes to a former ZAPU member (which is often understood as: to a member of the Ndebele ethnic group), John Nkomo (ZANU-PF), the Ndebele Vice President of Zimbabwe from 2009 until 2013, was replaced by another Ndebele, Phelekezela Mphoko (ZANU-PF). Furthermore, with Jonathan Moyo, the Minister of Higher Education since 2015 and the Minister of Information from 2013 to 2015, there is at least one other Ndebele minister in the current cabinet. The junior partner coding of the Ndebele can thus be continued, despite Minority Rights Group International (4797) reporting two incidents of Ndebele discrimination in 2013 and stating that the “Ndebele minority continues to be marginalized with regard to political representation” and despite the ZANU PF government continuing to refuse to officially acknowledge the atrocities of Gukuruahundi in the 1980s. The consolidation of power by the Shona-dominated ZANU-PF likely increased the influence of the Shona, which are continued to be coded as senior partners. The White Zimbabweans are continued to be coded as discriminated. They are often the target of hate speech by ZANU-PF officials and government-controlled newspapers, radio, and television stations, who scapegoat the Whites for the country’s economic and political problems (4798). In 2014, President Mugabe reiterated his claim that white Zimbabweans should cede land to black people (“We say no to whites owning our land and they should go”, 4799). In 2015, ZANU-PF officials, including vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa, again threatened to evict the remaining white farmers (4800, 2016: 21).

Note: With Mugabe’s succession in sight, inner ZANU PF contest intensifies and the cleavage between Mugabe’s Zezuru group and the Karanga group, the two major Shona sub-groups, is at threat of being used and manipulated as a succession argument - possibly also with the involvement of other Shona clans (4801). For the time being, however, the cohesive factors are stronger than the divisive factors and the Shona are coded as one uniform group. It seems possible though that the inner-Shona cleavage becomes dominant in the foreseeable future.

4796 [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

4797 [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

4798 [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

4799 [BBC, 2014]

4800 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2014]

4801 [Bhebhe, 2017]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe

From 1965 until 1979

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Africans	0.97	DISCRIMINATED
White Zimbabweans	0.03	MONOPOLY

From 1980 until 1981

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona	0.77	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER
White Zimbabweans	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1982 until 1987

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona (minus Ndau)	0.74	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	DISCRIMINATED
White Zimbabweans	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ndau (Shona sub-group)	0.03	DISCRIMINATED

From 1988 until 1991

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona (minus Manyika & Ndau)	0.61	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER
Manyika (Shona sub-group)	0.13	DISCRIMINATED
White Zimbabweans	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ndau (Shona sub-group)	0.03	DISCRIMINATED

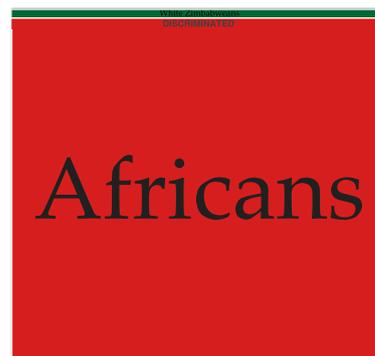


Figure 1018: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1965-1979.

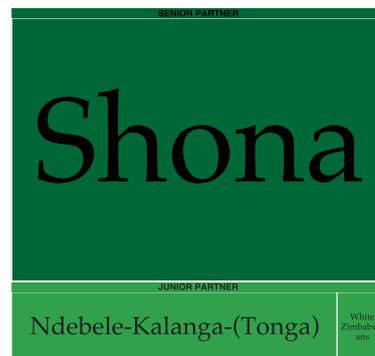


Figure 1019: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1980-1981.

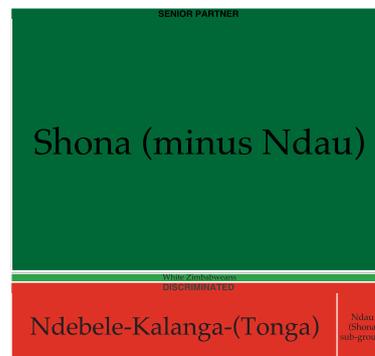


Figure 1020: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1982-1987.



From 1992 until 1999

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona	0.77	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER
White Zimbabweans	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 2000 until 2008

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona	0.77	DOMINANT
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	DISCRIMINATED
White Zimbabweans	0.01	DISCRIMINATED

From 2009 until 2010

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona	0.77	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER
White Zimbabweans	0.01	DISCRIMINATED

From 2011 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shona	0.82	SENIOR PARTNER
Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	0.14	JUNIOR PARTNER
White Zimbabweans	0.01	DISCRIMINATED

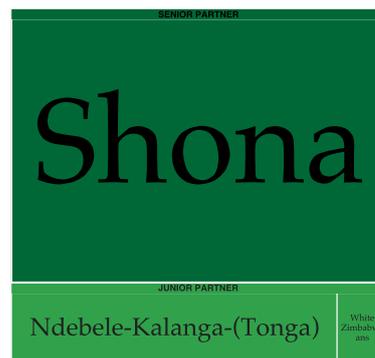


Figure 1022: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1992-1999.

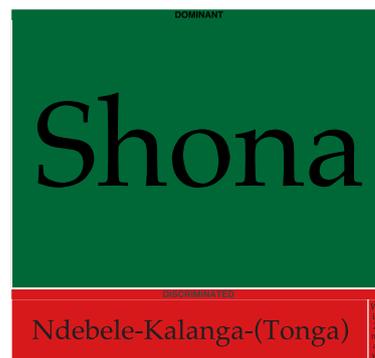


Figure 1023: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 2000-2008.

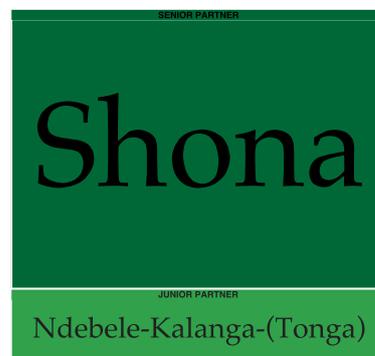


Figure 1024: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 2009-2010.

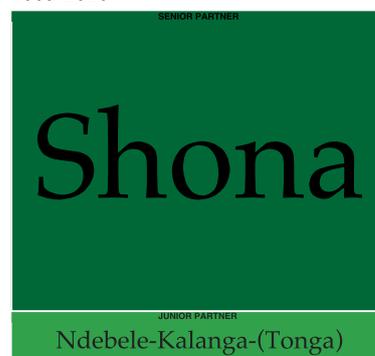


Figure 1025: Political status of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 2011-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe

From 1965 until 1979

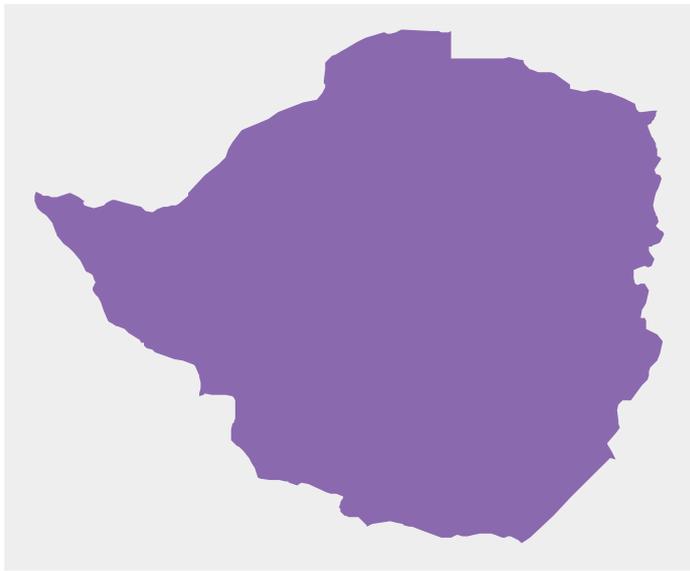


Figure 1026: Map of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1965-1979.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Africans	389 856	Aggregate
White Zimbabweans		Dispersed

Table 349: List of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1965-1979.

From 1980 until 1981

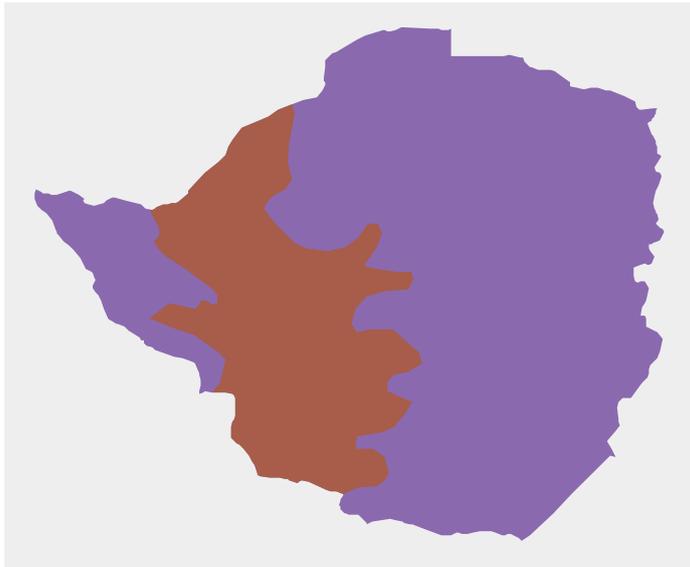


Figure 1027: Map of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1980-1981.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Shona	389 856	Aggregate
■ Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	101 698	Regionally based
White Zimbabweans		Dispersed

Table 350: List of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1980-1981.

From 1982 until 1987

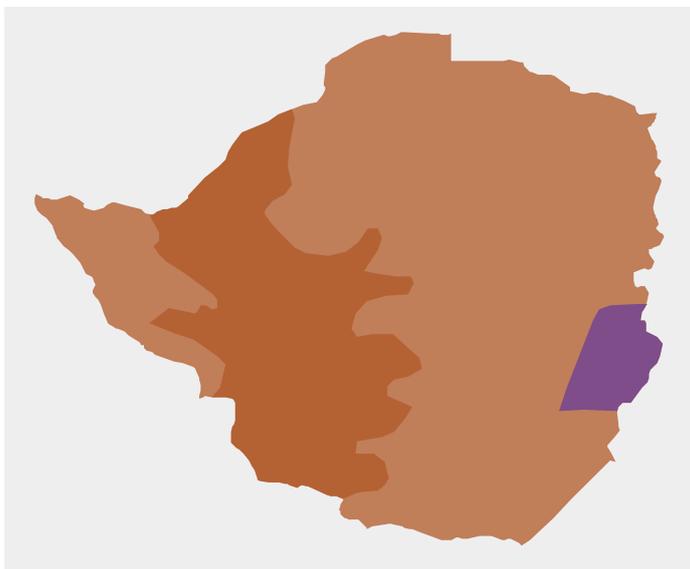


Figure 1028: Map of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1982-1987.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Shona (minus Ndau)	389 856	Aggregate
■ Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	101 698	Regionally based
■ Ndau (Shona sub-group)	13 560	Regionally based
White Zimbabweans		Dispersed

Table 351: List of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1982-1987.

From 1988 until 1991

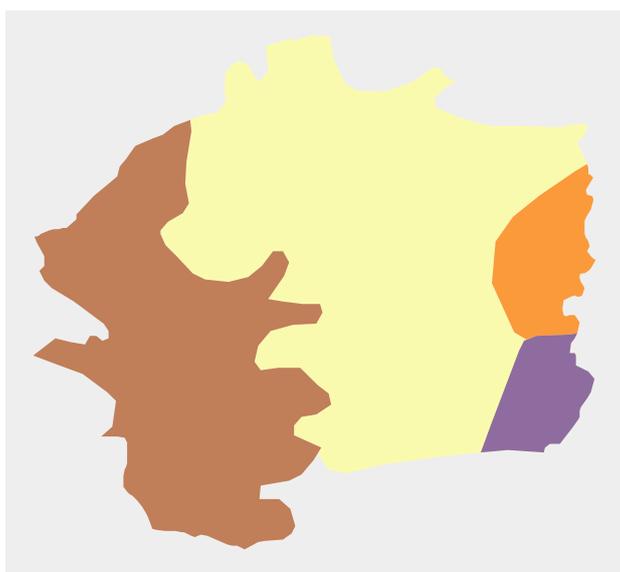


Figure 1029: Map of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1988-1991.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Shona (minus Manyika & Ndau)	182 807	Regionally based
■ Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	101 698	Regionally based
■ Manyika (Shona sub-group)	19 023	Regionally based
■ Ndau (Shona sub-group)	13 560	Regionally based
White Zimbabweans		Dispersed

Table 352: List of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1988-1991.

From 1992 until 2017

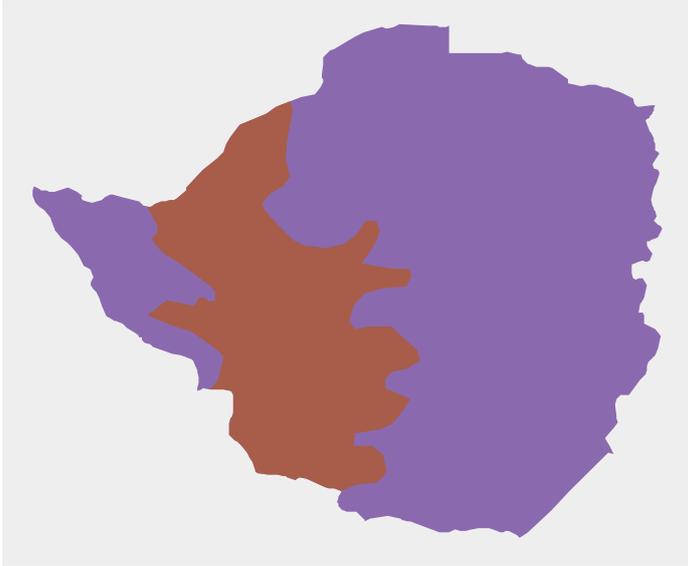


Figure 1030: Map of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1992-2017.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Shona	389 856	Aggregate
■ Ndebele-Kalanga-(Tonga)	101 698	Regionally based
White Zimbabweans		Dispersed

Table 353: List of ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during 1992-2017.

Conflicts in Zimbabwe

Starting on 1966-04-28

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	ZANU	Africans	1966-04-28	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	ZAPU	Africans	1966-09-06	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	PF	Africans	1976-11-01	Explicit	Yes	No