

Baseline study on election reporting in Zimbabwe's mainstream media

FIRST QUARTER 2018

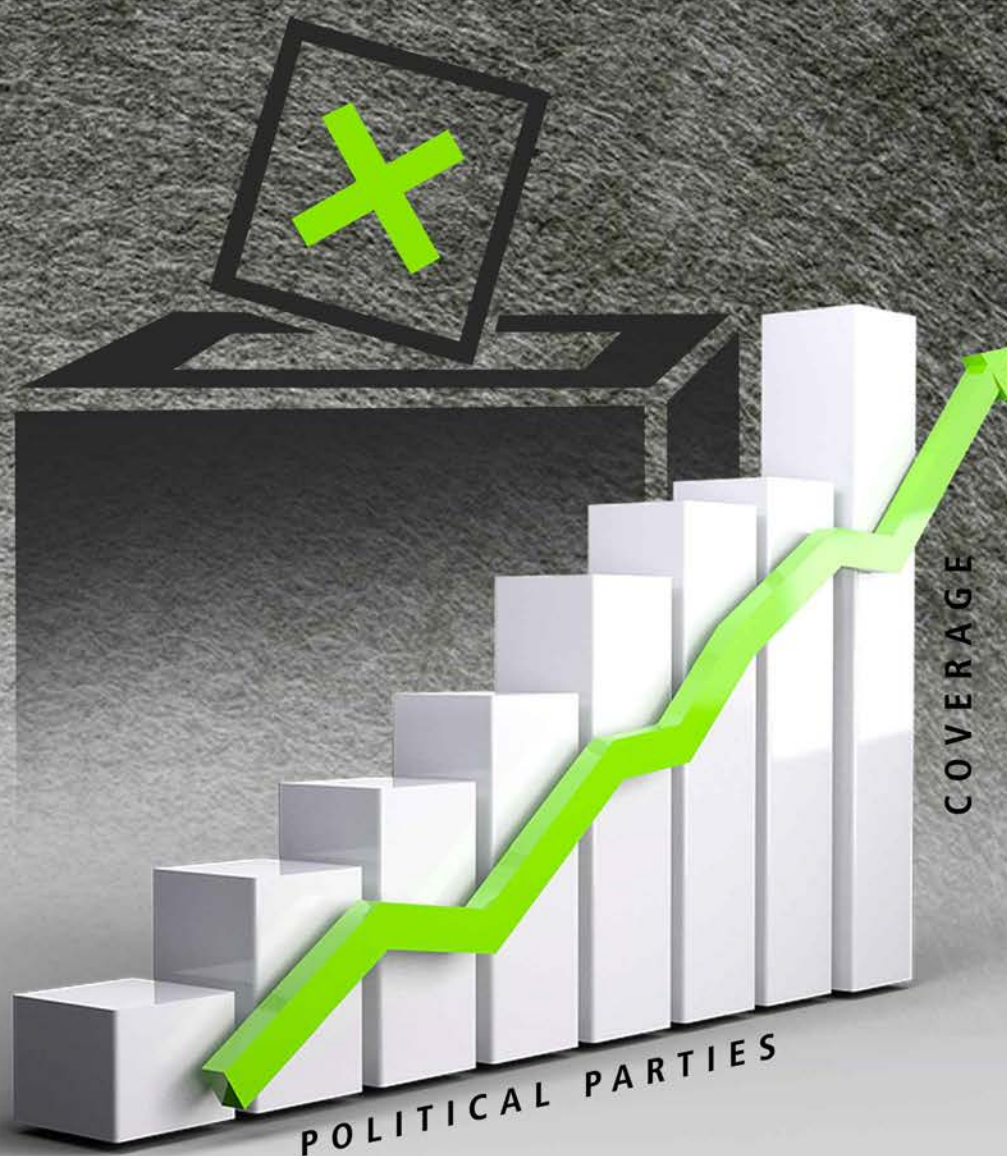


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Media Monitors conducted a study from 11 – 24 February 2018 on media reporting of Zimbabwe’s political processes ahead of the election on 30 July this year. The study monitored the media’s coverage of political parties, candidates, government officials and public affairs as well as the media’s professionalism in doing so. The study chose a sample that was representative of the various media in the country, which include the state broadcaster; private commercial radio stations; state owned and private print media. For this report, Media Monitors did not include a sample of the local commercial radio stations.

News coverage in the monitoring period was dominated by the death of longtime opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, the end of the Biometric Voter Registration exercise where 5,2 million Zimbabweans registered to vote, and the appointment of Priscilla Chigumba as the new Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. These events shaped the media’s election narrative.

The study concluded that the media in Zimbabwe falls short of standards of fair and balanced coverage of political actors in the country. ZANU PF and MDC T dominated the media’s coverage and combined for 94% of the space and time dedicated to political parties whilst the remaining 15 parties accounted for 6% of the coverage. This is a reflection of the lack of diversity in the representation of political actors, given that over 100 political parties are contesting the upcoming elections.

The gender dynamics were also problematic as the research noted that women political actors continue to be underrepresented in the media, they made up 16% of the space and time dedicated to political actors in the media while men accounted for 84% of the coverage.

The study assessed both the state and privately owned media and noticed that, despite all state-owned media outlets are constitutionally obliged to be fair and impartial in their reporting, the tone of MDC-T coverage was either neutral or negative in the state-owned news outlets, while ZANU PF received a more favorable attention on these platforms.

Elections were not one the major issues for coverage, filling 6% of all news hole. Out of all the news stories aired and published devoted to elections 62% focused on campaign activities or statements by political players during campaigns of the different political parties, while there was much less reporting of election related administrative issues and other preparations ahead of the upcoming elections. An analysis of the news agenda showed that the state and privately owned media have implicitly endorsed different parties and candidates to win the election. State-owned print and broadcast media seem to have endorsed President Emmerson Mnangagwa and his ZANU PF as the presidential candidate and party to win the upcoming elections. Private media on the other hand, seem to have endorsed Nelson Chamisa as their preferred presidential candidate, particularly over Thokozani Khupe, and the MDC-T as their party of choice.

While the majority of news reports on elections were professionally done, there were some challenges noted, particularly the lack of objectivity in some reports. There was also an over-reliance on “sound bites” with news reports developed from isolated catchy or scandalous comments by politicians at rallies, which in many cases would be taken out of context

To help strengthen the role media plays during elections, Media Monitors recommends that:

1. For these and successive elections, media legislation must be reviewed to align these with provisions on freedom of expression and freedom of the media in the Constitution.
2. More media players especially in the broadcasting sector must be licensed in line with Constitutional provisions that allow for freedom of establishment of broadcast media. This would enhance diversity of voices that represent various interests
3. Election regulations on media coverage must be amended so that they clearly define the election period, and further articulate what fair and equitable coverage means
4. Review the media coverage regulatory framework to ensure that there is an effective enforcement mechanism in place for monitoring compliance, receiving and acting upon infractions related to election reporting
5. Stakeholders in the media must take measures to strengthen professional journalism outside the election period, as elections do not take place in a vacuum.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This baseline report produced in the first quarter of 2018, on media and elections in Zimbabwe presents findings on media reporting of Zimbabwe’s political processes ahead of the election on July 30th this year. The study monitored the media’s coverage of political parties, candidates, government officials and public affairs as well as the media’s professionalism in doing so.

The main objective of the report is to assess the performance of a sample of media in providing information on political processes, and to understand to what extent the media is fulfilling its responsibility to the public. Media play an important role in the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. Citizens need to have adequate and credible information on various aspects of the electoral process that includes information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process so that voters can make informed choices, come election day. Media also play an essential role in providing a platform for political parties and candidates to communicate their messages to the electorate.

The main focus of the report is to measure and assess the level of political pluralism in the media - whether political participants in an election have access to media on a non-discriminatory basis to present their messages to potential voters so that they have sufficient information to make informed choices. The report therefore examined whether news and current affairs coverage of political players and events is sufficient, free of bias, and in line with professional standards, so as not to undermine people’s political choices on voting day.

To achieve this normative ideal, the media is required to follow specific guidelines in reporting, and even more so in election coverage, based on national and international standards of professional and ethical journalism. In Zimbabwe, obligations on the media and elections are contained in the Constitution, Electoral Act and other Statutory Instruments that regulate the conduct of the media during elections.

1.2 Media landscape

1.2.1 Broadcasters

Broadcast media is widely acknowledged to have a greater influence on public opinion because of the wider reach it has compared to other media. It is officially recognised that the airwaves are a public resource, with Zimbabwe placing licensing requirements that seek to regulate the airwaves.¹

State Broadcasters

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation is the nation’s public broadcaster, as defined by the Broadcasting Services Act. The ZBC operates one television channel (ZTV) and five radio stations, SFM, Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM, National FM and Radio Khulumani.

Private Commercial Radio Stations

Zimbabwe has two national commercial radio stations (ZiFM and Star FM). The two stations are owned by AB Communications and Zimbabwe Newspapers (Zimpapers) respectively.

Local Commercial Stations

There are eight local commercial radio stations in Zimbabwe; these are situated in seven of the country’s 10 provinces. Local commercial radio stations transmit within a 40 km radius. Below is a list of the local commercial stations.

Local Commercial Station	Area of Transmission
98.4FM	Gweru
Breeze FM	Victoria Falls
Capitalk FM	Harare
Diamond FM	Mutare
Hevoi FM	Masvingo
Nyaminyami FM	Kariba
Skyz FM	Bulawayo
Ya FM	Zvishavane

¹ Broadcasting Services Act (Chapter 12:06)

Radio listenership in Zimbabwe

Total listeners across the country is estimated at over 9 million. ZBC’s Radio Zimbabwe is estimated by the Zimbabwe All Media Products (ZAMPS)² survey to have the highest percentage share of the national audience at 43%. The other stations’ share is:

Radio Station	Audience
Radio Zimbabwe	43%
Star FM	30%
Power FM	17%
ZiFM	12%
Diamond FM	9%
National FM	9%
Ya FM	6%
Hevoi	3%
SFM	3%
VOA	3%

Reach of ZBC radio

Of the ZBC radio stations, Radio Zimbabwe’s coverage is listed as +80 percent, and 70 percent for the others. ZiFM says its geographical coverage is 80 percent. Overall geographical coverage for radio is 72 percent within Zimbabwe. This figure however fluctuates from station to station.

1.2.2 Newspapers

State owned/ controlled newspapers

By definition, the Zimbabwe Newspapers’ Group (Zimpapers) with a 51% shareholding by government through the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) qualifies as a state owned/ controlled broadcaster/publisher, with similar expectations on its performance as ZBC. Zimpapers runs three daily newspapers and eight weeklies, as well as three radio stations (one national and two local).

Private print media

Private print media in Zimbabwe have a relative ease of registration, even though the market is dominated by two publishers; Alpha Media Holdings (publishers of *NewsDay*, *The Standard* and *Zimbabwe Independent*), and Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (publishers of the *Daily News* and *Financial Gazette*), in addition to other smaller regional publications, such as *The Mirror* in Masvingo. Private print media have a moral obligation to report in the public interest, an obligation pro-actively taken on by the private print media that belong to an industry self-regulating body (the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe - VMCZ). Alpha Media Holdings, also notably has an Ombudsman who ensures its publications subscribe to truthful, accurate and fair reporting.

1.3 Constitutional and legislative framework

The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Section 61, and this right extends to all media, both private and publicly owned. The Constitution however, places a special mandate on State-owned media to be free to determine editorial content, be impartial and provide fair opportunity for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions. This distinction between the private and public media and their responsibilities is important in reflecting on the role that each media plays in political and election reporting.

Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20)

Section 61 of Zimbabwe’s Constitution specifically enshrines freedom of expression and the media, putting in place obligations for the State and the media in promoting this right. While every person is entitled to freedom of the media, including protection of the confidentiality of journalists’ sources of information, Section 61 (4) specifically states that all state-owned media must:

² ZARF, Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey 2016 Q4 National Survey Results presentation

- a) Be free to determine independently the editorial content of their broadcasts and other communications
- b) Be impartial
- c) Afford fair opportunity for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions

The Constitution places exceptions to freedom of expression and freedom of the media as these freedoms will not include:

- a) Incitement to violence
- b) Advocacy of hatred or hate speech
- c) Malicious injury to a person's reputation or dignity, or
- d) Malicious or unwarranted breach of a person's right to privacy

With reference to elections, media are regulated by the electoral act that sets out the parameters of election coverage in section 160 E - K.

Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13)

Sections 160 E - K

- **Access to broadcasting media (160G)**

This section provides for public media's coverage of political parties where all political parties and candidates are to be treated fairly and time allocated in a balanced manner.

- **Political advertising in broadcasting and print media (160H)**

Similar terms and conditions of publication of political adverts should be given to all political parties and candidates by the media, should they choose to publish political adverts

- **Conduct of news media during election period (160J)**

During an election period broadcasters and print publishers shall ensure that:

- (a) all political parties and candidates are treated equitably in their news media, in regard to the extent, timing and prominence of the coverage accorded to them;
- (b) reports on the election in their news media are factually accurate, complete and fair;
- (c) a clear distinction is made in their news media between factual reporting on the election and editorial comment on it;
- (d) inaccuracies in reports on the election in their news media are rectified without delay and with due prominence;
- (e) political parties and candidates are afforded a reasonable right of reply to any allegations made in their news media that are claimed by the political parties or candidates concerned to be false;
- (f) their news media do not promote political parties or candidates that encourage violence or hatred against any class of person in Zimbabwe
- (g) their news media avoid language that -
 - (i) encourages racial, ethnic or religious prejudice or hatred; or
 - (ii) encourages or incites violence; or
 - (iii) is likely to lead to undue public contempt towards any political party, candidate or class of person in Zimbabwe.

- **Monitoring of the media during an election**

Section 160K of the Electoral Act states that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission will monitor the Zimbabwean news media during any election period with the assistance of the Zimbabwe Media Commission and the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe. Anyone else can, however, monitor news media and report on their conduct during elections.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Media Coverage of Elections) Regulations 2008 (SI 33 of 2008), sets regulations on:

- Election programmes to be broadcast - These programmes should be clearly defined and identified as such. The public broadcaster is required to include programmes where political parties and candidates present their election manifestos and policies without being interviewed; discussions on elections; and interviews with candidates and representatives of political parties.

- The equal allocation of airtime on radio and TV. The public broadcaster is required to allocate airtime equitably among contesting political parties, and carry election adverts upon payment of the specified fee.
- Election broadcasts - A public broadcaster is required to transmit programmes during prime time and in a manner that the programme does not follow immediately before or after another election broadcast. Programmes and adverts will not incite violence or advocate hatred based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender, religion or political conviction and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.
- Election adverts - A public broadcaster is required to allocate four hours of available purchasable time during an election period for election advertisements and these will be equitably distributed to political parties and candidates taking into consideration the number of constituencies being contested by respective political parties.
- Election publications (print media) will not incite violence or advocate hatred based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender, religion or political conviction and that constitutes incitement to cause harm in their election publications.
- Media conduct - News and current affairs programmes on elections are required to be fair, accurate, complete and balanced in both print and electronic media. Political parties are also entitled to right of reply within 24 hours of a broadcast or publication.
- An appeal mechanism for aggrieved parties - An appeal mechanism for aggrieved candidates and parties is provided for in the Statutory Instrument. An appeal during elections is made to the Electoral Commission and the period between lodging a complaint and its determination will not exceed two days.

1.4 Standards of election reporting

1.4.1 Professional and ethical conduct

During elections, the media is required to observe the core values of journalism which include:

- Accuracy - News stories must be accurate, factual and based on sound evidence. Names, places, descriptions and quotes must be correct and contextual.
- Balance - Media must reflect the views of different parties and candidates.
- Separation between facts and opinion - Editorial opinion must be clearly distinct from fact and news.
- Use of language - Media must avoid language that encourages stereotypes, constitutes hate speech and incites violence.
- Diversity - Media must reflect diversity and plurality of voices in their coverage and ensure gender balance and sensitivity in the treatment of men and women.

1.4.2 A duty to inform

While all media have a role to inform the public, publicly funded media have special obligations imposed on them during elections. The ZBC has a mandate to inform the public about matters relevant to elections in a neutral manner, while ensuring that programming reaches and reflects all groups in society. Where ZBC provides direct access programming, where contestants present information about themselves and their views to the public;

- Space and time should be allocated on a fair, balanced and non-discriminatory basis.
- The amount of time allocated should be sufficient for parties and candidates to communicate their messages.
- Programmes should be aired at times that are likely to reach the largest audiences for all parties.
- Time slots should be assigned in an equitable manner.

One of the 10 principles for conducting democratic elections in the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections state the need to allow “equal opportunity for all political parties to access state media” (Section 2.1.5)

1.4.3 Political Pluralism

On reporting on political parties and candidates

- All broadcasters and print publishers are mandated to ensure that “all political parties and candidates are treated equitably in their news media in regard to the extent, timing and prominence of the coverage accorded to them,” in Section 160J of the Electoral Act.
- News media are also obliged to afford political parties and candidates a reasonable right of reply to any allegations made in their news media that are claimed by political parties and candidates concerned to be false.
- News media should not promote political parties and candidates that encourage violence or hatred against any class of persons in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Media and elections 2000- 2013

From Independence in 1980 until 2013, Zimbabwe’s old Constitution protected freedom of expression in Section 20, although freedom of the media was not expressly provided for. Until 2000, there was no media-specific legislation, and no specific rules relating to reporting by the media during an election. International standards on election reporting were therefore used to measure media performance. The legislative environment however, changed over the years, with various pieces of legislation introduced over the years from 2001 as highlighted in Table 1 below.

The introduction of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) had the effect of closing the media space, particularly the space in which the private media was operating. The closure of *The Daily News* in 2003 followed by other publications such as *the Tribune* and *Weekly Times* saw the dominance of state controlled media in elections held from 2005 onwards. The main trend in election news reporting saw an increasingly polarized media environment. Public media, particularly the ZBC maintained a pro-ZANU PF reporting stance. In elections from 2000 to 2005 space afforded to ZANU PF for example, went up from 91 to 98.7 percent with very little space offered to the opposition political parties. In this period, space afforded to ZANU PF in *The Herald* went up from 70 - 81%, and opposition voices were almost non-existent. Where opposition parties featured in these State media, reporting was negative. During its existence, the *Daily News* in 2000 carried 30% ZANU PF voices as opposed 19% for the MDC. But in the 2002 Presidential elections, they carried 60% MDC voices as opposed to 37% ZANU PF voices.

While reporting trends tended to be increasingly unbalanced and biased in the media, legislation was passed that sought to enhance access to direct access programmes by the various political parties. On ZTV, while each party was allocated just 15 minutes of direct access programming, this was increased to over two hours each for the bigger political parties, with the smallest political party allocated one hour and forty-five minutes. While this direct access programming allowed more time to political parties, reporting in the various elections till 2013 remained skewed and heavily polarized. In 2013, the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZEC’s media monitoring election partner) noted in its 2013 report that “the media has neither been fair, objective nor factual in the coverage of political parties and players”. The report noted that Zimpapers newspapers supported ZANU PF and the private papers endorsed MDC T. Their surprising conclusion however, was that this had resulted in “unintentional balance” in the mainstream media in coverage of the two parties.

Media-related legislation and regulations

2000 Parliamentary Elections	2002 Presidential and mayoral elections	2005 Parliamentary election	2008 Harmonized elections and run-off
No media regulations	AIPPA 2001 setting up the Media Information Commission (MIC) to register media houses, accredit journalists, monitor media content and investigate complaints against the media POSA 2002 banned communication or publication of statements that are offensive to the Zimbabwean state or the President, or which endanger public order.	2004 ZEC Act created the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.	Electoral Laws Amendment Act, 2007 included provisions to ensure fair media coverage during elections with ZEC as the monitoring authority. AIPPA amendments - ZMC replaced the MIC with new rules for selection and appointment as well as a new Media Council to enforce a Code of Conduct and Ethics.

	<p>Broadcasting Services Act 2001 4th Schedule</p> <p><i>"If, during an election period, a broadcaster broadcasts election matter, the broadcaster shall give reasonable opportunities for the broadcasting of election matter to all parties contesting an election."</i></p> <p>S39 (4) of the Act said "Every licensee shall, when providing an information service, provide a fair, accurate and complete service."</p>	<p>Broadcasting Services (Access to Radio and television During an Election) Regulations.</p> <p>Main political parties have equal opportunities of access to all stations under the national broadcaster in relation to election programmes and advertising.</p>	<p>Electoral Laws Amendment Act, 2007 included provisions to ensure fair media coverage during elections with ZEC as the monitoring authority.</p> <p>AIPPA amendments - ZMC replaced the MIC with new rules for selection and appointment as well as a new Media Council to enforce a Code of Conduct and Ethics.</p>
<p>13 June 2000 Supreme Court ruling that: ZBC should be impartial, conduct broadcasting without discrimination on the basis of political opinion.</p>	<p>ZBC "10 Golden Rules" on direct access and political advertising.</p>	<p>The <i>Daily News</i> was closed under order of the Supreme Court in September 2003</p> <p>The MIC also closed down the Tribune and the Weekly Times</p>	<p>Internet started featuring in elections. Report by the Zimbabwe Independent in 2007 said ZANU PF planned cyber warfare against 41 websites it had "blacklisted" for promoting regime change against President Mugabe's government.</p>

1.6 Where are we now? - The Media and Elections 2018

1.6.1 Background

Media monitoring for this baseline report was conducted from the 11th to the 24th of February 2018. This period was selected to be relatively reflective of the political environment in the first quarter of the year. The period under review followed dramatic events that include the military intervention on November 14th, which saw the resignation of long-time President Robert Mugabe and the inauguration of Emmerson Mnangagwa 10 days later on November 24th, 2017. The period also saw other changes that could possibly have a bearing on the 2018 election including the resignation of the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Justice Rita Makarau in December and the subsequent appointment of her successor Justice Priscilla Chigumba on January 31st after a month-long vacancy at the commission.

The biometric voter registration (BVR) process had also just ended on February 8th, 2018 after the registration of 5.2 million voters under the process. While the process was marred by incidents, such as the intimidation of registrants through recording of registration serial numbers, a relatively large number of potential voters registered. The death of long-time MDC-T opposition party leader, Morgan Tsvangirai on February 14th was another notable event that affected the political environment and reporting trends on the political landscape.

1.6.2 Media Monitoring Methodology

Media Monitors sampled 14 consecutive days from the 11th to the 24th of February 2018 to provide a baseline on media performance in reporting elections. The death of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai occurred on the 14th of February while monitoring was ongoing. While a spike was noted in the mentions of Tsvangirai, Media Monitors made the decision to include him as a political player during this period which enhanced the coverage of the MDC T in both the public and private media.

Media Monitors tasked 10 coders to fill in coding sheets for the different media on political pluralism, agenda setting, professional journalism standards and hate speech over the 14 day period. Statistics were captured in an excel database where collation also occurred. An explanation of the various methodologies is given below.

Media monitoring of political pluralism (quantitative analysis)

Monitoring aims to quantify and qualify time and space dedicated to political parties by the mainstream print and broadcast media. The quantitative analysis measures the total amount of space and time devoted to politicians and political parties by the media.

The analysis also evaluates whether the information about actors is positive, negative, or neutral in its content.

For print media, all articles within a selection of pages have been analysed. The monitored sample includes articles published in the following sections: front page, home news, political/election news. Monitoring also focuses on editorial pages and ‘letters to the editor’ sections. Monitoring does not include articles published in the business section, sport pages, and entertainment sections.

Television and radio channels have been monitored daily during a select time-frame, from 6pm to 9 pm, which is regarded as prime-time evening viewing or listening. All programs have been analysed during the sampled time period.

Media monitoring of adherence to journalistic standards in election reporting

This layer of analysis aims at verifying to what extent and how election reporting respects professional journalistic standards. In this respect, the Media Monitors (MM) produced an assessment for a number of dimensions (accuracy, separation of facts and opinions, use of misleading headlines and graphics among others.)

Beside this, Media Monitors, using a more qualitative approach, also observed and reported on media coverage of different aspects of the election process, including coverage of women candidates and women’s issues and coverage of election administration.

The sample - for this layer of analysis only election-related stories have been selected. For audiovisual media, the analysis includes election related news items contained in the prime time newscasts (for ZTV news at 8:00 pm, for radio stations the main news bulletin within the timeframe recorded) For print media, the analysis includes news articles focused on elections. Editorials, opinion piece, letters are not included.

Media Monitoring of agenda-setting

The analysis of agenda-setting aims to identify the main topics covered by the main news programmes of the media houses on a daily basis. Different issues are classified according to a number of thematic pre-determined categories and a brief description of the story. This type of monitoring identifies the key issues presented in the public discourse and it represents a complementary element to assess the quality of media coverage of topics of public interest during an election campaign.

The sample - For audiovisual media, the analysis includes election related news items contained in the prime time newscasts (for ZTV news at 8:00 pm, for radio stations the main news bulletin within the timeframe recorded) For print media, the analysis includes news articles focused on elections. Editorials, opinion piece, letters are not included.

1.6.3 The sample

The following media set was identified for the monitoring as representative of Zimbabwe’s mainstream media environment.

Daily newspapers		Ownership
The Herald		51% state-ownership
Chronicle		51% state ownership
NewsDay		Private
Daily News		Private
Weekly newspapers		Ownership
The Independent		Private
The Standard		Private
Sunday Mail		51% state ownership
Radio		Ownership
Star FM		Private
ZiFM		Private
SFM		Public
Radio Zimbabwe		Public
Television		Ownership
ZTV		Public

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

11 February - 24 February 2018

CHAPTER TWO: MEDIA MONITORING OF THE NEWS AGENDA

2.1 Introduction

The media have a mandate to provide citizens with relevant election related information that enriches their knowledge of the prevailing electoral issues and the socio-economic and political context within which an election is held.

One way the media can have an impact on the election narrative is through their framing of issues in the run-up to an election. The media’s influence in this regard is very subtle as it determines the issues (election-related or not) that will appear in the public discourse. The issues they decide to cover are discussed throughout the day and are given relevance by their audiences.

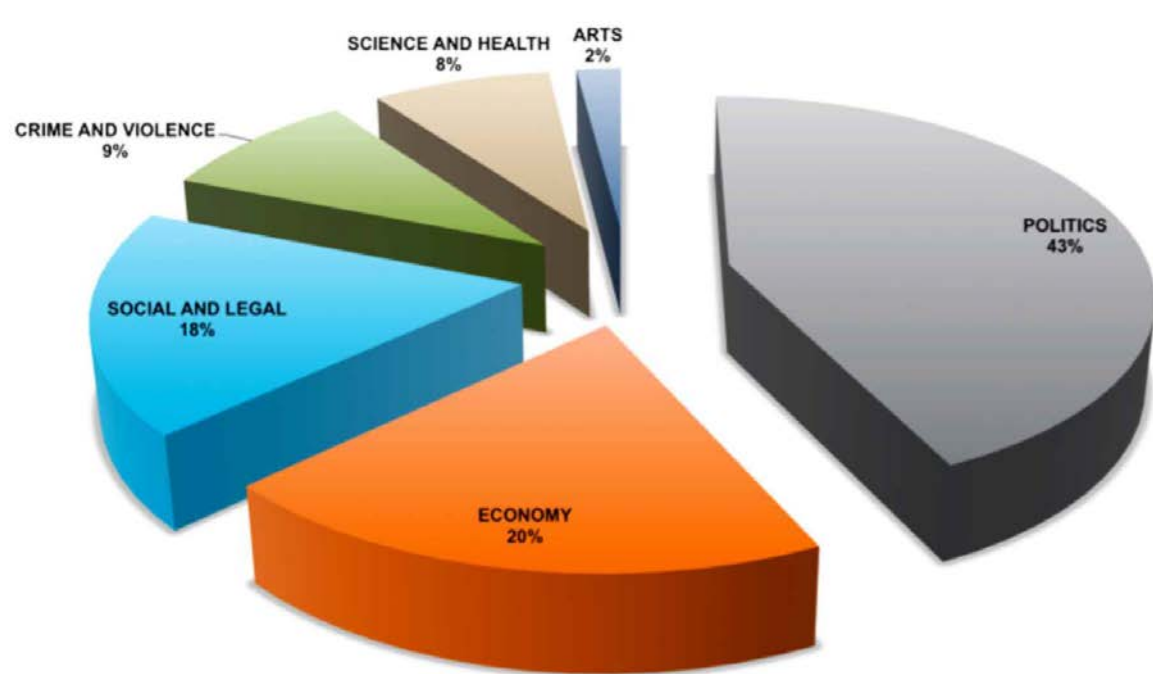
With this in mind Media Monitors analysed the Zimbabwean media’s agenda by looking at;

- What are the most covered issues during the monitoring period
- The placement of the issues in the monitored media
- What are the most covered election related issues

2.2 What is the media’s agenda in the run-up to the 2018 elections?

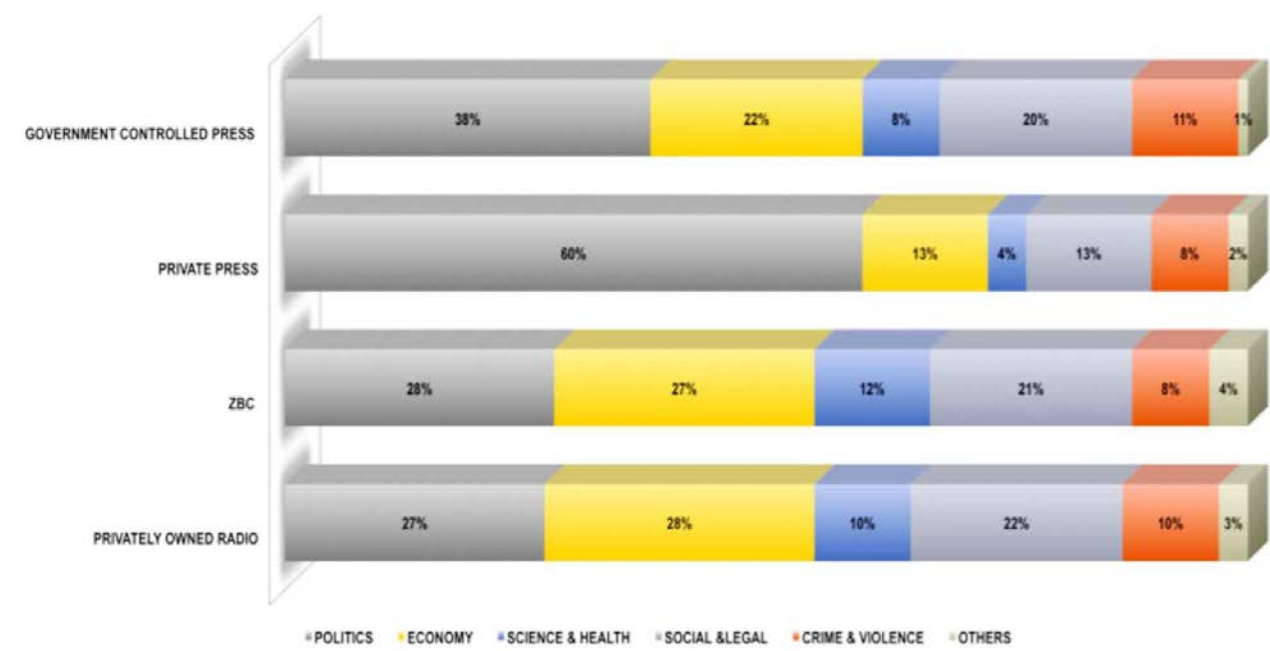
In the period under review, there was a high focus on politics and governance in media reports and these issues made up 43% of the issues that were covered by all monitored media. These were followed by stories on the economy and social and legal issues. Stories on the two categories accounted for 20% and 18% of the coverage respectively as indicated below.

The agenda of the media in the survey period.



Private print media publications carried the highest number of political stories with 60% of their stories focusing on politics.

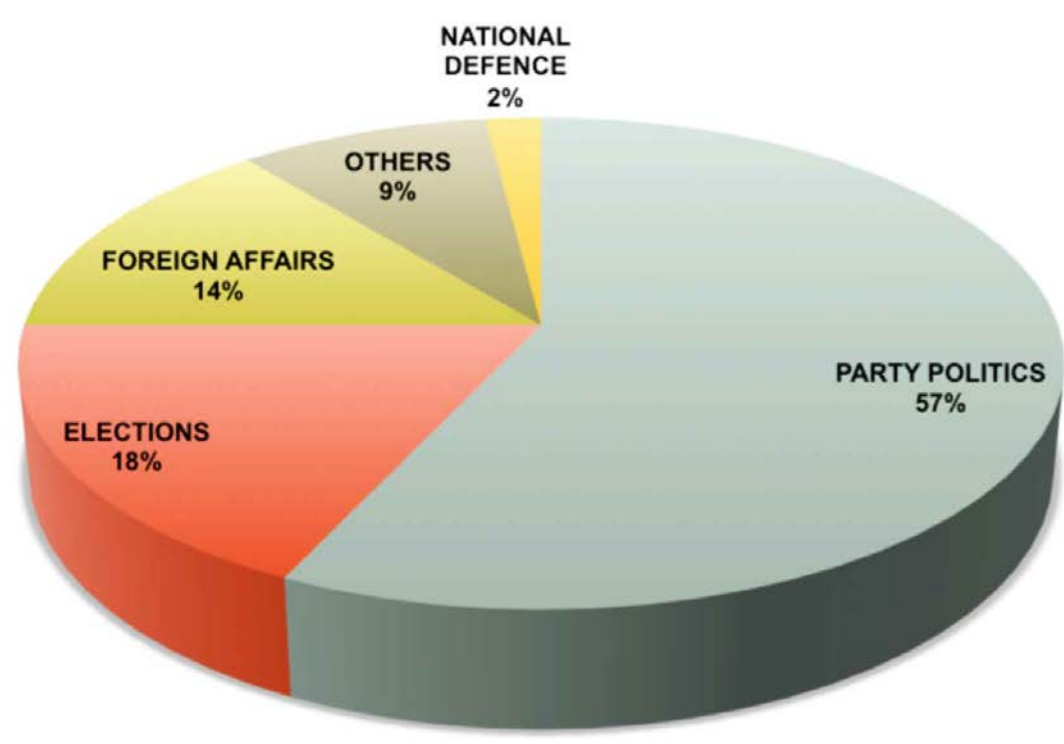
News agenda in all monitored media platforms



2.3 Coverage of politics and governance in the monitored media

Out of the total number of stories dedicated to politics, election-related news items comprised 18% of the agenda in the period reviewed.

Political issues covered by the media

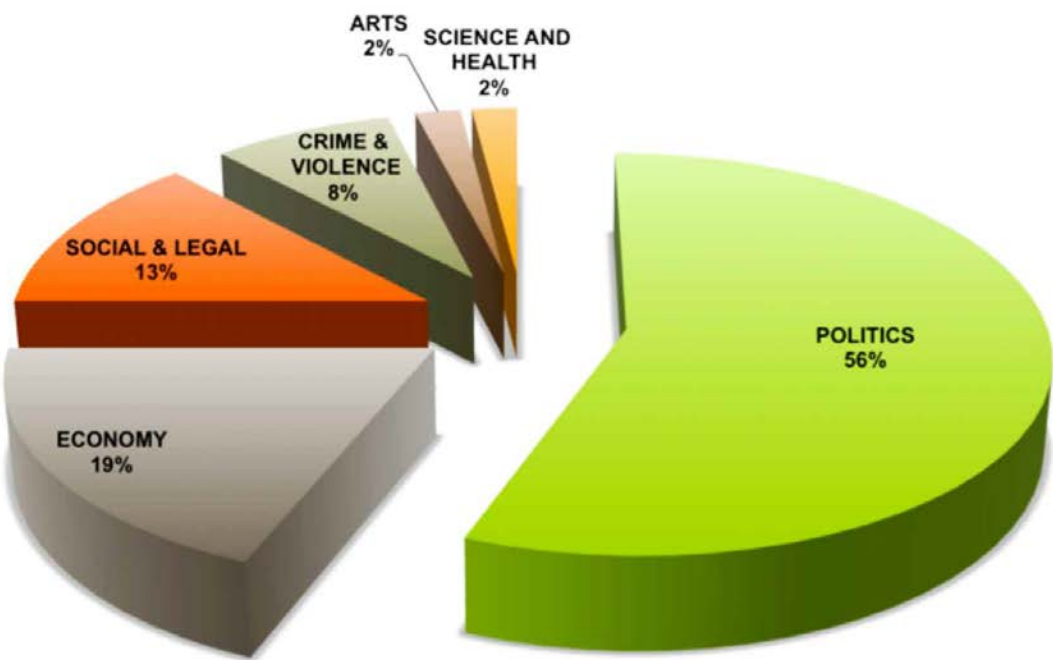


The majority of articles on politics (57%) were on domestic politics, mainly including news items on the illness, death and burial of MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai; followed by subsequent intra-party disputes on who would succeed him.

2.4 Coverage of politics in the print media

Political stories also dominated in 56% of front-page reports in print media, which was a reflection of what newspapers thought as the most important news of the day in the monitored period.

Front-page coverage of news - all newspapers



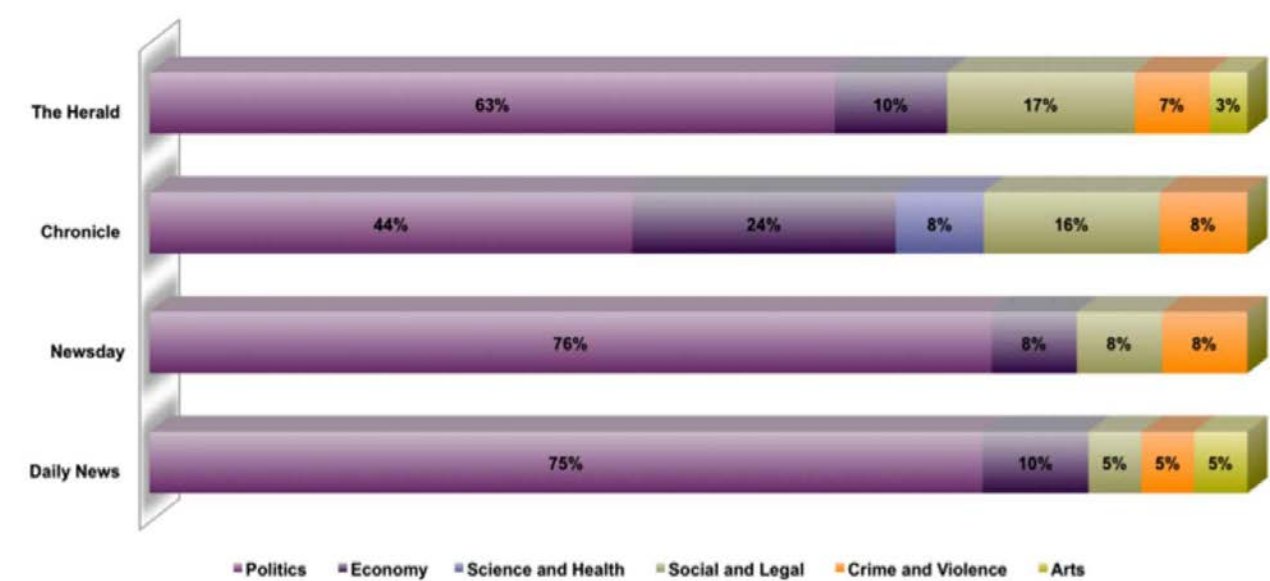
Most of the political stories that made banner headlines were on intra-party politics, particularly the front-page coverage on the death of Morgan Tsvangirai and the ensuing battle to succeed him in the MDC-T and MDC Alliance.

Front-page prominence given to the death of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai



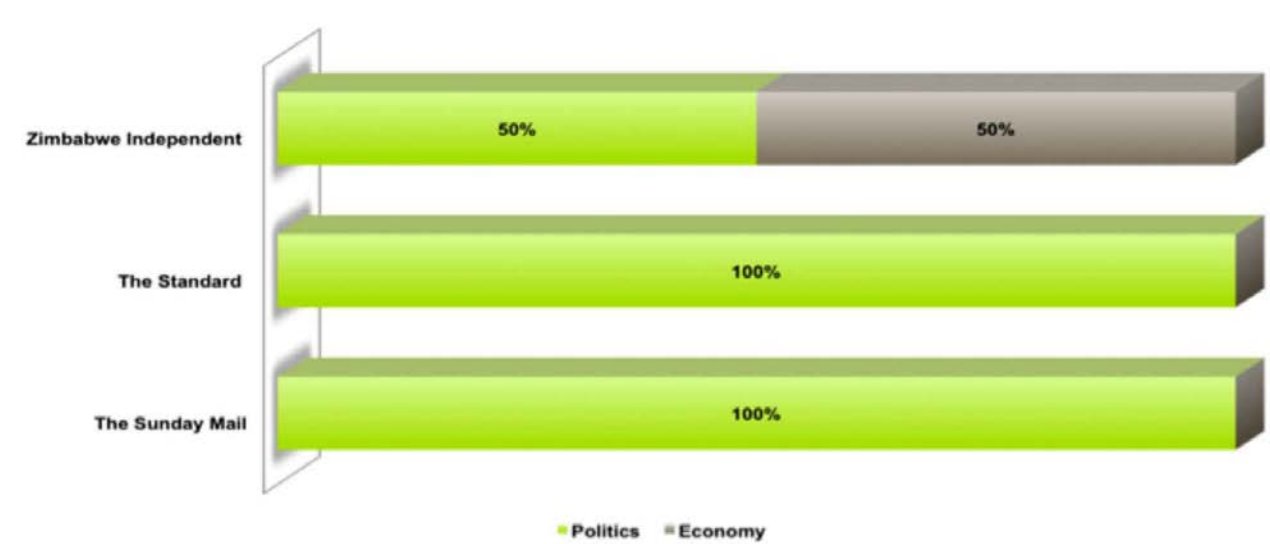
All dailies carried political stories in most of their coverage on their front pages. *NewsDay* carried proportionally more political stories on its front page with 76% slightly ahead of *Daily News*, 75% and *The Herald*'s 63%. Even though the *Chronicle* carried relatively less political stories on its front page, the 44% it recorded was significantly more than any other topic given front-page prominence.

News agenda on the front pages of daily newspapers



There was visibly less diversity in the stories that received front-page coverage in the three weeklies monitored. All of the front-page stories in *The Standard* and *The Sunday Mail* were on politics. Fifty percent of the *Zimbabwe Independent*'s top stories were also on politics and governance, whilst the remaining 50% were on the economy.

News agenda on the front pages of weekly newspapers



2.5 Coverage of politics in the electronic media³

While political issues made up the majority of the top stories in the electronic media’s bulletins overall, there was slightly more diversity in the issues that received prominence in the broadcast media compared to the print media. Politics was the most prominent topical issue on SFM, Star FM and Radio Zimbabwe. The national television broadcaster placed its main focus on the economy; 54% of its top stories were on the economy particularly efforts by President Mnangagwa to revive key economic sectors, particularly agriculture and industry.

News agenda on the top stories in the electronic media



2.6 Media’s agenda on elections in the monitored media

Coverage of election-related stories in all monitored platforms made up 6% of all stories and 15% out of all the political items in the media. While election-related news in all media have mostly been event-driven, *NewsDay* has introduced a new section titled, “Road to Elections”, that tackles election-related matters on a daily basis. The section covers a full page in the paper.

³ By top stories we mean the three stories that were more prominent in terms of position in the

8 NewsDay | Friday February 16 2018

Local News

#ROADTOELECTIONS

2018

YOUR VOTE COUNTS

Zanu PF purges G40 associates

BY XOLISANI NCUBE

AT least 15 Zanu PF staffers were recently dismissed from work on allegations of being associated with the fallen G40 or having been employed by the former secretary for administration Ignatius Chombo.

Among those fired include a director in the office of former secretary for administration, Brain Gavasa, Stephen Kawocha, Simba Nyachwaya, Charles Nkomo-Moyo and Bertha Nyamande, among others.

A letter written by party director for administration to one of the victims Dickson Dzora on January 20, 2018, did not give any reason for dismissing the affected workers.

"We hereby inform you of the termination of your service with effect from 26th January 2018. Please ensure that all party inventory in your possession is handed over to the director of administration before your departure. We wish you well in your future endeavours," Dzora's letter read.

According to sources, most of the fired workers were either accused of being close to the G40 faction, which was against the ascendancy of Emmerson Mnangagwa to the post of President.

"Most of these people were either employed when Chombo was the secretary for administration or were said to be close to the G40 cabal," a source said.

After the fall of former President Robert Mugabe and his G40 supporters at the height of a military intervention, a number of high-ranking party officials were kicked out of the party among them, Chombo, former First Lady Grace Mugabe — who was seen as the preferred successor to Mugabe by the G40, ex-political commissar, Saviour Kasukuwere and Jonathan Moyo among others.

The purge has also seen a change of guard in the military and the re-organisation of the police leadership, as well as in the State secret service.

Zanu PF spokesperson, Simon Khaya Moyo said he was unaware of the dismissals saying: "Ask the administrations department."

Obert Mpofu the Zanu PF secretary for administration referred all questions to Moyo.

"Talk to Cde Moyo he is the party spokesperson," he said.



Ignatius Chombo

'PRC will not join MDC Alliance'

BY BRENNIA MATENDERE/SILAS SIKALA

THE People's Rainbow Coalition yesterday met in Gweru to set the path for selection of parliamentary and senatorial candidates has declared that the grouping does not intend to join the MDC Alliance and that there will be no imposition of candidates for the upcoming polls.

The coalition will field National People's Party (NPP) president, Joyce Mujuru as its leader in the next elections expected in July.

Her other partners were the People's Democratic Party splinter group led by Lucia Matibenga, Zimbabweans United for Democracy Party led by Farai Mbirira and the Democratic Assembly for Restoration and Empowerment leader Gilbert Dzikiye.

In her opening remarks, Mujuru dismissed reports that the workshop for opposition parties held recently in South Africa had agreed on forming a single coalition of parties.

"In South Africa, the workshop was just on training us about how best to operate in an environment of a coalition so that we do not have votes that are wasted due to disagreements and acrimonious relationship. That was all we were trained about. There was never any agreement about us uniting with MDC-T or their alliance," she said.

Mujuru also boldly declared that her coalition will win the coming polls and form the next government.

"We will win the next elections because we have the support. We will not seek to join hands with anyone, we have the capability on our own," she said.

She urged PRC members to be nation builders and serve the people of Zimbabwe to tackle social problems, including poverty, faced by Zimbabweans.

Mujuru told members that mining, farming and value addition will be promoted to create employment and eradicate poverty if she takes over power.

She said the PRC will improve the investment climate.

"PRC is committed to democracy, human rights, transparency, inclusion, effectiveness and accountability," she said.

"The removal of Mugabe did not result in the removal of the system, a dishonourable system of governance, which the PRC is here to remove."

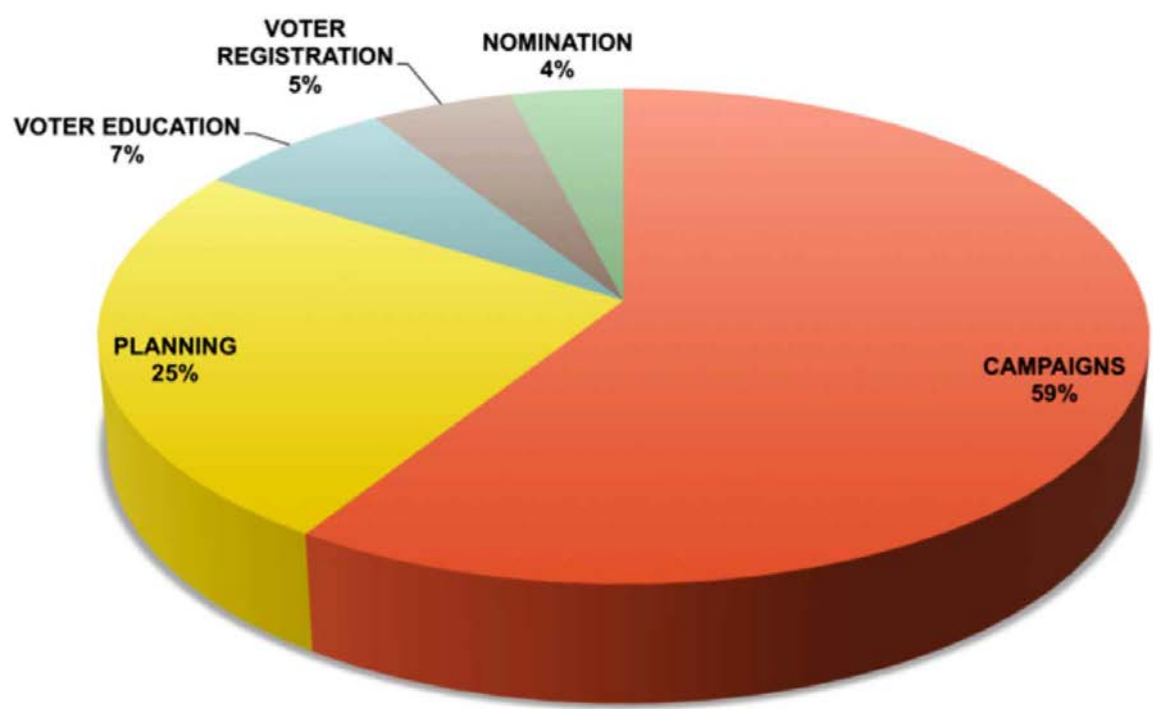
She then called on the PRC to go door-to-door to canvass for support.

"The old were once young and the youths must learn from them. The PRC will bring peace, prosperity and meaningful pay for everyone. The PRC Freedom Train is here," she added.

NPP spokesperson Methuseli Moyo in a report on the proceedings said Mujuru revealed that when she visited former President Robert Mugabe, she made no pact with him.

Coverage of party campaign activities (rallies, internal party preparations and succession battles) dominated news reporting on elections during this period. While privately owned media provided coverage to a wider range of campaign activities by the different political parties, state-owned media mainly focused their attention on President Mnangagwa and ZANU PF's campaign activities, with little reporting on other political parties.

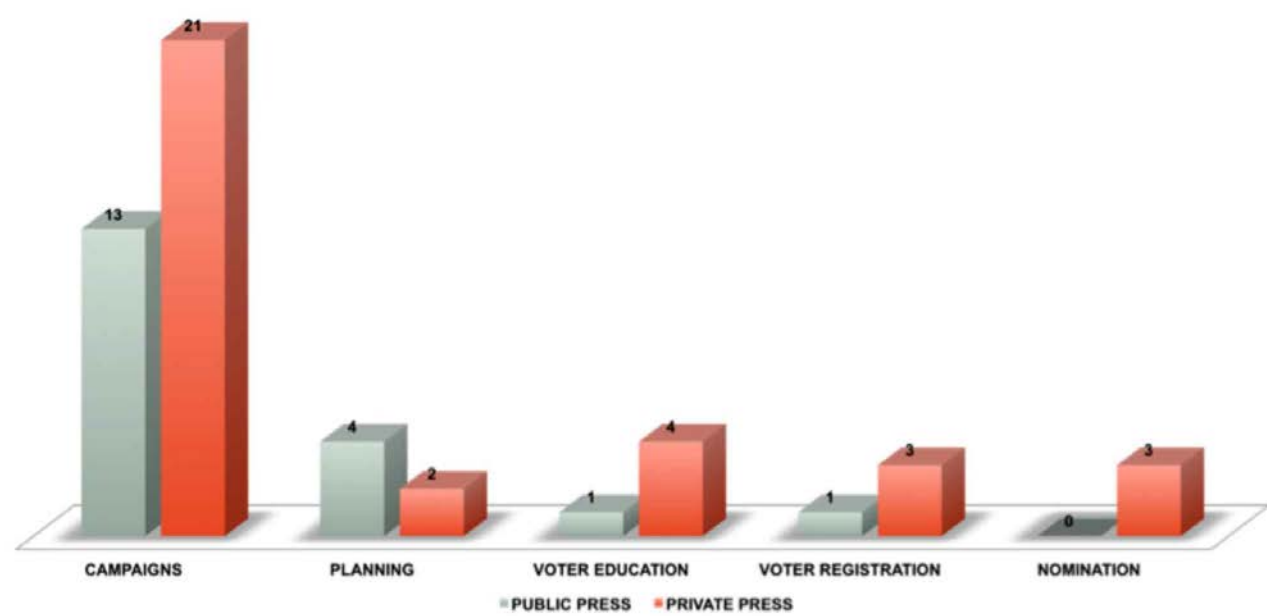
Overall election-related issues covered in the print and electronic media



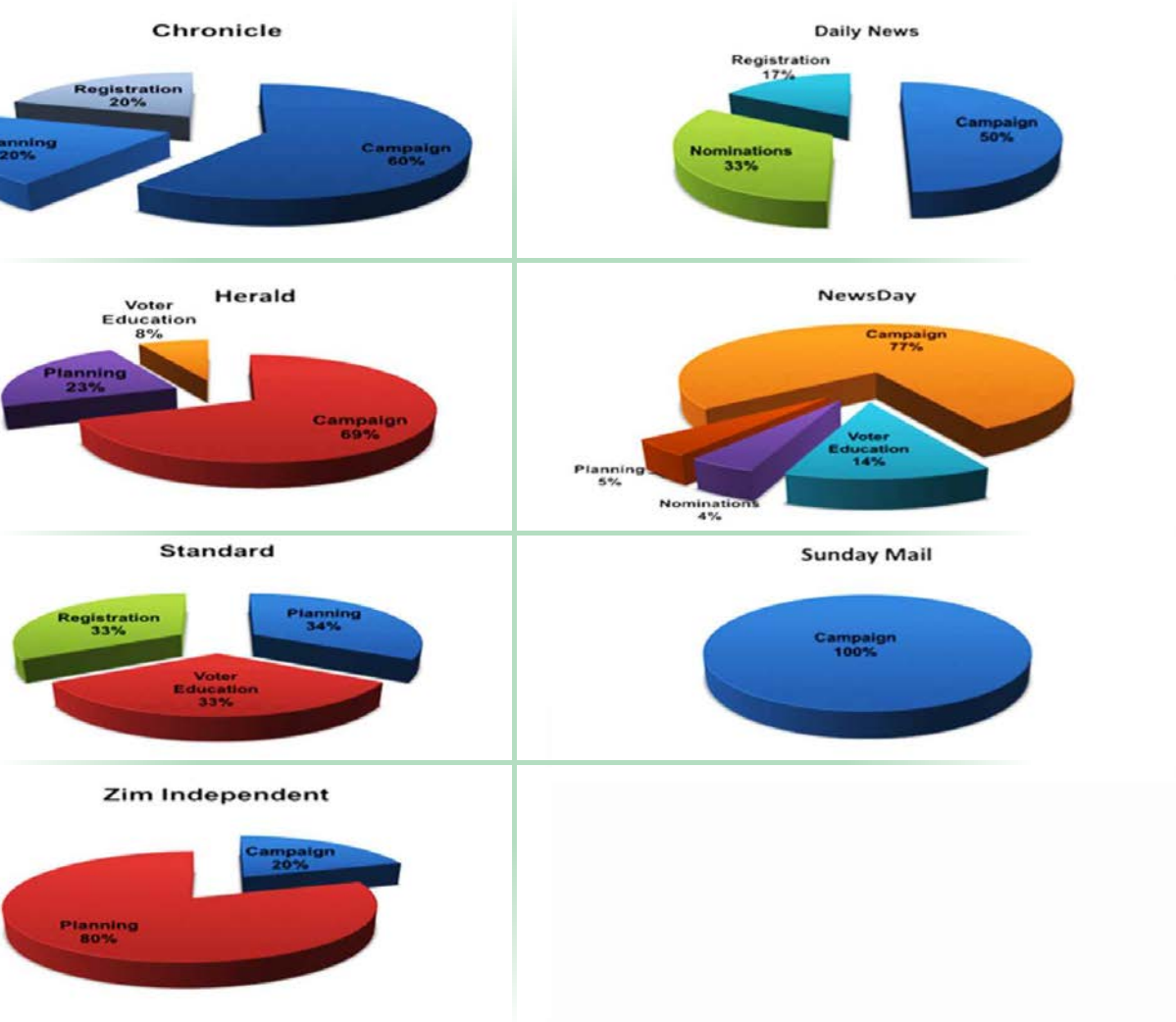
2.7 Print media’s elections agenda

Coverage of prospective Presidential candidates’ rallies and other campaign gatherings took up most of the space in the print media with little focus on other election-related issues in both the state-controlled and private print media, which is interesting given that the country at this time had not moved into the official campaign period. All stories on elections that appeared in the *Sunday Mail* for example, were on political party campaigns.

Elections agenda in the print media



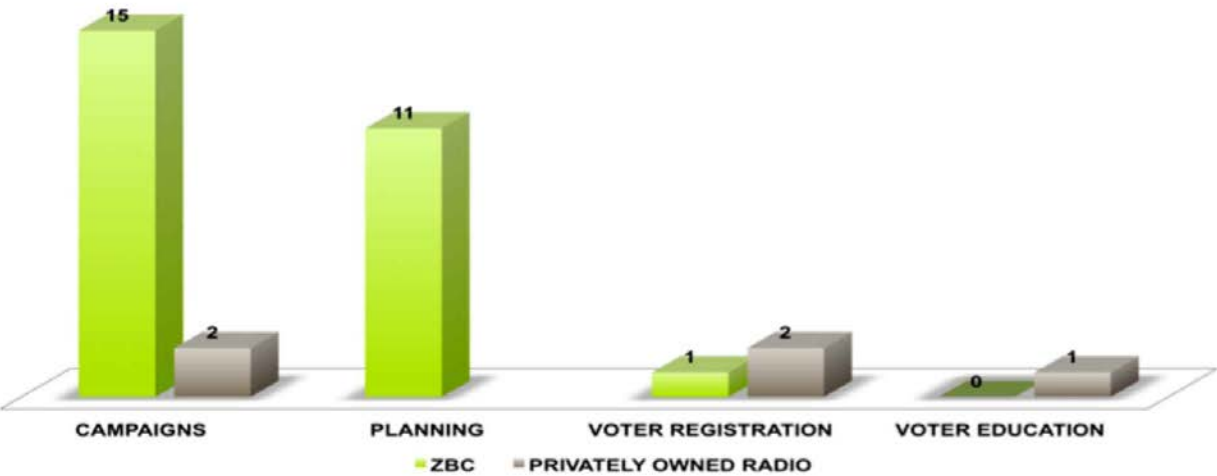
Coverage of election-related issues - by newspaper



2.8 Electronic media’s elections agenda

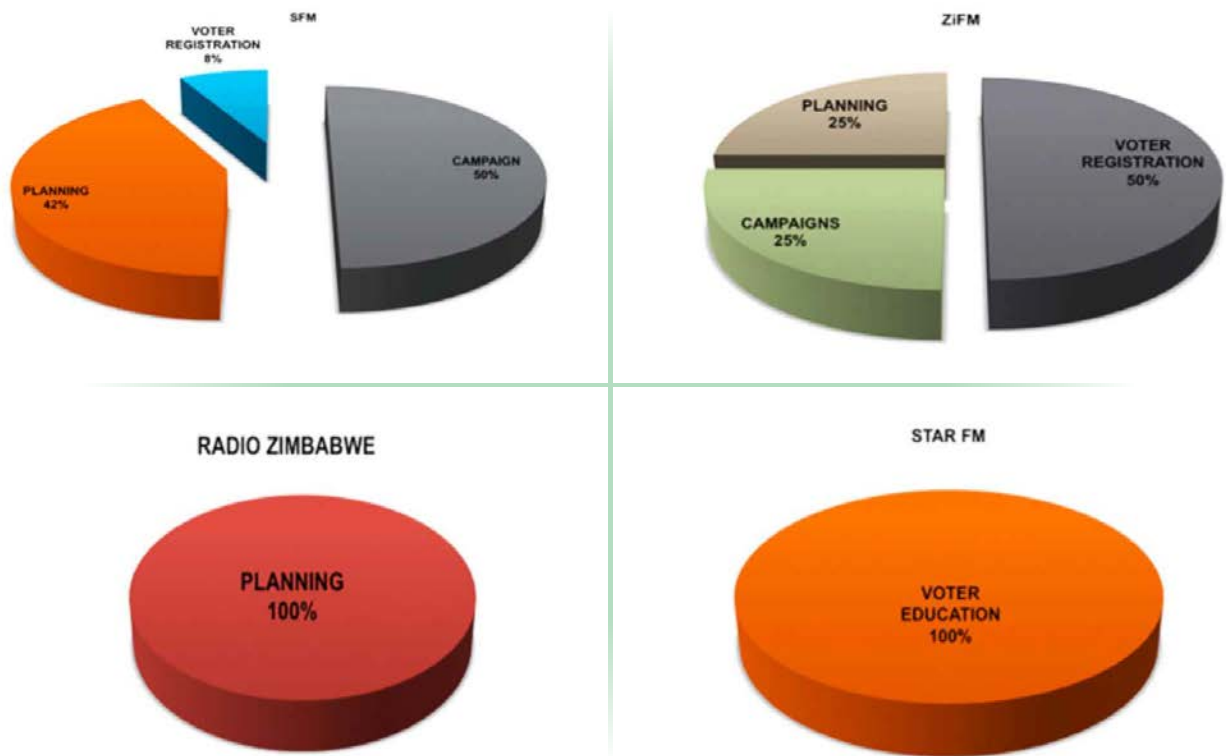
Trends in the coverage of election-related stories on radio show that the privately owned radio stations differed slightly from the print media, as they mainly focused their attention on election administration issues. On the other hand, ZBC tended to cover campaign activities more than administrative issues, as was the case of the monitored dailies.

Election-related issues covered on radio



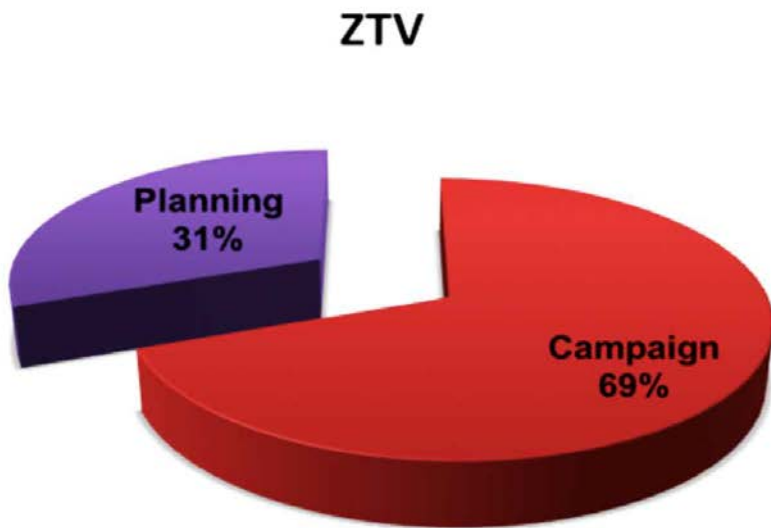
Individually, the monitored radio stations exhibited diverse coverage of election-related news. Radio Zimbabwe covered planning issues whilst Star FM concentrated on voter education. Spot FM contained a mixture of campaign and administrative stories.

Election-related issues covered in the individual radio stations



As far as television is concerned, ZTV focused its attention mainly on campaign activities (69%). The remaining 31% of the election-related news stories focused on election-planning issues such as ZEC election preparations.

Election-related issues covered on ZTV



2.9 Understanding the news agenda: A qualitative analysis

2.9.1 Setting the agenda: Who are the media’s preferred presidential candidates?

State-owned print and broadcast media have endorsed President Emmerson Mnangagwa and his ZANU PF as its preferred presidential candidate and party to win the upcoming elections and carried stories such as “Let’s give President an overwhelming mandate”

(20/2). While the headline is a quotation from the party's Secretary for Environment and Tourism, Prisca Mupfumira, addressing party supporters, it is stated in the headline as fact. The paper describes the party as the "revolutionary party" and Mupfumira is quoted as stating that, "the party is supreme, even to government".

Private media on the other hand, seem to have endorsed Nelson Chamisa as their preferred presidential candidate, particularly over Thokozani Khupe, and the MDC-T as their party of choice. While the *Daily News* and the *News Day* carried a variety of stories on the MDC-T, including a documentation of the party's internal arguments, there seems to be an implicit endorsement of the party winning the upcoming elections. Both the private dailies seem to be following a similar agenda, and on February 13th, a day before Morgan Tsvangirai's death, both papers carried the same letter from the same reader, Matangira Tidings, titled "Chamisa on the right track", a letter that endorsed Chamisa's leadership.

The two letters written by Matangira Tidings



A *Daily News* story "Chamisa now unstoppable" (21/2) stated that Chamisa was beating his party rivals based on his "charm and vitality". While the headline is phrased as a quotation, it is not clear who the quotation emanates from despite the many accolades poured on Chamisa by the various commentators and the story's writer. This seems more like an endorsement by the paper on Chamisa's leadership.

Reporting on campaigns in state media focused on ZANU-PF election preparations and campaigns held by President Emmerson Mnangagwa, with very little coverage of any other political party activities. Coverage of opposition activities were mostly negative.

A story appearing in *The Herald* (21/02) stated that "Politburo approves new party regalia" and reads like a ZANU PF public relations piece based entirely on quotations of Obert Mpofu, the Party's Secretary for Administration. The headline of the story itself makes it appear common sense that the reader already knows that the "Politburo" is the ZANU PF Politburo and that decisions to change party regalia are of interest to all the paper's readers. While the paper covers voter registration issues, these are through the eyes of ZANU PF, with stories such as "Mobilize voters ZANU PF urged" and "ZANU PF targets 500k voters".

State media also focused on the launch of the #EDhasmyvote campaign launched by the party's youth wing. The hashtag campaign targets youth voters and indicates the intention of the party to increasingly use social media in its election campaign.

The role of women in the upcoming elections may be tested, as it seems reportage is increasingly placing women in supportive roles to men in politics. The case of the story of ZANU PF's "wailing women" at the announcement that first lady Auxillia Mnangagwa was leaving her seat in the Chirumhanzu-Zibagwe constituency is a case in point. ZTV news (11/02) aired a video of a weeping first lady and a group of ZANU PF women wailing when they heard that she was leaving her seat. The news report stated that the first lady was leaving her seat "to concentrate on her role as mother of the nation". Reporting around the first lady in the state media has focused on her charity initiatives and not her involvement in politics.

2.9.2 Does the media have confidence in ZEC to run elections?

There seems to be mixed feelings in the media with regards to ZEC’s capacity to facilitate a conducive environment for free, credible and fair elections. The state-controlled media was confident that the government and the electoral commission would deliver free, fair and credible elections, whilst the privately owned media was skeptical.

The local media was polarised in their framing of ZEC’s administrative capacity. The state owned media sought comments from officials who ‘endorsed’ ZEC’s readiness to host the 2018 elections. A case in point arose when these media gave extensive coverage to praise from the AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki, who, on his visit to Zimbabwe, stated that: “We also appreciate highly the way the President of the Republic and Government has opened up the political field so that there can be free, fair and credible elections that can be organized in the country”⁴. This message was echoed in all the state controlled media platforms (ZTV, SFM, Radio Zimbabwe, The Herald). In another report by The Herald, AU officials who met ZEC officials were said to have given the just-ended Biometric Voter Registration exercise the “thumbs up”⁵.

The privately owned media were not as confident in ZEC’s capabilities as they highlighted shortfalls in ZEC’s preparations for the 2018 elections. The Daily News reported that independent commissions were failing to fulfill their mandate⁶. ZEC was discredited for failing to facilitate the diaspora vote. The privately owned media carried numerous reports on the ongoing Constitutional Court challenge on the diaspora vote. In another report ZEC’s accountability was questioned by ZAPU, which accused ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC of ‘monopolizing’⁷ the commission. ZEC was accused of being accountable to the three parties and having a negative attitude towards the ‘smaller’ political parties.

Claims by government officials about the “freeness and fairness” of the upcoming elections were taken at face value in the government controlled media. For example, President Mnangagwa was quoted stating, “... if I lose, I will step down my brother, and with grace because the people would have spoken”. There was no effort by the state owned media to question the sincerity of the President’s claims given the country’s history of disputed elections. This history was brought up by the Daily News, which carried a report quoting Pastor Evan Mawarire who warned that the election ‘may be rigged’. He stated that those in power were, “directly involved in subverting and suppressing the will of the people in 2008”⁸.

The state controlled media had strong opinions about the capacity of the “new dispensation” to administer the forthcoming elections transparently. They argued that the government is ‘not afraid’ of scrutiny from the outside world. In one of its editorial comments, the Chronicle noted that, “The government has already invited observers from SADC, AU, European Union, the United States and other bodies ahead of the elections and we hope they will heed the call”. The Daily News questioned the veracity of these claims after it interviewed the EU Ambassador, who revealed that the EU had yet to be invited to observe the 2018 elections⁹.

The government-controlled media’s public relations stance was exhibited in the extensive profiles on the newly appointed ZEC Chairperson, Priscilla Chigumba whose credentials were not questioned. Coverage of the ZEC chair was passive. A case in point was the interview by The Sunday Mail headlined, “Chigumba spells out vision” in which the interviewer appears to avoid following up on critical questions and even structured some in a way that raised eyebrows.

Q: The opposition keeps bringing up “electoral reforms”. What is the Commission’s position on those?

A: The issue of electoral reforms is the responsibility of the Legislature. We have made recommendations to them through the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

I encourage all political parties who have provisions they want amended to lobby Parliament to have the same Electoral Laws and Regulations amended.

In the above question, the reporter seems to imply that the issue of reforms is a request by the opposition when it is in fact a constitutional requirement.

⁴ Chronicle 21 February, 2018, AU support for Zim transition crucial ahead of polls
⁵ The Herald, 20 February, 2018, AU team hails Zim poll preps
⁶ Daily News, 11 February 2018, Independent commissions fail to deliver
⁷ NewsDay, 12 February 2018; ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC accused of monopolizing ZEC.
⁸ Daily News, 22 February, 2018, ...as Mawarire warns election may be rigged
⁹ Daily News, 22 February 2018, Govt yet to formally invite foreign poll observers

Q: Critics allege that Zec's secretariat has staffers with security sector backgrounds. What is your comment?

A: I have no evidence that there are any serving members of the security sector within Zec's rank and file. Further, there is no law which prohibits Zec from recruiting persons who have worked elsewhere, including the security sector and who have since left such employment.

I urge anyone who has credible evidence that Zec has serving members of the security sector on its payroll to come forward and present it to the Commission.

Similarly, if there is any credible evidence – other than fear or conjecture – that such serving members of the security sector are compromising or have compromised electoral outcomes in past elections or by-elections, then Zec would welcome anyone who presents this evidence now during this pre-election period so that corrective measures can be taken well before we enter the election period.

If the reporter had done research on whether there were indeed staffers with security sector backgrounds employed by ZEC, the commissioner would have been answering why this is so.

The private media also gave the incoming ZEC chair the benefit of the doubt. She was profiled and given a chance to outline her vision. However, they went a step further than their state media counterparts by seeking stakeholders' expectations from the Chigumba-led ZEC. The *Daily News* carried a special feature on Chigumba's appointment in which different politicians urged Chigumba to be "*bold and independent*". The paper also carried a statement by ZESN that called on the new ZEC chair to uphold transparency and professionalism. An excerpt of the statement read:

"As head of the electoral commission, Justice Chigumba must strive to safeguard and protect the independence of ZEC by ensuring that principles of good electoral management, such as transparency, integrity, professionalism, competence and fairness are upheld. Furthermore, the network calls upon the new ZEC Chairperson to ensure that provisions of the Electoral Act that guarantee freeness and fairness of electoral processes are respected by all electoral stakeholders, in particular political parties"¹⁰.

2.9.3 Case Study: Coverage of the death of Morgan Tsvangirai by The Herald and NewsDay

Not surprisingly, the mainstream print media was dominated by news of the death of longtime opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Both *The Herald* and *NewsDay* extensively covered developments that occurred following Tsvangirai's death up to his burial and beyond. The late opposition leader received predominantly positive coverage in both newspapers as they covered positive memories from his life.

But despite this coverage, there were variances in the levels of positivity. *NewsDay* went all-out in praising Tsvangirai and highlighting the highs and lows of his life. The paper highlighted the hardships he endured in his political journey, the torture and humiliation he was subjected to because he had chosen to stand up for democracy. *The Herald* mostly highlighted the positive milestones in Tsvangirai's life, but suppressed the instances in which he clashed with the ruling party. *NewsDay* made a case for Tsvangirai to be buried at the National Heroes Acre, describing him as the "People's Hero"¹¹. But this idea was not entertained in *The Herald*, which focused on his contribution as the country's Prime Minister for five years between 2009 and 2013¹².

The Herald gave the impression that Tsvangirai's death could signify the demise of MDC-T; there was extensive focus on the succession battle among Tsvangirai's deputies. The squabbles were given blow-by-blow coverage during this period to highlight the 'chaos' in the party. Stories on the MDC-T squabbles were superimposed on stories of Tsvangirai's death.

¹⁰ Daily News, 19 February, 2018; Chigumba must uphold transparency, professionalism:

¹¹ NewsDay 16 February, 2018; "Tsvangirai People's Hero"

¹² The Herald, 16 February, 2018; State-Funeral for Tsvangirai



The Herald, 19 February 2018, Page 2

Whilst *NewsDay* also covered the discord within MDC-T; Tsvangirai's death was viewed as a unifying factor that could reunite the party¹³. There were also pleas by analysts, politicians and members of the public for the party's two vice-presidents to iron out their differences for the sake of the party.

Both the newspapers appeared to be in a state of mourning. *NewsDay* took it upon itself to publish messages from foreign embassies and the international community. It also carried a report with a headline, "*European Union, United States mourns Tsvangirai*,"¹⁴ in which the international community shared condolence messages. *The Herald* on the other hand, carried condolence messages from local government departments.

13 NewsDay 16 Unite to recognise Tsvangirai's dream - MDC urged
14 NewsDay, 16 February 2018; European Union, United States mourn Tsvangirai

CHAPTER THREE: MONITORING POLITICAL PLURALISM

3.1 Introduction

One of the principal tenets of democracy is equality and equitable access to resources. During elections access to the media should be equitably shared among the contesting players. Due to the contentious nature of access to media space, equitable access has been enshrined in the Constitution and electoral regulation. Despite having a clearly outlined code of conduct and numerous legal statutes, the media in Zimbabwe have fallen short in previous elections of ensuring equitable allocation of time and space to the country's political actors vying for election¹⁵. This section of the report seeks to assess whether, there has been an improvement in the equitable allocation of media space and time to the country's competing political players.

Key indicators in this section of the report include:

- Access granted to political actors in the mass media (space and airtime), including the measure of the direct access granted (time and space for interviews)
- The tone of coverage of political actors.

3.2 Allocation of coverage among political parties

Overall the monitored print and electronic news outlets focused almost entirely on ZANU PF and MDC-T representatives, providing 94% of their political coverage to these two parties.

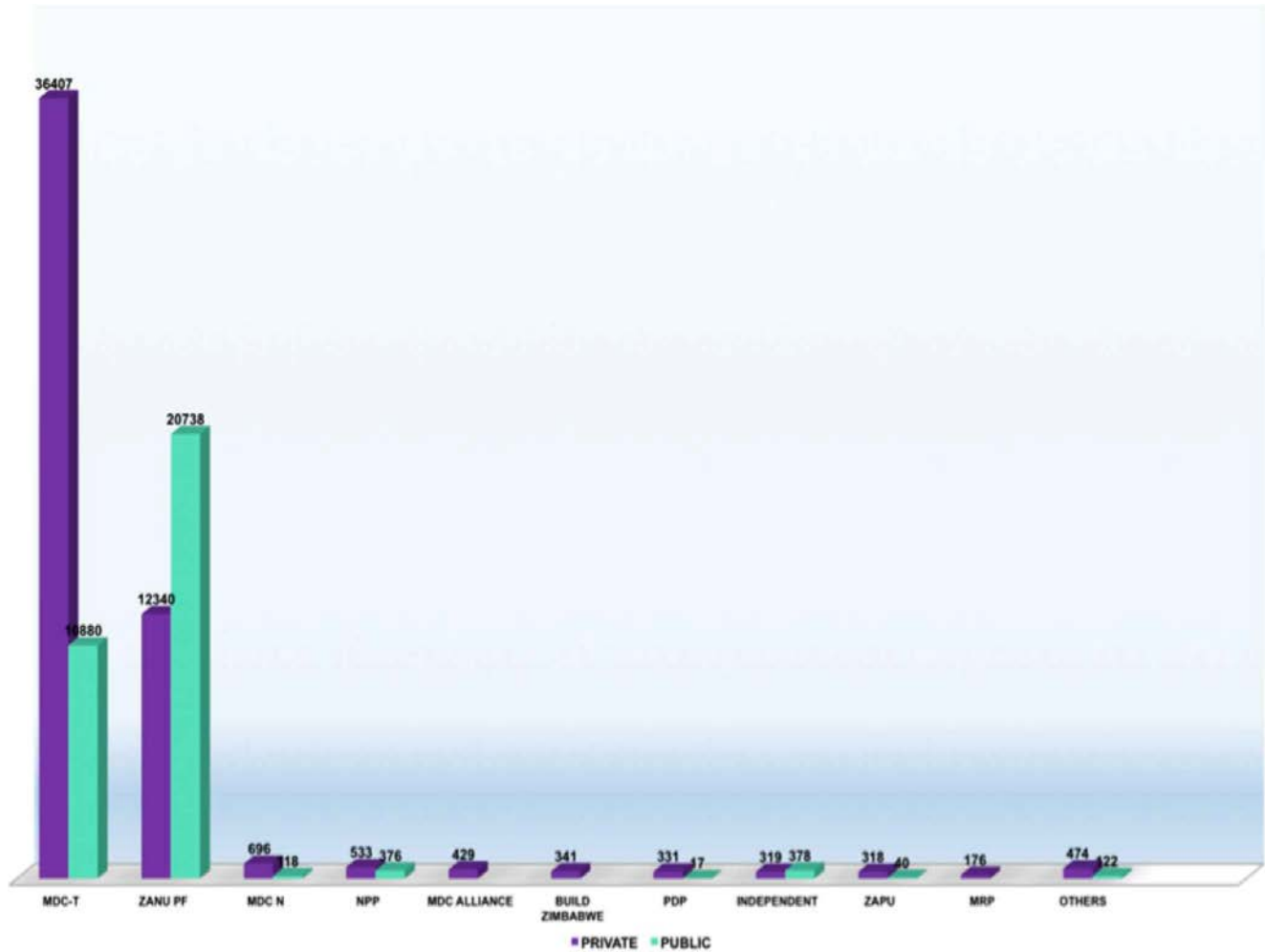
In the print media 85,000 cm² were dedicated to the representation of political players (dailies and weeklies) in the period under review. ZANU PF and MDC-T took up 94% of total amount of space devoted to political forces, while the other 16 political parties covered by the media took up the remaining 6%. This shows a heavy focus on the activities of the two main political parties by the print media.

The electronic media allocated 22,177 seconds to coverage of political actors during the monitoring period. Once again, ZANU PF and MDC-T accounted for 93% of the time allocated to political parties and players. The remaining three political parties and independent candidates featured in 6% of the time.

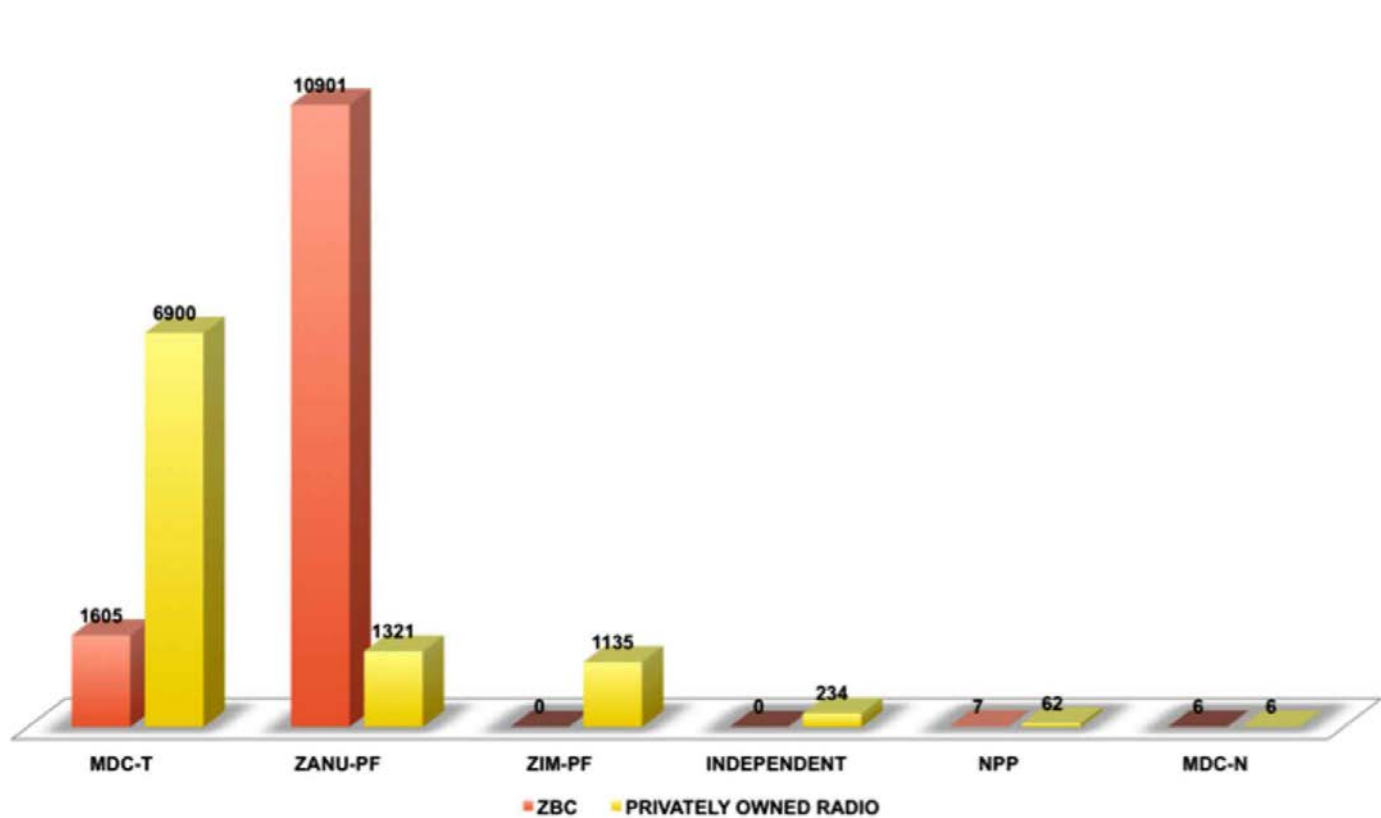
To sum up, in terms of space and time taken up by political players, coverage appears to be heavily skewed towards the two main political parties at the expense of other smaller political parties. Of the minor parties covered, several have links to the two main political parties.

¹⁵ MMPZ Daily Election Reports 2013 Vol 1-22

Overall space dedicated to political parties in the private and public print media (cm²)



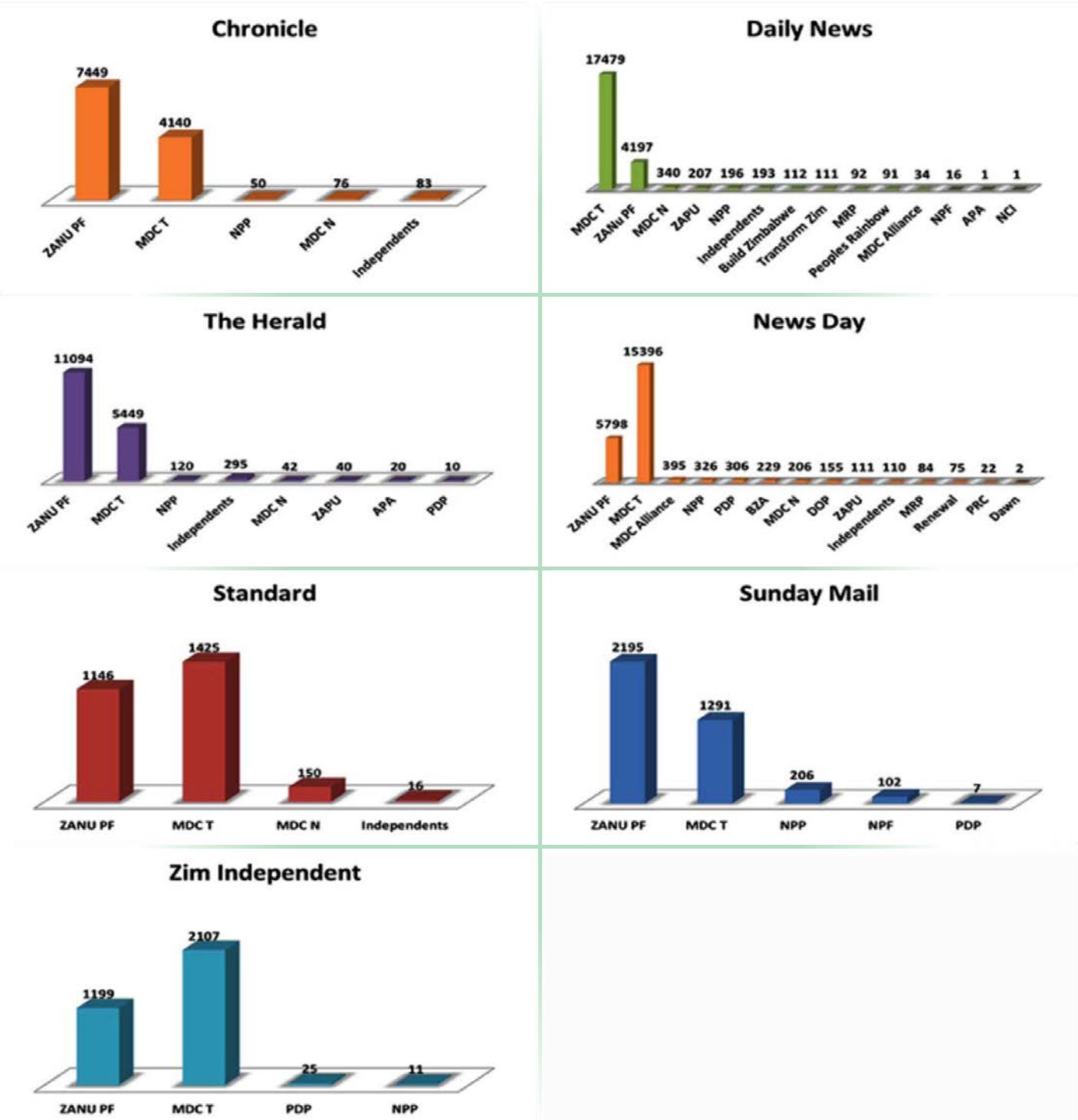
Time dedicated to political parties in the electronic media (in seconds)



3.3 Comparison of time dedicated to political parties in the press

A comparison of the space dedicated to political parties in the press showed a distinct difference between commercial and state-owned papers, with the private newspapers focusing their coverage more on the MDC-T followed by ZANU-PF and the state-controlled newspapers covering more ZANU-PF followed by MDC-T. All seven newspapers that were monitored devoted their attention on these two political parties significantly more than the other parties. However, the daily private newspapers presented a wider variety of political party players than the state controlled ones.

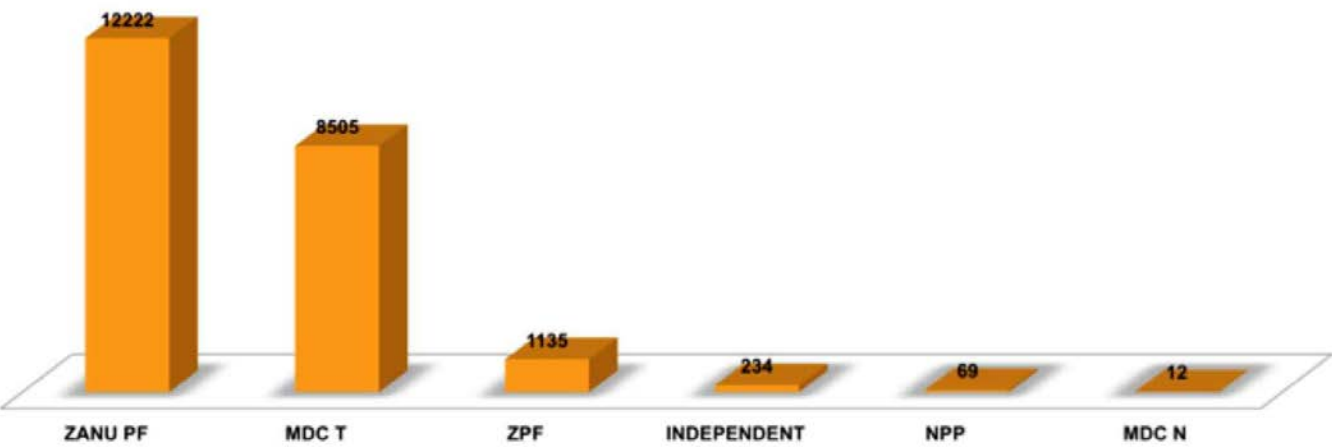
Allocation of space among parties by newspaper (in cm²)



3.4 Comparison of time dedicated to political parties on radio

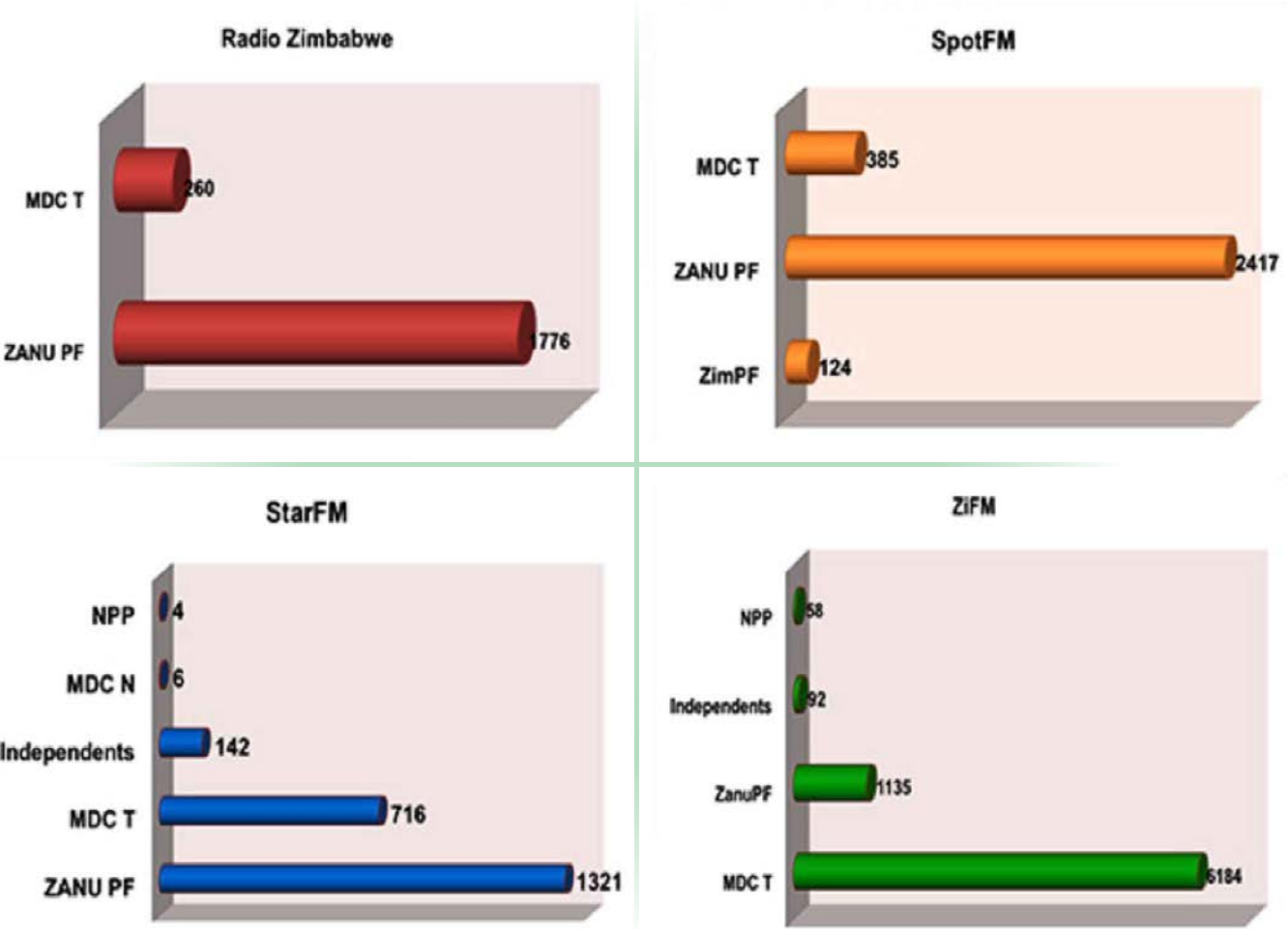
As was the case in the print media, most of the electronic media’s coverage concentrated on the activities of the two main political parties (ZANU PF and MDC-T). Combined, they accounted for 93% of the time allocated to political parties. Other political parties, which include ZIMPF, NPP, MDC-N and the independents, were covered in the remaining 7%. The prevailing trends observed could have deprived a number of parties of the opportunity to convey their messages to Zimbabwean citizens.

Overall time dedicated to political parties in the electronic media: all media (in seconds)



Overall, the privately owned radio stations gave more time to political parties in their news bulletins when compared to the state-owned ones. The privately owned radio stations (Star FM and ZiFM) gave more coverage to political parties, the two combined for 67% of the political parties’ visibility on all four stations. The state-owned radio stations (Spot FM and Radio Zimbabwe) carried the remaining 33%. Within the four radio stations, a familiar trend emerged; the ruling party received more time in the state-owned radio stations, whilst the opposition featured more in the private commercial radio stations. The commercial radio stations provided a more pluralistic coverage, granting attention to slightly more political parties, when compared to the government-controlled radio stations, which gave access only to three political parties (ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC-N).

Allocation of time among the political parties by radio station



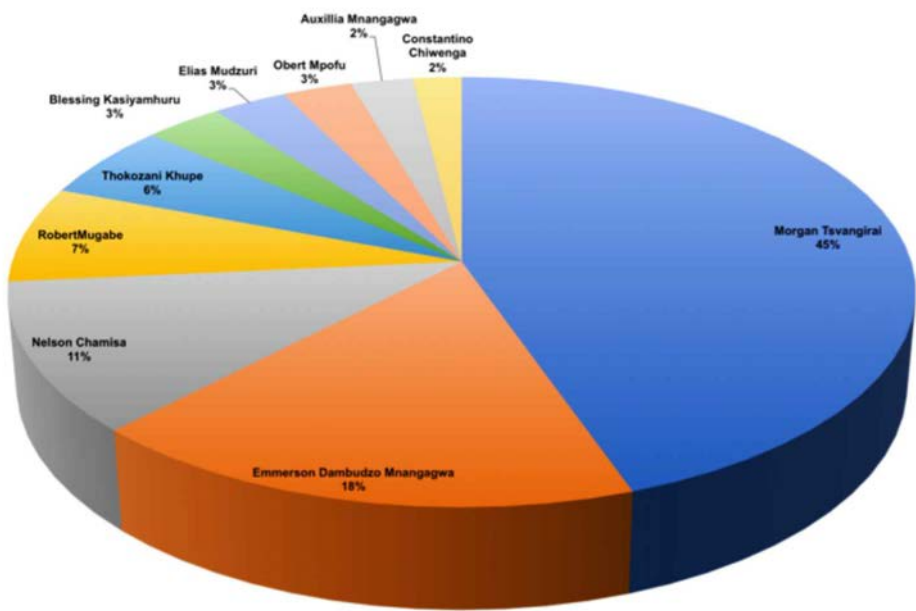
3.5 Which politicians did the media cover most prominently?

Overall, 150 individual political players from 17 political parties received some mention in the media. There was more diversity in terms of representation of political actors in the press where 124 actors were featured as opposed to 62 who appeared in the electronic media. Twenty-eight political actors appeared in both print and electronic media.

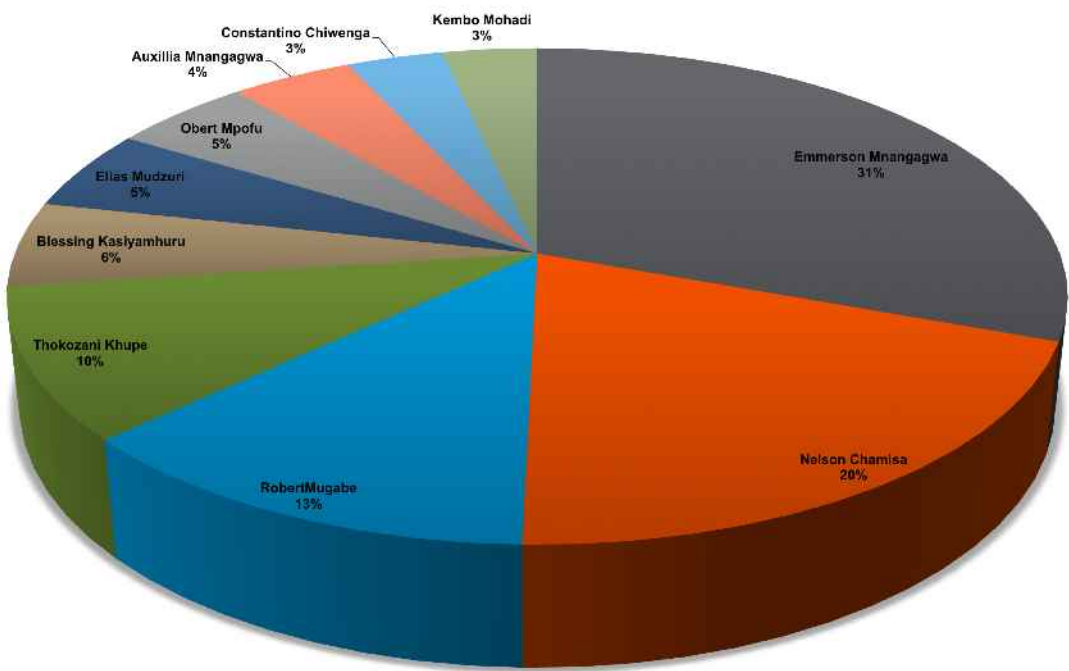
3.5.1 Amount of space dedicated to individual political actors in the press

In the press, 78,000cm² of space was dedicated to the coverage of individual political players, Morgan Tsvangirai took up 45% of the space devoted to the top 10 political actors, followed by Emmerson Mnangagwa (18%) and Nelson Chamisa 11%. The majority of the articles on Morgan Tsvangirai were those on his death and burial. The top 10 political newsmakers reported on by the media took up 74% of space in the print media. Coverage of the top 10 newsmakers is represented in the pie chart below.

Coverage of the top 10 newsmakers in the print media



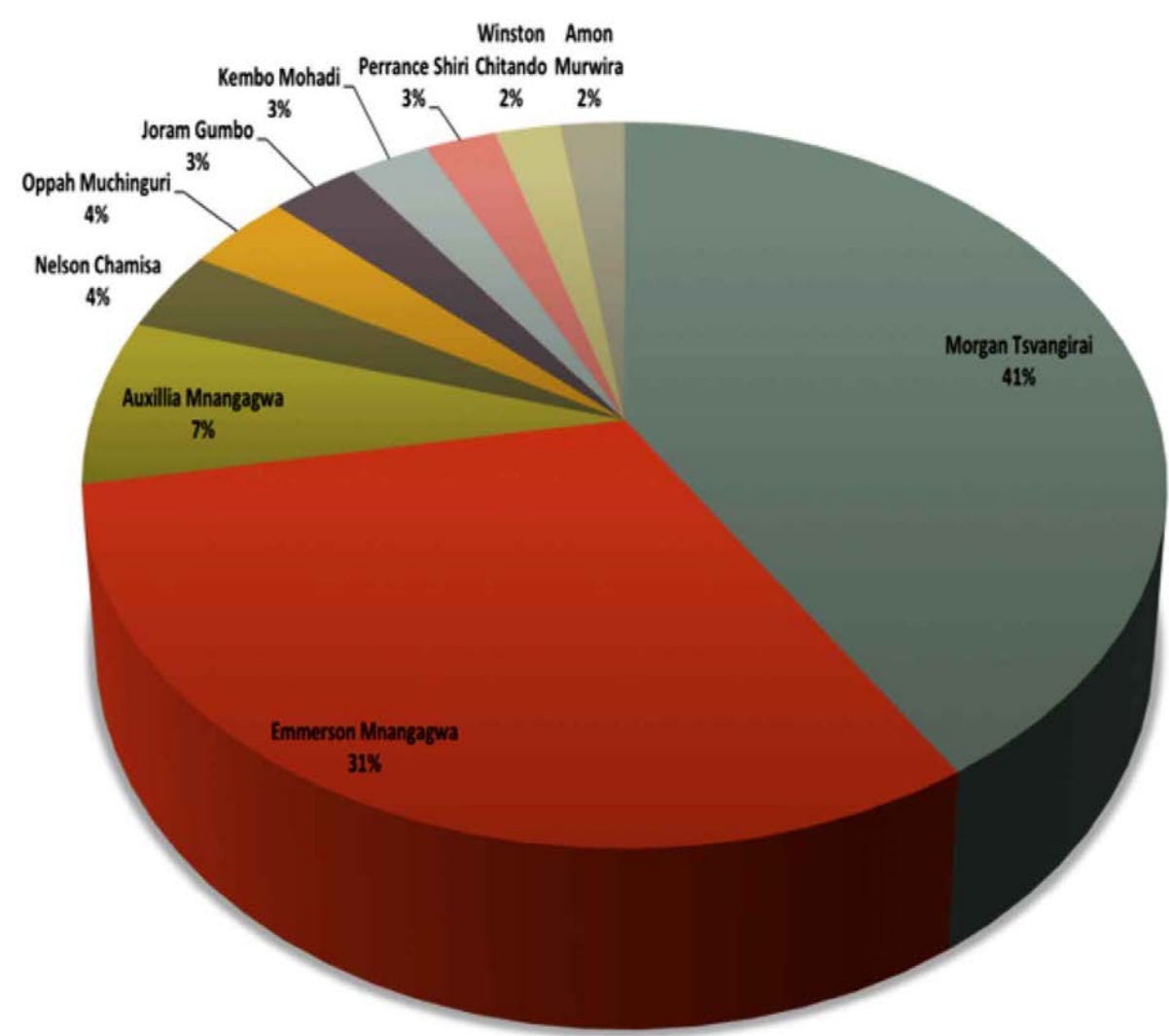
Excluding the coverage of Morgan Tsvangirai, Emmerson Mnangagwa would move to the top position with 31% of the space ahead of Nelson Chamisa who would now have 20% of the coverage.



3.5.2 Amount of time dedicated to individual political actors in the electronic media

During the monitoring period, individual political actors were mentioned for 21,250 seconds. Of the total coverage of political actors, the top 10 actors combined accounted for 44% of the airtime. The late MDC-T leader, Morgan Tsvangirai was the most prominently covered political actor. He was mentioned 41% of the time in which the top 10 actors were mentioned. President Emmerson Mnangagwa was a distant second at 31%. The remaining actors in the top 10 were featured in the remaining 28% of the time. It can be seen that only political actors from two political parties dominated the media’s coverage. The top publicity earners were officials from ZANU PF (8) and MDC-T (2). Coverage of politicians from the opposition seems to be driven by events, whilst coverage of actors from the ruling party appears to be routine. The death of Morgan Tsvangirai appears to have boosted his coverage during the monitoring period, which distorted the statistical representation of the opposition in the media.

Top 10 political actors mentioned in the electronic media

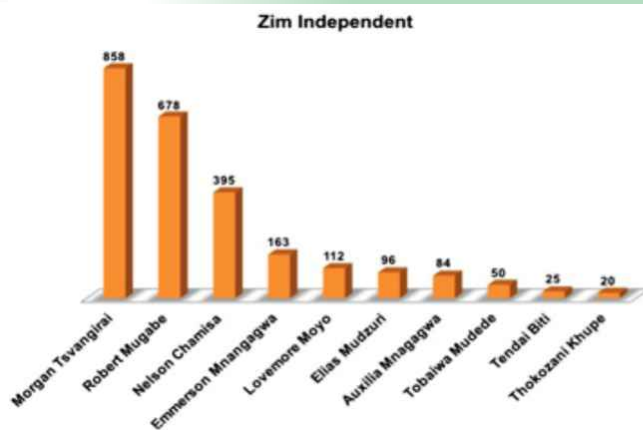
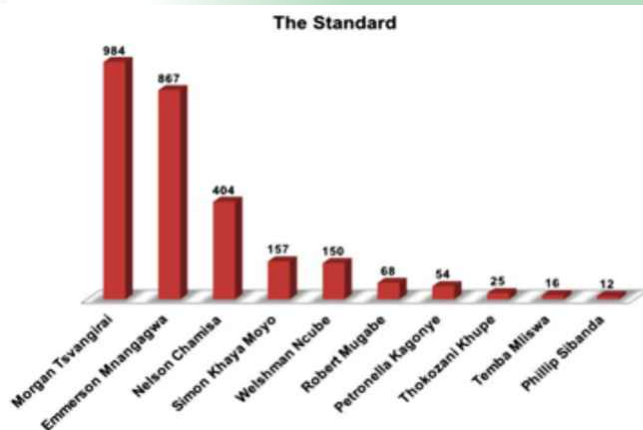
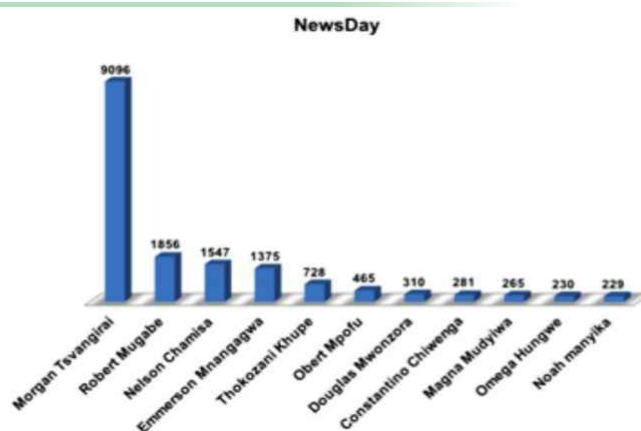
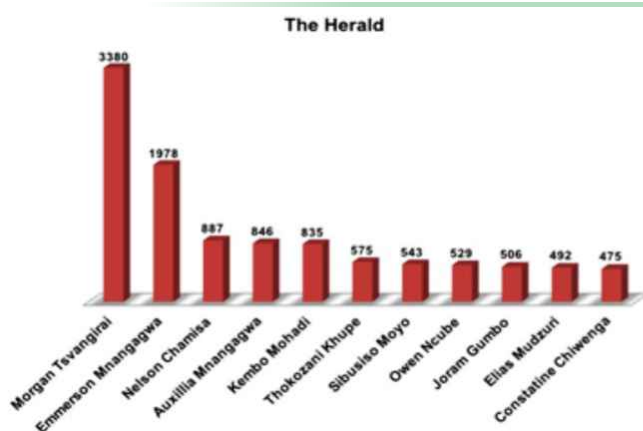
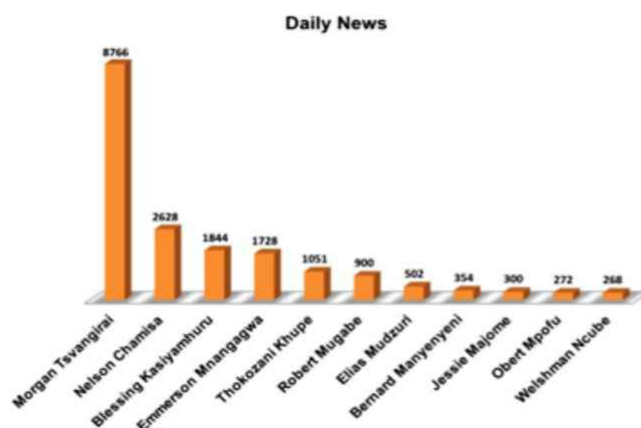
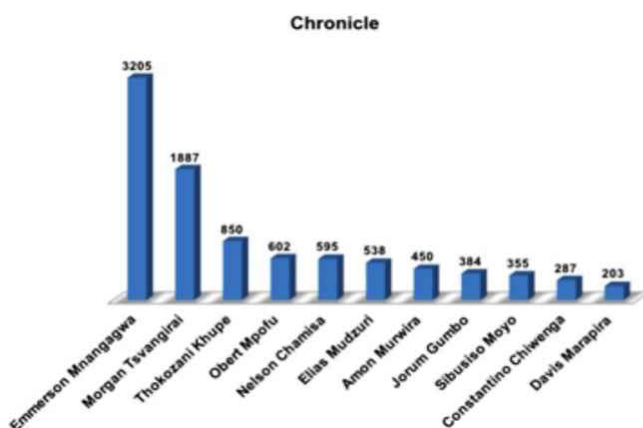


Without Morgan Tsvangirai, Emmerson Mnangagwa would account for 51% of the time allocated to political actors by the electronic media.

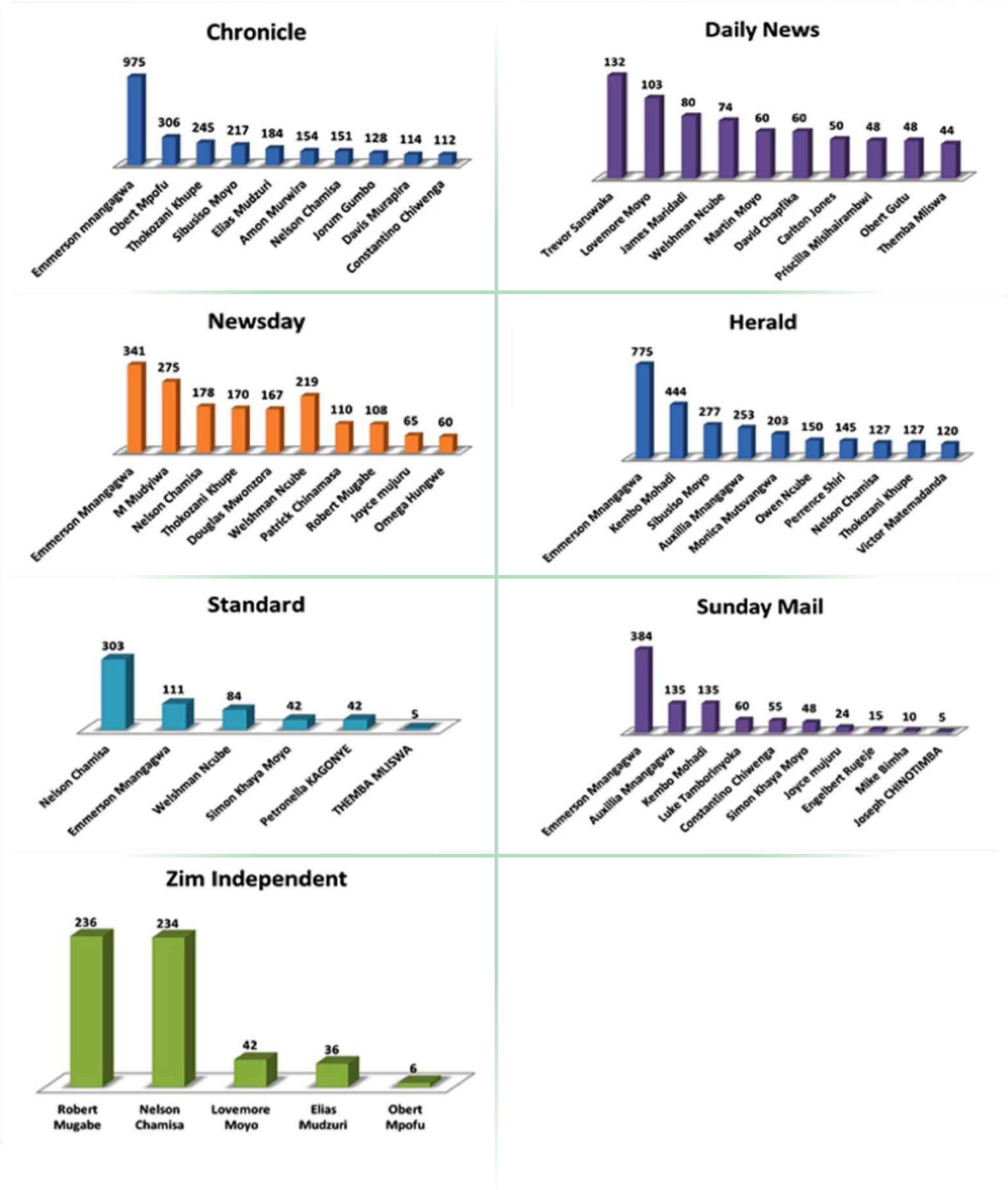
3.6 Allocation of coverage among individual political actors: print media

Political actors from ZANU PF and MDC-T were prominently featured in the press, with the late MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai receiving the most coverage in six of the seven newspapers that were monitored. Politicians from the ruling party were covered more in the government-controlled newspapers whilst those from the opposition were featured more in the privately owned press. Below is an illustration of the top10 political actors covered by each newspaper.

Representation of individual political players in the print media



Allocation of direct speech among individual actors in the print media



Whilst political actors from both ZANU PF and MDC-T were extensively covered in the press, the newspapers were polarised along political lines in their selection of whom they quoted. Some of the political actors who received extensive coverage from the media were not given as much space to comment on the issues in which they were featured. Morgan Tsvangirai and Nelson Chamisa faded into the background, whilst President Mnangagwa rose to prominence in this category; he was the most quoted political actor in four of the seven newspapers monitored.

3.7 Allocation of coverage among individual political actors: radio stations

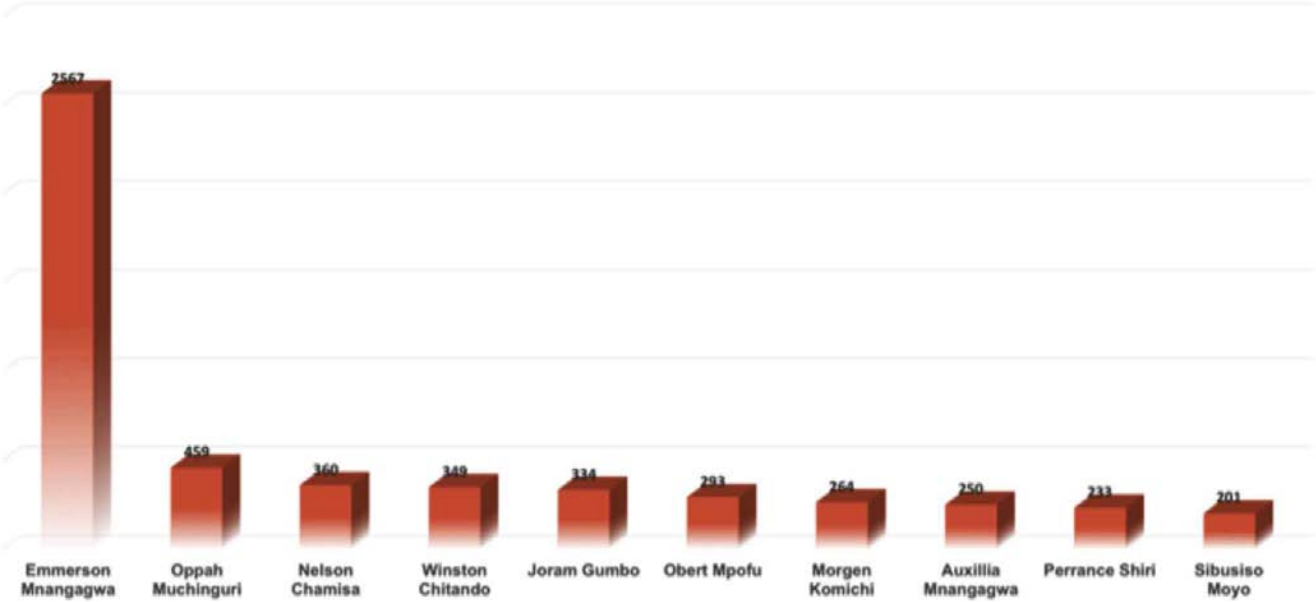
President Emmerson Mnangagwa was the most visible political actor on three of the four radio stations that were monitored.

Representation of individual political players in the electronic media by station (in seconds)

Rank	Radio Zimbabwe	Total Time	Rank	SFM	Total Time
1	Emmerson Mnangagwa	805	1	Emmerson Mnangagwa	1054
2	Kembo Mohadi	229	2	Winston Chitando	282
3	Morgan Tsvangirai	202	3	Morgan Tsvangirai	225
4	July Moyo	136	4	Auxillia Mnangagwa	216
5	Auxillia Mnangagwa	118	5	Oppah Muchinguri	172
6	Oppah Muchinguri	52	6	Betty Kaseke	136
7	Constantino Chiwenga	49	7	Didymus Mutasa	124
8	Tendai Chirawu	48	8	Morgan Komichi	118
9	Nelson Chamisa	47	9	Constantino Chiwenga	101
10	Joram Gumbo	39	10	Amon Murwira	80
Rank	Star FM	Total Time	Rank	ZiFM	Total Time
1	Emmerson Mnangagwa	317	1	Emmerson Mnangagwa	236
2	Nelson Chamisa	212	2	Nelson Chamisa	224
3	Obert Mpofu	185	3	Sthembiso Nyoni	118
4	Oppah Muchinguri	143	4	Oppah Muchinguri	105
5	Themba Mliswa	142	5	Perrance Shiri	102
6	Amon Murwira	134	6	Themba Mliswa	92
7	Tsungai Makore	125	7	Obert Mpofu	92
8	Morgan Komichi	115	8	Obert Gutu	85
9	Thokozani Khupe	113	9	Thokozani Khupe	75
10	Auxillia Mnangagwa	106	10	Constantino Chiwenga	69

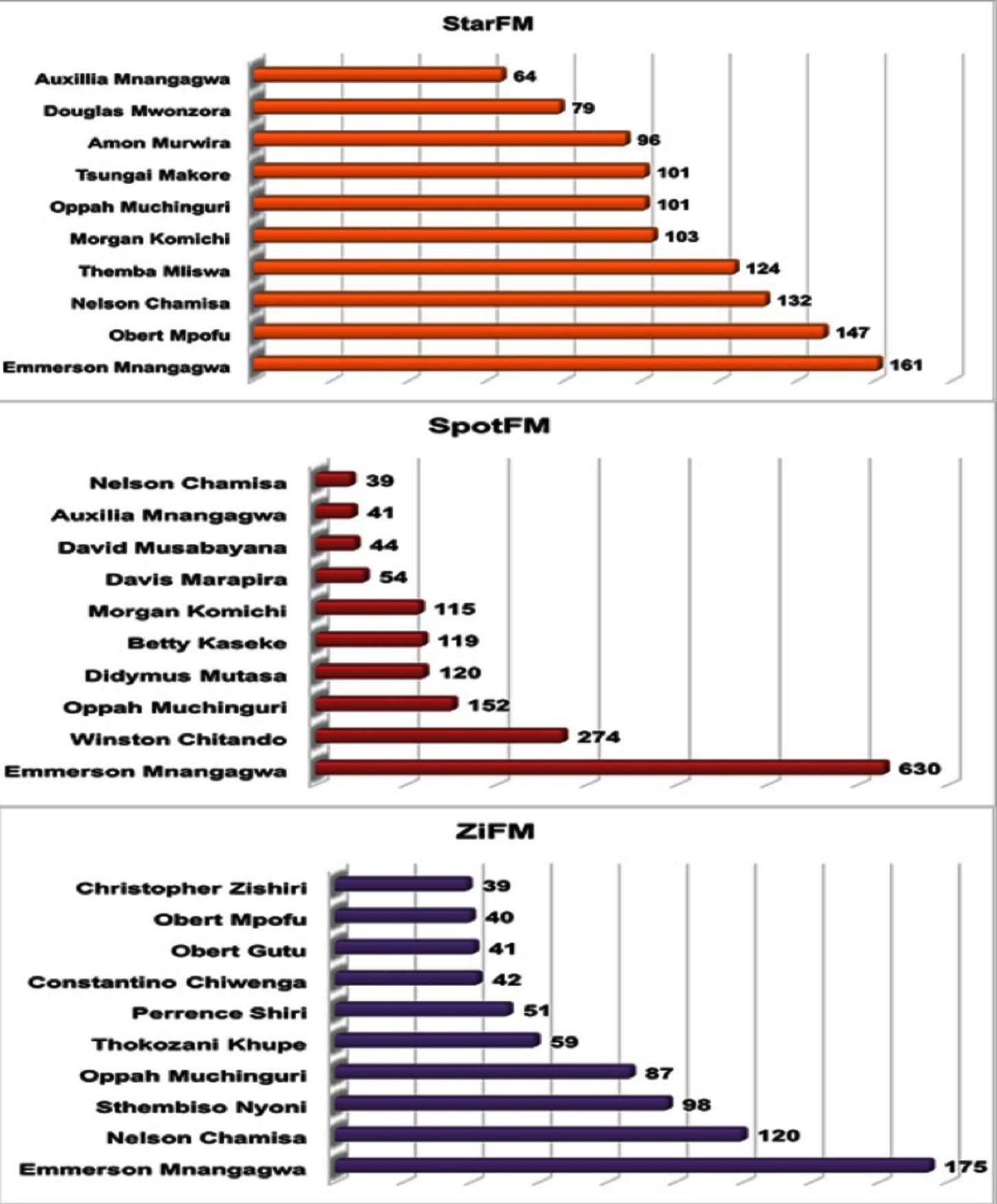
Radio appears to be a constricted public sphere where voices of political actors from two political parties (ZANU PF and MDC-T) overshadow those of all other political actors. Actors from these two parties comprised all 10 of the top voices quoted by the media during the monitoring period. Officials from the ruling party were more vocal; they received 88% of the direct access time. The opposition was not as prominent in terms of direct access time, only two MDC-T officials (Nelson Chamisa and Morgan Komichi) made it into the top 10 actors accessed for comment on radio.

Allocation of direct speech among individual political actors: top 10 actors all stations (in seconds)



Whilst there were some variations in the political actors whose voices were prominent on radio, there were some personalities who were consistently featured on the three radio stations that gave direct access time to political actors. President Emmerson Mnangagwa was the most vocal actor on the platforms that were monitored, whilst Nelson Chamisa, Oppah Muchinguri and Morgan Komichi were quoted prominently on ZiFM, Star FM and SFM.

Direct speech allocation - individual political actors by radio station: top 10 (seconds)



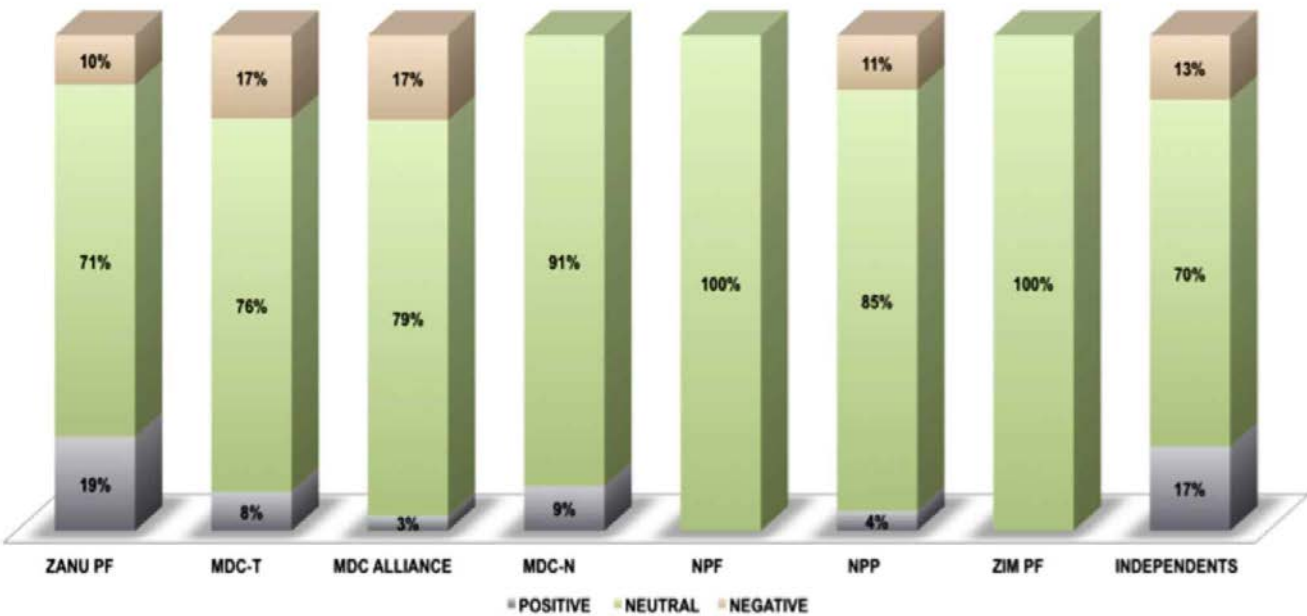
Radio Zimbabwe did not give direct access time to political actors in their bulletins. Instead of directly quoting political actors, the station paraphrased what the political actors said.

3.8 Tone of the coverage in all monitored media

An analysis of the manner in which the political actors were framed in the media’s coverage was conducted using a three-tier meter, which indicated whether the coverage was positive, neutral or negative.

Overall, 73% of the coverage of political actors portrayed them in a neutral manner whilst 14% was positive and the remaining 13% was negative. Of the parties whose actors received the most coverage, ZANU PF appears to have the most positive coverage whilst MDC-T and MDC Alliance were negatively framed the most.

Overall tone of coverage by party (all media)

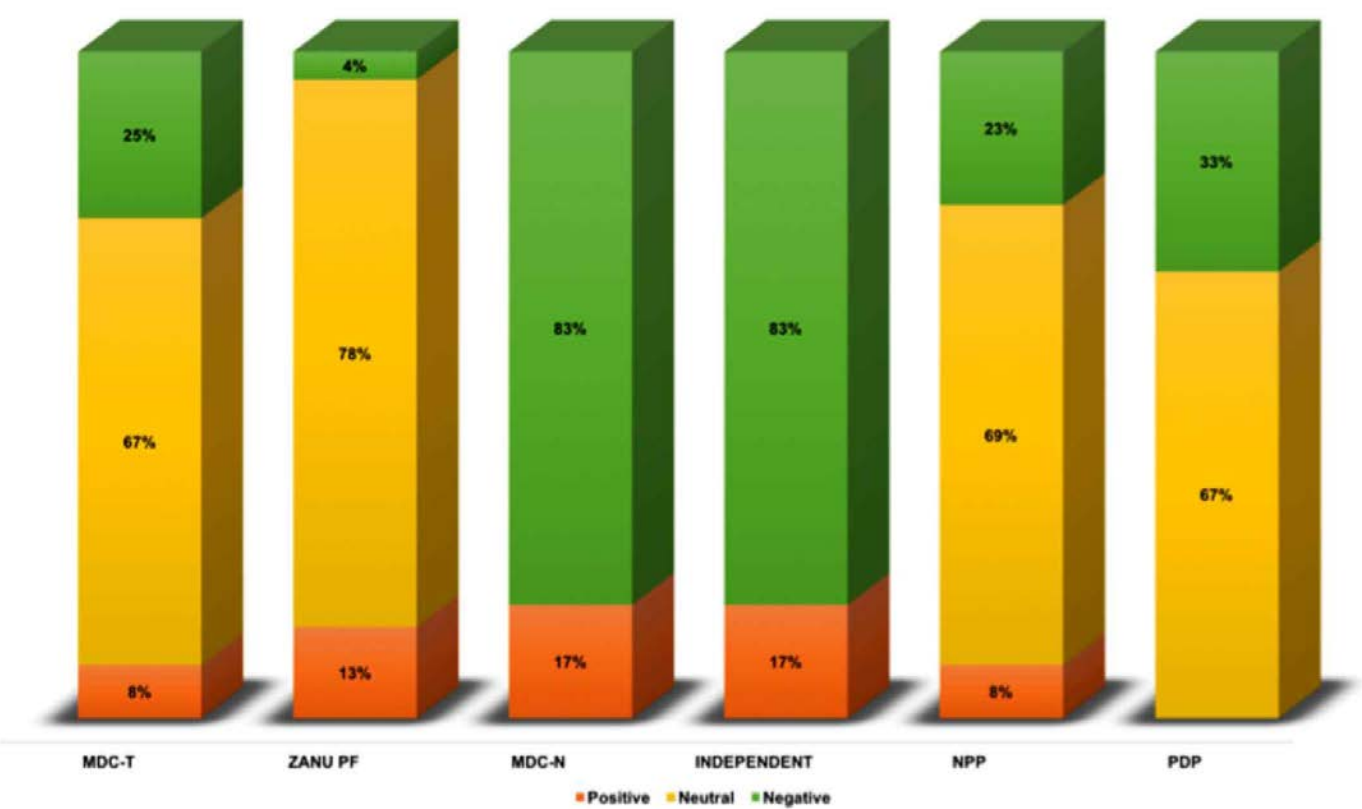


Trends in both the privately-owned and government-controlled news outlets showed evidence of polarization. In the press, there was more negative coverage of the ruling party (32%) in the privately owned newspapers than in the government-controlled press (4%). The same trend prevailed with the MDC-T, which received more negative coverage in the state-owned newspapers (25%) than in the privately owned press (19%).

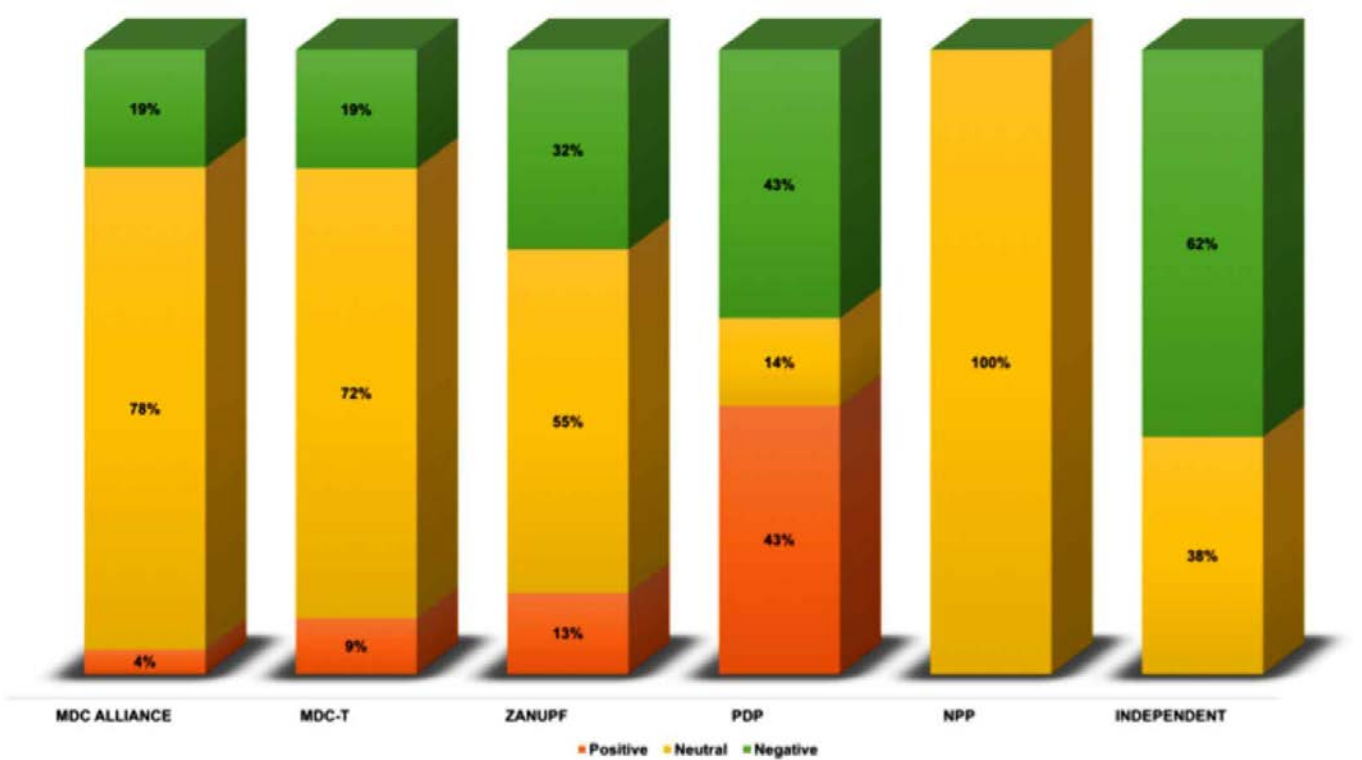
The tone of coverage in the electronic media can be seen as an indicator of the stations’ ‘biases’. In both the public and privately owned radio stations, the ruling party (ZANU PF) received coverage that was predominantly neutral and positive. The opposition parties on the other hand, received coverage that was mostly neutral with hints of negativity from both the private and publicly owned radio stations. It seems Zimbabwe’s electronic media is less critical of the ruling party than it is of the opposition. This could have an adverse effect on the audience’s perceptions of the political parties. Chances are, new political parties might not gain popularity in the country because their ideas are criticized before they get the chance to prove their worth.

Tone of coverage of the top political parties

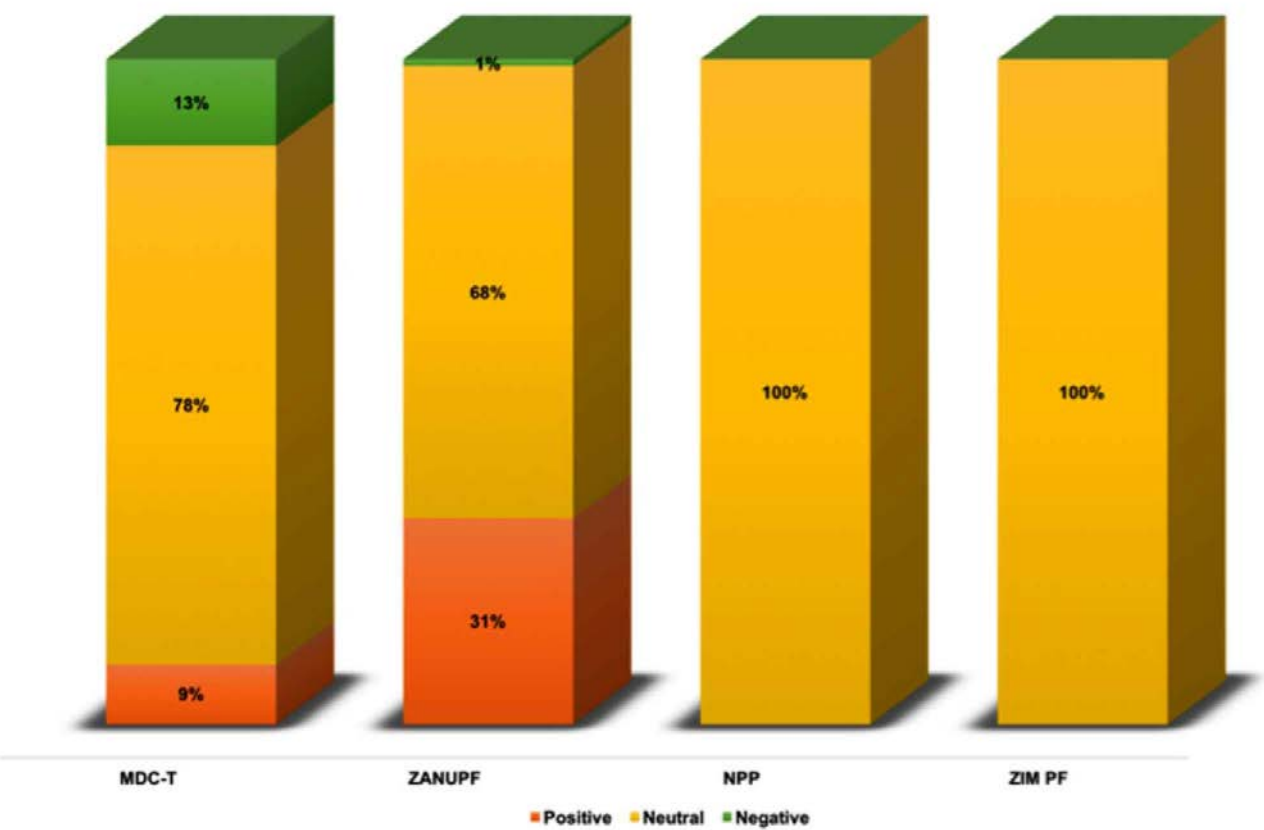
a) Tone of coverage in the government controlled print



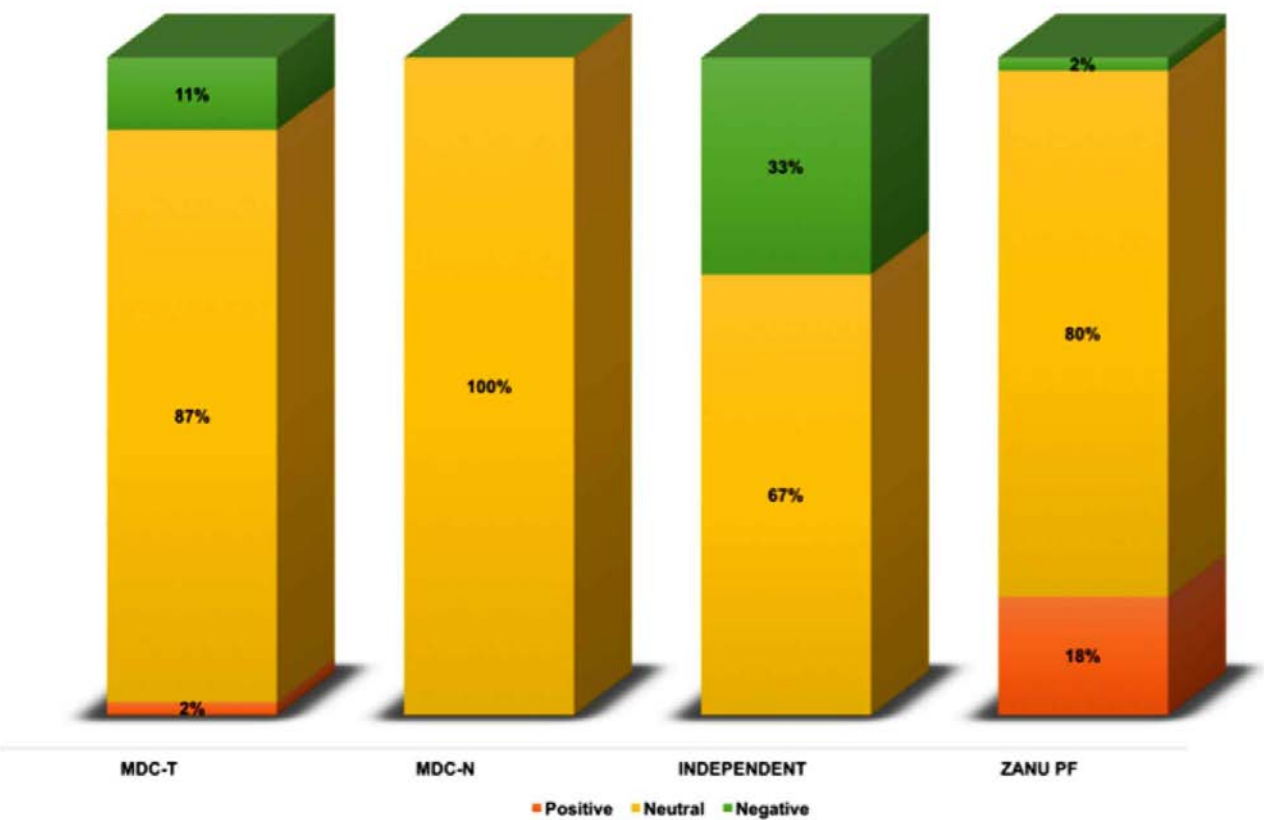
b) Tone of coverage in the privately owned print



c) Tone of coverage on ZBC stations (radio and TV)



d) Tone of coverage on commercial radio



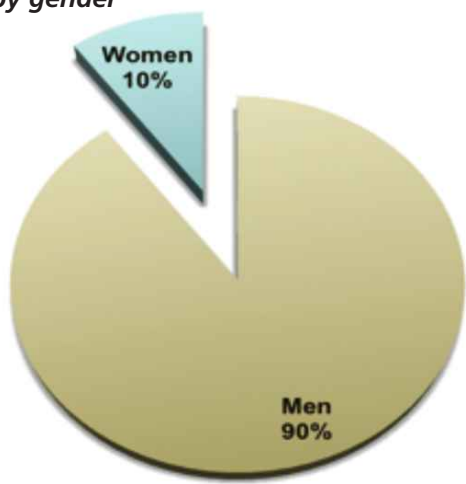
CHAPTER FOUR: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS

Even though there have been numerous campaigns in the media calling for equal representation of women, the prevailing trends are quite alarming as women’s voices are overshadowed by those of men. There is less space and time dedicated to the activities of women political actors, which is perhaps a reflection of the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwe’s political landscape. However the women who are politically active are not given as much prominence as men.

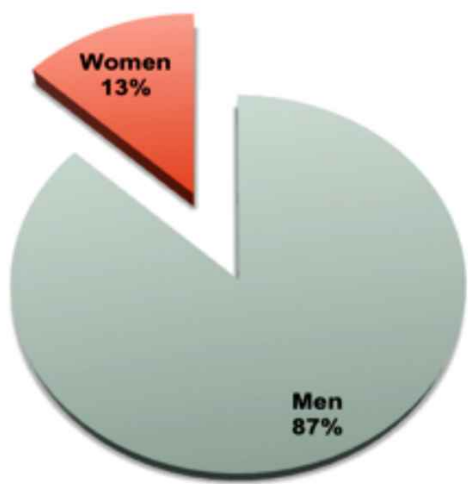
4.1 The Representation of Women Politicians: Coverage in the newspapers

Women political players occupy just 10% of the 78,000 cm2 dedicated to political players by the print media, and make up 13% of voices quoted. There is a high discrepancy in the voice distribution (interview space) of men and women political players in the monitored papers.

Print media: coverage of political actors by gender



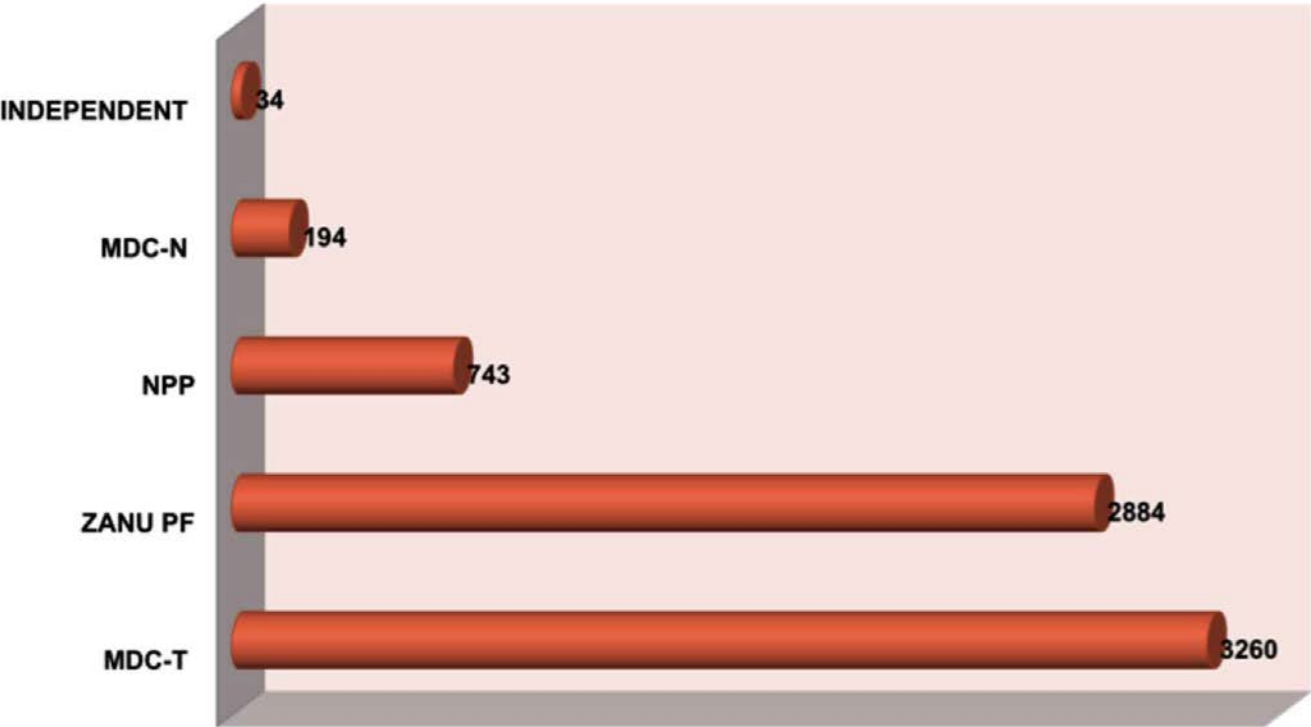
Print media: coverage by gender of political actors (interview space)



Women from the opposition political parties received more coverage than those from the ruling party. The opposition constituted 59% of the coverage whilst ZANU PF accounted for 41% of the space. However, it should be noted that ZANU PF and MDC-T occupied the largest chunk of the space dedicated to women. Combined, the two parties made up 90% of the space dedicated

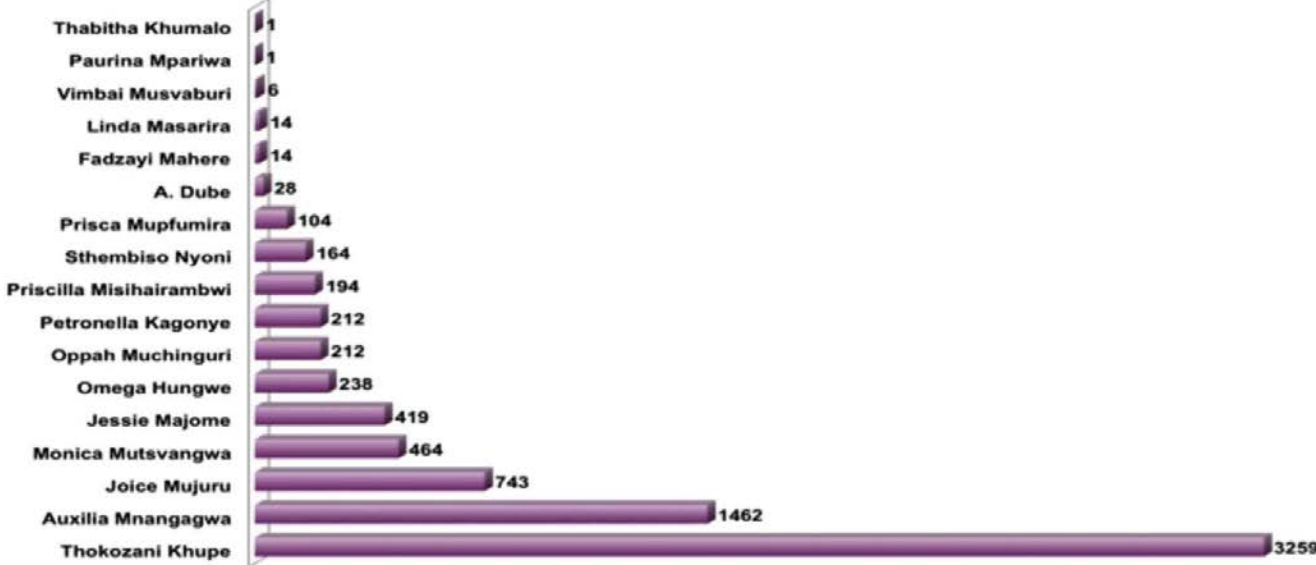
to women. This is an indication of the narrowness of the local media’s focus in their representation of women. It would be ideal for the media to widen their scope of women sources or subjects to include women from other political parties so as to add colour to women’s perspectives presented in the media.

Space in cm² dedicated to women politicians by political party: all print media



A closer look at the coverage of individual women political actors confirms the concern that the space allocated to women political actors is very limited, as only 17 women were featured during the period monitored. It appears women politicians have to try really hard to be considered newsworthy, as all the women political actors who received coverage in the print media occupy leadership positions in their parties or in government.

Total space dedicated to women in print media by individual actor: cm²



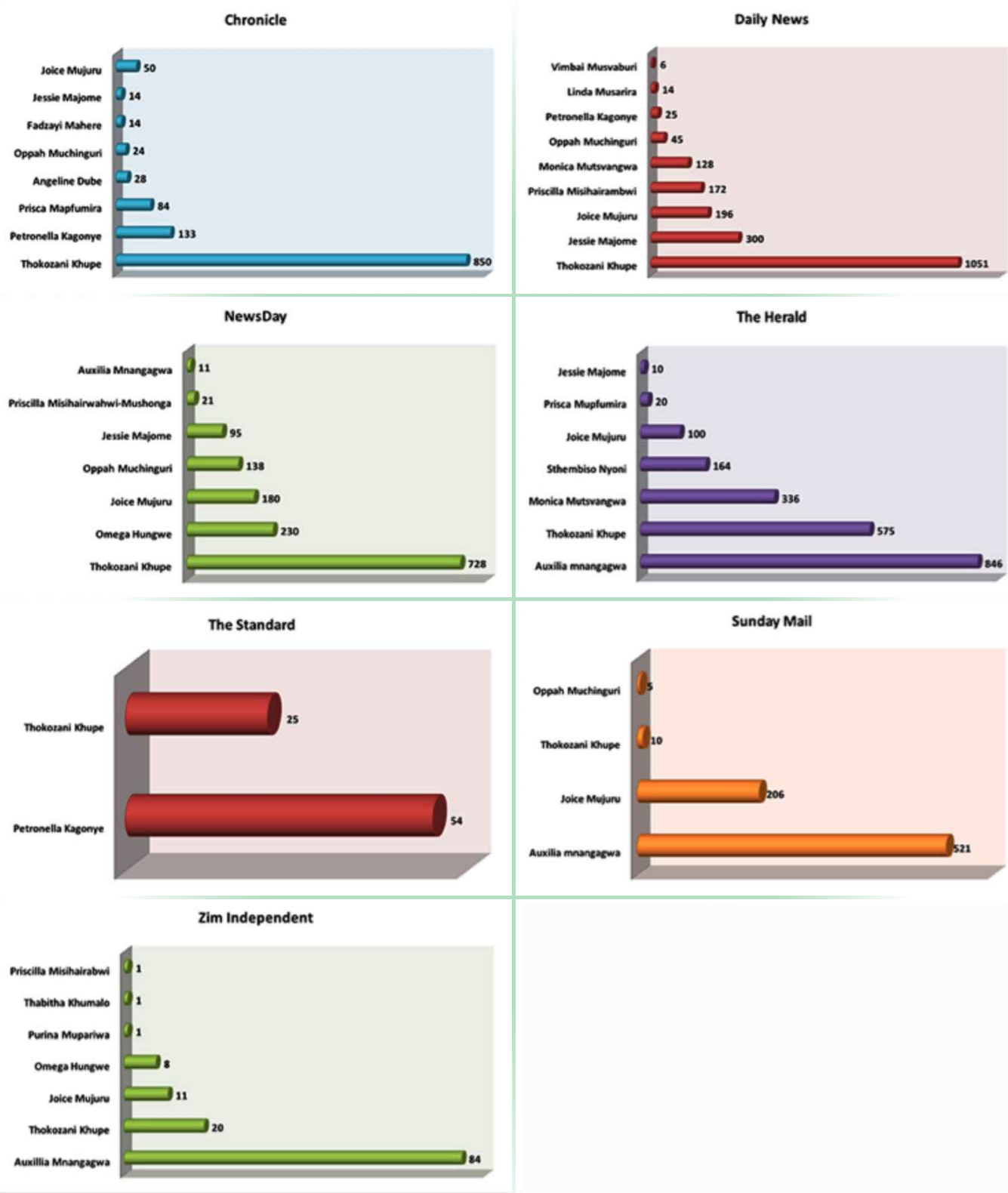
Within the newspapers, the representation of women from the different political parties seemed to be polarised with women from the ruling party getting more coverage in the government controlled newspapers, whilst women from the opposition were prominently covered in the privately owned newspapers. There were some peculiar instances in which the First Lady was extensively covered in the privately owned media; the same can be said for Thokozani Khupe who was widely covered in the state-owned media. However, it should be noted that in such instances the coverage was mostly negative. For example, when Khupe was covered in the publicly owned media, the tone of coverage was negative 30% of the time as opposed to their coverage of Auxillia Mnangagwa (7%).

In this opinion piece in the Zimbabwe Independent, the First Lady is ridiculed after the occurrences that happened when she stepped down from her parliamentary seat.



Zimbabwe Independent, 16 February, 2018

Space dedicated to women leaders by newspaper (in cm²)

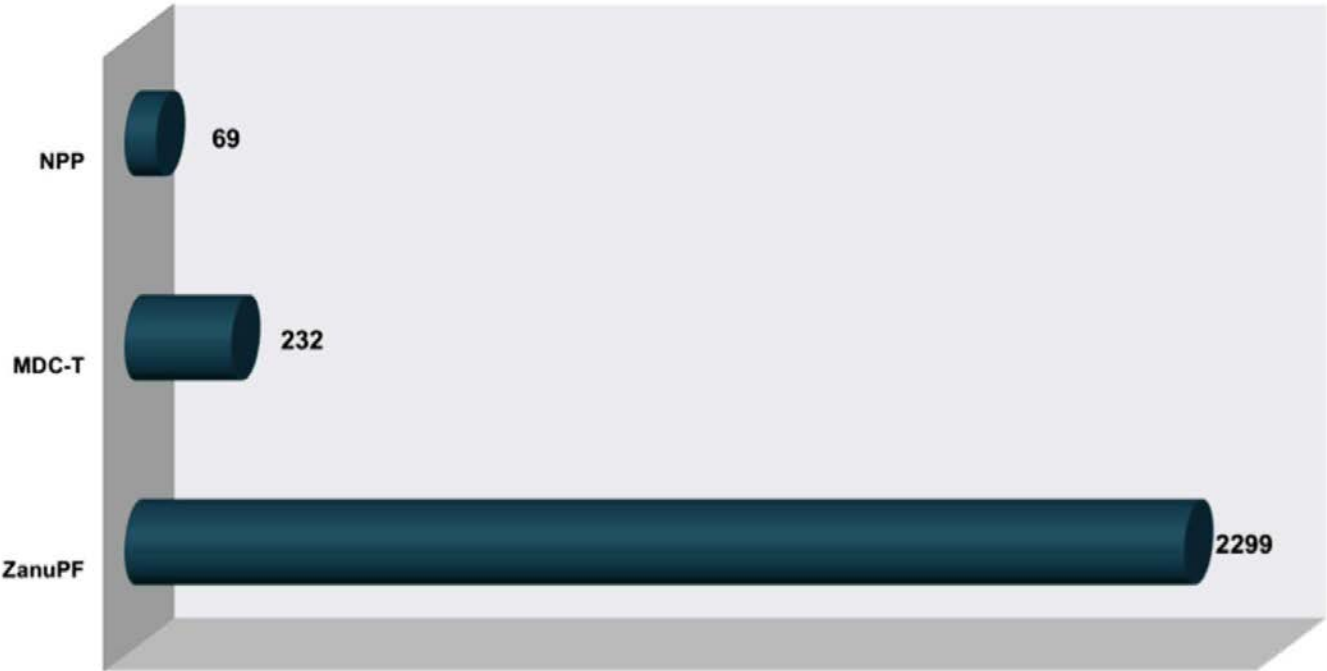


4.2 The Representation of Women Politicians: Electronic media

In the electronic media monitored, women political actors did not fare any better than in the print media as they are still grossly under-represented. Women politicians made up 12% of the 21,250 seconds that were dedicated to individual political actors.

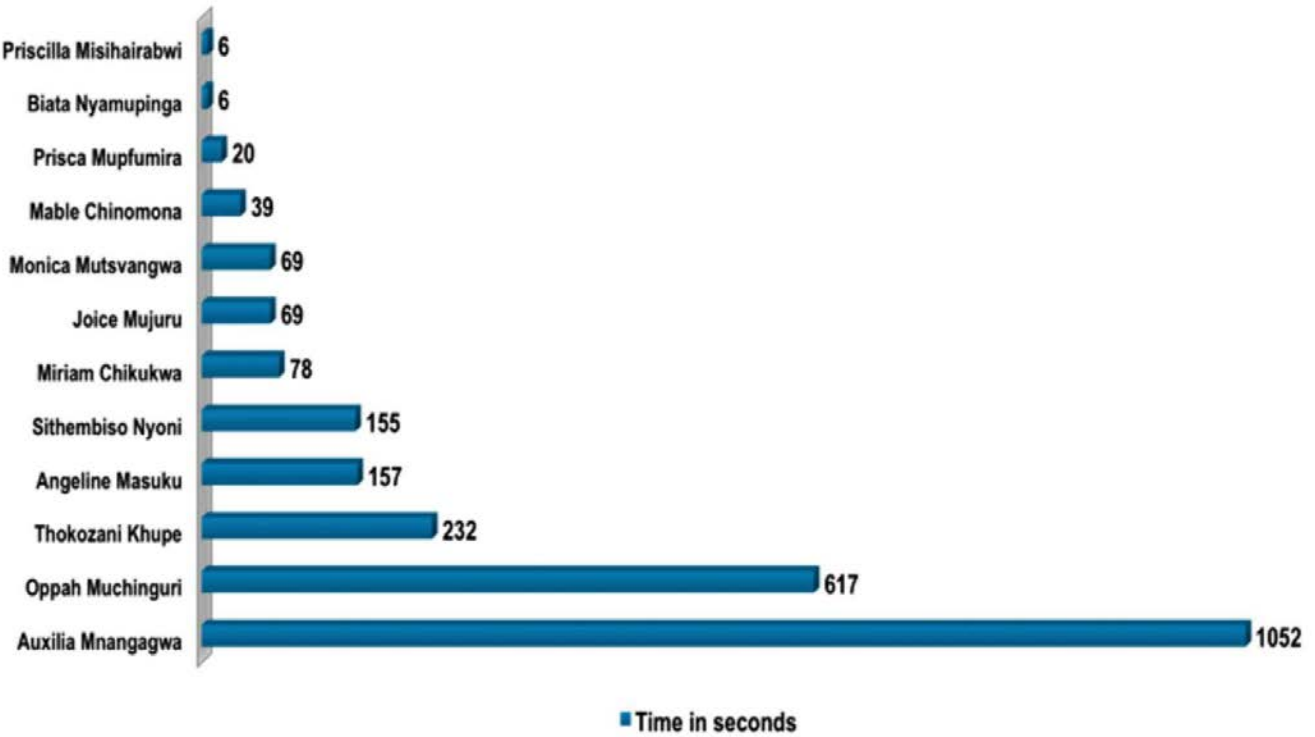
Representation of women by political party in the electronic media leaves a lot to be desired, as it appears to be lopsided in favour of the ruling party. Women from ZANU PF received 88% of the total coverage dedicated to women political actors by the electronic media, followed by MDC-T (9%) and NPP (3%). There is need for the electronic media to stop suppressing the voices of opposition female political actors and broaden its pool of sources.

Electronic media - time dedicated to women political actors by political party (seconds)



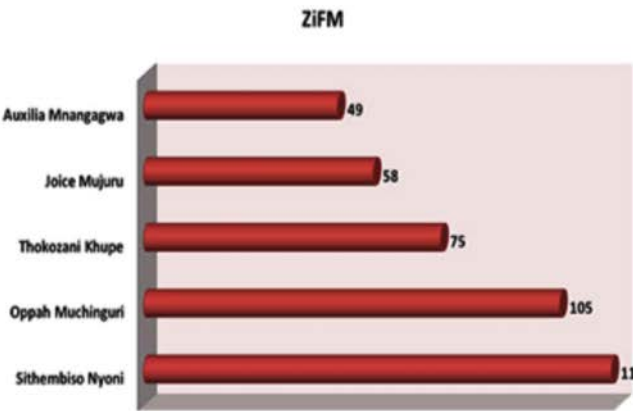
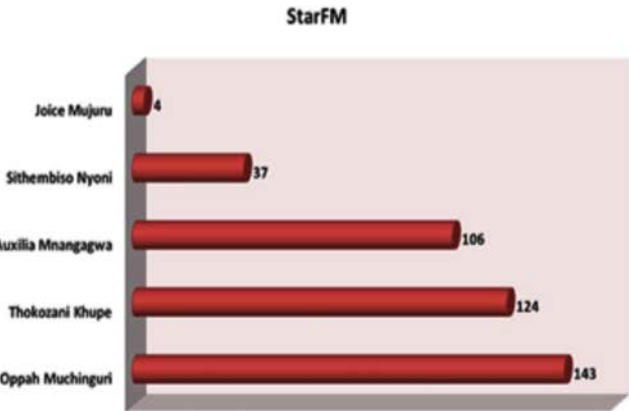
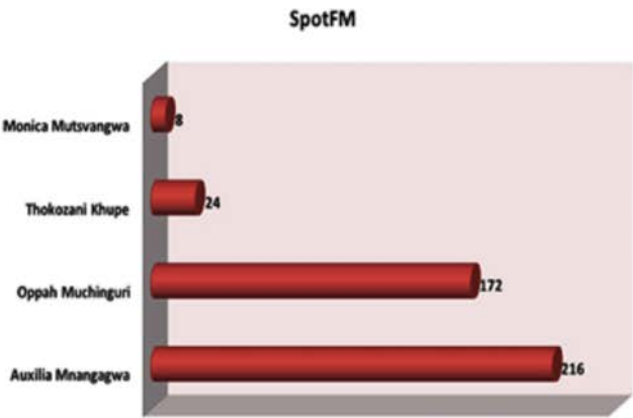
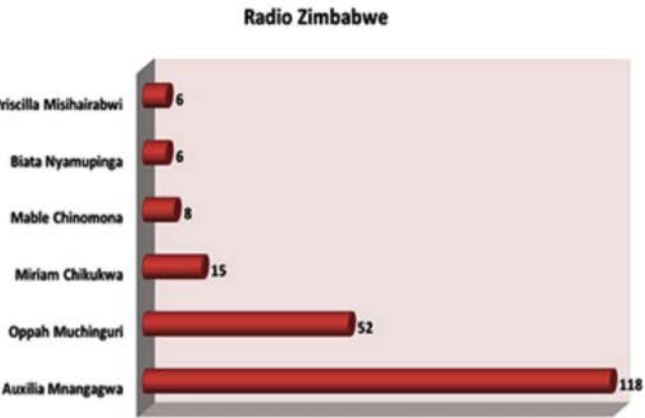
The discrepancy between the number of men and women politicians featured in the news is alarming. Of the 64 political actors covered in the news during the monitored period, only 13 (20%) were women. Of the 13 women, the First lady, Auxillia Mnangagwa, accounted for 42% of the total time dedicated to women.

Total time dedicated to women political actors on radio



Of the radio stations that were monitored, the distribution of women political actors was equally low. Women from ZANU PF were the most visible group in the broadcast media whilst women from the opposition were less visible than in the press.

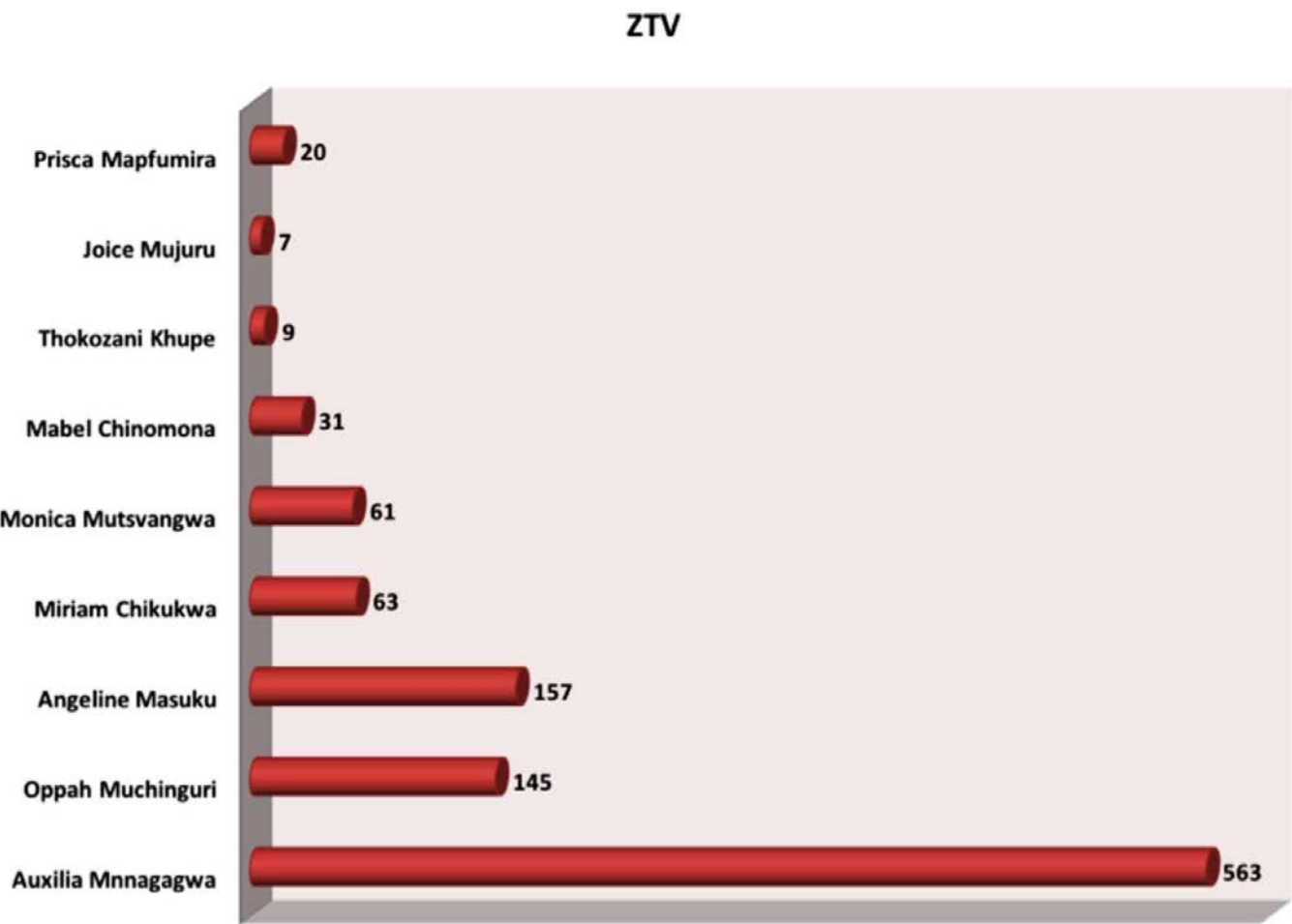
Total time dedicated to women politicians by radio station (seconds)



Just like radio and the print media, women were under represented on ZTV, comprising just 14% of the time allocated to political actors by the national broadcaster. A total of nine women were featured on ZTV during the monitoring period.

The composition of women given prominence by ZTV shows a concerning trend; 66% of the women who were covered by the TV station belonged to ZANU PF. The remainder represented MDC-T, MDC-N and NPP. In terms of time allocated to all women politicians, Auxillia Mnangagwa alone accounted for 53%.

Time dedicated to women politicians on ZTV (in seconds)



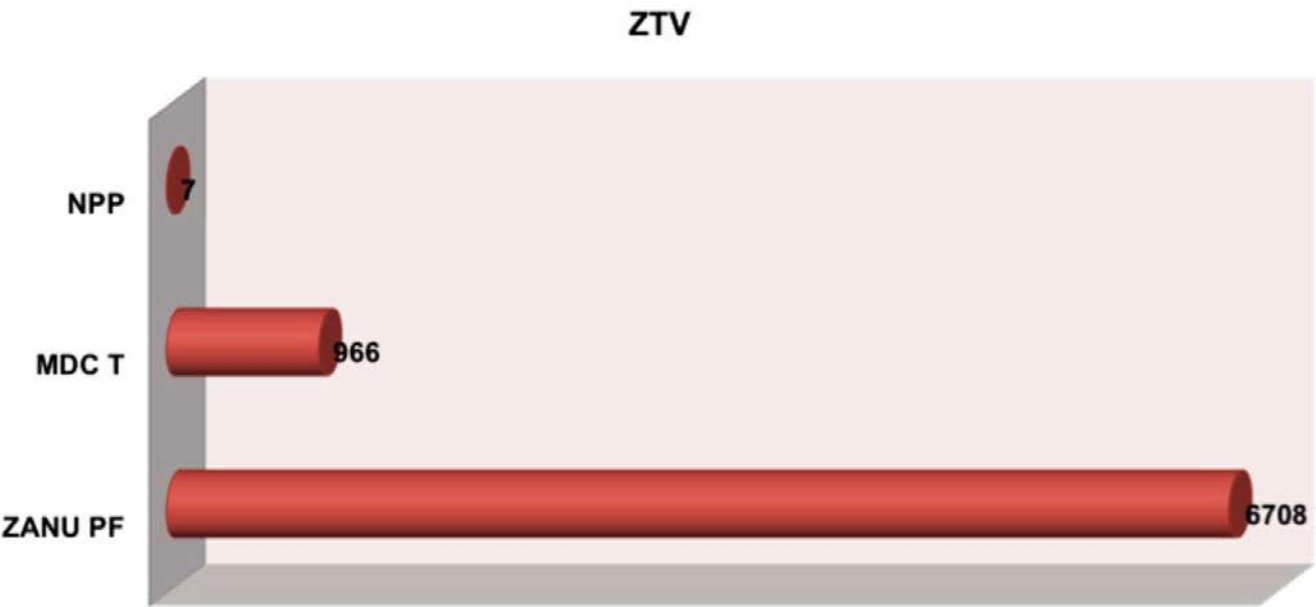
CHAPTER FIVE: MONITORING OF POLITICAL COVERAGE ON ZTV

As the country’s only national public television station, ZTV plays a critical role in weeks leading up to any election. The station has a constitutional obligation to be fair and balanced in its representation of the prevailing electoral environment. This is especially so during the official election period, and entails giving equitable coverage to all the political parties and actors aspiring to take part in the elections, as well as providing citizens with relevant information on the administration of the election. In previous elections, there have been concerns about the partiality of ZTV as it has given greater access to the ruling party at the expense of the opposition parties.¹⁴

5.1 Total time dedicated to different political parties on ZTV

During the period under review, Media Monitors noted that ZTV has a long way to go in terms of representing Zimbabwe’s diverse political landscape and opinion equitably. Only four political parties were represented in its coverage in current affairs programmes and main news bulletins in the monitored time frame. ZANU PF continues to receive significantly more coverage from ZTV than the opposition parties, which is worrying as Zimbabwe prepares for the 2018 elections. A total of 7,681 seconds were dedicated to coverage of political actors. Out of the total time allocated to cover political actors (parties and individual politicians), 87% was awarded to ZANU PF, 12% to MDC-T and the remaining 1% to MDC-N. This trend appears to be in violation of its “equitable and non-partisan” constitutional obligations as a national public broadcaster, let alone professional ethical standards of journalism and news reporting. Since its huge audience - estimated to be up to 3 million viewers - depend on the broadcaster to inform them accurately about the political landscape and the actors taking part in the election, this needs to be rectified swiftly if it is to avoid damaging the credibility of the July 30 elections.

Total time allocated to political parties (parties and politicians) on ZTV (seconds)



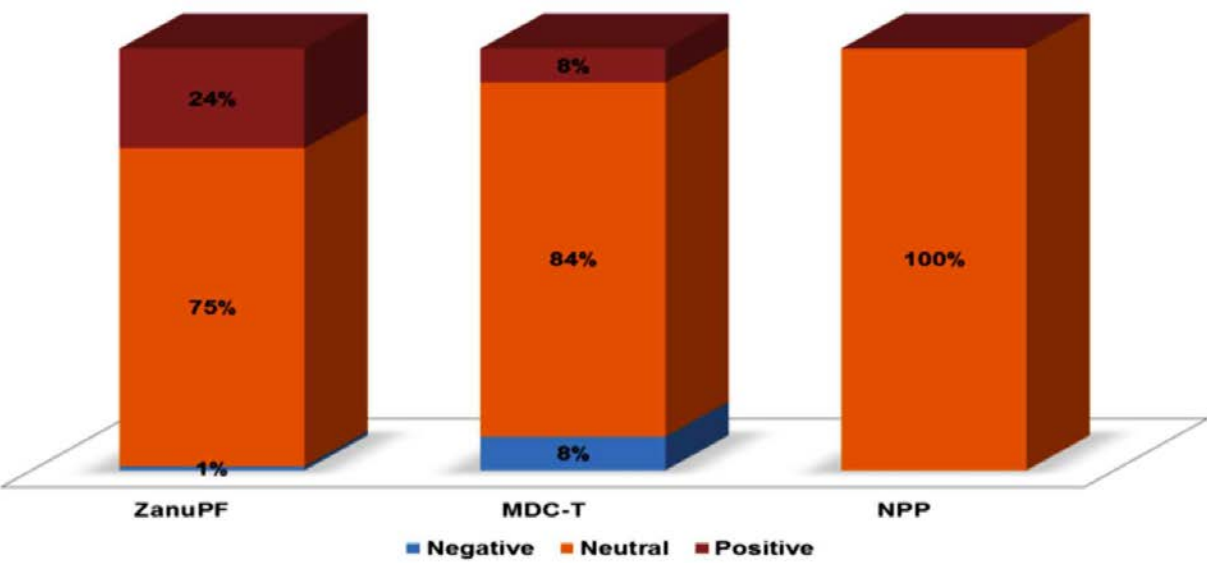
5.2 How were political actors portrayed on ZTV?

The national broadcaster’s reportage of political actors appears to be mostly neutral; 77% of the time dedicated to political actors was neutral, 22% was positive, whilst 1% was negative. A closer look at the station’s portrayal of the political parties shows that ZANU PF received most of the positive coverage on the government-controlled public broadcaster. This shows that the ruling party

14 MMPZ Eye on ZBC 2012-2013

is enjoying the benefits of incumbency from ZTV, as the station is barely critical of the ruling party. However, this is not the case for the opposition parties, particularly the MDC-T, which received the majority of the negative coverage. As was the case on radio, coverage of the opposition was driven by events; political actors from the opposition were rarely allowed to comment on socio-economic developments in the country, which appears to be a preserve of the ruling party.

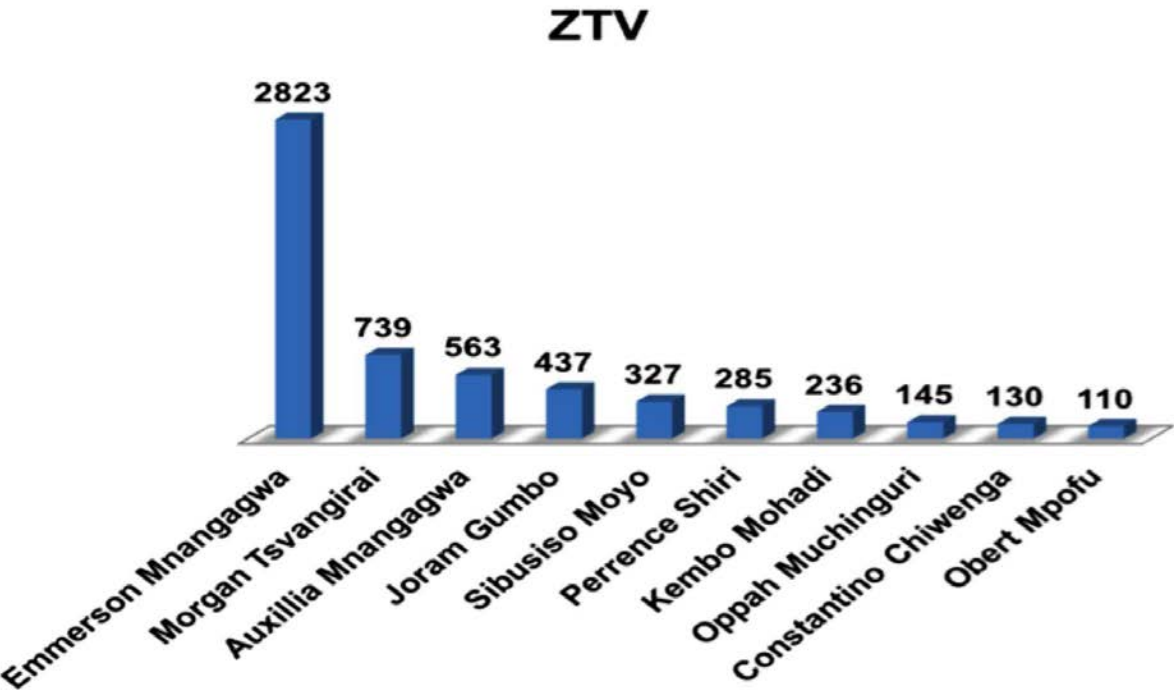
Portrayal of political parties on ZTV



5.3 Individual political actors: allocation of airtime on ZTV

During the monitoring period, political actors from ZANU PF were featured more than other parties’ representatives in ZTV’s coverage. Out of the top 10 political actors featured on ZTV, 87% of the time was dedicated to ZANU PF representatives. The late Morgan Tsvangirai was the only opposition leader in the top 10, accounting for 13% of the time dedicated to the top 10 actors featured on ZTV. And that figure was greatly affected by news of the opposition leader’s death. President Emmerson Mnangagwa was by far the most prominently featured political actor on ZTV’s news, receiving almost four times more airtime than Morgan Tsvangirai.

TV coverage: the 10 most visible individual actors (time in seconds)



CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF ELECTION REPORTING

The aim of this part of the report is to describe and assess media coverage of election-related stories. Media Monitors reviewed news stories published and broadcast in February 2018, applying an ad hoc content analysis form. Monitors produced an assessment for a number of dimensions (accuracy, neutrality separation of facts and opinions, based on fact vs based on personalities, among others), by answering a checklist.

6.1 How factual are the election stories?

In the presentation of news it is essential to present the truth, facts and opinions precisely. In its assessment of the factual content of election reports, Media Monitors highlighted the following indicators:

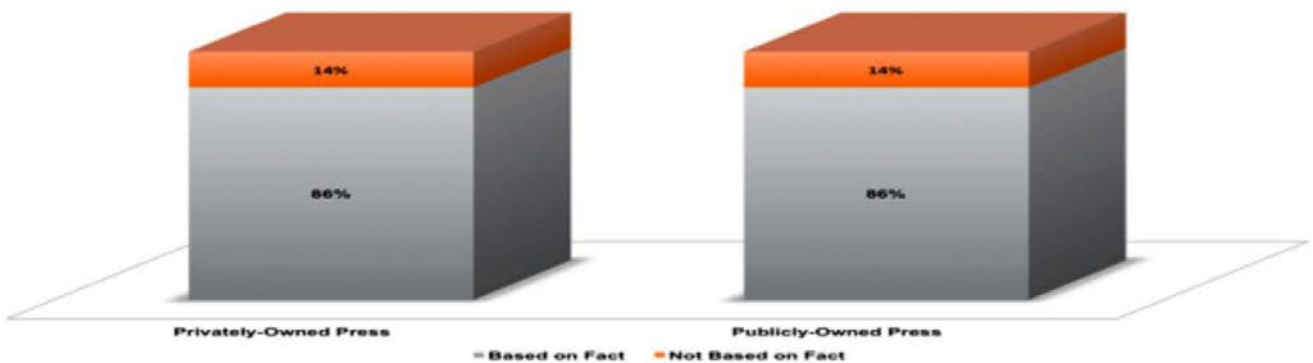
- Is the story well sourced and based on sound evidence?
- Does the story contain rumours/allegations?
- Does the news story contain all the important information?

Reporting in the monitored media was mostly factual with minor infractions triggered by speculation and reliance on single and unnamed sources. Overall, 88% of the recorded stories were factual; the remaining 12% had some factual challenges. The privately owned media carried more reports that lacked factual analysis than the publicly owned media; 15% of their election-related reports were not entirely based on fact, whilst in the state-owned media only 9% of their reports were questionable. This was mainly due to the privately owned media’s reliance on unnamed sources whose submissions could not be corroborated.

6.1.2 How factual are the election stories in the print media?

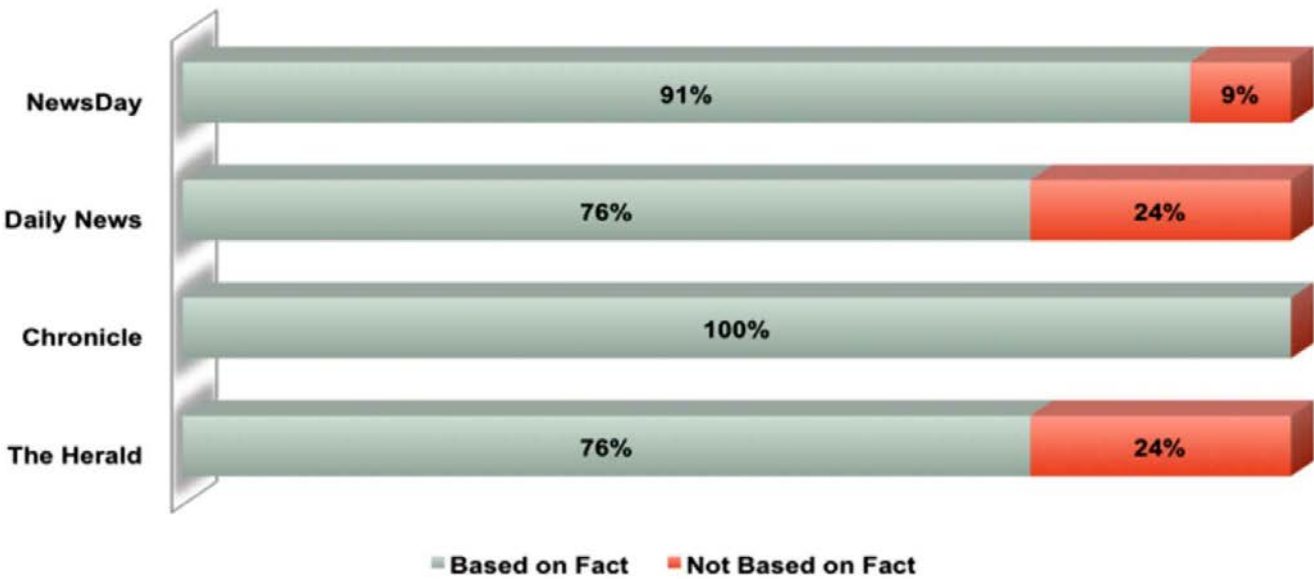
Media Monitors observed that both the government-controlled and privately owned newspapers were at par in terms of reporting factually. Eighty-six percent of their reports were factual whilst the remaining 14% were not.

Fact-based reporting in the print media



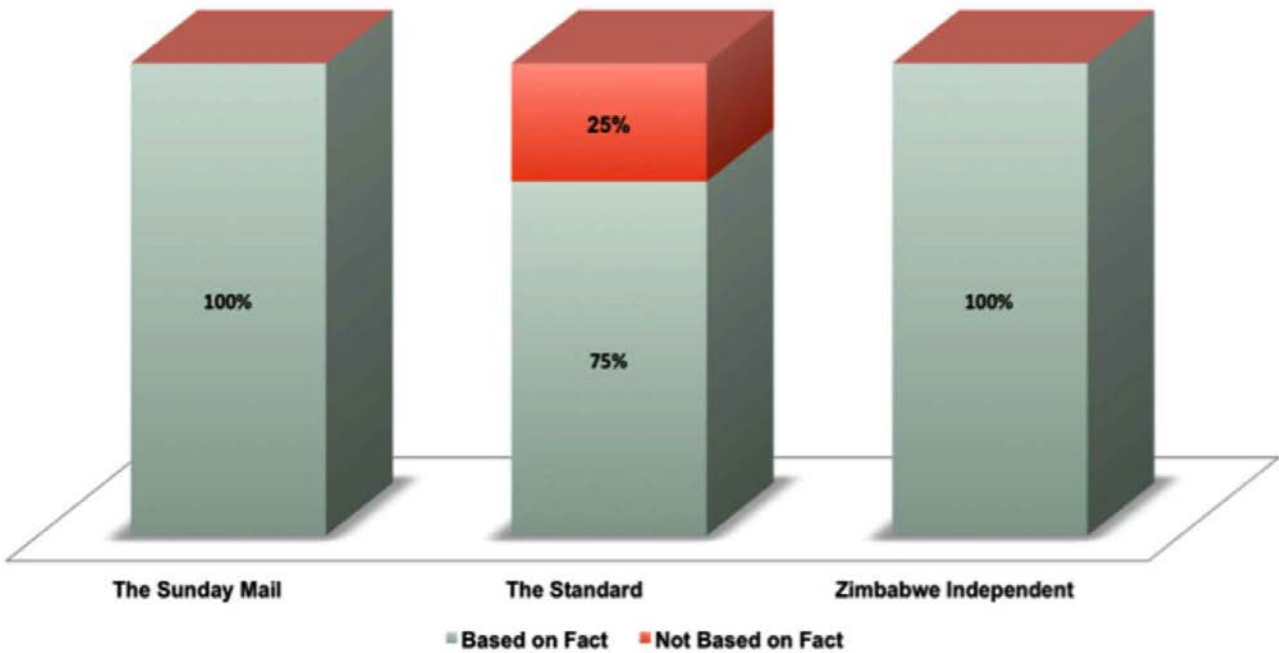
Eighty-six percent of the daily newspapers’ reports were factual whilst the remaining 14% were not factual. The *Daily News* and *The Herald* carried the highest proportion of reports that were not based on fact. Twenty-four-percent of their reports were not entirely fact-based. During the monitoring period the *Chronicle* did not carry any report that was not based on fact.

Level of factual reporting in the daily newspapers



As far as the weeklies are concerned 92% of their reports were based on fact. *The Standard* carried proportionally more coverage of election-related news that was not factual, whilst all of *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Sunday Mail*'s reports were based on verifiable facts in the period under review.

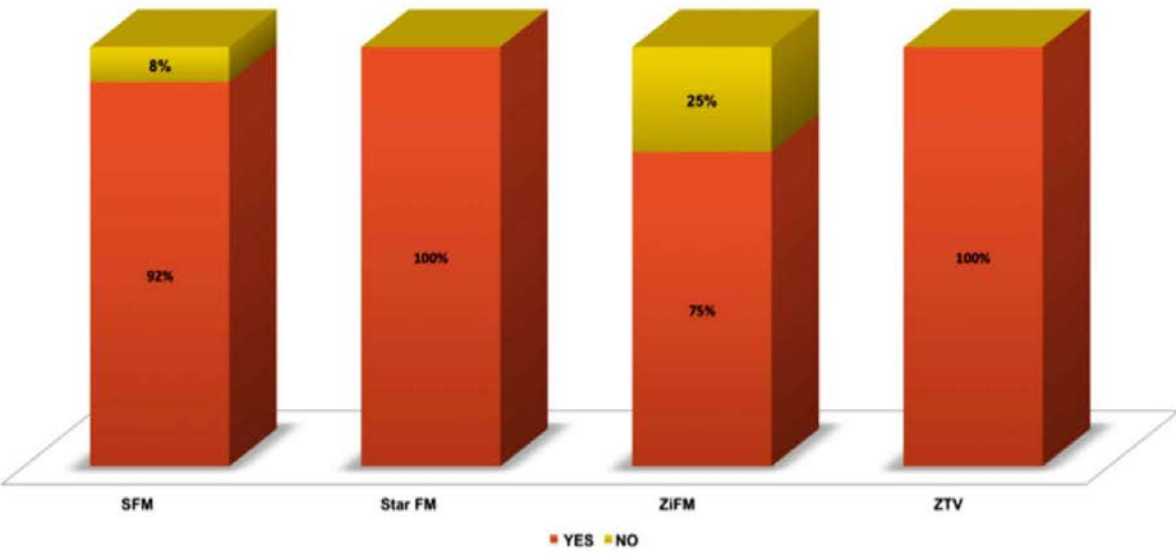
Level of factual reporting in the weekly newspapers



6.1.3 How factual are the election stories in the electronic media?

Reporting in the electronic media was mostly factual. It was mostly based on events and pronouncements by government officials. Ninety-four-percent of the electronic media’s election-related reports were factual and the remaining 6% were not. ZiFM carried relatively more reports that were not entirely factual, followed by SFM. All the election reports on Star FM and ZTV were factual.

Level of factual reporting in the electronic media



6.2 What was the focus of election reports?

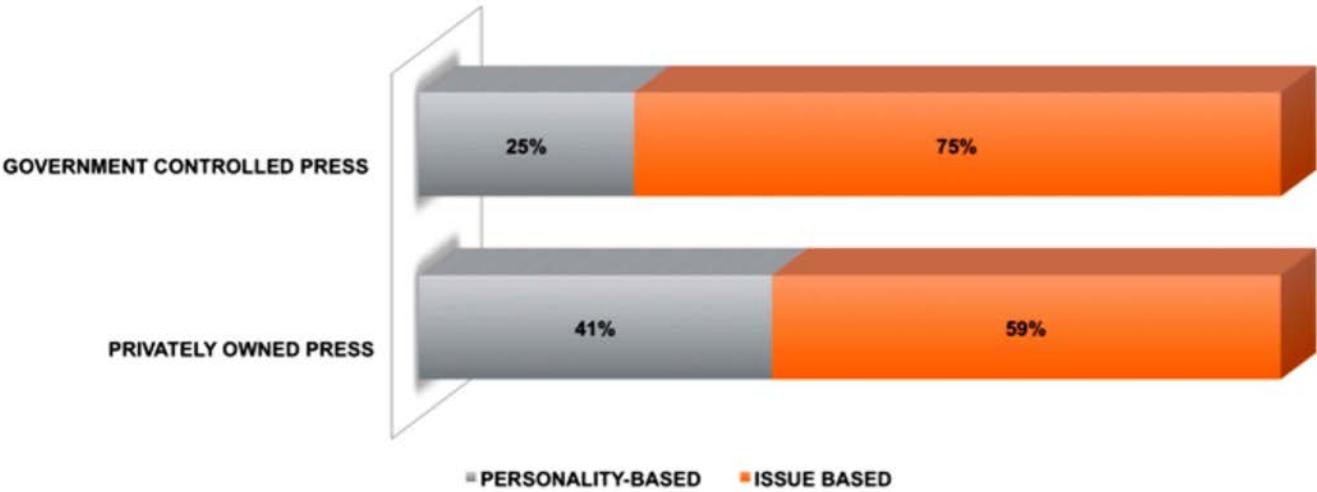
Media have a role to inform the public about matters relevant to the elections, providing political players a platform for issue-based campaigns. In election reporting there should be a balance between election related reports that focus on issues and those that cover personalities. Personality-based reporting enables the readers to have an appreciation of what the political actors are doing, whilst the issue-based reports provide them with relevant information about electoral processes.

During the monitoring period, 70% of the election-related reports monitored were issue-based, whilst the remaining 30% focused on personalities, on internal party dynamics, power struggles between parties. The reports that were personality-based were mostly based on statements made by political actors at rallies or official government events.

6.2.1 What was the focus of election stories in the print media?

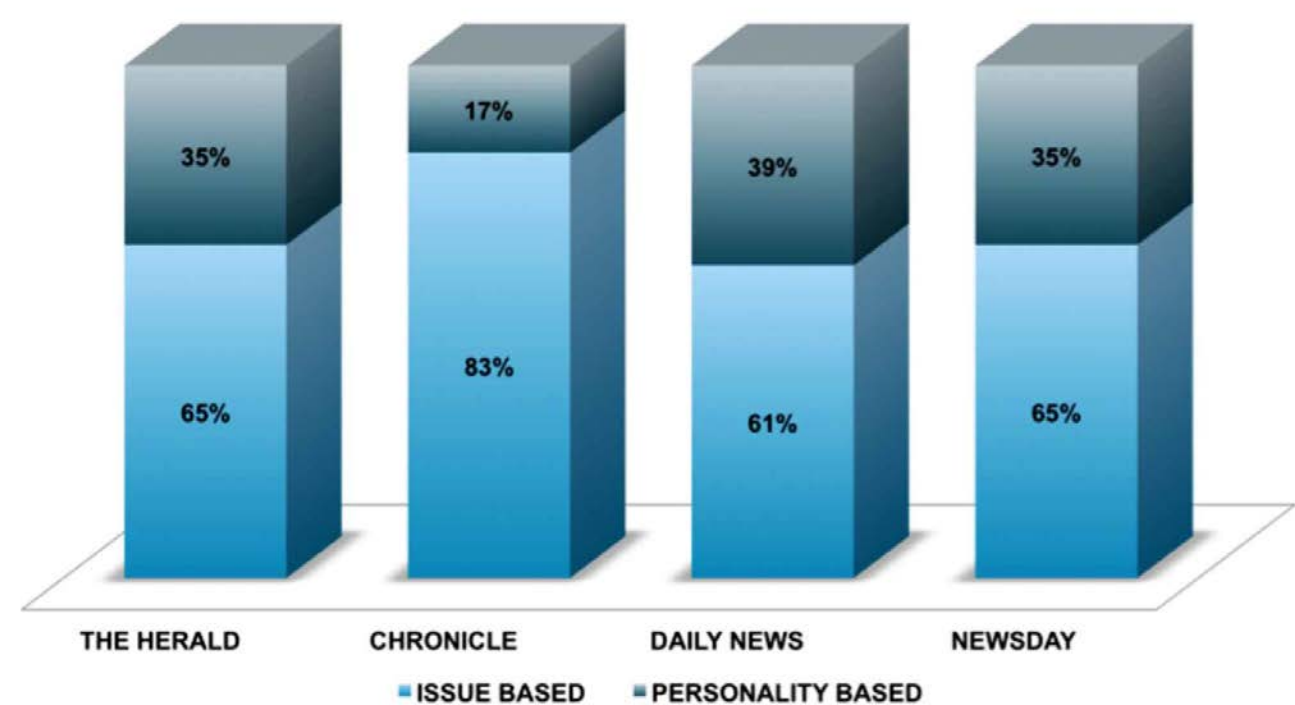
In the press, 75% of the reports were issue-based, whilst the remaining 25% focused on personalities. The privately owned newspapers carried relatively more reports that focused on personalities (41%), whilst the remaining 59% were issue-based.

Story focus in the print media



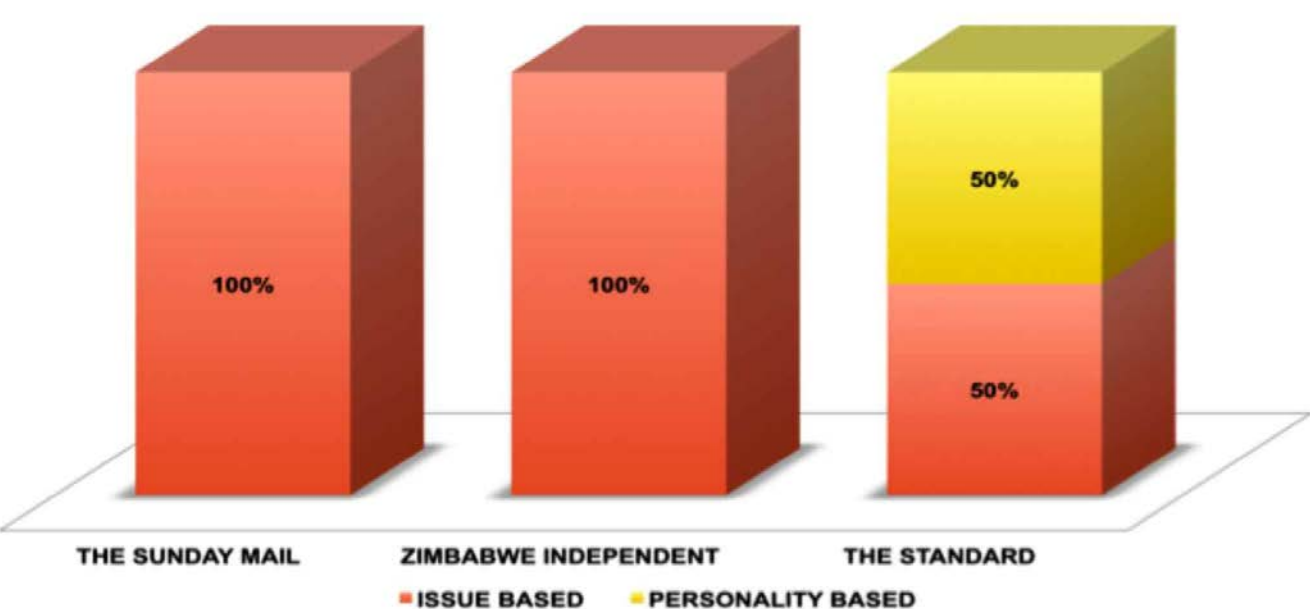
All the daily newspapers carried election reports that were more issue-based rather than on personalities. The *Chronicle* carried the most reports that were issue-focused. This meant it had the least percentage of reports that covered personalities. *Daily News* had the highest focus on personalities. Thirty-nine-percent of its reports focused on personalities.

Focus of reporting in the daily newspapers



Election related coverage in the weekly newspapers was mostly issue based, 83% of their reports focused on election related issues. The remaining 17% was centred on personalities. An individual analysis of the papers shows that all of the election related stories on *The Sunday Mail* and *Zimbabwe Independent* were issue based whilst 50% of *The Standard*’s reports were personality based.

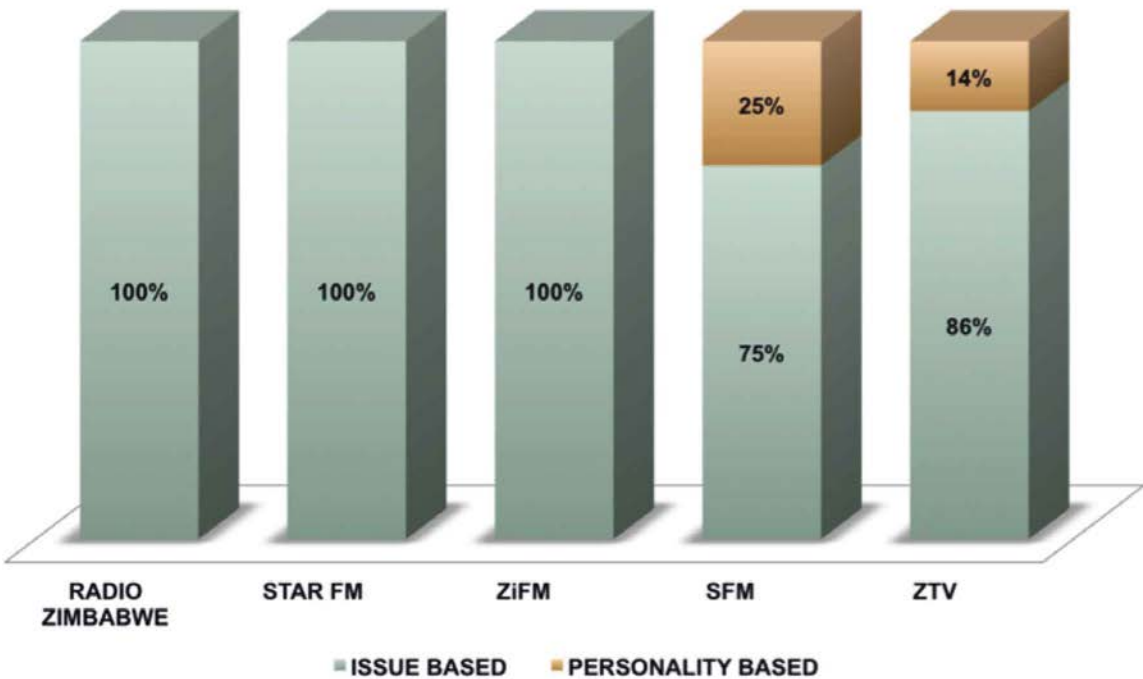
Issue-based reporting in the weekly newspapers



6.2.2 What was the focus of election stories in the electronic media?

The electronic media carried election-related reports that were predominantly issue-based. On average, 92% of their reports focused on issues, while the remaining 8% were personality based. Radio Zimbabwe, Star FM and ZiFM contained reports that were wholly issue-based, whilst SFM and ZTV featured stories that were based on personalities.

Focus of reporting in the weekly newspapers



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COVERAGE OF RALLIES

The media’s preoccupation with sound-bite journalism has affected the coverage of election reporting in Zimbabwe. While much is said at rallies, only controversial and exciting quotes make it into the news media. The media often do not document many issues discussed at these gatherings. This reporting trend deprives Zimbabweans who do not attend the rallies, the opportunity to hear what their prospective leaders have to say. The report below focuses on comments made at a three-day *indaba* titled “*Re-positioning RDCs to spearhead economic transformation in the new dispensation*”. There is no mention or analysis of the strategies discussed to reposition RDCs in the story. However, more focus is placed on encouraging councilors to encourage their wards to vote for President Mnangagwa and ZANU PF in the upcoming elections.

Ensure President, Zanu-PF win elections, RDCs urged

Masvingo Bureau

RURAL district councillors have been urged to put more effort in campaigning for President Mnangagwa in their wards to ensure that he wins emphatically in the forthcoming harmonised elections.

Addressing rural district councils’ chairpersons at an indaba in Masvingo recently, Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe president Councilor Killer Zivhu said councillors should be at the forefront of mobilising rural votes for President Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF.

Clr Zivhu praised councillors for mobilising people in rural areas to register as voters under the Biometric Voter Registration blitz that ended last week.

Clr Zivhu has spearheaded a programme in which ZANU-PF rural district councilors mobilise votes for President Mnangagwa and the party in this year’s harmonised elections.

The councilors were mobilising people in their wards to register as voters under the BVR blitz, and are now urging those who registered to vote for the President and the ruling party.

The campaign programme involves the councilors taking advantage of their usual meetings with people in their wards to campaign for the ruling party.

Rural district council chairpersons were tasked with supervising their councilors to ensure the task is carried out smoothly.

Speaking at the meeting in Masvingo, Clr Zivhu said councilors, since they are involved with the grassroots on a daily basis, were well positioned to attract the attention of people in their wards.

“It should be incumbent upon all RDC councilors to actively participate in all national elections,” he said. “We should campaign vigorously for our President Cde Mnangagwa who is the ZANU-PF presidential candidate until the day before polls so that he wins resoundingly.”

Clr Zivhu said councilors should work hard to bring development to their communities in line with the spirit of the new economic order pronounced by President Mnangagwa.

“As councilors, we should embrace President Mnangagwa’s call for us to work tirelessly for socio-economic development,” he said. “We must send a clear message and play an active role in making sure ZANU-PF maintains supremacy on the local political landscape.”

“ZANU-PF dominates in all RDCs around the country and there is no reason why councilors can fail to effectively mobilise for the party to register a landslide victory in the coming elections.”

The three-day indaba, which was held under the theme “Re-positioning RDCs to spearhead socio-economic transformation in the new dispensation”, was attended by nearly 60 RDC chairpersons from across the country.

The Herald, 15 February 2018

6.3 Clarity: Were reports on elections clear?

News reports should be clear, use simple language and be easily understandable by all media audiences so as not to lead to misinterpretations. In this report key elements of clarity that were assessed include:

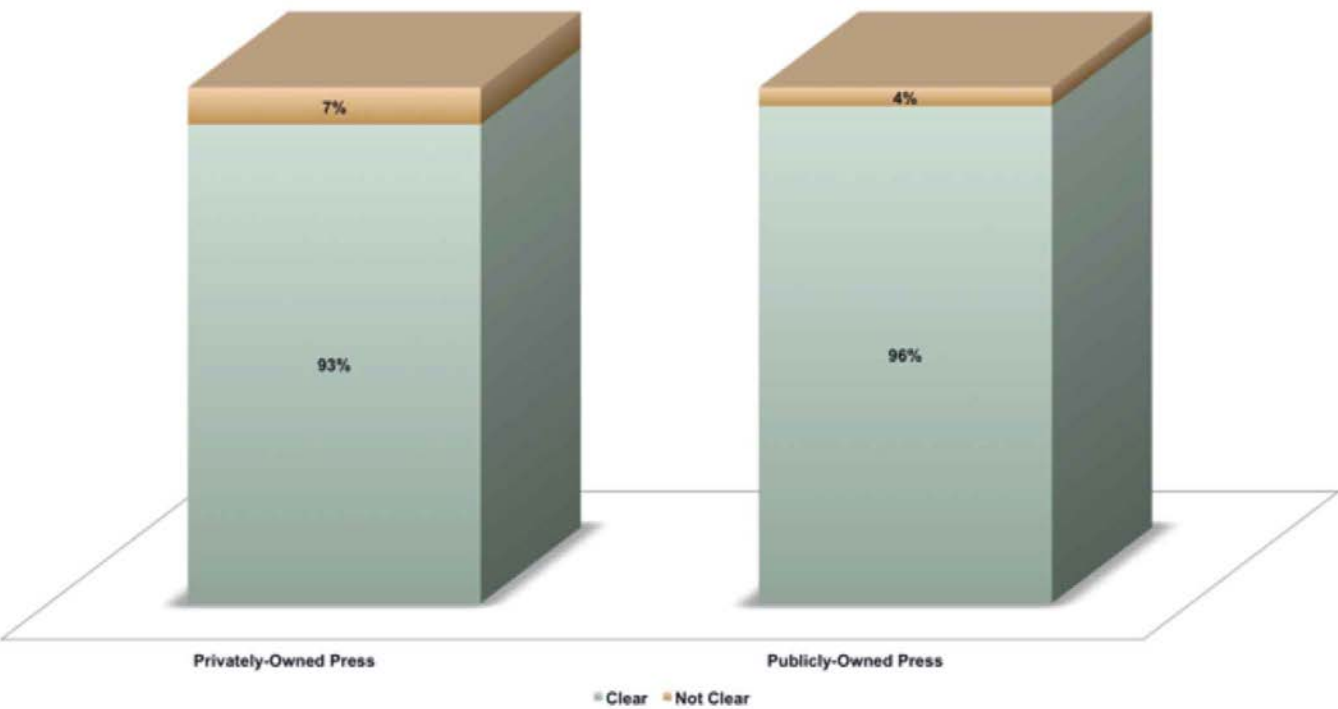
- Is information in the report comprehensive, does it cover every aspect of the issue in question?
- The story avoids any chance of misunderstanding in terms of language used, clarity, and context.
- After reading/watching/listening to the story you understand all the elements of the story.
- Does the news story contain a clear presentation of what the case is?

Clarity was not a major challenge in the election-related stories analysed by the Media Monitors. Ninety-six-percent of the reports monitored clearly articulated election-related news, whilst the remaining 4% was not quite clear.

6.3.1 Clarity of election reports in the print media

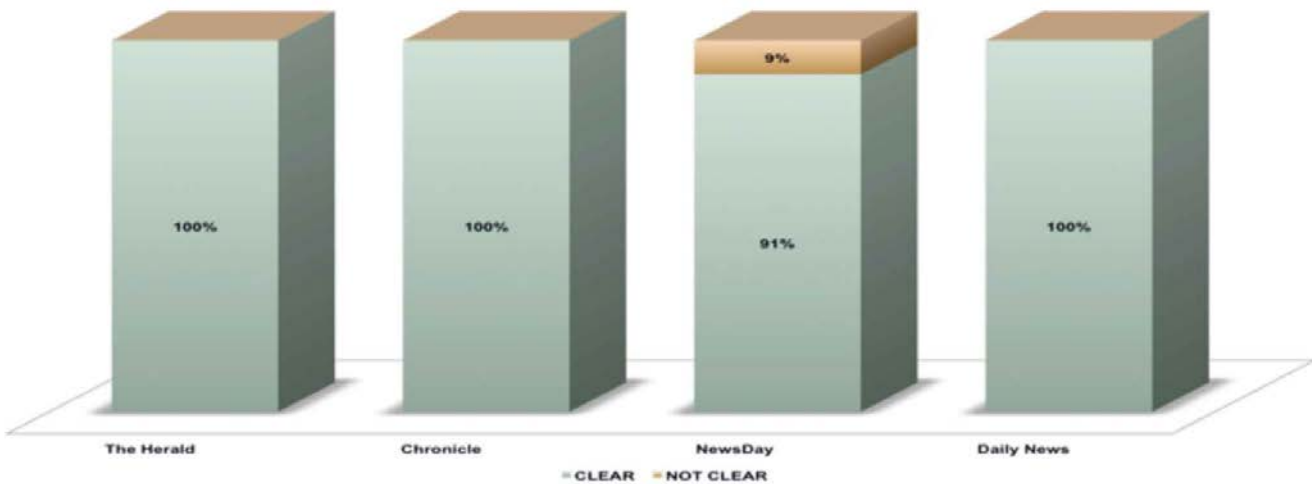
Ninety-five-percent of the print media had no challenges of clarity, only 5% were not clear. The privately owned media had relatively more reports that were unclear at 7% as opposed to 4% in the government-controlled press. Reports that were not clear did not have main ideas that were easily discernible.

Clarity of reports in the print media



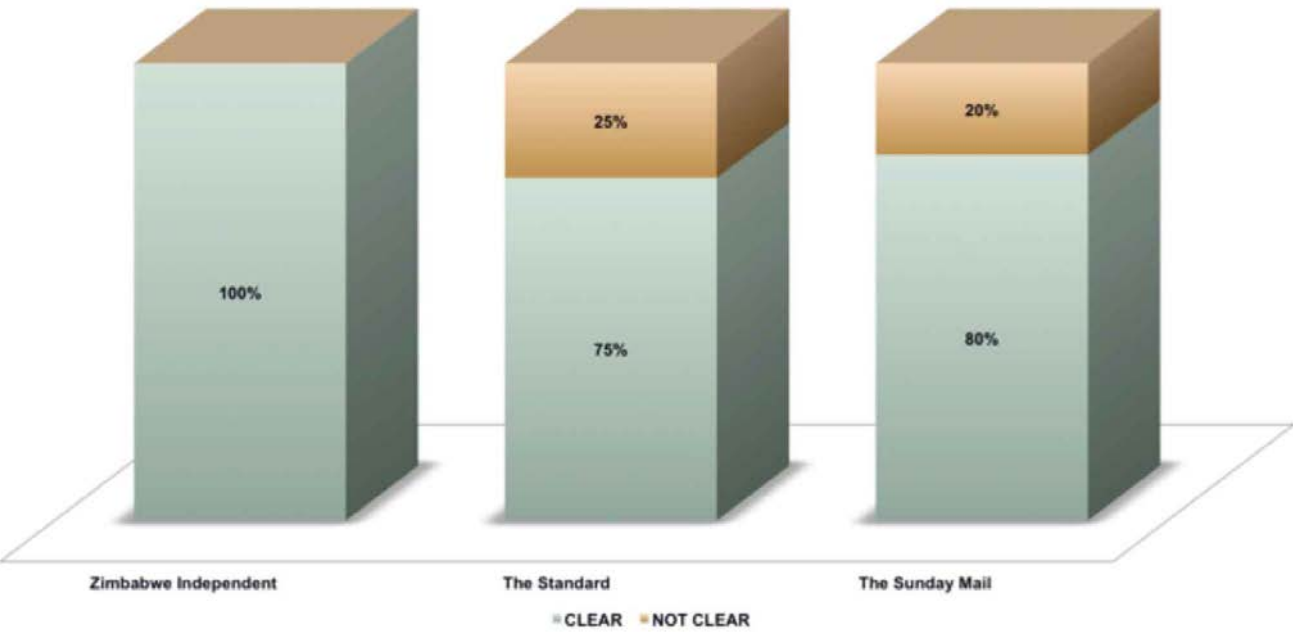
Ninety-eight-percent of the election-related reports in the daily newspapers were clear, only 2% were not. All the reports that were not clear featured in *NewsDay*.

Clarity of election reports in the daily newspapers



The weekly newspapers monitored carried proportionally more reports that did not meet the standards of clarity. Combined, 85% of their reports lacked clarity. *The Standard* (25%) and *The Sunday Mail* (20%) carried reports that lacked clarity, whilst *Zimbabwe Independent* did not carry any reports that were unclear.

Clarity of election reports in the daily newspapers



6.3.2 Clarity of election reports in the electronic media.

All reports that were recorded in the all-electronic media outlets clearly articulated the issues they covered.

6.4 Accuracy: How accurate were election reports in the media?

According to the BBC Editorial Guidelines, accuracy means not only getting the objectively verifiable ‘facts’ right - names, places, dates of birth, quotes, the results of sporting fixtures - but accurately reporting opinions expressed by those being reported on. In measuring accuracy of election reports Media Monitors looked at the following parameters:

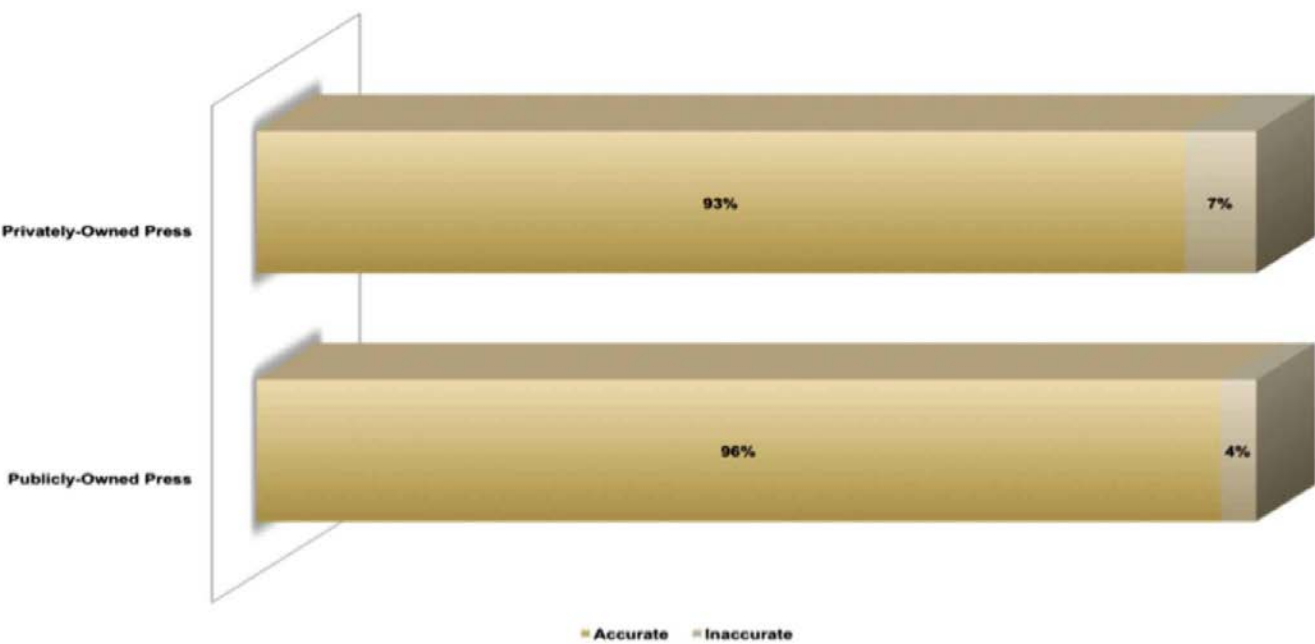
- Everything that is reported must be described accurately - the spelling of the candidates’ names, the words they use and the precise numbers and descriptions of people, places and things.
- Is key information such as figures, data, names, surveys, and statistics precisely reported?
- Are first-hand and second-hand sources clearly distinguished?
- Is the story based on credible and reputable sources?
- Is the story based on objectively verifiable facts?
- Are the opinions expressed accurately reported?
- Are the quotes clearly put in the context/circumstances of when the quote was given?

During this monitoring cycle 96% of the reports that were monitored were accurate, whilst the remaining 4% were not.

6.4.1 How accurate were election stories in the print media?

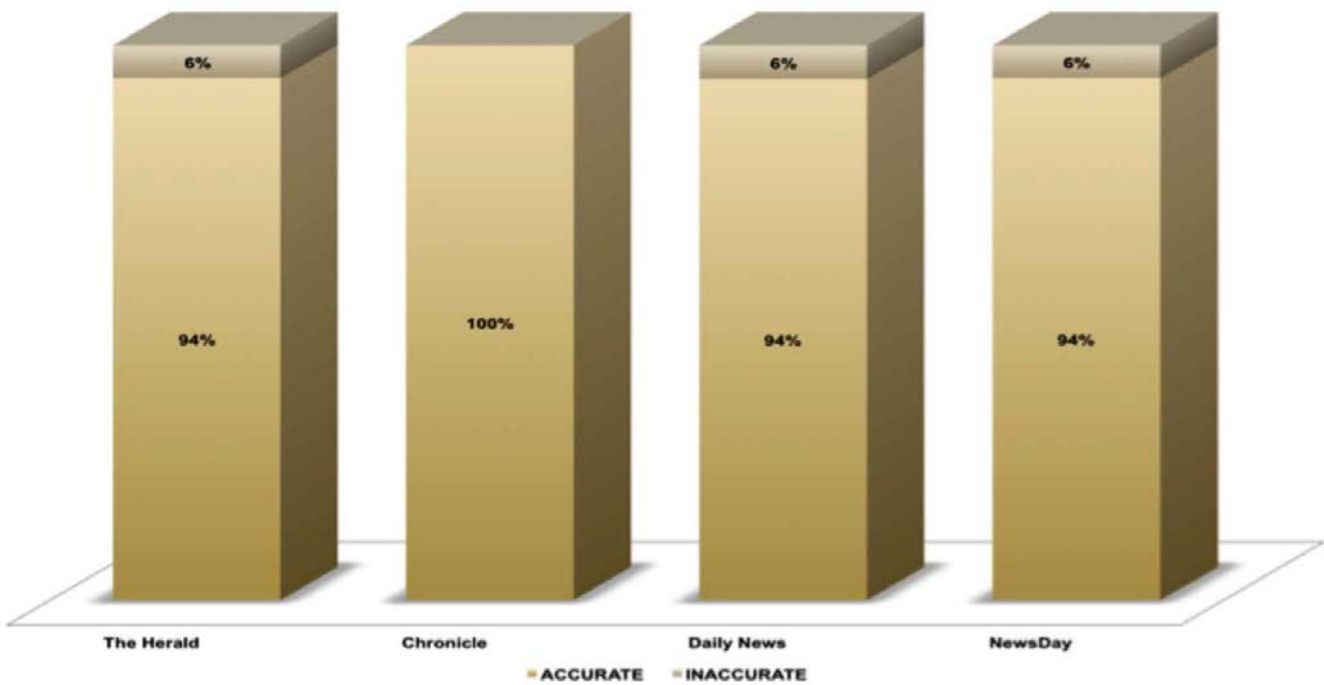
Reporting in the print media was generally accurate, where statistics, dates and names were concerned, 94% of the monitored reports were consistent in this regard. Only 6% contained inconsistencies. Of the inconsistencies that were observed in the press, the privately owned media contained more reports that were not accurate.

Accuracy of reports in the print media.



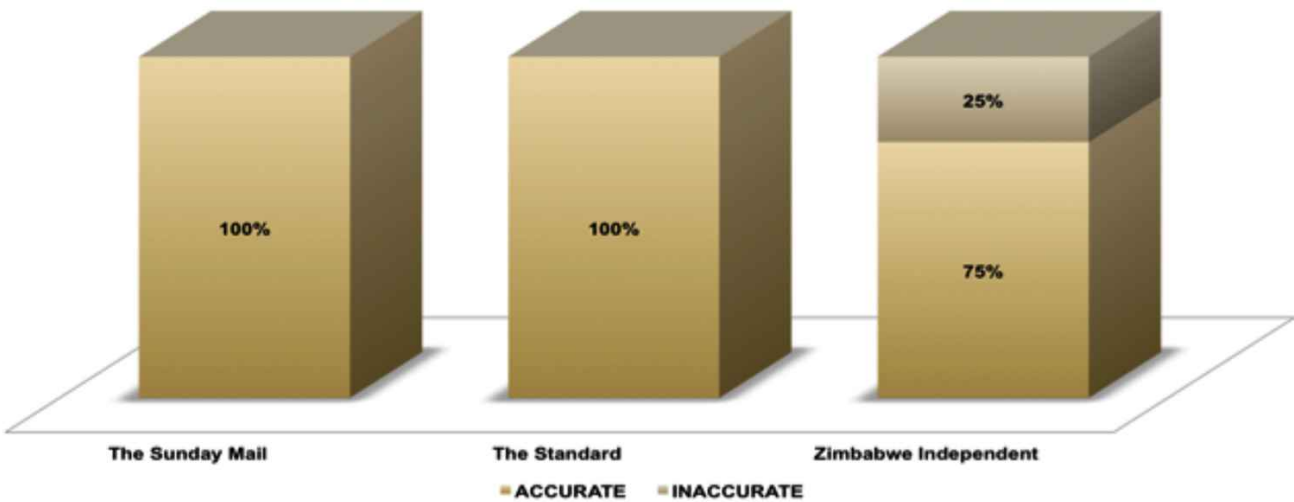
Ninety-six-percent of the election-related reports in the daily newspapers were accurate, while the remaining 4% contained inconsistencies. Six percent of the reports in *The Herald*, *Daily News* and *NewsDay* did not meet the requisite standards for accuracy. These reports lacked precision in terms of statistics, names and dates. During the monitoring period, *Chronicle* did not carry any reports that were inaccurate.

Accuracy of election stories in daily newspapers



Accuracy of reports in the weeklies was slightly lower than that of the dailies even though two of the monitored weeklies did not contain election-related reports that were inaccurate. Twenty-five-percent of *Zimbabwe Independent's* reports was inaccurate. However, it should be noted that even though the weeklies had a lower average in terms of accuracy, the dailies carried numerically more reports that were inaccurate.

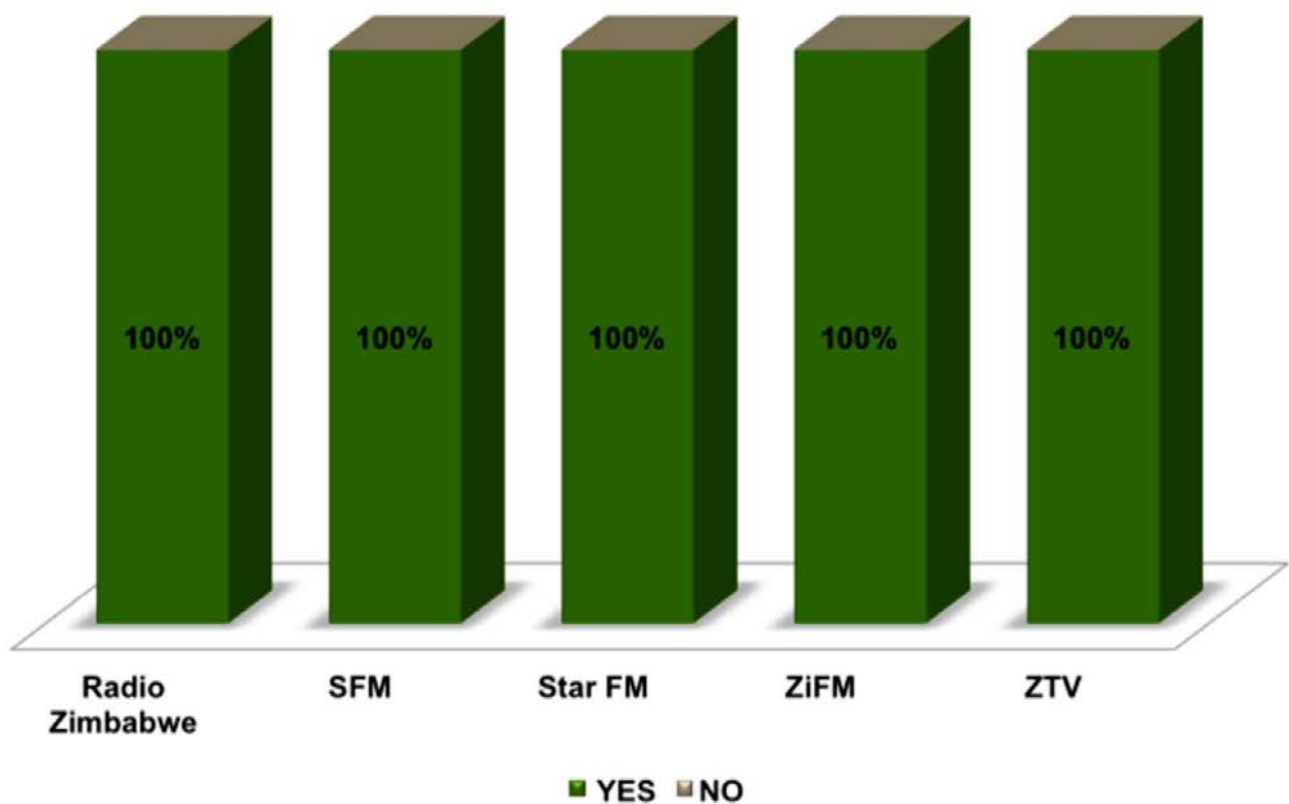
Accuracy of election stories in weekly newspapers



6.4.2 How accurate were election stories in the electronic media?

All the reports recorded in the electronic media were accurate as they provided key information for their audiences to understand the sense of the issues raised.

Accuracy of election stories in the electronic media



6.5 Neutrality in election reporting

The media should be an impartial observer of electoral processes. They have an ethical obligation to objectively document and disseminate election-related news without exhibiting any bias. Media Monitors used the following parameters to gauge the level of neutrality in the monitored stories;

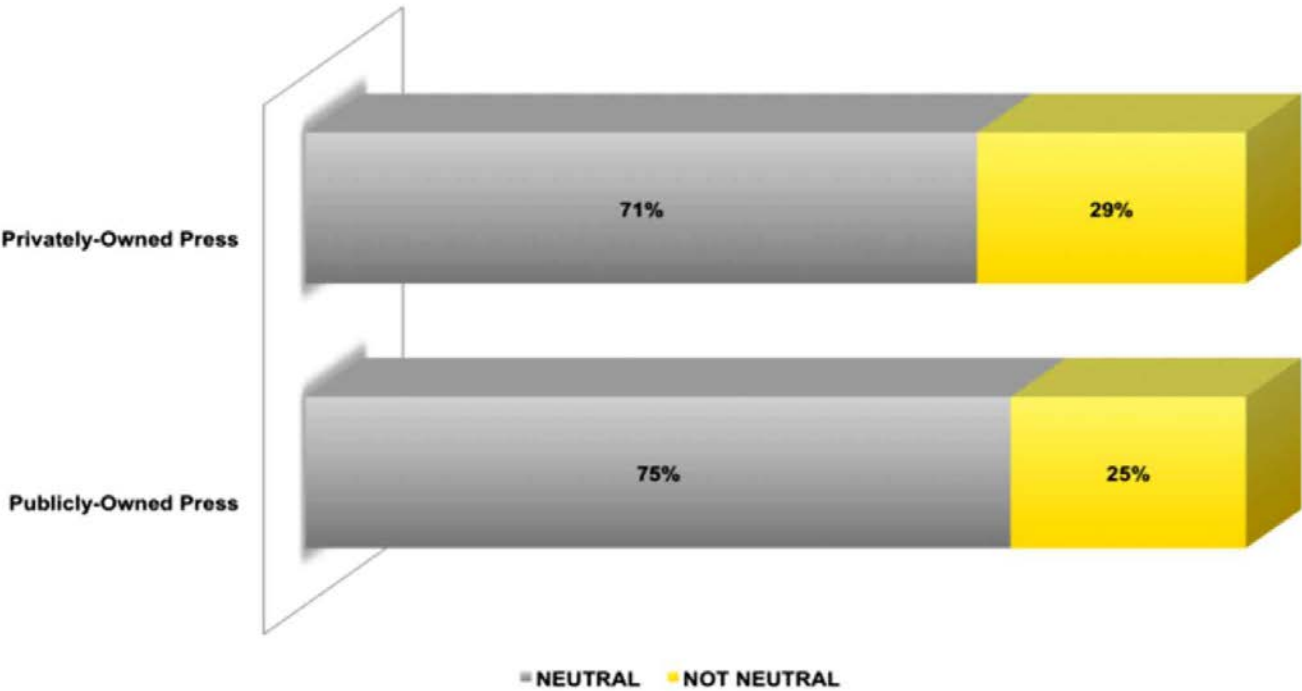
- Is a wide range of significant views given due weight and prominence, particularly when the controversy is active?
- Are opinions or conjectures clearly distinguished from facts?
- Do journalists maintain impartiality and avoid taking a side in controversial issues?
- Does the story give people, companies, organisations or sides, the chance to answer any charges levelled against them?
- Does the journalist present facts and stories with a proportional emotion, without excessive sensationalism that could overshadow critical analysis?

The question of neutrality remains a contentious issue in the Zimbabwean media as both the privately owned and government controlled media exhibit signs of significant bias in their coverage. Media Monitors observed that 75% of election-related stories monitored were neutral whilst the remaining 25% fell short of the set parameters.

6.5.1 How neutral were election reports in the press?

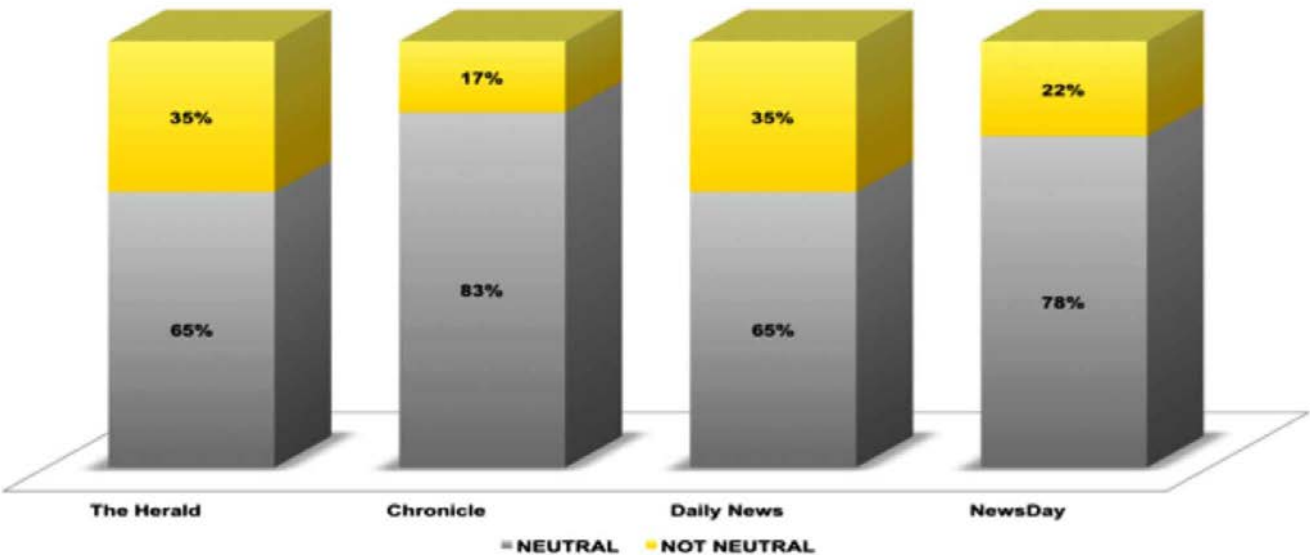
The monitored newspapers had a major challenge in terms of neutrality, 27% of the recorded reports were not objectively presented. The privately owned press appears to be less impartial than the government controlled press; 29% of their reports were not neutral, as opposed to 25% in the government-controlled press. Most of the reports that were not neutral did not give accused persons the right of reply.

Impartiality of reports in the press



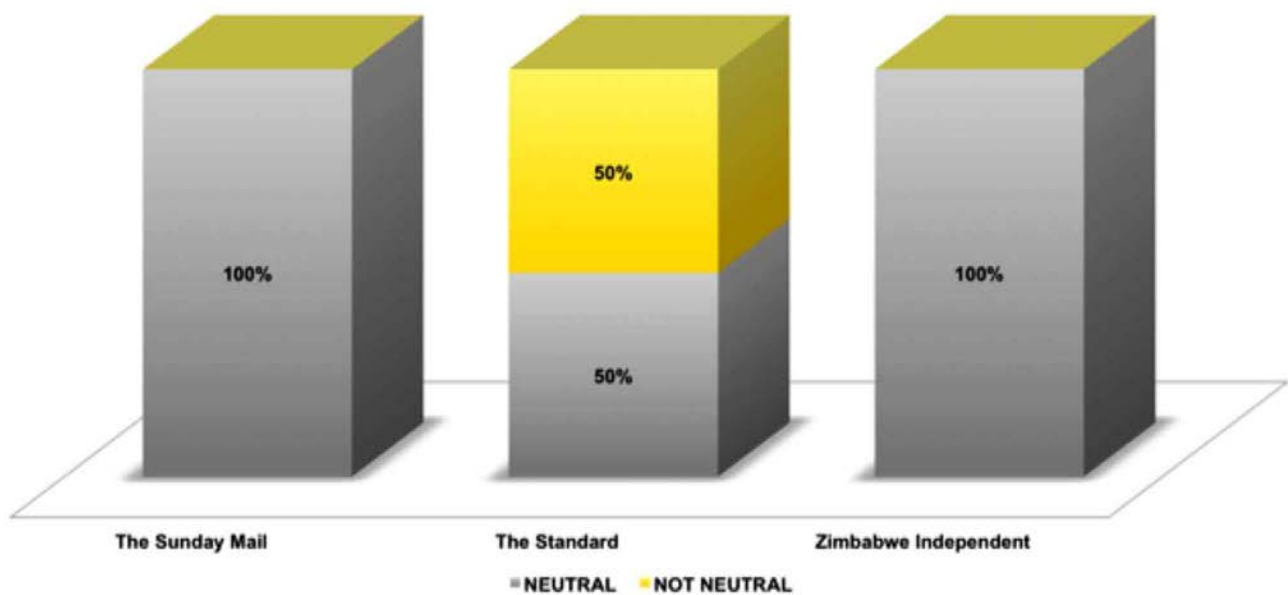
The *Daily News* and *The Herald* carried the most reports that were not neutral, 35% of their reports lacked objectivity. *NewsDay* was a distant third with 22% followed by the *Chronicle* (17%). One of the indicators of a lack of neutrality in the government-controlled newspapers is the papers’ inability to interrogate the ruling party’s activities as much as they covered conflict in the opposition parties. The privately owned media did not fare much better, as they were too critical of government without focusing more on the positive steps being taken to plan the upcoming elections.

Neutrality of election reports in the daily newspapers



Eighty-three-percent of the election reports in the weeklies were neutral, whilst the remaining 17% were not neutral. *The Standard* carried the highest proportion of reports that were not neutral, 50% of its reports were not objectively presented. *The Sunday Mail* and the *Zimbabwe Independent* were neutral in their coverage of election-related stories.

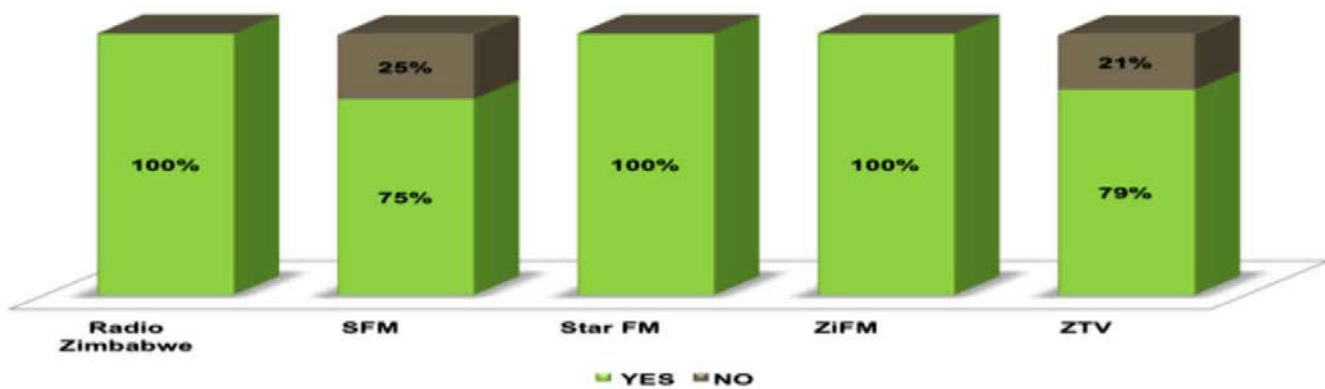
Neutrality of election reports in the weekly newspapers



6.5.2 How neutral were election reports in the electronic media?

As far as broadcasters are concerned, Radio Zimbabwe, Star FM and ZiFM only carried election reports that were neutral. SFM on the other hand featured 75% that were neutral. The national television broadcaster, ZTV featured 79% reports that were neutral whilst 21% of its stories were not neutral.

Neutrality of election reports in the electronic media



The reports on SFM and ZTV that were tagged as not neutral lacked objectivity in terms of analysis. The two channels carried reports that were selectively sourced to portray ZANU PF in a positive light. These reports quoted sources that are known to support the ruling party, which made them, appear to be like PR pieces. Below is a list of headlines from the two stations.

SFM

- ZILWACO rallies behind Mnangagwa in upcoming elections - (17/2/18)
- ZANU PF youth working with all structures to win elections - (17/2/18)
- ZICOSU and Zanu PF Youth League welcomes the Chitepo ideological school and have started campaigning for the president. - (18/2/18)

ZTV

- ZANU PF youths launch EDhasmyvote campaign - (11/2/18)
- Children of war vets support ED - (19/2/18)

6.6 Hate speech in the media’s coverage of elections

Hate speech can be defined as “speech intended to foster hatred against individuals or groups based on race, religion, gender, sexual preference, place of national origin, or other improper classification.” This category includes: inflammatory language, incitement to violence, and discrimination. When tracking hate speech in the news, Media Monitors looked at the following parameters:

- Does the story contain elements harming or aggravating religious, racial, political or ethnic sensitivities?
- Any items containing explicit incitement to violence, discrimination based on gender, ethnic or religious factors, defamation or xenophobia

Hate speech does not raise concerns in the monitored period. Ninety-six-percent of the monitored election-related stories analysed did not contain any instance of hate speech or inflammatory language;

Four articles appeared to be critical in terms of language used: three of them were found in the private daily *NewsDay* and one in the *Daily News*. The papers’ attitude towards hatespeech was mostly passive as they were bystanders in 50% of the reports and accomplices to perpetrators of hatespeech in 25%. *NewsDay* challenged the use of hatespeech in one of its reports.

Hate speech recorded in the print media

Publication/ Date	Headline	Type of hate speech	Speaker	Target	Quotation	Media’s attitude
<i>NewsDay</i> (14/2)	<i>Stop hate speech, derogatory slogans: Heal Zimbabwe</i>	Discrimination	President Emmerson Mnangagwa - Politician	Political actors	On February 7, 2018 while addressing a rally in Guruve, President Emmerson Mnangagwa chanted a slogan " pasi nezvimbwasingata, pasi nemhandu ". (<i>Down with greedy dogs that follow anyone for meat. Down with our enemies</i>)	Challenger
<i>NewsDay</i> (20/2)	<i>Tsvangirai memorial turns into Chamisa rally</i>	Discrimination	Clarckson Chimenda -Civil Society	Robert Mugabe - Politician	Chimenda called for unity in honour of Tsvangirai who he said chose to work with the “devil” in reference to former President Robert Mugabe	Bystander
<i>NewsDay</i> (23/2)	<i>MDC-T violence: Let’s call a spade a spade</i>	Discrimination	Conway Tutani - Columnist	MDC youth Political actors	These are the real political idiots, not the reference to President Emmerson Mnangagwa supporters as “ <i>EDiots</i> ”.	Accomplice
<i>Daily News</i> (14/2)	<i>Zapu, Zanu PF clash over voter slips</i>	Calls for violence	Ndodana Moyo -Politician	ZANU PF Political actors	<i>“It is against the spirit of free and fair elections as provided by the constitution. However, this time around ZANU PF will not have it easy as they are used to run over the MDCs. ZAPU matches them man-to-man and will never have their nonsense. Our ZIPRA veterans are already on the ground to protect all citizens.”</i>	Bystander

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

As Zimbabwe prepares for the 2018 elections the media must ensure election coverage is fair and balanced and be devoid of hate speech in line with constitutional, legal and professional obligations. The state of election coverage in Zimbabwe's mainstream media falls short of the ideals of election reporting. Analysis of coverage of elections by the media reveals an uneven playing field for political players, as platforms do not allow political players to present their issues in a fair and equitable manner.

While a regulatory framework on the media that guide media conduct during elections exists, specifically; The Constitution of Zimbabwe, the 2013 Electoral Act and Statutory Instrument 33 of 2008 - Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Media Coverage of Elections) Regulations; gaps in the regulations, and their monitoring and implementation mechanisms have resulted in continued skewed coverage of elections in Zimbabwe.

To date, the two largest political parties ZANU PF and MDC T receive the majority of coverage with 94% of all news and current affairs programming on elections focusing on the two parties. ZBC is still heavily biased in favor of ZANU PF as 87% of all news and current affairs programmes focusing on elections were on this party. The state controlled broadcasters and newspapers appear to have endorsed ZANU PF as the party they will back in the upcoming election; while private media appear to be serving the interests of the opposition. There is very low representation of women political players in the media. Just 10% of the total space in the media is dedicated to women and only 13% of all voices of political players are women.

The media news agenda in Zimbabwe focuses on those in power or those vying for power. There was little in the media that sought to analyse or interpret the meaning of pertinent election related developments that occurred during the monitoring period. The baseline study noted a high focus on politics which accounted for 56 % of the stories. Of these, 57 % were on internal party politics and disputes while 18% were on elections. Fifty-nine-percent of the election related stories were on party campaigns.

Neutrality was the most problematic aspect of professional reporting on election. Reporting patterns on elections in Zimbabwe reflect lack of balance in the various media as 25% of reports take sides on controversial issues. Some reports are emotional, give one side to a story, or excessively negative against one party.

To address some of the challenges noted in media coverage, it is important to review the legislative and institutional framework that regulates coverage of political players during elections.

Media ownership and impact on election reporting

Ownership patterns of the media show domination by the state through ZBC and Zimpapers. ZBC is entirely state owned) and Zimpapers is 51% state owned through a public trust (ZMMT). While there is relative freedom to operate in the print media, broadcast media is dominated by the state or in some cases proprietors with links to the ruling party. Trends in reporting reflect that the state-owned media have a heavy bias towards the ruling party (ZANU PF) and covers any opposition party much less. Reporting of the main opposition parties generally tends to be negative. The lack of diversity in media ownership, with the state dominating ownership of all media platforms affects reporting patterns. There is need for licensing of more media, especially in the broadcast sector, which would ensure diverse voices and opinions are presented to the public.

Effective monitoring by ZEC and the other commissions of these media would need to recognize the nature of the media and their varying obligations to the public. While ZBC is clearly state owned, ownership and control of Zimpapers is much less transparent. It would therefore be useful to define how the various media are required to behave, particularly state controlled media. Election coverage regulation would need to adequately define what media would be required to behave in what manner. Conditions could be set for:

- The public broadcaster's radio and television stations
- Broadcast media that is partially state owned/controlled
- Private commercial radio

- Local commercial radio
- Private print media
- Print media that is partially owned/controlled by the State

Election period and coverage

While the amended Electoral Act has indicated that monitoring of elections would be done six months prior to the election, this would only work when the election day is known well in advance. Speculation on election dates for 2018 only came to an end upon announcement of the election date two months ahead of the election in 2018. It would therefore be useful for the country to pre-determine election dates that allow the media to be monitored and any breaches sorted out in a timeous manner. It still remains unclear when regulations on the media would come into effect.

The baseline report noted that election reporting happens outside an “official” election period and therefore it is important to understand whether regulations would cover stories outside this period. Defining the election period also assists to define responsibility in monitoring the media among the different media commissions, other regulatory bodies and the election management body.

Defining “fair” and “equitable” coverage

The definition of fair and equitable coverage remains unclear given the nature of Zimbabwe’s politics and the number of political parties that participate in elections. While media reports place the actual number of parties who have registered to participate in the 2018 elections at +/-130, the media covers only about 14% of these parties. The statutory instrument indicates that “equitable” does not mean equal, but it falls short on defining how a media will determine what would be equitable coverage when there is this multiplicity of political parties or players. Reporting by the media shows that only the “main” political parties or those that have participated in elections before are covered significantly by the media. Regulations would therefore need to define in more detail issues of fairness, proportionality and equitability to guide the media in their work.

Regulating the media during elections

To strengthen fair coverage of political players, ZEC needs to put in place a holistic framework for monitoring and supervision of media when they break rules without impinging on freedom of the media. ZEC and the public media may consider the constitution of a multi-stakeholder ad-hoc committee that determines a formula for the allocation of airtime on public media to political parties. The body would include media experts, representatives of political players and public media players. The committee can:

- Set criteria for when a political party should qualify for free and paid airtime on public media.
- Set limitations of who would qualify for free airtime (e.g. political parties only, or political party and candidates at all levels such as Presidential, Parliamentary or Council levels)
- Consider a minimum standard for who would qualify for free airtime on public media. Considerations may include:
 1. The relative strength of a political party, for example, parties who received certain % of votes in the last election
 2. The number of seats a party currently holds in Parliament
 3. The seriousness of political party contenders who have a certain number of candidates vying for seats would be considered more serious
 4. Parties/candidates may be required to have a minimum number of signatures of support from registered voters to qualify for airtime

Professional and ethical journalism

Regulatory bodies must develop, monitor and encourage professional and ethical standards outside an election period. Elections do not take place in a vacuum, as journalistic standards will not suddenly change when there is an election.

Pluralism and diversity

While Zimbabwe has a more pluralistic media in numerical terms, there remains little diversity in reporting patterns. The same actors appear over and over again in the news and programmes on the different stations. This reflects a similarity in news values and what the different media deem important. The government of Zimbabwe for this and successive elections must ensure increased diversity through alignment of media laws with the Constitution to allow for greater diversity in broadcasting and the licensing of the three tiers of broadcasting including community media. This would enhance the diversity of voices from different geographical locations, social classes and beliefs.



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs