



Democracy 2022: Lay of the Land Report

Issue Date: June 2022

Introduction

This report is a summary of all current and former narratives within South Africa's online democracy conversation for 2022. Five main focus areas are being tracked within the broader democracy conversation. These focus areas include: the judiciary, democratic institutions, the constitution, the upcoming ANC elective conference in December 2022 as well as the RET network and corruption. Content sources for the Democracy_2022 Brandwatch dashboard include twitter, facebook, youtube, news publications and blogs. It is important to note that currently only South African content is being considered. For Twitter (the main content source) this means that only users who have selected South Africa as their location are being filtered through to the dashboard. Given that roughly 12% of South Africans make use of Twitter, the findings herein do not represent an exhaustive account of broader South African society and at best should be viewed as indicative of the nature of online conversations and narratives discussed. Twitter has outsized influence when compared to other social media platforms as most politicians have accounts and all media make extensive use of it, hence conversations on Twitter can and do move rapidly from Twitter to traditional media and other social media platforms. Hence, Twitter activity often serves as an early warning of what conversations and narratives may penetrate the broader societal ecosystem and become normative.

Democracy 2022

The query upon which the Democracy_2022 dashboard is based makes use of broad critical keywords to capture as much of the conversation as possible. Keywords such as democracy, inequality, unemployment, social justice, human rights and freedom were used as a broad starting point. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 2.02 million mentions were recorded from just under 200K unique authors (figure 1). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 10 mentions. A total of 1.38 million retweets were recorded, indicative of a largely (68%) retweet-based conversation. A retweet percentage gives an indication as to how many original authors are contributing to the conversation and sharing their own ideas. Typically conversations with high retweet percentages represent a small number of unique authors who present only a handful of views on a particular topic. The masses simply retweet instead of giving their own viewpoint. A high retweet percentage also casts doubt on the authenticity of a conversation as it could point to coordination by a group of tweeters to amplify specific content. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was Freedom Day, celebrated on 27 April 2022 in commemoration of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 (figure 2).

Prominent hashtags within the conversation include: #blacklivesmatter (21K mentions), #operationdudula (15K mentions), the misspelt #putsouthafricansfirst (11K mentions), #medicalaidracialprofiling (8K mentions) and #unemployment (8K mentions) amongst others (figure 3).

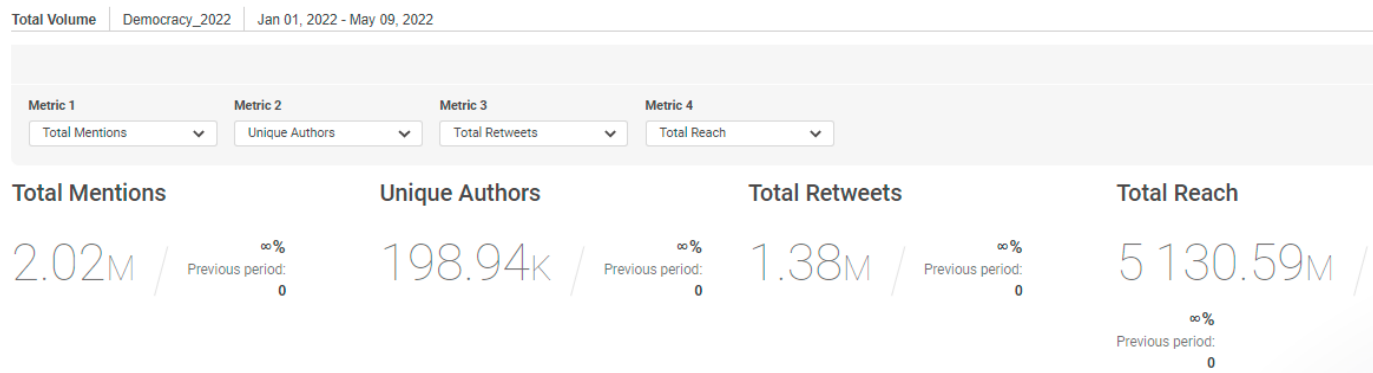


Figure 1: Total volume of Democracy conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

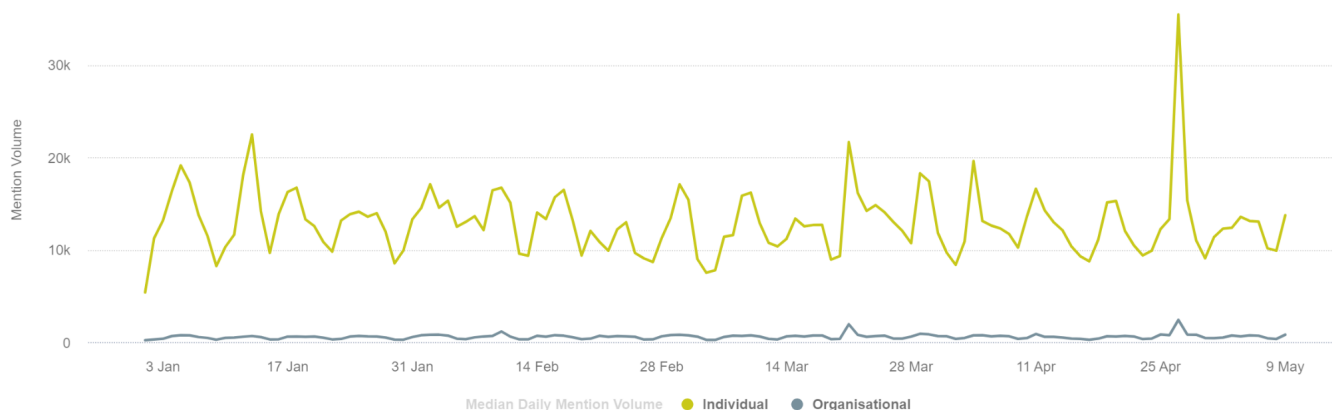


Figure 2: Mention volume for days broken down by account type (individual and organisational). Note peak in individual mention volume on 27 April.

#sabcnews #unemployment
 #grammys #4ir #qm #putsouthafricansfirst
#blacklivesmatter
 #operationdudula #notohealthactamendment
 #medicalaidracialprofiling

Figure 3: Top ten hashtags within Democracy conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.



<https://twitter.com/Alima1000/status/1523738227802542080>



PRAY FOR 🇷🇺
@mphoon

...

Operation restore have arrested 250 illegal immigrants in alexandra who where occupying restaurants jobs and trading spaces that belongs to SAns citizens. Thank you dudula movement your patriotism have created jobs and businesses for unemployed SAns.

#OperationDudula



11:39 AM · Mar 11, 2022 · Twitter for Android

410 Retweets 26 Quote Tweets 1,478 Likes



<https://twitter.com/mphoon/status/1502217600415240196>



Liezl van der Merwe
@Liezl_vdMerwe

...

The IFP has submitted a Private Members Bill to Parliament to regulate the employment of foreign nationals in ALL sectors - not just restaurants. We need to prioritise unemployed South Africans into job opportunities first. #JobSeekersSA
#PutSouthAfricansFirst

*(As introduced in the National Assembly (proposed section 56):
Explanatory summary of the Bill and prior notice of its
introduction published in Government Gazette No.)*

(The English text is the official text of the Bill)

increasing preference by certain sectors in the economy to employ foreign nationals over South African citizens, without justification on the basis of skills. It is therefore imperative to regulate the employment of foreign nationals in the Republic in a way that prioritises the employment of South African citizens who are ready, willing and capable of taking up the available job opportunities. This is necessary in an environment of inadequate enforcement of legislation around the employment of foreign nationals and increasing breaches by unscrupulous employers, which has caused excessive vulnerability of foreign nationals, stirred xenophobic sentiments, and closed the door to many South African jobseekers.

BE IT ENACTED by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, as follows:—

Enactment of section 1 of Act 4 of 2014

Section 1 of the Employment Services Act, 2014 (Act No. 4 of 2014) (hereinafter referred to as the "principal Act"), is hereby amended—

—by the insertion after the definition of "Board" of the following definition:

— "**Commissioner** means the Commissioner for Employment, Labour, established by section 28 of the

has also noted that considering the representation of foreign nationals at senior management level by population group in the 2021/2022 annual report, that it is clear that the expected skills transfer by foreign nationals to South Africans are not taking place as required. With the regard to the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 (Act No. 4 of 2000), there should be deliberate attempts by the State to control the increasing preference by certain sectors in the workforce to employ foreign nationals over South African citizens, without justification on the basis of skills. Moreover, the perception by South African citizens that foreign nationals are "taking their jobs", exacerbates xenophobia. Therefore, it is imperative to regulate the employment of foreign nationals in the Republic, in order to stem the narrative that the case

4:02 PM · Jan 19, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

1,178 Retweets 184 Quote Tweets 2,738 Likes



https://twitter.com/Liezl_vdMerwe/status/1483802063532445696



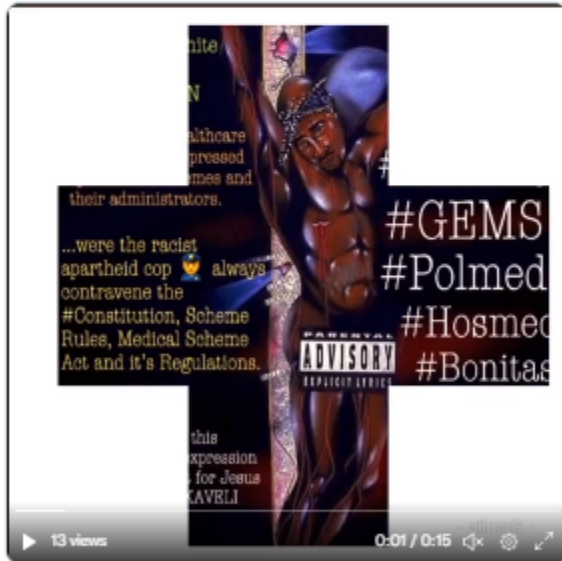
DONalimaG
@Alima1000

...

There are two powers in the world; one is the sword
and the other is the pen. #KKK #🔥 #🏳️ #🇳🇸
@GEMS_Number1

#MedicalAidRacialProfiling

#CMScares4u @ParliamentofRSA
@PresidencyZA @LPC_Law
@CouncilPractice
@LawSociety_SA CONSTITUTION
@JSAdvs @NatBarCouncil
#BlackLivesMatter 🍌🍌

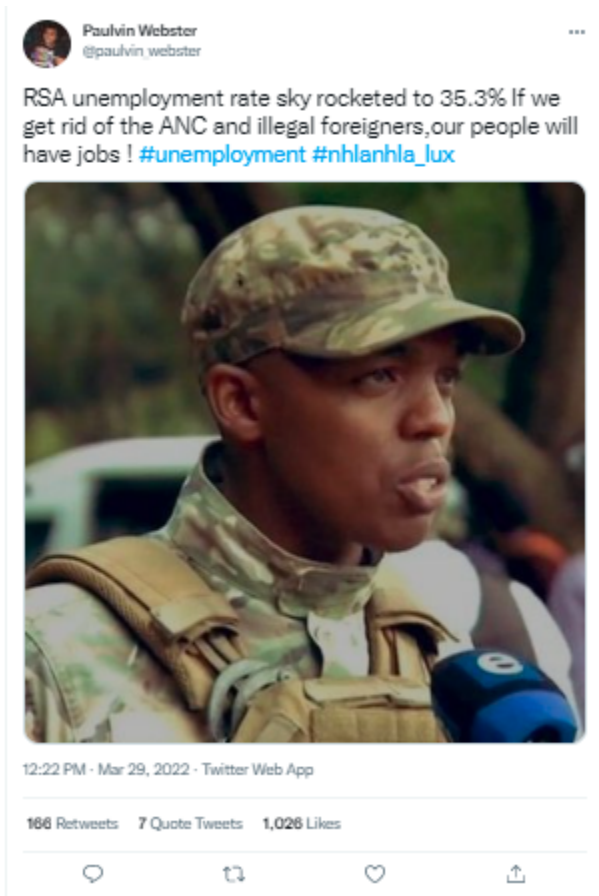


5:35 PM · Mar 20, 2022 from Pretoria, South Africa · Twitter for iPhone

14 Retweets 2 Likes



<https://twitter.com/Alima1000/status/1505568709062049794>



https://twitter.com/paulvin_webster/status/1508751541209124865

A prominent peak in the number of unique authors within the conversation occurred the week beginning 11 April (figure 4). On this day, the Patriotic Alliance's leader Gayton McKenzie was elected mayor of the Central Karoo District and he pledged 100% of his salary towards fixing the municipality.

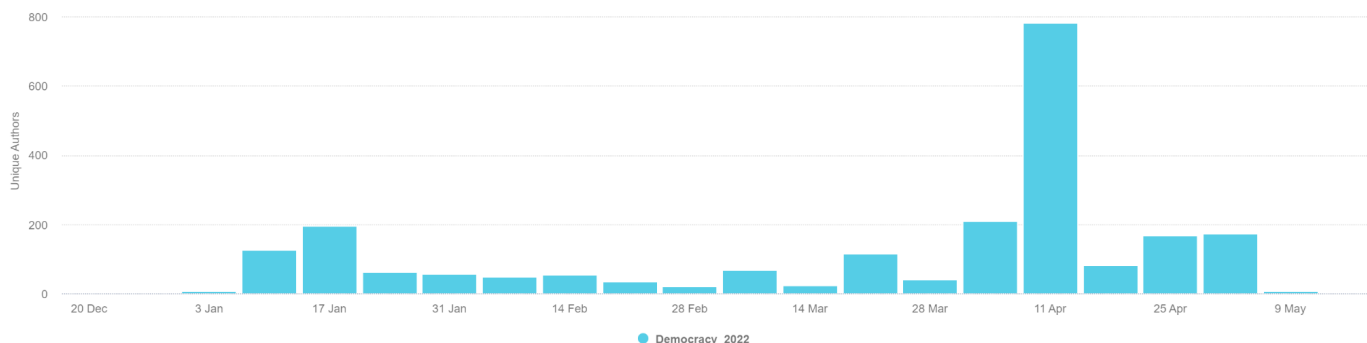


Figure 4: Unique authors over time between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

Trending topics over the period have ranged from unemployed teachers, youth unemployment, the unemployment rate and conversations around Freedom Day (figure 5). In terms of the five focus areas within the democracy conversation, the constitution as well as RET and corruption focus areas maintained the highest mention volume since 1 January whilst the chapter 9 focus area notably had the lowest mention volume throughout (figure 6).



Figure 5: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

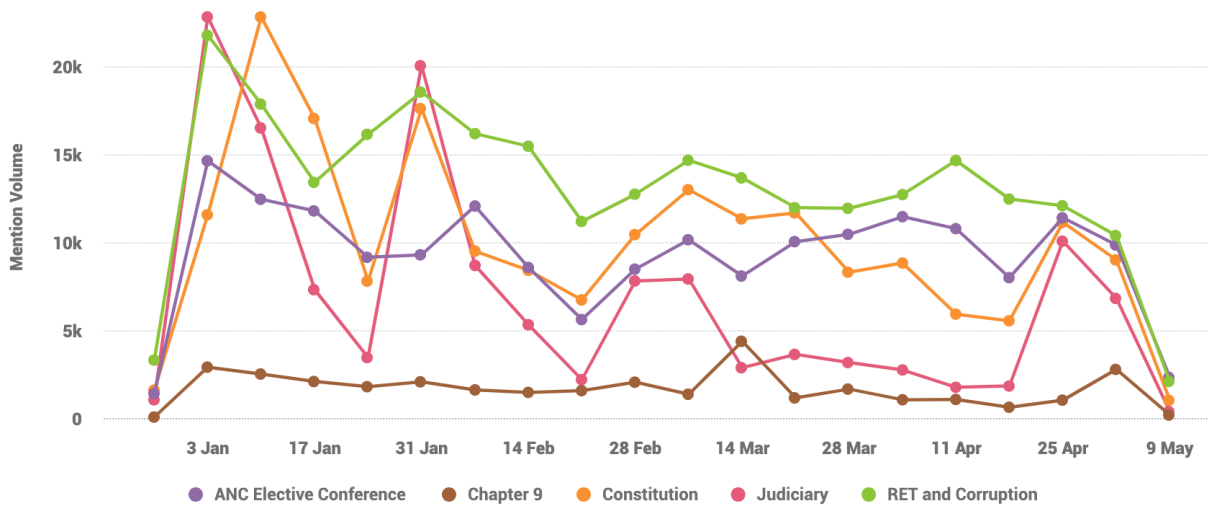


Figure 6: Comparative mention volume graph showing the five key focus areas between 1 January and 9 May.

Main Themes Within Conversation

- Operation Dudula and #PutSouthAfricansFirst being viewed as patriotic movements.
- Operation Dudula seen to be tackling unemployment and creating jobs for South Africans.
- Unemployment reaches all-time high - discussions as to who is to blame: Cyril Ramaphosa or foreigners.
- Protest against the proposed national health act amendment - views that constitutional and religious rights will be under serious threat.
- Conversation around apparent medical aid racial profiling.

Judiciary

Within the judiciary focus area, keywords such as “commission of inquiry”, “state capture”, “supreme court”, “judiciary” as well as the names of prominent judges within South Africa were used to capture the conversation. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 136K mentions were recorded from approximately 26K authors (figure 7). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 5 mentions. A total of 118K retweets were recorded, indicative of a predominantly (87%) retweet-based conversation. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was the state capture report (figure 8 and 10). Prominent hashtags within the conversation include: #statecapturereport (3517 mentions), #jscinterviews (1297 mentions), #cicinterviewsjudges (1237 mentions), #lindiwesisulu (1121 mentions) and #cr17bankstatements (1017 mentions) amongst others (figure 7).

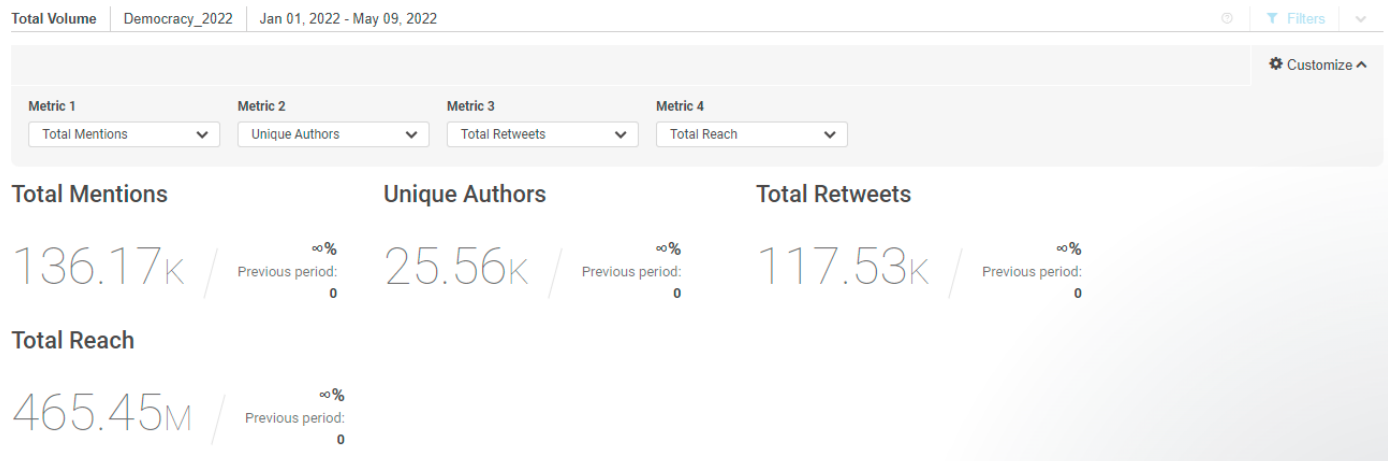


Figure 7: Total volume of Judiciary conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

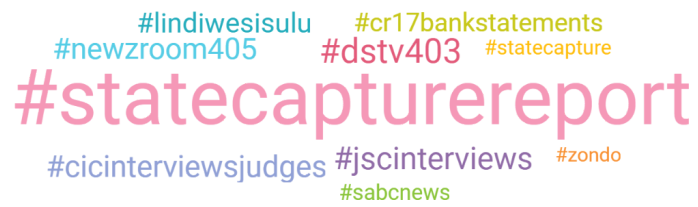


Figure 8: Top ten hashtags within Judiciary conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

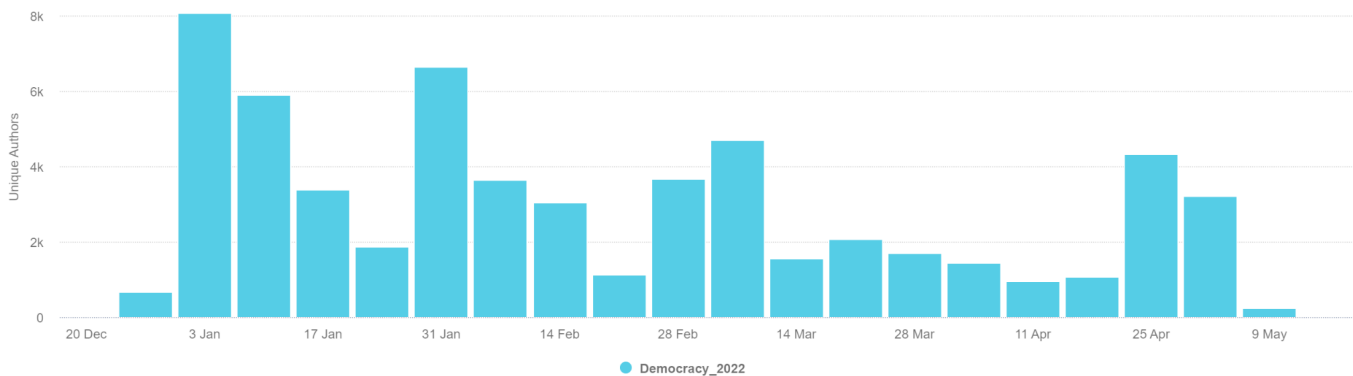


Figure 9: Unique authors over time between 1 January and 9 May.

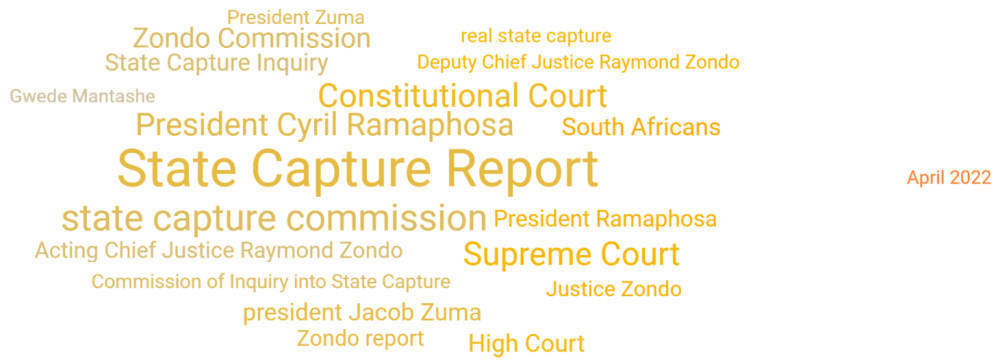


Figure 10: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

The highest number of unique authors was recorded the week beginning 3 January. In this week chief justice Raymond Zondo released his first state capture report which was swiftly followed by Lindiwe Sisulu’s open letter in which she attacked the integrity of the judiciary (figure 8, 9 and 10).

Main Themes Within Conversation

- Release of state capture report and its implications on those mentioned.
- Lindiwe Sisulu’s attack on the integrity of the judiciary.
- Commission of Inquiry interviewing judges on state capture.
- Conversations around the appointment of Raymond Zondo as chief justice of the constitutional court.

Democratic Institutions

Within the Democratic Institutions focus area, the keywords were made up entirely of the names of the various democratic institutions and their abbreviations for e.g. NPA, SARS, IEC and SAHRC. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 33K mentions were recorded from approximately 11K authors (figure 11). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 3 mentions. A total of 25K retweets were recorded, indicative of a predominantly (76%) retweet-based conversation. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was the Zondo Commission's slamming of the NPA for its failure to respond to state capture corruption. Prominent hashtags within the conversation include (excluding the hashtags of news houses): #statecapturereport, #publicprotector, #sars and #npa (figure 12) .

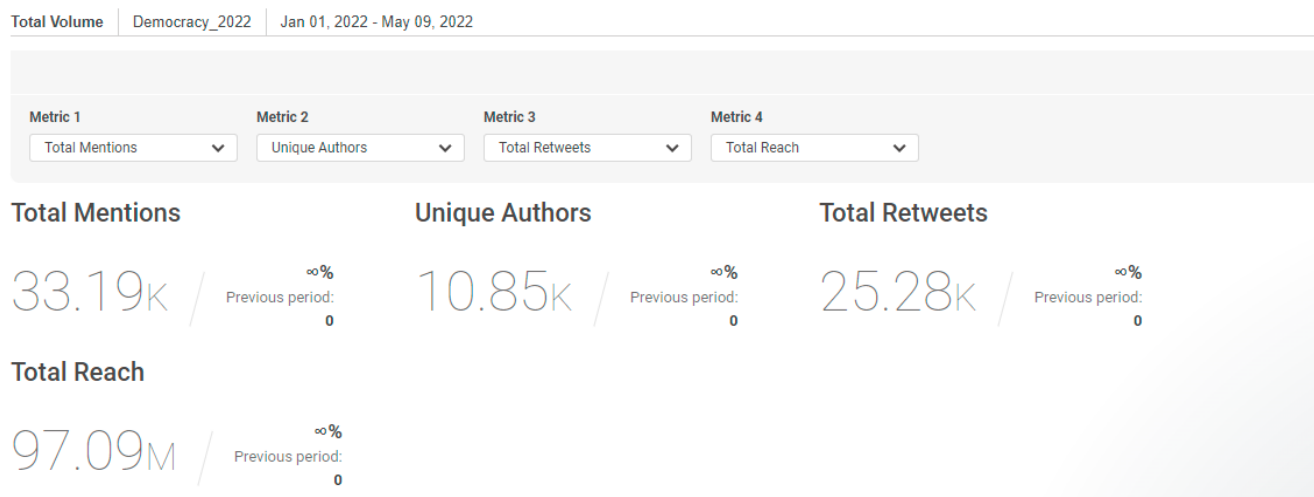


Figure 11: Total volume of conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.



Figure 12: Top ten hashtags within conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

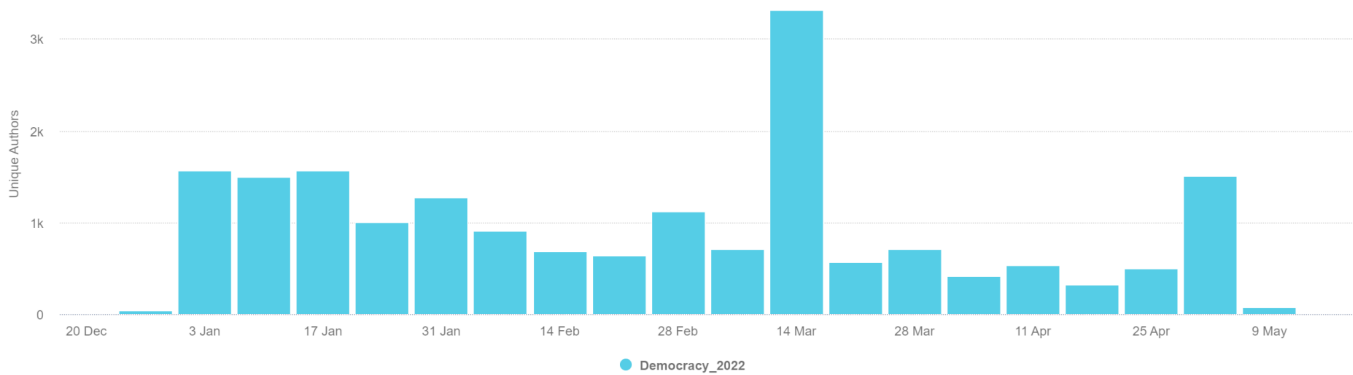


Figure 13: Unique authors over time between 1 January and 9 May 2022.



Figure 14: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

The highest number of unique authors was recorded the week beginning 14 March when President Cyril Ramaphosa requested reasons from the public protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane as to why he should not suspend her in terms of section 194(3)(a) of the constitution. During the same week the NPA announced that it will be prioritising high profile corruption cases with the intent to prosecute over the next 6 months (figures 13 and 14).

Main Themes Within Conversation

- Judicial Commission of Inquiry into state capture corruption and the role of the NPA.
- Role of public protector and inquiry into Busisiwe Mkhwebane's fitness to hold office.
- Implication of former president Jacob Zuma's involvement in state capture.
- Corruption at SARS, SASSA and Home Affairs.

The Constitution

Within the Constitution focus area, only two keywords were used, namely *constitution* and *concourt*. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 199K mentions were recorded from approximately 35K authors (figure 15). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 6 mentions. A total of 152K retweets were recorded, indicative of a predominantly (76%) retweet-based conversation. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was the appointment of Raymond Zondo as Chief Justice of the constitutional court. Prominent hashtags within the conversation include: #blacklivesmatter, #section59investigation, #medicalaidracialprofiling and #cr17bankstatements (figure 16).

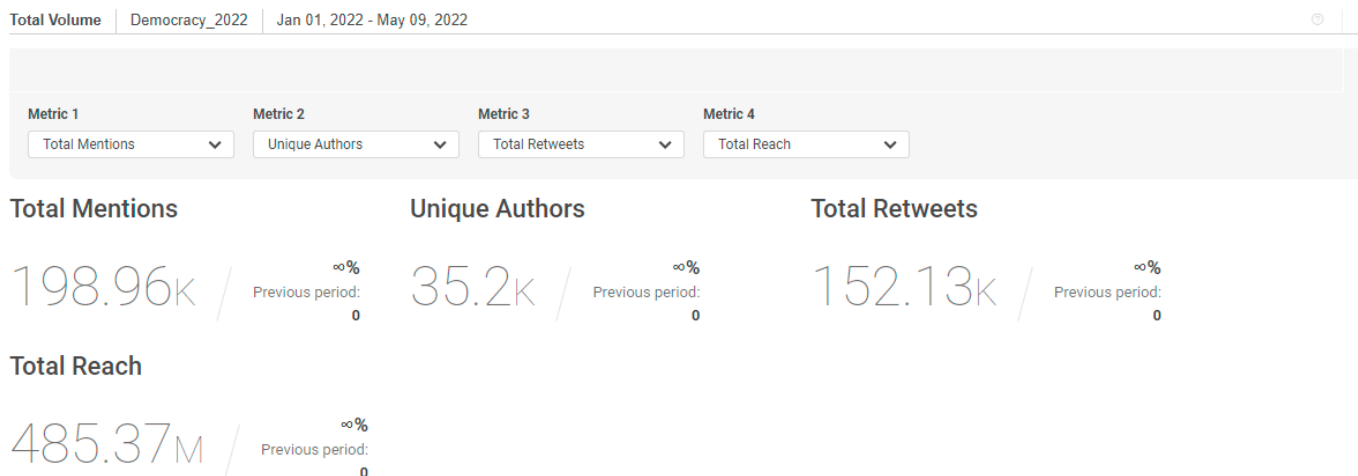


Figure 15: Total volume of Constitution conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

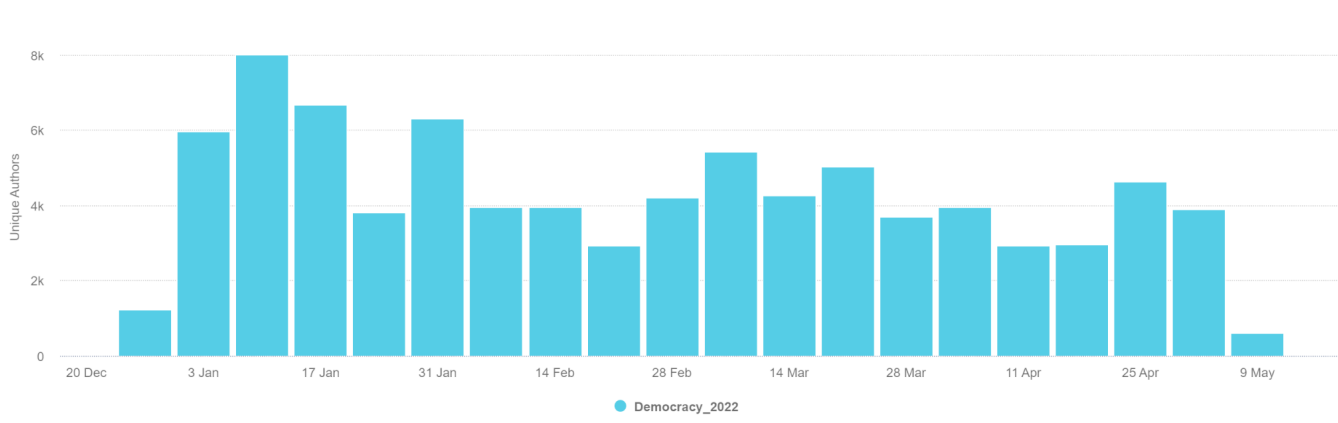
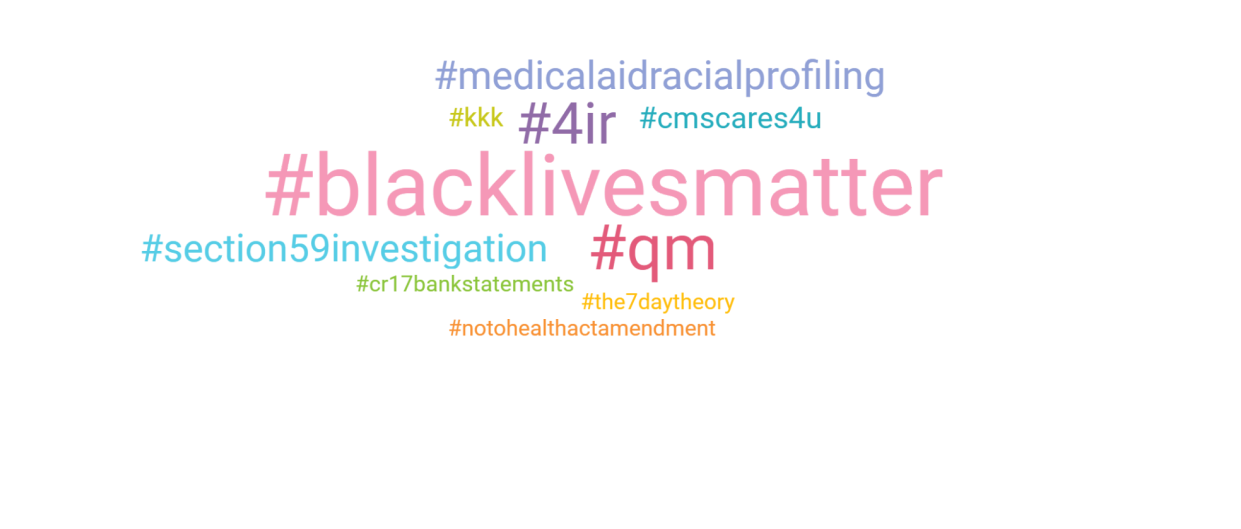




Figure 18: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

The highest number of unique authors were recorded for the week beginning 10 January. This was in the week that Lindiwe Sisulu penned an open letter criticising the Constitution (figure 17 and 18). This sparked a debate about South Africa’s constitution and whether a constitutional democracy has met the needs of the majority of citizens or whether a shift to a parliamentary constitution would be more beneficial. This is a debate that is still ongoing within the conversation.

Main Themes Within Conversation

- Constitutional democracy vs parliamentary democracy.
- Lindiwe Sisulu’s attack on the constitution.
- Chief justice of the constitutional court interviews.
- Appointment of Raymond Zondo as chief justice of the constitutional court.

ANC Elective Conference December 2022

Within the ANC Elective focus area, keywords such as *ANC Election*, *ANC Mistrust*, *Government Mistrust*, the names of prominent ANC leaders as well popular ANC-related hashtags were used. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 185K mentions were recorded from approximately 30K authors (figure 19). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 6 mentions. A total of 145K retweets were recorded, indicative of a predominantly (78%) retweet-based conversation. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was the re-election of Zandile Gumede to chair the eThekweni region. Prominent hashtags within the conversation include: #sona2022, #voetsekANC and #ANC (figure 20).

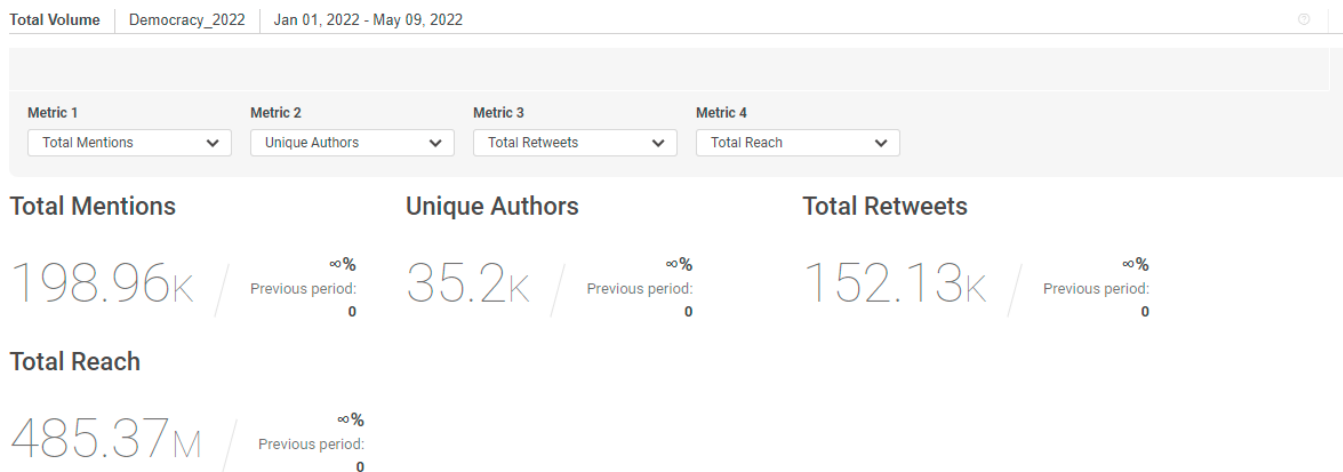


Figure 19: Total volume of ANC Elective conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.



Figure 20: Top ten hashtags within ANC Elective conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

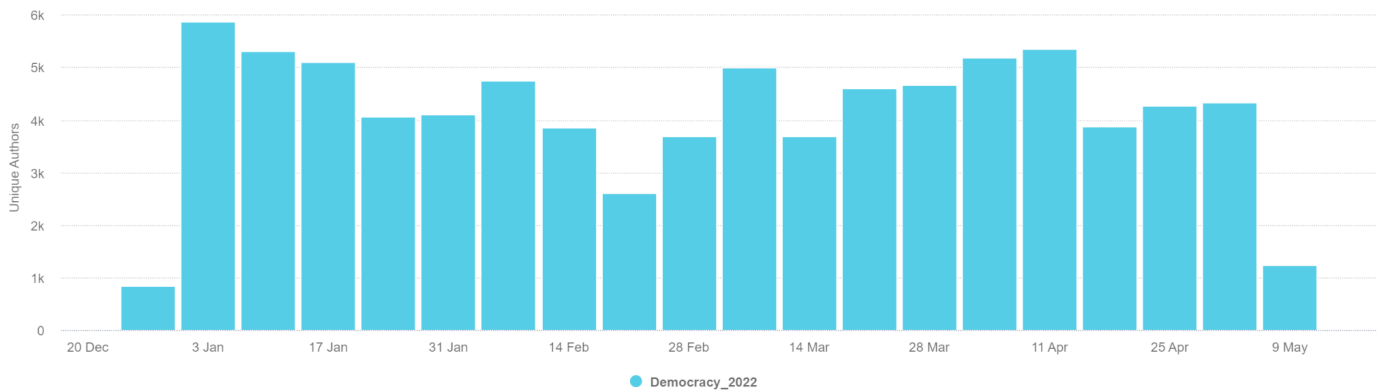


Figure 21: Unique authors over time between 1 January and 9 May 2022.



Figure 22: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

Three apparent peaks appear in the number of unique authors throughout the conversation (figure 21). The first occurs the week beginning 3 January in which the state capture inquiry report was released. The second occurs in the week beginning 7 March in which president Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Raymond Zondo as chief justice. The third occurs in the week beginning 11 April in which Zandile Gumedede was re-elected to chair the ANC's eThekweni region (figure 22).

Main Themes Within Conversation

- Release of state capture inquiry report.
- Appointment of Raymond Zondo as chief justice.
- Re-election of Zandile Gumedede by ANC to chair eThekweni region.
- Crisis at ANC's Eastern Cape conference.

RET and Corruption

Within the RET and Corruption focus area, keywords such as *RET*, *radical economic transformation*, *corruption*, *land expropriation*, *economic affirmative action* and *Jacob Zuma* were used. Between 1 January and 9 May 2022, a total of 261K mentions were recorded from approximately 50K authors (figure 23). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 5 mentions. A total of 185K retweets were recorded, indicative of a predominantly (71%) retweet-based conversation. The number 1 trending topic throughout this period was the finding by the Zondo commission that former president Jacob Zuma should be charged with corruption. Prominent hashtags within the conversation include: #corruption, #statecapturereport and #sona2022 (figure 24).

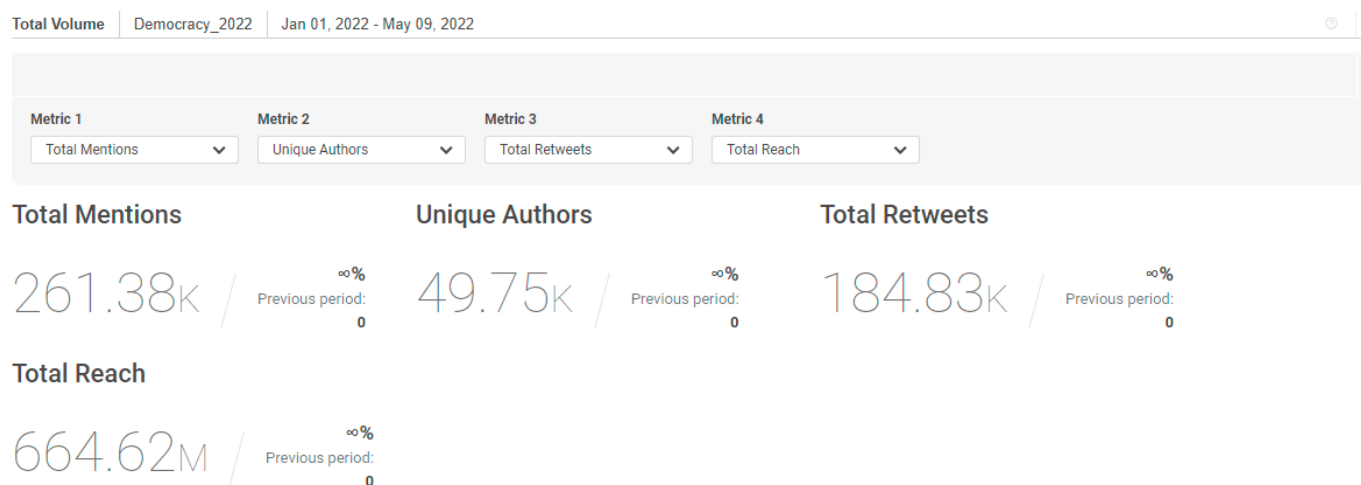


Figure 23: Total volume of RET and Corruption conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

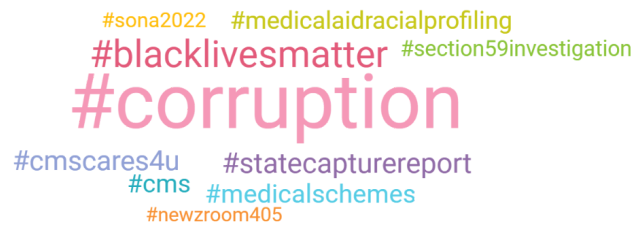


Figure 24: Top ten hashtags within RET and Corruption conversation between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

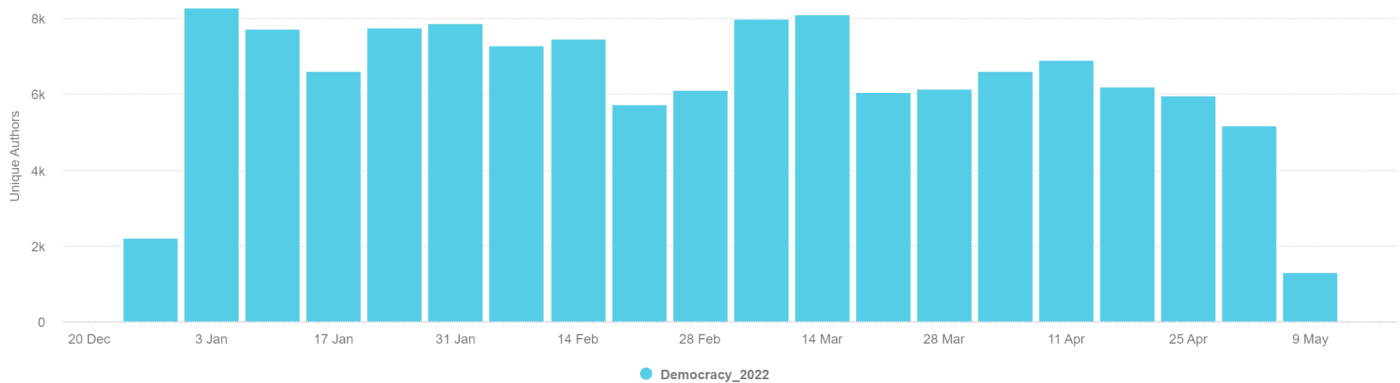


Figure 25: Unique authors over time between 1 January and 9 May.



Figure 26: Trending topics between 1 January and 9 May 2022.

The RET and Corruption conversation averaged 6k unique authors per week between 1 January and 9 May 2022, the highest average number of all the aforementioned tracked conversations. Whilst clear peaks are not easily seen, the weeks beginning 3 January and 14 March 2022 do stand above the other weeks (figure 25). The former relating to the state capture inquiry where members of the ANC were implicated in acts of corruption whilst the latter is related to a video released exposing corruption from SASSA, Home Affairs and SARS (figure 25 and 26).

Main Themes Within Conversation

- ANC members implicated in acts of corruption by the state capture inquiry.
- NPA focusing on prosecuting high profile corruption cases.
- Exposed acts of corruption at SASSA, Home Affairs and SARS.
- Former president Jacob Zuma's corruption case.

Recommendations

1. Produce a bi-weekly report summarising the main points of discussion within each focus area for the specific period (Brandwatch dashboards have been set up for each focus area so that relevant information is easily accessible).
2. In the build-up to the ANC's 55th elective conference, a weekly report could be produced as the date approaches to track the conversation more closely, similar to the local government elections reporting in 2021.
3. It is important to note that there is overlap within the main themes in the five focus areas. For example, the appointment of Raymond Zondo in the Judiciary, the Constitution and the ANC elective conference conversation are overlapping narratives. A similar overlap can be seen around the theme of state capture and corruption-implicated officials in the Judiciary, Democratic Institutions, ANC elective conference and the RET and corruption focus areas. This narrative overlap is to be expected, and reflects the complexity of real-world engagement with these narratives and their multi-faceted significance. Narratives are particularly predisposed to catering for complexity as they can hold multiple themes and paradoxes simultaneously in play. In future efforts to understand the complexity of the overlap in narratives we will endeavour to further delineate the overlapping themes in the five focus areas with the intention of better understanding the complexity of how they interrelate.