

# ICED Evidence Library

## Zimbabwe's changing urban landscape

Tags: Zimbabwe, Urban, Evidence

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*Evidence and insights on Zimbabwe's urban trends*



Roadside economic activity, Harare. Photo: Len Abrams

The ICED facility has undertaken an analysis of Zimbabwe's urban trends for DFID's Zimbabwe country office. This analysis was done in order to better understand urban trends and dynamics in Zimbabwe which can inform future urban programming.

The need for this analysis arose from the complexity around defining which settlements count as 'urban' in Zimbabwe. This creates uncertainty regarding the extent and nature of urbanisation.

Analysis of the official census data collected by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) suggests that the country is de-urbanising, with the proportion of the population living in urban centres falling from 35% to 33% between 2002 and 2012. But the data also shows slow urban growth in smaller centres with the total urban population growing slowly at 0.6% per annum from 4,029,707 to 4,284,145, compared to the 4.2% average across sub-Saharan Africa.

However headline de-urbanisation statistics do not capture significant diversity and complexity in population movements at the local level. There are driven by factors such as macroeconomic instability, urban economic downturn, climate pressure, mining industry dynamics and cross-border trade linkages. While this analysis finds strong evidence to support statistical de-urbanisation, changes to the census bases from 2002 to 2012, and a lack of disaggregated data mean that this conclusion should be treated with a degree of caution.

Strengthening the evidence base around urban trends in Zimbabwe will be imperative for programmes and policy makers aiming to support the urban poor across Zimbabwe. Analysis of independent population and satellite data sources could complement analyses based on available ZIMSTAT data, and would better inform donor community decisions around resource allocation and programme planning.

*Full findings of ICED's analysis can be found in the [scoping study](#) and accompanying [briefing paper](#). To find out more about how ICED and how the facility can support you, please contact Talia Smith at [iced.programming@uk.pwc.com](mailto:iced.programming@uk.pwc.com)*