



## In Zimbabwe, tolerance crosses ethnic, religious, national – but not sexual – lines

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 124 | Richman Kokera and Stephen Ndoma**

### Summary

Given Zimbabwe's diversity of ethnic, religious, national, political, and social backgrounds, peace and stability would be unthinkable without some degree of tolerance for those who are different. On some fronts, the country has struggled with intolerance. One example is political intolerance, played out in inter- and intra-party conflict turning neighbours against each other. Another is intolerance of sexual difference, with President Robert Mugabe leading a sometimes vicious chorus against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

How tolerant are Zimbabweans? Afrobarometer Round 6 survey findings may serve as a baseline for efforts aimed at bringing people together and fostering a culture of tolerance where diversity is celebrated.

The findings show that large majorities of Zimbabweans express tolerant attitudes toward people of different religions and ethnic groups, and somewhat less enthusiastically for people living with HIV/AIDS and immigrants. But most are intolerant of homosexuals.

### Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. After five rounds of surveys between 1999 and 2013, results of Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being published. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200 or 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Zimbabwe, led by Mass Public Opinion Institute, interviewed 2,400 adult Zimbabweans in November 2014. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Zimbabwe in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, and 2012.

### Key findings

- Overwhelming majorities of Zimbabweans say they would "strongly like," "somewhat like," or "not care" about living as neighbours of people of different religions (93%) and different ethnic groups (94%).
- Majorities also express tolerant attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS (94%) and immigrants or foreign workers (87%), although large proportions of "would not care"

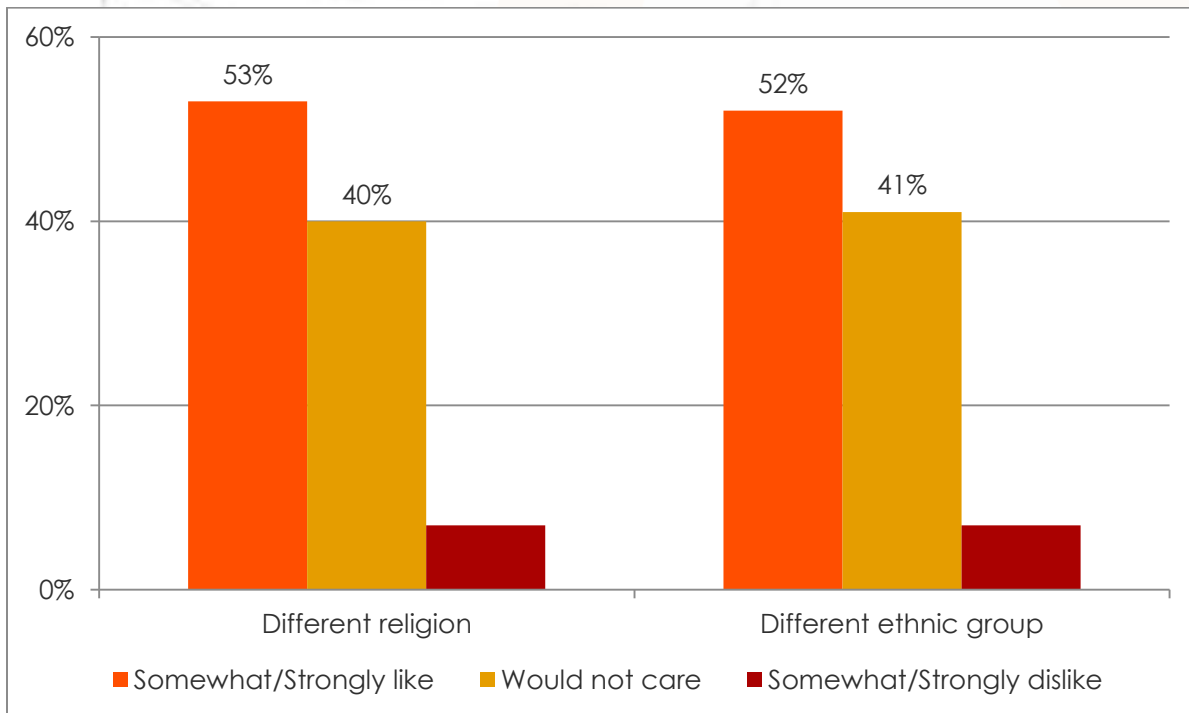
responses suggest that tolerance for these groups is less enthusiastic than for people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

- Nearly nine of 10 Zimbabweans (89%) say they would “somewhat dislike” or “strongly dislike” having homosexuals as neighbours. Younger, urban, and more educated citizens are somewhat less intolerant of homosexuality than older, rural, and less educated respondents.

### Tolerance for other religions and ethnicities

Afrobarometer assesses citizens' levels of tolerance by asking them whether they would like, dislike, or not care about having people from various groups as neighbours. On the whole, Zimbabweans exhibit good neighbourliness for other religious and ethnic groups. More than nine of 10 respondents express tolerant attitudes toward people of different religions (93%) and different ethnicities (94%). This includes majorities who say they would “somewhat like” or “strongly like” living next to people of different religions (53%) and different ethnicities (52%), while an additional four in 10 say they “would not care” (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1: Tolerance for other religious and ethnic groups | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People of a different religion? People from other ethnic groups?

<sup>1</sup> Due to rounding, combined category totals may appear to differ by 1 percentage point from the sum of sub-categories.

Tolerance for other religious and ethnic groups is strong regardless of respondents' gender, age, or urban vs. rural location. It is also strong among supporters of both major political parties,<sup>2</sup> although Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) adherents are more likely than Zimbabwe African Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) supporters to say they “would not care” (47% vs. 37%) rather than would like/strongly like having such people as neighbours.

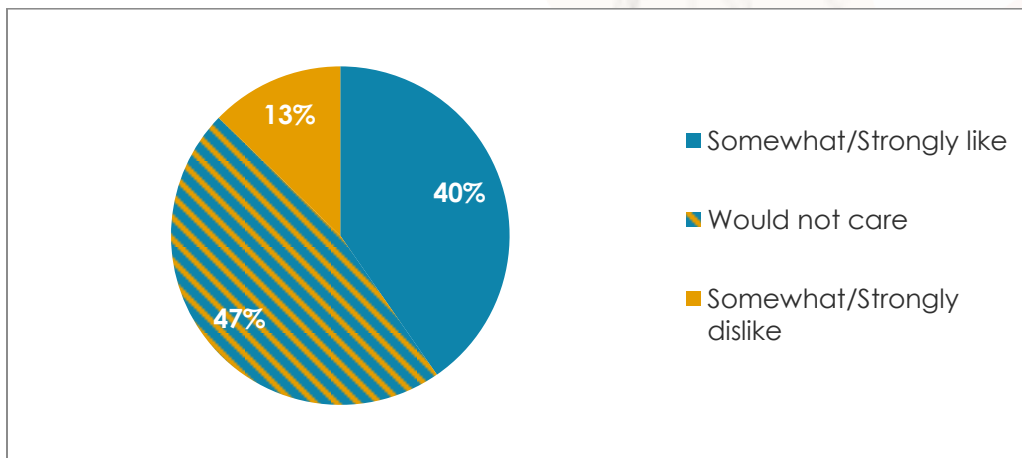
### Tolerance for immigrants and foreign workers

Despite Zimbabwe's economic difficulties and high levels of unemployment, a large majority of citizens say they would “somewhat” or “strongly” like it (40%) or would not care (47%) if their neighbours were immigrants or foreign workers (Figure 2). While this is a welcome finding in light of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, the proportion expressing positive feelings (somewhat/strongly like) is smaller for immigrants (40%) than for people of other religions (53%) and ethnic groups (52%), while the proportion expressing dislike is almost double (13%, compared to 7% for other religions and ethnic groups).

Objections to living next to immigrants and foreign workers are more common among rural residents (15%) than urban dwellers (9%) and among ZANU-PF supporters (17%) than MDC-T supporters (11%) (Figure 3).

The idea of having immigrants or foreign workers as neighbours is viewed somewhat differently in different provinces (Table 1). The most welcoming provinces are Matabeleland South (where 63% say they would somewhat/strongly like living next to immigrants), Mashonaland West (55%), Mashonaland Central (48%), and Harare (48%). Least welcoming are Masvingo (22% somewhat/strongly dislike), Mashonaland Central (22%), and Mashonaland East (16%). “Would not care” is the majority response in Matabeleland North (71%), Bulawayo (56%), Midlands (56%), Manicaland (55%), and Mashonaland East (55%).

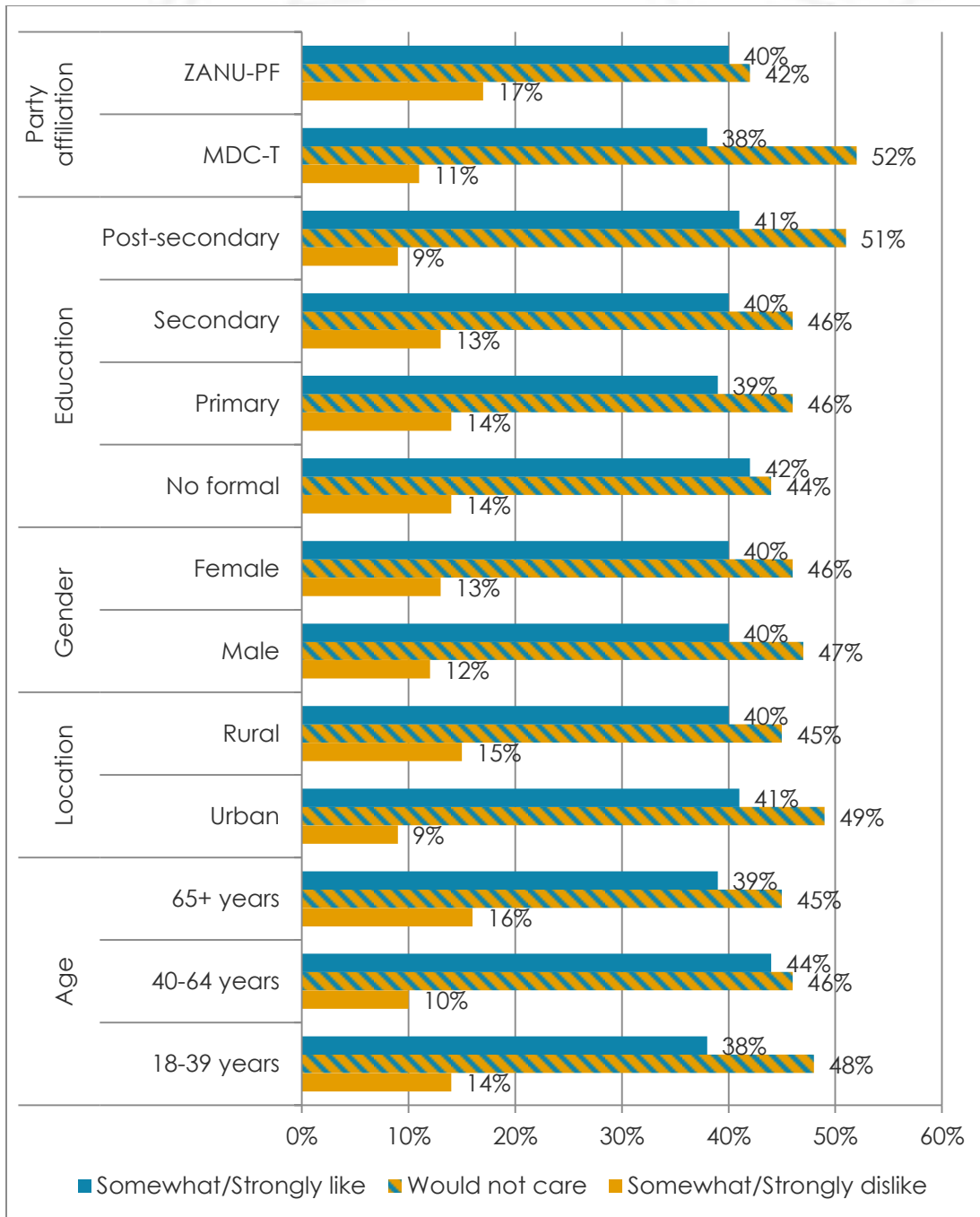
**Figure 2: Tolerance for immigrants | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Immigrants or foreign workers?

<sup>2</sup> Political-party affiliation is determined by responses to the questions “Do you feel close to any particular political party?” and, if yes, “Which party is that?”

**Figure 3: Tolerance for immigrants or foreign workers** | by rural-urban residence, age, gender, education and political-party affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Immigrants or foreign workers?

**Table 1: Tolerance for immigrants or foreign workers | by province | Zimbabwe | 2014**

	Somewhat/ Strongly like	Would not care	Somewhat/ Strongly dislike
Matabeleland South	63%	29%	8%
Mashonaland West	55%	38%	7%
Harare	48%	42%	10%
Mashonaland Central	48%	30%	22%
Masvingo	39%	40%	22%
Manicaland	33%	55%	12%
Bulawayo	32%	56%	13%
Midlands	31%	56%	12%
Mashonaland East	29%	55%	16%
Matabeleland North	21%	71%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>13%</b>

**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Immigrants or foreign workers?

### Tolerance for people living with HIV/AIDS

As with their attitudes toward immigrants, most Zimbabweans (94%) express tolerance for people living with HIV/AIDS, but this tolerance is more likely to be expressed as indifference (50% “would not care”) than as welcome (44% somewhat/strongly like) (Figure 4).

Feelings about living next to people with HIV/AIDS are quite similar across different sociodemographic groups. Objections to having HIV-positive neighbours are slightly less prevalent than average among respondents with post-secondary education (3%) and respondents in the middle age range (40-64 years) (4%).

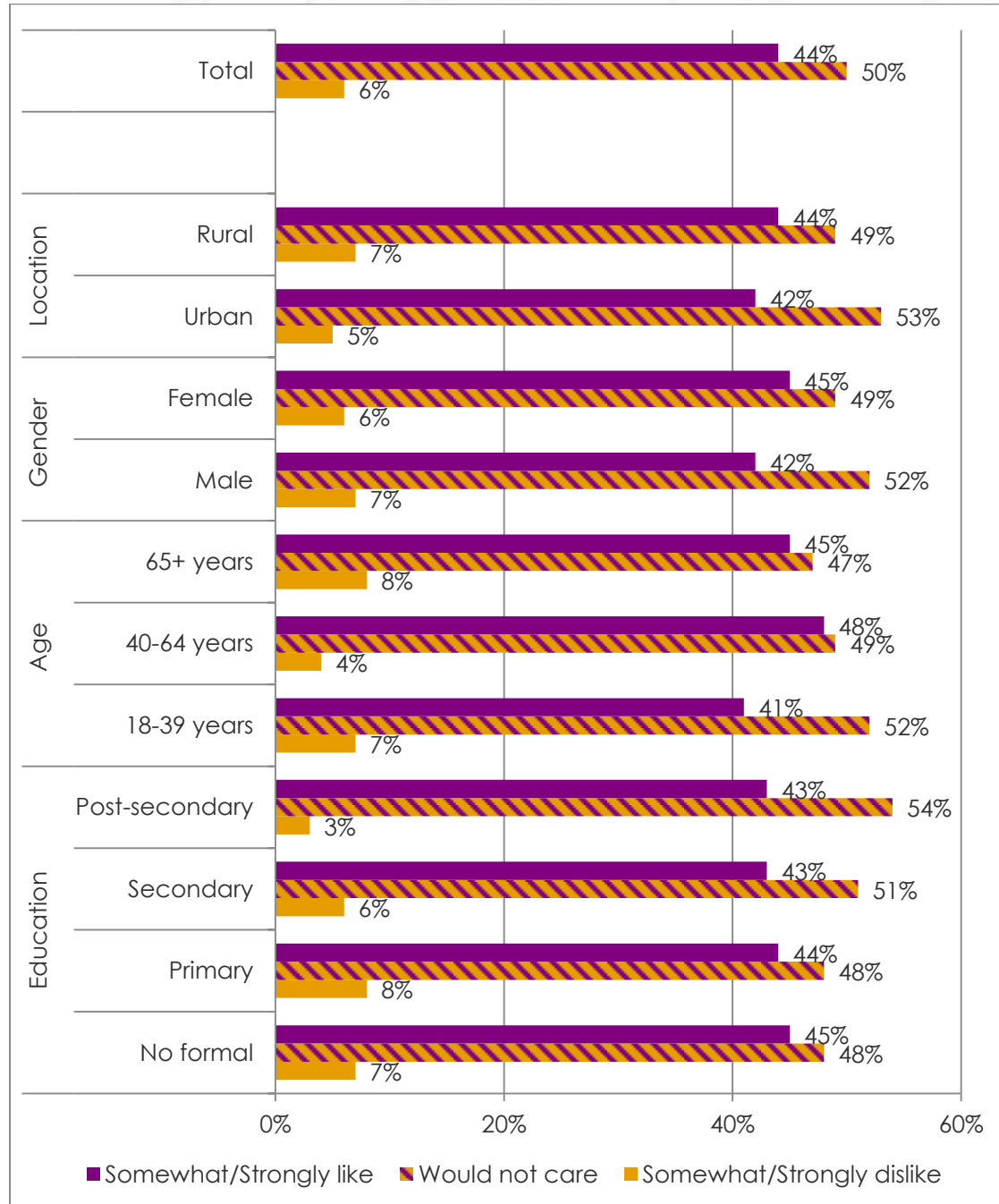
Among Zimbabwe’s 10 provinces, the most welcoming to people living with HIV/AIDS is Mashonaland West (57% would somewhat/strongly like), Matabeleland South (55%), and Mashonaland Central (51%) (Table 2). Least welcoming is Masvingo, where 13% say they would “somewhat” or “strongly” dislike having people with HIV/AIDS as neighbours.

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**Figure 4: Tolerance for people living with HIV/AIDS | by urban-rural residence, gender, age, and location | Zimbabwe | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People who have HIV/AIDS?

**Table 2: Tolerance for people living with HIV/AIDS** | by province | Zimbabwe | 2014

	Somewhat/ Strongly like	Would not care	Somewhat/ Strongly dislike
Mashonaland West	57%	38%	5%
Matabeleland South	55%	39%	6%
Mashonaland Central	51%	39%	10%
Midlands	48%	46%	6%
Masvingo	46%	41%	13%
Harare	45%	49%	6%
Mashonaland East	38%	58%	4%
Bulawayo	36%	62%	2%
Manicaland	30%	64%	7%
Matabeleland North	20%	78%	2%
Total	43%	50%	6%

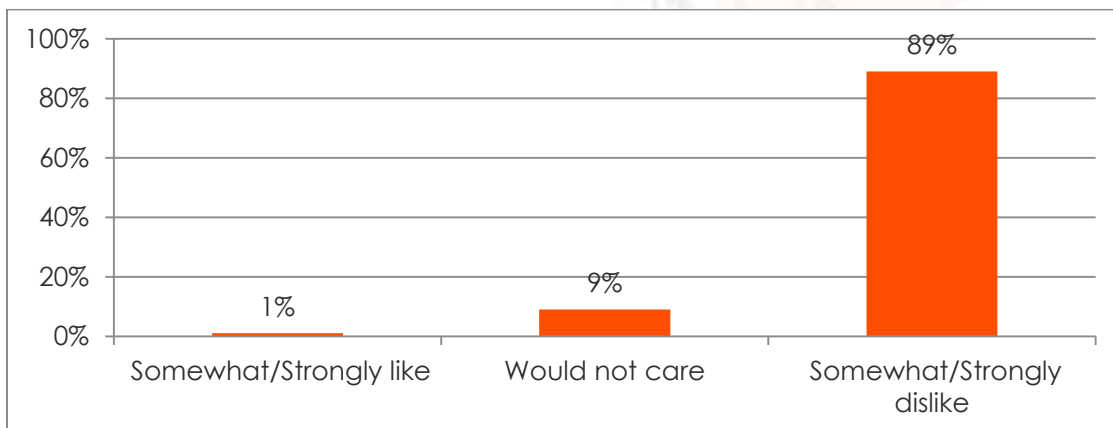
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People who have HIV/AIDS?

### Tolerance for homosexuals

Zimbabwe's new Constitution, adopted in May 2013, explicitly forbids marriage officers to preside over same-sex marriages, and many politicians, traditional leaders, and religious leaders have been vehement in their rejection of homosexuality.

Public attitudes reflect this widespread intolerance: Nine in 10 Zimbabweans (89%) say they would "somewhat dislike" (6%) or "strongly dislike" (83%) having LGBT persons as neighbours (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Tolerance for homosexuals** | Zimbabwe | 2014



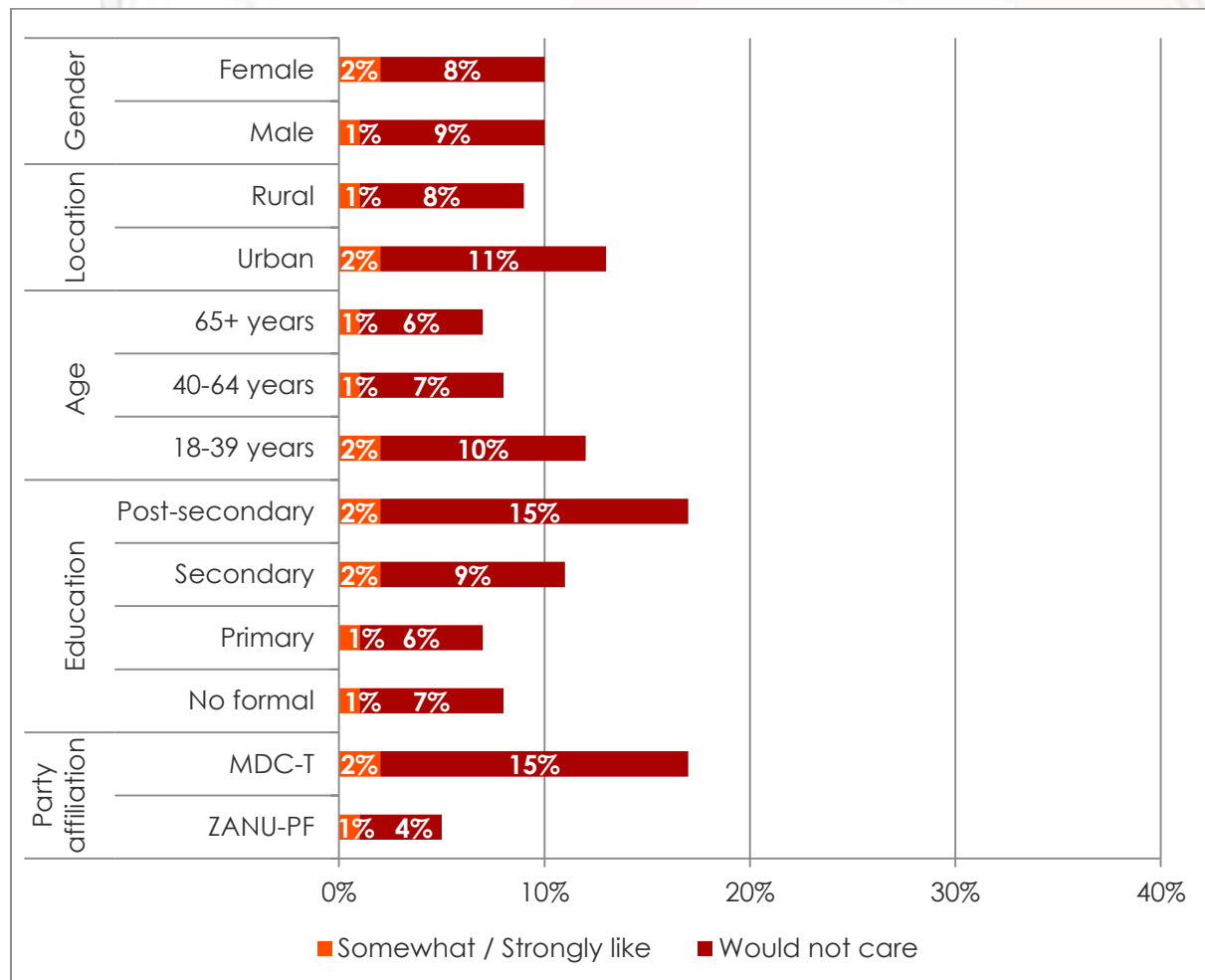
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Homosexuals?

Intolerance for homosexuals cuts across all walks of life, but some demographic sub-groups are somewhat more tolerant than others (Figure 6). Tolerance levels (strongly like/somewhat like/would not care) are somewhat higher among urban residents (13%) than among rural residents (9%). Education seems to affect levels of tolerance: Citizens with post-secondary education are more likely to express tolerant attitudes toward homosexuals (17%) than respondents with secondary (10%), primary (7%), or no formal education (8%).

Similarly, younger respondents are more likely to say they would like or not care about having LGBT neighbours: 13% of 18- to 39-year-olds vs. 10% of 40- to 64-year-olds and 7% of those aged 65 and older.

MDC-T supporters are more likely to express tolerance toward homosexuals (16%) than ZANU-PF adherents (6%).

**Figure 6: Tolerance for homosexuals** | by gender, urban-rural residence, age, education, and party affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014

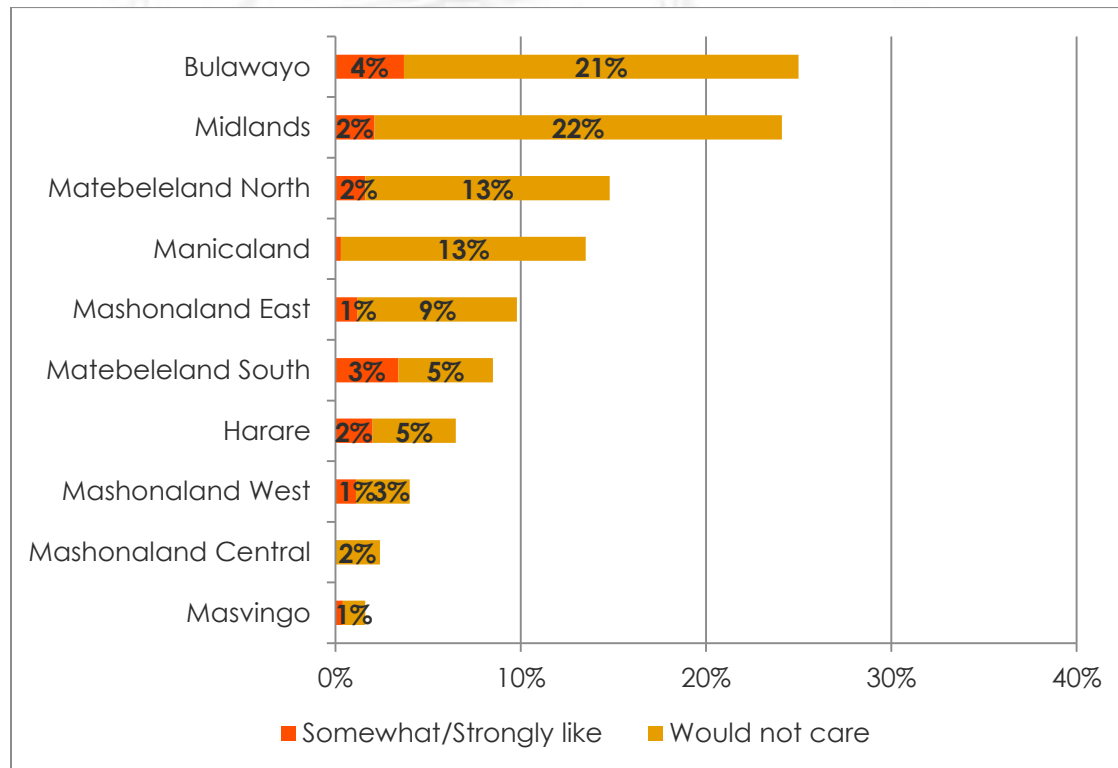


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Homosexuals?



The least intolerant provinces are Bulawayo and Midlands, where 25% and 24%, respectively, say they would like or not mind having LGBT neighbours, whereas in Masvingo and Mashonaland Central, only one in 50 respondents express such tolerance (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Tolerance for homosexuals** | by age, education, gender, urban-rural residence, and part affiliation | Zimbabwe | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Homosexuals?

### Conclusion

Most Zimbabweans express tolerance for people of different religions and ethnic groups. Tolerance for immigrants and for people living with HIV/AIDS is high, though somewhat less enthusiastic. A major exception to tolerant attitudes in Zimbabwe concerns the LGBT community, which faces overwhelming rejection. Younger, urban, and more educated citizens are somewhat less intolerant of homosexuality, suggesting the possibility of greater openness in the future.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Core support for Afrobarometer Rounds 5 and 6 has been provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank.

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 124 | 1 November 2016**