

## **The rural electorate in Zimbabwe's Elections 1980-2018**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyses rural electorate consciousness and urban voting preferences during Zimbabwe's elections from 1980 to 2018. The article gives agency to the rural dwellers in elections, contrary to the general perception of a captured rural voter and liberal urban voter. To analyse rural voters' electoral consciousness, the paper uses primary sources (electoral statistical records), oral interviews (notwithstanding the prevailing COVID-19 lockdown environment) and secondary literature to derive research data. The data helps to determine the differences between urban and rural ideologies, culture and ethics which manifest in the political party preferences of the social groups in the two geographical spaces. The paper concludes that rural dwellers tended to support the ruling party at elections, though they were more vulnerable to political patronage and seemingly forced participation in electoral processes than the urban voters. Nonetheless, complex cultural, economic, social and historic factors compelled them to participate in elections more than their urban counterparts. Thus, rural voters can be viewed as conscious participants in electoral processes with varied, albeit mobilized participation and political ideologies.