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Foreword from Chief of Mission

DTM has conducted Round 1 and 2 of the socio-economic survey to determine the impact of COVID-19 on returning migrants in Zimbabwe. Our hope as IOM is to foster a reintegration pathway that is resilient and sustainable ahead of the ever-increasing global pressure on livelihoods, incomes and savings as the pandemic ravages all nations. This socio-economic survey was conducted to establish immediate to long term recovery and reintegration of returnees post-COVID-19 period.

Mario Lito Malanca

Chief of Mission, Harare Zimbabwe

11 January 2021

Executive Summary

Background

This socio-economic survey sought to assess the impact of COVID-19 on returnees and the plans of returnees who came to Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 lockdown period to ascertain whether they intend to settle in Zimbabwe permanently or they plan migrate to their host countries. The socio-economic survey aimed at establishing the needs, challenges, vulnerabilities, demographics and coping mechanisms used by returnees to respond to their challenges.

This survey is the second Socio-Economic survey (R2), since the breakout of the COVID-19 virus. The preliminary results of the first one (R1) can be found [here](#). This report focuses on the findings of the second round survey, however reference and comparison will be made to R1 in some cases of the findings.

Methodology

A mixed research design was used to conduct this socio-economic survey. Enumerators were trained to administer the survey questionnaire through face to face interviews with the returnees and key informants focus group discussions to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. A total of 1952 returnees participated in Round 1 (938) and Round 2 (1014) and 25 focus group discussions with key informants in 15 districts under 7 provinces in Zimbabwe. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents who participated in the survey and a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing were used. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations and COVID-19 Precautions

Informed consent was sought from all participants and they gave verbal consent before the interview. Confidentiality of their personal information was guaranteed. For COVID-19 considerations, social distancing, wearing of masks and use of sanitizers was constantly used when engaging with the communities during and after the survey sessions. During focus group discussions, an Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) person was assigned to keep reminding participants to adhere to social distancing and use of masks correctly.

Limitations of the Study

While our approach was in person administration of questionnaires, 24 respondents who could not be reached in person due to distance challenges and COVID-19 considerations were interviewed telephonically.

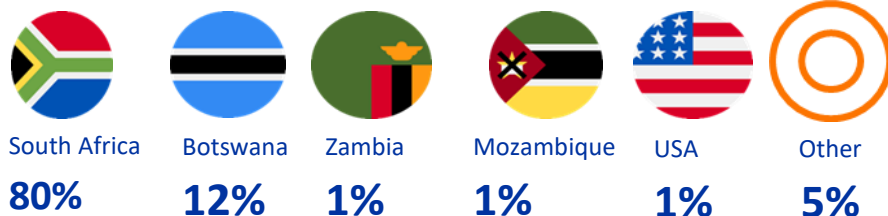
Key Findings

Demographics



Female respondents were 37% of all returnees whereas 63% were male returnees. The survey shows that 62% of female returnees are aged between 20 and 39 with 77% male returnees being in the same age range.

Host Countries



Most returnees were hosted in South Africa with 80 per cent followed by Botswana with 12 per cent. Mozambique, USA and Zambia had 1 per cent each and other countries contributed 5 per cent of the returnees.

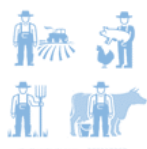
Returnee Occupations



18.8% have construction skills



9.5% have trading skills



8.7% have skills in agriculture



6.9% have driving skills



5.4% have catering skills



3.2% have painting skills



2.5% are in domestic work



77% returnees cited search for employment as the main push factor for initially migrating.

55% of the returnees intend to go back to host countries while **45%** wish to stay in Zimbabwe.

46% of the returnees who intend to go back to host countries intend to continue with their job while **36%** wish to search for a new job.

Vulnerabilities



63% of returnees are unemployed



55% of returnees do not have valid travel documents



95% of returnees face financial constraints

68% of the returnees face hunger and thirst

29% of returnees do not have access to travel documents



84% of returnees do not have savings in host countries. Only **16%** of those who have can access their savings

Findings and Recommendations

- The findings of the survey show that most returnees (80%) came back from South Africa during the COVID-19 lockdown. Of all the returnees, 55 per cent indicated that they intend to go back to their host countries. While more than half of the returnees intend to go back, it was also found out that 55 per cent of the total returnees do not have valid travel documents.
- In addition, it emerged that 63 per cent of returnees are unemployed hence this influences their intention to go back to host countries. The returnees did not indicate where they will get funds to return to their host countries.
- Sixty eight per cent of the returnees also cited that they face hunger and financial constraints. It is therefore suggested that an immediate intervention such as cash transfers, non-food items and agricultural kits be extended to them in the short-term to meet their needs.
- Seventeen per cent of the respondents indicated their access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of birth control was negatively affected while 17 per cent indicated that their right to have safe sex was negatively affected. Forty eight per cent (13) of 27 pregnant women interviewed indicated that the COVID-19 related lockdown affected their antenatal visits in a negative way.
- Therefore, access to healthcare services was limited amongst the returnees and it is recommended that the Government of Zimbabwe and humanitarian partners increase protection mechanisms through funding of free healthcare services and provision of sexual and reproductive health rights centres for returnees.
- Stigma also came out as one key issue from focus group discussions where returnees were regarded as transmitters of COVID-19 and in turn they had mental health problems. As a result, a comprehensive psycho-social support is required to help the migrants and host communities to co-exist and reintegrate.
- In the long-term, a sustainable reintegration and COVID-19 recovery plan is needed such as livelihoods projects which suit their occupational skills and other potential economic activities that may be available in their host communities. Eighty four per cent of the returnees do not have savings in host countries and as a result, they face other challenges such as limited access to healthcare and education for their household members. A comprehensive reintegration package that may include social grants in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe may be required to ensure safe, secure and successful re-integration of returnees.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCWs	Child Care Workers
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MPSLSW	Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
R1	Round 1 Socio-Economic Assessment on Migrants (Jun-Aug 2020)
R2	Round 2 Socio-Economic Assessment on Returnees (Nov-Dec 2020)
VHWs	Voluntary Health Workers
WGQ	Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions
WHO	World Health Organization
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

Socio-Economic Survey Map

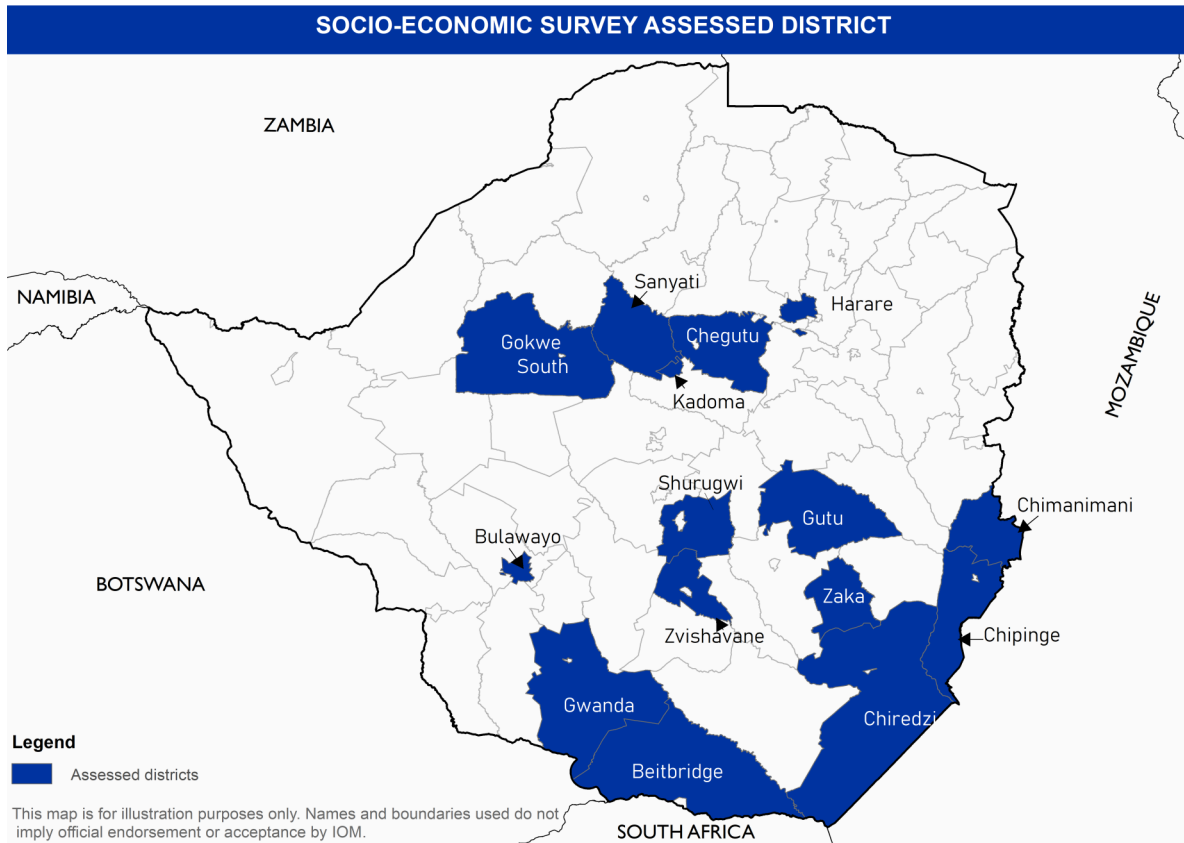


Figure 1: Socio-economic survey map of districts covered.

Background

Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020) on 20 January 2020 and subsequently termed a pandemic on 11 March (WHO, 2020). Since the declaration of COVID-19 pandemic in March to date, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases as of 10 November 2020 is at 68.8 million globally, with around 1,57 million deaths with a second wave hitting several countries thus, causing a sharp increase in confirmed cases. Several nation states have adopted multiple strategies, including lockdowns, to slow the spread of the disease however, the burden of COVID-19 on vulnerable persons is widespread particularly on the socio-economic front. The lockdowns were used to slow down the global COVID-19 pandemic, but they affected human mobility, global supply chains, industries, health governance, employment and other socio-economic impacts. Of significance to note is that COVID-19 transformed migration practices and dynamics between the global north and south nations as well as South-South and North-North human mobility.

It is important to underscore the fact that despite the disruption of mobility practices and its negative impacts on returnees, the Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 provides for an orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (UN, 2015). The Government of Zimbabwe is part to the SDGs and as such, this socio-economic survey will benefit the government in responding to the needs of migrant returnees who were affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

As of 21 October 2020, IOM had recorded more than 24,046 returnees who returned to Zimbabwe during COVID-19 lockdown. IOM conducted a socio-economic survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on returnee livelihoods, vulnerabilities, coping mechanisms, economic status, their immediate and long-term needs, and their intentions upon arrival in Zimbabwe. The survey was undertaken from 17 November to 20 December 2020. The approach was community-based surveys with returnees, host communities and the households of returning migrants. Surveys and focus group discussions were carried out in 7 provinces (Bulawayo, Harare, Manicaland, Mashonaland West, Midlands Matabeleland South and Masvingo) with returnee migrants and key informants in host communities. The study reached out to returnees in 14 districts namely Harare, Chegutu, Kadoma, Sanyati, Gokwe South, Bulawayo, Esigodini, Gwanda, Beitbridge, Zvishavane, Shurugwi, Gutu, Zaka, Chiredzi, Chipinge and Chimanimani. A comprehensive needs analysis of returnees was done to provide IOM with a framework for reintegration of returnees by way of understanding their needs and rebuild their livelihoods in a resilient manner while fostering recovery post COVID-19 era.

Purpose

This community-based survey sought to assess the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on returnees, host communities and the households of returning migrants. While there was a remarkable progress in tracking the returnees during the socio-economic study that was conducted on returning migrants in Zimbabwe, this study specifically sought to assess the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on migrants who have returned in Zimbabwe and ascertain their intentions to migrate with a view to forge a successful post COVID-19 recovery and reintegration plan. To achieve this, it was paramount to assess the multiple layers of vulnerabilities (economic and social) of returnees, identify key skill sets they demand and marketable skills they have in order to fit in the labour market, assess the income generating activities they engage in and effects on remittances.

¹ WHO (2020)

² UN Agenda 2030, SDGs 10.7

A comprehensive needs analysis of returnees would provide IOM with a framework for reintegration of returnees by way of understanding their needs, rebuild their livelihoods in a resilient manner while fostering recovery in post COVID-19 in a sustainable way.

Survey Strategy and Methodology

This socio-economic survey adopted a mixed research design where we used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyse data. Comparative analysis of two reports using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data based on the estimated population of 30,000 returnees by the end of the year. This socio-economic survey took place at community level hence, we chose some case studies to establish the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on returnees with total 1,014 returnees.

Ethical Considerations and COVID-19 Precautions

Informed consent was sought from all participants and they gave verbal consent before the interview. Confidentiality of their personal information was guaranteed. For COVID-19 considerations, social distancing, wearing of masks and use of sanitizers was constantly used when engaging with the communities during and after the survey sessions. During Focus Group Discussions, an IPC person was assigned to keep reminding participants to adhere to social distancing and use of masks correctly.

Limitations of the Study

While our approach was in person administration of questionnaires, a few respondents could not be reached in person due to distances involved to interview the returnees and COVID-19 considerations, therefore, we administered the interviews telephonically.

Findings

Demographics Profile of Respondents

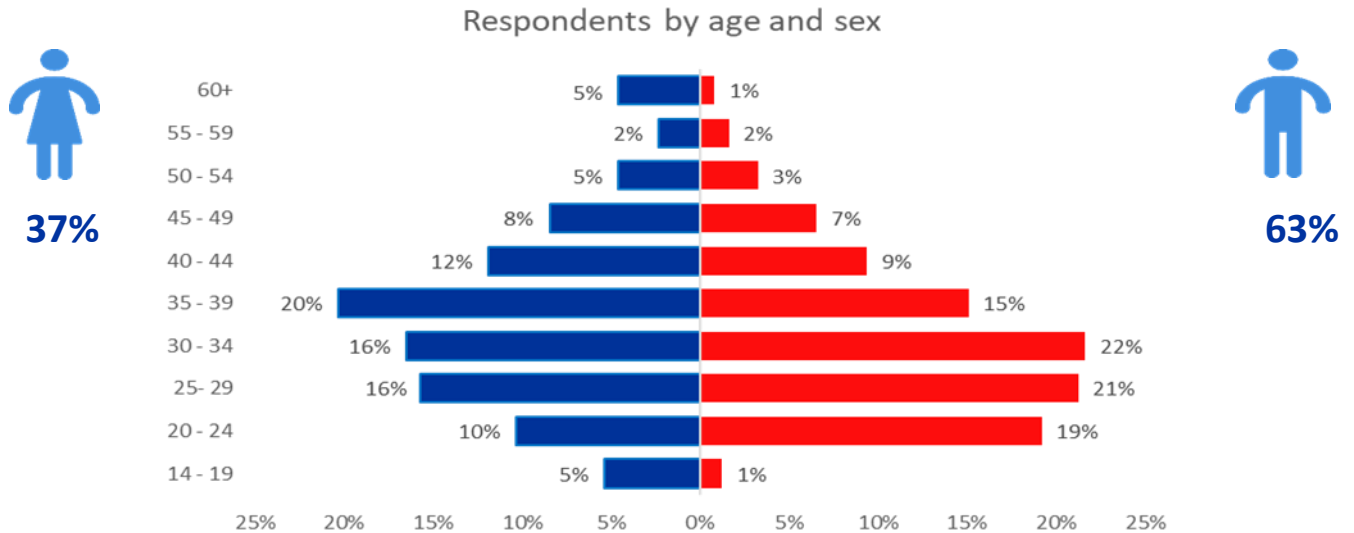
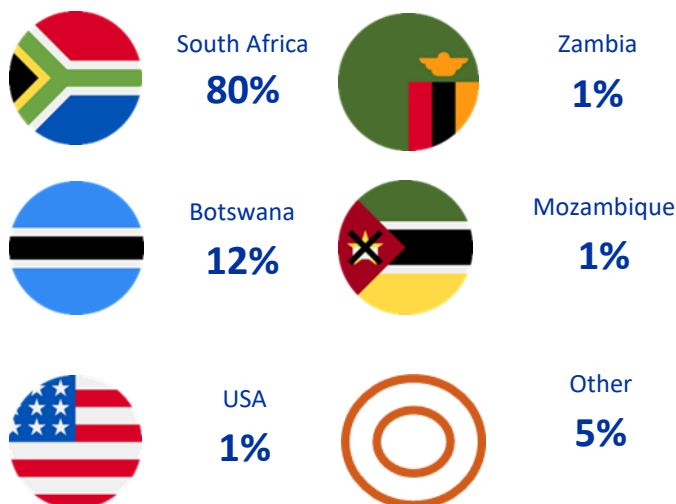


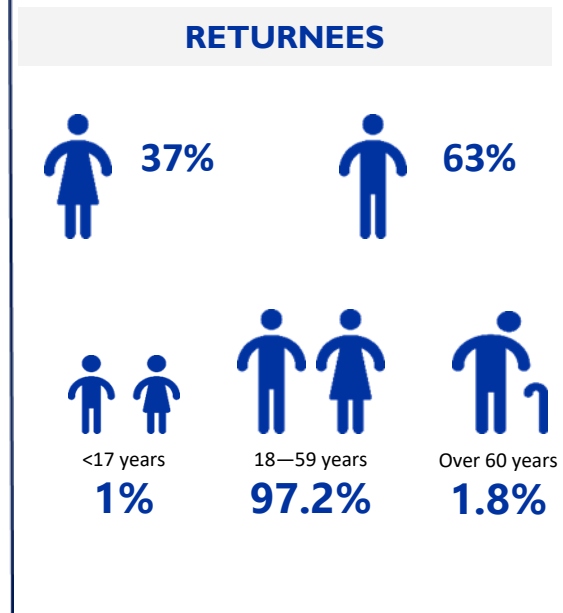
Figure 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Top 5 Host Countries of Returnees

A total number of 1014 of respondents from 5 host countries participated in the survey. They indicated that they were in South Africa (80%), Zambia (1%), Botswana (12%), Mozambique (1%) and USA (1%) before the lockdown. Five per cent were in various other countries.



1,014 Total Respondents



Sex and Age

Female respondents were 37 per cent of returnees whereas 63 per cent were males. The survey shows that 62 per cent of female returnees are aged between 20 and 39 with 77 per cent of male returnees being in the same age range. Ages between 40 and 59 for both male and female constitute 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Children with ages of 19 and below constitute 6 per cent and this was the same for the elderly persons above 60. Overall, it can be noted that 94% of the total respondents between the ages of 18 to 59. Children and the elderly have the least per centage, and this can be explained by their less economic activity. There is a variation when comparing to R1 of the socio-economic survey carried out between 10 June 2020 and 9 August 2020. In R1 there was a total of 938 respondents with 54% males and 46% females.

Distribution of respondents by province

Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces recorded the highest with 50 per cent and 14 per cent respondents respectively, followed by Midlands and Mashonaland West with a total of 22 per cent returnees who participated in the survey. While Harare and Bulawayo had the highest number of returnees, in this socio-economic survey we focused more on host communities which were living in mostly rural and peri-urban areas.

Therefore, Harare and Bulawayo have the least with a total of 4 per cent. Manicaland and Mashonaland West provinces recorded an average of 11 per cent and 23 per cent each respectively. In each province women constitute the largest proportion of about 52 per cent to 48 per cent compared to male respondents.

Distribution of Respondents by Province

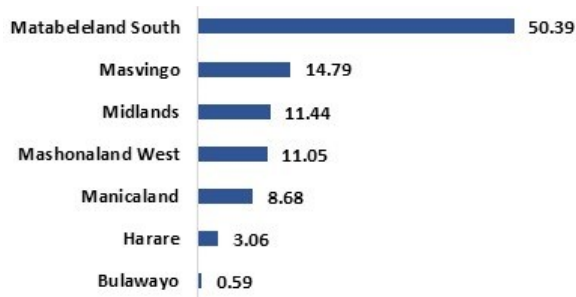


Figure 3: Respondents by province

Marital Status of respondents

Thirty five per cent of migrants are in an unregistered customary marriage and 28 per cent have never been married. Returnees who are divorced and widowed constitute 16 per cent while those who indicated that they are cohabiting or in civil marriage and registered customary marriage are 20 per cent of the total respondents. Overall, 72 per cent of the total respondents are in union of a different type suggesting that only an approximate of 29 per cent are not in any kind of union.

Level of education of Returnees

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on returnees, we sought to profile the returnees based on the level of education. In this case, we had hypothesized that the lower the level of education the higher one is likely to migrate. Therefore, level of education was an important variable that was considered to understand socio-economic vulnerabilities of returnee migrants in Zimbabwe. Figure 4 shows the level of education of returnees.

Sixty eight per cent of respondents indicated that secondary education is their highest level of education while 22 per cent have primary level education. Those with a Diploma to a PhD qualification constitute 6 per cent of the returnees. Two per cent of the returnees hold a vocational certificate. Of the 689 returnees with secondary level education, 231 (34%) are female compared to 458 (66%) male.

Level of Education

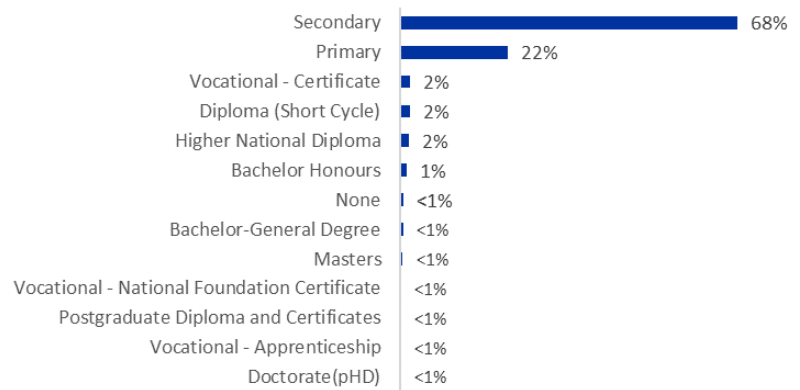


Figure 4: Level of Education

Occupation and Employment

In order to understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on returnees in Zimbabwe, we sought views of key informants using focus group discussions and asked a set of questions to the individual returnee. The occupation and employment status of the returnees are two variables that we sought to use to describe the vulnerability of returnees. In that regard, respondents were requested to choose the skills they have and also confirm their employment status.

Occupational Skills of Migrant Returnees

Returnees were asked to report on their occupational skills which ranged from domestic work, through general hand, carpentry, white collar jobs and construction to mention a few. The study findings show that 19% of the returnees have skills in construction and building followed by 9.5% of the returnees who said they are into buying and selling of goods and services. Nine per cent of the respondents reported that they have agriculture skills such as farming, poultry and horticulture. In addition, the graph above shows that most returnees do have various occupational skills such as welding (3.0%), driving (6.9%), painting (3.2%), catering and confectionery (5.4%), cutting and designing (3.0%), domestic work (2.5%), motor mechanics (2.9%) while 12 per cent indicated that they had no skills.

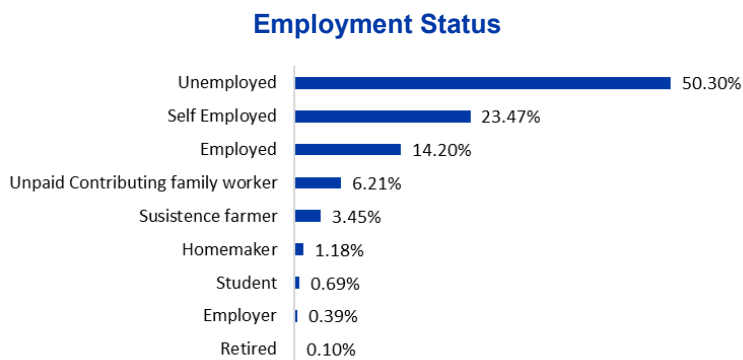
Main Occupational Skills of Returnees



Figure 5: Occupational skills

Employment status

Returns were asked to state their employment status where they were required to choose from whether they were employed, unemployed, student, retired, self-employed or they were an employer themselves. The figure below illustrates the responses that came from the returnees.



Unemployment amongst returnees who were interviewed in the socio-economic survey is very high as 50 per cent of the returnees reported that they were unemployed. Persons between the ages 18-39 constitute 78 per cent of the total unemployed.

Figure 6: Employment status

Migration

Migration reasons

It is important to ascertain the reason for leaving Zimbabwe hence returnees were asked the reason why they migrated from Zimbabwe.

Respondents gave various reasons for migrating with most (77.4%) indicating that they emigrated for employment, this was followed by 32 per cent who indicated that they went to other countries for financial reasons. 4 per cent were on short term visits and less than 1 per cent went because of a natural disaster. Respondents were also asked their level of satisfaction with regards to various factors in host countries, the responses are shown in figure 8 below.

Reasons for Migrating

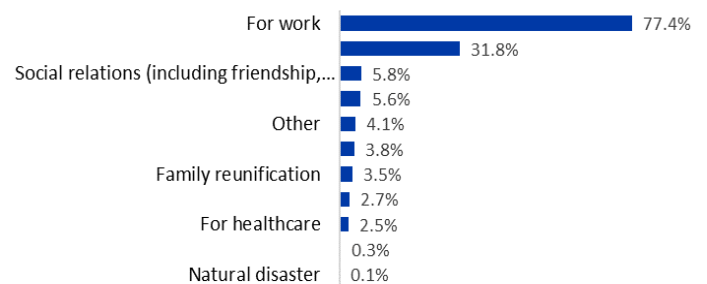
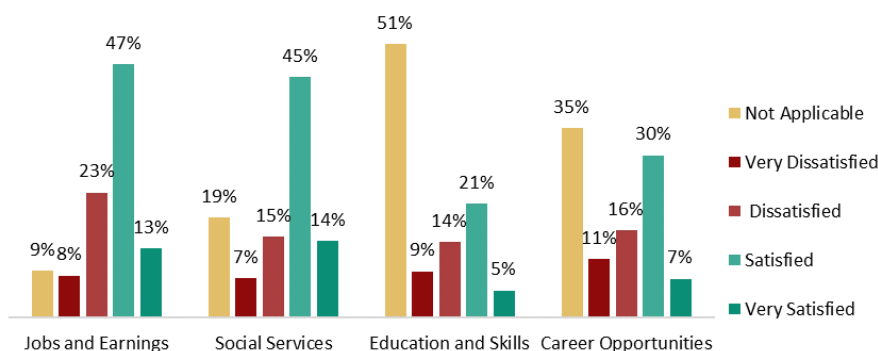


Figure 7: Reasons for migrating

Experiences of Returnees in Host Countries

Level of Satisfaction



With regards to jobs and earnings many of the respondents were satisfied, the same as social services in host countries. Fifty one per cent and 35 per cent indicated that education and skills as well as career opportunities were not applicable to them respectively.

Figure 8: Level of satisfaction

Length of Stay in the Host Country

Returnees were asked their length of stay in the host countries, the largest proportion of respondents (33.5%) had been in the host country for more than three years. There is a big shift when compared to the R1 survey whose largest proportion (33.7%) had stayed in host countries for 3 to 6 months. This shift may be explained by the fact that the returnees in R1 may have opted to immediately come back as they had not been in host countries for long. Another explanation for the shift may be because that those who had been in host countries for longer may have then lost their employment due to a direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their employers.

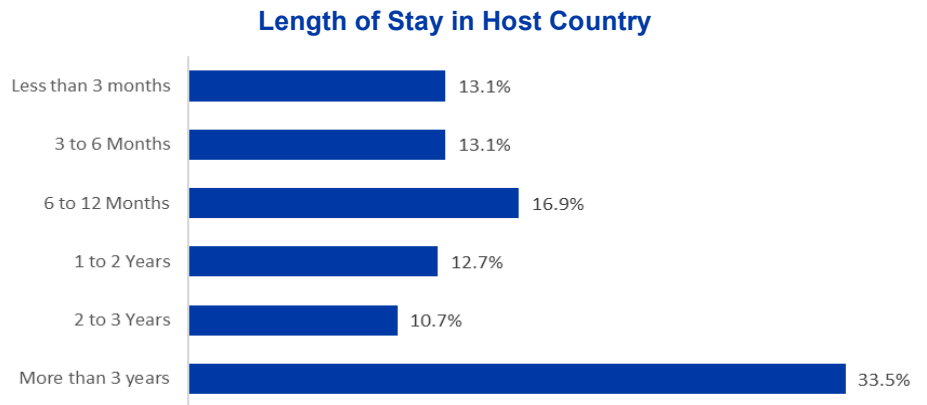
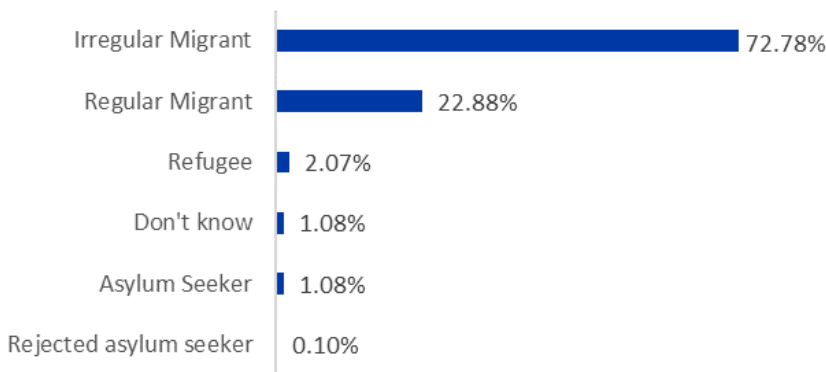


Figure 9: Length of stay in host country

Immigration Status in Host Country



A question on the immigration status of returnees in host country was asked and 73 per cent were irregular migrants against 23 per cent who had a regular migrant status. The remaining returnees (4%) were either an asylum seeker, rejected asylum seeker or they chose not to disclose their immigration status.

Figure 10: Immigration status

In comparison to the R1 socio-economic survey there is a change in the immigration status of returnees. In R1 69 per cent were regular migrants while R2, 21 per cent were irregular migrants. A majority of returnees (72.78%) who were irregular migrants could be explained by low levels of educational qualifications of returnee migrants (90.44%) who had secondary school level education or less (i.e. primary education or no formal education). These returnees could not attain work visas in host countries resulting in a sizeable number of returnees who were ex-convicts.

Travel documents held by returnees

A total of 566 (55.8%) returnees have no valid travel documents, with males making up 71 per cent of those without passports and females making up 29 per cent. Four hundred and forty eight (44.2%) returnees have a form of valid travel document (52.9% males and 47.1 females); 426 have a valid passport, 21 have temporary travel documents and 1 has a diplomatic passport.

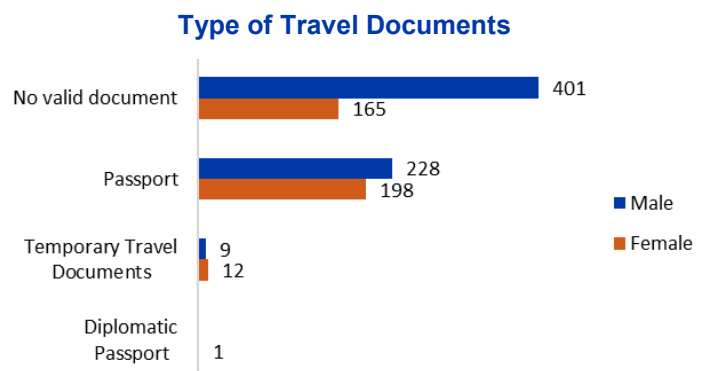


Figure 11: Travel document possession

Host Community Views on Travel Documents

Key Informants in FGDs

Findings of this survey show that 55.8% of the returnees had no passports. A Focus Group Discussion in Chipinge with community leaders reported that, “most of the returnees in Chipinge district whom they refer to as majoni-joni (returnees from South Africa) do not have travel documents” .

Another respondent who was a village health worker in the FGD added that, **“almost all returnees cross to South Africa via Save River using the Malayitsha (smugglers).”**

A Social Welfare Officer in Chegutu reaffirmed the views of other key informants on issues of travel documents. He explained to us that,

“most returnees do not have passports and due to COVID-19 and limited access to travel documents in Zimbabwe, many migrants resort to informal crossing to neighbouring countries which increases their vulnerability to abuse and crime (Key Informant Chegutu District).

Visas/Permits held by Returnees

Number of Respondents with Valid Visa or Permit

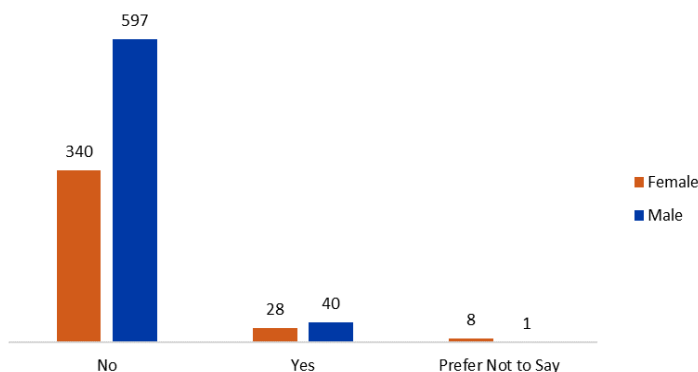


Figure 12: Visa/Permit possession

Of the 1,014 respondents, 937 (92.4%) did not have a valid visa/permit of the host country upon their return to Zimbabwe. Sixty eight (6.7%) had a valid visa/permit and 9 refrained from answering the question.

Of the respondents with a passport 16 per cent indicated that they possessed a valid visa/permit, this is similar to the findings in R1 where 16 per cent of returnees with a passport had a valid visa/permit.

Type of Visas and Permits held by Returnees

Of the 68 returnees with a valid visa/permit, 36 (52.9%) held an employment permit. This is a rise when compared to R1 where 31 per cent had an employment permit which may be an indication in job losses for returnees. In this round 15 (22.1%) held an ordinary visa whereas in R1 29.4 per cent had an ordinary visa, 9 (13.2%) held a student permit and 8 (11.8%) held other types of permits.

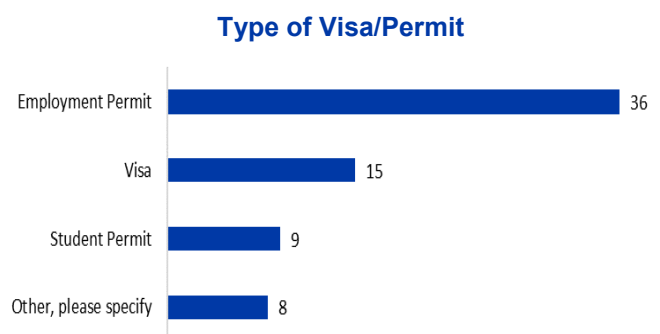


Figure 13: Type of visa/permit

Family Constellation by Dependents

The survey sought to establish the number of dependents that returnees had in the host country, other countries other than their host and in Zimbabwe. Figure 14 indicates that 75 per cent of respondents indicated that they had dependants with them, 28 per cent indicated that they had dependents who remained in the host country and 14 per cent of respondents indicated that they had dependents elsewhere. Given that the majority are living with their dependents, it means COVID-19 created more pressure on the households as vulnerabilities and needs including access to more food, water and healthcare increase with the size of the family.

Family Constellation

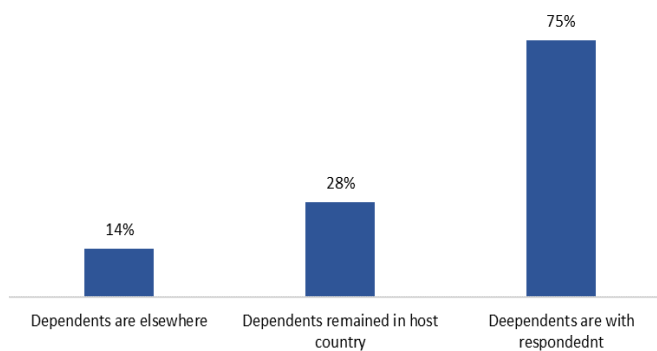


Figure 14: Family constellation

Age Distribution of dependants

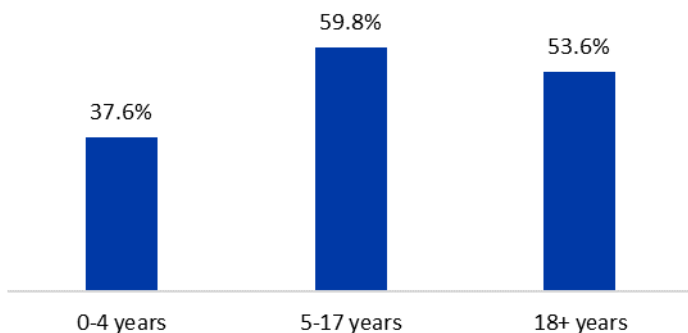


Figure 15: Age distribution of respondents' dependants

The returnees who had indicated that they had their dependents with them were also asked to give the number of dependents based on the ranges of 0-4 years of age, 5-17 years and those who were 18 years of age and above.

Livelihood Strategies

Returnees were asked how they have been coping economically since their return to Zimbabwe and the results are in figure shown 16.

A large proportion of the respondents were living on self-savings (24.4%), followed by selling labour (22.4%), selling/vending constituted 21 per cent of the responses.

Individual Coping Mechanisms

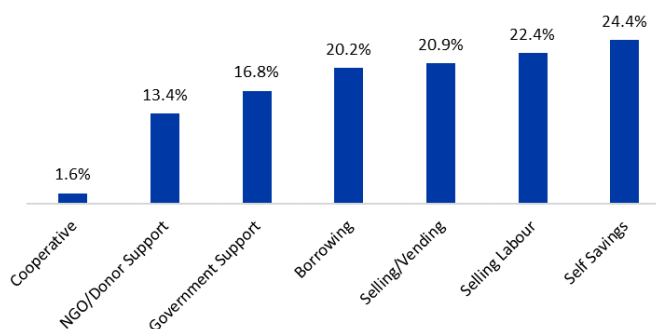


Figure 16: Individual coping mechanisms

Household Copying Mechanisms

Returnees were asked how their respective households were coping economically with their return. Forty two per cent indicated that their households had not made any adjustments in order to accommodate them, 14 per cent indicated that their households had resorted to the sale of agricultural goods (livestock and grain) in order to cope while less than one per cent indicated that money had been borrowed from a financial institution in order to cope.

Household Coping Mechanisms

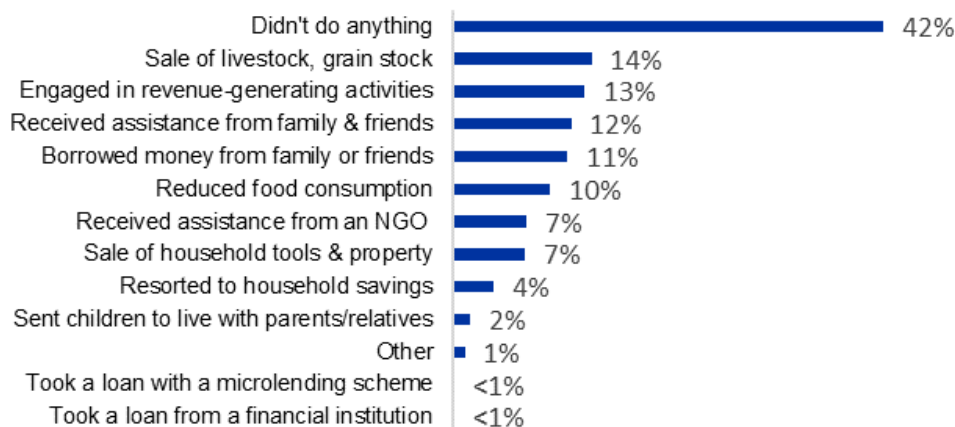


Figure 17: Household coping mechanisms

Vulnerabilities

COVID-19 and Vulnerabilities of Returnees

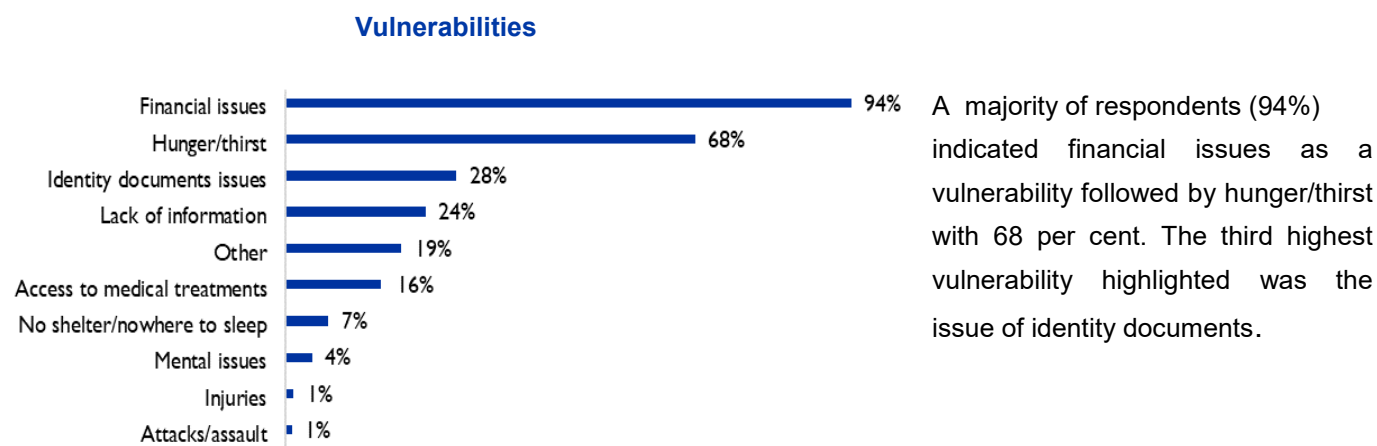


Figure 18: Vulnerabilities highlighted by respondents

Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods of Returnees

Respondents were asked on the nature of their diet since their return to Zimbabwe. There were two questions, one asking on their dietary diversity and the other on meal frequency. A majority of respondents (71.1%) of the respondents indicated that their dietary diversity had decreased and 70 per cent indicated that their meal frequency had reduced compared to when they were in host countries. A small percentage in both cases indicated an increase, 3 per cent had an increase in dietary diversity and per cent had an increase in meal frequency.

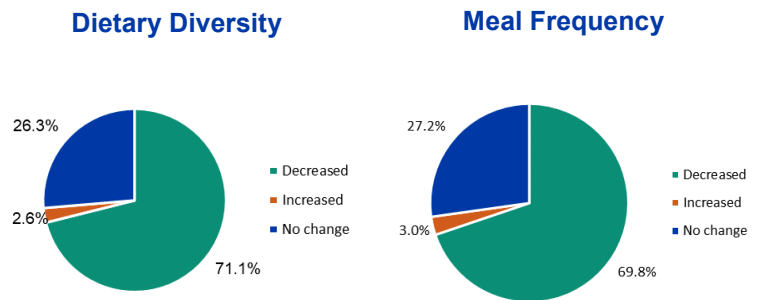


Figure 19: Dietary adjustments

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

The 6-item Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions (WGQ) was used in this survey. The WGQ is a set of questions designed to identify people with a disability. The questions assess whether people have difficulty performing basic universal activities such as walking, seeing, hearing, cognition, self-care and communication.

Table 1: WGQ responses

	Difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?	Difficulty hearing, even when wearing hearing aids?	Difficulty walking or climbing stairs?	Difficulty remembering or concentrating?	Difficulty with self-care	Difficulty communicating using your usual language
No Difficulty	926	983	926	943	997	999
Some Difficulty	69	28	74	61	16	13
A lot of Difficulty	17	1	14	10	1	2
Cannot do at all	2	2	0	0	0	0

Seventeen individuals indicated that they have a lot of difficulty seeing and 2 indicated that they cannot see at all. One reported having a lot of difficulty hearing and 2 indicated that they cannot do at all. Fourteen individuals have a lot of difficulty walking or climbing stairs and 10 have a lot of difficulty in remembering or concentrating. One individual has a lot of difficulty with self-care and 2 have a lot of difficulty communicating using their local language (i.e. understanding or being understood by others).

Returnees, COVID-19 & Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights

Respondents were asked whether the COVID-19 related lockdown had negative effects on various aspects of their sexual reproductive health and rights. The responses are highlighted in table 2 below.

Table 2: Sexual reproductive and health rights

	No	Yes	Prefer not to say
Antenatal visits	51.9%	48.1%	
Immunization of infants	83.7%	16.3%	
Access to healthcare	69.2%	29.9%	0.9%
Access to comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health	76.7%	22.3%	0.9%
Access to safe affordable contraceptives	80.4%	16.9%	2.8%
Right to safe sex	81.3%	17.0%	1.8%
Ability to report cases of SGBV	87.9%	10.8%	1.3%

The table shows that 17 per cent of the respondents indicated their access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of birth control was negatively affected while 17 per cent indicated that their right to safe sex was negatively affected. Forty eight per cent (13) of 27 pregnant respondents indicated that the COVID-19 related lockdown affected their antenatal visits in a negative way.

Pregnant and lactating women

Of the 376 female respondents 27 (7.2%) indicated that they are pregnant and 39 (10.4%) indicated that they are breastfeeding. In R1, 8.5% of women were pregnant.



Prevalence of Chronic diseases

This socio-economic survey also sought to investigate physical vulnerabilities amongst the returnees who came back during COVID-19 lockdown both in Round 1 and Round 2 of this survey. The respondents were asked if they have been diagnosed with any chronic diseases and 14 per cent (145) of respondents indicated that they have a chronic disease. The below figure illustrates the chronic illnesses and the frequencies of returnees who indicated that they suffer from an illness.

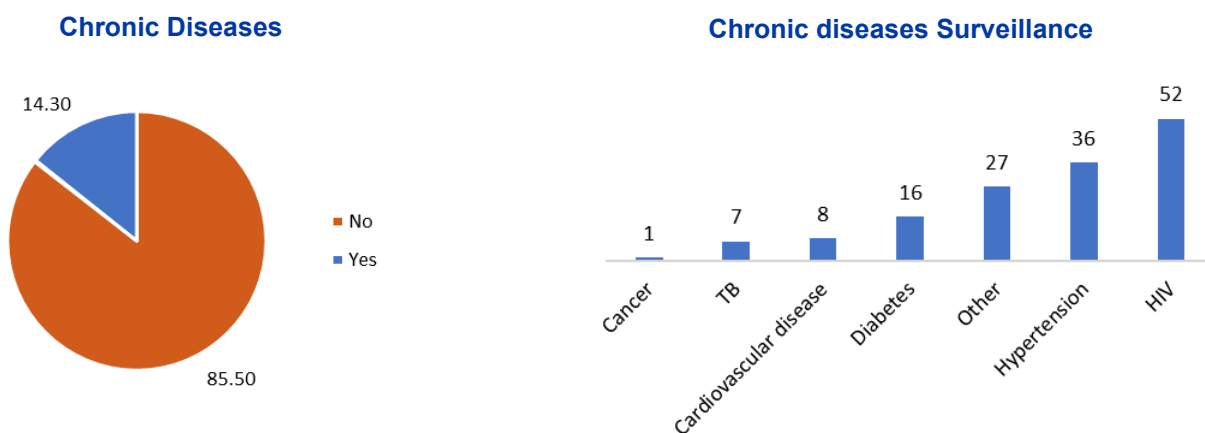


Figure 20: Chronic illnesses Surveillance

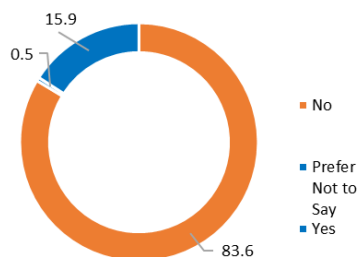
Fifty two respondents indicated that they are HIV positive, 36 have hypertension, 7 have TB and 1 has cancer. Nine of the 27 pregnant women indicated that they have a chronic disease.

Financial status during Covid-19 era

Access to Savings during COVID-19 Lockdown

Eighty four per cent of the returnees indicated that they had not left any savings in their host countries, less than one per cent refrained from answering the question and 16 per cent indicated that they had some form of savings in their host countries. Of those that reported having savings in their host countries 55 per cent have access to those savings while 45 per cent do not.

Returnees with Savings in Host Country



Returnees with Access to their Savings

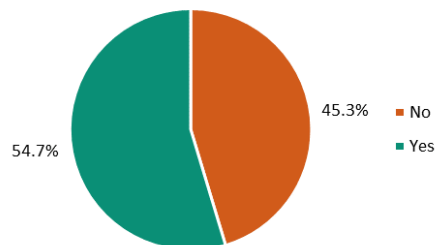


Figure 21: Savings in host country

Host Community Views on Financial status

A councillor in Nemangwe was asked to give his views on whether returnees had savings and have access to them and he had this to say,

“All the returnees under Chief Nemangwe leave this community for South Africa every year in March for seasonal work such as harvesting of oranges and come back in September every year for farming season.” He added that, “returnees do not have any savings and access to any savings as their work gives them money enough for survival”.

His experience in the community is that returnees were even struggling to come back home during the COVID-19 lockdown. The views from the community further supports 83.6% who stated that they have no savings back in their host countries (Councillor in Nenamngwe, 30 November 2020).

Host communities were also asked to give their views on the support rendered to returnees to return home. Below are some of the views:

“I have received reports from many village heads in Njelele that many returnees were coming back mostly from South Africa after days of being stranded. I know of a family that sold a cow to help 3 of their sons who were stuck in South Africa due to prolonged lockdown” (Chief Njelele, 30 November 2020).

In addition, key informants who took part in Focus Group Discussions in Chegutu and Esigodini reported that there were several cases they had had from returnees regarding who funded their return home during COVID-19 lockdown.

These respondents from a Focus Group Discussion in Esigodini and Chegutu also added their views on most returnees who came from South Africa. They said:

‘Most returnees used their personal funds while others received help from family’. A female Child Care Worker respondent in Chegutu reported that, two returnees who are sisters and were in South Africa during the lockdown had gone for seasonal work on farms. Due to prolonged COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, they lost their jobs. The CCW further reported that due to lack of income and high rentals, the two sisters had to seek help from strangers to return home. Both sisters had children under the age of 18 who needed their support.” (FGD Respondents in Chegutu and Esigodini, November 2020).

It can be concluded that, lack of savings and limited access to savings by the few returnees who returned to Zimbabwe had an impact on the ability to fund their trip back home as well as means to survive upon returning home. As illustrated by Chief Njelele in Gokwe South, this has had an impact on host community where family members had to chip in to support family members to return as well as their welfare when they return.

Returnees and Remittances

Returnees were asked whether they had received any money from relatives/friends outside the country since their return to Zimbabwe. Remittances play an important role in returnee household as they are used to meet daily needs of the family such as food, water, healthcare and payment of school fees. This survey sought to investigate if COVID-19 had an impact on returnee’s ability to have access to any remittances from family and friends.

Returnees who Received Remittances

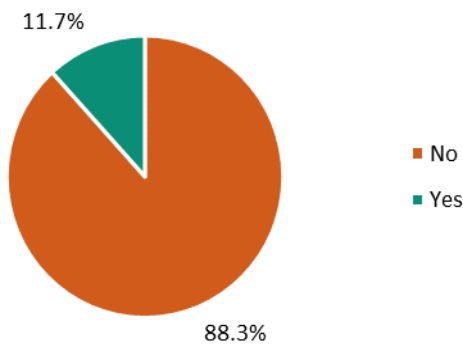


Figure 22: Returnees who have received remittances

Most of the returnees (51.7%) receive remittances quarterly, 35 per cent receive monthly, 10 per cent receive annually and 4. per cent receive remittances weekly.

Respondents were asked to give a range of the value of the money they had received in US Dollars. There were 4 categories splitting the ranges.

Ninety nine of the 119 respondents indicated that they had received at most US\$ 500, 5 had received between US\$ 501 and US\$ 1,000 and 12 refrained from responding to the question.

A large majority (895) indicated that they have not received any remittances from outside the country while 12 per cent (119) have indicated that they have received remittances from friends/relatives who are outside Zimbabwe.

Many of the returnees received remittances through money transfer agencies with 73 per cent indicating that as their means followed by receiving remittances through friends and relatives with 23 per cent.

Frequency of Remittances

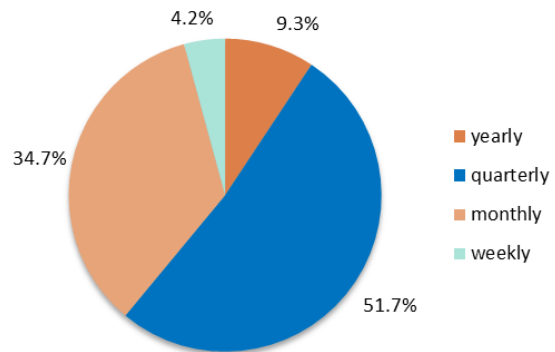


Figure 23: Frequency of receiving remittances

The frequency of receiving remittances against the range of the value of remittances received was also ascertained and the responses are tabulated below.

Table 3: Value of remittances vs Frequency of receiving

	\$1-\$500	\$501-\$1000	\$1001-\$2000	\$2001-\$3000	Prefer not to answer	Grand Total
Monthly	34	2	1	-	5	42
Quarterly	53	1	-	2	5	61
Weekly	4	1	-	-	-	5
Yearly	8	1	-	-	2	11
Total	99	5	1	2	12	119

Returnees were asked their preferences on where they wish to reside when comparing the host country and Zimbabwe. Nine per cent said they will never travel back to the host countries again and 50 per cent indicated that they have a desire to stay in Zimbabwe and only travel to the host countries when they wish.

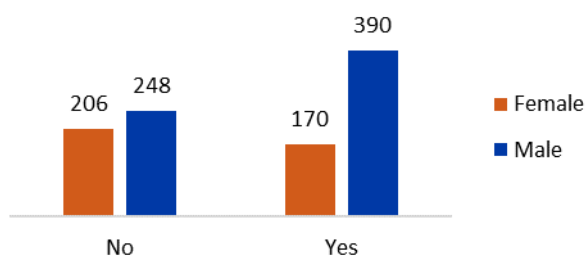
Table 5: Returnee preference

	If you had the choice, what would you prefer?
I will never travel to that country again	8.9%
Not Sure	3.4%
Remained in that country	37.5%
Stay in my home country and travel there when I wish	50.2%

Return Intentions

The survey also sought to establish the intentions of the returnees.

Intention to Return to host country



Intention upon returning to Host Country

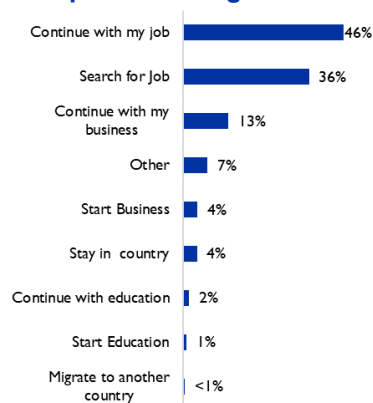


Figure 24: Returnee intentions

A total of 170 (30.35%) female returnees against 390 male returnees (69.65%) indicated that they intend to return to host countries after COVID-19 lockdown relaxations and when borders re-open. Of the 454 who do not intend to go back to their host country, 46 per cent were female and 55 per cent were male. In total, 55 per cent intend to go back to host countries while 45 per cent do not wish to return.

Host Community Voices on Intensions

Key informants who participated in FGDs such as CCWs and Village heads in Esigodini, Gokwe South, Chipinge and Chiredzi reported that, “many returnees do not wish to stay as some were already returning at the time of this survey”. In addition, the key informants also pointed out that most returnees only came because of COVID-19. Their intentions are to stay in those host countries.

Focus Group Discussions Reponses from Community Leaders

A Child Care Worker in a Focus Group Discussion pointed out that, ‘returnees here in Zaka who are mostly hosted in South Africa are suffering from stigma because community members think they have COVID-19 and they are usually associated with lavish lifestyles when they come back.’ A Village Head from Zaka District added that, ‘because the returnees did not come back home with money and other properties as they normally do, they are less likely to stay in the communities because of the stigma they suffer from community members who view them as *Injiva (the South African migrants)*’.

A youth coordinator in Chiredzi added that, “all the returnees he interacted with had plans to go back as soon as the borders re-open because there are no economic opportunities in the host communities”.

Income Generating Activities and Returnee Re-integration

Key informants were asked to identify viable income generating activities that can be done in their respective communities with a view to foster a long-term reintegration of returnees. Below are the findings from the key informants in various districts we visited:

Most Viable Income Generating Activities (IGAs)

Key Informants in Chipinge suggested the following business ventures which they said have highest potential to promote employment for returnees.

A key informant who works in the department of Social Welfare identified poultry projects and construction work while in Chipinge and Chimanimani irrigation schemes were said to have the highest potential. In Chimanimani they said they can utilize the Save River water source for irrigation schemes.

In Chiredzi, Chipinge and Chimanimani, the District Development Coordinator said horticulture through irrigation schemes has the highest potential to help returnees to reintegrate. He said, they have 360ha scheme with possibility for extension to 400ha to accommodate young farmers and they have other garden projects which needs financial support.

Another Key Informant in the CCW Focus Group Discussion reiterated the need to rehabilitate irrigation schemes which are lying idle. There is need for water and rehabilitation and fencing where each garden has a size of 1 ha. In her view, this is an IGA with the highest potential to rebuild the livelihoods of returnees after COVID-19.

- Trading (buying and selling)
- Carpentry, piggery and sewing
- Building and farming
- Cooperatives on brick moulding

Other IGAs with potential

Skills needed by Returnees

The key informants also suggested critical skills which are needed to fully reintegrate returnees and below are some set of skills they identified:

- Short course and vocational training in life skills such as hairdressing and construction
- Short course like driving, mechanics and poultry management.
- Crop management and marketing
- Entrepreneurship skills for example, trading, building, welding, carpentry and food processing
- Bee keeping and piggery
- Fish farming and tobacco farming
- They need financial literacy skills
- Bread making and bun baking skills

Conclusions and Recommendations

This socio-economic survey sought to assess the impact of COVID-19 on returnees and the plans of returnees who came to during COVID-19 to ascertain whether they intend to settle in Zimbabwe permanently or they plan migrate to their host countries. The socio-economic survey aimed at establishing the needs, challenges, vulnerabilities, demographics and coping mechanisms used by returnees to respond to their challenges.

- The findings of the survey show that most returnees (80%) came back from South Africa during COVID-19 lockdown. Of all the returnees, 55 per cent indicated that they intend to go back to their host countries. While more than half of the returnees intend to go back, it was also found out that 55 per cent of the total returnees do not have valid travel documents.
- In addition, it emerged that 63 per cent of returnees are unemployed hence this influences their intention to go back to host countries.
- Sixty eight per cent of the returnees also cited that they face hunger and financial constraints. It is therefore, suggested that an immediate intervention such as cash transfers, non-food items and agricultural kits be extended to them in the short-term to meet their needs.
- Forty eight per cent (13) of 27 pregnant respondents indicated that the COVID-19 related lockdown affected their antenatal visits in a negative way. Almost 17 per cent indicated their access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of birth control was negatively affected while 17 per cent indicated that their right to safe sex was negatively affected.
- Therefore, access to healthcare services was limited amongst the returnees and it is recommended that, the Government of Zimbabwe and humanitarian partners increase protection mechanisms through funding of free healthcare services and provision of sexual and reproductive health rights centres for returnees.
- Seventeen individuals indicated that they have a lot of difficulty seeing and 2 indicated that they cannot see at all. Twelve reported having a lot of difficulty hearing and 2 indicated that they cannot do anything at all. Fourteen individuals have a lot of difficulty walking or climbing stairs and 10 have a lot of difficulty in remembering or concentrating. Given the multiple forms of disabilities identified amongst the returnees, an inclusive reintegration package that considers the needs of PWDs is needed.
- Eighty eight per cent (895) indicated that they have not received any remittances from outside the country while 11.7 per cent (119) have indicated that they have received remittances from friends/relatives who are outside Zimbabwe. Given the changes in incomes and a lack of remittances, in the short term returnees could be assisted with cash-based transfers while in the long term livelihoods reconstruction is required and this may be achieved through more structured income generating projects such as irrigation and poultry.
- Eighty four per cent of the returnees indicated that they had not left any savings in their host countries, less than one per cent refrained from answering the question and 15.9 per cent indicated that they had some form of savings in their host countries. Lack of savings by returnees in host countries means it increases vulnerability to the household and host communities. It is recommended that the Government of Zimbabwe together with its humanitarian partners assist in order to protect the families from extreme poverty.
- Respondents were asked the nature of their diet since their return to Zimbabwe. There were two questions, one asking on their dietary diversity and the other on meal frequency. Seventy one per cent of the respondents indicated that their dietary diversity had decreased and 69.8 per cent indicated that their meal frequency had reduced compared to when they were in host countries. There is need to roll out a food and nutrition supplement distribution through government and humanitarian partners. Many of the respondents were living on self-savings (24.4%), followed by selling labour (22.4%), selling/vending constituted 20.9 per cent of the responses.

- Ninety five per cent of the respondents indicated financial issues as a vulnerability followed by hunger/thirst with 68.3 per cent. The third highest vulnerability highlighted was the issue of civil documents (Identity documents). Income generating activities such as irrigation, farming and catering services as well as job placements could help returnees restart their livelihoods.
- Stigma also came out as one key issue from focus group discussions where returnees were regarded as transmitters of COVID-19 and as a result they had mental health problems. As a result, a comprehensive psycho-social support is required to help the migrants and host communities to co-exist and reintegrate.
- In the long-term, a sustainable reintegration and COVID-19 recovery plan is needed such as livelihoods project which suit their occupational skills and other potential economic activities that may be available in their host communities. Eighty four per cent of the returnees do not have savings in host countries and as a result, they face other challenges such as limited access to healthcare and education for their household members. A comprehensive reintegration package that may include social grants in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe may be required to ensure safe, secure and successful re-integration of returnees.
- The study findings show that 18.8 per cent of the returnees have skills in construction and building followed by 9.5 per cent of the returnees who said they are into buying and selling of goods and services. Close to nine per cent of the respondents reported that they have agriculture skills such as farming, poultry and horticulture. This study recommends skills matching and job placements for those with skills that can be assumed in the local job market.
- It was also found out that 11.5 per cent of the total returnees interviewed had no formal education and skills for survival. Therefore, vocational training education is critical in capacitating returnees to ensure their employability and successful reintegration.

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