

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



Promoting Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe

ZESN REPORT ON PRE-ELECTION POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND OBSERVATION OF KEY ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Introduction

ZESN deployed 210 Long Term Observers (LTOs) to observe the political environment and key electoral processes in the run-up to the 30 July 2018 harmonised elections. This report is based on observations made by the LTOs between 18 May and 07 July 2018 in their respective constituencies from across the country's 10 provinces. However ZESN produced several thematic reports during the same reporting period, including a report inspection of the voters' roll, the nomination court, and primary elections for political parties. Figure 1 below is a map showing the areas from which the reports were received. During this period LTOs attended 300 political rallies, met with local stakeholders including the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), civil society organisations, politicians and other prominent members of society.

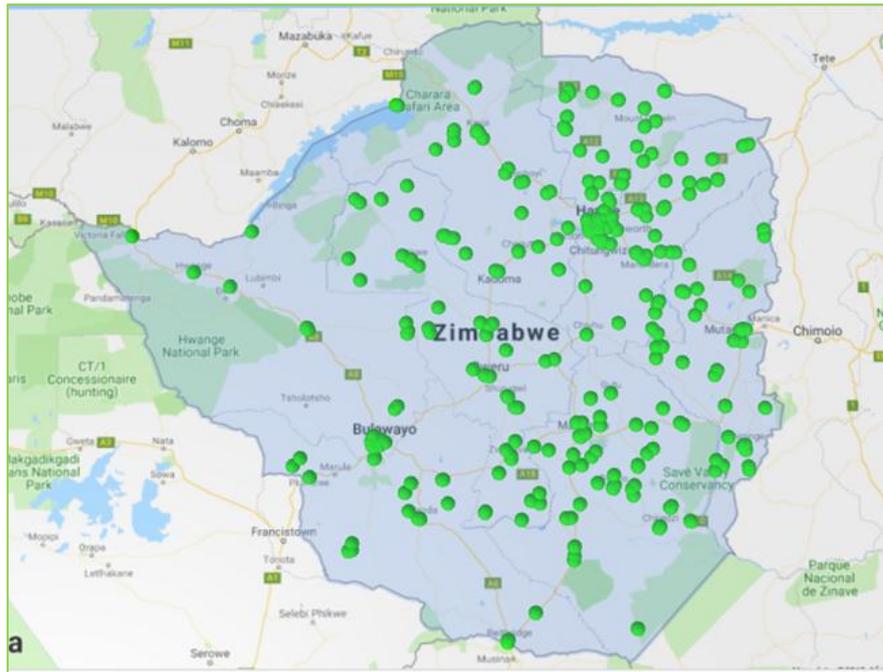


Figure 1: A map showing the areas where ZESN received reports from

ZEC preparations

Over the course of the reporting period observer reports have confirmed that the ZEC Constituency, and Ward offices had been opened; recruitment and training of polling staff had commenced; locations for final polling stations were being determined and published; ballot papers were being printed and other essential materials to be used for polling were being procured; and Multi-Party Liaison Committees were established at provincial levels.

Stakeholders’ confidence in the impartiality of ZEC

ZESN LTOs met stakeholders in their respective constituencies, including political parties, ZEC, and the electorate. An analysis of the 314 reports received from the observers generally shows that stakeholders’ confidence in the impartiality of ZEC remains in a state of flux. This is graphically illustrated in figure 2 below.

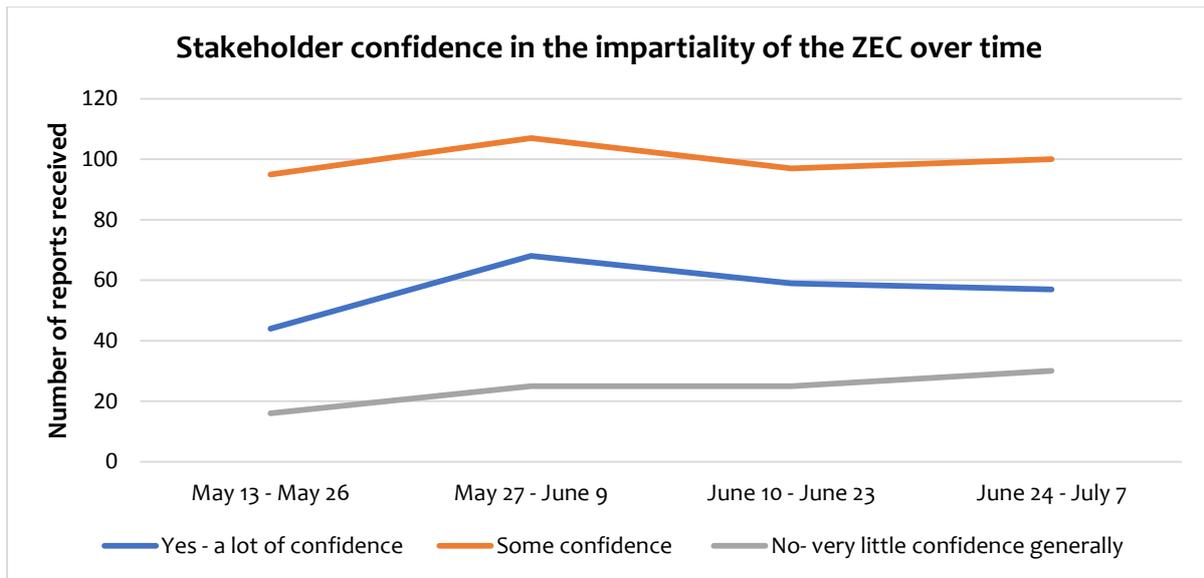


Figure 2: Stakeholders' confidence in the impartiality of the ZEC over time

As depicted in the graph above, the level of confidence that stakeholders had in ZEC was on an increase during the month of May. The trend changed with stakeholders' confidence decreasing between June and 7 July 2018 as the election date drew closer. Some of the developments that eroded confidence in the Commission include questions on the voters' roll health, unavailability of the voters' roll before the sitting on the nomination court and concerns surrounding the printing of the ballot papers.

Voter education campaigns

ZESN LTOs reported the visibility of voter education campaigns in their various constituencies. Over the reporting period, 171 reports gave examples of voter education campaign that they witnessed in their various constituencies while 109 reports showed that there were no voter education campaigns. According to the reports, ZEC voter education campaigns were the most visible. Most of the reports (136) indicated that ZEC was leading in providing voter education, followed by political party candidates (76); Civil Society Organisations (37); Faith Based Organisations (22); Community Based Organisations (17); and local government (4).

The voter education campaigns focused on inspection of the voters' roll; candidate nomination; election date; polling station locations; how to mark the ballot; secrecy of the ballot; and making an informed choice; among other issues. Further, the reports revealed that there were deliberate efforts to have the voter education campaigns target

specific groups that include women (122 reports); youth (121); blind voters (28); deaf voters (24 reports); illiterate voters (67 reports); and persons with physical disabilities (69 reports).

Active campaigning of political parties in constituencies

ZESN has also been observing political party campaigns to see which parties were actively campaigning across the country. The graph below shows the numbers of reports received from ZESN LTOs confirming the active participation of political parties in rural and urban areas.

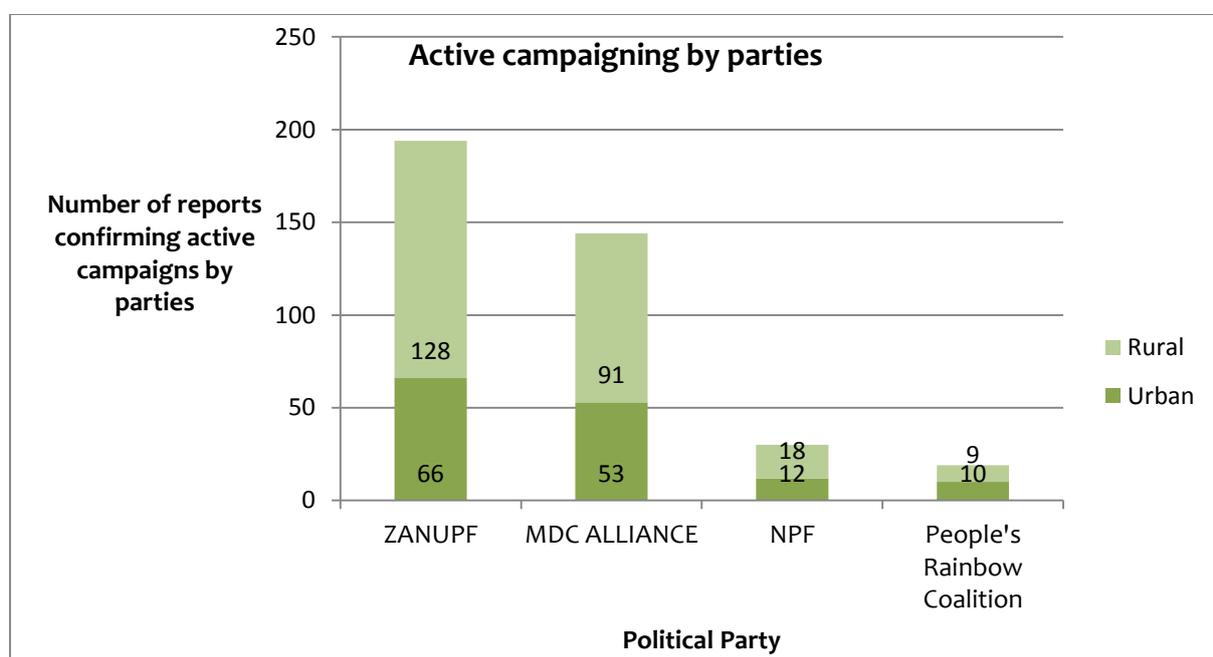


Figure 3: Active campaigning by political parties

From the graph above, the most dominant party in terms of active campaigns is ZANUPF, followed by the MDC Alliance. In general, political parties are campaigning more in rural areas than urban areas.

Political parties have been campaigning using various means including holding rallies; meetings; door to door campaigns; fliers, posters, and banners; distributing party regalia (t-shirts, wrist bands, *mazambia*); and sponsoring sporting or cultural events.

What types of campaigning?	Posters or banners on free sites	Posters on paid sites	Door to door	Meetings (less than 100 people)	Rallies (more than 100 people)	T shirt, wristband, mazambira distribution	Sponsorship of sporting/cultural events	Radio adverts
MDC Alliance	182	21	131	173	101	115	19	18
ZANU PF	258	95	168	206	150	262	65	49
NPF	28	4	29	25	7	25	2	
The Peoples Rainbow Coalition	22	3	29	21	10	15	2	
Other political party	41	4	32	28	8	25	4	3

Table 1: Campaign methods used by political parties

As shown in the table above, ZANU-PF was the most dominant party in terms of campaigning by the various means. The LTOs reports show that the most commonly used method of campaigning is posters or banners on free sites for all political parties. Political parties have also used door to door campaigns more than other ways.

Women participation in political processes

Just over half of LTO reports indicated that women were not participating in the process equal to men, although this was slightly improved in rural areas, this is shown in figure 4 below.

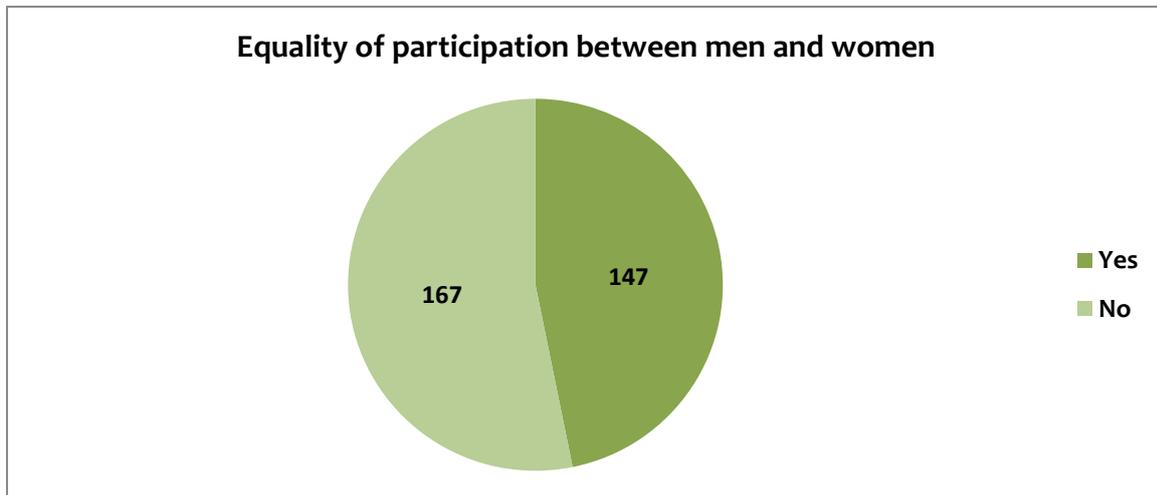


Figure 4: Pie chart indicating the level of men and women participation in the political processes

One example was that women were prevented from campaigning or putting up posters by MDC Alliance in Kuwadzana East Constituency, Harare. On a few other occasions women were prevented from attending rallies.

Abuses against political parties

ZESN received reports of violations of rights that affected political parties. Figure 5 below shows the numbers of reports received for the different acts that affected political parties.

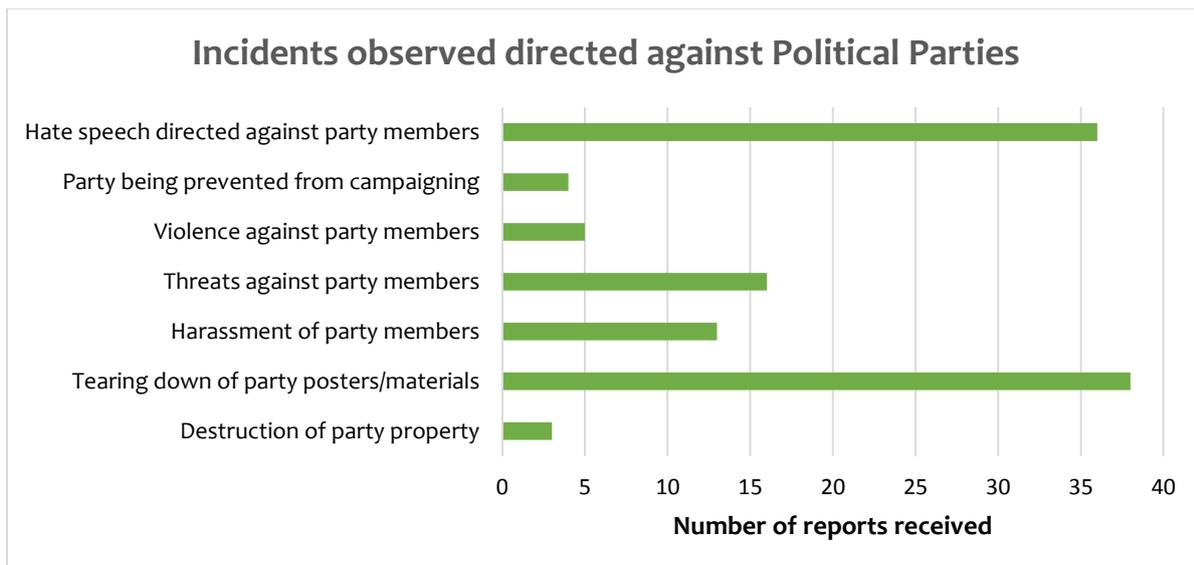


Figure 5: Rights violations against political parties

The most common of these violations was the defacing of campaign posters belonging to other candidates and hate speech against party members. Picture 1 below shows some posters that were torn in Sanyati.



Torn Political Party Campaign Posters in Mashonaland West Province in Sanyati

Use of government resources in campaigning

ZESN received reports of the use of government vehicles for campaign purposes; use of government buildings or land by only one party while other parties could not use the same; use of government public address system or staging that other parties could not use; government officials speaking at party events; campaigning at government held events; and government food aid, or equipment that was given out at political party events. This is shown in the bar graph below.

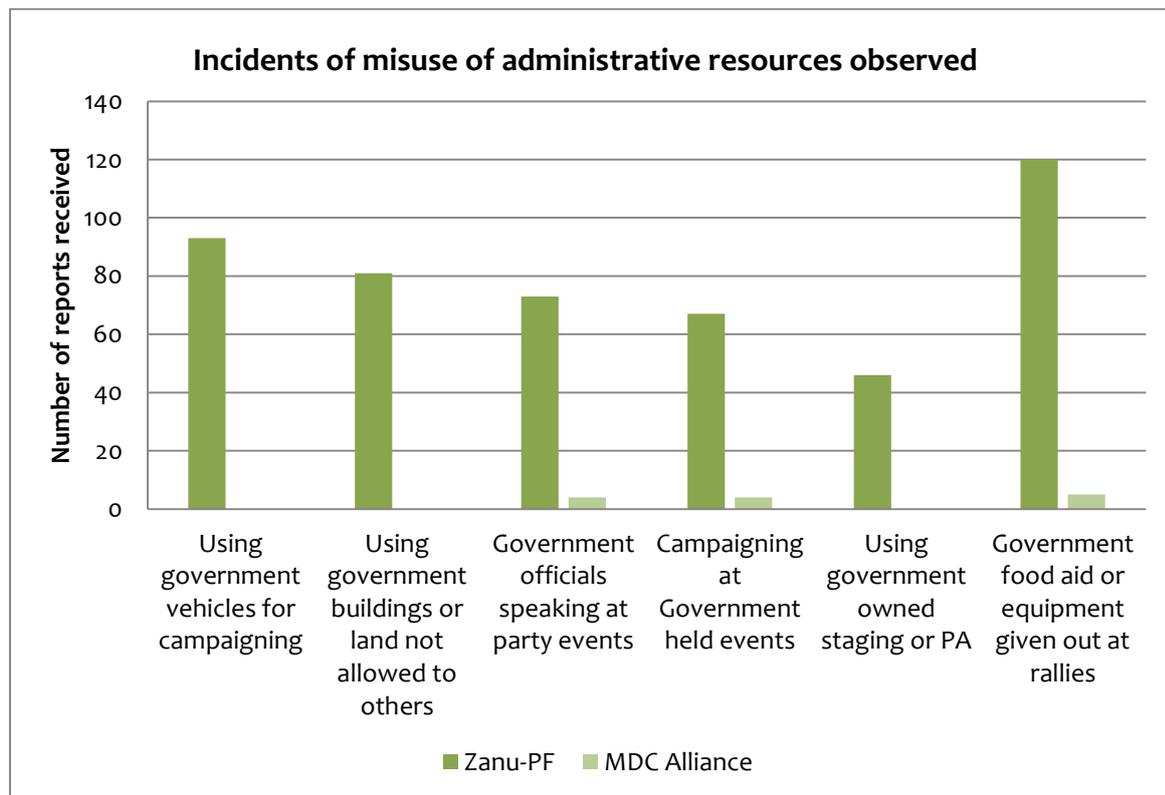


Figure 6: Incidents of the misuse of administrative resources

As shown in the bar graph above, out of the 308 reports received, ZANU-PF had the highest number of instances observed of misusing public administrative resources. ZANU-PF was the only party that was allowed the use of government buildings or land for campaigning that was denied other political parties. For instance, in Gokwe Nembudziya the MDC Alliance indicated that they were not allowed to use public grounds and had to resort to holding party primaries at a homestead. Further, ZANU-PF solely enjoyed the use of government PA system or staging that was not allowed to others and had the most cases of giving out government food aid or equipment at its

events. However, LTOs could not ascertain whether ZANU-PF paid or was charged a fee for to use the government resources. In Mutasa Central Ward 12, ZANU-PF aspiring council candidates and the aspiring National Assembly candidate campaigned at a field day event held at Bhonda School.

Serious abuses against male and female candidates

ZESN also received reports of cases of the abuse of rights affecting both male and female candidates. Figure 7 below shows the numbers of the reports received for the different types of abuses observed.

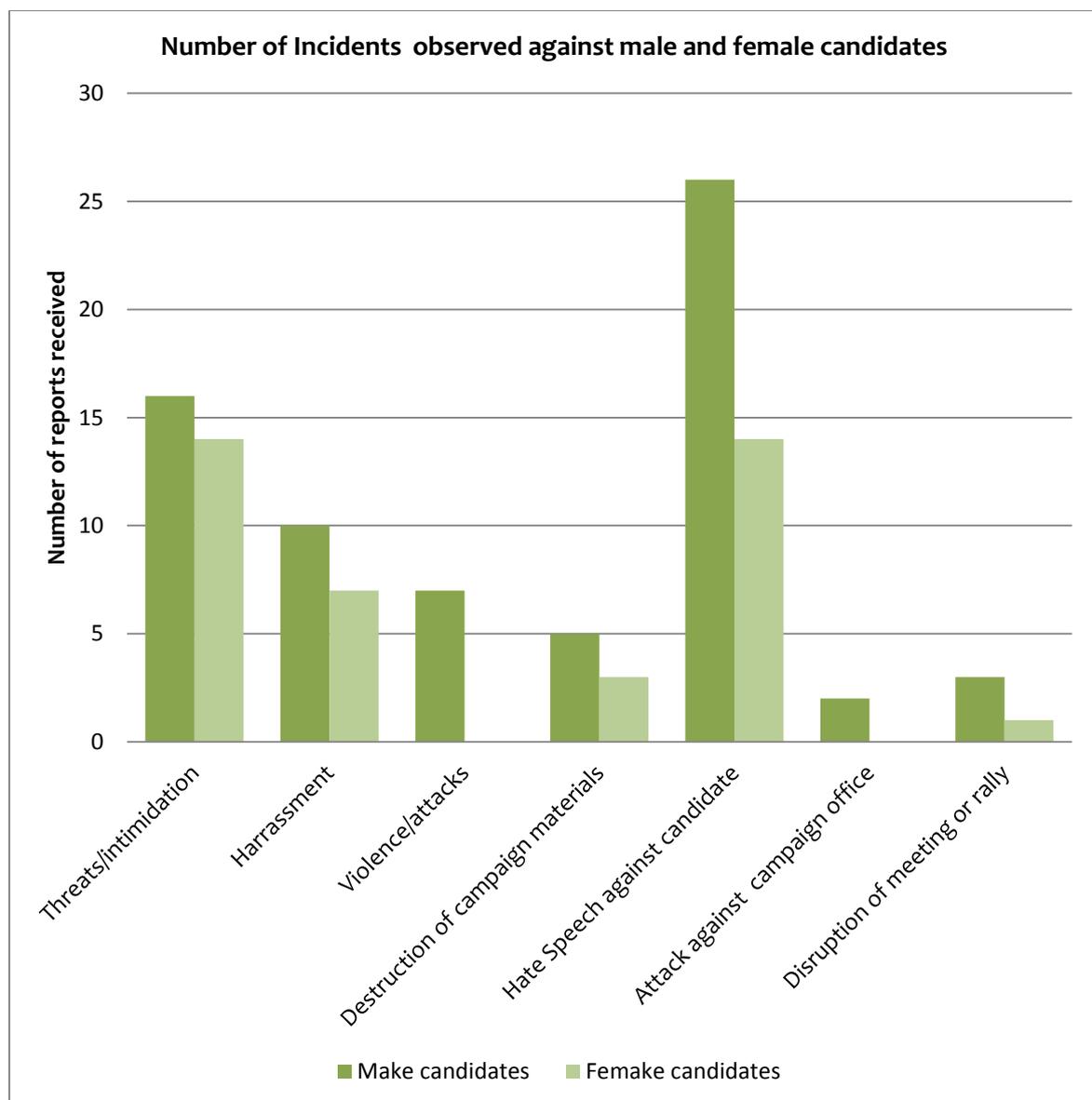


Figure 7: Abuses against male and female candidates

As shown in the bar graph above, the most common violations were hate speech against candidates; threats or intimidation; and harassment. In light of these, there is need for the enforcement of sections 5 and 6 of the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates and other Stakeholders that prohibits the intimidation and the use of hateful language, amongst other violations.

Restriction of fundamental freedoms or abuses against the public

The freeness, fairness, and credibility of an election is a function of many factors including the degree to which the electorate enjoys fundamental freedoms guaranteed under international best practice and national constitutions and electoral laws. In terms of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, no person can be forced to attend a gathering or meeting; people should enjoy the freedoms of association and speech, *inter alia*. In spite of this, ZESN LTOs reported on cases of the restriction of fundamental freedoms or abuses against the public. Out of 412 reports, 183 cases were reported. The graph below shows the percentages of reports received for the different types of abuses.

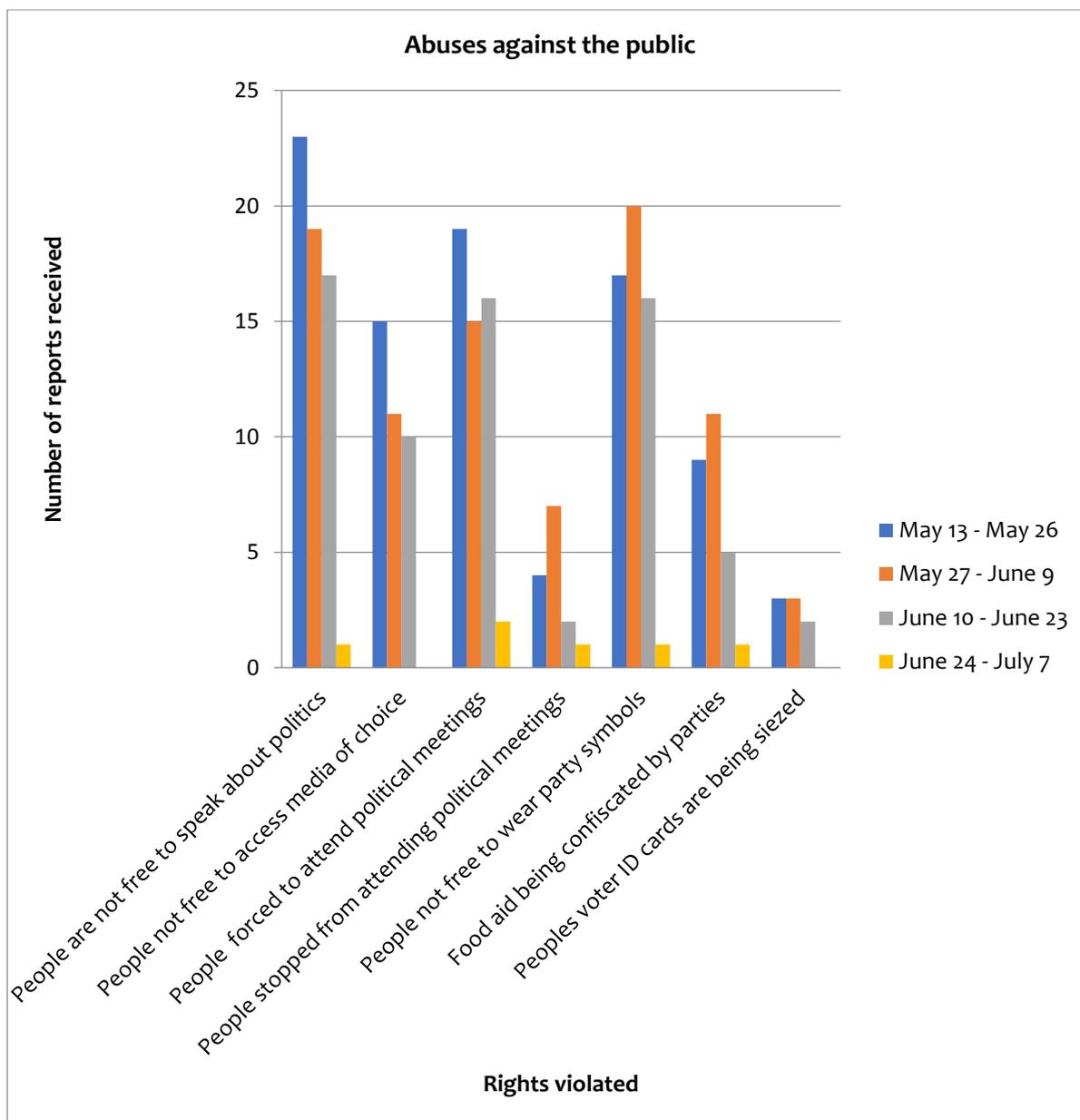


Figure 8: Rights violations suffered by the public

As indicated in the graph above, restriction of freedoms generally went on a downward trajectory over the reporting period. Some of the incidents include ZANU-PF youths who were reported to have gone door to door forcing residents of Zengeza West to attend a party meeting while in Ward 17, Chikanga-Dangamvura constituency, people were forced to attend ZANU-PF political meetings. These cases mar the political environment that has generally been noted to be relatively peaceful.

Role of security forces in the electoral processes

Security forces, that is, the police and the army, are required by the law to conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in electoral processes. Reports received by ZESN indicate that security forces generally played a positive role in the electoral processes during the reporting period. Figure 9 below shows the numbers of reports received from ZESN LTOs respecting whether the security forces were playing a positive role in the electoral processes, as significant number of responses to these question were in the affirmative.

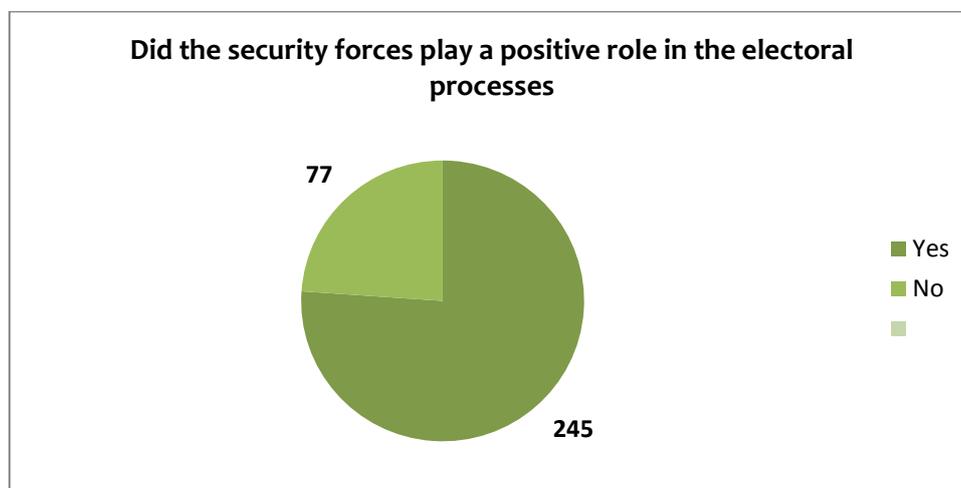


Figure 9: The role of security forces in the electoral processes

Tension barometer

Previous elections have seen tensions escalating, particularly as the Election Day approaches. ZESN sought to measure the degree of tension in the constituencies around the country in the run up to the 30 July election. Figure 10 below shows the number of reports received for different incidents.

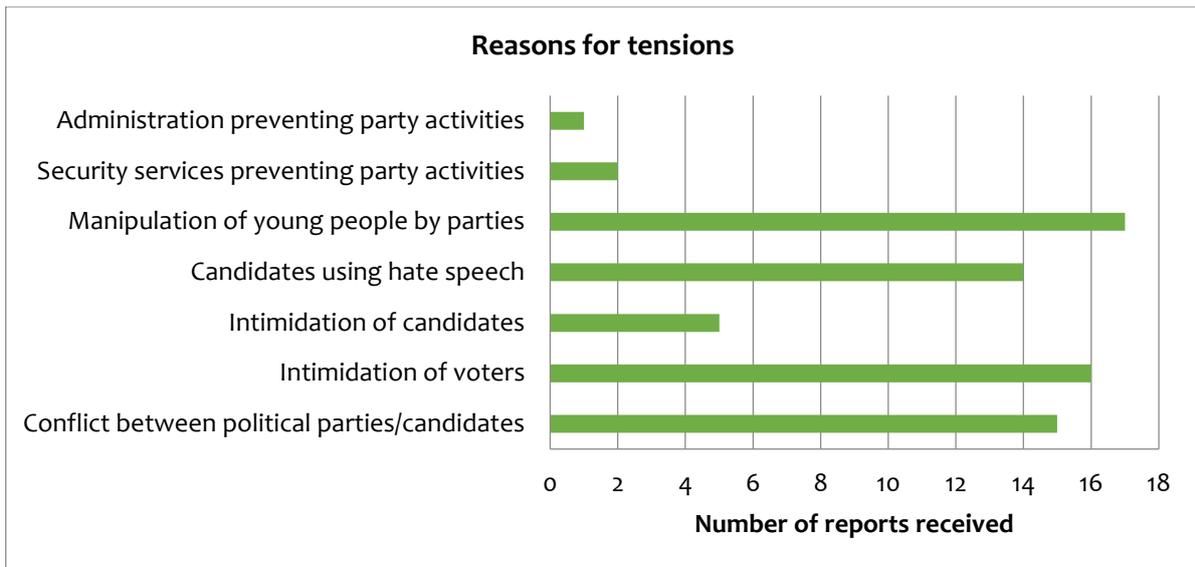


Figure 10: Reasons for tension in the political environment

Some of the reasons stated by LTOs, who reported that the environment in their constituencies was tense, include the intimidation of voters and candidates and conflict between political parties or candidates. The intimidation of voters and candidates was also reported in Chivi Central, Ward 16 where a PRC candidate and his team were threatened by a ZANU-PF activist while they were conducting door to door campaigns. Also, in Zengeza West Ward 7, supporters of the aspiring MPs for the MDC-Alliance had violent confrontations as one group did not allow the supporters of the other candidate to campaign in the constituency.