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CITY PROFILING REPORT 2025

Harare

AFRICAN CITIES REPORT

Harare

City Profiling Report 2025

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COVER PHOTO: City of Harare in Zimbabwe.
Photo: AFP

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Harare City Profiling Report is part of the African Cities Profiling project, designed to enhance understanding of urban dynamics across the continent with a view to improving government effectiveness and empowering citizens to hold their governments to account. As Africa experiences rapid urbanisation, cities like Harare face many challenges, including the proliferation of informal work and settlements as well as gaps in service delivery.

This report aims to support local authorities by providing comparative data to identify areas for improvement and learn from peer cities. It also provides information for national governments to regulate and assist local authorities more effectively. For residents, the report serves as a resource for understanding the developmental context of Harare, promoting transparency and encouraging civic engagement.

This report is part of a series of city profiles being developed by GGA for 10 cities across the SADC region (with plans to extend to other African cities). Other cities in the GGA SADC sample include Bulawayo, Cape Town, Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Johannesburg, Luanda, Lilongwe, Maputo, and Ndola. The selected cities represent a mix of primary and secondary urban centres in the region. Where relevant, comparisons are made between Harare and these other cities.

Overall, the project enables stakeholders (local authorities, national governments, and citizens) to compare urban challenges and successes, share best practices, and foster collaboration.

2. URBAN GEOGRAPHY AND HUMAN SETTLEMENT

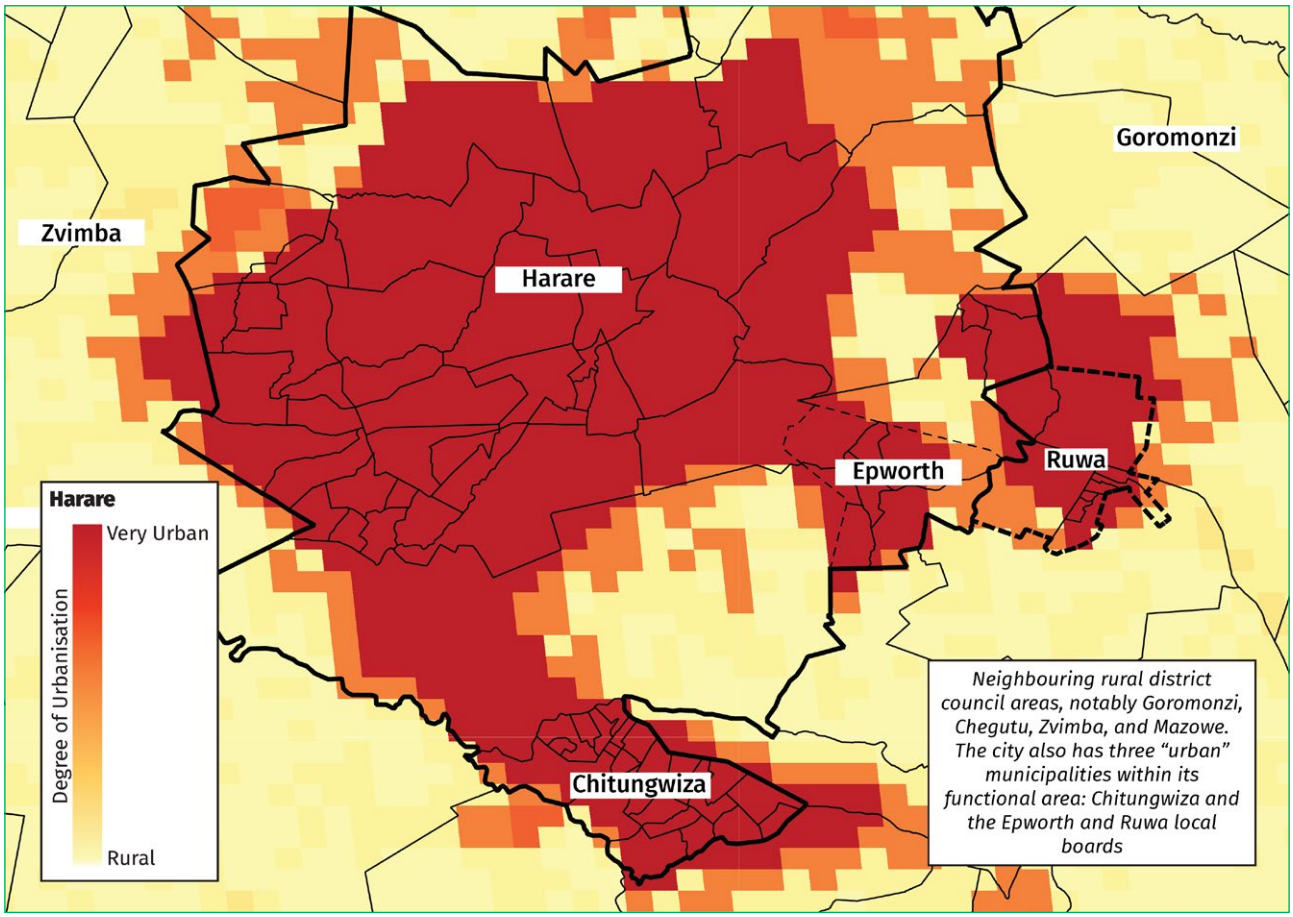
Harare was officially declared a city in 1935. Its urban landscape is a product of its colonial past and the rapid growth that followed independence from British rule in 1980 (notwithstanding the Unilateral Declaration of Independence that occurred in 1965 but was not recognised by the United Kingdom). The city was formally established as a settlement in 1890 by the British South Africa Company, led by Cecil Rhodes. By 1897, the city, then known as Salisbury, was declared a municipality. During the colonial era, the city was designed with strict spatial divisions. Neighbourhoods were mapped out to segregate communities. Prime areas, such as the city centre and Mount Pleasant, were reserved for low-density housing, typically for high-income European residents, while African residents were pushed to the outskirts. Mbare, one of the earliest high-density suburbs, was established to house Black workers, keeping them close enough for labour but separated from the city's core.

When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, Harare saw a huge population boom as restrictions on movement were lifted. People migrated to the city for better opportunities, and the urban area quickly expanded to accommodate them. The city's footprint has more than doubled since then, but much of this growth has been informal, with settlements springing up on the city's edges.

Specifically, the built-up areas in Harare increased from 279.5km^2 in 1984 to 445km^2 in 2018, with most of these land-use and land cover changes towards the southwest, where areas of high-density and often informal residential developments were located.[1] In 2021, the World Bank estimated that 33% of Harare's population lived in such informal settlements.[2] Moreover, citywide slum settlement profiles conducted under the Harare 'slum upgrading project' have also classified 63 neighbourhoods as 'slums.'[3] These informal neighbourhoods often lack basic services like piped water on site, functional sanitation,

1 Marondedze, A. K. and Schütt, B. (2019). "Dynamics of land use and land cover changes in Harare, Zimbabwe: A case study on the linkage between drivers and the axis of urban expansion". Land, 8(10):155.
2 George Masimba and Anna Walnycki. 2024. "Harare City Report" African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) Working Paper 19.
3 City of Harare (2016). "State of the City Address – 1st March 2016 by his Worship Mayor Benard Manyenyeni".); City of Harare (2017). City of Harare Results Based Strategic Plan (2017 – 2020); and Dialogue on Shelter (2020). Policy advice to respond to Covid-19 in urban informal settlements in Zimbabwe.

Figure 1: Map of Harare[7]



Graphic: Prepared by author based on Global Human Settlements data

and electricity, leaving many residents to find their own solutions through shallow wells, makeshift latrines, and inconvenient sources of energy.[4]

Environmental pressures also contribute to Harare's urban challenges. The city's greenery is dwindling as trees are cut down for firewood. Lake Chivero, Harare's main water source, is increasingly polluted, partly due to poor waste management. This threatens the water supply and contributes to health risks, especially for those in high-density and informal areas.

Harare's geography today is a patchwork of planned suburbs and spontaneous settlements, all competing for limited resources (see Figure 1). The city is organised into different districts, including the City Centre (CBD), the commercial and administrative hub. High-density residential areas (HDRAs) like Mbare and Highfield are densely populated and often face infrastructure challenges, while low-density residential areas (LDRAs) such as Borrowdale and Mount Pleasant are more affluent. The city includes medium-density residential areas (MDRAs) like Tynwald and Parktown, as well as informal settlements where rapid growth has outpaced infrastructure development.

The emphasis of the GGA city profiling project is on cities as functional areas, but recognising that the functional area may be made up of multiple administrative areas (local authorities). In Harare's case, the functional area of Harare spills over the administrative boundary of Harare City into neighbouring rural district council areas, notably Goromonzi, Chegutu, Zvimba, and Mazowe.[5] The city as a metropolitan area also includes three other "urban" municipalities as part of its functional area: Chitungwiza

4 Masimba (2021). Harare: City Scoping Study. African Cities Research Consortium. https://www.african-cities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ACRC_Harare_City-Scoping-Study.pdf, accessed 20 February 2025.

5 Palmer, I. (2024). City governance: a tale of five African cities. https://africainfact.com/city-governance-a-tale-of-five-african-cities/. Accessed 20/02/2025

and Epworth municipalities, both in Harare Province, and Ruwa local board in neighbouring Mashonaland East Province.[6] These three municipalities are the 3rd, 5th and 13th largest municipalities in Zimbabwe, respectively.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 POPULATION

As noted in Section 2, the functional area of Harare is made up of four local authorities, with populations based on the 2022 population census given in Table 1.

The City of Harare administrative area is Zimbabwe's most populous municipality. It had a population of nearly 20,000 when it was officially declared a city in 1935.[8] It had an estimated population of 1.9 million in 2024. With the other three municipalities included, the metropolitan area is estimated at 2.6 million in 2024, with a growth rate of 1.44% (See Table 1). Notably, highly divergent figures are quoted on Harare's population, presumably based on varying definitions of the city's urban boundary. For example, Macrotrends gives an estimated population of 1.6 million in 2024[9], while Global Human Settlements Layer gives a population of 2.1 million in 2025 for the metro area excluding Ruwa (compared to 2.5 million from Table 1).[10]

3.2 POVERTY

Poverty in Harare is a key concern. Many households struggle to meet their basic needs. An urban livelihoods assessment established that out of 10 provinces, Harare had the highest proportion of households that consumed poor diets.[11] The situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, which overwhelmed the city's health facilities and made physical distancing nearly impossible in low-income areas, where residents often had to queue at boreholes for water.[12] These socio-economic pressures are compounded by environmental challenges, such as deforestation, waste mismanagement, and water pollution.

A useful indicator of broad-based poverty is the International Wealth Index (IWI), which measures the position of households regarding assets, access to services, and housing.[13] The value for Harare was 64 in 2022, compared to the average for the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample of 64.4, with the range from 28.7 for Lilongwe to 89.4 for Cape Town.

Harare has a human development index of 0.62, which is close to the 0.65 average for the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample, with the range being from 0.52 for Lilongwe to 0.76 for Cape Town (where 1 is best and 0 is worst). Internationally, London has an index of 0.98, Sao Paulo 0.83, Mumbai 0.84, and Mexico City 0.83.

Table 1: Population of local authorities making up the Harare functional area

LOCAL AUTHORITY	PROVINCE	CENSUS 2002	CENSUS 2012	CENSUS 2022	20 YEAR GROWTH PA	2024 ESTIMATE
Harare	Harare	1,435,784	1,485,231	1,849,600	1.27%	1,897,000
Chitungwiza	Harare	323,260	356,840	371,244	0.69%	376,000
Epworth	Harare	114,067	167,462	206,365	3.01%	219,000
Ruwa	Mashonaland East	22,155	56,678	94,083	7.50%	109,000
Metro area		**1,895,266**	**2,066,211**	**2,521,292**	**1.44%**	**2,601,000**

6 Ibid
7 Prepared by authors using Global Human Settlements Layer data.
8 Muronda, T. (2008). "Evolution of Harare as Zimbabwe's Capital City and a major Central Place in Southern Africa in the context of by Bylands model of settlement evolution". Journal of Geography and Regional Planning 1(2): 034-040.
9 Macro-Trends (2024)
10 Global Human Settlements Layer (2025), https://human-settlement.emergency.copernicus.eu/ucdb2024visual.php
11 Government of Zimbabwe (2019). Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) 2019 Urban Livelihoods Assessment. Harare.
12 Chirisa, I., Mutambisi, T., Chivenge, M., Mabaso, E., Matamanda, A. R. and Ncube, R. (2020). "The urban penalty of COVID-19 lockdowns across the globe: Manifestations and lessons for Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa". GeoJournal, 1-14; Hunter, J., Chitsiku, S., Shand, W. and Van Blerk, L. (2020). "Learning on Harare's streets under COVID-19 lockdown: Making a story map with street youth". Environment and Urbanization, 33(1): 31-42.
13 Global Data Lab. These assets include seven consumer durables (possession of a TV, fridge, phone, bike, car, a cheap utensil and an expensive utensil), access to two public services (water and electricity) and three housing characteristics (number of sleeping rooms, quality of floor material and of toilet facility).

Broadly, the evidence points to growing poverty in Zimbabwe. Between 2011 and 2017, extreme poverty, using the national extreme poverty line of 2011 PPP US$ 1.83 per day, rose from 23% to 30% and then increased further to 38% in April-May 2019.[14] Simulations of the impact of rapid price rises (especially food price inflation) and poor crop yields in 2019 suggest extreme poverty is likely to have increased to 42% in 2019.[15]

3.3 EDUCATION

Broadly, Zimbabwe has achieved near-universal primary education enrolment, and its literacy rate for adults aged 15 and above stood at 90% in 2022, among the highest in Africa.[16] However, there are challenges, particularly at higher education levels. Nationally, completion rates for secondary education remain low, with significant drop-offs due to economic constraints, school fees, and limited resources in public schools.[17] The COVID-19 pandemic also disrupted educational progress in Zimbabwe, as school closures and reduced household incomes affected attendance and performance.[18]

Education indicators

Looking at Harare specifically, the city benefits from a higher concentration of educational resources than rural areas. The level of education in Harare is also relatively high compared to other SADC cities in the GGA sample. Adults aged 20 and older in Harare have an average of 11.1 years of schooling, exceeding the city average of 9.6 years for the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample. This places Harare behind Johannesburg (12.8 years) but ahead of cities like Lusaka (9.16 years) and Lilongwe (6.52 years).

Role of Harare City Council

The city council runs several municipal schools, primarily at the primary level and provides affordable education to residents, particularly in high-density areas. The council oversees staffing, infrastructure maintenance, and resource allocation. The council has over 40 schools built and run by the local authority autonomously.[19]

3.4 HEALTH

Health indicators

Health indicators in Harare highlight both progress and challenges. The infant mortality rate in Harare is 43.9 per 1,000 live births, slightly below the city average of 48.9 across the GGA SADC sample of 10 cities, but higher than cities like Johannesburg (32.5) and Bulawayo (35.2). Under-five mortality rate in Harare is a concern, with a rate of 67.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022,[20] the highest of the 10 cities (The average is 46.7).

Life expectancy at birth in Harare was 67 years in 2022, close to the average of 65 years for the 10 cities in the GGA sample, which indicates the health resilience of adults in the city, considering that health facilities are generally inadequate.

Role of Harare City Council

Harare's healthcare system includes a network of clinics and hospitals managed by the Harare City Council through the city's department of health. These clinics offer maternal and child health services, immunisations, outpatient care, and treatment for common illnesses. Health services are delivered through two infectious disease hospitals, 12 polyclinics, 38 satellite clinics, and 10 family health service clinics.[21] The city health department reports to the city council but also to the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC); the MoHCC provides regulatory oversight and quality assurance.[22] Revenue comes predominantly from the Harare city rates account.[23]

14 World Bank (2021) Poverty and Equity Brief: Africa Eastern and Southern, Zimbabwe. https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/AM2021/Global_POVEQ_ZWE.pdf
15 Ibid
16 World Bank (2024). Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above). https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS. Accessed 21/01/2025.
17 Chipenda, C., & Cochrane, L. (2024). Out of school children in the context of new policy trajectories and interlocking crises in Zimbabwe: a transformative social policy perspective. SN Social Sciences, 4(7), 131.
18 Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (2022). Zimbabwe COVID-19 Poverty Monitor: May 2022. https://www.chronicpovertynetwork.org/covid19-poverty-monitor/tag/covid-19. Accessed 21/01/2025
19 Republic of Zimbabwe (2015). National Report for Habitat 3. https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Republic-of-Zimbabwe-Country-Report-Habitat_2.pdf. Accessed 13/03/2025.
20 Global Data Lab.
21 The World Bank Group (2022). Zimbabwe: Health Sector Public Expenditure Review 2022. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099730506292238494/pdf/P16556501fc556037089b80ca23e3977f6c.pdf. Accessed 13/03/2025.
22 Ibid
23 Ibid

While urban residents have better access to healthcare compared to rural areas, the availability and quality of services in Harare remain uneven. Overcrowded public facilities, limited medical supplies, and shortages of qualified healthcare personnel are common issues, particularly in high-density suburbs. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a severely negative impact on the city's health systems and exposed gaps in infrastructure and services.

3.5 HOUSING

Harare's housing profile mirrors the city's rapid urbanisation and challenges in managing its growth – this has generated numerous socio-political issues and strained the built environment.[24] As stated in Section 2, the city's built-up area expanded rapidly, largely driven by the development of high-density and informal residential areas, particularly in the southwestern parts of the city[25], with 33% of the city's population living in these informal settlements[26]. However, weakened and often corrupt land administration systems have prevented the municipal government from harnessing the value of urban expansion, contributing to the prevalence of informal settlements.[27]

Informal settlements in Harare are characterised by lower shack densities compared to similar cities in the region, suggesting opportunities for in-situ upgrading – although residents in these areas often lack access to basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity.[28] Exclusionary planning frameworks rooted in the city's colonial history have also exacerbated these disparities and forced many residents to rely on informal systems, such as shallow wells and pit latrines, to meet their daily needs.[29]

Even Harare's planned suburbs face infrastructure challenges. Overcrowding in older areas like Mbare has led to the collapse of ageing water and sanitation systems, further straining the city's capacity to deliver essential services.[30]

The Zimbabwe Government has historically addressed the rise in urban informality through evictions and demolitions, as seen during the government-led Operation Murambatsvina ("Drive Out Filth") in 2005 and, more recently, in displacements triggered by COVID-19 lockdown measures.[31]

4. ECONOMY

GDP per capita

As Zimbabwe's capital, Harare is the centre of the country's political and economic activities. It contributes an estimated 40% to the national GDP.[32] Per capita GDP for the city has remained fairly static over the period 2015 to 2020 at about US$2,900.[33] In relation to other countries, the 2020 figure of US$2,909 per capita in 2020 was below the average of 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample of US$5,975. This is also significantly lower than the highest-scoring city, Johannesburg, at US$16,370, but well above Lilongwe, the lowest-scoring city, at US$1,126. This places Harare in the lower-middle range among the SADC cities sampled.

Employment

In 2025, the Labour Force Survey gives the unemployment rate for Harare at 24%.[34] Individual perceptions provide a contrasting picture, with a Citizen Engagement Survey conducted by Good Governance Africa-Zimbabwe between 2018 and 2019 showing that unemployment in Harare was at 43% and self-employment was at 24%.[35] Economic difficulties and limited formal employment opportunities have driven a strong share of the city's population into

24 Masimba (2021).
25 Marondedze and Schütt (2019).
26 George Masimba and Anna Walnycki. 2024. "Harare City Report" African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) Working Paper 19.
27 Masimba (2021).
28 Masimba (2021).
29 Ibid
30 Ibid
31 Dialogue on Shelter (2020); Tibaijuka, A. K. (2005). Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe. New York: United Nations.
32 Government of Zimbabwe (2012). Zimbabwe Census 2012 National Report. Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
33 Pindiriri, C. (n.d). GDP Measurement and Urban Data Piloting in Harare City. https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/49199/b12021908.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 13/03/2025
34 Zimstats (2025) 2025 Second Quarter Labour Force Survey Report
35 Dube, C. & Ngqala, S. (2020). A Tale of Four Cities. https://gga.org/a-tale-of-four-cities/ Accessed 14/03/2025.

informal work, where income security is often low. Importantly, Harare's formal and informal economies have not been fully integrated and have exacerbated socio-economic inequalities across its urban landscape.[36]

Factors influencing the economy

Harare is a key hub for Zimbabwe's road, rail, and air transport networks, positioning the city as a strategic node for trade and tourism.[37] After 1980, the city inherited a relatively strong manufacturing base supported by mining and agriculture.[38] Yet, from the early 1980s onward, Harare faced economic challenges linked to disruptive weather patterns and poorly executed macroeconomic policies.[39] These severely disrupted the agriculture, mining, and manufacturing sectors on which Harare ultimately depends.

Globally, Zimbabwe ranks 140th out of 190 countries on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index[40] (now discontinued). The Index has been applied only to Harare in Zimbabwe and serves as a measure of the business environment in the country. However, Harare/Zimbabwe did still rank well in areas such as getting credit (67th) and protecting minority investors (97th).

Although Harare benefited from significant infrastructure investments during the colonial and early post-independence periods, the city has experienced a sharp decline in both physical and social amenities since 2000.[41] Despite these challenges, Harare remains central to Zimbabwe's economy due to its strategic location and historical economic base.

5. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 LEGISLATION

Zimbabwe's local government framework is defined by a range of legislative acts that provide the legal and administrative foundation for decentralised governance. These include:

- **Chapter 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe (2013)** establishes the principles of devolution and outlines the roles and responsibilities of provincial and local governments.
- **The Urban Councils Act (1995) and Rural District Councils Act (1988)**, which govern urban and rural local authorities, respectively, detailing their functions, powers, and obligations.
- **The Local Government Laws Amendment Act (2016)** introduced reforms aimed at improving the accountability and efficiency of local authorities.
- **The Public Finance Management Act (2009)**, which ensures financial transparency and accountability within local government operations.

The Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) forms the primary legal framework for urban governance and planning in Zimbabwe.[42] It defines the authority, duties, and powers of urban local councils, including their roles in land use management, development regulation, and the delivery of municipal services.[43]

The core administrative unit of local governance in Zimbabwe is the district, with 59 districts currently established across the country. Local government is divided into urban councils (responsible for cities and towns) and rural district councils (serving predominantly rural areas and responsible for growth points).

36 Matamanda, A., Chirisa, I., Dzvimbo, M., & Chinozvina, Q. (2020). The political economy of Zimbabwean Urban informality since 2000 – A contemporary governance dilemma. Development Southern Africa, 37, 694 - 707. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2019.1698410.
37 Masimba (2021).
38 Cheetham, R. J. (2011). Infrastructure and Growth in Zimbabwe: An Action Plan for Sustained Strong Economic Growth (Vol. 1). Tunis: African Development Bank Group; Stoneman, C. (1990). "The industrialisation of Zimbabwe – past, present and future". Afrika Focus 6(3-4).
39 Masimba (2021).
40 World Bank Group (2020). Doing Business in 2020: Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies. (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group). https://archive.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/z/zimbabwe/ZWE.pdf
41 DFID (2017). DFID Zimbabwe Country Engagement Final Scoping Report. A.ZIM.PRE.01. Infrastructure and Cities for Economic Development.
42 Matooane, L. S., Matamanda, A., Bhanye, J., & Nel, V. (2025). The Role of Urban Planning in Strengthening Urban Food Security in Africa: Insights from Lesotho, Zimbabwe and South Africa. In Urban Forum (pp. 1-29). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
43 Ibid

5.2 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Councils in Zimbabwe are tasked with promoting local development and ensuring that essential services are provided to residents. These functions include:[44]

- To provide potable water and wastewater management services.
- To provide trafficable roads.
- To provide an efficient and effective public transport system.
- To provide an efficient and effective solid waste management system.
- To provide decent and affordable accommodation.
- To provide comprehensive and accessible health services.
- To provide comprehensive and accessible social services.
- To provide efficient public safety and emergency services.
- To promote sound local governance.
- To promote sound environmental management systems.
- To provide coordinated and orderly spatial development.
- To mobilise and ensure efficient utilisation of resources.

These functions are generally associated with promoting development within the city, supporting local enterprises and developing communities. The largest functions in terms of staffing and budget are associated, firstly, with ensuring access to basic services to properties, including the provision of clean water, waste removal, and sanitation, and secondly, providing health and social services which are essential for public health and quality of life.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Zimbabwe operates a unitary government system with three tiers: national, provincial, and local authorities. While the Constitution of Zimbabwe recognises the autonomy of local authorities, including urban councils like the Harare City Council (HCC), in practice, the national government retains significant control over key administrative and fiscal functions. This centralisation affects service delivery and limits local decision-making power. The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works oversees governance and coordination of urban councils, including approval of budgets, strategic plans, and senior appointments.

Although local authorities like HCC are legally responsible for key services, such as water, sanitation, waste management, urban planning, and local roads, national ministries and agencies often play overlapping roles. For instance, ZINARA (Zimbabwe National Road Administration) collects vehicle license fees and controls funding for road infrastructure, even though urban roads fall under council jurisdiction. Similarly, while housing and spatial development are council responsibilities, national-level ministries frequently intervene in planning and allocation, sometimes bypassing local authority structures.

Harare retains a more traditional municipal structure, with departments within the City Council managing water, waste, roads, and health services. However, the lack of modern systems, such as an integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, has led to inefficiencies, including billing errors, weak revenue collection, and service delivery delays. In addition, political tensions between the opposition-led council, Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), and the ZANU-PF national government often hinder cooperation, making institutional coordination difficult.

In sum, while Harare has constitutional and legislative backing to act independently, its institutional effectiveness is hampered by centralised fiscal control, overlapping mandates, weak internal systems, and political interference, all of which undermine its capacity to function as an efficient urban authority.

Table 2 provides a summary of functions associated with urban development in Harare, with these functions provided by multiple institutions, including HCC.

44 Harare Metropolitan Province (n.d). Harare City. https://harareprovince.co.zw/harare-city/. Accessed 09/04/2025.

Table 2: List of institutional responsibilities in Harare

FUNCTION	INSTITUTION PROVIDING	NOTES
Water supply	Harare City Council, Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA)	ZINWA manages water resources, while HCC distributes water within city limits.
Sanitation	Harare City Council	
Electricity	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA)	National utility responsible for power generation, distribution, and maintenance.
Roads – major (highways)	Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development	Handles national roads connecting Harare to other regions.
Roads – local (streets)	Harare City Council	HCC is responsible for maintaining local streets within city limits.
Public transport	Private operators, Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO)	ZUPCO is a state-owned entity, but most public transport is run by private minibuses.
Solid Waste Management	Harare City Council	The HCC has some agreements with private operators like Geo Pomona
Community services	Harare City Council	
Emergency and security services	Harare City Council (Fire Brigade, Municipal police), Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)	ZRP handles law enforcement and public security, while HCC manages fire services. HCC also has its own by-law enforcement municipal police who sometimes work with support from the ZRP.
Primary health care	Ministry of Health and Child Care, Harare City Council (Department of Health Services)	The Ministry plays a supervisory and regulatory role, while HCC manages urban clinics and infrastructure.
Education	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Harare City Council	The Ministry oversees schools; HCC manages some primary schools and early childhood development centres.

6. ACCESS TO SERVICES

6.1 WATER SUPPLY

Responsibility for water management is shared between the HCC and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), with the former handling bulk water supply and water distribution and the latter water resource development, which includes minimising the impacts of droughts, floods or other hazards. However, poor coordination between these bodies and limited financial capacity often hinders effective service delivery.[45]

Within the municipality water supply is the responsibility of Harare Water, a department under the HCC. The department is mandated to supply potable water to Harare and the surrounding local authorities of Chitungwiza, Epworth, Ruwa, and Norton Town Councils, with a combined estimated total population of about 4.5 million people, and to provide sanitation services to Harare Municipality.[46]

Bulk water supply

The Harare water supply system relies on raw water from Harava Dam, Seke Dam, Lake Chivero, and Lake Manyame, all on the Upper Manyame catchment area, along the Manyame River. These water sources are treated at the Morton Jaffray Water Treatment Works (design capacity of 614Ml/d) and Prince Edward Water Treatment Works (design capacity 90Ml/d).[47] In 2018, these plants were unable to supply sufficient bulk water: combined capacity was 700Ml/d while demand was 800Ml/d, or 1,300Ml/d if areas currently without water supply are included.[48] More recent reporting indicates that the effective capacity of the city's water plants is less than 60% of their design capacity.

45 Hove, M., & Tirimboi, A. (2011). Assessment of Harare water service delivery. Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 13(4), 61-84.
46 City of Harare (n.d). Harare Water. https://www.hararecity.co.zw/departments/about/harare-water. Accessed 10/01/2025
47 Republic of Zimbabwe. 2014. Greater Harare water and sanitation strategic plan. World Bank 103574 v1
48 Republic of Zimbabwe. 2018. Data collection survey on water supply and sewage sector in Harare city area – Final report. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

[49] This is partly related to insufficient water resources, with the Prince Edward temporarily decommissioned during the late 2023/2024 drought periods.[50] Moreover, water pollution from untreated sewage, industrial discharges, and agricultural runoff has degraded the quality of raw water in the reservoirs. This has increased the costs and complexity of treatment. Shortages are expected to worsen with increased drought risk from climate change.[51]

The bulk water limitations have contributed to a critical water supply challenge, with less than 40% of the city's demand being met by its formal treated water system.[52]

Access to water supply service

Yet Harare had the highest percentage of households with access to improved water sources in the country at 98.2% in 2022.[53] A significant proportion of this is via boreholes/other non-piped options, not a continuous municipal supply. With the poor state of the water supply infrastructure and inadequate capacity of the Harare Water system, this level of coverage has been achieved through citizens' own efforts, using boreholes (estimated at 15,000 in 2014[54]), on-site storage, rainwater harvesting and private vendors.

Access to water in Harare is also highly unequal. Residents of high-density and informal settlements often rely on unsafe sources, such as shallow wells and communal boreholes, which pose public health risks.[55] These areas, which lack proper infrastructure, are frequently affected by waterborne diseases and sanitation-related challenges. Meanwhile, more affluent neighbourhoods benefit from boreholes or private water suppliers to offset unreliable municipal services.[56]

Water supply system performance

The City is experiencing greater than ever pressure to improve the quality and reliability of service provision while coping with aged and inadequate infrastructure, declining raw water quality, poor revenue inflows, increasing arrears, and insignificant external support, among many high-level challenges.[57]

The deterioration of Harare's distribution network results in high levels of treated water lost to leaks, theft, and illegal connections.[58] This, together with a high proportion of unmetered and unbilled water, leads to a high non-revenue water figure with a value of 58% recorded in 2024.[59] This is well below the benchmark for African water utilities of 30%.

Revenue collection remains low, with only 45 to 50% of billed residents paying for water, and existing tariffs fail to cover operational and maintenance costs[60], leaving the system underfunded and under-maintained, vulnerable to collapse. There is also a lack of reliable data, which undermines decision-making.[61]

6.2 SANITATION SERVICES

Sanitation in Harare is managed by Harare Water, a department of the Harare City Council.

Wastewater treatment

Harare has six wastewater treatment works (WWTWs): Firle (144Ml/d activated sludge and trickling filter system), Crowborough (54Ml/d trickling filter system), Marlborough (2Ml/d pond system), Donnybrook (pond system), and Hatcliff (5Ml/d, BNR Technology system)[62]. The total design capacity was 208Ml/d, but the system was receiving inflows of up to 300Ml/d in 2009.[63]

49 Brooke, A., & Fenner, R. A. (2023). Improving urban water management and building water supply resilience in the city of Harare, Zimbabwe–a systems view. Civil Engineering and Environmental Systems, 40(4), 195-228.
50 allAfrica.com. 2024. Zimbabwe: Decommissioning of Prince Edward Waterworks Sparks Fears of Humanitarian Crisis in Harare. 30 August 2024.
51 van Dijk, R., et al. 2019. "Manyame Catchment: A Risk Assessment'.
52 City of Harare (2022). "City of Harare Water Resilience Plan (Draft)." City of Harare.
53 Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency. 2022. Census 2022: PHC Report.
54 Harare water and sanitation plan
55 Musemwa, M. (2021). Urban struggles over water scarcity in Harare. Dædalus, 150(4), 27-47.
56 Ibid
57 Ibid
58 Brooke & Fenner (2023).
59 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (n.d). Zimbabwe: Progress on achieving SDG 6. https://sdgs.un.org/basic-page/zimbabwe-34145. Accessed 24/03/2025; City of Harare (2024). 2024 Budget Speech: Accelerating Quality Service Delivery for Everyone.
60 Brooke & Fenner (2023).
61 City of Harare (2022).
62 Republic of Zimbabwe. 2014. Greater Harare water and sanitation strategic plan. World Bank 103574 v1
63 Nhapi, I. (2009). "The water situation in Harare, Zimbabwe: A policy and management problem". Water Policy 11: 221-235.

Commencing in 2013, there have been upgrades to the system, primarily funded by the Chinese Exim Bank, with the current commitment to construct four new WWTWs.[64]

Access to an adequate service

There is uncertainty over current figures for access to adequate sanitation in Harare. The Africa Finance Minister's meeting in 2020 gives a low figure of 40% for 2019 for Harare Province[65]. Yet a 2021 progress report on the SDGs gives 67.8% of the urban population of Zimbabwe having access to at least basic sanitation in 2019.[66] AMALI reports the following service levels for Harare Province:

- 61.5% of households use the municipality's piped sewer system.
- 27.1% of households use 'flush to septic tanks'.
- 3.6% of households use 'flush to pit toilets'.

This totals 92.2%. Normally, these service levels would be considered 'adequate', but the figure of 92.2% appears too high.

Access figures are likely clouded by differing definitions of 'adequate access'. Without the benefit of further research, the SDG figures for urban areas of Zimbabwe are assumed (67.8% adequate in 2021).

Harare City struggles to provide adequate sanitation services, particularly in high-density suburbs and informal settlements where infrastructure is lacking or non-existent. The city's sanitation crisis is evident in frequent sewer bursts, open drains, and flowing sewage. Harare's sewered sanitation system, which serves around 190,000 connections, has been severely overloaded, with 2012 figures indicating that treatment plants processed only 80 megalitres per day of the 274 megalitres per day of wastewater received.[67] This results in untreated sewage contaminating water sources such as wells and shallow boreholes, which many residents rely on in areas with limited municipal water access.[68] Poor sanitation practices, including open defecation, further exacerbate health risks. Residents resort to this practice due to non-functional toilets caused by water shortages or blocked sewage systems. These unsanitary conditions have contributed to outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid, as seen during the 2018–2019 cholera outbreak linked to contaminated piped water.[69]

While poor governance and a lack of reliable data make it difficult to assess the current scale of the crisis or plan effective interventions,[70] the city's sanitation crisis remains, worsened by the limited water availability, which makes it difficult for residents to flush toilets or maintain basic hygiene. These challenges pose serious risks to public health, dignity, and overall quality of life.

6.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid waste management in Harare is also the responsibility of the Harare City Council through its Works Department. The City struggles with inefficiencies due to financial constraints, outdated infrastructure, and limited operational capacity.

Waste quantities

A 2018 study using 2015 data indicated waste generation of 0.28 kg per person per day, with only 61% of this collected, leaving a significant amount of uncollected waste accumulating in streets, drains, and open spaces.[71] This is corroborated by authors of a 2019 report, which gives waste generated at 0.22 kg per person per month for both the City of Harare and the Harare metropolitan area.

Level of service

AMALI reports that 42% of people had a "door-to-door" waste collection service.[72]

64 CGTN Africa. 2014. https://africa.cgtn.com/chinese-firm-to-build-four-sewage-treatment-plants-in-zimbabwe
65 Africa Finance Ministers Meeting 2020. Zimbabwe Country Report.
66 Zimbabwe's Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDGs.
67 World Bank Water (2012). The Zimbabwe Water Forum. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/169031467990349150/pdf/103565-BRI-P126703-PUBLIC-ZWF-1-Durban-Water-Oct-2012.pdf
68 Human Rights Watch (2021). Zimbabwe: Dire Lack of Clean Water in Capital. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/22/zimbabwe-dire-lack-clean-water-capital. Accessed 10/01/2025
69 Ayling, S., Milusheva, S., Maidei Kashangura, F., Hoo, Y. R., Sturrock, H., & Joseph, G. (2023). A stitch in time: The importance of water and sanitation services (WSS) infrastructure maintenance for cholera risk. A geospatial analysis in Harare, Zimbabwe. PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases, 17(6), e0011353.
70 Brooke & Fenner (2023). Improving urban water management and building water supply resilience in the city of Harare, Zimbabwe – a systems view" in Civil Engineering and Environmental Systems.
71 Zimbabwe: Harare solid waste statistics (2018). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/07/harare_en.pdf. Accessed 26/03/2025.
72 AMALI (2025) AMALI City Profile - Data And Sources – Harare. Quoting City of Harare website: https://www.hararecity.co.zw/resources/download/344

Poor waste disposal practices result in solid waste clogging drainage systems, worsening flooding during the rainy season, and further contaminating water sources. Piles of uncollected waste become breeding grounds for flies and other disease vectors, contributing to the spread of cholera, typhoid, and trachoma.[73]

Collection and disposal arrangements

Harare City's waste collection fleet comprises 47 compactor trucks (12m³ capacity), 10 skip trucks (5m³ capacity), and 6 tipper trucks (10m³ capacity), but only 50% of these vehicles are operational due to inadequate maintenance funding.[74] This contributes to the poor state of waste collection.

Waste disposal in Harare is managed through two final disposal sites, where about 540 tons of waste per day is dumped at one site, while the second site handles 246 cubic metres (about 120 tons) of waste per month. However, landfill management practices remain poor – only one of the sites compacts and covers waste with soil, while the other lacks proper containment, increasing the risk of pollution.[75]

The private sector and informal waste pickers play a role in solid waste management through recycling; the city council has an agreement with private operators like Geo Pomona.[76] Moreover, there is no intermediate treatment or recycling system in place, limiting the city's ability to reduce waste before disposal.[77]

6.4 ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY

Electricity supply to Harare is provided by national government entities. The power sector is overseen by the Ministry of Energy and Power Development (MoEPD), regulated by the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority (ZERA), and operationally managed by ZESA Holdings, with its subsidiaries Zimbabwe Power Company (ZPC) responsible for generation and Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC) undertaking transmission and distribution.[78]

Power sources for national grid

Zimbabwe's energy sector has a total installed capacity of 2,800MW, of which 1,800 MW is operational, and the country's peak demand is 1,700MW.[79] ZPC manages four thermal and one hydropower station, with Kariba hydropower (1,050MW) and Hwange thermal (920MW) being the largest contributors. However, the recent drought of 2024/25 has seen the contribution of hydropower drop substantially to 27% of supply in early 2025.[80]

Independent power producers add 140MW, mostly from renewable sources, including bagasse and mini-hydro projects.[81]

Household access to energy

The average national electricity access rate is 62%, with urban and rural access rates of 86% and 37%, respectively.[82] Harare fares slightly better, with 88% of households having access to electricity as of 2019, according to Global Data Lab. However, even in urban areas like Harare, electricity supply remains unreliable due to frequent load-shedding caused by limited generation capacity, ageing infrastructure, and inefficiencies in the transmission network.[83]

In Harare, 62% of households use electricity for cooking, significantly higher than the national average of 23.9%, while 20% use gas, followed by 9.8% relying on wood and 6.9% on paraffin.[84] Nevertheless, electricity remains expensive and unreliable, with frequent blackouts lasting several hours daily, often from 6 am to 6 pm.[85]

73 Human Rights Watch (2021).
74 Ibid
75 Ibid
76 Geo Pomona (n.d). How did Geo Pomona take over the site from the City of Harare? Tell us of the procedures and was everything done above the board?. https://geopomona.co.zw/. Accessed 25/08/2025.
77 UN Habitat (2022).
78 Ibid
79 SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency – SACREEE (n.d). Zimbabwe. https://www.sacreee.org/member-state/zimbabwe. Accessed 11/01/2025
80 Zimstat (2025) Index Of Electricity Generation 2nd Quarter.
81 Ibid
82 ZIMSTAT (2022). Zimbabwe 2022 Population and Housing Census Report. https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/Demography/Census/2022_PHC_Report_27012023_Final.pdf Accessed 11/01/2025.
83 The Energy Poverty PIRE in Southern Africa (EPPSA) (2023). State of Knowledge Energy Access in Zimbabwe. https://eppsa.cpc.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-7097-CPC-EPPSA_Report_Zimbabwe_Final-1.pdf. Accessed 29/01/2025.
84 Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization (2020). Harare Voluntary Local Review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report. https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/harare_2020.pdf. Accessed 26/03/2025
85 Clean Cooking Alliance (n.d). Sector Directory. https://cleancooking.org/sector-directory/ward-energy/#:~:text=Around%2070%25%20of%20people%20in,e.g%20from%206am%20to%206pm. Accessed 21/01/2025

Performance of electricity sector

The financial position of Zimbabwe's electricity companies is a key constraint on the sector's development.[86] Low tariffs, which are often politically influenced and kept below cost-reflective levels, limit the company's revenue generation. Moreover, high operational costs, poor billing systems, and low payment compliance further exacerbate revenue shortfalls. The electricity sector is also burdened by high maintenance costs associated with ageing infrastructure. Performance figures for ZETDC from the UPBEAT utility monitoring service indicate that in 2020, the operating cost recovery, excluding subsidies, was 72%.[87]

This impacts negatively on ZESA Holdings, which takes responsibility for funding the state electricity supply system, including the cost of importing electricity to cover deficits, with ZESA owing millions of dollars to regional electricity suppliers, including Eskom (South Africa) and Hydro Cahora Bassa (Mozambique), for imported power.[88] Investment in infrastructure has been inadequate, leading to frequent breakdowns in thermal power stations and inefficiencies in the generation and transmission systems. While the government strives to attract foreign investment into the energy sector, challenges like currency instability, low returns on investment, and unclear regulatory frameworks often deter potential investors.

In Zimbabwe, there is a growing effort towards renewable energy amid challenges. The country has renewable energy targets of an additional 1,100 MW by 2025 and 2,100 MW by 2030.[89] The City of Harare is playing a part as it is in the process of facilitating a partnership with a private firm to build a 50MW solar plant to supply the city.[90]

6.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Zimbabwe's information and communications technology (ICT) sector has grown over the years, becoming a key driver of economic activity and social transformation. The government aims to leverage technology to foster economic development and improve service delivery, guided by the National ICT Policy (2022-2027).[91] Mobile telecommunications and fintech have been key growth areas, with companies like Econet Wireless, NetOne, and Telecel expanding mobile and internet penetration. According to the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), mobile penetration stood at 96.1% in Q1 2024, with internet penetration at 75.4% in the same quarter.

Internet access is not just about technology and availability but also about the freedom to access content. In this regard, Zimbabwe aligns with other SADC countries in the GGA sample. According to the 2024 Freedom House *Freedom on the Net* report, Zimbabwe scored 48 out of 100, significantly lower than South Africa's 73, comparable to the United States at 75.[92]

Zimbabwe faces challenges in ICT adoption and infrastructure development. Internet speeds are often constrained by outdated equipment, while the high cost of devices and data limits access for many Zimbabweans.[93] Efforts to improve e-government services are progressing slowly, with limited online portals for accessing public services and low levels of digital literacy among the population.[94]

As Zimbabwe's capital, Harare is at the centre of the country's ICT ecosystem. The city is home to most of the country's tech companies, innovation hubs, and

86 The Energy Poverty PIRE in Southern Africa (EPPSA) (2023). State of Knowledge Energy Access in Zimbabwe. https://eppsa.cpc.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-7097-CPC-EPPSA_Report_Zimbabwe_Final-1.pdf. Accessed 29/01/2025.
87 https://utilityperformance.energydata.info/utilities/ZETDC
88 360 Mozambique (2023). Zimbabwe Owes Over $100M to Regional Power Companies, Including Mozambique's. https://360mozambique.com/oil-gas/energy/zimbabwe-owes-over-100m-to-regional-power-companies-including-mozambiques/. Accessed 11/01/2025.
89 SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency – SACREEE (n.d).
90 Mayor's budget speech 2025.
91 Governenment of Zimbabwe (2022). National ICT Policy 2022-2027. https://www.ictministry.gov.zw/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/National%20ICT%20Policy%202022-2027.pdf Accessed 21/01/2025.
92 Freedom House (2024). Freedom on the Net. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net. Accessed 29/01/2025
93 Freedom House (2024). Freedom on the Net 2024: Zimbabwe. https://freedomhouse.org/country/zimbabwe/freedom-net/2024. Accessed 21/01/2024.
94 Simanje (2024). Zimbabwe's digital leap falls short in bridging access to justice gaps. https://www.apc.org/en/news/zimbabwes-digital-leap-falls-short-bridging-access-justice-gaps. Accessed 21/01/2025

digital start-ups, which drive advancements in fintech, e-commerce, and ICT education. Harare has better infrastructure than other parts of the country and leads in mobile and internet penetration.

According to the UN City Data's local online service index[95], in 2024, Harare ranked 126 out of 194 cities and had a score of 0.23, very similar to five of seven SADC cities where data is available. These cities sit in the range of 0.18 to 0.23, with Dar es Salaam scoring 0.34 and Johannesburg 0.60.[96] [97]

Global Data Lab[98] estimates that 34% of households in Harare had a computer, 97.1% a phone, and 46.4% had internet access in 2019. However, the city still faces challenges such as outdated municipal systems and limited integration of ICT into public service delivery.[99]

6.6 ROADS

Road transport is the dominant mode for freight transport in Zimbabwe, carrying approximately 80% of the country's trade by volume.[100] The road network includes primary and secondary trunk roads that link major cities and economic hubs, as well as tertiary feeder and access roads within urban areas. While the road density is relatively high compared to other developing countries, much of the network, especially secondary and tertiary roads, is in poor condition due to decades of underinvestment and inadequate maintenance.[101]

Road lengths for the City of Harare are provided in Table 3.

The total road length per capita is 5.26 metres per person, which is particularly high compared with other cities in the SADC sample (Lusaka is lowest at 2.0 km/cap, with Cape Town at 4.22 km/cap and Lilongwe at 4.23 km/cap). This is associated with a low density of settlement, with a greater length of road required to connect properties. The

Table 3: Road lengths for Harare

CATEGORY	KM	SPLIT
Trunk	138	1.64%
Primary	122	1.45%
Secondary	141	1.67%
Tertiary	486	5.77%
Residential & service	5,370	63.7%
Paths, tracks, etc	1,765	20.94%
Unclassified	409	4.85%
Total	**8,430**	**100.0%**

Source: OpenStreetMap (n.d), accessed via https://data.humdata.org/

OpenStreetMap data shows 1,261 km of Harare's roads are paved, 15.0% of the total, which is a relatively high figure compared to SADC sample cities in the GGA sample, excluding Johannesburg and Cape Town (average figure for paved roads for 7 cities excluding Harare, Johannesburg, and Cape Town is 9%). Road conditions in Harare are, however, poor, largely due to a lack of investment since the initial construction.[102]

The HCC manages the city's urban roads, but financial and resource constraints have left much of the network in disrepair. Many roads in high-density suburbs and informal settlements are either unpaved or riddled with potholes, making them difficult to navigate and unsafe, especially during the rainy season.[103] Poor drainage systems exacerbate the problem, leading to frequent flooding and further deterioration of the roads.

In 2017, the late President Robert Mugabe declared a state of disaster on Harare's roads, and today, over 87% of the city's road network requires rehabilitation.[104] The city aims to revamp 250 km of roads annually over the next five years

95 The UN City Data uses the Local Online Services Index (LOSI) to assess the e-government portals across various cities worldwide. https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/City/id/86-Harare/dataYear/2024
96 UN City Data, "e-government knowledgebase," https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/City/id/86-Harare/dataYear/2024. Accessed 21/01/2025
97 Data for Cape Town not located.
98 https://globaldatalab.org/
99 Nyahunzvi, V. T. (2016). Evaluating the utilisation of ICT as a service delivery tool in urban councils: a case of Harare city council.
100 Logistics Cluster (n.d). Logistics Capacity Assessments (LCA): Zimbabwe Road Network. https://lca.logcluster.org/23-zimbabwe-road-network. Accessed 21/01/2025
101 Mbara, T. C., Nyarirangwe, M., & Mukwashi, T. (2010). Challenges of raising road maintenance funds in developing countries: An analysis of road tolling in Zimbabwe. *Journal of transport and supply chain management*, 4(1), 151-175.
102 Masimba (2021).
103 The Herald (2018).
104 Finn, B. M., & Bandauko, E. (2024). Dwindling funds and increased responsibilities: Decentralization, unfunded mandates, and Harare's infrastructure crisis. *Habitat International*, 148, 103087.

at an estimated cost of USD 250 million per year, yet it struggles to secure the necessary funding.[105]

While Harare performs better than the regional average in traffic flow and emissions, its low proportion of paved roads and road maintenance challenges highlight the need for key infrastructure improvements. In underserved areas, poor road conditions hinder access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets.

6.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The limited information on passenger transport modal split in Harare indicates that more than 50% use public transport, primarily minibus taxis (commonly referred to as "Kombis"), 29% use private vehicles, and 17% walk.[106,107] At least 3% of people cycle. Public transport within the city is dominated by Kombis, which are informal and largely unregulated. There is also a state-owned bus service operated by the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO), but this was in decline as an urban commuter service from 2006.[108]

With Kombis forming the backbone of passenger transport services, their unreliability is a concern: vehicles are often overcrowded and prone to unsafe driving practices. Further, informal operators in Harare usually operate without proper licensing, their vehicles are not serviced regularly, and the drivers are often not competent enough to drive public service vehicles.[109]

In 2024, Harare had a Traffic Index of 144, lower than the average of 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample of 180, indicating relatively less congestion. The city's average commute time of 32.5 minutes is marginally better than the average of 37.4 minutes for these cities.[110]

Harare's population growth and increasing vehicle ownership are outpacing the capacity of the existing road network, with congestion increasing and road conditions worsening.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

Carbon emissions

With growing alarm at the impact of climate change, carbon emissions are a major global concern. In Harare's case, carbon emissions are estimated at 0.40 tons of CO^2 per capita per year in 2020, lower than the average of 1.04 tons across the 10 cities in the GGA sample. This places Harare above cities like Lilongwe (0.12 tons) but well below more industrialised cities such as Johannesburg (3.20 tons).[111] Harare's carbon footprint reflects its limited industrial base and relatively low levels of private car ownership.[112]

Air quality

Considering air quality, the PM2.5 concentration of particulates in the air in Harare in 2024 was 13 µg/m^3. This is below the average for 9 SADC cities in the GGA sample of 17 µg/m^3 (Range from Cape Town at 8 to Johannesburg at 42).[113] Internationally, this can be compared to 9 µg/m^3 for London, 16 for Bogota and 68 for Mumbai. The WHO standard is 5 µg/m^3.

Water and waste

Harare faces serious environmental challenges related to water and waste management (see Section 6). While the city relies heavily on surface water from Lake Chivero and Lake Manyame, water quality in these reservoirs is deteriorating due to untreated sewage and industrial discharges.

105 Ibid
106 NRTV. 2025. Locals are fuming over HCC's Masterplan proposal to ban kombis. NRTV news July 25 2025.
107 While this modal split information has limited reliability is aligns with earlier information.
108 Tatenda Mbare. 2006. Coping with demand for urban passenger transport in Zimbabwe: challenges and options.
109 Ibid
110 Numbeo Data (2024). 2024 data is used for comparative purposes. But note that Harare's traffic index changed to 134 in 2025.
111 Global Human Settlements Layer.
112 World Health Organization (2021). What are the WHO Air quality guidelines? https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/what-are-the-who-air-quality-guidelines. Accessed 21/05/2025
113 Global Human Settlements Layer.

8. ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Harare has 30 constituencies and 46 wards. Each constituency is represented in the National Assembly, while the wards form the basic units of local governance, each represented by an elected councillor within the HCC. These councillors work with the HCC to oversee urban administration, develop bylaws, and implement local projects.

Harare has been governed by the opposition (Movement for Democratic Change, now Citizen Coalition for Change) since 2000, while the central government has been run by the ruling party, ZANU-PF, over the past four decades.[114] This political divide has resulted in frequent conflicts between the two levels of government, with the ruling party often accused of using fiscal centralisation as a tool to weaken opposition-led councils. Despite Harare's high level of service delivery devolution, the national government provides minimal financial support, with intergovernmental transfers making up only 1% of Harare's operating revenue.[115]

The centralisation of funds by the national government limits HCC's financial autonomy, often leaving the council with insufficient resources to meet its expenditure responsibilities.[116] This financial strain often delays service delivery and deteriorates urban infrastructure. Moreover, public dissatisfaction with the council's performance often leads to poor compliance with levy and rate payments, which worsens fiscal constraints.[117]

The Afrobarometer Round 9 Institutional Responsiveness Survey provides a snapshot of public perceptions of Harare's governance quality. Harare's institutional quality index score is 0.9 out of 3, slightly lower than the city average of 1.0 across GGA's SADC sample. This score highlights key barriers to the council's transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. For instance, residents face difficulties accessing information about local development plans, budgets, or contracts, as well as reporting corruption or requesting community project assistance.[118]

These issues correspond with other governance challenges, including inadequate communication between the council and residents, limited opportunities for citizen engagement, and inefficiencies in service delivery. Comparatively, Harare's score is on par with Johannesburg but falls behind cities like Dar es Salaam (1.3) and Cape Town (1.1), which are perceived as having more effective local governance structures.

Table 4: Afrobarometer Institutional Responsiveness Survey, 2024

CITIES	COUNTRY	INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY INDEX (0-3, HIGHER IS BETTER)
Bulawayo	Zimbabwe	1.1
Harare	Zimbabwe	0.9
Johannesburg	South Africa	0.9
Cape Town	South Africa	1.1
Da es Salaam	Tanzania	1.3
Lilongwe	Malawi	1.0
Luanda	Angola	0.8
Lusaka	Zambia	1.0
Maputo	Mozambique	1.1
Matola	Mozambique	1.0

114 Finn, B. M., & Bandauko, E. (2024). Dwindling funds and increased responsibilities: Decentralization, unfunded mandates, and Harare's infrastructure crisis. *Habitat International*, 148, 103087.
115 Ibid
116 Chakunda, V. (2020). Impact of Public Debt on Service Delivery in Local Authorities. Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development. https://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Impact-of-Public-Debt-on-Service-Delivery-in-Local-Authorities.pdf. Accessed 21/01/2025.
117 Chombo, I. M., & Youm, S. H. (2021). Building performance evaluation of public housing in Harare, Zimbabwe. Acta Structilia, 28(2), 1-22.
118 Masvaure, S. (2016). Elusive public participation: citizen decision-making in budget formulation process in the City of Harare, Zimbabwe. In Urban Forum (Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 447-463). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

9. FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

Harare's financial position needs to be seen in the context of a city that has significant trading services (water, sanitation, and solid waste management) and social services (education and health) functions in comparison to peer cities in the SADC region.[119] From an infrastructure perspective – assuming infrastructure as separate from buildings – Harare has greater responsibility for roads in comparison with other SADC cities and, along with South African cities, is directly responsible for water supply and sanitation.

A summarised revenue budget for the city is given in Table 5:

Quite extraordinarily, compared to cities in the GGA sample in other SADC countries, 'own source' revenue is 99% of the total, with the City of Harare receiving minimal financial support from the national government, as described in Section 8. Other features of this budget include:

- Property rates contribute 48% of total income – more than double the average (23%) across six other SADC cities in the GGA sample.
- Strong contribution of tariff-based income from trading services – water supply, wastewater management and waste management (34% of revenue compared to 27% for Johannesburg and 14% for Cape Town, cities which also provide these three services).[120]

This revenue is intended to cover the operating expenditure of US$442 (See Table 6), but US$86 million is also allocated to cover 63% of capital expenditure, which is budgeted at US$136 million. Other sources of capital finance are inter-governmental transfers (16%); loans (13%); and other minor sources (8%)[121]. The city, therefore, carries substantial responsibility for funding capital works with little support from the national government. It has far too little access to capital finance in relation to the requirement to provide new infrastructure and renew existing infrastructure.

Operating expenditure figures for Harare City are given in Table 6.

With an expenditure budget of US$256 per capita per year, Harare spends far more than SADC cities in the GGA sample, excluding South Africa (Luanda $46; Lusaka $12 and Lilongwe $9 per capita per year), but far less than Johannesburg and Cape Town ($705 and $728 per capita per year respectively). Key features of this expenditure budget include:

- Expenditure on governance and administration is fairly typical for SADC cities, which average 32% for cities in the GGA sample.
- Along with Cape Town and Johannesburg, Harare budgets for a high level of expenditure on public order and safety (US$26 per capita per year for all these cities

Table 5: Harare City Council budget – Revenue – 2025

REVENUE SOURCE	US$ M	SPLIT	US$/CAP
Property rates	255.2	48%	159.2
Fines, licenses, penalties, levies & permits	74.9	14%	46.7
Other non-tariff revenue	18.6	4%	11.6
Service charges - Electricity			–
Service charges - Water	121.4	23%	75.7
Service charges - Waste Water Management	24.5	5%	15.3
Service charges - Waste Management	30.8	6%	19.2
Transfers for operating costs	3.1	1%	1.9
Total	**528.5**	**100%**	**329.7**

Source: City of Harare Mayor's budget speech 2025

119 This group of functions is more extensive than for any other city in the GGA sample of SADC cities, with South African cities having more trading services (including electricity) but fewer social services (some primary health care but no education function).

120 In SADC countries other than South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, water supply and sanitation services are provided by public utilities, not the municipalities.

121 Note that source of capital finance are not allocated to specific projects or sectors.

Table 6: Harare City Council budget – Expenditure – 2025

FUNCTION	US$ M	% SPLIT	US$/CAP
Governance and administration	128.0	29%	79.9
Environmental protection	1.3	0%	0.8
Public order and safety	41.6	9%	26.0
Community services	15.4	3%	9.6
Housing	17.1	4%	10.7
Health	48.0	11%	29.9
Education	7.4	2%	4.6
Roads and drainage	28.1	6%	17.5
Water supply	89.2	20%	55.6
Sanitation	16.5	4%	10.3
Solid waste management	49.6	11%	30.9
Total	**442.2**	**100%**	**275.9**

Source: City of Harare Mayor's budget speech 2025

compared to less than one dollar per capita per year for Lilongwe, Luanda, and Lusaka).

- As Harare has major responsibility for health care, including hospitals, budgeted expenditure on this function is substantial, along with Luanda, which also runs hospitals. Other SADC cities only provide primary health care facilities.
- As Harare is responsible for a major part of its road network, it has a relatively high level of road expenditure compared to other SADC cities (South Africa excluded), where national road agencies manage main roads within cities.
- The substantial proportion of expenditure on trading services (35%) is consistent with the level of responsibility Harare City carries for these services.

Critically, there is a big gap between these budgeted revenue and expenditure figures, with revenue collection averaging 40% in the first three quarters of the 2024/25 year.[122] This clearly constrains both operating and capital expenditure, with the latter constrained to 10% of budgeted expenditure. With low levels of revenue collection, the city is building up a large debtor's book. Notably, 66% of customer debtors are commercial and industrial customers.[123]

10. CLOSURE

In comparison with its peer cities across the SADC region, Harare has the greatest responsibility to provide urban services, including health and education, yet receives the lowest level of political and financial support from the national government. In addition, economic circumstances in the city are poor, limiting the ability of the City Council to collect revenue. Thus, Harare is a city of contrasts – it balances its role as Zimbabwe's capital with the challenges of rapid urban growth and strained resources. While it remains the country's political and economic hub, issues like ageing infrastructure, poor service delivery, and environmental pressures bring hardships for most of the city's residents.

122 City of Harare Mayor's budget speech 2025.
123 Ibid

Photo: By Sueson - commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30947958

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